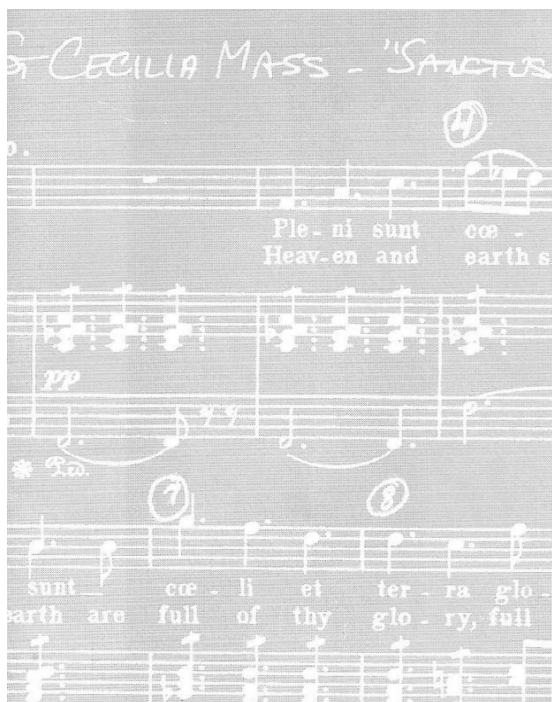


# Newsletter

of the Jussi Björling Societies of the USA & UK

No. 20—November 2011

## International Jussi Björling Centennial Conference: Stockholm and Borlänge



From left, performers Cleveman, Dalayman, Kaufmann, Hedlund, Opera manager Svendén (with rose), Castronovo

by Sue Flaster

### We start with music

This centennial year has had an incredible number of concerts and remembrances in the US and many other countries, but there was something special about celebrating this important milestone in Stockholm, and in the venues where JB's adult musical education began, and where he both made his operatic debut and performed far more than in any other theater.

The conference opening was a gala concert at the Royal Opera on Friday, September 2nd. Birgitta Svendén and her staff had put together a thrilling program: many of us heard Jonas Kaufmann for the

first time, not something one is likely to forget. His "Mamma, quel vino" was electrifying (Ingrid Tobiasson later remarked that she leaped out of her seat to cheer). Other standouts were Charles Castronovo, Paulina Pfeiffer, Katarina Dalayman and Lars Cleveman. You can see and hear more of the concert though the JBS website, and read more about it in Ward Murray's article in this newsletter.

### Intermission excitement

The Björling Jubilee Committee had suggested to the Opera that the JBS medal (with Jussi as Gustaf III of Sweden at the Met) should be presented to King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden. The Opera and Court accepted the suggestion and I was invited to deliver the medal during the concert intermission.

There were only about 15 people present (the three Björling children and their significant others; Jacob and Anitha Forsell; former Prime Minister of Sweden Ingvar Carlsson; and Opera manager Birgitta Svendén. Bengt Krantz and Hans Thunström, besides Harald Henrysson, represented the Scandinavian Society.

The King and Queen were really human and interested, and held us in conversation for about 10 minutes, while others waited. The Queen told a charming story about attending a Pavarotti concert at the Stock-

*continued on page 2*

### INSIDE THE Newsletter

- International JB Conference
- Upcoming events
- Membership renewal



The Royal Opera, looking toward the royal box



Bertil Bengtsson talks about fame

holm concert hall of which she mostly remembered him waving his hanky around. After the concert they met, and Pavarotti told her that he had been extremely nervous about singing on the stage where Jussi had sung.

#### Down to the waterside

On Saturday morning we trooped down to Nybrotkajen 11: a large and comfortable hall, full of JB memories, as it was the original site of the Royal Academy of Music of Sweden, and the very place where Jussi and his brothers—and Anna-Lisa Berg—studied music at the Conservatory. Jubilee Committee Chairman Göran Forsling gave a short speech of welcome, after which Scandinavian Society president Bengt Krantz presented the Society prize to Harald Henrysson and Roger Alderstrand in recognition of their contributions to Björling performance history.

Bertil Bengtsson followed with a fresh and illuminating talk on stardom and how Jussi became a star. This was thought-provoking as Bertil reminded us that often the perception of a person as a star may be very different from perceptions of that person's actual performances.

