

The
VOCAL
of
VALAIDA SNOW

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
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Born: Chattanooga, Tennessee, June 2, 1904
Died: NYC. May 30, 1956

Introduction:

Although Valaida Snow's reputation is mainly built upon her prewar work in Europe, including Denmark and Sweden, she never came to Norway, and since her records were largely unknown, she was not on Oslo Jazz Circle's list of important female vocalists, nor trumpeters. Too bad, because she really was an artist out of the ordinary, and with a history highly dramatic even among jazz musicians.

History:

Her mother taught her to play several instruments and her sisters Alvaida, Hattie, and Lavaida also became professional entertainers. She toured the USA in various revues during the 1920s and early 1930s. From 1926 to 1928 she and Lavaida, a singer, performed in the Far East with Jack Carter. Valaida toured and recorded extensively in Europe with her own groups (1935-40) and with other leaders. She was imprisoned in Denmark from 1940 to 1942, but continued to work as a singer and trumpeter in the USA until her death. She also appeared in films (ref. New Grove Dictionary of Jazz). Much deeper biographies however are found as liner notes by Rosetta Reitz on the Rosetta Records RR1305 LP "Hot Snow", and by Frank Driggs on the DRG Records (Swing Disques) SW8455/56 LPs "Swing Is The Thing". Strongly recommended reading, fascinating, incredible life!!!

VALAIDA SNOW VOCAL SOLOGRAPHY

EARL HINES & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. Feb. 13, 1933**

Charlie Allen, George Dixon (tp), Walter Fuller (tp, vo), Billy Franklin (tb), Louis Taylor (tb, arr), Omer Simeon (cl, bar), Darnell Howard (cl, as, vln), Cecil Irwin, Jimmy Mundy (ts, arr), Earl Hines (p, ldr), Lawrence Dixon (g, arr), Quinn Wilson (b, tu, arr), Wallace Bishop (dm), Valaida Snow (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, one has VS:

13062-A	Maybe I'm To Blame	Feature number for (vo). (S/FM)
13062-B	Maybe I'm To Blame	As above. (S/FM)

Quoting Brian Priestley's liner notes in the Earl Hines Mosaic box: "'Maybe ...' is largely a feature for Valaida Snow, who from the mid-1930s would record, as 'Valaida', no fewer than 40 sides in London, Stockholm and Copenhagen. In 1933 she was merely the star of Grand Terrace, briefly a girlfriend of Hines". Note however that she now was a professional, almost 29 years old, having started her career at an age close to half. "Maybe ... is filled with her charming vocal from the first to the last bar, changing tempo several times. Too bad that this is the only pre-war example of her singing in the U. S., and nothing showing us her trumpet capabilities, so praised even by Louis Armstrong.

VALAIDA SNOW ACC. BY BILLY MASON & HIS ORCHESTRA **London, Jan. 18/19, 1935**

Valaida Snow (tp, vo), Duncan Whyte, Louis deVries (tp), Harry Hayes (as), Buddy Featherstonhaugh (ts), Billy Mason (p), Alan Ferguson (g), Sam Molyneux (b), George Elrick (dm).

Four titles were recorded for Parlophone, three issued:

6799-1	Poor Butterfly	(tp)-Intro 4 bars. Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 32 bars. (SM)
6800-1	I Wish I Were Twins	Vocal 64 bars. (tp)-Solo 40 bars. (FM)
6802-1	I Can't Dance	Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 32 bars. Vocal 32 bars. (FM)

London, Feb. 20, 1935

Same except deVries omitted. Two titles:

6861-1	It Had To Be You	Vocal 32 and 32 bars. (M)
6862-2	You Bring Out The Savage In Me	Vocal 36 bars. (tp)-Solo 24 bars. Vocal 36 bars. (FM)

London, April 26, 1935

Same except Dave Shand (as), Bill Busby (b) replace Hayes and Molyneux.

Four titles:

6948-1	Imagination	Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 30 bars. (S)
6949-1	Sing You Sinners	Vocal intro 4 bars to ens. Vocal 64 and 10 bars. (FM)
6952-1	Whisper Sweet	Vocal 32 and 32 bars. (M)
6953-1	Singin' In The Rain	Vocal 32 and 64 bars. (M)

Valaida Snow in Europe, the part of world she made her most interesting records! Note that this is no newcomer, no amateur but a very experienced multi performer of the age of thirty! Starting in London with the best of British musicians, nine very successful items were made. She is a swinging singing lady, listen just to her fine "... Twins" and "... Sinners" and learn that she knows how to scat and growl in uptempo. On the other hand she sings with emotion on slow items like "... Butterfly" and "Imagination", delightful music! She also is a good trumpeter, although somewhat heavy and not quite with the flexibility and creativity of the really great ones. "Imagination" is a solid performance though. Some occasional fluffs would today have merited another take. Note also that there is another good trumpeter here (Great Britain had several!) with similar style and solo opportunities, and I hope I have managed to separate the two, please give feedback.

