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GLEANINGS FROM HERE & THERE

RAY HEDGES COLLECTION - SOME REFLECTIONS

There can be no doubt in my mind that the most significant event in local record collecting circles since the 78rpm deletion sales in the 1950s has been the recent dispersal of the Ray Hedges collection. Others may think differently considering how I actively campaigned in our group to get something done before he 'slipped his clogs' and we were reduced to the inevitable conclusion of wringing our hands regretting the way his collection might have been thoughtlessly thrown to the four winds. Therefore I acknowledge my views on the importance of this event are coloured because of my personal association. None the less, I'm proud to have played a part in getting something done and the way it seems to have succeeded, not only benefiting those who participated in the sale, but the peace of mind it has obviously given Ray to know that we will continue to enjoy his recordings long after he has gone.

For me it's been a fascinating yet melancholy occasion, as I made numerous visits to his house to remove the records to where they could be sorted and displayed. Apart from the sheer physical demands of transporting everything from its inaccessible location and the sensitivities that I was exposed to concerning mortality issues, I gained greatly from this project on a number of levels.

First was the realisation that Ray was no lightweight when it came to putting his love of music on the line. In the course of my work, I came across lots of notes he'd made in books like the *Voices of the past* series, biographies, programme notes and catalogues. These prove he was as studious as any in our midst, a knowledge which never really got aired sufficiently at our meetings because of a particular individual who made a habit of taking cheap shots at Ray when he had difficulty in marshalling his thoughts. While it was something of a strain to bear with Ray's impediment on these occasions, given patience and forbearing, there would be few amongst us who could match his knowledge and personal experiences, particularly in the field of the stage and musicals.

Secondly, I was amazed by the depth and extent of his collection which contained many interesting items, more than I ever imagined existed. In the realm of record collecting, he was like us all - simply accepting what came into his collection. Then again I found many boxes which indicated he especially imported certain items which were not commonly available in New Zealand. While this does not distinguish his collection to any special degree, I was impressed by the way he stuck with items which were superseded by newer and better(?) performances. How else could you explain ten or more different versions of some of the standard operas like *Aida* or *La Boheme*, stretching from 78s to boxed sets of LPs. One particular trait which I found frustratingly difficult to deal with were his sets of operas. It was his practice to put sets that had been released in individual packets into boxed sets, discarding the glossy packets in the process and of course mingling booklets, scores and even programmes with each package.

What made the dispersal of his records even more difficult was not reserved to this habit or the sheer physical problem of transporting them to a site where they could be pored over by potential buyers, but the utterances of certain well-meaning individuals who took pains to point out to me and others that Ray's playing equipment was not up to standard and his records should be approached with caution. Fortunately their comments in this direction did not seem to affect sales of 78s, but it has been a problem to interest buyers into examining the bulk of Ray's collection which is centred on LPs. It is therefore with concern I report that Ray's LPs have virtually been left untouched.

Another even more staggering revelation for me was a huge pile of programmes I came across in his basement. We all knew from his comments over the years that Ray had seen nearly every show, concert, opera or recital given here in Wellington over the last 70 years. What amazed me even more was the fact that his coverage was not reserved exclusively to visiting celebrities. College productions of G&S, amateur dramatics and obscure groups like the Ophans Club all received his undivided attention and patronage over the years.

For my part, my collection was greatly enhanced in certain areas. All told, I purchased sev-

eral hundred dollars worth of recordings, taking as I did the opportunity to catch up on singers whom I'd been severe upon in the late 1970s when I was endeavouring to reduce my collection down to 'one' as has jokingly been referred to on many occasions by members of the group. Hence I caught up on sopranos like Austral, Giannini, Farrar, Lehmann and Rethberg. Plums for me were Ray's Buckman recordings, including the test pressing of 'On Wings of Song'. Then there were a couple of albums containing Vladimir Rosing's Russian songs, a singer whom I've always fancied. Ironically, quite a few of the standard items I acquired had my speed and date of recording marked on them with a chinagraph pencil. So these had come the full circle back into my collection!

In a more esoteric vein, I was surprised by the number of quality Polydor recordings which he had. Schorr, Lehmann, Schlusnus, Onegin, Kurz and Hempel were represented with some excellent titles while I only found one G&T (Michalova). There were no Fonotopias apart from two in the Parlophone Historic reissue series and an excellent representation from the HMV Archive series. After I'd been through them, I couldn't help but notice that most of the more interesting titles had come from a single collection. These were distinguished by the initials VS and then either a 10 or a 12 numerical prefix to a three figure number. When I asked Ray who VS was, he was unable to help me.

