"GUSTAF WASA" AS THEATRE PROPAGANDA

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GUSTAF I'S PROPAGANDA MYTH of how in his youth he had liberated Sweden from the Danish tyrant Christian II has always been a myth dear to Swedish hearts, one that has proved politically viable both at home and in the rest of Europe. As such it reached one of its most effective peaks in the reign of Gustaf III. No fewer than four plays based on it, either Swedish or foreign, were staged, and at least one more was written on the same theme in Swedish.

One of these was a tremendous success—the opera *Gustaf Wasa*, which had its first night on Jan 19, 1786 (Fig. 1). It was the joint achievement of Gustaf III himself (planning and production), Johan Henrik Kellgren (Swedish verse libretto) and Johann Gottlieb Naumann (score). And it has also been this version that has mainly interested scholars, who have noted its political function and in detail studied its inception, the internal relations between the many surviving drafts and texts, its music and its models, chiefly those to be found within French literature and drama.[1]

Here I shall primarily try to show how Gustaf III's interest in history and politics is reflected in the libretto and staging, and give some idea of the role played by the *Gustaf Wasa* productions in the king's propaganda.

That Gustaf III should have closely associated Gustaf I's liberation myth with his own dreams of a *coup d'état*, the one he successfully carried out in 1772, is not strange. Monitory comparisons with Christian II's tyranny were common in the Age of Freedom, when internecine strife and party rule had replaced absolute monarchy after the death of Karl XII in 1718, and a defeated Sweden had ceased to be a great power and her domestic politics had been plagued by foreign

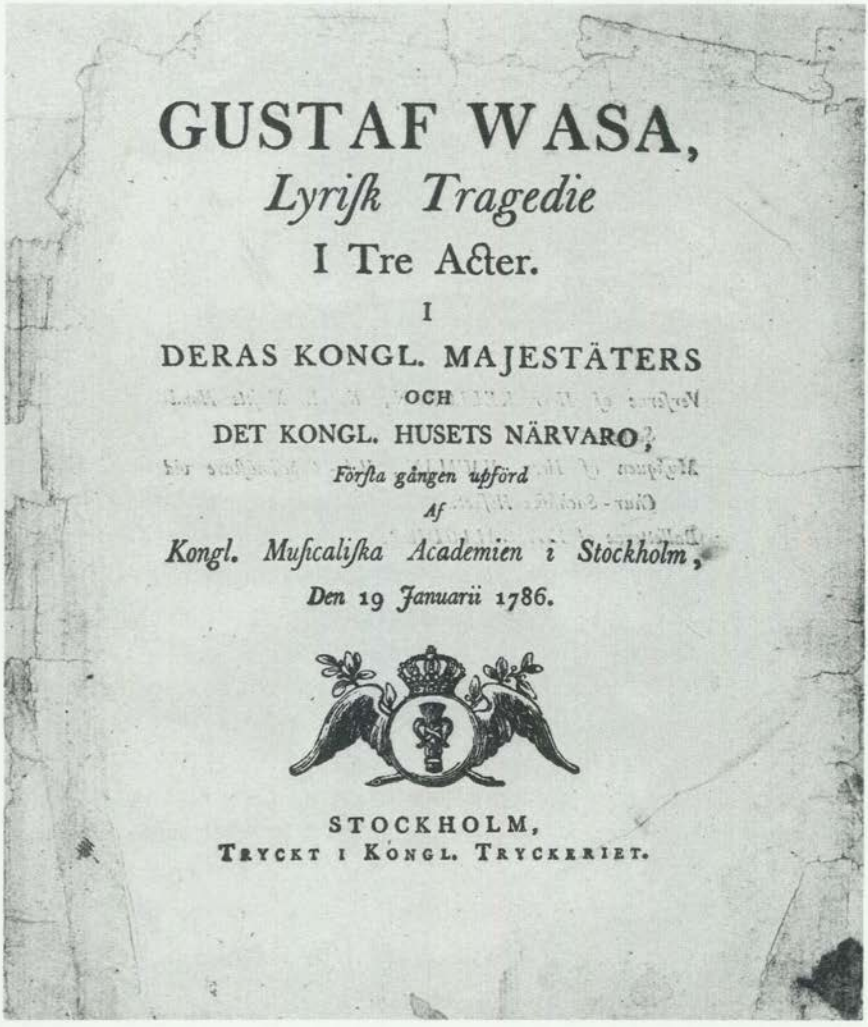

GUSTAF WASA,
Lyriſk Tragedie
I Tre Acter.
I
DERAS KONGL. MAJESTÄTERS
OCH
DET KONGL. HUSETS NÄRVARO,
Förſta gången upförd
Af
Kongl. Muſicaliſka Academien i Stockholm,
Den 19 Januarii 1786.
STOCKHOLM,
TRYCKT I KONGL. TRYCKERIET.

Fig. 1. Flyleaf of the printed libretto from the original production of Gustaf Wasa, *lyrical tragedy in three acts. "In their Royal Majesties' and the Royal Family's presence, performed for the first time by the Royal Academy of Music, in Stockholm, Jan 19, 1786." Stockholm 1786.*

interference. Prince Gustaf's birth in 1746 had been received with jubilation. Many hoped he would resemble his two namesakes, Gustaf Wasa and Gustavus Adolphus. Olof Celsius jnr published his *Konung Gustaf den Förstes Historia* ("History of Gustaf I"), declaring that he hoped the prince would study and emulate Gustaf Wasa's deeds. His mother, first Crown Princess then Queen Lovisa Ulrika, always ambitious to extend the powers of the throne, took it for granted that the

myth of Gustaf I as the country's liberator should be an ingredient in her son's education, based as it was on examples, admirable or otherwise, drawn from great men of the past.

In the early 1760s Prince Gustaf hinted that it was his first history teacher, Olof von Dalin, who had sparked off his longing to emulate Gustaf Wasa, the liberator. It had been Dalin's account of the latter's achievements, in Part III of his *Svea Rikes Historia* ("History of the Realm of Sweden", 1761) which had stimulated Gustaf to write his still unpublished *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Maison de Vasa sur le Throne de Suède*, which end with Gustaf Wasa's first great victory in 1521. They reveal an intense ambition to follow in his ancestor's footsteps. Like Celsius and Dalin, he applied that hero's history to himself, to his own circumstances and to the contemporary political situation, and it is striking to see how, more than twenty years later, much of this youthful piece of writing recurs in his opera, both in the point of view and in topographical and costume details.[2]

In the early 1760s Prince Gustaf must have been acquainted with at least one of the seven Gustaf Wasa dramas mentioned by Anders Schönberg, the state historiographer, to the publicist Carl Christoffer Gjörwell in 1786. The crown prince was passionately interested in theatre, and for his first tutor, Carl Gustaf Tessin, its political importance had been a maxim. In 1738, Olof von Dalin had written a historical drama for the Svenska Komedien company (Stockholm 1737–1754) and, in 1752, for the court, a controversial *Herdespel* (Pastoral). Even as an eleven-year-old, the crown prince had clad his political ideas in historical dramatic costume. Either Tessin or Dalin may have told him about a "*comoedia*" about Gustaf Wasa written by Andreas Prytz, a professor of rhetoric in the reign of Gustavus Adolphus, and which had had its origins in the Gustaf Wasa jubilee ordered by that king in 1621 on the eve of his reconquest of Livonia. Prytz' Uppsala students had used it as war propaganda against the Catholic Church and Gustavus Adolphus' deposed cousin the catholic King Sigismund of Poland. What is even more likely, however, is that Dalin, Tessin or perhaps Prince Gustaf's later tutor Carl Fredrik Scheffer had brought to his notice Alexis Piron's liberation drama entitled *Gustave*. All three were acquaintances of Piron's, whose play seems to have had a certain connection with the Franco-Swedish alliance, in which Tessin had been involved. At the time of the French campaign on behalf of the candidature of Stanislaus, the French queen's father, for the Polish crown, in 1733, Piron's play had had its première at the Comédie Française, then supervised by *Les Gentils-*

hommes de la Chambre. And it had had unusually many performances. Piron had sent a dedication copy via Tessin to Queen Ulrika Eleonora in Sweden, hoping she would send troops to support Stanislaus. Between 1733 and 1747 Piron's *Gustave* only had a few performances at the Comédie Française, in 1739–40. At that time Tessin had been in Paris on an unofficial mission to gain support for Sweden's war against Russia, and in 1747 he became President of the Council and Prince Gustaf's tutor, whilst Scheffer was Swedish minister in Paris. It was in that year Piron's *Gustave* became a fixture in the Comédie Française's repertoire, thereafter being staged almost annually, despite poor audience attendances. The French troupe of actors engaged by Lovisa Ulrika in 1753 also made sure that they knew this play on their arrival in Stockholm, but in the Sweden of the 1750s and '60s it was regarded as politically undesirable.[3]

The only years when *Gustave* was not performed at the Comédie Française were 1765–66, when an attempt was made to replace it by a new play of the same name, by de la Harpe, which however was a failure. In 1766, Maillet du Clairon also translated Henry Brooke's *Gustavus Wasa. The Deliverer of His Country*, a play so controversial and so obviously an indictment of the British prime minister Horace Walpole that he had banned it on the eve of its first night at Drury Lane in 1738. In 1766, Crown Prince Gustaf had an exceptionally strong reason to consider these two new dramas about his liberator ancestor. In April, the French minister in Stockholm was instructed to collaborate with the court in preparing a restoration of the royal power, an action in which, in 1767, the crown prince was given the leading role.[4]

It was Piron's play, however, which had the greatest impact in connection with Gustaf's *coup d'état*, and also on Swedish theatre as a whole. In early 1771, during his Paris visit when he won the favours and support of Louis XV, the crown prince had made the acquaintance of a number of leading personalities in literary circles and had a chance to study modern French theatre. On Feb 27 he went to the Comédie Française and saw the celebrated Lekain play the role of Gustave to the largest audience the play had so far ever attracted. Two days later he received the news of his father's death. Now he was the third Gustaf. Wishing to appear as a model of economy, one of his first actions was to dismiss his mother's French troupe. But not merely had he just seen Lekain as Gustaf Wasa; on his way to Paris he had seen a national theatre in Copenhagen, and while visiting his German relatives had been able to discuss the whole concept of a national

theatre, which was just then very much in the air. As soon as court mourning etiquette permitted and the campaign for a peaceful change of regime had been set in motion, readers of the Stockholm newspaper *Allmänna Tidningar*, the king's mouthpiece, were able to read, in the issue of Jan 20, 1772, a plea for a Swedish-language theatre, signed "Spectator". By drawing on Swedish history, the article declared, a Swedish theatre would show the public what dire disasters could befall the country, and instil in it a wholesome terror of domestic strife and foreign domination.[5]

Here I am inclined to suspect Gustaf III's desire for a drama on Gustaf Wasa; likewise a speech by Abbé Domenico Michelessi, one of his foreign propaganda experts, on the occasion of his taking his seat in the Acadmy of Science on July 29, 1772. Even while he was holding it the king and his fellow-conspirators were preparing their *coup d'état* that was to restore the throne's sovereign powers and put an end to the rule of the parties. Sprengporten had just left for Finland to prepare the ground there. On Aug 19, 1772, the *coup* was carried out. While preparing it Gustaf had also had time to lay the foundations of a national theatre that was to be his propaganda organ. For various reasons he found himself obliged to begin with grand opera. But his real dream was a theatre for the spoken drama, and it was for this art form Michelessi had primarily pleaded. He wanted to see tragedies of the kind that had emboldened the Athenians' victories, that would movingly depict heroic actions by heroes who find themselves in dire straits, strike terror, arouse tender feelings and sympathy in Swedes and teach them to patiently bear the vicissitudes of fate. It is thought that Michelessi, too, drew up a plan for a Gustaf Wasa play, to a script by Johan Fant, after the *coup d'état*, by which time the parallel between Gustaf III's and Gustaf I's liberations of the country had become the royal popaganda's *Leitmotif*, and an object of popular applause. Though never completed, this play has been linked with a Singspiel called *Gustaf Ericsson Wasa* by Moritz von Brahm, which however was neither staged nor printed. Von Brahm, a member of the Austrian embassy in Stockholm, was a friend of Michelessi, and during von Sonnenfeld's reform period he had been a secretary and provider of plays for the German-language theatre in Vienna.[6]

Von Brahm's version, *Gustaf Ericsson Wasa*, mirrors Gustaf III's view both of the myth in his historical garb of the 1760s, of party rule and of his own *coup d'état*, as is evident from the king's own political speeches and in Michelessi's official account.[7] Behind it lay the historians and Piron's and Brooke's dramas on the same theme, as well as

new French dramaturgical ideas. The Gustaf Wasa it presents is a man of royal blood who longs to win glory by liberating his beloved fatherland with the help of the Dalecarlian peasants. He is not going to let love for the opposite sex get in his way, and indeed it played no role either in the myth nor in Gustaf III's own life. Nor does von Brahm's Gustaf Wasa allow himself to be affected either by his mother's lacrimose pleadings or by the tyrant's threat to have her murdered. Like Gustaf III after his *coup d'état*, he shows mercy to his defeated enemies, whereas the tyrannical Christian II (symbol of the political factions of the Age of Freedom) is governed by his passions. He is in love with the ex-regent's widow Christina Gyllenstierna (symbolizing Sweden), and when she, though his prisoner, rejects his advances, he flies into a rage. Nevertheless he prefers flattery and bribery to threats. Christian II is both frightened and jealous of Gustaf Wasa. His lieutenant is not—as in Piron and Brooke—an evil-minded minister, but the Danish grand admiral Severin Norrby. Nor is Norrby depicted, as he usually was, as a law unto himself, but as a subservient courtier whose complaint in the hour of defeat is that he has lost all hope of reward—another allusion to the party strife of the Age of Freedom and to the 1772 coup which had put an end to it. Norrby is also astounded at Gustaf Wasa's magnanimity.

Von Brahm's play is far from being a masterpiece, and for a long time Gustaf III gave up all thought of a new drama on the same subject. In 1776, however, Piron's *Gustave* was privately performed in French at Gothenburg, on the occasion of the king's birthday. And it was also there, in 1781, that Brooke's *Gustavus Wasa* was staged in Swedish, on the basis of a German adaptation, by a troupe of professional actors, with interpolated acclamations of and allusions to Gustaf III's *coup*. The production must have greatly interested the king.[8] By this time, namely, his own propagandists from the 1770s, were beginning to disappear, or even join the opposition. Gustaf had just appointed Carl von Fersen, a man with strong theatrical interests, director of his Opera, and a new building was about to be inaugurated. The moment was therefore a suitable one for renewing the art of opera in Sweden.

Further steps were taken in the direction of the opera *Gustaf Wasa* in the summer of 1781, when Kellgren wrote another promising libretto. The actor and dramatist Monvel (Jacques Marie Boutet) had just come to Sweden from the Comédie Française to join Gustaf III's new French troupe. But what was probably most decisive of all was the collapse, as a result of the primadonna Caroline Müller's flight

from her creditors in February 1782, of the king's plans to inaugurate his new opera house with the grand opera *Æneas i Carthago*, by himself, Kellgren and Kraus. What Gustaf, who at this time on the one hand was thinking of a war against Denmark and, on the other, saw the tenth anniversary of his *coup d'état* approaching—the queen was also due to give birth—needed just now was a grand national manifestation. Since he was also hoping, that autumn, to unveil an equestrian statue of Gustavus Adolphus in front of his new opera house, the occasion seemed to be suitable for an opera about Gustaf Wasa. On March 13, Naumann wrote to his brother that the Swedish minister in Vienna was doing everything he could to get him to come to Stockholm in time for the celebrations around the birth, and for the inauguration of the new opera house with his own *Cora och Alonzo* and a new opera by Gustaf III.[9]

A number of other circumstances suggest that it was actually in early 1782 that Gustaf began planning his *Gustaf Wasa*, not in 1778–79, as Lennart Breitholtz suggests in his *Studier i operan Gustaf Wasa* ("Studies on the Opera Gustaf Wasa", 1954), and as has been generally accepted. All its drafts bear the imprint of haste, and in the earliest—the only extant complete plan for the opera in the royal hand - we find the king has made cuts and added new ideas, then changed the roles and singers in the introductory list of performers, and drawn up a list of costumes. Should Caroline Müller be available, her name was on no account to be omitted. Since she evidently was, the plan must have been drawn up either prior to her arrival in 1780 or after her flight on Feb 7, 1782. There are also great differences between the ballet sections (Gustaf Wasa's dreams) at the end of Act II, and the introductory list of roles; furthermore the new ballet sections are listed separately, together with new suggestions for who is to dance in them. The dancers' names show that Gustaf must have started to draw up his plan in mid-February 1782 at the latest and by the end of that month or in March decided who was to dance which role in the new ballets; from all of which can be concluded that he seems to have started working on his earliest extant plan immediately after Caroline Müller's flight, in February 1782, and very soon thereafter ordered his minister in Vienna to open negotiations with Naumann at Dresden. Comparison between the king's later drafts and Kellgren's texts from 1782-83 show that, even after Kellgren had begun working on it, the work still went on growing and being polished. The first time Kellgren mentions it is on May 27, 1782. Both he and Naumann, who had arrived in Stockholm on July 7 of that year, witness to the fact that the

king went on making changes in the text, at least up to the beginning of September. Even so, the opera was not ready for performance until a year later, and the king went on modifying the libretto even after its première in 1786.[10]

By that time Gustaf III was intending to use his opera to sway public opinion in favour of a war with Denmark, and at the same time to revive the favourable attitudes toward himself that had followed on his 1772 *coup*; whereas from his textual proposals of 1782 it seems as if it had mainly been his *coup* he at first time had in mind to celebrate. But in the autumn of 1782 and the spring of 1783 he was absorbed by developments in Russia, where Catherine II's plans to expand her empire southwards might prevent her from intervening on the side of her Danish ally. After the Russians had invaded the Crimea, the empress, wishing to maintain a quiet state of affairs in the north, invited Gustaf to meet her on the Finnish frontier. Hoping to obtain guarantees of Russian neutrality, Gustaf III, now decided to seize Copenhagen by a *coup de main*—and between this plan and the way in which Gustaf Wasa, in the opera, takes Stockholm, there are certain striking similarities. Furthermore, the very day before Gustaf III left for Finland to meet Catherine, all the Stockholm courts (except his own, his siblings' and his sister-in-law's) were invited to a "musical breakfast" with music from *Gustaf Wasa*. Both war and opera, however, had to be postponed. Instead, he set out on his Italian journey (1783/84), as a device, among other things, to hide his warlike schemes. In August 1784, with the applause of French theatre audiences ringing in his ears, the king returned to his capital. *En route* he had passed through Paris, where he had picked up French subsidies. Also in his baggage, so to speak, he had the great stage designer Louis Jean Desprez, later to become his chief architect and head of the Royal Opera workshops. No sooner was Gustaf back in Stockholm than the musical rehearsals for *Gustaf Wasa* were resumed. But its staging was a complicated matter, and before the première could take place, Carl Stenborg, who was to sing the lead role but who also ran a theatre of his own, had time to stage a play on the same theme. Stenborg's Munkbro Theatre, namely, was inaugurated on October 29, 1784 with *Gustaf Ericsson i Dalarne* ("Gustaf Ericsson in Dalecarlia"), a three-act drama with singing, by Carl Envallson (text) and Stenborg (music). Drawing on the Dalecarlian myth, it shows how contented the common people were and how devoted to Gustaf Wasa; the nobility, on the other hand, are either timid and treacherous or loyal and passionately patriotic.[11]

Gustaf Wasa had its première on Jan 19, 1786. The audience was entranced, and such was the crush, the fighting, and the black market in tickets that the Royal Opera management had to set out double lines of guards and place limits on ticket sales. Obviously we cannot now say exactly what made it such a huge success, or what the audience saw on the stage though we possess an exceptional wealth of source materials, both from Gustaf III's own time and the one immediately after. Besides the texts and music, many opinions have survived, as well as many pictures, scenery sketches and inventories, costume sketches and lists, also a detailed *mise-en-scène* and other production notes. It also transpires that, even as late as 1823, there was a reluctance to make any changes in the production. The subject, thought Fredrik Axel von Fersen, the Royal Opera director's brother and opponent to Gustav III, was found attractive. The royalist and publisher Carl Christoffer Gjörwell thought it inspired patriotism and warlike courage.[12] He should have added: royalism. Much of the credit must go to Kellgren's libretto which, underscored as it is by the music and the stagework, is almost too explicit. For his inspiration, both for libretto and production, Gustaf III drew on a great variety of sources: the new French historical dramas, operas, *opéras-comiques* and war pantomimes, Shakespeare's *Richard III*, allegorical divertissements, various kinds of pictorial materials, etc. For his main sources, however, he turned to the historians, mainly Celsius and Dalin, as well as to Piron's, Brooke's and von Brahm's plays on the same theme.

