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A REVIEW OF SHELLAC & VINYL VOCAL REISSUES FROM THE RAY HEDGES & BILL MAIN COLLECTIONS

EDITORIAL

The last couple of months have been a very difficult and trying time for me and Jill. Not only did I have to undergo a triple by-pass operation, but Jill had a stroke on the 1st of April. All this just as we had tradesmen in to refurbish our bath room - what timing!

The good news is that we've been told she will eventually make a good recovery, which will take at least 3-4 months. Her speech and memory have been slightly affected; but as I write (mid-May) the family have all noted a tremendous improvement and anticipate this will keep on until she returns to her old self.

All this has left us a bit topsy-turvy as I'm constantly on watch as well as doing things I've always done in the house to see things running smoothly. As well I've had to extend my cooking skills to the limit by heating up dishes which our friends and relations have supplied. So it hasn't always been intolerable. In fact this self imposed isolation has worked wonders in my role as editor of this journal. The *G&T Gazette* has borne the brunt of my confinement with an extended article which occupies the whole edition.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking members of the SRG for the cards we've received from the group, one for my operation and the other wishing Jill a speedy recovery from her stroke. We both hope that we will be able to carry out our obligations with you in September when we are set down to present our programme at 93 Burma Road. To wet your appetite for what we've planned we've forwarded this issue of the *G&T Gazette* by mail so you can 'swot up' on what we've got planned.

Until then, happy listening.

Bill & Jill Main

In the early 1950s when a number of companies were venturing into the reissue market with historic recordings, Eric Rees of Rubini records wrote an introductory note for a selection of items that came from a collector called Syd Gray. This is what he wrote.

"A long-playing record of transferred 78's is usually marketed on the strength of gimmicks; a self-limiting factor is accepted in the choice of material to justify a descriptive title of an alluring nature. This may be relatively orthodox and demure, such as '*Twelve Verdi Arias*' or '*Favourite Singers of the Past*'. Alternatively the record hunter may find his custom solicited by some such study in the recondite as '*Famous Westphalian Warblers*' or '*Seventeen Strident Sopranos Screech Supersonic Cs*' or '*Eighty Lithuanian Tenors Gurgle Otello's Last Gasp*'. In presenting this mixed bag of treasured electronic vocals, Mr. Gray has disdained such devices. Treating his collection rather as Jack Horner treated his Christmas pie, he has simply put in his thumb and pulled out some plums with results which would amply justify the cheerful verdict of 'What a good boy am I'.

Gray's LP listed items by the following singers. . .

Muzio, Islandi, Onegin, Piccaver, Austral,
Koslovsky, Flagstad, Plunket-Green, von Granfelt, Garcia,
Kruzalinka, Hasslo, Koshetz and Beddo.

. . . not exactly standard fare of the day!

Mr Rees statement pulls no punches and is directly aimed at those who wanted to get on the band wagon of entering the market in what seemed to them a lucrative enterprise, namely re-issuing old recordings from the past. While the choice of titles for these LPs obviously annoyed Mr. Rees he then went on to praise Mr. Gray's way of putting together a selection of interesting recordings that might appeal to a broader audience. I must say I found this outlook refreshing and in keeping with what we in the Scratchy Record Group hold dear when it comes to putting together a programmes for our members. This in turn also highlighted an important component in our collections concerning recordings we refer to as re-issues which fill in gaps when we are unable to acquire the originals. So inspired by the fact that reissues deserve better treatment by more sensitive souls, I decided to base my programme around these vocal anthologies and at the same

time put down on paper some thoughts which I have about their importance to us as record collectors.

HOW THE IDEA FOR THIS ARTICLE WAS BORN

When I began collecting records in the mid 1950s, companies like HMV were busy deleting their 78s with massive sales, I took time to look through my 1955/6 edition of the *Record Guide* and make a list of all the vocal recordings which the authors Edward Sackville-West and Desmond Shawe-Taylor had awarded with two asterisks, a sign which indicated an excellent performance that they recommended! When I passed this list over to a shop assistant in Cuba Street she rolled her eyes and invited me behind the counter to go through the racks on my own! This gave me a basic collection of 78s which I built on by haunting second hand shops and classified advertisements in the wanted to buy columns.

