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ASSISTING ARTISTS:

PAULINE BINDLEY - Soprano
FLORENCE SCAPINI - Violiniste
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The editor has asked me to provide a list of notable singers I have heard over the years. I've added comments where something particular came to mind. Where there is no comment there was no particular memory, except in the case of recitalists, who generally sang and sounded as they did on their numerous records. On the opera stage most singers sounded better than they did on disc, and sometimes quite different.

Nelson Kenny

SOPRANOS

Elly Ameling in solo recital.

Martina Arroyo as Aida at Covent Garden and as Valentine in a concert performance of *Les Huguenots* in the Albert Hall. Not much of an actor but a fine singer with a glorious voice. In *Aida* she floated a beautiful pianissimo at the end of *O patria mia* as she walked offstage with her back to the audience.

Josephine Barstow in all four soprano roles in a production of *The Tales of Hoffmann*. She was equal to the challenge. A fine singer and actor.

Victoria de los Angeles in solo recital.

Mattiwilda Dobbs in solo recital.

Mirella Freni in *La traviata* at Covent Garden. Violetta was not a role that greatly suited her.

Reri Grist as Gilda in *Rigoletto* at Covent Garden. Exquisite Gilda in the prewar soprano leggiero style.

Rita Hunter as the Mother in *Hansel und Gretel*, shortly before she embarked on her Wagnerian career. Ample of voice and figure.

Gwyneth Jones as Aida, Elisabetta in *Don Carlo* and Leonore in *Fidelio* at Covent Garden in the 1960s, when she was a thrilling dramatic soprano with a brilliant, rock-steady voice. A fine-looking woman too.

Ilva Ligabue as Mistress Ford in *Falstaff* at Covent Garden. Good singer.

Lucia Popp as Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera* at Covent Garden. Good.

Kiri Te Kanawa in *La donna del lago* (Rossini).

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf in solo recital only. She refused to sing opera in London after receiving poor reviews for *Der Rosenkavalier* at Covent Garden in 1959—like Caruso and Naples.

Renata Scotto as *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Metropolitan Opera in 1970. Superb.

Irmgard Seefried in solo recital.

Anja Silja as Cassandre in *Les Troyens* at Covent Garden.

Elisabeth Söderström as two countesses—in *Capriccio* at Glyndebourne and in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Covent Garden.

Rita Streich in solo recital.

Joan Sutherland as Marie in *La Fille du régiment* at Covent Garden, as Violetta in *La traviata* at the Metropolitan, as *Alcina* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* in the Sydney Opera House, as *Semiramide* in a concert performance at Drury Lane (a huge theatre) and as Marguerite de Valois in *Les Huguenots* in the Albert Hall. Also other concerts and solo recital. She was staggering at her best. Violetta needs clearer diction than she had. The performance of *Alcina* was a final dress rehearsal. At one point she stopped in mid-aria and said: "I've lost it". She didn't say whether she had forgotten the music or the words, but it was probably the latter. Her difficulty with remembering words was notorious. Anyway she was given a cue and everything started again.

Astrid Varnay as Kostelnicka in *Jenufa* at Covent Garden.

Mara Zampieri as Elisabetta di Valois in *Don Carlo* at La Scala. A powerful, penetrating but flexible voice with little obvious vibrato. Reminiscent some of the sopranos recorded in the early years of the 20th century.

MEZZO SOPRANOS

Janet Baker in *Das Lied von der Erde* and other concerts, and *Dido and Aeneas* at Glyndebourne. She sang Dido marvellously, but acted in semaphore.

Teresa Berganza as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Covent Garden, and in solo recital.

Grace Bumbry as Amneris in *Aida* at Covent Garden. She acted the part in sinuous Cat Woman style.

Rita Gorr in as Eboli in *Don Carlo*, Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera* and Azucena in *Il trovatore* at Covent Garden. A powerful singer. She has announced that she will retire this northern summer at the age of 80, after performing as the Countess in *Queen of Spades*.

