

## Mankelliana

Much music has been forgotten. This also holds for the major part of Gustaf Mankell's artistic heritage. At first sight Mankell's music may seem hopelessly antiquated, excessive or naïve. However, I have found a few works worth bringing out in our time. I hereby hope to deepen our understanding of the product of a cultured and genuine artist.

## The composer

Gustaf Mankell was born on the 20th of May, 1812 in Christiansfeld in Danish Sønderjylland. His father was a glassblower and an organist in the local fraternity of the Moravian Brethren. His mother was the daughter of a wealthy Stockholm merchant, also a member of the Brethren. His parents divorced as early as in 1814. Eventually, Gustaf came to perceive his mother's fatherland as his own, like his older brother Abraham.

Gustaf received his earliest musical learning in the varied musical life of the Brethren of Christiansfeld. He moved to Stockholm in 1833, where he gave private piano lessons for a living. After just two years he obtained his degree as organist at the Royal Academy of Music. In the same year he was appointed organist at St. Jakob's Church, a post he held until his death in 1880. From 1836 onwards he also worked as a singing teacher and cantor at Jakob's Higher Apologist School, the elementary school of the parish. From 1837 he also was an organist in the

Moravian Brethren communities in Stockholm. In 1853 he succeeded the teacher of organ playing at the Grammar School of the Academy of Music, Johan Peter Eriksson, and six years later he received the title of professor. As early as 1841 he was appointed member of the Royal Academy of Music.

There is a literary rendering of Gustaf Mankell in August Strindberg's short story "Den romantiske klockaren på Rånö", where he is represented as the professor. Perchance the model disciple Albert Lindström was in the back of Strindberg's mind when he named the young man Alrik Lundstedt.

Early on, Mankell appeared as an organist, in the capital as well as in the countryside. Mankell was considered an organ and piano virtuoso in his time. He also was an extremely expert organ improviser. His "contrapuntal extemporizations" were famous. For a long time he was considered the most adroit organ-player of the country.

"Mankell was an excellent organ executant, or perhaps rather an organ improviser, since he put less emphasis on registration and everything connected with outward effect than on the content and core of the rendering. In this regard it was said, perhaps not without reason, that the organ playing of Mankell lured not a few of the listeners who visited the church where he served. And at times it so happened that many of those listeners stayed on for a long time after the service had ended, to enjoy the improvisations of the famous organist. For even though he once in a while entertained his audience with the works of

other masters, especially of Lemmens and Hesse, and above all with the fugues of Bach, he preferred to let himself be carried away by his own fantasies, and thus captured the audience, often for hours. Mankell also was capable of improvising figured movements." (Europas konstnärer, 1887)

Mankell's talent and competence found expression in many fields of church music. Above all, his educational efforts at the Grammar School of the Academy must be emphasized. Here he reared several generations of organists. Many of these became brilliant interpreters as well as composers, among others Elfrida Andrée, Georg Wilhelm Heinze and Emil Sjögren, moreover Claes Wilhelm Rendahl, Albert Wideman, August Lagergren and the eminent Albert Lindström, who was also to become teacher and promoter of Otto Olsson. There is documentary evidence that Mankell not only was a zealous and conscientious teacher; "he also bestowed an almost fatherly care on his disciples, and there are many legends about him in this regard. His sacrifices for them were boundless, and he also generously awarded considerable amounts of his own money to the embellishment of the organ of Jakob's Church. He could also be a stern master, and on such occasions he was not to be trifled with. But when the storm had passed, the sun shone all the brighter and he often tried to cheer the unhappy victim of his outburst up with agreeable ideas, so that he or she should forget what had transpired. Anecdotes and histories abounded; on occasion the atonement even assumed material shape, and consisted of a composition by him or the like." (Europas konstnärer, 1887).

Mankell also assisted at the so called historic concerts in Stockholm, for which he did a good deal of transcriptions of the works for organ of older composers. He often played organ duets with his colleague Carl Torsell, organist of Storkyrkan.

