

---

## SOUND RECORDING REVIEWS

---

### **The Art of Maud Powell, a “Victor Immortal.”**

**Volume One:** Bach, Bouree from 1st Partita; de Beriot, Concerto No. 7, Op. 76, in 3 Movements; Bruch, Kol Nidrei; Sarasate, Zigeunerweisen and Spanish Dance, Op. 26 No. 8; Vieuxtemps, Polonaise, Op. 38; Four American Folksongs, and works by Gluck, Thomas, Elgar, Emmett, Danks, Herbert, Sauret, Drdla, Grainger, Chopin, Massenet, and Francois Schubert. **Volume Two:** Bach, 2nd and 4th movements from Sonata No. 8 in E major, BWV 1016; Mozart, Minuet from Divertimento No. 17, K. 334; Vieuxtemps, St. Patrick's Day from Bouquet Americain, Op. 33, and 2nd recording of Polonaise, Op. 38; Wieniawski, Romance from Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 22, and Capriccio Valse, Op. 7; Leybach, Fifth Nocturne, Op. 52; and works by Handel, Boccherini, Schubert, Schumann, Zarzycki, Martini, Raff, Grieg, Chopin, Ogarew, Cadman, Offenbach, Poldini, and Massenet. **Volume Three:** Mendelssohn, Finale of Concerto in E minor, Op. 64; Leclair, Tambourin; Beethoven, Minuet in G; Hubay, Hejre Kati and Zephyr; Sibelius, Musette and Valse Triste; Coleridge-Taylor, Deep River; Dvorak, Humoresque; Saint-Saens, The Swan; Schmitt, Chanson a bercer (Lullaby); and works by Tenaglia, Handel, Boisdeffre, Gilbert, Moszkowski, Neruda, Massenet, Saar, and Wieniawski. All recordings 1904-17, with piano accompaniments by George Falkenstein, Waldemar Liachowsky, and Arthur Loesser; Francis Lapitano, Harpist; and Joseph Pasternack, conductor of two selections. Issued by the Maud Powell Foundation, 533 N. 26th Street, Arlington, VA 22207; (703) 532-2055. Available from them as a 3-CD set (MPF 1-3), \$48; 3 cassettes for \$30; Vols. 1 and 3 available singly, \$16 each

In June of 1911, shortly after giving the work its world premiere at the Norfolk Festival in Connecticut, Maud Powell recorded a portion of Max Bruch's *Konzertstück*, Op. 84. When the old composer got wind of this, his response was unfortunately typical of many musicians with roots before the age of recording. In a letter to a friend, Bruch wrote, "...she appears to have played the *Adagio*, shortened by half, into a machine (!!)" I really gave her a piece of my mind about this." That recording never saw publication and it is not included in this survey which also excludes a few other unpublished items mostly from 1919. The 66 tracks of these three generous CDs (73'28", 77'26", and 66'09" respectively) include the entire published output on record, spanning the years 1904-1917, of America's first great violinist.

That epithet usually is reserved for the Chicagoan Albert Spalding (1888-1953), but Maud Powell (1868-1920) of Peru, Illinois preceded him by a generation. Even a cursory sampling of the documentary and recorded evidence reveals Powell as an artist of the

first importance, both as a major cultural force in a country with a very young cultural heritage, and as a virtuoso in the international arena. Indeed, Spalding himself supposedly said that Powell produced the most beautiful tone of any violinist of her day, especially on the G string, an assertion that is certainly not belied by the splendid recorded legacy at hand.

Violin specialists have always collected Powell's records assiduously and in some cases (James Creighton's Discopaedia series, in particular) issued selections on LP. Otherwise, she has disappeared all but completely from the general consciousness. Bad timing certainly has played a part in this major cultural injustice. Her premature death meant that all of her recordings are acoustic, most of them short and suited to the severe time constraints of the 78 rpm era. They also contain relatively light fare that reflected, but at the same time helped to elevate, the tastes of the record-buying public. That same sub-five minute barrier dictated that the concerto movements and many other works were recorded in more or less severely truncated versions. This fact, when added to the sound limitations, also militates against a more general acceptance, even in a time when many historical recordings are receiving a hearing.

