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# THE G & T GAZETTE

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## GLEANINGS FROM HERE & THERE

In the place of our usual editorial we have several items which we hope will keep you amused and informed.

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Rod Cornelius of Auckland has returned to New Zealand from a music box convention in America. He has written to say he supports the idea we floated to establish a fund.

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Prices fetched at a deceased estate sale of jazz records saw lots of 15 items going for very moderate prices with \$10 to \$15 seeming to be the norm. Adam Tiller of 'copyright stamp fame' purchased several lots of 78's and some early LPs. Altogether it is believed he bought 400 records.

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Ray Hedges is now ensconced at Alexandra Rest Home. For those who are unfamiliar this is just down the road from Athletic Park on the Newtown side of the hill. Visiting hours are very liberal and the editor in the company of John Gray has already discovered he appreciates tins of G&T instead of grapes and orange juice!

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A chance purchase of a couple of old magazines has turned up information on the New Zealand contralto Irene Ainsley. A review of a concert she gave in Auckland in the Weekly Graphic dated 26 August 1908, acknowledges her improved vocal technique, a point which the writer attributes to classes which she took with Madame Marchesi. Anyone possessing her plum label HMV's which were made in 1908 is asked to get in touch with the editor. Some claim she was the first New Zealand vocalist to make recordings. However they seem to have forgotten John Prouse (baritone) who made some in 1904 for the same company.

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In another issue of the above publication, this time dated June 29 1907, we see that Andrew Black was about to undertake a tour in the North Island, appearing in Auckland, Thames and Hamilton

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A postcard bearing a standing portrait of ENOS BACON - the 'Yorkshire Nightingale', clutching sheet music titled 'Rock of Ages by Enos Bacon', has surfaced recently in Wellington. Can anyone add anything to enlighten us on this discovery. For those who have a nose for details, this is a real photograph printed on Dominion of New Zealand photographic postcard paper. It has not been used through the postal system but it has all the appearance of 1910 or thereabouts.

## WHITHER THE 78?

by Jonathan Dobson and Larry Lustig

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There can be little doubt that, no matter how much we rage against the dying of the light, the sun is slowly and inexorably setting on collecting classical 78-rpm records. As the older generation dies out, few young collectors are taking its place. The only exception is in the field of jazz, blues and rock and roll, which is attracting a small, but enthusiastic following of twenty-somethings. What this means is that those carefully-handled shellac treasures, on which we have all lavished time and money, will eventually be worth less in real terms as market forces take effect and supply gradually outstrips demand. We are not suggesting that exotica like the Pandolfini and Saint-Saëns G & Ts may be had for peanuts simply if one has the good fortune to live long enough, but certainly for lesser rarities this might well be the scenario.

So what has caused this change? We now know more about early records than ever before. Our libraries are stacked with biographies, discographies, chronologies etc. and the time when senior collectors preached to the relative novice to avoid those artists who were unknown in favour of the big names has passed. We now know that many factors determine who became 'big names' and who did not. Indeed, investigating the unfamiliar is now one of the most rewarding aspects of our hobby. Shouldn't the value of old records then, if anything, be rising?

If we consider that record collecting [as we now know it] started in the thirties, then our hobby has undergone about sixty years of evolution. The average age of the collector has risen, and, probably, most of the important records are now safely housed in collections. Gone are the days when Jack Freestone could write a monthly column in The Gramophone detailing major rarities found for next to nothing.

Years ago, good records were to be found in traditional junk shops, but these have all but vanished, having moved up market to cater for the stripped pine and potpourri set. The 78s have been swept away along with the junk and the muck that made such establishments so appealing to collectors. Charity shops were another good source of 'finds', but many now balk at a donation of several hundred unwieldy and friable records.

As time has gone on, the audiophile market has driven equipment manufacturers to concentrate exclusively on CD and on turntables capable of making the most of high quality stereo LPs. Most companies react with derision to the customer who still wishes to reproduce 78s. Many modern amplifiers do not even have tone controls or the necessary equalisation networks to deal with older recordings, and only the most expensive and esoteric turntables offer a 78 facility. Some collectors still prefer to use old acoustic gramophones, but these are increasingly hard to locate and the sort of machines that can reproduce shellac records effectively, such as the big HMV re-entrants or the EMG/Expert range, carry hefty price tags. Others may be forced to use elderly radiograms or early valve amplifiers which, unless they are carefully restored, produce more distortion than actual signal, further masking the performances embedded in the grooves of old records. Specialist equipment and styli can be found, but limited production runs and lack of general demand prices them beyond the means of most. Nowadays, even playing a 78 is difficult, and a more-than-adequate reason for deterring a young collector.

