

Ruggiero  
**LEONCAVALLO**  
**Pagliacci**

Beniamino Gigli • Iva Pacetti • Mario Basiola • Giuseppe Nessi  
Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan  
Franco Ghione  
(Recorded in 1934)



**Great Opera Recordings**  
**Ruggiero**  
**LEONCAVALLO**

**Pagliacci**

Canio (Pagliaccio) ..... Beniamino Gigli  
Nedda (Colombina) ..... Iva Pacetti  
Tonio (Taddeo) ..... Mario Basiola  
Beppe (Arlecchino) ..... Giuseppe Nessi  
Silvio (a villager) ..... Leone Paci  
A Peasant ..... Arnaldo Borghi

Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan  
Conducted by Franco Ghione

Recorded on 18 sides by Italian HMV in the Milan Conservatory from the 2nd - 5th July, 1934  
Matrices: 2W 2582-98, 2W 2600  
Issued on: DB 2299/2307

<b>1</b>	Prologue Si può? Si può? (Tonio)	7:42	<b>Act II</b>	<b>22:32</b>
<b>Act I</b>		<b>38:18</b>	<b>15</b>	Ohè! Ohè! Presto! (Chorus / Tonio / Beppe / Silvio / Nedda)
<b>2</b>	Eh!...Son qua! Son qua! (Chorus / Canio)	2:58	<b>16</b>	Pagliaccio, mio marito (Nedda - Colombina)
<b>3</b>	Un grande spettacolo a ventitré ore (Canio / Chorus / Tonio / Beppe)	2:47	<b>17</b>	Ah! Colombina, il tenero... (Beppe - Arlecchino)
<b>4</b>	Un tal gioco, credetemi... (Canio / Nedda / Chorus)	4:15	<b>18</b>	Di fare il segno convenuto (Colombina / Tonio - Taddeo / Chorus / Arlecchino)
<b>5</b>	Don, Din, Don, Din (Chorus)	2:39	<b>19</b>	Arlecchin!...Colombina! (Colombina / Arlecchino / Taddeo / Canio - Pagliaccio)
<b>6</b>	Qual fiamma avea nel guardo!... Hui! Stridono lassù (Nedda)	5:27	<b>20</b>	Coraggio! Un uomo era con te (Canio / Nedda / Tonio)
<b>7</b>	So ben che difforme contorto son io (Tonio / Nedda)	3:38	<b>21</b>	No, Pagliaccio non son (Canio / Chorus / Silvio / Nedda)
<b>8</b>	Nedda!...Silvio! A quest'ora che imprudenza (Silvio / Nedda)	1:13	<b>22</b>	Suvvia, così terribile (Nedda / Canio / Beppe / Tonio / Silvio / Chorus)
<b>9</b>	E fra quest'ansie in eterno vivrai (Silvio / Nedda)	2:22		
<b>10</b>	Non mi tentar! (Nedda / Silvio / Tonio)	1:25	<b>Appendix</b>	
<b>11</b>	E allor perché, di', tu m'hai stregato (Silvio / Nedda)	3:28	<b>23</b>	Pagliaccio, mio marito (Nedda / Colombina)
<b>12</b>	Cammina adagio e li sorprenderai (Tonio / Silvio / Nedda / Canio / Beppe)	4:31		Iva Pacetti & Beniamino Gigli
<b>13</b>	Recitar! Mentre preso dal delirio... Vesti la giubba (Canio)	3:28	<b>24</b>	Ah! Colombina, il tenero (Beppe / Arlecchino)
<b>14</b>	Intermezzo (Orchestra)	3:34		Iva Pacetti & Beniamino Gigli (2W2599) D.B. 3158

## Ruggiero Leoncavallo (1857-1919)

### Pagliacci

Ruggero Leoncavallo achieved his one great success with the opera *Pagliacci*, an example of *verismo*, the realism that had won Mascagni such acclaim for his *Cavalleria rusticana*. Leoncavallo had at first been associated with Ricordi, but angry at the lack of attention he received from the publisher and promoter, he turned instead to Sonzogno, who had been responsible for Mascagni's early success. He had originally intended to follow Mascagni with a work in one act, but subsequently found it advisable to divide it, placing the play within a play in the second part. *Pagliacci* was first staged at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan, conducted by Toscanini, and with the added encouragement of Victor Maurel, the first Tonio.

