

MANON LESCAUT • MARTHA • MEFISTOFELE • DIE MEISTERSINGER • MIGNON • NORMA • LE NOZZE DI FIGARO • OTELLO • PAGLIACCI

LA SONNAMBULA • TANNHAÜSER • TOSCA • LA TRAVIATA • TRISTAN UND ISOLDE • IL TROVATORE • DIE WALKÜRE • DIE ZAUBERFLOTE

I PESCATORI DI PERLE • PORGY AND BESS • LE POSTILLON DE LONJUMEAU • PRINCE IGOR • I PURITANI • RIGOLETTO • RINALDO

ROMEO ET JULIETTE • DER ROSENKAVALIER • SADKO • SAMSON ET DALILA • SEMELE • SIMON BOCCANEGRA • THE SNOW MAIDEN



*The Prima Voce*

# TREASURY

*Vol. of Two*

# OPERA

Great Arias in Historic Recordings

ARTISTS INCLUDE

CARUSO • CHALIAPIN • FARRAR • TETRAZZINI  
McCORMACK • PONSELLE • TIBBETT

**FIVE DISC SET**

Nimbus

THE PRIMA VOCE TREASURY OF OPERA

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**John Steane, GRAMOPHONE**

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DISC 1

MANON LESCAUT, Auber

1 Amelita Galli-Curci - *C'est l'histoire amoureuse (L'eclat de rire)* 2.35

MANON LESCAUT, Puccini

2 Beniamino Gigli - *Donna non vidi mai* 2.54

3 Rosa Ponselle - *In quelle trine morbide (with recit.)* 3.13

MARTHA, Flotow

4 Tito Schipa - *M'appari tutto amor* 3.28

MAY NIGHT, Rimsky-Korsakoff

5 Boris Slotvsov - *How quiet here ... Sleep, my beauty* 4.15

MEFISTOFELE, Boito

6 Claudia Muzio - *L'altra notte in fondo al mare* 4.11

7 Beniamino Gigli - *Giunto sul passo estremo* 3.37

DIE MEISTERSINGER, Wagner

8 Lauritz Melchior - *Morgenlich leuchtend im rosigen Schein* 4.01

MIGNON, Thomas

9 Conchita Supervia - *Connais-tu le pays?* 4.35

10 Tito Schipa - *Addio, Mignon* 3.23

11 Luisa Tetrazzini - *Io son Titania* 4.41

12 Ezio Pinza - *De son coeur j'ai calmé (Berceuse)* 4.05

MIREILLE, Gounod

13 Frieda Hempel - *O légère hirondelle* 2.49

NORMA, Bellini

14 Rosa Ponselle - *Sediziose voci ... Casta Diva* 4.59

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO, Mozart

15 Giuseppe de Luca - *Se vuol ballare* 3.24

16 Conchita Supervia - *Non so più* 3.00

17 Elisabeth Schumann - *Voi che sapete?* 3.18

**Total playing time**

**62.28**

NI 1738

**Ninon Vallin (1886-1961)** was a leading lyric soprano at the Paris Opéra-Comique from her début there in 1912 as Micaela in Bizet's *Carmen*, but she also sang regularly at the Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires. During the 1920s she was so successful in South America that she appeared here more than in France. It was in her native country however that she spent the majority of her career and she eventually became the most important French female singer of her generation. Admired in her youth by Debussy (she was the first singer of his Mallarmé songs), her well-rounded soprano won success as Mélisande, as well as in the other important French roles and Mozart. Her widely-admired recordings include a complete *Louise* (Charpentier) and *Werther* (Massenet) both with Georges Thill.

advisers and husbands who quickly filed for divorce, as well as her flirtations with spiritualism and goodwill to charity which meant she ended her life in poverty. She retired to Milan, taking in pupils and lodgers in order to earn money.

**Maggie Teyte (1888 - 1976)** studied in London and then, in 1905, with the famous tenor Jean de Reszke in Paris. After appearances in Paris and Monte Carlo in 1906 she was chosen by Debussy to follow Mary Garden as Mélisande. The composer coached her in this role which she first performed in 1908, and this was undoubtedly an important turning point of her career in which she became renowned in French opera and song. Between 1911 - 14 and 1914 - 17 she sang in Chicago and Boston. During the 1920s she became a star of Beecham's British National Opera Company in England. She also sang operetta and musical comedy, especially during the inter-war years, but after 1937 concentrated on French song both in international recital appearances and recordings with Gerald Moore. Her distinguished career was rewarded in 1957 with a Chevalier of the Legion d'honneur, and in 1958 with a DBE.

**Lawrence Tibbett (1896 - 1960)** was born, bred and trained in America and spent the greater part of his career championing the cause of contemporary American opera. The Met was his artistic home for twenty-seven years, and he established a reputation as one of the finest singer-actors of the era. Amongst his greatest triumphs there were the title roles of *Simon Boccanegra*, *Emperor Jones* (a highly dramatic contemporary work by Louis Gruenberg), Tonio in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, and Escamillo in Bizet's *Carmen*. Tibbett also made history as a handsome male lead in Hollywood movies, one of the few opera singers to achieve this transition with a degree of success. He was a flamboyant extrovert who used his star status to promote the cause of musical drama, and he wrote at some length on how the medium of film could help democratise opera. Despite criticisms from the establishment, his strong baritone and magnetic stage presence endeared him to New York society, until illness and overwork began to impair the quality of his voice.

