

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

**NON-  
FICTION**

**HISTORICAL  
RECORDINGS**



# Great Historical Shakespeare Recordings

Henry Irving  
Ellen Terry

John Barrymore  
John Gielgud

Herbert Beerbohm Tree  
Sybil Thorndike  
Laurence Olivier  
and many others

## And a Miscellany from

Charles Laughton  
Edith Evans  
Laurel and Hardy  
and others

NA220012D

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## EARLY RECORDINGS OF ACTORS IN SHAKESPEARE

- 1 **Herbert Beerbohm Tree** as Mark Antony in JULIUS CAESAR Act III Scene 1  
'O pardon me thou bleeding piece of earth...' 3:06
- 2 **Herbert Beerbohm Tree** as Falstaff in HENRY IV PART 1 Act V Scene 1  
'Hal, if you see me down in the battle...' 2:32
- 3 **Arthur Bouchier** as Macbeth in MACBETH Act II  
Scenes 1 & 2 'Go bid thy mistress when my drink is ready,  
she strike upon the bell...' 4:03
- 4 **Lewis Waller** as Henry V in HENRY V Act III Scene 1  
'Once more unto the breach, dear Friends...' 1:54
- 5 **Frank Benson** as Henry V in HENRY V Act III Scene 1  
'Once more unto the breach, dear Friends...' 1:25
- 6 **Johnston Forbes Robertson** as Hamlet in HAMLET  
Act II Scene 2 'O what a rogue and peasant slave am I...'  
4:19
- 7 **Johnston Forbes Robertson** as Hamlet in HAMLET  
Act III Scene 2 'Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you...' 3:23
- 8 **John Gielgud** as Hamlet in HAMLET Act IV Scene 4  
'How all occasions do inform against me...'  
2:52
- 9 **John Gielgud** as Richard II in RICHARD II Act III  
Scene 3 'O God! O God!...'  
4:11
- 10 **Sybil Thorndike** and **Lewis Casson** in MACBETH Act I Scene 5  
'They met me in the day of success...'  
4:46

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- 11 **John Barrymore** as Gloster in HENRY VI Part 3  
Act III Scene 2 'Ay, Edward will use women honourably...' 4:26
- 12 **John Barrymore** as Hamlet in HAMLET Act III Scene 1  
'To be, or not to be...' 3:21
- 13 **Laurence Olivier** as Hamlet in HAMLET Act I Scene 2  
'O that this too, too solid flesh would melt...' 3:24
- 14 **Laurence Olivier** as Henry V in HENRY V Act III Scene 1  
'Once more unto the breach...' 2:27
- 15 **Henry Irving** as Richard III in RICHARD III Act I Scene 1  
'Now is the winter of our discontent...' 2:37
- 16 **Henry Irving** as Cardinal Wolsey in HENRY VIII Act III Scene 2  
'Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear in all my miseries...' 2:12
- 17 **Edwin Booth** as Othello in OTHELLO Act I Scene 3  
'Most potent grave and reverend Signiors...' 3:33
- 18 **Ellen Terry** as Ophelia in HAMLET Act IV Scene 5  
'O rose of May, dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia...'  
(Ophelia's mad scene, beginning with Laertes's lines read by Ellen Terry) 4:35
- 19 **Ellen Terry** as Juliet in ROMEO AND JULIET Act IV  
cene 3  
'Good night. Get thee to bed and rest...'  
(The Potion scene beginning with Lady Capulet's lines read by Ellen Terry) 3:57
- 20 **Ellen Terry** as Portia in THE MERCHANT OF VENICE Act IV Scene 1  
'The quality of mercy is not strained...' 2:34

