

## FORGOTTEN ARTISTS

An occasional series by Christopher Howell

### 30. VICTORIA ELLIOTT (1923-1986)

I

The name of Victoria Elliott may mean for you, according to your tastes and perspectives, the soprano in Barbirolli's 1959 Hallé performance of Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony, an HMV selection from *Die Fledermaus* with Sadler's Wells singers under Vilem Tausky or a World Record Club selection from the *Song of Norway* under Michael Collins. My own personal recollection is of a slightly different nature, and I shall have to start by admitting something one hesitates to say in the best society. My stepfather's mother was a fortune-teller.



This was not something the family knew much about and our own futures remained strictly unforecast. It was a sideline we vaguely knew about until one winter, it may have been in 1970, we spent the Christmas period at her house. The heat pump that was my stepfather's brainchild (he was a pioneer of underfloor heating which has since become common) had exploded and our own house was unfit for habitation pending repair. Dramatic events tended to punctuate my earlier years. During our stay, my step-grandmother's front room, the one room in the house that was kept reasonably clean and tidy – her dining room mantelpiece was a family legend – was periodically off limits and we were shunted out of view while someone came for “a reading”. This was the only time the front door was used – family and drunk priests used the side door, which remained permanently unlocked during the day – so our stay left us little the wiser as to what went on. I did once come across her crystal ball, accidentally left in the front room, and peered into it curiously, trying to convince myself I could actually see something. I had to conclude that clairvoyance was not one of my gifts. I believe it was done with cards more than the crystal ball, in any case. Even more, my stepfather thought it was done just by listening and drawing likely conclusions. When a “client” mentions, as part of the preliminary chit-chat, “You know, my husband reckons we might be



able to manage a little trip abroad next year”, she will not necessarily make the connection when told half-an-hour and a “reading” later, in sepulchral clairvoyant tones, “Next year you may go on a long journey”. More even than this, my stepfather held that her “clients” did not really come for the “reading” at all. They were people that needed to unburden themselves about their problems, but not to the extent of committing to psychiatric or psychoanalytical help. That would be like admitting there was a real problem, whereas a visit to a fortune-teller might do just as well and could pass off as a joke. My step-grandmother, with the family, was a compulsive talker – there was no getting a word in edgeways – but it was believed this was a reaction against the stuff she had to hear professionally, and was in fact an attentive, sympathetic and positive listener when on the job. Be that as it may, for a many, many years, the great and good of the London Borough of Ealing thronged to 2 Rosebank Road, Hanwell – pictured

here on a snowy day – to have their fate revealed by Madame Katrina. Prominent among them were the Mayor of Ealing<sup>1</sup> and Victoria Elliott, opera singer.

My step-grandmother did not habitually gossip about her “clients”, but she did rather go overboard about Victoria Elliott who, apparently, was the victim of a conspiracy to keep her off the stage, the result of professional jealousy since, when she last sang Tosca, everybody said no one could move the public the way she could. As will be seen below, I have not traced any definite engagement by Victoria Elliott after 1970. Her last Sadler’s Wells performance was on a provincial tour in 1968 so, as far as major venues were concerned, her career seems to have been over by the time I met her. This would have been reason enough unburden herself to a listener ready to lend an uncritical ear to her tale of woe. Whereas a more musically competent listener might have thought, even if they did not actually say, that she had after all been singing leading roles for about twenty years and maybe the voice was showing a bit of wear and tear. I wonder if Madame Katrina foretold a great comeback but my step-grandmother, though gullible in one sense, was also canny. Probably she realized it was safer to stick to long voyages and mysterious strangers, plus a warning to keep clear of potholes and not loiter under falling trees.

So yes, I did meet her briefly. I wish I could relate some terrific story about a magnificently magnetic personality or at least a flamboyant hat. Offstage, I would say she was a very “normal”, rather business-like person. I recall her as well built without being fat, with a slightly olive complexion. I was introduced as the family’s up-and-coming musician, she offered the ritual non-committal words of polite encouragement, and that was that. I asked my father, a BBC sound engineer who had worked on many musical projects, if he knew anything about her. He replied airily, “Oh yes, she was on practically every BBC light opera production for years.” The BBC Genome site seemed at first deny this, producing very few hits for Elliott at all. Strangely, if you “tease” it, searching for Elliott together with another musician, a lot of “hidden” material emerges, more than enough light opera programmes under Vilem Tausky, Stanford Robinson and others to bear out my father’s contention. He would quite likely have been on the recording team for some of them – and it was decidedly not his cup of tea. I also asked my piano teacher, the much valued RAM Professor Alexander Kelly, if he remembered anything. He confirmed that she was a prominent opera singer years back, with a big voice and inclined to rather hammy gestures – he gave a few hilarious imitations of an opera diva’s stock-in-trade movements. It is revealing, perhaps, that both of them referred to her in the past. It has taken me until now to try and track down who Victoria Elliott really was, how big a career she had and, since the answer seems to be “pretty big”, why so few people remember her today.

### Biography

A brief biographical note together with Elliott’s roles in Scotland can be sourced at Opera Scotland<sup>2</sup>. Other references found on Internet seem to derive from this, unless there is a common source for all of them. A certain amount of information is available in various places about her appearances around the British Isles. Covent Garden has a searchable database, not entirely reliable as will be seen. Elliott’s appearances there were few. ENO does not have an online database going back to the Sadler’s Wells days, which is where the real core of Elliott’s activity seems to have been. Listings of programmes and autographs for sale sometimes provide useful data. Most significant, though is the obituary tribute by former ENO chorus member William McGovern<sup>3</sup>. This has considerably more detail than any other account I have seen, but not all of it tallies with

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia shows that the Mayor of Ealing holds office for a single year. Given my uncertainty over dates, I would not like to hazard a guess as to which Mayor(s) of Ealing paid Madame Katrina the honour of a visit. In any case, there is a likely tendency to describe someone as “Mayor of Ealing” who has held that office at some time in his life, whether he is the current incumbent or not.

<sup>2</sup> <http://operascotland.org/person/1338/Victoria-Elliott>, retrieved 1.11.2022.

<sup>3</sup> The Stage and Cinema, 27.3.1986.

information found elsewhere. I get the impression McGovern based his notice on memories rather than careful fact checking. With all due caution, however, I have used it as my primary source.

Victoria Elliott, who McGovern describes as “probably the nearest thing to a prima donna the [Sadler’s Wells] company ever produced”, was born in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, UK, in 1923<sup>4</sup>. She decided to become a singer at the age of six and McGovern lists her teachers as Irving Dennis and Max Kowalski, followed by Marcus Thompson at the Royal Academy of Music, Rudolpho Mele and, in the late 1950s, Dame Eva Turner. He also tells us that she took a six-month seminar in Italy, studying with Rosetta Pampanini. This is where accounts begin to diverge. All agree that Elliott studied with Rosetta Pampanini (1896-1973), a major Italian soprano who spent her last decades teaching, but no one else mentions Eva Turner. Another British singer who went to Pampanini was Amy Shuard (1924-1975), and there seems no doubt that she had previously studied with Eva Turner. Elliott’s and Shuard’s careers ran in close parallel during the 1950s, even alternating in the same roles in the same productions, though Shuard subsequently made the grade to Covent Garden regular and is better remembered today. So I wonder if McGovern, in mentioning Eva Turner, was not confusing the two singers.

