

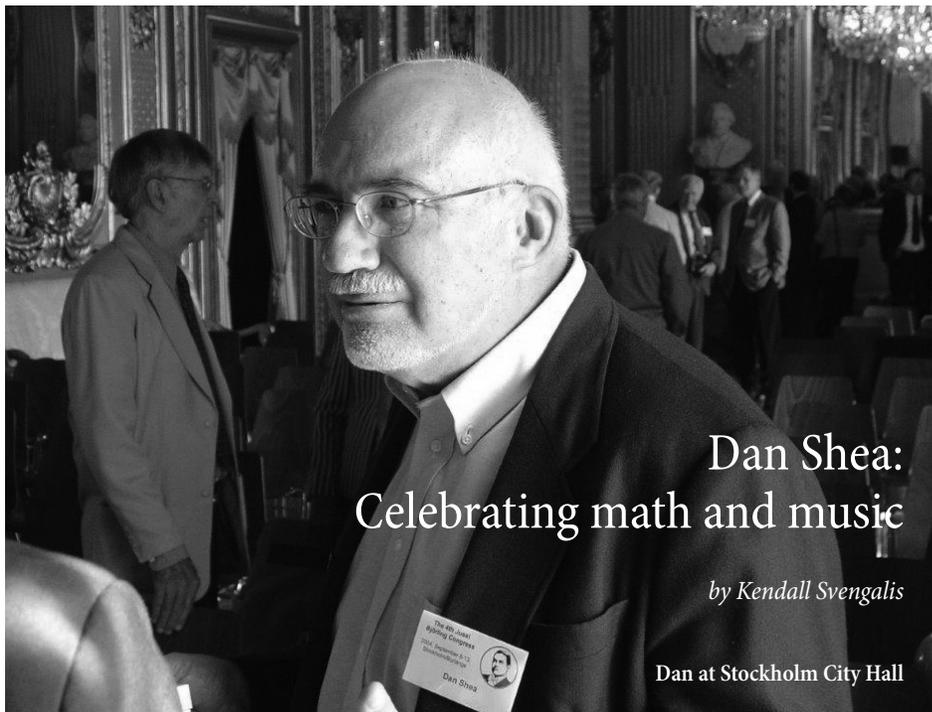
Enrique and baritone friend, St. Peter 2011



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



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.

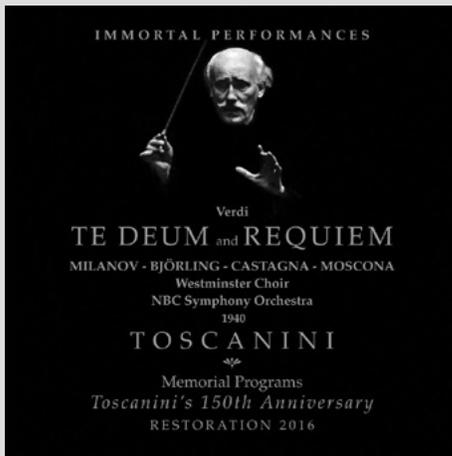
Dan was also heavily involved in operatic activities at the local level. He served on the board of Madison Opera, Opera for the Young, and the Madison Art Song Competition sponsored by the Yrjö Kilpinen Societies of North America and Finland.

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