CHAPTER 4

THE REPERTOIRE— A GENERAL SURVEY

Fig. 1. Act III, scene 13 from Gustaf Adolfs ädelmod *("The Magnanimity of Gustavus Adolphus"). The king: "Sparre, you forget our costum requires that a father shall speak for the bridegroom, and it is for me to serve you as a father." Gustavus Adolphus' costume consists of a black satin jacket with cloth-of-gold puffs, breeches and cloak in the same colours, white cuffs and collar. The Spanish costume for Lars Sparre was also authentically early 17th century, and the women's dresses were stricty designed for the epoch in question. Engraving by Fr. Bolt, after a drawing by J. T. Sergel. Printed in* Konung Gustaf III's Skrifter *("Writings of King Gustaf III")*, III. *Stockholm 1806.*

SWEDEN AND EUROPEAN DRAMA 1771–1796

A presentation of cross-cultural contacts

Marie-Christine Skuncke

IF YOU HAVE EVER visited Stockholm, you probably know Kungsträdgården park, right in the center of town. Today it is a busy, dusty and noisy place with motor-cars rushing past. But let us move to Kungsträdgården two hundred years back in time. It is a summer day, a day in July 1788. In the background we can see the orangerie—"*Orangerie med dess staket, upplyst af blomsterkrukor*"; on one side there is an outdoor café—"*det sommartiden öppnade caffeståndet*"; a small table stands beneath a verdant tree; in the distance one sees the park gate and St. Jacob's church. Such are the stage directions at the beginning of a little divertissement by Carl Michael Bellman, *Lust-spel den 17 Julii 1790* ("Comedy on 17 July 1790"). In the play we meet the owner of the café, Mlle Maja Lisa, and her maid Lovisa. Lovisa is sewing a cloak for her mistress, yet she is far less interested in the cloak than in a young officer who has just come back from the Finnish war. Mor Bobbi, a very tipsy old woman, enters trying to sell a basket of cherries; she reels and sings and dances[1] (Fig. 2). — What could be more typically eighteenth-century Swedish, more typically Bellman than this little tableau?

Still Bellman's *Lust-spel den 17 Julii 1790* is *not* a Swedish original. Bellman derived his plot and the central scenes of his play from a French work, a short *proverbe dramatique* by Carmontelle, *La Marchande de cerises* ("The Cherry-Monger").[2] Maja Lisa is Madame Mignonette, Lovisa, Marianne, Mor Bobbi, la Mère Rogome. When adapting Carmontelle's play though, Bellman introduced several changes. Not only did he localize the action, transposing it from a coffee-house in Paris to an outdoor café in a Stockholm park, but he

Fig. 2. Mor Bobbi. Engraving from Svenska teatergalleriet *("A Gallery of Swedish Theatre") by E. Chiewitz.*

also changed the genre of the play. Carmontelle's *La Marchande de cerises* is a *proverbe dramatique*, a very popular genre with the French aristocracy and bourgeoisie; it was performed in private, by amateurs, and it illustrated a proverb which the company had to guess at the end—a kind of parlour-game. Bellman's *Lust-spel* is a divertissement written for professional actors. Bellman transformed Carmontelle's prose into spoken verse interspersed with songs. Above all he introduced a political message which the French *proverbe* lacks. The aim of his play is to celebrate the anniversary of the battle of Hogland in July 1788 between Sweden and Russia (Fig. 3). In reality this naval battle had ended in a draw, with heavy losses on both sides; in the Swedish war propaganda it was presented as a great Swedish victory, and Duke Karl (the king's brother), who commanded the Swedish navy, was hailed as a hero. This is what happens in Bellman's *Lust-spel*. Mor Bobbi for instance has just learnt that her husband has died in the battle, yet she cries out:

Vår Kung och vår Prins Carl ha Fienderna tuktat,
Och deras drake-blod de vunna flaggor fuktat.
Courage, än en dans och än en fröjde-sång!

(Approximately: "Our King and our Prince Charles have chastised the enemy / whose dragon's blood has wetted the conquered flags. / Hooray, one more dance and one more song of joy!")

Bellman's *Lust-spel den 17 Julii 1790* is typical of Gustavian drama in several respects. First, it shows how Bellman, like many contemporary Swedish writers, enlisted in the royalist propaganda. Second, it illustrates the intricate relationship between "Swedish, national" and "foreign". As regards play texts the dependence of Gustavian drama on foreign models is enormous, though it is often a masked dependence. Bellman for example does not say a word about Carmontelle! Time and again when reading Gustavian drama, one finds that a play which looks like a Swedish original and may even be labelled "original" is in fact a camouflaged translation or adaptation. The label "original" should always be taken with caution.

In those days, of course, there was no copyright, the boundaries between original, imitation and plagiarism were much looser than today, and loans from one author to another, from one country to another, were widely accepted. King Gustaf III, however, wanted to create a national Swedish theatre. When he founded *Dramatiska teatern* (or *Dramaten*—the Dramatic Theatre) in 1788, he set out in the regulations that it was to be "a national theatre, where the works of Swedish dramatists (*Svenska Dramatiska Författares arbeten*) are performed by Swedish actors for the general public for the improvement of language, manners and taste". One may wonder how well Gustaf succeeded in creating a national theatre as far as texts are concerned. What Swedish dramatists—*Svenska Dramatiska Författare*—can the Gustavian era boast of?

The most gifted Swedish dramatist of the time was undoubtedly King Gustaf himself. Yet even he could not do without foreign models; even in a national work like the opera *Gustaf Wasa* he drew on foreign sources which he skilfully adapted and combined. The court poet Leopold wrote an immensely long and boring pseudo-classical tragedy, *Oden* (1790). Tragedy was the highest genre according to the classical French hierarchy of genres which prevailed in Sweden, and Gustaf rated *Oden* very high; yet besides being almost unreadable for modern Swedes, the play heavily derives from tragedies by the Frenchman Voltaire! Or take Carl Envallsson, the librettist of *Njugg spar och fan tar* (1784), a writer who concentrated on low genres, comedy and

Fig. 3. The Battle of Hogland 1788. Detail. Oil on canvas by L. J. Desprez. Swedish National Art Museums.

opéra-comique. Envallsson nearly always translated or adapted; in *Njugg spar*, one of his most original works, he partly adapted a comedy by Plautus and at times echoed Molière.[3] Hallman, who wrote parodies of grand opera in the 1770s, is probably one of the authors who depended least on foreign models, but he worked only for the private theatre, not for the Royal Opera. It would be easy to prolong this list. We have to accept that Gustavian drama is a hybrid product, part foreign, part Swedish.

This hybrid character may be one reason why Gustavian drama has long been looked down upon by Swedish historians of literature and theatre: for a long time the "Swedish" character of a work was set up as a criterion for value. The vast majority of Gustavian plays are translations and adaptations. One finds instances of stiff, wooden translations but also of authors—like Bellman—who succeed in transmuting a foreign original into a Swedish work. Since translations and adaptations play such a predominant part, the subject for this paper, "Sweden and European Drama", is a huge one, and I shall only be able to discuss a few points: I shall attempt a survey of contacts between Sweden and various European countries, and I shall very briefly mention some factors which influenced the work of Swedish translators and adapters. I must add that this study is based on *spoken* plays (not opera and *opéra-comique*)—it may perhaps be a useful complement to the papers on opera and ballet. Also, I shall deal mainly with plays performed at the public theatres in Stockholm: *Dramatiska teatern* (from the late 1780s onwards), which gave spoken plays and also ballets, and the private theatres of the Stenborg family (Petter Stenborg at Humlegården in the 1770s, his son Carl Stenborg at Eriksberg in the early 1780s and at the Munkbro Theatre from 1784); the Stenborg stage performed mostly *opéras-comiques* but also spoken plays.

The Swedish theatre historian Nordensvan called Gustaf III's plays a "gallicism". We may ask ourselves how far this term applies to Gustavian drama in general. Can we describe it simply as a Franco-Swedish hybrid, or should we take into account other influences—Italian, Spanish, English, Danish, German? Let us start with France. The importance of French theatre and drama is obvious as regards King Gustaf himself. In all his life he spent only a few months in France, yet few Frenchmen can have known French theatre as well as he. From his very childhood he was steeped in the tragedies of Corneille, Racine, Voltaire. In the 1760s his parents' French company provided the Court with high-level acting, at once introducing all the latest developments of French drama into their repertoire. Gustaf dismissed this company on ascending the throne, but in the long run he could not do without a French troupe. In 1781 he managed to recruit the famous actor Monvel, who specialized in tragedy and *drame* (a genre today generally known as "bourgeois drama"). Monvel became the leader of a new French company and moreover he trained Swedish actors (Gustaf had him watched by the police to prevent him from escaping!).[4]

The King learnt about French theatre through a variety of channels, somewhat like a spider at the centre of its net. He read French newspapers, he had literary correspondents like Grimm (and later Meister), he was informed by French friends like the Comtesse de Boufflers. An important function of Swedish diplomats in Paris seems to have been to send theatre reports, new plays, costumes etc. as well as recruiting actors. Further, Gustaf sent Swedish theatre directors to France on study tours, e.g. Kellgren's friend Clewberg-Edelcrantz in 1790, right in the middle of the Revolution. Clewberg-Edelcrantz was a man of strictly French taste. Passing Hamburg on his way back from Paris, he saw Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and a German adaptation of *Hamlet*. Of *Don Giovanni* he wrote to Gustaf that he had "never felt boredom to such a perfect degree"; of *Hamlet* he commented that the play was so ridiculous and full of absurdities that one did not even notice the absurdities of the actors.

Turning from the King and his news-gathering network to the repertoire of the Swedish theatres, one finds that the French predominance is marked not only at *Dramatiska teatern* but also at the private theatres of the Stenborgs, above all in the 1780s (in 1785, 85 % of the spoken plays at the Stenborg theatre were French). Putting together *Dramaten* and the Stenborg stage, the whole French repertoire is represented, from Molière and Racine in the seventeenth century to Pre-Romantic works from the late eighteenth century. There are plays in every genre: tragedy, comedy of character, comedy of intrigue, *drame, proverbe dramatique* etc.

Many non-French works, moreover, reached the Swedish stage through French intermediaries. This generally meant that they were submitted to French conventions. The traditional French view was that good taste being French by definition, foreign plays must be pruned and 'improved' before they could be presented to the French public: they must follow the dramatic unities, there should be no violence on stage, tragedy and comedy should not be mixed, the diction in 'high' genres must be elevated (no concrete, prosaic words) and so forth. Calderón's play *El Alcalde de Zalamea*, to take a Spanish example, was imported to Sweden through a Frenchified version by Collot d'Herbois where Calderón's austere grandeur and naked brutality are replaced by *galanterie,* tears and civic virtues (*Le Paysan magistrat,* 1778 / *Den Värdige Medborgaren* / "The Worthy Citizen", 1789). On the whole *Spanish* drama played a minimal part in the Gustavian repertoire; not one single play came direct from Spain! *Italy* of course meant a lot for Swedish opera and *opéra-*

comique, but as regards spoken drama it had a very limited influence. By Goldoni for instance only one spoken play was introduced, *Le Bourru bienfaisant* (1771), written in French, set in France, and nevertheless a total failure in Stockholm in 1796.

Let us move on to England. English drama was little known in Gustavian Sweden and nearly always reached Sweden through intermediaries. We may look at the case of Shakespeare, that barbarian genius who broke all Classical French rules. In Stockholm the French company performed *Le Macbeth* in 1791 in a French adaptation by Ducis where the dramatic unities were respected, each main character was given a confidant and the witches were suppressed as superfluous nonsense; but Shakespeare must have been thought far too barbaric to be translated into Swedish! In Gothenburg, on the other hand, which lay far from the capital and had lively trade relations with Britain, two Shakespeare plays were put on in the 1780s, *Romeo and Juliet* and above all *Hamlet,* which had its première in 1787, 32 years earlier than in Stockholm.

Another interesting case is that of the eighteenth-century actor David Garrick, who was also a dramatist. In the late 1780s, *Dramatiska teatern* performed Swedish adaptations of two Garrick farces, *The Lying Valet* and *Miss in Her Teens*. Yet Garrick's name was nowhere mentioned, and the Swedish public cannot have been aware it was seeing English plays. On the contrary, we may be confident that Olof Kexél, the adapter, chose the Garrick farces not because he wanted to acquaint the audience with a foreign author, but because Garrick was so little known in Sweden that Kexél could easily pass off his works as his own. This in turn was the result of the king's translation policy. In his eagerness to create a truly national theatre Gustaf at first banned translations altogether at Dramatiska teatern; he then allowed them (in 1789) but set disastrously low fees: the author of a translation only received the takings of the nineteenth performance of a play, which meant that many translators were never paid! This made it tempting to camouflage translations as originals—you then received the takings of the third, the ninth and the nineteenth performance. That is exactly what happened with Kexél. He always needed money, he was always pursued by creditors; he read the Garrick plays in French translation (very few people knew English in Sweden at the time), he localized the action, added typically Swedish details and presented his plays *Michel Wingler* and *Bergslags-Fröken* to *Dramatiska teatern* as Swedish originals.

Turning to Sweden's neighbour Denmark, we find that Danish

drama in Sweden at that time was almost synonymous with Holberg (one could add Wessel's *Kjaerlighed uden strømper* / "Love Without Stockings" at Humlegården in the 1770s). In Gustavian Sweden Holberg was regarded as an author for the popular stage; the aristocracy looked down upon him as being coarse and crude. In the 1770s Holberg plays formed an important part of the repertoire at *Humlegården*, with *Jeppe paa Bjerget* as the great favourite. In the 1780s Holberg's popularity decreased on the Stenborg stage, an evolution which seems to coincide with a social rise in the Stenborg public. At Dramaten meanwhile not a single Holberg play was put on until after the King's death.[5]

And finally German drama. The story of German drama in Sweden is that of a social ascension. Throughout the eighteenth century companies of German strolling players travelled through Sweden with their repertoire of *Haupt- und Staatsaktionen*, comic *Nachspiele* etc. They were much despised by the Gustavian establishment and sometimes parodied in plays. At the Stockholm theatres there were very few German plays in the 1770s and 1780s. The turning-point came around 1790, above all with the première of Kotzebue's hypersentimental *Menschenhass und Reue* in 1791 at *Dramatiska teatern*. Favourably reviewed by Kellgren in *Stockholms Posten* and triumphantly received by the public, the play inaugurated a period of Kotzebue fever at the Stockholm playhouses. Along with Kotzebue came a host of sentimental works by forgotten authors like Möller, Schröder, Jünger, while there were no traces of Goethe or Schiller.

The Swedish translation of *Menschenhass und Reue, De Okände eller Verldsförakt och Ånger* ("The Unknown Ones or Misanthropy and Repentance"), illustrates the ambivalence of Gustavian authors towards German literature. The translator, Didric Gabriel Björn, writes in his preface about his pride when he saw "the whole public share the feeling which a non-French genius (*ett icke Fransyskt snille*) had awoken in [his] breast". Yet it turns out that Björn was sometimes shocked by the German genius! Describing the pleasures of country life one of the characters mentions hearing geese and ducks cackle, feeding pigeons and picking wild strawberries. These details are far too low and prosaic for Björn, whose translation is nobly vague and abstract: *"oskulden af våra tidsfördrif", "nöjet af vår hvila", "en ny sällhet för människan och naturen"* ("the innocence of our pastime" ... "the pleasure of our repose" ... "a new bliss for man and nature"). – That was in 1791. After the king's death the German influence grew stronger and stronger. In 1796 the number of German plays for the

first time exceeded that of French plays at the Munkbro theatre. English drama began to reach Sweden through German versions. In 1796 a French play was imported through a German version by Kotzebue—a definite proof of the end of the French hegemony.

When a Gustavian writer translated or adapted a play, his work was influenced by a variety of factors. If he wrote for *Dramatiska teatern*, he must take into account the king's translation policy at which I hinted earlier, a policy which sometimes led to translations being camouflaged as originals. Besides, from 1785 onwards his work was submitted to theatre censorship, which made sure that the play contained nothing politically subversive; it seems likely, for instance, that the King banned Beaumarchais's *Le Mariage de Figaro* at the Munkbro theatre. During the war against Russia in 1788–90, moreover, dramatists took part in the royalist propaganda, as we have seen in the case of Bellman; the hero tended to become a nice young lieutenant or captain who dreamt of dying for his king and country.[6]

The plays which I have been discussing in this paper have long been considered stone-dead by theatre historians—a matter of concern for scholars delving into dusty libraries and archives, but not for modern theatre managers and actors. At the Gustavian Symposium in Stockholm in June 1986, pleas were made for reviving Gustavian spoken plays as well as operas. Two years later, as Dramaten is celebrating its two-hundredth anniversary (1788–1988), Swedish theatres appear to be going Gustavian. At the Ulriksdal Court Theatre Olof Thunberg's superb production of the King's own historical drama *Siri Brahe* (partly based on a French model) proves Gustavian prose to be alive and actable. The Royal Opera has staged a production at Drottningholm of the "Turkish" comedy *Soliman den II eller De Tre Sultaninnorna*, a translation from French, with music by Kraus. Let us hope this trend will continue. Many more eighteenth-century plays are waiting to be rediscovered, from the harlequinade *Arlequin Advocat och Skoflickare* ("Harlequin Barrister and Cobbler"), a Swedish example of *commedia dell'arte*, to Gustaf III's thriller *Den svartsjuke neapolitanar'n* ("The Jealous Neapolitan"), a representative of the *genre sombre*, the "dark" genre which revelled in mysterious hermits, old Gothic castles and sadistic husbands who keep their wives imprisoned in murky underground cellars.[7] Above all, let us not forget Bellman's plays, *Lust-spel den 17 Julii 1790* or even better *Mantalsskrifningen* ("The Census", 1790). It is a shame that these works should only be known by a few specialists. The right place for them is Drottningholm or Ulriksdal.

NOTES

1. This study is based on my Ph.D. dissertation *Sweden and European Drama 1772–1796. A study of translations and adaptations,* Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Litterarum 10 (Uppsala, 1981), where full references will be found (especially pp. 13–22, 29–44, 75–84, 88–98). Non Swedish-speaking readers will find an introduction to C. M. Bellman (1740–1795) in Paul Britten Austin's monograph *The Life and Songs of Carl Michael Bellman. Genius of the Swedish Rococo.* Malmö 1967.
2. For a detailed comparison between Carmontelle's *La Marchande de cerises* and Bellman's *Lust-spel,* see M.-Ch. Skuncke, "Körsbär och krigspropaganda. Bellman's *Lust-spel den 17 Julii 1790*", in *Läskonst Skrivkonst Diktkonst. Till Thure Stenström den 12 april 1987,* red. Pär Hellström & Tore Wretö. Stockholm 1987, pp. 281–315.
3. On Envallsson and *Njugg spar* (which was performed by the Stockholm College of Musical Drama during the Stockholm Symposium), see Johan Flodmark, *Stenborgska skådebanorna.* Stockholm, 1893, pp. 132–133, 178, and the papers by Lennart Hedwall and James Massengale.
4. On Jacques-Marie Boutet de Monvel (who remained in Stockholm until 1787) see e.g. Oscar Levertin, *Teater och drama under Gustaf III* (1889), in Levertin, *Samlade skrifter,* XVII. Stockholm, 1911, pp. 27–30; Nils Staf, *Polisväsendet i Stockholm 1776–1850.* Uppsala 1950, pp. 91–93.
5. Skuncke 1981 pp. 40–41. See also Gunilla Dahlberg, "Från komediantteater till operaspektakel. Holberg på Stockholms 1700- och 1800-talsscener", in *Holberg på scenen,* Teatervidenskabelige studier, IX. København 1984, pp. 133–139.
6. For details on theatre censorship see Skuncke 1981 pp. 99–127, on war propaganda Skuncke 1981 pp. 127–129, 1987 pp. 301–305.
7. Gustaf III, *Den svartsjuke neapolitanar'n,* utg. Kerstin Derkert, Stiftelsen för utgivning av teatervetenskapliga studier. Stockholm 1985.

GUSTAVIAN OPERA: AN OVERVIEW

Bertil H. van Boer Jr.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WAS a time of cultural and political ferment: a time of change that affected all avenues of social life and altered irrevocably the patterns of society then extant for several centuries. Dichotomies were particularly common during the second half of the period: the static social structure gave way first to the elevation of the individual as a free, thinking entity, whose life was based upon virtue and reason; subsequently to an emotional being (*Empfindsamkeit*); and, finally, to a more violent reactive stage, styled variously the Age of Revolution in political spheres, and *Sturm und Drang* in literary and, not without some controversy, musical circles. All aspects of European life of this time, from the main powers of France and Austria to the peripheral lands of Scandinavia and Russia, were influenced by vast and far-reaching changes and concepts.

Perhaps one of the most unique and, at present, largely unexplored of the many cultural phenomena in Europe was that associated with and directed by King Gustaf III of Sweden, whose twenty-year reign from 1771 to 1792 encompassed not only what can be considered an eighteenth-century Cultural Revolution in its most positive sense, but also some of the first flowerings of nationalism in the fine arts. Gustaf, who at best could be considered an enlightened monarch and patron of the arts and, at worst, as a shrewd political manipulator who used his patronage in a manner best seen as preserving his—by then—anachronistic absolutism, was the sole impetus and guide of an intensely active cultural milieu.[1] Indeed, it can be said that Gustaf himself was the *raison d'être* for its existence; not only did he openly encourage art of all types by importing leading artists of the day to Stockholm and lending them the all-important financial support, he personally contributed towards the achievement of specific goals. This

help took the form of subsidies for worthy talents, creative endeavours which resulted in dramatic works and detailed outlines to be fleshed out by professional authors, and of the collection of such material as antique statuary, intended to serve as models for native artists. He was also a nationalist *par excellence*, who encouraged the expression of a uniquely Swedish artistic idiom.[2] The king, though trained in French absolutism and a natural autocrat who spoke French better than Swedish, nonetheless had a strong desire to promote native Swedish culture. He encouraged and supported native Swedes who collaborated with and learned from their imported colleagues. The result was a successful amalgamation of influences from abroad, including the very latest artistic, literary, and musical trends, with indigenous material. The Sweden of Gustaf III's day acted in fact as a sort of vacuum which drew into itself culture from all over Europe, mixed it with local ideas and talent, and allowed the mixture to ferment in relative isolation. Whatever the manifold origins of Gustavian culture may have been, its products were, to say the least, singular. By far the most representative example of this cultural environment can be seen in the establishment of a cohesive unit in which all the arts—literature, music, and painting—would be combined. This entity was the Gustavian Opera.

