

Discussion at Des Wilson's recently about Tom Burke, a tenor who made his mark on British opera in the 1920s, prompted me to contact my friend Janet Kenny, who now lives in Sydney. Janet embarked upon a singing career in England in 1965 and as a result of gaining a number of contracts was gaining a foothold as an Opera, Oratorio and Concert soloist. Constant health problems caused her to retire from her career as a singer, but before this she worked with many notable singers. She has specially penned her reminiscences of Tom for our magazine. Elsewhere in this issue we conclude John Gray's comments on the Record of Singing LP sets and Dennis Brew reports from Prague.

TOM BURKE

I was put into Tom's 'hands' (almost) by the Welsh tenor David Parker. I was singing the role of Carmen at Neath in Wales. David usually had the tenor lead role at Neath and was very disappointed not to be included in this production. I was in what passed for a dressing room after a performance when an extremely self-assured person burst into the room with barely a knock and said that "he could HELP me". He also was very complimentary but his general manner and appearance led me to ask: "Whom do you represent?" He was astonished - "But I'm DAVID PARKER". "Who?" I'd never heard of him. And then he told me all about himself for about an hour. He told me about Tom and since my dear old teacher Flora Nielsen had had a stroke, and anyway I was feeling that she wasn't solving some major vocal problems, I decided to give Tom a go.

Tom was a wonderful terrible old man. His life had been sensational and included studying with De Lucia, Caruso, partnering Melba, and mixing with Chicago gangsters. He was a communist and we got on just fine politically because although not a communist I was a definite leftie. Tom started as a coalminer in Lancashire and sang his way out of poverty. It was definitely 1968 because I remember Tom consoling me over TV reports on Czechoslovakia which really had upset me. It was the first time I'd seen horror filmed as it happened.

He said that the only thing that he cared about was GLORY. And you could hear the trumpets when he said it. He told me that my problem was that I was too fond of what he contemptuously called "educational music". That was anything outside the Puccini, Giordano, Leoncavallo orbit. Purcell for example. "Alright in its way but it's EDUCATIONAL MUSIC". I did develop vocally with Tom but at a great loss of access to much that I valued. I always was in the (educational) business of nuance and atmosphere. Tom had me roaring through Meyerbeer, Carmen and Santuzza.

Actually, before I went to Tom I had given several concert performances of

Amneris (Aida) in good musical company and felt very comfortable with the role. I don't think Tom helped me much with that but he did help me join the register break I had developed as a child (through a love of yodelling) between the bottom and middle registers. Flora's solution was to throw away the bottom octave of my voice. She had studied with Elena Gerhardt and had given recitals with her in the National Gallery during the war. Flora hated what she called the "chest voice" and what Tom called the "throat voice". I remember shocking Flora when I performed the Sorceress in Dido and used "chest" for "Wayward Sisters". Actually I don't think I did it excessively and it did achieve a smoothly menacing effect. I had studied Patricia Johnson's wonderful Sorceress when I was at Glyndebourne (Janet Baker was Dido) and I more or less did as she had Tom taught from an anatomical point of view and helped one to understand what was happening to one's vocal chords and how to hold a note when one's throat was dry. Many teachers are against such self-consciousness but I did save myself from disaster several times by using Tom's trick of what he called "gripping" the vocal chords on top notes. The antithesis of Viennese good taste. Tom taught me to be proud of my "chest-throat" voice and it became a great strength to me and not nearly as overdone as, for example, Marilyn Horne.

Tom was determined to launch a Lancashire Opera Company and the Earl of Harewood and South African diamond millionairess Denny Dennis encouraged the poor mad old man in his impossible dream. With the help of Harewood and Dennis, he hired the foyer of the Royal festival Hall for a Grand Launching of company. There were white gloved manservants with plates of tiny sandwiches, Tom dressed up like a prince in a high backed chair, the future 'stars' of this glorious dream and about three journalists, the Guardian's music critic Edward Greenfield who admired Tom, Harewood and Dennis. AGONY!!!! Tom practised denial on a scale beyond belief. It was a SUCCESS. It HAD TO BE A SUCCESS. Because of the GLORY!