If, however, these new digital transfers are granted a hearing—something that fortunately seems to be happening—they could well win back a good measure of the devotion that Maud Powell once enjoyed. They are the work of Ward Marston who recently achieved glory (such glory as is reserved for the practitioners of this difficult but most important craft) for his achievement in the Pearl Caruso Edition. Maud Powell's violin was not so beautifully suited to the acoustic recording process as Caruso's voice, but the sound here is rich enough to provide ample support for the Victor Talking Machine's proud claim about the first instrumentalist chosen to record for the top-of-the-line Red Seal label. "Listen to Maud Powell's violin...if you want to find out how much can be got out of a fiddle, go—listen to—Maud Powell." I have not checked Marston's transfers with the originals, but the clarity and the clean stability of even the earliest of these recordings bespeak enormous care and skill, with unobtrusive filtering and access to a remarkably well preserved collection of shellacs.

The guiding light of this project is Karen Shaffer, a Washington D.C.-area attorney and scholar of the violin who with the late Neva Garner Greenwood wrote the biography *Maud Powell: Pioneer American Violinist* (Ames, Iowa: Maud Powell Foundation and Iowa State University Press, 1988). This is an extremely valuable cultural history as well as a generously documented account of the artist's life and career. The "Pioneer" in the title is thoroughly justified in the descriptions, often using Powell's own excellent writing, of tours to the hinterlands of this country, South Africa, and elsewhere. "Pioneer" is also the word for an artist who gave the American premieres of 14 violin concerti, including those of Tchaikovsky, Dvorak, and Sibelius. The response of the *New York Sun's* influential critic, W. J. Henderson, to the Sibelius is a classic in itself, both for its expression of shock at the outrageously new and for its appreciation of the brave champion thereof:

This concerto is of the Finns, finny. It is of the North, rugged. It is of the Russ, rude. It is of the fiddle, technical. It is almost everything except beautiful....It is bitter as gall and savage as wilderness....Now, everyone who knows anything knows that Maud Powell is the last of players to seek out a medium for bald technical display. She is too true an artist for that. She must have found something else in this extraordinary concerto to induce her to master its frightful passages. She played it superbly. Her tone was full and brilliant. Her style had virility and breadth and dash. Her finger work was admirable and her bowing glorious. But why did she put all that magnificent art into this sour and crabbed concerto?

Even the sophisticated ears of 1906 heard the Sibelius concerto differently than we do, but “virility and breadth and dash” are as apparent in the playing on these recordings as they were to Henderson. There is not space to comment on the selections in any detail—the overlong headnote is intended to give some idea of the significant range and variety thereof—but to mention a few favorites: Powell’s Bach is wonderfully effective, even with the portamento characteristic of the time. This is especially true of the vivacious Bouree from the B minor Partita. Her closeness to Bruch is underscored by one of the very finest and possibly first recording, dating from 1913, of *Kol Nidrei*. This performance has such intensity that it surely must have won the composer over if he heard it. Her performances of Gluck, Schubert, Martini, and others have all the poise and serenity required. But she also brought an unflinching tastefulness as well as real technical brilliance to the showpieces of Sarasate, Vieuxtemps, and Wieniawski. Her 1910 performance of Bellstedt’s unaccompanied Caprice on Dan Emmett’s “Dixie” is a bauble for those “pioneer” crowds, no doubt, but it is also superb fiddling and wonderfully entertaining even now. The performance of all three movements of de Beriot’s Seventh Concerto is again the work of the cultural pioneer; by 1915-16 there were still very few efforts to put an entire concerto on disc, even in heavily cut form.

The year 1916 is also the year of Marie Hall’s even more thoroughly truncated version of Elgar’s Concerto under the baton of the composer. Powell absorbed some of de Beriot’s principles of playing in her studies with Dancla in Paris, but even by the time of this recording, the founding father of the Belgian School was a fading figure, as Powell herself admitted. Still, this is a lovely work, full of still-fresh lyricism. Even in its relatively primitive technical state, Powell’s dashing performance is far superior to the only modern recording known to this reviewer: Maurice Raskin’s creditable effort for Belgian EMI.

