

Jenny Lind

World Reknowned Singer

by Donald Yates

It is a strange phenomenon, looking back in history 150 years. Today you can purchase a compact disc of singer, Brittany Spears, but when our story begins, there was no recorded music any where in the world. The phonograph was invented much later by Thomas Edison, an Ohio inventor. Her pictures were hand drawn lithographs and hand painted by artisans.

Jenny Lind was born on October 6, 1820, in Stockholm, Sweden. Jenny Lind's full name was Johanna Marie Lind. She sang her first opera at age seventeen, in Stockholm, Sweden.

Her parents were entertainers and Jenny played the piano as a child. She later performed in Swedish Operas.

All of Europe was enchanted by her beautiful, unique voice. As indicated, technology followed too late, and her voice was never recorded. Jenny Lind Fever swept throughout Europe. Queen Victoria attended a Jenny Lind Performance on April 22, 1846 and stated that Jenny had the most exquisite, powerful, and unique voice.

Jenny made her American debut at the Castle Garden Theater in New York City on September 11, 1850.

Jenny Lind had a natural aptitude for music, and attended the Royal Theater School in London. She studied piano, acting, singing, languages, and dancing. Jenny had a sweet, unique, soprano voice and she soon became the most popular singer throughout Europe. Jenny later gained a reputation as the Greatest Artistic Performer in the World.

Jenny Lind was known throughout Europe as "The Swedish Nightingale." Jenny Lind was greeted by four thousand people who had been enticed to meet her, by Phineas T. Barnum's press stories.

Interestingly, a New York Hudson River Steamer was named the "JENNY LIND" prior to her arrival. This ship was owned by the American Steamboat Company of New York. An artistic rendering of the "JENNY LIND" was painted in 1850 by the Bard Brothers, this ship may have been built in 1845.

Jenny Lind's opening concert was to take place in New York's Castle Garden. Her manager, Phineas T. Barnum auctioned off the first ticket, which was purchased by John Genin, a New York Hatter, for \$225. The remaining tickets sold for an average price of \$6.38.

Let's take a further step back in time and ponder the ship on which Jenny Lind crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Jenny's ship was casually named the "ATLANTIC". She was the first ship built by the Collins Line.

Fig. 1



The Collins Line was founded by Edwin Knight Collins in 1836. Edwin was born in 1802 and died in 1878.

Collins early sailing type ships took the main Atlantic crossing from New York to London. Collins won the U.S. Postal Service contract to carry mail across the Atlantic, in March 1847.

The Collins Line ordered four ships to meet their Postal Service Contract. All four were launched in 1850. These were the ATLANTIC, ARCTIC, PACIFIC, and BALTIC. They pushed these ships very hard, at full speed and subsequently made frequent repairs.

At the end of her first year, in December of 1850, the main shaft of the ATLANTIC broke from fatigue and she foundered 900 miles from Halifax. This was only three months after Jenny Lind's first crossing.

The ATLANTIC'S sister ship, the ARCTIC had a few good years and a good reputation for fast Atlantic Ocean crossings. She hit a few rocks, but was not seriously damaged.