Another important aspect of Mankell's musical work is the collections of organ music that he published. He was driven to do this by a concern for the improvement of quality of the organ music of services. Mankell's brother describes his brother's concern somewhat dramatically:

"In the Swedish countryside, especially the older organ players entertain at the so called 'exit', playing marches and other poor little pieces selected from the Liliput repertoire." (Abraham Mankell, Den kyrkliga orgelspelningen, 1862).

The collections of Gustaf Mankell are titled "Orgelbibliothek" (1849-50), "Orgelminsten" (1856-57), "Orgelvännen" (1863), "Album för orgelminster och amatörer" (1864) and "Orgelmusik för kyrkan" (without year). They contain works of the old masters, e.g. J. S. Bach, Händel and Mendelssohn, and of the admired contemporaneous Adolph Hesse and Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens, but also lesser pieces by Mankell himself. These organ music collections became very popular and contributed to the cultivation of more substantial organ music in the churches around the country.

Moreover Gustaf Mankell took great pains to further the development of the art of organ building. With

his expertise he contributed to better organ building in the country. He made a long journey to acquire knowledge of important organs on the continent with his friend the organ builder Per Larsson Åkerman. Their joint experiences led to intensive contacts in organ-building matters up to the death of Åkerman in 1876. Mankell's solid expert knowledge made him an inspector of many of the large organ buildings in the country during the 1850s, 60s and 70s. Through Mankell, the Danish organ building firm Marcussen & Søn began building instruments in Sweden, e.g. in Gothenburg Cathedral (1850), in Gärdserum (1857) and in Väderstad (1863, still in original shape).

Last but not least, Mankell's composition work has to be emphasized. He composed mostly for the organ and the piano, but also a string quartet and some vocal music. His tone language at first may seem conventional or impersonal. The formal framework is meticulously pruned, even though at times it becomes excessively circumstantial. His indebtedness to Bach is obvious, as are influences of the contemporaneous Hesse and Lemmens, but features of the classicist romanticism of the Leipzig School can also be found.

Comparisons with other composers could include the contemporaneous Dane Hans Mathison-Hansen (1807-1890), cathedral organist of Roskilde, or the Englishman Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876). Mankell's music is not on a par with the music of these composers, but he is a cultured and dignified representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century organ music in this periphery of Europe.

In his contrapuntal work Mankell's music does not compare with the lightness of a Mendelssohn; his music harks back in time, wherefore his style stands out as a bit old-worldly mannered. But one can't deny him a profound artistic drive, from which an artless flow of genuine ideas and charming melodies sprang.

The gigantic cycle of twelve big-scale organ sonatas stands out as his magnum opus. They were accomplished during the short period from 1874 to 1877 but were never printed. Some of the movements hark back to earlier works, and in some cases they have been inserted as arrangements. This is characteristic of Mankell, and it also occurs in the rich volume "Studier vid orgeln" (1869), which makes it difficult to date many of the works correctly, also those available in manuscript form.

Side by side with many lesser character works, there is a voluminous collection of Preludes or Fantasies with Fugues or Fughettas from Mankell's entire creative life. Many of them are incorporated in the above-mentioned organ collections, as well as larger Adagios, Andantes, Minuets, and "Tone-pieces". There is also a remarkable work, the voluminous "Minne från Gärdserums kyrka", a great fantasy for the solo stops of Marcussen's recently constructed 'model organ', followed by a fugue finale, and several pieces for organ à quatre mains. In his obituary on Gustaf Mankell Albert Lindström writes about his old teacher:

"When some time ago a member of the Academy of Music pointed out the need for a replacement teacher

of organ playing, in case Mankell would be absent or sick, the latter answered: 'I am never absent, and I never fall ill!' You should never say never, and only a few months after, by the irony of fate, even the strong Gustaf Mankell succumbed to illness. This anecdote, however, is not less characteristic of the zeal and dedication of this man of great merit than of his hard head. What once entered it was not easily removed from there, and he did not take lightly to being contradicted. If he was a little hard-headed, however, his heart was so much softer, and his most loved disciples were treated with boundless benevolence." (Illustrerad Tidning, den 3 april 1880).

