

= Carl Michael Bellman =

Carl Michael Bellman ( listen ; 4 February 1740 ? 11 February 1795 ) was a Swedish poet , songwriter , composer and performer . Bellman is a central figure in the Swedish song tradition and remains a powerful influence in Swedish music , as well as in Scandinavian literature , to this day .

Bellman is best known for two collections of poems set to music , Fredman 's songs ( Fredmans sånger ) and Fredman 's epistles ( Fredmans epistlar ) . Each consists of about 70 songs . The general theme is drinking , but the songs " most ingeniously " combine words and music to express feelings and moods ranging from humorous to elegiac , romantic to satirical .

Bellman 's patrons included the King , Gustav III of Sweden , who called him the master improviser . Bellman has been compared to Shakespeare , Beethoven , Mozart , and Hogarth , but his gift , using elegantly rococo classical references in comic contrast to sordid drinking and prostitution , which are at once regretted and celebrated in song , is unique .

Bellman 's songs continue to be performed and recorded by musicians from Scandinavia and in other languages including English , French , German , Italian and Russian . Several of his songs including Gubben Noak and Fjäriln vingad are known by heart by many Swedes .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Carl Michael Bellman was born on 4 February 1740 in the Stora Daurerska house , which was one of the finest in the Södermalm district of Stockholm . The house was the property of his maternal grandmother , Catharina von Santen , who had brought up his father , orphaned as a small child . Carl Michael 's parents were Johan Arndt Bellman , a civil servant , and Catharina Hermonia , daughter of the priest of the local Maria parish . Her family was wholly Swedish , whereas Johan 's family had German origins : they had come from Bremen in about 1660 . When Carl Michael was four the family moved to a smaller , single storey dwelling called the Lilla Daurerska house . He briefly went to a local school , but was educated mainly by private tutors . He was the eldest of 15 children who lived long enough for their births to be registered . His parents had intended him to become a priest , but he fell ill with a fever , and on recovering found he could express any thought in rhyming verse . His parents appointed a tutor called Ennes who Bellman called " a genius " . Bellman was taught French , German , Italian , English and Latin . He read Horace and Boileau ; Ennes taught him to write poetry and to translate French and German hymns . He was familiar with stories from the Bible including the Apocrypha , many of which found their way into the songs he composed in later life . However , expenses including the Swedish tradition of hospitality left the family with no money to start him off in life with a journey to the south of Europe , such as to Spain to visit his uncle , Jacob Martin Bellman , who was the Swedish Consul in Cádiz . Carl Michael translated a French book by Du Four and dedicated it to his uncle , but the hint was ignored . Deep in debt , at the end of 1757 the family sent Carl Michael to the State Bank as an unpaid trainee . He had no aptitude for numbers , instead discovering the taverns and brothels which were to figure so largely in his songs .

As the banking career was not working out ? and as trainees were ( after a period with a relaxed regime ) again required to sit an exam , for which Bellman was ill equipped ? he took a break in 1758 , going to the university of Uppsala , where Linnaeus was professor of botany . The idea of attending lectures was no more congenial than banking , and he stayed only one term ; one of his songs ( FS 28 ) records that " He contemplated Uppsala ? the beer stung his mouth ? love distracted his wits ... " However , he met young men ( such as Carl Bonde ) from wealthy and noble families , went drinking with them , and started to entertain them with his songs . Bellman returned to the bank job , and seems quickly to have fallen into financial difficulty : " a jungle of debts , sureties and bondsmen began to proliferate around him . " The character of bailiff Blomberg appears in his songs ( e.g. FS 14 ) , constantly trying to track down debtors and seize all their property . The law

allowed the bankrupt only one way to escape from debtors' prison : to leave Sweden . In 1763 , Bellman ran away to Norway . From the safety of Halden ( then called Fredrikshald ) he writes to the Council applying first for a passport , and then for a safe @-@ conduct , both of which were granted . Meanwhile , his father had first mortgaged the Lilla Daurerska house , and then sold it : the family 's finances were no better than his own . Even worse , by April 1764 the Bank had become tired of the riotous behaviour of its young men : its investigations showed that Bellman had been the ringleader , leading them ( the Bank wrote ) into " gambling , masquerades , picnics and suchlike " . Bellman resigned , his safe banking career at an end .

= = = Poetry and song = = =

In 1765 , Bellman 's parents died ; deeply moved , he wrote a religious poem . Then his fortunes improved : someone found him a job , first in the Office of Manufactures , then in the Customs , and he was able once again to live happily in Stockholm , observing the people of the city , with at least a modest salary . In 1768 his life 's work as we now know it got under way :

Bellman had begun to compose an entirely new sort of song . A genre which ' had no model and can have no successors ' ( Kellgren ) , these songs were to grow swiftly in number until they made up the great work on which Bellman 's reputation as a poet chiefly rests .

