

The
VOCAL
of
NAN WYNN
“MARSHA VATZ”

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
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Born: Johnstown, Pennsylvania, May 8, 1915
Died: Santa Monica, California, March 21, 1971

Introduction:

I remember very well back in the old days, when we played Teddy Wilson records day and night, the center of our jazz interest. And then suddenly we found some very fine swinging records with a charming singer, and she was not Billie at all!

History:

Grew up in Wheeling, West Virginia, where she attended high school, and sang in the school choir. Was 'discovered' at the age of 16. Sang and recorded throughout the 1930s and 1940s with the Emery Deutsch, Rudy Vallee, Eddy Duchin, Richard Himber, Hal Kemp, Hudson-DeLange, Raymond Scott, Teddy Wilson and Freddie Rich orchestras. While singing at the Pump Room in Chicago (1941), she caught the eye of Warner Brothers movie scout, leading to a role in Million Dollar Baby and other movies (1941-47). Known for dubbing Rita Hayworth's singing voice in several movies. In the late 1940s she appeared on the Morey Amsterdam and Ed Sullivan shows. Her career was cut short abruptly in 1949 by the loss of her voice following the surgical removal of a cancerous tumor which resulted in a severed facial nerve. She regained her speech and facial control by 1955, at which point she was briefly signed to RCA Victor (ref. Wikipedia).

NAN WYNN SOLOGRAPHY

HUDSON – DE LANGE ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 1, 1937**

Bigband personnel including Nan Wynn (vo), (vo-ens-542).
Four titles were recorded for Master/Brunswick, three issued:

542-1	Popcorn Man	(FM)
543-1	Yours And Mine	(SM)
544-1	I'm Feelin' Like A Million	(M)

A fine dance band with definite jazz qualities, note some hot trumpet. Nan Wynn is a promising singer but seems not fully developed here, could be much more relaxed. All three items are popular tunes of the day, particularly "Popcorn ..." is quite corny, while the two others are well known from other contemporary sessions (note by the way that they were recorded by Teddy Hill on May 17 and Casa Loma on July 2).

FREDDIE RICH & HIS ORCHESTRA **1938**

Bigband personnel including (strings), Nan Wynn (vo), Three Symphonettes (vo-group).

Vitaphone filmshort, eleven minutes, one title has NW with the vocal group:

Loch Lomond	(SM)
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Delicate, both for the ear and the eye, youtube has got it!

VINCENT LOPEZ & HIS ORCHESTRA **1938**

Bigband personnel including (strings), Nan Wynn (vo).
Clip from the 16" film "Queens Of The Air" (youtube).

I'm Yours	(S)
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Another very nice performance!

EMERY DEUTSCH & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. March 15, 1938**

Bigband personnel including Nan Wynn (vo).

Four titles were recorded for Brunswick, three have NW, two have been available:

22574	Joseph! Joseph!	(FM)
22575	Who'll Buy My Bublitchki?	(FM)
22577-1	Stop! And Reconsider	

Two fine and sensitive Yiddisch titles, and a dance orchestra with jazz qualities.

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. March 23, 1938**

Bobby Hackett (cnt), Pee Wee Russell (cl), Tab Smith (as), Gene Sedric (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), Allen Reuss (g), Al Hall (b), Johnny Blowers (dm), Nan Wynn (vo-22610-12).

Three titles were recorded for Brunswick (a fourth title without NW):

22610-1	Alone With You	(SM)
22610-2	Alone With You	(SM)
22611-1	Moments Like This	(M)
22611-2	Moments Like This	(M)
22612-1	I Can't Face The Music	(S)
22612-2	I Can't Face The Music	(S)

During a period of only four months, NW made three recording sessions for Brunswick with Teddy Wilson studio groups, and of course these are the main reason for ending up with a solography. She was not really a jazz singer as such, but had a very pleasant voice and fitted very well into these swinging small bands. I would like to quote extensively from Loren Schoenberg's liner notes on Mosaic: "An equally surprising discovery is 21-year-old Nan Wynn's absolutely impeccable and sensitive vocals. Female singers at the time were known as "canaries" and they arrived in New York in the thousands, hoping by hook or crook to wind up singing with a name band or with a radio network's studio orchestra. Wynn succeeded in short order on both accounts, and was at this moment making the transition from Will Hudson's group to the CBS network. She already has a

unique sound, a light one, wedded to spot-on intonation and a predilection for whispered high notes that gain in intensity from their softness. And perhaps most importantly, in this jazz context, her rhythmic sense, while not overtly “hot”, is as precise and swinging as the instrumentalists”. My personal favourite is “Moments ...” with Hackett supporting her with beautiful cornet.

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. April 29, 1938**
 Bobby Hackett (cnt), Jerry Blake (cl), Johnny Hodges (as), Teddy Wilson (p), Allen Reuss (g), Al Hall (b), Johnny Blowers (dm), Nan Wynn (vo).
 Three titles were recorded for Brunswick (a fourth title without NW):

22822-1	If I Were You	(M)
22822-2	If I Were You	(M)
22823-1	You Go To My Head	(SM)
22824-1	I'll Dream Tonight	(M)
22824-2	I'll Dream Tonight	(M)

Obviously the record company and Teddy Wilson himself were satisfied with NW, since they gave her another session only one month after the first one. Another LS quote: “Wynn continues to be a revelation, given her age and meager professional experience; she’s always perfectly in tune and totally simpatico with the high level of the surrounding musicianship”. The inclusion of Johnny Hodges gives an already excellent personnel an extra boost. Three lovely titles, all belonging to the vintage treasury chest, and I am particularly impressed with how she treats the challenging “... Head”.

