

*HALF a CENTURY of AIDA at the METROPOLITAN OPERA*

GRACE ANTHONY, soprano ( 1896- ) made her début on 19 November 1921 at the Metropolitan Opera as Lucienne in the first performance there of Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*. She remained with the company for six seasons, singing small roles, Xenia in *Boris Godunov* and Siebel in *Faust*, for example. She often sang small parts in the recording studio, in many instances not credited, with such artists as Giovanni Martinelli, Ezio Pinza and Rosa Ponselle.

ELSIE BAKER, contralto (Philadelphia 1885- 1958) studied with W. W. Gilchrist and H. G. Thunder in Philadelphia and then with Oscar Saenger in New York. She had a long and successful career singing in performances of oratorios and in churches. In 1920 she made a coast-to-coast tour with her own company.

ROSARIO BOURDIN, conductor (Longueuil, Quebec 1895-New York 1961) was of French-Canadian descent. His mother taught him cello from the age of seven and such was his talent that he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Ghent Conservatoire. After touring as a child prodigy in Europe and at home, he played in the Cincinnati Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestras. In 1909 he joined the Victor Talking Machine Company as a cellist, conductor and pianist in their studios and in 1920 he became joint musical director with Josef Pasternak. He returned to Canada in 1937 and became joint conductor with Wilfrid Pelletier of the Concerts Symphoniques de Montréal.

ENRICO CARUSO, tenor (Naples 1873-Naples 1921) rose from the humblest of beginnings to become by common consent the greatest tenor of the 20th century. He was able to sing with equal success the older, elegant Italian operas such as *L'Elisir d'Amore* and the modern "Verismo - True to Life" works such as *Pagliacci*. He sang 607 performances at the Metropolitan Opera, the first in *Rigoletto* in 1903 the last, as it turned out, in *La Juive* in 1921. He sang at Covent Garden from 1902 to 1914, but the main centre of his European career was Germany. All who heard him vouched for the unmatched beauty of his voice. Caruso sang in the premières of *L'Arlesiana* (Cilea, 1897) *Fedora* (Giordano, 1898) *Germania* (Franchetti, 1902) *Adriana Lecouvreur* (Cilea, 1902) and *La Fanciulla del West* (Puccini, 1910). There was talk of him creating also the part of Cavaradossi (*Tosca*), but that distinction went to Emilio de Marchi. Caruso was a heavy smoker and probably died of lung cancer.

FAUSTO CLEVA, conductor (Trieste 1902-Athens 1971) studied in Trieste and in Milan, and made his début conducting *La Traviata* at Carcano near Milan. In 1923 he emigrated to the United States. For two decades he worked in the Metropolitan Opera House as répétiteur, chorus-master and assistant conductor before achieving the rank of conductor. He was also for many years musical director of the

Cincinnati Summer Opera. In the recording studio he accompanied many singers and in the early days of long-playing records he conducted a number of complete operas. He was highly regarded for the care he took with singers.

EMMY DESTINN né Ema Pavlina Kitlová, soprano (Prague 1878-Ceské Budejovice 1930) studied the violin and at the age of eight gave a public concert. However, at fourteen she went to Marie Loewe-Destinn in Prague to study singing; later taking her name. She made her début in August 1898 as Santuzza at the Krolloper, Berlin. The following month she moved to the Hofoper, starting with the same role. In Berlin she created parts in a number of operas; the only ones still remembered being the Berlin première of Strauss's *Salome* at the Hofoper and of Milada in *Dalibor* at the Theater des Westens. Her appearances with Caruso in Berlin as Aïda and Radames were ranked as amongst the greatest operatic performances ever heard. In 1902 she appeared at Bayreuth as Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Her début at Covent Garden as Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) was followed by the title part of *Madama Butterfly* with Caruso and Scotti. Destinn was a firm patriot and in 1916 she gave up her career at the Metropolitan Opera House to return home. Her open demands for the independence of Czechoslovakia led to her arrest and imprisonment by the Austrian authorities. After the war she returned to the stage and concert platform but with diminished success. In Czechoslovakia she was regarded as a national heroine and when she died she was given a state funeral.

