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REVIEWED!

Anoushka Shankar
"No paternal pressure"

Andre Previn Jazz
maestro revealed

Sir Neville "At 75
I'm having a ball!"

Essential guide to the classics

Classic CD



100

GREATEST SINGERS
OF THE CENTURY



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Classic CD

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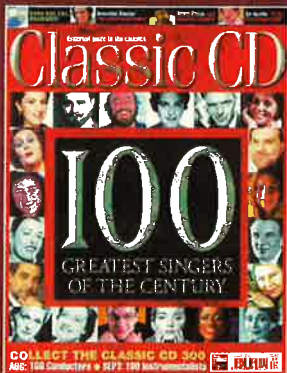
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Who **makes it** to the top of our list?

LISTS ARE FUN AREN'T THEY? EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE HIGHLY arbitrary and subjective they always cause controversy. You know, along the lines of "how could you possibly overlook such and such a person?" For the 'Classic CD 300' we asked our esteemed critics to nominate the century's most important singers, conductors and instrumentalists. The result is that this issue is a canary fancier's delight with our top 100 singers detailed over 14 pages and disc recommendations for each. With election-style fervour we have ranked our singers according to how many votes they secured. If you disagree with the order, or feel we have unforgivably omitted someone, then please write to us because we want to hear from you. As always with *Classic CD*, nothing about the ranking is safe and predictable – traditional do-no-wrong vocal sacred cows are often much further down the list than you might think. And you may be surprised to see some singers included at the expense of others. As one of the voters I was asked to nominate who I felt were the 25 most important singers of the century. What a task! I tried to be very impartial, eschewing some of my favourites for a broad range of singers who I feel have been pioneers in their fields – Fischer-Dieskau in art song, Maria Callas for theatrical immediacy, Cathy Berberian for avant-garde twentieth-century music. But it was agony leaving so many out and apologies to those many fine singers who I have enjoyed on stage and on disc but who didn't quite make it onto the list. And besides this is where you come in. We want to compile a reader's top 300 and in our last instalment in your September issue you will be asked to nominate your top three singers, conductors and instrumentalists. Meanwhile, do tell us what you think of our 100 singers. Without giving too much away I can tell you there are a few surprises. To find out in good old-fashioned reverse order the singers our critics cannot be without turn to page 32. And you can hear exactly why they are so special by listening to them at their best on your cover disc. Enjoy!



Neil Evans, Editor

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Neil Evans



The Classic CD 300: Traditional do-no wrong sacred cows (like Maria Callas?) can be much further down the list that you might think, p. 32

How the magazine and cover CD work

- Our reviews are direct, lively and authoritative, our features inform, entertain and keep you in touch with the music world. Uniquely, most of our features and the month's top five reviews are illustrated by tracks on the cover disc.
- For balance and maximum enjoyment the Classic CD cover disc is compiled solely by us. We choose the music to illustrate our features while our critics advise us on the best extracts from new releases. Happy listening!

THE CLASSIC CD GUARANTEE

Classic CD is the essential buyer's guide and the key to enjoying great music brilliantly performed on our own cover disc by the world's best artists

Singers of the Century p 32



100

GREATEST SINGERS OF THE CENTURY



Time to find out who the Classic CD critics have voted as the finest singer of the century. We count down the top 100, explain why we rate them as the greatest and, for the top six, give a sample of each on the cover disc... but will you agree with the winner?

Four faces from the wide, wide world of Classic CD (clockwise from top left): Anoushka Shankar appears on disc with her father Ravi; Neville Marriner turns 75 this year, but explains why slowing down is out of the question; André Previn, as adept on the jazz keyboard as he is on the classical stage; Plácido Domingo - where does he appear in our top 100 singers pole?



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Armidep 6



2
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Sonata IIp 8

On the cover disc

● Each track is related to a feature or review in the magazine (see page numbers below). This month 8 of the 17 tracks are from new recordings

● Turn to the page to read the article plus the detailed trackbox which takes you through the music minute by minute



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Violin Concerto No. 2p 10



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Eighth Book of Madrigals....p 18



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Der Operballp 26



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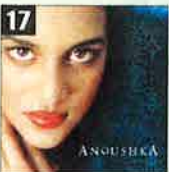
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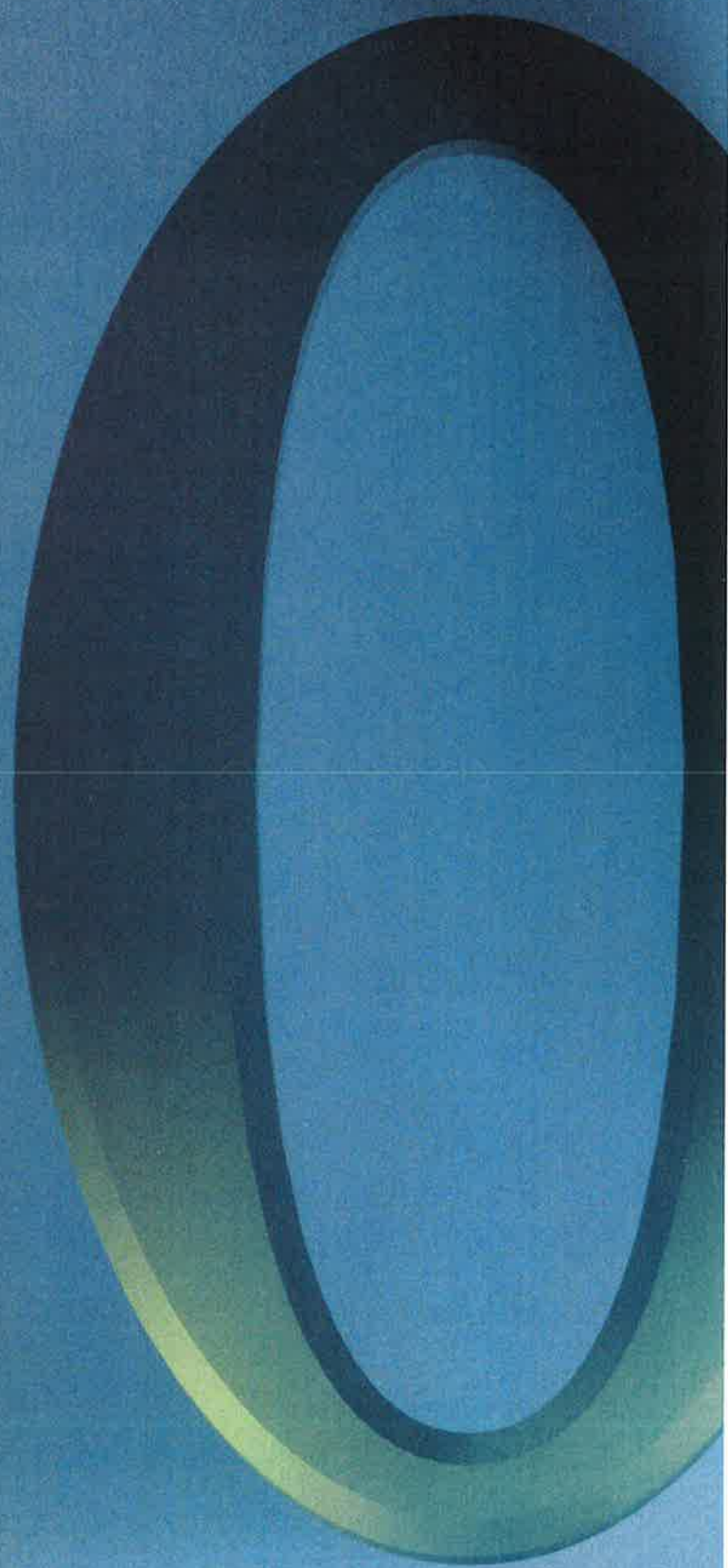
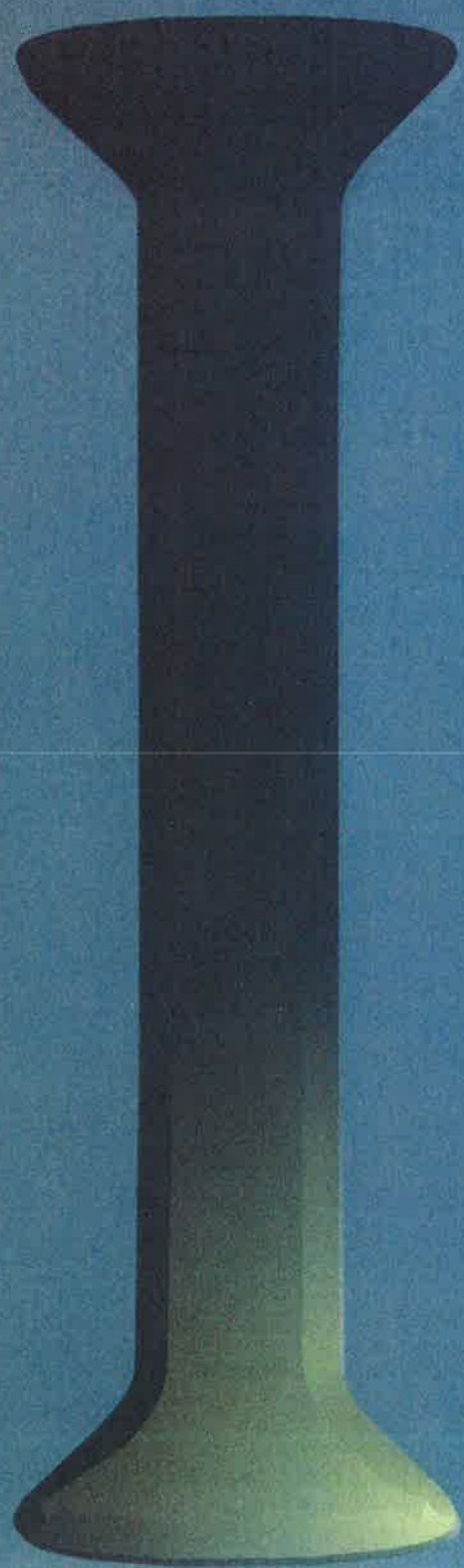


