



**Tito
SCHIPA**

**The Complete 1922-1924
Recordings, Vol. 1**

ROSSINI

BELLINI

THOMAS

VERDI

LEONCAVALLO

MASSENET

Tito Schipa (1888-1965)

Schipa Edition • 1

Tito Schipa has become some kind of template for a certain style of lyric tenor, something more than a *tenorino*, something less than a *spinto*. His long career, based on a superb technique and a whole heap of charm, spawned a host of successors. Among those immediately following on from him were Cesare Valletti, Ferruccio Tagliavini and Heddle Nash, themselves succeeded by singers such as Alfredo Kraus, the young Carreras and, most recently, Juan Diego Florez. Yet, while all of these have had or are having important careers, none has ever eclipsed the star of the original because there was something in Schipa's art that was frankly inimitable, not least the particularly plangent timbre that was his alone and his perfect judgment of rubato, and those subtle lingerings over a phrase that can be heard as well as anywhere in the first of Wilhelm Meister's solos from Mignon on this release.

The fluency and lightness of Schipa's singing, most particularly in Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, surpassed that of his contemporaries and most of his successors. Because his voice was not large, it was peculiarly well suited to recording, which was able to give a very faithful idea of what Schipa sounded like in the theatre. Realising that, its owner approached the acoustic horn and then the microphone in a wholly relaxed, unaffected way so that his listeners to this day are beguiled by the results. Indeed the word "caress" might have been created for Schipa - try his justly famous account of *Princesita 'Mariposa'* where you hear the very essence of all that makes Schipa's finely chiselled singing, with the final passage sung in a delicate mezza-voce, so special, turning dross into gold with the true alchemist's art.

Born on 2nd January 1888 (that is the date given in Grove - other sources give 1887, 1889 and even 1890), Schipa studied in his birthplace, Lecce (in Puglia),

where he was supported in his studies by the local bishop. Besides singing he studied piano and composition, and from an early age wrote songs and pieces for piano. Six further years of vocal training followed in Milan (with Emilio Piccoli), before he made his debut in 1910 as Alfredo in Vercelli (Piedmont), followed by the Duke of Mantua in Messina, with Muzio as his Gilda. The next two years were spent touring the Italian provinces, singing, among other rôles besides the Duke and Alfredo, Rodolfo, Almaviva, Ernesto, and heavier parts such as Turiddu and Cavaradossi that he soon and sensibly dropped. During the 1912-13 season he first sang in Milan, at the Teatro del Verne, as Alfredo and Cavaradossi. In 1913 he went abroad for the first time, to the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires where he appeared as Wilhelm Meister, Alfredo and Gerald (*Lakme*).

In the following seasons, after debuts in Rome and Naples, he made his first appearance at La Scala on 26th December 1915 in the unexpected role of Vladimir in *Prince Igor* (that must have been an occasion to treasure). From then on he was in demand everywhere in Italy and abroad, and he widened his repertory to include Massenet's Des Grieux, Fenton, Elvino, not to forget his creation of the role of Ruggero in the premiere of Puccini's *La rondine* on 27th March 1917 at Monte Carlo (another occasion that must have been memorable). In 1919 he went to the United States for the first time, appearing in Chicago as Duke of Mantua to Galli-Curci's Gilda (prompting a series of superb Victor recordings with the soprano, several included here - see below). He also appeared in New York with the Chicago company in 1920 as Elvino, Fenton, Duke of Mantua and Alfredo.

For most of the 1920s he remained in the United States, singing in Chicago and giving hugely successful concerts, only returning to Italy, to La Scala, in 1929, as

Nemorino, another of his most successful parts, followed by another, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. His return was such a triumph that he sang in all the major houses over the next few years in all his favourite rôles, while going back to the United States for his long-delayed Metropolitan début on 23rd November 1932 as Nemorino, the first of many acclaimed appearances in that house in the 1930s. At the same time he now sang regularly at La Scala, including an appearance in *L'amico Fritz* with Favero in the 1936-7 season, which led to their legendary record of the Cherry Duet from Mascagni's pastoral opera. During World War II he remained in Italy and after it re-appeared at La Scala, in 1949 in *Il matrimonio segreto*.

Now in his sixties, his career was beginning to wind down, although he still made occasional operatic appearances and gave sporadic concerts well into the 1950s. Another aspect of his career was the highly popular films he made in the 1930s which preserve for us his delightfully insouciant personality, but he is best encountered in his long list of recordings, made in all periods of his career, vital evidence of his great artistry.

