



THE McCORMACK EDITION • 4

ADD

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**John  
McCORMACK**

**1913-14**

**Acoustic Recordings**

**With Fritz Kreisler, violin**

**VERDI**

**BIZET**

**MASSENET**

**GODARD**

**IRISH SONGS**

New restorations by Ward Marston

## The McCormack Edition: 1913-1914 Acoustic Recordings

### SCOTT:

- ① *Within the Garden of My Heart* 2:18  
3rd January 1913; B 12762-1 (Victor 64317)

### MARSHALL:

- ② *Dear Love, Remember Me* 2:57  
3rd January 1913; B 12763-1 (Victor 64318)

### MASSENET: *Manon*

- ③ *Chiudo gli occhi ('Il Sogno')* 2:59  
3rd January 1913; B 12764-2 (Victor 64312)

### OLD IRISH AIR, arr. Stanford

- ④ *Molly Brannigan* 2:54  
3rd January 1913; B 12765-1 (Victor 64316)

### MILLIGAN FOX, arr. Clay:

- ⑤ *The Foggy Dew* 2:11  
3rd January 1913; B 12767-1 (Victor 64326)

### OLD IRISH AIR

#### 'The Jolly Ploughboy' arr. Lover:

- ⑥ *The Low Back'd Car* 2:24  
28th March 1913; B 13031-1 (Victor 64329)

### BIMBONI:

- ⑦ *Sospiri miei, andate ove vi mando* 2:22  
28th March 1913; B 13032-1 (Victor 64333)

### KENNEDY:

- ⑧ *Say 'Au Revoir', but not 'Goodbye'* 3:22  
28th March 1913; B 13033-1 (Victor 64328)

### TOURS:

- ⑨ *Mother o' Mine* 2:17  
28th March 1913; B 13034-1 (Victor 64332)

### RONALD:

- ⑩ *Down in the Forest* 2:53  
28th March 1913; B 13035-1 (Victor 64331)

### BIZET: *Carmen*

- ⑪ *Votre mère avec moi sortait de la chapelle* 4:01  
with **Lucy Isabelle Marsh**, *soprano*  
1st May 1913; C 13028-3 (Victor 74345)

### CADMAN:

- ⑫ *I hear a Thrush at Eve 'Serenade'* 2:13  
1st May 1913; B 13218-2 (Victor 64340)

<b>TOSTI:</b>		<b>LEROUX:</b>	
[13] <i>Goodbye</i>	3:59	[21] <i>Le Nil</i>	4:16
1st May 1913; C 13219-1 (Victor 74346)		with <b>Fritz Kreisler</b> , <i>violinist</i>	
		25th March 1914; C 14625-1 (Victor 88482)	
<b>SILESU:</b>		<b>GODARD: Jocelyn</b>	
[14] <i>A Little Love, A Little Kiss</i>	3:17	[22] <i>Beneath the Quivering Leaves</i>	5:13
1st May 1913; B 13220-2 (Victor 64343)		with <b>Fritz Kreisler</b> , <i>violinist</i>	
		25th March 1914; C 14626-1 (Victor 88483)	
<b>VERDI: Rigoletto</b>		<b>SCHUBERT:</b>	
[15] <i>Questa o quella</i>	2:00	[23] <i>Ave Maria, D. 839</i>	4:38
1st May 1913; B 13223-1 (Victor 64344)		with <b>Fritz Kreisler</b> , <i>violinist</i>	
<b>MASON:</b>		25th March 1914; C 14627-1 (Victor 88484)	
[16] <i>Nearer, My God, to Thee</i>	3:21	<b>GOUNOD:</b>	
1st May 1913; B 13225-1 (Victor 64345)		[24] <i>Ave Maria</i>	
<b>THOMAS:</b>		' <i>Meditation on J. S. Bach's Prelude in C</i> '	4:45
[17] <i>Eileen Allamah</i>	2:40	with <b>Fritz Kreisler</b> , <i>violinist</i>	
2nd May 1913; B 13231-1 (Victor 64341)		31st March 1914; C 14627-1 (Victor 88484)	
<b>HATTON:</b>		Tracks 1-3 and 6-18 : with orchestra	
[18] <i>Goodbye, Sweetheart, Goodbye</i>	3:11	Tracks 4 & 5 : with Spencer Clay, <i>piano</i>	
2nd May 1913; B 13233-1 (Victor 64342)		Track 19 : with Edwin Schneider, <i>piano</i>	
<b>PARKYNS:</b>		Tracks 20-23 : with Vincent O' Brien, <i>piano</i>	
[19] <i>Le Portrait</i>	3:07	Tracks 1-2, 4-6, 8-10, 12-14, 16-18, 20, 22-23	
2nd May 1913; B13235-1 (Victor 64374)		sung in English	
<b>BRAGA:</b>		Tracks 3, 7, 15 sung in Italian	
[20] <i>Angel's Serenade</i>	4:45	Tracks 11, 19, 21 sung in French	
with <b>Fritz Kreisler</b> , <i>violinist</i>		Track 24 sung in Latin	
25th March 1914; C 14623-1 (Victor 88479)			

The discographic data for the original Romophone CD issue is taken from *John McCormack - A Comprehensive Discography* by Worth, Paul W. and Cartwright, Jim. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986).

