



**Beniamino  
GIGLI**

**Milan, Camden and New York  
Recordings 1919-22**

**BIZET**

**GIORDANO**

**MASCAGNI**

**LALO**

**LEONCAVALLO**

**PUCCINI**

## Beniamino Gigli (c.1890-1975)

### The Gigli Edition Vol. 2

#### The Milan Recordings 1919 • Camden and New York Recordings 1921-22

Gigli's final titles recorded in Milan in 1919 include a rare disc of the duet from *L'amico Fritz*. In spite of an acid-voiced partner, it is one of his most desirable recordings. He brings to the intimate character of this delicate music an innate feeling of budding, shy romance. The extracts from *Fedora* chronicle his first performances as the hero Loris, which took place in February 1919: the liquid quality of his singing is again treasurable, as in his first and best version of the famous duet from *The Pearl Fishers*.

After two years break in his recording career, Gigli moved to Victor at the start of 1921. Indeed he went to the Victor studios just six weeks after his Metropolitan debut, which took place on 26th November 1920, when he sang Faust in a revival and new production of Boito's *Mefistofele*. That rôle had two years earlier provided the occasion of his debut at La Scala with Nazzareno De Angelis as Mefistofele and Toscanini on the podium. An aria from that score, *Dai campi, dai prati*, was the first disc he made in the United States. The fine quality of his voice, the suavity of phrasing, are not quite as we have come to expect on his later records, but the ascent to the ringing B flat near the close is ear-opening. The range of colour and the distinctive timbre, even in this occasionally bumpy account of Boito's aria, are harbingers of future treasures.

The following month Gigli recorded Faust's aria from the *Epilogue of Mefistofele*, and it is one of his most beautiful records. It is not a showy aria, but the tenor communicates the text with surprising poignancy, particularly the repeated phrase '*si bea l'anima già*'. A fine quality of sound shines in the three-note descending '*Ah*' that leads into the reprise of the opening.

Cavaradossi was Gigli's third rôle at the Metropolitan, first assumed on 10th December 1920 when he was partnered by Destinn. He had sung the part of Cavaradossi as early as January 1915 at the Carlo Felice in Genoa, and one would assume that the rôle might have held a central place in his repertory at the Metropolitan. That it did not was because Gigli and Maria Jeritzta, then the reigning Tosca there, did not get on well together on stage. At the Tosca on 10th February 1925 Jeritzta announced during a curtain call that 'Gigli, he not nice to me'. Apparently she had tried to galvanise the tenor into a more responsive dramatic interpretation, efforts he forcibly resisted. They never appeared together again. Gigli's recordings of the two *Tosca* arias made in 1921 show his great affinity for Puccinian melody. However stolid the tenor may frequently have been on-stage, there was plenty of sentiment in his vocal performance. It used to be commonplace to censure him as over-emotional in his singing, but his is rather a spontaneous response to the sentiments evoked by these arias. The downward portamentos given to the ends of certain phrases recall an older vocal tradition.

Another gem among these earliest records for Victor is *Spirto gentil*, Fernando's aria from the last act of *La favorita*. The classic poise of the opening section builds to a controlled climax at the repeated '*Ohimè*'. This is a treacherous number as it keeps the tenor going up and down through the *passaggio*. The basic soundness of Gigli's technique overcomes the problem effortlessly, as illustrated by the way he sings the '*Fuggite insiem*' near the end, going to the high C and continuing the phrase without a break. The syllabic cadenza with his Rubinian double-attack at the final cadence is not the least of the delights of this performance.

The repertory of Gigli's recordings took two directions during his first seasons in America. His début at the Met preceded by less than a month Caruso's final performance. After the elder tenor's death during that summer of 1921, it was natural to want to establish the newcomer Gigli as next in line: the 'Italian tenor' of the moment; hence his recording of *Vesti la giubba* some years before he tackled Canio in the theatre. Gigli does surprisingly well in a flavoursome and deeply felt performance. The bitter colour he lends to the phrase '*Tu sei Pagliaccio*' is striking indeed, and the climax of '*Ridi, Pagliaccio*' is convincing, if not without some hints of stress. Gounod's *Faust* was another rôle that was not among those Gigli sang at the Metropolitan. Stylistically Gigli's *Salve, dimora* is risible, the tempos wayward, and yet it is somehow *gigliissimo*, and likeable in spite of itself.

The other Caruso-like direction of Gigli's recorded

repertory is found among the sizeable number of Italian and Neapolitan songs represented, even though the two tenor's selections rarely overlap. These ditties were a feature of the concert programmes of the day. Like his predecessor, Gigli treats this material without condescension, approaching it with care and communicable pleasure. The little serenade from Drigo's *I milioni d'Arlecchino* has just the right insouciance, and the legato lavished on Toselli's *Serenade* is cherishable.

