



CD REVIEWS

Ernestine Schumann-Heink contralto. *Opera Arias and Songs 1900-1935. The Stanford Archive Series DELOS DE 5503 2CDs. Total playing time 79:25 and 77:22 respectively. \$19.98 (US)*

Lawrence Tibbett baritone. *Opera Arias and Songs 1928-1940. The Stanford Archive Series DELOS DE 5500 2CDs. Total playing time 71:00 and 69:10 respectively. \$19.98 (US)*

I think I am right in saying that every member of our organisation has at least one recording of Ernestine Schumann-Heink and Lawrence Tibbett. If I am wrong in this, then it is free coffee for those who can contradict my assumption at the Centre for Photography!

What has brought on this rash statement is a shipment of Delos CDs of the Stanford Archives Series which feature double disc issues on both these singers.

Now while I am honoured by the task of reviewing these CDs, the first to come to our editorial office since the establishment of our peripatetic publication in 1995, I feel a slight uneasiness about the role I have to play. My concern dwells on the fact that I have only kept a token representation of both singers in my collection of recordings. It's not that I don't like their voices, it's just a matter of narrowing down what I like playing and wish to retain. Then again, I might be the ideal person to revisit these artists through the luxury which these CD's offer, offering my thoughts afresh on their contribution to the history of recorded sound in the first half of the 20th century.

First let me explain how I came to be put into this situation. It all came about as a result of my long standing friendship with William R. Moran, who was instrumental in founding the Stanford Archive of Recorded Sound many years ago.

I first began to correspond with Bill in the 1960s on matters relating to 'the Victor Recording Companies 'take numbers' as they appeared on Australian pressings. As a result of his job with an American oil company Bill occasionally came to New

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EDITORIAL

For the second time in as many years, we extend a warm welcome to Rod Cornelius from Auckland, who will be our presenter tonight. As you probably know, Rod retired from his job last year and is now kept very busy with a number of interests, one of which sees him controlling the destiny of the Devonport Museum. An avid trout fisherman, he now tours the country in search of goodies in his home on wheels and continues to turn up goodies in the most unlikely places. Besides records, cylinders, gramophones and phonographs, he has one of the countries largest collections of nineteenth century music boxes. The crowning piece from this side to his collecting is a Violino. Its history and how he came to get it from where it was stored in London to Auckland, leaves you wondering about the sanity of it all. We are very fortunate in New Zealand that there are several people like Rod who refuse to be dissuaded from a seemingly impossible situation of tackling a complicated piece restoration. While it would be impossible for him to bring this wonderful music making machine south on one of his trips, we could perhaps look forward to the day when he could make a tape of it for our pleasure. Which brings us to the latest interest he has developed. That is he is involved in the production of a proposed CD reissue of Oscar Natzka's recordings, a task which I am sure he is ideally suited. I am sure that when it makes its debut, it will more than make up for that horrible CD of a few years ago which did nothing to put NZ CD reissues on the map. Of course there is another side to Rod which many don't realise. That is he was in his youth, stage manager for Bruce Mason's 'End of the Golden Weather' and toured with the NZ Opera company when it went barnstorming around New Zealand with concert performances. In every respect, Rod is a colleague whom we admire for his enthusiasm, dedication and diligence.

Zealand to meet Government Officials with a view to entering into negotiations over rights to explore our oil and gas resources. During these brief visits, we were able to meet up with one another and discuss record collecting in general. On one occasion we even managed a record hunting trip into the Wairarapa. Then in 1985, I had the pleasure of staying with him for a few nights in California on my way to Europe.

Hence when I attempted to catch up with him towards the end of 1997 by sending him a complimentary copy of the G&T Gazette, we renewed our association which had lapsed somewhat in the intervening years. It was not only good to catch up with him but to actually help him with some research on Blanche Arral. This is just one of several fascinating projects he is currently engaged upon and this prompted me to express an interest in the Stanford productions which eventually came my way.

For those in our group who don't know Bill Moran from a bar of soap, he is without doubt one of America's foremost authorities on singers who recorded for the Victor Recording Company, with many books and reissues to his credit. Therefore it is with pleasure I played to two CD sets which he produced, knowing how he would have spent many hours deliberating over the selections.

Let me deal with the Tibbett first which has a note which says "The selection of recordings in this presentation is designed to provide material which, with the exception of one selection which received very limited circulation, has never been previously available to the record buying public". This said, there is much to enjoy despite the noises which accompany some of the recordings which have come from film sound tracks and radio broadcasts.

