

Al sig^{ro} Trusla e gentile signora
per ricordo cordiale di

Foto del Monte



Wellington 1926

One of the tasks the *G&T Gazette* set itself when it came into existence in 1995 has been to draw or expand the Scratchy Record Group into an extra dimension with enterprises like silly quizzes and listening to records beyond red label Caruso's. We have done this by encouraging presenters to put on items of interest that fascinate them instead of sticking exclusively to the P.G.Hurst philosophy of what to collect. Then again we have encouraged collector's beyond the environs of the greater Wellington region to become presenters in our schedule of programmes.

In the *Gazette* we have attempted to liberalise our activities by providing articles that range from the sublime to the ridiculous. There will be no change to this pattern unless there is someone out there who wants to take over the editorship and oppose these arcane progressive activities!

As editor of this publication I have always felt that it is a shame that so much collective knowledge has never been set down for future generations of collectors. It was my hope that the *G&T Gazette*, might prompt some interesting articles, but this has been in vain. Not even a precis of our meetings has been submitted! Some might argue that titbits like this are unworthy of being documented. Better to aim for stories which have some historical significance.

In this respect we have in our midst, one of the most informed and experienced commentators of gramophone recordings in the Southern Hemisphere in the form of John Gray. An article or recorded utterances by him would surely qualify for a permanent record.

On the plus side with the Scratchy Record Group, there has been an innovation over the last couple of years to share an evening with a person whose interest and knowledge does not necessarily follow the main stream of record collecting. This is to be encouraged. Part of the residual problem with our organisation is the fact that we are very insular and seem to avoid like the plague any discussion which may or may not expand our horizons. As one might be drawn to observe, 'we are an aimless group where bonhomie rules like a soporific blanket'.

Now I'm not going to campaign for changes to this situation, after all, the *Gazette* is an independent voice and would never presume to echo the feelings of the Scratchy Record Group as such, even though it were the official organ. But I do think it is about time we grew up and formally recognised our status and went about establishing a constitution with some simple aims. That at least would be a beginning and could lead to some improvements.

For instance, when I approached our speaker tonight I was conscious that as a retired person, he might have welcomed some remuneration towards the costs of coming to Wellington to give his programme. For this, I was prepared to put up some petrol vouchers. To his credit, he read this offer for what it was and declined the offer but gratefully accepted the accommodation. In retrospect, I would have been more comfortable to have invited him on the understanding that it was a organisational decision which would have been accompanied with travel vouchers as a matter of course.

I wonder how much longer we can go on like this without some organisational structure or whether we should remain as we are. In the meantime, the columns of the *Gazette* are open to anyone who would like to submit their views on these and other issues.

Its not often I get records for review, but when I do it reminds me of the old proverb, 'It never rains, but it pours'.

In the last issue of the *Gazette*, I heaped praises upon the double CD reissues by Ernestine Schumann-Heink and Lawrence Tibbett on the Delos label, platitudes which have been endorsed by a friends to whom I've subsequently lent these recordings to.

This time around its the turn of two American singers. Richard Crooks who came to New Zealand on concert tours in 1936 and again in 1939 and the other is Richard Bonelli who was born Richard Bunn.

Those with a memory of John Gordon's late afternoon radio programme in the 1960s will recall how he often played Richard Crooks recordings, recounting his attendance at his concerts where he charmed audiences with song and ballads. These CDs revive this picture proving as they do that there is much more than good looks and stage presence to interest lovers of fine music. For instance, the first disc in the set has his 1933 Die Schöne Müllerin with Frank La Forge at the piano is a very distinguished accomplishment and lends weight to the fact that he was very highly thought of in Europe where he completed his musical education before centring his career in North America. One has to admire the Victor Recording Company (who were not known to extend themselves in the fine art song repertoire) by being talked into this Schubert song cycle. However, they soon blotted their copybook by not releasing it until 1941, and then only in fragmented bits and pieces. True, post depression economics and a doubtful market may have stayed their hand from publishing it in full. But they certainly made up for this in my mind with the excellent album of Stephen Foster songs which has always been one of my favourites, as those who have heard me present programmes over the years will testify.

For those who yearn for something different on these CD reissue compilations, the final two tracks on the second disc will see their dreams come true where Crooks is paired with Bing Crosby. I wonder what John Gordon would have said about that!

