


# G&T GAZETTE

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Analytical Programme

Cover of programme 1923

## EDITORIAL

Is this is a time to review the *The G&T Gazette* past and present?

Looking through last years issues, there was valuable support from Roger Hart in the form of his reminiscences concerning his time in London which filled the January - March issue from cover to cover. How I wish I had more contributions like this. Then there was a very sizeable contribution from Des Wilson who compiled a complete list of Richard Tauber's Australian Parlophone recordings, in the July - September issue. We need more well researched articles like this. For the rest, it was a case of yours truly bending his mind around various issues, like his interest in Heinrich Schlusnus and recalling some local collectors from a former generation.

To start the new year off we have a grab-bag of bits and pieces which have crossed my bows. Quite frankly, I don't know how much longer I can keep this up! Which asks the question, have I reached the bottom of the barrel?

This issue sees me tearing a strip off Walter Legge, an individual who left a very strong impression on the recording of classical music from the 1930s through to the 1970s. As well, I venture to publish some thoughts on how you might contemplate putting into place a plan that will see your collection of records secured for another generation after you die! Thought provoking stuff? Then there is an edited article by Robert W. F. Potter, who wrote some very interesting articles for *The Gramophone* from 1929 to 1939.

Of course the problem of getting copy to fill this little quarterly has always been a horrendous problem. How can I expect a bountiful flow of contributions from the dozen or so timid/reluctant souls who make up our group. If the task of sitting down and writing something seems too daunting, you could help me by keeping your eyes open for illustrations or articles that have a New Zealand connection from sources to which you have access. How about reviews of famous artists who have toured our country? Does your local library have runs of old newspapers or magazines that you could through. Could you explore the internet for items in your spare time?

Having stated all that, I will now sit back and see what sort of reaction I get. Your response to this plea may determine whether or not I continue the struggle to keep *The G&T Gazette* going!

## CONFESSIONS OF A DEDICATED RECORD COLLECTOR

by BILL MAIN

An account of how I became annoyed by a comment by WALTER LEGGE on the way HEINRICH SCHLUSNUS performed the songs of HUGO WOLF. As a consequence of this, I unexpectedly discovered the writings of ROBERT W. F. POTTER

I have recently concluded some research that was initiated by an article which Walter Legge wrote. Walter Legge was a recording producer who dominated EMI for 40 years or more. In June 1929, he was successful in getting an article published called "Treasure Trove of German Recordings" for *The Gramophone*. At the time, he would have been 21 years old and was about to make a name for himself in the specialised field of classical recordings. His comments in this prompted me to conduct a survey on the records and assessment of the music by the late 19th century composer, Hugo Wolf.

I came across this piece while I was searching through copies of *The Gramophone* for reviews of the recordings by Heinrich Schlusnus, a well known German baritone whose career was at its peak between the two world wars. While Legge wrote glowingly about some aspects of Schlusnus as a recording artist I was shocked to read his put down on his recordings of Hugo Wolf, which Legge said were "disappointing".

Now it should be appreciated that at this stage of his career Legge was merely a keen record collector who had a very good understanding of the German recordings that were being released in Britain on the Brunswick label. None the less my anger knew no bounds for his attack on Schlusnus, especially when he failed to

give any explanation for his discontent.

This startling attack compelled me to re-examine Elizabeth Schwarzkopf's biography on Legge called *On and off the record*. After reading it for a second time, I reasoned that Legge saw himself as something of a knight in shining armour for this German composer in England. A few years later, he embarked on a spectacular and successful campaign to rectify this situation by launching a series of albums under a Hugo Wolf Society subscription series. However it did not add up to see him raising doubt about one of the most highly regarded artists at the time who already had several Wolf recordings to his credit. In fact if it had not been for the his and Heinrich Rehkemper's endeavours in this direction, the catalogues would have been completely bare of this material.

At first, I mistakenly jumped to the conclusion that Legge was deliberately undermining the credibility of Schlusnus in order to prepare the way for HMVs assault on this very special market. However, Legge still had a lot of work to do before his idea of getting sufficient subscribers to underwrite the costs became a reality. So I dismissed this thought out of hand.

