

## HISTORIC VOCAL RECORDINGS

STRAUSS: Der Rosenkavalier. Marianne Schech, soprano (Marschallin); Otto Edelmann, basso (Baron Ochs); Hertha Töpfer, mezzo-soprano (Oktavian); Albrecht Peter, baritone (Faninal); Erika Köth, soprano (Sophie); Lisl Kadera, soprano (Marianne); Paul Kuen, tenor (Valzacchi); Ina Garhein, mezzo-soprano (Annina); Georg Wieter, basso (Kommissar); Karl Hoppe, tenor (Major Domo of Marschallin); Karl Ostertag, tenor (Major Domo of Faninal); Rudolf Wunzer, basso (Notary); Walter Carnuth, tenor (Innkeeper); Lorenz Fehenberger, tenor (A Singer); Berta Bracher, silent role (Widow); Bertl Baethe, soprano, Anne Lutz, mezzo-soprano, Agnes Viebock, contralto (Orphans); Chorus and Orchestra of the Bavarian State Opera; Hans Knappertsbusch, conductor. (Munich Festival, 3 March 1957) IGI RR 482, 3 discs.

The main interest is in Knappertsbusch, one of the last conductors of the old German school. He was 69 at the time of this performance (b.1888) and had eight more years to live. The cast was one of the best that could be assembled at that time. Marianne Schech, the Marschallin, will be remembered from the Karl Boehm recording (DGS 7301) reviewed in 1959-60. Her voice as we have it here is clear, bright and attractive, and she was a seasoned artist. Her Marschallin may not have quite the ease of a Lehmann - who else could treat the part so conversationally? - but she knew how to bring out salient words and phrases. The great monolog in the first act is knowingly delivered. She does have a tendency to overshoot the pitch, especially in upward intervals.

Töpfer, who made her Metropolitan debut as Oktavian in November 1962 and sang 8 performances there that season, has the right mezzo-soprano quality and is able to manipulate the higher passages easily enough. It was, perhaps, her most appreciated role, though her recorded repertoire is extensive and varied - including a number of Bach cantatas. The Ochs of Edelmann, also remembered from the Metropolitan, was one of the best of his time, and he recorded it under Karajan (Angel 3563D) reviewed in 1957-58. His characterization, complete with Viennese dialect, is broad without overstepping. The one thing he lacks is the bottom notes the score calls for. Erika Köth is a very youthful Sophie, indeed the girlish quality of her voice seems even a little unsophisticated for this role. The rest of the cast is generally good, though I found Fehenberger's delivery of the tenor aria somewhat rough.

The recording, taken live, is complete with applause, though not without occasional cuts. Sonically it is variable. Beginning rather cloudily, it has its bright spots as well as its murky ones; the volume level varies from side to side. The miking has highlighted the singers, which means that for the most part the text is easily understandable.

Beginning with a brisk prelude, the performance seems to me very well paced. "Munich just a decade after the war," says the annotator, "may have been thin of musicians, which perhaps explains the untidy playing of the State Opera Orchestra, but it is also possible that Hans Knappertsbusch, the conductor, simply wasn't interested in military precision. His performance is so full of warmth, humor and gemütlichkeit that inadequacies of his execution pale ..." Proverbially, he was never inclined to overrehearse.

"This recorded performance comes from the 1957 Munich Festival, the annual summer presentation of the Bavarian State Opera ..." so says the accompanying sheet of notes. I have not been able to reconcile this with the date - 3 March - given on the album cover.

