

The Successful Swedish-Romanian Collaboration between Ivar Hallström and Queen Elisabeth of Romania

Bianca-Teodora BĂILĂ¹

Abstract: *The following article highlights the important contributions of Ivar Hallström for the first national school of composition in Sweden, during the 19th century. This composer was credited for the creation of Sweden's national opera and he was also among the first internationally-renowned composers in Europe, being friends with important personalities such as Queen Elisabeth of Romania (Carmen Sylva). All the connections and friendships he made represented a source of inspiration for Hallström, as he created numerous musical pieces based on foreign texts and subjects. Ich bin jung represents only a small fraction of his special oeuvre. It is a vocal song which demonstrates his inclination towards the German Romantic language, a trait that was common for the 19th century Swedish composers.*

Keywords: *Ivar Hallström; Carmen Sylva; 19th Century; Swedish National School, Romantic Music; Romanian Inspiration; Ich bin jung Analysis.*

Introduction

The newly-emergent Swedish Romantic National School of Composition of the 19th century was heavily influenced by the German Romantic style of composition, especially until the first World War. This influence generated a less authentic national music throughout the Swedish territory compared to other European countries, and that is precisely one of the reasons that the Swedish National School was never close to achieving the same success of their neighboring countries such as Norway or Finland. Moreover, the authentic Swedish folkloric elements were heavily controlled and modified when it came to music composition.

In parallel with these paths of development, there was the French ideology of music saloons that got embraced progressively in the following decades, especially in the second half of the century. These saloons represented a frontier between socializing and creating. All the artists that were taking part in this type of artistic manifestation benefitted by finding a sponsor for their study voyages, or tested the public's reaction to their new compositions. The saloons were determining factors of the standards of the society.

Among the renowned Swedish composers of the 19th century were Adolf Fredrik Lindblad, August Söderman, Fredrik Vilhelm Ludvig Norman, Ivar Christian Hallström, Laura Constance Netzel, Johan Gustav Emil Sjögren and Helena Mathilda Munktell. Out of all of them, Ivar Hallström remains remembered as the creator of the national opera and a pioneer of the evolution of dramatic genres on Swedish land. His pedagogical input was also very important, as he discovered and trained talented pupils that were eventually to become famous singers. Hallström managed to successfully integrate the European influences and stylistic traits into his music while trying to remain original and also present the Swedish culture to the world.

¹ PhD School of Human Sciences and Arts - Music Domain, University of Oradea, biancaateodora@gmail.com.

1. Ivar Hallström

Ivar Christian Hallström was born in Stockholm (June 5, 1826) in a family that did not have any musical training. Even so, he managed to become one of the most productive and well-known composers of Sweden during the 19th century. He was considered to be the creator of the Swedish national opera, due to his prestigious work titled *Den Bergtagna*.

His first musical training consisted of piano lessons with teachers such as Edmund Passy or Theodor Stein. Ivar held a few performances as a pianist and was actually appreciated by the public. It is uncertain if he wanted to pursue a future as a musician from the start, as he began studying law at the University of Uppsala in the year of 1834. That was the town that facilitated his acquaintance with the Duke of Östergötland - who would later become known as King Oscar II, and prince Gustaf. He later became a member of their choir and the personal librarian of King Oscar II. Amongst others, Ivar was also the director of Adolf Lindblad's music school between 1861-1872, and the accompanist of Stockholm's Royal Theater.

After a study voyage in France, around the year of 1854, his decision to pursue a music career as a composer became more and more apparent. He started to teach private piano lessons in order to earn his living, being the mentor of important personalities such as Arvid Ödmann, Olof Lemon, Oscar Bergström, Blenda Nilsson-Lemon and Amalia Riégo. Ivar also organized plentiful music concerts at King Oscar's court, together with his friend and colleague Conrad Nordqvist, in which he promoted his compositions.

Ivar Hallstrom was elected as a member of the Royal Academy in Stockholm starting with 1861, and as a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Göteborg starting with 1881. He died in 1901 due to heart problems.

1.1. His oeuvre

Stylistically speaking, Ivar Hallström was closer to French Romantic music, resembling composers such as Charles Gounod or Fromental Halévy in his operatic repertoire or composers such as Adolphe Adam or Léo Delibes in his ballet works. Some consider that the form and structure of his operas were not grand, but rather „closer to operetta”².

