

THE RECORDS

The first twelve items in this set (HM FT1 - FT6) were all recorded at Tamagno's villa in Ospedaletti, Susa, Italy in February 1903. The matrix numbers for these 12 inch records were all in the Gramophone & Typewriter Company's 'C' series that would, in 1904, be allocated the identifying letter "c". They are:

(HM FT1)

10 - W2 - FT	Otello (Verdi): Esultate!	(Published as Gramophone and Typewriter issue no. 052101)
11 - W2 - FT	Otello (Verdi): Esultate!	(Unpublished)

(HM FT2)

12 - W2 - FT	Otello (Verdi): Ora e per sempre addio	(Published as Gramophone and Typewriter issue no 052102)
13 - R - FT	Otello (Verdi): Ora e per sempre addio	(Unpublished)

(HM FT3)

14 - R - FT	Otello (Verdi): Niun mi tema	(Unpublished except as HM 36)
15 - R - FT	Otello (Verdi): Niun mi tema	(Unpublished)

(HM FT4)

16 - W2 - FT	Andrea Chénier (Giordano): Un dì all'azzurro spazio	(Unpublished)
17 - R - FT	Guglielmo Tell (Rossini): O muto asil	(Published as Gramophone and Typewriter issue no 052103)

(HM FT5)

18 - R - FT	Il Re de Lahore (Massenet): O casto fior	(Promesse de mon avenir) (Private recording and unpublished.) <i>(This is sung by an unknown baritone – see also 19 W and notes)</i>
19 - W2 - FT Private	Otello (Verdi): Sì, pel ciel marmoreo giuro	(with unknown baritone – see notes) (Private recording and unpublished.)

(HM FT6)

20 - R - FT Private	v	(Private recording and unpublished.)
21 - R - FT Private	A Santa Maria di Oropa (Mapelli)	(Private recording and unpublished.)

The 'R' suffix indicates Bedford Royal, and the 'W' indicates Will Gaisberg - the two engineers who made the recordings. Gaisberg was in overall charge.

Titles of the unpublished items have been listed and printed on the labels as, in our opinion, would have been the case had they been published. Thus, since the original label for 17 R gave the opera title in Italian, rather than the original French; we have followed that for the Massenet and de Lara titles.

The following were recorded in Rome in April 1904. The engineer was William Sinkler Darby:

(HM FT7)

269i	Otello (Verdi): Niun mi tema	(Published as Gramophone and Typewriter issue no. 052068)
270i	Andrea Chénier (Giordano): Un dì all'azzurro spazio	(Published as Gramophone and Typewriter issue no. 052100)

Historic Masters is greatly indebted to the John Stratton Trust for generous grants which have made possible this edition of the Tamagno 12" records.

The EMI Group Archive Trust is a registered charity, whose objectives include the advancement of education and research to foster and promote the study and appreciation of the art techniques and development of sound recording, and the history of the sound recording industry. For more information on the EMI Group Archive Trust visit www.emiarchivetrust.org

Photographs from the collections of Gervice Archer jr., (Tamagno as Hélon in Messalina), Richard Copeman (Tamagno as Otello) and Stanley Henig.

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FRANCESCO TAMAGNO



HIS 12" RECORDINGS COMPLETE EDITION



THE TAMAGNO EDITION AN INTRODUCTION

A couple of years ago with the assistance of both Richard Lyttelton, then President of EMI, Classics and Jazz, and the staff at The EMI Archive, Historic Masters was able to gain access to original 78rpm metal masters stored since before the First World War at Emil Berliner Studios in Hannover. Historic Masters is still trying to get a complete listing from Hannover, but we were able to determine early that nearly all the metal masters for Tamagno's records appear to have survived. We are now proud to present, as vinyl pressings directly processed from the original first metal masters of the recordings made at Tamagno's villa in 1903 and in Rome in 1904, all of Tamagno's surviving 12" records. Anyone familiar with copies of Tamagno's records previously available will hear quickly that these are the most acoustically vivid issues ever made of his records.

The Gramophone Company issued only five of the fourteen sides in this set. Of the remaining sides, four were never intended by Tamagno to be considered for release. They include an aria from *Il Re di Lahore* by Massenet sung by a baritone not named on the metal master or in any contemporary documents actually discussing the records or the recording sessions.

