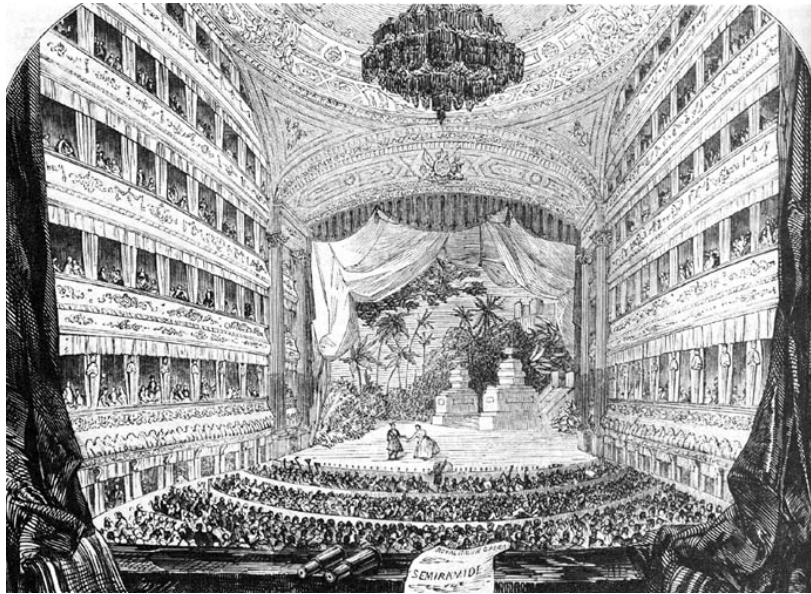


Flautists of the Royal Italian Opera By Stuart Scott



The years of Covent Garden's Royal Italian Opera (1847-1892) were marked by a particularly interesting group of flautists. All of them were singled out as being the best players in London during that period. Most of them were interested in or actually contributed to the development of their chosen instrument and their technical prowess was second to none.

It must be remembered that in 1847, the very year in which the Royal Italian Opera opened its doors, Theobald Boehm made his first metal flutes with cylindrical bore and covered keys. Although quick to take up Boehm's ring-key flute model in 1841, John Clinton, then professor of flute at the Royal Academy, declined the offer of a licence to manufacture the 1847 model flute. These instruments were subsequently produced by Rudall and Rose in London and by Godfroy and Lot in Paris. They were soon in demand and many players, who had started out on the old system eight-key flutes, were quick to make the change to a Boehm system flute.

It is probable that professional flautists in England made that change within 10 to 15 years or so of 1847; and with that change came a great development of tone and technique. Through this flautists made their presence felt in the orchestra and were able to compete and complement other instruments in tone and volume. This, of course, was very important to the professional flautists who sat in an orchestra of some 80 players. When one considers the fact that the Band of the Coldstream Guards was often used to augment the Royal Italian Opera orchestra, it is not so surprising perhaps that flautists were eager to try the new Boehm instruments in an attempt to hold their own in this unusually huge body of players.

The nineteenth century was a period of great innovation for the flute when almost all aspects of the instrument were being modified, changed or improved. Of the numerous models available at mid-century, professional players eventually took up the Boehm flute which in its turn underwent numerous modifications and additions. However, some players stuck to their old system flutes as they found mechanical changes difficult to cope with during a busy career.



José Ribas

One such player was José Ribas (1796-1861), principal flute at the Royal Italian Opera 1847-1851. He preferred to make improvements to his own flute rather than take up the new system. He played a wooden flute with eight or nine keys, larger holes and a bigger bore than those in common use at the time. His modifications brought about an improved intonation and a more powerful tone.

Rockstro states that he heard Ribas at Her Majesty's Theatre, "playing the most difficult passages with consummate ease, and with such a clear, full tone that not a note was lost. In the matter of fullness and power of tone throughout the compass of his instrument, Ribas was perhaps unequalled".