## John McCormack (1884-1945)

### The McCormack Edition Vol. 4

In his book on the great singers, Henry Pleasants deems John McCormack to be one of those rare artists who defies a specific category; he is, that writer tells us, one of those singers who truly stands apart. McCormack's career supports that judgement. Originally trained for opera, he soon found himself the most popular concert artist of his time; predictably labelled an Irish tenor, he developed into a supreme interpreter of Handel and Mozart; initially placed before a recording horn to make cylinders and seven-inch flat discs, he would later help to usher in the era of sound films and eventually became an effective radio broadcaster. He was the most versatile and adventurous of singers, and he indeed occupies a special place in our musical history.

John McCormack was born in the Irish town of Athlone on 14th June 1884, and was not yet twenty when he found himself in Dublin, studying reluctantly for a civil service examination he never took. A taste of musical training and some experience in a cathedral choir led, in May of 1903, to his winning the gold medal in an important music contest. The victory told the young man that music could be his future, and by 1905 he was in Milan, studying under Vincenzo Sabatini (the father of the romance novelist who wrote *Scaramouche*). It was not long before the maestro saw fit to arrange for the fledgling tenor's opera début, which took place in Savona on 13th January 1906. The rôle was that of the hero in Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz*, a part that required the 22-year-old Irishman to look twice his age. He did not. McCormack's stage awkwardness in this first production seemed prophetic of the discomfort he would always feel in costume and on the opera stage.

The quietly successful Savona début was followed by some unsuccessful local auditions, including an especially disappointing one at La Scala. Italian listeners could never quite respond to this Hibernian's vocal quality and weight of voice; they were too accustomed to native

tenors of the Caruso and De Lucia variety. McCormack soon realised his situation and turned to London, where he found a repetition of his experience at La Scala. It took the sympathetic influence of an important patron of the arts to open the door to Covent Garden, where, on 15th October 1907 the youngest principal tenor ever to sing in that opera house made his début as Turridu in *Cavalleria rusticana*. Critical reception was good, but hardly overwhelming; McCormack knew he had work to do. The recordings he made for the Odeon company between 1907 and 1909 clearly document what one critic has called an artistic leap without equal in the history of recording. By the time the singer made his first Victor records, shortly after his November 1909 New York opera début as Alfredo in *La traviata*, he was a fully developed artist.

During his first seasons in London, before his Covent Garden début, McCormack had earned a growing reputation as a recitalist. Indeed, Walter Legge has stated that it was the tenor's sensational performance at a March 1907 ballad concert, rather than his opera début eight months later, that marked the true beginning of his career in England. A similar phenomenon, although not as dramatic, occurred not long after that New York *La traviata* début. The singer found himself doing a great deal of opera work in New York, Philadelphia, and other locations, and was well received, but when he gave concerts the reception was overwhelming. One factor in all of this - although not the only one - was the enormous number of Irish immigrants who flocked to hear him. They patiently waited through the classical parts of his recitals in order to get what they had really paid for: the songs of their native Ireland, given interpretations they would never hear elsewhere. McCormack quickly realised that if he remained in the opera house he would always be in competition with tenors whose voices were stamped from heavier metal; wisely, he chose to reign

supreme in the recital hall. He was amply rewarded for his decision. In 1918 a national music magazine could pronounce him “the most popular singer in the world”, and it was around that same time he reached a highwater mark in his career: his record sales for a single year surpassed Caruso’s. The Italian was quick to congratulate his brother tenor the next time they met, but as he turned to go, the great Neapolitan paused and said, almost sweetly, “But please, Giovanni, not to let it happen again, yes?” Even between colleagues who genuinely admire each other, the scent of competition is never really far away.

