
G&T GAZETTE

Established 1995. Incorporating the *Edison Echo*

April/May/June

2013



Featured artist: **Blanche Arral**

Sunday 21st April 2013

The programme will be selected from the following recordings.

Arral, Blanche 1865-1945: Valse d'Oiseau Victor 64099 [1909]*

Buckman, Rosina 1881-1948: Waiata Poi (Hill) HMV E182 [1913]*

Caruso/Scotti: O Mimi tu piu non torni 'Boheme' HMV DM105 [1907]*

Chauve Souris: Songs of the Black Hussars (Trad.) Columbia 0799 [1927]**

Dawson, Peter 1882-1961: A Bachelor Gay (Tate) HMV B.3464 [1930]**

De Lucia, Fernando 1860-1925: Ideale (Tosti) G&T 52410 [1902]*

Grande Coro Italiano; 'Madam Butterfly' Fonotopia 168099 [1927]**

London String Orch: Valse Triste (Sibelius) Vocalion 644 [c.1927]**

National Band of NZ : Three Jolly Sailormen Tanza Z201 [1953]**

Pavement Musicians: A Day's Music in our Street Broadcast 889 (2 sides)**

Rose, Clarkson 1890-1968: Like the Big Pots Do (Rose) Zonophone 5303**

Schlussnus, Annemarie & Heinrich: Treue Liebe Polydor 47215 [1938]**

Sheridan, Margaret 1899-1958: I know where I'm going DA832 [1926]*

Spencer, Len 1867-1914: Auction Sale Am. Rec .Coy. 030625 [1904]*

Vallier, Jean 1863-1942: Le Reve Passe (Krier) Columbia D8082 [1916] *

* Played on a HMV Senior Monarch Gramophone with a exhibition soundbox.
This gramophone left the factory on the 29th August 1912.

** Played on a c1954 Pye Black Box Gramophone. Overhauled and serviced by
Neil McDonald.

Editorial and programme notes.

This edition of the G & T Gazette has prompted me into showing three translations of songs which I will be using in my programme. When I began to research these, I asked Des Wilson to help me find suitable texts that translated them into English. He found two that were ideal for my purpose. But the last frustrated me greatly. It was Krier's song *Le Reve Passe*. When I began to match them line for line I failed miserably as I attempted to decipher some of his vocal utterances in this performance. After several attempts to unravel this song line by line, I gave up after the first two stanzas which initially gave me no trouble. What I conclude from this experience was I think due mainly to the popularity of this song and how many publishers have had a hand in making it suit their requirements. So after the first two stanzas I gave up, hoping our readers would be satisfied with what I've chosen to capture the flavour of this very popular ballad. Then there came the very popular duet between Rudolph and Marcel in Act 3 of *La Boheme*. After ruminating a bit on the problems it posed, I decided to forego a word by word translation, and fall back upon what the 1924 edition of the Victor Book of the Opera had to say about this very famous recording.

La Boheme (Act 4)

Ah Mimi tu piu. (Ah Mimi, false one.)

In this scene, Marcel stands at the easel pretending to paint, while Rudolph apparently writing, is furtively gazing at Mimi's little pink bonnet. The true state of affairs is finally revealed in the famous duet, "Ah Mimi tu piu". The music is remarkably rich in feeling and melodious in character. This number is so familiar that to describe it would be to guild the lily. Its depth of feeling, however, and the spontaneity of its melody make it one of the rarest and richest numbers in modern music.

An entertaining quiz to enliven proceedings!

As one who has witnessed the highs and lows of the SRG over the years, I'm forever looking for something which enlivens proceedings. This year I've devised a quiz which I hope will test your memory and give you some fun. Just before the interval I will play a record and ask you to identify the tunes (four per side) which appear on a double sided disc by the 'Pavement Musicians'. As I play this record, I invite you to write down what you think the title of each song in the spaces provided in the entry form which is enclosed with this Gazette. If you can't remember the tune, then leave the space blank. During the interval, Des Wilson and I will gather up your entries and work out the winner.

