

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1237

The HAROLD WAYNE COLLECTION – Volume 35

A Survey of German Singers in Early Recordings

By the end of the nineteenth century the gramophone companies had begun to realise that there would be a considerable market for records of classical music and, in Germany in particular, they began to record the voices of well known classical singers. Of course the great artists of the day were suspicious of the new medium, being conscious of the fact that records of inferior quality would harm their reputations. Thus before 1900 very few famous singers consented to make records, and it was largely in Germany that the gramophone began to be accepted as a new art form; a matter for serious consideration. However, there were several problems which artists had to consider in order to make a successful recording within the engineering capabilities of the system. The largest discs were only 7"/17.5cm in diameter, which restricted the duration of recording to some two minutes, and also recording engineers instructed singers to move back from the recording horn when they sang loud notes. Thus questions of recording technique often detracted from freedom in interpretation; self consciousness is sometimes rather obvious in the results obtained.

Very few of these early recordings have survived in good condition, thus it is amazing that Dr. Wayne has managed to find so many with little or no signs of wear. I think it is fair to say that some of the very earliest discs in this recital are as much of importance as examples of early recording techniques, as of musical interpretations. But we hear preserved the gradual improvement in the standard of recording, so that the later examples do indeed approach full-scale performances and are of great interest to record collectors for this reason.

Here then, are examples of artistes who recorded in the first few years of the century, and in one instance we hear a disc made in the previous century.

EMMA BAUMANN

1 Mignon-Polonaise

Many of the artists who recorded at this time were provincial singers rather than international celebrities and this almost certainly applies to Emma Baumann, although she did have a considerable career. She was born Emma Schubotz in Erfurt in 1855 and she studied in Breslau with Frau Seidelmann. Her debut, in Dortmund in 1878, was followed by marriage and retirement from the stage for four years. Shortly after her return, under her married name, she moved from Dortmund to Leipzig. Although taken on there as principal coloratura, her roles included Agathe in *Der Freischütz*, Venus in *Tannhäuser*, Violetta in *La Traviata*, and Leonore in *Il Trovatore*. She continued to appear at Dortmund as well as at the Krolloper, Berlin from 1884 to 1903. In 1888 she was in the première of Mahler's reworking of Weber's *Die drei Pintos*. She made her home in Leipzig and she died there in 1925. Her three known recordings, each of exceptional rarity, are technically primitive and musically truncated, but show that the artist had a light soprano of good quality with an excellent coloratura technique.

SOPHIE HEYMAN

2 La Traviata-Ah! fors' è lui

Sophie Heymann was born in Amsterdam in 1874. She studied in Paris with Mathilde Marchesi and with Pauline Viardot-Garcia. Her career was, as far as is known, entirely on the concert platform, starting in 1897 with an extensive tour of her native country. The following year she took up residence in Berlin, and extended her activities to Germany. She sings the first half of Violetta's aria in a small but pleasant voice and adds some decorations in excellent style.

LOTTE SCHLOSS

3 Ständchen (R. Strauss)

Lotte Schloss was born in 1871 in Vienna, where she also commenced her studies. However, vocal problems caused her to give up the idea of becoming a singer and to try for the straight stage. In this manner she made her debut at Aachen in 1889, and went on to appear in St. Petersburg and Munich. She remained in Munich, studying again to be a singer, this time with a Frau Rula, and there made a successful debut in opera in 1896 as Mozart's Donna Elvira. She stayed with the Munich Opera for a decade, and from 1901 sang also in Hamburg. Here she took part in the local première of *Louise* and also of *Tiefland*. Her repertoire ranged through Susanna, Mignon, Elsa, Marguérite, Carmen and Nedda. She made what must surely be the first recording of any Richard Strauss song. It is a fresh and

pleasant soprano voice.

