Place, Polity, and Identity in Swedish Music and Art, 1890-1910

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Place, Polity, and Identity in Swedish Music and Art, 1890-1910

by

Juliana Elizabeth Madrone

B.A., Lewis and Clark College, 2003

A thesis submitted to the

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This thesis entitled:
Place, Polity, and Identity in Swedish Music and Art 1890-1910
written by Juliana Elizabeth Madrone
has been approved for the Department of Music

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Carlo Caballero

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Jeremy Smith

Date______________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Scholars have recognized the 1890s as a significant period of cultural change in the history of Sweden. The rise of the Social Democratic Party coincided with the development of a new national style in both the visual arts and literature. Yet our music histories either neglect the Swedish composers of this period entirely, or address their involvement with a national style only in terms of their use of folk material, a trait that was not a substantial part of Swedish national identity in other creative fields. Furthermore, the most influential cultural figures of the period together founded the intellectual society *Utile Dulci* in 1897, whose membership roster included composer Wilhelm Stenhammar. The way this society facilitated close relationships among musicians and other creative artists invites us to consider how issues of identity present in one creative field may surface in other fields as well.

Through an examination of discourse, I will show that the formation of a Swedish identity in music and art during this period was based on values drawn from political ideology and a conception of beauty as both useful and pleasing. In addition, nature was emphasized as a source of cultural identity and authenticity. Artistic depictions of nature were imbued with a sense of longing meant to evoke common memories and feelings among Sweden’s inhabitants. These abstract qualities are illustrated in discussions of the central artistic and musical works from the period. They are further exhibited in the context of chamber music, a revitalized genre in which these qualities apply in non-programmatic ways.
Only in studying the values expressed by artists and composers can we understand what the Swedish national identity in the arts consists of. The more integrated understanding afforded by this interdisciplinary approach in turn demands a reexamination of how we have defined nationalism in music in general, by calling for a widening of those features that we expect to signify national identity. Such a radical reexamination may result in new delineations of nationalism, leading to a definition with greater descriptive value in terms of style and less reliance on the perceived exoticism of the primitive.
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I would like to thank the whole of the musicology faculty at the University of Colorado for their gamble on this philosophy major and their constant encouragement and support during the course of my degree. I would especially like to thank Elissa Guralnick for her guidance in clarifying certain aspects of my argument in the early stages of the dissertation, and for always responding to editorial requests. My undergraduate professor at Lewis and Clark, Nora Beck, was indispensable for her imposition of arbitrary deadlines during the writing process which have enabled me to complete the dissertation in less than a decade, and for her insistence that academia is the home of truly avant-garde thinkers. And of course I am ever grateful for the open-mindedness of my advisor, Carlo Caballero, whose kindness in editing was its own encouragement, and whose clarity and rigorousness of scholarship I always strive for in my own work. Finally, the attendees at the AMS Pacific Northwest regional conference were essential in asking questions that prompted me to clarify certain distinctions in the paper.

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I am indebted to Kajsa as well for her family’s generosity in hosting me in Sweden, and sharing discussions of various Swedish cultural matters with me. To that end, my own distant relatives in Sweden were essential for including me in their Midsommar celebrations, an
experience that was integral to my understanding of the importance of that event in Swedish culture.

This project could not have been done without the staff of the University of Colorado’s interlibrary loan office. I must also acknowledge the assistance of the Multnomah County Public Library’s interlibrary loan staff, who must have wondered at the sudden requests for obscure Swedish works. And many thanks to Veslemöy Heintz, chief librarian at the Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket vid Statens Musikverk in Stockholm for her patient answers to my many questions and very generous help during my time at the archives. This project is also indebted to the scholarship of Bo Wallner, whose exhaustive three-volume biography of Wilhelm Stenhammar has established a strong foundation for studies of both the composer and the period. Many of Stenhammar’s letters were only available to me from citations in this work.

Finally, I am ever grateful for the quality and quantity of support from my family. My parents, who unfailingly believed in me and provided essential financial support as well as the research trip to Sweden, would have been just as happy to support my equally idealistic career as a sommelier, and for that I am amazed and blessed. Thanks to my brother, who never failed to remind me of my place as little sister, and thus return a sense of perspective to my life. And to my husband Eli, who not only put his career aspirations on hold and moved to the dry edge of the Rockies with me, but also talked through more esoteric musical ideas than he ever imagined possible and always believed in the force of my arguments before they were fully formed – to him I extend the ever-insufficient thanks of a spouse in graduate school.

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**Introduction**

Every work of art has its story. No story can replace that work of art, and seeking an explanation in words for something that is already fully and rightly communicated in its own medium is in some respects futile. But in some cases, the art has gone unnoticed, the music unheard. Or it has sounded upon ears that lacked curiosity, and consequently misjudged its worth or simply misunderstood it. In these cases, the story can be helpful. It can rekindle curiosity, foster understanding, and encourage engagement.

I entered into this project following my own curiosity. Our historical narratives tend to touch lightly on countries at the periphery of the European mainstream. Yet those narratives often include the music of Norway’s Grieg and Finland’s Sibelius, usually in the context of a budding nationalism in their respective countries. Increasingly, even Denmark’s Nielsen and Gade receive cursory treatment. But during this same period in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the inclusion of every one of its neighbors, the musical world of Sweden is overlooked. Still more puzzling is the acknowledged presence by art historians of a definite national style in Swedish visual arts at the end of the century. It seemed implausible that this national feeling would not have seeped into musical circles as well.

More importantly, if Swedish composers did conceive of their work in a national context, what could that mean? Perhaps they had been left out of the “master narrative” because of a failure to conform to its given assumptions. The character of Swedish nationalism suggested by art historians is frustratingly vague, but hints at certain significant influences, most notably the formation of a new political outlook. With these early hypotheses I cast my net widely, aiming for an interdisciplinary approach.
The reasons for such an approach are twofold. Firstly, I am proceeding from the known (a national art style) to the unknown (a national musical style?). Thus I have attempted to seek a stronger and more solid basis for those ideas within artistic circles before proceeding to reconsider them in musical circles. Secondly, I believe a comprehensive study of musical style and identity cannot exist in isolation. Culture is a system, and, like the more widely known realm of systems biology, it benefits from a holistic perspective. Complex interactions result in emergent properties that cannot be understood from the study of a single isolated element. In this case, it is the complex interactions between artists and patrons, critics and creators, figures from many cultural realms, that result in an “emergent property” of national identity. The philosophizing, socializing, and vacationing that brought these many figures into contact cannot have been meaningless for the artistic products that were created during the period. Howard Becker’s concept of “art worlds” is in every way relevant here, as it is the discourse of many kinds of cultural figures that I have focused on in order to bring that emergent identity to light.¹

Let me be clear, this is a study of ideas. I have been interested in considering the intellectual background for the cultural products of a particular time and place. I have tried, as much as possible, to let creative insiders speak through their own words in telling us what it means to be Swedish at the turn of the twentieth century. I have hoped that viewing their discourse with an open mind will reveal a new model for understanding identity: its contents, its consequences, and its signature in works of art. There is no exhaustive discussion of repertory, or listing of facts and figures. I have instead tried to distill the fundamental concepts that Swedish artistic and musical styles seem to twist around; the core ideals that root and guide surface

actions. Discussions of artistic works, primarily paintings and musical works, serve to illustrate these concepts in more concrete ways, and to forge possible paths between words and works.

Because of the central role of the national school of visual art to this project, I have chosen to focus on the period of their greatest productivity. Likewise, the composers primarily addressed are those that had the greatest opportunity for contact with these artists. The closing boundary for the period was determined by the rise of a new generation of Swedish composers who no longer seemed to face the same challenges, but rather could build on the successes of their predecessors. Additionally, I am interested in the governing ethos of a pivotal aesthetic moment. Therefore, while it would certainly be possible to discuss a trajectory of style change that begins prior to that moment and flows through it, or even to address the style change that occurs within particular composers’ output, this has not been the goal. I have instead attempted to limit the period in order to encompass a single cohesive perspective, inasmuch as such a thing is possible. Further, ideas of change and self-renewal are not central features of the intellectual viewpoint of the period. Indeed, some artists even exhibited a tenacious adherence to particular visual motifs, which recur throughout their careers. Hence, my constraints have not been in violation of some essential philosophical logic.

Naturally, there are limitations to such an approach, as already acknowledged in my opening paragraph. There are the usual difficulties with intention: a statement may be issued because it is what the creator wants us to think he intended, though it may not actually be his intention. Moreover, a creator may not himself know what his intentions are. But this concern with intention is in many ways irrelevant, for artistic statements about belonging and identity do not always appear in the form of artistic intentions. Rather, they surface in the creation and

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2 In the context of art history, see Michael Baxendall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
perpetuation of certain cultural myths, as with our familiar “Great American Dream,” myths which can be identified and discussed in the abstract whatever their relationship to reality. Other objections may surface concerning the limitations of making comparisons between various art forms, each with their own modes of expression and methods of critique. To some, such comparisons are dangerous at their worst, and useless at their best. I have worked with this warning in mind and have attempted to avoid direct comparisons between works of art and works of music, except in the most banal of parallels. I have, however, made multiple comparisons between the *discourse* of the various kinds of artists. That has in fact been a primary goal, for in finding parallels between the stated aims and descriptions of identity of practitioners of different artistic mediums, it is possible to draw out larger themes that can apply to the cultural time and place as a whole. In this pivotal period the groundwork was laid for many of the cultural values that still persist in Sweden.

Given these limitations, it may already be evident to the reader what questions I have left for a future project. As I was intent on finding out what a Swedish style might consist of, I have limited myself to those letters, reviews, and philosophical statements that can clarify such an abstract notion. I have left out many societal details – leaders of salons, founding of symphony orchestras, establishment of schools, ongoing choral traditions – that might interest some readers. These details are to some extent available, though for the most part, not to English readers. Furthermore, there are some composers, such as Tor Aulin and his sister Valborg Aulin, whose perspectives I would have liked to include to a greater degree, but whose correspondence or other manners of discourse were largely unavailable to me at this time. They certainly deserve additional study. And finally, although I have included some musical studies – and suggested in detail how these larger ideas might surface in certain pieces of music – this kind of analysis
could be fruitfully continued in a multitude of works. Again, giving a wider audience access to these works would be its own accomplishment.

Overview

The dissertation is divided into four chapters, demarcating the largest themes and covering a great deal of ground within them. The first chapter begins with a broad view, thereby providing context for the following chapters. After establishing a theoretical framework for the use of discourse in defining identity, I delve into the ideological tenets of a new political party in Sweden – the Social Democrats. This is the party that would go on to dominate Swedish politics for most of the twentieth century, and therefore established the conventions of the nation’s political structure. The ideological vision of its founding members is unique both from socialism and from democracy in other countries, and hence informs a particular political identity. The political ideals of this party were part of a national discourse that was taken up by a politically engaged school of artists responsible for creating a national style in Swedish visual art during the period. I reveal the nature of this parallel through an in-depth discussion of the artistic philosophy of one of Sweden’s most prolific polemicists, Richard Bergh. The political crisis caused by Norway’s increasingly urgent calls for independence prompted further questioning within Sweden regarding a national identity, especially within artistic circles. These events – the rise of a new political party, the creation of a national style in visual art, and the coming split with Norway (1905) – all contributed to the self-examination that was central to the formation of a Swedish identity. The Swedish style in the visual arts at this time cannot be described without recourse to Swedish polity.
The second chapter connects musical discourse to the ideas already presented in political and artistic contexts in the first chapter. I show that determining a national identity was a concern raised by artistic, literary, and musical figures, and that the role of the “folk” in relation to that identity was complex. Rather than looking to folk traditions as a source of the nation’s authenticity, these figures instead refer to the Swedish “temperament” or “character” as a defining feature. I present further evidence that aesthetic preferences within Swedish musical discourse align with the political and artistic values outlined in the first chapter. These concurrences are perhaps unsurprising given the amount of contact between composers and various other cultural figures, connections that are confirmed by the presence of the interdisciplinary society, *Utile dulci*. The membership of this society shows that philosophical parallels between the motivations of artists and those of composers were the result of significant social contact between the disciplines. In addition to the influence of the ideals of Social Democracy, beauty and usefulness were considered central aesthetic goals. I use discussions of important musical works to illustrate their adherence to ideals present in the discourse.

These two chapters already provide a strong argument for a redefinition of current narratives of nationalism, which have left Sweden’s musical output and aesthetic values unexamined. It should be immediately apparent that the ideas being promoted in Sweden – beauty, usefulness, solidarity, efficiency, freedom – would shape music that is unlike compositions elsewhere in Europe. In place of the aggressive autonomy of modernity, social communication was favored. The artistic works produced, while markedly different from works such as Debussy’s *Nocturnes* (1897-99), Strauss’ *Salomé* (1905), and Sibelius’ *Finlandia* (1900), to name a few contemporary achievements, also make no attempt to dominate the musical scene. The aesthetic cost of the Swedish perspective has been the exclusion of Swedish art products
from historical accounts that prioritize innovation and originality. Additionally, the Swedish attitude was fundamentally practical and optimistic. There is very little of the confrontation, the decadence, and anxiety that characterize much of turn-of-the-century visual art, from Gauguin’s Symbolism, to Picasso’s Cubism, and the early expressionism of works such as the Norwegian Edvard Munch’s *Skriket* (1893, *The Scream*).

In chapter three I examine the role of nature with respect to the Swedish identity. Artists and intellectuals frequently retreated to the country during the summer months, and composers were often most productive during these journeys. This emphasis on the return to nature was a common feature of many industrial societies as they nurtured a nostalgic longing for a pristine past. However in Sweden’s case, the return to nature was also a cultural tradition rather than a place of escape. It had greater significance because it was accompanied by celebratory occasions when communities gathered together in nature to appreciate and acknowledge natural events. In Sweden, nature is thus a real place that is treasured and provides respite, and also an imagined construction that represents the country’s rich past and promising future. Nature was endowed with a multitude of cultural myths and understood as the source of authenticity for the nation. The reverence directed toward nature is a familiar Romantic trope, but it is not an awe-inspiring or sublime nature that was envisioned in Sweden. Rather it was a benign and ultimately more useful version of nature. Natural motifs that became the focus of artistic and musical works reinforced ideological values such as community and equality. These creative products helped affirm nature’s role as the object of communal longing, binding the nation together by saturating nature with a nostalgic evocation of common memories and experiences. Nature is in this way not only revered, but also a symbol of the Swedish nation itself.
Chapters two and three examined the various features of Swedish identity and discussed them in the context of the most prominent paintings and obviously programmatic musical works, either by means of text or title. In chapter four I apply these concepts to the abstract arena of chamber works that are not expressly programmatic. Chamber music experienced a period of revitalization in Sweden at this time as well, owing to the combined circumstances of the difficulty of funding larger forces and the emergence of a talented touring quartet, the Aulin Quartet. While it may be easy to locate the features of Swedish identity in works that clearly address that identity, if those features are truly representative of a particular place and time, they should also be present in works that are less clearly about anything. Through close analysis of one of Stenhammar’s quartets and other chamber works I show that those features of Swedish identity discussed in previous chapters are in fact perceptible in non-programmatic music as well. By placing the music in the context of discourse in this way, we may come to see that these pieces have been left out of our historical narratives because of the alternate ideals that inform them and not necessarily for any inherent lack of quality.

This study of one country’s formation of its cultural identity (albeit in a very specific period of time) has caused me to reconsider my own understanding of “nationalism.” It now appears to me as one of those many tricky words that we thought we understood, but that with closer examination always wriggle just out of focus. Inquiry into the use of “nationalism” in other fields of thought has proven equally inconclusive, as the term is used with many qualifications and limitations. Its meaning in musicology has for too long now been clear, and I
hope that this project cultivates the seeds of doubt which others have already begun to sow.³ Historical narratives of nationalism in music all too conveniently root themselves in the “universal” ground of the Austro-Germanic tradition, and from there take in the view around them. The music of other countries is described as quaintly nationalist for its exotic sounds, its folk melodies from far-away peasant traditions, its colorful inclusion of primitive instruments, or for its use of modal harmonic material. Composers in these “other” countries seemed happy to oblige in this conspiracy of nationalist flavor which earned them recognition on a wider stage, and their audiences, having been raised on the “universal” tradition as well, were happy to support their patriotic banner-men. If I state the case perhaps a bit strongly, it is only to make the historical bias appear all the more glaring.

Sweden’s case, in its variance from this model, encourages a different view of what it means to be nationalist. Rather than conceiving of identity as a base recipe to which nationalist elements can be thrown in like spices, it is instead something built on ideals that must be understood from the inside out, not the outside looking in. To be sure, the folk element is present in Swedish music, as are the sounds of the peasant fiddle, but these are often unrecognizable to the outsider. What is intrinsic to the music are the ideals of beauty, usefulness, and solidarity that inform it. Striking too are the ideals that do not inform this music: the Hegelian dialectic of progress, the call for originality, and the pursuit of “art for art’s sake.” Perhaps the Swedish case can encourage us to seek an idea of nationalism that is formed within the nation it purportedly describes.

As a study of the relationship between music, culture, and nature, this project contributes to the recently coined subfield of ecomusicology. Uncertainties in the field still abound,

particularly with respect to methodological challenges and the aims and limitations of the approach. Aaron S. Allen describes the field as related to ecocriticism, which studies “cultural products that imagine and portray human-environment relationships.” I have sought to understand the interconnections between Swedish cultural products, both musical and artistic, the artists and composers that made them, and their environment, both existing and constructed. It is evident that these cultural figures had a relationship with and experience of place that profoundly influenced their view of the world and their creative output. Insights about the role of place in culture may give us a better understanding of these works and their moment in history, and also additional means for reflecting on the role of place in our own culture. Holly Watkins has further written, “music also is a place of sorts, replete with its own metaphorical locations, types of motion, departures, arrivals, and returns.” Understood in this way, is it possible to untangle the thread from an actual place to the construction of a related musical place? Exact analogues would be pushing such a metaphor too far, but with the aid of stylistic hints in the discourse it may be possible to identify a musical logic related to a composer’s understanding of their environment. Regardless, the importance of the land to the Swedish construction of identity was profound, and so it is in this area that I have made some of my most adventurous assertions.

To conclude, I will address one final objection. There are surveys of Swedish music history that naively label the composers of this period, namely Stenhammar, Alfvén, and Peterson-Berger, as national romantics. Their application of such a label is both misleading and

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limiting; suggesting that these composers are not only lagging behind continental developments, but that they can also be easily classified by a familiar label. Such a picture appears complete, and perhaps implies that my own study here is unnecessary. To these detractors, I must quote Oliver Sacks who said, “A doctor does not just diagnose disease… that is the least of what he does. He is also concerned with the impact of the disease on the person, their experience of it, and how they may adapt or… respond to treatment. So there is quite a strong individual story to be said of everyone with a disease or injury.” With the same perspective, the simple diagnosis of these composers as national and romantic – with the added insult of excluding them from the substantial discussion of nationalist composers that was afforded to their neighbors – has seemed to me insufficient. I have been keen to know not only what makes them nationalist, but also how they are (and are not) romantics. This project’s aim is to describe their nationalism from every angle and to clarify the impact of that concept on the artistic pursuits of its artists during a very special moment in Swedish cultural history: in short, to reclaim meaning for music that has lain dormant beneath hollow words. This is the “individual story” of another nationalism.

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6 Oliver Sacks, in an interview with Robert Krulwich, Radiolab from WNYC podcast, “Shorts: Happy Birthday Good Dr. Sacks” (July 9, 2013), 18:00-18:28.
Chapter One: Swedish fin-de-siècle Art and Politics

In every nation’s history there are certain periods whose cultural contributions appear especially rich. These periods are often the first to receive the attention of scholars, and there is often a common underlying question to this research, though it is not always acknowledged: why here, why now? The turn of the twentieth century in Sweden was one of these culturally rich periods, falling only behind the abundance of the Gustavian era at the end of the eighteenth century. This chapter addresses the formation of the Swedish identity during this era through a discussion of a new political movement within society and its effect on the ideological motivations of the artistic community of Sweden. Such a broad perspective will provide a foundation for understanding musical developments during the period, and also begin to provide an answer for why this particular period triggered a new discussion of Swedish identity.

Any attempt to define a nation must be considered at once incomplete and counterfactual. Incomplete because the cultural boundaries of a nation constantly shift in response to the changing values of a nation’s members, values which often have troubling definitions in their own right. As Homi K. Bhabha puts it, “to encounter the nation as it is written displays a temporality of culture and social consciousness” (emphasis in original), thus acknowledging the ephemeral nature of the nationalist idea, even when captured in writing. No description of the nation can keep up with this constant change. And counterfactual because such definitive descriptions of nationhood are merely abstract concepts represented as concrete reality. These concepts often exclude marginalized segments of the described society, and attempt to create a

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picture of permanence and stability that belies the very forces of change which allowed the development of the ‘nation’ to begin with.

Such concessions threaten to neutralize the current project before it has begun. However, the end design here is not to finally arrive at a method of defining the actual reality of a nation. Rather, the goal is to grant the aforementioned objections and examine the construction of that abstract concept of nationhood for one particular nation. Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as “an imagined political community,”⁸ is a fruitful model in this case. By community, the nation is understood to be a group of people existing in fellowship with each other. In declaring it imagined, Anderson refers to the fact that many members of the national community will never meet, but nonetheless feel this sense of kinship. How then is it that members of the community acknowledge their participation in and define the parameters of that community? Nations are constructed through discourse,⁹ the communication that occurs within a community and allows members to create and identify with an abstract idea. Political, sociological, historical accounts of nationhood take into consideration the discourse presented in newspapers, magazines, and novels, the primary print-media that mark the public domain of industrialized societies. It is in these forms of print that the narrative of nationalism flourishes.

But the members of the imagined community of a ‘nation’ also express their belonging through works of art: paintings, sculptures, musical scores, poetry, and similar endeavors. These works can become symbols for the various facets of the community’s imagined identity; they can become depositories of beliefs, ideas, and values. They can participate in the construction of a


⁹ This idea is argued by Patrik Hall in his *The Social Construction of Nationalism: Sweden as an Example* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1998), 8.
field of meaning, reinforcing the narrative present in discourse. Naturally the agents of these works imagine themselves as part of the community, and often contribute to the discourse in written form as well as reifying its values in their artistic works. By attending to their contributions to the national discourse, at the moment in which the national image was being composed, to use Bhabha’s apt choice of words,\textsuperscript{10} we may understand the abstract concept, or ideal, behind a distinctive artistic period, and thus come to a more complete understanding of those lasting works.

By the end of the 1880s the rhetoric that Swedish visual artists used to describe their work had begun to change in ways that were reflective of the new political climate of the period and that marked their participation in just such a nationalist discourse. At the same time, these artists were involved in establishing a national school of art distinguished by its unique style and a growing sense of attachment to their native land. It is the confluence of these two forces – the birth of social democratic politics and the maturation of a native artistic movement – that makes the period in question unique in Sweden’s cultural history. For what began as a very particular political community would grow to become a national voice: the emerging political party of the 1880s was in fact the vanguard for a party that went on to have a lasting impact in Swedish life, a party that maintained political power for the majority of the twentieth century, and the party that instituted the policies that are now defining aspects of the Swedish state. Many of the same principles and values that would come to define the new politics were also employed by artists to describe the aim and purpose of their art.

\textsuperscript{10} In reference to the project of examining language’s ”Janus-faced” role in national discourse, Bhabha writes, “the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of ‘composing’ its powerful image.” Bhabha, \textit{Nation and Narration}, 3.
This confluence of political and artistic ideals is striking when considered in contrast to concurrent artistic efforts in other countries. Various Post-Impressionist movements such as Synthetism, Symbolism, and Expressionism were formed by artists who seemed rather more concerned with specifically artistic matters – color theory, brush strokes, perspective, methods of interpreting reality in painted form – than with national ideals. Even those who thought to critique the ills of modern society, as with the primitivism of Gauguin or Seurat’s portrayals of the middle class, could not be shown to support the political ideals of a national party with any consistency. While the importance of the rising socialist democratic political ethos for Swedish artists has been granted by art historians, a detailed comparison of political ideology to artistic values such as I will be discussing has not been addressed. The Swedish artists were clearly more concerned with a socio-political perspective than their contemporaries, and their discourse and artistic works contributed to the identity of the imagined political community.\footnote{The rise of a nationalist artistic movement in Sweden has been recognized by art historians, including notably Kirk Varnedoe, \textit{Northern Light: Nordic Art at the Turn of the Century} (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988) and Michelle Facos, \textit{Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).}

**The Social Democratic Party and its Political Ethos**

The new political vision, that would ultimately surface in artistic circles, was first presented to the Swedish public by August Palm in an 1881 speech in Malmö.\footnote{The speech was entitled, “What the Social Democrats Want,” and was given at the Hotel Stockholm. Tim Tilton, \textit{The Political Theory of Swedish Social Democracy: Through the Welfare State to Socialism} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 18.} In 1889 a small party was established. The movement did not immediately come to prominence, in the way hindsight might indicate, and it was not until 1932 that the Swedish Social Democratic Labor
Party (Sveriges Social demokratiska Arbetareparti, or SAP) was instated as the ruling party in government. Despite the party’s later decades of governance, its earliest agitators left behind no systematic formulation of their theories. Their speeches and writings nonetheless provide a description of the ideals that were so influential to the national awareness of the 1890s. These ideals became increasingly clear as the party grew in prominence, but even their earliest iterations were persuasive.

The early goals of the party’s founders were simple. August Palm’s primary concern was to decry the ills of capitalism, and his speeches contain little in the way of alternative approaches. Hjalmar Branting, the first official leader of the party, directed most of his efforts toward encouraging workers to organize. Yet, as the party’s first elected member to the Riksdag and its official leader until 1925 Branting had the means to impose his influence in a special way. His emphasis on the reform and integration of the workers, rather than revolution or worker domination of other segments of society, had a lasting effect despite not being grounded in a more comprehensive political theory.13

Scholars generally agree that the version of social democracy that matured in Sweden was unique, primarily in its behavior and also because of its historical context.14 Branting’s influence must be considered crucial in this regard, as well. Matters of ideology were considered second in importance to actions and policies that would broaden the popular base for the party.

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13 For a detailed discussion of Branting’s contributions, see Tilton, Political Theory, 15-38.

This attitude ensured that the party’s influence was ultimately broad enough to be considered in national, rather than merely local, terms, a fact that is significant to this discussion for bringing these political ideals to the national community. Placing matters of ideology second also meant that important aspects of traditionally socialist ideology, such as the nationalization of the means of production, were not pursued with as much vigor as other goals, such as universal suffrage and improved working conditions.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, leading figures in the party’s first decades, Branting among them, preferred to gain ground by consensus rather than majority rule, thus establishing a tradition of slow change. Hence, in contrast to the kind of radical behavior that often proved unsustainable for the socialist parties of other countries, Sweden’s social democratic party functioned in a way that resulted in an enduring political party.

The approach to change exercised by Branting is significant for establishing an attitude of inclusion in what would become the political community of the nation as a whole. His was also an essentially practical approach. The repercussions of this attitude will continue to surface in our discussion of ideology, in both political and artistic arenas. But Branting’s methods cannot be considered a political theory, per se, despite the significance of his influence. It is only in the speeches and writings of his successor, Ernst Wigforss, that the underlying themes that came to characterize the party in Sweden can be discerned.

I will examine these principles in their artistic setting, but for the purposes of introduction they will first be addressed in a political context. These are the ideals that informed the perspective and decisions of influential political leaders, and that were shared with the public as

\textsuperscript{15} The Liberal Party had led a push for democracy in the 19th century, but income restrictions meant that 65% of men over 21 still couldn’t meet the requirements to vote in the 1908 election, a statistic cited in Karl Molin, “Historical Orientation,” in Misgeld, Creating Social Democracy, xviii. Truly universal suffrage was thus an ongoing goal.
both explanation and motivation. They are, in brief, equality, freedom, democracy, security, solidarity and community, and a pragmatic preference for economic efficiency.\footnote{These ideals form the ideological foundation of the Swedish Social Democratic Party as developed by one of its earliest theoretical contributors, Ernst Wigforss (1881-1977). Though his influence in the party came primarily after his 1919 election to parliament, the discussion of ideals as formulated in his writings is yet relevant to this project. For he was one of the first to formulate a \textit{coherent} theory of SAP doctrine, which makes his thought a less opaque place to examine important social democratic values in Sweden, values whose roots nevertheless exist in the discourse of earlier periods. Wigforss’ contribution is discussed in Tilton, \textit{Political Theory}, 39-69.}

Equality is an idea that seems to come naturally to the concept of socialism, advocating as it does for community ownership of the means of production. However, in the Swedish formulation conceived by Branting and Wigforss the idea contains a bit more. Not only does it encompass the classless equality of opportunity, but also the fraternity that results from removing the barriers based on circumstances of class from amongst people. The concept allows for individuality while building a sense of community.

Individuality is an important component of the value of freedom as well. This value indicates not only freedom from persecution, but also freedom to pursue one’s individuality and make choices that suit one’s personality. Economic freedom should be leveled so that everyone has a more equal degree of economic power, “even if the individual may thereby be deprived somewhat of his precious rights, both to become a millionaire and to starve to death.”\footnote{Wigforss, quoted in ibid., 53.} Put another way, Wigforss writes, “overweening economic power in the hands of one limits freedom for the other.”\footnote{Ibid., 54.}

Freedom of choice and equal participation are key aspects of another of the social democratic values, namely democracy. Wigforss describes what he envisions in the concept thus:
The democratic idea that carried me over into the socialist party was the demand for equality for all of the members of society. Equality of civil rights, equality also in the question of possibilities to take part both in spiritual and material culture. That this equality simultaneously implied equal freedom for all to develop their talents and make their contributions was so self-evident that it hardly paid to mention it.\(^{19}\)

It is clear that Wigforss understood democracy not only as full participation, but also as a concept that is related in significant ways to the earlier-named principles of equality and freedom. Wigforss’ vision for humanity portrays these ideals so intertwined that they can hardly be separated from one another.

Two additional values of the early SAP are connected when viewed in political and economic terms, and also, to an extent, in their artistic context. The first of these values is security, which was meant to refer to the workers’ security of livelihood against injury, old age, fluctuations of the market, and other uncontrollable events that may have an impact on their standard of living. The second is the control of the economy in order to maintain an increased and more efficient standard of production, a situation which in turn can guarantee the above-mentioned security for the worker. These two values, security and efficiency, promote a vision of a stable and prosperous society.

This brings me to the final principle at the root of SAP decision-making: solidarity. This is perhaps one of the most important principles in Wigforss’ vision for Swedish social democracy, for it supports an attitude that proved to be politically successful for the SAP, and one that has not seen glamorous promotion like “freedom” and “democracy.” In promoting the value of solidarity and the related notions of co-operation, community, and fraternity, early SAP leaders were providing an alternative to capitalist competition and self-centeredness. At the level of the individual, this principle manifests itself as a friendly attitude toward one’s neighbor and

\(^{19}\) Ibid.
the promotion of efforts to build community. At the political level, it was a principle that informed the process of gradual reform and politics by consensus; methods, as mentioned previously, that uniquely marked the SAP.

A further characteristic of the principle of solidarity as promoted by the Social Democratic Party was the emphasis on solidarity across class boundaries, so that the working class was not promoted at the expense of other segments of society, but as equal participants in society. Branting spoke of this attitude in the following way:

The class struggle ought, so far as its form depends on us and not on our opponents, to be carried on so that it does not close that way to a more expansive solidarity than simply that within the working class. The goal that we never must lose sight of in the midst of the conflict and its necessities, is to come through conflict to a solidarity that, after the fall of privilege, extends across the entire nation and through it to the entire human race.20

It becomes clear from these principles that the Swedish Social Democratic vision was an optimistic one, focused on the attainment of idealistic principles and the realization of a wide-ranging brotherhood of man.

The Social Democratic Ethos Among Visual Artists

Despite the fact that the principles of the SAP could hardly have been developed with any theoretical rigorosity by the start of the 1890s, the visual artists that came to define a national style in art articulated their stylistic motivation and sense of cultural duty in terms that aligned with the main tenets of SAP ideology. Art historians have set the artists in the context of this new political atmosphere, acknowledging that their ideals exhibit an attachment to the SAP vision. However, this comparison needs to be made more strongly. The artistic identity that we are calling national during this period of Sweden’s history is based to a great extent on what are

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20 Branting, quoted in Tilton, Political Theory, 28.
essentially political ideals. These two realms of thought are linked in ways that make the Swedish artistic concerns appear unique among their neighbors, and also detach them from many of the late-nineteenth-century artistic debates. Because artistic goals are so strongly connected to ideas about bettering the quality of life of an average Swede, they necessarily encouraged a different kind of art. In expressing similar values, Swedish artistic identity is constructed on the same basis as the political nation, both of which were elements of the same ‘imagined political community.’ The following discussion examines these ideological parallels in the artistic discourse.

The rise of a nationalist school of visual art occurred late in the nineteenth century in Sweden. Swedish artists, like many European artists in the nineteenth century, were in the habit of travelling to Paris and sometimes Düsseldorf to study with masters there before returning home. One of these artists, Edvard Perséus, returned to Sweden and started a school of Naturalist painting in 1877 as a result of learning the style in Paris. Young artists dissatisfied with the artistic ideals of the dominant Royal Academy and its reliance on the dated and foreign aesthetics of antiquity sought Perséus’ alternative style. However, the economic realities of the art market in Sweden were such that working in a style not approved by the Royal Academy meant having an unsuccessful career. Encouraged by Perséus’ example, artists such as Richard Bergh (1858-1919), Prins Eugen (1865-1947), Nils Kreuger (1858-1930), Carl Larsson (1853-1919), Karl Nordström (1855-1923), and Georg Pauli (1855-1935) went to Paris in the late 1870s and early 1880s, where the modern styles were thriving, and were quickly accepted at the Salon exhibitions of the Société nationale des Beaux-Arts.

Perhaps influenced by homesickness, or by the social responsibility of thinkers such as Zola in Paris, the artists soon returned home with the intention of reforming the academic system
of the Royal Academy and its hold on the Swedish art market.\textsuperscript{21} Georg Pauli wrote of the change, “the artists began to realize that they were not only artists but also citizens in a social community, with obligations and responsibilities to its members.”\textsuperscript{22} This, then, was the crucial moment in which creators of culture also began to participate in the imagined political community of the nation.

Their first step was to sign a petition calling for the reform of the Academy. Predictably, this resulted in a ban on the signers that prevented them from showing their works in the upcoming Academy-sponsored exhibition in the fall of 1885. The signers instead launched their own independent exhibition in the spring of 1885, and boosted by its success, organized a second exhibition in the fall under the title, “The Opponents.”

In August 1886, the Opponents organized into the Artists’ Association (Konstnärsförbundet), and began holding annual art exhibitions of its member artists, a status open to anyone not also a member of the Royal Academy. The Opponents were not the first to challenge an artistic elite, as the artists that would come to be known as Impressionists had successfully done so in France in the 1870s, and similar movements existed in the other Scandinavian countries. However, the rhetoric of the artists associated with the Opponent movement quickly assumed many of the same values as the growing social democratic party in Sweden. Further, the style of these artists’ works, while clearly evolving from the various Impressionist and Post-Impressionist styles in Paris, soon developed into an independent style

\textsuperscript{21} Facos writes of their reason for returning home, “As the initial preoccupation with their own artistic development yielded to social concerns, the National Romantic painters returned home.” Michelle Facos, \textit{Nordic Imagination}, 11.

that defies easy categorization. This style can only be explained in terms of the Swedish goals and values voiced by the artists themselves.\(^{23}\)

The member artists of the Artists’ Association were committed to ideological views similar to those of the leaders of the SAP, a point that is clearly reflected in their own writings. It seems they even considered their efforts against the hegemony of the Royal Academy to be related to the democratic ideals of the SAP and its efforts to bring about social change. Additionally, the artists couched their correlations with SAP ideology in a nationalist framework. They were involved in an effort to establish a national school of art, which meant distinguishing their style as something particularly Swedish.

Richard Bergh was one of the most prolific writers among the Opponent artists, contributing essays on art to several prominent journals and the daily paper, *Dagens Nyheter*. Of the need for art to reflect changes in Swedish society at the time, he writes, “Our era has a new faith, a new ideal of happiness, a new ideal of society, and a new political idea and demands an art inspired by the ideas and feelings, dreams and passions of contemporary people.”\(^{24}\) Not only does this reveal his awareness of the new politics, it also expresses his belief that artists ought to create work based on contemporary aesthetic ideals rather than the borrowed and ancient models of the Academy. Artists can no longer do their work in an isolated aesthetic space trying to conjure a universal ideal. They must be involved in their society and let their art represent that society.

\(^{23}\) That the artists created a style which does not easily fit into the standard historical progression of dominant artistic styles as they are typically defined in the French model is a point already argued by Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light*. The point is continued for the Swedish case in Facos, *Nordic Imagination*.

Bergh links this new duty of the artist to the creation of a national community when he writes,

The artist – I mean the artist who wants to dig deep down into the life of his nation – must… stand outside of the class barriers. He shall live his life so that he, in his innermost being, will feel just as close to the farmer as to the gentleman, to the factory owner as to the factory worker, to the wise as well as to the child, because he shall exactly represent that which, in the very fiber of one’s being, is common property and richness: the Swedish character. He shall represent the spiritual unity we together form, a unity that no class difference can completely erase as long as Sweden stands. But when there is no longer that unity, then there is no Sweden either.”

