



*Gabriele  
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WHO IS THE COLLECTOR WHO SKETCHED THIS PICTURE? FOR AN ANSWER, SEE THE ARTICLE BEGINNING PAGE SIX.

## GELANING FROM HERE AND THERE

### MEA CULPA!

We have been informed that the tenor who sang *I Pitch My Lonely Caravan*, in my programme in August, was not Walter Glynn! I was so overjoyed at seeing his name in the *Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia* I did not bother to check listing with the Australian Columbia I held. The GSE entry was an HMV recording. Des Wilson spotted the error and on hearing the record in question and quickly dispelled any doubt with "No, that's not Walter Glynn!"

Further he pointed out that I'd also erred in the Clement Q. Williams *Southern Maid* selections. Both items as stated on the label were indeed on this record, refuting my claim that their had been a slip up in the labelling department. On listening to it again, I agreed I had not picked up the exact words which clearly identified the fact that the Regal Zonophone Company had not misled the public in any way. In my defence I had been tricked by the re-prise of 'Love's Cigarette' which concluded the item. Thanks Des!

Other items resulting from my presentation concerns Owen Brannigan who died in 1975 - thank you John Sutcliffe.

### WHITHER RECORD COLLECTING!

The article appearing in this issue called *Down and Out Down under*, was originally conceived as a letter to the *Record Collector*. It voiced my concerns regarding what some experts agree is a decline in record collecting. What prompted me in this tirade were a number of things which reminded me of "Fiddling while Rome burns". In other words, those who seem to control the destiny of what we hold dear, namely internationally recognised record collectors, were doing nothing to foster

collecting by nurturing others into the habit of listening and acquiring 78s. Editor Larry Lustig was sympathetic and guided my outburst into a more reasoned and positive conclusion - more about that later. But for what it's worth, I reprint an edited version of this letter. See if you can take up the challenge it offers by initiating someone during the coming year to the agony and ecstasy of record collecting!

### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

For some time now, I've resisted suggestions by collectors to do an evening devoted entirely to the Edison Company. My primary reason for hesitating in taking this idea on board being that lateral-cut 78s have a greater range and appeal over their vertical-cut counterparts. As well, having dispensed with my wind up Edison Diamond Disc phonograph many years ago, I also had doubts about my ability to reproduce my Edisons to an acceptable standard. Despite these concerns, I have now come to the conclusion that despite my reservations, I do have the ingredients of a programme or two, from the 150 or so titles in my collection.

Therefore it's my intention to prepare a programme in 2002 which deals solely with the artists who made a commitment with Edison to produce recordings on either cylinder or diamond disc.

I hope to schedule this presentation in the first quarter of the coming year.

Any member who has Edison recordings is invited to get in touch with me with the thought we might be able to form an 'Edisonia' sub branch of the SCG.

BILL MAIN

## DOWN AND OUT DOWN UNDER

Some observations on the plight of record collecting from a "born again" lover of 78s.

As a third generation record collector, I have always loved 78s. I'm addicted to everything associated with them including their physical appearance and acoustic characteristics. The ultimate pleasure I get from these discs comes when I occasionally play them on one of my vintage gramophones.

It's not that I dislike LPs and CDs, in fact I probably have as many vinyls as shellacs which began appearing in the 1950s, a period which saw me enter the fray of collecting with my first purchase of 78s as they were exiting the market through deletion sales. Hence I categorize myself as a third generation collector.