One anecdote concerning one of his 78s emerged which is worth repeating. This was an 1906 recording of the trio from *Ernani*, which featured Baldassari (baritone) Martinez-Patti (tenor) and Elvira Tetrazzini (soprano). When I wrote of this discovery to our Australian correspondent Nelson Kenny, he said he'd once had this item in his collection, purchasing it from Begg's in Christchurch in the mid 1950s. Sure enough, when I examined the space on the disc between the last groove and the record label, there was a chinagraph marking which Nelson had put on the disc after tuning it to a piano. How it got into Ray's collection will remain a mystery as he can't recall how he acquired it. Incidentally, you actually can't hear Luisa Tetrazzini's sister in this recording!

THEY SAY PLAGIARISM IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST FORMS OF FLATTERY

Those attending Don Lang's evening in August were amazed when a programme bearing a strong similarity to the *G&T Gazette* was presented to each member of the audience. While the *Gazette* takes great pleasure in the *Gin & Tonic Splashette's* appearance, we feel obliged to point out that we came into existence after the efforts of Ilmar Taimre, who in 1993 set a standard which not only crystallised efforts of documenting the activities of the Scratchy Record Group, but set a standard of research and presentation which has become a model for others. While our front page and title in no way mimicked Ilmar's, we have taken a leaf from his book in presenting stories and articles which we feel are essential to giving our group status, equalling if not surpassing the measure of other organisations who take an interest in recorded music.

In the meantime, we have inserted a light-hearted warning on our cover to alert readers against further imitations from other quarters as a result of this challenging enterprise. May the spirit of competition prevail!

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

One of the perks of being editor of a small publication like the *G&T Gazette* is the way you can call the tune on what's published, especially when contributions from other authors are virtually non-existent. None the less, it's a role I play with care because I know how easy it would be to yield to one's own preferences over other concerns.

That said, I've often demonstrated my interest in the ballads of Carl Loewe by including examples of his songs in a number of my programmes over the years. On this score I think readers would have to agree I've shown great restraint in not bursting into print on him before this present issue.

Therefore I've chosen to write a special piece on the two CD anthologies of his songs and ballads which came my way during the 200th anniversary of his birth in 1996. What I have written will not cause any of you to dump your Schubert recordings. But if it causes you to dig out the odd Loewe items in your collection and listen to them again then my efforts will not have been in vain.



Getting High on Loewe!

In this article I don't intend to call upon my limited musical knowledge, let alone my schoolboy command of the German language to make profound statements on the merits of Carl Loewe's music. Instead I would simply like to draw attention to this composer's amazing ability to create wonderful characterisations for voice and piano that combine to express the storyline to perfection. I venture my ability to comment on the merits of his ballads and songs (lieder) purely on the basis of having acquired and enjoyed a large number of records over the years I have been collecting.

It has always been difficult to discuss Loewe's contribution to 19th century music without mentioning Franz Schubert, a contemporary whom he outlived by some decades. Both composers were products of the romantic Nordic/Celtic ethos which swept Germany in the late 18th century. In Loewe's case, he drew upon a lot of this material for his ballads like *Edward* -1818, *Archibald Douglas* -1858 and *Tom der Reimer* -1867. These rather horrific and fanciful themes were balanced with down to earth homilies like *Kleiner Haushalt* - Tidy Household, *Selbne Beter* - The Man Who Seldom Prayed, and *Die Uhr* - The Clock. These songs reflect the settled livelihood he experienced in the North German town of Stettin where he spent most of his life. Schubert on the other hand probably had more intellectual stimulation from the 'cafe society' in Vienna, an environment which motivated him into

accomplishing a tremendous amount of work in a very short life. By drawing attention to these differing lifestyles I'm not attempting to categorise their work to any great degree, but it must be acknowledged that Schubert either had the advantage when it came to recognition. Whatever their geographic/environmental influences, Loewe always suffered from the proximity of Schubert's brilliance, hence it has become customary to bypass him with only a passing reference when discussing music from this period.

Therefore it was heartening a few years back to see a number of companies producing special releases to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Loewe's birth.

