

# Washington's Vocal Arts Society Presents Bertil Bengtsson in "An Evening with Jussi Björling"

By Dan Shea with Bea Bobotek,  
Maija Budow, Beau Kaplan, and  
Ward Murray

The Vocal Arts Society of Washington DC regularly presents a superb concert series of some of the best singers in the world, including promising young names as well as established stars. For instance, this season their concerts feature René Fleming, Susan Graham, Mattias Goerne, Ewa Podlès as well as new Russian lyric tenor Daniil Shtoda, a stocky lad of 25 who gets reviews that sound something like Jussi's back in the 1930s.

Last April 29 the VAS tried something different, in presenting Bertil Bengtsson as host for "An evening with Jussi Björling" at the beautiful auditorium of La Maison Française, the French Embassy in Washington. A nearly full house heard Bertil discuss Jussi's career and some rare photographs and favorite recordings in top-quality transcriptions provided by the engineer behind these programs, Hans Thunström of Västerås. The program included videotape of Jussi in a scene from *Rigoletto* with Hilde Gueden from a 1957 "Ed Sullivan Show," as well as songs designed to display the lyric beauty of Jussi's singing, such as the 1952 recording of "A spirit flower" with its elegiac melody and thrilling finale. Bertil included the song "Så tag mit hjerte" ("So take my heart")



Bertil with Bea and Beau, after his lecture at La Maison Française.

and noted that his mother had just died, after a long illness, while he was flying to Washington. He dedicated Jussi's deeply moving performance of Alfvén's song to his mother.

Thanks to the support of Beau Kaplan, Richard Soderquist and Cathy Nodgaard, Bea Bobotek, Ward Murray, and others, VAS President Gerald Perman listed JBS-USA as a co-sponsor of the concert.

After the program, the enthusiastic audience was treated to an elegant reception sponsored by the Embassy of Sweden. In fact for many of us, the socializing was a continuation of the previous day's delightful Scandinavian smörgåsbord organized by Maija Budow at her Georgetown home for JBS members and other friends. The accompanying photographs will give a sense of that classic Scandinavian spring celebration.

For more information on the Vocal Arts Society, go to [www.vocalartssociety.org](http://www.vocalartssociety.org) or write to the VAS at 1818 24th Street NW, Washington DC 20008.

**LECTURES** ★

**VOCAL ARTS SOCIETY**  
in collaboration with  
the Embassy of Sweden and  
the Jussi Björling Society-USA  
presents

**AN EVENING  
WITH JUSSI  
BJÖRLING**

The career of the legendary tenor is reviewed in an audio-enhanced auditorium with recordings, slides and videos by Bertil Bengtsson, founder of the Jussi Björling Society of Sweden. Reception buffet provided by the Swedish Embassy follows.

Tues., April 29 at 7:30 pm  
La Maison Française (French Embassy)  
4101 Reservoir Rd., NW, Washington

Tickets: \$25 each

Send check to:  
**Vocal Arts Society**  
1818 24th St., NW  
Washington, DC 20008

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