Of the earlier teachers mentioned, Irving Dennis and Marcus Thompson are beneath the Internet radar, but Max Kowalski (1882-1956) had an interesting career. He was born in Poland, but the family moved to Germany in 1883. He had the curious distinction of writing a work called *Pierrot Lunaire* in the same year that Schoenberg was working on his own celebrated piece. He enjoyed a certain prominence in Germany until the 1930s, was imprisoned in Buchenwald and subsequently made his home in London. His later compositions were not published, but Elliott presented one of them in 1954. At least one critic thought she might not have bothered:

*Dr. Max Kowalski’s “Fünf Marienlieder” in the Festival Hall’s Recital Room on 14 January (Victoria Elliott accompanied by Louise Sumner) proved to be incongruously simple little trifles in the folkish style, whose model, perhaps, was a grossly simplified Brahms<sup>5</sup>.*

If by “Rudolpho Mele”, McGovern means Rodolfo Mele (1895-1974), he was an Italian actor, remembered for *Sposatevi ragazzi! (Wedding rehearsal)* (1932), who settled in Kensington, London, post-war. It is possible that Elliott sought his advice on stagecraft.

One source, not McGovern, states that Elliott made her début in 1940 as Siébel in Gounod’s *Faust* in 1940, but does not say where<sup>6</sup>. McGovern tells us that she gave concerts to troops during the Second World War, leading to concerts in London and the provinces. In 1944, she auditioned successfully for the Carl Rosa Company and joined, first as a chorus member, but rising to comprimari parts after six weeks and appearing as Marguérite (*Faust*), Antonia (*Tales of Hoffmann*) and Nedda (*Pagliacci*) before the year was out.

The Carl Rosa Opera Company toured the length and breadth of the British Isles. One of the many theatres it visited, the Hull New Theatre, has a list of its productions online<sup>7</sup>. Assuming the repertoire was the same in the other touring venues, this gives a fairly full picture of Elliott’s roles in this period, in *Rigoletto* (16.6.1944), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (21.6.1944), *Cavalleria Rusticana* (18.2.1945), *Rigoletto* again (16.3.1945), *Trovatore* (27.2 and 8.3.1946), *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* (2 and 7.3.1946), *Bohème* (2.4.1947) and a further *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci* (5.4.1947). We also know that she sang Nedda (*Pagliacci*) with the Carl Rosa

<sup>4</sup> One source has 1922: <https://www.historyforsale.com/victoria-elliott-typed-letter-signed-04-28-1960/dc80312>, retrieved 2.11.2022.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Mitchell, *Musical Times* 3.1954.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.historyforsale.com/victoria-elliott-typed-letter-signed-04-28-1960/dc80312>, retrieved 2.11.2022.

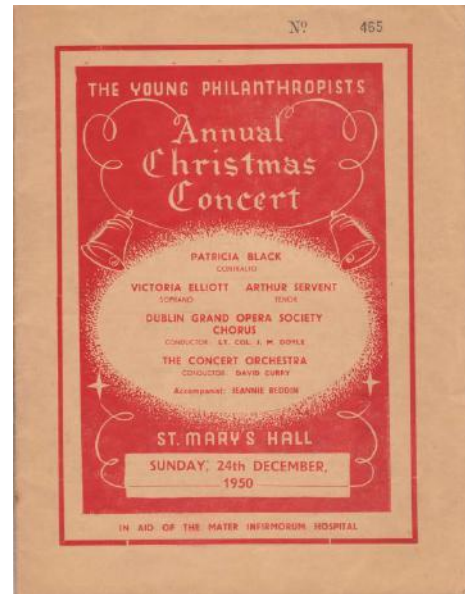
<sup>7</sup> <https://catalogue.hullhistorycentre.org.uk/files/l-dtnt.pdf>. Retrieved 2.11.2022.

Company in Aberdeen on 27.3.1946. These are not quite the roles McGovern lists, but she did sing Antonia and Marguerite in Scotland in 1946-7, presumably with the Carl Rosa.

In 1947, she left opera to concentrate on concert work. McGovern tells us that she “gave concerts with great regularity all over the British Isles”. He adds:

*Many readers will remember this vivacious young woman, beautifully attired invariably in velvet, with flashing dark eyes shining from a superb complexion, topped by full dramatic soprano tones of very high quality.*

And not only the British Isles. A fairly regular association with Ireland seems to have begun around this time, as the 1950 Dublin Christmas concert programme opposite shows. The somewhat unseasonal fare consisted of arias and duets from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Trovatore* and *Faust*.



It was not long before the siren call of opera had her back. According to McGovern, she was a founder member of the Welsh National Opera Company. Since it was created in 1946, this is not impossible, though the one definite date I have unearthed is in May 1951, when she sang Violetta (*Traviata*) with the company at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Cardiff<sup>8</sup>. McGovern states that she also sang Violetta for this company in Dublin in 1951-1952. It seems more likely that these performances were for the Dublin Grand Opera Society, with which she began to collaborate regularly in these years. Dates traced show her in *Bohème* (5.1951), *Butterfly* (12.51, alternating with Shuard), *Trovatore* (1952 and 1954) and *Simon Boccanegra* (12.1956, with Mackerras conducting). The *Trovatore* performance was given in Cork, and drew an enthusiastic review from the local critic:

*One got a very early and most favourable impression of the singing and acting capabilities of Miss Elliott ... from the second scene. Miss Elliott is a soprano with a wonderful range and great expression; the melody in her voice and her acting ability make her an ideal opera principal<sup>9</sup>.*

A rival to the Dublin Grand Opera Company was Vere Laurie’s Imperial Opera Company, which also gave tours in the English provinces. Elliott sang *Butterfly* for this company in (at least) Darlington and Torquay in 1948, the first of 300 appearances in the role, McGovern tells us<sup>10</sup>.

1952 seems to have been Elliot’s *Trovatore* year, for she sang Leonora both at Sadler’s Wells (3.3.1952) and Covent Garden (16.6.1952).

<sup>8</sup> Western Mail, 11.5.1951

<sup>9</sup> Cork press, undated cutting from 1952

<sup>10</sup> The press cutting is dated Darlington 1948.