To say that there is nothing which we don't already know about Lawrence Tibbett's voice and style of singing on these CDs, would be overstating the situation. On the other hand, it would be true to say that there are few surprises for those who have been collecting records for years and know his voice and the characteristic way he treats the vocal line on standard arias and songs. Some may even remember him in the flesh when he came here on a concert tour in 1938. As a result of this, his records were relatively common in our country which was basically fed recordings from Hayes, Middlesex who didn't extend themselves when it came to stocking his titles. This situation was rectified by the Australian HMV plant at Homebush who published the American Victors on the red label EC and ED series. Since that time, there could be many record collector's in New Zealand who only have a hazy concept of his repertoire and vocal prowess.

Therefore, I think this double CD issue will particularly suit those who don't already have a fair representation of Tibbett's recordings. Here they will find a selection of nearly everything Tibbett attempted in his career from the 1920s to the 1950s. On a first playing I found it a most enjoyable experience, reliving some of my youthful radio listening with 'De Glory Road' and reflecting with mirth over Tibbett's attempt to sing in a laboured English accent in Kiplings 'On The Road to Mandalay'. This aside, I still think his 'Edward' by Carl Loewe, one of the best versions made of this blood curdling ballad.

It was also a sobering exercise to listen to his enunciation and clarity of diction in the Pagliacci 'Prologo' and even though I blanched at his 'Vesti la giubba' from the same opera, I later began to warm to this and other 'Americana' contributions con-

tained in this set of recordings.

As one who could take or leave this singer's contribution to our recorded heritage, I am now prepared to concede that I now have a much better comprehension of what the public saw in him - not only as a fine baritone but as a stage and screen personality. When you have a perspective on this aspect of his life, then I think you have a better understanding of him as an artist and how he cashed in on his good looks to make a spectacular career for himself in America. Musically speaking, there is a lot of Hollywood in his singing, with exaggerated phrasing which occasionally get on one's 'G' string, but it obviously worked well for him and allowed many listeners to come to a better appreciation of the story he was telling.

Ernestine Schumann-Heink will be less known to most New Zealand collector's. Those Victors which made their way to our country with various label disfigurements to get over the HMV logo embargo, did not turn up frequently in my junk shop preambles in the 1950s and 1960s. Hence, when I stumbled across my first Schumann-Heink, on a Pink pre-dog Victor Monarch of the Samson Aria 'Mon Coeur s'ouvre', I was over the moon.

For a long time this was the only item I had by her. However, my knowledge of her singing took a tremendous leap forward when a collecting friend played me Millöcker's 'Swiss Yodel song'. Then he put on her Lucrezia Borgia 'Il Segreto'. What a singer and a fascinating career she created for herself while mothering a large family during three marriages. How I lusted after her recordings from that point onwards. But no matter how I tried I could do no better than two little ditties on DA 373 which features Harold's 'Child's Prayer', which I treasure to this day.

Of course, I can lay claim to her in duet with Caruso and various reissues, but nothing equals this wonderful double CD set. And here I must eulogise the notes and research which has gone into bringing this presentation to fruition. There are 48 items on these two Schumann-Heink discs and all but one 'Barbchen' (a song by E.H.G. Hermann), have the words in the original tongue and in English printed in the booklet which accompanies the discs. Tracking these down must have been a gigantic task, let alone comparing the texts with the recordings must have occupied hour upon hour.

The actual statistics of this production make interesting reading. After a brief flirtation with Columbia in 1903, Schumann-Heink became an exclusive Victor recording artist in 1906. Here her recorded repertoire was spread over fortyseven commercial recording sessions. In the present selection the bulk of are made up of Victor, with the balance coming from radio broadcasts in 1929, 1934 and 1935, and some private recordings.

The titles range from excerpts from Wagner to the 'Star Spangled Banner'. As one who is particularly attracted to the ballads of Carl Loewe, I obtained particular pleasure from her 'Das Erkennen', and I was intrigued by the spoken introduction which precedes 'Sapphische Ode', where she recalls her recollections of Brahms.

Unlike Tibbett, Schumann-Heink never made it to these shores. This is despite a rumour being spread by no less a personality than John McCormack who once told a newspaper reporter here in New Zealand during his second tour in 1912/3 that she would be coming south.

A thing which strikes me about these Stanford Productions is the way they

reflect what I can only describe as an American predilection for enticing top rank artists to tackle songs and ballads which not only bring them before a wider public, but also line the pockets of all involved. To read about these in catalogues and mutter into one's beard about the injustices of such goings on is one thing, but to listen to them is another kettle of fish. It has a wonderful humanising effect which I find completely captivating and has made me rethink a lot of the prejudices which I once held out against such practises.