The CD sets which sparked this article are excellent for their coverage and presentation, They are *The Songs of Carl Loewe* - Pearl GEMM CD 9251 and *Carl Loewe zu Ehren* 89239 (2 disc set). Each disc contains 18 items which means 54 tracks. Deduct 14 from this total that are duplicated and we only scratch the surface of the 700 plus songs he composed during his lifetime. Besides songs, Loewe lived to write 16 Oratorios, 5 Operas and a number of orchestral and instrumental works. Unfortunately, very little of this has been recorded, so it is virtually impossible to measure his contribution to music beyond these songs and ballads. In this respect it is very important to understand the subtle difference between lieder and ballads.

L. J. De Bekker's 1911 *Music and Musicians* described the ballad as "a narrative verse sung by the Anglo-Saxon or bard who was generally the author of both the words and music".

Lieder on the other hand is best described by paraphrasing S. S. Prawer's learned interpretation from the 1964 *Penguin Book of Lieder*. He says a poet's text is transformed into a melody and made to enter harmonic and contrapuntal relations with a piano or orchestra to such an extent that it can hardly be called a mere accompaniment! Incidentally, the same author is rather critical of Loewe in this context, accusing him of merely repeating the vocal line in the piano accompaniment in many of his ballads.

Despite this put down, I still get a thrill whenever I play Sir George Henschel's 1928 *Erl König* (Pearl) because here we have absolute perfection - a 'hand in glove' performance that distinguishes the balladeer's advantage over the more formal lied recital. One of my most vivid musical experiences in the late 1950s was at a concert in the Wellington Town Hall given by Burl Ives who I suppose would have been referred to at the time as a folk singer rather than as a

balladeer. Ives worked his magic to a half empty hall with his guitar and grab bag of songs which were a mixture of folk and art - that is assuming Stephen Foster's efforts in this direction can be viewed above the simple folk songs. Apparently this was the way Loewe conducted many of his performances, including one for Queen Victoria in 1847, singing to his own accompaniment.

While for space reasons I can't comment on all of the artists involved in these CDs, I would like to express surprise and satisfaction at the number of women represented. You don't normally associate women with the songs of Loewe. A least that's what the record companies would have us believe. Dark sonorous basses or bass-baritones seem to be the order of the day, yet it was most refreshing to find familiar singers like Elizabeth Rethberg, Sigrid Onegin, Hulda Lashan-ska, Julia Culp Lula Mysz-Gmeiner and the lesser known Beatrix Kernic front up with excellent performances. Lula Mysz-Gmeiner's interpretation of *Herr Oluf* (zu Ehren) is one of Loewe's more dramatic ballads and is skilfully handled in this instance despite the lighter treatment a woman's voice lends the effect. Hulda Lashan-ska (Pearl) and Elizabeth Rethberg (zu Ehren) on the other hand opt for the lyrical *Canzonette*.

Oddly enough, my other Loewe indulgence two years ago was to acquire a CD from a series on the CPO label which set out in 1995 to do a definitive edition of all of Loewe's songs. At the time of writing I'm not sure how far they got in this task - perhaps someone might be able to let me know. The CD I acquired featured the very attractive soprano Iris Vermillion with Cord Garben at the piano. So perhaps all this demonstrates that male dominance in the performance of Carl Loewe's songs is not all as one-sided as we might have been led to believe. Our own Rosina Buckman included a Loewe song in her early recitals in England.

For the rest, it might be said that the reputations of Heinrich Schlusnus, Karl Erb, Gerhard Husch, Alexander Heinemann, Paul Knupfer, Richard Mayr, Cornelius Bronsgeest *et al* were maintained if not advanced. Only one or two were less creditable, if not slightly out of tune like Theodor Scheidl's *Archibald Douglas* (Pearl). To a lesser extent some weaknesses were apparent when it came to choice of items. For instance, I can't see the point in putting Walther Ludwig's version of *Tom der Reimer* in the same set (zu Ehren) as that of Leo Slezak, who has more or less personalised this song beyond compare. In the same breath I was agog at Paul Bender's *Der Mummelsee*. If

anyone would like to nominate a dark German bass's performance against Pol Plancon's famous coloratura *Le Cid - Air du Tambour*, then this is the one! Bender's voice demonstrates runs up and down the scale that leave you breathless!

Then one must not forget the pianists. Michael Raucheisen's artistry stands out head and shoulders above a whole galaxy of talent that includes Sebastian Peschko, Franz Rupp and Bruno Seidler-Winkler. I wonder if Raucheisen ever made solo recordings?