He is generally considered to be a composer that merged „old” elements with folk ones, generating authentic national Romantic compositions. In his national operas, such as *Hertig Magnus och sjöjungfrun*, *Den Bergtagna*, *Vikingarna*, he included folk tunes in the shape of partial or direct quotations and that is exactly why he was considered the pioneer of this specific genre in Sweden. His collaboration with the Swedish librettist Frans Hedberg was a fruitful one. Their famous shared work - *Den Bergtagna* was based on an old nordic mythical ballad about a „maiden who, [...] is kidnapped by the Mountain King and taken into the mountain to be his wife”³.

Ivar was mostly self taught regarding composition and that could be one of the reasons he decided to stray away from complex genres such as symphonies, concerts, sonatas or chamber music. He was more fond of vocal and especially dramatic genres, such as opera (*Neaga*, *Vikingarne*, *Liten Karin*, *Den Bergtagna*, *Hertig Magnus och sjöjungfrun*), operetta (*Jaguarita L'Indienne*), melodrama (*En räddad engel*, *Kung Carls Eriksgata af Talis Qualis*), ballet (*Ett*

² Tobias Norlind. 1901. *Svensk Musikhistoria*. Helsingborg: Typografiska Anstalt, p. 212.

³ Anders Wiklund. *In Focus*. Retrieved May 2, 2024 from *Swedish Musical Heritage Website*, <https://swedishmusicalheritage.com/focus>.

äfventyr i Skottland, *Melusina*, *En Dröm*) and incidental music (*Nero*, *Stolts Elisif*). He was a master of lieder, composing over 100 works in this genre. His melodies are truly lyrical and present features extracted from the German composers of the 19th century. Hallström composed numerous other works, such as choirs, cantatas (*Kantat vid Konung Oscar II:s 25 åriga regeringsjubileum*, *Kantat afsjungen vid S:t Eric's 100åriga fest*, *Uppsala Kantat*), hymns (*Hell dig, älskade nord*), and small piano pieces. The number of works inventoried so far is 204.

His legacy is clearly consolidated, as musicologist Anders Wiklund concludes Hallström's biography from *Levande Musikarv* with the following statement: „And yet, no other Swedish composer in the opera domain has had fourteen operas performed at the Swedish Royal Opera.”⁴

2. Connections to Romania. Friendship with Carmen Sylva.

Ivar Hallström became acquainted with Carmen Sylva due to his close connection to King Oscar, the latter being an admirer of Carmen Sylva's writings. In 1877, during one trip the king made in Germany at the court of Queen Elisabeth's mother (Maria von Nassau), Hallström was also a guest. According to the Romanian musicologist Octavian Lazăr Cosma, that was the moment in which Hallström got to read Carmen Sylva's poems and „decided to set them to music, evolving into what was going to be the first cycle of lieder [...] *Drei ernste Lieder* (*Mutter*, *Müde* and *Trost*), [...] that consolidated their future collaboration”⁵. The same musicologist adds that their collaboration was an extensive one, comprising around 20 works: according to Ms. H. E. Schmidt, around 20 titles, which means something if you consider the fact that they are not only lieder and opera *Neaga*, but one more opera in one act, *Der schönste Schatz* (*The most beautiful treasure*), which was presumably performed July the 5th, 1883, at the Royal Court in Monrepos, celebrating birthday of Prince Wilhelm of Wied's wife. Also, there was one cantata, *Das Sonnenkind* (*The son of Sun*), which was performed on May 6th, 1884, in Stockholm, during *Musikföreningens Nionde Konsert*⁶.

Furthermore, in the summer of 1880, Hallström traveled to Bucharest together with the renowned tenor Arvid Ödmann. He was so impressed with the Romanian landscapes that he decided to compose an opera with Romanian subject, titled *Neaga*. Initially, it was thought of as an opera in five acts, but later got reduced to four. The premiere of this work took place on February 24th of 1885, at The Royal Opera in The United Kingdom. This particular work was criticized in Sweden due to the lack of authentic Swedish folk elements with which the public was familiarized. Still, this was actually a work that proved Hallström's craftsmanship in absorbing and transforming foreign modal elements into his nationalistic style of composition. Hallström once stated that he witnessed a folkloric festival in Romania „which he recorded and later used to create *Neaga*'s ballet scenes”⁷.

