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"Repertoire for a Swedish bassoon virtuoso: Approaching early nineteenth-century works composed for Frans Preumayr with an original Grenser & Wiesner bassoon"

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Chapter 1 The three Preumayr brothers in Stockholm

1.1 An attractive cultural center and the institution of the Royal Orchestra

An auspicious cultural environment already existed in Stockholm some thirty years prior to the arrival of the German musicians Johann Conrad, Carl Josef and Frans Carl Preumayr, at the beginning of the 1800s. With the ascension of Gustav III (1746–92) to the throne in 1771, Sweden experienced a period of cultural enlightenment, accompanied by massive political changes and military actions under his reign.⁹ A patron of the performing arts, Gustav III established the Royal Academy of Music in 1771 and the Royal Swedish Opera and Royal Swedish Ballet in 1773. The construction of a new opera house began in 1775, and the Royal Dramatic Theatre was created shortly thereafter. The Royal Orchestra had already been in existence in a smaller form and dated from the first part of the sixteenth century, making it one of the earliest of its kind; musicians from all of Europe could be found within its ranks throughout its long history. In the late eighteenth century, the orchestra became an institutionalized part of the Royal Opera ensemble.¹⁰

Those who had been drawn to Stockholm included a sizeable number from Germany, and included the composer Joseph Martin Kraus (1756–92), who spent his adult life in Stockholm; Johann Gottlieb Naumann (1741–1801), whose opera *Cora och Alonzo* was performed at the inauguration of the newly-completed opera house in 1782, as well as Abbé Vogler (1749–1814), who was appointed to the post of *kapellmästare*, or conductor, in 1786.¹¹ Although the Royal

⁹ Marie-Christine Skuncke, Oxford Reference, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195104301.001.0001/acref-9780195104301-e-288> [accessed April 2, 2015]. Gustav III abolished the parliamentary constitution in 1772 in a *coup d'état*, reinstating the power of the monarchy. Political conflicts and opposition to his rule led to his assassination at a masked ball in the Royal Opera House in 1792. This event was the subject of at least two operas, Daniel Aubert's *Gustave III, ou Le bal masqué* (premiered in Paris, 1833) and Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* (premiered in Rome in 1859).

¹⁰ Ander (2008), 477, 483–85, 497–500.

¹¹ Ibid., 507–08.

Orchestra was disbanded for several years at the beginning of the 1800s by the following monarch Gustav IV, it resumed its functions after 1809 upon his abdication, and the young Preumayrs were listed as members several years later.¹²

1.2 The Preumayr brothers

The three Preumayrs were sons of the bassoonist Severin Preumayr (ca.1750–?) an employee with variable duties as musician, servant and footman at the Hochstift Augsburg in the second part of the eighteenth century:

Um die hohen Kosten für solchen Luxus zu mindern, mussten im Hochstift Augsburg selbst der Violinendirektor Joseph Almerigi, wenn er nicht spielte, als Hoflakai, der Fagottist Severin Preumayr als Tafeldecker und Lakai, sowie der Waldhornist und Paukenschläger Joseph Schmid als Hofkoch arbeiten. Nur unter diesen Umständen konnte Joseph I. von Hessen-Darmstadt es sich leisten, bei Festen eigene Musiker spielen zu lassen.¹³

In the 1780s, Father Preumayr is also reported to have played in the Trier Electoral Kapelle in Coblenz, where all three sons were born.¹⁴ Arriving in Stockholm in 1802, the Preumayr sons eventually became members of the Royal Orchestra, joining many other musicians and composers from Germany or of German descent who were active at and connected to the Swedish court.¹⁵ The Preumayrs were well-known and successful musicians; their membership in the Swedish literary and musical society, Par Bricole (established in 1779), suggests an elite

¹² Gunhild Karle, *Kungl. Hovkapellet i Stockholm och dess musiker 1772–1818 [The Royal Court Orchestra in Stockholm 1772–1818 and its Musicians]* (Uppsala: TryckJouren, 2001), 321–22.