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<b>EARLY RECORDINGS: A MISCELLANY</b>		
21	<b>Noel Coward</b> and <b>Gertrude Lawrence</b> from Act I PRIVATE LIVES (Coward)	5:08
22	<b>Noel Coward</b> and <b>Gertrude Lawrence</b> from Act II PRIVATE LIVES (Coward)	4:25
23	<b>Fred Terry</b> and <b>Julia Neilson</b> in THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL (Orczy)	2:53
24	<b>Herbert Beerbohm Tree</b> as Svengali in TRILBY (du Maurier)	3:17
25	<b>Henry Ainley</b> reads THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE (Tennyson)	2:35
26	<b>Bransby Williams</b> as Irving in THE BELLS	4:09
27	<b>John Gielgud</b> and <b>Edith Evans</b> in THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST (Wilde)	7:00
28	<b>Charles Laughton</b> reads THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS	2:15
29	<b>Laurel and Hardy</b>	4:40
30	<b>Bransby Williams</b> as The Stage Doorkeeper	7:52
31	<b>Sarah Bernhardt</b> as Phèdre PHEDRE (Racine)	2:20
32	<b>Jean Mounet-Sully</b> as Oedipus OEDIPUS (Sophocles)	2:23
33	<b>Constant Coquelin</b> as Cyrano from CYRANO DE BERGERAC	1:55
34	<b>Feodor Chaliapin</b> reads REVERIE (Nadson)	1:34
35	<b>Alexander Moissi</b> reads ERLKOENIG (Goethe)	2:42
36	<b>Alexander Moissi</b> in FAUST (Goethe)	4:34

**Total time: 2:05:31**

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# Great Historical Recordings

'Life's but a walking shadow  
A poor player that struts and frets  
His hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more.'

With the development of Edison's phonograph in the 1880s, the ephemeral art of the actor found a little more permanence. Never again would a famous actor after his death be 'heard no more', and future generations would be able to judge for themselves whether his reputation was justified.

Since the 17th century, a classical actor's reputation has stood or fallen by his interpretation of Shakespeare, so this first disc looks at the changing styles of Shakespearian acting from the beginning of recorded sound in the 1880s, to the late 1940s.

If only we could have heard the voice of Richard Burbage, the first great performer of Hamlet, or hear for ourselves whether Garrick spoke Shakespeare with his native Lichfield accent. Fortunately, recordings have survived of the greatest actor of the Victorian age, **Sir Henry Irving**.

In 1888, the personal representative of

Edison, Colonel Gouraud, came to England with a prototype of the new phonograph, and publicised his employer's new invention by recording some of the most eminent figures in English society. After a dinner party at the Colonel's, Irving was requested to recite something, but he was nervous and, as his host said, 'frightened out of his voice'. Nevertheless he appeared to be intrigued by this 'most extraordinary instrument phenomenon'. He wrote to Ellen Terry: 'You speak into it and everything is recorded, voice, tone, intonation, everything. You turn a little wheel, and forth it comes, and can be repeated ten thousands of times. Only fancy what this suggests'.

Eventually, Irving mastered the new technique of directing his voice down a speaking-tube, which caused a needle, attached to a diaphragm, to vibrate and leave an impression of sound-waves on a wax cylinder. The needle then retraced its journey through the grooves, playing back the recording through a large conically-shaped horn. The bigger the horn, the louder the sound.

Sir Henry was not over-impressed with the result: 'Is that my voice? My God!'

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The phonograph was hardly more than a drawing-room entertainment at this stage, and some years away from commercial development, so the survival of the recordings of Irving included here is little short of a miracle. These early cylinders are important historic documents which, due to the limitations of the technology give us just an impression of Irving, Terry and the American Edwin Booth – which is why they have been placed at the end of the CD.

The first is a speech from *Richard III* [track 15] which Irving first played at the Lyceum in 1877. As one observer said: ‘he never lost nobility, the nobility of Lucifer’. Irving revived *Richard III* in 1896, which is probably when this recording was made.