## DISC 2

**DER OPERNBALL**, Heuberger

1 **Herbert Ernst Groh** - *Im Chambre séparée* 3.14

**OTELLO**, Verdi

2 **Enrico Caruso** - *Ora e per sempre addio* 2.27

3 **Lawrence Tibbett** - *E qual certezza sognate ... Era la notte* 4.14

4 **Eide Norena** - *Ave Maria* 4.31

**PAGLIACCI**, Leoncavallo

5 **Lawrence Tibbett** - *Si puo?* 7.27

6 **Beniamino Gigli** - *Recitar... Vesti la giubba* 3.32

7 **Tito Schipa** - *Serenata d'Arlecchino* 2.13

**I PESCATORI DI PERLE**, Bizet

8 **Beniamino Gigli & Giuseppe de Luca** - *Del tempio al limiar* 4.36

9 **Beniamino Gigli** - *Mi par d'udir ancora* 4.17

**LA PÉRICHOLE**, Offenbach

10 **Maggie Teyte** - *Tu n'es pas beau* 3.52

**LA PERLE DU BRÉSIL**, David

11 **Amelita Galli-Curci** - *Charmant oiseau* 4.08

**PORGY AND BESS**, Gershwin

12 **Helen Jepson** - *Summertime* 2.40

13 **Lawrence Tibbett** - *Where is my Bess?* 3.16

**LE POSTILLON DE LONJUMEAU**, Adam

14 **Helge Roswaenge** - *Mes amis, écoutez* 3.01

**PRINCE IGOR**, Borodin

15 **Feodor Chaliapin** - *Galitzky's song* 3.35

16 **Nina Koshetz** - *Jaroslavna's aria* 4.42

**Total playing time**

**61.45**

## DISC 3

## I PURITANI, Bellini

1	Giacomo Lauri -Volpi - <i>A te o cara</i>	3.44
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2	Amelita Galli-Curci - <i>Qui la voce sua soave</i>	4.36
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## RIENZI, Wagner

3	Lauritz Melchior - <i>Allmächt' ger Vater, blick' herab</i>	5.10
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## RIGOLETTO, Verdi

4	John McCormack - <i>Questa o quella</i>	2.07
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5	Amelita Galli-Curci - <i>Caro nome</i>	4.42
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6	Enrico Caruso - <i>Ella mi fu rapita ... Parmi veder le lagrime</i>	4.47
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7	Giuseppe de Luca & Grace Anthony - <i>Povero Rigoletto ...Cortigiani, vil razza dannata</i>	8.21
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8	Jussi Björling - <i>La donna è mobile</i>	2.18
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## RINALDO, Handel

9	Ernestine Schumann-Heink - <i>Lascia ch'io pianga</i>	4.22
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## RISURREZIONE, Alfano

10	Mary Garden - <i>Dieu de grâce</i>	3.55
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## LE ROI D'YS, Lalo

11	Beniamino Gigli - <i>Vainement ma bien aimée</i>	3.38
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## ROMEO ET JULIETTE, Gounod

12	Yevgeniya Bronskaya - <i>Je veux vivre dans ce rêve</i>	4.08
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13	Dmitri Smirnov - <i>Cavatina ... Ah! lève-toi soleil</i>	3.50
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## DER ROSENKAVALIER, Richard Strauss

14	Erna Berger & Tiana Lemnitz - <i>Ist ein Traum, kann nicht wirklich sein</i>	4.48
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Total playing time

60.26

appearing there as Bizet's Carmen and Saint-Saëns' Delilah. Her mezzo-soprano voice was extremely well-suited to roles in Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri*, *La cenerentola*, and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and helped initiate a musical renaissance in this type of bel canto opera. The Rossini roles, along with Carmen, formed the centre of her operatic repertory but she was also a great interpreter of Spanish song and zarzuela. She created roles in Falla's *El amor brujo* and Ravel's *L'heure espagnole*.

**Richard Tauber (1891 - 1948)** was unmistakable for the monocle, the sweet, superbly managed voice and astounding musicianship, coupled with a delight in singing every kind of music. He made his début at Chemnitz in 1913 as Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, following it immediately with Max in Weber's *Der Freischütz*. He was then snapped-up for Dresden where he stayed until 1926, breaking his contract only to go to Vienna. Although known as 'the SOS tenor' because he was such a quick learner, fame came instantly with a huge variety of roles, especially the Mozartian tenors at which he excelled. From 1923-32 he sang as much operetta as opera, being especially associated with Franz Léhar. Forced to leave Germany in 1938, he settled in England where he composed and conducted his own works.

**Luisa Tetrazzini (1871 - 1940)** comes across the years as one of the most engaging of all the great 'old timers'. Short and spherical, she pumped out her dazzling bursts of coloratura with a gusty abandon which typified her whole attitude to life. She made her début in Florence in 1890 after completing musical studies in the city (along with her sister, also a soprano, Eva). She had already sung in opera houses around the world but her Covent Garden début as Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata* (1907) caused a sensation. She returned there every season until 1912 but also made guest appearances elsewhere as well as hugely successful and extended concert tours. After the First World War she never returned to the operatic stage, but continued to develop her concert career, eventually earning more money than any other Italian singer except Caruso. Her tastes were extravagant but it was mainly her disastrous choice of financial

recitals were equally wide-ranging, running into many hundreds of songs, and her weekly radio broadcasts continued until the age of seventy-three.

**Boris Slóvtsov (1886 - 1934)** was a Bolshoi tenor who is practically unknown in the west, mainly because he never sang outside Russia, but perhaps also because his records were issued only on the Gramophone Company's Green Label (i.e. cheaper series). He was born in the Yenisei province of Siberia and after a relatively short stay in European Russia, mainly in Kiev, he returned in 1920 to Krasnoyarsk, near the border with Mongolia, where he was active in all aspects of musical life until his early death in 1934. During that period, however, he also spent some time both in Leningrad and Moscow. At the Bolshoi he partnered, among others, Nezhdanova and Mark Reizen.

**Dimitri Smirnov (1882 - 1944)** graduated from chorister to amateur singer to serious study and then to the Bolshoi in 1904, where he was so highly admired as to be cast as Dante in the première of Rakhmaninov's *Francesca da Rimini*. By 1907 Smirnov was an established lyric tenor and was invited to join Rakhmaninov, Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov along with Chaliapin and the dramatic soprano Félia Litvinne for Diaghilev's display of Russian music in Paris. In 1908, he sang the False Dimitri in the Russian impresario's Paris production of Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and repeated this success later at Drury Lane in Beecham's legendary 1914 season. From 1910-17 he was principal tenor of the Mariinsky Company in St. Petersburg. After the Revolution his tours were largely concentrated outside Russia and he finally settled in Riga as a teacher, only to find himself unwittingly back in the USSR when the Soviets took the city in 1944.

