

## Introducing George S. Weaver and his Review of a Jussi Concert

In my capacity as Vice President–Membership of JBS-USA, I am very pleased to report that what started out as routine email exchanges between myself and George S. Weaver, concerning membership and merchandise-ordering matters, has turned into a friendship. During these exchanges with George, I learned that we most likely attended some of the same performances at the “old” Metropolitan Opera during the early 1960s.

George told me that he attended Jussi’s April 2, 1959, recital in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and had vivid memories of the event. George is a fine writer and has written articles about various singers that have been published in *The Record Collector*. At my request, George provided a brief review of the Björling recital mentioned above and included a copy of his program cover autographed by Jussi as well as the program itself, with Jussi’s encores handwritten onto the program page. George was instrumental in having Jussi sing one of those encores, as he explains in his article.

Thank you George, and enjoy the reminiscence, everyone!

Allan Buchalter

## A Memory of Jussi Björling

By George Shelby Weaver

After hearing Jussi Björling on 78-rpm and microgroove discs during my early years, I longed to hear him in person. The only opportunity came on April 2, 1959, in a recital at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that blessed my twenty-two-year-old ears and psyche. From the tenth row it was obvious that his voice soared through the entire auditorium with ease. Its brilliance was immediately captivating, the inimitable shimmer sustained from softest pianissimo to trumpeted fortissimo. It surpassed, of course, his excellently recorded RCA Victor “New Orthophonic” self.

The program was essentially the same as recorded in Atlanta eleven days later except after much applause at the conclusion of the first half of the program in Baton Rouge, he announced and sang “Amor ti vieta” and a Swedish song which he called “Visions” [Note: *This is the Björling favor-*

*ite “Tonerna,” although the title and lyrics in Swedish deal with sounds, not visions.].*

Mr. Björling’s 10” 78-rpm recording of “Nessun dorma” had long been among my favorite discs. (The aria had not yet become the tenor national anthem.) I rushed backstage at intermission with my hand-written hope that he might sing it. After taking many bows at the end of the printed program he said, “As a request, I’d like to sing ‘Nessun . . .’ at which point in my youthful enthusiasm I burst into solo applause which the audience then echoed. He smiled wryly and continued with “. . . dorma’ from Puccini’s *Turandot*.” Glorious! Ovation!

A small group of us went to his dressing room where his wife, Anna-Lisa, and his accompanist, Frederick Schauwecker, were present. After my grateful thanks for the evening and “Nessun dorma,” Mr. Björling graciously signed our programs. That night remains one of the great events of my musical journey. ■

