SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1325

HECTOR BERLIOZ 1803-1869 Early Vocal Recordings

This compact disc contains a selection of vocal music by Berlioz preserved from the first fifty years or so of commercial sound recording. For much of this period performers would sing or play into a recording horn through which sounds were transmitted and mechanically transferred on to a rotating wax disc. Only a limited range of tonal frequencies could be captured, so that the timbre of many instruments and some voices was distorted. Moreover the insensitivity of the recording process precluded large ensembles or a spacious acoustic. Satisfactory (indeed, often excellent) results could be obtained with solo singers, accompanied by piano, or with woodwind and brass; strings fared poorly.

The sound spectrum of the gramophone increased enormously with the introduction of microphones in the mid-1920s, enabling symphony orchestras and large choirs to be recorded. Berlioz's uniquely inventive instrumentation could now be heard on record, mainly in short pieces but also in a handful of large-scale works. However the musical limitations imposed by a maximum playing time of five minutes remained. It was only with the LP era, from the late 1940s, that the greater part of Berlioz's oeuvre became available to the public at large, revealing his genius to many.

A significant number of vocal Berlioz recordings were made in the first decade of the 20th century, mainly of excerpts from *La Damnation de Faust*, which achieved great popularity as an opera following the 1893 Monte Carlo production with Jean de Reszke. Piano-accompanied performances of "Un certain rat" (Aumonier), "Voici des roses" (Renaud) and "Nature immense" (Cheyrat) recorded in 1901 were amongst the earliest Paris wax discs, while an abridged *Damnation* on fourteen 78 rpm sides was produced in 1909-1910. A less-incomplete electrical (microphone) version, conducted by Piero Coppola, was issued in 1933. Until the introduction of the LP this was the only available substantial recording of an extended vocal work by Berlioz. *The World's Encyclopaedia of Recorded Music* (1952) lists but three vocal excerpts each from *Les Troyens* and *L'Enfance du Christ*, and recordings of three *mélodies* from *Les Nuits d'Été*. Liturgical works and other sung concert and operatic music are unrepresented.

There is no record that has direct links with Berlioz, though several of the selections on this compact disc are by singers who took part in early performances of his music. Edmond Clément, who transposes *L'Absence* upwards by a semitone in his recording, was Hylas in the 1892 Paris *Les Troyens à Carthage*; Marie Delna, who made a technically inferior Pathé cylinder of *Chers Tyriens* (to be issued on a Symposium compact disc), was Didon. Maurice Renaud was the first operatic Méphistophélès in 1893 at Monte Carlo and sang Chorèbe in the Paris première of *La Prise de Troie* at the Palais Garnier in 1899, with Delna as Cassandra. (Renaud did not record Chorèbe's air "Reviens à toi", but Hubert Paty, the first Paris Chef Grec, did, in 1901.) Giovanni Zenatello was Faust in the 1902

La Scala *La Damnation de Faust*, conducted by Toscanini. Pol Plançon was the first Méphistophélès at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Richard Mayr's Papal aria is a souvenir of the 1911 Vienna première of *Benvenuto Cellini*. Finally, the excerpt from *Béatrice et Bénédict* is an extraordinary souvenir of Felix Mottl, who conducted the first complete *Les Troyens* in Karlsruhe in 1890 and who maintained Berlioz in his repertoire in Munich, where he moved thirteen years later. In his *Memoirs* the composer noted, some while after the first production of *Béatrice et Bénédict*, that the duet for Héro and Ursula had become very well-known in Germany and was often sung there; this disc suggests that that such popularity persisted for several further decades.

EDMOND CLÉMENT (Paris 1867-Nice 1928) graduated as a civil engineer before training at the Paris Conservatoire. His stage début was as Vincent (*Mireille*) at the Opéra-Comique in 1889. His successful career as a lyric tenor was centred in Paris, with excursions to Brussels and Madrid, until 1910. From 1909 he sang in North America, first at the Metropolitan Opera, New York and later in Boston. On the outbreak of war he returned home and enlisted. War injury curtailed his career though he sang in concert as late as 1927.

RICHARD MAYR (Henndorf near Salzburg 1877-Vienna 1935) was a medical student in Vienna while undergoing vocal training at the Konservatorium. In 1902, with only two years' experience as a singer, he was engaged by Mahler for the Hofoper. He remained there for the rest of his life, a much loved principal bass, with frequent visits to Covent Garden, Salzburg, the Metropolitan Opera and Bayreuth. He sang in the first performance of Mahler's eighth symphony in 1910 and in the local première of *Benvenuto Cellini* in the following year. His Baron Ochs was considered unsurpassable.

