

## Opera on the Move in the Nordic Countries during the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century

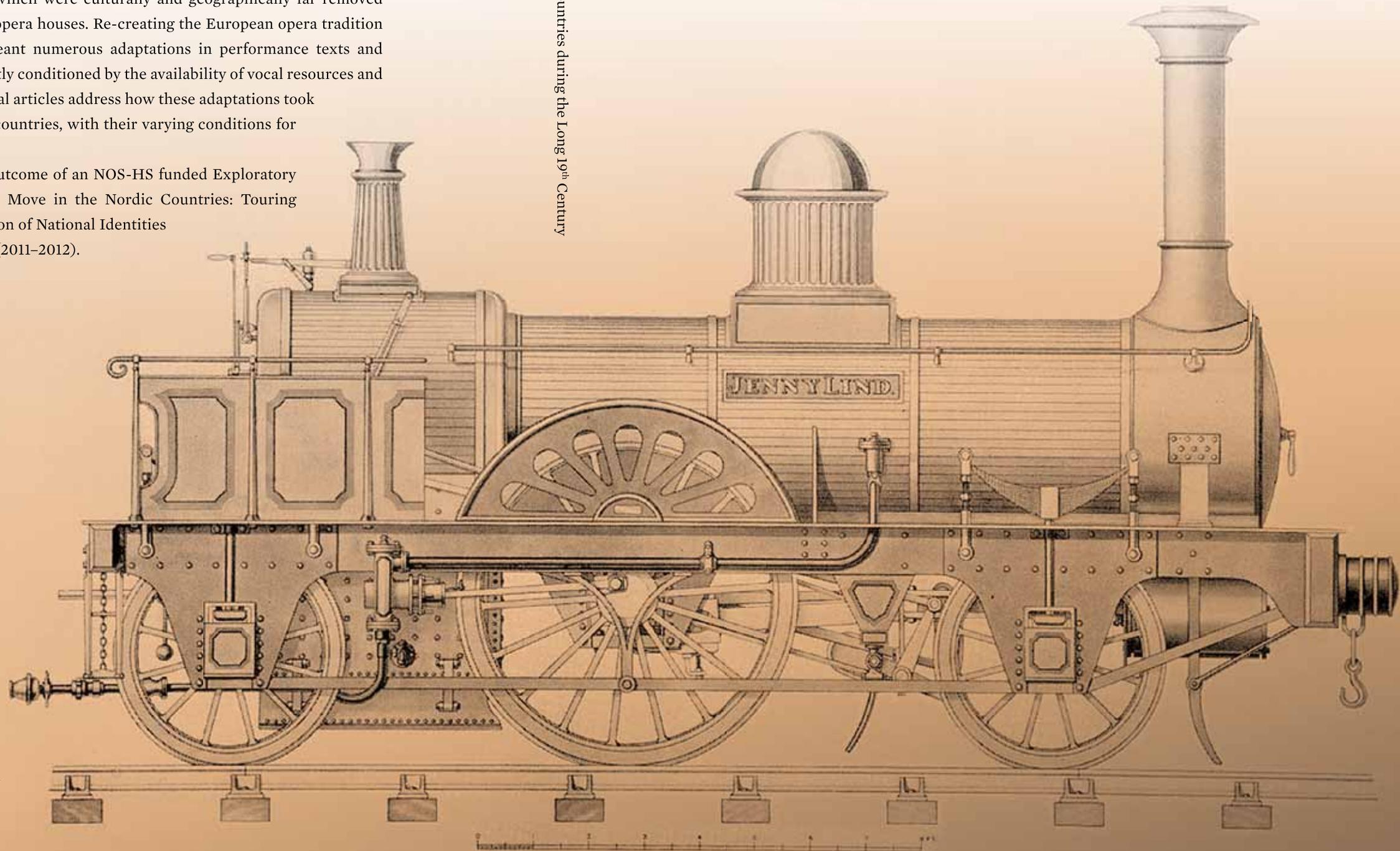
*Edited by Anne Sivuoja, Owe Ander, Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen and Jens Hesselager*

The purpose of this anthology is to foster a new understanding of opera as a cultural practice in the Nordic countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Methodological transnationalism forms a strong undercurrent here, directing interest towards the European operatic tradition and how its canons were disseminated and adapted in the Nordic countries, which were culturally and geographically far removed from the great European opera houses. Re-creating the European opera tradition in the Nordic context meant numerous adaptations in performance texts and staging and was significantly conditioned by the availability of vocal resources and instrumentalists. Individual articles address how these adaptations took place in different Nordic countries, with their varying conditions for performing opera.

This collection is an outcome of an NOS-HS funded Exploratory Workshop “Opera on the Move in the Nordic Countries: Touring Artists and the Construction of National Identities in the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century” (2011–2012).

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in the Nordic Countries  
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Anne Sivuoja, Owe Ander, Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen and  
Jens Hesselager (editors)

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# Contents

Anne Sivuoja with Owe Ander, Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen and Jens Hesselager  
Introduction 7

## Voices

Juvas Marianne Liljas  
The Björling 'Opera'. A children's Nursery Academy and an Italian  
Conservatory in Miniature 17

Marianne Tråvén  
Formed to Perform. Educating Students at the Opera School in  
Stockholm 1773–1850 50

Ingela Tägil  
Jenny Lind's Vocal Strain 83

## Theaters

Anne Reese Willén  
Music at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm during the Mid-  
nineteenth Century . The Musical Repertoire and Contemporary  
Criticism of the Position of the Opera as a Music Institution  
within the Musical Life of Stockholm 95

Pentti Paavolainen  
 Two Operas or One – or None. Crucial Moments in the  
 Competition for Operatic Audiences in Helsinki in the 1870s 125

Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen  
 Staging a National Language. Opera in Christiania and  
 Helsinki in the 1870s 155

## Performances

Joakim Tillman  
 The Introduction of Richard Wagner's Music Dramas  
 in Stockholm. The Reception of *Die Meistersinger* and  
*Die Walküre* 195

Jens Hesselager  
 Rachel the Jewess in Copenhagen 221

Kristel Pappel  
 Performative Elements and Sources. Verdi and Wagner in a  
 Nineteenth-century City Theatre 250

Camilla Hambro  
 Gendered Agendas and the Representation of Gender in  
 Women Composers' Operas and Theatre Music at the Dawn  
 of the "Women's Century". Case studies of Helena Munktell's *In  
 Florence* (1889) and Tekla Griebel's *The Rose Time* (1895) 271

# Introduction

Anne Sivuoja with

Owe Ander, Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen and Jens Hesselager

The long nineteenth century (1780–1918) was the Golden Age of opera all over Europe, both for composition and for performance. Opera became entertainment for the new bourgeoisie and the educated classes after having been for centuries mainly, although not exclusively, a courtly pleasure. The architectural spaces where operas were performed were amongst the largest secularised rooms in bourgeois society. Always centrally located, the opera theatres offered performance possibilities, not only for opera, but also for other types of musical performances (as Anne Reese Willén shows in this volume).

Accelerating urbanisation and societal and social changes affected the themes, settings and also the censorship of operas; Verdi's operas, for example, were important for the Risorgimento in Italy (and often under the censor's tight control). Elsewhere too opera became an important politico-cultural tool for creating and transmitting appropriate national pasts, presents and futures of different European nations and nation-states, as well as a means of criticising the existing social order. Opera also served as a means to hide politically sensitive issues by re-channelling public attention. All of this could be done in a more disguised form in opera than in

the spoken theatre, where words would provoke the authorities and the public too openly. Opera's overwhelming vocality exceeds the rationale of contents expressed by words alone. All in all, opera as an institution played an important role in the shaping of cultural identities at large, and not just musical identities, but also urban, bourgeois, religious, secular, national and international identities.

Many opera composers in vogue dealt with the themes of nation, language, religion and class in their works, for example, Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, Fromental Halévy, Carl Maria von Weber, Giacomo Meyerbeer, Giuseppe Verdi and later, Richard Wagner. Although many Nordic composers canonised today as the main 'national' composers of their time did not, in fact, take to opera as a central genre (men such as Niels W. Gade, Edvard Grieg and Jean Sibelius), this does not mean that opera played no role in the Nordic countries as a medium for articulating national and other concerns. Imported operas by foreign composers (including those with spoken dialogue – *opéras comiques* and *Singspiele* in translation) may have dominated in this respect, but many Nordic composers, such as Franz Berwald, J.P.E. Hartmann, Henrik Rung, Peter Heise, Waldemar Thrane, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Fredrik Pacius and Oskar Merikanto, contributed to the repertoire with works that may appear peripheral today (perhaps in some cases even justly forgotten), but which nevertheless testify to important cultural processes in the history of the Nordic countries.

Voices as sonorous phenomena are central to opera and, at an individual level, also to singers, whose careers depend on vocal competence. In our visually-orientated culture with its emphasis on written documents, it is all the more challenging in the midst of the empirical material to look for traces left by voices that are now forever silenced. The centrality of voices to opera is not diminished by the fact that very few sound samples were made or preserved from that period; this makes the research even more complex and challenging. Several chapters in this volume respond to such challenges in different ways. Some, for instance, deal with matters of voice training and education in historiographic perspective (see Marianne Tråvén's and Juvas Marianne Liljas' articles); others examine the careers and problems of individual singers and their voices (the focus of Ingela Tägil's and Jens Hesselager's contributions).

Re-creating the European opera tradition in the Nordic context meant manifold adaptations in the performance texts, in staging and in theatrical technology (e.g. scenery) and was significantly conditioned by the availabil-

ity of vocal resources and musicians (for the opera orchestras). Operas from central Europe, often from Paris, were performed in the national languages of the North: Danish, Swedish, Finnish or Norwegian. The translations not only affected the voice-language-musical relationship, but also offered a chance to re-cast the semantic message in a more nuanced way (Marvin 2010; Broman-Kananen 2011). Furthermore, staging an opera in a national language at a local theatre offered a means of enhancing political importance of that particular language, firstly, by making it loudly audible in a public space and secondly, by tying it to central-European urban cultural practice. This tactic was wielded as a cultural instrument in a political power game, for instance, in Kristiania (Oslo) in the conflict between the Norwegian and Danish languages and in Helsinki between Swedish and Finnish (a matter addressed by Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen and Pentti Paavolainen in this volume).

Several European cities, such as Paris and St Petersburg, boasted many opera theatres, which not only guaranteed their audiences a constant flow of opera performances, but also offered opportunities for composers, musicians, singers, stage designers, and the like. But in the Nordic countries, such bounty was generally not the case, as only Sweden (Stockholm) and Denmark (Copenhagen) had long traditions with established opera houses. Finland and Norway each had a discontinuous and episodic opera history with short-lived efforts to establish a permanent institution. In practice, this amounted to a few private opera companies, some of them managed by female opera singers (such as Emmy Achté and Emma Engdahl in Finland and Olefine Moe in Norway), and occasional visits either by private opera troupes or companies based in the neighbouring royal opera houses, such as the Royal Swedish Opera. The result was that novelties from central European stages, particularly Paris, were presented to Danish and Swedish audiences at a relatively quick pace, whereas Norwegian and Finnish audiences were served new operas much more sporadically, as revealed by comparing the repertoires of national opera theatres.

Paradoxical as it may seem, despite national(istic) identity work performed through operas – by institutions such as the Royal *Swedish* Opera or the Royal *Danish* Theatre or the *Finnish* Opera – the opera performances themselves often required singers, particularly prima donnas and tenors, along with orchestral musicians, conductors, vocal coaches (see Marianne Tråvén's article) and other professionals from beyond a nation's borders. Furthermore, as mentioned above, operas performed in the Nordic countries during the long nineteenth century originated to a

very large extent outside the Nordic frontiers, particularly in France, Italy and Germany.

For artists, the whole of Europe (and beyond) was a plausible working area, as musicians were able to take their professional skills across national boundaries with ease. Jenny Lind, Fritz Arlberg, Algot Lange, Linda Roeske-Lund and Ludvig Josephson are a few examples among many. Symptomatically, Jenny Lind's name was adopted for an English steam locomotive in 1847 (see the cover of this anthology). But even those who made their careers mainly or exclusively in their home countries depended, in one way or another, on an international perspective. For instance, many singers pursued their professional training abroad, in Paris, Milan or Dresden, with well-known teachers such as the Garcías (father and son), Pauline Viardot-Garcia, Mathilde Marchesi, the Lampertis (father and son) or Jean Jacques Masset – to name a few. In turn they brought these various pedagogical traditions back home to their own students. In addition, travelling in general became easier and cheaper, owing to an increasingly dense railroad network, which enhanced opportunities to obtain professional experience and know-how abroad (Italy was a preferred destination for many young artists). In this regard, the opera community resembled the transnational societies of pedlars, businessmen and criminals who, according to Clavin (2005), took advantage of their peripatetic way of living and readily moved across borders (see Preston 2001 on travelling opera troupes in the United States). In the Nordic countries a common linguistic background made moving around and working relatively easy, as even in the Finnish Opera Company (1870–1879), which was overtly tied to a Fennoman political programme, the working language, against all odds, was Swedish (as shown by Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen and Pentti Paavolainen in this volume).

As we in this anthology approach opera as a site for cultural practices involving real historical persons, we distance ourselves from the kinds of cultural studies that concentrate on cultural representations enhanced in and by opera (see, for example, Mary Ann Smart, ed. 2000 or Kramer 2007). But, instead of giving an overview of cultural processes extending back more than a hundred years, this anthology addresses particularities: events, productions, guest performances, travelling musicians, personal ties within the opera profession, as well as turning points in individual careers (see, for instance, the articles by Ingela Tägil – “Jenny Lind's Vocal Strain” – as well as Jens Hesselager's on Pauline Rung's career and vocal problems; cf. also Cowgill & Poriss 2012).

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Methodological transnationalism forms a strong undercurrent in our anthology. Understanding opera as a transnational cultural practice (instead of as a strictly national one, enhanced by a nationally motivated approach) directs interest towards the European opera tradition and how its canons were created, disseminated and adapted in the Nordic countries, which were culturally and geographically situated far away from the great European opera houses (for a broader European perspective, cf. Marvin & Poriss 2010; Fauser & Everist, eds. 2009; Poriss 2009; Marvin & Thomas, eds. 2006; Hallman 2002; Everist 2002). For this reason, the political potentials of opera (in gender, language, religion, power) are considered here in relation to transnational repertoires and their particular adaptations in various Nordic countries.

With this choice we join in the criticism of methodological nationalism voiced, among others, by Cohen & O'Connor (2004), Berger & Lorenz (2010) and Kettunen (2008) and distance ourselves from nationalistic historiography (see, particularly Aspelin-Haapkylä 1906–1910 and Pikkanen 2012 for its critique), under whose auspices “nation” and “national” have become naturalising, pre-determined categories, for instance, national opera cultures and national institutions (histories of national opera houses; for example, see Lampila 1997 for Finnish opera as well as Schepelern 1995 and Schiørring 1977–1978 for Danish opera). Furthermore, historiography written from the perspective of methodological nationalism has resulted in national (male) composers being represented as the most important agents within opera culture through their works (Camilla Hambro’s article in this volume offers an alternative view of operatic composition in the Nordic countries). This view, still embarrassingly dominant in the history of music, is under deconstruction in this anthology whereby individual works, such as Wagner’s operas or Halévy’s *La Juive*, still continue to matter, although not as privileged, fixed, autonomous objects within a narrative of their composers and (master)works, but as representatives of a malleable context themselves within a history of music-making that involves events, performances, performers and ideas (see Jens Hesselager’s, Kristel Pappel’s and Joakim Tillman’s articles in this volume; cf. also Marvin & Thomas 2006; Fauser & Everist 2009; Poriss 2009; Rutherford 2009). What also matters are the interconnections between historically constituted formations (Werner & Zimmermann 2006), in this case, the web of opera professionals, including vocal education (see in particular the contributions herein by Juvas Marianne Liljas and Marianne Tråvén as well as Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen).

The national gaze inherent in methodological nationalism has obscured the cross-Nordic contacts of artists, including their tours and the circulation of production ideas within the Nordic countries and beyond, to capitals such as St Petersburg and Riga (a Baltic opera capital). Fennoman historiography, for instance, has blanked out the long period during which Finland was part of Sweden, as well as all that could remind us of this time (Engman 2009). As a result, in the Finnish historiography of opera the European cultural heritage that was transmitted to Finland through Sweden has not been acknowledged. In a history of opera, this has led to a distorted view that needs to be readjusted.

To claim that opera took part in the cultural transfer of values and practices is merely stating the obvious, but what this anthology seeks to address within the select perspective offered by individual articles is how this was done *in practice* in different Nordic countries, where conditions for performing opera varied.

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This collection of articles is an outcome of a NOS-HS funded Exploratory Workshop “Opera on the Move in the Nordic Countries: Touring Artists and the Construction of National Identities in the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century” (2011–2012). The opera research network enhanced by this workshop has worked in tandem with the research project “The Finnish Opera Company (1873–1879) from a Microhistorical Perspective: Performance Practices, Multiple Narrations and a Polyphony of Voices” funded by the Academy of Finland (2010–2013). The two projects found their academic home in the DocMus Doctoral School at the Sibelius Academy (Helsinki), and it is within its Research Publications Series that this anthology is published. Among so many who have helped in shaping this volume we would like to thank the peer reviewers for their contribution in improving the articles and especially Glenda Goss and Joan Nordlund for their help in revising the language of the articles.

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## Summary

The purpose of this anthology is to foster a new understanding of opera as a cultural practice in the Nordic countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Methodological transnationalism forms a strong undercurrent here, directing interest towards the European operatic tradition and how its canons were disseminated and adapted in the Nordic countries, which were culturally and geographically far removed from the great European opera houses. Re-creating the European opera tradition in the Nordic context meant numerous adaptations in performance texts and staging and was significantly conditioned by the availability of vocal resources and instrumentalists. Individual articles address how these adaptations took place in different Nordic countries, with their varying conditions for performing opera.

Voices



# The Björling ‘Opera’

A Children’s Nursery Academy and an Italian Conservatory in Miniature

Juvas Marianne Liljas

In the opera world of the long nineteenth century, stories flourished about sensationally early debuts and the importance of the teaching opera stars had as children. One such star was the Swedish tenor Jussi Björling (1911-1960). The training he received as a child is an interesting and unusually well documented case contributing to the broader context of promoting and educating children during the epoch. Jussi Björling made his formal debut at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm when he was nineteen years old (Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 60).<sup>1</sup> His real debut, however, was in a church when he was four. Together with his brothers, Olle and Gösta, he amazed the audience. The review refers to children performing the songs with authority (*Örebrokuriren* 13/12 1915).<sup>2</sup> The repertoire was unconventional for

<sup>1</sup> Jussi Björling’s debut role was on 20 August 1930 as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* by W.A. Mozart. Before that he played the smaller part of the lamplighter in G. Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*.

<sup>2</sup> This first documented musical performance with the Björling children (13 January 1915) was repeated in an official concert with David Björling’s external pupils. David Björling opened a private practice in his home in Örebro in 1914. Cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 287-297.

such young singers: Olle, six years old, sang “La donna é mobile” from *Rigoletto*, in Italian, and between the songs the three-year-old Gösta turned a somersault on the floor of the choir stalls. By that time the Björling boys already had several years of training in singing from their father (Liljas 2007, p. 235).<sup>3</sup>

An early-established identity appears to have been the key to success for singers throughout history. On the European continent Henriette Sontag (1806-1854) began her singing career as a child, just as Jenny Lind (1820-1887) did in Sweden. Sontag was already singing smaller parts at the age of eight, and made her full debut as a 15-year-old. Later on she was trained in Paris under the tutelage of Manuel García. Another example is the coloratura soprano Adelina Patti (1843-1919), who was born into the Patti family’s opera company and started her opera career as a little girl. She is said to have performed demanding arias at the age of seven, and because of the attention she attracted she saved the company from bankruptcy. Just like the Björling boys she was placed on a table in the concert halls so that the audience would be able to see her better (Fuchs 1963, p. 26). What was apparently common to these early debuts was the informal training carried out in the home. Patti’s parents were both opera singers, and her brother started to teach her in a home environment characterised by singing. She made her debut at the age of 16 in Donizetti’s opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* (ibid., p. 26).

Aspects of informal learning are gaining more and more attention in education research. One reason for this is that such learning mirrors teaching outside of institutions, and affects the field and its capacity for self-understanding (Rostwall & Selander 2008, p. 24). It is an interesting perspective on the domestic opera education that took place in musicians’ homes during the 1800s, and on which there is little documentation (Rosselli 1992, p. 93; Liljas 2007, p. 13f; cf. Jander 1980, p. 342). Tegen (1955) connects the private field of vocal education to the rising interest among the bourgeois in singing combined with a shortage of singing schools. The private music institutes that appeared during the century focused mostly on instrument teaching (Tegen 1955, p. 100). Moreover, there was a general tendency among the upper classes in earlier periods to educate their children at home, which went on long into the twentieth century (Hartman 2005, p. 22-24). In this

<sup>3</sup> “*What is to become of these children?*”: A study of David Björling’s way of teaching and the background to it in older traditions of teaching singing (2007) explored the pedagogy behind David Björling’s education of his children in singing. The intention was to place Björling’s methodology in a historical context. The main starting point was therefore to investigate what pedagogical and didactic traditions had inspired him.

context the “mother educators” Hartman refers to also turns the focus to the mothers of opera singers.

In Stockholm the Berwald and Gelhaar families had daughters who were schooled as opera singers from an early age. The driving force in the Berwald family was the mother, the opera singer Mathilda Charlotta Berwald, née Cohn (1798-1877), who was married to the opera concert master Johan Fredrik Berwald (1787-1861). The story is reminiscent of that of the Björling family: the sisters Fredrique, Julie Mathilda and Hedvig Eleonora performed with their parents on tours and formed a well-known trio for a time.<sup>4</sup> Julie Berwald (1822-1877) had a short but successful career at the Royal Swedish Opera (Broman 1968, pp. 20-21). The Ficker sisters, better known as Charlotta Almlöf (1813-1882) and Mathilda Gelhaar (1814-1889), took child roles, and were enrolled in the school of the Royal Swedish Opera where they received whatever institutional training was offered at the time, in both singing and acting (Berg & Stålberg 1874, p. 137). Mathilda Gelhaar in particular had great success and has been compared with Jenny Lind. She was married to Fredrik Otto Gelhaar (1814-1889), who just like her father Christian Fredrik Ficker was an oboist with the Stockholm Royal Court Orchestra. They had a daughter, Wilhelmina Gelhaar (1837-1923), who rather took over her mother’s career. Her profession as an opera singer started early, and even before her time at the opera school she was playing minor parts on stage (Hedberg 1885, pp. 94-97).

The domestic musical context appeared to be important in the above-mentioned cases. As Sundin (1995, pp. 61, 64) notes, the musical environment has a strong effect on children, and the qualities to which they are continuously exposed are transferred to their own music representation (Sundin 1995). According to Gardner (1994), out-of-the-ordinary musical development demands both a genetic predisposition and a stimulating social-growth milieu (Gardner 1994, p. 103). On a more subtle level, Rosselli (1992), focusing on how Italian opera singers were trained from 1600 up until the twentieth century, suggests that singers are born into their profession to a lesser extent than instrumentalists because of the physical demands of opera singing, which are not necessarily connected to family conditions (Rosselli 1992, p. 94). With reference to the above-mentioned cases, through their professions members of the Gelhaar and Berwald families had close contacts with the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, and therefore had a good idea about the opera-singing standards at the time. Not only was

<sup>4</sup> The Berwald girls’ trio is comparable to the Björling boy’s trio, also called “The juvenile trio” in the USA (Henrysson 1993 p. 75).

it a useful network, it was also a source of knowledge about vocal demands, dominant voice ideals and the principal singing schools.

Both the Gelhaar family in Stockholm and the Berwald family are useful references given the focus of this chapter on the informal education in singing that took place in professional music families during this period. In earlier epochs it was quite normal for children in artisan and bourgeois families to be educated in their homes, and not only by tutors but also by their parents (Rosselli 1992, pp. 92-94; cf. Hartman 2005, p. 22). Before the establishment of opera schools it was not unusual for parents or other relatives to educate family members, including daughters and sons, and also future spouses and grandchildren, with a view to forming a family troupe or opera company. "Like any other trade, music came down by inheritance. Many singers were trained chiefly by their parents or uncles, themselves musicians" (Rosselli 1992, p. 92). The importance of the parental role as educators also links the Björling family to the paradigm of domestic vocal education and the historical tradition of opera singers as a family product (cf. Rosselli 1992, pp. 92-95). From this perspective the family is part of a canon, and the singing education Jussi and his brothers received when they were small could also be considered in the context of significant opera schooling in Europe and the Nordic countries.

There may have been similarities between the Berwald and the Gelhaars families, but the conditions in the Björling home probably differed substantially. The schooling process in the family was really hard given the demands of ordinary life and general school studies (cf. Stenius 2002). Another significant aspect from the education perspective is the family genealogy - they were not opera singers deep down, and far back in their family history they were blacksmiths (Björling & Farkas 1996, pp. 30-31). Accordingly, they did not have access to the codes that are normally passed down or the symbolic capital that, according to Bourdieu, is important for success (Gustafsson 2000, p. 22) Furthermore, the Björling domestic opera schooling was based in the countryside where there was a much poorer musical landscape than in the big cities, thus the family was, at least geographically, excluded from the urban sphere of musicians and opera singers surrounding the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm (cf. Ander 2008, pp. 497-506). Nevertheless, the Björling family name has strong resonance in Nordic opera history. The aim in this chapter is to enhance understanding of the informal Björling 'school' as a historical phenomenon, especially in terms of education and pedagogical ideas. More specifically, the focus is on the didactic principles followed. First and foremost I wish to draw attention

to Karl David Björling (1873-1926) as the 'family teacher' and the children's father. I use the concept *school* to refer to the Björling model of home education in relation to Karl David Björling's pretensions and explicit goals: the purpose was to educate the boys to be opera singers.

### The Björling opera project

During the first decade of the 1900s Karl David Björling (1873-1926) started a singing school for his sons Olle, Jussi and Gösta. The vocal education began at a sensationally early age and was combined with extended concert tours. The first performances were in 1916, taking place in the neighbourhood and adjacent provinces. The boy trio and their father gave over a hundred concerts in three years, 1917-1919 (Liljas 2007, p. 245). Most of the concerts were given in churches, but more secular venues included open-air theatres, major hotels in the cities, and bigger schools. The group usually travelled by train, and sometimes by bicycle or horse-drawn cab, and even on foot (*ibid.*, pp. 238-251; cf. Lööw 1951, p. 20).

The family troupe had a successful tour in the USA in 1919-1921. After a couple of months in New York they toured around New England, moving on to Chicago and the Swedish settlements in Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. On their way out west they performed in Kansas City, among other places. After an incredible journey around the USA the company turned up in San Francisco at the end of November 1920, performing in places such as Escalon, Turlock, Kingsburg, San José, Palo Alto, Oakland and Los Angeles along the West Coast. On their way back to New York they gave concerts in Denver, Kansas, Kansas City and Lindsborg (Liljas 2007, pp. 252-267 with further references; cf. Björling & Farkas 1996, pp. 38-42).

From the proceeds of the US tour David Björling bought a car, an im-



Illustration 1. Jussi, Olle and Gösta Björling. The picture was found in a program from the concert-tour in the province of Dalecarlia in 1916.

portant investment in view of the country-wide tours they were to undertake in Sweden. The one they did in 1922-23 has been called the North tour,<sup>5</sup> and featured the highest number of venues. In spite of the name it was also to encompass the southern parts of Sweden (Björling Kärn 1990, 1995; Liljas 2007, pp. 237, 275-283). The concerts were given in order to support the boys' studies. David Björling's intention was to have them study singing in Italy. He planned a European tour through Germany and Austria, and further to Italy. However, the plan was interrupted when he collapsed during a tour in July 1923 (Liljas 2007, pp. 281, 320-321).

The touring family quartet attracted a lot of attention in its time. The singing ability of the boys was astonishing given their very young age, and also considering how children generally sing. They had a masculine timbre, with strength – something that was unknown in Sweden. I quote from a review in *Borlänge Tidning* from 1 December 1917:

Mr Björling's boys astounded listeners through their strength, range, and the high level of teaching their voices bore witness to. We have never seen the like of this before.<sup>6</sup>

David Björling had problems in getting his method accepted among his contemporaries, and was occasionally accused of destroying his sons' voices. He was a pioneer in the field of training small children's voices, which in itself provoked some scepticism. According to Gustafsson (2000), the social network built up during one's education constitutes a significant resource in terms of gaining acceptance in the field. The fact that David Björling was trained abroad also meant that he was unknown within the Swedish system. The problem of capitalising on his foreign education in Sweden was compounded by the fact that he switched to voice training instead of following his career in opera: his ambitions were related to promoting his own children. Early on he instituted systematic training in singing and piano playing, and some form of general music education. His ambitions were high: he stated that he would start his own opera house.

David Björling's predictions regarding his sons' future potential were to be realised. The boys became professional singers, Karl Olov (Olle, 1909-1965) as a church and concert singer and Karl Gustav (Gösta, 1912-1957)

<sup>5</sup> Norrlandsturnéen. The tour is briefly described in Märta Björlings diary, a copy of which is to be found in the Jussi Björling museum archive.

<sup>6</sup> "Hr Björlings pojkar förbluffade åhörarna genom styrkan, omfånget, och den höga grad av utbildning, deras röster vittnade om. Något liknande har man överhuvudtaget aldrig bevittnat." *Borlänge Tidning* 1/12 1917.

in opera. The middle child, Johan Jonathan (Jussi), forged an international career and was one of the greatest singers of the twentieth century (Liljas 2007, pp. 19-20 Footnotes 2 and 6). There was a fourth son, Karl (Kalle, 1917-1975), who did not benefit from the intensive education his father gave his brothers and was brought up by an aunt in the province of Dalecarlia (Liljas 2007, pp. 26f; cf. Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 36).

Unfortunately, David Björling was unable to witness his sons' successful careers: he passed away unexpectedly during a tour in 1926. All in all, the Björling boys performed over 900 times between the years 1915 and 1926.<sup>7</sup>

### Substantial traces of David Björling's pedagogy

One of the few remaining traces of David Björling's ideas is his booklet entitled *How to sing: Care of the Voice Organs, Its Importance for the Health and Well-being of Man* (Björling n.d.).<sup>8</sup> The booklet was written in the USA, where interest in David Björling as a singing teacher for children was significant (Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 40).<sup>9</sup> The interest was focused, above all, on the results early singing education could produce, and David Björling was invited to music schools in order to demonstrate his method (cf. Björling 1945, p. 37). Aside from their vocal technique, the boys' well-developed pitch and extraordinary mnemonic capacities also attracted attention.

Another interesting turning point was the production of six gramophone recordings of the boys' trio at the American Columbia Phonograph Com-



Illustration 2. During the USA tour 1919-1921 the Björling boy trio recorded six gramophone records with Columbia Records in New York. The old 78s were brought to Sweden by coincidence. The Radio reporter Sven Jerring found them in a music-shop in Chicago 1937.

<sup>7</sup> Since the dissertation was published in 2007, evidence of several other performances has come to light (cf. the Jussi Björling museum archive).

<sup>8</sup> Information about the year and place of publication is missing. The booklet was published as a facsimile in Eriks Förlag in Stockholm, 1978. Cf. Liljas 2007, p. 332.

<sup>9</sup> The text is in both Swedish and English, implying that the booklet was written in the USA. See Liljas 2007, pp. 335-354 for a presentation and analysis of the text.

pany, New York in 1920 (Henrysson 1993, pp. 159-150, 74-76; Day 2000, p. 220; cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 355-360). The recordings are a contemporary document reflecting two significant factors: the technical developments in sound recording that made them possible and the renown that lay behind them. They were a status symbol and a means of spreading the word about the singing talent of the Björling children in parallel with their concerts. They could also be sold at the performances, thereby enhancing the status of the concerts. The significance of the gramophone as a technical innovation relates to the popular music of the time and its spread to the general public (Day 2000). It exposed the prodigies to a wider audience and become an artefact of sound production in intimate home settings.

The recordings also document a phase in the children's vocal development. From a scientific perspective they facilitated David Björling's theoretical introduction of his children's voice ideal and could be compared with an auditory product.<sup>10</sup> On account of their success there is a real archive of reviews in both Sweden and the USA. Those of the quartet's US concert performances have a special value in that they bring an international perspective to David Björling's pedagogy beyond contemporary judgements, enabling comparison of opinions about him as a teacher and reactions to his sons' singing technique between the US and Swedish reviews.<sup>11</sup> At the same time the reviews provide proof of how David Björling was perceived and valued as a pedagogue.

### David Björling's musical education

David Björling's vocal identity was a product of the religious revival that occurred in Sweden and Finland during the 1880s. The vocal model was probably his father – the blacksmith Lars Björn (1842-1909) - who loved to use his magnificent voice at the Sunday church services. His mother, Henrika Mathilda Lönnqvist (1844-1918) from Pori in Finland, was deeply religious and expressed her faith through her singing (Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 30). The Björling family was a singing family with renowned vocal talents. During the period they spent at Solla bruk (Fredriksberg) in Finland the Björling parents and their six children are said to have built “their own church choir” (Björling-Kärn 1990; Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 32).

<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of the recordings and the children's voices cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 360-370.

<sup>11</sup> See Liljas 2007 for a comparison between Swedish and foreign reviews. For more details see pp. 370-395.



Illustration 3. Karl David Björling (1873-1926), studio photo from McElliot, Chicago.

David Björling emigrated to America in his early youth. The road to his discovery and acceptance at the Metropolitan Opera School in New York was remarkable. Earning his livelihood by boxing and singing in the saloons in New York harbour, he was discovered by an influential person who persuaded him to attend the annual auditions at the school. In spite of the rigorous admission test and without the prescribed repertoire the jury accepted him (Björling Kärn 1995; *Såningsmannen* 6/7 1983).<sup>12</sup> During

his years of study he had the opportunity to perform with Enrico Caruso (1873-1921), for example.<sup>13</sup> Caruso's manner of singing strongly influenced the young Björling, who also claimed to have had singing lessons from the great man (Liljas 2007, pp. 208-211, with further references).

Under the protection of the Swedish diplomat Count Hans Joachim Beck-Friis (1861-1939), David Björling continued his studies at the Music Conservatory in Vienna in 1907.<sup>14</sup> The Count demands free tickets for his protégé in a letter sent from the Swedish legation to the director of the Court Opera in Vienna.

Mr Björling, a young talented Swede with a remarkable tenor voice, who has been accepted at the Vienna Conservatory, earnestly desires to be

<sup>12</sup> The information is based partly on Olle Björling's statement in *Såningsmannen* 6/7 1983. Sign. B.H.

<sup>13</sup> A Metropolitan Opera House programme from 15 February 1906 states that David Björling was in the same performance as Enrico Caruso, as were the well-known coloratura sopranos Marcella Sembrick and Emma Eames. Cf. Liljas 2007, p. 210-211.

<sup>14</sup> Sources on David Björling's studies in Vienna refer to a scholarship from the Swedish King Oscar II, but the information is contradictory and has not been verified (cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 211-212 with further references).

given free entrance now and then to performances at the Théâtre Impérial and the Royal Opera.<sup>15</sup>

Vienna was where David Björling received his broad musical training. He studied, among other subjects, piano playing, choral singing (Chorschule) and Italian. According to the Conservatory's yearbooks his main subject appears to have been singing, for which he was graded 'excellent' (Vorzüglich). The Conservatory's principal teacher in singing, Franz Haböck (1868-1922), was responsible for the voice training<sup>16</sup> (cf. Liljas 2007, p. 213f).

Haböck was famous for his work on castratos and their art of singing. He was engaged in research on the Old Italian School of singing during David Björling's time at the Conservatory, and wrote a book entitled *Die Kastraten und ihre Gesangkunst*. His material was published posthumously, except for a few articles in *Die Musik* (1908) (Haböck 1923; 1927).

Interestingly, Haböck's comments about register theory were misinterpreted. The misunderstanding is attributed to the inaccurate translations provided by the famous singing school the castrato pedagogue Pierfrancesco Tosi ran from 1723 (Haböck 1927, p. 87; cf. Stark 1999, pp. 64, 205).

#### .... and singing career

During the 1910s David Björling tried to establish himself as an opera singer in Stockholm. His opera debut may have been near: the March 1910 edition of *Thalia*, a magazine about music, reports that the newly discovered tenor David Björling will probably debut as Radamez in *Aida*. This never happened: Björling joined Sigrid Eklöf-Trobäck's opera company instead, which according to Tegen and Lewenhaupt (1992) was the leading national opera company in 1908-1918 (Tegen & Lewenhaupt 1992, p. 154).

David Björling was identified as Italian in vocal style. According to reviews from his singing career his voice was well suited to the Italian opera repertoire. At the same time he seems to have established an uncommon natural voice ideal, as reported in *Göteborgs- Sjöfarts och Handelstidning*, 22/10 1912:

<sup>15</sup> [...]“Monsieur Björling, jeune suédois doué d'une voix de ténor remarquable, venant “ d'être admis au Conservatoire de Vinne, d'esirerait vivement betenir de temps en temps des entrées gratuites aux représentations du Théâtre Imperial et Royal de l'Opera”. Jussi Björling museum archive.

<sup>16</sup> *Statistischer Bericht über das Konservatorium der Musik und darstellenden Kunst für das Schuljahr 1907-1908*.

Mr Björling displays an uncommonly euphonious tenor voice, tasteful and without any of the normal tenor mannerisms.<sup>17</sup>

The Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927), among others, noticed David Björlings tasteful singing style as distinctive among Swedish tenors. After one concert with The Orchestral Association of Gothenburg (Göteborgs Orkesterförening) on 25 March 1912 Stenhammar wrote the following review:

[...] Mr Björling possesses a remarkably fresh and beautiful, high tenor voice of strong Nordic tonal colour, which he treats with the most engaging naturalness, free from all artificiality and without the least bit of the sentimental boredom that unfortunately too often is held by Swedish tenors. Especially in the Rigoletto aria, he distinguished himself with an Italian-sounding lustre and brio. Undoubtedly this demonstrates great talents, and I would recommend our opera management to take advantage of them and to support their further development.<sup>18</sup>

Italian opera was considered passé at the Royal Swedish Opera. Strong forces sought the Wagnerian ideal, and David Björling's ideals may have been considered out of date (Rundberg 1952, pp. 220, 222f). There was no promising debut, and instead of pursuing an opera career he set out to teach his children. He set the bar high: David Björling would form his own opera company.

## Vocal pedagogy – historical background

A key source of information on the origins of David Björling's pedagogical position is the historical background of vocal pedagogy. In order to understand what he was facing, what influenced him and what he practiced it is necessary to define how the field was constructed. Liljas (2007) gives

<sup>17</sup> "Hr Björling visade prof på en ovanligt välklingande tenorstämman, smakfullt behandlad utan några som helst 'tenorfasoner'." Sign. J.B-ett: Recension av "La Bohème" på Nya teatern i Göteborg i *Göteborgs handels- och sjöfartstidning* 22/10 1912.

<sup>18</sup> [...] "Herr Björling besitter en ovanligt frisk och vacker, hög tenorstämman av utpräglat nordisk klangfärg, som han behandlar med den mest sympativäckande naturlighet, fri från all förkonstling och utan minsta anstrykning av den sentimentala tråkighet, som tyvärr alltför ofta plägar vidlåda svenska tenorer. Särskilt föredraget i Rigoletto-arian utmärkte sig för en rent italiensk verkande glans och brio. Utan tvivel föreligger här stora möjligheter, som våra operamyndigheter gjorde klokt i att söka taga vara på och hjälpa till vidare utveckling." Wilhelm Stenhammar, Göteborg den 25 mars 1912. Jussi Björling museum Archive. Cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 221-222, footnote 85.

the historical background as an exposé of the history of vocal pedagogy. She describes the rise and fall of the Bel Canto tradition, and outlines the dominant singing schools in 1850s Europe. From a Swedish perspective she describes how vocal training developed at the Royal Swedish Opera, ending with an overview of the situation in Stockholm around the end of the nineteenth century (cf. Liljas 2007, pp.71-203 with further references).

David Björling's singing ideal was related to the existing norm at the time, when there were demands for the reformation of opera education. There was heightened interest in the natural or simple as opposed to the constructed and artificial, thereby challenging the prestigious training in Paris that up until the turn of the century had been highly valued in the context of vocal pedagogy.

Two of the most influential singing schools from the mid-1800s were the Garcia School in Paris and the Lamperti School in Italy and Germany. They differed markedly in emphasis. Whereas the Lamperti School was resurrected from the remnants of (lost) knowledge from the Old Italian School, Manuel Garcia Jr. (1805-1906) shaped a singing school constructed upon scientific principles. This was a reaction to the failure to document the methods of castrato pedagogy. In his research based on clinical studies of the voice organs, Manuel Garcia Jr. attempted to produce a visual representation and clearer pedagogical instructions. The result was a historical dichotomy between the older audio-based educational traditions and the scientific system that developed in the field of vocal pedagogy (Stark 1999 preface, pp. 3-20; Celletti 1991, pp. 112-115; Fuchs 1963, p. 64; Liljas 2007, pp. 92-96).

The differences in pedagogical approach between the Garcia School and the Lamperti School were a topic of heated discussion in Europe. (Stark 1999 p. 43)

At the turn of the nineteenth century the pedagogy for which the Garcia School had become famous was problematized. This behaviourally oriented vocal pedagogy was defined as *the modern local effort school of singing*. In the background were prominent voice physiologists and singing pedagogues who doubted the vocal health of singers trained within this school, the glottal blast, coup de la glotte, being considered the most harmful (Stark 1999 s. xxiii-xxiv, pp. 17-20; Liljas 2007, p. 157). The focus in the discussion that raged about "the decadence of the singing art" was on the qualities that were lost when the modern and more conformist education ideal pushed aside audio-centred vocal education. The lost vocal tradition referred to The Old Italian School (Stark 1999, pp. 19f, 52f; Celletti 1991).<sup>19</sup>

In Sweden the opera singer and singing pedagogue Fritz Arlberg (1830-1896) promoted these aspects of singing education. He advocated training based upon the concept that the vocal organs were anatomically designed so that they could not, and should not, be stirred by predetermined methods. The scientifically based method, labelled 'artificial' in Sweden, was assumed to have a forceful character and collective aim that disturbed individual voice development. In strong opposition to such an artificial singing style – “which isn't only ugly but also destroys voices” – he wanted to create a natural school adapted to Swedish voices and perceptions of beauty, and to the Swedish language (Arlberg 1891, pp. 139f, 67, 150, 179f; Liljas 2007, pp. 157-168, cf. Sörenson Gertten von 2011). At different times, the origin of this natural method has been linked to David Björling.

Another aspect to be taken into consideration is that David Björling also visited the singing pedagogue Oscar Lomberg (1861-1911), a famous enthusiast of Fritz Arlberg's teachings. Lomberg's reputation and position as a vocal expert were confirmed, among other things, by the fact that he was recommended by Arlberg as a successor to Julius Günther, the leading vocal pedagogue at the Royal College of Music, Stockholm (Kungliga Musikhögskolan i Stockholm) (letter from Fritz Arlberg to Ludvig Josephson, 28 August 1895, The National Library of Sweden / Kungliga biblioteket).

## The Natural school of singing

David Björling attracted both national and international recognition and attention in the field of vocal training on account of his children's singing education and achievements. The principles on which he based his practices were at that time a pedagogical phenomenon emphasising tone building, mainly concerning the powerful chest-voice ideal that his children represented. The Western paradigm preferred a bright and light child's voice.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> There were fundamental ideological differences between the schools, but alongside the success of the Garcia School there developed an unethical market in which everyone wanted to be “Garcia”. Scandinavians travelled to Paris to be schooled in the method. Many had the bad luck to end up with pedagogues who said they taught according to the Garcia method but who did not master it (cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 97-104, 113-116, 151-156, 195-200 with further references). Manuel Garcia Jr. moved to London where he continued to develop the school at the Royal Academy of Music (Fitzlyon in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, vol.2 1997, p. 345).

<sup>20</sup> Reviewers in both Sweden and America compared their ideal to boys' choirs in Germany, Sweden, England and the USA. One reviewer in the USA claimed to be familiar with authorities that advocated “the white voice”. (The Jussi Björling museum archive; cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 370- 395)

Consequently, David Björling's singing pedagogy was defined as unorthodox and seen in its most extreme form as a danger to children's voices. There are signs that he was stigmatised just because his peers did not understand his principles. A future STIM<sup>21</sup> chief wrote:

I dare to say that the propaganda Mr B carries out with his young ones is fully destructive. [...] If Mr B means this could constitute an example to follow in the matter of child singing, I must give due warning about the consequences. [...] Three things were of the highest class; the ticket price, the well fitting tuxedos and the preliminary advertising for the so-called concert. If I have made Mr B defenceless in the North of Helsingland, I assume I have done good and blessed work.<sup>22</sup>  
(Erik Westberg; Hr. Björling's Concert, *Hudiksvalls Posten*, 20 June 1918)<sup>23</sup>

Many regarded the powerful song ideal as harmful and questioned how healthy tone building was. Despite the criticism, David Björling stressed the advantages and declared that it was too early to evaluate his teaching work. The ideal was a hearty and natural sounding voice – *voce piena e naturale* – with the role model drawn from the older Italian school (cf. Stark 1999, pp. 35, 59, 157, 163), which might have been particularly difficult to identify in children.

Although they were children the Björling boys were well developed in terms of tone building and appearance, reflecting the norm among adult scholar singers. In order to reduce the technical difficulties David Björling limited their vocal register and encouraged his sons to sing with full voice until the “support” was established. He wrote in his booklet *How to sing* that children may not sing *pianissimo*, apparently because it can create tension in the throat and give rise to nasality. Singing with an open throat gives a much fuller sound and is linked to the establishment of breath support and resonance (Björling n.d., p. 4). The establishment of “support” was also a

<sup>21</sup> STIM stands for The Swedish Composers International Music Society (“Svenska Tonsättares Internationella Musikbyrå”), which was founded in 1923.

<sup>22</sup> “Jag vågar t.o.m. påstå att den propaganda herr B. bedrifer med sina små, är i högsta grad fördärlig. Menar herr B. att detta skall vara ett efterföljansvärt exempel i fråga om barnsång, då måste jag på det bestämdaste varna för efterföljd [...] Tre saker voro fullt förstklassiga, biljettpriset, den välsittande fracken och reklamen som föregick den s.k. konserten. Har jag oskadliggjort herr B. i norra Helsingland anser jag mig ha gjort ett gott och välsignelserikt arbete.”

<sup>23</sup> Erik Westberg (1892-1944), composer and conductor in the north province of Sweden, was appointed managing director of STIM in 1923-44 (Åke Brandel in Sohlmans musiklexikon bd 5 1979, p. 790).

reason for avoiding “the treble voice” (*voce bianca*), which for the Lamperti School meant unestablished breath support. The problem was that it could not be properly regulated by the positions *voce chiusa*, (closed voice) and *voce aperta* (open voice) These voice positions are connected to the significant concepts *chiaroscuro* (a dark-light voice quality) and *appoggio* (the breath system) in the Lamperti School (cf. Stark 1999, pp. 33f, 42-45, 56, 91-93; Brown 1957, pp. 53, 137; Liljas, p. 384).

David Björling worked with a method that reflected the intermediate position and encouraged care with high notes before the voice was fixed (cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 353, 385). He declared that the quality of the tone was much more important than a big vocal range: “Never strive for a high or low note that you cannot produce with ease; it will come in time by itself, while, as for the tones that you can produce, practice them and make them as round and beautiful as possible and with plain enunciation of the text” (Björling n.d., p. 7). The criteria also included adapting the repertoire to the voice’s individual character, pedagogical instructions that David Björling followed religiously. In his determination subsequently to adapt the repertoire according to the voice’s state of development he was continuously working on transpositions (Liljas 2007, pp. 316, 368; cf. Björling 1945/1994, p. 22).

Contemporary connoisseurs did their best to create a picture of the voice character that made more than one critic raise his eyebrows:

Considering our own boys’ and girls’ light voices, we were expecting something purely innocent [...] instead we got to hear mature singers with powerful voices, a masculine timbre, a well-worked-out musical approach and feeling, and convincing in their declamation.<sup>24</sup> (Agda Schultz in *Engelholms Tidning*; 13 December 1922)

A critic in *Mönsteråstidningen* attempts to capture the unusual, but at the same time exclusive, voice timbre:

The voices were as clear as a bell and strikingly metallic with a solemn, intense tone.<sup>25</sup> (*Mönsteråstidningen*; 26 February 1923)

<sup>24</sup> “Med tanke på våra egna gossars och flickors ljusa röster väntade vi oss något serafiskt oskuldskraftigt, något af detta oberörda i uttrycket som vi hittills trodde nödvändigtvis medföljer barndomen. Istället finga vi höra mogna sångare med kraftiga röster manlig bröstklang, väl utarbetat musikaliskt fördrag, och känsla och öfvertygelse i deklamationen.”

<sup>25</sup> “Rösterna voro klockrena och frapperade malmfyllda med en mörkt fyllig ton.”



Illustration 4. The Björling opera from the early years, Olle, Gösta and Jussi. The singing position mirror David Björling instructions “the high chest, the open throat and the deep breaths”. The picture probably taken in 1916.

The analysis points to the fact that the boys’ voices constituted an auditive example of the more masculine tones aimed at in the older Italian School, and which were narrowed down at the same time as the male register increased during the later part of the 1800s. According to older sources, this was a “concentrated, dark timbre” originating in the voice-timbre spectrum that had been named *chiaroscuro* (Berg 1868, p. 52). This could be compared to the Lamperti School, in which all tones emanated from the dark timbre, *voce chiusa*, to be nuanced by *chiaroscuro* (cf. Stark 1999, pp. 33f, 42-45, 92f; Liljas 2007, pp. 368f). Jenny Lind’s teacher, Isak Berg, tells us in his hand-written scripts that the older Italian tenors were more smooth. They had a darker voice that was not so highly pitched. They sounded more like baritones, and all the tones emanated from the dark timbre to be nuanced by *chiaroscuro* (Berg 1868, p. 39, 42)<sup>26</sup> Berg also relates how clashing tenors with French schooling replaced the Italian singing ideal (*ibid.*, p.53, 43).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> John Forsell, the opera director and also a voice teacher at the opera school in Stockholm, had real problems deciding whether or not the 17-year-old Jussi Björling was a tenor because of his baritone resonance, especially in the middle position (Svanholm 1960, pp. 76-77; cf. early reviews in Bertil Bengtsson: *Jussi Björling och konsertkritiken i Göteborg 1931-1939*, 1999, pp. 7, 8, 9).

A mature and well-developed, masculine chest-centred voice was favoured in the older Italian School, and even transposition was preferred in order to contain the voice within a register. This solo singing ideal, which to a great extent aimed at an expressive tenor voice, had a piercing power reaching far beyond Italian borders that was transported further into later time eras. It was restored through the efforts of teachers such as Nicola Vaccai (1790-1848) and Francesco Lamperti (1813-1892) attempting to recreate a lost art (Celletti 1991, p.196; Stark 1999, p. xviii, 157, 59f, 197; Liljas 2007, p. 83).

It seems from the above analysis that David Björling had his roots in an older Italian tradition. There appear to be recurring similarities between his methods and the didactic principles of the Lamperti School. Taken in context, the Lamperti School promoted both an older Italian voice ideal and individual-centred education. Experiencing some form of revival around the late 1800s and early 1900s, it has been called the *natural* or the *national* school (Brown 1957; Stark 1999; Liljas 2007, pp. 194, 435).

## The pedagogue

David Björling rigorously controlled his children's progress. One consequence of his uncompromising attitude was that the boys were not allowed to attend singing lessons at their local school.

It seems that he was very careful to ensure consistency and quality in their vocal development. Their schedule included daily singing lessons, which started with a few minutes of throat massage.<sup>28</sup> Björling was anxious to explain that the vocal training was part of the musical upbringing he wanted his children to have, and was an indispensable element of their general upbringing (Björling n.d.). Was this an attempt to legitimise the training in the eyes of a doubting public, or does the statement reflect a deeper philosophy?

In recreating David Björling's pedagogical profile it would be useful to go back to the didactic starting points of vocal training. From this perspec-

<sup>27</sup> Isak Berg became familiar with Italian vocal traditions as a pupil of Giuseppe Siboni (1780-1839) at the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen (Berg 1868; cf. Liljas 2007, p. 368).

<sup>28</sup> Märta Björling-Kärn (1904-1997) recalls that the singing lessons lasted for one hour every morning. She was also a pupil of David Björling. For more details about the singing lessons see Björling-Kärn 1990; 1995 and other sources in Liljas 2007, pp. 303-307.

tive the Björling ‘school’ belongs to the conservative tradition regarding the master-pupil relationship: David Björling acted as a role model. It was also the master’s responsibility to prevent negative development – which is reflected in Björling’s prohibition of regular school singing and also followed the didactic traditions of the old singing masters and teachers of instrumental music. One example is Francois Couperin (1668-1773), who locked the cover of the cembalo after his lessons, thus preventing his pupils from practising in the wrong way (Gellrich 1992).

As a pedagogue David Björling was energetic and intense. He put much effort into developing the tone-building system he brought with him from continental Europe. His dexterity lay in his voice placing: with a few well chosen exercises every tone would find its rightful place (cf. Björling n.d., pp. 2-4). According to one of his pupils precision had no limits: an exercise could be repeated 10 to 20 times (SVT 1977; cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 304, 325ff with further references). He is said to have had a unique capability to explain his teaching so that the difficult seemed simple. The fact that he gave a singing and speaking course in 1922 confirms that he also taught speech technique (ibid., pp. 323-326). He was innovative with his children, using pedagogical tricks such as visual metaphors in order to make them understand vocal technique. Some of these were commonplace, and some of them could be traced back to older singing schools (Müller-Brunow 1898, p. 27; Lange 1900, p. 66ff). The seven-year-old Olle Björling surprised the press: “It was remarkable what strength and volume his young voice had”<sup>29</sup> (*Borlänge Tidning* 10/10 1916).

David Björling used the gramophone as a pedagogical aid. He would play records of his favourite singers, who functioned as role models. The boys told of how they had to repeat phrase by phrase until their father was satisfied (Björling 1945, p. 53; cf. Öhman 1960, p. 52). It seems that Enrico Caruso’s early recordings were influential in this respect. One of Björling’s private pupils reveals that he had to listen to Caruso at the start of every lesson before the practical voice training began.<sup>30</sup> It is clear from this statement that David Björling manifested his admiration for Caruso in a concrete way in his teaching. Enrico Caruso’s early recordings were produced during the period when David Björling was a student at the Metropolitan Opera School (Liljas 2007 footnote 315, p. 311). It is therefore interesting

<sup>29</sup> “Det var rent märkvärdigt vilken styrka och klangfullhet hans unga stämma hade.”

<sup>30</sup> Valfrid Nyström (1887-1988) from Luleå was his student in Örebro (cf. Liljas 2007, pp. 293-294).

to compare Jussi Björling's and Caruso's first recordings: there seem to be significant similarities in "La donna é mobile" from *Rigoletto* in particular.

The model used for training the voices of famous singers was developed during David Björling's time in the USA and coincided with the publication of handbooks by established voice pedagogues (Day 2000, p. 220).<sup>31</sup> In line with his belief in the above-mentioned master-pupil education tradition, he maintained his 'Master' status through his personal selection of individual masters (Rolf 1991, p. 134). He did not see himself as his children's only teacher in the longer term: he had plans for the boys to study singing, music and languages in Italy, which were interrupted when he became seriously ill.

### The singing school in its pre-existence

Daily life in the Björling family gradually included more and more musical activities. Sources covering the children's earliest years describe musical life in the Björling home. According to his niece Märta Björling-Kärn (1904-1997), in 1912, when David Björling was on tour with the Eklöf-Trobäckska Opera Society his voice filled the house with beautiful singing during tour breaks (Björling-Kärn 1990; 1995; cf. Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 37). It is reasonable to assume that the children also heard their father going through his opera repertoire, which judging by the available documentation included the repertoire of the younger Italian school.

David Björling was a professional and trained his voice carefully, but his wife, Ester Elisabeth Björling (1882-1917), also contributed to the children's musical upbringing.<sup>32</sup> She was a good singer, and she accompanied her husband and their children on the family pianoforte. Using the concept "pianism" Ling (2009) states that the family piano was a central musical artefact during the epoch (Ling 2009, p. 37). Esther Björling was a skilful pianist whose qualities are evidenced in her contribution within the field of silent films. Her son Gösta confirms the fact that the boys found her artistic piano playing stimulating (Björling 1945, p. 42).

The children engaged in the musical activities very early. According to his sons, David Björling tried to get them to sing along with him when he

<sup>31</sup> The vocal pedagogue Herman Klein (1856-1934) developed the method. He was also the adviser to The American Columbia Gramophone Company in New York. *The Herman Klein Phono Vocal method* was published in 1919. On the transmission of the method, see Day 2000, pp. 221-225.

<sup>32</sup> Ester Elisabeth Björling was also a professional milliner (Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 32).



Illustration 5. The Björling family around 1915. David, Olle Ester, Jussi and Gösta.

was practising, which is significant from a didactic perspective – instead of being pushed away from they were invited into the professional business. The boys describe their father as enthusiastic and themselves as amused by their own singing (Björling 1945, p. 20). Gösta also recalls how much he wanted them to perform, but the first documented performance, as mentioned earlier, was a spontaneous appearance to fill a gap in a programme featuring David Björling's permanent students. However, the boys seemed to be well prepared (Liljas 2007, p. 300).

David Björling admitted that he started teaching the boys before they could speak properly, practising scales with them. This is significant information: incomplete mastery of speech was not an obstacle as far as singing was concerned, and his work to ensure perception of the note intervals from the start reveals an ambition that goes far beyond the reproduction of shorter melodies. With the scale as a starting point he sharpened the children's awareness of the intervals and built up their intonation skills (cf. Sundin 1995, pp. 99-101; Gardner 1994, p. 103; Liljas 2007, p. 309). This very early singing training thereby paved the way for the systematised training of audio-sensitivity and voice.

The fact that David Björling opened a private singing school in his own home in 1914 meant that the children could also hear their father teaching

his external pupils, as evidenced in sources from Örebro describing how they listened to their father's lessons from a room close-by, and how they imitated his discipline (Löow 1951, p. 19; Liljas 2007, p. 299). This shows how the sons were socialised into their father's singing education and how they became familiar with the content of his lessons from an early age.

### Didactic principles

David Björling's theoretical principles for children's vocal training were a synthesis of education in singing and upbringing, the main point being the exceptionally early age at which he started the training. He believed that the development curve of very small children should consciously incorporate musical elements, and that a six-month-old baby is sufficiently developed to encounter music. The curiosity of infants and their increasing perceptual abilities are acknowledged to be particularly strong (cf. Sundin 1995, p. 53). Their senses should be stimulated, but not excessively, and musical stimuli should be limited to short periods. Formal teaching could begin at three years of age, but the lessons should be specially adapted. Aesthetic experiences are described as good support for teaching (Björling n.d., p. 4).

I have pointed out similarities between the Björling 'school' and the pedagogical model we understand today as the Suzuki method (Liljas 2007, p. 409; cf. Sundin 1995, pp. 132f; cf. Gardner, p. 103). At the same time I should stress that the Björling 'school' represented Suzuki methodology before its establishment. The determining factor in my reference to the Suzuki method is that the starting point of Björling pedagogy is the child's unique receptivity.

Another significant point of comparison is that Björling's children, just as Suzuki pupils would do, developed a memorising capacity resembling the more advanced *delayed in-learning*. In other words, these children could reproduce complete music pieces from an early stage, as opposed to the fragmentary repetitions that reflect *direct in-learning* (Sundin 1995, p. 99; cf. Gardner 1994, pp. 102-103). David Björling also saw the didactic advantages of group teaching.

David Björling's pedagogy incorporated singing training and the principles of childrearing. His words are reminiscent of the classic ideals of education: "bring out the good in children from the time of their birth"<sup>33</sup> (Björling n.d., p. 4). It is uncertain whether or not he knew of these ideals,

<sup>33</sup> "Inympa det goda uti barnet redan från dess födelse."

but during the 1800s the idea of education as a way to improve levels of general knowledge came from Germany. The teaching focused on human values such as humanity and aesthetics, and was directed towards the family and the way in which children were brought up. One of the neo-humanistic philosophers who adopted classical literature as an effective teaching tool was Friedrich Fröbel (1782-1852), the founder of the kindergarten (Uddén 2001, p. 182).

Singing took centre stage in Fröbel's way of teaching, and he likened the teacher to a head gardener who tends his plants with a loving hand: "Just as the sun affects plants, so music affects children", he wrote in a letter to Robert Kohl.<sup>34</sup> (Fröbel, referred to in Uddén 2001, p. 204). He did not represent school pedagogy, more a kind of family education. He collected his material in the family songbook *Mutter- und Koselieder* (1844), the first three songs in which are designed to awaken the infant's spiritual and mental powers. In his view, the vocal coaching of infants leads to the early development of a natural form of self-expression in song. The next series of songs systematically practises the child's ability to memorise (Uddén 2001, pp. 193-195). David Björling lovingly used metaphors about plants and seedlings, the different seedlings probably referring to his sons: some grow by themselves and support is given where necessary, namely to the weaker ones (Björling n.d., p. 4). The growth of plants is synonymous with the growth of the voice, which was close to David Björling's heart.

A useful starting point for understanding David Björling's teaching methods is to consider the meaning of the term *musical upbringing*. It has its roots in ancient times and appears in Plato's thinking, according to which music is character-forming (Liljas 2010, p. 140). Later on it formed the corner-stone of Friedrich Fröbel's pedagogical philosophy, and was based on the term *Gesang als Unterricht*, the principles of which I compare with David Björling's method of raising children with the help of music (Liljas 2007, pp. 400-406). The method was inherited from Johann Henrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), and was based in part on developing the child's musical ear, and in part on stimulating its receptiveness, but above all on giving it a noble character (Uddén 2001, pp. 133, 138-140, 203f, 215; cf. Hodges 1989).

The roots of David Björling's pedagogy were probably in the older German educational tradition and the assumed beneficial effects of singing in children's upbringing: it was about exploiting the ability of the very small child to learn through tuition in singing. He also seems to have taken in-

<sup>34</sup> "Som solljuset berikar växterna så verkar musiken på barnet." Robert Kohl was one of the composers contributing to the songbook *Mutter- und Koselieder* 1844.

spiration from theories about the teaching of singing to very small children that were promoted at the turn of the nineteenth century. Given the similarity between the controversial vocal pedagogue Algot Lange's (1850-1904) theories and David Björling's practice, Lange's ideas regarding the possibility to pre-cultivate and teach children to sing are very interesting. Lange's theory was built on the ideal of a technically perfect and skilled singer acting as a model for children to listen to and imitate – synchronised with the management of the child's automatic vocal reflexes. Among the requirements were energy and persuasiveness in working style, and the avoidance at any price of school singing (Lange 1900, pp. 4, 6, 8). One could say that David Björling fulfilled these demands.

Lange's *Om tonbildning i sång och tal* (1900) sets out some theoretical principles concerning the very early training of children. "The younger and healthier the child is, the easier it is for it to find the physiologically correct tone",<sup>35</sup> he writes (1900, p. 4). He advocates training that starts from the child's naturally correct voice and breathing technique, and describes a situation in which an infant listens to a perfect vocal pattern and aurally builds up its voice from it, which should result in a perfect voice. It depends on the teacher's ability to convey the beauty and quality of tone as well as the correct pitch (Lange 1900, pp. 6f).

Here, too, there is a link between training and health, something David Björling also stressed: every morning the Björling boys had to gargle with saltwater. He also believed that breath training helped to keep illness at bay (Björling n.d., p. 2; Lange 1900, pp. 191-197).

Lange focused on the special beauty and charm of boys' voices, which inferior school singing tended to destroy. David Björling had a similar mistrust of singing in school: he forbade his sons from taking lessons, as a result of which Jussi Björling was not graded in singing.

Lange uses the metaphor of a glass ball balancing in a fountain in his book *Om sång* (1898), which David Björling is thought to have quoted (Lange 1898, pp. 66f; cf. Björling 1994, p. 89). What Lange wanted to illustrate was that pressure in the vocal tract is decisive for the quality of the tone. A glass ball balancing in the stream of water from a fountain is used to represent tone, and the stream represents the vocal tract. If the pressure in the tract changes even slightly, the balance is lost and the ball either falls or bounces out. The originator of this metaphor was not Lange, but the German singing

<sup>35</sup> "Ju yngre och friskare människan är, desto lättare har hon att finna den fysiologiskt riktiga tonen."

pedagogue Bruno Müller-Brunow from Leipzig.<sup>36</sup> It is linked to the Italian concept *appoggio* – the consummate control of breath and voice - and is said to represent David Björling’s vision and pet passion for teaching singing (Liljas 2007, pp. 367, 384, 422f, cf. Stark 1999, pp. 92f, 101-110).

Contemporary research findings confirm David Björling’s theories about age stages determining the child’s musical development. A key factor is the three-year stage with its potential and the didactical balance between the joy of learning and the satisfaction of being able to do something (Sundin 1995, p. 132). Furthermore, academics are of the view that all musical learning in small children is on the child’s conditions. If the child is to accept the education there has to be psychological interaction in which it is justified in its attempts. According to the research, therefore, it can be assumed that David Björling made skilful use of his children’s natural developmental stages and their own will (Sundin 1995, pp. 53, 61, 64; Gardner 1994, p. 102; Hodges 1989).

## A family business

The starting point, which in the case of David Björling’s children was vocal training, is strongly connected with the family and its intimate structure. The family room as a teaching arena should be understood as diametrically opposed to institutional education, and as a historical representation of informal schooling (Rosselli 1992). The Björling children’s vocal training was nevertheless both a well-organised family routine and an external business matter. It was in the public arena that David Björling’s training was validated, and in which his children’s voices were subject to judgments from outside the family circle.

The singing tours were an important part of David Björling’s great vocal project with his children. They had a dual purpose: the continuous application of his singing education and also the pursuance of a business ideal. He was strongly criticised following Ester Björling’s death from tuberculosis in 1917,<sup>37</sup> but the issue of the prodigies has to be put in context in order for

<sup>36</sup> “Ein springbrunnen mit gerade aufsteigendem Wasserstrahl; die aufsteigende klingende Luftsäule. Auf dessen Spitze gipfelt eine Glaskugel, an welcher sich der Wasserstrahl bricht, dieselbe aber, in Folge richtiger regelung, auf gleicher Höhe balancierend erhält; der von der Luft gehobene Ton, welcher beim geringsten Versäumnis an Luftnachschiebung fällt - abbricht – verflacht.” (Müller Brunow 1898, p. 27)

<sup>37</sup> Ester Björling was stricken by tuberculosis. She died on 26 April 1917 at the Academic Hospital in Uppsala, having given birth to her fourth son, Karl, two weeks previously (cf. Björling & Farkas 1996, p. 36f).



Illustration 6. The brothers, Jussi, Olle, Kalle and Gösta Björling, together with their cousin and nursemaid Märta Björling (1904-1997). As payment for the nursing David Björling promised her singing lessons. He called her "my little Jenny Lind".

it to be interpreted. The trio's fame guaranteed the family's earnings, and secured David Björling's educational project (cf. Ling 2009, p. 32).

Differences between the USA and Sweden are significant to the story. David Björling and his sons were met with scepticism in Sweden. The criticism was based partly on the exposure of the sons, and partly on the singing ideal they represented, which contemporary critics considered damaging. There was also implied criticism of travelling families, which were associated with rootless people such as the Roma, vagrants and criminals (Karls-son 2002 p. 62). The hard and unpleasant tone of the Swedish establishment affected David Björling deeply, and the vote of no confidence in him may have had direct consequences. In spite of the exceptionally frequent concerts, big cities such as Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö were avoided. There was naturally more choice in these regions, and much less interest in countryside talent, but there were also other factors. Stockholm had, among others, the music critic Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867-1942), who was known for his ruthless treatment of rural talent. He was also of the opinion that "the flow of prodigies" contaminated European musical life. He



Illustration 7. Three well-dressed young singers on tour. David Björling was extremely careful with the boy's voices and their outfit as well. From the left Jussi, Olle and Gösta Björling.

contemptuously described prodigies who travelled around to be exhibited as “undeveloped broilers” (ibid., p. 62). According to Ling (2009), performance spaces could be seen as hierarchical in the bourgeois community, and the European musical wonder-child had to deal with all kinds of public (Ling 2009, p. 24).

