

# Alan Lindquest

by David L. Jones



Alan Lindquest's first two teachers in Chicago were Garcia-trained. His vocal study began when he was 15 years of age. After hearing his beautiful tenor voice, the founders of Sears Roebuck and Company decided to fund his vocal studies.

Born of Swedish parents in 1891, Lindquest's love of singing was nurtured by his mother. So it is no surprise that he evolved from his early concert years as Thomas Edison's favorite tenor on the Edison recording label. It was his coaching in 1917 with Enrico Caruso who inspired him to learn more of the Italian School of singing. As his concert and recording career grew during the 1920's and early 1930's, Lindquest observed that many world-famous singers were receiving their training in Sweden. He was so curious about this training that he decided to travel to Stockholm in 1938 to study.

His studies involved two major teachers in Stockholm; Joseph Hislop, himself a famous tenor of the day and teacher of Jussi Bjoerling, and Mme. Inge Isene, herself a famous dramatic soprano and teacher of Kirsten Flagstad. Isene took over the role of "listening ears" to Flagstad after her major technical, Dr. Gillis Bratt, died in 1928. Lindquest studied for fourteen months until Hitler invaded Poland. During this period of time however, he gained much of his technical understanding of the voice and he used this information as a great foundation for his teaching career. He studied at the "Musikaliska Akadamen", where he had won a research scholarship grant.

Dr. Gillis Bratt, teacher of Kirsten Flagstad and Joseph Hislop, had studied with Sigmund Freud and Manuel Garcia. Believing that singing had much to do with psychology, Dr. Bratt found it only fitting to study psychology and singing at the same time.

Dr. Bratt was a controversial figure. He was a hard-driving teacher and was aggressive by nature. When Flagstad auditioned for him in 1916, he asked, "Have you ever sung in public?" After she had answered in the positive, he stated that "no one could have heard her, because she had the voice of a child". He also said that her "vocal cords leaked too much breath" and this defect he could remedy. Flagstad was very angry at first, however, she studied with Dr. Bratt twice a week. Indeed, her voice grew twice its previous size in three months. Dr. Bratt taught Flagstad what he called "ahning" which combined the "a" vowel with the "ring" that most of the Scandinavian singers had in their sound. It was Dr. Gillis Bratt who prepared her for a world-class career as a dramatic soprano.

It was fortunate indeed that I met and studied with Alan Lindquest in 1979. He was a generous and kind man who offered all the vocal treasures of his almost 90 years. At times I could not believe I was in the room with a man who had coached the young Birgit Nilsson in Stockholm in 1938, had himself studied with the great teachers of the world, not to mention his coaching with Enrico Caruso himself. Alan Lindquest played a major role in saving this school of singing from extinction. He combined what he had learned from Isene and Hislop with his observation of Maestro Romani, teacher of Gigli. Lindquest also adopted breathing techniques from his study with Mme. Novikova. Few singers and teachers today know of this technique which adopts the beauty of color of the Swedish language and the brilliance of the Italian School.

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