

Jussi Bjoerling Is at Top of His Form In Carnegie Hall Song and Aria Recital

The spectacle of a great artist performing at the very top of his form was afforded by Jussi Bjoerling at his Carnegie Hall recital last night.

The Swedish tenor opened his program with a stupendous performance of the "Ingemisco" from the Verdi Requiem that left hearers in the hollow of his hand for the remainder of the program.

Mr. Bjoerling's voice seemed to have gained in power and intensity since last heard. The adjective "magnificent" should be used sparingly, but in this case it seemed justified.

His singing also, if one listener's recollection is correct, has added new solidity in the lower register. In Schubert's "Die Allmacht," the phrase beginning "Du hoerst sie im brausenden Sturm" had an almost baritone solidity.

The top tones, as usual, had

that splendid compact, focused quality the Italians call "raccolto." And throughout his range Mr. Bjoerling demonstrated the ability to vary his tone-color that is mastered by only the great vocalists.

One could not help reflecting that it will be something to tell our grandchildren, that we heard Bjoerling at the height of his powers.

Mr. Bjoerling's program was of a type usual with him, including Schubert songs, the "Serenade" being added as an encore; Beethoven's "Adelaide," Lenky's Aria from "Eugen Onegin," which was sung in Swedish; Nessun dorma, from "Turandot," Swedish songs and two works of Rachmaninoff. Mr. Bjoerling did handsomely by them all. Frederick Schauwecker was the accompanist.

J. B.

Music: Bjoerling Is Back

Tenor Gives Recital at Carnegie Hall

By JOHN BRIGGS

JUSSI Bjoerling, tenor, returned after an absence of a year and a half to sing a recital in Carnegie Hall Saturday evening. Mr. Bjoerling had been absent from this country since March 13, 1954. Because of recurrent attacks of bronchitis, he canceled his engagements for the remainder of the season and returned to his native Sweden.

A capacity audience gathered in Carnegie Hall to see how the tenor's voice had fared during his absence from this city. They were gratified to find it had lost none of its usual splendor, and that Mr. Bjoerling's control of his vocal resources was, if anything, rather more precise than before.

A principal delight of Mr. Bjoerling's voice is the evenness and consistency with which it is produced throughout its considerable range. His singing has the quality the Italians call "raccolto," meaning, approximately, compact and well focused. For special dramatic emphasis, Mr. Bjoerling may occasionally sing a tone that is "open" almost to the verge of flatness; but this is done as a calculated risk, not because the singer knows no better.

Mr. Bjoerling met with ease the severe demands of "Il Mio Tesoro." Its long sustained phrases and difficult roulades were done without apparent effort, as were the wide skips in passages like "nunzio vogli'io tornar." It was a polished performance of one of the most taxing arias in the repertory.

In songs of Beethoven, Schubert and Strauss, Mr. Bjoer-



Jussi Bjoerling

ling sang with no less expressiveness and beauty of tone. Songs of Grieg and Sibelius were among the evening's highlights.

The recital had minor flaws. There is an ascending phrase in "Black Roses" by Sibelius in which Mr. Bjoerling habitually goes sharp. He did so again Saturday evening.

And, in actual performance, a conductor would be most unhappy with the fermate that Mr. Bjoerling introduced into the "Flower Song" from "Carmen."

These, however, were trifling shortcomings with an evening of splendid music making.

Mr. Bjoerling was welcomed back to the New York musical scene with cheers that reached almost football stadium proportions. He sang encores after each group on his program.

perform at Carnegie Hall. Cantor Don Goldberg takes us on a tour of Jussi's performances and recorded legacy at Carnegie Hall, especially the performances of September 24, 1955 and March 2, 1958. Cantor Don helps us understand the confusion of the reissues on CD of these performances, the contents of which are covered in the sidebar.

[Editor's note] The three commercial RCA Victor recordings mentioned here should be considered by Jussi fans for their collection. These CD's will not be in print forever. While all three are in stock at towerrecords.com, "Jussi Bjoerling At Carnegie Hall" is in limited quantities and "Out of Print."

Jussi at Carnegie Hall

By Harold Sokolsky

Every classical music lover knows about Carnegie Hall, the historic concert hall at Seventh Avenue and 57th Street in New York City. Designed in a Neo-Italian Renaissance style by William B. Tuthill, the building opened in May 1891 and was eventually named for the industrialist Andrew Carnegie, its builder and original owner. Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky served as guest conductor during the hall's opening week, and since then virtually every important American and visiting musician has performed there. The hall was the longtime home of the New York Philharmonic until that orchestra moved to Lincoln Center in the 1960s.

