

Alys Robi: Diva. Brossard, QC: Gala Records 101, 2005. 1 compact disc (approx. 37 minutes). Alys Robi, vocals ; with Orchestre Lucio Agostini. Contents: Speak Low – I’ll Be Seeing You – Chica Chica Boom Chic – La Comparsa (instrumental) – Palabras de Mujer – You and I – Begin the Beguine (instrumental) – J’attendrai – Guadalajara – You’ve Change It All – Brazil (instrumental) – Good Night, Wherever You Are. \$20.00. Available from: Gala Records, C.P. 24512, Brossard, QC, J4W 3K9. Web site: www.galarecords.ca.

Alys Robi, the great Canadian singer of the 1940s who was renowned for her stylish rendering of songs in French, English and Spanish, had largely been forgotten until 2005. There had been a CBC biography in 1999 called “Let Me Sing Again,” but it tended to focus on the tragic aspects of her life, a car accident in Hollywood, mental depression and electric shock treatments. This past year, the film about Robi, *Ma vie en cinémascope*, won five Jutra awards and just released is this CD that showcases her remarkable voice. Now we can understand why Nat King Cole, Jack Benny, and Sammy Davis Jr. were among her numerous admirers throughout Europe and the Americas.

These recordings are taken from CBC broadcasts of the series, *Let There Be Music*, done between 17 April 1946 and 3 November 1946. The nine songs show the range of Robi’s musical skills and repertoire, while the three instrumental selections highlight the other star of this recording, Lucio Agostini. Agostini conducted the orchestra, made the

arrangements, and composed the jazz/pop ballad, *You’ve Changed It All*. This recorded documentation of Agostini’s talent is extremely valuable as there has been no available recording of his work apart from his composition, *Trio Québécois*. His legendary skills as a conductor and arranger are amply shown in the varied repertoire of this recording.

The producer, researcher, writer, and originator of this project, Jean-Pierre Sevigny, needs to be congratulated for putting together a detailed booklet in English and French of background information and rare photographs. The text reads well in either language, although only in the French will one find acknowledgement of the CBC announcer Elwood Glover. The sound is amazingly good and keeping the format of a radio-like broadcast with introductions and credits gives the listener an excellent sense of the importance of these broadcasts in the 1940s.

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