



GREAT SINGERS • TOUREL

ADD

8.110735



**Jennie
TOUREL**

A Vocal Portrait

BIZET

CHOPIN

FAURÉ

HAYDN

RACHMANINOV

RAVEL

ROSSINI

Recorded 1945-52

Jennie Tourel (c.1900-1973)

A Vocal Portrait

Born Jennie Davidovich in Vitebsk, Belorussia, on 9th/26th June 1900 (although the years 1898 and 1899 are also possibilities), Jennie Tourel appears to have studied the flute and later the piano before the family left Russia at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. It has to be said, however, that the exact events of her childhood are the subject of much speculation as the artist later gave several differing accounts of her early years. The family did, however, move to Danzig in the Polish Corridor where one reference source states that Jennie made her stage début in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* in 1918. After staying first in Berlin and later in Switzerland, where she studied singing, the piano and dancing, she later settled in Paris, working with the Venezuelan-born but French domiciled composer, singer and conductor Reynaldo Hahn and soprano Anne El Tour. (The name Tourel was long thought to be an anagram of her female teacher's name but she later denied this.)

Tourel's Parisian stage début was as a member of the Opéra Russe in Paris in the rôle of the Polovtsian Maiden in Borodin's *Prince Igor*. Her first American appearance came in Chicago later that same year as the Second Scholar in Ernest Moret's *Lorenzaccio* and in Hamilton Forest's *Camille*. She became a member of the Théâtre National de l'Opéra-Comique in Paris in 1933, remaining there until 1939. Her offerings included the title rôles in Bizet's *Carmen* (in over two hundred performances) and *Djamileh*, in addition to Thomas's *Mignon*, Cherubino in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and Charlotte in Massenet's *Werther*. It was as Mignon that Tourel made her début at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York on 15th May 1937. Following the German invasion of France in May 1940 she managed to escape to the United States by way of Lisbon. She later became a member of the Metropolitan Opera between 1943 and 1947 where in a total of fourteen appearances she sang Adalgisa in

Bellini's *Norma* and Rosina in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in the original mezzo version. Concurrently she also sang in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* and *Carmen* at the New York City Opera.

Jennie Tourel was the soloist in the first American performance of Prokofiev's cantata *Alexander Nevsky* with the Westminster Choir and NBC Symphony Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski on 7th March 1943. She later took part in the first ever recording of work under Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia on 21st May 1945. The previous year, on 4th May 1944, she had signed a recording contract with Columbia Records (now Sony), which took effect following the ending of the infamous two-year recording ban imposed by the American Federation of Musicians and its secretary James Petrillo in 1st August 1942.

With the composer Leonard Bernstein Jennie Tourel gave the première of his song cycle *I hate music* at the Library in Lenox, Massachusetts, on 28th August 1953 and its first New York performance on 13th November the same year (Regrettably, her later Sony recording with the composer remains unpublished.) The following year she also took part in the première of the same composer's *Jeremiah Symphony* in Pittsburgh on 28th January 1944. The two artists were to work together a great deal during the ensuing years. In 1946 Jennie Tourel became a naturalised citizen of the United States.

Although she had virtually retired from the opera stage by 1950, Tourel did create the rôle of Baba the Turk in the first performance of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* at the Teatro la Fenice in Venice on 11th September 1951. Sadly she did not take part in the American première in New York and its subsequent recording under the composer in March 1953. She devoted herself thereafter to concert appearances. She did, however, during the last two years of her life, appear in an American television production of

Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* in the rôle of the Countess. Her farewell to the stage was in the spoken rôle of the Duchess of Crackenthorp in Donizetti's *La fille du régiment* in Chicago on 26th October 1973, less than a month before her death from lung cancer in New York on 23rd November, aged 73.

Jennie Tourel enjoyed a distinguished and varied career as a noted soloist in the concert hall, both in the United States and Europe, including appearances in the 1951-52 Casals Festivals in both Perpignan and Prades in France. (The two recordings of Bach and Mozart she made with Casals conducting remain unpublished.) She contributed a memorable and extremely taxing solo recital with James Levine as her accompanist in the Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, on 19th April 1970, that was recorded live and was subsequently published as a two disc LP and CD set.