The Richard Bonelli on the other hand, is a different kettle of fish. There wont be many record collectors in New Zealand who would ever have heard of this singer, let alone possess one of his recordings. On this I have a slight advantage. Many years ago I picked up a Vocalion of his in a second hand shop in Newtown and have kept it in my collection ever since despite several purges on the growing number of records in my collection. Featuring the Hamlet Brindisi, it was made around 1918 when Bonelli was in his late twenties. It reveals a voice of considerable charm and promise.

Hence I was pleased to be able to extend my knowledge of this singer with these CDs. Quoting from the booklet which accompanies this set, it seems Bonelli had no time for recording companies, claiming they often dictated what was to be recorded. Therefore is it no surprise to find all of the items on these discs are from radio broadcasts and originate from his personal library. They cover Opera, popular songs and ballads spread over a period from 1935 to a New York Town Hall recital in 1947 made towards the end of his career.

Of particular interest to me were his renderings of two Hubert Hughes songs *Next Market Day* and *Ballynure Ballad*, both of which stand up well to comparison to John McCormack's renderings. As well there are unfamiliar items by Hugo Wolf and Vaughn Williams.

Both sets have wonderfully illustrated 40 page booklets, which should be held aloft as a model for all who attempt to reissue records from the past.

Portraiture and Opera

FOR ONE who has devoted a lifetime to gathering recordings by singers of the past, it comes as something of a shock to realise that I have lagged behind in acquiring photographs of those I derive pleasure from whenever I hear their voice reproduced. This admission is all the more difficult to assimilate when my line of work is taken into account. As Director of the NZ Centre for Photography, I am constantly coming up against images on a daily basis. Hence to extend myself into acquiring portraits of singers, might come as second nature.

Actually, when I take account of that which has come my way (more by accident than design), I can claim to have some rather interesting items in my collection. But nothing to match those who have made something of a speciality of acquiring ephemera of this nature. Here I think of the Richard Bebb and Stuart / Liff collections whose credit lines seems to pepper the pages of journals like the *Record Collector*. The moral to all this was driven home when I looked around for a portrait of Rosina Buckman to accompany an article I did to accompany a discography I had been working on for some years. I wanted one which showed some of her youthful character and not the matronly image that has been used in so many publications. What I ended up with was a photograph by an Auckland photographer called William Bartlett, who made a standing study of her for the August 1906 issue of *The Triad*, New Zealand's most venerated cultural publication from the early decades of this century. However while the satisfaction of this little known portrait placated my desire to see her depicted in new light, I knew it would be much better if I had been able to take it from an original print as opposed to using a coarse screened reproduction which had to suffice. Another instance of bemoaning the parlous state of our national photo archives in this area of musical celebrities came when I attempted to find a photograph of John McCormack during his visits to New Zealand in the Turnbull Library.

Now I'm not beating the drum for the establishment of a National Portrait Gallery - we already have one - but I do think it is beholden to all record collectors to take note and lend a hand in improving this situation because they may be in a position to halt the demise of so many precious images.

For instance, had I had my wits about me when I interviewed a relation of New Zealand's pioneer baritone John Prouse in the 1960s, I would have urged this relation to deposit her albums of his singing career with the National Library. Alas all this material has been lost.

So in order to perpetrate some interest in this important activity, I'm publishing some tidbits from my collection which I hope might stimulate interest in this peripheral but important activity.

First there is a Caruso caricature of Mishkin, a paradox if ever there was one. True this isn't a photograph, but it at least demonstrates how one prolific subject of his camera responded and recognised the impact this man had on so many artists in America over a particular period, by including him in a collection of studies which he made from his circle of professional associates.

Another example is the autographed portrait of Toti Dal Monte which came to me via an auction here in Wellington. It undeniably demonstrates that these things are around. Finally I've selected an informal portrait by an unknown photographer of the

Russian tenor Ivan Erschov. This particular item came in an assortment I borrowed from Dennis Brew in order to make copies from his originals several years ago. This is a staged yet arresting study and one which I think reveals how both the photographer and the sitter have combined to produce an image of haunting quality.