The second [track 16] is a recording of Wolsey’s speech in *Henry VIII*, which Irving played in 1892. He seems more at his ease in this recording, leading some scholars to doubt whether this is in fact Irving at all, or one of his many imitators. For me, the inclusion of a line not written by Shakespeare at the end of the speech makes it authentic. It is an extra line added by Irving to cover the dying Cardinal’s well-documented exit across the Lyceum stage: ‘Come Cromwell, let us go in. My spirit is broken, – Ah!’ He also adds a postscript,

saying ‘I consider that one of the finest tragedies in Shakespeare.’

Irving’s idiosyncratic pronunciation was much commented upon by his contemporaries. He pronounced ‘dog’ as ‘dug’, and famously in *The Bells*, said ‘Tack the rup from mey nek’ (‘Take the rope from my neck’). These peculiarities are evident in these recordings. For instance, in *Richard III* he says ‘Sun of Yark’, for ‘Sun of York.’ Irving was well aware of his deficiencies. He himself had corrected a bad stammer he had had since a boy, and to make the most of his thin voice he made use of nasal resonance. But it was not vocal power that made Irving a great actor; it was his gift of being able to hold an audience by the force of his magnetic personality. We can only catch a glimpse of his talent through these rather primitive recordings.

In the United States of America, the great Shakespearian tragedian, and Irving’s contemporary, was **Edwin Booth** (1833-93). He came from a theatrical family that was blighted with real-life tragedy. His father, Junius Brutus Booth, had suffered from bouts of insanity, and Edwin’s brother, John Wilkes Booth, assassinated Abraham Lincoln in 1865. This event cast a shadow over the rest of Edwin’s life and career. In

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1882 Irving invited Booth to play Othello in London, opposite his Iago. Booth's Othello was described by his biographer William Winter as 'affluent with feeling, eloquent, picturesque, and admirable for sustained power and symmetry.' In 1890 Booth made a private recording of Othello's speech to the Senate, for his wife, which is full of quiet dignity [track 17]. Does one detect in the restrained and almost naturalistic delivery the beginnings of an understanding and sensitivity towards the new technology?

Irving's stage partner at the Lyceum from 1878 to 1896 was **Ellen Terry** (1847-1928), and no actress was more loved by her followers. She was intensely feminine and the embodiment of Shakespeare's heroines. As one reviewer said, 'it was as if she had met, and talked with, and lived with them all.' After leaving the stage, she toured extensively with her lecture-recital on *Shakespeare's Heroines*, and was persuaded, whilst in America in 1911, to make the recordings included here. Astonishingly she was 63 at the time, but her youthful energy, which she never seems to have lost, is still in evidence, giving us a taste of those performances with Irving of more than thirty years earlier.

In preparing for her Ophelia, [track 18]

which she first played in 1878, she studied lunatics in an asylum: 'I noticed a young girl gazing at the wall. I went between her and the wall to see her face. It was quite vacant, but the body expressed that she was waiting, waiting. Suddenly she threw up her hands and sped across the room like a swallow. I never forgot it: the movement was as poignant as it was beautiful.' Ellen Terry did not think her Juliet, [track 19] which she first played in 1882, was a success, lacking, she said, 'original impulse'. But Irving admired it and her recording of the Potion scene is compelling. Her Portia, from *The Merchant of Venice* [track 20] which she had played as early as 1875, was 'a perfect woman, in all the attributes that fascinate', yet in the trial scene Ellen invested her 'with that fine light of celestial anger – that momentary thrill of moral austerity' (William Winter). Her last performance with Irving, in 1902, was in the role of Portia.

After the death of Irving in 1905, the mantle of Shakespearian production fell to **Herbert Beerbohm Tree** (1853-1917). Between the late 1890s and 1917 he mounted sixteen lavish Shakespearian productions at his own theatre, Her Majesty's. Tree was something of an idealist and a dreamer, and was lacking in self-

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discipline as an actor. This did not make him really suitable for playing Shakespeare, particularly passionate or heroic parts. His talent was as a character actor, and using his considerable skills of make-up, he was able to create bizarre and eccentric characters which were his greatest successes. (As an example, hear his Svengali on track 4.)