Bellman mostly played the cittern , becoming the most famous player of this instrument in Sweden . His portrait by Per Krafft shows him playing an oval instrument with twelve strings , arranged as six pairs . His first songs were " parody songs " , a common form of entertainment at the time .

Between 1769 and 1773 , Bellman wrote 65 of 82 of his Epistles , as well as many poems . He attempted to publish the poems in 1772 , but was unable to obtain the permission of the king , Gustav III , as a political coup intervened . He finally managed to obtain the permission in 1774 , but soon discovered that the cost of printing , especially as he was determined to publish the sheet music alongside the text , was prohibitive given his ruinous finances , and he was forced to put off his plans . In 1776 the king gave him a sinecure job as secretary to the national lottery ; this supported him for the rest of his life .

On 19 December 1777 , at the age of 37 , he married the 22 @-@ year @-@ old Lovisa Grönlund in Klara Church . They had four children , Gustav , Elis , Karl and Adolf ; Elis died young . Throughout his life , but especially during the 1770s , Bellman also wrote religious poetry , seeing no conflict with his bacchanalian works ; he published collections of his religious poems in 1781 and 1787 . He wrote some ten plays ( none with particularly strong plots ) as divertimentos , some of them later serving as entertainments at the royal court . The plays fill Volume 6 of his collected works . In 1783 , Bellman brought out The Temple of Bacchus ( Bacchi Tempel ) , perhaps hoping to establish his reputation as a poet , rather than the merry entertainer that he was in fact known as at the time ; but he always stood out in people 's minds as unique , a different kind of writer and performer .

Bellman 's main works are the 65 Fredman 's songs ( Fredmans sånger , 1790 ) and the 82 Fredman 's epistles ( Fredmans epistlar , 1791 ) . Their themes include the pleasures of drunkenness and sex . Against this backdrop , Bellman deals with themes of love , death , and the transitoriness of life . The settings of his songs reflect life in 18th century Stockholm , but often refer to Greek and Roman mythological characters such as the goddess of love , Venus ( or her Swedish equivalent , Fröja ) , Neptune and his retinue of water @-@ nymphs , the love @-@ god Cupid , the ferryman Charon and Bacchus , the god of wine and pleasure . Many of Fredman 's Epistles are peopled by a cast which includes the clockmaker Jean Fredman , the prostitute or " nymph " Ulla Winblad , the alcoholic ex @-@ soldier Movitz , and Father Berg , a virtuoso on several instruments . Some of these were based on living models , others probably not . Ulla Winblad was widely believed to have been closely based on Maria Kristina Kiellström , though the real woman , a silk worker once arrested for alleged prostitution , was not the ideal romantic figure of Bellman 's songs . Fredman 's songs also include Old Testament figures such as Noah and Judith .

Bellman achieved his effects of rococo elegance and humour through precisely organised incongruity . For example , Epistle 25 , " Blåsen nu alla ! " ( All blow now ! ) , begins with Venus

crossing the water , as in François Boucher 'sTriumph of Venus , but when she disembarks , Bellman transforms her into a lustful Ulla Winblad . Similarly , the ornate and civilized minuet melody of " Ack du min Moder " ( Alas , thou my mother ) contrasts with the text : Fredman is lying with a hangover in the gutter outside a tavern , complaining bitterly about life . Ulla Winblad ( " vineleaf " ) recurs through the Epistles ; Britten Austin comments that

Ulla is at once a nymph of the taverns and a goddess of a rococo universe of graceful and hot imaginings .

The songs are " most ingeniously " set to music , the melodies accentuated by the bold construction of music , word pictures and choice of words , while the music brings out a hidden dimension not seen if the words are simply read as verse . The poems themselves , far from being the brilliant improvisations that they appear , are striking in their " formal virtuosity " . They may be drinking songs in name , but in structure they are tightly woven into a precise metre , situating the " frenzied bacchanalia within a strict and decorous rococo frame . "

Bellman was a gifted entertainer and mimic . He was able to go into a room apart and behind a half @-@ open door mimic twenty or thirty people at the same time , a crowd pushing its way on to one of the Djurgården ferries , perhaps , or the uproarious atmosphere of a seaman 's tavern . The illusion was so startling , his listeners could have sworn a mob of ' shoe @-@ polishers , customs spies , seamen ? coalmen , washerwomen ? herring packers , tailors and bird @-@ catchers ' had burst into the next room .

In 1790 , the Swedish Academy awarded Bellman its annual Lundblad prize of 50 Riksdaler for the most interesting piece of literature of the year . Although Fredman 's Epistles was neither exactly literature as understood by the academy , nor meeting the standards of elegant taste , Johan Henric Kellgren and the King ensured that Bellman won the prize .