In September 1854, the ARCTIC sailed from Liverpool to New York. Heavy

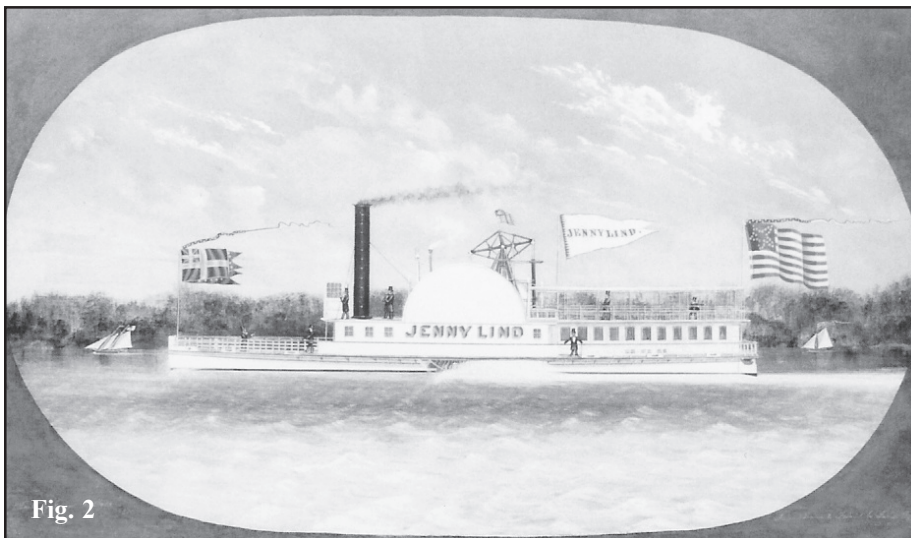


Fig. 2

fog along the US coast was treacherous. She sailed up to Newfoundland to get out of the fog.

The ARCTIC crashed into the schooner, VESTA in September, 1854 and was totally destroyed. 365 people died including all of the women and children. The men ran to the lifeboats first and many of them survived. That was the worst US maritime disaster at that time.

The PACIFIC also came to a horrible end when its boiler exploded in the middle of the ocean in 1856. 320 passengers died.

Another bad omen! The White Star Line had built a 420 foot long new ship in 1871, again named the ATLANTIC. In March, 1873, the ATLANTIC ran out of coal due to rough seas. She crashed into the rocks of Nova Scotia and 585 people lost their lives.

Jenny's New York performance was exquisite. Her first concert in the U.S. included beautiful songs by Bellini and Rossini and "The Headsman's Song," also known as the "Echo Song," for which Jenny was most famous throughout Sweden and Europe.

Jenny spent a year in the U.S. on tour. Her upper class audience included President Millard Fillmore, Politician Henry Clay, General Winfield Scott and authors: Washington Irving, Daniel Webster and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Jenny was on tour of many cities including New York, Wilmington, Boston and Richmond. The crowds formed long lines to purchase tickets. P. T. Barnum was always the showman. Jenny and Mr. Barnum parted company because of

different expectations and promises. This was in June, 1851 after her 93rd concert in their contract.

In less than a year, Barnum had made \$535,000 and Jenny was paid \$176,000. She donated \$10,000 of her first concert to charity.

Jenny continued to tour with her troupe and performed in Canada, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut, including Hartford and New Haven.

Jenny Lind's orchestra conductor, Julius Benedict, accepted a new position and sailed back home to London. Jenny wrote to her friend, Otto Goldschmidt, a gifted German pianist and asked him to join her orchestra in the U.S. and he accepted.

Jenny and Otto had long admired each other and were married in February, 1852, in Boston. They returned to Europe later that year, sailing home on the repaired ATLANTIC. I wonder if she knew about all of the safety risks of the Collins Steamship Line.

Jenny continued to perform through 1883. She died on November 2, 1887 and was buried in England. She was only 63 years old.

Phineas T. Barnum was always looking for promotional activities. Barnum purchased a copper plate engraving of Jenny's likeness from a Swedish artist and promoted Jenny Lind for six months prior to her arrival in New York..

At the time of Jenny's arrival, there were Jenny Lind shawls, Jenny Lind bonnets, Jenny Lind gloves, riding habits, mantillas, robes, chairs, sofas, and pianos. Jenny arrived to a splendid celebration of thousands of fans.

One of the popular Jenny Lind souvenirs was whiskey flasks. What a great way to celebrate! At least six glass houses created twelve styles of Jenny Lind flasks.

The Swedish copper plate image that P.T. Barnum had was probably used by the glass mold designers. Most of her portraits look similar.