The production and packaging stakes would favour Pearl who gratefully acknowledge the compiler Ian R. Lilburn and the transfers by Roger Beardsley. They also went to the trouble to note which songs were ballads or lieder. On the other hand while zu Ehren's transfers are well done and the booklet reads well, echoing all the data we love to pore over, I would question the lack of credits for special productions like this.

Bill Main

STOP PRESS

After this edition had been laid out and made ready for publication, we received an article by Brian Blackford. This is an important document and while some may skip reading it because technical matters don't seem to come high on the list of priorities in our group, I would urge everyone to take a serious interest in what he says, remembering we are only the temporary custodians of the records we cherish.

A LIST OF INTERNATIONAL SINGERS WHO VISITED NEW ZEALAND

This list has been compiled from several private sources. Additions are welcome.
Further details can be supplied if required.

Ainsley, Irene	1908 Auckland	NZ Graphic
Alda, Frances	1927 Cyril Towsey (pno)	Taimre
Arral, Blanch	1906?	JNK
Austral, Florence	1930 1934 1936 John Amadio	JNK
Baillie, Isobel	1940 1948(w.Nat.Orch.)	WM & RHC
Basiola, Mario	1947	WM
Black, Andrew	1907 North Island Leopold Premyslav (pno)	NZ Graphic
Borg, Kim	1961	JNK
Buckman, Rosina	1922 D'Oisly (tenor) Kahn (pno)	Taimre
Butt, Clara	1908 1913 1921-22 1926 Rumford (baritone)	Taimre
Calve, Emma	1910 Gasparri (tenor) Pintel (pno) Truda (flute)	Taimre
Chaliapine, Theodore	1926 Rabinowitsh (pno) Hilda Sutton (vn.)	WM
Comedy Harmonists	1939(?)	WM & RHC
Crooks, Richard	1939 Frederick Schauwecker (pno)	WM
Dal Monte, Toti	1924 ?1926 1928	WM
Dawson, Peter	1931 1946	RHC
Deller, Alfred	1964 w.consort ?	JNK
Di Stefano, G.	1967 Wn Ivor Newtown (pno)	WM Col.
Dolores, Antonia	1895-?	JNK
Dolukhanova, Zara	1966 1969	JNK
Don Cossack Choir	1956	WM
Duncan, Todd	1946 1949 1960 (?)	JNK
Falkner, Keith	1956	JNK
Gafni, Miclos	1948 & 1956 Henri Penn (pno)	Hart & RHC
Galli-Curci, Amelita	1925 1932.1925 1932 Samuels (pno)	Taimre
Gange, Fraser	1920 1928	JNK
Glaz, Herta	1947	RHC
Granforte, Apollo	1932	JNK
Hammond, Joan	1946	RHC

Infantino, Luigi	1957 Angelo Campori	WM
Kipnis, Alexander	1938(?)	WM
Lawrence, Majorie	1949	RHC
Lehmann, Lotte	1939	RHC
Lewis, Richard	1957	JNK
Los Angeles, Victoria de	1956/1957 Maurice Till (pno)	WM
Marshall, Lois	1950s	RHC
McCormack, John	1912 1913-1914. Buckman(sop) Kaufmann (bs) Clay (pno)	
Melba, Nellie	1903 1909 1903 Kirby (tenor) Dawson (piano) 1909 Bourne (pno) Lemmone (flute) Ranalow (baritone) Miss Whittle (pno)	Taimre
Middleton, Arthur	1920s	WM
Midgley, Walter	1949	JNK
Moncrieff, Gladys	1918-1961	JNK
Nash, Heddle	1940	WM
Pagluighi, Lina	1932	WM
Peerce, Jan	1960s	JNK
Power, Stella	1920s	WM
Raisbeck, Rosina	1947	RHC
Ripley, Gladys	1940	WM
Robeson, Paul	1950s	WM
Rumford, Kennerly	see Butt	
Schipa, Tita	1937 1950 (?)	JNK RHC
Schwarzkopf	1970s Maurice Till (pno)	WM
Snazelle	1890s	JNK
Souzay, Gérard	1959 Dalton Baldwin (pno)	WM
Streich, Rita	1960 1966 1968	JNK
Te Wiata	1958 NZ tour	RHC
Thill, Georges	1947	RHC
Thomas, Edna	1925	JNK
Thomas, John Chas	1947	RHC
Tibbett, Lawrence	1938	JNK
Vallin, Ninon	1947 1949 Werner Baer (pno)	JNK
Walker, Norman	1952	JNK
Webb, Yvonne	1944 w.Nino Marotto	RHC
Zeigler/Booth	1948	RHC

SOME NOTES ON THE ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION OF 78s

by Brian Blackford

The recent "Whither the 78" article drew attention to the difficulty and expense of reproducing 78 rpm records electronically. Whilst I cannot claim that reproduction to a standard that does the artists substantial justice is easy or particularly inexpensive, perhaps the comments below might help in avoiding unnecessary expense.