The World War I years found McCormack in America, where his popularity only increased season after season. The singer and his wife felt so much at home in the United States that, as the War was ending, they decided to become American citizens. It was a decision that cost the singer dearly. People in the British Isles and throughout the Empire felt betrayed by this transfer of loyalty, and it was not until 1924 that McCormack dared to announce a concert in London. While England awaited his return, the prodigal made concert appearances in Paris, Berlin, and Prague, and sang his final opera performances; these took place in Monte Carlo, his 1923 creation of the rôle of Grizko in the newly edited *La foire de Sorotchintzi* of Mussorgsky being the most notable production.

In 1926 McCormack went on an extended concert tour of the Orient; three years later he starred in the Hollywood film *Song O’My Heart* playing opposite the young Maureen O’Sullivan, then at the very beginning of her career. The early 1930s saw regular concert seasons on both sides of the Atlantic. The singer remained on tour until November, 1938, when he took leave of his public at London’s Albert Hall. Continuing to record until 1942, he also made several fund raising tours and BBC broadcasts for the war effort. The following year he retired to Ireland, where he died at his home outside Dublin on 16th September 1945.

The present volume of McCormack recordings finds

the tenor in his fourth year in the United States, recognised as an opera singer and enjoying unprecedented success as a recitalist. Because his concert work far outweighed his opera appearances, we should not be surprised that this volume contains only three operatic arias. These items provide varying levels of satisfaction. The first aria, the famous Dream from Massenet’s *Manon*, is sung here in Italian, always McCormack’s preferred language in opera. Since the aria has the true Massenet flavour and is in the best French tradition, we immediately feel the loss of the original language. Then, too, the pace taken is too brisk; we miss the legato we know McCormack could have given us, and we find ourselves wishing for the caressing head tones the aria requires.

The duet from *Carmen* is much more in the McCormack idiom. Here, our tenor makes a rare foray into the French repertoire and uses the work’s original language, with good results. McCormack never sang Don José on stage; the part would have been much too heavy for him. If, however, *Carmen* was on his wish list (a not unlikely possibility), his reading of Bizet’s music reveals his obvious sympathy for that composer’s work; this is a warm and ingratiating performance to hear. Finally, his ‘*Questa o quella*’ is his best effort among this small handful of arias. McCormack was an excellent Verdi tenor, and this aria from *Rigoletto* gives us useful evidence of that. Dramatically, the singer was always judged to be less than convincing as the Duke, but this recording shows clear and incisive singing, strong testimony to his understanding of the composer.

McCormack could be very good in opera, but, as always, he was supreme in the world of song. Some of the ballads included here harken back to a world that, with the coming of war in 1914, was destined to disappear, and the musical culture we hear in the Victorian parlour ballads McCormack sang so well would also vanish. These recordings are haunting echoes of that vanished world. *Within the Garden of My Heart* is a textbook example of the flowery song so loved by Victorian

audiences, and the 1913 *Nearer, My God, to Thee* resonates with the loss of the Titanic only a year earlier. Another example of this musical genre has some close associations with McCormack himself: *Dear Love, Remember Me* was composed by Charles Marshall, who composed the words and music of *I Hear You Calling Me*, a song McCormack discovered during his early days in London and which quickly became his signature song.

At least one other item has a close personal association for our singer. This is *Goodbye, Sweetheart, Goodbye*, a very popular ballad that was first sung in England by Mario, the reigning prince of tenors in the Victorian era; from his earliest career, McCormack always fancied himself the modern successor of this great artist. We are right to suspect that McCormack most likely had his illustrious predecessor in mind when he came to make this particular record. Other Italian associations apply even more directly to McCormack. When we listen to his lovely recording of *Sospiri miei andate ove vi mando*, two facts from his career call for our attention. His studies in Italy were intended to lead to a Continental operatic career, so we are not surprised when we learn that his study of the Italian language was rapid and thorough. In a matter of months, McCormack was fluent in Italian, and remained so throughout his life. We remember too his preference for song over opera. If we add to these facts the rich Gaelic vowels at his command, we understand why this recording of the Bimboni song is so ravishing.

No review of McCormack as singer of song would be complete without detailed reference to the music of his native Ireland, and this CD touches on more than one aspect of his original musical culture. The song *Eileen Allamah*, with its smooth melody and remnants of the Gaelic language, brings us to the romantic Ireland that McCormack's immigrant audiences in the United States wanted and needed to remember. The remaining two songs reveal how comically the Irish could view themselves; *The Low Back'd Car* and *Molly Brannigan* are twin masterpieces of a culture's self-directed humour.

