

### 3. JBS members join L.A. Opera Patrons for a mini-conference on February 3.

Our previous Newsletter #8 (December 2004) offered our members a new idea: A “mini-conference” in Los Angeles with two lectures, an opportunity to hear a starry new production of *Roméo et Juliette* at the LA Opera, and the pleasure of a few days of socializing together in the California southland.

In spite of the impromptu last-minute nature of our invitation, twenty-five of us gathered at the Miyako Hotel in Los Angeles’s Little Tokyo, close to the Chandler Pavilion, home of the Los Angeles Opera. Thanks to warm cooperation from the Opera’s administration, we were provided a pleasant rehearsal room for our meetings, and some 40 LA Opera supporters joined us as well.

We began our day with lunch at the opera house. Our afternoon program consisted of two lectures – illustrated by many recordings – by JBS Advisors Walter Rudolph and Cantor Don Goldberg. Walter spoke on “Jussi Björling, the unassuming superstar” – his title for an overview of the tenor’s life and personality. Cantor Don chose to celebrate both Björling and Plácido Domingo, with some unusual recordings – for example, he found a recording of “Till havs,” sung by Domingo in Swedish at a concert in Stockholm, as a graceful homage to Jussi. He also had a pirate recording of the 1962 performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* that marked Domingo’s debut as Edgardo and Lily Pons’s final appearance as Lucia.

The day still held a further treat: a magnificent performance of *Roméo et Juliette* starring young Mexican tenor Rolando Villazón and Russian soprano Anna Netrebko, preceded by a buffet dinner and an optional lecture. Here’s how our member from San Francisco, Sallie McKenna, reviewed the performance to the Björling on-line discussion group: “The *Roméo* was a stunner that flew by in an eyeblink ... Rolando was an impetuous hero with real mettle (and metal) in his voice. He is a singer that you totally relax with and follow in the role, rather than listening for the notes: There is no sense that he has to build up a head of steam to hit the big moments ... they just flow out of him. A gorgeous performance.”

Many of us celebrated afterwards at the Miyako, and looked forward to other west coast touristic opportunities. We plan to try some similar programs elsewhere (and we’re tempted to return to Los Angeles again, soon!). As a final bonus of the day’s program, we found that an enthusiastic cohort of LA Opera’s supporters also became JBS supporters: **A special welcome to May Shaw, Marilyn Strumwasser, Rosalie Kornblau, Ed Kaufman, John Spear, Sol Rubin, Nina Louise Haro, Oliver Deehan, and Barbara Hayes.**

We also wish especially to thank Los Angeles Opera administrators Lyla Forlani, Karin Min, John Nuckles, Peter Somogyi, among others – including General Director Plácido Domingo who in his other capacity as star tenor was swinging Siegmund’s sword in the Met’s *Walküre*!