

Newsletter

of the Jussi Björling Societies of the USA & UK

No. 31—July 2017

JBS-USA Announces 20th Anniversary mini-conference and CD

by Sue Flaster

JBS-USA is delighted to announce that the celebratory year of our 20th anniversary will kick off with a mini-conference in Washington, D.C. November 17th and 18th along with the issue of a very special members-only CD. We will begin on Friday the 17th by attending a rehearsal of Washington Concert Opera's presentation of Bellini's *La straniera* at the Lissner Auditorium. Those of us who attended this company's *Semiramide* a couple of years ago, and the D.C. members who regularly attend their productions, can attest to the very high level of performance we can expect.

During the day on Saturday, the 18th, we will be at the gorgeous Swedish Embassy to listen to a wide variety of highly qualified speakers. As of this writing, our speakers include Washington Post classical music critic Anne Midgette, Harald Henrysson, conductor and critic Will Crutchfield, our own Stephen Fischman and Peter Russell (former Director of DC Concert Opera and of DC Vocal Arts, among other things). Stefan Olmårs will talk to us about plans to get together early in Fall of 2018 in Sweden.

If you haven't been to the Swedish Embassy, it is a really spectacular building, and worth a visit under any circumstances.

On Saturday evening, members will adjourn to Maija Bodow's fantastic Georgetown home where she will once again host us for a buffet dinner and drinks. Maija has offered us this tremendous generosity several times over the years, and it has been a wonderful occasion to talk over what we've seen and heard, and to spend time with (usually) distant friends.

In honor of this important anniversary, our Board has been working together with the Jussi Björling Society in Scandinavia to produce a very special CD of items which either have never been released at all, or have simply not been available for a significant period of time. For instance, many of us who were present in Stockholm for the 2004 Congress will recall Carl-Gunnar Åhlen's *Faust* excerpt, not released until now. The Societies have worked together to acquire this stunning piece of singing, and it will be on the upcoming CD (available to members only). We will also include large chunks of the Vienna *Aida* and *Pagliacci*, up to now in very limited CD release. A long hoped-for bonus will be two electrifying excerpts from the legendary (and nearly mythical) 1939 Toscanini *Requiem*. The final item is something Lars Björling found in his father's desk drawer (the desk which now sits on the second floor of the Museum in Borlänge). Our plan is to have the CD ready for you to pick up in Washington.

Please see—and use—the sign-up sheet included here to reserve your place at the Concert Opera and the Embassy, as well as to place your order for the Fall delivery of the CD. ■



Embassy of Sweden



Carl-Gunnar Åhlen plays *Faust* at the Golden Foyer

Dan Shea in his first 80 years

By Enrique Gilardoni

As well as the famous German soprano Gundula Janowitz, our dear friend Dan Shea was born on August 2, 1937. While Gundula did it in Berlin, Dan was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, USA.

By the time the birth came, Jussi was tremendously occupied with his commitments at the Stockholm Royal Opera. Only in that month of August, our great tenor would have to sing two performances of *La bohème*, two others of *Roméo et Juliette*, two others of *Prince Igor* and one each of *Madama Butterfly*, *Pagliacci* and *Cavalleria rusticana*. But what worried him most was that, in late November, he should debut as an adult in the USA singing in Italian to a concert hall. Until then, only on one occasion Jussi had sung in public in Italian, and this happened in Paris in June of that year, where he sang the first act of *La bohème*. I must confess that to make this statement I had to consult that oracle of Jussi called Harald Henrysson. The U.S. debut was at Carnegie Hall in New York on November 28th and the second presentation, three days later, took place in the City Auditorium of Springfield, Massachusetts, the same town in which Dan had come to this world a few months earlier.

Dan's personal and professional background has already been published in the JBS-USA Journal no. 12 (pages 57/58) in the spring of 2001, where he also states that his mother's parents were Italian, from the *Piemonte* district. Upon later conversations I learnt that his grandmother's surname was Autino, the same surname as my wife Maria Luisa's grandmother, also born in Piemonte. Could there be a family relationship here?