About this time, I got to know about a small but very important publication called the *Record Collector*, a magazine which was edited by James Dennis in Ipswich. I took out a subscription of this magazine and also bought all back copies that I could lay my hands on because I could see how it would add to my knowledge on collecting matters at a variety of levels. Aiding and abetting my understanding of all the ins and outs of what to look out for was *The Gramophone*, a monthly which I began taking in my last year at Canterbury in 1955. This not only reviewed records that were issued but acted as a mine of information regarding the evolution which was taking place with the introduction of 33 1/3 and 45 rpm long playing recordings. It was in this journal that I learnt of what the 'big guns' of the trade were planning with their LPs called 'Great Recordings of the Century'. Companies like HMV, later called EMI, had by reason of their association in this market from 1899, vast resources at their beck and call with records by Caruso, Melba and Chaliapin, a formidable trio to head the roster of celebrity artists. By enriching my collection with as many of the standard celebrities that I could find, it soon became clear to me that I would go to my grave without the pleasure of hearing a broader cross-section of singers unless I took a more liberal attitude to investing in Long Playing reissues.

IN THE BEGINNING - 78rpm REISSUES

I hadn't been collecting for more than a year when I first came into contact with my first reissued recording. These were HMV recordings from their No. 2 Historic Catalogue which appeared on the market in August 1924, shortly after HMV began issuing double sided recordings. These were freely available from most retail

outlets in the major centres. This selection remained in the general catalogue until 1942. The popularity of these records is difficult to judge. I say this because I never encountered more than a dozen or so in all my collecting experiences. Their entry in the catalogues saw them listed in a special green paper section where they could be purchased for the same price as celebrity issues by the company.

My next brush with 78rpm reissues was with the HMV Archive Series which were released in 1953. These recordings (127 discs) were available to special order and were part of a post-war drive by the Board of Trade in Britain to encourage an increase in exports to work off the horrendous war loans which piled up in the early 1940s. It is said that American collectors had tremendous influence in the selection process of this series. Like records from the No.2 catalogue, these white label recordings were pretty expensive costing about three times an ordinary red label disc. My only success with these came when I was told about a pawn shop in Petone which had some of these through an un-redeemed pledge!

Finally I must mention the Parlophone Historic Series which came on to the market in the late 1930s. Their appeal to record collectors was the fact that they were made from Fonotipia and Odeon matrices of European artists who had made a name for themselves in Italy and Germany. These had barely become known to specialist vocal recording collectors when the second world war broke out in September 1939. That a selection of them emerged in LP format in Australia in 1989 is one of those fascinating features of re-issue recordings which adds to the aura of collecting reissues! According to my 1940-1941 Parlophone catalogue the company issued 27 recordings in this series which were priced the same as their celebrity series. What is even more interesting was that some of these were devoted to instrumentalists.

As for purchasing any of these vintage 78s, either in original format or reissue status from local retail outlets, I have no experiences to relate apart from a solitary instance when I was tipped off by a friend to go to Beggs in Christchurch and buy a copy of Chaliapin singing two arias from 'Faust' on DB 1437, a recording which was made in 1930 and wasn't a reissue. It was a vintage vocal recording which somehow had remained in the catalogue over the years as remainder stock. I treasure this particular recording to this day.

To conclude this personal recollection of acquiring examples of these very elusive and hard to find reissue recordings have mainly come my way through dealers and exchanges with other collectors, both here and overseas.

AN ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF RECORDING COMPANIES WHO ISSUED
This is a list of companies who produced reissue discs for distribution in the English speaking world. If any of those listed, it is a beginning which I hope to develop and expand in the future with other companies in the English speaking world that produced reissue recordings.

78 rpm pre Long Playing era.