The action revolves around Christian II's coronation banquet, the Stockholm Bloodbath of 1520, Gustaf Wasa's siege of the city in 1521–23, his election as king, and his coronation. The action takes place during a single twenty-four hours in Stockholm. Unlike its forerunners, the drama completely excludes any amorous intrigue; normally considered *de rigeur*, the king thought it unbecoming to his theme. Instead, without any complicated elaborations, he contrasts Christian the Tyrant's wicked deeds, morbid suspicions, bad dreams and the Danes' cowardly flight with the Swedes' patriotism, heroism and self-confidence.

Many people, in 1786, saw the king's opera exclusively as war propaganda. Even so, the picture of how it was received is not without ambiguities. Though the Danish embassy in Stockholm was well aware of Gustaf's political plans, it regarded his opera as merely a way of acclaiming his own ancestor. Berndorff, the Danish foreign minister, received enthusiastic reports on the work, likewise assurances that

nothing in it was insulting to Danish sensibilities. We can only suppose the Danes had let themselves be deceived by the elaborate precautions taken by Gustaf III to denude his military preparations of any elements that might be interpreted as heralding an assault on Denmark. Fredrik Axel von Fersen, too, assures in his memories that in his opera Gustaf had been at pains not to upset the Danish court. He adduces Christian's kingly dignity and the noble character of Severin Norrby, both these traits being stressed by the actors playing these roles. Christofer Karsten is reported as playing the part of a somewhat overproud monarch and tyrant, and Abraham de Broën, as we shall see, stressed Norrby's dislike of tyrannous behaviour: in Act III, for instance, he is said to have made an unforgettable impression when he tells his master he is a soldier, not an executioner.[13]

The libretto threw dust into people's eyes. Some only saw in it its original tendency—to defend and glorify Gustaf's *coup d'état*. Even in the final version, Christian is much the same figure as he is in the king's youthful *Mémoires* and in von Brahm's work from 1772: a regal and dignified tyrant, whose mythical proclivity for acts of violence, theft and murder have largely been softened down to cunning and threats. Although a valiant warrior, he is scared of Gustaf Wasa. In the opera he directs his ill deeds at such persons as audiences of the 1780s could identify with Gustaf III himself, with his family and closest friends. Nor is Norrby any longer von Brahm's subservient courtier, but a chivalrous nobleman. Indeed, the further Gustaf's plans for his opera proceeded, the more impeccable and virtuous a hero Norrby became, an admirer of the Swedes' patriotism and courage. While remaining loyal to his oath of fidelity he wants no part of his master's tyrannical ways.

The king's earliest plan for the opera contains only one major female role: that of Christina Gyllenstierna, whose heroic defense of Stockholm Gustaf III had already admired in his *Mémoires*. Dalin and Celsius had given touching accounts of her humiliation at Christian's coronation banquet. In the *Mémoires* she had been a symbol for Lovisa Ulrika, who was then struggling with the party strife of the Age of Freedom. In von Brahm she most likely stands for Sweden. In 1782, Gustaf III may have seen her as Sophia Magdalena, his Danish-born spouse, and in 1786 the role was in fact played by another Danish woman, Caroline Müller.

In 1778, Gustaf III had broken with his mother because she had given credit to the rumoured illegitimacy of his first-born son Gustaf Adolf. This can be seen in the king's first draft. There, as in the

histories, Christian II sends a herald to Gustaf Wasa to tell him he will kill his mother, Cecilia of Eka, if he doesn't raise his siege of Stockholm; and this is the source of the opera's main conflict. Even so, Gustaf III does not give his ancestor's mother a major stage role, as Piron, Brooke and von Brahm do. Only in the penultimate scene does she appear, briefly, to give vent to her joy at her son's victory and declare him worthy of her, and his victory a reward for all her pains. However, three days before Lovisa Ulrika's death on July 16 1782, mother and son had been reconciled. Gustaf III, who loved his mother, had suffered grievously from their schism; and it was probably after this reconciliation he gave Cecilia of Eka a greater part in his opera. Alluding to his sister Sophia Albertina and to his friend the Countess Bielke, he flanked Cecilia with her daughter Margareta and Anna Bielke. In the liberation myth Margareta had wept and implored her brother to refrain from his enterprise, and in his youthful *Mémoires* Gustaf III had admired Anna Bielke's defense of Kalmar. He also decided to let Svante Sture, the former regent Sten Sture's and Christina Gyllenstierna's son, appear on stage, a child who at the time of the Stockholm Bloodbath had been the same age as Gustaf's own eldest son, the crown prince. As in von Brahm, Gustaf Wasa's mother was even to show her love and anxiety in the first scene. But Gustaf III moves the scene from von Brahm's castle gate to a prison, thus at a single stroke underlining both Christian's threat and gratifying the eighteenth-century taste for gloomy interiors. Brooke's play, for instance, had opened with a scene in a cold dark mine.

ACT I

As the curtain rises on Act I it is mainly to impress us with the degree of Christian's tyranny. The first thing the audience sees is the widows and children of the executed noblemen of the myth, in a dark vault under Stockholm Castle. They are grouped in a semicircle on and around some benches. A single spot of light, only, focusses attention on the central column. Everything—the black Burgundian-style dresses, the tokens of mourning, the handkerchiefs and chains, the children's clothes striped with cloth of gold, reminiscent of sixteenth-century courts, their attitudes and songs—is designed to show how humiliated these proud ladies have been and the depth of their despair. Led by Gustaf Wasa's mother and sister, the women get up and pray for revenge or death. They are anxious for their children, for their own future in poverty and above all in shame and slavery. In a contemporary painting by Pehr Hilleström, which combines two moments in

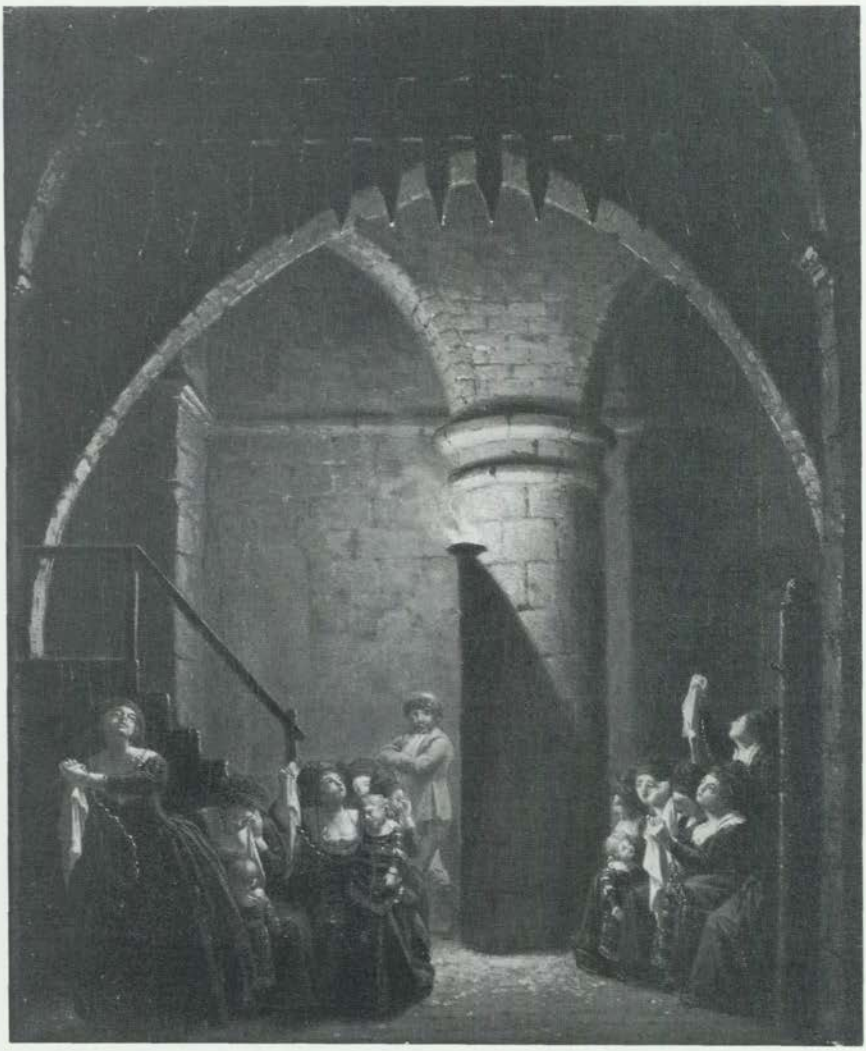


Fig. 2. Act I, scene 1 of Gustaf Wasa. *"The stage shows a vault under the Castle in Stockholm, where the Wives, Widows and Children of the Greatest Swedish Lords are imprisoned. This subterranean vault is only illuminated by a single lamp, which spreads a weak and despondent light." Oil on canvas by P. Hilleström. Private ownership. Photo: E. Carlsson (Gothenburg Museum of Art).*

the scene (Fig. 2), Gustaf's mother is standing far downstage to the left. Hilleström has depicted many of the incidents in *Gustaf Wasa*, and having been a weaver himself, is usually precise when it comes to costume. Allowances made for artistic convention, the implied action, too, seems realistic, capturing the mood of score and libretto. These

paintings were made between 1786 and 1810. As yet, however, I do not know exactly when each came into being or for example whether they show Hillestrom's vision of the action on stage or of how Gustaf III envisaged it. Here Gustaf Wasa's mother, leaning slightly forwards, is looking up, lamenting that she cannot die in her son's arms but must live dishonoured. But her son is alive, and this thought gives her courage. Helped by the miners who are faithful to the young Svante Sture, he will save them all. Soon we hear a rattling of chains, and on the stairs (left) the prisoners see to their terror two soldiers appear, wearing the red Danish uniform kilts. In the light from a torch they hand over the little heir to the throne to a gaoler, who makes no bones about chaining him to the central column. Shortly thereafter some guards enter. Nine men strong, the four holding aloft burning torches line up in a single row in the background, and the ones with pikes at the head of the stairs. The officer orders the prisoners to follow him. They are to appear before Christian to be punished.

The next scene takes the audience back in time. Hardly has the prison, downstage, been emptied, than the audience sees to its amazement and delight the magnificent hall of state in Stockholm Castle. No known picture exists of the definitive scenery or even of Desprez' sketches for it, only the simple pen-drawing on which he probably based it, some studies of details and pupils' copies of various more developed sketches. The one shown in the colour supplement gives us some idea of Desprez' widely praised Hall of State and the contrast between it and the noble widows' prison. Christian and his court, wearing glittering red, white, blue and black gala costumes, are celebrating their victory and Christian's coronation, at which the Gustavian ceremonial had been followed. To the rear of the superb hall, on steps and balconies, are ranged the Danish court ladies. To a solemn march Christian enters with his guards and courtiers. After circling the stage he seats himself on the throne and the others distribute themselves on either side. The tyrant is jubilant. Force and political cunning have brought the proud Goths to obedience, placed them forever in his power! Sture's widow and son are thrown in chains. Christian heightens his own voluptuous pleasure and his prisoners' despair by having his courtiers acclaim him with a torchlight dance. But soon the rejoicings are interrupted. Severin Norrby arrives with news that Gustaf Wasa is approaching. Christian is enraged to see that his men are afraid of Gustaf who, Norrby warns him, is no longer an insignificant stripling. The heroic Cecilia challenges the tyrant. But death, in Christian's eyes, is no adequate punishment for his prisoners.

Fig. 3. Act I, scene 8 of Gustaf Wasa. *King Christian threatens the young Svante Sture, son of Christina Gyllenstierna. Oil on canvas by P. Hilleström. DTM.*

They are to be humiliated, compelled to live in shame and poverty. As for the proud Christina Gyllenstierna, she is to besmirch her own scutcheon: he is going to force her to go to Gustaf, and tell him that, if he persists in his revolt, his mother will be killed. She is fetched; but in spite of chains and gaolers her entrance is a triumph. For the hour of vengeance has struck. Upon her refusing to be the wretched instru-

ment of her country's defeat, her son is brought forward from among the guards, who have been concealing him. Christian lifts his dagger,

> Christina, you are a mother—well, you see the danger / choose .... (She, beside herself with rage): Oh cruel one, what? my son!. (The tyrant, coldly) You can spare his days: / Obey! ...

[These and other quotes are from the score of the opera, the Archives of the Royal Theatres / KTA, Library of the Royal Academy of Music / MAB.]

This scene, sc. 8, climaxes Christian's tyranny. In Pehr Hilleström's painting (Fig. 3) we see in the background the throne which is the object of the struggle. Both it and its occupant are guarded at its foot by pikemen. In front of the steps leading up to it Christina—in the guise of Caroline Müller—is holding up its Swedish heir, the young Svante Sture, to the audience. Christian (Christofer Karsten) is threatening the child. To right of stage are the other widows and children; the women weeping and in chains, they hold up large handkerchiefs as they look down or imploringly up to heaven. The proud Christina Gyllenstierna, on her knees, is looking imploringly up at the tyrant, whose festive red and blue-striped Burgundian-style costume, with white stockings, black shoes, hat and scarlet-lined mantle forms a brilliant contrast to the women's black clothes. His whole person glitters with gold and gems. A medal hangs from the light blue bands of the orders of the Seraphim and the Elephant. Holding his dagger aloft, he glares at the little Sture. The weapon, we note, is a dagger, not a sword, by which the Stures, *qua* noblemen, were entitled to die, thus also stressing Christian's cunning and his determination to humiliate his victims. Even Norrby is visibly horrified. De Broën, who played the part of Norrby, stands far downstage (left), inviting the audience to reject Christian's loathsome deed. His head tilted, his eyes stare up to heaven and his fingers are spread out, as if to ward off evil. But Christian insists that Christina Gyllenstierna, accompanied by Norrby, shall deliver his ultimatum, and blackmail Gustaf Wasa into submission. Either he must surrender, or let his mother die. After Christian has left the stage, Christina Gyllenstierna begs Norrby to help her. On an earlier occasion, though the tyrant's friend and henchman, he has succoured the oppressed. But now, faced with this new threat to his monarch's life and throne, he remains staunch. Whereupon Gustaf's mother, placing honour and the fatherland even before her own son, begs Christina to tell Gustaf she'd rather die than

see him abase himself. Christina, in tears, entrusts her son to Cecilia, and follows Norrby out.

With history's help the audience has been made to see the horrors of foreign domination. Precisely as the anonymous "Spectator" had desired in 1772. At the same time Michelessi's recipe—to arouse sympathy by vividly depicting a hero's terrible dilemma—has been applied. Hopefully the scene has also aroused tender feelings for Gustaf III, for his dead mother, his sister, his wife and, not least, for the little crown prince, whose legitimacy has been no less threatened by malicious tongues than the little Sture by the tyrant's dagger.

ACT II

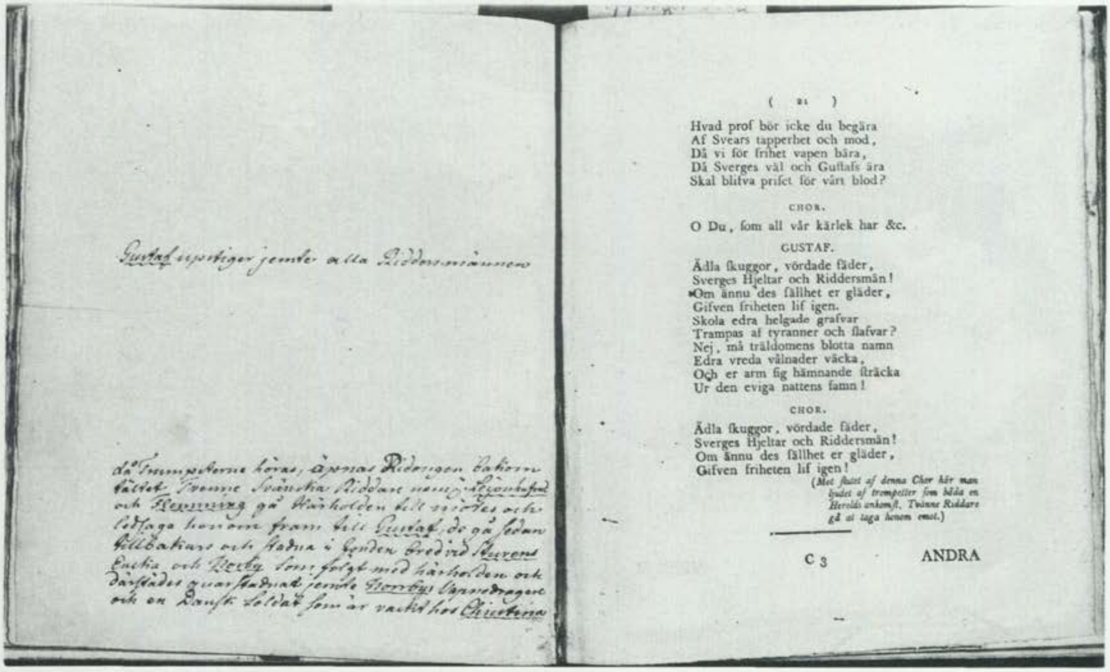
Act II focuses on the Swedes' love for king and country. Without interrupting the action, the Hall of State has disappeared behind Gustaf Wasa's tent, in his camp at Brunkeberg, just outside the city. His blue tent, enhanced with golden crowns, stands furthest downstage, its embellishments reminiscent of the mantle that covers the throne of Sweden. Two guards take up their post, to the left a soldier in yellow with a blue-and-yellow belt to his brown armour and helmet. To the right, a Dalecarlian peasant with a cuirass over his village costume's black coat. The tent opens, revealing Gustaf and his knights (seated left), their esquires holding their shields where they stand behind them. To the right of Gustaf stands his—purely mythical—Dalecarlian bodyguard, armed with spiked maces. Their leader, Anders Persson, is easily identifiable by his long white beard (see the colour supplement though this depicts a somewhat later situation in the opera). To judge from Hilleström's paintings, Gustaf Wasa—according to Dalin a candle lit in the darkness of that age—was as usual shown as blondheaded and blond-bearded, whilst the tyrant was dark haired and swarthy. Gustaf was also more splendidly clad than his commanders, with more gold and glitter, and steel-coloured body armour instead of brown against his blue and gold kilt. He too is wearing an order on a gold chain and, like his commanders, a blue and yellow sash (see the colour supplement). The knights' esquires, like the soldiers, wear yellow. Under their cuirasses the lifeguards are wearing white coats embellished with blue turnbacks—not black ones, like the sentinels—with the Dalecarlian costume's traditional yellow breeches, white stockings and black shoes. The blue tent, enhanced with golden crowns, is supported by four tent poles, two beside the 2nd sidewings (reckoned from the footlights), and two in front of the rear of the tent at the 3rd. At all four, banners are affixed crosswise,

with a helmet in front of them. Below is a coat of arms, either that of the State or the Wasa family. To left of stage, by Gustaf's bed, hang his shield and Sweden's war banner.

