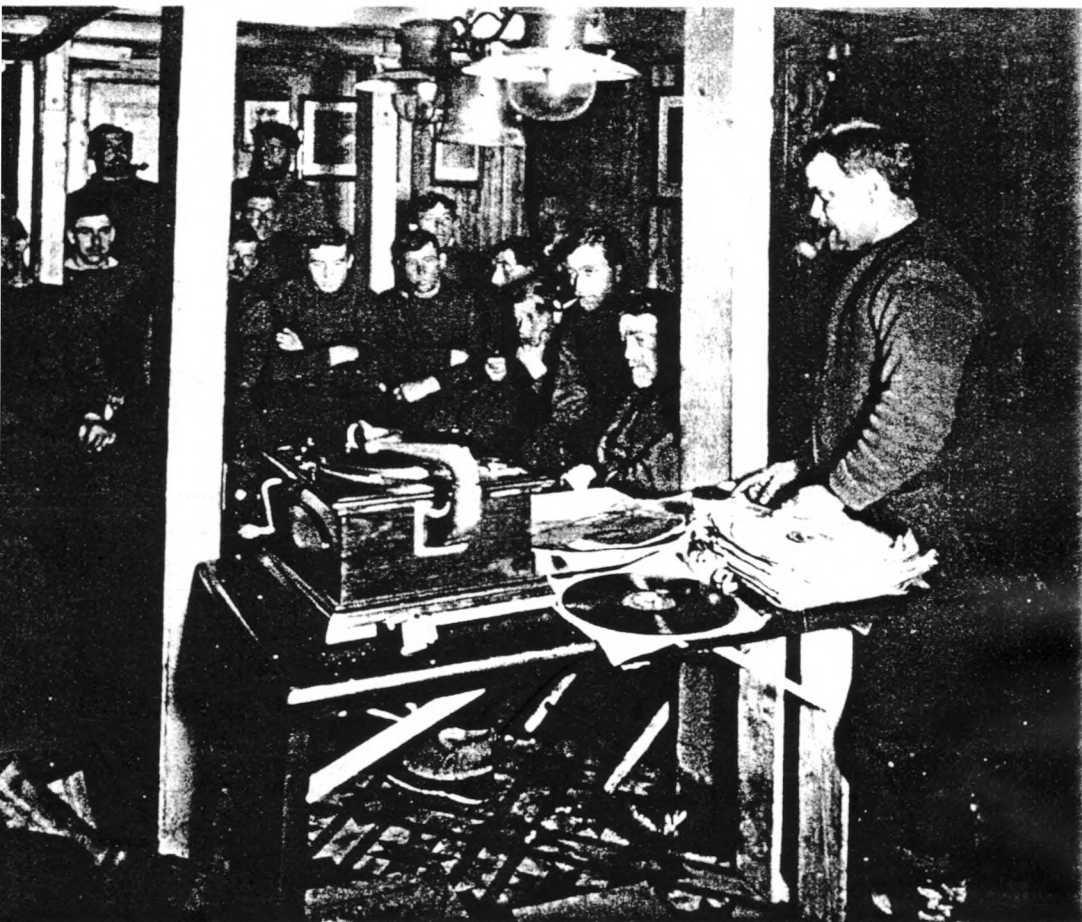


G&T GAZETTE

Established 1995. Incorporating the *Edison Echo*

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GLEANINGS FROM HERE AND THERE

A DON CAMERON MEMORIAL PROGRAMME: February 2003. It's just over a year since Don died unexpectedly in Melbourne. As a tribute to him, Des Wilson and I have arranged a combined programme to commemorate his activities in record collecting. We were fortunate in acquiring examples from his collection when we assisted his wife Stacia to clear up his estate in Khandallah.

We are sure there will be something in our programme for everyone, a task made easy by Don who had very catholic tastes which were centred on the acoustic period, a factor which surprised us as we prepared his collection for sale. We hope to elaborate on this point in February when it is our turn to host the group.

CADMAN COLLECTION:

Although most of our group would never heard of Bert Cadman of Auckland, I mourn his departure from the scene and once again ponder the responsibilities we share in making sure his collection is not lost through some thoughtless gesture. Dennis Brew, who will be remembered fondly for his presentation in Wellington of recordings from his collection a year or two ago, has masterminded the disposal of Bert's collection. So some of us who are active in acquiring 78s will once again have to find space to house new acquisitions coming from this source.