We heard Ann-Charlotte and Anders Björling in a panel discussion with moderator Nils-Göran Olve, followed by a very technical yet personal presentation on the physiology of the voice by ENT surgeon Per-Åke Lindestad. More fascinating and moderately technical information came to

us from Swedish cardiologist Mårten Rosenqvist. We were shown JB's EKG tracings, and heard that he was afflicted with rhythm disturbances which could have been fatal (especially considering the medication he was given—no longer permitted in Sweden. For more information on Dr. Rosenqvist's findings, see his complete article in the upcoming Journal).

Dr. Rosenqvist was then joined by author and journalist Yrsa Stenius and psychiatrist Sten Levander for further considerations of these life-and-death issues. Nils-Göran Olve again moderated.

Saturday's closing presentation by Walter Rudolph on Jussi in the US was notable for its scholarship, and powerful emotional impact. Walter's statement that "the one thing we are sure of is that Jussi died too young," struck all of us as perhaps the best reason why his death should preoccupy us to such an extent.

At the end of the Saturday session, many participants took a bus tour around important Stockholm locations in Jussi's personal life and performance career.

#### An early start

Day two started off with examinations of



Nils-Göran Olve, Ann-Charlotte and Anders Björling



Pianist Nils Lindberg, soprano Hillevi Martinpelto and JB award-winner Hanna Husáhr on stage at the Borlänge concert

differing engineering approaches and outcomes with sound recordist Christer Eklund (who remastered the Gröna Lund Bluebell set, among other things) and Dan Shea, on behalf of our “JB Live” set.

We then had the first of two presenta-

tions by Stephen Hastings, again displaying his enormous appreciation for and sensitivity to JB as an artist.

After a welcome lunch break, a panel of Birgitta Svendén (manager of the Royal Opera), former Prime Minister Ingvar

Carlsson, Dan Shea and Richard Klingspor, singer and artists’ agent mused about how young people can be drawn to the opera and its music. The panel moderator was well-known radio commentator Niklas Lindblad. Of the issues and questions raised, the practical notions of high cost and wardrobe insecurity seemed to resonate the most.

The group then shifted to a bus for the move to Borlänge and an enjoyable noisy dinner at a local Italian restaurant.

### **Borlänge**

Monday led off with a visit to the Björling Museum, followed by a bus tour to Stora Tuna church and the grave site, before continuing to the location of the original small Björling Museum. After another cheerful lunch, Stephen Hastings and local critic Björn Gustavsson—led by Göran Forsling—played some of their favorite and unfavorable JB recordings, and did their best to share with us the reasons for their selections. I must say that Gustavsson seemed a bit overwhelmed by Stephen’s level of preparation.

The comprehensive JB database (presented in an earlier state of completion in St. Peter) was then demonstrated by Harald Henrysson. Eventually it is intended to include the updated “Phonography” plus the performance chronology plus an astonishing variety of ways to access the data. Important material from the db will shortly be viewable as PDFs on the Museum web site.

The closing activity of the conference was a concert, as it should be. We all squeezed into the Mission Church, across the sidewalk from the Museum to hear five singers including mezzo- soprano Carolina Bengtsdotter Ljung, soprano Hillevi Martinpelto and this year’s winner of the Opera Soloists’ Jussi Björling Award, soprano Hanna Husáhr, as well as fiddler Alm Nils Ersson and jazz pianist Nils Lindberg.

The conference closer was dinner at

*continued on page 4*

Galaxen Hotel; it went on until they turned the lights out.

### Postscript

The September 10th concert at Strömsbruk was not, strictly speaking, part of the centennial celebration, but this gathering

near the birthplace of JB's father felt to me like a fitting and emotionally satisfying end to a week of celebratory and memorial events. Stefan Olmås brought us Bengt Krantz, Ingrid Tobiasson, 2010 Sällskapet prize winner tenor Nils Olsson, accompanist Lennart Eng, and brilliant

accordionist Sune Banger in a truly stirring concert. The small hall was packed, the general tone fairly informal, and the closing group singing of "Land, du välsignade" left us all temporarily Swedish and thoroughly uplifted.