Tableau. An appeal for national unity. Here another, earlier Gustaf is holding a council of war with his nobility, in a fashion that cannot but appeal to Gustaf III's celebrated courage. But Gustaf Wasa also has a bodyguard of peasants, the legendary Dalecarlians, the throne's chief support, who have given so many examples of their patriotism and love of freedom. Words and music take up the theme, stressing the popular support for Gustaf Wasa. His army is an army of Swedish volunteers, willing to conquer or die for their country, for its freedom, and for Gustaf himself. Between these devoted men and Christian's unreliable army of mercenaries and conscripts there is thus a striking difference. Finally, Gustaf Wasa and his men stand up and sing the famous hymn *"Ädla skuggor, vördade fäder"*, ("Noble shades, honoured fathers"). A triumph of the patriotic spirit, its climax only comes, even so, when the tyrant's messenger reaches the Swedish camp (Fig. 4).

Trumpeters in blue and yellow Burgundian costume blow fanfares, and the curtain at the rear of Gustaf's tent opens to reveal the camp. Behind a colour guard are two soldiers cleaning their weapons outside the army's tents that flank the stage on either side. The backdrop shows Storkyrkan church and Stockholm Castle, surrounded by rocky wooded knolls (left) and on the far side of the Stream (right) Brunkeberg. We see a Danish herald (upstage left) arriving with Norrby, his squire, a soldier escorting Christina Gyllenstierna. Two Swedish knights ceremoniously present first the herald, then Norrby. Gustaf, who is suspicious, gives the herald his gauntlet, but sends his men to prepare the assault. To Norrby he proudly says that a knight should subdue a nobleman in an open fight, not by underhand talk. He sings:

I thought a worthy knight / For knightly virtue more respect should have./ What? Does Sevrin Norrby hope / By threats to terrify a noble breast, / My fatherland enslaved / In poverty, scorn and torments, / My whole family laid waste by the executioner's iron and flames, / And earth's laments and heaven's call for vengeance:/ Behold the cruel cause for which I now bear arms—/ Go, meet me on the field of battle, / And there by force subdue me / But use not words which, hated and disguised, / A Hero's heart must scorn. / Go, and say that under fetters bowed,/ And when my blood flows 'neath the axe / Yet will I not my noble destiny exchange / With any Tyrant high upon his throne./ And still should Sweden not be freed / By my hand from her chains, / Yet to be crushed will be my glory / In ruins of my fatherland./ (Act II, scene 3)



(21)

Hvad prof bör icke du begära
Af Svears tapperhet och mod,
Då vi för frihet vapen bära,
Då Sverges väl och Guſtafs ära
Skal blifva priſet för vårt blod?

CHOR.

O Du, ſom all vår kärlek har &c.

GUSTAF.

Ädla ſkuggor, vördade fäder,
Sverges Hjeltar och Riddersmän!
Om ännu des ſällhet er gläder,
Gifven friheten lif igen.
Skola edra helgade grafvar
Trampas af tyranner och ſlafvar?
Nej, må träldomens blotta namn
Edra vreda vålnader väcka,
Och er arm ſig hämnande ſträcka
Ur den eviga nattens famn!

CHOR.

Ädla ſkuggor, vördade fäder,
Sverges Hjeltar och Riddersmän!
Om ännu des ſällhet er gläder,
Gifven friheten lif igen!

(*Mot ſlutet af denna Chor hör man ljudet af trompetter ſom båda en Herolds ankomſt. Twänne Riddare gå at taga honom emot.*)

C 3 ANDRA

Fig. 4. Act II, end of scene 1 of Gustaf Wasa. "Ädla skuggor, vördade fäder" *("Noble shades, revered fathers"). The printed libretto with contemporary jottings by the then vice-director of the Royal Opera, A. N. Clewberg-Edelcrantz, 1786. Stockholm 1786. KTA.*

But when Christina comes up to his tent just as the colour guard is being changed he starts back in horror, and is still more horrified to read the tyrant's letter. Christina reminds him that now and in the eyes of posterity the claims of honour and country take precedence over life itself. Together they sing:

Noble virtues we adore,/ Go, strengthen our hearts! / Sweden's weal depends on you. (Act II, scene 4)

After which the grief-stricken Gustaf leans for a moment against a writing desk (painted on a piece of scenery, right of stage), but soon summons his men. It is they, he says, who shall give Norrby his answer. Whereupon the Dalecarlian bodyguards, the knights and their squires, as we see in the picture in the colour supplement, return to their first positions, while all the others cluster behind the tent. In an outburst of patriotic fervour, vengeance and the fatherland are unanimously declared to be more important than family ties. Anyone who betrays them is despicable, worthy only of death and eternal

shame. The knights don their helmets, take their shields from their squires and clash them, swearing eternal fidelity to Gustaf and the cause:

No, Gustaf knows, we're one for all, / Upon our shields we swear it: / Conquer we shall or die, / But never fail to follow in your footsteps (Act II, scene 4)

In this scene Hilleström shows how proudly Gustaf (right, furthest downstage) looks at Norrby (left of stage). We also see with what imploring looks Christina Gyllenstierna (standing at an angle to Norrby) appeals to the Danish admiral. Placing one hand on his arm, with the other she indicates the Swedes. Amazed at the Swedes' courage, Norrby replies that he respects virtue:

I shall explain to Christian, / What I, amazed, have heard and seen. (He returns the gauntlet.) See here the loyal gauge you gave me. / Your mother is in my power—and soon you will see, / If Norrby's heart has learnt respect for virtue. /.../

Despite his fears for his mother, Gustaf's spirits rise. A cannonshot announces nightfall, interrupting his orders for the attack on the morrow. The rear flap is felled and in the darkened tent Gustaf throws himself down on his couch. The footlights are lowered, leaving as a sole point of light a lamp on his bedside table. In five dreams in the form of allegorical divertissements he foresees his coming triumph and how highly posterity will esteem him. By and by he is awakened by the dawn gun. Anders Persson comes in and hands Gustaf his helmet, sword and shield. The rear flap is raised. Gustaf goes out to meet his army, drawn up in battle array, draws his sword and gives the signal "right turn". And slowly, to a march tune, the soldiers troop off stage.

But Christian has fears for the outcome. During Gustaf's dreams the back of his tent, too, had opened and, in contrast to his heavenly dreams, we have seen Christian's hellish nightmares of impending catastrophe. In the earlier dramas he had only talked about them. Here that would not have sufficed.

ACT III

Originally Gustaf III had intended to open Act III with the battle between the Swedes and the Danes. But as early as 1782 he had given it a new beginning, contrasting with the heroic talk of patriotism and mutual admiration between Gustaf Wasa and his people that had opened Act II. It is a question of showing that there is a world of difference between the two monarchs. The tyrant's fears have a touch

of insanity about them - from which we suspect it was not only theatrical effect that Gustaf III had in mind. King Christian VII of Denmark, his contemporary, was in fact insane.

Christian II awakens in his scarlet, gilded tent. Like Gustaf, he has two guards and is dressed for battle in a suit of gleaming steel armour (see the colour supplement). Unlike Gustaf, however, his entourage does not consist of intimate friends: Christian is solitary, worried, suspicious and vengeful. When Norrby suggests he release Gustaf's mother, the tyrant refuses and says that, on the contrary, at the least sign of the Swedes attacking she's to be killed. Norrby refuses to have any part in so barbarous an act:

My industry and services you may forget, / But I do not forget my honour. (Act II, scene 2)

Norrby is arrested and led away, Christian out after him. But just as he is approaching the back curtain of his tent, all becomes dark within, and he finds his way barred by two Shades who arise on a trap through the stage floor. They are wearing thin white costumes with sixteenth-century overtones, a red ribbon round their necks and a thin veil over their heads, and are probably illumined from beneath, as Gustaf III had suggested in 1782. They are the two Ribbing brothers, two boys, aged 12 and 13, whose execution Christian II (in the myth) had insisted on, even though the headsman, moved to tears, had refused to do his duty. At the sight of his dead victims Christian starts back. They disappear, and are followed by others—the Bloodbath victims who in Act I had been invoked by their widows. First (behind the tyrant's couch, obliquely to the footlights, second wing right) the younger Sten Sture. Though he had died in battle, Christian had despoiled and insulted his corpse. Then, on the other side of the stage at the second wing and beyond, eight of the lords of the realm who had been murdered in the Bloodbath. As Sten Sture vanishes, two more of these lords, Gustaf's father and brother-in-law, appear in front of Christian's couch. All are dressed in white as ghosts—all except Sten Sture himself, the former regent, whose status is stressed by a richly ornamented military costume with a yellow kilt and blue royal mantle with crowns, only the veil indicating that he too is a shade from the underworld. Christian, scared out of his wits, reacts ever more madly to their furious demands for vengeance. In 1782, Gustaf III had thought one way of showing the tyrant's insanity would be for him at one moment to pass his mantle across his face and make wild gestures imploring the Shades' mercy, the next to cast himself

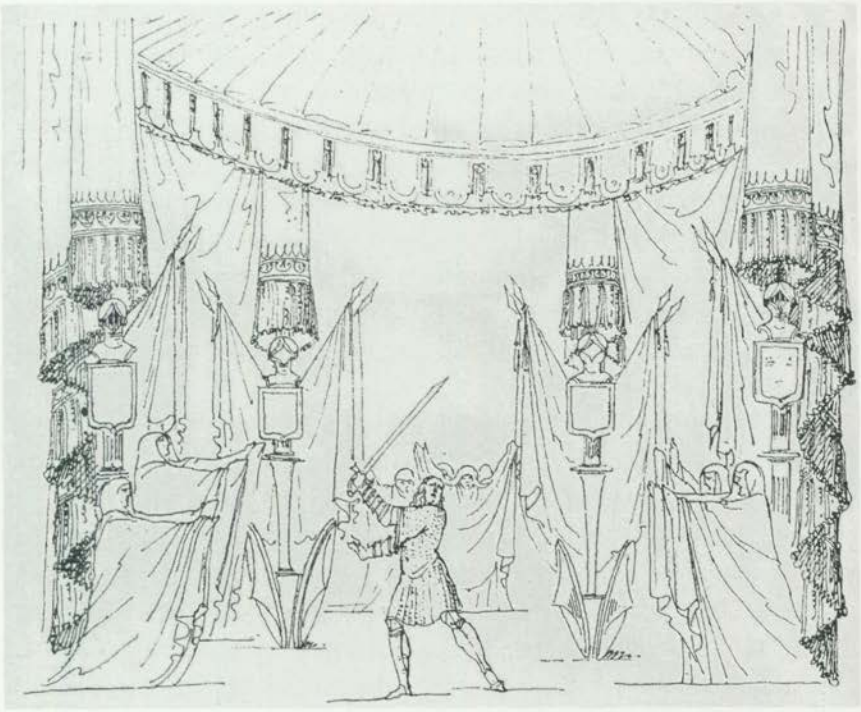


Fig. 5. Act III, Scene 3 of Gustaf Wasa. *"The stage shows the interior of Christian's tent" /.../ "The Shades of the Swedish Lords who have been murdered in the Stockholm Bloodbath at Christian's orders rising up out of the earth." Indian ink drawing by unknown artist. Private ownership.*

down backwards onto his couch, throw his arms wide and wildly try to drive them off. And for many years this stage direction was printed in the text. But in the 1786 première not only did Christian have no mantle, a pen drawing shows him standing in the traditional central downstage position for kings. (Fig. 5) The audience may read his terror in his face, as always being turned toward them, from his physical posture, his body slightly turned to the right, from his arms—flung wide to stave off the ghosts—and from his raised sword—all a typical contemporary pose. But later Christian throws himself down on his bed, just how we do not know. And there he remains lying after the spectres have finally disappeared. By this time, however, the Swedes have launched their attack and we hear a shot fired off-stage to give the alarm, and see the Danes' initial reaction. First one soldier, then another, comes rushing in to Christian, and he gets up off his camp bed and accompanies them out to lead his troops into battle.

In these ghost-scenes Gustaf III blends impressions from Celsius' description of Christian's timorous behaviour during Gustaf's siege of Stockholm in 1521 and on the occasion of his own deposition in 1523, with Shakespeare's *Richard III* and David Garrick's manner of playing such roles. Like the ceremonies which have proceeded it, the battle mirrors Gustaf III's great interest in the latest Parisian innovations, which he made sure reached him as soon as ever possible. The battle is an eighteenth, not sixteenth-century battle, which meant that the ninety guardsmen, among them six gunners and their officers, who had been mobilized for the parts, needed no more than one or two rehearsals.

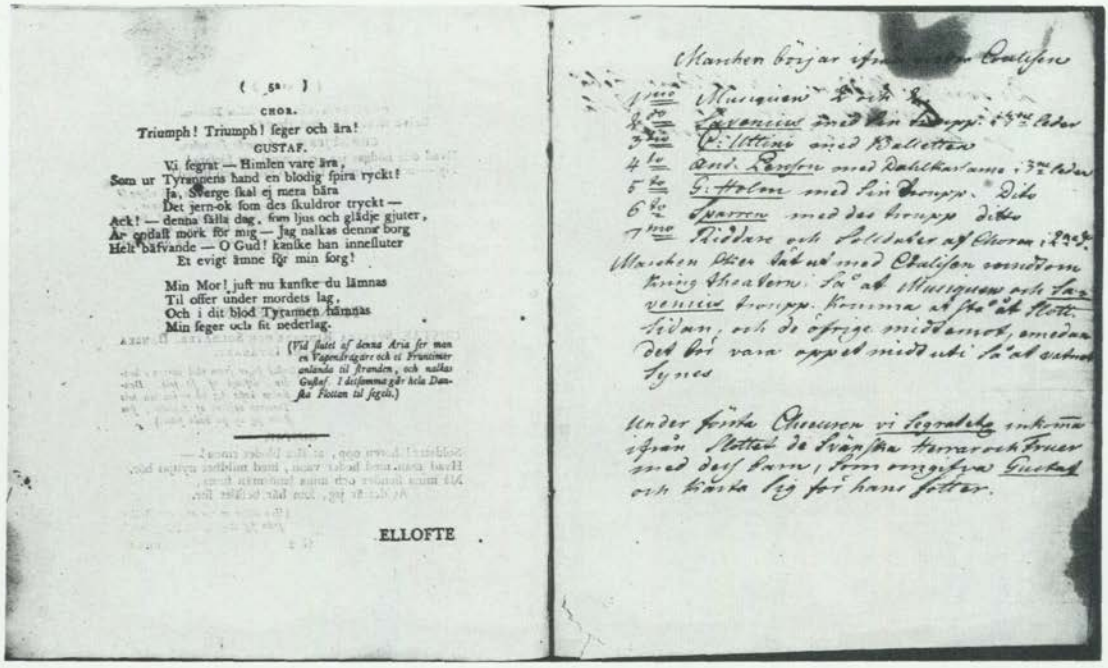
The Danes wore red and gold kilts to their brown armour, the Swedish officers blue and gold, the Swedish other ranks yellow and silver and the Dalecarlians their provincial costume with black or white coats. The struggle is for a fortress which the audience identified with the help of Stockholm Castle Tre kronor (Three Crowns) painted on the backdrop, the heights of Söder to the left, and Brunkeberg to the right. This may be seen in the colour supplement and Fig. 6, albeit not quite correctly. Furthest downstage the lefthand fortress had a bastion with a watchtower in one corner. The latter was built up of frames and loose stones to be a breach. Above the bastion could be seen part of the city, and, on the wings behind, the audience saw the two rectangular brick towers on either side of the drawbridge, while furthest upstage was a low wall in profile, with a watchtower in one corner. The drawbridge extended into a vaulted bridge with Fouquet's bronze lion in *papier mâché* on the parapet, to the round tower on the other side of the stage.

Immediately, the audience sees the Danish outposts fleeing across the bridge. Christian and his bodyguards retire, entering the stage backwards at the first wing (right), first the soldiers, then the officers with the great Danish banner, and finally the tyrant himself. A Swedish officer and his men drive them before them as far as the footlights. The two parties are equally matched in numbers—three ranks, of four men each. The Danes manage to drive the Swedes upstage toward the drawbridge, right. There, however, the Danes are reinforced by fresh troops, entering from a little gateway under the bridge, thus attacking the Swedes in the rear and breaking up their formation and driving half of them onto the bridge, the rest down to the footlights. Thanks to this timely intervention a path is opened up for Christian and his bodyguards to flee the field; and so they do, via the little gateway under the bridge, up over the drawbridge and into the fortress, where

Fig. 6. Act III, scene 6 of Gustaf Wasa. *"The Siege of Stockholm Castle". The battle between Swedes and Danes. Watercolour black pencil drawing by C. J. Hjelm. NM.*

they are covered by a battery on the bastion. Those soldiers who are left, together with others from the bridge—a fresh troop of twelve Danes-fire a volley at the Swedes, forcing them to retire in good order the same way they have come.