VALAIDA, THE QUEEN OF TRUMPET WITH SWING ACCOMPANIMENT **London, Sept. 6, 1936**

Valaida Snow (tp?, vo), Harry Owen (tp), unknown (tb), Freddy Gardner (cl, as, ts), George Scott-Wood (p), Joe Young (g), Dick Escott (b), Max Bacon (dm).

Two titles were recorded for Parlophone:

- 7819-1 Until The Real Thing Comes Along Vocal 32, 8 and 4 bars. (S)
 7820-1 High Hat, Trumpet And Rhythm Vocal 64, 10 and 8 bars. (FM)

London, Sept. 8, 1936

Same except Jock Fleming (tb) added, Jock Jacobson (dm) replaces Bacon.
 Two titles:

- 7826-1 I Want A Lot Of Love Vocal 46 bars. (tp)-Solo 16 bars.
 Vocal 48 bars. (M)
 7827-1 Take Care Of You For Me Vocal 80 bars. (SM)

London, Sept. 18, 1936

Same. Four titles:

- 7834-1 Loveable And Sweet Vocal 32, 8 and 32 bars. (M)
 7834-2 Loveable And Sweet As above. (M)
 7835-1 I Must Have That Man Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 8 bars.
 Vocal 8 bars. (SM)
 7836-1 You're Not The Kind Vocal 32, 16 and 4 bars. (SM)
 7837-1 You Let Me Down Vocal 34 and 34 bars. (S)

London, Sept. 25, 1936

Same. Two titles:

- 7838-2 Mean To Me Vocal 44 bars. (tp)-Soli 8 and
 8 bars. Vocal 40 bars. (M)
 7839-2 Dixie Lee Vocal 32 and 34 bars. (M)

VS is back in London after more than a year probably travelling everywhere, and she gets another great local group to accompany her. This session is quite different from the previous one, inasmuch as it is emphasizing her singing, and in fact it is even more fascinating and inspired here. There is an intensity, as in "You Let Me ..." and "Take Care ...", and exuberant swing and scat, as in "High Hat ..." and "I Want ..."; she is really a great and personal singer. On the other hand, the trumpet soli are so brief and hidden, that I wonder if they are hers at all? Maybe this is a vocal session only? Please give your opinion.

VALAIDA SNOW

WITH SWING ACCOMPANIMENT

London, July 7-9, 14, 1937

Valaida Snow (tp, vo), Johnny Claes (tp), Derek Neville (as, bar), Reggie Dare (ts), Gun Finlay (p), Norman Brown (g), Louis Barreiro (b), Ken Stewart (dm).

Twelve titles were recorded for Parlophone:

- 8479-1 The Mood That I'm In Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 32 bars.
 Vocal 12 bars. (SM)
 8480-1 Sweet Heartache Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 32 bars.
 Vocal 16 bars. (M)
 8481-1 Don't Know If I'm Comin' Or Goin' Vocal 48 and 44 bars. (M)
 8482-1 Where Is The Sun? Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo with
 ens 32 bars. Vocal 8 bars. (SM)
 8486-1 Some Of These Days (tp)-Solo with ens. Vocal 32 bars.
 (tp)-Solo 32 bars. (M)
 8487-1 Chloe Vocal 36 bars. (tp)-Solo 16 bars.
 Vocal 16 bars. (SM)
 8488-1 Swing Is The Thing Vocal 64 bars. (tp)-Solo with ens
 64 bars. Vocal 8 bars. (FM)
 8489-1 Nagasaki Vocal 64 bars. Duet with (tp-JC)
 32 bars. Vocal 8 bars. (FM)
 8490-1 I Wonder Who Made Rhythm? Vocal 32 and 48 bars. (FM)
 8491-1 I Got Rhythm Vocal 34 and 34 bars. (tp)-Solo
 with ens 68 bars. (F)
 8492-1 I Can't Believe That YINLWM Vocal 64 bars. (tp)-Solo with
 ens 32 bars. Vocal 16 bars.

(tp)-Coda. (M)

8493-1 Tiger Rag Vocal 56 bars. (tp)-Solo 128 bars. (F)

One more year and the third and last recording session in London. VS both sings and plays the trumpet extensively on this date, but note another highly competent trumpet player making the end of “Nagasaki” a two-trumpet-event, and he might easily take some of the trumpet soli above, as half of the 32 bars on “The Mood ...”? Sometimes I feel that she is slightly mocking the lyrics, a gain referring to “The Mood ...” and the concluding vocal. In total, a very important VS session!