I report the review from *The Stage*, 4th July 1968.

"Singers forming the nucleus of the Lancashire Opera Company gave a concert performance of "sizeable chunks of "Madama Butterfly", "La Traviata" and "Aida at the Purcell Room on June 26, amply fulfilling Tom Burke's wish for "old-fashioned singing". This meant robust attack and big volume, both in plentiful supply, even excessively so for the acoustics of the hall.

My Burke himself, the founder of the company, showed what he meant when he contributed some of Alfredo's phrases to "La Traviata" and, as he put it, "filled in a few notes" to Janet Kenny's singing of the seguidilla from "Carmen". At 79 years of age, his voice still shows signs of what a great singer he must have been in his prime.

Miss Kenny, a young mezzo from New Zealand, has a promising voice, already rich in tone and well-managed throughout its range, and she displays on the concert platform a poise that will be a great asset to her in opera.

The bulk of the evening's work was given to Doreen Doyle, who sang the three soprano roles with commendable stamina. She has a basically powerful voice, but does not always use it with artistic judgement, often allowing insufficient reserves for sustaining the climactic melodic phrases. Her tense stance is probably a major contributory factor in this, and it also tends to make her various interpretations too much alike. David Parker was a forceful Pinkerton, though one of the worst sufferers from the hall's acoustics. Alexander Hood a strong but tonally colourless Radames, Robert Bowman a first-rate Goro, whilst Neilson Taylor sang expressively in three contrasting

baritone roles. The singers were accompanied at the piano by the company's musical director, Gerald Gover, who made up for loss of orchestral richness with some excellent playing."

After that review do I need to tell you that the soprano was not friendly towards me? Doreen Doyle was the soprano lead in the only production I know of Alfano's "Il Resurrezzione" in a company I later joined called "Basilica". Tom smothered me in huge "old-fashioned" bunches of flowers.

During our association, Tom used to tell me all sorts of anecdotes regarding his career. For instance in Chicago (where he was a member of the Chicago opera company), he says he regularly dined with leading gangsters. I actually believe him. His descriptions of them and their lifestyle was too convincing to be fabricated.

I left Tom when he started to take advantage of me. He enjoyed chatting to me. It took me hours of tiring travelling for me to get to his place on the outskirts of London. Arriving he would immediately send me to the shops to do his shopping. He even asked me to clean his flat for him and altogether I was doing more fetching and carrying and less singing, besides which my health was pretty fragile at the time. So I stopped going to see him and discontinued the lessons. He telephoned me non-stop for weeks but I wouldn't answer the phone knowing that he'd just bellow insults at me. I was buggered and sick of stoking his insatiable ego.

I didn't go to his 80th birthday party where he allegedly sang higher and louder than David Parker. He died very soon after and I didn't go to his funeral. He was a vigorous atheist and loudly pooh-pooed things like funerals. I've always regretted not going.

Tom was engaged to sing opposite Melba in a performance of *La Boheme*, one which saw the re-opening of Covent Garden in 1919. To give some indication of this honour it might be remembered that Martinelli headed the second cast opposite Rosina Buckman. Traditionally in the theatre each performer has their "aura" the space in which other performers do not stand. This enables each performer to register with the audience. Tom kept crowding Melba by standing in her space.

She hissed at him, "Get your paws off me you Scouse bastard".

When it came to the death scene Rodolfo had to pick Mimi up in his arms and carry her to the bed. The "bed" was two packing cases with a cloth over it. Tom picked Melba up and when he got to the bed held her two feet above it and dropped her 'clump' on the packing cases.

"Now screech your head off you great titted Australian cow"! After the performance everybody said to Tom: "You're done for. She'll never forgive you. You'd better just resign." But Tom knew better. He got a bottle of champagne and went and hammered on the door of her dressing room.

"Who's there?", called Melba.

"It's me you Australian bitch" said Tom. "Let me in" and - Tom said - to everyone's amazement she did. Tom's version, re-enacted for me with almost pornographic effects is possibly apocryphal, but he said he - I quote - "made love to her".

