

# Wilhelm Stenhammar as an actor in the late 19th century musical life of Stockholm

## Suggestions for new perspectives and interpretations through digital musicology

Anne Reese Willén

### Introduction

Bo Wallner describes his monumental biography of Wilhelm Stenhammar as:

a work about one of the greatest figures in Swedish music history, significant not only as a composer but also as a pianist and conductor, all in a time – the decades around the turn of the century 1900 – when the foundation for the modern Swedish musical life was laid (Wallner, 1991, p. 7).<sup>1</sup>

This work does not solely focus on Stenhammar's life and work, a scope which Wallner considered too narrow and prone to overlooking important aspects. Instead, Wallner aimed to contextualize Stenhammar's achievements within the time and environment he worked in.

Wallner's deep engagement with Stenhammar's works began in the late 1940s and culminated in a biography to which he devoted 20 years. The biography is thus a culmination of over forty years of work and reflects Wallner's extensive interaction with and perspective on Stenhammar.

Wallner's contribution significantly enriches the research on Swedish musical life around the turn of the twentieth century and has also played a crucial role in the historiography of Swedish music. In the first volume of the biography, Wallner depicts the last decades of the 19th century as a musical backwater period. However, my interpretation of this period differs, based on comprehensive research of musical life in Stockholm during the latter half of the 19th century. Wallner's analysis of this period relies partly on specific statements from critical articles and reviews, and primarily on his extensive study of the music journal *Svensk musiktidning*. While he does draw on studies of music criticism in the daily press, there is a lack of systematic exploration of this kind of material. It is important to note that in Wallner's time, research on this

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Swedish to English in this article are made by the present author. Original Swedish: '...ett arbete om en av de största gestalterna i den svenska musikhistorien, betydande inte bara som tonsättare utan också som pianist och dirigent, allt i en tid – decennierna kring sekelskiftet 1900 – då det moderna svenska musiklivet började byggas'.

period was relatively limited. Since Wallner's biography was published, the source situation has undergone significant changes. The widespread digitization of daily newspapers and other periodicals, coupled with digital methodologies, has opened new avenues for historical research and reevaluations of previous findings. Furthermore, various contributions have been made to historical research on this period. This article aims to challenge the notion that the 1880s and 1890s were times of reduced activity or even decline in Stockholm's musical life, and instead proposes alternative ways of understanding the period and the individuals operating within it.

This article aims to contribute to three main fields of study: Stenhammar's early career, musical networks in Stockholm, and digital musicology. The article will analyze Stenhammar's role in Stockholm's musical landscape through the lens of existing musical networks within the city, with a particular emphasis on his involvement as a chamber musician. I will also critically examine Wallner's perspective on the position of chamber music in Stockholm's public musical life. Stenhammar was born in Stockholm in 1871. He embarked on his career in 1890 and was in 1907 appointed conductor of the Gothenburg Orchestral Society (Göteborgs orkesterförening). This investigation focuses on Stenhammar's time in Stockholm, but aims to consider longer historical developments of the musical networks and the chamber music scene and therefore spans over the second half of the 19th century until the first decade of the 20th century.

'Digital musicology', like the wider term 'digital humanities', encompasses a wide range of disciplines, from digital repositories of digitized archives and periodicals to computational analysis of extensive datasets (Platt, 2021). This study is a part of the research project 'Canon and concert life',<sup>2</sup> which investigates concert life and musical repertoire in Stockholm from 1848 to 1914, utilizing digital methodology in several ways. The project involves a systematic examination of concert advertisements and concert programs, following a 'slice history' approach<sup>3</sup> with in-depth studies of every tenth year over the period. This has resulted in a database containing comprehensive data on concert performances and other musical events. The database includes a wide range of metadata enabling different types of questions to the material. The source material consists mainly of advertisements, articles and reviews in contemporary daily press.<sup>4</sup>

The article's approach combines quantitative sliced history methodology with qualitative investigations, focusing on specific questions within a broader time span. This digital methodology offers new ways of analyzing structures in the musical life and

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<sup>2</sup> This project was financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation) and housed by the Department of Musicology at Uppsala University 2019–2023.

<sup>3</sup> 'Slice history' is a methodology that involves the deepest possible investigation of one-year slices of history. It has been applied within musicology within several projects (see Bashford, Cowgill, and McVeigh, 2002; McColl, 1996). In this context, the methodology means gathering as much material as possible about the concert life in Stockholm for one year every decade, including the years 1848, 1858, 1868, 1878, 1888, 1898, and 1908. The data have then been organized in a database.

<sup>4</sup> These sources are available via the National Library's (Kungliga biblioteket) database of digitized Swedish daily newspapers, *Svenska dagstidningar*, <https://tidningar.kb.se/>.

repertoire. Visualization is an important component in this study. A powerful tool for discovering and analysing structures in a large dataset, information visualization relies on two key principles, reduction and space. Graphical primitives such as points, lines, curves and geometrical shapes are used to represent objects or actors and relations between them. In addition, spatial variables such as position, size and shape can be used to represent differences in the data that can reveal patterns and structures (Manovich, 2011). In this article, I advocate the use of network visualizations to examine the concert scene's structures in Stockholm, aiding reinterpretations of its dynamics.

This article begins with a summary and discussion of Wallner's description and analysis of the musical life in Stockholm in the late 19th century, examining the categorization of composers into generations and its connections to developments in musical life. I will then present an overview of the period's expanding concert scene, covering venues and key figures, with particular attention to chamber music concerts. This overview forms a foundation for an analysis of Stenhammar's early career, providing new perspectives that challenge Wallner's portrayal of the era.

## Bo Wallner's description of the 1880s

As a foundation for his analysis of the context in which Stenhammar first interacted with the public musical life, Wallner uses the travelogues of the pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow. This text, originally written for the *Allgemeine deutsche Musikzeitung* during his tour in Stockholm in April 1882, describes the musical life of Stockholm for a German audience. Wallner also references the Swedish translation and summary of these letters published in the music journal *Svensk musiktidning* in June 1882 (issue 11), from which he derives his quotes (Wallner, 1991, p. 51). Rather than going into every aspect discussed by von Bülow, Wallner focuses mainly on the opening passage. There, von Bülow expresses his amazement at the 'tropical heat' he received during his recitals in Stockholm. Wallner points to von Bülow's speculations about the relation between the enthusiasm shown by the audience for the visiting performer and the 'productive drought' of Swedish composition (Wallner, 1991, p. 52). Wallner mentions von Bülow's account of the opera *Vikingarne* (The Vikings) by Ivar Hallström, staged at the Royal Theatre, a work that von Bülow finds dilettantish, 'testing his patience to the limit' (Wallner, 1991, p. 52)<sup>5</sup>. The only other composer mentioned by von Bülow that Wallner highlights is Ludvig Norman, 'the last truly successful student of the Leipzig Conservatory's heyday',<sup>6</sup> who was unfortunately suffering from illness at the time (Wallner, 1991, p. 52).

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<sup>5</sup> The name of the royal opera institution changed over time. In some periods the institution included both theatre and opera (opera throughout the period), but the name used most of the time was The Royal Theatre. I have chosen to use the name The Royal Theatre for the whole period to avoid confusion. The opera *Vikingarne* was staged at the Royal Theatre on April 26 and 28, 1882. von Bülow gave concerts at the Royal Swedish Academy of Music on April 25 and 27 and at the Royal Theatre on April 29. Hence, he had opportunities to see one of the performances and possibly one of the rehearsals.

<sup>6</sup> Original in Wallner, 1991, p. 52: [...] 'den siste verkligt framgångsrike lärjungen från Leipzig-konservatoriets glanspök'.

Another example that Wallner cites to support his analysis of the state of Swedish music in the 1880s is the First Nordic Music Festival (Första svenska musikfesten), in 1888 (Wallner, 1991, p. 52). He highlights the fact that the Swedish composers who received a ‘broader presentation’ at this festival – Franz Berwald, August Söderman and Ludvig Norman – all had already passed away. Among the living Swedish composers, Emil Sjögren and Andreas Hallén were the most successful. From this observation, he concludes that ‘the most and the best of Swedish music represented at this festival belonged to the past’ (Wallner, 1991, pp. 52–53). However, Wallner does not address the fact that music by several other contemporary Swedish composers was performed in the festival. His statement seems rooted in value judgments that he does not account for.

While Wallner acknowledges these examples as ‘spotlights’, he suggests that *Svensk musiktidning* may offer a more nuanced perspective on the musical life of the 1880s (Wallner, 1991, p. 53). Still, after a thorough study of this journal he arrives at the same conclusion. Hallén and Sjögren are the contemporary composers who figure most prominently in the journal, but the emphasis primarily falls on deceased composers, including Ludvig Norman (1831–1885),<sup>7</sup> Adolf Fredrik Lindblad (1801–1878), and Franz Berwald (1796–1868), along with a considerable number of foreign composers, particularly French. Wallner notes that the journal primarily focuses on performers, particularly visiting virtuosos. He highlights Adolf Lindgren as the foremost, and possibly the only, genuine critic, noting that other critics often lacked the education and analytical ability to assess music on a compositional level. However, he acknowledges that, in some cases, other individuals also demonstrated considerable expertise and observational skills, particularly in their interpretations of romantic piano repertoire (Wallner, 1991, p. 54).

Wallner highlights a few debate articles in *Svensk musiktidning*, which deduce that the challenges in Stockholm’s musical life could be partly attributed to the conservatism of the musical elite. Additionally, the authors of these articles come to the same conclusions, that the lack of resources in the form of a concert orchestra and multiple choirs, as well as the absence of a robust educational tradition, contributed to these problems (Wallner, 1991, p. 61).<sup>8</sup> Another aspect that Wallner places particular emphasis on here is the absence of chamber music in contemporary analyses of musical life. Wallner returns to this topic, given that it was an integral part of Stenhammar’s activities, especially during his early career.

