

Kutsch, F. J., and Leo Riemens; *Unvergängliche Stimme, Ein Sängers-Lexicon*. 3d edition. Bern und München, Francke Verlag, 1975.

This is the third and greatly enlarged edition of the *Kleinen Sängers-Lexicon* originally published in 1962, then in 1966, and was translated and issued in English as well.

The authors enlarged the work with approximately 1150 new biographies, chosen at random but subject to the qualification that the artists appeared on sound recordings. Thus, the book has become an encyclopaedia of vast proportions but loose cohesion.

I must admit that the contemplation of reviewing such magnum opus first depressed me. As a rule I distrust *Gesamtwerte*. At a second glance I became afraid of the task. I felt that too much time, research, and checking of data would be required to produce a reasonable factual review. Frankly, I did not feel equal to the task.

On further and deeper immersion into the immense array of biographical details some general impressions were generated and after a time began falling into some sort of pattern.

There are, of course, bound to be mistakes, misprints, and other inaccuracies in such a large book. To discover and enumerate any or all of these does not seem to be the task of a reviewer. Such a gradual evolution of a more perfect publication is the job of everybody who reads or uses the volume as reference when and if something incorrect is discovered. This is a healthy development and a lovely hunt, which should produce good results.

In general, I believe that the Kutsch and Riemens Lexicon is a unique and epoch making reference instrument. It is also an honest and not far from successful attempt in presenting and updating biographical data on singers old and new. As such, it should be present on the shelves of every library, archive, or vocal collector.

It is easier to criticize than to create, to be destructive than constructive, to find fault rather than suggest remedies. In attempting to suggest some corrections in future editions, here are a few of my impressions:

1) While I believe that the many additions of really important singers left out from the first editions strengthened the work, I feel that several biographies were added to swell the volume, selected at random, many of which detracted from the standard of the opus as the artists were anything but *Unvergängliche Stimmen*.

On the other hand, just a quick perusal of the names revealed that important singers were still missing from the rota. Excluded were Rosa Caligaris, Alice Cucini, Garulli and Bendazzi-garulli, Signoretta, Bobkova, Josie Petru, Lucy Vauthrin, Mihály Székely, Max Meili, Paul Derenne, Charlotte Tirard, Fanély Revoil, Paolo Wulman, Eliette Schenneberg, André Balbon, Giulietta Wermez, Isabel Jay, and Enzo Leliva, just to mention a few. Also omitted were most of the Latin American singers and several of the famous Russian coterie such as Yushin, Damaiev, Kastorsky, Seversky, and so on.

I did not check closely, but singers on Melodya, Supraphon, Muza, Hungaroton, and even on Canadian Rococo labels and many French labels were also absent.

Would it not be better therefore to restrict the amount of singers to selected artist of real importance and jettison the rest? It would make the work more compact, the standard higher, and the book certainly less voluminous.

2) Why did the authors bring racial overtones into a purely scientific book? Why should some singers be marked as *farbig*, *Neger*, or deriving from *black ancestry*? Information about the colour of the skin of some American singers is of artistic importance.

3) I strongly feel that something should be done to unscramble the mess caused by the attempt to point out the record companies the singers worked for. A list of European and American companies and their equivalent in each country should be tabulated in the preface and referred to in the text by letters or figures. This important facet of the work can only be fully realized if the information given is in every respect correct.

At the moment the division of a major recording company into "Victor" and "RCA" (and even this is badly documented in the case of Donald Bell, for example), the mixing up of European and American Columbia, Parlophone and Odeon, and English and American Decca are incorrect and often misleading.

In addition, often the names of companies for whom an artist recorded are incomplete and haphazardly researched. The authors should in this respect coordinate the information received from their contributors.

Most of the objections can easily be remedied before another edition is published. May I suggest that before translating it into English the *Lexicon* should also be revised by more closely scrutinising the choice of singers considered important enough to qualify as unforgettable voices?

A. G. Ross