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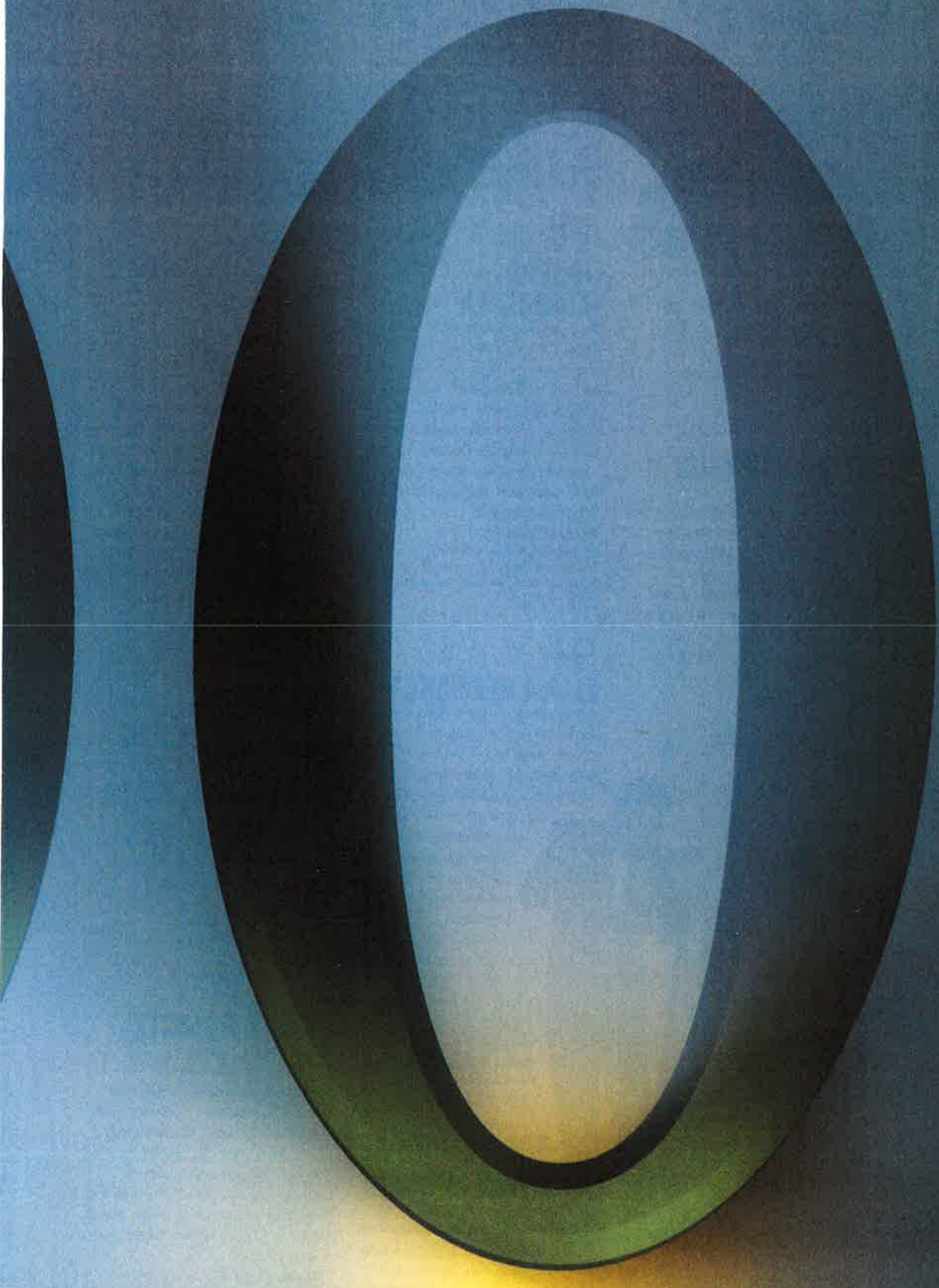


17
SHANKAR
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Next month's cover CD highlight:
The Greatest Conductors of the Century



GREATEST SINGERS



It's the kind of thing you might be asked when out for a drink after a night at the opera – “Who do you think ought to be remembered as the 20 greatest singers of the century?” Well, it's precisely the question we put to **two dozen of our leading critics** (and fortunately we weren't at the pub so we didn't have to get a round in). After pooling the hundreds of votes and arguing over level-pegging artists, Classic CD presents a near-definitive guide to the 100 greatest singers of the century. Any disagreement? Good, we want to hear from you! And next month, we'll have the top 100 conductors...

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OF THE CENTURY

100
NAT KING COLE

American pianist and singer, 1917-65
Blessed with perfect pitch, Cole was a brilliant all-round musician. An innovator and influential jazz pianist in his early days, it is his mellow, liquid baritone voice and easy television manner for which he will be remembered. Instantly recognisable, often imitated, never equalled in its blend of warmth and sincerity, the voice reflects the man himself. Unforgettable he certainly is.
Terry Williams
Recommended recording:
The Best Of... (Capitol 7243 4 97480 2)

99
KIRI TE KANAWA

New Zealand lyric soprano, b1944
Arguably the most beloved and successful lyric soprano of the past two decades, Kiri's glamorous looks and ravishing, creamy voice have endeared her to audiences round the world. Particularly successful in Mozart, the Italian repertoire and Richard Strauss, less so in her cross-over ventures.
Jeremy Nicholas
Recommended recording:
Philips Classics 434 725-2

98
JOSE CARRERAS

Spanish tenor, b1946
Equipped with a light, lyrically supple, sweetly attractive timbre, an unmatched sensitivity to text and a beguiling vulnerability, Carreras is the most commercially successful of the Three Tenors with career sales totalling 30 million discs. Repertoire is wide (including considerable crossover success) but he is at his best in the great operatic romances, Verdi's *Don Carlos* and Puccini's *Tosca* especially.
Michael Quinn
Recommended recording:
Bizet *Carmen* (DG 410 088-2)

97
MARGARET PRICE

Welsh lyric soprano, b1941
Early in her career Margaret Price established herself as one of the finest Mozart sopranos of her generation. But since then her firm and even voice, creamily rich as well as pure, has served her well in Verdi, Puccini, Bellini and Wagner. Often called a 'heroic' or



Kiri te Kanawa: a creamy-voiced soprano
'complete' soprano, Price is an outstanding song recitalist.
Neil Evans
Recommended recording:
Price in Mozart (RCA 09026 61635-2)

96
ALFREDO KRAUS

Spanish tenor, b1927
Generally recognised as the finest *tenore di grazia* since Tito Schipa, for many years the velvet-toned Alfredo Kraus enjoyed a distinguished operatic reputation, but made frustratingly few recordings. 'Rediscovered' in the mid-1970s, an 'Indian summer' in the studios found his amazing voice still in tip-top condition. He remains the definitive Ferrando on disc.
Julian Haylock
Recommended recording:
Mozart *Così fan tutte*; Böhm (EMI CMS7 69330-2)

95
FRANK SINATRA

American singer, 1915-98
Sinatra's career took off as the front singer with Tommy Dorsey's Swing Band, but he soon decided on a solo career that effectively raised popular song to an art form. Although it is said that his breath control and hence his phrasing was learned from Dorsey's horn technique, and his emotional delivery from Billie Holiday, his lyric interpretation was second to none.
Barbara Hammond
Recommended recording:
'Songs for Swinging Lovers' (Capitol CDP 7 46570-2)



O' Blue Eyes at No. 95

94
IVAN KOZLOVSKY

Ukrainian tenor, b1900
Ukrainian Ivan Kozlovsky was the leading

Russian operatic tenor of his generation, with the Bolshoi from 1926-54, but never allowed to perform abroad. His light but honeyed tone was allied to strong characterisation and an elegant technique that allowed him roles ranging from Alfredo (*Traviata*) to Lohengrin, and an unusually long career.
Michael Scott Rohan
Recommended recording:
Ivan Kozlovsky (Myto 1MCD921.55)

93
JOSEPH SHABALALA

South African singer, b1948
If Mel Tormé was the Velvet Fog, Shabalala is the Silken Mist. His translucent, floating singing gained wider attention via Paul Simon's *Graceland*, featuring the *a capella* style Isicathamiya which he developed. Shabalala is a fine composer, his songs providing perfect vehicles for his gently husky lead vocals with Black Mambazo.
Barry Witherden
Recommended recording:
The Spirit of South Africa: The Very Best of Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Nascente NSCD 021)

92
ELENA GERHARDT

German mezzo-soprano, 1883-1961
Elena Gerhardt only appeared on the concert stage, where she took the singing of Lieder to new levels of seriousness. At her first recital, in 1903, she was accompanied by the great conductor Artur Nikisch, at a time when accompanying was generally regarded as a mere chore for hacks; eight years later she recorded several songs with him. She was the first woman to sing *Winterreise*, which set new standards.
Michael Tanner
Recommended recording:
Wolf Society (EMI CHS5 66640-2)

91
DAWN UPSHAW

American lyric soprano, b1960
This soprano's finest work is in 20th century repertoire. A foray into Broadway on *I Wish It So* shows her versatility but *The Girl With The Orange Lips* is a brilliantly conceived collection from Falla and Ravel to Delage, showcasing her delicate, meticulous yet expressive approach.
Andy Hamilton
Recommended recording:
Girl with Orange Lips (Nonesuch)

90
KATHLEEN BATTLE

American coloratura soprano, b1948
Highly demanding and famously temperamental – the latter reputedly cost her her job at the Met – Kathleen Battle combines an enchanting stage presence with the voice of an angel. Her bell-like clarity and sparkling agility invariably hold audiences spellbound in a repertoire from Mozart to spirituals.
Julian Haylock
Recommended recording:
J S Bach Favourite Arias (DG 429 737-2)

89
TITO RUFFO

Italian baritone, 1877-1953
Tito Ruffo was a self-taught operatic artist who wholly changed the style in which Italian baritone music was performed: it had previously been a matter of cultivated vocalism, whereas Ruffo transformed it into a dramatic vehicle which, in his hands, was highly effective, but could easily become vulgar. His own voice had a dark beauty which is unforgettable.
Michael Tanner
Recommended recording:
Operatic arias (Nimbus NI 7810)

88
HUGUES CUENOD

Swiss-born French tenor, b1902
Hugues Cuenod was a light but immensely stylish tenor of the French school, both an opera singer and a master of French song and pioneer of baroque and early music throughout a career of more than 60 years.
Michael Scott Rohan
Recommended recording:
Cuenod in French Songs (Nimbus NI 5027)

87
AKSEL SCHIOTZ

Danish tenor, 1906-75
Aksel Schiøtz had a voice of unforgettable appeal, whose silvery timbre and elegance of style made an indelible impression. His career was lamentably short: his reputation mainly rests on his post-war records of *Dichterliebe* and *Die schöne Müllerin* and his poignant records of Nielsen. A brain tumour brought his tenor career to an end in 1950.
Robert Layton
Recommended recording:
Nielsen Songs (Danacord DACOCD354/6)

86
SENA JURINAC

Yugoslavian lyric soprano, 1921- 98

WHICH COUNTRY HAS THE MOST SINGERS OF THE CENTURY?

Italy with 15, closely followed by Britain with 14, and the United States and Germany tie on 11

This cherished soprano captured audiences worldwide, particularly at Salzburg, Vienna and Glyndebourne. Hers was a voice of brilliantly bright line, assured intonation and notable dramatic insight. Her physical beauty was as impressive as her stylistic mastery, especially in Strauss and Mozart.

Geoffrey Crankshaw
Recommended recording:
Opera and Song Recital (EMI CDH 7 63199-2)

85
GIOVANNI MARTINELLI
Italian tenor, 1885-1969

A trumpet-toned tenor, shining brass to Caruso's bronze, and hugely excited in the big Verdi roles in which he excelled. He made his debut at 25 (in Verdi's *Ernani*) and made his last stage appearance (as the Emperor Altoum in Puccini's *Turandot*) at the age of 82. Not long before that he recorded the last-act solo from Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* with a ringing vehemence and moving expressiveness that recapture the electricity of his great years.