VALAIDA SNOW & DJANGO REINHARDT Paris, June 30, 1938

Valaida Snow (tp-“...Blues”, vo), Django Reinhardt (g).
Two titles (medley) were recorded at “La Nuit du Jazz”:

1:08 Bei Mir Bist Du Schön Vocal 64 bars. (FM)

1:40 St. Louis Blues (tp)-Solo 40 bars to Vocal 24 bars
to (tp)-Solo 12 bars to coda. (FM)

The sound quality is extremely bad, and “Bei Mir ...” is almost only screaming far into the impenetrable noise. “St. Louis ...” is somewhat better, and it is possible to hear some good trumpet playing.

BOBBY MARTIN AND HIS ALL-STAR ORCHESTRA France, 1938

Personnel probably similar to April 1938. Valaida Snow reported to be present.
From the film “Alibi” with Erich von Stroheim, Albert Préjean, Louis Jouvet, Jany Holt and others. Postscript of June 30, 2020: VS’s presence is not correct.

VALAIDA SNOW & JOE TURNER France, 1939

Valaida Snow (tp, vo), Joe Turner (p).
From the Robert Siodmak film “Pieges”, released Dec. 16, 1939:

Sweetheart (tp)-Solo 8 bars. Vocal 32 bars.
(tp)-Solo 16 bars. Coda. (M)

Postscript of June 30, 2020: Fine music and some excellent closeup of the duo!

VALAIDA SNOW ACC. BY LULLE ELLBOJ’S ORCHESTRA Stockholm, Aug. 28, 1939

Valaida Snow (tp, vo), Bengt Artander, Gunnar Green (tp), Sture Green (tb), Lulle Ellboj (as), Gunnar Wallberg (as), Rudolf Eriksson (ts), Willard Ringstrand (p), Kalle Löhr (g), Roland Bengtsson (b), Olle Sahlin (dm), Sven Arefeldt (dir).
Four titles were recorded for Sonora:

4875 Minnie The Moocher Vocal 48 bars. (tp)-Solo with orch
16 bars to long coda. (M)4876 Caravan Vocal 64 bars. (tp)-Soli with orch 48
and 56 bars. (FM)4877 Swing Low, Sweet Chariot Vocal 16 bars. (SM) to
Vocal 92 bars. (M)4878 My Heart Belongs To Daddy Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 24
bars, last 8 with orch. (SM)

Now Sweden, and it cannot be a coincidence that they chose “... The Moocher” with a reference to “the King of Sweden”! The session has a hot background with a solid drummer, note an exciting “Caravan”. “Swing Low ...” is all vocal. My favourite is “My Heart ...” with a moving vocal showing how great she was. The trumpet solo is also outstanding, with some slight fluffs, but they should have let her take a full chorus here. After this session she made the mistake that almost killed her; war was coming, and she should have gone home to the US, or at least stayed in neutral Sweden. But no, she went to Denmark ...

MISS VALAIDA WITH WINSTRUP OLESEN’S SWINGBAND Copenhagen, July 26, 1940

Valaida Snow (tp, vo), Winstrup Olesen (tp), Kai Møller (cl), unknown (ts), Leo Mathisen (p), Helge Jacobsen (g), Christian Jensen (b), Kai Fischer (dm).
Four titles were recorded for Tono:

1062-B You’re Driving Me Crazy Vocal 48 bars. (tp)-Solo 16+8 bars,
(ts) on bridge. (M)1063-B Take It Easy Vocal 64 bars. (tp)-Soli 16 and
24 bars. Vocal 16 bars. (FM)

1064-A,B I Can’t Give You Anything But Love Vocal 32 bars to duet

- with (cl) 16 bars. (tp)-Solo
20 bars to long coda. (SM)
- 1065-B St. Louis Blues (tp)-Solo 40 bars to Vocal 24 bars
to (tp)-Solo 12 bars to coda. (FM)

Fine session with the best of Danish swing musicians, and nice to hear VS sing Leo's famous "... Easy"! Four very noteworthy items with "... Love" as the highlight; her qualities as a charismatic vocalist as well as a very competent trumpet player comes clearly through here.

MISS VALAIDA WITH MATADORENE **Copenhagen, Sept. 1940**
Valaida Snow (tp, vo), unknown (tp), Tage Rasmussen (tb), Aage Voss (cl, as, bar), Henry Hagemann (cl, ts, arr), Bertrand Beck (p), Willy Sorensen (b), Erik Kragh (dm, vib).
Two titles were recorded for Tono:

- 1140-B Some Of These Days Vocal 48 bars. (tp)-Solo 32 bars.
Acc. (dm). Duet (tp/tp) 14 bars.
Vocal 8 bars. (tp)-Coda. (FM)
- 1141-B Carry Me Back To Old Virginny (tp)-Solo 16 and 8 bars.
Vocal 32 bars. (tp)-Solo 16 bars.
Vocal 8 bars. (tp)-Solo 8 bars. (M)

The final Danish and European session is not among the most important ones, the recording sound is not good, and there may be good reasons for only making two sides. "Some ..." has been recorded before, here also with the verse. There are clearly two trumpeters here, and there is trumpet obbligato behind the vocal on "... Virginny", a duet section on "Some ...", and possibly other contributions by this very competent unknown person. By now the World War II has started, the Germans invaded Denmark (and Norway), and to stay as a female, black, US entertainer was almost suicide but she had no choice, concentration camp next. Postscript of June 30, 2020: The 'concentration camp' is a myth she brought with her back to the US. She would hide that she was taken by Danish police for drug violation.

