

FACT AND FICTION DEPARTMENT

STAMP FETCHES \$3,500 [News item from the *Wairarapa Bugle*].

Record Collecting circles in the lower half of the North Island, were amazed recently when a 'Tiny Tots' nursery record of Jack & Jill with a one penny Royalty Stamp bearing a monogram made up of the initials B.O.R.A.X, fetched three times the reserve at an antique sale in Eketahuna. When the president of the Record Collector's Association, Wairarapa Branch was contacted, he referred us to a Mr Fox a senior executive for comment.

"I am annoyed in the extreme by the publicity this sale has obtained. It slurs the very character and respectability of record collecting. Why only yesterday I was approached by a dealer with a copy of the very same record minus any stamp for an exorbitant amount of money. I sent him packing. What the public does not realise in situations of this sort is that the record collectors of New Zealand, have devoted their lives to saving and preserving these items of our cultural history. Then to have some upstart come on the scene and collect them for an entirely different and impractical reason, is simply beyond the pale!"

Despite this sentiment being expressed, we believe a splinter group has been formed with membership restricted to those who not only soak the stamps from their records, but publicly burn their copies of *The Gramophone* and vow never to play their records again!

FLOWER POTS RECOVERED!

Bill Main has recently discovered a way to flatten records that were pressed into service and used for flower pots during the shortages caused by the second world war. They were evidently placed in an oven with an earthenware pot and heated until they assumed the required shape. As Aunt Daisy allegedly remarked, the drain hole was already in place. He said that 35 seconds in a microwave oven at full power was required to make the disc return to its original shape. He advised removing any plants that were in place before commencing this operation.

HOW TO MOVE YOUR COLLECTION

A well known collector of old 78's who a short time ago reached retirement age recently moved house. When asked of his experiences in this traumatic time he enthusiastically sang the praises of a team of Polynesian movers, men of generous proportions who seemed to lift more than twice their own weight in recordings! When we pressed him for further details he could not work out the exact statistics but said little pieces of paper which he inserted at strategic places ensured the whole operation was carried out to his personal satisfaction. The mind boggles at the thought of a gang of grass skirted bearers moving records on their heads from Mandalay Crescent to Burma Road!

ALDA CD

Those of you who have not invested in this historic re-issue should be warned that there is an annoying swishing sound which is audible during lead in and run off to each item as well as quieter musical passages. It reminds me of a slightly off centre 78rpm! Blame for this can only be laid to rest at the engineers who transferred the originals onto tape(?). Such a pity seeing how much trouble was spent over the Madame Butterfly set which deployed the NoNOISE: Jonathon Wyner, Masterworks system. I hope the National Library takes note!

SCHUBERT 137 - LOEWE 66.

No this is not a rugby score. It is the result research by the editor who counted all the recordings by these two composers in *Voices of the Past* Volume 7 the 1898-1925 German Catalogues published by the Oakwood Press. Schumann and Brahms came a poor third and fourth well down the field. The Schubert total was greatly enhanced by a set of discs featuring *Die Schöne Müllerin* sung by the bartione Paul Schmedes. While this tit-bit will hardly set the Thames on fire it certainly gives claim to the fact that Loewe was at one time well to the fore in the record buying publics preferences.

SCRATCHY RECORD GROUP

established 1958

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY - February 1998

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EDITORIAL

After a sixteen years in the wilderness, your scribe has returned to the fold and taken out a subscription to the *Record Collector*!

What a flood of memories this has triggered. Some of which are recorded elsewhere in this issue of the *Gazette*. However, while I applaud the *Record Collector's* new format and general design I hope it will take pains to avoid what I perceive as certain pitfalls which dogged it in the past.

The *Record Collector* was established in 1946 by James Dennis. It was primarily intended for collectors to share their views on the merits of various singers from the past. Gradually its influence spread beyond England with authorities from Europe and America joining the ranks of a small but enthusiastic band of British writers.

