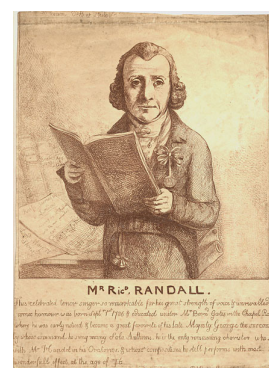


The British Tenor - an Introduction

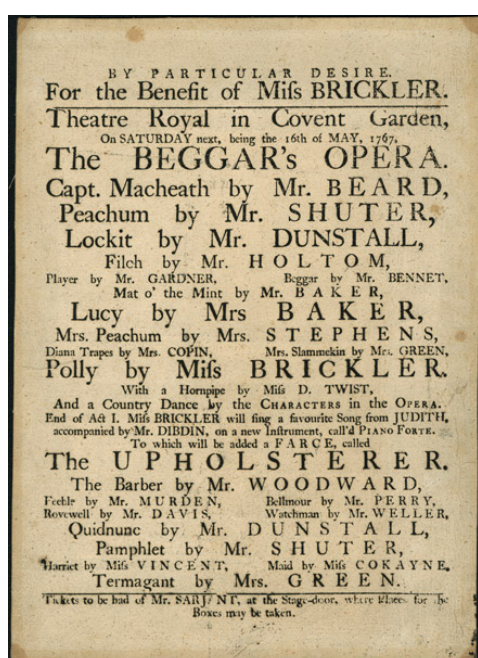
This document represents biographical information on some historical British tenors; it does not attempt to be comprehensive, and the brief entries are edited from sources including the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Using iconographic material mainly from the McCann Collection, Foyle Menuhin Archive and Spencer Collection represented in the Academy's on-line image catalogue *APOLLO* and comprising illustrations, playbills, letters and other documents, the British tenor's career can be traced through that of the singer-actor, in the masque, pantomime, the ballad opera, the pleasure gardens, in burlesque, the comic song, melodrama, opera, oratorio and concert performances.

Janet Snowman, 2011

Richard Randall. The text below the image reads: 'Mr RicD Randall. This celebrated tenor singer so remarkable for his great strength of voice & unrivalled comic humour was born Sepr 1st 1736 & educated under Mr BernD Gates in the Chapel Royal where he was early noticed & became a great favourite of his late Majesty George the Second by whose command he sung many Solo Anthems; he is the only remaining chorister who sung with Mr Handel in his Oratorios & whose compositions he still performs with most wonderfull effect at the age of 76. Published May 1812 by ...'. Drawn from life.



Richard Randall,
Spencer Collection



Foyle-Menuhin Archive, RAM



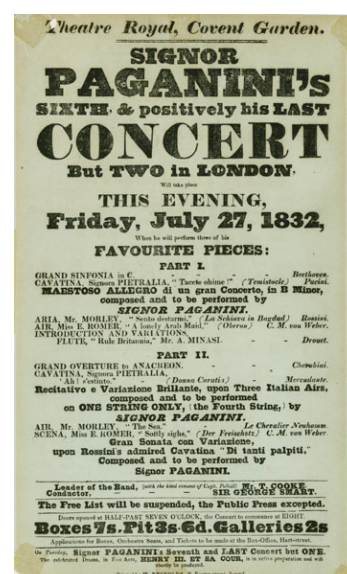
John Beard

John Beard. (1717-91) Mainly known as a singer, his first appearance as an actor was at Drury Lane in 1737. The hunting song, *The Early Horn*, from Galliard's pantomime *The Royal Chase* at Covent Garden (1736), became his signature tune. He was in demand for the ballad operas, pantomimes and burlesques as well as for more serious pieces. His reputation was chiefly gained at Covent Garden for his singing of tenor parts specially written for him by Handel, singing more parts under the composer than any other singer - including operas, church music, oratorios, masques and odes. Charles Dibdin said of him (*Complete History of the Stage*) that 'his voice was sound, male, powerful and extensive'. He married Charlotte, a daughter of the famous theatre manager John Rich, after whose death in 1761 he became a shareholder, through his wife, in Covent Garden, undertaking its management. On the playbill on the left, where he plays Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*, one of his most popular roles, at Covent Garden in 1767 (when he retired owing to deafness), you will also see the first mention in Britain of the pianoforte (made by Zumpe) as an instrument of accompaniment. He was admired by audiences in particular for his performance of English songs.

