

President's Notes

Greetings to Jussiphiles everywhere,

Fall is fleeing Winter's blustery arrival. The Board of Directors of JBS-USA sends you our very best greetings for Thanksgiving and the Holiday Season.

The November Newsletter always prompts membership renewals. We urge you to use the provided insert to make your annual contribution for 2014 to the Society, before the end of 2013. Remember your donation is tax-deductible, including any extra contribution you wish to include.

JBS-USA exists because each of us has had our own individual epiphany with the artistry of Jussi Björling. Documenting specific Jussi experiences is one of the Society's goals. We invite member submissions to document specific personal Jussi Björling Memories and Experiences.

Some may be quite short (150 words); none should exceed 700 words without advance encouragement. All submissions will be considered for publication in future Newsletters of the Society. The editor reserves the right to edit. Please submit yours to the email address below.

Finally, the Giuseppe Verdi bicentennial has given reason for new releases of performances and commercial recordings with Jussi Björling. We wish you blissful reading (and listening).

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or musicianship;" in addition, "he has immense resources and never touches their limits." This time she found "a lack of spirit in his delivery" and concluded that "his is too lovely a voice to be permitted to lose the fine-spun production he used formerly and his interpretive capabilities were of too high an order not to be employed in every number he sings."

I was surprised that *The Washington Post* did not publish a review, but in "On the Party Front" they had instead a report from the "brilliant reception" honoring Jussi and

Anna-Lisa at the Swedish Embassy. Ambassador Erik Boheman had just taken up his post, and readers were informed that "for her first reception as chatelaine of the embassy, Mrs. Boheman wore a Schiaparelli gown of deep mauve." Among the guests, some of whom stayed until long after midnight, were 10 ambassadors: from the other four Nordic countries and Great Britain, The Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Canada and Egypt, together with representatives from music life and administration.

Finally: unfortunately, nothing indicates that a recording of this interview might have been preserved. ■

The Festival of Britain in 1951 London and Jussi Björling – Almost!

By Richard Copeman



Richard Copeman

In 1951 there was a centennial celebration in London of the first Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1851. People usually just think of the exhibition and buildings when looking back at this great show, which was such a morale booster after the dark years of WW2. But there was also the London Season of the Arts, and the centerpiece of this centennial was the opening of the Royal Festival Hall, which was to act as replacement for the Queens Hall (where Jussi made his recital debut in 1937) but which had been destroyed by bombs in 1941.

I recently found a leaflet published in early 1951 announcing the cultural program, particularly the opening of the Festival Hall on May 3rd. The highlight of the first week was to be Toscanini conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Recitals by singers such as Victoria de los Angeles were announced. Jussi Björling actually made his first appearance there in 1952. His only appearance in London in 1951 was a July 29th recital at the Royal Albert Hall (built to commemorate Prince Albert who had organised the 1851 Great Exhibition). The Albert Hall remained popular with impresarios because it held over 6,000 spectators; however audiences were less keen because of its poor acoustics.

What I had not realised is that it was planned that Björling would also appear in the special Opera Festival at Covent Garden in May/June 1951. The idea was to recreate the traditional "Summer Season" which had flourished for over a hundred years. This combined social events such as balls and racing with a star studded opera season at Covent Garden. Before WW2 this had been organised by Sir Thomas Beecham. The first part was traditionally all Wagner with two *Ring*