



**Beniamino
GIGLI**

**London Recordings
1946-1947**

MASSENET

MASCAGNI

HALEVY

TOSTI

SCHUBERT

LALO

CHOPIN

Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957)

The Gigli Edition Vol. 12 • London Recordings 1946-1947

By the time the war was over Gigli was in his mid-fifties, and realised that his career could not go on forever, yet he proved to be as much in demand after the war as he had been before it. Indeed in English-speaking countries, soldiers who had acquired a taste for opera and song through war service in Italy provided him with a new audience. They crowded into Covent Garden and the Albert Hall when he returned to London at the end of November 1946. Just after, he was at Abbey Road Studios recording the first tranche of discs to be heard on this disc.

As he himself commented in his autobiography: 'I was almost 57 but I still felt myself to be at the summit of my powers, and was confident I could remain so for several years' - an assumption that proved to be right. He continued: 'My longevity as a tenor was already something of a phenomenon, but the combination of luck on which it was founded could not, I knew, prevail against the inexorable laws of physiology'. He said he did not want to undertake new rôles, but perfect those he already had in his repertory. As popular as ever wherever he went, he commented: 'I wanted as many people as possible to hear me and remember me'. To that end for the following eight years 'I travelled so much that any account of them would necessarily sound like a railway timetable'. His next visit to Britain for a tour of the country was in November 1947 bringing further sessions for HMV comprising the second part of the present recording.

One of the titles for the 1946 recordings was the *Serenade* that opens *Cavalleria rusticana*. This is a memento of his appearance as Turiddu at Covent Garden with the San Carlo Company of Naples at the end of 1946. Many in the audience would have heard that company in situ and so flocked to their London season. A bonus as guest was Gigli both in *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci*. But there was another reason for

recording the *Serenade*: HMV and Gigli were anxious to replace the performance of this piece in the 1940, wartime recording in Italy with a better one, and Gigli obliged.

Gigli never appears to have sung Eléazar in *La Juive* on stage, but was obviously keen to record the rôle's major aria, made famous on record by Caruso. As one would expect, Gigli's account is filled with the appropriate remorse and passion. The piece from Halévy's opera, always popular in his concerts, is given a suitably airy performance, in Gigli's most honeyed manner.

The two pieces from works by Massenet are sung, as was Gigli's wont, in Italian. Neither may sound idiomatic in style, but his tremendous conviction in Des Grieux's Act III aria when he tries to expunge Manon's memory as he takes holy orders is as irresistible as Werther's famed *Ossian Lied* which calls for just the smooth legato and exquisite pianissimi Gigli lavishes on it.

For the rest Gigli offers a very wide variety of song, the kind of selection he would offer in London in concerts at the time and in which he was supreme in his own idiosyncratic way. When he strayed into German or English repertory the results could overspill into sentimentality, as does the harp-accompanied version of Schubert's *Ave Maria*, sung in Italian. It surely must have been a marketing ploy on HMV's part to have him record *Adeste fideles* and *Silent Night* just before Christmas in 1947. The three English songs, *I'll walk beside you*, *Bless this house and Smilin' through*, may offend the best of tastes today, but they were doubtless best-sellers in their day, and their soft-grained beauty combined with Gigli's sweet tone still have a power to enchant the ear. I also have a penchant for Chopin's *Tristesse* (vocal setting of an *Etude*), so popular at the time, and sung in French.

Otherwise Gigli is in his element in Italian song in which he remains unsurpassed. He had taken over from Caruso *Core 'ngrato* and sings it with as much conviction as his great predecessor. His generous heart is also poured out in songs such as Tosti's *Segreto* and Cittadini's appealing *Nostalgia d'amore* and *Ninna nanna*. These simple pieces sung with such elegance and feeling are their own justification.

By this final, fourth period of his career, Gigli's voice had certainly lost a little of its golden refulgence

when he was singing full-out, and there are moments when we are conscious of the passing years, but enough remains to second his innate gift for communication. As he himself wrote: 'Communion with my audience - this was undoubtedly the most precious experience that I had found in my life as a singer. I decided that, in the active years remaining to me, it was this above all I would seek.' This recording proves how successful he was in his aim.

Alan Blyth © 2005

Producer's Note

The present volume is the twelfth 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, and these transfers were newly done for Naxos in 2005.

Mark Obert-Thorn

Tracks 1-8

Royal Opera House Orchestra, Covent Garden conducted by Rainaldo Zamboni

Tracks 9-11, 13-20

Orchestra conducted by Rainaldo Zamboni

Track 9 with chorus, Herbert Dawson, organ, and Kitty Wilson, harp

Tracks 10-11 with Herbert Dawson, organ, and Kitty Wilson, harp

Tracks 12 with harp accompaniment by Kitty Wilson

Tracks 1-2, 13: Sung in French

Tracks 6-7, 14-16: Sung in Italian

Tracks 3-4, 10, 19-20: Sung in English

Tracks 9, 11: Sung in Latin

Tracks 17-18: Sung in Spanish

Tracks 5, 8: Sung in Neapolitan dialect

Track 12: Sung in Sicilian dialect

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.

