

commercially available in crude sound, existed at the LC in excellent – and occasionally pristine – sound.

Late last summer, Harald Henrysson began the work required to get authorization for the LC to copy and release these programs to the Björling Museum. Although a large number of these programs were of interest, time and available money limited how many Harald would be able to get copied in summer 2002. While waiting times for the LC's transcription services might have been very long, due to backlogs created by the security issues arising from the terrorism of 9/11/01, Harald argued that he needed the recordings in time for the October JBS Conference in Manhattan. Thanks to friendly interest by the LC staff (the key contact person, Jerry H., was himself a tenor!), the LC would expedite Harald's requests, provided he could get releases from the legal departments of the NBC and ABC Radio Networks.

Harald patiently wrote many letters and made many phonecalls from Sweden, before finally finding the right network lawyers to ask permission to have copies made of their radio programs. The process was frustrating, since while the lawyers guarding the networks' "intellectual property rights" seemed willing enough to help us, once we finally found them, it was simply very hard to find these people! By the end of September, the various approvals had been made, a check for \$700 had been sent to the LC, and by mid-October the completed CDs were on their way to Andrew Farkas at the Library of the University of North Florida.

The CDs with this material were sampled for members of the JBS

Conference in Manhattan on Saturday morning, October 26, 2002. These recordings also have been shared with the Swedish National Archive of Sounds and Pictures.

*Now we hope to contact the NBC and ABC legal experts again and attempt to arrange some slightly broader release of this material to interested members of the chapters of the Jussi Björling Societies in the UK, USA and Scandinavia, so they may be able to own and enjoy these recordings.*

\* \* \*

(You can get a bit more on Mrs. Firestone's songs if you go to [www.classicthemes.com/50sTVThemes/themePages/voiceOfFirestone.html](http://www.classicthemes.com/50sTVThemes/themePages/voiceOfFirestone.html) or [www.newenglandconservatory.edu/libraries/aboutlibraries.html](http://www.newenglandconservatory.edu/libraries/aboutlibraries.html).)

## Another Look at the NYC Conference

By Dan Shea

Let's take one more look at our October 2002 conference: One way to get a sense of the occasion, is to look at the actual program for that event. You'll find a facsimile of the program below, along with a transcript of Regina Resnik's especially insightful reminiscences of Jussi made during George Jellinek's panel program on October 26.

We point out that videotapes of the main talks are available; details are given at the end of this article.

*Björling family members prepare to enter the Met for Andrea Chénier: Lars, Lisa, Janet, Susie, Anders.*



# Conference Program

*The Jussi Björling Society-USA meets at the New Yorker Hotel, Eighth Avenue at 34th Street, October 24-27, 2002*

## Thursday, Oct. 24—Grand Ballroom

*Kendall Svengalis, Chair*

8:30 – 9:30

Inspect exhibits, meet special guests and other voice-enthusiasts.

9:30 – 9:40

Introductions and greeting

9:45 – 10:45

“The Björling boys sing their way across America, 1919-1921,” by Harald Henrysson (Curator, Jussi Björling Museum, Borlänge).

10:45 – 10:55

Discussion

11:00 – 11:45

Biographer Andrew Farkas talks with Anders and Lars Björling about living and travelling with Jussi.

11:45 – 12:00

Discussion

12:00 – 1:30

Lunch break and more discussion

1:30 – 2:45

“Jussi Björling as an RCA recording artist,” by Daniel Guss, Senior Director, Product Development, RCA Victor Group, BMG.

2:45 – 2:55

Discussion

3:00 – 4:00

Albert Innaurato elaborates on the idea of “The free voice as an expressive instrument.”

4:00 – 4:15

Discussion

## Friday, Oct. 25—Grand Ballroom

*Walter Rudolph, Chair*

8:30 – 9:30

Videotape at 8:30

“*The Original 3 Tenors*”;

inspect exhibits.

9:30 – 10:15

Barrett Crawford, President of the Leonard Warren Foundation, speaks on “Perpetuating the artistry of Leonard Warren: A fifteen-year labor of love.”

10:15 – 10:25

Discussion

10:40 – 11:50

Robert Zarbock speaks on “Remembering Zinka Milanov.”

11:50 – 12:05

Discussion

12:05 – 1:30

Lunch break (repeat showing of “*Original 3 Tenors*” at 12:30)

1:30 – 2:30

Stephen Hastings discusses “Jussi and Zinka: What the RCA recordings tell us” (and we won’t forget Leonard and Bob).

2:30 – 2:45

Discussion

3:00 – 4:00

“Will the real Jussi please stand up? A discussion of remastering techniques and their consequences for the Björling legacy” by Seth Winner.

4:00 – 4:15

Discussion

## Saturday, Oct. 26—Grand Ballroom

8:30 – 11:30

Inspect exhibits and socialize.