Ideale

Tosti

*Io ti seguì com'iride di pace
lungo le vie del cielo:
io ti seguì come un'amico face
della notte nel velo,
e ti sentì nella luce, nell'aria
nel profumo dei fiori;
e fu piena la stanza solitaria
di te, dei tuoi splendori.
In te rapito, al suon della tua voce,
lungamente sognai;
e della terra ogni affano, ogni croce,
in quel sogno scordai.
Torna, caro ideal, torna un instante
a sorridermi ancora.
E a me risplenderà nel tuo sembiante,
una novella aurora.
Torna, caro ideal, torna, torna.*

I followed you like the rainbow of peace
along the ways of heaven;
I followed you like a friendly torch
in the obscurity of night.
And I sensed you in the light, the air,
the perfume of the flowers;
and the empty room was full
of you, and of your glories.
Enraptured of you, at the sound of your voice,
I dreamed long;
and every earthly care, every cross,
in that dream I forgot.
Return, dear ideal, return for one moment
and smile at me again.
And in your semblance, a new dawn
will shine on me.
Return, dear ideal, return, return.

Treue Liebe

Faithful Love

*Ach wie ist's möglich dann,
Dass ich dich lassen kann,
Hab' dich von Herzen lieb
Das glaube mir!
Du hast die seele mein
So ganz genommen ein,
Dass ich kein' andre lieb',
Als dich as allein!*

Oh how's that possible then,
That i'm able to leave you;
I love you from the bottom of my heart,
This believe me!
You've taken my soul
So completely,
So that I do not love any other
But only you!

*Blau blüht ein Blümelein,
Das heisst Vergissnichtmein:
Dies Blümlein leg' ans Herz
Und denke mein!
Stirbt Blurn' ind Hoffnung gleich,
Wir sing an lieb reich,
Denn sie stirbt nie bei mir,
Das glaube mire!*

little flower is blossoming blue,
Its name is forget-me-not;
This little flower put to your heart
And remember me!
If flower and heart die soon,
We'll be rich in love,
Because it will never lie with me,
This believe me!

*War' ich ein Vögelein,
Bald wolit' bei dir sein,
Scheut' Falk und Habicht nicht,
Flög schnell zu dir!
Schoss' mich ein Jäger tot,
Fiel ich in deinen Schoss;
Sahst du mich traurig an,
Gern sturb ich dann!*

If I were a little bird,
Soon I'd like to be with you,
Wouldn't be scared of falcon and hawk,
I'd quickly fly to you!
If a hunter shot me dead,
I'd fall down into your lap;
If you looked at me sadly,
I'd like to die then!

Le Reve Passe

Armand Mestral (Lyrics)

Les soldats sont la-bas endormis sur la plaine
Ou le souffle du soir chante pour les bercer,
La terre aux bles rases parfume son haleine,
La sentinelle au loin va d'un pas cadencé.
Soudain voici qu'au ciel des cavaliers sans-nombre
illuminent d'éclairs l'imprecise clarté
Et le petit chapeau semble guider ces ombres
Vers l'immortalité.

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The Soldiers Dream

Out in the plains the weary soldiers now are sleeping,
After the heat of day the cooling breezes blow:
Over the fields the scent of new-mown hay is creeping,
Only the sentinel is pacing to and fro.
Then from afar there comes the distant sound of marching.
Rhythmic beat of soldiers' feet upon the ground;
And yet nearer they come, to the roll of the drum -
Hear the trumpets sound!

Les voyez-vous,
Les hussards, les dragons, la Garde, Glorieux fous
D'Austerlitz que l'Aigle regarde, Ceux de Kledber,
De Marceau chantant la victoire,
Geants de fer S'en vont chevaucher la gloire.