Elliott's appearances at Covent Garden are one of the major divergences in the sources. According to Opera Scotland, her only appearances there were as Lady Macbeth and Santuzza in the 1959-60 season, whereas for McGovern, "From 1952 to 1957 she performed regularly at the Royal Opera Covent Garden, on the first occasion as Leonora in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* with an all Italian cast." The Covent Garden online performance database indicates that the 1959-60 Lady Macbeth and Santuzza performances were sung by Shuard, but it does confirm the 1952 *Trovatore*, though not the "all Italian cast". The Ulrica was Ebe Stignani and the conductor was Franco Capuana, but the other principals were Michael Langdon, Jess Walters and Leonne Mills. It was a single performance, the last in a run of six. The other alternating Leonoras were Gré Brouwenstijn, Hilde Zadek and Lucia Kelston (three performances). However, the ROH database seems not to take into account all second casts and last-minute changes. Another source<sup>11</sup> shows that Elliott returned as Leonora in the 1956-57 season, this time under Edward Downes and alternating with Zinka Milanov. It also confirms the Santuzza and Lady Macbeth appearances. The former, in the 1959-60 and 1960-61 seasons, alternated with Shuard, Marie Collier and Victoria de los Angeles, under Downes and Balkwill. As Lady Macbeth, she alternated again with Shuard. The conductor was Francesco Molinari-Pradelli. A sporadic presence, if not a regular one.

The Sadler's Wells *Trovatore* was another matter, for in that year Elliott became a member of the company and performed regularly with them, both in London and on provincial tours, for more than a decade. Subsequent roles of which I have definite information, and in some cases a recording, to be discussed below, include Tatiana (*Eugene Onegin*, 5.1952-1.1953, alternating with Shuard), Violetta (*Traviata*, 1.11.1952, in Hull New Theatre, 21.4.1953 and in Dundee in 4.1957), Luisa (*Luisa Miller*, 1953), Nedda (*Pagliacci*, 24.2.1954, a double bill with *Cavalleria* in which Shuard sang Santuzza and in Scotland, 11.1963), Amelia (*Simon Boccanegra*, 10.12.1955), Tosca (14.3.1956, on tour in Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee, 1957, Hull New Theatre, 5.6.1961, 7.2.1962 and 4.2.1964, London 6.2.1963, Bristol Hippodrome 14.5.1963), Giorgetta (*Il Tabarro*, 1957), Rosalinde (*Fledermaus*, London Coliseum, summer 1959, Hull New Theatre, 15.2.1960, Liverpool Empire Theatre, 21.5.1960) and Maddalena (*Andrea Chénier*, 12.12.1959).



SADLER'S WELLS OPERA.—Luisa pleads to the court for mercy—a scene from Verdi's opera *Luisa Miller* at Sadler's Wells. From the centre to the right are Luisa (Miss Victoria Elliott), Miller, her father (Mr. John Hargreaves), Rodolfo (Mr. Oreste Kirkop), and Count Walter (Mr. David Ward).

If this is all standard fare – though *Luisa*, *Tabarro* and *Chénier* are not heard that often in London – a revival of Weinberger's once-popular *Schwanda the Bagpiper* (14.1.1959) strayed further off the beaten track. Elliott was also willing to take on works in a more modern style. Back then, Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (20.1.1959, with David Ward under Alexander Gibson), still counted as "contemporary". J.W. (probably John Warrack) noted that "Victoria Elliott played out the protracted, tense exploration very movingly"<sup>12</sup>.

On 12 March 1953, Elliott sang Juliet in the first British performance of Sutermeister's *Romeo and Juliet*. A fairly recent recording of this opera aroused considerable interest, but J.A. in the *Musical Times* thought otherwise:

<sup>11</sup> <http://operaannals.blogspot.com/2020/05/royal-opera-house-covent-garden-london.html>, retrieved 3.11.2022

<sup>12</sup> Opera, 3.1959



SADLER'S WELLS OPERA.—A scene from Act I of the opera *Nelson*, which was performed for the first time last week at Sadler's Wells, London. The music is by Mr. Lennox Berkeley and the libretto by Mr. Alan Pryor-Jones. The above setting is the Palazzo Sessa in Naples, where a ball was being given in honour of Nelson's fiftieth birthday and the fiftieth of the Nile. In the centre are Mr. Robert Thomas as Nelson and Miss Victoria Elliott as Lady Hamilton.

*Sutermeister employs practically every operatic device except good music. The score is fascinating and nauseous by turns. ... Sutermeister's music will not bear the test of repetition ...*<sup>13</sup>

He added that "Victoria Elliott and Rowland Jones negotiated their difficult parts as the lovers", without telling us whether they did so well or badly.

Lennox Berkeley's *Nelson*, for which Elliott created the role of Lady Hamilton (22.9.1954), got more sympathetic consideration, though Donald Mitchell felt "it must be counted as

strictly a failure"<sup>14</sup>. He noted that Elliott was "a flamboyant Lady Hamilton, not always very secure of intonation".

Elliott's Dundee performance of *Violetta* was the result of a last-minute substitution, but drew another rave review from a local critic:

*Elizabeth Fretwell, who has been singing Violetta with success, was unable to appear through illness. This ill-chance resulted in a return to the part by Victoria Elliott, the company's leading dramatic soprano and an artiste of great experience. ... This extremely exacting part asks for skill in coloratura, dramatic power and lyrical grace, in addition to a range from gaiety to the pathos of death in emotional acting.*

*In a long operatic experience I have rarely seen and heard an all-round performance to equal Victoria Elliott's last night for sheer ability of vocal skill and acting. She transmitted the gaiety, passion and pathos of Violetta supremely well. At a score of points during her long evening's presence on the stage she figuratively gripped the audience by the intensity of her characterisation. Taking the renunciation scene and the letter-writing episode in Act II as an example, I thought her performance here subtly moving. In Act IV, in the shadow of approaching death, though re-united with Armand, she presented the famous gamut of conflicting emotions most convincingly. Her coloratura ornament singing was highly skilled, and the power of her voice in the dramatic passages left nothing to be desired*<sup>15</sup>.

A year later, Elliott was back in Dundee with *Violetta*, arousing (the same?) critic to even greater enthusiasm:

*The fact that there was a full house was possibly in part due to the knowledge that Victoria Elliott, the company's leading dramatic soprano, was to sing Violetta, in which role she made a great success here last year.*

*'If anything, her triumph was even more complete last night. She had the audience figuratively eating out of her hand throughout this long and exhausting part. Three particular periods stood out in her performance - the 15-minute long aria sequence in Act I beginning 'Ah, was it he my heart foretold?' the big renunciation scene in Act II; and Violetta's final illness and death. It would be difficult to*

<sup>13</sup> Musical Times, 5.1953

<sup>14</sup> Musical Times, 11.1954.

<sup>15</sup> Dundee Courier and Advertiser, 9.4.1957

*imagine a more expert performance than she gave - subtle, moving psychologically, intensely dramatic and tender, skilled in coloratura, and displaying fine volume on high notes. Verdi demanded everything from his heroine in the singing and acting arts. As rarely it was all supplied here<sup>16</sup>.*

In London, Elliott got a rougher ride. Cedric Wallis, reviewing her 1959 *Fledermaus*, remarked that she “seemed obsessed by the fallacious idea that, in a big theatre, one must sing as loudly as possible”<sup>17</sup>. Perhaps it needs pointing out that these performances were given, not in Sadler’s Wells’s own theatre, but in the Coliseum which became their home many years later. Possibly Elliott was overreacting to the unaccustomed venue.