Wallner continues his discussion of the state of musical life in the 1880s and depicts it as a low-water mark in Swedish music history. Nonetheless, his analyses often appear

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<sup>7</sup> However, Norman was alive and working through the first five years of *Svensk musiktidning* and, in addition, had the most central position in Stockholm’s musical life as court conductor, which may explain some of the attention he received in the journal.

<sup>8</sup> The articles referenced are ‘Symfonikonserterna’ (The symphony concerts) by Louise Heritté-Viardot (1882, [1]) criticising the repertoire of the symphony concerts at the Royal Theatre; ‘Symfonikonserterna’ by Ludvig Norman (1882 [2]), a reply to Heritté-Viardot; and a series of three articles called ‘Konservatism eller liberalism?’ (Conservatism or liberalism) by Adolf Lindgren (1885 [2], 1885 [3], 1885 [4]).

to be made from the vantage point of subsequent developments rather than an examination of the time leading up to it. Wallner's description and analysis of the period are predominantly negative, and considering alternative viewpoints allows for a broader range of interpretations.

The period that Wallner himself refers to as the beginning of 'modern Swedish musical life' (Wallner, 1991, p. 7) coincides with the emergence of a new generation of Swedish composers, which includes Stenhammar, Hugo Alfvén and Wilhelm Peterson-Berger. I propose that the emergence of this generation should be seen not an isolated phenomenon but rather a product of a long development in musical life.

## Generations of composers?

Wallner asserts that 'the eighties can never become a living concept from a qualitative art music point of view, at least not with the luminosity that the decade has in literature'<sup>9</sup> (Wallner, 1991, p. 71). The notion of the 1880s as a period of little or no progress in music, in comparison to art and literature, is also reflected in earlier historiography. For instance, in his commemorative words for Emil Sjögren, Wilhelm Peterson-Berger contrasts the 'musical 1880s' with the flourishing realms of visual arts and literature (Peterson-Berger, 1918, pp. 41–42). Within this context, Peterson-Berger highlights Emil Sjögren and Andreas Hallén as the principal composers of the era, with few other notable names emerging during the 1880s besides these two.

Periodization of music history based on composers' activities and influences is a traditional form of historiography, which also reflects an older historiographical paradigm. This tendency is notably observed in Swedish music historiography, particularly in narratives describing the musical landscape towards the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century. Earlier research and music historical writings has pointed to the '1880s generation' represented by Sjögren and Hallén, followed by the 'turn of the century generation' including Wilhelm Stenhammar, Hugo Alfvén and Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (see, for example, Peterson-Berger, 1918; Törnblom, ed., 1943; Hedwall, 1983; Wallner, 1991; Jonsson and Tegen, 1992).<sup>10</sup> The 1910s ushered in yet another generation, including names such as Kurt Atterberg, Ture Rangström and Natanael Berg. The interwar period is represented by Gösta Nystroem, Hilding Rosenberg and Moses Pergament, and so on (see, for example, Wallner, 1968; Wallner, 1972; Hedwall, 1983; Åstrand, 1994). These 'generations' not only represent the periods of impact for the composers, but also refers to stylistic features as well as aesthetic attitudes.

While it is possible to group the composers in the earlier part of the 19th century, the establishment of such groupings might not be as distinct, or not even as relevant either, as for later periods. This is primarily due to the relative scarcity of stylistic diversity in

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<sup>9</sup> '*åttiotal* kan aldrig ur konstmusikalisk kvalitativ synvinkel bli ett levande begrepp, i varje fall inte med den lyskraft som decenniet har inom *litteraturen*'.

<sup>10</sup> In Jonsson and Tegen, the term 'generation' is not used explicitly, but these composers are highlighted as examples of this precise time.

the first half of the 19th century. Moreover, there was a limited presence of native and, notably, professional Swedish composers during that era.

Composers who achieved prominence in the 1820s and '30s include Franz Berwald, Johan Fredrik Berwald, Adolf Fredrik Lindblad, Johan Peter Cronhamn, Andreas Randel, and Gustav Mankell, and in the 1840s, Jacob Axel Josephson, Gunnar Wennerberg and Oscar Byström. However, these groupings offer little insight beyond indicating the periods when these individuals made their debuts as composers. Their works span a range of genres, from salon and theatre music to symphonies, chamber compositions, and choral pieces. Franz Berwald, and to some extent Adolf Fredrik Lindblad, received most attention in public musical life long after their deaths, as they were promoted by prominent composers and performers of later generations. It is only for the period around mid-century that discussions about generations of composers in the manner described above might be of relevance. This transition aligns with developments in public musical life, which gained momentum from mid-19th century onwards and led to shifts in the composer's role and perspectives. These changes made this type of groupings more relevant.

There is some relevance in describing an '1850s generation' of which the main representatives were Ludvig Norman, August Söderman and Albert Rubenson. This generation represented the definitive entry of romantic music into Sweden. The contemporary musical life was characterized by the transformation from a representative to a bourgeois public musical life with a strong spirit of reform. This spirit manifested itself in music criticism, aesthetic debate, practical musical life, and in the ambitions to develop and improve the conditions of national musical life (Reese Willén, 2014). All three composers of the '1850s generation' shared a common educational background in Leipzig: Rubenson from 1844 to 1848, Norman from 1848 to 1852, and Söderman from 1856 to 1857. Norman was the only one actually enrolled in the esteemed Leipzig Conservatory, whereas Rubenson and Söderman studied privately with the conservatory's teachers (Hallgren, 2013; Löndahl, 2015; Volgsten, 2014). In particular, Norman and Rubenson were profoundly influenced by the musical idealism flourishing in Leipzig during the era. They brought these ideals back to Stockholm, incorporating them both in their compositions and in their engagement with musical life. Norman and Rubenson emerged as strong voices in the musical aesthetic discourse of the 1850s. In their discussions they addressed various topics, including the negative influence of dilettantism in musical life. Even though they were different, all three composers also gained important positions within the expanding public musical life. Consequently, they were able to influence the structures that had emerged during the preceding decades.

In contrast, two other composers who emerged in the 1850s, Jakob Edvard Gille and Per August Ölander, pursued distinct paths both in terms of career and compositional style. Gille chose to combine a musical career as a theatre musician and organist with a civil service role. Ölander, on the other hand, was a distinguished civil servant with an interest in music on the side. However, both adhered to classical stylistic ideals that stood apart from the romantic influences of the time (Hallgren, 2015; Lundberg, 2016).

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This sets them apart from Norman, Rubenson and Söderman, which makes it irrelevant to group them in the same ‘generation’.

Moving into the 1860s a new wave of composers joined the ranks alongside the ‘50s generation. Figures like Ivar Hallström, Joseph Dente and Johan Lindegren made their entrance during this period. Lindegren later became known as a leading author on music aesthetics and also as Sweden’s foremost teacher of counterpoint. Hallström had started his professional life as a civil servant but redirected his course in 1854, fully dedicating himself to music as a composer, music teacher and singing instructor at the Royal Theatre. It was primarily within opera that he made his name as a composer. Despite being almost an autodidact he managed to have fourteen operas staged at the Royal Theatre (Wiklund, 2015). Finally, in the 1870s, Laura Netzelt, Conrad Nordqvist, Elfrida Andrée, Vilhelm Svedbom and Anton Andersen also debuted as composers.

While it is evident that several composers made their debuts in the 1860s and ‘70s, it is not as relevant to talk about a ‘1860s- and 1870s generation’ of composers in the same way as for the 1850s. Most composers enjoyed careers spanning far beyond the decade of their debut. This means that composers who debuted in the 1850s could also be among the foremost in the 1880s, such as Ludvig Norman. For the practice of grouping composers in this manner to hold relevance, there needs to be an additional factor connecting them beyond the mere timing of their debuts.

The key point in Wallner’s analysis of the 1880s and 1890s is the question derived from von Bülow’s account (Wallner, 1991, p. 52): where were the composers? This suggests that Stenhammar at the outset of his career would have experienced the musical life of Sweden (or at least Stockholm) as a compositional void. However, I believe that this perspective offers a too narrow interpretation of this era. While Hallén and Sjögren were the rising stars of this period, representing stylistic progress, they were far from the only composers active during that time.

