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## THE OPERATIC VITAPHONE SHORTS

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**By William Shaman**

On 6 August 1926 "Vitaphone," the latest commercial sound-on-disc motion picture system, made its debut at the Warners' Theater in New York City. The feature film that evening, "Don Juan," with John Barrymore and Mary Astor, was a lavish costume picture with a pre-recorded soundtrack consisting of synchronized sound effects and a Spanish-flavored score written by Major Edward Bowes, David Mendoza, and Dr. William Axt, played by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under Henry Hadley. There was no spoken dialogue. Eight short subjects preceded "Don Juan:" Will H. Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers Association, welcoming the Vitaphone in a spoken address; the Overture to Tannhäuser played by the New York Philharmonic, again with Hadley conducting; violinist Mischa Elman, accompanied by pianist Josef Bonime, playing Dvorák's "Humoresque" and Gossec's "Gavotte;" Roy Smeck, "Wizard of the Strings," in a medley of Hawaiian guitar, ukulele, and banjo solos; violinist Efrem Zimbalist and pianist Harold Bauer playing the theme and variations from Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata, and three solos by singers Marion Talley, Giovanni Martinelli and Anna Case. By all accounts, the show was a resounding success. A steady flow of shorts and part-talking features would follow, beginning with the second Vitaphone show on 7 October 1926. On 6 October 1927 "The Jazz Singer" premiered in New York. The other major Hollywood studios, anticipating a favorable public response to sound films, had been involved in clandestine negotiations since 1926 and now were scrambling to secure a share of this lucrative new market. With the premiere of Warners' first all-talking feature, "The Lights of New York," on 8 July 1928 the future of the silent film was uncertain.

The Vitaphone shorts were produced by Warner Brothers and its subsidiary, the Vitaphone Corporation, beginning in 1926. The disc soundtracks were recorded using equipment developed by Western Electric through the Bell Telephone Laboratories, and were distributed on 12- and 16-inch 33 1/3 rpm shellac discs pressed by the Victor Talking Machine Company. With few exceptions, the shorts were one reel, approximately 600-1,000 feet in length (35mm), running roughly four to ten minutes. They were numbered serially, and by 1929 or 1930, issued under the informal series title, "Vitaphone Varieties."

Many important performers were featured in the long series of "Vitaphone Varieties" produced between 1926 and about 1932—violinists Elman, Zimbalist, and Spalding, cellist Horace Britt, pianist Harold Bauer, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra with Henry Hadley conducting, a superb delegation of famous popular art-

ists, and of course a mouth-watering assortment of 'golden age' voices. This filmography is limited to those shorts that are at least vaguely "operatic." Sixty-four Vitaphone shorts have been traced that preserve on film either operatic repertory or genuine "operatic" singing. This distinction is an important one, and accounts for the rather odd mixture of talent documented: amid the legends—Giovanni Martinelli, Beniamino Gigli, Giuseppe De Luca, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Francis Alda, Rosa Raisa, John Charles Thomas, Pasquale Amato, Charles Hackett, Anna Case, Adamo Didur, Jeanne Gordon, Giacomo Rimini, Reinald Werrenrath, Mary Lewis, and Cantor Josef Rosenblatt—will be found a number of second-rate headliners (Hope Hampton and John Barclay), first-rate supporting players (Minnie Egner, Louis D'Angelo, and Millo Picco), virtual unknowns (Rosa Low and Livia Maracci), and a few major Broadway and operetta performers (Eleanor Painter and Vivienne Segal, both of whom began their careers as opera singers). The films give us the unique opportunity to see these performers in much the same way they were seen on the stage: in operatic scenes, in ornate, costumed productions, and in simpler concert settings.

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Motion picture sound-on-disc was nothing terribly new in 1926. Vitaphone was not so much an innovation as it was the consummate application of an already well-traveled method that had been devised and subsequently refined throughout the early years of both the film and recording industries. Among its many antecedents were pre-century experiments by Edison himself, in league with his laboratory assistant William Kennedy Laurie Dickson. Edison and Dickson had synchronized films with cylinders as far back as 1889, patenting their "Kinetophone" in 1894 and exhibiting it with some success. Over the next 30 years there followed a steady stream of variations on this same basic method, using both cylinders and discs. Many of the systems that were developed enjoyed some commercial application, though as their names grew longer their tenure on the market seems to have grown shorter: Pathé and the British Walturdaw Company each marketed systems in 1903, followed by Gaumont's "Chronophone" (1904); Oskar Messter's "Messter's Projektions G.m.b.H." (1906); Cecil Hepworth's "Vivaphone" ["Hepwir Singing Pictures"] (1907); E. E. Norton and J. A. Whitman's "Cameraphone" (1908), the first American sound-on-disc system; Jules Greenbaum's "Synchronoscope" (1908); the British "Cinephone" of Harold Jeapes (1909); Edison's "Cinephonograph" of 1912, which used 5 1/2-by-8-inch Blue Amberol cylinders; Katherina Von Madaler's "Projectophone" (1916); the "Photocinema" of Orlando Kellum, used by D. W. Griffith in his 1921 production "Dream Street," and George Regester Webb's "Singing" and "Talking" pictures of the teens and twenties. There were many others.

Opera was big business at the time, and played a significant role in the development of these early talkies. When Greenbaum's "Synchronoscope" was exhibited by Carl Laemmle at the Majestic Theater in Evansville, Indiana in the summer of 1908, the program included a 'sound film' of Caruso singing, though just what the Master was supposed to have sung was not precisely documented. George Webb's 1921 London exhibition at the Westminster Cathedral Hall also offered a "Singing Picture" of Caruso, but this turned out to be one of the tenor's "Vesti la giubba" recordings synchronized with the image of some unidentified Canio-clad actor. A 1912 Edison "Cinephonograph" film of Caruso and Plançon in the *Lucia* "Sextette" has been a standard footnote in the textbooks of film history for years, but neither the film or its soundtrack have ever surfaced. The activities of Oskar Messter and George Webb are especially interesting in the context of recorded opera. Messter's

"Messter's Projektions G.m.b.H." of Berlin was one of the earliest to use a sound-on-disc system, and certainly Messter himself was one of the first inventor-entrepreneurs to produce serious operatic films. His earliest efforts, using two-foot wide, -inch thick "Synchrondiscs," were made in 1903. Using various electrical links between the turntable and the projector, the synchronization of sound and image could be fairly well maintained, though a number of minor problems persisted, many of which Messter was never able to solve completely. One of his earliest sound releases was a *Fra Diavolo* excerpt with soprano Hedwig Francillo [-Kaufmann] produced in 1906. By 1914, he had filmed and deposited for copyright a number of operatic films, issued in the U.S. through the American Commercial Biophone Company: an *I Pagliacci* "Prologue" by baritone Emil Lieban; a "Faust Aria" (sic) sung by "Siegrid Arnoldson" and "Joh. Lembach," which presumably also contained a duet with [Sigrid] Arnoldson and her partner (Johannes *Sembach* perhaps?); and a "Titania's Aria" from *Mignon* sung by "Mary" (Gertrude?) Runge. In 1915 Messter copyrighted several anonymous operatic films—an "Aria" from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, a *Carmen* "Toreador Song," a "Barcarole" from *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and a "Tonio's Lament" from *I Pagliacci*.

Peter Adamson of St. Andrews, Fife, has provided much information about the Messter discs, complete with photographic examples. Among these are cinema label G&Ts with standard Gramophone Company matrix numbers. Some, but not all, have what appear to be synchronization numbers around the rim of the label. One in particular, with a "Deutsche Vitascope-Gesellschaft G.m.b.H." label, features Paul Bender's 1910 Berlin Gramophone recordings of "Wer legt auf ihn" from *Der Freischütz* (Gramophone 4-42261, mt. 6476 1/2r) and "Lasst mich euch fragen" from *Martha* (4-42260, mt. 6475r). No copyright information on any Bender films has been found. Nor for that matter has any disc information been found for Messter's films of Lieben, Runge, Arnoldson or "Lembach." The Bender cinema labels lack any synchronization marks, which begs the question, were the records actually used to accompany a film of Bender singing? Perhaps they only were meant to be synchronized to the image of an actor, or merely to accompany some arbitrarily chosen image without synchronization. (Albert Narath's excellent and detailed study, "Oskar Messter and His Work," in Fielding (see Bibliography) gives some idea of Messter's varied accomplishments as a cinematic inventor.)

George Regeater Webb of Baltimore demonstrated his "Webb's Singing Pictures" sound-on-disc process in the Westminster Cathedral Hall, London, in 1921, but according to Parker (see Bibliography), had produced a number of interesting operatic films several years earlier, including Léon Rothier in excerpts from *Faust* in 1916, and baritone Giuseppe Campora in excerpts from *Carmen*. The London demonstration simply synchronized Caruso's "Vesti la giubba" with the projected image of an actor. Webb's was an electrically controlled device, with some sort of telephonic transmitter linking the film projector to the turntables, though probably this was not a mechanical link, but merely a monitoring device. Similar to most pre-Vitaphone contraptions, Webb's apparently lacked the means of maintaining synchronization or exceeding the temporal capacity of two- to four-minute records. A much earlier attempt by Webb, christened "Webb's Electric Pictures," made its debut on 3 May 1914 at the Fulton Theater in New York City. It was reported in a program dated the week of 11 May 1914. This was a sound-on-film device similar to that of the 1907 "Photocinetophone" of the Frenchman M. Eugene Lauste. It recorded sound optically on film, but failed to meet the needs of theatrical amplification,

hence Webb's subsequent return to the more reliable sound-on-disc method. Webb apparently exhibited an abridged *I Pagliacci* at this early program, featuring W. Rossini as Tonio, Eily Barnato as Nedda, and Pilade Sinagra as Canio. The rest of the program consisted of Vaudeville specialties (including DeWolf Hopper reciting "Casey at the Bat" and Nat Wills singing "The Old Oaken Bucket") and the recreation of a minstrel show. (See Taylor's "Opera on Early Sound Films" (see Bibliography), which contains a short list of 'Opera Sound Films Before Vitaphone,' with accompanying text.)

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Three shortcomings in particular accounted for the failure of most pre-Vitaphone sound-on-disc methods: (1) the inability to establish and maintain mechanical synchronization of sound and image, (2) the inadequacy of acoustical amplification for theatrical projection, and (3) the temporal limitations of the discs and cylinders which, without any dependable means of switching from one to another, confined these early sound films to a length not exceeding four minutes. Vitaphone managed to minimize, if not remove altogether, these three obstacles. First, by linking the turntable to the camera through a common power source during recording, and linking the turntable to the projector by a common motor during reproduction, a constant disc and film speed could be predetermined and maintained. Further, a reliable cuing system was designed using physical markings on both disc and film, thus enabling the two to be aligned properly from the start of projection. Only through accidental damage to either the film or the discs (or sloppy work on the part of the projection crew) could the mechanical synchronization be irreparably disrupted. Second, the use of 33 1/3 rpm discs, coupled with a reliable turntable switching device, more or less solved the problem of temporal capacity, as the individual reels of even a full-length feature film rarely exceeded 11 minutes—the potential playing capacity of a slow speed 16-inch shellac disc. Finally, by 1926 theatrical amplification was no longer a major obstacle. Even before electrical disc recording had been developed, the application of the audion tube in radio had cleared the way for sound film amplification.

Concurrent to the development of the Vitaphone were numerous experiments with the sound-on-film process: the optical soundtrack methods of Fox "Movietone" (a system developed by Theodore Case and Earl I. Sponable, developers of the photoelectric cell), the General Electric-RCA "Photophone," and the German "Tri Ergon," patented in 1919. Several years prior to Vitaphone, Lee De Forest's sound-on-film process, "Phonofilm," which employed the Case-Sponable system, had proven quite successful, mechanically if not commercially, and like so many others, its inventor was quick to film opera singers, among them Léon Rothier, Marie Rappold, and Bernice De Pasquale.

A comprehensive history of the pre-Vitaphone sound motion picture is perhaps out of place here. The following items (all fully cited in the Bibliography) are recommended to those who wish to pursue the subject further: the Franklin and Green books, though difficult to come by, are both detailed contemporary accounts, written during the heyday of Vitaphone, at a time when the sound-on-disc process still held an important place in the film industry. Thrasher's *Okay for Sound*, which came out alongside the film of the same name (see Filmography no. 63), is more an advertisement for Warner Brothers than it is a scholarly history of its subject. Geduld's is by far the best published retrospective history of the sound film, and is very well

documented. Walker's *The Shattered Silents* is superficial by comparison. John Douglas Gomery's *The Coming of Sound to the American Cinema*, a 511-page doctoral dissertation published (in that form) by University Microfilms, is even more exhaustive, especially in its careful attention to context. The Keller, Parker, Taylor, and Useton articles all deal specifically with opera singers on film, in varying degrees of detail. Last, there is Raymond Fielding's classic *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television*. Among the essays gathered in this collection are several definitive accounts of pioneering efforts in film sound. The 56-page published program for the Museum of Modern Art's series, *American MovieMakers: The Dawn of Sound*, edited by Mary Lea Bandy (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989) is also recommended as an introduction and well-researched survey of the original Vitaphone phenomenon.

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Western Electric's first electrical recording experiments pre-dated World War I. In 1912 they purchased the rights to Lee DeForest's audion tube, and by 1918 had developed a useable loudspeaker system capable of carrying electrically amplified sound. Two Western Electric engineers, I.B. Crandall and Joseph P. Maxfield, were charged with the respective tasks of devising sound-on-film and sound-on-disc systems specifically for motion picture use. Crandall, with E.C. Wenthe, also developed an improved condenser microphone with a frequency response of 15,000 cycles. Wenthe brought forth a revolutionary light valve for sound-on-film recording in 1922 as Maxfield was busy attempting to solve the resonance problems of low-speed turntables. The 33 1/3 rpm disc system, developed at Western Electric in 1924, could record a frequency range of 40 to 5,000 cycles, using a microphone, amplifier, electrically-powered recording and reproducing apparatuses, and loudspeakers.

The results of Western Electric's early work in sound-on-disc were first demonstrated publicly with the showing of two films: "Audion," a non-synchronous animated short, exhibited at Yale University's Woolsey Hall on 27 October 1922 for the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, and "Hawthorne," a demonstration film about Western Electric's Chicago plant, shown at New York's Hotel Astor on 13 February 1924. With some final improvements in turntable and projector synchronization, Western Electric was now ready to commercially market their sound-on-disc system.

By 1925 Western Electric had already licensed its electrical process to both Victor and Columbia for commercial recording, but the film industry had no reason to show any interest—yet—in electrical recording or amplification. In May of that year, Walter R. Rich, a free-lance New York entrepreneur, purchased the exclusive rights to the commercial exploitation of Western Electric's sound-on-disc system for a period of nine months. Rich signed the agreement with George E. Cullinan, Western Electric's general sales manager and his assistant, Elbert A. Hawkins, on 27 May 1925.

Enter the Warner Brothers. The fortunes of their ailing studio were much improved when, on 22 April 1925, their purchase of the old Brooklyn Vitagraph Studio was announced. Harry Warner had bought it from Albert E. Smith, the current owner, for \$800,000 and the assumption of an additional \$980,000 debt. In addition to the Vitagraph studio in Flatbush, N. Y., this substantial investment yielded a processing lab in Hollywood, the story rights to all Vitagraph properties, the Vitagraph film library, and best of all, a network of 50 theater exchanges—26 in the

U.S., four in Canada, 10 in the U.K., and 10 in continental Europe. In the spring of 1925, Sam Warner opened negotiations with Walter J. Rich to secure use of the Western Electric system for the purpose of producing sound motion pictures. Rich had invested some \$36,000 in developing the Western Electric system for this express purpose, and among his stipulations was that Warner Brothers spend twice that much in further refining it. Rich sold half interest in his development rights to the studio on 15 June 1925. In the autumn of 1925 two Western Electric engineers, Stanley A. Watkins and H. C. Humphrey were dispatched to the Warner Brothers Vitagraph studio with recording and reproducing apparatuses. Installation was completed in September. Herman Heller, then the musical director of the Warners' Theater in New York City, was signed as the musical coordinator of the studio. In early 1926 John Edward Otterson assumed the position of Western Electric's representative and commercial manager. By April, the Vitagraph studio had been equipped with modern laboratory equipment that could process 4,000,000 feet of film per week.

The Vitaphone Corporation then was established as a separate entity for \$2,000,000, with Walter Rich as president and Sam Warner as vice president. Its sole function was to produce sound films. A formal leasing agreement between Vitaphone and Western Electric was signed on 20 April 1926, granting Vitaphone exclusive rights to Western Electric equipment for the production of synchronous sound films (the agreement did not include an exclusive license to produce non-synchronous soundtracks). Vitaphone also received the rights to record the accompanying soundtrack discs, which Victor would press.

Victor sent two of its employees, Raymond R. Sooy, a house engineer since 1903, and C. S. Althouse, "one of the boys on our Recording Staff," as Sooy described him, to New York to help supervise the recording of the soundtrack discs. Sooy stayed only about eight weeks before he was sent back to Camden, but Althouse was there for six months, and eventually resigned his job at Victor to work permanently for the Warners, where he remained—in the Hollywood studio—through the 1930s.

Next, Harry Warner set about finding suitable talent. He purchased from the Metropolitan Opera the exclusive rights to bargain with its artists, which cost the studio \$1,000 a week. This assured that Met-contracted artists could make no other sound pictures for any other studio. The Met also was approached to supply some of the scenery for the earliest shorts. In addition, Warners still had to negotiate with the record companies with whom the artists also were contracted, usually with the stipulation that they could record for no other company. Victor accepted \$1,000 a week for Vitaphone's exclusive license to record their artists, with royalties to be adjusted in the prices paid for the sound discs they would be pressing. Brunswick released their artists in November 1926, for \$2,000 a month. No information on Vitaphone's agreement with Columbia has been found, but considering the films of Charles Hackett and Anna Case, there must have been one. Negotiations with the Music Publishers' Protective Association (MPPA) for the unlimited use of whatever musical compositions were to be performed in the films cost \$104,000 a year, but did not include the catalog of Whitmark & Sons, which Warner Brothers eventually purchased in January 1929. Mechanical rights also were secured, as sound films were looked upon even then as mere extensions of the phonograph.

The agreements with the Met and with the record companies yielded only the rights to negotiate directly with the artists, who then had to be contracted separately. Martinelli is reported to have received \$25,000 for two films, and an addi-

tional \$5,000 per disc. The 107-man New York Philharmonic which, for purposes of recording, was quickly reduced to 80 players, cost the studio \$900 an hour. Not only did the orchestra make a number of its own concert films, it almost undoubtedly served as the core of the "Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra," which accompanied a majority of the other musical shorts. Popular entertainers also received large salaries for their Vitaphone shorts—Jolson was signed for \$25,000, and Eddie Cantor for \$50,000.

It was discovered immediately that the Vitagraph studio in Flatbush was unsuitable for filming in sound. Apart from its generally poor acoustics, the Coney Island Line of the Brooklyn Mass Transit could send a subway car roaring past the studio windows at any moment. So in the spring of 1926, Warners leased Oscar Hammerstein's old Manhattan Opera House on 34th Street for one year. The location wasn't the best, but its acoustics were still excellent. Wiring was installed hastily, as were the generators needed to produce the alternating current used to run the recording apparatus and cameras. In quick succession, a monitor room, workshops, and switchboards all were built into the old opera house. Green tells us that:

the recording apparatus went into John McCormack's [old] dressing room. The door that had once borne Tetrizzini's 'star' opened into a workshop. Mary Garden was replaced by a group of generators. The men who put them in thought Mary Garden was a perfume. (p. 65).

The monitoring room, he continues, had to be placed six flights up, as no other quarters could be found to house it. This space had been leased to the Masons for their lodge meetings, so the equipment had to be moved at night and re-positioned each morning. Conditions were less than ideal. Warners' negotiations to finance a new complex of studios in Hollywood began in September 1926, but the premises were not completed, and filming did not begin there until 1927.

Most if not all of the Vitaphone operatics were filmed and recorded (simultaneously) in the Manhattan Opera House. The average cost of a one-reel short was \$12,000, outside of artists' salaries. While the recording apparatuses could easily be placed far from the shooting set, the camera, one of the noisiest components, obviously could not. From the start it had to be enclosed in a soundproof booth measuring roughly 7 feet high, 4 feet deep, and 3 feet wide. The cameraman was actually locked in to prevent the door of the booth from opening accidentally and spoiling a take with the resulting racket. The blistering temperatures inside the booth were legendary. Metallic shielding originally was used to insulate the equipment when static and radio waves were thought to be interfering with the recordings until it was discovered that the arc lights were the real cause of the trouble. Frank N. Murphy, the chief electrician, diagnosed the problem and replaced the arcs with quieter incandescent lamps. Drapes were hung on the walls to dampen echo and general resonance.

