



Beniamino GIGLI

**London, New York and
Milan Recordings
1931 - 1932**

SCHUBERT

MASSENET

SULLIVAN

ROSSINI

ALBENIZ

TOSTI

Beniamino Gigli (1890-1957)

The Gigli Edition Vol. 7 • London, New York and Milan Recordings 1931-32

When the present recordings were made, Gigli had more or less decided to leave the Metropolitan in New York after eleven years. The Depression and a loss of enthusiasm for the house decided him to return to Europe in 1932. As a consequence he began to record in London for HMV, leaving Victor behind, although tracks eight to twelve were in fact the tail-end of his Victor contract. These titles are not of great consequence, but as ever the golden tenor transmuted them into something quite magical. The exception, as regards the material, is the *Chanson Hindoue* from Rimsky's *Sadko*, a liquid piece of writing exactly suited to Gigli at his suavest; as was customary in his day, it is sung, incongruously, in French. The three Spanish items prove that Gigli was always willing to go off the beaten path in his search for new pieces to record.

In June and July 1931, shortly after his English début and a year before he left the Met, Gigli made his first electrical recordings for HMV in London, among them outrageously self-indulgent versions of Des Grieux's Dream from *Manon* and Nadir's lovely Romance from *Les pêcheurs de perles*, but they are performances, exquisitely floated on a magical half-voice, hard to resist, idiosyncrasies and all.

It now emerges that besides his recording in English of Tosti's *Addio*, he made one at the same session in Italian. They are both as utterly heartfelt and effusive as only Gigli could be. Then there is his endearing version of Sullivan's song *The Lost Chord*. All three are conducted by John Barbirolli, then making his name as an opera conductor at Covent Garden and elsewhere and employed by HMV to accompany singers, which he did most sympathetically.

With Eugene Goossens in July, Gigli made one of his best-selling discs, *Che gelida manina* from

La bohème. This finds Gigli at the peak of his career and popularity in one of a tenor's most popular arias. His phrasing and delivery have all the requisite ardour. The coupling, on the original 78rpm disc, was the almost equally popular *cavatine* from Gounod's *Faust*, sung with the same fervour as Rodolfo's narration. Neither is a model of style, but both are overwhelming in their emotional responses.

The same can be said of the almost equally popular duet from *Cavalleria rusticana*, recorded in September 1932 in Milan with the superbly equipped Italo-American soprano, Dusolina Giannini as his worthy partner. They both sing this duet of passion and jealousy as to the manner born.

The following month came the final items included here, various songs done in the tenor's inimitable style. His version of Schubert's wildly popular *Serenade*, sung in his native tongue, could hardly be called idiomatic, but once again Gigli gets away with it by virtue of his irresistibly mellifluous tone. *Pietà, Signore*, attributed to Niedermeyer, is one of those religioso pieces so in fashion at the time that would now seem irredeemably sentimental, were it not for the beauty and sincerity of Gigli's singing. Rossini's *Cujus animam* from his *Stabat Mater* is musically in another class. To its march-like progress, Gigli brings a kind of soulful commitment that the composer would surely have loved.

It is worth adding that, at this time, Gigli was perhaps at the height of his fame. How much he enjoyed his success is related in his endearing autobiography, *The Memoirs of Beniamino Gigli*. In the autumn of 1932 he relates that he went on a long recital tour of Germany when, no doubt, he sang some of the items recorded here. At the border he found he had mislaid his passport, but convinced the border guards of his identity by singing a few bars of *La donna è mobile*.

They let him pass. In Nuremberg such was the enthusiasm of the audience that they would not let him go until he repeated the whole of his programme as an encore. In Berlin he had an audience of twelve thousand, showing that, in his day, he was quite as popular as Pavarotti was until recently. Most movingly, in Frankfurt he was urgently requested to sing at the deathbed of an Italian lying in hospital. He performed the whole of *Spirto gentil* from *La favorita* and the

patient declared that he could now die happy.