BERTHE AUGUEZ DE MONTALANT (born in Baltimore circa 1865) was a favourite Parisian soprano in the first quarter of the twentieth century, singing with the Concerts Pasdeloup, Colonne and Lamoureux in a wide range of works including *Roméo et Juliette* and *La Damnation de Faust*, excerpts from both of which she recorded. Her sole operatic appearance, as Beethoven's Leonore in 1899, was at the Opéra-Comique, deputizing for an indisposed Rose Caron. Of French ancestry, she studied in Paris, where she remained after her marriage to Numa Auguez (1847-1903), comprimario baritone at the Opéra; her maiden name is spelt in several different ways.

POL PLANÇON (Fumay, Ardennes circa 1851-Paris 1914), one of the greatest bass singers on record, studied in Paris with Duprez and Sbriglia and made his debut as St. Bris (*Les Huguenots*) in Lyons in 1877. His Paris Opéra career began in 1883 (Gounod's Méphistophélès was his first role there). From 1891 to 1904 he sang at Covent Garden and from 1893 to 1908, the year of his retirement, at the Metropolitan Opera. He took part in the first American performance of *La Damnation de Faust* at this house on 7th December 1906. Many records attest his

vocal skills, demonstrating beautiful tone, perfect legato, great agility and a virtuosic trill.

MAURICE RENAUD (Bordeaux 1861-Paris 1933) studied in Paris and in Brussels, where he was principal baritone at La Monnaie from 1883 ('creating' the role of High Priest in Reyer's *Sigurd*) until 1890. After his return to Paris he appeared at the Opéra-Comique and at the Opéra, establishing himself as a major artist with his finely-nuanced dramatic singing. A favourite in London, Monte Carlo and the United States, Renaud continued to sing in opera until 1912. Berlioz's Méphistophélès was amongst his most successful roles.

GIOVANNI MALIPIERO (Padua 1906-Milan 1970) sang at in minor Italian opera houses until 1935 when he appeared in Rome. He performed in Parma the following year, at La Scala from 1936 to 1938 and at the Verona Arena from 1937 to 1939. During the 1940s he took part in many broadcasts. In 1946 he sang for Toscanini at the re-opening of La Scala. He retired in 1962. His lyric tenor repertoire was wide, embracing contemporary works as well as those of the 19th century. Records show a singer sensitive to musical and dramatic demands.

GERMAINE MARTINELLI (Paris 1887-Paris 1964) studied with Jean Lassalle amongst others and made her début in 1908. Too tall for opera, she made her career as a concert singer. She performed successfully for several decades, not only in France but in much of western Europe, and made many recordings, mainly of art songs, both *mélodies* and Lieder, and oratorio. It has been reported that she performed as Berlioz's Marguérite more than 150 times.

EMILIO DE GOGORZA (Brooklyn, New York 1872-New York 1949) left America for Europe as an infant and was brought up in his parental land, Spain, and in England and France. After singing in Brompton Oratory and St. George's Chapel, Windsor he returned to New York to study. His first engagement, in 1897, was a tour as an assisting artist to Marcella Sembrich. He was a successful concert performer, but being very short-sighted did not sing in opera. His hundreds of records made over three decades include duets with his wife Emma Eames, Caruso and Schipa, artists under contract to the Victor Company, of which he was artistic director, and show much finesse. Later he taught at the Curtis Institute of Music, Samuel Barber being perhaps his most celebrated pupil.

GIORGINA CAPRILE (born in Florence about 1880) made her début in 1900 at Rome as Mimi with De Lucia as Rodolfo and then sang with him in *L'Amico Fritz*. For a decade and a half she appeared in all the major houses of Italy and South America apart from La Scala and was awarded celebrity status by the companies she recorded for. Violetta was generally thought her finest role.

GIUSEPPE KRISMER (Naples circa 1873-Pozzuoli near Naples 1946) made his début in 1902 or 1903 at Naples and in 1904 he sang Walther von Stolzing at

Bologna. By 1905 he was at La Scala and in 1906 he sang in London with Melba and Sammarco. In 1907 at Rome he first sang Faust in a staged version of Berlioz's *Légende dramatique*; he made this one of his finest parts. His roles included also Alfredo, Gounod's Faust, Rodolfo and Turiddu. He sang until 1915, mainly in Italy, but also in South America. A 'glandular disorder', presumably marked obesity, is said to have limited his stage career.

