

Pekka Gronow

Recycling history: learning performance practice from records

Summary

The idea that some records are 'historical' first emerged when collectors started to compile listings of interesting old records. The first discographers focused on opera and jazz. The decade also saw the birth of the first labels specialising in specific types of music. Not surprisingly, these included jazz and historical opera recordings. In classical music, interest in historical recordings was mainly limited to collectors, while specialist labels such as L'Anthologie Sonore promoted much earlier performance practice. But in jazz, 'historical' recordings gave birth to a school of players which attempted to recreate the jazz idiom of the 1910s and 1920s, the first case of a musical movement based primarily on the example of historical records.

The discovery of "historical records"

In the early years of sound recording, most record companies attempted to produce a mix of recordings attractive to all sorts of customers. The big companies were supermarkets with all sorts of music. The market leaders, Victor Talking Machine Co. in the USA and the Gramophone Co. in Europe, had special "Red seal" or "Red label" catalogues of "classical" music, mostly opera singers, which complemented their output of popular music, and they also produced music for various regional or ethnic markets. Their smaller competitors usually had a narrower repertoire, but they, too, aimed at a general audience.

In the early years, records had a longer shelf-life than today. Recorded music did not yet have a history. Even in popular music, fads lasted longer, and after the technical problems of the very first years had been overcome, classical records stayed long in the catalogue. The Victor "Red seal" lists of the early 1920s still contained a large number of recordings made before 1910. Only in very special cases did record companies present to their audiences something as "historical". The 1912 Victor catalogue contains an interesting note on disc 31176, "The Merry Birds", by cornetist Jules Levy:

"Although this record is not up to our present standard of recording, having been made in 1904, it is kept on our lists as a memorial to this great cornetist, who died in 1905".

I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl That Married Dad	American Qt	16962	10	.75
Let the Lower Lights be Burning (Bliss)	Stanley-Macdonough	4481	10	.60
Let the Saviour In (Excell)	Haydn Quartet	16159	10	.75
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	Trinity Choir			
LEVY, JULES, Cornetist (1838-1905)				
The Merry Birds		31176	12	1.00
NOTE.—Although this record is not up to our present standard of recording, having been made in 1904, it is kept on our lists as a memorial to this great cornetist, who died in 1905.				
Lewin, Peter, Xylophone—See Xylophone Records				
Liars, or My Uncle's Farm	Comic Dialogue	Golden and Hughes	5664	10 .60
Liars, or My Uncle's Farm	Comic Dialogue	Golden and Hughes	16547	10 .75
How Mother Made the Soup—Comic Talk		Charley Case		
Liberty Bell March (Sousa)	With Chimes	Sousa's Band	1193	10 .60
Liebesfeier (Reger)	In German (2)	Children's Prayer (Wein-	87032	10 2.00
gartner)	In English	Ernestine Schumann-Heink		
Liebesfreud (Old Vienna Waltz)	Violin	Fritz Kreisler	74196	12 1.50
Liebestraum (A Dream of Love)	(Liszt) Pianoforte	Bachaus	71044	12 1.50
Liebestraum (A Dream of Love)		Victor Herbert's Orchestra	70046	12 1.25

VICTOR 1912 CATALOGUE

The shift from acoustic to electrical recording around 1925 suddenly caused many earlier recordings to sound old-fashioned. Even now, Victor and HMV kept a lot of older classical recordings in the catalogue for many years, carefully noting that they had been made by the acoustical method. The 1928 Victor catalogue still lists dozens of recordings by Enrico Caruso, who had died in 1921, marked with an asterisk (*) to denote "the older, acoustical method". But it was clear that acoustic recordings could no longer be passed on as current product.

VICTOR RED SEAL RECORDS

1928

Bo

characteristic part of the city's whole life and extending its fame as a musical and intellectual centre. Many great conductors in turn had the orchestra, which introduced many things for the first time in the country—the idea of a pension fund for its members being among them. Its finest players remained with it year after year, many of them achieving individual fame of their own. Despite the orchestra's reputation, comparatively few persons in the immense United States have had the chance to hear it, for not all Americans live in Boston, and symphony organizations, generally speaking, do not travel with ease.

