

# Letter from the Incoming President



Those of us who comprise the Board of Directors are a group of equals. We have opinions and passions. We are committed to the Society and its goals. We see a variety of paths, all leading to the success of our organization. It is that diversity of ideas, passions, and opinions that allow us to work together,

recognizing individual strengths and challenging ourselves to explore every possible clue and impression to extol the artistry and memory of Jussi Björling. I applaud the successes our Board has achieved over the past twelve years.

Beau Kaplan and Ward Murray have now left the board, but their dedication and willing hearts will continue to serve in addition to the myriad contributions they have made. We will always be mindful of their dedication and achievements on behalf of the Society.

We've had sterling service from Art Skantz as Treasurer. He will become an at-large Board member in 2012 with Michael Mayer taking over the financial details. Michael devoted every moment of the June conference in St. Peter to videotaping the full conference—exceptional loyalty! Allan Buchalter's work in keeping our membership and mailing lists is as exact and professional as our financial records. These individual efforts are well beyond what many of us recognize.

Ken Svengalis (Vice President) gave enormously to the American tour of Mats Carlsson and Bertil Bengtsson in Novem-

ber, arranging facilities, marketing and promotion, plus the creation of a poster of such distinction that most of us will be compelled to acquire our own copy.

Dan Shea's tireless effort toward *Jussi Björling Live* is only in keeping with the devotion he has shown throughout his years of service to the Society.

But most of all, I applaud Sue Flaster for her keen commitment as President since 2008 and especially for her blazing success *in absentia* in organizing the St. Peter June Conference. To have prepared such a classy event and then be momentarily incapacitated, without the possibility of presenting her creation is both catastrophic and heartbreaking. And besides that, we missed her enormously.

In our organization, no one measures the individual or collective effort put forth to extol Jussi Björling. We are constantly repaid for our efforts with our close association with the Björling persona. Still, the fact remains that "lives" are given to this work. Now the time has come to give an expression back to Sue of her immeasurable gift of self. While my short comments here are genuine, they remain inadequate. I invite each of you who has experienced the "Sue Flaster magic" to put forth your own expressions, as well.

As for me, I considered myself a member of the Society long before it was formed—I'm sure many of you know the feeling. The Jussi Björling Society-USA has had exceptional, multilayered successes—achievements that have been so consistently high that no one should expect anything less as we proceed into Our Tenor's second hundred years. Discover-

ing new or better recordings, encouraging research and scholarship, and writing will continue.

But we do have other needs to pursue. It won't be long before access will end to those who heard Jussi Björling in person. In the interest of space, let me talk about several areas where I think we may focus our attention:

1. *Membership*: Perhaps we can collaborate with some selected universities and Schools of Music toward building student memberships with reduced dues. Let us be sure we preach beyond the choir, enabling Jussi's great gift to continue to be heard by an ever-new group of developing Jussiphiles.

2. *Mini-events*: We have members capable of presenting short events about Jussi Björling. Some of these may become even regional events, but we could begin by making a few presentations in conjunction with student membership (#1 above).

3. Continued encouragement of research, writing, and recording projects might also encourage additional documentation (oral and written) of significant anecdotal Jussi Björling experiences.

Needless to say, the Jussi Björling Society-USA has no reason ever to be without great opportunities. I commit myself to the endeavor, although I'm admittedly humbled by the opportunity to be the new President. My fondest hope is that each of you will continue to vigorously endorse and assist the efforts of the Jussi Björling Society-USA.

Walter B. Rudolph (Wally)