 Scripts of Kingship

Essays on Bernadotte and Dynastic Formation in the Age of Revolution

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As the first Swedish piece performed at the opera, it was highly successful and is indeed both beautiful and interesting and includes many theatrical effects. The battles which occur in it, and by which the Swedes triumph over the Danes, attracted particularly vigorous applause on account of the abiding hatred between these nations, and never have I heard such a noise from the pit.1

The eye-witness account above, from the opening of the opera *Gustaf Wasa* in 1786 (music by Johann Gottlieb Naumann, libretto by Johan Henric Kellgren), shows the power and intensity of emotions that an opera performance can call forth. The staging of events from the 1520s appeared to the noisy parterre audience to be in direct connection to the political issues of the day. As representative arts, opera and theatre communicate not only through a text, but to the utmost degree also through acting and personification.2 For the audience, opportunities are provided to connect with the action, sometimes to a very high degree, as in the case mentioned above. Another eye-witness, the publicist Carl Christoffer Gjörwell, described the vigorous behaviour of the audience: “the voice of the people was constantly roaring: have at them, have at them, have at them”.3

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1 *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlottas dagbok* (1902–42) 2, pp. 99 f.: “Såsom varande det första svenska stycke, som blifvit gifvet på operan, rönte den stor framgång och är verkligen också både vacker och intressant samt innehåller många teatereffekter. De strider, som därutöre förekomma och i hvilka svenskarne afgå med segern öfver danskarne, blefvo i synnerhet lifligt applåderade till följd af det alltid inneboende hatet mellan dessa nationer, och aldrig har jag hört parterren föra ett sådant väsen.”

2 See e.g. Sven-Åke Heed, *Teaterns tecken* (Lund 2002).

That stage performances have been used to glorify power is a well-known fact. The use of music in connection with coronations has been noted, and not least French nineteenth century opera has been studied from a social and political perspective. The multi-faceted character of the music experience has also been noted, as well as the strength and power a shared experience can elicit within the audience. In an intricate interplay between actors and audience, aesthetic experiences, feelings and political ideas are communicated. Thus, a performance can fulfill different functions at the same time. The power in stage performances has always been regarded suspiciously by the government, noticeable not least through censorship and other regulations that have been in use.

During the nineteenth century people were well aware of the connection between the repertoire and society, as is shown in an article in Aftonbladet (The Evening Post) from 1883, which discusses the finances of the royal theatre. Aftonbladet regrets the king’s decision to not pay for the theatre any longer. The paper remarks that stage performances in all countries are regarded as “specially suited to illustrate celebrations that are important for the nation and the royal house”. During most of the nineteenth century, the king had principal responsibility for the Opera. He appointed the manager of the Opera and defrayed the cost for most of the work. As shown by the excerpt from Aftonbladet, the king abandoned this responsibility towards the end of the century. But when Bernadotte was elected heir to the throne at the beginning of the century, an opera without royal support was hardly imaginable.

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On the left hand side, the façade of the 18th century Opera House can be seen. The performances discussed in the essay were held here. Opposite the Opera House but not visible in this picture, Princess Sofia Albertina built her palace with a façade which mirrors that of the Opera. In the centre, the Royal Palace of Stockholm can be seen. (Lithography by A. Burman. Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, Kart- och bildavdelningen. Photo: Uppsala universitetsbibliotek.)
In this essay I want to focus on how Charles xiv and his opera directors utilized the opera stage to communicate their opinion regarding the royal family and the union with Norway. To which festive occasions did they pay attention, and which repertoire was performed at these occasions? How did Charles xiv make use of the tradition of a royal opera? While research on Gustavian opera is extensive, corresponding attention has not yet been paid to the early nineteenth century. It is therefore important in this essay to raise questions about repertoires as well as about organization and financing, because as a performing art, opera is dependent on practical conditions for its activities.

The Tradition – *Gustaf Wasa* 1810

The activities of the Stockholm court opera, founded by Gustav iii in 1773, had been curtailed since 1806 due to the war effort. The large stage in the opera house was then closed, and a large part of the staff was dismissed. The remaining activity was organized by the so-called *Operett-Theatern* (The Theatre of Operettas) which performed spoken plays and Singspiels. All performances were temporarily given at the *Arsenalsteatern* (The Arsenal Theatre), a smaller theatre which earlier on had been used mostly for spoken plays. After the coup d'état in 1809 the reorganization of the opera began at once. Already in December the same year, the stage in the opera house was re-opened and performances were resumed.