Ribas seems to have had something of a colourful career before coming to London around 1825. He was born at Burgos, Spain on 16th July 1796 and as a youngster studied both flute and clarinet with his father who was a bandmaster in a Spanish infantry regiment. He soon found himself serving in his father's regimental band during the Peninsular War (1808-1814) when he was taken prisoner by the French. He was rescued from the island of Funen by the British and subsequently served under Wellington, being present at the Battle of Toulouse (1814).

On leaving the army, Ribas settled in Oporto and studied flute with Parado, a well respected Portuguese flautist. He travelled Spain and Portugal performing on flute and clarinet and by the early 1820's had secured a position of principal flute at the Lisbon Opera, and that of first clarinet with the Philharmonic Society of Oporto.

Arriving in London around 1825 he continued to perform on both instruments, sometimes in the same programme, but eventually he made a name for himself as a flautist and was appointed second flute to Charles Nicholson at the King's Theatre in 1835. Two years later, on the death of Nicholson, he became principal.

Ribas occupied many prestigious positions in London orchestras including that of principal flute at the Philharmonic Concerts (1838-1851) where he played alongside William Card (1788-1861) who was one of the first professionals to adopt Boehm's 1832 model flute. It was during his time at the Philharmonic Concerts that he played at the first performance in England (27 May 1844) of

Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Apparently, Mendelssohn was so pleased with his playing at the rehearsal that he asked Ribas to play it three more times saying that he had no idea that the piece could be made to sound so effective.

In London at least, Ribas seems to have made his reputation through his activities as an orchestral player rather than as soloist but there must have been much opportunity to appear in recital or as a soloist with orchestras, if only to represent his own work as composer of flute solos, some of which still survive. There are a good number of published pieces for flute and piano, duets for two flutes, a few for flute and clarinet and an unpublished concerto for flute and orchestra.

When Ribas took his seat in the Royal Italian Opera orchestra in 1847, he found himself looking at a totally refurbished opera theatre and London audiences were about to experience opera performances of a much higher standard than those of previous years. This due to the selection of orchestral players and singers to a certain extent, but not least of all to the conductor.

With orchestral players representing London's best and under the direction of Michael Costa, the Royal Italian Opera opened its first season on April 6th 1847 with a performance of *Semiramide*. Grisi, Alboni, Mario and Salvi were hailed as great singers by the enraptured audience but the critic writing in *The Musical World* (Vol.XXII No.34, August 21 1847) was eager to point out that, "the instant the band was heard its power was felt. The overture was magnificently played. The quickness and precision of the allegro passages, the mellowness and suavity of the andante, the accuracy of the solos and the thunder of the fortes were never equalled. The band was faultless".

Costa, once described by Sir George Grove as, "a splendid drill sergeant", had succeeded in bringing discipline into the orchestra. He was careful to edit scores and parts before rehearsals and through reorganizing the positions of his players, achieved a better blend and balance between sections. This new layout of course, became the basis of our modern platform arrangement of orchestral forces. Costa's work with the orchestra meant that singers didn't have to struggle to be heard. The orchestra could actually maintain a piano or pianissimo quite easily, something which previously, London orchestras had only been able to approach by having half their number remain 'tacet' throughout solos and arias.

Ribas gave five years of his London career to the orchestra of the Royal Italian Opera, playing seventeen different operas in the first season alone. He was partnered for the first few years by de Folly, a successful French piccolo soloist with Jullien's band, and in his last years by John Clinton who eventually replaced him.

On August 7th 1851, Ribas played a Farewell Concert and left England soon after in order to retire but not before making a final tour of Spain and Portugal. He then settled once again in Oporto and spent his time teaching until his death in July 1861.

The vacant principal's chair at the opera theatre fell to Robert Sidney Pratten (1824-1868) who was admirably supported by John Clinton (1810-1864) as second flute. Born in Bristol, Pratten was a self taught musician who first appeared as a soloist in 1836, aged 12. His early career took him to Dublin where he played in the Theatre Royal but by 1845 he held the post of first flute at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. At the same time he appeared regularly as a soloist and his concerts were always well attended. One of his first solo appearances in London was in February 1845 when he played Nicholson's *Twelfth Fantasia – Air from Nina* in a 'Monster Concert' given at Covent Garden Theatre. Critics were motivated to write of his full tone and expressive style.