On the 23rd of March, 1880, at 6 pm, Gustaf Mankell's "simple but industrious life" ended. And with his death an era came to an end.

## The music

*Fughetta med Praeludium A-dur* [Fughetta with Prelude A major] is taken from the collection "12 Fughetter" from 1858. The Fughetta is bold, but still reined in in its clear course. This is a good example of Mankell's capacity for uniting strict form with classicist romanticism. The short introductory prelude is more diverting, a take-off before the weaving of the Fughetta. Neither in the Fughetta nor in the longer C minor Fugue (track 15 in this recording) are any autographs indicated in the re-registrations, but there is only the frequent Mankell information "Fullt Werk" [full organ]. They are thus played with unmodified sound throughout.

In the year 1867 Gustaf Mankell writes, regarding sound variations in organ playing:

"...caution against constant variation of stops. This is a widespread evil practise in our time, when the modern art of organ building has furnished the organ with many mechanical aids for different timbres and effects. Many an organist uses these aids indiscriminately in order to disguise his lack of musical inventiveness. This may entertain an audience without knowledge and taste, but not the thinking connoisseur." (G. Mankell, Orgelskola, kap. IV om Orgelspelet).

*Adagio H-dur* [Adagio B major] and *Adagio Fiss-dur* [Adagio F sharp major] are character pieces of the sort that abounds in "Studier vid orgeln", published in 1869. This collection represents part II of the Organ School that Mankell published together with Franz Berwald and Oscar Byström. Part I is first and foremost an arrangement of Jacques-Nicolas Lemmens "Ecole d'orgue", whilst "Studier vid orgeln" is a volume with works by Gustaf Mankell only. It contains 101 compositions of varying degrees of difficulty, from lesser preludes via more comprehensive Tone Pieces, Adagios and Andantes to larger Alleghros, postludes and the final "Concert-Fantasi F-dur" [Concert Fantasy F major] (track 16 in this recording). Both of these Adagio movements, which, according to the registration instructions of Mankell, are inspired by his favourite Filite harmonique 8', might seem a little affected and not very original. Their structure, however, is light and elegant.



*Organ-Sonata No 6 d-moll* [Organ Sonata No. 6 d minor] was finished in September 1875. The fourth movement is titled "Choral, Sv. Psbk. No 14, med 5 Förändringar". Choral variations of this type are found in three of the twelve organ sonatas by Mankell. Here Mankell arranges what he called a "Gregorian melody" — it is taken from "Gregor's Choralbook", which his disciple Albert Lindström explains thus:

"Gustaf M. was not a theoretician or historian, such as his brother Abraham. In society M. praised the beauty of the 'Gregorian melodies'. This historically accepted designation usually refers to the hymns that derive from the antiphony of the pope Gregory the Great. When someone inquired in more detail about this matter someone else informed him or her that by 'Gregorian melodies' M. meant melodies by Christian Gregor, the finest choral author of the fraternity of the Moravian Brethren (died in 1801), towards whom M. naturally felt sympathetically disposed from childhood, since he was raised in the faith of the Brethren" (Illustrerad Tidning, den 3 april 1880).

"Sv. Psbk. No 14" of the title refers to "Fader! Under detta namn / Nalkas jag med hopp och gläder / Mina sückar i din lämn" ("Jesus allt mitt goda är resp. "Jesus, meine Zuversicht") of the hymn-book of Wallin, published in 1819. The hymn melody is presented with an interlude "on a very weak manual", in accordance with older practice. After the 6/4 time of the first lively variation and "strong stops, albeit without Rohrwerk" there follows a calm, solemn variation with cantus firmus in the pedal, carried by Trumpet 8'. The third movement is prescribed "full

organ". Here the solemn choral melody is raised with semiquaver variations. The fourth variation is a peaceful movement in five parts, with cantus firmus in the tenor. It must be played with "Salcional 8, Harmonica 8, Euphone 8 and Gambetta 4 Fuß". The Fugato of the final fifth variation again is for "Voll Orgel". — This sonata movement in itself is a consummate work with its well-balanced "Variations" of completely different character.