The other three records (all unpublished and actually marked 'private' on the masters) are of Tamagno, singing an aria from *Messalina* by de Lara, a religious piece composed by Tamagno's friend, Luigi Mapelli, and, to everyone's complete surprise, a recording of the Act II duet 'Si, pel ciel' from *Otello* sung with the unknown baritone. In Alan Kelly's listing of Gramophone Company matrices, the matrix for the duet was listed as a second take of the aria from *Messalina*, a listing which accords with the company's own original internal records made before 1910.

As Michael Aspinall's excellent notes point out, there is circumstantial evidence that supports the possibility that Tamagno's younger brother, Giovanni, is the baritone but the evidence is not strong enough to be conclusive. There is no real evidence circumstantial or otherwise, except the hopes of collectors, to support any other attribution. We have decided to continue to refer to the baritone as unknown and have so labelled the recordings.

I would differ slightly from Michael Aspinall's observations about the voice of the unknown baritone by saying that the voice is rusty and dry but not necessarily the voice of an aged person. There is surviving correspondence that shows that Giovanni Tamagno was involved on his brother's behalf in the negotiations that led to the original recordings. Finally, Giovanni Tamagno did have a brief stage career as a baritone and there is no reason to think that he was not capable of the performances made by the mystery baritone, but we must accept that it is unlikely that we will ever be certain.

The late Richard Bebb was of the view that this duet recording was the most significant find made by Historic Masters in its more than thirty year quest for rare and unpublished material. I hope that the record collecting world agrees.

On a final note for the benefit of collectors, it is known that in 1904, Tamagno recorded a duet from *Il Guarany* with Gianina Russ. Collectors have always hoped that it would be found. There is surviving contemporary correspondence requesting that the master be destroyed. There was no evidence in Hannover that the recording had escaped its ordained fate.

In due course, Historic Masters hopes to issue all twenty-eight 10" sides recorded by Tamagno, plus a 10" side by the unknown baritone, which would then make our Tamagno issue complete. I would like to thank everyone who made the issue of these recordings possible, including Michael Letchford and Michael Aspinall; at EMI Archive Trust – Richard Lyttelton, Dave Holley, Jackie Bishop and Paul Lilley; and, at Emil Berliner Studios and Deutsche Grammophon – Gerfried Horst, Alan Newcombe and Evert Menting.

Stephen Clarke, Chairman, Historic Masters

an embellishment familiar to us from the records of Caruso and other tenors. The intention behind such simple embellishments was to heighten the emotional and artistic effect of the cadence, like giving a light final polish to a gem. Matrix 12W FT is perhaps the most satisfactory take; he executes the ornaments neatly and performs a shattering crescendo on the high B flat, followed by a diminuendo on the penultimate note.

It was recognized at the time that Tamagno's "Death of Otello" was one of the greatest records achieved by the gramophone, and we have five versions available to us today, all deeply moving, the lower notes like a great cello, with a suggestion of nostalgic sadness unique to Tamagno. Matrix 14R FT is full of dramatic contrasts, but the voice is more responsive, more velvety and more beautifully recorded in matrix 15. The Milan recording of April 1904 is perhaps the best all-round version.

Tamagno studied *Andrea Chénier* with Giordano and his extensive re-phrasing of the "Improvviso" carries the composer's authority. He prepares a thrilling high B flat at the end of the first part by phrasing typical of the mid nineteenth century: "Gridai / vinto d'amor / ah! t'amo". His very last recording of it, matrix 270, is considered by some to be his finest record. He enlivens Chénier's denunciation of the clergy with exciting snarling and biting effects, then the voice fills out with sunshine in the ecstatic finale, where his impassioned declamation of "l'amor!" on two high B flats seems an "improvement" indeed. Now comes a marvellous change, with "O muto asil del pianto" from *Guglielmo Tell*. No other tenor has achieved such a haunting mezza voce in this aria, nor sung it with such ease. The upper G (as on "pianto") is taken softly, and he restrains himself in the cadenza, singing with a gentle, mournful tone up to high C flat (instead of the C natural of the score).