Schipa's acoustic Victors were made when he was at the peak of his career, that is in his early thirties. Oddly, but perhaps understandably, they have been the least reissued among all his recordings, interest on LP and even on CD having so far concentrated on the rare early recordings up to 1921 and thereafter on the electrics, by which process most of the Victor acoustics were re-recorded. They nicely chronicle the shape of his repertory in his prime, which included much popular ephemera of the time, with which he delighted the groundlings at his recitals and in his films, and at the same time included items from many of, though far from all the operas in which he appeared. The items included here are typical of this balance. Spanish pieces

such as *A Granada Ay, ay, ay* (where the tone smiles so winningly), *Quiéreme mucho* and *Rosalinda* were the kind of evocative pieces perfectly tailored to the delicacy of accent and phrase that were an essential part of Schipa's art (he was greatly prized in Spain), and at this stage of his career, his performance of these had already become famous, not least because of the marvellous way he could spin out a line. He was equally irresistible in Neapolitan and other regional songs of Italy, of which *Chi se nne scorda 'cchiu* has attained classic status.

The operatic items include many unbeatable performances. Nobody surely has sung Beppe's (Arlecchino's) *Serenade* with such delicacy, such control and in such a plaintive tone, and of course, as in everything he sang, there was an innate feeling for the text, as exemplified in his perfect diction. It is there also in his persuasively shaped account of Des Grieux's Dream from *Manon*. Almaviva's solos, although they were remade by the electrical process, are sung here, with an unrivalled elegance, even if the runs in *Ecco ridente* are simplified as was then the custom. Wilhelm Meister in *Mignon* must have been one of Schipa's most effective rôles, if we are to judge it from his sweetly accented account of both the character's oft-remembered solos. In the duets from *La sonnambula* and *La traviata*, both Schipa and the pearl-voiced Galli-Curci were in pristine form, easier in execution than in electric remakes, their voices entwining effortlessly, not a forced note in hearing, their suave singing the very epitome of elegiac beauty in a manner now almost lost. The many songs, though perhaps they should not all be played at one sitting, once more encapsulate just why Schipa was so much revered in trifles.

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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.

- BARRERA & CALLEJA: Emigrantes:**
- 1 **Granadinas** 2:51
Recorded 3rd February 1922
B 26108-5 (Victor 66039)
- LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci:**
- 2 **O Columbina** 2:06
[Harlequin's Serenade]
Recorded 3rd February 1922
B 26109-4 (Victor 66045)
- PADILLA: La Corte del Amor:**
- 3 **La de ojos azules** 2:59
[Princesita 'Mariposa']
Recorded 9th March 1922
B 26107-10 (Victor 66067)
- Traditional Creole Song:**
- 4 **Ay, Ay, Ay (A sóma te a la ventana)** 3:56
Recorded 28th March 1922
C 26110-7 (Victor 74753)
- MASSENET: Manon:**
- 5 **Chiudo gli occhi** 3:31
[En fermant les yeux]
Recorded 3rd May 1922
B 26140-17 (Victor 66077)
- BARTHELEMY:**
- 6 **Chi se nne scorda 'cchiù** 2:53
Recorded 3rd November 1922
B 27115-2 (Victor 66117)
- COSTA:**
- 7 **Napulitanata** 3:46
Recorded 3rd November 1922
B 27116-2 (Victor 66121)
- ROIG:**
- 8 **Quiéreme mucho** 3:34
Recorded 12th March 1923
B 27598-4 (Victor 66142)
- PONCE:**
- 9 **A la orilla de un palmar** 3:01
Recorded 12th March 1923
B 27599-1 (Victor 66143)
- PALACIOS Y SOJO:**
- 10 **A Granada 'Canción andaluza'** 3:02
Recorded 31st May 1923
C 27992-1 (Victor 74839)
- ROSSINI: Il barbiere di Siviglia:**
- 11 **Ecco ridente in cielo** 3:32
Recorded 31st May 1923
B 27993-2 (Victor 66192)
- BELLINI: La sonnambula:**
- 12 **Son geloso del zefiro** 4:28
with **Amelita Galli-Curci**, soprano
Recorded 1st June 1923
C 27994-2 (Victor 8067)
- ROSSINI: Il barbiere di Siviglia:**
- 13 **Se il mio nome saper [Serenade]** 2:56
Recorded 22nd September 1923
B 28050-5 (Victor 66193)
- THOMAS: Mignon:**
- 14 **Ah! non credevi tu** 4:19
[Elle ne croyait pas]
Recorded 14th May 1924
C 30079-1 (Victor 6465)

