

**'O sole mio • Santa Lucia  
Torna a Surriento  
and many more**

**Mario Del Monaco • Giuseppe Di Stefano  
Beniamino Gigli • Jussi Björling • Tito Schipa**



**Historical Recordings 1926-1951**

## Italian Popular Songs • 1

While to some it may mean only ice-cream or overweight tenors strutting their rather hackneyed stuff, as a genre 'Italian Song' boasts a healthy tradition extending back at least two centuries. In the global market it has always proved a steady seller and here, by definition, we mean Italian song in the broadest populist sense, with all its commercial overtones of sunshine and romance (the *canzone popolare* or *napoletana* which, however clichéd, continued to flourish until the arrival of Claudio Villa and the San Remo Festivals), as distinct from the *aria antica* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which, while also still favoured, has retained more serious, scholarly connotations (Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi later all wrote fine songs but these too are generic descendants of that earlier category).

The selections in the present CD programme are all survivors of bygone eras. They are good tunes and, having been variously recorded since the advent of the gramophone by famous singers (and more often than not, by tenors), all have acquired a certain permanence. And all are linked in tradition insofar as they presuppose reserves of the sustaining lyric tenor spirit and a certain *italianità* in performance. Some of the songs were already established favourites when recording first started and, among the oldest, *Vieni sul mar* (Come to the Sea) and *La danza* have remained to this day staples of the Italian tenor song repertoire. The first, dubbed an 'old Italian folk-song' and famously recorded by Caruso, has more far-flung global connections than may be realised. Ostensibly a late-eighteenth-century Venetian street-ballad, its tune was sung and whistled in pre-Revolutionary Russia as 'Poy, Lastochka, Poy' (Sing, Swallow, Sing), while through the English music halls it was made even more famous in a famous Charles Coburn parody of 1886, entitled 'Two Lovely Black Eyes'. The second, the rafter-raiser of the Rossini song-cycle *Soirées musicales* (again notably recorded by Caruso) is a Neapolitan-style tarantella never outmoded since its first appearance in the early 1830s.

Chronologically next-in-line is *Santa Lucia*. Justly one of the most famous of Italian tunes, this hauntingly beautiful and simple ditty is generally – and incorrectly – regarded as a folk-song. Actually the work of one Teodoro Cottrau (1827-79) and published by its composer in 1849, in Naples, it appeared not long afterwards in an English translation in Baltimore and was thus among the first commercial Italian productions to reach a transatlantic audience. In fact, if not strictly speaking a blueprint, it was a foretaste of the *melodia* or *canzone da camera* soon afterwards in vogue in English-speaking countries, a salon-style miniaturising of the Italian operatic aria, the work of a number of Italian composers who by the mid-nineteenth century had settled in London, the earliest including the Neapolitan Michael (Michele) Costa (1806-1884) and the Tuscan Ciro Pinsuti (1829-1888). The latter, a one-time pupil of Rossini and a noted vocal coach, taught from 1856 at the London Royal Academy. His vast output included almost 250 songs akin to those of which Francesco Paolo Tosti (1946-1916) was to become the acknowledged master.

Born at Ortona on the Adriatic, Tosti studied violin at San Pietro in Naples but being a fine pianist and tenor singer in his own right was appointed a *maestrino* (pupil-teacher) at the college by his tutor Mercadante. He was soon playing and singing in Neapolitan salons and in 1870, through his pianist-composer friend Sgambati, he secured his introduction to Roman artistic circles. An instant success he became singing-master to the Queen of Italy. He first visited London in 1875, settling there in 1880 on his appointment as singing-teacher to the English Royal Family. Naturalised British in 1906, he was knighted by Edward VII in 1908. A celebrity in his own lifetime, as a composer and stylish and influential performer and promoter of his own songs Tosti enjoyed a *réclame* paralleled in history perhaps only by Thomas Moore (in the United States) and Reynaldo Hahn (in Paris). While he composed prolifically to Italian (or Neapolitan – 'A *vucchella* is a prime example), French and English texts

the quality of his output is unequal, his drawing-room settings of 'Barry Cornwall', Clifton Bingham and Fred E. Weatherly paling somewhat beside the pompous versifying of the Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) of *L'alba separa dalla luce l'ombra*.