Thomas Lowe (c.1719-83). Actor-singer. Joined Drury Lane in 1740, the same year he took part in the first performance of the masque *Alfred* at Cliveden, the residence of Frederick, Prince of Wales who commissioned the work. Written by poet James Thomson, author of *The Seasons* (pub. 1730), and David Mallet, with music by Thomas Arne. It contained the song 'Rule, Britannia'. As well as appearing in ballad operas and other light theatre pieces, he was a member of Handel's company at Covent Garden in 1743 and 1748-51. The parts of the Philistine and Israelite Man in *Samson* (1743), title role in *Joshua* (1748), Zadok in *Solomon* (1749) and Septimius in *Theodora* (1750) were among the roles Handel composed for him, the composer 'being careful not to tax either end of his compass'. Dr Charles Burney noted that he was 'the finest tenor voice I have ever heard in my life, for want of diligence and cultivation he could never be safely trusted with anything better than a ballad, which he constantly learned by his ear'. Bought the lease of Marylebone Gardens [which was then sited across the road from the RAM, behind and near Beaumont Street] where he gave concerts, later selling to Samuel Arnold in 1769 when both his voice and fortune had declined.

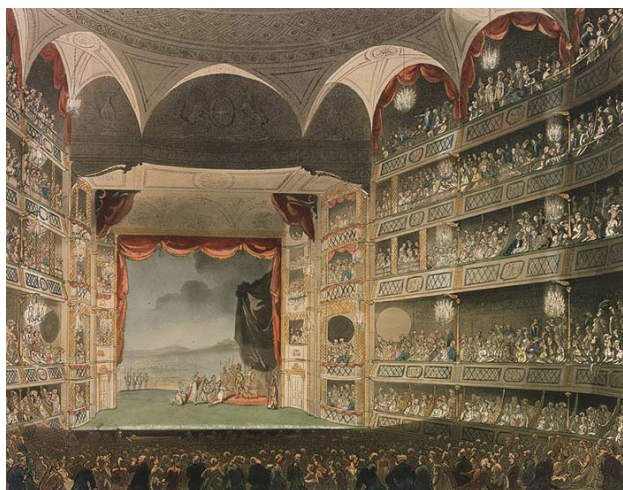


Engraving of a scene from the Marylebone Gardens, which functioned as Pleasure Gardens from c.1660-78. The words to the Opening in 1763, as sung by Thomas Lowe, are published on-line in the Victorian Dictionary website.



Arne's 'Rule Britannia' as played by Paganini, 1832. It was also sung regularly by the soprano Angelica Catalani (see the painting of her by James Lonsdale, main building, RAM, and a copy of the playbill in the Introduction to the Portraits in the Duke of the Hall).
Foyle-MenuhinArchive

Michael Kelly (1762-1826). Irish tenor, composer, theatre manager and music publisher. Having grown up in Dublin, a city rich in music, where his early singing teachers included, among others, the Italians Passerini and Rauzzini. One of his piano teachers was Michael Arne. He made his Italian debut in Florence in May 1781. Two years later became a member of a new Italian opera company in Vienna, and where he sang with the best singers of the day, Mozart wrote the roles of Don Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro* for him. He came to London in 1787 and became principal tenor at Drury Lane, singing there until 1808. Made his first appearance at the King's Theatre Haymarket in June 1789, becoming its stage manager for most of the next 31 years. He wrote many pieces for theatre between 1797-1821, often as songs or in collaboration with others, and claimed to have written over 60 theatre pieces between 1797 and 1821. His rescue-drama *Blue Beard, or Female Curiosity*, described as a 'Grand Dramatick Romance', was very popular and 'was extensively pirated in America'. His publishing shop was so close to the King's Theatre 'that he could offer patrons a private entrance through the shop, directly on to the stage'. As with the violinist Viotti, he also was also involved in the wine trade. His *Reminiscences* provide a valuable source of material for theatre and music historians.



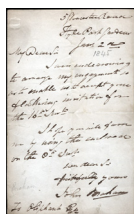
Drury Lane Theatre interior c.1808 from 'The Microcosm of London', published in London by Rudolf Ackermann between 1808-11, in three volumes. The artists included Thomas Rowlandson, Augustus Pugin and William Pyne.