My acquaintance with Dan dates back to June 1999 during the First JBS-USA Convention that took place in Washington DC. Thereafter we have met in all the Conventions of the JBS-USA that have taken



Dan Shea and friend

place either in USA or in Sweden as well as during several other events organized by the Society without having the character of a Convention.

The photograph of Dan I have chosen was taken in June 2000 on a visit to a copper underground mine in Falun, Sweden, near Borlänge, birthplace of Jussi Björling.

Added to his early link with music, Dan had travelled several times to Sweden for professional reasons. Having contacted Harald Henrysson and Bertil Bengtsson, the idea of creating a USA Björling Society came forth and this came to light in 1998 under the direction of Mickey Dove, who was succeeded by Dan in 2001.

However it is important to point out that Dan was vital in the creation of the Jussi Björling Society-USA, significant enough to be appointed an Honorary Member of the Jussi Björling Sällskapet of Stockholm, on February 2nd, 2008.

I consider Dan a very special friend, who owns an important knowledge of singers from both the present and the past. In addition, those who are subscribed to the Jussi Björling Yahoo group can verify that

Dan is an active participant, with documented comments not only on Jussi, but also on many other topics. Another of the characteristics that define Dan, is to be a good gourmet and an excellent wine taster. He knows how to enjoy the good things in life.

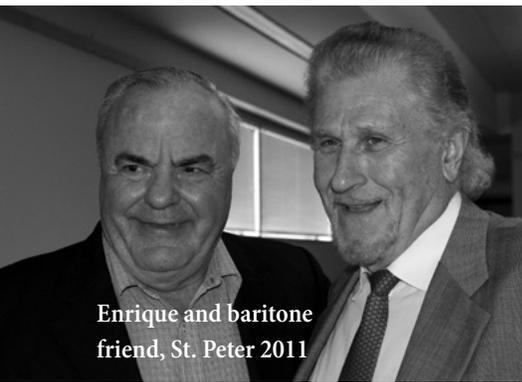
In mid-February this year Dan and his wife Gail made us a short but intense three-day visit in Chile, at the end of a cruise which began in Buenos Aires late in January and ended in Valparaiso, the main Chilean port. At their arrival, I was waiting for them with Aldo Bertolotto, also a member of the JBS-USA and a great connoisseur of the surroundings of the port of Valparaiso, who guided us in the visit of several points of interest. The tour ended at the home of our friends Gonzalo and María Angélica Bustos.

Gonzalo is an expert on Enrico Caruso and has the complete collection of his recordings on original 78 rpm discs and also several phonographs in which one can hear his wonderful voice with true fidelity. A room in his house is transformed into a Caruso museum and there we were listening to a lot of recordings.