Like some of their recordings, photographs of musical celebrities can be as bland as flour paste. Those that really set the pulse tingling are images like the Erschov which convey more than a likeness of the sitter. I am not insisting that we shy away from singers in costume just because they tend to conceal the personality of the individual, but it is undeniable fascinating to see celebrities like this in their street clothes. This is where the skill of the photographer comes into play with some photographers extracting some of the sitters characteristics - just like the recording apparatus and a good conductor does in the recording studio.

The example on the cover of this issue, taken by May and Minna Moore, might fall into this category. Here the topic of portraiture of celebrities gets somewhat blurred. When an artist of international stature like this arrived in a country during the latter part of the 19th century the first half of the present, there was a great demand for likenesses. If the singers didn't come armed with a bundle to give out at press conferences or stage door, then they had to make themselves available to the ordeals of the local photographers. Some photographers who fancied themselves in this specialised department would make approaches through the artists agent, no doubt offering generous discounts for bulk editions. Sometimes they were successful in receiving time for a sitting. Those singers with little or no experience of the importance of how photographs might help them in their careers, might be enticed by a photographers blandishments without any thought of the consequences. While I will not be drawn to say that careers were ruined by bad photographs, it may go some way in explaining why there are so many uninteresting photographs of these celebrities in existence. In the case of May and Mina Moore, two sisters who had their beginnings in Wellington, they were recognised as running one of the better studios in Australia. In more recent times it is a well kept secret that Brian Brake who was at work in Wellington in the 1940s showed exceptional talent in this particular area of photography. The work he produced with pianists like Colin Horsley and Lilli Krauss prove this point. We hope to do a feature article on these in a forthcoming issue of the *Gazette*. After reading this article, you decide to go looking for photographs then you don't have to go far. Diligent attendance at stamp, coin and postcard dealers shops or antique fairs will often prove fruitful if you are prepared to dig and delve in piles of postcards. And it wont cost you an arm and leg. In this fashion I have unearthed examples of Elsa Stralia and Chaliapin to add to my Leo Slezak.

John Sutcliffe has miles more than me. I know he has studies of Blanche Arral and Lilian Nordica. We must urge him to display these on a future occasion. Then there are recital programmes, clippings and letters.

I wonder if there is sufficient interest in these peripheral items to form a register between members.

Comments on these and other matters raised in this issue of the *Gazette* would be most welcome.

TONIGHTS PROGRAMME MONDAY 15th MARCH 1999

Emile Scaremberg - tenor [1863-1938] with piano
Reine de Saba (Gounod) - Inspirez moi
Fonotopia 39180 Recorded Milan, 1905.

Leon Escalais - tenor [1859-1941] with piano
Jerusalem (Verdi) - Je veux encore entendre
Fonotopia 39562 Recorded Milan. 1906.

Anastasia Vialtzeva - mezzo soprano [1871-1913] with piano
One day the spring will come for me (Romance)
G&T 23464 Recorded 1904.

Alfred Piccaver - tenor [1883-1958] with orchestra
Belisario (Donizetti) - O si tremendo annunzio
Odeon 76808 Recorded 1920.

Vladimir Kastorsky - bass [1870-1948] with orchestra
Les Huguenots (Meyerbeer) - Benediction
Angel Concert 3-22564 Recorded 1907.

Francesco d'Andrade - baritone [1859-1921] with orchestra
Don Giovanni (Mozart) - Brindisi
Parlophon P 323 recorded 1906.

AN INTERVAL OF FIVE MINUTES
followed by
THE SPANISH TENOR

Francesco Vignas - tenor [1863-1933]-with piano
Germania (Franchetti) - Studenti udite
G&T 52735 Recorded 1903.

Hipolito Lazaro - tenor [1887 -1974] with orchestra
I Puritani (Bellini) - Vieni fra questa braccia
Columbia 3911 Recorded 1916.

Antonio Cortis - tenor [1891 -1952] with orchestra
Una Vieja (Gaztambide)
Victor 1118 Recorded 1925.

Emilio Vendrell -tenor [1893-1962] with orchestra
Los de Aragon (Serrano) - Aguita que vas al mar
Odeon 121001 Recorded 1927.

Tino Folgar - tenor [1892-1983] with orchestra
Los de Aragon (Serrano) - Los de Aragon
Disco Gramofono AF 282 Recorded 1930.

