

## A Jussi Björling Phonography by Harald Henrysson: a Critical Tool

by Terry Williams and Sue Flaster

The number of questions which pop up on the Yahoo site and elsewhere on a regular basis indicate that a short reminder of what this book is and how it works is overdue. The latest paper edition of the book (3rd) does not have all of the indices, but they are available through the site of the Scandinavian JB Society, <http://www.jussibjorlingsallskapet.com/>

After the introductory matter, including definition of terms, acknowledgments and background, the original paper edition began with a chronology of Björling's activities. The newer paper edition does not have such a chronology as it has grown enormously since the second paper edition and the Farkas biography (as well as in more recent books, such as the Forsell JUSSI). This constantly-updated chronology will soon be available through the Scandinavian Society web site.

The first section of the latest paper PHONOGRAPHY is dedicated to studio recordings. Numbering of the recordings begins at number 1 and ends at number 244. It seems extremely unlikely that this list will ever grow, although some unused takes might be discovered, the number of recording occasions seems final and fixed.

For each of the recorded items, Henrysson gives ALL of the information available about CDs and DVDs on which the items appear. The earlier paper edition also listed other recording media, but as the number of CDs and DVDs has increased—and it has!—cost limitations have demanded that only the more current media be included in the print edition.

The second section covers recordings of live performances of every sort: recitals, concerts with orchestra, opera performances, radio performances with and without audiences, and interviews. Anything, in

short, where our tenor was recorded NOT in a studio setting. Each “performance (for the sake of simplicity, just the one word)” is identified first by the year in which it took place, followed by its position within that year, i.e. the second performance of 1948 is listed as 48.02, after which the date follows with all of the particulars of venue, ensemble (if any), cast (if any), other personnel, and CDs and DVDs on which the performance can be found.

Following this second section, the new paper edition has an index of recording labels which lists what appears on their CD issues and their catalog identifying information. The next index is of recordings by composer, with directions to the studio or live performance numbers. There is a short list of works with unknown composers, notes on the indices, and an appendix of works performed by JB of which no recording is known.

The new paper edition of the PHONOGRAPHY is available from JBS-USA for \$40, while supplies last. It is a unique and illuminating tool for the appreciation, understanding, and collecting of the recorded output of the Great Swede. There is no similar work in existence for any other singer, classical or otherwise. Together with the Farkas biography and the great critical analysis by Stephen Hastings (THE BJÖRLING SOUND), the PHONOGRAPHY completes the foundation of Björling appreciation and enlightenment. ■



Jussi as Manrico in *Il trovatore*, Tulsa, 1959