*Andante serioso* (Dess-dur) [Andante serioso (D flat major)] is the second movement of *Organ-Sonata No 3 f-moll* [Organ Sonata No. 3 f minor] (dated May 1875). In a letter dated November 1875 to his colleague Ludvig Matthias Lindeman, organist at Vor Frelsers Kirke in the then Kristiania (Oslo), Mankell characterizes the six organ sonatas that he had composed up to then with the words "in popular style with melodious themes". This movement is lyrical, almost serene, without becoming sentimental. He lets the sound of the three manuals interact: in 1<sup>st</sup> manual he prescribes "Gamba and Flüte harmonique", in 2<sup>nd</sup> manual "Fugara 8 foot" and in 3<sup>rd</sup> manual "Harmonica, Salcional and Euphone". These sounds find beautiful expression in the organ of Visby Cathedral.

The fourth movement of the same sonata, *Allegretto*, for "2 Man." is more concentrated: on one of the manuals "Euphone o Salcional, with Swell open", on the other "Fugara and Rohr Flüte". An elegant piece, albeit with a touch of melancholy, maybe influenced by folklore, in the spirit of those days.

The movement *Andante A-dur* [Andante A major] is taken from *Organ-Sonata No 5 C-dur* [Organ Sonata No. 5 C major], dated August 1875. Mankell borrowed this movement from an earlier composition. This is also true of various other movements of his twelve organ sonatas. This piece has something of the light heartedness of the classicist, romantic spirit reminiscent of the Leipzig School. The manuscript lacks registration instructions but carries metronome restriction (1/4 note = 60) by the Mankell disciple Ernst Melander (1856-1911), cathedral organist of Uppsala.

*Fantasi och Fuga c-moll* [Fantasy and Fugue c minor] is a rather early opus, dated Stockholm, August 1844. Mankell's own tone and idiom appear as far back as this; the fantasy is a little capricious, with the fugue theme discernible behind the sequences, the fugue somewhat circumstantial with a few long preliminaries — but it is genuinely handled. This fugue undoubtedly proves that organ music of a certain quality was created during this period. Abraham Mankell, music author and organist of Klara Church in Stockholm, the brother of Gustaf, gave the following opinion on contemporaneous organ music:

"Recent important compositions for the organ are rare. Only Gustaf Mankell, also an excellent organ-player, is a skilful composer of fugued movements for the giant instrument. This is a hard task. Because after having heard one such movement, the listener feels he has heard at least five hundred. When the thematic tones, which is often the case, speak to the heart only a little or not at all, the nature of the fugue

is actually empty talk" (Abraham Mankell, Musikens historia, 1864).

*Concert-Fantasi F-dur*; med användande af en större Orgels mångfaldiga Solostämmor [Concerto Fantasy F major; using the manifold solo stops of a larger organ] is the title of the final number of Mankell's collection "Studier vid orgeln" (1869). Here the registration instructions are more detailed than the usual, routine instructions often found in Mankell's manuscripts. E.g. there are the four stops that the organ-builder Per Larsson Åkerman installed at Mankell's organ in St. Jacob's church, viz. Dulciana 16', Salcional 8', Euphone 8' and Flüte harmonique 8', but also the cherished "Angelica 8 foot".

This work has a somewhat rhapsodic structure. It begins with a splendid march-like passage in plenum, followed by some equilibristic solos for flutes 4' and 2' respectively, which border on the mechanical. A few singable sections with different register combinations are then interlaced, and the composition ends without dramatic gestures. It concludes in the lonely Euphone stop in the manual — the stop that his contemporaries found "belongs to the most beautiful stops that have been lodged in an organ" (Carl Ludv Lindberg 1873).

This opus has certain structural deficiencies, but the melodies are intense and it bears witness to his mastery of the grandiose instrument. Here, as often in Mankell's music, an original character is to be seen behind the faultlessness and correctness.

— Claes Holmgren