

Chapter 26 : “The Singer-Prince” (1827-1852).

Prince Frans Gustaf Oscar, Duke of Uppland & 2nd in line, was born on June 18, 1827, at Haga castle. He and his brother Charles (XV) attended the castle school until 1843, and then three years of mixed civilian and military schooling. As Gustaf died so young, only 25 years old, he did not achieve much. He made his most lasting contribution as a composer.

There is a longer biography about Gustaf's person (Horn 1946), some short biographies (Carlsson 1853; NFB 1883; Almén 1893: ss. 191-205; SBHL 1906; NFB 1909; Efvergren 1925: ss. 65-80; Svedlund 1966: ss. 70-78; Tegen 1967; Elgklou 1978: ss. 32-67; Ohlmarks 1980: ss. 116-117; Weibull 1991: ss. 108-110; Elgklou 1995: ss. 78-82; Sundberg 2004: ss. 216-217; Mardel 2009; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 41-44; Raab 2010; Norlin 2015: ss. 87-90), special studies of his music (Wieselgren 1867: ss. 30-34; Geijer 1912: ss. 7-30; Jonsson 1991; Skott 1996: ss. 171-175; Öhrström 2010; Hallgren 2015) and as a secondary character in biographies & memorial literature (Wennström 1873; von Troil 1877; Edholm 1906; Lindbæk 1910; Geete 1911; Hagen 1929; af Edholm 1944; Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944). The last 10 years of his life Gustaf kept a diary (Lagerqvist & Åberg 1996), but there are no personal details in it.

Since Gustaf had two parallel careers - prince and composer - I describe them separately.

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Gustaf's military training began in 1843 and he participated every summer in exercises. Although he was frail, he had a strong voice. He does not appear to have participated in physically demanding exercises. In the usual way of princes he rose quickly in the ranks: 1845 Sub-lieutenant, 1846 Captain, 1850 Lieutenant-Colonel. In 1851 he was member of a committee for proposing new fencing instructions for the cavalry. Gustaf's military mentor Samuel von Troil (1804-1880) had a very positive impression of him as a person, although a certain lack of enthusiasm for Gustaf's military qualities:

The king's second son was appointed a volunteer at the dragoon corps in 1843 and in this capacity became employed at the royal guard, under my special care and with a mission for me to teach him all parts of the service. I closely trained the prince in sabre-cutting, lance-fencing, handling a gun, gymnastics, flanking and squadron drill, in one word, in all subjects related to his rank, and later also in battalion movements. During the first regimental meeting, the Prince rode as a simple private in the front ranks of the right wing, during the second as a non-com and during the third as a wing-commander. In this way, he received a fairly thorough education in the art of the cavalry and had the advantage of a good sounding command voice. In 1845, in the presence of the King and Queen, he was approved in all parts of the service, and subsequently promoted to second lieutenant and the following year to captain.¹

Of all memories dear to me nothing stands out as Prince Gustaf's gentle, noble figure. ... Simple, benevolent, righteous, modest, morally unspoiled, restrained in his way of life, but without exaggeration, pleasant but not boisterous, the person of the prince presented the true image of a "gentleman." Without ever taking advantage of his princely dignity, you never forgot that he was a prince. When to all this is added the

¹ von Troil 1877: s. 100

expression in the mild, blue, sometimes melancholy eyes, as well as his unusually beautiful voice and great musical ability, it is not strange that he enchanted those near him.²

Gustaf seems to have been the one of the siblings who best succeeded in the art of being royal & commoner at the same time. In addition to his birth, he had the looks for it and could rely on a successful "bourgeois" musical career. He was very interested in history, which led his father to assign him responsibility for a description of Sweden's role in the 30-year war after Chemnitz in 1639 and for the publication of records in the "Archive of the History of Swedish Wars and Establishments". Gustaf started with an account of the Parliament of 1655, in which the peasant's estate after the 1648 Peace of Westphalia forced through a (partial) reduction of the fiefdoms of the nobility.

Gustaf never had any political duties, but he had views - all of them reactionary. Together with Charles, he often visited the Junker Party meetings. There is a letter preserved to his Christianity teacher, court preacher Johan Gustaf Lundberg, regarding the outcome of the 1850 attempt to reform the constitution. Oscar I tried to introduce a two-chamber system & general elections as a way to appease the 1848 rebels. Gustaf wanted everything to remain at the old. He complains of the Liberals sniping at the well being of the nation. "Thus! Finally! Was pleased that the fatherland was rescued from the brink of democratic general elections (on a broad basis); another time it might not fare so well."³

In addition, Gustaf filled his days with court life, travel, military exercises, composing, writing on his history, hanging out in music circles & decorating his newly bought summer castle Stjernerund at the northern end of Vättern.