My enthusiasm for record collecting in those days didn't stop there. I became enthralled by the way the original owners of these recordings listened to their recordings with antiquated wind-up gramophones and mica diaphragm reproducers. In time I acquired my first over-horn machine, a HMV Senior Monarch complete with oak horn which was date stamped as it left the factory in August 1913. To this day I love putting my head in the mouth of the horn and hearing Caruso sing to me! Or my much loved Edison Phonograph which rattles out a splendid version of the Triumphant March from *Aida* on an Everlasting 4 minute cylinder. Experiences I have shared with friends to their complete amazement I can't resist the intimate nature of the sound which comes from an exponential horn. Some of my friends have remarked to me after such a demonstration that all other methods of reproduction have a synthetic nature to them which makes them sound rather impersonal in comparison to a voice down the horn! However for sharing the joys of recorded music in a group situation or while I'm working at my computer or delivering a presentation in my home, loud-speakers and amplifier have the advantage which I would never deny.

The reason for my becoming a "born again" lover of 78s is that I have gone through all the emotions of redistributing 12,000 recordings from Ray's collection which has left me with some disturbing thoughts. Beginning with how my heart sank when I advertised them on the open market. Standard items like Galli-Curci, Björling, Gigli and a host of others couldn't even raise a flicker of recognition in the eyes of buyers (curiosity seekers) who came in response to my classified notices in the local newspapers. Their indifference wasn't because I was asking premium prices. In fact I offered to put together basic selections for them into record albums which I made up for a nominal sum.

Eventually, I emerged from this depressed state convinced that there might be some light at the end of the tunnel if I tried to bend my mind around the problem. I began to have positive thoughts and made a list of those things which I hold precious to collecting in the hope that some of my idiosyncratic tendencies might rub off on someone receptive to the joys of collecting records.

For a start there is the aura of authenticity which playing a 78 brings to the occasion. The physical size of a 78 and putting it onto the turntable, floors most young people today who've never handled anything like this! Then there are the paper jackets and labels that have been personalized by previous collectors over the years with speeds indicated or a cryptic "Good" endorsing a particular performance. A patina of usage which no CD can approach. Having got the needle into the groove, the novice is assaulted by a series of clicks, crackles, and textural sounds which give them time to adjust their ears and expectations. While established collectors seldom think twice about these sounds, others find them a formidable hurdle. I have no answer to this other than to say this is the way our ancestors listened to music before Radio or TV. The antithesis to all this, I'm keen to point out, is a version which has been cleaned up by electronic means eliminating any character or es-

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sence of the original recording session.

I might add at this point that my 1913 Senior Monarch does not bear the brunt of my record playing sessions. If I do opt to use an acoustic gramophone to clean out the muck from a 78 with a steel needle, I use my upright HMV. Then again, I would not like to give the impression that I'm dedicated to playing my records with authentic apparatus like those who insist on listening to music played on ancient musical instruments. But whenever I perform a programme that incorporates some acoustical reproduction on a wind-up gramophone, the interest factor on my listeners seems to increase greatly.

Of course it would be wrong of me to acknowledge that time has stood still since the 1950s when I was literally given records by people who wanted to see them go to a good home. From my experiences all collectors seem to have a pile of records which they can't sell or exchange. Therefore why not gift them to someone you want to encourage into taking up an interest in record collecting. Of course, you may end up seeing them in the next church bazaar or antique shop window, but at least you've made an effort to "pass on the torch" - to use a hackneyed phrase! Then again, I don't see any merit in a tunnel vision approach of only promoting vocal recordings to a prospective collector. Conductors, instrumentalists and even some of the popular records of the 20s, 30s, and 40s might inspire a novice collector into a frenzy of collecting. I'm sure that those who take up the challenge of collecting 78s with a liberal approach will eventually gravitate towards classical vocal recordings. After all, the frequency response of acoustic recordings favours the voice over all other forms of recorded music. I don't think an evangelistic tirade will do the cause any good if you are presented with the opportunity to address a captive audience on why you cherish certain recordings. This is where a bit of showmanship with a wind-up machine might come in handy. I'd also like to see feelers being put out towards the addition of the History and Development of Sound Recording in the 20th century being a subject in its own right for the curriculum of Tertiary Institutions that conduct social science courses. Film and Television have already become accepted in the halls of academia so why not gramophone records and the influence they have had on our society?