HMV No.2 Catalogue 1924 -1940 & Archive Series 1953
IRCC 1932- Brain child of William H. Seltsam who died in 1968, production reissues
Parlophone/Odeon Historic Series 1930s

LP era 1950-1990

ASCO American Stereophonic Corporation, Ace of Clubs
Belcantodisc UK/USA Record collectors series 1958-1960
Cantilena - Canadian, Club "99" USA (Various - with one from the William Vio
Court Opera Classics, CSR, CRC Connoisseur's Record Club USA
Delta - London Both LPs and 45rpm releases, Discophilia
Edison 10"LP issued by their Voice-Writer Division LP mid 1950s (See note 2)
EJS/ANNA USA, Ember, Eterna
HMS Historic Master Series, HMV Treasury Series 1980s & HMV Golden Voice
Legendary
OASI USA, Opal, Olympus 1959-1960 UK
Pearl, Primo NZ 1964, Marcella Sembrich 45rpm from a Bettini cylinder, Preisler
Rococo Manufactured for Ross Court Co. Toronto Canada 1950s (See note 1), I
Scala named NY collectors involved include Henry Mecinski, William Violi &
TAP An American concern with Ed.J.Smith e.g. '20 Great Tenors/Sopranos/Wa
Turnabout
World Record Club (UK)
Viking Records (Rococo Agency held by Murdoch Riley NZ

LP - CD era .1980s & onward

Ampion, Atoll
ChenyneUK
Dutton
Gramophone Emporium
Larikin (an Australian label)
Marston, Memoir Classics
Naxos, Nimbus
Opal
Pearl UK
Record Collector, Recurrent (National Library of Australia) Regis, Romophon
Symposium Records Harold Wayne collection
SRG 50th anniversary CD 2008
Testament, Truesound Transfers

Notes: 1 It's my belief that two Rococo LPs of Caruso & Melba were issued under
2 Featuring Korsoff/Boninsegna/Destinn/Gilly & Galvany.



PHONOGRAPHS & GRAMOPHONES

1. Edison Gem phonograph. 1901 long key wind-model. Comes with a 10 inch witches hat horn. In original condition with Model B reproducer (2 minute only). \$800 Plays well!
2. Edison Red Gem phonograph. Comes with Fireside crane & horn. In original condition with Model K reproducer . \$1,400 **SOLD**
3. Edison Fireside phonograph. 2-4 minute with model K reproducer. Comes with a horn painted pale blue with floral transfers on interior panels and crane. \$900 Plays beautifully.
4. Edison Standard phonograph. 2-4 minute with model C reproducer. Comes with a spectacular red 12 inch floral horn. \$700 Needs a new belt.
5. Edison Home phonograph (with banner transfer). Comes with an orange coloured cygnet horn and crane. Horn interior painted cream with decorative floral transfers. Stunning appearance. Fitted with a turn-over 2 - 4 minute model O reproducer. In original condition. \$1,250 Truly spectacular.
6. Palliard Echophone (Casket model) with a 12 inch spun aluminium horn. Original reproducer for 2 minute cylinders. Beautiful wooden cabinet with ornate brass carrying handle. \$900 [Illustrated] Has great visual appeal. *Illustrated*
7. Columbia Trump Graph-o-phone. Plays 2-4 minute cylinders. With lyre mounted reproducer. 20 inch brass horn with music stand crane. \$1,000 *Illustrated*. Shown here with short floral horn.

8. HMV portable Gramophone. c.1930 in excellent con. \$350 **SOLD**
9. HMV Cinch gramophone. Factory dated 1913. Oak model with exhibition sound box. Under horn design with wooden louvres. Plays perfectly. \$300 **SOLD**
10. Nirona toy gramophone with 7 inch turntable in original condition. Well used but not abused! Plays small children's recordings. \$400 [Illustrated]
11. Avonia portable. Made in Christchurch. In superb oak cabinet. Rare. \$450
12. Decca portable. Carrying case measuring 30x30x19cms. Grey green finish. \$350 Great acoustic sound!
13. Decca portable. Carrying case measuring 25x28x19cms. Brown tan finish. \$400 Great acoustic sound!
14. Peter Pan portable. A bit worn but plays well in original condition. Originally sold by Johnstons in Sydney. \$250
14. Mikiphone (Made in Japan). In leather case. Absolutely superb condition. \$600 Very rare.

The above can be inspected by making an appointment telephone (04) 971-3535. The description 'in original condition' implies that there has been no visible attempt to restore a machine since they left the factory.

All phonographs and gramophone are sold with ten 2 & 4 minute cylinders or twenty 10 & 12 inch dance and vocal classical gramophone recordings.

Cheney Gramophone. American upright oak model in superb condition. c.1925. \$800. - On sale from another source - details supplied on request.