Opera in Sweden, however, was by no means equivalent to Gustavian Opera; nor, might one add, was opera in the Swedish language. Wandering troupes of actors and musicians had long made Stockholm a stop on their tours, beginning with German troupes as early as 1721.[3] The famous Mingotti troupe was a regular guest in the Swedish capital, though to be sure without their most famous *Kapellmeister,* Gluck. An opera in Swedish, *Syrinx eller then uti wass förvandlade Wattunymphen* ("Syrinx, or The Water Nymph Transformed into Reeds"), based upon a French *opéra-comqiue*, was premièred at Bollhuset in 1747. But it was Gustaf III's ascension to the throne, and his subsequent *coup d'état* in 1772, that set the stage for the emergence of the Gustavian Opera as a genre.

The events of 1771 are of interest with respect to the initial impetus of Gustaf's Cultural Revolution. As crown prince he had been in Paris when, on March 1, 1771, he learned of his father's untimely death. Moving swiftly, Gustaf consolidated his power, and made immediate, substantial changes in Swedish artistic life. The French troupe in residence at Drottningholm was dismissed, and on March 9 the new king wrote to Johan Wellander to "restore the Swedish theatre".[5] These acts were significant for two reasons: first, the dismissal of the

Fig. 1. Francesco Antonio Uttini (1723–1795). Kapellmeister 1773, First Kapellmeister 1781–1788. Engraving by an unknown artist. KMA.

French troupe meant both that Gustaf wished to start with a clean slate as to available performers and to eliminate their hold on the court; and second, the edict "to restore the Swedish theatre" was meant as a clear signal of the direction he wished to take in terms of his capital's culture. It was, however, more than a year later that the first actual steps were taken to institute this directive. Johan Flodmark notes in his work on the Stenborg Theatre that on March 11, 1772, an order was issued to "found a Swedish National Theatre" (translate "Opera"), and it was stated that "one begins to speak seriously about Swedish drama". Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd noted that the changes did not come easily; since the concept was "new", many suggestions were proposed and rejected, and the final decision was made to begin this new era in Swedish culture with what elsewhere would have been considered a final step—the composition of a Swedish opera. Ehrensvärd, appointed as the first director of the new theatre, stated:

> An opera, which contains a pleasant and engaging music, a well-integrated ballet, brilliant costumes, pretty and well-painted scenery, has so much going

for it, that the eye and remaining senses are all satisfied simultaneously. Eventually we shall become accustomed to the language ... we shall eventually find words and expressions easier ... and subsequently we shall come to like our own language.[7]

This decision so inspired Gustaf that he immediately sat down and drew up an outline of an opera based upon Classical mythology, *Thetis och Pelée*. It would only have been proper for one of the native composers in Stockholm to have undertaken the music; but the added condition that the work should be a *good* introduction, a forerunner of an entire musical genre, made it advisable that the only resident composer with experience in opera, Francesco Antonio Uttini (Fig. 1), be entrusted with the music. Wellander versified the libretto from Gustaf's own outline, and the entire production was coordinated by Patrik Ahlströmer, who also acted as impresario.

The première of *Thetis* on January 18, 1773 was a resounding success, and barely two weeks later Gustaf codified a chain of command for his new operatic productions: "The Royal Academy of Music is responsible for the text and music, and hereafter Swedish Opera will be performed under its auspices."[8] *Thetis* survived on stage for several years, drawing large audiences and proving that the king's assessment of the need for this type of cultural attraction had been correct.[9] Next year Gustaf followed up his success with the introduction of two very different types of operas: a pasticcio Swedish version of G. F. Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, and a work based on a nationalist subject, a play "*med musik*": *Birger Jarl*, with text by Gyllenborg and music by Hinrich Philip Johnsen and Uttini. With the success of both these works the Gustavian opera was viewed as a viable cultural medium.

These works solidified and represented some of the fundamental principles behind this emerging genre, principles which differ in aesthetic conception from other forms of eighteenth-century opera and form the basis upon which virtually all the operatic works were established. As noted above, Gustaf's opera was intended from the beginning to be someting new, something the like of which had not been seen, either in Sweden or anywhere else in Europe. While it drew its inspiration from numerous sources throughout the continent, it was not intended to be a slavish imitation of some greater operatic centre, but rather as a rival which would incorporate the leading concepts and trends of the day, blending them into a unique, quasi-nationalist form. Thus a Gustavian opera was not intended simply as a translation into Swedish of some pre-existing work, nor was it expect-

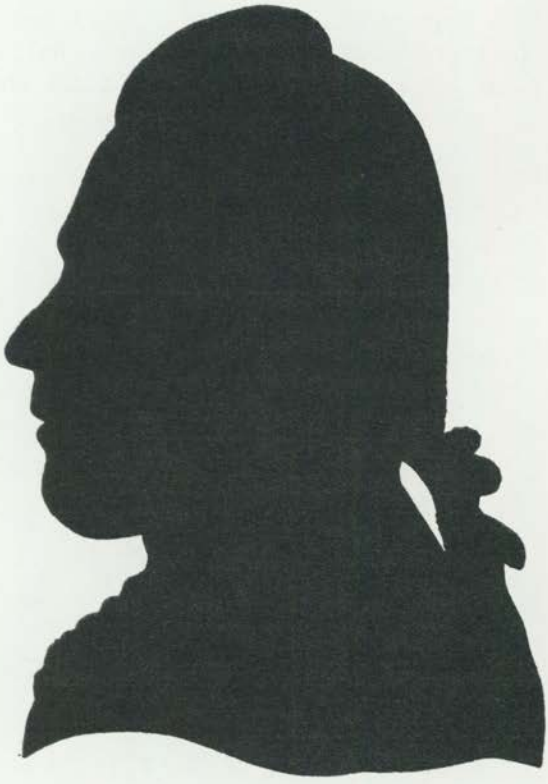


Fig. 2. Johann Gottlieb Naumann (1741–1801). Kapellmeister at Dresden. Silhouette cut-out by an unknown artist. KMA.

ed to follow one or more of the well-established common operatic styles—*opéra-comique, opera buffa, opera seria,* etc. Given this goal, it is not surprising that there was considerable initial debate over the content and structure of the new opera, a controversy that the king, despite his role as final determinant on the issue, encouraged. The final descision was to begin where other centres had left off, starting with relatively sophisticated operas, even though such a scheme still needed time to develop into a cohesive, popular form. And if it was to avoid the appearance of being a hodge-podge, it was in desperate need of a single model. The francophile king, ever aware of the cultural activities in the French capital through his diplomatic envoys, partially solved the issue by basing his opera on the one in Paris, as exemplified by the works of Christoph Willibald von Gluck. But rather than simply base his works solely on these models, he shrewdly set about directing the course of the debate by paraphrasing the same directives as had led to Gluck's ascendancy in Paris. Wellander wrote in May, 1772:

Fig. 3. Georg Joseph Vogler (1749–1814). "Directeur af musiken" 1786–1799. Indian ink by J. T. Sergel. NM.

The King has set the goal of providing Swedish dramaturgy with specific guidelines, and he desires fervently to establish a new epoch in Swedish language and literature.[10]

Ehrensvärd's statement on opera, quoted above, is more to the point; and by 1773, beginning with a version of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, that composer's operas received numerous performances. Gustaf was not content just to allow for fickle public opinion; beginning in 1779, he initiated through Johan Henrik Kellgren a polemical debate in the Stockholm newspapers on the aesthetics of opera, championing Gluck as the forerunner from which the opera of the future was to be derived.[11]

Gustavian opera, however, was no precise imitation of Gluck. Indeed, the scores of Gluckian operas now in the Kungliga Operans Bibliotek in Stockholm reveal that drastic changes were made by Gustaf's artisans in these works' texts, in the amount of ballet, and in instrumentation—out-Glucking Gluck, as it were. No, the intention went even further. Gluckian models were to be used to establish a new

and radically different art form. Ehrensvärd's statement hints at this. The goal can be summed up as a total operatic production, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, not, as Richard Engländer states, in the Wagnerian egocentric sense, but rather as the combination of an entire production, from music to scenery, in one coordinated effort.[12] Music and text were to be integrated, the sets were to be emotionally connected with the drama, not just backdrops; and each aspect was to act as *primus inter pares* with the rest, providing the audience with a total environment and giving them access to the work as participants, not just as by-standers. This aesthetic principle of integrating text and music was best summarized by Kellgren in a famous memorial speech in honour of Wellander, given at the Utile Dulci Society in 1785:

> It has been said that poetry is music for the soul; it can also be said that music is the dramatic language of the passions. Assuredly, because all the fine arts are brethren, all stem from a common source: in feeling and effect both poetry and music were born simultaneously, bound together by a common bond ... both appeal to the soul through the ears ... both beautify and ennoble each other. Without the support of music, the poet's language is less expressive; without the help of poetry, musical expression is ineffective.[13]

This subliminal aesthetic can be traced back directly to Gustaf himself. The king, through his subordinates, was constantly involved in the production of his operas; he provided advice on all aspects, from stage design to text. He supported all the participants financially, subsidizing travel to the continent to observe and assimilate the latest styles. He decided which works should be produced. He encouraged originality in the works by not attempting to impose his own tastes or restrictions which would have resulted in a bland uniformity. And he actively sought to achieve a high standard of production. This involvement did not go unnoticed outside Sweden. In his *Histoire des événements mémorables du règne de Gustave III*, published in Paris in 1807, Charles d'Aguila remarked:

> Knowing Gustaf III's genius, taste, and desires, you will easily believe me when I say that he is the creator of the opera which has been born in Stockholm. Decorations, costumes, machinery, ballet—all was, and still is, directed, sketched, planned, and protected by his brilliant inventive genius. The music is lively and moving and the Swedish language extremely adapatable to opera.[14]

Though Gustaf was personally involved in virtually every production, it was his ability to recognize talent and put it to use that made the realization of his opera possible. He gathered around him a group of creative people, gave them the freedom to exercise their talents to the

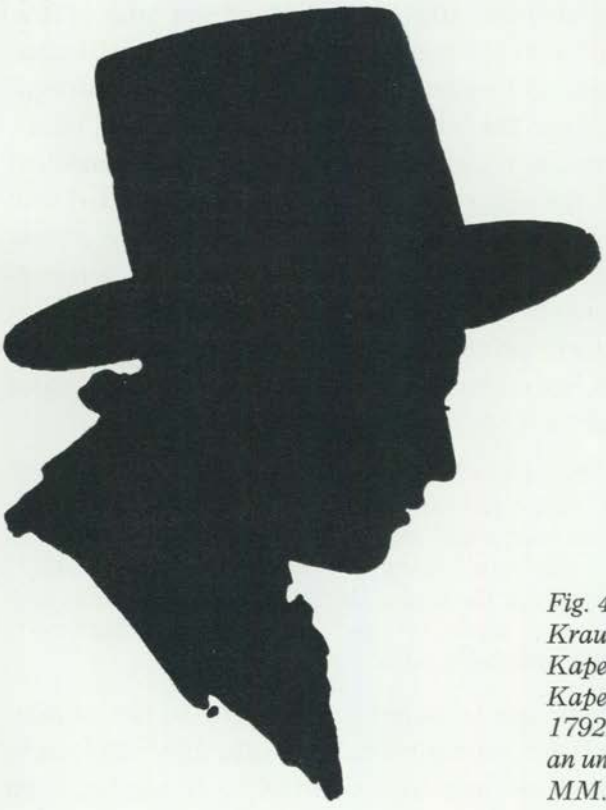


Fig. 4. Joseph Martin Kraus, 1783. Second Kapellmeister 1781. Kapellmeister 1788–1792. Silhouette cutout by an unknown artist. MM.

fullest, and used their efforts to achieve his goals. Since his main concern was for a Swedish National Theatre, his librettists were mostly native Swedes: Wellander, Kellgren, Didrich Björn, et al. Yet, in keeping with his passion for all things French, many of these authors' works can be traced back through Gustaf to French models. *Thetis* comes from Marmontel, *Æneas i Cartago* from Perpignan, etc. The king used a variety of foreign and native composers: Johann Gottlieb Naumann (Fig. 2) and Abbé Vogler (Fig. 3) came from Dresden and Mannheim respectively; Joseph Martin Kraus (Fig. 4), perhaps the period's most original composer, and Johann Christian Friedrich Hæffner were both born in Germany, but became naturalized Swedes; and Olof Åhlström and the singer-composer-impresario Carl Stenborg were natives. Antoine Bournonville, a pupil of Noverre, was in charge of the ballet, whilst his fellow-Frenchman Louis Jean Desprez created the sets. The actors and musicians likewise reflected an international mélange: lead singers such as Elisabeth Olin and Stenborg were Swedish, Carolina Müller was Danish, and Franciska

Stading was German. The orchestra, large for the period with over 60 musicians, was international and featured firstrate players: the trumpeter Merckl, who invented a keyed trumpet independently of Anton Weidinger in Vienna; the brothers Steinmüller, recruited from Eszterháza; and Johann Friedrich Grenser, a woodwind player from one of the most famous families of German woodwind manufacturers.[15] The discipline of the orchestra under Kraus was notable, and Kraus may well have been one of the first to conduct in modern fashion, using a baton.[16]

Gustavian opera itself, performed in one of the largest and most modern opera houses in Europe (completed in 1782), developed from the very first performances into three co-equal, yet distinct types. On a more intricate level, each of these types was intended to present music having a dramatic message: no mere popular entertainment, the aim was to create works that should far surpass Gluck in deep psychological probings into the various plots and characters, The three types can be characterized as a) works based on Greek and Roman mythology (the Classical trend); b) those based on Nordic subjects (the Historical-Nationalist trend); and c), those with comic or pastoral plots, the latter generally set to a Swedish translation of some German or French libretto (the Comic trend). *Thetis* is based on a Classical subject, as are Hæffner's *Electra* and Kraus' *Proserpin* and *Æneas i Cartago*. However, unlike many of their equivalents, even among the Gluckian operas, the plots of these works are not a stilted retelling of myths with larger-than-life figures. Rather, they depict human situations and characters, albeit with settings and story-lines set in antiquity. Beginning with *Birger Jarl* in 1774, operas on Nordic subjects became important and gave rise to works like Gustaf's *"drama med sång" Drottning Christina*, Naumann's *Gustaf Wasa*, Vogler's *Gustaf Adolph och Ebba Brahe* and Åhlström's *Frigga*. Indeed, so great was the attraction of one of these works, *Gustaf Wasa*, at its première in 1786, that even into the next century it was recognized as the epitome of Swedish Nationalism. For example, in a letter to Abraham Clewberg-Edelcrantz dated November 19, 1790, Kellgren states that *Gustaf Wasa* was to be performed each Monday until July 1791.[17] In the Classical and Historical trends the Gustavian opera's goals and aspirations, in the sense of being directly inspired and conceptualized by Gustaf III himself, were realized. These works represent its lofty aesthetic principles and goals and realize the Gustavian *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

The third trend, the Comic, was, as might be expected, the least

imposing but the most popular. Then, as now, the entertainment value of comic opera was recognzied by the Stockholm public, often at the expense of Gustaf's more expansive and serious works. These operas, some sketched out by Gustaf in his lighter moments, were mostly produced at Stenborg's Munkbro Theatre, often in direct competition with the Royal Opera. In fact, such was this genre's popularity that by 1789 it was threatening the main theatre's financial stability. In July 1789, Clewberg-Edelcrantz noted:

> The Swedish Dramatic Theatre has been asked to undertake reductions in performances. There is a great financial loss at the theatre ... while the public cries out either for the Comic Opera or Madame Price.[18]

Baron de Besche commented to Gustaf on September 22 that same year that Stenborg and his troupe

> are doing everything possible to compete with the Opera; costumes and decorations are not being stinted.

This success of the comic enterprise was due partially to the nature of the operas produced. Unlike those being staged at the main theatre, these were for the most part translations of such *Singspiele* like *Der Teufel ist los* and such *opéras-comiques* as Monsigny's *Le Deserteur*. Yet here, too, original Gustavian operas can be found, both as original *Singspiele* and in the form of a pasticcio. Simple plots were the rule; the route to acceptance for both composers and librettists, moreover, was more direct here than at the main theatre, there being no need to submit score or text through official channels for approval. Members of the Kapelle could have their own works produced with a minimum of bureaucracy and a maximum of personal profit. Johan David Zander's *Njugg spar och fan tar* ("The Niggard Saves and the Devil Takes") and Kraus' *Fintbergs bröllop* ("Fintberg's Wedding") represent two out of the more than two hundred plays produced during this period. The pasticcio, on the other hand, was a blend of popular and high Gustavian art. Unlike the normal pasticcio practice of shoehorning pre-existing popular tunes to new texts, the Gustavian pasticcio represented a collaboration of most of the leading Stockholm composers, each setting a portion of the libretto. Thus Lannerstierna's *Äfventyraren* ("The Adventurer") is a complex work, with most of the first act set by Kraus, and other sections by Johan Wikmanson, Per Frigel, Hæffner, Zander, Åhlström, Grenser and others. It too is a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the Gustavian sense, though to be sure without the lofty goals of the mainstream opera.

Given the great diversity of productions, both at the main opera

house and at Stenborg's competitive theatre, the Stockholm public had access to a wide variety of musical productions. When one adds the numerous dramas *"blandade med sång"* ("mingled with singing") and subsidiary performances of Bournonville's dramatic ballets, then one perceives quite correctly the picture of an active, progressive musical establishment. But there were times during the 1780s when, despite all these productions, financial success remained beyond reach. While *Gustaf Wasa* was a stunning success, plays like Ristell's *Visittimman* ("The Visiting Hour") drew few people, and Clewberg-Edelcrantz noted numerous times during 1788 and 1789 that the performers outnumbered the audiences, forcing a continual reassessment of goals and productions.[19] But on the whole, theatres in Stockholm generally at least broke even, and the public soon became an educated one, with an eye for theatrical quality.

This brilliant era came to an abrupt close in March 1792, when its royal patron was assassinated at a masked ball in his own opera house (providing material for later operas such as Auber's *Gustave III* and Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*). The principal figure of the Gustavian era was no more. His son, Gustaf IV Adolf, took little interest in theatre—indeed, the place where his father had been shot down became an anathema to him—and, though Kraus reported shortly after Gustaf III's death that money had been found for continuing the theatre, Gjörwell wrote to Lidén on June 5, 1792:

> The entire French troupe has been dismissed and has left ... The Bollhus theatre is scheduled to be torn down soon, and the Arsenal will be made over into a sort of Swedish National Theatre, a poor stepchild of the Opera.[20]

Performances became fewer and fewer, while attacks on the extravagance of the operatic establishment became more numerous; and by 1807 the opera house itself faced imminent demolition. Although this fate was barely avoided at the eleventh hour, the building stood empty and forlorn for over a decade, being used on occasion solely for government functions. Though the opera was revived in 1809, with the return of Gustaf III's brother Karl XIII to the throne, the works performed were all fashionable *opéras-comiques,* put on in deference to the taste of Sweden's newly adopted crown prince, Marshal Bernadotte of France. The brilliance of the Gustavian Age was but a memory.

Despite the fact that Gustavian opera was a short-lived phenomenon, it had a far-reaching impact not only on music in Sweden, but also, indirectly, on the development of the Romantic opera elsewhere.

More than a francophilic imitation of Parisian models, it was a genre both popular and containing the seeds of Romantic Nationalism. Gustaf's goal, like the one stated in the preface to Gluck's *Alceste*, was nothing less than the reform of an entire genre. His realization of this goal resulted in the synthesis of a new and vibrant art form which anticipated stylistic and aesthetic concepts more commonly associated with the nineteenth century.

NOTES

1. For further information of Gustaf III and his enigmatic character, see Bain, R., *Gustavus III and His Contemporaries*. London: Kegan Paul, Tench Trübner 1894 and Beth Hennings, *Gustav III*. Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1957. Gustaf's political history is documented in Barton, H. A., *Scandinavia in the Revolutionary Era*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986 and a discussion of his role as cultural determinant is found in Lönnroth, E., *Den stora rollen: Kung Gustaf III spelad av honom själv*. Stockholm: Norstedts 1986.
2. Engländer, R., *Joseph Martin Kraus und die Gustaviansiche Oper*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell 1943, 12.
3. No comprehensive history of Swedish opera as yet exists: brief and highly summaric overviews can be found in Sällström, Å., *Opera på Stockholmsoperan*. Stockholm: Norstedt 1977 and Horton, J., *Scandinavian Music*. New York: Norton 1963. See also various articles in general histories such as Aulin A., and Connor, H., *Svensk musik*. Stockholm: Bonniers 1974 and Moberg, C. A., *Från kyrko- och hovmusik till offentlig konsert*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell 1942.
4. Horton, *Scandinavian Music* 76. The libretto, based on a three-act opéra-comique, was transliterated by Lars Lalin, with music assembled in pasticcio fashion from Handel, Graun and others.
5. Levertin, O., *Teater och Drama under Gustaf III*. Stockholm: Bonniers 1920, 8.
6. Flodmark, J., *Elisabeth Olin och Carl Stenborg: Två gustavianska sångargestalter*. Stockholm: Frölén, 1903, 31. See also the same author's *Stenborgska skådebarnorna*. Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt 1893.
7. Breitholtz, L., *Förberedelserna för en svensk talscen under 1700-talet*. Uppsala: Lundeqvistska Bokhandeln 1940, 114.
8. Flodmark, *Olin och Stenborg*, 39.
9. Flodmark, *Olin och Stenborg*, 44–64; Levertin, O., *Gustaf III som dramatisk författare*. Stockholm: Bonniers 1911, 25–35.
10. Engländer, *Oper*, 8.
11. Leux-Henschen, I., *Joseph-Martin Kraus in seinen Briefen*. Stockholm: Reimers 1978, 41 and the numerous articles discussing this debate by Ek, S., Tegen, M., and Leux-Henschen in *Samlaren, Lychnos,* and *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*. These articles are listed in "Joseph Martin Kraus: Bibliographie bis 1983", *Kraus und das gustavianische Stockholm*, ed. by Åstrand, H., and Larsson, G. Stockholm: Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien 1984, 117–124.
12. Engländer, *Oper*, 38.
13. Kellgren, J. H., "Åminnestal öfver Rådmannen i Stockholm Herr Johan Wellander, hållit i Sällskapet Utile Dulci," *Samlade Skrifter* 3. Stockholm: Johan Per Lindh 1796, 171–172.
14. Charles Comte d'Aguila, *Histoire des événements mémorables du règne de Gustave III*. Paris: A. Belin 1807, I: 2.
15. See Dahlgren, F. A., *Anteckningar om Stockholms Teatrar*. Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt 1866, 529–559: Edenstrand, Å., "Die schwedische Hofkapelle in der Zeit von Kraus," *Kraus und das gustavianische Stockholm*. Stockholm: Kungliga Musikaliska akademien 1984, 110–116.
16. Leux-Henschen, *Briefe*, 149, 155–156.
17. Lewenhaupt, E., *Bref rörande teatern under Gustaf III*. Uppsala: Akademiska Boktryckeriet 1891, 230. Lewenhaupt appears to have misread "Jul [Christmas]" for "Juli" in the original letter.
18. Lewenhaupt, *Bref*.
19. See particularly Clewberg-Edelcrantz's journal

entry for November 4, 1788 (Lewenhaupt, *Bref*, 56) which notes that receipts were only 12 Riksdaler. Although there were days, such those when Stenborg himself took the leading role, where the Kungliga Spektakel was relatively full, these were in the minority.