RECORD COLLECTING

EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER BY DENNIS BREW

I began my 1999 pilgrimage with a 3 day stopover in Buenos Aires, a huge sprawling city full of contrasts. First a visit to the Colon Theatre, one of the largest opera houses in the world. On the evening of my departure 'Otello' with Cura was announced, But I had to be content with a guided tour.

The shopping area of the city is quite smart with many bargains except in CD's. A disc that may cost \$34 in NZ could be up to \$36 US, twice the price! So I didn't buy a single CD there which is unbelievable for me. However I was more interested in the Flea market at San Telmo, one of the best organised I have encountered. The stalls were full of antiques and better class junk. They cater for the American Tourist and their prices reflect that. One shop caught my eye, full of horn gramophones, music boxes and 78s. Here I picked out twelve 78s (Bassi, Grassi, Kuznetzova, Leisner, autographed Schipa, Anselmi etc.) good, but not top rarities. I took them to the counter and after much deliberation the owner said "that comes to \$800 US" which floored me. I argued of course pointing out that their value in USA would be no more than \$200, but his best offer was \$500, so I walked out empty handed.

Further down the same street, I found another shop with a pile of 78s and extracted a Caruso G&T, Bonci Fonotopia, de Luca Fonotopia 'Ideale' - a gem, Sagi-Barba Pre Dog, Palet and Cortis for \$10 each. At the market itself I took two Mojica Victors and some Phonodisc Mondial labels for \$2-\$3 each. Given time one would find good 78's in Buenos Aires.

On to Miami where I stayed four days with Milt Weiss, the doyen of record dealers. I carried with me some rare LPs and 78's from Auckland and effected some exciting exchanges. Milt also took the Caruso G&T and Mojica's I obtained in Buenos Aires. I obtained from Milt a Kamionsky Barbiere/Rigoletto - a superb disc in top condition; a super rare Lauri-Volpi Argentinian Odeon of 'Mignon'; Raitshev Vox Russalka/Snow Maiden; Palet Fonotopia; Piccaver s/s Odeons of Don Pasquale & Faust; Witttrisch 'Ernani' duos with Streinz; and a Tagliavini LP which includes 'La Spagnola' a song strangely neglected by tenors apart from Gigli (& Davidov).

Next three days with Larry Holdridge the most important New York dealer, who let me loose in his basement of cheap but decent duplicates. I sent back about 60 78s people like Lazaro, Cortis, Tagliavini Cetra labels, Palet Victors, McCormack 'Semele', Malipiero HMV etc. plus several Schipa I'm missing.

Larry is first and foremost a collector and we spent many hours listening to his choice rarities. - Siems, Brzezinski, Figner, unpublished Kipnis, mouth-watering items.

Next to Ward Marston near Philadelphia, a sound engineer now producing his own Marston CD label. Ward also owns some choice 78s and we played many from his rich French school of singers.

Don Hodgman met me at Ward's and we motored back to New York via Princeton where one of the great second hand music stores is located. LP & CD. Compared to last year it was disappointing and I only bought five of the Vocal Record Collectors Society CD's. Two days later Don took me to the stores in New York city where I was in my element. At a Russian shop I bought LPs for \$2 each Sofronitzky, Ots, Khromchenko and in Academy an interesting French LP of Bauge and CDs of the conductor Abendroth at \$11 each (\$18 normal). But the best store was Tower, where I took CDs of Devries, Paoli, Prandelli

(Bogovani), Adolph Busch live, and three videos - two of historic Bolshoi singers and Leonid Kogan (violin). US prices are similar to those in NZ although it's possible to find reductions.

After two wonderful weeks in the Americas, on to Prague, where Helena had advertised in advance of my arrival which was not very fruitful. This country is in recession and many shops have closed. The population seems to be in a state of apathy. I did however find two sets for Ward Marston for CD Tansfer (Talich-Dvorak Symphony 5 the rare wartime version and the early Koslovsky 'Onegin').

