



# Beniamino GIGLI

Milan, Berlin and Rome  
Recordings  
1941-1943

PUCCINI

MASCAGNI

GIORDANO

VERDI

MILITELLO

BIXIO

## Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957)

### The Gigli Edition Vol. 11 • Milan, Berlin and Rome Recordings 1941-1943

Gigli's recordings between 1941 and 1943 were made during the war at a time when his appearances were for the most part restricted to Italy. In his Memoirs the tenor, by then in his fifties, recalls that they were six years "of relative immobility and isolation". He goes on to say "I did what I could in the way of benefit recitals and performances for the troops; and, of course, the opera houses carried on as normally as possible. In their own way they were rendering a service; the need for music is perhaps deeper in time of war than at any other". Then, rather annoyingly from the point of view of posterity, he declines to go into too much detail about his performances.

We do know from the archives of La Scala that he sang Radames, Don Alvaro and Loris (*Fedora*) in that house in the period covered by these recordings, and as he tells us, just before, in 1940, he undertook the taxing title part in Donizetti's *Poliuto*, and at Florence's Maggio musicale in May 1941 he sang a new part, the title rôle in Alfano's *Don Juan de Manara*, which he studied with the composer. In July 1941 he managed to get to Croatia to sing Radames in Zagreb and in *la traviata* in Ljubljana.

On 24th December 1941, at the Rome Opera, he undertook – in Italian – Don José in *Carmen* for the first time. As the singer puts it: "That night I was carried away, I lost myself in the rôle. . . I was really in love with Carmen, consumed with longing for Carmen." By the time of the terrible dénouement, he added, "I had lost all recollection of tenor Beniamino Gigli. I was Don José. Love and despair welled up from my heart and almost choked me." Those words prove just why he could so move his listeners in whatever he tackled.

Two months later he recorded the Micaela-José duet with his daughter Rina as Micaela. For a while he promoted her career and indeed sang opposite her with

the San Carlo company at Covent Garden in 1946 in *Bohème*, but truth to tell she had inherited few of the tenor's vocal genes, her tone having an unpleasing edge to it, but it is good to hear Gigli himself, suave as ever, in this attractive duet.

In April 1942 he was back with a favourite part, Canio in *Pagliacci* in Rome. He had recorded the rôle complete back in 1934, but felt he was not yet ready to sing it on stage, so this was another late 'first' for the famous man. On this disc we hear Gigli not as Canio but as Tonio singing the opera's *Prologue*, perfectly feasible for a tenor as the part lies high for a baritone. That was recorded in August 1942, when Gigli was in Berlin making the film *Lache Bajazzo*. While in Berlin he also recorded, in Italian, a song from a Millöcker operetta, perhaps at the request of his hosts. He – predictably – turns it into something very Italianate.

Among the opera recordings included here, it is interesting to hear Gigli in an aria from *Lodoletta*, an opera he had appeared in back in 1917, right at the start of his career. His obvious affinity with Mascagni, whom he knew well, is shown in the long scene from that composer's little-known *Isabeau*. In these he shows little or no sign of vocal decline, the tone as fresh as it ever was. Des Grieux in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* was a rôle he first essayed in 1922 at the Metropolitan. In the character's impassioned Act 2 aria, he is as ever the involved and involving artist his public adored.

Federico's *Lament* from Cilea's *L'Arlesiana*, recorded in June, 1941, was another recording to mark Gigli's first attempt at a rôle. He had first met the composer in 1915, but it was not until 1941 that he sang Federico, at the Rome Opera. He writes about studying it with the composer, who consented to Gigli singing a high, unwritten B natural at its close. Federico is expressing all the pent-up sorrow of his life, and Gigli convinced Cilea that this needed a climactic end rather

than the fading-away in the score

In November 1941 he was to record *Andrea Chénier* complete, and perhaps his account of Chénier's impassioned plea for liberty in Act 1 was trial run for that set. The performance is not stylistically as pure or tonally as fresh as the recording of it he made almost twenty years earlier, but in what he declared to be his favourite part, he is never less than magnificent.

Don Alvaro is a part he undertook with some

reluctance as it really calls for a *tenore di forza*, which Gigli never possessed, yet his only account of that character's nostalgic Act 3 aria is pretty marvellous. Few tenors today would equal his technical control and his management of the voice. For the rest Gigli offers ephemeral material popular at the time, on which he lavishes all his customary care.

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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.

## Producer's Note

The present volume is the eleventh 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.

In addition, the high-pitched "whistle" which can be heard at the ends of some of the Italian sides is a result of the cooling of the wax matrices before the recording had finished being inscribed. Since this could only be filtered out by removing much of the high frequency information, I have chosen to leave it alone.

These transfers were originally prepared for the Romophone label in 2001, but went unpublished when that company ceased production. They are making their first appearance in the Naxos Gigli Edition.