## Historical role models

The Björling model of domestic opera schooling was active at the dawn of the modern era, but it was a recipe for success with roots going back to the eighteenth-century Romantic view of prodigies and their abilities. The best-known example of this is Leopold Mozart and his launching of his children in the upper-class environment of Austria (Ling 2009, pp. 24f). Taking the young Franz Liszt (1811-1886) as a starting point, Ling describes this wonder-child syndrome as a family project concentrated in Vienna. Characterised by an energetic, educative father, a supportive mother, and brothers and sisters with whom to share and compare musical progress, these families could be compared to the Björling family in the early 1900s (*ibid.*, pp. 24-35).

The touring that David Björling undertook reflected the promotion of prodigies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the tradition of travelling opera societies all over Europe, not least in the Nordic countries (Tegen & Lewenhaupt 1992, p. 154). It is possible that he used his experiences and contacts from the time he was with the Eklöf-Trobäckska Opera Society in promoting the Björling quartet. A successful opera society that could have been a more distant source of inspiration was the family opera the tenor and singing pedagogue Manuel Garcia Sr. led at the beginning of the 1800s.

Manuel Garcia Sr. (1775-1832) was a Spanish opera singer with a clear interest in voice training. He specifically targeted his own children, whose musical education he initiated with enthusiasm. The Garcia children were integrated into their parents' opera society at an early age, and schooled within the opera repertoire. His daughter Maria, who went on to marry Malibran, one of the most famous singers of the 1800s, made her debut at the age of three as a child in Paër's *Agnese*. Another daughter, Pauline, who later married Viardot, was also taught during the tours, as was his son Manuel Garcia Jr., founder of the world-famous Garcia School in Paris (Levien 1932, pp. 12-14, 18-20, 23; cf. Liljas 2007, pp.426-429).

## Conclusions

The Björling family 'school' represented a form of domestic voice training that was common in the long nineteenth century, particularly in the historical context of the Nordic opera tradition. Domestic opera education was, from a pedagogical perspective, a didactic phenomenon that differed in ba-

sic principles from institutionalised education (Rostwall & Selander 2008). Thus, the Björling model of home schooling is a source of knowledge that enhances understanding of how opera singing was deconstructed in the home environment in the long nineteenth century.

The Björling family had its own musical references. In sum, a folk tradition was combined with bourgeois pretensions to urban life in the nineteenth century. David Björling was schooled according to nineteenth-century traditions and built his interpretation of the art of opera through his studying, performing and teaching. The Metropolitan Opera School offered a formal education including an impressive international network. Vienna and his studies at the conservatoire there seemed subsequently to have inspired and enabled him to educate his children in the manner of the Old Italian opera tradition in terms of both music and vocal pedagogy. He also found inspiration in rural areas where the tradition of family singing was connected to the Free Church movement of the late 1800s.

David Björling's educational style belongs to an older Master-pupil tradition. On the conceptual level the Björling 'school' goes back to the eighteenth-century notion of the child prodigy and the involvement of the whole family (Ling 2009). The extensive touring in both Sweden and the USA is connected to the promotion of wonder-children and David Björling's ambition to ensure the boys' education. The two-year tour of the USA gave an international flavour to the education, together with experience of international audiences and modern techniques such as recording.

The focus in later research turns from the extraordinary musical talent of prodigies to the musical environment and teaching methods (Sundin 1995; Gardner 1994). David Björling's curriculum ranged from pre-schooling based on the infant's perception to programmed vocal practice. The results show that he was ideologically familiar with the German philosophy of musical upbringing and the neo-humanistic ideal on which reformed music education was based (Uddén 2001).

David Björling's method of teaching singing to children was connected ideologically to reformed music pedagogy and technically to earlier educational practices, specifically within an older Italian tradition reformed in part according to the didactic principles of the Lamperti School. In conclusion, his vocal pedagogical work reflects the move towards more delineated singing education. In modern terms, the curriculum was well defined and the learning outcomes were precise. David Björling could also be said to have been responsible for the sustainable development of the children's voices.

Inspired by theories connected to the contemporary debate on the “The decadence of the singing art” David Björling experimented in order to create the perfect voice. With his sons as pupils he formed a children’s nursery academy - an Italian conservatory in miniature. To protect his sons from unsuitable influences he created a strictly defined vocal environment in which he and other hand-picked opera singers were vocal role models. One of them was the Italian tenor Enrico Caruso.

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## Summary

The aim in this chapter was to develop a deeper understanding about the informal Björling 'school' in Sweden. Contextually the example is related to the micro history of opera education, contributing to the macro perspective through a provincial example of domestic opera schooling. The specific focus was on Karl David Björling (1873-1926), the teaching parent of the Swedish tenor Jussi Björling (1911-1960) and his brothers Gösta and Olle.

The Björling family model of opera schooling belongs to the classic canon of domestic home education that was common during the epoch. Within the field of opera singing it is a significant reference in the historical context of the Nordic history of vocal education.

The uniqueness of the Björling 'school' seemed to be the rigorous and exceptionally early training. David Björling's pedagogy was rooted in earlier German theories of musical upbringing. It is clear from his results that he was familiar with the neo-humanistic ideal on which the reformed music education was based. Of specific interest is the term *Gesang als Unterricht* as a concept for developing children's musical and memorising capacities.

Conceptually the roots of the Björling model are in the eighteenth-century Romantic view of prodigies and their abilities. The extensive touring is connected to the promotion of wonder-children, and David Björling's educational style to the conservative Master-pupil tradition.

David Björling's vocal ideal was part of the contemporary debate about "The decadence of the singing art", and seems to have had its roots in an older Italian tradition. There are recurring similarities between his educational methods and the didactic principles of the Lamperti School: Enjoying a revival around the late 1800s and early 1900s, it has been called the natural or the national school. Nevertheless, through authentic experiences and gramophone recordings the Italian tenor Enrico Caruso became David Björling's pedagogical role model.

# Formed to Perform

Educating Students at the Opera School in Stockholm 1773–1850

Marianne Tråvén

## Founding a school for singers and actors

In 1773 Stockholm was given what would be a permanent opera situated at *Bollhuset*. It was a bold undertaking spurred by King Gustav III's cultural and political ambitions. However, the question of recruiting and educating singers for the opera company became a topic of central concern. How could first-rate singers and actors be attracted, and how could a steady supply of singers be secured for the chorus? At the time Stockholm had no school for either actors or singers.<sup>1</sup> As in the rest of Europe, most of the musicians and singers came from artisan families, and they were often schooled by their families or apprenticed to a singing master or an actor for their stud-

<sup>1</sup> There were private teachers, such as Giovanni Croce, an Italian tenor who was part of a Bologna company that played in Stockholm between 1754 and 1757. When the company dissolved, Croce was hired as a court singer in Stockholm. (Nyblom 1923, p. 80)

ies (Rosselli 1992, pp. 91–113). The quality of the education was largely dependent on the abilities of the individual teacher.

Gustav III had founded the Royal Swedish Academy of Music (Kungl. Musikaliska Akademien) in 1771. Apart from being an institution for promoting music and supplying orchestral music for Gustav's official functions, the Academy was also planned as a music school on the Italian model, giving children from poor families a musical education. Needless to say, the organisation was not paid for in full by Gustav III, and it constantly struggled to make ends meet. Initially, Gustav intended to link the Academy to the opera, giving deserving pupils vocal education, and ultimately supplying the opera with much-needed singers. This was not an easy task, and for a few years the vocal school at the Academy faced competition from a national music school newly founded by the German composer Georg Joseph Vogler (Abbé Vogler). The Academy's singing school was reorganised in 1797 by Pehr Frigel, the secretary of the Academy, giving it the form of an elementary school for singing; it lasted until 1812.

The schools initially organised by the Academy taught singing, music and dance.<sup>2</sup> Tuition was given by individual singers and actors; in the 1780s, for example, these included the opera singer Carl Stenborg<sup>3</sup> and the actor Jacques-Marie Boutet, known as Monvel. This famous French actor was hired by Gustav III in 1781, and together with a select number of French actors, formed a company that played in Stockholm and the royal castles from 1781 to 1787. In the new opera house, erected in 1782, a small theatre for students was also built and a singing room attached for practice (Luterkort 1998, pp. 15–19). On Monvel's departure in 1787 a school of declamation was formed to complement the existing schools.

Monvel's successor is unknown. In the year 1792 the French actors Joseph Sauze Desguillons and Anne Marie Milan Desguillons received a royal assignment to lead a school fashioned on the French model, which they implemented the following year. Both actors had been part of the French troupe that played in Stockholm under Monvel. During the period in question most of the school's directors came from within the ranks, and

<sup>2</sup> In the eighteenth-century the name was Kongl. Theatrarne, and both drama and opera were housed under the same administration, even if at times they performed in separate buildings. From the start it was the music academy, however, that was responsible for the opera performances and the education of the singers. In 1788 the drama department was separated using a system based on shares divided among the actors. Here, "the opera" usually refers either to the company or to the house. The name "Royal Swedish Opera" was given later.

<sup>3</sup> According to his contract, Carl Stenborg was supposed to teach one or two students. (Kungliga Biblioteket T8)

most of them were actors who also taught declamation and acting skills. Most were also products of the French acting tradition introduced by Monvel (Luterkort 1998, pp. 15-30). Monvel had worked with and taught the Desguillons (1792–1800),<sup>4</sup> Maria Kristina Franck (1819–1828) and Gustaf Åbergsson (1828–1831). Both Lovisa Sofia Gråå (1804–1812) and Karolina Bock (1831–1834, 1841–1856) were students of the Desguillons, and Nils Vilhelm Almlöf (1834–1840) and Vilhelm Carl Arnold Svensson (1840–1841) were students of Maria Kristina Franck. Although one should always be careful in placing too much weight on such relationships, as aesthetics change over time, it is clear in the contemporary critique that a certain acting style associated with the French school was recognised as emanating from the opera school (Luterkort 1998, pp. 23, 144).

The only directors who were trained primarily as singers were Almlöf, who studied with the singing master Carl Magnus Craelius, and Carolina Müller (1812–1815), who had studied with Giuseppe Sarti and Michelangelo Potenza in Copenhagen. Her contract specified that she should teach acting and rehearse roles with the students. Possibly she also assisted with vocal tuition (Luterkort 1998, p. 21).

### The singing masters

During the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth, a system of employing two singing masters was used.<sup>5</sup> This stopped in the 1830s, possibly as a result of financial constraints. The first singing master would teach the older students and help the singers at the opera, whereas the second singing master would teach the younger students. In some periods the choirmasters would also help with the younger students. Since most of the students also sang in the choir, this was a logical division of work, but it also created tension among the singing masters. Some of the

<sup>4</sup> An annotation in a notebook kept by the poet Abraham Niclas Edelcrantz, known as Clewberg, dated 4 September 1789, preserved in the Royal Library in Stockholm, shows that Madame Marcadet probably taught acting in a class for the younger students from 1790.

<sup>5</sup> At first students were assigned to individual teachers under the supervision of the academy. This was true of both actors and singers and well into the nineteenth century the school did not divide the students at first, but they learned together, although they were placed in different classes. The school of Vogler is called a national music school, and unfortunately, we have no means of learning about its curriculum because there are no known sources. In 1792, however, there is proof of a more organised school, but still actors and singers studied together, and the singing masters educated both.

music directors also functioned as singing masters, such as Edouard Du Puy (Dahlgren 1866, pp. 423–424).

A close look at recruitment strategies reveals the opera directors' interest in foreign educational principles. All of the singing masters appointed between 1773 and 1850 were either given opportunities to study abroad or were foreigners who had been educated abroad. Lars Samuel Lalin (singing master at the Royal Academy of Music from 1771 and at the opera from 1773 to 1783) was a pupil of the Italian tenor Giovanni Croce (Nyblom 1923, pp. 38–39). In 1765 he was sent abroad to collect music and perfect his singing. Lalin stayed away for two and a half years and amassed a substantial number of scores during that time (Personne 1913, p. 105). The music was used during concerts at the House of Knights in Stockholm in the 1760s (Forsstrand 1926, pp. 391–400).

In 1783 the German composer Johann Christian Friedrich Haeffner was hired as the acting school's second singing master. He came to Stockholm in 1781 and worked as an organist in the German congregation, played in the band at the opera and led the band at the Stenborg theatre (Svenska Komiska Teatern) in the years 1781–1783. The origin of Haeffner's vocal education is uncertain. He may have come into contact with Johann Adam Hiller during his studies in Leipzig, although no documentation has been found. Haeffner had studied with the organist Johann Gottfried Vierling in Klein-Schmalkalden. In 1787 he was appointed the first singing master (Bohlin 1967–1969, p. 701) at the school. Like Lalin, Haeffner left no vocal manual to study, but he did compose an abundance of vocal music in which his principles can be detected. In his Chorale book for the Swedish Lutheran Church (1819) he tried to reduce what he considered to be the vices of Italian ornamentation, working more in the traditional Bach style.

Haeffner was replaced by an Italian, Ludovico Piccini, son of the famous Neapolitan composer Niccolò Piccini, who trained his son as a composer and singing master. The younger Piccini made his debut as a composer at the *Opéra comique* in Paris in 1788 with the opera *Les amours de Chérubin*. In 1796 he was summoned to Stockholm by the king as *maestro di cappella*, a position he held for six years. During this time he composed several works for Stockholm, all of them to Swedish texts, such as the opera *Sömngångaren*. In 1801 Piccini returned to Paris, where he had a succession of successful operas performed (Ayrton 1827, p. 24). His one-act *l'Amante statua* was presented in Italian by vocal students at the Stockholm Opera four times in 1798 and 1799 (Dahlgren 1866, p. 424).

Piccini left very little material in Stockholm and no singing manual. As a singing master, he depended on his father and the teachings of the Neapolitan school. His teaching methods are best portrayed in the solfeggi by Leonardo Leo and Nicola Porpora, and the manuals by Tenducci and Corri, among others.

In 1809, Carl Magnus Craelius, a singer at the opera since 1795, was hired as the second singing master and appointed first singing master in 1812. Prior to his appointment he was given support from the theatre to go to Germany and Italy to perfect his own voice and hire singers. Just whom he studied with is not known. He went to Berlin (1802) and Naples (1803) and also gave concerts in Berlin and Leipzig (1809) (Norlind 1931, pp. 61–64). Craelius was also appointed singing master at the Academy of Music between 1814 and 1815, when he absconded with two months' pay (KTA 1771–1813, 6/4 1812). He was reinstated in 1816 and worked in the capacity of singing master until 1831. Craelius specialised in Italian coloratura arias and had a volatile, flexible tenor voice. As a singing master, Craelius trained some of the finest singers of the day: Anna Sofia Sevelin, Kristina Casagli and Jenny Lind (Norlind 1931, pp. 63–64). Unfortunately, none of his didactic material has survived.

In 1812 the German singer Carl August Stieler was appointed second singing master at the opera, where he had been a singer since 1802.<sup>6</sup> He was also Cantor in St Jacob's parish from 1809 and choirmaster at the Academy of Music from 1814, where he became a member in 1818. In 1816 he received the post of singing teacher for the higher levels at the Academy, a position he held until his death in 1822. Stieler had studied singing with Johann Adam Hiller at the Thomas School in Leipzig in 1792–1799. He had a deep and lustrous bass voice that suited dramatic roles such as Sarastro in Mozart's *Magic Flute*. Stieler published a vocal manual called *Lärobok i de första grunderna för musik och sång* in 1820, used in the secondary and grammar schools and discussed below (*Theophrosyne* 1823, pp. 112–113).

In 1831 the opera management hired Isak Albert Berg as sole singing master, a position he held from 1831 to 1850, and again from 1862 to 1870. Berg had studied with Craelius in Stockholm and with Giuseppe Siboni in Copenhagen (Ahnfeldt 1887, p. 31). In 1827 Berg went to Germany, Austria and Italy, where he made his debut on the stage of La Fenice in 1828 in an opera by Pietro Generalis, *Il Voto di Jephte*. Among his students were Jen-

<sup>6</sup> Here, the anonymous author of *Theophrosyne* differs from Dahlgren who claims that he became second singing master in 1812. (*Theophrosyne* 1823, pp. 108–111)

ny Lind, Mathilda Gelhaar, Louise Michaeli and Oscar Arnoldson (Norlind 1922, p. 377–379). Berg's teaching principles were never published, but he left two book-length manuscripts and a collection of study material that are now in the possession of the Music and Theatre Library in Stockholm. This didactic material shows a heavy dependence on the Italian school of the time and will be discussed below.

The European influence is evident in a combination of Italian and German schools that were essential in shaping the curriculum and aesthetic principles of the opera singers in Stockholm. Both Haeffner and Stieler were products of the German school headed by Hiller, Haeffner perhaps to a lesser degree. Lalin, Piccini and Berg, on the other hand, were trained in the Italian singing style and recognised by their contemporaries as champions of Italian principles. Lalin and Craelius were both given the chance to study in Germany and Italy, and in contemporary texts they are mostly associated with the Italian singing style. With the exception of Berg, none was immediately hired as a singing master. In fact, the position of singing master often seems to have been a position given to someone who could not perform on stage as well as expected. From this, we can detect a didactic strategy that possibly sought to secure the educational worth of these individuals.

Some of the music directors, such as Ferdinand Zellbell, Jr, Georg Joseph Vogler and Edouard Du Puy, also seem to have taught some of the more gifted students.<sup>7</sup> Of these, Vogler, who published a vocal manual, will be discussed below.

From this short survey of the directors and singing masters it can be seen that the directors between 1790 and 1850 were generally actors, not singers, most of them trained in the French school following the teachings

<sup>7</sup> Ferdinand Zellbell, Jr, is said to have taught Elisabeth Olin, the prima donna of the Gustavian opera. He was one of the founders of the Music Academy in 1771 and elected member No. 10. Between 1771 and 1774 he was the director of the Academy's music schools. Zellbell was not a singer by profession, but played the organ, harpsichord and violin. (Franzén 1992-1994, 28, p. 188, Bengtsson 1979, pp. 872–873). Du Puy was a Swiss opera singer, violinist and composer who studied with Chabran and Dussec in Paris. Whether he had any training in singing is unknown. In 1793 he was in Stockholm giving violin concerts together with another famous violinist, Moser, and, at the departure of Moser, was promptly hired as second concertmaster in the court chapel. In 1795 du Puy was elected to the Academy of Music in Stockholm. He had a talent for singing and was soon hired as a singer at the opera as well. His contemporaries seem to have categorised his singing style as decidedly French. He also taught singing; the tenor Sällström claimed to have been his sole student. Du Puy changed both repertoire and vocal aesthetics at the opera from the German to the French style. (von Beskow 1870, p. 172)

of Monvel. The singing masters, on the other hand, were influenced by Italian and German vocal teaching. In the opera school we can therefore assume that the early nineteenth century was an amalgamation of the French acting style and the Italian and German schools of singing.

### The responsibilities of the singing master

No instructions for the singing masters at the Royal Swedish Opera have been preserved from the eighteenth century. A set of regulations from 1786 specify that the Theatre Masters for Song should teach the apprentices a certain number of hours per day and also educate them in morals and behaviour (KTA 1771–1813, pp. 103–174, see especially para. 13). It is clear that there were as yet no regulations for the singing school, and until regulations were established, the singing school was placed under the supervision of the music director. The regulations also state that the singing masters should help those actors who needed to learn their roles; they were also responsible for actors being dressed and in time for their entrances.

The earliest preserved specific instruction, written for Isak Berg in 1831, gives some insight into teaching procedures (Beskow KTA, 1831). The singing master should teach four days a week during the hours from 11 to 1 p.m. The curriculum consisted of basic theory, musical terms, musical declamation, vocalising, solfeggio, solo singing, ensemble and choir. The singing master decided the repertoire in cooperation with the director. Students were not given practice in declamation or dance, which could be detrimental to their vocal organs, and they were protected from doing chores that created static working positions, such as excessive writing. The singing master was also responsible for their moral and social education.<sup>8</sup> For didactic guidance he was to follow the rules prescribed by the best foreign singing schools in Europe.

Students that did not develop as expected were soon dismissed from the school. When a student was ready to make his or her debut, the singing

<sup>8</sup> How this was done is not known. The theatre was often seen as an unfit place for the young, and possibly the management sought to improve its reputation by schooling the students in morals. During the first half of the nineteenth century several reviews in the press debated the moral implications of working on the stage (see Nordin Hennel 1997, pp. 55–62), but even though the profession was often described as little better than prostitution (see the article by Owe Ander in this publication), it does not necessarily mean that the opera students were schooled in such a profession; in fact, the wording of Berg's instructions suggests that the management sought to prevent this from happening.

master notified the director, specifying the piece and role that he thought was appropriate. It was the singing master's responsibility to safeguard his student's interests so that they did not make their debut too soon or in an inappropriate role.

Apart from taking care of the students, the singing master also supervised the vocal work of the opera personnel, singers as well as actors. He corrected their vocal mistakes and nurtured their abilities; in short, he was responsible for the vocal health of everyone singing at the opera. When roles were distributed among the singers, the singing master guided the directors in choosing a voice that suited a given role. He also conferred with the leader of the orchestra on every new opera or play on how the vocal parts were to be performed. Their collaborative decisions were then presented to the director for approval. The instruction for Berg shows that the responsibilities of the singing master were manifold, spanning both the vocal and moral education of the students, choosing their repertoire, supervising rehearsals, correcting the bad habits of the older singers and guiding the directors in vocal matters.

## The curriculum

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the students were very young, between 9 and 15 years of age, but there were exceptions.<sup>9</sup> With such young pupils the theatre acted *in loco parentis* and supplied the pupils with clothing, room and board, as well as education. The curriculum consisted of declamation, singing, music lessons, acting and dancing.<sup>10</sup> Since Sweden had no general school requirement at that time, the students were also given a basic education in reading and writing, mathematics, geography, history and social subjects. They received some education in French and other foreign languages. During their music lessons the students were supposed to learn the rudiments of music theory and how to play the piano. This curriculum continued through the first half of the nineteenth century with a few minor changes.

There were three types of pupils: singers, actors and dancers. During their first years they all received lessons together. Each of the classes had regular students for whom the school paid boarding fees, and unpaid pupils were tested before being allowed to enter the school as regular students. In

<sup>9</sup> For instance, in 1785 Petter Swartling was accepted at the age of 25. (Luterkort 1998, p. 19)

<sup>10</sup> See the contract for Olof Ulrik Torsslow dated 17 October 1816. (KTA: F6A)

1816 the singing master Carl August Stieler taught his students between the hours of 9 and 11 or between 4 and 6 o'clock in the afternoon. He was expected to give 60 lessons per year, each of them an hour long, and for this he was recompensed with a yearly salary of 300 Riksdaler. From the 1840s there are several protocols from the different classes listing the number of students, the hours taught, the teachers and their salaries (KTA: F6A, 1843). Yet these documents do not tell us anything about the didactic materials used or the teachers' pedagogical principles.

### Eighteenth-century didactics

Very little material from the Gustavian period of the Royal Swedish Opera has been preserved, and what survives consists mostly of regulations. The opera house was completely paid for with money supplied by the King, and therefore there are no taxation or revenue papers that have come down to us. Some of the directors, like Clewberg, took their correspondence along with them when they left their post, with little thought to posterity. At best we can search their personal papers and hope to learn something about the machinations at the theatre from letters and diaries. Sometimes even these kinds of personal papers are missing, leaving us only with sources consisting of correspondence from other persons involved in the process, those going to the opera, and of course, reviews in the press.

None of the singing masters hired at the opera during the eighteenth century left any didactic material, so to get an overview of what was offered the student, we have to look partly at the teaching manuals by those who taught or inspired the singing masters and partly at which manuals were available at the time.

### The library of the Academy of Music

The Academy collected books and music related to its areas of responsibility. For this it received a small grant from the king (40 to 50 riksdaler annually) (Lundberg 2010, pp. 236–249).<sup>11</sup> In the Academy's catalogue, under the heading "donated books", we find a collection of solfeggi published by Jean Joseph Rodolphe in Paris in 1790, *Solfeggio ou Nouvelle Méthode de Musique*, donated by the assessor Johan Pfeiffer.<sup>12</sup> An inventory dated 1783

<sup>11</sup> There are no catalogues of the library's holdings written before 1777.

<sup>12</sup> Johan Pfeiffer (1731–1806) was from 1771 the editor of the newspaper *Dagligt*

lists Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg's manual *Anleitung zum Sing-Composition* (Berlin, 1758). Another list referring to a donation by Munthe in 1772 (but made later, since the text is typed) includes Johann Mattheson's *Die Neueste Untersuchung der Singspiele* (Hamburg, 1744), and Salomon von Til's *Dicht-, Sing- und Spiel-Kunst* (2nd ed. Frankfurt, Leipzig, 1719).

In 1795 the Academy bought the music library of Johan Fredrik Hallardt,<sup>13</sup> an important acquisition that complemented the existing theoretical library and made many of the best German manuals accessible to musicians in Stockholm, including Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum*, several works by Kirnberger, and Vogler's *Gründe der Kurpfälzischen Tonschule in Beyspielen*. With the purchase there were also a few works on the vocal arts, such as Johann Friedrich Agricola's *Anleitung zur Singekunst* (Berlin 1757), a revised and annotated manual based on the Italian singing master Pier Francesco Tosi's *Opinioni de' Cantori* (Bologna 1723), Vogler's *Stimmbildungskunst* (Mannheim 1776), Georg Friedrich Wolf's *Unterricht in der Singekunst* (Halle 1784) and Johann Adam Hiller's two manuals, *Anweisung zum musikalisch richtigen Gesang* (Leipzig 1774) and *Anweisung zum musikalisch zierlichen Gesang* (Leipzig 1780).

In the 1806 catalogue, which shows later additions, the *Méthode de Chant du Conservatoire de Musique à Paris* (Paris 1803) and the *Solfèges pour servir à l'étude dans le Conservatoire de Musique à Paris* (Paris 1802) were added to the collection, as well as Nordblom's *Sång-schola* (Stockholm 1836), donated by the author,<sup>14</sup> Panofka's *L'Art de Chanter* (Paris 1854), the collection *Solfeggio d'Italie* (Paris 1772), *Musik-Conservatorii i Paris Sånglära* (Stockholm 1814), Cronhamn's *Praktisk Lärobok i flerstämmig Sång* (Stock-

*Allehanda*. By profession he was a medical doctor and, from 1770, "Assessor" in the Collegium Medicum in Stockholm. Pfeiffer was also a renowned music lover and a member of the Academy of Music. The solfeggio collection's publication date suggests that it was added to the list later. (Hofberg 1906, II: 285).

<sup>13</sup> Johan Fredrik Hallardt was initially employed as a postmaster in Stralsund in 1765 and later became post inspector in Wismar during the 1770s. He was educated in music by P. Brant and became a good amateur violinist, playing at the concerts for the aristocracy in Stockholm. In the 1770s he also tried his hand as a publicist. He wrote about the music in his vicinity, probably inspired by Charles Burney's diaries. He also produced a biographical music lexicon. (Halén 1969–1971, p. 1)

<sup>14</sup> Johan Erik Nordblom (1788–1848) was *director musices* at Uppsala University and had studied music with Haeffner from 1808–1814. He was also a teacher in elementary singing and church singing at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm between 1824 and 1833, where he became a member in 1824. In 1846 he opened a vocal school in Stockholm. His vocal manual was published in three parts between 1836 and 1840 and succeeded Stieler's manual in the Swedish school curriculum. (A. L. 1913, 19, pp. 1240–1241)

holm 1851), *Möller's Lärobok i kyrko-sång* (Lund 1849) and Stielers' vocal manual discussed below (MTB 1806, D3:4). The Academy of Music played an important part in supplying manuals and exercise books for singers and musicians. Its collection made it possible for singers in Stockholm to profit from the best schools in Europe in accordance with the wishes of the opera management.<sup>15</sup>

## Eighteenth-century vocal technique

In the eighteenth century when there were many different schools with different vocal methods governed by individual and national preferences in sound and style, vocal didactics were essentially based on empirical study and experience. The teacher tried to instil knowledge and proficiency mainly by demonstration and explication. Manuals were therefore often considered unnecessary, and the written word was distrusted, because it permitted different interpretations. This did not mean that there were no written manuals; on the contrary, during the century a widening market supported by well-to-do citizens furthered the publication of music manuals, which preserve some of the general principles used in vocal production.

One of these principles was muscular freedom. This was applied to the mechanism of the vocal organs as well as to posture, movement and expression when singing. To force the voice, tire the student with excessive practice or forcibly augment the range was not allowed. Vocal comfort was always emphasised. Forcing was also recognised as a threat to the resonant

<sup>15</sup> The catalogues from the first part of the nineteenth century consist of Frigel's from 1806 (added to by several hands), the catalogue by Drake dated 1839, and a catalogue labeled "W. Bauck", which contains an inventory that, according to one annotation, was probably made sometime between 1800 and 1880. However, considering the discrepancies with the material in the 1806 catalogue, this catalogue was probably made between 1820 and 1880. In the catalogue by Drake there are no music books or singing manuals, but in the later inventory we find the works of García, Panofka and Bordogni. From the Academy's protocols we learn that García donated his manual in 1842 and donated a new edition in 1848. This last was an ornate and luxuriously bound copy that earned him membership in the Academy in Stockholm. Panofka also donated his manual in 1854, while Bordogni's manual probably came to the collection in 1860 with a donation attributed to Oxenstierna. Another copy was given to the Academy in the 1880s as part of the collection of the Harmonic Society. A handwritten copy of some of Bordogni's solfeggio exists in the hand of Wikström, choirmaster at the opera between 1807 and 1847. Missing from the collection was the famous *Metodo pratico de canto* (1832) by Nicola Vaccai. I am greatly indebted to Marina Demina at the Music and Theatre Library in Stockholm for helping me with this information.

beauty of the voice and considered detrimental to breath control (Mancini 1774, pp. 80–86). The disposition of the vocal organs was allowed to determine what the student could and could not sing. An extensive range was certainly a goal in teaching, but it was always related to the pupil's type of voice. Most teachers recognised the importance of posture for sound production (Corri 1820, p. 11), and apart from the physiological implications of posture, they also considered posture a dramatic factor for the effect it had on an audience. In addition to posture most manuals speak about presentation, gesture and action.

The demand for pure vowels was, as Cornelius L. Reid has shown (Reid 1971, pp. 34–35), another central principle. Pure vowels depended on a flexible laryngeal position and the *bocca ridente* (smiling) position of the mouth adopted by most teachers of this period.<sup>16</sup> In this case “pure” meant that the vowels should be produced without the interference of muscular constriction, and each vowel should have a clearly recognisable quality. The source material from the eighteenth century is largely silent when it comes to resonance and resonators. The sources go on at some length about articulation, mouth position and so on, but specific references to resonance are rare. This may be due to the fact that resonance was considered secondary, something of a bonus when the muscle systems functioned well. Resonance is hard to control voluntarily and therefore hard to train separately. Even if eighteenth-century manuals speak little about the sources of resonance, they at least specify what were considered undesirable resonant tones, such as nasal voices (Bayly 1771, p. 32).

The breathing techniques seem to be based on observation of the effect of certain exercises, such as the *messa di voce*.<sup>17</sup> A purely physiological study of the breathing organs, detached from practice procedures, was not desirable. Most teaching manuals did recognise breathing as essential for tonal production, and both Tosi and Mancini offer exercises for increasing and steadying the breath, mostly in connection with the *messa di voce*. Often the fact that breathing capacity must be allowed to grow naturally, without forcing, is stressed (Bayly 1771, p. 32).

<sup>16</sup> A lowering of the larynx modifies the vocal tract, making it longer. A similar effect can be achieved by protruding the lips. If, on the other hand, the corners of the mouth are pulled back, as happens in smiling and the position preferred by eighteenth-century voice teachers, the vocal tract is reduced. (Sundberg 1987, p. 20)

<sup>17</sup> A crescendo and diminuendo usually performed on one note. (Göpfert 1994, pp. 120–121)

## Georg Joseph Vogler's music school

In the 1780s, possibly owing to the inability of the Academy of Music to recruit students, the Royal Swedish Opera formed a school under Georg Joseph Vogler, the Kapellmeister in residence at the time. Vogler came to Stockholm in 1786 as the director of the opera house orchestra and stayed until 1792;<sup>18</sup> he returned in 1793, leaving Stockholm for good in 1799. Apart from his duties at the opera, Vogler was also supposed to serve as the music teacher to the crown prince.

In 1776 Vogler had written a vocal manual, *Stimmbildungskunst*, but did not see fit to translate it into Swedish. However, quite a few of his music manuals were translated by the end of the century, such as *Clavér-schola* and *Organist-schola*, both published in Swedish in 1798. Vogler's vocal manual is a small volume, dedicated mostly to the singing of solfeggio, using only five of the solfeggio syllables (ut, re, mi, fa, sol), and reusing some of the syllables to complete the scale (Vogler 1776, p. 4). It gives some indication of what he might have taught in Stockholm. Technical information is scarce, but Vogler gives a few hints as to what he thought was essential for the vocal arts: portamento, the ability to hold long notes without wavering, pronunciation, intonation and *mesa di voce*.<sup>19</sup> The singer should guard against singing through the nose or in the throat and not open the mouth too little or too much. It was also important to merge the chest voice with the head voice imperceptibly. Vogler did not recommend a mixed voice, but considered the chest voice and the head voice to be separate entities. The young singer should be trained using a limited number of notes at the beginning and then augment the vocal range upwards and downwards as the voice developed. To understand harmony, the student should learn to sing duets and ensembles first, instead of solo arias, using the works of the Italian masters Clari, Stefani and Marcello.

<sup>18</sup> The date for his departure is unclear, but it seems likely that he left Stockholm following the assassination of Gustav III. (Grave & Grave 1987, pp. 5–6)

<sup>19</sup> It is hard to know if Vogler used the term portamento to designate something that today we would probably call legato, that is, joining the notes together, or a classic portamento, a “slur, which is the gliding of the voice through every possible sound between note and note” (García 1982, p. 20). In fact, many of the eighteenth-century manuals seem to use the term for what today would be called legato. Giovanni Battista Mancini, for instance, says: “By portamento I mean the passing and blending of the voice from one tone to another with perfect proportion and union, in ascending as well as descending ... It must be a straight and limpid graduation that must pass, support, and blend from one tone to the other.” (Boodaghian 2006, p. 24). As for *mesa di voce*, Vogler does not use the term at all, but describes the crescendo and decrescendo used in the vocal exercise. (Vogler 1776, p. 5)

Vogler's first exercise is a melody of limited vocal range to an Italian text. The student should sing the melody, separating each note from the next, and then try to join them using portamento. The melody could also be used to train intonation and declamation. The second exercise is a scale of whole notes from c1 to c2. These were to be joined using portamento. This is followed by an exercise combining *messa di voce* and portamento, with a scale ascending and descending from c1 to c2. Two notes are joined, starting with a *messa di voce*. This was a standard practice in most eighteenth-century vocal manuals. But, while most Italian teachers had by this time discarded the solfeggio syllables and used single vowels instead, Vogler continued to use the syllables ut, re, mi, fa, sol.

The last exercise is in two parts, the first using half notes in sections of six notes (c<sup>1</sup> d<sup>1</sup> c<sup>1</sup> b c<sup>1</sup> d<sup>1</sup>, the last note being a quarter note) continuing up through the scale. The second part is an ornamented variant with dotted notes. A bass part is also given presenting the harmonies. Although Vogler's manual is brief, it presents the essential aspects of Italian teaching.

If we combine this little manual with the ornamentation exercises presented in his publication *Gründe der kurpfälzische Tonschule in Beyspielen*, a larger picture of his vocal aesthetics emerges (Corneilson 1998, pp. 91–109). The small da capo aria is presented on five staves, including the melody staff, a staff for ornamentation 1, another for ornamentation 2, and two staves for the piano accompaniment. The aria consists of a longer adagio and a short allegretto B part presented on one staff with ornamentation. Both A parts are ornamented, showing how important improvised ornamentation was at this time.

Vogler's suggested ornamentations are highly conventional, showing anticipatory notes, appoggiaturas, escape notes, diminutions (passing tones and filled-in intervals), arpeggios, mordents (containing three or four notes), shakes, tremolos and cadenzas – all part of standard vocal performance practice. Vogler was very careful about using trills, which occur only at fermatas, at the close of the B part (with no cadenza indicated) and at the cadence in bars 21–22. On the long notes in these bars Vogler had called for an arpeggio in the first part and syncopation in the second. In this he deviates from Italian practice, where shakes could be placed in scales or on long notes. The *messa di voce* seems to be excluded from the aria, something that was exceptional for the time, as it was usually called for on all long notes and at the beginning of the cadenza. The aria is a catalogue of eighteenth-century ornamentation, clearly written to demonstrate how ornaments were to be improvised in a given context. We can certainly count

on him transferring this knowledge to his Swedish students in the opera school.

## Nineteenth-century didactics

Of the nineteenth-century singing masters both Stielor and Berg left didactic material. Stielor published a vocal manual for use in secondary and grammar schools in 1820, and Berg wrote two manuals, left unpublished, called “Testament to my students”, in which he shared his thoughts on vocal aesthetics and the education of the voice. He also produced a collection of vocal exercises, presumably used by students at the opera school as well as by private students. The two manuals show a growing interest in science as well as a wish to professionalise the school. Here we will concentrate on the didactic developments between 1800 and 1850, into which the manuals by Stielor and Berg will be incorporated.

An initial hypothesis in this article has been that a change of paradigm took place between 1820 and 1830, in which the last remnants of the vocal technique and aesthetics of the eighteenth century were eliminated and replaced with a new concept of vocalising based on three unified registers, a lower larynx and intercostal breathing technique. This process of change can be linked to a set of technical and didactic changes. Those singled out for closer study are:

1. The concept of registers and the consequences for vocal sound.
2. The breathing technique and its importance in the teaching curriculum.
3. The *messa di voce* exercise and its place within the curriculum.
4. The role of solfeggi.

### The concept of registers

The concept of registers has been chosen because eighteenth-century singers mainly worked with two registers, the chest voice and the head voice or falsetto (Tosi 1723, pp. 14–15). In the nineteenth century a division into three registers, mainly inspired by teachers like Manuel García, Jr, became the norm, namely chest voice, head voice and falsetto, or chest, middle and head voice (García 1982, p. 7). During the eighteenth century the concept of registers was derived from empirical observation. The different registers had different sound qualities, which were cultivated to a certain degree, as the different sound characteristics were stylistically important. The regis-

ters were joined as imperceptibly as possible in the area of change. In the nineteenth century, however, vocal teachers began to strive for unity of the registers; the sound quality should be even throughout a register with no noticeable breaks. This phenomenon was called the *voix mixte* and is often confused with the so-called middle register. *Voix mixte* means a complete integration of all registers and, from a physiological point of view, is possible only when all muscles concerned operate in balance with their opposing muscles. In this case we can speak of equalisation instead of evening out the register breaks (Husler & Rodd-Marling 1983, p. 93). From a physiological point of view, which would entail considering the concept of “register” as a distinct and clearly definable muscular process, the *voix mixte* cannot be regarded as a register.

An investigation of singing masters’ views on registers therefore tells us whether they adhered to the older pedagogical method of description based on the concept of registers of the eighteenth century or emulated the newer, French model of three registers and the *voix mixte*. The latter would suggest an influx of ideas and a wider vocal network.

### Breathing techniques

The second point of attention is breathing technique. At the beginning of the eighteenth century very little was generally known about the physiological function of the lungs. An awakening interest in physiological matters, sparked by enlightenment ideas, did, however, supply several theories, evident for instance in Bérard’s and Agricola’s treatises.<sup>20</sup> During the Baroque period the French and Italian methods of controlling breath pressure differed; the French relied on a constant subglottic pressure, whereas the Italians preferred a flexible pressure, adjusting to the amount of breath needed for each expression, tone and dynamic quality (Sanford 1995, section 2). Needless to say, breathing techniques do not occupy many pages in the manuals of the eighteenth century; it seems probable that vocal instructors did not teach breathing to the extent that would be done in the nineteenth century, or for that matter, today. Breathing was important, but not important enough to warrant specific chapters in teaching manuals. The

<sup>20</sup> Bérard published an accurate picture of the lungs in his treatise, and the description he gives of their texture leads me to believe that he had taken part in a dissection, a growing field of interest in the eighteenth century. (Bérard 1757, introduction.) Whether any of the Swedish singing masters did the same is unknown, but public dissections were arranged at the anatomical theatre in South City Hall in Stockholm in the 1730s and 1740s. Carl von Linné took part in some of these when he practiced as a doctor in Stockholm 1738–1741. (Landell 2004)

techniques of the eighteenth century focused, as Reid has shown, on other aspects of voice teaching (Reid, 1971, p. 165). Pure breathing exercises, as practised by many today, were probably unknown to singers of this period. It is not until the nineteenth century and the teachings of Manuel García, Jr, that voice teachers singled out breathing procedures for specific study (García 1982, pp. 3–57). Intercostal breathing, required for many dramatic roles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is clearly linked to changing tonal ideals and the use of larger orchestras and larger opera houses (Donington 1965, p. 516).

#### The *messa di voce*

The *messa di voce* designates a vocal technique and ornament using a gradual crescendo and diminuendo, usually on a single note. During the eighteenth century the *messa di voce* was one of the first exercises in the singer's curriculum, used during the whole career as a warming-up exercise, performed in a comfortable range. Many eighteenth-century arias starts with this ornament, as does the cadenza, and it was essential for the singer, so essential that Tosi advised singers who were not trained in displaying long cadenzas to use only the *messa di voce* and the trill. The use of *messa di voce* at the cadenza lived well into the nineteenth century, but as an exercise it was moved farther into the curriculum, trained by advanced students rather than beginners. It was still an important part of the curriculum and has been even into the twentieth century (Pulte 2005). We shall therefore investigate its place within the curriculum as a marker for change.

#### The solfeggio

The word solfeggio is often used to designate vocal exercises, such as scales, intervals or melodic exercises, sung on the solmisation syllables. In the eighteenth century there were two different kinds of solfeggio, so before embarking on analyses or suppositions we have to define what the word solfeggio means. In doing so I find it important to make a clear distinction between the solfeggio designed to develop the vocal organs and the use of the solmisation system to teach sight-reading. In the eighteenth century, the concept of solfeggio was expanded, chiefly in Italy, to encompass exercises sung on single vowels. These agility and ornamentation exercises were often expressly composed by vocal instructors in order to eliminate certain vocal problems (Jander 1980, pp. 454–455). Such exercises were often considered too complicated to be sung on the traditional solmisation syllables, for which reason Porpora advised his students to use the vowel

*a* instead (Corri 1820, p. 36). The practice of single vowel solfeggio spread with Italian teaching throughout Europe.

At the Paris conservatory, solfeggio was taught as a separate subject from 1795 onwards. The French solfeggio collections, like the *Solfèges d'Italie*, published by Levesque and Bèche in 1772, show a substantial interest in the Italian form of solfeggio exercises. This collection was immensely popular. It enjoyed several editions and was distributed and sold all over Europe, and also found its way to Stockholm.

The collections of solfeggio from the eighteenth century are easily divided into two categories, exercises for beginners comprised of intonation exercises based on intervals and scales and exercises for advanced students, with training in ornamentation, for instance, or agility. In the last category we also find short arias in which a group of vocal problems is presented together. The solmisation form of solfeggio seems, at least in the Italian teaching, to have had a place in more advanced vocal studies, and this is a form that survived in the nineteenth century, at which point we rarely find the term solfeggio in connection with simple exercises designed to form the voice. The term solfeggio was nearly always used to designate the small aria-like pieces that could be sung on the solmisation syllables, but often was not. Examples can be found in collections by Panofka and Bordogni.<sup>21</sup>

### Stieler's manual

We do not know if the same principles as described in Stieler's manual, *Lärobok i de första grunderna för Musik och Sång vid ungdomens undervisning i Skolor och Gymnasier* (Stockholm 1820), were applied at the opera school, but it seems likely, although the students of the opera school were probably supposed to have advanced in their studies farther than the ordinary student in grammar school.<sup>22</sup> The manual was commissioned from Stieler by the Royal Educational Committee. The idea of creating a manual of singing for secondary and grammar schools rested on the assumption that song and singing were the foundation of music.

In his manual Stieler tried to combine the older teaching method, using the chorale as the sole didactic vehicle for oral imitation, with a new didactic

<sup>21</sup> Marco Bordogni was a singer and teacher who sung in Milan and Paris and was later appointed singing master at the Paris Conservatory. He was the teacher of Panofka and published several collections of solfeggi. (Forbes 2012)

<sup>22</sup> Franz Hedberg says that Stieler was the best teacher at the opera, surpassing Craelius by far. (Hedberg 1885, p. 36)

approach using notated music, adapted to the ability of the student, in order to teach students to read music. The first section of his manual is therefore devoted to teaching the musical system, such as signs, scales, intervals, and terms. In the second section, and the chapters that will play a major part here, he discusses the formation of the voice, intonation and breathing, as well as the vocal attack, keeping time, pronunciation, the use of chorales and the further education of the voice. The third section of the manual, divided into five chapters, consists of vocal exercises. The first is to exercise without a fixed tempo, then comes interval practice, followed by mixed exercises in major and minor and exercises containing several parts.

Stieler used the Italian “mastricelli” system in teaching, that is, older students instructed the younger. He saw several positive effects in this; first, the teacher saved time, and secondly, it was easier to determine whether the students had understood the principles if they had to explain it to their younger colleagues. It was also, as in Italian conservatories, a good school for those who went on to become teachers themselves (Stieler 1820, pp. 32–33). Let us now take a look at our four areas of attention.

### Registers and registration

In the first chapter Stieler reminds his readers of how different voices are. He discusses different voice types and explains that every voice has two registers, the chest voice and the falsetto. In a soprano the chest voice reaches  $g_1$  or  $a_1$ ; in an alto,  $e_1$  or  $f_1$ . Stieler believed one could achieve an imperceptible passage from one register to the other by singing the higher notes of the chest register in falsetto. The chest register was considered stronger than the falsetto, and one of the aims of his teaching was to make them more equal in strength, that is, soften the chest voice and strengthen the falsetto. High notes should be moderated since they were more prominent than lower ones (Stieler 1820, pp. 36–37).

In this text we have traits of the eighteenth century as well as the nineteenth. The division into two registers is a concept of the eighteenth century, but striving for a more even voice is clearly a vocal aesthetic of the nineteenth. Training this by suppressing and softening the chest voice, while strengthening the falsetto was a method used during the nineteenth century, while the soft top voice is a remnant of the eighteenth century, when a strong chest voice and a soft falsetto were preferred. It would therefore seem as though Stieler was at the breaking point of vocal change in his concept of registers.

## Breathing technique

Stieler recognised the importance of correct breathing technique. He pointed out that the beginner usually exhales more than he needs to. The right way of taking a breath was to “raise the chest and pull in the lower abdomen”,<sup>23</sup> something that could indicate more clavicular, or costal breathing than intercostal breathing. In the beginning this can be done slowly, but in time the student should accustom himself to filling his abdomen rapidly and then let the air slowly escape until the body regained the position before the breath. With practice the breath should be prolonged. The student should guard against letting the chest become too empty, since this weakened the chest. To strengthen the chest, continual moderate exercise was needed (Stieler 1820, pp. 37–38).

It is not clear whether or not Stieler practised breathing without pitch, and therefore it is hard to determine the exact method of his practice. The high placement of the breathing indicates an older technique, but possibly this is a result of the wording. Stieler clearly understood the concept of subglottic pressure and reflexive breathing. Breathing does not occupy many lines in Stieler’s manual, a matter in which he follows older manuals.

## The *messa di voce*

In the fifth section of his manual Stieler introduced the *messa di voce*. To sing with expression, the singer should to master the different dynamic shadings of a pitch. To train this Stieler proposed using the first exercises on long notes as follows: The student attacks the tone *piano* and then lets it swell to *forte* and then again diminish to *piano*, thereby making a gradual crescendo and decrescendo. The tone should be steady without wavering or going higher or lower. The exercise was to be performed in a comfortable range, never too high, at least not in the beginning. It could also be practised over several tones and then combined with legato. Stieler points out that this exercise should not be performed by beginners since the voice needs good intonation and firmness.

This is a teaching method of the nineteenth century. Stieler used the exercise of *messa di voce* to train dynamics and does not mention it as a means of training register.

<sup>23</sup> In a footnote Stieler describes the wrong way of taking a breath, that is, no movement should be detected in the chest, and the lower abdomen should bellow out. (Stieler, 1820, p. 37)

## Solfeggi

Stieler did not use the solfeggio syllables; it was the Italian system of vowel exercises that was most prominent in his manual. His programme of study started with single long notes in a comfortable register sung on the vowel *a*. The vowel *a*, open as in “ack”, was the most important tool for the singer and helped build the voice. The vowels should be given their right colour and be pure and clear. In this Stieler adhered to eighteenth-century manuals in which each vowel was to retain its sound. This also indicates that he used a technique with a slightly higher larynx than was used in the late nineteenth century (Stieler 1820, pp. 45–46). Stieler did not use the aria-like exercises, but seems to have concentrated his efforts on teaching boys to sight-read and form the voice in a pleasing manner for congregational singing. In this sense he had no use for the ornamental niceties of a Porpora or Mancini.

To summarise, in Stieler’s manual we can trace the aesthetics of both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The concept of registers is clearly based on eighteenth-century ideas. The interest in breathing points to the future, but the description of inhalation indicates an older technique. Stieler removed the *messa di voce* from its central position as a learning tool, something that places his teaching closer to the nineteenth century, and the focus on single vowels instead of the solmisation syllables positions his methods in the Italian realm more than the German. Stieler’s manual contains both past and future; above all, he seemed to look at teaching as a concept of individual understanding, not mere collective reproduction, something that would be exceedingly important to later schools.

## Isak Berg's Testament

In his two volumes entitled “Anteckningar rörande Rösten, Sången och Konsten: Testamentet till mina Lärjungar” (1868–1869),<sup>24</sup> Isak Berg discussed the vocal art. He saw the foundation for vocal expressions in nature, and he therefore based his theories on the laws of nature (Berg 1868, p. 5). It was important to him that singing be more than vocal display. Art should be a calling, not just a profession. Here a romantic view of the artist has taken over from a more materialistic outlook; the idea of being creative has succeeded that of being more reproductive. Song must fulfil the demands of

<sup>24</sup> These two volumes, together with vocal exercises and solfeggi, can be found in the Music and Theatre Library in Stockholm, Manuscript 258.

thought, sentiment and taste. Berg makes an important distinction, namely that while some may consider taste a product of sentiment, he considered it the result of the perfect proportions between the parts. He linked his belief to didactic considerations, saying that the scale should be considered the foundation, the backbone of the voice, a means of teaching proportion. By the term “scale” Berg meant a set of important parts of his teaching method, not the musical scale (Berg 1868, p. 11). Berg distinguished between two levels of exercises: the scale and the vocalise or solfeggio. With scale Berg counted, among other things, the speaking and singing voice, instrumental and vocal tone, physiological and self-made faults, posture, taking breaths, attack, timbre, registers, intonation and different scales (in the usual meaning of scale; Berg 1868, p. 11). In short, most of the things needed to form the voice. The second part of his manual was comprised of vowels and consonants and how to join them with syllables, breathing, rhythm and phrasing, accents, differentiating between vowels in depth and height, *portamento*, *slancio*,<sup>25</sup> periods and cadenzas (Berg used the term “final endings”) and the division in measures (Berg 1868, p. 12). Solfeggio was used for learning to pronounce the language while singing as well as for teaching phrasing.<sup>26</sup>

Here we shall deal less with Berg’s views on art in general and concentrate on the purely technical side of vocal education. In relation to Stieler’s manual, the four areas of attention shall be studied closely.

### The registers

Berg started his discussion on registers by saying that no one knew how registers are formed and with what tools; moreover, there are many different systems for dividing them. As long as science cannot look into working vocal organs, Berg considered the mystery unsolvable. He therefore found no reason to fabricate yet another system, as vague as the existing ones, and instead reflected on the phenomenon from his experience. (Berg 1868, p. 49)

In his second volume Berg gave a physiological explanation of the voice, explaining that in the chest voice, the whole of the vocal chords vibrate,

<sup>25</sup> The Italian phrase *con slancio* means with impetuosity and is best described as a burst forward, that is, the singer gives a boost through increasing the subglottal pressure and thereby the amount of air. (Apel 2000, p. 780)

<sup>26</sup> Berg commented that many of his contemporaries considered vocalise and solfeggio different things, but he does not tell us why, or in what respect. He himself thought of them as the French and Italian versions of the same thing. In this article I will henceforth use solfeggi to designate these small exercise arias. (Berg 1868, p. 10)

whereas in falsetto, only the edges vibrate. In the chest voice the vocal chords are more relaxed, for the falsetto stretched. He also gave a description of how the glottis and the vocal chords look within the throat when the chest voice is used. He knew the different muscle groups, and he identified the thyroarytenoid and arytenoid muscles as being responsible for the chest voice. He also gave the length of the vocal chords in men, women and children. For this he referred to Professor Johannes Müller's *Handbuch der Physiologie des Menschen*, published in Berlin 1834 (Berg 1869, pp. 8–11). In the mid-nineteenth century methodological experimental physiology emerged, pioneered by François Magendie in France and Johannes Müller in Berlin. Newly developed instruments made it possible to measure and record physiological actions (Schwalbe 1905, p.136). Berg's interest in such scientific works left traces in his teachings, and he cites several paragraphs from Müller's book, comparing them to the findings of Dodart and Liscovius,<sup>27</sup> among others (Berg 1869, pp. 9–10).

Berg recognised three registers: chest, falsetto and head register (Berg 1868, p. 51).<sup>28</sup> He believed that children and women had all three registers, but that during puberty men lost the head voice. Berg observed that some men retained the first notes of the head voice, citing the Italian tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini as an example.<sup>29</sup> The male falsetto voice was often so instrument-like and weak that Berg found it impossible to cultivate for singing. It should therefore, he believed, be eliminated, and in its place the so-called *voix mixte* should be used in the higher registers. For Berg, the *voix mixte* was a dense and dark timbre based on the chest voice. According to Berg, it was wrong to push the chest voice upwards with a clear timbre. This phenomenon, which Berg recognised as a French custom, especially cultivated by the tenor Duprèz, called *l'ut de poitrine* (Vest 2009, pp. 46–50), should be “excommunicated” because of the resulting “thin, shrieking, and unmusical” quality and the potential damage it could do to the vocal organs (Berg 1868, p. 52).

<sup>27</sup> Denise Dodart (1634–1707) was a French physician, naturalist and botanist who studied the respiration of plants. (Anonymous 2008). Karl Friedrich Salomon Liscovius (1780–1844) was a German physician and physiologist educated at the Thomas School in Leipzig. He published several treatises on the human voice, such as *Zur Theorie der tönenden Luftsäulen*, published in 1843. (Eitner 1902, p. 188)

<sup>28</sup> In the second volume of his notes, dated 1869, he listed all the different voice types with the vocal range for each type. (Berg 1869, p. 40)

<sup>29</sup> Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794–1854) became a friend of Berg, who claimed that Rubini was one of those exceptional singers who never experienced the break. He was a very popular singer in the 1830s and 1840s with a particularly ringing high voice and a knack for coloratura well suited to the music of Bellini and Donizetti. (Traini 1954)

The female voice had three registers. The chest register comprised the tones from g to g1.<sup>30</sup> The falsetto spanned the first octave and the head voice comprised the second octave and all possible tones above. The chest voice had declamatory possibilities, but Berg did not like the French manner of putting in power and volume for expressive purposes. The reason was that the balance between the registers was disrupted, and too much power signalled masculinity, something Berg did not find fitting for a female voice. To Berg, the registers should blend into one another, creating one voice. The female falsetto should have firmness and elasticity. Berg remarked sadly that his contemporaries no longer seemed to value falsetto, but preferred the head voice. This last register, for which a dark timbre was essential, he considered the most delicate of the registers. It should be sung with soft tones from c2 to a moderately high range.

The different tonal qualities of female registers made it hard to unify them into one voice; blending the strong chest voice with the weaker falsetto was especially difficult. To solve this problem, Berg proposed a method whereby the different registers were first practised separately. The breaking point should not be fixed at any particular note but remain flexible, depending on the musical context. Berg considered it easier to go from the chest voice to falsetto than from falsetto to the chest voice, and it was the elasticity and flexibility in each register that led to equalisation. For the notes in the breaking region Berg used closed vowels such as i and e. The first notes of the head voice, from c2 to g2, were to be sung with a decisive and dramatic colour. Berg considered it easier to join the falsetto to the head voice, since

<sup>30</sup> See Ingela Tägil's article in this publication. Berg does in fact state that the falsetto starts at c1, so although the chest voice could go as high as g1, it was not desirable (Berg 1868, p. 53). As Ingela Tägil has pointed out, Berg's concept of registers may have been detrimental to some of his students. In his own voice the chest register dominated, and we can see from his *Testament* that he disliked the falsetto in male voices, but thought it indispensable for the female voice. As didactics still relied to a considerable degree on demonstration, listening to a chest-based voice, such as the one Berg possessed, must have created a desire to adhere to his sound quality, which was probably detrimental to a head register-based voice such as Jenny Lind's. Berg trained the registers separately at first and considered it easier to go from the chest voice to the falsetto. In so doing the student would start with vocal chords of a relative mass, trying to make them slimmer as they went into falsetto. Today most vocal teachers agree that to take pressure off the voice, the opposite method should be used. Increased pressure on the chest voice would probably have robbed Jenny Lind's highest vocal range, creating a hole in her voice at exactly the point where she later experienced difficulties. A closer look at the teaching statements of the 1840s, with lists of who was being taught and who was indisposed, in fact shows that a number of students were hoarse for more than a month. This could indicate overtiring and a deficient technique or for that matter insufficient quarters and a lack of winter clothes. (KTA: F6A, 1843)

the singer only had to use the dark timbre to colour the transitional notes (Berg 1868, pp. 49–58).

So what did Berg consider a dark timbre and what, a clear timbre? A timbre is the inherent sound of an instrument, an individual quality in a voice.<sup>31</sup> Berg's division of the voice into two timbres is clearly linked to the registers, and he used these different qualities both aesthetically and as a didactic tool. Passing from one to another could be shaded in a thousand different ways, giving the singer an endless array of dramatic possibilities. As the singer went up the scale, he or she should be careful to observe how the pharynx was lengthened with every rising note. Berg noted that the rising steps were greater in the clear timbre than in the dark. In the same proportion as the larynx was lowered, the pharynx was raised. Here Berg means the soft palate. In a clear voice the form of the mouth should look like a slightly squashed C (high larynx and low palate), whereas in the dark voice the C was full (high palate, low larynx) (Berg 1868, p.42).

The clear timbre was the basis and core of the voice and should be practised on the middle tones of the voice. Berg linked it to the speaking voice and said that one should let the voice develop naturally and over time. It should be practised separately, like the dark timbre, and the two later joined together. The dark timbre should be practised even less and only to make the student observe its beneficial influence on the high notes, where it was essential. Using the clear timbre on high notes would, according to Berg, create a shrieking, hard voice. The female falsetto was trained in the clear voice, and for men the middle tones and the first tones in the first octave (which includes the pitches from c1 to h1).

For Berg, solving the problem of how to pass from one register to the other, effortlessly and imperceptibly, was essential to singing. To practise this transition Berg used a decrescendo. To him, *forte* contained a large amount of clear timbre, whereas the dark timbre was used in *piano*. Even if Berg here used only a half *messa di voce*, the intention is the same as in the eighteenth century, when *messa di voce* was used both to train the passing between registers and the flexibility of airflow. In both cases a seamless passing between the registers was desired. To practise a decrescendo instead of a full *messa di voce* was a didactic choice based on the belief that the crescendo was much harder for the student to perform and could result in forcing. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Berg did not consider the timbre to be a vehicle for expression (Berg 1868, pp. 42–48).

<sup>31</sup> Berg wrote *unique et invariable*. He often used French words and expressions in his text, something that indicates a French manual in his background. (Berg 1868, p. 39)

The division in three registers, the physiological interest in the mechanics of the voice, as well as the use of *voix mixte* placed Berg at the heart of nineteenth-century teaching methods. In his concept of registers he was clearly inspired by the teachings of Manuel García, Jr.

### Breathing techniques

Berg's views on breathing are a combination of eighteenth-century ideas, probably communicated via Giuseppe Siboni, and nineteenth-century science, for instance, the treatise on breathing *Sur la respiration* by a certain Dr. Mendt. Berg used breathing exercises without tone and declared that the air had to be taken from the lower abdomen. He described the difference between abdominal and clavicular breathing and warned against the latter. Air should be allowed to fill the lungs noiselessly. He also provided the student a method for determining whether they are breathing correctly:

For this to be executed correctly the posture of the body should be as I described in the previous chapter, and I consider it both unnecessary and wrong to protrude either chest or belly, as many say you should. The mouth and throat are opened, letting the atmospheric air fill the lung, so quietly that one cannot hear any sound – this is the simplest and, in my view, the truest principle of breathing. If one wants to be sure that it is done correctly, one only has to touch the larynx with a finger during respiration – inspiration – and be sure that it remains perfectly still. If the breath is clavicular, the larynx will, often quite violently, lower itself...<sup>32</sup>

Inhalation and expiration should both be practised an equal amount of time,<sup>33</sup> but not to the point of exhaustion. The most common fault among students, according to Berg, was that they use too much air when singing. He stated that a tone, like the stomach, can suffer indigestion, that is, lose resonance, and that too much pressure damages the organs. Less air gives more sound (Berg 1868, pp. 27–32).

<sup>32</sup> "För att detta rätt skall utföras skall kroppens ställning vara sådan jag i det förra Capitlet beskrifvit, och anser jag som både obehöfligt och orätt att bröstet eller magen framskjutes, som många påstår. Munnen och halsen öppnas, och låte man den atmosfäriska luften inströmma i lungan, så tyst att man sjelf derutaf ej förnimma något ljud – detta är den enklaste och, enligt min tanke, sannaste principen för andhämtningen. Vill man ytterligare försäkra sig att den göres på rätta sättet, behöver man blott med fingret beröra larynx under inandningen – inspirationen – och göra sig förvissad att den står orubbligt stilla. Är andetaget deremot clavikulärt, sänker sig larynx, oftast med häftighet", author's translation. (Berg 1868, pp. 28–29)

<sup>33</sup> It is not clear whether Berg means that the inhalation and exhalation in these exercises should be equally long or if the amount of time allotted to their practice should be equal.

From this we can deduce that Berg gave breathing a great deal of attention in his teaching, using exercises with and without tone. The focus on breathing in the manual was inspired by both French and Italian teaching methods of the time. In this way Berg was definitely at the forefront of vocal didactics. Like Stieler, he commented on the most common fault among students, using too much air, something that leads to lack of resonance in the voice. In his view that breathing exercises were gymnastics for the voice, Berg recognised the importance of training the muscles by themselves, a thoroughly modern view.

#### The *messa di voce*

Berg did not use the *messa di voce* as it was intended during the eighteenth century; in fact, he did not seem to use the full form at all in his basic practice. It is certainly not a part of his exercise sheets and seems to be rare in the solfeggi. The half *messa di voce* described above was preferred. Most of his contemporaries, such as Laure Cinti-Damoreau or Luigi Lablache used the *messa di voce* in their manuals,<sup>34</sup> but it is only in Garcí's manual that we find mention of using a half *messa di voce*. Garcí divided the exercise into two parts, making the student take a breath between the parts so as not to strain the voice too much (García 1982, p. 39), but whereas Garcí retained the whole exercise, Berg used only half, so possibly the idea for this came from Garcí's manual.

#### The solfeggi

Berg speaks about the solfeggio syllables in his chapter on amalgamation, the union between vowels and consonants in the second part of his "Testament" (p. 107–114). The syllables should be used to train language in sound and give the voice strength and consistency. The goal of the practice was to perform pure vowels and consonants with the right timbre. In this approach Berg seemed to adhere to the eighteenth-century view. In the manual he explained how each syllable is to be performed, the position of the tongue and the sound desired. The singing of solfeggi was a wide field

<sup>34</sup> The French soprano Laure Cinti-Damoreau was a teacher at the Paris Conservatory between 1833 and 1856. She published a vocal manual entitled *Méthode de chant* in 1849. Luigi Lablache (1794–1858) studied violin, contrabass and singing from the age of twelve at the conservatory Pietà dei Turchini in Naples. He had a deep bass voice and became famous in Italy and France during the 1820s and 1830s. He published a vocal manual called *Méthode complète de chant* including *messa di voce* in chapter 4 (Lablache 1997, p. 29).

of study, evident in the number of such exercises in his collection (MTB 17). They can be divided into two categories: simple exercises based on the scale to help form the voice, train legato, register, intonation, and so on, and short, aria-like compositions sung on the solmisation syllables and used to teach phrasing, ornamentation, expression and timbre. The exercises and solfeggi mirror a complete teaching programme, starting with simple scale-like movements to train agility, intonation and register, then progressing to descending triadic forms, possibly to train the union of head voice and falsetto, interspersed with pauses to train the attack. Berg wrote the solfeggio syllables underneath. In the fourth solfeggio he introduced difficulties such as chromatic passages, punctuation, syncopation, leaps and different turns and figures. In the collection there are quite a few solfeggi written by other different hands.<sup>35</sup> In some cases Berg also demonstrated how to ornament a melody through diminutions. Other pieces in the collection, called “Vocalises”, were clearly designed for advanced students.

The pattern that emerges is that a student’s initial study was based on intervallic training from the single tone to the quarter above the octave, in steps, leaps, turns and scales. The basic material consisted of twenty-one exercises, using the solfeggio syllables. After these came six, relatively easy solfeggi in different vocal settings, followed by more advanced, aria-like solfeggi for artistic purposes. Berg considered solfeggi an important part of his teaching programme, and he was not alone; solfeggi exercise books were very popular throughout the nineteenth century.

To summarise, Berg’s manual shows that he was keenly interested in the vocal methods of his time and that he reflected on vocal problems in an almost scientific manner. His method was based on both older and contemporary sources combined with his own experience from a long life as a teacher. In his views on register and breathing technique he was at the forefront of change, inspired mostly by the French school of García.<sup>36</sup> The lack of a full *messa di voce* exercise in his method is unique for the period. The focus on solfeggi as a teaching device can be traced to the Italian teaching methods inherited from Siboni.

<sup>35</sup> Berg used the opera’s copyists, and little in the collection is written in his hand. The material was used for school purposes, something that is mirrored in the great diversity of didactic problems and vocal ranges.

<sup>36</sup> With perhaps one important exception: whereas timbre in García’s manual is linked both to physiological requisites (see García 1982, p. 4) and expression (García 1982, p. 63), Berg seemed to consider timbre only a technical vehicle (Berg 1868, pp. 42–48).

## Conclusion

The manuals by the singing masters in Sweden show a deep reliance on the vocal didactics used in schools abroad. These foreign models were both desired and sought after by the management of the Royal Swedish Opera. The choice of singing masters probably fell on singers who came from a foreign vocal milieu or who had studied and internalised foreign vocal ideals. In this sense there was no “Swedish singing school” during the period 1773 to 1850 investigated here. The shifting vocal aesthetics at the Royal Swedish Opera were mirrored in the choice of singing masters. At the beginning of the period Italian vocal schools dominated the stage, replaced for a short time by German and French ideals mediated through Haeffner and Du Puy. From the 1820s, however, there was a strong focus on Italian vocal aesthetics, and later, in the teaching of Isak Berg, a mix with French vocal techniques.

The didactic material used for this article is diverse and consists of published as well as unpublished sources. Some of the materials may have had only marginal importance for students at the Royal Swedish Opera. In the case of Vogler there are no records to prove that his German manual was ever used at the Opera, although it was available in the collection of the Royal Academy of Music. The same can be said of Stieler’s manual, which was designed to serve the needs of the Swedish grammar school, with a clear, but general, method teaching the music fundamentals as well as basic vocal knowledge. Stieler too had no opportunity to influence how teachers used his book.

Berg’s “Testament” on the other hand was written as a declaration of his teaching principles and summarises his experiences from a long life as a singer and teacher, but it is uncertain whether his students had access to his writings, even if they heard the content of many of his articles discussed in their lessons. The exercise material in Berg’s collection gives a much more diversified view of his teaching than Stieler’s manual, given the differences in target groups. In both cases there is little evidence of how the material was used. To answer such questions we would have to examine declarations by their students, something that lies beyond the scope of the present article. Another point is the discrepancy between written material and oral teaching. Vocal exercises have surely been used in different ways, depending on the singing subject and his or her vocal problems and abilities. This is indicated by Berg’s exercises, which come in many different ways, designed for different voices and different vocal problems.

