

JBS Goes to Santa Fe – July 2001

By Dan Shea

When you've come a long way to attend a JBS conference, what else do you do after the conference? For some of our members the answer turned out to be: Join the JBS-organized post-conference excursion to Santa Fe for more opera. Fifteen of us enjoyed staying together at the Hotel St Francis, located close to the central city Plaza, and attended two performances: Verdi's *Falstaff* on July 4 and *Lucia di Lammermoor* on July 6. Most of us arrived July 3 and next morning Independence Day festivities began at the Plaza, when the local firemen offered their traditional pancake breakfast (a bargain at \$5 and a fundraiser for charity as well), followed by live music and local hoopla all day long. By late afternoon we gathered at the hotel patio and debarked for the Opera, a few miles outside town in the Tesuque hills, for the special "preview buffet"

picnic next to the opera house, complete with "pre-performance" lecture, a special treat on this typically lovely New Mexico summer evening.

The opera house itself is a beauty, open on the sides and with excellent acoustics. The *Falstaff* turned out to be a hit of the summer season, successfully directed by Jonathan Miller and starring Lancashire's "warm, genial" **Andrew Shore** as the comic knight. Also especially successful were the young American conductor **Alan Gilbert**, currently Music Director of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, and the Fenton: young tenor **Greg Turay** from Wisconsin, last year's winner of the Richard Tucker Award. A delegation from JBS went backstage to greet Turay after his performance, and presented him with a copy of this *Journal*. He told us of his upcoming plans at Lyric Opera (*Street Scene*) and the Met (Mozart and Berlioz), and said

Frank Lopardo declares his enthusiasm for Jussi to Val Wolff, Dan Shea, Maria-Lusia and Enrique Gilardone



Valerie and Eldon Wolf anticipate Santa Fe Opera's *Falstaff*, July 4.

of Jussi: "He's number one, in my book." Last year Greg stole the show at Lyric's *A View from the Bridge* (Bolcom) with his aria in praise of "The New York Lights."

The *Lucia* was less successful, in the opinion of most of our group, with soprano Alexandra von der Weth's soprano offering "little of the bel canto qualities the role requires" according to *Opera Now* (Nov/Dec). On the other hand, "Tenor Frank Lopardo was the star of the show, singing with a marvelous Italianate voice that thrilled and brought ravishing piano tone to the Tomb Scene." After the show our entire group headed backstage to meet the star, and we enjoyed presenting him with a copy of this *Journal*, in appreciation for his fine career, which many of us have been enjoying, whether in London, San Francisco, Chicago, Buenos Aires or New York. Mr. Lopardo offered that Jussi's was "the greatest voice that ever was," and



Liz Harsant, Inger Boudouris and Young So prepare to enjoy a southwestern meal.



Liz, Bertil and Elaine enjoy dining al fresco on Santa Fe's central plaza.

Eldon Wolf spontaneously offered his JBS patch, enthusiastically accepted by our Edgardo. Eldon's photograph records the moment for you. On September 15 Eldon and Valerie heard Frank's Duke in *Rigoletto* at San Francisco Opera, and then went backstage to present him with a copy of this photo. He greeted them warmly and vowed that he would save the photo for his memoirs. They had a fine conversation and even left the opera house together. According to Eldon, the whole cast was in fine form, especially Frank who "was a great Duke."

Otherwise there was much to do in the area: We got some excellent help from the hotel's head concierge, Swedish-born Inger Boudouris, who is herself a Jussi-fan and remembered an earlier visit by Anders and Janet Björling. With Inger's help, our folks organized their own trips to Taos pueblo, Bandelier National Park and other local attractions. The Santa Fe Wine Festival was in full swing and some of us enjoyed that. (Here's a factoid for you: New Mexico is America's oldest wine-producing state.) Enrique and Maria-Luisa Gilardoni visited wine-distributor

friends in the area, bringing along Bertil Bengtsson and Elaine Karlsson. Liz Harsant took an art lesson and Mati Zeiti checked out the area golf courses. Member Young So's daughter Sue flew in from San Francisco and fit right into our tight little band. It was a fine time, and even as we departed the area we made some interesting connections—I'm thinking especially of Jack and Peg Bunce, who overheard a conversation involving the name of Jussi Björling while at Santa Fe's little airport. When they identified themselves as being with JBS, Alan Gilbert introduced himself as the conductor for *Falstaff* (and presently employed in Stockholm), and a big fan of Jussi!

Excuse us for bragging, but—on the basis of JBS' first two group tours (this one and two weeks in Sweden, midsummer 2000)—it seems clear that one more excellent reason for supporting JBS is the opportunity we help provide, to travel together with congenial and knowledgeable friends having much in common. Our first two trips have also been remarkable for the flexibility and freedom they provide: You

travel on your own choice of airline, on your own schedule; further, we've managed to find hotels with very reasonable rates which we pass along to you. While our future trips will tend to focus on travel to Scandinavia with major stops in Borlänge, we remain open to good ideas of all sorts. Let us know your suggestions!

Mati Zeiti, Young So, and Sue So anticipate a pre-Falstaff buffet picnic.