The many tracks of these CDs contain numberless felicities to be enjoyed by anyone capable of listening through the barrier of acoustic reproduction, a barrier made as transparent as possible by Ward Marston. He and Karen Shaffer deserve the heartfelt thanks not only of violin lovers but of anyone who seeks a fuller understanding of our musical heritage and one of the most fascinating and accomplished figures of that heritage. *Reviewed by John Swan*

**Lennie Tristano Quintet: Live at Birdland 1949.**

“Remember,” “Pennies,” “Foolish Things,” “Indiana,” “I’m No Good Without You,” “Glad Am I,” “This is Called Love,” “Blame Me,” “I Found My Baby.” Jazz Records JR-1CD

These recordings come from the time when a new music had taken over the hearts and souls of most young jazz musicians, be-bop. It was rhythmically complex, harmonically adventurous, and a decidedly extroverted type of music whose main progenitors were alto saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. While that revolution was taking place, pianist Lennie Tristano was creating a little revolution of his own.

Tristano, blind from the age of 10, became mentor and teacher (some would add Svengali) to a small group of young musicians including alto saxophonist Lee Konitz, tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh, and guitarist Billy Bauer. While Tristano appreciated the bop sounds he heard around him, he favored a different approach, perhaps best represented by the recordings he made in 1949 for the Capitol label and the live music on this CD from the same year. The critics called Tristano’s music “cool jazz” because it lacked the obvious fire of bop. It was not as rhythmically jarring as bop, but it was every

bit as harmonically complex. Long, flowing melodies and contrapuntal passages permeate this music. The rhythm section (bass and drums) had a strict timekeeping function with the drummer using brushes on snare drum throughout each performance.

The first five tracks on this collection probably were recorded in the last month of 1949 at Birdland, the New York club named after bop master Charlie "Yardbird" Parker. Tristano, Marsh, Bauer, and bassist Arnold Fishkin all participated in the important Capitol sessions recorded earlier that year. As on those groundbreaking performances, the music on this CD is a textbook example of the Tristano approach to jazz. The performances are reworkings of well-known standards, and it is simply delightful to listen to these musicians skillfully navigate the harmonic minefields they create for themselves in their improvisations.

The final four tracks are solo piano performances recorded in 1945 by Tristano in a professional studio in Chicago. They afford a chance to hear the pure Tristano style, and one is immediately struck by the pianist's awesome technique. His playing is more rhythmically adventurous than on the quintet sides, and he swings more. Since Tristano never really cared for bass players or drummers, it is a pity that he did not record more piano solos because he clearly enjoyed the freedom.

The sound quality varies. Fishkin recorded the 1949 quintet titles and the tapes hold up fairly well some 40 years later. While the sound in no way can be called high fidelity, all the instruments can be heard clearly (even drummer Jeff Morton's brushes). Naturally, the 1945 studio titles are superior in sound. There are no program notes. Even the most rudimentary notes would have been preferable to the rather unflattering photo of Tristano included instead. Still, this CD is a welcome addition to the rather sparse discography of Lennie Tristano, a true genius of jazz. *Reviewed by Vincent Pelote*

### **Son House: Delta Blues.**

"Levee Camp Blues," "Government Fleet Blues," "Walking Blues," "Shetland Pony Blues," "Delta Blues," "Special Rider Blues," "Low Down Dirty Dog Blues," "Depot Blues," "American Defense," "Am I Right or Wrong," "Walking Blues," "County Farm Blues," "The Pony Blues," "The Jinx Blues (Tk A3)," "The Jinx Blues (Tk B1)." Biograph BCD 118 (CD)

Eddie James House, Jr. (1902-1988) was a master of the Mississippi Delta blues who taught and influenced both Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. This collection of his music should be welcomed by all blues lovers.

The Library of Congress field recordings contained on this CD were originally made by Alan Lomax (with assistance from Elizabeth Lomax and Lewis Jones, in some instances). Tracks 1-5 were recorded at a store near Lake Cormorant, Mississippi in 1941. Tracks 6-15 were recorded in Robinsonville, Mississippi on July 17, 1942. On four of the first five tracks, House is ably assisted by Fiddlin' Joe Martin (mandolin), Leroy Williams (harmonica), and Willie Brown (2nd guitar). These informal performances are quite lively with plenty of interaction between House and the others. Even the occasional train whistle or baby crying can't mar these examples of classic blues.

The 11 performances that feature just House alone, singing and accompanying himself on guitar, are the gems of this collection. His voice is strong and expressive throughout, and his guitar playing is positively phenomenal. The material ranges from a catchy little waltz about the war effort called "American Defense" to the autobiographical "County Farm Blues" (House served time in Parchman State Farm, ca. 1928-29).

