

Strömsbruk Jussi-fest, 2019

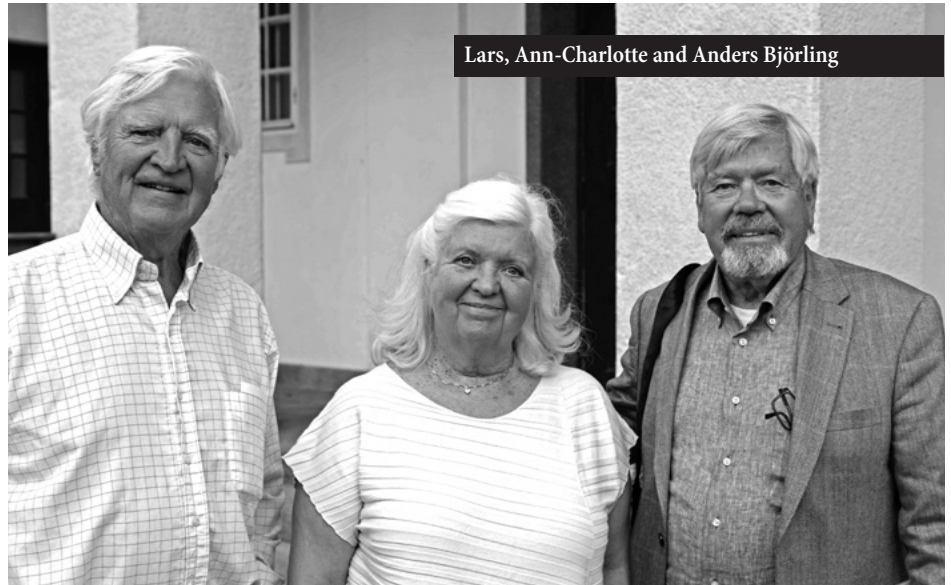
When Stefan Olmårs became Secretary of the Jussi Björling Society (Sällskapet), he was contacted by a man who told him that Jussi's father David had been born in Strömsbruk and had worked there as a blacksmith. Stefan became intrigued, and made contact with local historian Gustav Ekengren who took Stefan to the very small Mission Church in Strömsbruk (which had been set up almost like a theater). Gustav related that David Björling had come there with Jussi who was then so young that he was not yet speaking clearly and had to be stood on a table to sing. Gustav showed Stefan the little hut where the blacksmiths would have their lunch and rest, since they were too dirty to go home in the middle of the work day. In that little hut, Stefan was shown a picture of Jussi's grandfather, also a smith. At that point 15 years ago, Stefan decided to create an event celebrating David and Jussi, and made contact with Raymond Björling, who sang at the first of the Strömsbruk weekends in 2005.

14 years at Strömsbruk

This year marked the 14th year of Strömsbruk concerts and programs, and was special in several ways: all three of the Björling children attended (Anders for the first time) and Harald Henrysson's new

book about the Björling family's early adventures in the United States made its first public appearance. In addition, impresario Olmårs once again put together a program of varied musical satisfactions. We were again entertained by the Strömsbruks orkester, a brass band of local origin, full of charm and solid musicality. They specialize in Swedish marches and warm rapport with their audience.

Basso Erik Rosenius, winner of the 2018 Hjördis Schymberg award, gave us a stunning "Gremm's Aria" from Onegin as

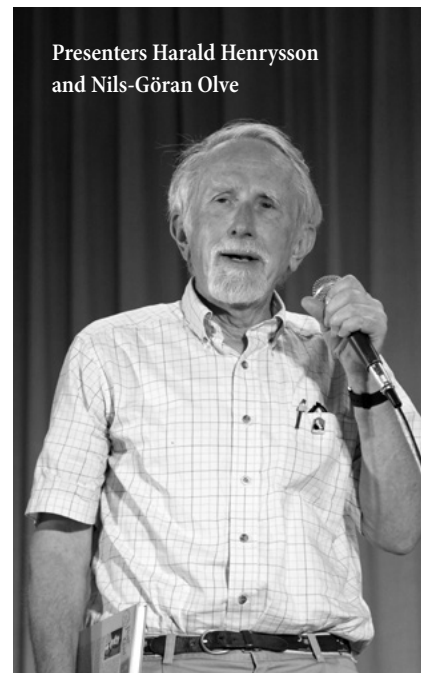


Lars, Ann-Charlotte and Anders Björling

Erik Rosenius, Lydia Kjellberg and Per Lindström take their bows



Presenters Harald Henrysson and Nils-Göran Olve



well as a very moving “Kung Heimer och Aslög.” We were all struck by the beauty of his singing voice and the extraordinary resonance of his speaking voice.