See them pass by!
There they go! What a show -- those Guardsmen.
All hearts beat high
at the sight of this grand array;
Cheers fill the air. They are blazing a trail to glory.

Soprano **BLANCHE ARRAL** 1865-1945



In 2003 I received a copy of **“The Extraordinary Operatic Adventures of Blanche Arral”** from California, an autobiography which was translated by Ira Glackens and edited by Bill Moran. In this she recalled her tour of New Zealand in 1907. Here is her account of this chapter in her life.

“For the sake of the record, then, we performed twice in Christchurch, four times in Wellington over ten days, and four times in Auckland over a week. At Wellington it was somewhat difficult to get a full house, as the public did not seem to be impressed with the notices from Melbourne. But those who did come came again, bringing more with them. Frankly, I must say I do not know how I accomplished such work-or rather, I do, and it was because I had Alfred Cabel to place my voice and Mathilde Marchesi to finish its training. Without these two teachers my voice could never have stood the strain of those performances. Bassett timed the productions and found that often I was on the stage two hours and forty-two minutes in an evening. This meant I was not only singing all that time but also carrying the whole performance on my shoulders without a moment’s rest or relaxation. The *New Zealand Graphic* observed, “Her versatility is nothing less than amazing, and her ‘staying power,’ if one may so put it, is beyond conception. Numbers of the most intricate difficulty succeed each other till it seems as if no mortal voice could stand so terrific a strain, and tiring is not in her vocabulary. It is an absolute fact that after a program including some dozen world-famous operatic solos and conclud-

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ing with the Polacca from *Mignon*, Madame seems if anything in finer voice than at the beginning of the program.... She worked the audience into a passion of enthusiasm such as in thirty years of theater going in all parts of the world the writer has seldom seen excelled."

From Auckland we returned by request to Wellington and gave three performances in six days. This time it was a very different story. The mayor welcomed us to the city at a large reception, where less than a month before half the house had been empty. The enthusiasm of the audiences was as great as any we had experienced. Then on to Christchurch, with three performances in a week. Our work kept us hurrying from town to town. In some towns musicians were plentiful, in others scarce. At several places special trains were put on to accommodate the public from as far as two hours away, and almost everywhere the houses were packed. Then we returned, playing Dunedin again twice, Nelson, Napier, and other towns-in all, more than fortyfive concerts".

To put a balance on things, here is a review by Charles Baertz.

"Having heard all sorts of mysterious hints dropped as to the personality of Blanche Arral, I went to hear her in Dunedin, and arrived at the conclusion that she had gained most of her experience at the *Cafe Chantants*. She has a big voice, but the quality is remarkably poor, and her French diction is exceedingly faulty. Now, all French artists are remarkable for their magnificent French diction. One never hears a mispronounced word from a cultivated French singer. Blanche Arral in Gounod's Serenade sang *chantee*, *reyee*, and *dormee*, for "chantez," "riez," and "dormez." These will serve as examples. Moreover, the best item on the programme was a little encore song which would have delighted the audience at the Moulin Rouge or the Folies Bergeres. Miss Arral has a stout, squat figure, and her appearance upon the stage in the dress of Carmen - the slim, sinuous, cat-like Carmen - was mirth provoking in the extreme - at least to me. I had heard the "Habanera" from Carmen in New York by three fine artists, and I certainly did not care for Madame's rendering of this famous song. One of her best essays was the "Drinking song" from *Girofle Girofla* which was sung with considerable vim and sparkle. Blanche Arral undoubtedly has ability of a certain order, but that she is a European *prima donna* of repute, visiting Australasia *incognito*, I for one refuse to believe".

Be that as it may, I have a special spot for her because of the postcard which heads this article. Somewhere during her tour to Australia and New Zealand, she acquired a stock of coloured cards attired in various roles. These turn up frequently. Both John Sutcliffe and I have acquired copies of these in various roles which were sold during her tour of NZ and Australia.