

## A NEW BJOERLING DISCOGRAPHY

Jack W. Porter and Harald Henrysson, A Jussi Bjoerling Discography. Indianapolis: Jussi Bjoerling Memorial Archive, 1982. Pp. 190. \$17.50 postpaid (from the Archive, P.O. Box 2638, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206).

Arguably the most universally accepted successor to Caruso and Gigli among tenors of mid-century, Jussi Bjoerling has been discographed several times before, in more or less detail. The most substantial earlier work was the 1969 Danish Nationaldiskoteket publication, compiled by Eyvind Skandrup Lund and Herbert Rosenberg, which the present authors accurately characterize as "comprehensive and neatly arranged." Its arrangement, in fact, they have basically retained, and wisely so.

Its core is two chronological master lists: the first comprises studio recordings made for publication, the second "live" recordings, films, interviews, and the like. Everything else is, in effect, indices to those lists: by label and catalogue number (not at all incidentally, furnishing coupling information, at least insofar as the couplings are other Bjoerling recordings, and release dates where known), by composer, by title, by associated performers. There is also a concordance between the serial numbers of this discography and the older one. (In the Danish publication, the various indices were bound in a separate insert leaflet; though this facilitated cross-reference, there was also the risk of misplacing the insert and the likelihood that libraries would bind the two booklets back together again anyway.)

Attractively typeset, with strategic use of boldface, the new discography is intelligently laid out, and bound with a plastic comb that looks more durable than many specimens of the breed. I have found it handy to use, easy to read.

It is also remarkably thorough and accurate, built on the firm foundation of earlier work. I have found no new errors introduced into the Nationaldiskoteket's information, and almost all the additions and corrections that I have noted over the years have been incorporated and then some, clarifying the provenance of many private issues, sorting out confusion about duplicate published versions and takes of some familiar arias. Lots of solid work is evident here, both in listening comparisons and in nitty-gritty archival research into primary sources for broadcasts programs and related data. For example, a number of Swedish delayed-tape programs are now assigned their actual recording dates instead of the air dates, and the "live" lists include - with appropriate qualifying question marks - items known to have been broadcast but not yet located.

Alas, the canon of Bjoerling studio recordings has not been greatly increased: one new title, Sjogren's "Ich mochte schweben," from the 1940 New York sessions, and some alternate takes, as well as the 1952 Bjoerling

Trio remake of Sommargladje, pressed in only a single copy as prize in a charitable lottery (but since copied and circulated on several LPs). Footnotes indicate the existence of test pressings where known (I can add that items 126, 128, and take 1 of 164 were all offered for auction in 1970 by a New York shop, but I don't know where they ended up). A number of previously unpublished EMI titles turned up in the 1977 HMV Treasury set (RLS-715), and I suppose still more will eventually be resurrected, under some auspices or other.

The expansion of the "live" list is more substantial; to begin with, Lund and Rosenberg did not include films and interviews, and a good deal of other material has been located, while a few phantom listings for broadcasts (traceable to the pioneering Seemungal discography) have now been definitively exorcised. And of course countless catalogue numbers have been added to the studio and pirate listings, among which I have found no errors so far. Some indication of the compilers' scrupulousness is afforded by the page listing "Discs and tapes which the authors have not seen", and the introduction gives further evidence of the high evidential standards applied.

The introduction, preceded by a useful biographical sketch, also analyzes Bjoerling's recordings in relation to his active repertory. From this it emerges that all of the 12 operas in his regular theatrical repertory during the 1940s and '50s survive in some recorded form, and by far the greater part of his concert repertory as well.

To maintain my reputation as a nit-picker, let me note that the edition of "Le Reve" from Manon (discography item 5101) published on EJS-252 omits the recitative ("Instant charmant") found on the original broadcast -- but that's a small harvest of nits indeed. Built on solid earlier work, this discography is even solidier, and a model of how to do it.

David Hamilton

The following statement has been submitted by Mr. Harald Henrysson regarding the authorship of A Jussi Bjoerling Discography. The Editor takes no side in this dispute and prints Mr. Henrysson's letter as a matter of record.

"This work was initiated by me some ten years ago. All the time, I led the compilation work while Porter, since 1973, contributed with important material, research and comments. In 1975, I accepted Porter as co-author on certain conditions, and we agreed that the work should be published by the Swedish Music History Archive (SMA), Stockholm, when the economic prerequisites were at hand. No other publisher was discussed. During a vast correspondence, we had in detail agreed upon the lay-out of the manuscript, including the title: "Jussi Bjoerling's Recordings: A Phonography by Harald Henrysson and Jack W. Porter."

The publication circumstances of the present volume are such that I would like to make the following clarification. This edition was produced by Porter without either my knowledge or consent from a photo-ready copy of the manuscript which I had sent over to him for checking. Porter has arbitrarily changed the title, the order of authors' names and the foreword. He has not had access to all my corrections and additions and I cannot take responsibility for all details in the text. No economic compensation for this publication has been offered either to me or to the SMA.

The originally planned issue has now been delayed by the complicated legal and economic situation caused by Porter's arbitrary action. I hope to publish in the near future a revised and completed edition in English. I will be grateful for any additional information from readers of this journal which might be of value for the revised edition."

Yours sincerely,

Harald Henrysson