2019 JB Sällskapet award-winner Per Lindström also sang at this year’s Voxna concert. His powerful tenor and natural manner were as convincing as they had been earlier in the summer.

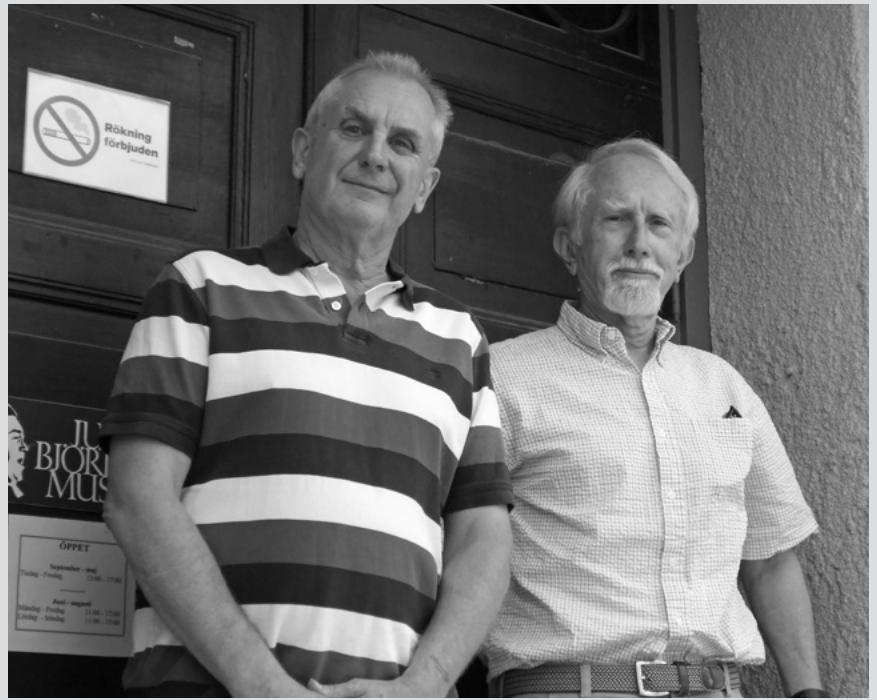
To the rescue

Filling in for the ailing Sigrid Vetleseter Bøe was young soprano Lydia Kjellberg (who happens to be Bøe’s au pair). Her “Song to the Moon” was appreciated by all present.

As always, the concert was followed by a buffet dinner and the playing of JB requests introduced by Harald. All three of the Björings were able to have their selections played and comment on them.

On Sunday morning, Nils-Göran interviewed the singers, leading them to give us a great deal of information about their careers and hopes. Nils-Göran then presented a fascinating talk on Olle and Gösta Björling, with many sound examples.

We’ll look forward to 2020, when Strömsbruk reaches its 15th year, and Voxna arrives at 20. ■



Curators past and present: Jan-Olof Damberg and Harald Henrysson

Jussi Björling Museum Celebrates 25 Years

The Museum’s official opening day was Oct. 22, 1994. The 25-year celebration will take place on October 26 with a gala concert in the Mission Church across the courtyard from the Museum. Music journalist Göran Forsling will assist Curator Jan-Olof Damberg by acting as Master of Ceremonies. Founding Curator Harald Henrysson will speak briefly about the history of the Museum, and about his new book. Local soprano Hanna Husáhr will be the featured artist. Hanna currently sings in the Royal Opera company and has sung in many companies throughout Europe. She received the 2011 Jussi Björlingstipendiet (JB Award of the Royal Opera Soloists Foundation). Hanna will be joined on stage by 2019 Sällskapet prize winner tenor Per Lindström. Per was also heard both in Voxna and Strömsbruk this summer.

The Museum gala will also feature Harald Henrysson’s new book, *DAVID BJÖRLING AND HIS SONS IN AMERICA, A Musical Family Saga Begins*.

(A larger piece about the Museum and discussions about its possible relocation will follow in the next issue of the *JBS JOURNAL*, February 2020.) ■