*Molly Brannigan* is filled with mock-heroic allusions that illuminate the Gaelic world, including an Irish phrase for a funeral procession ("the long meander"), the Devil's Glen (a natural wonder in the Wicklow Mountains), the Irish interjection "yerra" which could be translated as "alas", a comically and appropriately inaccurate term for the early firearm, known as a blunderbuss ("a blundergun"), along with a reference to "the famous Alexander", who is none other than Alexander the Great. A similar echo of the classical world is heard in *The Low Back'd Car*, with its reference to "the bloomin' gods of love," a clear image of the cupids who are ever present in classical painting and sculpture. Here the comic effect is heightened by having those cupids placed squarely in the same context as Peggy's cart.

The recordings of these two songs also document an important transitional moment in McCormack's career. The singer's accompanist during his first seasons in the United States had been the British pianist Spencer Clay. Musically, Clay was more than acceptable, but he was the source of some very poor public relations advice, which was damaging to McCormack. The singer's manager, Charles Wagner, was determined to get rid of Clay, and this he did, replacing the unhelpful Englishman with the American Edwin Schneider. The present CD affords us the opportunity to hear both pianists at nearly the same moment, Clay recording with McCormack in January 1913 and Schneider making his first record with the singer in May of that same year. Even a cursory hearing tells us that it was not Clay's musicianship that led to his banishment, but the fact that Schneider remained with McCormack for nearly 25 years is clear testimony to their artistic sympathy. This first record with Schneider represents one of McCormack's rare forays into the world of French song, and *Le Portrait* is effectively and sensitively sung.

The final five recordings presented here are especially memorable, and for more than a single reason. They are, first of all, the first examples we have of the legendary duets between McCormack and Fritz Kreisler,

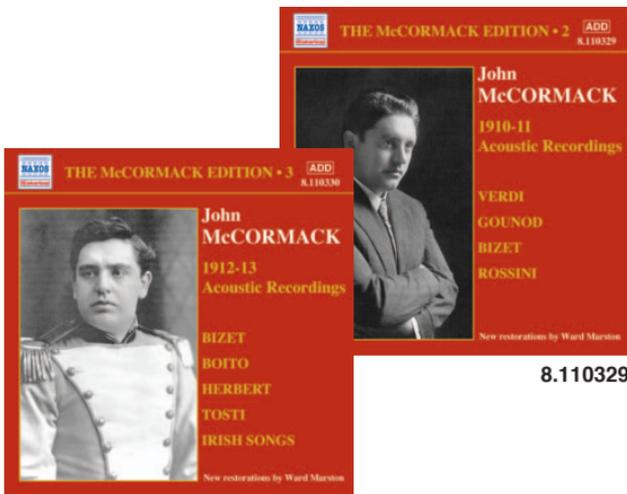
a collaboration that would extend, off and on, for a full decade. The exquisite *Berceuse*, the only piece to survive Godard's failed opera *Jocelyn*, is given a melting interpretation by McCormack, one made even more beautiful by Kreisler's obbligato. The text of *Ave Maria* is well represented by the Schubert and the Bach-Gounod settings, while a slightly less timeworn piece is the *Angel's Serenade*, followed by a languidly sung and gracefully supported *Le Nil*. The cherished chemistry of two kindred musicians is evident in each of these duets, but another more personal factor gives each of them an even deeper dimension. This is the musical presence of Vincent O'Brien, who serves as accompanist on each of the McCormack-Kreisler records. O'Brien was a legendary musician in his native Dublin, and it was he who had directed the young McCormack when he sang in the cathedral choir in that city. It was also Vincent O'Brien who had prepared the tenor for his entrance in the 1903 Feis Ceoil. Now, slightly more than a decade later, McCormack was able to thank his first singing master by inviting him to serve as his accompanist on a concert tour of Australia. The tour over, O'Brien was returning to Ireland through New York when the opportunity came to make these recordings. They are therefore important not only as the first examples of the McCormack-Kreisler collaboration, but they are also precious souvenirs of the musical understanding between a singer and his first teacher, the man who first sensed John McCormack's great promise, and who was so instrumental in starting him on that long and unprecedented journey through the world of music.

### Notes on the Song Texts

John McCormack's diction was so extraordinary that, throughout his career, concert managers would urge him not to incur the expense of including song texts in his recital programmes. Of course the singer wanted his