### **The public musical life**

Wallner’s focus lies on the scarcity of composers, even if he briefly mentions some of the other aspects that Hans von Bülow covers in his article (Wallner, 1991, pp. 51–52). However, a deeper reading of von Bülow’s text and his reference to the ‘reproductive forces’ reveals a much more positive picture of musical life in Stockholm during this time (Bülow, 1882, pp. 83–85). von Bülow emphasizes several excellent singers at the opera and particularly praises the opera orchestra, Hovkapellet (The Royal Swedish Orchestra).<sup>11</sup> He is impressed by the balance within the ensemble, despite the uneven distribution between strings and winds. He also praises the supplementary musicians typically engaged for symphony concerts. He highlights the deputy court Kapellmeisters Dente and Nordqvist and their impressive efforts as conductors. Furthermore, he appraises the cosmopolitan and modern nature of the repertoire, emphasizing the

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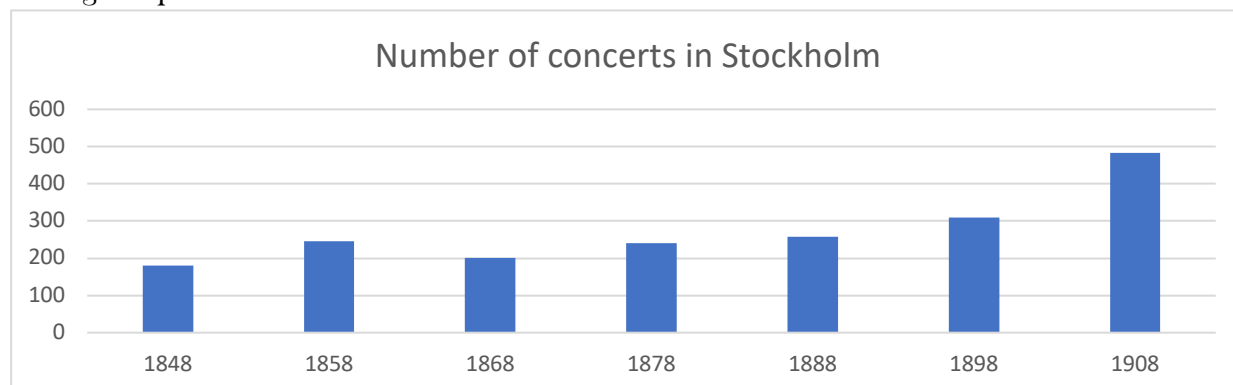
<sup>11</sup> Kungliga Hovkapellet was – and is still – the resident orchestra at the Royal Theatre. I have chosen to use the name Hovkapellet in Swedish in this article to make it clearer although I translate all other names of institutions and organisations to English.

breadth and diversity of musical performances offered to the audience. Additionally, he notes the Royal Swedish Academy of Music's conservatory (Kungliga Musikaliska akademiens konservatorium) and the excellent teaching staff there. In contrast to Wallner, I interpret von Bülow's account as rather positive, revealing many facets of the musical life that were the direct outcomes of the work of preceding generations. In relation to Stenhammar's career, it shows that working within this context provided many opportunities. Thus, while the 1880s might not mark a high point in the field of composition, the musical milieu itself provided a fertile ground for the upcoming generation.

An evident observation within the database of the project 'Canon and concert life' is the substantial changes that occur in concert life during this period. Martin Tegen's research establishes that the decades around 1900 saw an unprecedented expansion of public concert life (Tegen, 1955). The preliminary findings of the 'Canon and concert life' project align with these conclusions. By studying the structures of concert life on a detailed level it is possible to gain an understanding of the development within this context.

### The expansion of concert life

Musical life encompasses a range of diverse elements that collectively contribute to both music production and consumption. In this section, I will provide an overview of Stockholm's concert scene, showing how it changed before and during Stenhammar's early career in the city. Table 1 shows the total number of concerts every ten years during the period 1848 to 1908.



**Table 1.** In the beginning of the period, 'concert' was not the only term used to denote musical performances. In these statistics, a number of different types of music performances have been included, even those that do not bear the designation 'concert' but are assessed as equivalent. However, certain types of occasions when music was performed that are included in the database have been excluded here, for example, performances at dances and balls as well as more unspecified musical entertainment in connection with other events. The reason for this exclusion is the fact that the music was not sufficiently in focus for the event to be categorized as equivalent to a concert.

As depicted in Table 1, the frequency of concerts differed from year to year, with the most significant change occurring around the turn of the century. It is interesting to look more closely at the change that was taking place. How could there be such a



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noticeable expansion in concert life around the turn of the 20th century? How did the structures of the concert life change during this period?

More detailed studies of the material show that not only did the number of concerts increase, but also the number of concert venues and actors involved in the concert life. The concert life also broadened through an increasing variety of concert types and greater division between lighter entertainment and ‘serious’ concerts. The type of concert was determined entirely, or at least partly, by the context where music was performed.

### **Concert venues and musical actors in Stockholm**

The Stockholm Concert Hall (Konserthuset), was inaugurated in 1926, merely a year before Stenhammar’s passing. The period during which Stenhammar was active bore witness to the endeavours aimed at establishing an independent orchestra and a dedicated concert hall in Stockholm (see Kuritzén Löwengart, 2017). Before the Stockholm Concert Hall became a reality, the concert hall of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music<sup>12</sup> (Kungliga Musikaliska Akademien) offered the only purpose-built venue for concerts in Stockholm. However, numerous musical performances took place in other places as well (Reese Willén, 2014). The number of venues used for concerts also increased over the course of the century, which contributed to the growth of concert life.

The modern definition of the term ‘concert’ puts music at a focal point of social attention (Weber, 2001). The etiquette of maintaining complete silence and stillness during formal concert performances began evolving during the 19th century; however, this etiquette was not observed at all concerts. In fact, during the latter half of the 19th century in Stockholm, the term ‘concert’ was employed to describe both formal symphony performances and background music in restaurants. The Swedish language also employed other terms such as ‘matinée’ and ‘soirée’ (Reese Willén, 2014, pp. 97–99). Consequently, a more inclusive term, ‘musical events’, is apt when discussing public musical performances during this era. The design of the Stockholm concert life database is built around the ‘musical event’, but a wide range of metadata allows for diverse query types. I will use a series of visualizations in the form of network graphs (Figures 1–4) based on the data collected in the database to illustrate how the structures within concert life changed and how concert life expanded from mid 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century. Each graph represents the concert life of a particular year, including musical events registered in the database, performing musicians, concert producers as well as concert venues. In these network graphs, a two-node network principle is employed. This means that the nodes (represented by coloured circular symbols) represent two types: venues and actors. The colour indicates the type. Green nodes represent concert venues, whereas the other nodes represent actors of different types. Orange nodes represent male actors, and blue nodes, female actors. Purple nodes represent actors that are groups, organizations or institutions of different kinds (like

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<sup>12</sup> From here referred to as the Royal Academy of Music.

orchestras, choirs, etc.). The relational ties represent musical events. This means that actors are connected to both a concert venue and other actors performing at the same events. The size of the node indicates frequency, i.e., a large node represents an actor who appeared on many occasions, or a concert venue used frequently, and the thickness of the ties represents the frequency of the collaboration. In order to facilitate reading, I have reduced the number of labels on the nodes, including only the most pronounced actors and venues, but the complete graphs, with all details, can be studied in separate pdf files published together with the article. Through this mapping, structures become visible and can be spotted and analyzed.

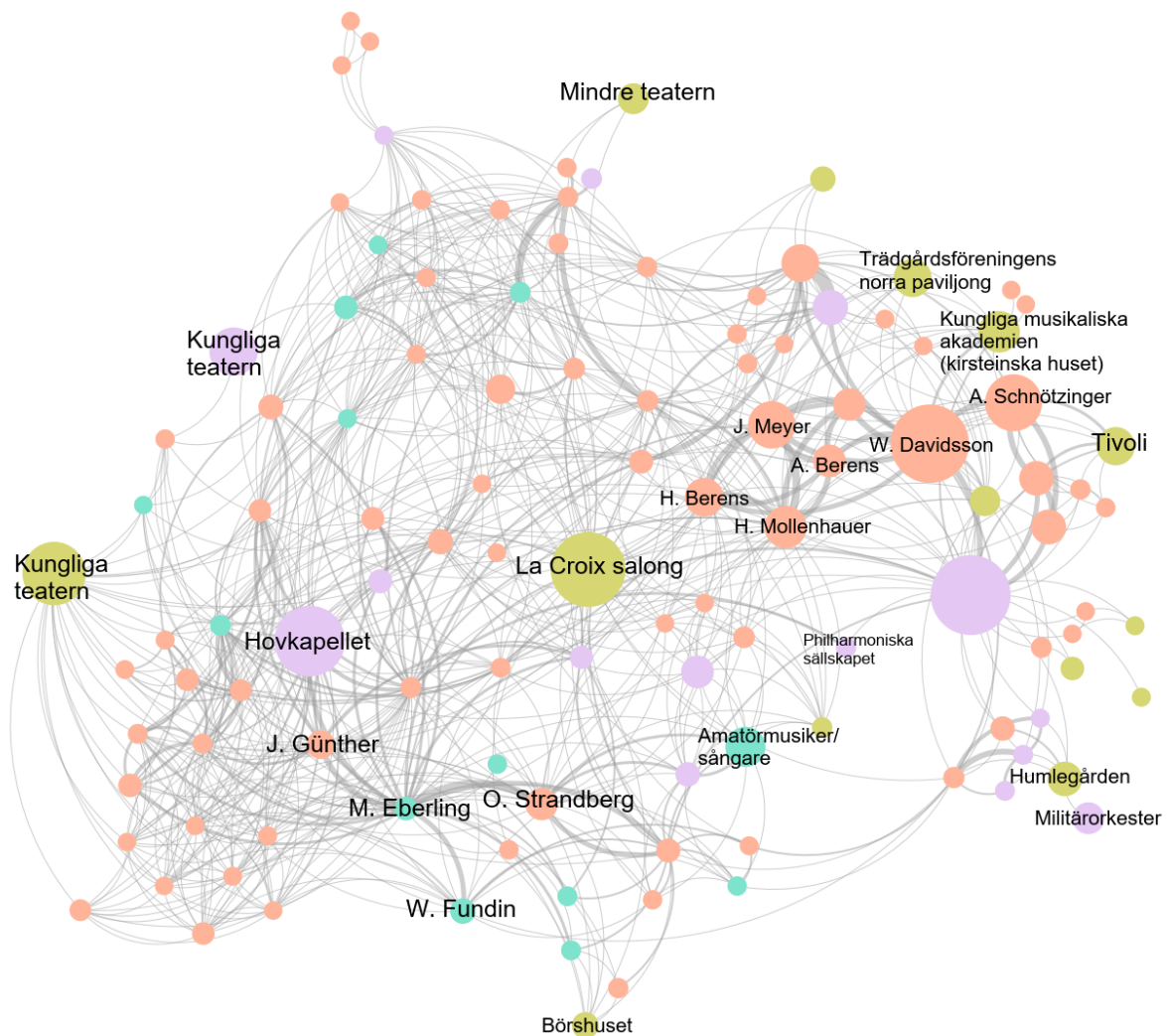


Figure 1. The concert life of Stockholm in 1848.<sup>13</sup>

During the 1840s and '50s there were relatively few concert venues. The prominent ones include the Royal Theatre, La Croix salon, the Royal Academy of Music,

<sup>13</sup> The software used to produce this and the following graphs is called Gephi and is available free online at <https://gephi.org/>. The database uses Microsoft Access and the data was exported via Excel and imported in Gephi.