STRAUSS: Ariadne auf Naxos. Alfred Neugebauer, speaker (Major Domo); Karl Dönch, baritone (Music Teacher); Irmgard Seefried, soprano (Composer); Rudolf Schock, tenor (Tenor; Bacchus); Gerhard Unger, tenor (Officer; Scaramuccio); Hugues Cuénod, tenor (Dancing Master); Erich Strauss, basso (Wig Maker); Oskar Kraus, baritone (Lackey); Rita Streich, soprano (Zerbinetta); Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano (Prima Donna; Ariadne); Hermann Prey, baritone (Arllecchino); Fritz Ollendorff, basso (Truffaldino); Helmut Krebs, tenor (Brighella); Lisa Otto, soprano (Naiad); Grace Hoffman, mezzo-soprano (Dryad); Anny Felbermayer, soprano (Echo); Philharmonia Orchestra; Herbert von Karajan, conductor. (Kingsway Hall, London, 30 June - 7 July 1954) EMI RLS 760, 3 discs.

When this recording reached this country in 1955 (Angel 3532C) it met with enthusiastic reviews - the Myers Index lists eight, every one of which rates a plus. I suppose it comes as near to being a "dream cast" as we are ever likely to encounter, and at the time its sonics (pre-stereo) were universally praised. But chief credit was duly given to the guiding hand of Herbert von Karajan. Meantime other Ariadnes have come and gone, leaving only one in the current Schwann, the 1979 Solti performance with Price and Gruberova heading the cast (London D 13131). And so it is a particular pleasure to welcome back this classic. The sound is still clean and beautiful. As Ariadne Schwarzkopf had one of her most congenial roles and she was in top form. As Zerbinetta Rita Streich proved herself the rightful successor to her teacher, Maria Ivogün, whose recording of the great aria set a standard in 1932. One unfortunate thing about this recording is the break between sides 4 and 5, in the middle of the aria. As the Composer Irmgard Seefried also set some standards. One might wish for a somewhat heavier voice - a mezzo-soprano - but after all it was the young Lotte Lehmann who created the role. I doubt if we will hear the music better sung or more convincingly delivered. Rudolf Schock, the Bacchus, was one of the best German tenors of his time. If he doesn't have the perfect lyrical quality one might like, neither did any of his contemporaries. A high spot in the performance is Arlecchino's song as sung

by Hermann Prey. And there are masterly characterizations by Karl Dönch as the Music Teacher and Hugues Cuénod as the Dancing Master. So on down the line, not forgetting the speaking role of the Major Domo taken by the well known actor, Alfred Neugebauer. With artists such as these and well balanced reproduction the text comes through clearly throughout.

MOZART: Le Nozze di Figaro. Heinz Rehfuss, baritone (Count Almaviva); Teresa Stich-Randall, soprano (Countess); Rolando Panerai, baritone (Figaro); Rita Streich, soprano (Susanna); Pilar Lorengar, soprano (Cherubino); Christiane Gayraud, soprano (Marcelline); Marcello Cortis, basso (Bartolo); André Vessières, baritone (Antonio); Madeleine Ignal, soprano (Barberina); Hugues Cuénod, tenor (Don Basilio); Gerard Friedmann, tenor (Don Curzio); Chorus of the Festival Aix-en-Provence; Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire; Hans Rosbaud, conductor. Pathe Marconi (EMI) 2 C 127-16312-14, 3 discs.

This live recording is a souvenir of the 1955 Festival of Aix-en-Provence. It first reached these shores as an importation (Pathé DTX 206/7/8) and was reviewed in various publications 1959. According to the Myers Index it aroused mixed feelings in five reviewers, but received one plus and one minus rating.

Before it comes to listening, the cast is intriguing, for it is all-star if a cast ever was. And Rosbaud was a justly honored name among conductors. But the weaknesses of the set are quickly apparent. The overture indicates that this is to be a no-nonsense, businesslike performance, and the opening duet - Cinque, dieci - is brisk enough. Indeed, on the whole the tempi are on the fast side, and the recitatives are rushed through as if the aim is to get them over. Rests are disregarded, no time for a Luft-Pause. This being an actual performance there are stage noises and occasional applause. And being an open-air performance, there is some unevenness and a lack of refinement in the sound.