John Braham (1774-1856). An orphan, he was introduced as a boy soprano at Covent Garden as Master Abrahams in 1787 when he sang Arne's 'The Soldier Tir'd of War's Alarms' from *Artaxerxes*. After his voice had settled, he spent three years studying with Venzio Rauzzini in Bath, where he met Nancy Storace. As a result he was engaged to sing in her brother Stephen's opera *Mahmoud* at Drury Lane, which she completed after his death. Toured the Continent with Nancy Storace giving concerts, and both sang in Nasolini's *Il trionfo di Clelia* at La Scala. Cimarosa wrote *Artemisia* for him when in Venice but died before completing it, although Braham did sing in the uncompleted version. Returned via Vienna and Hamburg to London, making his debut at the end of 1801 in Covent Garden. As a composer, his ballads, duets and patriotic songs, especially 'The Death of Nelson', written by Samuel Arnold and from *The Americans* (1811), were greatly popular. He sang Sesto in *La clemenza di Tito* (Mozart) at the Italian Opera in London, where he appeared between 1804-6, and impressed Weber, who wrote the part of Sir Huon in *Oberon* (1826) for him - he had already sung Max in the first English adaptation of *Der Freischütz* at the Lyceum in 1824. An impresario, he developed the Collosum in Regent's Park [which was in the inner circle to the left of the Academy], and by the 1830s he decided to build a new theatre to invest his fortune for his retirement. The new 'St James's Theatre' opened on 14 December 1835. It was demolished in 1957.



An early engraving of the St James's Theatre



One of the letters written by John Braham, McCann Collection, RAM.



This playbill (the lower half of an item from the St James's Theatre, 1836) shows Braham singing 'The Death of Nelson' (centre). This popular song was later sung in concert, in particular, by Sims Reeves and Edward Lloyd. Playbill, McCann Collection, RAM



Drury Lane Theatre c.1820;
and the actor, Thomas Potter Cooke.



Thomas Simpson Cooke (1782-1848). Irish singer, instrumentalist and composer who first appeared in London at the Lyceum in 1813. Two years later he performed the role of Don Carlos in *The Duenna* at Drury Lane, at which theatre he was principal tenor for nearly 20 years. He composed music for over 50 theatrical productions at Drury Lane during the same period, including an *Oberon* in opposition to Weber's opera, in 1826. Called from 1821 'director of the music at Drury Lane Theatre', he alternately sang and led the orchestra and from 1828-30 was involved with Vauxhall Gardens as a musical manager. A versatile musician, he played violin, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, cello, double bass and piano, as well as singing, conducting and leading the orchestra, and teaching voice. His pupils included Sims Reeves and Maria Tree; he also wrote a treatise on singing. His son, the oboist Grattan Cooke, studied at the RAM. Thomas Cook became leader of the Concert of Ancient Music for its final two years. He should not be confused with his contemporary, the famous actor T. P. Cooke (Thomas Potter Cooke), who also worked at Drury Lane.

GRAND MUSICAL PERFORMANCE DURING LENT.
The Public is most respectfully informed, that the GRAND PERFORMANCE OF MUSIC, LAST NIGHT, at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, was received by a brilliant, fashionable, and crowded Audience, with the most enthusiastic applause!

THE SECOND REPRESENTATION WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE
Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,
On **WEDNESDAY** next, Feb. 23rd, 1831,
Under the Immediate Direction of Mr. ALEXANDER LEE
THE PERFORMANCE WILL CONSIST OF
G. F. HANDEL'S SACRED ORATORIO, THE
MESSIAH.
WITH THE ADDITIONAL ACCOMPANIMENTS, BY
MOZART.
Conductor, Mr. H. R. BISHOP.

Principal Vocal Performers:
Miss F A T O N,
Miss HUGHES,
Miss P E A R S O N,
Miss BRUCE, Miss S. PHILLIPS,
Miss BYFIELD, Miss RUSSELL,
Mrs. BEDFORD, Miss HARRINGTON,
Miss CRAWFORD, Miss LEVOI,
Mrs. W A Y L E T T,
Mr. BRAHAM,
Mr. SINCLAIR,
Mr. T. COOKE,
Mr. HORN,
Mr. BEDFORD,
Mr. ROBINSON, Mr. G. SMITH,
Mr. PHILLIPS.

IN THE COURSE OF THE EVENING,
A FANTASIA ON THE FLUTE,
By Mr. NICHOLSON.