Herman Heller, in addition to being the Musical Director-in-Chief of the Vitaphone operatic "unit," and the supervisor of all experiments and trials made at the Brooklyn facility, was also the most frequent conductor of the accompanying "Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra," and probably the (film) director for most of the operatic shorts. Heller (1881-?) was born in Rajetz, Austria-Hungary. He began studying the violin when he was six, and made his debut as a soloist at age eight. He attended

the conservatory in Agram, Yugoslavia and finished his studies in Prague with Franz Ondrichek and Karbulka. He came to America in 1898, worked for six years as an engineer and concert violinist, and for a short time, as a soloist with Creatore's Band. He spent the years 1904-1925 in San Francisco playing in theater orchestras. In 1925 he was appointed the Musical Director-in-Chief at Warner Bros., and subsequently was put in charge of the Brooklyn studio. The last mention of him I could find was as a composer and music director at Universal Studios in 1936: there he scored both "Girl on the Front Page" and "The Sea Spoilers" (credited to "Herman S. Heller"), and acted as the music director for "Two in a Crowd." He can actually be seen directing a Vitaphone short in a one-reel promotional film made by Western Electric and the Vitaphone Corporation in 1926 entitled "The Voice from the Screen," first shown to the New York Electrical Society on 27 October 1926.

Other important members of the technical staff that were involved in producing Vitaphone shorts from the earliest days at the Flatbush studio included Barney Clark, an engineer at the Manhattan Opera House; Edward B. Craft, of Western Electric's Engineering Department (who may be seen narrating the 1926 demonstration film "The Voice from the Screen"); Edward Dupar, cameraman for Warner Brothers in New York, and later head cameraman in their Hollywood studios, who is credited with having devised the multiple-camera strategy used to film the shorts, thus providing an image that could be edited over the uneditable soundtrack; Bryan Foy, director of short subjects from mid-1927, director of booking and casting, production chief for the Warner studios in Hollywood, and eventually a major feature director (director of the first all-talking feature, "The Lights of New York," released 8 July 1928); Bert Frank, editor at the New York studio; George Grove, chief sound mixer, first at Vitaphone, later at Warner Brothers; Albert S. Howson, Vitaphone stage director; H. C. Humphrey, Western Electric technical advisor, manager (with Stanley A. Watkins) of recording and reproducing apparatuses in the fall of 1925; Arthur Hurley, screenwriter and the credited director of "Washington/The Man and the Capitol" (no. 62); Arthur Kay, joint head (with Herman Heller) of Warner Brother's Music Department, though probably only in Hollywood; Benjamin (a.k.a. Nathan) Levinson, Western Electric sound advisor, in New York with Sam Warner from April 1925; Frank N. Murphy, electrical advisor at the Manhattan Opera House in 1926, and later chief electrician in Warners' Hollywood studios; George Quigley, Vitaphone general manager; A. M. "Doc" Salomon, Warner technician in New York and later a superintendent of employees in Hollywood; R. C. Sawyer, Western Electric technical advisor; Sam Sax, production head of the Brooklyn Vitagraph studio prior to 1931, he replaced Bryan Foy as the head of Warners' Short Subject Division in Hollywood until 1940; Edward Senz, makeup man on the Manhattan Opera House set; Colonel Nugent Slaughter, originally chief technical advisor at Vitaphone (dispatched with his staff by Western Electric), and later chief recording engineer for Warner Brothers in New York and Hollywood; and Stanley A. Watkins, sound apparatus manager for Western Electric in 1925 (with H. C. Humphrey), and later a production supervisor at Vitaphone.

How many of these advisors and technicians actually worked on the operatic shorts is not known, but it is assumed that most were present in some capacity through the spring of 1927, when Warner Brothers began shifting the base of its operation to the new Hollywood facility.

The absence of Vitaphone production logs has made it impossible to determine the precise dates of filming. Neither Warner Brothers or its designated archival depositories claim to have any remaining written records of the shorts. It has been argued that most of the operatic "Vitaphone Varieties" were shot between 1926 and 1927, and simply held for release as needed (East coast production of the shorts ceased temporarily in the summer of 1927 with Warners' move to their new Hollywood studios; production in New York resumed, however, in the winter of 1928-1929). In favor of this theory are the many disparities between the Library of Congress copyright registration numbers and the corresponding "Vitaphone Varieties" serial numbers: films were numbered and released out of production sequence and copyrighted in blocks, so that, for example, "Vitaphone Varieties" no. 2122, released in November 1927, was assigned the copyright registration no. MP 4440 on 3 November 1927, where "Vitaphone Varieties" no. 974, released in June 1930, was assigned copyright registration no. MP 1457 on 30 April 1930. It has been suggested, but by no means confirmed, that the production number blocks assigned to the shorts correspond to the size of the disc used. This may account for the 2000 series of "Vitaphone Varieties" numbers (see Index III), which run entirely out of sequence. The earliest operatic shorts, released in 1926, begin at "Vitaphone Varieties" no. 198, and continue in roughly chronological sequence through 1245, released circa 1931. "Vitaphone Varieties" 2122-2546 are 1927 and 1928 releases exclusively, and may have used a disc size different than the others. While this may explain why a number as low as 974 was submitted for copyright nearly three years after no. 2122, and why a 1930 short was numbered lower than a 1927 short in the first place, it tells us nothing about why many of the earliest shorts were submitted for copyright more than a year after they were released. Clearly, copyright registration numbers and dates are misleading, and offer little evidence that any of the films were necessarily made after 1927. Similarly, the dates retrieved from prints and soundtrack discs never exceed 1927. By February 1927, production had risen to five shorts per week, and by the following October at least 150 "Vitaphone Varieties" had been produced, so it may well be that, with the exception of some of the late Martinelli shorts, production of the operatic shorts had concluded by the end of 1927. It is equally clear, however, that if other post-1927 releases were actually produced prior to 1928, some alterations were made: the credits of those released after April 1930, for example, included the advertising slogan "Brunswick Radios Used Exclusively." (Warners' takeover of the Sound Division of Brunswick-Balke-Collender was closed on 6 April 1930, and the sale was approved by all stockholders on 21 April 1930.)

In favor of the theory that at least some of the shorts were filmed later than 1927 is the filmic development we see over the course of the operatic series, the greater visual complexity of those shorts released between 1930 and 1932. There is even a bit of narrative evidence: Martinelli's "Love's Garden of Roses" (no. 33) makes mention of a national "Depression" charity appeal. As Martinelli's shorts were the most popular (certainly, their number alone implies this), it may well be that he was approached to make additional films, where others were not, as late as 1931.

Unresolved, and directly related to the issue of filming dates, is the manner in which the soundtracks were prepared for release: performances were cut direct-to-disc during filming, and in most cases were contained on single 12- or 16-inch masters. But it is not known if any of the discs finally released to theaters were dubbed from masters for editing purposes. As many of the films were mounted in

one continuous shot, without editing, it seems likely that there was no need to edit the soundtrack. Even in instances where the visuals were edited (usually with inserted close-ups among the master shots) we can be certain that it was the image that was cut to the soundtrack, not the other way around, as multiple-camera setups were in use on the Vitaphone sets virtually from the beginning. That being the case, we can assume that the recorded performances were not edited.

Two Martinelli soundtrack discs in my own collection, the solos from *Aida* (no. 37) and *I Pagliacci* (no. 38), both 12-inch, are very definitely not dubbings. Both are dated 21 June 1926 in the wax, almost certainly the date of recording. With the exception of the disc carrying a spoken address by Will H. Hayes, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, which is dated 17 June 1926, these two Martinelli arias were the first artist performances recorded: the dates found on the discs of the other eight shorts shown at the first Vitaphone show on 6 August 1926 range from 29 June to 15 July 1926.

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Vitaphone discs were uniformly single-sided, 33 1/3 rpm, lateral-cut, inside-start. They were pressed in the U.S. by the Victor Talking Machine Company. In England and Europe, Columbia (pre-EMI?) did some of the pressing, and still later, Vocalion and its affiliates. I'm anxious to know if the Gramophone Company also was involved in pressing them at any point. Most had 4 1/2-inch white paper labels with red print. The inside-start format was chosen so that the projection crew could more easily see the stylus as it finished tracking the grooves, thus making the disc change-over less strenuous. The name of the film, or the title of a musical selection, its production number, and the reel number to which a particular disc corresponded (in the case of features) are all found etched in the wax. Operatic discs also carry the artist's name. An arrow running perpendicular to the playing grooves is often etched in the surround, pointing to a heavily cut lead-in groove where the stylus would be cued for synchronization with the projector (eventually to be aligned with a special film frame marked "Picture Start," which then was placed directly in front of the projector's aperture). The projection crew frequently added their own arrow with a grease pencil to highlight the etched cuing arrow (quite often these "little helpers" can still be seen on surviving copies). Not all discs have the etched arrow, however.

"Victor" backs, identical to those found on commercial recordings, have been observed on all of the specimens I've encountered—none, including those pressed after 1930, seem to have "RCA Victor" backs. Even after Warner Brothers purchased the American Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. in April 1930, Victor apparently continued to do the pressing for the actual film discs, at least in the U.S. The only Brunswick products I have seen that were produced specifically for Warner Brothers films are the "Exploitation Records," advertising discs issued to Brunswick dealers to push the latest Warner Brothers films as well as the Brunswick records of the songs and artists featured in them. However, a curious item appeared in *Variety* on 30 March 1927 (86/2, p. 12):

Vitaphone programs are made of records manufactured by Victor, Columbia, and Brunswick. Martinelli, in the program at the Warner (sic), is recorded on Columbia. Van and Schenck, at the Selwyn, is another Columbia product. These two numbers are considered the clearest on the respective bill.

Van and Schenck were indeed recording for Columbia at the time, but not Martinelli. Only one Columbia Vitaphone disc has been inspected, and it is British, "Pressed by Columbia Graphophone Co. Ltd., London." English Vocalion pressings of Vitaphone discs also have been reported, along with what may have been promotional copies on its subsidiary label, Broadcast. I assume that any Vocalion or Broadcast discs would date from the period after Warners took over Brunswick (hence the Vocalion connection).

Both 12- and 16-inch discs were used. The smaller size usually was sufficient for the individual reels of a feature film: a 12-inch Vitaphone disc in my own collection, the fifth reel of a 1930 First National feature, runs about nine minutes at a speed of 33 1/3 rpm. The shorter, single-aria operatic films, in which there was little or no "padding" of the scene, needed no more than a nine-minute disc capacity, and so were recorded using the smaller size. The Martinelli *Aida* and *I Pagliacci* solos, for example, nos. 37 and 38, are both 12-inch, with wide rims and ample surrounds and thus, plenty of room to spare. The 16-inch, 33 1/3 rpm discs would easily have surpassed the longer running times of the shorts that ran 10 to 12 minutes, and were used when necessary, but I would guess that the majority of the operatic Vitaphones, considering their average running time of five to nine minutes, were recorded on 12-inch discs.

Two slightly different label types have been documented, both white with red print. The first, and earlier of the two, is on a 16-inch disc. Around the spindle is the legend "Recorded by and Property of/The Vitaphone Corporation/New York, NY," and below it, "Pressed by/Victor Talking Machine Company/Camden, N.J./U.S.A." Immediately to the left of the spindle hole are the "Fader" and "Horn" settings, and to the right, a 20-square 'log' headed "Number of Times Played" for keeping track of the disc's use. "Inspected/By . . . /Date . . ." is found above the spindle hole, and was meant to be filled in by the projectionist.

The second label is from a 12-inch disc. Around the spindle hole is "Recorded for Firnatone Corporation by and Property of/The Vitaphone Corporation/New York, N.Y." Firnatone was an early sound-on-disc Vitaphone clone developed by Western Electric and Victor. It originally was intended for non-synchronous musical scores, and was leased to First National Pictures (**FIR**st **N**ational **TONE**). Its major asset was compatibility with Western Electric equipment. When Warner Brothers absorbed First National in the summer of 1928, the Firnatone name was for some reason retained. The "Fader" and "Horn" settings are again to the left of the spindle hole, but the playing 'log' has been replaced on the right by the pressing information. International patents, extending from 1925 to 1929, adorn the rim of the label. Notice that the record is "the property of the Vitaphone Corporation," and notation that it must be returned to the "Vitaphone Distributing Corporation Branch" also appears, as does a warning that "Willful or Malicious Breaking, Scratching, Marking, or Defacing this record is breach of contract and a violation of the Law." The production number is etched in the wax and rubber-stamped on the label. The British Vitaphones manufactured by Columbia use a label almost identical to this—down to the "Firnatone Corporation" legend around the spindle hole.

By February 1929, Warner Brothers was the only major studio still recording sound-on-disc (actually, they were recording soundtracks simultaneously on disc and film by 1928, using the latter for workprint editing). The other studios were mastering sound-on-film and dubbing onto disc for those theaters still wired for disc repro-

duction. Most theaters had converted to sound-on-film by late 1930. Published statistics vary: in January 1931 it was estimated that only about 1,500 theaters were still wired for sound-on-disc, and by 1933 a mere 400, but other sources claim that as late as May 1931 some 5,000 theaters (out of a national count of over 13,500) could still accommodate the older format. Warner Brothers itself finally discontinued sound-on-disc recording in 1931, but like the others, continued to provide disc dubbings for theaters that needed them. Warner Brothers continued to use the Vitaphone trademark on most feature films through 1936, and on shorts and animated films well into the 1940s. As late as the mid 1960s "Vitaphonic Sound" was even employed as a slogan to distinguish the high fidelity recording method used by Warners for its commercial record label.

By early 1928, Victor's involvement with motion picture soundtrack discs had expanded to include recording and dubbing for other Hollywood studios, Fox and Paramount among them. According to the unpublished diary of Raymond Sooy, on 16 March 1928 the necessary equipment was installed in the Trinity Baptist Church building at 114 North Fifth Street, Camden, which Victor had purchased in February 1918 as a recording studio. Victor's activities over the next few years included the gathering of recorded sound effects taken on portable equipment, the recording of synchronized scores, and the transfer of optical soundtracks to disc for those theaters still in need of them.

The "fader" and "horn" setting index provided on the label was to be filled in by the projectionist. The "horns" were of course the loudspeakers. Several different kinds were installed in a theater, corresponding to today's woofers ("lower horns") and what must have been a combination mid-range/tweeter ("upper horns"). The upper horns were 12 feet long, the lower horns 14 feet long, both coiled. After a certain point they were mounted at various back-stage locations behind special semi-porous viewing screens to allow for the illusion of sound coming directly from the projected image, though earlier, they were placed on either side of the screen and even in the orchestra pit, causing a diffusion of sound and image that many critics took to task. Three basic horn settings were predetermined: "A" for dialogue accompanied by sound effects and music, "B" for musical solos and choruses, and "C" for orchestral selections and synchronized scores. These were essentially horn groupings: the "A" setting used the upper (high frequency) horns primarily, with the lower horns at a low volume; the "B" setting used the full upper horns, with the lower horns at a medium volume to bring out the accompaniment; the "C" setting, for orchestral soundtracks, used full lower horns for bass emphasis, and sometimes the full upper horns at high volume for brilliance. After the correct combination was determined for each disc, these letter settings were to be marked on the labels in the space provided.

The "fader" was simply the volume control, technically a double-amplifying rheostat. While it also was used to contrive certain volume-related sound effects, it was principally the means by which seamless switching between projectors and turntables was effected during multi-reel (and thus, multi-disc) films, in league with an elaborate film-disc transfer switch. The fader was connected to the pick-ups of both turntables, so that during the cued switch-over from one disc to another, the same volume level for the incoming disc could be secured after the "fade" of the outgoing disc (the last few grooves of a soundtrack disc, like the last frames of a film reel, overlapped the beginning of the next). Like the horns, the faders had a number of

predetermined settings on the master volume control (called the "full-house fader") and these were meant to be marked directly on each label for reference during projection. Generally, the same setting was established and maintained throughout a film, except at change-overs, but often some violent outburst in the narrative would provoke the predictable boost in volume. A printed cue sheet was maintained and followed throughout projection for these effects—nothing was improvised or left to chance. Film projection was well choreographed in those days!

There were master controls and submasters for both the fader and the horns. The submasters, feeding varying degrees of volume to the individual horns, would arrange the proper levels for, and between, the loudspeakers based on their placement and the characteristics of a given soundtrack disc. These were pre-set on the amplifier so that only the master controls needed to be manipulated during projection (much like a modern mixer).

All settings were determined in advance: an initial engineering survey was provided by Western Electric prior to a theater's installation or "wiring." To assure that the sound distribution was correct and that any reverberation or resonance-related distortion was kept to a minimum, the horns were placed in an arrangement that was appropriate to the size, acoustics, and anticipated audience capacity of the theater. The horns were always placed behind the screen. The upper horns usually were placed about one quarter distance from the top, sometimes even higher, and were pointed downward toward the audience, while the lower horns were usually kept just above stage level, pointed upward toward the balcony. As much attention was paid to the proper tilting and flaring of individual horns as to their respective volume levels. To cut down on echo (an interval of 1/16 second was considered noticeable and unacceptable) drapes were often hung in any backstage area not occupied by equipment. Even the angle of projection was adjusted to match proper horn placement. Theaters which still presented live entertainment between films usually were compelled to mount horns on movable towers or on elevator lifts so that the stage could be cleared quickly. Trap doors were even installed in some theaters so that horn installations could be lowered under the stage to get them out of the way.

Contemporary accounts insist that a great deal of practice was required for each show, involving both the projection crew and the house management. Beyond the constant shuffling of the loudspeakers, individual discs had to be auditioned in anticipation of any damage to the surface and to pinpoint any specific volume requirements. Up to four copies of each disc were supplied with a film (at a cost of \$3.00 per set), with the intention that none be used for more than a week. The average life of a Vitaphone disc was designated officially to be 18 to 22 plays. To insure the smoothest possible surfaces, no abrasive materials were used in the pressings, nor were they laminated. As a result, the discs were not nearly as durable as standard commercial pressings. A special disc cleaning solution was even provided. All discs were to be returned to the distributor, where they were no doubt destroyed, accounting for their great rarity today (by 1931 this disc-exchange program with theaters was costing the film industry nearly \$500,000 annually). Tungsten needles were supplied, to be discarded after each change of record. They too had to be inspected for any irregularities prior to use.

As mentioned before, filming and recording were done simultaneously. During this process the motors of both the camera (or cameras) and the turntable were linked, sharing a common power source. This assured that both ran at their pre-

scribed speed. They were started together and reached full speed together. During theatrical reproduction, the projectors and turntables were driven by the same motor. More than anything else, it was the dependability of Vitaphone's method of achieving mechanical synchronization that accounted for its success, where so many earlier attempts at sound-on-disc had failed. A film speed of 90 feet per minute, 16 frames per second (fps), had to be maintained for synchronization (the eventual restandardization of sound film speed at 24 fps was made in consideration of the sound-on-film process). Each frame was numbered so that in the event of breakage, the exact number of blank frames could be replaced to restore alignment. To prevent damage to the sprocket holes, and to lessen the possibility of the film sticking or jamming as it passed through the projector—often caused by the fresh emulsion of a new print—the edges of these early sound films were coated with a thin layer of paraffin at the printing laboratory. When damage to either the film or the discs was incurred during projection, synchronization generally had to be sacrificed. The projectionist's choices in an emergency were few: either the projector was turned off and the damage repaired (advancing the disc or replacing damaged frames by splicing in the necessary number of blank frames), or the sound was cut for the rest of the reel. If breakage occurred near the end of a reel, a switch-over to the next projector and turntable could be made with minimum inconvenience to the audience. In the case of a one-reel short subject, a quick switch to the next film was usually made while damage to the first was repaired, after which the program was merely rearranged.