Michael Oliver
Recommended recording:
Martinelli (Nimbus Prima Voce NI 7804)

84
GIULIETTA SIMONIATO
Italian mezzo-soprano, b1910

Simoniato was one of Italy's best mezzos throughout an international career of more than 30 years. Her full, rich voice took well to roles ranging from Cherubino (*Figaro*) to Rosina, Azucena and Amneris. Her stage personality was equally strong, dramatically intense, but bubbling with comic charm.

Michael Scott Rohan
Recommended recording:
Aida; Karajan (Decca 414 X87-2)

83
MATTHIAS GOERNE
German baritone, b1968

The Weimar-born baritone has had a rapid rise to fame. Lieder is his first love but he also appears in opera. Following a much-acclaimed interpretation of Schubert's *Winterreise* (Hyperion), his finest record to date is *The Hollywood Songbook* by Hanns Eisler with lyrics by Brecht (Decca). With Eric Schneider on piano, Goerne's interpretation is magnificent. Though his voice is beautiful, the intensity of expression means the cabaret edge of the material is not completely tamed and subdued.

Andy Hamilton
Recommended recording:
Schubert Lieder (Decca 452 917-2)

82
SIMON KEENLYSIDE
British lyric baritone, b1959

Simon Keenlyside (born London) is the outstanding British Lieder recitalist of today and the finest British singer in Schubert and Schumann, with a lyric baritone voice which is warm and used with great subtlety and immaculate taste. Keenlyside is also much in demand as an opera singer and, with his boy-next-door looks, he's the Pelléas and Billy Budd of one's dreams. His discography is substantial and includes three solo discs of Lieder by Schubert, Strauss and Schumann.

Adrian Jack
Recommended recording:
Schumann Lieder Recital (Hyperion CDJ33102)

81
HEDDLE NASH
British tenor, 1896-1961

Heddle Nash was the outstanding British lyric tenor of his time. He studied in Milan and made his London debut as the Duke in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. His singing was sweet and charming, with a graceful sense of line which sounds a model of old-world courtesy to modern ears. Nash was equally admired in Handel and Mozart. His ardent interpretation of Elgar's *Gerontius* became legendary and can be heard on a complete recording of the oratorio, with Sargent conducting, on Testament.

Adrian Jack
Recommended recording:
Various (Dutton CDLX7012)

80
IAN BOSTRIDGE
British tenor, b19xx

Bostridge's intellectually-underpinned delivery of song (Britten, Hahn), lieder (Schubert, Schumann) and all too rarely opera (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *The Fake's Progress*) has made him the thinking woman's tenor. Performances are characterised by a concentrated intensity, measured precision of delivery, deftly detailed dramatic characterisation

and a rapt emotional integrity.

Michael Quinn
Recommended recording:
Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin (Hyperion CDJ33025)

79
ANGELA GHEORGHIU

A sensational Covent Garden debut as Verdi's Violetta catapulted Gheorghiu to stardom overnight five years ago. Everything since has been full of hi-octane, hi-energy promise, the voice rich, intense, secure in line, beautifully proportioned and deliciously emotional in a way that only Callas could match. A huge, passionate *bel canto* talent.

Michael Quinn
Recommended recording:
Verdi: La Traviata (Decca 448 119-2)

78
LUISA TETRAZZINI
Italian coloratura soprano, 1871-1940

With a marginally less beautiful voice than Melba, Tetrazzini was a coloratura miracle from an age that spawned many such sopranos. Her technique was devastatingly good, with effortless floating high notes that are such a hallmark of the golden age. Phrasing was seamless, and she was no stranger to the odd liberty when display can be enhanced.

Simon Trezise
Recommended recording:
The complete Zonophone and Victor recordings (Romophone 81025-2)

77
ANNE-SOFIE VON OTTER

Swedish mezzo-soprano, b1955

Von Otter is a true Lieder singer, her mezzo-soprano less ideal for opera or even the concert hall, though she works in both. She has a bright sound and clear diction, and a beautiful tone. Her partnership with pianist Bengt Forsberg has produced a fine series of recordings

Andy Hamilton
Recommended recording:
Berg: Strauss songs (DG)

76
THOMAS ALLEN
British baritone, b1944

The greatest Don Giovanni of his generation, Allen simply exudes masculine and musical potency on stage with his seductive, dark-hued, tonally firm, strongly projected voice. Agile, too, with Rossini's Figaro and Mozart's

Papageno lightly sketched and deftly mischievous. Particularly expressive in English and French song and, increasingly on disc in American musicals.

Michael Quinn
Recommended recording:
Mozart: Don Giovanni (EMI CDS7 47037-2)

75
ANDREAS SCHOLL
German counter-tenor, b1966

With a vibrant, honey-warm, clarion-bright, angelically-pure voice Scholl marries beauty, brain and brawn to simply stunning, heart-stopping effect. Peerless *primo uomo* of the new countertenor generation, he excels in Handel, with strong showings on disc of Dowland and English folk song and an exquisite Vivaldi Stabat Mater.

Michael Quinn
Recommended recording:
Heroes (Decca 466 196-2)

Andreas Scholl: peerless

74
MIRELLA FRENI
Italian lyric-spinto soprano, b1935

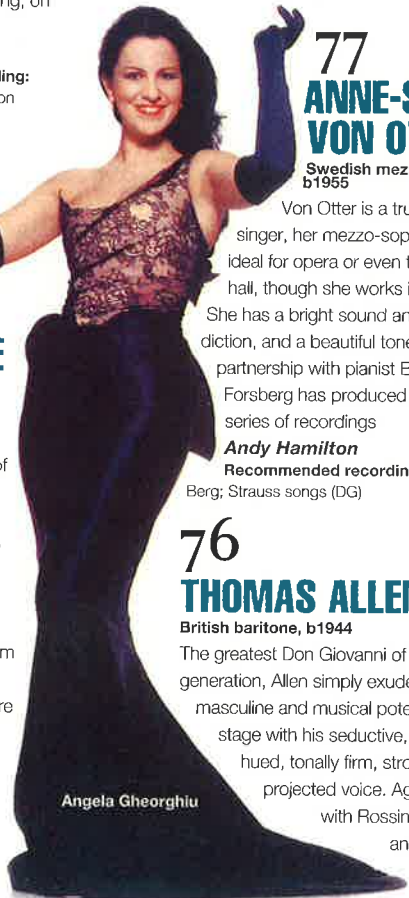
Arguably the finest Mimi (*Bohème*) and Violetta (*Traviata*) of modern times, the great Modenese soprano, Mirella Freni, coincidentally shared the same wet nurse as Pavarotti, and their respective mothers even worked in the same cigarette factory! She is an artist of incomparable charm and mesmerising vocal artistry.

Julian Haylock
Recommended recording:
Puccini La bohème (Decca 421 049-2)

73
LJUBA WELITSCH
Bulgarian dramatic soprano, 1913-98

Bulgarian Ljuba Welitsch made almost as much impression with her red hair and flamboyant, sensual stage presence as her powerful, silvery soprano, galvanising audiences in roles such as Aida, Tosca, and above all Salome. Singing and acting with total commitment, she largely exhausted her voice by the 1960s.

Michael Scott Rohan
Recommended recording:
Ljuba Welitsch: The Complete Columbia Recordings (Sony MH2K62866)



Angela Gheorghiu

JULIAN HAYLOCK

72
ELISABETH SODERSTROM

Swedish lyric/dramatic soprano, b1927
Probably the most distinguished singer-actress of her generation, with a special gift for conveying suffering. Her wide-ranging voice encompassed a huge repertoire, from light lyric roles to Ellen Orford, the Marschallin, Janáček's heroines and even Fidelio.

Michael Scott Rohan
Recommended recording:
The Makropoulos Case/Mackerras (Decca 430-372-2)

71
ILEANA COTRUBAS

Romanian lyric soprano, b1939
Ileana Cotrubas was renowned for the beauty of her voice but also for the subtlety and taste of her acting in both comic and tragic roles. Her greatest roles include Susanna in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* to which she brought wit and warmth, Debussy's *Meisande* and most famously *Violetta* in *La traviata* which, with her fragile and affecting presence, became her signature role.

Neil Evans
Recommended recording:
Verdi *La traviata* (DG 415 132-2)

70
NELLY MELBA

Melba belongs to the golden age of singing – the late Victorian period. Few sopranos have ever conveyed greater ease or pleasure in singing. Her technique is so perfect that rapid coloratura sounds like an act of nature, and a simple melody caresses the ear in

OF THE TOP 10 SINGERS 4 ARE LIVING; OF THE 100 SINGERS 26 ARE STILL SINGING

Plácido Domingo, the world's most versatile tenor, continues to astound in an astonishingly long and healthy career

Christa Ludwig, the great mezzo-soprano of the last 50 years, is retired and living in the Côte d'Azur

Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the baritone who has raised the art of song recital singing to its greatest heights, is retired but continues to give lectures and readings

Hans Hotter, leading Wagnerian bass, continues to narrate concerts

The younger ones include **Simon Keenlyside**, **Bryn Terfel**, **Dawn Upshaw**, **Cecilia Bartoli**, **Ian Bostridge** and **Andreas Scholl**

the most extraordinary way.
Simon Trezise
Recommended recording:
Nellie Melba (various songs and arias) (Nimbus Prima Voce NI 7890)

69
ANTON DEMOTA

Yugoslavian tenor, 1910-89
Anton Dermota excelled at the lighter end of the Austro-German operatic repertoire. His Bach and Mozart were particularly special: few tenors match the fluidity of his voice production and the heady beauty of his tone.

Terry Blain
Recommended recording:
Anton Dermota (Preiser 90022)

68
EMMY DESTINN

Czech dramatic soprano, 1878-1930
The legendary Emmy Destinn was the most commanding soprano of the early part of the century. Her strong, luminous timbre shines through the heavy shellac surfaces, and the glowing strength and melting warmth of her singing explains the hold she had over audiences. Greatness is more easily recognised than defined but her vocal presence leaves no doubt as to her stature.

Robert Layton
Recommended recording:
Mozart, Weber, Puccini, Verdi arias (Pearl Mono GREMM CD9172)

67
PETER SCHREIER

German tenor, b1935
One of the finest of all lieder singers, Peter Schreier is also a distinguished operatic tenor. His rare sensitivity and commanding intelligence combined with a ringing voice of breathtaking emotional range make him the archetypal modern German tenor.

Julian Haylock
Recommended recording:
Schubert *Die schöne Müllerin* (Decca 430 414-2)

66
JESSYE NORMAN

American lyric-dramatic soprano (b1945)
Although she made her operatic début singing Wagner, Jessye Norman has pursued an eclectic path ranging from Purcell to Schoenberg, both composers unexpected recipients of that capacious well-upholstered voice with its fruity bottom and abundant generosity. For all the power, however, she is blessed with magnificent *pianissimos*, and with guidance from Pierre Bernac has cultivated a productive soft spot for the French repertoire.