In 1898, he mounted an epic production of *Julius Caesar*, with sets by Alma Tadema, and large, carefully choreographed, crowd scenes. In choosing which part to play he wrote: 'For the scholar, Brutus, for the actor, Cassius, for the public, Antony.' He chose the public. Not having had any vocal training, Tree found difficulty in sustaining the verse and reaching a rhetorical climax. Perhaps this is why his recording of Antony's speech over Caesar's body [track 1], made in 1906, feels as if it's on the edge of being sung. It is constructed like an aria, each line moving up a semitone until the climax is reached. It sounds odd to our ears, and a far cry from modern Shakespearian performing styles, yet, given the size of the theatre he had to fill, this grandiose, unnaturalistic style would have been very thrilling.

In the second recording, Tree is much more at home with his broad and rich characterisation of Falstaff [track 2].

The disciples of Irving and Tree who made early recordings included Arthur Bouchier, Lewis Waller, Frank Benson and Johnston Forbes-Robertson.

**Arthur Bouchier** (1863-1927), was an enthusiast for Shakespeare. His acting is full of ardour and energy, broad brushstrokes, with little space for subtlety and delicacy. He was an aggressive actor-manager, who championed contemporary playwrights like Pinero and Jones. His performance as Macbeth, here recorded in 1909 [track 3] was described by one reviewer as 'merely a bluff and rugged warrior'. Nevertheless, I think he probably represents the most usual style of playing Shakespeare at the turn of the century.

The good looks of **Lewis Waller** (1860-1915), soon established him as a matinee idol, and he was renowned for playing romantic parts. Thousands of postcards were published for his adoring female fans, who banded themselves together into a society called 'Keen On Waller'. They wore button-hole badges displaying their were 'K.O.W.s' – which caused much mirthful comment in the popular press of the day!

Waller starred as *Henry V* in 1901, [track 4] when his 'ringing voice and striking presence' made it a popular success. J.T.

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Grein wrote of his performance: 'He quivers with passion, with excitement, with righteous ardour that we in our seats begin to feel the effect.' A century later we can still share in that experience.

**Sir Frank Benson** (1858-1939), an Oxford graduate and Shakespeare scholar, was also a keen sportsman, and his approach to Shakespeare is redolent of the playing field. Max Beerbohm wickedly reviewed his production of *Henry V* [track 5] in 1900 in this vein: 'The fielding was excellent, and so was the batting. Speech after speech was sent spinning across the boundary.'

Nevertheless, Benson and his 'team' toured Shakespeare unceasingly throughout Britain and its Empire from the 1890s through to the 1930s, giving generations their first experience of the plays.

**Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson** (1853-1937) possessed great physical beauty, a scholarly mind and in his heyday a voice 'of gold and silver tones'. Fine attributes for an actor, but Forbes-Robertson, despite his success, never really cared for acting. In 1913 he was a popular Hamlet, described by one reviewer as being 'patient and careful, the temperament of an English gentleman', and George Bernard Shaw said his

performance showed 'a genuine delight in Shakespeare's art and a natural familiarity with the plane of his imagination'. It is this delight and familiarity that comes across in his recorded lecture on Hamlet made in 1928 [tracks 6 and 7]. His delivery is more in keeping with modern approaches to Shakespearean acting, relaxed and naturalistic, less rhetorical.

His approach sounds distinctly more modern than the early recording of Hamlet by **John Gielgud** (1904-2000) [track 8] which seems to be overshadowed by the nineteenth-century acting tradition which was his background; Ellen Terry was his great aunt. Similarly, his sense of rhetoric and poetry dominates his performance of *Richard II* [track 9], sometimes at the expense of naturalism.

To be fair, Gielgud of course spanned the twentieth century, and these are early attempts at roles he was to make his own. He was only 23 when he made the *Richard II* recording in 1927. A later recording made in the 1950s is exemplary. The comparison between Forbes-Robertson and Gielgud shows that a particular acting style does not necessarily belong to one generation.

