

Early Wagner Recordings on Cylinder and Disk

PART 1

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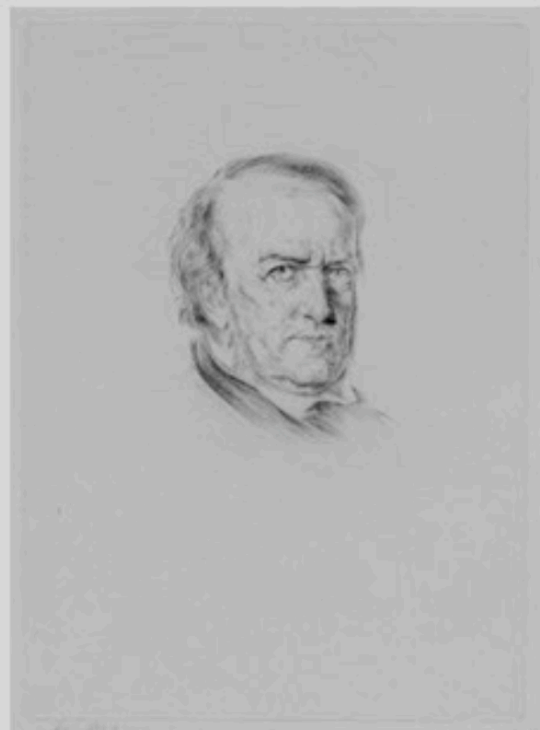
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Wagner Society NSW

Goethe Institut
Event Hall

90 Ocean Street
Woollahra, NSW 2025

21 June 2026



Wagner

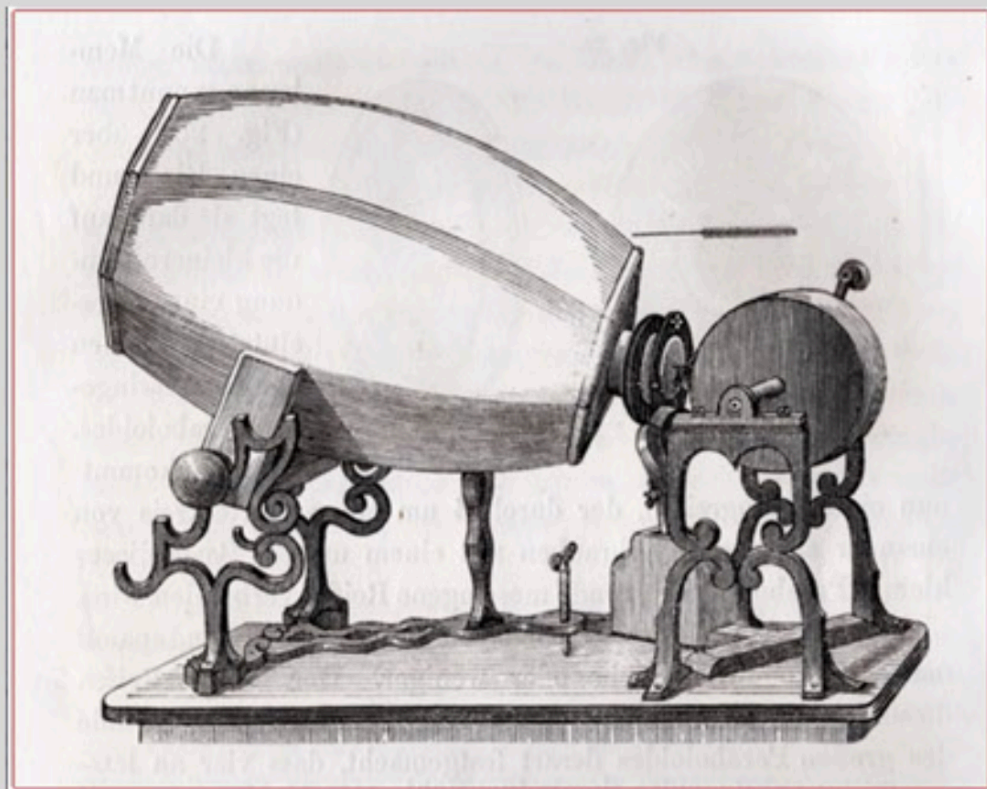
Etching by Edgar Chahine
From Maurice Barrès, *Novembre*,
Devambez, Paris, 1926



Thomas Alva Edison

Photograph 1888
From William H. Meadowcroft,
The Boy's Life of Edison, Harper &
Brothers, New York, 1911