The upside of all this was that it made me get out my albums of the HMV Wolf Society Sets and play them, comparing Schlusnus's interpretations against those of

Gerard Hüsch and Herbert Jansen, two baritones which Legge favoured for this series. As I possess no working knowledge of the German language, I found it very difficult when it came to subtleties of inflection and expression in this foreign tongue. Hence, it prompted me to extend my reading to see what knowledgeable critics of the day thought about the Society sets and how they reacted to the interpretations made by various artists who were chosen to present these songs.

With this in mind I began by reading Edward Sackville-West and Desmond Shaw-Taylor's views in their iconic publication called *The Record Guide*, which to my mind has never been equalled since it first appeared in 1951.

Here I must digress ever so slightly to explain my own interest and beginnings as a record collector.

Three or four years after *The Record Guide* appeared, I took out a subscription to *The Gramophone* and went about acquiring a basic library of recordings. At first I collected a smattering of Beethoven and Mozart LPs and began looking at what was being offered in the 78 rpm deletion sales which were rife at the time. Gradually my tastes in music began to broaden and embrace operas and vocal music. Because my own musical education was centred around (a) a dalliance with a brass band for 4/5 years as drum major (b) playing the violin with an emphasis on encore pieces. This meant my appreciation of music was almost entirely centred on melodic music. Hence, I was somewhat repulsed when it came across music that didn't have a tune! This guided my hand when it came to buying records. Sometimes in order to acquire a representation of a particular singer for my collection, I had to think hard if I was forced to take into consideration an example of German leieder. For a time this wasn't too bad because there were many

songs by Schubert, Schumann and Strauss which I knew by listening to the radio. But when I came across a Hugo Wolf, I was put off by the fact that there was nothing I could readily identify because of (a) my lack of German and (b) his songs bore no relation to what I'd become used to. So you might say that my interest in the music of Hugo Wolf, was inhibited on at least two fronts. This blockage to my appreciation of his work was brought to prominence when I discovered Heinrich Schlusnus, a singer who inspired me to the point that I felt confident he could take me by the hand when it came to appreciating Hugo Wolf.

I have enjoyed this learning curve coming as it does in the twilight of my musical appreciation. Proof of the way this bond between me and Schlusnus's interpretation of Hugo Wolf seems to be working. I already have Wolf's *Verschwiegene Liebe* - (*Silent Love*), at the top of my frequent playing list! So progress is being made. But to return to my story.

Somewhere along the line it dawned upon me that I could equate my interest in Hugo Wolf songs along with the appreciation I have for another German composer, Carl Loewe. At this point I might hasten to add that by a freakish series of circumstance the very first Hugo Wolf recording I acquired was a 10 inch HMV of the Budapest String Quartet playing his Italian Serenade - an out of character piece which gives credit to his South German origins. Compared to other North German composers like Brahms whose dour Lutheristic upbringing saw him seldom writing music that smiled, Wolf's Italian Serenade has real warmth and passion.

So as my initial fury over Walter Legge's derogatory remarks about Heinrich Schlusnus subsided to a reasoned statement of fact, I began to do a systematic search for contemporary comment on this singers recordings of Hugo Wolf. Where

better than start with that the highly respected journal *The Gramophone*.

In this I was well placed, having acquired beautifully bound and indexed volumes from 1929 - 1940s from my collecting friend from the 1960s, the late Hugh McSherry. The gap in this sequence of *The Gramophone* from 1925 to 1929 was covered by William R. Moran's book called *Herman Klein and The Gramophone*, which I'd invested in some years ago. Herman Klein was a figurehead in the formative years of *The Gramophone*, specialising as he did in reviewing classical vocal music. Today, some might scoff at Klein's old world prose and a tendency to live in the past. Acknowledging all that, he certainly knew his stuff when it came to putting into words his thoughts and feelings about vocal recordings. For instance, here is his first realisation about the talents of Schlusnus in connection with a recording of a Hugo Wolf song.