UNEXPECTED DELIGHTS:

Your editor seldom gets very excited these days as he fruitlessly trawls some of his old hunting grounds, most of which are located in Newtown where he spent his formative years. Lo and behold in the first week of November he called into a junk shop in John Street and discovered a Michael Bohnen Brunswick (Two Grenadiers/Tannhauser, a singer whom he greatly admires), a Lilac Melba, and several red DBs. When he asked what they cost he was informed that as they came from an album marked \$7.50, this was assuredly the asking price for the lot! This must rank as one of the buys of the year - or am I wrong in this department?

If you've acquired something lately which equals or surpasses this report, then please let us know so we can share your joy and excitement. Relevant details of sources can be excluded.

THE EARLIEST G & S COMPLETE RECORDINGS

Des Wilson

Those who attended Des's programme in November will remember this part of his presentation with great pleasure. We are delighted to see his notes in print, giving as it does a background to the recordings we encounter in the course of collecting 78rpm discs.

Those of us who've spent hours searching through piles of old 78s will have encountered many discs from the two complete series of Savoy Operas recorded by the Gramophone Company and released on their HMV label; occasionally we may even have come across a complete set in its original album. The Gramophone Company reached an agreement with Rupert D'Oyly Carte (son of the impresario who staged the original productions) to record the operas under his supervision. This meant that he was given test pressings from all the sessions and they had to meet with his approval. Sometimes they didn't; for example, he insisted on a change of casting for the role of Phoebe in the acoustic Yeomen. This arrangement also meant that the jealously guarded original orchestral scores could be used – all other recordings of G & S had to use their own orchestrations. The acoustic series began in 1917 with *The Mikado*, and at first the singers all came from the Gramophone Company's own roster of artists – familiar names like Violet Essex, Edna Thornton, John Harrison, George Baker, Robert Radford, Peter Dawson etc. But gradually D'Oyly Carte singers were engaged, and the last two operas in the acoustic series were performed almost entirely by D'Oyly Carte singers as were all subsequent issues.

With the advent of electrical recording a second series was launched in 1926 again with *The Mikado*, and this series was completed by 1932. A projected third series was begun in 1936 (*Mikado* yet again), but this was abandoned with the onset of war, and the arrangement between the Gramophone Company (now EMI) and the D'Oyly Carte Company lapsed. After the war a new series of D'Oyly Carte recordings was begun, but this time recorded by Decca.

These were the G & S recordings through which several generations of enthusiasts got to know the Savoy Operas, and many thousands of them were sold all over the world.

But there were earlier "complete" sets, pre-dating that 1917 *Mikado*. They came into being because of a specific event. In mid 1906 it was announced that there was to be a series of revivals of the operas at the Savoy Theatre in London

beginning in December 1906 and running right through to August 1907 under the personal direction of Gilbert himself. There had been no G & S performances in London for nearly four years and interest was high. Anticipating a demand for records, the record companies were goaded into a flurry of activity but, as G & S historians are fond of bemoaning, using all the wrong people. Instead of going to the Savoy Theatre and signing up the artists appearing there, thus giving posterity the chance to hear the songs performed in an "authentic" style, they preferred to use their own artists (as was to happen later, as mentioned above).

First off the mark was the Gramophone Company (HMV) who began to record bits of the more popular operas. On the concerted discs the artists were simply identified as "The Sullivan Operatic Party". Gradually they managed to record two operas almost complete - The Mikado and The Yeomen of the Guard. Although the discs were originally intended to be sold singly, and were, it occurred to somebody that they could be marketed as a complete set. And so The Mikado appeared (1906) on one 12" and 16 10" single-sided discs with booklet at £2.15.6, and The Yeomen of the Guard (1907) on two 12" and 17 10" records with booklet at £3.3.6. Later with the establishment of the double-sided plum label series (with the B 10" and C 12" prefixes) these sets were pressed in the new format. They are very rare - I've never seen any of the double-sided discs, and own just one of the single-sided.

In 1907 there was a State visit to London of Prince Fushimi of Japan, and The Mikado was banned during this time. With enviable entrepreneurial flair the Gramophone Company suddenly made The Mikado recordings available as a complete package at a special price, and a publicity campaign was launched urging the public to go to their local record store and hear the "banned opera". What's more, the Company presented a copy of the recording to Mr K Sugimura (who was attached to the Prince). His appreciation of the records was announced in a full-page advertisement in Talking Machine News: "Of all the presents I have so far received here, they are the most beautiful, the most valuable".

Mr Sugimura probably didn't notice that many of the sides show signs of being recorded in a hurry, with the artists not entirely familiar with the material and certainly not with the style. There are obvious uncertainties and slips, most famously Peter Dawson's cry of "Oops!" when he gets the words wrong in a Mikado duet.