KATHARINA SENGER-BETTAQUE

4 Es hat die Rose sich beklagt (Franz)

Katharina Senger-Bettaque was certainly no provincial artist. She was born in 1862 in Berlin and studied there under Heinrich Dorn. Her début, also in Berlin, was in 1879 in *Feramors* (A. Rubinstein). In 1888 she was the first artist to sing Eva in *Die Meistersinger* at Bayreuth and then had a truly international career. She came to Covent Garden in 1892, appearing as Freia, Guttrune, Sieglinde and Venus (*Tannhäuser*). At the Metropolitan Opera, New York she sang in the seasons 1888/89 and 1904/05. There her début was as Brünnhilde, and this was followed by Elsa, Eva, Margu érite and Selika (*L'Africaine*). By this time she was obviously past her best; one critic writing that her performance was "unacceptable". However, in Stuttgart in the years 1906 to 1909, towards the end of her career, she was highly regarded as Ortrude, Brünnhilde and Beethoven's Leonore. Her little record of a song by Franz is a welcome souvenir in view of the singer's great career and since her few records are all major rarities. It reveals a voice of good quality, but it is rather disappointing as a performance.

PELAGIE GREEFF-ANDRIESSEN

5 Fidelio-Komm, Hoffnung

6 Die Walküre-Ho-jo-to-ho!

7 Ich grolle nicht (Schumann)

8 Tristan und Isolde-

9 Lohengrin-Es giebt ein Glück (with Elsa Schweizer)

10 Tristan und Isolde-Als für ein fremdes Land

Pelagie Greeff-Andriessen was born in 1860 in Vienna. Her mother was a teacher of singing at the Conservatoire there, and it was she who first taught her. After considerable experience in operetta she attempted to move into opera as a contralto, but Berlin found her wanting. However, she made a sufficient contribution to Angelo Neumann's travelling Wagner company in the 1882-83 season, and followed this with a successful début as Aïda in Leipzig. She remained there, both singing and studying, until 1890, becoming thus a very successful dramatic soprano. She appeared at Covent Garden in the first two Ring dramas in 1892, and she sang in most of the main German-speaking European centres, including Salzburg and Bayreuth. Her recordings, made in Frankfurt- am-Main in 1901, are of extreme rarity. They show a fine dramatic soprano voice, but, obviously, they cannot do justice to her artistry since it was impossible to record Wagner adequately so early. Pelagie Greeff-

Andriessen died at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1937.

MARTHA LEFFLER-BURCKHARD

- 11 Ich liebe dich (Grieg)
- 12 Gelb rollt mir zu Füßen (A. Rubinstein)
- 13 Lehn' deine Wang' an meine Wang' (Jensen)
- 14 Die Walküre-Ho-jo-to-ho!

Martha Leffler-Burckhard was born in Berlin in 1865. She studied with Anna von Meichsner in Dresden and with Pauline Viardot-Garcia in Paris, and made her *début* in Strasbourg in 1888. She gained experience in a number of German opera houses, which led to a very successful career as a dramatic soprano. There were engagements in North America (1892-93), Bayreuth (1906-08) and Berlin (1913-18). In retirement she taught in Berlin. She died in Wiesbaden in 1954. Leffler-Burckhard's recordings, made in Wiesbaden in 1901, are major rarities. They reveal a voice of good quality allied to musical sensitivity.

HEDWIG FRANCILO-KAUFMANN

- 15 Robert le Diable-Robert, toi que j'aime
- 16 Il Barbiere di Siviglia-Una voce poco fa (Part I)

Hedwig Francillo-Kaufmann was born in Vienna in 1878. She studied initially in Vienna, then in Dresden with Aglaja von Orgeni, and lastly in Milan. After her *début* in Stettin in 1898 she rose through provincial German houses to reach Berlin in 1903 and Vienna in 1908. Her career continued in Europe and South America, mainly in coloratura roles, until 1927, and then she taught. After the second World War she lived with her husband, a Brazilian diplomat, in South America. Francillo-Kaufmann died in 1948. These are amongst her first recordings; she continued to work in the studios of G&T and Odeon for several years, and even made electrical records for Homochord. The two performances are in complete contrast. In the aria from *Robert le Diable* her singing is in good style, whereas in Rosina's aria she introduces many changes, mainly in rather poor taste. As an example of coloratura singing it is passable, but it bears so little resemblance to the music Rossini actually wrote. I am sure the old maestro would have repeated what he said to Patti, who sang this very piece and decorated it to such an extent that Rossini remarked, "What a pretty little aria, Madame, who wrote it?"