GIOVANNI ZENATELLO (Verona 1876-New York 1949) appeared in 1898 in the baritone role of Silvio in *Pagliacci*, and the year after as Canio, the tenor leading role in this opera. He rapidly achieved renown on all the world's leading stages, including the Manhattan Opera where, like Bonci, he was seen as a rival to Caruso. After Tamagno's untimely death he was a worthy successor in the role of Otello. His career as a dramatic tenor was a long one. He discovered that the arena of Verona was acoustically excellent and by initiating the festival there was able to fulfil his dream of providing operatic performances of highest standards for large audiences at prices people could afford. In 1902 he made his début at La Scala in *La Damnation de Faust* with Elisa Petri and Maurice Renaud under the direction of Toscanini, who wrote three years later of his dislike of the tenor's singing in some other operas.

GEORGES THILL (Paris 1897-Lorgues, Var 1984) studied at the Paris Conservatoire and then for two years in Naples under De Lucia, to whom he subsequently attributed everything worthwhile that he knew. His first appearances, in 1919 at the Opéra-Comique as Don José, and in 1924 at the Opéra as Nicias (*Thaïs*), led to engagements at Verona, La Scala, Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna and Buenos Aires. In a film version of Charpentier's *Louise* he sang with Grace Moore and André Pernet. He created Enée at the Palais Garnier on 14th November 1930 with Marisa Ferrer as Didon, under the direction of Ruhlmann (previous Paris productions were at the Châtelet in 1863 and 1892); it is to be regretted that his outstandingly fine singing in this role is preserved only in this heavily cut excerpt.

LOUIS MORTURIER (St. Pierre-Le-Moutier, Allier 1888) began to study as a horn player at an early age and at sixteen was already playing in orchestras, but in 1911 he became a student of Guillamat (who can be heard on Symposium CD 1349) and Sizes at the Paris Conservatoire. From 1914 to 1919 he was in the army and was twice decorated. The war over he began his career at the Opéra-Comique where he remained until 1945 except for service in the second World War. He then sang in Strasburg and Mulhouse, singing there in the French première of *The Rape of Lucretia*. Herod's aria is heavily cut to fit onto the twelve-inch disc.

JEAN PLANEL (Montélimar, Drôme 1903-Montélimar 1986) started his career about 1925. He was in the premières of Milhaud's Opéra-Minutes at Baden-Baden in 1927 and at Wiesbaden in 1928. From 1931 he was celebrated as a leading French concert and oratorio singer; his singing of Bach cantatas and Lieder being

much admired. The beautiful recording in this album with orchestra directed by Ruhlmann won the French Prix du Disque in 1933. He also composed, and in 1934 he gave the first performance of a cantata by his brother, Robert Planel. After the war he worked for French radio.

GEORGETTE FROZIER-MARROT (dates unknown) made her opera début in 1924 and within a few years was singing such parts as Amneris, Dalila, Fricka, Hérodiade and Ortrude. In 1928 she appeared as Carmen and as Dalila at Covent Garden with Ansseau and Journet. She sang Carmen and Margared (*Le Roi d'Ys)* at the Opéra-Comique in 1929. Until well after the war her career continued in the provinces; she performed as Brangäne as late as 1950. Her recorded Didon is very impressive; it seems that she did not perform this role in Paris.

LOUISE HÖFER née Holzhauer (Erlangen 1874-Munich 1918) studied with Müller in Munich. In 1897 she made her concert début there. From 1897 until 1899 she sang in opera at Augsburg and from 1899 until 1901 at Coburg. Then, until 1914 she was principal mezzosoprano of the Munich Court Opera, under Mottl's direction from 1903 to 1911. Guest appearances were made at Stuttgart, Kassel, Leipzig, Hanover, Nuremberg, Bayreuth and Brussels. From 1914 until her early death she restricted herself to Lieder and oratorio. Her best roles were Fricka, Ortrude, Waltraute, Nancy (*Martha*) and Marcellina (*Le Nozze di Figaro*).

ELLA TORDEK (Tordkova) (Kamenitz, Bohemia 1878-Munich 1918) studied from 1892 to 1897 at the Prague Conservatory and in Berlin with the distinguished soprano Mathilde Mallinger (Eva in the première of *Die Meistersinger*; teacher also of Lotte Lehmann). Her début was as Marie in *Prodaná Nevesta* at Prague in 1898. In 1901 she had a small part in the première of Dvorak's *Rusalka*. From then until she retired in 1913 she was at the Munich Court Opera, a celebrated performer of lyric coloratura roles, especially Pamina. She created Wolf-Ferrari's Susanna (1909) having sung principal roles in the premières of his *Le Donne Curiose* (1906) and *I Quattro Rusteghi* (1909). Mottl married her compatriot and colleague, the dramatic soprano Zdenka Fassbaender; after Mottl died Tordek retired and married.

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