20. Lewenhaupt, *Bref*, 277; Leux-Henschen, *Briefe*, 344.

Fig. 1. Swedish drummer in the opera Gustaf Wasa. *Watercolour pencil drawing by Louis Jean Desprez. NM.*

THE HERO AND THE PEOPLE

On national symbols in Gustavian opera

Anna Johnson

WITHIN THE IDEOLOGICAL COMPLEX known as nationalism we often encounter two symbols of crucial importance: "the hero" and "the people". Ideals which, obviously, have manifested themselves in Western art down the centuries. In music, for instance, the contrast between the antique heroes of *opera seria* and the "common people" of *opera buffa* clearly illustrates the polarization, as well as the interaction, between divergent musical ideals and styles. Apparently, they also bear witness to deep social and political tensions. With the rapid growth of cultural and political nationalism in nineteenth century Europe "the hero" and "the people" really came into focus as national symbols and were given new significance.

Gustaf III ardently dedicated himself to the creation of a national Swedish culture—a native counterpart to the court culture at Versailles. He aspired to place his country among the great powers of Europe and himself in the forefront of enlightened monarchs. Personally active as author of numerous plays and operas, as actor and producer, he was a lavish patron of the arts—in his opponents' eyes generous to a fault. But he was also a daring and calculating actor on the political scene. Through a bloodless *coup d'état* in 1772 he seized virtually unlimited powers which he knew perfectly how to use. In his hands—the hands of the "theatre king"—politics became an intricate, audaciously improvized drama, and opera a most efficient tool of political propaganda.

As *Gesamtkunstwerk*, opera was the perfect medium for his national

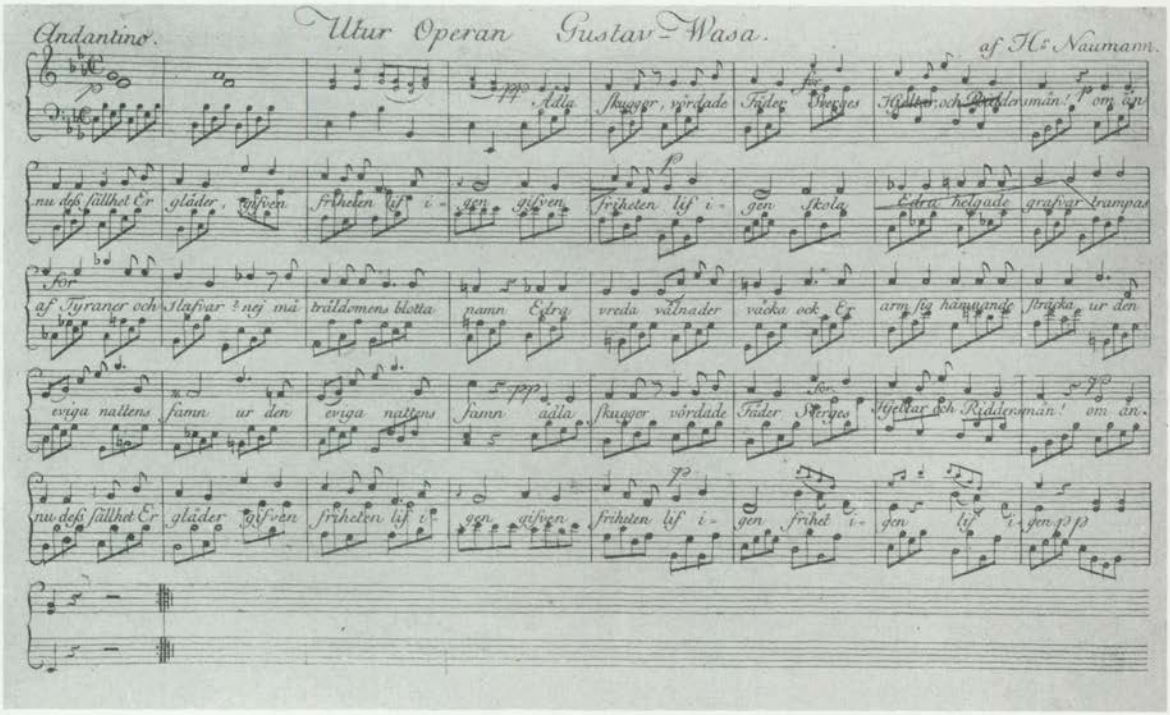
programme. During the very first years of his reign he founded the Royal Swedish Academy of Music (1771) and the Royal Opera (1773). During the following decades a broad repertoire of French and Italian operas came into being in Swedish translation, among them several productions of Gluck's reform operas. Yet even this didn't suffice. On the king's personal initiative, a whole series of new Swedish operas was created and staged. To begin with closely dependent on continental models, the national elements in them gradually increased. The creation of a Swedish opera company and of Swedish libretti were basic premises. More decisive, however, is the fact that many of these Gustavian operas and dramas were based on national topics. For European opera in the 1770s and 1780s this is remarkable. The comic Singspiele, popular in several parts of Europe in the late eighteenth century, with its spoken dialogue, folk scenes and allusions to folk music, was certainly a fresh new genre. But it would remain for the nineteenth century to create grand heroic operas based on themes taken from a country's history or mythology and—like *Der Freischütz, Prince Igor, Boris Goudonov* and *Halka*—written in the vernacular.

It was in his operas *Gustaf Wasa* (1786) and *Gustav Adolf och Ebba Brahe* (1788) about his two namesakes who had already sat on the Swedish throne, the third Gustaf went furthest. Both these works came into being at his personal initiative, not only to be great works of art, but also as important tools of practical politics. From earliest childhood Gustaf III had been brought up to regard the heroic kings of Swedish history as his models, and himself as their successor and equal. A notion confirmed by no less a man of letters than the aged Voltaire, in a poem acclaiming Gustaf's *coup* of 1772—his first triumph as improvizer on the political stage:

Jeune et digne héritier du grand nom de Gustave
Sauveur d'un peuple libre et Roi d'un peuple brave.

Any amount of circumstances witness to Gustaf's great interest in history and his *faiblesse* for imitating its heroes. All through his life he played the role of the third Gustaf to sit on Sweden's throne. And his operas about his forerunners stress, in eminent degree, his own position of power.

The opera *Gustaf Wasa* is the Gustavian epoch's most grandiose national manifestation. It had its first night on the occasion of the king's birthday in January 1786; by acclaiming Gustaf Wasa it also acclaimed Gustaf III. Rarely indeed had baroque opera's mirror ef-



Musical Ex. 1. Act II, scene 1 of Gustaf Wasa. Ädla skuggor, vördade fäder *("Noble shades, revered fathers"). A chorus of noblemen declare their loyalty to Gustaf Wasa with a hymn to freedom. Vocal score. Kungliga Priviligierade Nottryckeriet (Olof Åhlström). Stockholm 1787. MAB.*

fect—even identification—between stage and auditorium been so dazzling, or so pointed. The libretto was the work of Johan Henrik Kellgren, who based it on the king's own prose version. The music was composed by Johann Gottlieb Naumann, imported from Dresden. And the scenery was by the French artist Louis Jean Desprez. In a word, it was in everything a veritable mobilization of the country's most outstanding talents.

Historically, Gustaf Wasa, elected king in 1523, had been the leader of a successful war of liberation from the Danes, and the founder of Sweden as a sovereign state. And when, in the 1780s, Gustaf III secretly mobilized against Denmark, this ancestor was the perfect propaganda symbol for his policy. At first Gustaf III had closely allied himself with the aristocracy, and now he appealed for its support. In this opera it is therefore the nobles who represent the people. In an impressive scene in Act II, a chorus of noblemen declare

their loyalty to Gustaf Wasa, and he answers with a hymn to freedom, the opera's best-known number (Musical Ex. 1).

That the king of Sweden should have been totally dependent on foreign, mainly German, composers for his operas is characteristic, the same would have applied to other peripheral eighteenth-century states. Stockholm at that time being a stronghold for Gluck's music, his reform program provided the Gustavian operas with a stylistic model. Though Naumann was one of the last German representatives of Neapolitan opera, his Swedish works were strongly Gluck-influenced. *Gustaf Wasa* has splendid ensembles, large choruses, ballets, *recitative accompagnati, ariosi* arias in various forms, as well as an overture of truly French grandeur. What then about Swedish elements in this music? Admittedly, they are rare. The Swedish declamation in recitatives and arias is congenial, and certainly important to the melodic structure. But beyond this neither the king nor his composer had any intentions of creating a Swedish musical style. Though they sing in Swedish, the Gustavian operas' national heroes do so in continental *stile misto*, in close adherence to Gluck.

The elevated and grandiose elements of Naumann's score were further heightened by Desprez' sets—Desprez being the great contemporary genius among European stage designers. His productions for the Stockholm opera bear the hallmark of a highly personal combination of elevated classicism and preromantic expressivity. Yet they also bespeak a break with the traditional scenery of baroque opera, replacing its timeless stereotypes (palace interior, garden, town scene, military tent, grotto, etc.) with a new striving toward local colour and historical mood painting.

The scenery for Act I, a hall in Stockholm Castle (see colour supplement), is an imposing, if rather traditional classicistic interior. Its architecture has no Swedish traits. Yet not only here but throughout the opera national identity is stressed by the special coloration of the costumes—red and black for the Danes, blue and yellow for the Swedes, as in the Swedish flag. In the colour supplement we see Gustaf Wasa and the Danish king Christian (Christiern) wearing the Burgundian costume which had been *dernier cri* at the time. In this case it may also be based on one of Gustaf Wasa's portraits. A number of details are historically correct, albeit freely mingled with elements of rococo and classicism. Incidentally, the Burgundian costume also provided the basis of the "national costume" which Gustaf III in 1778 created for his court, cause of so much irritation and scathing comment for its excessive theatricality (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. The female version of the Swedish national costume (for the male version, see the colour supplement). In Gustaf III's reign the court ladies wore latticed elbow-length sleeves, a plume in their hair and red trimmings. KB.

Fig. 3. Amazon in Frigga. *Watercolour pencil drawing in the costume books of the Royal Opera, about 1800. KTA.*

Desprez' scenery for Act III is considerably less conventional and more dynamic (see the colour supplement). By drawing a sweeping diagonal across the stage he disrupts the tradition of a centralized perspective. Nor is there any doubt which city is being depicted: it is Stockholm and the open area between the old Three Crowns Castle and Storkyrkan, Stockholm's main church. Here as elsewhere Desprez, by establishing several stage levels where the drama can be played out, opens up possibilities of a more dynamic acting style and points the way forward to the romantic style of acting and production.

Just as Naumann's music for this opera is a striking blend of late Neapolitan *opera seria*, German *empfindsamer Stil* and Gluck's classicism, Desprez' scenery and costumes bear the impress of dramatic historical romanticism, albeit as yet partly classicizing in form and with obvious rococo traits.

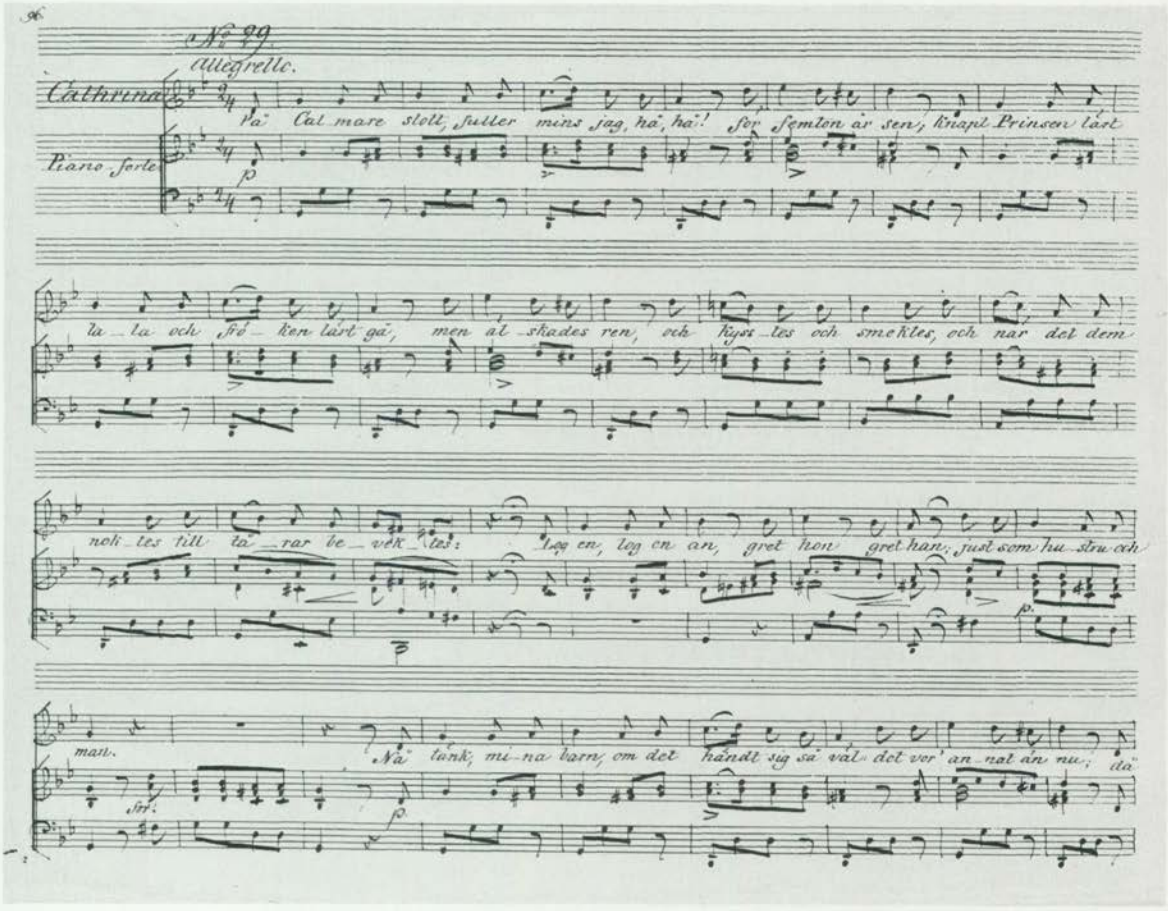
A clash of styles which becomes particularly noticeable in the

remarkable opera *Frigga*, staged for the first time in 1787, with a libretto by Carl Gustaf Leopold (again based on the king's prose version) and scenery by Desprez. For this opera a Swedish composer, Olof Åhlström, had been chosen—with mediocre results. The action takes place at the heathen temple at Old Uppsala, the chief cult place of the old Svea kingdom. Yet despite the appearance of Odin and Frigga in the lead roles, both action and décor hark back rather to Greek antiquity and classicistic pastoral than to Nordic mythology (Fig. 3). Here the differences between the way in which the Gustavian era saw Scandinavian mythology and the later nineteenth-century view, which would shroud it in nature-mysticism and a passion for Gothic prehistory, transpire with extreme clarity.

But back to *Gustaf Wasa*. Questionless it was not only the most brilliant of all Gustavian stage productions, but also the biggest audience hit. As it deserved to be. After all, in creating this Swedish national opera its German composer and French stage designer had given of their very best. And the effect was exactly what Gustaf had intended. Patriotic feeling was unleashed. We are told that on the first night the chorus refused to wear the hateful Danish uniforms and that the audience excitedly identified with the fighting on stage. It was in this atmosphere of inflated chauvinism that the king summoned parliament to get it to sanction and finance his warlike policy—only to discover to his bitter disappointment that the four Estates of the Realm could not so easily be stage-produced as the chorus at his opera house. Indeed it was the first time he had run into adamant opposition; and, for the time being at least, he had to abandon his flighty foreign policy.

The second great opera about a hero of Swedish history—*Gustaf Adolf och Ebba Brahe*—had its first night on another of the king's birthdays, Jan. 24, 1788. Like its forerunner it was the joint creation of Kellgren, Desprez and the king. But this time the composer was Abbé Georg Joseph Vogler, the virtuoso German organist.

Both dramatically and musically *Gustaf Adolf och Ebba Brahe* is a work of totally different character from *Gustaf Wasa*. It had come into being in a grim political climate. The aristocracy's opposition to Gustaf's autocratic and unpredictable ways, his total lack of concern for others and his despotism, were all increasing. This time, therefore, he paid court to the lower Estates, above all the Peasants. Where Gustaf Wasa had been presented as an aggressive avenger of his country's freedom and liberator of the fatherland, the Gustavus Adolphus of this new opera appears as the gentle, high-minded and unself-



Musical Ex. 2. Act II, scene 1 of Gustaf Adolf och Ebba Brahe *("Gustavus Adolphus and Ebba Brahe") lyrical drama in three acts by G. J. Vogler, libretto by J. H. Kellgren based on Gustaf III's drama of the same name. First performed at the Royal Opera on Jan. 24, 1788. The Poultrywoman's song. Monumenta Musicæ Sveciæ (vocal score). Stockholm 1973.*

ish father of his country, adored by his people. And the people—in this context—they are the simple folk of a little Öland fishing village. Gustaf III would dearly have liked to play, in his subjects' eyes, just such a paternal role.

When he speaks of his people it is as a father who loves his children; but when he acts he is a ruler who crushes them,

one of his closest collaborators, Ulrik Scheffer, President of the Council, writes bitterly.

Just as the scenery alternates between the halls of Kalmar Castle

and the Öland fishing village, the music oscillates between elevated *opera seria* and light operatic scenes inspired by folk music. For Act II Vogler writes a charming scene made up of popular tunes, choruses and dances. Katarina the fisherman's wife sings, to one such popular tune known as "The Poultrywoman's Song", a ditty about how in his youth King Gustavus Adolphus had been in love with countess Ebba Brahe, (Musical Ex. 2).

Obviously, in this scene, it is Vogler's ambition to compose music that is not merely popular in character but also has an authentic Swedish ring to it. An early instance of the process which would become so central to nineteenth-century European music—the creation of various national musical styles based on folk music. Nor is it surprising that it should have been Vogler, always and in so many contexts deeply interested in various kinds of folk music, who did this. An enthusiastic listener, during his many long journeys through Europe and North Africa, to the music of various districts, he had woven it into his own compositions. Thus for example we find in his *Pièce de Clavecin* a set of variations on an *"Air Barbaresque"*, an *"Air Finois"* and a number of Swedish folksongs. In his whole view of music and in much of his own, Vogler clearly points forward to romanticism. Later, we should recall, he would become teacher both to Carl Maria von Weber, creator of German national opera, and Meyerbeer.

The picture Gustaf III paints in this opera of the relationship between king and commons directly reflects what was going on in the realm of realpolitik. Only a few months after *Gustaf Adolf och Ebba Brahe* had had its première war broke out between Sweden and Russia—a war in high degree provoked by Gustaf himself, and which enabled him to play hero on reality's greater stage. In a letter to his sister Sophia Albertina he writes:

> I cannot conceal from you how excited I am at the thought of the brilliant prospect opening itself to me; my soul cannot withstand the glorious attractions of the thought that it is I who am to determine the fate of Asia, and that it is Sweden that the Ottoman Empire will have to thank for its existence, and further that I alone among so many monarchs either too indifferent or too astounded by the Empress' of Russia's successes, that I alone, I say, am going to resist her; thus I consider myself worthy of the throne once occupied by great kings and now by myself, and flatter myself on not belying at the end of my career the judgment which Europe at the outset of my reign was pleased to form of me.
> (Signed at Haga, June 13, 1788.)