Returning to the first category of these early recordings, they tended to reflect the rôles Gigli was either currently undertaking or soon to sing at the Met. Here we find the *Aubade* from *Le roi d'Ys*, in this rendition not overwhelmingly Gallic, but neatly inflected just the same.

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## Producer's Note

The present volume is the second in a series devoted to Beniamino Gigli's "singles" - his song and aria recordings not issued as part of complete opera sets. The aim of the series is to include every Gigli recording released at the time, as well as every published alternate take and, wherever available, unpublished takes. The sides here are presented in the order in which they were recorded.

Gigli's HMV acoustics were not as well recorded as those he made for Victor; indeed, his first few Camden sessions were devoted to remaking HMV sides which had then only recently been brought out on the Victor label. In addition, disparities in original sound quality are evident between the Victor sessions held in their Camden studios and those done in New York, with the latter sounding somewhat tinny in tone. Although a number of collections were drawn upon in order to assemble the finest available copies for this reissue, some wear remains audible on the more scarce releases.

Considerable care has been taken to pitch the records properly, taking into account Gigli's known transposition habits as well as conclusions inferred from the speeds of other contemporaneous recordings. For example, the *Faust* aria is sung a semitone below score pitch in the acoustic version presented here (just as it was in the 1918 version on Volume 1), although Gigli's 1931 electric is done in the original key. The acoustic Toselli *Serenata* is sung in E here, while his 1926 electrical remake is done a semitone lower. *Spirto gentil* is similarly transposed downward.

The 1919 recordings on the current volume were originally issued in 1998 as part of Romophone 82011-2 ("Beniamino Gigli - The Complete HMV Recordings, 1918-32"), while the 1921-23 Victors first came out in 1996 as part of Romophone 82003-2 ("The Complete Victor Recordings, Vol. 1, 1921-25"). In remastering my original transfers, I have tried to remove some of the clicks and pops that remained (both manually via digital editing and through the use of the CEDAR declipping module) and have made adjustments to the equalization of each track. In addition, Tracks 3 and 5 have been entirely re-transferred.

**Mark Obert-Thorn**

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

- MASCAGNI:**
- ① **L'amico Fritz: Suzel, buon dì (Act 2)** 4:17  
with Nerina Baldisseri, soprano  
Recorded week ending 5th December 1919  
in Milan  
Matrix: 1051 aj; First issued as HMV 2-054107
- MASCAGNI:**
- ② **L'amico Fritz: Tutto tace (Act 2)** 4:18  
with Nerina Baldisseri, soprano  
Recorded week ending 5th December 1919  
in Milan  
Matrix: 1052 aj; First issued as HMV 2-054108
- BIZET:**
- ③ **I pescatori di perle: Del tempio al limitar (Act 1)** 4:13  
[Les pêcheurs de perles: Au fond du temple saint  
sung in Italian]  
with Adolfo Pacini, baritone  
Recorded week ending 5th December 1919  
in Milan  
Matrix: 1055 aj; First issued as HMV 2-054109
- GIORDANO:**
- ④ **Fedora: Amor ti vieta (Act 2)** 2:00  
Recorded 11th December 1919 in Milan  
Matrix: 4233 ah; First issued as HMV 7-52150
- GIORDANO:**
- ⑤ **Fedora: Vedi, io piango (Act 2)** 2:20  
Recorded 11th December 1919 in Milan  
Matrix: 4234 ah; First issued as HMV 7-52151
- BOITO:**
- ⑥ **Mefistofele: Dai campi, dai prati (Act 1)** 2:34  
Recorded 5th January 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-24782-2; First issued as Victor 64933
- PUCCHINI:**
- ⑦ **Tosca: Recondita armonia (Act 1)** 2:56  
Recorded 31st January 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-24919-3; First issued as Victor 64944
- PUCCHINI:**
- ⑧ **Tosca: E lucevan le stelle (Act 3)** 2:59  
Recorded 1st February 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-24920-5; First issued as Victor 64943
- BOITO:**
- ⑨ **Mefistofele: Giunto sul passo estremo (Epilogue)** 3:24  
Recorded 1st February 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-24783-7; First issued as Victor 64942
- PONCHIELLI:**
- ⑩ **La Gioconda: Cielo e mar! (Act 2)** 3:10  
Recorded 1st February 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-24922-3; First issued as Victor 64938
- DONIZETTI:**
- ⑪ **La favorita: Spirto gentil (Act 4)** 3:53  
Recorded 21st March, 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: C-24921-2; First issued as Victor 74688
- GOUNOD:**
- ⑫ **Faust: Salve, dimora casta e pura (Act 3)** 4:33  
Recorded 21st March, 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: C-25109-2; First issued as Victor 74687