Robert Sidney Pratten

The following year Pratten made a tour of Europe (1846-47) which secured his reputation abroad, so much so that nearly twenty years later none other than Paul Taffanel was playing one of his compositions (*Marie Stuart Fantasia*) appearing as soloist at Pasdeloup's Paris concerts in 1864.

In Vienna Pratten performed before the Emperor at the Imperial Theatre where he was called for three times to receive applause from the appreciative audience and critics spoke of him as superior to any flautist heard there previously.

Returning to London, Pratten changed his eight-key Rudall and Rose flute for Siccama's model whilst still maintaining a busy work schedule. In 1852 he took up his position with the Royal Italian Opera and the following year also joined Jullien's band succeeding Richardson becoming one of the chief attractions of the Promenade Concerts.

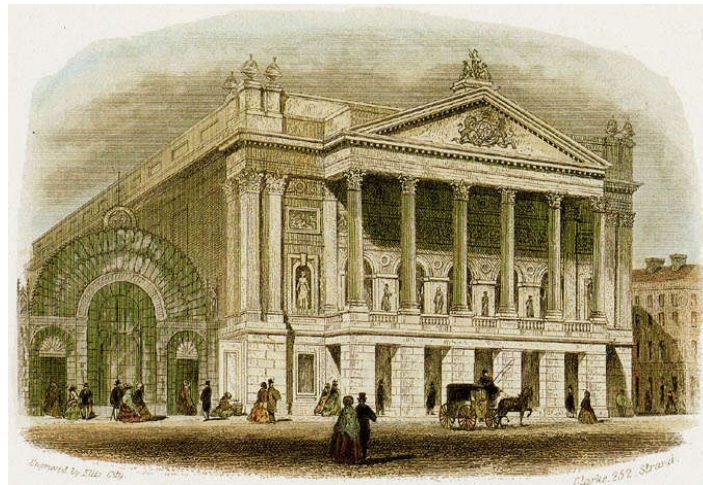
At the same time he began designing his own flute system and from about 1856, Boosey & Co. were producing instruments for him. At first he modified the eight-key flute keeping new keywork to an absolute minimum. However, he eventually produced his "Perfected Flute" which had large tone holes, a cylindrical bore and up to seventeen keys. The latter design obviously found favour with a number of players as Boosey & Co. were still producing Pratten's model in 1900. Their catalogue listed Pratten conical flutes with eight, ten, twelve, fourteen or seventeen keys and Pratten cylinder flutes with ten, twelve, fourteen or seventeen keys.

Using flutes of his own design, Pratten played not only in the Royal Italian Opera orchestra but at concerts of the Philharmonic and Sacred Harmonic Societies and The Orchestral Union where on May 13th 1854 he performed his own Concert Stuck with orchestra at the Hanover Square Rooms. His friend and colleague, R.S. Rockstro noted that, "His performance of this fine composition was simply superb". Pratten's playing was said to have been powerful in tone, especially in the lower register, perfect in intonation and remarkably accurate.

On March 5th 1856 Covent Garden was burnt to the ground and the Royal Italian Opera was temporarily transferred to the Lyceum Theatre. For Pratten it was business as usual despite the

rivalry from opera performances being given at Her Majesty's Theatre under the direction of Luigi Arditi. Of course, his appearances with other orchestras and as a soloist continued.

No time was lost in rebuilding the theatre at Covent Garden. The new opera house, the third and present theatre on the same site, opened on 15th May 1858 with a performance of Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*. Needless to say, Her Majesty's Theatre had already offered the same programme the previous month when Thérèse Titiens made her debut on April 13th. However, the Royal Italian Opera orchestra, still the élite band of the capital, accompanied some of the greatest singers of the day in lavish productions, attracting audiences to their new theatre.



Royal Italian Opera, 1858

In 1860 Pratten would have heard the great Grisi for the last time as it was announced that she had been engaged for twelve last performances before retiring from the stage. As it turned out these 'last' performances became almost twenty and at the end of the season there was no definite news of her departure.