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Humlegården, Tivoli, and the Stock Exchange building (Börshuset) as indicated by the larger nodes.<sup>14</sup> The north pavilion of the Stockholm Garden Association (Trädgårdsföreningens norra paviljong) also stood out as an important venue.

The structures highlight the central roles of Hovkapellet and the Royal Theatre. The latter is depicted by both a green and a purple node: green as a concert venue, and purple as a concert producer. As the only resident symphony orchestra, Hovkapellet was pivotal, though its opera commitments limited external projects. Other orchestras and ensembles during this period included military bands,<sup>15</sup> visiting dance orchestras, the occasional ensemble of the Philharmonic Society (Philharmoniska sällskapet), private theatre ensembles, as well as smaller groups serving as restaurant musicians.<sup>16</sup>

The Royal Theatre was the main employer of musicians and singers, which is reflected by individual actors that stand out in this visualization. Singers like Julius Günther, Mathilda Eberling, Olof Strandberg and Wilhelmina Fundin, all frequently featured in concerts, showcase this connection.

An interesting actor that stands out in this graph is Wilhelm Davidsson. Neither connected to the Royal Theatre nor in fact a musician, but a pastry cook and entrepreneur, he gained this position as a concert producer leveraging music in his businesses. The majority of musical events connected to him in this graph were the chamber music concerts at the Garden Association. Related to these concerts are also the prominent musicians Johannes Meyer; Hermann Berens, Sr; Adolph Berens; and Heinrich Hollenhauer. They formed a string quartet that performed at Davidsson's concerts.<sup>17</sup> The cluster around Wilhelm Davidsson also underscores the prevalence of promenade concerts during this time, exemplified by Anton Schnötzingers orchestra performances at Tivoli.

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<sup>14</sup> La Croix, a Swiss restaurant (schweizeri), was the most important place for social gatherings and entertainment during this time. The Royal Academy of Music was during this time located in the so-called Kirstein House (Kirsteinska huset). Humlegården is a public park in Östermalm where outdoor concerts were often held. There was also a restaurant there that sometimes had musical entertainment. Tivoli was one of Stockholm's first amusement parks, inspired by Tivoli in Copenhagen; it opened in 1848 at Nortullsgatan in Vasastan. At Tivoli there was a large indoor dance hall as well as an outdoor stage for music.

<sup>15</sup> In Figure 1 presented with the Swedish term 'Militärörkester', which refers to several different bands as they were not always explicitly named in the concert programs. This means that military bands appear as several nodes, as for instance the three purple nodes closest to the one marked 'Militärörkester' in Figure 1, which are bands that were named in the programs.

<sup>16</sup> It was relatively common for the orchestra or ensemble not to be named in the advertisements. Often the advertisements just mention 'orchestra' without specification. This was probably because many times the orchestras were put together for the occasion and did not have individual names. These unnamed orchestras mentioned in the concert advertisements are designated as 'unspecified orchestra' in the database, and appear in this graph as the node to the right of Philharmoniska sällskapet. It is not marked in the text because it is not one single actor. The label 'unspecified orchestra' is used in the database for advertisements that use the term 'orchestra' without specification.

<sup>17</sup> All of them were musicians who had come to Sweden as immigrants from Germany around 1847/48 and remained in Sweden after this. See Åhlén, 2014.

Figure 2 illustrates Stockholm's concert life in 1878. Compared to Figure 1, noticeable structural changes emerge. New prominent actors such as August Meissner and the Berns Orchestra come to the forefront. Distinct new venues include the Royal Academy of Sciences auditorium (Kungliga Vetenskapsakademiens hörsal), the Royal Academy of Music hall, and Berns' salon. Intriguingly, while the Royal Theatre and Hovkapellet remain central, they appear comparatively less prominently. Commercial entities like Berns instead gain prominence.

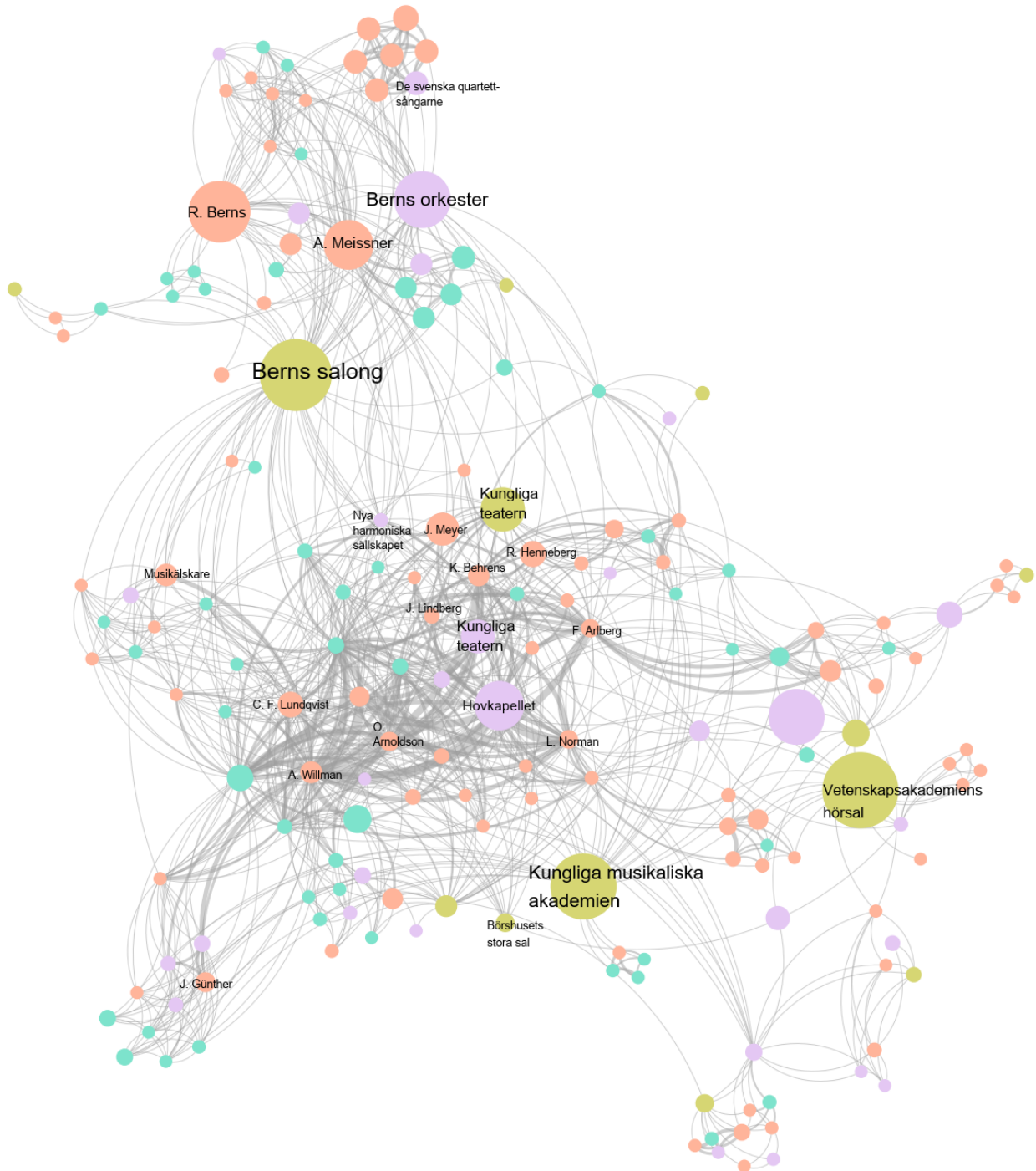


Figure 2. The concert life of Stockholm in 1878.

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Since its establishment in 1863, Berns, a restaurant and entertainment establishment, held a prominent position as a concert institution. It featured both light entertainment and symphonic concerts of high artistic ambitions. Berns boasted a resident orchestra of 20–35 musicians who delivered daily evening concerts in the restaurant, along with afternoon ‘coffee concerts’. The 1870s and 1880s marked the orchestra’s peak, presenting a diverse repertoire of high quality. An important part of this was the series of symphony matinées organized by August Meissner between 1872 and 1878 (62 in total). On these occasions, the orchestra, temporarily expanded up to about 50 men, performed classical and modern symphonic repertoire by both foreign and Swedish composers.

A key addition to the concert venues was the Royal Academy of Sciences auditorium, a lecture hall that was frequently used for concerts.<sup>18</sup> The Royal Academy of Music’s new building, built 1878, featured a dedicated concert hall – the first in Stockholm.

Amateur musicians played a pivotal role in the concert life, especially for larger choral performances, throughout the century. The New Harmonic Society (Nya harmoniska sällskapet), founded by Ludvig Norman, Ivar Hallström and Julius Günther in 1860, with the purpose of performing oratorios, utilized exclusively amateur instrumentalists until 1866 (Wottle, 2020). Church concerts surged in the 1880s, introducing sacred repertoire and choirs from various churches. While the New Harmonic Society dissolved in 1878, a successor, the Music Association (Musikföreningen), emerged two years later under Norman’s and Vilhelm Svedbom’s leadership. In 1885, Andreas Hallén established the Philharmonic Society (Filharmoniska sällskapet), with a large choir, expanding the choir and orchestra repertoire. Varieties and light entertainment music began gaining prominence, deepening the division between musical genres and performances.