**Mark Obert-Thorn**

## Editorial Note

On August 10th, 1942 at the Electrola Studios in Berlin Gigli recorded the *Prologue (Si può?)* from Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* and the Waltz *Nur ein traum, flücht'ger schaum aber doch* from Millöcker's operetta *Der Feldprediger* (arranged and sung in Italian to a specially prepared lyric *Su brindiam alla gioia di due cor*). Both of these had already been recorded by Gigli for the film *I Pagliacci* made in Cinecittà, Rome, during May and the early part of July 1942. As was customary at the time the film was made in Italian and German, first in Rome and then in Berlin. The Italian version included all the singing parts – sizeable excerpts from *Pagliacci* as well as an aria from *La Sonnambula*, and Millöcker's *Nur ein traum, flücht'ger schaum aber doch*.

When the Italian version of the film was completed the tenor and the musical sections of the film were sent to Berlin in the middle of July in order to make the German version entitled *Lache Bajazzo*, first shown in Bremen on May 28th 1943 and then in Berlin on August 12th 1943. On August 10th, prior to leaving for concerts in Switzerland, Gigli made new recordings of the *Pagliacci Prologue* and the Millöcker excerpt (to the same Italian lyric) at the Electrola Studios in Berlin. Matrices of the Berlin takes were sent to Italy and on the 27th April 1943 the Milan engineers 'dubbed' the recordings for release in Italy. When the recordings were first issued on Electrola DB 7623, Millöcker's waltz/aria was wrongly attributed to the operetta *Gasparone*, whereas it comes from *Der Feldprediger*. Italian HMV decided to call the track *Valzer della felicità*. It is the Electrola recordings and not the film soundtrack versions which are issued on this Naxos disc.

**Mark Ricaldone**  
Eastbourne, July 2005

- CILEA: L'Arlesiana:**
- 1 E' la solita storia (Act 2) 4:34  
Recorded in Milan, 14th June 1941  
Matrix: 2BA 4478-2  
First issued on HMV DB 5406
- PUCCINI: Manon Lescaut**
- 2 Ah! Manon, mi tradisce (Act 2) 2:51  
Recorded in Milan, 14th June 1941  
Matrix: 0BA 4479-2  
First issued on HMV DA 5411
- MASCAGNI: Lodoletta:**
- 3 Se Franz dicesse ... Ah! ritrovarla (Act 3) 4:12  
Recorded in Milan, 14th June 1941  
Matrix: 2BA 4480-2  
First issued on HMV DB 5408
- GIORDANO: Andrea Chénier:**
- 4 Un di all'azzurro spazio (Act 1) 4:28  
Recorded in Milan, 16th June 1941  
Matrix: 2BA 4483-2  
First issued on HMV DB 5406
- MASCAGNI: Isabeau:**
- 5 Non colombelle! ... Tu ch'odi lo mio grido (Part 1) 3:55  
Recorded in Milan, 16th June 1941  
Matrix: 2BA 4484-2  
First issued on HMV DB 5407
- MASCAGNI: Isabeau**
- 6 E passerà la viva creatura (Part 2) 3:46  
Recorded in Milan, 16th June 1941  
Matrix: 2BA 4485-2  
First issued on HMV DB 5407
- VERDI: La forza del destino:**
- 7 La vita è inferno (Act 3) 3:00  
Recorded in Milan, 17th June 1941  
Matrix: 0BA 4487-2  
First issued on HMV DA 5410
- VERDI: La forza del destino:**
- 8 O tu che in seno (Act 3) 3:22  
Recorded in Milan, 17th June 1941  
Matrix: 0BA 4488-2  
First issued on HMV DA 5410
- MILITELLO:**
- 9 Ninna nanna grigioverde 3:37  
Recorded in the Conservatorio Milan,  
23rd November 1941  
Matrix: 0BA 4813-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5414
- MILITELLO:**
- 10 Tenezza 2:48  
Recorded in the Conservatorio Milan,  
23rd November 1941  
Matrix: 0BA 4814-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5414
- TAGLIAFERRI & VALENTE:**
- 11 Passione 3:22  
Recorded in Milan, 20th February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4918-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5418
- CIOFFI:**
- 12 Tre rose 3:30  
Recorded in Milan, 20th February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4919-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5417
- BIZET: Carmen:**
- 13 Quels regards! ... Parle-moi de ma mère 3:28  
with **Rina Gigli**, soprano  
Recorded in Milan, 21st February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4920-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5416