Paul Riley

Recommended recording:
Berlioz *Nuits d'Été* (Philips 412 493-2)

65
ELLY AMELING

Dutch lyric soprano, b1938
An amazing 40 years-old before making her operatic debut, Ely Ameling has almost exclusively concentrated her career on the intimate world of 'art song'. Blessed with a voice of ravishing purity and immaculate intonation, hers is one of the most exquisite talents you will encounter this side of perfection.

Julian Haylock
Recommended Recording:
Schubert 24 songs (Hyperion Edition, Vol. 7) (Hyperion CDJ 33007)



Jessye Norman: immense power

64
LOUIS ARMSTRONG

American trumpeter and singer, 1901-71
Quite apart from his immense influence as a trumpeter and band leader, the unique sound of 'Satchmo's' gravel voice secured his legendary status. The relaxed phrasing and delivery of his late, great hits "Hello, Dolly" and "What a Wonderful Life" were as much loved as the "scat" style he popularised earlier.

Barbara Hammond
Recommended recording:
'Hot Fives and Hot Sevens' (ASV 5171)

63
MONTSERRAT CABALLE

Spanish lyric soprano, b1933
Montserrat Caballé had the most ravishingly beautiful soprano voice of her generation, and her technique was quite faultless. She excelled in *bel canto* with her seamless line and phrasing, but was also a fine Mozartian and a touching Puccini heroine. She was sometimes criticised for blandness, for letting lovely sounds do duty for vocal acting, but this under-rates both her intelligence and her

often vivid expressiveness.
Michael Oliver
Recommended recording:
Verdi *Aida* (EMI CDS5 56246-2)

62
CONCHITA SUPERVIA

Spanish mezzo-soprano, 1895-1936
The irrepressible personality and vocal *joie de vivre* of this adorable mezzo soprano spills exuberantly on to her records, though made over 70 years ago. Technical virtuosity, impeccable diction, a vibrant tone, wide range and innate musicality made her exceptional in Rossini and one of the great Carmens.

Jeremy Nicholas
Recommended recording:
EMI CDH 7 63499 2; Preiser 89023

61
GIUSEPPE DI STEFANO

Italian tenor, b1921
Perhaps the most sought-after operatic tenor of the 1950s, di Stefano was Callas's chosen male lead in many of her famous recordings. Unfortunately, his career nosedived when he began taking on roles too heavy for him. But as an ardent Cavaradossi in *Tosca* he is just about ideal. Fortunately, there is much recorded evidence of his exciting, dashing style as an operatic hero.

Terry Williams
Recommended recording:
Giuseppe di Stefano *Sings Opera Arias and Songs* (EMI CDM7 63105-2)

60
MARILYN HORNE

American mezzo-soprano, b1934
Dorothy Dandridge may dazzle with her sultry screen presence in the 1954 film *Carmen Jones*, but it is the 20-year old Marilyn Horne doing all the singing. In the same year she started on her operatic career, debuting as Hara in Smetana's *Bartered Bride*, to much acclaim. Rich in timbre and possessing a thrillingly secure upper register, she epitomises 'the art of bel canto'. She made splendid operatic discs, some of the most memorable with Sutherland, for whom she is the perfect foil.

Terry Williams
Recommended Recording:
Decca 421 881-2

59
EMMA KIRKBY

British lyric soprano, b1949
A fresh, vital, unadulterated and porcelain-delicate voice delivered with genuine feeling and an admirably restrained use of vibrato has made

Kirkby the unchallenged Empress of Early Music for over 25 years. The Baroque aside, Mozart, Haydn and Hildegard feature strongly in a focused, strong, in-depth repertoire.

Michael Quinn

Recommended Recording:
Purcell Dido and Aeneas (Chandos CHAN 0521)

58 ELLA FITZGERALD

American jazz singer, 1918-96

Famed for "scatting", virtuoso improvisations using wordless sounds or off-the-cuff lyrics, her most enduring achievement will probably be the "straight" recordings of classic American popular song: Porter, Berlin, Kern etc. Her singing never lost its elegant phrasing or its vibrant warmth.

Barry Witherden

Recommended recording:
Best of the Songbooks (Verve 519804)

57 PAUL ROBESON

American bass, 1896-1976

Pure-voiced:
Kirkby



His politics may have been controversial, but no-one could seriously dispute the quality of his deep, resonant, glowing voice. Whether singing spirituals, folksongs, classical repertoire or popular evergreens, the sincerity, honesty and dignity that shone through shamed every racist and McCarthyite Lilliputian that tried to drag this great talent down.

Barry Witherden

Recommended recording:
Songs of Free Men (Sony MHK 63223)

56 NICOLAI GEDDA

Swedish tenor, b1925

Nicolai Gedda was one of the most versatile tenors of the 1950s and 1960s, ranging from baroque and Italian opera to Mozart, Berlioz and even lighter Wagner (Lohengrin). His voice

was typically clear-toned and Scandinavian, his technique impeccable, with a debonair, stylish manner that lent itself equally to Mozart and operetta. **Michael Scott Rohan.**

Recommended recording

Berlioz
Benvenuto
Cellini/Davis
(Phillips 416 955-2)

55 BILLIE HOLIDAY

American Blues singer, 1915-59

Holiday's deprived childhood and constant drug abuse which, predictably, resulted in her untimely death, also lent an emotional intensity to her natural talent for singing the blues. Her unique style brought about her first recording session with Benny Goodman in 1933.

Barbara Hammond

Recommended recording:
Songs for Distingue Lovers (Verve 539056-2)

54 IRMGARD SEEFRIED

German lyric soprano, 1919-88

Irmgard Seefried was a German soprano who spent most of her working life at the Vienna State Opera. She specialised in Mozart and Richard Strauss, which she sang with incomparable naturalness and charm. She also was a delightful Lieder singer, with a spontaneity which had enormous appeal. Her voice remained girlish until late. She retired in 1976.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording:
Mozart The Magic Flute (EMI CHS 5 65356-2)

53 GERHARD HUSCH

German baritone, 1901-84



Billie Holiday: the greatest jazz singer

Apart from the extraordinarily lyrical quality of the voice, Gerhard Hüsch was an artist of great musical and dramatic intelligence, whether as Papageno in Beecham's pre-war *Magic Flute* or as an interpreter of lieder. To Schubert, Wolf and Kilpinen he brought a sense of characterisation and beauty of line which was peerless.

Robert Layton.

Recommended recording:
Schubert Songs, Die Schoene Müllerin

52 ALEXANDER KIPNIS

Ukrainian bass, 1896-78

Alexander Kipnis worked wholly in western Europe and the USA. He had a velvety but very powerful voice, deployed to sovereign effect in Mozart (Sarastro), Wagner, Verdi, Mussorgsky

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JULIAN HAWTHORN

and Mozart. Despite the size of his voice he was a sensitive and idiomatic Lieder singer, especially of Wolf.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording:
Parsifal (EMI CMS7 64008-2)

51

SUZANNE DANCO

Belgian lyric soprano, b1911

Suzanne Danco was the outstanding lyric soprano in French music during the period immediately after the Second World War. She was the heroine in Ansermet's first recording of Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* and she also appeared on his recording of Fauré's Requiem. With a wonderfully clear, flexible voice and a flawless technique, Danco's repertoire was wide, ranging from Mozart to the part of Marie in Berg's *Wozzeck*.

Adrian Jack

Recommended Recording:
Great Voices of the Fifties, Vol. 2 (Decca London 448 151-2LML)

50

EVA TURNER

British soprano, 1892-1990

Turner had one of the most powerful soprano voices between the war years. Indeed, the sheer strength of her voice caused recording engineers much grief. Turandot is perhaps her most distinguished achievement; in "In questa reggia" we encounter the full majesty of her impeccable technique and infinitely memorable soundworld.

Simon Trezise

Recommended recording:
Various (Claremont CD GSE 78-50-66)

49

LAWRENCE TIBBETT

American baritone, 1896-1960

The outstanding baritone of the inter-war years, particularly noted for his performances in Verdi and the Italian repertoire. A fine-looking man and an accomplished actor, he also appeared in films and light opera.

Jeremy Nicholas

Recommended recording:
The Emperor Tibbett (Pearl GEMM CDS9452)

THE LONGEST CAREERS

Hans Hotter – still singing speaker in *Magic Flute* and the narrator in *Gurrelieder* well into his eighties

Elisabeth Soderstrom – made her debut in the early 1950s and is still singing the role of the Countess in Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* today

Hugues Cuénod – created Sellam in Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress* and made his Met debut at the age of 85

48

CECILIA BARTOLI

Italian mezzo-soprano, b1966

Now the best-selling female opera singer in the world. Her charismatic stage presence and natural acting skills are allied to one of the most brilliant coloratura techniques ever and wide vocal range of warmth and expressiveness. Especially noted for her Rossini roles, she is now investigating roles from the Baroque.

Jeremy Nicholas

Recommended recording:
Rossini Heroines (Decca 436 075-2)

47

ROSA PONSELLE

American soprano, 1897-1981

Rosa Ponselle started out in vaudeville, then, in 1918, was catapulted onto the Metropolitan stage opposite Caruso in Verdi's *La Forza del Destino*. A star was born. Rich, flexible and alluring, her voice was likened to "pure gold".

Terry Blain

Recommended recording:
Opera and Song Recital (Nimbus NI7805)

46

ENZIO PINZA

Italian bass, 1892-1957

Pinza was a great example of the noble-voiced Italian *basso cantante*, his dramatic gifts (he was a fine actor and a strikingly handsome man) never impeding his flawless *bel canto* line. He had a vast repertoire of over 100 roles despite never having learned to read music properly. His appearance as well as his aristocratic voice (both survived long enough for him to make a successful second career on Broadway, notably in *South Pacific*) made him ideal as Mozart's Don Giovanni, but he was perhaps still more memorable in the great Verdi bass roles.

Michael Oliver

Recommended recording:
Enzio Pinza (Nimbus Prima Voce NI 7875)

45

CARLO BERGONZI

Italian tenor, b1924

Carlo Bergonzi was the most stylish and

refined operatic tenor of his time in the Italian repertoire. He first sang at La Scala, Milan, in 1953 and appeared the same year in Verdi's *La forza del destino* in London. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s he sang regularly at Covent Garden and the Met.

Adrian Jack

Recommended recording:
Various Tenor arias (Belart 450 005-2)

Bartoli: bestselling magic

44 RICHARD TAUBER

German lyric tenor, 1891-1948

The name Richard Tauber conjures up a picture of the debonair, be-monocled, evening suited man-about-town. But in his earlier days, he was a renowned opera singer, taking on all the leading tenor roles at the Dresden Opera and the Vienna State Opera, with Mozart operas his speciality. Described as 'the foremost lyric tenor of the inter-war years' his voice has 'warmth, elegance, grace and perfect inflection'.

Terry Williams

Recommended recording:
Various (Pearl GEMM CD 9327).