Even with these differences and methodological problems, it is clear that there are similarities. Both Stieler and Berg showed an interest in professionalising the opera school, basing their teaching on scientific findings as well as on the older Italian methods purveyed by their teachers. The investigation of changing concepts, above all, in the way the two instructors regarded registers and breathing technique, has shown that Berg, with his interest in physiology and his continental contacts, brought the latest European trends in vocal didactics to Stockholm, signalling a change in both technique and aesthetics that would prevail during the rest of the century and eventually lead to a more national singing school.

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## Summary

This article investigates the education of singers at the Royal Theatres in Stockholm (primarily the opera) and the Royal Swedish Academy of Music between 1773 and 1850, connecting this instruction to international educational methods. Resources for this study are divided into two parts: didactic manuals and manuscript sources on vocal instruction on the one hand, and documentation on the organisation of vocal education on the other, preserved in the archives of the Royal Opera and the Royal Academy of Music. The article gives an overview of the problems of vocal education in the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, when two traditions of vocal education were evident in Sweden. One was elementary, designed to form the vocal apparatus and give the student basic musical training. The other was orientated towards vocal dramatics and interpretation. Both were founded on late eighteenth-century aesthetic ideas.

# Jenny Lind's Vocal Strain

Ingela Tägil\*

Jenny Lind (1820–1887) may be considered one of the last, great singers of bel canto. The highlight of her career as an opera singer was the period 1838–49, and her repertoire consisted mainly of leading parts by the bel canto composers Bellini, Donizetti and Meyerbeer. Her voice was a high lyric soprano which easily performed the required long phrases, but had some difficulties with rapid passages. She also had a small vocal defect. The pitches from f1 to a1 were “veiled”, meaning that her voice let through more air than her vocal chords could use on these specific tones. Already when she made her big breakthrough in 1838 the reviewers noticed that:

Miss Lind's higher notes have an unusual strength and sound, but in her lower notes she has a hoarseness, which might be hard for her to overcome.<sup>1</sup>

The description of her voice as being less powerful in the middle and lower registers shows up again and again in reviews from Sweden, Germany, Aus-

\* with thanks to Eva Öhrström

<sup>1</sup> Orvar Odd, in *Aftonbladet*, 8 March 1838: ”M:lle Linds högre toner ega en ovanlig styrka och klang, men de lägre vidlåder en viss heshet, den det torde blifva henne svårt att öfvervinna.” All translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

tria and England during her entire active period. In 1845 *The Illustrated London News* reported:

Jenny Lind has a voice of extraordinary compass, its only defect being a deficiency of volume in the medium portion of the register.<sup>2</sup>

The voice defect went back to her early youth, when she was threatened with losing her voice completely due to vocal strain. In 1841 she consulted Manuel García the younger (1805–1906), one of the great singing teachers of the time. Her voice was extremely tired, and this was not the first time she had nearly lost it. Such a loss had happened during her early teenage years. Apparently, the damage that her voice suffered in her youth never really healed. Later, as she matured and sang more demanding roles at the Royal Theatre<sup>3</sup> in Stockholm, her technique was deficient, and she strained her voice once again.

In September 1830 Jenny Lind became a pupil at the school associated with the Royal Theatre. Her study at the drama school would continue to 1837. Like all children at the school, she was put to work as a child actress. Sometimes she also participated in concerts. The school was designed for three forms of theatre: dramatic theatre, ballet and opera. After a few years of study, the school determined which career was the most suitable for the pupil in question. Jenny was taught singing by the voice teacher Isak Berg, facial expressions by the actress Carolina Bock and dance by the premiere ballerina Sophie Daguin.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1830 Jenny made her debut as the character Angela in the play *Edwinski and Floreska* or *The Polish Mine*.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the year she had played this part another four times (KTA L1A, Daily posters, 1830). After the premiere, she acted frequently, but only in speaking roles. In 1831 she performed eleven times in four pieces, of which three were new to her, and during 1832 she acted a total of six times and participated in at least two of the Royal Theatre's concerts. During 1833 and 1834, she acted 20 times per year, and in 1835 she performed at the theatre 26 times, as well as in one concert. In 1836 she performed 17 times (KTA L1A, Daily posters, 1831–1836). During these years, the Stockholm press paid her tribute. The journal *Heimdall* was interested in the young student and wrote about her on several occasions. On 24 April 1832, *Heimdall* noticed her for the first time:

<sup>2</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, 11 October 1845.

<sup>3</sup> Kungliga Teatern

<sup>4</sup> *Edwinsky och Floreska* or *Polska Gruvan*.

Her remarkable musical mind, and, for her age, that, rare artistic education has brought her considerable attention in the various circles in which she has been heard, supervised by the teacher Mr Berg. Her memory and her ear are perfect, and her comprehension is quick: One would be amazed and moved by her singing. She can go through the most difficult and artistic musical passages without being confused [...]. If this young genius does not suddenly mature prematurely, we should to expect an operatic artist of high order.<sup>5</sup>

*Heimdall* delivered its opinion about Jenny's musical talents several times that year; in December it proclaimed: "The young student Jenny Lind has, though much younger [than Mathilda Ficker], a much clearer and more ringing voice."<sup>6</sup> This was part of a review of a concert that took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1832. The concert placard announced that said Jenny was a student at the Theatre's singing school (KTA L1A, Daily posters, 24 November 1832). This might indicate that it had already been decided that she would end up on the operatic stage. In any case there were high hopes for her singing career. But over the next few years, Jenny's voice declined. The first Jenny Lind biographer, Charlotte Birch-Pfeiffer (1845), claimed that Jenny's beautiful high tones disappeared at the age of 12, and her voice became weak and poor (Birch-Pfeiffer, 1845). However, several other writers, including Holland and Rockstro, argued that this decline took place later, sometime during her sixteenth and seventeenth years (Holland & Rockstro 1891, part 1, p 47). In the very earliest reviews from *Heimdall*, from 1832, there is no suggestion at all that Jenny's voice had any defect or sounded weak. The journal praised both her musical talents and her voice.

The first time any suggestion of Jenny's weakening voice turns up is in February of 1836, when she played her first big opera character, Georgette, in *Fron dövrerna* by Adolf Fredrik Lindblad (1801–1878) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February that year. The opera had been performed the previous year, with Mathilda Ficker as Georgette. Lindblad wrote to his friend Malla Silfverstople: "Little Jenny Lind, who played in Mathilda Ficker's place, has supported the

<sup>5</sup> *Heimdall*, 24 April 1832: "Hennes högst märkvärdiga musikaliska sinne och den för hennes år icke mindre sällsynta konst-utbildning hafva också väckt stort uppseende i de enskilda kretsar, der hon låtit höra sig, handledd af sin lärare, Hr *Berg*. Minnet är lika fullkomligt, som örat är säkert, och fattningsförmågan lika snabb, som djup: man på en gång förundras och röres af hennes sång. Hon kan genomgå pröfningen i de svåraste solfeger och de konstrikaste satser, utan att förvillas[...] Om detta unga snille ej brådmognar, eller genom någon yttre tillfällighet går förloradt, bör man ha allt skäl att vänta sig, ehuru ty värr [*sic*] i en aflägsen framtid, en opera-sujett af hög ordning."

<sup>6</sup> *Heimdall*, 1 December 1832: "Den unga eleven Jenny Lind har, ehuru mycket yngre [än Mathilda Ficker] en klarare och mera klingande stämma."

play through her lively action, although she has a weak voice, indeed almost no voice.”<sup>7</sup> Despite Lindblad’s remark – that Jenny had almost no voice – she was favourably reviewed in a paper for theatre and music: “Among the actors Miss Lind should have the credit of being mentioned as a primary consideration, while she performed her part with the utmost perfection as an actress as well as a singer.”<sup>8</sup> It appears that she did not lose her voice at once, but the voice gradually became more and more exhausted. In February 1836 Jenny was 15 years old, and her vocal fatigue seems to have begun then. Regardless of the exact year this occurred, something happened to a voice that previously had been praised as a high, clear soprano; some years later, Lindblad remarked that Jenny had a weak, almost non-existent voice.

What did happen? What made Jenny’s voice so fatigued and weak that she began to lose it? Most likely, it was not one factor, but a number of things. Holland and Rockstro conducted several, rather superficial analyses that suggest that the singing tasks she took on were too challenging for such an early age, that the Royal Theatre used her too often, and finally that her vocal education had been inadequate (Holland & Rockstro 1891, part 1, pp. 47–48, pp. 106–107). The suggestion that the Theatre used her too often cannot be corroborated, since she only performed around 20 times a year during the period 1833–36, which is not a sufficient reason to explain her vocal fatigue. She was certainly very young, and her vocal folds may not have been fully developed, but given awareness of her youth combined with a good singing technique, this should not have been a problem. It was common for children to be employed at theatres, not only in Stockholm, but also all over Europe, and the theatres usually knew how to handle children’s delicate voices. With this in mind, the Royal Theatre seems to have made an appropriate assessment to allow Jenny to act only 20 times per year, and in 1836 when she sang her first major operatic role, she performed even fewer times.

Naturally, the question arises of what may have been wrong with Jenny’s singing technique. Holland and Rockstro’s conclusion, namely that she lacked sufficient and qualified education, is probably close to the truth. Her vocal teacher Berg was an experienced singer with a solid international education. He also had had a singing career, which, though short, gave him

<sup>7</sup> Lindblad, 26 February 1836, KB L 48:3: ”Lilla Jenny Lind som uppträdt i Mamsell Mathilda Fickers ställe har, ehuru en svag, nästan ingen röst, dock genom sitt lifliga spel hjälpt upp saken.”

<sup>8</sup> *Tidning för Teater och Musik*, 20 February 1836: ”bland de spelande torde Mamsell Lind förtjäna att i främsta rummet nämnas, såsom den der med största fulländning, så väl i anseende till action som sång, utförde sin rol [*sic*].”

connections with other European centres. Thus, he cannot be entirely dismissed as incompetent. However, in the 1840s, criticism of his teaching abilities began to emerge. In the journal *Stockholm's Figaro* (14 June 1846) Berg was criticised for several fatigued voices of singers under his instruction, for instance, Elna Ström, Julia Liedberg, Olof Strandberg and Mina Fundin. The journal claimed that it was fortunate that Jenny had sought help from the great Manuel García (*Stockholms Figaro*, 14 June 1846).

But the question remains of what was it about Isak Berg's training that failed to produce an adequate vocal technique? Berg wrote about his vocal pedagogy in a few unpublished manuscripts: "Notes about the voice, the singing and the art: Testament to my pupils" (1868, 1869),<sup>9</sup> "Advice for singing exercises given by the tenor singer at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm: Berg after the Italian school" (1879)<sup>10</sup> and "Notes on vocal pedagogy and harmonoc theory" (1880).<sup>11</sup> Among his ideas, there are some that indicate his teaching and treatment of young voices may have contributed to exhausting them.

Berg generally placed the chest voice a little too high in the register. He claimed that a woman's chest voice starts at g1 and continues downward (Berg 1868, p. 53), whereas García believed that a woman's chest voice should be kept below e1. García's contention was that women can produce pitches in the chest voice over e1, but if over-used, this could damage the entire voice and even reduce it in a short time (García 1894, p. 15). The baritone Isidor Dannström, who often sang with Jenny Lind during the 1840s, thought that in her youth Jenny had used her chest voice too high in her register (Dannström 1896, pp. 34–35). Adding to this, García claimed that a voice veiled by the middle tones could be caused by using the chest voice in too high a range (García 1894, pp. 8–9). There is considerable difference between Berg's and García's assessments about where to use the chest voice. They differ by a minor third in their advice, which was probably one of the reasons why Jenny exhausted her voice. Berg's teaching can also be compared to the manual *Vocal-Learning* (1814)<sup>12</sup> in which a soprano was taught to sing in a chest voice up to f1 (*Sång-lära* 1814, p. 5). That is higher than García's e1, but still as much as a whole tone lower than Berg's g1.

<sup>9</sup> Anteckningar rörande rösten, sången och konsten, testamentet till mina lärjungar (Berg 1868, 1869).

<sup>10</sup> Råd vid sångöfningar gifna af Tenorsångaren vid Kungliga Operan i Stockholm Berg efter Italienska skolan (Berg 1879).

<sup>11</sup> Anteckningar i sångpedagogik och harmonilära (Berg 1880).

<sup>12</sup> *Sång-lära* 1814.

Another strange issue is that Berg had identified Jenny's voice as a mezzo-soprano. He emphasised that she sounded like a mezzo even if her vocal range was that of a soprano (Berg 1880, pp. 16–17). However, all the sources, including the earliest from *Heimdall* in 1832, contradict Berg. Already the earliest reviews talk about Lind's high soprano voice. Dannström pointed out that her voice was not only that of a high soprano, but also more suited to interpreting the sweet, elegiac or tragic rather than the passionate and heroic characters (Dannström 1896, pp. 34–35). Thus, her voice had the sound of a lyric soprano. Holland and Rockstro have categorised Jenny's voice as that of a dramatic soprano, but with the flexibility of a lyric soprano (Holland & Rockstro, 1891, part 2, pp. 262–263). Based on her greatest characters – Amina in *La Somnambula*, the title characters in *Norma* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Marie in *La Fillé de Régiment* – Jenny was definitely a high lyric soprano and absolutely not a mezzo-soprano. Even the roles written specifically for her, Vielka in Meyerbeer's opera of the same name and Amalia in Verdi's *I Masnadieri*, clearly indicate that Jenny Lind was a high lyric soprano. If Berg taught in the belief that the young Jenny Lind was a mezzo-soprano, he may have allowed her to sing parts that were too heavy. If she sang with her chest voice in too high a range, her high notes may have become too “thick”.

An even more serious error of Berg's, and one that probably caused Jenny's veiled voice, was his ideas about “consequence notes”.<sup>13</sup> Berg argued that neither the teacher nor the student should work with the soprano's pitch material higher than f2 or at most g2. Berg called all higher notes “consequence notes”, which he expected to appear by themselves as a consequence of the work with the lower pitches (Berg 1868, p. 79; Berg, 1879, p. 2). Thus, his students never had the opportunity to practise their high notes, although their operatic parts required such pitches to be sung. Jenny Lind's register extended much higher than g2. According to Dannström, she went at least to e3 (Dannström 1896, pp. 34–35), and according to Holland and Rockstro, even to g3, which is a full octave above Berg's recommendation. However, the roles she played demanded these very high vocal ranges. This means that, while still very young, she had to perform very high notes without sufficient rehearsal. It appears very likely that she sang in these high ranges with force rather than with an adequate technique, which by itself could be sufficient reason to explain an exhausted voice.

Another aspect is the voice-break that takes place during puberty. In the German journal *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* of 1845 a short comment

<sup>13</sup> In Swedish, *Konsekvenstoner*.

by "H.T." blamed the voice-break at puberty for the veiled tones in Jenny's middle vocal range (H. T. in *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, no 7, February 1845). Jenny was only ten years old when she started to act at the Royal Theatre, and her voice-break must have occurred sometime during her years as a pupil. The female voice-break is very individual. Some voices are deeply affected, while others show little effect at all. *Vocal-Learning* (1814) emphasised that the voice-break affects both boys and girls. *Vocal-Learning* also claimed that with care and without forcing the deepest or the highest notes, children can sing during the whole period while the vocal-break lasts (*Sång-lära* 1814, p. 6). Therefore, it could not be lack of awareness of the female voice-break on the part of the Royal Theatre, which allowed children to sing during this sensitive period. Jenny Lind's case was not unique in any way. There were many children in the theatres they sang and acted during the time their voices broke in the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that this change may have been significant in contributing to Jenny Lind's problems. García claimed that an advanced vocal education should not begin until the voice-break was past; for girls, this was after the age of sixteen (García 1894, p. 8). By that assessment, Jenny had started far too early. By the time she was sixteen years old, she was considered fully educated. That in fact was a common age to be considered an adult singer at theatres all over Europe, but perhaps Jenny's vocal folds were not completely developed at a time when more and more was being demanded of her voice. She may have had to put up with the pressures placed on an adult singer too early in life.

Another factor, and one that certainly should not be underestimated in this context, was Jenny's personal situation. The years after 1834 coincided with an emotionally difficult period for her. During her first ten years she lived with her single mother, but there were also long periods in several foster homes. Jenny's mother, Anna Maria Fellborg (1792–1851), was unmarried with two children: Amalia born in 1811, the daughter from Fellborg's previous marriage to a Captain Rådberg, and Jenny. The couple had divorced after only 18 months, and Fellborg had to work in order to provide for her family. Sometimes she worked as a governess, and when the employers did not allow her to bring along her youngest daughter, she simply had to leave the child in foster care. Fellborg's main source of income came from running a boarding house for girls. When Jenny was accepted as a pupil at the Royal Theatre, she was naturally placed in her mother's boarding house. The Theatre also placed three other girls there: the sisters Mathilda and Charlotta Ficker and Fanny Westerdahl. Placing the students

in boarding houses at the Theatre's expense was a common practice, and this was probably the largest part of Fellborg's income. However, her boarding house had low standards. It was cramped, and the girls were often left without enough food. After a number of grievances, the girls complained to the theatre management, which relocated the three lodgers to another boarding house run by Anette Bayard. This incident caused a huge financial loss for Fellborg. The relationship between Jenny and her mother was already strained, and after the three girls were removed, it became even worse, finally leading to Jenny's running away in October of 1834. She was placed with the other girls at Bayard's establishment and lived there until June of 1836. This episode led to a court case between the Royal Theatre and Fellborg over who was to be given responsibility for Jenny. She was still registered as an orphan, but during the trial, Niklas Jonas Lind showed up and declared that he was her father. Fellborg and Lind married, and Jenny's situation was suddenly transformed from that of an orphan to having both a mother and a father. The court ruled that Jenny should move back home to be with her new parents.<sup>14</sup> The whole affair affected Jenny very badly. According to Lindersköld, it paralysed her development (Lindersköld undated manuscript, pp. 5–6). When Jenny moved in with her parents, their relationship improved at first, but in November of 1839 she ran away for the second time, this time to the composer Lindblad. Like most women of the time, Jenny was not authoritative, and legally, she was a runaway. However, Lindblad was a sufficiently powerful protector that the parents were unable to force her to come home again. Jenny stayed with Lindblad until she left Sweden for good in 1844.

Adding together all of these factors, it is not difficult to understand why Jenny's voice was strained. All of these incidents, the personal as well as those of a technical vocal character, took place in her early teenage years when she was going through puberty, a sensitive period for any young girl. Furthermore, Jenny's sister, Amalia, died of cholera during the spring of 1835 (Rabe, January 1889). The problems with Jenny's vocal technique probably worsened because of her vulnerable personal situation, resulting in severe fatigue of her young voice. In the absence of an adequate vocal technique, the veiling of her voice never really healed, and when she sang

<sup>14</sup> A detailed account is available in the biography by Franzén (1982, pp. 32–35). Otherwise, not many authors have written about this episode. Lindersköld mentions it briefly in his undated and unpublished biography, pp. 5–6. The story became public for the first time through Lindblom's series of articles, based on interviews with those involved, and published in *Dagens Nyheter*, 7–9 November 1887.

more demanding parts, presumably forcing her voice, the vocal exhaustion returned and maybe even became worse.

In 1838, when Lind made her debut as Agatha in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, the reviews were enthusiastic, but the reviewers also pointed out an unpleasant hoarseness in her lower register (Orvar Odd, in *Aftonbladet*, 8 March 1838; *Dagligt Allehanda*, 9 March 1838). After this breakthrough, her vocal technique encountered even greater challenges, which she could not manage. During 1841–42, Jenny sought help from García. The result of this consultation was successful, and Jenny managed to repair her voice almost completely. However, her vocal folds probably had scars, which affected her voice in certain notes in her middle vocal range because the vocal folds did not close tightly enough. This was probably a consequence of the vocal strain in her youth, something she had to deal with for the rest of her life. Some of her pitches – from f1 to a1 – remained defective forever.

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## Summary

The Swedish singer Jenny Lind (1820–1887) had a defective middle range in her voice, probably the result of two episodes of vocal strain in her early youth. The first episode occurred when she was about 15. Later, when she was given more demanding vocal roles, she strained her voice again and nearly lost it entirely. I discuss the causes of the first episode, and specifically why her singing technique was deficient. The main issue seems to have been the ideas of her voice teacher Isak Berg, including a high placement of the chest voice; his belief that Jenny Lind was a mezzo soprano, although others described her as a high soprano; and the concept of "consequence notes", meaning that singers should not work with their high notes. Berg argued that these would appear by themselves as a consequence of working with notes at lower pitches. Another factor in Lind's case is the voice-break: she probably began executing the demands of an adult singer too early. Added to these reasons was a difficult home situation. The combination may have been enough to cause Jenny Lind's vocal strain.

Theaters



# Music at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm during the Mid-nineteenth Century

The Musical Repertoire and Contemporary Criticism of the Position of the Opera as a Music Institution within the Musical Life of Stockholm

Anne Reese Willén

## Introduction

The Royal Swedish Opera (*Kungliga Operan*) in Stockholm was not only a theatre and opera house, it was also the centre of public musical life in Stockholm for a great deal of the nineteenth century. It was the first organised music institution and contained the first public stage built for musical performance. It also housed the only symphony orchestra in the city during most of the century, and functioned as the main employer of musicians and singers. Performances were not limited to opera and music theatre, and the space was also frequently used as a concert venue. Its position was there-

fore unique at the time. Articles in music journals and newspapers from the 1850s show how some saw its role as problematic in terms of the development of musical life in Stockholm, and on several occasions the criticism extended to its effect on a national level. The articles focus mainly on the concert and opera repertoires, and strongly reflect the vision of musical performance of an international standard. The main source materials used for this survey are the music journals *Ny tidning för musik*<sup>1</sup> (NTM: New Journal for Music, Stockholm 1853-57), and *Tidning för theater och musik*<sup>2</sup> (TTM: Theatre and Music Magazine, Stockholm 1858-59), together with letters and other archive material, mostly from the Royal Swedish Opera archive (the main sources from there being the collection of playbills that were posted daily outside the opera house, and the employment contracts).

*NTM* was the most prestigious music journal in Sweden during the mid-nineteenth century. It was the first long-lived publication of this kind in the country, the successor of the much shorter-lived *Stockholms musiktidning* (Stockholm's Music Magazine, 1843 and 1844) from the same publisher – Abraham Hirsch (Grinde 1997a). Before this there had been a few other attempts at publishing music journals, and all were very short-lived (Grinde 1997b): most survived for no more than four issues/numbers, and only one lasted a whole season). *NTM* came out about once a week, and was not only long-lived but was also more extensive, at least compared to other similar publications if not to the daily newspapers (Waller 2001, p.148). The journal contained reviews of concerts and newly published music, articles on certain musical works and composers, critical appraisals and general commentary on musical life in Stockholm (and other cities), correspondence from Swedes travelling in Europe, articles from international music journals, short reports on music in other Swedish and European cities, and advertisements. Most of the contributors were professionals in the music field. Among the most prominent writers were Wilhelm Bauck (1808-1877), Albert Rubenson (1826-1901) and Ludvig Norman (1831-1885). *NTM* ceased publication in 1857, but was soon followed by *TyTM*. Two writers from *NTM*, Rubenson and Norman, became its main contributors – continuing the work that they had started. This journal survived for only one season, but was quite extensive, even larger than *NTM* (Waller 2001, p. 196). In terms of content there was a mix of music and theatre. The musical content was similar to that of *NTM* but there was more original material and it was generally more critical.

<sup>1</sup> The New Music Journal. From here on referred to as *NTM*.

<sup>2</sup> Journal for Theater and Music. From here on referred to as *TyTM*.

The three music critics, Rubenson, Norman and Bauck, writing in the music journals of the 1850s all reached prominent positions in Stockholm's music circles. Bauck worked as an organist, music teacher, composer and music critic, and held the position of librarian and secretary at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. He also wrote for *Svensk musiktidning* (Swedish music magazine) and for some of the major newspapers in Stockholm (*Aftonbladet* 1842-59, *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* 1860-71 and *Dagens Nyheter* from 1871).<sup>3</sup> Rubenson was one of the most outspoken music critics in Stockholm in the 1850s. Being from a wealthy Jewish family, he had had the means to travel a great deal in Europe. He visited music capitals and studied music privately in Leipzig and Copenhagen. He spent much of his time travelling, and in the meantime he worked as a musician and composer. He finally settled in Stockholm in 1872, having been appointed director of the Music Conservatory of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, where he remained until his death in 1901. He wrote for *NTM* as a correspondent and critic, and for *TyTM* as a critic and reviewer. He wrote several long articles in both journals on the state of musical life in Stockholm, and became one of the main voices of criticism.<sup>4</sup> Norman was also educated abroad, but unlike Rubenson was officially registered as a student at the Conservatory of Music in Leipzig. He also wrote for Stockholm's music journals in the 1850s. He held several influential positions, including that of head conductor at the Royal Swedish Opera from 1860, and was a teacher at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music from 1858.<sup>5</sup> Musical life in Leipzig and the ideals pursued there during the time of their studies influenced both Rubenson and Norman, which is evident in their critique of the musical scene in Stockholm. There were many reasons for their criticism. For one thing they were influenced by the idealism that was cultivated in Leipzig and spread across Europe, and desired to import similar ideals, comparable to those in other European cities. Moreover, as music professionals they probably wanted to increase their chances of pursuing a music career in Stockholm. Whatever their reasons, they provide a good basis on which to study the music on offer at the Royal Swedish Opera given their comments on the current situation within the public musical sphere and their individual roles as professionals.

The Royal Swedish Opera was the centre of musical life in the city. Because of its key position, its musical repertoire influenced the content of

<sup>3</sup> For more biographical information, see Hennerberg 1920

<sup>4</sup> For more biographical information, see Carlsson 1998-2000.

<sup>5</sup> For more biographical information, see Mark 1990-1991)

classical music concerts. This article examines the music repertoire at the Royal Swedish Opera and the public discourse on the effect of its prominent position within the musical life of Stockholm during the mid-nineteenth century. It describes the different contexts in which music was performed on stage. It also addresses the question of how and why music critics focused strongly on the Royal Swedish Opera as a music institution in their writings on musical life in Stockholm. Even though some of the music performed there could be described as lighter or of a “popular” character, the focus here is on the “serious” classical repertoire.<sup>6</sup> The operatic repertoire is not investigated in detail given the emphasis on the connection between the music at the Royal Swedish Opera and in the concert life of the city.<sup>7</sup> Concert programming was a significant aspect of the contemporary discourse on the state of Stockholm’s musical life, and the position of the Royal Swedish Opera as a musical institution. How was the question of concert programming treated in the contemporary music criticism? How did the programming on the royal stage compare to that in other European cities? The cultural and musical exchange between the European and Nordic countries was also significant, with musicians and singers travelling and working in different countries, spreading both music and performance ideals and propagating the developing music journalism.

This article is connected to a thesis project and a forthcoming dissertation on the institutionalisation and professionalization of public musical life in Stockholm during the mid-nineteenth century. Martin Tegen covered a similar topic in his thesis from 1955, in which he analysed musical life in the city after 1890. Owe Ander, Göran Gadamer, Dag Kronlund and Klas Ralf among others have carried out research on the repertoire of opera, music theatre and theatre music at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, and of its orchestra. However, thus far there have been no detailed studies on the concerts staged there.

<sup>6</sup> The music at the Royal Swedish Opera that could be described as lighter or popular included folk or dance music as theatre music, and dance music performed on occasions such as masked balls. In contrast, the symphonic music and other music performed at concerts or in connection with the theatre fell into the category of classical music that formed in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>7</sup> Göran Gadamer, Klas Ralf, and Owe Ander, among others, studied the operatic repertoire of the Royal Swedish Opera.

## The Royal Swedish Opera as a music institution

The Royal Swedish opera was for a long time the principal stage in Stockholm for opera, drama and concert performances. Not only was it the first arena built for musical activities, it was also the first to be institutionalised as such,<sup>8</sup> and set many of the standards for the institutionalisation of public musical life in Stockholm during the nineteenth century. There was an organisational, a social and a practical purpose behind it, with rules and regulations, a more or less firm financial basis, a fixed location, permanent staff, an established audience and rules of social conduct. The music and concerts at the Royal Swedish Opera therefore played a key role in the general concert activities in Stockholm. The institution provided a stable base for musicians and singers in the city, and it was one of the few places where they could make a living.

Music was played on a variety of occasions. Apart from opera, it was used in the spoken dramas as diegetic (or non-diegetic) accompaniment and between acts. It was not confined to lyrical and dramatic performances, however, but was also played in concerts.

## Concerts at the Royal Swedish Opera

Concerts were given on a more or less regular basis. In a statistical survey of the period 1844 to 1880<sup>9</sup> I noted that the number of concerts varied from year to year: on average there were six or seven a year, but the number varied from two to 15. Many of them were benefit concerts for employed singers or musicians, the Opera Orchestra, or some charity. Concerts were also put on for profit. Visiting artists appeared on the royal stage, in concerts arranged by the Opera or the artists. Artists wishing to give their own concerts had to apply for permission from the Opera Board. If permission was granted the artist concerned had to pay a fee, or “daily charge”<sup>10</sup> of 400 R:dr rmt<sup>11</sup>. This was a notable sum, about a third of a year’s salary for one of

<sup>8</sup> In my forthcoming thesis I examine the institutionalisation of musical life in Stockholm during the mid-nineteenth century in detail, and it is clear that the Royal Swedish Opera had a unique position as the first music institution functioning as a model or inspiration in the development of public musical life in the city.

<sup>9</sup> This survey was based on the playbills that were posted daily outside the Royal Swedish Opera announcing the performances of the day, which are now accessible in the archives. It is part of a larger survey that will be published in my forthcoming thesis.

<sup>10</sup> “Dagkostnaderna”.

<sup>11</sup> From 1863 the amount was set at 400 R:d rmt, before this it was in a different

the higher-paid musicians, or at least six month's salary for most musicians in the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra. In addition to this charge, which included staff costs, the artist had to make special agreements with other artists for additional solo performances. The general practice of having concert programmes featuring both vocal and instrumental works necessitated the involvement of singers and musicians. Concert programmes consisting only of instrumental music were uncommon.

On the organisational level concert performance was institutionalised early through the introduction of official practices such as contracts of employment and the theatre regulations. Other aspects such as the programme of concerts, the repertoire and other customs were also institutionalised in the Royal Swedish Opera. This was reflected in Stockholm in general as concerts in other places took the same form.

### Concert programming in Stockholm

Irrespective of who arranged the concerts, or where the performances were held, the programmes almost always consisted of a mix of vocal and instrumental pieces. William Weber extensively explores concert programming in Leipzig, Vienna, Paris and London at the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries in his book, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste* (Weber 2008). In sum, the general principle in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century was to alternate between vocal and instrumental pieces, mostly following certain patterns developed in the four above-mentioned musical centres. The content of the programmes varied depending on the kind of concert, but the main types Weber mentions – the benefit concert and the orchestral series – were also the most common in Stockholm and followed this principle. The vocal contributions were mainly popular opera pieces, although later in the period there was more “serious” music in some concerts (Weber 2008, pp. 159f). The main genres of instrumental music, which focused mainly on the orchestra, were the symphony and the overture, but solo contributions such as concertos were also popular. The programmes at the Royal Swedish Opera, and more generally in Stockholm, tended to be organised along the same lines as in Leipzig, for example. The first part opened with an overture or symphony (movement) and continued with a vocal piece, an instrumental piece, an-

currency, Riksdaler banco (Swedish currency 1777-1873) and the sum was 272 R:d bco: the two were not exactly the same amount, but similar when converted into today's monetary values.

other vocal piece (often ensemble) and another instrumental piece, and the second part proceeded in the same fashion (or in some cases, as in Leipzig, comprised a whole symphony or concerto (Weber 2008, p. 183). There were differences in the concert repertoire at the Royal Swedish Opera depending on the organisers (as was the case in many other places in Europe). For example, singers tended to favour vocal music whereas instrumentalist preferred orchestral pieces. It was also common for musicians who were also composers to feature their own work in their concerts. An example of this is a concert organised by Jacopo Foroni, the head conductor at the Royal Swedish Opera between 1849 and 1858:

Grand vocal and instrumental concert, 24 March 1850<sup>12</sup>

First section

- 1) Piano concerto (first movement), Beethoven
- 2) "Ouverture Mélancolique", Foroni (composed especially for the occasion)
- 3) Chorus with soprano solo from the opera "Christina", Foroni
- 4) a) Dream, b) Pastorale and humorous pieces, from the opera "La Prophète", Meyerbeer
- 5) Grand overture (new) from "Struensee", Meyerbeer

Second section

- 6) a) "Etude Melodique" for piano, Foroni, b) "Marche d'Illy" for piano, Leopold Meyer
- 7) a) "Harpselet" and b) "Gluten blir juvernal": songs, G Wennerberg, orchestral accompaniment, Foroni
- 8) "The Fischerman": text, Schiller, music, Donizetti
- 9) Overture to the opera "Christina", Foroni
- 10) a) Duet and b) Aria and Finale from the opera "Christina", Foroni

Foroni conducted the orchestra and also performed as a solo pianist. Moreover, about half of the pieces were his compositions (or arrangements). This was the first concert he organised at the Royal Swedish Opera following his appointment as head conductor there. Including many of his own pieces was an effective way of making himself known to the Stockholm audience not only as a performer but also as a composer. This was not uncommon practice among composers at the time. The concerts Foroni arranged as an individual entrepreneur later at the Royal Swedish Opera did not feature his own works so heavily, which supports the view that his aim in this first concert was to establish himself in Stockholm.

<sup>12</sup> Concert programme published in the daily playbill, 24 March 1850, Kungliga Teaterns arkiv (The Royal Swedish Opera archive), "Kungliga teaterns äldre affischsamling", L1A 1844-1880.

The content of Foroni's programme does not reflect the most common repertoire, but follows the standard pattern in terms of types of works, mixing vocal and instrumental pieces. The following programme, from a concert given by the mezzosoprano Henriette Nissen-Saloman in October the same year, is more typical:

Grand vocal and instrumental concert, 11 October 1850<sup>13</sup>

First section

- 1) Overture to the opera *Hämnden* [The Revenge], Siegfried Saloman
- 2) Aria from the oratorio *Judas Maccabaeus*, Handel
- 3) Capriccio on Swedish folksongs for cello, B Romberg
- 4) Aria from the opera *La Favorite*, Donizetti
- 5) Aria from the melodrama *Lucrezia Borgia*, Donizetti

Second section

- 6) Overture to the opera "Lulu", Kuhlau
- 7) "Die Bettlerine", aria from *Le Prophète*, Meyerbeer
- 8) Figaro's aria from *The Barber of Seville*, Rossini
- 9) Duet from *The Barber of Seville*, Rossini
- 10) Recitative and aria from *Ermani*, Verdi

This programme is more typical of concerts arranged by vocal artists in that it features more vocal pieces than if an instrumental artist had arranged it. The opera selections correspond closely with the opera repertoire at the Royal Swedish Opera.

There was an increasing tendency at the Royal Swedish Opera from 1853 to divide the concerts into three sections<sup>14</sup>, one of which (often the last) was dedicated to one multi-movement piece, typically a symphony. This is an example of a typical three-section concert:

Grand vocal and instrumental concert, 6 March 1853, arranged by Andreas Randel<sup>15</sup>

First section

- 1) "Jubel-ouverture" [Rejoice overture], A Randel
- 2) Violin concerto in A minor, Viotti

<sup>13</sup> Concert programme published in the daily playbill, 11 October 1850, Kungliga Teaterns arkiv (The Royal Swedish Opera archive), "Kungliga teaterns äldre affischsamling", L1A 1844-1880.

<sup>14</sup> Based on a survey of the programmes published in the daily playbills posted at the Royal Swedish Opera between 1844 and 1880. Kungliga Teaterns arkiv (The Royal Swedish Opera archive), "Kungliga teaterns äldre affischsamling", L1A 1844-1880

<sup>15</sup> The violinist Andreas Randel (1806-1864) was one of the two concertmasters of the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra. Concert programme published in the daily playbill, 6 March 1853, Kungliga Teaterns arkiv (The Royal Swedish Opera archive), "Kungliga teaterns äldre affischsamling", L1A 1844-1880.

- 3) Aria from *The Creation*, Haydn
  - 4) Trio from *The Magic Flute*, Mozart
- Second section**
- 5) Overture to *Athalie*, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
  - 6) a) Duet from *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart; b) Ballade from the opera *Kung Karls jagdt* [*The Hunt of King Charles*], Fredrik Pacius
  - 7) Introduction and theme with variations for violin composed by A Randel
  - 8) Duet from the opera *I Gladiatori*, Foroni
- Third section
- 9) Symphony no. 6 “Pastorale”, Beethoven

It became more and more common to perform complete multi-movement works after 1850, the previous practice being to perform just one (or a few) individual movement or to split the movements between the sections. Beethoven’s symphonies and overtures were at the heart of the symphonic repertoire, as was Mendelssohn’s orchestral and incidental music. In general, the repertoire did not differ so much from that in the other cities before the 1850s, but after that time seemed to follow the older tradition for a little longer (see Weber), especially with regard to instrumental music.

### Visiting performers at the Royal Swedish Opera

From time to time visiting musicians put on concerts as individual enterprises both on and off the Royal Swedish Opera stage. The proportion of concerts arranged by the theatre, its employed artists as individual enterprises, and visiting artists varied from year to year. In general,<sup>16</sup> there were more concerts arranged by artists employed at the Royal Swedish Opera or in its orchestra in the 1850s and 1860s. Fewer employed artists arranged them in the 1870s, whereas the Opera and visiting artists became more active. The fact that so many of the concerts were organised by individual entrepreneurs, despite the high costs and the risk of not selling enough tickets to make a profit, indicates the prestige of the Royal Swedish Opera as a venue that was worth the financial risk. Giving a concert there may have lowered the threshold for engaging the orchestra, and thus made it

<sup>16</sup> Based on a statistical survey of the playbills posted daily outside the Royal Swedish Opera between 1844 and 1880: Kungliga Teaterns arkiv (The Royal Swedish Opera archive), “Kungliga teaterns äldre affichsamling”, LIA 1844-1880; copies of these playbills are available at the Royal Swedish Opera Library in Stockholm (at the opera house).

more enticing a concert venue than others. It also had an established audience.

Many visiting artists made their way to Stockholm on their tours of the great musical cities in Europe. Max Bohrer, Sigismund Thalberg, Henri Vieuxtemps and Adrien-François Servais, for example, who visited Paris, Vienna and London among other cities (Weber 2008, pp. 146f), also performed at the Royal Swedish Opera. Sweden and Stockholm were on the route to and from St Petersburg, which brought many touring musicians to the city. These visiting artists performed at the Royal Swedish Opera as guest stars paid for individual performances at concerts or as providers of entr'acte music, or as entrepreneurs. The venue was a natural choice given its good reputation for concerts and its established audience. It was also the only institution able to take on these musicians (perhaps with the exception of the church, which may have had the necessary funding but not the interest). Visiting artists who wanted to give a concert on the royal stage in the 1830s were obliged to perform in the entr'actes according to the theatre regulations of 1834 and 1839.<sup>17</sup> This paragraph was not included in the new regulations of 1844 and later, but that did not mean that visiting artists ceased to perform on such occasions. Some of them, in fact, were paid very well. For example, in 1863 the brothers Alfred and Henry Holmes (two young British violinists touring around Europe) were paid 600 R:dr rmt<sup>18</sup> for performing between acts on three occasions.<sup>19</sup> Compared with the annual salaries of musicians in the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra, which normally ranged from 500 and 1500 R:d rmt, this was quite an amount.<sup>20</sup> One reason for engaging visiting artists at such a high cost instead of using employed musicians was the appeal of their virtuoso performances and the opportunity to attract a larger audience. This was not a regular practice, and depended on which traveling artists were available. It is, however, indicative of the change in function of music on this type of occasion, as it became

<sup>17</sup> §4d, Kongl. Majts nådiga reglemente för Kongl. Theaterns styrelse och förvaltning, gifvet Stockholms slott den 6 september 1834, och §28, Kongl. Majts nådiga reglemente för Kongl. Theaterns styrelse och förvaltning, gifvet Stockholms slott den 5 oktober 1839. (Official regulations for the board and administration of the Royal Swedish Opera, 1834 and 1839; copy at The Royal Swedish Opera Library).

<sup>18</sup> Riksdaler riksmünt, Swedish currency, 1855-1873

<sup>19</sup> Operans arkiv [The Royal Swedish Opera Archive]: Verifikationer G2BB vol 86 1863.

<sup>20</sup> Operans arkiv [The Royal Swedish Opera Archive]: Anställningskontrakt F8A vol 3-10. The leading singers were paid the most, and the extras (who probably did not perform every evening) were paid the least. The head conductor and musical leader had a yearly salary of 6,000 R:dr rmt, and the assistant conductors/concert masters 2,200 R:dr rmt.

more important in terms of attracting the audience. It was certainly not just used in passing, and the famous musicians and singers playing in the intermissions perhaps attracted the audience more than the official programme.

Touring artists visited Stockholm, often on established touring routes on the way to or from St Petersburg via the Nordic countries. They may have travelled from St Petersburg via the Finnish cities of Helsinki and Turku, Stockholm, Uppsala, through southern Sweden and on to Denmark (sometimes via Norway), or the other way around.<sup>21</sup> The fact that Stockholm was on this route naturally influenced what music was played at the Royal Swedish Opera and in the city, which now included virtuoso performances by these touring musicians. It is nevertheless reasonable to assume that the orchestral pieces performed at these concerts were in the repertoire of the Royal Court Orchestra (Hovkapellet), which had minimal time to rehearse new ones. This virtuoso music seemed to become more and more popular after the Opera spent large amounts of money taking on musicians to perform a few works on other occasions than at concerts, as a way of attracting an audience.

It seems to have been easier for these travelling musicians to perform at the Royal Swedish Opera given the difficulties in engaging other musicians on an individual basis. In a private letter to the composer Edward Grieg, Ludvig Norman gave him due warning as he was planning to visit Stockholm on a concert tour.

It is enough for me to know that you wish to conduct by yourself. Even if it is not common practice for any one apart from the orchestra leaders to conduct The Royal Court Orchestra, I am sure that it would be more than happy to play under someone like you. For my own part, I think it will be very nice to hear music outside my own office, and I promise to support you in any way, so you will have a day for your concert and assistance. But, with this letter I just want to point out the difficulties here. I do not know if you are aware of the current music situation in this city. If you are, then you might know the immense opera load of the orchestra – four to five operas a week and rehearsals on top, which is not a small commitment for an orchestra as small as ours. To ask members to take on extra work is neither a pleasant nor an easy task – as I know full well. And this is not the biggest problem. The theatre management may promise the artist a day for a concert, but then some theatre business may come up, and the concert is postponed indefinitely. This is not a problem for those who have time to wait, but since I assume that you do not have so much time to spend here in Stockholm, I see it as my duty to warn you

<sup>21</sup> This can be traced in advertisements and reviews in contemporary newspapers from the Nordic countries, for example.

that this could happen. [...] I hope you understand my intention; I am not advising you not to come, I just want to make you aware of the difficulties involved in arranging concerts. (Ludvig Norman, Letter to Edward Grieg dated 1 January 1873)<sup>22</sup>

Norman thus sums up the problems facing artists wishing to perform at the Royal Swedish Opera. It is clear from his comments that the theatre management did not prioritise this type of enterprise: it was common for it to postpone promised concerts because theatre business always came first. It is therefore understandable that many artists might have preferred to perform for payment at concerts arranged by the theatre instead of arranging concerts themselves as individual enterprises: the likelihood of cancellation was probably far lower.

## Entr'acte music and the significance of music at the Royal Swedish Opera

Music was an essential part of the activities on the royal stage, and not only in the operatic repertoire and concerts but also in conjunction with dramatic performances. Such music was usually diegetic in nature, and in addition the plays almost always had entr'acte music. The general custom was for the men to leave the auditorium in the intermissions for refreshments, while the women remained seated. One important aspect of the entr'acte music was thus entertainment for the ladies. This practice was

<sup>22</sup> "Det är nog för mig att veta att De sjelf önskar dirigera, och fastän det icke här är coutume att någon annan än cheferna dirigera Hofkapellet, så är jag öfvertygad om att orkestern gerna spelar under sådan man som Dem. Jag skall vara ganska glad att någon gång få höra musik utom tjensten, och jag lofvar understödja Dem allt hvad i min förmåga står, för att De må kunna få dag och biträde. Men jag vill med detta bref blott lägga i dagen de många svårigheter här förefinnas. Jag vet icke om De följer med något hvad i musikaliskt hänseende råder den svenska Hufvudstaden. Gör De det, så har De måhända sett den enorma operatjenst som Orkestern här måste vidkännas. 4 a 5 operor i veckan och f/pröver[?] dertill det är icke så ringa för en i sjelfa verket så liten orkester som vår. Att under sådane förhållanden animera ledamöterna till extratjenst, är hvarken någon lätt eller i grunden behaglig uppgift, det känner jag bäst. Men detta är det minsta. Ofta lofvas en concertgiffvare här af Theaterdirektionen en dag till Concert, så kommer något vid theatern i vägen, och så måste Concerten uppskjutas på obestämd tid. För den som har tid att vänta, gör detta ej mycket, men då jag antager att De ej har lång tid att depensera på Stockholm, har jag velat säga Dem att detta missöde kan hända Dem, och jag håller för pligt att underrätta Dem härom. [...] Jag hoppas De förstår mitt bref rätt; jag afråder Dem icke att komma, jag blott har velat göra Dem förtrogen med svårigheterna för en concertgiffvare här."

by no means restricted this theatre, and it was a long-standing tradition. In fact, the entr'acte music was, second to opera, the most common type of music at this time.

Even if there were aspirations to strengthen the connection between the theatrical performances, the entr'acte music seems to have generally followed a standard pattern, being selected from a relatively small number of works (Kronlund 1989, pp. 51-53). As implied in the following quotation, this made it rather boring:

[...] Certainly, it happens from time to time, mostly when Mr Randel conducts the orchestra, that you hear something, if not new at least something you do not know from cover to cover by heart – but this is an exception. Some of Andreas Romberg's and Haydn's symphonies are among the most frequently played, and one indeed does not exaggerate if one complains about having to live with the same meagre musical diet on five, sometimes six, of the Spectacle evenings. If you do not have any sympathy for the male audience, since it always has the opportunity to save itself from this intrusive music, you should at least have some mercy on the ladies, who do not. Even assuming that there is no consideration for the audience, that the orchestra does not care about the honour given that it is being treated like a machine in the form of a barrel organ, you still expect the main motivation for all the dramatic proceedings – monetary profit – would not be unimportant. Many people would undoubtedly go to the Spectacles even when less attractive pieces are being performed, if there was a chance of hearing pleasurable music.[...] ([NN] 1836)<sup>23</sup>

It is clear from the above that the music was not only part of the theatrical performance (or complementary to it), it also had definite intrinsic value,

<sup>23</sup> “[...] Visserligen händer en eller annan gång, och mest när hr *Randel* anför Orchestern, att man får höra något, som, om icke just nytt, man åtminstone icke från perm till perm kan utantill, men detta hör dock till undantagen. Några af And. Rombergs och Haydns symfonier äro de mest efterhägngsna, och man jämrar sig visserligen icke i otid om man klagat öfver, att fem ibland sex Spektakel-aftnar få lof att lefva af samma magra musikaliska kost. Om man icke har någon misskund med den manliga delen af Åskådarne, emedan den alltid har tillfälle att under Entre-akterne gå ut, och sålunda rädda sig undan den påträngande musiken, så borde man åtminstone hafva barmhertighet med Damerne, hvilka icke ega denna ressource. Men förutsatt att man icke gjorde något afseende Publikens fordran; att icke Orchestern vore nog öm om sin heder, för att så der behandlas som en machin och antaga naturen af ett Positiv; så väntar man sig likväl att hufvud-driffjedden till alla de Dramatiska åtgärderne, Penninginkomsten, här ej borde vara overksam; ty mången skulle otvifvelaktigt besöka Spektaklet, äfven då mindre lockande Pieser gäfvos, om han ägde hoppet att få höra Musik, hvaraf han kunde äga njutning.[...]”

and people could find it interesting. However, consisting mostly of Haydn's and Romberg's symphonies the repertoire did not achieve this purpose. The use of music as a magnet to attract an audience to the theatre also reveals its changing influence. This was especially noticeable when visiting artists such as the ones mentioned above were engaged during the 1860s. The question of the role, or meaning, of the entr'acte music was a debated topic for a long time in the nineteenth century. Albert Rubenson, for example, wrote about its harmful effects in *TfTM* in 1859:

[...][that] the unnecessary and in many ways harmful entr'acte music during the spoken dramas be abolished. These pieces of music, with no connection to the drama, distract the audience and reduce the musical art to a simple way of passing the time; and there is no reason for a theatre like our Royal Swedish Opera, which does not engage young musicians who could use the entr'acte music as practice for orchestral performance, to force the musicians to do things that undermine their artistic abilities. Such mechanical work tires them out and deprives them of the joy of engaging in more useful work in the best interest of the art. (Rubenson 1859)<sup>24</sup>

The harmful effect of the entr'acte music in terms of lowering the musical tone and demoralising the musicians is connected to an idealised notion of the status of musical art. According to Rubenson, taking the music out of context and using it just to fill the time between the acts, and disregarding the music itself, denigrated music as an art form. He was not the only one who felt this way. Similar criticism had appeared in *NTM* a few years earlier: Franz Liszt, in a republished article translated into Swedish, mentioned many of the same aspects (Liszt 1856). It is not unlikely that Rubenson fell under the influence of this article, which contributed to a larger discussion on the status of music in general and the use of entr'acte music. In the context of the Royal Swedish Opera in the mid-nineteenth century, this (both of the above quotations) is indicative of the general changes in the status of

<sup>24</sup> [...] den obehöflig och i många afseenden den skadliga mellanaktsmusiken vid talstycken upphäfdes. Dessa, utom all förbindelse med det uppförda dramat stående, musikstycken distrahera publiken och nedsätta den musikaliska konsten till ett simpelt tidsutfyllnadsmedel; och för en theater, som, i likhet med vår kungliga, ej vid sin orkester engagerar unga s. k. accessister, för hvilka mellanaktsmusiken kunde betraktas som öfning i orkesterspel, finnes intet skäl, att, äfven utan afseende på nödvändigheten af minskande göromål, nödga sina orkestermedlemmar till en sysselsättning, som på deras konstnärsegenskaper utöfvar ett demoraliserande inflytande, i det den, genom sin hantverksmässighet, tröttar och utledsnar dem samt beröfvar dem håg och lust till ett, för konstens bästa, mera nyttigt arbete.”

music as art in Stockholm and the significance of music at the Royal Opera. Rubenson criticised entr'acte music from a musical perspective, and even if there were aspirations on the theatrical side to cease using music simply to pass the time it was not considered as big a problem as Rubenson thought it was. The head conductor (*Hovkapellmästaren* – the hofkapellmeister) was the artistic leader of all music at the Royal Swedish Opera, but was not always responsible for choosing the entr'acte music, which did not necessarily require his expertise. In fact, he officially lost all responsibility for it in the middle of the century, and the concertmasters conducted the orchestra. The non-involvement of the head conductor and the mechanical and decontextualized manner of selecting the music confirmed its low status. The former was a practice that had become institutionalised by the beginning of the 1860s with its inclusion in the employment contracts, but it may have been used before this, as suggested in the quotation from *Tidning för teater och musik* from 1836 referring to the times when the orchestra was conducted by the concert master (Randel) ([NN] 1863).

As Owe Ander (2012) found, in some cases the entr'acte customs changed in that the ladies were also allowed to leave the auditorium for refreshments, and music was played elsewhere than in the auditorium during the intermissions. This practice must have been confined to the performance of grand operas however, because it is clear that entr'acte music, especially at dramatic performances, was common at least until the mid-1860s (see Kronlund): this was when the music and dramatic theatre split following the purchase of *Mindre Teatern* (the Smaller Theatre), which changed its name to the Royal Dramatic Theatre. Sometime thereafter the entr'acte music was phased out at spoken dramas, only to reappear at the beginning of the 1880s when a new small orchestra was hired for the dramatic theatre (Kronlund, p. 69). Franz Liszt's article was republished in an issue of the music journal *Svensk musiktidning*<sup>25</sup> in 1881 when there were plans to reintroduce entr'acte music at the Royal Dramatic Theatre (Liszt 1881). The editors reminded those planning this to think about the purpose of this music before reintroducing it. It thus seems that, although such music had been one of the most common types at the theatre, as time went by it became redundant. This was probably attributable to the changes in customs (as there were other activities during the intervals) and the more aesthetical values regarding the use of music. In time it became isolated as an art form in its own right, and increasingly separated from other art forms. As public musical and concert activities expanded in the city during the latter

<sup>25</sup> The most prominent music journal after *NTM* and *TfTM* (see Grinde 2001)

part of the century, the position of the Royal Swedish Opera changed and so did the music on offer. After the division into the Royal Dramatic Theatre and the Royal Swedish Opera in the 1860s and the phasing out of entr'acte music, the focus at the latter turned to concerts alongside opera. A further change was the introduction of a series of symphony concerts under the baton of the Court conductor Ludvig Norman. The repertoire was much more focused, the aim being to raise the musical standards at the Opera and in the city. It was based largely on the Leipzig repertoire of the 1840s and 1850s, reflecting the music ideals Norman had picked up during his studies there. Even though the repertoire was not the most modern at the time, it is worth noting that the focus was on symphonic music, thereby indicating further specialisation following the division between opera and theatre.

New concert venues were established in the city, allowing greater diversity in concerts and musical performance, as well as a clearer distinction between different genres of music. Concert repertoires became more and more specialised, and different venues focused on certain genres. The Royal Swedish Opera specialised in opera, and even if there were still concerts at that stage, the whole business focused more on one type of performance. This coincided with the establishment of new concert venues that would take the place of the Royal Opera as the principal stage for music performance.

### Music off the Royal stage – public concert life in Stockholm

As society changed during the nineteenth century, so did public musical life in Stockholm – in terms not only of gradual growth, but also of differentiation. The growth was not just in one direction, and in time diversified as the repertoire was divided between classical art music and lighter more “popular” entertainment. This was not unique to Stockholm, however: it was happening all over Europe (see Weber 2008 and Weber 2003). The Royal Swedish Opera heavily influenced the classical art music repertoire.

Music and theatre life in Stockholm totally changed during the summer. As the city theatres closed and many of the main artists went on tour other entertainment took over – much of it in the open air. The Djurgården recreational area became an entertainment centre offering productions of comedies and operettas, and many popular cafés and restaurants offered open-air musical entertainment from wind bands. This was entertainment of a much lighter, “popular” kind than was available in the city during the rest of the year. Musicians from the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra prob-

ably did not play at the summer theatres, which featured the company that performed at Södra Teater [The Southern Theatre]<sup>26</sup>. But wind bands probably included some of the members of the opera orchestra who were not engaged in military duties.

The performance of “serious” classical music was put on hold during the summer, and did not resume until the Royal Swedish Opera reopened for the autumn season. This confirms its position as a musical institution and its significance for the concert life of Stockholm. Furthermore, many aristocrats, who made up much of the audience, left the city during the summer for their country estates. However, when society and audiences began to change during the middle of the nineteenth century, incorporating a wider variety of people from different social classes, the effect on musical activity weakened.

Even if the Royal Swedish Opera was the most influential concert venue, concerts were not its top priority. Other venues were therefore sought for public concerts. The larger churches offered one solution, primarily for sacred music. Other types of public assembly halls were also used, such as the Stock Market building and the great hall in the House of Nobility.<sup>27</sup> Complementing these more traditional assembly halls new types of public venues became available in accordance with developments in the hotel and restaurant business. Due to the changes in legislation regarding the right to pursue business and the abolishment of the guild system, there was a massive increase in the numbers of hotels, restaurants and cafés to meet public demand. It was not only in the summer that cafés and restaurants offered musical entertainment: some of these businesses became more permanent venues giving music performances every night, and later also other types of entertainment. Most of the music was different in character from that played at classical concerts: it was light entertainment, dance and popular music. However, some of these establishments also offered concerts of classical music.

<sup>26</sup> This theatre was situated in the Södermalm district of Stockholm, a little outside the central area with a population mainly comprising lower-class citizens. It had its own musicians, but probably not more than a string quartet and a pianist – thus limiting the potential to perform more extensive works. The repertoire largely comprised comedies and operettas.

<sup>27</sup> Börshuset and Riddarhussalen in Stockholm.

## New venues

The Hotel de la Croix (which was mainly a place of entertainment and not so much a hotel in today's meaning) became a very important venue for classical concerts in the mid-nineteenth century. It was situated in a thriving centre for entertainment, Brunkebergstorg in Norrmalm, a district known for its population of higher-class citizens. The Hotel had one large and one smaller hall, which were often used for meetings, events and concerts. The main business was the café<sup>28</sup>, which became very popular in the 1840s and 1850s. The great hall was often hired out for concerts, among other things, during which time the café remained open, serving food and drinks. The hall was not ideal for classical concerts because of the disturbance from the café and the not so favourable acoustics, as noted in several reviews of concerts held there. Nevertheless it was often used, and seems to have been easily available and accessible. The concerts were always individual undertakings, as was common at the Royal Swedish Opera. The difference was that many more people had to be involved and paid, which made it more laborious for the entrepreneur. It also entailed greater financial risks because, even if it was popular, it did not have the same institutionally fixed location, influence and audience as the Royal Swedish Opera, although in terms of availability it was completely different. Most of the artists involved were from the Royal Opera Orchestra. The musical elite of the city, including the star singers and musicians at the Royal Swedish Opera, and other major artists (visiting and resident) – regularly used the hall at the Hotel de la Croix for their performances.

Another major venue for music and, for a time, classical concerts was the entertainment establishment “Berns salonger”. It was established in 1863 as a restaurant, café and general place of entertainment. Music featured heavily from the start, and this was the first establishment of its kind in Stockholm to employ a full-time orchestra, which at times had around 30 musicians and played daily. The repertoire was mainly dance or lighter background music. The conductor, August Meissner (1833-1903)<sup>29</sup>, had a rela-

<sup>28</sup> More precisely the “Schweizeri”, a type of café that was common in Sweden by the mid-nineteenth century and named after the Swiss pastry cooks who immigrated to Sweden early in the century and established these businesses. A “schweizeri” served coffee, tea, pastries and lighter meals, and also stronger alcoholic beverages including liqueurs and Swedish arrack punch.

<sup>29</sup> Meissner was born in Germany, but worked in Sweden from 1855 when he started as a cellist in Czapek's orchestra in Gothenburg (1855-1860), where he also played at chamber-music concerts together with Czapek and Smetana. He worked at Nya Teatern in Helsinki in 1860-1868, first as a cellist and later as conductor. He went to Stockholm in 1869, where he was appointed conductor at Berns. (Tegen 1985-87).

tively free rein over the repertoire, and tried to raise the cultural level by putting on symphony concerts with an orchestra of 50 musicians (Meissner 1914, pp. 21-22). Meissner tried to introduce a new and modern symphonic repertoire at these “popular symphonic concerts”, as they were called, but he also featured older music (Jonsson and Tegen 1992, p. 116). This project probably inspired Ludvig Norman, who introduced a similar concert series at the Royal Swedish Opera, although with a more conservative repertoire (*ibid.*). Meissner’s concert series only lasted until 1878, probably because the management did not think it had a place there. It seems at least that the music was put aside in favour of variety entertainment, as it was first moved to a smaller salon and then later phased out completely (Tegen 1985-87). This is another example of the further specialisation of music institutions and the division of music genres that came with time.

### Organising concerts in Stockholm – almost impossible without a connection to the Royal Swedish Opera

Concerts were held in many different places, but for the most part they were organised by a relatively small number of artists, most of them connected to the Royal Swedish Opera. In addition there were some amateur musicians and singers, and amateur musical societies giving concerts featuring various kinds of ensembles. Amateur choirs often gave choral concerts, for instance. The venue for chamber music was the musical *soirée*. Some of the string section of the Royal Opera Orchestra even arranged subscription series for musical *soirées* with a repertoire of music for string quartets. In addition, professionals collaborated with amateur choral societies and other groups in performances of larger-scale vocal works such as oratorios, cantatas and masses by composers such as Mendelssohn, Bach and Handel.

If an artist wanted to arrange a concert offering an orchestral repertoire the main option, basically, was to engage, the Royal Opera Orchestra. The Harmonic Society<sup>30</sup> had an amateur orchestra in the early nineteenth century, and there was a student orchestra at the conservatory of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music from the 1850s. It was also possible to engage musicians in private theatres such as *Mindre Teatern* (the Smaller Theatre) in Stockholm, but it required reinforcements in order to play most of the orchestral repertoire. Thus, the Royal Opera Orchestra was the only full symphony orchestra in the city, and most musicians who could be engaged

<sup>30</sup> Harmoniska sällskapet.

individually were members of it. Commitments at the Royal Swedish Opera left very little time for other engagements however, which made it difficult for private entrepreneurs to organise concerts featuring an orchestral repertoire. This affected both the feasibility of arranging concerts and the repertoire, which given that new pieces demanded more time for rehearsal was limited to works that had been played before and (or) did not need so much time.

### A controller of musical means

The centrality of the Royal Swedish Opera in the musical life of Stockholm was based on several factors. One was its institutional structure, which gave some organisation and stability. It provided a steady income for a group of professional musicians and singers, many of which would have had to seek employment elsewhere, perhaps touring or teaching. It also had a long tradition of importing musicians and singers who would not have come to Stockholm otherwise, and was therefore responsible for their being in the city. Moreover, many of its musicians and singers contributed to musical life in other ways too, as music teachers at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music or as military musicians, for example.

### Getting an audience

As music started to play a bigger part in people's lives during the mid-nineteenth century the fact that the Royal Opera Orchestra was the only orchestra in the city became more noticeable. The demand for music, and concerts in particular, increased, and in order to meet these demands the professional musicians arranged more concerts. This naturally gave them more earning potential, but it was not without financial risk because they were relying on a market that was not yet stabilised. The costs of arranging concerts were high: it was not just a matter of hiring a venue, it also meant engaging fellow musicians and singers and advertising the concerts in newspapers, for example. If the tickets did not sell well the whole venture would run at a considerable loss. Advertising in newspapers was not enough however, and networks of personal contacts helped to ensure success. This was pointed out in articles and reviews in *NTM* and *TyTM*. The music critic Wilhelm Bauck described the practice in an article on the autumn concert season of 1853:

The audience found itself in a state of siege: it is almost impossible to meet an acquaintance without also meeting the whole army that surrounds him. And if there is a concert one has *not* been press-ganged into attending one does not let the opportunity to escape slip. Another consequence is that the artists, even the best ones, have to follow the same practice as those with less ability unless they want to see their concert transformed into a private musical event. The whole misunderstanding could be resolved if there were an agreement within Hovkapellet [The Royal Court Orchestra] only to assist – alone or together – those who are evidently capable of being real artists, and to leave the rest to seek help from within their own sphere. (Bauck 1853)<sup>31</sup>

It is clear from this description that putting on concerts was very much a business enterprise, and that there was competition among professionals as well as between professionals and amateurs. It also underlines the unique position of the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra: in choosing whom to assist, its members carried a lot of influence. This practice is not so easily traced in the sources - it is reasonable to assume that inquiries for assistance were made unofficially. It is evident, however, that the orchestra performed in concerts arranged by Royal Swedish Opera singers or its own musicians much more often than in concerts arranged by others, even if that occurred as well.

## The role of the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra

Albert Rubenson also emphasised in his criticism of the state of musical life the fact that the Royal Opera Orchestra had such a crucial position.

The fact that our city does not have a symphony orchestra apart from the one at the Royal Swedish Opera is, without doubt, the obstacle that until now has barred the establishment of a music society that operates in the

<sup>31</sup> “Publiken har här funnit sig i ett slags belägringstillstånd; man kan knappt träffa en bekant, utan att tillika träffas af den lista, hvarmed han är väpnad, och om en musikalisk tillställning inträffar, hvartill man händelsevis *icke* blifvit pressad, så låter man tillfället att undslippa ej gå sig ur händerna; och en annan följd är att artisten, äfven den utmärktaste, måste anställa samma pressgång som den insolventa förmågan, såvida han icke vill se sin konsert förvandlad till ett musikaliskt privatissimum. Hela missförståndet vore emellertid afhjelpat genom en öfverenskommelse inom hovkapellet, att – enskildt eller in pleno – endast och allenast biträda de personer, som förmå dokumentera sig såsom verkliga konstnärstalanger, samt åt alla öfriga öfverlemna att inom sin egen sfer söka biträde.”

public arena. It is also the reason why no such previous attempts have been successful. (Rubenson 1859)<sup>32</sup>

He saw the dominance of the Royal Swedish Opera over available resources as a problem because it was hardly possible to hire any other full-size orchestra. He noted the attempts to form a student orchestra at the Music Conservatory of the Royal Academy of Music, but did not see this as a suitable substitution for the Royal Opera Orchestra. This was not because of the artistic level of the musicians, but because there was too little continuity within the ensemble to achieve a permanent change. The continuity inherent in the Royal Swedish Opera and its orchestra as musical institutions was something Rubenson aspired to within musical life in general. He suggested establishing another organisation that could take responsibility for promoting concert life in Stockholm. The resources of the Royal Opera were not sufficient for that, although indirectly it exerted control through its influence on the city's musical elite. Its management could, and did, prevent singers and musicians from taking on certain outside commitments, and in keeping the artists and the orchestra occupied with its own performances it also indirectly prevented them from doing other things. In addition, it had a significant impact on the external concert repertoire because the programmes often had to be adapted to the orchestra's repertoire because of the limited rehearsal time.

### Effects on the repertoire

The Royal Swedish Opera influenced not only the number of concerts held, but in many ways also the repertoire. Rubenson notes this in an article in *NTM* from 1857:

Hovkapellet [The Royal Court Orchestra] also exercises undue influence on the programmes. As is known, the great city of Stockholm has only one orchestra to assist at concerts.

However, this orchestra is so busy with official duties that there is not much time left for concert rehearsals, hence the all too frequent repetition of the same well known, often also acclaimed orchestral compositions. These pieces, should, for this very reason, leave room for other

<sup>32</sup> "Den omständighet, att vår stad icke eger en fullständig orkester att tillgå utom Kongl. Theaterns, är utan tvifvel det hinder, som hittills varit i vägen för bildandet af en offentlig verkande musikförening, och de försök, som blifvit gjorda, att åvägbringa en sådan, hafva ej krönts med framgång."

works that from an artistic perspective do not deserve to be neglected. [...] Another inconvenience resulting from the lack of an orchestra, especially for concerts, is the dependence on the Royal Opera's so-called "spectacle days", and a third is the great costs involved in arranging concerts. (Rubenson 1857, pp. 217-218)<sup>33</sup>

The lack of time to take on external engagements affected not only the number of concerts the orchestra gave but also the repertoire, given the lack of time to rehearse new pieces.

Ludvig Norman, who was the head conductor and musical director at the Royal Swedish Opera between 1861 and 1885, made every effort to extend the concert repertoire there. Between 1878 and 1885 he was the driving force behind a series of concerts focusing on symphonic music, which was a new venture for the Royal Opera. Given his position, he had immense influence on music and concert life in Stockholm, and could affect both the repertoire and the number and types of concerts on offer.