A three night stay in Madrid, flight included for \$250 US per person saw me back in my beloved Spain. Unfortunately it did not span the weekend, so I missed the flea market. Nevertheless the junk shops threw up two Anselmi Fonotopias, Fleta, Lazaro, Redondo, Vendrell, Sagi-Barba, Fagoaga and Gigli's 'Giovinezza'. I did not chase LPs only taking Lavingen, Fleta and Clemens Krauss 'Midsummer's Night Dream' on Spanish Vosc(?).

Spain is not cheap for CDs. A \$35 NZ CD could cost \$40 locally - better to wait for Vienna. Certainly I've slowed down, last year I bought freely in Madrid, but I 'disciplined' myself this time.

The Prague Festival is very much a modern programme, not to my taste. The only enticing item, next week is "Il Viaggio a Reims" (Rossini) by the Gotteborg Opera (?). Best wishes to all in NZ.

Dennis Brew

(Editors note: Some names and titles in Dennis's hand written letter were not readily discernable - my apologies if I have various names and titles wrong).

MEANWHILE ACROSS THE POND

While I would not consider the following to be in the same league as Dennis's record collecting adventures in the Americas and Europe, I would like to draw attention to a shop in Sydney which has simply thousands and thousands of 78 for sale at reasonable prices.

Photantiques is easily accessible using a bus that takes you past Sydney University to 76 Parramatta Road. It is run by Rob and Irene Goard who are open Thursday to Sunday 11am to 4pm. On entering their shop, you are met with a barrage of gramophones and cameras that dominate the front of shop. Don't be put off by this and press on towards the back where you will see stacks of 78s on tables. They are roughly classified into groups such as instrumental, orchestra, tenors, sopranos etc. Most are priced at a flat rate of \$1 each.

I spent the better part of a day looking through their stock and came away with some purchases that made me very happy. No top rarities like those Dennis encountered in Buenos Aires but as I'm currently into acquiring examples by singers that I'd passed over when I began collecting in the 1950s. Pristine copies by singers like Di Stefano and Luigi Infantino, both of whom came to New Zealand were added to two Parlophones by Gerard Husch (Mozart). One prize which I cherish was an acoustic Vocalion of Gladys Moncrieff.

At another source the St. Vincents de Paul in Oxford street yielded me a very nice Georges Thill L'Africaine "O Paradis". If the sharp eyed among you detects a certain preference in my current selections for singers who have made New Zealand one of their ports of call, then you can take ten brownie points.

Bill Main

THE RECORD OF SINGING

VOLUME 4 1939-1955

BY JOHN A GRAY

Or, "Le Tombeau des 78s"? as indeed someone said 35 years ago when the Worlds Encyclopedia of Recorded Music (WERM) issued what proved to be its last supplement. Keith Hardwick, the compiler of this instalment of the Record of Singing, has implied that it is the last, and in a letter to the Gramophone has given his reasons. But a whole generation of singers has come and in some cases even gone since 1955 and doubtless there are many who could suggest items for a fifth issue right now.

There has been a slimming down, probably due to the intervention of a world war. Volume 3 (1925-39) covered 25 sides and 200 on singers. Volume 4 has respectively 16 and about 130. But there is no sense of short-changing, and if you have the fortitude to play right through, you will occupy a good 8 hours and more, because only one or two of the sides plays for less than 30 minutes and most exceed it. It's a box of delights and surprises. Although some have tried already, it really is a job to name a singer who has been unjustly left out. Perhaps a case could be made for **Richard Lewis**; and if the criterion is 78s he did make one or two (those HMV excerpts from the first Glyndebourne *Idomeneo* under Fritz Busch, and at least one for Decca). On listening to Inge Borkh's rendering of Magda's outburst from *The Consul*, I at once recalled **Eileen Farrell's** searing performance (in the right language) made with **Schippers** and the Philharmonia, but that was well inside the LP era and it is mentioned only because Farrell's is to me about the one example of a great American soprano voice of the mid-century that isn't here.

For the first time we stray beyond the EMI/RCA axis; with a hint of *Glasnot* there are items from CBS, Philips, Decca and a few continental labels as though to point up the "international" scope of both singing and recording in this age of over-issue and multiplication. We have the now familiar division into "schools" of singing, but the choice of material is all-embracing and transcends national boundaries. You can hear Offenbach sung in Swedish and Russian, "Italian" Mozart in German, and sundry tracks in Portuguese, Spanish, Scottish, Neapolitan, and something called Schweitzerdeutsch. And for those who seek out "previously unpublished" tracks there are 14 of the. Let me begin by promising not to comment on all the 130-odd records in this set.