Meanwhile, when not busy at the opera, Pratten would take opportunities to appear as soloist. Sandwiched between performances of *Martha* given on Tuesday 19th June and Gluck's *Orfeo e Eurydice* on Wednesday 27th June, Pratten appeared at Collard's new concert room in a *Matinée Musicale*. According to *The Musical World*, the concert given on Thursday 21st June was, "a very elegant affair and attracted a large crowd of fashionables". Pratten played two fantasias of his own, one on *Marie Stuart*, the other on *Il Traviatore*, with great success using his new 'Perfected Flute', maintaining splendid tone and brilliant execution throughout. Having already performed in a quintet by Kuhlau at the opening of the concert, he later joined his friend R.S. Rockstro in accompanying Madame Rieder in an air from *Etoile du Nord*, for soprano and two flutes. There was also a performance of Pratten's song, *O tu'l piu bel sospir*, given by Augusta Thomson. With his wife performing on the guitar and Robert Sidney taking on the roles of composer and performer, the *Matinée Musicale* was indeed a Pratten affair.

The following season at the opera, Pratten and his colleagues supported Adelina Patti, who made her debut on 14th May 1861, appearing as Amina in *La Sonnambula*. Over the following seasons her reputation went from strength to strength, and Costa's orchestra continued playing to its own very high standards. But certain change for the orchestra was imminent when Pratten became suddenly ill whilst playing the obbligato to "*O rest in the Lord*" (*Elijah*) at Exeter Hall in November 1867. He never recovered and eventually died at Ramsgate on 10th February 1868. His obituary in *The Musical World* (22nd February 1868) stated that, "As an orchestral performer he was in high request, and his position as a principal flute can hardly be replaced. He was of a kind, gentle disposition, and greatly respected

by all who knew him". Oluf Svendsen, Pratten's partner in the opera orchestra must have felt a great sense of loss. They had played together for five years or so.

From the very start, the Royal Italian Opera orchestra had been more than fortunate in being able to appoint flautists of the finest calibre. Pratten's first partner, John Clinton (1810-1864), who had already succeeded Richardson as principal teacher at the Royal Academy of Music (1842-55) and played second to Ribas from about 1848/49, was one of the first to take up and teach the Boehm flute in England. He wrote what was probably the first English book of instruction for the Boehm flute – *A Theoretical & Practical Essay on the Boehm Flute as Manufactured by Mssrs. Rudall & Rose*.

In about 1845 Clinton started a flute making business. His flutes had a key system which was an adaptation of Boehm's but at the same time, they maintained a close relationship to the old eight-key flute. His 1848 model was manufactured for him by Henry Potter between 1848 and 1854. It was produced in wood, a material Clinton thought preferable to metal.



John Clinton

In 1862 he brought out a flute model with cylindrical bore and equally graduated tone holes which diminished in size towards the head. This instrument won a gold medal award at the London Exhibition the same year but Clinton continued to modify his designs, bringing out a further model the following year retaining the old fingering system and closed holes.

He seems to have had some success with his later model flutes as Rudall Carte were still producing Clinton model flutes at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, they had disappeared from their catalogue after 1911.

With the acceptance of the Boehm flute and his own modifications of it, Clinton achieved not only the fullness of power and tone sought by many players of that period but also a more flexible technique. The use of natural harmonics brought into use by the Boehm system offered Clinton a device for simplifying difficult passages in the third octave. In his teaching he would demonstrate the effectiveness of harmonic fingerings in passages from Rossini's *Overture, La Gazza Ladra*, Méhul's *Overture, Les Deux Aveugles de Toledé* and Cherubini's *Overture Anacréon*. No doubt harmonic fingerings stood him in good stead as a performer at the Royal Italian Opera.

Although a dedicated teacher, Clinton followed a successful performing career. He played as a member of the Philharmonic Society and in 1847 became principal flute at Her Majesty's Theatre. In his early thirties he was already highly regarded as a performer and his publications were also considered accomplished by his contemporaries. He wrote over a hundred compositions for the flute and several essays and instructions for the student.

