

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.

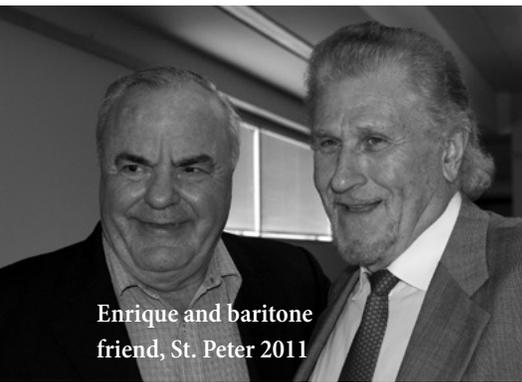
In mid-February this year Dan and his wife Gail made us a short but intense three-day visit in Chile, at the end of a cruise which began in Buenos Aires late in January and ended in Valparaiso, the main Chilean port. At their arrival, I was waiting for them with Aldo Bertolotto, also a member of the 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



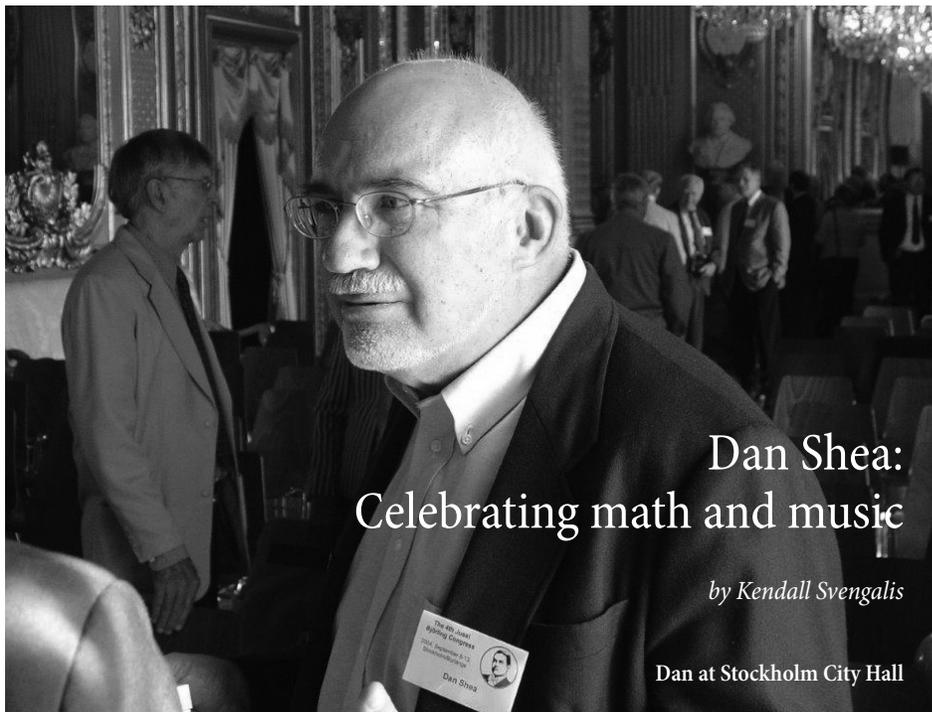
Enrique and baritone friend, St. Peter 2011



A hard slog through the copper mine

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. ■



Dan Shea: Celebrating math and music

by Kendall Svengalis

Dan at Stockholm City Hall

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