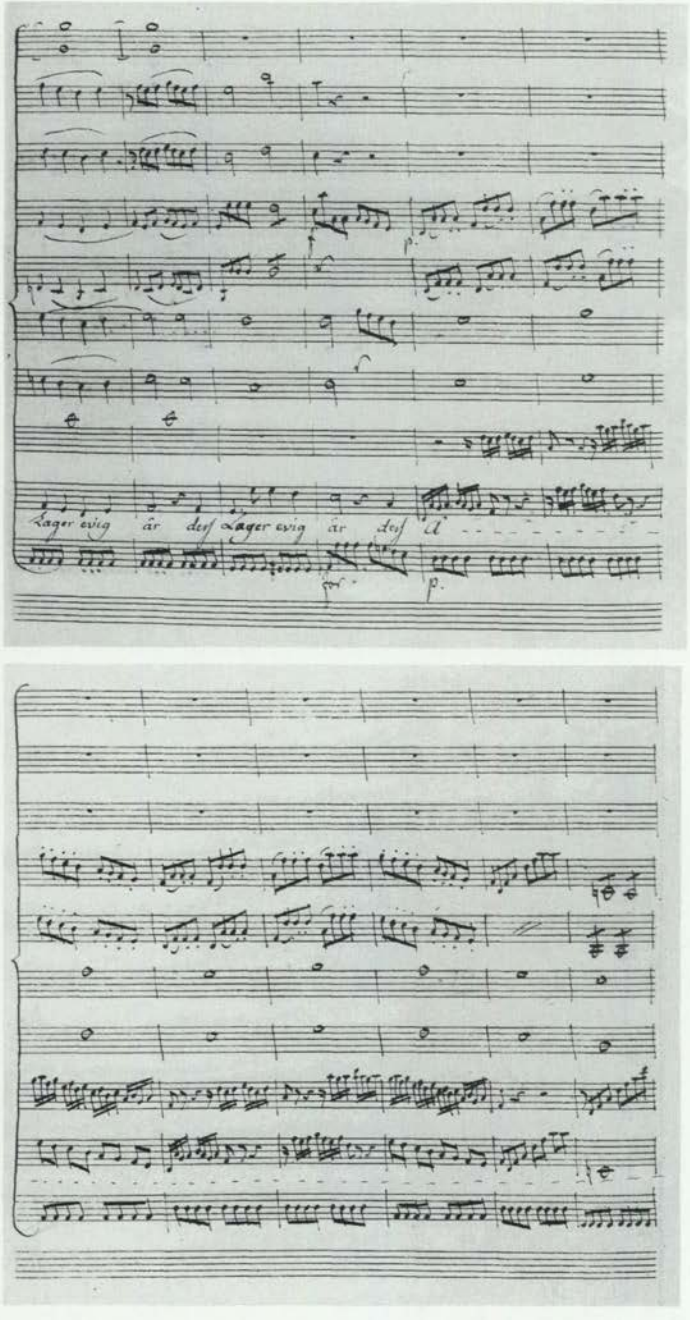
The scene changes before an open curtain. Instead of the charming

waves of the Drottningholm Court Theatre, turned by their shore-plank, we have Baltic storms. Gustaf Wasa's tents turn into the third Gustaf's headquarters on the Finnish front. Dreamed-of victories dissolve in humiliating defeats. And just as all seems lost, the Danes, by attacking on the southern front, place in the king's hands new propaganda weapons he is not slow to exploit. Following in his ancestor's footsteps, he goes up to Dalarna, once Gustaf Wasa's main stronghold, and there appeals to the peasantry for their support in the struggle against the hereditary foe to the south. Which he obtains. The tide of war turns. All of which was not merely "politics as the art of the possible"; but also those of a sovereign producer ... of theatre.

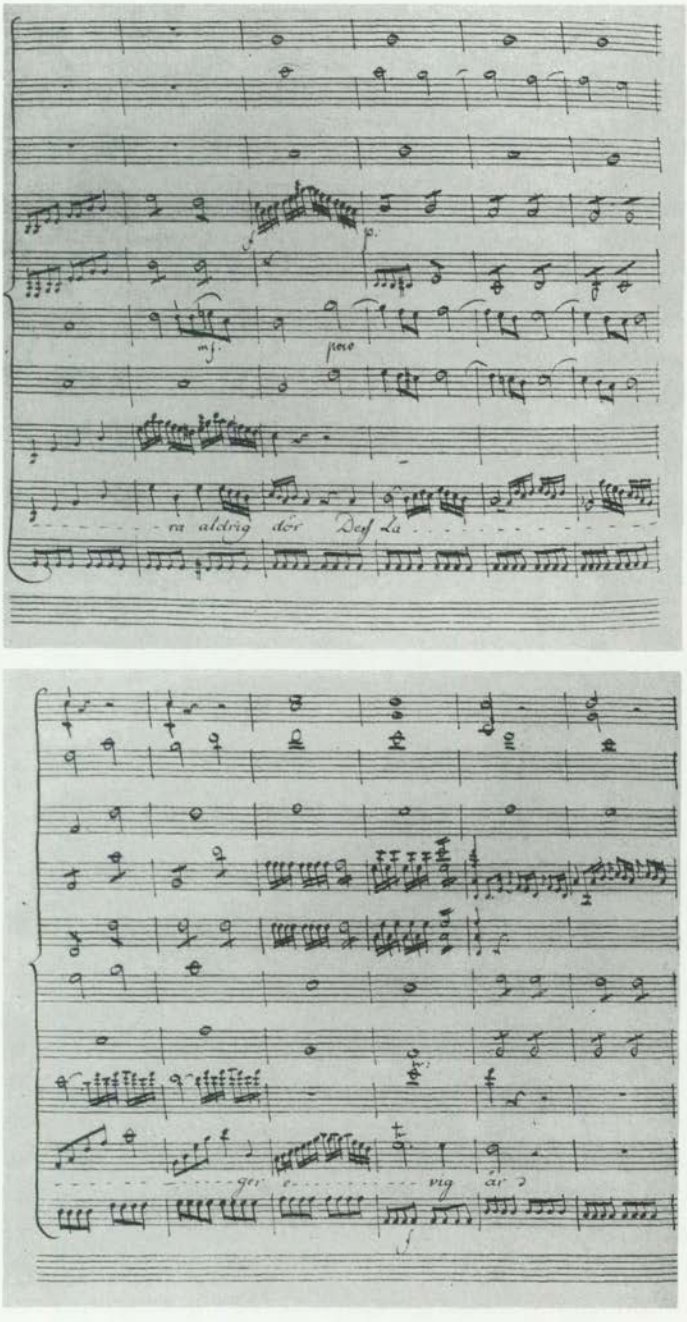
It was not only on the boards of the new Royal Opera house that the hero kings of Swedish history appeared. In the play *Gustaf Ericsson i Dalarna* we meet a more youthful, rebellious Gustaf Wasa fleeing from his Danish pursuers. This work had been staged as early as 1784 (two years before the great opera), at the splendiferous inauguration of Carl Stenborg's new private theatre on Munkbron Quay. It is a drama on the grand scale, written by the prolific author of musical comedies Carl Envallsson. Stenborg himself composed the musical numbers—besides owning his own theatre he was one of the leading singers at the opera house and two years later it would be he who would create the role of Gustaf Wasa in Naumann's opera. No question but that Stenborg/Envallsson chose the theme on account of its national and dramatic character, but also to acclaim the king, their princely patron, a Mæcenas of theatre, who indeed had ordered a royal box to be installed in Stenborg's and personally graced the first night.

Whilst the environment depicted in the grand opera about Gustaf Wasa would be chiefly courtly and the actors the highest knights of the realm, it is from simple folk, the commons of Dalarna, that young Gustaf Ericsson is here seeking protection and support. Unfortunately, nothing of the play's scenery or costumes has survived, but the stage directions do yield some idea of what they looked like. The first scene shows Anders Pehrsson's cottage at Rankhyttan. Gustaf is dressed like the peasants, short hair and with Dalecarlian peasant blouse. In the room Annika sits spinning. The others come in from the barn and hang up their flails on the wall.

Straight out of a scene, one might think, from one of the innumerable popular musical plays which would figure so prominently in the



Musical Ex. 3. Act III, scene 1 of Gustaf Eriksson i Dalarne *("Gustaf Eriksson in Dalecarlia"), drama with songs, in three acts by C. Stenborg, libretto by C. Envallsson. First performed at the inauguration of the Munkbro Theatre on Oct. 29, 1784. Gustaf Eriksson's aria: "No greater virtue is, than that burn with honour / And with one's very life (Compatriots' bliss to win: / Who for his fatherland does bloody deeds / His glory never dies; eternal are his Laurels." Autograph by Carl Stenborg, 1784. MAB.*



Muscial Ex. 3, continued.

Swedish nineteenth-century repertoire. The salubrious charms of country life are depicted, here as there, in Rousseauesque colours:

Work and virtue bring us all
Homely pleasures thousandfold:
In our dales are ever found
Health and happiness untold.

Most of the text is spoken dialogue, but interlarded with many and richly varied musical numbers: a 'sublime' *allegro maestoso* overture, choral sections, ensembles, arias and simple ditties. Stenborg draws on a variety of musical stylistic means to fix his individual characters' social status. In a major aria with advanced coloratura, Gustaf Ericsson sings the praises of honour and glory and love for the fatherland (Musical Ex. 3). All setting fire to the flame of patriotism—in a scene that must have been perfectly to the king's taste.

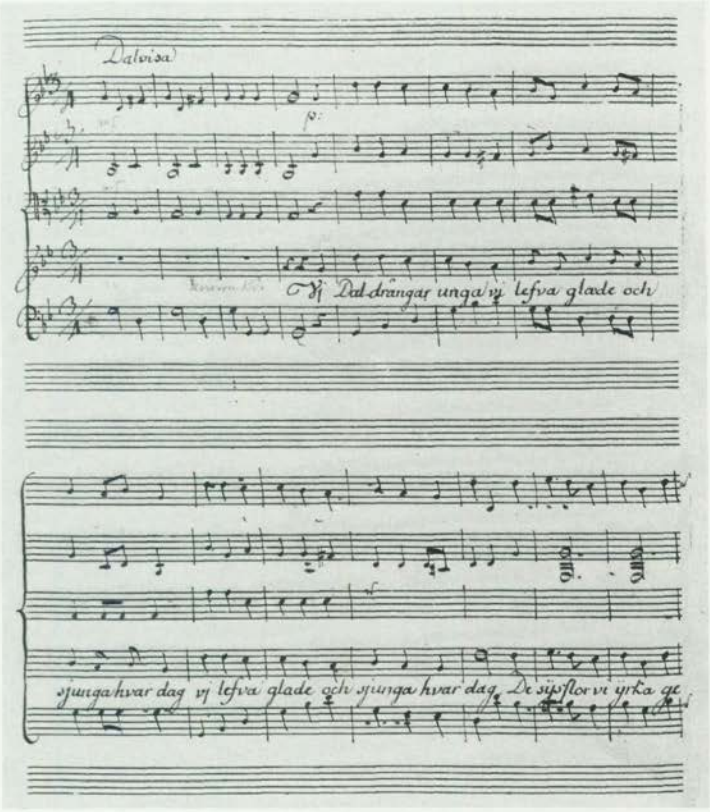
No greater virtue is, than burn with honour
And with one's very life Compatriots' bliss to win:
Who for his fatherland does bloody deeds
His glory never dies; eternal are his Laurels.

Now the young peasants sing—in unison—of their *joie de vivre,* to a simple popular melody in regular dance rhythm (Musical Ex. 4). Words and music alike move on two rhetorical planes, sharply contrasting the peasants and their nobly born hero. The spectacle climaxes in a grand ensemble finale, with recitatives, arias and an elevated four-part chorus acclaiming the country's saviour.

That the hero-kings of Swedish history must have been regarded as virtually sacrosanct can be seen from a remarkable newspaper debate which broke out after the play's first night. An indignant letter to the editor of *Stockholms Posten* (Nov. 18, 1784) complains of Gustaf Wasa, "that honour to Sweden, that founder of the royal lineage, that darling of God and men, that great man" so utterly profaned as to appear on stage in the person of a mere singer—even descending so low as to sing "in the company of Dalecarlian labourers". To this deeply hurt patriot Stenborg scathingly replied by referring to the impending production of Naumann's grand opera on the boards of the Royal Opera House (composed already in 1783), where the same hero was also due to appear.

I wonder what you will say, sir, when you shall soon see and hear Gustaf Wasa /.../ in the theatre not merely say one word, but sing from start to finish?. (*Stockholms Posten* Nov. 20, 1784).

In his preface to the play's printed edition, Envallsson, too, takes up

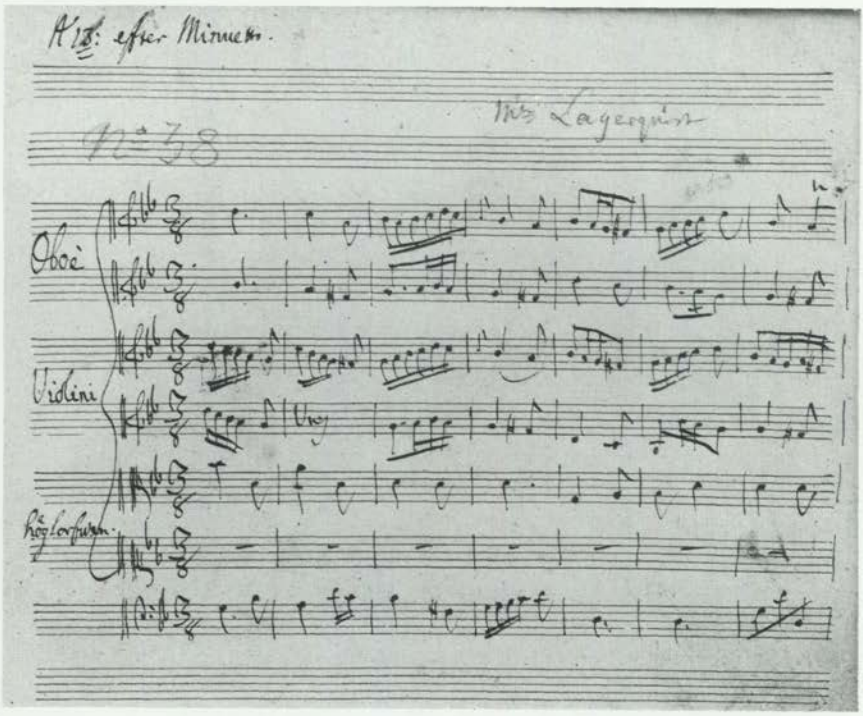


Musical Ex. 4. Act III, scene 2 of Gustaf Eriksson i Dalarne. *Autograph by Carl Stenborg, 1784. MAB.*

the cudgels against "wornout attacks on the Comedy and on all *Théâtre",* and declares that

> it is there an unquenchable love for our blessed Royal House, the Fatherland and its Citizens can be planted (sic).

Again and again this doublebottomed game between hero king and loyal subjects is played out on the Gustavian stages. An early instance is the spectacle which Gustaf had staged in July 1774 on the occasion of his brother Duke Karl's wedding. Here the action revolved around the great Swedish mediaeval liberator *Birger Jarl.* The text, based on a sketch by the king, was by Gustaf Fredrik Gyllenborg. For the wedding it had been supplied with brilliant music, with choruses, arias and ballets by Francesco Antonio Uttini and Hinrich Philip Johnsen. Act II contains a series of ballets inserted "for the Lapps", the most "exotic" ethnic group in Sweden. We read in the stage directions that

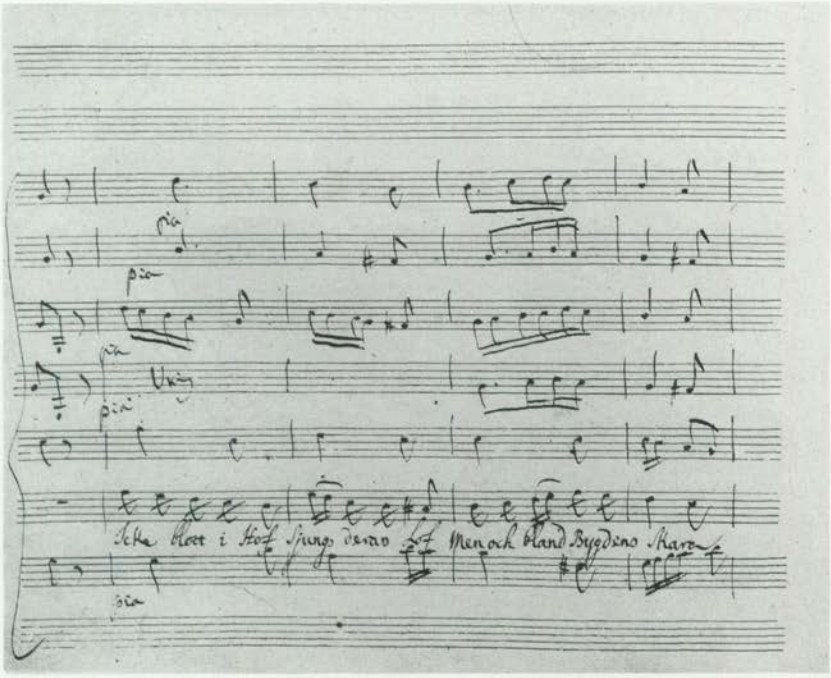


Musical Ex. 5. Act III of Birger Jarl, *play in three acts with singing and dancing divertissements, to a design by Gustaf III, executed by C. Gyllenborg (except for Act III, scene 5 and the divertissements, lyrics by C. G. Adlerbeth), music composed and arranged by F. A. Uttini and H. Ph. Johnsen. First performed in the Hall of State on July 8, 1774 on the occasion of Duke Karl's and Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta's nuptials; and again on July 20 in the same year in the Grand Gallery of the Palace. Unknown copyist, 1774. MAB.*

the seer draws circles with his sticks, the Lapps meanwhile dancing round them with their magical drums.

One medicine man utters his prophecies against a background of elevated hymn-like music—a veritable Sarastro of the dark and frozen north. Uttini's music is magnificent, richly orchestrated with trombones, horns, oboes, flutes, timpani, tambourine and strings. Not that there is the least connection with real Lapp music, which at the time was still virtually unheard by outsiders.

The play ends with a divertissement of popular Swedish folk dances. The Vingåker Dance and the so-called "*höglorfwen*" are performed specially in honour of the royal couple. To the latter, very popular dance melody, a young peasant girl presents the people's congratulations (Musical Ex. 5):



Musical Ex. 5, continued.

Not alone at court
Are their praises sung
But in all the villages
And in our cottages
Happy are we all
Our love to show them.

During the 1780s and 90s this growing interest in "the common people" or "ordinary folk" becomes ever plainer both at Stenborg's theatre and on the royal stages, in operas, plays, Singspiel and divertissements, clearly heralding the "discovery of the people" in national romanticism. The few extant pictures of stage sets and costumes can at times, and with remarkable precision, depict scenes from popular life. On her birthday in April 1783 Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta was congratulated with the divertissment *Tillfälle gör tjuvfen* ("Opportunity Makes the Thief"), a charming comedy bubbling over with good humour and in Bellman's manner swarming with popular types: the dean's wife, the sheriff, the smith, the parish clerk, a man with a

Fig. 4. Tillfälle gör tjuven *("Opportunity Makes the Thief"), lyrical comedy in three acts by various composers (overture by Grenser), libretto by C. I. Hallman. First performed before the royal family, at Ulriksdal on April 8, 1783. All the performers, except Bellman, were courtiers. The first Stockholm performance was at the Munkbro Theatre on Feb. 23, 1788. "A peasant woman and her daughter in the Värend costume" on the shore of a pond or a small lake. In the background, a church with a central tower. Though the action takes place at Vingåker, both women are wearing the Värend costume. Oil on canvas by P. Hilleström. NM.*

dancing bear, a half-drunken peasant, a young labourer, a peasant girl and a chorus of wedding guests. In one of his numerous theatre paintings Pehr Hilleström shows a "peasant's wife and daughter wearing the Värend costume", taken precisely from this divertissement (Fig. 4). Here the local colour is no less precise than in the illustrations of costumes from the Singspiel *En majdag i Wärend* ("A May Day in Värend"), which would have its première in 1843, half a century later.

When Gustaf III returned to Sweden in 1784 after rather more than a year in Italy and France, he was welcomed home to his kingdom by, among other arrangements, a divertissement called *Herrgårds Högtiden* ("Solemn Occasion at the Manor") staged at Stenborg's theatre (words by Envallsson, music by Johan David Zander). This simple occasional piece consists of a series of songs, acclaiming the king. They are sung by two peasant girls, by Baron Knut, by the village organist and by other representatives of the Swedish people. At a time when criticism, after years of failed harvests and starvation, of Gustaf III's travels abroad and his waste of public funds was seething in all quarters and indeed over the whole country, such panegyrics must have rung false in many an ear in the audience.

All over Sweden's realm
Love and peace and pleasure burgeon.
Our king no equal has in virtue
Nor yet his folk in love and loyalty.

In *Toberne ou Le Pêcheur suédois*, a French *opéra-comique* in two acts by Antonio Bartolomeo Bruni, we find quite another kind of picture of popular life. After having its world première in Paris in 1795, it was put on in Swedish translation at the Stockholm Opera three years later. The events occur in Bergslagen, in Dalarna, at about the time when Christianity was introduced into Sweden. A band of robbers are ravaging the countryside under their famous leader Arnliot Gellina (chiefly known in Swedish operatic history as the noble Viking Arnljot, in W. Peterson-Berger's Wagnerian-style opera of the same name, from 1910). Contrasted with the robbers are the local people, the peasant miner Ragvald, the young fisherman Torbern, fishermen's wives, miners and others. From a set of well preserved pictures of the costumes we get fascinating glimpses both of exotic robber romanticism and stark everyday realism (Fig. 5–6). This French opera contains, of course, nothing of the provincial romanticism whose dawn we have seen in the Gustavian theatre. Its costumes

Fig. 5. Miner, in Fiskaren (Toberne ou Le Pêcheur suédois / *"Toby, or the Swedish Fisherman"*) opéra-comique *in two acts by A. B. Bruni. Libretto by J. Patrat, imitation by C. G. Nordforss, three character ballets (fishermen, miners and Lapps) by F. N. Terrade to music by P. J. Lambert. First performed at The Arsenal Theatre on Nov. 9, 1798. Watercolour pencil drawing in the costume books of the Royal Opera, about 1800. KTA.*

bespeak rather an interest in "simple folk" as such and as a social class. The text, echoing the spirit of French revolutionary opera, is a plea for fraternity and solidarity among the overworked miners. Yet here too a representative of authority appears as the people's protector. This time he is no hero king drawn from Swedish history, but the miner Ragnvald:

> My daughter, if my workers did not love me, the fault would be mine /. . . /. The poor man's body grows strong and hard from work, but his heart is tender, susceptible to gratitude. My child, let us treat the unfortunate as ourselves, then they will take what for us is a duty as a a good deed.

