

Editorial Aria

Welcome to the Fall 2001 issue of our *JBS Journal*, our latest experiment in producing a permanent record for you of the activities of the Jussi Björling Societies. We'll tell you about our **Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College** (June 28-July 1), four days of stimulating comradery organized around some extraordinary presentations by our guest speakers.

For some, the fun continued with an excursion to **Santa Fe** sponsored by JBS-USA and we'll report on the musical and other connections made during our six days there based at the Hotel St Francis.

Our June conference also prompted a highly successful appearance by **Bertil Bengtsson** at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC. Thanks to an initiative by member **Bea Bobotek**, the **Smithsonian Institution** invited Bertil to lecture on June 26, on "Jussi Bjoerling: A Swedish Tenor's American Odyssey." The Smithsonian's promotional material made clear that the lecture was co-sponsored by the **Embassy of Sweden** and the **Jussi Bjoerling Society-USA** (ahem). In this issue, we present some photographs by **Don Pruitt** and a short article about this event, held in the Hirshhorn's lovely Ring Auditorium.

We were fortunate to have some expert technicians at the conference, who recorded the main events on video- and audiotape. Soon you'll be able to get copies of two eight-hour videotape souvenirs of the conference events, produced for us by member **Michael Mayer**. Mike did most of the photography, with some key help from Bill Clayton. We expect to be able to announce details on how to order these tapes in our

forthcoming *Winter Newsletter*.

Although the Gustavus conference is not yet history, we are already planning the next one! You can expect to be getting some preliminary information on our ideas for a **New York City conference**, tentatively scheduled for October 24-26, 2002. Jussi Björling based his American career in New York, starting with three extraordinary **Carnegie Hall concerts** broadcast nation-wide in November and December, 1937.

New York City is still indisputably America's classical music center, irrespective of the events of September 11. For JBS, the archives of institutions like the Metropolitan Opera, Carnegie Hall, the NY Public Library and the Museum of Television and Radio are essential treasures. For us as music lovers, there will be much of current interest happening as well. More than ever, we want to be there in 2002.

In this issue, we feature articles by **Don Goldberg** and **Hal Sokolsky** on **Jussi in Carnegie Hall**, with special emphasis on the concerts of 1955 and 1958, and the recordings that resulted from those events.

Our mission statements define the Jussi Björling Society-USA as an educational organization, and we intend to contribute to the understanding and appreciation of classical vocal music by **future audiences**. In addition to our support of the excellent music program at Gustavus through monetary contributions to the Jussi Björling Scholarships there, some of our members have engaged in useful discussion about future outreach programs. In this issue we present a description of one fine such program (in "**Jussi-appreciation**") organized by the Jussi Björling Museum in Borlänge for elementary-school children. Thanks to the ingenuity and broad experience of **Deborah Clemons**,

who assisted **Harald Henrysson** in designing the program, many of the ideas presented will transplant to other places. You can expect us to return to these questions again and again!

Harald Henrysson told Russian scholar **Don Pruitt** about an extraordinary chapter on Jussi in the Soviet reference encyclopedia "Masters of the Vocal Art of the Twentieth Century" [title translated from the Russian]. This brilliant analysis, by V.V. Timokhin, gives a **fresh—Russian—perspective** on Jussi with useful insights on his interpretation of the song literature, as well as on his portrayals of Lensky and Vladimir in *Eugene Onegin* and *Prince Igor*. Many thanks to Don and wife Alla for their efforts on this project.

Don also contributes a short article on an unusual aspect of Jussi: an error he committed in a recorded broadcast of Gounod's "Sanctus" from 1938. By the time Don has explained the circumstances, you will see that Jussi would have been justified to cancel the whole broadcast!

We're delighted to present an article by **Bertil Bengtsson**, on Jussi's "slave year," 1934-1935, for the Stockholm Royal Opera. Bertil wrote the article originally for the Swedish JB Sällskapet (Society), and now we have a fine translation provided by **Gail Campaign**.

And as usual, we have translations by Gail Campaign of two further chapters from the Jussi Björling Memory-book, presenting views of people who worked closely with Jussi and knew him well: in this case, **Kurt Herbert Adler** and long-time accompanist **Harry Ebert**.

Also in this issue we present two favorite columns, Hal Sokolsky with some notes on Jussi's "Recorded Legacy" and Carla Ramsey with "Jussi in the News." We hope you'll enjoy our continuing efforts to improve this *Journal*!

—Dan Shea



Bertil Bengtsson at Gustavus, June 29



The Gustavus Conference

June 28 – July 1, 2001

By Bill Clayton, Mickey Dove and Dan Shea

We came, we met, we listened—to some great singing, and some first-class commentary on the singing, at our JBS Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College. And we talked—many opinions were aired. For the "consumers' report" we refer you to Bill's survey of the members who attended, in the next article. Here we give an overview of the conference events as a whole, from start to finish.

Most people arrived on Wednesday, June 27, coming from 16 states and the U.K. (Des Lockett, Liz and Ray Harsant, Don Thomson), Chile (Maria-Luisa and Enrique Gilardoni), Sweden (Elaine Karlsson, Bertil Bengtsson), Israel (Mati Zeiti), Italy (Stephen Hastings)

and Brazil (Dorian Bruzzi). The basic group staying on campus numbered just over 50, with area visitors augmenting the audience for the main sessions. By evening our group had taken over the common room at our campus hotel, the Carlson International Center, and informal listening/ discussion sessions were in full swing.

Thursday morning brought the group to nearby Jussi Björling Recital Hall, a beautiful hall seating 450 attached to the music department's facilities. The main events of the day were Bertil Bengtsson's 90-minute discussion of "Great Royal Swedish Tenors," which featured several rare recordings of Jussi's predecessors Arvid Ödmann, David Stockman and Martin Öhmann in roles such as Turiddu, Roméo and Des Grieux, and presentations by Bill Clayton, Sue Flaster, Karl Hekler and Enrique Gilardoni on "other" singers they love, in this case Richard Crooks, Elly Ameling, Lauritz Melchior and Miguel Fleta, respectively. Then came a social highpoint, an evening gathering at the home of Anders and Janet Björling for drinks and light buffet—also present were family members and area friends. As pictures will attest (see following article), it was a lovely party—with delightful people everywhere, in the garden, on the porch, in the house.

Friday's sessions began with Stephen Hastings' discussion of "Jussi Björling as Verdi Tenor," a comprehensive analysis of Jussi's recordings of live and studio performances. Stephen stressed the