Miguel Flea - tenor [1897-1938] with orchestra
Los Gavilanes (Guerrero) - Flor roja
Disco Gramofono DB 850 Recorded 1925

AN INTERVAL OF 5 MINUTES

Andre d'Arkor - tenor [1901-1971] with orchestra
Maitre Pathelin (Bazin) - Romance
Columbia RF 49 Recorded 1931.

Hina Spani - soprano [1896-1969] with orchestra
La Wally - (Verdi) Ebben? Ne andro lontana
HMV DB 1163 Recorded 1928

Dinh Gilly - baritone [1877-1940] with piano
Amarilli (Caccini)
HMV DB 1256 Recorded 1928.

Tino Pattiera - tenor [1890-1966] with orchestra
Addio (Tosti)
Vox 03640 Recorded 1927

Todor Mazarov (tenor) [1907-1975] with orchestra
Il Trovatore (Verdi) - Di quella pira
Radioprom 1629 Recorded c1948

Tito Schipa (tenor) [1889-1965] with orchestra
Wo ist mein kleines Mädel? (Bixio)
Electrola DA 4432 Recorded 1938

ENCORES - IF TIME PERMITS

DENNIS BREW

New Zealand's most respected collector of historic vocal recordings?

When I began to put a few words together to introduce our presenter tonight, I pulled down a box of cuttings which has been a repository of articles which I have accumulated over the years regarding collector's and collecting.

In this I found two items on Dennis from 1971. One was a newspaper article from the *Auckland Star* and was dated 19th July. The same piece also featured Rod Cornelius and was headed 'Treasure in odd places'. It gave a run down on what they collect; Dennis Records and Rod Machines Gramophones and Phonographs. I would think both would cringe today if they were to read the way they were reported, none the less it must have helped them make contacts with people wanting to off load items they collected.

The second piece on Dennis came from the *Woman's Weekly* and was dated the 8th November 1971. This had the benefit of colour photographs and it is interesting to note that five uncommon record labels for New Zealand were displayed in the double page spread including a Russian 'Amour' HMV label.

I first came to know Dennis as a result of activities in connection with a Phonograph and Record Collector's Convention which we staged at the Dominion Museum in the early 1960s. Unable to entice him to come to Wellington for this event in 1965(?), he forwarded a tape which was played at one of the sessions. This revealed his tastes in music and artist selection were streets ahead of most of us who claimed to be collector's.

As a lead up to this gathering we had exchanged letters and records with one another and sent records overseas for trade in order to improve the quality of one's collection. In this respect, Dennis soon left me for dead by trading parcels or records behind the iron curtain.

I recall how I looked forward to visiting him in Auckland where I heard singers like Senius, Burrian and Erschov, taking me beyond the conservative approach to record collecting which senior collectors Brian Salkeld imposed on collecting in general with repeated playings over the air of standards like Caruso, Melba, Tetrizzini and Tamagno.

In my enthusiasm to share him with the greater collecting fraternity I urged him to contact James Dennis, editor of the *Record Collector*. This led to him compiling discographies on Pattiera, Burian, Jadowker, Rehkemper and Patzak.

As a result of all this I can not think of another New Zealand collector who has done more for establishing our presence on the international stage.

He Writes:

It is with real pleasure that I present a selection from my 78rpm collection this evening. Record collecting everywhere is a lonely hobby, and personally I feel the records always sound better when shared with kindred spirits,

My taste in collecting tends towards male voices, perhaps an influence

from childhood. The only records our family owned were those of John McCormack, reflecting Irish origins. My mother was very musical, a good pianist, and she adored the voices of Tauber, Schipa and Gerhard Hüsch.

When I began to collect records in 1953 my first purchases were from Wiseman's and Marbeck's in Auckland, and reflected those childhood influences. I quickly discovered "new" voices like Wittrisch, Strienz, Fassbaender, Tagliavini and Thill, and others mentioned in the 1951 "Record Guide", my bible at the time. Imagine the thrill when I heard for the first time Lauri-Volpi's "A te o cara" from "I Puritani". Then the HMV VA/VB archive series appeared, very expensive, and for the first time I encountered acoustic historical voices - that started my life-long passion for historical records.