Norman was educated at the Music Conservatory of Leipzig. Shortly after his return he presented his visions of musical life in Stockholm in an *NTM* article from 1853 (Norman: 1853). In his view the city's music resources – a good orchestra with a talented conductor (the Royal Swedish Opera Orchestra under its conductor Jacopo Foroni), competent singers at the opera and a large number of music lovers and amateur musicians – sufficed to accomplish great things. The solution was to combine all these forces in performances of grand vocal works such as the oratorios of Mendelssohn. It is clear that his influences came from Leipzig in his visions of musical life, and the repertoire he suggested for these joint efforts. He maintained that if this was to work it should be firmly rooted in the music resources of the Royal Swedish Opera, reinforced by amateur musicians. This also confirms the pivotal position of the Royal Opera. Here, Norman's and Rubenson's views parted a little, the latter being much more convinced that it would be better to separate concert performance from the Royal Opera and to form a special organisation to control it (Rubenson 1859). Norman's views seem

<sup>33</sup> "En menlig inverkan på programmernas uppställning utöfvar äfven Kongl. hofkapellet. Den stora staden Stockholm äger nemligen, som bekant, blott denna enda orchester att tillgå som concertbiträde. Dennes tid är dock så upptagen af theatergöromål. Att föga återstår till concertrepetitioner. Deraf de alltför tätt på hvarandra följande repriserna af samma kända, oftast äfven godgända orchestercompositioner, men hvilka, just för dessa egenskapers skull, borde lemna plats för andra, hvilka åsido-sättande kan ur konstnärlig synpunkt anses som en försummelse. [...] En annan olägenhet som medföljer bristen på en särskildt concertorchester, är beroendet af Kongl. Theaterns s. k. spektakeldagar. En tredje är den stora kostnad hvarmed concertgifvande är förenadt."

to have been closer to reality, but both he and Rubenson were idealists and presented their visions of how musical life should be constructed. William Weber brings music idealism up for discussion in his book *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste* (Weber 2008, pp. 85ff). Music idealism was a movement among “self-consciously serious musicians, amateurs, and commentator” all over Europe who attempted to reform and reshape music culture fundamentally (ibid., p. 86). It emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century when musical life became more and more differentiated and diverse. The aim was to base music culture on learned high culture as a reaction to the commercialisation of opera and concert performance. As Weber points out, the movement expressed itself mainly through the press, and although it spread across Europe it was centred in Austria and Germany and the influential music periodicals there. Moreover, despite the regional differences it was based on common values (ibid., pp. 87-88). Its idealism reflected the classical repertoire, and there were objections to the increasingly “popular” opera genres and virtuoso music. The repertoire was not the only item on the agenda, and the movement also emphasised appropriate concert behaviour, respect for the work of art as a whole, the authenticity of musical taste based on classic works, a hierarchy of genres and tastes, and the importance of learning about the works in order to understand them (ibid., p. 97). It is apparent from Norman’s and Rubenson’s writings that they were influenced by this movement, and they could also be said to have represented the music idealism movement in Sweden.

### Behind the criticism

Norman and Rubenson were both highly critical of the state of musical life in Stockholm, and both touch upon most of the same topics as other music idealists. Both had similar backgrounds in terms of education and music culture, and it seems that the influences they brought with them from the time they spent in Leipzig in the late 1840s and early 1850s stayed with them throughout their careers. Their music idealism largely reflected what they had experienced in Leipzig and the music repertoire there, with a strong focus on Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Bach. When they came back to Sweden they wanted to introduce reforms that would live up to their music ideals.

## A Nordic outlook

Rubenson compared musical life in Stockholm and Copenhagen, where he was staying at the time, in a journal article (Rubenson 1853, pp. 7-10), in which he also focuses on the repertoires. Like others he notes the low level of music culture in Stockholm and the lack of taste among audiences, together with the correspondingly low musical standards in the concert programmes. He argues that the programmes were put together without regard to the quality or value of the music, comprising what were considered “safe bets”, items that had popular appeal rather than aesthetic value. His main observation was that the Danes seemed to be much more musically educated than the Swedes. The major difference between Stockholm and Copenhagen as he saw it was in the construction of musical life and the general knowledge or education of the citizens. He identifies the music society *Musikforeningen*<sup>34</sup> in Copenhagen as a strong contributor to the higher level of music culture. He maintains that the lack of a society that could bring order to musical life and reform audience taste was one reason why Stockholm lagged behind Copenhagen in this respect. During Niels Gade’s time as head of *Musikforeningen* the concert repertoire was relatively modern, concentrating on Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann and Beethoven but also featuring music by Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner (Schjørring 1978, p. 300). This was precisely what Rubenson was looking for in a repertoire, and he was probably very familiar with the activities of *Musikforeningen*, having studied under Gade in Copenhagen between 1848 and 1850. Copenhagen had a longer and more widespread tradition of music and concert societies than Stockholm, and concert life revolved around these societies to a greater extent. As many of the concerts on offer in Copenhagen were arranged by one society or another, it is reasonable to assume that led Rubenson to the conclusion that concert life in general was much better organised than in Stockholm.

This was not the only way in which the two cities differed, however. Copenhagen had long had its independent orchestras. Hans Christian Lumbye and his orchestra, for example, had been giving concerts since 1839, and he became the leading composer and conductor of dance music in Scandinavia (Jürgensen: 2012). Even if Lumbye’s repertoire was not at all what Ruben-

<sup>34</sup> Musikforeningen was founded in 1836, its main task being to publish Danish music and arrange concerts, which soon became its main focus (Foltmann 2003, p. 279). It was a private society and most of the concerts were not open to the public, but still the number of concerts was extensive, especially during the time when Niels Gade was the leader (Foltmann 2003, p. 280).

son and Norman strived for, the gathering of musicians under his leadership facilitated the performance of other kinds of music as well. His musicians formed the basis of the orchestra performing at the *Musikforeningen* concerts, but with Gade as conductor (Schjørring 1979, p. 299). The first independent orchestra in Stockholm, on the other hand, was not founded until the 1860s and was much more tied to its functions at the new restaurant and place of entertainment Berns. Moreover, musical life in Copenhagen was not so closely tied to the royal institutions as it was in Stockholm: even if these institutions were important, they did not have as much influence.

The position of the Royal Swedish Opera in the city's musical life is one thing that separates Stockholm from the other Nordic capitals and other cities in Sweden and the Nordic countries. Stockholm thus had a unique position. The situation in the capitals differed, and generally one could pair up Stockholm and Copenhagen, and Helsinki and Christiania (now Oslo) as exhibiting similarities. On the one hand Stockholm and Copenhagen had similar royal institutions and an influential royal presence, whereas Helsinki and Christiania both lacked a royal presence and established music institutions such as The Royal Swedish Opera (see Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen's article on opera in Christiania and Helsinki in this anthology), at least until the latter part of the century. However, musical and cultural exchange flourished, with music professionals travelling between the Nordic countries and visiting musicians from the European continent passing through most of the capitals, thereby connecting the Nordic cities.

### Some concluding remarks

The Royal Swedish Opera had a unique position in the musical life of Stockholm during the nineteenth century. The 1850s was a time of change, both in society in general and in the music climate. It was a definite highpoint in terms of awareness and critical appraisal of the state of contemporary music, as well as a time of great vision and aspiration among young professional musicians. The music journals *NTM* and *TyTM* publicised these idealistic critiques and visions, thereby opening up a debate on the state of musical life in the city. It is clear that the central position of the Royal Swedish Opera was considered a problem. There was a definite desire to support higher ideals, influenced by the situation in Leipzig, among other things. The concert repertoire was always mentioned in this connection in that it was being institutionalised to the same extent as the practical organisation.

There were different views on best way to organise concert activity, and different opinions on who should have the responsibility. The fact that most of the music resources, including the professional musicians, were tied to the Royal Swedish Opera gave it a unique position in terms of influencing concert life in general, but the problem was that concerts were never prioritised business. Realising this, Albert Rubenson suggested forming a society to take on this role. Ludvig Norman, on the other hand, tried to foster collaboration with other bodies in order to promote concert performance.

The Royal Swedish Opera was at the centre of public musical life in Stockholm in the nineteenth century. Stockholm differed in this respect from many other cities in which there was not the same royal dominance. The merchant city of Gothenburg in southern Sweden is one example, with its much stronger ties to the bourgeoisie. Copenhagen is another example, where music making among the bourgeoisie had a much stronger influence on the emerging structures. The royal cultural institutions were also influential, but within the concert life of the city the structures were much more strongly connected to certain music societies that prioritised concert making. The geographical aspect is also a factor in that Copenhagen and Gothenburg, for instance, had closer connections to Europe than Stockholm. Nevertheless, despite the differences in structure and geography there was strong cultural exchange between these different cities and countries, and many artists travelled between them, performing the same repertoire. There were also close personal connections among people in important positions in the different Nordic capitals. The connections were not limited to the repertoire and the professionals however, but there was also a common interest in making comparisons with other Nordic cities, something that was part of the general striving for change and improvement. This cultural and musical exchange is discussed in several other articles in this anthology.

Much of the criticism of musical life and the position of the Royal Swedish Opera as a focal music institution stems from music idealism. Even if there was contemporary criticism of its role, it should not be understated. It was important as an institution promoting both opera and other forms of music. It served as a model for much of the institutionalisation of musical life in general, and facilitated development in providing the institutional stability that was otherwise completely lacking.

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## Summary

The Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm was not just a theatre and opera house, but also the centre of public musical life in Stockholm for a great deal of the nineteenth century. Because of its key position, the music performed on the royal stage represented the core of the classical concert repertoire in the city. This article examines the music repertoire and the different contexts in which music was performed at the Royal Swedish Opera. It also analyses the criticisms of some music professionals concerning its influence on concert life and programming in Stockholm. At the core of much of the criticism was the fact that concerts were not among the Opera's main activities and were thus not prioritised. The Royal Opera Orchestra was for a long time the only one available, and the only choice for artists wanting to give concerts. Its members always had to give priority to their commitments there, and it was therefore not easy for them to make other arrangements. Albert Rubenson and Ludvig Norman were among the most prominent music critics in the music journals *Ny tidning för musik* and *Tidning för theater och musik* from the 1850s. They were clearly influenced by and based much of their criticism of the concert programming and repertoire on their experiences in Leipzig and the music idealism that was present there in the 1840s.

# Two Operas or One – or None

Crucial Moments in the Competition for Operatic Audiences in  
Helsinki in the 1870s

Pentti Paavolainen

The birth and development of Finland's Finnish-language cultural institutions took place during the last four decades of the nineteenth century, thanks to a consistent national programme to be followed in the Grand Duchy of Finland. That programme defined the Finnish language as the only possible national language, to be spoken by the majority of the population, which also had to create a cultural space between Swedish, spoken mostly by the upper-class bourgeoisie and merchants, and Russian, used along with Swedish at the highest levels of administration. The Fennoman party, led from the 1860s by Prof. Georg Zacharias Forsman (who later called himself Yrjö S. Yrjö-Koskinen) saw an enemy in anyone who spoke Swedish. Yet Swedish was the language of academic, educated, urban and literary life. In the 1870s the Svecomans set out to defend their mother tongue and their cultural institutions, not least their theatre. It was housed in the brand-new (1866), well-equipped stone building called Nya Teatern (The New Theatre), which a Warrants Society hired to run a Swedish Theatre Company.

The New Theatre employed actors born in Sweden who spoke and later also sang Swedish on the stage. The local Swedish dialect (today called *finlandssvenska*) was not heard on that stage.

In 1873, the Finnish Opera Company was founded by Kaarlo Bergbom as the Lyric Department of the Finnish Theatre Company (1872–1902), which later became the Finnish National Theatre. Bergbom's Finnish Opera Company (1873–1879) has been hailed as the work of an heroic pioneer and was much appreciated in the small city of Helsinki as well as in the rest of the country. Bergbom's operatic activities were carried out in the shabby wooden Arkadia Theatre, which for more than four decades had served as Helsinki's first theatre. There was a clear difference, not only in the language, but also in the quality and facilities of the two theatrical venues, the New Theatre and the Arkadia Theatre.

The Swedish Theatre Company was also active in performing operas during the 1870s, until the operatic activities of both companies had to be abandoned in 1879 because of financial difficulties. Two opera houses were too much for a small capital. Meanwhile, a third operatic venue was being built during the same decade. In 1880 the Alexandre Theatre was opened, funded by the Russian Emperor. Besides Russian theatre groups, the Alexandre Theatre annually hired Italian operas from St Petersburg and later on brought in Russian operas for its regular season. (Cf. Byckling 2009, pp. 365–494) Most of the time the Alexandre Theatre offered art and entertainment in Russian for the substantial population of military officers and their families who lived in Helsinki.

In his *History of the Finnish Theatre Company* (1906–1910), Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä blamed the downfall of Bergbom's Finnish Opera Company on the acrimonious competition from the Swedish Theatre Company and its operatic performances. On the other hand, the Svecomans or "Sveci" accused the Fennomans of being unrealistic fantasists whose fanaticism prevented reasonable discussion and who turned down opportunities for cooperation. Several efforts were made to merge the two opera companies, but the mergers (whose most serious attempt was tried in 1877) never succeeded, and opera performances at both houses had to be abandoned. Thus, regular domestic operatic activity in Finland ceased for more than two decades. This delay influenced Helsinki's musical and theatrical life in many ways. (Cf. Savolainen 1999, pp. 128–129).

The purpose of this article is to look closely at moments when cooperation seemed to have been possible as well as moments when opportunities were suddenly lost or shut down. History is not deterministic, either by

the metaphysics of nationalism or by class theories. Especially in the case of a struggle within the elite classes and about entertainment and artistic life, the personalities, their networks, backgrounds and their choices are consciously made among real alternatives. To illustrate this point in the context of Finland's opera activities, we have to follow the work of two key figures.

The first is the young Kaarlo (né Karl) Bergbom (1843–1906), with a PhD in drama literature, who became a crucial figure in Fennoman activity. The second is the merchant gentleman, Consul Nikolai Kiseleff (1820–1883), who was on the board of the New Theatre House Owners' Company and was the executive director of the Swedish Theatre Company. Their moves in the emerging conflict are especially interesting, because all of their actions seemed to go against their "true wills". Fortunately, archival material is available for this investigation: the documents of the New Theatre House Owners Society (Nya Teaterhus Aktiebolaget) and the documents of the Swedish Theatre Warrants Society (Garantiföreningen för Svenska Teatern i Helsingfors), which leased the theatre and then hired actors on an annual basis. Both sets of documents are in the Svenska Litteratursällskapet (SLS, the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland). Kiseleff's personal letters also can be found in the manuscript collections of Åbo Akademi, the Swedish University in Turku. On the activities of the Finnish Opera and the Finnish Theatre there are hardly any records before 1877. Thus, we have to depend on personal correspondence and newspaper reports. The summary description of Kaarlo Bergbom's activities in the present article is based on the author's prolonged work on a detailed biography of Bergbom and on close acquaintance with Bergbom's correspondence with his sister and his friends, located in the Suomalainen Kirjallisuuden Seura (SKS, the Finnish Literature Society). The basic narrative is given in Aspelin-Haapkylä's work (1906–1910) noted above.

This standard Fennoman narrative went unquestioned until 2001, when Hanna Suutela pointed out that the Finnish Opera Company and the Finnish Theatre Company actually addressed two different classes of audiences and observed that a "second beginning" was needed for the Theatre Company after the fall of the Opera. This observation contradicted the myth of a homogeneous and a democratic vernacular movement; indeed, it showed that the movement was firmly in the hands of the Fennoman elites. (Suutela 2001).

The theoretical discussion to which the current article contributes is the deconstruction of a "methodological nationalism", which takes the con-

struction of a nation-state as a given. A return to a strictly chronological presentation has also proved very fruitful as has an effort to avoid drawing conclusions that are too dramatic or hasty. A kind of “neo-chronological” approach should help a great deal of theatre historical as well as musicological research, which often tends to explain or conceptualise *a priori*. The arguments are valid only when interpreted in the specific context where they can be verified as having occurred.

A third area of interest here concerns contra-factual assumptions: Could something else have happened? If the answer is yes, then we must ask when was some other outcome still possible and when had the time passed for such a possibility? As a fourth interest in the tradition of theatre scholarship, we have Tom Postlewait’s *12 Cruxes*, which are still worthy of attention. (Postlewait 1991) In Postlewait’s view the scholar has to struggle through several layers or filters that have already delineated and transformed the original event into something else. To be able to look at events “as they occurred” means that we must become aware of the filters that still modify what we see and what we do not.

### Bergbom’s proposal for a domestic opera department in the New Theatre (1869–1870)

Kaarlo Bergbom (1843–1906) was an ardent student of history, literature and drama, he was a frequent opera-goer and would-be poet, and he had made his debut as a promising playwright. In the early 1860s Bergbom became a close friend to the brother of Yrjö-Koskinen, the well-known leader of the Fennoman party. Jaakko Forsman encouraged him to concentrate on studying Finnish. Bergbom did not have the advantage of speaking Finnish from childhood, as several in this political *jungfennomaner* group had done. These bilingual party supporters were mostly sons of priests from the Ostrobothnian countryside who wanted to make their careers by assuming elite positions in Helsinki. At the end of the 1860s, Kaarlo Bergbom suddenly emerged as the energetic organiser who arranged cultural events in the Finnish language. He had grown up with the writings in Swedish of J. L. Runeberg and Zacharias Topelius, two key Finnish figures who had articulated the virtues and beauties of the fatherland. Like many others, Bergbom performed Runeberg’s poems as part of patriotic *tableaux vivants*.

On 10 May 1869, Bergbom arranged an event in Helsinki that included the first operatic excerpt sung in the Finnish language: Act II of Friedrich

von Flotow's *Martha*. The Swedish Theatre had been rented for a *soirée* arranged by an art-orientated group of young academics and music lovers. The "legendary 10th of May 1869" opened with the overture to Flotow's *Alessandro Stradella* followed by a performance of *Lea*, a Finnish-language drama by Aleksis Kivi, with the guest appearance of the leading Sweden-born actress, Hedvig Charlotte Forsman, who memorised her part without knowing Finnish.<sup>1</sup> The next was a *tableau vivant* on a poem by Runeberg (*Molnets broder*), glorifying a fallen soldier in the war of 1808–1809. The evening then ended with the second act of Flotow's *Martha oder Jahrmarkt in Richmond*, sung in Finnish by five soloists and a chorus. The orchestra was the professional Theatre Orchestra of the New Theatre house, conducted by Reinhold Littmarck; the chorus and the performers in the *tableau* consisted of students and daughters from the "better families". The five soloists in *Martha* came from the same circles. The enthusiasm of the invited audience has made this date a landmark in Finnish cultural history.

This one evening also made the 26-year-old Kaarlo Bergbom indispensable to all Finnish-language theatrical endeavours. The party leader Yrjö-Koskinen understood the enormous social and ideological power of a gathering at the theatre or the opera house. Such an activity – in Finnish – he believed, should be arranged as soon as possible with the help of a new Finnish cultural association, Suomalainen Seura, launched some months later. For Yrjö-Koskinen's political ambition, the capital Helsinki was the most difficult place to win sympathisers for the radical language programme of the Fennomans.

The Swedish Theatre had a deficit for the 1868–1869 season. The part-time director, Nikolai Kiseleff, had to cover the loss out of his own pocket, or more precisely, from the coffers of the Kiseleff family enterprise. In May 1869 Kiseleff resigned, dissatisfied with some of his colleagues on the theatre's Board of Directors. Did Kiseleff suggest that one way to build audi-

<sup>1</sup> Hedvig Charlotte Forsman (1838–1907) was born in Stockholm, where she received her professional training in acting. In 1858 she made her Helsinki debut, returning there frequently. Her style was "dramatic", and by the end of the 1860s she became the leading lady in the New Theatre. She also starred in Bergbom's two dramas. Married (from 1866 to 1872) to a talented actor, Frithjof Raa, she is also known as Mrs. Charlotte Raa. After her husband's death she moved to Christiania (Oslo), when she married (1874) a Norwegian journalist, Kristian Winterhjelm. She is most often known as Hedvig Raa-Winterhjelm, although that was never her official name. In addition to being an iconic figure in the Finnish Theatre, Raa-Winterhjelm is known for being the first Scandinavian Mrs Alving (in 1883, opposite August Lindberg's Oswald) in Ibsen's controversial play *Ghosts* (*Gengangere*). Later she taught privately, occasionally visiting Finland, and died in Stockholm

ences and cover fees would be to give Fennoman nationalist students the opportunity to perform in the New Theatre on evenings it was free? There are no documents to support his having made such a radical suggestion, but Kiseleff had devoted time and energy to promote all domestic art, he had sung opera in his youth, and he even issued a prize for Finnish-language drama, won by Aleksis Kivi in 1860.

A new, three-man board for the Swedish Theatre Company was appointed for the period 1869–1871. The executive was now Karl Aleksander Weckström, whose qualifications were previously the management of the old theatre venue, now called the Arkadia.<sup>2</sup> He was assisted by two men, both with legal training. The stage director Gustaf Gustafsson was responsible for the daily work. Later in the summer of 1869 enlightened opinion among the Warrants Society of the Swedish Theatre called for Kaarlo Bergbom to be added as a fourth man in the leadership, as a literary advisor or dramaturge (*scenisk litteratör*). (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1906, I, pp. 141–145) Bergbom had been proposed “by a rich merchant in town” – probably the other wealthy industrialist of Russian origin, Paul Sinebrychoff. Bergbom had already shown what he could do on the stage. Moreover, his own historical tragedy had been staged with success (*Pombal och Jesuiterna* [Pombal and the Jesuits], 1865), and for several years he had served as a reviewer of Finnish-language literature until he wrote his dissertation on German historical drama (*Det historiska dramat i Tyskland*, 1868).

Bergbom was the ideal figure to be involved in the development of all kinds of domestic theatre on the Grand Duchy’s main stage. In August of 1869 Bergbom decided that the time had come “to change the language of the New Theatre at one stroke” or at least to introduce Finnish along with Swedish. His first proposal was that four soloists should be engaged for the Company as the core of a domestic opera. The actors for the drama should still be hired from Sweden, owing to their professional qualifications, but a

<sup>2</sup>The Arkadia was a wooden theatre that went through many transformations. Drawn by C. L. Engel in 1827, it faced the Esplanade, standing just east of the present Swedish Theatre. The house became more comfortable after heating was installed in 1849 and many other reparations were made to the stage and public areas. In 1860 a new theatre built of stone was ready to the west (though it soon would be damaged by fire, in 1863, and rebuilt in 1866). Engel’s theatre was taken down, log by log, and moved outside Helsinki’s toll bar (*Esbo tull*). The Fennomans bought the building in 1875. One more major reparation was done in 1886 to accommodate the Finnish Theatre, which was based there until the present National Theatre was erected at Railway Square in 1902. Until 1908, the Arkadia was the location for domestic Swedish troupes before its logs were finally sold. The present Arkadiankatu (Arkadia Street) commemorates the eight decades of this important theatrical venue.

third, mixed-language group of Finns, who were able to use both languages, would be needed for the opera chorus and small parts, both spoken and sung. (See his personal notes in Emil Nervander's collection, SKS).

It is unknown how and exactly when this plan was proposed and on whose behalf. No such proposition is documented in Weckström's theatrical memorandum. In the meantime Bergbom was among the founders of the Suomalainen Seura, whose goal was to implement cultural activities – music, drama and literature – in Finnish. The Seura consisted of a rather limited group (400–500) of academic and administrative elite, who had decided to change their language from Swedish to Finnish and adopt “the Finnish Cause” as their social orientation.

Although Kaarlo Bergbom was the dramaturge for the Swedish Theatre Company, he started rehearsals for a competing musical and theatrical activity, which would gradually require access to the stage of the New Theatre. Bergbom had a hidden strategy: He would urge his Fennoman amateur actors to enter the formally bilingual Theatre School, which also existed, and from there, they could be hired for the Swedish Theatre Company. (Letter from Bergbom to Nervander, August 1869). But Bergbom forgot that his friends came from the educated classes. They could perform in social gatherings, but the profession of acting never became a real option for them. A singer's career, however, would be more respectable for academic men and women of “good families”. Among the soloists the most advanced wanted to develop their singing into a profession. For domestic artists the only forum available was the Swedish Theatre, which for some years had endeavoured to develop its musical repertoire. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1906, I, pp. 125–191; Lüchou 1977.)

The first Finnish performers would have been amateurs, whereas the actors in the Swedish Theatre Company were experienced professionals. The initiative to start a Finnish group within the New Theatre must have seemed utopian to the leaders' triumvirate, as well as to the stage director Gustafsson of the Swedish Theatre. They hardly saw any reason to change the language of their theatre, as most of their audiences did not understand Finnish.

Suomalainen Seura was established in October of 1869, with Bergbom responsible for its dramatic programmes. The musical section was led by Lorenz Nikolai Achté (1835–1900), a singer, conductor and composer, who was to become Bergbom's right hand in organising the operas. The musical and drama sections of the Finnish association immediately decided to perform *Preciosa*, an adventurous romantic gypsy melodrama with music

by Carl Maria von Weber to a libretto by Pius Wolff. Loosely based on a Cervantes' novella, the story tells of a gypsy changeling who was originally a girl of noble birth. She has grown up and wandered with the gypsies from whom she learned to sing. A nobleman, enthralled with her beauty, follows the girl, until one day in her own castle, her true, noble identity is revealed, and the nobleman can marry her. The play was outdated in most countries, but was still seen in Finland. Although it was not often done by professionals, it was taken up by Fennoman amateurs, who liked to dress as gypsies and perform as members of the lower classes. In December of 1869 the performers had rehearsed only some of the musical parts, and the production of *Preciosa* was postponed until the late spring of 1870. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1906 (I), pp. 145–154, 160–169.)

Nevertheless, Kaarlo Bergbom received a salary for his work at the Swedish Theatre Company that autumn. On 10 December 1869, two days after the concert performance of *Preciosa*, Bergbom resigned from the board of the Company, “because of different opinions about the repertory, and some other issues”. There are several possible explanations for the conflict. Bergbom was not always an easy partner to work with, but the “different opinions” cannot be attributed only to his youth and Fennoman party arrogance. The provisional executive, Weckström, did not have enough will or skill to be visionary or to risk anything by changing his management of the theatre's immediate cash flow.

The paths of Nikolai Kiseleff and Kaarlo Bergbom unfortunately did not cross, as it was this very year, 1869–1870, that Kiseleff resigned from the leadership of the Swedish Theatre Company. One cannot help but wonder whether Kiseleff would have reacted better in dialogue with Bergbom because Kiseleff's ideas were more conciliatory and creative in approach than Weckström's. Kiseleff was pragmatic and extremely frugal, yet he was a talented and visionary individual. He was very formal and polite, but as a merchant he could have seen the commercial potential in Bergbom's and Nervander's proposals. Kiseleff might well have asked Bergbom to start a domestic opera company within the New Theatre. Kiseleff had already engaged Richard Faltin, a very competent conductor and “Musikdirektor” from Viipuri (today Vyborg, Russia) in eastern Finland, to lead the Theatre Orchestra with the aim of expanding and developing the musical repertory.

Kiseleff's invitation to perform *Il Trovatore* (*Trubaduuri*) in Finnish in the New Theatre (October 1870)

Having turned his back on the Swedish Theatre Company, Kaarlo Bergbom was again busy with Suomalainen Seura and its planned performances, which he wanted to hold in the New Theatre. Yet the Seura did not want to pay the high rent that the New Theatre demanded or the fees they had required for the evenings of *Lea* and *Martha* the previous year. The idealistic issue for the Fennomans, as they understood it, was answered with "brutal commercialism" as they and many after them put it. The Swedish Theatre administrators, however, were responsible for their debts and commitments, which the young idealists did not want to hear about.

In the year 1870 Bergbom arranged more performances. At the beginning of April, his own 2-act drama *Paola Moroni* was performed in Finnish at the New Theatre with a joint cast of professionals and amateurs. In May Weber's *Preciosa* was ready in a Finnish translation and was given on the stage in the Arkadia Theatre. The Theatre Orchestra from the New Theatre, conducted by Richard Faltin, was hired for the occasion. The audience, mostly relatives of the performers, was enthusiastic, the performance was repeated twice, and thereafter, it was moved to the New Theatre, which was then available. The audience response was positive and along with the better stage conditions, was an encouragement of the idea that a full-scale opera could be performed in Finnish.

The question was, which opera? The process of making this decision, in the summer of 1870, can be traced only in part. Some young Finns, such as Emilie Mechelin, Ida Basilier, and Emmy Strömer (later Achté), had been studying voice in Paris. They returned to Helsinki in the late spring of 1870. Probably Bergbom and Nikolas Achté first asked Emmy Strömer to appear, but after only one year of study as a dramatic soprano, she felt she had to refuse. Her classmate Ida Basilier offered to perform in *Les noces de Jeanette*, a musical comedy for a coloratura soprano by Victor Massé. Basilier may also have suggested *Lucia di Lammermoor*, because she could have sung the role of Lucia. At first, this idea was adopted, but during the summer of 1870 the choice shifted to Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, with the Finnish title *Trubaduri* (today *Trubaduuri*). Meanwhile, there were problems of assembling a sufficient number of competent soloists.

The rehearsals took place in October and November of 1870, but Bergbom's arrangements were not very systematic. What had been Kaarlo Bergbom's real plans for the production? For some reason he had not even booked the New Theatre's Orchestra for the rehearsals or for the sched-

uled opening on 25 November. The orchestra already had obligations to its own theatre, and Richard Faltin, who was no longer in the service of the New Theatre, had to assemble a provisional ensemble from the city's experienced amateurs and professionals. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1906, I, p. 176.) Perhaps there was a reason why the schedule of the Theatre Orchestra had not been of primary importance. Perhaps Bergbom had calculated that the performance would finally take place in the New Theatre, and therefore, the theatre's orchestra would automatically be at their disposal.

The Swedish Theatre Company needed Nikolai Kiseleff to resume the position of executive director. In the early autumn of 1870 Kiseleff replaced Weckström, who had not managed the company's financial matters successfully nor had he put together an interesting repertory. Kiseleff had the experienced Dr. Fredrik Berndtson as his literary advisor, on whom he had depended for years. Kiseleff believed that domestic talents should gradually be engaged more and more in order to increase the musical and operatic performances in Helsinki. The future prosperity of the New Theatre depended on such growth. Audiences preferred musical repertoire, and Kiseleff gave the orchestra permission to use their own house, even for rehearsing programmes to be played elsewhere. The Orchestra could also participate in three smaller performances by the Suomalainen Seura in the Arkadia Theatre.

Kiseleff was well aware that a Finnish opera production was being prepared. Given the popularity he thought it would have, he had nothing against such a production taking place on his stage. This must be the reason why Kiseleff sent Dr. Berndtsson to discuss with Bergbom the possibility of performing *Trubaduuuri (Il Trovatore)* in the New Theatre. The costs per evening were still high, which the Seura did not want to pay, as they had the expenses of preparing the production, including payments for the orchestra and two of the soloists. But to avoid the theatre's expenses, the performance would have to be announced as arranged by the Swedish Theatre Company itself or perhaps as a joint performance. This would mean an additional small play in Swedish the same evening before *Il Trovatore*. Not quite impossible, but this would have made the evening far too long.

Just how diplomatic was Kiseleff's messenger Berndtsson, born a Swede and a senior colleague to Bergbom? How diplomatic was Bergbom himself, for that matter, who says "there were several attempts to find a solution"? It was Bergbom's desire to have *Il Trovatore* performed on the best stage in town, with the best sets, lighting and largest orchestra, and it was the New Theatre he wanted for his Finnish performances. The negotiations

lasted until mid-November, and Bergbom himself was willing to accept a compromise to get the New Theatre, but by then the performers from the Finnish Opera “felt insulted by the unwillingness [‘the lack of noblesse’] of the theatre management to support their patriotic initiative.” As a group, they refused to perform in the New Theatre. This unexpected refusal is the only explanation for why the troupe was suddenly without a professional orchestra in a venue (the Arkadia) that was fully booked for regular theatre performances in Russian.

For Bergbom and certainly for Faltin, the first choice was to perform *Il Trovatore* on the stage of the New Theatre. Arkadia was only a second option. The sudden difficulties in the last weeks of the production can be explained only by this conclusion. It was then difficult to find free evenings in the Arkadia Theatre, where the Russian drama troupe rehearsed and performed. It was especially difficult to find evenings for the general rehearsals of *Il Trovatore*. On those very same evenings the New Theatre Orchestra had an obligation for the performances in their own theatre. And in its free moments the orchestra was booked to rehearse for the inaugural festivities to be held on 26 November 1870 to celebrate the opening of the Student House (*Ylioppilastalo*, today called the Old Student House) in the centre of Helsinki. They were to perform a cantata under Fredrik Pacius, the grand old man of music in Finland. The inauguration had been postponed from its originally scheduled date in September. Richard Faltin did not have many options. There was only a small number of musicians left among the members of the amateur Academic Orchestra, various professionals and those military musicians who were not playing with the Theatre Orchestra.

There was not a single complete run-through of *Il Trovatore* before its opening, so the premiere (on 25 November 1870) was “half-way catastrophic.” But the four subsequent performances went better. The orchestra obtained more players, and audiences were enthusiastic. The Arkadia Theatre was now identified as the house for performances by the Finnish Opera, and the theatre began to acquire its Fennoman aura. Bergbom himself still wanted to stage operas in the Swedish Theatre, an ambition he would hold for the next ten years. But now it was the group of the Fennoman amateurs themselves who had refused a joint arrangement.

## Kiseleff's invitation to the Bergboms to rejoin the Warrants Society (the spring of 1871)

Nikolai Kiseleff's correspondence reveals how he approached the theatre, both strategically and practically. As a merchant, he was a formal, old-style patriarch. Yet he was also a pragmatist, who carefully considered his next moves. Kiseleff must have seen potential in the new academic audiences, the bilingual population of Helsinki, who were willing to see domestic artists on stage and to hear operatic productions. For him, the question of language, whether Swedish or Finnish, was a practical and commercial matter. A member of a Russian merchant family, Kiseleff spoke Swedish because it was the practical solution for doing business in Helsinki; for him, Finnish was not a threat. We do not have primary sources to verify his intentions, which therefore must be deduced from his actions. These suggest that in general, he seemed to want to be accommodating.

Immediately after the *Il Trovatore* performances in December 1870, Kiseleff offered Ida Basilier, the first Leonora, an engagement at the Swedish Theatre for 1871. The offer can be taken as proof of his plan to promote and assemble a domestic opera company with which he could produce operas regularly in his theatre. Among the Fennomans, this offer was taken as an insult, because it was made on the same day Basilier opened in *Il Trovatore*, 25 November 1870.

Kiseleff's offer must also have caused fear among the Fennomans, who saw that they could lose their young professionals to the more stable conditions of the Swedish Theatre. The press twisted the offer to Basilier into a debate about whether the engagement was "good enough for Miss Basilier's value as an artist." The martyr narrative was raised: It was an insult to offer so little money to an artist born in Finland, "one more sign of how unpatriotic they are in the Swedish Theatre Company". All of the economic disputes were transformed into ideological arguments. However, Basilier turned down the offer and went to St Petersburg to study voice in 1871. She was counting heavily on Bergbom to have an important role for her in Finland in the future. (See Basilier's letters to K. Bergbom, spring 1871, SKS.)

*Il Trovatore* was a sensation in Helsinki, a full-length opera given with domestic casting with the exception of one Swede. Kaarlo Bergbom had thus "completed his portfolio" for demonstrating his ability to lead a theatre. He perhaps dreamt of being appointed an Intendent for the New Theatre. He borrowed money and travelled to Berlin where he stayed from February to September 1871, eagerly attending operatic and theatrical performances.

In the spring he began to become acquainted with Wagner's works, and in July he wrote to his friend Otto Florell: "I am already a fanatic Wagnerite." (Bergbom to Florell, July 1871, SKS). In the spring of 1871 Bergbom was uncertain about his future and could not articulate any clear plans for the next season's (1871–1872) Finnish activities, about which friends in Helsinki were asking.

Meanwhile, Nikolai Kiseleff led the Swedish Theatre Company in a very successful *Midsummer Night's Dream*, with Mendelssohn's music conducted by Nathan B. Emmanuel. In the spring of 1871 the theatre's musical productions also included Jacques Offenbach's works, a domestic singspiel by Conrad Greve and N. H. Pinello called *Den Bergtagna* (*The Bride of the Mountain King*) and Auber's *Le Maçon* (*Muraren* in Swedish). This was season when Ida Basilier was studying in St Petersburg and Emmy Strömer was in Paris. But in April of 1871 a third singer, Emilie (Mili) Mechelin, accepted Kiseleff's offer of an engagement at the Swedish Theatre Company.

How did Nikolai Kiseleff plan his next season (1871–1872) and what did he think about the activities of the Bergboms and the Fennomans? At least he wanted the soprano Mili Mechelin to join the permanent company. She could also help in the theatre as chorus master and thereby assist the new orchestra conductor, Nathan B. Emmanuel. The spring of 1871 was also the time when the Swedish Theatre Company Warrants Society, which ran the activity in the New Theatre and had to pay for any eventual losses, had to re-organise. The Society collected guarantees from citizens (the warrants) who would agree to be financially responsible for any eventual deficit. Earlier, the Bergboms had been members of the Warrants Society, but they were no longer. In 1871 Nikolai Kiseleff specifically sent a messenger to ask the Bergbom family and their closest friends to become warrants and thus, practically supporters of the Swedish Theatre Company. Kaarlo Bergbom's sister Emilie Bergbom,<sup>3</sup> an ardent Fennoman, reported this to her brother, who was in Berlin:

However, Kiseleff seems to have had mixed feelings [*melerade tendenser*]. He sent [a messenger] and asked whether we or the Heurlins would sign. We said "no", but Heurlin was not at home, and the next day the

<sup>3</sup> Emilie Bergbom, or Emelie as she was baptised (1834–1905), was virtually a co-leader of the Finnish Theatre and Finnish Opera companies. She was responsible for financial affairs as well as for costumes, correspondence, sandwiches and decency in the enterprise. She and her sister, Augusta af Heurlin, were also key figures in the Fennoman urban network, which carried out many social activities (such as daily lunches for school children). The aspect of public enlightenment in the national movement should not be forgotten.

man returned to ask Heurlin. It was not, of course, for the money, for they had enough of that. He had even been sent to the Löfgrens.” (E. Bergbom to K. Bergbom, 6 April 1871, SKS)

She refused Kiseleff’s request straight out. Emilie knew that Kiseleff did not lack for warrants, so he must have had some other reasons – “mixed feelings.” Could she and her friends have answered more diplomatically? How would her younger brother Kaarlo have answered?

Why did Kiseleff not repeat his contact with Emilie Bergbom, especially as he had consistently begun to hire domestic artists who were capable of opera performances. Logic would suggest that he would have wanted Kaarlo Bergbom to return as a member of the Swedish Theatre Company leadership. But Bergbom could not be appointed by the Warrants Society electoral committee unless he became a member of the Society and was a designated supporter of the theatre. With *Il Trovatore*, Kiseleff had seen how much popularity the operas enjoyed. Bergbom could be very useful after his return from Berlin: as a dramaturge, he could read the texts in both national languages and in several continental languages, and he could also oversee the staging of opera performances with domestic artists in the theatre. This appointment, however, never took place.

Most likely, Mili Mechelin, who had sung Lady Durham in a performance of Act II of *Martha* in May 1869, was now the one who suggested to Kiseleff a performance of the entire opera *Martha*. She may have recommended that Bergbom be asked to do the staging in the autumn when he returned from Berlin.

Kiseleff obviously did have plans for Bergbom. But why did he not reveal some of them to Emilie or write directly to Bergbom in Berlin? As a businessman, Kiseleff probably did not want to put himself in an awkward position: Not everyone in the Warrants Society believed that opera could or should be sung in Finnish, nor did everyone believe that amateurs and professionals should be mixed or pretend that their respective talents could be evaluated on equal terms. (*Helsingfors Dagbladet* 3.12.1870). A written letter or document to the Bergboms would have been too binding, and Kiseleff could not promise anything on behalf of the electoral committee within the Warrants Society. The only way to be sure to have joint domestic opera activity in the New Theatre was for the Bergboms to be formally appointed to the Warrants Society. If Emilie Bergbom understood the situation or at least if she realised that Kiseleff’s “mixed feelings” possibly referred to engaging her brother Kaarlo, why did she refuse so categorically to support the society? (E. Bergbom to K. Bergbom, 6 April 1871, SKS). Evidently,

she was more of a politician than her brother, who was an aesthete, an enthusiast and a pragmatic artist.

We do not know whether Kaarlo was satisfied with his sister's categorical refusal. However, he had no ideas of his own for Finnish performances for the next year. Perhaps he could have directed something in the Swedish Theatre Company, but in fact he was planning to write a second dissertation for the Imperial Alexandre University in Helsinki, which would give him a reason to continue his stay abroad for literary studies. Bergbom returned to Helsinki from Berlin in early October of 1871 and was soon invited to join a new Fennoman project: a newspaper coming out in Swedish, *Morgonbladet*, which would serve as a moderate camouflage for the Fennoman radical programme. It was important to obtain sympathisers among the Swedish-speaking educated classes.

In November of 1871 the Swedish Theatre Company highlighted its musical repertory by performing von Flotow's entire opera *Martha* in Swedish. To promote a moderate language policy, a sample issue of *Morgonbladet* reviewed *Martha* on 5 December 1871 with a positive appraisal and without any irony. The review was unsigned, but it can probably be attributed either to Kaarlo Bergbom or to his younger colleague. *Morgonbladet* also reported on Ida Basilier's debut in Stockholm as Rosina in a Swedish-language *Barberaren av Sevilla*. In February 1872 Bergbom began work on an abridged adaptation of *The Barber of Seville* in Finnish, *Sevillan parranajaja*, so that Basilier could sing her Rosina parts for Helsinki audiences. For this occasion Bergbom again asked if he could hire the New Theatre's orchestra, to which Kiseleff agreed. A compilation of the Rosina scenes was performed in early June of 1872 in the Arkadia.

### Bergbom's public manoeuvres to "invade" the New Theatre (spring 1872)

The three events reported above were moments of some contingency. If Kiseleff had been working in his theatre in the autumn of 1869, he would probably have shown a more tolerant approach to Bergbom's ideas of having amateur performances or an operatic group in the New Theatre. A less arrogant or less martyred opinion among the Fennoman chorus members in the *Il Trovatore* production might have given them access to the New Theatre. A less categorical attitude on the part of Emilie Bergbom concerning the warrants list of 1871 might have resulted in her brother Kaarlo's en-

agement to stage operas in the New Theatre, starting with *Martha*, which was planned for November 1871. The first initiative came from Bergbom and Nervander. The last two initiatives were instigated by Kiseleff.

The next move came from Bergbom and the Fennoman party during the spring of 1872. It started as a propaganda manoeuvre in the Diet. Several delegates from the Peasants Estate (*Bondeståndet*) circulated a petition demanding that the Finnish-language theatre be given equal access to theatrical venues as the Swedish-language theatre. From February to April 1872, a tense debate was carried on in the press, and the petition went through the Estates Joint Committee and back to each of the Four Estates. The petition, however, could do nothing more, because the House Owners' Company of the New Theatre was a private enterprise, free to hire the theatre house to whomever it wanted, even if the Government had supported its construction costs. If such a thing as a Finnish Theatre Company existed, it could, of course, also receive subsidies from the Government just as the Swedish Theatre Company did, and it could propose to lease the New Theatre. The first five-year lease period (1867–1872) was over, and a new contract, for 1872–1877, was to be signed in some weeks.

Bergbom was behind this political initiative, and in a three-part newspaper article at the beginning of April 1872, he wrote his famous pamphlet "A few words about our prevailing theatre conditions." The article came out in a Finnish translation and then immediately in its original Swedish, Bergbom's mother tongue and working language. Bergbom defended the Peasants' petition against the arguments that had been made against it and wanted "to give reasons" for its presentation. Bergbom's point was that some of the public money used for the New Theatre should be used for a "national theatre" (national here meant exclusively a Finnish-language theatre.) Then came his arguments: there were sufficient texts in Finnish (which was true); there were Finnish-speaking singers and actors available (which was only half true); and there were audiences (which was not true at all in Helsinki).

In his articles Bergbom then accused the Swedish Theatre Company of not having included classics in the repertoire, of not promoting national writers and artists, and of not performing serious musical pieces, but rather immoral and light commercial plays and operettas. Bergbom became the target of counterattacks, and many of his arguments were obviously not tenable, but the fiery debate went on until mid-May 1872. The meeting in which the next five-year contract was decided stabilised the situation: The

New Theatre would continue to house the Swedish Theatre Company for the years 1872 to 1877. The status quo in the New Theatre thus prevailed.

The public debate had a logical consequence: Why did the Fennomans not establish their own Warrants Society and a Finnish theatre company? This need was indeed finally met, and it came on the initiative of the party leader, Yrjö S. Yrjö-Koskinen, at the end of May. Some five to seven dramatic actors were hired, and in June of 1872 Kaarlo Bergbom was appointed executive director of the Finnish Theatre Company (*Suomalainen teatteri*). The goal was to begin staging operas the next season.

The Finnish Theatre Company was launched with a Drama Department (*Puhe-osasto*), which was placed in the hands of the actor Oskar Gröneqvist-Wilho (1840–1883), who had been trained in Stockholm (1863–64). As the stage director (*regisseur*), Gröneqvist-Wilho supervised rehearsals and was the principal actor for the next eight years. The first six months of Bergbom’s leadership were spent in preparations for the company’s first tour of provincial capitals. After the company’s inaugural performances in Pori (October 1873), Bergbom began engaging singers for the Lyrical Department (*Laulu-osasto*), then called the Finnish Opera Company (*Suomalainen ooppera*). However, singers were hesitant to commit to Bergbom’s adventure, as Kiseleff was making more remunerative and secure offers at the Swedish Theatre. (See the article in this volume by Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen.) The next incident occurred in December of 1872.

Bergbom summoned to court for publicly offending Kiseleff et al.  
(the spring of 1873)

Bergbom’s next fiery debate – a distant echo of the previous spring – came in December of 1872. Bergbom was incensed over the Swedish Theatre Company’s projected performance of a drama by Aleksis Kivi called *Karkurit* (The Refugees), translated into Swedish as *Flyktingarna* by the young writer, Rafael Hertzberg (1845–1896). This choice of play must have been Kiseleff’s in a bid gradually to “domesticate” his theatre by having the talented Kivi’s Finnish-language play translated into Swedish. Bergbom publicly questioned whether the Theatre or Herzberg personally wanted to pay royalties to the author, who was lying ill in very poor conditions after having been treated in a mental asylum. Bergbom declared himself Kivi’s representative, which was true, although he had no legal document to that effect. Four years earlier this responsibility had been explicitly stated in

a letter written by Kivi to Bergbom. Moreover, Bergbom insisted that he should supervise the rehearsals on behalf of the invalid author. He was not given permission to enter the New Theatre. What was worse, Bergbom now accused the theatre of not having had “any intention of paying” the royalties, something Hertzberg had mentioned to a third person over a beer.

Nikolai Kiseleff was abroad when Bergbom raised the royalty issue in the press. By the time he returned, nothing could be done. Bergbom published an article entitled “Protest” in all the Helsinki newspapers (on 13 December 1872), accusing the Swedish Theatre Company of “mercilessly” exploiting the “weak health of the talented Finnish author”. After the premiere and the first performance of *Flyktingarna*, the issue was settled: Hertzberg as the translator-adaptor, according to custom, promised to pay half of the royalties to the author’s representative, Bergbom. This happened within a week and a contract-receipt was signed. The next day Bergbom published a scathing review in *Morgonbladet*, though without a signature. He bullied his young colleague Hertzberg, who had made his adaptation in good faith, a writer who in the future would do a great deal to promote Finnish-language literature in Swedish translations. Bergbom accused Hertzberg of not transmitting the “poetry” of Kivi’s work, which was somewhat true, although the translation used verse in passages where it is not found in the original. Two weeks later, on 31 December 1872, Aleksis Kivi died. The accumulated royalties were now used for his funeral. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1907, II, pp. 29–36.)

Bergbom’s reaction to the staging of Kivi’s play at the Swedish Theatre had been almost “hysterical”, which can best be explained by his own guilty conscience. Bergbom, like many other Fennomans, must have reproached himself for not having sufficiently supported Kivi, who was the only artistically original author writing in Finnish. His writing was not as “polished and beautiful” as the educated class and the gatekeepers of the Fennoman culture would have liked. Kivi’s humorous realism and down-to-earth comedy were sometimes too much – if not so much for Bergbom, then for many in the audiences whom Bergbom wanted to please. For the lower-class audiences, with their fluent native Finnish, Kivi was not difficult or offensive. (Paavolainen 2010, pp. 288–290).

Bergbom was now *persona non grata* in the New Theatre, although he had sent flowers to the actresses who had appeared in Kivi’s play. Nikolai Kiseleff’s two colleagues in the theatre’s leadership had had enough. At their instigation the theatre summoned Bergbom to court for “defamation” (*smädelse*). But here Kiseleff did not agree with his colleagues; he alone was

against the legal process. The court case continued from January 1873 to April 1873, and Bergbom was sentenced to pay a considerable fine for having insulted the theatre management publicly in writing. Bergbom took his case to the Court of Appeals, giving a convincing analysis of the conditions behind his actions. The amount of the fine was reduced and the definition of his crime lessened simply to an “insult” (*förolämpning*). The decision of the Court of Appeals came out just as the Finnish Opera company unveiled its performances in November of 1873. Nikolai Kiseleff was again ready to leave the issue there, because the whole affair was not good advertisement for the Swedish Theatre Company. His two colleagues, however, still wanted to appeal to the Senate (and the Emperor), but the Senate sent back the matter unchanged. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1907, II, pp. 29–36).

The atmosphere surrounding the first regular operatic activities was not very auspicious. During the entire season of 1872–1873, Bergbom and Kiseleff were competing for the same singers. Emmy Strömer and her sister Sophie Strömer were still hesitating in December of 1872 about whether to accept Kiseleff’s offer to join the Swedish Theatre and enjoy the security of the larger institution. On the other hand, their hearts were with the cause of the Finnish people, even though their working language was Swedish. Finally, Bergbom persuaded the Strömer sisters to sign a contract with the Finnish Opera Company for 1873–1874. Nikolas Achté was the baritone, John Bergholm the bass and Ludvig Ericsson, the tenor, the only one who came from Sweden. The first Finnish opera performances took place in Viipuri (Vyborg), opening in November of 1873 with *Lucia di Lammermoor* and followed by a revival of *Il Trovatore*. Emmy Strömer had great success, both in her Lucia and her Leonora roles. *Lucia* and *Il Trovatore* were followed by Act II of *Noita-ampuja (Der Freischütz)*. The season then continued with the comic opera *Fra Diavolo* (by Auber), *Sevillan parranajaja (Il barbiere di Siviglia)*, with Ida Basilier as Rosina, *Norma*, *Lucrezia Borgia* and *Alessandro Stradella* (by Flotow), followed by Verdi’s *Ernani* and, in February of 1876, Gounod’s *Faust*, which would be the most successful. The amount of work accomplished over the six years was astounding, given the number of singers working with annual contracts or engaged per production or singing regularly in a chorus that numbered between 50 and 80. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1907, II, pp. 470–473.)

Kiseleff and the Swedish Theatre Company also succeeded with their regular opera productions. After *Martha* came *De muntra fruarna i Windsor (Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor)* in April 1872, and in November 1873, *Friskyttten (Der Freischütz)*, which was revived once more in the autumn of

1874. The domestic opera *Kung Carls jagt* by Fredrik Pacius was performed in the spring of 1875.

### Kiseleff dismissed from the Swedish Theatre (1876–1878)

After the first successes, general opinion about the Finnish Opera Company became positive. The merits of Kaarlo Bergbom were soon recognised: Suddenly a new art institution indeed existed in Finland. The atmosphere and the emotional engagement in the performances were often said to be more intense in the Finnish productions in the Arkadia Theatre than in the New Theatre. Emmy Strömer, now Emmy Achté after her marriage to Lorenz Nikolai Achté, was the tragic diva, while Ida Basilier was the star in the coloratura and comic repertoire. Basilier had good pronunciation in Finnish and was a good comic actress. Nikolai Kiseleff was reported to have visited the Arkadia and seen most of the repertory. (Maria Grape to Hedvig Raa-Winterhjelm, 15 January 1876, SKS.)

For Bergbom, the problem was that there were not enough evenings available in the Arkadia Theatre, either for rehearsal or performance, because the Russian actors had it booked during the winter months. So the Board of the Finnish Theatre Company discussed whether the Finnish Opera could rent the New Theatre for some weeks and on evenings during the week when there were no performances. Unfortunately, the discussion was leaked to the press, arrogant positions were taken, with mutual accusations of lack of good will. Why did Kiseleff and Bergbom not meet tête-à-tête? Were there some protocol-related reasons? Did Kiseleff expect the younger man to approach *him*, somewhat apologetically? Why did Bergbom not approach Kiseleff and abandon his haughty and aggressive position?

In the spring of 1875 the Finnish Theatre Company bought the Arkadia Theatre, thereby gaining control over its own venue in Helsinki. The Arkadia had gone up for sale because the Russian company was building a house of its own. Having a permanent house enabled the Finnish company to increase the number of its performances and rehearse new works more effectively. There was also less reason to insist on the use of the New Theatre, which was still giving an opera or operetta twice a year. Usually, the music critics – at least those who strove for neutrality – reported that the quality of singing was uneven at the New Theatre and the *mises-en-scène* neglected. In Bergbom's opera his decor and costumes were always especially praised, and the “passion for the work” was said to be greater among the Finnish-speaking performers. The performances were also loy-

ally supported by the audience. Once the Finnish Opera bought the Arkadia Theatre in 1875, their presence in Helsinki was quite literally on firmer ground.

At this moment a new orientation took place in the Swedish Theatre. Some of the successes of the Finnish Opera Company, such as *Faust* in March of 1876, sparked a reaction from the supporters of the Swedish Theatre Company (cf. Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen's article in this volume). Nikolai Kiseleff was challenged on his own turf. At the end of March 1876, he was abruptly dismissed, replaced by Wilhelm Grefberg as the executive director, Ferdinand Wahlberg as the president (*ordförande*) and Wilhelm Bolin as the dramaturge. Grefberg and Wahlberg were medical doctors and Bolin a philosopher and librarian at the Library of the Imperial Alexandre University (today the National Library of Finland). All three were sworn "Vikings", i.e. anti-Fennomans. They wanted no merger, no compromise, not even discussion of such a move, yet they maintained that opera was needed. The takeover by Grefberg and Wahlberg has been described as "a coup." A fourth person involved may have been the ambitious conductor Nathan B. Emmanuel, who probably reacted to the challenge by the Finnish Opera Company, where performances had attained a certain standard of quality and which now had much longer seasons in Helsinki. The Finnish Opera Company would also hire a permanent orchestra, which would give them a further advantage. In the Swedish Theatre the plan was to increase the number of operatic productions in order to outdo the Finnish Opera. Professor C. G. Estlander reported to one of his students:

Yet the visual arts have a more secure future in Finland, standing on a safer and saner foundation than music, which is heading towards brilliant misery with this insane competition going on in our theatres. The dull mercantilism in the New Theatre will now be turned into a foolish swindle in the spirit of Bergbom, and with that, financial ruin will result for the one as well as for the other. If even the artistic *mise-en-scène*, which the New Theatre has cultivated as its tradition, is also lost, then all the results achieved thus far in the country in the dramatic arts will be lost, and a considerable number of partly excellent musical talents will be sacrificed in the coup d'état. (C.G. Estlander to Eliel Aspelin, [17 April] 1876, SLSA/KK)

The summer of 1876 was the summer of the great Industry and Arts Exhibition in Finland. Both theatres wanted to show themselves at their best. The emperor himself, Alexander II, visited the New Theatre together with the Empress Maria, their son Alexander and his wife Dagmar-Maria. But

the following day, only the crown prince and his wife had time to visit the Arkadia Theatre, which was a gesture in support of the Fennomans. During the same summer and the following autumn (1876), Bergbom's Finnish Opera was in trouble because some of their key figures left, namely, the Achté family. Without their knowledge, Bergbom had hired a new conductor, Bohuslav Hřimalý, to take on the role of musical director and replace Nikolas Achté. Nikolas Achté resigned from the Finnish Opera, and Emmy (Strömer) Achté followed suit in solidarity with her husband. In public opinion the Finnish Opera Company was nothing without Emmy Achté. By this point the Opera's debts were large, feeding rumour mills all around and the feelings of insecurity among the staff and the supporters. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1907, II, pp. 350–356).

The demonstration at *Die Fledermaus* (November 1876) signals irreconcilable parties.

During Kiseleff's absence from the Swedish Theatre Company in the two seasons 1876 to 1878, the last decisive steps were taken on both sides. Grefberg's regime had increased opera performances in the New Theatre by preparing *Wilhelm Tell* and *Rigoletto*. Mistrust and rivalry between the Arkadia and the New Theatre continued. Grefberg, Wahlberg and Bolin then made an investment in preparing the brand-new operetta by Johann Strauss II, *Die Fledermaus* (*Läderlappen* in Swedish) in November of 1876.

The audience liked the operetta, but a group of young and radical Fennomans arranged a disruptive whistling display in the New Theatre. This "radical action", they declared, was to be understood as a spontaneous act of indignation against "immorality in a state-subsidised theatre". They claimed that it had nothing to do with the Finnish Theatre Company. The attack, however, was planned in the foyer of the Arkadia where the Fennoman students had gathered before marching to the New Theatre. The students said that they hoped to help the Finnish Opera Company, but the result was exactly the opposite: The last vestiges of goodwill towards the Finnish performances disappeared from Helsinki's Swedish population, which stopped going to the Arkadia altogether, a kind of boycott against the Finnish Opera Company. The students were punished by the University, but their moralistic anti-operetta opinion was spread and repeated. Helsinki was forced to wait many decades for its next *Fledermaus*. Now in the spring of 1877 the

competition between the theatres was at its peak. Yet the repertories were impressive.

The Swedish Opera Company had produced in addition to its operettas *Friskyttan* (*Der Freischütz*), *Martha*, *Kung Carls jagt* (*The Hunt of King Charles*), *Regementets dotter* (*La fille du Régiment*), *Kärleksdrycken* (*L'Elisir d'amore*), *Sömngångerskan* (*La Sonnambula*), *Figaros bröllop* (*Le nozze di Figaro*), *Wilhelm Tell* (*Guillaume Tell*), *Rigoletto*, *Den stumma från Portici* (*La muette de Portici*), *Robert af Normandie* (*Robert le diable*), *Alessandro Stradella*, *Hvita frun* (*La dame blanche*), *Trubaduren* (*Il Trovatore*), *Mignon*, *Postiljonen från Lonjumeau* (*Le postillon de Lonjumeau*), *Den vilseförda* (*La Traviata*), *Maskeradbalen* (*Un ballo in maschera*), *Barberaren i Sevilla* (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*). (Lüchou 1977, passim.)

The Finnish Opera Company had produced *Lucia di Lammermor*, *Trubaduri* (*Il Trovatore*), *Noita-ampuja* (*Der Freischütz*), *Fra Diavolo*, *Sevillan parranajaja* (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), *Norma*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Alessandro Stradella*, *Ernani*, *Faust*, *Rykmentin tytär* (*La Fille du régiment*), *Martha*, *Violetta* (*La Traviata*), *Fidelio*, *Musta domino* (*Le Domino noir*), *Hugenotit* (*Les Huguenots*), *Taikahuilu* (*Die Zauberflöte*), *Robert Paholainen* (*Robert le diable*), *Tsaari työmiehenä* (*Zar und Zimmermann*), *Juutalaistyttö* (*La Juive*), *Unissakävijä* (*La Sonnambula*), *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *Linda di Chamounix*, *Romeo ja Julia* (*Roméo et Juliette*). (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1907 (II), pp. 467–476.)

### Attempt at a merger in 1877 and its failure

The second five-year lease period of the New Theatre by the Swedish war-rants was to expire in the spring of 1877. Preparations for the next lease period were made while Grefberg, Wahlberg and Bolin were still in power. In theory, the New Theatre House Company, which owned the building, could rent the house to any society that would guarantee the rent, be it Finnish, Swedish or a combination of those. In practice, the manoeuvres and debates in the spring of 1877 resulted in the consolidation of Swedish cultural opinion, manifested in defensive positions and broad support to continue the Swedish Theatre activity in the New Theatre venue.

The Government had appointed a special committee, whose task was to mediate between the two theatres and the opera companies. The situation had become more difficult than ever. After the *Fledermaus* episode, the hard-line Svecomans wanted nothing to do with the Fennomans. They declared that the true reason behind all the proposals for merging the two

operas was the catastrophic economic situation of the Finnish Opera Company. This was true: the Finnish Theatre Warrants Society had not published its balance sheet for two years, because the truth was that the debts had become unbearable. Of course, the poor financial situation was partly a consequence of the competition between the two opera companies, but it was also due to unrealistic calculations from the very beginning. Even the Bergboms proposed that the Finnish Opera Company should be terminated, but their own party activists could not imagine their lives or their “conquest of Helsinki” without it.

To give some taste of what a joining of forces could mean for the music itself, the conductor Bohuslav Hřímalý organised a concert on 17 February 1877 in which the two theatre orchestras played with amateur musicians. The evening took place in the University Festival Hall, with half of the evening dedicated to Wagner. Elsa and Lohengrin’s duet, sung by Josef Navrátil and Emmy Achté, was accompanied by some “demanding choral parts.” (*Morgonbladet*, 19 February 1877).

A culmination of the fatal opera competition came in early May of 1877: Meyerbeer’s *Robert le diable* was staged both in the New Theatre (as *Robert af Normandie*) and in the Arkadia Theatre (as *Robert Paholainen*) only a week apart. Two productions of the same grand opera in a city of 30,000 inhabitants was folly. A joint opera was certainly on the minds of many.

The Fennomans had arrived at the opinion that actually it was only the Finnish Opera Company that should be merged with the Swedish Theatre Company. The Finnish Theatre Company would remain independent of the merger. As its professional level was not yet very high, it would find more audiences in the country’s provinces where sufficient numbers of Finnish-speaking audiences for drama and comedy were found.

The Four Estates (and the press) discussed the merger of the theatres on the basis of a new petition by the Peasants Estate. The Petition of 1877 endorsed the Fennomans’ plan to merge the Finnish Opera Company into the Swedish Theatre Company. The Peasants’ petition did not even mention the Finnish Theatre Company or the need to secure its future. It was a paradoxical, even bizarre situation that the Finnish Peasants representatives did not have a word to say in defence of the cultural institution that was closest to them and to their language or about the actors who succeeded especially well in the characters of popular domestic plays. They simply repeated the script of Yrjö-Koskinen and his “junta”. Sincere support for the Finnish Theatre Company came from the liberal-minded Swedish-speaking representatives, who supported the balanced idea of creating a joint opera

company and two separate drama troupes, one in Swedish and one in Finnish. Representatives from the Clergy Estate demanded that Yrjö-Koskinen, the Fennoman leader, should first issue a proclamation assuring that the Swedish language would not be abolished from Finland – the most extreme measure advocated by the radicals in the Fennoman party. There were also some Finnish-speaking representatives in the Peasants Estate who were ready to let the Finnish Opera fall, wanting all the subsidies for the Finnish activities to go to the Drama Department. Finally, in April of 1877 the Estates of the Nobility and the Bourgeois rejected the plan for a “Swedish Drama and a Finnish Opera,” while the estates with a Fennoman majority, the Clergy and Peasants, supported it. But as the matter belonged to the sphere of private enterprise, the Estates could do nothing more. (*Talvonpoikaissäädyn pöytäkirjat 1877.*)

The Government appointed a committee with representation from both parties, Fennoman and Svecoman. There was a public vote on its proposals in which the Fennoman proposal received the most votes. But the New Theatre House Owners’ Company was independent. It had several rental offers by 9 May. In accordance with capitalist principles, a price competition should now have occurred with the best offer being the winner. Instead, the New Theatre House Owners, with a huge majority of the shares, decided once again to lease the New Theatre to the Warrants Society of the Swedish Theatre Company for the next five years (1877–1883), even though theirs was not the best proposal. But at least their future was on a more solid economic basis.

The Fennomans were defeated, and licking their wounds, tried to manage their debts of more than 100,000 Finnish marks. The result was a new Shareholders’ Company (*Osakeyhtiö /Aktiebolag*), which would start a Finnish Theatre with a clean slate. All the old debts were categorised as personal debts of the Bergboms, who therefore also owned all of the sets, props and costumes. The work started by buying the costumes from the Bergboms for the use of the new company. Then year by year the debts would be mortgaged by the new Finnish Theatre Company Ltd. (Aspelin-Haapkylä 1907, II, pp. 351–355.)

There had been unanimous will within the Fennoman party (i.e. the loose group of Yrjö-Koskinen’s men and women) to go on with the Finnish Opera. But the Bergboms themselves were exhausted. (E. Bergbom to B. Elfving, 13 February 1877, SKS). Financially, the Opera could continue only for two more seasons. The last new production by Bergbom, in the spring of 1879, was Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette*. But for the whole cultural map of

the city it is important to note that Count Adlerberg, the Governor-General who had promoted regular seasons by Russian theatre companies in Helsinki since 1868, had confirmed in the spring of 1875 that a new theatre and opera house would be built with imperial resources for Russian officers and merchants. (Byckling 2009). This was the final *coup de mort* for the two operas.

In 1878 Nikolai Kiseleff was once again elected to lead the Swedish Theatre Company. During his last two years as executive director (1878–1880), he still produced some operas, but he wanted to secure the quality of the domestic productions by acquiring Bergbom's two trump cards: the conductor Bohuslav Hřímalý and the tenor Josef Navrátil, both of whom moved to the Swedish Theatre for the 1878–1879 season. But Kiseleff and the Swedish Theatre could go on with opera only one more year – until the spring of 1880.

Conclusion: Who won? Who lost in the decade of two opera companies in Helsinki?

Two persons with common interests, Kiseleff and Bergbom, became adversaries somewhat against their will. First, it was the development of domestic musical activity which lost an important forum when the operas collapsed. It was not only the better musical quality of the Finnish Opera, it was also its meaning for the education and development of Finnish musical life which was essential in its work. A delay of ten years in this development would be the consequence if domestic opera activity did not have enough support. This was clearly predicted by Martin Wegelius. (M. Wegelius to C. G. Estlander, 4 March 1877, SLSA/KK).

The losers were also the many singers who had to decide what to do with their talents and their stage experience. Some of them went to other Nordic countries to make a living. Those who remained in Finland could find some work with the choruses of visiting companies, but they also came up with initiatives for producing opera again. In the next decade, 1880–1890, the operas staged in the Alexandre Theatre were Italian works sung by Italian singers. In the 1890s these were replaced by Russian operas during a time when there were Russian seasons with Russian operas and Russian singers in “patriotic style.” (Byckling 2009, pp. 365–494).

Another loser was “modern music”, specifically, Richard Wagner, whose *Tannhäuser* would have been the next production in Kaarlo Bergbom's

plans. The opera's Finnish translation was completed, encouraged by Richard Faltin, who had suggested the idea to Bergbom. One choice being considered as the new opera conductor, Martin Wegelius, was also a Wagnerite. There would have been an ideal cast available in Helsinki for *Tannhäuser* in 1880. But the collapse of the two opera companies caused a backlash against modern German repertory and fostered the dominance of Italian repertory to the neglect of modern French operas. We can argue that the competition inevitably delayed the production of Wagner's music in Helsinki by some 25 years. Wagner's music returned to Helsinki in 1904 and 1905, when Bergbom himself was convalescing from a serious illness, unable to work. His assistant, Jalmari Finne, helped in the productions of three operas: *Tannhäuser* and *Die Walküre* were conducted and produced by Armas Järnefelt, and *Lohengrin* was conducted and produced by Robert Kajanus. The Swedish Theatre performed *Siegfried* in 1910, under the baton of Georg Schnéevoigt.

Among the winners was the audience, in the sense that since that time, opera could be regularly seen and heard in Helsinki. But the audience also lost, because the repertory of available works was narrow (Italian), and there was no permanent domestic opera company. Nikolai Kiseleff resigned from the Swedish Theatre in 1880, and Kaarlo Bergbom had to readjust himself to leading the Drama Department, which fell into his hands. Another winner was Finnish-language literature, drama and theatre.

The winners were also the other sectors of musical life in Helsinki. The year 1882 saw the founding of both the Helsinki Music Institute (later renamed the Sibelius Academy) and the Philharmonic Orchestra, destined to be the first permanent symphony orchestra in Finland. These organisations were the fruits of the professional energy of that decade. A diversified development of music and theatre was needed before opera could be reborn.

The episode of the two competing opera companies in Helsinki in the 1870s was an incredibly intense phase in the city's cultural life. In 1911 a Domestic Opera (*Kotimainen ooppera – Inhemska operan*), the present Finnish National Opera, was founded, intentionally as a bilingual institution.

## Archives and collections

Helsinki  
 Kansalliskirjasto (KK) [National Library]  
 Käsikirjoituskokoelma [Manuscript collection]  
 Achté (née Strömer), Emmy Coll 4.

Weckströmska samlingen. Coll 255.