As a member of the Royal Italian Opera orchestra, Clinton had spent at least two years playing second to Ribas and a further ten years with Pratten. He seems to have retired from the orchestra in about 1862, dying two years later. His place in the orchestra was taken by Oluf Svendsen (1832-1888), a quiet, modest man who also followed Clinton as professor at the Royal Academy of Music.

Born at Christiania, Denmark on 19th April 1832, Svendsen first studied with Niels Petersen in Copenhagen and later with Matthieu André Reichert (1830-c.1870) at the Brussels Conservatoire. He came to England in 1855 to play for Jullien at his Covent Garden Promenade Concerts and the following year became principal in the Crystal Palace Orchestra (1856-58). Two years later he joined Queen Victoria's private band, remaining in that post until his death in 1888.



Oluf Svendsen

Like Clinton, he managed to combine his teaching at the Academy with a busy performing career and before arriving at the Royal Italian Opera he was already busy at concerts given by the Philharmonic Society (1861-85) and performances at Her Majesty's Theatre. There he appeared as soloist in 1865 at one of Arditi's Grand Vocal and Instrumental Concerts alongside a Mr Jensen who played piccolo solos.

Svendsen had spent his first five years (1863-68) at the Royal Italian Opera sitting next to Pratten and completed his time there playing alongside John Radcliff. He had a fine reputation as an orchestral player and soloist. He was probably the first to bring a silver flute into the Royal Italian Opera orchestra and it is said that he produced a beautiful tone. His exquisite phrasing and the singing effects he produced in his playing brought him to the forefront of his profession.

In April 1868 John Radcliff joined Svendsen, replacing Pratten as first flute and the season opened with a performance of *Norma*. The writer in *The Musical World* commented, "About the excellence of the orchestra of the Royal Italian Opera it would be superfluous to speak. Nothing could be more admirable than their playing on Tuesday, under their justly famous chief, Mr Costa". There were forty operas in the repertory at that time from which the management could draw up their prospectus for the season and Adelina Patti was given a number of different roles to perform establishing herself as the favourite soprano.

However, all seems not to have been well between conductor and management at this time, as Michael Costa resigned his post as musical director and Luigi Arditi was engaged to open the 1869 season with a performance of *Norma*. Several of the orchestral players resigned after Costa left and Sainton, the leader, was replaced by J.T.Carrodus. Radcliff and Svendsen remained loyal to the band helping to present *Fidelio*, *Don Giovanni*, *Robert le Diable* and *Le Prophete* amongst other operas of the season.

John Radcliff (1842-1917) measured up well to the reputations of his illustrious predecessors. Born in Liverpool on 6th December 1842, he made his first concert appearance at nearby Birkenhead when only twelve years old. Three years later he headed for London where he attended the Royal Academy of Music. He may well have received instruction from Svendsen and once there, he adopted the Boehm flute. He started work as a professional the following year. According to Macaulay Fitzgibbon, his tone was remarkably powerful recalling that of Nicholson and his sight reading was renowned.



John Radcliff

True to nineteenth century tradition this popular player composed music for the flute, appeared as soloist and then began to design his own flutes in about 1870. He worked on a simplification of Carte's 1851 model, retaining much of the old fingering and paired thumb keys for the left hand. The system had a closed G sharp and was manufactured by Rudall Carte. Radcliff continued to play a conical bore version of his own model flute into the early 1880's and a number of other professionals

took it up. Production was long lasting and it was later adopted most notably by the virtuoso John Amadio (1887-1964), who used a Radcliff flute throughout the whole of his amazing career.

The Royal Italian Opera performances of the 1870's were dominated by singers such as the tenor, Nicolini and soprano, Adelina Patti of whom George Henschel once wrote, "Her vocal art was as perfect as human achievement can ever hope to be". In 1872 Emma Albani, aged 18 made her début at Covent Garden in the role of Amina in *La Sonnambula* and Oluf Svendsen relinquished his post as second flute to Odoardo Tamborini (1843-1882) who remained alongside Radcliff for the next ten years or so.