Certainly this is a novel note in the interplay between the hero and the common people—a new hero and a new people.

Fig. 6. Robbers in Fiskaren. *Watercolour pencil drawings in the costume books of the Royal Opera, about 1800. KTA.*

The special hallmark of Gustavian opera is that it lies at the juncture between the old Europe of enlightened despots and the new Europe of the French Revolution, between late baroque antique-style heroics and nascent romanticism's cult of the common people. Already we find in it the most important figures of nineteenth-century Swedish music drama: hero kings from Swedish history, the gods of Nordic mythology, peasantry from various provinces, but clad in quite a different ideological garb. Gustavian opera is borne up by national pathos, initiated from above, by the king himself. It mirrors a royal conception of what was meant by "the people", *qua* devoted and loyal subjects to the hero kings. All this changes with the transformations, political and ideological, of the nineteenth century. A new interest in the people springs up, above all in academic and upper bourgeois circles—a new concept of "the folk" as the true carrier of "ancient, genuine and national" traditions.

The clash is also mirrored in Gustavian opera's various stylistic levels: in Uttini's Neapolitan *opere serie,* in Naumann's striking fusion

of Italian opera forms, *Emfindsamer Stil* and Gustavian romanticized history; in Vogler's programme music, popular song melodies and dance scenes; in Kraus' highly personal preromantic style, inspired by Gluck. We notice how the striving toward a national idiom in the music is first found in scenes of a popular nature. To develop a national accent for the heroic ideal and the great hero kings, on the other hand, seems to have been more problematic. No indigenous music existed for it to draw on. And it is above all in the popular scenes that Gustavian operas, both musically, costume-wise and in their scenery, forshadow stylistic trends in nineteenth-century music drama.

Gustavian music reaches its remarkable and stylistically correct culmination in a work which, more explicitly than any other, is the very incarnation of Gustavian ideas. I refer to J. M. Kraus' *Begravningsmusik för Gustaf III*. The music for the assassinated king's funeral gives him his own heroic "opera" and completes the trilogy of the three Gustafs. After the fateful Russian war, opposition to the royal despot had grown steadily more serious. On March 16, 1792, he was shot down by conspirators' bullets at a masquerade ball at the Royal Opera. Lethally wounded, it remained only for him to play his last great role, and he played it with truly sovereign self-control: the role of the father of his country dying at an assassin's hand, but gracious, gentle, forgiving to the end. The drama had reached its peripeisis. Amid the general horror at the terrible deed, political opposition turned into sympathy. Like the hero kings of his national operas, Gustaf III had himself finally come to occupy the very centre of events, borne up on his people's love.

The décor in Riddarholm Church on May 14 was a wellproduced piece of theatre, with décor, soloists, a large choir and orchestra, all fully worthy of Sweden's "theatre king". Here is how the newspaper *Stockholms Posten*, on May 25, 1792 described the remarkable scenery (Fig. 7):

> The décor in Riddarholmskyrkan on the occasion of the Most Blessed King's funeral resembled a dark forest or Grove of Cypresses, where gravestones were seen to have been raised over the most celebrated of Sweden's kings /. . ./. In the midst of these Monuments stood a high Ancestral Mound, on the topmost point of which stood the Most Blessed king's portrait bust, on a Pedestal surrounded by weapons of war, in front of which sat the image of a grieving Woman, representing Svea, with the Swedish Lion at her feet. Below the Funeral Mound were seen in four places Runestones, in which had been

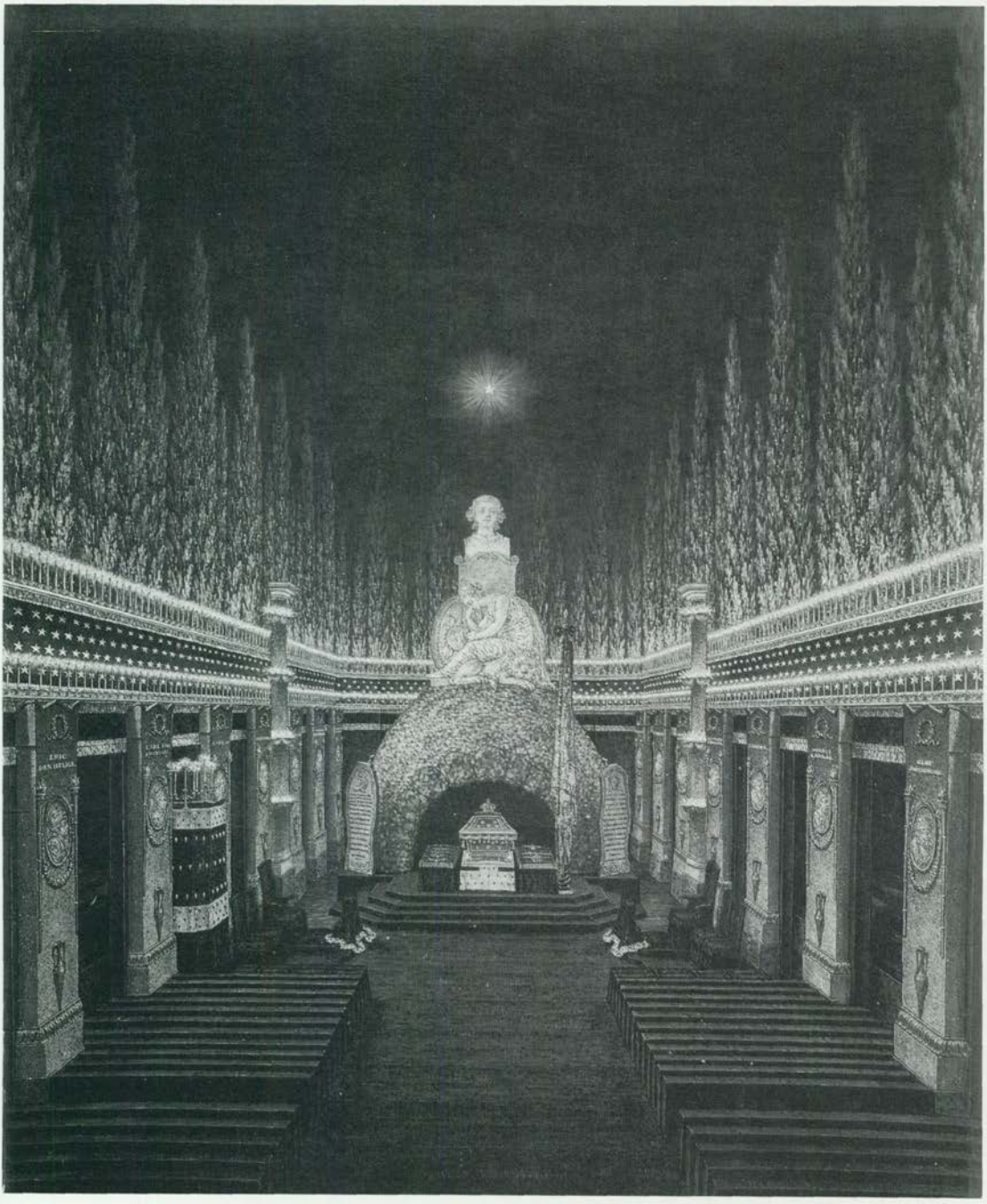


Fig. 7. Funeral of Gustaf III in Riddarholm Church. The décor was the work of C. F. Sundwall, based on a sketch by L. J. Desprez. NM.

engraved in Runic Letters the eminent Qualities adorning the King's Person, and the most remarkable events of His life.

The stage thus set, the scene moves into the body of the church which like a theatrical baroque scenery has been built up around a central axis. An illusory perspective is heightened by cypresses and gravestones in parallel "wings". At the back of the "stage" a temple of glory has been raised, here in the shape of a Nordic ancestral mound or tumulus. A *Temple de la Gloire* had been a frequent motif in Gustavian theatre. Two remarkable columns, made up of the prows of ships, like the pillars of an antique rostrum, form proscenium and footlights. Upstage towers the king's bust (by Sergel) and above it a gleaming Pole Star—favourite symbol of the former Swedish Empire and of Gustavus Adolphus. Colours and materials, too, have been chosen to heighten the dramatic effect and enhance the scene with regal splendour—crimson, gold and white ermine against a background of black velvet. The Royal insignia gleam around the coffin.

The Funeral Cantata is no less dramatic. The work has been composed in a state of shock and fury at the dreadful deed. Both Joseph Martin Kraus, its composer, and Carl Gustaf Leopold, its author, had long found a friend and patron in the king. No question but his death was a great personal loss to both of them.

In its concentration and declamatory style Leopold's pious text functions admirably as a libretto. The exclamatory introduction by the choir promptly sets the mood:

Heavenly power! What horrid fates!
Oh, what an hour for Sweden strikes!

As in the runestones around the catafalque, Leopold in his text chisels out the ideal image, so purposefully built up by Gustaf himself: "Thou, mildest of all—Sweden's hero, king and father!" The same royal virtues, in a word, as had been celebrated in the opera about Gustavus Adolphus.

What is entirely lacking, however, is the religious element. Even the king's funeral is to be mostly a grand spectacle. Kraus' music, too, is distinctly more operatic than ecclesiastical. It will not only be one of the last works he will complete, but unquestionably one of his finest, altogether on a level with his magnum opus *Æneas i Carthago*. In both he comes close to reaching Gluck's artistic ideal, both in point of compositional technique and in grandiose overall effect. Like Gluck, he fuses dramatic expressiveness with absolute aesthetic control.

No Swedish hero can ever have made a more remarkable stage exit.

But then, it was all designed to be a spectacle of reality, with a plot more fantastic than any librettist could ever have thought up. The theatre king in his last great role, murdered at a masquerade in his own opera house, and, in his own last act, laid to rest in the Ancestral Mound of Swedish kings; all to grandiose, highly dramatic music ...

PRINCES AND POETS

The Swedish courts and theatrical life in the 1770s

Magnus von Platen

THE AUTHOR OF A memoir on the Royal Dramatic Theatre published as early as 1825 begins by saying: "To give a historical account of the first beginnings, development and end of this theatrical institution would be an undertaking worthy of genius". True. And it discourages me, at least, from any more ambitious attempt to pose as the historian of Gustavian theatre. Here all I shall try to do is present a few notes on the first blossoming of Swedish theatre in the reign of Gustaf III. They may serve to complement Oscar Levertin's brilliant book *Teater och Drama under Gustaf III* ("Theatre and Drama under Gustaf III"), which though over a hundred years old, is perhaps still our best single work of research into the history of Swedish theatre. Certain repetitions have been unavoidable, and certain cornerstones must be recycled by anyone who wants to build further. Similarly, I shall invoke the great mass of later research by such writers as Agne Beijer, Lennart Breitholtz, Richard Engländer, Marie-Christine Skuncke, Gunnar Svanfeldt, and others. But first and foremost I shall present what I myself have come across in manuscripts, older printed works and in little considered literature.[1]

More than anything else my interest in the subject was aroused by the sensational development of Swedish theatre thanks to Gustaf III himself. Progress was made in virtually its every aspect; in drama, opera, opera houses, acting, singing, scenery, ballet. In the whole international history of theatre, I believe, there can be no equivalent to these explosive developments in the Sweden of the 1770s and 1780s. Not that the circumstances, as the king found them, were particularly favourable: he simply shaped such as were under his control in a maximally favourable direction. With the exception of Adelcrantz, his opera house's architect, not a single indigenous genius could be found.

And, worst of all, and no matter how many applied for that role and were helped by him in every conceivable way, no really gifted dramatist appeared—a century would have to pass before Sweden gave the world a dramatist of genius. Sometimes it seems as if cultural development defies the Marxist theory of its being a purely social product.

At the same time the king also demonstrated its truth, inasmuch as he successfully transformed Stockholm, then a little town of no more than 75,000 inhabitants, into Europe's second most outstanding theatrical city after Paris. In 1791 it was able to impress two cultivated Frenchmen with its three stages and four regular companies, its excellent actors, its admirable singers of both sexes, and its delightful productions, the work of leading stage artists under Desprez' leadership (Fortia de Piles p. 64–71). And at around the same point in time Abbé Vogler wrote:

Es sind nur zwei grosse, wahre Operntheater in der Welt und das sind die von Paris und Stockholm (Schafhäutl p. 34).

In his view it was only in its ballets that Stockholm was inferior to Paris.

All this was in high degree the king's personal achievement. It was he who initiated and organized it all: who founded the opera, made sketches for the opera house, and even directed its productions. It was he who founded the Royal Dramatic Theatre, inspiring and activating dramatists. Plays began pouring out. Anyone who leafs through Klemming's bibliography *Sveriges dramatiska litteratur* ("Sweden's Dramatic Literature") will find that the twenty years between 1773–92 fill no fewer than 59 pages—more than the number required for the foregoing 120 years, and far more than for the two decades that followed. What Gustaf did for the theatre is his greatest and most abiding achievement—a fact for which historians do not always give him full credit.

As is so often the case with a great passion, Gustaf's passion for theatre had appeared at an incredibly early age. Even as a small child, as crown prince, he was an actor, and at eleven a dramatist! Later he would become perhaps the most productive of all contemporary Swedish writers for the stage. One only needs to compare his plays with those of his competitors to acclaim him their superior in at least one respect: he is the best "man of the theatre", and his sense of what "goes" on stage was the most highly developed. If he has a shortcoming it is in his sense of literary form and in not being very original—though in the latter respect he is no exception. Hecatombs of alexan-

drines from French plays were stored away in his admirable memory; likewise scores of important roles, always vividly present to his mind, so that he could instantly perform any of them. In other respects a monarch who laid great store by etiquette, he was only too happy to "appear", playing against professionals—something his contemporaries found utterly shocking, and which he only refrained from when the emissaries of foreign powers protested. It has been pointed out that everyone else who was involved in Gustavian theatre either maligned or made insinuations against actors and actresses—everyone except the king! The key to Gustaf III's whole personality has been found to lie in his actor's nature. And the latest biography is entitled *Den stora rollen* ("The Great Role").[2]

It was however only in the degree of his passion for theatre he was exceptional. Indeed theatre has been called the eighteenth century's passion. A passion, if so, which flourished most strongly in Gustaf's own circles, among the royal families. Of the heroic lead-roles in dramas, especially tragedies, most wore crowns, were presented in a sublime light and were surrounded by courtiers and aristocrats. That princely personages should have taken an interest in the theatre is no more remarkable than that the Swedish bourgeoisie of our own time should have bought Olle Hedberg's witty novels, or that Swedish workers should study our working-class authors. In all three cases it was themselves they were reading about. In a powerful hand, moreover, the stage was an incomparable propaganda instrument, a *biblia pauperum*, legible not least to those who were neither poor nor read the Bible. Gustaf and his peers knew perfectly how to make use of it.

Hardly anyone in his family failed to share his theatrical interest. His mother, Queen Lovisa Ulrika's passion was hardly second to her son's. Both Duke Karl, the king's younger brother, and his duchess Charlotta, were busily and enthusiastically involved. The duke, always happy, like his brother, to appear on stage, was no poor actor.

What I should like to explore here is the various ways in which these three courts—the king's, the dowager queen's and the ducal couple's—all tried to promote theatre and to attach young talent to themselves. Obviously, this soon brought them into a position of rivalry, and, no less obviously, it was the king who drew the longest straw.

When Gustaf became king, in 1771, Swedish theatre was in the doldrums. In his celebrated journals Gustaf Johan (Gösta) Eh-

rensvärd, whom the new king would put in as head of his theatres immediately after seizing power in 1772, has an oft-quoted description of the state of the Swedish stage in the 1760s. Painted in darkest colours, it makes many a grotesque and comical point. The picture's lighter side, faint though it is, is occupied by the troupe of French actors maintained by Lovisa Ulrika and then performing at Drottningholm.[3]

As source material Ehrensvärd's account has been criticized. It lay in his interest—it has been pointed out—to blacken the past and thus make his own achievement in setting things to rights appear more brilliant. The objection could be called theoretical: nor is there any evidence to substantiate it. On the other hand it is confirmed by some contemporary statements that, prior to Gustaf's accession to the throne, Swedish theatre really was in a parlous state. Nor had ecclesiastical opposition ever been more intense than in the 1760s. In every way theatre was sailing against a head gale. And if we are to criticize the thirty-year-old Ehrensvärd, then it can only be by saying that he lards his account with overtones of farce.[4]

It was in 1772 that Gustaf III first began to consider the viability of a Swedish-speaking theatre. Clearly he intended it to have its baptism of fire in connection with his own coronation. From Johan Wellander, a young musical man of letters just then much in demand, he commissioned an opera libretto on the Thetis and Pelaeus theme, and himself drafted the text—as would become his habit. The music was commissioned from the Swedish composer Ferdinand Zellbell Jr., but transferred soon afterwards—Zellbell suffered from severe creative inhibitions—to the Italian, *Hofkapellmeister* Uttini. We find the first official note concerning the royal commission in the Musical Academy's minutes for March 18, 1772. In May, Wellander says in a letter that Gustaf III has decided to invest heavily in opera and theatre, yes, to "shape a new epoch for the Swedish language and letters" (Engländer, 1943 p. 8; Haeger p. 67 et seq.).

Delayed, it was not until January 18, 1773 that *Thetis och Pelée* was staged in the renovated Bollhus theatre, on Slottsbacken. Two years later Gustaf had begun to plan a new opera house. 1782 it could be inaugurated as the first "national" opera north of the Alps to perform in the vernacular.[4B]

The king's projects during his first year as sovereign ruler bespeak a great, if not fully justifiable, optimism as to the country's artistic resources. Where, on the other hand, equally unjustifiably, he was a trifle pessimistic, was in what concerned the potential of the Swedish

language. Originally he intended to begin with the spoken drama—of which more below. But in the upshot he settled for opera: a choice in all essentials due to his opinion that Swedish was as yet so unrefined that, if it was not to offend ears brought up on French culture, it would have to be mingled with music and made eloquent by being sung. Possibly he also thought opera likely to provide it with a superior verbal gymnasium. This, at least, is what the marshal of the court Christoffer Manderström, who also wrote for the stage, gave his listeners to understand when making his speech as a new member of the dowager queen's Vitterhetsakademi (Academy of Letters) in 1773. "Opera", we read, "wherein so many special aspects of music are to be found, must ... be the foremost evidence of a language's wealth and flexibility".

Just how oversensitively people reacted to Swedish as an operatic language can be seen from what one of the age's young poets wrote to a friend. In a letter in French of February 1777, Carl Gustaf Leopold warns Jacob Lindblom against going to listen to Dr Göran Rothman's much appreciated translation of Calzabigi's operatic libretto *Orpheus och Euridice*:

Elle est d'un genre tres vicieux, car elle ennuie le monde. Surtout elle n'est pas faite pour Vous, Monsieur. Votre grande connoissance dans la langue Romaine, Vous empèchera surement de gouter ces petites familliarités suedoises, dont elle abonde. Ce ne sont pas le même Orphé et la même Eurydice qui dans Virgile Vous ont fait pleurer. Ceux-ci Vous font rire et cela est un grand defaut deja. On ne rit pas a l'Elisée et encore moins aux enfers. (SS 2 p. 34)

Because of this anxiety over the shortcomings of Swedish as a language for the theatre, all manuscripts were submitted to close scrutiny, the king and his courtiers regarding themselves as specially qualified to pass them through the fine toothcomb of "taste", of which in eighteenth-century eyes persons of rank had a monopoly. Newspaper reviewers, too, mainly paid attention to the linguistic aspects, and to literary formalities (Breitholtz 1940, p. 115). An avid market existed for printed operatic libretti, which were closely studied. Even ballets were accompanied, in traditional fashion, by literary texts, which also appeared in print. It was common for authors to provide their own printed texts, sometimes in extenso, with introductory remarks anent the formal uses of language, the principles of translation, etc. All of which, both from the literary and language-historical points of view, constitutes a body of fascinating source material, and one that hitherto has been little regarded by research. In sum: everything that was put on at the theatres, including song texts and choreography, had a

literary and linguistic aspect, deeply interesting both to connoisseurs and the public at large.

Among poets and writers all over the country the success of *Thetis och Pelée*, in January 1773, and, above all, the king's enthusiasm for theatre, unleashed unprecedented activity. Driven on by individual blends of impassioned interest and personal cupboard love, they came flocking to the capital's theatres. "Now nothing is being spoken of here but new plays, operas and tragedies, some still being worked up, others rehearsed," we read in the newspaper *Nya Allmänna Tidningar* as early as February 8, 1773, i.e. only three weeks after Wellander's première. In the foreword to a translated comedy of 1775 we read how "all pens in the realm are as it were rivalling each other to present one dramatic work after another." (Chamfort's *Slavhandlaren i Smirna*/"The Slave Trader in Smyrna"). In mid-1777 the publicist Gustaf Regnér wrote some reflections on the theatre, later printed under the title *Tankar Om Svenska Teatern* ("Thoughts on The Swedish Theatre", 1780). There we read:

> One would think Sweden did not lack for dramatic geniuses, for since Swedish dramas have begun to be put on at the royal tennis court (i.e. the Bollhus theatre), authors have sprouted in every corner of the land. Operas and tragedies have been translated as if competing for great rewards. People have undertaken long journeys to the capital to get the products of their headlong genius performed at the theatre, and there's hardly a young poet who hasn't tried to translate some opera or tragedy. (p. 11)

In a letter of October 1777, Gjörwell, the royal librarian, turns to the court chancellor Fredrik Sparre—"my own and literature's protector", as he calls him—and implores him in caustic accents:

> I beg you, my Gracious Lord, in the name of all that's good: never permit the Swedish book trade to be reduced to cookery books and operas, just now the only manuscripts acceptable to a speculative publisher. (Ed. 1938, p. 59)

In 1785, in the learned society Utile Dulci, Clas Gartz made an encomium of Göran Rothman, who had translated a great deal for the theatre. He too laments, albeit in more amiable tones, such authors' self-ingratiatory enthusiasm:

> The time had come when operas became the most pleasing items of belles-lettres, and a poet is only to happy to gratify the wishes of his contemporaries. (p. 93).