RECORD SALE

Like all record collectors who take their interest seriously, I have bought and acquired many collections of 78 rpm gramophone recordings, consisting of mainly vocal classical with some dance band-jazz selections thrown in. Over the years these transactions have involved duplications or items I simply don't want to keep. They have been stored in my garage in vertical shelving. Now comes a time when I would like to be quit of them. So I'm offering them for sale - give or take - approximately 1,000 recordings for \$250.

Our illustration:

Like most collectors who are forced or tempted into providing an illustration of the goods on sale, temporary housing arrangements seem to be devild the attempts to depict the items clearly. In this respect, I do not fail, but I'm prepared to elaborate verbally on any items of interest.

REISSUE LONG PLAYING VOCAL RECITALS AND ANTHOLOGIES
sh speaking world . While I have been able to discover very little on most of
n the help of other collectors both here and abroad. If readers are able to provide
rds, I would like to hear from them.

ommenced in 1992.

collection), Columbia Grand Opera Series,

Series, Historia, HRE USA

ibini UK

oscar Bramson, Sunday Opera, Symposium

erian Singers etc.' 1959-1960. See also EJA. Anna.

What you see on this page has of necessity been limited to my own research. As such, it does not pretend to be authoritative because there are many companies which I haven't been able to view or sample during the time I have been actively collecting records. Despite these shortcomings, I'm keen to praise the smaller recording companies for their 'off the beaten track' offerings as opposed to larger concerns like EMI. The distinctive manner in which companies like Rococo, Court Opera Classics have gone about the job of reissuing recordings from the past is refreshing and invigorating, a thing which endears me to them immensely as they expand my horizons. Further down the pecking order of the reissue trade are groups and individuals like ours who are dedicated to preserving and sharing the enjoyment they get from their discoveries. They to deserve commendation for their enthusiastic and earnest achievements.

BILL MAIN

licence by Viking NZ firm late 50s early 60s.

LONG PLAYING COMPILATIONS

The building up of my collection lapsed for a year when I moved to Auckland to attend a Post Graduate Course at Auckland Teachers College. As luck would have it I shared a house in Kingsland with another ex-Canterbury student who was very interested in record collecting at the time because he was studying singing. Roger Hart who is known to us not only had good equipment to play records, but had also been active acquiring vocal recordings for some time previous to me when I met up with him in 1956. We kept in touch with one another in the next couple of years and taught at the Wellington Polytechnic before becoming members of the SRG. On one particular occasion which I remember well Roger gave me a lift back to Wellington in his car during one of our vacation breaks. The journey took us via New Plymouth where we spent a night with another record collecting buff called John Ford. During 1956 and the following year, I added only a few 78s but quite a few LPs. One particular company's products which I enjoyed immensely in this period was one of the very first to seriously enter the LP reissue market for vocal recordings from the past. It seems it was a firm which was founded by a group of record collectors in New York who named their company SCALA. I must claim uncertainty when trying to recall, who sold these records in Wellington. The only shop I can recall which might have carried them was in Cuba Street and was run by Roy Hill. I say this because it was a shop which primarily sold music scores and publications thus maintaining connections with the musical *literati* of Wellington, like Owen Jensen, a critic and writer who I recall wrote a very scathing review of SCALA's efforts for the *Listener*.

Although it might seem odd today to know that small independent concerns like SCALA stole a march on some of the established firms with their catalogue of reissue recordings, it must be remembered that companies like Victor and HMV were more interested in maintaining their dominance in the industry with LPs by reorganising a catalogue of works from the classical music repertoire with symphonies and operas proving a prestigious benchmark. When they eventually got around to using their archives for re-issues of singers like Caruso, Melba and Chaliapin, companies like Rococo of Canada had stolen a march on them in this specialty with a wide and varied range of artists, with issues that drew favourable comments from reviewers in the *Gramophone* some of whom went out of their way to urge a greater local interest in vocal reissues.