**Sybil Thorndike** (1882-1976) and her husband Lewis Casson (1875-1969) were

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stalwarts of the Old Vic in the early years of the twentieth century, then under the management of the eccentric Lilian Baylis. Her aim was to make Shakespeare popular for ordinary working people. She greatly encouraged a new generation of actors to join her company. Her recruits, John Gielgud, Edith Evans, Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson, were of the new school of Shakespearian acting promoted by William Poel and taught by Ben Greet. Poel desired to sweep away all the accretions of the nineteenth century and get back to a faster, more immediate style of verse-speaking. This recording from 1930, of Thorndike and Casson in *Macbeth* [track 10], well illustrates the changing tempo of performance.

With the advent of electrical recording in the 1920s, where a microphone was first used and the volume could be controlled by an amplifier, the quality of reproduction significantly improves, and the style of acting begins to adapt to this more sophisticated advance. Hitherto little concession had been made by the actors to the recording process. The breadth and size of their performances did not change significantly from the theatre to the studio.

An actor perfectly at ease with the medium and using it to enhance and

increase the effectiveness of his performance was **John Barrymore** (1882-1942). Like Edwin Booth he belonged to a theatrical dynasty, and some critics think he could have been as great a Shakespearian actor as Booth. He was a sensational Hamlet in 1922 on both sides of the Atlantic, but turned instead to Hollywood, becoming a matinee idol. The ease and confidentiality of his delivery in the speech from *Henry VI* [track 11] show his experience in the subtle world of the film. The speech from *Hamlet* [track 12], made as a 'promotion' towards the end of his life, may show some vocal signs of his fast lifestyle, but his natural and intelligent delivery also makes us think of the fascinating Shakespearian actor he might have been.

An actor who was both a film and a Shakespearian actor, and occasionally managed to combine both, was **Laurence Olivier** (1907-1989). The excerpt here from the film soundtrack of *Hamlet* (1948) [track 13] shows how far sound recording had progressed in 60 years. The high quality of the sound recording allows Olivier to take us right into the mind of Hamlet, he seems to be just thinking rather than speaking the lines.

By contrast, the Harfleur speech from his

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film of *Henry V* (1944) [track 14] is boldly theatrical. It is a trumpet call to arms at a time of national conflict, and in its style unashamedly takes us back to the 'ringing voice' of Lewis Waller [track 4].

These early recordings show us how the art of acting Shakespeare, which had been handed on from generation to generation, was changed and refined by the invention of recorded sound. As the twentieth century progressed, the larger style gave way to a more subtle and internalised style, matching the techniques required for those two other technological revolutions of the last century, film and television. These changes have ensured that Shakespeare has not remained solely the prerogative of the theatre, but has reached an ever-increasing audience in the electronic age.

Our second CD shows how the rapidly developing medium of recorded sound caught the popular imagination in the early years of the twentieth century. Jazz bands, brass bands, music-hall artists, politicians, all rushed to get themselves on record, and actors were not far behind. **Noel Coward** (1899-1973) was always a successful self-publicist and soon realised that recorded

excerpts from his plays would considerably help the box office. The excerpts here from *Private Lives* [tracks 1 and 2] recorded in 1930, with the Master and the sparkling **Gertrude Lawrence** (1898-1952), capture forever the spirit and style of the theatre in the 1920s.

An earlier popular theatrical duo were Fred Terry (1863-1933) and his wife Julia Neilson (1868-1957) who recorded their 'hit' *The Scarlet Pimpernel* in 1906 [track 3]. As A.E. Wilson said, 'A handsomer pair of lovers never trod the boards or raised rubbish to the plane of pure delight.' Rubbish or not, it was successfully revived throughout their long careers.

**Herbert Beerbohm Tree** (1853-1917), as we have already seen, had a huge success, mounting epic productions of Shakespeare, but his greatest triumph came with the adaptation of Du Maurier's novel *Trilby*, which he first produced in 1895.