Masters 18, 19, 20 and 21 were private recordings not intended for sale to the public. The mysterious 18R introduces an unnamed baritone who sings "O casto fior" from Massenet's *Il Re di Lahore*. Since it appears to feature an elderly gentleman who sings with remarkable skill and sensitivity, collectors have always hoped that it might be Antonio Cotogni (1831-1918) and I myself have eagerly embraced this attribution in more than one article. However, Piovano's researches show that Tamagno and Cotogni scarcely ever met.

Another possibility is that the baritone is Tamagno's brother Giovanni. "O casto fior" is a distinguished piece of singing. The recitative is delivered with authority, the aria persuasively murmured in a pleasing mezza voce and with skillful employment of rubato and portamento. Although some notes are tremulous, the overall effect is of a voice that has aged comfortably and "thinned out" in quality rather like Battistini's or Santley's. The emission is pure and round, free of the guttural resonances of the "modern" school of baritones. Giovanni Tamagno, if it is indeed he, sings the great duet "Si, pel ciel marmoreo giuro!" from *Otello* with Francesco, another "creator's record" the very existence of which was unknown until work began on this edition of re-pressings.

He proves equal to the occasion, articulating the difficult triplet figures cleanly. If it seems rather a pity that the original Otello politely allows his Iago to stand nearer the recording horn, a courtesy that he would certainly not have extended to Maurel, we can hear how grandiloquent, how thrilling is his phrasing; the deliberate tempo and free time at the cadences are just like his other *Otello* recordings. The old lion snatches plenty of extra breaths



but still covets with ease above the staff, pronouncing the words clearly and nonchalantly sailing up to the B flat. Hélión's prayer "Dei del patrio suol" ("Dieux de mon pays!") from *Messaline* includes changes to the vocal line that De Lara must have written in for Tamagno; it is another "creator's record" and a particularly expansive and brilliant piece of declamation. He appears to have transposed the prayer a semitone up, taking him up to a high B natural that is not perfectly supported, and he ends declaiming words clearly on the high A. No doubt with singers like Calvé, Tamagno and Renaud this exotic pseudo-French music would be evocative and stirring.

The title catalogued in the archives as "Ave Maria" is more properly described as "A Santa Maria di Oropa", words by Giovanni Camerana, music by Luigi Mapelli, composed for the wedding of Margherita Tamagno and Alfredo Talamona. Tamagno duly sang it at the ceremony on the 6th January 1899 in the chapel of his villa at Varese. In his biography, (*Francesco Tamagno, (Otello fu...), La vita del grande tenore, Ente Morale Scuole Officine Serali, 1990*), Mario Ruberi prints the vocal score of the song, which is in A major and takes the form of an extended melodious recitative, lovingly declaimed by Tamagno, in devotional mood. The music lies comfortably in his upper medium range with effective flights above the staff to a sustained G sharp at "Ascolti il coro", several high As and a sustained B flat.

For all his perhaps casual approach to questions of musical precision and accuracy of score-reading, Tamagno is one of the most charismatic and communicative singers ever to record his voice for the wonderment of future generations. He had his own, simple but deeply felt musicianship. As he once told Verdi: "You see, Maestro, many singers are greater artists than I am, but no one has more heart."

A touching gramophonic footnote: on the 22nd October 1898 Tamagno went to hear Enrico Caruso in the world première of Cilea's *L'Arlesiana* at the Teatro Lirico, Milan and on the way out said to the editor of *Il Secolo*: "He will be the greatest of all of us." As part of his contract with G & T, Tamagno was presented with a few free gramophones and records: he chose one record each of De Lucia and Alessandro Moreschi, but six of Caruso.



husband Alfredo Talamona had dissipated the fortune so carefully accumulated by her father's scrimping and saving.

THE 12" TAMAGNO RECORDS

The pianist accompanying Tamagno on the 1903 recordings is anonymous. He does not sound like a professional, for all his dexterity in covering up whenever Tamagno makes a slip and for all his skill in "vamping". Piovano has, I think, solved the problem: Tamagno's son-in-law Alfredo Talamona had begun to accompany him in some of his less important concerts, and, no doubt, his services would have been free.

