

# **ENRICO CARUSO**

(February 25, 1873 – August 2, 1921)

## Recommended Recordings:

### **NAXOS**

#### **Enrico Caruso - The Complete Recordings Volume 1 through Volume 12**

Caruso recorded over 260 sides, almost all for the Victor Company (now RCA Victor.) Since copyrights have expired on all of these, there are many labels offering versions of the same recordings.

The quality of sound restoration is the paramount consideration in determining which label to choose. Oddly, RCA Victor's own re-issues provide relatively poor quality.

The premier audio restoration engineer in the industry is Ward Marston and he did a masterful job on this set for Naxos Historical, which covers every Caruso recording from the Berliner Gramophone discs in 1902 through the final recordings in 1920.

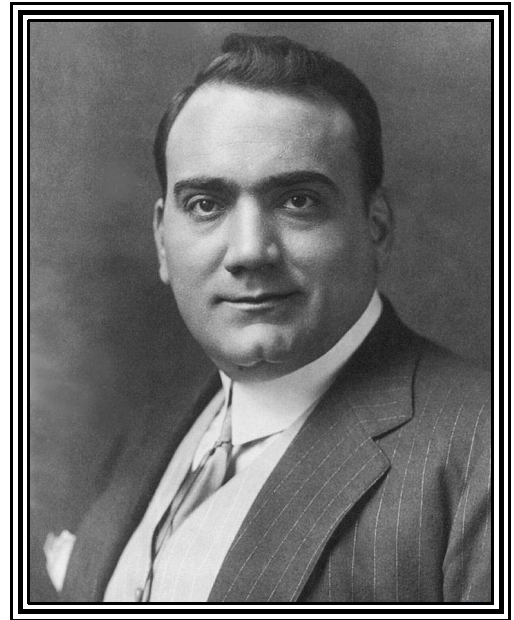
Choose your favorites.

## Recommended Reading:

### **Enrico Caruso - My Father, My Family by Enrico Caruso, Jr. - Amadeus Press**

There are several books on Caruso but this one by his son is not only surprisingly balanced and fair but has details of Caruso's family life (and especially his relationship with Ada Giachetti and her sister, Rina, that aren't to be found anywhere else.

Caruso's widow, Dorothy Caruso, wrote a biography of her husband, but she only knew him during the last few years of his life so her knowledge of his early career is mostly hearsay and her understandable desire to protect his image sometimes results in less than candid observations.



# FEODOR CHALIAPIN

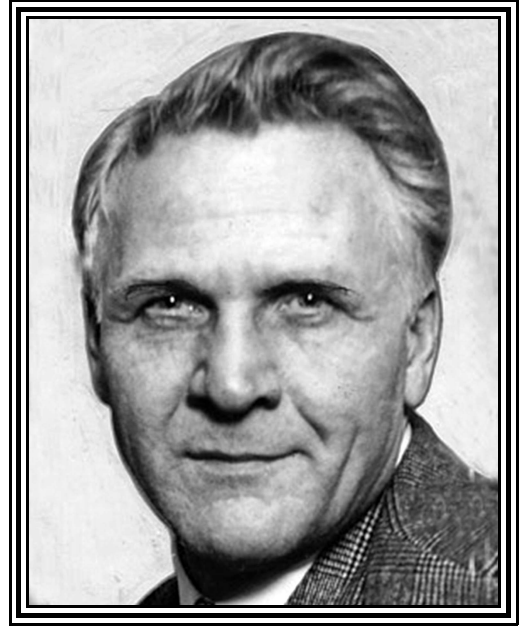
(February 1, 1873 – April 12, 1938)

## Recommended Recordings

LV (Lebendige Vergangenheit) - Feodor Shaljapin  
MONO 89030

### **EKLIPSE RECORDS- EKR 50**

Fedor Chaliapin Live Recordings at Covent Garden  
and Albert Hall



The LG disc captures Chaliapin (notice how many phonetic spellings can exist in translations of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet) when his voice was at it's freshest - from 1907 through 1912 but the acoustic recording process does not always display the richness of his voice.

The 2- CD Eklipse set consists of excerpts from live electrical recordings of six different operas using microphones placed near the stage during actual performances from 1926 to 1928. Chaliapin's voice lacked the range of earlier years, but the richness of the sound and the immediacy of the performances more than compensate.

**NOTE:** Chaliapin made only one film, *Don Quixote* in 1936 with music by Jaques Ibert. The music is not as pleasant as the Massenet *Quixote* which he performed on stage, but he is truly impressive. It is available in English and French.

My suggestion would be to view it on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and before you buy it.