THE BAND OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE,
IS ENGAGED, AND WHICH IS OF THE
GRANDEST AND MOST EXTENSIVE SCALE.
Leader, Mr. BARTON.
Organ, Mr. S. WESLEY, Jun.
The CHORUS, under the Superintendence of
Mr. J. T. HARRIS.

WILL BE VERY NUMEROUS, ASSISTED BY THE YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF WHITMINSTER ABBEY.
The Dramatic BILL LIST does not extend to these Performances,
The Public Press excepted.
The Theatrical Orchestra will be added to the Pit, for the accommodation of the Public.
NO ORDERS WHATSOEVER CAN BE ADMITTED.
The Doors to be opened at half-past Six, and the Performance to commence at Seven o'clock.
Boxes, 7s. Pit, 3s. 6d. Lower Gallery, 2s. Upper Gallery, 1s.
PLACES in the Boxes, or PRIVATE BOXES, may be taken at the Box-Office of the Theatre.
BOOKS of the Performances to be had in the Theatre, Price 10s.
PRINTED BY T. EGING. No. 15, in St. Martin's Lane. J. T. H. P. 1831. 10s. 6d. 10s. 6d. 10s. 6d.

In this Drury Lane playbill of 1831, both Braham and Cooke
are performing. McCann Collection

Sims Reeves (1818-1900) was engaged by the actor-manager William Charles Macready at Drury Lane in 1842 and 1843, where he sang in particular works by Handel and Purcell. He made his debut at La Scala in 1846 as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermor*, also singing elsewhere in Italy and in Vienna. Returning to London he sang Edgardo at Drury Lane, also creating the role of Lyonnel in Michael Balfe's *The Maid of Honour*. He appeared with soprano Jenny Lind in Edinburgh and joined Louis Jullien's opera company at Drury Lane. Sang Faust in the first performance in England of Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust* under the composer, and from 1848 sang in London, the regions and Paris, also taking part in many musical and choral festivals. He took part in many private recitals for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and composers such as Macfarren, Costa and Sullivan wrote especially for him. He later taught at the Guildhall. His written works include *On the Art of Singing* and his autobiography *Sims Reeves, his Life and Recollections, Written by himself*, as well as *My Jubilee*. In the late 1860s he pressed for the adoption of a lower musical pitch in England. He also toured South Africa after his retirement in 1893. Incidentally, Macready lived from October 1839 to around March 1840 at No 1 York Gate, now part of the Academy's museum.

In this Buckingham Palace programme (right, dated 1858), Reeves is singing in an ensemble which also includes Clara Novello, in a version of Beethoven's Choral Fantasy and Michael Costa's 'Serenata'. Lucy Anderson, concerto soloist and piano teacher to Queen Victoria and her children, is accompanying them. She later taught at the RAM. Also shown is the cover of sheet music for 'Come into the Garden Maud' by Michael Balfe, and an autographed photograph. (McCann Collection)

BUCKINGHAM PALACE,
MONDAY EVENING, JANUARY 25, 1858.
PROGRAMME.

Part First.

CORONATION ANTHEM, - - - - - Handel.
QUARTETTO, "Placido è il mar," (*Idomeno*) - - - - - Mozart.
Madame CLARA NOVELLO, Miss LASCALLE, Signor GUGLIELMI, and Mr. WEISS.
CHORUS, "The Heavens are telling," (*Creation*) - - - - - Haydn.
ARIA, "Dalla sua Pace," (*Il Don Giovanni*) - - - - - Mozart.
Signor GUGLIELMI.
CHORAL FANTASIA—Pianoforte—Mrs. ANDERSON,
Principal Singers, Madame CLARA NOVELLO, Miss LASCALLE, Signor GUGLIELMI,
and Mr. WEISS.

Part Second.

SELECTION from "Lohengrin," BRIDAL PROCESSION, WEDDING MARCH and
EPITHALAMUM, - - - - - R. Wagner.
ARIA, "Robert, toi que j'aime," (*Robert le Diable*) - - - - - Meyerbeer.
Madame CLARA NOVELLO.
FINALE, (*Loving*) - - - - - Mendelssohn.
The Solo Part by Miss LOUISE FYNE.
SERENATA, "The Dream," - - - - - M. Costa.
(Composed expressly for the occasion of the Marriage of H.R.H. VICTORIA, PRINCESS ROYAL OF
ENGLAND, and FREDERICK WILLIAM, PRINCE OF PRUSSIA.)
CONDUCTED BY THE COMPOSER.
Principal Singers, Madame CLARA NOVELLO, Miss LASCALLE, Mr. SIMS REEVES,
and Mr. WEISS.
FINALE, "God save the Queen."