In an interview published in the magazine *Records and Recordings* for June 1958, Sir John Barbirolli declared: "I come of a family of musicians, and in Italy both my father and my grandfather were in the orchestra for performances of *Otello* supervised by Verdi himself. I have more or less grown up with the music in my blood, and I can find nobody who sings it today as Tamagno did on these old acoustic recordings." Those hearing Tamagno's *Otello* records for the first time are frequently perplexed by the slow and stately tempi he adopts. This was his style, at least in the last years of his career, causing rows with Toscanini at the rehearsals of *Guglielmo Tell* and *Otello* at La Scala. After a performance of *Otello* in Manchester, Barbirolli assured the record collector F. S. Winstanley that his father had also loved the Tamagno records and reported that the tempi were exactly those used by Tamagno when conducted by Faccio at La Scala. It is only fair to point out that there is no lack of evidence as to Tamagno's having modified, over the years, the careful instruction imparted by Faccio and Verdi. In the *New York Times* of 4th December 1894, Henderson reported:

"Signor Tamagno's *Otello* was made known to this public in 1890 as a vivid and powerful interpretation, which justly entitled the tenor to the name of artist. In his performance of the part at that time he gave the impression of uncommon intelligence and high ideals. It is a truth and a pity that some of his recent work at the Opera House has done much to destroy that impression and to convince thoughtful persons that his *Otello* owed more to the training of the Maestro Verdi than to the natural ability of the singer..... while Signor Tamagno's *Otello* has lost some of the dignity that the severe restraint of the master's hand imposed upon it in earlier years, it has lost none of its tremendous power, its sweeping expression of fierce, overmastering passion, and its superb virility of declamation."

Tamagno recorded each of his selections twice or more, and each performance sounds spontaneously different. Blanche Marchesi declared that Tamagno's "Esultate!" (matrix 10W FT) was the finest example she had ever heard on records of declamatory singing. He makes an overwhelming effect, partly because he treats the music as a recitative in free time: "Esultate!" makes no effect in the theatre if the conductor beats strict time throughout. In matrix 11 the singing is equally thrilling if not quite so flawless, but here, interestingly, he includes an extra mordent on the third syllable of "l'uragano". On the first syllable of "l'uragano" the score has a simple acciaccatura as a grace note, which Tamagno converts into a mordent of two notes: he does the same thing in "Ora e per sempre addio".

The deliberate scansion of the phrases and the ringing, copper-coloured timbre are equally inspiring in "Ora e per sempre addio", into which Tamagno introduces a gruppetto of five notes,

THE CAREER AND RECORDINGS OF FRANCESCO TAMAGNO

Michael Aspinall

The enthusiast who wants to know everything about Tamagno should read "Otello Fu", La Vera Vita di Francesco Tamagno, il "tenore-cannone" by Ugo Piovano, Rugginenti Editore, Milano 2005, a magnificent biography that quotes extensively from reviews in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. I am indebted to Mr Thomas G. Kaufman's chronology, considerably amplified by Piovano.

Francesco Tamagno was born in Turin on the 28th December 1850 and baptized Innocenzo Francesco. His father, Carlo, the proud possessor of a fine natural voice, was a wine-seller and proprietor of the trattoria "Al Centauro". Carlo and his wife Margherita had 15 children, of whom ten died in infancy. Of the five who were spared, three studied singing: Francesco, Domenico (1843-1905) and Giovanni (1858-1910). Francesco and Domenico joined a group of young hopefuls who clubbed together to pay for private lessons. They then studied for a while in a Salesian school, and Francesco made his first public appearances in 1865, singing at this school and in religious services for which the Salesians provided the music.

From 1870 to 1873 Francesco and Domenico studied singing at the Liceo Musicale, where the lessons were free, with the composer Carlo Pedrotti, who told them that, in time, they might become excellent choristers and earn a decent wage in England! Domenico graduated from the Liceo in 1871 and Francesco in 1873. During the year 1871-72 Francesco did six months' military service.

It seems likely that Tamagno first stepped onto the operatic stage as a member of the chorus in *Gli Ugonotti* at the Teatro Regio, Turin, in December 1870. He made his first appearance in a primary role as Gaspero in Francesco Cortesi's *La colpa del cuore* on the 27th February 1872. In the 1872-3 season Tamagno was engaged for three small roles in *Il Guarany*, *Poliuto* and *Ruy Blas*.