#### Extract from *The Gramophone* "The Singing of Lieder V" May 1927.

*Of another well-known song, Verschwiegene Liebe, excellent records are forthcoming from Leo Slezak (62425) and Heinrich Schlusnus (70660). Both are imbued with intense poetic feeling and rare distinction of style. It is indeed hard to choose between them, but, if compelled to give a verdict, I should pronounce in favour of Schlusnus, on account of his exquisite mezza voce effects and the irresistible charm of his phrasing. On the whole, it is the best record I have yet heard by this singer, whose efforts invariably reveal profound sentiment. What a blessing it would be if he could lend a little of his dark timbre to John McCormack! The rendering by our Irish tenor of Wo find ich Trost? (H.M.V., D.B.766) might then possess real significance in addition to a sweet voice and a fluent method. At the same time it is not one of Wolf's great songs, and perhaps there is little more to be done with it.*

Fair praise indeed and something which Walter Legge may well have had cause to dwell upon had he taken this into account when he began to make up a short list of artists to help him compile songs for Hugo Wolf Society albums. Surprisingly, by 1932, the works of Hugo Wolf were almost something of a buzz-word in record collecting circles. Klein added his own tribute to this composer and Heinrich Schlusnus with the following extended piece in one of his columns.

#### *The Gramophone* January 1932.

*It is customary in these enlightened days to eulogise Hugo Wolf at the expense of other accepted masters of the art of lieder-writing, but I fail to see why this should be altogether necessary. Surely one can perceive the extraordinary genius for truthful and felicitous musical expression that Hugo Wolf possessed, without derogating by means of doubtful comparisons from the work of composers who were at least equally gifted. On the other hand, it is eminently desirable that Wolf's songs should be more widely known and appreciated than they are in this country, and for that reason I have cordially welcomed the good news that the newly-formed Hugo Wolf Society is practically what they call in the City "over-subscribed" - that is, if it ever really can be where adherence to a good cause is in question. That cause, in the meantime, can only be helped by the issue of splendid examples such as Heinrich Schlusnus has here furnished through Polydor. Both are lovely songs (Dass doch gemalt all' deine Reize waren & An die Geliebte) and are worthy of the same attentive thought and study on the part of the listener that they have obviously received from the interpreter. The first is notable for its energy and depth of feeling; the second reveals moments of greater tenderness and yearning, but also of power, together with fine contrasts of tone-colour. I would note that the piano accompaniment*

## THE BALLADS OF CARL LOEWE by Robert F.W.Potter

re-printed from *The Gramophone* December 1931

CARL LOEWE (1796-1869) was born two months before Schubert, and outlived him by forty-one years. As a boy, Loewe's soprano voice must have been phenomenal, for in his repertoire was the " Queen of the Night " music from *Die Zauberflöte*, which, in spite of its inordinate difficulties, Loewe sang excellently. He wrote numerous works throughout his long career, and met with an ephemeral success with his oratorios. His forte, however, was the setting of epic ballads (of which he composed about four hundred), and by these - his name will live. His predilection for the mysterious and the historical made the ballad his natural means of self-expression. How large a part folk-song played in his compositions may be seen in such ballads as *Tom der Reimer*, *Heinrich der Vogler*, *Prinz Eugen* and *Archibald Douglas*. His passion for mythology and folklore led him to the fever-heat of creative composition, and then to proclaim his message. Possessing a tenor voice with baritone range, and the ability to accompany himself skilfully, he sang - and played his own ballads in public on the continent and here in England. His power of clear enunciation was marked, and his inborn enthusiasm enabled him to re-create vividly -the dramatic situations.

First in popularity comes the old Scottish ballad, *Tom der Reimer*, which is astoundingly melodious. It appeared in 1867. An H.M.V. record (dated 1910) by the late Paul Knüpfer (bass) is excellent; it is vocally complete on one side of a twelve-inch disc, - and consequently the piano skips along with incredible speed. The voice is cultured, with thoughtful interpretation and clear diction.

The first utterance of *Nun bist du mein* is one of quiet rapture. Another acoustical recording, by Leo Schützendorf (bass), is fair, but he resorts to a stupid *inarcato* effect when the piano imitates the tinkling bells. Theodor Scheidl (baritone) is good without being noteworthy, but Räucheisen's fine playing adds to the record's worth. Leo Slezak's is tenderly sung: there is occasional strain, but he compensates with his perfect control in the pianissimo passages, which are as delicately spun as gossamer. The best of all *Tom der Reimer* records is the Ivar Andresen (Columbia) disc. The rich quality of the voice, its light and shade, are superb: there is also a fine sense of poetry, particularly in the artless reference to the Rhymer's happiness. Dr. Franz Hallasch's accompaniment is exemplary. The second best for all-round merit is that of Wilhelm Strienz (baritone), with but a slight cut; the introductory conversation between the rustic poet and the fairy queen is charming.