The celebration of Charles John’s arrival in Stockholm in 1810 provided an excellent opportunity to inaugurate the theatre with a special performance of *Gustaf Wasa*. The recently appointed Opera Director Anders Fredrik Skjöldebrand had received, at the same time as his appointment in the summer of 1810, “the king’s order to prepare the opera *Gustaf Vasa* to be played as a gala performance at the arrival of the crown prince”. *Gustaf Wasa* had since the

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10 *Excellensen greffe A. F. Skjöldebrands memoarer* (1903–04) 4, pp. 150 f.
time of Gustav III been called “the Swedish national opera”, and had been performed on special occasions, such as the wedding of Gustav IV Adolf in November 1797. Charles XIII had wanted it performed for his coronation festivities 1809, but was persuaded to give up this idea. His consort, Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, wrote in her diary that conceivable explanations for this were that it was considered too expensive (primarily because it had not been performed for a long time) and that it would be tactless towards the intended prince hereditary, the prince of Augustenborg, to perform a piece where the Danes were insulted. In her mind it was right to do without it. The expense was unreasonable during a time of hardship and amusements were unsuitable in any case, as peace negotiations had not yet been concluded, and one was faced with the prospect of losing Finland. A better opportunity to perform Gustaf Wasa came instead with the celebration of the new crown prince.

The opera depicts Gustav Vasa’s struggle against Danish supremacy. The good relationship between Gustav Vasa and his closest fellow-combatants is an important theme in the plot. In the introduction to the second act, Gustav Vasa praises the men for braveness and courage, and they reply by honouring Gustav who “delivered his country from distress and slavery”. Here there was a clear opportunity for the audience to draw a parallel between Gustav Vasa and the newly elected crown prince, something which was pointed out by Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta. She thought that the plot was very suitable for the audience to draw a parallel between Gustav Vasa and the newly elected crown prince, something which was pointed out by Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta. She thought that the plot was very suitable for the occasion, and it was also much appreciated. The plot, in which Gustav Vasa is elected by the people, and saves them from tyranny and is eventually crowned, could be viewed as an allusion to the new crown prince.

The opening scene of the second act ends with the jointly delivered hymn “Noble shadows, venerate fathers”. Already in the time of Gustav III this
hymn held special significance as a solemn complimentary song for the king. The text confirms the idea of a long line of Swedish kings and “noble men”, one in which Charles John may now be included.

At celebratory performances of this kind it was customary to write a particular prologue. But this time, in the autumn of 1810, there was not enough time. Special text and music had to be composed, and the soloists, the choir and the orchestra would all need time to rehearse the piece. On this occasion, the prologue with attendant work had to be omitted, since all resources went to the rehearsals of the grand opera, which had not been performed since 1797. Skjöldebrand was still expected to “give the spectacle an application for the merry occasion”, and solved the problem by creating a historical allegory that was inserted into the opera itself at the end of the second act where Gustaf Vasa is dreaming. A historical allegory was also suitable because the new crown prince did not understand Swedish. Using pantomime and ballet, certain kings chosen from Swedish history were represented on stage in a program written by Skjöldebrand and described by himself as on the following page’s illustration.

The allegory highlights Swedish history and the continuity from Gustav Vasa to the newly elected crown prince. The parallel with the coronation of Charles x in France 1825 is striking. At that time, the coronation was celebrated at the Paris Opera with the new piece *Pharamond*. In a central tableau in the opera, a number of French kings were seen on the stage in a long line, which ended with the new king in the hall. In a similar manner, the allegory and the performance of *Gustaf Wasa* represents the official opinion of the new

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16 One task for Skjöldebrand before putting up *Gustaf Wasa* was to re-assemble the artists, who from 1806 had been forced to leave the royal theatre. It was in many ways a difficult task.
17 *Excellensen greve A. F. Skjöldebrands memoarer* (1903–04) 4, p. 150: “gifva spektaklet en tillämpning till det glada tillfället”.
17. The drawing shows the scene where a guardian angel is descending on a cloud. In the special performance in 1810 King Gustav Vasa is dreaming of future successors to the throne:

"While Gustav Vasa was dreaming one could see the throne of Sweden with the lion at its foot, shaken by storm and thunder. Suddenly the name Charles xiii shines for a moment and everything becomes calm, but it is still dark. A star rises to the summit, stands still and shines clearly, but expires rapidly, which referred to the arrival of the heir apparent Charles August and his sudden death. Darkness then increases and the music becomes very sad. At last, though, one can perceive an increasing dawn, the music is enlivened in proportion and rapidly a sun rises with the names Charles xiii and Charles John united among the beams."

crown prince’s position in tradition. The performance becomes both a link to the past and an expression for expectations for the future.

A performance like this was not possible to realize without additional economic resources. The Opera Direction took advantage of the possibility of resuming its activity as a prestigious institution with this festival performance, aimed at spreading splendour upon the royal family. During this time there was no longer the close collaboration between king and management that existed during the time of Gustav III. Therefore, the actions of the first directors were of great importance for the running of the Opera. Their employment did not imply managing artistic day-to-day work. Instead, they would direct the general activities and contribute to the reputation and the position of the Opera in society. It was not a full-time job. All directors during the first half of the nineteenth century were noblemen who held other commissions such as diplomats and cabinet ministers. Their prominence at court and in the government shows that it was seen as an important and prestigious task to be Opera Director. The First Director, appointed by the king, largely made decisions on his own concerning the various activities of the theatre. A new organization was established in 1813, and the administration was divided into two departments, one for finances, the other for stage concerns, each with its head, called a Second Director. The latter of these functioned in practice as the stage director responsible for performances.

Many of the first and second directors had begun their services at the Opera already during the time of Gustav III, as, for example, the first directors Gustaf Löwenhielm and Gustaf Lagerbielke, as well as the second directors Johan Peter Törner and Carl Gustaf Nordforss, spoken of below. They all were good examples of continuity in the leadership of the Opera. The coup

20 First Directors at the Opera during the time 1804–1827 were: Abraham Niclas Edelcrantz (1754–1821) 1804–1811, former Secretary of Gustav III, member of the Swedish Academy, ennobled 1789; Anders Fredrik Skjöldebrand (1757–1834) 1810–1812, Cabinet Minister, General, member of the Swedish Academy; Gustaf C. F. Löwenhielm (1771–1836) 1812–1818, member of the court of Gustav III, Minister in Vienna 1815 and Paris 1818; Crown Prince Oskar (1799–1859) November 1818; Gustaf Fredrik Akerhielm (1776–1853) 1818–1823, Cabinet Minister; Gustaf Lagerbielke (1777–1837) 1823–27, Cabinet Minister, member of the Swedish Academy.

21 Gösta M. Bergman, Regi och spelstil under Gustaf Lagerbielkes tid vid Kungl. teatern (Stockholm 1946), pp. 138 f.
d'état in 1809 made it possible in practice to restore the Gustavian opera to the condition in which it had been at the time of Gustav III. That many of the persons who were active then remained in the management must have facilitated such a restoration. The performance of Gustaf Wasa can in the same way be seen to fit into a tradition in place from the time of Gustav III. Persons belonging to Gustav III’s theatre chose the repertoire, whereas Charles John exercised no influence.

**Opera for the People – Föreningen 1815**

When Charles John was elected heir apparent, activities at the Opera were still organized within the framework of the Operett-theatern. Finances were dependent on contribution, and the crown prince contributed with gifts amounting to 36,500 rdr banko for the period 1811–1815. At the same time, the Opera was undergoing reorganization, and after some temporary solutions, both theatre institutions were combined into one organization on 1 July 1813, with the name Kongl. Teatern (“The Royal Theatre”). Still, there were two stages for acting, the Opera house and the Arsenalsteatern. In practice, large performances were given at the Opera house and less extensive pieces at Arsenalsteatern, regardless of whether spoken theatre or opera was performed.22

While it was important to be able to stage larger pieces on solemn occasions, these performances were still only occasional elements in a repertoire dominated by French opéra-comiques and other comedy plays.23 Select performances at the king’s expense were enacted at the Stockholm opera, from the time of Gustav III, side by side with opera performances intended for a paying audience.24 These conditions did not change during the nineteenth century. The choice of genre often depended on which audience was approached, as is shown by the following example.