THE EARLY CAREER

Having signed a contract with theatrical agent Antonio Rosani the young tenor embarked for Palermo, but this season, though successful, may have been upsetting psychologically. The ship bearing the company from Messina to Palermo met with such a terrible storm that all the scenery and costumes had to be thrown overboard, which delayed opening night. Later the impresario went bankrupt and the singers had to carry on by themselves. This season, at the Teatro Bellini, opened with *La forza del destino*. Tamagno made his debut as a leading tenor as Riccardo in *Un ballo in maschera* on the 20th January 1874. On the 24th February he sang *Poliuto*, and his Palermo season ended with a performance of Rossini's *Stabat Mater* in April 1874. The following month he appeared in *Un ballo in maschera* and *La forza del destino* at Ferrara.

Tamagno began the 1874-5 season in Rovigo with *Roberto il diavolo* and *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*, after which he went to La Fenice, Venice, for *Il Guarany*, *Poliuto*, the world première of *Selvaggia* by Francesco Schira, *Der Freischutz* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Josephine de Reszke sang in *Guarany* and *Selvaggia*

and his Lucia was Emma Albani. He then appeared at the Liceu, Barcelona from October 1875 until April 1877. Here he added to his repertoire *L'Africana*, *Saffo* (Pacini), *Ernani*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Ruy Blas*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Marta*, *Don Carlo* (in the five-act version), *Gli Ugonotti*, *Aida* and Verdi's *Requiem*. Like many Italian singers, he was a quick learner.

In June 1877 Turin heard him at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in *Il Guarany*. He sang at the Teatro Regio in 1884 in *Poliuto* and returned in 1885 for *Il Profeta*, but he fell ill and was not able to complete his contract, which led to such unfriendly comments in the press that he would never sing in opera again in his native town. On the 26th December 1877 Tamagno made his debut at La Scala, Milan in *L'Africana*, followed by *Fosca* by Gomes. He sang from May to November 1878 at the Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires and in Rio de Janeiro, adding to his repertoire *Rigoletto*, *Il Profeta*, and *Enrico* by Miguel Angelo. He returned to La Scala to open the 1878-9 season with 21 performances of the title role in *Don Carlo* (still in five acts), in which he was praised for the new refinements in his singing: he and the baritone Giuseppe Kaschmann sang their duet in an intimate and hauntingly soft manner, though Tamagno always introduced a brilliant high C at the close. Then followed Massenet's *Il Re di Lahore* (with Jean Lassalle in his original role) and the world première of Gomes's *Maria Tudor*. In April Tamagno was back in Buenos Aires and later in Rio de Janeiro. He sang for the first time in Lisbon between December 1879 and April 1880, in May he was heard at Bilbao in *Poliuto* and in November he sang *L'Africana* in Florence with Battistini. That year he opened the Scala season again, with the world première of Ponchielli's *Il figliuol prodigo*, followed by *Ernani*.

TAMAGNO AND VERDI

Tamagno's first collaboration with Verdi was his creation of Gabriele Adorno in the revised version of *Simon Boccanegra* with Victor Maurel in the title role and Edouard de Reszke as Fiesco. In a letter to Verdi, Giulio Ricordi observed that in the last three performances Tamagno "having sung the opera several times now, had come to understand both the music and the action of his role better... he had moments of happy inspiration and



Palermo, casa editrice Salvatore Biondo, 1898? Reprinted in its entirety in Piovano, op. cit.). At the outset of his career Tamagno had to endure considerable financial hardship because he sent all his modest earnings to his mother. Perhaps this need to save money for his family was the fateful seed of the parsimony for which he became notorious? De Amicis says that "No other famous singer was ever so generous with his own voice", and it was easy for friends to persuade him to sing for them in private. This generosity extended to giving his voice for charity, which he was always eager to do. It was when it came to spending money or bargaining with impresarios that Tamagno's parsimony rose to the surface. In a letter of 4th November 1886 to Giulio Ricordi, Verdi says: "I would not have the courage to make him spend about a hundred Lire after I saw him travelling from Genoa to Milan with his little girl in second class!" There is scarcely a book of reminiscences by his fellow musicians that does not contain some amusing anecdote about his stinginess; however, this eccentricity in no way prevented Tamagno from being a well-loved comrade. Everyone remarks that he was simple, good-humoured, modest and highly professional. Once he had wrung his extraordinarily high fee from some suffering impresario he always turned up regularly at rehearsals and sang them in full voice.