The digital transfers, unfortunately, are not as good as earlier analog LP transfers of this material. The CD transfers suffer from over-filtering, to the point of cutting off the "highs" in the music. This gives the recordings a muffled quality, which also makes it difficult to understand the lyrics at times. Those shortcomings notwithstanding, this set is highly recommended. *Reviewed by Vincent Pelote*

### **The Earliest Negro Vocal Quartets, 1894-1928.**

Document DOCD-5061, 1991. 1 CD

This is an important reissue which deserves notice from collectors and archives. Unfortunately it is also a thoroughly botched job. The 22 tracks by the Standard Quartette (1894), the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet (1902), the Apollo Male Quartette (1912) and Polk Miller's Old South Quartette (1909 and 1928) are extremely significant sound documents which to this reviewer's knowledge have never been gathered in one place. In fact, most of them have never been reissued at all. This unfortunate CD is our first chance to hear them, and quite possibly our last for a long time to come.

First, the good news. The mere existence of this reissue should alert scholars to at least some facts concerning the history of early black recording, a subject that has been widely misunderstood and frequently misrepresented in print.<sup>1</sup> Discographers, including the estimable Dixon and Godrich (*Recording the Blues*), have maintained for years that the first authentic black quartet recordings were those made by the Dinwiddie Quartette for Victor in 1902. A scholarly article in the *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* in 1989 even stated that no black recordings of any kind were known from the 1890s! Most black archives and students of black history seem to know nothing of the subject. Perhaps the appearance of the Standard Quartette's remarkable Columbia cylinder, a commercially issued gospel performance from 1894, will begin to change that.

Most of the other tracks on this CD are highly sought-after as well, and will be welcomed by students of the field. Five of the six titles recorded by the Dinwiddie Quartette are here, along with all seven known Polk Miller Edison cylinders and all seven QRS discs made by Miller's Old South Quartette in 1928 long after the showman's death (Miller was white; his quartet was black). The two Columbia-issued sides by the little-known Apollo Male Quartette are also included.

One other track appears on this CD. It is unintentionally hilarious, and the first indication that the compilers, for all their good intentions, may not have been entirely knowledgeable about this field. This is "The Camp Meeting Jubilee" said to be performed by an unknown male quartette and recorded for the Little Wonder label "c.1910." Little Wonder was not founded until 1914, but more importantly the voices that come booming out are unmistakably those of Arthur Collins, Albert Campbell and the rest of the Peerless Quartet doing a boisterous parody of black dialect in one of the "coon" recordings so common at that time. What on earth is a Peerless Quartet "coon" number doing on a reissue of early, serious black recordings? Did the compilers actually believe that this was a black group?

Then there are the liner notes. We are told that the Standard Quartette cylinder is the only known surviving recording of the 22 recordings they made in 1894. As pointed out in my 1990 ARSC talk, there is at least one other, "Every Day Will Be Sunday Bye and Bye," in the hands of an East Coast collector. The quartet actually made at least 23 recordings (probably more), and some of them date from after 1894.

Ray Funk's notes also tell us that "almost all the earliest aural artifacts of music by African Americans (before blues) were quartet selections." This is nonsense as

witnessed by the scores of early solo recordings by Bert Williams, Carroll Clark, George W. Johnson and others. We are told that the CD contains “all known examples of these extremely rare (black quartet) recordings.” This ignores the many recordings by the Fisk Jubilee Quartet, not to mention a rare but extant cylinder by the Unique Quartette of the 1890s. And what about the “lost” sixth title by the Dinwiddie Quartette—“My Way Is Cloudy” (Victor 1724)? I have had a tape of it for years and suspect that others have as well. The compilers could have located this material had they simply asked in a published forum. I hope that students who come across this CD do not take these notes too literally.

Finally, we come to the transfers. One does not expect high quality from source material this early and rare, but the intermittently heavy filtering, pops, rumble and even tape squeal on these tracks is appalling! It would appear that the compiler has simply taken any nth generation tape that fell into his hands and slapped it on to this CD. State-of-the-art digital technology is used to preserve all the sins of bad audio taping. Which brings up another issue: the misappropriation of “rough dubs” made for circulation among scholars with no credit as to their sources. The owners of these original recordings may be distressed to see the amateur dubs they made privately for other researchers turning up on an Austrian CD, horribly reproduced. Apparently no attempt was made to contact them, either to obtain better transfers or to give them credit for sharing this material with the research community. Such behavior will simply discourage collectors with other rare and important recordings from sharing them at all.