Fig. 6 relates to the next section, where the Swedes are returning the Danish fire. With Gustaf and his colour guard at their head, the troop right of stage have turned about left, formed up in front of the bastion and begun firing on it. Now a new twelve-man Swedish unit has entered at the first wing, right, followed by twelve more who, led by their commander, halt there to cover the other twelve who, to Gustaf's battle cries, arrive on the scene with storming ladders. The gunners bring on two cannon upstage of Gustaf and open fire on the fortress—100 blanks in all being fired in this stage battle. Finally the storming



(52)

CHOR.

Triumph! Triumph! feger och ära!

GUSTAF.

Vi fegrat — Himlen vare ära,
Som ur Tyrannens hand en blodig spira tryckt!
Ja, Sverge skal ej mera bära
Det jern-ok som des skuldror tryckt —
Ack! — denna fälla dag, som ljus och glädje gjuter,
Är ogdaft mörk för mig — Jag nalkas dennar borg
Helt bäfvande — O Gud! kanske han innefluter
Et evigt ämne för min sorg!

Min Mor! just nu kanske du lämnas
Til offer under mordets lag,
Och i dit blod Tyrannen hämnas
Min feger ocks fit nederlag.

(Vid slutet af denna Aria ser man en Vapendragare och et Fruntimmer anlända til Stranden, och nalkas Gustaf. I dessamma går hela Danska Flotten til segels.)

ELLOFTE

Fig. 7. Act III, scene 10 of Gustaf Wasa. *"Victory, victory". The printed libretto with jottings by the then vice director of the Royal Opera, A. N. Clewberg-Edelcrantz, 1786. Stockholm 1786. KTA.*

ladders are raised against the bridge, which is taken by storm, and the Danes are driven off it.

And still the battle isn't over. But soon Gustaf is able to place his banner on the bastion and the guns are dragged closer to the gate. The Danes' sorties are equally unsuccessful. The Swedes outnumber them two to one, are thereto brave and as they fight sing incessantly of victory and their forefathers' courage. We see the Danes fleeing, before hesitantly, at Christian's order, turning back, or rallied in troops by Norrby. The scene changes and a troop is being chased into the narrow vaulted gateway by the Dalecarlians—where we also see a lion on its pedestal and a pyramid of cannonballs. We look out over walls and treetops. Another scene-change, and we follow the Danes' flight to their ships, which are waiting at the slips under the Söder cliffs, in the direction of the archipelago, behind the square between Stockholm Castle and Storkyrkan, the city's chief church. The Castle Tre Kronor is painted on frames obliquely to left of stage, and beside the church (right) is a throne and behind it a set depicting the city. We

Fig. 8. Act III, scene 14 (last scene) of Gustaf Wasa. *The king is borne in triumph to the throne. Engraving by J. Hall, about 1820. KB.*

witness Christian's fury, his vain attempts to rally his fleeing men. In despair, he sees the portcullis of the castle gate fall, closing it to him, and on its topmost tower the Danish flag being lowered and replaced by the Swedish one. At this moment Christina Gyllenstierna appears triumphantly on the parapet above the gate.

Tyrant, avaunt!—All hope is lost for thee—/ Know, this castle thou wouldst defend / No more is thine—That people whom thou'st whilom dragged thy chains, / By force their liberty this day have won. / Too much I hate thee not to fear thy death. / So hie thee hence! Take care to spare the sword, / A life to scorn and poverty and pain devoted / For thee a slow cruel death shall be.

So intense is Christian's despair, his men have to drag him by main force from the field. The ships put to sea, i.e. are drawn offstage. The

Fig. 9a. Knight's suit of armour for Gustaf Wasa. *Compare with pictures in the colour supplement. Nordic Museum.*

Fig. 9b. Knight's costume for Gustaf Wasa. *Compare with pictures in the colour supplement. Nordic Museum.*

Danish army, surrounded, falls to its knees, throws down its weapons and is marched off by Swedish soldiers. But Gustaf (as in von Brahm, 1772) orders them to be treated well. Upon Norrby sending his mother back to him, the Danes are set at liberty, allowed to fetch their weapons and sail off home in one of the ships. The first glimpse we have of the Swedes' triumphal march has been under the narrow vaulted gateway to the Castle. With the 16-man guards band at their head, Gustaf and his men marched once round the stage. Now, as the Danes surrender, the march reaches the area between the Castle and

Storkyrkan, again encircles the stage, and forms up on either side. A change made immediately after the first night was that the castle gate is opened during the march, and the prisoners we saw in Act I, together with other nobles, gentlemen and ladies in pseudo16th century black costumes, obliquely enhanced with gold stripes, emerge and fall on their knees in front of Gustaf (Fig. 7). And the last element of anxiety is removed when his mother, Cecilia of Eka, is brought on stage in a boat and the last Danes disappear. Christina Gyllenstierna suggests that Gustaf Wasa, as the country's most suitable regent, deserves the crown. And the nobles, the army and the people—represented by four female burghers with children in quasi-folk costume—agree. Then the right side of the stage is evacuated and the throne set in order; the troops present arms and Gustaf is raised aloft on a shield decorated with the Swedish coat of arms. To general acclaim and praise for the dignity of the throne he is borne (Fig. 8) by eight knights, preceded by the captured trophies and followed by the banners. These having been arranged around the throne, eight knights step forward, one with the banner, one with the sword of state, a third with the crown, which he places on Gustaf's head, while a fourth hands him the spire. The Dalecarlians fall on their knees in front of him and swear fidelity, and after them the noblemen, knights, and gentlemen and their wives. To a fanfare of trumpets from the castle Gustaf III lets the final curtain fall on this scene, so eloquent of his subjects' loyalty and fidelity.

HOW WAS *GUSTAF WASA* RECEIVED?

Any critical voices drowned in the immense enthusiasm. The company played to packed audiences, the opera's melodies became the hit-tunes of the day, and the libretto was on everyone's lips. Carl Stenborg's performance as Gustaf Wasa, even if it was regarded as a trifle weak and feminine compared with Karsten's as Christian, which was praised to the skies, was admired beyond words. People also praised de Broën's warm-hearted Norrby, Mme Marcadet as Gustaf's mother and Mme Müller's flexibility in a great variety of situations and feelings, as Christina Gyllenstierna. The great number of scenes and the splendour of Desprez' costumes and stage sets threw everyone into raptures, as they were found to be true to life, genial and historically correct. The battle scenes, in the royalistic Gjörwell's opinion, depicted fragments of the country's history and evinced a knowledge of the art of war. And it was they too which, among the commons, stirred up the warlike mood Gustaf III had intended: the always latent hatred

between Sweden and Denmark, as his sister-in-law Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotte put it. She had never heard the pit so noisy. Gjörwell too witnesses to the uproar there, and relates how, as the Danes had come marching in, the audience had roared "Hit 'em, hit 'em, hit 'em'!", sworn and shaken its fists.[14]

By May 15, 1787, at the latest the Danish embassy in Stockholm had tumbled to it that *Gustaf Wasa* was every bit as much a political as a theatrical event, aimed at Denmark. In his report home Rosenkrantz could hardly bring himself to speak of the opera, writing that in its every detail it was worthy of Gustaf's policy at that moment—a policy which Gustaf however would shortly thereafter change, making approaches to Denmark and turning against Russia. The Russian war, which broke out in 1788, was prepared, it too, in his opera house and on the stage of Adolf Fredrik Ristell's Dramatiska Teatern with other historical plays from the royal hand. After the end of 1786 *Gustaf Wasa* was no longer current politics again until August 1788. By then Gustaf III, who was with his army in Finland, needed to rally public opinion for the country's defense against the Danes, who by then were also threatening to declare war on him, to reduce aristocratic reluctance against the war and opposition in the army. On August 14, via Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, who had been head of the Royal Opera since 1786, he ordered *Gustaf Wasa* to be staged again, and advertized in the provincial press. Rehearsals were begun, but Armfelt, behind the king's back, put a stop to the project. The Danes had invaded Bohuslän, and Armfeldt, the king's favourite, thought that in the event of real military actions turning out badly Swedish stage heroics might seem ridiculous. Instead, that September Gustaf III placed himself on the Gustaf Wasa mound at Mora, in Dalarna, and next day on the church wall at Leksand, and, as his ancestor had done before him, appealed to the Dalecarlians.[15]

After Gustaf III's brilliant Swedish naval victory over Russia in Svensksund and the conclusion of peace *Gustaf Wasa* was staged again, on the occasion of the Stockholm national guard's parade of September 30, 1790. During the last years of the reign, when Gustaf III was in conflict with the nobility, in touch with dissatisfied elements in Norway and planning a major international manouevre to restore the French monarchy, it was played at Christmas 1790, around March 1, 1791 and again in November. And now, for the first time, Piron's *Gustave* was put on in Stockholm by the French troupe. There were also plans to stage the Swedish *Gustaf Wasa* in Paris, as antirevolutionary propaganda. In 1790 Ristell, then in London, got it accepted

by the Paris Opera, even making some suggestions for changes in the light of the current situation. But it was never staged.

Under the impact of the French Revolution and after Gustaf's death *Gustaf Wasa* in Sweden began to be regarded as a challenge to the régime, rather than as propaganda on its behalf, as before. In the autumn of 1792 some young merchants and shopkeepers began shouting applause and clapping at every mention of freedom and the need to extirpate tyrants. And the opera was instantly taken off.[16] Next time it was staged, in 1797, it was in censored form. Not until 1810 was it again played uncut. Thereafter the 1786 version was put on at regular intervals and without any major changes, even remaining a great draw card until as late as 1823. Thereafter it was not played until 1859.

NOTES

1. Friedländer, A. E., *Gustaf III som dramatisk författare*. Lund 1884; Levertin, O., *Gustaf III som dramatisk författare*, Sthlm 1894; Breitholtz, L., *Studier i operan Gustaf Wasa*, Uppsala universitets årsskrift 1954:5,; Backman, S., De Belloys drama 'Le Siège de Calais'—Gustav III:s och Kellgrens drama 'Gustaf Wasa'" in *Finsk Tidskrift 127* 1939:2; Engländer, R., *Johann Gottlieb Naumann als Opernkomponist*. Leipzig 1922; and others.
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CAROLINA MÜLLER

Iconographical sources showing Caroline Walter alias Carolina Müller on stage

Klaus Neiiendam

THE ART OF THE THEATRE is ephemeral in substance and social in function. This definition pinpoints the crux of the problem confronting theatre research. How is it possible to study bygone theatre, and the response of bygone audiences, when the essence of acting has to be experienced by the eyes *and* ears? The answer, of course, is that the complicated dramatic productions of the period can only be studied through written records, pictures and sheet music.

Just as words alone cannot describe music, written sources alone cannot capture the art of the theatre. Unlike music, no system of annotation existed in the past to provide us with a lasting record of performance tradition. Although theatre is three-dimensional, the best method to shed light on the acting and stage direction of earlier times is to piece together contemporary iconographical records with information from written sources.

However, even the best and most closely corroborated pictures —which faithfully reproduce stage performances as experienced by audiences—will only give an incomplete impression of the full complexity of the dramatic work they describe. Yet a clear idea can be gained of the theatrical conventions of a given period and style of acting, if a laborious collection is made of memorabilia. When iconographical sources yield a documentary record of performance, they provide posterity with a fleeting glimpse of bygone theatre. The aim of these painters has been to capture the art of the theatre for the lasting pleasure of contemporary theatre-goers. This means that their pictures disclose not only details of the action on stage, but likewise the

expectations and priorities of contemporary audiences. The artist tells us how the production is perceived by the audience, and provides us with important source material for studies in receptivity.[1]

The desire to perpetuate the art of acting through pictures goes back to classical antiquity, although it was greatly intensified in the 18th century in French art; for example, with Claude Gillot's drawings of the old Théâtre Italien, and Charles-Antoine Coypel's scenes from Molière's plays at the Comédie Française, as well as Gabriel de Saint-Aubin's depictions of performances of Voltaire's plays and the *opéra comique*.[2] Showing people at work—in their *métier*—appealed especially to genre painters, and in turn, they have produced some of the best visual documentation of dramatic art. In all, it is an expression of the transfer of patronage from the great princes and magnates of the Baroque to the citizens and general public of the Age of Enlightenment. In genre painting in Scandinavia, this is exemplified by Peter Cramer in Denmark, and Pehr Hilleström in Sweden.[3] Some of their best pictures are of the *prima donna assoluta* of the Gustavian era: Caroline Walter, alias Carolina Müller.

Caroline Fridericha Halle was born on the 5th February 1756 in Copenhagen. She was illegitimate and her family extremely poor. It was perhaps in the hope that she would be able to earn some money that her stepfather—a stagehand at Den Danske Skueplads—took her with him to the theatre when she was six years old. She trained here at the dancing school under the Italian teacher, Antonio Como, and later Jean Pierre Laurent from France. They taught her the art of movement and mime in the 18th century tradition, and the skill she learnt there remained with her for the rest of her life. She went on stage for the first time already at the age of six, and she continued in child parts until being promoted to Figurante roles. The Holberg actor, Iver Als, who also functioned as theatre manager, has in a letter described her early circumstances as follows:

> Often in the snow and sleet of winter, the poor child came to her training in shoes without soles and wearing a wrap of thin calico. Day after day she would be bullied and made fun of, but she always remained bright and natural, and learnt more than any of the others ever did.[4]

It was most likely Iver Als who recommended her to take up acting, and she was coached in the original baroque Holberg tradition with its emphasis on full mastery of dialogue, directly under the inspiration of the Molière school. Moreover, the first truly Danish dramaturge, Knud Lyne Rahbek, describes her Pernille in Holberg's comedies as

Fig. 1. "The Fight Between Ceres and Thetis", prologue by Johannes Ewald, music by P. Scalabrini, 1774. Caroline Halle as the sea nymph Thetis, daughter of the sea god Nereus. Indian ink and pencil drawing by P. Cramer. The Museum for Fine Arts, Copenhagen.

having "the fluent tongue and fleeting glance which Dorat expects of soubrettes. She was light-hearted, roguish, and naive".[5]

Cornelius Høyer, the miniaturist, painted a watercolour of Caroline which probably dates to the close of the 1770s. It is most likely a private portrait, but her expressive eyes are much in evidence. In the opinion of contemporay critics her eyes were the primary source of her air of merriment.[6]

Caroline Halle's real début was as the servant girl Pernille in Holberg's comedy, *L'Affairé sans Affaires* (*Den Stundesløse*) on 1st December 1769. After dancing school and her acting apprenticeship in the Holberg tradition, there followed training at the academy called *Den danske Syngeskole* (The Danish School of Singing), where she was among the first pupils. The leader of this academy was the Italian singer, Michelangelo Potenza. Judging from the early singing parts created for her, it seems that to begin with she was a lyrical soprano.

The oldest picture of her on stage which can be firmly dated, shows her at the age of eighteen as the sea-nymph Thetis (Fig. 1), daughter of the sea-god Nereus. The drawing is by Peter Cramer, stage designer at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. Thanks to preserved stage instructions and accounting records, Peter Cramer's sometimes incredible documentary flair is clearly revealed. It can be argued that if Cramer took so much trouble to depict decorations, props and costumes with such painstaking accuracy, then his pictures showing the action on stage are surely faithful records of performances, as these were experienced by the audience. Cramer's drawings were often models for mural decorations, overdoors, as well as for copperplate engravings. Their aim was to give the theatre-going public an opportunity to enjoy pictures showing favourite actors in popular roles.

Cramer's drawing is a depiction of Johannes Ewald's prologue "The Fight Between Ceres and Thetis", with music by the Italian composer, Paolo Scalabrini. It was only performed twice, on the 22nd and 31st October 1774. Whereas Ceres' emblem is a sickle, and Vertumnus, the god of gardens and orchards, holds a cornucopia, Caroline herself carries a sceptre and her right hand is raised in gesture. Cramer has caught her classical profile and lively glance, but we know from contemporary criticism that the "Heroic Style" was not her strong point.

Giuseppe Sarti was the first to make use of Caroline's musical talent. Today this Italian composer is world-famous because of Mozart's excerpt of his music in the banqueting scene of the opera *Don Giovanni*. Sarti became one of the most notable composers in Scandinavia in the eighteenth century, but in Denmark he suffered a sad fate. Presumably with the encouragement of the circle round Christian VII's personal physician from Germany, the statesman Johann Friedrich Struensee, he conducted "Enterprise" at the Royal Theatre in 1770. His idea had been to create *un opera danese*; however he sensibly started off with the *opéra-comique*—the Danish *Singspiel*. In it, he cast his first notable "singing actress", Caroline Halle.

Soliman le Second, with libretto by Favart and new music by Sarti, opened on October 8, 1770. Cramer made no less than two drawings of this performance.[7] Both show Caroline as Roxelane, a young French girl who has ended up in the harem of cruel Sultan Soliman of Constantinople. The drawings depict Act II, Scene 3, in which Roxelane revolts against the Sultan by taking his pipe and throwing it on the floor. Her yellow costume with its baggy trousers in the harem style reveals what, at the time, must have seemed a sexily provocative

Fig. 2. Scene 12 from Les Deux avares *by Grétry, libretto by Falbaire. Caroline Halle as Lucinde. Watercolour drawing by P. Cramer. The Museum for Fine Arts, Copenhagen.*

amount of leg. Here, Cramer's technique is much like a cartoon strip. He even shows how Caroline snaps the Sultan's pipe—an act which literally breaks his despotic power and male dominance. Apart from local colour, the piece is a demonstration against obsolete norms.

The première of Grétry's *Les deux Avares*, with libretto by Falbaire, took place on October 29, 1774. One of Cramer's best pictures perpetuates a scene from it: a painterly tableau in the style of Denis Diderot (Fig. 2). It is the beginning of Scene 12, when Damon and Lucinde try to flee from their tyrannical, miserly guardians. Unfortunately, the couple lose Lucinde's fortune down a well. Both express great horror, Damon's hands are clasped in prayer, his right knee is raised. Caroline as Lucinde stands as if in ballet, with arms gently outstretched in an expression of deep terror.

Fig. 3. Scene from Le Marchand de Smyrne *by K. D. Stegmann, libretto by Chamfort. Caroline Halle as the French maiden Amélie in chains. Pencil drawing by P. Cramer. The Museum for Fine Arts, Copenhagen.*

With its mixture of sentimentality and comedy, the *Singspiel Le Marchand de Smyrne* by the German composer, K. D. Stegmann, and libretto by Chamfort, became a kind of forerunner of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail.* In Copenhagen the première was on January 2, 1776 (Fig. 3). In an accomplished, almost impressionistic sketch, Cramer depicts Caroline in chains as the French maiden, Amélie, who is forced to listen to the aria sung by the evil slavetrader, Kaled. In the best *aria parlante*-style Kaled (ferociously bearded and with dagger in his belt) confident of his might, rages at her while she turns her back to him, her eyes downcast beneath her hat and, according to Knud Lyne Rahbek, "taking a couple of small, unsteady steps".[8]

On March 12, the same year, the première of *Ninette à la Cour*, Farvart's *opéra-comique* with pasticcio music, took place at the Royal Theatre. Here, Cramer has portrayed Caroline as the peasant-girl Ninette, feeling thoroughly uncomfortable in boned petticoats at court. According to the costume and properties inventory she wore:

"an Opera gown by Madame Pasi with train , and fan".[9] This description is borne out by Cramer's drawing, it likewise strengthens the source-value of the painting. Madame Pasi was the sister of Sarti's wife, Camilla Pasi, whose praises were sung in Stockholm by Carl Michael Bellman.