CONDUCTOR, - - - MR. ANDERSON.

"COME INTO THE GARDEN MAUD"
CAPTAIN BY
M. W. BALFE.
No. 2 OF

SIMS REEVES' VOCAL ALBUM.
A SELECTION OF
THE MOST FAVORITE SONGS COMPOSED
FOR THAT DISTINGUISHED ARTIST

CONTENTS:
1. MAID SHALL BE TAKEN. - - - - - 3.
2. GOD NIGHT BLESS. - - - - - 4.
3. I'DE SEARST TELL ON TELL ME. - - - - - 5.
4. I'DE SEARST TELL ON TELL ME. - - - - - 6.

LONDON.
PUBLISHED BY J. B. COOK, 10, BUCKINGHAM STREET, OFFICE STREET.



Courtice Pounds (1862-1927) began his career with D'Oyly Carte at the Savoy Theatre in 1881 playing Nanki-Poo (*Mikado*) in New York in 1885. Returning to London, he created Fairfax in *Yeoman of the Guard*, Marco in *The Gondoliers* and Indru in Edward's Solomon's *The Nautch Girl* (1891). Thought of as the great singer-actor of the period after his performances in Frederick Norton's *Chu Chin Chow* (1916). Studied at the RAM.



Royal Academy of Music Historical Collection, above and centre



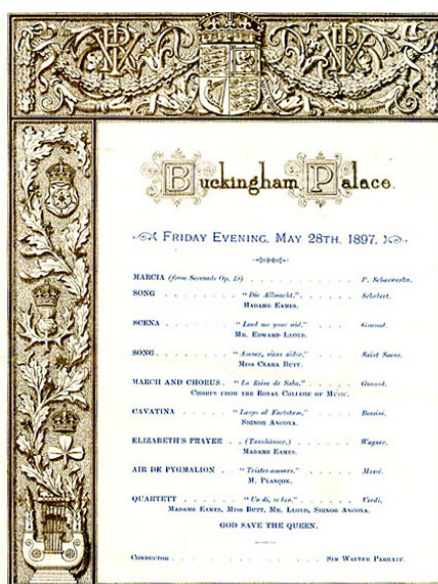
Left: original cast photographs, first performance, *The Gondoliers* (Gilbert and Sullivan). Pounds is lower left in the role of Marco Palmieri, which he created. Above. Lithograph by Charles Buchel of Pounds as Touchstone in *As You Like it*, by Shakespeare.



Autograph postcard, McCann Collection

Edward Lloyd (1845-1927) became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1869 for two years then turned to concert singing. Sang in Beethoven's Choral Fantasy in 1870 but his first great success was Bach's *St Matthew Passion* at Gloucester in 1871 followed by *Acis and Galatea* at the Crystal Palace Handel Festival in 1874. Sang the first performances of many important works, the last the (then) unsuccessful première of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* in 1900. Continued his concert career until 1902 but sang at King George V's coronation in 1911 and a benefit concert in 1915. Said to be the outstanding festival tenor of the day gifted with a range of exceptional beauty. His repertory included music by Wagner, whose music he popularised in the concert hall, and through popular songs. He also sang in North America and the Continent. In deference to his wife's wishes, he never appeared on the public theatrical stage. His son, E. Turner Lloyd, taught singing in 1897 at the RAM

Below: Lloyd, in this programme, sings 'Lend me your aid' (scena La Reine de Saba by Gounod) and 'Un di, se ben' (the quartet from *Rigoletto* by Verdi, with Emma Eames, Clara Butt and Mario Ancona. To the right are two images, including a caricature published by 'Vanity Fair' (all McCann Collection)



John McCormack (1884-1945). Irish tenor who became a naturalised American (included here, as Ireland was part of Britain until 1911; until the 1960s tenors such as Jon Vickers from Canada and Ronald Dowd from Australia were also called 'British'). Studied with Vincenzo Sabatini in Milan. Covent Garden debut as Turiddu (*Cavalleria Rusticana*) in 1907, also singing in *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni* and appearing at the summer season at Covent Garden until 1914. New York debut at the Manhattan Opera House in *La Traviata* (1909) and the Metropolitan Opera the following year. Irish nationalism made it difficult for him in England and he spent his time mainly in the USA. By his own admission he was a poor actor and he decided to pursue a concert career as an interpreter of Handel, Mozart, the Italian classics and German lieder. The many sentimental and popular ballads pleased the wider public but alienated other audiences. Made a Papal Count by Pope Pius XI in 1928. His farewell tour was in 1938 but he came out of retirement for broadcasts and a tour in aid of the Red Cross. He made a brief appearance in *Wings of the Morning*, the first British film to be shot in Technicolour.