Marilyn Horne as Marie in *Wozzeck* at Covent Garden, Arsace in *Semiramide* with Sutherland, and in solo recital. Notwithstanding her fireworks in *Semiramide*, she was perhaps even more impressive in songs.

Yvonne Minton in *Suor Angelica*, as Marina in *Boris Godunov*, as Mistress Page in *Falstaff*, and Ascanio in *Benvenuto Cellini* at Covent Garden.

Flora Nielsen in private.

Frederica von Stade in *La traviata* (as Flora) at the Metropolitan.

CONTRALTO

Muriel Brunskill in *The Mikado* in Christchurch. A vocal wreck but great style as Katisha.

TENORS

Luigi Alva as Almaviva in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Covent Garden, and Gonzalve in *L'Heure espagnole* at La Scala.

Giacomo Aragall as Duca di Mantova in *Rigoletto* at Covent Garden. Many regarded this Catalan tenor as the equal of Pavarotti when they were both young. He was a fine singer, but a stick on stage because of nerves. He actually retired for some years because of his stage fright.

Ugo Benelli as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* at Glyndebourne and Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* in Belfast. A stylish singer with a lively stage presence. While he was singing at Glyndebourne Dr Dulcamara's donkey brayed offstage. Benelli bowed deeply toward the wings.

Carlo Bergonzi as Alfredo in *La traviata* at the Metropolitan, and in solo recital. He sang beautifully as Alfred but Joan Sutherland overtopped him by about a foot.

Pietro Bottazzo *L'inganno felice* (Rossini). Another who was ranked with the young Pavarotti. His career took him to specialising in Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Mozart rather than Puccini and Verdi.

Tom Burke in concert in London. In his late 70s he sounded much as he does on his records.

Renato Cioni as Alfredo in *La traviata* and Gabriele Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra* at Covent Garden.

Hugues Cuénod as Monsieur Taupe in *Capriccio* and Monastatos in *Die Zauberflöte* at Glyndebourne. He celebrated his 105th birthday in June, 20 years after he made his Metropolitan Opera debut and 70 years after his great Monteverdi recordings with Nadia Boulanger. He used to claim to have no voice but his light, reedy sound was perfectly audible in the

theatre.

Ronald Dowd in *Faust*, *La bohème* and *Fidelio*. He was a fine Florestan.

Nicolai Gedda in *Benvenuto Cellini*. Disappointing. Often forced his rather dry voice.

Ernst Haeflinger in *Das Lied von der Erde* (with Janet Baker).

Luigi Infantino in solo recital in the 1960s. The lyric tenor had become a loud tenor.

Richard Lewis in Verdi *Requiem*, and as Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* at Covent Garden.

James McCracken in *Il trovatore* at Covent Garden. Big, thick, ugly voice. This performance was also notable for the conductor, David Atherton, being booed.

Ian Partridge in the St Matthew Passion and as Iopas in *Les Troyens* at Covent Garden. It was a surprise to find this cultivated concert singer in the cast list for *Les Troyens*. His light voice projected perfectly into the theatre and he provided some of the best singing of the whole long evening.

Luciano Pavarotti as Tonio in *La Fille du régiment*, complete with the aria with nine high Cs, at Covent Garden in 1969 and as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Metropolitan in 1970. His voice was still lustrous at that time and he sang more musically than he did later in his career.

Jan Peerce in solo recital in the 1960s. Some gleaming high notes were a relief from the grittiness elsewhere in his voice.

Bruno Prevedi in the title-role of *Don Carlo* at Covent Garden. A ringing dramatic tenor.

Michel Sénéchal in *L'Heure espagnole* at Glyndebourne. A skilled light tenor and comic actor. He performed until the age of 75 or so.

George Shirley as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* at Glyndebourne. A stylish singer with a rich voice.

Jon Vickers as Radames in *Aida*, Riccardo in *Un ballo in maschera*, Aeneas in *Les Troyens* and Don José in *Carmen* at Covent Garden. One of the great dramatic tenors of the 20th century. Recordings inadequately convey his impact. He could fill the theatre with great edifices of sound or fine his voice to a pianissimo, though sometimes there seemed to be not quite enough levels in between. He was built like a rugby league forward rather than a romantic hero but his musical intensity carried the day dramatically.

