

This Sunday afternoon meeting was hosted by Bill Dean Myatt at his home in Walsall when the programme Basses and Baritones was presented by the Midland Group chairman Eddie Dunn. For this well researched presentation Eddie had put together a (mainly acoustic) selection of recordings by bass and baritone singers several of which were on rare and unusual labels.

Eddie commenced his programme with an early 1920s Cliftophone Brunswick of the German born baritone Michael Bohnen singing (in French) the "Invocation" from Giacomo Meyerbeer's five act opera Robert Le Diable. He followed this with a record of the Russian bass Lev Sibiryakov singing "Mephistopheles' Serenade" Issued on the rare Stella label it was recorded in 1913.

In complete contrast was a recording of "There's A Man Going Round Taking Names" by the leading Afro-American bass singer of the twentieth century Paul Robeson. It was the most modern of all the discs that we heard that afternoon. Issued on the Horizon label, it was, I think, dubbed from a 1955 Czechoslovakian recording for Supraphon.

Having played one electrically recorded disc, Eddie played another. This was an Italian HMV (La Voce Del Padrone) of "Il Balen" from Il Trovatore sung by the Italian baritone Gino Bechi and recorded in 1941. Eddie followed this with a recording of another Italian baritone made nearly forty years before the previous disc. Issued on a "single face" Columbia from c. 1906, this was a recording of "Serenata Deh Veine" from Don Giovanni performed by the Florentine baritone (as was the previously featured singer) Alberto de Bassini.

Eddie now got into the realm of the truly obscure with a 1909 Orpheon disc of the Polish born bass Adamo Didur performing the aria "Di Gaspare" from Carl Maria Von Weber's opera Der Freischutz. It transpires that these Russian made Orpheon records were illegally pirated copies from Fonotipia pressings. It was then back to 1901 with a rare red labelled G&T recording of the French operatic baritone Maurice Renaud performing "Pour Tant D'amour" from Donizetti's opera La Favorite.

A Fonotipia recording from .1907 of the Italian bass Nazzareno De Angelis performing "Infelice e Tuo Credevi" from the Verdi opera Ernani was followed by a 1912 Phonodisc recording of the obscure Italian Baritone performing "Monologo di Gerard" The blue labelled Zonphone discs are legendary for their rarity and that afternoon we heard one recorded in Paris in 1902 by the French operatic bass Jean Francois Delmas singing the "Benediction" from Meyerbeer's opera Les Huguenots.

The next disc was by a largely forgotten operatic bass Cesare Preve heard on a 1907 Beka recording of "Vieni La Mia Vendetta" from the Donizetti opera Lucrezia Borgia. It is odd how an internationally famous baritone like Mario Ancona is now among the list of forgotten opera singers. Eddie played his 1904 recording of "Il Sogno" from Verdi's Otello issued on a red labelled G&T disc recorded in Milan in 1904. We then heard another piece from Otello, this was a Fonotipia recording dating from 1905 of "Credo de Iago" performed by Eugenio Giraldoni, an Italian baritone who rather curiously died in Finland.

Of the final two discs of this fascinating selection the first record was a pink labelled G&T of the distinguished French operatic bass Pol Plançon. Dating from 1907 Plançon was heard

performing "Canzone Del Porter" from Flotow's Martha. Eddie's final record was the German drinking song "Im Teifen Keller" Composed by Ludwig Fischer, the eighteenth century operatic bass, it was recorded c.1913 for the Polyphon label by the Austrian bass Adolf Lieban. The son of a Jewish cantor Lieban had developed the knack of *rolling his r's* which, as was demonstrated on this disc, produced what can be best described as a *bass trill*.

Sincere thanks to Eddie for putting together an interesting and well researched programme involving some of the rare records in his collection. Thanks also to Bill for his hospitality in providing us with the light refreshments at the end of the afternoon.



























































