The following interview with Alexander Kipnis was recorded at an unknown date and location, probably in Westport, CT. The speakers are principally Alexander Kipnis, his wife Mildred Kipnis and an interviewer. This interviewer was probably either Michael Bavar or William Youngren, both of whom were once working on biographies of Alexander Kipnis (both books unpublished.)

Please note that this is mostly a raw transcript of an old reel-to-reel tape recording, and that it is likely to contain errors. I have done my best to establish the names of the people who are mentioned in the recording, but at times that was not possible. – Barry Lenson, October 29, 2024

Siegfried Wagner, as I mentioned before, engaged me for Bayreuth, to sing Parsifal, Gurnemanz in Parsifal and also alternate to sing Titurel. The conductor at that time was Muck.

The assistant to Mr. Muck was a woman who was also an assistant conductor, or a coach, in Berlin. Her name was Faitis (Sp?) And we moved in, into an apartment in the Niebelungenstrasse. As you know, every street, every place, in Bayreuth has something to do with Wagnerian figures.

I was wondering, where was the Kundrybau? And anyway, this apartment in the Niebelungenstrasse was very pleasant and very nice. Then I came to a rehearsal and Miss Faitis asked me, “Where did you rent your living quarters?” I said, “In the Niebelungenstrasse No.3.” She said, “OH!, That’s the place where Muck used to live! Tell me, in what bed are you sleeping? Is it Muck’s bed?”

And I said, “I don’t know whether it is the bed in which Muck slept, what is the difference? And how do you recognize it?”

She says, “Es kracht!”

And it was very, very beautiful and very lovely, not very close ... not very far away from the Festspielhaus. We had many rehearsals. Muck was conducting, as I mentioned, *Parsifal*. I had a long rehearsal, Faitis was playing the piano. And Muck was listening and he did not interrupt me during the entire length of the first act. And when I finished the first act, he turned to me and said, “I cannot singingly correct you very much, and you did not make too many mistakes. I don’t think it is necessary to rehearse the Third Act.” This was Muck’s biggest compliment.

Interviewer: He didn’t say a lot of mistakes, however.

Yes. The Kundry in that performance was Micklasse Kemp. [Barbara Kemp – ed.] A dramatic soprano from Berlin, she was the wife of the composer and conductor Max von Schilling. Singlingly, she did not take the music from the rigging (?) exactly as it has been written. I remember during the intermission of *Parsifal*, Muck came on the stage and when he saw Mrs. Kemp or Mrs. Schilling, he said, “What? This Schwein is on the stage? Then I have nothing to do here anymore!” And he left the stage.

This is . . . the character.

Woman’s voice [probably Mildred Kipnis – ed.]: What did you say her first name was?

Nicklasse Kempt.

Woman’s voice: Barbara! Oh that her maiden name, you see.

[Note from Barry Lenson: Groves Dictionary lists her as Barbara Kemp.)

Elmundorff at that time conducted *Tristan*. He was not a very great light. He was a reliable, good conductor. There was also another conductor . . .(inaudible)

The performances went too very well. I remember only one little episode during a rehearsal of *Parsifal*, a lady, an elderly lady was sitting not very far away from us on the bench and somebody was listening, was saying something. This elderly lady jumped up and said, “How do you dare to talk during the rehearsal?”

This was Miss Melba. The famous singer came to listen to a rehearsal and she knew who she is and what she is. Suddenly came out to criticize somebody right in the Festspielhaus.

In 1933, I came again, they asked me again to sing in Bayreuth. Toscanini was there. I never met Toscanini before and he was very eager to hear me and to rehearse with me in *Tristan*. We had spent the summer vacation near a lake in Berlin, near Berlin, and received a telegram from Siegfried Wagner: “Toscanini is very impatient. He wants to rehearse. Come as quick as you can.”

And I answered him, “I sang *Tristan* already in Bayreuth, and I will come in about two weeks.” Then he again telegraphed, “But Toscanini has never heard you, and he wanted to hear you.”

So I told him, I will be there in ten days.

When I arrived, I didn’t even have time to unpack. I went to the Festspielhaus and there I was led into one of the big rehearsal rooms and there was Toscanini. And one of the accompanists was sitting at the piano. He very cooly said hello and said, “Let’s start.”