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA RECORDS

	No.	Size	List p.
*Fourth Symphony in F Minor—Finale, Part I Allegro con fuoco			
Tchaikowsky	6050	12	\$2.00
*Fourth Symphony in F Minor—Finale, Part II (Op. 36)			
Tchaikowsky	6050	12	2.00
*Lohengrin—Prelude to Act 3			
Wagner	547	10	1.50
*Marche Miniature (From First Suite, Op. 43, No. 4)			
Tchaikowsky	547	10	1.50

BUDAPEST STRING QUARTET (Boo'-da-pest)

Quartet in F Major ("American") (Dvořák, Op. 96)
Complete in Album M-14 (9069-9071) List Price \$4.50.

C

CARUSO, ENRICO, Tenor (Kah-roo'-soh, En-ree'-koh)

Enrico Caruso, not so long dead, was the greatest tenor of his generation, having had no equal within the memory of living humankind. His voice, of unrivalled sweetness and power, was a natural gift, developed to the highest degree by faithful training and study. There was little in the domain of song which he did not make his own, turning even less precious metal, at times, into gold, by the peculiar magic of his art. He was born in Naples, in 1873, and sang, as a child, in the churches of Naples. He was eighteen when he began serious study, aided by a distinguished singer who realized his powers. He made his debut at Naples, in 1894, in "L'Amico Francesco," then sang in Italy, Egypt and elsewhere. He came to the United States in 1903, where recognition was immediate.



CARUSO

His fame spread enormously. His services were in demand everywhere throughout the civilized world. He gave them, freely and without reserve, his career being a record of generosity, in the world of art, and in the world of common life. He came into such honors as have rarely been given any singer. At the crown of his career, late in 1920, while singing in the Metropolitan Opera House, he was taken ill on the stage. A long and distressing illness followed, from which he was believed to have recovered. Going home to Italy for final convalescence, he suffered a relapse, dying in Naples on August 2, 1921.

Caruso's long connection with the Victor Company was of an intimately personal nature. He made for it many superb records—together forming an artistic achievement unprecedented in the world of song.

VICTOR RED SEAL RECORDS

THE CARUSO RECORDS

(Sung in Italian unless otherwise noted)