Some years later I was given a box of older 78's with Caruso, de Luca, Martinelli, Galli-Curci etc, and this cemented my relationship with shellac, remembering that I was also collecting LP's by this time. However, in New Zealand the market was dominated by E.M.I. - how was I to obtain those exotic titles mentioned in "The Gramophone" reviews? So I began buying 78's and LP's from *Collector's Corner* in London and *The Record Album* in New York. I wrote to Supraphon in Prague to purchase some Beno Blachut 78's - a collector there contacted me, thus beginning the Czech connection. I was invited to visit Prague, and found it was a collector's paradise. The Communist regime had restricted the flow of records and books, plenty were to be found in shops and private homes. Despite obstacles I managed to send hundreds of choice, unusual 78's back to New Zealand. More difficult was trading with a Russian contact - there were severe restrictions on numbers and type of records that could be sent from the country, but still I managed to win some great discs from this friend in Lenin-grad.

It's true that without overseas trading or purchases one would not own many Fonotopias in New Zealand. On the other hand, I am amazed just how many rare G&T's, Polydor, Vox and Edison discs do surface in this country.

As a result of my discography work I made contact with several senior collectors in U.S.A. and England. I have visited many of these fellow enthusiasts and exchanged choice records with them. My collection has constantly changed. There are some records I would never part with, but with others, if an exchange will win me something I covet more, then I would willingly (perhaps sometimes reluctantly) enter into a trade. One's taste changes, why keep a record that ceases to please? I used to own almost complete collections of Burian, Jadowker and Rehkemper, but only a handful of these records were played!

I'm not obsessed with rarity for it's own sake. Many rare records are musically and vocally quite ordinary. I suppose there is a certain thrill about owning a super rare G&T, but I would rather own records to enjoy. My 78rpm collection is now down to about 800 discs. I have some 3000 LP's, and dare I say it 700 CD's. Most of the LP's and CD's tend to be of historical performers or performances. I enjoy very much the symphonic interpretations of conductors like Furtwaengler, Mengelberg, Abendroth, Klemperer, Krauss and Karajan.

The historical CD is generally preferable to an LP reissue. More care has been taken with speeds, the transfers are cleaner and retain more of the 78 depth than most LP's. The piddling booklets and photos annoy me, but one must marvel at the technology.

However, despite all of these LP's and CD's, I still have more pleasure from a full-bodied 78 sound, crackle and all. Further, what can be more thrilling than to find a rare or choice 78 in a junk shop, or at the flea market. I remember vividly the excitement of going through albums of 78's in Madrid, but I never recall the purchase of a LP or CD.

Records have been good to me. They have brought thousands of hours of deep listening pleasure, friendships in several countries, a wife who actually encourages my collecting passion, and turned me into an inveterate traveller. They truly have enriched my life.

It puzzles me why record collecting has never achieved the status or following achieved by stamp collecting. The disc can evoke emotional responses unknown to a postage stamp, and then there are the added collecting areas of needle tins, photographs, discographies, machines etc. Many rare records exist in only a few known copies, and surely are more important than rare stamps that command such high prices. May the art of record collecting grow in stature.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about my passion, and I hope you will enjoy some of the items I have chosen for tonight's programme. I wish you success with your society, and your personal collecting. Good hunting, and good listening.

Dennis Brew

For encores, Dennis will bring south the following items.

Delia Murphy Melodisc P 203 The Captain with the Whiskers & Country Tyrone.

E.M.Favor - tenor Ben Bolt Berliner 958zz recorded 1897.

Shura Cherkassky - pianist (age 11) Victor 453788 Scherzo (Mendelssohn).

If you have any records or artists on disc that you are unsure about, bring them along to this gathering. Dennis will gladly examine them and give you his appraisal. At the meeting, ask to see his latest 15 page catalogue of records he is willing to sell or trade. Contact me to make arrangements to secure a copy. He will bring items you would like south with him.

Obituary:
BORIS SEMEONOFF [1910-1998]

While the details are still to come my way, it saddens me to report the death of a personality in record collecting circles, who exerted a great influence on me when I began to collect records in the 1950s.

My friendship began when I wrote to Boris extolling the virtues of his book called *Record Collecting*, published by the Oakwood Press. Along with Roberto Bauer's famous *Historical Records* and Julian Morton Moses *Collectors' Guide to American Recordings*, these texts were my bedside reading as I desperately endeavoured to become familiar with what I was discovering in second hand shops throughout the country.