Here Bergh has made explicit the connection between Sweden as a nation and the idea of equality contained in the ideological foundations of the SAP. Further, it is the artist’s duty to represent this important connection in his art, both to remind and to continue to cultivate the general feeling among the public. Placing the cultivation of a communal Swedish feeling at the forefront of the artist’s obligations indicates that Bergh felt his social responsibility deeply. His reference to the Swedish character as the locus of a unifying thread among all Swedes would become a common trope in discussions of identity during the period, among artists as well as other cultural realms.

Bergh’s writings also reflect the delicate balance between the various ideals of Sweden’s social democratic principles. He writes, “our individual freedom, together with feelings of solidarity, must create a new law and a new gospel. It will be the new day’s work. Individual

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freedom will no longer stand as a threat to feelings of solidarity.” Such a statement resonates with the political value of freedom as understood by Wigforss, a freedom to develop one’s own personality and to act independently. But like the political formulation, Bergh is quick to clarify that this freedom does not threaten the ideal of solidarity and community so important to the Swedish formulation, but rather strengthens the ideal. This was by no means a universal feeling among artists in other countries, whose efforts to promote their own freedom and individuality often pitted them against their society at large, or indeed against their community of fellow artists. For the circle of Swedish artists influenced by the Opponents, this balance between individual freedom and a sense of community or solidarity is most apparent in the way that the various artists developed strikingly independent styles, while also uniting in their support of a national style of art.

Bergh took the balance of individuality and solidarity as a broader stance that should also govern the relationship of the nation to the world. In his view, humanity is an organism in development. But for him, the goal of this development is “greater richness and harmony, that is to say, fullness of life.” Just as a human is made of many parts, each unique for their own purpose, so the world comprises many countries of differing forms. In the human, every part is necessary no matter how big or small, and this is true with the larger world as well. “It is the


27 This balance was also realized by Branting, who wrote of the SAP and the Liberal party that it was their goal to “lay the foundation for the society that Ibsen dreamed of – where there is room for free and noble men and women, for personalities who in serving their fellow men can realize their own yearning for lofty personal development,” quoted in Tilton, Political Theory, 36.

28 “större rikedom och harmoni, det vill säga lifsfullhet,” Richard Bergh, “Den nationella konsten,” Om konst, 168. This article consists of letters to Ellen Key from 1901 that were published in Svea in 1902.
development and perfection of the *entire* organism that is of importance, not just the bigger organs. Nothing that can contribute to this organism’s development… can be insignificant for the goal. Every little part of the organism *must be original in its kind* in order for all the parts to work together for the good of the entire organism.”

These statements support the political ideals that envisioned everyone (worldwide) as a great fraternity.

Bergh expands the idea with an additional analogy:

If for all of us the goal of our hopes were that the entire world would thrive, it must be just as important that the dwarfed pine-trees in the Swedish archipelago will be able to grow and evolve as it would be for the cedars in Lebanon to be preserved. The latter may now be the world’s most wonderful trees and their crowns may rustle more grandiosely than all the other tree-tops… It is still more important that *the entire mass* is moving, even if it is ever so slowly, than that only a few are moving rapidly and in high waves. We want to see a never-ending verdant forest of many different types of trees grow up, not just a few, even if they are sky high.”

As with the analogy to the human body, this is an endorsement for many unique voices within a larger whole; for individualism in the context of solidarity. It is an argument that no genius is great enough to sacrifice the smaller voices, no cypress beautiful enough to justify destroying the dwarf pines, no head capable of functioning without its toes.

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For Bergh, there is a balance between the nourishment of the roots of the metaphorical
tree in its own national soil, and the addition of outside nutrients from foreign influences. He
makes a careful distinction between becoming so travelled that one becomes watered-down in
cosmopolitanism, and merely having a healthy awareness of outside influences.\textsuperscript{31} He writes,

Already that we Swedes have \textit{our own} history means, no matter how small it may seem,
that we also possess a rootedness and have \textit{our own} growth. Bring home to us all the
nourishment available – from every corner of the world – work with it, make it available
for us. Help us grow as tall as we can among the forest’s trees, so tall that we may look
out over the entire world, but above all: Teach us not to look down upon our own roots –
at least as long as the \textit{tree is growing}… Progress has two catch-phrases. One is “More
local patriotism, narrower circles, independent individuals!” The other one: “More
feeling of solidarity and working together, larger circles, people of the world!” Together
it sounds: “The highest possible unity in the richest possible diversity!”\textsuperscript{32}

This idea is born from a balance of the individual’s uniqueness with the solidarity of a larger
whole. But it would also have significant ramifications for a national identity, a national art, and
a national music that is as equally open to absorbing outside influences as it is to cultivating
inner qualities. This more amoebic operation of identity, with porous membranes, is supported
by Bergh’s assertion that patriotism should not be understood as chauvinism, but rather “let

\textsuperscript{31} His strongest statement against cosmopolitanism is the following: “I believe, for my
part, that the greatest danger for all art still lies in \textit{superficiality}, and that cosmopolitanism
promotes that vice more than nationalism, which nevertheless can be just as much of a nuisance
when it is dinned in people’s ears as empty program music.” Bergh, “Den nationella konsten,”
\textit{Om konst}, 170. This stance clearly distances him from Enlightenment ideals, despite his
allowance of outside influence. Likewise, the criticism of empty program music provides support
for the argument that a Swedish style in music must rest on more than extra-musical designations
of nationalism.

\textsuperscript{32} “Redan det att vi svenskar hafva en \textit{egen} historia betyder, hur ringa den kan synas, att
vi också äga ett rotfäste och hafva en \textit{egen} växt. Hämta hem till oss all näring, som kan fäss – från
all världens hörn – bearbeta den, gör den mottaglig för oss. Hjälp oss att växa så högt vi kunna
bland skogens trän, så högt att vi skada ut öfver hela vida världen, framför allt: Lär oss icke att se
öfverlägset ned på vår egen rot – åtminstone icke så länge \textit{trädet växer}… Utvecklingen har två
fältrop. Det ena lyder: “Mer lokalpatriotism, trängre ringar, själfständiga individer!” Det andra:
“Mer solidaritetskänsla och växelverkan, vidare ringar, världorganism!” Sammanstämda låta de:
“Den högsta möjliga enhet i den rikast möjliga mångfald!” Richard Bergh, “Den nationella
patriotism be equivalent to national feeling, *national self-esteem.*”33 Only in this way can patriotism for him support artistic endeavor. “…the Swedishness in us must – in my opinion – never be arrogantly silenced or forcibly suppressed since from a human standpoint the healthy development of the distinctive differences between both peoples and individuals should be of just as great an importance as the development of that which unites.”34 We can see in Bergh’s writing not only a commitment to SAP ideology in a political context, but also the way that ideology influenced his artistic perspective.

Support for the social democratic ideals of equality and democracy surfaced among artists and literary figures as well. Ellen Key’s 1899 pamphlet *Skönhet för alla* (Beauty for All) argued for the importance of art in people’s everyday lives and its role in maintaining healthy mental attitudes. Carl Larsson voiced his disappointment with the direction of the Royal Academy in terms of its failure to adequately encourage artists that their duty is to expose everyone to art.35 Both Larsson and Key are motivated by the conviction that people ought to have equal opportunity to access art, that it is just as much a right as universal suffrage. But beyond these written endorsements, perhaps the most convincing testimonial to equality and

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democracy was the model of a simple and functional home, modestly furnished, that was provided by Larsson’s own home, Lilla Hyttnäs.

The Larsson family home was meant to provide an example within everyone’s reach, and soon became a beacon for the development of Swedish style in the arts and design. Larsson brought attention to his example of the accessible Swedish style by publishing paintings of his Sundborn home in a book, *Ett hem* (published in 1899, the paintings were begun in 1894). The typical middle class home in late nineteenth-century Sweden was, in homage to history, full of antiques, but also dark and heavy, a style borrowed from fashionable German-renaissance interiors on the continent. The Larssons’ innovation was to lighten the interior of their home and to fill it with designs of greater simplicity and pragmatism. They encouraged the creation and decoration of objects within the home to be done oneself, and to use Swedish traditional handcrafts for stylistic inspiration. Carl crafted some of their furniture, oversaw the design of additions to the house, and painted traditional patterns on the interior walls and furniture. His wife Karin, a textile designer, created the textiles that fill the home, from tapestries to curtains and table coverings. As Larsson described it, “My art, it’s just like my home: fine furniture is out of place in it, there’s not even anywhere for a Haupt chest of drawers. It’s modest but harmonious, quite simply. Nothing extravagant, nothing for connoisseurs. But good and solid

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36 The paintings were first exhibited at the Stockholm Exhibition in 1897, and appeared again in rooms for a design exhibit at the Workers’ Institute organized by Ellen Key and Richard Bergh in 1899. *Ett hem* is the first in a series of four books Larsson published on his home and family life.


38 Larsson improvised his own furniture and advocated for Swedes to do the same, by making things with their own hands. Still, much of the furniture in his house had been inherited from past generations, and some was ordered from a local carpenter as well.
work.” Just as Wigforss described his understanding of democracy to include equal participation in material culture, Larsson advocated for that participation in a manner that was attainable to everyone. And like the political endorsement of efficiency, the Larsson home is practical in its restraint.

This attitude toward the practical advantages of simplicity is also evident in Prins Eugen’s commission for a new house from architect Ferdinand Boberg. He writes, “it will be a stylish house without style. No summer pleasure-villa, but a farm with simple artless style.” These statements bring to mind Wigforss’ vivid formulation of the political ideals of equality and freedom, in which one might not be allowed to become exceedingly wealthy, but neither would a person starve. Even among the royalty, the efficiency of simplicity is preferred.

The emphasis on home life and embracing a native style additionally relates to the political ideal of security for everyone. This ideal contained an element of concern with ensuring the comfort of all parts of society, in the interest of supporting the happiness and well-being of all citizens. Nowhere are such ideals more important than in the home, that stronghold of the family unit and source of moral behavior. The importance of the home to the social democratic paradigm was conveyed again by Representative Per Albin Hansson in 1928:

The basic framework of home is cooperation and a feeling of belonging. The good home does not acknowledge any privilege or prejudice; it has no favorite or abandoned members. There, one member does not look down on another; there no one seeks to profit at others’ expense; the strong do not oppress and rob the weak. In the good home equality, thoughtfulness, cooperation, and helpfulness rule. Adapted to the larger “folk home,” this would mean dissolving all social and economic differences that now divide

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39 Carl Larsson, quoted in Gunnarson, “Carl Larsson,” 47.

citizens into privileged and disadvantaged, dominating and dependent, rich and poor, haves and have-nots, plunderers and plundered.  

The family home is the origin and incubator for ideals such as equality and solidarity that lie at the very heart of the social democratic perspective. And the home serves as a model for transferring those ideas to a larger public arena. By embodying these ideals, the home became more than a physical dwelling, it was transformed into a metaphorical wellspring for Swedish identity.

**Creating a Unique Cultural Identity**

In addition to revealing a commitment to the same ideals that formed the foundation of SAP ideology, Bergh and his colleagues were also eager to distinguish their artistic style from that of other countries. He wrote, “if the art of a country in its essential character does not resemble its nature, that is a sure sign that a foreign influence is prevalent among its artists… Sweden is not a country for art, we sigh, and then we pull down the window shades… But outside the country stands snow covered and waits.”  

Attending to the natural setting of Sweden’s landscape was an important element in distinguishing Sweden’s art from that of other countries, but first the worth of that landscape had to be recognized. This was an essential step the Opponents and their circle took upon returning to Sweden from foreign travels. Bergh and his colleagues promoted an identity that they could declare was distinctly ‘Swedish,’ and that could be contrasted with a foreign ‘other.’ In some cases, as we have seen, this identity consisted of

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abstract ideals which were not always easily distinguishable in artistic subject matter. But they could be tied to the distinct character and atmosphere of the Swedish landscape, which easily translated into visual elements. The role of nature in the Swedish concept of nationalism merits a lengthier discussion, and will be treated in a later chapter. In short, Sweden’s unique natural traits were considered important to the concept of the nation, and used as visual symbols of less tangible features of identity.

In addition to being founded on the core ideals of the emerging political movement and a renewed devotion to Sweden’s natural setting, the construction of a national identity was based on a sense of continuity with a historical past. Like other late-nineteenth-century nationalisms, Sweden’s nationalism was exploited in order to preserve a cultural heritage threatened by growing foreign influences. And like similar efforts elsewhere, bureaucrats and intellectuals in Sweden reached back to a pure and romanticized version of their history. But unlike many other countries, Sweden’s past was a tribal and collective one rather than feudal. Thus, reaching for the historical roots of Sweden’s cultural identity offered further support for the ideals of the Social Democratic Party and nurtured a vision of optimism and creation rather than pessimism and loss. These factors contributed to a style with its share of nostalgic longing, but which never led as far as the somber and foreboding tone of other late nineteenth-century artistic styles.

Further, the idea of historical continuity was an important element in fostering a bright future for the nation. Bergh wrote,

only the people that consistently has its historical development before its eyes, who nurtures and preserves the history its fathers inscribed as clearly on the stones of many buildings as on yellowed paper, has a keen awareness of its inherited character; only that people knows also to which nationality it in fact belongs, and without such knowledge, the way forward is obscure and uncertain.43

43 “Endast det folk som ständigt har sin historiska utveckling för ögonen, som vårdar och värnar om den historia deras fäder inskrivit lika väl i mången byggnads stenar som på gulnade
Accordingly, events from Sweden’s past or historical monuments still in existence were popular choices as artistic subjects.

Yet, beyond historical monuments Bergh thought artists could make a connection with the contents of the Swedish essence through immaterial symbols as well.

That to which we are attached by the longest, the greatest, the finest, the deepest and the most secret roots, that which has haunted our minds since we were children and there eventually has taken on the dimensions of living indestructible symbols, valuable not through its correspondence with the perhaps insignificant reality but through its correspondence with our own and our people’s, yes all humanity’s (take notice of the trinity) idealistic longing, this is precisely what we as creating artists can use best of all. This idea of expressing a longing unique to the Swedish place and experience is not only democratic on its surface, but is also invoked in place of references to a folk or peasant authenticity. This anomaly in European nationalisms of the Romantic period will prove significant in our continuing discussion.

It is not just in artistic discourse that we can find a construction of national identity; it is of course evident in their visual works as well. An examination of the written word serves to verify that artists conceived of their efforts as part of a national school of artistic style, and sought to further a national awareness and sentiment in their fellow countrymen. This examination has also revealed important parallels with essentially political ideals. But these
principles and values appear in a visual examination of art from the period, particularly after the exhibitions of the Opponents in Stockholm and the founding of the Artists’ Association.

Richard Bergh is responsible for one of the most iconic images of Swedish nationalist art: *Nordisk Sommarkväll, 1899-1900* (Nordic Summer Evening, Göteborgs Konstmuseum). In it, a man and a woman stand on a veranda in the endless twilight of a midsummer night in the far north, gazing past the railing toward a calmly reflecting lake surface, its shores couched in thick forest. The painting embodies the principles of the new political ideology: the man and woman stand on opposite sides of the frame, given equal importance in a formal sense. They stand in an attitude that indicates fraternity, joint participation, and a sense of communal experience, but the distance between them also suggests independence. Here is visual evidence of those cherished values of equality, democracy, freedom, and solidarity.

However, the nationalist concept envisioned by the artists included other elements as well as the politically derived values, and these too are on display in Bergh’s work. For instance,
though man and woman face each other in bodily stance, their gazes are directed outwards, toward the reflective surface of the lake and the sunlit, forested hills beyond. That the subjects of the painting stand engrossed not in each other but in their natural setting, and that this setting forms the focal point of the painting, clearly indicates the significance of Sweden’s landscape. Indeed, the formal division of the work into thirds occupied by man, woman, and nature reinforces nature’s role as an entity. Additionally, a sense of historical continuity is in some measure present, as the pair stand on the veranda of a home – that symbol of comfort and security to which artist Carl Larsson brought special national attention. They stand in front of a railing carved in a traditional architectural shape, which therefore serves as a reference to the handcraft traditions so recently deemed worthy of preservation at a new outdoor cultural museum, Skansen, in Stockholm.45

Further, the general feeling of the work is one of optimism. This point can be most clearly understood by comparing the painting to one of the many influential Romantic works from the continent, such as Arnold Böcklin’s Island of the Dead, 1883, or Caspar David Friedrich’s Monastery Graveyard in the Snow, 1810. Both these works contain a sense of doom or darkness. In the former, the central focus of the work is a forest so dark its depths remain hidden, and both works contain references to the ruins of lost civilizations. Bergh’s work, in contrast, contains only the well-maintained railing of a living civilization. His female subject wears a light-colored dress that appears rather more sturdy than mysterious. And the central aspect of the painting is the gentle glow of a lowered sun, lighting both the lake and the sky, and

45 Founded in 1891 by Artur Hazelius, its purpose was to preserve and exhibit the unique architectural features of each region of Sweden and to provide a place for the handcraft traditions to be carried on and displayed. This ambitious open-air museum occupies 75 acres on the island of Djurgården in the Stockholm archipelago. It was part of the many efforts to preserve and celebrate native folk traditions. The incorporation of political ideals in Figure 1 is discussed in Facos, Nordic Imagination; additional observations are my own.
infusing the whole tableau with a pleasant calm – a distant sensation from the foreboding of the Romantic icons. Indeed, even a contemporary Norwegian work such as Edvard Munch’s *The Dance of Life*, 1899-1900, exhibits a much darker and more erotic portrayal of midsummer.

The optimistic mood is again portrayed in Prins Eugen’s equally iconic *Molnet*, 1896 (*The Cloud*, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde). The canvas is dominated by a large white cloud that functions as the source of light in the work. A bit of blue sky above is balanced by the weightiness of the green forest below and a sloping green meadow. Through the center leads a path, an open invitation for all to move through this landscape. Though inspired by nature, the

**Figure 2:** Prins Eugen, *Molnet*, 1896
work is ultimately a product of Eugen’s imagination, and he combined the various motifs to form a powerful graphic design.\(^46\) The painting style creates an evocative mood, a persuasiveness that is achieved without the presence of human figures or signs of civilization. It creates a sense of longing using the cool colors of a spring day that is all the more arresting for this seeming contradiction.

The evocative atmosphere is sustained in Prins Eugen’s *Månuppgång i Valdres*, 1890 (*Moonrise in Valdres*, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde), though now in the darker colors of a nighttime mountain landscape, and with the addition of the glistening waters of a still lake. This motif would be a recurring preoccupation for Eugen, with still bodies of water appearing in both evening and nighttime light in many of his works. It is possible to understand these works as a product of that idealistic longing that Bergh wanted artists to express, motifs that function as “living indestructible symbols” of something that has “haunted our minds since we were children.” The actual landscapes in Eugen’s works are often imagined ones, rather than exact portrayals of specific locations. In this way he truly is accessing a deeper essence whose archetype may be recognized by the viewer. Thus, the works may appear unremarkable to an outsider while raising multiple levels of meaning for an insider to the Swedish identity.

The cloud too was a recurring motif for Eugen, and an earlier work combines its dominating light with signs of civilization in *Det gamla slottet*, 1893 (*The Old Castle*, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde). Again in the blues and greens of summer, made brighter in contrast with the orange roof, the cloud seems to crown the castle with radiating light. In addition to the focus on immaterial symbols of the nation, artists during this period became fixated on certain

\(^{46}\) According to the prince’s own description of the compositional process of this work, cited in Varnedoe, *Northern Light*, 72-73. The prince painted an earlier version of the work in 1895, but that version is more realistic, less symbolic.
architectural symbols of the nation’s past; historical monuments that held greater meaning.

Works based on these monuments preserve a part of the nation’s history and serve as reminders of that past. Yet, this work also presents a reminder of nature’s importance in the timeline of a nation: the clouds dominate the horizontal space with a suggestion of movement and dwarf the still castle beneath.

One of the most captivating monuments for the artists was the Varberg Fortress, a stronghold of the Vasas during Sweden’s prosperous and powerful 16th and 17th centuries. Located in the current province of Halland, the group of painters known as the Varberg School had an artists’ colony nearby and painted the motif numerous times. Karl Nordström painted

Figure 3: Prins Eugen, Månuppgång i Valdres, 1890
several versions of the fort, including the imposing Varbergs fäste, 1894 (Varberg Fort, Göteborgs Konstmuseum). Its strong colors and design show some influence from the symbolist works of Gauguin’s Brittany landscapes, but the fort imparts an altogether more commanding presence. Again lacking any figures to populate the myth, the heroic deeds of Sweden’s past are nonetheless conjured in the powerful piece. The very lack of detail allows the work to merely

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47 A similar color scheme, formal design, and mood are present in Nordström’s earlier Ovädersmoln, 1892 (Storm Clouds, Nationalmuseum). For a discussion of Gauguin’s influence on these works see Facos, Nordic Imagination.
evoke past glory, while the robust depiction of the monument in its present provides tension between that past and a resilient present.

Other symbols of national identity appeared in the form of motifs from daily life, such as the characteristic red buildings of the rural countryside in Nordström’s *Granngårdana*, 1894 (*The Neighboring Farmhouses*, Nationalmuseum). The bright red is striking in the complementary blue and green landscape of summer, and a familiar sight in rural Sweden. Like Larsson’s simple house, the painting can be understood as a salute to the practical building style of an average farm. The traditional red building couched in the verdant countryside is seen in many provinces of Sweden. Because it can be so easily recognized as a Swedish phenomenon, the motif is a familiar and democratic symbol.

Anders Zorn portrayed moments from daily life in a more personal manner. His many depictions of nude bathers in various lake and ocean settings portray the subjects in a casual and spontaneous manner. The activity of bathing outdoors is a simple pleasure in the warmth of summer, and conveys an easy connection with the land. Works such as *Efter badet*, 1895 (*After
the Bath, Nationalmuseum), reveal an almost impressionistic attention to the effects of light. But the particular location in the Swedish archipelago is also a key element in the work. Its rocky islands dictate the form, and its scrubby evergreens interact with the figure as if posing like additional subjects in the work. Other works move away from the impressionistic effect, such as Frileuse (Sommar), 1894 (Chilly (Summer), Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde), which seems to depict the same ritual transferred to an inland lake. The effect however, of being drawn into this intimate moment, is the same. And the setting is an unmistakable summertime activity in Sweden’s countryside.

The depiction of everyday moments was famously a trademark of Carl Larsson’s watercolors. In addition to providing an example of the typically Swedish home in the form of his own Lilla Hyttnäs, he painted numerous watercolors of the interior and daily life there. First published as Ett hem in 1899, later books followed and a wider audience was soon exposed to the
simple style the Larssons had used to decorate their home. In addition to portraying the interior of the home, with all its Swedish handcrafts, some paintings were of typical outside activities around the home. *Frukost under stora björken*, 1896 (*Breakfast Under the Big Birch*, Nationalmuseum) is one of these, showing the whole family gathered at a large table outside under the birch for breakfast, a tree Larsson declared to be absolutely integral to the experience. Larsson’s style is more illustrative in these works than the works of his fellow painters, but the same appreciation for the native land and character of the people is evident. A later work, 1908 (*Karin by the Shore*, Malmö Art Museum) exhibits a more formal approach to the surroundings of the Sundborn house, but with the same reflective interaction between subject and landscape. As with Zorn’s work, a tree stands nearly as an additional subject in the form. The detailed
depiction of the flora in the foreground is reminiscent of botanical studies. And Karin’s contemplative expression is balanced by the sense of merriment conveyed in the background figure of their child and dog in a boat on the lake. As with *Det gamla slottet*, a benign nature is woven into the life of the nation and depicted without grandiosity. Instead, it appears accessible and inviting, in accordance with a worldview dominated by the ideals of the SAP.

We have examined the extent to which the artistic construction of Swedish identity parallels the central tenets of an emerging political ethos of the period, and is further augmented by a devotion to nature, an essentially optimistic outlook, and an attention to historical continuity. However, these elements did not constitute the whole of the artistic endeavor. Traits associated with Romanticism and other more specialized artistic movements, such as

![Figure 9: Carl Larsson, *Karin vid stranden*, 1908](image)
Symbolism, were also part of their artistic perspective. An emphasis on emotional content, the use of the imagination, working from memory, and appeals to nostalgia were all considered important aspects of artistic creation. Indeed, highlighting historical continuity and the role of nature are also familiar components of Romanticism as well as of many nationalisms in other nations. These factors combined have earned the Swedish group of artists the moniker National Romantics in most art-historical narratives, and the title has even carried over to composers from the period in question.

While such labels may at first be helpful, they ultimately fail to convey both what is unique about the Swedish condition, and the ideals of its artistic communities. Stylistic techniques in the visual arts indicate a familiarity with post-Romantic movements, from Zorn’s vaguely Impressionist inclination, Nordström’s Symbolist associations, and Eugène Jansson’s night views of Stockholm reminiscent of Van Gogh’s swirling cypresses, to Gustaf Fjaestad’s and Bruno Liljefors’ geometrically patterned water surfaces that would not be out of place in an Art Nouveau exhibition. In this respect, the painters exhibit an awareness of contemporary trends that precludes categorizing them with the imprecise Romantic label. A label such as “national romantic” unnecessarily limits our explanation of the Swedish artistic movement during this period by not fully accounting for their style or even what makes it national.

Consequently, this paper will not focus on the ways in which Swedish artists may have belonged to the larger Romantic movement, but rather with the ways in which they attempted to differentiate themselves from other nationalist movements, and what they considered their own national culture to consist of. Hence, I have only addressed in depth artistic traits that were used in service of specifically Swedish nationalist goals. Those that align with the political values outlined above take their place in this category, as well as the emphasis on nature. This latter is a
Romantic trait to be sure, but the concept was endowed with greater depth in the Swedish case. It was not merely the great power and awe of a generalized Nature, but the very specific traits of the Swedish countryside that were celebrated.\footnote{The special role of nature for the Swedish artists is acknowledged by art historians as well, including Michael Snodin, “Introduction,” 9, and Torsten Gunnarsson, “Carl Larsson: His Life and Art,” 15 in Snodin and Stavenow-Hidemark, \textit{Carl and Karin Larsson}; and in Facos, \textit{Nordic Imagination}.} Elements such as historical continuity and the use of the imagination will leave our discussion here as they seem to provide no insight into a particularly Swedish perspective.

\textbf{The Union crisis}

Certainly the embryonic political party, with its new societal ideals, and the evolving style in the visual arts, with its new attention to local subjects, were major contributors to the budding national identity. But one other external event instigated this fresh self-examination: the union crisis with Norway. Already since its establishment in 1814 the union had been on uncertain ground. Both countries had their own impression of the basis of the union and its purpose: for Sweden, it was a consolation for having lost Finland, but to Norway the union was a step toward independence. This basic misunderstanding was reflected in the founding documents, and continually caused disagreements in Sweden’s governing of Norway. Compromise became less successful throughout the century, finally resulting in domestic autonomy for Norway in 1884 and a renegotiation of the union terms in 1898. This last issue proved unresolvable, and in June of 1905 the Norwegian parliament declared the union to be dissolved. Only after both countries had mobilized for war, the issue was finally peacefully resolved in September of 1905 with Sweden granting Norway’s declaration of independence.
This issue was widely observed in artistic circles. Prins Eugen was especially disappointed by the events leading up to the dissolution of the union. In a letter to his mother from Tyresö in 1904 he writes,

That the Consulat negotiations now seem to go to hell, is very sad… No, the whole thing upsets me greatly. The matter is as awkwardly handled from the Swedish side as it possibly could be… There would be much to write about the politics: it goes badly, badly. It is sad, and what is worse, dangerous. I think probably that as the matter now stands, “a settlement” of the whole question, with the dissolution of the union as a background option, would be in any case the most proper thing, the least stagnant.\(^{49}\)

This tended to be a common perspective, in which artists and composers were reluctant to lose Norway, but preferred not to escalate the situation to physical battle.

Composer Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960) had even more to say about the matter.\(^{50}\) In his view, the union was more trouble than it was worth and its dissolution would perhaps result in Swedes’ greater appreciation for their own country. He communicated his opinion on the matter in a letter to his patron, theology professor Oscar Quensel. The letter is worth quoting at length, as it displays the nuances of a common reaction, and presents a detailed depiction of one of the origins of the period’s renewed patriotism.


Oh, if this crisis could finally awaken the Swedish people from their dreadful indifference, that, as I understand it, threatens to completely brutalize their patriotism and self-respect, then the breakup of the union would be a blessing rather than a misfortune. I don’t know a people who so lack all patriotic affinity as the Swedish...

My personal opinion however, is that it would be the greatest happiness for Sweden if this union ceased... This union has weakened our land instead of making it stronger. It stands, so to speak, with one foot at home and the other in Norway, and this has shown itself to be an increasingly tiresome position, with increasingly unstable balance. Were Sweden however to stand with both feet within its own borders, then the country would stand steady and gain immensely in strength and internal cohesion, while Norway would become weakened. It is we, not the Norwegians, that would win at the union’s dissolution. But this association may not be broken arbitrarily by the latter through treaty violations, it must be done in a legitimate way and with Sweden’s voluntary consent, otherwise there will be war.

And as terrible as it sounds to the Professor’s ears, I must however say that a war just now, that is what Sweden needs. The hundred years of peace has put a thick layer of sleepy dust over the Swedish people. It has been like an overfed duck in a calm puddle, surrounded by dense forest, through which no fresh winds can penetrate. If now the war’s storm overturned the protective forest and bit with icy teeth through the duck’s fat skin, I think that it hastily would be transformed into the eagle that it was at the time when the Swedish army wrote the world’s history on the battleground of the continent.51

Alfvén continues with the assertion that he does support peace, but not at any price. Sweden’s dignity, it appears, seems to finally be too great a price. A short reply from Quensel includes the following lines in concurrence, if rather more conservatively voiced: “It is best if we here in Sweden are not hasty. Norway can certainly be a little morally pinched for some months still. Moreover, I believe and hope... that the outer loss shall mean internal gain: more patriotic feeling, self-respect, more Swedishness and less negligence.”52

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As is evident from this correspondence, the union crisis put the question of Sweden’s own self-image, as a stand-alone nation, into sharp relief. Composer Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927)\textsuperscript{53} also reveals this tension in a letter from September of 1905; after Norway had declared its independence, but still before King Oscar II had conceded it.

Yes, now we get to see what Sweden and Swedes are fit for. Now we get to see what is really meant by the national collection, now we get to see if we are able not only to awaken ourselves, but also to keep ourselves awake. Now the answer begins. There is no art to hating and despising the Norwegians, but let us see if we are able to really love and nurture ourselves…\textsuperscript{54}

Stenhammar’s letter recognizes the reluctance to acknowledge a national identity that was so prevalent in Sweden. This was an attitude that further complicated the nationalist question.

Polemics in such situations can easily veer toward the offensive. One of the consequences of the political unease was a chilling of relations between Swedish musicians and Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. Violinist-composer Tor Aulin (1866-1914) had long admired Grieg, and was a passionate supporter of his compositions through performances of the chamber works. The two finally developed a close friendship after several years of Aulin sending complimentary accounts of audience reception of Grieg’s work and repeatedly requesting that Grieg visit Sweden for guest appearances.\textsuperscript{55} When Grieg could be persuaded to visit Stockholm for a series

\textsuperscript{53} The definitive work on Stenhammar remains Bo Wallner’s \textit{Wilhelm Stenhammar och hans tid}, 3 vols. (Stockholm: Norstedts Förlag, 1991), which contains extensive discussion of various aspects of Swedish musical culture during Stenhammar’s lifetime, as well. Wallner’s work also contains a works list and extensive bibliography.

\textsuperscript{54} “Ja, nu får vi se vad Sverige och svenskarna duga till. Nu får vi se om det var allvar med den nationella samlingen, nu får vi se om vi förmå icke blott väcka oss, utan också själva hålla oss vakna. Nu börjar det svåra. Inte är det någon konst att hata och förakta norrmännan, men låt oss se om vi orka riktigt älska och fostra oss själva…” Wilhelm Stenhammar, letter home from September 20, 1905. Quoted in Wallner, \textit{Stenhammar och hans tid}, 2:323.

\textsuperscript{55} The flavor of these letters can easily be portrayed by the following lines: “At our last chamber music concert before Christmas, I gave your C minor piano-violin sonata for the first
of concerts in 1896, his reception there was positive and enthusiastic. Letters from the following years are friendly and warm, and Grieg even got to know Stenhammar, who he called, “an artist that is a high star to me.” However, in the months leading up to Norway’s independence, the union issue appears more often in Grieg’s letters. Finally, after seeing Grieg in Copenhagen, Aulin wrote to his wife,

> With Norway, everything seems to be ended now, and the union well sings its last verse. The mood is bitter on all sides, and though Grieg was not so angry, I think, he is certainly unwell, worse than before. He gave a touching farewell, declaring that he was ‘much delighted’ with me. If he is well in autumn, he will probably tour with me, and if I am free. For money he will do anything, including tossing out his so-called political considerations. Nina is more tingly and acrid toward Sweden, …and her speech about betrayal and infidelity seems ridiculous to me, as it is just an echo. However, they are friendly to me, and she, who is able to go to the concerts, is very happy for it. Found only that we have become somewhat chilly with the year.

The friendship was nevertheless repaired, as later letters indicate. Discussions of touring plans continued, and Grieg seems to have been a great fan of Aulin’s own compositions as well. But the dissolution of the union clearly had an impact on their relationship.

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Time in Stockholm with a success for the composer and performer to which one rarely gets to be a witness. The critics found no expression warm enough for their admiration and the audience’s acclaim can only be compared with that which came to your string quartet, that we have performed for the first time and encored every time it has been on our program.” Tor Aulin in a letter to Grieg, Stockholm, December 29, 1891, cited in Bo Wallner, “Edvard Griegs brev till Tor Aulin,” *Ord och Bild* (1952): 558.


The dissolution of the union was certainly a political challenge, and we have seen its repercussions in social realms that go beyond the strictly political. The tension between the two countries must have been felt in the years leading up to the dissolution as well, as political decisions gradually made the situation worse. The union crisis caused a common reaction among musicians and artists in Sweden, in that they consistently acknowledged the need for Swedes to reexamine their own identity and to kindle a new love of the fatherland. This observation, that national pride had been neglected, would be a common thread in cultural discourse during the period. The break-up of the union merely threw the situation into sharper relief.

Conclusion

To review the groundwork that has been set, I have begun with a very specific political community, the Swedish Social Democratic Party, in order to determine the values its members used to define themselves. The SAP has been called “Sweden’s first political party in the modern sense,” in that it was the first to engage in mass politics. Because of the party’s wide appeal, the principles that formed its early ideology soon became part of the national consciousness, primarily through leaders like Branting and Wigforss. The uniqueness of the formulation of this party’s ideology and modes of behavior as compared to other socialist and democratic parties lends further support to the party’s role in a growing Swedish nationalism, a conceptual process that necessarily construes every nation as a particular.


59 For a discussion of particularity as a necessary part of the definition of nationalism, see Anderson, Imagined Communities, 5.
The fundamental ideological principles for the emerging Social Democratic Party were also integral to the cultural vision of an important group of artists at the end of the nineteenth century in Sweden. These artists returned to their native country with a sense of duty and responsibility to form a national school of art and tailored their styles accordingly. They participated in the construction of a national identity both in written form and through their works of art. They expressed this national identity in terms closely aligned with the ideological principles of the SAP. In this way, they gave voice to the imagined political community of the Swedish nation. This era spawned a new awareness of the nation and its place in the world, and gave birth to artistic ideals corresponding to that awareness. As Bergh optimistically wrote,

If the Swedish character in some small way, if only in indirect ways, will be able to give the creative spirits of the future something of this straightforwardness of the soul, which I insist I see in the Swede, it will already have made itself well deserving of humanity and the generation that will be born. Every nation must build its own original bridge over to world citizenship.\(^{60}\)

Political pressures between Sweden and Norway made the question of a Swedish identity and the Swedish place in the world particularly acute, and Bergh’s generation was keen to find an answer.

I shall argue that these artistic ideals are also evident in the rhetoric and discourse about art music in the same period. First, I will show that through these concurrences composers and music critics exhibit important idealistic parallels with the period’s politics and visual arts at a time when both the latter fields developed significant new movements. Second, if these ideals form the basis of a nationalist identity both for the period’s artists as well as contributing in

\(^{60}\) “Om den svenska karaktären i någon liten mån, vore det än på idel indirekta vägar, skall kunna bidraga till att gifva framtidens skapande andar något af denna själiska rakhet, som jag envisas att vilja se hos svenska, så har den redan därmed gjort sig väl förtjänt om mänskligheten och det släkte som skall födas. Hvarje nation måste bygga sin egen originella brygga öfver till världsborgarskapet.” Richard Bergh, “Den nationella konsten,” *Öm konst*, 172.
important ways to a new vision of a political nation, then these ideals probably perform the same
duty for the period’s composers. A nationalist conception of Swedishness in music then becomes
a broader formulation than has previously been described. Because of this broader formulation,
the musical arts can be considered alongside what have already been acknowledged as important
nationalist movements in Swedish literature and art. The following chapter addresses the
expression of parallel ideological principles in musical discourse.
Chapter Two: A Swedish Musical Aesthetic

As one of the period’s leading art patrons, a friend to many of the artists in the newly formed Artists’ Association, and a member of the royal family, Prins Eugen was in an acutely powerful position to support and further a growing Swedish style in the arts. This influence is neatly illustrated in four paintings he commissioned from fellow artist Georg Pauli and which hang as door lintels in the salon at Waldemarsudde, the prince’s home on the outskirts of Stockholm. Each depicts the prince among the period’s leading figures of either art, architecture, the applied arts, or music. The image for Music portrays a concert at Waldemarsudde performed by violinist-composer Tor Aulin and composer-pianist Wilhelm Stenhammar, and attended by the prince, other artists and architects, and their wives. Additional records show that such gatherings were not infrequent, and so it should perhaps be no surprise that ideas gaining favor in artistic circles might also surface among musicians.