Two years earlier, in 1774, Caroline married Thomas Christian Walter, an obscure composer but socially respected civil servant in Copenhagen. Not until 1777 however did the most popular picture of Caroline see the light of day. It was painted by Cornelius Høyer, a gouache depicting her as Aglaë in "Aglaë or the Statue" by Poinsinet de Sivry with original Danish songs and music by Giuseppe Sarti. The performance opened on February 16, 1774, but Høyer's picture was intended as the model for a copperplate engraving by Terkel Kleve. In 1778, the reproduction was advertised for sale in the following words:

> When we see Fru Walther's portrait, we ought to remember that it is engraved after an excellent drawing of her in the play "Aglaë or the Statue". The harmony of her expression, her tranquil poise, her theatrical costume and her coiffure are all so vividly portrayed that we at once recognise this actress in her greatest role.[10]

The piece is on the theme of Pygmalion, made popular in the 18th century by Jean-Philippe Rameau's *acte de ballet, Pygmalion,* and its notable success at the Paris Opéra, and later by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's version, which Goethe had introduced into Germany. In Denmark, Caroline's interpretation of the statue which comes to life brought forth a celebrated poem by Johannes Ewald, in it he calls her "Thalia's Caroline". The poem was printed beneath Kleve's print 1777.

At the artistic peak of her career in 1780 she fell victim to intrigue. One of the people responsible for the execution of Struensee, General Hans Henrik von Eickstedt, had by now been promoted to "*Geheimestatsraadet*". Acting as a kind of minister for national security, he abused the authority he held over the Royal Theatre to such an extent that Caroline was forced to flee in male disguise to Sweden. In Gothenburg, exactly one month later, she married Christian Friedrich Müller, the violin virtuoso from Brandenburg, who among other creative successes also later composed the music for Gustaf III's and Kellgren's production *Drottning Christina* in 1785. After her marriage Caroline adopted the Swedish name Carolina Friderica Müller. She made her début on February 26, 1781 at the Royal Opera in Bollhuset as Gluck's *Alceste.*

By now her voice had developed from lyrical soprano in Johann

Ernst Hartmann's *Singspiele* to the dramatic soprano she became so convincingly in Stockholm. She had to form a new repertoire: the majestic queens of *opera seria*. Caroline could not have avoided becoming acquainted with Gluck's Alceste while she was in Copenhagen. In 1775, a rather poor version of it had been performed by the Italian opera. Moreover, the seeds of reform were cultivated at Potenza's singing academy, and there she had got to know the outstanding Swedish singer, Christofer Karsten, sent by Gustaf III to Copenhagen to perfect his singing.

Undoubtedly Caroline's experience in French and Danish *opéra-comique*, as well as her training as a dancer and in drama, all combined to furnish her with the artistic resources which would be necessary for the passionate expression enacted in the reformed operas. In this light, then, it is hardly surprising that *Alceste* should be such a tremendous success in Stockholm. In a letter of March 2, 1781, the gifted poet and Sweden's first real drama critic, Johan Henrik Kellgren wrote:

> Yesterday, I wept for two whole hours at the Opera when "Alceste" was performed for the first time: Mrs Müller's début. One can say that never before in Sweden has such a spectacular performance or actress been seen.

Gustaf III summoned Caroline to him, and presented her with: "A superb gold watch with chain and pendant."[12] The king's brother, Prince Karl, gave her a diamond ring. Pehr Hillerström's painting of a scene from this performance is now owned by the Royal Opera. It depicts the closing scene in Act III.[13]

To the forefront of the stage beneath the crescent moon we see Admete, the husband of Alceste, overcome by grief. Carl Stenborg mimes Sorrow with left hand and outstretched left leg. On the right can be seen the Altar of Death with hourglass and scythe. The main action is centre stage where Hercules is fighting the demons of the underworld with his club. Carolina Müller, as the lifeless Alceste, hangs from his left arm. A costume inventory from 1792 gives us reason to believe that the artist wanted to reproduce accurately what he saw on stage. The newspaper *Stockholms Posten* reported that this closing scene caused "a great sensation". Even the Danish ambassador could not refrain from sending an enthusiastic account to the Danish Foreign Office:

> *Madam Miller, autrefois si connuë chez nous sous le nom de Walter, vient de debuter ici dans le rôle d'Alceste. Les éloges qu'elle a recueillis, ses succès ont eté si grands, si suivis dans les trois fois qu'elle a parû sur le Théâtre, qu'ils*

seroient incroyable pour tous çeux qui ne connoissent pas les talens superieurs de cette Actrice.[14]

However, since these remarks indirectly criticised the dispositions of the stupid Danish government, he was severely reprimanded for his report. The following year, Caroline suddenly left Stockholm with her husband, and they arrived in London via Christiania in Norway, and Hamburg. As an actress fêted by the bourgeoisie in Copenhagen and an accomplished singer, she objected to some young members of the Swedish aristocracy who were pages at the Court of Gustaf III and who, unfortunately for her, were the sovereign's favourites. Gustaf mobilized units of the Swedish army in an effort to capture her, and diplomatic negotiations were set in motion at the highest level. But this was to no avail; and the King's splendid new opera-house, the most modern in Europe, could not open with "Æneas in Carthage", created personally by the king in collaboration with Kellgren, and with music by Joseph Martin Kraus.

Caroline was the first Danish representative of the performing arts to appear in London, but her visit was brief and she did not win fame in the theatre or concert hall. On the other hand, she had become familiar with one of Europe's leading centres of music. Perhaps in the autumn of 1782 she may have seen Mrs. Siddons' triumphant début at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. It is also likely that by seeing Sarah Siddons' classical portrayals she experienced the full dignity of tragedy in the contemporary style. In any event, Caroline excelled in precisely this type of role upon her return to Stockholm.

We know that in Germany she gave successful performances in several theatres. There is an amusing little piece of information in the diary of Frederik Schmidt, a young theologian—later to become a dean; his entry for May 28, 1794, reads as follows:

> On one of the panes in my window (at Wirtshaus St. Petersburg am Jungferstige) is written: Caroline (Walter, I presume), *die schönste der Welt ist hier gewesen an Glück für Hamburg.*[15]

By chance, too, a poster has survived which shows that she appeared at the Hamburg Opera at any rate in 1783.

It was of crucial importance to her career that Gustaf proved less petty than the Danish government. He called her back to Stockholm from London, to an improved appointment at the Opera. By the consistency of her actions she had proved that she was indispensable.

Without doubt, the high point of Carolina Müller's artistry was reached in *Gustaf Wasa* by the king, Kellgren and Naumann,

which had its première on January 19, 1786. In Sweden, the historical theme of the opera was familiar, yet by striking chords of nationalism (with address to foreign powers), the piece was in fact highly effective national theatre with overtones of domestic politics. Gustaf's chief political aim was a strong, independent Swedish monarchy. When Gustaf I Wasa was cheered on stage the homage fell on Gustaf III. No effort was spared to make the king's cultural policy ring true. One of the most outstanding stage designers of the day, the Frenchman, Louis Jean Desprez, created the settings in the so-called "Burgundian Style".[16] In Denmark, it had already been introduced under the name of "Gothic Style" in 1779 by the painter, Nicolai Abildgaard for the costumes in Ewald's and Hartmann's "Death of Balder" in which Caroline had sung the female lead, Nanna. Now, in *Gustaf Wasa* her director was the king, who with this production proved himself to be one of the great connoisseurs of talent and the theatre in the eighteenth century, and one with special power and authority.

Pehr Hilleström made four paintings of scenes from *Gustaf Wasa*. Two of them give an impression of Carolina Müller on stage. The Swedish source material lacks the documentary detail of the Danish material. Pehr Hilleström's portrayals of the action on stage are not as documentary as those by Peter Cramer, yet there are grounds for believing that Hilleström wanted to depict what the audience experienced in the theatre. The picture of Act 1 Scene 8 (see Fig. 3 in Birgitta Schyberg's article) clearly shows Desprez' neo-Gothic arches, flags and the throne in the centre of the stage. The setting is divided into picturesque groups with Severin Norrby and King Christian on the left, and the unfortunate captured women on the right. Norrby expresses his sorrow to the audience, whereas the central role is Christofer Karsten as Christian, the tyrant. His dagger is held high above the poor little boy, whose mother, Christina Gyllenstierna —played by Caroline—passionately defends him. We recognise Carolina Müller's characteristic profile and eloquent eyes.

Hilleström's painting with its motif taken from Act II Scene 4[17] (see the colour supplement) shows Caroline in Gustaf Wasa's tent in the Swedish encampment, with Stockholm's old castle Tre Kronor in the background. Although the setting is out-of-doors, the artist faithfully depicts the boards of the stage as if his intention is to capture the theatrical experience. Like opposite poles, Norrby and Gustaf each dominate the stage. Norrby gazes across the auditorium, while Gustaf, in an attitude of noble pride, receives the acclaim of his soldiers. At the same time Carolina Müller gestures proudly towards the troops, some

Fig. 4. A noisy dinner. The inscription reads: "Madame Dechauz Schön Mrs Möller Sergell". Washed pencil drawing by J. T. Segel. NM.

of whom wear long beards. The wardrobe inventory of 1792 seems to confirm that Hilleström has reproduced the costumes correctly, much as these were visualised by Gustaf III himself. On the whole, however, Hilleström has adapted the dimensions of the stage to the format of a genre painting. To Cramer in Copenhagen, and Hilleström in Stockholm, the centre of interest lies in the acting on stage.

At the time of Caroline's triumph in *Gustaf Wasa*, she was modelled by the greatest Swedish sculptor of the day, Johan Tobias Sergel, in one of his outstanding reliefs.[18] By catching the firm line of her closed lips, Sergel conveys both her determination and smiling charm.

In one of his inspired, lightning sketches (Fig. 4): "A Noisy Dinner Party", Sergel has also depicted "Fru Möller". The artist is seated on her right, empty wine-bottles piled behind his chair. On her left is undoubtedly her merry host, a voluminous merchant. It is quite natural to find Carolina Müller in Sergel's circle. He numbered the Danish artists Nicolai Abildgaard and Jens Juel among his friends, as

Fig. 5. Carolina Müller (1755–1826), First actress and Singer at the Royal Opera 1780–1806. Oil on canvas by Jens Juel, 1791. NM.

well as his Danish colleague, Bertel Thorvaldsen. Carl Michael Bellman was also one of Sergel's friends, but no special link between Caroline and Bellman has as yet been traced. On the other hand, Sergel and his artist-friends could all share in her freedom from trivial financial worries.

The most artistically noteworthy painting of Caroline Walter alias Carolina Müller is by Jens Juel, the Danish portraitist (Fig. 5). The painting probably belonged to Caroline. It hangs today in the National Museum in Stockholm. It was painted in 1791, when Carolina Müller was allowed to travel to Copenhagen in order to have her baby (a daughter) in Denmark. In Juel's painting she wears a dress of white muslin in the Directoire style, with a pale blue silk sash round her waist. A transparent collar enhances the light, airy quality, and her blonde curls which are held back by a lightly twisted headband. There is grace and charm about her, but her firm mouth denotes a strong will. Jens Juel has caught her bold freshness as well as her air of conviction, which the king both feared and admired.

Caroline gave her last performance at the Stockholm Opera on November 9, 1810, in a gala performance for the heir apparent, Jean Baptiste Bernadotte. She took her great role of Christina Gyllenstierna in *Gustaf Wasa*. After her retirement from the stage she taught

the next generation of Swedish players and singers for a number of years, "*uti en rigtig Action och sann Declamation*"—real mime and true declamation.

In theatre-going circles in Stockholm, the memory of Carolina Müller's performances lived on for many years. Johan Frederik Vikström writes in his memoirs that:

> Her voice possessed both tone and strength in her early years. The emotion she expressed in her singing as well as her acting always made a great impact on her audience. Armide was her triumph, no-one has ever equalled her in this role. She was also a tender and loving Alceste. As Christina Gyllenstjerna she was sometimes sublime. Those who have seen her inspired performances in the quartet in Act 1 will never forget her.[19]

Caroline Walter's life and career were exceptional. In spite of being split between two countries, she achieved the height of fame in both: in Copenhagen as "Thalia's Caroline", and in Stockholm as the prima-donna of the Royal Opera. She was schooled in ballet, comedy, tragedy, *opéra-comique* and *opera seria*. Her career spanned from the theatre of the Baroque, over sentiment and neo-classicism, to pre-romantic tones. She experienced a social reform, starting as an actress at a time when all actresses were thought to be prostitutes, she ended by becoming the first to be worshipped for the divine powers of her acting. But her dedication to her craft was largely overlooked. Caroline's dramatic departure from Copenhagen, and later, from Stockholm, broke with contemporary social norms and helped to place members of the acting profession in a new light, and through it to show the true importance of the theatre to society.

The music composed for her voice can give us an impression of her artistic calibre. The aria "O, heavenly powers"—*allegro assai*—was created for Caroline Walter in the part of Nanna in Johannes Ewald's and Johann Ernst Hartmann's "Death of Balder" 1779.[20] It is an invocation to the gods which reveals the great melodramatic powers of expression she learnt while studying with Giuseppe Sarti in Copenhagen. However, it was at Gustaf III's great opera house in Stockholm she reached the peak of her career as an actress and singer.

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Translated by Jean Olsen.

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THE OPERAS OF JOSEPH MARTIN KRAUS

Bertil H. van Boer Jr

IT IS A DIFFICULT TASK to determine the comparative quality of the hundreds of operas and *Singspiele* performed in Stockholm during the eighteenth century, a time of intense and extensive activity within the realm of the theater. This is particularly true for the last two and a half decades of this period, when on any given day as many as two or three different stage works, ranging from crude pasticci to Swedish adaptations of *opéra-comique* to grand-eloquent large-scale operas, could be heard in theaters ranging from Carl Stenborg's popular Munkbro to the Royal Opera of Gustaf III. The style and variation of these works was immense, and music was an ever-present entity; even the most rudimentary of the spoken plays was infused with some sort of music. In short, the Swedish capital was the center of a rich and varied musical theater wherein it was possible to experience a wide range of productions of both foreign and domestic works, each of which contained some musical element.

This same variety extends to the music of these various works, if one chooses to focus on that aspect. Music was the necessary catalyst for comedy and drama alike, and much of it covered the same range of styles from the simplistic tunes of the French comic opera to elaborate orchestral textures of the grand Gustavian Opera. As on the continent, the music of the more popular composers was common, and even those resident in Stockholm contributed greatly to the stage. One of these, the German-born composer Joseph Martin Kraus (Fig. 1), stands out by virtue of his bold and dramatic music that has been acknowledged as among the finest written in Europe during this period.[1]

Kraus was a complex individual whose cultural interests extended in many directions. His early training in Germany brought him into

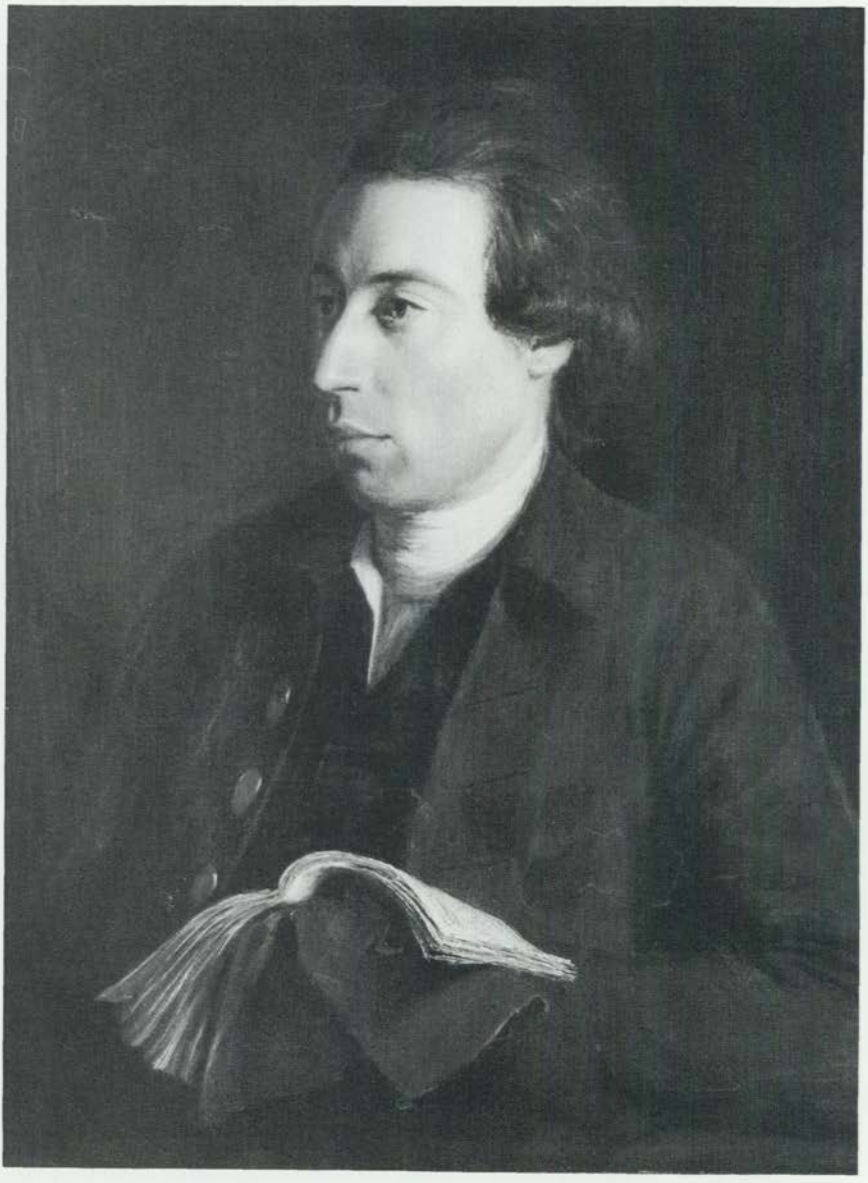

Fig. 1. Joseph Martin Kraus (1756–1792). Second Kapellmeister 1781, Kapellmeister 1788–1792. Oil on canvas attributed to A. Graff. KMA.

contact with the *Sturm und Drang* literary movement in Göttingen, under whose influence he began to dabble in poetry. It is from these years, 1776–78, that his first contact with opera—as a librettist and critic[2]—dates. Following his relocation to Stockholm in 1778, his sole

purpose in dedicating his life to musical composition was to write music for the stage, beginning with a *Singspiel, Azire,* begun in Göttingen in collaboration with his friend Carl Stridsberg. This purpose was achieved throughout his all-too-short life; although he completed only three major operas, his music for the stage—ballets, incidental music, contributions to *pasticci*, insertion arias, and the like—was both extensive and well-received, making Kraus the leading composer of the Gustavian Period (Table 1). His friends and contemporaries like author Johan Henrik Kellgren recognized Kraus's genius early on, yet the composer was continually plagued with performance set-backs. His monumental work, the six-act opera *Æneas i Carthago,* never achieved performance during his lifetime, and most of the other stage works had but brief moments of popularity before falling into oblivion, a situation that still occurs today despite extensive background work and scholarly study.[3] Yet these neglected works contain the essence of Kraus's compositional skill, which in itself incorporates the very best traits of Swedish eighteenth-century opera.