In correspondence, Bill tells me he is currently working on extending this series of Standard Archive CDs with a Richard Crooks and Ricardo Bonelli as well as Joanna Gadski and Geraldine Farrar. Hopefully I will be able to keep readers informed of his progress in these and other ventures from time to time.

For inquiries about ordering these CDs write to DELOS International, Inc. Hollywood & Vine Plaza, 1645 North Vine Street, Suite 340 Hollywood, CA 90028 U.S.A. or <http://www.delosmus.com>

L.D.A. on P.G.H.

Before readers get their knickers in a knot over deducing what the above initials stand for, they represent L.D. Austin who was a music columnist for the Dunedin *Evening Star* over a long period of time and P.G. Hurst, who is acknowledged by English collector's as the father of collecting vocal recordings. His utterances in a column called 'Collector's Corner' in the *Gramophone*, shaped and moulded some of the concepts on collecting recordings from the past for many years. It therefore came as a great surprise in the late 1950s for me to learn that there was someone in New Zealand who could cross swords with PG, as he was affectionately known on the 'Golden Age of Singing'. Up to that time, LDA was no more than a cantankerous individual who wrote 'letters to the editor' in the *Listener* and the *Evening Post*. Learning of his longevity, I cheekily wrote to LDA in 1959 inquiring if he had any gramophone records from the turn of the century, he replied that he had never bothered in this direction and courteously sent me two clippings from his *Evening Star* columns that dealt with PG's book called *The Age of Jean de Reske*. Here is an excerpt that gives you the flavour of these pieces. I quote a passage that concerns PG's views on Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. "Everybody who survives from those early days of 'Butterfly' will recall with deep regret the later introduction, evidently with the composer's connivance, of the 'humming' which, to my ear, is quite abominable..." LDA responded by saying, "I witnessed the opera in 1906, and I can assure him that the humming interlude was then not only in the score, but was one of the most delightful features - in fact, it stands out in my memory as a truly haunting reminiscence..." Concluding his two column reviews which are dated the 3rd and 10th of January 1959, he said, "I commend wholeheartedly *The Age of Jean de Reske* to all opera lovers. Mr Hurst has the knack of enchanting the reader's attention even when he deals solely with chronological data. I am astonished to read that of all the operas he has heard Mr Hurst prefers Verdi's *La Traviata*, which he terms 'an inspired score'. *De gustibus non est disputandum*."

PROGRAMME
Monday 20th July 1998

Giuseppe Anselmi, - tenor [1876-1929] with piano
Pagliacci - Vesti la giubba (Leoncavallo)
Fonotipia 62160 Recorded Milan, April 1907.

Ester Mazzoleni - soprano [1883- 19..] with orchestra
Aida - O Patria mia (Verdi)
Fonotipia 92378 Recorded Milan 14th April 1908.

Eugenio Giraldoni-baritone [1871-1924] with piano
Giovanni Zenatello - tenor [1876-1949]
La Figlia di Jorio - Che c'ei egli (Rinverdisca)
Sample pressing Fonotipia 39767 Recorded Milan 1905-7.

Francesco Vignas - tenor [1863 -1933] with piano
Il Profeta - Sopra berta, l'amor mio (Meyerbeer)
Fonotipia/Columbia 39805 Recorded Milan July 1905-7.

Emma Carelli - soprano [1877 -1928] with piano
Adriana Lecouvreur - Il son l'umile ancolla (Cilea)
Fonotipia 39734 Recorded in Milan July 1906.

Lousia Tetrizzini - soprano [1871-1940] with piano
Rigoletto- Caro nome (Verdi)
Zonofono 10001 1904.

AN INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES

Piero Schiavazzi - tenor [1878 -1949]-with piano
Amica- Orfani e senza pan (Mascagni)
Sample pressing Fonotipia 39322 Recorded in Milan 1907.

Maria de Macchi-soprano [1870 -1909] with piano
Poliuto - Aria di Paolina (Donizetti)
Sample pressing Fonotipia Recorded in Milan 1906-7.

PROGRAMME
Monday 20th July 1998

Oreste Luppi-bass [1870 -1952] with piano
Faust - Serenata (Gounod)
Fonotipia 39139 Recorded in Milan 1905-6.

Giuseppe Anselmi-tenor [1876-1929] with piano
Il Barbiere di Seviglia - Ecco ridente (Rossini)
Fonotipia 62268 Recorded in Milan 4th November 1907.

