

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1356

An ANTHOLOGY of SONG ~ Volume I

THERESE BEHR-SCHNABEL [Stuttgart 1876-Tremezzo, Italy 1959] was born to wealthy parents and the quality of her soprano voice was soon noticed. In 1904 she went to Frankfort a.M. to study with Julius Stockhausen, but soon transferred to Franz Wüllner in Cologne. After recitals in the provinces she appeared in Berlin in 1898 and was advised by a critic to go to Etelka Gerster, who realised that she had actually a lower voice. Thus, in 1899, with the distinguished Liszt pupil Alfred Reisenauer as accompanist, she re-appeared successfully as a contralto. A short while later she joined a touring concert party in which the pianist was Arthur Schnabel. The tall, Protestant, 23 year old contralto and the short, Jewish, 17 year old pianist formed a deep and lifelong attachment. They were married in 1905 and they took a flat in Berlin, large enough for each to have a studio for teaching. In their joint recitals, which included solos by him, besides Lieder of Brahms, Cornelius, Franz, Schumann and Tchaikovsky, they gradually worked through Schubert's entire Lieder. Their *Winterreise* was particularly praised. Their joint and separate careers, his included composition, continued to develop, though gradually illness and age limited her activities. In 1933 they moved to Switzerland and then to New York. After his death in 1951 she continued to teach. Today Arthur Schnabel is most remembered of the two, but his enduring reputation rests to a considerable extent on Therese's influence in the years of their joint development.

ANTON van ROOY [Rotterdam 1870-Munich 1932] was a cigar merchant before studying with Stockhausen. He made his début on the concert platform in 1894. He was recommended to Cosima Wagner by her daughter, Daniela Thode and Felix Weingartner, and his operatic début as Wotan in the Bayreuth Ring cycle of 1897 followed. Cosima is said to have remarked, "Ah! The Master should have heard that." He re-appeared as Wotan in 1899, 1901 and 1902, and he added Hans Sachs and van der Decken to his repertoire in 1899 and 1901 respectively. From 1898 to 1914 he was in Berlin in both opera and recital, from 1898 to 1913 he was every year at Covent Garden, and from 1898 to 1908 he was at the Metropolitan Opera. After his appearance there in *Parsifal* in 1903 he was not asked back to Bayreuth. After signs of vocal failure in 1910 he appeared less frequently. He retired in 1913. He was the finest Wagner baritone of the time, but he also appeared in *Carmen*, *Faust*, *Fidelio*, *Die Königin von Saba* (Goldmark) and *Salome*.

ANTON SISTERMANS [den Bosch 1867-The Hague 1926] was another pupil of Stockhausen in Frankfort and he settled there. Apart from singing Pogner at Bayreuth in 1899 and the Hermit in a broadcast of *Der Freischütz* in 1926, his career was entirely in oratorio and concert. From 1891 to 1914 he was very often in Berlin, and from 1902 to 1912 in Vienna. In 1886 he gave the first performance of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* in Berlin and of Brahms' *Vier ernste Gesänge* in Vienna in the composer's presence. His repertoire included oratorios of Haydn, the *Missa Solemnis*, the Verdi Requiem, and works dedicated to him by

Pfitzner and D'Albert. From 1904 to 1915 he taught at the Scharwenka Conservatorium in Berlin. Later he taught in The Hague.

FELIX SENIUS [Königsberg 1868-Königsberg 1913] moved to St. Petersburg when he was four on his father's appointment there as a bank director, and there he gave charity concerts in 1895, studied and gave his first Lieder recitals in 1900. After very successful concerts in Finland, Germany, Russia and Sweden he settled in Berlin. His oratorio career included notable performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* in England, and in Munich in 1910 he sang in the première of Mahler's 8th symphony. He died of ptomaine poisoning from fish eaten at a banquet given in his honour in his home town. He was married to the soprano Clara Senius-Erler. His brother Rudolf was an operetta singer.

KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD [Hamar, Norway 1895-Oslo 1962] astonished her father, a violinist and conductor, and her mother, a coach and pianist, by memorising the role of Elsa (*Lohengrin*) at the age of 10. She studied with Ellen Jacobsen in Oslo and Gillis Bratt in Stockholm, making her début in 1913, whilst still a student, in *Tiefland*. For 18 years she appeared only in Scandinavia, singing all manner of parts and venturing into operetta, musical comedy and revue. Isolde, in 1932, was her first role in German. She was heard by Ellen Gulbranson who recommended her to Bayreuth, where she sang various small parts in 1933. As Sieglinde and Isolde at the Metropolitan Opera in 1935 she suddenly found herself a star, ranked with Nordica and Fremstad. She married Sigurd Hall in 1919 and Henry Johansen in 1930. She returned to Norway in 1941 to find that Johansen had joined Quisling's party. Despite persuading him to resign, despite not singing in occupied territory and despite making her views the more obvious by appearing in Sweden and Switzerland, having returned to occupied Norway was held against her for some years after the war, particularly in the United States. In 1950 she gave the first performance of Strauss's *Vier letzte Lieder* at the Albert Hall. She went on to appear in *Alceste* and *Dido and Aeneas*. She retired in 1953, but she came back to the Albert Hall in 1957 for the 50th anniversary of the death of Grieg.

PETRE MUNTEANU [Campina, Romania 1916 or 1919-Milan 1988] obtained first prize for his year for singing and violin at the Bucharest Conservatory and was immediately engaged by the Bucharest State Opera. In 1941 he left for Berlin to study Lieder and oratorio with Hermann Weissenborn. In 1944 Romania changed sides and Romanian Nationals, including Munteanu and his fellow student Sergiu Celibidache, were interned. Thus his career really started after the second world war with his début at La Scala, Milan in *Così fan Tutte* in 1947. He appeared in most important opera houses of Italy, and in opera, oratorio and recital throughout Europe, and also in Australia, India, Pakistan and Singapore. Munteanu also conducted and composed, especially chamber music. He read linguistics and literature at Università Bocconi in Milan, and Hugo Wolf was the subject of his doctoral. His all-embracing range of repertoire calls to mind such names as Lilli Lehmann and Fischer-Dieskau.

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