Another factor in the decline is the burgeoning reissue market. The advent of LP reissues of historical material gave new life to long-deleted recordings, and many collectors no longer felt the need to possess the original also. Whole symphonies and operas fitted sensibly on one or two unbreakable discs. Gone was the athleticism needed to rise from a comfy chair at the end of every side to turn over the disc. After LP reissues celebrated their quarter century, the CD sounded the death knell yet louder. Its quart-into-a-pint-pot capability seemed the perfect way of collecting performances originally issued on 78s. Now, armed with little more than a cheap CD player one can hear priceless rarities, transferred to a standard hitherto unattainable. When JD started collecting as a schoolboy in the late 70s, virtually the only way to hear Cortot, Pachmann or Grainger was to search for the original recordings. How different is the situation today, as transfers improve and prices drop. JD recently reviewed a three-disc set for ICRC, 'The Complete Sauer'. For the first time he had access to material that would take two lifetimes and thousands of pounds to acquire. Is it surprising that

younger generations have bypassed the 78 altogether?

Some blame must be laid squarely on the shoulders of a few less-than-scrupulous dealers, who have attempted to inflate the price of records for their own ends. To illustrate this, we were once told the tale of the dealer whose strategy, when faced with an unsold record, was to double the price when it appeared on a subsequent list, creating the illusion that the item was more desirable than reality suggested. Incredibly, this sleight of hand worked every time, which just goes to prove Grandmother's adage about a fool and his money soon being parted. This anecdote may be apocryphal-although it was relayed as fact-but, even so, such sharp practices have played their part.

Naturally, dealers do play a pivotal role in our hobby. They are a source of supply and a wealth of information. Some go to great lengths to produce lavishly illustrated and informative catalogues but, like all commodity brokers, their objective is profit. In the 1980s and early 90s, when collectors from the Tiger economics were paying very high prices for 78s, dealers, quite excusably, made hay while the sun shone and sent most of their prime stock abroad. Seasoned observers knew that the gravy train would eventually run out of steam, and so it has. Some records that sold fifteen years ago in the £5-£10 range may now be virtually worthless, because already supply has outweighed demand. A friend of ours, a collector of forty years, recently took over one thousand 78s to the local tip. Chamber and orchestral sets in magnificent condition were unceremoniously dumped. The effort of trying to sell them was just more than they were worth.

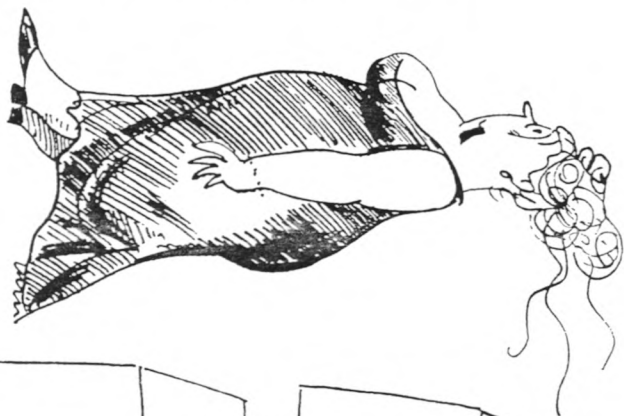
Of course, not all dealers are at fault: some, instead of continuing to sell records at top prices to a dwindling band of regular punters, are actively seeking and nurturing a younger market. We know of a far-sighted jazz dealer who occasionally offers significant rarities to younger collectors at cost, thereby sacrificing shortterm profit for long-term employment. This kind of approach may save the hobby, but few to date have had such vision.

