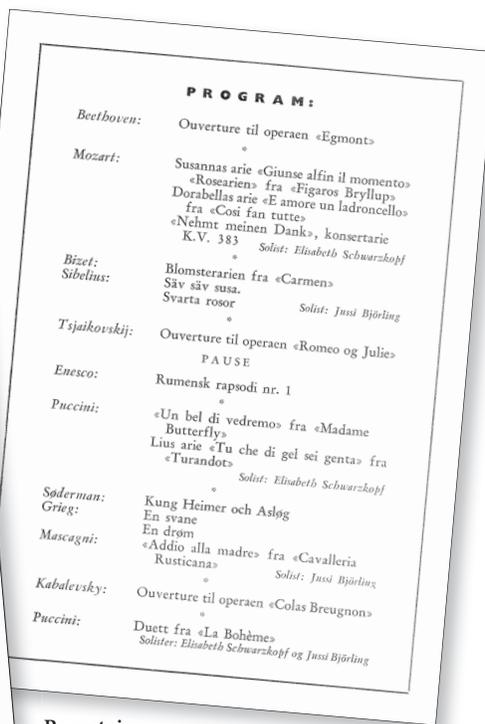


Cover



Repertoire

My thoughts shifted to the research done by Andrew Farkas for *JUSSI*. How many dead-end trails did he pursue, similar to this one? And yet none of them were dead-ends. Each revealed its own results. Even when there is no trail to follow, sometimes there is still a reward – witness the 1959 Copenhagen Recital, or the Beverly Sills fax about Jussi Björling (elsewhere in this issue). And witness the quotes and commentary that surfaced for this article.

Thanks to Daphne Kerlake, Andreas Schubert (for Gerd Nachbauer) at the Schubertiade in Vienna, Kristian Krogholm, Professor Walter Moore, Don Goldberg (who started the ball rolling) and Allan Buchalter, and especially to Harald Henrysson, who provided the commentary, visuals and related translation from the Oslo concert reviews. ■

—Walter B. Rudolph

Drake on *JUSSI* (from page 29)

EDITOR: *Among the seven published books by Dr. James A. Drake are four focused on operatic singers: Rosa Ponselle (2), Lily Pons and Richard Tucker. Jussi Björling commands significant interest, too, as is quickly seen as one reads his review (Amazon) of JUSSI. An Early Review of “JUSSI” by Anna-Lisa Björling and Andrew Farkas from Amazon, November 4, 1997*

By James Drake

One of the most important opera biographies of the decade. Making a case for Andrew Farkas' *JUSSI* being one of the most important opera biographies—and certainly one of the most anticipated—of the decade is a rather easy task. Here was a tenor who, as Luciano Pavarotti has remarked on a number of occasions, laid to rest once and for all the notion that only Italian-born tenors could impart the requisite emotional impact to the great verismo roles. Here was a tenor who

not merely excelled in every repertoire in which he sang, but in many cases established vocal and interpretive standards that few, if any, of his successors have been able to match. And here was a tenor, sadly, whose entire adult life was spent in a losing struggle with alcoholism. As Farkas and Björling's widow, soprano Anna-Lisa Björling, recount that struggle, a truly admirable man emerges from the chapters. The Jussi Björling whom Farkas has thoroughly documented (both the research and the prose are almost entirely Mr. Farkas's) bears no resemblance at all to the allegedly irresponsible, petulant and often boorish character found in the memoirs of Sir Rudolf Bing, the writings of Francis Robinson and others of the Bing regime. Instead, Björling emerges as a thoroughly engaging, likable, always approachable man who struggled mightily against a disease that in his lifetime was much misunderstood. As the chapters of this new book amply attest, there was no empire-like rise and fall to the

career or to the man himself—no descent into the bottle from a failed career (see the new Lawrence Tibbett biography, also from Amadeus Press, for that sad story), and certainly no diminution of Björling's vocal powers even as his body was failing him at age forty-nine; if anything, as Farkas's research underscores, Björling was arguably a greater singer at the very end than at any other point in his singular career. As with Farkas's Enrico Caruso (1990), this book is laden with rarely-seen photographs, recollections of numerous colleagues and contemporaries (and, once and for all, a final clearing-up of the Solti *Un ballo in maschera* recording incident, cross-documented from correspondence, recording-industry documents, and from one of the very last interviews that Sir Georg Solti ever gave), plus a chronology (by Björling discographer Harald Henrysson), and an exhaustive bibliography. In sum, in Andrew Farkas's new *JUSSI*, the story of a great singer has found an ideal teller. ■