I started with the King Marke’s monologue. He did not interrupt me once. Once in a while, he moved his arm as if he was going to conduct. When I finished the Monologue, he went over to me, took my at the hand he went down on the stage. And there was Siegfried Wagner, rehearsing something. And the rehearsal immediately stopped when Toscanini came up, and he said, “Tell me why aren’t the other singers who sing *Tristan*, why aren’t they singing the same way this man is singing?

[Next paragraph hard to hear and probably transcribed incorrectly.]

“There is Austroalese (??). `Muss ich. . .’ And the tenor sings, `Musssich’ as it were it would have been six s’s. But your father has composed a quarter and a dot and and eighth. . . `Muss ich.’ Why don’t they sing like that?”

This was my first acquaintance with Toscanini. Shortly, about a week later after the performance of *Tristan*, and then I also sang the same season *Parsifal* with Muck. A great, great envy and jealousy came up between Muck and Toscanini. Siegfried Wagner decided to build an extra room for the conductor. And Muck didn’t like the idea. He walked around on the stage and he said, “Over fifty years, we have been performing and living in Bayreuth and we did very well without a conductor’s room. Now we have built for Toscanini a conductor’s room.”

The envy and the jealousy was very obvious. For we also had very often auditions in Bayreuth. Young singers from all over the world came to audition. The audition was usually early in the noontime, about 12:00, 11:00 or 1:00. Sometimes, very good voices came and after the auditions, they used to stand around near the Festspielhaus and discussing the different voices. At one day, a girl, a big girl, you could call her a big woman, was singing Isolde’s Liebestod. And many other singers sang this and that and then we were standing after these auditions and discussing them. Muck was old and his face was like parchment. Yellow. He walked with a stick, a cane and at that moment, there was standing somebody was standing there, this one big woman came closer and closer and she looked at Muck and Muck turned around and he said, “What do you want?”

And this woman said, “Karl? Don’t you recognize me?”

And he turned around and left. Later on, the whole mystery cleared up. While Muck was in the United States during World War I, and he conducted in Boston, toward the end of the war, Muck was arrested and he was only released when the war was over. He was accused that he was spying and he was communicating with U-Boats which were somewhere floating on the water and under the water near Boston. The whole story was only invented. The real reason for his arrest was he had a love affair with a very young girl who was not sixteen yet. And the family did not want to have the whole story publicized and Muck was for that reason arrested. And this young girl became very big and huge and out of Muck’s devotion, she started to study Wagner. And this was the same girl who sang Isoldes Liebestod. And Mr. Karl Muck, the old Dr. Karl Muck, did not recognize her. Anyway, this was the story.

In 1930, we arranged a concert for elderly singers who used to sing in Bayreuth and have been in great need for financial support. This recital was given in the old Markgräfliches Theater. A very beautiful old baroque theater.

In the inside of the theater, Toscanini and his family were sitting, and on the other side of the theater, also near the stage, was Muck and his friends. Toscanini didn’t look to Muck and Muck didn’t look to Toscanini. This soloist at this recital was a very lovely soprano, her name was Maria Müller. And Maria Müller sang Agathe’s aria from *Freischütz* and several songs by Strauss.

I sang Hugo Wolf and Schubert. On the following morning, I had a rehearsal with Toscanini for *Tannhäuser*. I was not going to sing *Tannhäuser*, but my colleague, Mr. Andrésen, became ill and he needed an operation and they asked me to take over Mr. Andrésen’s share and parts of this season. So I took over *Tannhäuser*, and several Gurnemanzes, which he was supposed to sing. I alternated with Andrésen in *Parsifal*.

Toscanini at that moment, during the rehearsals, paid me a great, great compliment for my singing of Schubert. And he also criticized at the same time Maria Müller for her singing of Agathe’s aria. He said, “I have seen the original score of *Freischütz*, which is in Washington, and a certain phrase was written completely different than Maria Müller sang. Why don’t they tell her the exact score the way Weber has written it?”

Shortly after this occasion, Siegfried Wagner passed away. They decided to bury him not in Wahnfried, but in an old cemetery in Bayreuth where Franz Liszt is also buried. As a matter of fact, they found a grave very close to Franz Liszt where Siegfried Wagner is buried. Messages and telegrams and wreaths from all over the world came to this occasion.

