

G&T GAZETTE

Established 1995. Incorporating the *Edison Echo*

JULY/AUGUST

2002

WHAT'S THIS 1920s PICTURE
OF PALMERSTON NORTH
DOING ON THE COVER !



HAS YOUR EDITOR LOST HIS MARBLES!
ALL THIS AND MUCH MORE REVEALED ON
PAGE 5

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GLEANINGS FROM HERE AND THERE

As the time draws near to the 125th Anniversary of recorded sound, there is every reason for us to remember the man who was responsible for this and many other inventions which we now take for granted. Although some may persist with the view that Thomas Alva Edison was more a tinkerer than inventor in the analytical scientific mould, there is a lot about him which New Zealanders can embrace, especially if we admire the practicality of the no.8 fencing wire to innovative problem solving.

I suppose there will be those in our group who will remain unforgiving about his abysmal lack of comprehending the entertainment potential of his sound recording equipment. Be that as it may, some of the planned activities during the week-end of the 11/12 August may soften attitudes as the thrill of hearing ones voice issuing forth from a tin horn, send the hairs at the back of your neck rigid, as it did to some of the vocal luminaries we all adore.

Our technical advisor Brian Blackford has forwarded to our office a document which sets out how to replace the elastic coupling of the Series ii Model 3009 & 3012 SME precision pick-up arms. Anyone wanting to avail themselves of this information is invited to get in touch with me and I will forward a photo copy free-of-charge.

We welcome Des Wilson to a small but select band of authors for this journal. Let us hope it is the first of many pieces we know he is capable of producing.

As you editor I have recently received a flyer for a FONOTIPIA CD-Rom put out by Historic Singers and Historic Masters Ltd. This is based on the original Fonotipia Ledgers held at the EMI archive containing detailed information on all Fonotipia Recordings. This enterprising endeavour costs £42 and is published by Symposium Records.

GETTING TO THE WORDS by DES WILSON

The first opera record I ever bought (with an 11 year old's hard-earned pocket money) was Jussi Björling's coupling of "La donna è mobile" and "Recondita armonia". At that time, and for several years after, I was so excited by discovering what glorious sounds "real" singers could make that I wasn't at all interested in what they were singing about. But later, as I began to buy my first complete opera sets, I started studying the libretti. It seemed to me then, as it still does today, inconceivable that one could sit and listen right through an opera without having any idea of what the singers are saying. And, of course, the same goes for any songs in foreign languages – lieder, French art song etc. Certainly I don't think that we should venture an opinion on a recorded performance unless we know what the words are about. One has only to read of the great care with which composers choose their librettists and texts to realise the importance of the text.

So over the years I've made a point of tracking down words when these are not supplied with the LP or CD. In the days of the 78 you were left to your own devices, apart from the booklets issued with complete opera sets and some song recitals (usually purchased separately). The advent of the photocopier has made it possible to paste the appropriate text on the 78 cover, and to compile one's own texts and translations if the manufacturer of the LP or CD has not obliged (and readers of this article will know only too well that re-issues of historical material usually come without texts).

I've also extended this into performances in English where, for whatever reason, the words are hard to pick up. This is often so with very early recordings of unfamiliar songs. The editor thought it might be of some use to offer a guide to where all this material may be found, and although much of it is self-evident, I offer the following.

Opera texts: The text/translation booklets supplied with complete sets (LP and CD). The Wellington Public Library has an excellent collection. If you can't locate a complete recording it's likely that the aria may have been

recorded as part of a recital disc. Failing this you could try the Public Library scores collection (for me this has meant a lot of laborious copying out, but worthwhile in the long run).

Songs in foreign languages: LP and CD recitals are the best starting point (always hoping that texts are provided). Otherwise try the Library again – there's a wide selection of scores.

Songs in English: For art songs the Library's scores collection is a good starting place. Many of these songs use texts by well-known poets so the Library's poetry section may be useful; consult Granger's Poetry Guide (held in the Reference Section) to locate the anthologies which contain the poem you're looking for.

The Library's scores section also contains a very fine collection of Musical Comedy scores (from the R E Gillon bequest) – all those Edwardian musicals and moving up into the shows of the 30's, 40's and 50's. For ballads and popular songs go to the Music and Sound Centre at the National Library of New Zealand. There's a large collection, filed neatly in boxes in alphabetical order. You can consult these at any time but can't take them away. You'll have to photocopy what you want at 20 cents a sheet.

And if you're really keen you can go through the piles of sheet music which still turn up in second-hand shops.

Finally, some sad news. An American enthusiast has posted a superb Lied and Songs Text Page on the Internet (<http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/>) but I am dismayed to see that because of the threat of legal action from American music publishers she has been obliged to take it down. However, she is hoping that it can be restored.



