

A TRIBUTE TO JUSSI BJÖRLING



MATS CARLSSON, TENOR
LOVE DERWINGER, PIANO
BERTIL BENGTTSSON, LECTURER

www.lsa.umich.edu/german



The Scandinavian Program is
proud to present the
Annual Signe Karlström Event:

A Tribute to Jussi Björling

November 5, 2011, 7:00 pm.
Kerrytown Concert House

415 N. 4th Avenue

Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Tickets available through KCH. Please call
734-769-2999; email kch@kerrytown.com

Jussi Björling (1911-1960) possessed arguably the greatest operatic voice of the 20th century. His musical legacy will be commemorated in his centennial year with a thrilling combination of live vocal performances by Mats Carlsson, leading tenor of the Swedish Royal Opera, and carefully selected recordings and a slide show compiled and presented by Björling expert, Bertil Bengtsson. The audience will be taken on a fascinating and moving journey through the life of this incomparable artist. If you have not heard the voice of Björling before, be prepared for a life-changing experience. Do not miss this unique event.

Reception Following

Sponsored by the Signe Karlström Fund, SWEA Michigan, Detroit Swedish Foundation, and The Jenny Lind Club

Tickets are:

\$30 for row 1 and 2; \$20 for row 3-5;
\$15 for general admission;
\$10 for students.

For additional information, please contact Johanna Eriksson at
johannae@umich.edu

Department of
Germanic Languages & Literatures



M UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Jussi Björling (1911-1960). Sweden's Jussi Björling was one of the most beloved vocal artists of the 20th century. His voice had a silvery brilliance of tone and a highly individual vocal timbre, laced with melancholy, that could move an audience to tears. A 1931 Copenhagen reviewer set the tone for what would be a lifetime of glowing accolades: "he sings so your heart melts, with a voice fresh and strong, a glowing lyric tenor with the most beautiful timbre, with both softness



and power ... a more perfect voice than Jussi Björling's does not exist. Nature has given him everything." Björling sang with impeccable artistry, combining richness of tone, consistency of tone color throughout his range, the ability to shape and phrase across all dynamic levels, amazing breath control, rhythmic and tonal precision, shimmering high notes, and great emotional depth.

Together with his brothers Olle and Gösta, Jussi made his public debut at the age of four in Örebro, and his operatic debut at the age of 19. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1938 at the age of 27 and, except for the war years, sang there for the next 20 years. He was equally at home in both the opera house and concert hall. He passed away in his sleep at his summer home on the island of Siarö in the Swedish archipelago on September 9, 1960. Although only 49 years of age, he had spent 44 of those years singing in public. His untimely loss was deeply felt throughout the musical world. Today, his legacy is honored and preserved by the Jussi Björling Society-USA, the Scandinavian Jussi Björling Sällskapet, and the U.K.'s Jussi Björling Appreciation Society. In 1998, 38 years after his death, a team of 25 music critics assembled by Classic CD magazine in the U.K. ranked Jussi Björling as the greatest singer of the 20th century, and ahead of such famous tenors as Plácido Domingo (6), Enrico Caruso (7), Beniamino Gigli (11) and Luciano Pavarotti (19). He left an enormous legacy of recordings, including complete operas, oratorios, arias, lieder, English and Scandinavian songs.

Mats Carlsson, Tenor. In recent years Mats Carlsson has established himself as one of the most sought after tenors in Sweden in opera, oratorio, and recital. As the first recipient of the Scandinavian Jussi Björling Society Prize in 2008, he has been praised for his shimmering Nordic timbre and ringing high notes coupled with an Italianate style.



His roles at the Swedish Royal Opera include Romeo, the Duke in Rigoletto, Faust, Don Jose, Pinkerton, Ernesto, and Enzo Grimaldo, among others. In recent years, his career has taken him to concert halls in Europe, India, and the United States. He has performed at two conferences of the Jussi Björling Society-USA and was guest soloist with the American Union of Swedish Singers. One reviewer wrote that: "Carlsson's crystal clear diction and perfect blend of light and dark timbre of

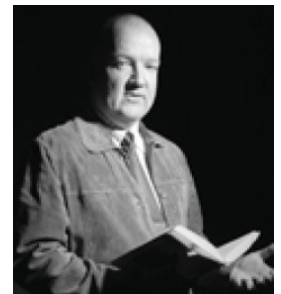
his voice can compare to Set Svanholm and Fritz Wunderlich was an extraordinary surprise." Noted Swedish soprano Kerstin Meyer described him as "one of the most promising tenors in the world." His seven concert American tour speaks to his great admiration for Jussi Björling. For samples of Mr. Carlsson's singing, visit his web site at: www.matscarlsson.net/en/listen.asp

Bertil Bengtsson, Lecturer. A seasoned lecturer, Bertil Bengtsson is a cofounder of the Scandinavian Jussi Björling Society and a longstanding consultant with the Jussi Björling museum in the singer's hometown of Borlänge, Sweden. A leading Jussicologist, Bertil has studied and researched in great depth the life and career of Jussi Björling as well as other great singers of the past including Enrico Caruso. Bertil's international lecture venues include the Smithsonian Institution, Vocal Arts Society and Finlandia Foundation; Gustavus Adolphus College, Minnesota; Friends of



English National Opera, London; The St. Olav, and Kirsten Flagstad Festivals (both in Norway). Bertil has also produced radio programs and articles about Jussi Björling as well as other singers.

Love Derwinger, Accompanist. Love Derwinger is regarded as one of Sweden's leading pianists. Born in 1966, Derwinger made his debut at 16, as soloist in Liszt's Second Piano Concerto. Since then he has given recitals throughout Europe, USA, Canada, Japan, Middle East and South America and has been soloist with the major orchestras in Scandinavia and Europe. Derwinger is also the regular pianist of the world-famous soprano Barbara Hendricks. He has made over thirty recordings on the labels BIS, CPO and others including his critically acclaimed performances of the original version of the Grieg Piano Concerto and Max Reger Piano Concerto. According to one reviewer: "Love Derwinger is perhaps the most original and interesting pianistic personality of his generation."



The **Signe Karlström** Event was inaugurated in 1989 in honor of Signe Karlström and her family, who have been great benefactors of the University of Michigan's Scandinavian program. Originally an annual lecture, the format was extended in 2000 to allow for a variety of cultural events.

For additional information, please contact Johanna Eriksson at johanna@umich.edu