## Recommended Reading:

### **Chaliapin - A Critical Biography by Victor Borovsky - Alfred Knopf**

Man and Mask by Feodor Chaliapin - Garden City Publishing

Both of these books are indispensable. Borovsky's book is thorough and authoritative with a complete description of Chaliapin's career and an analysis of both the man and his singing.

Lots of good pictures, too.

Chaliapin's autobiography has a lot of information, too, but it is equally an exploration of his opinions, his feelings, and his philosophy of life and the theater.

And the man is a gifted writer.

# LAWRENCE TIBBETT

(November 16, 1896 – July 15, 1960)

## Recommended Recordings

### **DELOS - DE 5500 2-CD**

#### **Lawrence Tibbett Baritone**

Opera Arias & Concert Songs

Opera Arias & Sound Tracks

NIMBUS - Lawrence Tibbett In Opera NI 7825

NIMBUS - Lawrence Tibbett HRM 6005

from Broadway to Hollywood



The Delos disks include commercial recordings, broadcast recordings, and film sound track recordings.

The Nimbus In Opera disk covers most of Tibbett's best commercial recordings from 1926 to 1939.

The Nimbus Broadway to Hollywood disk includes all eight of the songs from the first recording of music from "Porgy and Bess" (with George Gershwin in the studio supervising) plus several other items including four sound track songs from the lost film, "The Rogue Song."

NOTE: MGM has never released any of Tibbett's films on DVD, but some are available through private sources and there are musical excerpts from several on **[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)**.

The best source is: **<https://www.robertsvideos.com/index.php3>**

They list four of his films. **Metropolitan** and **New Moon** (which co-stars Grace Moore) are well worth the purchase. The plots are stupid the music is fine.

### **Dear Rogue by Hertzl Weinstat and Bert Weschler - Amadeus Press**

Lawrence Tibbett - the Singing Actor - by Andrew Farkas - Amadeus Press

"Dear Rogue" is an admiring but honest and well researched look at a complicated man. The Andrew Farkas book is primarily a photo book with re-prints of semi-biographical articles by Tibbett published in the 1930's. The photos are great but Tibbett was not a good writer.

# ROSA PONSELLE

(January 22, 1897 – May 25, 1981)

## Recommended Recordings

**NIMBUS /PRIMA VOCE - Ponselle NI 7805**

NIMBUS / PRIMA VOCE - Ponselle NI 7846

ROMOPHONE - Rosa Ponselle The Victor Recordings  
1923 - 25 81006 (2-CD's)

ROMOPHONE - Rosa Ponselle The Victor Recordings  
1926 - 29 81007-2 (2-CD's)

PEARL - Rosa Ponselle The Columbia Acoustic  
Recordings 1918 - 1923 GEMM 9964

NAXOS - La Traviata 8.110032-33



The two Nimbus/Prima Voce discs cover all of the most famous Ponselle commercial recordings in well restored sound.

For completists, the Pearl and Romophone sets include every commercial record the lady made including some previously unreleased takes.

Miss Ponselle herself always maintained that her voice was best represented by her radio broadcasts and the 1935 Metropolitan Opera broadcast of “La Traviata” on Naxos Historical. The sound has been well restored, and, especially in the Act II duet with a magnificent Lawrence Tibbett and in the final act death scene, Ponselle gives one of the greatest interpretations of Violetta in recorded history.

**NOTE:** The only film available of Ponselle is the MGM screen test she made for Carmen. But it is on *The Art of Singing: Golden Voices of the Century* DVD which also contains videos of many other great artists. Highly recommended. You can also find it on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## Recommended Reading:

**Rosa Ponselle - A Centenary Life by James Drake - Amadeus Press**

James Drake ghost-wrote an “Rosa Ponselle - a Singer’s Life”, which was fairly good, if a trifle sanitized. After her death, he added all of the notes and background material that had been left out of the earlier book, plus information from additional interviews, and made a far more complete - and far more interesting - book. One of the best biographies of an opera singer ever.

# JUSSI BJORLING

(February 5, 1911 – September 9, 1960)

## Recommended Recordings

**NAXOS - Jussi Bjorling Vol. 1 through Vol. 7**

**BLUEBELL - ABCD 006**

**Jussi Bjorling Live Holland 1939 / Norway 1954**

SONY - 88697 80465 (2-CD)

Romeo et Juliette - Jussi Bjorling & Bidu Sayao

BLUEBELL - Jussi Bjorling ABCD 002

Rigoletto and Il Trovatore excerpts

The Naxos set includes just about every commercial recording Bjorling made, from his days as a child soprano with the Bjorling Quartet, through his “crooner” recordings as “Eric Odde” and on to his greatest operatic hits.

**The Swedish label Bluebell** has released all of his Swedish commercial recordings, plus almost every concert Bjorling gave in Sweden, as well as operas he sang there.