As artists began to cultivate a distinctly Swedish identity at the close of the nineteenth century, so too did composers and music critics begin to refer to musical works as expressions of national character. And in both cases, this national character was described in terms that reflected

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62 These additional records can be found not only in Lindgren’s many references, but also in an unsigned review of a concert performance in Prins Eugen’s workshop by [Tor] Aulin (violin), [Emil] Sjögren (piano), and Victor Andrén (voice), Valhallavägen, Stockholm, that appeared in the paper *Vårt Land* (Stockholm), January 11, 1893. Further references appear in Prins Eugen’s *Breven Berätta*, Richard Bergh’s *Om konst och annat*, and Hugo Alfvén’s memoirs.
the values of the growing Social Democratic party. These values find further concurrence in the writings of important literary figures and poets during the period, who also exhibit a preoccupation with defining what was particular to the Swedish experience. This chapter will continue to identify a sense of Swedishness that rests on the ideals of fraternal equality, the freedom of the individual, democratic involvement, a pragmatic efficiency, a sense of security that emphasizes home life, and the solidarity of a cooperative community. As we will see, these ideas informed specifically artistic values, such as beauty, simplicity, expressiveness, and usefulness, which were all important to defining a Swedish aesthetic in music.

**Folk and Nation**

Folk and peasant references are conspicuously absent from the list above, as the role of folk traditions in the Swedish self-conception is complex. I believe that to rely on the presence of folk material as the marker of a nationalist work is inadequate in the Swedish case. Music critics also wanted to avoid the charge that Swedish composers needed to rely on folk materials because of a deficiency in their own creativity or originality. They therefore defined “our national art music” rather widely, as one “with or without national colors” and “inspired inside our own dominions.”63 The inclusion of native folk materials was neither necessary nor sufficient for labeling music as Swedish.64

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64 Verner von Heidenstam’s perspective on folk culture is instructive here. Art historian Ragnar Josephson cites his view: “In a passage which is characteristic of [Heidenstam’s] slightly contemptuous view of the whole Skansen culture, he says: ‘If we clothed ourselves in national costume and danced the Dal[arna]-polka and never used other than wooden spoons and put the peasant fiddlers at the front of the parade,’ so would we still not achieve anything of the deepest Swedishness.” Ragnar Josephson, “Konsten och nationalkänslan,” *Nationalism och Humanism*
Nationalist concepts are often construed as resting on a strong foundation of folk identity, in which peasant cultures provide living proof of an ancient, and therefore authentic, unified people. Their traditions, both in craft and song, are to be preserved as a unique national heritage and at the same time provide a source to be mined for inspiration in modern artistic endeavors. In an era of urbanization and industrialization, the folk also represented nostalgia for a pristine country life, itself a constructed memory. Folk culture thus provided a panacea for the ills of modern life, and functioned as that bifocal element in Benedict Anderson’s description of the nation, which looks to the past while at the same time creating a future image of itself.

Musically, the role of the folk is represented by the use of peasant melodies and modalities to infuse cosmopolitan genres such as the symphony and string quartet with a nationalist identity. This is to say nothing of grafting a nationalistic program onto a piece of music in order to garner for it a nationalist label. A reliance on folk materials in music from countries outside the Austro-German sphere of “universal” musical style was to varying degrees


Sweden’s population in 1800 was roughly 2.3 million, by 1910 it was still only 5.5 million. In 1800, over 90 percent of the population was rural, with a slow shift over the course of the century so that the 1890s were the period of most rapid industrialization and expansion of town and city populations. Employment disbursement shifted accordingly, so that in 1800, 950,000 people were employed in agriculture, while the combined areas of manufacturing industry, handcrafts, building and construction, and transport and communication employed roughly 185,000. By 1890 agriculture still occupied 1.1 million people, while the other categories had risen to almost half a million, showing a slow change to the balance. But by 1910 agriculture had declined to roughly one million, with the other categories still gaining to over 700,000. Statistics taken from Olle Krantz and Lennart Schön, Swedish Historical National Accounts 1800-2000, Lund Studies in Economic History 41 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2007), 57 and 59-62. A general description of the nineteenth-century’s industrial development is found in Jörgen Weibull, Swedish History in Outline (The Swedish Institute, 1993), 82-90.

Anderson, Imagined Communities, 1-8.
disdained when viewed from within that sphere. It made the music somehow less worthy of serious consideration, instead placing it in a new (subordinate) category as an exotic foreign expedition. However, the role of folk culture in Swedish musical identity was informed by a conscious reluctance to rely too heavily on peasant traditions for the identity of a modernizing nation.

Early in the nineteenth century, Erik Gustaf Geijer and Arvid August Afzelius collaborated on a collection of folk songs, *Svenska folkvisor från forntiden* (1814-18), in an effort to preserve traditional melodies. This was one of the first ventures to bring attention to the preservation of peasant traditions in Sweden, and was akin to similar efforts in other European countries at the same time. This new awareness of the role of the folk spread into other parts of society, and influenced a drive for universal education that included a significant element of patriotic cultural instruction. By century’s end an entire generation of composers and artists had grown up with this patriotic emphasis in their education. This resulted in composers incorporating folk elements not merely to mark a piece as Swedish, but to call on something now recognizable by everyone. Swedish composers at the end of the century had been incorporating folk material and the subjects of Swedish history and legend for decades. But in the 1880s and 1890s the reasons for this inclusion had more to do with the influence of literary and political ideas, themselves a result of changing societal and economic conditions, which demanded that artists communicate with the people. While art music on the continent became increasingly

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67 Geijer and Afzelius were members of the Gothic Society (Götiska förbundet), an academic literary group founded in 1811 and interested in the preservation of a pristine and authentic prehistoric folk heritage. Geijer and Afzelius’ collection of folksongs from oral practice included musical arrangements by Johann Christian Friedrich Haeffner. This three-volume collection was not the only folkloric publication, as Olof Åhlström’s *Traditioner af svenska folk-dansar* (1814-15) was also published during the period. Although the Gothic Society’s interest in folk culture was primarily academic, the patriotic effects of these publications were felt in other realms of society.
complex by the end of the nineteenth century, composers in Sweden seemed to be interested in maintaining rapport with their growing audience for classical music. As Swedish scholar Martin Tegen puts it,

“The national folk element was in this way a means of giving Swedish art music a more folksy expression than it otherwise would have, to make it comprehensible and enjoyable for all parts of society, to ‘popularize’ the compositions… Everyone put an emphasis on the people’s value, their possibilities, and their power that was unthinkable fifty years earlier.”

This is an inclusive attitude, one that strives to make music accessible and recognizable rather than to mark it as exotic or distinctive. It is an attitude that reinforces the political emphasis on creating a more democratic and equitable society. And in a period where patriotic cultural education was no longer novel, this inclusive attitude was part of a new kind of patriotism that only emerged in the last decades of the century.

Inclusion of folk materials in music and art did help to promote the preservation of such material, as in many other countries. Yet, the use of folk material was only one aspect of denoting a work as nationalist. Wilhelm Peterson-Berger, one of the period’s most influential composers, advocated for the use of folk materials, explaining that

Folk music is the tonal expression of a nation, a people’s essence, it is an element, a life-giving source of power, that should flow through art music… If art music loses its connection with folk music it will soon be drawn into sterility.


However, Peterson-Berger seems to have expanded the idea of what constitutes folk music. As Tegen goes on to explain, “the concept folk music here has transformed from signifying a definable concrete phenomenon to a hardly definable national atmosphere that the composer should strive to express in harmony with the authors and painters of the time.”

Because of this, the relationship between musical works that incorporate folk melodies and a full understanding of what it meant to be nationalist in Swedish music is much more complicated. Folk materials are surely part of the concept, but “a hardly definable national atmosphere” must comprehend a great deal more. It is for this reason that the ideals so important to the formation of the Social Democratic party and to the artistic expression of nationalism may facilitate a more complete understanding of musical nationalism in Sweden. Thus, it is this ‘atmosphere’ that I am pursuing, understood through the formulation of nationalist ideas by “the authors and painters of the time.”

Indeed, many of the most iconic paintings of the time have been labeled stämningsmåleri, or “mood paintings,” because of the ways in which they seem to evoke a certain atmosphere. The evocative quality of these paintings proves difficult to describe, but nevertheless has been referred to as a part of the uniqueness of the style of the visual artists in the 1890s. It is possible, however, to distill this ‘national atmosphere’ into aesthetic principles that are definable and concrete; principles that affected both musical and artistic style, and which ultimately are based on a unique cultural identity. Through comparison between the artistic realms, we will “arrive at

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58 “Begreppet folkmusik har här övergått från att beteckna en konkret, definierbar företeelse till en knappt definierbar, nationell atmosfär, som tonsättaren skall sträva att ge uttryck åt i likhet med epokens författare och målare.” Tegen, Musiklivet, 54.
clearer contours” in determining how societal developments in Sweden at the end of the century influenced artistic creation.\(^{71}\)

**The National Icon**

We cannot simply turn to the opinions and output of a single composer to elucidate the national Swedish idea (as with a Grieg or Dvořák), but there does continue to be a style that critics and historians point to as recognizably Swedish, or at the very least, Nordic. At a time when principles of solidarity and community were repeatedly praised, the company of several Swedish composers rather than a single bright star offers a nice symmetry. In this, the artistic comparison is apt, as they too were a circle of many rather than a single luminary.\(^{72}\)

Moreover, a description of Sweden’s musical nineteenth century could not account for the untold factors that prevented the rise of a single “great” nationalist composer. There were certainly figures that could have been candidates for the role. Carl Michael Bellman (1740-1795) is one, the troubadour-like figure of the eighteenth century whose poems and songs could be compared to those of Robert Burns in mood and reception among his countrymen. Franz Berwald (1796-1868) surely could be considered as well, whose compositions following the

\(^{71}\) Wallner, *Stenhammar*, 1:71. The expression is Wallner’s, used in reference to the usefulness of comparing developments in different cultural fields in 1890s Sweden.

\(^{72}\) Three composers during this period tend to receive more attention than the others in the context of nationalism: Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867-1942), Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927), and Hugo Alfén (1872-1960). Composers and historians alike often credit their predecessor, Emil Sjögren (1853-1918), with laying the foundation for a Swedish style. There is no biographical work on Sjögren, but some articles and theses treat his songs. He is discussed in Bo Wallner’s important Stenhammar biography, and an overview of his life and work appears in a publication at the time of his death: *Emil Sjögren in memoriam* (Stockholm: C.A.V. Lundholm, 1918), with contributions from Berta Sjögren, Sigrid Elmblad, Gunnar Norlén, and Wilhelm Peterson-Berger.
great Gustavian era were viewed by many as the highest accomplishment and demonstration of mastery in the European styles.\(^\text{73}\) But Bellman is somehow not serious enough (perhaps by association with rather too many drinking songs), and Berwald not Swedish enough, or to use the familiar Romantic term, not \textit{original} enough (though as we will see, this is entirely the wrong feature to be looking for in a Swedish context). In any case, Berwald did not appear to be interested in creating music that expressed a particularly Swedish identity.

The problem of national identity in the arts was certainly recognized, and still an unsettled matter in the first decade of the twentieth century in Sweden. August Strindberg (1849-1912) wrote in 1908:

The reason why we (Swedes) have no music is undoubtedly this: that we have an Academy and a Lindegren (= antique pedantry). Emil Sjögren, who once possessed a few natural notes and heard songs in the wind, went to Lindegren and was in danger of getting caught up in orthodox cadences, but fled, and sang like a bird in the open air – for a time! I don’t know why he went silent, it was probably in his nature that autumn should come early. Since then there’s been no one!\(^\text{74}\)

\(^\text{73}\) Born into a musical family, Berwald played violin and started composing at an early age. While he was recognized as one of the most important composers of the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century in Scandinavia, his work has not entered the repertory accordingly. Among his influential innovations is a formal treatment in which the scherzo is inserted into the slow movement, thus approaching a symmetrical overall form, an innovation that influenced later Swedish composers. He is one of the best-documented Swedish composers, and yet has only warranted three biographies, the most recent of which is Ingvar Andersson’s \textit{Franz Berwald} (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1970). Data on his family, life, and work is collected in Erling Lomnäs, Ingmar Bengtsson, and Nils Castegren, eds., \textit{Franz Berwald. Die Dokumente seines Lebens} (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1979). Other important scholarship includes the treatment of his symphonies in Lennart Hedwall, \textit{Den svenska symfonin} (Stockholm: AWE/Geber, 1983), his operas in Einar Sundström, “Franz Berwalds operor,” \textit{Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning}, 1947, and his chamber music in Bo Wallner, \textit{Den svenska stråkkvartetten. En sammanställning. Del 1: Klassicism och romantik} (Stockholm: Kungliga Musikaliska akademien, 1979).

\(^\text{74}\) \textit{Strindberg’s Letters}, ed. and trans. Michael Robinson, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 2:756. Letter to Tor Aulin, 1908. Strindberg refers to composer Emil Sjögren (1853-1918), known for his many songs, and who also wrote several violin sonatas of note. He also refers to Johan Lindegren (1842-1908), composer, teacher of counterpoint at the Royal Musical Academy beginning in 1876, cantor at Stockholm’s Storkyrkan from 1885, and publisher of a hymnal in 1905. An earlier letter to Aulin is similarly disparaging toward
Strindberg’s opinion should not be taken as universal, as he was a character who often walked his own path. But in this he did have some company, and it shows that determining who could carry the national mantle was a matter still up for debate. Other comments from the period similarly reveal an urge to name Sweden’s Grieg, to recognize a composer who could become a “hero” for Sweden internationally. In a view that recalls how the Opponents splintered from the artistic establishment, Strindberg here appears to consider the root of the problem to lie with the imposing influence of the musical Academy.75 The quality of musical education was an acknowledged problem, as one critic saw the necessity “to lift the study of composition at the music conservatory from the deep decay it has gotten into.”76

An alternative to the confines of an Academy education became available in 1886 when Richard Andersson opened his music school in Stockholm. Both Tor Aulin and Emil Sjögren taught at the school, and Wilhelm Stenhammar studied there. Andersson’s association with these

Lindegren, where Strindberg writes that Aulin is a successful composer because he is not “plagued by scholarship (Lindegren),” *Strindberg’s Letters*, 2:755. Strindberg himself was a noted Swedish artist and playwright of the period. His novel *The Red Room* (1879) is considered the first modern Swedish novel. His plays were often experimental, including an attempt to dramatize the unconscious in *A Dream Play* (1902), as was his painting, which became increasingly abstract later in life. He even developed theories about music and notation that approach some of the ideas of the Second Viennese School, primarily in an article published in *Idun*, 1907. The literature on his life and work is extensive.

75 The period of Gustav III’s rule (1771-1792) was particularly rich for royal arts patronage, and witnessed the founding of the Royal Academy of Music in 1771, the Royal Academy of Art in 1772, and the Royal Swedish Opera in 1773, not to mention numerous scientific academies as well. The Royal Academy of Music (Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien) has been known by several names, most notably the Kungliga Musikonservatoriet after 1866, and currently as the Kungliga Musikhögskolan i Stockholm. It appears to have been loosely referred to as both the Academy and the Conservatory during the period in question, though strictly speaking the Conservatory was the teaching arm of the organization.

76 Orfeus, “Om vilkoren för blomstringen af vår nationella tonkonst,” pt. 3, *Necken, Svensk Musiktidning* 2 (1880): 28. Orfeus has been identified by Swedish scholar Bo Wallner and others as the pen-name for Johan Lindegren. It is interesting to note that low opinions of the conservatory education seem to have come both from within and outside the system.
composers as well as with other members of the Artists’ Association suggests that the school perhaps offered the same kind of release from the constrictiveness of official paradigms that visual artists had sought in their educational system. However, there is little evidence to confirm or deny this, as the rivalry between new and old schools of thought seems to have been less contentious within musical circles. In fact, Andersson was elected to the Academy in 1890 and began teaching at the conservatory in 1904, suggesting that the two schools coexisted rather well.

No relief appears to have been found by resorting to overseas educational solutions either. Despite Bergh’s rather enlightened perspective on balancing external and internal influences, one music critic wrote about the perils of sending young composers to the continent, and particularly Berlin, for their education: “on the big music market, where they, for want of mature judgment and, we had so nearly said, parental care, give in, enveloped by all sorts of learning climates which blow over one, and although continental, are therefore sometimes not on as ethically as aesthetically slippery, uncertain ground.” Such attitudes are a sign of the growing concern for the weight of outside cultural authorities at the cost of cultivating a native identity in the arts. Nevertheless, many of the most prominent Swedish composers in the late nineteenth century continued to travel to Berlin for additional training, including Sjögren and Stenhammar.

Events leading up to the decades in question, namely the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s, further placed Sweden’s status as a great power in doubt, which only caused the “nationalist question” to emerge with rising frequency and urgency. These were decades prefaced by the recent loss of

colonies, and in which Sweden was still smarting from the consequences of giving up Finland – decades that felt the impending specter of Norwegian independence, and the fading of the dream of a pan-Scandinavian alliance. Decades in which the arts of the various European countries increasingly focused on nationalist ideas, and the growing urban audience for those arts in Sweden began to wonder, where’s ours?

The lack of a national music was mirrored by a lack of patriotism in general, and no one made this observation louder than a new generation of poets. Much like the sentiments voiced by Stenhammar and Alfvén in the context of the Union crisis, the poets described a Swedish sense of self that was weak and uncertain. Verner von Heidenstam (1859-1940) explained his authority in the matter: “like the Italians we have in the poets had our philosophers.” He chastised his fellow countrymen for their overly humble self-opinion, writing, “the underestimation of the intrinsically domestic has its shadow and causes a disastrous and ridiculous overestimation of the foreign.” He described the Swedes’ particular “ability to scrutinize their own infirmities and prejudices,” rather than taking pride in themselves. His characterization of the state of Swedish

78 In the 17th century Sweden briefly held territories in what is now the United States (New Sweden) and parts of Ghana and Togo on the African continent (Sweden’s Gold Coast). However the primary colonial holding was Saint-Barthélemy, now in the French West Indies, which it owned from 1785-1878. The colony was ultimately not lucrative enough to justify the effort of governing it.

79 “Endast på filosofiens byggnad saknas en svensk minnestafla, och likt italienerne ha vi i poeterna haft våra filosofer.” Verner von Heidenstam, *Om svenskarnes lynne* (Stockholm: Iduns Tryckeri Aktiebolag, 1897), 9. Heidenstam was a Swedish poet and novelist. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1916, and became a member of the Swedish Academy in 1912. Significant works include the poem *Ett Folk* and numerous nationalist and historical essays.


81 “… ett folks förmåga att skärskåda sina egna lyten och fördomar.” Heidenstam, *Om svenskarnes lynne*, 7.
patriotism is particularly poignant: “There is not a backwater in Europe where patriotism is so
dead behind hollow words as with us, and there is no Medea who has her dagger as soiled by her
own son’s lifeblood as Sweden.”

Heidenstam balanced such harsh criticism by describing a Swedish temperament that
ought to be valued. He and other poets of the period, such as Gustaf Fröding (1860-1911) and
Oscar Levertin (1862-1906), provided a new sense of regard for Swedish history, characteristics,
and especially the natural landscape. These poets rejuvenated Swedish literature in the 1890s so
that the decade was later described as that in which “beauty worship became the flame that lit
inspiration, in protest against the eighties’ gray everyday realism.” Their poems were often
used as song texts by Swedish composers.

Gustav Sundbärg (1857-1914), another important literary figure, formulated the situation
in an equally telling manner. He stated in a widely known work, Det Svenska Folklynnet (The
Swedish People’s Temperament), that “two facts chiefly give the Swedish temperament its
character in our day. One is, that Swedes love and are interested in nature, but not with people.
Second, we lack patriotism.” The former characteristic continues to surface in discussions of
Swedish identity, and here too Sundbärg gives it special attention as having been a defining

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82 “Det finns icke en afkrok i Europa, där fosterlandskärleken ligger så död bakom ihåliga
ord som hos oss, och det finns ingen Medea, hvilken har sin mördareknif så sölad af egna söners
hjärteblod som Sverige.” Heidenstam, Om svenskarnes lynne, 12.

83 “Skönhetsdyrkan blev till en eldslåga som tände inspirationen, i protest mot

84 “Två fakta gifva fornamligast det svenska folklynnet sin karaktar i våra dagar. Det ena
är, att vi svenskar älska och intressera oss för naturen men icke för människor. Det andra: att vi
sakna nationalkänsla.” Gustav Sundbärg, Det Svenska Folklynnet (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt &
Söners Förlag, 1911; Bibliolife, 2012), 8. Sundbärg was primarily a statistician, but this work
was widely known and quoted in the years after its publication.
element of the Swedish temperament for centuries, or in his words, “from the beginning.”\(^85\) But the latter part of his declaration echoes Heidenstam’s portrayal, and points to an explanation for the seeming reluctance to name what is distinct about the Swedish character. That is, a culture that seems to have no pronounced national spirit would not naturally direct its energy toward developing a loud and unique national voice. Clearly Sundbärg is to some extent wrong about his statement, for the very act of making it reveals a certain urge to create and define a Swedish voice. And Sundbärg’s designation of the special role of nature vis-à-vis the Swedish temperament contributes to the effort of defining a national spirit. But Sundbärg’s and Heidenstam’s depictions of Swedish culture as one that lacks national spirit do help to explain why determining the characteristics of this culture, ones that its very practitioners are reluctant to own up to, is an exercise in subtlety. An overactive national pride was considered a disagreeable national trait, as witnessed in Alfvén’s letter from Spain: “Unhappy people! What it is deep down: poor, dirty, lazy and with an unbelievable national vanity. Never have I been so happy to be Swedish as during this trip…”\(^86\)

**The Swedish Temperament**

Heeding Heidenstam’s call to take greater pride in the domestic, as opposed to the foreign, composers began to attend to what might be truly Swedish in their music. One of the

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\(^85\) “från begynnelsen.” Ibid., 8.

\(^86\) “Olyckliga folk! Hvad det är djupt nere: fattigt, smutsigt, lättjefullt och med otrolig nationalfåfänga. Aldrig har jag varit så glad öfver att vara svensk som under denna resa…” Hugo Alfvén, letter to Oscar Quensel of May 2, 1903, *Tempo furioso*, 138. He is speaking of the Spanish people’s imperviousness to the joys of music as being a condition that will last as long as they are enthusiastic about the bloodshed of bull-fighting.
most outspoken composers during this period was Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867-1942). Both in his compositions and his contributions to musical discourse, he participated in this newly invigorated self-appraising of Swedish style. Peterson-Berger was famous for making enemies through his sharp criticism of musical colleagues, and is perhaps the most prolific music critic of the period. He too observes the underestimation of native composition, explaining that it must be judged according to the Swedish temperament rather than any external measure:

For this is a Swedish music, incommensurable with all the other European art music, a music still unappreciated, despised, yes, even unknown, because nobody measures her with the only natural measure, the Swedish temperament. One measures her with Germany’s, France’s, and Italy’s art music…

For Peterson-Berger, then, the very fact that Swedish music appears of lesser value is because it has been measured according to the wrong scale. To see this music in a new light, it is necessary to understand the Swedish character and what is important in that culture. Already at the turn of the twentieth century, a Swedish composer and critic was calling for a reevaluation of the larger nationalist concept; was arguing for an understanding of identity construction based on his own culture’s patterning, rather than on comparisons with other cultural constructions. The situation is even more peculiar in light of Sweden’s longstanding independence, comparative national unity and stability, and the unchallenged primacy of the Swedish language during this period.

These are all factors whose absence in other countries had caused the formation of nationalist

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87 In addition to Peterson-Berger’s own writings and reviews, the most important scholarship is a new biography by Bengt-Olof Engström, Orvar Eriksson, Lennart Hedwall, and Henrik Karlsson, *Wilhelm Peterson-Berger: en vägvisare*, Kungliga Musikaliska Akademiens Skriftserie 105, Wilhelm Peterson-Berger Institutet 3 (Möklinta: Gidlunds Förlag, 2006). Numerous essays and articles cover different aspects of his work, particularly his opera *Arnljot*.

movements and sentiments, but whose presence in Sweden complicated the issue of cultural identity.

Just as Peterson-Berger advocated for a narrower perspective, so Alfvén’s patron wrote to him that musical rejuvenation would have to come from within: “It is without doubt in Swedish moods and motifs that our music will find its rebirth, like our fine arts have already found theirs there.”89 Like the visual artists, whose exposure to the outside world had encouraged them to return home and cultivate their own native style, musicians would have to use their experiences and Sweden’s new place in the world to look with fresh eyes on their homeland. Alfvén reveals a similar view in an earlier letter to Stenhammar, “O, that the time might come again, that even we composers will drink from our own unblended water. We can never create a great, true and profound art until it springs from our own Swedish culture, our own individuality.”90 The use of a nature metaphor is apt, given Sundbärg’s assessment. And Alfvén is clearly concerned with looking inward in forming a musical culture, rather than borrowing the ideals and techniques of other places. The reference to “unblended water” may sound eerie in light of nationalist manifestos in Europe leading up to World War I, or indeed in light of recent Swedish history, but any question of ethnic purity at the time played a benign role in Swedish national identity, as the nation’s status as a state was unchallenged. What is notable here is that no matter how subtle the final result, composers were concerned with consciously cultivating a Swedish musical style.

89 “Det är utan tvifvel i svenska stämningar och motiv vår musik skall finna sin pånyttfödelse, liksom vår bildande konst redan funnit sin där.” Oscar Quensel in a letter to Hugo Alfvén on February 23, 1905, Tempo furioso, 152.

From a “Temperament” to an Aesthetic

Statements of various composers and critics reveal to us what they considered as signifiers of Swedishness in music. In a review that is uncharacteristically supportive Peterson-Berger writes,

There is an old worn-out phrase that the undersigned is also guilty of repeating, that Norman is only a Swedish imitator or transplant of Schumann. It is about time to let go of this superficial opinion. Norman is rather a classic Swedish composer. He does not appear original in the sense of an external perception, but if one listens without any desire for novelty and temptation, one shall find him natural, at least in all the best, the most representative he created. To that category belongs the A major Sextet. This is Swedish music – not originally exciting, not surprising, but natural, such as reflects a depth and true national temperament.91

This type of apologetic account of what constitutes the truly Swedish is not uncommon in musical writing from the period. Critics seemed concerned to acknowledge the obvious debt and influence of other dominant styles, particularly the Austro-Germanic. Historians have largely written off the Swedish contribution because of such imitations, with the excuse that the music is unoriginal or of inferior quality. However, Peterson-Berger’s words might alert us to the fact what is “Swedish” in music may be more restrained, and understated. He makes the connection between music of a “true national temperament” and something that sounds natural, something that is “not exciting, not surprising,” but yet with depth. This show of modesty allows for the

acknowledgement of stylistic debts, but it also points toward different stylistic goals in Swedish music.

Further characteristics of Swedish style are evident in a review by composer Ture Rangström (1884-1947), who wrote about the Aulin Quartet’s 1908 performance of Erik Åkerberg’s Piano Quintet in D minor (published in 1909):

The composer does not deny his Swedish temperament, the lyrical, its manifestations are certainly not strikingly original, but he has had the taste to not paste in his music the peculiar folk tunes which are rudimentary and not at all considered ‘art.’

Like Peterson-Berger, Rangström has drawn on the idea of a Swedish “temperament” as the guiding aesthetic principle for the composition, and includes the same kind of diffidence about the lack of originality in the work. Both composers seem to disdain originality in the sense of something that is eccentric, unconventional, or novel. Rangström further asserts that the work shows restraint because of its status as “art,” even toward folk material. This may seem a curious assertion, but we have already seen how folk materials were used to make music more accessible and were not necessarily considered a signifier of nationalism.

The Swedish perspective regarding originality is most clearly stated by composer Wilhelm Stenhammar:

For each day that passes, it becomes more clear to me how all of this in the scope of art that is called original, interesting, bold, etc., is the purest, most worthless nonsense; the

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only, only thing that is of necessity, and that is the condition of all true art, is expressiveness.\textsuperscript{93}

His assertion shows that what is the mark of greatness in other countries, namely originality, may not be a useful measure in Swedish music. In place of something that marks the music as distinctive when compared to other composers, Stenhammar promotes expression, an act of communication, an essentially cooperative endeavor. References to “natural” expression reserve an extent of freedom and individuality for the composer. This was important to visual artists as well, as Bergh wrote,

People have a need to see a personality behind every work of art, to sense a heart that beats within it… to listen to a spirit that has the power to be enthused and therefore the power to enthuse. This element – a personal, unique inspiration – is linked to the nature of art; without it, there can be no talk of art.\textsuperscript{94}

However, the voice of the individual should not reach so far into novelty that the receiving audience no longer understands it. This is an intention that differs significantly from the Romantic demand for originality, in which the audience’s inability to comprehend merely proves the artist’s genius. The Swedish preference for expression treads a delicate line between uniqueness and the ability to communicate with one’s audience. This delicate balance bears a similarity with the balance of the freedom of the individual and solidarity within a community, which were discussed in a political context during the period.

Composer Hugo Alfvén gives this perspective further musical detail, reinforcing the preference for communication with the audience:

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I mentioned the word clarity. It is just that which I strive for, and that which one can reach in all musical forms, from the simplest melody up to the fugue and canon. I willingly allow that it is not easy to write a piece with eight actual parts, where every voice is also rhythmically and harmonically unlike the others and goes its own independent way. But this does not get in the way of the fact that the piece can be clear as crystal, and that it shall be. Otherwise it has failed… and the distinctive character of art is of course, as I take it, by depicting life in its ideal form, to show it to the people in transfigured form, cleansed of the dirt and the dust which life’s brutal struggle and daily triviality entails. It requires above all truth toward one’s self and “the holy audacity” to dare to give only what one feels to be born out of their own self… it is my desire for truth toward myself, my longing to be able to create high, sublime art, and my desire for the greatest possible clarity and strength in expression, which drives me to write as I do. And I believe that I therefore don’t need to fear becoming misunderstood by that humankind for which I work.  

In this statement, Alfvén connects the Swedish values we have so far uncovered with the familiar ambition to create sublime art. Like Bergh, Alfvén supports a personal expression that is true to the artist’s inner feeling. But this inward truth must be balanced by clarity of expression, which thus leads to a communicative relationship with the listening audience. One artist’s freedom and individuality is balanced by solidarity for his community; each individual musical voice is balanced by the clarity of the whole. Alfvén’s music tended toward more contrapuntally complex textures and richer orchestral colors, and so he perhaps felt special pressure to defend his efforts at clarity of expression.

Further characterizations of Swedishness in music are equally subtle. Rangström begins to expound upon the idea of a Swedish style in the continuation of his review. After having already declared that Åkerberg’s lyricism is part of that style, he goes on in describing the 

Quintet,

The mood of the whole is a bit monotonous, the contrasts in ideas within are not so diverse or strong, the shadows not so deep and the highlights not so light, but it lies to a certain extent in the Swedish poetic essence. The energy rarely breaks out with an immediate strength, despite the score’s rapid indication. An elegiac energy!  

From this characterization, one that is again self-effacing, a picture of what is intended in the concept of the Swedish temperament arises. It includes the aforementioned lyricism, and also an even-keeled manner that has neither bright highs nor dark lows. Such a position provides an example of how the equalizing political stance promoted by Wigforss may be translated into musical terms, where the ideal informs a stylistic choice. The democratic access to material comfort, the security that denies poverty just as it denies great wealth – these are values marked by balance and an avoidance of extremes, characteristics that also readily apply to music of the period.

Other essentially political values proved significant for Sweden’s artistic culture as well, particularly democracy. Ellen Key (1849-1926), a feminist activist and outspoken lobbyist for universal suffrage, wrote many articles and books on family life and raising children. Her ideas on aesthetics and design proved to be greatly influential, particularly her essays collected in *Skönhet för alla* (*Beauty for All*), parts of which were published in the journal *Idun* as early as

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96 “Stämningen öfver det hela är en smula enahanda, konstrasterna i idéer, innehåll, äro icke så skiftande eller starka, skuggorna icke så djupa och dagarna icke så ljusa, men det ligger ju till en viss mån i den svenska lyrikens väsen. Energien bryter sig sällan fram till en omedelbar styrka, trots alla partiturets fortebeteckningar. En elegisk energi!” Rangström, untitled 1908 article.
The first essay, “Skönhet i hemmen” (“Beauty in the Home”) argues for the importance of artistic beauty in the lives of all Swedish people. According to Key, beauty is one of the basic human necessities, right along with food and shelter, for exposure to it generates happiness. She writes,

Beauty can everywhere exert its ennobling influence, if only people begin to open their eyes and hearts to all things beautiful. But above all they first have to learn to realize that the beautiful in life is not at all an extravagance; that you work better, feel better, become friendlier and more joyful if you surround yourself in your home with beautiful shapes and colors. If you understand how to seek out the beautiful in art and nature, then you soon realize from your own experience that beauty gives you comfort and lifts your spirits even in the midst of the heaviest drudgery.

Her perspective was based on the belief that social and moral improvements to society began at home, and they could be brought about through exposing people to more beauty and thus more happiness at home. The essay is full of advice for replacing the dark German decorative trend with a simpler, lighter style, even with limited means. In this way her efforts corresponded to those of the Larsson family, and indeed Carl Larsson illustrated the cover of *Skönhet för alla*. Key also included her recommendations for viewing the best art and architecture in Stockholm, if given the opportunity, in order to be exposed to great beauty and develop one’s own taste. That people should all experience art is a view that reveals a strong commitment to the democratic ideals we...

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97 The other essays deal with the importance of connecting to nature in creative endeavors, the role of festivals in providing continuity, and the importance of the hearth in a home. *Skönhet för alla* was published under the Verdandi series of Bonnier, named for a liberal student group in Uppsala, and which came to provide a progressive intellectual forum during this period. Barbara Miller Lane, “An Introduction to Ellen Key’s ‘Beauty in the Home,’” *Modern Swedish Design: Three Founding Texts* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 19-31.

98 Key, “Beauty in the Home,” translated by Anne-Charlotte Harvey, in *Modern Swedish Design*, 55. In addition to striving to enlarge women’s role in society, Key saw the home as the special realm of women and a critical place to exert their influence in the promotion of beauty. She wrote, “Unfortunately even the aesthetically aware woman very often sees striving for beauty merely as a pleasurable pursuit and not as a duty,” here reinforcing the necessity of beauty’s presence.
have already witnessed within Swedish politics. That the purpose of this universal access to art was essentially pleasurable only confirms the idealistic nature of the period’s ethos.

Beauty became an important aim in specifically musical contexts as well. In an article on the national musical culture, the purpose of art music was described in the following way:

It is incumbent upon us as a cherished duty to convey the beautiful, however it is not regarded as a mere pastime to amuse and cheer us; neither as a mere theoretical creation of an idea without life and warmth; nor as an accommodation to the spirit of the time, when it is precisely the spirit of the time that out of beauty’s radiant gleam must be warmed and enlivened; neither as a vehicle for our ambition, which later would begin to trample what it intended to establish…

It is not enough to simply entertain, to create music that is more mathematically interesting than beautiful, or to allow one’s ambitions to overtake a beautiful idea. (This latter is a typically Swedish example of the preference for humility and the objection to boastfulness.) Interestingly, in this view it is also beauty that is responsible for the character of the “spirit of the time.” Most significantly, beauty is singled out as the one duty of composers and the quality around which a national music could thrive. This states the case rather strongly, and again differentiates the Swedish idea from other purely Romantic goals. The author continues, “we must remind ourselves that the beautiful, in so far as it comprised art music, must be viewed as a manifestation of the power of the creative spirit of the people.”

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people, the beautiful can be understood to stand in for what might play this role in other nationalist conceptions, namely the folk. In citing beauty as the aim of Swedish music, this writer is advocating a style that speaks to the people by capturing their very spirit.

The previously cited article has been described as one of the most important contributions to musical aesthetics during this period, if no great literary success. In the continuation of the article, the author depicts what might bring about improvements in Sweden’s musical culture. In addition to calling for the general improvement of music education, including the indispensable study of music theory, the musical qualities he describes are revealing. Speaking specifically of the music, the author writes that improvements to the national music could be brought about through the “insistence on or proper re-elevation of the melodic principle as being art music’s true idea and life-generating breath, as well as its fundamental basis for all teaching in the art of composition.” Such statements place importance on the lyrical line, a trait already highlighted by Peterson-Berger, and one that could similarly further the expressiveness called for by Stenhammar. The author continues in advocating for “the casting out of overwrought chords,” emphasizing a simplicity and lightness that have likewise already been mentioned by other reviewers in conjunction with descriptions of the Swedish style. These musical qualities are thus connected to the concept of beauty that serves as a cultural rallying point.