On 20 December 1926 Electrical Research Products, Inc. (ERPI) was established as a Western Electric subsidiary to exploit all commercial patents outside of telephony. ERPI would act henceforth as receiver for all rights, titles, contracts, patents, and trademarks relating to Western Electric's non-telephone activities. John Otterson, Western Electric's original representative to Vitaphone, was named general manager, and Edgar S. Bloom president. With the formation of ERPI, Vitaphone lost its exclusive right to use Western Electric equipment, and its power to bargain directly with other studios wishing to use it. On 31 December 1926, Fox signed with ERPI to use Western Electric amplification equipment for its sound-on-film "Movietone" process (a refinement of Theodore Cases' "AEOLight" variable-density sound-on-film recording system). Subsequently, the history of the early sound film became a battlefield of corporate manipulation, with the Case-Sponable system ("Movietone"), augmented by Western Electric's amplification equipment, fighting the RCA-General Electric "Photophone" system for supremacy as the studios all converted to sound production. The two major licensors, ERPI and RCA, would be battling it out for years to come. By 1928 Fox, Paramount, M-G-M, United Artists, Hal Roach, and Christie were licensed to use Western Electric equipment by arrangement with ERPI, and some, by arrangement with Fox, to use "Movietone." Universal quickly followed suit, as did Columbia Pictures. Some of the smaller studios went with RCA's "Photophone," which eventually made its greatest impact on the market through [RKO] Radio Pictures, a major studio incorporated in 1928 (properly, Radio-Keith-Orpheum, with which RCA was directly connected). Warners stuck to Vitaphone, but it soon became clear that sound-on-film was the more flexible system. By 1930, sound-on-disc was being referred to as "the old system," similar to the references we find in record catalogs of the 1930s to the "old acoustical method of recording." By then, Warners had lost its stature as the prime mover in the history of the sound film industry.

After the New York debut of the first Vitaphone show on 6 August 1926, "Don Juan" and its accompanying shorts were taken on the road, first to McVicker's Theater in Chicago's Loop on 16 September, then to St. Louis on 1 October. "Don Juan" was shown at Grauman's Egyptian in Los Angeles shortly thereafter, but without sound.

The second show, 7 October 1926, premiered at the Colony Theater, New York City, which Warners had rented for \$5,000 a week. Only one operatic short was shown at that premiere (Werrenrath, no. 57), but eventually the bill included others (Werrenrath, no. 58 and Martinelli, no. 36). The feature film was Warners' "The Better 'Ole." On 27 October 1926 the same show made its Los Angeles debut at Grauman's Egyptian, this time with sound. This west coast premiere was actually broadcast over a local Los Angeles radio station, the Warner Brothers-owned KFWB. On 2 December 1926 "The Better 'Ole" and its accompanying shorts were seen at the Woods Theater in Chicago, and on 8 December in Detroit.

The third show, with the John Barrymore feature "When a Man Loves," played the Selwyn Theater in New York City for six months, beginning on 3 February 1927. The shorts included three operatics, Mary Lewis (no. 23), the Talley-Gordon-Gigli-De Luca *Rigoletto* Quartet (no. 53), and Charles Hackett (no. 18).

By April 1927, shorts were being thrust onto, and removed from, feature bills almost without notice, sometimes in an effort to tailor a show to its intended audience, but very often in deference to poor reviews, hence the disappearance of Talley's "Caro nome" (no. 51) from general circulation by 1927. A short's longevity depended upon its popularity—Gigli's and Martinelli's tended to receive the greatest acclaim, and apparently were favored by audiences even above the vaudeville shorts. Accordingly, their films, as well as many others, constantly were being recycled well into the 1930s.

The other Hollywood studios were quick to produce their own series of operatic shorts, but these proved short-lived: six operatic "Metro Movietone Acts" were released in 1929 and 1930, two featuring soprano Maria Kurenko, and three featuring Titta Ruffo; Fox presented two "Movietone Numbers" with baritone Richard Bonelli in 1928, and Paramount two Tito Schipa "Concerts" between 1929 and 1930. One of the Schipa films was a "M'appari" and "Princesita" (copyrighted as "Tito Schipa; Concert No. 2," LP 1327, on 23 May 1930). The contents of the other Schipa short, copyrighted as "Tito Schipa" (MP 505 on 25 July 1929), are unknown. Bonelli sings the Prologue from *I Pagliacci* in one of his Fox shorts (MP 5316, copyrighted 4 June 1928), and Figaro's "Largo al Factotum" in the other (MP 5427, copyrighted 31 July 1928). The contents of only one of the Kurenko M-G-M shorts can be ascertained from its copyright title, the *Dinorah* "Ombra leggiera" and the *Sadko* "Chanson Hindu" (MP 1154, copyrighted 10 February 1930). The other (MP 595, copyrighted 3 September 1929) is simply titled "Madame Kurenko." Ruffo's three M-G-M "Metro Movietone Acts" included a "Largo al Factotum" (MP 187, copyrighted 13 May 1929), excerpts from *L'Africaine* (MP 1158, copyrighted 10 February 1930), and the "Credo" from *Otello* (MP 1335, copyrighted 20 March 1930). Two of the Ruffo soundtracks, the *Barbiere* and the *Otello*, have been issued on LP (EJS 142, released January 1959).

No other operatic specialties from the Vitaphone period have been found, or in fact, documented elsewhere to my knowledge.

Many famous singers had appeared in silent films (Caruso, Garden, Case, Cavallieri, Farrar, etc.) of course, but the absence of sound robbed them of their greatest splendor. The talkies allowed for the visual spectacle of opera, the physical presence of its stars, and the sound of their voices, hitherto the prisoner of imageless recordings and live performances that relatively few could see. Opera singers were still big box office attractions in the twenties and thirties, and the studios were quick to exploit them as viable commercial property. After the operatic short subjects had run their course, there were numerous appearances by opera singers in feature films of the 1930s and 1940s, sometimes singing, but more often acting: among them Gigli, Tibbett, Slezak, Matzenauer, Lauri-Volpi, Mojica, Supervia, Grace Moore, Bjoerling, Bonelli, McCormack, Koshetz, Flagstad, and Melchior. Certainly enough to keep us up into the early mornings for years to come, with fingers frozen on the switches of our VCRs. By the mid-1930s, as popular and "classical" entertainment diverged, opera singers and the silver screen became increasingly estranged, though many continued to appear in films either in character roles or as featured "guests." As soon as it was discovered that the microphone could afford to the comelier likes of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy the same vocal grandeur that had once required the strained grimaces of real operatic singing, Hollywood realized that glamour need not be sacrificed as it had been in the days of the Vitaphone, when Martinelli and Gigli were the screen's most popular operatic stars.

Many of the earliest Vitaphone shorts were crude, single-shot 'tableaux,' with little onstage action, no movement of the camera and only the most minimal editing. Confining the camera to a booth to eliminate its noisy whirring was partly to blame, as this also rendered it immobile. But it was the abandonment of the image as the basic unit of cinema in the early days of talkies that primarily was responsible, and this was by no means born entirely out of practical necessity. The breadth of visual splendor characteristic of the late silent film had given way to sound—indeed, any sound, and this became the principal attraction to audiences of the late 1920s, just as the resulting stagnation of the visuals became the principal concern of contemporary *cinéastes*. After all, they argued, is not the complex and varied visual language of cinema the component that distinguishes it from the other arts, especially theater?

The idea of actions and emotions being expressed entirely filmically crumbled in the wake of sound, along with the autonomy of the image. The famous "A Statement [on Sound]," co-authored by Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Gregori Alexandrov, first published in the Leningrad magazine, *Zhizn Iskusstva* on 5 August 1928, warned that sound was a "two-edged invention." They wrote that, "in the first place, there will be commercial exploitation of the most saleable merchandise, TALKING FILMS," wherein sound will inevitably be used "naturalistically" simply to provide the illusion of "talking people . . . and audible objects," before it is further debased and relegated to achieving mere "photographed performances of a theatrical sort." The solution, they argued, was in sound being treated as "a new montage element (as a factor divorced from the visual image)," which would "inevitably introduce new means of enormous power to the expression and solution of the most complicated tasks that now oppress . . . working only with film images." A "counterpoint" of sound and image, they concluded, might prevent the sound film from degenerating into mere talk, and at the same time, rescue the silent film from the "fearsome eventuality of meaninglessness and reactionary decadence" that would

result from resorting to “fanciful montage structures.” (reprinted as an appendix in Jay Leyda’s 1949 English translation of Sergei Eisenstein’s *Film Form*, published by Harcourt, Brace & World).

The Vitaphone shorts provide ample evidence that such fears were well founded. Most are indeed bad mechanical copies of theater—essentially photographic reproductions. And assuming that Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov would allow the consequences of naturalistic sounds to be expanded to include singing people as well as “talking people,” the Vitaphones might well stand as a case in point. Many of them were so visually sluggish as to lack even the actions and stage movements normally found in a real theatrical performance. They are as primitive as only the earliest talkies dared to be. Where the frame itself was rendered immobile through a lack of camera movement, focal variation, and cutting, the movement of objects within the frame (the *mise-en-scène*) was even minimalized as singers were made to stand stiffly before the lens in public-address fashion. Martinelli’s early “Celeste Aida” (no. 37) is typical. The tenor is seen in a medium torso shot, appropriately costumed and standing between the two pillars of a “palace” set. The film is composed of one continuous shot. Unlike many of the films, which end with the singers bowing to their audience, Martinelli concludes the aria with arms outstretched (his only consequential gesture!), and remains fixed through the final fadeout. De Luca’s “Largo al factotum” (no. 10), on the other hand, is exceptional. The film is mounted in a single medium longshot, allowing the singer at least the luxury of body movement within the frame. And body movement there is! After the orchestral introduction, the costumed, guitar-strumming Figaro bursts upon the stage, dancing throughout the film, and bows to his audience at the end. The energy of the performance is quite extraordinary. De Luca is one of the few singers able to overcome the immobility of the camera through bodily exploitation of the *mise-en-scène*. Vibrant as it is however, De Luca’s is clearly the more “theatrical” of the two films. A long, unchanging master shot essentially recreates a view of the action similar to what a theater audience might expect to see, where a closeup or even a medium closeup, as in the Martinelli *Aida*, is composed in a focal length that is theatrically impossible, the intimacy of which must be perceived as essentially photographic.

The shorts began to improve quickly, if inconsistently. There are, for example, fairly early instances where the sound and the image are manipulated. In the Martinelli-Marracci *Martha* short (no. 34) there are reaction shots of Marracci watching Martinelli as he sings. Similarly, in the Martinelli “Ship’s Concert” (no. 27) there are numerous parallel shots inserted over Martinelli’s voice—the sound representing one space, the image another, both united in time by the soundtrack. Hardly the breadth counterpoint the Soviet aestheticians envisioned perhaps, but even such simple cutting does create a more effectively filmic discourse. Sound, too, was often used rather effectively. The natural sounds of stage movement and object placement missing from commercial recordings is often unwittingly present in these films, simply because the microphones could not distinguish between musical and physical utterances. Modulations of amplitude also made quite an impression at the time—just as we hear singers fading in and out of ‘live’ performance recordings as they move about the stage (thus heightening their realism), the immobile microphones used on the make-shift sound stages were helpless in maintaining a consistent studio-like volume as the singers enacted their scenes. Tracking booms were not yet in common use, and microphones had to be planted in the earliest sound films—sometimes quite literally—as invisible props.

By 1927 cutting between master shots and details became more frequent, but generally the shorts maintained their original posture: the approximation of a stage performance—singers standing stiffly before the camera, arms outstretched, bowing to the audience before the final fadeout. There are even instances of “curtain calls” after the fadeout of the action, wherein the singers return in a final shot for an ensemble bow. In May 1927, Warners is said to have officially banished these naive theatrical endings, and set about finding a way to use the camera a bit more elaborately. By 1928, reviewers began mentioning this (see, for example, the review of the Gigli-De Luca *Pearl Fishers* duet, no. 11, in *Variety*, 21 March 1928, p. 44).

Five different formats of presentation dominated the operatic shorts, and these were more or less adhered to from the beginning: a) operatic scenes with costumes and scenery but little or no accompanying action; b) operatic scenes with costumes, scenery and some accompanying action; c) concert recreations; d) concert recreations with accompanying action; and e) “revues.”

Among the Vitaphones that I have seen, these formats were never mixed within a single film as they were in some of the operatic shorts made by other studios. One of Schipa's 1929 Paramount shorts, for example, offers a costumed “M'appari” with off-screen orchestra, enacted in a rustic setting, followed by a “Princesita” in concert dress, with Schipa on stage with his pianist.

The operatic scenes without accompanying actions were essentially tableaux-filmed gramophone records, or, depending upon how they were perceived by their contemporary audiences, gramophoned films.

The operatic scenes with accompanying action offered a bit more in the way of spectacle. Sometimes these observed the actions and setting prescribed in the libretto, and sometimes not. Many of the Gigli, Hackett, and Martinelli operatic scenes and ensembles did so with some polish, often enhancing the scenes with dense choreography and evocative sets. Alda's *Otello* “Ave Maria” (no. 2), on the other hand, pays no heed whatever to Boito's libretto: while there is accompanying action, Desdemona's prayer is not sung in her bedchamber, but rather, in a convent setting, complete with strolling nuns! In fact, Alda herself is so attired. There are six shots in all, but virtually none of the body movement we find in De Luca's fluttering rendition of the “Largo al factotum.”

In the concert recreations, the singers, decked out in full concert attire, are usually cast as “themselves,” standing in front of a piano singing. They bow courteously as they come on stage and again after each selection, as if to acknowledge the applause of their imaginary audience. Most often these use a three-shot strategy: an establishing shot as the artist emerges on stage and begins to sing, a cut to a medium (torso) shot until the conclusion of a song or aria, and a return to the establishing shot for a bow and the start of the next selection. This sequence is then repeated, overlapping the music subsequently performed. Among these, Hackett's “Il mio tesoro”/“O Paradiso” (no. 20) is remarkable, if only for its introduction: as the pianist plays the familiar opening bars of the Mozart, the singer walks onto the set, puts down his hat and coat, and steps up to the piano to sing . . . as if late in arriving!

The concert recreations with accompanying action are part concert, part “revue.” Hackett's “Call of the Nile” (no. 16), appropriately nicknamed “Tent and Desert Oasis Scene” in a contemporary Vitaphone catalog, is essentially a concert, but it is done in costume on a desert oasis set suspiciously reminiscent of Valentino. Marti-

nelli's "Love's Garden of Roses" (no. 33) takes place at a "benefit show," with Martinelli singing in response to a national charity appeal. The "show" is complete with a master of ceremonies, who announces the proceedings. It is an unusually sophisticated film, with full panning shots of the audience throughout the songs, and a recurring shot of a man and a woman watching from atop the stage in one of the boxes. The circa 1931 "Ship's Concert" (no. 27), also with Martinelli, is similar, but here the tenor is aboard the "S.S. Lombardi" as the featured guest star of the voyage. The "show" again is introduced by an unidentified master of ceremonies. Martinelli's "The Song of Songs" and "Homing" are both accompanied on stage by piano, but on the soundtrack by orchestra ("invisible orchestras" were an icon of the film musical even in 1930). Amid "Homing" are shots of the ship at sea, complete with waves crashing against it and vivid closeups of gulls hovering above ("homing" perhaps?), a rudimentary but effective use of parallel action. As in the "Love's Garden of Roses," there are inserted panning shots of the audience, not just applauding after a selection, but actually reacting as Martinelli sings.

The "revue" format is a potpourri of song and dance, a variety show of different selections by different performers all united by some theme or dominant atmosphere. In "Gypsy Caravan" (no. 25) Martinelli is cast as a gypsy who loses his beloved to a fellow camp dweller. In the final sequence he sings the wistful "Ssak egy Kislany" atop a horse-driven wagon, and rides off into the night. In addition to his three songs, there is a "gypsy dance" (to the "Trepak" of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*) and even a violin solo—in the gypsy style of course—by Max Pollikoff. In "Come Back to Sorrento" (no. 32) the dim Venetian(?) setting offers an occasional fleeting glimpse of Martinelli floating by on a gondola, oar in hand, singing his two songs. Between them is an elaborate dance sequence choreographed to Rossini's (Neapolitan!) "La Danza." Similarly, "La Fiesta" (no. 7) is composed of an opening dance sequence, a lengthy chorus, and eventually, Anna Case's "Anhelos." The other Case short (no. 8) and Mary Lewis' "Way Down South" (no. 23), judging from contemporary press notices, were also revues of this sort.

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Most collectors are familiar with Edward J. Smith's LP dubbings of the Vitaphone soundtracks: apart from the many Martinelli reissues on EJS, ASCO, Celebrity, and Rondo Gold, and the Gigli dubs on EJS and TAP, Smith issued a "Film Potpourri" on EJS 513 in May 1970, containing other Vitaphone performances of interest. There are also a few Gigli extracts on the Eterna and Scala labels (see Microgroove Discography below). Generally the singing is more spontaneous than it is in contemporary studio recordings, perhaps a bit less careful. I would imagine that tight budgets and hasty shooting schedules had something to do with this, insuring that retakes be kept to a minimum whenever possible. Studio time, even then, was very expensive, so that the little musical lapses that we rarely hear on commercial recordings were overlooked probably as inconsequential in Hollywood. The singing is all very good, but the conducting is uniformly poor, for which only Heller can be blamed. His general approach, naked for all to hear in the ponderous orchestral introductions, is largely unsympathetic, even resistant, to anything that the singers set out to accomplish. Nor for that matter is his direction of the films themselves much better—if indeed he was the director, as is commonly assumed. Little was done to flatter the stock gestures assigned to the principals, or to smooth out the comical fumbling of aimless choristers as they attempt to assume 'character' and effect meaningful actions. Most often their antics simply upstage the singers.

While there is much pleasure to gain simply from listening to the soundtracks, it is the moving, living presence of the singers themselves that captures the imagination. Few of the Vitaphone performances are musically superior to those we have on contemporary commercial recordings by the same artists (though in their original form, the recordings themselves are technically far superior—amazingly so); but the portraits that these films offer are in many ways more satisfying. We are fortunate indeed to have them at all. How delightfully unpredictable the historical record often is, and how precious, if unlikely, its gifts can be!

Another valuable feature of the Vitaphones is the opportunity they afford to hear some of these singers electrically recorded, or for that matter, recorded under studio conditions of any kind. Several of the artists, Yvonne Benson, Louis D'Angelo, Rosa Low, and Livia Marracci, appear not to have left any commercial recordings. What are likely to be Ina Bourskaya's only commercial recordings appeared during her years with the Kiev Opera, circa 1912, on the rare Aristotipia label. Hope Hampton made several sides for Columbia in the late 1920s, but none appear to have been issued. Vivienne Segal, a major artist, only began recording a decade and a half later. Pasquale Amato, Guido Ciccolini, Minnie Egner, Eleanor Painter, and Millo Picco made no other commercial electricals that I know of, while Adamo Didur, Jeanne Gordon, Rosa Raisa, and Giacomo Rimini made very few: indeed, only two of Gordon's electrical Victors were issued, Didur and Rimini made only a handful of rare electric Brunswicks (though the latter also took the title role in the 1932 Milanese *Falstaff*, conducted by Molajoli on Columbia), and Raisa, apart from her few (1928?) Brunswicks, left only four electrical HMVs. John Barclay was also a Brunswick artist, but I have seen only acousticals documented. Five of the Vitaphone singers, Chase Baromeo, Minnie Egner, Millo Picco, Eleanor Painter, and Allan Prior, left very few commercial recordings of any kind: Baromeo was one of the conspirators in an early-twenties quintet from *Un Ballo in Maschera* on Fonotipia 74974 (XXPh 5666); Egner is apparently heard only on the 1917 Caruso/Galli-Curci *Rigoletto* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* ensembles; Picco made about a half dozen acoustical solos for Emerson, and a few more for Lyric (issued on various labels), and Prior only a few early electrics for British Columbia. Only two of Painter's four acoustical Columbia sides were issued.

The other Vitaphone singers are well represented on commercial recordings of the early electrical period, though the shorts often supplement their recorded repertory. Hackett and Case were then Columbia artists, while John Charles Thomas, like Didur, Raisa, Rimini, and perhaps Barclay, was recording for Brunswick. Alda, De Luca, Gigli, Lewis, Martinelli, Rosenblatt, Schumann-Heink, Talley, Werrenrath, and Whitehill were Victor Red Seal mainstays.

But what of the present availability of the operatic Vitaphone shorts? Most have been absorbed into the growing body of extant, but unavailable films, a tragic misfortune. Many have been preserved complete, some in original nitrate prints with soundtrack discs intact. Others are incomplete, lacking either soundtracks or portions of the image. A good many of the musical items (though surprisingly few of the operatics) have simply disappeared without a trace, like so many other important films of the period, with no known copies having survived. The sources and present disposition of each film will be given in the Filmography to follow, and it is hoped that readers will report any copies that have been overlooked.