Like his contemporary Tosti, the Naples-born Luigi Denza (1846-1922) was a pupil of Mercadante at the Naples Conservatory, and like Tosti he settled in London (in 1879) where he taught singing and was appointed (in 1898) professor of singing at the Royal Academy. The inaugurator of a noted singing competition, whereas he apparently penned 500-600 songs (including several English drawing-room ballads in the style of Pinsuti) he is today effectively remembered by only two: *Occhi di fata* (Fairy Eyes) from 1902 and the more ubiquitous *Funiculì, funiculà*, a rousing tarantella with parallel texts in Neapolitan and Italian, composed in 1880 to mark the opening of the funicular to Vesuvius. It was mistaken for a folk-song by Richard Strauss and incorporated in *Aus Italien*. To some extent a kindred song, and more genuinely Neapolitan, '*O sole mio* is surely the most enduring of all Italian popular songs, although its author Edoardo Di Capua (1859-1920), who died in extreme poverty after selling it outright, never reaped any reward from it. Rehashed and regurgitated down the decades in every conceivable style and tongue, in its original form, with music drawn presumably from a traditional source and words by the Neapolitan vernacular poet Giovanni Capurro (1859-1920), it is now hallowed in all but name as a folk-song. It was first aired at a Naples Round Table exhibition in 1894 and published in 1898.

By the turn of the twentieth century the scope of Italian Song was already expanding alongside new

technologies and more than previously songs were tailored for the various media, and often with specific tenors in mind. Although a prime mover in *verismo* opera, the fame of Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919) now rests solely with his opera *I pagliacci*. Commercially-minded, he was, however, among the first composers to become involved with the gramophone and in 1904 he accompanied Caruso in the first recording of *Mattinata*, with a dedication 'to the Gramophone & Typewriter Company'. The first great commercial exponent of Neapolitan song on records, Caruso was the dedicatee of other songs of which he cut the first versions, among them *Core 'ngrato* (1911) and in the Americas Gigli and Schipa, among others, capitalised on the sentiments of the immigrant Italian contingent and the susceptibility of non-Italians elsewhere to a rattling good tune, a populist trend continued by Tagliavini and Di Stefano and more recently still, by Pavarotti, Domingo and others.

By the 1930s new boom industries of radio and the film-musical had similarly created a seemingly inexhaustible production-line for the *canzone popolare*. In Italy, via the air-waves, Carlo Buti christened dozens of new – and mostly ephemeral – titles each month, while in the cinema, starting with Jan Kiepura's *Napoli, Città Canora* (also known as *City Of Song*) in 1931, a new transatlantic market was opened which by 1936 had reached its zenith with such internationally-distributed vehicles as *Forget Me Not* (1936) and *Ave, Maria* (among several chances to shine for Gigli, this last offered musical director Alois Melichar's spirited 'afterthought' *Anima mia*).