Tourel's voice was a true mezzo-soprano, covering three octaves. It was an instrument capable of much warmth and colour of considerable flexibility, as she exhibited in Rossini's coloratura writing. She had a command of languages, singing in English, French, German, Italian and Russian with equal facility. She also displayed splendid musicianship and clarity of diction, allied to an acute awareness of and attention to the texts sung. For many years she taught at the Juilliard School of Music in New York City where her students

included the soprano Barbara Hendricks and tenor Neil Shicoff. She was also on the faculty at the Aspen (Colorado) School of Music. Married and divorced three times, she had no children. At her funeral on 9th December 1973 the funeral oration was given by her long-time fellow musician Leonard Bernstein. Her papers, correspondence, programmes, news cutting and publicity material are now held with the archives of the Juilliard School of Music.

Jennie Tourel enjoyed a fruitful recording collaboration with Columbia Records, covering music by Bach, Berlioz, Bernstein, Bizet, Chopin, Debussy, Fauré, Foss, Hahn, Hindemith, Mahler, Mozart, Mussorgsky, Offenbach, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Rossini, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams and Villa-Lobos, a number of which were conducted by Leonard Bernstein. Whilst almost all her recordings were made in the United States, she did record a number of operatic items in London in September 1951. She also made two discs for the American Decca label, parts of which appeared in a CD in the Decca series "The Singers" in 1991. The Haydn songs comprised a whole disc devoted to the cantata *Arianna a Naxos* and six English *Canzonettas* which were made for the enterprising Haydn Society of Boston in the summer of 1952.

Malcolm Walker

Ward Marston

In 1997 Ward Marston was nominated for the Best Historical Album Grammy Award for his production work on BMG's Fritz Kreisler collection. According to the Chicago Tribune, Marston's name is 'synonymous with tender loving care to collectors of historical CDs'. Opera News calls his work 'revelatory', and Fanfare deems him 'miraculous'. In 1996 Ward Marston received the Gramophone award for Historical Vocal Recording of the Year, honouring his production and engineering work on Romophone's complete recordings of Lucrezia Bori. He also served as re-recording engineer for the Franklin Mint's Arturo Toscanini issue and BMG's Sergey Rachmaninov recordings, both winners of the Best Historical Album Grammy.

Born blind in 1952, Ward Marston has amassed tens of thousands of opera classical records over the past four decades. Following a stint in radio while a student at Williams College, he became well-known as a reissue producer in 1979, when he restored the earliest known stereo recording made by the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1932.

In the past, Ward Marston has produced records for a number of major and specialist record companies. Now he is bringing his distinctive sonic vision to bear on works released on the Naxos Historical label. Ultimately his goal is to make the music he remasters sound as natural as possible and true to life by 'lifting the voices' off his old 78 rpm recordings. His aim is to promote the importance of preserving old recordings and make available the works of great musicians who need to be heard.

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.

Joseph HAYDN			
1	The Mermaid's Song [Now the dancing sunbeams play] Recorded Summer 1952 Haydn Society HSL 2051	2:43	9 CARMEN: Séguidille Recorded 13th May 1952 Columbia ML 4608 1:50
2	A Pastoral Song [My mother bids me bind my hair] Recorded Summer 1952 Haydn Society HSL 2051	4:00	10 Adieu de l'hôtesse arabe Op 21, No.4 Recorded 7th October 1947 Columbia ML 4158 4:04
Gioacchino ROSSINI			Emmanuel CHABRIER
3	SEMIRAMIDE: Bel raggio lusinghier Recorded 17th July 1946 Columbia 72134	4:14	11 Romance de l'étoile Recorded 6th January 1947 Columbia ML 4158 3:13
4	IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA : Una voce poco fa Recorded 12th & 17th July 1946 Columbia 72133/32	6:19	Gabriel FAURÉ
			12 Trois poèmes d'un jour, Op. 21: a) Rencontre b) Toujours c) Adieu Recorded 7th October 1947 Columbia ML 4158 4:55
Fryderyk CHOPIN			Maurice RAVEL
5	Zyczenie [The Maiden's Wish] Recorded 28th February 1949 Columbia 72870	2:13	13 Vocalise en forme de Habanera Recorded 7th October 1947 Columbia ML 4158 2:48
6	Moja pieuszczota [My Joys] Recorded 28th February 1949 Columbia 72870	2:11	Reynaldo HAHN
			14 Si mes vers avaient des ailes Recorded 7th July 1947 Columbia ML 4158 5:03
7	Niema czego trzeba [Melancholy] Recorded 28th February 1949 Columbia 72870	3:42	Modest Petrovich MUSSORGSKY
			15 Serenade Recorded 24th January 1950 Columbia ML 4289 5:03
Georges BIZET			
8	CARMEN: Habanera Recorded 13th May 1952 Columbia ML 4608	3:48	16 Field-Marshal Death Recorded 24th January 1950 Columbia ML 4289 6:15