audiences to have the words and translations of the items he sang in Italian, French, and German, but printed texts could add nothing to McCormack's clarity of diction when it came to songs in English. We have already seen in the texts of *Molly Brannigan* and *The Low Back'd Car* that Irish words and phrases require some explanation; a few additional references also call for translation. For example, *The Low Back'd Car* contains the Irish word "forninst" ("the lady would sit forinst me"); that is, the lady would sit opposite ("forinst") the young man of the song, while Peggy, with her loving warmth, would sit next to him "with her arm around me waist". The song also has an archaic use of a modern word form, the word "engage" ("well worth the cage, I do engage"). Here, "engage" has the meaning of taking a position in an argument of some kind, in much the same manner that we use the phrase 'to engage in a dispute'. The title of the song *Eileen Allannah* is not a woman's name, but a first name and a term of endearment, one that combines "Eileen" with an anglicised form of "a leanbh", a word for "dear" that serves as an intimate way of addressing a child. In the refrain of the song, "Eileen allanah, agus asthore", the named term of endearment is combined with the Gaelic conjunction "agus" that links "allanah" and "asthore", another intimate term close to "beloved". The word "colleen" that occurs in the song is the Gaelic word for a young girl. One additional song needs minor explanations. This is the ballad *Goodbye, Sweetheart, Goodbye*. The mention of "chanticleer" refers to the rooster whose morning cry announces the beginning of each new day. With "levret" we have another reference to an animal. The word is not in current English, but seems to be adapted from the French "lièvre," alluding to both a rabbit and a hare. Then, as later, writers were fond of inserting foreign words into their songs to give their lyrics an extra touch of sophistication.

John Scarry



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John McCormack

The McCormack Edition, Vol. 4

The Acoustic Recordings (1913-14)

 Playing  
 Time  
 78:07

- |    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 1  | SCOTT: Within the Garden of My Heart                                   | 2:18 |
| 2  | MARSHALL: Dear Love, Remember Me                                       | 2:57 |
| 3  | MASSENET: Manon: Chiudo gli occhi ('Il Sogno')                         | 2:59 |
| 4  | Molly Brannigan (Old Irish Air, arr. Stanford)                         | 2:54 |
| 5  | MILLIGAN FOX (arr. Clay): The Foggy Dew                                | 2:11 |
| 6  | The Low Back'd Car<br>(Old Irish Air 'The Jolly Ploughboy' arr. Lover) | 2:24 |
| 7  | BIMBONI: Sospiri miei, andate ove vi mando                             | 2:22 |
| 8  | KENNEDY: Say 'Au Revoir', but not 'Goodbye'                            | 3:22 |
| 9  | TOURS: Mother o' Mine  | 2:17 |
| 10 | RONALD: Down in the Forest   | 2:53 |
| 11 | BIZET: Carmen: Votre mère avec moi sortait de la chapelle*             | 4:01 |
| 12 | CADMAN: I hear a Thrush at Eve ('Serenade')                            | 2:13 |
| 13 | TOSTI: Goodbye   | 3:57 |
| 14 | SILESU: A Little Love, A Little Kiss                                   | 3:17 |
| 15 | VERDI: Rigoletto: Questa o quella                                      | 2:00 |
| 16 | MASON: Nearer, My God, to Thee   | 3:21 |
| 17 | THOMAS: Eileen Allamah   | 2:40 |
| 18 | HATTON: Goodbye, Sweetheart, Goodbye                                   | 3:11 |
| 19 | PARKYNS: Le Portrait   | 3:07 |
| 20 | BRAGA: Angel's Serenade**  | 4:45 |
| 21 | LEROUX: Le Nil**   | 4:16 |
| 22 | GODARD: Jocelyn: Beneath the Quivering Leaves**                        | 5:13 |
| 23 | SCHUBERT: Ave Maria, D. 839**  | 4:38 |
| 24 | GOUNOD: Ave Maria *Meditation on J. S. Bach's Prelude in C**           | 4:45 |

with Lucy Isabelle Marsh, *soprano*\*  
 with Fritz Kreisler, *violin*\*\*

With its focus on Irish songs and Victorian ballads, Volume 4 of the Naxos McCormack Edition completes the tenor's 1913 recordings. McCormack could be very good in opera, but he was supreme in the world of song. Some of the ballads included on this disc belong to a world that, with the onset of war in 1914, was destined to disappear. Within the *Garden of My Heart* and *Goodbye, Sweetheart, Goodbye* are textbook examples of the flowery song so loved by Victorian audiences, while the 1913 *Nearer, My God, to Thee* resonates with the loss of the Titanic only a year earlier. Last but not least, this disc also includes five selections with McCormack accompanied by the legendary Fritz Kreisler playing violin obbligato from their first recording sessions in 1914. Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of the Naxos McCormack Edition are available on 8.110328, 8.110329 and 8.110330.

 MADE IN  
 THE EU


Producer and Audio Restoration: Ward Marston • Production Coordinator: Jeffrey Miller  
 Special thanks to John Bolig, Jim Cartwright, Lawrence Holdridge, Peter Lack, William Moran and John Scarry

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A complete track list can be found on pages 7 and 8 of the booklet  
 Cover image: John McCormack, circa 1920 (Private Collection)