Peter Dempsey

## 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.

## Italian Popular Songs • 1

- 1) **FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI (1846-1916): 'A vucchella** **2:43**  
Sung by **Tito Schipa**  
Recorded in the USA on 19th October 1927. Matrix: BVE 39899, Cat. No. Victor 1317
- 2) **FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI (1846-1916): L'alba sèpara dalla luce l'ombra** **2:26**  
Sung by **Jussi Björling**  
Recorded in Stockholm on 11th August 1949. Matrix: OSB 3071-2, Cat. No. HMV DA 1931
- 3) **MICHELE ESPOSITO (1855-1929): Anema e core** **3:49**  
Sung by **Ferruccio Tagliavini**  
Recorded in the USA on 26th October 1951. Matrix: E1FB 3789, Cat. No. Victor 25-7162
- 4) **ALOIS MELICHAR (1896-1975): Anima mia** **3:21**  
Sung by **Beniamino Gigli**  
Recorded in Germany on 24th May 1936. Matrix: ORA 1308-2, Cat. No. HMV DA 1487
- 5) **ERNESTO DE CURTIS (1875-1937): Carmela** **3:06**  
Sung by **Beniamino Gigli**  
Recorded in the USA on 4th December 1930. Matrix: BVE 64391-1, Cat. No. Victor 1575
- 6) **ERNESTO DE CURTIS (1875-1937): Canta pe' me!** **3:24**  
Sung by **Beniamino Gigli**  
Recorded in the USA on 27th December 1928. Matrix: BVE 49150-4, Cat. No. Victor 1403
- 7) **RICHARD BARTHELEMY (19th/20th century): Chi se nne scorda cchiù** **2:47**  
Sung by **Tito Schipa**  
Recorded in the USA on 10th September 1928. Matrix: BVE 27115-6, Cat. No. Victor 1415
- 8) **SALVATORE CARDILLO (1874-1947): Core 'ngrato** **3:42**  
Sung by **Giuseppe Di Stefano**  
Recorded in Italy on 24th April 1953. Matrix: OBA 8335, Cat. No. HMV DA 11345
- 9) **GIOACHINO ROSSINI (1792-1868): La danza** **2:51**  
Sung by **Jan Kiepura**  
Recorded in Germany in March 1932. Matrix: 10011, Cat. No. Parlophone Odeon RO 20201.
- 10) **LUIGI DENZA (1846-1922): Funiculì, funiculà** **2:37**  
Sung by **Alessandro Ziliani**. Recorded in Germany in October 1935. Matrix: ORA 799, Cat. No. HMV DA 1450
- 11) **FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI (1846-1916): Ideale** **3:25**  
Sung by **Jussi Björling**  
Recorded in Stockholm on 5th September 1937. Matrix: OSB 577-2, Cat. No. HMV DA 1582
- 12) **EMANUELE NUTILE (1862-1932): Mamma mia, che vo' sape'?** **3:47**  
Sung by **Beniamino Gigli**  
Recorded in the USA during December 1930. Matrix: CVE 58124-2, Cat. No. Victor 7400

- 13 ERNESTO TAGLIAFERRI (1889-1937): Mandulinata a Napoli** **2:55**  
**Sung by Joseph Schmidt**  
 Recorded in Germany on 15th December 1934. Matrix: W 85247-2, Cat. No. Decca 23035
- 14 FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI (1846-1916): Marechiaro** **3:33**  
**Sung by Giuseppe Di Stefano**  
 Recorded in Italy on 24th April 1953. Matrix: OBA 8331, Cat. No. HMV DA 2047
- 15 RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO (1857-1919): Mattinata** **2:05**  
**Sung by Aureliano Pertile**  
 Recorded in Germany on 10th October 1927. Matrix: BF 2360, Cat. No. HMV DA 1008
- 16 STANISLAO GASTALDON (1861-1939): Musica proibita** **3:43**  
**Sung by Mario Del Monaco**  
 Recorded in London. Matrix: DR 769, Cat. No. English Decca P 18213
- 17 EDOARDO DI CAPUA (1859-1920): 'O sole mio** **3:18**  
**Sung by Jussi Björling**  
 Recorded in Stockholm on 5th September 1937. Matrix: OSB 576, Cat. No. HMV DA 1607
- 18 LUIGI DENZA (1846-1922): Occhi di fata** **3:00**  
**Sung by Beniamino Gigli**  
 Recorded in England on 4th June 1938. Matrix: 2EA 6351-1, Cat. No. HMV DB 3551
- 19 TEODORO COTTRAU (1827-1879): Santa Lucia** **3:24**  
**Sung by Joseph Schmidt**  
 Recorded in Germany on 18th January 1933. Matrix: 133716, Cat. No. Parlophone B 48807
- 20 FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI (1846-1916): Serenata** **3:34**  
**Sung by Beniamino Gigli**  
 Recorded in Italy on 24th February 1930. Matrix: OBA 2347-1, Cat. No. HMV DA 1618
- 21 NICOLA VALENTE (1853-1939): Torna** **3:36**  
**Sung by Tito Schipa**  
 Recorded in Italy on 27th April 1932. Matrix: OM 502, Cat. No. HMV DA 1271
- 22 ERNESTO DE CURTIS (1875-1937): Torna a Surriento** **3:04**  
**Sung by Tito Schipa**  
 Recorded in Italy on 4th May 1934. Matrix: OW 2485-2, Cat. No. HMV DA 1379
- 23 FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI (1846-1916): L'ultima canzone** **4:31**  
**Sung by Beniamino Gigli**  
 Recorded in London on 4th June 1938, England. Matrix: 2EA 6349-2, Cat. No. HMV DB 3551
- 24 TRADITIONAL arr. VERGINE: Vieni sul mar** **3:34**  
**Sung by Tito Schipa**  
 Recorded in the USA on 8th September 1926. Matrix: BVE 35859-2, Cat. No. Victor 1204