The next day I had the pleasure of pre-



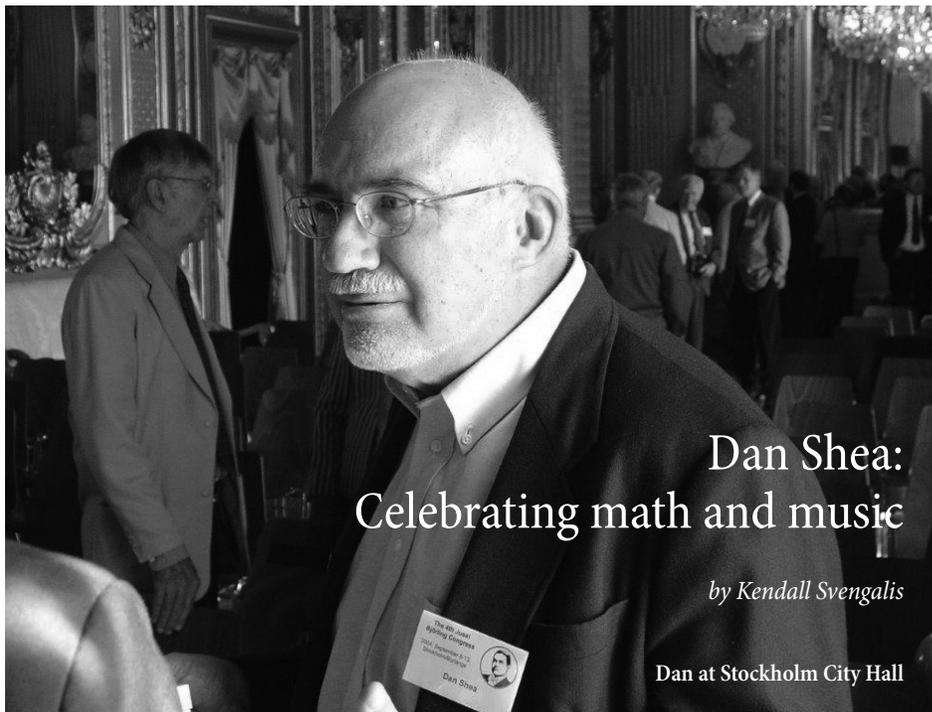
Beach BBQ with musical friends



Enrique and baritone friend, St. Peter 2011



A hard slog through the copper mine



Dan Shea: Celebrating math and music

by Kendall Svengalis

Dan at Stockholm City Hall

paring a barbecue in my beach house where the friends mentioned above attended, who we see here in this photo shot by myself. From left to right: Aldo and Nora Bertolotto, Myra Gilardoni (my sister), Gail Shea, María A. and Gonzalo Bustos, María Luisa Gilardoni and Dan Shea. I don't want to go further on the subject because Dan plans to write his impressions about their trip.

Dear Dan, I welcome you to the exclusive group of the "80 + members" of the JBS-USA, to which Beau Kaplan, Eldon Wolf, Anders Björling, Andrew Farkas and I belong, among others. I pray that we have you for many years, giving life to this so special group, and illuminating our way with your energy, wisdom, honesty and probity. ■

What is it about a voice that so grips a teenage boy and holds his passionate interest for the rest of his life? And not just any voice, but the voice of that most exemplary of tenors—Jussi Björling. And not just any boy, but a future founder of the Jussi Björling Society—USA: Dan Shea.

Born on August 2, 1937, Dan Shea's musical odyssey began in his hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts. As he later described it in a 2003 essay on *The Poetry of Scandinavian Art Song*:

"As a child of 7 or 8 and really without knowing why, I found myself drawn to classical vocal music—thanks to the old wind-up phonograph at my Italian grandmother's house, and a pretty good collection of Caruso records. As years went on, I learned to love art songs as well as opera—especially the fabulous lieder of Schubert and Schumann. But thanks to some favorite singers from Norway, Finland and Sweden, I found myself increasingly fascinated by songs of Grieg, Sibelius, Peterson-Berger, Rangström, Kilpinen, and others. While I loved the singing, and the music (which usually had a very direct appeal) still almost always I had no idea what the words being

sung meant. Typically, concert programs and recordings would omit texts, especially for the Scandinavian songs."

Then, in 1952, as a high school student, Dan became captivated by the Björling sound. His serious listening commenced when he began borrowing Björling records from the Springfield Public Library. But, like many Björling fans, the library's meager holdings could not satisfy his musical hunger.

Dan began taking the train from Springfield to New York City in order to raid the bins of Record Hunter. This was still in the 78 era, when Record Hunter's catalog was filled with listings for Björling's Swedish HMV 78 recordings. With the anticipated demise of 78 records, however, Dan was able to scoop up many of these discs for about \$1.00 each. When he learned about Georg Pluck's releases, he also acquired the Toscanini/Björling recording of Verdi's *Requiem* and the now legendary 1947 performance of *Romeo and Juliet* with Björling and the delightful Brazilian soprano, Bidu Sayão.

It was during this time that Dan had the opportunity to hear Björling live in New York City, first at Carnegie Hall in duets with



Kendall Svengalis, Harald Henrysson and Dan Shea at Jussi Björling Museum, July 12, 2005 on the occasion of American Union of Swedish Singers (AUSS) tour of Sweden. Dan, who was coincidentally visiting the museum at that time, and Harald accompanied the chorus to the Stora Tuna Kyrkogård where “Tonerna” was sung at Jussi’s grave.

