

A British Voice By Joseph Hislop

On one of my visits to Stockholm for guest appearances in the early 1930s, Jussi Björling came to me and asked for advice regarding a number of problems of singing technique. He had already, at that time, presented his beautiful voice at the Royal Opera and also in Copenhagen, and had shown both critics and the public alike that here was a rare star on the rise.

I happily agreed to help, and the following summer he stayed with me on Brottkärr. Teaching Jussi was like pouring water on blotting-paper - everything stuck and was absorbed immediately. He gained as much from a single lesson as a mediocre singer would get from six months tuition. Jussi was always extremely particular about perfecting his art.

During the last ten years we met each time Jussi visited London, and we often discussed the art of singing. During an orchestral rehearsal for Jussi's guest appearances at Covent Garden in the spring of 1960 - those appearances which turned out to be so dramatic because of the heart attack he suffered at the second performance - I sat with him in his dressing-room during a break in the rehearsal. I had sometimes noticed that his voice, at the very top of its range, had lost something of its earlier sovereign freedom. I gave him a tip on how he might be able to correct this little fault. Once again his genius was evident: at the performance, his high C burst forth like a magnificent bloom.

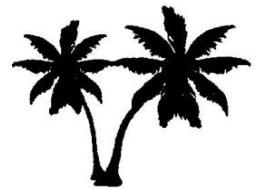
For me, Jussi's voice was unlike those of other great tenors - it had a completely individual colour. He did not have the seething temperament of a Gigli, but his musical taste, phrasing and feeling for rhythm bring to my mind Jascha Heifetz's violin playing.

Jussi Björling was a kind and cheerful person, totally without pretensions. He has left a great blank behind him here in London too.



The Desert Isle Redux Edited by William C. Clayton

Though the members of JBS certainly have faultless taste in singers, some of them are obviously not very good sailors. Shortly after we published the ocean contretemps of a few of our company (the present editor included), we received word of three similar ship wrecks. Fortunately, these unlucky souls also managed to salvage their beloved JB tapes which contained their precious "top ten" favorites from Jussi's substantial recording career. Perhaps the beneficent hand of our dear honoree is stretched out over us, for all managed not only to survive the island ordeal but to return safely to their homes. Here, as before, are their lists:



Dana Rossell:

O Holy Night	Swedish Society Discofil	1959
Now Take My Heart	Swedish Society Discofil	1959
Adelaide	EMI Classics	1939
Morgen	EMI Classics	1939