When Dennis died in 1983, the editors job was taken over by Roland Phillips, then Pamela Dennis, Clifford Williams and finally Larry Lustig. For many years its format and content remained virtually unchanged. Then a few issues ago under Lustig's direction, it was enlarged and expanded, finally dropping its rigid format and unremitting cover design, to one which engages you right from the outset. Furthermore it has adopted a new editorial policy which sees articles that are submitted for publication vetted by a panel of international authorities. While these improvements are welcome it is interesting to look at the recently published culminative index which reveal one or two weaknesses.

For anyone who is fortunate enough to have a complete set of early *Record Collector* volumes it becomes apparent that this publication more or less took over from where P.G.Hurst left off, with celebrities from the Gramophone Company dominating most issues from the start. And rightly so I might add because these records tend to dominate most collections in the English speaking world.

Occasionally artists from other companies got centre stage, but it makes interesting reading to run a finger down the alphabetical listing of singers in the index to discover an imbalance which seems to warrant some comment. For instance some luminaries have had up to 22 separate articles, addenda or corrections spread over many years (Fernando De Lucia), while others get a solitary entry (Clair Dux). There is a very good reason for this besides the comparative merits of both singers on an international and artistic plane, there was their varied recordings careers. I think it would be fair to say that little was known about the details of De Lucia's records when Ronald Phillips submitted a biographical note in Volume four in 1950. Forty three years later at least a dozen other authors had added their contribution to the same singer - some in a most detailed and scholarly way. Its all got to do with the sharing of information - a work in progress situation which editors delight in. But I do see fault in allowing it to drag on and on.

Staying with the index I discovered that as far as coverage of the ground is concerned, the *Record Collector* is doing a pretty good job. Let me explain. A count of all the singers whose surname begins with the letter 'D' revealed that 48 individual artists have a listing in the columns of the *Record Collector* 16 with major Biography/Discographies. A quick check on singers with their surname starting with the same letter in *A concise Biographical Dictionary of Singers* by Kutsch & Riemens shows a 27% strike rate. If this trend is echoed with all the other letters of the alphabet in Kutsch & Riemens then it can be said that the *Record Collector* is well on the way to progressively documenting all the important artists who made recordings in the first half of the twentieth century.

That being the case, I would like to see the newly constituted editorial panel making a list of artists from works like Kutsch/Riemens who have not featured in the magazine and subsequently calling for articles and discographies from contributors to fill in the blanks. This gesture would mellow my attitude to previous editors who it seem to have allowed contributors to indulge themselves on their pet subject without restraint.

My heretical thoughts don't stop there. I think the *Record Collector* should embrace other celebrities besides vocalists. Record collecting through the pages of this journal has become so secular that you cant see the forest for the trees, a sentiment which was more or less expressed by Pamela Dennis when she relinquished the editors job at the end of 1985. As much as I admire the depth and detail of some major contributions, I would love to see more light hearted articles balancing the statistical material which attracts itself to discographies like metal filings to a magnet. If lighter pieces were inserted in the magazine, then I think I could weather issues which featuring a vocalist for whom I have no interest or hopes of acquiring in my junk shop preambles. For instance, basic pieces or guidelines for collecting instrumentalists, music hall artists, early LPs and Jazz recordings would go a long way to fill a need and satisfy my habit.

I hope under Larry Lustig and his newly constituted panel of experts the *Record Collector* will attract an influx of new blood who will gradually set to rights what I have felt to be its shortcomings in the past. Above all I would like nothing better than to see the *Record Collector* continue for years to come. We owe it lots!

THREE THOUSAND RECORDS AFTER DB.3463

"Hardly had (record) collecting become a vital issue before astonishing reports reached us from Australia of discoveries of exceptional interest and importance...It seems that the method of ordering records in the period to about 1907 consisted in a dealer sending to England for a box of mixed records". P.G.Hurst

For the programme this evening, I have chosen items that are linked to a particular time or event in my collecting career. As well as doing this, I have attempted to select an item from some of the major recording companies represented in my collection. This was done by consulting my data base which now responds to all sorts of perverted requests for information. Therefore I beg your indulgence for what is essentially a biographical journey with a dash of help from my PC.