Renata Tebaldi, followed by a 1956 *Un ballo in maschera* at the Metropolitan with Robert Merrill and Zinka Milinov, and two concerts at Hunter College in the late 1950s. He remembers being “overwhelmed” by the LP issues of Verdi’s *Aida*, with Milanov, and Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*, with Licia Albanese.

Dan graduated from Springfield’s Classical High School, and went on to earn a B.A. in 1959 from American International College in Springfield, where he was president of student government, member of the rowing crew, and presenter of concerts by Tom Lehrer and the Springfield Symphony. He attended graduate school at Syracuse University, where he earned a PhD in mathematics in 1965. While doing graduate work, he also studied at the University of London (Imperial College, 1963-64), and served an internship with NASA in Greenbelt, Maryland.

His professional career commenced at the University of Wisconsin in 1965, where he served for 52 years on the mathematics faculty (now with Emeritus status). While anchored at UW, he also held visiting professorships at Purdue University (1970-71), California Institute of Technology (1973-

74), the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm (1975), the University of Hawaii (1979), Uppsala University (1986, 1996), Joensuu University (1989); and Würzburg University (1991). He has published more than fifty research papers in complex analysis, harmonic analysis, and integro-differential equations. He also served as Undergraduate Advisor, UW Mathematics Department, from 1996-2002. Beginning in 1970, his collaboration with a mathematician in Uppsala brought him to Sweden many times, the first in 1975.

It was these trips to Sweden that allowed Dan to combine his professional activities as a mathematician with his personal passion for the vocal arts: “As it turned out, my mathematical research interests took me to Scandinavia, over and over starting in the 1970s, and I was able to deepen my understanding of Scandinavian song, through concerts there and discussions with some patient friends in Uppsala who helped me understand the texts and spirit of the music.”

It was also during one of his many visits to Sweden that Dan first met Harald Henrysson, then employed as record librarian at Swedish Radio. Harald recalls that he first heard from Dan in a letter dated May 9, 1982, after Dan had acquired Jack Porter’s unauthorized edition of Harald’s *JB Phonography* and wondered if they could meet when he came to Stockholm a little later for “mathematical business.” During a visit with Harald in the Stockholm suburb of Haninge on May 22, 1982, Dan learned the story behind Porter’s unauthorized edition of the phonography and offered his support for an authorized edition. Subsequently, Harald obtained a grant to publish the official *JB Phonography* in 1984.

As Harald recalls, “this was the prelude to an intense correspondence in which Dan admitted that part of him already said ‘drop your math’ for work on JB, but that he had too many math projects currently in progress.” But his comments presaged a future devotion to the Björling legacy.

Dan recalls that it was on a trip to Sweden in 1996 that he met with Harald and

Bertil Bengtsson at the new Jussi Björling Museum that had opened on October 22, 1994 in conjunction with the Jussi Björling Tenor Competition in Borlänge. It was on this occasion that Harald and Bertil suggested that Dan spearhead an effort to organize a Jussi Björling Society in the United States. Although he initially hesitated on the grounds of heavy university work, Dan promised to give the idea some thought. Critical to his thinking was the fact that the new English edition of Jussi would be coming out shortly, and that Harald had collected a list of potential members and workers for an American society.

These thoughts further germinated on November 8, 1996, when Dan attended a book release party at Jussi Björling Recital Hall at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, and spoke with Andrew Farkas, co-author of JUSSI (with Anna-Lisa Björling). In June 1997, he traveled to Borlänge, where he, again, met with Harald and Bertil and further discussed the creation of an American society in the wake of the release of Jussi and the realization “that many of the key people interviewed for it were getting very old. That did it for me,” Dan recalled. “I committed to Harald, Bertil (and Gunilla) at the Museum to try to get a JBS-USA started.” By September, he was calling Mickey and Bill Dove (who lived a mile away from one of his sisters), and Mickey agreed to help with membership. He also enlisted Andy Binns to serve as Treasurer, and Tom Hines to serve as board member.