When **Conchita Supervia (1895 - 1936)** died in childbirth at the age of forty, the world of opera was robbed of one of its most charismatic figures. A bubbling, glamorous and intensely feminine singer she had started her career at the astonishingly early age of fourteen, and she was still only sixteen when she treated an audience in Bologna to a double dose of Gallic seductiveness,

## DISC 4

SADKO, Rimsky-Korsakoff

1 Beniamino Gigli - *Chanson Hindoue* 3.33

2 Nina Koshetz - *Berceuse* 4.11

SAMSON ET DALILA, Saint-Saëns

3 Conchita Supervia - *Printemps qui commence* 4.31

4 Marian Anderson - *Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix* 4.59

LO SCHIAVO, Gomes

5 Giacomo Lauri-Volpi - *Quando nascesti tu* 4.04

SEMELE, Handel

6 John McCormack - *O sleep, why dost thou leave me?* 3.30

SIMON BOCCANEGRA, Verdi

7 Alexander Kipnis - *A te l'estremo addio ... Il lacerato spirito* 4.43

THE SNOW MAIDEN, Rimsky-Korsakoff

8 Boris Slóvtsov - *Full of wonders* 3.04

LA SONNAMBULA, Bellini

9 Claudia Muzio - *Ah, non credea mirarti* 4.01

10 Luisa Tetrazzini - *Ah! non giunge* 3.12

TANNHAÜSER, Wagner

11 Lauritz Melchior - *Dir töne Lob* 3.36

12 Tiana Lemnitz - *Dich teure Halle* 3.27

13 Kirsten Flagstad - *Allmächt'ge Jungfrau (Elisabeth's Prayer)* 7.23

14 Marcel Journet - *O du mein holder Abendstern* 4.28

TOSCA, Puccini

15 Giovanni Martinelli - *Recondita armonia* 2.22

16 Geraldine Farrar - *Vissi d'arte* 3.45

17 Jussi Björling - *E lucevan le stelle* 2.59

**Total playing time**

**67.48**

## DISC 5

## DIE TOTE STADT, Korngold

1 Richard Tauber & Lotte Lehmann - *Glück, das mir verblieb* 4.23

## LA TRAVIATA, Verdi

2 Luisa Tetrazzini - *Ah! fors' è lu i... Sempre libera* 4.41

3 John McCormack - *De' miei bollenti spiriti* 3.53

4 Luisa Tetrazzini - *Addio del passato* 4.52

5 John McCormack & Lucrezia Bori - *Parigi o cara* 3.18

## TRISTAN UND ISOLDE, Wagner

6 Frida Leider - *Liebestod* 5.01

## IL TROVATORE, Verdi

7 Rosa Ponselle - *Tacea la notte placida* 4.17

8 Heinrich Schlusnus - *Il balen del suo sorriso* 3.12

9 Giovanni Martinelli - *Di quella pira* 2.51

## THE TSAR'S BRIDE, Rimsky-Korsakov

10 Alma Gluck - *Liuba's Air* 3.33

## TURANDOT, Puccini

11 Lotte Schöne - *Signore, ascolta* 2.54

12 Giacomo Lauri-Volpi - *Nessun dorma* 2.51

## LA VESTALE, Spontini

13 Rosa Ponselle - *O Nume tutelar* 3.32

## DIE WALKÜRE, Wagner

14 Kirsten Flagstad - *Du bist der Lenz* 2.14

15 Lauritz Melchior - *Winterstürme wichen dem Wonne mond* 3.02

## WERTHER, Massenet

16 Ninon Vallin - *Va! laisse couler mes larmes* 2.36

17 Tito Schipa - *Ah! non mi ridestar* 4.05

## DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE, Mozart

18 Gerhard Husch - *Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja* 2.56

19 Richard Tauber - *Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön* 4.00

20 Erna Berger - *Der Hölle Rache* 3.01

21 Tiana Lemnitz - *Ach, ich fühl's* 4.53

**Total playing time**

**76.05**

that she resumed her career in 1945, but she did make guest appearances again in Berlin in 1948, retiring to a teaching position in Paris in 1953.

Perhaps the most consistently striking quality in the performances of **Elisabeth Schumann (1888 - 1952)** is that of charm. Her voice was light and silvery and she used it with disarming skill, always radiating her own sense of joy in the act of singing. In her prime she was a celebrated Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* but in her early days as a member of the Hamburg Opera she accepted more minor roles such as Cherubino, as heard on this set. Her rendition here is typical of Schumann's Mozart style - lively, mischievous but totally free from any form of exaggeration. In 1919 Richard Strauss persuaded her to join the Vienna Staatsoper and remained a life-long admirer, touring the USA as her accompanist, as she sang his songs in 1921. She remained a favourite in Vienna and enjoyed success in a number of Mozart roles as well as making the role of Sophie in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* virtually her own through performances in Hamburg (1911) and Covent Garden (1924). As a singer of operetta she was also irresistible. In 1938 she decided to leave Vienna to settle in the USA. After the war she became a naturalised American and continued to make recital appearances.

**Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861 - 1936)** was one of the greatest contraltos in the history of recorded sound. She was afflicted by poverty in her early career but her chance came when she asked to perform the role of Carmen without rehearsal. She took the opportunity without hesitation and the result was sensational. From then on she became the leading contralto in Hamburg, where she remained for fourteen years often with more than twenty performances a month. For the next thirty years she performed a wide variety of repertoire, on stages and concert platforms around the world, including musicals. She was a specialist in the Wagnerian roles and was much respected by Cosima Wagner in Bayreuth. She sang in a number of world premieres including *Elektra* (1909), in which she created the role of Klytemnestra at the special request of the composer, Richard Strauss. It was in America however that her career reached its zenith. Here she was a regular at the Met between 1899 and 1932. Her concert repertoire and

was as Alfredo in Verdi's *La traviata*, a role he repeated with sensational success four years later in a Toscanini season at Milan's Teatro dal Verme. In 1917 he sang Ruggiero in the première of Puccini's *La Rondine*. From here he developed an international career singing in Chicago, Buenos Aires, Milan (La Scala), Verona and the Met. A master stylist, his career spanned no less than fifty-two years before the public.