To understand the reality of market forces, look at what has happened to the prices of most of the bread-and-butter records that are the backbone of every collection. A Martinelli DB, which was still available in the catalogues in Britain at the end of the 78 era, sold for 8/11 (about 45p) when the average wage was somewhere between

*continued on page 8*

# TOSCA

## San Francisco Opera 1961



One must remember that Tosca is very often the Cinderella - the last opera of the season - in a big opera house. This is because it is thought to be an 'easy' opera; there are in effect only three principals - Tosca, Cavaradossi and Scarpia. Looked at from the point of view of an overworked producer under great pressure, ninety per cent of the battle obviously lies in the principals knowing the work - the other participants amount only to the first-act chorus (some

rehearsal needed here), the second-act choir (off-stage thank God) and the third-act execution squad (no problem, they don't sing...). Alas, it is thus that fatal errors, hideous disasters, are engendered. On this particular occasion that innocuous firing squad was composed of hurriedly enlisted and highly enthusiastic college boys from the local campus, totally ignorant of the story and constantly worrying the producer with their 'When do we come on? What do we do?' His answer was an invariable, 'Wait, wait - I'm working with the principals'. In the end, a combination of illness and a desperately tight schedule led to the cancellation of the dress rehearsal and the appearance on the opening night of the execution squad itself only five minutes after their first and only consultation with the producer. He was still in a hurry, but felt he had given them enough to go on - 'O.K., boys. When the stagemanager cues you, slow-march in, wait until the officer lowers his sword, then shoot'. 'But how do we get off?' 'Oh - well, exit with the principals'. (This is the standard American instruction for minor characters, servants etc.)

The audience, therefore, saw the following: a group of soldiers marched on to the stage but stopped dead in its tracks at the sight of two people, not one as they had assumed - a man and a woman, both looking extremely alarmed. When they pointed their hesitant rifles at the man, he at first drew himself up, looking noble and resigned, but then started giving inexplicable conspiratorial sidelong glances at the woman ... they pointed them at her, but she made a series of violently negative gestures - but then what else would she do if she was about to be shot? Should they, perhaps, shoot them both? But then they would hardly be standing so far apart anyway, the opera was called Tosca, it was evidently tragic, the enormous woman on stage was presumably Tosca herself, solemn funeral music was playing, the officer was raising his sword....

Thus it happened. By a perfectly sensible process of logical deduction they shot Tosca instead of Cavaradossi. To their amazement they then saw the man, some twenty yards away, fall lifeless to the ground, while the person they had shot rushed over to him crying (we must remember this was in a vivid American translation), 'Come on, baby, get up we gotta go'. What could they do? They had shot one of the principals - though admittedly the wrong one - and their next instruction was 'Exit with the principals'. In disbelief they watched as, first, Spoletta and his minions burst on to the stage and Tosca could it be true? took up her position on top of the battlements. She jumped, and there was only one thing for it - as the curtain slowly descended the whole firing-squad threw themselves after her....

Reprinted from GREAT OPERATIC DISASTERS by Hugh Vickers illustrated by Michael ffolkes. - Macmillan - London 1979.

£10 and £15 per week. With the demise of the old speed, prices rose for several years as the collectors sought the suddenly unavailable. Today, one cannot give these discs away. With sufficient time, it is likely that a similar phenomenon may occur with good, middle-of-the-road collectors' records, like the commoner G&Ts and Fontotipias. Greater rarities are unlikely to be thus affected, for there will always be a greater demand than supply.

A common misconception among collectors is that a record bought for £20 twenty years ago may be worth at least £10 to a dealer when it comes to disposing of that cherished collection. Unfortunately this may not be the case, but conversely a disc that cost £10 forty years ago may now be worth many times the purchase price. The lesson here is: do not collect for investment (unless you have serious money to spend on recorded incunabula), collect for pleasure and don't expect your widow or widower to recoup your losses.

