

This performance was very well-received. Harald quotes the well-known music critic and composer Sten Broman who reviewed the performance: "Jussi was in top form. ... His bel canto singing poured forth with a previously seldom heard richness and suggestivity, also in half-voice and in the finest pianissimo, and the most intense parts had a magnetic fire and at the same time a fascinating refinement ... His sublime breathing technique carried an ideal legato and an authoritative phrasing, which were quite impressive." In Broman's opinion, Björling's acting surpassed expectations even more and contributed to "the most grandiose opera performance ever given here".

Ethel Mårtensson was Björling's Mimì in Malmö; Marcello was Nils Bäckström. Harald comments further, "Only the first and the two last acts were recorded; it is unknown why act 2 is missing. The microphone was placed beside the prompter's box, just above the stage in front of the singers."

Early in 1959, Jussi returned to the Royal Opera House in Stockholm for three guest performances, two *Manon Lescaut* and one *Tosca*. According to Harald, "the singer was in splendid form again; a reviewer noted how he sang better with each act and especially how he used his voice "like a Stradivarius" rather than forcing it. On this occasion, his *Tosca* was for the first (and only) time Kjerstin Dellert."

"At this 1959 *Tosca* performance, an experiment with stereo documentary recording was made by a member of the opera staff, Valter Valentin, who was sitting with a microphone in the auditorium. The last act, most part of which is presented here, is one of two live recordings with Björling that exist in stereo; act 2, which was also preserved, is actually in mono."

JB never sang Prince Calaf's role in *Turandot* on the opera stage, but he added "Nessun dorma" to his concert repertoire in the summer of 1942. Harald points out that in 1944 JB recorded the aria twice, once in March with Nils Grevillius, and again in November at a benefit concert which was broadcast and partly preserved. "The conductor for the latter performance was Tor Mann, then chief conductor at the Swedish Broadcasting Company. Although recorded only half a year apart, Björling's two 1944 recordings of the aria are strikingly different, and Mann's tempo notably slower than that of Grevillius (the difference is more than 30 seconds). In this slow tempo, Björling beautifully expresses all the lyricism in the aria and at the same time has the mighty climax under perfect control – a performance to rival any!" (Editor's Note: I've heard this *Nessun dorma* at the Museum, and it is stupendous- I agree completely with Harald's assessment. I'd purchase this CD if the *Nessun dorma* were the only selection on it!)

Prophone

Swedish Prophone Records will reissue, as a multimedia CD-ROM under the title "Till Havs", the famous Swedish Songs (originally issued by the Swedish Society Discofil) possibly in 1999. This CD-ROM will include scenes from Jussi's life and many of the items on display in the JB Museum. The sound is reported to be good, there is a significant amount of information (in both English and Swedish) contained on the disk, and the pictures include many previously unpublished ones of the recording session. Genealogical information is also included.