In *Archibald Douglas* (1857), sixteen bars of verse --unimportant repetition --are omitted by both Scheidl and Knüpfer at, the same place. The devotional andante of the, old Earl imploring King James is strangely moving. The newer disc has all the advantages of modern recording, Scheidl being at his best, with Räucheisen at the piano.

While, as regards the older disc, some of us who admire the richness of Knüpfer's organ, his authoritative delivery and artistic finish, put him into the company of such singers as Pol Plancon and Jean de Reszke. The piano reproduction in this pre-war H.M.V. disc is surprisingly good.

Knüpfer's decisive style lends itself admirably to *Prinz Eugen*, a song (1844) extolling the brilliant Austrian commander (Marlborough's coadjutor at Blenheim) and his popularity with his troops. This early H.M.V. recording has orchestral support. Scheidl's rendering is also spirited, but, not always dead in tune, with a most energetic accompaniment. Michael Bohnen's rendering (Odeon) is decidedly brusque. The liberties he takes for dramatic effect are as daring as those which Chaliapine would employ, and before the song ends he has even converted the bugler into a, drummer! An Odeon ten-inch electrical recording, also with orchestra, by Oscar Kalman (baritone), is straightforward and full of vitality. A more meritorious rendering is that, with orchestra, by Rudolf Watzke (bass), who bids fair to be the best new singer of Loewe's ballads.

*Heinrich der Vogler* (1836) relates a lord's love of fowling and his sudden call to the throne of Saxony. Sir George Henschel, who has done more than any singer -to establish, Loewe as the greatest ballad composer, portrays the fowler's serenity, surprise - and trustful humility with an old-world, grace and the natural simplicity of the highest art. As in his other Columbia records, he accompanies himself. Scheidl sings more slowly and with greater volume, but I detect a sharpness of tone, occasionally. Watzke's interpretation is less, subtle than Sir George Henschel's, but the record is magnificent nevertheless; the reproduction of the orchestral accompaniment is of vernal freshness.

*Der Erlkönig*, which Wagner and others have placed above Schubert's setting for veracity, is a masterpiece. In Sir George Henschel's interpretation and playing of this ballad, the boy's anguish, the forest spectre's misty voice, and the manly accents of the

father who vainly endeavours to allay the fears of his panic-stricken child, are unforgettable. His is an art which we shall always cherish. Michael Bohnen (Odeon) gives an equally original narration, but tends to hold up the rhythm. Again it might be Chaliapine, so personal is the conception. The Erlkönig is less sinister, having more body than spirit. The repetition of the child's cry when the forest-goblin has claimed him for his own, is the merest -whisper. This is in many ways a remarkable record.

It is a matter for regret that (at the time of writing)- the following acoustical recordings of six Loewe ballads have not been re-recorded: *Der Nöck* and *Der Mummelsee* (both by Paul Bender, bass); *Kleiner Haushalt* and *Niemand hat's geseh'n* (by Elisabeth van Endert, soprano,); *Heimlichkeit* (by Richard Mayr, bass), and *Spirito santo* (Theodor Scheidl, baritone). A glance at the rippling arpeggios of the printed pages of *Der Nöck* (The Water Sprite) will suffice to make even a Schubertian admit that Loewe also could write music indicative of the rushing water of country streams.

At a recent Max Mossel concert in Liverpool I was pleased to note that Madame Jeanne Dusseau included on her programme Loewe's version of *Meine Ruh' ist hin* from Goethe's *Faust*: it is interesting to compare this with Schubert's setting of the same poem under the title of *Gretchen am Spinnrade*. In view of Loewe's recognized position as the greatest composer of dramatic ballads as apart from purely lyrical songs, I trust that some of the best known of those I have named will be made available for gramophone enthusiasts by the recording companies.

excellently played by Franz Rupp, are rendered precisely as the composer wrote them, without the meddlesome co-operation of violin or other tiresome obbligati.