Leoncavallo's later operas fell short of this early triumph. His version of *La Bohème*, which may still be heard occasionally, was soon eclipsed by Puccini's treatment of the same subject, while his attempts at grand opera proved as ephemeral as his operettas. *Pagliacci*, however, still remains as an essential part of popular operatic repertoire and was, in 1907, the first opera to be recorded complete, under the composer's direction.

The plot of *Pagliacci* was drawn from a court-case judged by Leoncavallo's father. Accusation by Catulle Mendès of plagiarism, since the libretto seemed to bear some resemblance to the latter's *La femme du tabarin* (The Clown's Wife), led to Leoncavallo's explanation, with whatever justification, of the true source of the drama, which he claimed lay in events that had taken place in the Calabrian village of Montalto. The

emotions and events, however, reflect a current operatic preoccupation with love, jealousy and revenge.

In 1932 Beniamino Gigli, acknowledged heir to Caruso, rejected the offer of a further contract with the New York Metropolitan Opera at a reduced salary, after the Depression, and returned to work in Italy, elsewhere in Europe and in South America. He had made his earlier international reputation as Faust in Boito's *Mefistofele*, first in Bologna and then at La Scala, followed by his début at the Met in the same rôle in 1920. The rôle of Canio was among those for which he was celebrated. The Italian soprano Iva Pacetti made her début in her native Prato as Aida and first appeared at La Scala in 1922 as Helen of Troy in *Mefistofele* under Toscanini. She was the first to sing Turandot in Rome in 1926 and in an international career was known, in particular, for her Tosca. Her Nedda, heard on the present 1934 recording, is among the best known of her performances for the gramophone, although the rôle was not one that she sang in the opera house. Mario Basiola, Tonio in the 1934 recording, made his début in Rome in 1918, toured with the San Carlo opera company and first appeared at the Metropolitan Opera in 1925. By 1933 he was in Italy once more, appearing in Rome and Milan in leading baritone rôles. Giuseppe Nessi, after an earlier short career as a lyric tenor after his 1910 début in Saluzzo as Alfredo, became a leading  *comprimario* , distinguished particularly in a number of comic rôles. The present recording seems the only available one of Leone Paci, who sings the rôle of Silvio.

# Synopsis

## Prologue

[1] After the orchestral introduction, with its themes of the clown's tragedy, of love and of jealousy, Tonio comes forward, seeking the indulgence of the audience. He explains that the coming play is true, not fiction, and written from the memory of events that still affect the writer. It is a story of love, hatred and sorrow. The audience should understand that actors are human, with feelings like those of the audience. He calls on the actors to begin.

## Act I

[2] As the curtain rises, a trumpet call is heard and the sound of a drum. The people of the village, in their best clothes for the Feast of the Assumption, gather to see the players arrive.

[3] Canio, standing on his cart, announces the coming entertainment, promising the sight of Pagliaccio's revenge and of the intrigues and discomfiture of the clown Tonio. Tonio makes to help Nedda down from the cart and is cuffed by Canio, who takes her by the arm. Beppe drags the cart away, while Tonio threatens revenge. A group of villagers invite the players to drink with them, but Tonio alone refuses. The villagers suggest that Tonio wants to stay behind to pay court to Nedda, which forces a reluctant smile from Canio.

[4] Canio tells them that it is better not to joke like that, because acting and real life are not the same. On the stage Pagliaccio catches his wife with her lover, a

subject for comedy, but if Nedda seriously were to be caught out like that it would be quite another matter. The villagers ask him if he is serious, but Canio tells them he adores his wife, whom he now kisses.