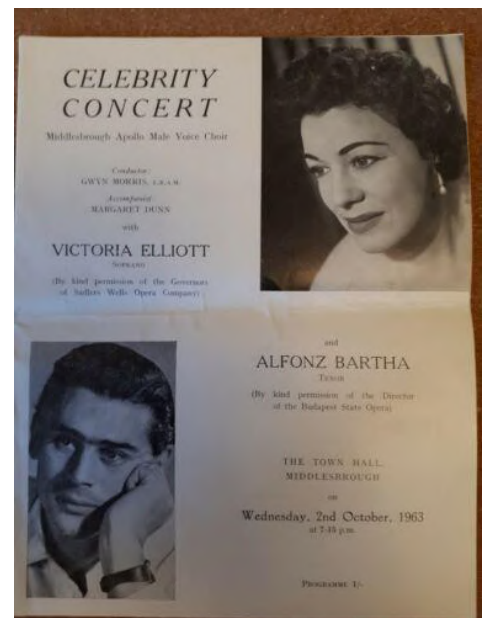
Harsher words still came from A.P., presumably Andrew Porter and a vastly experienced critic. Reviewing her *Tosca*, he began with lukewarm comments on the other principals, Rowland Jones and John Hargreaves, and the conductor Alexander Gibson, before concluding:

*Victoria Elliott’s Tosca was the main disappointment. The sounds she made were uglier than ever – as if all that was worst in her singing of Juliet and Luisa Miller some years ago had got upper hand. And this was a pity, for she brought intelligence to her playing of the part, and the musical intentions were good<sup>18</sup>.*

Regarding Elliott’s *Tosca*, it is worth mentioning that one of her performances in the role was an early formative influence on Sir Thomas Allen, who later got to know her and remembers that she was “a big star” back then<sup>19</sup>.

Elliott’s *Tosca* for Sadler’s Wells in 1963 is her last appearance on the company’s London stage that I have traced. Post 1960, they seem to have increasingly relegated her to provincial tours. According to McGovern, her final Sadler’s Wells appearances were with a tour of *Traviata* in 1968.

Outside the Sadler’s Wells company, Elliott performed *Aida* in a concert version for the Kingston-upon-Hull Opera Society on 25 March 1958, with Walter Midgley and John Noble the other principals. Her *Butterfly* at the Hull New Theatre in October 1960 does not seem to have been for Sadler’s Wells. There was a celebrity concert in Middlesborough, with Alfonz Bartha, on 2 October 1963. On 9 May 1964, she appeared with the City of Birmingham Orchestra in a programme of opera excerpts under Harold Gray. She returned to Birmingham, again with Gray conducting, for another opera programme on 6 May 1967. A 1964 *Tosca* in Kilrush was notable as the first opera conducted by Nicholas Braithwaite. Braithwaite wrote an interesting piece about Kilrush Opera at the time, though he mentions Elliott only in passing:



<sup>16</sup> Dundee Courier and Advertiser, 10.5.1958

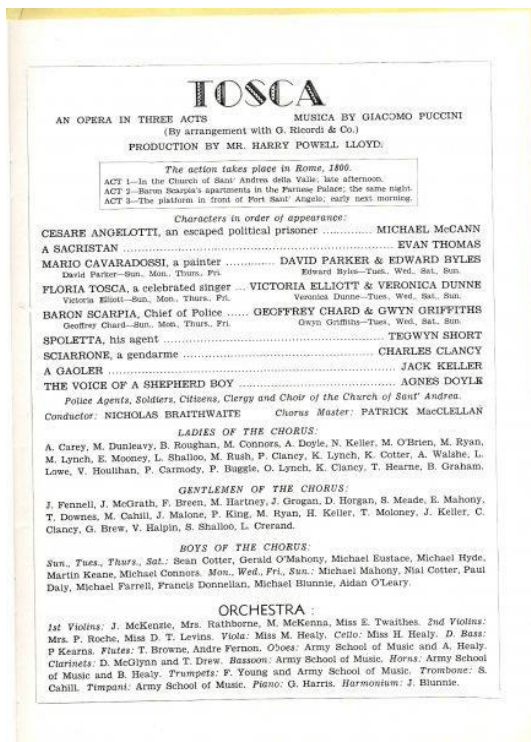
<sup>17</sup> Musical Times, 6.1959.

<sup>18</sup> Opera, 5.1956.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Sir Thomas Allen, <https://theartsdesk.com/opera/theartsdesk-qa-opera-singer-sir-thomas-allen>, retrieved 3.11.2022. Chronologically and geographically, it seems likely that Sir Thomas heard her while she was touring the role in Scotland in 1957.



*In the west of Co. Clare, not far from where the Shannon opens into the Atlantic and just a few miles down the road from the grave of the Lily of Killarney, is a town called Kilrush: here every Whitsun week the Kilrush Opera Society presents a Festival of Grand Opera. Kilrush has a population of some 2,800 and each year spends about £3,000 on its festival. Four days before the opening night the Mars Theatre (the town's cinema) has not even a true stage, nor any of the other appurtenances of an opera house. Yet 12 days later not only have all these been provided, but there have been eight performances of operas such as Tosca, Rigoletto and Carmen. The producer, Harry Powell-Lloyd, calls it 'a modern miracle'; and indeed one cannot fail to be amazed at all that is achieved there each year.*



*... The opera season is run by a highly enthusiastic and highly efficient local committee, and the basis of the society is the local amateur chorus, who possess fine singing voices. ... The principals mostly come from this side of the Irish Channel – our two casts for Tosca in 1964 included Victoria Elliot, David Parker, Geoffrey Chard, and Veronica Dunne (from Dublin), Edward Byles, and Gwyn Griffiths – as do the producer, Harry Powell-Lloyd, and the conductor (myself). The orchestra, which usually numbers about 20 to 24, is made up of professionals from all over Ireland<sup>20</sup>.*

A potentially major event was a rare opportunity to hear Mascagni's *Iris*, presented by Opera Viva in Fulham Town Hall under the indefatigable Leslie Head on 25 May 1967. This strange opera can potentially haunt the mind to a greater degree than *Madama Butterfly*, but critics and public have yet to be convinced. Winton Dean, having expressed his reservations over the opera, added:

*The cast included two stalwarts from the old days at Sadler's Wells .... Victoria Elliott sang nicely up to mezzo forte but above that her tone became shrill and the words disappeared<sup>21</sup>.*

It is perhaps significant that, by this date, Dean could refer to Elliott as a blast from the past. Her engagements were gradually petering out, it would seem. Opera Scotland tells us that "in the later 1960s and 70s she toured widely in concerts of Viennese operetta". She appeared in one such Viennese Evening at the Hull New Theatre on 4.11.1967. Doubtless a diligent search of local paper archives would turn up more, even extending into the 1970s. An advertisement by Raymond Gubbay Opera and Concert Management<sup>22</sup> suggests quite an ambitious operation.