Like any other human being, sometimes Klein got it wrong. This is what he said when reviewing Schlusnus's version of Wolf's Epiphany.

**The Gramophone, December 1932. Epiphany (Hugo Wolf) and Serenade (Richard Strauss). In German. Piano acc. by Franz Rupp. Decca-Polydor CA8109, 12in., 4s.**

*It seems to me rather a pity that a song so cleverly written alike for voice and piano as Hugo Wolf's Epiphany (or The Three Kings, as it is also called) should have for its theme such poor stuff. One can understand a Friar Tuck trolling forth his "Ho, jolly Jenkin, I spy a knave in drinkin," because carousing was his proudest boast. But who that has stood before some old Italian picture of the three Holy Kings, kneeling at Nazareth with their offerings of myrrh, frankincense, and gold, can imagine one of those staid, richly attired dignitaries telling us how on his journey thither he has eaten and drunk his fill, but with reluctance paid his bill. To me it sounds ridiculously coarse and, if I may say so, medieval Teutonic. I turned to the Serenade of Strauss for a contrast and found it. But that is not to say that it suits Heinrich Schlusnus in the smallest degree, or, shall I say rather, that he has the least idea how to express it. If I were the Serenaded One, reposing on my comfortable bed and listening to this doleful outpouring of sentiment, I should remark, "Thanks. It must be raining in the sunlight. I don't think I'll trouble to dress and 'come out' this morning!"*

This critique brought forth the following response.

**The Gramophone, December 1932. To the Editor**

DEAR SIR,- It is gross temerity on my part to differ from an authority like Mr. Klein, but I cannot help feeling that the spirit of Wolf's "Epiphany" may not quite have revealed itself to him. I have had Schlusnus' record in the old Brunswick edition for some time, and have always thought of it as not a broadly comic piece, but as a representation of three, small boys marching into a Christmas party and singing a set of traditional mummers' rhymes, marching out again at the end. Medieval and Teutonic in a sense no doubt it is, but to my mind the picture is not of the Three Kings who came to Bethlehem, but of three boys representing the traditional figures, and this thought removes the coarseness that would appear if the last verse were ignored and the other words were taken too seriously. After reading the words and hearing the record again, I am sure that I have the right idea of what was in Goethe's and Wolf's mind. Yours faithfully, A. Nelson. London N.W.11

My own views on the Schlusnus and Hüscher performances of Epiphany is naturally biased towards the smoother higher voiced baritone of Schlusnus, who on more than one occasion was called the German Battistini. Technically it is also a better recording with the piano captured beautifully at the end. I consider this comparison refutes Walter Legge's assessment of Schlusnus and as far as I'm concerned closes the book on this argument from all points of view.

Incidentally, it also gave me food for thought to read in the *Record Guide* that there were artists in the Hugo Wolf Society sets who were found wanting. For instance they did not come up to high standards set by Elena Gerhardt who launched the series. Woe betide those who endeavoured to match the interpretations of this singer which is another story in itself!

All this finally brings me to the conclusion that there will always be differing opinions when it comes to a choice of one voice over another. After all this I still can't come up with a plausible reason why Walter Legge would have been so critical of Schlusnus's interpretations of Hugo Wolf. In this respect I suppose you might say the jury is still out. But I don't want people to think that it has all been a waste of time. A wonderful by product to all this was that I discovered there was someone in the 1930s who apparently had almost identical tastes to my own 60 years later! His name was Robert W. F. Potter.

In the December 1931 issue of *The Gramophone*, Mr Potter published a two page article on the *Ballads of Carl Loewe*. In this he listed about 20 of the most

popular titles and mentioned them in context with records he'd acquired for his collection, both acoustic and electric. He was definitely a man after my own heart. What a bonus this was for me (see an edited version of this pages 6-7). Then low and behold! As I continued reading through this period in *The Gramophone*, I encountered another piece which Mr. Potter had written. This appeared just as gloom and doom was descending over Britain in the aftermath of the declaration of war in 1939. The October issue of *The Gramophone* carried another piece by Mr Potter. This time the subject was - yes you've guessed it! It was an article on the Polydor recordings of Heinrich Schlusnus!