EMERY DEUTSCH & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. June 3, 1938**
 Bigband personnel including Nan Wynn (vo).
 Six titles were recorded for Brunswick, three have NW, two not available:

23011	How To Win Friends And Influence People	
23014	A Twinkle In Your Eye	(M)
23015	I'll Tell The Man In The Street	

TEDDY WILSON & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 29, 1938**
 Jonah Jones (tp), Benny Carter (as), Ben Webster (ts), Teddy Wilson (p), John Kirby (b), Cozy Cole (dm), Nan Wynn (vo).
 Four titles were recorded for Brunswick:

23305-1	Now It Can Be Told	(SM)
23305-2	Now It Can Be Told	(SM)
23306-1	Laugh And Call It Love	(M)
23306-2	Laugh And Call It Love	(M)
23307-1	On The Bumpy Road To Love	(FM)
23307-2	On The Bumpy Road To Love	(FM)
23308-1	A-Tisket, A-Tasket	(FM)

I have the feeling that NW might have continued to be at the Wilson’s smallband studio recording sessions, if it was not for the fact that they were coming to an end! This is the last one, because he forms a bigband in March 1939 and records accordingly. The personnel is again superb with three ‘new’ horns. One might wish for more serious music material, but the session is nevertheless magnificent with great music and vocal contributions that fit perfectly into the total, Billie could not have done that better, no general comparison intended. Also, NW swings “A-Tisket ...” more jazzy than some more famous contemporary. Note also as a nice detail Ben’s tenorsax playing behind her on take 2 of “... Love”.

NAN WYNN **1938/39?**
 Nan Wynn (vo) with (orch), (strings), (rhythm).
 Filmclip on youtube:

They Say	(S)
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Very nice one!

HAL KEMP & HIS ORCHESTRA **NYC. May 19, 1939**
 Bigband personnel including Nan Wynn (vo).
 Four titles were recorded for Victor, two have NW:

37130-1 Time On My Hands (S)
 37132-2 Let There Be Love (SM)

NYC. May 31, 1939

Same. Five titles, three have NW:

37160-2 Paradise (M)
 37170-1 I'm Sorry For Myself (FM)
 37171-1 When Winter Comes (M)

NYC. July 24, 1939

Same/similar. Four titles, one has NW:

38129-1 What's New? (SM)

NYC. Aug. 24, 1939

Same/similar. Four titles, one has NW:

38050-1 Melancholy Lullaby (SM)

NYC. Sept. 25, 1939

Same. Five titles, two have NW:

42710-3 Lilacs In The Rain (M)
 42726-1 Many Dreams Ago (SM)

NYC. Oct. 18, 1939

Similar. Four titles, two have NW:

42981-1 Out Of Space (SM)
 42982-1 The Answer Is Love (FM)

These sessions are very commercial, and the backing orchestra has very little to do with jazz. The choice of songs also does not make the music more jazzy. The items can be found on archive.org but must be enjoyed for the nice vocal contributions only.

RAYMOND SCOTT & HIS NEW ORCHESTRA **NYC. July 8, 1940**

Bigband personnel including Nan Wynn (vo).
 Three titles were recorded for Columbia, two issued:

26990-A Now I Lay Me Down To Dream (SM)
 26991-A And So Do I (SM)

Chi. Aug. 13, 1940

Same/similar. Four titles, three issued:

3266-A Yesterthoughts (SM)
 3267-A In A Moonboat (SM)
 3268-A A Million Dreams Ago (SM)

Chi. Summer/Autumn 1940

Same/similar.

Broadcast from the Panther Room, Hotel Sherman, four titles have NW:

All This And Heaven Too (S)
 And So Do I (SM)
 Blueberry Hill (SM)
 A Million Dreams Ago (SM)

Neither is this orchestra much jazz oriented, so the nice singing, like "... Dream", is what you get, no more.

Nan Wynn was featured in several movies in the early 1940s, including the musicals "Pardon My Sarong" and "Is Everybody Happy?", co-starring Larry Parks. She also appeared in the comedy "Million Dollar Baby" with the future US President Ronald Reagan.

Her voice, however, was heard in much more important movies than those, as she was one of the vocalists who dubbed the singing voice of Rita Hayworth, including

“The Strawberry Blonde” (1941), “You’ll Never Get Rich” (1941), “My Gal Sa!” (1942) and “You Were Never Lovelier” (1942).

These movie activities will not be researched here, at least not at the present time.

NAN WYNN **1943**

Nan Wynn (vo) with (strings), (rhythm).
One title from a filmclip, presented as “A Wonderful Vocal” by NW:

Unidentified Title (S)

Very beautiful!

KRAFT MUSIC HALL ORCHESTRA **NYC. Jan. 6, 1944**

Bigband personnel with (strings), John Scott Trotter (dir), Nan Wynn (vo).
Sound with stillphoto, youtube:

Speak Low (M)

PHILCO RADIO HALL OF FAME ORCHESTRA **NYC. Nov. 12, 1944**

Bigband personnel with (strings), Paul Whiteman (dir), Nan Wynn (vo).
Sound with stillphoto, youtube:

There Goes That Song Again (SM)

NAN WYNN **middle 1940s?**

Nan Wynn (vo) with (orch), (strings), (rhythm).
Filmshort presented as “Nan Wynn Sings A Popular Latin Song Of The Day”:

Unidentified Titles (FM)

NAN WYNN / BING CROSBY **middle 1940s?**

Bigband personnel with (strings), (rhythm), Nan Wynn, Bing Crosby (vo).
Sound with stillphoto, youtube:

Experience (SM)

NAN WYNN **1955**

Nan Wynn (vo) with unknown (ts), (rhythm).
Recorded for RCA Victor (singles), three found on youtube:

Hands Off (F)

The Lord Is A Busy Man (F)

Thirteen Black Cats (M)

No further recording sessions.

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