LAURA HILGERMANN

17 Mir träumt von einem Königskind (Hartmann)

18 Es hat die Rose sich beklagt (Franz)

19 Wiegenlied (Brahms)

20 Herbst (Franz)

21 Du bist wie eine Blume (Amadei)

Laura Hilgermann, née Oberländer, was born in Vienna in 1857. She first sang in Prague, making her début as Azucena, and then in Budapest, until Mahler engaged her for Vienna in 1900. She remained there until 1920, greatly admired in a wide range of roles, including Orphée, Cherubino, Mignon, Sieglinde, Amneris and Carmen. Gitta Alpar and Maria von Ilosvay were amongst the pupils she taught in retirement. Laura Hilgermann died in the cellar of her house in Budapest, destroyed during the Russian bombardment of 1945. The titles listed above are all non-operatic; later she made recordings mainly from dramatic roles. The voice as shown in these songs is of beautiful quality; the singing is a model of restrained elegance.

SELMA KURZ

22 Un Ballo in Maschera-Saper vorreste

23 Mignon-Je connais un pauvre enfant

Selma Kurz was born in Bielitz in Silesia in 1874 and her voice was first recognised by Cantor Goldmann in whose choir she sang. Her studies in Vienna with Johann Röss were financed by Count Nikolaus Esterházy; she went on to receive coaching from Mathilde Marchesi and Jean de Reszke in Paris. Her début in Hamburg as Mignon in 1895 was followed by a move to Frankfurt-am-Main in 1896. Then, in 1899, Gustav Mahler engaged her for Vienna. She sang with huge success in most of the important operatic theatres of Europe, although her artistic home remained the State Opera in Vienna, where she remained until her retirement in 1929. She came to Covent Garden in 1904, making her début as Gilda in *Rigoletto*. The critics praised her performance as a triumph, but she found that she had been too successful in a role which Melba treasured, so that although she reappeared in 1905 and again in 1907, she was never able to overcome the opposition of the older prima donna. Strangely, her career on the American continent amounted to one concert in 1921. She continued to sing in opera until 1927. She died in Vienna in 1933. The noted soprano Desi Halban was her daughter.

As these early records show, she had a phenomenal technique and an amazing trill.

OTTILIE FELLWOCK

24 Il Trovatore-Stride la vampa

25 Samson et Dalila-Mon coeur s'ouvre ? ta voix

Ottilie Fellwock was born in 1877. Her father, Austria's consul in Berlin, did not consider a career in singing a suitable occupation. However, when he capitulated, he did so in style, sending her to Gmunden for lessons with no less than the world-famous soprano Pauline Lucca. One day she sang the part of Ortrud in a student-performance of *Lohengrin* in her teacher's house-theatre. The much feared critic, Edward Hanslick just happened to be present. Amazingly, she was then given an audition by Mahler and received a contract for the Viennese Imperial Opera. However, after one season she transferred to Prague. She is said to have been a great success there, but nothing has been traced of her after 1904. The voice, as recorded, is an impressive contralto of considerable weight, and she sings with authority.

ERICA WEDEKIND

26 Ernani-Ernani, Ernani, involami

27 Mignon-Légères hirondelle

with Leon Rains

28 Fra Diavolo-Voyez sur cette roche

with Karel Burrian

Erica Wedekind was born in Hanover in 1868. She turned to singing after studying to be a teacher. Her principal teacher was Orgeni in Dresden, and there, after appearances on the concert platform, she made her operatic début as Nicolai's Frau Fluth. She remained in Dresden until 1909, with such acclaim that the critics likened her even to Adelina Patti. She sang with similar success over much of Europe. She came to Covent Garden in 1903 and sang in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* but, exceptionately, she was not well received and did not return. No doubt she found that the dominating presence of Melba made life difficult for her. In the two duets she is partnered by artists of considerable status and this shows that she was herself an artist of importance. In retirement, after 1930, she lived in Zürich, and there, in 1944, she died. The voice, as recorded sounds attractive and she blends well with her partners.