= = = Later life = = =

After the assassination of the King at the Stockholm opera in 1792 , support for the liberal arts was withdrawn . Bellman , already in poor health from alcoholism , went into decline , drinking increasingly heavily . His drinking very likely contributed to his gout , which troubled him badly in 1790 . He also caught tuberculosis : the disease had already killed his mother , and by the winter of 1792 , he was seriously ill .

As well as being ill , he was imprisoned ? after struggling with debts and haunted by the threat of ruin and imprisonment all his life ? " for a wretched [ ly small ] debt of 150 Rdr " . The rumour was that a former Customs colleague , E. G. Nobelius , had had his advances to Louise Bellman rejected , and in revenge had sued Bellman for the debt , knowing he was penniless : he owed a total of almost 4 @,@ 000 Riksdaler . On 11 February 1795 , he died in his sleep in his house in Gamla Kungsholmsbrogatan . He was buried in Klara churchyard with no gravestone , its location now unknown . The Swedish Academy belatedly placed a memorial in the churchyard in 1851 , complete with a bronze medallion by Johan Tobias Sergel .

= = Reception = =

King Gustav III called Bellman " Il signor improvisatore " ( The master improviser ) .

Bellman has been compared with poets and musicians as diverse as Shakespeare and Beethoven . Åse Kleveland notes that he has been called " Swedish poetry 's Mozart , and Hogarth " , observing that

The comparison with Hogarth was no accident . Like the English portrait painter , Bellman drew detailed pictures of his time in his songs , not so much of life at court as of ordinary people 's everyday .

Paul Britten Austin says instead simply that :

Bellman is unique among great poets , I think , in that virtually his entire opus is conceived to music . Other poets , of course , notably our Elizabethans , have written songs . But song was only one branch of their art . They did not leave behind , as Bellman did , a great musical @-@ literary work

nor paint in words and music a canvas of their age . Nor are their songs dramatic .

= = Legacy = =

Bellman 's poetry continued to be read and sung throughout the nineteenth century , contrary to the widespread belief among researchers that he was largely forgotten during this period . His songs were sung especially by the urban bourgeoisie and in fraternities , but also in aristocratic circles and ordinary people in the countryside . The Orphei Drängar Vocal Society , named after a phrase in Epistle 14 , was founded in Uppsala in 1853 ; the song became their trademark . The Epistles and Songs were published in chapbooks , sung at festivals and performed in a variety of concerts and entertainments . Figures such as Fredman , Ulla Winblad and Movitz , as well as Bellman himself were painted on tavern walls and memorabilia such as plates , beer tankards and hipflasks . Curiously , Bellman was celebrated at least as enthusiastically in polite and abstemious circles , though with bowdlerized versions of the songs .

Major interpreters of Bellman 's songs include the modern Swedish singer Fred Åkerström and the Dutch @-@ born Cornelis Vreeswijk . Other recordings have been made by Evert Taube and his son Sven @-@ Bertil Taube , and as rock music by Joakim Thåström , Candlemass or Marduk . They are also performed as choral music and as drinking songs .

Bellman has been translated into at least 20 languages , including English , most notably by Paul Britten Austin , and into German , for example by Hannes Wader . German Communist leader Karl Liebknecht liked Bellman 's songs and translated some into German . Hans Christian Andersen was one of the first to translate Bellman into Danish . Bellman 's songs have been translated and recorded in Icelandic ( by Bubbi ) , Italian , French , Finnish ( for instance by Vesa @-@ Matti Loiri ) , Russian , Chuvash and Yiddish . English interpretations have been recorded by William Clauson , Martin Best , Freddie Langrind made some Norwegian translations in 2008 . Sven @-@ Bertil Taube , Roger Hinchliffe and Martin Bagge . Schoolchildren two hundred years on still learn some of his songs , and several including Gubben Noak and Fjäriln vingad are known by heart by many Swedes .

Books in English with translations of Bellman 's work have been written by Charles Wharton Stork in 1917 , Hendrik Willem van Loon in 1939 , Paul Britten Austin in 1967 and 1990 , and the historian Michael Roberts in 1977 ? 1991 . In English the most thorough treatment of Bellman 's life is also by Britten Austin . Van Loon 's The Last of the Troubadours : The Life and Music of Carl Michael Bellman ( 1740 ? 1795 ) was inspired by a visit to Sweden , and tried to introduce the unknown Bellman to an American audience , but critics felt his version of twenty of the songs was " stiff and often ungraceful " , not doing justice to their composer .