A large group of operatic Vitaphones, consisting primarily of Gigli and Martinelli shorts, recently turned up for sale on videotape in New York: they are deplor-

able transfers from equally deplorable 16mm prints, and cannot be recommended. Possibly an impassioned but realistic appeal can be made to the current copyright holder, the Turner Entertainment Company, and to the libraries, archives, and museums that possess good quality prints, so that what remains can be reconstructed and made available, one hopes on videotape. The Museum of Modern Art's recent exhibition, "American MovieMakers: The Dawn of Sound," has restored copies of at least ten of the operatic shorts, in many cases wedding original soundtrack discs to superb 35mm nitrate prints, so the chances of a commercial re-release grow better. I for one am optimistic that such eventually will come to pass. 

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For much assistance, I tender thanks to Messrs. Peter G. Adamson, St. Andrews, Fife; William J. Collins, Davis, California; Frederick Crane, Iowa City, Iowa; Robert Fazio, Long Island, New York; Herbert Glass, Champaign, Illinois; Miles Kreuger, Los Angeles; and W. R. Moran, La Cañada, California. And to the staff of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, Madison, Wisconsin, for allowing me three days of research and film viewing on their premises.

To my wife Susan, special thanks for sitting through nearly ten hours of Vitaphone shorts, and for managing to notice all of the things I missed.

Additionally, let me acknowledge my debt to the many authors whose works are cited in the bibliography.

The author would greatly appreciate any corrections, additions, or comments in the hope that an addendum can be compiled at some point. He may be contacted directly: William Shaman, 1403 Bixby Avenue, Bemidji, Minnesota 56601.

## THE LISTINGS

Films are listed alphabetically by ARTIST, and within this arrangement, alphabetically by TITLE. Cross references to major artists are supplied for the supporting artists. An alphabetical index to all performers—singers and accompanists—also is provided, as well as a title index to the music performed.

## FILM TITLES

Wherever possible, film titles are given as they appear in the actual films. Otherwise, copyright registration titles are given (generally, barring the often severe abbreviation of copyright titles, or the 'nicknames' assigned there, the major difference between the two is one of punctuation). "[CT]" is used to designate a copyright registration title in the filmography.

## "VITAPHONE VARIETIES" (SERIAL) NUMBERS

Given as available. These were the Warner Brothers-Vitaphone series production numbers. Some were taken from prints of the films, others from contemporary Vitaphone catalogs or "release schedules" (these were published in loose-leaf binders for exhibitors, and were in circulation for many years). Serial numbers appear to have been assigned in blocks, clearly not in chronological order. Early releases were referred to only as "Vitaphone Presentations," but by 1929-30 an informal series title, "Vitaphone Varieties" was adopted, and began appearing on the title cards. An index to these numbers, cross-referenced with the corresponding copyright registration number, copyright date, known premiere date, and filmography number will follow the listing.

### FILM LENGTH

All but two of the films listed are one reel in length, and run approximately eight to 12 minutes: Nos. 21 and 62 are two-reelers, and were assigned two sequential "Vitaphone Varieties" numbers. Actual footage and running times have been omitted, as the only figures available corresponded to 16mm sound-on-film prints, some incomplete.

### COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

See also ABBREVIATIONS below. As with the "Vitaphone Varieties" numbers, a cross-referenced index of copyright registration numbers will follow the listing. Copyright dates have nothing to do with either the date of production or the date of release, but in many cases they are the only means of dating a short, albeit approximately. Many shorts were submitted in large blocks for copyright (regardless of when they were produced, released, or assigned a "Vitaphone Varieties" serial number), making even the month of copyright frequently misleading.

Dates have been observed on prints of several of the films, but it is not clear whether these are dates of production (filming/recording) or release. Possibly they are "processing" dates of one kind or another (film laboratory dates, etc.). These in turn may or may not correspond to the dates observed on the original soundtrack discs which, too, might be "wax" shipping dates rather than recording dates. All such information, as available, will be discussed in the endnotes. Note that Victor did not actually record the Vitaphone soundtracks, they only pressed them. According to W. R. Moran, the Victor books contain much film material (especially sound-on-film to sound-on-disc dubbings), but no pressing information for the Vitaphone shorts.

### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Production credits for the operatic shorts are very sparse indeed: only three of the listed films carry even directorial credit (nos. 4, 61, and 62). More than one source has claimed that conductor Herman Heller was responsible for the actual direction of the shorts prior to Bryan Foy's more or less permanent assumption of this task in late 1927. Heller's many technical innovations in the area of sound effects and sound dubbing lend some weight to his possible involvement off the podium and behind the camera. However, Heller is only credited as director on no. 4 in the listing, and his name actually appears as such in the Catalog of Copyright Entries.

### PREMIERE DATES

These have been taken from a variety of sources: reviews, contemporary Vitaphone catalogs, and some secondary sources (Geduld, for example). All have been researched thoroughly, but many have not been confirmed with absolute certainty. The premieres of feature films were generally reviewed with mention of the accompanying shorts, but more often, shorts were merely added to a bill during the run of features already reviewed. Such substitutions were rarely noted in the press. When more than one Warner Brothers feature was playing at a major New York City theater (Warners', the Colony, the Selwyn, etc.) we can only speculate as to where a short began its initial run, though much incidental information is available to better substantiate such speculation.

Many premiere dates have been taken from contemporary Vitaphone catalogs, where they appear as handwritten additions. Press notices were used to verify many of these, but in the absence of reviews, some were impossible to document.

*Variety* began reviewing the Vitaphone shorts in March 1927, but selectively; *Photoplay's* "Short Subjects of the Month" column was only inaugurated in June

1930, so that a majority of the operatic shorts received no mention there. These publications tended to contain the most detailed information available on the shorts (content and release date above all); without them, one can only rely on whatever brief descriptions were given in major newspapers.

Accordingly, premiere dates marked with a plus (+) are taken directly from Vitaphone catalogs or from reliable secondary sources, but have not been verified by contemporary press citations or reviews.

## CASTS

Performers are given in the listing based upon screening of the films, contemporary reviews, Vitaphone catalogs, and the *aap* catalog cited in the Bibliography—regardless of claims made in the film or copyright registration titles, both of which were frequently incorrect or incomplete. A plus (+) preceding the cast designates that this information has not been verified by a screening.

## ACCOMPANIMENT

Taken from film and copyright registration titles, contemporary Vitaphone catalogs, and from the *aap* catalog. These have been modified only when a viewing of the actual film reveals an error in these sources, as is often the case. In addition to the preceding plus (+), which means that the accompaniment has not been verified by a screening of the film or by a soundtrack dubbing, the designation “accompaniment unknown” will be used. When only the accompanist (not accompaniment) is unknown, and this is usually an anonymous pianist, “pf unknown” will be used.

The “Vitaphone Symphony” and the “Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra” are frequently credited in the film and copyright registration titles, in contemporary Vitaphone catalogs, and in the *aap* catalog. Invariably Herman Heller is also cited as the conductor. As Vitaphone’s “Musical Director,” we can assume that he was on the podium for most if not all of the operatic shorts. The “Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra” under Heller’s direction was also featured in a few of the orchestral shorts, sharing this responsibility with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under Henry Hadley.

## WORKS PERFORMED

These have been researched from viewing the films and from the various soundtrack dubbings (when these are known to be complete). The plus (+) again designates that the exact portion of the work(s) performed has not been so verified.

## LANGUAGE OF PERFORMANCE

Given when the soundtrack has actually been heard. A language given with a question mark (i.e. “in English?”) designates a guess. See also the ABBREVIATIONS, below.

## REVIEWS

Given as available. Only the *New York Times* review of the first Vitaphone show of 6 August 1926 has been given for nos. 7, 38, and 51: others can be found in virtually every New York newspaper and trade magazine active at the time, owing to the initial impact of the “Don Juan” premiere. Reviews for subsequent shorts have been cited as comprehensively as possible, but only when they are of substantial length.

### ABBREVIATIONS

- \* Item discussed in the NOTES following the filmography
- + Information derived from a reliable secondary source or catalog, but not otherwise verified
- [CT] Copyright (film) title
- LP Library of Congress Copyright Registration Number: published motion-picture photoplay
- MP Library of Congress Copyright Registration Number: published motion-pictures other than photoplays
- c Date of Library of Congress copyright registration
- pf pianoforte accompaniment
- (E) English (language)
- (F) French (language)
- (G) German (language)
- (H) Hebrew (language)
- (I) Italian (language)
- (S) Spanish (language)

### [IN SOURCES LISTING]:

- (S) Sound (only)
- (P) Picture (only)
- (S+P) Sound and picture (both)
- LP Long playing microgroove DUBBINGS.

### SOURCES

- PvtC** A large **PRIVATE COLLECTION** of operatic Vitaphone shorts, 16mm, sound-on-film. These prints were made at Warner Brothers studios in the mid-1950s for Edward J. Smith. With the possible exception of those on the Scala, Eterna, and Pearl labels, all of the LPs listed in the MICRO-GROOVE DISCOGRAPHY were transferred from the optical soundtracks of these copies. None are available for public use; no published catalog.
- AFI-LC** **THE AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE COLLECTION AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**, Washington, D.C.: Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. The largest collection of Vitaphone shorts in the U.S., 35mm nitrate prints, many with corresponding sound-on-film safety reference copies for public use. Some of the original nitrates are without soundtrack discs. The collection was part of a large package of Warner Brothers productions donated by United Artists, the copyright holders of the Vitaphone shorts at that time. Available for public use upon request; published catalog (see Bibliography).
- WCFTR** **WISCONSIN CENTER FOR FILM AND THEATER RESEARCH**, Madison, Wisconsin. 16mm, sound-on-film. Donated to the Center by United Artists. Available for public use by appointment; unpublished catalog (see Bibliography). The number following the sigla (preceded by a letter[s] prefix) is the WCFTR catalog number.
- BFI** **BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE**, London. Miscellaneous Vitaphone shorts, sound-on-film, gauge unknown. Available for public use; unpublished catalog (card catalog only).

**VIDEO** To date, only one Vitaphone short has been issued satisfactorily on a commercial videotape (item no. 12). As advertised (in *The Record Collector, London*), it is available only in the British PAL standard (VHS format). All other known commercial videocassette copies should be avoided, their quality is so poor, and have accordingly been omitted from the listings.

The recent exhibition assembled by New York's Museum of Modern Art entitled "American MovieMakers: The Dawn of Sound" is omitted as a "source" of the films because, to date, these restorations have not become either commercially or "institutionally" available for private use. Along with several of the earliest Vitaphone features, 10 of the operatic shorts (items 2, 7, 10, 12, 14, 28, 30, 37, 38, and 51) were included. The exhibition was a joint venture of the Museum of Modern Art, AT&T, the Turner Entertainment Company (which furnished many of the prints and is the current copyright holder of the Vitaphone shorts), as well as a number of the libraries and archives responsible for much of the restoration work. The original exhibit was mounted at the Museum of Modern Art between 19 October and 6 December 1989 but it has since been taken on tour throughout the country.

Moreover, Turner Broadcasting has begun showing some of the Vitaphone shorts on its "TNT" cable network, which will undoubtedly prompt a healthy "underground" circulation of the shorts, and possibly (preferably!) a commercial video issue of them.

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**FILMOGRAPHY**

**[ALDA, FRANCES]**

- \*1. *Madame Frances Alda Singing The Star Spangled Banner, Accompanied by the Vitaphone Symphony, Herman Heller, Conducting.* [CT]  
Vitaphone Varieties 451. One reel. MP 3936. c 9 April 1927. +Premiere: New York City, 2 July 1927. +Frances Alda, soprano; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra, and chorus(?) / Heller: "The Star Spangled Bannner" (F. S. Key) (E)  
SOURCES: AFI-LC(?) (S+P) [given as "*Madame Frances Alda*"].

**[ALDA, FRANCES]**

- \*2. *Mme. Alda Singing "Ave Maria" by Verdi.*  
Vitaphone Varieties 943. One reel. MP 1188. c 17 February 1930. Premiere: unknown. Frances Alda, soprano; Frank La Forge, pf; Dr. Clarence Dickinson, organ; with bells: *Otello*: Ave Maria piena di grazia (Verdi) (I)  
SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 023 (S+P); BFI (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 11.

**[ALDA, FRANCES]**

- \*3. *Mme Frances Alda Singing The Last Rose of Summer and Birth of Morn.* [CT]  
Vitaphone Varieties 805. One reel. MP 588. c 30 August 1929. Premiere: unknown. +Frances Alda, soprano; pf unknown:  
a) *Martha*: The Last Rose of Summer (Moore-von Flotow) (E)  
b) "Birth of Morn" (Paul Lawrence Dunbar-Franco Leone) (E)  
SOURCES: AFI-LC(?) (S+P) [given as "*Madame Frances Alda*"]; LP: 11.

**[AMATO, PASQUALE]**

- \*4. *Pasquale Amato in A Neapolitan Romance.* [CT]  
Vitaphone Varieties 2254. One reel. MP 4708. c 4 February 1928. (Film) Director: Herman Heller. +Premiere: New York City, 26 March 1928. +Pasquale Amato, baritone; Lillian Mines, pf:  
a) "Torna a Surriento" (G. Paghara-De Curtis) (Neapolitan)  
b) *Carmen*: Con voi ber ("Canzone del Toreador") (Bizet) (I)  
SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); PvtC (P only).

**[BARCLAY, JOHN]**

- \*5. *John Barclay Offering His Famous Character Interpretations, Mephisto's Calf of Gold [and others].* [CT]  
Vitaphone Varieties 437. One reel. MP 3926. c 4 April 1927. Premiere: Colony Theater, New York City, 23 March 1927. +John Barclay, baritone; accompaniment unknown:  
a) *Faust*: The Calf of Gold ("Le veau d'or") (Gounod) (in English?)  
b) "Pale Moon" (Indian Love Song) (Jesse G. Glick-Frederick Logan) (E)  
c) "Danny Deever" (R. Kipling-Walter Damrosch) (E)  
SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).  
REVIEW: *Variety*, 86/10 (23 March 1927), p. 15.

[BARCLAY, JOHN]

- \*6. *John Barclay Offering Impersonations of Famous Characters Singing Prologue from Pagliacci [and others]*. [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 436. One reel. MP 3931. c 4 April 1927. +Premiere: New York City, 12 March 1927. +John Barclay, baritone; accompaniment unknown:

- a) *I Pagliacci*: Prologue, "Si puo?" (Leoncavallo) (in Italian?)
- b) *Faust*: Mephisto's Serenade ("Vous qui faites l'endormie") (Gounod) (in English?)
- c) *Boris Godounov*: excerpt(s) unknown (Moussorgsky) [Chaliapin imitation!]  
(in Russian?)
- d) *Carmen*: Toreador Song (Bizet) (in English?)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).

[BAROMEIO, CHASE] (see HACKETT, CHARLES, no. 21)

[BENSON, (Cecile) YVONNE] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 26)

[BOURSKAYA, INA] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 28)

[CANSINOS, THE (FLYING)] (see CASE, ANNA, no. 7)

[CARNEVALI, VITO] (see GIGLI, BENIAMINO, no. 13)

[CASE, ANNA]

- \*7. *Anna Case in La Fiesta, Supported by the "Cansinos," The Metropolitan Opera Chorus, and The Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra, Herman Heller Conducting*  
*Vitaphone Varieties* 294. One reel. MP 3917. c 4 April 1927. Premiere: Warners' Theater, New York City, 6 August 1926. +Anna Case, soprano; the (Flying) Cansinos, Spanish Dancers; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera House Chorus/Heller:

- a) [The Flying Cansinos and Metropolitan Opera House Chorus]: "Cachaca" (sic) ["Cracovienne" or "Cachucha"] (trad.-Polish)
- b) "Anhelito" (Mendoza-Axt-Bowes/arr. ?) (S)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); Excerpt: *Okay for Sound*, no. 63.

REVIEWS: *New York Times* (7 August 1926), p. 6:1.

[CASE, ANNA]

- \*8. *Anna Case in Swanee River, Supported by Roy Smeck [and] Dixie Jubilee Singers; Five Gallons of Gas and No Money to Pay for It*. [CT]

*Vitaphone Varieties* (no. ?). One reel. MP 3916. c 4 April 1927. Premiere: unknown. +Anna Case, soprano; the Dixie Jubilee Singers; Roy Smeck, guitar; other accompaniment(?) unknown:

- a) "The Old Folks at Home" (Stephen Foster) (E)
- b) "Five Gallons of Gas and No Money to Pay for it" (?)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P).

[CICCOLINI, GUIDO]

- \*9. *Guido Ciccolini and Eric Zardo*. [CT]

*Vitaphone Varieties* (no. ?). One reel. MP 708. c 28 September 1929. Premiere: unknown. +Guido Ciccolini, tenor; Eric Zardo, pf: selection(s) unknown.

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).

[COMPTON, JOYCE] (see HACKETT, CHARLES, no. 19)

[D'ANGELO, LOUIS] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, nos. 26 and 35)

### [DE LUCA, GIUSEPPE]

\*10. *Giuseppe De Luca, of the Metropolitan Opera Company, as Figaro, Singing "Largo al Factotum" from "The Barber of Seville."*

Vitaphone Varieties 488. One reel. MP 3979. c 6 May 1927. +Premiere: Colony Theater(?), New York City, 14 May 1927. Giuseppe De Luca, baritone; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*: Largo al factotum (Rossini) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P: nitrate & safety); WCFTR AA 828 (S+P);

BFI (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 11, 13.

[DE LUCA, GIUSEPPE] (see also GIGLI, BENIAMINO, no. 11;

TALLEY, MARION, no. 53)

[DICKERSON, DR. CLARENCE] (see ALDA, FRANCIS, no. 2)

[DIDUR, ADAMO] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 31)

[DISKAY, JOSEPH] (see no. 59)

[DIXIE JUBILEE SINGERS] (see CASE, ANNA, no. 8)

[EGENER, MINNIE] (see GIGLI, BENIAMINO, no. 12)

[FOWLER & TAMARA] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 29)

### [GIGLI, BENIAMINO]

\*11. *Beniamino Gigli and Giuseppe De Luca in Duet from Act 1 of "The Pearl Fishers" (Pescatori di Perle)... Bizet.*

Vitaphone Varieties 518. One reel. MP 4826. c 15 March 1928. Premiere: Warners' Theater, New York City, 14 March 1928. Beniamino Gigli, tenor; Giuseppe De Luca, baritone; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *I Pescatori di Perle*: Sei tu che dinnanzi mi sta . . . Del tempio al limitar ("Au fond du Temple") (Bizet) (I)

SOURCES: BFI (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 7, 12.

REVIEWS: *New York Times* (15 March 1928), p. 28:3;

*Variety* (21 March 1928), p. 44.

### [GIGLI, BENIAMINO]

\*12. *Beniamino Gigli in Cavalleria Rusticana Supported by Millo Picco, Minnie Egener, and Chorus of Metropolitan Opera Co. Accompanied by Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra, Herman Heller Conducting.*

Vitaphone Varieties 414. One reel. MP 3915. c 4 April 1927. Premiere: Colony Theater, New York City, 5 April 1927. Beniamino Gigli, tenor; Millo Picco, baritone; Minnie Egener, contralto; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Cavalleria Rusticana*: Intanto, amici, qua . . . Viva il vino spumeggiante. . . A voi tutti salute . . . Addio alla madre (Mascagni) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AA 652 (S+P); PvtC (S+P);

LP: 8, 14; VIDEO.

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 86/12 (6 April 1927), p. 26;

*New York Times* (6 April 1927), p. 25:1.

[GIGLI, BENIAMINO]

- \*13. *Beniamino Gigli of the Metropolitan Opera Company in "A Program of Concert Favorites" a: "Bergère Légère" b: "Mirame Asi" c: "Come, Love, With Me" d: "O Sole Mio."* (sic)

Vitaphone Varieties 498. One reel. MP 3978. c 6 May 1927. +Premiere: Colony Theater, New York City, late June 1927 Beniamino Gigli, tenor; Vito Carnevali, pf:

- a) "Mirame asi" (trad.?) (I)
- b) "Bergère Légère" (Weckerlin) (F)
- c) "Come, Love, With Me" (I.C. Falbo-Vito Carnevali) (E)
- d) "O sole mio" (G. Capurro-E. di Capua) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AA 653 (S+P); BFI (S+P);  
PvtC (S+P); LP: 8, 14.