As our correspondence grew, we eventually gravitated to exchanging records. While his preference was for singers like Evelyn Scotney on Vocalion and pianist Mischa Levitzki, black label HMVs. Oddly enough even though I can remember these details I can not remember what I received in exchange. During this period, I discovered he was a friend of Professor Ian Gordon, who was in charge of the English Department at Victoria University. It seems they graduated together at Edinburgh University, where his subject was psychology. For some unexplained reason, Prof. Gordon wasn't a very good correspondent. I say this because I often supplied information on his doings through my letters to Boris who was always interested to hear what his friend was doing. When I approached him about this, he confirmed that Ian Gordon had never replied to any of his letters.

On a visit to Britain in 1994, I had an impromptu impulse to visit Edinburgh on my British Rail ticket to take in a couple of art exhibitions. The tourist information centre at Edinburgh station advised me to stay at a University Hostel which was within walking distance of the central city. The first night there, I picked up the telephone directory to see if Boris was listed. He was and much to my delight answered the phone, inviting me around to tea the following day.

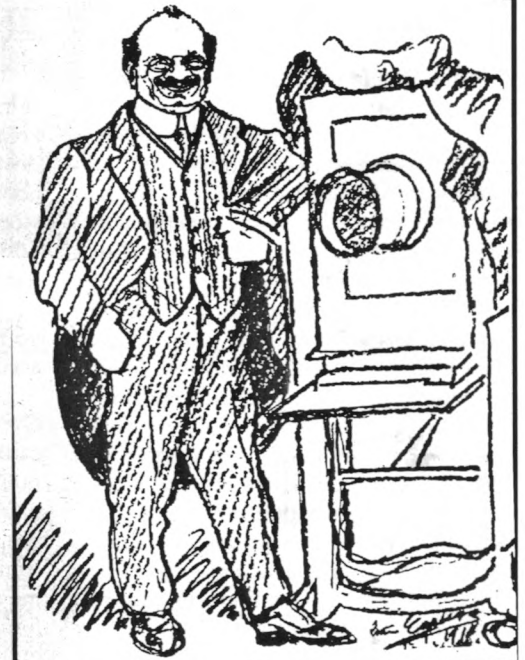
When I duly presented myself at his semidetached house in a modest well kept area close to the University, I was led into a downstairs living room where we chatted about our doings in recent years (we had stopped writing to one another in the 1970s while a high tea was served by his wife. At the end of the ordeal of balancing a cup and saucer with a side plate, he suggested we go upstairs to his study where I took the accompanying photograph.

He had just had his CD of Russian Gypsy singers released by Pearl and he graciously presented me with a copy to commemorate my visit. While we chatted, pausing to hear some of the titles he was preparing for another CD on the singers from the Maryinsky Theatre, he reminded me of a collection in New Zealand which found its way to him after the tragic death of the owner on our ski fields. To this day, I can't remember what this person's name was, but the circumstances of it being bundled up and shipped to Scotland certainly stayed in his mind. I think he was amazed that no one in New Zealand had laid claim to this collection at the time. Evidently the owner of these 78's had come into contact with him through his book and thought he was the only one interested in such things. We ended this enjoyable hour by playing one of his Leo Sibiriakov recordings.

Oddly enough, Boris was not as prolific in writing about records as one would have thought. At least that is the impression I have gained by making a study of the *Record Collector Index* where it appears his article on Feodore Chaliapin was his only major contribution. But I could be wrong on that score.

My last letter to him in 1997 contained a *Listener* article on his old friend Ian Gordon. He replied noting the fact that according to the article, he 'seemed as pugnacious as ever'. and disclosed he'd been the best man at his wedding.

Bill Main



Top left: Claude Woldege, an Edison dealer snapped in Christchurch in the early 1920s talking to Arthur Middleton (1880-1929), bass-baritone. Top right: Caruso's caricature of Mishkin, a New York photographer who specialised in celebrity musician photographs. Below: Ivan Erschov (1867 - 1943) tenor, unknown photographer. Cover: Toti Dal Monte (1892-1976). *Main Collection*