In 1959 Carnegie Hall came close to being demolished, because of the New York Philharmonic's planned move to Lincoln Center. Violinist Isaac Stern and the music patrons Jacob and Alice Kaplan mounted a successful campaign to save the concert hall, and in 1960 New York City bought the building, for the new nonprofit Carnegie Hall Corporation. Carnegie Hall continued to host concerts and other musical events, and in 1986 it underwent a major restoration, to mixed reviews.

Jussi Bjoerling was one of the thousands of artists who loved to per-

RCA Victor Vocal Series
 CD 60520-2-RG
 "Jussi Bjoerling At Carnegie Hall
 with Frederick Schauwecker, piano
 Recorded live March 2, 1958

1. *Verdi: Requiem: Ingemisco*
Schubert:
2. *An die Leier*
3. *Die Forelle**
4. *Frühlingsglaube*
5. *An Sylvia: Was ist Sylvia**
6. *Die Allmacht*
7. *Ständchen**
(Schwanengesang No. 4)
8. *Beethoven: Adelaide*
9. *Brahms: Ständchen, Op. 106*
10. *Tchaikovsky: Eugene Onegin:*
Lensky's Aria
11. *Alvén: Skogen sover*
12. *Sjögren: I drömmen*
13. *Peterson-Berger:*
Jungfrun under lind
- Rachmaninoff:*
14. *Lilacs*
15. *In the Silence of Night*
16. *Grieg: Ein Traum**
17. *Puccini: Turandot:*
*Nessun dorma**
18. *Tosti: Ideale*
19. *Verdi: Rigoletto:*
La donna è mobile
20. *Puccini: Tosca:*
E lucevan le stelle
21. *Strauss: Zueignung*

* Also appears on RCA Victor
 CD 74321 63468 2—Artists of the
 Century "Jussi Björling—The Ultimate
 Collection"

RCA Victor CD 09026-68429-2
 "Jussi Bjoerling—O Paradiso—Great
 Opera Arias"
*This recording includes five selections
 from the Carnegie Hall concert on
 September 24, 1955:*

4. *Carmen* La fleur que tu
m'avais jetée
9. *Don Giovanni* Il mio tesoro
11. *Tosca* E lucevan le stelle
15. *Manon* (Le rêve)
19. *Fedora* Amor ti vieta

More on Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Bertil Bengtsson's Smithsonian Lecture

By Dan Shea

We were pleased to learn that Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg had attended Bertil's lecture in Washington, described elsewhere in this Journal, but not really surprised: Justice Ginsburg is a well known supporter of the arts and especially an opera fan. In fact, she told about her enthusiasm for opera during an interview on a Met intermission feature last season, as you may recall. But in checking some biographical notes on her (www.supremecourthistory.org/justice/ginsburg.htm and also via google.com) we were surprised to learn of her additional connections to Sweden and to the classical music recording industry!

In fact, after graduating from Harvard Law School Justice Ginsburg participated in a comparative law project sponsored by Columbia Law

School that culminated in a book on judicial procedure in Sweden, coauthored with Anders Bruzelius (1965). Her official autobiography states that "After almost daily tutoring in Swedish for several months, she traveled to Sweden to observe Swedish courts in operation." Further, during the years 1990-1993 she "spent some of her spare time assisting in the translation of the Swedish Code of Judicial Procedure into English." She concludes by mentioning that "She is an opera devotee who has appeared in full period costume—complete with wig and fan—as an extra in a Washington Opera production." She has been married since 1954 to Martin D. Ginsburg; they have a daughter, Jane, who teaches at Columbia Law School, and a son, James, who produces classical recordings.

The Sibelius Memorial Concert

Sibelius had often expressed his enthusiasm for Jussi's interpretations of his songs, on one occasion presenting him with an inscribed photograph "To the genius, the great singer, Jussi Björling" (Jussi, p. 215). So it was natural that Jussi was invited to participate in the Sibelius memorial concert at Carnegie Hall on 8 December, 1957, and he sang these five great songs accompanied by the New York Philharmonic, Martti Similä conducting:

Säv, säv, susa; Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte; Var det en dröm; Svarta rosor; Demanten på marssnön.

Only recently, about 1990, was a recording of this concert discovered in the archives of Finnish Radio. Jussi's phenomenal performances of these songs, on that emotional occasion, are available thanks to Bluebell, on ABCD 050.