Such commentary should logically deal mainly with motors, pickups and preamplifiers/equalisers; the components that have specific relevance to 78s.

However, we should also consider amplifiers and loudspeakers, since ultimately the quality of what one hears depends very much on these too. There really are differences in clarity, evenness of tone, and resolution of detail between very good and average equipments, differences which can substantially affect one's enjoyment and appreciation of the artistry on the record.

Domestic loudspeakers took important steps forward, first in the late 1960s with the production by Bowers and Wilkins of moderately priced speakers having a relatively much flatter frequency response, then in the early 1970s with the commercial manufacture of BBC-developed designs by firms of Spender and Rogers. Since then improved design philosophy and testing methods, and much attention to fine detail, have produced many good models of loudspeaker, and happily most speakers don't seem to wear out if not abused (though internal capacitors might need replacing, the foam cone surrounds on some models can deteriorate, and screws fixing the bass/midrange units to front panels can come loose). So, secondhand speaker systems from the best UK manufacturers, from the late 1960s onwards, are well worth trying out. Ones to be considered should have had favourable test reports in Gramophone magazine. Alternatively, if a full measure of bass is not needed or wanted, bookshelf 2-way designs from the mid 1980s onwards are often very satisfactory.

Transistorised amplifiers started to become generally acceptable with the Quad 33/303 system of 1968, and this probably represents the minimum standard to aim for. The 33 pre-amp has really been superseded, though, and I replaced the high value capacitors in my 303 main amplifier long ago: electrolytic capacitors do deteriorate with time and temperature, causing subtle degradation in audio quality. With that caveat, many UK or American-sourced amplifiers from the 1980s onwards should be satisfactory, and again Gramophone test reports are useful guides. Japanese "Technics" amplifiers, though quite well written-up in Gramophone, have not achieved a positive reputation locally for sound quality. Amplifiers can be overhauled by a good technician if full service data is available.

Regarding Japanese amplifiers, in the early 1960s a Chinese engineer working for Westinghouse, Dr H C Lin, devised an ingenious type of output stage circuit for producing adequate power reliably from the types of output transistors then becoming available. Known as the "quasocomplementary circuit", this was taken up enthusiastically by Oriental companies as the basis for their affordable amplifier designs for about the next 20 years. Unfortunately such amplifiers produced unpleasant-sounding "crossover distortion", most noticeable at low volume levels, and this gained transistor amplifiers generally a bad name. They also confirmed to their makers that most "HiFi" purchasers are uncritical of such defects, perhaps especially when in combination with imperfect LPs, cheap pickup cartridges and rough-sounding tweeters. However, with high-grade ancillaries, better types of amplifier are justified.

Old valve amplifiers, which might seem highly 78-compatible, have problems on two fronts. Firstly their pre-amplifiers introduced rather high levels of hum, hiss and in some cases, distortion (and usually by now most of their internal components will be worn out or deteriorated by age). Secondly their main amplifiers would normally need a substantial re-build to achieve reliability, safety and proper performance, and only the best models could justify this on cost and performance grounds.

Motors/Turntables .

A new Garrard 501 at around \$15,000, or a comparably-priced SME motor and pickup, would no doubt solve all of our problems, but might be just a little better than many of our discs could justify.

Good new turntables for 78, complete with pickup and variable speed, are available at around \$2,000 to \$3,000 e.g. from "Project" (of the Czech Republic) and from Esoteric Sound Inc. of Chicago, NA (the "Esoteric Sound Reference Restoration Deck", based on a Japanese product).

To get the best from this still significant expenditure, bear in mind that we want our final sound to be a reproduction of tiny vibrations induced in the stylus tip by the recorded groove, and not by any other source. Vibrations from the room need to be damped out, for instance by placing the turntable assembly on a stable, solid cabinet top, with vibration-absorbing damping pads in between (e.g. "Fowlpods"). On older equipment, vibration from the motor, or any idler wheel, needs to be eliminated as far as possible, and the correct lubricants applied to all bearings. Any play in the turntable centre bearing can obviously cause unintended wobble of the record groove where it is contacted by the stylus, affecting the resulting sound, and even the quality of the turntable mat has some relevance.

