

tor. *Ferrier – A Career Recorded* describes the extent of this legacy.

Paul Campion, with impressive curatorial detail, recounts year-by-year the singer's travels and performances both in the studio and on the air. The first known recording dates from June 30, 1944, the last eight and one-half years later on January 12, 1953. He has charted every facet of Ferrier's career, aided by access to her diaries and notes provided by her sister Winifred. He presents her career in nineteen parts, each representing a six-month period, beginning with January to June 1944 on to January to June 1953. He starts each segment with a biographical narrative into which he numbers and inserts the discography. Each recording citation gives composer, librettist, translator, title, opus number, language sung, time, date, place, matrix and take numbers, accompanying participants, form of publication (from 78s to compact discs). Two examples:

8.15 pm on 12/7/51 [July 12, 1951]

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

158 MAHLER / *Klopstock and Mahler*

Symphony No. 2 in C Minor, The Resurrection / *German*

Soprano: Jo Vincent, Conductor: Otto Klemperer, Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam

Toonkunstkoor

A recording made available by courtesy of Nederlandse Omroep Stichting and Katolieke Radio Omroep

Dutch Radio Sound Archives NOB References: EM-HM-0753, EM-HM-08768 and EM-HM-090

2:00-5:00 pm on 10.12.51 [December 10, 1951]

163 I will walk with my love / *English*

Piano: Phylliss Spurr

Matrix DR 16594-1

Although Ferrier recorded for British Columbia and Decca, she made radio broadcasts for BBC and others. As radio archives are researched more and more, further recordings by this remarkable artist become available.

One usually sees Ferrier's face as a gray-eyed Athena on boxed sets of CDs, just as there were boxed sets of LPs. This book brings the person and her career into sharper focus and is accompanied by many photos. It is fascinating both as a discography and a good read. *Reviewed by Ted Richards.*

Discographie der deutschen Keinkunst, Vol. 1.

By Manfred Weihermuller. Bonn: Birgit Lotz Verlag (Jean Paul Str. 6, 53173 Bonn, Germany), 1991. 100 DM (shipping overseas 20 DM).

This is the first of four volumes which, when complete, will cover the field of German popular music on 78 rpm records. If your favorite artists aren't listed here, don't worry: this one simply contains the performers for which relatively complete and well-documented discographies could be assembled. Two of the newer volumes are now available, and the fourth is promised for this year, so if you're looking for Brecht, the Comedian Harmonists and Karl Valentin, not to mention Lale Andersen and Lotte Lenya, they will be appearing there.

This volume contains no index, though the later ones do. The format in all cases is essentially the same for each artist:

Record Label
 Date and place of recording
 Serial Number
 Matrix Number
 Song Title
 Composers ("M")
 Lyricists ("T")
 Catalog or Order Number

You don't have to read German to understand the contents. In fact, the publisher will provide an English translation of the Foreword with its explanation of each artist's entry.

In a sense this compilation is a triumph over war, since many, though not all, of the original recording ledgers and documents were destroyed during World War II (the exceptions are some recently discovered Hanover recording ledgers documenting the Deutsche Grammophon output from around 1936 to 1945). As a result, the author has had to rely on a variety of sources, each with its particular reliability, such as the recordings themselves from a variety of private collections, company catalogs, new release lists, articles in trade publications and other secondary sources.

This volume, as well as its companions, should be on every research library's shelf. If you're looking for further information on this fascinating era of popular music, here are some books I have come across that illuminate the cabaret tradition these records contain:

Cabaret Performance Europe 1890-1920. Vol. 1. Edited by L. Senelick. Johns Hopkins University Press. \$12.95.

Cabaret Performance Europe 1920-1940. Vol. 2. Edited by L. Senelick. Johns Hopkins University Press. \$19.95.

Each of these books contains English translations of sketches, songs, monologues, and memoirs of some popular German musical artists. The translations are reasonably accurate and capture some of the flavor of the era.

Berlin Cabaret, by Peter Jekavich. Harvard University Press, 1993. \$39.95.

Relying primarily on copies of sheet music, Jekavich tries to recreate the history of this particular art-form from the turn of the century to the beginning of World War II. Probably the most comprehensive source on the subject in the English language.