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Shortly after the establishment of the union with Norway, Charles John wished to have a play performed where he could give his opinion about the union. The result was the musical play Föreningen (The Union), opening in January 1815.\(^{25}\) The play is set in the borderland between Sweden and Norway in the autumn of 1814. The main characters are two families, each with a brother and a sister who want to marry the sister and the brother from the other family. The conflict between Sweden and Norway causes problems, however, but after numerous difficulties the play concludes with a double wedding and a happy ending. The personal relation symbolized the relationship between the two nations of the union. The music was composed and arranged by the Master of the King’s Music (hovkapellmästare) Edouard du Puy, and consisted mainly of folksongs and folk dances.\(^{26}\) The text was written by First Director Gustaf Löwenhielm and Second Director Carl Gustaf Nordforss.\(^{27}\)

Föreningen was called an “incidental play with song and dance in one act”.\(^{28}\) The designation suggests that the play should be understood as an entertainment without any profound ambitions. At the same time, the features of songs and dances were popular at the time and were therefore emphasized. The play is in two parts. After a number of scenes with spoken dialogue, a “Divertissement” is performed. It becomes both an entertainment of its own and an element in the play, where it is included in the festivities that are cel-


\(^{26}\) Edouard Du Puy (1772–1822) was employed as actor and singer at the Opera from March to November 1799, and from October 1812 to April 1822. From 1812 on he was also active as Master of the King’s Music at the Opera. Earlier in the 1790s he was employed in the court orchestra as third leader (Concert-Master) 1793 and as second leader 1796–99. See Dahlgren (1866), p. 529.

\(^{27}\) Carl Gustaf Nordforss (1763–1832) came to Stockholm in 1785, and soon joined the circles around Thorild, Lidner och Kraus. In 1790 Gustav III appointed him Second Director at Dramatiska teatern. In 1799 he took on the same task on the lyric stage, and stayed there until 1818. Nordforss wrote some pieces of his own in the same style as Föreningen. In addition, he translated and revised more than 60 pieces for the stage. See Nils Personne, Svenska Teatern 4. Under Karl Johanstiden 1818–1827 (Stockholm 1916), pp. 11 ff.

\(^{28}\) Edouard Du Puy, Föreningen (Stockholm 1816): “tillfällighetspjäs med sång och dans i en akt”.
ebrated in connection with the union of both the engaged couples and the brother countries. The divertissement consists of a number of song items followed by dances and a concluding chorus sung by all performers. The songs are written in a simple style, and have many similarities with the repertoire spread by the publications of the steadily growing music trade, addressing a broader circle of customers. The fraternization between the families, and therefore also between the two countries, finds expression not least through the songs, as is shown by the following examples.

In the third song in the divertissement a Swedish young man appears and tells everyone that he will perform a “Norwegian song” of an old kind (see NOTE EXTRACTION 1). The song has a decided folk character, with a fanfare-like introduction, mainly consisting of broken triads. The text describes how Norway and Sweden shake hands and the former enemies turn into a pair of twins.

As a direct answer to this song a Swedish song follows, performed by a young Norwegian soldier (see NOTE EXTRACTION 2). The music has a distinctly military character, achieved above all through the dotted rhythms and reiterated notes. The harmony too, principally consisting of the main chords, contributes to the forthright manner. The text deals with the hero who protects the North. He expands the frontiers of the country he has been called to support. It is not blood that stains his victories. Instead, he adorns his head “with an oak-leaf wreath, to build his dominion on leniency.” In the last strophe all are exhorted to fraternize. “As solid as the foundations of the snow-mountains, resting on honesty, stands the union, which has been tied by CHARLES and Nature.”

By letting the characters sing a song from the opposite country, a sense of “fraternization” is achieved on the stage, too. At the same time as the text speaks of a united brotherhood, the audience can see such a brotherhood pres-

30 All comments on the piece refer to Edouard Du Puy, Föreningen (Stockholm 1816).
31 “med eklöfvets krans, Att grunda på mildhet sitt välde.”
32 “Så fast som de åldriga fjellarnas grund, På redlighet hvilande, står det förbund, Som knutits af CARL och Naturen.”
ent itself in practical action through the two young men singing a song from each respective brother country. The melodies could be regarded as symbols for two national characters, which are different but nevertheless possible to unite. The parallel between the oakleaf-wreathed hero who protects the Northern countries and the newly elected crown prince is also easy to draw.