Figure 3 illustrates Stockholm’s concert life in 1908, revealing a much more intricate network of actors and venues compared to Figures 1 and 2. Prominent venues like the Academy of Sciences, the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Theatre and Berns’ salon remain visible. Throughout the 1890s and around the turn of the century, the proliferation of schools and clubhouses, which were also used extensively for concerts, contributed to the expansion of musical life. This coincided with public education initiatives, including workers’ concerts or folk concerts, often held in places like the Workers’ Institute (Arbetareinstitutet), the Workers’ Association’s main hall (Arbetareföreningens stora sal), and the auditorium of Södermalm High School (Södermalms allmänna läroverk). Established concert venues, including the Academy of Sciences and the Royal Academy of Music, also hosted this type of events. Associations such as YMCA (KFUM), YWCA (KFUK) and the Victoria Hall<sup>19</sup> (Viktoriasalen) also offered stages for concerts. The Academy of Sciences, Berns, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Theatre continued to be important concert stages. Chamber music

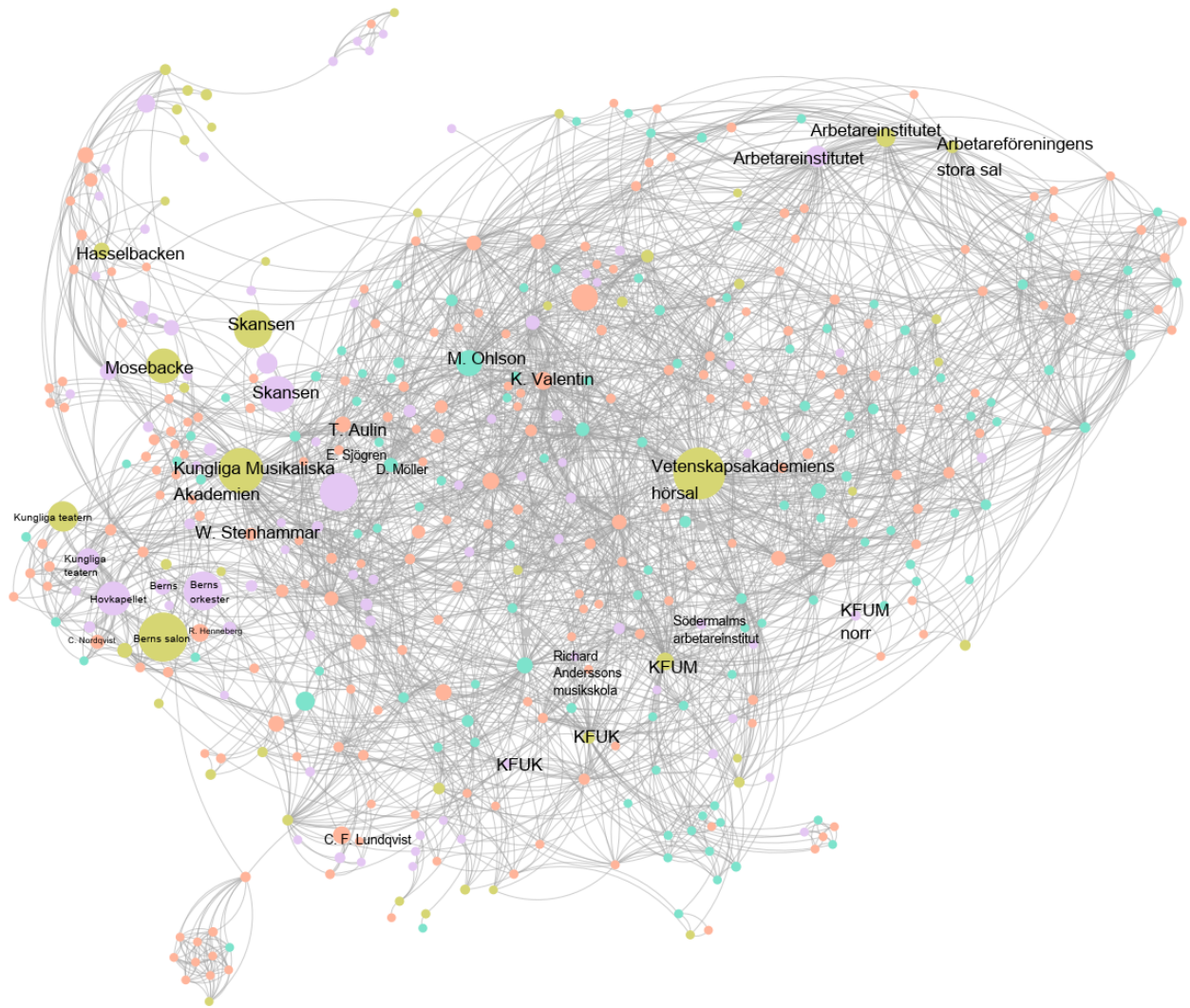
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<sup>18</sup> The hall was inaugurated in 1868 (Lundin, 1890, p. 398).

<sup>19</sup> The Victoria hall was the hall of the Good Templar order in Stockholm.



concerts prominently took place at the Academy of Science, the Royal Academy of Music, YMCA and YWCA.



**Figure 3.** The concert life of Stockholm in 1908.

Hovkapellet and The Royal Theatre retained significance, albeit less prominently. In 1902, the Stockholm Concert Society orchestra (Stockholms Konsertförenings orkester)<sup>20</sup> was established, under conductor Tor Aulin, using the Royal Academy of Music's hall until 1910 and from 1914 the so-called Auditorium at Norra Bantorget. This period saw the orchestra's development and desire for a dedicated concert hall eventually realized in 1926 with the new Concert Hall at Hötorget, which became the orchestra's permanent home.

The expansion of musical life from 1840 until the 1880s laid the foundations for modern concert life, which began to take shape around the turn of the century (illustrated in Figure 3). Notably distinct concert venues signify institutionalization that

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<sup>20</sup> In 1957, the orchestra was renamed The Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra (Stockholms filharmoniska orkester), and again in 1992 The Royal Philharmonics (Kungliga filharmonikerna) which is the name of the orchestra still today.

bolstered the fundamental structures of concert life (Reese Willén, 2014). This continuity provided a stronger base for growth, aided by societal shifts like the burgeoning middle class, efforts to bring ‘serious music’ to a wider audience, and a strengthened music market. The rise of international impresarios facilitated the presence of foreign artists on Swedish stages during the 1870s and onwards. The turn of the century also marked improved conditions for concert agents, driven by audience expansion and purchase power (Tegen, 1955, p. 118). These factors created favourable circumstances, surpassing those of any previous era, for musicians launching their careers around this time.

## Stenhammar as performer and composer

Wilhelm Stenhammar belongs to the generation of composers who had their breakthroughs just before the turn of the century, coinciding with the realization of efforts made by earlier generations. During the 1880s and 1890s, Emil Sjögren gained significant attention and was seen as a potential successor to Ludvig Norman as Sweden’s foremost composer (Reese Willén, 2022). The initial reception of Stenhammar’s compositions echoed similar assessments, often by the same critics. This shows a general tendency in music life: the anticipation and hope for the emergence of the next great Swedish composer, and it was often Ludvig Norman who was seen as the great predecessor and model. Other Nordic composers such as Niels W. Gade and Edvard Grieg also served as role models. To achieve this esteemed status, composers were expected to engage with larger orchestral forms, especially symphonic works. Performance opportunities play a pivotal role in promoting compositions, and Stenhammar was very fortunate to have his music played frequently. His work context, particularly in Stockholm through collaborations with Tor Aulin and the Aulin Quartet, enabled performances of his chamber music. Similarly, in Gothenburg, he had platforms to present compositions across various genres. This unique environment nurtured his growth as a composer, and enabled his works to be presented in ways that were previously rare.

Wallner takes the 1880s as a starting point and paints a rather pessimistic picture of the musical landscape into which Stenhammar entered. I would like to offer a re-interpretation of this environment.

## Stenhammar’s first years within the public musical life

Stenhammar began his career as a musician in 1890 as an accompanist, but soon made solo appearances as well. Wallner gives an account of Stenhammar’s earliest public appearances in the biography (Wallner, 1991, pp. 267–277), a list which after further study shows some gaps.<sup>21</sup> Through an investigation of the daily press, it appears that Stenhammar’s concert activity in the first years of his career was somewhat more extensive than Wallner presented. This is probably because Wallner’s main source is the journal *Svensk musiktidning*. This publication, however, was issued only once every

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<sup>21</sup> As does the list of performances between 1894 and 1897 that Wallner presents (1991, pp. 327–352).

two weeks and made no real attempt to provide a complete account of concert life. Studies of the daily press enable a much more comprehensive picture, and the now digitized resources make it possible to process the material much more efficiently than was possible for Wallner.

Stenhammar seamlessly integrated himself into the concert scene thanks to his connections from his musical education and salon interactions in Stockholm. He debuted as an accompanist at Tor Aulin's concert on May 5, 1890, held at the Academy of Science's auditorium. Shortly after, on May 11, he joined Aulin once more for a charity concert at Hotel Continental. Towards the end of the year, Stenhammar participated in a few more concerts, including the Concert Society's second concert with Hallén conducting and Stenhammar as accompanist. At the Society's Christmas concert on December 30, he accompanied on the organ and also debuted as a composer with an orchestral adaptation of the song 'Christmas night' (Julnatten) by Francis Thomé.<sup>22</sup> In the spring of 1891, Stenhammar continued performing, most frequently through Richard Andersson's music evenings, described by Wallner as private events within the school (Wallner, 1991, p. 144), but press advertisements suggest their public nature. Stenhammar's concert activity was temporarily interrupted by military service in 1891, but he returned in November with a few concerts, including some with the Concert Society. In early 1892, Stenhammar made his debut as a soloist at Hovkapellet's symphony concert, with Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 (first performance in Stockholm), under the baton of Hallén.

