

# Launch of new Jussi CD-box in Stockholm

by Lars Hemmingsson (translation Harald Henrysson & Sue Flaster)

The launch and presentation on October 23rd of the boxed set of Jussi Björling's American radio and TV performances took place in a very appropriate setting: the Grünewald auditorium of the Stockholm concert hall.

It was a full house with our Society and the Friends of the Royal Opera and the Folkopera. It was an appropriate venue, since Jussi had made several recordings in the Grünewald auditorium, formally called the "small auditorium," as well as in the large hall and the top floor auditorium. The auditorium is named after the artist Isaac Grünewald, whose art hangs in the hall as well as in the foyer.

The presentation was chaired by Nils-Göran Olve, president of the Friends of the Royal Opera, assisted by Jussi expert Harald Henrysson, and Yrsa Stenius, author of the book *Tills vingen brister*. In earlier issues we have published articles about the access to and restoration of this material which our American sister-Society has been working for 10 years to trace and gather—mainly through private contacts, since similar material preserved at the American Library of Congress was impossible to use for financial reasons.

We then heard eight excerpts from the four packed CDs and felt the nearness to the artist and the music which a live broadcast with announcer and audience reactions can give. In addition, the sound quality is far superior to earlier issues of this material, for example the video of the Bohème scene with Tebaldi. In some concerts there are songs in English because the sponsors wanted easy-to-understand music among all the Italian, French and



Full house in the concert hall



Panel members, HH, Nils-Göran Olve, Yrsa Stenius

German. That could also be reversed: in a program about Swedish music, Jussi sang a song by Tosti in Italian.

That Jussi would be limited in his repertoire and lazy was denied by both Harald and Yrsa. Jussi used his concert appearances to showcase his wide repertoire, Harald stressed, and Yrsa said that the "laziness" was better defined as fatigue—Jussi had been singing for so many years, beginning as a prodigy under strong pressure from a demanding and discriminating

father. But with strength of will he maintained the quality of his voice throughout his life. Think of the 1955 Carnegie Hall concert where he delivered 25 numbers!

Then it was time for the usual schmoozing in the foyer, where the public bought the new boxed set at a special price. Both the box and Yrsa's book in paperback were in great demand, as was Jacob Forsell's book, released a few days earlier (JUSSI: SÅNGEN, MÄNNISKAN, BILDERNA). ■