

# Hanna Hedman, 1934–2020

By Harald Henrysson



Record producer Hanna Hedman has passed away in June, 2020, after a long illness, just weeks before her 86th birthday. She is mourned by a sister and niece, their families and many friends.

Hanna was born in Lägerdorf, North of Hamburg. In the mid-50s she and her sister moved to Sweden. During the 60s, Hanna was employed at *Grammofon AB Electra*, which was founded in 1956 and came to represent RCA Records in Sweden. Therefore not only did it market most of Jussi's 1950s recordings in Sweden, but also arranged his last Swedish recordings in 1957 and 1959. At *Electra*, Hannah met producer Frank Hedman, who was responsible when those recordings were issued on the RCA label. Frank left *Electra* in 1977 and founded his own label, *Bluebell of Sweden* (later simply *Bluebell*), in 1979. Hanna and Frank were married in 1983. When the 17-years-old Frank suddenly passed away of a heart attack in 1990, Hanna, who had played an important role in his work and had many years of experience in the business, took over management of the company. She was first hesitant about the task, but wanted to

continue with meaningful work and soon proved to be entirely up to the challenge.

*Bluebell* created its own identity as a quality label with a mixture of new recordings and reissues of mostly Swedish artists, composers and ensembles, from opera to jazz. Internationally the label was best-known for issuing Jussi Björling's live recordings, largely from Swedish Radio's archive, which are often among his best and widen the perspective on his singing. Frank had issued the the label's first Jussi LP in 1981, and in 2012 Hanna issued the last of *Bluebell's* 21 Jussi CD productions, which was also the last release of AB *Frank Hedman* (*Naxos* has continued to use the label name after its purchase). In 1989, Frank was one of the founders of *Jussi Björlingsällskapet* (The Jussi Björling Society) in Stockholm, and in 2011 Hanna became an honorary member of the same society.

Some 30 other representatives of the Swedish classical singing tradition were issued on *Bluebell* CDs, 25 of them in the series "Great Swedish Singers." Rolf Björling, Nicolai Gedda, Set Svanholm, Gösta Winbergh, Ragnar Ulfung, Birgit Nilsson, Elisabeth Söderström, Hjärdis Schymberg, Kerstin Meyer, Berit Lindholm, Margareta Hallin, Joel Berglund, Hugo Hasslo, Erik Saedén and Ingvar Wixell are some of those singers. "Wagner in Stockholm" presented on 4 CDs 53 singers at the Royal Opera. Alice Babs is best known internationally as a jazz singer. Composer issues were, for instance, 5 CDs of Emil Sjögren's piano music and 2 discs devoted to the contemporary Carin Malmlöf-Forsling.

I worked together with Hanna for many years, mostly regarding selection and commentaries for her Jussi Björling issues. Among other people contributing

to her singer portraits were the dramaturg Stefan Johansson and Bertil Hagman, once program editor for the Royal Opera and publisher of Jussi's *Minnesbok* (he happened to be twin brother of actress Gerd Hagman, to whom Frank had once been married). In later years, Christer Eklund contributed with engineering and layout. Hanna ran her company with great engagement and sense of purpose along with excellent musical and financial judgement. The apartment on a high floor in the Stockholm suburb of Solna was also *Bluebell's* office, where Hanna hosted the annual Board meeting with a fine dinner, while a garden allotment in Ulriksdal provided her relaxation. Hanna Hedman's low-key, warm, and humorous outlook made for fine relations with all whom she met, and she is deeply missed. She made a valuable contribution to Swedish music life, and admirers of Jussi Björling's art have special occasion to feel thankful to her. ■

**Editor's Note:** *Some of Bluebell's wonderful CDs are still available for purchase through our website.*