	No.	Size	List p.
*Addio a Napoli (Farewell to Naples)	T. Cottreau	502	10 \$1.50
*A Granada (To Granada) In Spanish	Gras y Elias-Alvarez	6011	12 2.00
*A Granada In Spanish	Gras y Elias-Alvarez	8038	12 2.50
*Aida—Celeste Aida (Heavenly Aida)	Verdi	6000	12 2.00
*A la Luz de la Luna (Anton-Michelena) Spanish	with de Gogorza	8038	12 2.50
*Andrea Chénier—Un di all'azzurro spazio (O'er the Azure Fields)	Giordano	6008	12 2.00
*Ave Maria In Latin (Violin by Elman)	Kahn	8007	12 2.50
*Bohème—Racconto di Rodolfo (Rudolph's Narrative)	Puccini	6003	12 2.00
*Campana di San Giusto (Chimes of San Giusto)	Drovetti-Arona	6011	12 2.00
*Canta pe' me (Sing for Me) (Neapolitan Song)	Bovio-de Curtis	502	10 1.50
*Cavalleria Rusticana—Addio alla madre (Turiddu's Farewell)	Mascagni	6008	12 2.00
*Core ngrato (Ungrateful Heart) (Neapolitan Song)	Cordiferro-Cardillo	6032	12 2.00
*Deux Sérénades (Two Serenades) In French (Violin by Elman)			
Leoncavallo	8008	12	2.50
*Dream, A In English	Chas. B. Cory-J. C. Bartlett	507	10 1.50
*Dreams of Long Ago In English	Carroll-Caruso	6015	12 2.00
*Élégie—Melodie (Song of Mourning) In French (Violin by Elman)			
Massenet	8007	12	2.50
*Elisir d'amore—Una furtiva lagrima (A Furtive Tear)	Donizetti	6016	12 2.00
*For You Alone In English	O'Reilly-Geehl	507	10 1.50
*Forza del Destino—O tu che in seno agli angeli (Thou Heavenly One)	Verdi	6000	12 2.00
*I m' Arricordo e Napule! (Memories of Naples) Neapolitan	Gioe	6009	12 2.00
*Lolita—Spanish Serenade	Buzzi-Peccia	6003	12 2.00
*Love Me or Not In English	Secchi	6013	12 2.00
*Mamma mia che vô sapete! (Neapolitan Song)	Nutille	6009	12 2.00
*Martha—M'appari (Like a Dream)	Flotow	6002	12 2.00
*Noche Feliz (Happy Night) In Spanish	Posadas	958	10 1.50
*O sole mio (My Sunshine)	Capurro-di Capua	501	10 1.50
*Pagliacci—No, Pagliacci non son (No, Punchinello, No More)	Leoncavallo	6001	12 2.00
*Pagliacci—Vesti la giubba (On With the Play)	Leoncavallo	6001	12 2.00
*Rigoletto—La donna è mobile (Woman is Fickle)	Verdi	500	10 1.50
*Rigoletto—Parmi veder le lagrime (Each Tear That Falls)	Verdi	6016	12 2.00
*Rigoletto—Questa o quella (Mid the Fair Throng)	Verdi	500	10 1.50
*Santa Lucia Neapolitan	Neapolitan Folk Song	6032	12 2.00
*Si vous l'aviez compris (Had You But Known) French (Violin by Elman)		8008	12 2.50
*Tosca—E lucevan le stelle (The Stars Were Shining)	Puccini	511	10 1.50
*Tosca—Recondita armonia (Strange Harmony)	Puccini	511	10 1.50
*Trovatore—Ah, si ben mio (The Vows We Fondly Plighted)	Verdi	6002	12 2.00
*Tu, Ce Nun Chigniet (You That Wept Not For Me) Neapolitan	Bovio-de Curtis	958	10 1.50
*Vucchella, 'A (A Little Posy) Neapolitan	D'Annunzio-Tosti	501	10 1.50
CARUSO AND SCOTTI			
*Bohème—Ah, Mimi, tu piu (Mimi, False One)	Puccini	8000	12 2.50
*Forza del Destino—Solenne in quest' ora (Swear in this Hour!)	Verdi	8000	12 2.50
MISCELLANEOUS DUETS, QUARTETS, ETC.			
*A la Luz de la Luna (Anton-Michelena) Spanish	Caruso and de Gogorza	8038	12 2.50
*Bohème—Quartet	Caruso, Farrar, Viofara and Scotti	10007	12 3.50
*Lucia—Sextette	Caruso, Galli-Curci, Egner, de Luca, Journet, Bada	10000	12 3.50
*Otello—Si, pel ciel (We Swear by Heaven and Earth)	Caruso and Ruffo	8045	12 2.50
*Rigoletto—Quartet	Caruso, Galli-Curci, Perini and de Luca	10000	12 3.50
*Traviata—Brindisi—Libiam nei lieti calici	Caruso and Gluck	3031	10 2.00
*Trovatore—Ai nostri monti	Caruso and Schumann-Heink	8042	12 2.50
*Trovatore—Miserere	Caruso, Alda and Metropolitan Opera Chorus	8042	12 2.50
QUARTETS BY CARUSO, ALDA, JACOBY AND JOURNET			
*Martha—Presto, presto (Spinning Wheel Quartet)	Flotow	10003	12 3.50
*Martha—Quartetto notturno (Good Night Quartet)	Flotow	10003	12 3.50

Ca

Victor solved the problem by introducing a special "Green Section" in its annual catalogue. I have not yet been able to ascertain when it first appeared, but the preface to the "Green" listing in the 1928 is almost prophetic:

"Most of the records in this section have been made by the now-abandoned "acoustic" or horn method of recording. Many of them, the work of artists now dead, cannot ever be replaced. Others are the work of artist still living, but for the time being inaccessible, for purposes of re-recording under the new methods; others, again, exhibit methods and qualities of interpretation, which are so characteristic of their makers at certain periods of their artistic development, as to be of highest comparative importance in the historic study of music." In Europe, the Gramophone Co. published a parallel list of "records of unique and historic interest", but while it also included many early vocal records, it stressed the role of "great statesmen, soldiers, divines, explorers and other prominent figures" that had made records for HMV.