- BIZET: Carmen:**
- 14 **Votre mère avec moi ... Ma mère, je la vois** 3:31  
with **Rina Gigli**, soprano  
Recorded in Milan, 21st February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4921-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5416
- NARDELLA:**
- 15 **Surdate** 2:21  
Recorded in Milan, 23rd February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4925-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5419
- CIOFFI:**
- 16 **'Na sera 'e maggio** 3:45  
Recorded in Milan, 23rd February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4926-2  
First issued on HMV DA 5417
- VALENTE:**
- 17 **Troppo 'nammurato** 3:28  
Recorded in Milan, 24th February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4929-1  
First issued on HMV DA 5418
- OLIVIERI:**
- 18 **Son poche rose** 3:08  
Recorded in Milan, 24th February 1942  
Matrix: 0BA 4930-2  
First issued on HMV DA 5419
- LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci:**
- 19 **Si può? (Prologo)** 4:42  
Recorded in the Electrola Studios, Berlin,  
10th August 1942  
Matrix: 2RA 5608-2  
First issued on Electrola DB 7623
- MILLÖCKER: Der Feldprediger:**
- 20 **Nur ein traum, flücht'ger schaum aber doch (Act 3)** 3:18  
Recorded in the Electrola Studios, Berlin,  
10th August 1942  
Matrix: 2RA 5609-4  
First issued on Electrola DB 7623
- BIXIO:**
- 21 **Cinefolia** 2:40  
Recorded in Rome, 29th June 1943  
Matrix: 0BA 5485-2  
First issued on HMV DA 5443
- BIXIO:**
- 22 **Dimmi tu, primavera** 3:03  
Recorded in Rome, 29th June 1943  
Matrix: 0BA 5486-2  
First issued on HMV DA 5443

Tracks 1-8, 13 and 14: La Scala Orchestra • Umberto Berrettoni  
Tracks 9 and 10: La Scala Orchestra • Giovanni Militello  
Tracks 11 and 12, 15-18: Orchestra • Dino Olivieri  
Tracks 19 and 20: Prussian State Orchestra • Bruno Seidler-Winkler  
Tracks 21 and 22: Orchestra and Chorus of the Rome Opera House • Luigi Ricci

All sung in Italian except tracks 11-12 and 15-17, which are sung in Neapolitan dialect



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MADE IN  
THE EU

## Beniamino Gigli

The Gigli Edition, Vol. 11

Milan, Berlin and Rome Recordings 1941-43

Playing  
Time  
76:51

- 1 CILEA: *L'Arlesiana*: E' la solita storia
- 2 PUCCINI: *Manon Lescaut*: Ah! Manon, mi tradisce
- 3 MASCAGNI: *Lodoletta*: Se Franz dicesse ... Ah! ritrovarla
- 4 GIORDANO: *Andrea Chenier*: Un dì all'azzurro spazio
- 5 MASCAGNI: *Isabeau*: Non colombelle! ...  
Tu ch'odi lo mio grido
- 6 MASCAGNI: *Isabeau*: E passerà la viva creatura
- 7 VERDI: *La forza del destino*: La vita è inferno
- 8 VERDI: *La forza del destino*: O tu che in seno
- 9 MILITELLO: *Ninna nanna grigioverde*
- 10 MILITELLO: *Tenerenza*
- 11 TAGLIAFERRI: *Passione*
- 12 CIOFFI: *Tre rose*
- 13 BIZET: *Carmen*: Quels regards! ... Parle-moi de ma mère \*
- 14 BIZET: *Carmen*: Votre mère avec moi ... Ma mère, je la vois \*
- 15 NARDELLA: *Surdate*
- 16 CIOFFI: 'Na sera 'e maggio
- 17 VALENTE: *Troppo 'nnammurato*
- 18 OLIVIERI: *Son poche rose*
- 19 LEONCAVALLO: *Pagliacci*: Si può? (Prologo)
- 20 MILLÖCKER: *Der Feldprediger*: Nur ein traum,  
flücht'ger schaum aber doch
- 21 BIXIO: *Cinefolia*
- 22 BIXIO: *Dimmi tu, primavera*  
\* With Rina Gigli, Soprano

This volume is the eleventh in a series devoted to Gigli's 'singles', the song and aria recordings not issued as part of complete opera sets. This disc features recordings made during the war, when Gigli's appearances were for the most part restricted to Italy. Of special note are the excerpts from Mascagni's rarely heard *Isabeau*, and Gigli in the rôle of Don José from *Carmen*, of which he wrote "I was really in love with Carmen, and consumed with longing... Love and despair welled up from my heart and almost choked me... I was Don José." Unusually, we also hear Gigli as Tonio singing the *Prologue* for *Pagliacci*, and a very Italianate rendition of Millöcker's *Nur ein traum, flücht'ger schaum aber doch* (released in Italy as the *Valzer della felicità/Waltz of happiness*). There is also a selection of ephemeral material popular at the time, on which Gigli lavishes all his customary care.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn  
 Special thanks to Lawrence F. Holdridge and Mark Ricaldone

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

A complete track list can be found in the booklet  
 Cover image: Beniamino Gigli as Don Alvaro in *La forza del destino*,  
 Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, July 1933  
 (from the Mark Ricaldone photographic collection of Beniamino Gigli)