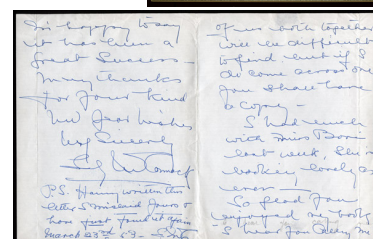


Left: Programme, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, 6th July 1908. *Otello* (Verdi) - McCormack is singing Cassio.

Upper left: '78 Recording of 'God Bless America' by McCormack, signed and inscribed on the label by the composer, Irving Berlin.

Right: Letter from Lily McCormack, his wife, to a Mr Campbell about her biography of her husband, 'I hear you calling me' (Feb. 1953).

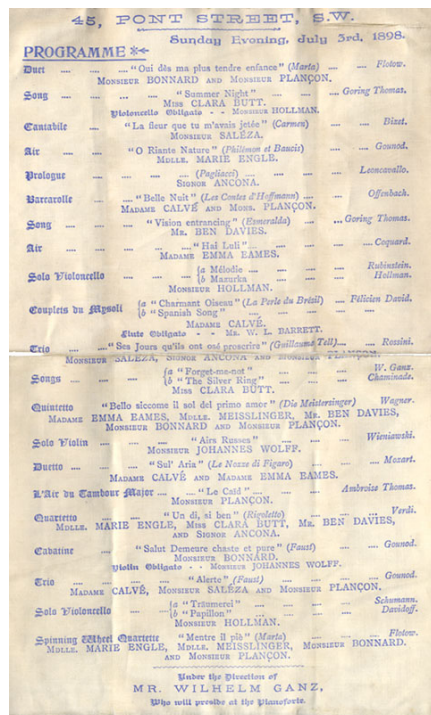
all McCann Collection



Alfred Piccaver (1884-1958). Born in Lincolnshire but brought up in New York, he was sometimes compared with Caruso. Went to Europe in 1907 and was engaged by the Neues Deutsches Theater in Prague, making his debut as Romeo. Continued his studies in Milan and Prague and in 1910 joined the Vienna Hofoper, where he remained a favourite tenor until his retirement in 1937. Sang the first Austrian performances of *La fanciulla del West* and *Il tabarro*. Also sang with the Chicago Opera from 1923-5 and Covent Garden in 1924. He spent the War years in London, returning to Vienna in 1955.



Right: A playbill from the Neues Deutsches Theater in Prague. Piccaver is the tenor in Nicolai's opera *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*)



Left: In this concert programme of 3rd July 1898 at Chelsea (printed onto silk), Davies appears in eminent company, with Clara Butt, Pol Plançon, Mario Ancona, Emma Calvé, Charles Bonnard under the direction of Wilhelm Ganz and with the cellist Joseph Hoffmann, pianist Anton Rubinstein and violinist Johannes Wolff and flautist William Barrett, among others.

Images: McCann Collection

Ben Davies (1858-1943) studied at the RAM with Fiori and Randegger. His stage debut was in Birmingham in Balfe's *Bohemian Girl* (1881), and in 1887 he became lead tenor in Cellier's *Dorothy*, a role which he sang for two years. Sang for many years with the Carl Rosa Opera Company and after Edward Lloyd's retirement was in great demand. Inaugurated the Royal English Opera in the title role of Sullivan's *Ivanhoe* which Sullivan conducted. Sung with Augustus Harris's Company and from the early 1890s turned his attention to oratorio. Made his American debut at the 1893 at the Chicago World Fair, returning to the USA almost annually. His Covent Garden debut in July 1892 as Faust. Sang in Berlin 1894. It is noted that he had a 'bad habit of always singing with his eyes shut'.