When I was in San Francisco some years ago, the name Florence Quartraro turned up as editor of the "Playbill" programmes for opera and theatre events. Remembering that I had her on a record of a *Tosca* duet with **Ramon Vinay**, I wrote her a fan letter that was not acknowledged. It's good to find her on a, 1947 disc from Handel's *Atlanta* tastefully sung. The Brazilian (and regrettably suicidal) soprano **Elsie Houston** does an erotic and wide-ranging song by Villa Lobos. **Eleanor Steber**, now forgotten by some, has her moment of triumph in one of Alan Blyth's "Song on Record" books, where a survey of 17 versions of the Berlioz "Nuits d'été" cycle declares her as the outright winner. Here she is in a luxuriantly expansive version of "Depuis le jour".

The disc by **Dorothy Maynor** (which, is not in the booklet, did have an HMV number - it was DB 3989) caused raised eyebrows when it was issued here because (a) apart from **Marion Anderson** there were hardly any black "serious" singers on HMV, and (b) unless I am wrong, this was the only instance on a vocal 78 single to be backed by

Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony, or as many as were required for Handel and Mozart. She soon faded out (does anyone know why?) but not before she had recorded *The Shepherd on the Rock* amongst other things. Vivian Liff, writing in the American Record Guide, is dismissive of **Joan Hammond** who, he declares, has just no idea of how to approach Marietta's Lied from *Die Todt Stadt*, but to me and no doubt most others, this track is valuable as showing what a voice the first 'Dame Joan' displayed. My one-time friend Leo Riemens wrote to me of Hammond "she is no artist, but the voice is absolutely gorgeous", and he was right at least about the voice.

The first of the unpublished treasures comes from **Astrid Varnay**, an impressive version of "Dich teure Halle", with, unusually at that time, the orchestral introduction played full - a feat on 78 rpm discs. At Bayreuth 30 years ago, the programmes held elaborate biographies of all the soloists, but when they came to Varnay, all we could read was "Permanent at Bayreuth since 1951". In some ways that said it all. Now she still sings as Mrs Begbick and Mamma Lucia, and even in her heyday she was apt to be pushed aside by Flagstad and Modl and Nilsson, but she was and is a great singing-actress, and is happily preserved in full flight on those Karl Böhm videos of *Salome* and *Elektra*. **Traubel** sings Elsa's Dream, **Bampton** does her best in an aria by Gluck, and Blanche Thebom shows up as a natural Delilah, whilst **Jennie Tourel** is both forthright and sparkling in Carmen's Habanera.

I suppose the temperature drops a bit as we return to the British Isles, but **Gladys Ripley** is luscious in one of the more "pop" extracts from Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, Ferrier her inimitable self in Ca' the yowes, **Webster Booth** a model of delicacy in the Faery Song from *The Immortal Hour* with the veteran harpist John Cockerill, and there's a precious souvenir of **Pears and Britten** in a French song. A dip down brings Peerce as his manly-self in Victor Herbert, **James Johnston** (conducted by my old friend James Robertson) in Vaughan Williams, and, back across the Atlantic, **Richard Tucker** singing the aria from *La Gioconda* with an amplitude which demonstrates why he aroused the enmity of his brother-in-law Jan Peerce.

Alfred Deller's Purcell shows why his voice was very much an acquired taste at a time which only foreshadowed the now universal rush towards authenticity in singing this repertoire. **Robert Irwin** is described as "a very minor singer" by one critic, but he is well inside the good old British tradition, and **Frederick Fuller's** Villa-Lobos has the composer at the piano. **Igor Gorin's** baritone seems to have taken English critics by surprise. We in the Antipodes can sit back, because his records, and even himself were not unknown here in the post-war period. There is, I recall, a good "largo al factotum" midst other items on local HMV, and he once visited us part of a Mormon campaign.

