

## HISTORICAL VOCAL RECORDINGS

STRAUSS: Morgen, Op. 27, no. 4; Ständchen, Op. 17, no. 2; Wiegenlied, Op. 41, no. 1; Freundliche Vision, Op. 48, no. 1; All mein Gedanken, Op. 21, no. 1; Hat gesagt, Op. 36, no. 3; Schlechtes Wetter, Op. 69, no. 5; Traum durch die Dämmerung, Op. 29, no. 1; Ich schwebe, Op. 48, no. 2; Heimkehr, Op. 15, no. 5; Muttertandlerlei, Op. 43, no. 2; Die heiligen drei Könige, Op. 56, no. 6; WOLF: In der Frühe; In dem Schatten meiner Locken; Mausfallensprüchlein; Auch Kleine Dinge; Und willst du deinen Liebsten; Schlafendes Jesuskind; Nun wandre, Maria; Du denkst mit einem Fädchen; Mausfallensprüchlein; Eilfenlied; Ach, des Knaben Augen; Bedeckt mich mit Blumen; Wie glanzet der helle Mond; Nimmersatte Liebe. Elisabeth Schumann, soprano; Isolde Menges, violin (in Morgen); Lawrence Collingwood, conductor; Ivor Newton, Karl Alwin, Leo Rosenek, Gerald Moore, Ernest Lush and George Reeves, piano; Vienna State Opera Orchestra, Karl Alwin, conductor (in Die heiligen drei Könige). World Records SH 398.

The first side has documentary as well as musical value, for Schumann was an intimate friend of the composer and a favorite interpreter. She often sang to Strauss's accompaniment, and in 1921 she toured the States with him. Aside from three acoustics on Odeon and Polydor, these recordings constitute Schumann's complete Strauss discography, with the single exception of a piano-accompanied Ständchen recorded 14 November 1927. The Ständchen included, in Mottl's orchestration, is dated 4 February of the same year. All but one of these twelve songs were recorded between 1927 and 1932, the exception being Heimkehr, done in 1938. All of them have been on LP before, notably in the Great Recordings of the Century series (COLH 102 and 154) but Keith Hardwick has made superior transfers from the originals.

Complementary to these definitive recordings, Schumann has left us a chapter on Strauss in her book on German song, and in her broadcast lectures on lieder interpretation (available on IGI 274) she performs and analyzes Morgen. Notably, she practised what she preached. The point would be made even more strongly had the recording been done a few years later, for 1927 was early in the electrical era, and the balance could be better. Strauss's string orchestra is all but lost in a trio for voice, violin and harp. Schumann tells us that the singer must begin singing to herself at the start of the introduction; thus when the voice enters the first phrase is not a beginning - Und morgen wird die Sonne wieder scheinen... This was an effect one remembers from her singing of the song, and she all but accomplishes it here. Her Wiegenlied is incomparable, with its arching phrases and the silvery sheen of her upper voice. True, the weakness of her lower tones has been criticized, but surely it matters little. It will be noted that other singers sing the song more slowly, but Schumann had sung it many times with Strauss. The composer's direction is Sanft bewegt. Here and in the Freundliche Vision, with which it was originally coupled, the shallowness of the recording was something we had to accept; happily, this has been much improved in the transfer. I am tempted to go into

many more details, but perhaps what I have said will suffice. Except that such a performance of Schlechtes Wetter must be the despair of many singers, and Die heiligen drei Könige (done properly with orchestra) is an inspiration.

The Wolf songs on side 2 were recorded between 1935 and 1946. Some loss of voice will be noted in the later takes, but Schumann remained a great artist, Five previously unpublished performances are added to the well known recordings (but one of them, Mausfallen Sprüchlein, is also here in a later version). Elfenlied, Bedeckt mich mit Blumen and Ach, des Knaben Augen were recorded in 1935; it is by no means clear why they were passed over all these years. Several of the recordings seem to be improved over their 78rpm originals - notably Auch kleine Dinge. Schlafendes Jesuskind, long a favorite recording, seems better, if not quite perfectly balanced.