9:30 – 11:30

Some newly-available Björling recordings are expected to be available to play and analyze. Harald Henrysson and his team will lead the discussion, with Andrew Farkas the inevitable choice for one surprise discovery.

11:30 – 11:45

Perspectives of Jussi in Massenet’s

“Ah fuyez!” aria by Walter Rudolph  
11:45 – 1:30

Lunch break

1:30 – 3:00

George Jellinek greets several friends and discusses singing with them: Participants will include Licia Albanese, Lucine Amara, Anders Björling, Lars Björling, Robert and Marion Merrill, and Regina Resnik.

3:30 – 4:00

Silent auction concludes and winners are announced.

## Saturday, Oct. 26—Crystal Ballroom

5:30 – 6:30

Reception

6:30 – 8:00

Dinner

8:00 – 9:00

Program, Regina Resnik and friends.

## Sunday, Oct. 27—Room TBA

10:30 – 11:00

Conference survey; Walter Rudolph offers a “mystery aria”

11:00 – 12:15

Cantor Don Goldberg celebrates the life and recorded legacy of great American tenor Richard Tucker.

### Some of the special events planned for JB Society members:

1. Group seating, Oct. 24 Andrea Chénier, Metropolitan Opera (Domingo, Millo)
2. Reception on Oct. 25 at Scandinavia House (co-sponsored by Volvo Group and the American Scandinavian Foundation), 7:00 – 8:30.
3. Private tours of the Metropolitan Opera Archives on Oct. 23 (2:00 – 3:00) and Oct. 28 (10:30 – 11:30).
4. Private tour of the Enrico Caruso Museum, Oct. 27 (2:30 – 4:30, and dinner).



Anders and Lars Björling with Regina Resnik.

## Regina Resnik's remarks about Jussi Björling in a panel discussion October 26, 2002.

*With thanks to Toby Hekler for providing this transcript. —Ed.*

George Jellinek asks Regina Resnik to reminisce about performing Tosca in 1946 with Jussi Björling...

RR: Do you want that experience only?

GJ: No.

RR: I was 25 years old (in April 1948) and privileged to sit in front of Jussi Björling in the marriage scene of *Trovatore*, as his Leonora, and watch this phenomenal artist sing the big aria. Even though I thought I was really quite innocent at that time about career and about great singing and about Verdi, and it was at the very beginning and I was at the Met. I watched him and I went back to my singing teacher and said, "I don't see him doing anything. How is he singing that way?" And she said, "Watching Jussi Björling in the marriage scene of *Trovatore* will probably be the greatest singing lesson you've ever witnessed in your life." And it was. The thing I remember the most was the perfect adaptation of a technique that was not noticeable. The naturalness, the beauty and the com-

plete sincerity of every note he sang and every note he uttered.

I was very privileged to have sung 4 operas with him. I sang my first *Eboli* (April 1952)...believe it or not, that was as a soprano. That was a whim of Mr. Bing's at the time, which turned out to be a prophecy. And I sang... And I also sang the *Tosca* in Philadelphia. *Eboli* was a great experience in general, because we had brought in Margaret Webster. His great male partner was my good friend and colleague sitting to my right, Robert Merrill, and Eleanor Steber was Elizabeth...You know, we're talking about a massive and interesting evening. My mind was always centered upon standing in the wings and watching all these great artists sing.

I want to put at rest also Andrew Farkas' great research on me in the biography, because I now have found in my archive a program which I had sent to Andrew showing that Jussi Björling was going to sing *Don Ottavio* in San Francisco, when I sang

*Donna Anna*. And that performance was never verified. I have now found a review of that performance of *Don Giovanni*, where Max Lichtig substituted for him, and instead that week, Jussi sang *Rodolfo*.

My experiences with him as a young artist were very interesting because on the train going to Philadelphia for the first *Tosca* I sang with him, I was very worried. They were sewing me into the dress because Stella Roman had become sick and I was put into my first *Tosca* with Tibbett and Björling, can you imagine? The costume department brought the costume onto the train in Philadelphia—we were singing at the Academy of Music. Timidly, I went to speak to him [Jussi], as I knew there would be no rehearsal. What he said to me, smiling, was, "You just do your work—you won't have any trouble with me." I said, "I think I won't have trouble, but will I have help?" He was very sweet, and said, "Well, we don't have so much to do, only two big duets, just Act 1 and Act 3. You'll be fine." He was very supportive. He came to my dressing room and asked if my costume fit, and he said in his way, "Coraggio!" Well, what young *Tosca* could have not done her very best if she is in good voice, with Lawrence Tibbett as Scarpia and Jussi Björling as Cavaradossi!