Tamagno was an "unmarried father", openly proud of his illegitimate daughter in an epoch when such things were normally not mentioned. Not even his descendants today know the identity of the mysterious aristocratic lady who on the 2nd September 1879 gave birth to his daughter Margherita (named after his mother). De Amicis tells us that "for years he was a mother to her; he dressed her, sewed her buttons on, tucked her up in bed and sang her sweetly to sleep..." Margherita is believed to have inherited about eight million lire, making her one of the richest women in Italy. Within a few years the unlucky business speculations of her

PERSONAGGI	
OTELLO, maresciallo dell'Armata Veneta ..	TAMAGNO FRANCESCO
JAGO, aiutante ..	MAUREL MAUREL
CASSIO, capo di squadra ..	FRANCESCO GIOVANNI
RODRIGO, giurisperito Veneziano ..	FRANCESCO ROBERTO
LODOVICO, ambasciatore della Repubblica Veneta ..	NAVARRINI FRANCESCO
MONTANO, professore di Orlo nel governo dell'isola di Cipro ..	LIARONTA NAPOLITANO
UN ARALDO ..	FR. N.
DESDEMONA, moglie di Otello ..	CAVATTA ANTONIA
EMILIA, moglie di Jago ..	MONTANETTI ERINA

Soldati e Marina della Repubblica Veneta.
 Contidoro e Gentiluomini Veneziani. — Popolani Ciproiti d'ombro e tessè.
 Uomini d'arme Greci, Dalmati, Albanesi. — Fanciulli dell'Isola.
 Un Tavernaiuolo. — quattro servi di taverna. — Basso cirrino.

SCENA: UNA CITTA' DI MARE NELLA ISOLA DI CIPRO.
 EPPOCA: LA FINE DEL SECOLO XV.

Cast list of the first performances in Milan in February 1887.

around the audience to great enthusiasm.” In 1884 he returned to La Scala to create *Don Carlo* in Verdi’s new arrangement of the work in four acts. A letter of Verdi to Ricordi stipulates that “in the duet with the Queen, the tenor should sing as though fainting, with a veiled voice and ... not leaning over wide-eyed trying to follow the beat....”, which sounds like typical Verdian doubts about Tamagno’s ability to enter fully into his ideas. On another occasion he worries Ricordi about the rehearsals: “Don’t try to tell me that the singers have studied their parts and know the opera. I don’t believe a word of it. Two things they certainly do not know: how to pronounce their words clearly and how to sing strictly in time. These qualities are more essential in *Don Carlos* than in all my other operas.” Tamagno’s success was overwhelming, and the critic Filippo Filippi wrote of him in *La Perseveranza*: “Tamagno comes back showing great progress in his manner of singing, of phrasing, of shading effects, singing in mezza voce, bringing out the accents of impassioned music and of immersing himself in the character he represents.... I cannot help warning the esteemed tenor, however, that he comes rather too often to the very front of the stage to sing his most energetic phrases....”

On the 26th December 1886 the future cast of *Otello* - Tamagno, Maurel, Romilda Pantaleoni and Francesco Navarini - under the baton of Franco Faccio, opened the Scala season in *Aida*. Tamagno eagerly made himself available for rehearsals with Verdi and Faccio and Verdi’s often expressed doubts and hesitations are well documented. We might quote his letter to Faccio of the 29th October 1886: “I urge you make Tamagno, when he arrives, thor-

oughly study his part. He is so imprecise in his reading of music that I really want him to study the role with a thorough musician who can get him to sing the notes with their full value and in time.” Ricordi was able to reassure him that “Tamagno is studying every day with Faccio, with all his heart and with the greatest love, and that Faccio is rather pleased with him.”

Giorgio Gualerzi has shown the development of the relationship between composer and singer, singer and role (*Gualerzi, Esultate! Otello c’è: si chiama Tamagno in the volume Il Titanico Oracolo / Francesco Tamagno published by the Teatro Regio, Turin in 1997*). In Boito’s words: “Giuseppe Verdi had decided that Tamagno should take the leading role in the appalling tragedy even before composing it; he was, therefore, the first to guess that he would be capable of a formidable performance. Then, when the opera was ready and put into rehearsal he was the first to admire Tamagno as singer and tragedian; in fact, the Maestro’s expectations were greatly surpassed.”