[5] To the sound of the bells, the villagers prepare to go to the church for Vespers, while Canio tells those who have invited him to wait for a moment, while he goes behind the stage erected in the village square.

[6] Nedda is left alone and thinks that Canio may discover her secret love. She welcomes the mid-August sunshine and the birds, that her mother understood so well, singing and flying through the sky, towards the realisation of their desires, whatever may come, as her thoughts do. She is interrupted by Tonio, who has been listening. She laughs at him.

[7] Tonio tells her that, although he may be ugly and deformed, he has his own dream and is in love with her. She finds the idea ridiculous and tells him to keep his desires for the play and his simpering for the stage. He tells her not to laugh and insists that she hear him. He tries to kiss her and she strikes him with a whip. He goes, vowing revenge, while she declares that she is not afraid of him, ugly as he is in mind as in body.

[8] Silvio appears, rebuked by Nedda for his imprudence. He tells her that Canio and Beppe are in the tavern, but she explains what has just happened with Tonio.

[9] Silvio begs her to stay with him, when the players

move on the next day. He tries to persuade her, if it is true that she never loved Canio, to escape with him that night.

[10] She pleads with him not to disturb her life by such temptation, as he continues to urge her. They are observed by Tonio, who slips away to the tavern.

[11] Silvio continues, declaring that Nedda has bewitched him and recalling the times they have spent together. Nedda gives way, ready to yield completely to his pleas.

[12] Tonio has found Canio, whom he now leads to the scene. They hear the lovers plan to elope that night, but Silvio, unrecognised by Canio, makes his escape. Canio chases after him, while Tonio expresses his satisfaction. Returning, Canio presses Nedda to reveal the name of her lover, but she refuses to divulge it. He threatens her with a dagger, but is restrained by Beppe, who urges Canio to make ready for the play, as the people are leaving the church. Tonio tells Canio that it is better to pretend and that he will watch out for Nedda's lover, who will be in the audience. Beppe urges Canio to make ready and tells Tonio to bang the drum.

[13] Canio is distraught and finds his task hard, to play the clown in these circumstances. He must don his costume and make-up to amuse the public, whatever his own feelings.

### Intermezzo

[14] In the orchestral interlude themes from the *Prologue* are heard.

## Act II

[15] Beppe comes forward sounding the trumpet, while Tonio bangs the drum. Beppe then arranges the benches for the audience, who now come excitedly in, urged on by Tonio as they take their places. Silvio is among them, taking a seat in the front row and then moving to exchange a word with Nedda, who is collecting ticket money. She tells him to be careful but that Canio has not recognised him. The audience is impatient, while Beppe tries to deal with them. Eventually he and Nedda go behind the stage. A bell sounds and the curtain is drawn back.

### La Commedia

[16] The scene is a little room with two side-doors and a window in the background. There is a table and two chairs. Nedda, as Colombina, is seated at the table, from time to time looking round impatiently to the door. She stands and looks through the window, walking up and down impatiently. Her husband Pagliaccio is late coming back, and why is that idiot Taddeo not there.

[17] She hears the plucked strings of a guitar from outside and with a cry of joy runs to the window, serenaded by Beppe as Arlecchino.

[18] She signals to him that the coast is clear, but Tonio, as Taddeo, comes in and declares his love for her; her husband is away and now they are alone. Ironically he praises her purity, as white as snow. Meanwhile Arlecchino has made his way into the room, carrying a bottle, which he puts on the table. He takes Taddeo by the ear and gives him a kick, turning him out.

19 Colombina and Arlecchino embrace. He sits down at the table, while Colombina sets two places and puts a chicken on the table. They are interrupted by the return of Taddeo, announcing the arrival of Pagliaccio. Colombina tells Arlecchino to go and he leaps out of the window, telling her to pour a draught from the bottle into Pagliaccio's drink, before he goes to sleep. She promises to join him that night, overheard by Pagliaccio.