**Heinrich Schlusnus (1888 - 1952)** first worked for the post office in Koblenz and Frankfurt but soon developed such a passion for singing that his employer was prepared to grant him one year of leave to further his study. He moved to Berlin and studied under Louis Bacher. In 1914 he made his début as the Herald in a production of *Lohengrin* at Hamburg. Despite being enlisted (his time at the front-line soon came to an end due to a serious leg-injury) he managed to develop his career with a two year engagement at Nuremberg. This was followed by nearly thirty years at the Berlin Staatsoper, where he established himself as Germany's principal Verdi baritone of the inter-war period. Amongst other triumphs was his Guy de Montfort, at the Berlin premiere of Verdi's *Vêpres siciliennes* in 1932. He was also appreciated outside the realm of Italian opera, scoring notable successes in Wagnerian repertoire (Chicago, 1927 - 8 and Bayreuth, 1933). The intelligence and sensitivity of his vocal style and warmth and richness of tone were used to great effect in his recitals of Lieder, for which he achieved an outstanding reputation.

**Lotte Schöne (1891 - 1977)** was a lyric soprano much admired in Mozartian soubrette roles, operettas like *Die Fledermaus*, and the lighter Donizetti, Verdi and Puccini operas. Vienna-born, she sang at the Volksoper and Staatsoper before Bruno Walter engaged her for Berlin between 1926 and 1933. Her enchanting voice also made her a Salzburg Festival favourite. In 1933 she was forced to leave Germany and made her home in Paris where she took French citizenship. Her Mélisande was much admired and concert tours through France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland followed. During the war however, with Paris occupied, she took refuge in a village in the French Alps. It was mainly as a concert singer

## THE PRIMA VOCE TREASURY OF OPERA - VOLUME TWO

"An exotic and irrational entertainment" Dr Johnson's description of Italian opera during the eighteenth century, may well have applied to Opera in general as a dramatic art form; a synthesis of acting, speaking, singing and stage-setting. The balance of emphasis between these elements has long been the subject of much debate. This collection aims to highlight the rich vocal element present in a wide range of operas. It is a collection of the great melodic moments - the big tunes - which are spread throughout an evening at the opera.

The arias, and occasional duet, are sung by some of the finest singers who recorded during the first fifty years of the twentieth century, a time when top international opera houses were more concerned with vocal production than set design. Singers had to develop their technique to enable them to communicate both emotionally *and* dramatically through vocal resource alone. Consequently, when it came to making records, these singers consistently achieved results of the highest order. It is a happy coincidence that the average length of an aria is between three and four minutes, neatly fitting onto one side of a 78 rpm disc. This boosted the popularity of operatic recordings and ensured a rich vocal tradition was captured for posterity.

Since information on most of the operas and composers is widely available, space has been utilised to offer concise biographies of each singer. All the tracks have been arranged in alphabetical order according to opera title, hence this second volume takes the listener from Auber's *Manon Lescaut* through to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. A previously released Volume 1 contains operas from *Adriana Lecouvreur* through to *Manon*. All tracks are drawn from the highly acclaimed Prima Voce series of recordings which currently consists of over one hundred titles. Further information on the series can be found at the Nimbus website: [www.wyastone.co.uk](http://www.wyastone.co.uk).

## BIOGRAPHIES

"A voice like yours is heard only once in a hundred years" is the compliment that the great conductor Arturo Toscanini paid to the contralto **Marian Anderson (1897 - 1993)**. After study with Giuseppe Boghetti and Frank La Forge she made concert appearances in the USA but it was through tours in Europe during the 1930s that she established her artistic credentials. Her success as one of the first black singers to achieve prominence in the field of 'classical' music inevitably involved her in the racial disputes of the era. Soon after her return to the USA in 1939, she was due to give a concert in Washington but was prevented from performing by the 'Daughters of the American Revolution'. Instead she gave an open-air concert at the Lincoln Memorial which attracted an audience of 75,000 people. She became a friend of the presidential Roosevelt family and was awarded an honorary doctorate by Howard University in Washington. A belated operatic début at the Metropolitan as Ulrica in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* finally occurred in 1955. By this time, the stage voice was past its prime but the significance of this appearance both for future policy and in a broader sense was of prime importance. Leaving the Met in 1956, her career as a recitalist continued, mixing classical 'art' song with spirituals, as well as oratorio. This finally drew to a close with a worldwide tour, culminating in a farewell concert at Carnegie Hall in 1965. Although her contribution to political and social causes of the day was of great importance, it is her artistic integrity and unique voice - broad in range and rich in pathos, deep and velvety - for which she is most remembered.

**Grace Anthony (b.1896)** made her début at the Metropolitan in 1921 in the American première of Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*. Between 1921 and 1927 she sang a number of minor roles such as Siebel in Gounod's *Faust* and Giovanna in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Little is known about her career after 1927. She appears on several Victor recordings of duets from Verdi's operas alongside more well-known artists such as Giuseppe de Luca and Giovanni Martinelli.

*Pacific*. His rich voice, handsome presence and spirited personality were also used to great effect in the films that he made.

Before she changed her family name, **Rosa Ponselle (1897 - 1981)** was singing professionally with her sister Carmela in a cabaret act entitled the 'Ponzillo sisters'. An agent heard her and managed to arrange an audition which resulted in Caruso recommending her for a début at the Met (1918) in Verdi's *La forza del destino*. A vibrant dramatic soprano of commanding beauty of tone and vivid presence, she excelled as Leonora (*Il trovatore*), Norma and Violetta (*La traviata*) in a repertory of over twenty roles. Until 1936 she was considered the prima-donna of the Met, but retired to live in Baltimore when she married.