The Strömsbruk event closed with a well-received presentation by Yrsa Stenius on Sunday morning, as she talked about her changing understanding of JB's life---I must admit my primitive Swedish is not up to any fuller description. A highlight of the morning for all present was JBS-USA member Janel Lundgren relating the story of her childhood meeting in Chicago with JB after her recovery from rheumatic fever. We got to see a wonderful photograph of her and Jussi Björling (now at the JB Museum). ■



Walter Rudolph at JB's gravesite, Stora Tuna church



An excellent road sign!

# The Jubilee Memorial Concert, September 2, Royal Opera, Stockholm: A Reaction to the Broadcast

by Ward Murray

*Note: the concert on September 2nd was shown on Swedish television twice on the weekend after the concert itself. Swedish TV then kept the program available for viewing on its web site for some time afterwards.*

Thanks to Allan Buchalter for capturing this gala so that it might be available past Swedish Television's cutoff of 3 October.

I watched the gala through the SVT website and found parts of it to be most affecting. It was a bit too chatty for my taste, but perhaps that's because I'm not Swedish and had a limited understanding of what was being said. Birgitta Svendén, manager of the Opera, was the MC and presenter.

The most affecting and effective parts for me were as follows:

1. David's "Psalm" sung by the "new" juvenile quartet (Adolf Fredriks Boys Choir) —very moving in its straightforward simplicity and earnestness.

2. The lamplighter scene from *Manon Lescaut*—this scene brought chills down my spine as Klas Hedlund sang the lamplighter role wonderfully, but the big surprise was hearing Jussi's voice emerging from the ether on the stage of the Royal Opera, as Des Grieux. That moment was beautifully engineered and the most moving and effective blending of Jussi's nonpareil artistry with a live performance.

3. Of course, I enjoyed seeing the Voice of Firestone performance of "Mattinata"

and the little play on words by Svendén at the end of the program.

The singing by the featured artists was of a very good standard, although it's hard not to refer back to the definitive performances by Jussi of this material. Charles Castronovo and Jonas Kaufmann are admirable in many ways, but certainly do not bring Jussi to mind in their approach or delivery. The overall effect is attractive and compelling, but if one just listens to the soundtrack, only, the deficiencies become apparent.

I did enjoy the program, however, and it was a very nice tribute to Jussi on a stage where he began his operatic career and saw many of his great triumphs. ■

## Last chance for Jubilee Book!

We still have a few copies left of Jacob Forsell's "Jussi Sängen Människan Bilderna (The music, the man, the pictures)." While the text is in Swedish, the photographs are wonderful, the book is lavishly and elegantly produced, and it includes a CD with musical selections as well as Harald Henrysson and Roger Alderstrand's complete performance chronology—somehow a recent reviewer missed that part!

A truly spectacular holiday gift.

Please send \$75 + \$15 for US domestic shipping to  
Dan Shea  
3337 Conservancy Lane  
Middleton, WI 53562

# Jussi Björling Memorial and Centennial Events 2011-2012

Updated 7 October 2011

**October 27** (20:00) New York, NY, Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church.

**October 29** (20:00) Cranston, RI, Rhode Island Center for the Performing Arts at Park Theatre.

**October 31** (19:00) Washington, DC, House of Sweden.

**November 2** (19:00) Philadelphia, PA, The Ethical Society of Philadelphia.

**November 4** (19:00) Chicago, IL, North Park University's Anderson Chapel. November 5 (19:00). Ann Arbor, MI, Kerrytown Concert House

**November 7** (19:00) San Francisco, CA, Conservatory of Music.

"A Centennial Tribute to Jussi Björling". Concerts by Mats Carlsson (ten) & Love Derwinger (piano). JB presentation by Bertil Bengtsson (Nov. 7 also introduction by Anders Björling). Note: See the splendid poster and flyer for the New York City event produced by JBS VP Kendall Svingalis on page 8.

**October 31 – November 13** Hallunda, Folkets Hus.

"Jussi Björling 100 år (JB 100 Years)". Memorial Exhibition (arranged by Folkets Hus och Parker).

**November 18** Borlänge, Stora Tuna kyrka (church).

Jussi Björling memorial gala concert with Katarina Dalayman (sopr), Antonello Palumbi (ten) & Fredrik Zetterström (bar), the Dalarna Sinfonietta & Gävle Symphony Orchestra.

