

- Nov. 11 or 12
travels [train?]
New York-Detroit;
rehearses [?]
- Nov. 13
rehearses [?] and performs.

It certainly seems, therefore, that there was enormous extraneous pressure on Jussi at this time, aside from that surrounding his anticipation of and preparation for his Met debut. Probably having to use an unfamiliar, poorly edited text only added to the pressure. Of course that is all conjecture; but I believe it is not unjustified. When Jussi came to sing the same composition for the Voice of Firestone on April 15, 1946 (HHP 4604c), the Latin text was used, and this passage passed off flawlessly.

Note: I thank Cantor Goldberg for permission to quote his letter for this article, and also for sending me a tape copy of the Voice of Firestone program, HHP 4604.

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Let me add a brief comment on another new CD involving Jussi: The Naxos Historical Opera CD set of *La Traviata*, with Eleanor Steber and Giuseppe Di Stefano (8.110115/16), contains filler material, a portion of which involves two duet performances of Steber and Jussi which were broadcast on the Voice of Firestone program of March 25, 1946: "Will You Remember," from Romberg's *Maytime* and the "Miserere" from *Il Trovatore* (HHP 4602b and d). My player times the latter at 4:36, while the same cut on VAIA 1189 times out at 4:59. In checking to learn the reason for the discrepancy, I found that Naxos has made a clumsy cut in the horn (replacing the male chorus) bridge between the strophes.

The J.B. Museum's "Jussi-Appreciation" Project for Elementary-School Students

By Deborah Clemons

Who says that children can't love opera and the classically trained singing voice? The first step is to let them hear it. We at the Jussi Björling museum in Sweden have tried just that. We recently completed a pilot project with the Östermalm Elementary School in Borlänge that introduced students to Jussi. Our project used a group of 80 students from ages 6 to 9. We designed the project to give students a broader experience than they would normally get during a standard one-hour museum visit. This project, with some modifications, could be used in any school and with any age group.

Projects that work best are partnership projects. In the case of our project in Borlänge, I first made contact with the school principal and later with the teachers of the classes that would be involved. Then I worked out a strategy for the program with the other participants: Harald Henrysson, Museum Director; Katarina Tegen-Höckerlind, Cultural Assistant for Borlänge and former middle-school art teacher; the teachers at the school, and the music teacher at the neighboring high school. We formulated plans for the music and art components, the classroom activities, and the museum visit. I stressed that it was important that students be divided into small groups even though it meant that each activity had to be repeated five times by the presenters to reach the 80 students.

We found that 12-16 students was an optimal size.

The first activity was a visit to the music teacher who talked about and played examples of the different types of voices: soprano, alto, bass, tenor, etc. They discussed the dynamics of the human voice and how sound is made, transmitted, and heard. They listened to Jussi as a child and as an adult.

Next, Katarina and I visited the classroom and told the story of the young Jussi augmented by a short video. We discussed the concept of an "opera". We then directed the students in the painting of sets and backdrops for an opera. Miniature stages had been prepared in advance from small cardboard boxes. The backdrops would later hang from dowels set in notches in the top of the box. The students worked in pairs and listened to Jussi while they worked. We placed photos of Jussi in various character roles on the walls as inspiration.

Teachers directed a later classroom work-session, in which students embellished the outside of the box. They painted the box, used fabric scraps for stage curtains, and decorated the arched stage opening. Students also made figures, using cardboard and fabric scraps, that were later attached to dowels so that they could be manipulated from the top of the box like puppets.

Then came the actual visit to the museum which included a short



Swedish students visit Jussi's museum in Borlänge.

video, narrated by Harald Henrysson. Then Harald, the teachers, and I assisted in an activity called "Detective in the Museum" in which the students completed an activity sheet in the museum. Harald supervised the final portion of the visit as students listened to Jussi on the headsets in the listening room and wrote down their impressions. They were mesmerized by Jussi's voice. Final comments as the students were finishing the activity sheet were: "Jussi is cool" and "Oh, how beautiful that sounded!" It was apparent that the visit had been a success.

Back at school, the students created a journal in which events of the project were recorded, and walked to the "Jussi Square" in town to sketch the statue of Jussi that stands in the middle of the square. Art work, photos, newspaper clippings, stages and figures were assembled for an end-of-the-year exhibition, mounted for parents to see.

For future promotion of the project, we have assembled a "Jussi Suitcase", containing all the elements of the original pilot project. It

includes photos, video, CDs, written information about Jussi, and instructions for art activities. It can be borrowed by schools before or after a museum visit.

What do students like best?