**Helge Roswaenge (1897 - 1972)** was born in Denmark of German parents. He graduated as an industrial chemist but was self-taught as a singer. After a début as Don José (*Carmen*) in 1921 at Neustrelitz, he appeared in several provincial opera houses but was engaged by the Berlin Staatsoper in 1929. By 1930 he was considered the leading 'Italian' tenor, and enhanced his reputation further with a Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) at Salzburg in 1933, and a Parsifal at Bayreuth in 1934 and 1936. During the Second World War he continued to perform in Berlin and Vienna (also at the Staatsoper) and, despite a short break from the operatic stage between 1945 and 1948, continued to sing until the late 1960s as Calaf (*Turandot*), Radames (*Aida*) and Manrico (*Trovatore*). Roswaenge nursed his voice carefully so that it altered very little throughout his distinguished career. It was a very characteristic instrument: combining a slightly metallic timbre with an ease, brilliance and bravura in the upper register.

**Tito Schipa (1889 - 1965)** had a voice which was one of total individual beauty, quite unlike that of any other Italian tenor. He was perhaps the most elegant and graceful tenor of his generation, if not of this century. If one were to compare the voice with a musical instrument, the oboe would come to mind: slightly reedy in quality, pleading in tone, more delicately poised on the breath than beefier voices, and thus more miraculous as the tenuous line spins on an on. His début in 1911

**Claudia Muzio (1889 - 1936)** was a real child of the theatre, many of her early days being spent backstage in the various international opera houses in which her father worked as a director and her mother sang in the chorus. Tall, beautiful and intensely theatrical in her vocal style Muzio was regarded as one of the finest operatic actresses of her day. Her voice was famously described by the tenor Lauri-Volpi as 'made of tears and sighs and restrained inner fire' and although it lost some of its tonal magnificence towards the end of her career it was still a marvellous instrument for the expression of emotion. She sang at Covent Garden and many other European opera houses before moving to America in 1916 where she spent the majority of her career. Her main house was the Met but she also made several guest appearances in South America. At her best in the great Italian roles, her high points were Tosca, Desdemona (*Otello*), Violetta (*La traviata*) and Maddalena (*Andrea Chénier*). By many of her contemporaries she was regarded almost with reverence; as the great mezzo Ebe Stignani put it 'Muzio was above all comparisons - to me she was on an altar.'

**Eidé Norena (1884 - 1968)** the Norwegian soprano, began her career in her native country and only appeared on the international circuit in 1924, at the age of forty, when she sang Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto* under the baton of Toscanini. After this her career blossomed taking her to Covent Garden, Chicago and the Met. The security and style of her coloratura technique never left her. Under the guidance of Melba however, amongst others, she transformed the light, delicate voice that characterised her earlier years, into an instrument of awesome capacity and flexibility.

The Italian bass **Ezio Pinza (1892 - 1957)** wanted to become a professional cyclist, but his father insisted on his taking up singing. He was recognised by Toscanini as an outstanding talent and offered a contract at La Scala. From 1926 he was the principal bass for the Italian wing of the Met while guesting in Europe. His *Don Giovanni* (which he performed over two hundred times) and *Figaro* were both received with great acclaim, especially at the Salzburg Festival. After his operatic retirement in 1948 he began a new career on Broadway, notably in *South*

**Erna Berger (1900 - 1990)** made her début in 1925 at the Dresden State Opera under Fritz Busch as one of the Three Boys in *Die Zauberflöte*. With a voice which never lost its fresh, youthful and dramatic characteristics, her regular engagements along with concert tours made her the most important German coloratura soprano of her generation. A notable achievement was her involvement in the première of Strauss's opera *Die ägyptische Helena* in Dresden in 1928. Her long career also included appearances at the Bayreuth Festival (1930) and Salzburg Festival both before and after the war. For over twenty years, from 1934, her regular home was the Berlin Staatsoper but during this time she also appeared at Covent Garden (1934, 1935, and 1938) and the Metropolitan Opera (1949 - 53), as well as at the Vienna Staatsoper and in Hamburg. There were also a number of concert tours in North and South America (1946 - 53), Australia (1948) and Japan (1953). Her long career was honoured in 1960 with a Professorship from the Hamburg Musikhochschule.

**Jussi Björling (1911 - 1960)** was first taught by his tenor father with whom he and his two brothers formed a male quartet which toured Sweden and the USA until 1926. Björling then studied with Joseph Hislop and John Forsell in Stockholm, making his adult début in 1930 as Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. He first sang at the Met as Rodolfo in Puccini's *La bohème* in 1938, staying there until 1941 when he returned to Sweden for the rest of the war. A fine Manrico (*Il trovatore*) at Covent Garden was his single pre-war appearance there, and he only returned in 1960, a sick man, shortly before his tragically early death. The voice, sumptuous in its timbre and evenness of tone throughout its range with a ringing top B flat was one of the most accomplished Italian-style lyric tenors of the century.

**Lucrezia Bori (1887 - 1960)** was amongst the best-known recording artists of the early electrical period. Although she had a soprano voice of modest size and limited upper register, she used its qualities with great style, sensitivity and charm to create impersonations of fragile heroines such as Mimi (*La bohème*), Manon or Violetta (*La traviata*) which are particularly appealing. Her sense of

humour also helped her to successfully portray a number of roles within the comic repertory e.g Norina in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. She studied first in her native Spain and then in Milan with Sibella and Melchiorre Vidal. After a Rome début in 1908 she appeared as Puccini's Manon Lescaut in the Metropolitan Opera's first Paris visit in 1910. This role was repeated two years later at her official Met début in New York. She sang at the Met until 1936, except in 1916 - 20, when she underwent a number of operations to remedy vocal problems. Worldwide guest appearances and concert tours helped to spread her fame to many different countries. After her retirement from the stage she became the first female to be appointed to the board of directors of the Metropolitan Opera.

