

## MFA IN MUSICAL THEATRE 2004 TRAVEL TO GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

### **Background:**

In spring 2004 the graduating MFAs in SDSU's Musical Theatre program extended their traditional New York showcase field trip to include the pilot for what it is hoped will be a fruitful ongoing collaboration between the SDSU program and the corresponding program at Gothenburg University, Sweden. The Gothenburg program training musical theatre artists is the only one of its kind in Scandinavia; the SDSU program is one of only four in the U.S.

### **The time in Gothenburg:**

A total of eight students, four faculty (Paula Kalustian, Rick Simas, Terry O'Donnell, and myself), and one staff member (Wendy Thomson) traveled from SDSU to Gothenburg. The Gothenburg class of six students and their core faculty of five interacted and worked with the SDSU group for five intensive days and evenings. The time spent together culminated in a public performance in the big concert hall at Artisten, the GU downtown performing arts center, in the evening of March 24 (see program). The performance filled the hall and was most enthusiastically received. This culminating concert was of top quality, with 14 diverse very talented singers, choreographed by Paula Kalustian and directed primarily by Rick Simas. Superb accompaniment on the two grand pianos in the hall was provided by Terry O'Donnell and staff accompanist Wendy Thomson, as well as Gothenburg's legendary jazz pianist Sven-Eric Dahlberg, who also happens to be the director of Gothenburg's musical theatre program. The concert was documented in video and sound recordings.

The packed schedule in Gothenburg included lessons, scene work, vocal work, and rehearsals. Evenings were spent at select performances or visiting other educational institutions (Balletakademien, the Ballet Academy, offering a BFA-type program in performance with an emphasis in dance). Socializing took place at all times, from the warm opening reception in Artisten's black box theatre to late night snacks and visits to jazz clubs and the celebratory champagne after the final concert.

### **Publicity:**

An article in *GöteborgsPosten*, the biggest newspaper in Gothenburg, points up two things: first, the visit by SDSU was considered an event, and a very positive one at that, and, second, the students in the two programs do indeed have much to learn from each other. (See attached.)

The event was also noted in the local *Bohuslänningen* and even warranted an appreciative mention in Stockholm's biggest daily, the *Svenska Dagbladet*! (See attached.)

### **Outcome of collaboration:**

Quite aside from the personal gains and the tremendous goodwill generated on all sides, several advantages to this kind of international workshop experience became clear.

- 1) Intense work in a limited time with artists you don't know  
--forces you to be very sharp, keep up with the others;

- gives you permission to extend yourself beyond your familiar self;
- teaches you by demonstration other ways of working and performing;
- teaches trust and willingness to give and take (suggestions, impulses).

2) The SDSU students experienced working within another culture with different aesthetic standards and different working conditions (some much better than they were used to), the Swedish students experienced the higher tempo of the American performers and were energized by their "can do" attitude.

The joint rapid work on abstract choreography in some of the musical numbers appeared to be a revelation to the Swedes, who picked up the technique/skills/moves very quickly and enthusiastically. I quote from Reidun Saether, one of the Gothenburg students, who e-mailed the SDSU group in early April: "...I have to tell you, we've been using some of your staging ideas and working methods on this one. The director seemed really satisfied... . . . I can see we have a lot to learn from you guys, and I hope some of you are thinking the same, so there'll be good exchanges between us in the future..."

3) Every performer was respectfully listened to and worked with; no one was in a competitive situation where the object was to oust others from a role or performance opportunity. The spirit was truly cooperative.

4) Especially exciting for an observer (such as myself) was to see how the collaboration worked in scenes that combined a Swede with an American, or all the Swedes and all the Americans singing alternately English and Swedish. The American students saw first hand how well their Swedish counterparts spoke English and how comfortable they were with working in a language other than their mother tongue. They got a taste of trying the same thing when they themselves ended up singing in Swedish... which they actually did very well! They learnt that other languages are not necessarily obstacles or roadblocks to artistic expression but rather bridges to other cultures and peoples.

5) Both sides appreciated the tough climate that pervades the musical theatre profession and the fact that international experience and contacts can only increase a performer's chances of having his/her talent improved and used.

6) The faculty observed each other's pedagogy and found much to admire and emulate, although the time was short. A foundation of mutual trust and respect was laid which can and should result in future exchanges of not only students but also instructors.

#### **What's next?**

The next step for "the Gothenburg connection" is to formally invite the Gothenburg University class of six to SDSU for a similar experience in Spring 2005. The SDSU performing arts facilities may not be as supportive of artistic creativity as Gothenburg's but San Diego will provide a tropical escape from the cold and dark late winter of Gothenburg. A public performance is again planned, and we hope to create a special interest in this event among Swedes in San Diego.