The Beginning



Phonautograph

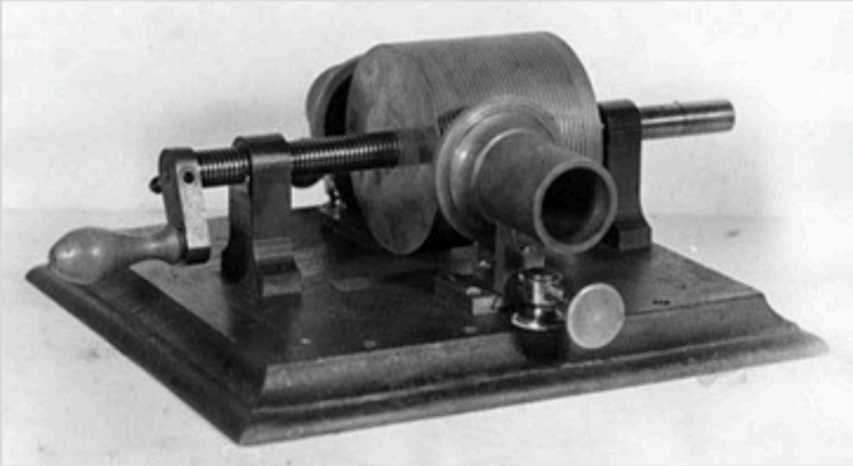
Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville (1817-1879)

French Patent 17,897/31,470

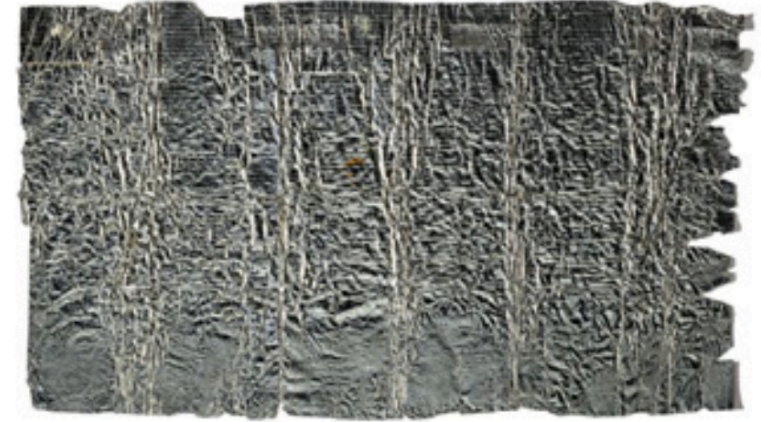
25 March 1857

First device for recording sound only

The Next Step



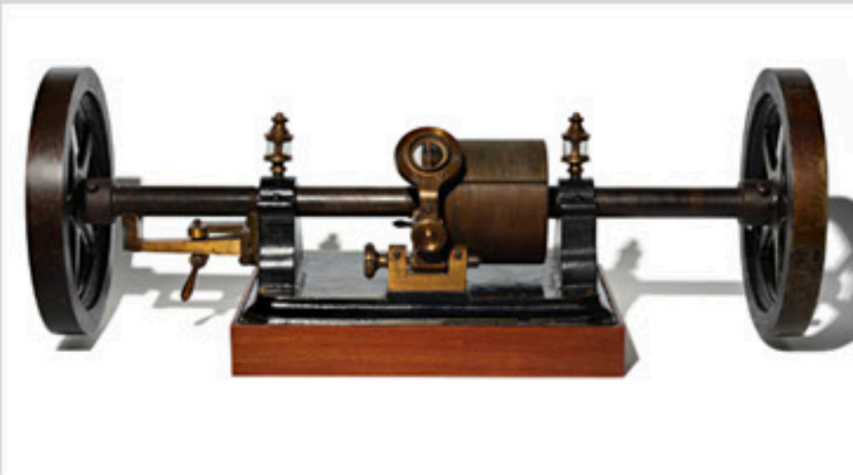
Original Tin Foil Phonograph, 1877



Original Tin Foil Recording, 1878

Thomas Alva Edison
(1847-1931)
US Patent 200,521
24 December 1877

First device for
recording and reproduction
of sound



Demonstration Tin Foil Phonograph, 1878



Thomas Alva Edison, 1888

Distraction

1878: Establishment of Edison Speaking Phonograph Company

Edison's and public's interest in the phonograph fell off

Thomas Alva Edison
(1847-1931)