- HALEVY: La Juive:**
- ① **Rachel, quand du Seigneur (Act 4)** 4:49
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 4th December, 1946
Matrix: 2EA 11482-1
First issued on HMV DB 6336
- LALO: Le Roi d'Ys:**
- ② **Puisq'on ne peut ...** 3:27
Vainement [ma] ô bien-aimée! (Act 3)
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 4th December, 1946
Matrix: 2EA 11483-1
First issued on HMV DB 6336
- TOSTI:**
- ③ **Parted** 3:27
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 4th December, 1946
Matrix: 0EA 11484-2
First issued on HMV DA 1870
- MURRAY:**
- ④ **I'll walk beside you** 2:41
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 4th December, 1946
Matrix: 0EA 11485-2
First issued on HMV DA 1870
- CARDILLO:**
- ⑤ **Core 'ngrato** 3:59
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 13th December, 1946
Matrix: 2EA 11510-2
First issued on HMV DB 6436
- MASSENET: Manon:**
- ⑥ **Je suis seul! ...** 4:44
Ah! Fuyez, douce image (Act 3)
(Sung in Italian)
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 13th December, 1946
Matrix: 2EA 11511-2
First issued on HMV DB 6346
- MASSENET: Werther:**
- ⑦ **Pourquoi me réveiller? (Act 3)** 3:08
(Sung in Italian)
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 13th December, 1946
Matrix: 2EA 11512-1
First issued on HMV DB 6346
- FALVO:**
- ⑧ **Dicitencello vuje** 3:19
Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
on 13th December, 1946
Matrix: 2EA 11513-1
First issued on HMV DB 6436
- TRADITIONAL:**
- ⑨ **Adeste fideles** 2:44
Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
on 26th November, 1947
Matrix: 0EA 12477-2
First issued on HMV DA 1874
- GRUBER:**
- ⑩ **Silent night, holy night** 2:32
Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
on 26th November, 1947
Matrix: 0EA 12478-1
First issued on HMV DA 1874

- SCHUBERT:**
11 Ave Maria 4:27
 Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
 on 26th November, 1947
 Matrix: 2EA 10684-1
 First issued on HMV DB 6619
- MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:**
12 O Lola (Siciliana) 2:47
 Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
 on 26th November, 1947
 Matrix: 2EA 10685-2
 First issued on HMV DB 3960
- CHOPIN:**
13 Reviens mon amour 2:34
(from Étude in E major Op. 10 No. 3) [Tristesse]
 Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
 on 27th November, 1947
 Matrix: 0EA 10686-3
 First issued on HMV DA 1892
- CITTADINI:**
14 Ninna nanna 2:58
 [Sung in Italian]
 Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
 on 27th November, 1947
 Matrix: 0EA 10687-1
 First issued on HMV DA 1892
- TOSTI:**
15 Segreto 4:44
 Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
 on 27th November, 1947
 Matrix: 2EA 10688-2
 First issued on HMV DB 6705
- CITTADINI:**
16 Nostalgia d'amore 3:21
 Recorded in Kingsway Hall, London
 on 27th November, 1947
 Matrix: 2EA 10689-1
 First issued on HMV DB 6705
- WILLIAMS:**
17 Vidalita, Op. 45 No. 3 2:49
 Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
 on 30th November, 1947
 Matrix: 0EA 12595-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1891
- BUCHARDO:**
18 Canción del Carretero 3:22
(from Seis Canciones al estilo popular)
 Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
 on 30th November, 1947
 Matrix: 0EA 12596-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1891
- BRAHE:**
19 Bless this house 2:50
 Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
 on 30th November, 1947
 Matrix: 0EA 12597-1
 First issued on HMV DA 1894
- PENN:**
20 Smilin' through 2:23
 Recorded in Studio 1, Abbey Road, London
 on 30th November, 1947
 Matrix: 0EA 12598-2
 First issued on HMV DA 1894

Playing
Time
67:05

Beniamino Gigli
The Gigli Edition, Vol. 12
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ADD

- 1 **HALEVY: La Juive:** Rachel, quand du Seigneur
- 2 **LALO: Le Roi d'Ys:** Puisq'on ne peut ...
Vainement, ô [ma] bien-aimée!
- 3 **TOSTI:** Parted
- 4 **MURRAY:** I'll walk beside you
- 5 **CARDILLO:** Core 'ngrato
- 6 **MASSENET: Manon:** Je suis seul! ... Ah! Fuyez, douce image *
- 7 **MASSENET: Werther:** Pourquoi me réveiller? *
- 8 **FALVO:** Dicitencello vuje
- 9 **TRADITIONAL:** Adeste fideles
- 10 **GRUBER:** Silent night, holy night
- 11 **SCHUBERT:** Ave Maria
- 12 **MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:** O Lola [Siciliana]
- 13 **CHOPIN:** Reviens mon amour [Tristesse]
- 14 **CITTADINI:** Ninna nanna
- 15 **TOSTI:** Segreto
- 16 **CITTADINI:** Nostalgia d'amore
- 17 **WILLIAMS:** Vidalita
- 18 **BUCHARDO:** Canción del Carretero
- 19 **BRAHE:** Bless this house
- 20 **PENN:** Smilin' through
* Sung in Italian

This volume is the twelfth in a series devoted to Beniamino Gigli's 'singles' – his song and aria recordings not issued as part of complete opera sets. Made in London after the war, these recordings include the *Serenade* that opens *Cavalleria rusticana*, a memento of Gigli's appearance as Turiddu at Covent Garden with the San Carlo Company of Naples at the end of 1946, and two excerpts from operas by Massenet, both sung with tremendous conviction. Eléazar's aria from Halévy's *La Juive* is from a rôle that Gigli never undertook on stage. The disc also includes a selection of lighter fare, popular with London audiences at the time, on which Gigli lavishes all his customary care.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Lawrence F. Holdridge, Jim Peters of Norbeck, Peters & Ford, and Mark Ricaldone

www.naxos.com

A complete track list can be found in the booklet
Cover image: Beniamino Gigli as Mylio in Edouard Lalo's *Le Roi d'Ys*
(from the Mark Ricaldone photographic collection of Beniamino Gigli)



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THE EU