It's good to hear the American **Mack Harrell** in *Der Rattenfänger*. This one of Hugo Wolf's songs that really moves. Husch did it for the Wolf Society, and I remember that the old NBS just about wore out a Polydor by **Heinrich Rehkemper**. I always enjoy it because one phrase echoes - or pre-echoes - a line in an old music hall song that begins "She told me her age was five and twenty" (sing us that, Denis Norden!) and I refrain from quoting the rest. **Norman Walker** is characteristic in "Arm arm ye brave", **George London** tries out Boris with a piano, and the whole section comes to a fitting end with the only New Zealand representative, **Oscar Natzke**, in (wartime economy?) an organ-accompanied track of "Hear me ye winds and waves."

True to form, the French, whom I refrain from calling "perfidious" as I did when writing about Volume 3 in the wake of the Rainbow Warrior, stick mostly to their own

music and their own language, and there are fewer outright obscurities than those that littered the earlier volume. In the old days there was only one reason for listening to a record by **Medo Robin**; it was the guarantee of a steam-whistle top note at the end. That was in her Decca days. Here, on French HMV right in the middle of the war, she reveals a good sense of style in something by Dell'acqua of "Villanelle" fame. It begins just like "I'm going to Maxim's" (and we wonder if it was Dell'a or Lehár who got there first) and sure enough, it soars up to the stratosphere and right through the ozone layer.

More respected names include **Solange Michel**, whom I remember as the star of one of the two or three best "authentic" Carmens ever recorded. It was the Cluytens Opéra Comique set that graced one of English Columbia's very first LP lists, and on shellac it went back right to 1948. **Renée Doria**, another stalwart of that era, sings the bewitching "Rose and the Nightingale" of Rimsky's (which Xenia Belmas also did, in Vol. 3) and there are contributions from the heavyweights **Bouvier** and **Gorr**. The latter sings a passage at the end of *Les Troyens* which was in a group of really imaginative opera extracts that graced HMV's long discarded "History of Music in Sound" on both 78s and LP. And of course the French item that has caused the most curiosity has been that by **Hugues Cuenod** (86 by all accounts still singing as I write this), wherein we are given Four French Songs by Dinu Lipatti with the composer's widow at the piano. It's of no consequence that in fact these things makes an intriguing souvenir of Walter Legge's great days. So much for the French, except to note that **Victoria de los Angeles** had been slipped in by courtesy, and, together with some early Souzay, it all comes to a just climax with the unforgettable Messieurs **Bernac and Poulenc** in the most voluptuous of Duparc's slim song album (*L'Invitation au Voyage*).

With the Germans we seem to be on really familiar ground, since most of the post-war stars from the Legge treasury are in fact well-represented on other recent EMI compilations. In this case I feel that despite the rarity of the individual pieces, dear old **Elizabeth Schumann** is disposable, but the real fascination about the German selection is the glimpse it gives of the enormous amount of high-class music-making that prevailed in "Fortress Europe" during the years when that was a closed book to the rest of us.

Nowhere is this aspect more telling than in a rare track from the depths of 1942, when one day in the Brahmsaal **Maria Reining** put down an item from "Eva" with the Vienna Philharmonic under Franz Lehár. It's so good that she's here because she was one of that Vienna galaxy who never had much of a chance outside their home territory. About the only other big commercial release in which she featured was Decca's first try at her *Der Rosenkavalier*, where she was the Marschallin. That sealed her fate, as it had to come out at a time when all the Sackville-Wests and Shawe-Taylors were still mesmerised by the ghost of **Lotte Lehmann**. Thumbs down!

As I implied, most of these singers turn up in familiar guises with a few novelties - Jurinac for instance, in one of Lisa's laments from the *Queen of Shades*. **Seefried** is imaginatively displayed in a solo track from that bewitching early set of the Brahms Liebeslieder with the piano duet accompaniment, and **Paul Schoeffler** is suitably biting as Pizarro in an odd *Fidelio* Track that includes a chorus and could have been from a broadcast. There's a glimpse of the young **Rysanek**, songs from **Hilde Konetzni** and the great **Elisabeth Höngen** who in my time was the reigning mezzo of the Staatsoper. I am very interested in **Hugo Meyer-Welfing's** German Don Ottavio, which helps me to make amends in his case. I was always sniffy about him because whenever I heard

him he was following those I considered greater than he; he appeared as Hoffmann shortly after I had heard and seen **Patzak** striding through it like the voice of doom, and Ottavio just after the mellifluous and now sadly deceased **Anton Dermota**.