A better dub of the Dinwiddie’s lively “Down on the Old Camp Ground” (Vic 1714) can be found Richard Spottswood’s LP “Religious Music Congregational and Ceremonial” (Library of Congress LBC 1). I am not aware of any currently available reissues of the other selections in this set.

*The Earliest Negro Vocal Quartets, 1894-1928* is undeniably important because of the material it contains. Until someone undertakes to do the job right, this is all we will have. Compiled and produced by Johnny Parth, Eipeldauerstr. 23/43/5 A-1220 Vienna, Austria. Available in the U.S. for \$19.50 plus S&H from Roots & Rhythm (formerly Down Home Music), 6921 Stockton Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530 (510-525-1494). *Reviewed by Tim Brooks*

### Note:

1. That history and its misrepresentation was the subject of a talk given by this reviewer at the 1990 ARSC Conference in Ottawa; a cassette of the talk, with recorded examples, is available from ARSC.

### **The Monkees: Listen to the Band.**

Rhino R 70566, 1992. 4 CD box set

The Monkees are an acquired taste; acquired, it seems, mostly by those who grew up with them in the 1960s. Though they set no new musical directions, they are undeniably important both because of their immense popularity and because of what they symbolize—the dawn of “corporate rock.”

As almost everybody must know by now, this particular rock group was not formed in the usual fashion. It was literally “cast” by Columbia Pictures Television which was seeking to produce both a youth-oriented television series about a rock band and spin-off records by that band. The carefully controlled image making was so blatant, and successful, that it has fascinated both fans and critics ever since.

Asking whether the Monkees' recordings deserve to be reissued is probably pointless since a lot of people want them and they *are* going to be reissued. The only question is how well, and Rhino has certainly done it right. In this four-CD box set we have 80 tracks by the band including all 19 of their charted hits, key cuts from their many LPs (remember LPs?), live performances, and unissued material. Most cuts are from their 1966-1970 glory days, but also included are half a dozen from the short-lived Monkees revival of 1986-1987.

Most of this is pure pop pablum, catchy hooks, catchy beats and an ample supply of teen angst. Even in their "protest" songs ("Another Pleasant Valley Sunday/Here in status symbol land...") the boys don't sound as if they really mean it. But it was also exceptionally slick stuff turned out by some of the best songwriters in the business, several of whom later became stars in their own right—Carole King, Neil Diamond, John Stewart and Harry Nilsson among them. Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart wrote much of the Monkees hit material, but Gerry Goffin/Carole King and band member Michael Nesmith also contributed a lot. And once you get past the sound-alike hits, there are some surprises: Nesmith's "Papa Gene's Blues" with its hard-driving country feel and first-rate guitar work by studio legends James Burton and Glen Campbell, the jazz jam on "Goin' Down" (stolen bodily from Mose Allison), the early Moog synthesizer on "Daily Nightly," and the psychedelia of "The Door Into Summer" (based on a Robert Heinlein book).

Two aspects of this reissue deserve special mention. Though there has been some controversy about this in the pages of *Goldmine*, the transfers sound absolutely superb. The tambourines on "Last Train to Clarksville" and the bells on "Words" are so clean and crisp coming out of my Polk speakers as to make your hair stand on end. The stereo separation is excellent. Engineer Bill Inglot took his work very seriously indeed.

The 28-page oversized booklet accompanying the set was nominated for a 1992 ARSC Award for Excellence. The format is ingenious. After a brief introduction, each track is listed followed by discographical information (original issues, recording dates and location, producer, engineer, personnel) and then the background of that individual recording. There are copious quotes from those involved, both the artists and others, giving the tracks a context seldom seen in discographies. Since the tracks are in more or less chronological order, one can follow the band's progression as it gradually wrested creative control away from its corporate sponsors and explored—none too successfully—a variety of musical paths. It is entertaining and highly informative reading, enhanced by listening to the corresponding music while you read. Unfortunately the discographical detail is not all that serious students of the band may want. There was much overdubbing and session-splicing in those days, and despite the apparent detail, it is not always clear who did what when. For example, on October 25 and 27, 1966, Mickey Dolenz sang lead during sessions in New York, while on October 26th he was recording in Los Angeles. Perhaps he traveled a lot. Explicit take and overdubbing information might have helped explain such cases.

Some recording dates and personnel are missing, including—surprisingly—some information for sessions held by Rhino itself only five years ago when the "revival" band was recording for this label. How quickly discographical information disappears.