A character actor of considerable scope, with the aid of his artistry in greasepaint, he brilliantly personified the evil Svengali [track 4]. He brought Du Maurier's drawings to life. A.E. Wilson described his performance as having 'the air of romantic shabbiness and picturesque grime with guttural alien accent – the very tones of which struck a chill.' He

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recorded this excerpt in 1906.

There was a growing public for the theatre in the early 1900s. It was the heyday of the picture postcard and fans competed to collect whole sets of their favourites. The recording companies too saw the potential in persuading the stars to record their party pieces. One of the most beautiful and adored actors of his generation was **Henry Ainley** (1879-1945) who also had a musical voice ranging 'from fluty sweetness to deep organ tone'. Here he reads Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* [track 5].

Giving 'impressions' of famous people is nothing new, and **Bransby Williams** (1870-1961) had a long and successful career as a 'mimic' (his term) in the music-hall. Over sixty years in fact. The arrival of recorded sound was a boon to the impersonator and Williams' celebrated imitation of Irving in *The Bells* [track 6] has led some to question the authenticity of the Irving recordings (see CD 1). He captures Irving's vocal mannerisms to perfection, and it is not perhaps surprising to learn that Irving was 'sensitive' about his impersonators, of whom there were many. On one occasion, he called on the power of the Lord Chamberlain to threaten the withdrawal of the offending theatre's licence. Bransby Williams seems to have

escaped unscathed, and recorded the extract included here around 1914. He was still performing it in his eightieth year, 1950, on another piece of new technology – the television.

**Edith Evans** (1888-1976) will always be associated with *The Importance of Being Earnest* in which she gave the definitive performance of Lady Bracknell. The 'handbag' line must be the most imitated piece of theatre in the Western world! But the performance she gave in John Gielgud's 1939 production was one of subtlety and detail: 'I know those sort of women,' she said, 'they ring the bell and tell you to put a lump of coal on the fire; they spoke meticulously, they were all very good-looking and didn't have any nerves'. Here she recreates her performance with her director John Gielgud, himself the very incarnation of John Worthing [track 7].

**Charles Laughton** (1899-1962) was one of scores of British actors who made his name in Hollywood. Like Stan Laurel, he came to prefer the American way of life, and scored a popular hit in the film *Ruggles of Red Gap* (1935), where he played an English butler incongruously working in the Wild West. During the course of the action Ruggles, the butler, recites Abraham

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Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* to great effect. It is a fine speech and this recording, made in 1937, shows Laughton at his best [track 8]. Towards the end of his life, he made more use of his rhetorical skills and turned increasingly to the recital platform with readings from *The Bible* and *Dickens*.

Recording companies were always looking for novelties, and music-hall artists performing sketches and monologues were very popular in the first half of the twentieth century. Many comic moments from the films of **Laurel and Hardy** for instance were transcribed to disc. The recording included here [track 9], though, was made to promote one of their far too infrequent visits to Britain. It is a curious paradox to think that these two stars, who made their name in films without sound, could be so successful in sound without vision. It is a fine example of two geniuses adapting their skills to the now well-established medium of sound recording.

We end the English section with another 'novelty act' by Bransby Williams. Throughout his long career, *The Stage Doorkeeper* [track 10] was one of his most popular 'turns'. In it, he mimicked the most successful performers of the day, continually changing them to remain topical.

Here, frozen in time, are the 'voices' of the performers of the moment in 1914, the year of the recording. **George Alexander**, the actor-manager, **Forbes Robertson** as Hamlet, and the music-hall artists **Chirgwin**, 'the White-Eyed Kaffir'; **G.P. Huntley**, the silly ass type; **R.G. Knowles**, the eccentric comedian; **Fred Emney** and **George Formby** (senior) with his characteristic cough. Many of these names, now long forgotten by the public, were never recorded themselves, and it is poignant to hear them one step removed as it were. It makes one grateful that so many early recordings have survived of the great artists of yesterday, and I hope this compilation will help to bring those 'poor players' out of the 'shadows' and once more into the light.