**RAYMOND GUBBAY**  
 OPERA AND CONCERT MANAGEMENT  
 29D DRYDEN CHAMBERS, 119 OXFORD STREET,  
 LONDON, W.1.  
 Tel.: 01-734 9610

**VIENNESE EVENING**  
**SONGS FROM THE SHOWS**  
**AN EVENING OF GILBERT & SULLIVAN**  
**GEMS FROM THE OPERAS**

Artists include:  
 Janet Coster Victoria Elliott Margaret Price Marion Studholme  
 John Cameron John Heddle Nash Alberto Remedios

Bookings, January to June 1967, include:  
 Esplanade, Bognor Regis; Spa, Bridlington; Palace Pier, Brighton; Civic, Camberley; Marlowe, Canterbury; New, Cardiff; Town Hall, Cheltenham; Belgrade, Coventry; Civic, Darlington; Kings Hall, Derby; Congress, Eastbourne; Adeline Genee, East Grinstead; New Victoria, Halifax; Kenton, Henley; Playhouse, Kidderminster; Royal, Lincoln; Civic, Mansfield; Little, Middlesbrough; Royal, Northampton; Civic, Rotherham; Royal, St. Helens; Cliffs Pavilion, Southend; St. John's Hall, Whitley Bay; and Tours for the North Eastern Association for the Arts.

<sup>20</sup> <https://operainireland.wordpress.com/opera-in-kilrush/>, retrieved 3.11.2022.

<sup>21</sup> Musical Times, 7.1967. The other "stalwart" was Robert Thomas.

<sup>22</sup> The Stage and Television Today, 13.4.1967



Elliott had at least a trace of an international career. McGovern tells us she sang *Butterfly* in Liège, and also recalls an occasion when she returned from an engagement in Bucharest at midday, “only to perform a full evening's concert repertoire in Islington that very night”. The only date outside the UK I have traced is a performance of *Fledermaus* with the New Zealand Opera Company in October 1966.

Elliott's broadcasts cast a revealing light on her repertoire and, perhaps, her artistic aims. Her contributions to light and lightish opera and operetta programmes conducted by Vilem Tausky are so numerous that I have gathered them into an Appendix (see below). I list here her other BBC appearances, insofar as I have traced them.

The most important is surely the television presentation of *Tosca*, recorded under Charles Mackerras and first seen on 22 June 1953. One can only hope that a copy exists somewhere. It would be something of a landmark in the television history of this opera and would enable us to see and hear Elliott in her most famous role at a time when she was presumably in her vocal prime.

Later the same year, on 22 December 1953, the BBC Light Programme broadcast “Nights of Gladness”, a “Tribute to composers whose melodies have enriched the world of operetta, musical comedy and revue”. This was actually Chapter Nine of a series, introduced by “The Man with the Opera Cloak” and dedicated to the music of Nat D. Ayer, Harry Parr Davies and Emmerich Kalman. Elliott appeared alongside Webster Booth, Joan Young, Dudley Rolph, Billie Baker and Dick James, with Guy Daines conducting the BBC Chorus and Concert Orchestra.

The unspecified works heard on 1 March 1954, when Elliott sang with Marjorie Shires, John Kentish, Frederick Sharp, the BBC Singers and the Goldsbrough Orchestra under Mackerras, are likely to have been more serious fare, as was the concert under Sir Malcolm Sargent broadcast on 26 August 1954. Elliott's contribution was the aria “Where art thou, father?” from Dvořák's *Spectre's Bride*. The concert opened with *Zampa* Overture and concluded with Gina Bachauer playing Rachmaninov's Third piano Concerto.

Back on the BBC Light Programme, Elliott sang with the Palm Court orchestra under Jean Pougnet on 3 April 1954, while “Tuesday Serenade”, on 8 June 1954 included a selection from Romberg's *Desert Song*. She was

joined by the baritone John Cameron and Stanford Robinson conducted. On Christmas Day 1955 it was the turn of Gilbert and Sullivan. “The First Quarrel” was Episode Four of “The Story of a Great Partnership” by Leslie Baily. Webster Booth was present again, with Gwen Catley, Arnold Matters, George James, Janet Howe, Denis Bowen and Gilbert Wright. Mackerras was the conductor. Elliott did not contribute to any of the other episodes.



On 9 January 1956, Elliott appeared with the tenor Rowland Jones and the pianist Arthur Sanford in a programme conducted by Stanford Robinson. It was the Light Programme again on 29 May 1956 with Leighton Lucas and the Leighton Lucas Orchestra in “Music Tapestry”, “A melodic pattern coloured for your pleasure by Victoria Elliott, David Galliver, Peter Newbury, Josephine Lee, George Thalben-Ball and the BBC Singers”, while on 1<sup>st</sup> July Elliott was back with Jean Pougnet and the Palm Court Orchestra (see opposite)<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> This could have been a repeat of the programme of 3.4.1954.

On 15 January 1957, Elliott was heard in a radio production of Nicolai's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, followed by *Pagliacci* on 19.4.1959 (discussed below). On 13 March 1960 she contributed, with Patricia Kern and Peter Glossop, to "Signor Crescendo, a Radio Portrait of Rossini, written by Colin Shaw". Stanford Robinson conducted.

Somewhere in the middle of this, Elliott made a curious television appearance. The legend had got around that her voice could break glass, so the BBC decided to put the matter to the test. Since the Corporation's glassware remained intact, the experiment seemed at first a failure. Less so when their switchboard became jammed with phone calls from listeners claiming their valuable crystals had cracked during the programme. One further television event took place on 16 January 1966, with Mantovani and his orchestra. The last broadcast appearance I have traced was on 23 August 1970, on Eric Robinson's *Melodies for You*. Elliott joined Geraint Evans and John Lawrensen, with Stanford Robinson conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Thereafter, she faded into quiet obscurity. McGovern tells us she "sang all the carol concerts at Trafalgar Square from the late sixties to fairly recently" and she encouraged music locally, becoming President of the Ealing-based Julian Light Operatic Society, which presented mainly Gilbert and Sullivan in Greenford Town Hall<sup>24</sup>. In 1985, she underwent three operations and was then told that her illness was terminal. She coached young singers till the end and had the strength to sing at a private party three months before her death on 21 February 1986. Of her private life – marriage? children? family? – nothing has emerged.

### **Broadcast performances**

A small clutch of broadcast performances by Elliott enable us to get some idea of the kind of artist she was. As far as I know, none of the four operas I am about to discuss has been issued officially and I am not sure of the legality of the versions circulating. Rather than involve MusicWeb in aiding and abetting unlawful behaviour, I give no links and limit myself to saying that, just as I managed to track them down, I imagine any interested reader will be able to do likewise.

A BBC studio recording of *Pagliacci*, broadcast on 19 April 1958 for the centenary of Leoncavallo's birth, features Elliott as Nedda, alongside Charles Craig (Canio), John Cameron (Tonio), Rene Soames (Beppe) and John Heddle Nash (Silvio), with Leo Wurmser conducting the BBC Midland Chorus and Orchestra. It is sung in a slightly adjusted version of Weatherly's English translation.