The preface to the Victor "Green Section" shows a rare awareness from the record company that old records could have a value beyond their sales potential, but it was clear that their main interest was in current product. Caruso had become a brand name in the record business, and in the early 1930s both Victor and HMV experimented with ways of creating new electrical recordings of the singer who had died in 1921. These were produced by mixing a new orchestral accompaniment with his voice from the old acoustic discs. The new "electrical" Caruso discs included "Celeste Aida" from Aida, "Vesti la giubba" from I pagliacci and the inevitable "O sole mio".

VICTOR RED SEAL RECORDS

1738

THE BUSCH QUARTET

Quartet in C Major ("Kosmowitsky") Beethoven
 Album M-171 (8255-8338) AM-171 (8339-8342). Price, \$8.00.

Quartet in C Minor (Op. 51, No. 1) Brahms
 Album M-227 (8343-8346) AM-227 (8347-8350). Price, \$8.00.

Quartet in C Sharp Minor, No. 14 (Opus 131) Beethoven
 Album M-369 (14432-14436) AM-369 (14437-14441). Price, \$10.00.

Quartet in F Major (Opus 18, No. 1) Beethoven
 In Album M-206 (8224-8256) AM-206 (8257-8259). Price, \$6.50.

Quartet in F Major (Opus 135) Beethoven
 Album M-237 (8850-8853) AM-237 (8854-8857). Price, \$8.00.

Quartet in F Minor—1st Move.—Allegro con brio (Op. 95, No. 11) No. Size Price
 Beethoven 8252 12 \$2.00

Quartet in F Minor—2nd Move.—Allegretto ma non troppo Beethoven 8252 12 2.00

Quartet in F Minor—3rd Move.—Allegro assai vivace, ma serio Beethoven 8253 12 2.00

Quartet in F Minor—4th Move.—Allegretto agitato—Allegro Beethoven 8253 12 2.00

BUSCH, FRITZ, Conductor—See *Glyndebourne Festival Opera Company and London Philharmonic Orchestra*

BUSCHI-SERKIN TRIO—Violin, Cello, Piano
 Trio in E Flat Major, No. 2 (Opus 109) Schubert
 Album M-374 (14464-14466) AM-374 (14469-14473). Price, \$10.00.

BUSSER, HENRI, Conductor—See *"Opéra-Comique, Paris Orch."*

C

CARIOCA STRING QUARTET (1st and 2nd Violin, Viola, Cello)
 Brazilian Quartet No. 5—Parts 1 and 2 Hector Villa-Lobos 11212 12 1.50
 Brazilian Quartet No. 5—Parts 3 and 4 Hector Villa-Lobos 11213 12 1.50

CARUSO, ENRICO, Tenor (*Kah-roo-zoh, En-ree-koh*)
 Enrico Caruso was the greatest tenor of his generation, having had no equal within the memory of living humankind. His voice, of unrivalled sweetness and power, was a natural gift, developed to the highest degree by faithful training and study. He was born in Naples in 1873, and sang, as a child, in the churches of Naples. He was eighteen when he began serious study, aided by a distinguished singer who realized his powers. He made his debut at Naples, in 1894, in "L'Amico Francesco," then sang in Italy, Egypt and elsewhere. He came to the United States in 1903, where recognition was immediate. His fame spread enormously. His services were in demand everywhere throughout the civilized world. He came into such honors as have rarely been given any singer. At the crown of his career, late in 1920, while singing in the Metropolitan Opera House, he was taken ill on the stage. Going home to Italy for final convalescence, he suffered a relapse, dying in Naples on August 2, 1921. Caruso's long connection with the Victor Company was of an intimately personal nature. He made for it many superb records—together forming an artistic achievement unprecedented in the world of song. Science has revived this glorious voice with new recording processes; and many of his most popular songs have been re-recorded.