Reviewed by William E. Walling.

A Jussi Björling Phonography, 2nd Edition.

Compiled by Harald Henrysson. Stockholm, Svenskt Musikhistoriskt Arkiv, 1993. 382 pp. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993. ISBN 91-85172-10-3.

This volume is the culmination of some twenty years of research by Harald Henrysson, who acknowledges contributions from more than 200 individuals and institutions in two dozen countries. Not surprisingly it contains an awesome quantity of detail about Jussi Björling's career and performances preserved on sound recordings and films.

From the late 1930s through the mid-1950s, the Swedish singer Jussi Björling was arguably the finest lyric tenor in opera. Although his bright, beautiful voice generally lacked the caressingly sweet tones of a Beniamino Gigli, he did not have the excessive mannerisms that sometimes marred Gigli's performances. He could express

passion and tenderness with great sincerity, but his was essentially a “cool” voice. His total repertory encompassed 55 leading roles, but during most of his career he concentrated on about a dozen mainstream operas primarily those of Gounod, Puccini, and Verdi.

Although not quite fifty years old when he died on September 9, 1960, Björling's recording career spanned forty years and his legacy of sound recordings comprises more than 650 performances including 36 complete, or substantially complete, operas, three large sacred works, and many songs and arias. Multiple versions exist of several the complete opera recordings. Björling also recorded complete opera roles, e.g., Calaf in *Turandot*, which he never performed on stage.

Of those recorded performances made during commercial studio sessions, 243 were released. The remaining 600-plus originated from live opera performances, concerts, and films. Some of his finest recordings stem from these sources – the Metropolitan Opera Historic Broadcast release of *Roméo et Juliette* from 1947 springs immediately to mind. This is a genuinely great performance.

His first discs were made – as a nine-year-old boy soprano – with his brothers Olle and Gösta for Columbia in 1920 during an American tour of the “Björling Male Quartet” (led by Jussi's father, David). His last recording was made during a radio concert just 35 days before he died. The continuing popularity of Björling's recordings nearly 34 years after his death – Henrysson notes about 150 reissues in CD-format – becomes an even greater testament to his artistry when one considers that only a minority of those purchasing his CDs can have heard him in person.

To one who did hear him, the occasion could be stamped indelibly onto the memory. An example is one of the concerts not cited in Henrysson's chronology, that of April 2, 1952 in Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C.

Constitution Hall was sold out and Björling filled the auditorium with his ringing voice. His charm and warm informality established a remarkable rapport with his listeners – quite in contrast with his operatic appearances in which he usually had to win over his audience by voice alone to compensate for his often wooden acting and stage movement. To a program of twelve songs and arias he added another dozen as encores scattered throughout the six sections into which the concert was divided. The audience response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic; people called for favorite numbers and Björling seemed content to sing on and on. The arias ranged from Handel's “Largo,” to the romantic works of Flotow and Verdi, to the verismo arias of Leoncavallo, Giordano, and Puccini. The songs – several of which he recorded with the same accompanist, Frederick Schauwecker, for Victor in New York about a week later (*i.a.*, LM 1771) – included works by Schubert, Grieg, Sjöberg, Rachmaninoff, Richard Strauss, de Curtis, and Tosti.

Although Henrysson's book illustrates Björling's typical concert repertory in the listings of recordings derived from concerts, he does not discuss the tenor's programming preferences (as, for example, John Ardoin's comments in *The Callas Legacy* do about her concerts). And while Henrysson does not comment extensively on Björling's artistry or relationship with his audiences and singing colleagues, he includes both a bibliography and a list, by author, of significant liner notes. This latter is a welcome inclusion and should be a part of any discography. To have addressed these topics in detail in the *Phonography* would have probably overwhelmed the compiler if not the reader.

The book is a mass of detail as it is. Its organization appears to have been dictated as much by the manner in which the contents have been compiled over the years as by Henrysson's thoughtful method of presentation. The heart of the book is in two

parts: the first is a summary of Björling's life and career and the second the "phonography" proper. Henrysson, as he explains in his introduction, has chosen the term phonography over the more widely used "discography."