The avoidance of unnecessary complexity was further supported in musical circles. In a political context, economic efficiency in production encompassed an absence of waste.

101 This characterization was made by Bo Wallner, *Wilhelm Stenhammar*, 62.


Simplicity of musical material may also be understood as the absence of waste in communicating a musical idea. Strindberg wrote in a letter to Tor Aulin, “When an art form has developed over a long period and become complex (Wagner) and turned into a form of higher mathematics, as music has done, there is usually a return to simplicity… Seeking new combinations of tones simply to avoid the old ones is affected, not effective!” Strindberg’s statement not only shows a strong partiality for simplicity but also implies an opposition to the idea of progress in music. These are values that may easily result in a musical style unnoticed by outsiders, lacking in palpable novelty.

Against this ideological background, it is possible to see what is meant by a Swedish style in music. In praising composers for their simplicity, natural expression, lack of extremes, and reflection of a national disposition, critics recognized their compositions as beautiful, in the Swedish sense, and therefore as contributing to the flourishing of the national music. This is a subtle manifestation of identity in the arts, but one that incorporates elements of political, artistic, musical, and literary discourse.

**Polity’s Influence**

Although matters of musical style resonated with what were originally political values, these values are also evident in the musical discourse more broadly. As Peterson-Berger suggested, perhaps the qualities that were important in Swedish music were not the ones that can be found in the musical discourse of other countries. They instead reflect other areas of discourse in *Sweden*. These are parallels that may not directly relate to style, but do show a certain continuity of cultural organization and reveal patterns of thought that usually remain

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104 *Strindberg’s Letters*, 2:757.
unexamined. Discourse in this category will be treated here, as it contributes to the formation of that imagined political community. These parallel patterns of thought between the disciplines are thus, however abstract, yet relevant.

In explaining what is needed for the flourishing of a national art music in Sweden, Lindegren describes the necessary conditions in the following way:

All flourishing presumes sun and warmth; the arts’ fair lily must, at the risk of otherwise withering, in double measure get the benefit of these considerations. One can say that art requires an outer and an inner source of heat, the outer consisting in the patronage and support of the general public, the establishment of universities and provision to them of quality teachers of eminent rank, a burning zeal, as it were, with subordination of both sympathetic and antipathetic sentimentality; the inner constituting the conscious notice, which kindles devotion and passion for the art, for that which must be taken and studied to its very core: the classic piece of music.105

These were exactly the conditions being advocated in politics. The outer support of educational institutions and audiences places composers and musicians in a position of solidarity with their nation. Likewise, the inner condition of kindling passion for art’s very core is an individual pursuit, one that can only be undertaken with a certain amount of individual freedom. In this case, the author refers to the creation of a national culture and the characteristics that govern that culture. The Swedish example demonstrates goals that differ significantly from the Bildungsidéal of a nascent German middle class, or the rallying cry for independence that marked nationalist movements in its neighboring countries.

Lindegren goes on to say that the national musical culture could be further improved by,
constantly setting before the young good examples in serious and unprejudiced research, in extensive, thorough preparatory work, in beelike diligence and dedication, in artistic intentions, in a spare and tasteful handling of all arts funding, in patriotism and popularity, in an enlightened and envy-free manner… in always aiming toward the highest, knowing that here is contained, as well as compressed, all that art has to offer of uplifting, encouraging, redeeming, invigorating, religion, humor, moral force, cheerful jokes.  

The tone here is one of optimism and practicality, attitudes already apparent in the political spectrum. Economic efficiency in areas of funding and hard work by the practitioners of the art assure the well-being of future generations, a pragmatism that echoes the political vision. Of note is the inclusion of both patriotism and the people in a discussion of furthering art music—features that again distance this vision from discussions of an unfathomable genius artist.

The discourse of the period applied particularly well to conversations about chamber music. The special metaphor of the home, as the origin of those principles that also defined the nation, had been reinforced by the attention of such figures as the Larssons and Ellen Key. In the musical realm the emphasis on the home was exhibited in an inclination toward the more intimate genres. To be sure, song had long been a part of Swedish musical culture, to the extent that it had often been accused of carrying the banner for “national art music.” But the rise of a newfound pride in a simple Swedish home was accompanied by the reinvigoration of chamber music.  

106 “Genom att städse, så vidt det möjligtvis kan stå i vår, förmåga, föregå de unga med godt exempel i allvarlig och fördomsfri forskning, i omfattande, grundliga förarbeten, i myrlik flit och idoghet, i konstnärliga intentioner, i ett ledigt och smakfullt handhavande af samtliga konstmedlen, i fosterlandskärlek och folklighet, i ett upplyst och afundsfrist väsen, med förmåga att, utan att allt för mycket ondgöras, kunna fördra möjliga kantigheter och ‘omöjliga’ trindheter hos åtskilliga resp. musikvurmar; i att alltid syfta till det högsta, väl vetande det här inneslutes, likasom komprimerad, allt hvad konsten har att erbjuda upplyftande, muntrande, försonande, uppiggande, religion, humor, sedlig kraft, glädigt skämt.” Orfeus, “Om vilkoren,” pt. 3, 28.

107 For instance, one critic writes “regarding the expression ‘our national art music,’ we want to seek in advance to protect ourselves against the possibility of being misunderstood. Many could of course consider, that we particularly mean, for example, student songs, which naturally, … scattered so much brilliance over the old country.” Orfeus, “Om vilkoren,” pt. 1, 2.
music and salon culture. External factors may have contributed to the rise of chamber music, such as limitations in the ability to gather large performing groups for symphonies, and difficulty in establishing performing spaces and audiences that could be sustained throughout a season. However, the partiality for chamber music seems to be deeper, or at the very least it was declared so. An article on the string quartet in Svensk Musiktidning, the foremost musical journal in Sweden at the time, begins with this endorsement:

Chamber music has, in contrast to orchestra and opera music with their large volumes of sound, multiple tone color shifts, and obnoxious effects, been called pure music and, if considered from the noble simplicity and at the same time very constricted form and deep content of the music, it can deserve that description. This is particularly true for the string quartet. Since the four-voice piece has already been shown since the 16th century to best unite simplicity of design and practical executability with harmonic richness and clarity, so has the quartet, both vocal and instrumental, become the foremost art form. This statement illustrates the terms in which chamber music, particularly the quartet, was defended as the truest form for music. It confirms the role of simplicity and a pragmatic support for efficiency that have already been revealed as important elements of the nationalist concept in art as well as in politics. The inclination for clarity, depth of content, and a genre that lacks the boastfulness of “obnoxious effects” further corresponds to style traits that have already been discussed.

This article is intended to promote the genre of the string quartet, as it introduces the season of the well-known Aulin Quartet, so a certain amount of bias is to be expected. But its author did so in terminology that paralleled the political ideals, both with respect to style traits

and the manner in which the genre functions. The article continues with a more detailed explanation:

The string quartet, with its fine nuances and its painstaking detail-work, is for every instrument a solo part. The four players use the same language in a spirited, at times perhaps too philosophical, discussion that in its whole forms a discourse of an intellectual nature… In the true quartet almost all ostentatious display in the performance disappears, because the effect of the musical ideas neither can nor should be seen in one voice, but is always dependent upon the expression of the entire ensemble.\(^{109}\)

This description emphasizes the individuality of each part in a quartet; a feature that highlights the freedom and equality between the parts. The author refers to the performance of a quartet as to a group of voices in conversation, painting a picture of multiple participants engaging in the fraternity of discourse from equal footing. Here we are reminded of the solidarity described in social democratic ideology. Chamber music’s role during this period merits a deeper treatment and is discussed in a later chapter, but these quotations show that it was praised for exhibiting the same values privileged in the new political movement.

This examination of artistic, poetic, and musical discourse has revealed important ideological parallels between the arts and the new political movement in Sweden. Consideration of the discourse has further indicated specifically musical qualities that embody those ideological values, such as the importance of the melodic line, clarity and expressiveness, harmonic simplicity, and balance. These abstract ideological concurrences find confirmation in the concrete existence of an interdisciplinary society formed in 1897, the *Utile dulci*. The principles described by its members embody the ideals of the Swedish identity.

Utile Dulci

A list of the society’s members printed in 1898 includes about forty names, most of which remain well-known in Sweden because of their historical importance. The members include the painters Richard Bergh, Carl Larsson, Georg Pauli, and Anders Zorn; the poets Tor Hedberg, Verner von Heidenstam, and Oscar Levertin; the modern architect Ferdinand Boberg (who designed Waldemarsudde); the feminist and social philosopher Ellen Key; and composer Wilhelm Stenhammar; as well as the wives of most of these figures. Some, like Hanna Hirsch Pauli, Karin Larsson, and Anna Boberg, were at least as famous in their day as their husbands. The list includes many more authors, sculptors, art historians, publishers, and literary critics. While not listed as members, composers Tor Aulin and Hugo Alfvén were also known to socialize with the group, and the parties of its colorful members are described in Alfvén’s letters.\footnote{The list was published in the remembrances of one of the members, author and art historian Carl G. Laurin’s Minnen, and cited in Wallner, 357. Alfvén recounts one particular celebration on the occasion of Thegerström completing a portrait of Alfvén, which included the company of the Bobergs, Heidenstams, Stenhammars, Carl Larsson, Richard Bergh, and the Paulis, Första satsen, 315-320. Alfvén also describes his time travelling with Anders Zorn to see a traditional fiddling festival in Dalarna in 1907 and following that, the two travelled out to the Stockholm archipelago, Tempo furioso, 380-391.}

The society that was founded in 1897 has the same name as a more famous Swedish society active from 1766 to 1795. The original Utile dulci was primarily a literary society and literary competitions and publications were an important part of its activities. It was criticized for encouraging an excessive simplification of style as a result of fanatical adherence to principles
associated with the society’s name. One of the 18th-century society’s four chapters was devoted to music, and consisted of some of the strongest musicians in the capitol. A full orchestra and mixed choir provided performances for the weekly gatherings of the society, whose formal activities lasted up to five hours. The society amassed a collection of scores and manuscripts for its use, mostly of German and Italian Baroque and Classical works, which were later passed on to its successor, the Royal Academy of Music.

The Latin phrase *utile dulci* means “usefulness with pleasure,” or “pleasing usefulness.” It is taken from Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, or The Epistle to the Pisones, which presented guidelines for writing good poetry. The decision to use the phrase again in the 19th century was perhaps to make a connection with this distinguished academic group. It is more likely, however, that the members of the 19th-century society chose the name because it so neatly encapsulated their own ideas about beauty.

In the context of Key’s argument for a democratic access to beauty, she writes, “harmony

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111 “The review board’s pedantic zeal to ‘simplify’ thoughts and expressions often did violence to individual creativity.” The society’s works were published in four installments of the *Vitterhets-nöjen* between 1769 and 1781. King Gustaf III was the patron of the order, and it was generally considered the authority of taste and talent in literary matters. *Nordisk Familjebok*, Uggleupplagan, 31. Ural – Vertex, s.v. “Utile dulci.” The “Owl edition” is the second edition, 38 volumes published 1904-1926, with the volume in question published in 1921.

112 This collection is now part of the Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket, but has been reassembled virtually and is accessible at this website: [http://www3.smus.se/UtileDulci/index.php?lang=sw&type=start](http://www3.smus.se/UtileDulci/index.php?lang=sw&type=start)

between the useful and beautiful is the only thing worth striving for.” Here, she highlights the important relationship between an object’s appearance and its utilitarian success, or efficiency, that is indicated by the *Utile dulci* society’s very name. In fact, in her essay Key gives many examples of objects whose overly flamboyant decoration inhibits their usefulness. Such a stance appears strongly opposed to ideas of art-for-art’s-sake. Rather, Key’s statement resonates with the perspective that arose in political contexts, in which efficiency (there referring to economic efficiency) is valued for its potential to create happiness. The support for usefulness as an integral component of the beautiful in art is additionally illustrated in a letter Oscar Quensel wrote to Alfvén upon reading some of Bergh’s theories of art: “Thus a thrown-out draft horse can become art: he has filled his beautiful task to wear himself out *in service* and can therefore – rightly painted – give a stronger impression of the horse’s nobility than the neighboring battle stallion in all his exuberant fullness of life.” Like Key’s injunction against unnecessary flamboyance, Quensel praises something whose beauty is a result of its practicality.

Key’s definition of beauty further places the concept in a uniquely Swedish light. She wrote,

Each thing must, like every beautiful object in nature does, fulfill its purpose with simplicity and lightness, delicacy and expressiveness, otherwise it has not achieved beauty, notwithstanding the corresponding utilitarian claims. Beauty thus certainly includes efficiency, but this alone is not always beauty.  

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116 “Saken måste, liksom varje vackert föremål i naturen gör det, fylla sitt ändemål med enkelhet och lätteth, finhet och uttrycksfullhet, annars har den ej uppnått skönheten, oaktat den
Here beauty encompasses simplicity, lightness, delicacy, and expressiveness: all characteristics that have been championed in musical discourse. These characteristics were used in Peterson-Berger’s description of Norman’s Sextet, Rangström’s description of Åkerberg’s Quintet, and in Stenhammar’s own declaration about expressiveness as the necessary quality of art. If we recall that beauty was put forth as the duty of composers in establishing a national art music tradition in Sweden, then all those works that reviewers described as showing “simplicity, lightness, delicacy and expressiveness” suddenly appear in a new light: as Swedish. Those qualities that composers, artists, and critics tentatively tried to single out as signs of a Swedish style now come together under the aegis of the *Utile dulci* in a meaningful way.

The existence of this society, and its birth during the artistic rejuvenation of the 1890s in Sweden, are important indicators of a special period for the arts. The society provided a space for the intimate circulation of ideas between disciplines and for debate about those ideas. Its presence underwrites the connected motivations between the various artistic fields in this period. Moreover, interactions between its members occurred on many different levels. The nineteenth-century *Utile Dulci* seems to have been considerably less formal than its predecessor. Unofficial remembrances describe how each member of the group possessed a nickname built on the initials U. D., most of them humorous in-jokes. Prins Eugen recounts in a letter in 1899 how an *Utile Dulci* party at Stallmästargården included a mock trial between Ellen Key and Verner von motsvarar nyttans krav. Skönheten innefattar således visserligen ändamålsenligheten men denna icke alltid skönheten.” Key, *Skönhet för alla*, 4-5.
Heidenstam. Such details suggest that social play was just as much a part of the society as serious philosophizing.

In addition to these ephemeral interactions, numerous physical works of art remain as evidence of contact among the society’s members. Pauli’s painting of a salon performance by Stenhammar and Aulin, with other important figures in attendance, opened this chapter. There are also portraits of Aulin, Alfvén, and Stenhammar by Thegerström. A portrait of Hedberg by Eugene Jansson, and one of Levertin by Carl Larsson join Hanna Hirsch Pauli’s painting of Verner von Heidenstam as a character from one of his poems, Hans Alieenius (1896). Hanna Hirsch Pauli depicted Ellen Key in her familiar role as orator, and again in the painting Vänner Key sits in a gathering of friends surrounded by such figures as Richard Bergh and author Klas Fåhreus. This list is surely not exhaustive of such works.

Poetry by Hedberg, Heidenstam, and Levertin provided the basis for many songs by Swedish composers (poetry by Fröding and Runeberg were also popular choices, though they were not members of Utile Dulci). During this period Aulin composed his Tre dikter af Tor Hedberg, op. 24. Stenhammar composed Fyra svenska sånger, op. 16 (1899) to poems of Heidenstam, Hedberg, and Fröding; Ithaka, op. 21 (1906), for baritone and orchestra on Levertin’s poem of the same name; and Tirfing, op. 15 (1898), a mythic saga in two acts with text by Anna Boberg. But perhaps the most important work of this type was Stenhammar’s opus 22 setting for baritone, choir, and orchestra of Heidenstam’s poem, Ett folk (A People).

Examining the discourse has revealed the central ideals of a Swedish identity, and shown them to be shared across multiple disciplines. They have been observed in the work of visual artists. The one element that remains to be emphasized is how these ideas filtered into the

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musical compositions of the time; how composers revealed their involvement with the dynamic ideas of this new group of intellectuals in the concrete product of their work. We will turn now to Stenhammar’s aptly named *Ett folk* for consideration of the Swedish style in musical composition.

*Ett Folk*

Like many other artists, Stenhammar was deeply influenced by the union crisis with Norway, and sympathized with the Norwegians’ struggle for independence. These feelings seem to have been what motivated him to begin work on *Ett folk* in the summer of 1904, as the politics of the union debate heated up. Heidenstam’s own politics were decidedly more right-wing than Stenhammar’s, and the poem’s contents can be read that way. But we saw in Stenhammar’s letter from 20 September 1905 that the union crisis prompted a different reaction from the composer: a plea for Swedes to pursue their own self-love. After working all summer on the piece in 1904, Stenhammar struggled with writer’s block. He wrote to his wife,

I read Wagner’s letters, how he felt the same way when he wrote Tristan. Cold comfort – I write no Tristan. I do nothing... I want to try – inch by inch – to get this love-song to my beloved country finished, then... make something practically useful. Help others. Forget myself and my small talent.¹¹⁸

Couched in a characteristically humble attitude, Stenhammar reveals the deep importance of this piece. For him, this setting of Heidenstam’s poem is meant as a love-song to his native land, an effort at cultivating a positive relationship internally rather than stirring the fires of hate towards

others. Already imbued with that Swedish penchant for the useful and practical, he struggles with his own wish to complete this work of patriotism.

Born out of a political crisis that focused new attention on the question of Swedish national identity, Stenhammar’s *Ett folk* is easily categorized as a nationalist work. Its programmatic content supports such labeling, and we can see that Stenhammar’s own views confirm it as well. In fact, he felt it was so particular to the Swedish perspective that it would not be understood elsewhere. In a letter to his publisher Heinrich Hennings, he wrote,

> But now I believe I have very nearly mastered this. It has taken me three years. Now, it *shall* be. It is high time. If it will be the best I have done, I certainly cannot say, but that I never put so much feeling and energy and will-power into any other piece, that is certain. And I am sure of a big success. In Sweden. Outside Sweden the piece is impossible. In Sweden, and now, it is set to be a cry of attention, a banner, a rallying watchword.\(^{119}\)

Like Peterson-Berger, cited above, Stenhammar claims this very Swedish composition of his has a place within Sweden that it cannot have in other countries. He conveys the idea that outsiders, conditioned by their own cultural perspectives and circumstances, could not understand this “love-song” to his own country. This supports the argument for a national identity that makes sense to its own members while not being recognized by outsiders, a national style that functions at home but not abroad.

Yet, if Stenhammar’s setting of *Ett folk* is to succeed as a nationalist work within the broader concept of national identity that I have been outlining here, it must do so on more than

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\(^{119}\) “Men nu tror jag mig i det allra närmaste ha bemästrat detta. Det har sysselsatt mig i tre år. Nu *skall* det fram. Det är hög tid. Om det blir det bästa jag har gjort, kan jag ju icke säga, men att jag aldrig satt in så mycket kärlek och energi och viljekraft på något annat stycke, det är säkert. Och jag är säker på en stor framgång. I Sverige. Utanför Sverige är stycket omöjligt. I Sverige, och just nu, äger det förutsättningen att bliva ett lystringsrop, ett banér, en samlingens lösen.” Letter from Saltsjöbaden, August 22, 1905. Cited in Wallner, *Stenhammar och hans tid*, 2:328. Stenhammar refers to three years of composition time; the first of these seems to have been a period of germination in which he did not actually write anything, but merely considered the idea of the piece.
simply programmatic grounds. From this broader perspective it could provide a model for identifying musical signifiers in less obviously nationalistic works. For this purpose, we will examine the second movement of the piece, the hymn, *Sverige*. Of Heidenstam’s six-poem cycle, Stenhammar set only five. The first four movements were written in the summer and early fall of 1904, and the final movement during the same period of 1905. The formal design of *Ett Folk* as a whole can be described as symphonic: it begins and ends with serious dramatic movements, which surround a slow second movement and two faster scherzo-like movements. The text of the first movement, *Folket (The People)*, contains references to prophets and a Viking heritage, and speaks of a people now asleep, a familiar sentiment from Heidenstam’s writings. The text of the second movement is more concretely descriptive of the country:

Sweden, Sweden, Sweden, native country,
Our longing’s countryside, our home on the earth!
Now cow-bells ring, where armies have been illuminated by fire,
And deeds have become legend, but with hand in hand
Swear yet your people, as before, the old words of allegiance.

Fall, winter snow! And sigh, deep heath!
Burn, eastern star through the June night!
Sweden, mother! Be our battle, our peace,
Thou land where our children again may reside,
And our fathers sleep beneath churchyard stones.

Stenhammar suffered from writer’s block after composing the first four movements. He travelled to Heidenstam’s country home, looking for inspiration and hoping to encourage Heidenstam to rewrite some of the troubling final poem. Stenhammar wrote Heidenstam a letter in 1905, again beseeching him to rewrite the poem, which he described as failing to be lyrical or musical, and thus impossible to set to music. Heidenstam’s reply was a satirical, but emphatic, no. Stenhammar finally succeeded in setting the original poetry several weeks later. Wallner, 2:325-327.

*Ett Folk*, II. *Sverige*, by Verner von Heidenstam. This translation is my own, more literal, version and is based on the rather more poetic version of Charles Wharton Stork, which appears in *Sweden’s Laureate: Selected Poems of Verner von Heidenstam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), 137. The Swedish is as follows: Sverige, Sverige, Sverige, fosterland,/vårt längtans bygd, vårt hem på jorden!/Nu spela skällorna, där hårar lysts av brand,/och dåd blev saga, men med hand vid hand/svär än ditt folk som förr de gamla
After the rousing mood of the first movement, and its conclusion with dramatic *fortissimo* chords, *Sverige* provides a sharp contrast. The tempo indication is *stilla*, still or tranquil, suggesting the character of this entirely a cappella movement. The text is set simply in a homophonic style throughout, with only dynamics and enrichment of the texture to provide contrast. Stenhammar rarely uses rests in the movement, and primarily only at significant points in the poem’s own structure, so that it maintains a sense of motion. Yet the movement begins with *pianissimo* chords, gradually growing louder, and punctuated by fermatas over the bar lines. This gives the opening three words the feeling of a salutation, or of repeating bell peals.¹²² The second line is likewise punctuated by rests, though in a less distinct continuation of the idea.

The effect of this opening, especially in the wake of the first movement, is at once striking and personal. The opening calls quietly demand attention, while the lines that follow are simply set – Stenhammar’s deeply felt love letter. For this text which describes Sweden as a homeland, as a place that guards the past and provides for the future, and a place whose natural surroundings play an important role, Stenhammar has written music that is simple and pleasing, and that is expressive of his feeling for national identity. This latter aspect seemed particularly important to him, as he wrote after the success of the premiere, “…but my joy is thereby no less, on the contrary it is increased by the feeling of having been able to say a word which awakens trohetsorden./Fall julesnö och susa djupa mo!/Brinn, österstjärna genom junikvällen!/Sverige, moder! Bliv vår strid, vår ro,/du land, där våra barn en gång få bo/och våra fäder sofva under kyrkohällen.

¹²² The bell-like or hailing quality of these opening chords is noted by Bo Wallner in his discussion of the piece, 2:335.
resonances and vibrates afterward – long and far, I hope – in so many minds around me.”

This piece, whose text clearly marks it as relevant to national topics, also displays the stylistic traits of the *Utile Dulci* milieu, such as expressiveness, clarity, simplicity, and naturalness.

The argument for Stenhammar’s stylistic choices with this movement can be further supported by pointing out the way in which it differs from the intentions of the poet. Heidenstam

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had asked Emil Sjögren to set *Sverige* to music, and his letter from 1899 describes how he envisioned the tone of the music:

Myself, I have thought of the beginning as a resounding march, which with the words ‘Fall winter snow’ slides into an idyll and finally ends as a hymn. But on that you perhaps have another sense. If you let your Devil loose the first night and rage like a fool, that’s how the whole thing is soon done – mightily and thunderously, so that the church vaults will rumble. You cannot say no. Music or life!\textsuperscript{124}

The mood of Heidenstam’s lines to Sjögren perhaps reveals as much as his actual directive. However, rather than Heidenstam’s heroic vision of marches and thunderous power, Stenhammar has chosen to set the poem entirely in a mood of tranquil idyll, a quiet hymn. In the context of the political events surrounding the union with Norway during which the piece was composed, we can see Stenhammar’s pacifist perspective being written over Heidenstam’s more bellicose inclinations. The choice also reveals Stenhammar’s nature-loving and beauty-worshipping tendencies.

It seems that Hugo Alfvén too had considered setting the poems at some point, and had gone as far as considering how to interpret them in music. He also read *Sverige* differently, and points out some of Stenhammar’s particular emphases:

The poem’s first section up to ‘Fall winter snow’ has for me a distinctly virile and proud character… The last section: ‘Sweden, mother! Be our battle, our peace!’ is an invocation, filled by bright confidence, where for example ‘our children’ and ‘our fathers’ should especially be emphasized. Stenhammar instead puts emphasis on ‘children,’ ‘sleep,’ and ‘churchyard’ in diminishing volume, which goes to sleep in a *pianissimo*… such a song must end with a mighty climax. Thus in my composition from 1905 I went in the opposite direction: avoiding all softness in the last section and pushing

the dynamics up to fortissimo with the three major exclamations ‘Sweden! Mother! You country!’…

Rather than the dramatic contrasts that Alfvén perceived in the poem, Stenhammar’s interpretation emphasizes stillness and solitude, a dream-like state of time. Its nearly constant motion is fluid, so the texture becomes silken, lyrical. These stylistic choices give the impression of simplicity, and convey the poem’s meaning with efficiency but also calmly. There is greater balance, and less exposure to extremes in texture or dynamics. As Alfvén points out, Stenhammar also chooses to emphasize certain words that give us a clue to his intentions. In the first lines, held notes occur on ‘country’ from ‘native country,’ and ‘jorden,’ which translates as earth, soil, or land. The climax and highest note of the piece occurs on ‘country,’ again emphasizing the importance of the physical land. And as Alfvén alluded to, Stenhammar interrupts the rhythm of the final line to lengthen the first syllables of ‘fathers,’ ‘sleep,’ and ‘churchstone.’ These words draw attention away from the self, and toward a community of families and a sense of responsibility or duty. Stenhammar perhaps also alludes to his feeling that Swedes needed to be woken up to find the right path through the union crisis.

While the text of Sverige is a clear indicator of its national subject, the details of Stenhammar’s compositional choices claim for the piece a special place as an example of the Swedish identity in music. The homophonic setting is an unpretentious representation of ideas such as equality and solidarity, while at the same time furthering artistic goals like simplicity and

expressiveness. Stenhammar’s emphasis on certain words reveals his own thoughts on the text, and its popular success shows that his feelings were to a large extent recognized by his fellow countrymen.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which the nationalist musical conception in 1890s Sweden was analogous to many of the ideas that were important to nationalist artists, and further, that these ideas significantly resonate with socialist democratic ideology. It is clear that composers were inspired by the new patriotism of the decade, and that the aesthetics of their style was articulated in parallel terms with the nationalist trend in other cultural fields. Any discussion of a so-called Nordic tone, Scandinavian style, or Swedish sound must benefit from descriptions such as those above which articulate specific aesthetic goals and can thus lead to the isolation of the artistic choices that defined the decade’s style in Sweden.

Among the issues discussed in relation to the characteristics of a national style is the reluctance of music critics to let that style rest solely on the inclusion of folk-musical materials. Their writings instead suggested that a Swedish style draws from the Swedish temperament, a topic which was of great interest in poetic circles as well. The most important element of this temperament was a devotion to nature, an interest that will be addressed in the following chapter. But other values have emerged too, namely the importance of Beauty, and its attendant qualities of perfection, simplicity, lightness, efficiency, clarity, and expressivity. I have shown how these qualities are related to the important political ideals of social democracy, such as efficiency, democracy, equality, and solidarity. And the pursuit of the beautiful was articulated in musical terms as a preference for melody, a lyrical quality, and simplicity of texture, all of which are
characteristics that can further the expressive and communicative capacities of music. This chapter has thus connected the ideals of the period, as expressed in the areas of literature, poetry, art, and politics, to a Swedish aesthetic in music and ultimately to the style of musical composition that was inspired and influenced by national identity.
Chapter Three: The Role of Nature in Swedish Identity

Without doubt there will come to be said still more disapproving words about this beautiful sextet, which of course has its weaknesses, but also its great, glorious merits… All tone-poems are a landscape painting. In the first movement there is the sunlit summer day with shine and sparkle across the straits, gently sighing forests, and the fresh scent of grass from wide meadows… And on comes evening, cool and full of song – the second movement. In the third, one thinks he hears the echo of young people playing, and in the last, one glimpses night and moonlight over the forests… But the whole time the landscape picture lingers there, idyllic Swedish surroundings that we all have seen and love.126

Wilhelm Peterson-Berger wrote this description in reference to composer Ludvig Norman’s A Major Sextet; the preceding section of the review has already been cited in an earlier chapter. The remarkable detail in this case is that the piece in question is not programmatic. Directly following Peterson-Berger’s statement about Norman being a classically Swedish composer, and this piece of music “reflecting a depth and true national disposition,” is a rather detailed and heartfelt ascription of a natural setting to what should be an otherwise independent musical utterance. Moreover, this natural setting contains some of the very features that are often considered to be signifiers of a unique Swedish landscape, namely the ever-present waterways, abundance of deep forests, the cool evenings of its northern latitude, and the luminous moonlit nights which are such a palpable presence during that half of the year when the hours of darkness

in a day outnumber those of light. Notably, the only reference to a purely musical sound is that of song, the genre so long prized in Sweden.

Sweden’s unique natural features played a significant role in identity creation within a broad cultural space in the period after 1890. The overlapping of the image of the nation with the image of its nature was carried out by poets and writers, artists, and as we can see here, musicians. This identification of nation and landscape was related to democratizing political efforts, with their attendant message of equality and freedom. These are values implicitly embedded in the natural idea because of its accessibility to all and its promise of wild freedom from the strictures and anxieties of society. The renewed attention to the natural setting can of course also be viewed as part of a rapidly urbanizing society’s nostalgia for a simpler (and often imagined) time, and its effort to reclaim a pure and authentic version of its past on which to base a vision of a new future. In both cases, a natural reality provides the pattern, but ultimately is transformed into something imagined. Like the nation itself, the idealized landscape is played out through discourse, and its role is to provide yet another avenue for the imagined community to perform its membership.

This chapter will explore the Swedish formulation of a national landscape in the various cultural modes: poetic, artistic, and musical. It will describe what features were considered particular to the Swedish setting, and how this (in some ways invented) landscape was both validated in the words of the various creative figures, and portrayed in their creative endeavors. The cultural myth of the natural landscape was a central part of Swedish identity during this period. Those artistic qualities already shown to be essential characteristics of Swedish cultural

\[127\] This overlapping idea is pointed out by Daniel M. Grimley in *Grieg: Music, Landscape, and Norwegian Identity* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2006), with reference to Grieg.
products will also be observed in depictions of and discourse about the Swedish natural environment. A preference for simplicity, expressiveness, solidarity, balance, and clarity again dominate Swedish style in works motivated by the landscape.

Landscape and the Nation

A mystical Nature formed an important part of the Romantic outlook, with its notion of the sublime and its wild fantasy providing an opposition to Classicism’s order and balance. Certainly, examples abound among the Romantic generation of nature themes in poetry, painting, song, and programmatic works. And those examples exist among the various arts in Sweden’s nineteenth century, as well. However, the topic of Nature has earned its place in this project by virtue of the special emphasis on Sweden’s particular landscape and natural features present in the context of the discussions of Swedish identity and national character during this period. Not only was nature invoked as a signifier of identity, but a distinct attentiveness to the natural world was considered a particularly Swedish perspective.

This former characteristic, the incorporation of natural features in a country’s conception of its own identity, is part of a much older tradition of nature myths in Western culture. A fascination with an almost anthropomorphized Nature surfaces in numerous artistic mediums, where it is employed in defining a nation’s identity either through metaphorical parallels or in functioning as the root source of a unique culture. Historian Simon Schama writes, “national identity, to take just the most obvious example, would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and
enriched as a homeland.” Understood in this way, a country’s landscape stands not only as part of the national concept, but as one of the most fundamental parts of that concept.

The force of place on identity, especially national identity, was strong in countries like the United States, where the vastness and magnificence of the wide open West fed myths of freedom, the presence of the divine, and the promise of prosperity. These characteristics of place became attributed to the inhabitants of the new country as well. Denise Von Glahn writes of this relationship between place and identity:

A sense of place, along with a sense of time, helps form our identity… This is true of individuals, groups of people, and nations. In addition to locating us in the cosmos, place tells us who we are. In the case of nations, the ways in which people view their places says much about their shared values—the evanescent ones and the enduring ones. Artists arguably gaze upon a place with special attentiveness, hence their view more strongly reveals the shared values of the nation. The reverent tones with which poets and artists begin to attend to Sweden’s landscape during this period indicate their awareness of the importance of place, while displaying tenets of the national character. As we will see, their view of Sweden exposes shared values of a very different manner from those in the youthful United States.

However, in accordance with the tradition of nature myths, it is not merely the existing landscape of a country that provides the cradle of national identity. Rather, it is an idealized version, an imagined landscape that is invented from the raw materials of an existing natural reality. And when that imagined landscape is a wild and somehow untouched vision of nature, it is a “product of culture’s craving,” a remedy for the ills of society that became especially pertinent in the industrial age. In addition to providing a cure for the modern reality, the

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landscape could be imagined in terms that justify and emphasize all the best characteristics of its nation’s people. “Landscapes can be self-consciously designed to express the virtues of a particular political or social community.”

Therefore, it is possible to comprehend the many references to Sweden’s natural characteristics by the various cultural figures of the period as forming a significant portrayal of the national identity. That these cultural figures found inspiration in returning to the far-out places of their youths was a sign of recognizing the landscape as a homeland. Their further descriptions and depictions of Sweden’s landscape composed that idealized remedy for the anxieties of society, while at the same time crystallizing for posterity those qualities of the national community that were considered Sweden’s virtues. We can witness this construction of the national identity, which in many ways parallels the idealized political conception, through their words and their vision of the homeland.

The function of the nature myth in Swedish national identity is, however, more profound than simply providing another example of this paradigm. For the instinctive attentiveness to nature, the very sense of existing in a landscape, was a defining characteristic of being Swedish. This perspective is confirmed by literary figures such as Sundbärg, who wrote that “two facts chiefly give the Swedish temperament its character in our day. One is, that Swedes love and concern ourselves with nature, but not with the nature of man.” The second, as we recall from an earlier chapter, is a lack of patriotism. Thus, the love for nature that Sundbärg observed is the only positive feature of the Swedish temperament that he provides. The cultural attendance to holidays celebrating important seasonal moments in nature, and the almost heroic status of

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130 Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 7 and 15.

nature-focused figures such as the 18th-century botanist Carl Linnaeus lend support to Sundbärg’s characterization.

Heidenstam’s treatise on the Swedish temperament also includes a lengthy discussion of the Swedish relationship to nature. He writes, “the Swedish landscape has all the stages from sea to snowfall. It is a mosaic as equally variegated as the Swedish temperament and equally difficult to behold in complete figure.” Here he suggests that the landscape is somehow intrinsically related to the Swedish temperament. He elaborates on the idea in the following statement, by describing the Swedes’ relationship to the natural surroundings as fundamental to their way of life:

Nothing has meaning for Swedes as much as the Nordic climate. The changing seasons invite a refreshment and diversion which the southern countries lack, and turn our attention to nature. We change our scenery and habits of life four times a year without having to move and we get used to examining the sky and air. The most beautiful is the late autumn, the season of the home and intellectual work, when the fire burns, when the days become shorter, the roads quieter, and when the Christmas trees get raised up in the square. The year’s most solemn and most indescribable moment is when the first snow begins to fall, and all the people prepare themselves for the old Midwinter festival, which is less about the return of the sun than it is about everyone’s own hearth and feeling themselves part of the inherited land.

Heidenstam’s description reveals this attentiveness to nature that is so much a part of the Swedish perspective. He also draws on the older tradition of nature myths in characterizing the

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natural setting as a homeland, as a place in which the nation is rooted. Further, his account is of a natural setting that provides renewal and variety. It is the natural setting that fulfills the people’s need for beauty and security, and it is the home they crave. In describing nature in this way, Heidenstam fulfills three major functions of a nature myth with regards to national identity: first, the landscape is depicted as the homeland of the nation; second, it is an image created to satisfy “culture’s craving;” and third, it is an expression of the virtues of that national community. That is, those rituals and moments that Heidenstam describes are the ones that involve a community coming together in solidarity to celebrate the seasons and prepare for the next, moments available to every member of the community regardless of station. This is a portrayal of important cultural values such as solidarity and equality, all within an atmosphere that allows its members the freedom to perform these actions. Heidenstam’s depiction of the Swedish relationship to nature is implicitly expressed in terms of the idealized virtues of the political community.