43

LUCIA POPP

Czech coloratura/lyric soprano, 1939-93

Lucia Popp shot to stardom with her dazzling 'Queen of the Night,' a more spine-tingling, technically spot-on portrayal you are unlikely to hear. In the opera house, her warmth, natural acting ability and often coquettish charm make her the ideal Despina. Although best remembered for her vocal pyrotechnics, she is equally at home in the more intimate demands of lieder.

Terry Williams

Recommended recording:
Decca (417 129-2).



Lucia Popp: adorable Czech soprano

42

CATHY BERBERIAN

An inspiration to sometime husband Berio and to Cage, amongst others, Berberian was also a composer in her

own right. She was famed for her facility in avant-garde and experimental music, and for her great dramatic presence.

The timbre of her voice was as individual as her range was astounding.

Barry Witherden

Recommended recording:
Berio Songs (Stradivarius 10017)

41

PIERRE BERNAC

French baritone, 1899-1979

Pierre Bernac was the greatest French baritone of the mid-century and a supreme stylist. His effortless control of line and subtlety of vocal colour made him the ideal interpreter of Poulenc, who composed many song-cycles for him, and one of the most magisterial exponents of Debussy and Ravel.

Robert Layton

Recommended recording:
'The Essential Pierre Bernac' Testament mono (SBT 3161)

40

JAMES BOWMAN

British counter-tenor (b1941)

The leading counter-tenor of the second half of the century, James Bowman did much to revive interest in the high male voice. By performing and recording the roles which earlier had been sung by contraltos and mezzo-sopranos like Kathleen Ferrier he worked hand in hand with the authentic movement. With a more powerful voice than most counter-tenors he created roles in operas by Tippett, Maxwell Davies and Britten

Neil Evans

Recommended recording:
Handel Heroic Arias (Hyperion CDA 66483)

39

GOTTLIEB FRICK

German bass, 1906-94

Frick was famous for his singing of Wagner bass roles, especially Hunding and Hagen in the *Ring*, Gurnemanz in *Parsifal* and Pogner in *Meistersinger*. He had the blackest of voices, though it was also very beautiful, and could be caressing as well as baleful.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording:
Mozart: Die Entführung aus dem Serail/Beecham (EMI CHS 7 63715-2).

38

GERAINT EVANS

Welsh baritone, 1922-92

Geraint Evans made his Covent Garden and Glyndebourne debuts in the late 1940s, from whence his popularity as both musician and actor in such roles as Falstaff, Figaro, and Papageno soon brought him international exposure.

Barbara Hammond

Recommended recording: 'Great Mozart Singers Series, Vol. 4' (Orfeo C394401B)

37 JOHN McCORMACK

Irish tenor, 1884-1945

John McCormack was the archetypal Irish tenor, sweet-toned and beefy of frame, but with a mellow artistry that won the admiration of his rival Enrico Caruso. No actor, he relied on his elegant Italianate phrasing to create character, and retired early from the stage to become a recording giant.

Recommended recording:

John McCormack - recital (Romophone 82006-2)



Della Casa: a perfect Strauss singer

36 LISA DELLA CASA

Swiss soprano, b1919

Lisa della Casa sang much of the same repertoire as Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, to whom she provided a simpler, less mannered alternative. Her lyric soprano was clear, honest, even innocent, and she was considered the outstanding interpreter of Strauss's Arabella, of which there are two versions on CD, with Solti (1957) and Keilberth (1963). Della Casa's beauty and personal charm matched her voice, and she was a naturally radiant Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* and Figaro Countess.

Adrian Jack

Recommended Recording:

Recital (EMI Classics 5 66571 2)

Bryn Terfel: today's top bass baritone



35 FRIEDRICH SCHORR

Hungarian bass-baritone (1888-1953)

Rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the First World War the bass-baritone Friedrich Schorr dominated the Wagnerian bass scene for two decades. Schorr was tall, imposing and vocally majestic. He took the humanity of Hans Sachs as firmly in his stride as the doom-laden psychology of Wotan - whose farewell to his errant daughter Brunnhilde was unique in its blend of heroic grandeur and deep compassion.

Geoffrey Crankshaw

Recommended recording:

Wagner Arias (Preiser 8952)

34 FRIDA LEIDER

German dramatic soprano, 1888-1975

Three sopranos dominate the heroic-soprano repertoire between the wars - Flagstad, Leider and Lawrence. Each has her own distinctive qualities, Leider's being a remarkable vocal technique and intensely dramatic style.

Simon Trezise

Recommended recording:

Scenes from Götterdämmerung (Preiser 90266)

33 BRYN TERFEL

Welsh bass-baritone, b1965

Early competition success at Cardiff has provided Terfel's meteoric rise to pre-eminence with a suitably patriotic launch pad. A versatile singer, physically as well as musically, he dominates the operatic stage. But he is a commanding recitalist too whose innate authority, willingness to take risks and richly modulated expressive palate makes the familiar sound fresh.

Paul Riley

Recommended recording:

English songs (DG 445946-2)

32 GUNDULA JANOWITZ

German lyric soprano, b1937

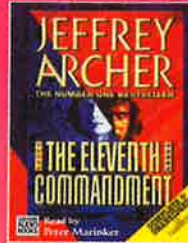
Janowitz is one of the best post-war examples of a distinctive type of German soprano voice. Much of her finest work was with Karajan, who clearly loved her creamy and pure tone. She could construct ravishing lines high above the orchestral line in Strauss; her *Four Last Songs* is especially memorable, as is her more intimate set of Schubert Lieder.

Simon Trezise

Mozart: Le nozze di Figaro (DG Originals 449 728-2)

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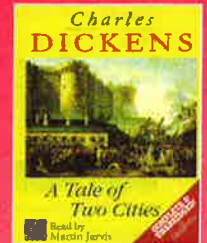
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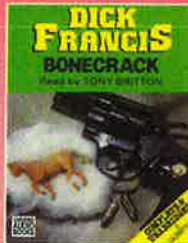
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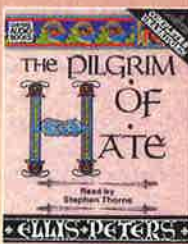
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31 REGINE CRSPIN

French lyric/dramatic soprano, b1927

Mistress of the grand French style, Crispin's début role was Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin* (in French), and Bayreuth soon saw her potential for heavier Wagner roles. But she brought to them the qualities that distinguished her great French heroines: purity of line, womanly dignity and subtle expressiveness. Her greatest role was one in which her French heritage and her Wagnerian experience could fuse in a memorable and moving portrayal: the Marschallin in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Michael Oliver

Recommended recording: Strauss: *Der Rosenkavalier* (Decca 417 493-2)

30 JON VICKERS

Canadian helden tenor, b1926

A tortured Otello, a near-demented Tristan, a Handel and Schubert singer of rare intensity. Tenor Jon Vickers was all of these and more. Sometimes raw and idiosyncratic in diction, psychological acuity was the keynote of his interpretations. Britten hated his Grimes, others found it matchlessly penetrating. Canada's greatest-ever vocal export?

Terry Blain

Recommended recording: Britten *Peter Grimes* (Philips Duo 462 847-2)

29 JOAN SUTHERLAND

Australian coloratura soprano, b1926

The century's finest coloratura soprano who made many of the great roles of Delibes, Massenet, Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini her own. With her agile, rich and firm voice capable of effortless and thrilling top notes she was a natural Handelian. She sang in London the first performance of his *Alcina* for 200 years before conquering the opera world in one night in 1959 with her performance of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Covent Garden. None of this voice type has rivalled her in range of roles, in vocal stamina and in sheer size of voice.

Neil Evans

Recommended recording: Various (Decca 458 209-2)

28 BRIGITTE FASSBAENDER

German mezzo-soprano, b1939

Happy to perform mostly in Munich, both as an opera singer and in Lieder

TRAGICALLY SHORT CAREERS

Fritz Wunderlich – died after falling down stairs

Kathleen Ferrier – died of cancer

and oratorio, she brought a ferocious, almost animal presence to everything she sang, and she employed her rich voice in the service of expressive truth. Her song recitals were more dramatic than most opera performances, except for ones with her in them.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording: Schubert: *Winterreise* (EMI CDC7 63715-2)

27 LEONTYNE PRICE

American dramatic soprano, b1927

With her dark, smoky and sultry voice, Price became one of the leading dramatic sopranos, excelling in Puccini and Verdi, especially as his Aida. Her superb musicianship, beauty and fine acting lent her a natural nobility for roles like Cleopatra in Barber's opera. She is also a great interpreter of spirituals.

Neil Evans

Recommended recording: Verdi *Aida* (Decca 417 416-2)

26 GERARD SOUZAY

French baritone, 1920

A pupil of the great Pierre Bernac, Souzay carried forward the master's championing of French repertoire, expanding successfully into German Lied territory, Schubert in particular. An even more elegant and finished stylist than Bernac, Souzay's voice typifies the airy graceful nature of the French baritone to virtual perfection.

Terry Blain

Recommended recording: Souzay in French Songs (Philips 438 964-2)

25 BIRGIT NILSSON

Swedish dramatic soprano, b1918

It was in the mid 1950s that Birgit Nilsson started to forge a Brunnhilde destined to run 'rings' around most of the opposition – and Bayreuth swiftly consummated her reputation as the heiress to Flagstad. She was a formidable Isolde who combined steely brilliance and a razor-sharp top with unassailed technical accomplishment and an enquiring musical insight.

Paul Riley

Recommended recording: *Götterdämmerung* (Philips 412 488-2)

24 RENATA TEBALDI

Italian dramatic soprano, b1922

Renata Tebaldi had one of the most beautiful soprano voices on record. She shot to fame in 1946, and had a long career, devoted to the central Italian repertoire, though she was not at her best in Verdi. The notorious rivalry with Callas was concerned with lovely

vocalising versus dramatic intensity, but later Tebaldi improved as a singing actress.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording: Puccini *La bohème* (Decca 440 233-2)



Joan Sutherland: agile and powerful

23 PETER PEARS

British tenor, 1910-86

Peter Pears is best known as Benjamin Britten's partner and associate, but he was a distinguished opera and 'lieder' singer in his own right. His reedy, plangent tenor, later with a fierce tremor, characterised many of Britten's greatest works; his immensely refined diction did not suit characters like Peter Grimes, but his expressive intelligence made him a compelling interpreter.

Michael Scott Rohan

Recommended recording: *Winterreise* (Decca 417 473-2)

22 ALFRED DELLER

British counter-tenor, 1912-79

When Tippett heard Deller in 1943 it was as if 'the centuries rolled back'. He gave him a London platform and from there began the trail-blazing rehabilitation of the counter-tenor voice. Deller's refinement and highly individual sonority, ethereal and other-worldly, ensnared Britten to write the part of Oberon for him in *Midsummer Night's Dream* but his early recordings of Purcell, Dowland and Campion are more representative.

