

His Voice Thrills Anew

Seufert Audience Reacts to Jussi Bjoerling The Swedish Tenor Sings with Eloquent Ardor in Music Hall

By Clyde Neibarger, Music Editor
(Reprinted from the Kansas City Times, 4/11/59)

One of this season's most demonstrative Music Hall audiences applauded and shouted its enthusiasm last night for the thrilling voice and artistry of Jussi Bjoerling, Swedish tenor, who is at the crest now of his remarkable vocal prowess. Bjoerling won hands down the acclaim of a large, though not capacity, audience. He gave vivid proof that he is both a song recitalist and a master of the dramatic vocalism of grand opera.

There were three art song groups, most from the tried and true repertoire, and three operatic arias. The tenor, as generous as he is eloquent, did three more arias as encores. His extra numbers which included two songs, were not all reserved to the last. The concert was a Seufert series attraction.

Spirit in Carmen Number

Examples of Bjoerling at his best in uninhibited vocalism and ardor of feeling were in the "Flower Song" from *Carmen*, in the resplendent Richard Strauss lieder, and in two Giordano opera arias.

Those who still worship Bjoerling's voice of a decade or two ago, for its richly lyric quality, took note now of how it has matured to a darker, more dramatic hue. His stature as a recitalist has gained in dimension. He has lost none of his gift of expressive, communicative artistry that endears him to all. As always, his top notes emerged without strain, richly colored, sure of pitch. At full

voice, or a finely-spun pianissimo, his singing was incredibly flawless.

Ready with Applause

Bjoerling, a stockier figure than the last time he sang here, retains a youthful stride, on and off stage, but does not resort to exaggeration or gesture for effect or to win applause. The ovations welled up as spontaneously as did the singer's voice raised in song.

The majestic melody of a Handel aria opened the program, preparing the way for songs of Schubert and Strauss, and an encore, the Brahms "Serenade." The *Carmen* aria brought the singer back for another extra, an aria from Giordano's opera *Fedora*.

Bjoerling sang in five languages in the course of his program. The English bit was in two beloved songs by Rachmaninoff, "Lilacs" and "In the Silence of Night." Least familiar to most listeners, but filled with charm and melody, were the art songs in a Scandinavian group, including several Swedish favorites and two by Greig, a Norwegian.

The Bjoerling voice rose to glorious heights in the final scheduled aria, from Giordano's *Andrea Chenier*, where the mood of pathos was deeply moving, and in the two encore arias- *Nessun dorma* from Puccini's *Turandot* and *E lucevan le stelle* from the same composer's *Tosca*. Frederick Schauwecker, the tenor's seasoned accompanist, was a most helpful colleague.

Editor's Note: This review was provided by reader Don Quinn who also related the following story:

"I was sitting in the 1st seat, 2nd row center at this concert. When Jussi came out to sing an encore, he announced the name of the encore. I stood up in the second row and shouted, "Nessun dorma!" Jussi turned to his accompanist and said, "I think that I will sing Nessun dorma," which he did in glorious tones. I was never sorry I acted so brashly, and I don't think Jussi was either."

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