

New Course on Jussi Björling at Juilliard

We were delighted to hear of the following course that was offered recently at the Juilliard School, by Prof. John Muller. The enrollment for this course was robust (25+) and thus we can expect that it may be repeated there, as well as serving as a model for similar courses and programs at other schools. Here is the program as it appeared in the Juilliard School's catalogue:

Title: Jussi Bjoerling

Instructor: John Muller

Course Description: More than 40 years after his death, the Swedish tenor Jussi Bjoerling remains one of the most beloved singers of all time. His ringing high notes, elegant phrasing, and extraordinary breath control continue to thrill listeners today. Perhaps the most striking quality of his voice is its innate timbre. As one critic put it, his singing

had a quality that "mixed innocence with a touch of heartbreak."

This series of lectures will focus on Bjoerling's interpretation of opera and song. Through recordings, we will trace the development of his voice, from his childhood to weeks before his untimely death at 49.

Many hard-to-find recordings of live performances will be included.

Not subject to registration fee, library fee, or discounts.

Duration: 3 weeks

Date: October 7, 14, 21

On: Tuesdays

Time: 6-7:30 p.m.

Cost: \$95

The classes were held at Juilliard School at Lincoln Center (Broadway and 65th). They carry no college credit. For detailed information on registration for similar courses offered during the year, go to <www.juilliard.edu/evening> from which you also

can download registration forms. You also can call 212-799-5000, ext. 273 to get information concerning registration procedures, catalogues, etc.

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N.B. How shall we regard this new indication of the special regard accorded Jussi Björling among great singers? We asked this of Andrew Farkas, and got this response:

Jussi would surely be astonished if he knew he has been turned into a music course at Juilliard! What an extraordinary honor! I often wonder whether the great singers, the really great ones with undisputed supremacy, do have even a glimmer of understanding that their performances represent important milestones in the history of opera and, concurrently, are they cognizant of their own importance in the history of singing? Probably not. Yes, they do know they have risen to the top and they try to cling to their position, but did a Caruso, Ruffo, Flagstad, Melchior, Gigli, Ponselle, Sutherland, et al. truly understand their paragonal position? Chaliapin surely did, because he knew how far beneath him his contemporaries were. But what about the rest?

Just musing - Andrew

Editor's Note: John Muller tells us that he was introduced to Jussi's singing 33 years ago by longtime JBS member Bill Clayton, when Bill was his 12th grade English teacher! In addition to his work as Chairman of the Music History Department at Juilliard, Prof. Muller is a popular lecturer for The Metropolitan Opera Guild, New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, and other NY area organizations. He's also a member of JBS-USA.

Des Lockett, Stefan Olmårs, Allene Cash, Dan Shea, Valeric Wolf, Harald Henrysson, Sue Flaster near Penn Station, October 2002