Joseph Hislop (1884-1977) studied in Stockholm where he made his debut as Faust at the Swedish Royal Opera in 1914. Joined San Carlo, Naples, before making his Covent Garden debut in 1920 in *La Bohème*, where Puccini called him 'my ideal Rodolfo'. Sang at Chicago and Manhattan and then Italy, becoming the first British tenor to take a leading role at La Scala, Milan (Edgardo, *Lucia di Lammermoor*). He made over 120 records for HMV and Pathé. He retired in 1937 and taught in Stockholm, where his pupils including Birgit Nilsson and Jussi Björling. He also taught at the Guildhall.

Tom Burke (1890-1969). Studied in Manchester, the RAM and in Italy and made his debut at the Teatro Dal Verme, Milan in 1917 as the Duke in *Rigoletto*. First sang at Covent Garden in 1919 as Rodolfo, and in 1920 in the English premières of *Gianni Schicchi* and *Il tabarro*, as Rinuccio and Luigi. It is said that he 'sang like an Italian and lived his life like a swashbuckling film star'.

Parry Jones 1891-1963. British tenor who sang in the USA. Studied at the RAM, Weimar and Milan. A survivor of the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915. Prior to joining the Beecham Opera Company he performed with D'Oyly Carte from 1917 (as Gwynn Jones). Was also a founder member of the British National Opera Company. Also sang with the Carl Rosa Opera Company and in the first British stage performance of Berg's *Wozzeck*, 1952, as well as the first British performances of *Gurrelieder*, *Doctor Faustus* and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. On the original recording of Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*. Parry Jones also taught at the Guildhall.

Heddle Nash (1894-1961). Studied in Milan where he made his debut as Almaviva (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) in 1924. Having sung in Genoa, Bologna and Turin he returned to London in 1925 and sang the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Tamino, Faust and Tonia (*La fille du régiment*). Debut at Covent Garden was in 1929, and he sang there regularly until the war, returning as Des Grieux and David in 1947-8. Was a mainstay of the early Glyndebourne seasons. A popular concert and oratorio singer whose was known for his advocacy of Liszt's songs. Many recordings for HMV including Handel arias. Taught at the Royal College of Music and in Manchester.

NOTE - While both Reeves and Hislop are said to have been the first British tenor to have sung at La Scala (each singing Edgardo in 'Lucia di Lammermoor'), Braham sang there much earlier.

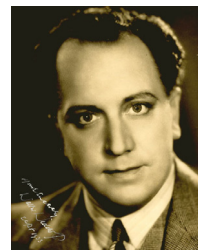


Images: McCann Collection

Walter Widdop (1892-1949). Joined the British National Opera company in 1923, making his debut as Radames (*Aida*). At Covent Garden he first appeared in *Siegfried* in 1924, and he sang Siegmund (1932) and Tristan (1933, 1937, 1938). In 1936 sang the title role in the British première of Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Performed abroad in Spain, the Netherlands and Germany. He also sang some heavier Italian and heldentenor roles. Said to have been one of the best heroic tenors of the century. *Image: McCann Collection*



Left: Portrait of conductor Sir Henry Wood with the sixteen singers who comprised his recording of Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music*, written by the composer to celebrate Sir Henry's Golden Jubilee in 1938. The setting was a passage from the final act of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Pictured are Walter Widdop, Parry Jones, Frank Titterton and Heddle Nash (tenors); Roy Henderson, Harold Williams, Robert Easton and Norman Allin (baritones). Seated are Isobel Baillie, Elsie Suddaby, Eva Turner and Lilian Stiles-Allen (sopranos) with Margaret Balfour, Astra Desmond, Muriel Brunskill and Mary Jarred (contraltos). In the centre is Sir Henry, his legs crossed. Directly behind him is Ralph Vaughan Williams. Taken in the recording studio. *McCann Collection, RAM.*



Tudor Davies (1892-1958). Initially a Welsh miner, he studied in Cardiff and at the RCM. Debut at Old Vic in 1920 as Tamino. Joined the British National Opera Company. His Covent Garden début was as Rodolfo in *La bohème* in 1921, which he also sang opposite the Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba. Created the title role in *Hugh the Drover* (Vaughan Williams) Later with the Sadler's Wells and Carl Rosa companies he sang a wide range of roles until his retirement from opera in 1946. His recordings include the 'Wagner-in-English' series conducted by Albert Coates. *Image: McCann Collection*