CARUSO

THE CARUSO RECORDS

*Addio a Napoli (Farewell to Naples)	T. Cottrau	No. Size Price
Africanus—O Paradise! (Oh Paradise!)	Meyerbeer	502 10 \$1.50
Aida—Celeste Aida (Heavenly Aida) (Verdi) with Victor Symphony Or.		14234 12 2.00
Aida—Celeste Aida (Heavenly Aida) (Verdi) with Victor Symphony Or.		8993 12 2.00
Aida—Celeste Aida (Heavenly Aida) (Preceded by the Recitative) (Verdi)		7770 12 2.00
		8900 12 2.00

VICTOR RED SEAL RECORDS

THE CARUSO RECORDS—Continued

*Ave Maria—In Latin (Violin by Elman)	No. Size Price
Because	Kahn 8007 12 \$2.00
*Bohème—Raconto di Rodolfo (Rodolph's Narrative)	D'Hardelo 1688 10 1.50
*Canta pe me (Sing for Me) (Neapolitan Song)	Puccini 6003 12 2.00
Carmen—Il fior che a vovi a me tu dato (Flower Song)	Bovio-de-Curtis 502 10 1.50
Dream	Bizet 14234 12 2.00
*Elegie—Melodie (Song of Mourning) (Violin by Elman)	Corv-Bartlett 1658 10 1.50
*Elixir d'amore—Una furtiva lagrima (A Furtive Tear)	Massenet 8007 12 2.00
*For You Alone	Donizetti 8018 12 2.00
*Forza del Destino—O tu che in seno agli angeli (Thou Heavenly One)	O'Reilly-Gesli 1658 10 1.50
Largo (Ombra mai fu) ("Xerxes")	Handel 8806 12 2.00
*Lullaby—Spanish Serenade	Buzzi-Peccia 6003 12 2.00
Lost Chord, The	Proctor-Sullivan 8806 12 2.00
Martha—M'appari (Like a Dream)	Flotow 7720 12 2.00
*Ma Canzone, La	Tosti 1688 10 1.50
O Sole Mio (My Supanine)	di Capua 501 10 1.50
*Pagliacci—No, Pagliacci non son (No, Punctinello, No More)	Leoncavallo 6001 12 2.00
*Pagliacci—Vesti la giubba (On With the Play)	Leoncavallo 6001 12 2.00
*Pêcheurs de Perles, Les—Je crois entendre encore	Leoncavallo 7720 12 2.00
Procession, La	Brizeu-César Franck 1474 12 2.00
Rameau, Les (The Palms)	J. B. Faure 1474 12 2.00
Rigoletto—La donna è mobile (Woman is Fickle)	Verdi 500 10 1.50
*Rigoletto—La donna è mobile (Woman is Fickle)	Verdi 6016 12 2.00
*Rigoletto—Parli veder le lagrime (Each Tear That Falls)	Verdi 500 10 1.50
*Rigoletto—Questa o quella (Mid the Fair Throng)	Puccini 511 10 1.50
*Tosca—E lucevan le stelle (The Stars Were Shining)	Puccini 511 10 1.50
*Tosca—Recondita armonia (Strange Harmonies)	Puccini 511 10 1.50
*Vucchella, A (A Little Popy) Neapolitan	D'Annunzio-Tosti 501 10 1.50

CARUSO AND SCOTTI

*Bohème—Ah, Mimi, tu più (Mimi, False One)	Puccini 8000 12 2.00
*Forza del Destino—Solenne in quest' ora (Swear in this Hour)	Verdi 8000 12 2.00

MISCELLANEOUS DUETS, QUARTETS, ETC.

*Lucia—Sextette	Caruso, Galli-Curci, Egner, de Luca, Journet, Bada	10000 12 3.50
*Nella—Si ved via! (We Swear by Heaven and Earth)	Caruso and Ruffo	8045 12 2.00
*Rigoletto—Quartet	Caruso, Galli-Curci, Perini and de Luca	10000 12 3.50
*Trovatore—Ai nostri monti	Caruso and Schumann-Heink	8042 12 2.00
*Trovatore—Miserere	Caruso, Aida and Metropolitan Opera Chorus	8042 12 2.00

CASALS, PABLO, Violinist (*Kah-sah's, Pab's-lah*)
 Pablo Casals was born in Vendrell, near Barcelona, Spain, in 1876. He was the son of an organist, from whom he learned to play the violin, flute and piano. At twelve he took up the cello, began to win prizes, and in a year or two he began his concert career, which has brought him the highest honors that may come to an artist. His playing is almost unbelievably smooth, finished and elegant. If he gave up the cello, he still would be a violinist of the highest rank. If he abandoned both he would probably devote his talents to conducting, for he has already led the London Symphony Orchestra on a number of notable occasions.