Just how willingly and with what haste poets were gratifying their contemporaries' desires can best be seen from a survey of how many works were commenced and in not a few cases also completed during

Fig. 1. Fire fan, showing a scene from Act II of Acis och Galathea, *heroic ballet in three acts, lyrics by L. S. Lalin, music "partly new, partly from Handel's opera [sic] 'Acis and Galathea' as well as other famous masters' sought out and ordered" by H. Ph. Johnsen, who also composed some of the choruses and other sections. First performed on May 10, 1773 at the Bollhus Theatre. Collage of engravings of theatre figures, composed as a pastime by ladies of the court in the 1770s. DTM.*

the course of 1773. Just then everyone seems to have been busy with various kinds of musical theatre. There were three premières: first, of *Thetis och Pelée*, then of *Acis och Galathea*, and finally of *Orpheus och Euridice*. The words for *Acis och Galathea* (Fig. 1) had been written by a singing teacher named Lars Lalin, who had been commissioned by the king "to set serviceable words to music already composed"; and in this way an opera had been fabricated in a mere nine weeks. The translation of *Orpheus och Euridice* had been begun by Abbé Domenico Michelessi and, upon his dying in April 1773, had been completed by Göran Rothman, who was simultaneously—though obviously fruitlessly—working on Metastasio's *Alcide al bivio*. Michelessi

had also planned an opera about Gustaf Wasa. This Italian, by the bye, had also expressed his admiration, verbally and in writing, for latterday Swedish history, which he regarded as an incomparable gold mine of theatrical themes (Beijer pp. 123 et seq.). It is probably to his encomia on this point that Gustavian opera owes some of its preoccupation with national historical subjects. The libretto for the drama about Gustaf Wasa had been entrusted by the king to a favourite, Johan Fant, a clergyman he had just appointed dean of Västerås, but who in reality was a man of worldly and literary tastes (Beijer p. 126). However, the work had come to a halt, presumably because of Michelessi dying. Whereupon another immigrant, Moritz von Brahm, tried his hand at a drama about Gustaf Wasa, probably as early as 1772 (Beijer p. 127 et seq.). At last Gustaf III himself wrote the drama about Gustav I.

Naturally, the king entertained high hopes of poets who already enjoyed a reputation. In a letter of October, the poet and diplomat Creutz was exhorted to write an opera on the occasion of Duke Karl's engagement (*Gustave par ses lettres,* p. 144.) Earlier that year the poet Gyllenborg, too, had been engaged. On the one hand he had begun work on the little musical *Sveas Högtid* ("Festival of Svea"); on the other, on the far more ambitious task of versifying Gustaf's own draft for a drama about Birger Jarl, an important task which soon became the subject of widespread gossip. In March, 1774, Gjörwell wrote to Sven Lagerbring:

> The king is more particularly studying the character of Birger Jarl and his age. But can you, Gracious Sir, guess to what purpose? Well, His Majesty is working, albeit in the company of Councillor Count Gyllenborg and a young but rather witty secretary in the War Office, a Mr. Adlerbeth, on a new Swedish play, called *Birger Jarl av Bjälbo*. (Bergianska avskriftssamlingen XVI p. 522).

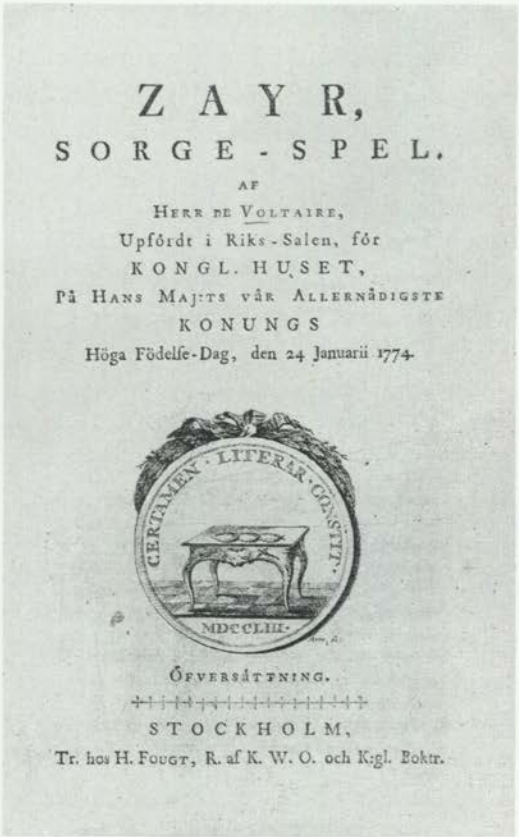
In the course of 1773, Gudmund Jöran Adlerbeth, that newly discovered talent, would find time to almost complete his *Iphigenie*, a "tragedy with choruses" reworked from Racine; Lars Lalin—over and above the aforementioned *Acis och Galathea*—was writing an opera no longer extant but according to a contemporary jotting in its own way original, entitled *Zephis och Flora*; Bellman was labouring over his *Fiskarena* ("The Fishermen"); and his fellow poets Anders Fredrik Ristell and Carl Henric Flintberg were busy translating *Armide* and *Ismène och Ismenias*, though in the event none of these three works came up to expectations.

A work in another genre which, though not brought to fulfillment

until much later, seems to have been begun as early as 1772, was called *Zephis och Flora*, and has been ascribed to Johan Simmingsköld (Sundström p. 52). Two courtiers who had been attached to the theatre were also individually at work. One was the theatre director Ehrensvärd himself, who, albeit in vain, was struggling with an operatic arrangement of Creutz' epic poem *Atis och Camilla*. The other was C.B. Zibet, who was translating Sedaine's *Aline Drottning uti Golconda* ("Aline, Queen of Golconda"), which would not be put on or printed until 1776. A third courtier, Christoffer Manderström, was translating Laujon's *Silvie*.[5] Which brings us to the plays being written for Lovisa Ulrika's sponsorship.

The overall portrait has still to be written of Queen Lovisa Ulrika that would do her justice as a cultural personality, indeed has scarcely been attempted. It is a major and fascinating task that still awaits its author. Here I shall merely try to throw some light on the dowager queen's activities during the last years of her life, when she was trying to guide Swedish theatrical developments in another direction than her son's. By then her earlier enthusiasm for French drama at Drottningholm had given way to an equally warm interest in drama in the Swedish language. As I have hinted, there was rivalry between the three courts, especially noticeable between hers and the king's. Indeed, during the first few years after Gustaf's accession, one can even speak of a power struggle between mother and son as to the lines along which the Swedish language ought to be cultivated; therewith also a tug of war for literary and, more particularly, dramatic talent. Evidence of such rivalry can sometimes be found, at such times as their quarrels did not forbid all communication between them, in mother's and son's French-language epistles to each other—letters by turns tender and downright hellish, and filled with a furious ambivalence that at times strikes the reader's nostrils like sulphurous fumes from a blast furnace.

Immediately on ascending the throne, Gustaf's first measure had been to dismiss the French troupe his mother had engaged in 1753.[6] Whatever his motives, the newly relegated dowager queen must have felt his intervention to be a blow aimed at the theatrical activities she had inspired. Yet she did not let herself become discouraged. In January, 1773, as soon as her year of mourning allowed, she revived her Vitterhetsakademi (Academy of Letters), dormant for seventeen years.[7] Its first meeting was held on the very morrow of the day on



ZAYR,

SORGE-SPEL.

AF

HERR DE VOLTAIRE,

Upförd i Riks-Salen, för

KONGL. HUSET,

På HANS MAJ:TS VÅR ALLERNÅDIGSTE

KONUNGS

Höga Födelse-Dag, den 24 Januarii 1774.

CERTAMEN · LITERAR · CONSTIT ·

MDCCLIII ·

ÖFVERSÄTTNING.

STOCKHOLM,

Tr. hos H. FOUGT, R. af K. W. O. och K:gl. Boktr.

Fig. 2. Flyleaf of the printed text of Zayr *("Zaire"), "Tragedy by Herr de Voltaire, Performed in the Hall of State, before the Royal Family, on His Majesty our Most Gracious KING's Exalted Birthday; the 24 January 1774". Stockholm 1774.*

which Gustaf had realized his great plan for an opera with the first night of *Thetis och Pelée*. Only three out of her academy's five surviving members were able to attend; but ten new ones were elected during the course of the year. All were poets or university men; none was merely a gentleman—which, however, does not mean the poet Kellgren was wrong, in his little verse satire *Fåglarnas vitterhets-akademi* ("The Birds' Academy of Letters"), to poke fun at these "literary owls". Young Kellgren was an opportunist determined to get on, who realized that a little persiflage at the expense of the dowager queen's academy would not be ill-received in the Royal Palace.

Within her academy, where she held absolute sway, the queen dowager, like her son, was working to develop both the Swedish

language and Swedish theatre. In the first of these two respects she imposed on it certain major tasks of a linguistic-theoretical and critical-aesthetic nature—a serious scientific project, such as had no equivalent in the king's programme. Under the second head she showed her disapproval of his lopsided support for opera, wishing for her part to champion the spoken drama. The secretary of her academy was Eric af Sotberg; and from the interesting preface to his version of Voltaire's *Zayr* (pr. 1774) it transpires that the academy wished for nothing less than to "relay the foundations of a Swedish didactic theatre of manners". Sotberg says, too, that the queen had ordered its members to translate foreign plays; adding that drama, as a genre, was currently struggling to survive in the face of prejudice. By 'prejudice' Sotberg must have meant, on the one hand, the attitude toward theatre prevailing at the king's court; but also, on the other, the last decade's general and vehement prejudice against all public spectacles. At the *Vitterhetsakademin's* second meeting in 1773 it selected some competition topics. Within the field of poetics the theme chosen was "Whether plays benefit a society by improving the language and manners, or the reverse?". It had been hoped to produce one or two effective rebuttals of the resistance so prejudicial to all theatrical art. But that the "improvement of the language" theme, almost impossible to make poetry of, had also been selected shows that the Vitterhetsakademi had its sights aimed not merely at the stage's more long-standing enemies.

Further, Sotberg mentions that several members had devoted themselves to the task, imposed from above, of translating plays, but that "hindrances and the duties of their office", coming between, had put an end to it. Besides *Zayr*, according to the Academy's minutes, what had been produced was only a translation of Racine's *Britannicus* by the elderly Joachim Lilliestråle, who, incidentally, would continue to produce translations of plays seldom or never printed. Furthermore, the queen's librarian Ristell was so unfortunate as to have simultaneously worked up a translation of the same Voltaire drama as the one Sotberg was working on—a collision which perhaps shows how great was the enthusiasm for theatre also prevailing in the queen's circles.

She had a special purpose in mind for Sotberg's *Zayr* (Fig. 2). It was to be staged as a surprise for the king on his birthday, January 24, 1774, the venue being none less than the Hall of State. The actors were courtiers, one part being taken by Duke Karl. The queen was hoping that this production would stimulate Gustaf to take an interest

in spoken Swedish-language drama. First, Gyllenborg read out a prologue written at the queen's behest, in which he has Melpemone, the Muse of Tragedy, address some exhortatory words to the king. In his diary for December 8, 1772, Fischerström, Gyllenborg's *protégé,* sums up this prologue's tendency:

> The purpose of the prologue is to encourage the king, instead of his many operas, to also give us comedies and tragedies. (p.121)

Actually, the views of mother and son did not diverge all that much, or else any such divergence had been accentuated by various circumstances. The fact—often overlooked—is that the king, before or at the same time as he had been struck by his idea for a national opera—had himself originally dreamt of creating a body of Swedish-language plays. Which is hardly surprising. Not very musical himself, he can have taken little pleasure in operatic music. Further, it had been Petter Stenborg's public success with two comedies at the Bollhus in March 1772 that had provided the exterior stimulus for his determination to promote theatre. "First impulse to found a Swedish opera", he had noted, ex post facto, on Stenborg's application.

As early as March 5, the king, via Gjörwell, had "commanded" the poet Olof Bergklint to write a tragedy for his coronation (Svanfeldt, p. 609). Can it have been the rehearsals of Stenborg's French comedies, which Gustaf had attended, that had inspired the idea? Or should his jotting on the application perhaps be taken literally? Can the mere application have sufficed to unleash his project? Further, we know that he had originally intended to entrust the task of reviving Swedish theatre to the Utile Dulci society (ibid.).

In 1773, Bergklint's play, a historical drama about *Torkel Knutsson*, got no further than a couple of acts. Then the whole project capsized. In January of that year Anders Schönberg wrote to Jacob Lindblom expressing a hope that it would be Lindblom who would write the "tragedy His Majesty had hitherto fruitlessly desired" (Rodhe p. 18). Just then the king's most burning desire was to find a talent that could complete the big draft, worked up by himself in French, for a drama about Birger Jarl. And in the autumn of 1773 he finds his man—in the person of Gyllenborg, who is commissioned to put the play into verse.[8] But notwithstanding the favourable impression gained by king, court and press alike from Sotberg's *Zayr* of Swedish as a stage language, when *Birger Jarl* was put on in July 1774 no one dared go further than interspersing this original Swedish drama with divertissements, ballets and incidental music. Two years

would have to pass before the king repeated his experiment, this time with Johan Murberg's interpretation of Racine's *Athalie*.

Throughout the 1770s the spoken drama would be stingily treated. And though Bishop Wallenstråle, when he published his friend and fellowclergyman Jacob Wallenberg's drama *Susanna* after the latter's death, says the play had been due to "the most gracious encouragement that literature in general and more especially this branch of it enjoys from the throne", he feels forced to add:

> In a time when the pomp and noise of opera has captivated the nation and more effort is put into pleasing the eye and ear than the feelings, it is hardly to be hoped that dramas as plain and simple as this will have much success.

The operatic uproar was in fact drowning the less vociferous spoken drama. The king however did show a lively interest in various intermediate forms: *Singspiele*, tragedies interspersed with choruses, *opéra-comiques*, etc. Indeed, brought up as he was on French tragedies. such abstention from theatre pure and simple must have been something of a self-sacrifice. So reliable a source as Nils von Rosenstein assures us that such was the case. In his funeral oration of 1809 over C.B. Zibet, the former director of the theatre, he says of the king's interest in opera:

> Borne up on a lively love for this kind of pleasure, the king, even so, in limiting himself to the lyric stage, sacrificed his own personal inclination, postponing comedy and tragedy against a time when the language and literature should have made greater progress. (p. 4)

But to return to the dowager queen. Though she never got a chance to found a "didactic Swedish theatre of manners", she continued to support serious drama. In this she was supported by Carl Fr. Scheffer, a Councillor of State and her academy's most senior and eminent member. And most of what would be produced in this line during the 1770s was in one way or another connected with one or other of these personages. As we've seen, two members, Lilliestråle and Manderström, and the librarian Ristell, another of Scheffer's *protégés*, were all hard at work. And when Erik Brander-Skjöldebrand published his tragedy *Aslög* in 1775, he provided it with a most flattering dedication to the queen. A covert appeal to be allowed to join her academy, it does seem as if Skjöldebrand was concerned to do something for her reputation: though Gustaf was now occupying the centre of the stage, her cultural achievements were not to be forgotten. Skjöldebrand says his drama is not intended as

an offering worthy of the supreme and best qualified judge (*domarinna*) of literary works or of the great queen whom Sweden in all humility has most to thank for its progress in taste and the loveliest sciences; etc.

Carl Scheffer also protected the young Isac af Darelli and made sure this twenty-year-old writer's translation of Voltaire's *Alzir* was introduced into court circles.[9]

So authentic and detailed a genre painting from that period is Darelli's account of the matter, his autobiographical manuscript deserves to be printed in its entirety.[10] He was graciously permitted to read his translation aloud to a breathlessly listening group of eminent persons in the house of His Excellency, Gustaf Adolf Hiärne. When he had done, Count Sten Piper—marshal of the dowager queen's court and her personal secretary, and himself a member of the Vitterhetsakademien and a translator—came up to him, and, says Darelli

made me a proposition that I join the dowager queen's court, in which case he, as its first marshal, promised me his protection and swift promotion. I explained to him the reasons for my decision to devote myself exclusively to agriculture, and spoke with him at length.

But he gave Piper a copy of the drama, which Piper read aloud to the queen. What happened afterwards Darelli does not relate, for at that point his account, more's the pity, breaks off. All we know is that his *Alzir* appeared in print, in 1778.

To believe Darelli, Piper acted as a fully-fledged talent scout. And much else goes to show that both king and the queen dowager were not merely hunting around for literary talents, but in two instances actually competed to get hold of one. Of all Swedish poets at that time, Gyllenborg had the biggest name. A passage in his autobiography *Mitt Leverne* ("My Life") depicts for us the moment when the king captured him, apparently unaware of what was actually going on, right in the midst of the queen's circle. The episode occurred in early 1773. First, the elderly poet mentions that during Gustaf's reign, so favourable to literature, Queen Lovisa Ulrika had nonetheless been the first to recognize him:

With the most positive words of praise I was summoned to become a member of the Vitterhetsakademi, into which she had breathed new life, and an even more flattering summons introduced me into her private society. One evening, while visiting the dowager queen, the king approached me after I had begun reading a work, was so good as to ask me to begin all over again, listened to this repetition and said he found pleasure in it. That same evening, taking his leave, he expressed the most lively sentiments of friendship for me and said I

should visit him the following evening. Once a guest at his literary suppers, I remained so for several years to come. (p.116).

We can supplement Gyllenborg's account. He wrote his first dramatic work in 1773, "exhorted thereto when I entered the Vitterhetsakademien, by its then eminent protectress."[11] She proposed a theme she found suitable for the former satirist, and which he worked up as the verse comedy *Det Nya Herrskapet* ("The New Master and Mistress", sometimes called *Fruntimmersväldet*, a title perhaps familiarly translateable as "A Monstrous Regiment of Women"). Yet even when Gyllenborg had penned the prologue to Sotberg's *Zayr* we've seen he was already one of the king's dramatists. The man who in his prologue recommended to Gustaf that he also take an interest in the prose drama ("to support new kinds of plays") must simultaneously have had his head full of his own lyrics for his own already completed operatic divertissement *Sveas Högtid*.

The royal patrons' rivalry is still more obvious in the case of Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna. This young poet, secretary at the Viennese legation, was a gentleman of the chamber to the dowager queen. That she had her eyes on him is evident from a letter sent him by his former private tutor, Olof Bergklint, in March 1774, just before he left Vienna:

In what concerns yourself, you must know that for her part the dowager queen would be happy to see you come home, the more so as she is expecting to have you make up operas, tragedies and God knows what else, in the twinkling of an eye, and compel you to be a poet and author *par force*; and do you realise what your fate would be then? Well, the same as Sotberg's, who has versified Zaïre and has had to put up with so much tedious scrutiny and so many caprices.[12]

The queen's hopes were dashed. Obviously inspired by what he'd heard from home about a Swedish theatre in *statu nascendi*, Oxenstierna, while still in Vienna, had started work on an opera and had nurtured other theatrical plans. No sooner had he come home than the king grabbed him. From Gripsholm he wrote to his mother:

Le jeune Comte Oxenstierna, qui est revenu de Vienne, se destinant à la carriere ministérielle et, par conséquant, attaché au comptoir du Président de la Chancellerie, ne pourra pas exercer, avec l'assiduité qu'il devrait, la place qu'il a l'honneur d'occuper à la Cour de ma chère Mère. Je me suis chargé de le dédommager des appointementes qu'il aurait d'Elle, si Elle me permet de le prendre auprès de moi en qualité de mon chambellan, c'est dont j'ose La supplier très humblement.[13]

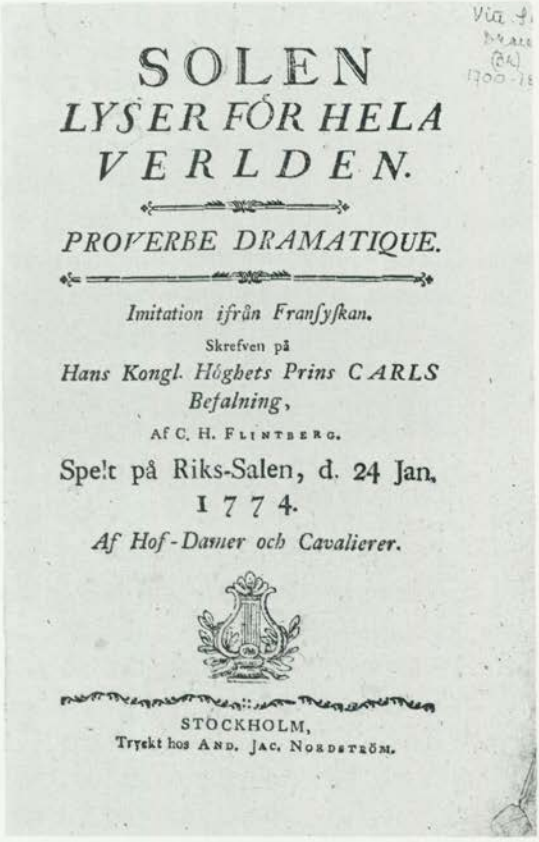
The job at the Chancelry was only a pretext; we have Oxenstierna's own word for it that in practise it turned out to be nominal. Instead, he was obliged to follow the king's ambulant court, busily writing plays and divertissements to entertain it. And the dowager queen got another gentleman of the chamber, by name Silfversparre, who is not known to have had any literary talents.[14]

At the end of the solemn performance of Sotberg's translation of Voltaire's *Zayr* on Gustaf's birthday in 1774, the mood was lightened with a *proverbe dramatique* entitled *Solen lyser för hela världen* ("The Sun Shines on the Whole World"), by C. H. Flintberg and—according to the title page—"written at the command of His Royal Highness Prince Carl" (Fig. 3). It was the mother who was congratulating her son with a serious drama, the brother his brother with a gay postlude. As far as we know, this was the first time Duke Karl supported a playwright.

Duke Karl would never be so important to the theatre as his mother or brother; but when, in 1774, he married the gifted and energetic Charlotta, his court, too, began to show ambitions in that direction. Some pieces for the stage, most of them admittedly small-scale, were dedicated to him: by J. G. Oxenstierna in 1776, by J. H. Kellgren in 1781, by D. G. Björn in 1785, and, in 1776 by a certain Anna Maria Malmstedt, known to posterity as the witty satirical poet Mrs Lenngren. During the 1770s she would become perhaps the most brilliant stage translator of them all. Forgotten as she usually is by historians of theatre—Levertin, for instance, only gives her a passing mention—I shall here dwell at some length on her contributions.

