

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS 1380

THE GREAT TENORS – VOLUME 4

ALFONSO GARULLI (Bologna 1858-Bologna 1915) worked in a bank before making his début at Milan in Lecocq's operetta *La Fille de Mme Angot*. He then underwent a throat operation to improve his voice and made his début in opera at Ravenna in 1881 in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*. He built a most successful career, mainly in Italy. His Covent Garden début was as Don José on 18 July 1885. He had no rehearsal; his first meeting with Carmen that evening, Adelina Patti, was on stage. That season he seems to have appeared only as Don José. He returned in 1887 for *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*, presented that season as *Leila*. In that year also he sang in *Aïda*, *Faust* and *Mefistofele* at the Kroll-Oper, Berlin, and he was in the première of *Flora Mirabilis* by Spiro Samara at La Scala. His repertoire ranged from Bizet and Massenet to Verdi and the lighter roles of Wagner. Deteriorating health forced him to retire from opera in 1903, but he continued to appear as a concert singer until 1907. In 1887 he married the soprano Ernestina Bendazzi-Garulli (Naples 1864 or 1866-Trieste 1931). In retirement they opened a studio in Trieste which they ran until the start of the First World War. Their son, Valdo taught music and composed. The quality and state of the voice, and the style of singing bring to mind our earliest recorded artists, such as Francesco Marconi (1853 or 1855-1916; on CDs 1069 & 1073). And in assessing the style it is interesting to note that when Garulli was born none of the music which he sings here had been written.

It is believed that his complete Pathé recordings are present.

Zonophone recordings by Garulli are on Symposium CD 1077.

AMEDEO BASSI [Montespertoli, near Florence 1874-Florence 1949] studied with Pavesi at Florence. His début in 1897 was in the title role of Eduardo Marchetti's *Ruy Blas* at the municipal theatre of Castelfiorentino. He gained experience in Florence, Genoa, Trieste and Venice. In the 1900-1901 season he appeared as a guest at the Metropolitan Opera. From 1902 he sang in South America; his roles there including Radames at the opening performance of the new Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires in 1908. In 1903 he was in St. Petersburg and from 1906 to 1908 he was at the Manhattan Opera House. In 1911 he sang at the Metropolitan Opera, now a member of the company. However, he seems to have sung only three times, apparently taking over from Caruso as Dick Johnson, shortly after première of *La Fanciulla del West*. From then until 1916 he was at Chicago; his work there including various American premières. In 1913 he sang in Brussels and Paris. He was in a number of premières including: *Lorenza* (Mascheroni, Rome 1901), *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* (Samara, Genoa 1905) and *Tess* (d'Erlanger, Naples 1906). At Covent Garden he was in the first London performances of *Loreley* (Catalani, 1907), *Germania* (Franchetti, 1907) and *La Fanciulla del West* (Puccini, 1911). In the latter he was also in the first Rome performance. At the Teatro Regio, Parma he took part in the Verdi centenary celebration of 1913. In the years

1921 to 1926 he sang Loge, Siegmund and Parsifal under Toscanini at la Scala. Bassi also had an extensive international concert career. He retired from the stage in 1926, but gave concerts until about 1940. He then established himself as a teacher, his most significant pupil being Ferruccio Tagliavini.

At Covent Garden in 1907 Bassi shared the roles of Canio, Cavaradossi and Riccardo with Caruso. Indeed, of the thirteen roles represented on his Pathé recordings, nine were also in the repertoire of Caruso, nine out of ten if one ignores the abstruse works. (Probably neither of them appeared in *I Lombardi*.) However, although born the year after Caruso, and although very much into the verismo school, nevertheless Bassi's style seems to be based on somewhat earlier models. His enunciation is excellent, often, despite the primitive recording the text is very clear, and he has substantial power when he opens up, but he knows also how to sing quietly. This album includes all the operatic music which Bassi recorded for Pathé. His recordings for the Fonotipia company are on Symposium CD 1224.

Technical Note: The Pathé company, which made the records in presented here, used a recording system which was in two respects radically different to that of most of its competitors. 1) The modulation was vertical rather than horizontal and 2) recordings were initially made on giant wax cylinders and a pantograph device was used to copy them to create masters and moulds for a variety of sizes of discs and cylinders. It was an ingenious system, but inherent features led to very variable results. This accounts for variation in sound quality in this album.

Aurora, the last of three operas by Ettore né Héctor Panizza (Buenos Aires 1875-Milan 1967) an operatic conductor and composer of Italian extraction, was commissioned by the Argentinean government for the opening season of the new Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires. It was first performed in Spanish on 5 September 1908 with Bassi in the part of Mariano.

Chopin, an opera by Giacomo Orefice (Vicenza 1865-Milan 1922) based on music of Chopin, first performed at the Teatro Lirico, Milan on 25 November 1901. It is said that Bassi created the title role, but this has not been verified.

La Bohème, at this stage Pathé could not accommodate the entire aria on one track.

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