SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1403

An ANTHOLOGY of SONG Volume V

FRENCH SONG in RARE RECORDINGS 1919 - 1943

The art of *mélodie* (French art song) flowered in the middle of the nineteenth century as major and minor composers, following the lead of Berlioz, took inspiration from French poetry. By the early years of the twentieth century the medium had developed to the extent that singers were able to make a career outside opera, presenting *mélodie* in recitals and mixed concerts. Some of the artists on this disc (not all French) were opera stars, others concert performers; all were accomplished in this medium. The words and English translations of many of these songs, together with notes on their composers, are to be found in the admirable *French Song Companion* by Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes (OUP, 2000) to which the interested listener is referred.

Paul Lewis

LEÏLA BEN-SÉDIRA (Algiers 1902-Paris 1982) was taught as a child by Saint-Saëns and then studied piano with Lazare-Lévy in Paris and voice at the Conservatoire National de Paris. Her début in 1929 was as Olympia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, which led to a very successful career in opera all over France. Probably her greatest part was Lakmé. From the mid-'30s she appeared increasingly in song recitals, also in Belgium, England, Italy and Sweden and with the "Ars Rediviva" Ensemble. Later she taught in Paris.

PIERRE BERNAC né Bertin (Paris 1899-Villeneuve-les-Avignon 1979) spent some years in light music, but in 1930 he went to study with Reinhold von Warlich in Salzburg and made his début as a recitalist in Paris in 1933. In 1934 he met Francis Poulenc and for the next two decades Poulenc accompanied his recitals. They gave the first performances of many songs of Poulenc, and works of Barber, Berkeley, Daniel-Lesur, Hindemith, Honegger, Jaubert and Jolivet. From their base in Paris they toured Western Europe and North America. Later Bernac taught at Howard University, Michigan and at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau. His pupils included Gérard Souzay and Jessye Norman.

EMMA CALVÉ née Rosa Noëmie Emma Calvet de Roquer (Décazeville, Aveyron 1858-Millau, Aveyron 1942) sang whilst still at convent school in Montpellier. In Paris she studied with Jules Puget and made her début at Brussels in 1882 as Marguérite in *Faust*. After further studies with Rosine Laborde and Mathilde Marchesi she made her career at the leading houses: the Opéra Comique, début 1885; La Scala, 1887; Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera, 1893; and the

Manhattan Opera, 1897. She sang in the premières of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *L'Amico Fritz*, and about ten lesser works. Her greatest role was Carmen, she excelled also as Marguérite, Santuzza and Ophélie. Calvé was also very popular in concerts.

GERMAINE CERNAY née Pointu (Le Havre 1900-Paris 1943) wished to be a pianist, but studied singing under Albers and Engel at the Conservatoire National. Her very successful career started in 1925 at the Grand Opéra, Paris as Euryclée in Fauré's *Pénélope*. She was acclaimed in oratorio, especially in the works of Bach and, as we hear in this example, she excelled also in French song. She was minded to enter a convent, but died suddenly before she could do so. The voice was of the type which the French call Galli-Marié, after the famous singer of that name who created Carmen.

SUZANNE CESBRON-VISEUR (Paris 1879-Seilhan, Haute-Garonne 1967) was educated at the Conservatoire National, Paris. She made her début in 1902 at the Opéra-Comique without a rehearsal, standing in for another singer, and in the Paris houses she continued with great success for more than a quarter of a century. Her career was entirely in France, but for occasional appearances in Belgium and Monte Carlo. Her career as a recitalist was also most distinguished. She retired in 1927and taught until 1949 at the Conservatoire, Paris. Her pupils included Régine Crespin. Her husband, Georges Viseur, was an official at the Opéra-Comique.

GERMAINE CORNEY née Cornelys (? 1901-?) entered the Conservatoire National, Paris at the age of 16 and left three years later with all of the four possible prizes. She was at once engaged by the Opéra-Comique, but before starting there she appeared in South America and studied further with Ninon Vallin. She also appeared in Monte Carlo and at the Théâtre de la Potinière, Paris and at the end of 1924 she came finally to the Opéra-Comique. 1939 left the stage for a career with Radio Rennes. Later she taught at the Luxemburg Conservatoire.

