



President's Notes

Dear Jussiphiles,

Once again the holidays are upon us, and the Society has outstanding book and CD offerings you may choose as gifts.

Harald Henrysson has delivered his 3rd edition of *A Jussi Björling Phonography*. Available in very limited quantities (21 left as I write this), so be sure to take advantage of this quickly disappearing opportunity.

Those of you who attended the St. Peter Conference in the 2011 centennial year had the opportunity to meet Jacob Forsell, whose beautiful book of Jussi Björling photos entitled *Jussi* was released. In the meantime, because of the generosity and efforts of Harald Henrysson and Sue Flaster, the Swedish captions for all of the photographs in *Jussi* have been translated. Simply by going to our website jussibjorlingsociety.org, you may download this PDF to greatly enhance your reading experience. Only 16 copies of *Jussi* are still available.

Be sure to check out the enclosed order form for instructions on how-to-obtain-your-copies!

Additionally, beginning with this issue of the Newsletter, your mail label will indicate your last membership year paid. We encourage everyone to pay for 2015 now, but we will continue to include a membership form with each publication.

In closing, I express my endless appreciation to the members of the Board of Directors for their contributions to our publications and to their efforts in sustaining the Society. I extend appreciation to each of you, too, for your contributions, both financial and otherwise. Your submissions for possible publication are always welcome. We congratulate

Lee Alperin for his article, "What Caruso Would Have Thought," which has received additional interest from the Jussi Björling Sällskapet.

As we approach the end of 2014, we remind you that additional contributions are always welcome, and are fully tax deductible as allowed by law.

Wishing you all the very best for a Happy Holiday Season,

Walter B. Rudolph, *President*

A Jussi Björling Phonography
3rd print edition
All preserved soundings, with CD & DVD issues



Harald Henrysson



Remembering Licia Albanese

by Allan Buchalter

Licia Albanese did not merely sing the role of Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*—she lived the role through her performance. Even every non-musical sound, be it a breath, sigh, laugh/giggle, crying, etc. sounded not as if it was acted or planned, but as if it was happening in real life, at that moment. Although she was a lyric soprano with a relatively small voice, I remember, that she was able to make her voice soar. The best example that I can think of is when I first saw her *Butterfly* at the "old" Met (more about that later). In the second act, *Butterfly* sees Pinkerton's returning ship, and the passage culminates in her telling Suzuki *ei torna e m'ama*. This passage, slowed down/stretched (*allargando*) is overpowering as the *mà* of *m'ama* is held for the entire measure (plus a *fermata*) on a high A. In this phrase, despite a "small" voice, Albanese soared over the full orchestra—and I mean full—including four French horns, three trumpets, and for part of the measure, the third trombone all playing forte. During this she walked closer to the front of the stage and on the end of the phrase (the second *ma* of *m'ama*), she sank to her knees, bringing down not just her body, but also the house with thunderous applause.

Indirectly, if not for Licia Albanese, I would not be on the Board of Directors of, nor the Membership Chairman for, the Jussi Björling Society-USA; in fact, I would probably never have even known the name Jussi Björling.

Before discussing Licia's roles, etc., I need to give a condensed autobiography as it relates to opera in general and Albanese in particular. Upon graduation from junior high school, I only knew, and liked pop and rock 'n' roll music. However, being interested in audio equipment advances, when I got a graduation present of a "hi-fi" multi-speaker record player, I wanted to hear it at its best. Thus, I bought an LP with a full orchestra—the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto (Heifetz/Reiner) and later Brahms First Symphony (Munch with the BSO). Upon repeated playing, I began to really like the music. But to hear the full potential of my "hi-fi," I decided that I needed a full orchestra, but with voices as well. The *Madama Butterfly* highlights LP with Albanese and Peerce was my purchase, because, as in the case of the other two purchases, not knowing the performers or the music, I just opted for a nice looking LP jacket/cover!! Well, that *Butterfly* recording changed me and made me a lifelong opera buff since age 14. Every day, probably for a few months, I listened to this Albanese recording. This recording gripped me; Licia's portrayal seemed so real to me that each time I felt both exhilarated and emotionally drained. One of the next recordings that I purchased was the *I pagliacci* studio recording with Björling, de los Angeles and Warren. That is how I discovered Jussi, later to become my favorite tenor. It was Licia's *Butterfly*, how-