The life and career section includes a detailed chronological table of key events in Björling's life. These events include all the opera and concert appearances that Henrysson and his contributors have traced and all of Björling's recording engagements. This part of the book is also supplemented by a listing of his opera, operetta, and oratorio repertory and summary discussions of his recorded repertory.

The recordings discussions are divided into periods – the acoustic Columbias; early HMV recordings; HMV international celebrity discs; the RCA recordings; and live, radio, and film recordings. There is also a brief discussion of recordings that were projected but never realized, particularly the aborted *un Ballo in Maschera* commenced in summer 1960.

The "phonography" – quite the largest part of the book – is divided into four sections: a chronological list of recordings; disk and tape issues; indexes; and the bibliography.

The chronological list of recordings is subdivided into three topics: first – the commercial record company takes with a substantial endnotes section; second – live recordings, broadcasts, and films with a detailed appendix covering performances and broadcasts probably not preserved; third – a key to the index numbers used in both editions of the *Phonography* and in the 1969 *Jussi Björling: A Record List*.

The disk and tape issues section, cross-referenced to the chronological list contains all reported commercial issues by format for each item. Endnotes are provided for a number of issues.

The indexes section includes thorough listings for composers and titles (with endnotes), titles, and performers. The bibliography is as noted above.

The volume opens with the forewords to both this and the first edition. Given the controversial genesis of this work – a collaboration from which Henrysson considered himself obliged to dissociate, the forewords are more than usually important to read for one to understand how this book came about.

It must be admitted that *A Jussi Björling Phonography* is not exceptionally "user friendly." It requires a good bit of referring back and forth between sections to obtain all the information it has to offer on a particular recording, or a particular title which the tenor recorded more than once, or something he recorded both commercially in a studio and via live performance. Even so, the logic of its organization is readily apparent and, as one becomes familiar with the book, its wealth of detail, meticulous scholarship, and accuracy go far to offset the additional searching it sometimes requires. There is, furthermore, a detailed explanation of the arrangement of the various listings, and there is extensive cross-referencing used throughout the book. Checking it against a modest but varied Björling collection indicated that if there are errors – I did not encounter any – they consist of minor omissions of particular facts or of records issued since 1992. Certainly Henrysson has not perpetuated any of the kinds of wrong facts which seem to take lives of their own in books about famous persons. A professional proofreader might find a mistake or two, but I did not.

This is not a book to introduce one to the art of Jussi Björling, nor is that its purpose. His many surviving recordings will do that and, since virtually any of them will convert all but the most hard hearted, to listen is to become an admirer of this wonderful tenor voice. For those who go on to become Björling collectors, this book will be indispensable. Individuals and institutions having the first edition will find this second well worth acquiring. *Reviewed by Elwood A. McKee*

Early Recordings and Musical Style.

By Robert Philip. Cambridge University Press, 1992. 274 pp.

This is something new and luckily – or rather by Robert Philip's sheer application – it is also very good. Philip has taken records of orchestral and instrumental music made between 1900-1950, the preponderance before 1940, and analyzed the playing in terms of degree of tempo fluctuation, rubato, rhythmic character, portamento and vibrato, closely measuring the changes over the period and pointing lessons for the future. He has drawn on 156 works by 49 composers and a total of 337 recordings; many of these recordings are analyzed at different points in the text for varying purposes. Amongst these are eight versions of the Brahms 1st Symphony, nine of Chopin's 2nd Piano Sonata and of the Brahms 2nd Symphony, eleven of the Beethoven Violin Concerto, and no less than twelve of Mozart's Symphony No.40 and Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata. The minute examination to which some of the recordings are subjected is, as will be shown, revealing, but hardly less valuable is the integration into Philip's commentary of reference to an extremely wide range of contemporary literature which serves to point the way to and underpin his conclusions drawn from the recordings themselves.