Think of the mechanical 'circuit' between the cartridge body, the headshell it's clamped to, along the pickup arm, through its vertical and horizontal bearings to the arm base, along the deck to the turntable centre bearings, through the lubricating layer to the turntable spindle, then along the turntable, through the mat and record thicknesses to the stylus and thence to the transducer element that generates the electrical signal. Any play or vibration introduced anywhere in this tortuous circuit will be superimposed onto the groove/stylus vibration that produces the musical signal, reducing the clarity of the music. This is the big problem of the analogue gramophone. This is also why so much expensive design and engineering goes into the very best modern turntable/pickup systems. And on a much similar scale, it's why the condition of the three bearings mentioned, and their lubrication, are vital for the best results.

It is possible, though, to obtain quite good results from some older turntable units, even from some autochangers, given correct attention to their maintenance and installation.

Of the domestic turntables or record playing decks (i.e. motor/turntable plus pickup) produced in the LP's heyday, the Garrard 301/401 and the Goldring Lenco stand out as regards quality and functionality, and often become available secondhand. Both can be maintained indefinitely, but were so well made that with proper care and lubrication little other maintenance should be needed. The Garrard is potentially the best from that era, as regards quality of sound obtainable, but needs some modification and technical understanding to give of its best. Reputably most Garrards are now in Japanese hands. The Goldring Lenco is probably a very good compromise.

Motor/turntables from the 78 era were crude by comparison, but the later ones are quite suitable for building into acoustic gramophones where bass reproduction is limited.

Reverting to the Garrard 301/401, these are probably best used by being clamped to a thick plywood base but not "boxed-in", and ideally the eddy current brake should be removed and the motor fed from a 200 volt variable frequency supply (to give speed con-

tol). This is because the motor, when fed from 240 volts, is too powerful for use with modern lightweight pickups, producing excessive vibration when its speed is held back by the magnetic brake.

The best quality autochangers from the 1960s are also worth considering, notably models with balanced aluminium turntables from Garrard, Dual etc., and an autochanger is very helpful for sorting out 78s. An aluminium turntable is preferred for use with magnetic pickup cartridges, and the heavier turntables help to keep speed constant. Likely problems are that an autochanger's spindle bearing design is compromised by the need for a stationary upper spindle; that spindle has to be of a smaller diameter, often allowing excessive clearance for the record centre hole, thus off centre rotation and consequent "wow"; and the pickup's bearings are usually of a lower quality and are often worn out. Better results may be gained by removing the various items of autochanging mechanism and substituting a better pickup arm - assuming that the loss of the autochange facility can be tolerated. Such a system can produce very acceptable sound from 78s, for little more than the cost of the high quality pickup cartridge and diamond stylus that it justifies.

A final note on gramophone motors of all types, is that prior to about 1975 most long-lived mechanisms for domestic use were designed to be periodically cleaned, adjusted and re-lubricated. The period might be every 10 years, or longer, but "maintenance free" only applied to throwaway items. That may, in fact, still be largely the case.

Pickup Arms, Cartridges and styli

In the days before S.M.E. there really was no high fidelity pickup arm that a competent, discriminating engineer could take seriously; that was why the boss of Scale Model Engineering Ltd decided to make one. He set the standard for all future pickup manufacturers to aim at, and created a design classic. Over a million of the SME 3009 arms have now been made, and the removable headshell model is the obvious recommendation for our purposes, new (they're still current after 39 years!) or secondhand.

But the SME is so useful, and such a work of art, that few owners are prepared to part with them while they're still alive. Therefore I mention another vintage arm, possibly just as good for 78s and rather simpler, that also takes the lightweight, detachable SME headshell - the Ortofon of, I believe, around 1970 to 1975 manufacture, as used by the NZBC, I'm told.

These may occasionally turn up. There were also some quite useful Japanese arms marketed in the 1970s, which aped the SME in various ways.

Twelve-inch arms are available, particularly for use with sixteen-inch diameter acetate discs, but for normal use with high compliance cartridges a nine-inch arm has advantages associated with its lower moment of inertia.

Next we consider the stylus material, and here the colourful history of the shellac disc is relevant. The problem is that from the beginning of 78 production to about 1935 there was no agreed industry standard for the size and shape of the recorded, modulated groove, and in the early years there were quite wide differences between manufacturers. This meant there could be no standardisation of the reproducing stylus, which obviously needed to fit the groove fairly closely.