OTELLO AND AFTER

The first night of *Otello* took place on the 5th February 1887; there were 25 triumphant performances. The Scala company with Faccio set off on a tour, giving eight performances at the Costanzi, Rome in April and eight at La Fenice, Venice, in May. Tamagno repeated *Otello* at the San Carlo, Naples, at the Teatro Argentina, Rome, at the Colon, at the Politeama Garibaldi, Palermo, the Carlo Felice, Genoa, and at the Lyceum Theatre, London. In June 1888 Tamagno escorted Adelina Patti to the Teatro Politeama, Buenos Aires, to hear the local première of *Otello* (in a “pirate” version unauthorized either by Verdi or Ricordi) with the great tenor Roberto Stagno, who was miscast in the title role. Tamagno appeared in 14 performances of the “authorized version” at the Colon in July. He then sang in Madrid and in other Italian theatres, appearing at the Teatro Pagliano, Florence in Franchetti’s *Asrael* in April 1889.

The London impresario M. L. Mayer engaged Tamagno, Maurel, the conductor Franco Faccio and the forces of La Scala to give twelve performances of *Otello* at the Lyceum, the first performance being on the 5th July 1889. Critics pulled out all their superlatives to describe Maurel’s Iago and were deeply impressed by Tamagno’s Otello.

Patti’s manager, Henry E. Abbey, engaged the diva to tour North America in opera, yet another “Farewell Tour”, over the winter of 1889-90. Tamagno joined the company which included Nordica, Albani, Fabbri, Del Puente and Castelmarty: the conductors were Luigi Arditi and Romualdo Sapiro. He made his U.S.A. debut as Arnoldo in *Guglielmo Tell* in Chicago on the 11th December 1889. During the tour he also sang *Il Trovatore*, *Aida*, *Gli Ugonotti*, *Otello*, *L’Africana* and *Mefistofele*, appearing in Mexico City, San Francisco, Denver, Louisville, Boston, New York and Philadelphia; he cancelled only three performances.

Amongst later highlights of Tamagno’s career were further performances of *Otello* with Maurel in Buenos Aires and Nice. In Moscow his Iago was Kaschmann. Returning to Madrid he sang Puccini’s revised version in three acts of *Edgar*. In a letter to Tamagno dated 15 January 1892, Puccini writes “I can always hear the sound of your divine voice in my ear and think of the extraordinary, the inspired interpreter who will sing my music!” Tamagno declined to sing *Guglielmo Tell* at the Rossini cente-

nary celebrations in Pesaro that year and appeared only in a miscellaneous concert on the 27th July, in which he sang the duet “Le minaccie” from *La forza del destino* with Delfino Menotti and the trio from *I Lombardi*. Monaldi gives us a vivid description of Tamagno singing to an importunate mob of admirers outside his hotel:

“...he stepped onto the balcony, bareheaded, and in the sepulchral silence of those five or six thousand people crowded into every corner, sang his famous *Esultate*. Like everyone else I had had no idea of what Tamagno’s voice would be like in the open air, and supposed only logically that the acoustic effect would certainly be less than in a theatre; quite the contrary! Tamagno’s voice suggested to me a silver trumpet, animated by the breath of the famous Brizzi of Bologna! A quite prodigious ring and power. Almost everyone in Pesaro heard the blast of that human trumpet echoing through the night, and many were the windows that were flung open, even in the most distant streets, so that people might admire that formidable sound. And when, urged on by the frantic applause of the crowd, Tamagno sang the *Esultate* a second time, at least half the citizens of Pesaro gathered that that was the voice of Tamagno, the only one capable of such a prodigious feat.” (*G. Monaldi, Cantanti celebri del secolo XIX, Roma, Nuova Antologia [1929].*)

In January 1894, Tamagno began his long connection with the Monte Carlo Opera, then under the inspired direction of Raoul Gunsbourg. He appeared in fourteen operas during eight seasons. In 1899 he received 6,500 francs per performance for three performances each of *Otello* and *Aida* and 10,000 francs each for four performances of Isidore De Lara’s *Messaline*, in which he created the role of Hélio. In 1900 he earned 124,740 francs for fourteen performances, over 26% of the opera budget for the year. (*See T. J. Walsh, Monte Carlo Opera 1879-1909, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1975.*)