For both Heidenstam and Sundbärg, Sweden’s landscape and natural features are central aspects of the national identity. They exhibit a construction of identity built on the older traditions of nature myths, in which the nation is envisioned as the homeland and the root of the nation’s culture. Their descriptions also indicate an awareness of nature that is an essential feature of the Swedish temperament.

**Artistic Visions**

For the Swedish artists as well, nature provided a powerful symbol of national culture. Portraying the natural features of the country in works of art was a way to ensure that the work of art could be considered truly Swedish. Hence, the portrayal of Sweden’s natural environment
became central to the Swedish artists’ project of creating a national school of art. Richard Bergh acknowledged the importance of portraying Sweden’s natural features: “authentic Nordic art must differ as much from authentic Mediterranean art as a fir tree from an umbrella pine. The general character of a country’s nature must also be visible in its art.”\textsuperscript{134} Again, Bergh states the point: “if the art of a country in its essential features does not resemble its nature, that is a sure indication that a foreign influence is predominant among its artists.”\textsuperscript{135} Sweden’s art must attend to the features of its own singular landscape, thereby distinguishing the country’s identity and avoiding the imitation of foreign models.

The portrayal of Swedish natural features was even connected with patriotism in the words of one art critic, here in reference to artist Bruno Liljefors: “In his conception and manner of expression he is as modern as anyone, yet authentically patriotic, as one can be only if he understands how the firs whisper and what the waterfalls say.”\textsuperscript{136} Here, patriotism is predicated on an understanding of distinctly Swedish natural features, and their portrayal in art thus becomes the performance of national identity.

Artists recognized that nature was not only an observable place, but also stood as the root of a truly Swedish culture. Nature thus becomes the locus of authenticity, bypassing folk culture in this role. Bergh elaborated on this stance:

Art shall come to a country because nature is singing in the chest of all the people and demands an expression – an art. And the artist must be one with ‘all the people’… The

\textsuperscript{134} Richard Bergh, cited in Facos, \textit{Nordic Imagination}, 47.


artist will bring old and young, poor and rich, townspeople and country people together face to face with the Swedish nature, the mother of our national character and the quiet shaper of our culture.137

Again, the perspective revealed here differs from the Romantic trope of genius artists isolated from their publics. Instead, nature is the instigator of the artistic impulse and is expressed to the people by the artist, so that all three are connected. Moreover, by referring to Swedish nature as the “shaper of our culture,” Bergh underscores the significance of place in the Swedish identity.

A sense of nostalgia contributed to the effectiveness of invoking Sweden’s landscape as the nation’s homeland. As Svetlana Boym points out, nostalgia is connected to the particularity of Romantic nationalism, as opposed to the universality of Enlightenment thought. With the increase of globalization, the longing for the local became more acute.

Globalization encouraged stronger local attachments. In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world. Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals.138

Just as Sweden’s shifting place in the world fragmented its historical timeline, a yearning for belonging became more palpable. Custom and tradition, even if invented, could provide this sense of belonging in a community as well as a feeling of continuity with both past and future.139

The particular place where one’s nation was located could also provide a strong catalyst for feelings of community, as its inhabitants share the experience of being in that landscape. In this


139 Ibid., 42.
way, place supersedes tradition as the font of the nation and the object of nostalgia’s longing. Displacement from the nation renders that longing for the lost home stronger.

As the artists that would later form the Artists’ Association travelled to Paris, Florence, and other parts of the continent, they experienced a homesickness that was often described in terms of longing for the natural features of their native country. Bergh describes one such moment of realizing this homesickness while in Italy:

I stood on a hill outside Florence – one afternoon in February last year. Spring had just come into the air. Around me mountain ranges rose in classically beautiful lines. On the slopes down towards the valley almond trees shone in their first white flowering. The sun went down and all the hills glowed. Over the whole city down there in the valley the evening shadows were already spreading, cool and dense; only at the crown of the dome a flicker of light still burned. At the moment it died down, as if given a hint, all the city bells began to jointly sound; it became a gentle melody in finely-tuned successions of tones. It spoke to me, loud and clear, of an old refined culture, which was tactfully attentive to all the senses’ need for beauty. Poor Sweden, I thought, that you lie far to the north, far from civilization and beauty! [Umbrella] pine trees in my immediate area began gently sighing in the evening breeze from the mountains, and their sighs mingled as a murmur of voices with the ringing bells from the valley. I stood as if rooted – with intoxicated senses.

Poor Sweden, I repeated. But the bells fell silent, one by one, and I heard at last only the sighing of the pines. It sounded like the hum of a [Scots] pine forest. – A [Scots] pine forest! It tore at my chest. All at once a longing came over me, an overwhelming longing for Sweden, the quiet, white country in the north.140

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His description is vivid, of an artist deeply appreciative of the sophistication of an Italian city, and then suddenly gripped by a deep longing for home and the familiarity of its environs. Bergh wrote that he could never paint Italy’s trees as well as Sweden’s, for “we don’t have any memories in common.” Such comments reveal that in addition to features of a purely natural environment, part of the longing for home also included a feeling for the past. Again, Bergh wrote, “there is no meaning to what we want to achieve until we have Sweden’s land under our feet and all our childhood and youthful memories murmuring in our ears.” His statement brings attention to the special tension in nostalgia between traces of the past and its pull on the present. In engaging one’s childhood memories to construct a sense of community, Bergh is attempting to transform the experience of the individual into the communal “glue” of belonging, without which “there is no meaning.” The Swedish landscape combined with a sense of nostalgia provides a foundation for national identity that satisfies the conditions of historical continuity, communal belonging, and a feeling of worth – an integral feature of any national construction.

As if seeking to have “youthful memories murmuring in [their] ears,” many of the artists and composers frequented the provinces of their youth, each becoming known for paintings of a similar return to a beloved natural feature with Alfvén, who wrote “Italy’s sun is still so strong in the eye, that autumn here at home seems to me doubly dark, but therefore also of a more intense mood than elsewhere. And it is arresting to now sit here in the boat and see the bleak, dear archipelago’s scenery emerge, indescribably expressive in its heavy, autumnal poetry.” Letter to Oscar Quensel, October 28, 1905, in *Tempo furioso: Vandringsår* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1948), 161.


142 Richard Bergh, letter to Georg Pauli dated December 7, 1886. Published in Georg Pauli, *Konstnärersbrev*, 2 vols. (Stockholm, Bonniers: 1928), 1:24. Translated in Facos, 63. Elsewhere Bergh writes, “the most important thing in a painting is not formal beauty, noble taste; it is the unfathomable and gripping tapestry of memories, of premonition and imagination, which the artist has spun into his picture.” “Svenskt konstnärskynne,” 152.
particular region. As Alfvén recognized, “[the archipelago] is of course my childhood home, and there my muse has its dearest place.”\textsuperscript{143} But this attachment to the places of our memories is also part of an effort to return to a more perfect past, that aspect of nostalgia wherein what is remembered is an unspoiled ideal that tells only part of the truth. This was a common aspect of nation-building too, in which heroic historic events became objects of collective memory, even if embellished or rewritten. Reanimating the idealized past of childhood, one captured in memory, was an important part of the Swedish artistic ideal. “The color and shapes which a painting offers us must always, so that the painting will be perceived as a \textit{living} whole, appeal to our memory of reality.”\textsuperscript{144}

Artists and composers also recognized the countryside as an opportunity to escape the pressures of living in a rapidly expanding urban and industrial environment. The impulse to return to nature was part of the paradigm of the nature myth created by a desire to reclaim a pristine past, to live out a history in which an unspoiled natural environment nourished a nation. This kind of nostalgia for a purer history, rooted in wholesome Nature, was the aspect of nature that was perhaps more invented than real. This was nature in the role of unspoiled and historic past, from which the modern notion of nation could spring in full glory. It is this sense of nostalgia that emerges in a letter from Stenhammar to his wife:

It was like a reunion, I felt all of it, knew it all again, plateau, lake, and mountain and the mooing cows outside in the green stillness, the dark firs and bright beech trees, quietly I walked slowly up the slope to my hotel… Yes dear, it can \textit{not} be described, but for me

\textsuperscript{143} “I maj reser jag upp till Stockholm och kommer att i juni ligga ute i skärgården. Den är ju mitt barndomshem, och där har min sångmö sin käraste plats.” Letter to Oscar Quensel, Good Friday 1906 from Hugo Alfvén, \textit{Tempo furioso}, 165.

\textsuperscript{144} De färger och former, som en tavla bjuder oss, måste alltid, för att tavlan skall fattas som ett \textit{levande} helt vädda till vårt minne av verkligheten. Richard Bergh, “Emotionell konst,” \textit{Efterlämnade skrifter: om konst och annat} (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1921), 121.
there is no longer more than one lake, and I think there really is no more than one country, the Östergötland country. My ancestors were östgotar, and I will be östgöte…

Stenhammar had not actually spent any time here as a child, but it was the region where his family’s roots lay. The summers he spent there have been considered some of the most productive of his career, unhindered by performances or social obligations. The inspiration he felt here was that of occupying an invented ancient homeland.

Stenhammar’s time in Östergötland was primarily at Vestanå, very near to Heidenstam’s home on the lake Vättern. He also composed in Särö, a town to the south of Göteborg. Originally an agricultural area, the influx of upper-class tourists in the late nineteenth century eventually turned it into a resort town, frequented even by the king. These locations gave Stenhammar access to Sweden’s lake landscapes, but also the west coast and the Bohuslän archipelago, a more barren setting than the Stockholm archipelago. The return to the countryside is part of a wider cultural pattern in Sweden, as most families have small, and often very rustic, cabins on one of the many lakes to retreat to during the long summer days.

Hugo Alfvén did most of his composing in the countryside as well. He sometimes sought out new surroundings, whether the lakes of Dalarna or the mountainous terrain of the western border with Norway. But the surroundings of his childhood seemed to have held the strongest

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145 Det var som ett återseende, jag kände det alltsammans, kände igen alltsammans, slätten, sjön, och berget och de råmande korna utanför i den gröna stillheten, de mörka granarna och de ljusa bokarna, tyst vandrade jag sakta upp för slutningen till mitt hotell…. – ja kära, det kan icke beskrivas, men för mig finns det icke längre mer än en sjö, liksom jag tror att det egentligen icke finns mer än ett land, landet, Östgötalandet. Mina fader voro östgötar, och jag vill bli östgöte… Wilhelm Stenhammar, Dec. 5, 1905, cited in Wallner, Stenhammar och hans tid, 1:31. Also cited in Wallner, 2:324, slightly altered and with date September 10, 1904, while writing Ett Folk. This discrepancy does not affect the present argument.

146 There are numerous recollections both in his letters and the memoirs of his acquaintances that describe summer diversions and excursions in the area.
influence for him, as he repeatedly reveals. In a letter from 1908 he writes, “I feel an increasingly
stronger need to get to know all my country with its beautiful and imagination-fertilizing
scenery. In the depth of my being I am however, an archipelago-dweller. Among the rocks and
surf, the sun- and moon-glittering bays, my muse thrives best. My life’s goal is to once again
have my own cottage at the sea’s edge.” While the archipelago held a distinct expressive
power for Alfvén, he clearly felt the importance of experiencing all of Sweden’s various natural
motifs.

Prins Eugen wrote often of his trips into the country, and his descriptions of the effects of
light and weather on various views are numerous and detailed. He seems to have conducted these
trips as a kind of research in some cases. He writes,

To refresh my impression of pines and yellow evening air I took a day out to
Saltsjöbaden and up to Karlsbaderberget. The weather looked threatening and a rainstorm
came, but the sun broke forth and shone with double glow on parts of the landscape,
while Tyresö and Dalarö, where the storm pulled out, lay in shadow. I had a lovely view
over the bays, which stood dark blue from slush with shimmering spots of open water.
Round about us hundreds of thrushes called, and gave the impression of spring
emerging.

The prince’s letters are filled with descriptions such as this. It is as if his natural surroundings
were a necessary part of communication with his friends and family. By referring to the icons of

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147 “Jag känner allt starkare behof att få lära känna hela mitt land med dess sköna och
fantasibefruktande scenerier. I djupet af mitt väsen är jag dock skärgårdsbo. Bland kobbar och
brännningar och sol- och måneglittrande fjärdar trifs min sångmö bäst. Mitt lifs mål är också att
en gång få en egen stuga i havskanten.” Hugo Alfvén in a letter to Oscar Quensel from Leksand
on August 20, 1908, in *Tempo furioso*, 186.

148 För att friska upp mina intryck af tallar och gul aftenluft för jag en dag ut till
Saltsjöbaden och upp på Karlsbaderberget. Vädret så hotande ut och en regnskur kom, men så
bröt solen fram och lyste med dubbel glöd på delar af landskapet, medan Tyresölandet och
Dalarö der ovädret drog fram lågo i skugga. Jag hade en härlig utsigt öfver fjärdarna som stodo
mörkblå af issörja, med glindrande fläckar af öppet vatten. Rundt omkring oss lockade
hundratals trastar och gåfvo intryck af begynnande vår. Prins Eugen, letter to his mother, April
14, 1899, in *Breven Berätta: Upplevelser och iakttagelser, åren 1886-1913* (Stockholm: P.A.
Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1942), 257-258.
the Swedish landscape, he could somehow strengthen personal bonds with his community. This tendency further illustrates the preoccupation with nature that was considered a trait of the Swedish temperament.

For artists and composers then, nature was both a physical place – to which one retreated for solitude and inspiration – and an imagined construction, whose best features represented nothing less than the very essence of a Swedish identity. It functioned as homeland and a creation to satisfy the longings of the members of a rapidly growing and changing society. Nostalgia caused by modern urban realities found its panacea in the sense of community and belonging supplied by an experience of, and attention to, nature.

Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory. 149

Although Swedish nostalgia lacks the shades of meaning present in displaced cultures or those for whom the homeland never existed in the past, it still functioned as a force of belonging. As a symbol of all that was distinctive and authentic about the nation, the artistic portrayal of landscape was thus, necessarily, an act of participating in the imagined national community.

Natural ‘Topics’: Sighing Forests

When considering natural features that stand as symbols of a unique and recognizable nation, the aim of any national identity after all, those features are either highly distinctive or exceedingly typical for that nation. It is already apparent that members of creative circles focused on Sweden’s forests in particular. Having neither the imposing mountain ranges nor the mysterious fjords to the extent of its neighbor to the west, Sweden instead found itself carpeted

149 Boym, Nostalgia, xvi.
in great expanses of forest: solemn, still, deep forest. In fact, these forests were responsible for a great deal of the wealth of the country during the nineteenth century, and its ability to participate in the expansion of industry sweeping across Europe. Merchants became wealthy and powerful from the sale of timber, or used it to fuel their industrial endeavors. In turn, they populated growing cultural centers, and provided demand for concerts, patronized artists, and welcomed print material. Forests were a palpable presence in the country, and a seemingly endless mass of potential. A hiker who makes her way to a high point in the northern part of Sweden’s forests, which remain only sparsely populated, begins to comprehend the vastness of this bounty, and its power as a defining feature of the landscape.

But what does it mean to ground one’s nation in a forest, in a gathering of trees? A potent symbol, the tree is both something permanent, stable, sending down deep roots, and something that is self-renewing, rising again from the decaying matter of its ancestors. A forest’s primeval existence, before the time of men, allows its authenticity to trump that of folk traditions. And a forest, when shorn of its outermost members, still remains a forest. How metaphorically apt for a country which had recently relinquished its colonies, and yielded its rule over neighboring Norway and Finland. If we also understand the trees of a forest to exist in a community where no one particular member is more important than any other, and where all participate equally in the formation of the whole, then the forest becomes a landscape that expresses the values of the imagined political community of the nation. And perhaps the metaphor can be stretched even further, in noticing that the stillness and depth of a forest resonate with the simplicity and inner feeling praised by artists and musicians alike.

\footnote{Schama treats these symbolic ideas in greater detail in “Part One: Wood,” \textit{Landscape and Memory}, 3-242.}
The expansive forests of Sweden are not only objects of longing and a significant motif of the imagined landscape. They are also a defense for the virtues of rawness or naturalness in the artistic community. What once was a cause for apology, the uncultivated wilderness, and a sign of Sweden’s backwardness in comparison with the countries on the continent, suddenly becomes a mark of pride. The moody and untouched landscape is now a sign of Sweden’s special closeness to the purity of nature. As Stenhammar describes it, artistic imagination functions by growing “like trees in a nature park, formed after a more secure, more beautiful code than any French garden master’s ax could reflect in its clipped hedges.”

In particular, the fir tree seems to have been an important national symbol for Swedes, and an embodiment of particular character traits that were valued. Art historian Ragnar Josephson identified its importance for Bergh’s work in particular, and called it, “the Swedes’ holy tree.” Bergh’s own thoughts draw a parallel between the tree and the Swedish character.

There is a physical quality with the Swede, which I as an artist, and therefore a human being, value very much and that is: he is in general very straight in his growth. No matter how often I pessimistically believed that this straightness in growth only stood for spiritual stiffness and austerity, I have finally told myself that… it also answers to some deeper and stronger characteristic of the soul: to a certain straightforwardness in the character and the will… A sky-high pine in the heart of our barren homeland with its…

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152 The birch might also vie for this distinction, but its numbers are much fewer in Sweden than the fir, which carpets the hills and mountains far into the north of the country. Additionally, the birch has not been used as a symbol of national character traits by artists in the way the fir has.

entire power as a symbol, has given me a prouder courage to face life than this [the Sistine Chapel], the highest of art’s creations.\footnote{154}

Here the attributes of a natural feature have been mapped onto the national identity.

Perhaps the clearest evocation of the symbolic forest is the painting by Prins Eugen, *Skogen (The Forest, 1892, Göteborgs Konstmuseum)*. Just two years earlier the prince had written of the contrast between Norway’s mountainous western terrain and the forested landscape of Valdres:

> It offers much more of interest with its fields, houses, and forests than Vestlandet’s overwhelming mountains which are ragged, ad hoc, and do not at all give the impression of a necessary organic form, at least I could not distinguish one. We got up at 6 am to paint the morning atmosphere, a great motif with firs, which I longed to paint. I am at present crazy for firs!\footnote{155}

In his later publication of this letter, Eugen adds that “Firs were considered by ‘Parisians’ unpainterly, likewise Scandinavia’s jagged hard contours. But precisely because of this I was...
now tempted to paint them.” Eugen’s concentration on this feature of his native country is connected to a certain defiant pride in its forms and colors.

His colleague Richard Bergh describes the painting well:

A pine forest at dusk; a glint of the evening sun between the tall blue trunks which resemble thousands upon thousands of majestic pillars in a boundless church – in nature’s own great temple. Over there, the glow of the evening sun – many miles away – resembles a faintly shining choir window with gilt glass, towards which all the pillars, tall and majestic, lead...

Bergh’s description hints at the reverence accorded the forest as a natural feature, an attitude appropriate for a phenomenon associated with the mysteries of primeval times as the forest was. It does not convey, however, the simplicity of the design, bordering on the abstract, or the stillness one feels gazing into the dark heart of the forest, populated by little else than the statuesque trees themselves, that stand in communal witness to the last rays of the day. This is a work that satisfies the aesthetic demands for a beauty that is simple and expressive, those values that were integral to the Swedish artistic formulation of what constitutes good art.

Eugen’s treatment of this motif demonstrates one further characteristic of the Swedish artistic portrayal of nature. Like the cultural mandate to get out in nature, his work invites the viewer to experience the forest from within. Facos observes,

The viewer has no secure vantage point in the silent forest. Prince Eugen transformed the canvas into an iconic, two-dimensional surface with which the viewer’s consciousness is invited to merge, creating a painting that functions as a pictorial metaphor for

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157 Bergh, translation quoted in Varnedoe, Northern Light, 72.
identification with nature. The somber palette and emphatic rhythms of the work induce a contemplative mood with strong emotional resonances.\footnote{Facos, \textit{Nordic Imagination}, 101.}

This manner of identifying with nature by experiencing it, by going inside as it were, is a visual strategy that emerges in many of the Swedish works from this period (and one that contrasts with contemporary Symbolist works from the continent). As we will see in this chapter and the next, it
is an aural strategy employed by composers as well. The nostalgic relationship to the landscape has its visual analogue in the contemplative or evocative atmosphere of the painting.

The forest motif exists in numerous poems from the period in which the literary figures of the 1890s expressed their veneration of nature. Many of these poems—by Heidenstam, Fröding, and Levertin—were set as songs by the period’s composers, providing an obvious example of musical attention to these ideas. Notably, Stenhammar set Tor Hedberg’s “Guld och gröna skogar” (“Gold and Forests Green”) in 1897 as part of his *Fyra svenska sånger*, Op. 16, along with poems by Heidenstam and Fröding. The first two songs of this set deal with happiness in life, while the last two are romantically oriented. Hedberg’s poem falls into the former category:

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Dear life, you promise so much,
When we knock on your door
With eager knuckles;
Open the door, smile so benevolently,
Promise us all gold,
Gold and Forests Green.
But how, I wonder, do you keep
The promise that you gave,
For to one you give gold
To another debts so manifold,
But the forests green? Oh the forests green!
Save your gold, for debts so manifold
Beneath fate’s knuckles.
Keep your promise, benevolent mother,
Give us forests green,
Vast forests green.  
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159 Tor Hedberg was the director of the Royal Theatre in Stockholm at the time.

In Hedberg’s poem, forests are the salve, a part of life more important than any monetary compensation. As with Eugen’s painting, the forest is invested with emotional weight. The almost religious tone ascribed to this natural feature gives it a sense of timelessness, of something larger than the daily experience of humanity. But these descriptions share another significant characteristic: they do not animate the natural feature or attribute to it a psychic power (Hedberg’s entreaty is to life, not the forest). In both cases, the forest simply is. The descriptions are absorbed in details of color, light, and form. These depictions emphasize the presence of nature, but without a narrative. Nature simply observed in this way is a mechanism that functions by virtue of endless cycles and processes in a constant state of simultaneous renewal and decay. To understand one’s place in such a system is reassuring without overt sentiment. This is the sense of reverence that is apparent in these works, an emotional attachment to the life-giving and at the same time indifferent forces of nature. To imbue this nature with a sense of emotional attachment and patriotic nurturing is to trade the urban monuments to the accomplishments and narcissism of man for an idol that is at once humbling and intricately beautiful.

Stenhammar’s setting of Hedberg’s poem reinforces this interpretation. The song is short, just over one minute, and its tone is matter-of-fact. It is as if the singer is simply speaking to the audience, with the marching duple rhythm largely matched to the natural rhythm of the text. The piano accompaniment is homophonic, with an uncomplicated chordal texture that is neither lyrical nor embellished. The only exceptions to this overall mood are in the emotional high point of the song, where the rhythm slows for an appropriately somber depiction of “fate’s knuckles,” and in the four phrases when the text refers to forests. Here the tempo slows, the vocal line becomes more lyrical, and the mood becomes soothing; introspective. The contrast is clear
between the impassive prattling that dominates the song and the lyrical moments that communicate the solace of the forest. The setting of the word “green” additionally receives not only the highest notes in the piece, but reaches them by way of the expressive sixth, an interval Stenhammar repeatedly turns to for his most sensitive musical moments.

Even in a simple song, to a short text, the nature myth is prominent. The natural feature is portrayed as the preferable alternative to the dangers of money, surely a symbol for the

temptations of modern society. The lyrical spaces that accompany the image of the forest are accomplished partly by way of an interruption in the march of time. These moments slow time as if the singer has gotten lost in longing for the natural world. In so doing, Stenhammar communicates nostalgia for a recognizably Swedish feature of the landscape.

**Nordic Light**

Sweden’s northern latitude has bestowed on the country another especially conspicuous natural feature: light. In the more densely populated southern regions of the country, the seasonal shifts in the number of daylight hours are substantial. Reach just a bit farther north, and they become even more marked. In fact, the quality of the Swedish light was one of the first distinctions noted by Swedish artists who, in bringing their works home from France, realized that it was the light of the French countryside that made the works so obviously un-Swedish.

Sweden’s crisp northern light thus became one of the primary natural topics for artists and poets. As this feature was further compounded by the radical swings in the proportion of daylight to darkness from winter to summer, it no doubt called attention to light in a way not experienced by residents of the middle latitudes.\(^{161}\) That beguiling quality of the light at dusk, which ordinarily lasts for just a few minutes, and is practically nonexistent toward the equator, can, at the peak of summer, stretch for hours. To experience this is to have the sense that one has frozen time, that the most sentimental moments of the sun’s descent will go on eternally. The return of light after the darkness of winter also causes a sense of release that is expressed in the liberation of summertime activities and community events. The celebration of the summer

\(^{161}\) Bergh wrote of this dichotomy: “Midwinter – midsummer! There you have the extremes of your Nordic essence’s rich tonal scale, a tonal scale so much infinitely richer than that of the south, and consequently also infinitely more difficult to bring to harmony.” “Svenskt konstnärskynne,” 154.
solstice, *Midsommar*, accordingly holds a prized position in Swedish culture, and is the cause for as much holiday anticipation as Christmas.

Richard Bergh has genuinely frozen time in his *Nordisk Sommarkväll* (*Nordic Summer Evening*, 1899-1900, Göteborgs Konstmuseum), allowing the countryside to be eternally bathed in the glow of the midsummer light. He thought that works such as this would trigger an emotional response to the landscape, and certainly the stillness and solitude of the captured moment does invite contemplation of life’s larger truths. Brightly shining light is a motif that comes packed with symbolic richness, not least a religious association with the heavens and all things Good. But the light of a midsummer night is something different. It is the fading light that marks a close, the decline after a bright zenith. To be caught in this light then always carries an element of longing, yearning, sadness, a sense of watching the denouement. This same element

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162 On Bergh’s intentions, see Varnedoe, *Northern Light*, 54. See chapter one for more discussion of this painting.
of longing is present in the idea of nostalgia that artists and composers expressed in writing for their native land.

Anders Zorn also captured the light of the midsummer night during the summer revelries, in his Midsommardans (Midsummer Dance, 1897, Nationalmuseum). The painting is easily recognizable as depicting the festival, with the ubiquitous maypole in the background, and the folk costumes of the dancers which are still worn today during the celebration. In this sense the depiction is timeless, for it portrays the festival as it looks now and has looked for many generations. But Zorn has dealt with time in a more profound way as well. The viewer is thrust into the midst of the dancing, a scene clearly full of motion and excitement. Yet the quality of the
light and the indistinctness of certain details serve rather to communicate the sense of suspended time. The juxtaposition of figures in liberated motion with the stillness of the two-dimensional work and its waning evening light captures the very tension of the solstice. Its position as the longest day of the year, with the most life-giving light, is also the still moment at the end of the pendulum’s arc: each day that follows will be shorter and darker. As with Bergh’s work, the endless dusk of the midsummer sun distills an essential moment.

For Zorn’s painting, as with Eugen’s *Skogen*, the perspective is that of the insider. The viewer occupies a position within the frame, as opposed to other artists’ works on similar subjects that present a distanced view of the spectacle. Furthermore, the details of costume, architecture, and even the decoration of the maypole that mark this celebration as occurring in the province of Dalarna are details that will likely be lost on a non-Swedish observer. The veneration of nature that is the base of the Midsummer celebration, and the festival’s significance to Swedish culture, might also be overlooked by outside observers who see merely another peasant painting in the nineteenth-century tradition. This insider’s recognition reminds the observer that their personal memories of Midsummer are in fact collective memories, reinforcing the sense of belonging in a community. Zorn said of this work, “I consider this to be the work that contains the whole of my innermost feelings.”

The emotional content is evident in the painting, and exhibits a deeper allegiance to the motif – a personal articulation of identity.

The Midsummer celebration was a preoccupation of composers too. Music is a fundamental aspect of the festivities already, from the folk songs that accompany the slow hours

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163 Works that place the viewer at a distance include those by J.W. Wallander, and *Midsummer Dance at Rättvik*, 1852 by Kilian Zoll, both Swedes.

164 Anders Zorn, translated and quoted in Varnedoe, *Northern Light*, 275. Prins Eugen first encouraged Zorn to address this subject. Throughout his life, Zorn was known for helping to preserve the folk traditions of his local province of Dalarna through his residence at Mora.
of raising the maypole to the vigorous fiddle and dance tunes that stretch into the night.

Composers have written many works that draw from this repertory, such as Aulin’s *Midsommar-dans*, Op. 18, for violin and piano, and Stenhammar’s *Sensommarnätter*, Op. 33, for piano. One of the most widely known programmatic works that celebrates the festivities is Hugo Alfvén’s *Midsommarvaka* (*Midsummer Vigil*), Swedish rhapsody for orchestra, Op. 19, written in 1903. He wrote of its origin,

Gradually I came to feel an increasing urge to express in music something of the delight of the Midsummer’s Eve, the abundance of poetic moods and impressions that I had received through the years. I wanted to sing the praise of the Swedish character and the beauty of Swedish nature at Midsummer, write a hymn of joy in the idealizing language of music. I set to work as in a dream.\(^{165}\)

Alfvén has tied the Swedish character and Swedish nature to this celebration that had become a national symbol. Like Zorn, he was interested in folk traditions, which resulted in the frequent inclusion of folk material in his music. But as his statement reveals, the piece has a deeper connection to the Swedish identity than the mere inclusion of folk elements. A significant aspect of that identity was the attention to nature.

Despite the above statement, Alfvén had been inspired to write the piece not by a Midsummer celebration, but by a late summer wedding in his youth. His memories of that night conclude with this statement, “it took a good while before I could sleep, for the memory of the wedding festival and the night’s lovely experience would not release its grip on my imagination. Everything slipped up to a higher plane and crystallized into a tone-image, which I that night only glimpsed – an image of Swedish nature and the Swedish people’s character, which I wanted

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to paint in tones." He explains that he ruminated on it for a further ten years, changing the setting to the midsummer festival that would be more recognizable for his countrymen, and which contains all the same themes of love, community, and celebration during the light and carefree days of summer. But the reference to the Swedish character and nature were there from the beginning. “To make the tone poem approachable, as vivid as possible for the listener’s imagination, I made it lighter than I had in the beginning intended and I placed the action in midsummer weekend’s lovely time, when Lars Olsson’s wedding festival is celebrated over all our country in thousands of variations, well-known and loved by everyone.” Again, we see the importance of successfully communicating with the audience in a language that is characterized by lightness.

Alfvén calls the piece a “symphonically constructed tone poem, based on a purely visual program.” It paints a picture of the festival night, beginning with the arrival of the community at a country barn, the first dance tunes, and a bawdy brawl that disintegrates into cheerful laughter. The carefree celebratory mood is overwhelmingly apparent from the very beginning of the piece, which skips along in steady duple time. The orchestration is rich, and though Alfvén’s opening melody has a folk flavor, it is a refined presentation of the tune. Alfvén’s depiction of

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167 “För att göra tondikten lättillgänglig, så levande som möjligt för åhörarens fantasi, gjorde jag den ljusare än jag från början avsett och förlade handlingen till midsommarhelgens ljuvliga tid, då Lars Olssons bröllopsfest firas över hela vårt land i tusentals variationer, välkända och älskade av envar.” Ibid.

Example 3: Hugo Alfvén, *Midsommarvaka*, opening measures
brawl and ensuing laughter is quite literal and easily discerned by listening to his colorful orchestration. The sense of a festive community event is clear.

A quieter interlude illustrates the youthful romance of a girl and boy who have snuck away to the forest in the moonlight. The dance strains fade away, and a “melancholy melody, breathed forth by the spirit of the forest” emerges. Introduced by gently rising fourths in muted strings, this English horn melody is punctuated by rolling harp chords. Alfvén’s depiction of the forest is a bit more sentimental than Stenhammar’s, but the manner of the contrast is similar. The forest occupies the lyrical and introspective Andante at the center of the piece. The rhythms become less regular, often incorporating triplets. The opening dance theme is actually present in one or another voice through most of the section, but it by no means dominates the texture. The extreme regularity that characterized the first section of the piece gives way to a different sense of time and a more expressive mood. Gradually day breaks, and bits of a new dance tune filter into the texture as the young lovers return to the barn in the first light of morning for one last wild dance. The stillness of the night forest is ended as “the two young people return to reality.” The collected nature of the dance at the opening of the piece contrasts with the abandon evident at the end, and folk influences are in much clearer relief over clanging open fifths. Alfvén writes, “The Midsummer’s Vigil ends with this whirling climax. It is, I repeat, a paean to the Swedish character and Swedish nature at Midsummer time.”

Alfvén clearly indicates nature’s role as inspiration in this work. The style of the piece is true to the raucous spirit of the celebration, which distinguishes it from Stenhammar’s more reserved and lyrical style. Yet the central interlude exhibits similar compositional strategies for

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169 These events bear some similarity to the actual course of events he experienced at the Olsson wedding many years before, which he gives recounts in Första satsen, 238-248.

depicting the atmosphere of the natural setting. As a whole, the piece depicts the importance of nature as both reason and setting for the midsummer festivities, and hence its role in fostering a sense of community. It hardly need be added that this event is familiar to all Swedes, and so its depiction in music surely calls on mutual memories of the celebration in years past.

In nature, light is balanced by the dark, and the midwinter festival of the winter solstice was also a source of inspiration in artistic circles. Another celebration with pagan and peasant roots, this too ultimately celebrates something older, a natural phenomenon that predates our observation of it. In a letter describing his orchestral rhapsody Midvinter, Op. 24, Stenhammar connects the aural sources of the piece to its emphasis on the contrast of light and dark: “The old heathen midwinter dance and medieval hymn sound together in the same longing out of the
darkness of winter toward sun and light.”\textsuperscript{171} In the darkest days of the year, it is again nature that
provides the focus. The trappings of the celebration, and whether they are of pagan or Christian
roots, are inconsequential. The winter season encourages as much communal feeling as the
liberation of the bright summertime. Only rather than coming together in the light of the eternal
evening, the gatherings occur around the hearth and the numerous candles lit to ward off the
darkness. It is a quieter and more contemplative kind of coming together, and this is the mood
that dominates Stenhammar’s piece as well.

At the beginning of the score, Stenhammar writes, “The motivic material in \textit{Midvinter}
consists of a pair of old dance songs, which I heard by way of the fiddler Hinns Anders from
Östnor in Mora (Dalarna), and the old psalm ‘Den signade dag’ which is still sung every
Christmas service in the Mora church.”\textsuperscript{172} He further notes that the choir for the piece should
consist of at least forty voices situated behind the orchestra, stating a preference for as large a
choir as possible. These voices only enter at about the midpoint of the piece, to sing a lushly
orchestrated arrangement of the hymn “Den signade dag,” which gives the middle section a
solemn character. As with the Midsummer traditions, Stenhammar has chosen melodic material
originating in the province of Dalarna. But the piece is a statement on more than just folk
traditions.

\textsuperscript{171} Gammal hednisk midvinterdans och medeltida psalmsång klinga samman i samma
längtan ur vintermörkret mot sol och ljus. Stenhammar, in a letter to Olallo Morales, March 25,

\textsuperscript{172} Det motiviska materialet i Midvinter består af ett par gamla danslåtar, som jag hört af
spelmannen Hinns Anders från Östnor i Mora (Dalarne), samt den gamla psalmen “Den signade
dag” sådan den ännu sjunges hvarje julotta i Mora kyrka. Wilhelm Stenhammar, \textit{Midvinter}
(Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen Musik-Förlag, no date) Stenhammar heard Hinns Anders play
while on a visit to Zorn’s house in Mora in 1902, Wallner, \textit{Stenhammar}, 2:413.
The opening of the piece grows from the deep tones of six divisi double basses into the middle register of the cellos. The rich tones move through swirling string lines, and into the bassoon, the rising fourths conjuring the crystalized cold of winter’s deep sleep. This opening melody soon appears in solo violin as a fiddle dance tune, revealing its true identity. The piece gathers momentum, and the first fiddle tune gives way to a second in triple time. The ornamentation, double stops, and drone accompaniments are unmistakably folkish.

These reeling dance tunes come to dominate the texture, and once again serve to draw the listener to an inside perspective. With their festive merriment they bring a balancing light to the piece’s opening darkness. And like Zorn’s painting, two versions of time seem to coexist. The listener is thrust into the animated and joyous motion of celebratory dancing. But this moment also feels suspended, trapped by the hushed darkness at the piece’s opening, and the solemn prayer at its center. The return of the fiddle tunes in the final section of the piece is deceptive. The sense of suspension is ultimately reinforced by Stenhammar’s closing bars, which as in Zorn’s painting, freezes the folk dance in mid-stride. The sunny tunes that felt so real were actually only memories. They were derived from the hallucinatory darkness that opened the
piece, and subsided in the face of the cold winds that threatened to drown the central hymn – winds portrayed by running triplets and sixteenths in various voices of the orchestral accompaniment. The sudden vanishing of the fiddle tunes at the piece’s end causes a sense of nostalgia that is immediately engulfing.

The cheerful dances and the solemn hymn indicate more than just the balance that comes from linking darkness and light. The dance tunes, which sit preserved as if in amber, serve as a symbol of the far side of the year. The hymn tune then, holds the seeds of renewal that will grow into that summer season. Stenhammar chose to set only the first verse of the hymn:

Example 7: Wilhelm Stenhammar, *Midvinter*, opening bars
The blessed day which we now here see
From heaven to us descending.
His blessing upon us, may he bring
Joy and salvation to all of us.
May the supreme Lord preserve all of us today
From sin and sorrow.  

