

A TRIBUTE TO JENNIE TOUREL: *Cenerentola* - *Nacqui all'affano ... Non più mesta*; *Barbiere di Siviglia* - *Una voce poco fa*; *L'Italiana in Algeri* - *Cruda sorte!*; *Semiramide* - *Bel raggio lusinghier* (Rossini); *Carmen* - *Habañera*; *Séguidille*; *Gypsy song*; *Card scene* (Bizet); *Norma* - *Sgombra è la sacra selva* (Bellini); *Canção de carreiro* (Villa-Lobos); *Triste* (Ginastera); *Paño murciano* (Nin); *Coplas de curro dulce* (Obradors); *Zyczenie Op.74 no.1*; *Niema czego trzeba, Op.74 no.13* (Chopin); *Songs and dances of death* (Musorgski); *Chansons madécasses*; *Vocalise - Étude* (Ravel); *Trois chansons de Bilitis* (Debussy) *L'adieu de l'hôtesse arabe Op.21 no.4* (Bizet); *Le chapelier*; *Je te veux* (Satie). Jennie Tourel, mezzo-soprano; Pietro Cimara, Jean Morel, Fausto Cleva, Heitor Villa-Lobos, conductors; George Reeves, Leonard Bernstein, piano; John Wummer, flute; Laszlo Vargo, cello. Odyssey Y2 32880, 2 discs.

IN MEMORIAM: RICHARD TUCKER: *Requiem* - *Ingemisco tamquam reus*; *Rigoletto* - *Parmi veder le lagrime*; *Aida* - *Celeste Aida*; *Luisa Miller* - *Quando le sere al placido* (Verdi); *Manon Lescaut* - *Donna non vidi mai*; ... *Guardate, pazzo io son*; *Tosca* - *E lucevan le stelle*; *Turandot* - *Non piangere, Lidù*; ... *Nessun dorma*; *Bohème* - *Che gelida manina*; *Fanciulla del West* - *Ch'ella mi creda libero* (Puccini); *Andrea Chenier* - *Un dì all'azzurro spazio* (Giordano); *Giocanda* - *Cielo e mar* (Ponchielli); *Pagliacci* - *Vesti la giubba* (Leoncavallo); *Pêcheurs de perles* - *Je crois entendre encore*; *Carmen* - *Air de la fleur* (Bizet); *Africaine* - *O paradis* (Meyerbeer); *Le Cid* - *O Souverain, O Juge, O Père* (Massenet) *Joseph - Champs paternels* (Méhul); *La Juive* - *Rachel, quand du Seigneur* (Halévy); *Caro mio ben* (Giordani); *Tu lo sai* (Torelli); *O del mio dolce ardor* (Gluck); *La danza* (Rossini); *Dicentello vuie!* (Falvo); *Tiritomba* (Anon); *Vienna, city of my dreams* (Sieczynski) *Yours is my heart alone* (Léhar); *In our secluded rendez-vous* (Heuberger); *You'll never walk alone* (Rogers); *The Exodus song* (Boone); *Sunrise, sunset* (Harnick); *Rozshinkes mit mandeln* (Goldfaden); *Yehi rotzon*; *Yir'u eineinu*; *Kiddush*; *Kol nidre* (Traditional). Richard Tucker, tenor; Fausto Cleva, Max Rudolf, Nello Santi, Emil Cooper, Pierre Dervaux, John Wustman, Alfredo Antonini, Franz Allers, Skitch Henderson, Sholom Secunda, conductors. Columbia D3M 33448, 3 discs.

The time of memorials has come for Jennie Tourel, who died on 23 November 1973, and for Richard Tucker, who followed her on 8 January 1975. Both recorded generously for Columbia, and for each a selection has now been made, well designed to show the breadth and variety of their respective repertoires. Naturally this is an occasion for superlatives, and there are plenty in the tributes accompanying the records.

Tucker will stand chiefly on his long career at the Metropolitan. From the time of his debut there until his death on concert tour with his friend Robert Merrill, he was identified with New York's opera. Although he guested elsewhere, this was his home. To his own people, however, he was first of all a cantor, and that he never ceased to be. As a recitalist he remained an opera singer. He did not venture often into the field of lieder, nor did he specialize in the art songs of any school. But he obviously enjoyed singing the songs of modern Israel, the Yiddish operetta music of Goldfaden and some of the popular Broadway tunes of his time.