On the plus side, the singers are in good voice and there are heart-warming moments. Top honors go to Panerai's Aprite un po' quegli occhi and Streich's Deh vieni, non tardar. There are also a few goofs and minor flaws. As has been customary, Marcellina's and Basilio's arias are omitted, as well as some of the recitative. This is also a performance without appoggiaturas.

AIRS D'OPERA ET MÉLODIES FRANCAISES: GOUNOD: Mireille--Ange du paradis; SAINT-SAENS: Samson et Dalila--L'as-tu donc oublié?; DELIBES: Lakmé--Fantaisie aux divins mensonges; MASSENET: Manon--En fermant les yeux; Ah! fuyez, douce image; BRUNEAU: L'Attaque du moulin--Adieu, forêt profonde; GLUCK: Iphigénie en Tauride--Unis de la plus tendre enfance; CHERUBINI: Les Abencerages--Suspendez à ces murs; FLOTOW: Martha--Air des larmes; PUCCINI: Bohème--Que cette main est froide; Tosca--Le ciel luisait d'étoiles; FAURE: Sérénade toscane, Op. 3, no. 2; Poème d'un jour, Op. 21; Fleur jetée, Op. 39, No. 2; Clair de lune, Op. 46, no. 2; Noël, Op. 43, no. 1; En prière; DUPARC: Phydilé; La vie intérieure; MARCELLO: Quella fiamma che m'accende; SCHUBERT: Le Tilleul; FRANCK: Le Mariage des Roses; S'il est un charmant gazon; Nocturne; LEVADÉ: Enlèvement; HAHN: La Barcheta. Georges Thill, tenor; Eugène Bigot, Alfred Bruneau, Élie Cohen, Meurteur, conductors; Maurice Faure, piano; Lily Laskine, harp; Lafon, guitar. Pathé Marconi (EMI) 2 C 161-11660/1, 2 discs.

CHANTS RELIGIEUX ET POPULAIRES: ADAM: Noël; BIZET: Agnus Dei; FAURÉ: Le Crucifix (with Louis Guénot, baritone); FRANCK: Quatrième Béatitude; BACH: Cantata 65--Prends mon coeur; Cantata 85--Ah! quel prodige d'amour; Mass in B minor--Benedictus; ROUGET DE LISLE: La Marseillaise; HELMER & KRIER: Le Rêve passé; MEHUL: Le Chant du départ; FRAVART: Ce que c'est qu'un drapeau; YVAIN: J'ai tant d'amour (from film, Chansons de Paris); LEHAR: Frasquita--Des yeux très doux; Giuditta--O ma belle étoile; TOSTI: L'ultima canzone. George Thill, tenor; A. Bernard, Élie Cohen, Gustave Bret, Pierre Dupont, conductors. Pathé Marconi (EMI) 2 C 061-10010.

Georges Thill was perhaps the most successful French recording artist in the years between the wars. So far as I know no one has yet attempted a complete discography, but the list of his records is formidable. Reviewing a four-disc retrospective (Pathé Marconi 2C 153-16211/4) released in honor of his 80th birthday in Vol. 11, No. 1 of this publication, I mentioned six previous LP's, five made in France and one in Canada. These two releases bring the total up to eight with which I happen to be familiar. It is remarkable how little duplication there is among the programs. The birthday tribute was naturally the most varied of the lot but it does not by any means contain all the best performances. Four sides of opera, with two given to Otello, which he never sang in performance, two to Werther, Manon, Turandot, Lohengrin, Damnation de Faust and Samson et Dalila (all in French), a disc of French songs, including some interesting out-of-the-way melodies, and finally two sides of popular fare. Thill's voice recorded very well, though always at a rather high decibel level (and sometimes with a kind of electronic bristle) which I suspect may have equalized some of the subtleties of his singing. But he was above all an outgoing artist. In my earlier review, cited above, I wrote at some length about his career and his art. It hardly seems necessary to go over that ground again, and these two new programs hardly call for as much detail.