Perhaps we need someone, a guru of recorded music to write a column like the old *Collectors Corner*, which featured in *The Gramophone* many years ago, to bring about a revival of interest in what we do. In the 1950s, John Freestone virtually turned me into a record collector overnight. I avidly read everything he wrote and when in one article he referred to comments made by his predecessor P. G. Hurst, I could not rest until I'd located someone who held issues of *The Gramophone* going back to the 1930s. Of course, the reissue of historic recordings was uncommon during that period with only the Archive Series making any concession to record collectors. So the chase for originals was definitely a very lively issue.

Today anyone acquiring a collection of historic records has no need to pursue original 78s with the ubiquitous CD providing more than a person can keep up with. This is where I think the really tough work has to be done by weaning the new generation of record collectors off CDs and getting them back to basics with 78s. While a revitalized *Collectors Corner* might sound old hat, I think a better approach might be using CDs to get a foot in the door with a judicious reminder that despite the torrent of CD reissues, it's going to take a long time before every 78 of historic merit will be published in this fashion.

The problem comes when one looks for an individual with the right sort of background to front a regular column in one of the overseas publications which could give space to such a series. Those eminently qualified to write about classical recordings from the past seem to be preoccupied with immortalizing themselves with articles that border on the esoteric, featuring singers whom the majority of collectors have never heard of! I admit it's important we should attempt to learn as much as we can from singers who for various reasons never ventured beyond the borders of their own country, but surely there is space and time for a resifting of assessments on the gamut of celebrity artists whose position was

never questioned. I refer to the old HMV Red Label series. Why don't these gifted individuals turn their knowledge to assessing the talents of singers we all have in our collections against the singers of our generation?

My fears for the perilous future of record collecting were driven home in May this year when I attended a meeting at the Recorded Vocal Art Society in London. I was attracted to this event in the first instance when I saw that Roger Beardsley (a person I greatly admire) was going to give a talk on Plastic Surgery. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend. RVAS therefore had to improvise a fill-in programme. What we heard was a selection of taped recordings by singers who for me at least were slightly off the beaten track by virtue of the company they recorded for and the item they performed. The audience and panel were asked to identify the singer, the piece of music and then comment on the performance. The panel's response to this challenge was very objective and impressed me greatly. Modesty didn't permit me to raise my hand when I recognized two of the voices during the evening. I was happy to be just part of the audience while the experts went through their paces, exercising their knowledge with a lovely balance of serious discussion sprinkled with wit and banter. A sort of intellectual's *My Music*.

Now I know the RVAS is not in the business of worrying about the decline of interest in record collecting *per se*. On the contrary, its objectives seem to evolve around pushing ones appreciation of record collecting to the very limits when listening to vocal recordings. But none the less, it did irk me to sit through the evening and never catch sight of a 78!

Response from the audience that night, although muted, was generally in sympathy with the panel's findings, a reaction which I took to be typical at these gatherings. About 45 people were present and I would say their average age would have been around the mid 60s. The conclusion I drew from the evening is that if this is what this group considers a good night out with the boys (there were only two women present) then we're dead and buried. On the other hand, I'm sure that the RVAS would never insist that its approach to record collecting is beyond question and should have universal acceptance. I therefore wonder what are the views, hopes and aspirations of record collectors around the world.

What I would like to find out is what do other record collectors closer to home think about the situation of diminishing numbers and the role they might play in seeing a continuance of collecting? Should we lick our wounds, roll over and die, or should we endeavour to sow seeds that might bear fruit in the future by enticing a new generation of individuals into the joys of record collecting?



# EUROPEAN ODYSSEY - 1961



**I**t began in April 1961 when London's Festival Services advertised tickets for the festivals at Bayreuth, Salzburg and Verona, and I happened to see the ad. Elation followed by apprehension, could I afford it? - I remembered my first visit to Bayreuth two years earlier when a ticket to *Parsifal* had cost £4 (\$12) - shock, horror, but finally, why not, let's go, and so in I went and booked for the *Flying Dutchman* at Bayreuth, *Così fan Tutte* and *Don Giovanni* at Salzburg, and *Aida* and *Carmen* at Verona. No problem, come in a couple of days before you leave and pick the tickets up.