Paul Riley

Recommended recording: Purcell, Dowland, Handel (Decca 448 247-2)

21 FRITZ WUNDERLICH

German lyric tenor, 1930-1966

At the time of his death at the age of only 36, Wunderlich was arguably the outstanding lyric tenor of his generation and intriguingly about to dip a toe into Wagner. But it was as a lieder singer and aristocratic Mozartian that he is most cherished. Possessed of a honeyed suppleness, his voice was warm yet firmly contoured, free of histrionics and always at the service of

the music and the words. Prophetically he first sang the part of Tamino as a student, Mozart's quester-after-truth proving to be a role he would occupy with distinction to the end of his life.

Paul Riley

Recommended recording: *Magic Flute*; Bohm (DG Originals 449 749-2)

20 BORIS CHRISTOFF

Bulgarian bass (1914-93)

Chaliapin leaps to mind as one who had the type of emotional power and tonal grandeur characteristic of Christoff. Boris Godunov was his natural goal, and how he excelled in a part calling for pathos as well as grandeur. His singing of Russian traditional songs was magical.

Geoffrey Crankshaw

Recommended recording: Russian trad songs (EMI CDH 76425)

19 LUCIANO PAVAROTTI

Italian tenor, b1935

With his huge open air concerts Pavarotti is certainly the most popular tenor of his generation. His work in bringing opera to such enormous



Pavarotti: the most popular tenor

audiences worldwide would be enough to ensure his place in any list of the century's greatest singers. But he is blessed with a pure, effortless tenor voice with thrilling high notes and he has become vocally if not dramatically the outstanding interpreter of Verdi, Puccini and Donizetti roles.

Neil Evans

Recommended recording: Turandot (Decca 443 204-2)

18 LAURITZ MELCHIOR

Danish helden tenor, 1890-1973

Melchior is famous because he has so far been the one, almost perfect solution to the Heldentenor problem. For sheer power, stamina, musical intelligence, and a voice that sounded beautiful even in the final ecstatic throes of Siegfried, the longest of Wagner's ordeals for

tenor, he is unequalled.

Simon Trezise

Recommended recording:

Wagner: Siegfried (Music & Arts CD-696)

17

ELISABETH SCHWARZKOPF

German lyric soprano, b1915

As her husband and partner in all things musical, Walter Legge masterminded Schwarzkopf's career, particularly in recording. Purely as sound, her voice was one of the most beautiful this side of heaven, famous for its ability to float effortlessly in the ether. She is matchless in German lieder, and her portrayal of Strauss's Marschallin is legendary.

Terry Williams

Recommended recording:

Four Last Songs (EMI Ref CDH 761001-2)

16

FIODOR CHALIAPIN

Russian bass, 1873-1938

Fiodor Chaliapin was, together with Caruso and Callas, one of the three supreme operatic artists of the century. He was a complete performer, paying as much attention to makeup as to acting and singing, which were all used for dramatic ends. Thanks to his incomparable performances as Boris Godunov the opera has achieved its deserved place in the repertoire; recorded 'live' at Covent Garden in 1928, his account of the role is scarcely credible. His extensive repertoire included roles written for him, such as Massenet's Don Quichotte.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording:

Mussorgsky: Excerpts from Boris Godunov (Preisler 89965)

15

ELISABETH SCHUMANN

German lyric soprano, 1885-1952

A voice of pure silver, and an artistic personality that could range from delicious humour to poignant vulnerability, she is best-remembered for Lieder recordings, of Schubert especially.

But she was a definitive,

rapturous Sophie in Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* and a bewitching exponent of Mozart's soubrette roles.

Michael Oliver

Recommended

recording: Strauss *Der Rosenkavalier* (EMI CHS764467-2)

Schwarzkopf: intelligent

14

JANET BAKER

British mezzo-soprano, b1933

Musically impeccable, theatrically intuitive, emotionally direct, fiercely intelligent, Baker's command of the repertoire from the Baroque to Britten was supreme. The human grandeur of her Handelian heroes remains unsurpassed, her Dido reigns supreme. Equally at ease in Mahler and French mélodies, her partnership with Barbirolli and the Hallé was British musicianship at its most eloquent.

Michael Quinn

Recommended Recording: Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius* (EMI CMS7 63185-2)

13

VICTORIA DE LOS ANGELES

Spanish lyric soprano, b1923

As enchanting for her sunny personality and charm as for the purity of her voice, Los Angeles was the acknowledged mistress of Spanish song, but had a surprisingly wide operatic repertoire, from Massenet's *Manon* and Bizet's *Carmen* to Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and Mimi in *La bohème*. Her art was an intimate and subtle one; she could touch the heart with her sincerity and that quite unmistakable voice of pale but warm gold.

Michael Oliver

Recommended recording:

Puccini *Suor Angelica* (EMI CMS7 64165-2)

12

LOTTE LEHMANN

German soprano, 1888-1976

One of the greatest and best-loved singers of the century, Lehmann was especially associated with Strauss's Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* to which she brought aristocratic stage presence. She created the Strauss roles of the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Christine in *Intermezzo* and was an extremely accomplished song recitalist and teacher.

Neil Evans

Recommended recording:

Strauss Songs (EMI CHS7 644 87-2)

11.

BENIAMINO GIGLI

Italian tenor, 1890-1957

Coming to the fore in the 1950s and enjoying a long career, Gigli set new standards of Italian singing. He refused to belt out everything at the top of his voice. His piano and mezzo-voce singing was a dream of tonal beauty and he loved the traditional songs of his country and yet excelled in every genre.

Geoffrey Crankshaw

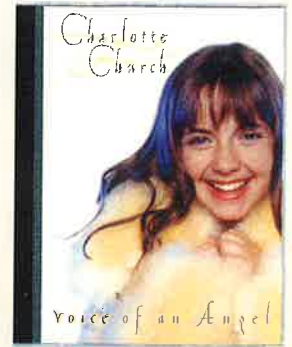
Recommended recording:

Verdi *Amas* (CDH7 610 51-2)

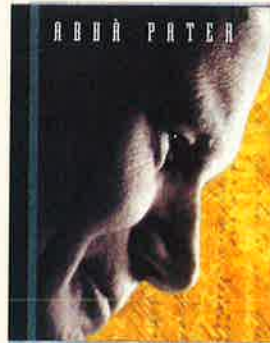
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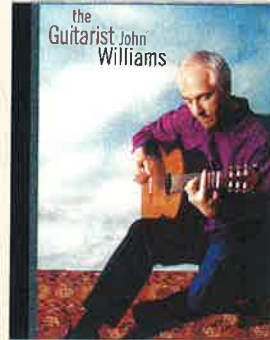
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Voice of an Angel
SM 60957



Pope John Paul II
Abba Pater
SM 61705



Yo-Yo Ma
John Tavener: *The Protecting Veil*
SM 62821



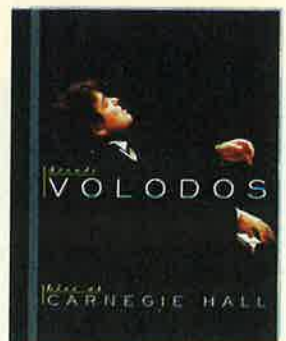
John Williams
The Guitarist
SM 60586



Yo-Yo Ma
Simply Baroque
SM 60680



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Ludwig: the great, versatile mezzo of the last 50 years

10 Christa Ludwig

German mezzo-soprano, b1928

Categorisation of singers is a dangerous but necessary occupation. Ludwig is officially a mezzo, in that the real meat of her voice lies somewhat lower than that of a genuine soprano. Her Mahler songs, for instance, reveal the deep, rich, vibrant area of her lower voice (the earlier EMI recordings, 1958-64, are especially glorious). In spite of this, many of her better-known roles are actually soprano parts. Who can ever forget her Leonore in the great Klempner recording of *Fidelio*? It was as if she had been designed for the role, for how many others have so successfully brought the womanly and the heroic (both understood in the nineteenth-century sense) so movingly together. Her astonishing 1964 recordings for RCA have her singing the Immolation from *Götterdämmerung*, among other soprano war-horses, and only the most critical listener would observe or be troubled by a marginal loss of security in the higher reaches.

Like Björling, Ludwig came from a musical background. Her first contract was in Giessen, Germany in 1945, and she has performed in most of

RUNNERS UP

Those we left out include Sheila Armstrong, Arleen Auger, Mattia Battistini, Teresa Berganza, Erna Berger, Franco Corelli, Amelita Galli Curci, Jan de Gaetani, Nicolai Ghiaurov, Maria Jeritsa, Edith Mathis, Robert Merrill, Martha Modl, Mario del Monaco, Julius Patzak, Hermann Prey, Samuel Ramey, John Shirley Quirk, Cesare Siepi, Eleanor Steber, Matti Talvela, Maggie Teyte, Tatiana Troyanos, Astrid Varnay, Fats Waller, Felicity Lott, Ann Murray, Philip Langridge, Gwyneth Jones, John Tomlinson. Tell us your favourites.

the great opera houses. From Karajan she reckons she learnt her 'beauty of phrasing', from Böhm her fidelity to note values, and from Bernstein 'the depth of meaning of the music'. The three influences nicely summarise the attributes of her lovely singing.

Simon Trezise

Recommended recording:

Christa Ludwig: A 70th Birthday Tribute, The Classic 1964 Recordings (Strauss, Gluck, Rossini, Wagner) (RCA 09026 68951 2)

9 HANS HOTTER

German bass baritone, b1909

Hans Hotter was the dominant Wagnerian bass-baritone of the post-war years, but also a distinguished *lieder* artist. Born in Bavaria, he showed such vocal promise that he made his stage debut as Sarastro at only 21, and in Wagner roles including Sachs and the Wanderer in *Siegfried* only a year later. Considered "politically unsound" by the Nazis, he began his true international career in Covent Garden. His first job was in Wagner performances in 1948 (in English!) becoming a regular until the mid-1960s. In 1953 he sang the three Wotan roles at the revived Bayreuth Festival, and thence throughout the world, recording *Siegfried* and *Die Walküre* in the first complete *Ring* under Solti.

His voice was large, though not overwhelming, with a distinctive slightly hollow tone, but capable of immense warmth and subtlety, and allied to towering height, aqualine features and unusual acting ability. His *lieder* singing was more fluent than the detailed Fischer-Dieskau style then dominant, but with no less genuine sensitivity to words. He was often handicapped by acute hay-fever, and later developed a drastic wobble above the staff, but remained a commanding, moving artist. He coached other great Wotans, including David Ward and James Morris. Even into his 90s he has continued to perform roles such as the Speaker in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*.

Michael Scott Rohan

Recommended recording: *Siegfried*/Solti (Decca 455 555-2)

8 KATHLEEN FERRIER

British contralto, 1912-53

Kathleen Ferrier's professional singing career did not start until she was 31, and lasted only 12 years. In 1946, she made her operatic debut in Britten's *Rape of Lucretia*. Gluck's *Orfeo* quickly followed, and the "What is life?" aria became synonymous with her name – as did her famous recording of the unaccompanied English folksong, *Blow the Wind Southerly*. With Bruno Walter's encouragement, she sang Mahler at a time when he was out of fashion. She first sang *Das Lied von der Erde* (Song of the Earth) at the 1947 Edinburgh Festival with Peter Pears, and with Walter conducting. By the time she reached the final bars of the "Abschied" she was in tears and could not sing the final "ewig".