Of the twelve styles of Jenny Lind flasks, one is a pint, two are quarts, and nine are calabashes. Calabash bottles were popular in the 1850s. They were basically spherical in shape at the bottom, attached to a very long and slender neck. A calabash is a tropical fruit which hangs on a calabash tree, perhaps nine inches

Fig. 4



in diameter and could be dried and used as a dish.

The first Jenny Lind flask has her image on the front and also has a banner with her name on it. She is surrounded by a wreath of lotus leaves. On the back of the flask there is an image of a factory building. This is the Fislerville Glassworks. It was located in Fislerville, New Jersey, proprietor Jacob P. Fisler. Their glassworks was started in 1850 and was shut down in 1856.

Thomas Stranger purchased a Jenny Lind flask mold in September of 1854 from Samuel Huffsey, who owned a store in Philadelphia and was a broker for local glass factories, supplying equipment, tools and materials. Thomas Stranger's glass factory was called the Isabella Glass Factory and was located in New Brooklyn, New Jersey.

WHAT SINGER JENNY LIND TAUGHT US

CENTURY MAGAZINE – May 1897

Jenny Lind left deep impressions upon her audience. She had four outstanding qualities in one person. A voice unique in power, musical beauty, as well as a dramatic quality. She had perfect musicianship; unusual intellectual culture; and spirit of generosity, kindness; and high moral values. Jenny had insight into a variety of emotions, especially in religious music, possessed by her alone.

Jenny reviewed each song from the perspective of a Master Musician. She developed its dramatic possibilities as a woman of ardent temperament, enhanced

Fig. 3



by high social culture. Her own inner spirit developed a group of expressions of an outstanding gracious character. The author of this article was an artist, who was profoundly impressed with Jenny Lind.

Those people who have never heard Jenny, are prone to think that the hold which she possesses upon the imagination and spirit of those who have heard her is no proof of her greatness. She is still supreme in memory because she was the first great artist that sang to everyone.

Jenny Lind was different than all other great artists. She could not be compared with any other singer. Her art was completely different in its presentation. The people were very excited about Jenny.

Wherever she sang, every window and roof for blocks from the concert hall, was packed with people waiting to watch her pass by. In America were similar scenes of London, where the frantic rush of fans fighting their way toward her, in the concert hall had developed a new name: "The Jenny Lind Crush"

Jenny Lind united in her concerts three fields of music usually quite distinct, and was equally excellent in all. She sang the greatest of the oratorio arias, as well as a variety of folk music. In all of her music there was a pathetic attribute in her voice that vibrated in the feelings, often to tears.

The author was a violinist, who performed with Jenny at Tripler Hall. Jenny had light blue eyes, and her hair was natural Swedish blond. She gave the impression of great dignity. Her manners were that of the nobility. Very simple, modest, and yet stately.

Jenny's voice was a soprano, in richness more like singer Parepa's than that of any other modern singer. Her voice had the timbre like a clarinet, penetrating and tearful and sweet.

When Jenny sang in Rochester, people paid for standing room in the arcade, across the hall from Corinthian Hall. She possessed two qualities of voice – one somber, the second of a clear sunny ring, brilliant and sparkling.

Jenny Lind was a perfect opera singer for Meyerbeer, whose strong friendship with her is well known. In her operatic singing she threw herself with absolute concentration into each character, and



Fig. 5

sang with alternate tenderness and fire of passionate intensity.

Jenny was a close friend of composer, Mendelssohn. He himself taught Jenny the spirit and expression of oratorio music. He quotes her as a Member of that Church Invisible, and delighted in her splendid enthusiasm.

She was only fulfilling his inspiration when she gave vent to the exaltation of artistic – religious feeling in such strains. "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth", she sang with such a fever of religious passion that it caught one up, as it seemed, into a heavenly experience.

Jenny's presentation of music was grafted upon a religious nature so deep that practical Christianity was the master spring of her life. Jenny – a ballet dancer as a child, a comedy actress in her teens, a highly passionate, and yet feminine in her tragic roles of opera – was in America to be the daughter of a Lutheran Minister.