Museoviraston arkisto [Archives of the National Board of Antiquities]  
Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen arkisto SMMYA [The Archives of the Finnish Association of Antiquities]

contains personal archives, letters from and to:  
Aspelin, Johann Reinhold  
Nervander, Emil

Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, SKS [Finnish Literature Society]  
Kirjallisuusarkisto [Literary Archive] KiA

contains personal archives, letters from and to:  
Aspelin, Eliel, Kk 108  
Bergbom, Emelie, Kk 45–54  
Bergbom, Kaarlo, Kk 45–54  
Elfving Betty, Kk 45–54  
Grape, Maria, Kk 41–44  
Gröneqvist, (Wilho) Oskar, Kk 45–54  
Nervander, Emil  
(Raa-)Winterhjelm, Hedvig Charlotte, Kk 41–44  
Stenvall (Kivi), Aleksis

Svenska Litteratursällskapets arkiv (SLSA) [The Archives of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland], deposited in the Kansalliskirjasto manuscripta [National Library]

Historiska och litteraturhistoriska arkivet [Historical and literary history archive]  
contains institutional and personal archives, letters from and to:

Svenska Teaterns arkiv [The Archives of the Swedish Theatre] SLSA1270  
specifically also Kiseleff, Nikolai (business & personal corr.)  
Estlander, Carl Gustaf (depos. in KK / N.L.) SLSA 181 & 252

Åbo Akademis bibliotek [Library of the Swedish University of Turku]

Manuskriptsamling [manuscripts]  
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Newspapers

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## Summary

This article examines the period 1869–1880 in Helsinki, when the resources for an emerging domestic activity to produce operas resulted in a destructive competition between the Swedish and Finnish language groups. Nya Teatern (the New Theatre) housed a Swedish theatre company, which started to produce operas regularly. Its director, Nikolai Kiseleff, a wealthy merchant, welcomed domestic activity into which Finnish-language productions could also be gradually introduced. The intellectual and enthusiastic Dr. Kaarlo Bergbom was the capable producer of these opera performances. Meanwhile, Bergbom and his group founded the Finnish Opera Company (1873–79, based in the Arkadia Theatre) as a separate professional activity. The Finnish Opera gained general approval for its artistic commitment. Yet Helsinki, a city of 30,000 inhabitants in these years, could not provide sufficient audiences for two opera companies, and the financial situation turned catastrophic. A merger of the two theatres was suggested by "all reasonable people" and the state. But the cultural antagonism (in 1877) was too intense and led to the collapse of both activities. The focus here is on the stages of the dispute, those moments when the doors seemed to be "half open" and when they were "slammed" again.

# Staging a National Language

Opera in Christiania and Helsinki in the 1870s

Ulla-Britta Broman-Kananen

In this chapter I will compare opera in the 1870s at three theatres in two Nordic capitals; the Christiania Theatre in Christiania (today Oslo) and the Finnish Theatre and the New Theatre in Helsinki.<sup>1</sup> I shall especially concentrate on how the language of the operas in each theatre dominated and defined the three houses, although in different ways. Language was an obvious and strong identity marker for national movements as well as for ethnicity, and it was the main issue over which political parties in both countries were struggling in those days. However, this struggle was also very much about claiming a cultural space for the growing bourgeoisie and middle class, as well as establishing a new national language in each capital.

Language was at the forefront of operatic works, especially in opera companies, but the issue of language also appeared in the performance language chosen at each opera company as well as in their choice of the repertoire.

<sup>1</sup> In 1887 the New Theatre was renamed the Swedish Theatre. Pentti Paavolainen's chapter in this book would be useful to read before this chapter, because Paavolainen explores the earlier history of the Finnish and the New Theatres in Helsinki, as well as the relationship between their directors, Kaarlo Bergbom and Nikolai Kiseleff.

A major problem that all three opera companies shared was that there were simply not enough (available) vernacular *and* professional opera singers in either country for opera's needs. This problem caused tensions in the daily life of each opera companies, especially between the Boards and the directors; as a rule the Boards were politically and ideologically engaged, while the directors' first concern was artistic and creating a professional company. The tensions between the Boards and the directors sometimes escalated into real crises when the Boards interfered too much in the daily planning of a house. These clashes and crises will be of a special interest in this chapter as they depict the daily life of running an operatic enterprise that was fuelled by political and nationalist ideologies.<sup>2</sup>

Why would comparing opera companies in Christiania and Helsinki be of any interest? Both cities seem to be situated somewhere outside opera's major avenues throughout the nineteenth century, and the operatic productions in each city have certainly not been remembered for their grandeur, if at all. The answer to these questions is simply that the neglect of opera in these cities is not a sign of their insignificance, either for contemporaries or even for the course of history. Quite the opposite is true. We should instead ask why these episodes have attracted such little attention from later historians. There are at least three answers: 1) all three opera companies failed to become permanent; hence, they are difficult to dovetail with a teleological view of history, which takes the present time as its starting point (Engman 1995, p. 12); 2) the episodes are excellent examples of a *transnational Norden*, especially from the viewpoint of the artists, who moved from one country to another in search of job opportunities. This in turn goes against the pre-suppositions of writing the history of a nation as the main agent with the present borders of a nation pre-determined; 3) looking at opera with a national gaze narrows historians' view of performances, musical works or unusual accomplishments (and not only in this case), which somehow bolster the uniqueness of a given nation.<sup>3</sup> The aim of this chapter

<sup>2</sup> This chapter does not provide the reader with a detailed history of the three opera houses. Instead, it follows certain critical thresholds in the trajectory of these enterprises, which highlight the main argument here: the staging of a national language through opera. For those interested in the history of the operas at the theatres, the following works can be recommended: Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä (hence EAH) 1906-1910; Blanc 1899; Eckhoff Kindem 1941; Lampila 1997; Nordensvan 1918; Qvamme 2004. Unfortunately, history has almost totally neglected the New Theatre's opera performances. Not even the one existing work about the New Theatre (Qvarnström 1946) includes much about its opera performances.

<sup>3</sup> Ilona Pikkanen (2010) has analysed and compared the histories of the two main national theatres in Finland and Norway; Eliel Aspelin Haapkylä's extensive history

is to go beyond the national gaze and study both transnational interconnectivity as well as the episodic nature of opera in two capitals situated on the outskirts of Europe.

The choice of these two Nordic capitals as a point of comparison through opera can be easily justified on historical grounds. Firstly, the political situation in both countries was somewhat similar during the decade of interest (the 1870s). The countries were both semi-independent with a certain amount of autonomy, yet they were also united to another country – Finland to the Russian Empire and Norway to Sweden. Secondly, in each case, the struggle for a national identity was carried out mainly as a language struggle. In Norway, a national language was to be established in relation to Danish and Swedish; in Finland, it was in relation to Swedish and Russian. Thirdly, as these operatic enterprises had no court tradition on which to build, they started as commercial ventures right from the beginning, albeit with a certain amount of state funding. Fourthly, the short and intense opera episodes examined here were followed by a long intermediate period in both capitals, during which several efforts were made to establish a permanent opera along with visiting opera companies from the rest of the Nordic world as well as from Europe. A national and permanent opera house was not founded until 1911 in Finland and 1957 in Norway. Furthermore, some of the opera singers from Christiania found their way to Helsinki in 1876; later, when the opera companies closed down in Helsinki, some of the performers took the return route, from Helsinki to Christiania. It is also relevant here that most of the performers originally came from Sweden and particularly from Stockholm with its rich possibilities for education and the training of singers, musicians, conductors and directors. This was especially evident among the artists at the New Theatre in Helsinki, but it pertained as well to the operatic enterprise in Christiania, which was founded in 1874 by the Swedish director Ludvig Josephson (1832–1899).

Christiania and Helsinki were small cities in those days, although they were rapidly expanding and urbanizing. In 1870 the population of Helsinki numbered 30,000 inhabitants; Christiania had nearly three times as many, with 80,000 inhabitants. The majority of the population in Helsinki (60 percent) was Swedish-speaking, while 25 percent were Finnish-speaking and 15 percent Russian-speaking. (Åström 1956, p. 31.) However, outside Hel-

of the Finnish National Theatre in four volumes (1906–1910) and Tharald Blanc's history of the Christiania Theatre (1899). In her article "Theatre Histories and the Construction of National Identity: The Cases of Norway and Finland", she analyses how the nation and the birth and emergence of a national theatre is narratively constructed in the two historiographies. Her article is an important source for this chapter.

sinki where Finnish dominated, Swedish was not the main language of the population. The situation in Christiania was very similar, notwithstanding that Swedish and Norwegian (or Norwegian and Danish for that matter) are closer to each other than Finnish and Swedish. Neither *Riksmål* or *Landsmål* (the forerunners to *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*) in Norway nor Finnish in Finland were firmly established in the 1870s, and as standardized languages they still had a way to go. (Engman 1995; Sørensen 1997, pp. 121–137). The opera companies were needed to promote the respective vernaculars as national languages and to establish these tongues as belonging to a civilised and educated European linguistic family. (See also Pikkanen 2010.) This situation differs radically from countries such as Sweden, where the opera houses translated opera librettos into a language that the audience knew and could read and speak daily. For these opera houses the purpose was not to “teach” their audiences a new language, but rather to help the audience understand the operatic drama. At the New Theatre in Helsinki the situation was slightly different; its stage language was Swedish-Swedish (*riks-svenska*, as the actors originally all came from Stockholm). Hence, the stage language at the New Theatre was close to that of the audience and could be easily understood. However, Swedish-Swedish was still a reminder of a history of oppression, at least as purveyed by the Finnish-nationalist historiography (Engman 2009, p. 31).

The histories of the three opera companies overlap slightly as they all started at the beginning of the 1870s, although each last a different length of time and each culminated at slightly different times. The Finnish Opera Company and the Christiania Opera Company started in 1873 and 1874 respectively. The New Theatre’s lyrical department was founded already in 1871, at least according to the theatre (Degerholm 1900). The Christiania Theatre’s opera history was even shorter than its Finland counterparts; it literally went up in smoke after only two and a half seasons when the theatre building was destroyed by fire in January of 1877. Despite the efforts of its director Ludvig Josephson to revive it, opera at the Christiania Theatre was not able to rise from the ashes. In Helsinki the New Theatre entered a new phase in 1876 as competition with the Finnish opera company escalated. For nearly a whole decade the two opera companies in Helsinki competed for the Swedish-speaking audience by giving operas in both languages. At the end of the 1870s both theatres gave up opera performances, not only because of the financial losses on both sides, but also because in 1880 the Russian Theatre grandly opened with an Italian opera at the recently built Alexander Theatre.

## Vernacular or professional opera: Tensions between the Boards and the directors

The history of the three opera companies has a beginning and a clear end. It has a certain trajectory, a certain direction of change, although not in a deterministic manner (Giddens 1984). In these three opera histories the middle of the trajectory was a turning point in which the enterprises reached a certain climax after which they began to decline. This kind of turning point is more obvious in the Helsinki operatic enterprises than in the Christiania Opera Company, where a clear turning point occurred in a dramatic ending by fire. At these turning points, tensions between the Boards and the directors were intensified, and the three opera companies demonstrate different strategies for handling these tensions. In Christiania Director Josephson had persuaded the Board to be solidly on his side and for the opera, but when fire destroyed the theatre, the Board withdrew its support. In Helsinki the interdependence (or competition) between the two opera companies became more and more exhausting during the latter half of the decade. Both theatres were working under pressure of an ongoing public debate, in the press as well as in other public forums.<sup>4</sup> The main subject of these discussions was the plan to merge the two operas into one Finnish opera at the New Theatre.<sup>5</sup> This highly provocative proposition was presented to the Finnish Diet in 1877. The plan was also supported by the Senate, as the state funding was being (momentarily) withheld from the New Theatre in order to persuade the Board to accept the merger. These plans were also in line with the ambitions of Kaarlo Bergbom (1843–1906), the director of the Finnish opera, who had long dreamed of being able to command the New Theatre's stage with all its facilities and scenic possibilities (see Paavolainen's chapter in this volume). Some of the New Theatre's Board members reacted negatively to the thought of a merger and demanded counteractions from its longstanding director, Nikolai Kiseleff (1820–1883). Opera, which up to this point had been staged at a languid pace at the theatre, now became the very centre of the theatre's existence. As a result of the Board's pressure the liberal and financially realistic Kiseleff resigned from the directorship, and a five-member board took over his position in April of 1876. This was the beginning of a new era in the capital. Visible and audible signs

<sup>4</sup> This was also the case in Christiania. (Blanc 1899.)

<sup>5</sup> Petteri Kumpulainen of the Peasants Estate presented this petition at the Diet's meeting on 23 February 1877. (EAH 1907, p. 344.) It was also the Peasants Estate which had made a similar petition about the not yet founded Finnish Theatre Company's state funding earlier at the Diet's meeting in 1872. (EAH 1906, pp. 254–256.)

of the new era were the eleven opera premieres given by both the Finnish and New Theatre's companies during the season 1876-1877, a number that might be difficult to pull off in Helsinki even today.

### The Christiania Theatre's opera episode, 1874–1877

In Christiania the national poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson contacted the Swedish director Ludvig Josephson in the early 1870s and asked him to become the director of the Norwegian theatre. Josephson agreed, but only if he could begin in 1873. Bjørnson himself had been the director at Christiania Theatre in 1856, and his first aim had been to “clear out” the Danish actors from the Christiania Theatre stage and replace them with Norwegians (Josephson 1898, p. 13). Nevertheless, Bjørnson was now responsible for inviting a “Swedish foreigner” to Christiania, something that seems to have given him second thoughts. Or at least so Josephson thought; he believed Bjørnson to be behind the demonstrations that confronted him on his arrival at the Christiania Theatre in 1873 (Josephson 1898, pp. 11–13).

For Josephson, opera was vitally important to a theatre, and so, almost immediately after settling down, he began to assemble an opera company among his Swedish friends.<sup>6</sup> He was aware of the hopes cherished by the theatre Board members for opera performances sung in Norwegian by Norwegian singers. But the reality was that there were not enough of them to realise this dream, as the talented Norwegian singers were already attached to foreign opera houses (Josephson, 1898). The Norwegian soprano Olefine Moe (1850–1933) would have been a good choice, but she was already engaged at the Stockholm opera. Josephson did his best to meet the demands of the Board (or so he presents the situation in his unpublished memoirs, “Ideal och verklighet”<sup>7</sup>) as well as in his book *Ett och annat om Henrik Ibsen och Christiania* (1898) about Ibsen and his time in Christiania. There is no

<sup>6</sup> Josephson also negotiated with the Finnish opera singer Emmy Achté (1850–1924), who had been engaged at the Finnish Theatre's lyrical department since its foundation. He persuaded Achté to come to Christiania, and for a while, he and the director of the Finnish Theatre, Kaarlo Bergbom, outbid each other. In the end Achté stayed with the Finnish company. The source for this competition is the correspondence between Josephson and Donald Bonnevie, who lived in Christiania and was engaged to Emmy Strömer-Achté's sister Sofie Strömer. Bonnevie acted as a representative for the then unmarried Emmy Strömer during these negotiations (see Josephson's letter collection at the National Library of Sweden, hereafter NLS, Kungliga Biblioteket).

<sup>7</sup> Josephson's fifteen volumes of memoirs, unpublished, handwritten, and undated, are preserved at the NLS.

doubt, however, that Josephson's first priority in creating an opera company was the performers' professional skills and not their nationality.

The opera company's makeup reveals a great deal about Josephson's ideas. Fritz Arlberg (1830–1896) was a self-evident choice, not only because he was an excellent and experienced singer, but also because he was Josephson's close friend and long-time colleague. They were nearly the same age (Arlberg was born in 1830 and Josephson in 1832) and had worked together during the 1860s when Josephson was engaged as director at the Royal Swedish Opera. Fritz Arlberg happened to be free to join the theatre as he had left the Royal Swedish Theatre stage after a quarrel with Ludvig Norman, the conductor of the Royal Court Orchestra and Arlberg's brother-in-law.<sup>8</sup> A lively correspondence between Josephson and Arlberg had begun already in August of 1874. In these letters the two colleagues appear more like companions than employer and employee.<sup>9</sup>

Their discussions about the future company's constitution, language and repertoire are interesting for many reasons, not only because they reveal how Josephson and Arlberg worked together as a team, but also for how the pair built an opera company to be as flexible and professional as possible. Arlberg himself was a good example, as his repertoire was large and he was willing to learn new roles. He also realised that it was diplomatically correct to volunteer to sing in Norwegian, especially for roles he did not know and had to learn anyway.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he offered to become a teacher for novice Norwegian singers to fill the company's future needs.

When prima donnas were discussed, language was no longer an issue; their fame and reputation clearly came first, while their repertoire was a close second. Nevertheless, the prima donna's ability to fit in with Arlberg was an issue in the letters. For that reason Signe Hebbe (1837–1925), a Swedish prima donna who had announced her interest in guest performances in Christiania, was a dubious choice, despite her fame. Arlberg and

<sup>8</sup> Evidently, the quarrel was not predominantly a family affair, but about artistic and professional authority; Arlberg had criticised the orchestra for playing too loud when he sang. Criticising the Kapellmeister was unheard of in those days, and the quarrel ended with Arlberg's resignation from the Royal Swedish Opera (Nordensvan 1918). In fact, many sources, including Josephson, indicate that Arlberg's voice had become weaker over the years. (Nordensvan 1918; Josephson in "Ideal och verklighet", Vol. XIII, p. 61, NLS.)

<sup>9</sup> Arlberg frequently uses the plural "we" and refers to the opera as a joint affair: "Yet we two do not know of any difficulties"; ["Dock, vi båda känna ju inga omöjligheter"] (Arlberg to Josephson, 3 October 1874, NLS); "We shall be together" ["Vi ska vara tillsammans!"] (Arlberg to Josephson, 16 September 1874, NLS).

<sup>10</sup> Later, Arlberg was appreciated for his "light and sure treatment" ("lätt och säkra behandling") of the Norwegian language (Qvamme 2004, p. 108).

Hebbe did not get on well, although they both were prepared to put their disagreements aside for the sake of the opera. A far more serious matter was that Hebbe had a limited repertoire: *Traviata*, *Fidelio* and *Faust*. None of these was suitable for the premiere of a brand new opera company. In the end, the negotiations with Hebbe escalated into a quarrel, not between Hebbe and Arlberg, but rather between Josephson and Hebbe, especially regarding the opening opera. Josephson and Arlberg wanted to open with *Don Giovanni*, “the opera of operas”, undoubtedly because the opera offered Arlberg a handsome title role. Hebbe was offered Donna Anna’s role, a suggestion which she strongly rejected, meanwhile threatening to reconsider her engagement altogether.<sup>11</sup> Hebbe decided to postpone her visit to Christiania for a few months.

Josephson then began to negotiate with the Swedish soprano Linda (Theodolinda) Röske-Lund (1836–1893), who had made a career in Berlin. Röske-Lund was well-known to Josephson because she made a success in Donna Anna’s role at the Royal Swedish Opera in 1868 during Josephson’s directorship (Swanberg 1917, p. 138). To make sure she had not declined in talent, he contacted another old friend from his years in Stockholm, the set painter (*dekoremålaren*) Fritz Ahlgrensson, who now was employed by the Royal Danish Theatre. Ahlgrensson had recently heard the Swedish soprano Linda Röske-Lund in Copenhagen and knew that she was on her way to Christiania. He recommended that Josephson engage her for his opera company:

The voice has become somewhat thin, but she has prima donna ability and it sounds damn good. She has become somewhat meagre all around, except around the waist. I remember her as Agatha in *Der Freischütz*: now she has brushed herself up and looks rather good.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Hebbe is “making a fuss”, Josephson wrote. He decided to let her “sun-dry” [*soltorka*] for a while and wrote to Arlberg in an indignant mood: “It would never occur to me to start with *La Fille du Régiment* or *Traviata*, would it? Rather I do not start at all. The Herr knows my taste” [“Det kunde väl icke falla mig in att börja med Regementets dotter eller *Traviata*. Hellre har jag icke börjat alls. Herrn känner min smak”] (Josephson to Arlberg, 14 October 1874, NLS).

<sup>12</sup> “Rösten har blifvit något tunn, men hon har primadonna ansats och det låter som bara fan. Hon har blifvit något mager öfverallt, utom kring lifvet. Jag minns henne som Agatha i *Friskyttan*; Nu har hon stufvat upp sig, och ser ganska bra ut.” (Ahlgrensson to Josephson, 23 October 1874, NLS.)

In order to demonstrate Röske-Lund's transformation from Agatha into a good-looking singer, Ahlgrensson drew a picture of her face and her hair in his letter.

Röske-Lund seems to have been more flexible than Hebbe about her roles. Arlberg was enthusiastic about the prospects of having Linda Röske-Lund as his counterpart, because if Röske-Lund would come, then "any opera could be given",<sup>13</sup> especially *Ernani*, which Arlberg also wanted in the repertoire.

Eventually, the opera company was complete and the opera at the Christiania Theatre officially opened in November of 1874 with *Don Giovanni*. Linda Röske-Lund sang Donna Anna's role and Fritz Arlberg, Don Giovanni's. Josephson remembers the premiere as a success. All the singers did their best. Even Thorvald Lammers, a Norwegian bass, performed decently

Figure 1. Linda Röske-Lund before and after a "brush-up". (Ahlgrensson to Josephson, 23 October 1874, NLS.)



<sup>13</sup> "Väl vore om Herrn finge Röske, då kunde som sagt allting gifvas" (Arlberg to Josephson, 10 October 1874, KB).

as Leporello, although he was a novice in relation to the other singers.<sup>14</sup> The enlarged orchestra at Christiania Theatre was conducted by Johan Hennum (1836–1894).<sup>15</sup> “[T]he whole production looked dignified and elegant, after the same scenery by me which still is used in Stockholm with the exception of the hell fires, which I was keen once and for all to extinguish at Stockholm’s theatres”.<sup>16</sup> From this quotation we learn that Josephson not only had turned to his old colleagues from the Stockholm opera, but also used his own material and *mises-en-scène* from his period as director in Stockholm as well.

Later in the season Signe Hebbe and Julius Saloman (1838–1892) joined the company. The repertoire for the first year consisted of *Faust*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Norma*, *Alessandro Stradella*, *La Traviata*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Der Freischütz* and *Martha*, as well as parts of *Trovatore* (with Röske-Lund as Leonora). The Finnish coloratura soprano Ida Basilier (1846–1928) appeared in the Christiania opera in her favourite role as Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in November 1875.

### The continuity of the opera at stake

The correspondence between Josephson and Arlberg illustrates how the two of them made most of the important decisions at the opera about performers and repertoire. Their shared past as well as their shared artistic views made their cooperation strong, and the Board members began to feel bypassed. A suggestion to engage the Swedish tenor Julius Saloman in the middle of the season in February 1875 set off a series of discussions among the Board members, concerning not only Saloman’s suitability for the company, but also the very future of the opera company. For some time Josephson had been searching for a reliable and professional tenor instead of the Norwegian actor Hans Brun, the only tenor in the company, who barely managed each role. In his search Josephson came across the young Swedish tenor Julius Saloman (1838–1893), who had made a recent successful debut in Stockholm in the title role of *Alessandro Stradella* (Nordensvan 1918). Josephson asked the Board for permission to bring Saloman to the Chris-

<sup>14</sup> Thorvald Lammers (1841–1922) had studied with Arlberg and later with Francesco Lamperti in Milano. The young Norwegian singers Rosa Asmundsen and Johanne Hoch sang in Zerlina’s and Donna Elvira’s roles respectively. (Qvamme 2004, pp. 98–99.)

<sup>15</sup> The orchestra normally consisted of 30 musicians (Blanc 1899).

<sup>16</sup> “[H]ela uppsättningen tog sig värdigt och elegant ut, efter samma sceneri af mig som ännu i Stockholm användes med undantag af helveteseldarna, som jag ifrigast en gång för alla låtit släcka å Stockholms teater.” (“Ideal och verklighet.” Vol. XIII, p.61. )

tiania Theatre. The tenor's demands became an obstacle: He wanted to be engaged not only for the rest of the current season, but also for the following season as well. Nor were his wage requirements moderate; he actually asked for the same salary as Röske-Lund – 800 kronors a month, which was a great deal for a singer who had only recently made his debut. The Board realised that agreeing to Saloman's engagement also meant agreeing to continue the opera performances for the next season. Some of the Board members were strongly opposed to this idea. A strong argument for closing down the opera was the lack of Norwegian singers in the company. Another forceful contention was that the drama section and the actors were overshadowed by the extravagance of the opera, which seemed to appeal more to the audience than the drama. In reality this meant that the actors were jealous of the opera singers' much higher salaries. ("Ideal och Verklighet"; Josephson 1898.)

In his long answer to the Board, Josephson went through all of these arguments and presented his own view: Hans Brun was no singer, but an actor. In addition he was often ill, and the troupe had not been able to perform as often as needed. Two prima donnas and one (mediocre) tenor were not enough for any opera, because at least two good tenors were needed in the event of illness. There were no Norwegian singers at all to choose from; those with training education were already engaged elsewhere. However, this could change in due time, Josephson emphasised, as Arlberg was giving lessons to promising young Norwegian singers who, unfortunately, were not yet ready for the stage. And finally, the fear among the actors that the opera would impoverish the whole theatre with its huge salaries could be proved to be totally wrong. The opera actually brought more money to the theatre than it spent. As a strong counter-argument to the Board's doubts about the opera, Josephson used Helsinki and Gothenburg as examples of cities where a national opera had been founded, no matter how small they were in comparison to Christiania. "It would be a great shame if Christiania was not able to compete with these two Nordic cities."<sup>17</sup> The Board seems to have capitulated to Josephson's verbal persuasion, at least this time. Saloman was engaged and the opera could move on to its next season.

The debate continued in the press, however, and the Swedish language used in the opera performances repeatedly gave rise to criticism. This debate, which sometimes bogged down in details, reveals something of the inflamed atmosphere at the time. Josephson, for instance, had written the

<sup>17</sup> "Det vore stor skam om Christiania ej skulle kunna täfla med dessa två nordiska städer." ("Ideal och verklighet" Vol. XIII, p. 73g.)

name of the opera *Der Freischütz* on the programme in Swedish, *Friskyttan*, by mistake instead of its better-known Norwegian/Danish name *Jaegerbruden*. Another example is that the Norwegian singer Olefine Moe sang one of her roles in Swedish during her visit to the opera, causing a storm in the press, which accused her of “denationalizing” herself. (Blanc 1899, p. 275) Not even the Swedish singers’ attempts to sing in Norwegian were met with any understanding. Besides Norwegian-Swedish, one could now hear several dialects (*vestlandsk, ostlandsk og trondersk*) on stage without coming any closer to a norm for spoken Norwegian (Blanc 1899, pp. 292–293).

The debate escalated when the theatre’s application for state funding was rejected. This happened late in 1876 and not long before the fire. The opera had begun to show a deficit, yet it was more popular than ever with audiences. Josephson had also made the mistake of pushing aside some of the most established actresses, and a storm arose among the actors opposed to the opera. The press readily participated in this struggle over the theatre, and Josephson fought for the opera with his pen on the pages of the press. (“Ideal och verklighet”; Qvamme 2004, pp. 117–123; Blanc 1899, pp. 301–204).

### The Finnish Opera Company, 1873–1879

The Finnish Theatre Company was founded in 1872 and its lyrical department was established one year later, in 1873, the same year Josephson arrived in Christiania. Like Josephson, the director of the Finnish Theatre Company, Kaarlo Bergbom (1843–1906), invested much in opera, especially after 1875, when the theatre settled down in Helsinki and took over the Arkadia Theatre building vacated by the Russian Theatre company (EAH 1906, pp. 182–185).<sup>18</sup> During its first two years, the opera company was mainly on tour in Viipuri and Turku, performing only occasionally in Helsinki because it had no premises of its own. Settling down in Helsinki meant new challenges and confronting a Swedish-speaking audience.

The Finnish Theatre Company was established with the explicit goal of establishing the Finnish language as a national tongue. On this question there was no schism between Bergbom and the theatre’s Board. The goal was jointly shared, and a particularly welcome project to the figurehead of the Finnish national movement, the historian Professor Yrjö Sakari Yrjö-

<sup>18</sup> The Russian Theatre had a pause while its new building the Alexander’s Theatre was under construction. And opened up again in 1880.

Koskinen. The tensions between Bergbom and the Fennoman movement emerged only later when the opera's budget begun to show a deficit, yet the Fennoman party nevertheless demanded that it continue.<sup>19</sup>

As a young director, Kaarlo Bergbom did not have Josephson's experience when he began to build an opera company. The lyrical department was a result of several coincidences, one being that the two Finnish, professionally educated female singers, Emmy Achté and Ida Basilier, were available. Emmy Achté's sister Sofie Strömer was at that time engaged as choral singer at the New Theatre and was also asked to join the Finnish Opera Company. Bergbom as well as Josephson had to weigh his company's singing skills against its knowledge of the preferred national language, and he had to make several compromises. The tenor was also a difficult issue in Helsinki, even though the demand for a tenor who could command the Finnish language was abandoned at an early stage. The tenor Ludvig Eriksson was recruited from the chorus at the Royal Swedish Theatre,<sup>20</sup> but he knew no Finnish at all. At its premiere (featuring *Lucia di Lammermoor*), the first Finnish opera company consisted of the sisters Emmy and Sofie Strömer and the baritone and orchestra conductor Lorenz Nikolai Achté (1835–1900), Emmy's future husband, together with the Swedish tenor Ludvig Eriksson.

Bergbom also had plans to establish an opera orchestra with Nikolai Achté as its conductor. But for the time being he had to assemble the orchestra from available musicians in each town they visited and engage local conductors. This was obviously a considerable inconvenience as the company had to start from scratch every time with a different orchestra and a different conductor. At this point the chorus consisted of the best singers from the theatre department, which also caused some practical problems, as the theatre and the opera company had to be in the same town at the same time and take turns performing.<sup>21</sup>

The Finnish Theatre Company and especially its opera company went into a new phase when the group finally moved into the Arkadia Theatre building, described as an old wooden barn, cold and with poor acoustics, then in the outskirts of Helsinki.<sup>22</sup> (EAH 1907, pp. 182-185; *Morgonbladet*,

<sup>19</sup> Kaarlo Bergbom's sister Emilie Bergbom, who took care of many practical matters at the theatre, often expressed her concerns about the opera in her letters to Betty Elfving (the Finnish Literature Society, the Literature Archive; hereafter FLS/LA).

<sup>20</sup> The contract book (F8A) at the Archives of the Royal Theatre ( hereafter KTA, *Kungliga teaterarkivet*).

<sup>21</sup> Correspondence between Nikolai Achté and Kaarlo Bergbom, 1873-1874 (FLS/LA).

<sup>22</sup> It was situated close to where the Parliament building is today.

13 May 1874). Helsinki with its Swedish-speaking bourgeoisie audience was a challenge for the Finnish national movement. The 1870s also marked a breakthrough for the Fennoman movement in the capital, a place where the movement could channel some of its cultural ambitions through the opera enterprise. For the Fennomans it was tempting to meet the Swedish elite on their own ground in Helsinki and perform opera in Finnish, which was a sign of the Finnish-speaking population's feeling of belonging to European civilization. It was also very convenient that the Diet was about to meet in the spring of 1877, which meant an opportunity to realise the plans to merge the Finnish Opera Company with the Swedish Theatre Company.

Already in 1876 when the Finnish opera was reaching a high point, there were clear signs of a looming crisis. The political dimensions behind the opera became more and more obvious and put a great deal of pressure on Bergbom. He also had to live up to the demands sparked by the competition with the New Theatre. Like Josephson in Christiania, Bergbom began to take measures among his staff because the opera company appeared to be too small and too vulnerable in the changed situation. Bergbom's intentions were to strengthen the company and secure its abilities, including in the event of illness among the singers. A second aim was to raise the standard of the performances. The tenor Ludvig Eriksson was the first to be replaced because he was often hoarse and indisposed and performances were cancelled because of him. He was replaced by another non-Finnish tenor, Josef Navratil (1840–d. ?) from Austrian Bohemia. In the meantime Emmy Strömer and Niklas Achté had married and were expecting their first child in April of 1876<sup>23</sup>; Emmy Achté's marital status made her unreliable in Bergbom's eyes. She was partly replaced by Ida Basilier, who now came to Helsinki regularly during the second half of the decade (or at least until she married in Christiania in 1878 and her career slowed down).<sup>24</sup> Nikolai Achté was replaced as orchestra conductor by Bohuslav Hřímaly. The Finnish Theatre followed the example of the New Theatre and established an orchestra of its own, giving Helsinki two theatre orchestras, which competed for the few professional musicians in town.

Not all of these changes were well received, especially not by the Achtés, who started a huge quarrel with the Bergbom siblings and resigned in anger. Thereafter, they performed only occasionally as guests at the opera.

<sup>23</sup> Their child was Aino Ackté (1876–1944), who had an international career as an opera singer and was the founder of the Finnish National Opera in 1911.

<sup>24</sup> Naëmi Ingman (1855–1932), Lydia Lagus (1853–1928) and Alma Fohström (1856–1936), all Finnish singers at the beginning of their career, were other occasional guests at the opera.

Emmy Achté was persuaded to return to the company by prominent Fenoman leaders, both in public (a newspaper article by the elderly Johan Wilhelm Snellman) as well as in private (in a letter from Yrjö Sakari Yrjö-Koskinen). One of the New Theatre's Board members, Wilhelm Grefberg, found the means to offer Emmy Achté an engagement with a substantial salary, 20,000 Finnish marks per year, which no doubt was the highest offer ever made for an opera singer in Helsinki.<sup>25</sup>

Not all singers or musicians remained as faithful to the theatre as Emmy Achté who rejected the generous offer from the New Theatre. Some of them were quite interested in seeking employment from the New Theatre in the hope of better salaries and working conditions. In due course Hřímalý also realised that the New Theatre's orchestra was better off than the Finnish Theatre's orchestra, and he took over after its long-standing conductor Nathan B. Emanuel left the country in 1877. Niilo Kiljander, one of the opera singers who had studied in Stockholm's Academy of Music (*Musikakademin*) moved over to the New Theatre at the same time as Hřímalý and changed his name to Nils.<sup>26</sup> The tenor Navratil, who may have been unaware of all the many language disputes, performed at the New Theatre every now and then as needed. (Degerholm's archive, SLS.) Change-overs also happened the other way round; even a "bloody svecoman"<sup>27</sup> like Martin Wegelius jumped to the "other side" when he became the Finnish Theatre's orchestra conductor, succeeding Hřímalý in 1878 (EAH 1907, p. 424).

These thoroughgoing transformations of the company's volume and structure in the late 1870s were a clear step towards a permanent opera institution, although simultaneously, the opera company became more difficult to manage and especially to make profitable. It might also be that the loss of Nikolai Achté, not only as a conductor, but also as a co-director of the rehearsals, began to show. The orchestral conductor Hřímalý was new to his position, and the situation with two orchestras in a small town competing for the few professional musicians was presumably new to him.

<sup>25</sup> As a comparison, the New Theatre later paid Linda Röske-Lund 1,600 Finnish marks a month for four months, a sum comparable to the offer to Emmy Achté. On the other hand, we have only second-hand knowledge of Grefberg's offer to Achté. Emilie Bergbom mentions the sum in a letter to Ida Basilier where she also writes that Grefberg was trying to persuade the choral members of the Finnish Opera Company to join the New Theatre's choir. (Emilie Bergbom to Ida Basilier, 27 September 1876. FLS/LA.)

<sup>26</sup> Kiljander had studied with Julius Günther and Oscar Arnoldson in Stockholm. (Jalava: Muistiinpanoja [Memoranda], FLS/LA.)

<sup>27</sup> The description "blodig svecoman" appears in a letter from Wegelius to Bergbom, January/February 1875. FLS/LA.

Emilie Bergbom, who took care of the practical matters in connection with the rehearsals, also recognised the change from the fairly stable practices of earlier years to the hectic and occasional arrangements with a new and inexperienced company, at least with regard to general routines.

### Opera at the New Theatre, 1871–1880

The New Theatre, built in the centre of Helsinki in 1866, was a manifestation of many dreams – dreams of a luxurious and exclusive structure for the Swedish-speaking bourgeoisie and Finland’s upper class, who could meet in its foyer and in the opera restaurant and discuss politics and other matters of the day. Many scholars (e.g. Habermas 1984 and Sennett 1976) have pointed to the importance of a theatre in constructing and creating a bourgeoisie public space in European urban centres (cf. also Pikkanen 2010). Opera houses became a vital sign of European civilization and education all around Europe during the nineteenth century, where hopes, fantasies and technique merged and were reflected, onstage as well as offstage.

A permanent theatre company with actors from Sweden had begun already in 1867 at the New Theatre with Nikolai Kiseleff as its director. Kiseleff was a skilled amateur musician and opera enthusiast, even though his chief employment was at his family’s sugar refinery. He was also acutely aware of the theatre’s financial limitations, as he had to cover deficits out of his own pocket. Hence, he was careful to balance drama and opera on the stage. For this reason he did not want to expand the number of opera performances at the cost of dramatic plays, as both had to share the same stage at the New Theatre – unlike the Finnish opera company, which had the Arkadia stage to itself. This meant that Bergbom outbid Kiseleff every time the latter tried to hire a domestic singer for the theatre, since Bergbom could always offer the singers more productions, and consequently, a higher salary. Kiseleff did not venture out to assemble a separate opera company; thus, for him, the ideal artist was an actor who could sing or a singer who could act.<sup>28</sup> Kiseleff engaged the theatre’s actors from Stockholm’s various stages, mostly beginners but occasionally more experienced artists. From Stockholm he also acquired plays (in Swedish), scores and librettos.<sup>29</sup> The

<sup>28</sup> Kiseleff’s dilemma can be traced, for example, in the Finnish baritone Bruno Holm’s negotiations with both Kiseleff and Bergbom. Bergbom easily outbid Kiseleff because Bergbom could offer Holm more performances than Kiseleff could (or wanted to). (Holm to Bergbom, 15 March 1876, FLS/LA.)

<sup>29</sup> Kiseleff’s contact in Stockholm was Fredrik Björklund, whose correspondence with

Royal Swedish Theatre was a model for the New Theatre in Helsinki in many respects, reflected not only in the repertoire and the Swedish-Swedish language on the stage, but also in the identity of a bourgeoisie theatre that it wanted to maintain.

As mentioned above, in the history told by the New Theatre itself, the opera department was launched in 1871, when the orchestra conductor Nathan B. Emanuel and the singer and voice teacher Emilie Mechelin were both hired by the theatre.<sup>30</sup> Emanuel had come to Helsinki with an opera company directed by Arlberg in 1870 and was asked to take over the orchestra at the New Theatre after Richard Faltin's retirement. Mechelin also performed operatic roles during the first half of the decade, as Agatha in *Der Freischütz* (*Friskyttten*) and as Lady Durham in *Martha* (Lüchou 1977). During the first half of the decade, the opera section performed a few operas and many operettas, mainly Offenbach. No doubt the New Theatre's reputation for playing only "light" repertoire was established at this time, a reputation often criticised by Wegelius in his writings in the press.<sup>31</sup>

In March 1876 there are clear signs that the New Theatre's Board wanted a more aggressive employment policy by Kiseleff, because they collectively sent a telegram in which where they asked him to hire available domestic singers as soon as possible.<sup>32</sup> The Board suggested that he contact Emma Engdahl (1852–1930), Hortense Synnerberg (1856–1920), a young promising soprano, and the baritone Bruno Holm. Kiseleff reacted to this telegram by immediately resigning from his post as director. The reason for his strong reaction can be found in the earlier discussions and in the fact that he already had tried to hire these singers for the theatre without success, with the exception of Emma Engdahl. Hortense Synnerberg was on her way to Milan for study there (*Huvudstadsbladet*, 2 April 1876), and Bergbom had engaged Bruno Holm.<sup>33</sup> Kiseleff resigned on 12 April 1876, in the middle of preparations for an upcoming important event in the summer,

Kiseleff is found in the Swedish Theatre's archive at the Swedish Literature Society in Finland (hereafter SLS, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland).

<sup>30</sup> Emilie Mechelin (1838–1917) was the sister of future senator Leo Mechelin, and she had been the first teacher for most of the female singers in Finland, including Ida Basilier and Emmy Achté. (Broman-Kananen 2011.)

<sup>31</sup> Wegelius 1919, pp. 113–124.

<sup>32</sup> The original telegram cannot be found in the archives, but its content is related in J.A. Estlander's letter to Kiseleff (26 March 1876, the Swedish Theatre's archive. SLS).

<sup>33</sup> This can be concluded from the above-mentioned letter from Bruno Holm to Bergbom. The date (15 March 1876) on the letter proves that it was Kiseleff who negotiated with Holm and not Ferdinand Wahlberg, who later negotiated on behalf of the five-member Board during the spring.

the Industrial and Arts Exhibition in Helsinki together with an imperial gala performance at the New Theatre for the Russian tsar, Alexander II and his family. A group of five members from the Board took over, with Ferdinand Wahlberg as the first chairman during the summer. Later, Wilhelm Grefberg took over as the director from August 1876. J.A. Estlander described the Board as “a Board of competition” (*en konkurrensens styrelse*) in his letter to Kiseleff; he feared that it would steer the theatre in the wrong direction.<sup>34</sup>

By the middle of the 1870s the New Theatre’s self-appointed position as a national theatre was being questioned by the mere existence of the Finnish Opera Company in the neighbourhood. The Board members of the New Theatre were naturally concerned about the audience and were eager to show their patriotic and national position, although they were not able to change the language of the theatre.<sup>35</sup>

#### Touring artists from Christiania in Helsinki in the summer of 1876: A new operatic era begins at the New Theatre

The Industrial and Arts Exhibition in Helsinki in the summer of 1876 (arranged for the first time in Finland) aroused a great deal of interest, not only among the Finns, but also among visitors from abroad. The foreign press covered the exhibition; for instance, the young Carl Larsson published his drawings from the exhibition in *Ny Illustrerad Tidning* on a regular basis. (Klinge 1997, pp. 269–271.) The exhibition gave Helsinki an opportunity to present itself as a modern and industrialised urban capital, and for a summer the city turned into a tourist attraction and entertainment centre. Both theatres prepared themselves to perform regularly throughout the summer with reinforced troupes. As it happened, the core of the Christiania opera troupe visited both of Helsinki’s stages that summer, although not as a troupe, but as individual performers. The year before, in November 1875, Ida Basilier had been visiting the Christiania opera, and she might have actively advertised the summer events. The first sign of interest in an engagement at the Finnish opera for the upcoming summer is a letter from Ida Basilier to Emilie Bergbom (25 November 1875), mentioning that Fritz Arlberg had expressed a desire to come to Helsinki the following summer. The tenor Julius Saloman had even decided to leave Christiania altogether

<sup>34</sup> Estlander to Kiseleff, “annandag påsk” [Easter Monday] 1876, The Swedish Theatre’s archive/SLS.

<sup>35</sup> The Finland-Swedish language was actually not accepted on the theatre’s stage until the early twentieth century.

and accept an engagement at the New Theatre for the upcoming season. Later, Signe Hebbe also came to the Finnish Opera Company, although she was too late to appear as part of the exhibition.

Fritz Arlberg was the first to arrive, in June; he was to perform at the Finnish Opera Company in *Trovatore* and *Ermani* (besides giving voice lessons to Emma Engdahl during the exhibition. (Kruskopf 1988.) Arlberg sang his roles in Italian, but as a courtesy to the Finnish Opera Company, he had learned to sing the Finale of the third act from *Ermani* in Finnish (EAH 1907, p. 264). Signe Hebbe arrived in Helsinki in September to perform the same roles at the Finnish Opera Company as she had done in Christiania: Margaretha in *Faust*, Violetta in *La Traviata* and Leonore in *Fidelio*. Neither Hebbe nor Arlberg was visiting Helsinki for the first time. Arlberg especially was well known in Helsinki, because nearly every summer he was on tour in Finland – in Viipuri and Turku as well as Helsinki. He normally assembled a company among his colleagues at the Royal Swedish Opera and went abroad. However, he was now appearing in the Finnish Opera Company for the first time as was Signe Hebbe, although she had visited Helsinki and the New Theatre as early as 1870 and Turku in 1863. (Lewenhaupt 1988.)

The Christiania opera's director, Ludvig Josephson, also happened to visit Helsinki during the summer, although mainly as a tourist. The New Theatre's director, Wahlberg, nevertheless saw an opportunity to persuade Josephson to direct the first act from Pacius's *The Princess from Cyprus* at a gala performance. The gala (15 July 1876) was intended to display the ability of the Finnish and New Theatres to cooperate, but it turned out to do quite the reverse; the difficulties culminated only a few days before the gala evening, and the performance was remade and renamed in haste. The Finnish Theatre Company had suggested that the prima donnas Emmy Achté and Ida Basilier would sing arias from *Il Trovatore* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* respectively with full equipment and scenery on stage. The president of the Council and future senator Leo Mechelin acted as mediator between the theatre Boards (as he often did later), but the negotiations broke down because Bergbom apparently did not agree to lower his demands about the equipment on stage.<sup>36</sup> The gala performance was renamed a "festive representation" (*festrepresentation*), and the programme was changed to present one act from Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'amore*, with which Emma Engdahl earlier had had great success. Julius Saloman made his debut at the New Theatre

<sup>36</sup> Mechelin to Bergbom, 11 July and 13 July 1876; FLS/LA.

as Nemorino, a role which he presumably learned in only two days. Josephson's evaluation of the singer's execution of his role was quite negative:

Mrs Engdal [*sic*] as Amina sang weak and too low, and Saloman acted badly and sang clumsily and stupidly. . . Without the guidance of one all, he immediately goes into a strong decline. He is losing ground from one day to the next, and in a year he will be truly bad. He was disliked in Helsinki [<sup>37</sup>], and he said himself that he has improved his tenor, which soon will have only old, worn-out tones left.<sup>38</sup>

Saloman's departure from Christiania may have offended Josephson, so his negative criticism was no doubt coloured by this.

Saloman's engagement introduced a new operatic era at the New Theatre. Engdahl and Saloman formed the core of a new company, while the other singers were recruited from among the actors, for example, the young Swedish actor Algot Lange (1850–1904), who had a good (bass) voice with great potential. This was actually a new beginning for Lange, who found a new career as an opera singer after only two years. He first went abroad to study and later was engaged at the Royal Opera in Stockholm. Eventually, he became one of the leading basses at the Royal Danish Theatre. (Engberg 1995; Shepelern 1995.) Oscar Bentzon-Gyllich (1847–1899) was recruited as a baritone for the company. He had no training as a singer and originally was a telegraphist.<sup>39</sup> After a decade as an opera singer in Helsinki, Stockholm and Christiania, Bentzon-Gyllich returned to his work as telegraphist, now in Viipuri and in the service of the Russians. The actors at the theatre suddenly found themselves in the opera chorus. Because the repertoire during the first season consisted of several French grand operas, they had a lot of learning to do (Degerholm 1903).

<sup>37</sup> It is true that his voice caused astonishment and not always in a positive way. Berndtson in FAT (7 November 1876) did not like his high vocal timbre at all. He compared it to the voice of a shawm (*skallmeja*). Other critics claimed that Saloman did not sing his high notes – *a* and *b* – as they were accustomed to hearing them. He might have had a voice close to a contratenor, because Maria Grape writes in a letter to Charlotta Raa that Saloman sang like a woman: “Saloman has a peculiar tenor more like a female soprano, stiff and impossible in his movements.” (Maria Grape to Charlotta Raa, 19 October 1876, FLS/LA).

<sup>38</sup> “Fru Engdal [*sic*] sjöng som Amina klenst och för lågt och Saloman spelade uselt och sjöng klumpigt och dumt. /--/ Utan ledning i ett och allt är han genast på stark retur. Han skall försämra sig från dag till dag och om ett år vara mycket dålig. Man tyckte illa om honom i Helsingfors, och sjelf sade han att han förbättrar sin tenor, som snart bara har gamla, utsjungna toner kvar” (Ideal och verklighet Vol. XV, p. 159).

<sup>39</sup> He had served both in England and China before arriving in Helsinki.

The opera company was hard to put together and even harder to keep together. Lange and Engdahl were the first to leave. Emma Engdahl left for Milano for the season 1877–1878, and as the result the whole opera company was nearly paralysed. However, it could not have come as a total surprise to Director Grefberg that Engdahl was leaving, because she received a scholarship from the Finnish Senate; already in the spring of 1877, the theatre had arranged a performance for her benefit. The situation was a sign of poor planning because with all the male singers, the engagements were already in place for the upcoming season. But now the male singers became unemployed while still receiving a full salary during the season. No wonder the opera showed a huge deficit that year, which the Board members had to cover. (Degerholm's archive, SLS.)

Grefberg did his best to find a suitable soprano to replace Engdahl, but succeeded only in part. He engaged Linda Röske-Lund, who, after the fire in Christiania, was now free to come to Helsinki. She was well known to Helsinki audiences, who had heard her sing in 1862 when a Swedish opera company lead by Arlberg visited the New Theatre. Linda Röske-Lund sang Leonora in Verdi's *Trovatore*, which was a daring experiment by the New Theatre, as this was a signature opera of the Finnish company, which gave it regularly with either Emmy Achté or Ida Basilier as Leonora. One critic noticed this too and described this opera as boring. Röske-Lund's second role was Lady Durham in Flotow's *Martha*.

### The repertoire at the three operas

The repertoire at the three operas shows many similarities, although there were clear differences. *Der Freischütz* was popular on all three stages as well as *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. *Il Trovatore* was also given at all three theatres, although it seems to have been most popular at the Finnish opera. The competitive relationship between the Finnish and New Theatres can be traced in their choices of repertoire. When an opera appeared on one stage, before long it showed up on the other, with the exception of *Robert le Diable* (Meyerbeer), which was premiered in both theatres during the same week in May of 1877 with somewhat different names, *Robert Paholainen* and *Robert af Normandie* respectively.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> According to Gademan, the reason for translating *Robert le Diable* into Swedish as *Robert af Normandie* was that the Royal Swedish Theatre wanted to avoid "the Devil" in the opera's title (2007, pp. 151-177).

|           | <b>Finnish Opera Company</b>   | <b>The New Theatre</b>  | <b>Christiania Theatre</b>  |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| 1871–1872 |  | Martha  |   |
| 1872–1873 |  | Der Freischütz  |   |
| 1873–1874 | Lucia di Lammermoor<br>Il Trovatore<br>Der Freischütz<br>Fra Diavolo                             |   |   |
| 1874–1875 | Il Barbiere di Siviglia<br>Norma<br>Lucrezia Borgia  | Kung Carls jagt   | Don Giovanni<br>Faust<br>Le nozze di Figaro<br>Norma<br>La Traviata<br>Guillaume Tell<br>Alessandro Stradella   |
| 1875–1876 | Alessandro Stradella<br>Ernani<br>Faust<br>La Fille du régiment<br>Martha                        | La Fille du Régiment<br>L'Elisir d'amore<br>Sonnambula<br>Le nozze di Figaro  | Il Barbiere di Siviglia<br>Les Huguenots<br>Ernani<br>Fidelio<br>Der Freischütz<br>Iphigenia in Aulis<br>Martha |
| 1876–1877 | La Traviata<br>Fidelio<br>Le domino noir<br>Les Huguenots<br>Die Zauberflöte<br>Robert le Diable | The first act from<br>Prinsessan af Cypern<br>Guillaume Tell<br>Die Fledermaus<br>Rigoletto<br>La Muette de Portici<br>Robert le Diable | La Fille du régiment<br>Tannhäuser  |
| 1877–1878 | Zar und Zimmerman<br>La Juive<br>Sonnambula<br>Don Pasquale                                      | Alessandro Stradella<br>La dame blanche<br>Il Trovatore<br>(Martha)   |   |
| 1878–1879 | Linda di Chamounix<br>Roméo et Juliette  | Mignon<br>La Traviata<br>Un ballo in maschera   |   |
| 1879–1880 | Il Barbiere di Siviglia<br>(Le Maçon)<br>(Kung Carls jagt)<br>(La Traviata)                      |   |   |

Figure 2. Premieres at the New Theatre, the Finnish Opera Company and the Christiania Theatre during the three opera episodes.

The greatest difference between Christiania and Helsinki was that the Christiania opera staged Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (or *Sangerkrigen paa Wartburg*) as its name was in Norwegian, (figure 3), which was not performed in the Royal Swedish Opera until two years later, in 1878.<sup>41</sup>

Neither *Iphigenia in Aulis* (in Wagner's revised version of Gluck) nor *Carmen* was staged in Helsinki in the 1870s. But otherwise the repertoire was very similar in all three theatres, which put on the most canonical pieces in the European operatic tradition. Arlberg was known as an ardent advocate of Wagner's music, and it was he who had introduced Wagner to Stockholm audiences for the first time, translating and directing *Rienzi* at the Royal Swedish Opera in 1865. Arlberg also translated and performed in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (as the Dutchman), staged in 1872 in Stockholm. Given Arlberg's huge interest in Wagner, he (and Josephson) may have wanted to show the Royal Swedish Theatre that a small operatic stage with scarce resources (with regard to the orchestra) was more alert to Wagner's music dramas than a big theatre stage with all its resources. *Tannhäuser* had also recently (1875) been performed in Copenhagen with Ahlgrensson's sets, and Josephson also asked him to sketch the decor for the Christiania production, although he never had the time to do so ("Ideal och verklighet").

In Josephson's *Tannhäuser* production of 1876 Arlberg sung Wolfram's role, and Röske-Lund was Elisabeth. Hans Brun had the principal part as Tannhäuser. After the premiere the press observed that Brun had "more quiet emotion than passion in his voice".<sup>42</sup> The performance was a success, largely because the students had decided to organise applause during the premiere. (Eckhof Kindem 1941, p. 46.) The reinforced chorus and orchestra were much appreciated and especially the mise-en-scène with its decorations and costumes. (Qvamme 2004, p. 116.) *Tannhäuser* had its Christiania premiere in November of 1876 shortly before the fire, but it was not the Christiania opera's last performance. Instead, the last performance was *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in December with Ida Basilier as Rosina. After the fire Josephson revealed that he also had plans to stage *Lohengrin* if the opera were allowed to continue. (Qvamme 2004, p. 120.)

<sup>41</sup> However, it was first staged in Stockholm at the Mindre Teatern by a German company in August of 1876, although in a sharply abbreviated version (Gademan 1996, p. 219; Percy 1973, p. 100.) *Tannhäuser* was performed in Helsinki as early as in 1857 by Thomé's company from Riga (Lampila 1997, p. 34).

<sup>42</sup> "mere stille Følelse end Lidenskab i hans Stimme" (Qvamme 2004, p. 116). The Norwegian singers Thorvald Lammers (the Landgrave), Lona Gulowsen (Venus) and Camille Wiese (the shepherd), were also much appreciated.



Figure 3. Poster from the *Tannhäuser* premiere (18 November 1876) in Christiania. (The National Library of Norway.)

The repertoire profiles reveal much about the three operatic episodes, especially the situation in Helsinki during the 1870s. In Christiania seven premieres were given in each of two seasons, indicating that Josephson preferred a certain regularity for his enterprise, as his above-mentioned speech to the Board shows. At the Finnish and the New Theatres in Helsinki, eleven premieres were given during the season 1876–1877 (six and five premieres respectively). Even though the season was prolonged owing to the exhibition in the summer of 1876, eleven premieres means almost one a month throughout the year at either theatre. In addition both theatres gave “old” operas along with or between performances of new ones. This meant hard work for the singers. Julius Saloman must have begun to fear for his voice because the next season there is a clause in his contract that he would not have to sing on consecutive evenings. (STA/SLS.) Both theatres carried out this number of premieres with a minimum of staff, the Finnish Opera Company relying mostly on female guest singers.

Already the previous season (1875–1876) showed signs of an increase (five and four premieres respectively), but after the peak in 1876–1877, there was a clear decline, with a total of only seven premieres. In the spring of 1879 the Finnish Opera Company gave up, but the Swedish company continued for another season and a half (until the autumn of 1880) with two premieres (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *La Traviata*) and three “old” operas, *Kung Carls jagt* (*The Hunt of King Charles*, Pacius), *Le Maçon* (Auber) and *Rigoletto* (Verdi).

In 1876–1877 the New Theatre’s new opera company staged three French grand operas, *Guillaume Tell* (Rossini), *La Muette de Portici* (Auber) and *Robert le Diable*. *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss) and *Rigoletto* (Verdi) were also premiered during the autumn. They were intended to impress the Helsinki audience, but *Die Fledermaus* caused an unwanted surprise. This operetta had its premiere in November of 1876, shortly after the theatre’s success with *Guillaume Tell*. Finnish national-minded students realised that *Läderlappen* could be a weak point in the theatre’s repertoire and an opportunity to make a public statement. Pretending moral indignation, they began to interrupt and whistle during the performance. It all ended in a fight between the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking Finns in the snowbanks outside the theatre. Further performances were cancelled. From the perspective of the season’s competition, as shown by the premieres at both theatres, the *Fledermaus* incident could be interpreted as the young Fennomans’ attempt to cast the New Theatre’s opera department back to its earlier reputation as a producer of a “light” repertoire of morally dubious content, while the

“heavy” and educationally acceptable repertoire was performed at the Finnish Opera Company.

In renewing its repertoire, the New Theatre closely followed the footsteps of the Royal New Theatre. All of the operas staged at the New Theatre were also in the repertoire of the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, even during the same season, and all the material, such as the librettos in Swedish and the piano scores, were directly imported from the Royal Swedish Opera.<sup>43</sup> The scores and the translated librettos were thus easily available and could be re-printed more or less as such in Helsinki.

The theatre’s choice of three French grand operas staged with an inexperienced company during one and the same season is surprising. There could be several explanations for this: a) the grand operas might have been a practical solution; the company had many male voices, but only one (rather weak) female singer; b) another reason could have been that the grand operas offered the theatre an opportunity to show off its staging resources, the ones so envied by the Finnish Theatre and Bergbom (see Paavolainen’s chapter in this book). The grand operas certainly offered the theatre a chance to use the possibilities of the stage in full, something noted in the press, which reported on newly bought wings, electric lights (for the moon light in *Robert*) and fairly advanced stage machinery. The staging even included at least parts of ballets, which as a rule were excluded from performances by the Finnish Opera Company. Moreover, these operas relied on a good orchestra more than less grandiose works; the theatre’s orchestra company (*orkesterbolag*) was quite acceptable with 21 musicians and more when needed (although the orchestra still must have been undermanned in relation to what it should have been); c) French grand operas also have a political dimension and thus might have been well suited for the national statement the theatre wanted to make. For example, *La Muette*’s reputation as “revolutionary” in both a compositional and a political sense was well known in Helsinki, as far as one can judge from the press comments.<sup>44</sup> It also suited the Svecomans (the Swedish-minded Swedish liberals) that the people (in the chorus) on stage sang in Swedish. Yet it is perhaps not

<sup>43</sup> The librettos were published for the Helsinki audience with only minor revisions, made necessary because of the cuts in the productions at the New Theatre. Seven of these librettos have been bound into a single volume, located in the Fennica collection, (kansalliskokoelma Fennica), in the National Library of Finland. The Swedish theatre’s archive also preserves printed scores of *La Muette* and *Rigoletto*, on which the label “Royal Swedish Theatre” can be seen on the opening pages. Linda Röske-Lund’s score of *Il Trovatore* is also preserved in the archive, with the texts (of Leonora’s part) written between the lines in Norwegian and in Swedish. (STA/SLS.)

<sup>44</sup> Berndtson in FAT 7 November 1878.

surprising that at this same time, the Finnish Opera Company staged Meyerbeer's *Les Huguénots* and Halevy's *La Juive*, in both of which a religious conflict divides the people.

During the following season, 1877-1878, the number of premieres had decreased alarmingly at both Helsinki theatres, with only four at the Finnish Opera Company and three at the New Theatre. The meetings of the Diet were over, the discussions about the merger were stranded, and the Finnish Theatre Company's offer to rent the New Theatre for the next five years had been turned down. However, this was not the immediate reason behind the decline in the premieres for the upcoming season, at least not at the New Theatre. Rather it was because the company had been reduced; Engdahl and Lange had left and were never entirely replaced. Nevertheless, *Alessandro Stradella* was staged, Saloman's debut role from earlier days. The grand operas *Guillaume Tell*, *La Muette* and *Rigoletto* were repeated but without Engdahl and Lange. Parts from *Guillaume Tell* were also given with Conrad Behrens as guest performer in Tell's role. Behrens had recently been on tour in Christiania in the autumn of 1877 together with Zelia Trebelli, and they both visited Helsinki in the autumn and gave concerts.

### The end of the episodes

After only one and a half seasons of intense operatic production the actors at the New Theatre staged a "palace revolution" (Degerholm 1903, p. 14), which resulted in Director Grefberg leaving his position. The Board once again was re-organised, and the engineer John Stenberg took over the position as administrative director of the opera (Degerholm's archive, SLS). For some time the actors had been dissatisfied with developments at the theatre. The members of the Board who had resigned together with Kiseleff expressed their opinions in the press against the opera business at the theatre, among them the writer and critic Rafael Hertzberg, who hoped that the opera's "destructive sway" (*fördärliga välde*) was well and truly over (*Finsk Tidskrift*, 1 January 1878).

From the theatre's financial accounts (Degerholm's archive, SLS), it can be concluded that the theatre suffered a huge deficit from the disastrous season of 1877-1878 by not having regular opera performances. In addition the state funding was withdrawn, at least for a while, in order to speed up the decision about the proposed merger. It now became obvious that the Helsinki bourgeoisie really cared about its theatre. Board member Wahlberg was married to a daughter of Nikolai Sinebrychoff, the Russian mer-

chant who had made a fortune in Helsinki as a brewer. His money was now needed to cover the opera's financial losses.<sup>45</sup> Sinebrychoff's fortune was also needed for another reason. The theatre company's five-year contract with the Theatre House Company expired in the spring, and a new company was about to be hired. The Finnish Theatre Company also made an offer, which actually was lower than the Swedish Theatre's. Eventually, Wahlberg and his father-in-law, Sinebrychoff, offered to pay what was needed for the Swedish Theatre company to become re-elected as the regular company of the theatre (*Keski-Suomi* 28 April 1877), and so the Finnish Theatre Company's offer was rejected.

After Grefberg's resignation Kiseleff was asked to return, to which he agreed. As usual, he paid his own share of the deficit caused by the opera. Once again he wrote down his demands on paper, and the new Board (to which his old friends Berndtson and Herzberg had returned) accepted.

It can be argued that the theatre Boards had taken over the planning of the operas at both houses in Helsinki, at least partly, and with disastrous results. At the New Theatre the artistic planning of operas was practically non-existent, as the five-member group consisted of physicians or merchants and knew little or nothing about how and when to engage new opera singers. The theatre director Albert Åhman (Wilhelm Åhman's brother, who came to Helsinki with the Åhman-Pousette company in the 1860s) was apparently not a very forceful theatre director either, at least not according to Josephson ("Ideal och verklighet"). The Board's political conviction, however, was very clear; as one newspaper pointed out, all of the members of the New Theatre Board were former editors of the Swedish-minded newspaper *Vikingen* (*The Viking*) (*Keski-Suomi* 28 April 1877).

At the Finnish Opera Company Bergbom could hold out against the Party's political influence artistically, which probably resulted in opera productions of better quality, but he could not control the audience, which now took sides in the language struggle. There was obviously no clear decision taken to end the operatic production at either theatre. At the Finnish Opera Company the performances just stopped during the spring of 1879, and at the New Theatre the opera production slowed down noticeably when Kiseleff returned in 1878. The productions now centred around Emma Engdahl, who returned from her studies abroad. Curiously, when the competition with the Finnish Opera Company was over, the production of operas at the New Theatre ended too. In 1880 the Russian Theatre inaugurated its the

<sup>45</sup>Degerholm's financial statistics show that many other Board members also participated in covering the deficit, in the amount of ca 100,000 Finnish marks. (SLS/STA)

newly built Alexander Theatre with a newly established Italian opera company, which began staging exactly the same repertoire as the Finnish and New Theatres had programmed earlier (Byckling 2009).

Many of the now-unemployed artists travelled from Helsinki to Stockholm and were later found in productions at the Royal Swedish Opera. Lange had made his debut in Stockholm in 1878 as Lothario in *Mignon*. He made a short visit back to Helsinki to sing the same role in the New Theatre and also starred with Emma Engdahl in *Mignon* in the autumn of 1878. Lange stayed in Stockholm until 1883, after which he was engaged by the Royal Danish Opera. In his later years he worked as a voice teacher and was a frequent critic of Arlberg's voice method.

As mentioned, the Christiania Theatre burnt down in January of 1877, and the opera never recovered, although the theatre went on performing in another building. Josephson's attempt to establish a permanent opera in Christiania was over after only two and a half seasons. After the fire the theatre Board required the opera singers to lower their salaries or the opera would close down. Arlberg declared that the fire had not affected his voice, and so he had no reason to agree to this. The rest of the company followed his example and refused to lower their salaries. Josephson's condition for staying in Christiania was that the opera should continue. When this ultimatum did not succeed, he resigned and returned to Stockholm.<sup>46</sup>

Thereafter, the Christiania Opera went into an irregular phase with visits by opera companies from Sweden and Italy and occasional attempts to establish some permanency. One of the more interesting efforts occurred in the early 1880s when Olefine Moe returned to Christiania together with her friend, the Swedish author and critic Mathilda (Mattis) Lundström, and established an "opera for all" or a folk opera. They even staged a successful *Lohengrin* in 1885, one of their last productions (Qvamme 2004, p. 170). And once again Ida Basilier (now Basilier-Magelson and officially a Nor-

<sup>46</sup> Or to be specific he went to Italy, from where he persuaded Arlberg to become his partner in creating a new theatre and opera company, which would tour Uppsala, Gothenburg, Christianstad, Christiania, Helsinki and Stockholm. Another alternative was to open a theatre and opera school in Stockholm, which would also perform on a regular basis. (Josephson to Arlberg, 26 June 1877, SNL). Arlberg did not agree to either plan, because of the financial risks involved. However, he declared himself willing to perform at a future theatre when needed (Arlberg to Josephson, 28 October 1877, SNL). It is also interesting that Josephson mentions in a letter in June of 1877 that he had read in the newspaper that Arlberg was to become the Finnish Opera Company's director in Helsinki. These rumours also circulated in Helsinki, although Emilie Bergbom seems to have been as surprised as everyone else on hearing about them (Emilie Bergbom to Kaarlo Bergbom, 7 November 1877, FLS/LA).

wegian) appeared in her favourite role as Rosina (Qvamme 2004, p. 162.) Benzon-Gyllich apparently became one of the leading forces in the Mattis and Moe troupe. For example, he sang Count Luna's role in *Il Trovatore*. His career as an opera singer seems to have come to an abrupt end, because the sources laconically state that Benzon-Gyllich suddenly had to be replaced right before a performance of *La Traviata* because he was ordered to leave town by the police. (Eckhoff Kindem 1941, pp. 59-60.)

### Opera as politics

Was it a coincidence that these three opera episodes became embedded in an ongoing and intense nation-building project in each country? If not, how did the opera companies participate in the construction of the nation? The questions posed in the introduction to this chapter were especially concerned with the position of language at all three opera companies, as well as with the practical consequences of this position in the daily life of each house. In light of the discussion above, it seems clear that the choice of language in each opera company was the most noticeable political act of the three opera histories studied in this chapter. The choice of a particular language for operatic performance became radical and meaningful when it differed from the audience's language and when that language was not yet widely established in the capitals (as was the case with Helsinki and Christiania). The language promoted by each national movement was to be refined and civilised with the help of a modern and truly European art form, the opera. This was especially in the interest of the Boards of each theatre, which consequently pushed the nation-building project to the foreground of all three opera enterprises. This was also the case at the New Theatre in Helsinki where the language of the performers (with the exception of Engdahl) was Swedish-Swedish and not Finnish-Swedish. Of course, in this case there were no problems of understanding the language, but ideologically, Swedish-Swedish was a reminder of the cultural heritage of the Svecomans (*svekomaner*) and of the oppression of the Fennomans.

Despite the similarities among the three episodes, especially with regard to the prominent role of language in each opera company, there were also significant differences. A clear line divides the opera companies into two categories, with the Finnish Opera Company and the Christiania Theatre on the one hand and the New Theatre on the other hand. The feature shared by the Finnish and Christiania Operas was related to the means with which a new language was both constructed and "taught" to the audi-

ence. The purpose of the operatic language was thus actively to *create* a certain audience, and by extension, a public space, which was favourable to the political message imparted by a certain linguistic choice. By contrast, the New Theatre had to defend its position as a national theatre, which had seemed to be self-evident until the Finnish Theatre appeared to challenge it. There is also another detail which separates the New Theatre's opera company from the other two, namely, that the administrative and the stage director were two separate individuals. This was not the case at the Finnish Opera Company or the Christiania Theatre where the director both ran the opera and was in charge of the artistic result. In Christiania, Josephson forcefully functioned as a shield between the Board and his staff and was not prepared to relax his standards of professionalism.

Curiously, the outcome was more or less the same at both the Swedish and Christiania Theatres, where the actors revolted and demanded that a stop be put to the opera productions. In Christiania the Board took advantage of the fire to "degrade" the opera singers and put them on a more equal footing with the actors, at least with regard to their salaries, if not with regard to their popularity with audiences. This was a clear turning point in Norwegian operatic history, and the Board made a clear choice between a vernacular theatre and opera sung by "Swedish foreigners" to the benefit of the former. Yet the consequences for vernacular theatre ultimately lost out: For more than two decades, Christiania was regularly "invaded" by Swedish opera companies.