Listening to Gigli sing throughout this programme you can well understand why such a generous, open-hearted artist would be so much in demand and so adored by his audiences. His voice was God-given; so probably was his outgoing, passionate personality.

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Producer's Note

Except for the unpublished version of Tosti's *Addio* in Italian, which makes its first appearance here, the selections in the current volume were originally issued in 1998 as part of Romophone 82011-2 ("Beniamino Gigli – The Complete HMV Recordings, 1918-32") and in 1996 as part of Romophone 82005-2 ("Beniamino Gigli - The Complete Victor Recordings, Volume 3: 1929-32"). In remastering my original transfers, I have tried to remove some of the clicks and pops that remained (both manually via digital editing and through the use of the CEDAR declipping module) and have made adjustments to the equalization of each track. For the present volume, the majority of tracks were newly re-transferred, including all of the 1931 London sides, the Cavalleria duet, *Pietà*, *Signore* and *Cujus animam*.

Mark Obert-Thorn

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

- TOSTI:**
1 Goodbye 3:51
 Recorded 26th June 1931
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 1401-3
 First issued on HMV DB 1526
- MASSENET: Manon**
2 Instant charmant... En fermant les yeux (Act 2) 3:32
 (Sung in Italian)
 Recorded 26th June 1931
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 0B 1402-1
 First issued on HMV DA 1216
- SULLIVAN:**
3 The Lost Chord 4:32
 Recorded 26th June 1931
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 1403-3
 First issued on HMV DB 1526
- TOSTI:**
4 Addio 3:49
 Recorded 26th June 1931
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 1404-1
 Previously unpublished
- PUCCINI: La bohème:**
5 Che gelida manina (Act 1) 4:23
 Recorded 4th July 1931
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 1411-2
 First issued on HMV DB 1538
- GOUNOD: Faust:**
6 Quel trouble inconnu... Salut, demeure (Act 3) 4:47
 (Sung in Italian)
 Recorded 4th July 1931
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 2B 1412-2
 First issued on HMV DB 1538
- BIZET: Les pêcheurs de perles:**
7 Je crois entendre encore (Act 1) 3:51
 (Sung in Italian)
 Recorded 4th July 1931
 in Kingsway Hall, London
 Matrix: 0B 1413-1
 First issued on HMV DA 1216
- SIMONS:**
8 Marta 3:17
 Recorded 3rd May 1932
 in RCA Victor Studio No. 2, New York
 Matrix: BSHQ-72534-1
 First issued on Victor 1570
- ALBENIZ:**
9 Quisiera olvidar tus ojos 3:03
 Recorded 3rd May 1932
 in RCA Victor Studio No. 2, New York
 Matrix: BSHQ-72535-2
 First issued on Victor 1646
- SANDOVAL:**
10 Eres tu 2:54
 Recorded 3rd May 1932
 in RCA Victor Studio No. 2, New York
 Matrix: BSHQ-72536-2
 First issued on Victor 1646