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*What right you thought, what you in love wanted,
what beauty you dreamt, can not by time be ravaged,
it is a harvest, salvaged from destruction,
For it belongs to the kingdom of eternity.
Go ahead, you humanity! be happy, be comforted,
For you carry the kingdom of eternity in your breast.
Viktor Rydberg (1828-1895)*

Gustaf's home was very music-oriented. Even as a toddler Gustaf spent long hours in front of the piano. The family had a piano teacher Edmund Passy (1789-1870), but Gustaf was educated by his successor Adolf Fredrik Lindblad (1801-1878). Lindblad had a music school in what is now Rosenbad, but for the prince children it was private education. Gustaf had a beautiful voice and was therefore also taught by the singing teacher Isak Berg (1883-1886). Gustaf's first compositional attempt was in his 10s. His first publicly performed compositions are from 1843: One march for the Royal Guard (brother Charles's regiment) & one for the Royal Dragoons (his own regiment), a waltz dedicated to sister Eugenie and a gallop. The following year he was elected honorary member of the Academy of Music. Between 1843 and 1851, there were a total of 55 compositions, which the Academy had printed after his death:

² von Troil 1877: ss. 100-101; Horn 1946: s. 126.

³ PHT 1917; Horn 1946: s. 141.

The most successful [in this music-interested family] was Prince Gustaf, whom this article will mainly be about. With his often loveable and simple pieces, he became one of the most played and sung Swedish composers of the 19th century. In his vocal quartets he embraced a popular gentle and effeminate student singing style alongside the "male" style represented mainly by Gunnar Wennerberg. A couple of these songs have for all time been adopted as Swedish classics. We greet the spring with *Happy as the bird*. We graduate to *Sing of the student's happy day*. Perhaps one or twice we have even sung the sentimentally bittersweet *Smelling the rose*. With these, Gustaf has made himself immortal.⁴

Which is true as far as it goes, but Gustaf's constant lyricist Herman Säterberg (1812-1897) has been criticised. The 2nd stanza of the student song, with its call for the students to after graduation sacrifice their life for king & country, is seldom (read never) performed.⁵ Gustaf worked in a transitional time when the Swedish national feeling was based both on warrior feats and nature romanticism.

The fact that Gustaf's compositions were widely known was both due to their intrinsic qualities and to his position. His contacts with the music establishments in Stockholm, Uppsala and the military ensured that they were played. The fact that they were printed and distributed - free of charge it seems - made them available. By birth, he was a name. All this goes a long way, but not 150 years. By this time, most of his contemporaries are reduced to curiosities. But Gustaf's pubertal angst belongs to eternity. Life is unfair, and for that we should sometimes be grateful.

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Gustaf and sex is an unknown. His lack of interest has often been commented on. Maybe it had to do with his bad health. There is no record of marriage plans, but perhaps probes were underway. In the meantime Gustaf seems to have buried himself in his art.

There is a story from 1892 that he was boarded with a priest, who was given the task of making him less of a poetic dreamer more of a sportsman and that during his stay Gustaf became fond of the priest's daughter.⁶ It is difficult to place the story in time and space. 1944 was made a film with a similar plot, *Prince Gustaf*, directed by Schamyl Bauman. The plot is located in Uppsala in the year 1845. Alf Kjellin plays Gustaf, Mai Zetterling plays the vicar's daughter Ann Maria Wastenius, Lennart Bernadotte plays Charles.⁷ No such vicar's daughter has been located. In contrast, Gustaf during his time in Uppsala 1844 and 1845 socialized in with the author Tekla Knös (1815-1880) and later also with the baroness Josephine Hamilton (1834-1861; Rudbeck, 1857). Tekla thought Gustaf beautiful enough to make you weak in the knees just being close, but a little uninteresting. We do not know what Josephine Hamilton thought. Much later, there was speculation about a love affair, similar to that between Prince Oscar and lady-in-waiting Ebba Munck.

Gustaf was often bedridden in difficult to diagnose infections. On July 10, 1852, he accompanied his father to Germany for a spa visit. On the return trip he fell ill with "gastric

⁴ Jonsson 1991: s. 161.

⁵ Skott 1996: s. 175.

⁶ de Fontenoy 1892: ss. 440-441.

⁷ Prins Gustaf (1944). Svensk Filmdatabas. <sf.se> (2016-01-01).

nerve fever” - possibly a salmonella infection. On September 24 he died in Kristiania, aged 25. The legacy was unusually bland:

According to E af Edholm (obituary in *Post och Inrikes Tidningar*), G was foreign to politics but passionately interested in literary and aesthetic studies. His high, stately and at the same time well proportioned figure as well as his ”dreamy eyes and at the same time unassuming and princely posture” granted him ”a rare beauty”. The unusually large number of memorial celebrations and poems in the days following G's death shows his popularity in broad circles. North of Haga Castle, a bust of K E Sjöstrand was erected in 1854 by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. For the centenary of 1927, G Eldh's statue was unveiled outside the Geijer court in Uppsala.⁸

⁸ Tegen 1967.