When the two young role characters have performed their songs it is time for the Swedish master (Sven Carlson) to appear. He introduces the song “One king, one people, one country”, a text which becomes something of a motto for the play (see note extraction 3). The melody, in D minor, is broad and flowing, a character which is achieved partially by the choice of key and the long note values giving weight to the melody, which can be interpreted as being in a “patriotic style”. There is also a certain folk music link. The text speaks of Charles XIII as the Father, whose children now rejoice. He is also called “Manhem’s patriarch”, who joyfully looks at the Hero (that is, Charles John) and holds out his hand to the grandson (that is, Oskar).

After this solo several dances follow, and both Swedish and Norwegian “polska” dances are performed. The play concludes with Norwegian and Swedish soldiers appearing together on the stage. The stage directions in the libretto read as follows:

The officers agree on what shall happen, whereupon they each run to their respective troupe. Positions are taken. The exercise begins. Swedish and Norwegian troupes break through each other, so that a Swede and a Norwegian stand next to each other and form a square, one of each side is open to the hillside. As soon as the formation is done, the people once again sing: ‘One king, one people, one country etc’. The exercise is timed so that when the song is finished a square is formed. Then the artillerists set off fireworks, within the square, representing the arms of the two realms and the high monograms of His Majesty the King and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince. END.


108
Der hold-tes Ting i Op-sloe Bye, men le-e-digt sto-od Haar-
fa-gerssae-de. Der skul-de kaa-res ud paanye En Drot som ku-nnde
det beklæde

Note extraction 1.

Från faror som mana de folken till strid och ljunga de vilt över jo-orden Han
kommer han kommer med seger och friid, Den Hjelte som skyd-dude Nøden

Note extraction 2.

En kung ett folk ett land skall nu vår lö-ösen va-
ra vårt fröj-de-rop från strand ti-ill strand.

Note extraction 3.
At the end of this striking scene, which visually conveys the message of fraternization, the song that Sven Carlson has already sung is performed once more, this time by the entire ensemble. As distinguished from the first time, the melody has a concluding part using the same text but with new music written in D major. That makes for a grand conclusion, where the text “One king, one people, one country”, is emphasized by longer note-values and more repetitions, and therefore without much difficulty can be seen as the motto of the play, as the content that Charles John wanted to convey to his new subjects.

The modest choice of genre and the use of folksongs and folk-dances show that the intention was to present a play with popular content. No previous knowledge was needed to understand the play, and the individual music items were all of an easy-listening character. In spite of the fact that the music in Föreningen was mainly composed of simple songs, these songs nevertheless held a great expressive power. They were chosen and arranged with care, and their different stylistic features had distinct connotations, implying that with the help of music one could portray both the simple subject and the majestic ruler. All this speaks in favour of the assumption that Föreningen was aimed at a wider audience. This is confirmed by the fact that the play was performed annually until 1820, totalling 46 performances, each time with the opening performance on the anniversary of the union, on 4 November.34 Apart from the representative function of Gustaf Wasa, the play also belongs to the opinion-forming activity of the royal theatre. The royal interest in celebrating anniversaries is an important factor here, as it provides an opportunity to take part in the creation of traditions.

Even though Föreningen (and many other plays) attracted relatively large audiences, it was of course not possible to finance the Opera by ticket incomes alone. The Opera finances were a continuous problem, and every year additional royal funding was required to cover the annual deficits. The riksdag was not inclined to increase its grant, and in 1818 Charles xiv decided to stop supporting the theatre, which then became an entrepreneurial contract venture instead. The entrepreneur, Johan Peter Törner, was Second Director at the Opera, which was renamed Stockholms teater (The Stockholm Theater)

34 Dahlgren (1866) p. 218.
and he resumed giving performances on 1 July 1818. The Master of the King’s Music Edouard Du Puy entered into the contract together with Törner. Although the king did not award any grants, Törner could command the state subsidies that had been granted to the Opera.