Those organizational efforts led to the Society’s first conference in May, 1999, in Washington, DC, featuring a stellar lineup of speakers, including Anders Björling, Harald Henrysson, Cantor Don Goldberg, Cornell MacNeil, Andrew Farkas, and Jane Phillips-Matz. In addition to organizing the first board of directors, Dan served as the Society’s first president, journal and newsletter editor, and, later, as secretary, board member, conference planner, book and CD “store manager,” and most of all, as the Society’s most energetic and peripatetic ambassador for Jussi’s legacy. Dan traveled the country, and the world, to hear operatic

performances and never missed an opportunity to meet with Björling devotees and promote the Society.

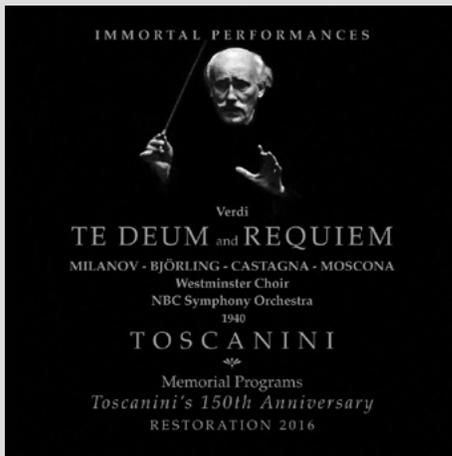
Dan was also heavily involved in operatic activities at the local level. He served on the board of Madison Opera, Opera for the Young, and the Madison Art Song Competition sponsored by the Yrjö Kilpinen Societies of North America and Finland.

Ever attuned to opportunities to enlist new members, Dan established email contacts across the country, and the world.

Past president Sue Flaster, recalls that “about five minutes after we had our first email contact, Dan mailed me a copy of a newspaper review of Jussi’s first American concert appearance in Springfield, Mass. That informed and immediate desire to share and help firmly attached me to the Jussi Björling Society at a time when I was full of interest but low on information. Not only did Dan know EVERYTHING, but he was happy to patiently pour it out. We’re both deeply emotional people, and in the

years we worked together on the JBS Board, we often noted how very much like family members we are...” That was Dan!

On the occasion of the Society’s 20th anniversary, and Dan’s eightieth birthday, it is important for us to recognize the man who was instrumental in giving it birth and whose energy, musical intelligence, unbridled love of the vocal arts, and devotion continue to sustain it in so many important ways. ■



Te Deum, Messa Da Requiem (Verdi)

Jussi Björling, Zinka Milanov; Bruna Castagna; Nicola Moscona; Westminster Choir and NBC Orchestra, Cond: Arturo Toscanini
Immortal Performances IPCD 1073-2 [2 CDs] 143 min.

It has been thought by some that, of all Toscanini’s performances of the Verdi *Requiem*, this was the most dispensable of them. This reaction is hard to believe, as it is still a vastly imposing performance with some excellent singing from voices that can easily cope with the demands, especially Jussi Björling and Zinka Milanov. Stephen Hastings, in his book *The Björling Sound*, describes the “spiritual concentration” of an earlier performance from Lucerne, Switzerland, recorded in the Jesuitenkirche. However that 1939 performance has, as far as I know, not been issued and it is also incomplete.

Our *Requiem* under review was presented as a benefit concert and has been successfully remastered by Richard Caniell as part of his Immortal Performances series. It has much more flexibility than

Toscanini’s commercial recording from 1951 and mixes the dramatic and lyrical parts of the work rather more successfully. As a result Toscanini takes over five minutes longer than in 1951.

The opening “Kyrie” has Jussi in fine voice and singing with such confidence it nearly makes you leap out of your seat. Milanov is hardly less expressive, with Moscona and Castagna not far behind. The “Dies irae” with its rasping brass and thwacks on the timpani come through the years on this new CD with terrifying impact. “Mors stupebit,” sung well enough by Moscona, does not equal the horror from Ezio Pinza in the famous 1939 *Requiem* conducted by Tullio Serafin. Bruna Castagna sings to the manner born and with fine Italianate tone but emits some strange sounds. In the Serafin recording, Ebe Stignani’s singing is simply flawless, bringing more voice, dignity and grandeur to her role.