JOHANNA GADSKI, soprano (Anklam, Pomerania 1872-Berlin 1932) studied with Frau Schröder-Chaloupka in Stettin and made her début at the Krolloper, Berlin in 1889 as Agathe in *Der Freischütz*. After gaining experience in Bremen, Mainz and Stettin, she went on a concert tour of Holland and then toured North America with the Damrosch Opera Company. Her first American part was Elsa (*Lohengrin*) and her first part at Covent Garden, in 1899, was Elisabeth (*Tannhäuser*). Her début at the Metropolitan Opera was as Senta (*Der Fliegende Holländer*). By 1917, besides being much admired in repertoire which included Aïda, Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Santuzza, Tosca and Valentine (*Les Huguenots*), she had become the house's leading Wagner-heroine. However, in 1917 the United States entered the war against Germany and in the general hysteria her German husband was groundlessly accused of espionage and though Gadski herself retained her public esteem, she returned with her husband to Germany. In 1928 she formed the German Opera Company with which from 1929 to 1931 she toured North America, in her mid-50s still singing the heaviest Wagnerian roles. Gadski died as the result of a car crash.

LOUISE HOMER né Louise Dilworth Beatty, contralto (Pittsburgh 1871-Winter Park, Florida 1947) was the daughter of a Presbyterian clergyman who founded the Western Pennsylvania College for Women. After initial training in Philadelphia she entered the New England Conservatory, Boston. Amongst her teachers there was Sydney Homer, who she later married. She completed her studies in Paris under Fidèle König and Paul Lhérie. In 1900, after gaining experience in Vichy, Brussels and London, she returned to her homeland and made her American début as

Amneris in *Aïda* in San Francisco. That same year followed her first appearance at the Metropolitan Opera, also as Amneris. She remained at the Metropolitan Opera until 1919 and she returned for the seasons 1927-1929. In 1909 she and Johanna Gadski were in the famous revival of *Orpheo ed Euridice* under Toscanini. During the Metropolitan Opera's visit to Paris the following year there was an unpleasant demonstration against Homer organised by Marie Delna who attributed her lack of success in New York to intrigues by Homer. She retired in 1930, but still gave occasional concerts. The composer Samuel Barber was her nephew.

MARCEL JOURNET, base-baritone (Grasse, near Nice 1867-Vittel, Vosges 1933) studied under Obin and Segettini at the Conservatoire Nationale, Paris. He made his début in 1891 at Béziers as Balthazar (*La Favorite*). From 1894 to 1900 he was very successful in Brussels. In 1897 he appeared at Covent Garden in *Inez Mendo* by Frédéric d'Erlanger. He progressed from success to success, moving to Paris to join the Opéra-Comique in 1900 and the Opéra in 1908. At the former he was in the French première of *La Bohème* in 1898 and at the latter, in *Parsifal* in 1909. He was extremely successful and Metropolitan Opera House in 1900 to 1908 and as a member of the company he was in San Francisco at the time of the earthquake. He returned to Europe in 1908 and passed the remainder of his career in Brussels, Milan, Monte Carlo and Paris.

LOUISE KIRKBY LUNN, contralto (Manchester 1873-St. John's Wood, London 1930) was taught singing by J. H. Greenwood, an organist in her hometown, before enrolling at the Royal College of Music in 1893 to study singing under Visetti. Whilst a student she was praised for making her début at short notice in the English première of Schumann's *Genoveva* and also whilst still a student she made her concert début in the first season of Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts in 1895. The following year she made her professional début in the première of Stanford's *Shamus O'Brien*. At Covent Garden in 1902 she sang the part of Maddalena in the performance of *Rigoletto* in which Caruso was making his English début and the part of Siebel in *Faust* with Melba, Plançon, Saléza and Scotti, and at the end of the year she sang Ortrud and Amneris at the Metropolitan Opera. Kirkby Lunn was now becoming an internationally-recognised opera-star singing with the likes of Caruso, Dalmorès, Destinn, Melba, Plançon, Scotti, Ternina, van Dÿck and van Rooy. She toured the United States in 1904 and 1905 in English performances of *Parsifal* with the Savage Company and from 1906 to 1909 she was much admired at the Metropolitan Opera. In 1909 the English censors finally allowed *Samson et Dalila* to be performed. Dalila may well have been Kirkby Lunn's greatest role. Kirkby Lunn's health was never strong and she died at a relatively young age.