- MASCAGNI:**
- 13 **Iris: Apri la tua finestra (Act 1)** 2:28  
Recorded 21st March, 1921 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-25110-2; First issued as Victor 64959
- DE CURTIS:**
- 14 **Tu sola** 3:00  
Recorded 6th April 1921 in Camden, New Jersey  
Matrix: B-25141-2; First issued as Victor 66010
- MARIO:**
- 15 **Santa Lucia luntana** 3:29  
Recorded 29th April, 1921 in New York  
Matrix: B-25017-6; First issued as Victor 64975
- DRIGO:**
- 16 **I milioni d'Alecchino: Notturmo d'amore** 4:38  
Recorded 3rd March, 1922 in New York  
Matrix: C-26061-4; First issued as Victor 74742
- LALO:**
- 17 **Le roi d'Ys: Vainement, ma bien aimée (Act 3)** 3:26  
Recorded 31st March 1922 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-26191-2; First issued as Victor 66070
- LEONCAVALLO:**
- 18 **Pagliacci: Vesti la giubba (Act 1)** 2:39  
Recorded 31st March 1922 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-26192-2; First issued as Victor 66095
- TOSELLI:**
- 19 **Serenata** 3:30  
Recorded 25th September 1922 in New York  
Matrix: B-26795-1; First issued as Victor 66102
- GIORDANO:**
- 20 **Andrea Chénier: Un di all'azzurro spazio (Act 1)** 4:18  
Recorded 5th October 1922 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: C-27011-2; First issued as Victor 74793
- GIORDANO:**
- 21 **Andrea Chénier: Come un bel di di maggio (Act 4)** 3:00  
Recorded 5th October, 1922 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-27009-2; First issued as Victor 975-B
- PUCCHINI:**
- 22 **Tosca: O dolci mani (Act 3)** 2:08  
Recorded 5th October, 1922 in Camden,  
New Jersey  
Matrix: B-27010-2; First issued as Victor 66170
- Beniamino Gigli, tenor**  
**Anonymous Orchestra, Carlo Sabajno**  
(Tracks 1-5)  
**Anonymous Orchestra, Josef Pasternack**  
(Tracks 6-14, 17, 18, 20-22)  
**Anonymous Orchestra, Nathaniel Shilkret**  
(Track 15)  
**Anonymous Orchestra and Conductor**  
(Tracks 16 and 19)

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| Playing<br>Time<br>73:14 |
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# Beniamino Gigli

The Gigli Edition, Vol. 2

Milan, Camden and New York Recordings 1919-22



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| ADD |
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- 1 MASCAGNI: *L'amico Fritz*: Suzel, buon dì
- 2 MASCAGNI: *L'amico Fritz*: Tutto tace
- 3 BIZET: *Les pêcheurs de perles*: Au fond du temple saint  
[Sung in Italian]
- 4 GIORDANO: *Fedora*: Amor ti vieta
- 5 GIORDANO: *Fedora*: Vedi, io piango
- 6 BOITO: *Mefistofele*: Dai campi, dai prati
- 7 PUCCINI: *Tosca*: Recondita armonia
- 8 PUCCINI: *Tosca*: E lucevan le stelle
- 9 BOITO: *Mefistofele*: Giunto sul passo estremo
- 10 PONCHIELLI: *La Gioconda*: Cielo e mar!
- 11 DONIZETTI: *La favorita*: Spirto gentil
- 12 GOUNOD: *Faust*: Salve, dimora casta e pura
- 13 MASCAGNI: *Iris*: Apri la tua finestra
- 14 DE CURTIS: *Tu sola*
- 15 MARIO: *Santa Lucia luntana*
- 16 DRIGO: *I milioni d'Arlecchino*: Notturmo d'amore
- 17 LALO: *Le roi d'Ys*: Vainement, ma bien aimée
- 18 LEONCAVALLO: *Pagliacci*: Vesti la giubba
- 19 TOSELLI: *Serenata*
- 20 GIORDANO: *Andrea Chénier*: Un dì all'azzurro spazio
- 21 GIORDANO: *Andrea Chénier*: Come un bel dì di maggio
- 22 PUCCINI: *Tosca*: O dolci mani

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MADE IN  
CANADA

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn  
Special thanks to Lawrence Holdridge, Ward Marston, David Norbeck,  
Jim Peters, Peter Ford and Mark Ricaldone • Previously released on Romophone

[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)

A complete track list can be found in the booklet  
Cover image: Beniamino Gigli as Faust in Boito's *Mefistofele*, 1924  
(from the Mark Ricaldone photograph collection of Beniamino Gigli)