20 Pagliaccio reproaches Colombina, who declares that he is mad or drunk. He sees two places set at the table, but she tells him the other place was for Taddeo. Called in, Taddeo pretends to be afraid, assuring Pagliaccio that his wife is pure and chaste, to the amusement of the audience. Pagliaccio insists on knowing the man's name.

21 Unable to restrain himself any longer, Canio declares that he is no longer Pagliaccio, now demanding retribution, blood to wipe out disgrace. He reminds Nedda how he found her, an orphan, almost dead from

hunger, and gave her a name and his love. The audience comments on the realism of the scene, while Canio continues his reproaches. Nedda coldly tells him to let her go, if she is unworthy of him. He will have none of it, but must know the name of her lover, as he seeks, seemingly, to return to the play again.

22 Nedda tries to continue her part and assures him that it was the timid, harmless Arlecchino who was with her. Canio, though, accuses her of infidelity and demands the name of her lover or her life, but she refuses to tell him, as the audience begins to realise that the scene is real, not acting. Beppe tries to intervene, but is held back by Tonio. Canio seizes a knife from the table, as Nedda tries to escape among the audience. Canio seizes her and strikes her with the knife. As she falls, she calls on Silvio for help. He cries out and is stabbed to the heart by Canio. Disarmed by the audience, Canio declares that the play is over – *La commedia è finita*.

Keith Anderson

## Ward Marston

In 1997 Ward Marston was nominated for the Best Historical Album Grammy Award for his production work on BMG's Fritz Kreisler collection. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Marston's name is 'synonymous with tender loving care to collectors of historical CDs'. *Opera News* calls his work 'revelatory', and *Fanfare* deems him 'miraculous'. In 1996 Ward Marston received the *Gramophone* award for Historical Vocal Recording of the Year, honouring his production and engineering work on Romophone's complete recordings of Lucrezia Bori. He also served as re-recording engineer for the Franklin Mint's Arturo Toscanini issue and BMG's Sergey Rachmaninov recordings, both winners of the Best Historical Album Grammy. Born blind in 1952, Ward Marston has amassed tens of thousands of opera classical records over the past four decades. Following a stint in radio while a student at Williams College, he became well-known as a reissue producer in 1979, when he restored the earliest known stereo recording made by the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1932. In the past, Ward Marston has produced records for a number of major and specialist record companies. Now he is bringing his distinctive sonic vision to bear on recordings released on the Naxos Historical label. Ultimately his goal is to make the music he remasters sound as natural as possible and true to life by 'lifting the voices' off his old 78rpm recordings. His aim is to promote the importance of preserving old recordings and make available the works of great musicians who need to be heard.

## Producer's Note

Pagliacci was the first of six complete operas to have been recorded by Italian HMV featuring the great tenor Beniamino Gigli. It was originally issued by most of the HMV affiliates around the world as well as by RCA Victor in the United States. The present transfer of this recording was made using four sets of Victor pressings as they tend to yield the quietest playing surfaces. The balance between the orchestra and singers is quite good and the acoustic quality of the recording is flattering to both. Therefore, I have not added any artificial reverberation, nor have I found it necessary to tamper in any way with the sound of the original recording.

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LEONCAVALLO: Pagliacci

NAXOS Historical



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(1857-1919)

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ADD

 Playing  
Time  
68:36

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Nedda (Colombina) .....	Iva Pacetti
Tonio (Taddeo) .....	Mario Basiola
Beppe (Arlecchino) .....	Giuseppe Nessi
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2-14	Act I	38:18
15-22	Act II	22:32
23-24	Appendix	4:09

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Archivist &amp; Restoration Producer: Ward Marston



A complete track list can be found on pages 2 and 3 of the booklet  
Cover Painting: Stage design for Pagliacci by Vittorio Rosa  
(Metropolitan Opera, New York, 1916)



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