JOHN McCORMACK IN OPERA (1907-1912): MASCAGNI: Cavalleria Rusticana--Siciliana; LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci--On with the motley; PUCCINI: Tosca--E lucevan le stelle; Bohème--Che gelida manina; THOMAS: Mignon--In her simplicity; BIZET: Carmen--Il fior che avevi a me; DONIZETTI: Favorita--Spirto gentil; VERDI: Aida--Celeste Aida; Rigoletto--Questa o quella; ...La donna è mobile; ...Bella figlia dell' amore (with Melba, Thornton, Sammarco); GOUNOD: Faust--All'erta (with Melba, Sammarco); ROSSINI: Barbiere di Siviglia--O meglio mi scordavo... Numero quindici (with Sammarco); PONCHIELLI: Gioconda--Badoer questa notte... O grido di quest' anima (with Sammarco); WOLF-FERRARI: Gioielli della Madonna--T'eri un giorno (with Kirkby Lunn); ROSSINI: Mira la bianca luna (with Destinn). John McCormack, tenor. World Records SH 399.

McCormack's first recordings were made in London in 1904 - some 19 cylinders and 18 discs, all of Irish ballads. Then, having raised enough money, he departed for opera study in Italy, returning in 1906. He made his Covent Garden debut in October 1907. Meanwhile, in 1906, he began recording for the London Odeon Company. On his arrival in New York in 1909, the Victor Company sensed his potential and straightaway bought off his Odeon contract. The rest is a familiar story. Up to this time, be it remembered, his ambitions were centered in opera; it took American audiences to prove to him where his real talents lay. He never had financial reasons to regret his decision. This program comprises 10 of his Odeon recordings and 6 concerted numbers made for HMV in 1910, 1911 and 1912. According to John Steane's introductory notes, the album "includes every operatic recording (except for duplications) that the tenor made in England" - that is, excepting two Handel arias recorded in 1936.

The McCormack Odeon repertory has been drawn on rather extensively by the compilers of LP recitals, but until recently the dubbings were made in a generally haphazard manner. It took a while for the producers to realize that recording speeds throughout the acoustic period were

never predictable, and pitching had to be literally by ear. Not by accident there are three arias in the present recital sung a half-tone below the original pitch. The decision has been made on the basis of tone quality. Three arias are sung in English (sometimes made embarrassingly clear by McCormack's fabled diction) and four of the operas represented were never in his repertory - indeed, since he never would have sung Radames, his lyrical Celeste Aida has a special interest (one remembers very pleasantly his 1914 Victor of the final duet with Lucy Marsh, an equally unlikely Aida). Readers of The Gramophone will recall a recent exchange in the correspondence column on the subject of McCormack's high notes. There are a couple of controversial notes here. But more important are such details as the beautiful diminuendo in *La donna è mobile* and in the *Mignon* aria. This is not quite the McCormack of the Victor years, but the Odeons provide A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Vocally, I should say, the best are the *Cavalleria*, the *Mignon* (I remember this was a favorite of Lily McCormack) and, aside from the top note, the *Favorita*.

As for the HMV's, they are a mixed bag. The *Rigoletto* quartet is hardly a model of beautiful ensemble. Indeed, though McCormack sings the opening phrases meltingly, there is little else to be admired in this performance. With Melba so far off standard I suspect this may become a "party" record. It was recorded on 11 May 1910, the same day that produced two takes of the *Faust* trio, both included among the complete London recordings of Melba (EMI RLS 719). The statement that the trio is "previously unpublished," therefore, is not quite accurate. But this is the first take, which seems never to have been issued prior to the EMI set (the second take, rather more forward in sound, is known to American collectors as IRCC 7-B, bearing the legend "First edition September 1932," and in Victor's Heritage Series, 15-1019, issued in 1948). Though both versions of the *Faust* are vastly superior to the *Rigoletto*, they remained unpublished for those many years. The two duets with Sammarco are splendid, especially the *Gioconda*, in which McCormack sings with unaccustomed passion. I cannot wax enthusiastic over the curious scene from *The Jewels of the Madonna* with Kirkby Lunn, nor does the Rossini duet with Destinn seem to me very important.

As it happens, most of the material on this disc has recently been issued by Arabesque in a two-disc set, along with two sides of McCormack's fine lieder recordings (with dates ranging from 1924 to 1942). Of the Odeons here included only the *Pagliacci* is missing, of the HMV's the *Faust* and the duet with Destinn. Both Arabesque and World Records credit Keith Hardwick for the admirable transfers. Somehow the sound is a little stronger in the World Records version, but without making direct comparisons there is not much to choose between them.