Charles xiv apparently had no greater interest in the Opera, unlike his predecessor, Gustav iii, whose commitment was a necessary prerequisite for its creation. His son Oskar would later on show a greater interest in the events of the stage, and he also composed several works himself. But Charles xiv seems to have regarded the Opera as an institution which mainly created problems, not least financial ones. In spite of that, the Opera’s time as a contract-managed institution was brief. After only a few months, in the beginning of November 1818, the king resumed the running of the Opera, notwithstanding that the planned period for the contract was 10 years. The king now had to contribute 20,000 rdr banko from his own means. Moreover, there were payments from public funds, as well as contributions from others, including Crown Prince Oskar, who rented a box for 4,000 rdr banko per year, and Princess Sofia Albertina, who rented a box for 1,000 rdr banko per year.

Why did the king resume the responsibility for the Opera? The immediate explanation is that he wished a performance in honour of the anniversary of the union, which the entrepreneur did not consider economically feasible, as the performance would include both music and ballet. (The importance attached to the celebration of anniversaries is evident; the piece referred to was probably Föreningen.) The resumption of responsibility by the king shows,

35 Johan Peter Törner (1768—1844) was employed at the Fortifications administration in 1791 and later, among other things, Major in the army 1810 and titular Colonel 1816. Törner was Second Director between April 1812 and June 1818, and between November 1818 and April 1832. For a short period in 1832, when First Director Bernhard von Beskow had resigned prematurely, Törner served as First Director as well. See Dahlgren (1866), p. 418.
37 F. A. Dahlgren (1866), p. 98.
according to my view, that he was well aware of the importance of the Opera in the formation of public opinion. Though he did not himself show any interest in the opera, and clearly wished that it was run by someone outside the court, the Opera was of such a great importance that it was not possible to get rid of it. Even if the king in this respect did not want to uphold the tradition, he found it necessary to do so for political reasons.

The formerly popular Föreningen was performed only once more after 1820. As part of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the union, the play was performed on 4 November 1864. This time it was not a success, and this was certainly due to both the content and the form of the play. The public opinion concerning the union had changed and was no longer positively inclined towards it. The piece may also have been regarded as old-fashioned. The divertissement as a genre had gone out of fashion and did not have a part in the repertoire. In spite of changes, among other things newly composed music numbers by August Söderman, the piece did not generate any response from the audience.40

Op
tera for the Nobility
— La Vestale 1823 and Fernand Cortez 1826

Crown Princess Josefina’s arrival in Stockholm in June 1823 attracted great attention. In connection with the wedding, two festival performances were staged at the Opera. Apart from a prologue, specially written for the occasion, the performance on the first evening was Mozart’s opera La clemenza di Tito and on the second evening La Vestale by Spontini.41 This was the first performance of La clemenza di Tito in Stockholm. The opera is written in the Italian opera-seria-style, which has always had a close connection to court opera. In the opera the good and wise prince, who because of his foresight eventually arranges everything to the best, is honored by his people. Apparently the work fulfilled its representative function, but it never attained any greater popularity, and was only performed four times within the space of two seasons.


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La Vestale had been on the repertoire earlier.\footnote{La Vestale had its première on 3 January 1823 at the Stockholm opera. The translation was done by Anders Lindberg, and the ballet was written by A. I. Carey. See Dahlgren (1866), p. 383.} From a stylistic viewpoint it belongs to the French revolution opera, with its predilection for magnificent scenery and extensive chorus and ballet features, along with many solo and ensemble numbers. The emphasis on individual feelings is characteristic, as is the stress laid upon the visual presentation. The interest for Spontini’s work at the Stockholm Opera in the 1820s had a clear connection to the new aesthetic ideals beginning to gain currency within opera at this time.\footnote{Bergman (1946), pp. 104–108.}

La Vestale is set in ancient Rome.\footnote{This summary is based on Gaspare Spontini, La Vestale (Garland 1979).} In the first act, the Roman general Licinius returns to Rome in triumph, together with his friend, the centurion Cinna. Licinius has earlier sought to marry Julia, a girl of patrician birth. Her father opposed the marriage. Because of that, Licinius devoted five years to win honor and promotion in battle, so that he could become a suitable match for Julia. During this time Julia, obedient to her dying father’s command, has become a priestess of Vesta, sworn to eternal chastity. She still loves Licinius. In a ceremony, Licinius receives a crown of triumph as a reward, and Julia is among the Vestal virgins who deliver it to him. When this happens, Licinius tells Julia about his plan to rescue her from the temple and elope with her that very night.