While we're quibbling, the book is filled with dozens of pictures of the group in various locations, but hardly any of them are captioned. It is not even clear which band member is which. Don't laugh, not everybody knows. For the uninitiated, Michael Nesmith is the tall serious one, often with a wool hat; Davy Jones the little guy; Mickey Dolenz has the widest smile and the biggest mop-top; and Peter Tork is the bland-looking "other one." Mickey sang lead on many of the hits such as "Last Train to Clarksville,"

"I'm a Believer," "Pleasant Valley Sunday," while Englishman Davy Jones is heard on top-ten entries "Daydream Believer," "A Little Bit Me," and "Valleri." And, yes, all of them had musical experience before becoming part of the Monkees.

In all, a fine compilation from a label known for the loving care it takes in its reissues of rock, R&B and occasionally country music. If you want to hear the Monkees, *Listen to the Band* is the essential set to have. *Reviewed by Tim Brooks*

### **Greatest Speeches of the 20th Century.**

Rhino Records, Inc. 2225 Colorado Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90404, 1991, R2 70567. 4 CD set plus 45 page guide, illus.

Some things, most readers of this journal will agree, have to be heard to be appreciated. Clearly, that is the case with many of the pronouncements that have shaped the contemporary world. In this collection of four compact discs, many of those pronouncements—most frequently seen as words in black and white—are restored to living color, and greater credibility, by the voices of those who spoke them. The technological advance of digital sound reproduction, to force the simile a bit, brightens the hues and sharpens the contrast. One can hear the bona fide scratchiness of an Edison phonograph and hear John F. Kennedy turn the pages of the speech that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962.

Gordon Skene, who compiled and produced this collection, badly misspoke himself when he titled it *Greatest Speeches of the 20th Century*. Many of the selections are not really speeches; and if measured by the standards of classical oratory or the contemporary standards of the Cross Examination Debate Association, few of them are great. The 25 second retirement announcement of Alan Freed (a rock 'n roll promoter who was disgraced by the Payola scandal) and the 10-minute swatch of Lt. Col. Oliver North's testimony at the Iran-Contra hearings come to mind as not-great non-speeches. Young people in the 1990s may marvel that anyone who mangled the language as badly as Casey Stengel could manage a baseball team; they will be incredulous that anyone thinks he was so bad he was great.

What Gordon Skene has put together is an oral montage of 68 well-known people and significant events in twentieth century America with an occasional bow in the direction of European celebrities and events that periodically diverted our collective attention. He has done a very good job of that, and I doubt that sales would suffer had he labeled his work more precisely. One CD covers politics beginning with Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft and ending with Mario Cuomo and Jesse Jackson. A second disc, or "volume" as the user's guide insists, covers historical landmarks—from the first recorded promotional message on the Edison Phonograph (1906) to George Bush's announcement that American planes had commenced bombing targets in Iraq (January 16, 1991).

The third disc consists of "inspirational" pieces: William Jennings Bryan on the ideal republic; Amelia Earhart on women in the transportation industry; remarks by Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and Hank Aaron that sanctify baseball; astronauts John Glenn, Frank Borman, and Neil Armstrong each making "one small step for man", valiant statements by our British cousins Winston Churchill and Princess Elizabeth during the war; Eisenhower's Farewell and Kennedy's Inaugural; and Ronald Reagan's last good shot in the Cold War, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall" (June 12, 1987).

The fourth "volume" is topical and purports to sample the "Best of Times, Worst of Times." Mostly, it recollects the worst: nine minutes of Charles Lindbergh's harangue, just four months before Pearl Harbor, that the war in Europe was not America's fight; over 12 minutes of Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist bile; 10 minutes of Oliver North;



and over 16 minutes of Richard Nixon's grousing after he lost the California governor's race to Pat Brown ("You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore."). Add, for not very light relief, a segment of the Nixon-Khrushchev "kitchen debate" and snippets from Malcolm X, Jerry Rubin, Richard Daley, Gloria Steinem, and Spiro Agnew.

Over all, the compiler/editor of this collection sees the twentieth century as political. Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan are amply represented in longish excerpts from their acceptance speeches, inaugural addresses, farewell remarks, and resignation statements. There is enough of Thomas E. Dewey, Adlai Stevenson, Douglas MacArthur, John Foster Dulles, Barry Goldwater, and Robert and Ted Kennedy to establish a sound image of these first-string players. Of the foreigners, Churchill speaks longest, followed by King Edward VIII, Neville Chamberlain, and Adolf Hitler.