Usually sung deep in the throes of winter, this verse emphasizes the life and joy of the Christmas holiday. Including just this verse keeps the message simple and avoids the more sober metaphors that appear in later verses. Stenhammar’s setting draws out the syllabic treatment of the text so that each syllable occupies an entire measure, and sometimes several measures at the end of phrases. Both the opening wintry scene and this solemn interlude are marked by a reflective sense of time. Like the self-renewing forest, nature’s period of darkness is not dead but rather a time of gestation.

There is something symbolic in Stenhammar’s manner of depicting the midwinter season as well. He has chosen to include two episodes that are experienced communally: the singing of hymns and dancing to folk tunes. In this way the piece highlights an essential feature of the Swedish identity. The observation of natural cycles provides the motive for communal events. Whether those communal events grow from pagan or Christian traditions seems of little consequence. In commemorating a remarkable time of year, the piece calls on characteristics of location and perspective that are distinct to the Swedish identity.

“Sparkle Across the Straits”

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73 Den signade dag som vi nu här se/ av himmelen till oss nedkomma,/ Han blive oss säll, han låte sig te/ Oss alla till glädje och fromma!/ Ja, Herren den högste oss all i dag/ För synder och sorger bevare! Translation by Paul Erling, program notes for Chicago Chorale, *Northern Light: A Concert of Scandinavian and Baltic Music* (Nov. 18-19, 2011). The hymn tune’s origins date back to medieval times in Scandinavia. It later appeared in a 1695 psalm book, and was modified by Johan Olof Wallin for the 1819 psalm book, with nine verses.
The final natural feature that defines Sweden’s landscape must be water. Stockholm itself is a city of islands, resting on fourteen within an archipelago of over 30,000 islands. Water is ever-present in this cultural capital. But a glance at a map reveals the country to be riddled with waterways as well, primarily inland lakes of all sizes. It is as if the landscape is a great M.C. Escher print, in which the islands of rock in a body of water morph unnoticed into islands of water in a body of earth. The emphasis here is not on the moving avenues of flowing rivers, but on brooding bodies of water whose existence is less transitory. Many nature myths are based on the power and fertility of great rivers, and imbue them with a feminine mystique. The painterly focus on Sweden’s lakes and archipelagos emphasizes something different.

The stillness of the inland lakes is apparent in many of Prins Eugen’s works. Like Bergh’s *Nordisk Sommarkväll*, Eugen’s lakes are often shown in the late glow of a summer night. In *Sommarnatt Tyresö* (*A Summer Night at Tyresö*, 1895, Nationalmuseum), the fading light of the sky is reflected on the still surface of the lake, with the surrounding forest in darkness. The mood is solemn and still, the emotional effect is compelling. It is evocative in the best way, communicating both the beauty and vastness of the natural scene. Similar atmospheres are present in two later works by the Prince. In *Det lugna vattnet* (*Still Water*, 1901, Nationalmuseum), a work also conceived while in the country at Tyresö, the prince describes the small lake in the foreground as “like a pool in the bottom of a kettle, calm and black, untouched by winds that drive the clouds high up in the air.”

*Det klarnar efter regn* (*Clearing After the Rain*, 1904, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde) again portrays a darkened landscape, with the fading light of the sky reflected in the surface of a lake. Gustaf Fjaestad turns the motif into a winter scene in *Hoar Frost on the Ice*, 1901, with a similarly calm lake surface. Zorn’s *Midnatt*

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Midnight, 1891, Zornmuseet) shares some characteristics with these paintings as well. The quiet lake is shown in the twilight of summer night with dark forests reflected in its surface. In this case however, the presence of a woman rowing and the viewer’s perspective from within her boat set the work apart from Eugen’s works. The commonality is in the occurrence of the lake as a natural phenomenon whose placid surface reflects its surroundings, but whose depths remain impenetrable. They lie like silky mirrors, an occasional opening set amid the forests.

The archipelago provides a different kind of motif, expressed as the nearly abstract decorative patterning of Bruno Liljefors’ archipelago marshes, the feverish blues of Eugene Jansson’s nighttime depictions of Stockholm, or the glinting waves off idyllic beaches that are reminiscent of bourgeois genres.\(^{175}\) Anders Zorn’s I skärgården (In the Skerries, 1894, The National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design, Norway) captures the essence of the idea. The work is one of his many paintings of bathers, and the play of light and shadow on the female

\(^{175}\) These works and Zorn’s Midnatt are discussed in Varnedoe, *Northern Light.*
form is a central focus of the piece. The sunlight reflects off the rippling waves of the ocean behind her, providing a surface full of motion and yet without any great drama. Zorn effectively portrays the feeling one has in the archipelago: without a single towering natural feature to direct the gaze, one instead feels the slightly unsettling sense of great space and anonymity. Or perhaps it is the sense of freedom he has portrayed, in a landscape that cannot be tamed or settled and thus remains a wild playground.

There is some commonality to the portrayals of these two motifs – the placid lakes and the ocean waters of the archipelago. Both are often depicted from a distance, where their position as openings between forested bits of land is clear. We are reminded from such vantages that the waterways provided another mode of transport for the country’s inhabitants. But these roads without lines symbolize a manner of travel that offers greater freedom. While the surfaces of the
lakes conceal hidden depths, the labyrinthine archipelago seems to invite liberation, from rules, from a sense of time, and from the restraint of civilized interactions. Water thus comes to signify the emotional life; in one depiction it is the resonance of deeply held internal feeling, and in the other it is the release of those feelings into openness.

Hugo Alfvén was especially inspired by the archipelago setting. He spent part of his childhood there, and we have seen how it left a strong impression on him. He returned to the topic many times throughout his compositional career, including notably his *Skärgårdsbilder* (Images of the Archipelago), Op. 17 (1901-2), for piano, and the Symphony No. 4, *Från havsbandet* (From the Outer Skerries), Op. 39 (1918-19). His description of the archipelago communicates something of his regard for it:

> Out there, the light summer nights are strangely attractive. Green islands, grey skerries – the surrounding sea seems almost musical, laughing when the alburns spawn among the rocks, rippling and foaming like the chords of a harp when the wind caresses the verdure of the islands, roaring when the storm lashes furious waves against the rocks and gravel of the shores. But the most beautiful time of all is when the air is so quiet that the sea and sky seem to have merged, forming a taut, spherical Chinese lantern, and the horizon is no longer discernible.\(^\text{176}\)

Like Eugen’s and Bergh’s, Alfvén’s descriptions reveal a poetic attentiveness in his observations that paints the landscape in great detail. Alfvén’s symphonic poem *En skärgårdssägen*, Op. 20, 1904 (variously translated as *A Tale From the Archipelago*, or *A Legend of the Skerries*) addresses this pervasive natural feature most directly. Both it and the fourth symphony were products of a period of composition privately funded by Oscar Quensel and his contacts after Alfvén’s Jenny Lind Stipend expired. The tone poem is a single movement for orchestra in sonata form, but the relationship between programmatic content and musical material is

\(^{176}\text{Alfvén, “A Midsummer’s Vigil,” 12.}\)
somewhat more complicated than is typical for Alfvén. In a letter in 1906, he writes about the piece:

It has cost me more trouble to find the right name than to compose the piece. It is an apotheosis about the archipelago’s nocturnal autumn poetry, with its melancholy moonlight and wild storms and with the human passions, which there flame up and die, like bioluminescence in a fire.

Now I have considered calling the whole thing simply “From the Archipelago.” It certainly does not indicate any program of epic or of a reflective nature. It indicates only that it is a tone poem, which is inspired by the archipelago’s nature and mood and as such may work on the listeners according to their own temperaments.  

Alfvén hesitates to admit a narrative thread, instead referring to the archipelago as a lens for communicating human emotions. This location, one that encourages exploration and freedom, makes an apt medium for expressing emotions that are typically held deep within. The inland lakes with their placid surface and obscured depths are a useful metaphor for the reserved Swede. The archipelago provides catharsis through the depiction of seemingly detached natural moods.

That Alfvén refers to the piece as an “apotheosis” of the archipelago is an indication of his personal regard for the location. He later wrote in his memoirs about the creative origins of the piece; “I longed to write an epic, which would depict the nocturnal tragedy in storm and in moonlight over straits and wide bays; I wanted to depict some of what I myself experienced out

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Such a statement would seem to indicate a desire for narrative elements, and perhaps he felt more comfortable with explicitly descriptive programs. More importantly, though, Alfvén indicates that he has drawn from his own memories, thus transforming one individual’s experience into a source of communal belonging by way of mutual nostalgia for the landscape.

Alfvén’s own statements about the program for the piece were contradictory. In a letter from 1925 he writes,

Regarding “En skärgårdssägen,” the whole program I can provide really lies in the title. The contents depict an episode from my own life, which certainly cannot interest anyone other than myself. I have however, on one occasion, in response to a request from Professor Šchéévoigt, sought to construct a fictitious program, but I found it so unsatisfactory that it immediately went into the trash.

The music is designed to portray late autumn night-time, moon-glittering poetry, and dark tragedy in the archipelago. Nature painting is here always synonymous with the human affections, and I cannot but leave it to the imaginative and musical listener, himself, without literary commentary, to seek to understand what the tones depict. If he does not succeed, the fault is mine.

I would be grateful if you would refrain from using any of the programmatic information, which earlier was publicized about these two compositions.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Jag längtade att skriva ett epos, som skulle skildra dess nattliga tragik i storm och i månglitter över sund och vida fjärdar; jag ville skildra något av det jag själv upplevat där ute i havsbandet. Hugo Alfvén, *Tempo furioso*, 301.

In a similar vein, he stated in a memoir from 1952 that it is best if music’s program “lies compressed only in the work’s or the movement’s title or subtitle, as for example in Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony… One should as little as possible tie down the listener’s imagination with words.”\textsuperscript{180} As Joakim Tillman has pointed out, these retractions may have been influenced by changing trends in musical fashion which tended away from programmatic associations mid-century, and perhaps also by certain negative reviews of Alfvén’s compositions.\textsuperscript{181} He remains constant, however, in asserting that the music conveys something of the beauty and power of nature that he has felt, and that this portrayal of nature was bound to an expression of human emotions. As members of the same national community, he was confident his audience would recognize their own experiences of the archipelago in his music. And just as with a painting, a strong linear narrative may not be present, or indeed necessary for communicating the sense of the subject.

The piece opens in a quiet stillness reminiscent of Stenhammar’s opening bars for Midvinter. However, true to Alfvén’s descriptions, it soon takes on a weightier emotional pitch, full of nineteenth-century pathos and longing. It is easy to imagine the archipelago in the grips of an autumn storm, or to hear the illustration of great human tragedy. Alfvén’s style tends toward the dramatic in any case, as opposed to Stenhammar’s characteristic restraint. But notwithstanding, one can hear in this piece an even greater freedom in emotional expression such as would be ill-suited to the depiction of one of those calmly reflecting inland lakes.

\textsuperscript{180} Hugo Alfvén, \textit{Final} (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1952), 267.

\textsuperscript{181} Tillman, “Form och innehåll.”
The ability to soak in one’s surroundings and then communicate them back to an audience was something Bergh encouraged in the development of a national art. For Bergh, this was the only way the artist could understand the motifs they used, and the only way the audience could understand the art. Perhaps unknowingly Alfvén applied something of this process in soaking in the language and emotional experiences of the archipelago, then using those encounters to color his music. Whether Alfvén agreed with Bergh in this matter or not, whether he would describe his inspiration from the archipelago in such terms, he was recognized by his community as portraying Swedish nature in music. A review of a Finnish performance of both En skärgårdssägen and Midsommarvaka describes them with the following contrast:

And it [En skärgårdssägen] was a Swedish sea-legend, not with sounds from folk-song or from the Söderman style, but Swedish in the sense that despite the nocturnal tragedy and fabled-wildness, it seemed fresh, liberating, with the aroma of strong saltiness and the sound of bold Viking exploits. It was a painting of the sea… Was this the same Hugo Alfvén who had created the rhapsody ‘Midsommarvaka’? In the archipelago-painting – as in the symphony – heavy, saturated minor mood, and in the midsummer-night-picture the most exhilarated, richest humor with sparkling good mood and material from peasant life… It [Midsommarvaka] was a depiction in tone of the Swedish nature and Swedish people’s life, new, realistic, and as land-saturated as Strindberg’s, Fröding’s, and Karlfeldt’s depictions in word and verse. Over both pieces there was an enchanting, color-sounding, intoxicating orchestration.

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182 Richard Bergh, “Svenskt konstnärskynne,” Om konst, 161. See also “Karl Nordström och det moderna stämningslandskapet,” 1896, Om konst, 112.

A perfect setting for the play of light that so marks the Swedish relationship to nature, the archipelago is a place at once of freedom and of grounding – its water free and its solid islands ever-present. It is a place to be lost and also to be found, a place that seems as straightforward to any Stockholm native as it is confounding to any foreigner. Its many moods clearly made a profound impression on the artists and composers who knew it best. It was integral to their notion of place, and their expressions of the archipelago became expressions of identity and nation.

Nature Filtered Through Art

For many artists as well as composers, nature provided a retreat and a place of inspiration. In it could be found the unique motifs or topics that characterize a nation, as defined through its very place. There is a sense too that one must be Swedish to unlock the meaning of these motifs. Bergh writes,

The wild and varied Nordic nature does not meet the painter like the simple civilized nature of France or Holland or Italy – she does not offer herself, does not hand the motifs to the painter ripe, like mature fruit, on a plate. She sparingly reveals her treasures little by little to the initiated. To interpret this reluctant nature with the brush, it is useless to merely open your eyes, you must also know to close them at times, dream of what you have seen, poeticize it, weigh the manifold impressions of the eye with the feeling, and thereby fathom the unity of this barbaric diversity and finally find your way to the simplicity of decorative arrangement that alone makes greatness possible in painting.¹⁸⁴

Bergh indicates that a natural reality had to be filtered through one’s own inner feeling. Like any potent nationalist construction, only an insider can truly understand Sweden’s natural motifs – only an insider has the emotional resonances of memory to distill the essential themes in a significant way. This idea, that one had to look at nature not only with the eyes but also with the soul, was pervasive in the artistic circles Stenhammar was part of. Detecting this interpretation of nature with any scientific certainty in a musical creation is a largely unattainable goal for the listener. But combining the idea that landscape is a fundamental part of the Swedish identity with Bergh’s assertion that only insiders can truly comprehend that landscape preserves a sort of “us vs. them” that is an inherent part of the national concept.

Bergh talks of filtering a natural environment through one’s inner feeling in order to arrive at a final arrangement of greater simplicity. Simplicity has been repeatedly praised in conjunction with national style. This preference for interpreting nature in order to isolate the essential motifs was echoed by other artists as well. Prins Eugen recounts, Hasselberg was also very interested in my work and especially in The Cloud, which had just begun to take form, and he stated often his satisfaction that I had not, as “the Paris-Swedes customarily did, merely copied nature,” but had reshaped it after an inner will. This was also in accord with his own program, of which his works clearly bear witness.185

Nature may provide the stimulus, but photographic representation was not the goal. The artistic portrayal of a natural landscape required the filter of individual feeling and expression. Bergh additionally confirms the regard for raw and untended qualities in the Swedish landscape that were an important aspect of nature as an indicator of authenticity in the national identity.

185 Hasselberg tog också mycket intresserad del av mitt arbete och särskilt av “Molnet”, som just då började ta form, och han uttalade ofta sin belåtenhet med att jag inte, som parisersvenskarne hade för sed, bara kopierade naturen” utan omskapade den efter en inre vilja. Detta var också i enlighet med hans eget program, därav bära hans verk tydligt vittne. Prins Eugen, Breven Berätta, 164.
The emphasis Bergh places on feeling and expressivity was part of a larger argument about style. An article from the period in Svensk musiktidning sets up the dichotomy between art directed at the understanding and art made for the senses or feeling. The writer praises the return to nature that occurred with movements such as the impressionists and plein-air painting. The article then continues,

And music? She too has undergone this change in some countries. Scandinavians have in fact remained as good as untouched by the philological, mathematical doctrinal direction. They had too much nature in and around them, to be able to fail to notice the value of the natural charm of sound. And when they joined the German school, they joined in a significant way with the composer whose music for the most part was of a purely sensual nature, namely to Mendelssohn.¹⁸⁶

The writer goes on to accuse the German school of descending into intellectualism, of “a counterpoint written for the eye and for the mind, not for the heart and the ear.”¹⁸⁷ But Scandinavians’ very location is credited with having saved them from a similar destiny. Their proximity to a rich, largely unspoiled natural world preserved for them the connection to the senses and feeling that is praised here. This rhetorical move serves to illustrate the power of the nature myth in Sweden. Once its dominance had been established, nature in all its guises became an accepted explanation for any national trait.

The article continues by praising the purely physical sensations created by composing with different timbres, and advocates for creative instrumentation in music as an analogue to the


symphonies of color endorsed by painters. This focus on the sensual is designed to counteract the intellectual trend, and is put forth as a redirection rather than the ultimate goal.

One can now, possibly contemptuously, say, that music is thus on the way to becoming purely materialistic, that she would dwindle from the mental to the physical, from the ideal into the dirt. But firstly, the material, the physical, is not at all something dirty now, but rather an understood prerequisite for the spiritual and mental. And secondly, the current modern direction, which exclusively caters to sensuality, is certainly only a transitional stage… Art is feeling! Of the feeling she is born, and to the feeling she returns. But during the latest period she had become accustomed to turning herself into the understanding, and was created by the understanding. Therefore we must go through this purely physical and basically almost technical school. We must again hear the tone ring in nature. To know the world as sensation, this is the undertaking of our time.188

While the aim is a careful balance of the intellect and feeling, which then produces art with spiritual, sensual, and mental value, the author reveals an important perspective on the role of nature. Nature provides the physical grounding for reaching the senses, it provides equilibrium to the power of the intellect. In recognizing nature as a significant contributor to identity, the Swedish artists reinforced their partiality for feeling and expressivity in their work. The constant return to nature and natural subjects provides the opportunity for sensual renewal and combats an overly intellectual complexity. In this way the natural influence also reinforces the preference for simplicity.

Nature prompted a powerful awakening for many Scandinavian artists. Upon his return from painting in Paris, Prins Eugen recalled being struck by the contrast of color and contour

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between Nordic works and the paintings he had seen in France. His view of the experience that a new work of art should stimulate is related to that encounter:

When one for the first time sees a play, hears a musical piece, reads a book or visits an art exhibit, in other words stands for the first time before a newly created artwork, what is it one actually seeks, one longs for, if not to bring to life a new word, a new thought, to experience a new feeling which can awaken resonance in one’s interior being and stimulate that which slumbered there.\(^{189}\)

This is a useful perspective for the programmatic musical pieces discussed here as well.

Composers associated their music with nature motifs that held special meaning for them, and which in turn had the potential to “awaken resonance” in their fellow countrymen regarding those same natural features. Through their art they expressed a sense of identity rooted in Swedish land, light, and water.

This chapter has explored the role of nature in the Swedish identity that emerged in the 1890s. Landscape played a fundamental role in many national conceptions, and its significance for Sweden at this time was equally central. Sweden’s natural features were construed as the contours of a homeland in which a national culture was rooted. They provided the basis for an idealized landscape conceived as a remedy for the dissatisfactions of an urban society, an idealized landscape molded by nostalgia and longing after the rarified visions of memory and dreams. Natural motifs such as the forest, the particular qualities of light provided by a northern latitude, and the ever-present bodies of water became emphasized in this imagined landscape.

Rooting the national idea in these ancient features of the land affords it both an authenticity and a

feeling of stability and permanence in the future. Artistic and musical depictions of these features confirm ideas set forth in the discourse by portraying them with an evocative and deeply expressive mood, appealing to common childhood memories and experiences in recognizably Swedish locales. Rather than tradition or folk culture, these artistic depictions put place in the role of binding the nation’s community. Nature, both real and imagined, becomes imbued with a rich web of meaning that substantiates abstract values like community, freedom, expressiveness, and balance. Where composers have explicitly designated a relationship to landscape, the music reflects their reverence for nature and its foundational role regarding identity. The following chapter will continue to explore these ideas within the realm of chamber music, and how they might be understood within musical works that are not expressly programmatic.
4. The Swedish Style in Chamber Music

“The quartets are perfectly – if sometimes neurotically – self-governing collectives. Autonomy has always been the chief appeal of this itinerant life; Joseph Joachim… once described his group to Brahms as ‘our little four-voiced republic.’”

The significance of chamber music for this study of a Swedish aesthetic could not be put more succinctly. The quartet, and in many cases its relatives, the trio, quintet, and sextet, is an ideal model for exhibiting the values of the new Swedish identity of the 1890s. Its very form facilitates compositions where all members participate (democratically), with an equal share in the resultant sound, and yet perform their own unique parts (individually), while also acting as a communal whole (in solidarity). A more perfect model for the ideas of a new social democracy could hardly be found. And certainly these insights were exploited in the polemics of the period, as we have already seen. However, there are other components to chamber music’s important role during this period as well. Historical factors such as changing societal structures and emergence of an important professional quartet provide an explanation for the growth of chamber music. Additionally, chamber music has just the right characteristics to have been important in the context of the Utile dulci gatherings. This chapter presents the historical and aesthetic context for chamber music in Sweden’s nineteenth century. A lengthier discussion of a few key works will show how the principal features of the Swedish artistic identity are evident in non-programmatic music from the period, and address the implications of the long-standing importance of song in the Nordic countries for the genre of the violin sonata.

Enthusiasm for chamber music steadily grew throughout the nineteenth century in Sweden, beginning with the establishment of the Mazer Society in 1847. This amateur, private

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society for the appreciation of chamber music functioned rather like a men’s club. The society continues to this day, its success a sign of its popularity. Both Aulin’s father, Lars Axel Alfred Aulin, and Stenhammar’s father, Per Ulrik Stenhammar, were frequent performers at the society’s music evenings, particularly in the 1860s. And these music evenings provided a steady forum for chamber music in Stockholm’s music life when few other options were available. The repertory performed at the society was largely Austro-Germanic compositions with an emphasis on Beethoven and Brahms, but guest performers often widened this scope.

The Mazer Society was balanced by the presence of many salons, primarily in Stockholm, which were usually hosted by educated ladies and provided them access to the kinds of musical performances they were excluded from in other venues. And just as was the case on the continent, many salon gatherings were entertained by arrangements of the latest fashionable pieces from the best opera houses in Europe. These salons were most prominent in the 1870s and 1880s, and declined in the 1890s as public concerts became more popular and widely available.

As industrialization continued in Sweden, and a rising middle class increasingly found itself with leisure time and the wealth to spend on cultural pursuits, serious art music gained larger audiences. But with a population of less than 250,000 by 1890, Stockholm was unable to support the musical institutions that many of its European counterparts took for granted. The

191 Both men unfortunately died while their sons were still young, and therefore they had little chance to share this enthusiasm for chamber music. That both sons eventually ended up performing for the Mazer Society is therefore less of an inevitability than might at first be assumed.

192 The most important of these were hosted by Clary Magnusson, a merchant’s wife and pianist.

193 Letters indicate that this was the case in Sweden, particularly with performances of Wagner’s music by musicians like Stenhammar. Wallner, Stenhammar och hans tid, 1:354.
Royal Opera House had been established in 1792, during the reign of King Gustav III, and continued to host performances of operas by the leading composers on the continent. Its orchestra occasionally gave concerts independently of the opera season, but having an acoustically suitable place to perform and a dedicated audience to attend those performances were continual challenges. The Vetenskapsakademie, which was built in the 1860s as a public lecture hall, was able to provide a location for many of the public concerts at century’s end, though acoustics were not ideal. And it wasn’t until 1902 that the Konsertföreningen, a dedicated symphony orchestra, was established to provide regular orchestra concerts. Standards for musical education, both in performance and composition, were also considered unsatisfactory, as contemporary opinions have revealed.

These factors would seem to provide the opportunity for chamber music to fill a niche. Chamber performances were more flexible, and could be carried out in smaller locations, thus eliminating the need for expensive new music halls. More intimate locations meant fewer people were necessary to fill the audience. Likewise, fewer players were required, which lessened the burden of identifying highly talented performers. Yet performance records indicate that in the 1880s, Stockholm was a veritable wasteland for public chamber music concerts. In a review of the Aulin Quartet on the occasion of their 25th concert in 1892, the state of chamber music was described in this way:

These characteristics of chamber music... have always attracted truly art-loving and art-knowledgeable music lovers to find pleasure in this music. But the elite body of these is, even in a capital such as ours, not numerous enough to be able to guarantee the success of attempts that have been made to maintain annual concerts for chamber music, no matter how deeply they were missed in the years when they did not occur... If we look back at the past thirty years of chamber music concerts, we will find that our capital was
completely lacking in such valuable musical events for some years prior to the appearance of the Aulin Quartet.\textsuperscript{194}

Great virtuoso soloists visited from the continent, such as Rubinstein, Ysayë, Wienawski, and Bulow, but their visits were short and their performances were for larger forces. What chamber concerts there were also involved mostly visiting performers, such as Emile Sauret, Marie Wieck, or David Popper, and their programs consisted primarily of works in the Austro-German tradition: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Schumann. One announcement in December 1883 promised a diverse chamber music series for the following year, but the only performance that seems to have taken place in this series was of a radically different nature: Söderman ballads and a popular symphonic arrangement of Bellman songs.

By 1885 and 1886 performances began to include students in Richard Andersson’s music school, with programs also incorporating native composers like Ludwig Norman, Andreas Hallén, and Emil Sjögren.\textsuperscript{195} But chamber performances overall were of varied ensemble sizes, among which the string quartet was one of the least common. Against this background, the formation of the Aulin Quartet in 1887 appears improbable at the very least. That it lasted a successful twenty-five years, until Aulin’s health no longer permitted, indicates a significant shift in this tradition.

\textsuperscript{194} “Denna egenskap hos kammarmusiken… har alltid utgjort en lockelse för verkligt konstläskande och konstförståndiga musikvänner att få njuta af sådan musik. Men elitkären af sådana är till och med i en huvudstad, sådan som vår, ej talrik nog att kunna garantera framgången af de försök, som företagits att upprätthålla årliga konsorfer för kammarmusik, hur stor afsaknad man än känt de är, då sådana ej förekommit… Om vi blicka tillbaka på de senaste trettio årens konsorfer för kammarmusik, finna vi att huvudstaden före Aulin’ska kvartetens uppträdande några år voro i saknad af sådana värdefulla musikstillställningar.” Svensk Musiktidning 12, no. 8 (April 4, 1892): 57-58.

\textsuperscript{195} A summary of Stockholm’s music life in the 1880s is given in “1880-tal – Ett panorama och en bakgrundsteckning,” of Wallner’s Stenhammar och hans tid, 1:51-88, and additional information appears in “Tor Aulin och Kvartetten,” of the same work, 1:404-463. This information is sourced from concert announcements and reviews in journals such as Svensk Musiktidning and the Mazer Society journal.
in the musical climate of Stockholm. Perhaps too much should not be attached to the fact that such an influential ensemble was established at just the point when the Artists’ Association formed and declared a new direction in the visual arts, or when the poets were finding their national voice, but the coincidence is striking.

There may be no satisfactory explanation for the appearance of this arguably game-changing ensemble, but it was born out of a familiar pattern, in which its steadfast founder went off to Europe for an education and returned home to establish himself. Tor Aulin had early experience playing with the Mazer Society, and after being well-reviewed in Europe he returned to Stockholm with a desire to play in a quartet. In 1886 he began rehearsing with violinist Edvin Sjöberg, violist Axel Bergström, and cellist Berndt Carlsson. By the start of 1887 they were invited to play three chamber music evenings, which all received positive reviews, and so the quartet was born. By the following year they were well known in Denmark and Norway as well. Those first concerts consisted of quartets by Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Norman, Haydn, and Rubinstein, a Brahms piano quintet, and violin sonatas by Saint-Saëns and Sjögren, the latter particularly significant for being performed by the composer and Aulin rather than foreign virtuosos.

In addition to forming the new quartet, Aulin had met and become friends with Emil Sjögren upon his return to Stockholm in 1886. Their relationship deepened through socializing and performing together in the salons of Stockholm, and Sjögren’s influence can be seen in Aulin’s own compositions. Aulin’s most important works include the *Fyra akvareller (Four Watercolors)* for violin and piano, the Violin Concerto in C minor, a violin sonata, a set of songs based on the poetry of Runeberg and Hedberg, and music to Strindberg’s play *Mäster Olof*. Strindberg, who developed a warm and deep friendship with Aulin, said of his compositions,
“you are not plagued by the lesson (Lindegren), you take your art as a game, a divine game, not as research or mathematics or algebra,” indicating a connection to the pleasing aesthetic of the national musical style. In addition to his friendships with Sjögren and Strindberg, Aulin also became close with Stenhammar after they began performing together in the 1890s, and was present at many of the music evenings and social gatherings of the Utile dulci circles.

Stenhammar praised his violin concerto in particular, saying that the piece “is the absolute best to be seen today here in this country since Sjögren’s E-minor sonata – for my part, I would set it even higher! This is not said in the heat of the moment – it is my most serious artistic opinion and conviction. I am wild with rage over the manner in which he was treated… the piece is worthy of becoming world-famous.”

Yet, despite the presence of poetry by two of the period’s nationalist poets in Aulin’s compositions, and his own involvement with the salons where issues of national identity were frequently raised, current scholars seem to have difficulty explaining Aulin’s style, and even the description is revealing. Aulin’s style has been described as not bold, not having any interesting national tonal language, not having structural individuality, being largely homophonic, and having only a few moments that display a debt to the development and thematic processes of Beethoven. The success of the violin concerto, has thus been attributed to “a colorful and

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passionate musical temperament… but above all, in one of those happy moments of inspiration, a rare melodic impulse with a warm, intense emotionalism. There is in Swedish music of the 1890s hardly a more beautiful and, in its languor, yes, its pain, a more immediately appealing music than the C minor concerto’s slow movement… The music is not written for but through the violin.” 198 The struggle to explain just what it is about Aulin’s (and his contemporaries’) musical style that made it so successful can be resolved by turning to the markers of Swedish identity that have been discussed in earlier chapters. For this is yet another piece that fits into a category of art that is not overly original, but strives to be beautiful, lyrical, and has a deceptive simplicity that facilitates easy understanding of what has been expressed. Such qualities, rather than designating the music as derivative and trivial, instead show it to be representative of the very style that grew out of the artistic environment of a newly constructed identity.

While it is possible to show that Aulin’s compositional style belonged to the growing national identity, it is arguably his role as a performer that had greater importance for Swedish musical life. He, along with Stenhammar, took seriously the role of touring performer, in an effort to spread quality music throughout the country: one source counts sixty concerts in thirty cities in a ten-year period, with a majority in Uppsala and Göteborg. The regularly occurring concerts of the Aulin Quartet in Stockholm were a risky undertaking, set up as a subscription series. And their programming was surprisingly inclusive, containing a fair number of new works by Swedish and Scandinavian composers in addition to established names from the continent. This stands as a significant difference from the repertory of the Mazer society. For

example, an overview of performances of the Aulin Quartet between 1887 and 1897 lists composers that appeared on the program most often, beginning with 13 works by Beethoven, 9 by Haydn, 9 by Mozart, then 6 by the Swede Ludwig Norman and 5 by Berwald. Although the Viennese School received the most playing time, it is significant that the top five names in order of frequency include two of Sweden’s own. Also on the list with multiple works are Schumann, Rubinstein, Dvořák, Mendelssohn, Chaikovsky, Saint-Saëns, Schubert, Grieg, and Sjögren. But the list of names that received performance of only one or two works during that period is even more varied and equally as wide-ranging.\footnote{The quartet played two works by Valborg Aulin, Bach, Cherubini, Franck, Glass, Sgambati, Sinding, Smetana, Stenhammar, and Svendsen. One work by d’Albert, Tor Aulin, Knut Anderson, Ellberg, Fauré, Gade, Godard, Handel, Kiel, Lange-Müller, Thieriot, and Verdi. Thirteen of the Swedish works were played in manuscript, and several works by foreign composers received their Swedish premiere with the quartet. First names are not given for most composers. These lists appear in Svensk Musiktidning 17, no. 7 (April 1, 1897): 51.} In the following decade of performances compositions by Stenhammar appeared with greater frequency, the works of lesser-known Swedish composers appeared in the programming, and concerts usually included one Swedish composition. A few special concerts devoted to the works of Beethoven were balanced by other concerts entirely devoted to Swedish compositions. Aulin (and later Stenhammar) was also instrumental in returning Franz Berwald’s compositions to the living repertory, first through his chamber music and later by conducting Berwald’s orchestral works. The combined support for works from the canon and new works from both the continent and Scandinavian countries shows Aulin to be adhering to Bergh’s ideal of balancing the national and the international.

The presence of a stable and proficient performing group rooted in their own capital city must have been a reason for composers to look at chamber music with new ambition. It is no coincidence that Stenhammar’s first four string quartets were all premiered by the Aulin Quartet. Yet, the influence of the Aulin Quartet was deeper than merely providing a steady injection of
chamber concerts into Sweden’s musical life. In addition to persevering with public concerts, the quartet seems to have represented something artistically as well. In a letter to publisher Henrik Hennings, Stenhammar explains his motivation for declining the offer of performing a piano recital in Berlin:

The Aulin concerts in Stockholm are a venture which is closer to my heart than any other such, and I don’t exaggerate if I say that I long for every new concert, and it is a real sacrifice to have to give up being in a single one of them. I know not if you understand me in this, yet I believe that you understand my feelings when I tell you that the Aulin Quartet is for me, and will be for every day that comes, the admittedly not ideal, but to me, perhaps even with their faults, a so much dearer incarnation of all the highest I know in the world of music. With every day and every hour I feel it more clearly, so I won’t give it up willingly, I give it up last of all. It has fostered me, it has made me a musician, I need it, and I love it.\(^\text{200}\)

By this time Stenhammar had become the pianist for the quartet, playing with them regularly since 1894. Given the quartet’s habit of always adding one more instrument to their concert performances, this meant that Stenhammar played with them quite frequently. It is clear that for him it was not just another performance opportunity, but an experience that had unlocked a deeper, inner relationship to music. Aulin and his quartet started something that took root and had a profound impact on Swedish musical life. It bolstered the state of public concerts. It supported modern compositions by native composers, thereby encouraging new compositions. Aulin was involved in the establishment of the Konsertföreningen in 1902, and two members of

his quartet founded a professional quartet based in Göteborg, the Göteborgskvartetten, after Aulin’s death.\textsuperscript{201}

It is true that Sweden’s situation – its smaller population, its late industrialization resulting in a delayed growth of the middle class relative to other European countries, its inability to support competitive musical institutions or establish important systems of musical education, its lack of a strong tradition of native composition – all contributed to its perceived status as a musical backwater. Hence, there is some sense that smaller genres are all that could thrive under these conditions. But as we have seen, even chamber music needed the talent and the determination that Aulin brought to it in order to become an area of vitality in Swedish musical life.

Yet, could the chamber genres also have been so successful because of the nature of their mode of expression, one that fulfilled the demands of a very particular audience in the 1890s? There is a fragile space between the kind of music composed for amateur home use, and the kind intended for dramatic public utterances in a concert hall. This is a space filled by music that, while less dramatic, still demands a certain amount of artistry in both composition and interpretation. It has been suggested that many of Stenhammar’s chamber works fill just such a niche.\textsuperscript{202} Remembering what the performance environment was likely to have been for these works, and surely what the composer would have had in mind, music that lies somewhere between amateur and theatrical turns out to be a perfect fit. For Stenhammar often played at the \textit{Utile dulci} gatherings, or at similar social events where members of the Artists’ Association dominated. That is to say, he played for what was essentially a circle of friends, of educated

\textsuperscript{201} Violinist Gustaf Molander and cellist Rudolf Claeson.

\textsuperscript{202} Wallner, \textit{Stenhammar}, 1:616.
people for whom he could express what he wished through a medium that was likely to be understood, rather than for an anonymous concert audience. Even the public concerts of the Aulin Quartet were likely attended by much the same audience that previously had provided a demand for chamber music in private settings. Therefore, the chamber music that was composed by a member of the *Utile Dulci* for just the kind of gatherings known to have occurred in their midst must be viewed as a contribution to their conversations, a musical utterance of Swedish identity.