With this book, gramophone history has come of age. Forty years ago (when your reviewer started serious listening) an interest in old orchestral and instrumental recordings was regarded as rather quaint. Stacks of discarded 78s sat in junk shops and the history which they embodied was disregarded in favor of the latest wunder aus Karajan usw. The climate has changed gradually (the position of vocal recording has always been rather different) and, with this, the availability of source material, so much so that, had Philip begun his task today, he would have had to stray from the CD catalog only in limited fields for his exploratory purposes.

As Philip explains, however, his work was founded on his explorations over many years on the 78 record libraries at Cambridge University (lying covered in dust and ignored) and the BBC. Possibly as a consequence of their limitations, or an inevitable selectivity in their use, some of Philip's conclusions will seem a little surprising to those who might have chosen different recordings to illustrate identical interpretive problems. This does not mean that Philip's general conclusions are invalidated. For the greater part, they are well-founded, and, as it seems, indisputable. There are, nonetheless, areas in which room for dispute remains as a result of a choice of recordings which is either injudicious or insufficiently explored. Unwittingly, perhaps, these very areas illustrate the limitations which records have for the historian of performance styles.

The chapters on flexibility of tempo and tempo rubato are the principal sufferers in this respect. The general thesis in regard to flexibility, that the passage of time saw a gradual tightening-up of approach by conductors and instrumentalists during the first half of the century, is beyond dispute. But some of the details disturb. It is strange, for example to read that Toscanini became more flexible in romantic works as time progressed, limiting the notorious progress towards an apparent rigidity to classical works (p.21). Philip relies for this, in relation to romantic works, solely on a comparison between the conductor's pre- and post-War recordings of Brahms' *Tragic Overture* and Haydn Variations; but the 1953 *Tragic Overture* was amongst that substantial number of performances from Toscanini's last season which evidenced a failure of powers. Comparison with the 1952 Philharmonia performance would have shown a different story (the timings give it away: 1937 12'40"; 1952 12'15"; 1953 13'50").

Similarly, selected Stokowski and Klemperer recordings are used to illustrate the tightening-up (or evening-out) process (p.24). Stokowski's Brahms 1st Symphony from 1928 and 1972 show him latterly "much more restrained in his tempo fluctuations". True, but this ignores Stokowski's complex interpretative development which runs somewhat contrary to the general thesis: reference to his recordings of the 1930s, and in particular to his 1936 and 1945 versions of the Brahms 1st would have set in context what were, in fact, relative restraint in his early and late recordings. The same work, in Klemperer's 1928 and 1957 recordings, is used to illustrate the same trend, but other contemporary Klemperer recordings show that early Brahms 1st to have been atypical in its relative romantic freedom. Had, for example, his early Beethoven 8th (1926) been used for illustrative purposes, the thesis would have fallen flat.

If these (omitted) illustrations buck the trend, so, too, do those significantly missing from the long list of Mozart G minor symphonies, stretching from 1926 to 1977 (p.20). If Malcolm Sargent in 1928 is to be examined, what about Toscanini in 1938 and 1950 and Furtwängler in 1948/49? The extreme flexibility of the first two and the relative lack of deviation from the straight and narrow of Furtwängler do not fit in with the particular point sought to be made about the others in regard to the acceptability of greater tempo fluctuations, both in decrease and increase, at the earlier recording dates. In truth, the omitted performances illustrate nothing more than the extraordinarily powerful personalities of the two conductors concerned, whose musical personalities developed with little reference to the trends of the times. Furtwängler is almost wholly missing from the book, perhaps on that very account. Toscanini changed over the years from an early proto-Germanic approach, of which the gramophone captured next to nothing, to his latterday unencrusted directness, and that change stemmed wholly from his personal thought and convictions, and not at all from the zeitgeist or public taste.