**November 10** (19:30). Hyldeskoncert i anledning af 100 året for den svenske verdenstenor Jussi Björling (centenary concert homage to the world-famous Swedish tenor JB). Nils Olsson & Hans Christian Hansen (tenors); Jacob Beck (piano and introductions)

**November 21 – December 4** Borlänge, Galaxen.

"Jussi Björling 100 år (JB 100 Years)". Memorial Exhibition (arranged by Folkets Hus och Parker).

**November 24** (19:00). Stockholm, Kungl. Slottet (Royal Palace), Rikssalen. Höstkoncert till Jussi Björlings 100-års Jubileum (Autumn concert for JB's 100th anniversary). Anna Eklund-Tarantino (soprano), Paula Hoffman (mezzo), Mathias Zachariassen (tenor),

Kosma Ranuer (baritone) and Inese Klotina (piano)

**November 29** Ljusdal

**November 30** Hofors.

**December 14** Ängelholm.

Jussi Björling memorial concerts by Mats Carlsson (ten) & Love Derwinger (piano).

**November 30** (12:00) Huddinge, Klockargården.

"Med guld i strupen: En hyllning till Jussi Björling 100 år (With a Golden Throat: A celebration of JB 100 Years)". Lunch concert with Katarina Pilotti (sop) & Ulf Wiger (ten); Elisabet Brander (piano).

## 2012

**January 16-29** Örnsköldsvik, Gnistan. "Jussi Björling 100 år (JB 100 Years)". Memorial Exhibition (arranged by Folkets Hus och Parker).

**January 27** (19:30) Linz (Austria), Landestheater

"Björling-Abend zum 100. Geburtstag (Björling Evening for his 100th Anniversary)". With Pedro Velázquez Diaz (ten).

**February 6-19** Östersund, OSD/ Folkets Hus.

"Jussi Björling 100 år (JB 100 Years)". Memorial Exhibition (arranged by Folkets Hus och Parker).

**February 27 – March 18** Söråker, Folkets Hus.

"Jussi Björling 100 år (JB 100 Years)". Memorial Exhibition (arranged by Folkets Hus och Parker).

*This list was compiled by Harald Henrysson. I will be happy for additions or corrections: harald.henrysson@tele2.se.*

## The Centennial issue of the *JBS Journal*, coming in February, 2012

- Andrew Farkas "Just Jussi"
- New JBS officers
- Swedish Cardiologist Mårten Rosenqvist on possible causes of JB's death and the mystery of the missing documents
- Richard Copeman's recent discoveries about the London *Bohème*
- Stephen Hastings "The very human voice of a pure musician"

*Please be sure and renew your membership now to insure receiving this important issue and other mailings*

# Jussi Björling Society-USA: 2012 Membership Renewal Form

- To renew your membership now for 2012, please use this form (or a copy, or some other piece of paper).
- Individual membership contribution is \$35; family membership \$50.
- Membership in the Jussi Björling Society-USA is on a calendar-year basis.

Your name (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Members' names and email addresses will be made available to Jussi Björling Society-USA members who elect to be included on the list. The purpose of the list is to permit members to communicate with each other; this information will not be made available for marketing or any other purposes. If you wish to be included on the email list, please check the Opt-In Box.