THE CASALS RECORDS—See also *London Symphony Orchestra*

Adagio (from Toccata in G Major)	Bach-Sjost-Casals	6635 12 \$2.00
Cygne, Le (The Swan) (from "Carnival of the Animals")	Saint-Saëns	1143 10 1.50
Evening (Aberdeen) (Op. 85, No. 12)	Schumann	6630 12 2.00
Flight of the Bumble Bee	Rimsky-Korsakov	7195 12 2.00
Goyescas—Intermezzo	Granados	6635 12 2.00
Jezebel—Brennus (Lullaby)	Godard	6630 12 2.00
Komm süsser Tod (Come Sweet Death)	Bach	7501 12 2.00
Melody in F	Wagner-Wilhelmj	6620 12 2.00
Minuetto	Rubinstein	1178 10 1.50
Mostest Musical	Haydn	7501 12 2.00
Nocturne in E Flat	Schubert	1143 10 1.50
Prélude	Chopin-Poppo	6589 12 2.00
Sonata in A Major (Op. 69)	Chopin-Sievking	6589 12 2.00
Album M-134 (7268-7270) AM-134 (7571-7573). Price, \$6.50.	Beethoven	

However, there were now a growing number people who had a deep interest in old records which could no longer be purchased in record shops. For a number of reasons, such interest usually focused on classical vocal records and jazz. "Hot collecting" had become a fad among Ivy League college students in the USA. As far as I know, the origins of historical opera collecting have not been researched. Although jazz and opera collectors were two separate groups, their interest took similar forms. They soon started networking with like-minded collectors, exchanging recordings and information. This activity culminated in 1936 – 1937 with the publication of the first discographies, Charles Delaunay's "Hot discography" (Paris 1936), Hilton Schleman's "Rhythm on record" (London 1936) and Roberto Bauer's "Historical records" (Milano 1937).

The prefaces of these publications illustrate the international networking of record collectors. "Rhythm on record" includes a foreword by American jazz critic and producer John Hammond, who notes that the work is "comparable in its own particular way with Grove's famous 'Dictionary of Music' (which, of course, at this time knew nothing about jazz). Delaunay thanks Schleman, Hammond, Marshall Stearns, Stanley Dance, Joost van Praag and others. The foreword to "Historical records" is by British collector P. G. Hurst, and Bauer also thanks Carl Bruun, Knud Hegermann-Lindencrone, Leo Riemens and others for assistance. These pioneer discographies were soon followed by other books and magazines devoted to collectors, such as Hegermann-Lindencrone's "Grammofon bogen" (Copenhagen 1942). In the 2nd edition of "Historical Records" (1947), Bauer in turn thanks Hegermann-Lindencrone for additions...

The specialist labels

In the course of such activities, it must soon have become evident that some historical records were so rare that most collectors had little chance of locating copies. But why not reissue them? Besides HMV and Victor, record companies

had showed little interest in keeping their back catalogues available In 1931 William Seltsam of Bridgeport, Connecticut, started the first record label specialising in historical reissues, International Record Collectors' Club. I do not know what connection Seltsam had with the industry, but Bridgeport at that time was the site of a Columbia factory. In any case, Seltsam was able to secure the cooperation of record companies and could use original stampers to press records for IRCC, sometimes in runs as small as 50 copies. Soon the activity was extended to recordings where the original masters no longer existed or could not be used, as in the case of vertical-cut recordings. I do not know if and how the reissues were licensed, but at this stage, in the depth of the economic depression, record companies probably were glad for any extra pressing jobs.



IRCC was followed in 1936 by two American labels specialising in jazz reissues, UHCA and HRS (Hot Record Society). UHCA was nominally issued by the United Hot Clubs of America, an organisation of jazz-minded college students with John Hammond as the president, but in practice both labels were operated by New York record shops catering for jazz fans.



