SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1321

The SYMPOSIUM OPERA COLLECTION – Volume 12

PASQUALE AMATO

PASQUALE AMATO was born in Naples in 1878 of well-to-do, well connected parents. He was to have studied for a career in civil engineering, but the lure of opera was too great. Thus, after some success as a choirboy he was trained for three years at the Conservatoire San Pietro a Majella. His début in the season of 1899-1900 at the Teatro Bellini as Germont père was followed by appearances in *Aïda*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Carmen*, *Faust* and *Violinaio di Cremona* (Giannetti). He then moved from Naples to gain two years' experience in Italian provincial houses. The mainstay of his work was the music of Verdi with a sprinkling of verismo roles, and he often appeared with Giovanni Zenatello.

His first appearance in Milan was in 1902 at the Teatro dal Verme in *Andrea Chénier* with Giuseppe Borgatti. As the season ended he went on to sing in Leipzig, Monte Carlo, Nuremberg, Odessa and Prague.

In 1904 he journeyed for the first time to South America to sing in Buenos Aires. There, in *Falstaff*, *Lohengrin*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Siberia* and *La Wally*, his colleagues included Borgatti, Didur, Farneti, Garbin, Pandolfini, Sammarco, Storchio and Arturo Toscanini. He returned to Europe to sing at Covent Garden and Rome. Amato was developing a wide repertoire of old and modern works; besides those mentioned there were roles in *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Germania*, *La Gioconda*, *Maria di Rohan*, *Otello*, *I Pagliacci*, *Rigoletto*, *Tannhäuser*, *Werther*, *Zampa*, *Zazà* and various works now mentioned only in reference books.

Amato had so impressed Toscanini that in 1907 he was invited to La Scala. He sang first in *La Gioconda*, with Bruno, Burzio and Zenatello; then in *Tristan und Isolde*, with Borgatti and Kruszelnicka; and in *La Wally* with Burzio and Calleja. At the end of the season, with Ferrani and Giraud, also under Toscanini, he sang the part of Golaud in the Italian première of *Pelléas et Melisande.*

His successes, built on talent, work and experience, led, inevitably, to New York. His first appearance at the Metropolitan Opera was in 1908 as Germont père. The cast included Enrico Caruso and Marcella Sembrich; Toscanini conducted. In 1910 he sang Jack Rance in the world première of *La Fanciulla del West*; his colleagues included Caruso, Destinn and Toscanini. He sang also in other first performances, though of less note. These included the title role of *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Walter Damrosch with Alda (1913), Giordano's *Madame Sans-Gêne* with Farrar, Martinelli and Toscanini (1915), and the American premières of *Prince Igor* with Alda and Didur (1915) and Zandonai's *Francesca da Rimini* with Alda, Martinelli and Mason (1916). A notable occasion in Amato's Metropolitan career was the revival of *Un Ballo in Maschera* to mark the Verdi centenary

He was relatively young when he left in 1921. There had been some illness, perhaps related to his heavy schedule, for by this time he had participated in 471 performances, and, of course, he was singing elsewhere between Metropolitan seasons. Some reviews of his subsequent European performances mention loss of powers, but he continued to appear, albeit infrequently, for a further ten years.

In 1935 he was appointed Head of the Opera Faculty at the State University of Louisiana, where he taught until his death in 1942 of a heart attack.

The records indicate a very beautiful voice, invariably holding a model vocal line; indeed he was regarded very highly by Emilio de Gogorza, himself one of the most polished baritones of his time. De Gogorza felt his voice to be one of the finest known to him. If there is a criticism, it is that we are captivated by beauty of sound rather than by finely pointed character, changing as dictated by unfolding drama. If there was any deterioration, it is not evident from the late records. Some suffer from a rather low recording level and noisy material, but on others the timbre is captured with particular vividness.

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