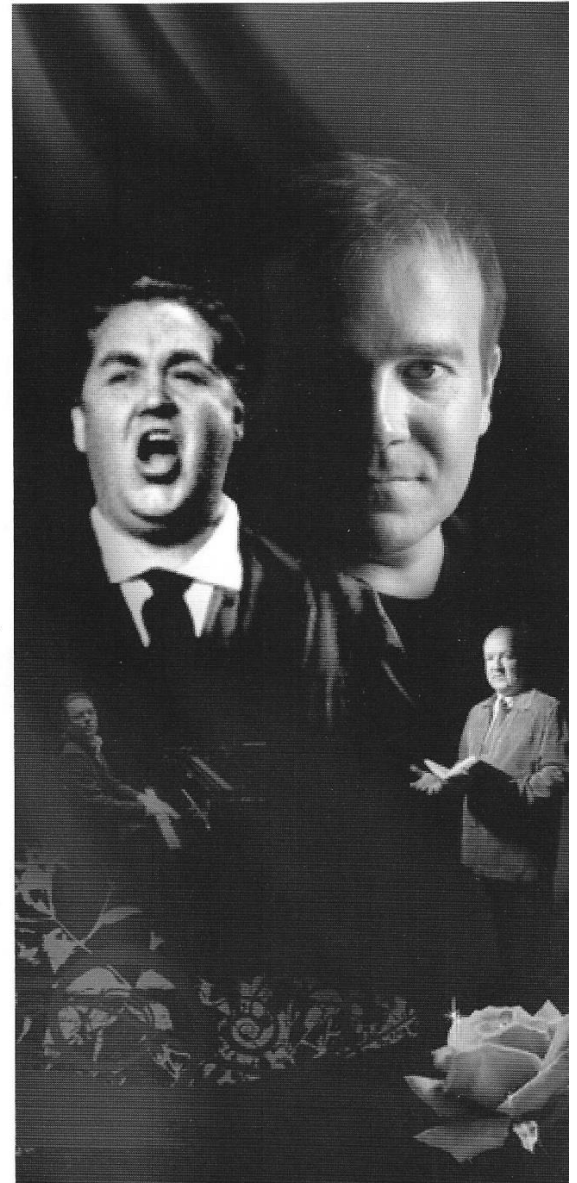
I hereby *opt in* to the distributed email address list.

2012 membership contribution	\$ _____
Additional contribution to help our work	\$ _____
Your total contribution	\$ _____

-----  
Please mail check or money order MADE OUT TO JBS-USA, to:

Mr. Michael Mayer  
3351 Aquila Ave S  
St Louis Park, MN 55426

*Note: although checks are most efficient for us, you may also remit payment via Paypal at: [payments@jussibjorlingsociety.org](mailto:payments@jussibjorlingsociety.org)*



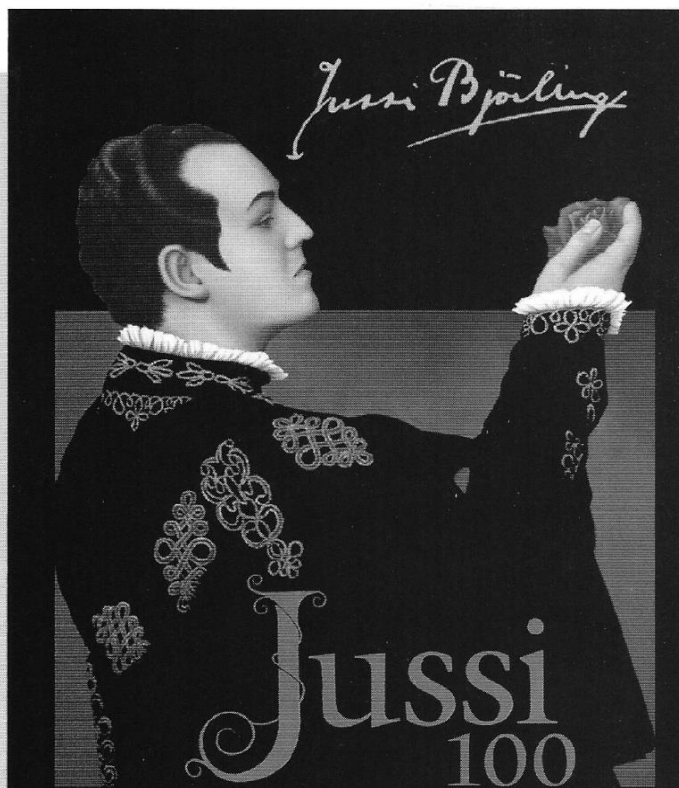
Jussi Bjorling, Mats Carlsson, Bertil Bengtsson in the terrific concert-series flyer from Kendall Svengalis

JUSSI BJÖRLING SOCIETY

3337 Conservancy Lane  
Middleton WI 53562 USA

*Jussi Björling*

First Class  
US Postage  
PAID  
Madison WI  
Permit No 47



*Jussi Björling*

**Jussi**  
100

**A CENTENNIAL TRIBUTE TO JUSSI BJÖRLING**  
Tenor Mats Carlsson, Swedish Royal Opera  
Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church, 155 E 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, NYC  
8:00 p.m., Thursday, October 27, 2011

Concert-series poster thanks to  
the work of Kendall Svengalis