Of the 68 excerpts, nearly half (32) are drawn from the 20 years between the end of war in Korea and the resignation of Richard Nixon. If space on these discs were a measure of importance (or the greatness of a speech), Richard Nixon is far and away the man of the twentieth century. Of four hours and 17 minutes of oral history on these CDs, Skene allots 52 minutes (counting debates with Khrushchev and Kennedy) to Nixon, twice as much as to anyone else. But no one has claimed that this collection constitutes a balanced history-in-sound of the twentieth century. It is not. It is Skene's sampling of sound recordings that have survived.

Woodrow Wilson's appeal to Congress for a declaration of war in order to make the world safe for democracy, or his explanation of his Fourteen Points for postwar peace were greater speeches (whether the measure be importance or eloquence) than the 100-second bite included here from a speech to American Indians in 1913. ("Your Great White Father now calls you his brothers.") Clearly, the reason Wilson is ill represented is that no one recorded his call to war or the oratorical version of his plan for peace. For the same reason, apparently, Margaret Sanger's advice on birth control and Betty Friedan's outline of "the problem that has no name" are not included. Indeed, women left little that Skene considered great; he selected four, Earhart, Steinem, and the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, and allotted them just over three minutes. No labor leader, business tycoon, educator, cleric, journalist, scientist, musician, or thespian left a speech great enough to displace General John "Black Jack" Pershing or Spiro Agnew. I hope notables less purely political will be featured in future releases.

Most of the selections in this collection are well edited. Appropriately, almost nothing has been cut from Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. In paring to the core of Harry Truman's inaugural address of 1949, however, Skene kept the platitudinous boiler plate and discarded the agenda-setting "point 4" among the President's specific points for dealing with communism; namely, "a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas."

How ever one might quibble about this or that excision, the collection is infinitely superior to the most popular spoken-word recordings. There is no sonorous commentator and no crying violins or trumpets of triumph; no "You are There" pretending or "Hear it Now" reconstructions. Background sketches for each cut are contained in a practical user's guide, and the discs contain only oral documents. Whether used to give texture to a classroom presentation, as documents for an exercise in historical discovery, or, more personally, as a device for reawakening and clarifying memories cooled and dimmed by time, this set is well worth having. *Reviewed by Richard McKinzie*

### **Richard Jose, Countertenor. Cornwall's Greatest Singer.**

"With All Her Faults I Love Her Still," "Rose of My Life," "I Cannot Sing the Old Songs," "When You and I Were Young Maggie," "Dear Old Girl," "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Silver Threads Among the Gold," "Time and Tide." AJP 3 [Cassette] MONO. Copyright 1988. Joe Pengelly, producer

Only with trepidation did this reviewer decide to appraise this recording of Richard Jose. The assignment was accepted because the vocal medium is fascinating. Only afterwards did the various controversies that surround the producer and his recording methods come to light.

Since the subject of recording methods has been broached, those concerns will be addressed first. The only information that has been provided on the recording states that the chromium cassette tape was recorded in real time directly from a digital master tape, and that Dolby-B encoding was used. Those familiar with Mr. Pengelly's work as a producer most likely have their curiosity piqued by now. They probably are asking if any supplemental reproduction processes were used, and the only answer that this reviewer can give is no. After listening numerous times in quest of determining if Mr. Pengelly can be taken at face value, the conclusion is that in this instance he can. Other more astute ears may be able to detect otherwise, but this opinion was reached after the following process.

Fortunately, the resources of the Marr Sound Archives at the University of Missouri-Kansas City were at hand to make several comparisons. One of the songs, "Silver Threads Among the Gold," [Victor Issue 2556] was in the Archive's holdings, and from that disc a comparison was made between an original pressing and this cassette. Not only were no enhancements found, but the sound on the cassette was somewhat compressed and almost "flat" or two-dimensional compared with the disc. The original recording of Richard Jose must have been exceptional for the acoustical process because the singer's voice was captured quite naturally. This flatness may have resulted from the attempt to eliminate a small amount of unnecessary surface noise using the digital remastering process. But this also detracts from the acoustics of the original pressings. A fair amount of the normal pops and cracks can still be heard. Apparently, there was no attempt to suppress them all.