This is not nit-picking: it leads directly to the substantial reservations to be made about Philip's chapter on flexibility of tempo, at least so far as it concerns orchestral practice. There is a danger, not wholly avoided here, of placing too much reliance upon what are not more than musical snap-shots of how an artist felt on the day of recording, and of placing exclusive reliance upon what we have while ignoring what is significantly missing. As to the first, Weingartner's VPO recording of the *Eroica* (1936) is a particular illustration. Philip uses it (p.23) to suggest that Weingartner was more flexible than his writings and reputation might suggest, pointing out that the first movement is only "slightly flexible", while in the second the "changes of tempo go far beyond those heard in most pre-War and modern performances". In fact, there are some pretty noticeable tempo modifications in the first movement at measure 45 (dealt with by Philip, inappropriately in view of its character, in the chapter on rhythmic style (p.78)) and again at 83. These are virtually absent just a year before in a 1936 Salzburg broadcast, as are the fluctuations observed by Philip in the second movement. Why was this? Did Weingartner find extra stimulation in the recording studio, or were the distentions intended as a demonstration of his remarks about the handling of these passages in the first movement in his book on the performance of Beethoven? The second explanation is hardly consistent with the way he ignores his own recommendations, as rightly noted by Philip, in the second movement. Perhaps it reveals no more than Weingartner's mood on the day. Of how many recordings, with attendant dangers for putative generalizations, lessons to be drawn and so on, must that be the case?

As to what is missing, the true significance for flexibility of tempo in the orches-

tral field lies hidden in the book's sub-title: changing tastes in instrumental performance 1900-1950. While individual instrumental recordings could reflect with some (albeit varying) reliability the player's approach from the start of the century, serious orchestral recording began only with Nikisch in 1913; and aside from a few discs by Strauss and Toscanini, only in 1923 did another first ranker, Weingartner, begin a more systematic documentation permitting a proper evaluation of interpretative approach. Before that date, then, for the most part only hints and scraps by a few greats, and nothing at all from other supreme masters who could have – but did not – make orchestra recordings, such as Mahler, Richter and Steinbach.

It is these significant absences which enable Philip, as it would seem, to fit the pattern of available recordings too neatly into the framework of the written references with which he chooses to introduce the chapter as a whole. These, to a degree rightly, emphasize “a general acceptance in the early twentieth century of the needs for flexibility of tempo” (p.8) and the way in which that approach was exemplified by (among others) Mahler, detailed descriptions of whose approach to matters of tempo modification survive. In that context, Weingartner and Toscanini are seen as “the leading pioneers against the tradition of flexible tempo” (p.13). Actually, however, as Weingartner made clear in his own writings, in particular in his observations about Richter, that “tradition” never stood alone: there were always conductors who could not be categorized as belong to the “general acceptance”. Here the absence of any recordings by Richter, Steinbach (Brahms's favorite, greatly admired by Toscanini, Boult and Fritz Busch), and so few by Muck, obscure the huge variety of styles prevalent among conductors in the first years of the century.¹ Hints there are: the architectural integrity of Muck's finale of Tchaikovsky's 4th Symphony (1917) stands in startling contrast with Mengelberg (1928), but to have included that comparison would not have fitted the pattern which Philip aims to establish.

Let it be clear: Philip is persuasive in regard to solo instrumental practice, for the simple reason that reliable and representative evidence straddles the full length of his chosen period. If he is less persuasive about orchestral practice, it is because of gaps in that evidence of which, it is suggested, he might have shown greater awareness. Because of this, the general remarks in Philip's summarizing chapters which close the book about the implication which recorded evidence have for our knowledge of 19th century performance styles have, in this respect at least, a less persuasive force. Possibly the subject was too large in compass for a general survey such as this; it demands a book to itself.

Greater awareness of available evidence would also have assisted the chapter on instrumental rubato. Here the introduction, based on the differing prescriptions of contemporary pedagogues, is particularly detailed and illuminating, more so than its equivalent on flexibility of tempo. Philip rightly defines the three different kinds of rubato referred to in the writings: detailed tempo fluctuation, agogic accents, and separation of melody and accompaniment. The highly selective recordings used to pin down the elements analyzed on paper are therefore rather surprising. Where are the many Chopin experts captured on early recordings, such as Michalowski, Friedman, Hoffman, Lhevinne (to take some random names scatter over a generation), whose recordings could usefully have been prayed in aid? And why the reliance on late recordings by so many pianists widely acknowledged to be well past their best by the time of the examples chosen: d'Albert in 1916, Rosenthal in 1939, and the Paderewski and Pachmann of the late 1920s. Paderewski was always a highly variable recording artist and never more so than by 1930. As for Pachmann's recordings dating from the