In Europe, there was not yet room for independent labels specialising in jazz reissues, because the majors had discovered this market. Parlophone (an EMI label since 1931) had established a "New Rhythm Style Series" in the UK in 1929. The recordings were selected by jazz critic Edgar Jackson. The illustration below indicates that there was enough demand for "Rhythm Style" records in Denmark that a special edition of the catalogue was produced especially for Kleinert's record store in Copenhagen.

Vi har den Hot Plade De ønsker



MUSIKHUS KLEINERT
KØBENHAVN K
CHR. DEN IX'S GADE 7
TELEFON 3432
POSTGIRO NO. 28231

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The Parlophone Co., Ltd.

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8896/P/P. *Printed in England*

**The
PARLOPHONE
"RHYTHM-STYLE"
SERIES**



The Complete List of Records up to and including December, 1935, ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY and NUMERICALLY together with the

**PERSONNELS
OF THE ORCHESTRAS
AND INDEX
TO ARTISTES . . .**

NEW "RHYTHM-STYLE" SERIES
SECOND NEW "RHYTHM-STYLE" SERIES
1934 "SUPER-RHYTHM-STYLE" SERIES
1935 "SUPER-RHYTHM-STYLE" SERIES

Compiled by EDGAR JACKSON
Dance Music Critic of the "Gramophone," etc.

The Parlophone Company Ltd., 102, Clerkenwell Rd., London, E.C.1
Hot Music House Kleinert

Originally, the Rhythm Style Series focused on new American jazz recordings, but around 1935 the label systematically started to reissue earlier jazz recordings. At this time, Louis Armstrong was probably the best known jazz musician in Europe, and the series had opened with his "West End blues". Since then, Parlophone had released most of his new recordings within a few months of their original American release. After 1935, they also reissued many recordings from Armstrong's original Hot Five period. Today, these recordings have become canonical examples of historical jazz, but until the mid-1930s, they were almost unknown in Europe.

This period also saw the introduction of several other labels or series in Europe which specialised in jazz records. The best known of was the Swing label, introduced by French EMI in 1937 under the direction of Charles Delaunay, but German Odeon, Swedish Sonora and Czechoslovakian Imperial also started special "swing" series. They issued mainly local jazz bands and/or recent American jazz, but there were also reissue projects, such as the Brunswick "Classic Swing" series, which introduced several of the now-famous King Oliver Creole Jazz Band sides (1923) for the first time to European collectors in 1937.



In the field of opera, there was less interest in reissues, although in 1938, German Odeon issued a number of early recordings from the Fonotipia label, including some previously unissued sides. In the UK, the reissues appeared on Parlophone.



Instead, the first labels specialising in specific areas of Western art music now appeared. The first had been the National Gramophonic Society in the UK in the 1920, focusing in chamber music. This label only lasted a few years. In 1933, the

well-known early music scholar Curt Sachs launched L'Anthologie Sonore in France. Sachs had been the head of the Musical Instruments Museum in Berlin and co-operated with the German Lindström company, but he was forced to leave the country because of his Jewish origins. By the time he moved to the USA in 1937, he had already issued over 60 discs on L'Anthologie Sonore. The discography of the label is well known, but it would be interesting to know more about its backing. How was it possible, in depression-ridden Europe, to establish a label specialising in little known early music? There are unconfirmed reports that Curt Sachs was backed by a rich American living in Paris, whose wife was one of the musicians recorded by the label.

The rise of traditional jazz

In the 1930s, two trends had appeared in the record industry: reissues of "historical" recordings, and small labels specialising in specific musical genres. Both trends continued after the war, and the small labels, often by the personal interests of the founder, were to become a permanent feature of the industry. But what influence did they have at this time?

In the field of Western art music, the influence must have been quite limited. Record collectors remained a distinct group apart from practicing musicians. But in jazz, the availability of historical reissues was one of the factors behind a new movement. In the 1940s, jazz was at the peak of its commercial popularity, but the "traditionalists" or "revivalists" considered contemporary jazz as corrupt. "Swing is a form of rabble rousing that elicits for itself and its exponents the same blind idolatry the demagogue or the dictator receives from the mob", wrote jazz critic Rudi Blesh. Instead they wanted to revive a style of jazz based on the playing of (preferably African-American) bands of the twenties, based on "collective improvisation". Blesh described New Orleans jazz as "a miracle of creative synthesis".

