

collectors. The “Styrienne” from *Mignon*, on the other hand is perfectly delicious and, like the “Jewel Song” from *Faust* (particularly the first version), indicates the verve and spirit she could infuse into her performances. And, of course, the records do not let us see the beauty revealed in her movies and many photographs. To have seen her in the theater would have been a marvelous experience. What we have in her recordings is, nevertheless, a valuable and attractive souvenir of a remarkable artist.

Farrar continued to appear in concert for a decade after her early retirement, at age 40, from the Metropolitan Opera. Her song repertoires – on record, at least – reflect the American audience tastes of the time. She recorded mostly light concert numbers – “Annie Laurie,” “Believe me if all those endearing young charms,” “Nymphes et sylvains,” and the like. This compilation includes 13 of these songs. With the advent of the classical song recital, it has become common to denigrate these sentimental pieces. Farrar, like the best of her contemporaries, takes them seriously and sings them with skill and taste. She recorded several of them more than once. I find them enjoyable and worth hearing.

It would be interesting to know how she came to record “The Star Spangled Banner” in 1909. Not that this was so unusual (Emma Eames made her version in 1905), but the heyday of patriotic songs was later during the Great War of 1914-18. Farrar repeated her recording of our future national anthem in 1916 and took an active part in Liberty Bond drives when the United States entered the war. In the 1909 version (dubbed from a noisy HMV pressing) she introduces the interpolated final high note that can sound so thrilling and that most performers seldom manage to bring off. Farrar does it superbly, although even more effectively in her 1916 version.

Seth Winner’s transfers are quite acceptable and David Mermelstein’s liner notes are informative and enjoyable reading. There are only a few minor errors and omissions. Farrar sang 35 roles at the Metropolitan, not 30. In the discographic citations, Caruso’s participation in the *Madama Butterfly* love duet is not mentioned nor is Scotti’s in the “Barcarolle” from *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*. All in all, this is a compilation collectors of vocal records will find rewarding. *Reviewed by Elwood A. McKee*

Endnotes

1. Arias and operatic ensembles from *Madama Butterfly*, *Tannhäuser*, *Don Giovanni*, *Mefistofele*, *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, *Manon*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Mignon*, *Faust*, *Tosca*, *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, plus thirteen songs, including *The Star Spangled Banner*.
2. Most of the *Faust* and *Carmen* recordings were made subsequent to the period covered by this collection. Farrar was to be a distinguished interpreter of *Carmen*, but the excerpt included herein is Micaela’s aria recorded before Farrar assumed the title role.

Beniamino Gigli: A Life in Words and Music. Naxos 8.558148-51 (3 CDs).

Graeme Kay, author and narrator of this fairly recent addition to the budget-priced Naxos catalog, certainly did his homework in researching the life and times of Beniamino Gigli. Serendipity, nonetheless, had a small but essential part to play. A chance inquiry resulted in the writer/broadcaster accessing information on the tenor’s pre and post-World War II career not widely known or sourced by other biographers, but made public for the first

time in a 1993 ARSC conference paper.¹ The inquiry also led to Kay connecting with the Gigli aficionado Mark Ricaldone, subsequently credited by Naxos with “editorial consultation”. Happenstance, in this instance, underscored the inherent risk run by many present-day biographers who rely only on “popular writings,” which is what plagued the first release in the Naxos *Life in Words and Music* series that profiled Enrico Caruso.² Kay’s primary source appears to have been Gigli’s memoirs (London: Cassell, 1957), supplemented by more recently published commentary and research.

Regrettably, Naxos’s “packaging” of the four CDs that make up this volume mars Kay’s laudable efforts. Several tracks are misleadingly described as “Not yet released”. The Gigli collector shouldn’t be teased into thinking there’s previously unissued material to be heard. There’s none. “Not yet released on Naxos” would have been a more accurate.

There are a couple of errors also in the details about the recordings. Track 2 of the second of the four CDs is incorrectly identified as the 1927 version of “Tombe degl’avi miei,” from Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*. It’s the 1925 version. And, track 24 of the fourth CD is not “O paradiso,” from Meyerbeer’s *L’Africana*, but (as will be immediately evident) “La donna è mobile,” from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*.

No credits are given for the transfers. For the discriminating collector, this is a serious oversight and grossly unfair to the sound engineers involved. The excerpts from recordings of complete operas, and the Verdi *Messa da Requiem*, are from earlier Naxos re-issues, which have been reviewed in the *ARSC Journal*.³⁻¹¹ These are all the work of Ward Marston. The transfers of the pre-war and two post-war singles are by Mark Obert-Thorn, the latter specifically for this set. Obert-Thorn’s other transfers were heard first on the now defunct Romophone label (reviewed in this journal).¹²⁻¹⁵ Last year, Naxos acquired that company’s catalog and is in the process of re-issuing Gigli’s Victor and Gramophone Company recordings in its own *The Gigli Edition*.