Her first work for the stage was a Swedish version of Marmontel's *Lucile*, solemnly premiered in June 1776. The printed text is dedicated in elegant verse to Duchess Charlotta. This dedicatory poem tells us that the translation has been made at "the Duke's express desire". Though the initiative would thus seem to have been his, we know nothing more about how his court had come into contact with the 21-year-old Uppsala writer.

In her preface Mamsell Malmstedt proudly declares that the piece she presents here is the first *opéra-comique* in Swedish. The date has not hitherto been remarked by literary historians. True, Queen Lovisa Ulrika's French troupe had put on *opéras-comiques*—in French during the 1760s. But now a larger public was to make the acquaintance of this charming but undemanding genre, where scenes of spoken dialogue alternate with sung passages—what we should call musical



SOLEN
LYSER FÖR HELA
VERLDEN.

PROVERBE DRAMATIQUE.

Imitation ifrån Franſyſkan.

Skrefven på
Hans Kongl. Höghets Prins CARLS
Befalning,
Af C. H. FLINTBERG.

Spelt på Riks-Salen, d. 24 Jan.
1774.
Af Hof-Damer och Cavalierer.

STOCKHOLM,
Tryckt hos AND. JAC. NORDSTRÖM.

Fig. 3. Flyleaf of the printed text of Solen lyser för hela världen *("The Sun Shines for the Whole World"). "Proverbe dramatique. Imitated from the French. Written at his Royal Highness' Prince Carl's command. By C. H. Flintberg. Played in the Hall of State, the 24 Jan. 1774. By Ladies of the Court and Cavaliers." Stockholm 1774.*

comedy, or operetta—as indeed it was sometimes called even in the eighteenth century—in Swedish.[15] In his notes, Gösta Ehrensvärd, head of the theatre, confirms Mamsell Malmstedt's claim to priority, saying that this evening "a new sort of Swedish spectacle, an opéra-comique", was performed. And confirms that it was a great success: "never has any play been given such a reception". He also reports that what people particularly liked about the operetta was its greater fidelity to reality than operas, whose content as a rule was mythological. "People seemed to prefer to see human adventures to those of the gods", Ehrensvärd writes (p. 40 et seq.). Gjörwell, in a letter to Patrik Alströmer, takes the same view:

Lucile has been played to great applause; and Mamsell Malmstedt promises much; it is a different kind of amusement to see performed the adventures of people rather than of gods.[16]

In a letter concerning her remuneration the promising mamsell tells us that the duchess has rewarded her dedication with a "precious gold watch", and the king with a gold medal. Probably these gifts met the same fate as Gyllenborg in his *Mitt leverne* tells us he accorded to the gold snuffbox he'd been given for his *Birger Jarl*, and which he, "at the first opportunity, had sold off for two hundred riksdalers" (p. 135). A gold snuffbox was the king's usual fee for a theatrical work. Playwrights could also be recompensed with benefit performances.

Her success with *Lucile* spurred Mamsell Malmstedt to renewed efforts. According to a news item in the Gothenburg paper *Hwad Nytt? Hwad Nytt?* in November 1776, she was just then working on two translations: of Voltaire's *Mahomet* and Marmontel's *Zemire och Azor*. A varied diet: on the one hand a grand-scale, famous and strongly tendentious—i.e. anti-clerical and antireligious—drama; on the other, a harmless little *opéra-comique*. In all probability she intended them for two different patrons. The tragedy, which had the further merit of being the work of the dowager queen's admired Voltaire, must have been intended for her court or academy. What became of it, or whether it was even finished, we do not know. Sweden offered a problematic market for more radical Enlightenment products, and the taste of the day was hardly favourable to serious drama. As for the gay operetta, it must have been meant for the king's or the duke's court. And indeed it was the king who had it staged.

Could the other, more serious work have been addressed to the dowager queen? We know that the translator had contacted her in 1777. In a letter of June of that year she relates that the queen "has most graciously commissioned me to translate something by Ovid". And just then Swedish translations of Ovid were on the Vitterhetsakademien's programme. Mamsell Malmstedt translated a heroïd, published in 1778.

In February that year we find her boldly and busily seeking out new patrons among the royal family. She writes to Fredrik Sparre, the court chancellor who, as such, was in practice minister of culture. Together with her missive she sends him

a little attempt in those exercises whose tyros possess in Herr Baron and Court Chancellor a respected protector. (SS 2 p. 455)

Fig. 4. Act III, sc. 6 from Zemire och Azor, *a comedy ballet with songs in four acts by Grétry, libretto by Marmontel, translated by Anna Maria Malmstedt (Lenngren). First performed on July 22 1778 at Drottningholm. In a magic mirror Azor, a Persian prince who has been turned into a monster with a lion's head, is showing Zemire a portrait of her father and sisters. Over his leonine apparition Azor is wearing a pale blue mantel, fringed with silver. Zemire's dress is green with a greyish pink bodice, she wears a lace veil with plumes in her coiffure. At the première Zemire was sung by Marie Louise Baptiste (Marcadet), Azor by Christofer Karsten. Oil on canvas by P. Hillerström. DTM.*

She asks him to present her attempt to the king and queen, the dukes and the duchess. It has been surmised, unquestionably correctly, that this "attempt" refers to her translation of *Zemire och Azor*, which was now ready and which five months later would be performed under the aegis of the king, on no less splendiferous an occasion than the queen's nameday—Magdalena Day in the Swedish calendar (Fig. 4). Sparre had firmly and efficiently supported his supplicant. And when the work appeared in the bookshops in October—in a charmingly printed edition which can only have been paid for by some higher authority—it was dedicated, in elegant verse, to the Queen Magdalena. By now Anna Maria Malmstedt would have been entitled to regard herself as one of the royal family's regular suppliers of stage works.

Zemire och Azor's brilliant first-night had been preceded by elaborate preparations—among them the commissioning of a prologue. A promising young poet had been engaged who had no greater desire than to be attached to the royal theatres. He carried out his task swiftly and well, and his original verses were printed in company with his more well-established colleague's translation. Such was the beginning of Anna Maria Malmstedt's and Johan Henrik Kellgren's long collaboration.

Mamsell Malmstedt had a new translation ready for the queen's next name-day: of *Arsène*, a "*féeriecomédie*". For once she had abandoned her favourite author Marmontel for an original work by another Frenchman, Favart. According to a news item in *Stockholms Posten* for July 22, 1779, *Arsène* was already in the bookshops on the day of the première.

Though Mamsell Malmstedt translated one more play for the theatre, Marmontel's *Silvain*, it would not be put on until 1791; but thereafter would appear quite often in the repertoire. We do not know for certain when she had translated it, but it would appear to have been at the same time as the others. Actually we do not need to speculate. In his speech in memory of Anna Maria Lenngren, Franzén says that *Zemire och Azor* were followed by *Arsène* and *Silvain*.[17] Only part of the text, a copy of the sung passages, is extant. Which is a pity, for the translation is both natural and subtle.

Altogether, Mamsell Malmstedt is an admirable translator. A German researcher has captured her qualities in this line. In his essay on *Joseph Martin Kraus und die Gustavianische Oper*, Richard Engländer writes as follows:

Die literarische Begabung äussert sich in der geistreichen Wortprägung, in der Ungebundenheit gegenüber dem Original, in der Leichtigkeit des Stils, in der

klaren Einsicht von dem Unterschied der Wortbedeutung und des Wortschatzes im Französischen, das sie völlig beherrscht, und im Schwedischen (p.39)

Her translations were in fact a success, and frequently played both in Stockholm and in the provinces.[18] The press praised them to the skies: among others the poet and radical publicist Thorild in his newspaper *Den Nye Granskaren* 1784. Pehr Hilleström painted no fewer than ten paintings of scenes from "her" plays.[19] She was also elected a member of various literary societies, among them Utile Dulci. In 1778–79 the series *Kongl. Svenska Teatren* was published, a collection of the plays which had been put on and a monument of all this interest in theatre. Before the series was broken off, Mamsell Malmstedt's two first translations had appeared in it.

She even attained to a certain European fame. In 1790 the dramatist Ristell, who for certain misdemeanours had had to shake the dust of Sweden off his feet, published a work in English, translated the same year into French, on the Swedish court. There she is described as "a lady of eminent literary merit". And in a rare little anonymous pamphlet, *Chronographie des schwedischen Nationaltheaters*, published in 1779 at Stralsund in Swedish Pomerania, she is called a lady "von vielem Geschmack und eben so vielen Anlagen". C. W. Lüdeke's well-known *Allgemeines Schwedisches Gelehrsamkeits-Archiv* for 1785 characterizes her *Lucile* translation as *"rein, fliessend und angenehm"*—a verdict stemming from the otherwise caustic Carl Stridsberg (Leux-Henschen p. 105 etc).

It was only during the seventies that Mamsell Malmstedt worked for the theatre. That she then ceased to do so may be connected with her marriage in November 1780; thereafter she, on the whole, laid down her pen for a long time to come. Another reason may have been a falling-off in interest in theatre. As early as November 1775 we find the newspaper *Dagligt Allehanda* lamenting the "sudden falling off in taste for theatre", and later on we come across more remarks of the same kind. The fate of *Silvain* is presumably but one symptom of its dwindling popularity.

Mamsell Malmstedt's case shows clearly how theatre, under Gustaf III, was the highroad to success. Thalia had become identical with Fortuna. Gustaf was so delighted with the way his birthday was celebrated in 1774 that he not merely gave Gyllenborg a diamond ring, worth 200 ducats, for his *Zayr*, but granted the abovementioned

C. H. Flintberg, who had written the little postlude, the title of "court poet" with a pension of 1,800 dalers and free quarters in the Ekeblad house (Levertin p. 21). Though Flintberg was an unknown talent, a genius for comedy was felt to be discernible in his nice little bagatelle. Both the cash and the accommodation must have been welcome. Flintberg's normal address was the debtor's gaol.

Johan Murberg was a forty-year-old grammar school teacher of no renown, at Gävle, when

> some happy efforts in verse which friendship had brought to Gustaf III's notice brought him a commission to transfer one of Racine's masterpieces to the Swedish stage,

as Gustaf af Wetterstedt, Murberg's successor in the Swedish Academy, relates in his inaugural speech in memory of his predecessor (p. 109). Murberg's translation of *Athalie*, of 1776, instantly made him a prominent literary personage. Alas, he would reap no more literary laurels, despite his election to the Swedish Academy in 1787. What he did become, within the framework of the Vitterhetsakademin, was an excellent cultural historian.

Wilhelm von Rosenheim's destiny, too, is typical of the age. While still an undergraduate, some of his verses were accepted in 1774 by *Upsala Stads veckotidning*. In December of that year Gjörwell wrote to Sparre, recommending the young man for royal patronage. And so it turned out: next year Rosenheim was made a page of the chamber, with theatrical work as his whole-time occupation. Later the king would honour him with the totally undeserved sobriquet "the Swedish Racine" (Wieselgren).

In a letter home to his father, in January 1774, Carl Fredrik Mennander gives us a good picture of the age. There he tells him about his 22 year-old room-mate, Gudmund Jöran Adlerbeth and his translation—or rather, free reworking—of Racine's *Iphigénie*.

> The King has been infinitely gracious to him, and Adlerbeth has already thrice had the honour to take his play up to the King in the evenings, where he has also twice supped at the King's own table. Amusing, how little circumstances can contribute to one's good fortune. Adlerbeth is already known to everyone in the great world.

That the young man should have been allowed to sup at the king's own table was a "special distinction" (Landen, p. 12).

"Little circumstances can contribute to one's good fortune"—many were hoping for such little circumstances to come their way. Olof Kexél, in company with his mistress, the fifteen-year-old opera dancer

Sophie Holmstedt, carried out a smart *coup*. Being himself employed at the theatre, he translated plays in her name.[20] The exiguous couple's greatest success was with a translation of a brand-new French comedy called *Slav-handlaren i Smyrna* ("The Smyrna Slavetrader" 1774). It was printed with a dedication to the king and a foreword in which Mamsell Holmstedt takes care to stress her part *qua* young feminine debutant. To support this fiction, Johan Simmingsköld, always his friends' friend, published in Gjörwell's *Samlaren* (1774-09-10) a "Verse to mademoiselle Sophie Holmstedt on the occasion of her translation of *Le Marchand de Smirne*". He had already contributed a brazen puff to *Hwad Nytt? Hwad Nytt?*, praising the translation as virtually superior to the original (nr. 196–197). "This proves that the Swedish language is as flexible for the theatre as any other language in the whole world." And as a pay-off line: "May her intention to serve be her sex's best epitaph". One can't help wondering what Mamsell Malmstedt's feelings were when she read this premption of her having the honour to have been the first woman to work for the theatre at this time.

NOTES

1. This study is largely based on a section in the essay "Den vittra mamsell Malmstedt" in my book *1700-tal*, 1963. That slightly obscure enquiry not having been noticed by theatrical research, I am grateful for this chance to present it, rearranged and in a more befitting context. Since writing it a quarter of a century ago I have also found much to add.
2. Gustaf III's portrait as a man of the theatre has been drawn by several pens. Among other books on this subject are two, strangely enough with the same title: *Gustaf III som dramatisk författare. Litteraturhistorisk studie*, published at a ten-vear interval by A. E. Friedlander (1884) and O. Levertin (1894). Two more good but little recognized articles deserve mention: Nils Erdmann's "En komedi och ett porträtt" (*Nordisk Tidskrift* 1905, pp. 547–560; concerns the young crown prince's theatrical interests) and Olle Holmberg's *"En kunglig dramatiker"* (Dagens Nyheter 1953-08-28).
3. G. J. Ehrensvärd, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof 1*, ed. 1877, the chapter entitled "Anteckningar om svenska teaterns uppkomst" (pp. 200–223).
4. For ecclesiastical resistance to theatre during the 1760s, see M. v. Platen, "Djävulens bländverk: Om motstånd mot teatern i gamla tiders Sverige" s. 65 et seq. and passim.

   Of Ehrensvärd's source value Bengt Hildebrand writes in his article about him in *SBL 12* that he "was an sharp observant, honest and passionately truthful observer"; and, concerning his memoirs: "Their source value is great" (p. 465). There is considerable evidence for the truth of Ehrensvärd's criticism of the theatre in Adolf Fredrik's time. A letter to Anders Berch's *Posten* in 1768 laments "heartily ... that there is no Swedish theatre in Stockholm nor any competent actors" (no. 10). After an evening at the theatre on Nov. 21, 1769, J. G. Oxenstierna's diary is no less critical than Ehrensvärd (Oxenstierna p. 63). A letter printed in *Dagligt Allehanda* (29 Jan, 1770) complains of the state of affairs in the theatre and demands that the government shall intervene. "As long as the government does not make itself responsible for the welfare of Swedish theatre (*NB. if there is to be any),* does not encourage learned and virtuous young persons of both sexes (SIC!) ... we cannot expect Swedish

theatre to be what it could be, but on account of its poverty and wretched rôle-players (sic) will have to move about hither and thither from one unsuitable place to another, until it vanishes altogether" (quoted from Flodmark p. 36). Carl Stenborg says in his "Speech held before His Majesty the King at the opening of the Swedish theatre at the Bollhus in Stockholm, March 11, 1772": "Swedish theatre will soon grow up from its nothingness [my ital.], if it can draw its strength from Your Majesty's grace and favour" (*Allmänna Tidningar. År 1772. Förra Delen*, col. 566). See also A. Sahlstedt 1775 p. 26. We should also bear in mind Lovisa Ulrika's withering verdicts on Swedish theatre and music in her letters home to her German relatives.

4 B. Fogelmarck, p. 98.

5. Of these three courtiers' activities Gjörwell writes to J. J. Björnståhl on Nov. 16, 1773: "Further, work is being done on new operas by the Court Marshal Baron Manderström, by Baron Ehrensvärd gentleman-of-the-chamber and by Herr Royal Secretary Zibeth, entitled: Silvie, Atis och Camilla, La Reine de Golconde" (Bergianska avskriftssamlingen/MSS collection XVI p. 506).

   This survey is based on these works and also on the following: Fischerström, *En gustaviansk dagbok*, passim,; *En Stockholmskrönika ur C.C. Gjörwells brev* p. 47 et seq.,; Hultin, G. F. Creutz p. 288; Levertin's doctoral thesis.

6. Concerning this measure and its motivation, see Svanfeldt's thesis, p. 596 et seq.

7. The history of Vitterhetsakademin has been sketched by H. Schück not only in his major historical reviews both of it and of the Swedish Academy, but also in the introduction to *Kungl. Vitterhetsakademiens dagbok 1773–1782*. Certain other items of information included later have been taken from this source.

8. See the quotation from Gjörwell's letter to Lagerbring 1774, above.

9. It is much to be desired that someone shall undertake an enquiry into Carl Scheffer as a cultural patron, more especially of theatre and literature. There is any amount of material. See also Bolin's essay.

10. J. af Darelli's autobiography is to be found in the Wängsjöberg Archive (Royal Library).

11. Gyllenborg, *Theater-Stycken* p. 235.

12. Quoted from Lamm, p. 271

13. *Gustav III:s och Lovisa Ulrikas brevväxling 2*, p. 408 et seq.

14. In the introduction to the published minutes Schück has pointed out how the dowager queen could use the *Vitterhetsakademin* to fire off sarcasms against the king. He points more especially to the minutes for Feb. 14, 1777, where we read:

    "As the subject for a competition and a prize for the present year, Her Majesty was most graciously pleased to suggest and desire the question answered, with good reasons and examples: Whether such persons as are either blessed with singular good fortune or are less conscientious in the means they use to implement great works, deserve the name of great men?"

    Schück's comment reads: "In all probability the prize-topic proposed by the queen was aimed at Gustaf III, with whom she was just then at loggerheads" (p. XIV). It may be added that one of the two topics for a poem is aimed at the same target: "Fable, with the moral: Honesty is the best policy".

15. On this genre, see Breitholtz 1947 p. 972 et seq., 1016.

    Only one other writer seems to compete with Mamsell Malmstedt for priority. In 1776, A. F. Ristell, too, had published an *opéra-comique* called *Konung Gustaf Adolfs Jagt* ("King Gustavus Adolphus' Hunt"), This play, to music by Carl Stenborg, was a free imitation of a French musical comedy; thus to half its extent a Swedish original. In his dedication to Carl von Fersen, who had encouraged him to undertake it, Ristell calls his play "the first of its kind in the Swedish language"! To decide between the two authors' claims, Ristell's or Anna Maria Malmstedt's, is impossible. At all events *Lucile* was the first *opéra-comique* to be produced; Ristell's play was not staged until 1777; and it is on the former that the Swedish public seems to have based its expectations. Cf. what is said of *Lucile* by Ehrensvärd, further on in my text, and the following statement by J. Simmingskjöld in *Hwad Nytt?*:

    The public's pleasure in the production of this play was so much the greater as it was the first comedy it has seen since the establishment of the Royal Opera. (1776: 157–158).

    That same year Carl Stenborg translated another play in the same genre. The title of the MSS reads: *Alexis. Opera comique. Översättning från fransyskan av C. Stenborg 1776* (according to Flodmark p. 116). But it did not have its first night until May 1777 (*Dagligt Allehanda* 12/5).

16. Gjörwell 1920 p. 170 (July 1776).

17. Kexél's *Kongl. Svenska Theaterns Almanach För Året 1783* includes among Malmstedt's works "Silvain, which has not yet been produced".
18. For the production of Mamsell Malmstedt's plays, see also Breitholtz 1940.
19. These paintings are to be found in the Cederblom's catalogue in her *P. Hilleström som kulturskildrare.*
20. See Gjörwell's *En Stockholmskrönika* p. 101 et seq. According to Klemming in his *Sveriges dramatiska litteratur*, p. 102, Kexél was openly named as the translator in Holmberg's (the publisher's) later lists.

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TOURNAMENTS AND CAROUSELS IN THE GUSTAVIAN ERA

Magnus Olausson

THE TOURNAMENTS AND carousels of the Gustavian era represent a very special form of dramatic activity, in particular those arranged by Gustaf III himself, and it is the latter with which I shall be concerned here. They are remarkable in the sense that they do not immediately lend themselves to classification. They can be regarded neither as pure theatre nor solely as physical training, but must be seen as a mixture of knightly exercises, drama, ballet, and music. As they increasingly became "total" works of art, Gustaf also found an outlet for his other favourite interests—architecture and picturesque gardening—in the design of the scenography. And indeed this is the reason for my involvement with the subject, stemming from work on my thesis on the *jardin anglais* in Sweden. This paper is just an outline of a larger-scale study on Gustavian carousels on which I am working.