Students enjoy "active" looking and listening. They like listening to music, seeing films, videos, photos, making a journal, writing poetry, expressing their feelings. They learn best when they are doing something with their hands – building, painting, drawing; or doing something with their bodies – singing, dancing, acting. Students like a strong role model/ teacher/ performer/ artist who is enthusiastic about his or her topic. The Swedish children specifically liked hearing about how a child from their own hometown, began singing with his father and brothers and later became world famous. It was something that made them proud.

But what do I do since I don't have the resource of the museum?

- Evaluate your own local resources. Instead of a museum visit, perhaps the students could attend a live performance or a performer could come to the school. Depending on the age of the child (and the talents of the teacher), an opera could be written and performed. A local musical organization, drama club, theatre group, writers group, could be used for the outside partnering organization. Students like to meet people from outside the school and it also inspires the teachers.

- Evaluate the resources of the school. For the first foray into the schools, find a teacher who is "on-fire" for the students—creative, imaginative. Ask the principal for recommendations. Other teachers will see the results and soon ask to participate also. A great resource is the music teacher and the art teacher. Don't leave them out of the planning. If you bring in an "outside" musician or artist, they will be as inspired as the students if they also have a part to play. Also, ask about financial resources for bus travel for the students, for paying for an outside resource person, for art supplies. If the project suddenly grows, granting organizations are always looking for innovative projects to fund. After our Borlänge project, Harald was the driving force behind a decision by the community to provide free bus travel for all Borlänge school groups to all Borlänge museums.

- Develop parameters for the program with the teachers. Teachers may be intimidated by a topic about which they have limited knowledge. Plan with them, and be imaginative. They want your vision and specialized knowledge. They will be more enthusiastic about a program to

which they have contributed, and will think of many supplementary activities. A program can be general or specific; about the performing arts, classical music, opera or Jussi.

- Plan a hands-on or physical activity. Use an artist, dramatist, set designer, dancer, costume designer, or a craftsman. Plan something for the body, the hands, and the voice.
- Keep it small. Small groups work best. Individual attention and time for questions and discussion is important.
- Call the newspapers. They love writing about "alternative learning activities."
- Be enthusiastic. This is the most important element, your enthusiasm will communicate itself to the students.

Deborah Clemons has been a museum educator at museums in Elmira, NY, Pittsburgh PA and London, and has been living in Sweden for the past three years where she is director of Ornässtugan, a historical museum in Borlänge, and an occasional assistant at the Jussi Björling Museet. At the Arnot Art Museum in Elmira, she directed an interdisciplinary school project for fourth grade students that began with about 100 students and within two years grew to 600 students; now in its sixth year, that project features year-round activities involving cultural, historical and ecological programs.

Deborah stressed the value of Harald Henrysson's cooperation for their Borlänge project, and mentioned that the students loved his enthusiasm and ability to respond in just the right way to their questions.

"Björling indeed had an unusually beautiful voice which contained distinctly Italian qualities. His timbre conquered with its remarkable clarity and warmth; his sound excelled in its rare plasticity, suavity and flexibility, and was at the same time saturated with succulent ardor. Throughout its entire range it was produced evenly and freely. His upper register was shining and resonant, the middle captivated with its sweet flexibility."

An Appraisal of the Vocal Art of Jussi Björling

(A chapter from *Mastera Vokal'nogo Iskusstva XX veka [Masters of the Vocal Art of the Twentieth Century]*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 72-85.)

By Vsevolod Vasilievich Timokhin

The countries of Scandinavia have given the world of vocal art many names which have achieved world renown. What music lover does not know about the "Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind, who was one of the greatest singers of the Nineteenth Century? Or about those other artists, Patti's rivals, Christine Nilsson and Sigrid Arnoldson? Or about the famous Finnish singer Alma Fohström, who performed for many years on the stage of the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow? In our century many Scandinavian singers have achieved international fame; but it is interesting to note that almost all of them were adherents of the German, principally Wagnerian, vocal school. We have but to remember the names of the Danes Peter Cornelius and Lauritz Melchior, the Swedish artists Birgit Nilsson, Karin Branzell, Set

Svanholm, Joel Berglund, Nanny Larsén-Todsén, and Kerstin Thorborg, the Norwegians Kirsten Flagstad and Ivar Andresen, the Finns Martti Talvela and Tom Krause.... Some of them studied with students of the German school who were working in Stockholm and Copenhagen; others themselves went to Germany or Austria to study. It must be remembered that many of the severe epic Wagnerian music dramas have something in common with the traditions and legends of the northern lands, and therefore the emotional atmosphere of these dramas could not but find a response in the soul of a person who was brought up amidst cliffs, lakes, and fiords.

In any event, although other vocal schools do indeed have their representatives in Scandinavia, only a very few of them succeeded in achieving