Another important source to read about their connection is *Arvid Ödmann: minnesblad*⁸, the traveling journal of Arvid, which was published by Alma Hård-Ödmann in 1915. In this book, he describes the Romanian landscape, criticizes the capital city, talks about his and Ivar

⁴ Anders Wiklund. *Ivar Hallström*. Retrieved April 4, 2024, from Levande Musikarv Website, <https://levandemusikarv.se/tonsattare/hallstrom-ivar/>.

⁵ Octavian Lazăr Cosma. 1999. „Opera „Neaga” de Ivar Hallström, libretul Carmen Sylva (I)”, *Muzica*, No. 3, p. 101.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Anders Wiklund. *Ivar Hallström*. Retrieved April 4, 2024, from Levande Musikarv Website, <https://levandemusikarv.se/tonsattare/hallstrom-ivar/>.

⁸ Alma Hård-Ödmann. 1915. *Arvid Ödmann: minnesblad*. Stockholm: Hugo Gebers Förlag.

Hallström's warm welcoming from Queen Elisabeth and most importantly, recounts all the Romanian customs, dances and melodies he witnessed while being in Sinaia.

Both Ivar Hallström and George Enescu created music for the texts of *Die Sphinx* and *Jurge Schmerzen* by Carmen Sylva. Octavian Lazăr asks himself „did the two composers met?” and quickly follows up by saying that „it is hard to determine but it is certain that they knew about each other”⁹. There was also the poem titled *Einem jungen Genie* written by Carmen Sylva and dedicated to George Enescu, for which Ivar provided the music.

Ivar Hallström's works based on texts written by Carmen Sylva are:

- a) Operas: *Neaga*, *Der schönste Schatz*
- b) Vocal-instrumental lieder for soloists, duets, or more voices: *Sinaia-Album* cycle, *Erinnerung*, *Das Glück*, *König Erichs Laute (Rosenschein auf den Wassern)*, *Ich bin så klein*, *Die vier blauen Augen (Von Schwarzwald hatt' ich)*, *Ira Diei (Zornroth geht der Tag)*, *Der Wald (Komm, komm)*, *Auf der Fels Spitze (Hier steh' ich)*, *Im Atelier (Ein Mahler)*, *Kindia (Es blitzen die Augen)*, *Der Bachio (Ich bin frei)*, *Hopp, Pegasus!*, *Meine Ruh (Drei ernste Lieder, Mutter, Müde, Trost)*, *Ich bin jung*.
- c) Cantata: *Das Sonnenkind*.
- d) *Sfinxen*, for soloists, choir and orchestra
- e) Musical telegrams: *Telegramma officiell (Presentata la oficial)*, *Télegramme à Mr Alecsandri (Monsieur Alecsandri)*, *Réponse télégraphique de Mr. Alecsandri (Mademoiselle Romalo)*, *Soupir de Monsieur Alecsandri (La maison serait bien)*, „*Sei nicht trotzig... An Fräulein Olga Braïleoi als Page*.

Their collaboration was mentioned in the Romanian press in some occasions. For instance, Grete Tartler was writing about an event titled „The weeks of cultural Swedish-Romanian dialogue” in *Luceafărul*¹⁰ (1997). The event unfolded at the Cotroceni Palace and its main event was the performance of lieder composed by Ivar Hallström, with texts by Carmen Sylva. The singers were Bianca Manoleanu, Remus Manoleanu and Gabriel Câte.

More recently, a celebration of Ivar Hallström and Carmen Sylva's friendship took place on February 24, 2009, through a themed concert organized by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Stockholm. The concert included works extracted from Ivar Hallström's oeuvre which had texts written by Carmen Sylva.

2.1. *Ich bin jung*

According to *Levande Musikarv*, Hallström composed this vocal song in 1864, but according to musicologist Octavian Lazăr Cosma, „*Ich bin jung* seems to date from 1897”, one year before their last encounter - „It seems that the last time they met was at Segenhaus, in 1898”¹¹.

The work contains one of the poems written by Carmen Sylva and it was conceived for a tenor voice, presenting even a clear dedication on the score to his student Olof Lemon. The voice is accompanied by piano. The predominant tonality is D Major and the meter is binary (4/4). The form used for the song is a ternary strophic form (ABAvr), really common for Romantic lieder.

⁹ Octavian Lazăr Cosma. 1999. „Opera „Neaga” de Ivar Hallström, libretul Carmen Sylva (I)”, *Muzica*, 3, p. 105.

