



**Beniamino
GIGLI**

**Milan, London and
Berlin Recordings
1933-1935**

PUCCINI

GIORDANO

DONIZETTI

MASCAGNI

HANDEL

GLUCK

Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957)

The Gigli Edition Vol. 8 • Milan, London and Berlin Recordings 1933-35

This disc includes some of Gigli's best-loved and best-selling 78 rpm records, performances when he was in the full plenitude of his powers, fêted as a popular tenor all over the world and consequently loved by audiences far beyond those who heard him in the opera house. The tenor's singing, alternately impassioned or smiling, appealed to the hearts of all those who could recognise a singer of the people and one who wanted above all to please his hearers. Yet there was nothing the least calculated about what he achieved. Gigli was among the most natural of singers and, as can be seen in films made contemporaneously with these recordings, he was genuinely a person who felt deeply and sincerely, inspired by basic emotions. Indeed the lack of complication or any hint of intellectualism in his singing was the basis of his success. Superior persons did and still do complain of a touch of vulgarity in his performances, decry his resort to gulps, even sobs, but these were part and parcel of the Gigli persona and without them he would not have been the same singer.

The first two tracks epitomize the Gigli who had returned to Europe after eleven successful years at the Metropolitan in New York, singing with renewed confidence. Chenier was reportedly his favourite part and he shows us just why in Chenier's passionate defence in front of the revolutionary tribunal. Employing every rhetorical device in his appreciable armoury, Gigli's poet appeals to the gallery, nowhere more so than in the line to which he later ascribed autobiographical meaning: *Con la mia voce ho cantato la patria*. About a decade later Gigli recorded the rôle complete, but he is here in stronger, fresher voice, second-period Gigli at his most potent. At the same session in Milan he recorded his renowned version of Turiddu's farewell to his mother. At the apex of his career, Gigli pours forth golden tones: the soft warmth

of his half-voice, with more than a hint of nostalgia in it, the vigorous, full-throated declamation of the closing passage are truly unsurpassed.

Gigli's next session was in London, where he began by recording *Ombra mai fù*. Caruso had claimed the castrato aria that opens Handel's *Serse*, the king's paean to the leafy shade of his tree, and his successors were not slow in following his example. Though totally anachronistic given today's view of authentic Handel, Gigli's performance has its own justification. Canio's jealous outpouring *No, Pagliaccio, non son*, recorded the same day as the Handel with Barbirolli conducting, offers the very essence of Gigli's interpretation of *verismo*, not as tragically dignified as Martinelli in the same music as the clown throws off his comic mask and confronts his adulterous wife, but involved and involving. In the great passage beginning *Sperai, tanto il delirio*, Gigli sings with that thrilling intensity that made his Canio so remarkable.

The next three titles were among the most popular Gigli ever made. Although the 1929 Victor *Una furtiva lagrima* (Naxos 8.110267) is probably the more stylish, this 1933 London remake finds the tenor pouring out his thoughts with a greater breadth of tone and feeling, and the recording, with Barbirolli again the conductor, is much better. The Italianate warmth of Gigli's tone leaps off the disc; so does the way he freely adumbrates Nemorino's lovelorn sentiments in a seamless flow of tone. Back in Milan in March 1934, Gigli made a coupling that was bound to become a bestseller, *La donna è mobile* and *E lucevan le stelle*, now with Franco Ghione, as it were, in the pit. As the Duke of Mantua, Gigli is cheekily insouciant, irresistibly charming in his variations of tone and phrase, so much more interesting than most tenors today in this music. Cavaradossi's lament might have been written with Gigli in mind, and he delivers it with

the complete identification with the character in hand that was such a mark of all his stage rôles, and with those marvellous *diminuendi* for which he was famous.

The two other operatic items would not pass any test in matters of style. Don José's *Flower Song*, sung in Italian, is a long way from Bizet's intentions for his anti-hero, Gigli claiming it as just another Italian exclamation of fervent love, gulps and all, but he overcomes almost all objections by the sincerity of his reading. Gluck's Paris is also included in the Gigli pantheon and here, whatever the stylistic quirks, the sweet *mezza voce* is hard to resist. For the rest it is the

songs with which Gigli always delighted his fans at his myriad recitals. Bixio's *Solo per te*, *Lucia* from the film *La canzone dell'amore* is typical of them in its bewitching magnetism, all the traits that made the tenor such a beloved figure there in a spinning of honeyed, unfettered tone. Martini's *Plaisir d'amour* and Massenet's *Elégie*, where Gigli for once essays French, are further examples of his seamless marriage of line and tone, while *Mattinata* again shows Gigli glorying in the sheer confident strength of his vocal powers in the mid-1930s.