Webster Booth (1902-84). Performed with the D'Oyly Carte Company from 1923 and in the 1930s turned to concert and oratorio performances. His career included performances at Covent Garden, musical comedy and over 1000 radio and television broadcasts. Appearing in several films (the first one was *Invader* starring Buster Keaton), he met Anne Ziegler, his second wife, on the set of the film of *Faust*, the title role of which he performed - she was singing Marguerite. They toured the world in the 1940s and 50s as a popular vocal duo. Their autobiography is called *Duet*. *Image: McCann Collection*



Tudor Davies as Walter in *Der Meistersinger* *McCann Collection*

Ruby Helder (1890-1938), born Emma Jane Holden. Initially a baritone, she became a famous female tenor, singing to a packed house at the Queen's Hall in 1909. Her career developed both in the USA and Britain where she did many broadcasts for the BBC. Her recording career began with Pathé, and recently-released CD (Pearl), called *Ruby Helder, The Girl Tenor 1908-21*, includes M'appari tutt'amor from Flotow's *Martha*, and many songs.



Peter Pears (1910-86). Studied at the RCM for two terms, joining the BBC Chorus and then the BBC Singers (1934-8). Met Benjamin Britten in 1936 and a year later they gave their first recital together (including *On this Island*). In 1939 went to the USA. Returned to London in 1942 with Britten and made his stage debut in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* at the Strand Theatre. Joined Sadler's Wells Company, during which time he created the title role in *Peter Grimes* (1945) and first performances of Britten's *Michelangelo Sonnets* and *Serenade* for tenor, horn and strings. One of the founders of the English Opera Group, 1946. Also created for Britten Captain Vere (*Billy Budd*), Essex in *Gloriana*, Quint in *Turn of the Screw*, Flute A *Misummer Night's Dream* and other roles. At Covent Garden his roles included Tamino and David (Die Meistersinger), and he also created Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida* (1954). *Image: McCann Collection*



Richard Lewis (1914-90), the subject of this new York Gate exhibition, studied in Manchester and at the RAM. Made his debut with the Carl Rosa Company in 1941. His roles at Glyndebourne between 1948-70 included Don Ottavio, Ferrando and Idomeneus, as well as Florestan (*Fidelio*) (see left). Created Troilus in Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* (1954) and Achilles in *King Priam* (1962), as well as Aaron in the first British staging of Schonberg's *Moses und Aron* (1965). Also sang in San Francisco and in Venice. His *Gerontius*, which he also recorded under Sir John Barbirolli, was much acclaimed, as were his opera, concert and oratorio performances. *Image: McCann Collection*



James Johnston (1903-91). Belfast-born, he initially worked as a butcher and then studied privately. Appeared in 1940 in Dublin as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*. In 1945 he was engaged by Sadler's Wells, and while their leading tenor (1946-50) he sang Gabriele Adorno in the English première of *Simon Boccanegra* (1948), as well as Don Carlos, Pinkerton, Jeník and Hugh the Drover. He made his début at Covent Garden in 1949 as Alfredo, and the same year created Hector in Bliss's *The Olympians* there; he went on to become a principal tenor at Covent Garden (1951-8), singing Manrico (to Callas's Leonora), Radames, Don José, Cavaradossi and Calaf. He sang Macduff at Glyndebourne in 1952. Johnston had a ringing tone and unaffected delivery, and sang with rare fervour. *Left, as Pinkerton, McCann Collection*



Charles Craig (1920-97). English tenor. Began his career in the chorus at Covent Garden having auditioned with the musical director Karl Rankl, and was in 1951 engaged by Sir Thomas Beecham as a soloist - Beecham, realising his talent, both arranged and paid for his tuition. Joined the Carl Rosa Company and also sang with Sadler's Wells Opera from 1956. Made his Covent Garden debut as Pinkerton (*Madam Butterfly*) with Sena Jurinac in the title role, to critical acclaim. Sang his first *Otello* (Verdi) with Scottish Opera in 1963, a role he then sang all over Italy and Germany and in which he made his American debut in Chicago in 1966. He performed opposite many of the great sopranos, including Dame Joan Sutherland and Maria Callas. His repertoire comprised over 50 roles, both lyrical and dramatic, with a true Italianate quality. *Left, as Lohengrin, McCann Collection*

The many other successful historical British tenors - from Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales - included Joseph O'Mara, Barton McGuckin, Gervase Elwes, Frank Mullings, Eric Greene, Edgar Evans, Walter Midgeley, Walter Hyde and Alexander Young, as well as Josef Locke and the popular entertainer Sir Harry Secombe.