[GIGLI, BENIAMINO]

- \*14. *Beniamino Gigli, Tenor of the Metropolitan Opera Company Singing Selections from Act II of the Opera La Gioconda.*

Vitaphone Varieties 517. One reel. MP 4118. c 29 June 1927. +Premiere: Warners' Theater, New York City, 21 June 1927. Beniamino Gigli, tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *La Gioconda*: Sia gloria ai canti dei naviganti! . . . a un cenno mio . . . Ed or scendete a riposarvi . . . Cielo e mar! (Ponchielli) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC: (S+P: nitrate & safety); WCFTR AA 654 (S+P);  
PvtC (S+P); LP: 5, 12 (recitative only), 17, 18, 19 (aria only).

[GIGLI, BENIAMINO] (see also TALLEY, MARION, nos. 52 and 53)

[GORDON, JEANNE] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 24; TALLEY, MARION, no. 53; and LEWIS, MARY, 64)

[HACKETT, CHARLES]

- \*15. *Charles Hackett and Rosa Low / Roméo et Juliette Tomb Scene.*

Vitaphone Varieties 1143. One reel. MP ?. c ?. Premiere: unknown. Charles Hackett, tenor; Rosa Low, soprano; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Roméo et Juliette*: C'est là! Salut! tombeau! . . . to end of the opera (Gounod) (F).

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AA 701 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 11.

[HACKETT, CHARLES]

- \*16. *Charles Hackett a: The Call of the Nile b: Chanson Indoue (Song of India).*

Vitaphone Varieties 552. One reel. MP 4158. c 11 July 1927. +Premiere: ?Warners' Theater, New York City, 11 July 1927. Charles Hackett, tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller:

- a) "The Call of the Nile" (Charles Wakefield Cadman) (E)
- b) *Sadko*, Tableau IV: "Chanson Indoue" (Rimsky-Korsakov) (E)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AA 702 (S+P).

**[HACKETT, CHARLES]**

**\*17. *Charles Hackett Leading Tenor of the Chicago Civic Opera Co.***

Vitaphone Varieties 890. One reel. MP 747. c 14 October 1929. Premiere: unknown. Charles Hackett, tenor; pf unknown:

a) "Thank God for a Garden" (Teresa Del Riego) (E)

b) "I Heard You Singing" (Eric Coates) (E)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AA 700 (S+P); PvtC (S+P).

**[HACKETT, CHARLES]**

**\*18. *Charles Hackett of the Chicago Opera Co. Sings Questa o Quella and La Donna e Mobile from Rigoletto.* (sic) [CT]**

Vitaphone Varieties 392. One reel. MP 3824. c 12 March 1927. Premiere: Selwyn Theater, New York City, 3 February 1927. +Charles Hackett, tenor; "dancing chorus;" the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller:

a) *Rigoletto*: Questa o quella (Verdi) (I)

b) *Rigoletto*: La Donna è mobile (Verdi) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P).

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 86/11 (30 March 1927), p. 24;

*New York Times* (4 February 1927), p. 16:6.

**[HACKETT, CHARLES]**

**\*19. *Charles Hackett Offers A. Who is Sylvia [and] B. A Serenade by Franz Schubert.* [CT]**

Vitaphone Varieties 2379. One reel. MP 5140. c 1 July 1928. +Premiere: New York City, 28 May 1928. +Charles Hackett, tenor; Joyce Compton, ?soprano; accompaniment unknown:

a) "Who is Sylvia?" (Shakespeare-Schubert) (E)

b) "Serenade" (*Schwanengesang*, D. 957, no. 4: "Leise fliehen meine Lieder") (Rellstab-Schubert) (in English?)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P).

**[HACKETT, CHARLES]**

**20. *Charles Hackett Singing "Il Mio Tesoro Intanto" [and] "O Paradiso."***

Vitaphone Varieties 916. One reel. MP 881. c 25 November 1929. Premiere: unknown. Charles Hackett, tenor; pf unknown:

a) *Don Giovanni*, K. 527: Il mio tesoro intanto (Mozart) (I)

b) *L'Africana*: Mi batti il cor . . . O Paradiso (ô Paradis) (Meyerbeer) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AA 705 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 11.

**[HACKETT, CHARLES]**

**21. *Charles Hackett Tenor of the Chicago Opera in "Faust" Assisted by Chase Baromeo.***

Vitaphone Varieties 899 and 900. Two reels. MP 942. c 9 December 1929. Premiere: unknown. Charles Hackett, tenor; Chase Baromeo, bass; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Faust*, Act I/i (complete): Rien! En vain j'interroge . . . to end of the scene (Gounod) (F)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AA 703 & AA 704 (S+P); PvtC (S+P).

[HAMPTON, HOPE]

\*22. *Hope Hampton in the Fourth Act of Manon*. [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 740. One reel. MP 245. c 27 May 1929. Premiere: Winter-garden Theater, New York City, 13 March 1929. +Hope Hampton, soprano; Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra and (unnamed chorus)/Heller: *Manon*, Act IV: excerpt(s) unknown (Massenet) (in French?)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).

[KOUNS SISTERS: NELLIE AND SARA] (see Appendix, no. 60)

[LA FORGE, FRANK] (see ALDA, FRANCIS, no. 2)

[LEWIS, MARY]

\*23. *Mary Lewis in Way Down South*. [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 383. One reel. MP 3822. c 12 March 1927. Premiere: Selwyn Theater, New York City, 3 February 1927. +Mary Lewis, soprano; male chorus; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra and male chorus/Heller, conductor:

- a) [Male Chorus]: "Swing Along Su" (sic) (?)
- b) "Dixie Land" (Dan Emmett) (E)
- c) "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny" (James A. Bland) (E)

SOURCES: None known.

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 86/11 (30 March 1927), p. 24;

*Variety*, 87/2 (27 April 1927), p. 26.

[LEWIS, MARY] (see also no. 64)

[LOW, ROSA] (see HACKETT, CHARLES, no. 15)

[MARRACCI, LIVIA] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, nos. 30 and 34)

[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI] Giovanni Martinelli (sic) (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 33)

[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]

\*24. *Giovanni Martinelli, Assisted by Jeanne Gordon in Selections from Carmen*. [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 474. One reel. MP 3949. c 18 April 1927. Premiere: Colony Theater, New York City, 12 April 1927. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Jeanne Gordon, contralto; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Carmen*, Act II: excerpts (Bizet) (F)

- a) Gordon: Les tringles des sistres (first 30 measures and last 28)
- b) Martinelli: Halte-là . . . Dragons d'Alcala! (beginning at measure 38 of no. 16)
- c) Gordon and Martinelli: Enfin c'est toi
- d) Gordon and Martinelli: Je vais danser . . . Je le veux Carmen . . . La fleur que tu m'avais jetée (complete)

SOURCES: PvtC (S only); LP: 1 ("La fleur" only); 2 (do.); 3 (complete); 4 (do.); 9 (do.); 16 ("La fleur" only).

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 86/13 (13 April 1927), p. 25;

*New York Times* (13 April 1927), p. 29:4.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*25. *Giovanni Martinelli in "Gypsy Caravan"* (a.k.a. *Martinelli No. 2.* [?])  
 Vitaphone Varieties 1245. One reel. MP 2312(?). c 5 February 1931(?). Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Willis Stiles, "daneuse;" Max Pollikoff, vln.; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller:  
 a) "Cammina Morelo" (Italian folk song) (I)  
 b) "Oche chornye" (Russian folk song) (R)  
 c) [Dancers with orchestra]: *The Nutcracker Suite*, Op. 71a: Trepak (Tschaikovsky)  
 d) [Max Pollikoff, violin solo]: work unidentified  
 e) "Ssak egy kislany" (Hungarian folksong) (Hungarian)  
 f) "The Only Girl" ("Ssak egy kislany") (Hungarian folk song) (E)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 036 (S+P); PvtC (S+P);  
 LP: 2 (a, b, and e only), 21 (a, b, and e only).

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*26. *Giovanni Martinelli in "The Prison Scene" from Gounod's "Faust" Assisted by Yvonne Benson and Louis D'Angelo.* (sic)  
 Vitaphone Varieties 974. One reel. MP 1457. c 30 April 1930. +Premiere: New York City, June 1930. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Yvonne (Cecile) Benson, soprano; Louis D'Angelo, bass; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Faust*: Vaten! . . . Trio, "Alerte! Alerte!" (Gounod) (F)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 037 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 2, 20.  
 REVIEWS: *Photoplay*, 38/1 (June 1930), p. 120.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*27. *Giovanni Martinelli in "The Ship's Concert."* [Martinelli No. 1.] [CT]  
 Vitaphone Varieties 1162. One reel. MP 2230. c 5 January 1931. Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; pf unknown:  
 a) "The Song of Songs" (M. Vaucaire-C. Lucas-Moya) (E)  
 b) "Homing" (Arthur L. Salmon-Teresa Del Riego) (E)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 033 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 2, 21.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*28. *Giovanni Martinelli in the Temple Scene from "Aida" with Ina Bourskaya.*  
 Vitaphone Varieties 1024. One reel. MP (?). c 1930. Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Ina Bourskaya, soprano; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Aida*: L'abborrita rivale a me sfuggia . . . Già i sacerdoti (Verdi) (I)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 038 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 1, 2.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*29. *Giovanni Martinelli in "The Troubador."* [CT] (a.k.a. *Martinelli No. 2.* [?])  
 Vitaphone Varieties (no. ?). One reel. MP 2312(?). c 5 February 1931(?). Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Fowler & Tamara, dancers; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller:  
 a) "Estrellita" (Manuel M. Ponce) (S)  
 b) [Fowler & Tamara]: "O, Ya-Ya" (dancers with orchestra)  
 c) "Pavo real" (Ernesto Lecuona?/Mexican folk song - arr. Landizuri?) (S)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 2, 21 (a and c only).

[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]

\*30. *Giovanni Martinelli Singing Arias from Verdi's "Il Trovatore," Assisted by Livia Marracci - "Ah, si ben mio" and "Di quella pira" from Act III Scene II of "Il Trovatore" by Giuseppe Verdi.*

Vitaphone Varieties 944. One reel. MP 1078. c 18 January 1930. Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Livia Marracci, soprano; unnamed tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Il Trovatore*: Ah sì, ben mio . . . Di quella pira (Verdi) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 031 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 2

[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]

\*31. *Giovanni Martinelli Singing Celeste Aïda by Giuseppe Verdi/Chorus and Music by Members of The Metropolitan Opera Co.*

Vitaphone Varieties 953. One reel. MP 1503. c 15 May 1930. +Premiere: New York City, July 1930. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Adamo Didur, bass; unnamed soprano (voice only); with the Metropolitan Opera House Chorus, and (?Vitaphone Symphony) Orchestra/Heller: *Aïda*: Sì, corre voci . . . Celeste Aïda (Verdi) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 035 (S+P); PvtC (S+P);  
LP: 2 (w/o "Celeste Aïda").

REVIEWS: *Photoplay*, 38/2 (July 1930), p. 129.

[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]

\*32. *Giovanni Martinelli Singing "Come Back to Sorrento" [and] "Nina." (a.k.a. Martinelli No. 2 [?])*

Vitaphone Varieties 1213. One reel. MP 2312(?). c 5 February 1931(?). Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; the Albertieri Dancers; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller:

a) "Torna a Surriento" (G. Paghara-De Curtis) (I)

b) [Albertieri Dancers]: *Le Soirées Musicales*: "La Danza" (Tarantella Napoletana) (Rossini) (dancers and orchestra)

c) "Nina" (Enrico de Leva-Fernando Tanara) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 032 (S+P); PvtC (S+P);  
LP: 10 (w/o "La Danza").

[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]

\*33. *Giovanni Martinelli singing [a] "Love's Garden of Roses" [b] "Because." (a.k.a. Giovanni Martinelli[?])*

Vitaphone Varieties 1174. One reel. MP 1605(?). c 8 June 1930. +Premiere: New York City, March 1931. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; pf unknown:

a) "Love's Garden of Roses" (Haydn Wood-Ruth Rutherford) (E)

b) "Because" (Edward Teschemacher-Guy d'Hardelot) (E)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 034 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 2, 21.

REVIEWS: *Photoplay*, 39/4 (March 1931), p. 104.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*34. *Giovanni Martinelli Singing M'Appari from Martha by Von Flotow Assisted by Livia Marracci.*

Vitaphone Varieties 932. One reel. MP 971. c 21 December 1929. Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Livia Marracci, soprano; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Martha*, excerpts (von Flotow) (I)

a) Act III: Sul cespite tremante . . . M'appari (Martinelli)

b) Act II: Questo fior . . . Qui sola vergin rosa . . . Su questo care amante (Martinelli and Marracci)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 030 (S+P); PvtC (S+P: incomplete); LP: 9, 20 ("Questo fior" only).

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*35. *Giovanni Martinelli, tenor, Assisted by Louis D'Angelo, bass, of the Metropolitan Opera Company in a Duet from Act IV of the Opera "La Juive."*

Vitaphone Varieties 509. One reel. MP 4108. c 29 June 1927. +Premiere: New York, 12 June 1927. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; Louis D'Angelo, bass; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *La Juive*: Ta fille en ce moment (Halévy) (F)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 039 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 1, 2, 6, 22.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*36. *Giovanni Martinelli, Tenor of the Metropolitan Opera Company, Singing "Va Prononcer la Mort" from Act IV of the Opera, "La Juive"*

Vitaphone Varieties 510. One reel. MP 4107. c 29 June 1927. +Premiere: Warners' Theater, New York, 8 October 1927. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *La Juive*: J'ai fait peser sur toi mon éternelle haine . . . Rachel! quand du siegneur" (Halévy) (F)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 1, 2, 4, 6, 16 ("Rachel" only), 22.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*37. *Giovanni Martinelli, tenor of the N.Y. Metropolitan Opera Company, in Celeste Aida, from the Opera Aida by Verdi.*

Vitaphone Varieties 204. One reel. MP 3975. c 30 April 1927. Premiere: unknown. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Aida*: Se quell guerrier . . . Celeste Aida" (Verdi) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AC 194 (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 2.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]**

- \*38. *Giovanni Martinelli, Tenor of The N.Y. Metropolitan Opera Company in "Vesti la Giubba" from the Opera "I Pagliacci" by Leoncavallo*

Vitaphone Varieties 198. One reel. MP 3836. c 12 March 1927. Premiere: Warners' Theater, New York City, 6 August 1926. Giovanni Martinelli, tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra Heller: *I Pagliacci*: Recitar . . . Vesti la giubba (Leoncavallo) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); PvtC (S+P);

Excerpt: *Okay for Sound*, no. 63; LP: 10.

REVIEWS: *New York Times* (7 August 1926), p. 6:1.

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]** Martinelli No. 1 (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 27)

**[MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI]** Martinelli No. 2 (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, nos. 25, 29, and 32)

**[PAINTER, ELEANOR]**

39. *Eleanor Painter, The Lyric Soprano*. [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 746. One reel. MP 69. c 10 April 1929. Premiere: unknown.  
+Eleanor Painter, soprano; accompaniment unknown:

- a) *The Princess Pat*: "Love is Best of All" (Henry Blossom-Victor Herbert) (E)
- b) *Carmen*: Habanera, "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" (Bizet) (in French?)
- c) "How About Me?" (Irving Berlin) (E)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).

**[PICCO, MILLO]** (see GIGLI, BENIAMINO, no. 12)

**[POLLIKOFF, MAX]** (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 25)

**[PRIOR, ALLAN]** (see no. 61)

**[RAISA, ROSA]**

\*40. *Mme. Rosa Raisa Offers A Good-Bye by F. Paolo Tosti, B. Eili-Eili! by Kurt Schindler*. (sic) [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 2545. One reel. MP 5022. c 19 May 1928. +Premiere: New York City, 13 June 1928. +Rosa Raisa, soprano; pf unknown:

- a) "Good-bye" (G. T. Whyte-Melville - F. Polo Tosti) (E)
- b) "Eili-Eili!" (Kurt Schindler [sic]) (H)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).

**[RAISA, ROSA]**

41. *Mme. Rosa Raisa Offers "Plaisir d'Amour" (Joys of Love) - Padre G. Martini / "La Paloma" - S. Yradier*

Vitaphone Varieties 2546. One reel. MP 5052. c 2 June 1928. +Premiere: New York City, 8 July 1928. Rosa Raisa, soprano; pf unknown:

- a) "Plaisir d'amour" (Padré G. Martini) (F)
- b) "La Paloma" (Sebastian Yradier) (S)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only: nitrate & safety); PvtC (S+P); LP: 11.

**[RAISA, ROSA]**

\*42. *Rosa Raisa, Soprano, and Giacomo Rimini, Baritone, of the Chicago Opera Company in Selection from Act IV of "Il Trovatore"*

Vitaphone Varieties 524. One reel. MP 4120. c 29 June 1927. +Premiere: New York City, 6 June 1927. Rosa Raisa, soprano; Giacomo Rimini, baritone; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Il Trovatore*: Udiste? Comme albeggi . . . Mira, di acerbe lagrime . . . Vivrà! Contende il giubilo (Verdi) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P: nitrate & safety); PvtC (S+P); BFI (S+P); LP: 11.

**[RIMINI, GIACOMO]** (see RAISA, ROSA, no. 42)

**[ROSENBLATT, CANTOR JOSEF]**

\*43. *Cantor Josef Rosenblatt*. (a.k.a. *Cantor Rosenblatt No. 1*)

Vitaphone Varieties 558. One reel. MP (?). c (?). +Premiere: New York City, 13 December 1928. +Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, tenor; accompaniment unknown: "Omar Rabbi Elosor" (Rosenblatt?) (H)

SOURCES: AFI-LC: (P only) [as "*Cantor Rosenblatt No. 1*".]

**[ROSENBLATT, CANTOR JOSEF]**

\*44. *Cantor Josef Rosenblatt and Choir*. (a.k.a. *Cantor Rosenblatt No. 2*)

Vitaphone Varieties 2203. One reel. MP (?). c (?). Premiere: unknown. +Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, tenor, with Machtenberg's(?) Male Choir; accompaniment unknown: "Halleluja!" (?)

SOURCES: AFI-LC(?) (S+P) [as "*Cantor Rosenblatt No. 2*".]

**[ROSENBLATT, CANTOR JOSEF]**

\*45. *Cantor Josef Rosenblatt Singing "Eli, Eli."*

Vitaphone Varieties (no.). One reel. MP (?). c (?). Premiere: unknown. +Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, tenor; accompaniment unknown: "Eili, Eili" (Jacob Koppel Sandler-arr. N. Shalitt?) (H); other selection(s) unknown

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only: nitrate & safety).

**[ROSENBLATT, CANTOR JOSEF]**

\*46. *Cantor Josef Rosenblatt Singing "The Last Rose of Summer" and "Yahrzeit."* (sic)

Vitaphone Varieties (no.). One reel. MP (?). c (?). +Premiere: New York City, 28 June 1927(?). +Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, tenor; accompaniment unknown:

a) *Martha*: The Last Rose of Summer (Moore-von Flotow) (E?)

b) "Yohrzeit" (Kadish) (H. B. Silberstein-Rhea Silberta) (H)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only: nitrate & safety).

**[ROSENBLATT, CANTOR JOSEF]**

\*47. *Cantor Josef Rosenblatt Singing "Yiddishe Momme."* (sic)

Vitaphone Varieties (no.). One reel. MP (?). c (?). Premiere: unknown. +Cantor Josef Rosenblatt, tenor; accompaniment unknown: "My Yiddische Momme" (Jack Yellen-Lew Pollack) (E) other selection(s) unknown.

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only: nitrate & safety).

**[ROSENBLATT, CANTOR JOSEF]** Cantor Rosenblatt No. 1 (see ROSENBLATT, JOSEF, no. 43)

**[ROSENBLATT, CANTOR JOSEF]** Cantor Rosenblatt No. 2 (see ROSENBLATT, JOSEF, no. 44)

[SCHUMANN-HEINK, ERNESTINE]

- \*48. *Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heink a) Der Erlkönig (German) b) Trees c) Pirate Dreams / Josefín H. Vollmer—at the Piano*  
 Vitaphone Varieties 568. One reel. MP 4163. c 18 July 1927. +Premiere: Warners' Theater, New York City, 15 August 1927. +Ernestine Schumann-Heink, contralto; Josefín Hartman-Vollmer, pf; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller:  
 a) "Der Erlkönig," Op. 1, D. 328 (Goethe-Schubert) (G)  
 b) "Trees" (Joyce Kilmer-Oscar Rasbach) (E)  
 c) "Pirate Dreams" (Louise A. Garnett-Charles Huerter) (E)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC(?) (S+P) [given as "*Schumann-Heink*"]; BFI (S+P); PvtC (S+P); LP: 11 (w/o "Pirate Dreams").