In October and November 1894 Tamagno sang in Mexico City before going on to New York for his only season as a member of the Metropolitan Opera, singing 51 performances of eight operas in New York and on tour in Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Boston, Chicago and St. Louis. His first “official” appearance at the Metropolitan was on the 21st November 1894 in *Guglielmo Tell* with Ancona, de Reszke and Plançon, after which he appeared in *Aida*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il Trovatore*, *Otello*, *Sansone e Dalila*, *L’Africana* and, for the only time in his career, *Cavalleria rusticana*. He appeared in several Sunday Evening Concerts, and sang Rossini’s *Stabat Mater* three times (lucky the audiences that heard him with Nordica, Scalchi and Plançon!). He sang in the concluding gala concert on the 30th April, but on the 13th May he was already making his Covent Garden debut as Otello. He also sang *Il Profeta* (with Giulia Ravogli), *Il Trovatore* and *Gli Ugonotti* (with Melba, Albani, Ravogli, Ancona and Plançon). A private performance of *Il Trovatore* was given for Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle on the 24th May.

During 1896 and 1897 there were further performances of *Otello* in St. Petersburg with Battistini as Iago and in Paris where he sang at the Opéra in Italian, at the time an unheard-of proceeding. Rose Caron, Jean François Delmas and the other soloists sang with him in Italian, while the chorus sang in French. There were also guest performances in various German opera houses. The great tenor was now showing signs of slowing down, his health beginning to fail through heart trouble. He returned to La Scala in April 1899 for *Guglielmo Tell*, one of the crowning tri-

This Morning, at 2 o'clock,

OTELLO

Grand Opera, in Four Acts,
 By VERDI.
 Libretto by ANTONIO BOITO.

Otello	...	...	...	...	...	Sig. TAMAGNO.
Jago	...	...	...	...	...	Sig. MAUREL.
Cassio	...	...	...	...	...	Sig. PAROLI.
Rodrigo	...	...	...	...	...	Sig. DURINI.
Lodovico	...	...	...	...	...	Sig. SILVESTRI.
Montano	...	...	...	...	...	Sig. MARINI.
Desdemona	...	...	...	...	...	Sigra. CATANEO.
Emilia	...	...	...	...	...	Sigra. MATTIUCCELLI.

ACT I.
 OUTSIDE THE CASTLE.
 ACT II.
 A HALL ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE CASTLE.
 ACT III.
 THE GRAND HALL OF THE CASTLE.
 ACT IV.
 THE BEDROOM OF DESDEMONA.
 PLACE - A STRAITS IN CANTON. PERIOD - END OF THE 15TH CENTURY.
 New scenery specially painted for the London production by
 Sig. G. ZWISLOCKI.
 New Dresses by Sig. VIGNERELLI.
 Properties, Jewellery, etc., Sig. BIANCHI.
 The Chorus and Orchestra from La Scala, Milan.
 Conductor - - - Sig. FACCIO.
 (of La Scala, Milan.)

The first London cast performing at The Lyceum 5th July 1889

umphs of his career, and later in the month sang Poliuto at the San Carlo, Naples. His last opera seasons included Covent Garden (*Otello*, *Aida* and *Messaline* in June-July 1901) and one last gala performance of *Otello* for the Kaiser at the Argentina, Rome on the 5th May 1903. Dottor Piovano has established that Tamagno’s very last public appearance was in a concert at the Circolo degli Artisti in Turin on the 27th March 1905. One fascinating discovery of Dottor Piovano’s is that in concerts, Tamagno would sing the operatic excerpts in costume, and yet another is that Tamagno almost never sang excerpts from *Otello* in concert.

At the beginning of May 1905 Tamagno, who had gone to pass Easter in his villa at Varese, had a severe attack of angina pectoris, from which he had been suffering for a long time: as early as the rehearsals for *Otello* in 1887 he was kept in bed for a while with chest pains. Regular health bulletins were issued by the newspaper *La Stampa*, as if the great tenor were a member of the royal family. After some weeks of apparent progress Tamagno suffered a cerebral haemorrhage on the 19th August, and died on the 31st August after a second attack. He was buried in the cemetery of Turin on the 5th September: Arrigo Boito was among the pall-bearers.

TAMAGNO THE MAN

The popular writer Edmondo De Amicis wrote a short biography of Tamagno (*Francesco Tamagno. Ricordi della sua vita*,