¹⁰ Grete Tartler. 1997, May 14. „Lieduri pe versuri de Carmen Sylva”. *Luceafărul*, p. 18.

¹¹ Octavian Lazăr Cosma. 1999. „Opera „Neaga” de Ivar Hallström, libretul Carmen Sylva (I)”, *Muzica*, 3, p. 105.

Original text:

(A) *Ich bin jung, ich bin jung,
und die Welt sie ward mein,
ja, mein ist der Tag und sein Gehen!
Ich bin jung, ich bin jung!
In die Strahlen hinein will ich greifen
wie Frühlingswindwehen!*

(B) *Ich bin jung, ich bin jung,
und das Herz ist so voll,
es will aus den Lippen mir schwellen!
Ich bin jung, ich bin jung,
und das Blut ist so toll,
es will aus den Adern mir quellen!*

(Avar) *Ich bin jung, ich bin jung,
und viel süssen Gesang,
den legte mir Gott in die Kehle!
Ich bin jung, ich bin jung,
dass mit jauchzendem Klang
dem Himmel sich öffnet die Seele!*

Romanian translation:

*Sunt tânăr, sunt tânăr,
Și lumea a fost a mea,
Da, a mea este ziua și trecerea ei!
Sunt tânăr, sunt tânăr,
Vreau să ating razele precum
o briză de primăvară!*

*Sunt tânăr, sunt tânăr,
Iar inima este atât de plină,
Vrea să iasă printre buzele mele!
Sunt tânăr, sunt tânăr,
Și sângele este atât de grozav,
Vrea să iasă din vene!*

*Sunt tânăr, sunt tânăr,
Și mult cântec dulce,
Dumnezeu mi-a oferit în glas!
Sunt tânăr, sunt tânăr,
Prin sunetul jubilent
Sufletul se deschide spre cer!*

The general tempo marking, *Mit Jubel*, can represent a reference to Schubert's way of writing the tempo indications only in German. Nothing out of the ordinary happens regarding this aspect, exception being bars 16-17, where a *poco rit.* appears. The predominant dynamic is *forte* for sections A and Avar, while *piano* is predominant in the middle section (B).

From a melodic perspective, the A and Avar sections present the following differences in intervallic jumps, as detailed in the table below:

Section A	Section Avar
bar 6 - m2, M2, m2, P4, m3.	bar 22 - P8, P1, m2, P1.
bar 7 - M2, -4, m2, P4, m2, m6, P5.	bar 23 - m2, +1, m2, P4, M3.
the end of A, bar 8 - M2 downward.	the end of Avar, bar 24 - two intervallic jumps: m6 downward and m2 ascending.

Table 1. *Analysis of intervallic jumps in the similar A and Avar sections, based on the score of Ivar Hallström - Ich bin jung, Svensk Musiktidnings Musik-Album, No. VII, Svensk Musiktidnings Expedition, Stockholm, 1893*¹².

¹² Available link: https://carkiv.musikverk.se/www/epublikationer/Svensk_Musiktidning_musikbilaga_1893.pdf.

The image shows the first system of a musical score. It consists of a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment features a prominent sextuplet in the bass line.

Fig. 1. Ivar Hallström - *Ich bin jung*, *Svensk Musiktidnings Musik-Album, No. VII, Svensk Musiktidnings Expedition, Stockholm, 1893, bb. 6-8.*

The image shows the second system of the musical score, continuing from the first system. It includes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics continue across two lines. The piano accompaniment continues with sextuplets and other rhythmic patterns.

Fig. 2. Ivar Hallström - *Ich bin jung*, *Svensk Musiktidnings Musik-Album, No. VII, Svensk Musiktidnings Expedition, Stockholm, 1893, bb. 21-24.*

Each instance in which the verse *Ich bin jung, ich bin jung* appears in sections A or Avar, the melody unfolds in an ascending, successive way (see bar 1 with off beat, 4-5, 16-17 and 20-21). In the B section, the melody is unfolding with intervallic jumps (bars 8-9 and 12-13). This verse usually starts on the second half on the fourth beat (see bars 1 with off beat, 4, 8, 12, 17, 20).