However, the dividing line could also be drawn differently, with each opera company placed in a category of its own. All three companies sought to establish a clear, recognisable identity where not only the language, but also the repertoire and the professionalism of the performers and the performances were the distinguishing characteristics. The best option for all three opera companies was when these demands coincided, for example, with a musically educated native singer who had already mastered suitable roles. Hence, Emmy Achté and Ida Basilier were highly valued on the operatic market in Helsinki, as both were born in Finland and educated as professional singers. They also complemented each other with their different voice types.<sup>47</sup> Emma Engdahl at the New Theatre got her voice education slightly too late to compete with these two singers on a fully equal basis. However, it seems that the policy at all three theatres was to choose a foreign, professional singer over a home-grown, less talented

<sup>47</sup> Emmy Achté's voice was lower and more dramatic than Ida Basilier's voice, which was a high coloratura.

singer, no matter how much criticism arose. This was especially clear at the Christiania Opera, where Josephson (together with Arlberg) worked very hard to create a professional company. The operatic *Norden* appeared to the professional and touring artists an open marketplace without any borders, not even linguistic ones. This contradicted goals of the individual theatres, which aspired to positions as national theatres. From a nation-building perspective the Swedish-Swedish opera singers represented the “foreigners” who colonised the culture of both capitals, Helsinki and Christiania. Nevertheless, at the Finnish Opera Company this was not a hindrance to having Swedish guests perform in operas as long as they sang in a language other than Swedish.

The most obvious differences in the repertoires among the three opera companies resulted from the availability of singers. At the Finnish Opera Company lyrical operas with prima donna roles were staged more often than in the New Theatre, which mainly focused on “male” operas, the French grand operas, at least as long as Emma Engdahl was a novice or abroad. When she later returned and Saloman left (in 1878), the situation changed, and operas that depended heavily on female principal roles, such as *Mignon* and *La Traviata*, were given in Helsinki. The Finnish and New Theatres also competed by performing each other’s signature works, which means that *Il Trovatore* was given at the New Theatre and *Martha* was given at the Finnish Opera Company. *Il Trovatore* was the first (complete) opera ever staged in Finnish (in 1870), and it was given often at the Finnish Opera Company. Thus, when the New Theatre included it in their repertoire (perhaps at the suggestion of Linda Röske-Lund), the audience only reluctantly warmed to it.

For all three opera companies a vernacular opera repertoire was still only a dream. Most of the operas given were translations with a few exceptions: *Kung Carls jagt (The Hunt of King Charles)* by Fredrik Pacius with libretto by Zacharias Topelius (in Swedish) was staged twice at the New Theatre during this period (in 1875 and in 1880). Bergbom wanted to translate the text into Finnish for the Finnish Opera’s premiere in November 1873, but it appears that Pacius never gave his permission for a translation, although Topelius did.<sup>48</sup> It is thus understandable that the New Theatre opened with this opera as soon as the Finnish Opera Company had settled down in the

<sup>48</sup> Correspondence between Kiseleff and Pacius (STA/SLS). The opera was not translated into Finnish until 1905. The translation was by Jalmari Finne, who also staged the opera in Viipuri (Vainio 2009, p. 272).

Arkadia Theatre in 1875. This can also be regarded as a prelude to the competition between the two theatres.

In Christiania Josephson took pride in introducing the dramas of Norwegian authors Henrik Ibsen and Bjørn Bjørnson to Norwegian audiences. One of his greatest successes was *Peer Gynt*, a dramatic poem created by Ibsen with music by Edvard Grieg. It was performed 25 times with extraordinary stage sets until the fire put an end to the performances. (Blanc 1899.) The popular Norwegian Singspiel *Fjeldeventyret* (The Mountain Adventure) composed by Waldemar Thrane in 1824 held little interest for Josephson; it was given only twice during his directorship. Later, when Finnish and Norwegian were established in the capitals, the theatres took over the opera's task of building a national repertoire, which then began to grow rapidly.

In conclusion, the integration of opera into nation-building projects helped the institutionalisation of all three opera companies, but only for a while. In a period rife with various political agendas opera aroused emotions and heated debates in both capitals, debates, which, to a lesser degree, concerned the artistic value of the operatic performances, although this was discussed too. From within the theatres a conflict between the drama and the opera sections eroded the unity of the theatres, while the politically-orientated press made verbal attacks on "foreigners" at their national opera companies. The visibility of the opera companies and their splendour attracted the bourgeoisie and the nobility to their performances, in other words, audiences that politically formed the most influential parts of society. Paradoxically, in Helsinki, the conflict between the two opera companies escalated with the petition to the Diet for a merger of them.

Paavolainen in this volume argues that it was the competition between the two opera companies in Helsinki that brought about their demise. This claim may well be true, but it should also be noted that the Russian Theatre inaugurated its new building, the Alexandre Theatre, an opera company situated at the opposite end of the same boulevard on which the New Theatre sits. The Alexandre Theatre was a project dear to the heart of Count Nikolai Adlerberg, the Governor-General of Finland (1866–1881), and he often compared the building to the New Theatre in outer appearance, stage facilities and foyer, even at the planning stage. (Byckling 2009). It was certainly no coincidence that the theatre opened with the performance of an opera. Adlerberg was very serious about the need for opera at the Russian Theatre. He went directly to Tsar Alexander II with his plans and applications for funding. He engaged opera singers from the Moscow Opera and the Italian Opera in St Petersburg, as well as singers for the chorus. Adler-

berg first organised the opera performances in relation to the New Theatre so that he could engage the New Theatre's orchestra with Hřimalý as its conductor (at this point the orchestras of the Finnish and New Theatres had merged into one large ensemble). Later the New Theatre orchestra was completely overtaken by the Russian Theatre.

The Russian Theatre's opera company performed in Italy, but this was not a problem, because it now staged the same operas as had been heard at the Finnish and the New Theatres' stages earlier: *Faust* at the premiere and then *Lucretia Borgia*, *Rigoletto*, *Un Ballo in maschera*, *La Traviata* and so on. (Byckling 2009, pp. 107–111.) The rumours about Adlerberg's operatic passion must have reached the ears of the directors at both the Finnish and New Theatres, and the threat of a third competitor about the Helsinki audience was probably one more reason for closing down the operas. The Italian-Russian company was a very good company (with professional chorus members and a ballet), and the Russian Theatre's aim was probably to overwhelm the Helsinki audience with highly skilled performances and also attract the Swedish-speaking upper class to the theatre. The Russian Theatre's strategy was to offer artistically advanced performances, and once again, the language did not matter as much when the operas were well known and the performers excellent. The Russian Theatre came to the market as a third party and did so forcefully, with the purpose of having its own share, run by professionals and financed by the tsar. Two opera companies were already too much for Helsinki, but three were impossible to support. The discussions of merging the Finnish and Swedish opera companies continued for a while, but became weaker and weaker until such talk died out altogether. It was only in the twentieth century, with the dynamic combination of new personalities, Aino Ackté and Edvaard Fazer, that a permanent opera company was founded in Helsinki in the year 1911. And as for Oslo, Kirsten Flagstad became the first Director of a national opera in 1957.

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## Summary

In this chapter I explore how the language of opera dominated and defined three opera houses in as many episodes: the Finnish and Swedish Theatres in Helsinki, Finland, and the Christiania Theatre in Christiania (Oslo), Norway. Despite the similarities among the episodes (which occasionally even included the same performers), there were also significant differences. A clear line divides the episodes into two categories: those of the Finnish and Christiania Theatres on the one hand and that of the New (Swedish) Theatre on the other. The feature shared by the Finnish and Christiania Theatres was related to the means by which a new language was both constructed and “taught” to the audience. The purpose behind the choice of operatic language was to *create* a certain audience, and by extension a public space, for political reasons. By contrast, the New Theatre had to defend its position as a national theatre, which had seemed self-evident until challenged by the Finnish Theatre. The dividing line could also be drawn differently, however, with each opera company placed in a category of its own. All three companies sought to establish a clear, recognisable identity whereby not only language, but also the professionalism of the performers and performances were the distinguishing characteristics. In this respect, the New Theatre’s affiliation with the Royal Swedish Theatre (and other theatres in Stockholm) is revealing on many levels, beginning with an exchange of material resources (scores and librettos), knowledge of the operatic repertoire and performers.



# Performances



# The Introduction of Richard Wagner's Music Dramas in Stockholm

The Reception of *Die Meistersinger* and *Die Walküre*

Joakim Tillman

There were several phases in the Swedish reception of Richard Wagner's works. The first period was roughly between 1857 and 1884 (described in Percy 1936, Gademan 1996 and Salmi 2005). It began with concert performances of the *Tannhäuser* overture, and continued with the introduction of Wagner's operas at the Royal Swedish Opera: *Rienzi* (1865), *Der fliegende Holländer* (1872) *Lohengrin* (1874), and *Tannhäuser* (in 1876 as a special performance at Mindre Teatern [the Smaller Theatre], and in 1878 at the Royal Swedish Opera). The second period began in 1884 with a performance of Andreas Hallén's (1846-1925) *Harald der Wiking* (at the Royal Swedish Opera, translated into Swedish as *Harald Viking*), the first Swedish opera more substantially influenced by Wagner. This work paved the way for Wagner's music dramas in Stockholm: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1887), *Die Walküre* (1895), *Das Rheingold* (1901), *Siegfried* (1905), *Götterdämmerung* (1907) and *Tristan und Isolde* (1910). *Parsifal* was introduced in

1917, a couple of years after the copyright protection had expired, making the work available for theatres other than the Bayreuth Festival Theatre (Festspielhaus).

Wagner's operas were heavily criticised, and according to Gademan (1996, p. 63), his most negative critic, Wilhelm Bauck (1808-77), carried on what almost amounted to a persecution campaign. Despite this critical opposition however, *Lohengrin* immediately became a favourite with the audience, and was firmly established in the repertoire: by 1899/1900 it had been performed 124 times. After a somewhat slower start, *Tannhäuser* gradually became more highly appreciated (81 performances by 1899/1900). The *Holländer*, though, did not achieve the same level of popularity (44 performances by 1899/1900, 31 of which took place in 1898/99 and 1899/1900).<sup>1</sup> After Bauck's death in 1877 the critical diatribe against Wagner's operas quickly disappeared. However, it was not until 1887 that one of his music dramas,<sup>2</sup> *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (abbr. *Die Meistersinger* in the rest of the article), was introduced in Stockholm. Apparently there was some resistance to his later works at the Royal Swedish Opera (see Hedberg 1885, p. 210), and also widespread scepticism towards the music dramas among music critics in Stockholm.

The aim in this article is to study the beginning of the above-mentioned second period in the Swedish reception of Wagner through an investigation of the critical reaction to the first Swedish performances of *Die Meistersinger* in 1887 and *Die Walküre* in 1895.<sup>3</sup>

## Adolf Lindgren and Wagnerism

After the death of Wilhelm Bauck, Adolf Lindgren (1846-1905) became the most influential music critic in the Stockholm press. During his long career he wrote a large number of books, articles and reviews about Wagner's works and ideas, and he also reviewed the rapidly growing literature on the composer. His most important and influential study is *Om Wagnerismen* [On Wagnerism] (1881)<sup>4</sup> in which he expresses a positive attitude towards Wagner's operas:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of one performance in 1885/86, *Rienzi* disappeared after 1870/71.

<sup>2</sup> Despite Wagner's objections, the expression "music drama" has become the established genre designation for his works from *Das Rheingold* to *Parsifal*.

<sup>3</sup> The investigation is based on all the reviews listed in *Svenskt Pressregister* 1969 (*Die Meistersinger*) and 1985 (*Die Walküre*).

<sup>4</sup> Lindgren used the word "Wagnerism" to designate Wagner's aesthetic ideas, not the cultural movement.

I am able to enjoy *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*, for example, almost without reservation, because already as operas in the usual sense these works are already among the best of the century. (Lindgren 1881, p. 50)

Lindgren claims that Wagner had introduced justifiable innovations in those works, “yet without breaking apart the musical form” and developing his theories ad absurdum. *Om Wagnerismen* begins with a short résumé of Wagner's *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, and continues with a very thorough and generally accurate summary of the main ideas in *Oper und Drama* (pp. 10-23). Lindgren's conclusion is that these leading ideas constituted “a strange mixture of sensible opinions and misunderstandings with divine flashes of genius” (p. 23). He continues with a predominantly polemic evaluation of *Oper und Drama*, taking some of the objections from Eduard Hanslick. It is not possible to give an account of all his criticisms in this article. The focus is therefore on the topics that were influential later on in the Swedish reception of *Die Meistersinger* and *Die Walküre*, most of which centred around a group of terms that played a decisive role in the reception of Wagner's works from an early stage: ‘infinite melody’, ‘leitmotif’, ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ and ‘music drama’. As Carl Dahlhaus (Deathridge and Dahlhaus 1984, p. 111) points out, “it is hard to decide whether the assistance they gave in promoting understanding of the works was greater or less than the harm they did through oversimplification and trivialization.”<sup>6</sup>

### Infinite melody

According to Lindgren, Wagner's music dramas lacked a healthy and satisfactory periodic melody. Infinite melody raged like a storm in *Tristan*, *Die Meistersinger* and the *Ring*, “running riot, suppressing almost all musical form, all unity, all ordered clarity, all posture” (p. 39). He goes on to quote Hanslick, claiming that infinite melody could not be better described than in these words:

Anxiously omitting every conclusive cadence, this boneless tonal mollusk floats on toward the immeasurable, renewing itself from its own substance. Fearing the ordinariness of natural perfect cadences or half cadences, Wagner turns to another, but not better pedantry; he becomes

<sup>5</sup> Lindgren is not consistent in his use of terminology, and sometimes designates the later works as operas and the earlier ones as music dramas.

<sup>6</sup> For critical discussions on the history, use, and possible meanings of these terms, see Carl Dahlhaus 1984, pp. 111-118, and Thomas S. Grey 1995.

monotonous exactly because he regularly, every time the ear expects a concluding triad, presents a dissonant chord.<sup>7</sup>

According to Lindgren, Wagner overlooked the fact that the listener needs orientation marks in order to comprise and measure a long distance, “for the same reasons that a wanderer needs breathers on a long road.” If Wagner had been consistent, the text in his “tendency music” would have been a “recitation through each act without full stops, commas, or other punctuation marks – possibly a question mark here and there.”

### A mix-up of the vocal and the instrumental

Lindgren’s opinion was that Wagner turned the correct relationship between singer and orchestra upside-down:

The true, singable melody – which W erroneously claims to be instrumental, because song is older than instrumental music – is as a rule placed in the orchestra (in the leitmotifs), while on the other hand the singing part often moves in progressions that are anything but natural for the human voice. (p. 41)

According to Lindgren, proof of Wagner’s distortion of the vocal parts lay in the fact that they were shown to have a detrimental effect on the voices of singers, who had sacrificed the beauty of their voices “on the altar of the music of the future.” However, his main objection concerned the aesthetic aspect:

It is said that Grétry, neglecting the importance of Mozart, once stated that ‘Cimarosa put the bust on the stage and the pedestal in the orchestra, but Mozart did the opposite.’ One asks oneself what Grétry might have said about Wagner’s declamation. Here the singers are not even ‘pedestals’ for the music, but only supplementary parts in the ‘infinite’ symphony, they are ventriloquists, whose true utterances are heard from another direction, helpless figures in a shadow play, who are not allowed or able to express their feelings, but have to leave this to the orchestra. (p. 41)

In Lindgren’s view, this was the main cause of the lack of musical individuality that characterised the figures in Wagner’s later dramas. He found it

<sup>7</sup> Lindgren does not give the source. It is from Hanslick’s review of the *Die Meistersinger* premiere in 1868.

difficult to understand how an artist with Wagner's keen eye for stagecraft could make such a mistake.

### Leitmotif

Lindgren was not against the use of leitmotifs per se. He claimed that they were an important musical tool for evoking premonitions and memories, for making a threatening destiny concrete, for repeating a memento. However, they should not be used as the only means of characterising figures "whereby they – as Emil Naumann correctly points out – appear similar to the signs that hang from the mouths of people in naive medieval paintings." Furthermore, he felt that over-abundant repetition of the leitmotifs made one suspect a lack of musical creativity, a suspicion that grew stronger with each new work Wagner created. It was through the Wagner epigones, however, that the danger of fabricating music dramas from a false system had become apparent. Above all, leitmotifs become good for nothing when they are stacked together in large quantities and with such far-fetched connotations that a special book has to be published in order to explain them, which was the case with Wolzogen's Leitfaden.

According to Lindgren, Wagner applied his theories most consistently in *Tristan*, although in *Die Meistersinger* and the *Ring* he had "to some small extent returned to a more traditional melodic style" (p. 50). Lindgren uses statistics on Wagner stagings in larger German and Austrian cities in the autumn of 1878 to prove that the earlier works (*Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*) were the most popular, and that the decrease in popularity of his later works correlated with the extent to which Wagner applied his theories. Thus, Lindgren's conclusion is: "the popularity of Wagner's operas is inversely related to their Wagnerism" (p. 52).

### Andreas Hallén and *Harald Viking*

The Stockholm audience gained its first impressions of Wagner's later musico-dramatic style not through one of Wagner's own works but through the Swedish composer Andreas Hallén's *Harald Viking*.<sup>8</sup> This work is generally considered the first Swedish opera written under the influence of Wagner.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> It is worth pointing out that *Harald Viking* was not a regional Swedish venture. The German librettist Hans Herrig knew Wagner and Cosima personally. Hallén later

The reaction to *Harald Viking* showed the influential role of the critic's knowledge and horizons of expectations in the reception of a new work. The critic writing in *Post och Inrikes Tidningar* (19/2 1884) claimed that Hallén had gone further than Wagner in breaking with traditional opera. Another reviewer (StD 21/2 1884), who pointed out that he had seen the *Ring*, expressed the opposite view, suggesting that Hallén had not yet reached the later Wagner of the music dramas. The truth lay somewhere in-between. The alliterative verse is constructed in the style of the *Ring*, and so is Hallén's setting of it. The result is musical prose, and as in Wagner's music dramas the orchestral network of recurring leitmotifs provides continuity. However, there are also periodic sections in which the leitmotifs are assigned a purely dramatic function.

### The reception of *Die Meistersinger*

After the first Swedish performance of *Die Meistersinger* on 2 April 1887 no critic completely dismissed Wagner and his work in the same way as Bauck had done in the previous decades. Of the eight reviews examined in this article four are mainly negative (AB, NDA, PIT, StD), even if they point out some merits, and four are mainly positive (DN, GHT, Svd, VL).<sup>10</sup>

With the exception of Adolf Lindgren's in *Aftonbladet*, the negative reviews are not signed. On the other hand, three of the positive reviews are signed: Fredrik Vult von Steijern (1851-1919) in *Dagens Nyheter* (signed G-t), Karl Valentin (1853-1918) in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* (K. Valentin), and Andreas Hallén (the composer of *Harald Viking*) in *Vårt Land* (signed A.H.). Thus, the authors of three of the positive reviews were Wagnerians who had acquired abundant knowledge of his works during studies and travels on the European continent.<sup>11</sup> Praising the Swedish performance and writing in *Svenska Dagbladet*, the fourth positive critic points out that although he had not seen Wagner's operas on the German stage, he dared

boasted that he had also met Wagner, but there is no evidence to confirm this claim. However, he did meet Liszt, who praised *Harald der Wiking*. The work was premiered by the Leipzig opera in 1881, staged by Angelo Neumann and conducted by Artur Nikisch.

<sup>9</sup> Tegen 1960 and Knust 2011 are the two most detailed studies of the work and its creation. My forthcoming study about Wagner's influence on Hallén gives a more thorough examination of this aspect.

<sup>10</sup> In most of the papers the reviews were published in three installments: an introduction before the premiere, and two articles after the premiere that evaluated the work, the staging and the performance.

to suggest that the Germans “cannot surpass the Swedish staging” (SvD 4/4 1887).

One issue not mentioned in the reviews was Wagner's anti-Semitism and the possibly anti-Semitic content of *Die Meistersinger*. Without doubt the critics were aware of this aspect of Wagner's world-view. Lindgren mentions his “well-known hatred of the Jews” in *Om Wagnerismen*, and refers to *Das Judenthum in der Musik* (1881, p. 62). However, he was of the opinion that this was a personal obsession of Wagner rather than a characteristic trait of Wagnerism. Thus, he was an early advocate of the notion that Wagner's anti-Semitism is not to be found in his works.

### The negative reactions

Adolf Lindgren admitted in his review (AB 9/4 1887) that *Die Meistersinger* was one of Wagner's best texts, and if the musical inspiration had equalled the poetic achievement the opera in its entirety would have been among his most enjoyable. Unfortunately, his tendentious application of his musico-dramatic doctrine had intensified to the same extent as his musical creativity had faded. As a result, one of Wagner's faults was more prominent in *Die Meistersinger* than in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*: “his ponderous depiction of details, which often blocks the big picture and has a tiresome, dry and monotonous effect.”

Lindgren repeats much of the criticism he had formulated in *Om Wagnerismen*, and again turns against infinite melody and the leitmotif technique:

Wagner claims to have created a new art form, ‘the music drama’, but it is nothing more than a blown-up photograph of the sounds of spoken language, with fixed pitches and intervals, mixed with some arioso passages and surrounded by orchestral leitmotifs that appear on command as soon as the objects they designate are mentioned, imagined or even scented from a rather far-fetched distance. Consequently, the symbolic play and change of the leitmotifs become a polite little mental game that attracts the most strained interpretations, on which Wagnerians have since written volumes.

However, Lindgren continues, “is it reasonable to assume that people [folket] will find it psychologically or even physiologically possible to understand and enjoy an ‘infinite melody’ consisting of unmelodic, dry declama-

<sup>11</sup> See Salmi 2005, pp. 197-203 for an account of Vult von Steijern's relationship with Wagner's music, Bayreuth and the Wahnfried circle.

tory phrases, the cerebrally forced use of symbolic leitmotifs, and a very complicated orchestral texture?”

Lindgren claims in *Om Wagnerismen* that Wagner did not apply his theories as consistently in *Die Meistersinger* as in *Tristan*, but “to some small extent returned to a more traditional melodic style.” Therefore, if *Die Meistersinger* were ever to gain any popularity, he argued, it would be because of the passages that were not tendentiously Wagnerian, but melodically striking in the traditional sense. Among these passages were the overture, the chorale, Walther’s three songs, Sach’s Flieder monologue and cobbling song, Beckmesser’s serenade, David’s song about St John, and finally all the ensembles including the beautiful quintet and the exciting finales.

The other negative critics shared Lindgren’s views in many respects. Like him, the reviewer writing in *Stockholms Dagblad* (31/3 1887) was of the opinion that Wagner had not applied his ideas as radically in *Die Meistersinger* as in the *Ring*, but moderated them to a considerable extent. The review continues with an account of Wagner’s ideas for opera reform, thus providing the context for his evaluation of the work and the staging in the following parts of the review (StD E 3/4 1887 and 6/4 1887). After criticising the infinite melody, the extended recitatives, and the leitmotif technique he continues:

In the end, it would be surprising if people who are appreciative of the flowing melody and lucid masterworks of Mozart and Weber, France and Italy would exchange the rich musical beauty of their cantilena and their lush ensembles for instrumental motifs and melodically meagre and chopped up ‘speech-song’ phrases or ‘song-speech’ fragments.

Thus, for this critic the Wagner question boiled down to the following:

Should opera be a *conglomerate* of five arts and some professions (tailoring, machinery and others), or should *music* be the main and vital principle of opera? Wagnerians vote for the former, Mozartteans, Weberians, Bizetians and others strictly keep to the latter.

The StD critic obviously preferred the latter alternative, claiming that *Die Meistersinger* attracted the most sympathy in passages that were based on old-fashioned principles, in other words where Wagner had abandoned all ideas of spoken melody, infinite melody and leitmotifs. Such passages were to be found mainly in the third act, while the infinite melody occupied a large space in the first two acts. Thus, the view expressed in StD was iden-

tical to that of Lindgren, and in a footnote the critic adds: "to our delight we find that the critic in *Aftonbladet* shares this view."

Critics writing in NDA and PIT expressed themselves in a similar way as those writing in AB and StD. The NDA (B 12/4 1887) critic admitted that many aspects of Wagner's reform were justified, and their healthy influence had given a beneficial impetus to the development of modern opera in many countries. His objections concerned the more extreme consequences of Wagner's principles, which he claimed Wagner had applied in *Die Meistersinger* with almost the same imperative strictness as in *Tristan*. In the last act, however, he had made considerable concessions to a more lyrical style, and gave the spectators a pleasant surprise in the form of a melodic and euphonious quintet.

The PIT (A 5/4 1887) critic also wrote that concessions were made to other tastes, "as there are many ensembles and choruses in existence", even if a large part of *Die Meistersinger* was composed in accordance with Wagner's reform ideas. Both NDA and PIT turned against the excessively long passages in which infinite melody dominated the score.

Both NDA and PIT criticised the leitmotif technique. The NDA reviewer paraphrased Lindgren's leitmotif critique in *Om Wagnerismen*, and like Lindgren referred to Emil Naumann's comment that leitmotifs resemble the signs that hang from the mouths of figures in naïve medieval paintings, displaying their names. Furthermore, he felt that the score was so richly crammed with leitmotifs that it was impossible to understand their connotations without special guides. The PIT (A 5/4 1887) critic was of the opinion that the leitmotifs were sometimes used in a strange way:

[...] so for instance, when [...] Beckmesser is approaching the table on which Walther's poem, which Sachs wrote down, lies. The melody heard is the one Walther sung to this text, which Beckmesser had never heard, nor would be able to hear. Thus, the leitmotif illustrates the object, not the character. One rather expects an expression of the joy Beckmesser feels when finding such a rarity as a song by Sachs.

Wagner writes in *Oper und Drama* that the orchestral motifs should function as an expression of the emotions and thoughts of the fictive characters when they cannot or will not give expression to them in words (Wagner 1903, vol. IV, p. 200). In practice however, as Carl Dahlhaus points out, the orchestra more often plays the role of an omniscient narrator.

## The positive reviews

A common feature in the four positive reviews is the general agreement that *Die Meistersinger* was a work that made new and different demands on the audience:

And in addition all this glorious music! However, it is music that cannot be described, it must be heard, and indeed, it must be heard several times if you are to become fully familiar with it. (Karl Valentin GHT B 16/4 1887)

You have to study *Die Meistersinger*; its beauties do not reveal themselves, and not until you make the effort to conquer them, to understand their peculiar nature and creative temperament, you will capture them. (SvD)

Almost certainly, without certain prerequisites you will neither understand nor enjoy this work, which differs to such a large extent from the operas our audiences are used to hearing. Therefore you must not believe that a single experience is enough if you want to form an opinion about the grandeur and importance of this work. (Andreas Hallén VL 1/4 1887)

... someone who only hears it once, or has to have the text at hand in order to follow the action, will hardly get a clear impression of the work. (Fredrik Vult von Steijern DN 7/4 1887)

Vult von Steijern was the critic who most clearly pointed out the characteristics that made these new demands on the listeners:

Many will find the extremely polyphonic treatment, which lets every part in the orchestra speak its own language and gives every singing part its independent rank, no less than the completely new and wonderfully multifarious rhythm that makes it possible to build up a colossal work from a few simple motifs, difficult to understand at first unmediated acquaintance, mostly because of unfamiliarity with the part the orchestra is given: it no longer merely provides accompaniment, but has been assigned a leading role, it has become the bearer of mood and characterisation.

According to Vult von Steijern it was important to understand that everything in Wagner's "Gesamtkunstwerk"<sup>12</sup> had to interact in order to convey

<sup>12</sup> The word is usually written Gesamtkunstwerk in the Wagner literature, but von Steijern's spelling, GesamtKunstwerk, is the one Wagner used.

the correct impression. For the listener who understood this, the much-decried infinite melody will not appear as a sloping plain of non-melodiousness.

The negative critics considered the passages that reminded them of traditional opera the most successful in *Die Meistersinger*, and above all they praised the third act. On the other hand, the SvD (9/4 1887) critic claimed that the first act was the most characteristic and perhaps the most brilliant, even if it was not the most beautiful from a purely musical perspective. However, he also found merits in the second act, and singled out Sachs's Flieder monologue:

This scene in its entirety, with the old poet-shoemaker who sits dreaming by his work in the light of the summer evening, and the music, which conveys his changing thoughts before finally ending in an elevated rejoicing of poetry, is magnificently captivating.

Furthermore, he considered the third act prelude the “noblest gem in the opera”:

It is a characterisation of Hans Sachs in music, an analysis of the spiritual mind of this peculiar poet of the people [...] In the strings you first hear a heavy, sad motif – the same motif that accompanied Hans Sachs at his working table in the second act – it depicts the inner, troubled brooding of the poet, which no one notices in the happy shoemaker.

These quotations show that the SvD critic, unlike his negative fellow critics, understood the new, more profound narrative function of the orchestra in Wagner's later works.

### The Reception of *Die Walküre*

The Swedish premiere of *Die Walküre* took place on 7 November 1895. As *Die Walküre* is the second part of a tetralogy (or the first part of a trilogy if *Das Rheingold* is considered a “Vorabend”), many critics provided background information about the *Ring* in its entirety. The greater part of this information concerned the action, but Adolf Lindgren also wrote about how the work related to Wagner's “world view” (AB A9/11 1895).

After the *Die Meistersinger* premiere eight years earlier, as mentioned above, the critics were clearly divided into two opposing camps: for and against Wagner. *Die Walküre* did not cause the same kind of polarised press

reaction. In a relatively balanced way most of the critics pointed out what they considered the merits and the flaws in the work. Albert Anderson-Edengren's report for SDS (K 11/11 1895) reveals a change in the tone of the debate since 1887: there were no longer any fights about the artistic value of Wagner's music, and he found it surprising that the conflict was once so serious and bitter. Thus, according to Anderson-Edengren, with time and continuous development taste changes in a commendable way, "increasingly opening the gates of understanding." Magnus Josephson (PIT 8/11 1895) claimed that the enthusiastic reception from a full house of interested music lovers representing different layers of society finally proved that even in Stockholm the time of Richard Wagner had arrived.

Like the negative critics in 1887, Josephson voiced some criticism of Wagner's "peculiar technique or system, used with iron-hard consistency." However, he did not let this influence his experience and evaluation of the man's work:

No, it is possible to enjoy the creations of Richard Wagner [...] immediately and profoundly without tying up your impressions in the strait-jacket of a system. And – above all – you don't have to admire everything in its entirety.

It is clear from Josephson's review that he had profound knowledge and experience of Wagner and his works. Among other things, his writing about the style of *Die Walküre* is highly informed: he notes that Wagner's style completely changed during the long gestation of the *Ring*:

His later style with its stern polyphony, symphonically handled orchestra, and predominantly declamatory singing parts, appears fully developed in the third act of *Siegfried*. The previous acts in *Siegfried*, though, together with *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, are written in what you could call a modified *Lohengrin* style. There is an abundant use of leit-motifs [...] but you also find the same lushly flourishing melody and the same lucid, although richer use of the orchestra as in *Lohengrin*. (PIT 13/11 1895)

Josephson was not alone in this opinion. Adolf Lindgren (AB 8/11 1895) expressed similar views: "The composition of die *Die Walküre* is so close in time to *Lohengrin* that the style has not essentially changed, although the declamatory singing has been stretched out considerably." The predominant view in modern Wagner research is that there is a wide gap between *Lohengrin* and *Das Rheingold* in terms of style and compositional technique

(see e.g., Dahlhaus 1971, pp. 56-59). As is apparent in *Om Wagnerismen*, Lindgren was aware of the difference between Wagner's operas and his music dramas. In fact, it was this very difference that provoked his criticism of the music dramas. However, he apparently viewed the dividing line as more flexible than Dahlhaus did, for instance. It is also possible that the cuts made *Die Walküre* appear in another light to Swedish critics in the late nineteenth century.

Even if he admitted that there were passages containing beautiful vocal melodies, Lindgren continued to criticise Wagner for making the music more orchestral in his works after *Lohengrin*, for placing the melodies in a completely symphonic orchestra and reducing the importance of the singers. Other critics also had objections to the vocal parts. One, for instance, under the signature Verus (GP 8/11 1895) wrote that these "do not move in sweeping melodies, but in the most strange intervals, and although Wagner is extremely afraid of repeating even a single word, he makes the opposite mistake in piling up words and phrases after each other with the result that longueurs are not few in number [...]". Henrik Victorin (NDA 8/11 1895) pointed out the difficulties Wagner's vocal parts caused Swedish singers who were unused to the style. He claimed that the motivic work was the worst stumbling block for them because on the one hand they lacked experience of the many difficult intervals, and on the other hand they "had sung too much absolute music to be able to make an immediate adjustment to Wagner's short, forceful and plastic motifs."

One noticeable change in the reception of *Die Walküre* was a more balanced view of the leitmotif technique. Admittedly, Magnus Josephson (PIT 8/11 and 21/11 1895) had several objections:

1. Claiming that a detailed knowledge of all the leitmotifs is a condition for understanding the work is ridiculous pedantry.
2. It is not possible for a motif to depict a character or a situation so clearly that it always brings them to mind when you hear the motif in the orchestra.
3. There are many clever references in the orchestra you can admire in the score, but which are not apparent in the mighty swell of the orchestral sound.

However, Josephson also praises the magnificent effects Wagner achieved with his ingenious use of the leitmotifs. Even when he is too ingenious one can enjoy the rich symphonic texture in the orchestra, the result of a combination of all the melodically beautiful and rhythmically pregnant motifs, without worrying about whether one fully perceives everything he wished

to express. As Josephon points out, it was not difficult to perceive Wagner's intentions in *Die Walküre*, in which the orchestral polyphony is less complex than in the later works, and especially in the first act.

The critic who most forcefully defended Wagner's leitmotif technique was Eugen Fahlstedt (1851-1935) in *Vårt Land* (8/11 1895). Fahlstedt claimed that the average listener did not need a printed "Leitfaden" in order to perceive the most important motifs when first experiencing the performance. Of course, he or she would not perceive all the motifs, but upon closer acquaintance would learn more and more to appreciate the fine and significant combinations, as well as the wise economy whereby the poet used them in order to facilitate understanding of the action and tie the four parts of the *Ring* cycle into one musico-dramatic unity. Fahlstedt was fully aware of the narrative and structural functions of the leitmotifs, and he objected to the simplified view of leitmotivic association put forward in Lindgren's *Om Wagnerismen* and in several of the *Die Meistersinger* reviews:

It is an erroneous notion that the leitmotif is some kind of label or sign that is presented in the orchestra each time a certain character makes an entrance. Wagner does not characterise it in such a simple and superficial way, and if, as an exception, the playing of a personal motif coincides with the character's entrance, this is caused by the situation (e.g., Hunding's rhythmically sharp and threatening motif).

Furthermore, Fahlstedt claims that it was a misconception that each character had one motif: "on the contrary, the main characters have several motifs, which characterise them from different angles." He continues by presenting concrete examples of "profound moods and beautiful artistic impressions" that can be evoked through the use of the leitmotif technique.

## The cuts

In accordance with the performance practice of the time, both *Die Meistersinger* and *Die Walküre* were extensively cut. The Swedish critics were all of the opinion that, given the longueurs in Wagner's works these cuts were beneficial. In the opinion of Adolf Lindgren (AB 4/4 1887), David's uninteresting part could have been shortened even more extensively, especially because the singer, Mikael Bratbost, had a rather immature way of singing. Furthermore, if the longueurs between the striking episodes had been replaced with spoken dialogue, or at least a lighter and more cheerful musical

conversation, *Die Meistersinger* could have been classed among the best of comic operas (AB 9/4 1887).

The cuts in *Die Meistersinger* affected the part of Hans Sachs more than any other, and as a consequence, according to some of the critics, the character was not given its due importance in the drama. Lindgren pointed out (AB 4/4 1887) that some of these cuts were made between the dress rehearsal and the first night, supposedly because the part was too low for the singer Carl Fredrik Lundqvist ("Lunkan"), or because he was indisposed. Irrespective of the reason, however, Lindgren considered the cuts well founded, "especially the removal of Sachs's trying monologue in the first scene of the last act." However, not everyone agreed with him on this, and Fredrik Vult von Steijern (DN 9/4 1887) hoped for the return of the glorious soliloquy.

Adolf Lindgren estimated that the cuts in *Die Walküre* comprised about 60 of the 360 pages in the vocal score, and above all they concerned the dialogues between Wotan and Fricka, and between Wotan and Brünnhilde in the second act, together with the conversation among the Valkyries and with Wotan in the third act (AB 8/11 1895).<sup>13</sup> In his view, these cuts shortened the acts in a commendably thoughtful manner, and the one in the dialogue between Wotan and Brünnhilde in the second act was especially successful. This was also the view of Magnus Josephson (PIT 13/11 1895):

In *Die Walküre*, for instance, it is only the part of Wotan that contains some dry declamatory passages, and these are usually cut: the long narration (the recapitulation of the content in *Das Rheingold*) in the scene with Brünnhilde, a gruesome *longueur* which probably no one misses, is an example.

All the critics who mentioned the cuts viewed them in a positive light, and some even thought they could have been even more extensive. For instance, the *Stockholms Dagblad* (8/11 1895) critic wrote that, despite the cuts, the work still contained *longueurs*. Adolf Lindgren (AB 8/11 1895) was also of the opinion that it might be advisable to make more cuts in the dialogue between Siegmund and Brünnhilde, "because this scene carries on too long at a slow tempo." However, there was one cut he considered less successful. It was not Fricka's claim about the sanctity of marriage or the reprehensibility of incest that made Wotan change his mind and decide that Siegmund had to die: it was purely the result of Fricka's proving that,

<sup>13</sup> The sources in the archive of the Royal Swedish Opera probably made it possible for future researchers to establish precisely where the cuts were made.

because of his dependence on Wotan, Siegmund was not the necessary free hero. The cut in the dialogue contained this crucial information. Therefore, according to Lindgren, more than one spectator must have asked himself or herself: “But why on earth does Wotan surrender to Fricka?”

### The performance

In one of the *Harald Viking* reviews the critic mentions two obstacles against performing works following Wagnerian principles on the Swedish stage (StD 25/2 1884). First, Sweden had no singers who were able to do justice to the declamatory phrases, and secondly, “because of its raised and, against Wagner’s instructions, prominent position, the orchestra was not able to achieve the subdued volume a Wagner opera demands in order to achieve the proper effect.”

When *Die Meistersinger* was premiered on 2 April 1887 the Royal Swedish Opera was still located in the old Gustavian opera house. However, no critic mentioned any problems with the balance between the singers and the orchestra. Because the orchestral forces required are somewhat smaller in *Die Meistersinger* than in Wagner’s other music dramas, it is possible that the problem was not as prominent in this work. According to an account of the rehearsals (SDS M 29/3 1887), however, the orchestra was as large as the space allowed: “that is, eight first and eight second violins, six violas, six violoncellos, and so on.” *Die Walküre* was staged in Svenska Teatern [The Swedish Theatre] on Blasieholmen, which was the site of the opera house in 1891-98 during the construction of the new premises. The new Oscanian Opera House provided Stockholm with a stage and an orchestra pit that were more suited to the demands of Wagnerian works (even though there is not enough space for the number of strings Wagner prescribed).

The Swedish tenor Leonard Labatt (1838-97) sang the title role in *Harald Viking*, and was praised by all the critics. He appeared as Tannhäuser a month after the *Harald Viking* premiere. He had returned to the Royal Swedish Opera in 1883 after 14 years at the Hofoper in Vienna (1869-83). He had sung Tannhäuser in November 1875 with Wagner conducting, and had also studied this part and that of Siegmund in *Die Walküre*, coached by the composer himself (Hofsten 1977-79, p. 19). According to Percy (1936, pp. 241ff), his interpretation of Tannhäuser in Stockholm convinced Swedish critics that a new way of performing the big Wagnerian roles was necessary. Following a disagreement with the new opera management, Labatt left

Stockholm after one theatrical year, and the Royal Swedish Opera lacked a suitable Heldentenor for the Wagner parts.

*Die Meistersinger* was performed solely with Swedish singers in the roles. The critics were unanimous in their praise of the performance and the staging, but nevertheless pointed out the apparent shortage of suitable vocal resources. Karl Valentin, for instance, wrote (GHT B 16/4 1887):

In all the three leading parts the lack of experience of this style was noticeable, and because of the lack of breadth that characterises Wagnerian declamation when accomplished in the spirit of the Master, some things in the text did not appear as they should have done.

The other critics made an exception for Selma Ek (1856-1941) in the role of Eva, however. Fredrik Vult von Steijern, who like Valentin had seen *Die Meistersinger* in Germany, considered her to be “the only one who hit the mark in terms of a proper stylistic idea and a true artistic rendering.” (DN 4/4 1887) Von Steijern wondered where she had picked up this ability because, to his knowledge, she had had no more opportunities than her colleagues to study the Wagnerian way of singing. Earlier in the 1880s she had appeared as Elisabeth and Elsa, Wagnerian parts in which, according to Adolf Lindgren, she had always succeeded brilliantly (AB 4/4 1887). Furthermore, she had performed the female leading part, Sigrun, in *Harald Viking*, and it is therefore possible that she came to an understanding of idiomatic Wagnerian singing through studying Labatt.

The critics did not restrict their praise to Selma Ek's singing. They also admired her considerable acting abilities, which Frans Hedberg (1885, pp. 258ff) had pointed out a couple of years before the *Die Meistersinger* premiere. However, she was not a dramatic soprano. Karl Valentin's (GHT B 16/4 1887) objection was that she lacked “the full-bodied voice and the breadth of delivery that were necessary”. In a letter to Hans Herrig (the librettist of *Harald Viking*) dated 26 February 1884 Andreas Hallén wrote that her voice was not adequate for Sigrun, even though he admitted that she was an excellent actress (see Knust 2011, p. 52). Hallén's review of *Die Meistersinger* only has praise for Selma Ek, however: “Of the performing soloists we, in the first instance, mention Selma Ek, who through her correct interpretation of the character and distinctly sung dialogue came closest to the Wagnerian intention.” (VL 6/4 1887)

Carl Fredrik Lundqvist (1841-1920) performed the role of Hans Sachs. Frans Hedberg (1885, p. 263) emphasised that it was precisely as a Wagner singer that Lundqvist had been noticed and valued by both audience

and critics during the “last couple of years”. His debut at the Royal Swedish Opera was as a tenor in 1869, and he had sung the lead part in *Rienzi* and the helmsman in *Holländer* before becoming a baritone. He took the role of Herold in the first Swedish performance of *Lohengrin* (1874), and when Fritz Arlberg left Stockholm in the mid-1870s he inherited the part of Telramund. He also had great success as Wolfram in *Tannhäuser*. Hedberg concludes at the end of his chapter on Lundqvist in *Svenska operasångare* [Swedish Opera Singers] that he had all the qualities required to make Hans Sachs one of his best achievements. However, this did not happen. All the critics considered the part to be too low for his voice, and according to Fredrik Vult von Steijern this could have made him appear less secure, and thus his declamations were not as expressive as they should have been (DN 9/4 1887).

The leading lyrical tenor at the Royal Swedish Opera, Arvid Ödmann (1850-1914), performed the role of Walther. According to *Svenska Dagbladet* (13/4 1887), Wagner’s tenor roles were not the most suitable for Ödmann’s voice:

Mr Ödmann has silver and moonlight in his voice, but in order to sing Wagner you need iron ore and fire. However, the lyrical element is so predominant in the whole part of Walther that it can hardly be compared to Wagner’s other tenor roles.

The general opinion was that Ödmann succeeded well in the lyrical episodes, but that he did not master the Wagnerian declamatory style. According to Fredrik Vult von Steijern, for instance (DN 9/4 1887):

It is well known that Mr Ödmann is not a Wagner singer, and if this is taken into proper consideration it could be said that he makes the best he possibly can of Walther. Whenever the song alone carries the mood, the elevation and poetic warmth of the singing, his performance is good, such as when he sings his prize song for Sachs and Eva, but he lacks the capacity for dramatic individualisation [...] He has the great merit of clearly pronouncing every word, but because of the effort this demands his declamation is dry and torn to pieces.

Irrespective of their position regarding Wagner’s vocal style, it is noticeable that the critics had strong opinions about the correct and idiomatic way of executing the vocal lines. Given their awareness of the shortcomings of the Swedish singers, it is somewhat odd that they did not consider the possibility that their negative impressions of Wagner’s vocal melodies were

related to the performance. The discussion about the appropriate way of singing Wagner continued after the Swedish premiere of *Die Walküre*, and indeed, Magnus Josephson claimed that Wagner's music would not deserve criticism if the singing were accomplished in an appropriate way (PIT 9/11 1895):

What must be stated as an imperative condition is clear and distinct diction, and an expressive, richly nuanced declamation of text and music. The nuances are of the utmost importance, and Wagner's music would never have been accused of being monotonous if adequately trained singers had been available to perform his works.

According to Josephson, it was the ability to meet these demands that made the Sieglinde of Carolina Östberg (1853-1924) stand out in comparison with all the the others singers participating in the *Die Walküre* performance:

It is always possible to hear her text clearly, something that contradicts all claims that this is incompatible with a legato delivery. On the contrary, you could claim that if the diction is not entirely clear, then a truly perfect legato is not possible either. Mrs Östberg's phrasing and declamation are above all praise.

It was defective declamation that Josephson considered the biggest flaw in Adèle Almati-Rundberg's (1861-1919) singing as Brünnhilde: "She sings without nuances and does not meet the changing demands of the text, even if her diction nowadays is clearer than it used to be. Altogether, though, her performance is meritorious, and it has, as already pointed out, exceeded expectations."

David Breckbill (1992, p. 363) mentions "two apparently contradictory ideologies of Wagner singing which emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: that of projecting the words and that of singing the music." He points out that "the inexpert approximation" of the first ideology "which achieved general circulation in the 1880s and 90s featured sloppy, imprecise, often choppy singing at a monotonously forthright dynamic level which it was thought would make the word more comprehensible." The ideal Wagner singing in Magnus Josephson's view, however, was obviously a combination of clear text delivery with a musically satisfying execution. A couple of years later he wrote in an article about Andreas Hallén's opera *Waldemarsskatten* ("Waldemar's Treasure"):

Now at last fresh breezes are blowing, one is tired of the one-sided declamatory usage of the voice in the new operas, and one even wishes to

hear Wagner being sung. In Vienna Mahler has conducted a *Götterdämmerung* performance with a careful handling of the vocal melody, and in which long song phrases in the piano nuance have replaced strained voices and one-sided declamatory execution. Moreover, from London, in a letter to *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, Weingartner expresses his delight at hearing bel canto predominate in a performance of *Die Meistersinger*. The return to beautiful singing is preached everywhere, and among the composers joining this movement is Mr Hallén. (Josephson 1899, p. 244)

When Hallén composed *Waldemarsskatten* he felt that the vocal melody should be more prominent than the orchestral texture. It is open to question whether, when he conducted the first Swedish performance of *Die Walküre*, his changed view on the relationship between the vocal parts and the orchestra influenced his interpretation.

Just like *Die Meistersinger* in 1887, *Die Walküre* was staged in 1895 featuring only Swedish singers. Carolina Östberg was the only one with more extensive experience of Wagnerian singing. She was a member of Angelo Neumann's touring cast of *Ring* in 1882, singing Sieglinde in a number of European cities. Following the Swedish *Die Walküre* premiere all the critics agreed that Östberg was the most successful of the soloists, and the singer who came closest to the ideal interpretation of Wagner. Everyone praised her legato, her excellent phrasing and nuanced delivery, and her expressive and noble declamation. Alongside Josephson, Henrik Victorin discussed the demands of good Wagnerian singing in more detail, and described how Östberg met those demands:

The two who are most successful in the difficult art of rhythmic execution are Mrs Östberg and Mr Söderman [Wotan]. In particular, Mrs Ö is superior in chiselling her phrases in a clear, firm, and secure way. The listener experiences an agreeable sensation of security and calm in her singing, and at the same time is captivated by the performance: in the part of Sieglinde Mrs Ö proves that she is able to convey the inner value of the phrases even when the external circumstances are not unconditionally favourable to having an immediate effect on the listeners.

Like Josephson, Victorin had reservations about Almati-Rundberg. He claimed that the part demanded better mimicry and means of expression than were at her disposal, and her inclination to drag out her delivery, thereby destroying the rhythm, was a fundamental fault.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately there are no preserved recordings of Swedish Wagner pioneers such as Caroline Östberg, Arvid Ödmann, and Matilda Jungstedt: see Stefan Johansson 2002.

Göran Gademan (1996, p. 63) points out that it was not until 1878 that the conductors of operatic performances were mentioned in reviews, and then only briefly. It is therefore striking how the two conductors, Conrad Nordqvist and Andreas Hallén, are acknowledged and praised in the *Meistersinger* and *Walküre* reviews. It seems obvious that the new and enlarged role of the orchestra in Wagner's later works not only increased the importance of the conductor, but also made the critics notice his contribution. Fredrik Vult von Steijern (DN 7/4 1887) also points out that the responsibility of the conductor is so much greater in a work like *Die Meistersinger* when in most of the participants he cannot rely on the support of the tradition.

Many critics reviewing *Die Walküre* pointed out that the number of rehearsals was exceptional for Swedish conditions. The industriousness apparently paid off. According to KRS (DN 9/11 1895), the orchestra played with confidence as if they had been doing nothing else for a long time than rehearsing *Die Walküre*. With an element of national pride he added: "I could mention that while there were 45 orchestral rehearsals in Stockholm, there were 60 before the premiere in Copenhagen, and approximately the same number before the first performance of the work in Frankfurt."

Unfortunately, not much is said about the interpretations of the conductors: only their tempi are mentioned by some of the critics. After praising Conrad Nordqvist, Karl Valentin writes:

I have only one objection, and it is that the tempi were not always according to tradition. The prelude, the first scene after the opening chorus, the quintet and some other passages were played too fast. It is always difficult to argue about tempi, but irrespective of the tradition, it is absolutely certain that these passages must be played a touch more slowly, and that the declamation demands a calmer tempo in order to have its effect and then appear completely different and more forceful.

Hallén's tempi in *Die Walküre* were also fast. KRS (DN 9/11 1895) does not make this observation himself but writes that "somebody" pointed out that some of them were too fast. His own comment was that one should suppose that Hallén generally knew the proper traditions. While "somebody" considered Hallén's tempi too fast, Magnus Josephson (PIT 9/11 1895) claimed that there was no harm in his choice of some fast tempi because even "if at the moment they can't get enough of slow tempi in Germany, this is not something that should be imitated unconditionally." Finally, TA (SvD A 11/11 1995) also notes Hallén's fast tempi, but considered the reason to be a "certain, moreover easily explainable nervousness" that made Hallén increase the pace too much."

## The audience reactions

The *Die Meistersinger* premiere attracted both applause and attempts to silence it. According to Adolf Lindgren, this showed that the backwash of the European Wagner debate had reached the calm coasts of Sweden (AB 4/4 1887). He argued that the two extreme audience reactions made it difficult to express a general opinion about how the audience received the new work. Furthermore, it appeared to be rather passive and indifferent during the first and second acts “except when once in a while a truly beautiful melody refreshed their minds, or when Beckmesser’s parodist jokes provoked laughter, or when the boldly magnificent realism of the scuffle increased the tension.” One problem with such an evaluation is that the critic’s accounts of audience reactions may be influenced by his own attitude towards the work he is reviewing. The *Svenska Dagbladet* (4/4 1887) critic, who had a more positive attitude to Wagner, writes that the audience was really enthusiastic, and that it was only a “small clique of anti-Wagnerians” that tried to silence the general bravos with some hushing noises after the first act. Nevertheless, another source confirms Lindgren’s claim that some members of the audience left the theatre after the second act: according to the composer and critic Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867-1942) in his *Minnen* [“Memories”] (1943, p. 56), several of the most prominent families in the musical life of Stockholm left during the interval between the second and third acts, expressing crushing criticism.

The majority of the critics, including Lindgren, considered the third act to be the best. Even though views differ about the audience response to the first two acts, no critic was in any doubt about the enthusiasm during and after the third: “after the magnificent quintet ending of the first scene there was no end to the storm of applause. After the second scene, and the end of the whole opera, curtain call after curtain call followed.” (GHT N 6/4 1887) Thus, even though *Die Meistersinger* is a continuous musical drama, the audience behaved in the traditional manner and started to applaud after something that resembled a traditional operatic number.

*Die Meistersinger* was performed six times during the spring of 1887, but then disappeared from the Royal Swedish Opera’s repertoire until 1899/1900. Henrik Victorin (NDA 951107) writes in one of the reviews after the first performance of *Die Walküre* that it would be unfortunate if this work had to share the undeserved fate that *Die Meistersinger* suffered ten years previously, and which showed that at that time the taste of the audience in general was not receptive to the mature works of Wagner. Of course, there may be many reasons for the disappearance of a work from

the repertoire, such as the availability of the right singers. However, after the second performance *Dagens Nyheter* noted that the audience did not show the same enthusiasm as after the premiere. Peterson-Berger, who was present at at least four of the performances after the first night, writes that they were given to successively smaller audiences (1941, p. 56). Thus, insufficient audience interest appeared to be at least one reason why *Die Meistersinger* did not become established in the repertoire. Another reason may have been the financial problems of the Royal Swedish Opera. Following the withdrawal of the governmental grant the operatic activities were outsourced and taken over by Conrad Nordqvist between 1888 and 1892. Performing a work that required extensive resources and could not guarantee box-office success would probably not have been wise under such circumstances.

In his review of the *Die Walküre* premiere Adolf Lindgren refers to the animated discussions between the acts “where, as is always the case with a work by Wagner, the opinions were somewhat divided” (AB 8/11 1895). However, there was no booing, and no one left the theatre in protest (the reason for the departure of King Oscar II after the first act was a planned hunting trip, see SDS K 11/11 1895). On the contrary, Lindgren points out that the audience appeared unanimous in its recognition of the highlights of the work (just as after the quintet in *Die Meistersinger*, there was applause during the acts). He also writes that the audience was in high spirits, and the response developed into full-blown enthusiasm, as witnessed by the 20-to-30 curtain calls for the leading singers, and eventually also the conductor, producer and stage designer. Magnus Josephson (PIT 8/11 1895) claimed that the enthusiastic reception finally proved that the time of Richard Wagner had arrived, even in Stockholm.

Without doubt, *Die Walküre* achieved much greater success than *Die Meistersinger*. Its second performance, unlike that of *Die Meistersinger*, met with an enthusiastic reception (SvD A 11/11 1895). TA therefore assumed that “the stirring tone paintings of *Die Walküre* had begun to take root in the Swedish mind.” The work was performed 13 times during its first theatrical year and was also performed the following years (three times in 1896/97; four times in 1897/98; and three times in 1898/99). After a break in 1899/1900 it was performed at least once every theatrical year up to the mid-1960s. With 191 performances by 1972 it was at that point the most frequently performed Wagner work at the Royal Swedish Opera after *Tannhäuser* (477 performances) and *Lohengrin* (458 performances).

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## Abbreviations

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| AB  | <i>Aftonbladet</i>                            |
| DN  | <i>Dagens Nyheter</i>                         |
| GHT | <i>Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning</i> |
| GP  | <i>Göteborgs-posten</i>                       |
| NDA | <i>Nya Dagligt Allehanda</i>                  |
| PIT | <i>Post- och Inrikes Tidningar</i>            |
| SDS | <i>Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten</i>       |
| StD | <i>Stockholms Dagblad</i>                     |
| StT | <i>Stockholmstidningen</i>                    |
| SvD | <i>Svenska Dagbladet</i>                      |
| VL  | <i>Vårt Land</i>                              |

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*Die Meistersinger*

AB 4.4.87, A 9.4.87  
 DN B 2.4.87, 4.4.87, B 7.4.87, B 9.4.87  
 GHT B 6.4.87, B 16.4.87  
 NDA B 12.4.87  
 PIT 31.3.87, A 5.4.87  
 StD 31.3.87, E 3.4.87, 6.4.87  
 SvD 4.4.87, 9.4.87, 13.4.87  
 SDS M 29.3.87  
 VL 1.4.87, 2.4.87, 6.4.87

*Die Walküre*

AB 8.11.87, 9.11.87, 13.11.95  
 DN 7.11.87, 9.11.87  
 GP 8.11.95  
 NDA 7.11.95, 8.11.95  
 PIT 8.11.95, 9.11.95, A 13.11.95, A 21.11.95  
 StD 8.11.95, 13.11.95  
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## Summary

There were several phases in the Swedish reception of Richard Wagner's works. The first period was roughly between 1857 and 1884. It began with concert performances of the *Tannhäuser* overture, and continued with the introduction of Wagner's operas at The Royal Swedish Opera (Kungliga Operan): *Rienzi* (1865), *Der fliegende Holländer* (1872) *Lohengrin* (1874), and *Tannhäuser* (in 1876 as a special performance at Mindre Teatern [The Smaller Theatre], and in 1878 at the Royal Swedish Opera). The second period began in 1884 with Andreas Hallén's (1846-1925) *Harald der Viking* (at the Royal Swedish Opera, translated into Swedish as *Harald Viking*), the first Swedish opera more substantially influenced by Wagner. This work paved the way for Wagner's music dramas in Stockholm.

The aim in the article is to study the beginning of this second period in the Swedish reception of Wagner through an investigation of the critical reaction to the first Swedish performances of *Die Meistersinger* in 1887 and *Die Walküre* in 1895. The first parts of the article describe the critical reaction towards the works themselves. A central aspect is how attitudes and ideas about expressions associated Wagner's later works (music drama, leitmotif, infinite melody and "Gesamtkunstwerk") influenced the critic's evaluations. The later parts give an account of the critic's opinions of the cuts, the performances, and the audience reactions.

After the *Die Meistersinger* premiere the critics were clearly divided into two opposing camps: for and against Wagner. *Die Meistersinger* also divided the audience, and beginning with the second performance attendance waned. *Die Walküre* did not cause the same kind of polarised press reaction. In a relatively balanced way most of the critics pointed out what they considered the merits and the flaws in the work. The work also met with an enthusiastic audience reception. According to one critic this finally proved that even in Stockholm the time of Richard Wagner had arrived.

# Rachel the Jewess in Copenhagen

Jens Hesselager

During the winter season of 1841-42, a group of opera-loving Copenhageners developed a habit of behaving in a somewhat unrestrained manner. Or at least they did so when attending performances of Pietro Rossi's visiting Italian opera company, which had arrived in Copenhagen in November of 1841. These audience members frequently interrupted the action by applauding loudly, "forcing" the performers to take bows and perform immediate encores, and they threw flowers at the singers (Overskou 1864, 495-98, 581). Eventually, even C.E.F. Weyse (1774-1842), the old composer of incorruptible classicist leanings, felt obliged to attend a performance, but did not like what he heard (it was Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*). Weyse left early (Schepelern 1976, 104). A few days later, on 27 February 1842, Weyse wrote to his friend, the priest and poet B.S. Ingemann:

Yesterday Madame Forconi was drowned in flowers [...] The Danes are and always will be a bunch of blockheads, who do not know what they do, exhibiting such eccentric enthusiasm for these middle-of-the-road Italians of no more than third rank, who in any case sing off key like all the misery in the world.<sup>1</sup>

While Weyse was by no means the only one to find fault with the Italians, many felt that they were a most welcome and refreshingly lively alternative to the opera company at the Royal Theatre. Thomas Overskou (1798–1873), the theatre historian, felt that there was both a downside and an upside to all the fuss. On the one hand, he was critical of what he felt was a trend amongst the admirers of the Italians towards single-mindedly celebrating the achievements of individual singers, such as Madame Forconi, while remaining unconcerned with the artistic value of the collective performance as a whole. On the other hand, he recognised that the dramatic verve, energy and warmth of expression which the Italians (or some of them, at least) brought to their performances represented qualities that had long been wanting in the opera performances at the Royal Theatre. Indeed, he felt that the competition from the Italians had a beneficial effect on the general quality of the Royal Theatre performances, where efforts were now increasingly made to put more dramatic life, emotion and energy into the operatic characters (Overskou 1864, 493–98).<sup>2</sup>

During these months, opera reviews invariably referred to this context, explicitly or implicitly. It would seem reasonable, in fact, to suggest that the entire critical discourse on opera was preoccupied with the project of positioning Rossi's company, which performed at the Court Theatre, in relation to the Danish opera company at the Royal Theatre.<sup>3</sup> Or to put it in more general terms: positioning "Italian opera culture" in relation to "Danish", or even more generally "southern" in relation to "Nordic". These two poles might then be considered two general principles along which much of the discourse was structured, functioning sometimes as opposites in an antago-

<sup>1</sup> "Igaar er Madam Forconi overøst med Blomster [...]. De Danske ere og blive nogle Dumbartler, og vide i Sandhed ikke hvad de gjøre, ved at vise saadan excentrisk Enthousiasme for disse middelmaadige Udlændinge, høist af tredje Rang, der i alt Fald synge falsk som al Landsens Ulykke." (Schepelern 1976, 105) All translations are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> A similar point was made in *Berlingske Tidende*, 11 June 1842 (Schepelern 1976, 111–12).

<sup>3</sup> At first Rossi's company performed at Vesterbros Teater, a wooden building just outside the city borders which was otherwise home primarily to comedies, vaudevilles, popular entertainments, circus performances and the like. But when King Christian VIII took a personal liking to the Italian company, it was soon offered the opportunity to perform at the Court Theatre beginning in January of 1842. The Court Theatre opened nearby in 1767 as a complement to the Royal Theatre at Kongens Nytorv, which had opened in 1748. The Court Theatre still exists; it was turned into a museum in 1912, while the Royal Theatre at Kongens Nytorv was replaced by a new building in 1874. Vesterbros Teater opened in 1834 and closed in 1875.

nistic scheme, but more often as complementary values which needed to be somehow balanced against each other.

In what follows, my main focus will not be on Rossi's company at the Court Theatre, but on the Royal Theatre and particularly its performances in 1838 and 1842 of the opera *Jødinden* – a Danish adaptation of Jacques-Fromental Halévy's grand opera *La juive*, which premiered in Paris in 1835. Even more specifically, my focus will be on the soprano who starred in the role of Rachel, the Jewess of the opera's title. She was Pauline Lichtenstein, becoming Pauline Rung in 1841, when she married the Danish composer and soon-to-be singing master at the Royal Theatre, Henrik Rung. Pauline Rung was not Italian, of course, and while hopes were high in 1838 that she might become a *prima donna* capable of handling the virtuoso Italian *bel canto* repertoire, her voice never quite developed in that direction. Even so, her singing and acting were very much praised for having many of the positive qualities otherwise associated mostly with the Italians – qualities which many of her Danish colleagues at the Royal Theatre were often said to lack: warmth of expression, the ability not only to sing well, but also to act in an emotionally convincing and touching way, and so on. The perception of such qualities in her singing and acting in fact predated the arrival of the Italian company in Copenhagen. These "southern" qualities of her performances, furthermore, seem to have resonated in the "exotic" identity of several of her roles, not least in the Jewish identity of Rachel. Another important context for this enquiry into her performances as Rachel therefore concerns the history of Jewish culture, and thus of anti-Semitism, in Denmark at this point in time.

Finally, the enquiry concerns the ways in which these exotic, southern or Jewish qualities were represented in performance, particularly in the qualities of Pauline Rung's vocal performances (insofar as sources permit any reliable impressions of them). What was "Jewishness" made to sound like, in 1842? In dealing with this question, I am seeking to understand a rather complex cultural phenomenon, which I believe Pauline Rung may allow us to glimpse, and which ultimately has to do with a very ephemeral event – the relation of an individual's vocal performance to its contemporary cultural context. The trajectory of this investigation does not follow a straight line, yet by the end of this text, there is something like a thesis that the articulation of a certain moderately "exotic" or "southern" quality became part of Pauline Rung's vocal style, particularly in the 1842 performances – and that this quality contributed to the articulation of the "Jewishness" of Rachel, and possibly, by implication, of Pauline Rung herself.

Methodologically, I should add that this thesis is not primarily based on the evidence of contemporary reception. I do not claim, in other words, that contemporary reviewers identified Pauline Rung's voice as having a "Jewish" timbre or that contemporary listeners necessarily perceived or interpreted the qualities of her voice as expressive of a "Jewish" identity.<sup>4</sup> Rather, I turn this problem on its head: The question of what "Jewishness" was made to sound like in 1842 should be understood quite literally and along the lines of what Ralph P. Locke, in his volume *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*, has called the "All the Music in Full Context" paradigm. In *Jødinden*, the Jewishness of Rachel is already defined by the plot of the opera, by her costumes, in other words, by many factors that do not necessarily relate to the music or to the vocal performance at all. It is fully conceivable, in that context, that the musical sounds emanating from Rachel could have been completely devoid of anything that might be identified as "exotic" or "Jewish" in style.<sup>5</sup> And yet because they are sung in the character of Rachel, at that moment they define the sound of that particular Jewess. I will seek some idea of what characterised that sound in 1842 and evoke what I believe to be a relevant context as fully as I can within the limits of this chapter.

## 1842: The long-missed daughter of Zion

In a review in *Berlingske Tidende* of the Royal Theatre's performance of *Jødinden* on 26 February 1842, the first sentence refers explicitly to the

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, if a reviewer were to have explicitly expressed the idea of Pauline Rung's voice sounding Jewish, it would have been at the risk of being interpreted by contemporary readers as derogatory. When Johanne Louise Heiberg (1812-1890, née Pätges), the most famous actress of her time, overheard, at the age of 15, a row between her parents which revealed that her mother was in fact born a Jewess, she was, according to her own memoirs, filled with grief and shame. As Poul Borchsenius comments, during her childhood Heiberg would hardly have encountered the word "Jew" as anything other than a term of abuse (Borchsenius 1968, 80). It took more than a few decades to change this attitude radically.

<sup>5</sup> Locke develops his concept of the paradigm "All the Music in Full Context" in contrast to what he calls the "Exotic Style Only" paradigm. According to the latter, it makes sense to apply the term musical exoticism only to music that incorporates musical signifiers of Otherness (e.g. *à la turca*, "gypsy" scales, etc). The "All the Music in Full Context" paradigm widens the scope of what may be discovered through using such critical terminology, however, in that it takes a broader view of how images of Otherness and music interact and reflect on each other as well as on a broader context. Musical exoticism, within this broader paradigm, may be conceivable as both "exoticism with and without exotic style" (Locke 2011, 43ff).

competing Italian company at the Court Theatre (in fact, it refers to the very event mentioned by Weyse in his letter to Ingemann, quoted above). The reviewer, it seems, wanted to complain about the bad planning of which the administration at the Royal Theatre was guilty:

Saturday: "Jødinden"; only less than full house, perhaps because Mad[ame] Forconi was to receive flowers at the Court Theatre on that same evening.<sup>6</sup>

While criticising the management, the reviewer suggests that a full house really ought to have been expected, for the event reviewed was in fact a rather high profile one. This was the long awaited re-opening of Halévy's opera, whose first run in 1838 had been very successful, when the then 19-year-old Pauline Lichtenstein made her debut in the role of Rachel. After a few more sarcastic comments about the administration of the Royal Theatre, the reviewer then turned to the event:

Yet – finally she came, the long-missed daughter of Zion, and brought comfort to those who languished, who  
 "Sat by the Rivers of Babylon crying,  
 While the zither hung silent in the willows,  
 And thoughts were set on Zion!"<sup>7</sup>

The long-missed daughter of Zion was obviously *Jødinden*, i.e. Halévy's opera and its female protagonist, Rachel. Yet by implication it seems that the phrase also referred to the soprano, Pauline Lichtenstein, who lost her voice after seven performances of *Jødinden* in 1838;<sup>8</sup> thereafter, her presence as a leading soprano at the Royal Theatre had, in a sense, been "long missed".<sup>9</sup> If the Italians represented one type of operatic exoticism a "southern" in-

<sup>6</sup> "Løverdag: 'Jødinden'; kun Godt Huus, maaskee fordi Mad. Forconi samme Aften skulde have Blomster paa Hofteatret." (*Berlingske Tidende*, 9 March 1842)

<sup>7</sup> "Dog – endelig kom hun, den længselsfuldt forventede Zions Datter, og bragte Trøst til de Vansmægtende, som 'Ved Babylons Floder grædende sad,/Mens Zitharen taus mellem Pilene hang,/Og Tanken i Zion mon være!'" (Ibid.)

