



Terry Williams

## Introducing Terry Williams

When I was 10, “The Glenn Miller Story” came to a movie theater near me in our small town of Galesburg, Illinois. My parents took me to see it. Well, before the end, I had determined that I, too, wanted to play the trombone. My parents actually bought one for me and, somehow, I learned to play it, and play it I did for the next ten years, including a couple of years as a trombone major at the Conservatory in Kansas City. At this point you may be asking what on earth my trombone playing has to do with Jussi Björling. Let me please tell you.

Toward the end of my high school junior year, I decided I wanted to sing in the concert choir (not that I’d ever really sung before you understand). Some of my friends encouraged me to try out. I did. I made it. The choir director retired over the summer. When school resumed the following fall we had a new choir director who happened to be an aspiring singer. He, and many of the best singers in Kansas City at the time, studied privately with Ernest J. Remley (EJ as he was always called) who had, himself, studied with Percy Rector Stephens.

Very early in the school year the new director began introducing us to recordings of singers he considered the best in their voice types. The tenor example was none other than Jussi Björling. Not only did the director introduce us to a number of great singers, he selected a small handful of us he considered as having some promise as singers and arranged for us to be heard by his teacher. EJ, probably even more so than our director, viewed JB as paragon of correct singing. I received a copy of the ‘55 Carnegie Hall LP that Christmas, wore it out, and bought a replacement a few years later. EJ had heard Jussi live and always said he sounded on the Carnegie Hall recording just the way he sounded in person. Thus, JB became an important part of me at an early age.

Life is full of twists and turns. I abandoned the trombone after a couple of years at the Conservatory and focused exclusively on singing. I continued to study with EJ and several other teachers, including Dorothy Coulter (a lovely person), sang in churches and a few shows but never pursued a career. I resumed college, earned a degree in accounting, and then a law degree. During and following law school I worked for Arthur Young & Co. in the tax department in Kansas City and Tulsa and became a CPA; then spent six years with a pension firm in KC; and, since April of 1989, have conducted a solo estates and trusts law practice ably assisted by my wife, Stephanie, in Kansas City. I still study voice and sing around town.

In May of 2001, I found the JBS-USA web site quite by accident. It announced a conference in St. Peter, MN the following June. I signed up, attended, and enjoyed one of the most memorable experiences of my life. The conference in New York the following year proved to be even more enjoyable. The demands of my law practice prevented me from attending further conferences until Salt Lake City this past June. It was absolutely terrific in every respect.

While I admire a great many singers, I have never lost my enthusiasm for Jussi Björling. As one who has studied singing and singers most of my life, he is in my view, the one singer who consistently, and over a very long span of years, sang more correctly than any other.

I am most grateful to have been a member of the JBS-USA for more than 14 years, and to have been able to play a very small part in all it does to honor and perpetuate the memory of this singularly remarkable artist. Being elected to its Board of Directors this past summer was an unexpected honor. Thank you. ❖

## “Gustav” Björling in the Movies!

*(Thanks to the watchful eye of Harald Henrysson)*

On December 30th, 1946, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle published the following review about the Swedish movie, *Hans Majestäts Rival* (aka *Kungens Rival*, *Queen for a Night*, and *His Majesty’s Rival*).

Obviously Mr. Herbert Cohn, the author, was ill-informed on the Björling family. He mistakes Gustav Bjorling (sic) for Jussi Björling, who is actually not Jussi at all, but his brother Gösta!

The full transcript of the article follows.

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### Screen by Herbert Cohn

*Brooklyn Daily Eagle, December 30, 1946*  
‘Queen for a Night,’ a Swedish Operetta in the Traditional Manner, at the 5th Ave.

Sweden’s first screen operetta, “Queen for a Night,” couldn’t have come to pass if there hadn’t been a long line of non-Swedish operettas preceding it. It has borrowed a bit from one here and bit from one there so that, when it had its American premiere Saturday at the 5th Avenue Playhouse, “Queen for a Night” looked and sounded like a great many other costume-romances-with-music you have seen for many years on the screen. It has tunes that are momentarily pleasant, a fairytale of a story set against ornate backdrops and players who are pleasant and graceful. No more.

Gustav Bjorling, one of the Metropolitan Opera Association’s singers, is supposedly one of the film’s stars. If you keep on the *qui vive* you might recognize him as the tubby gentleman who, during the first few minutes of the proceedings, is dismissed by his leading lady (whose honest-to-goodness name is Gurli Lemon Bernhard) as a broken-down tenor. After that he presumably takes off in a huff for the Met, for “Queen for a Night” sees no more of him.

The singers who are left to carry this