[SCHUMANN-HEINK, ERNESTINE]

- \*49. *Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Contralto, Singing: By the Waters of the Minnetonka [and others].* [CT]  
 Vitaphone Varieties 380. One reel. MP 3903. c 2 April 1927. Premiere: unknown.  
 +Ernestine Schumann-Heink, contralto; accompaniment unknown:  
 a) "By the Waters of Minnetonka" (J. M. Cavanass-Thurlow Lieurance) (E)  
 b) "Leggero Invisible" (Bolero) (Luigi Arditti) (I)  
 c) "Spinnerliedchen" (H. Reimann) (G)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC(?) (S+P) [given as "*Schumann-Heink*"].

[SCHUMANN-HEINK, ERNESTINE]

- \*50. *Mme. Schumann-Heink, Contralto, Singing: Danny Boy [and others].* [CT]  
 Vitaphone Varieties 379. One reel. MP 3927. c 4 April 1927. +Premiere: Selwyn Theater, New York City, after 5 April 1927. +Ernestine Schumann-Heink, contralto; accompaniment unknown:  
 a) "Danny Boy" (trad.-Frederick E. Weatherly) (E)  
 b) "The Rosary" (Robert C. Rogers-Ethelbert Nevin) (E)  
 c) "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht" (Joseph Mohr-Franz Gruber) (G)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC(?) (S+P) [given as "*Schumann-Heink*"].  
 NOTICE: *Variety*, 86/12 (6 April 1927), p. 26. (NOT A REVIEW)

[SEGAL, VIVIENNE] (see THOMAS, JOHN CHARLES, no. 54)

[SMECK, ROY] (see CASE, ANNA, no. 8)

[STILES, WILLIS] (see MARTINELLI, GIOVANNI, no. 25)

[TALLEY, MARION]

- \*51. *Marion Talley, Youthful Prima Donna of the New York Metropolitan Opera / in "Caro Nome" from the Opera "Rigoletto" / Accompaniment by the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra, Herman Heller Conducting*  
 Vitaphone Varieties 308. One reel. MP 3928. c 4 April 1927. Premiere: Warners' Theater, New York City, 6 August 1926. Marion Talley, soprano; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Rigoletto*: Gualtier Maldè! . . . Caro nome (Verdi) (I)  
 SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only); Excerpt: *Okay for Sound*, no. 63.  
 REVIEWS: *New York Times* (7 August 1926), p. 6:1.

**[TALLEY, MARION]**

- \*52. *Marion Talley, Soprano, and Beniamino Gigli, Tenor, of the Metropolitan Opera Company Singing Verranno a te sull'aura (Borne on the Sighing Breeze) from Act 1 of the Opera Lucia di Lammermoor.* [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 499. One reel. MP 3973. c 30 April 1927. +Premiere: New York City, 28 May 1927. Marion Talley, soprano; Beniamino Gigli, tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR: Lucia perdona . . . Verranno a te sull'aura . . . sulla tomba (Donizetti) (I)

SOURCES: PvtC (S); LP: 7, 14, 15.

**[TALLEY, MARION]**

- \*53. *Quartette from Rigoletto; Marion Talley, Giuseppe De Luca, Beniamino Gigli, and Jeanne Gordon, Singing the Quartette Number from the 3d Act of Verdi's Opera, Rigoletto.* [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 415. One reel. MP 3923. c 4 April 1927. Premiere: Selwyn Theater, New York City, 3 February 1927. Marion Talley, soprano; Jeanne Gordon, contralto; Beniamino Gigli, tenor; Giuseppe De Luca, baritone; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *Rigoletto*: Un dì, se ben rammentomi . . . Bella figlia dell'amore (Verdi) (I)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR AB 221 (S+P); BFI (S+P);  
PvtC (S+P); LP: 7, 14.

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 86/11 (30 March 1927), p. 24;  
*New York Times* (4 February 1927), p. 16:6.

**[THOMAS, JOHN CHARLES]**

- \*54. *John Charles Thomas, Outstanding American Baritone, and Vivienne Segal, Broadway Musical Comedy Star, Singing: Will You Remember, The Sweetheart Song from Maytime.* [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 495. One reel. MP 3965. c 19 April 1927. Premiere: Colony Theater, New York City, 6 May 1927. +John Charles Thomas, baritone; Vivienne Segal, soprano; accompaniment unknown: *Maytime*: Will You Remember (Sweetheart)? (Cyrus Wood-Rita Johnson Young-S. Romberg) (E)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only: nitrate & safety + reference print).

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 87/4 (11 May 1927), p. 25;  
*New York Times* (7 May 1927), p. 15:2.

**[THOMAS, JOHN CHARLES]**

55. *John Charles Thomas, Outstanding American Baritone, Singing A: "Danny Deever" B: "In the Gloaming."*

Vitaphone Varieties 493. One reel. MP 3964. c 19 April 1927. +Premiere: New York City, 23 April 1927. John Charles Thomas, baritone; pf unknown:

a) "Danny Deever," Op. 2, no. 7 (R. Kipling-W. Damrosch) (E)

b) "In the Gloaming" (Annie Fortesque Harrison) (E)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P: nitrate & safety); WCFTR AA 957 (S+P);  
PvtC (S+P); LP: 11 ("Danny Deever" only).

**[THOMAS, JOHN CHARLES]**

\*56. *John Charles Thomas Sings the Prologue to I Pagliacci, Accompanied by the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra.* [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 481. One reel. MP 3956. c 18 April 1927. Premiere: Colony Theater, New York City, 20 April 1927. +John Charles Thomas, baritone; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller: *I Pagliacci*: Prologue, "Sì puo?" (Leoncavallo) (I)

SOURCES: None known.

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 87/1 (20 April 1927), p. 26;  
*New York Times* (21 April 1927), p. 25:1.

**[WERRENRATH, REINALD]**

\*57. *Reinald Werrenrath, Concert Baritone, Sings The Long, Long Trail [and] When You Look at the Heart of a Rose.* (sic) [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 365. One reel. MP 3887. c 2 April 1927. Premiere: Colony Theater, New York City, 7 October 1926. +Reinald Werrenrath, baritone; accompaniment unknown:

a) "The Long, Long Trail" ("There's a Long, Long Trail") (Stoddard King-Zo Elliott) (E)

b) "When You Look in the Heart of a Rose" (Marian Gillespie Florence Methven) (E)

SOURCES: None known.

REVIEWS: *Variety*, 86/10 (23 March 1927), p. 14.

**[WERRENRATH, REINALD]**

\*58. *Reinald Werrenrath, Famous Concert Baritone, Sings On the Road to Mandalay [and] Duna.* [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 361. One reel. MP 3831. c 12 March 1927. +Premiere: New York City, October 1926. +Reinald Werrenrath, baritone; accompaniment unknown:

a) "On the Road to Mandalay" (R. Kipling-Oley Speaks) (E)

b) "Duna" (Marjorie Pickthall-Josephine McGill) (E)

SOURCES: None known.

**[WHITEHILL, CLARENCE]** (see no. 62)

**[ZARDO, ERIC]** (see CICCOLINI, GUIDO, no. 9)

**MISCELLANEOUS VITAPHONE SHORTS OF RELATED INTEREST**

**[DISKAY, JOSEPH]**

\*59. *Joseph Diskay, The Hungarian Tenor.* [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties 2122. One reel. MP 4440. c 3 November 1927. +Premiere: New York City, 7 November 1927. +Joseph Diskay, tenor; accompaniment unknown:

a) "Pale Moon" (Indian Love Song) (Jesse G. Glick-Frederick Logan) (E)

b) "At Dawning" (Nelle R. Eberhart-Charles W. Cadman) (E)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).

**[KOUNS SISTERS: NELLIE AND SARA]**

\*60. *The Kouns Sisters, Nellie and Sara, Soprano Duetists [Offer] A. La Paloma [and] B. Swiss Echo Duet.* (sic) [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties (no. ?). One reel. MP 4130. c 2 July 1927. Premiere: unknown. +Nellie and Sara Kouns, soprano duet; accompaniment unknown:

a) "La Paloma" (Sebastian Yradier) (in Spanish?)

b) "Swiss Echo Duet" (sic) (?) (in English?)

SOURCES: AFI-LC (P only).

**[PRIOR, ALLAN]**

\*61. *Mister Allan Prior, Australian Tenor, Directed by Bryan Foy and Accompanied by the Vitaphone Orchestra, Sings: A. A Dream [and] B. La Donna e mobile.* (sic) [CT]

Vitaphone Varieties (no. ?). One reel. MP 4294. c 13 September 1927. (Film) Director: Bryan Foy. Premiere: unknown. +Allan Prior, tenor; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/Heller:

a) "A Dream" (Charles B. Cory-J. C. Bartlett) (E)

b) *Rigoletto*: La Donna è mobile (Verdi) (in Italian?)

SOURCES: None known.

**[WHITEHILL, CLARENCE]**

\*62. *Washington/The Man and the Capitol.*

Vitaphone Varieties 1313 and 1314. Two reels MP (?). c (?). Produced November-December 1931. (Film) Director: Arthur Hurley. Premiere: late 1931 or early 1932. Cast:

George Washington . . . . . Clarence Whitehill

[other cast members unknown]

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR CA 345 (S+P).

\*63. *Okay for Sound.*

Warner Bros. Pictures-Vitaphone Corporation (featurette). Gordon Hollingshead, Producer. Two reels. LP 643. c 2 October 1946. Premiere: unknown.

SOURCES: AFI-LC (S+P); WCFTR CA 266 (S+P).

**UNFINISHED/UNRELEASED OPERATIC VITAPHONE SHORTS**

**[LEWIS, MARY]**

\*64. [*The Tales of Hoffmann*: Excerpt(s)] (no title assigned)

Vitaphone Varieties: no number assigned. ?One reel. Not submitted for copyright. John T. Adams, Musical Director and Advisor. Filmed: Manhattan Opera House, New York, 18 April 1927. Not completed or released. Mary Lewis, soprano; Jeanne Gordon, contralto; the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra/?Heller: *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*: Belle nuit d'amour ("Barcarolle") (Offenbach) (in French?); other excerpt(s) unknown

SOURCES: None known.

# NOTES TO THE FILMOGRAPHY

**Items no. 1-3:** Only two Alda films are listed in the AFI-Library of Congress catalog, *Madame Francis Alda "Otello"* (obviously no. 2), and *Madame Francis Alda*, which could either be nos. 1 or 3.

**Item no. 2:** Accompaniment credits taken from *aap* catalog. Neither La Forge or Dickinson appear on screen. The original Vitaphone release schedule suggests that this short is "Especially suitable for Easter, Lent, Christmas and New Year's (sic). Mme. Alda's name has tremendous box-office value. Her recent retirement from opera to devote her talents to radio broadcasting has gained her world-wide publicity."

**Item no. 3:** EJS 513 lists "Birth of Morn" as "An Angel Robed," which is the opening phrase of the text. The text is Paul Lawrence Dunbar's "Dawn," from his 1896 collection, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*. Franco Leoni (1864-1949) was a fairly well-known operatic composer. Lucy Isabelle Marsh recorded the song in 1912 (Victor 60073), as did Alda herself (Victor 87116).

Possibly La Forge is the pianist here as well, but this has not been documented.

**Item no. 4:** Note that the PvtC print (the one viewed for the Amato article in *The Record Collector*) is without a soundtrack. Heller's directorial credit is taken from the *Catalog of Copyright Entries*. Contents and accompaniment credit taken from a contemporary Vitaphone catalog.

Amato also appeared as Napoleon Bonaparte in Warner Brothers' "Glorious Betsy," a part-talking feature released 9 June 1928 (New York premiere 26 April) starring Dolores Costello. In a smaller role was André de Segurola, whose singing of "La Marseillaise" received rave notices. Reviews of "Glorious Betsy" suggest that Amato was not featured in any of the sound sequences. Was it the baritone's 1915 Met appearance in Giordano's *Mme. Sans-Gêne* that prompted this casting?

**Items no. 5 and 6:** John Barclay was an exclusive Brunswick recording artist in the early 1920s (seven sides, all songs of a more or less popular nature, are listed in the 1924 company catalog). A transplanted Englishman, Barclay came to America in 1921 to pursue a career as a concert singer. He was evidently quite successful, and appeared in performance with the Philharmonic Orchestra of New York, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and in Canada, with the Mendelssohn Choir of Toronto. During World War I he was a member of a British group, "The Barnstormers," a novelty ensemble that entertained the troops in Europe. References to his having been a member of the English Singers have not been verified: certainly, he was not one of its members during the 1928 recording sessions for Roycroft (the male singers there were Messrs. Kelly, Notley, and Stone). Often billed as "The World's Tallest Baritone," he played the title role in Victor Schertzinger's British filmization of *The Mikado* (Universal, 1939).

His Brunswick recordings are quite good, and reveal a sturdy, well-trained voice.

**Item no. 7:** Original disc dated 10 July 1926. Premiered in the first Vitaphone show, at the Warners' Theater, New York City, 6 August 1926. "Anhele" ("Longing") is a vocal arrangement of a theme prominent in the orchestral score of the accompanying feature, "Don Juan," written by David Mendoza, Dr. William Axt, and Major Edward Bowes.

The Flying Cansinos were Eduardo (1895-1968) and Volga (died 1945) Cansino, parents of Margarita (1918-1987) and Eduardo, Jr. (1920-1947). Margarita would become better known as Rita Hayworth. Elisa Cansino, the sister of Eduardo Sr., was also a member of the team at some point. Only Eduardo and Olga seem to appear in the film.

This short proved very popular, and remained in circulation until at least 1928 in the New York area.

**Item no. 8:** The copyright title of the film suggests that "Five Gallons of Gas and No Money to Pay for It" is the second selection performed, but no information on such a song, or its composer, could be found. Perhaps it was simply a routine built around another song.

Note that the "Dixie Jubilee Singers" may be the "Pace Jubilee Singers," a well-known gospel group who used this pseudonym on several recordings issued on the Gennett and Champion labels in the 1920s. Another group known as the "Dixie Jubilee Singers" recorded for Brunswick in 1924 and 1926, Columbia in 1925 and 1928, Cameo in 1926, and Regal in 1928. All of these were New York recordings. The Columbia personnel consisted of Mrs. Powell, Miss Jessye, Mrs. Brown, Mr. Parker, Mr. Hall, Mr. Patterson, and Mr. Jones, with Eva A. Jessye accompanying on piano. The "Dixie Jubilee Singers" also were featured in King Vidor's "Halleluja" (M-G-M, 1929), and made a recording for Victor of one of the film's songs, Irving Berlin's "Waiting at the End of the Road," accompanying its star, Daniel Haynes (BVE-50884-4R, recorded at the Hal Roach Studio, Culver City, California, on 4 May 1929, issued on Victor 22097). Personnel is given in the Victor books as 2 sopranos, 2 contraltos, baritone, and bass, accompanied by banjo. Take "4R" is marked "on approval." The group performing here with Miss Case is certainly an ensemble of black singers.

An award-winning profile of Roy Smeck released in 1985, "Wizard of the Strings," contains excerpts from more than one of his Vitaphone shorts, and may well include footage from this film.

**Item no. 9:** Pianist Eric Zardo (died 8 January 1956) was playing on the Keith Orpheum Circuit when this film was made. He was the son of an operatic baritone, Napoleon Zardo, and went on to become the assistant conductor of the Amateur Symphony Orchestra of New York.

On 18 April 1927, he was the featured accompanist to Emma Trentini in "A Night in Bohemia" at the Mark Strand Theater in New York City—an entr'acte given at the premiere of a Colleen Moore feature film, "Orchids and Ermine," released by First National.

**Item no. 10:** Titles missing from WCFTR print. Premiere date as given in a contemporary Vitaphone catalog, but no contemporary reviews could be found. This short seems to have premiered during the run of the Warners' feature "The Missing Link," a Sydney Chaplin comedy directed by Charles F. Reisner, at the Colony Theater.

**Item no. 11:** Original disc dated 6 April 1927. Premiered with the Warner Brothers feature, "Tenderloin," directed by Michael Curtiz, and starring Dolores Costello. Like the Gigli-De Luca Victor recording of the duet, this performance ends at "Elle fuit!" (to quote the original French text), nine bars before the Andante ma non troppo.

Gigli sued the Vitaphone Corporation for withholding his contracted salary on this film. The case was eventually settled out of court, the singer receiving "about \$10,000." Apparently Warner Brothers was dissatisfied with the photography, which Gigli's attorneys, Freudenberg and Mattuck of New York City, argued was not the tenor's fault. What role, if any, De Luca might have played in this squabble is unknown. See "Gigli Settles Suit on Film Appearance: Action Grew Out of Refusal of Vitaphone Corporation to Pay Tenor for Work in Pictures," *New York Times* (2 February 1928), p. 17:2.

With the exception of a poor-quality videotape in circulation (taken from a faded, virtually useless 16mm print), the film portion of this short has been claimed lost (see Bandy: *The Dawn of Sound*, p. 46). The UCLA Film Archive is reported, however, to have an original copy of the soundtrack disc.

**Item no. 12:** Begins with the "Brindisi," omitting the choral introduction and the concluding duet with Turiddu and Lola. The Finale is complete, but without Lola. Concludes with the "Addio alla Madre." Egner is Lucia, Picco is Alfio.

This film was substituted for Schumann-Heink's "Danny Boy" short (no. 50) at the last minute, according to the *Variety* review, 86/12 (6 April 1927), p. 26. It accompanied the Warner feature "The Fourth Commandment," with Henry Victor, directed by Emory Johnson. A contemporary Vitaphone catalog gives the premiere date as 3 February 1927 (as it does for no. 50), but the full program given on 3 February (the third Vitaphone program at the Selwyn Theater, New York City, with the feature "When a Man Loves") is

well documented, and reviews establish 5 April as the correct date. *The Dawn of Sound* program says that "The short played on the program with the feature *When a Man Loves* (p. 46)," but does not say whether it was shown at the premiere—contemporary reviews of the premiere make no mention of the short, so possibly it was added to the bill at some later date.

Shown on American television in 1986 over the Public Broadcasting System, and now available on an excellent pirated videotape.

**Item no. 13:** Note that the order of songs in the film title does not correspond to the order in which the items are actually sung.

The accompanist credit (Carnevali) was taken from the *aap* catalog. 26 June 1927 is the premiere date given in a contemporary Vitaphone catalog. No review could be found, but it is likely that this short was added to the program at the Colony Theater sometime after 26 June the last day that "The Missing Link" played there. On 27 June a Roy Del Ruth feature, "The First Auto," with Barney Oldfield, made its debut at the Colony, but Gigli had not yet been added to the bill. A late June or early July premiere is my guess.

**Item no. 14:** Premiered with the Alan Crosland feature, "Old San Francisco," starring Dolores Costello.

**Item no. 15:** This film is not listed in the *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, and like items 28, 43-47, and 62, may not have been submitted for copyright. It is one of the three Vitaphone operatics seen with the notice "Brunswick Radios Used Exclusively" in the titles, suggesting a post-April 1930 release.

Soprano Rosa Low's surname appears as "Low" in both the film and copyright titles, and as "Bow" on the EJS 513 LP. It was in fact "Low" (see Key, p. 189).

Low claimed to be a protégée of Victor Maurel, who apparently advised her not to undertake serious vocal study, fearing that this might ruin the "fine natural quality" of her voice. She sought professional coaching instead, and made her debut at New York's Aeolian Hall in 1924. Thereafter she was a featured member of the Washington and Philadelphia Civic Operas, and the San Carlo Opera Company. I have not been able to establish what these dates were.

**Item no. 16:** The *aap* catalog gives the title of the Cadman song as "Song of the Nile," but both the copyright and film title agree on the proper "Call of the Nile." A Vitaphone catalog gives the title of the film as *Tent and Desert Oasis Scene*. Premiered during the run of "Old San Francisco" at the Warners' Theater. It seems unlikely that the premiere date and copyright date could be the same, so I suspect that the former, taken from the Vitaphone catalog, is incorrect.

**Item no. 17:** Title given as in the original film; the copyright title is "Charles Hackett, Tenor of the Chicago Civic Opera Company." PvtC print bears the subtitle "Presentation."

**Item no. 18:** "Dancing Chorus"[] is sic *aap* catalog.

**Item no. 19:** Joyce Compton (née Eleanor Hunt, 1907) was a well-known Hollywood actress active from the late 1920s to the late 1950s, usually in light comic roles. Her participation here, sic the *aap* catalog, seems a bit unlikely. [This is not the "Eleanor Hunt" (died 1981) who appeared in several Hollywood westerns and second-features circa 1931-1941].