<sup>8</sup> The last of these performances took place on 16 November 1838. In October Lichtenstein had also sung the role of Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio* in three performances (Keller 1918, 17 and Overskou 1864, 341-42).

<sup>9</sup> She had, however, appeared in various roles in 1840 and 1841, but these were relatively small and undemanding, and none was comparable in status to that of Rachel (see Keller 1918, 43). Also, as will be discussed below, she appeared at two concerts in early 1842, shortly prior to the restaging of *Jødinden*. Critical reception of her reappearance as Rachel in 1842 nevertheless indicates that this was perceived as her true come-back to the stage of the Royal Theatre.

spiration in Copenhagen at this time then Pauline Lichtenstein seems to have represented another type, associated in this role at least, not with Italy, but with a potentially more “Nordic” way of being “southern”, namely being Jewish.

### 1838: The debut

In 1838 it had been generally agreed that the young Pauline Lichtenstein was a brilliant and unusually promising talent – a great new asset for the Royal Theatre. Hans Christian Andersen was in the audience the night of her debut. He wrote enthusiastically about the performance in several letters, even noting in his almanac: “If her [Lichtenstein’s] spirits and heart are like her singing and nature onstage, I would want her for my wife.”<sup>10</sup>

In a later account of the impression made by the 19-year-old Lichtenstein at her debut, Thomas Overskou described her voice as having a large compass, sounding “full” and “beautiful” (*fyldig og velklingende*). He also complimented her singing for its inner life and the emotional fervour of her expression and her acting, which he characterised as natural and accomplished with artistic ease. These combined qualities prompted an outburst of applause in a first-act ensemble, and she elicited stormy applause on several occasions, especially in singing her more emotional passages (*pathetiske Sæts*), which she did with touching energy (*gribende Energi*) (Overskou 1864, 334).

Hans Christian Andersen’s contemporary correspondence with his friend in Odense, Henriette Hanck, generally confirms Overskou’s testimony, as does Andersen’s rather detailed description in a letter of 28 May 1838 of the two performances of *Jøddinden* he reports to have witnessed. Like Overskou, Andersen made special mention of Lichtenstein’s acting in ensemble scenes:

It is surprising to see how she affected her two colleagues, Sahlertz and Schwartsen. The finale of Act II, in which the three sing together, captured everyone, and I thought I was in Paris; all three of them acted and sang in such a way as to bring tears to my eyes; the audience was electri-

<sup>10</sup> “Har hun Aand og Hjerte, som hun er paa Scenen i Sang og Natur, da vilde jeg have hende til Kone.” (Andersen, *Almanac*, 25 May 1838) Pauline Lichtenstein’s performances are also discussed in Hans Christian’s Andersen’s letter to B.S. Ingemann on 5 June 1838, and in the correspondence with Henriette Hanck, 27 April, 28 May, 9 and 10 June 1838 (Andersen, *Letters*).

fied; they all became southerners, the holy spirit of the tones descended upon them and one heard that they could speak in tongues.<sup>11</sup>

Given Overskou's critical view of what he perceived as the audience's exaggerated and fragmented focus on the achievements of individual singers in Rossi's company in 1841-42, it is interesting to observe here that the positive appraisal of Pauline Lichtenstein's performance concerns not only her own singing, but also the effect she had on her colleagues and their collective achievements in ensemble scenes. It is as if a "southern" quality (the enthusiasm, the emotional absorption, the "magical" transformative power of the experience on the audience) is presented without a negative side attached to it (the individualism, the isolated effect unrelated to the whole).

The sense of enthusiasm amongst the audience was not the only quality of the 1838 performances to be perceived as "southern", however. Even before she started singing, Overskou observed, she attracted attention for her

[...] beautiful, southern exterior; an attractive, full-bodied figure, noble features, dark, fiery eyes, with a lively expression of both passion and quiet melancholy, black hair and a virtuous posture, which, in combination with the soft movements of her arms characterised her entire being as one of pure virginity.<sup>12</sup>

### The 1830s: With the Beckers

For some reason, however, Pauline Lichtenstein's "southern" looks never seem to have been explicitly identified as Jewish. It may well be, of course, that the 1842 review in *Berlingske Tidende* was intended to be read as a suggestion that Madame Rung was herself a "daughter of Zion", but the formulation seems deliberately conceited, ambiguous.<sup>13</sup> Why? Well, probably

<sup>11</sup> "Det er forbausende hvor hun har virket ind paa sine to Medspillende Sahlertz og Schwartsen; anden Acts Finale, hvor de tre syngte, henrev Alle og jeg troede at være i Paris; de spillede alle tre, og sang saa Taarene stod mig i Øinene; Publicum selv blev som elektriserede, de bleve alle Sydboer, Tonernes hellig Aand kom over dem og man hørte de havde Tungemaal." (Andersen, *Letters*, 28 May 1838)

<sup>12</sup> "[...] skønne, sydlandske Udvortes: en smuk, frodig Figur, ædel Ansigtsform, mørke, ildfulde Øine, der havde et levende Udtryk for baade Lidenskabelighed og stille Veemod, sort Haar og en takkelig Holdning, som i Forening med de bløde Armbevægelser gav hendes hele Væsen Præget af reen Jomfruelighed." (Overskou 1864, 334)

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, if "daughter of Zion" were to be understood literally, then the general audience at the Royal Theatre would also, by analogy, have to be identified as a Jewish

quite simply because Pauline Rung was not in fact Jewish – not officially, in any case. However, the story of her life and of her possible Jewish and/or Christian identity is somewhat complicated.

In the biographical sketch published by Rung's daughter, Sophie Keller (née Rung, 1850-1929), published in 1918, no mention is made of the possibility that Pauline Rung might be Jewish (Keller 1918). Pauline Charlotte Frederikke Lichtenstein, we learn from the sketch, was born in Berlin on 21 July 1818 from whence her family at some point moved to Gothenburg in Sweden. There her father died tragically in a work-related accident when Pauline was eight. When the rest of the family moved back to Berlin, Pauline stayed behind, taken care of by the German actor Carl Becker and his family, who ran a travelling theatre company which performed primarily in Sweden, Denmark and northern Germany. Eventually, Pauline too took part in the performances and became much admired, both for her attractive looks and her beautiful singing voice. Amongst her most important roles was Hulda in the popular *Das Donauweibchen: Volksmärchen mit Gesang* – a role that demanded metamorphosing her way through a number of guises (an old mother, a Savoyard, a mermaid queen, etc.) (Keller 1918, 9-11; Hensel 1798, 1). Another role for which she attracted special attention was the title role in Carl Maria von Weber's *Preciosa*, in which she starred as the beautiful gypsy girl. In other words, it seems that somewhat exotic qualities tended to be associated with her professional persona already at this early stage of her career or that she gave such roles with particular success.

While it may not be possible to determine for which theatrical role Pauline Rung's exotic attire in this portrait is intended, it does lend some credibility to Thomas Overskou's description, some twelve years earlier, of her "beautiful, southern exterior".

## 1818: The Baptism

Presumably, Sophie Keller would have mentioned that her mother was Jewish if this was in fact the case. The only detail that might imply her Jewish heritage is a brief comment about the wedding between Pauline and Henrik Rung on 30 October 1841 – a "quiet" wedding owing to the circumstance

community who had spent the years since 1838 in silence, metaphorically crying by the rivers of Babylon – an implication that may or may not have been intended as a subtle suggestion that Royal Theatre audiences tended to consist of liberals who sympathised with the culture of the French July monarchy, of which Halévy's *La juive*, of course, was a product.



Illustration 1. Julius Magnus Petersen: Pauline Rung in costume, 1850. The Royal Library, Copenhagen

that they had received special permission to marry from the King: “de havde løst Kongebrev” (Keller 1918, 20). No explanation is offered as to why special permission (*Kongebrev*) was needed, but one reason would be if Pauline was Jewish (see Schwarz Lausten, 202ff, and Landsarkivet, “Kongebrev”). According to a document in the large international database FamilySearch, it appears that Friedrike Charlotte Lichtenstein was baptised on 2 August 1818 in Berlin, i.e. a few weeks after her birth on 21 July. The parents, according to this database, were Michael Heinrich Lichtenstein and Henriette Luisa Grosse (FamilySearch, “Friedrike Charlotte Lichtenstein”).<sup>14</sup> It also appears that the father, Michael Heinrich Lichtenstein, was himself baptised on 18 May 1816, i.e. only two years before the birth of Friedrike Charlotte and six months before the birth of her eldest brother, Ludwig Heinrich Lichtenstein (FamilySearch, “Markus or Michael Heinrich Lichtenstein” and “Ludwig Heinrich Lichtenstein”). This would indicate that Pauline’s father, Michael Heinrich Lichtenstein, was born a non-Lutheran (i.e. possibly, but not necessarily, a Jew) and converted in 1816 in order to marry the pregnant Henriette Luisa Grosse. What does this say about Pauline’s religious identity? Presumably the fact that she was baptised should make her a *bona fide* Christian in the eyes of the law, regardless of whether her father’s family was Jewish. But it is also possible that she was unable to prove her Christian identity to the Danish authorities. Thus, there is a possibility that these somewhat ambiguous circumstances could after all explain why a so-called *Kongebrev* was needed for Henrik Rung and Pauline Lichtenstein to marry in 1841.

In Sophie Keller’s portrait Pauline’s experience of being adopted, exiled and growing up apart from her family in Berlin occasioned a certain melancholy strain in her personality: “Ich denke an meinen Schicksal”, she is reported to have said at one point, having been asked what was on her mind – an utterance to which her daughter evidently attached significance (Keller 1918, p. 8). It would seem that Pauline Lichtenstein had a second identity, one that was not talked about (whether Jewish, Catholic or something else), which, figuratively speaking, formed a silent, unvoiced counterpoint to her official life. Viewed in the light of such biographical details, the role of Rachel could have functioned, in one way or another, as a figure of identification for Pauline Rung and an opportunity to give voice to a second, possibly more exotic identity. And reviewers, such as the one from *Berlingske Tidende*, might have participated in a similar double-game.

<sup>14</sup> This is consistent with information given about Pauline Rung in the article on Henrik Rung in the online encyclopedia *Den Store Danske* (Ketting 2011).

## Excursus I: Who is Jewish?

During the nineteenth century many European Jews converted to Christianity. For some, the conversion could be seen as a logical step in a process of cultural “modernisation”, while for others, such a process ought not to involve conversion, but rather a reforming of Jewish religious and cultural traditions.<sup>15</sup> Conversion was also part of the process of political and cultural integration into the dominant Christian culture, a move that could make life much easier with respect to education, work opportunities and marriage (Schwarz Lausten 2006, 16ff and 202ff). In Denmark Jews in principle had been “free citizens” since the so-called *Frihedsbrev* (“Letter of Freedom”) of 1814, i.e. they were allowed to work in all trades.<sup>16</sup> In reality this freedom was quite restricted, however, and anti-Semitic sentiments were widespread. Literary campaigns against Jews in 1813 and 1816 and a violent pogrom in 1819 marked perhaps the most explicit manifestations of such sentiments, yet anti-Semitism is detectable throughout and beyond the period under discussion here (see, again, Schwarz Lausten 2006 and also Tudvad 2010 and Borchsenius 1968). While this is not the place to analyse or consider the many complex aspects of this history of cultural change and discrimination, a few questions do seem to be relevant to the present discussion. One has to do with the appreciation in Christian society of conversion, not only as a phenomenon that concerns an individual’s formal religious identity, but also as concerns that individual’s cultural identity,

<sup>15</sup> Cf. (Botstein 1991).

<sup>16</sup> This included employment in public institutions, in principle at least, yet it appears that interpretations of the *Frihedsbrev* could vary on this point. As far as the Royal Theatre is concerned, the employment of Jewish singers or actors seems to have been controversial, and it may have been the general understanding for several decades after 1814 that Jews had no legal access to these jobs. In September 1827 two sisters, Ida and Emilie d’Fonseca, whose father was Jewish, were employed at the Theatre, and a third sister, Julie, was employed in 1833. Ida d’Fonseca, an alto with a dark timbre, was known, nationally and internationally, as one of the foremost singers in Denmark at the time. Tellingly, when a reviewer in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* on 15 January 1829 complained that many Copenhageners were unjustly prejudiced against “Israelites” on the stage and that the fine talents of the two d’Fonseca sisters ought to persuade them to think otherwise, the directors of the Royal Theatre felt obliged to issue an official denial that the d’Fonseca sisters were in fact Jewish: on 19 January a statement was published in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* that the sisters were of Christian birth and religious persuasion (Ahlgren Jensen 2007, 75). Martin Schwarz Lausten quotes the Jewish catechist, A.D. Cohen who stated in 1837 that no Jewish person had obtained public employment in a number of central types of jobs so far – in teaching, governmental institutions, the army, etc. Cohen adds, however, that this was not because the King or the law prevented such employment from happening, but rather because tradition and habit worked against it (Schwarz Lausten 2006, 16).

so to speak. This, by implication, is also a question pertaining to some of the mechanisms of anti-Semitism in Christian society in the nineteenth century. Another issue has to do with the ways in which music and the musical voice may have been part of the symbolic representation of Jewish cultural identity.

As is well known, Richard Wagner dealt with both of these questions in his essay *Das Judenthum in der Musik*, first published in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1850 as a reaction to a discussion in the journal of the phenomenon of a possible “hebräischer Kunstgeschmack”. While Wagner’s essay may not be a relevant document to consult if we want to know about the specific relationship between Jewish and Christian culture in Denmark around ten years earlier, it may nevertheless serve to illustrate clearly two arguments that are relevant to the Danish context, as I will seek to demonstrate. The premise of Wagner’s discussion was that Jews and Jewish culture in contemporary European society – at least progressive, reform-orientated members of that culture – while largely ghettoized, increasingly sought to be integrated and indeed assimilated into the national cultures around them. Considering the intellectual legacy of Jewish enlightenment philosophers such as Moses Mendelssohn and also the contemporary Jewish reform movements, this is a fairly unproblematic premise.<sup>17</sup>

The same premise is also central to the first novel of the Danish author, Meïr Aron Goldschmidt, *En Jøde* (1845). Goldschmidt, however, viewed the issue from the standpoint of the young, ambitious, “modern” protagonist, Jacob, who strives to be accepted on an equal basis amongst his fellow Danes, meanwhile frowning on the backward ways of his own Jewish culture. What Wagner describes as “our” problematic blend of an idealistic support of the “emancipation” of the Jews in principle on the one hand and an instinctive disgust and reluctance to accept Jews when actually confronted with them in daily life on the other is very similar to Goldschmidt’s descriptions of the attitude Jacob encounters among his fellow Danes, not least in the seemingly well-meaning family of his fiancée, the daughter of a Danish Protestant pastor.

More controversially, of course, Wagner set out not only to explain and analyse this situation, but also to rationalise and legitimise “our” instinctive reluctance (disgust) to accept the Jews. He ends his essay with rather disheartening friendly advice to the Jews: “Gemeinschaftlich mit uns Mensch werden, heißt für den Juden aber zu allernächst so viel als: aufhören, Jude zu sein.” (Wagner 1850/1869, 32) For some reason Wagner chose to single

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Botstein 1991.

out the converted poet, Ludwig Börne, as a rare instance of someone who had indeed ceased to be a Jew. Obviously, however, it is not just the simple fact that Börne “formally” converted to Protestantism that qualified him, in Wagner’s eyes, to be considered a fully assimilated German – effectively a non-Jew – for the formal act of conversion was clearly not enough in the cases of Mendelssohn, Heine and others. In order to *really* stop being a Jew, a mythical transformation like the one experienced by the Flying Dutchman was needed: “Die Erlösung Ahasvers” (ibid.). While Wagner obviously expressed a rather radical point of view, which may not have been uncommon, but which at the same time was certainly not unanimously shared by all of his contemporaries,<sup>18</sup> his essay may still serve as a reminder that conversion would not automatically result in broad cultural acceptance and that Jews would not necessarily stop being considered “Jewish” simply because they were baptised.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, this statement should probably be balanced against other testimony. Martin Schwarz Lausten, for instance, quotes the late nineteenth-century historian, Marcus Rubin, for stating that the effect of conversion for Danish Jews in the early nineteenth century was that they became “equal to their Christian co-citizens and were in the future neither troubled with obstacles on their path, nor met with rude or delicate Hep-greetings”.<sup>20</sup> While this is not, to be sure, a statement which belies or belittles the existence of widespread anti-Semitic sentiments in Danish culture in the early nineteenth century (quite the contrary, in fact), it does represent the attitude that for some, such anti-Semitic sentiments did not amount to defining Jewish identity as a practically inescapable, “deep” cultural identity, as in Wagner’s analysis, but that anti-Semitism was simply an expression of dislike of the Jewish religion and its overt symbols .

To sum up, then: If Pauline Rung was never identified as “Jewish”, this may reflect the simple fact that she was baptised a Christian and married Henrik Rung in a Danish church. Still, Pauline’s southern, dark looks seem to have been associated naturally, and with positive connotations, with the Jewish identity of Rachel in *Jødinden*.<sup>21</sup> What remains to be considered is whether this association may also have had a musical side.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also Peter Tudvad’s analysis of Søren Kirkegaard’s anti-Semitic thinking in the context of contemporary Danish culture (Tudvad 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. note 16 above.

<sup>20</sup> “...ligestillede med deres kristne Medborgere og vare i Fremtiden hverken udsatte for Hindringer paa deres Vej eller for grovere eller finere Hepraab.” (Schwarz Lausten 2005, 506)

<sup>21</sup> It might be added that I have come across no indication that Pauline or Henrik Rung shared the anti-Semitic sentiments of many of their contemporaries. Henrik

## Excursus II: What does “Jewishness” sound like?

To answer the question of what does “Jewishness” sound like, I need to return yet again to Richard Wagner, Meïr Aron Goldschmidt and Hans Christian Andersen. Richard Wagner’s critique of the Jewish in music is formulated along two lines. The one which should no doubt be considered the most important – the critique directed primarily against Mendelssohn and Meyerbeer, the main targets of the whole polemic of Wagner’s essay – will not concern me here. The other has to do with the sound of the Jewish singing voice. This voice, according to Wagner, is incapable of artistic expression, first of all because the Jewish language is packed with incomprehensible, ridiculous sounds (“ein zischender, schrillender, summsender und murksender Lautausdruck” (Wagner 1850/1869, 15)) and because Jews are generally unable to pronounce any European language without a strong accent. Secondly, the Jewish singing voice is unable to convince us emotionally; if a Jewish voice becomes passionate, the effect is ridiculous; it never awakens sympathy in the listener. This general argument is quite unconvincing (and unsympathetic), of course, and also quite below the usual intellectual standards of Wagner’s prose. What nevertheless makes it interesting here, to my mind, has little to do with the substance of his argument and rather more to do with the rhetorical function of the negative stereotype that he conjures up. The strange (and to the outsider ridiculous-sounding and provocative) Jewish voice is made to represent that which is fundamentally incompatible with national (German) culture and something which defies comprehension across cultures.

In chapter 9 of Goldschmidt’s *En Jøde*, the time arrives for Jacob’s Bar Mitzvah. At a certain point the narrator appears compelled to observe the ceremonies from the outside:

Now it was time for the Tora to be read. Singing out loud, the person from the congregation who had bought this privilege approached the Aron Kodesh, drew the curtain aside and took out the Tora, while the congregation prayed audibly. Whoever might have heard the shouts of the congregation at this moment and not understood the ceremony would have believed that the precentor was about to commit a burglary and that the others through their warnings were trying to prevent it.<sup>22</sup>

Rung collaborated throughout his career with Jewish artists; in 1869, for instance, he composed the music for Meïr Aron Goldschmidt’s drama, *Rabbi’en og Ridderen*, incorporating “old Jewish” melodies into the score.

<sup>22</sup> ”Nu kom Tiden da Thora skulle oplæses. Høit syngende nærmede den af Menigheden, der havde kjøbt denne Betjening, sig Oraun hakaudesch, slog Forhænget til side og

When a little later Jacob is to perform his part in this ceremony, his pronunciation of the benedictions are described as being in “the curious singing tone that befits this”; then he proceeds to the “artificial rhythmic declamation” of the verse, which was selected by chance for him on that day.

While Goldschmidt’s descriptions are obviously not meant to ridicule these Jewish vocal performances, he nevertheless employs a rhetorical strategy that stresses their “strangeness” when heard by “outsiders”: the performances sound “curious”, “artificial”, more like “a burglary” than music. This rhetorical strategy prepares for a more outspoken sense of alienation, when Jacob, while studying in Copenhagen, gradually distances himself more and more from what he perceives as the superstitious religious traditions of his family.

Thus, the sound of the Jewish voice may, in such contexts, be understood as a voice marked by its cultural difference, belonging to a ghetto culture which is “problematic” or “provocative” in the sense that its traditionalism is also perceived as indicative of an attitude of resistance to “modern” Christian culture (a quality to which Wagner and Goldschmidt related in quite different ways).

But the same category of Jewish voice(s) may also be experienced from the opposite perspective, stressing a sense of community, familiarity and belonging. In a description of a Passover ceremony in Jacob’s childhood home these aspects are very much emphasised; in fact, the descriptions of the ecstatic, transformative power of the singing almost remind us of Hans Christian Andersen’s descriptions of the ensemble scenes in *Jødinden*, quoted above:

The joy increased and became almost wild; Danish, German and Hebrew were mixed in the singing; [...] Louder and louder the jubilant cries; the elderly sang with tears in their eyes, the child beat the rhythm on the table with a glass in one hand and a bottle in the other and cried with joy [...].<sup>23</sup>

udtog Thora, under Menighedens lydelige Bønner. Den, som havde hørt Forsamlingens høie Raab i dette Øieblik og ikke forstod Ceremonien, skulde troet, at Forsangeren vilde begaae Indbrud, og at de Øvrige ved deres Advarsler søgte at afholde ham derfra.” (Goldschmidt 1845/1896, 110)

<sup>23</sup> ”Glæden steg og blev næsten vild; man sang Dansk, Tydsk og Hebraisk imellem hinanden; [...] Høiere og høiere hvirvlede Jublen; de Ældre sang med Taarer i Øinene, Barnet slog Tact i Bordet med et Glas i den ene Haand og en Flaske i den anden og græd af Jubel [...]” (Goldschmidt 1845/1896, 29)

In Andersen's first novel, *Improvisatoren* (1835), the idea of the Jewish voice, in this case female, is introduced in quite a different way. The story is set in Rome, where the protagonist, Antonio, and his friend, Bernardo, are both captivated by a young, beautiful woman, whom Bernardo has "found" in the Jewish ghetto. Together, the two visit the Alibert Theatre where a soprano is to make her debut as Dido (presumably in Niccolò Piccini's opera). Bernardo recognises her as his "Jewess", while Antonio believes her to be a Catholic girl from his childhood. For a while her identity (Jewish or Catholic?) is unclear to the reader. At the point when we finally learn that the soprano is in fact the Catholic girl, Annunziata, of Antonio's childhood memories, her identity has nevertheless become ineradicably associated with the image of the "beautiful Jewess" – *la belle juive* – a literary stereotype, of which, as Diana Hallman argues, Rachel is also a clear example (Hallman 2002, 213ff).

Escaping a cruel destiny, Annunziata was for a while protected by an old Jew in the Ghetto (which is where Bernardo met her), and as Antonio later runs into her, she is always accompanied by an old lady, whose "eyes and facial features revealed at first sight that she was a Jewess!"<sup>24</sup>

Andersen's description of Annunziata's fictive performance as Dido follows the protagonist, and Antonio's intense subjective experience of it is cast in the language of admiration, musical romanticism and emotional absorption:

When Aeneas then confesses to her that he will leave her, that they are not married, that he does not know of their wedding torch, how amazingly did she not express the transition in her soul, the surprise, the pain, the anger; and now she sang her grand aria; it was like the waves from deep below, hitting the clouds above; how can I describe this world of tones, as it appeared now! [...] A general applause washed through the house, "Annunziata! Annunziata!" they shouted, and she had to reappear, before the enthusiastic crowd, again and again.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "hendes Øie, den hele Ansigtsfor sagde ved første Øiekast, at det var en Jødinde!" (Andersen 1835/1987, 95)

<sup>25</sup> "Da siden Aeneas tilstaaer hende, at han gaaer bort, at de jo ei ere figte, han ikke kjender deres Brudéfakkel, hvor forbausende vidste hun da ikke at udtrykke Overgangen i sin Sjæl, Overraskelsen, Smerten, Raseriet; og nu sang hun sin stor Arie; det var som Dybets Bølger, der sloge mod Skyerne; hvorledes udtaler jeg denne Toneverden, som her aabenbarede sig! [...] Et almindeligt Bifaldsraab brusede gjennem Huset. "Annunziata! Annunziata!" raabte de, og hun maatte frem og atter frem for den begejstrede Mængde" (Andersen 1835/1987, 90)

In chapter 6 of his autobiography, *Mit Livs Eventyr*, Hans Christian Andersen tells us of two sources of inspiration for the character of Annunziata: one was Maria Malibran, whom he heard on his travels; the other was one of the first actresses he ever experienced as a child in Odense, performing the role of Hulda in *Das Donauweibchen*, and whom he later met as a poor old lady at the hospital in Odense (Andersen 1855/1996, 192-93). While there is no direct link, of course, between the actress Hulda of Andersen's childhood and Pauline Lichtenstein's later performances of the same character (also in Odense, among other places), it seems clear that Andersen must have heard in Pauline Lichtenstein's performances as Rachel a reflection of the soprano of his own imagination, Annunziata – a mixture of Hulda and Maria Malibran, a dark-haired, dark-eyed beauty who fit the part of the beautiful Jewess – *la belle juive* – perfectly.

As a literary stereotype, the beautiful Jewess will almost invariably involve a (“problematic”) love interest between herself and a young Christian man. And she will be protected by an older Jew, either her father, her grandfather or someone playing a similar part – a variant of the Shylock character (in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*).<sup>26</sup> One central question which such fictions deal with is the possibility of marriage between Jews and Christians – a question which clearly resonated with contemporary political and cultural reality in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe. It may even be that Pauline Lichtenstein's own parents had faced the same problem. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many fictions involving the beautiful Jewess places this figure in a sort of intermediate realm between Judaism and Christianity; *Improvisatoren* is one example of this, *La juive* another.<sup>27</sup>

As far as the vocal characterisation of Rachel is concerned, it would make sense to look for signs of a similarly “intermediate” realm, a voice that may be considered “exotic” to a degree (but not ridiculous), which combines this exoticism with a sense of familiarity and communality and invites emotional absorption.

### Rachel's voice

With respect to musical style the character of Eleazar seems much more clearly marked as a Jew throughout the opera than Rachel's, especially

<sup>26</sup> See also Diana R. Hallman's discussions of Eleazar and Rachel as literary stereotypes (Hallman 2002, 210-252).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Diana Hallman's discussion of the “dual religious identity” of Rachel (Hallman 2002, 193ff).

when he performs the role of Precentor during the Passover ceremonies in Act II, for instance. The major musical “hit” of the opera, Eleazar’s aria “Rachel, quand du seigneur”, also lends itself to performance in a Jewish cantor’s vocal style.<sup>28</sup>

Although it is Eleazar who performs the role of Precentor, it is Rachel’s voice that is heard over the ensemble, as the choir repeats Eleazar’s phrases in responsorial style, characteristic of much of the liturgical music used in moderate, or “reformed” Jewish communities in the nineteenth century (Hallman 2002, 177ff).<sup>29</sup> In fact, the review in *Berlingske Tidende* in 1842 singles out this passage for special praise: “The way in which she [Rachel], at the table along with the others, repeats the prayer is among the most beautiful and most touching moments in the art of dramatic singing we have experienced here in Denmark.”<sup>30</sup>

As we have seen elsewhere, special attention is given here to Rachel’s contribution to ensemble scenes, and in this case – as in her finale performance in Act II in 1838, according to Hans Christian Andersen – part of the effect must have had to do with the way in which a sense of community was communicated. As in the Passover ceremony described in Goldschmidt’s *En jøde* (quoted above), this scene is all about the collective expression of positive religious feelings within the closed circle of a Jewish household. And significantly, the Jewish voices heard during this scene were not staged as defying comprehension across cultures or sounding like a burglary to a stranger, but as voices that expressed such sentiments in a beautiful, touching way.

In the opera a young gentile, Leopold, who is in love with Rachel, but takes part in the ceremony disguised as a young Jewish man named Samuel is also present in this scene. Shortly afterwards, as Rachel and Samuel/Leopold are alone, he reveals that he is not Jewish at all, but merely

<sup>28</sup> Cf., for instance, Richard Tucker’s performance of the role or Neil Shicoff’s. Several historical recordings of the aria sung by professional Jewish cantors are also available (e.g. Misha Alexandrovich, Moshe Koussevitzky on the CD *Cantors in the Opera House*, Israel Music, 2006). Particularly famous, of course, are Enrico Caruso’s renditions of “Rachel, quand du seigneur”.

<sup>29</sup> In Denmark this style must have appeared relatively modern in 1842. According to Jane Mink Rossen, the “reformed” style of the Viennese cantor Salomon Sulzer (comparable to the style represented in Act II of *Jødinden*) was introduced gradually by Isidor Rosenfeldt and Moritz Moses Mirkin, who became cantors at the Copenhagen synagogue in 1843 and 1844 respectively (Rossen and Sharvit 2006, 28, 40-41). Cf. also (Sulzer 1839/1989) and (Rosenfeldt n.d.).

<sup>30</sup> “Den Maade, hvorpaa hun ved Bordet, med de Andre, gjentager Bønnen, er Noget af det Skjønneste, og meest Gribende, vi have oplevet af dramatisk Sang herhjemme.” (*Berlingske Tidende* 9 March, 1842).

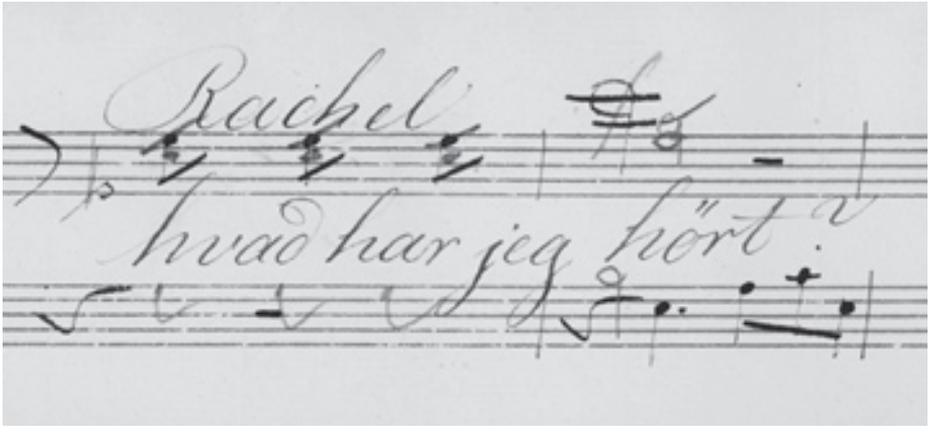


Illustration 2. Detail from Rachel's part in the Royal Theatre's rehearsal material for *Jødinden*. The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

pretended to be so in order to get close to Rachel. At this, she exclaims, shocked: “What have I heard?” (“Hvad har jeg hørt?”)

In the rehearsal material used in connection with the Danish performances of *Jødinden* in the nineteenth century, it appears that the melodic line sung by Rachel at this point – as in many similar passages – has been altered slightly. The original's c’-c’-c’-a”, in which the last syllable is sung on a rather high note (a musical gesture somewhat reminiscent of Leonore’s melodramatic disclosure “Ich bin sein Weib!” in the finale of Beethoven’s *Fidelio*), has been crossed out and a few alternative versions suggested below. The lowest version reads: a’-a’-a’-c”. On the staff below, a final option seems to have been decided upon: c’-c’-c’-e” (to be read, no doubt, in the soprano C clef of the upper staff, rather than the bass clef of the lower staff on which it is actually notated; see Illustration 2).

While this material was used by several performers during the nineteenth century and even at a performance as late as 1929, it seems possible – even likely, I think – that these alternatives were notated by Henrik Rung in 1842. According to Sophie Keller, Pauline Lichtenstein started her voice lessons with Henrik Rung in 1840. At that point his judgement of her voice was that it had been over-exerted: she had, apparently “sung on her talent” (“sunget på talentet”), but lacked careful, systematic training (Keller 1918, 19). Recently returned from a stay in Italy and Paris during which he had apparently picked up many modern ideas about voice training,<sup>31</sup> Henrik

<sup>31</sup> In Rome Rung had been taught by Girolamo Ricci – according to Thrane one of Rome’s best singing teachers at the time (Thrane 1901, 47). In Paris he avidly studied the styles and performances of the famous singers at the *Théâtre-Italien*: Rubini,

Rung embarked on a strategy of cautious, gradual and systematic training of Pauline's voice.

Interestingly, a manuscript of singing exercises written by Henrik Rung, which presumably dates from around this time, contains among many other things a number of short phrases with many alternative texts written underneath (Rung n.d.). The phrases often suggest rather "passionate" outbursts as shown in Illustration 3, where the words *abbandono*, *assasino*, and so on are to be sung on the pitches g'-g'-(d'')-c''. Significantly, all the exercises of this type are in a relatively low register (mostly between c' and c''). None goes beyond f''.

A similar tendency seems to be generally detectable in the original rehearsal material for the part of Rachel in *Jødinden*. Short dramatic statements which in Halévy's original often end on rather high notes (higher than f'') are altered, presumably so that they can be sung in a lower register. Another example appears shortly before Leopold/Samuel reveals his true identity in Act II. Here in the original Rachel sings the name "Samuel!" on a repeated ab'', *fortissimo*. The alteration changes this into a descending diminished triad, f''-d''-b' (Illustration 4).

It would seem logical that such alterations stem from 1842 as part of a general strategy of accommodating Pauline Rung's voice problems and show care that she not over-exert her voice again. At the same time, it would seem that the use of a relatively low register for short, strong, passionate outbursts was also calculated to produce a specifically "exotic" dramatic effect.

That this was the case, may be confirmed, I think, by considering a concert which took place at the Court Theatre on 12 February 1842, only

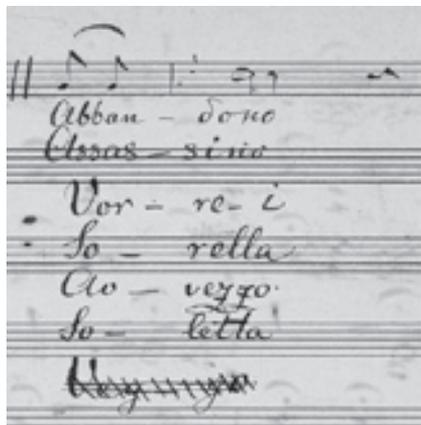


Illustration 3. Detail from Henrik Rung: *Sangøvelser* (n.d.). The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

Tamburini, Lablache, Grisi, Persiani and the young Pauline Garcia (Thrane 1901, 55-56). It may be added that Henrik Rung's large collection of musical materials, now in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, contains a copy of a first edition of Manuel Garcia's *Ecole de Chant*, vol. 1, from 1840, and a copy of Nicola Vaccaj's *Metodo pratico de cant*, first published in 1832. Concerning Rung and his collection, see also (Bergsagel 2004).

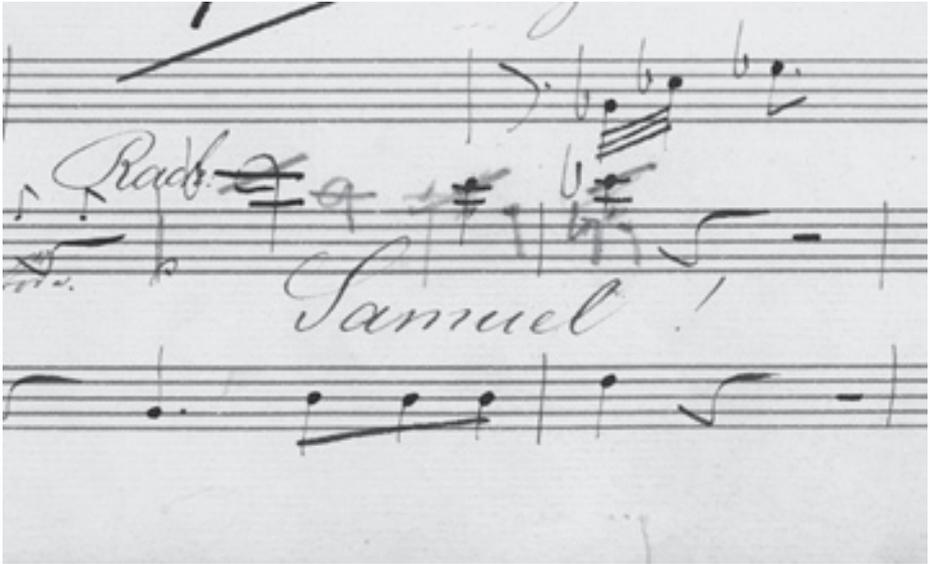


Illustration 4. Detail from Rachel's part in the Royal Theatre's rehearsal material for *Jødinden*. The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

two weeks before the re-staging of *Jødinden*. The performance was repeated on 1 March, and while the venue may have been associated with the Italians at this point, it was not, after all, reserved especially for them. The concert was announced as a concert "by Mad[ame] Rung". The rather lengthy programme, printed in full in the newspaper *Fædrelandet* on 31 February, was divided into three parts, each of which was introduced by a solo performance by Pauline Rung. The rest of the programme consisted of solo performances, duets or ensembles featuring other singers of the Royal Theatre. The whole thing was led by Henrik Rung.

Apart from her three solos Pauline Rung was to participate in three operatic ensembles (two by Mercadante and one by Donizetti), a *Notturmo* (a quintet) by Bonifazio Asioli and a sextet composed by Henrik Rung. A rather strong emphasis, in other words, was on showing how the whole opera company at the Royal Theatre could perform together (this being generally commented on as a weak point of Rossi's company) and also apparently demonstrating the allegedly brilliant effect of Pauline Rung's contribution to such ensembles. A marked preference for relatively simple, beautiful slow movements is evident: andantes, largos and andantinos prevail over fast and virtuosic tempi. The three solo songs performed by Pauline Rung at this concert are also remarkably simple and devoid of high notes and vir-

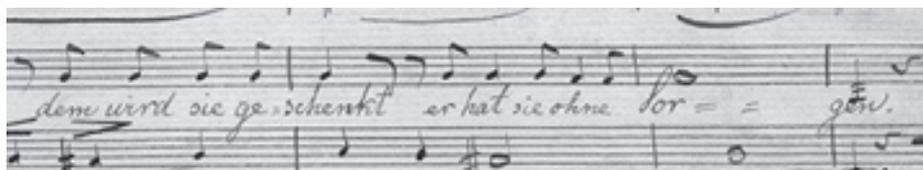


Illustration 5. Detail from Julius Rietz: *Die Hexenküche aus Faust von Göthe*. The Royal library, Copenhagen.

tuosic passages (f” again is the high note, although a “high” g” is touched on, very briefly at one point).<sup>32</sup>

Pauline Rung’s last solo performance, at the beginning of the third part of the concert, is particularly interesting. The text was in German (Pauline Rung’s mother tongue), and most of the time the piece involves a rather energetic declamation of the text on a single repeated note. The music, by Julius Rietz, was a song called *Die Hexenküche aus Faust von Göthe*. Pauline Rung represented one of a group of witches, and according to the manuscript, the music was introduced by a few words to be spoken by Mephistopheles. Perhaps actors from the Royal Theatre participated in a quasi-scenic performance of the piece. The vocal part is exceptionally low; most of the time it stays within the interval of the fourth between f#’ and b’. At the very end it drops down a further octave, to f# (see Illustration 5). This would be a low note even for an alto, and given the context, it appears that the point of using such a low register has to do with the song being sung by a witch.

While the dramatic exclamations in *Jödinden* are not nearly as low as this, it nevertheless seems that the lowering of Pauline’s Rung’s voice, so that syllables expressing particularly stressful emotions are pitched around or just below c” (rather than c”), were not only calculated to ensure that her voice was not strained beyond its capacity, but at the same time added an effect of “exoticism” to the musical characterisation of Rachel.

## Conclusion: Southern, exotic, Jewish, Danish

In 1841, one critic praised Madame Forconi, the female lead of Rossi’s company, for the “riveting delivery and the extraordinary dramatic effect she

<sup>32</sup> For this study I have consulted a selection of the music manuscripts in Henrik Rung’s collection at the Danish Royal Library, focusing primarily on the solo numbers performed by Pauline Rung at these concerts. The manuscripts consulted are listed in the Bibliography (s.v. Court Theatre Concert Manuscripts).

invests in her singing”.<sup>33</sup> The critic went so far as to state that “we cannot imagine a more perfect dramatic singing than that of Mad[ame] Forconi”.<sup>34</sup> The same reviewer soon goes on to admit, nevertheless, that Forconi was really only a mezzo soprano and had some difficulties with the high notes, which tended to be a little false (*Københavnsposten*, 19 November 1841, here quoted from Schepelern 1976, 85). Thomas Overskou described Madame Forconi in a somewhat similar manner. He praised her acting for its energetic passion and her voice for “a pleasant timbre, full and grounded in the middle register, but somewhat thin and shaky in the top notes, for which reason she did not usually have much luck with the coloraturas”<sup>35</sup> (Overskou 1864, 494-95).

Pauline Rung’s voice, it would seem, had many of the same qualities. Even before she re-appeared as Rachel on 26 February 1842, she was compared to Madame Forconi in the press. Thus, on 21 January 1842, the Danish newspaper *Dagen* predicted that the Royal Theatre might very well be able to compete with the Italians in the Italian repertoire and that audiences in particular might find in Madame Rung “a fine artist and a lucky competitor to Mad[ame] Forconi”.<sup>36</sup> It would seem that Rung had lived up to expectations. Yet opera culture and etiquette were different at the Royal Theatre. The reviewer in *Dagen* put it this way after a very positive review of Madame Rung’s performance as Rachel in *Jødinden* on 26 February:

Were not, as they luckily are, all enthusiastic celebrations of the artist after the curtain falls considered foreign to the Royal Theatre, then surely curtain calls and offerings of flowers, not just from some parties, but from the entire enthusiastic audience, would not have been missing from this wonderful performance.<sup>37</sup>

The hot, “southern” operatic qualities of Pauline Rung’s performance belonged, after all (“luckily”!), to the context of our own, cooler, less Dionysian, more “Nordic” opera culture. In fact, it would seem that the exoticism

<sup>33</sup> “[...] henrivende Foredrag og den mageløse dramatiske Effekt, hun forstaar at lægge i sin Sang; [...]” (*Dagen* 21 January 1842).

<sup>34</sup> “[...] vi kunne ikke tænke os nogen mere fuldendt dramatisk Sang, end *Mad. Forconis*” (ibid.)

<sup>35</sup> “[...] af meget behagelig Klangfarve, fyldig og fast i Mellemtonerne, men noget tynd og usikker i Høiden, hvorfor hun sjældent var heldig i Coloraturer; [...]” (ibid.)

<sup>36</sup> “[...] en udmærket Konstnerinde og *Mad. Forconis* heldige Medbeilerinde,”

<sup>37</sup> “Vare ikke, lykkeligviis, alle entusiastiske Hyldninger af Konstneren, efter Tæppets Nedgang, fremmede i det kongelige Theater, vilde Fremkaldelser og Blomsterofringer, ikke af Partier, men af det hele begeistrede Publicum, ikke være udeblevne efter denne herlige Fremstilling.” (*Dagen*, 27 February 1842)

of Pauline Rung was always a balanced one, or at least it was interpreted that way. Like Forconi, Rung was really more of a mezzo soprano. Jenny Lind on the other hand – like Madame Forconi, Pauline Rung’s almost exact contemporary<sup>38</sup> – having also experienced voice problems that seem to have been somewhat comparable to Pauline Lichtenstein’s,<sup>39</sup> came to be known for her rather bright, light and agile soprano voice – a voice well suited to the Italian *bel canto* repertoire, yet in a particularly “Nordic” or “Scandinavian” way (she was called, as is well known, the “Swedish nightingale”). Jenny Lind first appeared in Copenhagen in 1843 and was very well received, including by Hans Christian Andersen who immediately brought her flowers. Jenny Lind and Pauline Rung each in their own way seem to have satisfied a desire for an operatic voice that was able to balance southern and Nordic qualities.

And if, in 1842, Pauline Rung’s voice, and the whole of her stage appearance, may have been associated with the Jewish identity of Rachel, it seems that this stage identity was not so strongly and inescapably attached to her as to inhibit her from taking on other roles. In 1844 she starred as Valentine in Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* (premiered in Paris in 1836), and in 1845 she was the Danish girl Ida in Henrik Rung’s grand opera, *Stormen paa Kiøbenhavn* (cf. Hesselager 2010). As if calculated to complete this trajectory, which seems to have made her more “Nordic” or “Danish” every year, Pauline Rung was the first to appear in the role of Kirsten, in Hans Christian Andersen and J.P.E. Hartmann’s opera *Liden Kirsten*, which premiered in 1846. *Liden Kirsten* is a relatively short opera based on a legend from a Danish medieval ballad, which may be said to be at the heart of Danish national-romantic culture. At the time of the premiere, Andersen was in Italy, so he did not witness personally Pauline Rung’s creation of the role of Kirsten. A friend, Jonna Stampe, however, wrote to him of the performances, not only of *Liden Kirsten*, but also of his romantic play, *Mulatten*, which was performed around the same time – this time with a new figure in the role of Cecilie, the Jewish actress Emma Meier:

“Liden Kirsten” has now been performed and was received with much applause; how lovely it is, dear poet! And how I find the music and text in complete harmony with each other; it is the loveliest dramatised medieval ballad imaginable, so Nordic and so healthy, I wish you might have heard it! Hansen sings as beautifully and with such heart as only he knows how to, and M[a]d[ame] Rung represents the most lovable

<sup>38</sup> Jenny Lind was born in 1820; Felicita Forconi was born in 1819.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ingela Tägil’s text in this anthology.

little Kirsten, so virginal and graceful she is! Ms Meyer gave the role of “Cecilie” in “Mulatten”, but with all due respect to the applause she received from her fellows-in-faith, there can be only one judgement of her, namely that she is cold and unbearable; I did not want the beloved Mulatto spoiled by her, so I did not go, yet I actually regret it, for the high worth of the Mulatto she cannot, thank God, diminish, the little fool!<sup>40</sup>

It may be, of course, that Emma Meier was not a great actress.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of her artistic merits, however, the grim contrast between the praise lavished on the healthy, Nordic qualities of *Liden Kirsten*, including Pauline Rung’s performance of the title role, and the rather contemptuous deprecation of a performance by a Jewess, whom the author had not seen, is striking to say the least.

Pauline Rung, it seems, could be appreciated as both “Nordic” and “southern”; she successfully occupied an intermediate realm between these poles, balancing them against each other. While she did not belong to the Jewish community in Denmark, nor was she considered a Jewess, at least not explicitly, this balancing act seems nevertheless at the outset of her career to have been quite intimately associated with the convincing way in which she gave voice to the ambiguous cultural identity of the figure of the “beautiful Jewess”.

<sup>40</sup> ”’Liden Kirsten’ er da blevet opført og modtaget med meget Bifald, hvor er det dog yndigt, kjære Digter! Og hvor jeg finder Musik og Text i Samklang med hinanden; det er den yndigste dramatiserede Kæmpeviser man kan tænke sig, ret saa nordisk og sund, jeg ønsker Dem at De havde hørt det! Hansen synger saa smukt og hjerteligt, som kun han kan synge, og Md: Rung repræsenterer den elskeligste liden Kirsten, saa jomfruelig og graciøs er hun! Jfr Meyer gav ”Cecilies” Rolle i ”Mulatten”, men med al Respect for det Bifald hun fik af sine Troesforvandrede er der dog kun een Mening om hende, at hun er kold og utaalelig; jeg vilde ikke have mig den saa høit yndede Mulat fordærvet af hende, derfor gik jeg der ikke, men jeg har egentlig fortrudt det, thi Mulattens Værd kan hun Gudskelov ikke forkleine, det lille Asen!” (Hans Christian Andersen, *Letters*, 6 June 1846).

<sup>41</sup> Having made her debut at the Royal Theatre in 1845, Emma Meier ended her short career at the Royal Theatre with an appearance in 1846 in *Mulatten*. However, there was some controversy concerning whether she had been unjustly treated. After her engagement at Royal Theatre she enjoyed considerable success as an actress in the Danish provinces and also in Norway (see Sandfeldt 1971, 219-29).

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## Summary

This chapter examines the performances of Pauline Rung (née Lichtenstein) in the role of Rachel in Halévy’s opera *La juive* in Denmark in 1838 and 1842. It seeks to understand these performances in relation to their contemporary context in several respects. First of all, the performances are considered in relation to the local critical discourse on operatic performances at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen in general – a context which, in 1842, involved the phenomenon of a competing and quite successful Italian opera company at the nearby Court Theatre. This situation generated a general trend of positioning “southern” and “Nordic” qualities vis-à-vis one another. The contemporary appreciation of certain “southern” qualities in Rung’s performances is interpreted in relation to this critical discourse, as well as in relation to the “Jewishness” of the character of Rachel. Consequently, the contextualisation of Rung’s performances here involves

investigating the implications of “Jewishness” in Copenhagen at this time and of the ways in which the sound of Rung’s vocal performances may have served to define Rachel as an example of the literary stereotype of the “beautiful Jewess”. Finally, the contextualisation includes an investigation of Rung’s biography, both with respect to her professional career as a singer and the possibility that her father might have been of Jewish birth. Since the performances in 1838 over-exerted the voice of the young Pauline Lichtenstein (as she was then called), her voice, as it gradually recovered, seems to have been characterised by a rather lower compass. The performance material used by the Royal Theatre in the nineteenth century, preserved in the archives of the Royal Library in Copenhagen, suggest that several passages in *La juive*, particularly those containing passionate outbursts, were altered at some point, probably in 1842, in order to accommodate a voice having problems performing pitches higher than f2 or g2 (approximately). This tendency towards a lower-sounding voice can also be observed in a concert given by Rung early in 1842, in which the voice was associated with a more bizarre brand of exoticism (a song in which she sings the character of a witch). The author concludes that the vocal rendition of Pauline Lichtenstein as the “beautiful Jewess” in 1842 was probably the sound of a relatively low voice, as compared to the type of soprano for which the part was originally written, and a sound associated with certain “southern” and “exotic” qualities, although these seem to have been balanced against other qualities perceived as more “Nordic”. The tendency to associate Pauline Rung’s performances with “Nordic” qualities apparently increased in the latter part of her career.

# Performative Elements and Sources

Verdi and Wagner in a Nineteenth-century City Theatre

Kristel Pappel

Erika Fischer-Lichte raised the question of what research on the history of theatre (or music theatre) involves. In the case of music theatre it is not sufficient to restrict oneself to works written at a certain time, one should also study aspects such as the theatre's function in society, analyse the theatrical and performative aspects of musical productions and connect these to the background and ideas of the international theatre of the period. Fischer-Lichte's response was that studies should address essential questions and transgress the boundaries of disciplines (Fischer-Lichte 1994).

Research on music theatre has evolved rapidly in recent decades. The performative side of an opera production has come into the limelight, and operatic staging can be analysed as an independent artefact. Thus a complicated network of relations is built between the score – that is the music, the text, the remarks – and the staged realisation. The last of these has become the subject of recent research in the form of performance analysis, especially performative elements such as the corporeal presence and gestures of singers. Stage realisation should be analysed on a concrete level,

however, incorporating audience reaction. Gundula Kreuzer and Clemens Risi summarise the current research situation:

The practical stage realization itself could be analyzed in terms of multiple transitions. As a culturally and technologically contingent performance, it relates opera to changing contexts and audiences; as an event, it partakes in the staged opera's passing through time by linking past and future performances; as a corporeal manifestation of materiality, it mediates between the intended concept of a production and its individual concretizations (which always embrace nonintentional, spontaneous elements), as well as between performers and spectators, stage and auditorium. Both the process of operatic staging and its history could therefore be described as complex chains of ephemeral transitions. (Kreuzer, Risi 2012, p. 150)

However, when it is a question of conducting research on opera staging in the past, how could one make the transition from the present so as to be able to see through “the eyes of the past”? It is clear that one cannot escape subjectivity or the load of the intervening periods that the comprehension horizons of the past and present fuse together,<sup>1</sup> and that nothing remains untouched by this. It is impossible to reconstruct past opera performance. Nevertheless, it is possible to re-construct certain elements on the basis of the context, the mental climate at the time and the sources – “and thus not lose the balance between microscopia and generalisation”, as Stephan Mösch puts it in his book about the reception of Wagner's *Parsifal* (2009, p.11).

Although we have acquired “an increasingly detailed understanding of historical performance practices and of the social conditions in which opera has been performed” (Levin 2007, 6) since the mid-1990s, this can now be combined with observing the performative elements and the reception. Obviously the existence of the appropriate sources is a prerequisite.

If one were to examine nineteenth-century opera performance outside of centres such as Paris (which was particularly influential during the first half of the century), Munich and Bayreuth (during the second half), what would one see in city theatres within the German cultural area, for example, and in particular in peripheral regions such as the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire?

<sup>1</sup> According to Gadamer, part of real understanding “is that we regain the concepts of a historical past in such a way that they also include our own comprehension of them” (Gadamer 1996, p. 374).

The theatre system in the German-dominated Baltic governments – Estonia (capital Reval/Tallinn), Livonia (Riga) and Courland (Mitau/Jelgava)<sup>2</sup> – was modelled on the German city theatre (*Stadttheater*), which had evolved in Germany at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when travelling companies became settled in one place and the social status of actors improved. The theatre building in which dramas and operas were staged belonged to the city or a theatre society (a corporation of theatregoing citizens), at first involving one theatre company with two or three acceptable singers before companies specialising in drama or opera evolved.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the court theatres in which Italian opera companies and French dramatic actors performed, the city theatres served a German audience, and all performances of Italian, French and Russian operas, for example, were in the dominant local language, which was German.

This kind of theatre system emerged in German-dominated Estonia at the end of the eighteenth century, at first with combined theatre companies.<sup>4</sup> It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the Tallinn City Theatre (*Revaler Stadttheater*), functioning as a multi-genre institution, hired an opera company.

### Theatre conditions in Tallinn in the nineteenth century

The theatre built in the classic style at the beginning of one of the city's arterial streets (called Lai – Broad) near the aristocratic Toompea (Cathedral Hill) opened in 1809 and was in use until the Great Fire of 1902. Even though it almost burned down in 1855, it was restored and modernised, and re-opened in 1860.<sup>5</sup> It was now possible to heat the auditorium, for

<sup>2</sup> During the nineteenth century, present-day Estonia and Latvia were divided among these three governments or provinces. Present-day Estonia includes both nineteenth-century Estonia and the northern part of Livonia, and Latvia includes Courland and the southern part of Livonia.

<sup>3</sup> The most heavily subsidised theatres in the Russian Empire were the court operas in St Petersburg and Moscow (the Bolshoi), and there was a strong separation between opera and drama (Pappel 2009, pp. 127-128). Here it is worth noting that it became a tradition in nineteenth-century Europe (except in the court theatres) to perform operas in the locally dominant language: German for Verdi's operas in Germany and Italian for Wagner's operas in Italy, for example.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this see Pappel, Kristel 1998: *Von der Wandertruppe zum ständigen Theater. Schwierigkeiten des Übergangs im Tallinner (Revaler) Musiktheater 1795–1809*, in: Loos, Helmut & Möller, Eberhard (eds), *Musikgeschichte in Mittel- und Osteuropa*. Mitteilungen der internationalen Arbeitsgemeinschaft an der Technischen Universität Chemnitz, Heft 3, Chemnitz: Gudrun Schröder Verlag, pp. 3–13.

example, which made a cloakroom necessary (Revalsche Zeitung [=RZ], 3.09.1860, Extrablatt<sup>6</sup>). Sets were kept in the attic and they could now be painted in a large room specially adapted for the purpose. The major innovation, however, was gaslight, which became a common feature in German theatres in the 1860s (Langer 1997, p. 101). Coloured taffeta screens made it possible to produce red, yellow, blue and green light on stage. Copper plate was used to produce total darkness (“*Nacht*” – “night”). Gaslight also allowed the auditorium to be darkened (electricity was in permanent use in the Tallinn City Theatre as from 1900; Pappel 2003, p. 145). Stage machinery was also novel, and was specially designed by Professor Andreas Roller, one of the leading specialists in the field and scenic designer and stage engineer of St. Petersburg Imperial Theatres.<sup>7</sup> Many renovations followed, in 1869-1870 (RZ, 13.08.1869; RZ, 2.09.1870) and 1901 (Theater-Almanach 1901/1902).

The auditorium seated 900 people, and in addition to the stalls (*Parquet*) and grand circle (*Parterre*) there were boxes, a balcony and a gallery (Theater-Almanach 1891/1892; Pappel 2003, p. 40).<sup>8</sup> The orchestra pit accommodated 24 musicians, but was expanded at the end of the century to accommodate more than 30.

Most of the scenery was painted the nineteenth century, but the addition of furniture and other requisites was new: staircases were built if needed. Audience members and critics noted the precision of the painting. Given the limited space for making and storing sets, and for financial reasons, old sets were used in various combinations. A totally new set was a major event that was publicly announced.

<sup>5</sup> For more on this see Pappel, Kristel 2003: *Ooper Tallinnas 19. sajandil* [Opera in Tallinn in the nineteenth century], Eesti Muusikaakadeemia Väitekirjad, vol. 1, Tallinn: Eesti Muusikaakadeemia [including a resumé in German, pp. 168-185].

<sup>6</sup> According to the Julian calendar, used in the Russian Empire: in the Gregorian calendar it would be 15.09.1860.

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Roller (1805-1891) was invited to St. Petersburg in 1834 so that he could update the stage machinery and the sets of the imperial theatres. He designed the scenery and invented the stage effects for the premier of Verdi's *La forza del destino* in 1862. The composer admired his work. See: <http://www.mariinsky.ru/lib/opera/repertoire/forza>, 6.02.2010.

<sup>8</sup> In 1860 a special entrance was provided for the gallery audience so that they would not mingle with the more refined levels of society (3.09.1860, Extrablatt).

The singers, the director, the musical director, the chorus and the orchestra

Up until the 1870s the Tallinn City Theatre had a mixed company comprising two or three opera singers and a variety of actors with good singing skills (who were essential, especially in smaller companies). A separate opera company was hired in 1872, but the practice of putting actors in smaller roles persisted. Singers (as well as actors and conductors) came to Tallinn from all over the German-language cultural space, especially Prussia (Berlin, Stettin, Elbing, Königsberg), Lübeck, Hamburg, Saxony (Dresden, Leipzig), Darmstadt, Mannheim and other places (Pappel 2003, p. 180). The theatre had close connections with the Riga theatre and there was a constant exchange of people. In terms of training, singers learned mainly by practising, and took private lessons if they had the resources: this applied to Tallinn City Theatre artists as well. It is noteworthy that a Berlin critic (quoted in RZ, 28.08.1872) referred to members of the Tallinn City Theatre's first opera company as "naturals" (*Naturalisten*), meaning that they had rather natural voices, unlike artists with polished vocal skills and performance ability. Beginners came to a Tallinn-sized city in order to gain stage experience in various roles. At the other end of the scale were artists whose best years were behind them, as well as the mediocre but brave singers who were common everywhere. As was typical at the time, the company was in constant flux, and people rarely lasted for more than two seasons. The contracts normally covered one season (Pappel 2003, p. 53), often justified on the assumption that small-city audiences became bored with the same faces.<sup>9</sup>

In smaller theatres such as that in Tallinn in the nineteenth century the theatre producer (*Theaterdirektor*) may also have been a director (*Regisseur*), a role that was not usually named. The first time a director was specifically mentioned was in 1832 (Pappel 2003, p. 177), and the opera director (*Opernregisseur*) was mentioned in 1845 (Pappel 2003, p. 177). During the second half of the century most opera directors in Tallinn were former singers, especially bass singers who could also take on smaller roles. It is worth pointing out here that at the time direction (*Regie*) meant placing singers and the choir in groups (*Gruppen*) or *tableaux*, as well as deciding

<sup>9</sup> The population of Tallinn in 1871 was 29,162, of which 34.4 per cent were Germans, 51.8 per cent were Estonians and 11.3 per cent were Russians. By 1881 the number had grown to 45,880. It should be mentioned here that German was the home language of educated Estonians, and "German" and "Estonian" may refer to social status, not necessarily to nationality.

from which wing or side the actor would enter the stage. It was also important to ensure smooth changes of scenery.

Nineteenth-century city theatres usually hired a music director but in lower position of *Kapellmeister* (in German-speaking countries during the approximate period 1500-1800, the word *Kapellmeister* often designated the music director for a monarch or a nobleman). The *Kapellmeister* was employed mainly in court theatres and larger cities. The first reference to a *Kapellmeister* in smaller companies dates back to the 1840s, and in Tallinn the title was first used in 1860 when the restored and modernised theatre building was opened.<sup>10</sup> The noble title of *Kapellmeister* was devalued during the century, and at the dawn of the twentieth century Tallinn had three *Kapellmeister* – for opera, operetta and *Posse*<sup>11</sup> (Pappel 2003, p. 177).

The chorus included “singing actors” and local amateurs, made up of eight women and eight men on average. The orchestra also comprised local musicians, additional players being hired from the city orchestra *Stadtkapelle* (which in the middle of the century had nine players) or the military band when necessary. The theatre orchestra usually had between 17 and 22 musicians, increasing to 30 at the end of the century (Pappel 2003, pp. 177-178).

## Sources

Up until the mid-nineteenth century the “work” (*Werk*) in music theatre practice was not the score of the opera, but the performance. The score (in practice the vocal score) was the raw material from which the performance was created according to local conditions. Successful operas travelled from theatre to theatre via manually written copies, printed and vocal scores being very expensive at the beginning of the century. The remarks of the director or prompter were made on the handwritten libretti.<sup>12</sup> The situation changed in the middle of the century when advances in printing technology brought down the cost of printing sheet music. On the other hand, the authors’ rights were regulated, which meant that the composer’s contract was not with the theatre but with the printing company, which published the

<sup>10</sup> At that time the *Kapellmeister* was the well-known musician Louis Saar.

<sup>11</sup> *Posse* was a satirical play depicting the life and conditions of the German lower middle class, and containing a great deal of music – duets, choruses, dances and an extended overture.

<sup>12</sup> Here I refer to Arne Langer’s extensive research (Langer 1997, see References) and my own observations.

score, the vocal score and the libretti. Thus the composer's score became a complete work of art. In everyday theatre practice, of course, the "final" score was adjusted to suit the theatre, but in a much more careful manner. As theatre-related materials started to appear in Germany in the 1880s, special director's copies (*Regiebücher*) were also published.

Next I examine sources dealing exclusively with performativity at Tallinn City Theatre (Sources in the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum, Tallinn = TMM, fund T 187, register 1 and fund Mo 256).

1. Cast lists (*Theaterzettel*) and announcements. Information about the cast, scenery and costumes. Some of them give details about the singers as a form of advertisement.

2. Libretti (*Textbücher*), either manually copied or printed, which generally contain all the verbal text together with the staging directions and remarks. Manually copied libretti in genres such as Singspiel, unlike the printed versions, do not give the text of the musical numbers (e.g., arias) but just list the numbers and the performers. In the case of operas with recitatives all the text is given. The director and prompter used the libretti (either the director's or the prompt copy – *Souffleurbücher*), as did the stage manager (*Inspizient*).

3. Scripts (*Rollenhefte*) that contain the text of specific roles, with remarks and notes. Manually copied scripts do not include the texts of the musical numbers.

4. Director's copies (*Regiebücher*) are libretti used by the opera director, possibly specially adapted for him. These books took various forms in the nineteenth century: 1) a libretto with notes about the direction; 2) a libretto specially adapted for the director, with blank pages and 3) special notebooks just for the director. All these were either manually copied or printed.

5. The vocal score (*Klavierauszug*), which contains both text and music, staging directions and notes and was used by conductors in the nineteenth century, and after the 1860s also by directors, prompters and stage managers.

6. The director's vocal score (*Regieklavierauszug*) contains the director's remarks and staging plans, and usually includes blank pages. They came into use in the 1860s.

7. The scenario (*Szenarium*) is a huge chart specially drawn up for the stage manager. It contains all the necessary information about the characters, set items, props, sound and lighting effects required for each scene.

Finally, a major source was the newspaper review. The first daily paper – *Revaler Zeitung* – in the Baltic provinces came out in 1860, followed by

Revaler Beobachter in 1879. In those days the reviews were far from detailed, but reflection on the performances, no matter how brief, was crucially important for the theatre. The main focus was on the singers and the quality of their voices. The reviewers' knowledge about opera came from their travels in Europe, visits to St. Petersburg and their own studies. There is valuable information to be found in memoirs, but so far little has come to light concerning Tallinn City Theatre.

What follows now are some general remarks concerning what is documented in the surviving director's copies at the Tallinn City Theatre. I should emphasise that these are libretti containing the director's notes and plans, originating from the 1890s. It should be borne in mind that librettists only started to give detailed descriptions of the staging and the activities on stage in the nineteenth century. Often the director noted the required action or location with a cross, or added "right" (*rechts*) or "left" (*links*) to the librettist's description, and sometimes only the initial letters (all in pencil). Stage depth is indicated in expressions such as "upstage right" (*rechts hinten*). The letter "M" refers to the centre (*Mitte*) of the stage. The prompter's box indicates the central axis. In order to assess the depth of the stage the wings were numbered, the first one being closest to the footlights. A semicircle with a dot (like an eye) in the middle gives the direction of the character's gaze (body). An arrow usually marks movement on stage from one point to another, or the same name is written in two different locations, one denoting the initial and the other the final moment.

From the surviving notes it is possible to imagine the performance in a space, the characters' positions in the ensemble numbers, how the chorus was placed, and the direction of movement. The staging at the end of an act tended to follow the group (*Gruppe*) principle. When the chorus was involved the singers were often placed in a semicircle or in an asymmetrical pattern, and big static groups formed *tableaux*. In both cases the characters were placed on stage in positions that indicated the relationships, whereas *tableaux* from *grand opéra* were powerful and more picturesque. The old method of lining the choir up along both sides of the stage was popular, as was the procession (*Zug*) coming onto the stage and leaving it. It was deemed unnecessary to note the action in solo scenes or duets.

## Performing Wagner's operas in Tallinn City Theatre, 1853-1902

Researching the presentation of Wagner's operas is interesting for many reasons. First, his textbooks and vocal scores contain detailed explanations

about the scenery and the activities on stage, including the direction of a character's glance and his/her reactions. According to Gundula Kreuzer, keeping the so-called visual side in harmony with his music was essential for Wagner, thus he incorporated visual elements into his music and he expected them to be realised on stage: “[---] Wagner employed all musical means available to effect a vivid and continuous sonic “depiction” of the gradual transformation of locations, their materiality, and the respective atmospheric and light variations: an aural equivalent to a seamless, proto-filmic transition” (Kreuzer 2012, p. 207). As he wrote in his well known essay *The Artwork of the Future* (1849): “Without addressing the eye, all art remains unsatisfying, and thus itself unsatisfied, unfree.”<sup>13</sup> The audience had to be “distinctly led to comprehension of the artwork by everything that meets the eye.”<sup>14</sup> Or as Patrick Carnegy states, it was Wagner's firm belief that “the stage picture should mirror the music” (Carnegy 2006, p. 25; Kreuzer 2012, p.191).

How much of this was realised in practice, especially in ordinary, small provincial theatres with limited facilities? The Tallinn examples indicate that the scenery of the original production (premier) was taken as the model, and often this information was greeted with a wail of complaint that the costs were huge due to the new sets and costumes.

The first of Wagner's operas to be performed in Tallinn was *Tannhäuser* in 1853 (premiered at the Dresden Court Opera in 1845), slightly before Christmas. The impetus probably came from the City Theatre in Riga where it was staged a year before.<sup>15</sup> The new director of the theatre in Tallinn, the tenor Theophil Fass, came from Riga, as did the director according to the poster (Pappel 1997; see also Salmi 2005, 82-84). He “spared neither time nor money to present this work and to present it in a worthy manner”, and spent 1,000 silver roubles on it, which was a considerable sum at the time (by way of comparison, the annual salary of the musical director of the

<sup>13</sup> “Ohne Mittheilung an das Auge bleibt alle Kunst unbefriedigend, daher selbst unbefriedigt, unfrei”, see Wagner, Richard [1911]: „Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft“, in: *Sämliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 3, Leipzig: Breitkopf ja Härtel, p. 72. Translation in *Richard Wagner's Prosa Works* 1966: transl. William Ashton Ellis, reprint, New York: Broude Bros., vol. 1, p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> “das Verlangen nach dem Kunstwerk, zu dessen Erfassen er durch Alles, was sein Auge berührt, bestimmt werden muß.” Ibid., p. 152 (transl. *ibid.*, p. 185).