MOZART: *Così Fan Tutte*--Highlights. Act I. 1. Trio: La mia Dorabella ... E' la Fedele delle femmine... Recit: Scioccherie de poeti...  
Trio: Una bella serenata... Duet: Ah guarda sorella... 2. Quintet: Sento, o Dio! 3. Recit: Non v' e piu tempo... Quintet: Di

scrivermi ogni giorno. 4. Recit: Dove son?... Trio: Soave sia il vento. 5. Aria: Come scoglio. Act II. 1. Recit: Dunque fa un po' tu... Duet: Prendero quel brunettino. 2. Recit: Questa piccola offerta... Duet: Il cor vi dono... 3. Recit: Ei parte... Senti... Aria: Per pietà. 4. Duet: Fra gli amplessi. Sena Jurinac, soprano (Fiordiligi); Blanche Thebom, mezzo-soprano (Dorabella); Erich Kunz, baritone (Guglielmo); Richard Lewis, tenor (Ferrando); Mario Borriello (Don Alfonso); Glyndebourne Festival Orchestra; Fritz Busch, conductor. World Records SH 397.

This selection, apparently all that was recorded of the 1950 Glyndebourne Così Fan Tutte, was issued by RCA Victor in 1951 (LM 1126). Those were the early days of LP, and there were regrets that the famous 1935 complete production was no longer available, as its cast was a stronger one. On two LP sides it was hardly possible to include all the best of this opera, and as the record ends abruptly with the Fiordiligi-Ferrando duet, it leaves us unsatisfied. Despina does not appear at all. For all that, the recording has attractions, which no doubt account for its re-release at this time. First and foremost is the conducting of Fritz Busch, though his earlier performance, reissued by Turnabout, is still listed in Schwann 2. And Sena Jurinac was just coming into her own, well matched by Blanche Thebom. The men are a cut or two below those in the 1935 cast. Comparing the old Victor disc, I do not find any striking superiority in the new issue, except that it is an improvement to have the highlights separated by bands.

CONCHITA SUPERVIA & THE GYPSIES: BIZET: Carmen--Habanera; Seguidilla; Chanson Bohème; Quintet (in Italian); Tra-la-la... Attends up peu, Carmen; Non, tu ne m'aimes pas; Card scene; Final duet (with Gaston Micheletti, tenor; André Vavon, soprano; André Bernadet, soprano; Anita Appolini, soprano; Ida Mannarini, mezzo-soprano; Giuseppe Nessi, tenor; Aristide Baracchi, baritone). FALLA: El amor brujo--Canción de amor dolido; Canción del fuego fatuo; GAZTAMBIDE: El Juramento--Ay! yo me vi en el mundo desamparada; CHAPI: Las hijas del Zebedeo--Al penson en el dueno; La Chavala--Fué mi madre la gitana; BRETON: La verbena de la paloma--Ya estás frente a la casa; GIMENEZ: La Tempranica--Sierras de Granada; SERRANO: La Reina Mora--Ay! gitana, paso la pena; El mal de amores--Cancion de la gitanita; La alegría del batallón--A una gitana preciosa; LUNA: El niño Judío--De España vengo; Flor de España; MORENA TORROBA: La Marchenera--Petenera; VIVES: La presumida; MANÉN: La divi estel; Lo frare; ALONSO: Pajarico triquero; VALVERDE: Clavelitos (with Marcos Redondo, baritone); CONDUCTORS: Gustav Cloëz, A. Albergoni, Antonio Capdevila, Pacual Godes, Modesto Romero, Morena Torroba; Acevedo). EMI World Records SHB 72, 2 discs.

Conchita Supervia has not been neglected by the compilers of LP. As early as 1951 American Decca issued the Carmen excerpts (except for the Italian quintet; DL 9522), Rossini arias (DL 9533) and songs of Falla and Granados (DL 7510). A better transfer of the Carmen numbers came in 1959 (Odeon XOC 121) and a program of Spanish songs was issued

in the Great Recordings of the Century series (COLH 113) in 1960. The Rossini arias appeared again in 1964 (Washington VM 467) and somewhere along the line Rococo issued two discs (R 5230 and R 5236). Club 99 also had its Supervia issue (no. 74) and by last count OASI was up to Vol. 7 (OASI 623).

The interest here, then, centers on the repertory and the quality of the dubbings. It hardly seems possible there could be anything new in the first consideration (though the published recordings run over 200). I cannot claim to have kept up with all the LP's. As for the second matter, the name of Keith Hardwick assures us a superior job and I find no occasion to qualify that statement.