## Chamber music

In 1892, Stenhammar joined the Aulin Quartet, which became a central part of his activities for a great part of his career, something that Wallner highlights in his biography. The Aulin Quartet had debuted in 1887 and were thus already known when Stenhammar joined. Wallner states that at the time of the Aulin Quartet's debut there

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<sup>22</sup> Although I have not had a chance to study this work, I draw the conclusion that it was more than just an arrangement of a song, being received more as a composition in its own right and drawing special attention from the press. In an article about the upcoming concert in the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, the work is described as an orchestral introduction: 'the introduction is not to be regarded as a usual prelude but is directly connected to the other parts of the program. The motif for this introduction belongs to the French composer Francis Thomée [sic!] and is taken from a small French Christmas magazine from 1888. A young, promising student of Mr. Hallén has adapted this motif for a larger orchestra; his name is Mr. Vilhelm [sic!] Stenhammar, and he is the son of the well-known composer and architect P. U. Stenhammar.' [introduktionen är ej att betrakta som ett vanligt preludium, utan står direkt i förbindelse med programmens övriga nummer. Motivet till denna introduktion tillhör den franske tonsättaren Francis Thomée [sic!] och är taget ur en liten fransk julitidning från 1888. Det är en ung lofvande elev till hr Hallén som bearbetat detta motiv för stor orkester; hans namn är hr Vilhelm [sic!] Stenhammar, och han är son till den bekante tonsättaren och arkitekten P. U. Stenhammar] (*Dagens Nyheter*, 30 December 1890). In *Svensk musiktidsning*, the work is described similarly: 'the instrumental introduction; "Christmas night", on a motif by Frans Thomé, talentedly adapted by Mr. Wilh. Stenhammar, a student of Mr. Hallén in composition and orchestration, otherwise known as a skilled accompanist on the piano' [den instrumentala introduktionen: 'Julnatten', motiv af Frans Thomé, talangfullt bearbetad af hr Wilh. Stenhammar, elev af hr Hallén i komposition och instrumentation, annars känd som skicklig ankompanatör [sic!] på piano] (*Svensk musiktidsning*, 1891, [1], p. 7).



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were largely no chamber music concerts in Stockholm and that the quartet's initiative meant a 'hope that Stockholm's musical life could finally also have a public chamber music cultivation'<sup>23</sup> (Wallner, 1991, p. 414). In an anonymous newspaper notice, possibly written by the critic Adolf Lindgren (*Aftonbladet*, 22 January 1887), on the Aulin Quartet's coming soirées on January 25 and February 8, 1887, the author emphasizes that '[i]t has been such a long time since string quartets were publicly heard in our city, that this circumstance alone should provide the organizers of the soirées with good houses [i.e., a big audience]'.<sup>24</sup> Lindgren further writes:

Chamber music is by its very nature of an aristocratic character and can never become popular in a wider sense; but in such a large and musical city as Stockholm strives to be, there should always be an audience, and a large one, even for this more fine and abstract music, and it can hardly be considered quite normal that we now for several years have not had any concerts for chamber music, during which [years] we were, on the other hand, inundated with virtuoso productions. (*Aftonbladet*, 22 January 1887)<sup>25</sup>

It is true that many travelling virtuoso musicians visited Stockholm during tours in the 1880s, but a study of concert announcements in the press<sup>26</sup> gives a less pessimistic picture. A public chamber music culture had existed for a long time in Stockholm. Already in the 1840s and 1850s, both local and visiting musicians gave chamber music concerts. As seen in Figure 1, an important contribution to the concert life of 1848 was the chamber music concerts at the Garden Association with the string quartet led by Johannes Meyer,<sup>27</sup> which in comparison to the rest of the musical events that year are more prominent than any other concerts. Since these concerts were organized by a businessman and the music was combined with other activities, they might not have conformed to the ideals of the early 20th century chamber concerts. However, there is no doubt they were of high musical standard, with classical repertoire (mostly Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart) and professional musicians.

Most musicians organizing chamber music concerts were connected to Hovkapellet. During the 1850s, Andreas Randel, Eduard d'Aubert, Johannes Meyer and Anton Sack

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<sup>23</sup> 'förohoppning om att Stockholms musikliv äntligen skulle kunna få också en offentlig kammarmusikodling'.

<sup>24</sup> 'Det var så länge sedan man i vår hufvudstad offentligen hörde stråkkvartetter, att redan denna omständighet torde bereda soarégifvarna goda hus.'

<sup>25</sup> 'Kammarmusiken är till sin natur af aristokratisk prägel och kan väl aldrig blifva populär i vidsträcktare mening; men i en så stor och musikalisk stad som Stockholm bespetsar sig på att vara, borde dock alltid finnas en publik, och en talrik sådan, äfven för denna mera fina och abstrakta musik, och det kan knappt anses riktigt normalt, att vi nu på flera år icke haft några konserter för kammarmusik, under vilka vi deremot varit öfversvämmade af virtuosproduktioner'.

<sup>26</sup> For this study, I have used the National Library's digitized daily newspapers, <https://tidningar.kb.se/>, for systematic text searches of this type of appearances. Although this method leaves room for a certain margin of error, in that I may have missed some appearances, this is of minor importance for this investigation as my review clearly showed that there was a regular occurrence of chamber music concerts.

<sup>27</sup> Jean[ also called Johann or Johannes] Friedrich Heinrich Meyer (1822–1893) was a German violinist employed by Hovkapellet.

formed a recurring ensemble that organized quartet soirées in Stockholm and made concert tours in the regional cities of Sweden.<sup>28</sup> In the journal *Ny tidning för musik*, Wilhelm Bauck describes the concert season in the spring of 1853 as follows:

Apart from the symphony, the instrumental ensemble has also been cultivated, although the regular quartet soirées have not started this year. In this regard, we mention the three interesting quartet sessions, organized by the excellent quartet player Mr. *von KönigsLöw*. On such an occasion (as well as on a couple of previous occasions) an attempt was also made to introduce Mr. Robert Schumann to us, which, however, did not succeed, probably as a result of the Swedish mind's distaste for mists and fogs, especially when they allow themselves to be avoided. In addition, one has heard several magnificent quintets by *Mozart* and *Beethoven*, as well as the last-mentioned master's great septet [...] Of domestic chamber music have been performed three complete violin quartets, by *Foroni*, *Randel* and *Bauck*, as well as a piano trio by *H. Berens*. In connection with this, we should also mention the *Mazerska Quartet Society*, which twice a month during the winter held its séances and should essentially contribute to awakening and lifting the mind to this interesting type of music.<sup>29</sup>

The concerts he refers to was a series of 'Quartet-Matinées' given by the visiting German violinist Otto von KönigsLöw together with the violinists Adolf Fredrik Lindroth, Adolph Behrens<sup>30</sup> and the cellist Heinrich Mollenhauer, members of Hovkapellet. During the autumn of the same year and the following year, the quartet appeared regularly again, but with Eduard d'Aubert as first violinist since KönigsLöw was no longer in town. This demonstrates that chamber music performances were already occurring regularly in the 1850s, establishing them as a prominent component of public concert life.

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the notice by -u- [Wilhelm Bauck] in *Aftonbladet*, 2 July 1850: 'The quartet soirées given by Messrs. Randel, d'Aubert, Meyer and Sack in the past season were very successful [...] they have now started a trip to the countryside, in order to organize more of these concerts in the other major cities of the country. Such an enterprise should, no doubt, contribute to the expansion of a more general musical taste and education, while at the same time promising the audience an equally entertaining and rare pleasure.' [Hrr Randel, d'Aubert, Meyer och Sack, hvilkas under förflutne säsong är gifna kvartettsoiréer gjorde så mycken lycka ... hafva i dessa dagar anträdt en resa till landsorten, för att äfven i rikets öfriga större städer arrangera dylika underhållningar. Ett sådant företag bör utan tvifvel väsendtligen bidragas till utbredandet af en allmännare musikalisk smak och bildning, på samma gång det lofvar sina åhörare ett lika underhållande som sällsynt nöje.]

<sup>29</sup> 'Utom symfonien har även instrumentalensemblen varit kultiverad, ehuru de regelbundna kvartettsoiréerna detta år icke kommit i gång. I detta afseende nämna vi de tre intressanta kvartettsanserna, för hvilka den ypperlige kvartettspelaren hr *von KönigsLöw*, stod i spetsen. Vid ett sådant tillfälle (likasom vid ett par föregående) gjordes ock ett försök att hos oss introducera hr Robert Schumann, hvilken dock ej ville lyckas, troligen till följd af det svenska sinnets obenägenhet för dimmor och töcken, synnerligast när de låta sig undvika. Dessutom har man hört åtskilliga herrliga qvintetter af *Mozart* och *Beethoven*, äfvensom sistnämnde mästars stora septett [...] Af inhemska kompositioner hafva gifvits tre fullständiga violinkvartetter af *Foroni*, *Randel* och *Bauck*, samt en pianotrio af *H. Berens*. I sammanhang härmed böra vi ock nämna det *Mazerska kvartettsällskapet*, hvilka tvenne gånger i månaden under loppet av vintern hållit sina seancer och väsendtligen torde bidraga till väckandet och lyftandet af sinnet för denna intressanta musikart.' *Ny tidning för musik*, 1853 (6), p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Concert advertisements mention 'A. Berens' (as in *Svenska Tidningen*, 3 March 1853), which most likely refers to Adolph Behrens, who was employed as an extra violinist at Hovkapellet (see the Royal Theatre's archive, Employment contract F8A vol. 3).