My first reaction was that I should perhaps be writing an article about almost any other of the protagonists. John Cameron is outstanding as Tonio. Once you have made allowance for slightly dated English vowels, this is not just excellently sung – there is real vocal acting on offer. Much the same could be said for John Heddle Nash's Silvio, while Charles Craig's Canio was a very pleasant surprise. I heard his portrayal of Otello in Edinburgh in the early 1970s, by which time his voice had the characteristics of the opera-battered heavy. It is nice to discover that he got where he did because his voice, in its earlier days, was supple, lyrical and unforced. His "Vesti la giubba (On with the motley)" is as good as you could wish for a version in English. The BBC Midland Orchestra is no more immaculate than an Italian radio orchestra of that date would have been, but under Leo Wurmser, a Viennese pupil of Franz Schmidt who worked for the BBC from 1938 and was more associated with the light repertoire, they play with comparable spirit. All this is very much to the good, so what about the leading lady? "Opera-battered heavy" would be overdoing it, and in fact her top As, B flats and Bs (no top C in this opera), have a fine, naturally vibrant but firm quality. I am quite ready to believe that this same quality once extended through the whole range, but somehow, maybe through husbanding principally the upper range rather than the lower one over the years, the middle notes seem to need, unless

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.getsmartt.net/julian/Bannon%20appreciation.html>, retrieved 4.11.2022.

sung softly (not a frequent occurrence), to be pushed out, acquiring a rather vinegary quality. Nor do I hear much vocal acting. I have heard far worse, but alongside Craig, Cameron and Nash, she is hardly the star of the show.

In view of the above, it may be a pity that everything else I have of Elliott dates from 1959.

At first, the live recording of Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* (Sadler's Wells, 12 December 1959) seemed to confirm the pattern. The two male leads, Charles Craig again as Chénier and Peter Glossop as Gérard, are excellent, there is more good work from John Heddle Nash as Roucher and another refugee conductor, from ex-Czechoslovakia this time, Vilem Tausky, obtains plenty of authentic Italianate sounds from the orchestra. This is an opera with a long cast of *comprimari*, not all of whom are listed in the downloaded version I found, so I will merely say that some are better than others. Which brings us to Elliott. As I suggested, the initial impression was similar to that of her *Nedda*, but this performance did expand my awareness of what she could do. In the Act Two love duet, she shows that she can still float pianissimo medium-high notes beautifully. But then, as the pressure increases, that slightly vinegary sound intrudes again. Her big scene in Act Three, however, "La mamma morta" to give it its Italian name, came as a pleasant surprise. Yes, the voice is a bit jaded, but jaded in the same way as Callas's was by about 1959. And she shows at least something of a Callas-like ability to grab and involve the listener, turning even her occasionally precarious vocal state to artistic advantage. I have to say that, beside this, Craig and Glossop are elegant but lack this sense of the grease paint. This time, warts and all, Elliott emerges as the star of the show – and in what is generally thought of as a "tenor's opera".

On 20 January of the same year, also at Sadler's Wells, Elliott had appeared alongside David Ward in Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*. Ward's Bluebeard is marvellously secure and clear and the orchestra is well handled by Alexander Gibson. In *Opera*, as mentioned above, JW noted that "Victoria Elliott played out the protracted, tense exploration very movingly". This psychodrama obviously calls for very different qualities from those needed for Leoncavallo or Giordano, though fairly early on Elliott does find the opportunity for a beautifully floated medium-high note. She certainly sounds fully involved. Does the sometimes jaded sound matter here? As noted above, for JW it seemingly did not, and if this was John Warrack, then this was a critic for whom I have a lot of respect. I began to wonder if this was a voice, like that of Raina Kaibavanska, whose vibrations were for some reason not microphone-friendly. I suspect that, if I had been present, Elliott's conviction would have carried the day for me, as it did for JW.



Just six days earlier, 14 January, Elliott sang Dorota in Weinberger's *Schwanda the Bagpiper*, once again at Sadler's Wells. The closeness of the dates reflects well on her general musicianship and ability to learn quickly – though I have no proof, I assume that Dorota was new to her, and maybe Judith as well. And perhaps even Maddalena as a whole, though doubtless she had long known "La mamma morta". Sitting here in Italy, it is easy for me to forget that *Andrea Chénier* is not really standard repertoire in much of the operatic world. Whether she was doing her vocal equipment any great favours by taking on so much is another question.

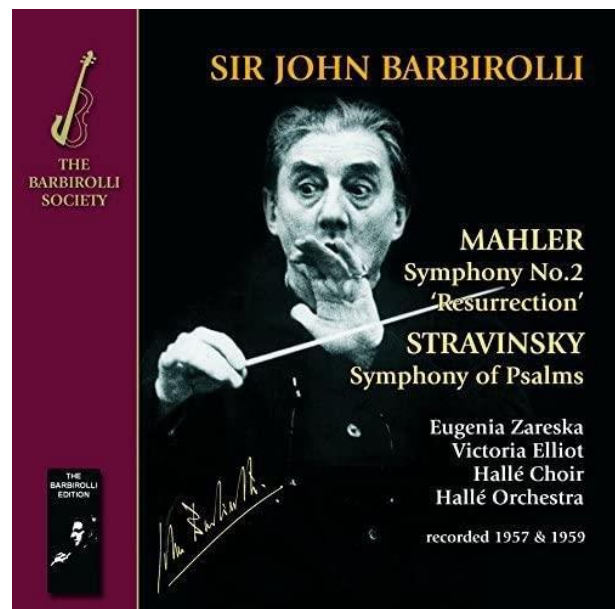
If *Chénier* is a "tenor's opera", *Schwanda* is a baritone's one. The tenor, another nicely sung performance from Charles Craig as Babinsky, has a certain pivotal role in the plot, but the central figure is Schwanda himself. This is a baritone part but with a high texture verging on the tenorial and it sometimes pushes the generally



excellent John Hargreaves to the limit. An odd feature of the opera is the way singers get major roles in one act but are absent from the other. The Queen, grieving among her icy reign (did C.S. Lewis know this opera?), all but dominates Act 1, together with the scheming Magician who had enslaved her. Neither appears in Act 2 at all. The Magician, a bass, gets a fine performance from David Ward and Margreta Elkins is both regal and touching as the Queen. This, though, is a role where, as with Dvořák's Foreign Princess in *Rusalka*, the composer specifies mezzo-soprano in the score and then writes for a soprano tessitura. Evidently, he wanted a soprano with a mezzo sound that will contrast with the actual soprano part. Elkins seems strained beyond her natural limit in some of the high-lying phrases. There is, conversely, a major role for the Devil in Act 2 only, nicely but rather blandly sung by Howell Glynne. This, for the home listener, is the least interesting part of the opera. The semi-recitative exchanges between the Devil, Schwanda and, later, Babinsky, are tiresomely thin musically, though titters from the audience suggest they can be enjoyable on the stage.