His **1957 “Rigoletto”** is simply extraordinary.

The **Live Holland 1939** catches the 28 year old Bjorling when his voice was freshest and most beautiful. The Norway concert five years later is less satisfying as he had a bad cold that evening, but still equals most other tenors at their best.

And the **live performance of “Romeo et Juliette”** from the legendary Metropolitan performance in 1947 has just been released by Sony at a price competitive with most single disc CD’s. It’s a must have.

NOTE: Besides a *La Boheme* duet with Renata Tebaldi on the *Art of Singing: Golden Voices of the Century* DVD, his TV appearances on *The Voice of Firestone* are available.

I would also recommend the DVD *Bel Canto I - Tenors Of The 78 Era*, which includes interviews with the Bjorling family.

## RECOMMENDED READING:

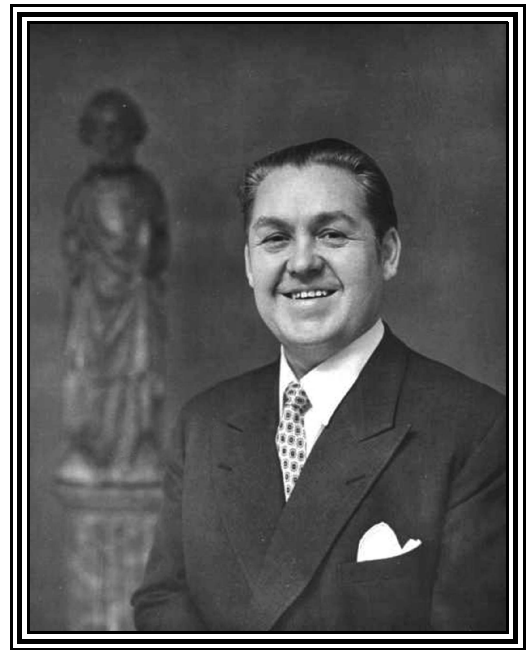
**Jussi by Anna-Lisa Bjorling & Andrew Farkas - Amadeus Press**

The Bjorling Sound by Stephen Hastings - University of Rochester Press

There is only one current biography of Bjorling (if you exclude his out-of-print 1943 Swedish-language autobiography) and that is the excellent one by his wife Ana-Lisa Bjorling.

But because she is so honest about both his virtues and his failings (including his alcoholism) I really don’t think another book is needed.

However, Stephen Hastings has written a fascinating, but very technical, examination of almost every recording Bjorling made (“The Bjorling Souns”) if you are up for it.



# MARIA CALLAS

(December 2, 1923 – September 16, 1977)

## Recommended Recordings:

**EMI Maria Callas CDC7 47730 2 Verdi Arias I**

EMI - CDC7 47282 2 Callas Opera Arias

GALA - GL 310

Maria Callas Historical Recordings 1955 - 1960



The Callas voice was not conventionally beautiful, but through her artistry she sang as if it was and made you believe it was beautiful. It was a powerful voice and yet she could scale it down to delicate coquettishness or plaintive sadness.

The EMI discs capture Callas between 1955 and 1959 when her voice was most secure and her artistry at its fullest.

The Verdi disc contains Callas' only studio recordings of arias from "Macbeth." She sang Lady Macbeth on the stage only three times ( a poor quality recording exists of one performance) and she is simply magnificent here.

The Opera Arias disc provides some of her finest studio recordings, with outstanding arias from "Adriana Lecouvreur" and a definitive "Una voce poco fa" from "Barber of Seville."

The Gala disc consists of live concert recordings from 1955 through 1960.

Only Callas and Björling, of the singers in this course, recorded complete operas. Callas' EMI "Tosca" with Tito Gobbi conducted by Victor Sabata is rightly considered one of the few "perfect" opera recordings. Of her live performances, I recommend especially her 1955 Berlin "Lucia di Lammermoor" conducted by Herbert von Karajan and the 1955 "La Traviata" from La Scala conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini.

**NOTE:** The only film Callas made was Paolo Passolini's truly awful *Medea*, in which she does not sing. Avoid it. Instead, grab a copy of *In Concert - Hamburg 1969-1962* and *In Concert Paris 1958*. There are also several documentaries available which include musical excerpts. I prefer *Maria Callas - Living & Dying for Art & Love*.

## RECOMMENDED READING:

**Callas by John Ardoin & Arnold Fitzgerald - Holt-Rinehart**

"Callas, the Art & Life" is the first half of this book; a brilliant examination of Callas life and character and by John Ardoin a perceptive music critic who was also a close friend and confidant of Callas. The second part by Gerald Fitzgerald is "The Great Years" which covers her stage career with an incredible amount of photos.