The Sullivan Operatic Party also produced a series of 10' sides from HMS Pinafore issued in 1907. But after a short time they were superseded in 1908 when the Gramophone Company issued a complete recording - this was their first attempt at recording a complete opera with a consistent cast (Alan Turner, Thorpe Bates, Ernest Pike, Peter Dawson, Eleanor Jones-Hudson and Amy Augarde). None of these pre-1917 Gramophone Company sets has been re-issued and I'm

not entirely sure that the discs have survived in their entirety.

There was another series of excerpts from Pinafore issued in 1907 by the Russell Hunting Company on eleven "Gold Moulded" two minute cylinders, retailing at 1/- each. Copies have been found of all but one. The singers included Walter Hyde (later a well-known Wagner tenor) and Harry Dearth.

Later that year the Odeon Company (which was then allied with the Russell Hunting Company) issued a complete recording of Pinafore on ten double-sided discs with largely the same cast as on the Hunting cylinders. It came in an album, with booklet and cast photographs (all wearing costumes hired for the photo shoot) at £2.10.0.

This set shows signs of having been recorded with more care than the Sullivan Operatic Party discs but much of it is transposed down - often as much as a third - primarily for the benefit of Walter Hyde and Harry Dearth. The next year (1908) Odeon came out with a complete Mikado with much the same cast, except that Ko-Ko was sung by Walter Passmore, a genuine Savoyard. Passmore was thought of as the successor to George Grossmith who had created the famous comic roles. Complete copies of these two Odeon albums are practically non-existent today, only two or three copies are known.

But even rarer is the Pathé recording of The Yeomen of the Guard made in 1907. In John Wolfson's book The Savoyards on Record, published in 1985, he wrote "at the moment a complete copy is not known to exist." However, more recently one has turned up, and like the Russell Hunting and Odeon sets mentioned above, has been re-issued. It appeared on nine double-sided discs selling at 4/- each. It's of particular interest because of the presence in the cast of Amy Evans who appeared at the Savoy in 1910 and, at the time of her death, was literally "The last of the Savoyards". She was the daughter of a Welsh coal miner and her professional singing career lasted seventy-seven years. After her appearances at the Savoy she pursued a concert career, married the Scottish baritone Fraser Gange, and moved to America where she died in January 1983 at the age of 98.

"I never look upon gramophone records as an extravagance but as a natural accessory to life."

Peter Ustinov (1950)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bill

Your article on 78s (Oct. 2001) brought back all sorts of memories for me. I entirely agree with you about the pleasure of handling them, the sound of the crinkly paper wrappers, the hiss as the needle went down and all of the other things you wrote about. One of the great things about 78s for me is the sense of immediacy. You know that what you are hearing is what the performers did at that time. No question of a note being dropped in from Take 237. And everything had to be done then and there within a time limit of about 4 minutes per 78 side.

On the matter of re-issues. I don't hear many because I don't have a CD player, but there's one which I heard broadcast some time ago which seemed to keep most of the warmth and intimacy of the original recording. I refer to the guitar concerto by Castelnuovo-Tedesco recorded by Segovia in the 1940s. It even retains some blemishes which are inevitable in a live performance.

When LPs first arrived I couldn't believe that they were less fragile than 78s because they were so light. Admittedly, they didn't shatter if you dropped them. They became even lighter and more flexible in later years, but they were more fragile in the sense that a bad stylus could ruin them in one playing and scratches were less acceptable than those on 78s. Somehow the blips and clunks on 78s had become part of the musical experience, rather like coughs at a concert but less irritating because you knew they were coming. A symphony or a concerto occupied several 78s and over time one learned to be prepared to flip each record over at exactly the right moment with minimum delay. So one was 'programmed' for the changes of sides during the recording. When I got an LP of Beethoven's violin concerto, which I knew well from Szigeti's recording on 78s, I found myself leaping up every 3 or 4 minutes unnecessarily. Even now, whenever I hear a continuous performance I get the occasional twitch.

Another thing. In the early days, records were numbered Side 1, Side 2. When a contraption called AutoChange was invented, record numbering changed so that one could put a stack of records on to the gadget and turn the pile over when they'd all played, to play the other sides. Record sets now had Sides 1 and 3, 2 and 4 etc. Very confusing if one didn't have the AutoChange thing.

My favourite and I think most amusing memory of 78s is of playing a recording of the well known Adagio for Strings by Samuel Barber. I can't now remember the orchestra or the conductor - this was more than 50 years ago. I remember hovering over the gramophone to flip from Side 1 to 2 as quickly as possible after the huge build-up and the last note on Side 1, only to discover years later that there's a 'fermata' or pause mark in the score at that point. On some later recordings the tempo is so slow (listen to Bernstein's) that the 'fermata' is almost as long as one side of a 78. (I joke, of course.)