STELLA POWER

Report on a work in progress
by Bill Main

My interest in the recordings of Stella Power originates back to the early 1980s when I was engaged in picture research for the Readers' Digest publication *New Zealand Yesterdays*. As part of my brief, I diligently went through thousands upon thousands of photographs at the Alexander Turnbull Library. Some time after I began this work I encountered a photograph taken outside the Palmerston North Railway Station in the 1920s. It was looking down the street which led into the Square, a view which was dominated by a row of parked cars (Taxis?) in the middle of the road. At the end of this column and slightly to the right I saw a bill board which displayed a poster advertising Stella Power. Making a mental note of this I passed on thinking no more about it until a few years later I acquired one of her Edison Diamond Discs, 80708 (see discography).

Several years later I read in a book devoted to *Edison Diamond Disc* machines written by George L. Frow that she gave one of Edison's famous 'Tone Tests' in Australia in September 1919. Thinking no more about this at the time my curiosity was re-ignited when I noted in Rudolfson's *Edison Diamond Discs* that the record I'd acquired *vis* 80708 was one of two discs which were specially prepared for the Australian Market and along with 80709 seemed to have been created specially for this event. I was naturally fascinated to think that perhaps Stella Power might have conducted one of these 'Tone Test' performances here in New Zealand!

So riding the crest of my renewed interest in Edison artists and recordings, I took myself off to the Turnbull Library to track down this beguiling photograph. As I began to conduct this search through their Palmerston North prints, Joan McCracken, the pictorial collections manager consulted their database for Stella Power entries. To my surprise she found several including an autographed post dated 1923. Back to my task and sure enough, I duly located it and ordered a print out. When I examined the poster I discovered it advertised her Palmerston North concerts for Monday and Tuesday 5/6. Consulting a historical calendar these dates and days could have occurred in February, March or November 1923.

In the near future I intend tracking down her concert tour and will report my findings accordingly.

STELLA POWER DISCOGRAPHY

EDISON (all recorded in New York with orchestra unless noted otherwise)

| <u>Mtx.no.</u> | <u>title/composer</u> | <u>rec.date</u> | <u>cat.no.</u> |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 6009 | Spring (Henschel/Nash) | Feb.1918 | 80401 |
| 6010 | Blackbird's song (Scott)& Songs my mother taught me (Dvorak) | Feb.1918 | 80400 |
| 6015 | Semiramide (Rossini) Bel raggio lusinghier | Feb.1918 | 80402 |
| 6018 | La Perle du Bresil (David) Chamant Oiseau | Feb. 1918 | 80401 |
| 6022 | Il Barbiere di Siviglia (Rossini) Una voce poco fa | Feb.1918 | 80400 |
| 6024 | Nymphs et Sylvains (Bemberg/OCompo) | Feb.1918 | 80402 |
| 6973 | Se saran rose (Arditi) | Oct.1919 | 80604 |
| 6976 | Oh that we two were maying & One spring morning (Nevin) | Oct.1919 | 80708* |
| 6977 | Bird Songs (Lehamnn) The Wren & The Cuckoo | Oct.1919 | 80604 |
| 6978 | Serenade (Gounod) | Oct.1919 | 80709* |
| 6979 | I cannot sing the old songs (Claribel) | Oct.1919 | 80708* |

Those marked with * were designated at 'Tone Test' discs.

HMV

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|
| Cc269 | Should he upbraid (Bishop) | 1921 | 03763 |
| Cc328 | A spring morning (Carey) | 1921 | 03766 |
| - | Butterfly wings & Little bunch of snowdrops (Phillips) | - | E 278 |
| - | Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti) Ardon gli'incensi & Regnava nel silenzio | - | D 54 |
| - | Nozzi di Figaro (Mozart) Voi che sapete | - | D 55 |
| - | Flauto Magico (Mozart) Ah lo so piu nonm'avanza | - | D 55 |
| The last four titles were recorded with orchestra conducted by Percy Pitt | | | |

RE-ISSUES

| | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------------|--|-----|
| LP | Regnava nel silenzio (Lucia di Lammermoor) | | AO1 |
| | Great Australian Singers | | |

NEW ZEALAND TOUR.

Direction—E. J. Gravestock.



Stella Power

"The Little Melba."

AND

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Australia's Foremost Composer-Pianist

HAROLD BECK - Solo Violoncellist

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TIME CINEMA

191 Sutherland Road, Melrose, Wellington.

*The programme will include demonstrations of Edison phono-
graphs and related equipment, including a rare*

Edison 1912 Kinetoscope.

*Besides static displays there will be films that set out some of
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Audio demonstrations.

Making a cylinder recording.

Interval with light refreshments.

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Final viewing of displays.

Seating limited so make a phone booking.

on tele(04)934 8463

To defray expenses there will be a cover charge of \$10

made at the door.

Please make a note of this in your diary now!