Kraus completed three major operas, in addition to a work that more properly belongs to that intermediary category *"drama med sång"* (drama mingled with songs). His earliest work, *Azire,* to a Swedish text by his fellow Göttingen student Carl Stridsberg, dates from his first years in Stockholm 1778–82. In a letter to his parents from Stockholm, dated December 6, 1778, he reported:

> In short—I am now writing an operetta, but unwillingly, may all the Saints bear witness. Why? Can't I tell you? I would like to, but naturally that wouldn't do. It is a terrible thing to have to work in order to be able to pay for China and its treasures.[5]

That Kraus was "forced" to write this Swedish *Sturm und Drang Singspiel* is, of course, a moot point; it is clear from the following correspondence that he was using this opera as a means of establishing his credentials in a foreign city. He repeated his reasons on January 5, 1779: "My operetta is accepted; how it will be accepted is another issue."[6] This seems to have been too optimistic, for on March 2, Kraus explained his dire need for money to his parents, with the excuse that his opera had been put on the back burner, so to speak:

> The music has everyone's approbation, but the librettist has enemies, and although I stake my life that it is the best piece to give the Swedes something original, it was still suppressed.[7]

The director of the Royal Opera, Baron Adolf Fredrik Barnekow, it appears, had a personality conflict with Kraus and was determined to

place every obstacle in his way. He forced the composer to wait upon the "King's good will," and the submission to the Royal Academy of Music resulted in an interminable wait for Kraus with an unfavorable verdict at the end. On May 8, Kraus blamed Barnekow for inciting cabals against himself and Stridsberg, and the opera *Azire* was destined never to be performed.[8]

Table 1. The Operas of Joseph Martin Kraus

Date	Work (No. of Acts)	Type	(Librettist)
1778	*Azire* (3) VB 18[4]	Opera	Stridsberg
1781?	*Le bon Seigneur* (1) VB 24	Play	Unknown
1781	*Proserpin* (1) VB 19	Opera	Kellgren
1782–92	*Aeneas i Cartago* (6) VB 23	Opera	Kellgren
1784	*Amphitryon* (3) VB 26	Incidental Music	Unknown
1785	*Oedip* (3?) VB 21	Opera	Unknown (Incomplete)
1785	*Zélia* (1) VB 20	Duodrama	d'Invilliers
1787	*Visittimman* (1 aria) VB 25	*Opéra-comique*	Ristell (Poinsinet)
1787	*Fintbergs bröllop* (1) VB 27	Play	Holthusen
1787	Gluck's *Armide* VB 38	Ballet	
1788	*Fricorpsen* (1) VB 30a	divertisement	Björn
1789	*Soliman II* (3) VB 22	*Drama med sång*	Oxenstierna (Favart)
1789	*Fiskarena* (1) VB 39	Ballet	Bournonville
1789	*Mexikanske Systrarna* (1 aria) VB 28	Play	Rosenheim (Sparrschöld)
1790	*Olympie* (5) VB 29	Play	Kellgren
1790	*Födelsedagen* (1) VB 30	Drama med sång	Gustaf III
1790	*Äfventyraren* (2) VB 31	*Pasticcio*	Lannerstierna
1791	Birthday Prologue for Duke Karl (1) VB 32	Play	Björn
1792	*Oedipe* (5) VB 33 (choruses)	Play	Adlerbeth
1792	*Marknaden* (1) VB 34	Operetta	Björn

Little survives of *Azire*; Kraus' biographer Silverstolpe was able to obtain the final chorus and ballet movements (and some 10 bars of the penultimate concerted number) from a bookseller in about 1850.[9] Markings on this autograph fragment indicate that it had been torn from the original opera and used separately as a ballet. But both Per Frigel and Silverstolpe had the opportunity to review the entire work during the beginning of the nineteenth century, and their observations give a general idea of the music and contents of this work:

The overture (in A major) was full of fire; in the opera itself I found, together with a plethora of those beautiful things that grab the heart, a true originality with respect to form and motion. That which Herr Frigel said, that the subject was dark, the characters wild like the music that supported them, is accurate through and through.[10]

If nothing else, this lost opera established Kraus as a composer of this genre in a manner that eventually attracted Gustaf III's attention.

In 1780, Kraus was finally commissioned by the king himself to write a work that would be used as a test piece in opera composition. This work was the one-act Classical drama *Proserpin*, written to a text by Johan Henrik Kellgren based upon a sketch by Gustaf III. On June 20, 1780, Kraus reported to his parents that his own situation in Stockholm had improved; his enemy, Barnekow, had been replaced by Carl von Fersen as the director of the Royal Opera, and through him and the king's personal secretary, Christoffer Zibet, Kraus received his first commission. On June 1, 1781, a private performance was arranged at Ulriksdal theater. Kraus described the event and his resulting employment in a precise manner:

My work was finally performed before the king at ... Ulriksdal, and I was permitted to conduct it myself. The court was extraordinarily pleased with the work and the manner in which the king declared his satisfaction was beyond all my expectations. Immediately following the end of the music, the king talked with me for a quarter of an hour; he complimented me politely, asked me about this and that, and took my measure from head to toe with his large eyes, and I, in my usual fashion, did the same, which pleased him.[11]

Despite this successful performance and Kraus's subsequent appointment, *Proserpin* was not intended to be anything more than a test piece of the composer's abilities. Kellgren, the librettist, omitted it from the first edition of his complete works, evidently regarding it as a bagatelle rather than a real operatic attempt, and even Kraus noted optimistically: "Because the text of the libretto needs to be altered somewhat, of course my opera cannot be given until the Fall; but then I can hope for a really pretty present."[12]

Prosepin remains today somewhat of an enigma. Though the work has its dramatic moments, such as the abduction of Proserpin by Pluto (see the colour supplement), Ceres's grief, and the long, sorrowful chorus of nymphs, it lacks the cohesion necessary for a successful work. The single act is extremely long—thirty-eight musical numbers plus ballet—and there is little overall action. The characters, particularly the shepherd Atis and the nymph Cyane, are contrived and wooden, and the plot lacks decisiveness. But Kraus's sensitive treat-

ment of the music more than compensates for the inadequacies of the text. Richard Engländer noted the Gluckian sound of the choruses, such as *"Proserpin, vi ropa dig"*, and the through-composed recitatives. Pluto's aria expressing his love for Proserpin (*"Kärlek, ack kärlek"*) demonstrates the composer's orchestrational ability with a haunting solo clarinet line that sounds like something out of Mozart's "Magic Flute", and Atis's suicide by jumping into the crater of Etna (*"Grym volcan"*) is a tension-filled aria of the musical *Sturm und Drang*. As a whole, however, it is not an opera that is easy to stage in its present form, and the dramatic problems must have been apparent even during the Gustavian period. *Proserpin* was set on the shelf, despite Kraus's hope for eventual revision into a "real" opera that would be acceptable for the stage.

If nothing else, *Proserpin* demonstrated that Kraus was a capable and brilliant composer of operatic works, a person who would be able to fulfill Gustaf's plans. In this spirit, he was commissioned by the king to write the inaugural opera for his new opera house, then nearing completion. This stage was to have been the most advanced in Europe and capable of both grandeur and all manner of special effects. Designed by architect Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz, it had been almost ten years under construction when Kraus reported to his parents on August 26, 1781:

> I have received the honor of composing the new work with which the new theater will be dedicated ... the title of the work is *Aeneas i Carthago*, and the plot, staging, and episodes are all by the king himself, with only the versification by the poet who did my last opera.[13]

With this missive began the long and—for Kraus—frustrating history of his most extensive and best work, the opera *Æneas i Carthago eller Dido och Æneas*.

Kraus was hard at work on the opera, a massive piece containing five acts plus prologue, until February 1782. After having completed the prologue and first two acts, his lead soprano, Caroline Müller, and her husband fled Sweden to avoid debtor's prison; with this scandal, Kraus's opportunity to write a work for the inauguration of the new opera house came to naught.[14] Time and time again, Kraus attempted to have his work staged, but neither his efforts nor those of the librettist, Kellgren, succeeded. It was not until 1799, some seven years after the composer's death and, as Leux-Henschen points out, after the final departure of his greatest rival Abbé Vogler, that the work was staged.[15]

It is difficult to discuss so large and varied a work as *Æneas* in such a short space. Nonetheless, certain aspects of this work are noteworthy. First, its composition occupied Kraus throughout his entire life. Fragments of the early version, dating from 1782, demonstrate that neither he nor Kellgren had produced a finished product. The orchestration is still fairly primitive—only flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns, and strings—and surviving examples of the recitatives from the prologue show a discontinuity of drama and action, especially when compared with the final version.[16] For instance, in the 1782 score, Juno threatens to unleash the winds upon the Trojan fleet, yet halfway through the same recitative, Æneas appears stating that a mysterious force has calmed the waves allowing him to make landfall. In the final score, these events are divided by a massive *scena* wherein Æolus unleashes the winds upon the hapless fleet (seen in the distance on stage). Neptune appears and calms the winds by sending gentle Zephyrs and sea creatures to waft the Trojans ashore.

The revisions underwent even more drastic change during the composer's years abroad, 1782–86; the influence of French *grand opéra*, such as Niccolò Piccinni's *Didone*, can be felt in the intensification of musical-dramatic action in the final score. Kraus himself noted that the work was in a state of flux; at the end of one of his letters to Kellgren he asked testily: "Where the devil is the text to Aeneas? For God's sake, answer me!"[17] The final work, which the composer seems to have finished about 1791, is as close to a *Gesamtkunstwerk* as one can come in the eighteenth century. It is a monumental drama within which music and drama are intimately intertwined, creating situations and characters that are all too human in their emotions. Since its original purpose as a vehicle to demonstrate the vast capabilities of Gustaf's new opera house was never altered, it is loaded with every conceivable type of technical display; storms at sea, temples, bucolic glades, ghosts, earthquakes, and even three armies on stage at one time! Taken together, both the human conditions and monumental setting of *Æneas* make this work one of the most powerful operas of the eighteenth century and well worth revival today.

While abroad on his Grand Tour, Kraus also began to set two other dramatic works, an opera entitled *Oedipe* and a duodrama *Zélia*. The first was evidently conceived as a means of obtaining some success on the Parisian stage. Yet it was begun without the necessary patronage, and Kraus himself appears to have destroyed the score after completing one act:

I finally chose a poem that promised to come up to the standards I sought. The subject was *Oedipus*. After completing the first act, I learned that Sacchini was working on the same material, but under the protection of the queen. Those that know the conditions here would doubtless have given me the same advice I gave myself; namely to cease work ... and throw it into the fire.[18]

Shortly thereafter, Kraus seems to have come upon a pastoral duodrama—a specific eighteenth-century dramatic work wherein the music accompanies spoken dialogue. The text of this work, *Zélia ou l'origine de la félicité*, suvives, but the music is lost, and there is no indication that it was ever performed in Paris or Stockholm.[19]

Though each of Kraus's major operatic works was more or less unsuccessful during his lifetime, the composer was by no means a stranger to Stockholm's theatrical life. He was active as a conductor, and the scores of Gluck's operas (as well as several of his own colleagues, like Uttini) bear unmistakable revisions in his hand.[20] He was also throughout his career a sought-after composer of incidental music for various plays. It is not without some sense of irony that Kraus, the dramatic composer par excellence, made his most popular contributions in the field of comedy and comic opera.

By far the most popular work was an adaptation of Charles Simon Favart's *opéra-comique Soliman II* (Fig. 2), revised and translated by Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna. Premièred on September 22, 1789, as the first performance of comedies at the Royal Opera under the new regulations of the same year, *Soliman* achieved instant success, remaining in the repertory until 1817.[21] Although it is generally considered among the operas of Kraus, this work is in reality one of the *"dramer blandade med sång"* ("dramas mingled with songs") that form one of the major types of stage works of the Gustavian era; the music is limited to barely two or three numbers in each of the three acts, with the major focus being upon the spoken dialogue. At the end of the work is a long ballet finale entitled *Roxelanes kröning*, the music of which takes more time than all of the numbers in the rest of the opera combined.

Kraus's music is at once both innovative and exciting, reflecting the various dramatic requirements. The overture, a long ritornello-form movement, contains the popular "Turkish" instruments—cymbals, jingling Johnnies, drums, and triangle—as well as episodes of complex thematic development and contrapuntal imitation. The music outlines the various characters in a careful fashion. The vivacious but scheming Spaniard Elmire is given a quick dance in B minor with a solo

Fig. 2. Theatre costume in "Turkish" style. Watercolour pencil drawing by an unknown artist. NM.

Schellenbaum, while Roxelane's gentle nature underneath her shrewish exterior is shown in her calm serenade in the second act, during which a long lyrical melody is accompanied by a soft mandolin. The long finale is a scene that integrates vocal music and ballet in a gigantic spectacle. It begins with the entrance marches of Soliman's subjects, from the slaves (B minor) to the Sultan himself (D major with all the Turkish instruments). The marriage and coronation of Roxelane is solemnized by choruses of priests and dervishes, the former of which sing in a slow, deliberate manner worthy of Mozart's "Magic Flute". After a lengthy ballet entertainment by harem dancers, Turkish jugglers, and other subjects, the work ends with a huge double chorus of Franks and Turks done in the French vaudeville style.

Kraus's other stage works show a wide diversity in style and mood. The two surviving lighthearted works—music to the comedy *Le bon seigneur* and Holthusen's *Sångspel*, *Fintberg's bröllop*—show his comic style at its best. The history of the first is, at present, uncertain; Engländer noted a "certain Viennese touch" in the work, stating that it could have been composed for the appearance of the Monvel

troupe resident in Stockholm in 1788.[22] Yet, the simplicity of style points rather to some time before Kraus's grand tour. The plot of the comedy is simple; the heroine Lucille is forced to abandon her love (Alexis) in favor of a rich suitor (Dumont). With the help of an old busybody, Le Bailli, the match is thwarted and the lovers reunited. Kraus's music is simple and uncomplicated, conforming perfectly to the *opéra-comique* style of composition. The first aria, "*Importune richesse*," is based upon a set of horn fifths, while the trio "*Aux charmes de l'espérance*" is a simple pastoral reflecting the naïve emotions of the lovers. The finale, "*Ah, quel bonheur*", is a typical French vaudeville.

Fintbergs bröllop was composed in 1787 upon composer's return from abroad. The seven movements are miniature portraits of the characters, from the basso buffo who sings of his commitment to his friends accompanied by unison strings, to the tenor dandy, whose fickle love is outlined by a rhythmically complex alla polacca. The vaudeville finale, "*Kärlek kan mig aldrig föra*", contains some of the most inventive orchestral accompaniments of the period supporting a simple melodic line.[23] In this piece, Kraus has met and bettered the *Singspiel* tradition of such German composers as Johann Adam Hiller and Johann Friedrich Reichardt.

Kraus appears to have been a sought-after composer of stage music, particularly comedy. For example, when Nils von Rosenheim attempted to revive Sparrschöld's comedy, *Mexikanske Systrarne*, at the Royal Opera in 1789, he offered a revised aria for the heroine, Zelda, for which he suggested Kraus as the composer of the music:

> If this piece is accepted, I would recommend that the Royal Kapellmeister Kraus, as my very good friend, would undertake the composition of the music for the verses that Zelda will sing.[24]

This aria, and one written under similar circumstances for Ristell's version of Poinsinet's comedy *Visittimman* the previous year, have survived only in a piano reduction printed by Åhlström in the *Musikaliskt tidsfördrif.* Two complete works remain lost, the satire *Födelsedagen* with a text by Gustaf himself and a one-act *Singspiel, Marknaden,* with a text by Didrich Björn.[25] The former was written as a gift to the people of Stockholm following the king's second *coup d'état* during the parliament of 1789, when the burgher estate mobilized to support his war with Russia. Gustaf's enemies among the nobility were depicted in satirical fashion, and the couplets that Kraus set to music at the end of the work included a reference to one of the

composer's main rivals, Abbé Vogler. Kraus wrote to his parents on November 21, 1790:

> Vogler wrote [...] to the king that he would like to set a new opera that will be one of the wonders of the world. What happened? Instead of a direct answer, yesterday the King allowed a small comedy to be produced which depicted my dear Abbé large as life with all of his mannerisms, walk, language, gestures, wigs, etc.; in short, exactly how he stands, walks, speaks, and schemes so naturally on stage that the public just about laughed themselves sick.[26]

For Kraus, who long suspected that Vogler was at the heart of the obstacles to his staging his most dramatic works, his portrayal must have been a form of sweet revenge, and it is indeed a pity that it has been lost. *Marknaden* is Kraus's last work, composed in September 1792, only three months before his death.[27] It too has not survived, even though a contemporary announcement stated that the music would be available for purchase in piano reduction at the theater.

One of the more emotionally intense forms of music for the stage can be seen in the music written to accompany the various dramas, such as Molière's *Amphitryon* and Kellgren's reworking of Voltaire's tragedy *Olympie*. The former is by far the largest work and was commissioned during Kraus's grand tour. It consists of four *Intermèdes* (to be performed between the acts of the play) and a lengthy *Divertissement* which is to follow the final act. One of Kraus's longest and more complex works, it is a mixture of ballet, French choruses and *grand opéra* based upon a Classical subject.[28] The text for the various sung portions is simple, generally based upon laudatory statements showing the Greek hero Amphitryon's triumph. In a letter dated July 32 (!), 1784, Kraus wrote to his parents:

> I've been given a short bit of work called "*Intermèdes pour Amphitryon;*" something consisting of six cleanly-written pages of French rhymes in quarto and a whole bunch of pantomimic dances like *La lutte, la course, le ceste,* ballet of the twelve hours of the night and, of course, one for the hours of morning who chase the stars ... This entire thing has to be set to music, and the king said that it would please him enormously if I could put it all together as soon as possible. To do that, I'll simply get up a few hours earlier each day. But, whoever came up with the saying that "The early bird gets the worm" (*Morgenstund hat Gold im Mund*) was certainly no composer![29]

Kraus evidently completed his commission, and in 1787 was required to revise the fourth *Intermède* extensively. This work is a spectacle in itself, despite its associations with Molière's work; the dances are among the best works for the stage that Kraus wrote, and his entire

concept of integrating dance, opera, and elaborate staging is evident throughout.