J.W.Meyers - baritone [18..- 19..] with piano
Asleep in the deep
Zon-o-phone 859 Recorded in New York 190?

AN INTERVAL OF 5 MINUTES

Alessandro Bonci-tenor [1870-1940] with piano
Elena e Paride - Spiagge amate (Gluck)
Fonotipia 39127 Recorded in Milan 1905.

Domenico Viglione Borghese -baritone [18..-19..]
Mario Gillion - tenor [1870-1914] with orchestra
Il Trovatore - Deserto sulla terra (Verdi)
Fonotipia 92664 recorded Milan 1910?

Antonio Magini-Coletti-baritone [1855-19412]
Ferrucio Corradetti - baritone [1866-1939]
Oreste Luppi - bass [1870-1952] with piano
Crispino e La Comare - Terzetto de dottori (Ricci)
Fonotipia 39396-7 Recorded Milan 1905.

Herr Wachlin - trumpet solo [18..-19..]
Der Alte Dessauer
Zonophone 520553 Recorded in Germany with orchestra 1910?

Encores if time allows!

FONOTIPIA

Bill Main highlights some facts and poses questions regarding this recording company which surely must be high on the list of all vocal collector's to acquire, en bloc. In doing so he acknowledges information gleaned from J.R.Bennett's two pioneering publications on the Fonotipia Company together with other sources. He then adds some of his own views on the company in relationship to the local collecting scene.

While the bare bones of the establishment of the *Societa Italiana di Fonotipia* is well known to most collectors, and probably needs no introduction from me, in fear of selling 'coals to Newcastle', here are a few rudimentary facts.

Fonotipia was founded by Baron d'Erlanger who it seems put up the cash and provided valuable social connections and the composer Umberto Giordano who assisted with artists and repertoire. They commenced recording in Milan in October 1904, and from the outset the company committed itself exclusively to classical music. Records were made at the Odeon factory in Weissensee, Germany and were not on sale until 1905 (January 1906 in England). Fonotipia Ltd was formed in Great Britain on the 24th April 1906, taking over the Milan Company.

The excellence of their recordings, when they were released won them fame and attention. Sadly, while we have a considerable amount of background information on firms like His Master's Voice, through the writings of F.W.Gaisberg, we know nothing about the individuals who combined their talents to produce stunning realism in the 'takes' for the Fonotipia company. Let us hope that the clouds of mystery which obscure the details behind the their technical excellence will eventually roll aside to the pressures of research, so we may at last be able to attribute praise where it rightly belongs in this direction.

After cherishing the thought for many years that Fonotipia was an Italian company, it has come as something of a shock to read in books like the Guinness Book of Recorded Sound that its registered base of operations was in Great Britain where Baron d'Erlanger had taken up residency.

Comparing Bennett's Supplement to Dischi Fonotipia, to the Guinness Book it seems a common agreement that the date for their initial release on the English market was 1906 when record buyers were appraised of Fonotipia's existence in no uncertain terms with advertisements in the Covent Garden programmes and a beautifully produced brochure, printed in Italy but bearing an English text, announcing a galaxy of celebrities*, with art photos of all the principle singers. The same publication bore a declaration of the company's aims through a

signed statement from the artists which said, "We only recognise as faithful reproductions of our voice, and as examined and approved of by us, these records which bear our signature. We decline any responsibility for records without our signature, which we give as a guarantee to the public, the publishers and ourselves".

This statement not only suggests illicit duplication, but could have been a thinly disguised attempt to take a leaf out of the *Gramophone and Typewriter Company's* book who had gone to pains with advertisements in 1904/05 heralding the addition of Dame Nellie Melba to their ranks of their recording artists, commemorating the event by creating a unique 'Melba' label to give added weight to the nature of their coup.

When one studies the list of artists that made Fonotipias intentions to capture the buyer of operatic recordings, you might believe that it might have been a 'no contest' event, especially when it's realised they were one of the first companies to offer double sided records to gain a share of this select market. But this does not appear to have been the case.

Where did they go wrong!

Of course in hindsight, we could ask the question, was the move on the English market a wise one in the first place. Would it not have been better to secure a network of distributors across Europe before attempting an all out attack on the British record buyer. Then again distribution throughout the British Empire (where the sun never set) might have added weight to their decision. It is therefore interesting to read in Bennett the views of one notable record collector of the time, P.G.Hurst, who in comparing their wares with G&T grudgingly remarked, "A notable feature of the early Fonos was the number and quality of the concerted items, but as these were generally coupled with selections (admirable though they were) by the Chorus of La Scala, Milan, they owed nothing to cheapness. But the solo records at twelve and eight shillings, compared favourably with the red label G&Ts at ten and fifteen shillings before being re-priced and capriciously graded". Hurst concluded his Preface in the Bennett book with a remark that put some of the blame for their slow acceptance on English record buyers because of the difference between Latin and Anglo-Saxon tastes.