The recording dates (all given on the jackets) range from 1927 to an amazing 1970 (in duet with an excellent baritone, Louis Guénot) and an incredible 1971 (Samson et Dalila); even at the end the voice retains its familiar qualities, though the top notes no longer come so easily.

To me the highlight of these programs is the magnificent recitative and aria from Iphigénie en Tauride; any singer aspiring to the French style may well take it as a model. The long flowing lines of Gluck's melodies are smooth and even from top to bottom, the superb diction floats on the tone and the breath control is apparently endless. It hardly needs saying that the arias from Lakmé and Samson et Dalila are completely idiomatic. About the dream aria from Manon I have some reservations; one wishes for a softer tone (remembering Clément) and a quieter delivery. Perhaps this should be blamed on the recording, but the impression is the same. But Ah! fuyez finds M. Thill back in form.

The Faure and Duparc songs are mostly beautiful, especially the extravert Sérenade toscane, the touching Poème d'un jour and the hectic Fleur jetée. Clair de lune is rather bright for moonlight, and strangely the performance is marred by a fumbled entry. Of the Franck songs I particularly like Le Mariage des roses, but the other two are well turned. And Thill makes an exciting thing of the Levade Enlèvement. That he was at home in the Italian classics is demonstrated by the Marcello number.

Puccini in French may have a strange sound, but Thill, having studied in Italy, was not without the proper style. Bach in French is even more strange, yet there is something forthright and convincing in the singer's enthusiasm. Tauber fans will find something different in the Lehar songs. A real curio is Schubert's Lindenbaum in French, accompanied by a trio - piano, violin and cello - with the introduction cut. A quite different performance, with piano but without the postlude, made 12 years later, is included in the birthday set.

Needless to say there is plenty of tone poured out in the Adam Noël, sung with organ in an obviously sizable church, but the tempo is brisk and the interludes are trimmed. And there is fervent patriotism especially in La Marseillaise and the celebrated Chant du départ (words here erroneously attributed to André Chenier - the author was Marie Joseph Blaise de Chenier). Finally, to end on a tenderer note, Tosti's L'ultima canzone, sung in Italian with graceful style.

In sum, if there is an overall criticism it seems at least in part the fault of the recording. It is rather strong for continuous listening. But individually the performances never fall below a certain level. These two latest LP's do not, like the birthday album, give full catalog and matrix numbers, only the year of the recording.

MÉLODIES ET AIRS: SCHUBERT: Wohin?; SCHUMANN: Le noyer; Au loin; FALLA: Asturiana; Jota; Nana; SÉVERAC: Chanson pour le petit cheval; MILHAUD: La séparation; RAVEL: Chanson hébraïque; Chanson française; LULLY: Alceste--Air de Charon (Il faut passer); GOUNOD: Le soir; DUPARC: Soupir; Sérenade florentine; Chanson triste; HAHN: Cimitière de campagne; D'une prison; FAURÉ: Clair de lune; Adieu (Poème d'un jour, no. 3) Je me suis embarqué; Diane Séléne (L'horizon chimérique, nos. 2 & 3); MOZART: Don Giovanni-- Air de Leporello; SCHUBERT: Le sosie; BERLIOZ: Damnation de Faust--Sérenade de Mephisto; FAURE: La chanson du pêcheur (Lamento); DUPARC: L'invitation au voyage; La vague et la cloche; Phidylé; SAINT-SAENS: Le pas d'armes du roi Jean; CHAUSSON: Le temps des lilas; CAPLET: Forêt; DEBUSSY: Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons; Ballade que Villon fait à la requête de sa mère pour prier Notre Dame; Pelléas et Mélisande--Il fait beau cette nuit (with Yvonne Brothier, soprano. Charles Panzera, baritone; Magdeleine Panzéra-Baillet, piano (sides 1-2); Orchestre de Gramophone; Piero Coppola, conductor (sides 3-4, beginning with Mozart). EMI Pathé Marconi C 151-73084/5. 2 discs.