Which brings us to Dorota. She, too, is almost confined to Act 1, returning to the stage a few minutes before the final curtain for a brief contribution that was hardly worth coming for – I am assuming the opera has not been cut in this performance. Logic would expect a radiant love duet to end the evening nicely, but either Weinberger or Sadler's Wells (I do not have a score to check this point) decided otherwise. Under the circumstances, this is not a case where, as in *Chénier*, the soprano can steal the show even if the leading player is supposed to be one of the men. Yet in Act 1, Elliott comes close to doing so. She adopts a somewhat *verismo* manner and her occasionally vinegary tones can sound rather shrewish as she (quite rightly) castigates Schwanda for his faithlessness. But her outburst at the end of Act 1 Scene 1 has that frisson noted in her Maddalena, an ability to make a gut appeal to the audience that nobody else in the cast quite manages. This is even more evident in her song at the end of the act. Her voice is mostly well under control – very few vinegary notes – and this is really the highlight of the evening. But it is brief and she virtually disappears for the rest of the show. The opera is well conducted by James Robertson, though the orchestra sounds raucous at times, including in the famous Polka, and I have heard the Fugue played with greater cumulative effect.

Barbirolli's performance of Mahler's Second Symphony in Manchester on 12 March 1959 circulated clandestinely for many years before achieving an official issue by the Barbirolli Society. This [was reviewed for MusicWeb](#) by John Quinn. John had a slight preference for Barbirolli's 1965 Berlin performance, which had the advantage of Janet Baker as the contralto soloist – Eugenia Zareska is not especially impressive here. I have not made the comparison, either with this or with the other extant Barbirolli versions from Stuttgart and Milan, both in 1970, but taken on its own I found Barbirolli in 1959 pretty terrific. John also praised Elliott, feeling she withstood comparison with Maria Stader in the Berlin recording. This is no mean praise, since Stader was a highly esteemed artist who recorded extensively for Deutsche Grammophon. The 1970 soprano soloists are Helen Donath and Luciana Ticinelli Fattori. This performance does indeed show the best of Elliott, soaring easily to the high notes without the need to push. Only the passage at figure 41, "O glaube: Du wardst nicht umsonst geboren!", finds her momentarily pushing in the lower register, but it is a passing moment you may not notice if you are not already alerted to her tendency to do this.



### Commercial recordings

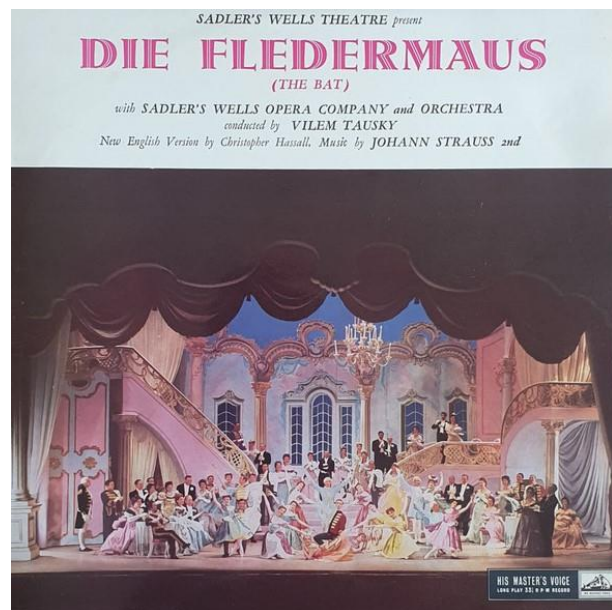


Some time in 1959 seems to be the date for a selection from Wright and Forrest's adulterated-Grieg confection *Song of Norway*. This originally came out on World Record Club and had Michael Collins conducting "his" orchestra and the Williams Singers. The other members of the cast were Norma Hughes, Thomas Round, John Lawrensen, Geoffrey Webb and Olwen Price. Just for a nasty sting in the tail, the disc is completed with a potted version of the Piano Concerto – the big tunes from the outer movements, the second being unworthy of consideration, some ugly key switches and a chorus bursting in at the end. The solo part is played with proficiency but appalling taste by Semprini.

The disc does, though, give us a picture of Elliott, in the part of the wholly fictional Louisa Giovanni, at her best.

My impression that this was not a voice whose vibrations were microphone-friendly has to be modified. Vinegary sounds are scarcely in evidence – perhaps I would not have even noticed any if I had not been forewarned by the previous recordings. It looks as if she took special care over her voice production when she was setting down for posterity. We get a voice with a quality and allure that the other cast members cannot match. The final part of "Three Loves", in particular, brings before us a fine singer in full flow.

A similarly favourable impression – and a more palatable musical experience – emerges from the Sadler's Wells *Fledermaus* highlights set down in June 1959 (HMV CSD 1266)<sup>25</sup>. Elliott, as Rosalinde, does not get any solo in this selection, but is present in various ensembles. We find that she has a decent trill and can manage light agility with ease. Above all, we get some lovely, unforced singing. Her contribution to the Act 1 trio, "Ah, woe is me", certainly explains why she was so much in demand in her heyday and induces regret that she was not asked to record more. I will not say though, that here she stands above the rest, since there are fine contributions from John Heddle Hash, Alexander Young and Marion Studholme, with only Anna Pollak disappointing in "Chacun à son gout". Vilem Tausky is the completely idiomatic conductor.



### Final thoughts

Can the rave reviews from Cork and Dundee be reconciled with the pernicky, even dismissive comments in the London press? Partly, it would seem that we have a "Callas-problem". A fine natural voice used recklessly, resulting in the vinegary lower-middle range particularly notable in her live broadcasts. It can also be perceived from these that she had something of a Callas ability to carry her listeners with her. But only something. Alexander Kelly's recollections of her stock gestures provide one clue. By the latter end of Elliott's career, singers were expected to act as well as sing, not just stand and deliver as in the old days. And Callas had been fundamental in raising such expectations. Moreover, while there are some people for whom

<sup>25</sup> Date from Michael Gray: A Classical Discography <https://classical-discography.org/>, consulted 29.10.2022

Callas's vocal faults prevent their entry into her world, and I sometimes feel that way myself, for most others, her riveting artistry and psychological penetration of her characters triumphantly carry the day. On the evidence I have heard, Elliott could not aspire to this.

Another issue is what might be called, in English terms, the Robinson-Tausky syndrome or, in singer-speak, the Traubel syndrome. Stanford Robinson and Vilem Tausky were two very fine conductors, well able to command a wide range of repertoire. The BBC chose to farm out the light repertoire to them, and they did it supremely well. With the result that people grew unwilling to take them seriously in "serious" music, which in reality they performed equally effectively. The long list of broadcasts that Elliott shared with Tausky, in Appendix One, speaks volumes. Helen Traubel was one of the finest Wagnerian singers of her day, but was unceremoniously booted out of the Metropolitan Opera by Rudolph Byng because she also sang musicals, cabaret and the like, thereby, some thought, lowering the tone of the establishment. The English way is less public and dramatic, but it can be imagined that, in the gentlemen's clubs where the best decisions were taken, it was felt, amid much head-shaking, that a soprano who sang Berkeley and Sutermeister and then appeared with the Palm Court Orchestra and Mantovani was "not quite the thing".