Alan Blyth

Producer's Note

The present volume is the eighth 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.

The selections in the current volume were originally issued in 1999 as part of Romophone 82017-2 ("Beniamino Gigli - The Complete HMV Recordings, 1933-35"). 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 declicking module) and have made adjustments to the equalization of each track. A few tracks have been re-transferred in their entirety. The distortion heard in the beginning of *Non ti scordar di me* is in the original recording. I have determined that the supposed alternate take of *Vesti la giubba* which was coupled with Beppe's Serenade on DB 3158 is actually a dubbing (at a different speed) of the take used in the complete *Pagliacci* recording, and so is not included here.

Mark Obert-Thorn

Tracks 1-2
La Scala Orchestra conducted by Carlo Sabajno

Tracks 3-6
Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli
with Herbert Dawson, Organ (Track 3)

Tracks 7-9, 13-15
La Scala Orchestra conducted by Franco Ghione

Tracks 10-12, 16-19
La Scala Orchestra conducted by Dino Oliveri

Tracks 20-22
Berlin State Opera Orchestra
conducted by Alois Melichar

Tracks 1-8, 10-11, 13-15, 18, 20-22
Sung in Italian

Tracks 17, 19
Sung in French

Tracks 9, 12, 16
Sung in Neapolitan dialect

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>GIORDANO: Andrea Chenier:
 1 Si, fu soldato (Act 3) 2:36
 Recorded 3rd March 1933
 in the Conservatorio, Milan
 Matrix: 0M 1168-1
 First issued on HMV DA 1312</p> | <p>PUCCHINI: Tosca:
 7 E lucevan le stelle (Act 3) 2:58
 Recorded 26th March 1934
 in the Conservatorio, Milan
 Matrix: 0W 2403-3
 First issued on HMV DA 1372</p> |
| <p>MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:
 2 Mamma, quel vino è generoso 3:59
 Recorded 3rd March 1933
 in the Conservatorio, Milan
 Matrix: 2M 1169-2
 First issued on HMV DB 1902</p> | <p>VERDI: Rigoletto:
 8 La donna è mobile (Act 3) 2:16
 Recorded 26th March 1934
 in the Conservatorio, Milan
 Matrix: 0W 2404-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1372</p> |
| <p>HANDEL: Serse:
 3 Frondi tenere e belle ... Ombra mai fù (Act 1) 4:04
 Recorded 20th March 1933
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 3505-1
 First issued on HMV DB 1901</p> | <p>DI CAPUA:
 9 'O sole mio 3:04
 Recorded 26th March 1934
 in the Conservatorio, Milan
 Matrix: 0W 2405-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1373</p> |
| <p>LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci:
 4 No! Pagliaccio non son! (Act 2) 3:02
 Recorded 20th March 1933
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 0B 3506-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1312</p> | <p>DE CURTIS:
 10 Addio bel sogno 3:12
 Recorded 7th April 1934
 in the Pro Salute Studios, Milan
 Matrix: 0W 2430-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1374</p> |
| <p>COTTRAU:
 5 Santa Lucia 4:17
 Recorded 20th March 1933
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 3507-1
 First issued on HMV DB 1902</p> | <p>BIXIO:
 11 Solo per te, Lucia 3:13
 Recorded 7th April 1934
 in the Pro Salute Studios, Milan
 Matrix: 0W 2431-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1374</p> |
| <p>DONIZETTI: L'elisir d'amore:
 6 Una furtiva lagrima (Act 2) 4:24
 Recorded 20th March 1933
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 3508-1
 First issued on HMV DB 1901</p> | <p>DE CURTIS:
 12 Senza nisciuno 2:56
 Recorded 7th April 1934
 in the Pro Salute Studios, Milan
 Matrix: 0W 2432-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1373</p> |

- LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci:**
- 13** **Pagliaccio, mio marito ... O Colombina (Act 2)** 4:11
Iva Pacetti, soprano
Recorded 5th July 1934
in the Conservatorio, Milan
Matrix: 2W 2599-1
First issued on HMV DB 3158
- BIZET: Carmen:**
- 14** **La fleur que tu m'avais jetée (Act 2)** 4:05
(Sung in Italian)
Recorded 26th April 1935
in the Conservatorio, Milan
Matrix: 2BA 563-4 *
First issued on HMV DB 2531
- LEONCAVALLO:**
- 15** **Mattinata** 2:15
Recorded 26th April 1935
in the Conservatorio, Milan
Matrix: 0BA 564-2; First issued on HMV DA 1454
- DE CURTIS:**
- 16** **Torna a Surriento** 3:18
Recorded 27th April 1935
in the Pro Salute Studios, Milan
Matrix: 0BA 565-1
First issued on HMV DA 1454
- MARTINI:**
- 17** **Plaisir d'amour** 4:11
Recorded 27th April 1935
in the Pro Salute Studios, Milan
Matrix: 2BA 566-6 *
First issued on HMV DB 2530
- GLUCK: Paride ed Elena:**
- 18** **O del mio dolce ardor (Act 1)** 4:07
Recorded 28th April 1935
in the Pro Salute Studios, Milan
Matrix: 2BA 567-5 *
First issued on HMV DB 2531
- MASSENET:**
- 19** **Élégie** 3:46
Recorded 28th April 1935
in the Pro Salute Studios, Milan
Matrix: 2BA 568-4 *
First issued on HMV DB 2530
- SCHUBERT (arr. MELICHAR):**
- 20** **Mille cherubini in coro** 2:32
[Wiegenlied, D. 498]
Recorded 25th October 1935
Electrola Studio A, Berlin
Matrix: 0RA 839-3
First issued on HMV DA 1447
- DE CURTIS:**
- 21** **Non ti scordar di me** 3:21
Recorded 25th October 1935
Electrola Studio A, Berlin
Matrix: 0RA 840-2
First issued on HMV DA 1447
- MELICHAR:**
- 22** **Serenata Veneziana** 2:16
Recorded 25th October, 1935
Electrola Studio A, Berlin
Matrix: 0RA 841-2
First issued on HMV DA 1451

*A note of explication is required for the unusually high take numbers of Tracks 14 (4), 17 (6), 18 (5) and 19 (4). These do not represent additional takes made at the recording sessions in Milan. In June 1935 the engineers at the EMI factory in Hayes undertook a volume reduction of some of the masters received from their colleagues in Milan, which they considered 'too loud'. This process took place in the 'Transfer Room', with each attempt at volume reduction given a new take number until a satisfactory result was achieved.



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ADD

Beniamino Gigli

The Gigli Edition, Vol. 8

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 Playing
Time
74:06

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- 1 **GIORDANO: Andrea Chenier:** Sì, fu soldato
- 2 **MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:** Mamma, quel vino è generoso
- 3 **HANDEL: Serse:** Frondi tenere e belle... Ombra mai fù
- 4 **LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci:** No! Pagliaccio non son!
- 5 **COTTRAU: Santa Lucia**
- 6 **DONIZETTI: L'elisir d'amore:** Una furtiva lagrima
- 7 **PUCCINI: Tosca:** E lucevan le stelle
- 8 **VERDI: Rigoletto:** La donna è mobile
- 9 **DI CAPUA: 'O sole mio**
- 10 **DE CURTIS:** Addio bel sogno
- 11 **BIXIO: Solo per te Lucia**
- 12 **DE CURTIS:** Senza nessuno
- 13 **LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci:** Pagliaccio, mio marito...
O Colombina, with Iva Pacetti, Soprano
- 14 **BIZET: Carmen:** La fleur que tu m'avais jetée
- 15 **LEONCAVALLO: Mattinata**
- 16 **DE CURTIS:** Torna a Surriento
- 17 **MARTINI: Plaisir d'amour**
- 18 **GLUCK: Paride ed Elena:** O del mio dolce ardo
- 19 **MASSENET: Élégie**
- 20 **SCHUBERT (arr. MELICHAR):** Mille cherubini in coro
[Wiegenlied, D. 498]
- 21 **DE CURTIS:** Non ti scordar di me
- 22 **MELICHAR:** Serenata Veneziana

The present volume is the eighth 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 alternative take and, wherever available, unpublished takes. The sides here are presented in the order in which they were recorded. For this Naxos series, restoration engineer Mark Obert-Thorn has remastered his original, critically-acclaimed Romophone transfers, cleaning them up further and re-doing some tracks in their entirety. Of particular interest in this eighth volume is repertoire not usually associated with Gigli such as the famous castrato aria from Handel's *Xerxes*; and a rarely heard aria from Gluck's *Paride ed Elena*.

MADE IN
THE EU

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Mark Ricaldone, Lawrence Holdridge and Peter Lack
Previously released on Romophone

www.naxos.com

A complete track list can be found in the booklet
Cover image: Beniamino Gigli as Cavarodossi from Puccini's *Tosca*, Palermo, March 1935 (from the Mark Ricaldone photographic collection of Beniamino Gigli)