At 32, JD has the unenviable distinction of being one of the world's youngest collectors of classical pianists on 78 and could well be the last of a dying species. Are we to bury our head in the sand and watch the life-blood of our hobby drain slowly but inexorably away? Or is salvation possible? One way is for us all to recognise a responsibility to nurture the musical non-collector. Who among us has recently invited a young person into our home to share the thrill of the great voices? LL was fortunate, as a neophyte, to meet the likes of John Freestone, Vivian Liff, George Stuart and Harold Wayne, all of whom went out of their way to preach the gospel to a young collector. It does not need super-rarities to interest and intrigue. Each and every reader of The Record Collector must possess sufficient numbers of beautiful records to persuade the uninitiated that 78s are worth the effort. Perhaps readers can think of other way, if we do not we may be faced with the scenario of one senior collector, who recently told JD that, when the time came, his wife would be lucky to get 35p a record for his eight-thousand strong 78 collection. If the market is allowed to diminish further, then even that modest figure may be optimistic.

*This thought provoking piece has sparked a couple of responses which I have been tempted to reprint. However, until the dust settles a bit and I have got some feed-back from our local fraternity, I will withhold these follow-up pieces for a while. If anyone feels tempted to put pen to paper for our next issue, which is due out in early 2000, I will welcome their views. I might even approach them to see if they would allow The Record Collector to reprint their views. A 'Kiwi' inspired retort might make waves overseas - who knows!*

## ON A SOMBRE NOTE!

When asked recently what he'd like played at his funeral, doyen of record collecting in Wellington Ray Hedges asked for a recording by Gladys Moncrieff. The next thing we have to find out from him is what title he prefers. I can't help thinking it will be something from Fraser-Simpsons 'Maid of the Mountains'.

## OBITUARY

**Josef Locke (Joseph McLaughlin), tenor:** The son of a Londonderry butcher, young McLaughlin served with the Irish Guards early in the Second World War and returned to become a policeman. Spare-time singing as Ireland's Singing Policeman eventually led to a showbusiness career starting with 'Showboat' in Dublin and a number of operettas. Locke, as he had begun calling himself, went to London in 1945 to sing with The Crazy Gang (three pairs of comics) and the following summer joined George Formby in a summer season in Blackpool. The next year Formby took him on his Australian tour. He made three films, singing such favourites as *Macushla, I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen, Abide With Me* and *Goodbye* from White Horse Inn. In the second film he sang *Hear My Song, Violetta*, which became his theme song and 'Hear My Song' was the title of a 1992 film about his life. By the 1950s he was earning more than £1500 a week. Locke left Britain when the taxman called. He went back to Ireland, bought a farm, racehorses and a pub called White Horse Inn and enjoyed a hearty and harddrinking retirement - Born Londonderry. March 1917; married; died Clane, County Kildare, October 15, 1999.

*Evening Post 4th November 1999*

## TOO HARD COLUMN

Have you ever thought you could contribute to the G&T Gazette. Does this thought freak you out! Let me explain. What we'd require is a print out of your programme, with the name of the artist, song or title you played with composer and record number. We'd also ask for a 250 to 500 word precis of the points you wanted to express during your programme. That's the hard part. Try and reduce the waffle to some coherent phrase which future record collector's can appreciate. Too difficult! Impractical! Well this venture into publishing is too much a one man band and unless I get some feed-back shortly, I can't see the point of continuing.

# JOHN PROUSE

[1856-1930]

## NEW ZEALAND'S FIRST COMMERCIAL RECORDING ARTIST

John Prouse was born in Wellington in 1856 and as a youth was very active in local choirs in Wainuioinata and Taita where his family lived and worked. In 1885, he made his debut as a solo artist on the concert platform. A few years later he featured in the New Zealand Festival of Music which was held in Wellington. Highlighting this occasion were performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Handel's *Israel and Egypt*.

In the early 1890s he travelled to England to further his career, studying with William Ganz at the Guildhall in London. Later he became a pupil of Sir Charles Santley who helped to launch his professional career, getting him engagements at the Crystal Palace, Royal Albert and St James's Halls. In 1892 he returned to New Zealand where he gave many concerts throughout the country. While singing preoccupied him in the evenings, he was very active in the family's milling interests in the lower half of the North Island. Before going overseas again in 1903, he completed a tour of the country with Antonia Dolores, a soprano who made several visits to our New Zealand.

His second stay in England was longer than the first and allowed him a better chance to pit himself against some of the world's greatest singers. Acting as supporting artist, he appeared with the violinist Jan Kubelik and the pianist Wilhelm Backhaus. In June 1905, he made a series of test pressings for the Gramophone and Typewriter Company, precursors of His Master's Voice. Up until recently, it was supposed these never were released on to the market, but as they were allocated catalogue numbers, there's every chance that some copies may have survived. At the time of writing, we only know a handful of test pressings that came from his own collection.