There were two ways of coping with this situation. The original one was to make the stylus or needle from a moderately soft material such as a fairly low carbon steel, or cellulose fibre, and to make the record material abrasive, adding a slate filler to the shellac to grind the stylus tip to the size and shape of the groove within the first few revolutions. Unfortunately the abrasive material added a "frying eggs" (or maybe bacon) sound to the music, and also meant that the needle became excessively ground down after about one side. But that was the only way, at the time, to cope with all the differently sized and shaped grooves, and it did sell a lot of consumables.

The modern approach is to have a selection of differently-sized very hard (i.e. dia-

mond) styli, operating in moving-magnet pickup cartridges at relatively much lower playing weights, typically around two grams. Instead of fitting exactly into the bottom of the V-shaped groove, these are made to ride further up, contacting the groove walls at points roughly half way up each wall, so avoiding any dirt or debris on the groove bottom.

Either headshells, complete with cartridges and fixed styli, are swapped around as needed onto the end of the pickup arm, or different styli are plugged into a fixed cartridge. The very low playing weight, around 1/100th the weight of a soundbox and carrier, means that at least 1000 sides, and possibly far more, can be played before stylus wear becomes troublesome. So, instead of a cheap stylus, softer than the record material and changed frequently, we now use expensive styli, harder than the record material but changed very infrequently. One might expect that the hard stylus will now wear the record, but with such a dramatically lower playing weight any wear is inconsequential, and certainly far less than the wear caused by steel or fibre needles.

Accurately sized, shaped and polished diamond styli are available from the Expert Stylus Company of Ashted, Surrey, England, mounted in tip assemblies to fit Shure cartridges. A selection of 2 or 3 sizes will cater for most "78" needs.

As regards cartridges, the choice among medium-priced ones is very limited these days, but 'Expert' were recently supplying Shure M55 types, which are very good for our purposes. These incidentally are stereo cartridges, which have the advantage that the two pairs of output terminals can be connected in any of four ways; Firstly, in series or in parallel: this provides for two different output impedances, but may not make much difference in practice. More importantly, in-phase or out-of-phase: in-phase for lateral cut (normal) records, or out-of-phase for vertically cut.

In more detail, the parallel connection (gives a higher output current) is more suitable for normal transistorised amplifier input stages. The series connection, which gives a higher voltage and is reportedly preferred by Americans, is theoretically preferable for amplifiers using valves or field effect transistors in the input stage. Of course, with a stereo amplifier, the inputs to both channels should be connected together, i.e. in parallel.

Also, as regards styli, we have the choice of two basic shapes; truncated conical, or truncated elliptical. "Truncated" refers to the cutting off of the extreme tip, to clear the groove bottom. Conical is the general purpose shape, but particularly for worn records. Elliptical, with the minor axis about one third the length of the major axis, and the major axis positioned across the groove, should give clearer reproduction of discs in good condition, owing to reduction of the "pinch effect". These styli, though, are more fragile, wear faster, and need to be accurately set up, precisely across the groove width, to give of their best.

Regarding stylus wear, this can be detected early by microscopic examination, at 200 to 500 times magnification. A simple toy microscope could be used. Look for flat spots on the stylus sides, near the tip. A good recommendation is to check after 1000 to 1200 sides played for elliptical, possibly rather more for conical tips. Tip fracture can be more of a problem - cracked, chipped or pitted records should be played with steel needles on an acoustic machine rather than with delicate and expensive electronic stylus assemblies. Also, records that have had many playings with steel needles, and consequently having steel debris in the grooves, might do the diamond stylus no favours.

So, periodically think about stylus wear, and perhaps at the same time think about re-lubricating those turntable bearings.

Next issue deals with Recording and Replay Characteristics, Preampifiers, Equalisers and Noise Reduction.

CURTAIN'S UP!

This is the first of two articles on Ray Hedges which I have prepared for publication. The second will appear in the first issue of Vol. 7 G&T Gazette in 2001.

Ray is alive and well as I write this piece, so he will be in a position to rectify any errors which creep in. If this article appears to be an oblique reference to his demise, let's call it a preliminary survey of a person whose commitment to music and the stage grows as you dig and delve into these activities in the Capital from the 1930s.

While clearing out some of his record collection from the basement in Wallace Street, I came across several scrapbooks which he'd compiled over the years. In one of these were a number of newspaper cuttings which I've used for this tribute.