ARTHUR ENDRÈZE né Krackman (Chicago 1893-Chicago 1975) studied agriculture until the conductor Walter Damrosch persuaded him to have his voice trained. Thus in 1918 he became a student of the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau and then studied under Jean de Reszke. In 1925 he made his début as Don Giovanni at Nice. In 1928, after experience in companies led by Reynaldo Hahn, he appeared at the Opéra-Comique, and in 1929 at the Opéra. He was in the premières of a number of works, including operas by Honegger, Magnard, Milhaud and Ibert. Under the occupation he was imprisoned, but as an American citizen he was allowed to return to the United States. After the war he resumed his French career, and from 1948 he taught in Kansas City, then in Paris and after that in Chicago.

MARCELLE GERAR née Regereau (Brussels 1891-Brussels 1970) was a student of Ninon Vallin. From the time of her début in Paris in 1921 she sang exclusively

on concert and recital platforms, devoting herself particularly to contemporary French works. Honegger, Ibert, Milhaud, Roussel, Florent Schmitt and, most significantly, Ravel wrote works for her. She met Ravel in 1923 or 1924. They became close friends and he accompanied her frequently. She made concert journeys throughout Europe, often with Ravel, who dedicated *Ronsard à son âme* to her. They were particularly acclaimed in England and Spain. She was a professor at the École Normale de Musique and co-editor of Ravel's letters.

GINETTE GUILLAMAT (Paris 1911-) attended at the Conservatoire National, Paris and won the Fauré-Medaille. She studied piano under Marguerite Long. She made her début in 1935 and appeared as a concert singer in many West European countries. However, she made few appearances and her career, believed to have been exclusively on the concert platform, was short.

LUCILLE MARCEL née Wasself (New York 1877-Vienna 1921) studied in the United States and then under Jean de Reszke in Paris. Her début was astonishing: she appeared as Elektra in Vienna in 1908, replacing Mildenburg, who declared the part to be unsingable. She was encouraged by Weingartner, then director of the Hofoper, and in 1911 she became the third of his five wives. From 1912 to 1914 she sang at the Boston Opera. From 1914 to 1917 she was at Darmstadt (Première *Kain und Abel*, Weingartner, 1914) and from 1919 until her death she sang in Vienna. She appeared also in Prague (1910 and 1917), Hamburg (1912) and Paris (*Otello, Die Meistersinger*, 1914). She made her début as a concert singer in 1910 and a concert career became more significant than her appearances in opera.

ANDRÉE MARILLIET (1897-) made her stage début in 1922 at the Grand Opéra as the second lady in *Die Zauberflöte* and she remained there until 1937. Her repertoire ranged from comprimario parts to major tragic roles e.g. Salomé (*Hérodiade*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*) and Liu (*Turandot*). She was in the premières of works by Hahn, Magnard and Enescu. She was also singing major roles in the French provinces throughout this time.

CHARLOTTE MELLOT-JOUBERT appeared around 1906 at the Opéra and in the prestigious Salles des Concerts singing music by Balakirev, Beethoven, Haydn, Hillermacher, Lalo and Weber. She was one of the first generation of French artists to give solo recitals devoted to French song. At the Concerts Colonne in 1908 she was in the première of Pierné's *Croisarde des Enfants*, the composer conducting. Her few records were made at the end of her career.

JEANNE MONTJOVET sang at the Opéra in 1916. She gave first performances of songs by Louis Vierne, whose mistress she was from 1910 to 1915, and included works by Borowsky, Dubois, Ibert and Wagner in her programmes.