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#### Conclusion

In order to test my feelings about this issue, I sent a draft copy of my article to Nelson Kenny in Australia who replied as follows.

Your suspicion about Walter Legge may well be right. He was particularly fond of Hugo Wolf, and he was widely regarded as ambitious and unscrupulous.

The *Telegraph's* obituary of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf described how she auditioned for EMI in Vienna in 1946: "During a two-hour audition, Legge made the soprano spend the best part of an hour and half experimenting with different ways of colouring a single phrase in a Wolf song - 'pure sadism', said Karajan, who was listening. Legge was intolerant of the slightest fluff, and at one post-recital reception years later was overheard telling Schwarzkopf that 'you sang that last Wolf Lied like a pig'."

The *Guardian's* obituary of Schwarzkopf said "his long and strict sessions coaching her in Wolf have become the stuff of legends". They no doubt contributed to a certain excess of detail in her interpretations.

## DISPOSING OF YOUR COLLECTION

HERE ARE SOME BASIC SUGGESTIONS WHICH YOU MIGHT EMBRACE REGARDING THE FATE OF YOUR RECORD COLLECTION AFTER YOU'VE SHED THIS MOTAL COIL!

### HOW TO MAXIMISE A FAIR AND JUST RETURN FOR YOUR COLLECTION

Keep your family informed about what you think your collection is worth.

Let them know where your collection is stored and what is its valuable.

If your collection is especially valuable, nominate an executor in your will.

Let your family know which of your collecting friends can be called to get things in order, especially if you have a specialised collection.

If possible, keep detailed records of what you have paid for items in your collection.

Keep your collection written up - this makes it easier if a dealer is called upon to give a value or to maximise prices that should be reached in an auction.

### DISPOSING OF YOUR COLLECTION AFTER DEATH

All of the above relates to the disposal of your collection by your heirs. Much of it is designed to make their life easier and ensure your collection doesn't end up at the dump or consigned to go mouldy under the house. It is important that your lawyers or executors know how to handle and store your collection. It is important to realise that not all collections are worth large sums of money and some aren't even worth much to anyone except for the pleasure it has given the person who has collected them over the years.

### SOME OTHER THOUGHTS ON DIS-

### PERSING YOUR COLLECTION FOLLOWS

Leave it to a relative. This is not recommended unless you know that your chosen relative has a strong interest in collecting. If not, then this can be a disaster. The worst outcome of this is that the relative throws it away or sells it without appreciating its realistic value.

Arrange to have it sold by a dealer. If you have a good business relationship with a dealer, then you may wish to arrange a sale after your death. Any competent dealer will be happy to offer a fair price, especially if it fits into his existing stock.

Give it to a charity. Do not do this. Charities don't know what to do with collections. It is far better to arrange a sale and then donate the money to the charity.

Give it to an institution. People leave their collections to all sorts of institutions such as museums, libraries universities etc. The trouble with institutions is that they don't always know what to do with gifts like this. They often deteriorate unless someone in the institution takes an interest and gives it curatorial care.

Leave it to your club or society. There is considerable benefit in this suggestion if the collection is of limited value, then you are not giving much away. The material that you give them, will in general be sold and provide some useful funds for the organisation. Any material that is not saleable will most likely go to junior members and will provide them with some useful material.