THOMAS: Mignon:			
15 Addio, Mignon, fa core	3:15	22 A Cuba	2:36
[Adieu, Mignon, courage]		Recorded 16th May 1924	
Recorded 14th May 1924		B 30093-2 (Victor 1031)	
C 30080-2 (Victor 6465)			
OTEO:		VERDI: La traviata:	
16 Mi viejo amor	3:11	23 Un di felice eterea	3:20
Recorded 14th May 1924		with Amelita Galli-Curci , soprano	
B 30081-3 (Victor 1030)		Recorded 17th September 1924	
		B 30907-2 (Victor 3038)	
CIMMINO:		VERDI: La traviata:	
17 Serenata medioevale	3:24	24 Parigi, o cara	3:41
Recorded 14th May 1924		with Amelita Galli-Curci , soprano	
B 30082-2 (unpublished on 78rpm)		Recorded 17th September 1924	
		B 30908-2 (Victor 3038)	
CIMMINO:			
18 Serenata medioevale	3:18	Tracks 1, 3, 4, 8-10, 16, 19, 20, 22 sung in Spanish	
Recorded 14th May 1924		Tracks 2, 5, 11-15, 17, 18, 23, 24 sung in Italian	
B 30082-3 (Victor 1063)		Tracks 6, 7 sung in Neapolitan dialect	
		Track 21 sung in French	
DE FUENTES:			
19 Rosalinda	2:47	Tracks 1-5: Victor Orchestra • Joseph Pasternack	
Recorded 14th May 1924		Tracks 6, 7, 10, 11:	
B 30083-2 (Victor 1030)		Victor Orchestra • Nathaniel Shilkret	
FALLA:			
20 Jota (Siete canciones populares españolas)	2:52	Tracks 8, 9, 12, 14-19, 23, 24:	
Recorded 16th May 1924		Victor Orchestra • Rosario Bourdon	
B 30086-5 (Victor 1031)			
		Tracks 13:	
PALADILHE: Suzanne:		Tito Schipa, Guitar and anonymous pianist	
21 Comme un petit oiseau	2:22	Tracks 20-22:	
Recorded 16th May 1924		Victor Orchestra • Charles Adams Prince	
B 30088-1 (unpublished on 78rpm)			

Playing
Time
77:42

Tito Schipa (1888-1965)

SCHIPA EDITION • 1

The Complete Victor Recordings 1922-1924

- 1** BARRERA & CALLEJA: Emigrantes: Granadinas
2 LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci: O Columbina [Harlequin's Serenade]
3 PADILLA: La Corte del Amor: La de ojos azules [Princesita / 'Mariposa']
4 Trad. Creole Song: Ay, Ay, Ay (A sóma te a la ventana)
5 MASSENET: Manon: Chiudo gli occhi [En fermant les yeux]
6 BARTHELEMY: Chi se nne scorda 'cchiù
7 COSTA: Napulitanata
8 ROIG: Quiéreme mucho
9 PONCE: A la orilla de un palmar
10 PALACIOS Y SOJO: A Granada 'Canción andaluza'
11 ROSSINI: Il barbiere di Siviglia: Ecco ridente in cielo
12 BELLINI: La sonnambula: Son geloso del zefiro †
13 ROSSINI: Il barbiere di Siviglia: Se il mio nome saper [Serenade]
14 THOMAS: Mignon: Ah! non credevi tu [Elle ne croyait pas]
15 THOMAS: Mignon: Addio, Mignon, fa core [Adieu, Mignon, courage]
16 OTEO: Mi viejo amor
17 CIMMINO: Serenata medioevale (unpublished on 78rpm)
18 CIMMINO: Serenata medioevale
19 DE FUENTES: Rosalinda
20 FALLA: Jota (Siete canciones populares españolas)
21 PALADILHE: Suzanne: Comme un petit oiseau (unpublished on 78rpm)
22 SCHIPA: A Cuba
23 VERDI: La traviata: Un dì felice eterea †
24 VERDI: La traviata: Parigi, o cara
 † with Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano

Tito Schipa (1888-1965) began his career as a composer before becoming a professional singer. After his operatic début as Alfredo in *La traviata* in 1910, he made numerous appearances throughout Europe. He joined the Chicago Civic Opera in 1919, and remained there until 1932 when he made his début at New York's Metropolitan Opera. The outstanding *tenore di grazia* of his time, Schipa had a distinctively sweet, yet incisive timbre to his voice. The fluency and lightness of his singing, most particularly in Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, surpassed that of his contemporaries and most of his successors, while his ability to express a sense of pathos and passionate intensity was rare for a lyric tenor. This first of two volumes of Schipa's complete early Victor recordings presents the singer in his youthful prime.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Ward Marston
 Special thanks to Lawrence Holdridge, Peter Lack and Jeffrey Miller
 Previously released on Romophone

www.naxos.com

A complete track list can be found in the booklet
 Cover image: Tito Schipa
 (Tully Potter Collection)



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