When I look back on the 43 years I have been collecting records, certain events stand out and underline the pleasure I have had in acquiring items for my collection. To say it all began with a film I saw in the 1950s highlights a very important period in my life, when I came up against many challenges and exciting prospects. Never the less, it make sense to nominate 'Tonight we sing', as a starting point in my reminiscences.

In 1955 during my last year at Canterbury University, my friend Nelson Kenny told me that Beggs in Christchurch had a lot of 78rpm recordings for sale. Included among them was Chaliapine's Farewell and Death of Boris on DB3463. These arias held a special fascination for me because I had seen Ezio Pinza in a film based on the life of impresario Sol Hurok a year or two earlier. So it was only natural I simply had to buy a copy of this recording. What a record to start a collection with!

A years post graduate study in Auckland and settling into life in Wellington again after an absence of four years saw me repress the urge to add anything to my 78rpm collection until I had space, time and money. What I attempted to collect around this time was what I simply came up against in the auction rooms and second hand shops which I frequented with monotonous regularity. Foremost in my mind was the desire to acquire as many red label HMVs as possible, especially the custom coloured labels of celebrities like Battistini and Melba and the HMV label predecessors called Pre Dog and G&T. I was led in this direction by that doyen of record collecting P.G.Hurst, who

wrote columns for *The Gramophone*. In my book he is still the father of 'record collecting' to this day! Supplementing his texts with something of the basic do's and don't's of collecting was a book which I still cherish called 'Record Collecting' by Boris Semeonoff.

At the time, I didn't question the widely held belief that HMV celebrity recordings were the only ones worthy of collecting. If I really wanted to transport myself into a fantasy mode, then I imagined coming across a pile of Fonotipias! This was the ultimate dream!

To increase the flow of records, I advertised in the *Evening Post*. To my delight and pleasure, these classifieds brought responses from others who were similarly afflicted with a passion for old recordings. Hence it was an unexpected joy to meet and become acquainted with established collectors like Ray Hedges, Ray Bresanello, Jack Henderson and Joe Male. Their general comment to me was that I was far too late in the field and would have little success. Therefore it not only gave me joy and satisfaction to prove them wrong but made me double my attempts to acquire a basic collection of all the great singers which had made recordings.

Besides these old grey beards of collecting, I met up with other beginners like myself. Michael Woolf, Bruce Petrie, Alan Sadd and Don Cameron. Under my urging we formed an association called the 'Scratchy Record Group', the formation of which I has already been documented in an earlier issue of the *G&T Times*.

So if the late 1950s represented the first steps into record collecting, the next decade was a watershed of consolidation and expansion. About this time, I moved out of inner suburbs of Wellington to the northern fringes of the city with my wife Jill and family. This meant a reduction of activity for a while and apart from yearly conventions at the Dominion Museum, my main involvement with record collecting was kept alive with correspondence with various individuals at home and abroad.

New Zealand friends who helped me greatly with my collection during this period were Wally Golledge Nelson and Rod Cornelius, who was then based in Dunedin. With these collectors, I traded phonograph parts for discs. Overseas, I struck up a correspondence with a number of collectors including Boris Semeonoff [Edinburgh], Bill Moran [California] and Henry Hirsch a dealer in New York.

Having 'cut my teeth on P.G.Hurst, my guide around this time was *The Record Collector*. Along with my initial subscription in 1958, I bought back every issue I could lay my hands on. How I devoured every word. The same thing happened when Hugh McSherry gave me his bound volumes of *The Gramophone* in 1959. It was about this time that I met up with an Auckland collector who was to have a tremendous influence upon me. This was Dennis Brew.

Dennis stood head and shoulders above the general *milieu* of collectors

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Study these labels carefully and answer the questions on page 11. As before, the judges decision in these matters is final and no correspondence can be entered into. All prize winners can uplift their awards at the NZ Centre for Photography, 3 Inverlochly Place, Wellington between the hours of 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday.