Much has been written about the seductiveness of Supervia's singing and her mastery of the art of vocal acting. Her diction was superb (notably in French) and her records are vivid enough to leave no doubt as to her abilities as a singing actress. As Lionel Salter points out in his introductory notes, although no one knew better than she that the Spain of Bizet's opera is a mythical country, Supervia, who was "like all Spaniards conscious of the great differences of character between the regions, throws herself wholeheartedly into the depiction of the Andalusian gipsy." Aside from Carmen these two discs are devoted mostly to the zarzuela, covering a range of 40 years in dates of composition, and what would seem to be a cross-section of moods and temperaments. "Throughout her life," says Salter, "she was an outstanding interpreter of Spanish music, to which she brought an uninhibited earthy passion (often expressed in a particularly Hispanic chest register)." Indeed, some of us may find so generous a sampling overpowering.

But at this point I must declare myself guilty of heresy--to me Supervia's voice was anything but beautiful. For a full confession please refer to The American Record Guide for June 1978 (p. 46). But obviously I am in a small minority. To paraphrase a famous book review, this is the sort of thing that if it appeals to you, you'll like it very much.

STRAUSS: Arabella. Georg Hann, basso (Graf Waldner); Rosette Anday, mezzo-soprano (Adelaide); Maria Reining, soprano (Arabella); Lisa Della Casa, soprano (Zdenka); Hans Hotter, baritone (Mandryka); Horst Taubmann, tenor (Matteo); Julius Patzak, tenor (Graf Elemer); Josef Witt, baritone (Graf Dominik); Alfred Poell, basso (Graf Lamoral); Herma Handl, soprano (The "Fiakermilli"); Ruth Michaelis, soprano (A Fortune-teller); Choir of the Vienna State Opera & Vienna Philharmonic; Karl Bohm, conductor (Salzburg Festival, 12 August 1947). GEMA PR-525, 3 discs.

It comes as something of a shock to read in The New Grove that in 1944 the Salzburg Festival was cancelled, but activities were resumed in 1945. Who could have patronized a festival in times like those? It is only less surprising that a performance as impressive as this could

have lent distinction to the 1947 festival. It is no doubt to the international broadcast of that festival that we owe this live recording. It may as well be said at the outset that it has the limitations we might expect--general unevenness in reproduction, at best quite clear, hardly the "splendid sound" promised on the front cover. The balance tends to highlight the voices, though of course they do move about on the stage. And effects of nuance and shading that may have carried over into the house are largely lost. There are a few short cuts in the performance (Boosey & Hawkes full score, pp. 302-303; 326-330; 348-352; 461-463; 467-476). Of course full credit goes to Bohm, who could get results under such trying circumstances.

The distinguished cast is headed by Maria Reining, then at the height of her career. She must have been an extraordinarily appealing Arabella, as she was noted for her stage presence as well as her singing. The voice as we hear it is right for the character, clear, bright and pure in sound, with something of that illusive quality known as personality. But those of us who remember Lisa Della Casa's Arabella may find it hard to adjust to another. Della Casa was 28 in 1947, just embarking on her career. Harold Rosenthal has written of that broadcast from Salzburg, when he heard Della Casa for the first time: "The exquisite young voice of silvery quality was one of those which immediately thrilled the listener, and made one wonder why the possessor of such a voice was not better known. It was not long before she was." Further, he opines that "having first sung the role of Zdenka in the same opera she seems to have a really deep feeling and understanding for this role (Arabella)."

The Mandryka is Hans Hotter, a singer justly famous for his operatic characterizations. It is rather surprising to find his freely editing his part. "He may have indulged in some downward transpositions of the part," says Allan Ulrich in his jacket note, "but that is a small price to pay for such unerring musicianship, intelligence and integrity." But in the great duet with Arabella--Und du wirst mein Gebieter sein--one wonders whether he had really studied the score. Still, Ulrich quotes Strauss to the effect that he might have written the part especially for Hotter. It should be added that Reining, too, does a little transposing. The rest of the cast is convincing, from the scheming Graf Waldner of Georg Hann and his wife well characterized in the shrewish tones of Rosette Anday, to the four suitors of Horst Taubmann, Julius Patzak, Josef Witt and Alfred Poell. Herma Handl's Fiakermilli is quite intentionally less refined than brilliant in her coloratura.

I note the ominous black diamond beside the Schwann listing of the Solti recording with Della Casa in the title role (Richmond S-63522). To replace it there is a newer recording under Sawallisch, with Varady, Donath and Fischer-Dieskau (Angel SX 3917). Della Casa made two recordings, of which the Richmond is the earlier and vocally fresher performance. For collectors of 78's, I cannot resist mentioning the first Arabella recording that came my way when the opera was new, duets of

Arabella and Zdenka by Marta Fuchs and Else Wieber, and Arabella and Mandryka by Fuchs and Paul Schoeffler (Telefunken E 1477)--one of the loveliest ever made.