**Item no. 22:** Premiered alongside the feature "Noah's Ark," with Dolores Costello and George O'Brien, directed by Michael Curtiz.

Hope Hampton (1899/1901-1982) was best known as an actress in silent films. Her first film was released in 1921, her last in 1961. She is found in most of the standard film biographical sources, as well as in Key, p. 168. There it is claimed that she was indeed a trained singer (a student of Estelle Liebling), and that her formal operatic debut took place with the Philadelphia Grand Opera Company on 21 December 1928 as Massenet's Manon. Possibly her Vitaphone short of the Fourth Act excerpts was meant to commemorate this apparently successful debut. On 25 September 1930, she made her San Francisco debut as Gounod's Marguerite at the San Francisco Opera (with Jagel, Pinza, and Thomas, Pelletier conducting), to decidedly poor notices.

A number of unissued Hampton Columbia electrics have been reported.

**Item no. 23:** The 27 April 1927 *Variety* review notes that on 24 April (Geduld, p. 164, says 26 April) "Mary Lewis, Metropolitan Opera Soprano . . . sang lightweight ditties of the Confederacy in the Vitaphone unit show at New York's Colony Theater." The song titles are not mentioned. It is assumed that this is a reissue of the same short that premiered at the Selwyn Theater, New York City, 3 February 1927, in the third Vitaphone show, and not a second Lewis short: indeed, except for the unreleased *The Tales of Hoffmann* excerpts (see no. 64), no trace of any additional Lewis Vitaphones has been found.

**Item no. 24:** PvtC print dated 1926. This short premiered with the May McAvoy programmer, "Matinee Ladies," a Warner Brothers release directed by Byron Haskins. A Vitaphone catalog gives the premiere date as 19 April 1927, but the *New York Times* review proves otherwise.

**Item no. 25:** PvtC print dated 1931; the "Gypsy Caravan" title is not copyrighted as such and there is no date given for it in the AFI-Library of Congress catalog. The film *Martinelli No. 2*, copyrighted 5 February 1931 as MP 2312, may be the copyright title of *Giovanni Martinelli in "Gypsy Caravan,"* but see also item nos. 29 and 32, and the corresponding notes.

Additional performer credits (Pollikoff and Stiles) taken from the *aap* catalog which further gives the translation of the Hungarian folk song "Ssak egy kislány" as "The Only Girl." This seems to clear up the attribution problem on the Celebrity LP noted in Collins, pp. 189 and 198. How Victor Herbert's *The Only Girl* ended up in Smith's documentation is anyone's guess . . . but as such, Collins is correct: the performance does not exist!

Pollikoff (1902-1984) went on to specialize in the contemporary violin repertory. He can be heard on Columbia, RCA, and CRI LPs of the 1950s and early 1960s performing the works of Luening, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Sydemann.

**Item no. 26:** PvtC print dated 1926. The *Photoplay* review gives "Martinelli" as the title of the film.

Benson's middle name (Cecile) is taken from the *aap* catalog. No other information on the soprano could be found. Collins gives her surname as "Bourdin" (p. 188); "Bourdon" has also been reported in correspondence (PvtC). "Benson" is sic the film title. According to a contemporary Vitaphone catalog, Benson was a member of the Boston Opera Company at the time, but this has not been confirmed (no mention of her is found in Eaton's study of the Boston company).

Edward J. Smith's various LP issues of this soundtrack identify Virgilio Lazzari as the bass, not D'Angelo, as the latter requested payment if his name was used. To avoid this, Smith reached into his magic bag of attributions and pulled out Lazzari. The same is true for number 35, below.

**Item no. 27:** *Martinelli No. 1* was only a copyright title, and does not appear in the film (it was not his first film!). PvtC print dated 1927.

The original French text of "The Song of Songs—Chanson du coeur brisé," was written by Maurice Vaucaire (1865-1918), and the English translation, sung here, by Clarence Lucas. "Maya" was the pseudonym of the English composer Harold Vicar (?-1922).

**Item no. 28:** PvtC print dated 1926. Like items 15, 43-47, and 62, this film does not appear in the *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, and may not have been submitted for copyright. Bourskaya is listed as "Jeanne Gordon" for some reason on the ASCO and Celebrity LPs. The *Dawn of Sound* program dates this short as 1930. The original Vitaphone release schedule refers to Martinelli as "the ace of grand opera," and to this particular "high-class operatic Vitaphone Varieties" as "ranking with Martinelli's greatest screen appearances."

**Item no. 29:** Another likely candidate, along with nos. 25 and 32, for the copyrighted title, *Martinelli No. 2* (MP 2312 c 5 February 1931). The "Troubador" title was not copyrighted, and the film is dated 1931 in the AFI-Library of Congress catalog. The *aap* catalog gives the additional personnel (Fowler & Tamara) and musical selection ("O, Ya-Ya"). The only other mention of Fowler and Tamara I have found is a recording of "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" from Kern's *Roberta* sung by "Tamara," a Russian vaudevillian and Broadway

performer whose real name was Tamara Drasin, accompanied by Leo Reisman and His Orchestra on Brunswick 6715 (mtx. B-14382-A, recorded in New York on 28 November 1933). Could this be the same "Tamara"?

The *aap* catalog further cites "E. Lecuona" as the composer of "Pavu real," where Collins cites Landizuri as the arranger of this "Mexican folk song." Ernest Lecuona's song, titled "**Pavo** real," was not copyrighted until 1931, which might also imply that the short was not made until 1931. The PvtC print, however, is dated 1927, so I suspect that Collins may be correct, unless the songs are the same and copyright was delayed for some reason.

**Item no. 30:** PvtC print dated 1926. Martinelli sings the "Di quella pira" down a whole-step, in B-flat. The original Vitaphone release schedule alerts potential bookers to the fact that this short is "Another opportunity to book the million-dollar voice and the million-dollar name of Giovanni Martinelli! . . . the greatest living tenor."

**Item no. 31:** PvtC print dated 1926. The *Photoplay* review claims that this is Martinelli's "11th" Vitaphone short." From the film's title (" . . . Chorus and Music by Members of the Metropolitan Opera Co."), it could be the Met Orchestra providing the accompaniment here, but this is doubtful. Note that neither this performance nor the earlier "Celeste Aida" (no. 37) is the one dubbed on ASCO A-116 (the splendid 1929 Edison version is featured there). This, in answer to the note in Collins' Martinelli discography, p. 197.

**Item no. 32:** Still another *Martinelli No. 2* (MP 2312 c 5 February 1931) candidate. The title as given was not copyrighted as such, and the AFI-Library of Congress catalog dates the film as 1932. "Brunswick Radios Used Exclusively" is noted in the titles, so that a release date of 1932 may be correct.

The Albertieri Dancers are cited in the *aap* catalog. PvtC print is missing the titles.

**Item no. 33:** PvtC print titled "Love's Garden," and dated 1927. The AFI-Library of Congress catalog dates this film as 1927. The *Photoplay* review gives the title as "Giovanni Martinelli," the alternate title under which the film may have been copyrighted. Again, as with nos. 15 and 32, "Brunswick Radios Used Exclusively" appears in the titles, suggesting a post-April 1930 release date.

**Item no. 34:** PvtC print missing portions of the picture.

**Item no. 35:** PvtC print dated 1927. See also note on no. 26, regarding the Lazzari credit on all EJS LP releases of this soundtrack. Both items 35 and 36 are listed as with Lazzari and the "Chicago Opera Orchestra conducted by Tullio Serafin" on the label of EJS 221, with the date "March 8, 1927." The bulletin for this November 1961 LP says that the Act IV excerpts were "taken from the Chicago Opera Company." *La Juive* was indeed performed five times in Chicago during the 1926-1927 season (coincidentally, Martinelli himself performed it at Ravinia Park, 25 miles north of Chicago, on 26 July 1927, with Rethberg), but that season's Eléazar was not Martinelli. The Act II excerpts that appear alongside the Vitaphone items on EJS 221 and Voce 40 are from a Rethberg-Martinelli San Francisco Opera broadcast (NBC) of 30 October 1936.

This short was obviously shot during the same session as the "Rachel" (no. 36), as the makeup, costumes, and sets are identical.

**Item no. 36:** In spite of the film title, Martinelli omits the first three phrases (16 measures) of the recitative, which are taken by the orchestra. See also the note for no. 35 regarding the EJS 221 and Voce 40 LP dubbings and the shooting session.

The closing shot of the film is among the most remarkable found in any of the operatic shorts: Eléazar collapses in his chair as the scene fades out; he is still in position as the picture fades back in, and there follows a dissolve wherein the character is "transformed" back into Martinelli (in street clothes), still seated. The singer rises and bows to his audience with a wide, delightful grin!

Premiered during the first run of "The Jazz Singer" at the Warners' Theater, New York City. The short reappeared at least once, at the premiere of an obscure Lloyd Bacon feature, "The Lion and the Mouse," with May McAvoy and Lionel Barrymore, released by Warners.

**Item no. 37:** WCFTR print dated 6 August 1926, but this short did not premiere on this date (the first Vitaphone show). Though a Vitaphone catalog cites this as Martinelli's second short, it is not the film copyrighted under the title *Martinelli No. 2*, (MP 2312 c 5 February 1931). See also the note for no. 31, regarding ASCO A-116.

The wax of the original 12-inch soundtrack disc in my own collection bears the date 21 June 1926 (mismarked "1921"), the "Matrix" number 300109, a mysterious "M 202," the designation "Rec #33," the fader setting "V +9," and the title, "Celeste Aida." Martinelli's name appears as "Bartinelli!"

**Item no. 38:** From the first Vitaphone show at the Warners' Theater, New York City, 6 August 1926. A formal reissue of the film, at the Colony Theater, New York City, 30 April 1927, was reviewed in *Variety*, 87/3 (4 May 1927), p. 27. A 3 May 1927 showing was reviewed in the *New York Times* (4 May 1927), p. 29:2, at which point it accompanied the feature "The Climbers," directed by Paul Stein, and starring Irene Rich.

The wax of the original 12-inch soundtrack disc in my own collection bears, again, the date 21 June 1926, the "Matrix" number 300107 and "M 200," the designation "Rec #33," the fader setting "V +9," and no title. The singer's name was spelled correctly this time.

**Item no. 39:** Eleanor Painter (1886-1947), one-time wife of baritone-turned-tenor Louis Graveure, made her operatic debut in Nürnberg in 1913. She created Herbert's Princess di Montaldo on 29 September 1915, and was in the premiere cast of several other successful shows throughout the teens and 1920s, among them, *The Lilac Domino* (Smith-Guivillier), 1914; *Glorianna* (Cushing-Friml), 1918; *The Last Waltz* (Atteridge-Dunn-Straus), 1921; *The Chiffon Girl* (Carlo-Sanders), 1924; and *Nightingale* (Wodehouse-Vecsey), 1927. Her only issued commercial recordings appear to be two sides on Columbia A1937, a coupling of the song "The Lilac Domino," from the show of that name (46226-5), and "Love is Best of All," from *The Princess Pat* (46213-2/4), both recorded on 19 November 1915. She recorded two more selections on 25 January 1916 from the same shows, but neither was issued.

**Item no. 40:** Composer given sic the copyright title, but this is probably the Jacob Koppel Sandler-arr. N. Shalitt setting of "Eili, Eili," written, ostensibly, by Sandler in 1896 for the play *Brocha*. Raisa's 1920 recording of "Eili, Eili" on Vocalion 30101 (mtx. 5055) is credited only as a "Traditional Hebrew Melody" on the label, but differs little from the Sandler-Shalitt version.

**Item no. 41:** Raisa's male accompanist is shown to some advantage throughout both songs, but is not identified on the title card.

**Item no. 42:** This Raisa-Rimini duet was eventually recycled to accompany the Warner Brothers feature, "The Terror" with May McAvoy and Louise Fazenda, directed by Roy del Ruth, which opened at the Warners' Theater, New York City, 16 August 1928.

**Items no. 43-47:** None of the Rosenblatt films appear in the *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, and like item nos. 15, 28, and 62, may not have been submitted for copyright. Item nos. 43 and 44 are cited as "Cantor Rosenblatt No. 1" and "Cantor Rosenblatt No. 2" in the AFI-Library of Congress catalog, and as "Cantor Josef Rosenblatt" and "Cantor Josef Rosenblatt and Choir" elsewhere. Item nos. 45-47 appear as cited in the AFI-Library of Congress catalog, with no other details given.

Geduld (p. 163) says that among the Rosenblatts is "a film of the cantor singing two songs at a New York recital," implying either a live filming of a concert (virtually impossible), or that the short in question sought to depict or re-enact such a concert.

Rosenblatt recorded his own setting of "Omar Rabbi Elosor" three times between September 1913 and September 1921, so it may be assumed that this is the setting sung here. Similarly, as the cantor's Victor recordings of the Sandler-Shalitt "Eili, Eili" (1930), the Silberstein-Silberta "Yorhzeit" (1926), and the Yellen-Pollack "My Yiddische Momme" (1925) were in print at the time, these are probably the works performed in shorts 45, 46, and 47, respectively. The "Hallelujah" performed in no. 44 has not been identified: no similar title can be found among Rosenblatt's commercial recordings of the period.

In several of his contemporary Victor recordings, Cantor Rosenblatt was accompanied by Machtenberg's Male Choir, often with Meyer Machtenberg himself on organ. This, in the period September 1927 to June 1929. Hence the provisional attribution of this ensemble to item no. 44, where the AFI-Library of Congress and Vitaphone catalogs list only "Male Choir."

**Items 43 and 44:** are noted in a Vitaphone catalog as "Booked on request only."

Cantor Rosenblatt made at least three more films: "The Jazz Singer" (Warner Brothers, 1927), in which he appears as himself singing the Sandler-Shalitt "Yohrzeit" in a concert sequence, "The Voice of Israel" (Judea Films, copyrighted 5 and 12 December 1931), a 10-reel feature, and "The Dream of My People" (possibly Fox, 1934).

**Item no. 46:** This short may have premiered during the run of "The First Auto" at the Colony Theater, 27 June 1927, but no review could be found. This date is given in a contemporary Vitaphone catalog.

**Item nos. 48-50:** The AFI-Library of Congress catalog lists only one Schumann-Heink film, under the title "Schumann-Heink," so it is not known which of the three they own.

**Item no. 48:** The introduction to "Der Erlkönig" is first played by the Vitaphone Symphony Orchestra, then repeated by the piano, which accompanies Madame Schumann-Heink thereafter. The other two songs are accompanied only by piano. Premiered during the run of "Old San Francisco" at the Warners' Theater.

**Item no. 49:** "Leggero Invisible" and "Spinnerliedchen" taken from a contemporary Vitaphone catalog.

**Item no. 50:** 5 February 1927 is the premiere date assigned to this short in a contemporary Vitaphone catalog, but it did not make its debut on this date (two days after the opening of the third New York Vitaphone show). The film was again scheduled to premiere at the Colony Theater, New York City, on 5 April 1927, but was replaced by the Gigli-Picco-Egener *Cavalleria* excerpts (no. 12). See the *Variety* notice cited. It was finally added to the run of the Warners feature "When a Man Loves," with John Barrymore and Dolores Costello, directed by Alan Crosland, at the Selwyn Theater, probably late in April 1927. The short was apparently an early one, produced in late 1926 or early 1927 and scheduled for the February premiere, but may have been held back until some technical problems could be solved.

**Item no. 51:** Original disc dated 15 July 1926. This short was quickly dropped from distribution and so does not appear in later Vitaphone release schedules. The soundtrack was for years lost, but has been acquired and restored by the UCLA Film Archive for the Museum of Modern Art exhibition, "The Dawn of Sound."

Premiered at the first Vitaphone show at the Warners' Theater, New York City, 6 August, 1926. The AFI Collection at the Library of Congress has only a silent 35mm nitrate print. A brief sound clip can be heard, however, in "Okay for Sound" (no. 63).

**Item no. 52:** This film was among the most successful of the Vitaphone operatics, and later appeared during the run of Alan Crosland's "Glorious Betsy" (see also note for item no. 4).

In regards to the EJS 403 dubbing, a report from the owner of the PvtC notes that Edward J. Smith's soundtrack source was incomplete, and may have been supplemented on EJS 403 by a fragment from a Tagliavini-Pons broadcast, of which there are at least five documented from 1947-1951. The EJS 403 excerpt begins at "Lucia, perdona," and is lacking the first solo sections of "Verrano a te," skipping to the duet a few pages further on. It also omits the "Sì, sì, allor," probably a performance cut, and concludes from "Rammentati." There is a clear source cut just before the concerted "Verrano a te" (evidence of the section missing from Smith's original source?). I hear no Pons-Tagliavini broadcast insert, though Gigli's lovely *mezza voce* "Io di te memoria" might certainly be taken for Tagliavini. Perhaps an insert was planned but not executed. The sound of the recording, especially the orchestra, is clearly Vitaphone throughout, with nothing of broadcast quality.

**Item no. 53:** Titles missing from both the PvtC and WCFTR prints. Premiered alongside the Warner Brothers feature "When a Man Loves."

**Item no. 54:** This short premiered with the Warner Brothers feature "The Missing Link." Geduld (p. 164) gives the premiere date as "late May," but the *New York Times* review fixes it at 6 May.

Vivienne Segal (born 1897) enjoyed a fabulously successful career, first in opera (Philadelphia, circa 1914), then on the Broadway stage, where she appeared in major productions of works by Romberg, Friml, Kern, and Rodgers and Hart. She made only five feature films: "Bride of the Regiment" (First National, 1930), with another Vitaphone alumnus, Allan Prior (see no. 61); "Golden Dawn" (Warner Bros., 1930), "Song of the West" (Warner Bros., 1930), "Viennese Nights" (Warner Bros., 1930), and "The Cat and the Fiddle" (M-G-M, 1934), all in Technicolor. She recorded a revival of the 1927 Rodgers and Hart show *A Connecticut Yankee* for Decca in 1943 (Album 367, later reissued on the JJA LP, 19733), and is featured in the 1950 Goddard Lieberson production of Rodgers and Harts' *Pal Joey*, originally issued in the U.S. as Columbia LP ML 4364. She retired in 1952.

**Item no. 56:** A contemporary Vitaphone catalog gives 16 April 1927 as the premiere date, but 20 April is correct. The short was billed at the premiere of the Warner Brothers feature "The Brute," directed by Irving Cummings, and starring Monte Blue.

**Item no. 57:** From the second Vitaphone show at the Colony Theater, New York City, 7 October 1926. The feature that evening was Warner Brothers' "The Better 'Ole," directed by Charles Reisner, and starring Sidney Chaplin.

**Item no. 58:** Also premiered during the run of "The Better 'Ole," but the date is uncertain. 7 October—which is not correct—is given as the date in a contemporary Vitaphone catalog.

**Item no. 59:** Joseph Diskay was born in Hungary in 1887. He is reported to have sung the "Kol Nidre" for Warner Oland in "The Jazz Singer" (1927), but he was not credited (note, however, that it was not sung by Josef Rosenblatt, as so many sources claim). Diskay also had a small part in John Ford's "Black Watch" (Fox, 1929). Later, he settled in Los Angeles as a voice teacher, and is thought to have died there in the 1940s. No commercial recordings have been traced, but one known Warner Brothers (disc) test containing the "Kol Nidre" has been reported.

**Item no. 60:** Little has been found on Nellie and Sara Kouns. The sisters made at least one commercial recording together in 1919 for Vocalion, the Gounod "Serenade," with Nellie taking the melody and Sara singing the flute obbligato! Nellie, a very light, decidedly juvenile-sounding soprano, made a few other solo sides for Vocalion as late as 1922: "La Golondrina" and "Just A-Wearyin' for You" were typical of her recorded repertory. Sara's solo Vocalions, which included dell'Acqua's "Chancon Provençale" (1921), reveal a surprisingly lovely lyric soprano voice and a firm technique.

The credited "Swiss Echo Duet" may be Carl Eckert's popular 1852 "Swiss Echo Song."

**Item no. 61:** Allan Prior (? - ?) was a successful Broadway leading man and light opera singer of the 1920s. He made his New York debut in *Topics of 1923*, and was subsequently featured in a production of Offenbach's *The Love Song* at New York's Century Theater (1925), and the original New York (1925) and London (1926) productions of the Donnelly-Romberg *The Student Prince*. Among his commercial recordings are three sides from a studio adaptation of *The Student Prince*, made circa 1926 by Columbia in London (on DB 9083 and DB 3903). Apart from his activities in New York (1923-1929), he appeared in San Francisco (1930), and from 1933, in his native Australia. He appears to have made only one feature film, Warner Brothers' "Bride of the Regiment," a Technicolor musical released in June 1930, featuring fellow Vitaphone artist Vivienne Segal.