Did she need to do it? The episode related by McGovern, when she returned from Bucharest at midday and sung in Islington that same evening, suggests she was overdoing it. The singing bug can be a dangerous thing. I have known singers who literally feel ill if they do not have the opportunity to sing to people. It is all very well if high-level engagements are offered with sufficient regularity for the singer to be selective and conform to a certain artistic vision. It is dodgy if it amounts to a blanket acceptance of what comes – wherever, whatever and whenever. This blanket acceptance can be looked at two ways, of course. It may amount to generosity, a desire to bring live music to people of all ranks, people who would otherwise never hear professional singers and players. It is arguably better for a citizen of Hull to hear *Trovatore* in the local theatre with Victoria Elliott than to sit at home with the Callas recording, marvellous though it is. It may also amount to an obsession with self-display. The singer who performs Malotte's *Lord's Prayer* (Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1955), surely does not care what they sing as long as they sing it. Probably there was a bit of both in Elliott.

But let us end on a positive note. Let us listen to her contributions to the *Song of Norway* and *Fledermaus* and her best live moments – *La mamma morta* from *Chénier* and the end of *Schwanda* Act 1, as well as the Barbirolli *Resurrection* – and remember that this is a singer who held the stage in leading roles for some twenty years. It would be nice to discover that something survives from her earlier appearances, but on the strength of what we have, McGovern's claim that she was "the nearest thing to a prima donna Sadler's Wells ever produced" seems justified.

#### **APPENDIX: Broadcasts conducted by Vilem Tausky<sup>26</sup>**

All broadcasts have items sung by Victoria Elliott and are conducted by Vilem Tausky. The Radio Times did not usually give details of the music performed. The BBC Light programme, Network Three (from 1957) and Home Service are the present day Radios 2, 3 and 4. The BBC Northern orchestra, later the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra, is now the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra

2 March 1956, Light Programme: MID-DAY PROM, Music from the Operas  
BBC Northern Orchestra, from the Town Hall, Manchester

8 May 1956, Light Programme: ALL THE BEST of light music  
Presented by Vilem Tausky with Marjorie Westbury, other singers Alexander Young (tenor), Dudley Rolph  
BBC Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra

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<sup>26</sup> Sourced from <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/search/20/20?q=tausky+elliott#top>, retrieved 3.11.2022



28 August 1956, Light Programme: ALL THE BEST of Light Music  
Presented by Vilem Tausky with Marjorie Westbury, other artist Anthony Pini (cello)  
BBC Concert Orchestra

21 May 1957, Light Programme: TUESDAY TUNETIME  
Music in all Directions, introduced by Gordon Clinton, celebrity choice Gerard Hoffnung  
My Big Occasion - Sandy Macpherson – I'm Old-Fashioned – Alexander at the piano – How Wrong They Were  
Devised by Richard and Alma Jones with Victoria Elliott  
Other singer: Ranken Bushby (baritone)  
BBC Concert Orchestra, Charlie Katz and his Novelty Sextet, The Linden Singers

23 June 1957, Home Service: AT HOME  
BBC Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra

7 November 1957, Home Service: WORLD PREMIERE  
A series of programmes recalling historic performances in the great theatres of the world  
First Nights in Vienna  
Part 3 including music from 'The Merry Widow' 'The Dollar Princess' and 'Countess Maritza'  
Other singers: Joan Bramhall (soprano), John Mitchinson (tenor), Ranken Bushby (baritone)  
BBC Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra  
Devised and written by Johannes Mulvad, introduced by Roy Williams

6 March 1958, Home Service: WORLD PREMIERE  
Recalling historic performances in the theatres of the world  
First Nights in Rome including music from 'Il Trovatore', 'Tosca' and 'Cavalleria Rusticana'  
Other singers: Raymond Nilsson (tenor), Denis Dowling (baritone)  
BBC Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra  
Written by Robert Irwin, introduced by Roy Williams

5 July 1959, repeated 14 October 1965, Home Service: HUMORESKE  
A radio portrait of Antonin Dvořák, written by COLIN SHAW  
Other artist: Liza Fuchsova (piano)  
Manchester St. Cecilia Choir, BBC Northern Orchestra

25 March 1961, Light Programme: SATURDAY CONCERT HALL  
A Viennese programme  
Other singer: William McAlpine (tenor)  
BBC Concert Orchestra Leader  
Introduced by Roy Williamson, from The Dome, Brighton

10 August 1961, Home Service: RING UP THE CURTAIN  
A programme of opera, operetta, and ballet  
Other singer: John Mitchinson (tenor)  
BBC Concert Orchestra

15 November 1961, Light Programme: MUSIC WE LOVE  
Including music from 'Countess Maritza'  
Other artists: John Mitchinson (tenor), Rawicz and Landauer (piano duo)  
The Bowman-Hyde Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra Leader, William Arnion

19 July 1962, Home Service: LIGHT MUSIC  
Other singer: Ronald Lewis (tenor)  
BBC Concert Orchestra

8 April 1963, Home Service: SERENADE

Other artists: John Heddle Nash (baritone), Peter Element (piano)

BBC Concert orchestra

17 June 1963, Home Service: SERENADE

Other singers: Robert Thomas (tenor), John Heddle Nash (baritone), Ian Black (oboe)

The Ambrosian Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

16 September 1963, Home Service: FOR YOUR DELIGHT

BBC Home Service

Other singer: Rowland Jones (tenor)

The John McCarthy Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

24 February 1964, Home Service: RING UP THE CURTAIN

Highlights from operetta, opera and ballet

Other singer: John Mitchinson (tenor)

The John McCarthy Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

14 March 1964, Light Programme: SATURDAY CONCERT HALL

Other singer: Rowland Jones (tenor)

BBC Concert Orchestra

30 March 1964, Home Service: RING UP THE CURTAIN

Other singer: Peter Glossop (baritone)

The John McCarthy Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

26 April 1964, Light Programme: WINE, WOMAN AND SONG

Other singer: Robert Thomas (tenor)

The John McCarthy Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

4 May 1964, Home Service: RING UP THE CURTAIN

Highlights from operetta, opera and ballet

Other singers: Robert Thomas (tenor), John Noble (baritone)

The John McCarthy Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

9 August 1964, Home Service: DIE FLEDERMAUS, highlights from the operetta

Other singer: Rowland Jones (tenor)

The Ambrosian Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

Narration written by Mark Lubbock, spoken by John Dunn

4 January 1965, Home Service: RING UP THE CURTAIN

Highlights from operetta, opera and ballet

Other singer: Robert Savoie (baritone)

The John McCarthy Singers, BBC Concert Orchestra

3 April 1965, repeated 13 October 1965: ON STAGE

Music from opera and ballet

Other singer: Robert Savoie (baritone)

BBC Concert Orchestra

20 March 1965, Home Service: GALA CONCERT HALL

Other artists: David Hughes (tenor), Peter Element (piano)

The Gala Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra

24 July 1965, repeated 24 March 1966, Network Three: ON STAGE

Other singer: Robert Savoie (tenor)

BBC Concert Orchestra

1 January 1966, Home Service: GALA CONCERT HALL

The programme includes music from Die Fledermaus (Johann Strauss), Carmen (Bizet), Le Cid (Massenet) and Henry Geehl 's Caprice Concertante

Other artists: Rowland Jones (tenor), Philip Challis (piano)

The Gala Chorus, BBC Concert Orchestra

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