In addition to reaping the benefits of the happy coincidences of history, and playing a fundamental role in the gatherings of the leading figures of the 1890s, chamber music further aligns with the political and artistic values that have been described in earlier chapters, in ways that are perhaps overly simplistic but nonetheless undeniable. The new social democratic political movement was based on the principles of equality, democracy, freedom, solidarity, efficiency, and security. Chamber genres such as trios, quartets, quintets, and sextets are easily able to embody many of these values in their very construction. The lack of conductor and distribution of only one player per part exemplify the values of democracy and freedom, as well as efficiency of performance means. Depending on the style of composition, the players may have parts of equal importance. And while each part is unique, the whole cannot be successfully realized without a certain amount of solidarity in the performance. Contemporary critics realized as much in praise for the quartet that we have already seen.\(^{203}\) Other descriptions label chamber music as one of the finest compositional types:

The “chamber style”… is characterized in contrast to concert and opera music by its more subtle crafting and detailed elaboration of the musical thoughts, all the more as every

\(^{203}\) See Chapter Two, pages 79-80.
instrument is a solo-voice and great effects of volume and seductive shifts of timbre are impossible. 204

Here too, chamber music is praised for the interaction of soloistic parts, and the larger genres are derided for their reliance on cunning tricks of timbral change to provide excitement. 205 Chamber music, in its intimacy, is here considered a means for expressing deeper sentiments. Another writer, Ritter, puts it this way:

But the more the life of the soul develops itself, which can be described as a new emotional process, the application of the composer’s intimacy, the more should chamber music flourish. Our day’s music has predominantly turned away from the salon in the home toward the large concert halls, gardens, and streets, hand in hand with the social life, which develops itself more in public than in the family… But the soul of the artist, which doesn’t want to lose itself in the slaughter of the modern orchestra’s infernal din, thirsts for the proffering of musical fare whose purest and most noble appears in chamber music’s work. Albeit this longing of one or another composer is not a symptom of a more profound desire for chamber music in our time… however, there can be perceived clear voices that speak for chamber music and call for not pushing away or trampling this, art music’s finest flower. 206


205 These characteristics of chamber music are still emphasized many years later in an article on Stenhammar’s chamber music by Julius Rabe: “In chamber music’s interaction of different voices there can never be talk of an individual self-assertion and subjective expressiveness, and chamber music’s basic traits of objectivity progressively came to define Stenhammar’s whole artistic personality. He clears away all the things which are only surface events and seductive sound. His ideal is a simple, unadorned music, where every note has something to say.” Article accessed in Stenhammar’s files at the Musik- och Teaterbiblioteket, “Stenhammars kammarmusik,” 1947.

206 Men ju mer det själslif utvecklar sig, hvilket kan betraktas som en ny känsloprocess, hänvändningen till tondiktarens intimitet, dess mer skall kammarmusiken florera. Våra dagars musik har öfvervägande vändt sig från salen (camera) i hemmet till de stora konsertsalarna, trädgårdarne, gatorna, hand i hand med sällskapslivet, som mer utvecklar sig i offentligheten än i familjen… Men den konstnärssjäl, som icke vill förlora sig i de moderna orkesterslaktningarnas infernaliska larm, törstar efter framräckandet af den musikaliska kost, som renast och ädlast framträder i kammarmusikens verk. Om än denna längtan hos en och annan tonkonstnär ej är ett symtom till en mera djupgående åtrå efter kammarmusik hos vår tid… så förnimmas dock redan å andra sidan tydliga röster, som tala för kammarmusiken och mana till att icke allt för mycket
The writer expresses the opinion that chamber genres provide a place for the expression of the innermost feelings of the soul, and they should therefore not be neglected. At the same time he acknowledges that the development of a greater public life in society has caused an equivalent demand for larger genres of music. Perspectives such as this leave open the opportunity to observe important expressions of identity in larger programmatic and operatic works, while still allowing for significant personal statements to occur in smaller genres.

Ritter continues to explain his aversion to the larger genres:

Already in the fact that a group of people sit together in dense rows of seats in stuffy and unhealthy air lies a barrier to true musical pleasure. The public’s free grouping, such as in family circles, is better in its place for enjoying chamber music… Chamber music’s basis is thus family life in educated circles, which practice serious art-music. It pulls itself away from the direction of new music circles. Let large-scale orchestral music develop how it wants, but let us also support chamber music and give it its full right.207

This statement reflects an emphasis on the home and family similar to that voiced by members of the *Utile dulci* circle like Ellen Key and Carl Larsson. In addition, it declares that musical pleasure, that watchword of the *Utile dulci*, is best attained through chamber music. Perhaps the greater freedom of the setting, the camaraderie of being in the company of familiairs, and the personal expression realized through the smaller genre seem to Ritter to best approach an ideal of pleasure. The intimate nature of expression in chamber genres is also acknowledged by Lindgren: “The quartet is an ingenious entertainment in the narrow, intimate circle, an exchange

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of these fine thoughts and feelings which one does not loudly take to the public square, but which go from friend to friend.”

The chamber genres must have been appealing to members of the *Utile dulci* as well though, with their devotion to an aesthetic of beauty. This beauty was defined by simplicity, lightness, delicacy, and expressiveness. The reduced performing means of chamber music and its intimate venue make the first three of those characteristics natural for the medium. As has been indicated above, the final characteristic of expressiveness was also bound to be an integral element, given the setting of such performances and the demand for this quality that was already so important with visual artists and poets during the period. Moreover, chamber music is ideally suited to fulfill the balance of usefulness and sweetness indicated by the very name of the society. Trios, quartets, and quintets in their function at social gatherings could quite literally embody a directive such as Ellen Key’s that “harmony between the useful and the beautiful is the only thing worth striving for.”

Stenhammar’s participation in both the Aulin Quartet concerts and the *Utile dulci* society lent him a special opportunity to synthesize the mode of expression of the former with the values of the latter. His chamber compositions reveal such a synthesis, and it seems even his contemporaries recognized it as well. Olallo Morales wrote about Stenhammar’s musical style being ideally suited for the chamber genres, and at the same time truly Swedish, in terms that we are by now familiar with:

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Such a composer as Stenhammar should however be more famous than popular, for the individuality and nobility of his composing requires a refined artistic sense to be rightly appreciated, and the intimate, almost timid beauty, which is so truly Swedish, yes Stenhammar-ish, offers up no insistence for attention, such as the greater part of the commercial music of our time. The composer’s introspective, reflective art lends itself only reluctantly to the expression of great dramatic situations and colorful, decorative effects, something which certainly is also consistent with all of Swedish art’s purely lyrical base-atmosphere.

Morales continues by venturing that Stenhammar’s operatic compositions do not exhibit the same high level of mastery because of this alignment with a fundamentally introspective Swedish style. Morales suggests that because Stenhammar’s style is Swedish, its greatest means of expression is in chamber music.

Even years later, chamber music was recognized to have occupied a special place in Swedish cultural life. In a 1926 article summarizing his experiences and observations, Peterson-Berger wrote, “Especially chamber music is absolutely unbelievably brilliant and full of substance in its sober, extraordinarily refined style, a molding without parallel in Sweden’s culture of spirit and art.” This is not to say that chamber music somehow abruptly eclipsed song composition, or that composers during this period were not also eager to achieve the next great national opera or large-scale symphonic work. But these kinds of statements do bring

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attention to the special appreciation of chamber music in Swedish society at the turn of the century, and verify that serious artistic energy was devoted to these genres.

The very structure of the chamber medium invites parallels with the political values of the period, and thus earns a privileged status for the genre. But a link can also be made to that other essential element of the Swedish identity, the appreciation for and experience of nature. So much of the Swedish experience of nature was connected to ideas of community and the act of performing traditions together. This too can be seen in the form of the chamber genres, which are so clearly an act of forming a small community. On a deeper level, the experience of nature often elicited a profound expression of inner emotion. Chamber compositions, as understood in the context of the above discussion, perhaps provide an ideal mode of expressing that inner emotion, situated as they are in that space between the isolation of the purely private and the grandiosity and posturing of the public. And thus they may contain depictions of nature that while not expressly pictorial are just as profound as any more obviously programmatic utterance.

“Our Little Four-Voiced Republic”

The values that informed a Swedish national identity in the arts have up to this point been primarily dealt with in the form of declarations made by artists attempting to define their own place in the world. But these values should be evident in the artistic works as well. For the visual artists, scholars have identified the nationalist attitude in many Swedish paintings, an attitude that the previous chapters have broadened. In music, the nationalist attitude is most transparent in larger genres: programmatic orchestral pieces such as Alfvén’s Dalarapsodi, Stenhammar’s cantata Ett Folk, Peterson-Berger’s opera Arnljot. If a national style will have any kind of convincing explanatory power though, it must pervade more than just these kinds of
composition. The following discussion examines one of Stenhammar’s quartets from the period to illustrate ideas that have so far been explored in largely abstract terms. I do not wish to suggest that my analyses are the only manner of interpreting these works, as there are certainly many ways to read them. This is simply a way to understand the music in the context of the discourse that has been presented here. With this perspective I aim to provide an account of why this music has not become part of our musical canon – an account in which alternate ideals, rather than insufficient quality, are fundamental to the explanation.

Stenhammar’s String Quartet No. 4 in A minor, Opus 25, was composed between 1904 and 1909. He commented on it only once in his correspondence, in a letter to Tor Aulin from Florence in 1907, in which he states that he has just finished the first movement, and calls it “very beautiful – I myself think.”212 His choice of words, though few, link the work to those ‘worshippers of beauty’ who dominated the art world of the 1890s and who were so influential for Stenhammar’s style. As his only comment on the piece, we can perhaps give his description more weight than it otherwise might merit. The piece was performed for the first time by the Aulin Quartet at a private chamber music evening of August Strindberg’s on January 10, 1910, in Stockholm. Its public premiere came on March 7 of the same year in Göteborg, also by the Aulin Quartet.

Of the six string quartets that Stenhammar composed throughout his career, he considered the first two to belong to his juvenalia. These were followed by an unpublished quartet that he was never satisfied with. The four that followed were of higher quality and reveal his compositional voice to a greater degree. Stenhammar had intended to dedicate a symphony to Sibelius, whom he deeply admired, but feeling unsatisfied with the intended work he instead

chose to dedicate the fourth quartet to him. This distinction marks the work as one that Stenhammar considered a high point in his oeuvre. The quartet primarily follows a traditional formal plan, with the first three movements in the expected pattern of Allegro-Adagio-Scherzo. The last movement is an Aria variata, andante semplice, a slow variations finale. Even in the movements that outwardly adhere to our formal expectations, the deviations within reveal Stenhammar’s expressive aims.

While the first movement Allegro could be said to fit into a traditional sonata form, certain anomalies make such a description inadequate. At first glance the movement is a simple presentation of first and second theme groups, development, then a recapitulation that begins with the second theme group, followed by the first, and a short coda to bring it to a close. This arch form is reminiscent of Berwald’s formal experiments in his String Quartet No. 3 in Eb (1849), and is not surprising in a composer who helped to revive Berwald’s works and could thus be expected to be familiar with his methods. However, a two-measure rhetorical gesture that followed the second theme group’s statement in the exposition, and that seemed to provide a framing function for the development, occurs again after the second theme group’s presentation in the recapitulation. This not only disrupts the arch form and works against expectations of framing, but also oddly interrupts the recapitulation. The two-measure gesture, which is derived from the opening melodic statement, no longer seems to function as a framing device, but rather as a prologue to some following turmoil (Examples 8 and 9).

The idea of an arch form is somewhat thrown by the “return” of the first theme group in the recapitulation as well. For instead of returning in an analogous way to its appearance in the exposition, it appears rather more like the treatment of the first theme group that occurred in the development. This gives the whole a rondo-like character that could be described as ABA’BA’.
Additionally, the second theme group does not appear in the development at all, and its return in the recapitulation (now in Ab) is much the same as its first appearance in the exposition (then in Db). This second theme already has an unstable character from its first appearance, and is presented in an improvisatory and sequential manner that arguably makes additional development redundant. Closer examination reveals that the primary motivic material of the theme is derived from part of the last two beats of the first theme, both in intervallic structure and melodic contour (Examples 8 and 10). Thus in some way the second theme is already a “development” of the first theme and not fully distinct from it. These factors probably explain the second theme’s absence from the development section, and its very nature additionally contributes to the ambiguity of formal boundaries.

To describe the movement as a sonata form then is only to approximate its formal events. As we have seen, the very character of the second theme is partly responsible for this. A more accurate understanding of the piece’s internal structure may be found by examining the first theme group. This consists of a two-measure free-flowing arabesque in the first violin, labeled theme A, and a four-measure chorale-like homophonic melody in all four voices, labeled theme B (Example 8). After their initial presentation, each theme then appears again with accompanying material. This material soon takes over, and its transitional character is saturated with a motivic idea that will pervade the movement (and the third movement as well). The reappearance of the original versions of theme A and B, this time in the cello and in the subdominant, signal the end of the first theme group, and this section of the exposition ends with a fermata rest.

The development section begins with these two themes in alternation, still in the tonic, traded between instruments and interrupting each other in fragments. This opposition turns out to
be the underlying structural process of the piece. Although it may have escaped notice, such opposition is present in the passage immediately following the first presentation of the themes, in which the accompaniment to the arabesque of theme A is actually a diminution of theme B, excluding its pick-up (Example 8, mm. 12-13). And this opposition is present throughout the piece, even when these themes are absent, in a more general opposition of tightly wound moving parts against singing lyrical lines.

The story of the movement thus becomes one of growing tension between these two parts of the same theme group, rather than a large-scale drama of functional formal sections or key relationships. Stenhammar continues to add layers, making accompanying lines richer with rhythmic motion (even in the return of the second theme group), until the piece reaches its statistical climax near the end of the movement (measures 210-212), to use Leonard Meyer’s term. Rapid sixteenth-note figuration fills in the middle ground between a soaring theme B in the upper register of the violin and the same theme in the lowest register of the cello, all at the dynamic level of $ff$. The build-up to this moment has the feeling of a reigned-in race-horse, and the violin’s leap in register is thrilling. This is the opposition at its strongest, and also in its last wild throes. For in just a few short measures the secondary theme appears again, then imperceptibly morphs into theme B. But this theme B is colored by characteristics of theme A: the free-flowing, almost improvisatory feeling and faster rhythms. Rather than a great distance of harmonic modulation that must be resolved at the end of the movement, Stenhammar has a thematic opposition that is settled through integration. And with an authentic cadence tacked onto the end in soft breaths, the movement is over.

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Already in the first movement Stenhammar displays compositional traits that place the piece within the nationally-fixated *Utile dulci* milieu and their artistic tenets. Despite its many unique features, the movement has a certain simplicity to it. There is a concentrated focus on the interplay between melodic elements which downplays any internal complexity for the listener. It consistently veers away from the gravity of the sublime, instead maintaining a dance-like lightness in the more exciting passages. Even the climax is restrained; the violin soars to that upper register for only half a phrase, before the ensemble retracts and the dynamic level diminishes. Such tactics remind one of the directive to avoid the extremes of high and low that were considered so un-Swedish and instead head for a sensible middle balance. Lightness and simplicity have also been frequently invoked as Swedish artistic characteristics, and in addition to its melodic qualities, the constant fluid motion of the piece contributes to a lyrical, almost dream-like atmosphere.

And what of Peterson-Berger’s insistence that art-music not lose its connection with the folk essence? Or the view that the composer’s duty was to convey the beautiful, as a manifestation of the creative spirit of the people?\(^{214}\) Stenhammar includes a nod to folk material with theme B, which bears a striking similarity to the refrains of several tunes from Geijer and Afzelius’ *Svenska Folkvisor*.\(^ {215} \) In this case the tunes are not explicitly adopted, but rather allusions to them might enable a wider audience to recognize echoes of their childhood, sounds that would have defined their grade-school days. The first presentation of B, in a homophonic setting harmonized in all four instruments, makes clear reference to choral singing and could not have been missed by his audience. It is as if this theme is meant to represent Sweden’s people in

\(^{214}\) See Chapter Two, this work, 57 and 74.

\(^{215}\) Wallner lists *Kämpen Grimborg*, *Den bergtagna*, and *Rosilia sitter*, but suggests that others might also apply, in *Stenhammar*, 3:17.
their most communal activity. Each time the theme appears in this texture, it is set apart from the musical surroundings with rests, earning it special attention and a privileged space. Further, this theme permeates the movement, with many different accompanimental textures, and carries some of the most expressive moments of the piece. Its importance is undeniable, and thus its symbolism more potent. In the wake of the dissolution of the union with Norway, it would not be a stretch to understand the theme as representing a way forward for the Swedish people, its changing character and varied settings a metaphor for the changing identity of a nation.

The second movement of Opus 25 further demonstrates aspects of Swedish musical identity. In form, the movement is mundane, consisting of a simple binary structure in which each part contains a smaller ternary design. The whole could be described as AA’ and the smaller parts as aba’, a’’b’a. While the movement is not simple enough to be described as consisting of a folk melody which merely repeats with varied harmonization, it is true that a large-scale formal problem is not the primary interest of the movement. Rather, tension and excitement are achieved at climactic moments as a result of textural, registral, and dynamic processes. Likewise, one of the two primary melodic ideas is nearly always apparent, providing an anchor for the listener. Such compositional choices produce a movement whose expressivity is not obscured by overly complicated formal design, a movement that can be understood by listeners at many levels of musical expertise. The Adagio fulfills the preference for art that is not only beautiful, but also useful in its ability to communicate to listeners equally.

The movement begins with a simple theme in the first violin, accompanied by a single chord at the end of each phrase (Example 11). Wallner has pointed out the similarities between this theme and two well-known Swedish folk songs, *Eja mitt hjärta* and *Kristallen den fina*. And
he has pointed out that if the rests are removed from Stenhammar’s theme, it immediately becomes more song-like, more hummable.

However, Stenhammar has not simply used a folk melody as his theme. Rather, he has again used material that is reminiscent of a folk melody, material that would sound familiar to his audience without actually being known, material that would evoke in them memories or experiences in the past. Likewise, the addition of the rests provides a heightened level of expressivity which when played by a string instrument is only amplified. The addition of a rising sixth, an interval not present in either related folk tune, increases the expressivity of the melody and adds a twinge of longing to it. With his opening theme Stenhammar fulfills the demand for music that is lyrical, with its clear relation to song; for music that is expressive, with his enhancement of the melodic structure; and for music that is simple, with an uncomplicated texture. The use of a melodic idea that is related to familiar folk tunes further heightens the music’s accessibility.

Yet the connection goes deeper still. As we have seen, the natural landscape played an important role in the concept of Swedish identity. It functioned both as a source of cultural authenticity and a product of culture’s craving. Even in a piece without programmatic associations or pictorial representations of landscape we would expect some engagement with this essential marker of Swedish identity. Musical signifiers of landscape have to do with the absence of normative musical behavior, particularly with regards to the perception of time. Daniel Grimley writes, “in Grieg’s music, landscape similarly is not merely concerned with pictorial evocation, but is a more broadly environmental discourse, a representation of the sense of being within a particular time and space… Landscape in music therefore appears to play on a powerful contradiction, between its temporal nature (its perception in time), and the way in
which it appears to collapse ordered or linear notions of time into a potentially illimitable sense of space.”

Music thus behaves not as a representation of landscape, but rather as a communication of the *experience* of being in the landscape. Julian Johnson writes of this phenomenon in Romantic music:

> Nature music, in its apparent self-containment and avoidance of linear motion, seems to suspend time. In this it seems to offer an analogy for our experience of spaciousness in which there is little or no movement. Space without perceived directed movement appears timeless. The perception of time, correspondingly, requires boundaries and limits against which things move, which is why mountain landscapes were so often associated with images of the eternal.

For Grieg’s music, this spaciousness receives a double articulation. For it is not only the spaciousness of suspended time, but also the distance of mountain vistas about which Grimley has pointed out the role of echoes in Grieg’s music. Yet Sweden’s landscape is not dominated by towering mountain scenes, and so the spaciousness of suspended time is manifested in a more intimate experience, in the landscape of brooding forests and pensive lakes rather than dramatic fjords.

The connection to Swedish nature emerges already in the opening bars of Op. 25’s second movement, with its character of stillness and the expressive suspension of musical time that is realized through breaths between phrases. As the movement progresses, layers of texture gather momentum through more active rhythmic patterns, but the melodic themes remain discernable. And while both melodic themes provide rhythmic motives that play important roles in the textural layering in the piece, these motives are not manipulated in a way that might be called developmental. Instead the movement is experienced in the same way that one experiences

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the landscape: a placid overview prevails, but as the gaze sweeps over the view smaller details begin to emerge until the whole is seen to be teeming with life and feeling – a contrast communicated through the change to pizzicato timbre (m. 88). These details overlap and weave amongst each other as the eye continues to move, the scene drawing the observer further in, during an infinite moment of contemplation. The sense of suspended time is interrupted by momentary awareness in a measure of silence between the two formal sections, but a winding chromatic figure quickly brings the listener spiraling back into the landscape. The movement could be said to adhere to the *Naturklang* landscape topic defined by Dahlhaus:

The *Klangfläche* conveys a landscape because it is exempted both from the principle of teleological progression and from the rule of musical texture which nineteenth-century musical theorists referred to, by no means simply metaphorically, as ‘thematic-motivic manipulation’, taking Beethoven’s development sections as their *locus classicus*. As Hegel would have put it, musical landscapes arise less from direct tone-painting than from ‘definite negation’ of the character of musical form as process.\(^{218}\)

The Adagio contains the kind of internal motion, here as a result of layered rhythmic patterns, that Dahlhaus ascribes to these landscape topics.

The climactic moment of the movement is built on dynamic growth and rhythmic intensity in the supporting voices. Each layer in the texture gradually works up to more active rhythms carried out in an ever-widening range. The dramatic sweep of the parts builds excitement – always with the melody singing over the top – but the forward motion gives the whole a gentle rolling sensation. This lends levity to the denser texture, and prevents it from becoming bogged down in seriousness. Even this moment of greatest intensity is characterized by simplicity, in that the visual complexity of the supporting rhythms is concealed under the

sound of the gently soaring melody. As with the first movement, this climactic moment feels reserved.

If we consider that musical representations of landscape require a sense of suspended time, then there must be a process of returning to a normal experience of time. The final measures of the Adagio do this by exploiting the nostalgia that is a component of both the Swedish concept of landscape and the Adagio’s primary melody, marked by the expressively longing sixth and breath-like rests. The dynamic intensity and rhythmic density of the climax subside into $p$ and $pp$ tremolo in the full quartet (Example 12). This is followed by the first theme in the second violin, harmonized in the viola and cello in a chorale fashion with the winding chromatic motive in the upper register of the first violin. But instead of just one eighth-note rest between phrases of melody, there are now two full bars, filled by a barely audible tremolo in the lower voices, like the cleansing static of white noise. The elongated phrases of melody continue until they are only pick-ups preceding quietly held notes, and the winding chromatic motive descends all the way to the cello’s lowest register, becoming the pizzicato motive as it goes. The effect of this liquidation of the melody is like the remembrance of a sweet dream. As Svetlana Boym writes of nostalgia, it is a “yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams.”

And so the landscape observer gradually returns from a nostalgic dream back to the sunny present, as the melody finally resolves itself in a straightforward A major chord.

Following the lyrical second movement, the Scherzo third movement provides a necessary contrast with its active, even motoric, character that hardly stops for breath. Comparisons to Mendelssohn’s scherzo sound would not be amiss here. As in the first

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movement, the most agitated moments of the Scherzo are carried off with such brusqueness that they are characterized by excitement and lightness of mood without becoming overly serious. An opening section in 2/4 alternates twice with a second thematic area in 3/8, giving the whole an ABABA form. The two themes of the first area are primarily diatonic, and both contain the somewhat jittery rhythm in Example 13, which resembles the dotted eighth-sixteenth that was so prevalent in both previous movements. In the second thematic area (B), the first motivic idea contains striking drawn-out notes that contrast with all the surrounding activity, but the accompanying idea is appropriately vigorous. These two ideas alternate so many times between the various voices as to give the sense of a fugue. The first thematic area (A) that occurs at the center of the movement climaxes in a whirl of sixteenth notes, where the rests in the themes have been filled in. Here, the resounding open strings of various double stops create an exhilarating effect, and support an interpretation that is clear and ringing. The final return to the first thematic area (A) has the added harmonic interest of a modulation from D minor down a half step to C# minor, and increased chromaticism overall as it moves through many harmonic areas toward the final cadence. Along with softer dynamics, this last section seems to anticipate the return to a more lyrical mood in the final movement with its gradual dissolution of thematic material.

While the Scherzo appears to have abandoned all claims of lyricism, it does not fall short on clarity. Although it dashes along at a wild rate, it maintains the simplicity of audible themes and well-defined formal boundaries. The transition to the B sections is accomplished by way of a slower preparatory phrase and thinning of texture, while the A sections are preceded by two full measures of rest and a short melodic gesture based on material from the preceding section. This gesture and the measures of rest occur twice at the outset of the final A section, as if to warn the listener of the approaching completion of the movement. As with the rest and two-measure
rhetorical gesture that appeared before each return of the primary thematic material in the first movement, these breaks in the Scherzo perform a preparatory and pointing function. After three movements with such helpful pauses, the *attacca* continuation from the third movement into the final Aria variata is unexpected, to say the least.

The fourth and final movement of the quartet is a set of variations based on the folk song *Och Riddaren*. Its *andante semplice* marking clearly declares its adherence to the simplicity and lack of ostentation that defined the Swedish style. The folk song at its heart was published in Richard Dybeck’s *Runa I* (1842) and J.N. Ahlström’s *300 Nordiska folkvisor* (1855), but was likely also sung in Stenhammar’s childhood home.220

> “And the knight spoke to the young Hillevi: how long will you wait, if I travel now? - among the roses.”221

The movement begins with this folk melody in the first violin, each phrase first presented as a solo, and then repeated with simple accompaniment by the other voices (Example 14). The texture and mood are similar to the opening of the second movement, with breaths between phrases and similarly supporting accompaniment chords. But the prevailing mood here is of a folk song, with the breath suggested by breath marks rather than rests, and the occasional chords quickly becoming full accompaniment.

The ten variations that follow show great creativity and freedom in the use of the folk melody. Though most maintain the same form, phrase structure, and cadences, enabling them to be considered formal-outline variations, only variations one and two could be classified as


221 These lines are printed in the score, at the top of the first page of the Aria variata: “Och riddaren han talte till unga Hillevi: hur länge vill du vänta, om jag bortreser nu? - ibland rosor”
melodic-outline variations. The first variation introduces a wide sighing motive in the first violin derived from the neighbor-note sighing figures in the accompaniment to the original folk melody. This is followed by a countermelody in the first violin, and both ideas are taken up imitatively in the cello, with new offbeat figuration in the middle voices. The second variation presents the countermelody in the first violin, lyrical accompanying lines in the middle voices, and a return of the folk melody in the cello line, both in its original form and with additional notes filled in. After this variation, the folk melody disappears for most of the movement, leaving behind only its phrase structure, and a slow accumulation of related motivic material. The third variation changes from the lyrical character of the first variations to a scherzo quality, full of the neighbor-note sigh motive in staccato sixteenth notes. The fourth variation builds on a steady eighth-note pizzicato pulse with a melody consisting of the wide sigh motive from the first variation combined with the neighbor-note motive. An accompaniment figure in sixteenths takes its intervallic structure from a similar figure in the third variation (Examples 15 and 16). As the variations proceed, this kind of borrowing from previous movements continues to build, so that the connections between variations multiply. The harmonic and formal outlines remain constant though, giving the listener a sense of continuity that is not reflected as strongly in the score as in the auditory experience.

The fourth variation contains two iterations of the entire phrase structure, giving the melody time to build from fragmented origins. This longer and freer sounding variation foreshadows variations eight, nine, and ten, which evolve from formal-outline to fantasy variations. Variation eight simplifies melodic material from the previous variation, and the liquidation of the texture leading into variation nine makes the reappearance of the folk melody there all the more impactful. Each instrument plays one phrase of the original folk melody, now
in D minor, building up to a climax at the end of the variation. Stenhammar has made it easy to follow him down the rabbit hole of these variations, as each leads so well into the next. It is not until the folk melody finally returns that we notice how far we have ventured. He has used a symbol from his own childhood and made it the object of nostalgic longing, appearing far into the movement as a memory of the secluded space the melody was first presented in.

The folk melody would have been able to function as an object of nostalgic longing on its own, but its text suggests further implications for the movement’s form. It speaks of youth, a journey, and waiting among the roses. These images give us another way to understand the progression of the variations: as visions and emotions accrued over time, linked by the body that experiences them. In this scenario the folk melody in the ninth variation is the varied appearance of the youthful girl after so many years away, and the multitude of related motives are the numerous rose petals around her. But the final remembrance is yet to come. The climactic moment in the ninth variation leads into the tenth, with the feel of a coda. Its melodic material is an inversion of a motive first seen in the second violin in variation two; there it was connected rising fourths and here they descend (Examples 17 and 18). The falling fourth thus plays an important role on a structural level, as the modulation to D minor from A when the folk melody returns, and at the level of surface details. This variation is the sweetest, with the singing line high in the violin over undulating accompanimental lines creating a texture reminiscent of other climaxes in Stenhammar’s work. As the melody comes to a close, the undulating lines take over, then quickly collapse into a single voice. Out of this rises the opening arabesque of the quartet’s first movement, at ppp. Barely uttered chords provide a cadence, but the expressive space is left open, reaching back for that first line. Here, then, is where we are truly aware of how far we have travelled. And here lies the deepest moment of nostalgia, a sweet remembrance of that first
melody, shrouded in the evocative light of a midsummer evening rather than the clear midday sun that it first appeared in.

Wallner has pointed out how the slower, folk-like theme from the B section of the Scherzo is similar to the theme of the Aria variata, and so in this way functions as a preview and preparation of the final movement. But he did not go far enough. The themes from all four movements in fact exhibit similarities, falling primarily within the A-E pitch set, and with related melodic contours and interval patterns. When considered along with the continuity of rhythmic material in the four movements, and the repeated use of increasing textural density to attain climactic moments, the piece demonstrates a high level of integration and an economy of material. It is efficient without compromising its expressive capability, lyrical and beautiful without becoming overly sensitive or somber. It is permeated with a certain folk essence and awareness of place, but not so overtly that these signals take on the mark of the exotic. Rather, one gets the sense that Stenhammar has minded Bergh’s appeal for artists to “fathom the unity of [nature’s] barbaric diversity and finally find your way to the simplicity of decorative arrangement that alone makes greatness possible in painting.”

The Opus 25 Quartet is based on traditional elements of the genre, but also reveals Stenhammar’s own compositional devices and elements of the Swedish identity.

A Short Interlude

222 A description from the period of string quartet compositions in general could just as easily be describing the workings of this piece in particular: “Airy motives fly from voice to voice in an easy, endless game, attach themselves to melodies, to movements, or detach themselves from the movements more frequently and more insistently than in any other composition. The polyphony itself only occasionally resorts to the more serious forms of canon or fugue...” Adolf Lindgren, “Om kammarmusik,” Svensk Musiktidning, 1905, 4.

223 See Chapter Three, this work, 139.
In the eighteen regular concert seasons of the Aulin Quartet between 1887 and 1907 (excluding irregular seasons caused by touring or the predominance of guest quartet performances), the quartet gave 113 performances of string quartets (including repeats). This makes the string quartet by far the most important genre in their performing repertory, as one would expect. Following this in fairly equal proportions are the piano trio, the piano quintet, and the violin sonata, which together number about half as many performances. These were fairly evenly distributed throughout the seasons in a way that could be considered regular. The violin sonatas were those of continental and Swedish composers alike, and contemporary as well as past works. These will be treated in the next section. As we have seen, the Aulin Quartet presented very catholic programs, reaching from the Viennese classics through contemporary French, Norwegian, and Czech composers. Their performances accommodated such works as Mendelssohn’s Octet and a Mozart clarinet quintet (though wind instruments were a rare occurrence at their concerts). Yet, even though the piano trio and piano quintet ranked among the most played genres on their programs, these were largely by non-Swedish composers. The only Swedish works in these genres were by Norman and Berwald, the former being a favorite for Swedish audiences and the latter a promotional effort by Aulin and Stenhammar.

In his position as pianist with the Aulin Quartet, Stenhammar was in a good position to provide Swedish compositions in these genres. His intimate knowledge of a wide repertory of chamber music for piano and strings would have been unmatched by his contemporaries. But it seems he was more inspired by the string quartet, and his efforts in that genre certainly show a sensitive and deft handling of the medium. He did however, leave us two unpublished movements to speculate on what might have been: an Allegro brillante for piano quartet from
1891 and an Allegro non tanto for piano trio from 1895. Stenhammar’s first performances with the Aulin Quartet began in early 1892, just after the date for the piano quartet movement. His first string quartet was written in 1894, performed by the Aulin Quartet in 1895, and the second string quartet was written in 1896. These years appear to have been an important period of germination for him as he experimented with the chamber genres, especially if we remember that it was only with his third quartet, written between 1897 and 1900, that he felt he had passed an important turning point in composing for the genre.

The Allegro brillante does not occupy the same nostalgic dream space of Stenhammar’s Quartet No. 4 and the other mature works that we have discussed. It is full of bright optimism, and does not reveal the intimacy that even Stenhammar’s large-scale works soon would. The strings and piano are generally treated as oppositional units, with the piano primarily playing a supporting and textural role. Melodic lines do occasionally get passed to the piano, but more often they occur in lushly harmonized strings, a texture that recalls the sound of choral song. These moments are beautiful, and perhaps show an early fondness for the string idiom. The mood briefly acquires a darker hue in a static chordal section at the start of the development, but this is soon washed away by the return of the opening themes for the real meat of the development.

It is possible to see early tendencies of some of Stenhammar’s characteristic compositional methods in the movement as well. The first theme is clearly presented at the very start of the movement, bracketed by rests, as in the second movement of Quartet No. 4, so as to clearly frame it (Example 19). The theme emphasizes the tonic triad, and the following imitative

224 These were rediscovered in manuscript among the composer’s papers donated to the Statens musikbibliotek (Music Library of Sweden). A scholarly edition was produced by Martin Sturfält, ed. (Stockholm: Musikaliska Konstföreningen, 2008), more than a decade after Lucia Negro and members of the Tale Quartet had recorded them from manuscript for BIS Records.
passage in the strings exploits the potential of such a structure by redirecting the harmony within a diatonic language. This passage of imitative pieces of the theme is typical of Stenhammar’s compositional practice, and is only halted by another statement of the theme in its original form. Transitional material ensues, with a preview in the piano of an off-kilter quarter-half-quarter rhythm that will become important later. The second theme is a lively staccato tune in the piano with pizzicato accompaniment. It has the feel of a dance, especially when the strings take up the theme and the piano emphasizes the off-beats. The off-kilter rhythm returns as a closing theme and leads into the slowly descending dark chordal passage that starts the development.

As is typical for Stenhammar’s chamber style, the thematic material is closely related, and transitional passages are ultimately derived from expanded bits of those themes. Scalar and triadic material is common, as is a rocking kind of motion. Stenhammar treats sonata form with his usual editing eye, leaving the second theme entirely out of the development and only treating it briefly in the recapitulation. The added material from the first theme that appears at the end of the recapitulation, both in fragments and as a simplified augmented motive, then receives a disproportionate expanse in the movement as a whole. Such techniques would certainly resurface in later works, but often with better balance. The boisterous cadence at the end leaves no room for nostalgic quotations or poignant fading away as in the fourth quartet. Formal boundaries similarly lack the seamless weaving together of motivic material that later works exhibit.

Many of the same things could be said of the trio movement as well regarding formal structure, motivic character and manipulation, and ensemble, so they will not be repeated here. Structural transitions are much more seamless in this movement, but given the large chunk of material Stenhammar edited into the development, the movement could very well have seen additional revision before coming to a final form. As unpublished movements, these works offer
little help in our discussion of a Swedish artistic style, but they do provide an instructive lens into Stenhammar’s early style, and perhaps also into the performance atmosphere of the Aulin Quartet concerts. The trio is difficult to execute with the necessary grace to make it convincing, yet in a good performance it conveys a sparkling motion and gentle lyricism that are also evident in Stenhammar’s mature chamber works. Both of these movements pose an intriguing question about their continuation that we will never be able to answer.

“Bundles of Sounding Songs”

In addition to chamber music for three, four, five, or six players, the most common duo to appear in the intimate setting of a chamber music evening, particularly those of the Aulin Quartet, was the violin sonata. The meaningfulness of this genre in Sweden should already have been indicated by its presence in Georg Pauli’s painting for Prins Eugen’s grand home. Of all the musical events and genres that could have conveyed the prince’s musical interest, it was the violin sonata that Pauli painted (with, of course, Stenhammar and Aulin performing it).

Scholars have noted that the violin sonata was far more characteristic in Nordic music than the string quartet.\textsuperscript{225} It was certainly not unique to the Nordic countries. Yet, while the string quartet as a form was clearly borrowed from the continent, and came with its own baggage, the violin sonata was somehow shielded from such allusions. Peterson-Berger asserted that the violin sonata in Sweden had not emerged from the same tradition as those of Beethoven and Brahms, but instead from the solo song tradition, which invites us to consider what truth

\textsuperscript{225} For instance, Wallner, \textit{Stenhammar}, 1:614.
there might be to his declaration.\textsuperscript{226} In the context of nationalist discussions, his statement may be crudely understood as an effort to claim an entire genre as Sweden’s own. But at the same time, there may be evidence to support the distinction as well.