US Patent 223,898

27 January 1880

Invention of first practical incandescent light bulb



Technical Development
1878-1880

Success

- 1) Effective incandescent filament (carbon)
- 2) High vacuum shroud
- 3) High-resistance filament
- 4) Technical and commercial scalability



Commercialisation

- 1887:** Establishment of Edison Phonograph Co., introducing New Phonograph
- 1888:** Introduction of Improved Phonograph in May and Perfected Phonograph in June (released commercially in 1889 as Class M and Class E; rental and purchase units; electricity-driven; hill-and-dale; white wax cylinders, 11.0 cm L x 5.7 cm Ø, 120 rpm, 3 min.)
- 1888:** Industry consolidation by establishment of North American Phonograph Co.
- 1889:** Release of first commercial brown wax cylinders (10.8 cm L x 5.7 cm Ø, 120 rpm, 2 min) used mostly in nickel-in-slot units in arcades and saloons)
- 1890:** Policy change from rental to purchase of phonographs
- 1890:** Manufacture of talking dolls by Edison Phonograph Toy Manufacturing Co. (production ceased 1891)
- 1894:** Consolidation of Edison's control by bankruptcy of North American Phonograph Co.
- 1895:** Introduction of spring-driven motors
- 1896:** Targeting of home entertainment by establishment of National Phonograph Co.
- 1899:** Introduction of Edison Concert Phonograph (brown wax cylinders 10.8 cm L, 12.7 cm Ø, 2 min.; production ceased 1912)
- 1900:** Speed increased to 144 rpm and then 160 rpm
- 1902:** Introduction of Gold Moulded Records (hard black wax; moulded grooves, not engraved, allowing mass production)
- 1911:** Consolidation of Thomas A. Edison, Inc.
- 1912:** Introduction of Diamond Disk phonographs and records (80 rpm)
- 1926:** Introduction of Long Play phonographs and records (80 rpm, 24 min./side with 10"; 40 min./side with 12")
- 1929:** Cessation of production



*Perfected Phonograph
(1888)*

Elsewhere

First Disk Recordings

Emile Berliner
(1851-1929)

(Based in Washington, D.C.)

German Patent 45,048

8 November 1887

US Patent 372,786

8 November 1887



Berliner Gramophone, 1890



Berliner Gramophone, 1891



- 1887:** Invention of shellac lateral-cut flat-disc record (12.7 cm Ø, 70 rpm, 1 min for 12.7 cm, 2 min for 17.8 cm; zinc etching and pressing allowed mass production)
- 1889:** Commercialisation by Kämmer & Reinhardt in Germany (players and talking dolls, German pressings, 12.7 mm, on market until 1892)
- 1894:** Establishment of United States Gramophone Co. (first US pressings, 17.8 mm)
- 1898:** Globalisation through establishment of The Gramophone Co. in UK
- 1900:** Forced out of US market



Wagner Singers on Berliner Disks

Other Known Singers

Carl Bernhard	(?)
Leopold Demuth	(1861-1910)
Emmy Destinn	(1878-1930)
Ferruccio Giannini	(1868-1948)
Wilhelm Hesch	(1860-1908)
Karl Jörn	(1873-1947)



Sophie Sedlmair
(1857-1939)



Ellen Beach Yaw
(1869-1947)



Wilhelm Hesch
(1860-1908)



Karl Jörn
(1873-1947)



Leopold Demuth
(1861-1910)



Ferruccio Giannini
(1868-1948)



Emmy Destinn
(1878-1930)

Earliest Wagner Studio Recordings on Cylinder

Edison Brown Wax (US)

1893-1894	--	<i>Marche Nuptiale</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Baldwin's Cadet Band of Boston
1896-1901	14	<i>Bridal March from Lohengrin</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Edison Grand Concert Band
1897	60	<i>Selection from Tannhauser</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Edison Grand Concert Band

Columbia (US)

1896-1900	1515	<i>Tannhauser: Pilgrim's Chorus</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Gilmore's Band
1896-1900	1519	<i>Bridal March from Lohengrin</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	Gilmore's Band
1896-1900	1523	<i>Grand March from Tannhauser</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	Gilmore's Band

Lioret (France)