BARITONES

Renato Bruson as Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* at La Scala. A real Verdi baritone. His expressive

continued page 8

Ever mindful that someone, sometime in the future might wish to see what our group was interested in, I print a list of the items I have selected to play for you on the 15th of July 2007. While I reserve the right to change the items and sequence without notice, here is a tentative order of presentation.

PATTI, Adelina (Soprano)
Ah non credea mirarti "La Sonnambula" (Bellini)
Gramophone Patti Pink G&T 03084 - 1906

PLANÇON Pol (Bass)
Pro Peccatus "Stabat Mater" (Rossini)
Gramophone Monarch (Pink Dog Monarch) 052218 - 1908

PAYAN, Paul (Bass)
Berceuse "Mignon" (Thomas)
Disque Pour Gramophone GC 4-32089 - 1910

PADEREWSKI, Ignaz Jan (Piano)
Minuet in G (Paderewski)
HMV DB 379 - c1917

PONSELLE, Rosa (Soprano)
Homing (Del Riego)
Cantabile BIM 701-2 - 27 September 1936

PINA, Ezio (Bass)
Caro Mio Ben (Giordano)
HMV Ed 172 - 1940

SEMBRICH, Marcella (Soprano)
Voce di Primavera (J. Strauss Jnr.)
PRIMO P.1001 - c.1900

DELMA, Mario (Bass)
Bénédiction des poignards "Les Huguenots" Meyerbeer)
PATHÉ 2495 - 1902

NIVETTE, Juste (Bass)
Voici donc les Débris "Robert Le Diable" (Meyerbeer)
PHYRNIS S1305 - c.1910

BLUFF, Harry (Comedian)
I'm Henry the Eighth I am (Murray & Weston)
POPULAR P418 - c1914

HATO, Ana (Soprano)
Waita Poi (Hill)
PARLOPHONE A 2802 - 1929

PRIHODA, Vasa (Violin)
Ay-Ay-Ay (Freire)
POLYDOR 62567 - 1926

VICTORIAN QUARTET
Pretty Polly Perkins of Paddinton Green
Regal Zonophone G 21878 - c1942

G.NESSI A.(t) , BARACCHI (bar.), E.VENTURINI (t)
Ping Pang Pong "Turandot" (Puccini) 2 sides
Columbia 03651 - 1926

INTERNATIONAL NOVELTY ORCHESTRA
Peter's Pop Keeps a Lollipop Shop (Long) * see lyrics below
Regal Zonophone G 23036 - 1930s

DAVIES, Tudor (Tenor)
Walter's Prize Song "Meistersinger" (Wagner)
HMV D 1021 - 1926

PAVEMENT MUSICIANS
"A DAY'S MUSIC IN OUR STREET" 2 sides
Broadcast 890 - c.1932

L.TIBBETT (bar), G.MARTINELLI(t), R. BAMPTON (s), L.WARREN (bs)
Plebe Patrici "Simon Boccanegra" (Verdi)
HMV DB 3950 - 1939

* Peter's pop keeps a lollipop shop full of dainty things to eat
Peter's pop keeps a lollipop shop it's a real good treat for Pete
Pretty girls all stop at the lollipop shop that is owned by Peter's pop
And Peter's big mammie has perfect peaches from Pete's lollipop shop!!!

phrasing, handsome voice and elegant figure made him an ideal Rodrigo.

Renato Capecchi as Don Inigo in *L'Heure espagnole* at La Scala.

Piero Cappuccilli as Giorgio Germont in *La traviata* at Covent Garden. Rich voice.

Geraint Evans as Dottor Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* and in the title-roles of *Wozzeck* and *Falstaff*. He barked through his roles in a harsh, monotonous voice. In comic parts he overacted so that audiences who didn't understand the Italian words would know that something funny was happening. This brought him (like Gobbi) much praise in the press.