Emil Sjögren’s sonatas, particularly his Violin Sonata No. 2 in E minor, Op. 24 (1889), became the reference point for this line of thinking, as one of the first examples of a truly Swedish style. Peterson-Berger referred to Sjögren’s violin sonatas as “proudly impassioned and yet gracefully dreamy memory songs from our [18]80s.” He described their relationship to vocal music as an instrumental embodiment of the poetic impulse wrapped into a largely irrelevant form; Sjögren’s sonatas “are bundles of sounding songs without words, but often longing for the word, cleverly bound together in the traditional sonata’s arbitrarily chosen restraints.”\textsuperscript{227} Not only does this attach the genre to the oldest and dearest musical tradition in the country, it also connects it, by way of its reference to lyrics, to the recent flourishing in Swedish poetry. And although there was some reluctance in allowing song to act as the national music, a genre that captured the essence of song within a “respectable” instrumental medium could perform that role comfortably. The interest in the genre is apparent: after Sjögren’s five

\textsuperscript{226} Peterson-Berger writes, “these sonatas and poems for violin and piano, which had emerged not with Beethoven’s and Brahms’ chamber music as a model, but as an instrumental and more worked-out counterpart to the evocative, idyllic, and sometimes even enthusiastically animated art song, where Emil Sjögren since the beginning of the 1880s was a master.” Quoted in Bo Wallner, \textit{Den svenska stråkkvartetten: en sammanställning}, vol. 1, \textit{Klassicism och romantik}, Kungliga Musikaliska Akademiens skrifter serie 24 (Stockholm: Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien, 1979), 98. Original source is not given.

\textsuperscript{227} “… stolt lidelsefulla och dock behagfullt svärmiska minnesånger från vårt 80-tal,” and “…äro knippen av klingande visor utan ord, men ofta långtande efter ordet, skickligt sammanknutna i den hädvunna sonatens godtyckligt valda band.” Wilhelm Peterson-Berger, quoted in Wallner, 1:620.
Swedish composer active around the turn of the century composed a violin sonata at some point between roughly 1890 and 1910.\textsuperscript{228}

To what extent then does the Swedish tradition of violin sonatas stand up to Peterson-Berger’s description? In other words, are there song-like traits that recur across the various Swedish composers’ sonatas that distinguish the genre in a significant way from those of the Austro-German lineage, as Peterson-Berger would have us believe? We can turn first to the oft-cited Sjögren Sontata No. 2 in E minor. Dedicated to Tor Aulin, it was performed at the Aulin Quartet concerts in their 1888-1889 season and again in the 1893-1894 season. Although Sjögren was not known to associate directly with the Utile dulci milieu, his style, particularly in the violin sonatas, exhibits the traits they endorsed. Certain peculiarities of his style can also be seen in the works of the younger generation of composers, and for that he certainly deserves the credit figures like Peterson-Berger gave him as a model of the Swedish violin sonata style. Sjögren’s Sonata No. 2 appears to have been a popular one, being repeatedly mentioned in reviews and frequently performed. The piece follows a fairly standard four-movement plan, with opening and closing sonata form movements framing a quick scherzo-trio and lyrical andante.

The first movement begins with the presentation of the theme in the piano: a lyrical melody whose opening leap up from scale degree five to the tonic prefigures the tension between tonic and dominant that occupies the first section, culminating in a modulation to the dominant before the end of the first theme group. A harmonically unstable transitional segment draws on rhythmic material from the first theme and presents a dialogue between the instruments. The

\textsuperscript{228} Wilhelm Peterson-Berger, No. 1 in E minor, Op. 1 in 1887, an unnumbered sonata in A minor in 1888-89, and No. 2 in G major in 1910, and other works for piano and violin; Tor Aulin, Op. 12 in 1892, and other works for piano and violin; Hugo Alfvén, Sonata in C minor, Op. 1 in 1896 and other works for piano and violin; Wilhelm Stenhammar, Sonata in A minor, Op. 19 in 1899-1900; Edvin Kallstenius, in 1909; and Sigurd von Koch, in 1913.
piano introduces the second theme in the relative major: an even more lyrical idea that emphasizes a descent from tonic to dominant scale degrees, providing a balanced reversal of the first theme. Where the first theme imparts a lively off-kilter sensibility through alternating emphasis of the down beat and weak off-beats, the second theme is solidly grounded in downbeats. But here too, echoes of the first theme’s rhythmic character are present in the accompaniment to the second theme, as yet another kind of balancing reversal of material. Both themes are presented first in solo piano, and then in the violin as the piano moves into an accompaniment role. But in both cases, the violin spins out the melody before it comes to a phrase ending, as if beginning to develop it before it has even been established. This spinning-out is accomplished through sequences, and sometimes alters significant aspects of the theme, as in the second theme where the overall descent of the line is transformed into an ascending trajectory (Example 20).

This kind of “spinning out,” utilizing the basic motivic cell of the theme to extend it, is a trait evident in Stenhammar’s sonata as well. But with Sjögren, the motivation is a bit more transparent. The spinning-out of the first theme enabled harmonic modulation into the transitional material. The spinning-out in the second theme enabled a reversal of the descending line and thus led into a climactic moment in the violin’s uppermost register. At the same time, the piano parts thickened and deepened, creating excitement by means of balancing extremes. This climactic moment marks the end of the exposition, which is repeated exactly before the development begins. A short development makes use of both themes and the transitional material in harmonically unstable states. After building to a climax, the first theme returns in the tonic, and a nearly exact presentation of the exposition follows, this time with the second theme in E major. A short coda provides another climactic build-up, with the violin presenting a varied first
theme and the piano playing its accompaniment parts for both themes combined, as if offering a summing up of what has gone before. A truncated iteration of an altered first theme takes the key back to minor for the final solemn cadence (Example 21).

Already in the first movement it is possible to see Sjögren’s piece as an embodiment of the many descriptions of Swedish music we have witnessed in reviews and essays from the period. It is certainly not novel or eccentric, its harmonic transitions and formal structure are nearly textbook. They are skillfully accomplished, but not difficult to discern in any way. Blurred formal boundaries and complicated harmonic procedures are abandoned in favor of clarity of form and melodic expression. The melodic lines themselves are lyrical and free of excessive ornamentation or ostentatious display – Sjögren has certainly not avoided the necessary textural, dynamic, and rhythmic intensity needed to accomplish climactic events, but virtuosic display for its own sake is absent. The melodic construction too is resourcefully simple, consisting of little more than embellished triadic material. The whole seems designed for expressiveness and balance between the parts, but is presented unassumingly, and there is so little composerly commenting on the form that it would be correct to call it, in some sense, “arbitrary.”

The second movement is an Allegretto scherzando in the relative major with a Piu tranquillo trio section. The scherzo begins with a melody consisting of a triadic falling line attached to a rocking scalar motion – the very same rocking motive that first appeared at the start of the transition in the first movement (Examples 22 and 23). In this scherzo movement, it has a much more prominent role. The accompaniment of frenetic sixteenths in the piano imparts a skipping flow to the movement despite the lyrical melodic line. The dotted quarter-eighth rhythm from the transition of the first movement also makes an appearance, and is shared between the
instruments as the scherzo progresses. A plagal cadence foreshadows the key of the trio, in C major. The trio is an expectedly sweet melodic interlude, in which the violin plays the same rhythm for nearly the entire two-part segment, again derived from the transition rhythm of the first movement. Closer examination of the primary pitch material of the melody reveals that the emphasized notes are really nothing more than outlines of G major and C major chords. The construction is again simpler than it first appears, and what is emphasized on a small scale confirms the harmonic motion of the movement as a whole. The scherzo is repeated exactly after the trio, completing the ternary form.

The third movement, Andante sostenuto, exhibits the most pathos and sentimentality of any movement in the piece. It most nearly gives the impression of a passionate intoning, of a human utterance spoken through the violin. The piano again introduces the melody alone, and is then joined by the violin whose own presentation of the melody is more than twice as long as its original, spinning it out to a higher climactic tension and then gradually descending. The melodic material is related to earlier motives, with a prominent dotted eighth-sixteenth and the familiar rocking eighths. The movement’s continuation is full of fragments of the melody in both parts, and often in dialogue, as if the whole were a sequence-filled development. The movement is defined by range and dynamics rather than melodic interaction, and despite its fragmentary construction gives the impression of a sustained lyricism.

The final movement is marked Con fuoco, and its fiercely roiling opening lives up to the name. It is the dramatic tempest to foil (or perhaps balance?) the tender pathos of the previous movement. Again the dotted eighth-sixteenth and dotted quarter-eighth are important rhythmic motives, and again melodic material is largely triadic and scalar. The relatedness of motivic material – in both rhythmic and intervallic structure – is by now a familiar sign of
resourcefulness. (We could in fact describe it as that ever-practical Swedish preference for efficiency.) But the surprises in this movement come through other means. In what appears to be another standard sonata form, something we have seen Sjögren present in an absolutely straightforward manner in the first movement, the middle of the development is suddenly interrupted for a dreamy Andante sostenuto. Fourteen measures of melodic longing that we first glimpsed in the trio of the second movement and fully experienced in the third, reappear here as if in a memory. This time it is only the pleading part of the melody, and feebly voiced in pp tones. This perhaps, is Bergh’s nostalgic symbol from childhood, conjured up in the turbulence of the storm like a mental safety blanket. It slips away faster than it appeared, and the tempestuous roiling sixteenths return. The development continues into the recapitulation, once again true to form. A coda in E major increases the tension for a final dramatic end. But poured out, as if with the last breath, comes that same quiet E minor phrase that had so solemnly ended the first movement (Example 24). And now the ghostly sense of nostalgia descends with a great weight, compounded by the silence that follows.

Given Sjögren’s position as a perceived predecessor to the Utile dulci ideas, it is difficult to say whether his work could exhibit the same kind of filtering of nature that the painters, poets, and younger composers expressed. It is much more plausible to ascribe to his style musical traits like simplicity, balance, and the prioritization of melody that we have already observed. But these kinds of nostalgic tricks, the melodic recall and sudden solemn longing, at least stand as precursors to Stenhammar’s more developed use of nostalgia and the nature idea. Perhaps Sjögren was thinking along the same lines and had not found an intellectual circle to foster such impulses. Perhaps these are just the first seeds of what bloomed into a Swedish style.
Alfvén’s Violin Sonata in C minor (1896) contains many similar formal characteristics to Sjögren’s, but elements of his own style are present here as well. Like Sjögren, the piece is four movements with sonata form movements framing a fast scherzo-trio and a lyrical andante. As with Sjögren, Alfvén introduces both themes of the first movement in the piano, and then the violin joins with a longer version of the theme. And like Sjögren, the formal structure of the movement is easily discernible, reinforced both melodically and harmonically. The main themes either emphasize triadic motion, or utilize the same rocking motive that was so prominent with Sjögren, and the dotted eighth-sixteenth and dotted quarter-eighth are also heavily incorporated into thematic material. But where Sjögren’s themes are distinct, despite their relatedness, Alfvén’s are much longer lyrical lines, much more romantic in style. The lengthening that occurs in the violin’s presentation of the themes is not as regular as the spinning-out method that Sjögren used, but rather more like a Wagnerian line full of Romantic yearning. Like Sjögren, Alfvén passes motivic material between all three voices of the instruments (upper and lower registers of the piano, and the violin), but he frequently compresses their entrances until the passage takes on a fugal character (Example 25).

Perhaps most striking is the difference in character between Alfvén’s opening movement and Sjögren’s. Alfvén’s style is much more dramatic, even heavier than Sjögren’s, a fact that is made abundantly clear by the thunderous piano passage that occurs after the presentation of the first theme. The placid transition that follows and the sweet second theme then appear like polite party-goers who have ignored an embarrassing outburst by the family drunk. A short development containing one of Alfvén’s canon-like counterpoint passages follows, and is succeeded by a recapitulation that is a nearly exact repeat of the exposition. These lead into a coda with more imitation and a dramatic $fff$ passage that should provide the culmination of the
movement. But like Sjögren’s first movement, a delicate muted phrase is tacked onto the end. Alfvén’s remembrance is more literal, and this phrase is an exact repetition of the first theme (Example 26).

A sparkling scherzo follows in the key of the dominant, whose staccato and pizzicato themes make no pretension at lyricism. The two-part scherzo is again filled with imitative passages, and the texture is much lighter than the dense first movement. Like Sjögren’s, a minor trio provides contrast, this time in the parallel minor to the scherzo. The melody is lyrical and singing, and though still in duple time signature, so full of triplets as to provide a similar kind of rhythmic contrast between the two parts of the movement. The primary thematic material for the scherzo is triadic, and the trio leans heavily on rocking thirds and scalar passages.

Again, the third movement is an incredibly longing Andante patetico, full of the pathos its title promises. Unlike Sjögren’s, the boundaries of the melody are more distinct, and likewise the longing feels more haunting than the generic yearning of Sjögren’s Romantic style. The piece begins with a simple presentation of the melody in solo piano, then gradually thickens with shifting accompanimental textures as if in a variations movement. After a developmental middle section, there is a return to the material of the first section, made more poignant by slight alterations in accompaniment or register.

The final movement, marked Allegro vivace, moves farthest from Sjögren’s model and capitalizes on those traits of Alfvén’s own individual style that began to emerge in the earlier movements. The two themes exhibit the largest contrast of any of the other movements. The first is a staccato leaping motive in triple time, marked by a trill that makes subsequent occurrences of the theme impossible to miss. The second is a duple-time rising scalar motion. Both themes, and the transition theme, are passed around in Alfvén’s usual imitative style, sometimes with both
themes sounding at once. The piano takes on more importance as its solo moments are increased in this movement. Though the form is still clear, the ends of themes begin to disappear in the recapitulation as if racing toward the coming ending. The movement ends with the first theme in canon and running sixteenth notes leading into appropriately exciting fff chords in all three voices. The listener is left with Alfvén’s flair for the dramatic, and a sense of four distinct movements defined by their individual characters and unique melodic material.

Though some of Alfvén’s methods clearly show a family resemblance to Sjögren’s sonata, his melodic construction and dramatic aesthetic set him apart. More idiomatic writing for the violin is present, but the piece veers toward the tradition of violin sonatas in which the piano played the greater role. In some sense, the discussion of this piece in the context of a Swedish sonata tradition is unfair, for being Alfvén’s Opus 1 it is likely as revealing of his personal style as it is of his musical education. Additionally, it appears before Alfvén would have been connected with Stenhammar and the Utile dulci group in any significant way.

Stenhammar’s sonata exhibits a more mature expression of compositional style, and another approach to the Sjögren model. As a performer with Aulin, Stenhammar certainly would have known some of the Sjögren sonatas. Stenhammar’s sonata was written in the summers of 1899 and 1900 and dedicated to Tor Aulin. They premiered the work together in Stockholm in March of 1901, the same year that Peterson-Berger published his own violin sonata. Unlike both Sjögren’s sonata and Alfvén’s, Stenhammar’s is only three movements: two sonata-form movements and a central lyrical Andantino. The piece reveals similar methods of melodic construction and the lighter mood that were evident in Sjögren’s No. 2. Yet, as with his use of sonata form in the Opus 25 Quartet, the sonata-form movements here provide interesting deviations that mark a significant evolution from the Sjögren sonata.
The first movement begins with a soulful upward leap of a sixth in solo violin. This moment expresses such a deep inwardness that the piano’s entrance almost gives the impression of an interruption. Despite the piece being in A minor, a key confirmed by this movement’s final cadence, the piano’s first chords do not establish the key and the first real cadential progression leads to the key of the relative major, C. The three primary motivic ideas of the movement appear in succession at the beginning, just as Stenhammar so often does (Example 27). The first, the rising sixth, leads into a gradually widening rocking motion. The piece seems to get caught on the third motivic idea, two falling sixteenths and a longer held note, and its repeated iterations sustain the harmonic ambiguity of the opening over C and F chords. Like Sjögren’s themes, Stenhammar’s are made of small motives whose intervallic structure easily lines up with triadic material and can be used in harmonically unstable passages to move through many key areas. They are motives that are distinct enough to be recognized, and are employed in a fluid manner that gives the movement momentum.

Stenhammar’s exposition does not have the clearly demarcated first and second theme areas with a transition between like Sjögren’s and Alfvén’s sonatas. Instead, the repeated iterations of the third motive lead into a spinning-out of the first rising sixth motive in the manner of Sjögren. A short dialogue between the instruments on the second motive finally settles into an A minor cadence. The remainder of the exposition is taken up with a repetitive kind of alternation of the first motive and several variants of the second motive leading to a climactic moment in the upper register of the violin over rapid figuration in the piano. One final “correct” iteration of the first and second motive in succession lead to a cadence and modulation into the development. This is largely occupied by the third motive, whose sixteenths and staccato eighths
impart a nice contrast to the section. The rest of the development returns to the first two themes in harmonically unstable alternation between the instruments.

The recapitulation begins with an assertive statement of the first two themes in their original key. The motivic material of the exposition is repeated nearly exactly, except for the exclusion of the third motive and a modulation to the key of A major where that motive should have been. A final surprise appears at the end of the movement. Where the exposition had ended, in the recapitulation Stenhammar adds a coda containing several statements of the second motive and then the first. These are accompanied by a stepwise descent in the bass that culminates in an authentic cadence in the tonic and another “correct” iteration of the two motives in succession. But then the third motive appears again, traded between the instruments and finally appearing in its full form to conclude the movement in A minor.

As with Quartet No. 4, Stenhammar appears to be playing with the form here, making it possible to hear it in two ways. In one sense, the distinction of formal boundaries suggests a sonata form. Held chords after the initial presentation of the first two themes provides a pause to hear those themes and understand their importance. The third motive, following those chords, further sets them apart by providing a contrast in character. Similar held chords at the end of the exposition again signal a break, and the jaunty third motive at the start of the development provides the necessary contrast. The transition to the recapitulation is signaled by the first “correct” presentation of the first two themes since the end of the exposition. The ff first theme in the violin is marked ritardando, allowing a ff echo in the piano to give the opening of the recapitulation special distinction, before the second theme continues in its original character, indicated by the marking ‘in tempo ma tranquillo.’ The nearly exact repetition of motivic
material that follows confirms the formal divide. In this way, Stenhammar has provided the necessary signposts to understand the movement as a sonata form.

However, the way Stenhammar presents his motivic ideas in such a clearly audible fashion, and avoids the larger sectional divides of first and second theme areas, draws attention to the surface melodic material. Though he has barely presented his motivic themes before he begins to “develop” them, moving through different keys and playing with instrumental dialogue, register, and accompanimental figuration, they have not been buried in the texture or transformed through rhythmic diminution or augmentation. In this way the movement adheres to the clarity of expression and emphasis on melodic line that was part of the useful-and-pleasing aesthetic. This treatment of motivic material also invites consideration of a second interpretation of the formal structure. Presentation of all three themes in succession and in their original guises occurs only twice; at the beginning and at the end. Between these framing bookends the altered treatment of the first and second themes in turn frames the altered presentation of the third theme, giving the whole movement an arch form that pivots on that third theme (all three – altered AB – altered C – altered AB – all three). Despite such formal ambiguity, the movement is built on fundamentally simple musical material, free of excessive ornamentation or ostentatious virtuosity, and has the lean silken texture so much a part of Stenhammar’s individual compositional voice.

As if taking a cue from the latter interpretation of the first movement’s form, the second movement is also an arch form, specifically a rondo (ABACABA). The first theme is built on that rocking-eighth motive that was so prevalent in Sjögren’s sonata. In its first presentation rests in both instruments set off the phrases, giving it a sense of poetic oration (Example 28). These are the same kind of rests that invited comparison with the breath in the slow movement of
Quartet No. 4, and reoccur here in the final statement of the theme at the end of the movement as well. Some alteration to the refrain material transpires over the course of the movement, as the second A episode is treated like a dialogue between the instruments, and in the third the piano figuration becomes more urgent from the addition of sixteenth notes. The second theme (B) incorporates triplets and the quarter-eighth rhythm from the second motive of the previous movement. The real contrast is provided by the third theme though, which has the feeling of a dance in triple time. Again the thematic material is easy to follow, and the overall mood is lyrical. And again, Stenhammar can’t resist a small token of remembrance at the end, giving the violin a fragment of the second theme for the final cadence.

The last movement is a quick Allegro in duple time and in the parallel major. Like the first movement, it offers some anomalies to a standard sonata form. The three thematic ideas are quicker, and the movement overall is less lyrical than the previous two. Stenhammar has treated the themes with the greatest flexibility in this movement, freely creating variants through altered intervallic content. Structural moments are more difficult to discern than in previous movements – instead the focus seems to be on a gathering excitement that builds like a tumbling wave to the climax. The development is missing the third thematic idea, but this only makes its reappearance in the recapitulation more thrilling. The rocking eighth motive plays a large role throughout the movement, tying it to previous movements as well as the other works discussed here. But the biggest surprise of the movement again comes near the end (and by now may not be a surprise). In a fairly lengthy coda built entirely of material from the first theme, the time signature changes imperceptibly to 6/8. There, suddenly, appears the first and second motive from the very first movement of the piece, high up in the violin with great expressiveness (Example 29). This final climax is, as with Alfvén, a powerful memory and races to a triumphant cadence.
The three violin sonatas discussed here reveal markedly different compositional styles. Although every Swedish composer active in this period did write a violin sonata at some point, only Sjögren showed real dedication to the genre with his five sonatas spread across his career. And although violin sonatas seemed to figure prominently in the performance practice, usually only one or two appeared each season on the Aulin Quartet programs. Given these caveats, it is difficult to generalize in a meaningful way about a Swedish tradition of violin sonatas. However, even with these limitations, a subtle stylistic inclination does emerge from a comparison of the above pieces to both each other and others from the continent.

Peterson-Berger’s assertion that the Swedish violin sonatas were not derived from the same lineage as the Beethoven and Brahms tradition can be substantiated to a degree. Beethoven’s sonatas, particularly those that appeared in the Aulin Quartet’s programs, tend toward more regular periodicity. They are dramatic instrumental utterances reminiscent of orchestral styles and replete with grand gestures. Even as the most regular phrase structure of the early style evolved, the relationship between melodic ideas and their harmonic potential became more important. With Brahms as well this attention to harmonic drama took precedence. Though he also included quotations of themes from earlier movements, they were more fully incorporated and altered, with attention given to the implications of presenting them in different harmonic contexts. The brief quotations of earlier themes that occurs in the Swedish works happens at the end of the piece, and in a recognizable form, indicating that the intention is one of remembrance rather than organic incorporation.

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Discussions of the Schubert sonatinas come closer to the Swedish style, in noting the lack of independence or virtuosic brilliance of the parts there as opposed to Beethoven’s sonatas. Similarly, Schubert’s works can be described as having triadic and scalar themes, and elegant and optimistic tones. As far as contemporaries to this period, the “motivic coherence” of Debussy’s sonata resists development in a way that is comparable to Stenhammar’s use of motivic material. But even in choosing more suitable subjects of comparison, the Swedish sonatas still stand apart. They lack the periodicity and dialogue of Beethoven, the molasses-like richness of Brahms, the pianistic sonority of Fauré, and the frozen flow of time in Debussy.

While they clearly possess a greater weightiness than the many other Swedish pieces for violin and piano (thinking here of Aulin’s *Fyra aqvareller* and *Midsommar-dans*, Peterson-Berger’s *Lyrisk sång*, and Sjögren’s *Två fantasistycken*, among many others), they avoid the serious pronouncements of their continental relatives as well (with the obvious exception of the initial piano declarations of Alfvén’s first movement, statements that are not reinforced by material later in the work). The Swedish sonatas have less instrumental conversation, the violin plays a more important melodic role, and the character of the whole is altogether more fluid. These are pieces that make a serious effort at being *pleasing*, not lightly as in café music, but intentionally pleasant endeavors.

Here, perhaps, we may finally come to an understanding of Peterson-Berger’s assertion that these sonatas trace their ancestry to a tradition of song. For although they are not idiomatic to the voice in their melodic style, and they lack any kind of regular phrasing that would easily lend itself to poetic text, they are certainly intimate and expressive in the way that salon song is. They are meant to communicate emotion and drama in a pleasing personal voice, rather than the more public grandiosity of larger ensembles. The relationship between the instruments supports
such an interpretation. As with song, the melody is principally in the violin, and though the piano occasionally takes over, more often it supports the violin’s melody with similar material. The two function in a partnership, rather than as solo efforts. Their message is unconvincing unless uttered together. With song, harmonic interest and motion is certainly necessary, but generally as an undercurrent to melodic and textual considerations. In these sonatas, the drama of potential harmonic oppositions, or of formal boundaries implied and obscured, or of motivic developments fulfilled, never undercuts the importance of singing melodic lines in changing textural contexts.

It may be too much to try to claim for these pieces any adherence to a nostalgic aesthetic in a way that would suggest the importance of the Swedish location, or to argue that they exhibit the polity of Sweden. But they certainly do adhere to the basic tenets of useful pleasingness that were such hallmarks of the period. In Peterson-Berger’s description of song as “evocative” and “idyllic,” we find the same references to nostalgia and happiness that these pieces certainly exhibit. And despite the disparate styles of Sjögren, Alfvén, and Stenhammar, these sonatas display similar compositional devices such that we may consider them members of a like-minded approach. These composers’ differences in style were in fact a necessary trait of the period’s aesthetic. Ellen Key writes that without this their works “would lack truth; they would give a false picture of the spirit of the personality, which ought to be expressed… it is only in this way that a [work] acquires style, personality, and – in the presence of good taste – even beauty.”

Indeed, Stenhammar’s own comments about his sonata reveal a different intention than the creation of a dramatic instrumental work. He wrote that the first movement is “so enchantingly beautiful that to me nothing is good enough for the continuation… I know so well how I want to have it, but the stupid heavy material does not want to come with me into the

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scenic dreamland where I want to bring it.” His comments reveal a preference for something beautiful and light, within an idealized dream-space much like the Adagio of Opus 25 with its nature evocations. Peterson-Berger’s review of the performance is similarly revealing, not only in the context of his own statements about the violin sonata, but also for the way his description places Stenhammar’s composition within the artistic values of the *Utile dulci* generation:

As we already know, nothing becomes this composer so well as to be simply melodious, to pretend – for now it would not be more than pretending – that he knows naively. All three movements of this beautiful tone-poem move within a directly musically intelligible sphere. Nowhere is one compelled by a sound combination, by a transition, to put forth the question *why*. Everything flows, and flows organically, and with a palpable atmosphere of completeness. --- It is in every movement Wilhelm Stenhammar, both the mild Allegro, the still milder Andantino, and the finale which moves between the boundaries of the bold and the elegantly conventional. The peculiar, though in newer music not unknown, harmonizing, whereby this last movement’s main section ends – the dominant key’s dominant seventh chord immediately connected with the current key’s tonic – had something of both these elements.

The description alludes to the primary qualities important to the Swedish cultural identity. The references to melodiousness and the naïve are merely alternate ways to describe something that is pleasing to hear yet simple and artless. Peterson-Berger stresses the importance of communication and intelligibility, and with that provides a justification for the prevalence of

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conventional forms. We have already seen discourse that promotes clarity and simplicity for communicative aims in this way. Peterson-Berger also seems concerned to point out that the piece is true to the composer’s individual style. These qualities cannot have been lost on the audience either, as Peterson-Berger goes on to say, “That such an art product didn’t fail in its effect was proved by the thunderous acclaim that came not only to the violin part’s admirable performer, Aulin, but even and above all to the pianist-composer.” These comments provide evidence that the piece succeeded on the same terms that Bergh and Eugen spoke of for art: it is a piece in which the individual personality of the composer shines through, and which “can awaken resonance in one’s interior being and stimulate that which slumbered there.”

The piece possesses all the traits of naturalness, expressiveness, clarity, simplicity, melodiousness, and lack of eccentricity that were praised in conjunction with a Swedish style, and perhaps it is these characteristics that finally unite the Swedish violin sonatas as a coherent tradition.

Conclusion

We know now the impact Sweden’s Social Democratic Party eventually had, though they were just crystallizing their own ideas and assembling followers during the period in question. Nevertheless, they heralded a new era of creativity in the arts as well. Their vision of life and leisure, encompassing the ideas of freedom, democracy, equality, security, efficiency, and solidarity, seeped into burgeoning national movements in art and literature. Sweden’s seeming lack of identity on the world stage was addressed by these cultural figures, who turned their gaze anew toward their homeland. The increasing tension regarding the union with Norway heightened these concerns over Sweden’s self-image. These factors are all evident in the

233 Eugen, Breven berätta, 113. For full quotation, see this work Chapter Three, page 144.
discourse of cultural figures during the period, and particularly among members of the interdisciplinary intellectual society, *Utile dulci*. The members of this society included the most influential figures in many fields, including poet Verner von Heidenstam, artists Richard Bergh, Carl Larsson, and Georg and Hanna Pauli, architect Ferdinand Boberg, social philosopher Ellen Key, and composer Wilhelm Stenhammar.

These creative figures questioned what it meant to be Swedish, and what role their creative endeavors ought to play in society. Informed by the ideas of the new political party, their answer was ultimately rooted in the very ground beneath their feet. Nature became a central feature in the Swedish artistic style, from depictions of the very Swedish light and ever-present forests and lakes, to evocations of the most important communal moments witnessed in nature. Not only did the natural setting act as the homeland and a source of authenticity for the nation, it also provided the object of nostalgic longing that drew on both childhood memories and imagined yearnings. Along with the role of nature in the Swedish style came other ideas that drew on the holistic vision of social democratic political values. Every person should have access to beauty, but not a frivolous kind of beauty. Instead, beauty encompassed what was pleasing and also useful, ideas that reach back to the equality, democracy, and efficiency of the Social Democrats. Artists should express their own individuality through their art, their singular voice, but they should also communicate with their audience, lest their expression be wasted. These beliefs were a practical view of the ideas of freedom and solidarity.

We have examined how these ideas are borne out in visual art and music, both in large-scale programmatic works and in smaller chamber genres with no apparent extra-musical connections. Composers’ own words about their works as well as reviews of their works have confirmed specific characteristics of the Swedish style. We have seen how a Swedish identity
can suffuse the sounds of an intimate work, as with Stenhammar’s *Sensommarnätter*. A piano suite named for that special long evening that occurs in Northern summers, there could be no more perfect soundtrack for Bergh’s *Nordisk sommarkväll* than its fifth movement. It is a contemplative idyll, pleasing in its simplicity, delicate and expressive, clear but not pedantic. It holds that otherworldly light suspended in lovely but gently wistful tones, encouraging the long gaze exhibited by Bergh’s figures.

A composition like Stenhammar’s *Ett folk* encapsulates the Swedish identity even more compellingly, and in the final movement certain compositional choices give its meaning extra weight. This movement is based on Heidenstam’s last poem for the set, “Invocation and Promise,” which is rather dark – perhaps he had the Union crisis too much in mind when writing it. The poem speaks of uniting the people, and toiling in the dark days to come, but the last lines are a promise for the future:

If the night is sleepless, if the camp is hard,  
We will not let you down on the journey,  
You people, you country, you language that became ours,  
You, our spirit’s voice in the world.  

Stenhammar’s setting, for baritone solo, choir, and orchestra, contains many of his usual devices: the opening lines are set off by rests, and the word “jorden” (soil or earth) is given special emphasis. The text is set mostly homophonically, with exceptions like the imitative entrances of “my people,” and the punctuating recurrence of “they sleep” bringing attention to those words. When Stenhammar gets to the last lines, he again emphasizes “people” and “country” by setting them in longer tones in two of the voices with accented, delayed entrances in the other two. What follows are imitative repetitions of the rest of the line at *p* dynamics, made conspicuous by the

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absence of textual repetition in the movement up to this point (aside from the slight instances of imitation mentioned above). More significant though is that Stenhammar focuses on the reiteration of only part of the line: “that became ours.” Rather than emphasize the singular object of a nation or its inhabitants, ideas that tend to support divisive actions, he calls attention to an act of coming together – a communal idea. With a multitude of voices, he peoples the nation. Their singing enacts their individuality and their solidarity all at once. When the multitude finally abates, the tenors sing the last line. But this is not how Stenhammar would have the piece end. Instead, he adds a final word to Heidenstam’s poem, the same word that began the second movement with gentle hails: “Sweden.” It appears in the other three voices here, with the same rhythmic and intervalllic character it had in the second movement, and just as softly. Two simple chords in the orchestra end the movement, and clarify the key (F minor), since the hail to Sweden was left rootless. Like so many of Stenhammar’s final movements, this one too offers a nostalgic remembrance, with a dreamy glimpse of what was once solidly grounded, both musically and metaphorically. It is offered like a promise, an incentive to once again become a community.

Together with Stenhammar’s elegant portrayal of nation, I will let Bergh have the last word. In his correspondence with Ellen Key he wrote:

We want to see a never-ending verdant forest of many different types of trees grow up, not just a few, even if these were sky high. This is at any rate the implication of individualism. And it furthermore bears the truth: the more individuals, the greater the individuals; the richer organism, the more complete the parts; the more personal points of view, the broader the vision. The unique, knotty, wind-twisted, dwarfed pine tree is just as great a witness to the energy of nature and the enormous power of growth as any of the cedars of Lebanon.  

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235 Det är en oändlig grönskande skog af många och olika trädslag vi vilja se växa upp, ej blott enstaka träd, vore dessa än skyhöga. Detta är åtminstone individualismens innebörda. Och den bär dessutom in sig den sanningen: Ju fler individer, dess större individer, ju rikare organism, dess fullkomligare organer, ju fler personliga synpunkter, dess vidare syn. Den originella,
In his words we are confronted with the fundamentally egalitarian and inclusive attitude that was such a part of the Swedish perspective at this time. Perhaps this attitude is only so refreshing in the wake of a century of nationalism’s darker manifestations, and its products of unchecked ego. In Bergh’s words we see a perspective that appreciates the uniqueness and individuality of all the world’s glorious variety, and at the same time we are presented with an invitation to celebrate that together – to let difference enrich our existence rather than divide us. And it is exactly this idea that has guided the current project as well. In describing one nation’s identity the point has not been to arrive at another color to add to the rainbow of nationalisms, but rather to provide a context for understanding the values of the Swedish artists and their style, and to reanimate a musical repertory. The Swedish sound may be vastly different from other traditions, or perhaps not; such distinctions are at some level peripheral. Every small tree plays a part in the forest, and in glorifying one at the expense of another we neglect what is beautiful about the whole.

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Appendix One: Hugo Alfvén letter to Oscar Quensel

Casa Barbegelata. Sori figuren den 21 juni 1905.

Käre Professor!

Härmed återsänder jag den som förlorad ansedda artikeln och tackar för att jag fick läsa den. Jag tycker liksom Professor Quensel, att den tog norrmännen på pricken.

I en italiensk tidning såg jag i dag, att den svenska riksdagen sammanträdt i går, och jag avfaktar naturligtvis med oehörd spänning, hvad den kommer att besluta med hänsyn till ‘broder-folket.’


Och hur hemskt det än låter i Professorns öron, måste jag dock säga, att ett krig just nu, det är hvad Sverige behöfver. Den hundraåriga freden har lagt ett tjockt, förorfande dammkränger öfver det svenska folket. Det har lagt som en öfvergödd anka i en lugn pöl, omgifven af tät skog,
genom hvilken inga friska vindar kunnat tränga. Om nu krigets storm vräkte omkull den skyddande skogen och bet med iständer genom ankans feta skinn, tror jag att den hastigt skulle förvandlas till den örn som den var på den tid, när svenska armén skref världshistoria på kontinentens slagfält. Att den karolinska stridslusten allt fortfarande glöder under askan, ser jag dagligen af polisrapporterna i tidningen. En ordentlig omraskning från topp till tå: det är hvad svenska folket länge behöft. Det skulle skaka lusen ur pälsen!


[The letter breaks off there, to be taken up again the next day, and presumably sent together with the second part.]
Appendix Two: Musical Examples to Chapter Four

Example 8: Wilhelm Stenhammar, Quartet No. 4, Opus 25, I. Allegro ma non troppo, opening measures
Example 9: Stenhammar, Opus 25, I. mm. 70-71

Example 10: Stenhammar, Opus 25, I. mm. 37-48, theme begins in m. 39
Example 11: Stenhammar, Opus 25, II. Adagio, opening measures

Example 12: Stenhammar, Opus 25, II. closing measures
Example 13: Stenhammar, Opus 25, III. Scherzo, m. 1, second violin

Example 14: Stenhammar, Opus 25, IV. Aria variata, opening measures

Example 15: Stenhammar, Opus 25, IV. motive from third variation, viola m. 64

Example 16: Stenhammar, Opus 25, IV. motive in fourth variation, cello m. 77
Example 17: Stenhammar, Opus 25, IV. rising fourth motive in second variation, violin II m. 37

Example 18: Stenhammar, Opus 25, IV. tenth variation falling fourth theme, viola mm. 215-216

Example 19: Stenhammar, Allegro Brillante for Piano Quartet, opening
Example 20: Emil Sjögren, Violin Sonata No. 2 in E Minor, Opus 21, I. Allegro moderato, second theme “spinning out” in violin, mm. 59-73

Example 21: Sjögren, Opus 21, I. final measures
Example 22: Sjögren, Opus 21, I. rocking motion from transition in violin, mm. 23-27

Example 23: Sjögren, Opus 21, II. Allegretto scherzando, opening with rocking motion in mm. 4-5

Example 24: Sjögren, Opus 21, IV. Con fuoco, last measures
Example 25: Hugo Alfvén, Violin Sonata, Opus 1, I. Allegro, molto lugubre, alternating entrances of second theme, mm. 85-92

Example 26: Alfvén, Opus 1, I. final measures
Example 27: Stenhammar, Violin Sonata, Opus 19, I. Allegro con anima, opening measures

Example 28: Stenhammar, Opus 19, II. Andantino, opening measures
Example 29: Stenhammar, Opus 19, III. Allegro, mm. 375 to end, with first and second themes of mvmt. I in violin at mm. 379-384