

# **Jussi Björling: A Chronology**

## **Complete list of known singing performances 1915-1960**

### **Foreword**

This chronology lists 3180 performances by Jussi Björling, of which no fewer than 1008 as a child or teenager during the years 1915-1927. The chronology is much more complete than the earlier versions published by Harald Henrysson in his *A Jussi Björling Phonography* (1993) and as an appendix to *Jussi* by Anna-Lisa Björling & Andrew Farkas (1996). After those publications, research has proceeded in close collaboration between us, using as a base the Jussi Björling Museum, which opened in 1994 but closed in 2021. Documentation of the research is available in the museum's archive, now preserved at the Borlänge Municipal Library. We thank Bertil Bengtsson, Roland Johansson, Jan-Olof Damberg, Harold Löwing and Ulla Moulvad for important help. In 2010 we already published a version of this chronology in the Swedish book *Jussi: Sången, människan, bilderna*, edited by Jacob Forsell, but it has here been re-edited to some extent, and 177 appearances have been added.

Lacking diaries or calendars, and with touring schedules for only a part of the American tours (nothing from 1937-41) the work has been very time-consuming and in large part based on an ongoing perusal of microfilmed newspapers. That work is now becoming easier with the digitization of many newspapers, which has made them more easily searchable and which is sure to expand the chronology still more.

It is now possible to present nearly all of the Björling brothers' extensive touring as children, under their father's direction until his death in 1926 and a year thereafter. This sheds light on an interesting part of Jussi Björling's career, with few comparisons among other great artists. We have tried to establish the composition of David's family ensemble on every occasion, as far as sources permit.

The chronology of Jussi Björling's performances will never be quite complete (though it may be as far as opera performances are concerned). During the childhood tours, for which newspapers have been the dominant source, other recitals were given which were only announced with no longer existing posters (for example during the boys' last tour in Värmland the Summer of 1927). Since much material from the US 1919-1921 is hard to come by, mapping of this tour is hardly complete. David Björling claimed to have given about 300 recitals, but we have so far only documented 156. (See further: Harald Henrysson, *David Björling and His Sons in America: A Musical Family Saga Begins, 1899-1921*. Förlags AB Björnen, Borlänge, 2019.) There is also a gap in the chronology from February to September of 1925, which we cannot explain. Of course, appearances both during the early tours and later which are included based on advertisements or other press announcements, may have been cancelled without any way of knowing that.

Harald Henrysson

Roger Alderstrand

## Introduction

The chronology includes public events, or events arranged for a special audience, as well as broadcasts with or without an audience in the studio---even if pre-recorded. Gramophone and film recordings are not included (for those, see Harald Henrysson's *A Jussi Björling Phonography*, link here: [Recordings](#)), nor are situations where it is known that Jussi Björling sang "spontaneously" --- for instance, private dinners.

Information which can be translated is given as a rule in two languages, first in Swedish and then in English, separated by a slash. For performances in countries with other languages, cities, venues, choruses and orchestras are first written in the local language, then in translation to Swedish and English; information originating in English is not translated into Swedish. "Jussi Björling" is always abbreviated "JB."

The following information about performances is given:

- *Date* (year, with the two last figures/month/day, for example: 500422). When more than one performance took place on the same day, they are separated by -1, -2 or -3.
- *Place*. After Swedish place-names, the present-day name of the municipality follows [in brackets]. Place names in the US and Canada are followed by an abbreviation for their respective states and provinces.
- *Venue*.
- *Description of a performance*, for example as concert or recital (or special arrangements like "festival banquet", "music service", etc.), or with an opera or operetta's name (original title followed by the title in Swedish and English, even if the original title was used in the US or Britain), its composer and JB's role. "Recital" is generally used when JB sings as a member of the family group which his father founded in 1915 and which was dissolved in 1927, or later when he sings alone or together with one or a few other singers or instrumentalists, with piano or organ accompaniment. "Concert" is generally used when he sings with orchestra accompaniment, or with several other artists. Further information is often given, such as if the performance was part of a larger event, who the arrangers were, the purpose for charity performances, etc.
- *Names of contributing soloists or choruses*. For operas and operettas all other singers in the respective casts are named, followed (within parentheses) by their role-names in Swedish and English. Main roles are first, followed (after a semicolon) by secondary roles, both groups listing female singers first. Other participants in concerts or other programs, are named as a rule if not more than three. When JB performed together with other soloists or choruses, it is specified whether he also joined them in the musical performance or only sang solo. Duets were normally included when performing with one partner; when not, this is noted. If there were several other soloists, it is stated when JB joined them in individual numbers.
- *Accompaniment*, when known. Especially for early performances with the family ensemble, the pianist's name is often missing. When JB sang with both orchestra and pianist at the same performance, the conductor and orchestra are listed first, the pianist after. If the accompanist's name cannot be verified, but is very likely, it is added with a question mark. For opera performances with the institution's own orchestra and chorus, their names are not added, only the name of the conductor.
- *Recording numbers*. For performances, which are as a whole or to some part preserved as a recording, the number in the latest version of *A Jussi Björling Phonography* (link here: [Recordings](#)) follows at the end of the description. It is written in bold type in parenthesis, for example: **(41.01)**.