**Yevgeniya Bronskaya (1882 - 1953)** studied first with her mother in Russia and later with Teresa Arkel in Milan. Following considerable experience in provincial theatres and abroad she made her Mariinsky Theatre (St Petersburg) début, as Lakmé, in 1910, remaining there as a leading Russian soprano until 1923. During this time she was also regularly engaged by the Bolshoi theatre and underlined her reputation as a recording artist. Although commonly thought of as primarily a coloratura singer with exceptional skill, she had a wide-ranging repertoire and was highly regarded as a recitalist. From 1923 until 1950 she held a post as professor at the Leningrad conservatoire.

From his début in Naples in 1894, **Enrico Caruso (1873 - 1921)**, was destined for huge success and as a result became the standard by which all tenors are judged. He established what was to become the gramophone 'industry' by recording ten 10" sides for which he was paid £100 in Milan 1902 - an unprecedented sum in those days! Until 1906 his voice had a rich quality to its tenor ring, after which it became increasingly darker. At every stage of his career, however, the sound he produced was unlike anything heard before or since. He combined a subtle and convincing stage presence with a kind of personality and quick wit that made him the perfect operatic tenor and colleague.

After surviving appalling hardships in his early life, **Fedor Chaliapin (1873 -**

During this time he sang almost seven hundred performances in approximately forty different roles. After Caruso's death Martinelli became his natural successor. His dramatic tenor voice had great intensity and he sang with passion and impeccable musicality.

**John McCormack (1884 - 1945)** was by his own admission 'the world's worst actor', and though he managed to enjoy considerable success at Covent Garden and with the Manhattan Opera Company in New York it was as a concert singer that he achieved his full potential. Here he could deploy the beguiling sweetness of his voice and the wide-ranging versatility of his style while remaining what he essentially needed to be as a performer - himself. His popularity on the concert platform was unprecedented and has not been rivalled since - in one season 58,000 people bought tickets to hear him in New York alone - and whether singing Handel or a popular ditty he never lowered his meticulous standards of musicianship.

**Lauritz Melchior (1890 - 1973)** was unique in the German repertoire and arguably the greatest Wagnerian tenor of the century with a tone both dark and brilliant. Trained as a baritone, his début was in 1913 as Silvio at the Royal Opera in Copenhagen, but it was not until 1917 that he decided to become a tenor. After restudy, he sang Tannhäuser in 1918 but was not, at first, a success; with financial support and encouragement from the novelist, Hugh Walpole, Melchior was formally trained as a *Heldentenor* singing Siegmund at Covent Garden and Parsifal at Bayreuth in 1924. In 1926 he appeared at the Metropolitan, but an awkward stage presence and lack of personal publicity delayed his full acceptance until his Tristan in 1929 placed him beyond all competition. He took several years to 'fix' his characterisations but, having done so, was unwilling to change anything. The Metropolitan became his main centre of activity although there were several guest appearances both in Europe and Buenos Aires. Disagreements with the management finally caused him to leave in 1950 after which he starred in films and cabaret as well as making the occasional concert and radio appearance in his old repertory.

1938 and at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires in 1936 and 1950, when she sang the title role in Janáček's *Jenufa*. She made an appearance at the 1939 Salzburg Festival and gave guest performances in Vienna, Munich, Amsterdam, Brussels and Warsaw, where in 1937, she partnered Chaliapin in Gounod's *Faust*. Her sensitive artistry, exquisite *pianissimo* and touching interpretations were greatly admired.

Roman by birth **Giuseppe de Luca (1876 - 1950)** began his singing life as a member of the Vatican choir, before attending two of the greatest singing teachers of the age, Persichini and Cotogni. These masters instilled in him a sound technique, rooted in the old Italian method, and a knowledge of his own limitations, which allowed him to sing professionally for fifty years with few signs of vocal deterioration. He was successful both in *buffo* and *serio* roles, and participated in a number of significant premières: as Sharpless in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (a disastrous first night); as the eponymous hero of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*; and as Michonnet in Cilèa's *Adriana Lecouvreur*. He also distinguished himself in Wagnerian roles at La Scala, though this was early in his career. Despite formidable rivalry from Ruffo and Amato, de Luca remained a favourite at the Met from his début there in 1915 until 1946, thus outlasting his two colleagues by eighteen and twenty-six years respectively. He may not have possessed equivalent vocal resources to either, but ultimately proved himself a more resourceful singer.

The singing talent of **Giovanni Martinelli (1885 - 1969)** was discovered by a bandmaster during military service. At that time his official role was as a clarinetist but after studying singing in Milan, he soon made his operatic début as Ernani in 1910. During 1911 Puccini chose him for the role of Dick Johnson in the Italian première, in Rome, of *La Fanciulla del West*, and the following year Toscanini engaged him for the première at La Scala. En route to America he sang with great success at Covent Garden and returned on future occasions. From 1913 he was a member of the Met, remaining there until his retirement in 1946.

**1938)** rose to become a dominating figure in Russian artistic circles and in due course one of the most widely discussed theatrical figures in the world. His insistence that every aspect of an operatic performance - production, decor, lighting, make-up and so on - should be dedicated to the dramatic and psychological essence of the work in hand was in those days revolutionary. Apart from being a 'basso cantante' of the first rank he was an actor of mesmeric potency. He was most famous for his interpretations of the Russian masterpieces, and is remembered for his large flexible bass voice and gripping stage presence. Particularly noted for his singing of the title role of Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* he performed in St Petersburg, Moscow, Milan, Paris, London and New York with equal success.

**Geraldine Farrar (1882 - 1967)** was principally a star of the Metropolitan Opera where she sang thirty-five roles between 1906 and 1922. Before that she was at Berlin's Königliche Hofoper where, in 1901, she made her début as Gounod's Marguerite (*Faust*) and studied with Lilli Lehmann. Lehmann became, in Farrar's words, "her only great teacher" and these years proved especially formative as it emerged that Farrar was destined to be a singing actress rather than a virtuoso vocalist. American-born, she was the Met's first *Madama Butterfly* and the creator of Puccini's *Suor Angelica*. There were several other Puccini roles for which she was much admired, including the Tosca heard here. With her personal beauty, clear tone and shapely phrasing she also excelled in Mozartian and French roles.