The first mention of Ray being involved in the theatre in Wellington dates from the 7th of June, 1934 when he was seventeen. Acting as producer he staged "WHIRLED INTO HAPPINESS" - a revue in two acts with a ballet and chorus of 40 artists. This was put on in the parish hall of St. Luke's, Wadestown. J.D.Turrall was Musical Director and the Ballet Mistress was Hazel Martin. Ray or Raymonde as he was listed in the programme, played the role of Reggie Browne. Proceeds from this were given to the YMCA gymnasium equipment fund.

The following year in July another revue called "HOW DO YOU DO" was staged at the Blue Triangle Hall. Once again Ray was the producer, this time his name appeared without the affectitious 'e'. A feature of this production was the prison scene from FAUST. This attracted the following press comment. "The Prison Scene from Faust was well played by Doris Clarke (as Marguerite), W. Binet Brown (Mephistopheles) and Sam Hall (Faust). In this scene the players quite captured the atmosphere of the grand opera".

In 1936, Ray seems to have given up the role of producer for a lead in one of the sketches. David Devitt's revue TO-NIGHT'S THE NIGHT was staged in the Concert Chamber, Wellington Town Hall, saw him appearing in "Ghosts", an item which was repeated the following year. Acting with him were Gladys Thomas, Frederic Hunn and Ina Small.

October 1937 saw WORDS AND MUSIC, another two act revue performed in the Concert Chamber, Wellington Town Hall and the King George Theatre Lower Hutt, where he again figured in "Ghosts". This time his leading lady was Valerie Hall. The same year, an Armistice Night concert was staged for the benefit of Returned Servicemen where Ray produced an item in the pro-

gramme called "Indian Love Call and Ballet". Advertisements leading up to this performance referred to this segment of the programme as being performed by the RAYMOND HEDGES REVUE COMPANY.

ON WITH THE SHOW, in 1938, was followed in 1939 with THE INTIMATE REVUE. Undated press attention was given him in the following fashion.

"RAYMOND HEDGES - This clever young producer-performer produced his first show when only 16 years of age, and this year, though only in his early twenties, staged a smart modern revue, playing principal roles in some of the sketches himself. He has also written many sketches. Mr Hedges possesses what must surely be one of the most unique selections of grand opera records in existence; he has practically all the operas complete. Such musical appreciation and knowledge are rare".

On the same page we read...

"YOUNG WELLINGTON PRODUCER IN HAMILTON - Raymond Hedges who produced his first revue in Wellington when he was only 16 years of age and since then has staged many other productions, specialising in smart modern comedy of the Noel Coward variety, will spend a few days in Hamilton next week, prior to going into camp. As mentioned in these columns formerly, Mr Hedges has one of the most unique collections of grand opera records in New Zealand, having practically all the operas complete, and being a mine of information on opera singers". Further mention of him in two further undated and unsourced cuttings conclude this period of Ray's life.

"SAW SALOME IN ARABIC. A friend writing me from Cairo says: - 'I had a very interesting experience recently - the production of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in Arabic. Although I could not understand the language (I know the play well in French) the acting positively gripped me, especially that of the woman who played Salome. According to our standards it would be considered over acting, but how less effective would be restrained English acting in the scene in which Salome addresses the head of John the Baptist on a salver and forces her kisses on his dead lips - lips that would receive them in life. It was certainly the most repulsive, yet fascinating, production I have seen. I am looking forward to a production of the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* in French. I have attended many rehearsals, and have also been allowed to help in the direction, so you can imagine the thrill it has given me".

"SOLDIER HEARS OPERAS. It is good to know that soldiers, on going abroad on war service, get the opportunity of seeing and hearing things in which they are particularly interested. Private Ray Hedges, who has just returned from the Middle East and is visiting Hamilton, was well-known as a producer and entertainer in Wellington before going into the forces, and was particularly interested in grand opera, of which he had one of the biggest and most complete sets of recordings in New Zealand. He speaks of the joys of hearing opera in Egypt, Palestine and Italy, where there are almost constant seasons, with performances in English, French and Italian. One performance was a strange mixture, one principal singing in Italian, another in Czech and others in French".

EPISODE TWO - NEXT ISSUE



Captions to illustrations.

Front Cover: Ray Hedges and Valerie Hall depicted in a scene from "GHOSTS" - a sketch prepared for a revue in Wellington, October 1937.

Below: Cover illustration of a programme prepared for Ray's production that was performed in Wadestown, Wellington on the 7th June 1934.

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