

Sjungande berättare

VISSÅNG
SOM
ESTRADKONST
1900–1970

*En musikvetenskaplig studie av den svenska vissångens
uppförandepraxis och sociala sammanhang*

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Abstract

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The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate how the song type *visa*, especially the so-called literary *visa*, has been presented on Swedish public stages from 1900 to 1970. More specifically it aims to: a) identify characteristic features for the performance of *visa*; b) ascertain in what ways performance practice has changed during the period; c) analyze and discuss the causes of change; by d) studying the performance of *visa* in its social and historical context.

The empirical data consists of recordings, reviews, newspaper articles, biographies and interviews. Three periods are treated with special attention: 1900–1925, 1930–1945, and 1962–1970. The first period takes place before the introduction of microphones and electronic amplification. The second and the third periods have often been described in terms of *visa* renaissance, by both writers and performers.

This study shows that even though the literary *visa* existed as a phenomenon over a long time it became a more easily distinguishable genre, attached to a certain performance style, during the 1930s and 1940s. A core repertoire began to emerge. One factor contributing to this process was the foundation of the association *Visans vänner* (Friends of the *Visa*) in 1936. Other factors were the introduction of the radio as a new mass medium, the beginnings of the welfare state, and the contemporary idea of national identity.

The performance of the *visa* on the public stage has often been associated with informality, intimacy, and simplicity, all qualities usually more connected to the private sphere than the public one. The thesis also suggests that *Visans vänner*, in its initial phase, in some aspects can be regarded as a prolongation of the 19th-century bourgeois salon, a performance venue that also occupied a space somewhere between the private sphere and the public one.

During the 1960s, songs associated with a movement for social change were incorporated in the *visa* singers' repertoire to a greater extent. While many of the previous performers had expressed a form of idealism – to sing for pleasure, rather than as a profession – the professionalism within the field now became more explicit. The study also shows that male performers, as well as male authors and composers, have been in the majority in *visa* presentations on the public stage during all three periods.

Key words: authenticity, folk music, guitar, lute, microphone, performance practice, poetry, process of change, repertoire, simplicity, singing style, singer-songwriter, Sweden, troubadour, *visa*, voice