Like Georges Thill, Panzéra was one of the most prolific French recording artists in the twenties and thirties. Thill was the great French opera tenor, also distinguished in the field of song; Panzéra was the great interpreter of mélodies who also sang in opera. Panzéra was the more systematic in his recordings, performing cycles - Dichterliebe (with Alfred Cortot), La bonne chanson, the songs of Duparc. Many of his songs were recorded more than once. Early in the LP era the Panzera-Cortot Dichterliebe was coupled with the equally admired performance of Aksel Schiøtz and Gerald Moore (RCA Victor LCT 1132), and more recently there have been reissues of the mélodies of Duparc (COLH 104) and Fauré (COLH 103).

Panzéra, like Thill, served in the army in World War I before he could embark on his career. While he was in service he met a young pianist with whom he enjoyed making music and who, as Mme. Panzéra-Baillet, was to collaborate in most of his piano-accompanied recordings. He made his debut at the Opéra-Comique in 1919 as Albert in Werther and sang his quota of secondary roles before making his great success as Pelléas. In his younger days he had met Debussy, who singled him out for the role. Along with various premieres of contemporary works (notably of Milhaud and Honegger among others) he is credited with some 150 performances of La damnation de Faust.

But his major career began at a gala concert at the Sorbonne in honor of Gabriel Fauré on 20 June 1923. Panzéra sang L'horizon chimérique, Fauré's last song cycle which he had dedicated to the singer. According to a note by Mme. Panzéra, they were immediately engaged by HMV and made their first recordings in 1924. A number of performances of that vintage are included in this program. Clair de lune and D'une prison were made that year; the two short songs from L'horizon chimérique and Adieu! are dated 1925. These acoustic recordings are of special

interest to those who know the later versions of the songs. For example, I note a ritard at the end of Clair de lune which he did not allow himself later.

As collectors know, he made three complete recordings of L'horizon chimérique; the first (DB 4972) issued in 1935, was almost immediately replaced (I suspect because of some details in the performance) and the second (DB 5009) remains the standard for interpretation. While in America in 1952 the Panzèras made two LP's for Mercury (MG 10097/8), and the first of these - a side each of Debussy and Fauré - contains a third performance, which may have been made because, freed from the timing restrictions of 78 rpm, it was possible to broaden the tempi a bit. These two excerpts take us back as nearly as possible to the world premiere. Several of the other French songs were made in the early days of electrical recording; some of them were redone in the 30's.

Sérenade florentine and Cimitière de campagne were made in 1926 and thus are among the first made by the new techniques. Chanson pour le petit cheval, La séparation, Chanson hébraïque, Chanson française, Le pas d'armes du roi Jean, Forêt (which Bernac calls "one of the most beautiful melodies of all the French concert repertoire") and Noël des enfants (1927-29) seem not to have been recorded again, and the three Duparc songs on side 3 (Invitation au voyage, La vague et la cloche and Phidylé) are given here in the earlier orchestral versions. Of the German songs, Wohin? is sung in good clear German, while Der Nussbaum, In der Fremde and Doppelgänger are in French. More unusual for Panzera are the three Falla songs in Spanish.

Opera is represented first by Charon's delightful air from Lully's Alceste (1938), then by Mephistophles's serenade extracted from the abridged recording (HMV L 886-95) and Pelléas by the third act duet with Yvonne Brothier (the abridged opera was once on Victor as M-68). For good measure there is Leporello's aria sung in French, recorded in 1934 with surprisingly good effect. This fine program by no means exhausts the Panzera repertoire, but it spans the years from 1924 to 1938. From first to last he was a fine musician, always the sensitive interpreter.

For those who would study the artist's singing in depth, he has written several books, one in particular - 50 French songs (Schott, 1964) - discusses a number of the mélodies on this program. Among the introductory notes on the jacket, the brief tribute of Roland Barthes is particularly valuable for its analysis of Panzera's diction: "For if I want to know what the French language really is, it is to the art of Panzera I turn ..."

Philip L. Miller