Patzak of course was a wonder. That he is featured here in one of the more profound songs from *Die Schöne Mullerin* is enhanced by the presence of Michael Raucheisen, whose accompaniments, as assessed by my old friend Ray Hedges, show more flexibility and imagination than was ever displayed by You Know Who! And nothing better could be found for **Fischer-Dieskau** than Schumann's Mondnacht. Anders is ardent in *Der Freischutz* and **Schock** is well in tune with something from the sometimes despised, but to me rather lovable Lortzing. James Robertson turns up again as conductor for the fine **Marko Rothmüller** in one of Guglielmo's arias from *Così*, **Ludwig Weber** (something different from him for once) booms decisively in the Landgrave's address, **Frick** descends impressively to the depths of Sarastro.

Now for the Northerners. **Flagstad** authoritative and matronly as Purcell's Dido. Ungratefully, I would have preferred the other side of that record, which was Gluck's *Che faro* and I've never heard it. All the more vexing because in the earlier Flagstad "golden voices" issue (HQM 1057) this delectable piece is printed on the label, but it ain't in the grooves. To continue in an ungrateful mood I feel I can chide the great **Björling** who is here represented by Romeo's "Ah levee-toi soleil" of Gounod's. I know it's magnificent singing, but how can this trumpeting get by with anyone who has had the fortune to hear **Alfredo Kraus** in the same school of music? And to stay with Gounod for a moment, there is the intriguing and puzzling "Judex" from the fine **Kim Borg**. WERM informs us that *Mors e Vita* was an oratorio from 1885, and Judex in unequivocally listed as being for "orchestra and chorus". It goes on to list one choral version, a clutch of orchestrals (old timers will remember the plum label by the New Symphony Orchestra under Collingwood) and the only solo version listed is for a soprano, and even that is shown as an arrangement. So where does Mr Borg fit in? But there's nothing wrong with how he does so, and another poser is that it starts off as though he's going on to "Ev'n bravest heart". Pointing up how the only Wagner opera that receives much attention here is *Tannhäuser*, we have a good rendition from **Berglund** of Wolfram's other solo, the one in Act two.

To Russia we must go, and this segment gets off to a rip-roaring start with one of the most grotesque exhibitions in the whole caboodle. **Claudia Novikova** makes an exotic meal of *La Périchole's* "tipsy" song, rendered at what seems like a quarter of the correct (or at least the normal) speed, with more hiccups and cackles than anything that could be described as singing. It seems that this lady made a speciality of laughing songs and recorded four sides of them. It is followed but the only blot in the copybook, since my copy has a visible blotch and some grating surface noise as a lady sings "Why?" by Tchaikovsky, but two minutes in eight hours is something that can be borne without rancour.

The next surprise follows at once, when an extract from *Sorotschinsky Fair* is accompanied by a lugubrious bassoon that gives off what to me is an astonishing anticipation of what was once Stravinsky's most notorious masterpiece. Soon we are in the thickets of Askold's *Tomb*, *Mazeppa*, *Dalibor*, *Dubrovsky*, *Sadko*, *The Snow Maiden* and sundry other Slavonic exotica, until suddenly up comes **Christoff** with an unpublished slice of *Nabucco*. He doesn't go on to the cabaletta (was that the reason why it wasn't released?) but gets back on to his home ground with Borodin. A presumably test recording by the talented **Mark Reizen** with Albert Coates at the piano raised the question of why EMI did not

