

ONE RECORDING OF SOPHIE TUCKER

An Annotated Tentative Name-Discography

TUCKER, Sophie, originally Sophia Kalish, singer, comedian, performer

Born: Tultschyn, Russia, January 13, 1886

Died: New York City, February 09, 1966

Sophie Tucker was a very successful entertainer in the US in the first half of the 1920s, called 'First Lady of the Show Business' or 'Last of the Red-Hot Mamas'. She cut her earliest recording in 1910 on an Edison cylinder to be succeeded by 'Some Of These Days' in 1911, also on a cylinder. In the 1920s she worked in vaudeville – also together with Mamie Smith and Ethel Waters – and in television later in the 1950s and 1960, also recording a couple of LPs. Her recordings of jazz content were solely cut in the 1920s.

This personello-discography is based on RUST, JAZZ AND RAGTIME RECORDS 1897 - 1942.

Personnels are taken from this source, but modified in the light of earlier or subsequent research or on the strength of my own listening, discussed with our listening group or other interested collectors.

- Documented, most certain and aurally absolutely obvious identifications are listed thus: *Sophie Tucker*
- Probable, generally agreed, but not documented identifications are listed in italics, thus: *Sophie Tucker*
- Not attributable identifications – although the musician in question might be an otherwise well-known person – are listed thus: *unknown*
- If a possible identification for an otherwise unknown musician is suggested by the author without the possibility to prove the factual evidence, it is listed thus: (*Sophie Tucker*)

When feeling certain without a musician's documented presence, I have not refrained from altering Rust's statements without using italics. In any case, my statements are open to discussion and I would appreciate any contribution - pro or contra!

As always in my discographies on this website I have written recording sessions with their headings, dates, titles and names of musicians in italics, whenever I am convinced that the eponymous musician of this discography is not part of the accompanying group of this session! Documented names of musicians if known – in recording ledgers or on record labels – are listed in bold letters.

This - most probably - will be the only white singer/performer to be discussed at this web-site. About fifty years ago, I – KBR – got hold of a cassette containing the below listed recording of Sophie Tucker which fascinated me because of the swinging performance of the accompanying group of black musicians. As cassettes were not my kind of sound recording medium, I had John R.T. Davies cut this title on one of the acetates I received from him at times. I had not heard it for many years, but found it mentioned in a recent letter by Mr. Barry Harden, British jazz enthusiast in the USA, as the supposedly last recording of clarinetist Bob Fuller.

SOPHIE TUCKER

001 SOPHIE TUCKER

New York,

Jul. 10, 1929

Sophie Tucker – voc;

Leonard Joy – dir;

unknown - tpt; *unknown* – tbn;

unknown – clt, alt;

unknown – pno; *unknown* – pno; *unknown* – bbs; *unknown* - dms

55602-2 Some Of These Days

Vic 22049,

not on LP/CD, but held

Composer credits: 55602 (*Brooks*)

Hearing this side again after a long time of neglect, I immediately started to thump my foot with the swinging beat. The vocal is not bad at all, but the band are really swinging.

But what do we hear: Miss Sophie Tucker, an internationally known performer and singer of the early 1910s and until the 1960s, singing with a jazzy voice, using off-beat and hot phrasing as used by jazz singers. This is surprisingly nice and interesting. Also interesting is Miss Tucker's "sostenuto" in bar 15 of the first chorus, where it causes a good tension.

But the real surprise is the band of trumpet, trombone, clarinet, two pianos – as the 'Victor Master Book Vol. 2' asserts –, tuba and drums.

All Rusts list a banjo, but this certainly cannot be heard at any time of the recording.

There is a trumpet player with a squeezed tone playing the melody in the introduction with a somewhat "square" rhythm, accompanied by his band colleagues on very interesting muted trombone and appropriate alto sax playing ad-lib. Miss Tucker takes over and sings the first

chorus nicely accompanied by the band, ad-lib as well.

The verse then is sung by Miss Tucker, accompanied by piano, only. And there a problem appears: I hear a piano part in the verse which is played by one sole pianist. If there really is a second pianist on this side as given by Brian Rust's 'The Victor Master Book Vol. 2', he may be playing un-obtrusively with the band only, thus not in the verse, he being the band's pianist. The piano accompanist in the verse might be somebody else. This player reminds me a bit of James P. Johnson, by the way.

The second chorus is accompanied by the band, again, playing a scored riff throughout the chorus, with the clarinetist/alto player taking the lead part on clarinet. The band pianist is rather subdued, again.

I hoped to find some clue to the pianist's identity accompanying the verse in Brian Rust's 'The Victor Master Book Vol. 2'. But much to my annoyance, nobody else but the Tucker accompanists seem to have been in the studio on this particular day.

Then there is a flexible and imaginative tuba player with nice ideas, whose playing I really like, but of whose identity I have no idea at all. And there is a driving drummer restricted to wood-block work in eighth-strokes and eighth-triplets, and the final cymbal-stroke. Very good! The noted "director" Leonard Joy (Victor Master Book, Vol. 2) obviously is a white employee of the Victor company with no recognisable activity in the recording process.

But here a note by the above-mentioned Mr. Harden might be of interest: "*There was one record that I bought from Norman Stevens (a noted British jazz enthusiast/collector of bygone days – KBR) ... by Sophie Tucker which he said had Bob Fuller and a black band accompaniment. ... It was quite a large band with no real solos. The title was, I think, one of the regulars, maybe I Ain't Got Nobody, something like that. If Bob Fuller was on it, it certainly was not memorable. But from what I recall it would have been his last recording. I believe it had on the label 'acc. Negro Orchestra'.*"

This, now, seems to be really interesting, as we might have a hint here to Bob Fuller's late career as a jazz musician in a long residency at the 125th Street Dance Hall in New York. In case, it actually is Bob Fuller! But we really don't know.

Notes:

- B. Rust, *The Victor Master Book, Vol. 2: Vocal acc* by LJ/c/tb/s/2p/bb/d ("coloured orchestra")

- BGR*2,*3,*4: *As Sophie Tucker was a white singer and performer, she is not listed in 'Blues and Gospel Records'!*

- Rust *2,*3,*4,*6: *Leonard Joy dir. unknown Negro group: unknown cnt; unknown tbn; unknown clt; unknown two pno; unknown bjo; unknown bbs; unknown dms*

Tune structure:

55602 *Some Of These Days* Key of C Victor

(Intro 8 bars ens)(Chorus 1 32 bars ABCD ST voc + ens)(Verse 16 bars ST voc + pno)(Chorus 2 32 bars ABCD ST voc + ens)

Miss Tucker recorded frequently in her life, but, as all her other recordings were accompanied by white musicians, this little mention of her record above must remain the only room we can attribute to her!