Tourel was a far more versatile artist, one of the most versatile, indeed, within living memory. There was always something mysterious about her background. According to the books (and to the dutiful liner notes of Robert Jacobson) she was born in Montreal, 22 June 1910. Her father, a Russian-Jewish banker named Davidson, happened to be in Canada on business at that time. Obviously, though she often passed as a Canadian, her case was like that of Emma Eames, who though born in Shanghai would never have claimed to be Chinese. But now comes Robert Offergeld (see *Stereo Review*, November 1975) with evidence that the birthdate was actually 1900 and the place Russia. Since the family was well-to-do and did their share of traveling, this makes it easier to understand her facility in languages - says Jacobson, she claimed "fluency in seven, ability in ten" - and perhaps her intuitive sense of many musical styles. Her study of voice and piano began in Russia, but the family was forced to leave the country by the Revolution in 1918. At this point Paris became her home, and she studied there with Anna El-Tour,

whose name she rearranged for her own professional purposes. Though as Jacobson tells us she made her debut with the Opera Russe in Paris in 1931 (according to Offergeld as the Polvetzian Maiden in *Prince Igor*) it is a matter of record that she appeared at the season's opening in Chicago, 27 October 1930, singing a role in the American premier of Ernest Moret's *Lorenzaccio*. With that company she also sang Lola in *Cavalleria rusticana* and Frederick in *Mignon*, as well as small parts in Alfano's *Resurrection* and the world premiere of Hamilton Forrest's *Camille* (both with Mary Garden).

Her debut with the Opera-Comique was as Carmen in 1933. Oscar Thompson heard her there in 1933 and sent a glowing dispatch to the New York Sun, pronouncing her the best Carmen in his experience, excepting only Calve and Bressler-Gianoli. She made her Metropolitan debut in the spring season of 1937 as Mignon, but did not again sing in the house until 1944, when she returned in the same role. Meanwhile she had sung the soprano part of Lisa in *Pique Dame* with the New Opera Company, and revealed her Carmen with the recently founded New York City Opera. At the Metropolitan her Adalgisa in *Norma* (with Milanov) was particularly admired, and she was the first mezzo to sing Rosina in *Il barbiere*. Along with Carmen this was her entire Metropolitan repertoire. After 1947 she devoted her time mostly to recitals, but crowned her opera career 28 February 1971 with her much-talked-of characterization of the old Countess in the televised *Pique Dame*.

Successful as she was in opera, Jennie Tourel preferred singing in recital, and it was as a singer of songs that she will be most gratefully remembered. Certainly it was in this field that her amazing versatility was most evident. She could sing whole evenings of Russian songs, from Dargokizhski and Glinka through Musorgski, Tchaikovski and Rachmaninoff to Stravinsky and Prokofiev, the Polish songs of Chopin, German lieder, Italian classics and American songs, though one suspects her greatest love was the French *mélodie*.

With a wealth of material to draw on the compilers of the Tourel *Tribute* have not endeavored to cover her whole career or every facet of her art, but have rather confined themselves to the years 1945 to 1951 and represented several outstanding fields in some depth. First Rossini. She herself has told us she was early influenced by Conchita Supervia, who was at the height of her fame in Tourel's student days. Thus we may account for her mastery of the Rossinian coloratura. She was, however, no slavish imitator, and one hears no echoes of the Supervia quality in the Tourel voice. On the evidence of this recording her Rosina was a thoughtful schemer, all tenderness when she first mentions the name *Lindoro* and full of self-confidence as she declares: *lo vincerò*. A mezzo cannot dazzle here in the long familiar soprano manner, but she can draw a character - if her name is Jennie Tourel. Her neat, light performance of the *Cenerentola* finale served for the lesson scene in her Metropolitan *Barber*. Too bad we never had the chance to hear her in the opera or in *L'Italiana in Algeri*. To my ears, at least, the more serious dramatic *Bel raggio* is a shade less convincing. The scene from *Norma* seems not to have been released before, perhaps because as a recitative it was considered too fragmentary, or perhaps it may have been intended to precede a recording of the duet that follows in the opera. In any case, here is a proper example of Bellini style.

The four *Carmen* numbers, needless to say, are naturals, and her performances have had wide currency. The songs of Villa-Lobos, Nin and Obradors are a satisfactory representation of another side of her art, the Chopin (sung in the original) of still another. The Musorgski *Songs and dances of death* were a specialty (particularly admired by Virgil Thomson). This recording also brings in Leonard Bernstein, with whom she so often worked throughout her American career. The Ravel and Debussy cycles are good samplings (though one might regret the Ravel *Shéhérazade* and the Debussy Baudelaire songs; they would not have fitted so neatly into the available space). Finally, the Bizet and Satie songs were favorites on Tourel programs.