By the mid-1870's Pauline Rita was appearing at the rival Royalty Theatre to great acclaim and according to the writer in *The Theatrical Observer*, the Royal Italian Opera was showing "traces of crudeness" in their performance under Vianesi. He explained it away with the words, "for though most of the old instrumentalists were in their places there are some few strangers, and the orchestra can have little experience of playing together".

It is clear that either a number of changes in orchestral personnel had taken place at this time or perhaps the deputy system was taking its toll on a band which had long enjoyed being the best in London. It was not many more years before John Radcliff left the orchestra and made a final appearance at the Leeds Festival of 1883 before setting off for Australia, where in January 1884 he married the famous Pauline Rita.

Odoardo Tamborini may have left the orchestra at about the same time as Radcliff and made his way back to Milan where he died in 1882. He had started his career playing in theatres in Milan where he studied with Giuseppe Rabboni (1800-1856) and Francesco Rizzi (1808-1871) at the conservatory. Before arriving in London, Tamborini had been a teacher at the Civiche Scuole Popolari di Musica and director of the State Chapel in Milan. Although he started playing on an eight-key flute, many of which were made in Milan during the first half of the nineteenth century by makers such as Agostino Rampone, there is little doubt that by the 1870's Tamborini would have used a Boehm flute of some sort, despite his teacher's recommendations.



Odoardo Tamborini

It is uncertain who filled the vacant position of first flute on Radcliff's resignation but it is fairly certain that Jacob Victor Buzian (1842-?) played in the Royal Italian Opera orchestra between 1882 and 1900. He may have replaced Tamborini as second flute or even replaced Radcliff but certainly he played second to Frederick Griffith from about 1890.

He came to London from the Netherlands at some time prior to 1860, at which time he married and settled here. Other family members may have come too as the leader and solo violinist appearing with the Royal Aquarium band under Arthur Sullivan in February 1876 shared the same surname. He may or may not have been a relative of Jacob Buzian.

As a member of the Royal Italian Opera orchestra in the 1880's, Buzian would have contributed to performances of a high standard. Patti and Nicolini were appearing in Gounod's *Faust* to much adulation and *The Illustrated London News* (Vol.LXXXI, 22 July 1882) reported that, "In vocal brilliancy (particularly in the 'Jewel Song', which was encored) and in dramatic feeling in the deeper situations towards the close of the opera, Madame Patti displayed all her well-known excellence". In 1888 Buzian would have played for the first appearances of sopranos, Nellie Melba and Margaret Macintyre, each making their London debut in the same season.

It is not known what model flute Buzian would have used but it is almost certain it would have been a Boehm model. No evidence has come to light to suggest that he made solo appearances or composed music for the flute but as a member of the opera orchestra for nearly twenty years he undoubtedly played in other London orchestras. He lived in London all his working life and died there probably sometime during the first decade of the twentieth century.

The final years of the Royal Italian Opera were marked by the appointment of the remarkable Frederick Griffith (1867-1917) to the position of first flute in about 1890. Born in Swansea, Griffith gained his first successes at the Welsh National Eisteddfod and at Cardiff before entering the Royal Academy of Music to study with Svendsen. Further studies were undertaken with Paul Taffanel in Paris from October 1888.

On returning to London he gave solo recitals, became director of the Wind Instrument Chamber Music Society and made tours in the provinces with Melba. During one such tour he took part in a Harrison Concert at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester on 10th November 1897. The other participants included Melba, Belle Cole, Ben Davies and Douglas Powell. Landon Ronald was the accompanist.



Frederick Griffith

Owing to the time spent with Taffanel, Griffith's tone had the delicacy of French players and Taffanel himself reported that the quality of his tone was good and even in all registers. It is said that his exquisite delicacy of tone was brought about by always practising everything pianissimo. In adopting Taffanel's style of flute playing Griffith must have appeared to his colleagues as a very individual flautist.

However, his individualism didn't hinder his work in the musical establishment. He became professor of flute at the Royal Academy and was always in demand as soloist. He composed music of his own and was also dedicatee of two pieces by Edward German – *Suite and Saltarello*.

