

# Hallo Jussifriends

The Björling family lived for hundreds of years in the small village of Voxna. Jussi's grandfather was a blacksmith here. And David and his three young sons came here to sing in the small wooden church twice. These are the reasons why each summer I organize a concert in this church. Some 15 people from JBS USA visited us during last year's concert. This is a recording from that concert and here are a few comments, mainly for you who were not there. The singers were Bengt Krantz (baritone), President of JBS Scandinavia and Mats Carlsson (tenor). Mats has now been awarded the first Jussi Björling Prize during the annual meeting of JBS Scandinavia, which took place at the JB Museum in Borlänge on the 2nd of February 2008.

Each year I have an amateur singer at the concert. This year I invited Hans Qvarfell (tenor). I had him first sing at a members meeting in Stockholm and invited Erik Saedén to come and listen, to get a professional opinion. And afterwards Erik said: "I am so moved by such a beautiful voice. He is such a 'nature boy.' I now understand the feelings that Jussi gave people when they first heard him." Erik does NOT mean Hans is a new Jussi. But Hans has taken almost no lessons and gives a spontaneous impression of happiness with his singing.

In the audience was a living legend of voice teaching in Sweden. Torsten Föllinger, a dear friend of Birgit Nilsson and voice teacher for many actors in Ingmar Bergman's movies as well as many famous Sweden singers. He was a very good tenor himself and had an

amazing voice range that made it possible to also sing like a baritone and even as a basso. A voice teacher told him to sing all this, and it ruined his voice. He is 85, has had several heart attacks, has emphysema and many other health problems. I managed to persuade him to sing one song. I had to help him up to a chair, from which he sang. I told the audience he would sing a song about a nearby river, but would do it in English for the US group. Torsten replied that it was about the river "on the other side". He started a bit weakly, but the old circus horse in him showed and he ends the song so

powerfully, that many of us had tears in our eyes when he sang "tired of living, scared of dying". He is still alive today, but we all had the feeling it was his last performance to us. I met people afterwards who said this was the highlight of the evening.

Bengt and Mats had only one real rehearsal before the concert and the piano is not very good. The pianist had not heard the duets before he got the music. But I do think they all did a marvellous concert together. The re-

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## New Honors for Dan Shea

Today, on Jussi's "official" birthday, the Scandinavian Jussi Björling Society held its annual meeting at the Jussi Björling Museum in Borlänge. We want to announce that during this meeting, the society appointed two new honorary members: Dan Shea and Raymond Björling, and that Mats Carlsson became the first recipient of Jussi Björlingsällskapet's Pris (The Jussi Björling Society Prize).

We are happy to honor in this way Dan's indefatigable work in Jussi's memory as President of the JBS-USA, as a member of this group and in other connections, and to welcome Raymond as a representative of the fourth professionally singing Björling generation (Ann-Charlotte, Lars and Anders are already honorary members).

To see and hear Mats Carlsson, we can refer you to his website: ([www.matscarlsson.net](http://www.matscarlsson.net)). Those of you who went on the JBS tour to Sweden and Finland last summer already know him.

Bengt Krantz  
*chairman*

Per Bäckström / Lars Hemmingsson / Harald Henrysson / Irene Johansson / Carola Kilstrom / Stefan Olmårs / Hans Thunström