Olympie, however, represents a contrast, as do the incidental choruses to Adlerbeth's tragedy *Œdipe* composed shortly before Gustaf III's assassination in 1792. These are short, even terse works designed to give a rapid glimpse into the emotional turmoil of the characters onstage. The former contains echos of the grandeur of Rameau and Lully in the dotted rhythms of the overture and *entr'actes*, while the *Allegro* sections are filled with the violent emotions of the *Sturm und Drang* that Engländer suggested anticipated Beethoven in form and structure.[30] *Œdipe* shows Kraus's conscious study of the role of the Greek chorus. These interludes are his most Classical work, in the strictest definition of that term, being used as commentary upon the action of the main play. Yet the composer's instrumentation, particularly the dark tone colors of the lower woodwinds, is highly advanced, and some of the pieces are strongly reminiscent of Schubert's symphonies almost thirty years later.[31]

Kraus also participated in the Gustavian *pasticcio*, a unique form in which all of the resident composers of Stockholm combined their talents to write for a single play. Unlike the commonplace *pasticcio*, which was a hodge-podge of music stolen from whatever was popular at the moment, the Gustavian version was a carefully constructed work wherein each of these composers knew in advance which portions they would set. Both greater and lesser works fall under this category. For instance, in 1791 a prologue featuring three figures drawn from Classical mythology—Clio, Mars, and Neptune—was cobbled together by author Didrich Björn to celebrate the birthday of Duke Karl of Södermanland (later Karl XIII). The thin plot has each of these characters appearing to congratulate the duke on his birthday and to laud his achievements. For this work Kraus composed the final chorus "*Må Sveafolk din tacksamhet.*" A larger and more popular example is the music to Lannerstierna's comedy *Äfventyraren* (1791), which contains music by Kraus, Frigel, Wikmanson, Müller, Hæffner, and others. Here Kraus set the first seven numbers of the first act (plus overture). *Äfventyraren* is a compendium of the composer's musical style; the movements show a wide range of forms, from the French-inspired overture to simple *Singspiel* arias, and from a brief melodrama for the high priest to a complex, tension-filled storm scene.[32] It is music that transcends the stereotype of the comic opera by providing it with an emotional underlay that spans many moods and different characterizations of people and scenes.

Kraus wrote a wide variety of music for the Stockholm stage, and his contributions must be considered as some of the most pertinent in the formation of the Gustavian Opera in all of its guises. As a versatile composer, he was able to write music befitting tragedy as well as comedy. He synthesized and developed existing operatic styles, endowing the best dramatic elements of each with his personal stamp. Kraus's music contains ideas far in advance of his time, and his sense of drama resulted in highly original works that stand at the forefront of opera in Stockholm.

NOTES

1. Cf. Robbins-Landon, H. C., *Haydn: Cronicle and Works*, 5 vols. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978–82, II: 478. Biographical information on Kraus can be found in Karl Friedrich Schreiber, *Biographie über den Odenwälder Komponisten Joseph Martin Kraus.* Buchen: Bezirksmuseum, 1928 and respective biographical articles in such lexica as *Sohlman's, Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* and *The New Grove.*
2. See Leux-Henschen, I., *Joseph Martin Kraus in seinen Briefen.* Stockholm: Reimers, 1978, 24–27. For example, in a letter to his parents dated April 1777, he states: "Nothing came of my operetta project, because the Austrian gentleman wanted only good, phlegmatic prose!" This indicates his activity as a librettist, instead of as a composer.
3. See Strömbeck, K. G., et al., *Kungliga Teatern i Stockholm: Repertoar.* Stockholm: Kungliga Teatern, 1974, 150. Only the ballet *Fiskarena* (1973), the opera *Proserpin* (1978), and one act of *Æneas* (1966) have been performed as part of the standard repertory at Drottningholm. *Fiskarena* was revived in 1985, and *Soliman II* was premiered in May 1989.
4. The VB numbers of this table are taken from the present author's *Die Werke von Joseph Martin Kraus: Systematisch-thematisches Werkverzeichnis.* Stockholm: Kungliga Musikaliska akademien, 1988.
5. Leux-Henschen, 215; see also 50–52.
6. Leux-Henschen, 216.
7. Leux-Henschen, 218.
8. Leux-Henschen, 222. Kraus's excuse at this point was to note that *Azire* was accepted, but that the court also wanted to appoint him to a position within the Royal Opera. See Schreiber, 47–48.
9. Engländer, R., *J. M. Kraus und die Gustavianische Oper.* Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1943, 99. See also Silverstolpe's comments on his handwritten libretto of *Azire*, reproduced in van Boer, *Werkverzeichnis,* 43–46.
10. Silverstolpe, F. S., Notes on *Azire.* Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek, Folio X270f, 87^{r}. See also Stridsberg, C., *Åminnelse-Tal öfver Kongl. Svenska Musikaliska Akademiens Ledamot Framl. Kongl. Hof-Capellmästare Herr Joseph Kraus.* Stockholm: Nordström, 1798, 20 and Engländer, 100–103.
11. Leux-Henschen, 237.
12. Leux-Henschen, 237. See also Sylwan, O., *Johan Henric Kellgren* Stockholm: Bonniers, 1939, 67. A complete description of this opera is given in Engländer, 104–119, which in turn is based upon his article "Kraus' Proserpin: ett bidrag till Kraus' musikdramatiska stil", *Svensk Tidskrift för Musikforskning* 21 (1939): 48–67.
13. Leux-Henschen, 240. See also Levertin, O., *Gustaf III som dramatisk författare.* Stockholm: Bonniers, 1911, 45–53.
14. Leux-Henschen, 243. Kraus describes his disappointment in graphic terms: "Our first actress, Müller, and her German husband have flown the coop, and this had a most unfortunate influence on my position. In the opera with which the new opera house was to have been dedicated, she had the primary role. All my hopes were dashed with her flight, for the third performance was my own, and now a sum of between 700–800 florins has slipped through my fingers."

15. Leux-Henschen, 164.
16. Several fragments of the 1782 version can be found in the Silverstolpe manuscript collection at Näs herrgård, Rö, Uppland, Sweden. See Mörner, C. G. S., *Johan Wikmanson und die Brüder Silverstolpe*. Stockholm: Haeggström, 1952, 412–413.
17. Leux-Henschen, 255. For complete discussion of *Aeneas,* see Engländer, 141–179 and the present author's "Kraus's *Aeneas i Carthago*: A Gustavian Gesamtkunstwerk," in *Kraus und das Gustavianische Stockholm*. Stockholm: Kungliga Musikaliska akademien, 1984, 90–109. An exhaustive study on this work is currently under way and will appear in 1994 at the same time as a planned première of the complete work.
18. Leux-Henschen, 312. Engländer (126–127) falsely concluded that this fragment was later reworked into the choruses for Adlerbeth's drama *Oedip* in 1792.
19. The libretto survives (Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Vp 269a). It is written in miserable French and is most unconducive to music. The title page, however, clearly states that it was set by Kraus. See Sundström, E., "Ett melodrama av Joseph Martin Kraus?" *Svensk Tidskrift för Musikforskning* 15 (1933): 169–172.
20. These can be seen particularly in the scores of *Armide* produced in 1788. (Scores now in the Royal Opera Music Library dep. MAB, Stockholm.) Kraus appears to have reorchestrated most passages, adding a second pair of horns and strengthening the wind instruments.
21. Dahlgren, F., *Anteckningar om Stockholms Theatrar*. Stockholm: Norstedt, 1866, 346. A critical edition has recently been completed for the performance by the Royal Opera at Drottningholm in 1989.
22. Engländer, 137. The author of the text is unknown, since the text of the musical numbers (and preceding cues) is not identical with Ribié's *Le bon seigneur ou la vertu recompensée* of 1782.
23. This finale was later turned into a song with pianoforte accompaniment under the title *Astrild till könet*; see Elers, J., *Glada Qväden*. Stockholm: Åhlström, 1792, No. 19.
24. Leuwenhaupt, E., *Bref rörande teatern under Gustaf III*. Uppsala: Akademiska Boktryckeriet, 1891, 96.
25. See Levertin, 216–222, and the present author's *Werkverzeichnis,* 30 and 154–155.
26. Leux-Henschen, 337–338. An article on *Födelsedagen* appeared in *Scandinavian Studies* 61 1989, 28–40.
27. See the present author's *Werkverzeichnis,* 154. Beginning with Stridsberg in 1798, most scholars have noted that Kraus's last work was his Funeral Music for Gustaf III written in March–April 1792. Yet on June 25, 1792, Kraus reported to his parents: "The opera continues on its way, and already the regent [Duke Karl] has found a fund to build a new theater for comedy and operetta—this should be ready by Fall—and thus as long as things remain the way they are, no changes are anticipated." *Marknaden* was written especially for Duke Karl, and the newspaper announcements of the time specify a newly-composed work. It is therefore appropriate that the Romantic view of a despondent Kraus writing his own swan song after his beloved patron's death be put to rest.
28. See Lindberger, Ö., *The Transformations of Amphitryon*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1956, 104–109.
29. Leux-Henschen, 287. See also Engländer, 138–139.
30. Engländer, 128.
31. Engländer, 127.
32. Mayer-Reinach, A., "Lannerstiernas Äfventyraren: Musik av Kraus med flera," *Svensk Tidskrift för Musikforskning* 21 (1939): 101–114. See also Engländer, 134–135.

A GUSTAVIAN MONSTER-OPERA

A backdrop to the stage mechanics of "Æneas i Carthago"

Ture Rangström

JUST AS THE EIGHTEENTH century faded away and was replaced by its grim successor, Gustavian opera suffered its final stroke—with Kraus' *Æneas i Carthago*. That opera's première—an expiring sigh of distress from an already vanished age—was a flop.

As finally presented, in November 1799, it was a post-Gustavian monster. Its music had been cut. Its libretto was chopped to pieces. And its scenery had been reduced to a poverty-stricken copy of what it could and should have been. But perhaps no one any longer cared to remember, or really wished to revive what was perhaps the most remarkable combination of the arts initiated by Sweden's dead theatre king? Long before Wagner, this highly imaginative operatic project on the well-worn theme of Dido and Æneas was to have been a *Gesamtkunstwerk* to inspire the combined efforts of composer, librettist, scenographer and balletmaster.

All four men had been hand-picked for the task.

Already (as he himself put it) Kellgren was "sitting under his master's table", churning out operatic libretti to order (Fig. 1). Together with the German composer J. M. Kraus, he had completed *Proserpin*, a lyrical one-acter the two men had surprised the king with at Ulriksdal in 1781. Now they were to collaborate with Desprez, his visionary stage designer, and with Gallodier, his somewhat eccentric maître de ballet. So work had begun on *Æneas i Carthago*. Its gala première was to have inaugurated the king's new Stockholm opera house, in 1782.

The task must have been an exciting one. A new Swedish opera, in a newly built theatre with modern machinery and new scenery! Adel-

Fig. 1. Johan Henrik Kellgren (1751–1795). Bronzed plaster medallion by J. T. Sergel. KMA.

crantz, its architect, regarded his creation as "unique in its genre" and its stage machinery as "something quite superior".

How could this optimistic team of geniuses have guessed that *Æneas* would turn out to be nothing but a source of grief and frustration, or that its staging, delayed for seventeen years, would in the end become an impossibility? The reason was not only cultural tangles and court intrigues. The inaugural première had to be cancelled because the *prima donna* had done a flit and left Stockholm. And when, in another age, its libretto again came up for consideration, those who ploughed through its pages would shake their heads over its inordinate length (about 6 hours), not to mention its advanced and mastodontic scenic requirements. And even when, at long last, in 1799, it had its wretched première, of its four authors only Desprez,

then on his last legs, and a skeletal Gallodier had survived to sit in the auditorium. Gustaf III, Kraus, Kellgren—all had quit the earthly scene. And only Desprez—if anyone had cared to listen to him—could have told them how they had originally intended to satisfy their taskmaster's scenic imagination, and of the resources he'd once placed at their disposal.

Æneas i Carthago (or *Dido och Æneas* as its title also reads) was to have been a stage spectacle of the very first order. Its libretto, abounding in theatrical effects in a diapason which runs from idyllic bird-twitter to panic and earthquakes, swarms with technical challenges to a stage manager. Though the scenario may seem to us to contain a disproportionate number of catastrophes, it was entirely in line with that age's taste, mirroring both the characters' violent emotions and also their more subtle sentiments.

Kraus' grand and elegant music enhances the whole with singular tints and peculiar moods. The overture promises hunting scenes, races and duels. Desprez' shimmering visions—his sketches date from about 1790, when there had again been talk of producing it, are fraught with both baroque and romantic overtones.

In a word, *Æneas i Carthago* is a theatrical dream, in which sound, lighting and mobile scenery fuse to form a single indissoluble whole.

The best way of keeping ecstasy within bounds is to confront its visions with practical considerations. Thus reduced, the stage images can perhaps be kept within their proper proportions and Desprez' many sketches can be transformed into simple backdrops and dusty flats, such as only come to life to an odour of oil lamps and dripping candlewax.

In Sweden we are uniquely in a position, even today, to explore, concretely, the "scenic instrument" available to men of the theatre in the late eighteenth-century.

No stage direction seems impossible or too fantastic when Dido and Æneas reappear among the Drottningholm court theatre's wellpreserved sets, operated by its original machinery. Indeed, Drottningholm can be regarded as an older and more experienced sister to Gustaf III's Stockholm opera house. Both had the same architect. Their scene-shifting system, their sets and mechanical equipment were virtually identical, or at least constructed along the same lines. Admittedly, the Opera stage—24 m. deep, as against the court theatre's 20 m.—was somewhat larger than the one at Drottningholm. Yet the same scenery, we know, could be used in both theatres, to serve an at times identical repertoire.

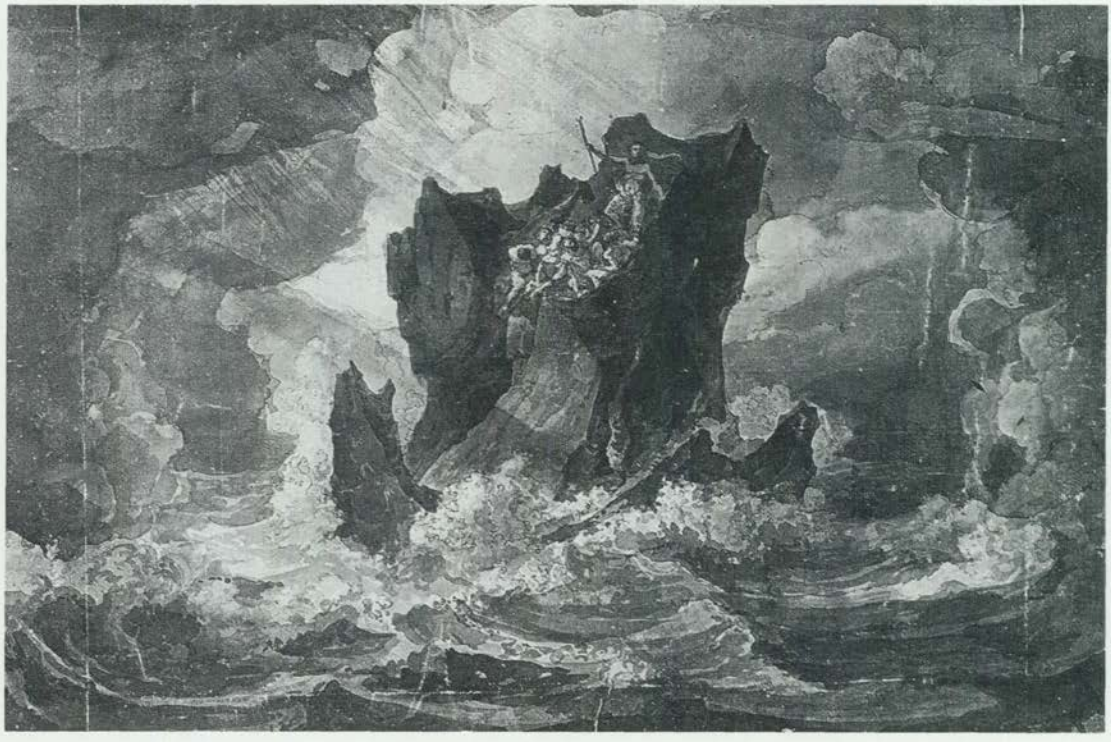

Fig. 2. Prologue, scene 1 of Æneas i Carthago, *lyrical tragedy in five acts and prologue by J. M. Kraus, libretto by J. H. Kellgren. "The stage shows a great cliff in the sea. On the top of it sits Æolus, with Boreas and his army captive at his feet." Watercolour drawing by L. J. Desprez. NM.*

Æneas i Carthago is hardly less exciting to watch backstage than from the auditorium. If its Prologue, for instance, is produced according to Kellgren's instructions, the off-stage activities are at least as dramatic as the spectacle itself. The stage manager's book reads like an intricate thriller:

> The theatre represents a great cliff in the sea. On top of it sits Æolus, with Boreas [the north wind] and his army captive at his feet.

The machinery has been charged with sets. On the foremost chariots are twelve wing flats (six on either side), representing a desolate landscape with cliffs. The ceilings overhead have been painted to look like atmosphere and blueish clouds. Furthest upstage, among the revolving waves, two major flats represent a cliff, where Æolus, seated on a padded ledge, is seen against a sky faintly illumined by concealed candles.

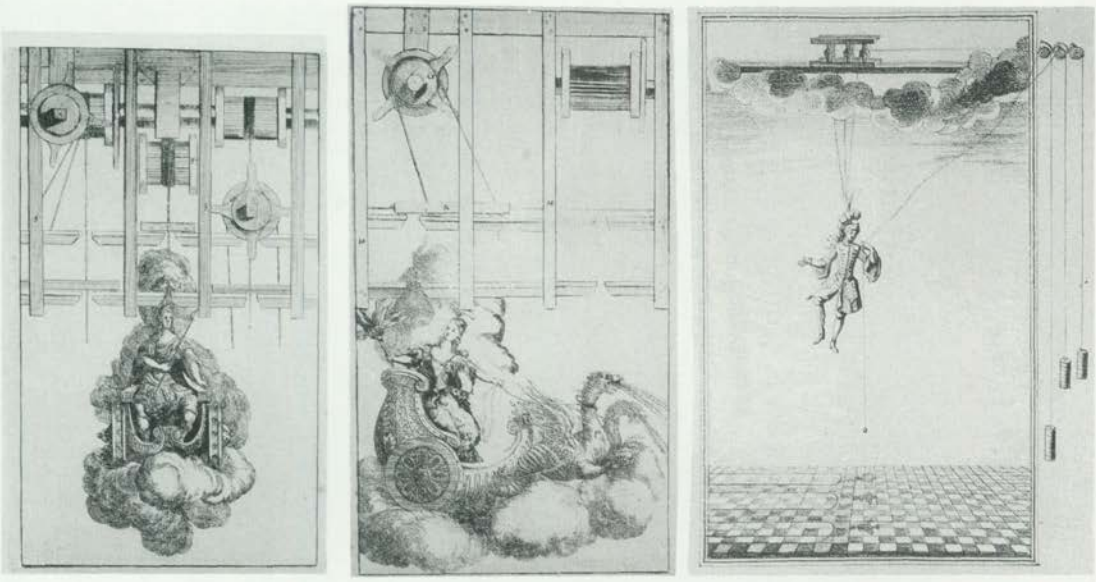

Fig. 3 a–c. Constructional designs: cloud machines and a "flying machine". Engravings by A. Fouré, second half of the 18th century. DTM.

