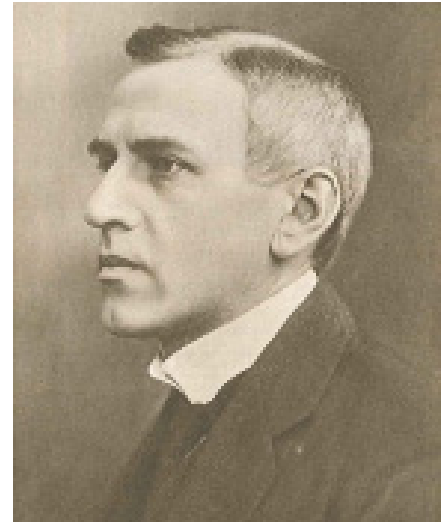


WILHELM STENHAMMAR

David C F Wright

Carl Wilhelm Eugen Stenhammar was born in Stockholm on 7 February 1871 and became one of Sweden's finest composers. His father, Per Ulrik, was an architect, composer and a religious man and Wilhelm's first teacher. The young man studied at the Stockholm Royal Conservatory from 1887 with Richard Anderson who had been a pupil of Clara Schumann. He also studied counterpoint with Joseph Dente and composition with Emil Sjogren, before going on to Berlin to continue his studies with Karl Barth. He also studied in Florence during 1906.



He had the deepest admiration for Wagner and Bruckner. In fact, Stenhammar's 55 minute Symphony no 1 was withdrawn by the composer as it was trivial and idyllic Bruckner. However, it has been recorded and is available on CD. Wilhelm decided to be more nationalistic and Nordic and follow along the lines of Nielsen and Sibelius as shown in his Symphony no 2.

From 1890 to 1892, he was the organist at the French Reformed Church in Stockholm. Studying with Wilhelm Heinze, resulted in his organists degree in 1890. In February 1892, Stenhammar was the pianist in Saint Saens Piano Quintet Op 14 and two weeks later his first large scale work, I rosegarden, for soprano, tenor, choir and orchestra was performed. A year later, he played the magnificent Brahms Piano Concerto no 1 which concert included his own ballet Florez och Blanzefler Op 3. He was also a fine accompanist often working with the violinist, Tor Aulin (1866-1914).

Another successful premiere was of his Concert Overture Excelsior Op 13 in 1896

From 1909 to 1922, he was the director of the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the first real Swedish orchestra, and premiered many Scandinavian works. He premiered Tor Aulin's Violin Concerto no 3, for example.

In 1909, he was the musical director of the Uppsala University before Hugo Alfven took over.

Stenhammar was a very fine pianist and his Piano Concerto no 2 in D minor, Op 23, made his name although some said it was heavily influenced by Brahms. It was favourably compared to Rachmaninov's Second Concerto and one performance was with the composer as soloist and Richard Strauss conducting the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Other conductors took up his work such as Arthur Nikisch, Karl Muck and Hans Richter.

In the 1920s, his health began to fail with a series of strokes although he was the director of Swedish Opera from 1923 - 1925 at the age of 56

He died of a stroke, or a brain haemorrhage, in Gothenburg on 20 November 1927. He wrote a lot of fine music and a list of his works follows:

Orchestral works

- Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Opus 1 (1893)
- Excelsior! Concert Overture, Opus 13 (1896)
- Symphony No. 1 in F major (1902-03, withdrawn)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Opus 23 (1904–1907)
Two Sentimental Romances for violin and orchestra, Opus 28 (1910)
Serenade in F major, Opus 31 (1908–13, rev.1919)
Symphony No. 2 in G minor, Opus 34 (1911–1915)
Symphony No. 3 in C major (1918–19, fragment)

Opera and choral works

Florez and Blanzefflor (for baritone and orchestra), Opus 3 (1891)
Gildet på Solhaug (opera), Opus 6 (1892–1893)
“Tirfing” (opera), Opus 15 (1897–1898)
Ithaka (for baritone and orchestra), Opus 21 (1904)
Ett Folk (cantata), Opus 22 (1904–1905)
Midvinter (for mixed chorus and orchestra), Opus 24 (1907)
Sången (symphonic cantata for soloists, mixed chorus, children’s choir and orchestra), Opus 44 (1921)
Around 60 songs

Chamber music

String Quartet No. 1 in C major, Opus 2 (1894)
String Quartet No. 2 in C minor, Opus 14 (1896)
String Quartet No. 3 in F major, Opus 18 (1897–1900)
String Quartet No. 4 in A minor, Opus 25 (1904–1909)
String Quartet No. 5 in C major, Opus 29 (1910)
String Quartet No. 6 in D minor, Opus 35 (1916)
Violin Sonata in A minor, Opus 19 (1899–1900)
Allegro ma non tanto in A Major, for Piano Trio (1895)
Allegro Brillante in E flat Major, for Piano Quartet (1891)

Piano music

Sonata No. 1 in C major (1880)
Sonata No. 2 in C minor (1881)
Sonata No. 3 in A-flat major (1885)
Sonata No. 4 in G minor (1890)
Three Fantasies, Opus 11 (1895)
Sonata in A-flat major, Opus 12 (1895)
Late Summer - 5 piano pieces, Opus 33 (1914)

Incidental music

Lodolezzi sjunger, Op. 39 (1919) (“Lodolezzi Sings” a drama by Hjalmar Bergman)

[Score of String Quartet No. 4](#)

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