1897	2098	<i>O mon Beau Cygne</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	No Details
1897	2099	<i>Récit du Graal</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	No Details
1897	2104	<i>Concours des Chanteurs</i>	<i>Die Meistersinger</i>	No Details
1897	2150	<i>Couplets de la Forge</i>	<i>Siegfried</i>	No Details
1897	2160	<i>Romance à l'Étoile</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	No Details
1897	2161	<i>O Gloire à Toi, Gloire à Toi, ma Déesse</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	No Details
1897	2185	<i>Chanson du Printemps</i>	<i>Die Walküre</i>	No Details

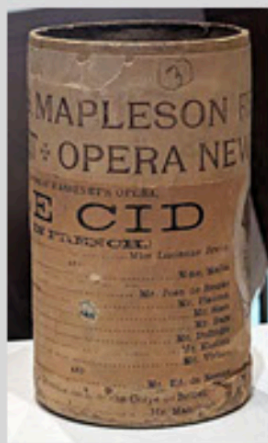
Pathé Frères (France)

1897	27	<i>O! Mon Cher Cygne</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	No Details
1897	28	<i>Récit du Graal</i>	<i>Lohengrin</i>	No Details
1897	38	<i>Romance de l'Étoile</i>	<i>Tannhäuser</i>	No Details
1897	42	<i>Chanson du Printemps</i>	<i>Die Walküre</i>	No Details
1897	44 ^{bis}	<i>Air</i>	<i>Die Meistersinger</i>	No Details

Earliest Live Wagner Recordings on Cylinder



Lionel Mapleson, 1901



Mapleson Cylinder

Lionel Mapleson (1865-1937) was born in the UK and migrated to the US in 1889, at which point he joined the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, where he held the position of Orchestral Librarian for 48 years.

On 20 March 1900, he purchased an Edison Home Phonograph. The next day, the cellist Leo Stern (1862-1904) gave him a Bettini recorder and reproducer to integrate with the Home.

In the fall of 1900-1901, he took the machine into the prompter's box onstage during live performances but the results were not encouraging. For the 1901-1902 season, he installed a large recording horn from a catwalk elevated ~12 metres above the stage and this gave better results. A total of ~120 cylinders were made.

Interestingly, the chorus sang in Italian, even when the soloists sang in German.



*The Mapleson Cylinders:
1900-1904 Complete Edition*

Rogers and Hammerstein
Archives of Recorded Sound
New York Public Library

6 LPs (monaural)

R&H-100

1985

Other Landmarks

1903

Victor Talking Machine Co.

(established by Eldridge R. Johnson and Emile Berliner in 1901)

Catalogue No. 81018

The Battle Cry of Brünnhilde

Die Walküre

Johanna Gadski (1858-1922)

Anonymous Pianist

This recording is celebrated as one of the most electrifying and sonically successful of all acoustic operatic recordings



Johanna Gadski (1872-1932)

Other Landmarks

1909

First Recording of a Full Act of a Wagner Opera

Odeon

Act II

Tannhäuser

7 double-sided 78 rpm disks

Performers

Conductor	Eduard Künneke (1885-1953)
Orchestra	Großes Odeon Orchester
Chorus	Chor der Königlichen Hofoper Berlin
Tannhäuser	Fritz Vogelstrom (1882-1963)
Elisabeth, Nichte des Landgrafen	Annie Krull (1876-1947)
Wolfram von Eschenbach	Hermann Weil (1876-1949)
Hermann, Landgraf von Thüringen	Léon Rains (1870-1954)
Walther von der Vogelweide	Walter Kirchhoff (1879-1951)
Biterolf	Karl Armster (1882-1943)
Heinrich der Schreiber	Arthur Neudahm (?)
Reinmar von Zweter	Joseph Schöfel (1881-1952)

Other Landmarks

1927

First Wagner Live Recording on Disk

Columbia Masterworks, Set No. 79

Bayreuth Festival 1927

Excerpts from Parsifal, Siegfried, Das Rheingold, and Die Walküre

11 double-sided 78 rpm disks (L2007-L2017)

Parsifal

Acts I & II

Conducted by Karl Muck

(1859-1940)