PROGRAMME
Monday 18th May 1998

Dame Clara Butt-contralto [1873-1932] with band of H.M.Coldstream Guards
conducted by Lieut. Dr.J. Mackenzie

God Save the King

HMV 03240 Recorded in June 1911

George J. Gaskin vocalist with piano by F.W.Gaisberg(?)

Dixie (Anon)

Berliner 942 Recorded in New York 14th October 1896.

Pol Plancon-bass [1851-1914]with piano by F.W.Gaisberg.

Caid - Air du Tambour Major (Thomas)

G&T 2-2665 Recorded in London 1902.

Suzanne Adams-soprano [1872-1953] with piano

Romeo et Juliette - Valse (Gounod)

Columbia 1197 Recorded in New York 1903

Carlos Fancisco (alias Emilio de Gogorza)-baritone [1874-1949] with orchestra

Marta - Porter Song (Flotow)

Victor 16812 Recorded in New York 1904-6 (?)

Lilli Lehmann-soprano [1842-1929] with orchestra

Norma - Casta Diva (Bellini)

Odeon 99737 Recorded in Berlin 1907

AN INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES

Grade Coro Italiano-with orchestra

Madama Butterfly - Coro a bocca chiusa (Puccini)

Fonotipia 168099 Recorded in Milan 1927

Alessandro Bonci-tenor [1870-1940] with orchestra

Aida - Celeste Aida (Verdi)

Edison 83003 Recorded in London 1913

Harry Champion-comedian [1866-1942] with orchestra

A little bit of Cucumber(Carter)

Pathe 8996 Recorded in London 1914

PROGRAMME
Monday 18th May 1998

John Coates-tenor [1865-1941] with piano by Berkeley Mason

Come into the garden Maud (Balfe)

Vocalion 0246 Recorded in London c1920

Conchita Supervia-mezzo [1895-1936] with piano by Ivor Newton

Oh no, John! (Sharp)

Parlophone AR 192 Recorded in London 1932

Ink Spots-vocal ensemble with instrumental accompaniment

Don't get around much anymore (Ellington)

Decca Y5816 recorded (?) 1940s.

AN INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES

Sigrid Onegin-contralto [1891-1943] with orchestra

The Fairy Piper (Brewer)

Brunswick 15155 recorded New York (?) 1926-8

Leopld Demuth-baritone [1861-1910] with piano

Czar und Zimmermann - Czarenlied (Lortzing)

G&T 042039 recorded in Vienna 1903

Lotte Schoene - Soprano [1891-1977] with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Fritz
Zweig

Cosi Fan Tutte - Schon als Mädchen (Mozart)

Gramola Record (Czech HMV) Recorded in Berlin 1927-31

Lula Mysz-Gmeiner-contralto [1876-1948] with piano (Bechstein Grand) by Julius Dahlke

At the Ball (Tchaikovsky)

Polydor 23106 recorded in Berlin 1928

Leo Slezak-tenor[1873-1946] with piano by (?)

Tom der Reimer (Loewe)

DGG 19926 recorded in(?) 1928

Theodore Chaliapine-bass [1873-1938]with orchestra

Boris Goudonov - Farewell & Death of Boris (Mousourskgy)

HMV recorded in London at an actual performance in Covent Garden 4th July 1928 released 1938
COLH 100 LP issued 1958.

END OF PROGRAMME

because it was he who demonstrated to me on many occasions that although a singer was not known beyond certain boundaries, it was a fact that their records could often run rings around international celebrities whose works were exclusively listed in the red pages of the HMV catalogue. Karl Burian, Alfred Piccaver, and Herman Jadowker were three I remember whose records he idolised.

On top of this Dennis had the ability to attract items from all quarters of the globe, in particular behind the iron curtain! It was he who demonstrated that you could specialise to a certain extent, even in far off New Zealand! Through him I began to appreciate the virtues of artists like Sibriakov, Erchoff, Koslowsky and a whole host of eastern European artists. Listening to some of these artists made me wonder where I had been all my collecting life!

