

## From the President

By Janel E. Lundgren



**H**appy New Year to our members, and welcome to the 2019 edition of our *Journal*. We are privileged to feature articles by multiple eminent authors, friends, and supporters of JBS-USA. We also reprint an article by our dear former member the late Pat Darrow, take a delightful stroll down memory lane with our friend Ray Harsant, and say farewell to JB documentary creator Torbjörn Lindqvist with a memorial by Harald Henrysson.

Also contained in these pages are news and updates about some exciting new projects for 2019.

Harald Henrysson is currently completing a new book about the first American tours of David Björling and his young sons, which we anticipate will be available for a late-summer release. This elegant volume, providing brand-new information about Jussi's early years, will be one you will certainly want to add to your Björling collection. Detailed book and purchase information will be in our July Newsletter.

More good news: *Immortal Performances* will shortly be releasing its much-anticipated new 2-CD set "*Jussi Björling: A Treasury of Little Known Broad-*

*casts*". This beautifully remastered offering will feature the complete November 1959 Stockholm performance of *Manon Lescaut*, as well as songs and arias from various broadcast concerts, including those from the Hollywood Bowl, London Palladium, and the final one from Göteborg. This set will shortly be available through our website; you may also pre-order your copy with the enclosed Audio and Book Order Form.

And finally, our *Journal* offers a substantial salute to the great Birgit Nilsson, whose centenary was celebrated in 2018 throughout the musical world. We devote three articles to this great soprano and the impact of her magnificent career — one which overlapped with that of Jussi Björling by only a few years. Nevertheless, she was his colleague, friend, and, from her days as a young singer, admirer. Following is an excerpt from her autobiography (reissued in 2018) about her first performance with Jussi at the Stockholm Royal Opera.

*"The twenty-sixth of September 1953 was a great day: I was to sing Tosca for the first time with Jussi Björling. I admired him endlessly and was afraid I would not be able to please him. God knows, one had heard*

*of all the peculiarities of great singers, and I was certain Jussi would have many of his own. My fears proved to be unfounded. He was the most considerate and uncomplicated partner one could wish for, with a voice that mirrored the Swedish spring with fresh birch groves, blue sky, and dew-fresh grass. And beneath this smoldered an Italian fever like the lava of Vesuvius.*

*"His voice serves as a model for singers all over the world. There are many tenors who try to emulate him by listening to his recordings. But what is the imitation worth? There was only one Jussi. He was tremendously generous toward his colleagues and saw to it, for example, that everyone got as many curtain calls as he did. When he felt he was being unfairly treated, however, it was advisable to stay out of his way."*

—Birgit Nilsson: *La Nilsson*, originally published in the United States by Northeastern University Press, 2007, pp. 79-80.

And may we return the compliment: there was only one Birgit. We hope you enjoy reading about her, and many other topics, as you page through the *Journal*. ■

Warmest greetings,  
Janel E. Lundgren, President and Editor



P.S. Please don't forget to renew your membership if you have not already done so. A Membership / Donation Form is enclosed; your support is more important than ever, and very much appreciated!