Jenny's childlike sympathy of character came out so clearly in her ballad singing. She reveled in the ventriloquial displays of her bird song; she threw herself with delight into the homely lieds of Sweden.

No one ever heard her sing "Home Sweet Home" without crying. The quality of tone as she sang the words wrung your heart. She was perfectly original in all of her songs.

The great power of her voice made it impossible for her to equal the coloratura of singers possessing a lighter timbre. This great voice she had under very high cultivation. She sang clearly without a tremolo, and she could pass from the most tremendous crescendo to the most delicate pianissimo. Her climax in singing "Agatha" was the acme of passion.

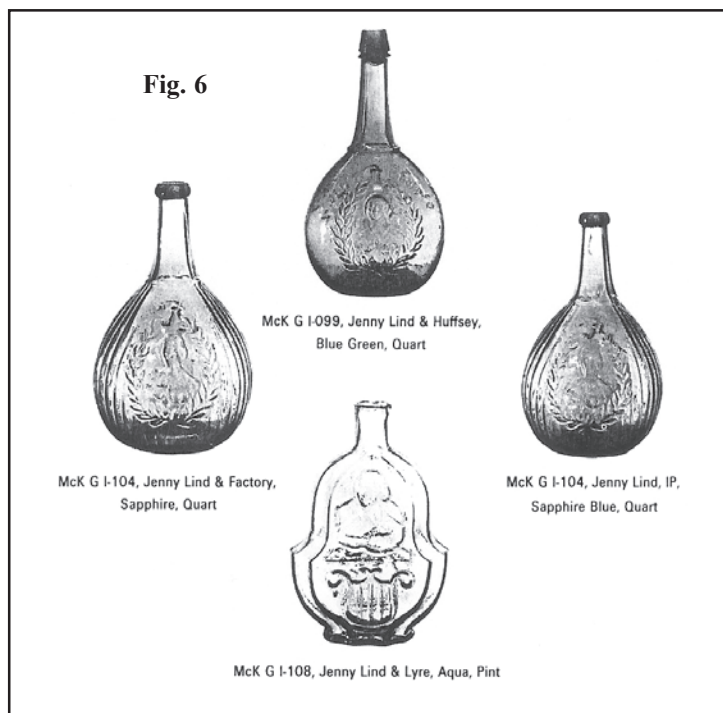
"I was present at Jenny Lind's last concert. The late Mr. Scharfenberg, one of New York's pioneer musicians, sat beside me. 'What do you think?' I asked him. 'She will never sing again,' he answered. Glorious as her voice still was, there had come a veil over the upper tones, once so brilliant; the delicacy and sympathy were gone from the lower – they had become harsh and cold.

"I did not hear her voice in the future triumphs in oratorio of which her Biographers write so enthusiastically. To my mind, her fiery temperament, which she had thrown against her voice, had worn her and her voice out together. The American Tour had destroyed her."

– Henri Appi

WHAT JENNY LIND DID FOR AMERICA

Jenny Lind's extensive travel throughout America was quite successful. Her charitable contributions developed a chain of many institutions where orphans and sick people were nurtured. The rapture of her music created a standard



by which the success of every other artist has been measured.

The tradition of her pure and noble womanhood has remained to music a bulwark against which the scandal and corruption of the operatic and musical world has broken in vain.

In the memory of every person who heard her, her singing has rung to the end of life as one perfect and sublime revelation of the beauty and ecstasy of music itself.

America owes Jenny one other and greater debt that has never been recognized. She brought the musical temperament of America to an awakening. Her presence was the supreme moment in our national heritage, when young America, ardent, enthusiastic, impressible, heard and knew its own capacity for musical feeling forever.

From that time it had received or denied the world's greatest artists, who traveled here, great in its own consciousness of its artistic needs and temperament.

In the preceding article, Mr. Appy has summed up the musical attributes of Jenny Lind, and if we apply his analysis to the effect of these gifts on ourselves, it will help us to see ourselves from the outside.