While I don't think this ever troubled record collectors in New Zealand, I for one have always been puzzled by the dimensions of their recordings and why the 27cm disc became the staple Fonotipia unit. The reason for this may lie with the record plant where they were produced, whose stampers would no doubt have been more industrially orientated than that which is artistically displayed on their label. Then again the romanticist in me says the 27cm disc seems to have suited Fonotipia because it accommodated most of the standard operatic arias for length of duration! But this says nothing for the irritation their storage in collections midst 10 & 12 inch discs must have caused over the years.

Putting the matter of size aside for a moment, while the company provided products that must have been ideally suited for Italian audiences, its attempts to cater for a share of the French and German market is worthy of greater study than this summary can mount. Fonotipia had brief flirtations in this direction where it apparently had access to recording facilities for brief periods of time. Unfortunately these never came to much apart from seeding the legendary Jan

De Reske recording saga. But that's another story.

Sadly, the idealism which founded Fonotipia did not bear sufficient fruit for it to withstand the economic pressures which eventually led it to affiliation with other companies.

First there was the Odeon connection, which might have been present with d'Erlanger and Giordano right from the start. Commentators have noted that within the space of a few years, this partnership saw Fonotipia's products removed from prominence to one of an attachment at the back of the Odeon companies catalogues which they shared.

Then there was the link with Columbia, who until they launched themselves into a new series of Operatic recordings in 1910, made great use of the Fonotipia lists, gaining them access to the lucrative American market.

The first world war 1914-1918 saw a reduction in production. To cap it all, a late entry into electrical recording in 1928 further minimalised their chances of surviving the great depression. Bennett lists what appears to be a final batch of matrix numbers dating from the 1929/30 period. If we can take this as the end of the company then it is interesting to speculate what happened to the matrixs and archives of the company from this date to the present, especially how Baron d'Erlanger and Umberto Giordano extricated themselves from the gradual demise of the company.

Summarising the activities of the Fonotipia Company in his Supplement in 1957, Bennett remarks on the general availability of their records by saying that at a rough guess, only one if five titles he had listed in his books had ever come to light. He went on to make the comment that earlier titles were more easy to obtain rather than those from their later period - offering South America and Cuba as a more likely source for these.

In New Zealand we now have evidence that they were being sold across the counter in 1914. One comment I would like to add to this is that I have always been surprised by the large number of sample recordings which have turned up in New Zealand. The total number of these 'give always' far outweighing any other company sample pressings I have seen. Perhaps by nature of our remote position on the globe we were on the end of the line as far as travellers samples were concerned.

From my knowledge of various collections around the country, I would say that more Fonotipias have come into New Zealand since Record Collecting became established here in the 1960s than those that came here under their own steam as imports from 1906 to the end of the company in 1930.

As a footnote I would like to add one development that has caused me concern. This was the release of a boxed set of CDs celebrating EMI's Centenary. Here without any 'by your leave', you can find a couple of Fonotipia titles in the mix of items from Yaw to Sawallisch. As an old fart who can't see difference between EMI and HMV, I find it hard to see a company with such a rich heritage being fobbed off in such a cavalier fashion.

Talk about a 'Dog in the Manger...'

*Teresa Arkel, Maria Barrientos, Allesandro Bonci, Francesco Bonini, Giuseppe de Luca, Leon Escalais, Edoardo Garbin, Enzo Leliva, Oreste Luppi, Antonio Magini-Coletti, Victor Maurel, Regina Pacini, Armide Parsi-Pettinella, Elisa Petri, Regina Pinkert, Giannina Russ, Mario Sammarco, Riccardo Stracciari, Amelia Talexis, Francesco Vignas, Giovanni Zenatello.



This photograph of W.R.(Bill) Moran was made sometime in the early 1970s in the living room of 93 Burma Road. He is holding a wax cylinder made by the Australia Phono Record Co.

This advertisement for F.J.Pinny was found in a 1914 Handbook to the Wellington Zoo. It was purchased in a box of books from the Zillah Castle sale at Dunbar Sloane's. It is the only reference to Fonotopia records being sold in New Zealand that we at the Gazette have come across.

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