

attention by the reissue companies in the last decades. This release should do much to re-establish her as the singer of stature that she was.

As an interesting appendix, Romophone has included the spoken commentary on her recordings which Eames gave in a radio interview in 1939. Indexing information is supplied so that one can return to the recording being discussed. This appendix is most suitable for multi-disc players.

Emmy Destinn: Czech soprano Emmy Destinn (1878-1930) was one of the most widely acclaimed artists of her time. The public, critics, composers and her colleagues were equal in the adulation. Puccini created *Fanciulla del West's* heroine, Minnie, for Destinn after hearing her as Butterfly. Often paired with Caruso, she was regarded as the finest dramatic voice and actress of her era. Early training as a violinist enabled Destinn to learn roles quickly. She had a phenomenal memory and covered an enormous repertoire. Her recordings number some 213, of which these Victors were the last made. Critical opinion of her recordings has always been less than enthusiastic. The sheer size of her instrument did not take well to the primitive recording techniques of the time. Indeed, present day technology still cannot do full justice to really big voices. The faultless technique, secure intonation and thrilling delivery reported unanimously by her contemporaries are denied us. These recordings demonstrate a large warm voice, especially generous at the top, which occasionally strays from pitch. Her phrasing is four square and lacks subtlety. Few phrases stick in the memory. If we use these recordings to judge her, then the reputation she earned seems somewhat unjustified, although the beauty of her voice cannot be denied.

This edition contains 37 tracks including opera arias, art songs and a number of Czech songs (including some of Destinn's own). Four of the Czech songs are duets with Destinn's lover at the time, Dinh Gilly.

Ultraphone, a Supraphon subsidiary, has issued a single, mid-priced CD of 20 tracks (Ultraphone 11 1337-2 601). This disc contains some duplication of materials with interesting differences for comparison. The *Aida* "O patria mia" (both Victor 88469) on Ultraphone appears to have been from a less worn copy than Romophone's version. The sound on the Ultraphone is cleaner and far more listenable. However, the *Mignon* "Kennst du das Land" (both Victor 88467) demonstrates the value of Mr. Marston's thorough research into pitch and speed variables. The Ultraphone version, pitched a good step lower than Romophone's recording results in a leaden affair doing little to enhance Destinn's reputation. "Kennst du das Land" is hardly a happy aria, but at dirge tempo its effect is lugubrious. Ultraphone has announced a 16 CD set of Destinn's complete recordings for 1994. This will include a complete *Faust*, *Carmen* and *Lohengrin* Act 3.

Destinn was an important artistic force in her time but she has not translated well to our age. This collection is a welcome addition in that so few of her recordings have been released.

Claudia Muzio: Countless reissues on LP and CD of Italian soprano Claudia Muzio (1889-1936) have kept her name familiar and the wonder of her singing always available. The better known selection of electrical recordings made for Italian Columbia in the early 1930s demonstrate a more mature artistry but also document the soprano's failing health and vocal powers. The Edison Diamond Discs have long been treasured as the best representation of this voice at its peak despite some reservations about Edison's reorchestration ideas for the accompaniments. (The "complete HMV" consists

of only two tracks, a "Si, mi chiamano Mimi" and "Amami Alfredo").

Columbia issued two LPs of this material in the 1970s. Listening to them was a revelation of just how much improvement Mr. Marston's restorations have made. The voice, once so distant, is now forward and bright. The flashes of humor and depths of pathos that characterize Muzio's work have never been more apparent. The two-CD issue of *The Published Edisons* on Cantabile (BIM-705-2) also suffers in comparison with this release. The distortions and fading in and out of sound that plague that issue have been eliminated on Romophone's release. This is a truly outstanding job of technology aiding art.

The emotional intensity of Muzio's singing is its hallmark. Listen to the *La Wally* aria or "Pace, pace, mio Dio." No wonder she was called the "Duse of song". Her voice was a *verismo* instrument by training but capable of *bel canto* style. The purity of her "Lascia ch'io piango" has long been praised. The exaltation she brings to the climaxes of *verismo* arias is pure exhilaration for the listener. This issue is highly recommended for its technical excellence and content. *Reviewed by Howard Kennett.*

Endnote

Romophone's issues are not readily available in the US. The company's address is: Romophone, PO Box 450, London SW17 0XR, England. The fax number is 44 (81) 682-0965.

Treasures from the Yale Collection of Historical Sound Recordings Two CD set (no catalog number given on discs or package)

The Yale Collection of Historical Sound Recordings at Yale University Library is one of the outstanding collections of early vocal recordings in the world. The generous patronage of Mr. and Mrs. Laurence C. Witten II founded the collection and continuous support from them, along with individual and corporate donors, has built the collection to what it is. A selective acquisitions policy focusing on certain areas of sound recording history has governed the nature of the collection. It is not limited to vocal music but includes jazz, instrumental music, drama, theatre, and public speaking.

The forty-nine classical vocal recordings in this release were chosen for their rarity and interest. The collection is divided into seven segments representing the national schools which prevailed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The seven segments are: American and English singers, French singers, German and Austrian singers, Scandanavian singers, East European singers, Russian singers, and Italian singers.

The Yale collection's criterion for inclusion in the collection include creators of the roles recorded, singers strongly identified with a particular role, and singers of music new at the time of its recording. Rejected for inclusion were singers and repertory that have been released elsewhere. To say that this collection is un-hackneyed is understatement. Most, but not all, of the artists rate a mention in Michael Scott's *The Record of Singing*. The famous rub shoulders with the virtually unknown. Recording quality varies from mostly excellent to rather gritty and dim. This is definitely not a collection for the uninitiated. Disc to tape transfer was accomplished at Yale and the tapes sent to Richard C. Burns at Packburn Electronics, Inc. for filtering. For those who desire the sound free of processing, "application to purchase the tapes" information is provided in the liner notes. Full discographic information about the originals