What then is missing? She did record some Bach, but this was hardly a specialty of hers. Her performance of Hindemith's revised version of *Das Marienleben* was a landmark, but it would be rather rarified for this program besides running to length. I do miss her Offenbach, some of her Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovski songs and such contemporary American works as Thomson's *Stabat Mater* and the Foss *Song of songs*. Mozart, Mahler and Schumann are regrettably absent. And, to round out the picture, she once did record Fox's *The hills of home* and Ronald's *Down in the forest*. Truly, the scope of her sympathies seemed endless!

Looking back over Tucker's long career - one of the longest in Metropolitan Opera history - one is struck by the evidence of his deliberate and steady growth and his sense of his own capacities. Though it may be a bit of an exaggeration to say he was completely green when he made his debut, the preliminaries were modest enough. He had been singing since his days as a choir boy, and as his voice developed he quite naturally became a cantor. But he also knew some opera arias, and if it is true that even after his marriage to Jan Peerce's sister (Peerce joined the Metropolitan in 1941) he had never heard an opera in the house, he had had some experience in small companies. He entered the Metropolitan Auditions of the Air in 1942, but did not make the finals. After study with Paul Althouse he asked for an audition in the house, and of course his debut in *La Gioconda* followed on 25 January 1945. The New York public took to him at once, though there was some doubt among the critics as to whether the voice was really big enough for the role of Enzo. For all that it remained one of the most active in his repertoire. Two repetitions of *Gioconda* constituted his assignment for the rest of his first season. The following year he added Alfredo in *Traviata* and the Duke in *Rigoletto*, both destined to remain among his most popular roles.

Throughout the three decades that were to follow the operas of Verdi and Puccini dominated

his repertoire. When asked to name his favorite part it was Des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut*. Three French roles were highly successful - Faust, Don José and Hoffmann - and in 1971 he added Samson, of which he sang only four performances. The fact that his first Canio in *Pagliacci* came as late as 8 December 1970 is an indication of his affinity for more lyric parts. Twice he ventured into Mozart, singing Tamino in German and Ferrando in the English *Così fan tutte* (which Columbia recorded). Other roles in English were in *Fledermaus*, *Martha* and *Eugene Onegin*. In line with the more dramatic development in his later years was his hope for a revival of *La Juive* at the Met. He sang Caruso's great part of Eleazar in concert in New York and on the stage in New Orleans (18 October 1973) but the opera has not been heard at the Metropolitan since Martinelli headed the cast.

The memorial program has been put together as a sampler, showing the various sides of Tucker's repertoire. It is not concerned with chronology, and indeed it does not, as the Tourel set does, reveal the dates of the recordings. On the contrary, mono and stereo performances are offered side by side (with the mono not objectionably touched up to match the stereo). Not the least noteworthy thing about Tucker was the long preservation of his voice and the little the quality changed over the years. One senses a deepening of the art as he comes to be more at home on the stage, but the tone remains uniquely constant. And so the first side is given over to Verdi, with the *Ingemisco* leading off perhaps to remind us that the *Requiem* was an important part of his repertoire. The second side covers the high spots of his Puccini roles; the third presents the lesser Italian composers and takes us into the French operas. On side 4, *L'Africaine*, *Le Cid*, *Joseph* and *La Juive* may be said to represent his concert singing and his unrealized hopes in opera. That he was hardly a classic stylist is demonstrated by his old Italian arias (though he did no such violence to them as Gigli sometimes did); and he was provided with a particularly lush background in these. But he could sing Rossini's *La danza* with the best. Finally, being an "Italian" tenor, he gives us a

touch of Naples, then moves over to Vienna without learning the language or attempting the style of Richard Tauber. *Carousel*, *Exodus* and *Fiddler on the roof* assure us that Tucker was American after all, and a popular piece by Goldfaden joins with the traditional sacred music in tribute to his background.

As to the performances, there is little one can add to what has been said so many times. Particularly impressive in the Verdi numbers is the weight and authority of his recitatives, his easy phrasing in the arias. His voice flows richly through the Puccini scenes; there is never any question why his singing appealed to a wide audience. His French (like Caruso's) was something less than Parisian, but it was by no means in a class with the average Italian tenor's. And the fervor of his singing was always a great asset. All in all, these three discs give an admirably rounded musical portrait of the artist.

Philip Lieson Miller