Sergey RACHMANINOV

- 17 O Cease thy Singing, Maiden Fair, Op. 4, No. 4 4:17
Recorded 23rd June 1945
Columbia 71807
- 18 In the Silence of the Night, Op. 4, No. 3 2:34
Recorded 25th June 1945
Columbia 71808
- 19 Floods of Spring, Op. 14, No. 4 2:06
Recorded 23rd June 1945
Columbia 71809

Sergey PROKOFIEV

- 20 ALEXANDER NEVSKY: Field of the Dead 6:04
Recorded 21st May 1945
From Columbia set M580

Tracks 1 and 2 sung in English
Accompanied by Ralph Kirkpatrick on a Challis Fortepiano

Tracks 3 and 4 sung in Italian
Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera Association, New York conducted by Pietro Cimara

Tracks 5-7 sung in Polish
Accompanied by George Reeves, piano

Tracks 8 and 9 sung in French
Columbia Symphony Orchestra conducted by Jean Morel

Tracks 10-14 sung in French
Accompanied by George Reeves, piano

Tracks 15 and 16 sung in Russian
Accompanied by Leonard Bernstein, piano

Tracks 17-19 sung in Russian
Accompanied by George Reeves

Track 20 sung in English
Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy

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Jennie Tourel

A Vocal Portrait

Recorded 1945-1952

 Playing
Time
74:49

NAXOS Historical

TOUREL: A Vocal Portrait

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TOUREL: A Vocal Portrait

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- 1 **HAYDN:** The Mermaid's Song
[Now the dancing sunbeams play]
- 2 **HAYDN:** A Pastoral Song
[My mother bids me bind my hair]
- 3 **ROSSINI:** *Semiramide*: Bel raggio lusinghier
- 4 **ROSSINI:** *Il barbiere di Siviglia* : Una voce poco fa
- 5 **CHOPIN:** *Zyczenie* [The Maiden's Wish]
- 6 **CHOPIN:** *Moja pieszczota* [My Joys]
- 7 **CHOPIN:** *Niema czego trzeba* [Melancholy]
- 8 **BIZET:** *Carmen*: Habanera
- 9 **BIZET:** *Carmen*: Séguidille
- 10 **BIZET:** *Adieu de l'hôtesse arabe* Op 21, No.4
- 11 **CHABRIER:** *Romance de l'étoile*
- 12 **FAURÉ:** *Trois poèmes d'un jour*, Op. 21:
a) Rencontre b) Toujours c) Adieu
- 13 **RAVEL:** *Vocalise en forme de Habanera*
- 14 **HAHN:** *Si mes vers avaient des ailes*
- 15 **MUSSORGSKY:** *Serenade*
- 16 **MUSSORGSKY:** *Field-Marshal Death*
- 17 **RACHMANINOV:** *O Cease thy Singing, Maiden Fair*,
Op. 4, No. 4
- 18 **RACHMANINOV:** *In the Silence of the Night*,
Op. 4, No. 3
- 19 **RACHMANINOV:** *Floods of Spring*, Op. 14, No. 4
- 20 **PROKOFIEV:** *Alexander Nevsky*: Field of the Dead

Born Jennie Davidovich around 1900 in Belorussia, Tourel gave several differing accounts of her early years. She settled in Paris where she collaborated with the Venezuelan composer Reynaldo Hahn and became a member of the Opéra-Comique. Her rôles include Mignon, Cherubino and Carmen, which she performed over 200 times. The onset of the War saw Tourel move to New York and become a member of the Metropolitan Opera where she performed in *Norma* and *The Barber of Seville*. In America, she took part in the première of Bernstein's *I Hate Music* and *Jeremiah Symphony* and was the soloist in the American première of Prokofiev's cantata *Alexander Nevsky*. After her retirement in 1950, she created the rôle of Baba the Turk in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* at La Fenice, Venice in 1951. Jennie Tourel died in New York in 1973.

MADE IN
E.C.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Ward Marston
Special thanks to Gregor Benko, Raymond Edwards and
Lawrence F. Holdridge

www.naxos.com

A complete track list can be found in the booklet
Cover image: Jennie Tourel as Carmen (Lebrecht Collection)