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Collaborations with guest musicians were a recurring phenomenon. Another example is the series of chamber music soirées that d'Aubert and Gustaf Adolf d'Arien gave together with the Austrian pianist Anton Door in 1857.

Several of the musicians who appeared in chamber music contexts in the 1850s continued in the 1860s, including d'Aubert, Lindroth, and Johannes Meyer (as can be observed in Figure 2, Meyer had an important position in the concert life for a long period, mostly as a chamber musician). In addition to them, the violinists Fredrik Lindholm and Johan Lindeberg, and the cellists Fritz Söderman and Carl Arnold were active in chamber music soirées. In 1865, several quartet soirées were also given by Wilhelmina and Maria Neruda together with d'Aubert, Lindroth and Arnold. The Neruda sisters were internationally known violinists who toured Europe, but then stayed for a long time in Sweden, during which Wilhelmina got married to Ludvig Norman.

In the 1870s, the violinist and concertmaster of Hovkapellet Fridolf Book organized quartet or chamber music concerts together with the violinists Richard Hagemester or Lindroth, the then second court conductor Conrad Nordqvist on viola and Fritz Söderman on cello. Sometimes they also had a pianist; Ludvig Norman, Hilda Thegerström and Hilma Lindberg were among these. Book's quartet gave concerts throughout the 1870s. During the early 1880s, Book formed a piano quartet together with the pianist Aron Hultgren, the violinist Lars Zetterquist (member, later concert master, of Hovkapellet) and the cellist Anton Andersen (member of Hovkapellet), who gave regular chamber music soirées (about 4 per season) until 1884. An interesting feature in the chamber music of the 1880s was also the Swedish Ladies' Trio (Svenska damtrion), with Hilma Lindberg (violin), Valborg Lagervall (cello) and Hilma Åberg (piano), which regularly gave concerts during 1881–1883 but was discontinued when the members got married, Lindberg to Vilhelm Svedbom and Åberg to Carl Fredrik 'Lunkan' Lundqvist, both of whom were also important actors in concert life.

Most chamber music concerts were organized as subscription concerts in series of three or four events, to which tickets could either be purchased by subscription or for individual concerts. This was a way to ensure sufficient income to make these productions profitable, and often the subscription series was advertised well in advance with the stipulation that the company was dependent on enough people signing up. The ticket price for these concerts was the standard price for concerts, or slightly higher, especially for stand-alone tickets, which suggests that the concerts were aimed at a more exclusive audience. As musicians who were permanent employees of Hovkapellet performed in these concerts, it was probably difficult to do this in a completely regular way. However, as it was done in series, there was still some continuity during the season, and several of these musicians made recurring ventures. Judging by the reviews, which mention very good crowd attendance at most of these concerts, the concerts seem to have had an audience that was interested and willing to attend. Sometimes it is mentioned in the press that there were periods of inactivity, e.g., in a review of Meyer's soirée (*Aftonbladet*, 1 March 1864): 'The silence, which for some time prevailed in the area of concerts, soirées and matinées, saw the first interruption through Mr. *Jean*

*Meyer's ... first soirée of chamber music*'.<sup>31</sup> However, the stagnation that is mentioned does not seem to have been particularly long-lasting in that particular case. Another example from *Aftonbladet* in 1871 mentions the matinées of Book, Hagemeister, Nordqvist and Söderman for chamber music:

Since chamber music, one of the noblest branches of the musical art which is embraced abroad with the liveliest interest, here, on the other hand, could, at least as far as public life is concerned, be considered nearly extinct, had not the above-mentioned artists in recent times taken it in their care, it is with true satisfaction that we salute their beautiful initiative, all the more since their known talent is a sure guarantee for perfect performances. ('Matinéer för kammarmusik', *Aftonbladet*, 13 January 1871)<sup>32</sup>

Here, too, there is no question of any real lack of chamber music concerts, as it was a series, and in the years before and after, other chamber music series were given regularly. To say, as Wallner does, that public chamber music was almost extinct is therefore an exaggeration. This survey instead shows that there was a great interest in chamber music, even greater than could be satisfied by the concerts on offer. There were some periods of decline with interruptions in chamber music concerts, but this was the case in other concert forms as well. Throughout the second half of the 19th century there were musicians who regularly devoted themselves especially to instrumental chamber music, above all in the form of piano trios or string quartets. Even if there was no permanent string quartet throughout the period, there was a clear interest in instrumental chamber music. Likewise, from the recurring comments about shortcomings in the frequency of chamber music, I conclude that it was a highly valued genre and that there was an audience that demanded it. However, the fact that the main musicians who devoted themselves to this art form were tied to Hovkapellet limited the possibilities for productions that took place outside the orchestra's regular activities. The Aulin Quartet's entry into concert life was part of an already established phenomenon, and there was a clear market for their music in Stockholm as well as in Sweden in general through their many concert trips in the countryside.

### Stenhammar's position in the musical life of Stockholm

Stenhammar quickly reached a firm and central position within the musical life of Stockholm, and through his musical versatility he came to have many different functions, which I believe further contributed to consolidating his position. Based on his own statements, he seems to have valued chamber music highly, preferring the role of accompanist. At the same time there were high expectations for him especially in the more public parts of his activities as soloist, conductor and composer. The attention that

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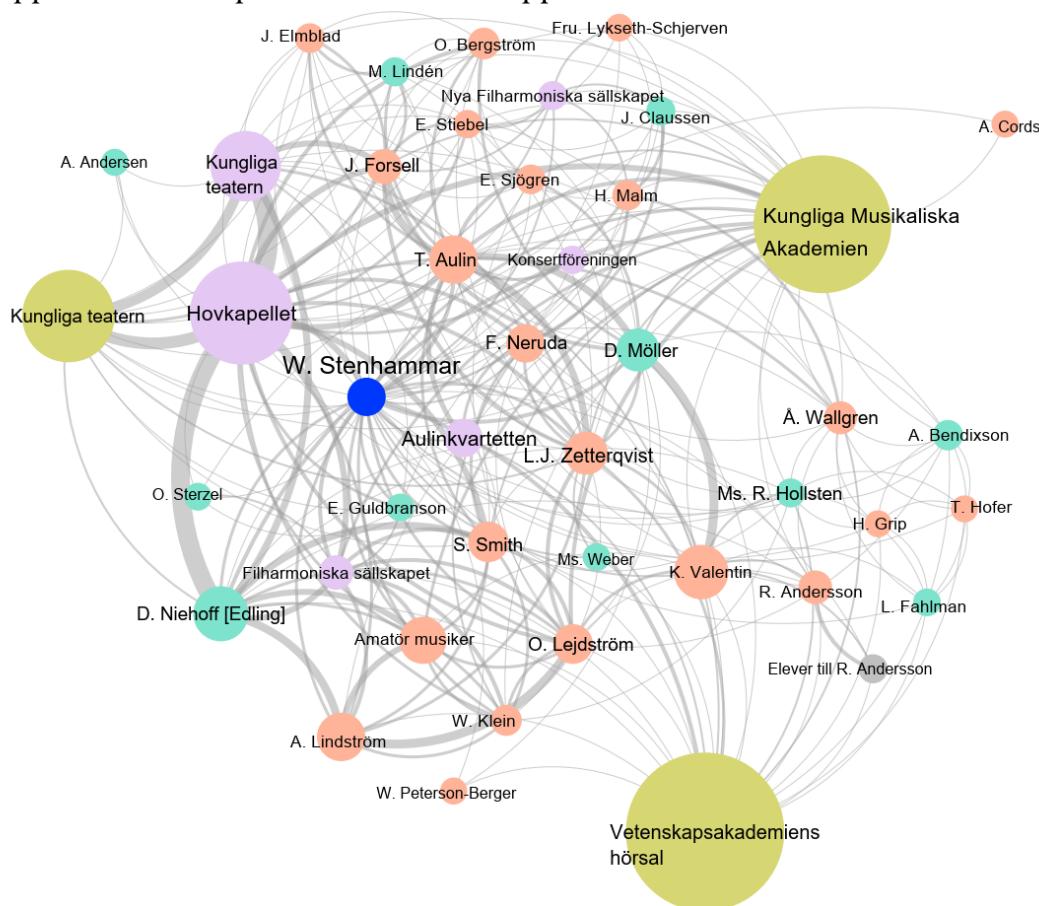
<sup>31</sup> 'Den stiltje, som någon tid varit rådande inom konserternas, soiréernas och matinéernas område rönt det första afbrottet genom hr *Jean Meyers ... soirée för kammarmusik*' (*Aftonbladet*, 1 March 1864).

<sup>32</sup> 'Då kammarmusiken, en bland de ädlaste brancher å tonkonsten och som i utlandet omfattas med lifligaste intresse, här deremot skulle, åtminstone hvad beträffar offentligt lif, kunna anses hardt när utdöd, så vidt ej ofvan nämnde artister under senare tid tagit densamma i sin omvårdnad, är det med sann tillfredsställelse, vi helsa deras vackra företag, så mycket heldre som deras kända talang är oss en säker borgen för fulländade prestationer.'

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the Aulin Quartet received certainly helped to promote Stenhammar's early career, as chamber music was a genre that held a high position in musical life.