SIGRID ONEGIN née Elisabeth Elfriede Sigrid Hoffmann (Stockholm 1889-Magliaso, Switzerland 1943) was of German-French origins and passed her

childhood in Wiesbaden. She was taught first by Luise Ress in Frankfurt a. M., then by Eugen Robert Weiss in Munich and finally by Silvio de Ranieri in Milan. She was taught also by her husband the Russian pianist and composer Eugen B. Onegin (1883-1919). Her concert début, as Lilly Hoffmann, was in 1911 and her opera début at Stuttgart in 1912. She remained there until 1919, her appearances including Carmen with Caruso and Dryade in the première of *Ariadne auf Naxos*. During the First World War she concealed her husband until the King of Württemberg assured his freedom. After three years at the Bavarian State Opera she moved to the Metropolitan Opera, where her roles included Amneris, Brangäne and Fricka. In 1922 she sang with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski. She also appeared in the opera houses of Bayreuth, Berlin, London, Paris, Salzburg, Stockholm, Vienna and Zürich. She was especially praised as Lady Macbeth, as Eboli (*Don Carlos*), as Ulrica (*Ballo in Maschera*) and as Orpheus. In 1920 she married the doctor and novelist Fritz Pentzoldt, whose biography of her was published in 1939.

ABBY RICHARDSON (1892-?) was American by birth and travelled to France as a child. She studied in Paris under Rose Caron. She made her début at Nantes in 1910 and in 1911 at Nice sang Rosalia in the French première of D'Alberts's *Tiefland*. She was married to Pierre Chereau, director of the Nice Opera. During three seasons at the Théâtre de la Monnaie she appeared sixty times as Carmen. She was often a guest at the Opéra-Comique, at the opera of Monte Carlo and in the French provinces. She was a celebrated concert artist and after her retirement conducted the opera class at the Conservatoire Rachmaninoff, Paris.

CHARLES ROUSSELIÈRE (St. Nazaire 1875-Joue-les-Tours 1950) worked as a smith before studying at the Conservatoire National, Paris under Albert Vaguet. In 1900 he made his début in the arena of Béziers as Andros in the première of Fauré's *Promethée*. That same year he appeared as Samson at the Grand Opéra, Paris. He sang mainly in Paris and Monte Carlo where he was in the premières of works by Bizet, Charpentier, Fauré, Mascagni, Massenet, Messager and Saint-Saëns. At the Metropolitan Opera in the season of 1906-07 he was admired as Canio, Faust, Gérald, Don José and Roméo. He appeared also at La Scala, at the Teatro Massimo, Palermo and at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires. He was the greatest French Wagnerian tenor of his age. In 1925 he retired and taught in Paris.

CHARLOTTE TIRARD (Rouen 1887-?) was taught in Milan by Giulietta Wermez. In 1926, at the age of 39, she made her début at Grand Opéra, Paris as Helmwige (*Die Walküre*). Only a year later she was singing Aïda and in 1929 the Marschallin. At Monte Carlo, also in 1929, she sang the part of Aithra in the French première of *Die Ägyptische Helena*. She retired in 1939 and lived in Paris.

[JEAN-ÉMILE-DIOGÈNE] VANNI-MARCOUX (Turin 1877-Paris 1962) was the son of French parents, his father owning a café in Turin. He studied law at the University of Turin, but then had his voice trained by Collino and Taverna in Turin,

and after that by Frédéric Boyer in Paris. He made his début in 1899 at Bayonne as Frère Laurent (*Roméo et Juliette*) and next year he sang Colline (*La Bohème*) in his home town. After gaining experience in Nice, Brussels and The Hague, he appeared with great success at Covent Garden in the years 1905 to 1914. His début in 1909 at the Grand Opéra, Paris was as Guido Colonna in the première of Henri Février's *Monna Vanna*. A great career followed. In 1912 at the Opéra-Comique he sang the part of Don Quichotte in the first Paris performance of Massenet's opera. From 1912 he appeared in North America, but he remained in France during the Great War. In 1922 he appeared at La Scala as Boris Godunov, it became one of his greatest roles, and at Covent Garden in 1937 he was much admired as Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. He continued to sing until 1947. From 1938 to 1943 he taught at the Conservatoire National, Paris and from 1948 to 1951 he was director of the Bordeaux opera.

Acknowledgements: Symposium Records thanks Paul Lewis and Adrian Tuddenham for assistance with the production.

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[Tracks 16 & 17 The French poet and inventor Charles Cros (1842-1888) is of significance to historians of sound recording for having anticipated Edison with a description of a mechanical means of recording and reproducing sound. However, Edison was the first to construct working apparatus.]