Ferrier's voice is a generous and rich contralto which she uses quite artlessly. It is the honesty and simplicity of her singing which touches the listener. As a lasting memento I would choose the recording of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* which she made with Julius Patzak and Bruno Walter in Vienna in 1952. The final "Abschied" has a special poignancy. She died from cancer in the following year.

Terry Williams

Recommended recording: Decca 417 129-2

7 ENRICO CARUSO

Italian dramatic tenor, 1873-1921

Enrico Caruso was the first great singer to make a world-wide reputation through recordings. For many listeners, even those who never heard him, he was and remains the tenor to whom all others are compared. His voice was rich, virile and distinctly baritone: when a bass singing the role of Colline in Puccini's *La bohème* was taken ill during a performance, Caruso had no difficulty in singing his Act 6 "Coat Song" in the original key. He had the heroic timbre and ringing top register that the great Italian heroic roles need, but with an exquisite and sensitive control of quieter singing. He created major roles for Puccini (Dick Johnson in *La Fanciulla del West*), Mascagni (*Osaka in Iris*), Giordano (*Loris in Fedora*) and several others.

He had a large repertoire, and spent much of each year at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where he gave over 600 performances of nearly 40 roles. His training was imperfect, he had some early vocal difficulties and his international career was not a long one: he died of a lung complaint at the age of 48. But the burnished bronze of his voice and the visceral eloquence of his singing have made him one of that handful of musicians (like Heifetz, Melba, Horowitz and a very few others) who are household names even to those who know little of music.

Michael Oliver

Recommended recording:

Caruso: The Early Recordings (Nimbus Prima Voce 7900)

6 PLACIDO DOMINGO

With a virtually boundless repertoire, Domingo is the supreme actor-singer of his generation. And with more than 100 roles committed to disc he is, far and away, the most recorded tenor in history – a remarkable achievement for a singer who began his career as a baritone (a range he still occasionally sings in). A passionate populariser of opera, his matinee-idol looks



Plácido Domingo: a fine tenor voice and a versatile actor

and natural charisma have earned him legions of adoring fans. But it is the voice that earns their abiding loyalty. A big, powerful, unmistakably masculine voice smoothly expressed with near faultless intonation and a rich, intensely lyrically feel for character, its ability to describe tenderness and sensitivity is the real key to his success.

It is in Italian repertory that his lyric-dramatic prowess has been most pronounced with recommendable contributions to Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (a Des Grieux to die for) and a host of Verdi operas – *Aida*, *Luisa Miller*, *Nabucco*, *La Traviata*, and a searing, surely definitive *Otello*. French opera – Bizet, Massenet, Meyerbeer – has provided memorable performances, too, and after a shaky start, he is proving increasingly more comfortable in Wagner. With category-defying musical sympathies – as wide as the world itself – he recently enjoyed considerable success on disc with a return to the zarzuelas of his native Spain with which he made his professional debut in 1957 (hear his zarzuela disc on Astree Auvidis)

Showing few signs of slowing down, he continues to investigate the repertoire with the sincerity, integrity and unquenchable curiosity that has characterised a career now in its fifth decade and made him what he undoubtedly is: the greatest male singer of the century.

Michael Quinn

Recommended Recording: Verdi: *Otello* (Deutsche Grammophon 439 805-2)



La Divina: as a singing actress Callas is unbeatable

5 MARIA CALLAS

Greek dramatic soprano, 1923-77

Maria Callas was born and brought up in New York. She spent the war years in Greece, making her international debut as *La Gioconda* in Verona in 1947. For the next few years she sang heroic Wagnerian roles, *Isolde*, *Brunnhilde* in *Die Walküre* and *Kundry*. But in 1949 she also began to sing in *bel canto* operas by Bellini, Rossini and Donizetti, and it was in them, and in some major Verdi and Puccini roles, as well as in lesser eighteenth and nineteenth century Italian composers that she established herself as the greatest opera singer

of the age, and equal in authority and fame to any who has ever lived.

She gave herself to her roles so unsparingly, both as singer and actor, that by the end of the 1950s her voice was showing serious signs of wear, though she continued to appear on stage until 1965. She came out of retirement in 1973 for a worldwide concert tour with Giuseppe di Stefano, but her voice had largely gone and she retreated to her Parisian home as a recluse until she died in 1977. Many recordings, both made in the studio and of live performances, show that all the fuss around Callas was completely justified.

She has no peer for intensity, astonishing breath control, overall musicality and fearless giving of herself to her roles. She was at her greatest recreating operas that had been almost or wholly forgotten, and giving them a dramatic dimension which no-one believed they had. But also as *Tosca*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Aida*, perhaps above all in *La Traviata*, she is the despair of all sopranos who have followed her. Her influence on the way these roles are sung has been enormous, and her reputation rightly goes from strength to strength.

Her wretched personal life, which most famously involved her metamorphosis from pachyderm obesity to slender beauty, with a movement into high society and a long and devastating affair with Aristotle Onassis, stoked the flames of a reputation which got out of her control and ruined the already delicate balance of her nerves. It is a tribute to her transcendent greatness that none of that makes the least difference when one is in the presence of her art.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording: Bellini *Norma* (1960) EMI CMS 5 66428-2

4 TITO GOBBI

Italian baritone, 1913-84

Tito Gobbi was the pre-eminent Italian baritone of the post war era, and a household name even in Britain, both as a Covent Garden regular and through his appearance in *'The Glass Mountain'* and other films. His vocal talent was recognised whilst he was still a teenager, but his family's genteel poverty made his studies a struggle, which he alleviated with film acting. After an inauspicious provincial debut he joined the Rome Opera in 1937, under the aegis of Tullio Serafin, graduating to major roles such as *Rigoletto* and *Ford*, opposite the great Mariano Stabile's *Falstaff*.

Gobbi's voice despite its distinctive smoky tone, was not the strongest voice for the repertoire, but he used it with both refined musicality and extraordinary intensity and relish for words and action. He became one of the new generation of singing actors and amongst the greatest, a stocky but personable stage figure, with the ability to generate both charm and menace. In 1941 he sang the title role in the Italian première of *Wozzeck*, but otherwise held largely to the Italian repertoire.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s he made a towering international career, especially as a mordant, joyously sadistic *Scarpia*, an ideal foil to Callas's searingly intense *Tosca*, but also in warmer roles – a lively and lovable *Falstaff*, although something of an Italian dandy instead of a bluff English swaggerer, and a mercurial *Figaro*. He sang until the mid-1970s and also founded a summer school for younger singers

Michael Scott Rohan

Recommended recording: Rossini *Barber of Seville* (EMI CDS5 56310-2)

COVER DISC

● TRACK 8



VERDI *Otello* – Act 3, "Dio! mi potevi scagliar tuttii mali" (4:29)

Misled by Iago into believing his Desdemona has been unfaithful to him, Otello makes a despairing entreaty to heaven wishing

poverty, shame and ruination upon himself rather than be robbed of his beloved. If not, he determines, let her first confess her crime, then die!

An unimpeachable example of Domingo's total immersion in the role, this pivotal Act Three aria, for all its fierce, raging irrationality, needs to be sung with finger-tip sensitivity to marshal the full extent of the raw, shattered emotions it describes. Domingo duly delivers with painful, almost overpowering intensity.

● TRACK 9



BELLINI *Norma* – Act 1, Scene 1, "Casta Diva", extract (2:58)

Norma is Bellini's masterpiece and one of the finest of all *bel canto* operas, the title role is one of the most dramatically demanding in

the entire repertoire; along with *Tosca* and *Medea* it provided Callas with her greatest role. *Norma* had had an earlier love affair with Pollione, the Roman pro-consul, and borne him children; Pollione, however, is now interested in the young priestess Adalgisa, though he fears *Norma's* vengeance. Adalgisa confides in *Norma*, after the latter has sung this great invocation to the rising moon *Casta Diva*. Over a simple orchestral line of Mozartian elegance, Callas sings with unequalled intensity and passion.

● TRACK 10



ROSSINI *The Barber of Seville* – Act 1, "Largo al factotum" (4:45)

Gobbi, brilliantly as he portrayed *Rodrigo's* doomed nobility and *Scarpia's* sadistic snarl, was equally vivid as

Rossini's cheerfully hedonistic *Figaro*, extrovert barber and matchmaker to all *Seville*. He introduces himself with "Make way for the busiest man in the town!" (0:40) and sings of the joys of life as a barber "di qualita" (1:05), always busy – especially with extra commissions for ladies (2:23) and gentlemen. Everyone calls on him, for haircuts, shaves, wigs, clandestine letters – "One at a time please". He's summoned from every side (3:45), high and low – and without overplaying the funny voices, as so many *Figaros* do (4:09) "A bravo Figaro, bravo, bravissimo!"



Kirsten Flagstad: the Wagnerian soprano with the huge, penetrating, but warm voice

3 KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD

Norwegian dramatic soprano, 1895-1962

Kirsten Flagstad was trained by her aunt, and made her debut in 1913, singing a large repertoire, with many light roles, even in operetta, until the early 1930s. Only in 1932 did she undertake the role of Isolde, which she went on to sing all over the world, totalling 182 performances of it. In 1935, when she made her debut at the Met in New York, as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre*, she finally created a sensation, and from then on she became identified with the heroic Wagner roles, especially Brunnhilde and Isolde.

She went back to occupied Norway to be with her husband in 1941, and hardly sang again until after the War. She kept her voice in magnificent shape until she retired from the stage in 1951, and afterwards, singing taxing roles until the late 1950s, when she was over 60. Her last roles were Purcell's Dido in London, performed twice an evening for a quart of Guinness, and Gluck's *Alceste*. She also had a great success in 1949-50 at Salzburg singing *Fidelio* under Furtwängler.

The beauty of Flagstad's voice is unmistakable, and remained extraordinarily constant throughout her long career. That was largely thanks to the care with which she sang new parts, so that her major career only got under way when she was 40. She had a placid temperament, and that has often led to criticism of her performances for lack of fire, especially compared with Frida Leider, the great Wagnerian whom she supplanted. The many records she made give a powerful impression of her inexhaustibility and warmth of tone. Without offering detailed new insights into her roles, she did do them the fullest musical justice, and brought to them the most ample voice they have ever been accorded. Singing the notes as beautifully and accurately as possible, she is as moving as needs be. The sheer fire of Leider, Mödl and Varnay escaped her, but the goddess-like impression is inimitable.