#### **Sustainability of program:**

The chances that SDSU may gain ongoing future support for the Gothenburg Connection from San Diego SWEA (Swedish Women's Educational Association) are good. The outlook for streamlining the logistics of the exchange is likewise good. SDSU's Musical Theatre students' travel would be included in their fourth and final semester's coursework, so there is no need for a special course to give academic credit. Travel arrangements proved to be simple enough that in the future they can be made by the MFA program itself (no need to involve Travel/Study), with some assistance by Robert Carolin and OIP. Recordings of joint concerts may serve all the performers as a learning tool. The international experience and the performance itself becomes an intriguing item on each graduating MFA's resume.

**My role during this experience:**

Though I am not a member of the core faculty in the MFA program in Musical Theatre, I supported the "Gothenburg Connection" in several ways:

As a native Swede, one key role of mine at this initial stage of the American-Swedish collaboration was as translator, from language to language and from culture to culture (generally speaking, but also specifically with regard to higher education systems).

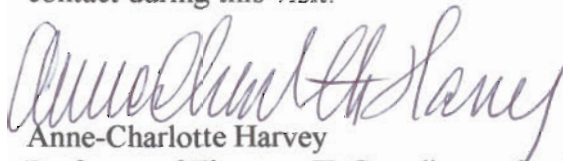
Direct input into the student work was in the form of coaching two songs performed in Swedish, beginning with two sessions at SDSU before the travel. I translated the lyrics of one of these songs, "The New World," into Swedish, as well as dialogue from the musical *Promises, Promises*.

In Gothenburg I served as media liaison when the rest of the SDSU group was busy rehearsing, and as dramaturg (researcher, translator, writer of program copy, moderator).

For the Office of International Programs I

- documented the work (in photos and video) and took detailed notes;
- observed and evaluated the experience;
- wrote this report.

I also attempted to meet with Gothenburg City Theatre Föreställningschef (Production Head) Ingemar Melander to set up internships for the SDSU's MFA students in Design and Technology. (Initial contact had already been made by Theatre faculty Loren Schreiber.) Unfortunately, Ingemar Melander had just left his position in Gothenburg and moved to Stockholm. Time was too short to pursue a new personal contact during this visit.



Anne-Charlotte Harvey  
Professor of Theatre , IP Coordinator for CPSFA  
May 10, 2004

Encl.:

Program, joint concert in Gothenburg, March 24, 2004  
Article *GöteborgsPosten*, with translation  
News items from *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Bohuslänningen*

## TEATERHÖGSKOLAN/ARTISTEN

School of Theatre and Musical, Göteborg University

In association with

San Diego State University (SDSU)

Master of Fine Arts Musical Theatre Program

Present

**Johan Bernspång \***  
**Alison Bretches** ☒  
**Marc Ciemiewicz** ☒  
**Daniel Eriksson \***  
**Caleb Goh** ☒  
**Pierre Hagman \***  
**Emma Klingenberg \***

\* Göteborg University

**Ryan McKinney** ☒  
**Kristen Mengelkoch** ☒  
**Reidun Saether \***  
**Ivy Vela** ☒  
**Eric Vest** ☒  
**Matt Weeden** ☒  
**Ida Holten Worsøe \***

☒ San Diego State University

in

## “It’s Our Time”

A musical revue performed in English and Swedish

By musical theatre students from ARTISTEN and the SDSU MFA Musical Theatre Program

### Directors:

Paula Kalustian  
Dr. Rick Simas

### Accompanists:

Sven-Eric Dahlberg  
Wendy Thomson

### Musical Directors:

Derek Barnes  
Dr. Terry O’Donnell

### Moderators:

Dr. Anne-Charlotte Harvey  
Dr. Rick Simas

## Part One

“The New World” ( <i>Songs for a New World</i> , Jason Robert Brown, 1996; Swedish translation by Anne-Charlotte Harvey)	All
“Fugue for Tinhorns” ( <i>Guys and Dolls</i> , Frank Loesser, 1950)	Marc, Eric and Caleb
“Mein Herr” ( <i>Cabaret</i> —film, John Kander & Fred Ebb, 1972)	Emma and Women
“I Wish It So” ( <i>Juno</i> , Marc Blitzstein, 1959)	Matt
“Here Comes the Ballad” ( <i>Diversions</i> , Carl Davis & Steven Vinaver, 1959)	Kristen
“If I Can’t Love Her” ( <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> , Tim Rice & Alan Menken, 1993)	Pierre
“Another Mr. Right” ( <i>Going Hollywood</i> , David Zippel & Jonathan Sheffer, 198?)	Alison
“Magic To Do” ( <i>Pippin</i> , Stephen Schwartz, arranged by Bernard Matracki, 1972)	Artisten Students
“Elizabeth” ( <i>Howard Crabtree’s Whoop-Dee-Doo!</i> , Mark Waldrop & Dick Gallagher, 1995)	Caleb
“By The Sea” ( <i>Sweeney Todd</i> , Stephen Sondheim, 1979; Swedish translation by Stig Tysklind)	Ida and Marc
“Unworthy of Your Love” ( <i>Assassins</i> , Stephen Sondheim, 1991)	Pierre and Kristen
“Muddy Water” ( <i>Big River</i> , Roger Miller, 1985)	Marc and Johan
“Make Our Garden Grow” ( <i>Candide</i> , John Latouche & Leonard Bernstein, 1956)	Eric, Kristen and All