Transformation Scene, Act I, Parts 1 & 2

Grail Scene, Act I, Parts 1-6

Flower Maidens Scene, Act II, Parts 1 & 2

Parsifal

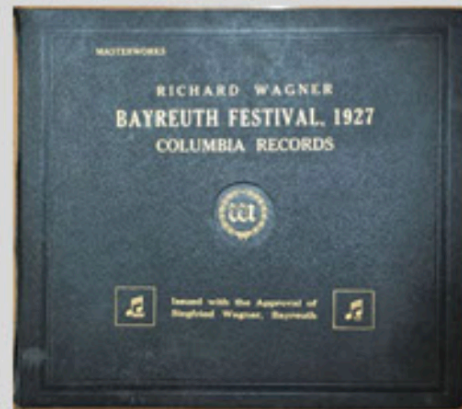
Act III

Conducted by Siegfried Wagner

(1869-1930)

Prelude, Act III, Parts 1 & 2

Good Friday Music, Act III, Parts 1-3



Die Walküre

Act III

Conducted by Franz von Hoesslin

(1885-1946)

Ride of the Valkyries, Act III, Parts 1 & 2

Siegfried

Acts II & III

Conducted by Franz von Hoesslin

(1885-1946)

Forest Murmurs, Act II

Prelude, Act III

Fire Music, Act III

Das Rheingold

Act I

Conducted by Karl Muck

(1859-1940)

Entry of the Gods into Valhalla, Act I, Parts 1 & 2

Other Landmarks: First Wagner Live Recording on Disk

Details

Occasion	Bayreuth Festival 1927	
Venue	Festspielhaus, Bayreuth	
Conductors	Karl Muck	(1859-1940)
	Siegfried Wagner	(1869-1930)
	Franz von Hoesslin	(1885-1946)
Chorus Master	Hugo Rüdell	(1868-1934)
Orchestra	Bayreuter Festspielorchester	
Chorus	Chor der Bayreuter Festspiele	

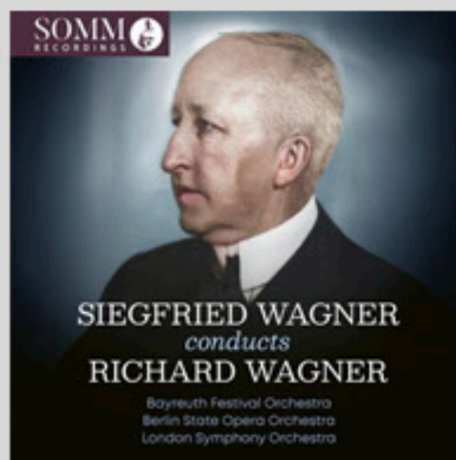
Performers

Parsifal

Flowermaidens	Charlotte Müller	(1902-1988)
	Anny Helm	(1903-1993)
	Hilde Sinnek	(1900-?)
	Maria Nezadal	(1897-?)
	Ingeborg Holmgren	(1897-1978)
	Minnie Rusk-Leopold	(1891-?)
Parsifal	Fritz Wolff	(1894-1957)
Gurnemanz	Alexander Kipnis	(1891-1978)

Die Walküre

Valkyries	Charlotte Müller	(1902-1988)
	Charlotte Rückforth	(1902-?)
	Erika Plettner	(?)
	Henriette Gottlieb	(1884-1942)
	Ingeborg Holmgren	(1897-1978)
	Maria Nezadal	(1897-?)
	Maria Peshken	(1888-?)
	Minnie Rusk-Leopold	(1891-?)



Somm Recordings
Ariadne 5043-2
Released
19 September 2025

Other Landmarks



Georg Solti (1912-1997)

1965

First Recording of Full Ring Cycle

Decca

22 LPs (including 3 LPs of Deryck Cooke's Supplement)

Conductor Georg Solti
 Orchestra Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
 Chorus Vienna State Opera Chorus



Boxed Set (1965)

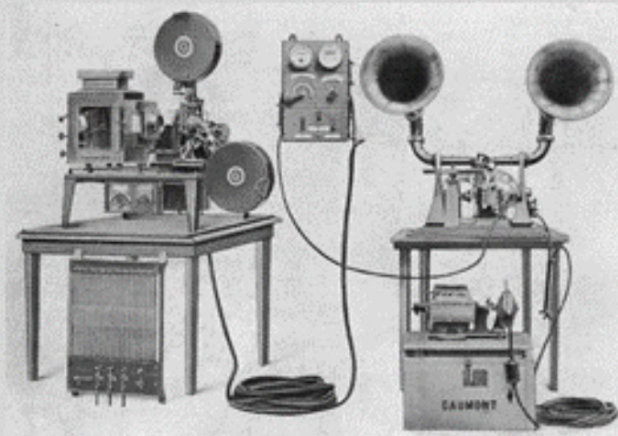
Das Rheingold (1958) – 3 LPs		Die Walküre (1965) – 5 LPs		Siegfried (1962–1964) – 5 LPs		Götterdämmerung (1964) – 6 LPs	
George London	Wotan	Hans Hotter	Wotan	Hans Hotter	Wanderer	Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau	Gunther
Kirsten Flagstad	Fricka	Birgit Nilsson	Brünnhilde	Birgit Nilsson	Brünnhilde	Birgit Nilsson	Brünnhilde
Claire Watson	Freia	Christa Ludwig	Fricka	Wolfgang Windgassen	Siegfried	Wolfgang Windgassen	Siegfried
Set Svanholm	Loge	Régine Crespin	Sieglinde	Gerhard Stolze	Mime	Gottlob Frick	Hagen
Gustave Neidlinger	Alberich	James King	Sigmund	Joan Sutherland	Valdvogel	Christa Ludwig	Waltraute