Michael Tanner

Recommended recording: *Tristan und Isolde*/Furtwängler (1952) (EMI CDS 5 56254-2)

● TRACK 11



WAGNER *Tristan und Isolde* Act 1, Scene 3 "Wie lachend sie mir Lieder singen", extract

Kirsten Flagstad excelled in this role of the great lover in Wagner's recreation of a Celtic myth set off the coast of Cornwall. Listen to her wonderfully rounded and noble tone, warm and beautiful but also strong – and as penetrating as

a laser beam. On the ship which is bearing Isolde to her marriage with King Mark, Tristan is in command. Tristan and Isolde are already in love; she does not love Mark, and there is tension as each is aware of the situation. A sailor is heard singing a love song. Isolde plans to poison herself and Tristan, but Brangäne, her attendant puts a love potion in the drinking cup instead of the poison. As the ship nears land, Isolde summons Tristan. They both are thrown into paroxysms of ecstatic love. This is Wagner at his most powerfully emotional and sensual.



King of song recitalists: Fischer-Dieskau revolutionised German song performance

2 DIETRICH FISCHER-DIESKAU

German baritone, b1925

Fischer-Dieskau began his career in the opera house, but he first made his name outside Germany as an outstandingly gifted, imaginative and intelligent Lieder-(German art song) singer. His voice was rich and very beautiful and his immaculate technique made possible an exceptionally long career: he made his début in 1947 and only retired from singing in 1992, when he was 67 (he had retired from the operatic stage 10 years earlier). He rose to fame very rapidly; his first operatic role, at 22 in Berlin, was the major one of Posa in Verdi's *Don Carlos*, and by his mid-20s he was singing in opera houses and concert halls throughout Europe. In the 1970s he began a second career as a conductor, which stills continues, and he has written numerous and thoughtful books, mainly on German song, but also on Nietzsche and Wagner.

His repertoire was vast (thousands of songs, hundreds of operatic roles and concert works), and no singer has made more recordings, including nearly all the songs of the major Lieder-composers that are suitable for a male voice. His stage repertory included many Italian operas as well as German ones, but he was especially admired in Strauss and Wagner. The roles of Mittenhofer in Henze's *Elegy for Young Lovers* and King Lear in Aribert Reimann's opera were written for him, as were the baritone roles in Britten's *War Requiem* and Tippett's *The Vision of St Augustine*.

He is widely seen as the greatest male lieder-singer of his period, and many of his qualities that earned him that position he brought also to his operatic roles: an extreme care for the text, a subtle palette of vocal colour, fine control of phrasing and a penetrating intellect. He was criticised for over-emphasising words but the current popularity of the German song repertory owes more to him than to anyone else, and his influence on three generations of singers has been incalculable.

Michael Oliver

Recommended recording: Schubert: songs with Gerald Moore (EMI CMS7 63559-2)

● TRACK 12



SCHUBERT *Nacht und träume* (3:22)

In this soothing Schubert song which has the effect of time standing still Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau sings with his customary sensitivity to text but also with raptly beautiful tone, a quality which people tend to forget given that so much emphasis is given on the intelligence of his

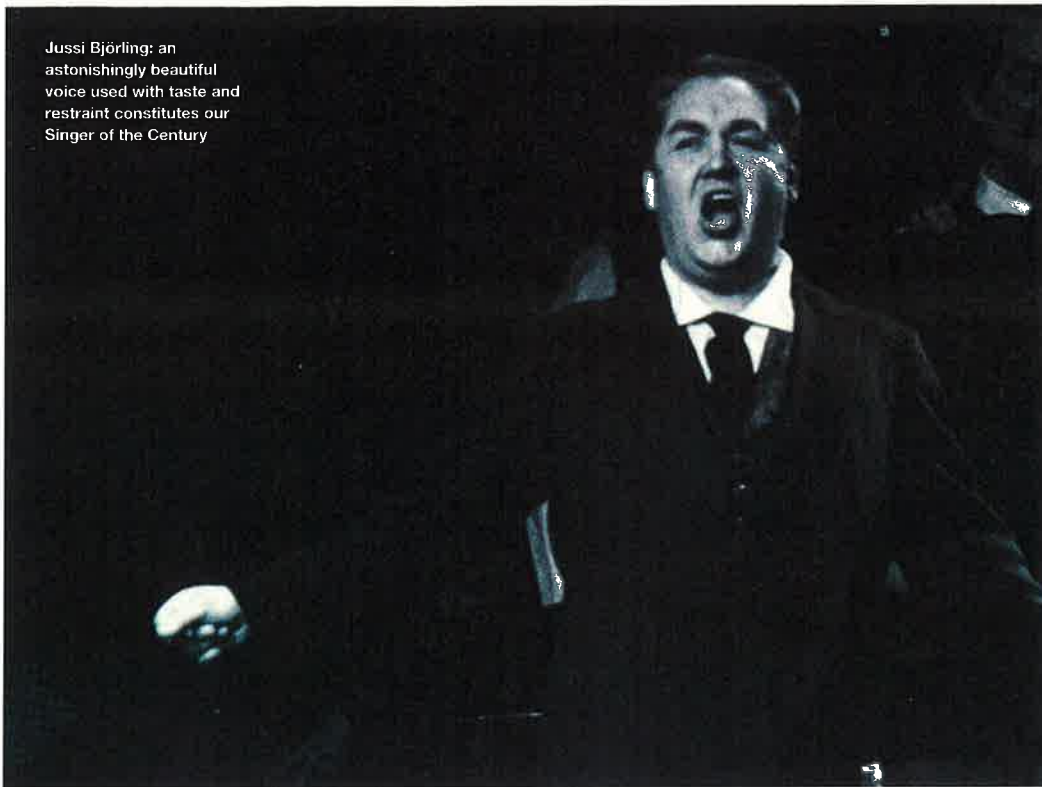
interpretations. Gerald Moore starts the simple accompaniment before the singer comes in with a long held first note "Heil'ge" (holy). It calls for the smoothest legato and great reserves of breath control.

"Holy night, to earth descend; and the dreams float down as well, as your moonlight fills the room, fills the sleeping hearts of men."

"And they listen eagerly; crying, when the day awakes: stay with us, you holy night, soothing dreams, return to us!"

Jussi Björling: an astonishingly beautiful voice used with taste and restraint constitutes our Singer of the Century

HULTON GETTY



NO. 1 JUSSI BJÖRLING Swedish tenor (1911-1960)

A web page devoted to Jussi Björling proudly proclaims him the greatest tenor of the century. Enrico Caruso, who would easily have stolen this accolade at one time, perhaps seems too remote, his recordings too incomplete to make him vital to so many people's musical happiness. Björling, in contrast, made numerous records with all the advantages of the electrical process, the mono LP, and in his final years, stereo. Certainly he is the people's tenor, for the voice recommends itself straightaway no matter how little or how much one has to compare him with. Björling was singularly blessed with a musical family. His father knew a thing or two about singing and the technique that would sustain a voice beyond the fortieth year. With his father and two brothers the Swedish family stormed Sweden and America in a group entitled, unremarkably, the Björling Quartet. Together they performed night after night in venues large and small. They were so popular they totalled some 98 concerts in Sweden in 86 different venues. Their success extended to a few little-known recordings. Jussi learnt about life on the road and, crucially for his career in opera, he learnt how to nurture and preserve his voice (he lost little in flexibility and beauty of tone as he grew older).

It was the great John Forsell, baritone and 'dictator' of the Royal Opera in Stockholm, who launched Jussi's career as he came to the end of his studentship at the Stockholm Conservatoire. On 21 July 1930 he appeared as the lamplighter in *Manon Lescaut*. A month later he sang Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. His career was set. While he continued to sing regularly in Stockholm, America craved him, as did London. Only Italy turned its back, considering his classical style somewhat unappealing compared with the more expressive manner of Italian tenors. Even before his operatic success erupted with such unstoppable force, the first solo recordings had been made. One operatic item and three songs were recorded in Sweden for the home market in 1929, Björling, a mere stripling of 18 years, heard his own voice for the first time on discs that still sound astonishing for one so young. In order to

hear that voice, Björling took receipt not only of the 78s but also a gramophone, which was given to him in a large parcel. Once home he "spent the afternoon playing them". He was most struck by the fact he simply couldn't recognise his own voice.

Less popular with the opera management was Björling's decision to make some dance records, which enraged Forsell, who made it quite clear that if this was what he really wanted to do he should change his name! Forsell had occasion to deal forcibly with Björling at his debut, when he sang Don Ottavio: Forsell was singing Don Giovanni as Björling faced him on stage holding on a sword (he's supposed to challenge him in the opera). Björling froze, Forsell yelled, "Get going, damn it!", Forsell poked his sword in the direction of Björling's stomach; in shock Björling parried his thrust and the Don's foil flew up and cut his – Forsell's – eyebrow. Nevertheless, the audience was happy with its bright new tenor, as were the critics.

So what is it about the voice that makes Björling, for so many, *the tenor*? Those who knew Björling commented on a child-like quality, a certain vulnerability that made him very attractive as a person. This vulnerability is heard in the voice. It is not a flaw, but rather a direct appeal to the emotions. As he launches into the great love music in *La bohème*, Act I, the vocal line is absolutely firm; everything is perfectly under control, and yet somehow the tenor brings us right up against the tender awakening of love as Rudolfo takes Mimì's hand into his own. Nobody else – certainly not recent tenors – combine gentleness and strength like this. Needless to say, the voice is exceedingly lovely. Of burnished gold, mellow, and with a very slight huskiness, it is not a sound one can easily tire of. There is little undesirable vibrato, the tuning is usually spot on, there is not a hint of throatiness, top notes ring our loud and true, and he has all the musical virtues one might wish for, including a good sense of rhythm (rare among tenors), and an ability and willingness to sing *pianissimo* (even rarer among tenors!).

Simon Trezise

Recommended recording: Jussi Björling Edition (EMI 5 66306 2) 4 discs 296:08 ADD

Who is the Number 1 singer of the century and why?

JUSSI BJÖRLING

Until 1938 he was regular at Stockholm Opera but then made debuts at Chicago in 1937, New York in 1938 and Covent Garden 1939. In America he became an indispensable favourite at the Met. Roles; Verdi's Duke in *Rigoletto*, Manrico, Don Carlos, Puccini's; Rodolfo, Cavaradossi.

Qualities:

- Purity and restraint
- Refined art
- Velvety smooth voice
- Capable of ringing high notes
- Consistent from top to bottom of his range
- Consistent in voice and musicianship for 30 years
- Impeccable musicianship



● TRACK 13

VERDI Requiem – "Ingemisco" (4:01)

'Ingemisco *tanquam reus*' is a section of Verdi's vast *Dies irae*. Although carefully accommodated in the larger canvas, it is often taken out of context and sung as an aria. It depicts the offender groaning under the weight of guilt and unworthiness, begging for a 'place among the sheep'. Made in 1938 in Stockholm, this recording traverses most aspects of Björling's consummate art. The heartbreaking beauty of the opening phrases draws from him a melting sweetness. Exquisitely sustained phrases follow at 0:45, again displaying the luxurious quality of his piano singing and later crescendo from 1:20. Where firmness and strength are called for, they are available in abundance at 3:09 as the supplicant looks for a place at God's right hand.

July 1999 Classic CD 45