¹³ Hayat Dorothea Wiersch, *‘Zeremoniell im Wandel’*, PhD (Ruhr Universität Bochum, 2011), 110. “In order to reduce the high cost of such luxuries at the Hochstift Augsburg, even the leader and violinist Joseph Almerigi, if he wasn't playing, had to work as footman, the bassoonist Severin Preumayr as servant and footman, and the hornist and timpani player Joseph Schmid, as court cook. Only under these circumstances could Joseph I of Hessen-Darmstadt afford to have his own musicians perform at festivities.”

¹⁴ Johann Nicolaus Forkel, *Musikalische Almanach für Deutschland: 1782–1789* (Leipzig: Schwickertscher Verlag), 153.

¹⁵ Ander (2008), 497–502. Nationalities of orchestra members from 1772–1885 are reported here in detail. For a complete listing by instrument group from 1772–1818, see also: Karle (2001), 458–77. Additionally, AMZ, no 36, Sept 2, 1812: 594–95. The reporter mentions various German musicians holding positions in the Royal Orchestra in 1812.

status and level of activity in the cultural community of the capital city.¹⁶ This study focuses on the youngest, Frans Carl (1782–1853), who eventually gained international recognition as a talented virtuoso.

Johann Conrad Preumayr, the eldest, was born in 1775 and held a position as bassoonist in the Royal Orchestra from 1811–19. Several performances of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Septett in Es-Dur*, op. 20 with orchestral colleagues are noted in the years from 1805 until 1813, and his performances with solo concerti in Stockholm are reported in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1812, 1813 and 1814.¹⁷ On various occasions, programs including *sinfonie concertante* composed by Louis-Emanuel Jadin and Bernhard Henrik Crusell for winds with orchestra, were presented by Johann Conrad with Bernhard Crusell (clarinet), and Johann Hirschfeld (horn), all virtuosi wind players in the Royal Orchestra.¹⁸ Johann Conrad was evidently a very accomplished musician and we can only speculate if the eldest Preumayr would have become as renowned a bassoon soloist as his youngest brother Frans, had he not met with an untimely death at the age of forty-four, in 1819.¹⁹

Following Johann Conrad's death, the second eldest, Carl Josef (1780–1849), otherwise employed in the Royal Orchestra as a violoncellist and singer at the Opera, moved into the position of bassoonist during the years 1820–23.²⁰ Although not cited as a bassoon soloist, Carl Josef's name appeared regularly in reports describing musical events in the Swedish capital,

¹⁶ Par Bricole, <http://www.parbricole.se> [accessed August 2, 2013]. Members in the nineteenth century also included such musicians as Bernhard Crusell and Franz Berwald. The Par Bricole homepage states: "*Par Bricole är ett ordenssällskap. Dess mål är att vårda och bevara det svenska kulturarvet, särskilt i form av sång, musik, teater och talekonst.*" "Par Bricole is a society whose purpose and goal is to nurture and preserve the Swedish heritage, primarily in singing, music, theater and oratory." This traditional fraternity still exists today, and plays an active role in the Swedish cultural environment.

¹⁷ Fabian Dahlström, *Bernhard Henrik Crusell* (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1976), 249–56. Also: AMZ, no 53, Dec 30, 1812: 867; no 19, May 12, 1813: 320; and no 18, May 14, 1814: 308.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 249, 252–55.

¹⁹ Woodrow Joe Hodges, 'A Biographical Dictionary of Bassoonists Born Before 1825', PhD (University of Iowa, 1980), 524.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 518–19. Carl Josef played cello in the orchestra 1808–20 and 1823–38, and bassoon from 1820–23.

documenting his capabilities as a bass singer. In 1814, a reviewer commented favorably upon his roles in productions of *Armida* by Gluck:

Mit vielem Vergnügen haben wir auch auf unser Bühne, als eine alt Bekanntschaft, die schöne Oper, *Armida* von Gluck, wiedergesehen. Hidrast (Hr. Carl Preumayr) und Aronte (Hr. Wichström) singen gut: aber Sidonie, (Mad. Sevelia), Ubald (Hr. Aman) und Artemidor (Hr. Lindman) waren desto schlechter.²¹

and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*:

. . . worin wir mit Freude den Hrn. Lindström (Tamino) und Hrn. Carl Preumayr (Sarastro) gehört haben.²²

Another writer noted that the performance of *Armida*, given later in the season, suffered musically due to Carl Josef's absence and subsequent replacement by Mr. Broman:

Wir haben von diesem Monate nur sehr Unbedeutendes zu melden. Wegen anderer Festlichkeiten fanden keine Concerte statt. Das Vorzüglichste, was die Opernbühne gab, war Folgende. *Armida* von Gluck worin Dem. Wäselia die Hauptrolle mit allgemeinem Beyfall ausführte. Auch Hr. Lindström (Renaud) verdient Lob. Das Ganze gelang, obgleich die Rolle des Hydrast, statt von Hrn Carl Preumayr, von Hrn. Broman gegeben ward; wodurch der Gesang allerdings litt.²³

Carl Josef also appeared as violoncellist, along with his brother Frans Preumayr, Bernhard Crusell (clarinet), Johann Hirschfeld (horn) and Franz Berwald (violin and composer) in chamber music concerts in Stockholm, where several performances of Beethoven's *Septett* were noted.²⁴

²¹ AMZ, no 18, May 4, 1814: 308. "With much pleasure we have seen again, like an old acquaintance, the beautiful opera, *Armida* by Gluck on our stage. Hidrast (Mr. Preumayr Carl) and Aronte (Mr. Wichström) sing well [enough]; but Sidonie, (Mad. Sevelia), Ubald (Mr. Aman) and Artemidorus (Mr. Lindman) were the worst."

²² Ibid., no 25, June 22, 1814: 424. ". . . where we listened to Mr. Lindström (Tamino) and Mr. Carl Preumayr (Sarastro) with pleasure."

²³ Ibid., no 9, March 1, 1815: 154–55. "We have only very insignificant events to report this month. Due to other festivities, no concerts were held. The best from the operatic stage was the following: *Armida* by Gluck, in which Miss Wäselia performed the title role receiving general applause. Also Mr. Lindström (Renaud) deserves praise. On the whole, it was successful, although the role of Hydrast was taken by Mr. Broman instead of Mr. Carl Preumayr, whereby the vocal quality therefore suffered."

²⁴ Dahlström, 253, 256.



Figure 1.1. Portrait of Frans Preumayr, courtesy of the National Library of Sweden

The youngest Preumayr, Frans Carl was born in Ehrenbreitstein near Coblenz in 1782 and died in Stockholm in 1853. Frans was a celebrated bassoonist and member of the Royal Orchestra (1811–35), director of the Svea Lifgardet (Swedish Lifeguards military band) (1814–19), Upplands Dragonmusik, and the Kalmar Regiment (1826–49), as well as choir conductor in the

society Par Bricole (1832–53).²⁵ He married Sophie, the daughter of his colleague, the clarinetist Crusell (whom he referred to as “Pappa”) in 1821, and they had three children.²⁶

Frans Preumayr’s name was often mentioned in chamber music programs with Crusell and Hirschfeld, as he gradually replaced his eldest brother, Johann Conrad. Later known as a virtuoso in Sweden and abroad, his performances were generally met with enthusiastic public acclaim.²⁷ Édouard Du Puy, Franz Berwald, and Bernhard Crusell, all colleagues in the Royal Orchestra, and other composers, including Pierre Crémont and Eduard Brendler, wrote highly-virtuosic pieces for Frans, some of which he performed during an extended European tour in 1829–30; a travel journal of substantial historical interest exists from this period [see chapter 2]. After his retirement from the Royal Orchestra in 1835, Preumayr was awarded membership in the Royal Academy of Music and received a royal pension, although he continued his activities with military music until the end of his life in 1853.²⁸

1.3 The bassoon trio

The popularity of *Harmoniemusik*, or music for wind ensemble, increased towards the end of the eighteenth century together with the common practice of transcribing well-known compositions for varying kinds of settings, ranging in size from duo to large military band.

Harmoniemusik ensembles not only provided entertainment, but also music for social functions

²⁵ Hodges, 519. Additionally: Johan Leonard Höijer, *Musik-Lexikon* (1864), 376. Project Runeberg, <http://runeberg.org/muslex/0376.html> [accessed October 3, 2014].