Early Audio-Visual Wagner Productions

1906-1908

Chronophone Gaumont

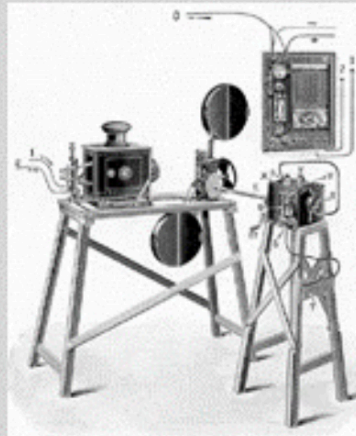
Société des Établissements Gaumont



No Wagner Films/Disks Known

Ciné-Phono Pathé

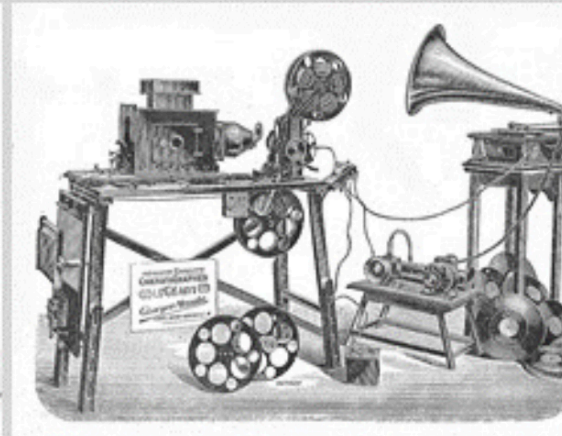
Pathé Frères



No Catalogue Known

Cinémato-Gramo-Théâtre

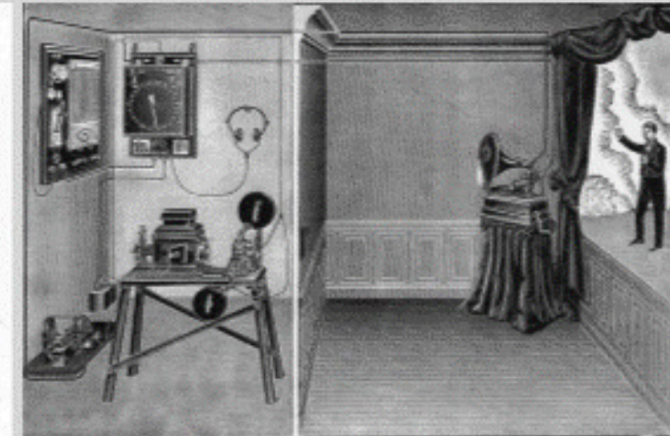
Georges Mendel



Three Wagner Films/Disks Known

Synchrophone

Oswald de Faria



No Catalogue Known

Film Clips

Chronophone Gaumont

Bizet: *Air du Toréodor*

Cinémato-Gramo-Théâtre

Donizetti: *J'ai pour Moi mon Droit, mon Glaive* (with Caruso)

Early Audio-Visual Wagner Productions

1906

Mendel
Mendel
Mendel

526
527
533

Récit du Graal
O mon Cher Cygne
Romance de l'Étoile

Lohengrin
Lohengrin
Tannhäuser

Agustarello Affre (1858-1931)
Fernando de Lucia (1860-1925)
Jean Noté (1858-1922)



Agustarello Affre
(1858-1931)



Fernando de Lucia
(1860-1925)



Jean Noté
(1858-1922)



Ciné-Phono Pathé:
Actor Miming Aria