MOZART: Don Giovanni. John Brownlee, baritone (Don Giovanni); Ina Souez, soprano (Donna Anna); Luise Helletsgruber, soprano (Donna Elvira); Salvatore Baccaloni, basso (Leporello); Kolomon von Pataky, tenor (Don Ottavio); David Franklin, basso (Commendatore); Audrey Mildmay, soprano (Zerlina); Roy Henderson, baritone (Masetto); Glyndebourne Festival Orchestra and Chorus; Fritz Busch, conductor. (Recorded at Glyndebourne, 29 June-5 July 1936) EMI Pathe Marconi C 151-43057/9, 3 discs.

The original Glyndebourne Don Giovanni is, I need hardly say, a recorded classic, and this is not the first time it has returned in LP format. It was the first virtually complete Mozart opera recording (a couple of cuts are insignificant). The Marriage of Figaro, from the 1934 festival, had preceded it, but the 33 sides of that performance had been divided into ensembles and arias and rather timidly issued at intervals in three albums. The sides were later rearranged in proper sequence, but since most of the recitatives had been omitted, the opera was still not really complete. The strongest feature of these early Glyndebourne issues is the guiding hand of Fritz Busch and the ensemble he was able to achieve. They remain as his memorial. The cast of Don Giovanni, if not stellar, was about as strong a one as could be assembled at that time. Indeed, several of the artists achieved fame by their participation.

Much has been written over the years concerning the performance, and surely little need be added here. In ARG for March 1938, I find that noted Mozartean, Nathan Broder, writing: "It is evident at once from the playing of the overture that Busch considers this an exciting drama, and this impression is sustained by orchestra and soloists throughout the set. Only the Masetto occasionally overdoes the buffo element in his part. It remains true of this set, as of the Figaro recording, that many of the numbers have been better sung on individual discs made in the past by great vocalists; still, the singers here are all remarkably good, considering the resources of the company..." Occasionally they find the going a bit tough. Helletsgruber presents a positive Donna Elvira, yet one wishes she could put more venom into her great aria, Mi tradi. Similarly Souez's Or sai chi l'onore seems rather leisurely and mild. She, like other Donna Annas, is obviously working in Non mi dir to produce the long phrases. Pataky does a creditable job in both of Don Ottavio's arias, despite the catch-breaths in Il mio tesoro. Interestingly, although appoggiaturas were not in style in the 1930's, Pataky brings in one or two.

I feel confident in hailing this as the most successful LP transfer this recording has had. Previously the Vox-Turnabout set (THS 65084/6) had seemed the best. The sound here is solidier and cleaner.

WAGNER: Tristan und Isolde--Act 2. Kirsten Flagstad, soprano (Isolde); Lauritz Melchior, tenor (Tristan); Margarete Klose, contralto (Brangaene); Herbert Janssen, baritone (Kurwenal); Sven Nilsson, basso (King Marke); Booth Hitchin, tenor (Melot); Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor (22 June 1937). A.N.N.A. 1051.

Flagstad in particular was in magnificent voice that evening. Her singing has a lyrical quality one rarely hears in this music; one feels she is very close to Wagner's ideal. And, what is nowadays too much to hope for, she has a Brangaene with a real Brangaene voice. As for Tristan, Melchior is Melchior, with his unique instrument and his sloppy musicianship. Beecham is very much in charge, and he whips up plenty of excitement in the tumultuous meeting of the lovers and fervor in their oblivious lovemaking. Aside from one cut (p. 146-157 in the Schirmer vocal score) the act is complete.

Sonically the recording is good for what it is; it is futile, of course, to wish it were better. The voices are enough highlighted so that the words are easy to follow--and Flagstad brings out all the beauty there is in them--but this at the expense of the orchestra. There are the expected audience noises. There is a strong-voiced Melot and a heavy-voiced King Marke, who succeeds no better than most in making his long speech interesting. The labeling of this disc calls for action by the truth-in-packaging department. The entire cast is listed, and no less than four names are garbled: Booth Hitchin, the Melot, becomes Book Hitchess; Octave Dua, the Shepherd, is called Octase Dua; Parry Jones, as the Seaman, becomes Pappy Jones; Leslie Horsman, the Steersman, is listed as Leslie Honman. Most of this is unnecessary, as of course only Isolde, Tristan, Brangaene, Kurwenal, Melot and King Marke appear in Act 2.

Philip L. Miller