HMV - EMI BOXED SETS

Desmond Shawe-Taylor in the January 1955 issue of the *Gramophone* applauded

the fact a British company calling itself *London International* had finally taken the plunge by re-issuing a 12 inch LP recital of the soprano Claudio Muzio's Pathe recordings. Elsewhere in this journal in May 1955 it was noted that IRCC recordings were being sold in Ireland. In fact Ireland again came to notice the following year with a John McCormack re-issue series which had been specially produced 78's appearing under the IR and IRX prefix! Finally news was announced that EMI were in fact preparing a centenary album for Covent Garden in 1958 similar in style to the Victor '50 Years of Singing at the Met'. When this album finally appeared, it did so without any reference to Covent Garden with a slight change to the original American title to '*50 Years of Great Operatic Singing*'. This was a Victor production selected by Irving Kolodin, a music critic and historian whose selection naturally favoured singers associated with the Metropolitan Opera House in New York and as a consequence hardly appropriate for Covent Garden! Under the prefix of CSLP 500-4 68 individual items were accommodated in the set, which dated from just after the turn of the century to the 1940s. English lovers of opera and those interested in record collecting had to wait another twenty years for something which they might relate to more readily as their own. When it did appear it did so under the name of a boxed set called '*The Record of Singing*' RLS 724'

'*The Record of Singing*' was finally launched in December 1977 with a hard back book by Michael Scott which provided a biographical sketch and photograph of all the singers in the set. It was in time followed up with 2nd edition in June 1982 with corrections to pitch variations under the title of '*A Record of Singers*' RLS7704 & RLS7705. It came with a supplementary disc covering the period from 1899 to 1919. Masterminding this undertaking was Keith Hardwick whom I met very briefly at Abbey Road by courtesy of a friend called Lester Smith who worked there and took me to lunch where I met Mr Hardwick who was working on an LP Featuring the organist G Thalben Ball. Between these various projects volume two RLS 743 made its appearance under the direction of Bryan Crimp in 1979 covering the years 1914-1926. The series continued under Hardwick's supervision, with two further additions to '*The Record of Singing*', volumes three and four finally advancing the completion of this tremendous task to the end of the 78rpm era.

Not content with all this activity on the operatic front, EMI extended their interest into the '*HMV Treasury Series*' to embrace boxed sets on lieder by Schubert, Schumann & Brahms in 1982/3. The reason why I've taken the trouble to list the achievements of '*A Record of Singing*' is because for collectors it represented the highest possible attainment of selection and production in the reissue market,

particularly the pains they went to to get the pitch right, a detail which was often ignored by companies in the early days of re-issues in the 1950s.

While projects of this magnitude were going on at the top end of the re-issue market, other concerns were steadily issuing recordings which exploited artists and repertoire which never have found favour with the larger companies. These were singers and artists who created a career for themselves outside the mainstream circuit. Often as not, those who promoted them in this fashion were fans who had a passion for out of the way companies or performers - sometimes with a very nationalistic vein or flavour. As well, some institutions which had been gifted or inherited collections from philanthropists entered the market with editions which are very sought after today. Inevitably, some collectors of standing took the bull by the horns and issued selections from their collections. These private editions had their origins in the late 1950s with a series which highlighted some distinguished English collectors under the title of 'Collectors Corner'. This raises the question of how big were the editions. Surely a minimum of 500 hundred copies or larger? Speaking from experience in this instance Walter Norris, Michael Woolf and I produced 400 copies of Primo P.1001, Marcella Sembrich singing in 1964/5. With outlets in Australia, USA and England we had no difficulty getting our money back. When our efforts were noticed in the annual summary of recordings in the December issue of the *Gramophone* as one of the more interesting releases for 1965, sales took on a sudden surge. What really attracted buyers was the fact that this was a re-issue of a 5inch brown wax cylinder made by Gianni Bettini in New York around the turn of last century.

THE RAY HEDGES COLLECTION

Finally I must give credit to Ray Hedges for what follows. When I stepped in to assist his executors to sell off his record collection, I had no idea of the depths of his LP collection. My chief concern at that time was to see Ray's 78s into good hands, with the LPs sitting there in my garage until I had space to put them in some order for collectors to view. While a bulk sale of boxed opera sets found a ready buyer, there was very little interest shown in the re-issue recordings because of a rumour which was circulated at the time about the poor playing equipment Ray used inferring that they might be damaged as a result of this treatment! As a consequence of this, I ended up with close on 200 hundred records which still sit in my garage. Surprisingly, I have yet to discover any record which is damaged because of poor equipment. So this legacy has now become a valuable adjunct to my 78 collection, and I have every reason to be thankful to those who spread the rumour of its condition because of the wonderful position it now places me in with

the preparation of this article.