Traditional jazz arose almost spontaneously during the war in the USA, Australia and UK, and was spread to many European countries immediately after the war. Although the idiom which the traditionalists aimed to recreate was only a few decades old, jazz styles had already changed rapidly. In the United States, the movement also brought back many old New Orleans musicians who had been inactive since the 1920s. It was the creation of a small group of idealists who promoted reissues of historical records and wrote jazz histories where these recordings were given canonical status. It was often (but not always) connected with a radical, anti-racist, leftist political ideologies. In Europe, the old New Orleans musicians had previously been unknown, as their records had only been issued in the USA in special "race series". As jazz performance practice was mainly transmitted orally, reissues became the principal models for European traditional jazz players in the 1940s and 1950s.

The jazz ideology did not encourage players to copy records note by note. Instead, the old recordings were used in three ways:

- 1) Traditional jazz adopted the instrumentation typical of the bands of the 1920s: one or two cornets or trumpets, trombone, clarinet (preferably Alberti system), piano, banjo, drums and bass or tuba.
- 2) The repertoire of the traditionalist bands was largely drawn from bands of the 1920s with canonic status in jazz history: King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven, Jelly Roll Morton and his Red Hot Peppers, Original Dixieland Jazz Band, New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and the revivalist bands of Bunk Johnson and Kid Ory.

- 3) Performance style, timbre, typical phrases and occasionally even individual solos were copied from records.

The first traditional jazz bands outside the USA included George Webb's Dixielanders in the UK, Graeme Bell's Australian Jazz Band, Claude Luter's band in France, Stig Wennström's Dixieland Band in Finland and the Hep Cats Creole Jazz Band in Sweden. The number of bands grew rapidly in the late 1940s. The first European bands typically made recordings for small labels which spread the idiom further, and they were sold in specialist record shops which also carried reissued of early jazz records - now also issued by European specialist labels such as Jazz Collector and Jazz Classics. The basic repertoire was recorded over and over again by new bands.



Illustration: Jazz Collector was a London label specialising in reissues of rare jazz record from the 1920s. The Swedish Gazell label issued recordings by the British traditionalist band of Humphrey Lyttelton, originally made for the London jazz label. "Working man blues" was first recorded by King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in 1923.

By the late 1950s's, traditional jazz had become "trad", part of the general youth culture. New bands now copied earlier European bands rather than the veterans of New Orleans, although there still was a hard core of critics and collectors who saw commercially successful bands such as Acker Bilk's Paramount Jazz Band as traitors who had compromised the movement. The movement faded away in the 1960s, but it had a considerable influence on the emergence on the next wave, the blues revival.

Conclusion

The rise of the traditional jazz movement in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s is a striking example of musicians learning performance practice from historical records. The recordings of the New Orleans bands of the 1920s became "canonic texts" for the movement, and they were used to re-create a style of playing which had already disappeared. But other types of historical recordings seem to have little influence, beyond the fact that they had become "collectible".

The process can be compared with more general models based on the study of the diffusion of innovations and ideas. Media researchers say that "some media influence some people at some times". Records are media, and the influence of the media in general is complex. Often new influences spread in waves, with early adopters influencing latecomers. The traditional jazz movement was created by

the convergence of politically active critics and amateur historians (ideologists), record labels and club owners (businessmen) and musicians.

The “historically informed performance” movement is now approaching the period from which recorded documents exist - Elgar, Debussy, Ravel, Grieg. However, the richest sources on historical performance practice are the innumerable vocal records made in the acoustic period. We have recordings by many singers who had created the roles in well-known operas premiered during the last decades of the 19th century. Yet no one has come forth to claim that they represent the only true art of singing, or even less, attempted to sing like Tetrazzini or Melba.

It is possible that it is easier to reproduce instrumental than vocal styles from old records. The traditional jazz movement copied King Oliver’s solos directly from his 1923 recordings, but no one really attempted to re-create faithfully the singing style of the country blues singers of the same era.

Still, we can make a mental experiment. What would it take to start a movement in opera singing like the traditionalist movement in jazz, recreate opera performances of the 1890s on the basis of recordings? The recordings are now easily available. My guess is that we only lack the ideologists and businessmen who would back such a movement and provide the economic foundation for it.

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