period, they are notorious for their eccentricity and distortion of all musical sense, unworthy documents of an artist in his dotage. Small wonder that Philip, though admitting their age (p.69), finds that “the rubato of Paderewski and Pachmann now sounds rather clumsy and disorderly”. Yet exquisite earlier documents of Pachmann in particular (the 1907 and 1909 G&Ts/pre-Dogs, the Victors of 1911-12 and some of the Columbias of 1915-16) would have conveyed a very different impression. The limitations upon Philip’s choice of material tend in this important chapter to vitiate his conclusions about the extent to which recordings reflect the types of rubato described in the literature and the changes which they underwent in the course of the century toward’s today’s minimalist approach. Disappointing, too, is the absence of any attempt to analyze the recordings in terms of any of the schools of pianism – pupils of Liszt, Leschetitzky and so on – to discern whether their different pedigrees resulted in differing practices in this critical area.

Philip’s greatest strength lies in his chapters on vibrato (both strings and wind) and portamento (both solo string and orchestral), for a variety of reasons. For one, his range of literary reference is detailed and apposite in demonstrating precisely what practice was, on paper, expected to be. Secondly, his choice of recordings, particularly in relation to solo portamento, is catholic, constrained neither by omission nor oversights, and is therefore capable of fully supporting his conclusions. Finally, it is here that the painstaking character of the analysis is most apparent. Countless hours seemingly were spent in notating exactly the number and character of slides in those passages played by the most eminent artists from Joachim, Sarasate and Ysaye onwards, and careful qualifications are made throughout out in reference to the possible effects of the age of the artists concerned and the negative experience of the early recording process upon what can now be heard.

The analysis fully supports Philip’s conclusion (p.155) that in some cases recordings reflect the written evidence, in others they contradict it. There is no denying that in general terms, as vibrato has been used increasingly as an expressive device, so at the same time the use of portamento for the same purpose has decreased and been refined almost to the point of extinction. Spot-checking Philip’s analyses, however, did suggest an over-eagerness to identify as portamento some (only a few out of many) instances which appeared – to these ears – as no more than a change of position. A slide marked, for example, in the second measure of the example on p.161 (the Bach two-violin concerto), as played by Adolf Busch and Frances Magnes, is not audible as such; nor at measure 15-16 on p.170 (Adolf Busch, Beethoven Op.131, first movement). Further, the portamento rightly observed in the Polonaise of the Bush ensemble’s Brandenburg Concerto No.1 (p.189) must surely have been fully planned, given the entire absence of the device in the surrounding Minuet. But these reservations are indeed minor in the context of so much richly and accurately observed.

Philip closes the book with a chapter on the implications for the future of his preceding analyses. Summarizing, he says, (p.229) that the trend during the century has been “towards greater power, firmness, clarity, control, literalness, and evenness of expression, and away from informality, looseness, and unpredictability”. That is doubtless largely true but, as has been suggested here, it is possible to question, at least in some areas, Philip’s contention that the evidence of performing styles is so complete that, leaving aside some fundamental questions of modern style and taste, it permits reconstruction of early twentieth century performances (pp.229-30). To be fair, the author is extremely cautious about any such venture, suggesting that it would indeed by doomed to failure, given that all musicians involved would have to “unlearn” the

lessons of our generation about the function of vibrato, portamento and even of rhythm itself. Only time will tell whether Philip's insightful analyses and commentary will have any long-term effect on future performances of late-romantic and early twentieth century music. At least anyone venturing to carry forward into that period that pioneering work of Norrington, Gardiner and others beyond their self-imposed limits will now be fully warned of the numberless pitfalls to be encountered in any such attempt. *Reviewed by Christopher Dymnt*

Endnote

1. Space precludes discussion of reference in the literature but see in particular Fifield *True Artist and True Friend* (Hans Richter) pp. 463-464; Scholes *The Mirror of Music* Vol. 1 p.392 (Weingartner); Haslick *Music Criticisms 1846-99* ed. Pleasants pp.104-06 (on Wagner's performances of the *Eroica*

Symphony in 1872); and those cited in the *ARSC Journal* (1986;18[1-3]:154-155). It may be noted that Hanslick's praise for Mahler's *Eroica* cited by Philip (p.8) went to its clarity and power; he did not mention tempo manipulation: see de la Grange *Mahler*, pp.489-90.