DE CRESCENZO:		NIEDERMEYER (attributed):	
[11] Triste maggio	3:17	[16] Pietà, Signore	4:15
Recorded 31st May 1932 in RCA Victor Studio No. 2, New York Matrix: BSHQ-72831-1 First issued on HMV DA 1307		Recorded 1st October 1932 in the Conservatorio, Milan Matrix: 2M 837-2 First issued on HMV DB 1831	
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: Sadko:		ROSSINI: Stabat Mater:	
[12] Chanson Hindoue (Scene 4)	3:24	[17] Cujus animam	4:18
(Sung in French) Recorded 31st May 1932 in RCA Victor Studio No. 2, New York Matrix: BSHQ-72832-1 First issued on Victor 1570		Recorded 1st October 1932 in the Conservatorio, Milan Matrix: 2M 838-3 First issued on HMV DB 1831	
MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:		DE CURTIS	
[13] Tu qui, Santuzza?	4:19	[18] I' m'arricordo 'e te (Lucia, Luci)	2:43
with Dusolina Giannini, soprano Recorded 13th September 1932 in the Conservatorio, Milan Matrix: 2M 804-2 First issued on HMV DB 1790		Recorded 3rd October 1932 in the Conservatorio, Milan Matrix: 0M 844-2 First issued on HMV DA 1292	
MASCAGNI: Cavalleria rusticana:		DE CURTIS:	
[14] No, no Turiddu	4:40	[19] 'A canzone 'e Napule	3:18
with Dusolina Giannini, soprano Recorded 13th September 1932 in the Conservatorio, Milan Matrix: 2M 805-2 First issued on HMV DB 1790		Recorded 3rd October 1932 in the Conservatorio, Milan Matrix: 0M 845-1 First issued on HMV DA 1292	
SCHUBERT:		Tracks 1-4 Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli	
[15] Ständchen	4:32	Tracks 5-7 Orchestra conducted by Eugene Goossens	
(Sung in Italian) Recorded 1st October 1932 in the Conservatorio, Milan Matrix: 2M 836-2 First issued on HMV DB 1903		Tracks 8-12 Orchestra conducted by Nathaniel Shilkret	
		Tracks 13-19 La Scala Orchestra conducted by Carlo Sabajno	
		Tracks 1, 3 sung in English	
		Tracks 2, 4-7, 11, 13-16 sung in Italian	
		Tracks 8-10 sung in Spanish	
		Track 12 sung in French; Track 17 sung in Latin	
		Tracks 18, 19 sung in Neapolitan Dialect	

Playing
Time
72:44

Beniamino Gigli

The Gigli Edition, Vol. 7

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MADE IN
CANADA



- 1 **TOSTI:** Goodbye
- 2 **MASSENET:** *Manon*: Instant charmant...
En fermant les yeux
- 3 **SULLIVAN:** The Lost Chord
- 4 **TOSTI:** Addio
- 5 **PUCCINI:** *La bohème*: Che gelida manina
- 6 **GOUNOD:** *Faust*: Quel trouble inconnu... Salut, demeure
- 7 **BIZET:** *Les pêcheurs de perles*: Je crois entendre encore
- 8 **SIMONS:** Marta
- 9 **ALBENIZ:** Quisiera olvidar tus ojos
- 10 **SANDOVAL:** Eres tu
- 11 **DE CRESCENZO:** Triste maggio
- 12 **RIMSKY-KORSAKOV:** *Sadko*: Chanson Hindoue
- 13 **MASCAGNI:** *Cavalleria rusticana*: Tu qui, Santuzza?
- 14 **MASCAGNI:** *Cavalleria rusticana*: No, no Turiddu
- 15 **SCHUBERT:** Ständchen
- 16 **NIEDERMAYER (attrib.):** Pietà, Signore
- 17 **ROSSINI:** *Stabat Mater*: Cujus animam
- 18 **DE CURTIS:** Lucia, Luci
- 19 **DE CURTIS:** 'A canzone 'e Napule

Tracks 13-14, with Dusolina Giannini, soprano

Tracks 2, 6, 7, 15 sung in Italian

Track 12 sung in French

The present volume is the seventh in a series devoted to Beniamino Gigli's 'singles' - his song and aria recordings not issued as part of complete opera sets. The aim of the series is to include every Gigli recording released at the time, as well as every published alternative take and, wherever available, unpublished takes. The sides here are presented in the order in which they were recorded. For this Naxos series, restoration engineer Mark Obert-Thorn has remastered his original, critically-acclaimed Romophone transfers, cleaning them up further and re-doing some tracks in their entirety. Of particular interest in this seventh volume are the previously unpublished 1931 Kingsway Hall version of Tosti's *Addio* sung in Italian and the *Chanson Hindoue* from *Sadko*, a liquid piece of writing exactly suited to Gigli at his suavest.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Mark Ricaldone, Ward Marston, Lawrence Holdridge, Jim Peters and David Norbeck • Previously released on Romophone

www.naxos.com

A complete track list can be found in the booklet
Cover image: Gigli as Rodolfo in Puccini's *La bohème*, Europe, circa mid-1930s
(from the Mark Ricaldone photographic collection of Beniamino Gigli)