It’s worth noting, with the release of the Romophone series, that Obert-Thorn amended or corrected a great deal of the information contained in the Gigli discography compiled by Peel & Holohan, widely regarded as definitive.¹⁶ The Romophone series also included a good many previously unreleased alternative takes, so it’s still a very worthwhile acquisition.

The accompanying booklet to *Beniamino Gigli: A Life in Words and Music* includes an overview of the tenor’s career, written by Kay, and a useful chronology. The aspiring record collector or inquisitive opera buff should appreciate the bibliography as most of the titles listed are readily available. The musical selections, though not in chronological order, are well chosen and these by themselves provide a wonderful sound document of one of the great operatic tenors of all time, and there’s considerably more substance in the narrative, far more than the one on Caruso. Recommended. *Reviewed by Barry R. Ashpole*

Endnotes

1. “Beniamino Gigli: Italian Patriot or Fascist Sympathizer,” by Barry R. Ashpole & Colin Bain. 1993 ARSC Conference. Updated and, subsequently, published as “Beniamino Gigli: The Record of Prejudice” (*ARSC Journal* 1999;30(2):125-133). Graeme Kay mistakenly credits this reviewer with the research *vis-à-*

vis Gigli’s dispute with The Metropolitan Opera Company and the tenor’s alleged political activities pre and post-World War II. It was Colin Bain’s research that formed the basis of the conference paper and later journal article, and he should have been properly acknowledged as the source.

2. *Enrico Caruso: A Life in Words and Music* Naxos 8.558131-34. *ARSC Journal* 2004;35(1):122-123.
3. *Giordano: Andrea Chénier* Naxos Historical 8.110275-76. *ARSC Journal* 2004;35(2):301-302
4. *Leoncavallo: I Pagliacci* Naxos Historical 8.110155. *ARSC Journal* 2003;34(2):240-242.
5. *Mascagni: Cavalleria Rusticana* Naxos Historical 8.110714-15. *ARSC Journal* 2003;34(2):242-243.
6. *Puccini: La Bohème* Naxos Historical 8.110072-73. *ARSC Journal* 2002;33(1):127-129.
7. *Puccini: Madama Butterfly* Naxos Historical 8.110183-84. *ARSC Journal* 2002;33(2):273-275.
8. *Puccini: Tosca* Naxos Historical 8.110096-97. *ARSC Journal* 2002;33(2):275-277.
9. *Verdi: Aida* Naxos Historical 8.110156-57. *ARSC Journal* 2002(1):126-127.
10. *Verdi: Un ballo in maschera* Naxos Historical 8.110178-79. *ARSC Journal* 2003;34(2):243-244.
11. *Verdi: Messa da Requiem* Naxos Historical 8.110159. *ARSC Journal* 2003;34(1):99-100.
12. *Beniamino Gigli: The Complete Victor Recordings, 1921-1932.* Romophone CDS 82003-2 (2 CDs), 82004-2 (2 CDs), and 82005-1 (1CD). *ARSC Journal* 1997;28(1):102-104.
13. *Beniamino Gigli: The Complete HMV Recordings, 1918-1932.* Romophone 820111 (2 CDs). *ARSC Journal* 1999;30(1):53-54.
14. *Beniamino Gigli: The Complete HMV Recordings, 1933-1935.* Romophone 82017-2 (2 CDs). *ARSC Journal* 2003;34(1):85-86.
15. *Beniamino Gigli: The Complete HMV Recordings, 1936-1938.* Romophone 82020-2 (2 CDs). *ARSC Journal* 2004;35(1):123-125.
16. *The Record Collector* 1990;35(5-7):111-158.

Guido Cantelli – The NBC Broadcast Concerts December 1949-January 1950, December 1950, January 1951 & December 1951. Testament SBT4-1306, SBT4-1317, SBT4-1336 (4 CDs each).

The Art of Guido Cantelli – New York Concerts and Broadcasts, 1949-1952. Music and Arts CD-1120 (12 CDs for the price of 6; Not Available in the USA).

Guido Cantelli remains one of the great “what ifs” in modern performance history. His tragic death in a plane crash in 1956 at age 36 deprived us of one of the most gifted conductors of his generation. Had he lived he would now be in his 85th year, and given the longevity of most conductors, quite possibly still active. Arturo Toscanini first heard Cantelli conduct at La Scala, Milan in 1948 and became the young conductor’s mentor, advocate and friend. Testament (www.testament.uk.com) has already released all of Cantelli’s commercial recordings with Toscanini’s NBC Symphony Orchestra, and most of those he made with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London. The current releases from Testament and Music and Arts (www.musicandarts.com) offer a generous sampling of his live performances with the NBC Symphony and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York.

The Testament collections consist of 3 sets of 4 CDs each, documenting 13, but by no means all, of Cantelli’s guest appearances with the NBC Symphony between December 1949 and December 1951. It is easy to categorize Cantelli as a mere clone of