Returning to New Zealand, his services in concert and oratorio were once again in great demand. Despite the fact that he and his wife were so far away from the musical centre of things, they played host to many visiting celebrities, thus keeping alive the contacts forged during their stay in England. Dame Nellie Melba, Dame Clara Butt and her husband Kennerly Rumford made visits to their home in Clifton Terrace, Wellington. In 1911, Prouse and Antonia Dolores once again toured New Zealand where his selection of songs included Schubert's *Der Wanderer* and a bracket by Albert Mallinson, a composer who toured Australasia in 1908, giving recitals with his wife. Besides *Elijah* and *Israel in Egypt*, Prouse is known to have had Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and Haydn's *Creation* in his repertoire. Shortly before his death in August 1930, he gave some broadcast recitals.

A light baritone, his recordings show a well-produced voice with great attention being lavished on phrasing and diction. My favourite would be *There's a land*, which he sang at a State Concert in Wellington in 1901, given in honour of the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall, who later became King George V and Queen Alexandra.

I came by his recordings when Frederick Page's daughter responded to a hand

written notice I put up at the Technical College where I was working. This was an inquiry regarding recordings from the golden age of opera. When I called on Prof. Page at the university, he directed me to a loft off his study where I found a dusty pile of 78s. Besides four white label test pressings there were items by Plancon, Renaud (three flush 1901 black label G&Ts) Caruso, and one solitary Columbia Bonci. When Bill Moran expressed an interest in the Prouse titles in my collection, I presented him with "There are no more like thee".

This article was originally printed in the winter 1989 edition of *Music in New Zealand*. Some editing and additions have been made.



### DISCOGRAPHY

#### 78rpm 10" recordings

Matrix	& date	Title - Composer	Catalogue no.
2146e	9 June 1905	Youth (Allitsen)	3-2356
2147e	9 June 1905	There's a Land (Allitsen)	3-2357*
2148e	9 June 1905	Queen of Connemara	X-42325**
2180e	20 June 1905	Pilgrim's song (Tchaikovsky)	3-2358*
2181e	20 June 1905	Gipsy John (Frederic Clay)	destroyed
2182e	20 June 1905	No information	destroyed
2183e	20 June 1905	Deathless Army (Trottere)	destroyed
2184e	20 June 1905	Maid of Morven (Lawson)	3-2359*
2185e	20 June 1905	There are no more like thee (Temple)	3-2360*

#### 78 rpm 7" recordings all destroyed

978d	20 June 1905	I cannot help loving
979d	20 June 1905	Heart of Oak (Bryce)
980d	20 June 1905	Maritana: In happy moments (Balfe)

\* Test pressings held in private collections \*\* Zonophone

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

*our honorary editor writes*

I have been privileged to be chosen as the recipient of the RAY HARRIS collection of 78 rpm jazz recordings. As most in our group will know, RAY HARRIS is a well known radio personality who has appeared on our National Radio programmes for many years.

Without hesitation I accepted the challenge of re-distributing this 1,200 plus collection to good homes. Now I need your help!

Starting with the scratchy record group, I'm inviting anyone interested to contact me so we can discuss ways and means of seeing this fascinating collection of records somehow preserved. Most of the items date from the late 1920s to the end of the 78rpm era in the mid 1950s.

For those who have some knowledge of record collecting in the jazz idiom may be interested to know that Ray's preferences were centered mainly on the 'swing band Artie Shaw - Benny Goodman era'.

I have hastily scanned the boxes they came in and can report they are all in pristine condition. Many of the standard classics are supported by variants which make it a delight to investigate. Please come forward and help me see this problem resolved.

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT



Front and rear cover illustrations by courtesy of Roger Hart. Many of our readers will not know that Roger followed in the footsteps of Russell Clark as the *Listener's* chief illustrator in the early 1960's, a job which he carried out with great distinction until a change of editorial policies saw the 'short story' feature axed several years later. We thank Roger for this chance to renew our bonds with him and hope that one day he will return to the Scratchy Record fold.