Recording companies on the continent were also eager to preserve for posterity the leading actors of their day. Most famous and most notorious was the great **Sarah Bernhardt** (1845-1923). Ellen Terry said of her: 'She was as transparent as an azalea – like a cloud, only not so thick. Smoke from a burning paper describes her more nearly! She was hollow-eyed, thin, almost consumptive-looking. Her body was not the prison of her soul, but its shadow – she always seemed to me more a symbol, an

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ideal, an epitome than a woman – which makes her so easy in such lofty parts as Phèdre.’ Her voice was variously described as a ‘golden bell’, or the ‘silver sound of running water’. Its sustained power in this extract from Racine’s *Phèdre* recorded in 1903 is thrilling [track 11].

Two of her leading men are also featured here. **Jean Mounet-Sully** (1841-1916) was a major tragic actor of the nineteenth century whose passion, conviction and sheer dramatic power overwhelmed his audiences. He played opposite Bernhardt in *Hernani* by Victor Hugo, but he was a renowned Oedipus, recorded here in 1912 [track 12].

**Constant Coquelin** (1841-1909) was essentially a comic actor making his debut at the Comédie-Française. He joined Sarah Bernhardt’s company in 1892, but his strong personality clashed with hers and their association was short-lived. He will always be known as the originator of Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which he played over 400 times [track 13].

The Russian bass, **Feodor Chaliapin** (1873-1938), was a formidable talent. He was a great singer and also a great actor. On stage he blended the two arts. His voice ‘rolled out like melodious thunder’ and could be at once ‘powerful and caressing’. He left

the Soviet Union in 1921, and became an international artist. In 1922, he was recorded performing *Reverie* by Nadson [track 14].

**Alexander Moissi** (1880-1935), although of Italian/Albanian parentage, became a leading German actor from 1905, working with the innovative Max Reinhardt in Berlin. He was a notable proponent of the title role of Goethe’s *Faust* [track 15], recorded here in 1927, and in 1930 came to London with his version of *Hamlet*. Goethe’s *Erkoenig* [track 16] was famously set by Schubert. Both the recordings here show us his rich and musical speaking voice.

**Notes by David Timson**

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**The music on this recording is taken from  
the MARCO POLO catalogue.**

<b>SULLIVAN</b> INCIDENTAL MUSIC RTE Concert Orchestra, Andrew Penny, conductor	8.223635
<b>SATIE</b> PIANO WORKS VOL. 3 Klára Körmendi, piano	8.550698
<b>STENHAMMER</b> PIANO WORKS Niklas Sivelov, piano	8.553730

Cover photographs from the private collection of David Timson.

**Lewis Waller** (left, top) **Sir Henry Irving** (right, top)

**Ellen Terry** (left, bottom) **Herbert Beerbohn Tree** as Svengali (right, bottom)

# Great Historical Shakespeare Recordings

Henry Irving • Ellen Terry • John Barrymore • John Gielgud  
Herbert Beerbohm Tree • Sybil Thorndike • Laurence Olivier  
and many others

## And a Miscellany

from **Charles Laughton • Edith Evans • Laurel and Hardy** and others

In this remarkable anthology of historical recordings are many of the great artists of the past. Early cylinder recordings of *Sir Henry Irving* preserve the voice and character of the greatest actor of the Victorian period as well as *Ellen Terry*, his stage partner for many years. In this programme are documented the changing styles of Shakespeare performance – a fascinating study – with such varied actors as *Tree*, *Gielgud*, *Thorndike*, *Olivier* and from the USA, *Booth* and *Barrymore*.

The second disc is no less absorbing, an entertaining miscellany of melodrama, tragedy, comedy – including the famous extract of *Edith Evans's* performance as Lady Bracknell and an unforgettable dialogue between *Laurel and Hardy*. In addition, there are some great actors from France, Germany and even Russia – the formidable singer/actor *Feodor Chaliapin*.

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Total time  
2:05:31