GIACOMO LAURI-VOLPI né Volpi, tenor (Lanuvio near Rome 1892-Valencia 1979) was the fifteenth child of a merchant. After first studying jurisprudence, he entered the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome to study singing with Antonio Cotogni, teacher also of Mattia Battistini, Julian Biel, Guido Cicolini, Carlo Galeffi, Benjamino Gigli, Dinh Gilly, Virgilio Lazzari, Giuseppe de Luca, Jean de Reszke and Luigi Rossi-Morelli. After four years' military service in the Great War, during which he rose to the rank of captain, he completed his studies in Milan

with Enrico Rosati, teacher also of Beniamino Gigli. In 1919, as Giacomo Rubini, he made his début as Arturo in *I Puritani*. He gradually gained experience and earned success in Buenos Aires, Florence, Genoa, Rio de Janeiro, Saragossa, Valencia and Rome before making his début at la Scala as the Duke in *Rigoletto* with Toti dal Monte and Carlo Galeffi under the baton of Arturo Toscanini. In ten seasons from 1923 he sang at the Metropolitan Opera, the Duke being again his entrance role. He sang there on 232 occasions in 26 roles. He sang all over America and Europe and at the age of 47 considered himself ready to sing the heavy part of Otello. He sang in public as late as 1972 after which he wrote extensively his memoirs in which he was not slow to expose his quarrelsome nature and to criticise other artists.

GIUSEPPE de LUCA, baritone (Rome 1876-New York 1950) sang at the age of eight in a choir in Rome and at ten appeared in the role of a child on the stage. He was first taught by Ottavio Bartolini and then he studied under Venceslao Persichini and Antonio Cotogni at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome. After a successful début as Valentin in *Faust* at Piacenza and experience in various Italian houses and in Lisbon, he was chosen for several world premières. These included: Michonnet in *Adriana Lecouvreur* by Cilea, Milan 1902; Gleby in *Siberia* by Giordano, Milan 1903; and Sharpless in the ill-fated initial performance of *Madama Butterfly* by Puccini, Milan 1904. In 1903 he sang Alberich in the Ring-Cycle at la Scala. Guest appearances made him widely known throughout Europe and South America; but not until 1915 did he appear at the Metropolitan Opera. He remained there as the company's first baritone for more than three decades, appearing on over 900 occasions in 52 roles. Even at the age of 70 he gave admirable performances as Figaro and Sharpless. In retirement he taught; his pupils including Leonard Warren.

LUIGI MANCINELLI, conductor (Orvieto, Papal States 1848-Rome 1921) showed early great promise for the cello which he studied and intended as a career. However, when, one evening in 1874, the Teatro Apollo, Rome found itself suddenly without a conductor for a performance of *Aïda*, Mancinelli was asked to conduct. This he did with such success that he henceforth pursued the career of a conductor. One notes with astonishment the similarity with the career of Toscanini. He appeared all over Europe and South America and in most seasons from 1893 to 1903 at the Metropolitan Opera. Like Toscanini, too, Mancinelli was a charismatic and exciting conductor. He composed about ten operas.

EMILIO de MARCHI, tenor (Voghera near Pavia 1861-?Milan 1917) intended to follow a military career, but his voice was discovered and in 1886 he made a successful début at the Dal Verme, Milan as Alfredo in *La Traviata*. He developed a very good career throughout Italy, Spain, and the remainder of Europe, and South America. His repertoire included several Wagner roles. In 1897 he sang in the première of Mancinelli's *Ero e Leandro* in Madrid. From 1901 to 1903 he sang at the Metropolitan Opera. He is remembered principally today for being the first Cavaradossi in Rome in 1900. He retired in 1909 and taught in Milan.