Socially, we had some very interesting times especially on tour in San Francisco and when we went to Los Angeles with Anna-Lisa and Jussi with his quietude and his reserve. He had a charming quiet sense of humor. I saw him get angry only once, and it was at me, because he was finding me impatient about what I was thinking about rehearsals and performances and preparation



Charlie Anders Jussi Björling is admired by Regina Resnik, aunts Susie and Lisa, and mother Jennifer.



Marion and Robert Merrill with Licia Albanese.

and I was saying, "I don't want to be thrown in anymore. I want to be able to work, and what it would be like to rehearse with you." And he said, "Never mind, we're singing, aren't we?" And he would give it up and he'd say, "You have to do your run-ins, you have to do your own [moves], and you have to be ready, and you are. What do you want?" "I want the world, [but] if I had Jussi Björling in a rehearsal, it would be twice as good." He was charming, Anna-Lisa was delightful, and we had a socially wonderful time. Especially since they were very close and good friends with Bidú Sayão and her

great baritone husband Giuseppe Danise, who turned out to be my second teacher with whom I made the change from soprano to mezzo.

So, we had a...relationship which was partly social, mostly professional. Needless to say, when he was singing, and I was anywhere, I was the first one on line for that ticket.

I have a very sweet tender story to tell. I don't want to take too much time, you have so many great artists to tell you about him. He was singing a recital at the Albert Hall in London [June 1952] and I notified Anna-Lisa in the hotel I would be coming. She said why don't you come to see Jussi in the dressing room before the concert. I said I never do that to an artist. She said, just come in and say hello, he'd like that. So with a bit of trepidation before a big recital, I went to his dressing room. So he said, what would you like me to sing for the first encore, Flower Song, for you? And I was so filled with emotion that I didn't know what to say. I said, "Well, Of course!" That was all I could say. And then I went out into the Albert Hall, and heard the beginning of a concert [the likes of] which, in my 60 years since my operatic debut, I have never heard before and will probably never hear again. He began the concert with "Ingemisco" from the Verdi *Requiem*, which is started as you well know, without accompaniment. He carried the sound in his head from the dressing room. There wasn't a sound at

the piano. He put his hands on his lapels. I remember he had this stance. He stood with his hands on the lapels of his tuxedo jacket. And just out of some ethereal place in this man's body and voice came this pianissimo "Ingemisco..." which to this day rings in my ears as one of the most unforgettable moments of my life. I could go on forever but I won't. There's so much to say about him. I just want to say I'm honored to be here. I want to thank the Björling family and Dan Shea for including me to say something about this great singer, and the loss of him at such a terribly early age. Thank you.

Many thanks to Ms. Resnik for this remarkable testimonial. We look forward to the extraordinary autobiography that she could, and must, write! In the meantime, for more information on this treasured artist see detailed appreciations in *Musica* (August 2002, by Stephen Hastings, marking her 80th birthday) and *The Opera Quarterly* (Spring 1993, by John Ardoin).

Here we just provide some key dates related to her appearances with Jussi Björling (all for the Metropolitan Opera), and refer you for further commentary on these performances to the biography *Jussi*:

1. Jan. 8, 1946 (Philadelphia), *Tosca* (with Tibbett; Sodero)
2. Jan. 11, 1946 (New York), *Tosca* (with Tibbett; Cimara)
3. Dec. 31, 1947 (New York), *Cavalleria Rusticana* (with Valentino; Antonicelli)
4. April 16, 1948 (Los Angeles), *Il Trovatore* (with Elmo, Warren, Hines; Cooper)
5. April 9, 1952 (New York), *Don Carlo* (with Steber, Merrill, Hines, Moscona; Cellini)

## Acknowledgements for Assistance with the JBS Conference in NYC

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### Conference Videotapes Available in Two Ways

See the Conference Program on page 12 for titles of the following sessions:

1. H. Henrysson
2. A. Farkas, Anders & Lars Björling
3. D. Guss
4. A. Innaurato
5. B. Crawford
6. R. Zarbock
7. S. Hastings
8. S. Winner
9. G. Jellinek & panel

Would you like to have a videotape souvenir of part or all of the main sessions of the October 24-26 events at JBS's 2002 Conference? If so, here are two choices that we offer JBS members:

(1) Two 6-hour tapes of the eight sessions of Oct. 24-25, plus the afternoon session of Oct. 26 (Jellinek panel), recorded at Extended Play speed, for \$55 for members living in North America (postage included); or for \$60 for members living elsewhere.

(2) You choose the sessions you want copies of, and you'll get them on videotape, recorded at Standard Play speed, for \$10 per session, with a minimum order of \$20.

Note: These tapes are only available in the NTSC format that is standard in North America and some other countries. (If your VCR can use only the PAL format, then our tapes will not work for you. Neither are we able to offer DVD copies at this time.)

To order these tapes, email or write Mickey Dove (mdove9@cox.net or 109 Melrose Rd., Broad Brook, CT 06016 USA), sending check or cash (if negotiable by USA banks), or international money order.

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