The tonal plan of the song revolved around D Major and its minor relative key - b minor - in sections A and Avar. The middle section, B, commences with a sudden chromatic passage, as the two sharps, f# and c#, are mostly erased and replaced with two flats, bb and eb. This passage establishes itself in F Major between bars 10-12, but quickly moves towards other keys such as g minor and A Major before going back to D Major (Avar section).

The accompaniment is only present to support the vocal line - as in the case of early Romantic composers, not to overshadow it - as in the case of late Romantic composers. It comprises mostly sextuplets for the A and Avar sections, and tremolos in the B section. The

upper voice of the right hand doubles the vocal line. There are two unique moments in this accompaniment line: one *appoggiatura* appears in bar 16, and two triplets appear in bar 23.

There is one performance available on YouTube offered by *The Orchard Enterprises*, dating back from 1899, in which the soloist was the Swedish tenor Oscar Bergström. This particular performance is important because nowadays Ivar Hallström is not integrated in concert programs as much and it offers us a clear proof of how Swedish singers used to perform such genres over a hundred years ago. Even though it's not a high-definition rendition in order to clearly distinguish the piano part from the soloistic part, it can still be heard that the composer's indications were applied and the overall sonority of the *sång* certainly follows the Romantic style and aesthetic.

3. Conclusions

The first Swedish National School of composition was founded around composers such as Ivar Hallström, who not only managed to find their successful path in their own country but were able to travel and thus extend their knowledge in order to find their own style and consolidate their career as Romantic composers during the 19th century. Even though Hallström is rarely included in concert programs nowadays, his legacy in the dramatic genres is an impressive one. He deserves to be acknowledged more, especially in Romania - the country to which he felt somehow attached due to his tight relationship of friendship with Queen Elizabeth.

He was among the first international composers that crafted numerous works which promoted our culture, traditions and folk music abroad, and yet, many of those works remain stored in archives and are little to none discussed or analyzed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my PhD coordination, conf. univ. dr. habil. Mirela Târc, for allowing me to express freely and write my current PhD thesis about the subject that I like the most, that being the Swedish music belonging to the 19th and 20th centuries and the Swedish-Romanian connections established in the same period of time. This topic became my top priority since I was in Malmö during a whole school year, through an Erasmus grant obtained while being a student at the „Gheorghe Dima” National Academy of Music in Cluj-Napoca. In Sweden I discovered the beauty of choral singing, and the ingenuity and craftsmanship of certain composers that I had never heard of until that instance. Since 2021, composers such as Wilhelm Stenhammar, Emil Sjögren, Hugo Alfvén, Helena Munktell, Laura Netzels, Ivar Hallström and many others, have become my favorite subjects of research.

4. References

Books

- Hård-Ödmann, Alma. 1915. *Arvid Ödmann: minnesblad*. Stockholm: Hugo Gebers Förlag.
- Norlind, Tobias. 1901. *Svensk Musikhistoria*. Helsingborg: Typografiska Anstalt.

Articles (from journals)

- Cozma, Lazăr Octavian. 1999. „Opera “Neaga” de Ivar Hallström, libretul Carmen Sylva (I)” [Electronic version]. *Muzica*, 3, 93–122.

Article (in a newspaper)

- 1884, November 15. „Följetong. Neaga”. *Svensk Musiktidning*, 18, 139-140.
- 1901, April 16. „Ivar Hallström”. *Svensk Musiktidning*, 8, 57-59.
- Tartler, Grete. 1997, May 14. „Lieduri pe versuri de Carmen Sylva”. *Luceafărul*, p. 18.

Electronic sources**Document available on university program or department website**

- *Ivar Hallström - Ich bin jung* [electronic score], Retrieved August 7, 2024, from *Svensk Musiktidning* :
https://carkiv.musikverk.se/www/epublikationer/Svensk_Musiktidning_musikbilaga_1893.pdf
- *Ivar Hallströms arkiv*. Retrieved August 8, 2024, from *Musikverket*:
https://carkiv.musikverk.se/www/arkivforteckningar/Ivar_Hallstroms_arkiv_innehallsforteckning.pdf.
- Wiklund, Anders. *Ivar Hallström*. Retrieved April 4, 2024, from *Levande Musikarv*:
<https://levandemusikarv.se/tonsattare/hallstrom-ivar/>.
- Wiklund, Anders. *In Focus*. Retrieved May 2, 2024, from *Swedish Musical Heritage*: <https://swedishmusicalheritage.com/focus>.