GIOVANNI MARTINELLI, tenor (Montagna 1885-New York 1969) was the first of 14 children. His father, though of very limited means, took him to hear Tamagno, De Lucia and Battistini. Nevertheless, he intended to follow his father into cabinet-making. During a lark whilst he was on military service as a clarinettist, the bandmaster heard him sing. This led to a publisher funding his training as a business proposition. Thus he was able to study under Giuseppe Mandolini in Milan. He made his concert début in Milan in 1910 in Rossini's *Stabat Mater* and his début in opera, also in Milan in 1910, as Ernani. His career developed quickly. After Amedeo Bassi had sung the part of Dick Johnson in the Italian première of *La Fanciulla del West* Puccini chose Martinelli to complete the run. He appeared many times at Covent Garden between 1912 and 1937. In 1913 he sang at the Metropolitan Opera and returned every season until 1945, becoming, after Gigli and Lauri-Volpi left, the house's most beloved and celebrated tenor. The death of Caruso, whom he worshipped, enlarged his repertoire and the retirement of Zenatello came at the right moment for him to sing Otello. He enjoyed one of the longest careers of any singer. For his last appearance, in 1967 at Seattle, he sang the part of the Emperor in *Turandot*. The voice, if not innately beautiful, had a steely sheen ideal for heroic roles.

ADOLF MÜHLMANN, base-baritone (Kishinev, Bessarabia 1865-Chicago 1938) was expected to become rabbi, but was taught singing for three years by a cantor and became a choral singer in the Odessa Synagogue. In 1887 he travelled to Vienna to study further under Scheu. He made his début at the German Theatre in Rotterdam. After two years there and a year in Düsseldorf he moved to Breslau and in 1898 from there to the Metropolitan Opera, where remained there for twelve years. He sang also in Vienna, St Petersburg, London (1899-1903) and in many North American houses. His repertoire included Kothner (*Meistersinger*), Pizzaro (*Fidelio*), Telramund (*Lohengrin*) and Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*). He retired to Chicago where he became a teacher and music critic.

PERCY PITT (London 1870-London 1932) was brought up in France and was then a pupil of Reinecke, Jadassohn and Rheinberger in Germany. He returned to England in 1893 and after a period of composition he held various appointments as chorus master, organist and musical advisor. He conducted occasionally at Covent Garden and in 1922 was appointed musical director of the British Broadcasting Corporation. He was frequently in the recording studio of The Gramophone Company.

ROSA PONSELLE né Ponzillo, soprano (Meriden, Connecticut 1897-Green Spring Valley near Baltimore 1981) was the daughter of immigrants from Naples. She and her sister, Carmela, sang in cinemas and cabarets in New York as The Ponzillo Sisters. She was heard by the impresario William Thorne, who arranged her entry to the Metropolitan Opera after an extremely brief training under Enrico Rosati. She made her début there in 1918 with, astonishingly, Caruso in *La Forza del Destino*. Success was instant and remained with her. Spontini's *La Vestale* and Bellini's *Norma* were revived especially for her. The only role in which she was less than successful was that of Carmen, which she essayed in 1936 and which

perhaps contributed to her decision to retire. Her career was centred almost entirely on the Metropolitan Opera and appearances at Covent Garden in the two seasons 1929-1931 were notable exceptions. She insisted on orchestras being tuned down to A=435. She married and retired in 1937, but took pupils.

ELISABETH RETHBERG né Lisbeth Sättler, soprano (Schwarzenberg, Erzgebirge 1894-Yorktown Heights, New York 1976) early showed exceptional music talent. After studying piano and voice at the Dresden Conservatoire, she studied further under Otto Watrin. She made her début at the Semperoper, Dresden in 1915 in *Der Zigeunerbaron* with Richard Tauber and was highly acclaimed for her Agathe in *Der Freischütz*. In 1922 she moved to the Metropolitan Opera, making her début there as Aïda. Interspersed with twenty seasons there, were guest appearances at Covent Garden, Milan, Rome, Salzburg Festival and other European centres of opera, and a worldwide concert tour. On one of many return visits to Dresden she created the title role of *Die Ägyptische Helena*. She retired in 1942, her voice by then somewhat tired by roles perhaps on the heavy side for her. In her were combined a remarkably beautiful voice and thoroughly well-schooled artistry. She was much admired by Arturo Toscanini. She was married first to a merchant and then to the comprimario baritone George Cehanovsky.