Admittedly, I had long since come to the realisation that just because an aria or song by an artist appeared on an lesser label it did not necessarily mean it was inferior to anything the HMV could produce. Although I did not cut off my nose to despise my face by dumping all my DBs and DAs, I could see pitfalls in what some might describe as the tunnel vision on record collecting.

Somewhat disillusioned at this stage, I decided to stand down from actively collecting for a period while I sorted out some of my priorities. This was done by playing each item and comparing various arias and songs against other versions, an evaluation process that took me the better part of three years in the late 1970s. As a consequence of this action, I became something of a 'cause celebre' to the local collecting fraternity.

Of course one of the benefits of this exercise has been the satisfaction of knowing that by going to my shelves and taking a recording at random, I am fairly confident that it would be worth playing and give me great pleasure as I recall why I kept it over others. This change of direction to my collecting habits was jokingly referred to as 'Bill Main's Zen period', the ultimate being a collection that existed in the mind only!

What pundits did not understand from this deletion exercise was that while I was quitting records right and left, I was still actively acquiring items at a rate of knots. This time my collecting policy was to take in a much wider cross selection of recorded music. Jazz, popular tunes from and instrumentalists began to occupy spaces which had formerly been devoted to Caruso and Battistini. If I were to begin all over again, there would be no way I could replicate finding collections like the John Prouse records at Victoria University, a pile which brought me my Plancon Air du Tambour or the wonderful Steiner estate Demuth and Schoene. Then again I could possibly predict duplicating finds of the same level as Suzanne Adams or Allesandro Bonci, all of which I will play tonight.

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RECORD LABEL QUIZZ

Our editor chose six records from his collection that had distinctive labels. See if you can match them against his description from the point of informatin and how it is displayed . Please enter your choice (company) in the space provided.

- [A] AESTHETICALLY PLEASING.....
- [B] ORDERED RESTRAINT.....
- [C] MISPLACED CLASSICISM.....
- [D] FRUSTRATINGLY IMPRACTICAL.....
- [E] OVER INFORMATIVE.....
- [F] UNINTELLIGIBLE LAYOUT.....

SCORE OUT OF 6 MARKS.....

Enter the record company alongside a category that reflects their most notable contribution in the annals of recorded music.

- [A] PREDOMINANTLY ITALIAN ARTISTS
- [B] THE SHORTEST PRODUCTION PERIOD
- [C] PREDOMINANTLY FRENCH ARTISTS.....
- [D] PREDOMINANTLY GERMAN ARTISTS.....
- [E] THE LONGEST PRODUCTION PERIOD.....
- [F] HISTORY OF MUSIC SERIES.....

SCORE OUT OF 6 MARKS.....

Which of the record companies products would strike you as being hardest to find [mark it 1]]. Also nominate the easiet to find [mark it 6], then fill in the remaining companies in comparative scarcity to the NZ market..

- HMVrarity factor.....
- COLUMBIA.....rarity factor.....
- FONOTIPIA.....rarity factor.....
- PATHErarity factor.....
- POLYDORrarity factor.....
- NEOPHONErarity factor.....

SCORE OUT OF 6 MARKS.....

TOTAL MARK _____

Concluding Three Thousand Records After DB.3463

Of course there have been other benefits of collecting beyond the euphoria of finding a particularly rare item which gives such a thrill. These are the friendships I have made in the course of collecting. Besides the collectors who are seated here tonight, I relish the contact I have had with individuals from all walks of life who enhanced my joys tremendously by relating the circumstances by which they came to buy or own certain recordings.

Record Collecting to me has always been the spice of life because of the unexpected. You never know what is going to be underneath the next record as you turn over a pile of 78s. To take that out of the computation by having unlimited amounts of time and money to indulge yourself in the extreme, and order items for your collection by computer leaves me wondering. If that became the case then I think I'd turn to Macrame!



This charming cartoon was discovered on a Dutch record packet.