**Kirsten Flagstad (1895 - 1962)** was Norwegian, and the outstanding Wagner soprano from her Bayreuth début in 1934 for almost twenty years. She maintained a lasting purity and thrilling beauty of tone, and was occasionally heard also as Beethoven's Leonora in *Fidelio*, Gluck's Alceste and (in London) Purcell's Dido. She was still singing majestically into her fifties.

**Amelita Galli-Curci (1882 - 1963)** was one of the first coloratura stars of the gramophone. Born in Italy, she studied the piano and was largely self-taught as

a singer, producing a silvery soprano to adorn the lyric coloratura repertory of Rossini, Donizetti, and Verdi. It was in the role of Gilda, in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, that she made her début in 1906 and this role also brought her rise to fame at Chicago ten years later. Her florid singing has a naturalness, ease and freedom, even in the highest of registers, which is rare amongst sopranos of this type.

**Mary Garden (1874 - 1967)** had a 'fairy-tale' début in opera, taking over during a performance of *Louise* when the leading soprano was taken ill. Born in Scotland, brought up in America, and trained in France, she created the role of Mélisande in the world premiere performance of *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1902, at Debussy's request. She later moved back to America for the Manhattan Opera, 1907 - 1910, and the Chicago opera 1910 - 1930. She was the first to introduce a wide variety of French operatic repertoire to American audiences but also made guest appearances in many of the world's leading opera houses. In 1930 she returned to the Opéra-Comique for four seasons and as her final role in 1934, sang Katjuscha in Alfano's *Risurrezione*, a part she had created in Chicago in 1925. After retirement she participated in wide-ranging lecture activity in North America and England passing on her knowledge, especially her great acting ability for which she was noted.

**Beniamino Gigli (1890 - 1957)** was born in Recanati, Italy. His training with Cotogni secured him first prize in a singing competition in 1914. He made his début as Enzo in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* at Rovigo that same year. Hailed as the tenor, his voice and name soon became famous world-wide; engagements soon followed at La Scala (1918) and the Metropolitan (1920), both in Boito's *Mefistofele*. His career at the Met lasted from 1920-32, where his exceptionally beautiful voice was heard to utmost effect in all the lyrical roles. He was the highest paid and greatest draw for audiences after Chaliapin had left. Gigli went too, eventually, refusing a cut in salary during the Depression, and was heard in concert where there was always more scope for his personality. He sang through the 30s and 40s with a voice that had not diminished in beauty and made several

and audiences alike, and was very happy there, until she was offered a contract with the Vienna Court Opera. Then, in a matter of weeks on 4 October 1916, she suddenly became a star. This happened because Richard Strauss insisted that she, and not the established soprano, must create the role of the Young Composer on the first night of his revised *Ariadne auf Naxos*. So early a breakthrough at 'the Opera House on the Ring' was beyond most singers' wildest dreams, but for Lehmann it was reality. She went from strength to strength and remained there, a much-loved leading soprano, until politics forced her to leave Europe in October 1937. She continued to sing Lieder until her last recital in 1951 and, for most of her career, was unrivalled in the German repertoire.

**Frida Leider (1888 - 1975)** made her début, in 1915, in Halle as Venus in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and sang at a number of other German opera houses before establishing herself as the leading dramatic soprano at the Berlin Staatsoper in the 1920s and 1930s. During this time she was also a favourite in several other opera houses including, between 1924 - 38, Covent Garden. She concentrated on roles by Mozart, Strauss, Verdi and Wagner. Between 1928 and 1938 she was celebrated at the Bayreuth festivals for her interpretations of Brünnhilde and Isolde, bringing her international acclaim and making her the most important Wagner soprano of her generation. In America she sang at Chicago and less frequently at New York, but she was born and died a Berliner. Her rich and beautiful singing with fine spun legato and purity of phrase made her recordings an object-lesson to others later.

**Tiana Lemnitz (1897 - 1994)** studied singing in Metz and at Hoch's Conservatory in Frankfurt with Anton Kohmann. Her début in 1921 was at the Stadttheater in Heilbronn in the title role of Lortzing's *Undine*. She pursued her career at the Stadttheater in Aachen (1922 - 28), the Hanover Opera (1928 - 34) and from 1931 became a regular guest at the Dresden State Opera. Between 1934 and 1937 she sang at the Berlin Staatsoper, appearing in the première of Paul Graener's *Der Prinz von Hamburg* with Max Lorenz in 1935, and taking the title role in Moniuszko's *Halka* in 1936. She appeared at Covent Garden in 1936 and

studying his roles in great depth.

**Nina Koshetz (1894 - 1965)** was born in Kiev, studied at Moscow and made her début in St Petersburg in 1913 as Mozart's Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) with the Zimin Private Opera Company. In 1920 she left the company and went to America where she sang Fata Morgana in the Chicago première of Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* (1921). The 1920s were spent with the Russian Opera Company in New York and, for a time, in Paris where she studied with Felia Litvinne and sang at the Opéra in 1925. A lyric soprano of strong personality, in 1926 she gave a cycle of Lieder concerts in New York, concentrating upon modern Russian composers with luminaries such as Rachmaninov and Glazunov at the piano. Despite this she made relatively few recordings and in 1940 retired to Hollywood, where she managed a restaurant and starred in several films, including *Algiers* with Charles Boyer.

The striking and self-confident tenor **Giacomo Lauri-Volpi (1892 - 1979)** also trained as a lawyer. After studying with Cotogni in Rome (as did Gigli), he made his début in 1919 under the pseudonym Giacomo Rubini as Arturo in Bellini's *I Puritani*, thereafter singing under his proper name. In 1920 he was a fine Des Grieux (in Massenet's *Manon*) in Rome and in 1923 went to the Met. There the other principal tenors were Gigli, Martinelli and Zanelli, but Lauri-Volpi was unstoppable and sang the Duke in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Galli-Curci, Cavaradossi (*Tosca*) with Jeritza, and Turridu (*Cavalleria rusticana*) with Ponselle. He remained in New York until 1934, giving two hundred and thirty-two performances in sixty-two operas. He had an excellent technique and a strong voice, well able to take the high Cs as Manrico and Radames. Later he sang Otello with great success. Probably at his finest in the 1920s and 30s, he was still singing as late as 1972.