ANTONIO SCOTTI, baritone (Naples 1866-Naples 1936) was determined to have a career in opera despite his family's preference for the church. He studied under Vincenzo Lombardi and Esther Trifari-Paganini (a niece of Paganini) and probably made his début as Amonasro at the Theatre Royal, Malta. In Portugal, Russia, South America and Spain he gathered experience, and in 1898 he sang at la Scala, Milan. His début role was Hans Sachs, probably his sole appearance in Wagner. In 1899 his first appearance at Covent Garden was as Don Giovanni and he returned frequently until 1914. In 1899, also, he made his début at the Metropolitan Opera, likewise, as Don Giovanni. Besides his roles in the central Italian repertoire, he was also in the local premières of some half a dozen operas. He continued as the Metropolitan Opera's leading baritone until 1933, when he returned to his hometown where he died in poverty.

GIULIO SETTI, conductor (Treviglio 1869-Turin 1938) was a choral conductor working mainly as a chorus master in opera houses in Buenos Aires, Cairo, Cologne and Italy. In 1908 he was engaged as chorus master at the Metropolitan Opera House. He remained there for twenty-seven years. On retiring he returned to Italy. He conducted for a large number of recordings by the Victor company, frequently unnamed.

RICHARD TUCKER né Rubin Ticker, tenor (Brooklyn, New York 1913-Kalamazoo, Michigan 1975) was born of Romanian Jewish immigrants from Bessarabia. His early-apparent musical promise was guided by Samuel Weisser. In his teens he was torn between athletics and cantorial training. After a few part-time posts he became cantor at the Brooklyn Jewish Center, which enabled him to give up employment as a salesman. He was taught by Paul Althouse. Despite his teacher's advice, he entered the Metropolitan Opera "Auditions of the Air". He was

not placed, but he was heard by Edward Johnson, the manager, and thus in 1945 he came to make an acclaimed Metropolitan Opera début as Enzo in *La Gioconda*; which led to a career of three decades as the country's leading tenor. High points in his career were appearances with Maria Callas at Verona and in New York under Arturo Toscanini. Alongside his career in opera he also sang extensively in concerts and continued as a cantor.

ROBERTO VANNI, tenor ( ? 1861-Milan 1941) made his début around 1885 in Italy, but he seems soon to have emigrated United States. He was on the roster of the Metropolitan Opera House from 1894 to 1900 and from 1901 to 1903 singing small and middle range roles. He also appeared in Boston and at Covent Garden. Later he returned to Italy and established himself as a teacher.

Notes:

Track 1 The artist, unusually, includes a quiet ending after his top note.

Track 2 Recorded live in the Metropolitan Opera House.

Track 5 This track was recorded in London, all the others in the United States,

Track 6 Amonasro's aria ends at 2' 05" on page 154.

Scotti then continues with Aïda's lines to the top of page 155.

Track 9 The timbre of Caruso's voice is perhaps best captured when, as in this duet, he is singing quietly.

Track 10 is a good example of how the stature and drama of a performance are heightened when relatively brief original 78 sides are edited together to give a continuous stretch of music.

[Page references are to *Aïda* Opera Score Editions-G. Schirmer Inc. 1963]

An opera recital by Caruso is available on Symposium 1070.

Giovanni Martinelli can be heard as Enzo in *La Gioconda* on Symposium 1186 & 1187.

Emilio de Marchi is not known to have made any commercial recordings, but several other of the Mapleson Cylinders which include his voice are on Symposium 1284.

An album of recordings by Emmy Destinn is on symposium CD 1283.

Further recordings of Antonio Scotti are available on Symposium CDs 1170, 1100 and 1284

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