Using the Archive's disc, attempts were made to determine the speed at which the Pengelly production was recorded. After listening to the song played at 78, 77, 76 and 75 rpm, it would appear that the piece was remastered at 78 rpm. Because the other selections on the tape are at the same pitch level, it is logical to assume that they also were rerecorded at 78 rpm.

Now we turn to the artist. Very little information could be found on Richard James Jose, or Juan Ricardo José as he was known in the United States. We do know that he was born in Lanner, Gwennap, Cornwall on June 5, 1862, and that he died in San Francisco in 1941.<sup>1</sup> Even though Jose appears to be a Spanish name, the surname of Jose was a common name in the Duchy of Cornwall. Richard Jose appears to have been of Cornish descent with no Spanish ancestry. When he toured in other countries, Jose may have used a stage name to attract a larger audience (as did other more famous musicians), thus contributing to the confusion over his nationality.

Jose's vocal quality is one of the rarest and most unique of the male voices: the countertenor. In most reference sources the countertenor is described as either singing in falsetto or in a natural head voice. Most of today's performers who label themselves as countertenors are actually male altos who sing with a very refined and cultivated

false alto. Two of the more famous contemporary artists who sing in this fashion are Michael Chance and Paul Esswood, both of whom specialize in roles heard in the early music revival. Falsettists also sing the alto part in the English cathedral choir tradition or in some other choirs such as John Elliot Garner's Monteverdi Choir. The tonal quality of such a voice is easy to detect because it has a "white" tone that is straighter than a female alto voice. Jose's vocal production, however, is of the natural head voice category.

Owen Jander describes the head voice of the countertenor as "a natural voice with an abnormally high tessitura."<sup>2</sup> A more technical description of the head voice defines it as "a loud full tone of the trained head voice with added resonance...a combination of chest voice vocalis and falsetto cricothyroid energy."<sup>3</sup> This is an apt description of Jose's voice. Upon hearing his first few lines in any one of these songs you realize that the voice is very high, but that it has the distinct tenor quality as opposed to a male falsetto. This very quality immediately draws the listener's attention. The voice is fresh and full-bodied. Each of these songs was recorded for Victor Records in 1904-05<sup>4</sup>, when Jose was in his early forties and probably at the height of his vocal prowess.

This recording could be used by any vocal teacher or coach as an example of how a true head voice or countertenor should sound. Some teachers may take exception to this statement, and find the vocal quality displeasing. However, we have too many artists, pop artists especially, who are exploiting their high tessitura voice as a very cultured falsetto, whereas this reviewer knows of no one using a head voice (if there are, any information would be welcome).

Jose's tessitura is very narrow, with his voice ranging from A to b and an occasional c-sharp. Because of his restricted range, most of the selections on this tape are in the key of E Major. This situation lends itself to sameness and tedium sets in after a point. The songs on this tape are all Victorian ballads, with the exception of "O Come All Ye Faithful." This genre was Jose's forte, and he was known as "Top of the Pops" in the United States before World War I.<sup>5</sup> Enrico Caruso was known to have said of Jose, "Ricardo, you are the world's greatest ballad singer!"<sup>6</sup> Whether he was the world's greatest is disputable, but he was well versed in this genre.

For those who are interested in the artist or in the voice type, this issue is instructive and guardedly recommended for that purpose. If on the other hand, one is mainly concerned with the recording process and the faithfulness to the original sonics, then this will not be your "cup of tea." What little this reviewer heard from an original pressing of these songs convinced him that others may be able to achieve even better results provided that they use exceptional pressings. *Reviewed by Keith D. Wilcox*

#### Notes:

1. *The Encyclopedia Discography of Victor Recordings: Matrix Series: 1 through 4999*, Ted Fagan and William R. Moran, compilers (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 314.
2. Owen Jander, "Countertenor," *The New Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 4, 854.
3. Johnny C. Matlock, "The Male Falsetto Register," Unpublished research paper, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1988, p. 21-22.
4. The Victor Issue numbers are: "With All Her Faults..." 31171, "Rose of My Life" 4219, "Sing the Old Songs" 31496, "When You and I Were Young Maggie" 31485, "Dear Old Girl" 4226, "O Come All Ye Faithful" 2725, "Silver Threads" 2556, "Time and Tide" 31355.
5. Joe Pengally, liner notes to *Richard Jose: Cornwall's Greatest Singer*.
6. *Ibid.*