Bellman was the subject of an 1844 ballet choreographed by August Bournonville . Bellman features as a character , along with Ulla Winblad and King Gustav III , in the first episode of the Swedish television series " Nisse Hults historiska snedsteg " ( Nisse Hult 's historical slips ) by SVT Drama . Bellman appears with his cittern and various objects from Fredman 's Epistles and Fredman 's Songs on a 100 Swedish kroner postage stamp issued in 2014 and designed by Beata Boucht ; he was shown on earlier Swedish stamps in 1940 and 1990 , commemorating the 200th and 250th anniversaries of his birth , and again in 2006 . Bellmansgatan in Stockholm 's Södermalm district is named for Bellman ; Stieg Larsson places the apartment of his Millennium trilogy hero Mikael Blomkvist in Bellmansgatan , which Dan Burstein and Arne de Keijzer suggest is meant to provide Bellman associations .

Swedish schoolchildren tell Bellman jokes about a person named Bellman , an antihero or modern @-@ day trickster with little or no connection to the poet . The first known Bellman joke is in a book from 1835 , which quoted a letter written in 1808 by a contemporary of Bellman . 19th century Bellman jokes were told by adults and focused on Bellman 's life at court ; they often related to sex . In the 20th century , the ' Bellman ' character became generic , the jokes were told by schoolchildren , and often related to bodily functions . The jokes have been studied by anthropologists and psychologists since the 1950s .

= = = Bellmanmuseet = = =

Stora Henriksvik , also called the Bellman museum ( Bellmanmuseet ) for its small permanent Bellman exhibition , celebrates his life and work with paintings , replica objects and a beachside café in a 17th @-@ century Stockholm house . The place , beside the beach at Långholm , was in Bellman 's time called Lilla Sjötullen ( The Small Lake @-@ Customs House ) where farmers from Lake Mälaren had to pay a toll on the goods they were taking to market in Stockholm 's Gamla stan . The place is mentioned in Epistle No. 48 , Solen glimmar blank och trind .

= = = Bellmansällskapet = = =

The Bellman Society ( Bellmansällskapet ) , founded in Stockholm on the anniversary of Bellman 's birth in 1919 , fosters interest in Bellman and supports research into the man and his work . To these ends it organises concerts , lectures and excursions . It produces the series of Bellmanstudier , starting in 1924 , so far running to 24 volumes , as well as facsimile prints of Bellman documents , essay collections , and Yngve Berg 's Bellman porcelain . It has published recordings including Alla Fredmans Epistlar ( All Fredman 's Epistles ) and Alla Fredmans Sånger ( All Fredman 's Songs ) . The Society 's newsletter is called Hwad behagas ? .

= = Works = =

Månan ( The Moon ) , Nyström och Stolpe , 1760

Bacchi Tempel ( Temple of Bacchus ) , 1783

Fredmans Epistlar ( Fredman 's Epistles ) , 1790

Fredmans Sånger ( Fredman 's Songs ) , 1791

Samlade verk ( Collected Works )

= = = English = = =

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Stork , Charles Wharton . Anthology of Swedish lyrics from 1750 to 1915 . New York : The American @-@ Scandinavian Foundation , 1917 .

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Eriksson , Lars @-@ Göran , ed . ( 1982 ) . Kring Bellmann [ Around Bellman ] . Stockholm : Wahlström & Widstrand . ISBN 91 @-@ 46 @-@ 14135 @-@ 9 .

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Hägg , Göran ( 1996 ) . Den svenska litteraturhistorien [ The Swedish literature history ] . Stockholm : Wahlström & Widstrand . ISBN 91 @-@ 46 @-@ 17629 @-@ 2 .

Jonshult , Bengt Gustaf ( 1990 ) . Med Bellman på Haga och Carlberg [ With Bellman at Haga and Carlberg ] . Solna : Solna Hembygdsförening . ISBN 91 @-@ 971109 @-@ 1 @-@ 4 , ISSN 0280 @-@ 3062 .

Kleveland , Åse ( 1984 ) . Fredmans epistlar & sånger [ The songs and epistles of Fredman ] . Svenolov Ehrén ( illus . ) . Stockholm : Informationsförlaget . ISBN 91 @-@ 7736 @-@ 059 @-@ 1 .  
( with facsimiles of sheet music from first editions in 1790 , 1791 )

Matz , Edvard ( 2004 ) . Carl Michael Bellman ? Nymfer och friskt kalas [ Carl Michael Bellman ? Nymphs and splendid feasts ] . Lund : Historiska Media . ISBN 91 @-@ 89442 @-@ 97 @-@ 0 .

Hjörd , Bengt , ed . ( 1989 ) . " " Carl Michael Bellmans okända släkt " by Marianne Nyström pp. 209 @-@ 226 and " Skalde @-@ Anor : Carl Michael Bellmans härstammning " by Håkan Skogsjö pp. 227 @-@ 236 " . Stadsbor i gångna tider : Släktforskaren och staden : Årsbok 1989 [ City dwellers in olden times : The genealogist and the town ] . Stockholm : Sveriges Släktforskarförbund , Norstedts Tryckeri . ISBN 91 @-@ 87676 @-@ 03 @-@ 6 .