At the head of the grave there was a sort of a little step up and representatives from Finland, from France, from Germany, even from the United States, came to the burial and each one was holding a wreath and saying something about Siegfried Wagner, what he was and what he meant to the world. And there was also a delegation from the fire department in Bayreuth and he went up and he could not find his wreath. So he took, there were thousands of wreaths, and he took one of them and was holding this wreath in his hands and spoke up about Siegfried Wagner, what he did for Bayreuth and what it meant to have Siegfried Wagner as a resident in this small town and what kind of a person he was, and how kind he was, and so forth and so forth.

Muck was standing nearby and suddenly Muck lifted his hand, pointing to the wreath, and started to laugh with a demonic laughter. The head of the fire department was holding Dr. Karl Muck’s wreath in his hands and he said, “What do you say to that?”

[AK tells this part of the story imitating a laughing voice.]

This was unfortunate. A terrible reaction of Muck. Nobody could find any reason to laugh with him during this occasion. On the following day, there was a memorial concert in the Festspielhaus. Two numbers have been on the program. The first number was Siegfried’s Idyll conducted by Toscanini. Under the impression of Siegfried’s death, and possibly because Toscanini was conducting it, we had a feeling we have never heard a performance so beautiful and so touching of this kind. After that, Muck came out on the stage of the Festspielhaus and he conducted Siegfried’s Death and Funeral March.

[Note: BL transcribed as spoken; I think that AK made a mistake in referring to the funeral music as a “march.”]

He was old and very yellow in his face and the music sounded, in comparison to Siegfried’s Idyll, very old, very used-up. The contrast was immense between these two performances. This was the summer of 1930. I sang several performances, two of *Parsifal* which I didn’t have to sing, and one of *Tannhäuser*, and possibly one more.

Our fee at that time was 1,000 Marks per performance. I, when the season was over, a messenger brought me a check for 4,000 Marks more for these four performance which I sang, substituting for my sick colleague. I asked the messenger to take the check back and to give it to Winifred Wagner and to say that this is my gift to Bayreuth.

In 1931 and 1932, I did not go to Bayreuth because I had a contract with Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. But in 1933, I was under contract to Bayreuth, Tietchen [Heinz Tietchen – ed.] at that time took over the management of the Festspielhaus and he made me sign the contract for 1933. I signed the contract already in 1932, ahead of the 1933. The principal conductor at that time was Richard Strauss. And he conducted *Parsifal*. I don’t recall who conducted in that year *Tristan*. Toscanini didn’t come. He was. . .he didn’t come that year to Bayreuth. I sang *Tristan* and *Parsifal*. Strauss was a conductor of an entirely different caliber than Muck. He was more flexible, much faster sometimes, or he did not have the holy (???) which Muck used to have. We used to call him, “The guarder of the grail.” Strauss, his approach was cool, but very intense. On the stage, during the introduction, they could hear Dr. Richard Strauss’s voice.

. . .the evening after the performance a game of skat, which he loved, or he did not have a game of skat. Accordingly . . . a game of skat.

There was Andrésen again, who was supposed to alternate with me in *Parsifal*. But Andrésen was not very movable in the occasion of singing. And for that reason, Strauss didn’t like him. Basically, he said, “. . . sie darft nicht . . .Gurnemanz ist . . .”

And then he said to Tietchen, “I want Herr Kipnis to sing all the *Parsifals*.” And here I was, singing all the *Parsifals*.

Andrésen sang all the other parts - Hagen and Hunding, Fafner and so forth. I sang *Tristan* and Gurnemanz.

We did not have too many rehearsals at that time. Then was . . . the feeling of the Nazi regime. The people have changed the name of a certain plaza before the Festspielhaus, they called it the Hitlerplatz. This was the year when Flagstad, when Tietchen engaged Flagstad for two small parts. For the third Norn in *Götterdammerung*, and for one of the Brünnhildes. And he told her to prepare and to study as a substitute for Sieglinde. The Sieglindes were sung at that time by Maria Müller. One day, during a rehearsal, we received an invitation to have dinner in Wahnfried. The invitation came from Winifred Wagner. And everybody was looking forward to being in Wahnfried and to have the dinner.

It was a very rare occasion. In the afternoon, some of the, one of the (??) said “There is also going to be a surprise in the dinner.” And I inquired, “What is the surprise?” And he said, “Hitler is also be invited.”