Bert Williams: a biography of the pioneer black comedian.

By Eric Ledell Smith. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Co., 1993. 301 pp., notes, appendices, index, bibliography.

Though this book isn't without problems, it provides at least a fragmentary biography and some useful insights into the life, career and feelings of one of America's greatest theatric figures. With long-time partner George Walker, Williams managed to break through formidable color barriers and eventually elevate himself to the top of his profession.

Following their successful appearance at Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York City in 1896, the Williams and Walker team proceeded to star in a series of all-black musical comedies, beginning with "A lucky coon" and "The policy players" in 1899. Later shows, like "In Dahomey" (1903), "Abyssinnia" (1906) and "Bandanna Land" (1907), were each long running shows on Broadway and on the road, due in no small part to the talents of Walker's wife, Ada (later Aida) Overton Walker, the skilled actress, dancer and choreographer.

Following the onset of George Walker's terminal illness in 1908, Williams eventually abandoned the musical comedy format to star, nearly annually, in the Ziegfeld Follies extravaganzas of the 1910s. His own death came prematurely in 1922 at the age of 46.

Smith is not the first to contribute a book-length treatise on Bert Williams. Mabel Rowland's 1923 *Bert Williams: son of laughter* was a postmortem tribute which contained stories and anecdotes from friends and professional colleagues. Ann Charters' 1970 biography *Nobody: the story of Bert Williams* discussed his career against the backdrop of the racially restricted social climate of his time.

Smith necessarily covers much of the same ground, though his work contributes new insights by way of his extensive research into contemporary resources, like performance reviews, newspaper articles and interviews, and various scholarly works. At least a few sources contain direct quotes from Williams (and Walker too, on occasion) which provide important insight into his own feelings and intellect. Quotes from oth-

ers reveal a variety of assessments and attitudes, from the sensitive support of George M. Cohan to the antagonism of Grace Kelly's uncle Walter C. Kelly, whose best-selling Victor records of "The Virginia judge" turn out to reveal an uncomfortably close portrait of his own racial attitudes.

Unfortunately, there are enough errors and omissions in this book to make one wary of relying on it as the last word. Poet Paul Laurence Dunbar's birthdate is given as 1892 instead of 1872, which suggests that he must have been quite the prodigy when he contributed the libretto to *Clorindy, or the origin of the cakewalk* in 1898. Then there's composer Joe Jordan's intriguing life span, from 1882 to 1871, and the misspelling of names like John Steel, Wilbur Sweatman, Anton Heindl and Tim Brymn. On page 216, Smith states that *Under the bamboo tree*, which starred Williams, began an engagement in Cincinnati on December 4, 1922; Williams had died in March.

Steel, Sweatman, Heindl and Brymn were figures of consequence in early recording-making, an area where Smith's knowledge is clearly deficient. On page 168, he states that "Williams (sic) Sweatman...and his band [in 1903] had become the first to make a recording." So much for Sousa, Gilmore and Charlie Prince! On page 48, we learn that "Williams was the first black recording artist," a statement which likewise dismisses George W. Johnson, Cousins & De Moss, and the Standard Quartette.

A Folkways/RBF 33, which followed the release of Ann Charters' book two decades ago, is the only modern reissue of Bert Williams' records. Astonishingly, Smith seems only to be familiar with the cuts chosen for inclusion on the LP. Had he chosen to consult and audition more of the impressive number of songs recorded between 1901 and 1922, he could have learned a great deal about just what it was that made Bert Williams such a towering presence. The records abundantly reveal his performing and composing techniques and normally provide clues, via composer credits, to the origins of the many songs to which Smith inexcusably pleads ignorance. In one place, he cites Williams' 1917 recording of the superb musical monologue, "Twenty Years," unaware that the "Judge Grimes" piece mentioned subsequently is the same.