make more use of this fine singer, as did a similar example in Vol.3. Then at long last (it seems) we are in the land of sunshine and song. **Tagliavini's** here, and all's right with the world. The fare is much as expected, but **Prandelli** is a rather unexpected bonus - a good artist (he was in Decca's first go at *La Bohème*, and was the tenor in Toscanini's Historic ninth symphony at the reopening of La Scala). **Del Monaco's** Exsultate is I guess, some kind of a record - it must be one of the shortest tracks to be issued since (I believe) Queen Victoria uttered the worse "Good Evening" on to one of Mr Edison's cylinders. The exuberant **Infantino** sings "Dicitincello vuje" and **Silveri's** "A tanto amor" is heart-easing. Everybody no doubt rushes to put on the Malaspina track of the Te Deum from *Tosca*, with Hardwick/Spoletta uttering his celebrated "Sta bene", and in a way this is even more interesting as a souvenir of what the newly established Covent Garden Chorus and Orchestra were then capable of. My beloved **Ebe Stignani's** big scene from *La Favorita* has been described as "disappointing", and I recall that on the 78 one of those last high notes was a bit "off", here to me at least it is not so bad, and there's no mistaking the immense authority of the singing. The original disc was something of an oddity because EMI's orthodoxy assured that each side was labelled with the opening words she sang, and thus nowhere did the conventional title "O mio Fernando" show up. The juxtaposition here of **Rossi-Lemini** and **Pasero**, both in excerpts from Russian operas, reminds me that in the late 1940s there was a production of *Boris Godunov* at La Scala with an almost (now) incredible line-up Pasero as Boris, Christoff as Pimen, and Rossi-Lemini as Varlaam.

Another foreigner, **Raphael Arié**, chooses the Count's big solo from *La Sonnambula* and sings all of it; **Noni** is heard in *I Pescatori di Perle*, Carosio in a truncated excerpt from Bellini's *Romeo* opera, and Barbieri's traversal of one of Azucena's big moments gives us a glimpse of the obscure **Mariano Caruso**. But the really big guns are reserved for the last side of all. The great **Margherita Grandi** shows her mettle in Elisabetta de Valois's closing scena from *Don Carlo*, the young **Tebaldi** is appropriately represented as *Manon Lescaut*, since she had sung an act of it at Toscanini's first postwar Scala appearance, **Milanov** does the *Trovatore* Leonora when at the height of her powers if not of her fame.

There are at the same time some oddities; the unknown and forgettable **Alba Anzellotti**, for example, in a Respighi song, but they all lead up to a glorious outburst of fireworks as the great **Callas** sweeps through one of the most fearful passages from Rossini's *Armide* in a knock-em-dead manner that causes an eruption of delirium in a fortunate concert audience at San Remo.

There's a lot I have forgotten or chosen to ignore, one participant being my favourite **Zara Dolukhanova**, who is the same age as myself and thus is now presumably silenced. She shows up well in an extract from *Khovatschina*, but had I been the Hardwick, it would have been something from a wonderful 10 inch disc she once made with **Barshai** and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, in particular a stunning exhibition of her powers in Carissimi's *Vittoria Vittoria*. And what would you have chosen had there been a few extra tracks to be filled? For me, in the spirit of "a little nonsense now and then", it would have been **Anna Russell** singing "Yesteryear" and the immortal **Mrs FF Jenkins** singing - well, practically anything.

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Postscript. Vivian Liff in his review states that this compilation contains one item that has been transferred at the wrong speed, and teasingly declines to identify it. Can anyone with "perfect pitch" do so?



Janet Kenny - New Zealand mezzo soprano, publicity photograph used during her career in England as a concert and oratorio, recitalist in the 1960s.

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HELP!

Can anyone supply me with basic facts on the following singers who visited New Zealand.

What I require for the ISINZ database (International Singers In New Zealand) are the year they came to our shores and any other details you might have like programmes, reviews or clippings from newspapers and magazines etc.

Here is a shot list for starters...

Blanche ARRAL

Florence AUSTRAL

Kim BORG

Toti DAL MONTE

Alfred DELLER

DOLORES (what were her Christian names)

DOLUKHANOVA

Todd DUNCAN

Keith FALKNER

Richard LEWIS

Walter MIDGLEY

Gladys MONCRIEFF

Jan PEERCE

Stella POWER

Paul ROBESON

Rita STREICH

Lawrence TIBBETT

Ninon VALLIN