The second act begins in the temple of Vesta, where Julia has the responsibility of tending the sacred fire, which must never be extinguished. Licinius arrives and the two of them declare their love to each other. Licinius assures Julia that the gods will have mercy on them for the strength of their love. They do not notice that the fire has gone out. When the enraged people approach, Julia takes the full blame. The high priest condemns her to death by being buried alive.

In the third act, Licinius pleads for Julia’s life, but the high priest remains implacable. A procession of Vestal virgins enters together with Julia into the temple. Her veil is placed upon the altar. If Vesta pardons her, a sacred fire will burn the veil as a sign. Licinius arrives, asserting that he is equally guilty,
but Julia denies that and descends to the tomb. Licinius and his followers attempt to rescue her and fighting breaks out. Suddenly the sky darkens, and a storm erupts. A thunderbolt strikes the altar and burns the veil and relights the sacred fire. The high priest interprets the miracle as a sign of Vesta's forgiveness. Licinius and Cinna bring Julia, who is unconscious, up from the tomb, and the lovers are reunited. In a final chorus everyone celebrates the happy outcome.

The great battles in the opera parallel a smaller conflict between individuals. The feelings of the role characters are performed on the stage and make it possible for the audience to empathize with them. The ideals that are emphasized can be connected with ideals that fitted well in the contemporary context: Licinius wins glory and fame in combat, which compensates for his lack of noble birth. As a reward, he receives a victor's crown. The parallel to Charles xiv is evident. The image of the woman as the one who is eternally faithful and loyal is typical of the time, as is the love theme and the happy end. Here it also well fits in a performance celebrating the young newly wedded couple, which hopefully will guarantee the future of the dynasty.

When Josefin's and Oskar's first son was born in 1826, it was the first heir apparent in the Bernadotte dynasty born in Sweden. The birth was celebrated with a festival performance of *Fernand Cortez* by Spontini, given on 13 June 1826. This time, a piece with a marked propaganda character was chosen. In 1808, Napoleon demanded an opera with the conquest of Mexico as subject, as a propaganda piece for the planned campaign against Spain. The result was *Fernand Cortez*, an opera in three acts with choirs, mass-scenes and live horses on the stage. It had its first performance in Paris in 1809.45 The Swedish minister in Paris at the time, Gustaf Lagerbielke, acquired the music for the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm. It is also possible that he attended a performance of the opera in Paris, and it is quite certain that he attended a performance in Berlin in 1820.46 The music to *Fernand Cortez* was thus available in Stockholm, and only the opportunity to perform it was lack-

45 A substantial revision of the piece was undertaken after the première season in 1809. A new version was performed in 1817, and it is that version which has been performed ever since. It met with great success during the following decades on the European stages.
46 Bergman (1946), pp. 205 f.
ing. This came when prince’s birth was to be celebrated. Lagerbielke’s action shows how the Opera could acquire music from abroad, and becomes another example of how the need for representative performances went hand in hand with the interest from the Opera Direction to give operas that went beyond the usual repertoire (Lagerbielke was at the time of the performance First Director of the Opera, a post he held from 1823 to 1827.)

Fernand Cortez takes place in 1520, and is a free rendering of a historic event. In the first act, Spanish soldiers in Mexico revolt. It is only the Spanish leader Fernand Cortez who can master them. Cortez’ brother, Alvar, has also taken part in the combat, and is now held in Mexican captivity. Cortez has a lover, Amazily, who is a niece of the Mexican king, Montezuma. At the beginning of the second act, Cortez and his forces are outside Mexico City. Cortez is offered peace by the Mexicans if the Spaniards leave the country. Cortez responds by setting the whole of the Mexican fleet on fire and by taking Amazily’s brother Télasco prisoner. He proposes an exchange of prisoners, Alvar for Télasco. The Mexican priests do not accept this. Instead, they want Amazily, whom they regard as a traitor, to be executed. If this does not happen, they will execute Alvar. The stubborn attitude that the priesthood shows is not shared by the Mexican people. Instead, they want to unite the fighting groups. Similar opinions have been shown earlier by the Spanish soldiers. In the third act, Amazily arrives just in time to prevent the execution of Alvar. Just as the Mexican high priest is going to kill Amazily, the Spaniards break into the temple. Télasco unites Amazily and Cortez with each other and all rejoice in the union of the two peoples.

