

# Newsletter

of the Jussi Björling Societies of the USA & UK

No. 15, July 2009

## Jussi's Visit to Charleston a Triumph

by Ward Murray

Some of my colleagues and I arrived on Friday morning to a spectacular downpour at the airport, but quickly encountered sunshine and blue skies once arriving in the city proper. A quick check-in at the conveniently located McAlister Hall at the College of Charleston campus, and I was on foot in this eminently walk-able place – taking in the sights and sounds of King Street and its unique selection of shops, restaurants, and historic buildings. The jasmine was in full bloom, climbing the ubiquitous Palmettos that lined the thoroughfare, and sending their inimitable fragrance throughout the town. I had a formidable lunch at the Old Town Restaurant of Greek fare, before continuing my adventures.

Stopping to admire the hanging moss on the old trees guarding the entrance to the Charleston Library Society, founded in 1748, I encountered a gentleman with a distinct Scandinavian accent, who informed me that the trees were Ginkgo, one of the oldest species extant on the planet. I asked him if he was Swedish, and discovered that he was Finnish, “but not quite finished”, and living in Charleston with his wife, the proprietor of a nearby shop. We spoke of Jussi and his Finnish

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From left, Sue Flaster, soprano Deanna McBroom, Mats Carlsson, Robin Zemp and John Erik Eleby

**H**ad Jussi ever performed in Charleston, SC, that would most assuredly have been the local headline! Nearly fifty years after his death, a large contingent of JBS members descended upon this jewel of the South for a weekend conference that celebrated his life, legacy, and repertoire, as well as a strong Swedish connection to this port city dating back to the ante-bellum period and extending to the present day.

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