Gustaf III's interest in tournaments and carousels was no doubt sparked off in his childhood, as he browsed through the engraved volumes in Carl Gustaf Tessin's extensive library. A typical example is Basnage de Beauval's *Dissertation historique sur les duels et les ordres de chevalerie,* 1720. Well endowed with imagination as he was, Gustaf had no difficulty in travelling back into the past. His feelings on one of his first visits to Gripsholm are significant:

> I have been here since Tuesday, walking among my ancestors. I fancy I have returned to the time of Gustavus the First ...[1]

Gustaf must have been an avid reader of contemporary French literature, with its search for ideals and norms in medieval chivalry. One sometimes gets the impression that the aristocracy in pre-revolu-

Fig. 1. A suit of half-armour worn in Duke Karl's quadrille by Count Sten Lewenhaupt at the tournament on Adolf Fredrik's Square in 1777. It is made of sheet iron, painted black and gilded around the edges. The helmet crest is in the shape of a lion rampant. Royal Armoury.

tionary France sensed the impending disaster and were therefore more than happy to dream off into a remote age. In Sweden, too, the nobility were on the decline, and counts and barons competed to wed daughters of wealthy merchants. The archaic ideas informing Gustaf III's programme for the 1777 tournament were therefore no less loosely based in reality. According to the king, a revival of knightly exercises would

> maintain in the nobility the heroic spirit so necessary in an estate destined for the defence of the Realm.[2]

Veteres Revocavit Artes—"He revived the arts of old"—is the inscription on the medal for the 1777 tournament, and the programme is in the same vein:

> The exercise of the body has more influence on the mind than one would at first sight imagine,

the king wrote.[3] This was without doubt a conclusion drawn from theoretical study rather than practical experience, as the king himself had no great liking for sports. In line with this approach, Gustaf spoke out in favour of pure tournaments rather than over-elaborate carousels. However, the future proved the king to be mainly interested in these events as dramatic spectacles. It is therefore symptomatic that the first tourney was merely an intermezzo in a divertissement called "Queen Christina's Tournament", staged in March 1776 at the Royal Palace in Stockholm. The king's brothers, Duke Karl and Duke Fredrik Adolf, each commanded a quadrille of knights and the battle was fought on a raised stage in the middle of the Hall of the Queen's Life Guard. To create a realistic seventeenth-century atmosphere, period costumes had been borrowed from the royal wardrobe.[4] The use of historical stage properties on these occasions would later become common. Thus, for the next tournament, a variety of old armour was brought from the Arsenal to Ekolsund in August of the same year.[5] The knights, however, were given newly made armour. The king himself appeared in great splendour, in a gilded suit of armour, the Grand Star of the Order of the Seraphim on his cuirass, and crimson horse trappings adorned with crowns and trimmed in ermine. The knights' devices were composed by Carl Reinhold Berch and alluded to the emblematic figures on their shields (Fig. 2a). Gustaf's showed Hercules crushing the Hydra—a well-known allegory, often used by him to symbolize the 1772 *coup d'état*. The royal equerry, Munck, had chosen a sunflower illuminated by the sun's rays, with a memorable motto: "*Je dois tout au soleil*". "This device",

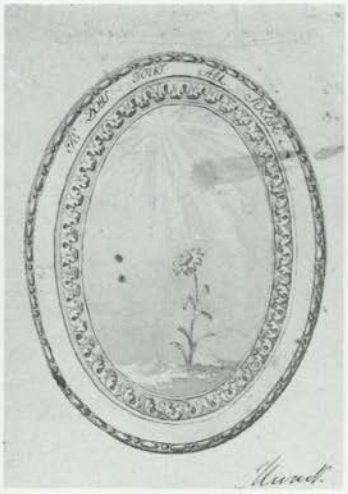

Fig. 2a. Proposed design for a shield for Adolf Fredrik Munck, the grand equerry, intended for the tournament at Ekolsund in 1776. Washed pencil drawing by L. Bolander. GLA.

Fig. 2b. Shield carried by Gustaf III during the tournament in Adolf Fredrik's Square—today's Mariatorg—in Stockholm 1777. Tinned and painted sheet metal. Royal Armoury.

Fig. 2c. Shield carried by Johan Christian Toll's page during the tournament in Adolf Fredrik's Square, 1777 (see also colour supplement). Tinned and painted sheet metal. Royal Armoury.

Ehrensvärd wrote in his diary, "used in Louis XIV's carousels and borrowed from them, was to characterize Munck's life . . ."[7]

The tourney, which lasted three days, was organized on a thematic basis, with various contests such as combat with and rapier, and tilting at Turk heads, the ring, and the quintain. At first, upon the duke of Södermanland being suddenly taken ill, it looked as if the event would have to be cancelled; but other courtiers were quickly summoned to play his part, and even the king had to stand in for one of his knights. With considerable difficulty the tournament went ahead. The king was undeterred by all these problems, and immediately started planning the following year's tourney. Since a court spectacle of this kind had greater propaganda value in the capital than in out-of-the-way Ekolsund, he decided to hold it in Stockholm. By holding the tourney in late May/early June 1777, he hoped to divert attention from his sensitive journey to St. Petersburg, a few days later.[8]

The tournament, held at Adolf Fredrik's Square (now Mariatorget), was a repeat of the one at Ekolsund the year before, except that this time twice as many people took part. Unused to competing in full armour, the knights of eighteenth-century Sweden were not required

Fig. 3. Plan of the tilting ground at today's Floras kulle *("Flora's hillock") at Drottningholm in connection with "Dianas Feast", in 1778. Pencil drawing by Gustaf III. UUB. (Cf. colour supplement.)*

to wear it on the days they were not engaged in man-to-man combat. Instead, interestingly, they wore so-called Burgundian or Spanish costume. The king thus used the opportunity to "try out" what was known as "The National Swedish costume", one of the reasons he gave typically being that it was "comfortable and advantageous". Moreover, he went on, it had been worn at the tournaments of the Vasa kings—a touch of historical romanticism that tied in well with the Vasa sheaf on the king's shield and the device "Mindful of our forefathers" (*Veterum non immemor parentum*)[9] (Fig. 2 b).

The other shields that had been used at Ekolsund were also repainted. The change in design was particularly striking in the case of the duke.[10] The admiral's insignia were replaced with "a cubic stone in the form of an altar with a black and white marble floor, and a royal crown on the stone". These symbols alluded to Duke Karl's being Grand Master of the Swedish freemasons and to his wish to be elevated to the rank of Salomo Vicarius. There was thus a clear link between the innocent jousting and the romantic crusader mentality cultivated in the higher grades of freemasonry. The same idea recurs on the shields of the other knights in the duke's quadrille: the set-square, the cubic stone, and the sun and moon—all common masonic emblems[11] (Fig. 2 c). Symptomatically, the duke's quadrille had gathered at the House of the National Grand Lodge on the island of

Riddarholmen, before they proceeded to the tilt-yard. Under the guise of a sport, they could now quite openly don full battledress in the style of the Knights Templars. This aspect has not previously been considered; but I shall have cause to return to it presently.

All the effort and imagination on the king's part that went into costumes and ceremonial soon transformed the knightly exercises into a grandiose dramatic spectacle, i.e. a carousel with a literary story. This was the case with the carousel out at Gripsholm, in November 1777, and with the *Fête de Diane* put on at Drottningholm in August 1778 (Fig. 3 and the colour supplement). In the latter—a mixture of jousting, ballet, and theatre—Diana appeared with a host of nymphs, fauns, and Scythian hunters.[12] Two of the participants, Duke Karl and Claes Rålamb, were so spellbound by the tale, that two days later they fought with lances, pistols, and rapiers on the forecourt of the Palace—an escapade that almost cost the duke his life: and all for the sake of a beautiful 16-year-old, the duchess's maid of honour, Miss Rosenstierna. The whole thing was witnessed by the entire court and by the duke's poor wife, the duchess of Södermanland. The likes of this had not been seen for over 300 years, one of the king's chamberlains observed.[13]

The following year, 1779, a carousel was again staged at Drottningholm—this time using a story derived from the Amadis novel: *La Prise de la Roche Galtare.*[14] The basic theme of *liberation*, of course, lent itself ideally to combat man against man. The lady to be freed was Briolanie, queen of Sobradisse (played by the duchess of Södermanland), who was held captive inside a castle erected on the slope above the Djurgården Common.[15] The knight who finally, after he had fought on horseback, resisted the spell of the nymphs, battled against Furies, and even danced a ballet to music from Gluck's *Armide*, succeeded in rescuing the poor queen was Amadis de Gaule (i.e. Duke Fredrik Adolf).

The story had been put together by the king: but the poet Oxenstierna, who put the divertissement into verse, regarded it as a hotchpotch of all manner of oddities.[16] The French *chargé d'affaires,* Chevalier de Saint-Croix, informed the French foreign minister, the Comte de Vergennes, that this carousel was not only an anachronism: in a country as poor as Sweden, it was also a waste of money, especially as the Swedes were accepting subsidies from France.[17] The king cannot have been unaware of this; for he dispatched senator Carl Fredrik Scheffer to tell Saint-Croix that most of the equipment had already been used before at previous court festivities. Later Gustaf hastened to

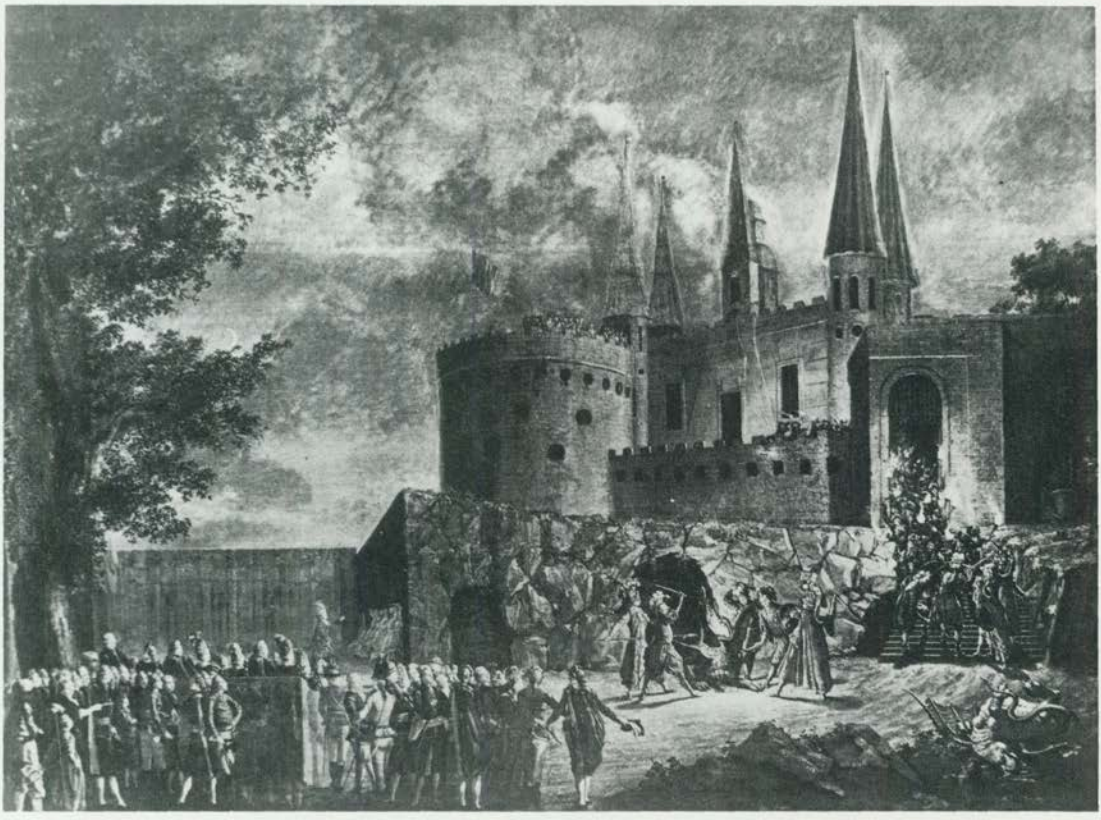

Fig. 4. La Prise de la Roche Galtare *("The Conquest of the Galtare Rock"). A tournament at Drottningholm in 1779, designed by Gustaf III with verses by J. G. Oxenstierna and La Bourdonnière. The knight Amadis (Duke Fredrik Adolf) and his entourage are forcing their way into the castle to liberate Queen Briolanie. In the centre Espladian (Gustaf III), son of Amadis, is fighting the fire-breathing dragon that guards the mediaeval castle* (La Roche Galtare)*, erected on Flora's hillock in Drottningholm Park. Oil on canvas by P. Hilleström. DTM.*

repeat the same thing himself, and there is no denying that what he said was true.[18] Not only were costumes and properties used taken from the king's own dramatic performances and tournaments, as his inventory shows, but even items used in Karl XI's carousel in 1672 were again pressed into service.[19] It may be noted in passing that this worked both ways. Several "Burgundian" costumes from the 1777 tournament, for example, were also used in the play *Gustaf Adolfs ädelmod*.[20]

It is highly probable that the king himself designed the scenery for *La Prise de la Roche Galtare* (Fig. 3). The resemblance between the

Fig. 5. Costume designs for Claes Rålamb and Bror Cederström or Adolf Fredrik Stackelberg in the drama of Angelika's liberation, the carousel which had to be cancelled in 1782. Watercolour pencil drawing by J. T. Sergel. KB.

Fig. 6. The 1785 tournament. Detail, showing the duke's quadrille and the grandstand for the court and diplomatic corps (left). Washed contour etching by M. R. Heland, after E. Martin. UUB.

mock fortress of painted planks and the famous *donjon* at the Temple, in Paris, is striking. This is no accident. We know that, for masonic reasons Gustaf was at the time exceedingly interested in the Temple. Through his favourite, Anton de Geer, he was secretly making a detailed study of the Order of the Knights Templars. It was of great importance to him to acquire all the secrets pertaining to the legend of the last Knights Templars, in order to have as many cards up his sleeve as possible, on the eve of negotiations concerning the election of his brother, Duke Karl, as the head of the Strict Observance. Using his brother as a front, he was trying to strengthen his position in foreign politics. Thus, for him, all this romantic passion for medieval chivalry had real political significance.[21] After a straightforward tournament at Drottningholm in 1781, another carousel on a literary theme was planned, to celebrate the queen's name-day on 22 July, 1782.[22] Again,

Fig. 7. Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm (1756–1813) as "Magister Tempi", i.e. the highest grade of the Templar masonry. Miniature by Anton Oechs, 1803. Swedish National Art Museums.

the theme of liberation recurred, the object of the knights' attention this time being *Angélique, Queen of Cathay* (not unexpectedly played by the duchess of Södermanland). The king had put together his script by freely combining Ariosto's and Boiardo's Roland epics (Fig. 5 and the colour supplement) and the result was such a colourful story that one of the people involved observed, "*on y fera tout except se jetter dans l'eau*"[23]. Monvel put the piece into verse, while Sergel was commissioned to design the new costumes needed.[24] No doubt it would have been a magnificent festive occasion, had it not been for the queen mother's death on 16 July, which led to the whole thing being called off. Three years later, however, in August 1785, the cancelled carousel was revived at Drottningholm, albeit in a new form: *L'Entreprise de la Forêt Enchantée* (Fig. 6). This time it was Jerusalem that was to be set free. The plot, according to Princess Sofia Albertina, was so involved, that without reading Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* it was impossible to understand a thing.[25] In this over-elaborate riot of colour, more than 300 people appeared as crusaders, saracens, tartars, fairies, and so on. From the very start, the event was plagued by misfortune. The first day had barely begun when it was interrupted by torrential rain. One of the participants described the devastation: "Chariots which were superb, but which were decorated with weter paints that flowed as fast as the rain, resumed their former natural colour. Gilded helmets turned black—in a word, all our splendour was destroyed."[26] The temporary hall set up for the spectacle in the

avenue, decorated with Gobelin tapestries from the *Histoire de Medée* series in imitation of the Versailles festivities, came to grief when the rain poured through the canvas roof and the spruce-branch walls.[27] Within a few days, however, Desprez (whose portrayal of the actual tournament we see here) and his men had managed to repair the damage, and the carousel could continue. But misfortune was soon to strike again. The duke of Södermanland injured his knee on the barrier and then went down with measles.[28] Worse still, the page von Platen died from an accidental pistol shot in his hip.[29]

Il vaudroit mieux encore que le Roi de Suède ne se permit pas de pareilles fantaisies,

was the comment of the French Ambassador, the Marquis de Pons, whose own daughter took part.[30] And, true enough, this was to be Gustaf's last carousel.

Though rather unique as such, the tournaments and carousels of the Gustavian era clearly reflect the craze for mediaeval chivalry and architecture that arose both in England and in pre-revolutionary France. Examples of this new appreciation put into practice not only include mock castles and revised versions of mediaeval ballads but also the appearance of the higher grades of freemasonry or Templar masonry (Fig. 7). Thus it is not surprising that the tournaments held during the reign of Gustaf III took place at a time when the king and his brother, the duke of Södermanland, were deeply involved in efforts to restore the Order of the Knights Templars. Sometimes interpreted as merely a ludicrous passion for chivalry, the carousels are in fact perhaps the most visible testimony to Gustaf III's obscure plans to use international freemasonry for his own political aims.

NOTES

1. Gustaf III to Duke Karl, dated 3rd August 1773, RA, K 368.
2. *Torner- och Riddarespel, Hållit af Konungen --- Maji 1777.* Stockholm. Printed in Kongl. Tryckeriet, p. 2.
3. Ibid., p. 3.
4. Fersen, F. A. von, *Historiska skrifter*, III. Stockholm 1869, p. 218.
5. *Excellensen Grefve A. F. Skjöldebrands Memoarer*, I. Stockholm 1903, p. 67.
6. Ehrensvärd, G. J., *Dagboksanteckningar* etc, I. Stockholm 1877, p. 129.
7. Ibid., p. 131.
8. RA, Scheffer MSS, Ulric Scheffer: "Journal du voyage du roi à Petersburg en 1777".
9. *Torner- och Riddarespel, Hållit af Konungen --- 1777,* pp. 10ff.
10. Ibid., pp. 17ff.
11. For example a shield with the sun and the moon is preserved in the Royal Armoury, Lrk 45/275. Others are to be found in the collections of the National Grand Lodge, Stockholm.
12. The story seems to have been created as a teamwork between the king, Count Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna and Baron Adolf Fredrik Barnekow, according to a courtier, Count Claës Julius Eke-

blad (cf. C. J. Ekeblad to Brita Horn, dated 28th April 1778, KB, MS Ep E 6: 1).

13. C. J. Ekeblad to B. Horn, dated 17th August 1778: "Mlle Rosenstierna en l'honneur de qui tout ce si se faisoit avoit la gloire et le plaisir de voir fasse pour soi ce qui n'avait été fait depuis 300 ans; car au moins y a-t-il si longtem/p/s depuis que deux chevalier se sont battu en champ clos et en presence de tout la cour pour une belle. La contenance de la Duchesse [Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta] étoit admirable, Mais Dieu sais ce qu'elle pensoit dans le fond de son cœur." (KB, MS Ep. E 6: 1.)
14. For a detailed description of the tournament performed in August 1779, see G. J. Ehrensvärd, op. cit., I, pp. 298 ff.
15. Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta wrote herself to Sophie Piper, dated 2nd September 1779: "Cette fete a eut le coup d'œuil fort brillant et le batiment a fait un effet charmant, mais je ne l'ai pas trouvée pourtans moin ennuyante puisque j'avois un rôle qui pouvait il inspiré l'ennuie. J'ai été separée de tous le monde restant enfermée dans le chateau jusqu'a la fin qu'on a bien voulut avoir pittie de moi et me deliveré a mon grand plaisir puisque ce n'est pas mon fort de rester longtemps tranquille surtout en de tels occasion." (RA, Stavsund papers, miscellaneous MSS, vol. 14.)
16. Diary of J. G. Oxenstierna, dated 24th August 1779, Archive of Värnberg.
17. Chev. Saint-Croix to Count de Vergennes, dated 31st August 1779, Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Corr. pol., Suède 1779, vol. 270.
18. Ibid., "M. le Cte Charles Scheffer se promenant avec moi dans le Parc, quelque moment avant le commencement du Tournois, me dit dans le cours de la conversation 'vous allés voir une fête qui vraiment est belle et très brillante et vous paroitra même au premier coup d'œil fort dispendieuse, mais la plupart des habits ont déjà servis dans d'autres occasions et serviront peut-etre encore, on les rajuste au besoin et le Roy peut à très peu de frais se procurer ces sortes d'amusements'. Je conjecturai que le Senateur Scheffer avoit ordre de me tenir ce langage, et je ne doutai plus qu'il n'eut en effet été concerté avec le Roi, lors qu'après le souper auquel il m'avoit fait inviter a la table des Dames du Palais dans le meme Sallon ou étoient celles de la famille Royale, ce Prince me prenat a l'écart me repeta lui meme les memes discours."
19. Ehrensvärd, G. J., op. cit., I, p. 301.
20. University Library of Uppsala, MS F 412. For instance the role of Magnus Brahe was performed by Claes Rålamb dressed "en habit de Gallons noire que le marechal General de Camp s'est servi en Tournoi 1777".
21. See M. Olausson, "Freemasonry, Occultism and the Picturesque Garden Towards the End of the Eighteenth Century", Art History 1985: 4, p. 422.
22. For a detailed account of this carousel, see Dahlbäck, B., "Gustav III:s och Sergels förberedelser för ett riddarspel sommaren 1782" in *Dramaten 175 år*. Sthlm 1963, pp. 75 ff.
23. A. L. Stierneld to G. A. Reuterholm, dated 5th July 1782, RA, Reuterholm-Ädelgren MSS, vol. 30.
24. Ibid.
25. Princess Sofia Albertina to Sofie Ehrensvärd, dated 28th July 1785, RA, Tosterup papers, vol. 63. According to the Princess everyone ought to have the work by Tasso in their library. Nonetheless she was not herself in possession of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Her own lady-in-waiting took great pains to find a single copy, the king having already purchased them all in Stockholm (cf. Catharina Wilhelmina Piper to Princess Sofia Albertina, dated 7th, 10th August 1785, National Archives, Ericsberg papers, autographic MSS, vol. 62).
26. A. F. Stackelberg to F. Sparre, dated 23rd August 1785, National Archives, Ericsberg papers, autographic MSS, vol. 200.
27. Archives of the Royal Academy of History and Antiquities, Cer 160.
28. C. J. Ekeblad to B. Horn, dated 29th August 1785, Royal Library, MS Ep, E 6: 2.
29. Ibid., dated 30th August 1785.
30. Marquis de Pons to Count de Vergennes, dated 2nd September 1785: "Le Spéctacle de ce Carousel pris en Masse est véritablement magnifique et même imposant, mais il ne faut pas le détailler plus que celui de l'Opera auquel il ressemble beaucoup pour le genre de magnificence. Je concois plus facilement depuis que je l'ai vu comment avec un magazin que le Roi de Suède a formé des differents carousels qu'il a donnés precedements. On peut repeter cette espéce de fête sans une très grande dépence, quelque soit qu'on prenne pour y mettre de l'économie. Il vaudroi mieux encore que le Roi de Suède ne se permit pas de pareilles fantasies." Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Corr. pol., Suède, vol. 271.