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ADD

# ITALIAN POPULAR SONGS • 1

Tito Schipa <sup>1</sup> • Jussi Björling <sup>2</sup> • Ferruccio Tagliavini <sup>3</sup>  
 Beniamino Gigli <sup>4</sup> • Giuseppe Di Stefano <sup>5</sup> • Jan Kiepura <sup>6</sup>  
 Alessandro Ziliani <sup>7</sup> • Joseph Schmidt <sup>8</sup>  
 Aureliano Pertile <sup>9</sup> • Mario Del Monaco <sup>10</sup>

Playing  
Time  
78:17

NAXOS Historical

ITALIAN POPULAR SONGS • 1

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1	FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI: <i>'A vucchella</i> <sup>1</sup>	2:43	17	EDOARDO DI CAPUA: <i>'O sole mio</i> <sup>2</sup>	3:18
2	FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI: <i>L'alba sèpara dalla luce l'ombra</i> <sup>2</sup>	2:26	18	LUIGI DENZA: <i>Occhi di fata</i> <sup>4</sup>	3:00
3	MICHELE ESPOSITO: <i>Anema e core</i> <sup>3</sup>	3:49	19	TEODORO COTTRAU: <i>Santa Lucia</i> <sup>8</sup>	3:24
4	ALOIS MELICHAR: <i>Anima mia</i> <sup>4</sup>	3:21	20	FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI: <i>Serenata</i> <sup>4</sup>	3:34
5	ERNESTO DE CURTIS: <i>Carmela</i> <sup>4</sup>	3:06	21	NICOLA VALENTE: <i>Torna</i> <sup>1</sup>	3:36
6	ERNESTO DE CURTIS: <i>Canta pe' me!</i> <sup>4</sup>	3:24	22	ERNESTO DE CURTIS: <i>Torna a Surriento</i> <sup>1</sup>	3:04
7	RICHARD BARTHELEMY: <i>Chi se nne scorda cchiù!</i> <sup>1</sup>	2:47	23	FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI: <i>L'ultima canzone</i> <sup>4</sup>	4:31
8	SALVATORE CARDILLO: <i>Core 'ngrato</i> <sup>5</sup>	3:42	24	TRADITIONAL, ARR. VERGINE: <i>Vieni sul mar</i> <sup>1</sup>	3:34
9	GIOACHINO ROSSINI: <i>La Danza</i> <sup>6</sup>	2:51	<p>As a genre in the broadest populist sense, the Italian <i>canzone</i> boasts a healthy tradition extending back at least two centuries. The selections on this release are all established favourites, survivors of bygone eras, having been variously recorded since the advent of the gramophone by famous singers, and more often than not, by tenors. They include Tosti's <i>Last Song</i>, De Curtis' <i>Come back to Sorrento</i>, the hauntingly beautiful <i>Santa Lucia</i> and <i>'O sole mio</i>, perhaps the most enduring of all Italian popular songs. The performances are classics of the gramophone by some of the greatest tenor singers of the twentieth century.</p>		
10	LUIGI DENZA: <i>Funiculi, funiculà</i> <sup>7</sup>	2:37			
11	FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI: <i>Ideale</i> <sup>2</sup>	3:25			
12	EMANUELE NUTILE: <i>Mamma mia, che vo' sape'?</i> <sup>4</sup>	3:47			
13	ERNESTO TAGLIAFERRI: <i>Mandulinata a Napoli</i> <sup>8</sup>	2:55			
14	FRANCESCO PAOLO TOSTI: <i>Marechiarè</i> <sup>5</sup>	3:33			
15	RUGGIERO LEONCAVALLO: <i>Mattinata</i> <sup>9</sup>	2:05			
16	STANISLAO GASTALDON: <i>Musica proibita</i> <sup>10</sup>	3:43			

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Ward Marston  
 Special thanks to Lawrence Holdridge and Paolo Zeccara

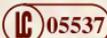
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A complete track list can be found in the booklet  
 Cover image: Neapolitan postcard (19th century): View of Sorrento  
 (Private Collection)



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CANADA



ITALIAN POPULAR SONGS • 1

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