Came July, and so passports at the ready along with travel and hotel bookings, my partner and I went in to pick the tickets up, only to be met with a scene of chaos and despondency and notices to the effect that Festival Services had gone into liquidation. But, we were assured, don't

worry, the tickets are in order, all you have to do is present them and all will be well.

And so, more or less reassured off we went - the journey had begun.

On arrival in Bayreuth we had a look around the town before proceeding up the long tree lined drive to the Opera House on the hill - the Bayreuth Festspielhaus no less - before heading for the box office and presenting the tickets. Long silence!! "These tickets are not valid!" But we bought them at Festival Services through Mr ?? "Mr ??? is a very bad man!" Another silence, then my companion who later became a professional actress, decided a few tears might help alleviate the situation and they did, as the lady at the box office, 'ein moment', disappeared to return with a shortish balding man with heavy dark rimmed glasses who listened gravely to the story and turning to us said 'komm with me!' It was

Wieland Wagner, grandson of the composer, Director of the Festival, and producer and designer of the evening's entertainment.

Down through the entrails of the opera house he led us, past doors labelled Herr Knappertsbusch and Herr Sawallisch, past a distraught lady in frantic conversation with one of the intendants (was it Astrid Varnay?) until at a given point my companion was led off up some stairs to the right and I was directed up a few stairs to the left. It was a moment or two before I realised that I was actually backstage and was being dispatched up a ladder to a lighting platform where it dawned on me I was going to watch the opera. Mein Gott! I knew that Wieland Wagner had revolutionised the concept of stage design, building on the ideas of Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) by getting rid of naturalistic sets and replacing them with symbolic structures and subtle lighting. I had an interest in it, having mounted a couple of shows in Auckland, but to be able to observe at first hand the nuts and bolts as at Bayreuth was heady stuff indeed. The only drawback was that I couldn't see what the audience was seeing.

The Senta of the evening was Anja Silja, a good looking lady and a commit-

ted actress, with a strong voice not totally under control. She had been plucked from the chorus and this was her debut; she was obviously very nervous and sought refuge in the arms of the evening's Dutchman, George London prior to her first entrance at the beginning of Act 2. On came Wieland Wagner "Ein, zwei, drei, vier" drumming his foot upon the floor to get the spinning ladies all operating in unison, the curtain

went up and off they went.

The scene where the sailors from the Dutchman's ship come over to Daland's ship was particularly eerie. They were rather noisy getting on stage but apparently nothing was heard out front, then at a given signal all became silent, and they proceeded to ooze most spookily up and over the side of the Norwegian ship. I only wished I could have seen the effect from out front.

I didn't catch up with my companion until after the end of the opera - how had she got on? Well, she had seen it from the Wagner box, reserved exclusively for the Wagners and royalty!!!

Things had turned out very well, but the next stop was Salzburg - how would our dodgy tickets be received there?

Arrived in Salzburg and the hotel room turned out to be very clean and old world, its main feature being an old style kachelofen, a large tiled heating device,



half of which protruded into one room and half into the next. The room was on the first floor and looked out onto a small cemetery, which surrounded by buildings on all four sides, contained the grave of, among others, Leopold Mozart.

And so, with some trepidation, to the Opernhaus. Again, the realisation that our tickets were suspect, some head shaking and muttering, but not quite the drama as at Bayreuth. They knew all about Mr ?? and Festival Services and the suggestion was made that we should get to the opera house early and occupy the allotted seats, but if they were claimed by someone else with the relevant tickets, then we would have to vacate. We did get there early, and there were some nasty moments

when ticket clutching patrons glared beadily in our direction, but nothing actually happened, and ten minutes into the performance we were able to relax and enjoy the proceedings.