“Quid sum miser” brings some lovely soft singing by Jussi especially at the second Quid. He is ardent in the “Rex tremendae,” easily heard at the final ‘Salva me.’ “Ingemisco” is well poised and well phrased and keeps to tempo at around three and a half minutes. Perhaps it lacks just that last degree of sweetness or even Italianita that Gigli brings, despite all the aitches! Björling’s commercial recording is longer by half a minute and does have a more spiritual atmosphere. In 1938, “Inter oves” is sung with a glorious head voice, building up to a strongly sung “parte dextra” with a tremendous rise to a soaring b-flat to finish. Two years later Jussi still sings “Inter oves” softly, but perhaps does not have the time to linger over phrases quite so subtly. In the Offertorio, the tenor blends very well with his colleagues and the Hostias is glorious, despite a slight frog in the throat at ‘Domine.’ Milanov’s soft singing is a thing of wonder here.

It is not clear if this performance was ever to be released commercially. Toscanini would probably have declined, as there are just a few errors, perhaps inevitable in a live performance. Embarrassingly, Jussi drops out entirely of “Lux aeterna” at 1:40 for just a second or two after an error and Milanov almost fluffs her floated b-flat in the “Libera me.” This is a shame, as she is particularly effective at the start and easily rides over both chorus and orchestra at the concerted passage near the end. Her dramatic ‘Libera me, Domine’ ends the work fittingly.

If you already have this 1940 *Requiem* from Music & Arts, who produced a fine version in 2012, why buy this new IP set? This IP restoration is simply in superb sound. It makes the M&A discs seem like there is a blanket over the sound. IP is better balanced and more open as well as brighter throughout, the voices coming out loud and clear with little distortion. It also has the concert in the right order and several spoken extras including a delightful reminiscence of Toscanini by soprano, Lotte Lehman. Congratulations to all at IP for such a magnificent new version of this splendidly sung Verdi’s *Requiem*.

—David Cutler, courtesy of THE RECORD COLLECTOR

The Jussi Björling Recording Survey – “Song” Results

By Walter B. Rudolph



Walter B. Rudolph



Jussi hears a reference recording on January 21st, 1939

In our home, not a day passes without a telephone call survey. Any purchase, chat, or other inquiry one makes on the Internet is followed by a survey. Going to the Post Office or any fast food joint always invites a survey on the receipt. Truly we could call our world today “The Survey World.”

So when we offered the opportunity to participate in this first JBS-USA survey, we hoped you wouldn't all be surveyed-out, and decline participation. Nearly 20% of our membership sent in their choices, and only a couple arrived after the deadline, so we decided to also include them in the results. And while the goal was to identify the Top Five Song and Aria Recordings, and the Top Three Opera Recordings, there is much more to be seen, heard and explored.

We promise the aria and opera results in forthcoming publications.

Fifty-four (54) individual song titles received votes in the Song category. The survey allowed for specific performances to be identified, and approximately 30% of participants provided that information for most of their submissions. In many cases this information is insufficient to be conclusive. Therefore any preferred performance listed for each title is provided only when a clear choice was indicated. Also, please keep in mind that all participants may not

have had access to (or made choices based on) all of the Jussi Björling recordings. “I know what I like and I like what I know” becomes the basis of this adventure. And we do not know how many votes were for a favorite song versus a favorite performance.

So here is the full list of all 54 songs, listed in order of preference by the participating members of the Jussi Björling Society-USA. The second (inner) row shows where the multiple ties occurred. The first (outer) row shows the order of all 54 songs, randomly removing the ties. The year in column 4 indicates the most often selected performance, when one was indicated, unless there is only one performance from which to select.

* * *

Note that in the top 10 songs, most of Jussi's languages are represented – German, Swedish, Italian and English. Two French songs are sung in Swedish and English. There are two female composers in the list (d'Hardelot and Beach), and many other details to be gleaned. We hope you will enjoy these ample considerations.