²⁶ Ibid., 519–20. Additionally: Alf Hörberg, ‘Musik och musiker i Crusells Stockholm’, Kungliga hovkapellet website, <http://www.hovkapellet.com/2008/11/05/musik-och-musiker-i-crusells-stockholm/> [accessed August 2, 2013].

²⁷ Various international reviews of Frans Preumayr’s concerts can be found in chapter 2.

²⁸ Hodges, 519. Additionally: WP, https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frans_Preumayr&prev=search [accessed January 21, 2014].

such as weddings and other celebrations, having the advantage of being available for outdoor performance, without a keyboard.²⁹

On various occasions before Johann Conrad's death in 1819, the brothers performed together as a bassoon trio, illustrated by the following series of reviews that report of their success in public performances. An early appearance of the Preumayrs at the German Seebad Doberan (a summer spa located on the Baltic coast) is documented in an enthusiastic account from 1806 with news about the *Harmoniemusik* corps and the musical activities to be found in this romantic setting during the bathing season. The reviewer declared that the artistic talents of the young men were equally matched by characteristics of modesty, good manners and respectfulness, and hoped that they would be just as warmly received elsewhere during their travels. Furthermore, he commented that the performing artists deserved a larger audience than that present at the three concerts offered in this series:

Das zweyte Konzert gaben die drey Gebrüder Preumayr aus Coblenz, sämmtlich Fagottisten, eben so talentvolle Künstler als, durch Bescheidenheit und gute Sitten, achtungswerthe Menschen. Möge ihnen die gute, herzliche Aufnahme, die sie hier, besonders von Seiten der H. Hofharmonie fanden, auf ihrer Reise überall finden! . . . Alle drey Konzerte waren indess nicht sehr besucht; das zweyte noch am meisten, aber doch nicht im Verhältniß mit dem Verdienste der Künstler.³⁰

At another concert in Stettin, a writer conveyed his pleasure in hearing the eldest, Johann Conrad, master the bassoon in a singularly refined manner and admired his beautiful tone quality in all registers, evidently something not commonly heard from this instrument. The bassoon trio was noteworthy as an ensemble, and certainly as exceptional in 1806 as it would be nowadays:

²⁹ Stephen L. Rhodes, 'A History of the Wind Band', 2007.
http://www.lipscomb.edu/windbandhistory/rhodeswindband_04_classical.htm#harmonie_instrumentation
 [accessed July 19, 2011].

³⁰ AMZ, no 7, Nov 12, 1806: 112. "The second concert was given by the three brothers Preumayr from Coblenz, all bassoonists, and just as much talented artists as modest, good-mannered, and respectable people. Let them find the good, warm reception they found here, particularly from the court *Harmoniemusik* band, everywhere they travel! . . . All three concerts were not, however, very well-attended; the second the most, but not in relation to the merits of the artists."

Fremde Virtuosen haben uns eine Menge von extraordinären Konzerten zuwege gebracht, worunter einige sehr interessant waren. . . . Das letzte, was wir vor einigen Tagen hatten, war das der drey Brüder Preumayr, alle drei Fagottisten. Der ältesten unter ihnen zeichnet sich durch ein überaus schönen, weichen und dabey kräftigen Ton aus – in der Höhe nicht schneidend, in der Tiefe nicht knallend, was auf diesem Instrument so häufig ist! Das *Allegro* trägt er mit bewundernswerther Fertigkeit und Rundung, wie das *Adagio* einfach und edel vor. . . . die beyden jüngern Brüder . . . erreichen ihn zwar nicht an Virtuosität, blasen aber auch sehr rein und präzis. Einzig ist das Ensemble, das sie in Trios hören liessen. Besonders schön war ein *Adagio*, dass alle Zuhörer aufs innigste ergriff.³¹

A note from the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* regarding a concert given in Stockholm on April 11, 1813, reports that a Swedish hymn with variations arranged by Crusell, was performed “masterfully” by the bassoonists and contrabass player; the cellist Megelin however was severely criticized for significantly harming “the otherwise good effect” of the ensemble with his “nasal tone”:

Schwedisches Nationallied mit Variationen, v. Hrn. Crusell eigentlich für drey Fagotte und Contrabass componiert. Dem letzten wurde diesmal noch ein Violoncello zugesellt, das, da es immer nur in Octaven mitging, auch Spieler desselben (Hr. Megelin) nur einen Nasenton hervorbrachte, der sonst guten Wirkung beträchtlich schadete. Die drey Brüder Preumayr und Hr. Wirthe (Contrab.) trugen ihre Partien meisterhaft vor.³²

On January 8, 1814, the Preumayrs performed an arrangement of a Mozart serenade for three bassoons with orchestra accompaniment in Stockholm and were highly praised. Unfortunately, neither title nor arranger is noted:

³¹ Ibid., no 1, Oct 1, 1806: 14–15. “Foreign virtuosi have offered an assortment of extraordinary concerts, some of which were very interesting. . . . The last virtuoso concert that we had a few days ago was with the three Preumayr brothers, all bassoonists. The eldest distinguished himself by a very beautiful and soft but strong tone - not shrill in the upper register, nor explosive in the lower, which is so often heard on this instrument. He played the *Allegro* with astounding facility, as well as the *Adagio* simply and nobly. . . . both the younger brothers . . . do not reach his virtuosity, but also play very purely and precisely. Unique is the ensemble, which presents itself as a trio. Especially beautiful was an *Adagio* that moved all listeners deeply.”

³² Ibid., no 19, May 12, 1813: 320–21. “Swedish national folk song with variations, from Mr. Crusell, actually composed for three bassoons and contrabass. A cello joined in, playing along in octaves and the player of the same (Mr. Megelin) brought forth only a nasal tone, which detracted considerably from the otherwise good effect. The three brothers Preumayr and Mr. Wirthe (Contrab.) played their parts masterfully.”

Mozart's Serenade variirt für 3 Fagotte mit Orchesterbegleit[ung], von den drey Brüdern Preumayr sehr gut geblasen.³³

Aside from the pieces previously mentioned, no original works or other arrangements composed for the Preumayr trio have been identified thus far.³⁴ Nonetheless, other examples from the period for this combination exist, such as ten trios for three bassoons composed by François-René Gebauer and an anonymous nineteenth-century arrangement of Carl Maria von Weber's opera, *Der Freischütz*.³⁵

Although both of his brothers were also established musicians in Stockholm, it is the youngest, Frans Carl, whom Finnish musicologist Fabian Dahlström referred to as “possibly the most talented bassoonist in Europe.”³⁶ Preumayr's legacy not only includes a substantial body of compositions written for the celebrated virtuoso, with at least half a dozen solo works and numerous others in diverse chamber music settings, but also a travel journal of significant interest which offers reports of his experiences and impressions of European musical life. Selected passages from this document are the subject of chapter 2, as we follow Frans Preumayr's journey through major cities such as Hamburg, Paris, and London in 1829–30, where he performed as a soloist in concerts and soirées, visited opera productions, collaborated with famous musicians such as Ignaz Moscheles and Maria Malibran, and also paid a brief visit to Louis Spohr in Cassel.

³³ Ibid., no 18, May 4, 1814: 307. “Mozart Serenade arranged for three bassoons and orchestral accompaniment, was very well played by the three Preumayr brothers.”

³⁴ Unfortunately, the arrangements mentioned here have not yet been recovered.

³⁵ François-René Gebauer, ‘*Trios Nr 1–10 für 3 Fagotte*’, Jean-Christophe Dassonville (ed.), (Wargau: Accolade Musikverlag Nr. 4089, n.d.). And: Carl Maria von Weber, ‘*Der Freischütz für drei Fagotten*’, Helge Bartholomaeus (ed.), (Leipzig: Friedrich Hofmeister, 2002).

³⁶ Dahlström, ‘Bernhard Henrik Crusell: Concertante Wind Works’, [CD booklet, BIS Records, 1990], http://www.eclassical.com/shop/art90/BIS-CD-495_booklet_scan.pdf-8324b6.pdf [accessed July 20, 2015].