Note that Bryan Foy, director of the first all-talking feature, "The Lights of New York" (Warner Brothers, premiere 6 July 1928), is actually credited as the film director. The only other credited director for any operatic Vitaphone is Herman Heller (no. 4).

**Item no. 62:** Not a musical film, rather a dramatic performance by singer Clarence Whitehill. The film was produced in November-December 1931 at the old Vitagraph studio in Brooklyn and on location in Georgetown and the District of Columbia. It was released (in two reels) to coincide with the 1932 bicentennial celebration of Washington's birth. It is not listed in the *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, but it is found in both the AFI-Library of Congress and WCFTR catalogs. In the former it is given under the title "Washington 'The Man and the Capitol,'" and in the latter as "Washington, The Man—The Capitol."

An article in the *Musical Courier* (5 December 1931), p. 2, has a photograph of Whitehill in costume on the set. With him is Sam Sax, production head of the Brooklyn studio. A production still in a private collection shows a scene from the film in which Washington's oath of office is recreated. This photograph, which cites the unpunctuated film title used in the filmography, gives a "Vitaphone" number "2571" (a studio, rather than series production number?) and "Rel. No. 1313-14," the 'release' or "Vitaphone Varieties" numbers corresponding to the two reels. The film was made under the auspices of the Washington Chamber of Commerce, with some scenes actually shot at the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. and at Mount Vernon, the president's home in Virginia. The Mount Vernon interiors, as well as Washington's military headquarters were studio recreations.

An article in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, dated 10 November 1931, notes that a four-week search for Washington's ideal impersonator led to Whitehill, who was granted permission to make the film by Gatti-Casazza. Whitehill had by this time only been signed for the role; when a portion of this article was quoted in the *Pioneer-Republican* of Marengo, Iowa (near Whitehill's birthplace) on 26 November, the introductory text stated that the picture was "being filmed." No doubt filming began sometime in late November 1931, for release in early 1932.

Frank F. Williams, in his Whitehill article in *The Record Collector*, says only that in 1932 Whitehill "... had appeared in a totally different milieu, when he was filmed and appeared in pageants as George Washington, whom he closely resembled, in the Washington Bi-Centenary Celebrations." (p. 241). Whitehill appeared in these pageants in the summer months of 1932 (he died on 19 December 1932).

**Item no. 63:** Produced and released by Warner Brothers in 1946 to commemorate the "20th Anniversary of the Talking Picture," this two reeler contains excerpts from all eight of the Vitaphone shorts exhibited at the first Vitaphone show at the Warners' Theater, New York City, on 6 August 1926.

Of the operatic shorts, excerpts from nos. 7, 38, and 51 are featured.

**Item no. 64:** An unseemly and complicated episode similar to the one that engulfed item no. 11 (see note, above). This unfinished film, shot at the Manhattan Opera House on 18 April 1927, was to have featured Mary Lewis and Jeanne Gordon in the "Barcarolle" from Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and perhaps additional excerpts. Production was halted, however, when Lewis was accused of being "unfit and unable to properly perform" after indulging in "a teacupful of Scotch whiskey, in three installments," according to the Vitaphone Corporation's statement. Lewis claimed that she had merely taken "a nip of brandy" to combat a chill sustained on the set: it seems that construction on the Eighth Avenue Subway had played havoc with the electricity, leaving the singer to linger scantily-clad on an unheated set during long stretches of inactivity.

John T. Adams, President of New York's Wolfsohn Musical Bureau, who had been hired to act as the musical director and advisor on the film, had apparently dispatched his own valet to secure the liquor for Miss Lewis, who in turn consumed it under the watchful, and as was later revealed, condoning eye of Sam Warner himself. Adams was dismissed, not only for tempting the film's star, but for violating the Volstead Act! He then sued the Vitaphone Corporation for breach of contract and for withholding his April wages of \$1,250.00. Attorneys Victor House and Matt Goldstein represented Adams and the

Vitaphone Corporation, respectively. Depositions for and against Adams and Lewis were taken from Edward Senz, a makeup man, Albert S. Howson, Vitaphone stage director, and Barney Clark, an engineer at the Manhattan Opera House. Much was made of the temperature regularly maintained in the opera house in an effort to dispute Lewis' claims of purely 'medicinal' consumption. Jeanne Gordon is noted as having defended Miss Lewis against any charges of drunkenness. Finally, Dr. Lawrence D. Alexander of New York City, who claimed to have attended to the various medical needs of such singers as Caruso, Sembrich, Farrar, Scotti, Amato, Anna Case, and Reinald Werrenrath, signed an affidavit on Lewis' behalf stating that "a single drink of whiskey or brandy would have no harmful effect on the voice," and that the Vitaphone Corporation's fears were, therefore, unwarranted.

See "Miss Lewis's Drink Moot Point in Suit: Vitaphone Says Talking Movie Failed as a Result, but She Denies a Nip Hurt Her Voice," in *New York Times* (12 Oct. 1927), p. 29:7.

### MICROGROOVE DISCOGRAPHY: THE OPERATIC VITAPHONE SHORTS ON LP

Except for the Scala, Eterna, MDP, and Pearl issues, the following LPs all were compiled and released by Edward J. Smith, on both commercial (ASCO, TAP, Rondo Gold) and private (EJS, UORC, Celebrity) labels. The "Celebrity Record Company" was often a moniker for standard EJS "Golden Age of Opera" issues.

Filmography numbers are given under Contents:

1. **ASCO A-116: "Giovanni Martinelli: Diamond Jubilee, Golden Anniversary"**  
American Stereophonic Corporation ASCO A-116 (2 LPs)  
Issued: 1961  
Contents: 24, 28, 35, 36
2. **CELEBRITY CEL 500: "Giovanni Martinelli: In Memoriam"**  
Celebrity Record Company CEL 500 (1 LP)  
Issued: March 1969  
Contents: 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36, 37
3. **CELEBRITY CTL 1001: "Giovanni Martinelli: The Last of the Immortals"**  
Celebrity Record Company CTL 1000 (1 LP)  
Issued:  
Contents: 24
4. **EJS 102: The Golden Age of Opera (1 LP)**  
EJS 102 (1 LP)  
Issued: 1956  
Contents: 24, 36
5. **EJS 111: The Golden Age of Opera: "Beniamino Gigli, tenor (1923-1944)"**  
EJS 111 (1 LP)  
Issued: 1957  
Contents: 14
6. **EJS 221: The Golden Age of Opera: "La Juive [Excerpts from Acts 2 & 4]"**  
EJS 221 (1 LP)  
Issued: November 1961  
Contents: 35, 36
7. **EJS 403: The Golden Age of Opera: "Beniamino Gigli in Opera"**  
EJS [Celebrity] 403 (1 LP)  
Issued: June 1967  
Contents: 11, 52, 53

8. **EJS 464: The Golden Age of Opera: "Beniamino Gigli, 1927-1955"**  
 EJS 464 (1 LP)  
 Issued: March 1969  
 Contents: 12, 13
9. **EJS 470: The Golden Age of Opera: "Giovanni Martinelli Recital No. 2"**  
 EJS 470 (1 LP)  
 Issued: May 1969  
 Contents: 24, 34
10. **EJS 512: The Golden Age of Opera: "Martinelli Recital"**  
 EJS 470 (1 LP)  
 Issued: May 1970  
 Contents: 32, 38
11. **EJS 513: The Golden Age of Opera: "Film Potpourri"**  
 EJS 513 (1 LP)  
 Issued: May 1970  
 Contents: 2, 3, 10, 15, 20, 41, 42, 48, 55
12. **Eterna 732: "Beniamino Gigli [Recital]"**  
 Eterna 732 (1 LP)  
 Issued: 1959  
 Contents: 11, 14  
 [Issued in East Berlin as VEB-Eterna 8-20-757.]
13. **MDP 015: "Giuseppe De Luca in Live Performance 1940-1948" (sic)**  
 MDP 015 [Michael D. Polimeni] (1 LP)  
 Issued: ? late 1960s  
 Contents: 10  
 [I suspect that this dubbing of item no. 10 was taken directly from the EJS 513 transfer, no. 11 above.]
14. **Pearl GEMM 202-6: "Gigli Victor Recordings"**  
 Pearl GEMM 202-6 (5 LPs)  
 Issued: ca. 1982 [U.K.]  
 Contents: 12, 13, 52, 53
15. **Pearl CD GEMM 9367: "Gigli II"**  
 Pearl GEMM 9367 (1 CD: AAD)  
 Issued 1989 [U.K.]  
 Contents: 52
16. **Rondo Gold RG 1001: "Giovanni Martinelli: Last of the Titans"**  
 Rondo Gold RG 1001 (1 LP)  
 Issued: 1958  
 Contents: 24, 36
17. **Scala 861: "Beniamino Gigli Volume 2"**  
 Scala 861 (1 LP)  
 Issued: 1961  
 Contents: 14  
 [Issued in the U.K. as Ember GVC 41, in Argentina as Propilei PL 1541, and in Brazil as Copacabana SCLP 12077.]
18. **Scala 5001: "Beniamino Gigli"**  
 Scala 5001 (2 LPs) [repackaging of Scala 861 and 856?]  
 Issued: circa 1962  
 Contents: 14

- 19. TAP 331: "Beniamino Gigli [Recital]"**  
 Top Artist Platters 331 (1 LP)  
 Issued: 1961  
 Contents: 14  
 [Issued in the U.K. as Rhapsody RHA 6017.]
- 20. UORC 255: "Martinelli in Duet (1926-1942)"**  
 Unique Opera Record Company 255 (1 LP)  
 Issued: June 1975  
 Contents: 26, 34
- 21. UORC 375: "[Martinelli Song Recital]"**  
 Unique Opera Record Company 375 (1 LP)  
 Issued: December 1975;  
 Contents: 25, 27, 29, 33
- 22. VOCE 40: "Halévy: La Juive Act II/Act V Excerpts"**  
 Voce 40 (1 LP)  
 Issued: ?early 1980s  
 Contents: 35, 36

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     Act III/ii: Di quella pira 30  
     Act IV/i: Udiste? Comme albeggi . . . Mira, di acerbe lagrime . . . Vivrà! Contendeile  
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## INDEX III: "VITAPHONE VARIETIES" SERIAL NUMBERS

Known "Vitaphone Varieties" serial numbers (VV), followed by the Library of Congress Copyright Registration number (CRN), the copyright date (CoD), the premiere date (PrD) and the filmography number (FN).

| VV  | CRN     | CoD       | PrD       | FN |
|-----|---------|-----------|-----------|----|
| 198 | MP 3836 | 12 Mar 27 | 6 Aug 26  | 38 |
| 204 | MP 3975 | 30 Apr 27 | -----     | 37 |
| 294 | MP 3917 | 4 Apr 27  | 6 Aug 26  | 7  |
| 308 | MP 3928 | 4 Apr 27  | 6 Aug 26  | 51 |
| 361 | MP 3831 | 12 Mar 27 | ? Oct 26  | 58 |
| 365 | MP 3887 | 2 Apr 27  | 7 Oct 26  | 57 |
| 379 | MP 3927 | 4 Apr 27  | ? Apr 27  | 50 |
| 380 | MP 3903 | 2 Apr 27  | -----     | 49 |
| 383 | MP 3822 | 12 Mar 27 | 3 Feb 27  | 23 |
| 392 | MP 3824 | 12 Mar 27 | 3 Feb 27  | 18 |
| 414 | MP 3915 | 4 Apr 27  | 5 Apr 27  | 12 |
| 415 | MP 3923 | 4 Apr 27  | 3 Feb 27  | 53 |
| 436 | MP 3931 | 4 Apr 27  | 12 Mar 27 | 6  |
| 437 | MP 3926 | 4 Apr 27  | 23 Mar 27 | 5  |
| 451 | MP 3936 | 9 Apr 27  | 2 Jul 27  | 1  |
| 474 | MP 3949 | 18 Apr 27 | 12 Apr 27 | 24 |
| 481 | MP 3956 | 18 Apr 27 | 20 Apr 27 | 56 |

| <b>VV</b> | <b>CRN</b> | <b>CoD</b> | <b>PrD</b> | <b>FN</b> |
|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 488       | MP 3979    | 6 May 27   | 14 May 27  | 10        |
| 493       | MP 3964    | 19 Apr 27  | 23 Apr 27  | 55        |
| 495       | MP 3965    | 19 Apr 27  | 6 May 27   | 54        |
| 498       | MP 3978    | 6 May 27   | ? Jun 27   | 13        |
| 499       | MP 3973    | 30 Apr 27  | 28 May 27  | 52        |
| 509       | MP 4108    | 29 Jun 27  | 12 Jun 27  | 35        |
| 510       | MP 4107    | 29 Jun 27  | 8 Oct 27   | 36        |
| 517       | MP 4118    | 29 Jun 27  | 21 Jun 27  | 14        |
| 518       | MP 4826    | 15 Mar 28  | 14 Mar 28  | 11        |
| 524       | MP 4120    | 29 Jun 27  | 6 Jun 27   | 42        |
| 552       | MP 4158    | 11 Jul 27  | 11 Jul 27  | 16        |
| 558       | -----      | -----      | 13 Dec 28  | 43        |
| 568       | MP 4163    | 18 Jul 27  | 15 Aug 27  | 48        |
| 740       | MP 245     | 27 May 29  | 13 Mar 29  | 22        |
| 746       | MP 69      | 10 Apr 29  | -----      | 39        |
| 805       | MP 588     | 30 Aug 29  | -----      | 3         |
| 890       | MP 747     | 14 Oct 29  | -----      | 17        |
| 899       | MP 942     | 9 Dec 29   | -----      | 21        |
| 900       | MP 942     | 9 Dec 29   | -----      | 21        |
| 916       | MP 881     | 25 Nov 29  | -----      | 20        |
| 932       | MP 971     | 21 Dec 29  | -----      | 34        |
| 943       | MP 1188    | 17 Feb 30  | -----      | 2         |
| 944       | MP 1078    | 18 Jan 30  | -----      | 30        |
| 953       | MP 1503    | 15 May 30  | ? Jul 30   | 31        |
| 974       | MP 1457    | 30 Apr 30  | ? Jun 30   | 26        |
| 1024      | -----      | -----      | -----      | 28        |
| 1143      | -----      | -----      | -----      | 15        |
| 1162      | MP 2230    | 5 Jan 31   | -----      | 27        |
| 1174      | MP 1605    | 8 Jun 30   | ? Mar 31   | 33        |
| 1213      | MP 2312    | 5 Feb 31   | -----      | 32        |
| 1245      | MP 2312    | 5 Feb 31   | -----      | 25        |
| 1313      | ?          | ?          | 1931-1932  | 62        |
| 1314      | ?          | ?          | 1931-1932  | 62        |
| 2122      | MP 4440    | 3 Nov 27   | 7 Nov 27   | 59        |
| 2203      | -----      | -----      | -----      | 44        |
| 2254      | MP 4708    | 4 Feb 28   | 26 Mar 28  | 4         |
| 2379      | MP 5140    | 1 Jul 28   | 28 May 28  | 19        |
| 2545      | MP 5022    | 19 May 28  | 13 Jun 28  | 40        |
| 2546      | MP 5052    | 2 Jun 28   | 8 Jul 28   | 41        |

**INDEX IV:**
**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION NUMBERS**

“LP” prefix (published motion-picture photoplays)

“MP” prefix (published motion pictures other than photoplays)

Known Library of Congress Copyright Registration Numbers (CRN), followed by the copyright date (CoD), the known “Vitaphone Varieties” serial number (VV), the premiere date (PrD), and the filmography number (FN).

| <b>CRN</b> | <b>CoD</b> | <b>VV</b> | <b>PrD</b> | <b>FN</b>  |
|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| LP 643     | 2 Oct 46   | ----      | 1946       | 63         |
| MP 69      | 10 Apr 29  | 746       | -----      | 39         |
| MP 245     | 27 May 29  | 740       | 13 Mar 29  | 22         |
| MP 588     | 30 Aug 29  | 805       | -----      | 3          |
| MP 708     | 28 Sep 29  | ----      | -----      | 9          |
| MP 747     | 14 Oct 29  | 890       | -----      | 17         |
| MP 881     | 25 Nov 29  | 916       | -----      | 20         |
| MP 942     | 9 Dec 29   | 899       | -----      | 21         |
| MP 942     | 9 Dec 29   | 900       | -----      | 21         |
| MP 971     | 21 Dec 29  | 932       | -----      | 34         |
| MP 1078    | 18 Jan 30  | 944       | -----      | 30         |
| MP 1188    | 17 Feb 30  | 943       | -----      | 2          |
| MP 1457    | 30 Apr 30  | 974       | ? Jun 30   | 26         |
| MP 1503    | 15 May 30  | 953       | ? Jul 30   | 31         |
| MP 1605    | 8 Jun 30   | 1174      | ? Mar 31   | 33         |
| MP 2230    | 5 Jan 31   | 1162      | -----      | 27         |
| MP 2312    | 5 Feb 31   | *         | -----      | 25, 29, 32 |
| MP 3822    | 12 Mar 27  | 383       | 3 Feb 27   | 23         |
| MP 3824    | 12 Mar 27  | 392       | 3 Feb 27   | 18         |
| MP 3831    | 12 Mar 27  | 361       | ? Oct 26   | 58         |
| MP 3836    | 12 Mar 27  | 198       | 6 Aug 26   | 38         |
| MP 3887    | 2 Apr 27   | 365       | 7 Oct 26   | 57         |
| MP 3903    | 2 Apr 27   | 380       | -----      | 49         |
| MP 3915    | 4 Apr 27   | 414       | 5 Apr 27   | 12         |
| MP 3916    | 4 Apr 27   | ----      | -----      | 8          |
| MP 3917    | 4 Apr 27   | 294       | 6 Aug 26   | 7          |
| MP 3923    | 4 Apr 27   | 415       | 3 Feb 27   | 53         |
| MP 3926    | 4 Apr 27   | 437       | 3 Mar 27   | 5          |
| MP 3927    | 4 Apr 27   | 379       | ? Apr 27   | 50         |
| MP 3928    | 4 Apr 27   | 308       | 6 Aug 26   | 51         |
| MP 3931    | 4 Apr 27   | 436       | 2 Mar 27   | 6          |
| MP 3936    | 9 Apr 27   | 451       | 2 Jul 27   | 1          |
| MP 3949    | 18 Apr 27  | 474       | 2 Apr 27   | 24         |
| MP 3956    | 18 Apr 27  | 481       | 20 Apr 27  | 56         |
| MP 3964    | 19 Apr 27  | 493       | 3 Apr 27   | 55         |
| MP 3965    | 19 Apr 27  | 495       | 6 May 27   | 54         |
| MP 3973    | 30 Apr 27  | 499       | 8 May 27   | 52         |
| MP 3975    | 30 Apr 27  | 204       | -----      | 37         |
| MP 3978    | 6 May 27   | 498       | ? Jun 27   | 13         |

| CRN     | CoD       | VV   | PrD      | FN |
|---------|-----------|------|----------|----|
| MP 3979 | 6 May 27  | 488  | 4 May 27 | 10 |
| MP 4107 | 29 Jun 27 | 510  | 8 Oct 27 | 36 |
| MP 4108 | 29 Jun 27 | 509  | 2 Jun 27 | 35 |
| MP 4118 | 29 Jun 27 | 517  | 1 Jun 27 | 14 |
| MP 4120 | 29 Jun 27 | 524  | 6 Jun 27 | 42 |
| MP 4130 | 2 Jul 27  | ---  | -----    | 60 |
| MP 4158 | 11 Jul 27 | 552  | 1 Jul 27 | 16 |
| MP 4163 | 18 Jul 27 | 568  | 5 Aug 27 | 48 |
| MP 4294 | 13 Sep 27 | ---  | -----    | 61 |
| MP 4440 | 3 Nov 27  | 2122 | 7 Nov 27 | 59 |
| MP 4708 | 4 Feb 28  | 2254 | 6 Mar 28 | 4  |
| MP 4826 | 15 Mar 28 | 518  | 4 Mar 28 | 11 |
| MP 5022 | 19 May 28 | 2545 | 3 Jun 28 | 40 |
| MP 5052 | 2 Jun 28  | 2546 | 8 Jul 28 | 41 |
| MP 5140 | 1 Jul 28  | 2379 | 8 May 28 | 19 |

\* "Vitaphone Varieties" nos. 1245, ?, or 1213 (Filmography nos. 25, 29, and 32, respectively)

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