LUCIE WEIDT

- 29 Der Freischütz-All' meine Pulse schlagen
- 30 Fidelio-Komm, Hoffnung
- 31 Die Walküre-Der Männer Sippe
- 32 Siegfried-Ewig war ich
- 33 Die Götterdämmerung-Zu neuen Thaten with Erik Schmedes

Lucia Weidt was born in Opava, Bohemia in 1876, and studied in Vienna with Rosa Papier. She made her début in Leipzig in 1900 and was a leading member of the Hofoper in Vienna from 1902 until 1926, making her début there as Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*. She was the first Lisa, the first Marschallin and the first Kundry in Vienna and in 1919 she created the role of the nurse in Richard Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. She was the legitimate successor in Vienna of Sophie Sedlmair and was one of the principal artists in Mahler's Vienna ensemble. She sang in Amsterdam, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Milan (first Kundry), New York and Paris. After her retirement in 1926 she taught singing in Vienna, where she died in 1940. Kundry and the Marschallin were probably her finest roles. The voice as recorded is very impressive, despite the fact that at the time it was very difficult to record large dramatic soprano voices.

This then, is a representative selection of recordings by female German-speaking artists who made records during the first decade of this century. The fact that I have spoken of one or two of them as provincial does not necessarily mean that they were inferior to their more widely-travelled counterparts, but it shows that they preferred to remain with their local operatic companies where they were well-known and appreciated. Whereas in England there was no permanent operatic centre, Covent Garden was open only for a summer and an autumn season, in Germany almost every important city had its own permanent company. A few centres that come to mind immediately were Berlin, Cologne, Dresden, Leipzig, Munich and Wiesbaden. They had their own resident artists; Emma Baumann, for example, was a local celebrity in Leipzig.

John Freestone

Dr. Wayne writes:

This extraordinary and truly wonderful Compact Disc contains many outstanding rarities; some, indeed, undoubtedly unique.

Emma Baumann, who made only three records, at Leipzig in May 1899, was considered to be the best coloratura at Leipzig at that time. Two decades later Baumann was accounted greater than the legendary Abendroth.

Bauer lists only two of Heymann's three titles of 1901. That more than a handful have survived anywhere in the world is doubtful.

The Lotte Schloss Berliner is very special indeed, and presumably another unique specimen. The great scholar and teacher of operatic voice, Otto Müller claimed he had acquired it virtually directly from Richard Strauss and rumour has it that he was the accompanist, but it must be stated that there is no authentication for this.

Senger-Bettaque's output was meagre for an international celebrity, who in 1888 had even been Bayreuth's first Eva. The total number of extant copies is abysmally small; I am very fortunate to have two items grace my collection.

The two brothers Reichmann were fugitives from Germany just before the outbreak of World War II. They came to London where they acquired a rather strange reputation: they would go around "Pop" Russell's Gramophone Exchange and Colin Shreve's International Record Collectors emporium at Newport Court, asking for cheap copies of very early records. Condition was immaterial, cracks were patched up, scratches were carefully doctored; as I say, they acquired a rather strange reputation. One brother died, the other went to New York, where I met him twice in the late '60s. He lived alone in a magnificent Manhattan apartment overlooking Central Park; in the impressive hallway was a Rembrandt. He never played his records to visitors; I never saw a gramophone. He produced two seven-inch albums of Berliners and was persuaded to part with all five of the Greeff-Andriessen Berliners and the unique group of Leffler-Burckhard's. The great paradox, in the light of what I wrote earlier, is that they were all mint. In one of the albums was also a seven-inch Gutheil-Schoder of a song by Weingartner, but this was withheld and I never again set eyes on it.

A clutch of Hilgermann discs came from the personal collection of the Viennese dealer Roland Teuchtler, when I visited him in his home above the shop for the first time.

The Francillo-Kaufmann Berliners suffer from pitch problems as do also those of Leffler-Burckhard. I am so pleased that using modern technology the engineers have all but eliminated this defect in these transfers. They could not have sold in any numbers. However, I have had two copies of "Una voce", one from Roberto Bauer, and one from Herr Grundheber of Munich, who used to visit me in my home in London before his illness.

Otilie Fellwock made only four titles. Only one, a twelve inch disc, have I seen twice. The two ten inch titles were also on a double-sided green Zonophone record in Roland Teuchtler's collection.

The piece by Selma Kurz from *Un Ballo in Maschera* appeared only twice throughout my years of collecting.

Most Wedekind examples seen in Germany have been heavily worn, so that I was not comfortable acquiring them, but, sadly, they never showed up again.

Lucy Weidt, one of the greatest German sopranos to have recorded, is heavily represented in my collection, with most copies in generally lovely condition. Most of these came from Teuchtler. All of the 1904 series are ultra rare, but some of the 1909 issues turn up occasionally in Germany as black-label double sided records.

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