Our nation left home to plant itself in the woods for a religious idea; that fought for a moral idea, a bloody and devastating Civil War. It builds its homes on an ideal of love, and has taught its sons and daughters to believe that romance is a short word for the happy end of a true affection.

This is the world to which Jenny sang. And since then, whatever following musicians may have had for other gifts, it is the idealist and the poet who have gathered the consent of the whole nation. No longer – America has idealized the character of life and of every genius it has loved from that day to this.

The second criterion of our behavior follows from the original. While Jenny was the one perfect singer for the composer of "Robert Le Diable", she was surely the greatest interpreter of such strains.

It is a singer of religious music that America loves most. She touched the master chord of a profoundly religious people, and this is the highest cause and

revelation of music, will be most potent to its temperament.

Hans Christian Anderson stated that through her he had learned that one must forget ones self in the service of the Supreme. "No books, no men, have had a more ennobling influence on me as a poet than Jenny Lind." In fact, she revered her own art, not only as a musician, but as a dramatic artist.

Jenny was clear in all of her interpretations. She maintained her dramatic power in reserve, with a reticence which none but the greatest artists are ever known to exercise. This was at the predetermined situations in which she felt that it could be successfully exhibited with logical consistency and the deepest reverence for dramatic truth.

Her art is of a very intellectual nature. With this honesty, she brought Hans Christian Anderson to tears, while on stage. It would be an exaggeration to say that no American audience has ever confused blind temperament with dramatic expertise: but it is certain that America has never for very long mistaken temperamental excess for the ecstasy developed by such spiritual art as Jenny Lind's.

The depth and intensity of passionate feeling that America recognized in her, became the criterion of its future favor, and precisely a criterion of our nation itself. Less fire than her climax, more apathy than her silence has never since convinced. From then until now, every artist who lived among us has been forced by his listeners into greater heights and depths in his effort to win his public. Without temperament, no one wins American listeners.

Jenny had her greatest success when she captivated the musical world by expressing the greatest types and revelations of character. Her artistic displays were essentially normal, healthy and direct.

In "La Sonnambula", her dignity and innocence convinced her listeners and brought them to tears. She appealed to the very feelings and emotions that not only are most natural, but are most sedulously cultivated, in American Women. Let America sing her own song on the high themes where first she found her voice.

I have shown the choice

which Jenny made of the emotions, which she would impose on her listeners. It allows that she was sincere. If she worked up a climax, she did it within the intention of the composer. She could express sympathy in a true manner. It was the character of Jenny Lind behind her music that made her America's Ideal.

Lastly – and this is the one true characteristic of the highest art, Jenny was full of sweetness and kindly light. Her message was optimistic. The characteristics presented in this article are those of the very heart of American temperament, and that has determined the success of every visiting artist. Let them speak simply and directly and we will listen.

References:

Smith, Fanny Morris. *Century Magazine*, May, 1897.

Photos:

Figure 1: 1847 painting of Jenny Lind by R. J. Lane, Esq.

Figure 2: Steamship "Jenny Lind" painted by Bard Bros., 1850.

Figure 3: 1850 lithograph of Jenny Lind, Bard, N.Y..

Figure 4: 1850 daguerreotype by Root.

Figure 5: Queen Victoria (with the Prince of Wales) painting, 1846.

Figure 6: *Kovel's Antique Bottles Price Guide*, Jenny Lind flasks, 1985.

Figure 7: Jenny Lind flask, Glass Works Auction.

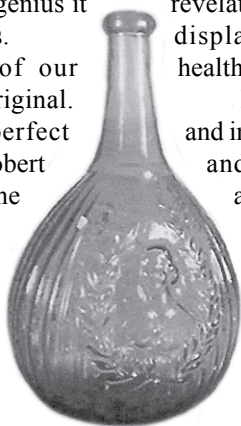


Fig. 7

Donald Yates
8300 River Corners Road
Homerville, OH 44235
donaldbetsyates@earthlink.net