

Record Industry and Egyptian Traditional Music: 1904-1932

by Ali Jihad Racy

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First is a number of very early disc recordings on whose labels the company's name reads "*The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd., and Sister Companies.*"

These discs, **very rare now**, are seven inches, black-labelled, and **recorded only on one side**. They were made most probably before 1904. This same company name, with the word "*Typewriter Ltd.*" added, appeared on disc labels between 1900 and 1908, after the company had ventured into a short-lived typewriter manufacturing business.

In the light of the general history of disc recording, these black-label discs represent an excellent example of early non-celebrity recordings. For instance, on the whole, the performer's name is either completely missing from the label or appears only in what seems to be a *French* transliteration. On the other hand, the title of the recorded selection is written down conspicuously in *Arabic*, which shows that these recordings were appealing to customers not necessarily because of the performer's name, but for the popularity of the pieces recorded. Some of these pieces are generally attributed to well-known late-nineteenth-century Egyptian composers.

One interesting example among this group of recordings is a disc whose label presents the performer's name as such: *Grazia (Théâtre Cheikh Salamé)*; *Grazia* being a practically unheard of female singer who was obviously associated with the theatrical group of the celebrity Shaykh Salāmah Hijāzī (d. 1917)...

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