<sup>15</sup> Here I would like to mention that *Tannhäuser* was first performed in Helsinki in 1858, and then also by the Riga opera company. (Wagner's performing in the Baltic region has been researched by Hannu Salmi, see Salmi, Hannu 1997.) In Riga, however, *Der fliegende Holländer* had been performed before *Tannhäuser* in 1845. The first Wagner opera to be staged In St. Petersburg was *Lohengrin* in 1868 (in Russian).

*Stadtkapelle* in Tallinn was 150 silver roubles, although he had certain perks as well; Vallaste 2008, p. 121). The model, as mentioned, was the première in Dresden. Carl Marloff, who came to Tallinn from Darmstadt, sang *Tannhäuser*. Nine players from the city ensemble (*Stadtkapelle*) augmented the nine-member orchestra, and it is possible that amateur musicians and members of the military band were also used, as was done in Riga (Pappel 1997).

The next time a Wagner opera was performed in Tallinn was in 1860 – again *Tannhäuser*, after the renovated building was opened. *Lohengrin* was popular there (unlike in Riga and St. Petersburg), the first production being in March 1883, only a month after Wagner’s death in Venice. His operas were regularly staged after the season of 1882-83 – and every time the theatre hired an opera company.<sup>16</sup> *Lohengrin* was usually sold out days in advance (Revaler Beobachter [= RB], 2.03.1883). *Der fliegende Holländer* was produced for the first time in 1894, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in 1901.

In the following I discuss some characteristic aspects of the productions of Wagner’s operas in Tallinn between 1853 and 1902 (from the first production until the fire).

I have already mentioned all that is known about **the scenography and direction**: the model was the German première and according to Wagner’s instruction. Thus the reviews of the 1901 Tallinn première of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* note that sets were painted in the style of the Munich Court Opera.

Many reviewers only reported amusing anecdotal mistakes. At one time Venusberg in *Tannhäuser* was too bleak (RZ, 19.11.1860), at another the evening star offered a “somewhat unusual play of natural forces”<sup>17</sup> because it was far too big compared with the other stars (RZ, 7.10.1895), and some chorus members had the wrong costume on, and so on. Sometimes it was difficult to follow Wagner’s remarks and directions. In the third act of *Tannhäuser* Elisabeth was already lying in her coffin when the male chorus in

<sup>16</sup> The theatre producer (*Theaterdirektor*) in Tallinn at this time (for 27 years, 1869-1896) was the legendary Eduard Berent. His Tallinn opera company (with the successful tenor David Grobé) planned to give guest performances in Finland, for example 29.03-13.05.1883 in Wiborg with *Die Jüdin*, *Faust*, *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin* and *Troubadour*, (Wiborgsbladet 27.11.1882, announcement).

<sup>17</sup> “ein etwas ungewöhnliches Naturspiel, als er erheblich über die sonst bei den Sternen übliche Größe hinausgewachsen war”.

the wings reported her death (RZ, 19.11.1860: many theatres did not show the coffin).

**The singing and the roles** The main material used for the interior of the Tallinn City Theatre was wood, which contributed to the good acoustics and in general the singers had no problems in being heard. There is only one remark suggesting that it was wrong to label the part of Lohengrin a “tenor murderer” (RZ, 19.02.1892). In Tallinn a great deal of attention was paid to declamation and making the text understood. Although the libretto was sometimes for sale, the audience followed the narrative via the sung text. Attempts were made to achieve variety in the repetitions through timbre changes in the voice, otherwise the audience was disappointed and the critics demanded that the singers should add more **colour to the harmony**. This was something for which David Grobé, the first Tallinn Lohengrin, was praised: “The often repeated phrase *“Fühl ich [zu dir] so süß mein Herz entbrennen”* shows these erotic dreams in which frequent and sudden changes of key depict the alteration of souls.”<sup>18</sup> (RZ, 10.03.1883) Grobé’s Lohengrin became a model on the Tallinn stage, and the singers were expected to be full of emotion and eroticism. The young 22-year-old Bohemian Karl (Karel) Burian (1879-1924), later a famous interpreter of Wagner and Strauss in Dresden and New York, brought heroic and masculine features to the role in 1892. His voice had force, stamina, youthful freshness and brightness, and he showed no signs tiredness at the end of the opera (RZ, 19.09.1892). Burian wrote in his memoirs that he was then tall and as slim as a herring, and that he was the first beardless Lohengrin on the Tallinn stage.<sup>19</sup>

*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was produced for Christmas in 1901 when it had become customary to emphasise before each Wagner première how many rehearsals there had been – as if otherwise it would not have been the “right” Wagner. According to the Tallinn theatre director there were 123 rehearsals (RZ, 20.12.1901), which even counting all the individual music rehearsals seems excessive. Nevertheless, it indicates diligence and carefulness. The role of Hans Sachs, performed by Herman Ganser, was highly praised both for the acting and the singing (RZ, 24.12.1901). The need for a bright high tenor register in the role of the Walther was emphasised. Beckmesser’s performance did not meet the requirements according to the reviewer: it was customary to show Beckmesser’s priggishness and

<sup>18</sup> “Die häufige Wiederholung der Strophe: ‘Fühl ich so süß mein Herz entbrennen’ zeigt jene erotische Schwelgereien, in welcher der öftere und plötzliche Wechsel der Tonarten die Alteration der Seelen versinnlicht.”

<sup>19</sup> <<http://www.karelburian.cz/english/reval.php>>, 8.09.2012. See also RZ, 19.09.1892

emphasise the dark side of his character, but Theo Hilder's interpretation was more grotesque and vulgar than expected. The final chorus in which the soloists also took part was powerful – the 24-member theatre choir getting support from amateurs (RZ, 24.12.1901).

**Adaptations and the orchestra** Of the materials connected with the performance of Wagner's operas on the Tallinn stage only the vocal score of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* has been preserved. It was used in the season of 1901-02 and the conductor was Theo Ritte-Schwarzwald. On the very first page is the conductor's note that the score is his adaptation for the Tallinn theatre (TMM, Mo 256).<sup>20</sup> Numerous pencilled remarks give an idea of what the performance was like and how it might have sounded.

First of all: about the cuts. These mainly concern chorus scenes that have been shortened, and also on-stage music. There are also cuts in some of the longer dialogue scenes in the second act (Sachs and Walther, Sachs and Beckmesser, Sachs and Eva). In Sachs' speech to Walther and others (Act II, scene 5) the lines concerning the decreasing role of the aristocracy in keeping German art alive and the dominant role of the burgher class are left out: "That our Masters have cared for it / rightly in their own way / cherished it truly as they thought best / that has kept it genuine:/ if it did not remain aristocratic as of old / when courts and princes blessed it / in the stress of evil years / it remained German and true; and if it flourished nowhere/ but where all is stress and strain / you see how high it remained in honour – / what more would you ask of the Masters?"<sup>21</sup> Directly after the "leap" the important and polemical lines "Beware! Evil tricks threaten us" ("*Habt Acht! Uns dräuen üble Streich*") appear.

Other notes concern the dynamics. Wagner's directions were sometimes clarified and brought out in order to achieve a balance between the orchestra and the vocal part. The orchestra at the time contained 30 instrumentalists, but local amateur musicians were also engaged for the performance of *Die Meistersinger*. (How they managed to fit into the orchestra pit is another matter.) This performance was one of the rare occasions on which the reviewer complained that the orchestra was too powerful, in the reviewer's

<sup>20</sup> The vocal score was published by Peter Jürgenson, Moscow 1898: text in German and Russian.

<sup>21</sup> "Dass uns're Meister sie gepflegt / grad recht nach ihrer Art, / nach ihrem Sinne treu gehegt, / das hat sie echt bewahrt: / blieb sie nicht ad'lig, wie zur Zeit, / wo Höf' und Fürsten sie geweiht, / im Drang der schlimmen Jahr' / blieb sie doch deutsch und wahr; / und wär' sie anders nicht geglückt, / als wie wo Alles drängt' und drückt, / ihr seht, wie hoch sie blieb in Ehr': / was wollt ihr von den Meistern mehr?"

opinion because of the conductor's excessive effort to bring out the leitmotifs in the orchestral texture as much as possible (RZ, 24.12.1901).

The opera orchestra, and Tallinn in general, did not have all the instrumentalists required for performing Wagner's score. There were no second-part players in the woodwind section (indicating that there was only one musician for each instrument group!), no third or fourth French horn and only two trombones. The piano took the place of the harp, woodwind and brass parts were re-written for different instruments – and so skilfully that the audience noticed it only in the orchestral introductions and the *Fliederzauber* scene in the second act (RZ, 24.12.1901).

The Tallinn press refers to the performance of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* as a task that had been close to the conductor's heart for a long time, and that he was very familiar with the Wagner tradition of Munich (RZ, 24.12.1901). Before coming to Tallinn he had conducted the so-called Vienna opera and operetta company, which had given successful performances, mostly of operettas, in Åbo and Wiborg (Åbo Underrättelser, 24.08.1900; Wiipurin Sanomat 21.10.1900)<sup>22</sup> One can see why being a conductor in a Tallinn theatre and conducting what was already a cult opera by Wagner was a real challenge.

## Performing Verdi's operas in Tallinn City Theatre, 1860-1902

Italian opera was strongly represented in Tallinn during the first half of the nineteenth century, Bellini and Donizetti being frequently in the repertoire. Verdi arrived relatively late with a production of *Ernani* (as *Hernani*) in 1860.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that it was difficult to hire an acceptable *spinto* tenor at the time, and furthermore, many of the talented members of the opera company had gone elsewhere after the fire in 1855.

*Ernani* may not have been the most fortunate choice given the audience's cool reaction. The initial dramatization had been drastically changed. The final, tragically ending fourth act was cut, but the terzetto (Elvira-Er-

<sup>22</sup> According to Uusi Suometar, (30.08.1900), he arrived at the Kleinehn hotel in Helsinki on 29 August 1900 "with his family from Lübeck" ("perheneen Lyypekistä"), and the first performance was in Åbo on 6 September. The opera genre was represented by German *Spieloper* and popular pieces such as *Der Barbier von Sevilla* (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), *Bajazzo* (*Pagliacci*) and *Troubadour*.

<sup>23</sup> See also Pappel, Kristel 2003: "Verdi an einem deutschen Stadttheater im Baltikum; Aufführungspraxis und Rezeption in Reval/Tallinn", in: Žiuraitytė, Audrone & Koch, Klaus-Peter (eds.), *Deutsch-Baltische Musikbeziehungen: Geschichte – Gegenwart – Zukunft*, Sinzig: Studio, pp. 209-221.

nani-Silva) was moved to Act III, which caused “irreparable confusion”, as the reviewer from the *Revalsche Zeitung* newspaper remarked (RZ, 14.09.1860), ending his article as follows: “In order to understand it better, we demand the fourth act!”. There was an argument for leaving out Act II, which ended happily. In fact, this version with the happy ending was performed on many stages in the German-speaking theatrical world up until the 1930s (Gerhartz 1997, 400).

Verdi became popular in Tallinn five years later, in 1865 when *Der Troubadour* (*Il trovatore*) was first performed there. In fact, it was the only Verdi opera to be performed in Tallinn between 1865 and 1890, a period of 25 years! It frequently opened the season – it allowed the tenor, the soprano and the mezzo-soprano to demonstrate their skills. Although the critics referred to the music, the rhythms and the melodies as trivial, it was a favourite with the audience (RZ, 3.09.1892; 1.12.1894; 9.09.1895). Only *Aida* (from 1890) began to undermine its position, followed by *Traviata* (*La traviata*) and *Maskenball* (*Un ballo in maschera*) (both in 1894-95) and *Rigoletto* (in 1896-97). Thus general and more sustained interest in Verdi was not evident in Tallinn until the 1890s.

**Scenography and direction** There were few model productions on which to base performances of Verdi’s operas, as there were with Wagner, and the libretti gave less information and fewer directions. We therefore need to use other archival materials concerning productions of Italian operas in order to envisage a production of a Verdi opera at the end of the nineteenth century in Tallinn. The archival materials about Tallinn theatre contain the libretti of Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Lucrezia Borgia*, with director’s pencilled remarks concerning the placing of the characters and the chorus, as well as notes for the stage manager concerning thunder and storm effects (TMM, fund T 187, register 1). The director (and bass singer) August Dörner made notes in the old libretti (which had been in use since the 1840s) in the 1894-94 and 1895-96 seasons. These notes followed a certain tradition in terms of performing Italian operas, on which research into the production of Verdi’s operas would shed light. In any case, Dörner is praised for his direction (*Regieführung*) of *Der Troubadour* because of his “nice arrangement” (*hübsches Arrangieren*) (RZ, 9.09.1895). In general, however, directors were praised for quick scene changes (e.g., Treumann in 1891-92; RZ, 3.09.1892).

The vocal score of *Aida*, published in 1890, contains detailed interpretational remarks (to be discussed later) and some tentative notes, such as “suddenly away” (*plötzlich ab*) (TMM, fund Mo 256).

The set is rarely mentioned, but it did attract attention at the Tallinn première of *Aida* (15.11.1890) – both the decor and the costumes were new, which was understandable in the case of such an exotic and grand-scale opera. The production was acclaimed as a whole, a musical drama in which all the components are harmoniously combined.

**Singing and roles** As mentioned above, *Der Troubadour* was one of the favourites for opening the opera season. Sometimes, however, the hired tenor failed miserably as Manrico and the director had to look for a replacement, which in the 1891-92 season was the newly arrived young Karel Burian. Burian’s debut in Tallinn was successful, but in his acting – as the reviewers noted – he was still a beginner (RZ, 15.09.1891). He was also criticised for his habit of straining his voice in the high register.

Critical attention was focused on whether the singer playing Manrico was able to sing the famous stretta in C major or if it had been transposed to a lower key. However, the audience required C major for a striking performance (RZ, 15.09.1894).

Interestingly, singers were more expressive in their mannerisms when performing Verdi than with Wagner, who clearly offered fewer opportunities. They used too much “*portamento*, declared sacred on all stages“ (*Der Troubadour*, see RZ, 14.09.1882), there was often tremolo in the voice (Violetta in *Traviata*, RZ, 20.09.1894), rhythmic inaccuracy (Alfredo in the same performance) and bad pronunciation (Azucena in *Der Troubadour*; RZ, 14.09.1882). They tended to compensate for their vocal shortcomings by overacting (e.g., Azucena in *Der Troubadour*, RZ, 15.09.1894), but there is no indication of what this entailed.

The chorus was problematic in *Der Troubadour* because of the shortage of singers, or the intonation was wrong or rhythmically tentative. One reviewer suggested in 1882 that only the Gipsy Chorus (Act II) should be kept and the rest could be cut (RZ, 14.09.1882). The situation was somewhat better eight years later in 1890, but the famous and difficult “*Miserere*” was still “a chaos of dissonances” (RZ, 17.11.1890).

**Adaptations and orchestration** Among the most interesting surviving musical material of the Tallinn City Theatre is the vocal score of *Aida*, which Joseph Wilhelmi, a long-serving conductor in Tallinn theatre who

produced *Aida* for the first time in the 1890/91 season, clearly used.<sup>24</sup> Given the small size of the chorus, those scenes were largely cut, as were the ballet scenes due to the lack of dancers. Similar cuts were quite common in the smaller German theatres, and even on prominent stages the Chorus of the Priests in Act II was cut in the 1940s<sup>25</sup> because it required additional, highly skilful singers. The theatre chorus barely managed to portray people and prisoners.

The vocal scores used by conductors contained notes about which instruments should be introduced at what moments, which would play solo and which would accompany. If a typical string section was playing it was simply written as *Archi* or *Streicher*, in the case of brass instruments *Blech*, and so on. If the orchestra lacked certain instruments the score had to be re-orchestrated, which was the case with *Aida*. After the introduction in the first scene of Act I Verdi had divided the cello group into three parts to achieve a muffled sound. There must have been only one cellist in the theatre orchestra because, according to the vocal score, the three imitative voices were played on a viola, a cello and a bassoon. There were more changes of a similar kind. At the same time there are surprisingly many hand-written observations, indicating very careful preparatory work. There are many notes about tempi and dynamics – in which bar to have a bigger *crescendo*, when to emphasise *piano*, when *ritenuto* should not be forgotten, for example. Such detailed work culminated in a worthy result – the reviews praised the musical presentation. What is even more significant is that it was after the production of *Aida* in 1890 that the Tallinn audience started to appreciate Verdi.

## Conclusion

The famous tenor Karel Burian, who in his youth was a member of the Tallinn City Theatre Opera Company, remembers the beginning of his engagement in Tallinn:

I announced in a letter where I lived and that I was waiting for the instructions. [---] Thereupon it was announced that I shall sing Troubadour at the season opening. I was relieved. It was one of my old school parts, although I had no recollection of the lyrics ever since the Brno

<sup>24</sup> TMM, fund Mo 256. The vocal score was published by G. Ricordi (Milan) and Ed. Bote & G. Bock, Berlin; text only in German.

<sup>25</sup> Information from Prof. Dr. h.c. Joachim Herz, opera director, Dresden, October 2001

tournaments and practically it was one of the roles that were sung quite often...

<http://www.karelburian.cz/english/reval.php>>, 8.09.2012.

This shows something about the life of an opera singer in those times: he found out only a couple of days in advance that he was to perform in a work belonging to the permanent repertoire, and in what role. It was a typical test for a new singer. Even though the words had slipped his mind, he could recall them quickly, and during the performance he could trust the prompter. Burian took private singing lessons for a short time before moving to the stage. He took major roles in Brno for a brief period until the theatre went bankrupt, and then he found a place in Tallinn City Theatre for a season. He learned to act by doing it, using colleagues as models. This leads on to the issue of singers' acting skills, and the kind of corporeal presence and expression they could convey. Sources in Tallinn do not give any direct evidence. Thus, the next stage in the research would be to compare the guides to acting and performance reviews (if they exist) in other city theatres within the German nineteenth-century cultural space. Clemens Risi successfully analysed Wagner's comments on a production of *Der fliegende Holländer* in Weimar,<sup>26</sup> comparing them with the acting tuition that was prevalent at the time (Risi 2011). The comments constituted a vision of the ideal based on what Wagner, who was an active theatregoer and also enjoyed drama, had seen. How was this ideal realised on stage? It would also be interesting to take a closer look at the contemporary criticism of operetta and drama productions at the Tallinn City Theatre. There is more information about the direction, and especially about the gestures of singers: opera singers sometimes performed in operetta.

One can nevertheless draw some conclusions about elements of performance from the information in the Tallinn City Theatre archives. It gives a picture of the spatial and visual realisation of the productions, of the typical placing of the characters on the stage and of the painted sets (as well as other objects on stage such as tables and chairs). One can imagine (and in the case of Verdi's *Aida* even reconstruct) the orchestra sound and instrumentation that were modified to accommodate the small number of musicians, as well as the mannerisms of the singers. Director's copies and the libretti used by the prompter and the stage manager give a picture of the stage machinery and its use.

<sup>26</sup> Wagner was in exile in Switzerland in 1852 when Liszt wanted to produce the opera in Weimar and asked for help.

As Gundula Kreuzer remarks:

As a whole, then, operatic production inhabits a mixed mediality that hovers between the fixity of corporeal objects, the ideality of pre-planned visions, and the contingency of their performative fulfilment; like the constantly shape-shifting vapour, a staging veers between different physical conditions, between concretization and abstraction, and between transient perceptibility in performance and invisibility as concept. (2012, 207)

The music theatre historian consults the available sources in order to capture the ephemeral transition between the author's vision and the stage realisation in certain social and theatrical conditions, as well as between the stage and the audience's reception.

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## Summary

Research on music theatre has evolved rapidly in recent decades and the performative side of an opera production has come into the limelight, enabling operatic staging to be analysed as an independent artefact. A complicated network of relations is built between the score, in other words the music, the texts, and the remarks – and the staged realisation. It is the latter that has been the focus of recent research based on performance analysis. Stage realisation, however, must be analysed in a concrete context. It is impossible to reconstruct a past opera performance, but it is possible to re-construct it and the various elements on the basis of the context, the attitudes of the time, and sources.

The research object investigated in this article comprises opera performances at the Tallinn/Reval City Theatre of the nineteenth century, focusing on interpretations of both Wagner’s and Verdi’s operas in the period between 1853 (since the first production of a Wagner opera) until the fire at the theatre in 1902. The theatre system in German-dominated Baltic governments was modelled on the German city theatre (*Stadttheater*). The music theatre in Tallinn was part of the European (German-speaking) theatre network.

The sources used for the research comprise libretti and the copies used by the opera director, vocal scores used by conductors with hand written remarks and adaptations, cast lists and announcements (all in the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum, fund T 187, register 1, and fund Mo 256), newspapers and other printed materials. The main themes are scenography and direction, singing and roles, adaptations and the orchestra. The most difficult question concerns the singers and their corporeal presence and expression. Sources in Tallinn do not give direct answers. During the next stage of the research it would be useful to compare the guides to acting of the nineteenth century and the reviews (if they exist) of performances in other city theatres of the German cultural space. Another possibility is to analyse the contemporary criticism of the operetta and drama productions of Tallinn City Theatre, and to combine the results with observations of performativity in the opera productions.

# Gendered Agendas and the Representation of Gender in Women Composers' Operas and Theatre Music at the Dawn of the "Women's Century"

Case studies of Helena Munktell's *In Florence* (1889) and Tekla Griebel's *The Rose Time* (1895)

Camilla Hambro

Living in a state of becoming

Few women composers appear in general music history books, and even fewer women acquire any influence or importance in our master narratives. Nordic women composers are rarely subjects of doctoral dissertations or

academic publications. With the rare exceptions of Suzanne Cusick's monograph on Francesca Caccini's *La Liberazione di Ruggiero* (2009) and Jacqueline Letzler's and Robert Adelson's *Women writing opera: Creativity and controversy in the age of the French Revolution* (2001), even international research on women and music drama is scarce.

Without leaving a trace in Nordic music historiography or opera history books, identities and social roles of women and men at the dawn of what the Norwegian feminist pioneer Ragna Nilsen predicted would be "The Women's Century" were at the top of the agenda of public debate: "This is a prophecy in many quarters, and we hope that it is a true foreboding. At the moment we may feel only the happiness of living in a state of becoming" (*Nylænde*, 15 April 1896). The socio-political climate for women's rights was steadily improving, but opinions on femininity were considerably different from today's. Old discussions about women's innate nature and what was fitting for women to do intensified. Inspired by the feminist movement, Nordic women composers expressed themselves about their roles as women composers and about their works.

The numbers of women composers who had their music published and performed increased so much between 1890 and 1920 that it was considered something of a sensation in daily newspapers, music magazines and women's magazines. Music historical research has not seized the opportunity to stage or analyze sufficiently how changing conventions of (wo)manhood and music theatre were negotiated in women's operas in general and specifically in opera and other dramatic music, particularly by Nordic women. Since questions about women's identity and social situation in the Nordic societies were debated publicly, gender-sensitive analyses of Nordic women's opera and theatre music might prove a fruitful avenue to understanding this subject.

Among the sleeping beauties in our archives, Helena Munktell's *In Florence* (1889) is of particular interest, because she was the first Nordic woman whose composition made its debut at an opera house on the same terms as her male colleagues. During Munktell's lifetime her *opéra comique* enjoyed success and repeat performances for more than a season as well as acclaim from critics and audiences, only to vanish from music history. Tekla Griebel's *The Rose Time* was commissioned by the heavily gender-laden *Women's Exhibition from Past to Present* held in Copenhagen in 1895, a crossroads in history at a time when women's liberation caused a major crisis in male identity and masculinities. In a steady stream of interaction between social norms and audience expectations, these highly interest-

ing cases reflect changing gender norms and fears, as well as the possible consequences and opportunities that were triggered in the wake of these changes. Both cases have been omitted from our performance canons and consequently are not part of a living performance tradition. If we continue to research only the rich and multivalent dramaturgical meanings, genre problems and historical-cultural foundations of canonized operas by men without reviving and analyzing opera and theatre music by women, we risk recycling dilemmas associated with the traditional “great man” approach instead of nurturing much-needed dialogical approaches.

The time is ripe for asking: Who were Munktell and Griebel? What do their activities, experiences and roles have in common, and how do they differ? Under what conditions did they compose and perform theatre music? Starting from the assumption that gender perception connected with opera and dramatic music were self-organising dynamic systems, two very different works, *In Florence* and *The Rose Time*, will be placed in their respective representational contexts and overall gender political situation. Although the two composers followed different geographical and historical paths, Munktell and Griebel offer different historical answers to how theatre music composed by women was represented, how it questioned perceptions of gender and how it (de)constructed these perceptions. Thoroughly reviewed in the Scandinavian press, both works were discussed in terms of gender. Hence, reception materials will account for *live* experiences in our cultural heritage, and tracing the critics’ descriptions in the scores and librettos is possible: Examined in a historically-informed way, the reviews reveal the meanings that critics and audiences gleaned from plots, settings, staging and dramatic actions.

#### “The Nordic Frenchwoman”

Helena Munktell (1852–1919) was the first woman composer to debut on the Swedish operatic stage. She studied piano and composition in Sweden with Ludvig Norman, Johan Lindegren and Joseph Dente, as well as in France with Benjamin Godard and Vincent d’Indy. Her musical talent was fostered with all the care and tact necessary for a lady of noble disposition in a noble world.<sup>1</sup> Hence, her eagerness to work and her urge to achieve perfect ro-

<sup>1</sup> The well-to-do Munktell remembered the art to which she dedicated so much of her life in her will, leaving the Swedish Royal Theatre Orchestra, Hovkapellet, a sum of money to keep her memory alive with concerts at the Royal Opera that included her compositions. The programme was meant to provide a comprehensive illustration of her compositional personality.

mantic affection for the musical composition was considered touching and unselfish. According to *Svensk Musiktidning* (8 June 1897), Munktell was favourably known in Sweden as a prolific song and piano composer prior to the staging of her opéra comique, *I Firenze*. However, the Nordic press, not least the leading Stockholm critic Adolf Lindgren<sup>2</sup> in *Aftonbladet* (31 May 1889), considered her well-known Norwegian composer colleague, Agathe Backer Grøndahl (1847–1907), to be superior when it came to giving spontaneous musical expression to more immediate and lyrical moods. On the other hand, Munktell's oeuvre was deemed superior to her Norwegian colleague's, owing to its breadth and seriousness. While Backer Grøndahl was viewed as most ingenious when it came to romances and piano pieces, the more lyrically-talented Munktell was praised for her epic and theatrical interests. Eventually, these interests led her into a musical field previously taboo for Scandinavian women composers, namely operas and symphonic poems. Her orchestral works in particular were believed to reveal a talent far from commonplace or dilettante. In general, commentary in the Nordic press was prone to explain that praise of a woman composer did not mean condemnation of male composers, even though they were not necessarily more conscientious or better.<sup>3</sup>

#### In Florence: A small opéra comique

In 1889 the Royal Swedish Opera witnessed an unusual occurrence when Munktell's one-act *opéra comique I Firenze (In Florence)*, a setting of a libretto by the Swedish author Daniel Fallström, was submitted early in the spring of that year for production the same season. Conducted by her former composition teacher, Joseph Dente, *In Florence* was produced on 30 May 1889 and programmed during two further seasons, 1891 and 1892, appearing just before Donizetti's operas *The Daughter of the Regiment* and *The Elixir of Love*. The setting and background of the plot were not set in Sweden, but in an Italian art studio; Munktell's music, however, was created in a light French style. The successes of the performances were confirmed by public acclaim as well as by the positive reception in daily newspapers and music magazines.

<sup>2</sup> The music critic for *Aftonbladet*, Karl Adolf Lindgren (1846–1905), was also a music historian and translator. Under the signature A. L. he wrote extensively about music, musicians and music theory in the first edition of *Nordisk Familjebok*. As a critic and author, he was valued for his extensive knowledge and impartiality.

<sup>3</sup> This is stated, for instance, in an unidentified newspaper clipping, signed Patrik V., preserved in Munktell's clippings archive at the Stockholm Music and Theatre Museum.

In addition to the performances in Sweden, *In Florence* was also given in Paris in private performances: The composer had her *opéra comique* translated into French by the famous poet and chronicler Armand Silvestre, and the work was produced twice in the beautiful studio of Munktell's sister, Baroness Emma Sparre, on rue d'Amsterdam (*Stockholms Dagblad*, 28 April 1892). Several Nordic vocal students made up the small choir. The orchestral score was reduced for piano, played by the composer, and accompanied by violin and harp. According to Karl Valentin<sup>4</sup> (*Nya Dagligt Allehanda* April 28 1898), artists such as Scarenberg and Mille de la Tour successfully performed *In Florence* in French under the direction of Benjamin Godard. After the two private performances mentioned above, the little opera received positive reviews in several newspapers, as well as acclaim from musicians and the fifty invited guests who filled the elegantly decorated studio: Among others, Parisian celebrity musicians such as Godard, Vincent d'Indy, Gabriel Marie, Henry Emien and Armand Silvestre were present. Even the Swedish-Norwegian Minister Fredrik Due, himself an amateur composer, attended the performance with his wife. Hope was that the performance as well as Silvestre's reputation and personal connections would pave the way for a production of the opera at the Paris Opéra comique or the new Théâtre lyrique.

Following the Stockholm production, critics considered Fallström as the Swedish author having the best qualifications as a good opera librettist. The critic for the *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar* (31 May 1889) was of the opinion that Fallström's text seemed to rise above the trivialities penned by his librettist colleagues and that it must have been rewarding to set his text to music. The plot of *In Florence* was described as written by a wordsmith, the dialogue in verse light and fluent and in some places resembling French. Although the content of the plot was not too difficult to understand, Fallström knew how to avoid sloppy and cheap traits in his text. On stage he attempted to illustrate an insignificant incident in a fifteenth-century Florence studio. Hence, critics such as Karl Valentin thought that more exact markers of time and place would have been desirable in the libretto (*Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 31 May 1889). In short, more action or practically-orientated spoken dialogue, characteristic of the *opéra comique* genre, made up a significant part of the opera, in Valentin's view, perhaps too big a part, because it put great demands on performers. Interspersed among the different parts of the spoken dialogue are mostly arias and duets.

<sup>4</sup> The Swedish composer Karl Valentin (1853–1918) wrote extensively about music in books and newspapers.

### Daniel Fallström's plot

Fallström's libretto revolves around a romantic love story. Duchess di Vanozza announces a competition for the best portrait of a woman, thus drawing attention to how women are depicted in art. In fact, there was no real competition, and after the first scene it would not have been difficult to predict the story's outcome. During the Venice carnival season, the poor, young and beautiful painter Stefano Varezzi makes the acquaintance of a young lady who goes by the name of Gemma, but eventually turns out to be the duchess in disguise. The two are infatuated with one another, and she models for him. Standing obliquely in front of an easel with the canvas facing the audience, young Stefano shows how he struggles to depict his model. A kiss reminding her of their secret meetings during the carnival and their awakening love elicits the desired glow in her cheeks and inspires him. Pleased with the result, he hopes to win the 500 ducats of prize money and a trophy. While working on her portrait, he has fallen in love with her, and so, he is grief-stricken when, at their last session, she reveals that they never will meet again. Her departure is painful. Before leaving, "Gemma" contemptuously reveals that she rejected the painter Bardi, who sees Stefano as a dangerous rival for Gemma and the prize. As Stefano's landlord Beppo arrives to collect the rent, Bardi raises his dagger in anger to rip Stefano's canvas apart. Bardi tries to persuade Beppo to take Stefano's picture as security for his claim of 103 ducats in rent and other necessities. This is prevented by Stefano's sudden arrival. Anxious to defend his artwork, Stefano clashes with his landlord in a fencing match. In the midst of their duel the veiled, young and eccentric duchess arrives accompanied by the art professors she has selected to evaluate Stefano's painting. Before Gemma reveals her true identity, the art professors are ridiculed. In Gemma's view Stefano paints women more skilfully than any art professor could possibly teach him to do. Stefano falls into her arms. She, the trophy, gives him her hand, her heart and the prize. And, of course, all ends in joy and merriment.

### Munktell's musical setting

Munktell set the libretto to eight musical numbers for tenor and soprano. There are two arias for Gemma, a farewell song and a romance performed by Stefano, duets between Gemma and Stefano and between Bardi and Beppo during their duel, a duet between the art professors plus the choir and a duet between the play's main characters followed by a final chorus. And, of course, there was an overture, which almost sounded like a potpourri,

with an evocative middle part featuring good voice leading and successful instrumentation. The orchestral illustrations are particularly striking when the curtain rises, allowing the audience to see Florence through the open window of an attractive art studio.

About not expecting creative femininity to celebrate its greatest triumph in music drama

Reviewers loved the model's transformation from Gemma to Duchess and found some sloppy remarks in the libretto about academics looking down on the study of nature as a fortunate maneuver. They found this at its clearest in a chorus revealing the judges, high and wise art professors, as mere naked emperor, i.e. showing almost no judgement. According to *Socialdemokraten* (1 June 1889), Munktell's music sounded melodious, popular and more French than Swedish. In a detailed review in *Aftonbladet* (31 May 1889), the distinguished music writer Lindgren called Munktell "the Nordic Frenchwoman" and compared her to several other female composers:

In general it has been said that women have no power as creative artists. Still the visual arts has several notable women, and when it comes to press coverage, a reference to George Sand suffices to show how ground-breaking a woman artist can be. However, one should expect creative femininity to celebrate its greatest triumph in music, the so-called art of the emotions, yet this is not the case. Obviously, music has many productive women of the highest rank, but by comparison with the other arts, the number of productive, ingenious women is lower than in any other art form. The gifted composer Pauline Viardot certainly sparkles in France along with her sister Malibran and her daughter Henrietta, who resided here for a short time. The Germans also have more to show for themselves: Among them Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, Josephine Lang, Pauline Fichter, Laura Kahrer-Rampoldt share respectable talents, and apparently they have even composed music in larger and more difficult genres, such as fugues and concertos. (The Polish-born Tekla Badarzewska deserves no mention for being notorious in a dismal way). In the Nordic countries perhaps Agathe Backer-Gröndahl is the most ingenious of them all. In Sweden women composers have been discussed for a long time, but even if an occasional song by Emilie Holmberg, Hanna Breeman or Mathilda Gyllenhaal has become popular, none of them has risen above the dilettante level. Recently, Swedish women composers have endeavoured to become professional composers: we only mention Elfrida Andrée, Amanda Maier [Röntgen] and Valborg Aulin to prove our point. Helena Munktell, previously known for her sensitive and musically interesting songs, has joined them. And, as if confirming her epithet, "the Nordic Frenchwoman", her new chosen field is opéra

comique. Oddly enough, it seems that only French and Swedish women have chosen to compose in the aforementioned genre. Both Pauline and Louise Viardot have composed operas, while we only recall one German woman opera composer, and fate would have it that she is of Swedish birth: Ingeborg v. Bronsart's parents are actually Swedish (*Aftonbladet*, 31 May 1889).<sup>5</sup>

Typically, Lindgren's lengthy article compares Munktell to her female colleagues. Still, he gives a fairly comprehensive list of women composers and thereby valuable insights into who was who in contemporary Nordic musical life. His contemporary critics published a broad spectrum of everything from apparently fair and balanced descriptions of women composers and musicians who mastered very demanding and difficult tasks in brilliant ways to reviews openly stating generally negative attitudes to the ability of women to compose music and arrange concerts. As late as 1916, the Norwegian composer Signe Lund (1868–1950) stated in *Aftenposten* (5 March) that a music publisher soon would stop a woman composer venturing outside genres on which the company could earn money. Usually, bigger works were rejected if the composer was not well known. Despite such difficulties women kept on writing, compelled to compose, and tried their luck as conductors, not in hopes of earning money, but in the hope of having their works performed. Often rejected in that arena too, they bore the expenses of arranging performances of their own works. Deeply rooted negative attitudes towards women composers were also voiced in the press, and the ideological climate seemed openly misogynous. Showing everything from apparently fair and balanced descriptions to reviews that openly express negative attitudes towards women, the critics – mainly male composers, conductors and musicians – tried to make it appear as if women posed no real threat or challenge to the male establishment. This puts in perspective the overall positive judgements of women quoted above from *Aftonbladet*. No matter how ingenious a woman composer might be, projected womanliness and femininity usually blurred the critics' judgement of her music. As Hilda Torjusen stated in *Nylænde*<sup>6</sup> (15 February 1894): "If gifted women chose to develop in directions other than men, they would not become renowned, and if they followed in men's footsteps, they were accused of not

<sup>5</sup> This and the following quotes from Swedish and Danish sources are translated by the author.

<sup>6</sup> *Nylænde* ("New Terrain") with the subtitle "Journal for the women's cause" was the most political and controversial of several Norwegian women's magazines. Gina Krog owned and edited this first Norwegian feminist journal, which was published in Kristiania/Oslo from 1887 to 1927.

being original. While men's original ideas were cultivated, women's ingenuity could not be accepted because of society's strong misoneism (sticking to old traditions)."

Valentin singled out the first fine and the delicate romance, "Do you believe a woman forgets that easily", as the most of effective of Munktell's solo songs (*Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, 31 May 1889). Munktell revealed her compositional talent both in this aria and in the following song, "Oh, beautiful child", in Swedish-Italian popular style, which turned out to be a waltz culminating in a duet at the end. Revealing a great melodic talent and skilled treatment of form, these numbers had warm, passionate colours, increased the overall effect of her songs and proved the composer's previously unknown abilities in musical characterisation. The accompaniment to Gemma's carnival song was also considered characteristic of her style. In other words, Valentin planted more than a few gentle hints that Munktell was more experienced in the romance than in the genre of *opéra comique*. He went on to elaborate just how. The *Aftonbladet* critic reported (31 May 1889) that he heard in this solo a successful and excellent composer of romances. He gave Munktell credit for avoiding the influences of Strauss and Offenbach and being influenced instead by a noble and Delibes-like style. Even though some critics called for a faster tempo, they agreed on Munktell's remarkable talent for the buffa style in the duo in which Stefano kicks Bembo out of his studio as he tries to collect the rent. The reason for the praise lay in the fact that Munktell was a beginner at composing operas, and hence unfamiliar with what really worked well on the stage, not just on the piano. Stefano's farewell song was also singled out for special mention for its chorale-like character, for having a Nordic sound and for fitting the dramatic situation so well. The fencing terzetto was thought to contain several dramatic elements that demonstrated Munktell's talent in creating dramatic and sharply characteristic rhythms more boldly than in the solo songs.

#### A genius soon to be scrutinised

As a taste of this *opéra comique*, I have chosen an excerpt from the art professors' duet (see Example 1, pp. 281-283). Accompanied by a choir of art students, the self-important and pompous art professors, Viarducci and Sarsapilla, make their entrance, stopping at stage centre with their students arranged in a semi-circle around them. Before the professors have a chance to comment on Stefano's picture, the duchess describes it as excellent. The professors can only add that the picture is a good likeness of the duchess,

despite the fact that Stefano did not use traditional brush technique, that he fancied novelty and that he mixed colours in a very untraditional way. As in their opinion the image reveals great talent, they offer him a place in their art school, where if a student is diligent and nice to the professors for many years, they might find a position for him painting planks.

In the excerpt shown in Example 1 the professors postulate:

En yngling har fått för sig klart,  
att han skall konstnär bli  
och på Akademien snart  
kalfatras hans geni.  
Ingen natur  
bara gå på  
himlen är gul  
solen är blå!

A youngster has got it clear into his head  
that he is to become an artist  
and that his genius soon  
is to be scrutinized at the Academy.  
No nature,  
just head on,  
the sky is yellow,  
the sun is blue!  
[Translated by CH]

The very long, sustained tone on the word *klar* (“clear”) over the augmented dominant chord might indicate that the speaker is actually unsure about the clarity of the matter and needs time to think about it. Another peculiarity is the canonic-melismatic setting of the word *kalfatras* (“scrutinised”), a rather old-fashioned word of Arabic-Dutch origin that literally means caulking. In the music Munktell emphasises the word in a rather baroque oratorio style à la Handel, which undoubtedly marks a notable contrast to the simplicity of the surrounding musical language. In this way the professors are portrayed as old-fashioned, comic characters who adore scrutinising and attacking the younger generation; as put by the critic of *Svenska Dagbladet* (31 May 1889), not unlike the “Beckmesserei” and plait manner of Wagner’s *Meistersinger*.

Hence, Munktell achieved a strong, but natural comic effect through the voicing of the professors’ opera buffa duet, which succeeded in being the most comic moment in the opera. *Aftonbladet*’s critic (31 May 1889), Lindgren, stated that Munktell mastered the parody very well and had composed

Viarducci  
En yng-ling har fått för sig klart,

Sarsapilla  
att han kan konst - när

Viarducci Sarsapilla  
bli och på A - ka - de - mi - on snart *f* kal

fat - ras hans ge - ni! Bl kor Kal -  
fat - ras hans ge - ni! *f* Kal

*sf* *mf* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

Example 1. Helena MunkteLL, *In Florence*, scene 7

fat - ras hans ge - nil

fat - ras hans ge - nil

*fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *f*

31 Viarducci og Sarsapilla

In - gen na - tur, ba - ra gå på, him - len är gul, so -

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *fp*

37 Bl. kor

len är blå

*ff* In - gen na - tur, ba - ra gå på,

37

Example 1. Helena Munktel, *In Florence*, scene 7

43

him - len vår gul, so - len är blå!

43

fz

f

a good opera, even if the scene, according to *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* (31 May 1889), referred more to conditions in the Swedish world of art in the 1800s than to the actual setting in fifteenth-century Florence.

#### A great operatic talent

In general the critics agreed that Munktell's setting of the libretto provided a fairly nice impression and that her music revealed a great operatic talent, even if the writer in *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar* (31 May 1889) pointed out that the genre of reference, *opéra comique*, was not well chosen. *Svenska Dagbladet* (31 May 1889) praised the composer's solos for being harmonically interesting and melodious and stated that her compositional style resembled the French school, especially Gounod at certain points, as well as Jules Massenet's and Benjamin Godard's style, i.e. "modern" French patterns. This was true, he added, not only in composing melodic lines, but also in the accompaniment figures and piquant harmonic twists à la *Lakmé* by Léo Delibes and other "modern" French works. Not only the critic of *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar*, but also Lindgren in *Aftonbladet* (31 May 1889) pointed out that Munktell's instrumentation was too heavy compared to the same French composers, even if it was executed with due diligence. The advice was that, in future, she should take care of it herself, since the conductor of the Stockholm Opera, Dente, apparently was unable to understand her intentions and therefore to a greater or lesser degree somehow corrupted them.

## *The Rose Time* and the “Women’s Exhibition from Past to Present” of 1895

In contrast to Munktell, who confidently set a libretto dealing with the arts’ portrayal of women in music and submitted it to the Swedish Royal Opera, Griebel’s *The Rose Time* was commissioned by “The Women’s Exhibition from Past to Present” for a performance in Copenhagen in August of 1895. With this event we encounter gender as the fundamental structuring category: Only women could participate in the production. More than 80,000 people visited the exhibition, leaving it with a surplus of 13,000 kroner (Lous 1999: 48). The purpose was to show that not only was intersectional collaboration between active women from different fields desirable and possible, but that skilled women could tutor and develop the abilities of other women. Through the exhibition Scandinavian women created an imaginary women’s museum with performances of music, drama and ballet as obvious components. Danish women carried out organisational as well as historical pioneering work. Still, spectacle-wearing, “what-we-want” women with short hair who were commonly associated with *Kvindelig Fremskridtsforening*<sup>7</sup> were mostly conspicuous by their absence. Hence, *Dannebrog* described the event as “the fashionable summer meeting of the fair sex” (9 June 1895). Nevertheless, national and international media coverage was impeccable.

Officially, the organising women disapproved of the women’s liberation movement. Heads of several disciplines made negative remarks to the press about “militant feminists”. Feminism, the non-issue they were referring to, was still passionately discussed among the organisers, press and audience. “Feminist women acting in armies are pretty horrible, and I’d rather die than listen to lecturing ladies”, Emma Gad stated in *Dannebrog* on 17 August 1895. During the exhibition Gad still presented herself as a playwright and operetta librettist as well as the author of the ballet plot *I Rosentiden* (*The Rose Time*). And, of course, women lectured during the exhibition. When the Swedish “difference feminist” Ellen Key (1847–1926) presented her new book, *Misused Women’s Power*, more listeners turned up than the premises could accommodate.<sup>8</sup> Despite her claims that wom-

<sup>7</sup> “The Advance Association”, a Danish women’s liberation movement founded in 1885.

<sup>8</sup> In *Misused Women’s Power* (1896) Key highlighted gender differences and focused attention on women’s distinctive skills and responsibilities, a set of values she labelled “Mothering Society”. In her opinion women did wrong when they demanded equality instead of developing their equal, specifically feminine qualities as mothers and in personal relationships. Key feared an abuse of female power, and she also feared that

en's liberation was not for her, Gad was a member of the Danish liberation movement. But the voice teacher Nanna Liebmann (1852–1935), who was responsible for the music section of the exhibition, confided to *Dannebrog's* readers that Gad was neither positive about women being heads of disciplines nor did she believe in "women's liberation" (24 June 1895). Moreover, Gad expressed strong scepticism of all highly original compositions by women "constantly being in demand". In her opinion male composers and their excellent musical works should come to the rescue of the exhibition rather than settling for what she considered women composers' mediocre musical compositions such as were heard at the exhibition's two musical soirees. Asked by the reporter if she simply had no faith in women composers, Gad replied: "At least I am too musical to put my faith in them unconditionally".

#### A festive and fashionable event

The first performance of Tekla Griebel's *I Rosentiden* took place in the Exhibition's first dramatic performance at the Dagmar Theatre on 18 August 1895 in a festive atmosphere. According to *Avisen*, on 28 August 1895, tickets had been in great demand; hence, only the nobility and the Copenhagen elite were present. Seats had long been sold out, and at the twelfth hour room had to be made for the royal family, announcing its participation rather late. The capital's most elegant audience was gathered in the Dagmar Theatre. In addition the majority of the regular audience at premieres, considering it their mission to represent "all Copenhagen", was also present. The festively dressed people entered a room garnished with live flowers along the parapet and balconies; bouquets tied in yellow and white silk ribbons dangled from the balconies overhead. The programmes placed on each seat had embroidery-like decorations. Ushers dressed in white saluted everyone like marshals, and in the orchestra pit Olsen and her talented all-women's orchestra were in place. *Politiken's* critic, Charles Kjerulf (1858–1919), commented that he, from his seat in the Dagmar theatre, realized that several members of the orchestra were known to audience members from their performances in private salons, but that only a few of these musicians had performed in public concerts before (*Politiken*, 29 August 1895).

women would not get anywhere in society. After her book was released, she was attacked from many quarters, not least the Norwegian Women's liberation movement: On 15 April 1896, *Nylænde* accused her of reserving seats for "independent" women in charities and volunteer social work.

When the time came, the conductor raised her baton competently and authoritatively, and to applause from the audience, led a performance of a symphonic allegro by Mozart, which was not further identified. The curtain rose, new floral decorations appeared along the balcony railings, and Agnes Nyrop stepped forward to perform Magdalene Thoresen's prologue, which, according to one journal, contained too many words about what women wanted. *Socialdemokraten* (on 29 August 1895) considered the prologue too dry and philosophical – a overwrought defence of women's rights. Furthermore, Mrs Nyrop was criticised for performing the piece almost like a sermon. Thoresen's grave words about the status of women at home and in life in general, about their goals and abilities, as well as their right to make their way side by side with men was deemed totally out of sync with the festive atmosphere in the theatre. Nevertheless, the press discussed the contents of her prologue to some degree, namely women's battle for human rights and their desire to be freed from long-standing obstacles in order to try and make use of their abilities in new fields.

Following the prologue, the orchestra performed an unidentified andante by Tchaikovsky. A performance of Anna Kjerulf's one-act play *May he come?* followed. Thereafter, the sisters Don, Fanny Christensen and Gina Oselio performed romances. *I Rosentiden*, which turned out to be a fairly lengthy work of approximately one hour, concluded the evening. The reporter for *Kvinden og Samfundet: Udstillings-Tidende* described "the elegance of the costumes as extraordinary" (6 September 1895, No 9a). The music consisted in part of recitatives and declamatory movements (influenced by the ravishing *L'enfant prodigue* pantomime music by André Wormser) and in part of well-balanced pieces, imitations of rococo dances, such as the minuet, the gavotte and the like. The rest of the ballet music had a more independent style.

A plot leaving an impression of women wanting to be linked in roses and holy matrimony

The story of the ballet is based on a Nitouche-like<sup>9</sup> motif and set in two acts: The first act takes place in the courtyard of a monastery, the second in a rococo parlour where *tableaux vivants* are to be performed. The young Chevalier de Gramont jumps over the convent wall to meet the love of his life, Aline de Fontenay. Seduced by her beautiful singing, he tears a page out of his sketchbook, writes down his confession of love and climbs over

<sup>9</sup> Mamzell Nitouche was a very popular vaudeville-opérette by Louis A. Hervé (1825-92), premiered in Paris 1883.

a wall into the courtyard of the monastery to meet her. Following their meeting, the prioress discovers his forgotten hat and returns Aline to her parents. However, they do not find his love letter particularly disturbing. After a brief fainting episode and more intrigues, it appears that the parents have already promised Aline to a young man: the chevalier. The engagement is celebrated with a party, a ballet and the performance of mythological scenes.

Neat ballet rhythms rocking themselves forward

Before the premiere Griebel had already given a solo performance of her piano arrangements of the ballet as part of an interview (*Dannebrog* 2 August 1895). A description of the forthcoming performance of her ballet on 28 August at the Dagmar Theatre ran as follows:

The rhythms of the ballet neatly rock themselves forward with their swirling rococo motifs along with their ancient, fragile and pure harmonies. Then we hear a graceful and elegant children's minuet, intended for a Mozartian spinet. From a painting of a shepherd in the style of Wattau come the sounds of Diana's hunting party, which consists of nymphs and cupids and the sleeping Endymion. The alluring horn signals distract the hunter from his path to follow the goddess deep into the woods. *I Rosentiden* reveals soul, imagination and an affinity with the past. The music is composed by a quiet, modest girl in an old-fashioned room furnished in her great-grandfather's style and with a ticking Bornholm clock on the wall.

Tardini-Hansen had arranged a series of dances about the power of love for the ballet's premiere. The main parts were assigned to Emma Nielsen, who looked lovely as the gallant chevalier and evoked encouraging applause. Valborg Jørgensen danced the part of his beloved mistress, a partly open rosebud, mischievous and modest. Together they created a lavishly-dressed loving couple in pastoral style. The press considered their gavotte the main event of the evening. At least *Dannebrog's* critic could not imagine anything more delightful than their dancing together. In one of the mythological scenes Agnes Harboe danced a dark and cruel huntress Diana, who was infatuated with the slumbering Endymion. In addition Tardini-Hansen allowed a group of adorable cupids, danced by children, to intervene in the plot. A stylish, beautiful and big Kehraus dance concluded the ballet. The reception of the ballet plot was lukewarm, and the plot was described by *Dannebrog* as "very flimsy". On 29 August 1895 the *Socialdemokraten* critic praised the Shepherd's Dance. According to the critic in *Københavns Adresse*

*Avis*, compared to the other parts of the event (the prologue, Emma Gad's play and the solo songs), the ballet steadily improved the atmosphere in the audience; the final tableau led to stormy applause (*Københavns Adresse Avis*, 29 August 1895).

#### Loving dramatic composition with life and soul

Whereas Liebmann had no faith in women composers and called on men to rescue the exhibition's musical level, Griebel had great confidence in her own ability to compose music that was just as original as men's. This was something the male critics neither believed nor expected. Nevertheless, in 1895 Griebel was considered the most prominent Danish woman composer (*Politiken* 5 September 1895). In a *Dannebrog* interview about *I Rosentiden*, she stated her ambitions: "I love dramatic composition with my life and soul and still hope to make my way in this genre". Performed before an elite Copenhagen audience, the production was created not only by Griebel, but also by a woman author, Emma Gad, and a woman choreographer, Jeanette Tardini-Hansen, an all-women's orchestra conducted by a woman, Orpheline Olsen, and women dancers exclusively on stage (even in male roles). Aside from Bjørn Bjørnson, the stage director, not one man was involved in the production. Hence, we come across gender as *the* fundamental structuring category: Only women could participate in the production.

#### A pièce de résistance preferably done without men

*Politiken's* critic found this situation invigorating and refreshing: "If yesterday evening also had a deeper idea, then it must be sought in the ballet, which documented that the art of ballet not just do without men, but preferably *should be without men*" [italics added by the author] (*Politiken*, 29 August 1895). Groundbreaking attempts were made to expose the neutrality of the male gender on stage as merely an illusion. *Kvinden og Samfundet: Udstillings-Tidende* remarked how particularly enjoyable it was to see women in men's roles and that most women would agree on men having the largest entitlement to mimes, while being dispensable as solo dancers (6 September 1895, no 9a). This suggests that ballets were gendered in diverse ways and makes it appropriate to view the 1895 all-women production at the Dagmar Theatre as a visualisation and a comment on all-men ballet performances at the dawn of "the Women's Century".

At this first performance of *I Rosentiden* all the Royal Theatre's dancers as well as some of the actresses from the private theatres were on stage, even in men's roles. Women dressing up in men's clothes caused a sensa-

tion. The *Dannebrog* critic found the concept of women only productions exciting as well as compelling and therefore inclined to prefer only ladies on stage in honour of the graceful and piquant (29 August 1895). *Politiken* even claimed that the ballet would be better without men: “Imagine what a relief it would be to drop the bald-headed and pot-bellied gentlemen constituting the majority of the Danish ballet” (29 August 1895). However, the pen name Camille in *København* (25 August 1895) deemed it rather doubtful that women could add anything of artistic value when it came to how men should be portrayed on stage.

#### A production by women trying out new fields

Contrary to the exhibition’s music section, which according to *Kvinden og Samfundet: Udstillings-Tidende* (13 March 1895, no 8) deemed it impossible to put together an all-women’s orchestra that would satisfy artistic requirements, the drama section had managed to assemble just such an ensemble. It was made up of local, musically-gifted young women and primarily consisted of strings and a few wind instruments with piano support conducted by Orpheline Olsen. The *Dannebrog* critic “Vir & Co.” argued that “[Olsen’s] routine and practice in swinging the baton, [...] made her the obvious choice for female Chef d’Orchestre” and predicted that “her delicate ears would know how to avoid all harsh dissonance from this randomly assembled orchestra” (28 August 1895). *Dagens Nyheder’s* critic pointed out that he experienced the exhibition’s female composer, orchestral musicians, conductor and playwright as pioneers, more so than the singers and dancers (29 August 1895). As pointed out by *Berlingske Tidende*, “Fortunately, [Olsen] had previously led so many musical performances that one felt fairly confident seeing her as the head of this lovable orchestra” (29 August 1895). Before moving to Copenhagen, Olsen had led the music association from her manor “Lille Grundet” in Vejle.<sup>10</sup> Rumours had it that her relentless enthusiasm more than once had led Vejle’s women to real artistic triumphs. Producing concerts and performing fragments of operas, she rehearsed and directed “this good city’s cohort of small misses keen on singing, pharmacy assistants and saleswomen” (*Dannebrog*, 28 August 1895).

#### Ballet music composed by a lady’s hand should sound very light

Among the reviewers, there was broad consensus that the ballet music was a success. *Avisen’s* critic stated that he believed in advance “ballet music

<sup>10</sup> The town Vejle is situated in southeast part of Denmark at the Jutland Peninsula

3

## Gavotte.

Piano.

*mp*

*mf*

*cresc.*

*f*

*p*

*f*

*pp*

*cresc.*

*f*

*poco ritard.*

K.H.M. 9114

FINE

Example 2. Tekla Griebel, Gavotte from *I Rosentiden*. *Balletmusik af Thekla Griebel*. (Gavotte – Menuett – Pierrettedands (Kehraus)). Kongelig Hof-Musikhandel (Henrik Hennings Efterfølger Aktieselskab (Kjöbenhavn)). [1895]

composed by a lady's hand, quite contrary to Griebel's music, would sound very light. Even though it testified to her knowledge and skill, hers was rather too hefty". Her setting also surprised him by being "a pretty extensive work full of lovely arrangements and offering much for the eyes to enjoy." In *Politiken* Charles Kjerulf described the public debut of Griebel's ballet music and enjoyed it so much that he recommended that it be produced at the Royal Theatre. The critic of *Københavns Adresse Avis* found that her music "bears testimony of unquestionable talent. Several details catch one's ear immediately, namely the dances in rococo style; the gavotte above all made a splendid impression" (see Example 2). *Berlingske Tidende* focused on the "pirouette dance in the first act by the transformed cloister school pupils, the enchanting dance by five children as cupids, the lovers' gavotte and finally, the big dance ensembles".

The lovers' gavotte, performed by Emma Nielsen and Valborg Jørgensen, is here chosen as an example, because this very dance was not only highlighted by *Avisen's* critic (29 August 1895), but also by most newspapers, which emphasized its particular success and elegance.

*Dannebrog* (29 August 1895) reported satisfaction both in the choreography, as well as in the music and dance: "In simultaneously very old and very new fashion dance and singing are mixed together in a very powerful way, and generally the ballet appeared so fine and enjoyable that we almost could assume that it found favour with the royal theatre directors present in the audience". Further on he stressed that Griebel "composed very stylish music in sync, in graceful rhythm, in delicate mood and not devoid of humour. However, passion was clearly not woman's forte, at least not setting it in music." *Dagens Nyheder* pointed out that "certainly we have seen women with and under the baton before, but what hereafter might become the rule, was an exception" (29 August 1895). It was emphasised that women ballet composers, orchestral musicians and conductors were more pioneering than the singers and dancers. Still, the critic consistently described the women's orchestra as more of a decorative element, "dressed in short sleeves as if going to a dance, but playing instead in a dance orchestra" (*Nationaltidende*, 29 August 1895). Apparently, the performance was not on the same artistic level as the conductor and the composer:

Even if the orchestral performance was not flawless, blame cannot be placed on the conductor. Rather it should be sought among the sometimes rather amateurish women musicians the orchestra consisted of. Most of the evening nervousness along with incapacity paralysed the orchestra's performance.

As far as *Politiken's* critic was concerned (29 August 1895), the Primo violin group was far better filled than the others. At places, even when they dominated, they contributed to a sense of real orchestral sound during the performance. Otherwise, the sound was marred by a lack of precision and purity in the other instruments, especially in the second violins and cellos. The flautists and horn players stood well at their task. Still, Miss Philipsen deserved a very special compliment for her talented and energetic piano playing which obviously as the conductor within the orchestra held things together ever so much.

A possible reason for the rough treatment to which the *Nationaltidende* critic subjected the randomly assembled amateur orchestra might be Liebmann's statement to the press that the music section was not able to muster enough skill musicians for a woman's orchestra (*Udstillings-Tidende* 13 March 1895, no 8). Generally, music critics were far more chivalrous in their discussions of the thirty-strong women's orchestra, excusing the performance with the lack of the musicians' orchestral experience.

Leaving realism, the darker sides of life and Ibsenesque thunderstorms behind

In writing her prologue, Thoresen probably assumed that women would seize the opportunity to strike a blow for women's liberation in the theatre. However, none of the contributions following her prologue showed tendencies in that direction. As *Politiken* put it on 29 August 1895, the fun was primarily in women trying out things that were not part of their everyday playground. On 2 August and 29 August *Dannebrog* accused the drama department at the exhibition of being too content with entertainment and diversion, in stark contrast to Magdalene Thoresen's prologue. The *Dannebrog's* critic felt that women's world had long since left realism and the darker sides of life behind as the Ibsenesque thunderstorm cracking over women's heads, setting minds on fire like lightning, had passed over and left no trace. After that evening not even Strindberg would be in an uproar over women intruding on his domain.

It seems that what our history books describe as the criteria for success at the time were related to more general negotiations about *what* was legitimate culture and *who* should have the power to define it. Most critics cited here were men who had other professional tasks; they themselves often served as composers, musicians or conductors. Thus, they may have engaged in propaganda for their own aesthetics. In other words, male composers' authority in music for the theater was probably formed in interac-

tion with and in the exercise of influence on the very criteria they were evaluated against when they acquired the same authority. They made it seem as if the women who were active as dancers and actresses at the exhibition offered only a bright and light, cheerful and enjoyable pastime. Still, *Dannebrog's* critic suspected or sensed Delilah's famous insidiousness in this deliberate aloofness that lulled the opposite sex to rest (2 August 1895). The women themselves claimed that a rococo ballet with the beautiful name "The Rose Time" was the evening's *pièce de résistance*; when all was said and done on stage, it left the impression of women wanting to be linked with holy matrimony and roses, he stated. The fact that a piano excerpt of *The Rose Time* was published bears witness to the success of the ballet music and the exhibition's desire that the audience would bring home a musical souvenir from this particular event.

#### Gender, genius, The Rose Time and Gorgeous Karen

Prior to Griebel's Women's Exhibition, Griebel composed a one-act opera *Skjøn Karen* (with libretto by Einar Christiansen), premiered in Breslau in April 1895. Despite a miserable production by the singers and orchestra, most critics agreed unreservedly on Griebel being very talented (*Politiken*, 5 September 1895). Regardless of favourable judgements in the Copenhagen newspapers *Dagbladet* and in *Politiken* on 29 August 1895, the emphasis on her talent and Griebel's impeccable technical mastery and graceful use of the folk song motif "And Karen served at the young king's court", her opera was not performed at Copenhagen Royal Theatre until 1899, even though the arrangement for solo piano received extremely good reception. Although prospects for drawing a full house were considered to be good, the opera did not find favour with the managers. Having produced several operas of the same or lesser quality by male composers, the theatre could easily have rehearsed and performed *The Rose Time* with ease and without much sacrifice in terms of time and money. In her memoirs Griebel recalls: "My dear gentlemen, how our audience would have perceived it if a young lady composed just as well as male composers, with even less education, a household to care for, and without the priceless advantage of playing in an orchestra?" (Dahlerup: 85) An 1895 production of *Skjøn Karen* would have been particularly relevant, very suitable and probably a successful comment on the concerts, drama and ballet productions' exhibition. Even to Griebel's contemporaries, *Skjøn Karen's* failure to find favour with the board of the Royal Opera House was incomprehensible. Taken by surprise this very fact made *Dagbladet's* critic wonder: Rehearsing such a short opera could have

been done with the greatest of ease and few expenses – something which made the dismissive attitude towards *Skjøn Karen* even more baffling:

Not long ago the same theatre listed works of Danish male colleagues, who certainly did not rise above Miss Griebel's *Skjøn Karen*, on the contrary. Producing her opera simultaneously with the success of the Women's Exhibition could have been a very appropriate supplement, and more importantly, it would no doubt have had a particularly good chance to attract a big audience. Hopefully, the theatre board has not yet had its last word on the matter. A young lady of 24 composing a talented and technically immaculate opera is an event worth celebrating. Not only would a fiery prison execution of *Skjøn Karen* within the walls of the theatre be unfair, but it would be unwise in the highest degree (*Dagbladet*, 29 August 1895).

### Munktell, Griebel and other sleeping beauties

Munktell and Griebel's experiences as women composers staging ballets and *opéra comiques* were probably quite different from the experiences of their male colleagues. The "producerly texts" of the *opéra comique* and the ballet illuminate bourgeoisie women's experiences of gendered musical culture. In both cases the reception materials consist of a broad spectrum of everything from apparently fair and balanced descriptions of women mastering very demanding tasks in brilliant ways to reviews that openly express general negative attitudes about women's ability to compose and stage music for the theatre. Although gender proves to be only one of several aspects communicated in reviews of the two cases, it is seen as an important plot trigger. Closely related, yet still following slightly different geographical and historical paths, Munktell and Griebel offer different historical answers to how *opéra comique* and ballet music by women represented, questioned and (de)constructed contemporary perceptions of gender.

Munktell found ways of being *in* the French and Swedish opera world, which allowed her to stage gender norms at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm and in Baroness Emma Sparre's beautiful studio in Paris. The plot she set to music draws attention to how women were depicted and even ridicules professors of art. In this way she and Fallström epitomise intrinsic performativity in their own culture together with how they imagined gender performativity in renaissance Florence. The fact that *In Florence* was produced repeatedly on the Stockholm Royal Opera stage *and* in Sparre's studio highlights how systems in different groups interacted and interrelated. Presumably, *In Florence* was discussed critically in Baroness Sparre's

studio. Since the work was not staged in established Parisian opera houses, the artistic value probably did not receive acclaim from her influential and high-powered audience.

As pointed out by Eva Öhrström in her article “Ett eget rum. Ett kvinnersperspektiv på musikaliska salonger” (2007), women composers were successful at using salons to enable their works to reach the public despite some resistance up until the 1890s. As public music arenas became more important and women’s rights increased during the 1890s, a backlash can be observed. At the turn of the century the salon discussions of the first half of the 1800s were replaced by critics writing in solitude and publishing reviews in newspapers and journals about what happened in public music forums controlled by men. Most critics were men; they had the opportunity to establish the premises for what was true, valid and relevant as well as run propaganda based on their own aesthetic standards. On the other hand, newspaper reviews were based on what readers expected, although, in turn, what readers expected was based on what they were used to reading.

Participating in this larger cultural project several influential male critics constantly belittled music associated with femininity and womanhood. When it came to the events surrounding the performance of the ballet *The Rose Time*, “The Women’s Exhibition from Past to Present” in Copenhagen in 1895 we encounter gender as *the* fundamental structuring category: Only women could participate in the production. Some critics wrote about the production of *The Rose Time* with tongue in cheek, and described the personal appearance and gestures of the dancers, the conductor and the orchestral members almost flirtatiously.

For Griebel, choosing to accept the commission for a ballet from the Copenhagen Women’s Exhibition in 1895 and especially cooperating with a manager of the music section with so many negative attitudes towards her women composer colleagues in general and towards assembling a women’s orchestra in particular may have presented strong dilemmas. Probably her realm of artistic possibilities was limited by the commissioned work’s relation to the exhibition’s “difference feminist” ideals.<sup>11</sup> Since only women were able to participate in the production, she must have been aware that she was composing for a production in which amateurs and professionals would work side by side. In Griebel’s urge to compose stage music and question the male ballet tradition, we meet a daring individual voice stripped of the position, power and thorough music education of her influential male colleagues. Exploring Griebel’s guest appearances as a ballet and

<sup>11</sup> Cf. footnote 8.

opera composer not only reveals a history of denigration and marginalization, but also demonstrates a glittering example of how women composers, musicians, dancers and artists transformed the salons' good working relationship between amateurs and professionals.

Our two highly interesting cases of Nordic women composers of music drama and ballet has provided gentle hints about the kinds of contributions our Nordic "sleeping beauties" have in the national archives. By examining a multitude of forgotten figures that constitute the counterparts, discussion partners and opponents of the Nordic male composers, we can achieve a more complete overview of the operatic field through dialogical perspectives. Hence, integrating knowledge about women composers and musicians into the storylines will be a rewarding task for our future music histories and master narratives. In turn this might lead to broader perspectives on how Nordic (wo)men staged gender at the dawn of "the Women's Century".

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### Summary

Until date research on a multitude of forgotten women counterparts, discussion partners and opponents of our male Nordic opera composers has been scarce. The foci of the article are twofold: Firstly, it presents research on the first *opéra comique* by a Swedish woman composer to be debuted at the Kungliga Teatern (the Royal Theatre) and on a ballet that a Danish woman had commissioned by the heavily gender-laden *Kvindernes Udstilling fra Fortid til Nutid* (The Women's Exhibition from Past to Present) in Copenhagen (where women could participate in the production). Secondly, it elaborates on under what conditions Helena Munktell and Tekla Griebel composed and performed theatre music as well as on their productions

have in common and how they differ from each other. Closely related, yet following slightly different geographical and historical paths, *I Firenze* (In Florence) (1889) and Griebel's *I Rosentiden* (The Rose Time) (1895) offer different historical answers to how *opéra comique* and ballet music by women represented, questioned and (de)constructed contemporary perceptions of gender. Both exemplify how gender has been a factor in music critics' expectations to theatre music and productions. Even if gender proves to be only one of several aspects communicated, it is seen as an important plot trigger. Reception consist of a broad spectrum of everything from fair and balanced descriptions to reviews that openly express general negative attitudes about women's ability to compose and stage music drama and theatre music.