And I was looking for a reason to cancel my invitation and while walking with Mildred on the street, we met two old friends from London, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Newman whom we had known during my activities in Covent Garden and then in the time when I was associated with the Hugo Wolf Society. And Mildred looked at me and I looked at her and I said to her, “What a marvelous idea, to be. . .to get out of this invitation.”

And we asked Vera Newman and Ernest Newman if they are free that evening. And they said, “Yes, we are free,” and I said, “Wouldn’t you like to have dinner with us?”

And they agreed and I said, “This evening at seven o’clock, please.”

And we had a marvelous dinner and drank a very good, old burgundy and we were sitting and having conversation, mostly about music, and the music of Hugo Wolf. Ernest Newman asked me at that time, “Did you ever sing this beautiful song by Hugo Wolf, `Was fùr ein Lied soll dir gesüngen werden?’”

I said, “No I don’t, I never sang it, and I don’t know it.”

And he sat at the piano and played it for me. I took it into my repertory and which I later have recorded it.

We stayed the whole evening until about two o’clock in the morning. It was a memorable day and we were very, very glad to avoid this so-called “dishonorable invitation” to Wahnfried and to meet this so-called Führer.

Woman’s voice: You didn’t mention that Hans was with us. . .

The situation in Bayreuth in 1933 became so unbearable for us that we have been very happy to leave this place in Bayreuth. The things which had been so valuable and so dear to us in Bayreuth suddenly disappeared. I remember in one of the dressing rooms, there was written with chalk, “Today after the performance,” or “Today after the rehearsal, all the singers and conductors are invited to Wahnfried for a glass of beer. Richard Wagner.” With his own hand.

This is something which you could not buy. But during the time 1933, everything was forgotten. All the feelings. All the singers and conductors, big and small, used to go after the performances, or after rehearsals, and having a glass of beer. All the walls are covered up with photos of the old singers and of the new singers and of the old conductors and it was a small country and it was a pleasure to be there.

We have been many times and we had some very, very pleasant memories of this place. . . We left at that time Bayreuth. I returned to Berlin. I remember Furtwängler tried to rehearse everything which was performed in Bayreuth. He followed his own way, because he thought that everything which happened in Bayreuth was against the (??) . . .of a very good conductor. So we had to rehearse. We rehearsed all the Ring, all of *Parsifal*, all of *Tristan* again and again and have absolutely the OK of Mr. Furtwängler.

I didn’t stay very long there. I went to London for performances and concerts and also for recordings.

The singing in Bayreuth, in generally, was marvelous. They loudest passages of the orchestration was subdued, the voices could go over the orchestra with ease. I remember listening to the introduction of *Parsifal*. You don’t see a conductor, you don’t see the musicians. From nowhere, the sound of the introduction comes up. It is like magic. Many conductors didn’t like it, especially Mr. Furtwängler didn’t like it. He wanted to be seen.

I remember . . . when he was going to conduct in Bayreuth, he insisted that this cover-up of the orchestra shall be completely removed. That people should see the conductor and they see the musicians. I was not there anymore. This was after my time in Bayreuth. But all the music in *Walküre*, in *Götterdämmerung*, in *Tristan* was absolutely ideal with this cover-up of the orchestra. We on the stage could see the conductor very well. We could see also most of the players in the orchestra. I am judging only from the point of view of a performer, not of the public.

I remember that one day during 1927, London Columbia approached us to perform *Parsifal* for their recordings. They brought all the machinery from London and Muck was conducting most of *Parsifal*. And when it came to the Good Friday Music, Muck refused to conduct this because he thought it should be recorded and played without interruption. But in 1927, they didn’t have any tape. They only had records. And each record would last about three and a half, three and three-quarter minutes. But the contract called for the recording of the entire opera and so Siegfried Wagner took over the conducting for the Good Friday Music. I remember he recorded it on the stage. The orchestra was on the stage. We were standing on the stage. And this recording of 1927 is still available. And you can still hear it. The spirit of the performance, also of Siegfried Wagner, is still present.

In the cast of 1927 the tenor was Fritz Wolff, a young man with a good voice. Very German in quality. And a good, intelligent performer. Kundry was Barbara Kemp. She was, or a little later, married to von Schilling, the composer. She was an exceptionally good actress with a very fine, penetrating voice. Amfortas . . .

Woman’s voice: Was his first name “(??)”