I have made a list of the various reissue recordings Ray acquired during his record collecting years which for LPs extended back by at least 30 years on the centre page spread with odd comments which I've gleaned from publications and sleeve note information. His most active period of collecting reissues occurred in the 1980s when he constantly frequented Slow Boat Records in Cuba Street and a shop in Palmerston North which I think was run by Anne who was the wife of John Ford mentioned earlier in the text. As Ray did not drive a car, I don't know how he would have got to PN, but these would have been his preferred method of adding records to his collection.

As a final comment it would be impolite of me if I did not at least mention CD reissues as the continuation of this specialised field of record collecting, especially because of the activity on this front which the SRG supported to celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2009. Without wanting to 'stir the pot' by mentioning the pros and cons of the 'analogue versus digital' controversy which raises its head in certain quarters these days, I do see great merit in compact discs in the way they can be used with ease and comfort. But I do miss the resonance which shellac and vinyl recordings have against the clinical clarity of electronic reproduction! That said, I will leave readers to find their own preferences on this topic.

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- The Record Collector* Index Volumes 1-52 by Michael E. Henstock 2008
- The Record of Singing* by Michael Scott Duckworth 1977
- The Record of Singing* by Michael Scott Duckworth 1979
- Voices of the Past* - various volumes Oakwood Press

Cover illustration: The cover illustration of this publication in the 'Gramophone' for August 1957 suggests it was a very substantial book. In fact it was an end stapled 35 page booklet that came out with the five CSLP discs that indicated it represented Fifty Years of Great Operatic Singing. The selection of items was the handiwork of music critic Irving Kolodin of New York. Harold Rosenthal, editor of "Opera" wrote the preface for this English edition.

Items for the programme on the 18th of September will be selected from the following recordings.

Henry Lytton - baritone

Yeomen of England & Imagination "Merrie England" (Hood/German)

Pearl Gem 118/120 from 2-2654 & 2-2125 1902

Enrico Caruso - tenor

Una Furtiva lagrima "Elisir d'amore" Victor 88339 1911 reissued 1939 DB3903

John McCormack - tenor

O lovely night (Ronald) Columbia 869 1909 reissued 1920

Details announced on the day. RT

Alexander Kipnis - bass

Little Jack Horner (Diack) Victor 2135 [Aust.EC90] Club"99" 1940

Antoninia Neshdanova - soprano

Una voce poco fa "Barbiere di Siviglia" (Rossini) 023123 HMB24 1913

Harry Plunket-Green - baritone

Poor Old Horse (arr. Cecil Sharp) Columbia DB1321 1933

Claudio Muzio - soprano

Entrance of Butterfly "Butterfly" (Puccini) Pathe 62022 1917

Details announced on the day. BM

Paul Whiteman - Orchestra

Muddy Waters (Trent-De Rose-Richman) w.Bing Crosby Victor 20508 1927

Nellie Melba - Soprano

A ce mot tout s'anime "Les Huguenots" (Meyerbeer) January 1901

IRCC L7006

Gladys Moncrieff - soprano

Love will find a way "Maid of the Mountains" Columbia 01784 DE001 1929

Amy Castles - soprano

Angels Guard Thee "Jocelyn" (Godard) 3740 1907 from PFP CD 100

Details announced on the day. MM

The *G&T Gazette* is published quarterly and distributed gratis to friends and associates who attend or share in the interest of a group known as the "Scratchy Record Group". Opinions expressed in the *Gazette* are those of the authors and do not represent the philosophies and beliefs of the SRG. Unsolicited material is welcome. Care with submissions for publication will be exercised, but no responsibility for loss or damage in transit will be accepted. Advertising rates are negotiable. All material is copyrighted. Permission to use anything appearing in the *Gazette* must be cleared in the first instance with the editor William (Bill) Main 93 Burma Road, Wellington - 6035 New Zealand. Telephone (04)971-3535, e-mail <wmain@paradise.net.nz> This edition was proof read and edited by Des Wilson.