Obviously there are songs which received only minimal votes. Perhaps you'll find some you don't know or haven't heard recently? There are surprises lurking! ■

JBS-USA web site

Please visit our new, ever-so-improved, attractive and updated web site at jussibjorling-society.org. Our own Janel Lundgren put in countless and productive hours working with web designer Amory King to give us something we can both use and be proud of. Note that for the first time, both the PHONOGRAPHY and the performance Chronology can be accessed from our site. Many thanks to all those members who helped to defray the cost of this huge and welcome project.

1.	1.	Adelaide	Beethoven	1939
2.	2.	O helga natt	Adam	1959
3.	3.	Tonerna	Sjöberg	1957
4.	4.	L'alba separa della luce l'ombra	Tosti	1949; 1959 tie
5.	5.	Skogen Sover	Alfvén	1959
6.	6.	Jag längtar dig	Alfvén	1960
7.	7.	Ideale	Tosti	1937
8.	8.	Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair	Foster	1945
9.	9.	Because	d'Hardelot	1948
10.	10.	Ständchen	Schubert	1955
11.	10.	Säv, Säv, Susa	Sibelius	1959
12.	11.	Till Havs	Nordqvist	1953
13.	12.	Am Sylvia	Schubert	1940
14.	13.	En Svane	Grieg	1959
15.	13.	Trollsjön	Söderman	1959
16.	14.	Die Allmacht	Schubert	1958
17.	14.	Cäcilie	R. Strauss	
18.	14.	Mattinata	Leoncavallo	
19.	15.	Jungfrun under lind	Petersen-Berger	1958/1939 tie
20.	15.	Svarta Rosor	Sibelius	
21.	15.	Land du välsignade	Althén	1957; 1937 tie
22.	16.	Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte	Sibelius	1957
23.	16.	In the Silence of the Night	Rachmaninoff	1947
24.	17.	Sommarnatt	Schrader	
25.	17.	Så tag mit hjerte	Alfvén	
26.	17.	Traum durch die Dämmerung	R. Strauss	1955
27.	17.	Ehre Gotte aus der Natur (Guds lov i nature)	Beethoven	
28.	18.	Tristans död	Rangström	
29.	18.	A Spirit Flower	Louis Campbell Tipton	
30.	18.	Only a Rose	Friml	
31.	18.	Mother o Mine	Frank E. Tours	
32.	18.	Lilacs	Rachmaninoff	
33.	18.	Die böse Farbe	Schubert	
34.	18.	Kung Heimer och Aslög	Söderman	1957
35.	18.	Sverige	Svenhammar	
36.	19.	Lilla princessa	Enders	
37.	19.	Nämner du Sverige	Widestedt	
38.	19.	När jag för mig själv i mörka skogen går	Peterson-Berger	
39.	19.	Ständchen	R. Strauss	
40.	19.	Morgon	Eklöf	
41.	20.	Pieta Signore	Niedermeyer	
42.	20.	Die Mainacht	Brahms	1959
43.	20.	Rangstrom Ballads	Rangström	
44.	20.	Var det en dröm?	Sibelius	1957
45.	20.	Zueignung	R. Strauss	
46.	21.	Sylvia	Oley Speaks	
47.	21.	Ninon	Jurmann / Kaper	
48.	21.	Säg mig god natt (Eric Odde)	Ray	
49.	21.	Sjung din hela längtan ut	Widestedt	
50.	21.	Aftonstämning	Körling	
51.	21.	Ah Love But a Day	Beach	
52.	21.	Ay, Ay, Ay	Pérez-Freire	
53.	21.	Die Forelle	Schubert	
54.	21.	For You Alone	Geehl	1937

JUSSI BJÖRLING SOCIETY

1027 West Burning Tree Drive
Kansas City, MO 64145 USA

Jussi Björling

First Class
US Postage
PAID
Permit 49
Provo, UT

Membership note:

PLEASE CHECK the address label which shows the last membership year paid above your name.



The studio on Siarö