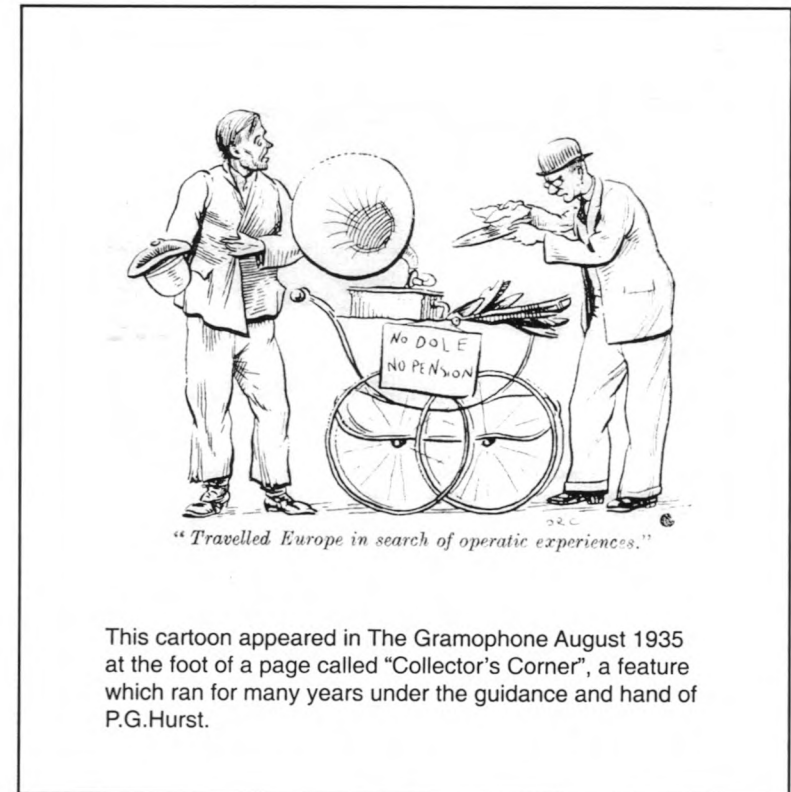
Auctions. If you have a valuable collection, particularly with specialised material, then there is no doubt that this is the way to go. Don't not consign your collection to a general auctioneer. Go to one who has a reputation for selling antiquarian books or art objects. Some clubs and societies do run auctions among their members from time to time. However, these are not recommended because of insider dealing, usually by a non qualified auctioneer!

### SELLING BEFORE YOU PASS AWAY

The best way for you to dispose of your collection is to do it before you die. You have the knowledge of what you have,

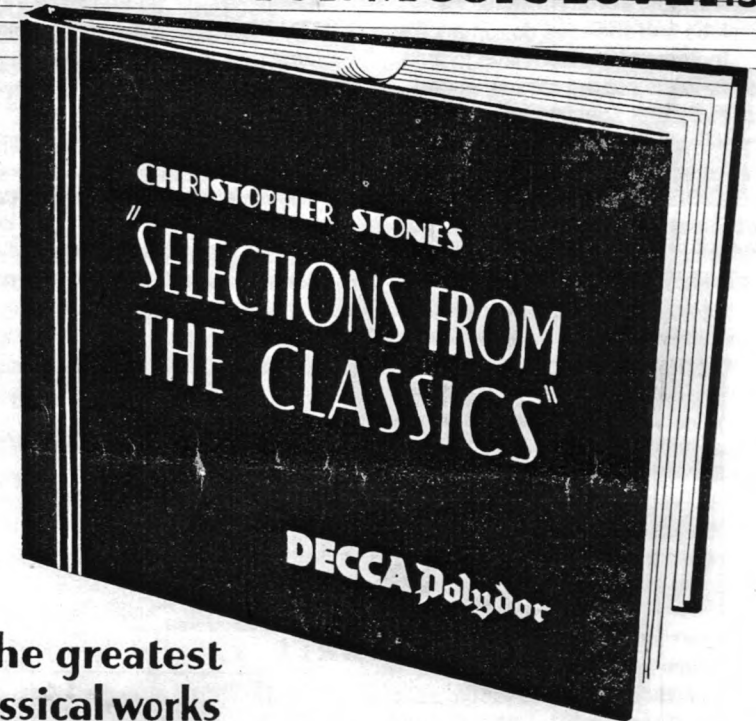
what you paid for it and what it is worth. You can still use any of the above recommended methods to sell, but it is important you must have realistic expectations. If on the other hand you are unsure of what to do, then discuss it with other collectors who will be able to guide you in the best way to maximise your returns, Beware of eBay or TRADEME. This is not the best way to sell large collections.

*These notes were inspired from a philatelic magazine I get from Australia. I have not acknowledged either the source or the author because I have had to delete and change many phrases to get it into a form which our readership would appreciate.*



This cartoon appeared in The Gramophone August 1935 at the foot of a page called "Collector's Corner", a feature which ran for many years under the guidance and hand of P.G.Hurst.

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Whole-page advertisement from *The Gramophone* July 1934

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