Amfortas, no, unfortunately I don’t remember. But I remember one very strange episode. In the last act, when Amfortas in his desperation and pain removes the symbol of his kingdom from his head, and begins to shout, “Go and stab me! I cannot live any longer!” This baritone grabbed his symbol and pulled it up and together with this symbol on his head. But the wig also came up and unfortunately, he was completely bald-headed and this happened during a performance. And it was . . .it did not add to the sanctitude of the grail at that time.

Tristan was at that time Melchior. And Isolde was Larsén-Todsen. [Nanny Larsén-Todsen – ed.] She had a very fine voice and quite a good actress. Melchior was so much younger, as a matter of fact, he was very young at that time. He learned the part and in spite of being at Bayreuth, they had in the last act many, many cuts which Melchior, later under Toscanini, had to restudy. Brangäne was Annie Chen (??), a young woman with a fine voice and agreeable, but she was not outstanding. The performance in general was very, very, very fine.

[Note: Historical sources say that the Brangäne was Emmy Bettendorf - ed.]

In 1930, we had again Melchior as Tristan. He had great difficulties doing study the cuts. But Toscanini wanted to have it entirely. And so Melchior came on the stage, which had never happened before, on the stage with his score and he was reading from the score and worked very, very hard. I remember Muck at that time said to me, “Tell your friend Melchior, the Schweinhund, he should not play bridge so much. Instead he should study for Tristan.”

(Inaudible comment from interviewer.)

It was 193(??) when Theodore Schreibel (??) sang Amfortas in 1940. [I am unable to find any information on a baritone Schreibel who sang Amfortas at that time in Bayreuth – ed.] Muck was still conducting at that time *Parsifal*. Thedore Schreibel (??) was very tall. He used to make his own fun about himself. Instead of saying, “I am the tallest singer,” he said, “I am the greatest singer in the world.” Because he was the tallest singer. He was almost six feet tall. . .

Woman’s voice: Almost six? He was. . .

Seven! When Strauss conducted *Parsifal*, there was already Leider singing Kundry. Melchior was Parsifal again. And if I’m not mistaken, Bockelmann was Amfortas. Bockelmann also sang same year Hans Sachs and Wotan. I also sang the same year a Pogner. I remember in 1933. Tietchen was the conductor. And also the stage director. And we had double cast. We have been ordered one day for rehearsal on the stage. And it was not told who should come and participate, and who should watch. So we enter the stage. Pogner, Beckmesser, Pogner, Beckmesser. He insisted, Tietchen insisted, that when Pogner and Beckmesser step on the stage, they shall have a certain movement. Pogner shall put his hand on the shoulder of Beckmesser. So we, the two pairs, two Pogners and two Beckmessers, enter the stage at the same time, putting the hand on Beckmessers shoulders and singing, “Seid meiner Treue wohl versehen,”

And there was the biggest laughter during the rehearsal. And Tietchen said, “This is not a joke!”

And I said, “Of course it’s not a joke, but why didn’t you tell us who should come?”

And Eva was Maria Müller. Stolzen (???)was Fritz Wolff. Beckmesser was Mr. Fuchs. Magdalena was somebody, I don’t remember. The cast of *Parsifal* under Strauss was Fritz Wolff again, and Melchior. Wolfram [Here Kipnis jumps and refers to *Tannhäser* – ed.] was Jantzen and Bockelmann. I was the only Gurnemanz, because Strauss insisted. Kundry was Leider. She was vocally magnificent, and she acted the first act very well. The second act, she didn’t look very attractive. And the third act, she was like in the first act, very simple, she doesn’t have very much to sing, except one word, “Dienen.” “Dienen.”

Kundry is an exceptional part. Many, many singers, mezzosopranos as well as dramatic sopranos, sang this part and have a desire to sing it. I remember Mary Garden expressed very clearly the desire to sing Kundry. She used to say, “This is a part which I am dreaming of being able to sing.”

As you know, Gurnemanz at one point expresses “. . . durch Luft.” In other words, he indicates when she has to (??) a duty according to her conception, she is almost flying in the air. And this was the reason that Mary Garden, she wanted to fly as Kundry. But unfortunately, she didn’t have the voice. Unfortunately, she didn’t sing it.

Interviewer: A little bit about Rudolf Bockelmann. . .?