Wallner shows that Stenhammar would certainly have had the opportunity to pursue an international career if he had wanted to, but as he seems to have preferred the role of accompanist and chamber musician (Wallner, 1991, pp. 47–49), it was perhaps not a venture worth making. The Swedish music life might have offered him enough to have the career he wanted. He was constantly given new opportunities to develop and have his music performed and published, which contributed to his further development as a composer. It is clear that his early network had a major influence on his career and opportunities and the positions he came to. Tor Aulin seems to have been particularly significant, which both falls back on his own personality and on the position he had obtained in musical life before he started collaborating with Stenhammar. The latter's teachers Richard Andersson and Andreas Hallén were also important, by providing opportunities for performances and support for his work.



**Figure 4.** Stenhammar's network within concert life based on concerts in 1898 and 1908.

Figure 4 shows the ego-network<sup>33</sup> formed around Stenhammar and the relationships he had with actors and concert venues during this time. It is a section based on the concert years 1898 and 1908. This means that Stenhammar may have had additional contacts in

<sup>33</sup> An ego-network, or 'ego-centered networks' is a particular type of network which specifically maps the connections of, and from the perspective of, a single person.

other years that are not visible in this graph. For example, an actor that does not show up on this graph is Hugo Alfvén, whose position in musical life was similar to that of Stenhammar, but who did not belong to his performing network in Stockholm.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, it still gives a good overview of the musicians he collaborated with and where he played. As shown here, there were three main concert venues where he performed, namely the Royal Academy of Sciences, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Theatre – i.e., the most prominent concert venues of the time. The relational ties to Tor Aulin and the Aulin Quartet are, of course, important as can be seen by their close proximity to Stenhammar.

## Opening up for new questions and new perspectives on Stenhammar

In this article, my aim was to provide a broader perspective on Wilhelm Stenhammar's role in the musical life of Stockholm. This forms a critique of Bo Wallner's interpretation of 'the decades around the turn of the century in 1900' as the time 'when modern Swedish musical life began to be built'<sup>35</sup> (Wallner, 1991, p. 7).

Wallner presents his biography as something more than an ordinary life-and-work publication; he wants to relate his object of study to the context in which he worked. This approach is admirable in itself, even if the main part of the analysis has a much more composer-and-work-centred focus than the opening words indicate.<sup>36</sup> I would say that it is in his work descriptions that Wallner makes his most valuable contributions. Wallner's contextual description of the time when Stenhammar entered musical life is to a large part based on *Svensk musiktidning*, which, for reasons stated above (p. 15), may not be the best source. Also, the description and interpretations are coloured by Wallner's own musical views and composer ideals. Wallner's contemporary idealistic views on music and composition colour the analysis and do not represent quite the same ideals as those prevailing in Stenhammar's time (see Volgsten, 2013). Stenhammar's

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<sup>34</sup> This means that Stenhammar and Alfvén did not collaborate in any concerts in Stockholm during these two years. A quick overview of the press indicates that they did not regularly collaborate in performance around or between those years either, even though they both performed frequently in Stockholm and Gothenburg at the same time. I have only found a few occasions where Stenhammar and Alfvén performed together. First at an 'Alfvén-concert' (featuring only Alfvén's music) in Uppsala on March 2, 1905, which they repeated in Stockholm (March 10) and Gothenburg (April 28). Also, they gave a concert promoting Swedish music together with Tor Aulin and John Forsell in Copenhagen on January 20, 1906. As both gained focus as conductors, the chances for collaborations naturally decreased. Stenhammar conducted performances of Alfvén's Second Symphony several times. And there are other examples of Stenhammar performing and conducting other works by Alfvén, although they do not seem to have performed together. Also, their works often appeared side by side on concerts by other musicians. They most certainly met in other contexts as well since they both belonged to the same artistic and cultural elite (see Lund, 2022, p. 67). But the fact that they apparently belonged to different performing networks is interesting and calls for further studies.

<sup>35</sup> 'decennierna kring sekelskiftet 1900 – då det moderna svenska musiklivet började byggas.'

<sup>36</sup> For the whole quote, see the first page of this article.

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career coincides with a period when the musical life was undergoing a major transformation and the roles of performer and composer were changing.

Researchers have pointed to three different roles or ideals for composers during the 19th century. The genius, with Beethoven as the ideal type, whose focus was composition; the commercially successful opera composer, exemplified primarily by Rossini; and the versatile musician, conductor, composer and administrator, represented by Mendelssohn (Volgsten, 2013, p. 95; Ander, 2000, p. 195). The first two types were in principle unattainable ideals in Sweden during the 19th century and most professional composers can best be described by the third category. However, in the generation around the turn of the century with Stenhammar, Alfvén and Peterson-Berger, a change began to take place that meant a movement towards a realization of the ideal of the genius composer. On the other hand, Stenhammar's activities are characterized to the highest degree by musical multitasking, in which the various aspects of his career worked together. I therefore believe that a deeper understanding of Stenhammar as a musician and the context of his musical activity can contribute to opening up new questions and new perspectives on Stenhammar. The chamber music is an interesting aspect here, since it seems to have been of great importance to him as a performer. The fact that chamber music is also particularly prominent within his activity as a composer makes this even more interesting. The relationship to Tor Aulin and the Aulin Quartet is clearly emphasized in Wallner's work, but Stenhammar had many other relationships within the chamber music sphere, which may also have had an impact on his development both as a musician and as a composer. Likewise, broader studies of chamber music's reception and significance within public concert life can also contribute new insights. Chamber music concerts, especially with string quartets, had a long history and a special position within the concert life of Stockholm that Wallner does not recognize. I would like to suggest that further studies in the chamber music concerts of the mid-to-late 19th century in Stockholm could provide important insights leading to new interpretations of the roles and status of musicians.

By opening up to a wider view of contextualization, for example, through the use of methods from digital humanities and also more quantitative studies, it is possible to gain new insights into the structures that shaped musical life and consequently also concerning those who worked within it. This is something that Wallner partly distances himself from when he, with reference to Martin Tegen's study, believes that a 'sociological approach is difficult to apply if you want to treat a composer's artistic development'<sup>37</sup> (Wallner, 1991, p. 70). He then asks the question of whether there was a connection between the various art forms and what the relationship to the general social development looked like around the end of the 19th century. He finds it difficult to see any clear connections but believes that the European influences are always more important than the national ones. He sees the connection between social development and music primarily from the perspective of social engagement or social criticism.

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<sup>37</sup> 'Ett sociologiskt betraktelsesätt är svårt att tillämpa, om man vill behandla en tonsättares konstnärliga utveckling' (Wallner 1991, p. 70).

However, he does not acknowledge the expansion in the musical life of the 1880s, a view that I think may contribute to a misleading picture that affects the interpretations that Wallner makes. I would like to advocate an interpretation of the expansion of musical life as a flow that takes place in waves, with more or less intense periods of change over a longer period, but where the important thing is to pay attention to the significance of the longer lines. By taking a step back, overlooking the development in musical life from a higher perspective, possibilities open up for alternative interpretations and a new understanding of a very important figure and a very important time in Swedish music history.

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### Digitized resources

Canon and concert life database (will be published online at <https://www.musik.uu.se/forskning/databaser/> in spring 2024)

*Ny tidning för musik* <http://runeberg.org/ntfm/>

*Svenska dagstidningar* <https://tidningar.kb.se/>:

*Aftonbladet*

*Dagens Nyheter*

*Dagligt Allehanda*

*Morgon-Posten, eller Det Nya Dagligt Allehanda*

*Nya Dagligt Allehanda*

*Post- och Inrikes Tidningar*

*Stockholms Aftonpost*

*Stockholms Dagblad*

*Svenska Tidningen*

*Svensk musiktidning* (<https://musikverket.se/musikochteaterbiblioteket/rariteter/svensk-musiktidning/>)

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## Abstract

This article presents a reevaluation of Wilhelm Stenhammar's role in Stockholm's late 19th-century musical scene, challenging traditional views of the 1880s as a time of decline. The article aims to provide new insights into Stenhammar's early career, his involvement in musical networks, and his contributions as a chamber musician.

Utilizing digital musicology, this article revisits the work of Bo Wallner, who has had a significant impact on the understanding of Swedish music at the turn of the twentieth century. By analyzing digitized newspapers and periodicals, the study presents new insights into the concert scene and musical repertoire from the mid-19th century to the first decades of the 20th century.

This article underscores the possibilities of digital tools in historical musicology, especially for visualizing and analyzing concert performances and musical networks. It reveals a more vibrant and dynamic musical environment in Stockholm than previously recognized, highlighting Stenhammar's substantial contributions as a chamber musician and his involvement in the city's musical networks.

The article also demonstrates the potential of digital methodologies in reconstructing historical narratives. The study enriches the understanding of Stockholm's musical life in the late 19th century, portraying it as a fertile period for musicians like Stenhammar.

**Keywords:** Wilhelm Stenhammar, Stockholm's musical life, late 19th century, early 20th century, Bo Wallner, digital musicology, networks.

## The author

Anne Reese Willén is a musicologist specializing in modern music history, with a specific emphasis on the 19th and early 20th centuries and Swedish music history. Her research interest focuses on issues related to the structure and transformation of public music life: institutionalization, professionalization, and organization of concert life. Interests also include musical repertoire, musical canon, canon formation, and aesthetic debate. She holds a PhD from the Department of Musicology at Uppsala University,

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with a dissertation entitled *I huvudstaden, musikkivets härd: den strukturella omvandlingen av Stockholms offentliga konstmusikliv ca 1840–1890* (2014). She has also been a research fellow and teacher and is now an affiliated researcher at Uppsala University. Anne also currently has teaching positions at the University of Gothenburg and Dalarna University.

*This article is a result of the research project ‘Canon and Concert Life: Formation Processes within the Musical Life of Stockholm 1848–1914’, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation).*