Peter Glossop as Rodrigo in *Don Carlo*, Renato in *Un ballo in Maschera*, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Coroebus in *Les Troyens* at Covent Garden.

Dmitri Gnatyuk in solo recital in Christchurch. Great Ukrainian singer who wasn't well publicised in NZ.

Tito Gobbi in *Il tabarro*, *Gianni Schicchi* and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Conte d'Almaviva) at Covent Garden. He had a dodgy vocal technique and he was a bit of a ham actor. None of this mattered greatly in *Gianni Schicchi* because of the nature of the role and the fact that he was hidden behind bed curtains much of the time.

Hans Hotter in solo recital in Sydney, after he had retired from the stage. His singing was unforgettable, especially his rhythmic verve in Schubert. The program didn't call for him to unleash the full power of his beautiful voice.

Cornell MacNeil as *Rigoletto*, and Conte di Luna in *Il trovatore* at Covent Garden. Particularly fine as *Rigoletto*.

Robert Massard as Fieramosca in *Benvenuto Cellini* at Covent Garden. Fine French singer.

Sherrill Milnes as Giorgio Germont in *La traviata* at the Met and in the title-role of Thomas's *Hamlet* in Sydney. A remarkable singer and actor, especially in *Hamlet*, which is a surprisingly good opera if Shakespeare is not required.

Leo Nucci as the Chiming Clock and the Cat in *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* at La Scala.

Rolando Panerai as Dandini in *La Cenerentola* in Belfast. I was told that he had a cold but he made a fine, rich sound, perhaps a little less vibrant than on records. He gave a spirited comic performance, though the fioratura in Dandini's aria defeated him.

Mario Sereni in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Met.

Gérard Souzay in solo recital.

BASSES

Kim Borg in solo recital. A fine musician with a beautiful resonant voice.

Owen Brannigan in concerts. He had a fine big voice, with which he could characterise an English song like no other singer in England in his time.

Boris Christoff as *Boris Godunov* and as King Philip in *Don Carlo* at Covent Garden. As fine as one might have expected. A great actor (and expert scene-stealer). Philip's big aria, in which his *mezza voce* floated through the auditorium, was almost as overwhelming as **Tancredi Pasero's** 78.

Alfredo Mariotti as Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola* in Belfast. A fine basso buffo with a strong, powerful voice.

Donald McIntyre in *Messiah*, and as Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* at Covent Garden.

Paolo Montarsolo in *L'inganno felice* (Rossini). Lots of comic business but rough vocally and musically.

Ruggiero Raimondi as Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Metropolitan and as King Philip in *Don Carlo* at La Scala. His Philip was smoothing sung and well acted but he lacked the vocal power to be truly dominating.

Matti Salminen as the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo* at La Scala. A Finnish giant with a voice to match his size.

Giorgio Tadeo in *L'inganno felice*. A good basso buffo.

Inia Te Wiata as Dansker in *Billy Budd* and as Pimen in *Boris Godunov* at Covent Garden. His accounts of Pimen's numbers were finely phrased.

Norman Walker in concert. The first visiting singer I heard in NZ, in 1952. He seemed OK but unremarkable to me. One of his items was the second of Osmin's three arias in *Die Entführung*, an unusual choice. Not a huge voice.

Yi Kwei-sze in concert and solo recital. As those lucky enough to have his Dutch LP of Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* and Brahms's *Four Serious Songs* will know, this Chinese bass was a wonderful artist.

Finally, one that I missed. I was wandering around the Royal Festival Hall one morning, for what purpose I forget, when I found myself in a box-office foyer. A score of people were queuing to buy tickets for Gerald Moore's farewell concert. Outside hundreds more were waiting to be let through the doors in small groups. I could have attached myself to the indoor queue but scruples overcame me and I departed. At least I missed seeing de los Angeles and Schwarzkopf perform the spurious Rossini *Duetto buffo di due gatti*. Those two cats are so arch in the recording that heaven only knows what they did in the concert hall.

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