Rodolf Bockelmann was a very intelligent man with a voice of good tessitura. Good range. He was always reliable. I think he was a teacher, a school teacher, before he became a singer. His voice was of dry character. A very dry. When he tried to sing something expressively, like Verdi or Puccini or even Schubert, it came out like a bloodless piece of something. He was a good actor. He was a good actor. He was a good, impressive Hans Sachs. But everyone is a good Hans Sachs, everyone who was German, was a good and *echt* Hans Sachs. And he was of medium stature, and, as they say, in a kingdom of blind people, the one-eyed is king. We didn’t have at that time a baritone of the caliber which Wotan should be.

1933, if I’m not mistaken, Schorr was not there anymore. He, Schorr, had the voice of that part, although not the driven, the demonic character of Wotan.

Interviewer: Who else was there?

No, I . . .remember Schorr sang all the time the Ring in Bayreuth, and I did not sing anything in the Ring in Bayreuth.

Interviewer: Did you attend any of the performances?

I attended the rehearsals. And I don’t recall a great deal of the impression at that time. I used to go in and go out. . .

In 1932, we have spent the summer in Lucerne. I was swimming there, beautiful lake, Vierwaldstättersee. I was out in the middle of the water and I saw there on the shore, a boy, a page, who was waving toward me. So I swam to the shore and he handed me over a telegram from my manager in Berlin. The question was, “Are you available and willing to sing in September in Oslo, King Marke? If so, telephone me and give me your conditions. Your terms.”

I did, and he said, “I will let you know if they will accept your terms.”

So they did, and I went to Oslo. They had a cast only of Norwegian people. Tristan, Isolde, Brangane, Kurwenal, King Marke and the conductor. The singer of King Marke was at that time Andresen. Andreson once in a while fell a victim of his thirst. And when he started to drink, it lasted a few months until he sobered up. So the cast was ready, and no King Marke and since I was . . .for that part and I have been a little bit more Nordic than the other king Markes, they asked me. We had rehearsals and the performance took place. They have in Oslo a lovely theater, but small. During my career, I always am on the stage, backstage, listening to the first act of *Tristan*. And here I heard a beautiful voice who sang Isolde.

She was comparatively young, and a good figure, and very, very good diction.

Interviewer: Was she singing in German?

Everybody was singing in German. The tenor at that time was a man named Drahrud. (???) I don’t remember the other singers. I remember only the name of the conductor. His name was Gunner Eggert.

After the fist act, I went to the dressing room. I put on my beard, I put on my costume, and here I am ready for my big monologue. I was listening to the love duet, Tristan and Isolde, and then my scene came up. When I finished the second act, I tried to speak to Isolde. She didn’t speak any German. I tried to talk to her in English. She didn’t speak any English. I tried to speak to her in Russian, she didn’t speak any Russian. The singer who sang Brangäne tried to help us out, to communicate. So I asked her if she every sang outside Norway. She said, “Yes, I sang in Sweden a little bit.”

I asked her if she would like to sing in other countries. And she said, “Oh yes, I would.”

Her voice was exceptionally beautiful.

I asked her, “What is your name?” And she said, “Flagstad.”

I said “what is your address?”

And she said, “My address is Grand hotel. My husband is the director of the hotel.”

And I told her, “You will hear from me.” And when I came back to Berlin, I had a conversation with Mr. Tietchen, who was the manager of the Berlin Opera, and also the manager of Bayreuth. And I told him about this young singer. He took the name and address, and a week later, he told me, “You are right about your prodigy.”

He called her “My prodigy.”

“She sang an audition for me, and I engaged her to sing at Bayreuth two small parts. The Third Norn and one of the Valkyries. And as a substitute, to learn Sieglinde.”

And then I recommended her also to Brussels, where I also sang a great deal. And she was engaged to sing Sieglinde in Brussels.

And then she was heard in Bayreuth by Bodansky, and by Gatti-Casazza, and she was engaged to the Met. This is the way Fladstad started her career. In her so-called little biography, she mentions that.

I sang a great deal with her in the Met. We also met in Australia. We also, if I am not mistaken, sang together in London, in Covent Garden. She was a calm, cold personality with the most beautiful voice.

In Wagner, one does not have to be an outstanding actor or actress. But it doesn’t disturb if somebody is an outstanding actor. . .

She sang all the Wagnerian parts, including Senta . . .