**Lotte Lehmann (1888 - 1976)** was one of those rare sopranos equally at home on the concert platform, performing Lieder, and the operatic stage. She was admired as a principal soprano at the Hamburg Opera by colleagues, conductors

films. Despite the fact that he supported Mussolini he easily managed to resume his career after the Second World War.

**Alma Gluck (1884 - 1938)** was born in Bucharest but moved to America as a child. She made her début in the New Theater, New York, in 1909, followed almost immediately by her début at the Met as Sophie in Massenet's *Werther*. In 1912, even though she was already an established lyric soprano, she made time to travel to Paris and study with the great Jean de Reszke, and followed this in 1913 with a long course of study under the great diva of the previous generation Marcella Sembrich. She was a regular performer with the Met until 1918 after which she made the decision to devote her energies exclusively to concerts and recording. As in the similar case of John McCormack, it would be hard to exaggerate the extent of her popularity with the American public. The clarity of her enunciation and purity of tone and line were especially important in this respect.

**Herbert Ernst Groh (1905 - 1982)** appeared in his first concert (in Basle) at the age of thirteen. After studying in Zurich and Milan, the Swiss-born tenor was engaged in Darmstadt (1926 - 28). He first came to the wider public's attention during a long tour of Italy, especially in the field of operetta. On his return to Germany in 1930 he established a first-class reputation in this field through radio broadcasts and concert activity. This success was underlined through numerous recordings he made of popular operetta melodies which were perfectly suited to his lyric voice.

**Frieda Hempel (1885 - 1955)** was born in Leipzig and later took American citizenship. Renowned as a Mozart soprano, she was also the first Marschallin (in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*) at Berlin in 1911 and the New York Metropolitan in 1913, where she sang regularly until 1919, combining this with guest appearances in the major European houses. In many of the lighter soprano roles she was considered the natural successor to Marcella Sembrich. After a farewell appearance she turned mainly to concerts. She added fluent coloratura technique

to wide-ranging tonal purity using this to perform an outstanding range of repertoire: from the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, through to Eva in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, to the aforementioned Marschallin as well as the operas of Verdi, Rossini and Donizetti.

**Gerhard Husch (1901 - 1984)** was born in Hanover and began his stage career as an actor, but turned to opera after studying singing with Hans Emge; his début followed in 1923, at which he appeared as Liebernau, in Lortzing's comic opera *Der Waffenschmied*. His career continued within Germany, first at Bremen (1924 - 7) and Cologne (1927 - 30), and then in Berlin (Städtische Oper 1930 - 5, and Staatsoper 1937 - 44). He first appeared at Covent Garden in 1930, singing the role of Falke in *Die Fledermaus* - a distinguished revival under the baton of Bruno Walter. Husch returned to London in 1931 and 1938 to sing Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*). His lyric baritone, which was suited to roles such as Mozart's Count Almaviva (*Figaro*), Puccini's Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*), and Verdi's Germont père (*La traviata*), was transformed into an instrument of resonant substance for German repertoire, and, in 1930 and 1931 he excelled as Wolfram in *Tannhäuser* at Bayreuth. He gave his first Lieder recital in 1932 and in 1937 was made a Professor at the Munich Academy of Musical Art. After the war, he became a distinguished voice teacher, holding master classes across Europe.

**Helen Jepson (1904 - 1997)** began singing with an amateur opera group at the age of thirteen and thereafter studied at the Curtis Institute under Queena Mario. After appearances in Philadelphia (1928 - 30) she was engaged in Montreal and from time to time sang on radio broadcasts and as a jazz vocalist with Paul Whiteman's orchestra. In 1935 she made her début at the Metropolitan and it was here that she continued to appear regularly in roles such as Marguerite (Gounod's *Faust*) and Nedda (Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*). In 1936 she returned to study for a brief period with Mary Garden in Paris and thereafter excelled in the role of Massenet's *Thais*. That Jepson and Tibbett (another RCA Victor contractee) rather than the actual leads in the original stage-performance of *Porgy and Bess* were chosen to record the songs caused no raised eyebrows; in those days

original cast recordings were as yet unknown. She made few recordings but her excerpts from *Otello* (with Martinelli and Tibbett) are also well-known. After retirement she taught for many years.

Next to Pol Plancon, **Marcel Journet (1867 - 1933)** was undoubtedly the most important bass, in western Europe, of the earliest recording period. After training in Paris and making his début in 1891 at Béziers in *La Favorite*, he served his apprenticeship at La Monnaie in Brussels. Between 1897 and 1909 he appeared regularly at Covent Garden and from 1900 he became a stalwart of the Metropolitan in New York. Other major international centres welcomed him for a season at a time but his most important home was at the Paris Opéra and Opéra-Comique where he sang almost to the time of his death at the age of sixty-six in 1933. Although he had all the attributes essential to a true bass, he was also able to undertake baritone roles and, unusually for a French bass, his enormous repertoire included a substantial element of Wagner. On the recording side he is perhaps, principally noted for the number of contributions he made to the high-priced ensemble discs, with Caruso and others, that were once the glory of the HMV catalogue.

**Alexander Kipnis (1891 - 1978)** was a rarity amongst Russian basses in that he also won international renown as a Lieder singer. One of the most consummate artists of his day, with a voluminous yet refined and flexible voice, he was particularly fond of Wagner and Mozart roles but he also sang the Italian and Russian repertoire to great acclaim. The early part of his career was based in Germany and Austria during which time he appeared regularly at the Bayreuth Festival (1927 - 33) and at the Salzburg Festival (1933). He also established an international presence through concert tours. In 1938 when the Anschluss came, he took the opportunity to move his family to the USA, later becoming an American citizen. A début at the Met followed in 1940 and he remained a member of the company until 1952, after which he increased his teaching activity. Communication of character, whether in opera or song, was of vital importance to him. He therefore always tried to be musically well-prepared,

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