Save This Date! Our August 20, 2000, Mini-conference in NYC Is On!

By Dan Shea

How can our Jussi Björling Society NOT meet on August 20th to celebrate the simultaneous 70th anniversary of Jussi's debut in his first major operatic role, Don Ottavio, and the 40th anniversary of his last public concert? We've decided that we must go ahead with a one-day conference in Manhattan.

Our Society needs to grow, and the publicity and visibility that hopefully we can generate via a meeting in the New York City area validates the effort and risk involved. Most members of our Advisory Committee have been enthusiastic and have supplied some valuable ideas. Several JBS members have been helpful with good ideas as well. And we are fortunate in having a cadre of local people willing to help with publicity and hospitality.

Yes, we have a location; yes, we have a main speaker; and yes, we have a good plan. But here's a tease. While we have pencilled in an agreement for a fine venue at a Lincoln Center locale, we still have several other ideas and may be able to do better. So, we're not quite ready to announce that decision.

We plan to have three main speakers and a panel of celebrities with a general conference theme of "The Great Björling Performances, as Recorded Live from New York and Stockholm." We won't insist on this theme, however, to allow our speakers some room for creativity. One of our invitations to speak has been accepted, one is still being considered, and a third offer is about to be made. Our first confirmed speaker is our Advisor Bertil Bengtsson, a founder and mainstay of the Scandinavian JB Sällskapet and right-hand man for Harald Henrysson during summers at the Björling Museum in Borlänge. Bertil will likely concentrate on Jussi's early career, 1930-1936, in Stockholm and Central Europe- the solid preparation at the Royal Opera School that helped lead to the successes in Brussels, Vienna, Prague, and elsewhere. Harald Henrysson showed in his talk last June at our first conference that one needs to try to understand Jussi's life in Sweden in order to understand who he was and how he developed his phenomenal vocal technique. Bertil is most qualified to expand this discussion: he is an extremely knowledgeable Jussicologist and a graduate student in Arts Administration at Göteborg University. And we will benefit again in New York City from the Museum's marvelous and still-growing collection of materials of all kinds, as well as for the essential base it provides for further research.

We will soon be able to give many more specific details about our plans for the events of August 20th; you can expect to hear from us by a later special announcement. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to pass along your ideas to me or to any of our of Directors or Advisors.

We Welcome a New Member of Our Advisory Committee: Robert Tuggle

We are very pleased to announce that Robert Tuggle, the Director of Archives for the Metropolitan Opera, has agreed to join our Advisory Committee.