

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.

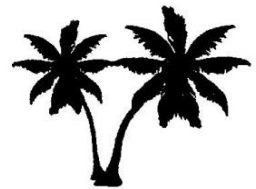
For me, Jussi's voice was unlike those of other great tenors - it had a completely individual colour. He did not have the seething temperament of a Gigli, but his musical taste, phrasing and feeling for rhythm bring to my mind Jascha Heifetz's violin playing.

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

Cielo e Mar,	EMI Classics	1937
Nämner du Sverige	EMI JB Edition	1938
	RCA	1957
The Judgment of Paris	EMI JB Edition	1938
Ah, Love, but a Day	EMI JB Edition	1952
Va! Je T'ai Pardonne	Voce	1951

John Grundy:

Frühlingsglaube	Bluebell ABCD 050	1940
Nessun dorma	Bluebell ABCD 078	1944
Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair	EMI Classic 566306	1948
Che gelida manina	HMV Beecham 747235.8	1956
Aftonstämning	Swedish Society SCD 1010	1957
Solenne in quest'ora (with Leonard Warren)	RCA 1.24281	1957
Love Duet from Madam Butterfly (with Victoria de Los Angeles)	HMV Santini 763634.2	1959
Salut demeure chaste et pure	Gala G.L.315	1959
In fernem land (Lohengrin)	Gala G.L. 315	1960
Ingemisco (Verdi's Requiem)	Decca 421316.2	1960
Swedish Songs*	Swedish Society SCD 1010	
The Ultimate Collection*	RCA 1.24281	
La Boheme (Beecham)*	HMV 747235.8	

* CDs as opposed to individual selections.

Dorian Bruzzi:

Adelaide	EMI JB Edition studio	July 15, 1939
Salut demeure	RCA 5934-2-RC studio	January 13, 1951
Che gelida manina	RCA 09026-68429-2 studio	January 13, 1951
No! Pagliaccio non son	EMI CDC 749503-2 studio	January 1953
No! Pazzo son! Guardate!	EMI 60573-2-RG studio	July 1954
Ai! Nostri monti ritorneremo (with Fedora Barbieri)	RCA 6643-2-RG studio	March 1952
E lucevan le stelle	Bluebell ABCD 078 live	February 12, 1959
Nessun dorma!	Bluebell ABCD 078 live	November 10, 1944
Se quel guerrier...Celeste Aida	Glendale GL 8006 (LP; live)	March 12, 1951
La fleur que tu m'avais jetée	RCA LM-1841 (LP) studio	September 19, 1950

We would still love to hear from anyone else whose desert island stay was sustained by their JB top ten. ♦♦♦