Performances at the Royal Italian Opera in the 1890's were not always received well by G.B. Shaw who after hearing *Carmen* complained that he hadn't heard a single phrase of elegance or individuality from the woodwind to approach that of Radcliff. He went on to say that, "simply by assassinating less than a dozen men I could leave London without a single orchestral wind instrument player of the first rank". Did Griffith's performance of those famous flute solos in *Carmen* prompt Shaw to point out that he didn't like his Parisian style, hinting at the same time, that Radcliff's was more acceptable?

Throughout the season (1890) Griffith and Buzian played for Tetrizzini's first appearance as Leonora in *Il Tavoratore*, Albani in *La Traviata*, Melba in *Lohengrin* and a very successful *Die Meistersinger*. The orchestra at that time played for different conductors and from comments made by Shaw it seems that there was certainly some inconsistency. He complained about Beignani's conducting and the string playing on 4th June for Tetrizzini's appearance in *Il Tavoratore*. Later, after a performance of *Aida* in October he wrote, "Beignani, the conductor barely did more than keep band and singers together". In November he thought the strings left a good deal to be desired in a performance of Gluck's *Orfeo*, but admitted that, "more justice was done to the scoring for the wind, which far from growing old fashioned, only becomes more admirable by the light of recent developments in orchestration".

The orchestra working under different managers and conductors was probably not enjoying the high reputation it had made for itself in previous decades. It still had the best players in London but changing tastes and conditions conspired to make things difficult. The theatre became the Royal Opera House in 1892. There were winter and summer seasons of opera and ballet but in between the theatre was either closed or used for films, cabarets, lectures and dancing.

Griffith and Buzian had completed their time at the theatre by the turn of the century. However, Griffith continued to tour the provinces with Melba and in 1902 set off with her party for Australia. For Griffith there was no career in the opera house to come back to as the Royal Opera House was soon to be requisitioned by the Ministry of Works and used as a furniture store during the First World War. He made his home at Thames Ditton and died there on 28th May 1917.

The flautists under discussion here were all well respected professionals who were not only good players but contributed much to the development of the flute and its repertoire in the nineteenth century. In their search for a bigger sound and virtuoso effects they may or may not have been influenced by Nicholson's earlier flute improvements. It has been said that Charles Nicholson's brilliance and powerful tone was one factor which led Boehm to develop his own flute designs but the "improvements" on Boehm's system, made by the likes of Pratten and Radcliff, remain important developments in the history of the flute, simply because they were generated by men who were flautists themselves rather than manufacturers.

Nicholson, who taught at the Royal Academy of Music, is often credited with being the instigator of a so called 'English School' of flute playing. Many of the nineteenth century professional players would certainly have acknowledged Nicholson's experiments in flute design in their own quest for a bigger

sound. They were in pursuit of a more robust sound than that of the more delicate French players but exactly how they sounded and what similarity and individuality there was between players is difficult to determine. The flute sound of the pre-recording era is not available to us today.

Nevertheless, we may note, that the beginnings of the eminent flautists of the Royal Italian Opera were indeed diverse, to say the least. Of the flautists here mentioned only Clinton was possibly taught by Nicholson. However, it cannot be said for certain that he attended the Royal Academy as a student or received instruction from Nicholson although it appears that Clinton he definitely knew him. All the rest received instruction in other countries or, in the case of Pratten, were self taught. Svendsen studied in Copenhagen and Brussels, Tamborini in Milan and Buzian in the Netherlands. They had no experience of English flautists during their formative years. Even on arriving in London they would have been playing in orchestras which included a good proportion of foreign players. They had no teachers or methods in common and probably continued to use techniques gained during their formative years. One is unable to say that these men constituted any particular school through initial instruction.

If there was an 'English School' of flute playing established by Nicholson it is more likely to have evolved through Richardson, Clinton and Benjamin Wells rather than the players at the Royal Italian Opera. By the turn of the century Griffith was seeking his own individual sound through Taffanel's teaching, shaking off any possible labels of national identity. It would only be a matter of two or three decades before others were doing the same.

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