As in La Vestale, the course of historical events is interwoven with personal events creating major consequences for the involved individuals. Not least the female principal role, with her dual loyalties, is interesting in this regard. It is typical that she has to function as an intermediary, as a necessary condition for a locked situation to be resolved in a satisfactory way for all involved.

The ideal which is promoted in the opera is the just army leader who

47 This summary is based on the article “Ferdinand Cortez”, in The New Grove Dictionary of Opera (London 1998).
keeps his soldiers in order at the same time as he is noble and wants the best for those he conquers. Besides being a great ruler he appears on the stage as an emotional person too, who shows great care for his brother and for his beloved. The parallel to the Swedish king was made evident in the Swedish translation, for example in the concluding chorus, when all actors sang together:

What days of joy are once more approaching! / A hand from high has protected us: / May Providence protect with Grace / Our King and His Dynasty and His Country!⁴⁹

As usual with this kind of performance, a special floor was built on the amphitheatre and the parterre, which therefore became a prominent “parquette”. In the middle of this parquette sat the royal family, with the king, the queen, the crown prince, the crown princess and the Princess Sofia Albertina surrounded by the rest of the court.⁵⁰

In performing La Vestale and Fernand Cortez, the Opera Direction followed a tradition of using representative pieces which honoured royal ideals. At the same time, the Direction made use of the opportunity to connect to new ideals of style. That this was important is clear from the unsuccessful performances of La clemenza di Tito. Probably it was regarded as an old-fashioned piece compared with the new style of Spontini’s work. The public now wanted characters which could create sentiments of sympathy, rather than the types representing sovereign characters in a realm beyond ordinary life.

Conclusion

The celebrations of Charles John in 1810 introduced this essay. It is fitting to conclude with a few words about how the Opera celebrated the 25th anniversary of his government in 1843. It was done by once again performing parts of Fernand Cortez (ouverture and the second act) together with a newly writ-


⁵⁰ Bergman (1946), pp. 194 f.
ten musical play entitled *Ett National-Divertissement* ("A National Divertissement"), consisting of choruses, songs and dances in a folklore style. Three of the dances were taken from *Föreningen*, presented in 1815.

A prologue (with text only) written by Carl Wilhelm Böttiger was performed on this occasion. In the prologue the author in a customary way honours the monarch for his long achievement and emphasizes continuity by alluding to Gustav III and his theatre. The text evokes how the high North in a time of distress calls to the South to give it one of its heroes. One alone is worthy, the South replies. He is a man of the people who understands the pleas of the people, and who has brought esteem to himself through military achievements. He came, and may now as an old man look back on a quarter-century as a king. Around him, this hero who has given up the swords, stands a prince with four younger brothers. Charles XIV's interest in the story of Fernand Cortez is pointed out, and Cortez' bravery and honour is paralleled to the young king's dreams for the future.

Even if it is a concession to the occasion, it is interesting to see that the ideals presented in the operas of Spontini are the same as the ideals for which the king is honoured in the prologue: military achievements, his relation to his subjects and his ambitions. He is also depicted as an ancestor of a dynasty that blossoms forth.

Several examples in the operas indicated Charles XIV's relation to tradition as well as to his people, both when it comes to the text and to the performance itself. This interpretation gives the audience a possibility not only to understand, but also to take part in the plot with empathy. The repertoire of these occasions also shows the span between the international and the national which is present in the Opera's performances, as well as the combination of old and new repertoire, providing a good balance between continuity and change. A visit to the Opera, besides giving an aesthetic experience, implied taking part of the forming of opinions about social issues. In its own time, the Opera was not just an aesthetic institution, but a place for disseminating ideas as well.

See Nils Ekedahl's essay in this volume.

Carl Wilhelm Böttiger, *Prolog till Operan Ferdinand Cortez, jemte ord till kupletterne i det National-Divertissement, som gifves å Kongl. Theatern d. 6 Februari 1843; till firande af H. M. Konungens regerings-jubileum* (Stockholm 1843).