Nowhere does the author explain why there is no discography, which should be a fundamental component of a work about a performer whose work survives primarily on records. Films too are cited, but no listing is provided. Smith states that at least some have not survived, but what of those which have? And why did Smith apparently make no attempt to see them?

Despite my unhappiness with elements which should have been researched – and proofed! – more thoroughly, I like this book for the positive things it does provide. The extensive quotes from newspaper columnists and reviewers go quite a ways to show how Bert Williams was perceived in his own time, and how the down-at-the-heels and down-at-the-mouth tramp image he perfected became a universalized figure who transcended racial appeal. Smith doesn't say so, but I'm sure it could be argued that Williams at least partially paved the way for the successful films of Charlie Chaplin, in which the actor portrayed a comparable character.

Smith does note that a 1908 parody of the medieval morality play *Everyman* (which didn't include Williams) did include a chorus figure called Nobody, suggesting that it may have been based on the Williams signature song of the same name from 1906. Certainly, bracketing *Everyman* with *Nobody* implies the serious nature of the best comedy and helps place Williams in proper perspective, especially since his black-faced, shuffling persona would otherwise be hard to accept and understand today.

Reviewed by Dick Spottswood

Trumpet Records: an illustrated history with discography.

By Marc Ryan. Milford, NH: Big Nickel Publications, 1992. 114 pp., bibliography, discography, photos, index.

This entertaining and instructive story covers the birth and demise of a Jackson, Mississippi record label from 1951 through 1956. It also pays homage to the remarkable Lillian Shedd McMurry, a Jackson native who fell in love with the blues and gospel she encountered, both locally and on records by Tampa Red, Arthur Crudup, Washboard Sam and others, which she sold through a North Farish Street retail outlet beginning in 1949. By spring in the following year, she had launched her own Trumpet label as a means of exploiting local talent.

I use "exploiting" in the positive sense of the word, since the author describes in detail the ways in which Ms. McMurry went out of her way to be supportive of Trumpet artists, advancing royalties to them, in getting them out of occasional personal and legal scrapes, and in personal exchanges which revealed the depth of her commitment to the music she was recording and to the people who made it.

However, McMurry could be resolute when the occasion called for it. Ryan describes a couple of telling incidents; one involved a surreptitious visit to the area by Joe and Jules Bihari, whose west coast Modern and RPM labels were an important factor in the burgeoning r&b market of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Trumpet's early successes by Sonny Boy Williamson and Elmore James apparently aroused the Biharis' competitive instincts and brought them to Mississippi to sign up and record local talent, regardless of any pre-existing contractual obligations the artists might have had.

After recording Elmore James in a Greenville club (with their Magnecorder hooked up to the p.a. system!), they returned to record some "tests" by Trumpet artists Sonny Boy Williamson and Willie Love. Lonnie Holmes' band was preparing to record when McMurry, an attorney and a local high sheriff strolled in to serve a restraining order. Love and Williamson were artists whose previous sales justified forgiveness after a discussion concerning loyalties, but Holmes was denied any further opportunity to make records. A successful lawsuit brought only a small damage award from the Biharis, who managed to release their Elmore James material afterwards.

Another incident in 1951 involved a three-evening session scheduled to be held at a Jackson musicians' union hall, rented to Trumpet by officials apparently unaware of the label's racially mixed talent roster. During the first evening, these white officials proceeded to insult and menace the black musicians. As the situation deteriorated, McMurry called for everyone to pull out, while arranging for the recording to continue in another vacant hall. Salvaging her own dignity and that of her musical colleagues in such a situation can't have been easy in that era of Mississippi's rigidly enforced racial segregation patterns which preceded the 1960s; it surely called for an iron will and deep integrity, qualities which Lillian McMurry apparently has in some abundance.

A further stranger anecdote, which I guess couldn't be told in greater detail, concerns Eldridge R. Johnson III, great grandson of *the* Eldridge R. Johnson, and a 1971 purchase of Trumpet session tapes for intended release. Instead the tapes were stolen and ransomed back to him on several occasions and were ultimately dug out of a basement and sold to author Ryan, who plans to issue them himself.