To stage such a spectacle called for some 30 stage-hands, distributed between grid, flies and mezzanine and at stage-level. When Juno, as per the staging instructions, "*descends in a cloud*", three stage-hands (left of stage) slowly lower the great chariot. As it descends, the landscape of cliffs is veiled in blushing clouds, operated in situ via the upstage cloud machine (Figs. 3a–c).

Æolus' curse

Let wave against wave / Violently rage! / Let the day be hid / By terror and darkness!

is the signal for feverish backstage activity. Juno up to Olympus again! Clouds up to a new level, where they merge with the downstage cloud machine! As Æolus raps the cliff with his sceptre the rocks suddenly split, unleashing the captive winds: that is to say, more prosaically, the stage-hands heave on ropes to separate set pieces, so that chorus and ballet make their entrance between them. Whereupon the cliffs sink into the sea—viz., descend on traps to the mezzanine. At that moment all wheels are turning! The dramatic music is accompanied by the thunderbox. And the rough sea swells and heaves angrily as a stage-hand turns the screw-shaped wave-machine (Fig. 4). All with highly dramatic effect!

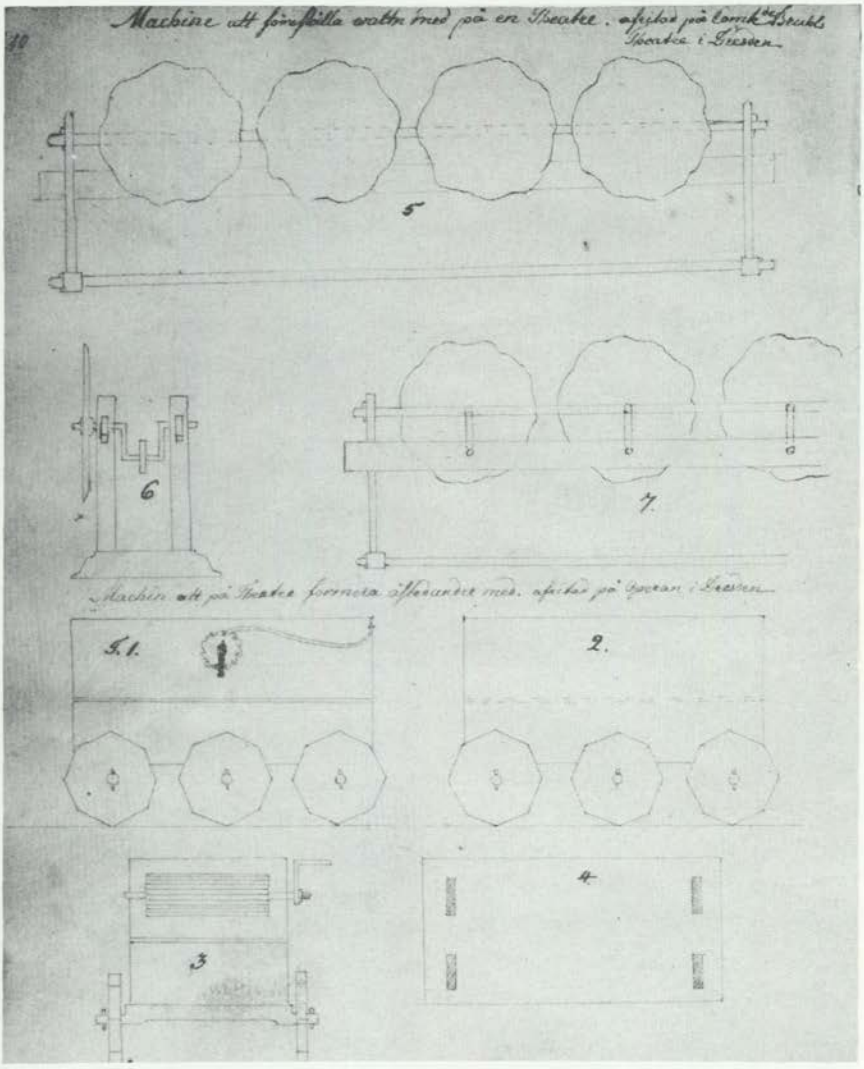

Fig. 4. Nr. 1–4 Thunder machine in the Dresden Opera. Nr. 5–7 Wave machine in the theatre of Count Bühl in Dresden. Drawings by Georg Fröman, chief architect, 1755. UUB.

Now, far upstage, the Trojan fleet—consisting of miniature ships painted on so-called sea-planks—appears (see cover illustration). In a jiffy the lighting master and his assistants darken the stage by turning the big handle of the lighting machine; and the approaching armada is seen against lighting flashes. Whereupon Neptune and his wild horses, dramatically enhanced from below by a flaming torch in the mezzanine, rise out of the waves on one of the upstage lift-traps. Now he

disappears again; and again the cliffs rise out of the sea. Storm and wave abate and fall silent. The horizon brightens. Two large set pieces, representing Æneas' ship (life-size) are introduced between the two upstage flats; and the Trojans, their leader at their head, step ashore. Up in the sky Venus hovers over the scene, seated on an illuminated cloud ...

Curtain.

A flying start, if ever there was one, to a thoroughly spectacular opera—no matter whether the spectator has arrived via stage door or main entrance!

Follow five complicated acts, with *changemanger*—scene changes—both between the scenes and in front of the audience's gaze—a dramatic journey in time and space, in which one milieu incessantly yields to another. The stage instructions prescribe "Juno's wood", "Diana's grove" (Fig. 5) and "a solitary cave". From "the Great Marketplace in Carthage" we're whisked into "Dido's Audience Hall" (see the colour supplement) and a "forest of roses". Thereafter we're entertained to scenes showing "Carthage Harbour" and "Dido's Palace"; and this five-act opera closes with: "The whole stage is transformed into Olympus".

But before that happens, altars and statues have been hoisted up through trapdoors or lowered from the flies. Censers have burnt incense, sacrificial bonfires have been lit. Showers of rain and other kinds of water have come pouring down, and the stage has vibrated to warlike drums and tramplings, plus one or another earthquake.

Nothing's impossible ... at the movies!

The man mainly responsible for the stage of Gustaf's opera house being so admirably equipped was his stage manager, Johan Schef. Schef had been sent on a technological grand tour of the Continent that had included Paris. There he had made drawings of all the most modern theatrical arrangements and newly invented devices.

Strict though they were in point of perspective and illusion, eighteenth-century theatrical principles opened up unimagined possibilities. In Adelcrantz' well-equipped opera house the scenic image was built up of flats, ceilings and backdrops, all of which could be changed either en bloc or individually. The stage itself—known quite simply in eighteenth-century terminology as "the theatre"—was broader "than the biggest in Italy". Measurements above and below stage, too, were so ample that backdrops could either be lowered from above or raised from below. At the rear was an opening with a long sloping ramp for introducing various machines and vehicles.

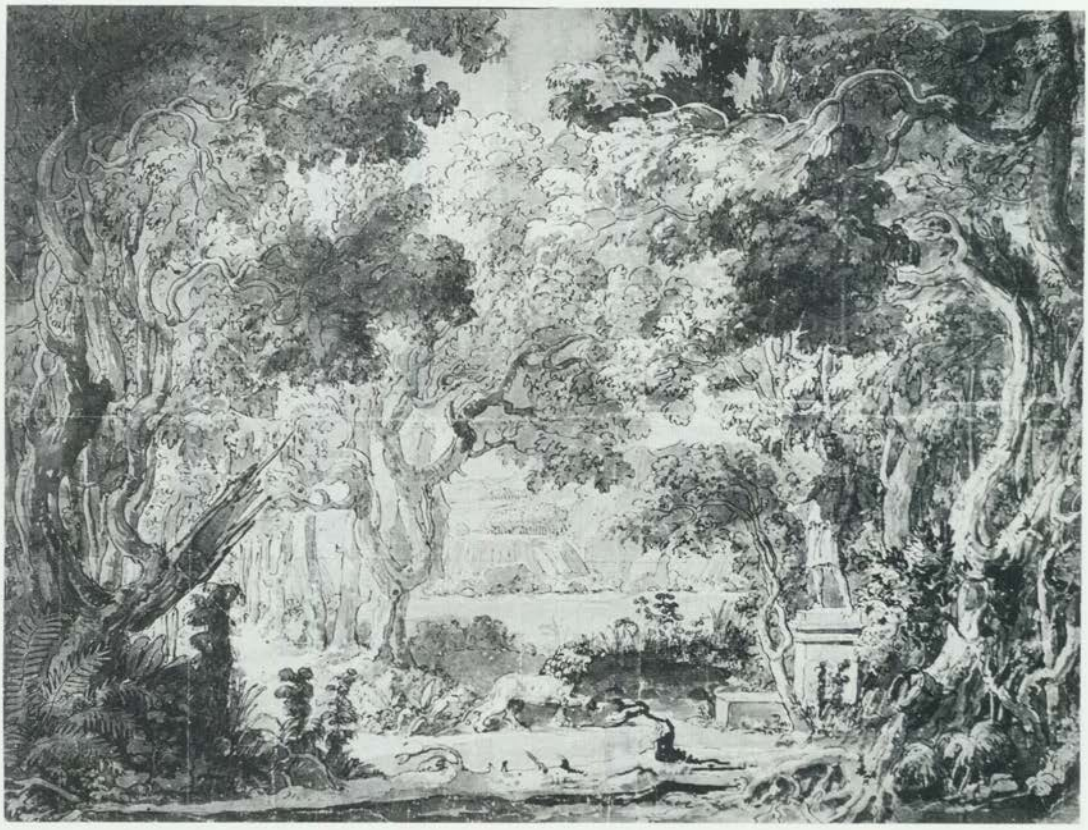

Fig. 5. Stage design for act I, scene 1 of Æneas i Carthago. *The wood, sacred to Diana. Watercolour pencil drawing by L. J. Desprez, 1790s. NM.*

Whereas the Drottningholm Theatre—like the Comédie Française—had (and still has) six pairs of flats, the Stockholm Opera had eight. Its initial stock of sets consisted of "twelve of the most usual kinds of scenes", whose remains can still probably be identified today in the Drottningholm Theatre's storehouse, which contains over 500 original components. Some fifteen complete sets have survived, with backdrops, flats and set pieces—a whole world of stage sets, adapted to the eighteenth-century repertoire with its well-established basic requirements: forests, palaces, caves, halls, chambers, etc. Thus Dido and Æneas can still be conjured forth in their authentic milieu, several parts of "Dido's Hall of Audience", based on Desprez' designs for the delayed first night of 1799, having survived.

Many of the scene-changes in the kaleidoscopically conceived *Æneas i Carthago's* take place with open curtain. Out of such a *grand*

changemang a veritable filmic Odyssey could be staged, scene gliding into scene. In a space of five or six seconds, heaven can turn into hell or a peasant cottage become a palace, all in one long legato.

One of the main ideas behind all this was to create surprising but credible effects of deep perspective. From an ideal point in the auditorium (at Drottningholm, immediately behind the royal chairs) all lines in the flats, backdrops and ceilings, and even the very floorboards, converge in a remote imaginary focal point. This ideal viewpoint in the auditorium has its on-stage equivalent—a point immediately behind the prompter's box where acoustics and stage lighting are optimal. This creates a small downstage area where the actors can perform without disturbing perspective or proportions and where they are also in perfect contact with the orchestra.

Such eighteenth-century mirror effects and contrapuntal illusions never cease to surprise. There are innumerable tricks for reinforcing perspective. Usually the scene ended in a backdrop depicting the sea, a starry sky, or some other horizon. Desprez was a master at painting such perspective effects, using imaginary terraces, staircases and flat-figures to help him. One very effective trick was to place, high upstage, a model of a miniature landscape. The diminutive Trojan fleet in *Aeneas* sails in at a point where it enhances depth of stage.

In order to surprise an easily stimulated audience—but perhaps primarily to facilitate the stage-hands' work backstage—it was customary to alternate deep sets with shallow ones. An intermediate backdrop, known as a "cloth", would be lowered to hide the next scene-shift being prepared behind it. Experienced librettists and dramatists, familiar with these requirements, wrote them into the "book". In "The Magic Flute" Schikaneder calls for "*einen kurzen Garten; eine lange Halle*" etc. Composers too knew the ropes, of course, and were careful to give stage manager and lighting master the time they needed to pull them.

All the men who created *Æneas i Carthago* were already more or less virtuosic men of the theatre. Even so, when planning what was to be the great theatrical event of the age, Gustaf thought fit to send Kraus on a refresher course to Germany, France and Italy, "not to study music, but to become acquainted with the newer theatrical devices", as the king himself put it.

Sometimes the finest scenic climaxes coincide with the musical and dramatic ones. In the last scene of *Aeneas* the whole stage is transformed into Olympus, where Jupiter and other gods appear, together with chorus and a ballet of stars beneath a shimmering transparency,

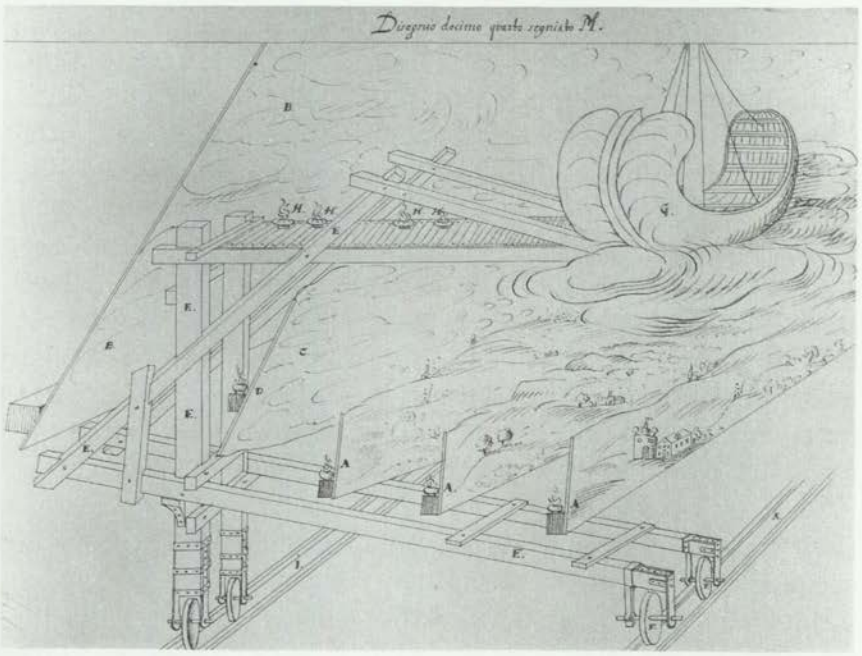

Fig. 6. Flying ship above a miniature landscape. Italian drawing from the late 18th century. Compare with the ships on the cover illustration. DTM.

in what was called *"une gloire"*, Naturally, such a grand finale created advanced staging and lighting problems. The scene can perhaps be compared with the final one in "The Magic Flute": *"Sogleich verwandelt sich da ganze Theater in eine Sonne"*, writes Schickaneder audaciously, and relies on both Mozart and his stage manager to do just that!

Eighteenth-century stage machinery made possible innumerable permutations of scenic elements. Even if quality, shades of colour and motifs varied, all flats and backdrops were painted in distemper of uniform tone and lustre. Even when 12 quite different flats are combined at Drottningholm, the overall impression is of unity. A forest can be combined with a temple, or kaleidoscopically varied in many ways. Such set pieces as trees, bushes and statues prevent monotony of effect and introduce novelty. *Æneas* introduces altars, baldachins and flowering hedges. To enliven a "suburb of Carthage", Desprez, with his dramatic grasp of staging, avoids any tendency to stiffness by exploiting the possibilities offered by diagonals and wry perspectives.

In their eighteenth-century manifestations, Dido and Aeneas still moved in the world of baroque tradition, where dramatis personæ could be packed off to hell through an assortment of traps, and

celestial visions came in to land on chariots and flying machines (Fig. 6).

And the purpose of all this machinery? To try and emulate, as authentically as possible, nature in all her moods. A sunset could turn into a raging gale which, suddenly abating within the space of a few bars in the music, was transmuted into glittering moonlight. Kraus conceived his score to an accompaniment of rumbling stone balls, trickling peas and hissing lightning flashes, to mention only a few more or less ingenious mechanical effects.

Earth, heaven, water. And, lastly, the fourth element, fire. I.e. light.

Most heavily criticized of the contemporary theatre's shortcomings was its inadequate lighting. Theatrical lighting defied all natural laws. The scene painter's illusory shadows and half-lights were murdered by the lighting master's footlights. Light, both indoors and out, falls mainly from above. But at the theatre an actor's features were distorted from below by a flickering light which screened off stage from auditorium by a veritable curtain of smoke.

In the Stockholm of the 1780s the trend toward a more visual *mise-en-scène*, with lighting balanced between footlights, backdrop and flats, had few champions. Oil lamps and wax candles were traditionally utilized in the footlight and flat battens. But the scenes in *Æneas i Carthago* call for imaginative romantic lighting, with twinklers and smoky torches. We know that Desprez, before making his sketches, sought fresh inspiration by studying the illusionist Lotherbourg's theatrical tricks with moving pictures and atmospheric effects.

Such techniques existed. Stage light could be filtered through oil--treated paper, softening and disseminating it to create an altogether different effect. To break up symmetrical monotony, lighting could be coloured and shaped so as to redden the sun and make the moon blue. Perhaps Desprez knew about the recent experiments in gathering and directing candlelight? The future of theatre lay in the lighting master's mysteries!

Æneas i Carthago was an opera that made extreme demands, equally on librettist, composer, scenographer, choreographer and stage manager.

Even today it would still be possible to reconstruct—yes, even recreate—this *chef d'œuvre*. The theatre needed for such a revival, and its stage technology, both exist! Or are even greater masterpioeces needed to justify, artistically, such an enterprise? Until that happens, *Æneas i Carthago* remains the unfinished masterpiece of the Age of Gustavian Opera.

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This article is based on a study of the Drottningholm Court Theatre's stage machinery, and of stage and auditorium lighting in Swedish 18th-century theatres. Also on practical experiences of various productions and tests carried out in theatres. At my disposal I have had Agne Beijer's unpublished collections, at the Drottningholm Theatre Museum (DTM), as well as inventories and studies made of that theatre's original scenery.

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