Ron Burt
23.08.02

Ron Burt is a friend and former colleague who came to New Zealand from London in 1958. We both taught at the Wellington Polytechnic School of Design and shared many evenings together playing records and bending an elbow or two over a game of chess. Others may recognise him in a different capacity; that of a guitarist who has had some pieces of music dedicated to him by David Farquhar and Douglas Lilburn. For some time now he's been associated with the production of the G&T Gazette in a proof reading capacity. When in conversation to me he indicated he'd met Maggie Teyte, I asked him to pen a few words to record the occasion.

You asked me to write something about my probably seeing and hearing Maggie Teyte in the early 1950s. I can't be sure of the exact year but it would have been between 1951 and 1953 because I was a student at the Royal College of Art during those years. Some other details are a bit blurred and I should say at the outset that the name Maggie Teyte meant nothing to me at the time.

There was a connecting door between the RCA and the Victoria and Albert Museum - after all, they were originally part of the same institution - and one lunch time I wandered through to do something. To go to the library, possibly.

Hearing music coming from somewhere, I found my way to an open air space (a quadrangle?) where there were chairs set out and a string orchestra was playing. It was obviously a rehearsal but nobody objected, so I sat down to listen. The only other person present was a little old lady sitting near the stage. After a while, the little old lady got up and went on to the stage. The band started playing and I heard one of the most beautiful songs I'd ever heard, and so beautifully sung in the open air early one sunny afternoon. Magical.

My fading memory tells me that before I left to get back to a class I plucked up the courage to ask what the song was. "En Retour", I was told, "by Berlioz." "And your name?" (Cheeky!) "Maggie Teyte", said the little old lady.

Well, that's how I remember the occasion. Maggie Teyte (born Tate, by the way) would have been in her 60s. Or did I dream it all?

It shouldn't be too difficult to discover whether Maggie Teyte sang at the V+A one evening in the early 1950s with, I think, the Reginald Jaques (no c I think) String Orchestra. If I could use the Internet I'd do it myself.

Ron Burt
25.08.02

To conclude this item on Maggie Teyte, I extracted a few lines from liner notes accompanying her NAXOS CD of French Songs and Arias.

In the introduction to her autobiography, *Star on the Door* (Putnam, 1958) Maggie Teyte relates an incident from her early years as a singer in the USA:

'I was given a dressing-room with a star painted on the door, which was the custom in those days. But when I opened the door and went inside, I found the following rhyme written in lipstick on the large mirror:

"Twinkle, twinkle little star.

Who the hell do you think you are?"

What a pity that more mirrors are not Scribbled on these days!"

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We are now taking advance orders. Those received before the release date will be sent a free, printed copy of Frank Andrews' exhaustive and detailed history of the company. This will be available after 30th June, but at an additional cost of £ 10.

Price of the CD Rom will be £40 plus £1 p&p (UK) and £2.50 p&p airmail. The price includes a payment to the EMI Archive whose generous help and support is gratefully acknowledged. The CD Rom works with both PC and Mac systems - provided you have a recent version of Microsoft Excel or Office installed.

Order by writing...

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RECORDS TO GIVE AWAY

During the summer months I will be clearing my garage of surplus recordings from the Ray Hedges and Don Cameron collections. These will be given away free. The only catch being that those interested in this offer must be prepared to take at least 100 records in order to make a dent in the huge accumulation. I'd suggest that when members of the Scratchy Record Group pay me a visit in February to attend my presentation (a Don Cameron memorial programme put on by Des Wilson and myself) you may care to come earlier than the start time of 2pm to avail yourself of this offer.

OUR COVER STORY

The photograph occupying front (and part of the back) cover was made by Frank Hurley, an Australian photographer who accompanied Ernest Shackleton's 1913/4 expedition to Antarctica in the *Endurance*.

The *Endurance* became frozen in the pack ice and was eventually crushed by these flows and sank to the bottom of the Weddell Sea. Amazingly, all survived the disaster in what one could only describe as a *Boy's Own* tale come alive.

During their incarceration, regular recitals were given in the ship's mess. So my title to this picture is..

Members of the Weddell Sea Gramophone Society enjoying an evening's entertainment in 1913.

Nearly every expedition to Antarctica took a gramophone to the ice.

Mawson's expedition base at Cape Dawson found the gramophone a popular form of entertainment in the evenings; the same records being played again and again. A continuing topic for conversation throughout their stay concerned a phrase in the chorus from the *Mikado*. No one could quite hear it, and on their return to Australia there was a general rush to find the libretto and to discover what the words in the chorus were!

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