VALAIDA SNOW ACC. BY **NYC. 1945**
BOBBY SMITH & ORCHESTRA
Valaida Snow (vo), Bobby Smith (as, dir), unknown personnel, (strings).
Four titles were recorded for Apollo:

- 3368 Around The World Vocal. (M)
- 3369 Porgy Vocal. (S)
- 3370 My Heart Is Such A Fool Vocal. (M)
- 3371 The More I Know About Love Vocal. (S)

VS managed to survive the war and return to the US. She does not play the trumpet here, but she still is an excellent singer. The repertoire though is no longer the swinging one she used in Europe but adapting to the postwar era, and well worth listening to when not in a particular jazz mood.

VALAIDA SNOW **Hollywood, ca. Aug. 1945**
Valaida Snow (tp- "... Blues", vo) with unknown orchestra.
AFRS Jubilee No. 145, two titles:

- 2:51 Sentimental Journey Vocal 48 bars. (S)
- 2:42 St. Louis Blues (tp)-Solo with orch 52 bars to vocal 24 bars to
(tp)-Solo with orch 24 bars to coda. (M)

VS still sings as good as before, although "... Journey" is not exactly the most exciting of songs. "St. Louis ..." however is great, her third preserved version, structured somewhat differently than the previous ones.

VALAIDA SMITH ACC. BY **LA. Dec. 1945**
BUZZ ADLAM'S ORCHESTRA
Valaida Snow (tp?, vo) with (orch), (strings), The Day Dreamers (vo-group), Buzz Adlam (dir).
Four titles were recorded for Bel-Tone:

- 54 Fool That I Am Vocal. (S)
- 56 Lonesome Road Vocal. (tp)-Solo 8 bars. (S)
- 57-3 If I Only Had You Vocal. (S)

58-4 It's The Talk Of The Town Vocal. (S)

Sweet strings background and not tailored for jazz as such, but these items are in fact very nice! I doubt though that the fine trumpet solo on "... Road" is VS's.

VALAIDA SNOW ACC. BY

THE ALI BABA TRIO

L.A. early 1946

Valaida Snow (tp-"... Fortitude", vo), Cleveland Nickerson (accordeon), Mike McKendrick (g), Calvin Ponder (b). Soundies.

1:19 Patience And Fortitude Solo 16 bars. Vocal 32 bars. (M)

2:26 If You Only Knew Vocal 32 and 20 bars. (SM)

These two soundies are of course very valuable historical material, and she also shows on "Patience ..." (wrongly given as "Lady Be Good") that she still knows how to play the trumpet. However, it seems that this is the last time she is recorded with her famous instrument. Except for the corny clothing, the accompanying trio is in fact very good. And how she is goodlooking!

VALAIDA SNOW

L.A. Spring 1946

Valaida Snow (vo) with (orch), (strings).

Four titles were recorded for Bel-Tone:

98-5 Caravan Vocal. (M)

Solitude Vocal. (S)

100 Frustration Vocal. (S)

I Must Have That Man Vocal. (S)

Another very nice vocal session, but no trumpet present.

VALAIDA SNOW ACC. BY

JIMMY MUNDY's ORCHESTRA

NYC. Jan. 1950

Valaida Snow (vo), Jonah Jones (tp?), unknown (ts), Dave McRae (bar, bcl?), large band, others unknown.

Four titles were recorded for Chess:

16 Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone Vocal. (SM)

17 When A Woman Loves A Man Vocal. (S)

18 Chloe Vocal. (M)

19 Coconut Head Vocal. (M)

This is an attempt to make some noisy popular music, but quite unsuccessful. Only "... Woman ..." has artistic value.

VALAIDA SNOW

Chi. 1953

Valaida Snow (vo) with unknown (bar), unknown accompaniment.

Four titles were recorded for Chess, two issued:

4405 I Ain't Gonna Tell It Vocal. (M)

4407 If You Don't Mean It Vocal. (S)

Typical Chicago and Chess; VS still knows how to sing, better than most of them.

No further recording sessions.

Postscript: On June 25, 2019, The New York Times Magazine listed Valaida Snow among hundred of artists, whose material was reportedly destroyed in the 2008 Universal fire.