The 1961 *Così* has I gather, become legendary. Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Christa Ludwig, Graziella Sciutti, Waldemar Kmentt, Herman Prey and Carl Dönch produced by Günther Rennert and conducted by Karl Böhm. I remember particularly the exquisite duet singing between Schwarzkopf and Ludwig and the beautifully sung and acted ensembles.

*Don Giovanni* I remember less well. The major disappointment was Eberhard

Wachter as the Don, whose voice when I heard it two years previously I had thought most beautiful, had now become hard and hectoring, although he looked and acted well. Leontyne Price was a very good Donna Anna, but the standout singing came from Nicolai Gedda as Don Ottavio. It was a dream cast, with Wilma

Lipp, Sciutti, Nicolò Zaccaria, Walter Berry and Rolando Panerai, conducted by Karajan.

On to Vienna for a few days. A marvellous old Vienna hotel with wide curving balustraded staircases and huge double doors ideal for making dramatic entrances and exits. Beautifully draped curtains across large windows and on looking out I saw opposite what appeared to be a theatre

with a strange sculpture over the entrance. It was the Theater an der Wien which saw the first *Zauberflöte* in 1791 and the first *Fidelio* in 1805 and the strange sculpture was of Papageno and his birdcage.

Being the vacation period, both the Staatsoper and the Volksoper were closed, but we did get to see two Donizetti one actors, *Rita* and *The Night Bell* (*Il Campanello*) given by the Wiener Kammersoper in one of those small wildly over decorated Baroque opera houses, which in this case was set in the grounds of the Schönbrunn Palace. *The Night Bell* (sung in German) was very funny and

concerned one Don Hannibal, a wealthy apothecary who had just married the youthful Seraphina, and as he had to leave on a journey the next day, was anxious to be rid of the guests, and be alone with his young bride. Seraphina's cousin Enrico however had other ideas, firstly delaying the departure of the guests, and then adopting a variety of disguises (a hoarse foreign singer, an old man etc.) and demanding attention by ringing the night bell in order to disrupt Don Hannibal's wedding night which of course he does very successfully. Don Hannibal never actually gets to bed. I rather feared though for Enrico's vocal health with his large repertoire of cracked and croaking voices. Both Don Hannibal and Gaspara in *Rita* were sung by Norman Bailey who later became an important Wagnerian singer.

Plenty to do and see in Vienna and not the least of the pleasures being drinking in a Weinstüber and listening to the Schrammel orchestra (violin, accordion and guitar) and the odd rather good singer who would get up and give us an impromptu.

On to Venice - magic place - where practically every obscure little Church has its Titian or Tintoretto, in among the painterly effusions of the less accomplished. Easy to get away from the tourists too. St. Marks Square, the Basilica and

the Campanile which collapsed in 1902 and was quickly rebuilt, marvellous galleries, and when it all gets too much, the Lido to which one can repair to swim in the sea and bake in the sun.

Marvellous Opera House as well, the Teatro La Fenice which saw the first *Traviata* in 1852, and which in 1961 was in the middle of a season of it with Anna Moffo, Alvinio Misciano and Mario Sereni.

They were all good although Moffo rather reinforced my growing perception that stellar performances on records do not always translate quite as effectively to live performances in the theatre; Misciano had been a member of the Italian Troup that toured NZ in 1948 and got me all en-

thused in the first place, and Sereni was one of those solid Italian baritones that sound better live than on records. If I had gone to either of the two following performances I would have heard Robert Merrill.

But just being there was enough, and it was tragic when the Fenice burned down a few years ago. I expect they've rebuilt it by now, but will it be the same? It was the only opera house where patrons could arrive by gondola.

On to Verona and the arena. No trouble with tickets there, with an audience of some 20,000, two more weren't going to make a lot of difference. The at-