## INTERMISSION

## Part Two

"Ballad of Sweeney Todd" ( <i>Sweeney Todd</i> , Stephen Sondheim, 1979)	All
"Everyone Wants to Be" (Alan Chapman, 1993)	Ryan
"Colors of the Wind" ( <i>Pocahontas</i> —film, Stephen Schwartz & Alan Menken, 1995)	Ivy
"Det måste vara underbart" ( <i>Vita Hästen [Im weissen Rössl]</i> , Hans Müller & Ralph Benatzky, 1930; Swedish translation by Karl-Ewert)	Johan
"A Call From the Vatican" ( <i>Nine</i> , Maury Yeston, 1982)	Reidun
"The Surrey With the Fringe on Top" ( <i>Oklahoma!</i> , Oscar Hammerstein & Richard Rogers, 1943)	Eric and Kristen
"Everyone's Addicted to More" ( <i>Speakeasy</i> , Robert Lindsey Nassif, 1993)	Marc
"Seasons of Love" ( <i>Rent</i> , Jonathan Larson, 1995)	Artisten Students
"King of the World" ( <i>Songs for A New World</i> , Jason Robert Brown, 1996)	Daniel
"You'll Think of Someone" ( <i>Promises, Promises</i> , Hal David & Burt Bacharach, 1969; Swedish translation Anne-Charlotte Harvey)	Emma and Matt
"Pretty Young Men" ( <i>A...My Name Is Alice</i> , Susan Birkenhead & Lucy Simon, 1983)	Alison, Kristen and Ivy
"Our Time" ( <i>Merrily We Roll Along</i> , Stephen Sondheim, 1981; Swedish translation by Erik Fägerborn)	Ryan, Matt, Alison and All

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### **San Diego State University Musical Theatre Program (1982)**

The Master of Fine Arts degree program in Musical Theatre in the School of Theatre, Television and Film at San Diego State University is one of only three such programs in the United States. Its mission is to prepare emerging artists for careers as performers, directors and educators in the field of Musical Theatre. Each term we produce a musical as part of our performance season, as well as smaller portfolio productions and projects, including staged readings, songwriter symposia, cabaret performances, and outreach events in the community. Six to ten students, some from outside the United States, are admitted every other year for two years of intensive training in all aspects of musical performance as well as a theoretical and historical approach to the field.

Faculty: Paula Kalustian, Movement and Directing, Director of Musical Theatre Program

Dr. Terry O'Donnell, Music (joint appointment with the School of Music and Dance)

Dr. Rick Simas, Acting and Directing

Wendy Thomson, Accompanist and Vocal Coach

Roy Mote, Voice

Laurinda Nikkel, Voice

### **Musical Theatre program, School of Theatre and Musical, Göteborg University (1992)**

The Musical Theatre program at Göteborg University is the only one of its kind in Scandinavia and attracts students from all over the Nordic countries to its competitive three-year program. Typically, 7-8 students are admitted each year from hundreds of applicants. The first two years the students perform in smaller projects and in-house productions, while the third and final year culminates in professional internships and one full-scale major production. Our integrated curriculum draws on the expertise of a sizeable professional adjunct faculty enriching the program's academic core.

Faculty: Sven-Eric Dahlberg, Accompanist, Director of Musical Theatre Program

Per Nordin, Acting and Directing, Principal, Teaterhögskolan

Frantisek Veres, Acting and Directing

Derek Barnes, Music Directing, Voice

Bertil Sandberg, Speech

Enzo Florino, Vocal Coach

Birgit Louise Frandzen, Vocal Coach

Harald Ek, Vocal Coach

Pia Muchin, Movement

Anita Åstrand, Movement

Mauro Rojas, Dance

Bernard Matracki, Accompanist

# Musikal ihop med amerikanska elever

**MUSIK:** Under en vecka har fjorton amerikanska och svenska musikalelever samarbetat om föreställningen *It's our time*. I kvällen kan den avnjutas på Artisten.

Förhoppningsvis är detta starten på ett mer omfattande samarbete, hoppas Sven-Eric Dahlberg, studierektor på Teaterhögskolans musikallinje. Han ler ikapp med Anne-Charlotte Harvey, professor och dramalärare vid San Diego State University och en av dem som

gjort utbytet möjligt. Med lite tur och pengar kan de sex svenskarna returnera visiten med en tripp till Kalifornien nästa år.

Åtta amerikanska studenter har gjort sällskap med Harvey och hennes kollegor Terry O'Donnell, Rick Simas, Wendy Thompson och Paula Kalustian. Kalustian leder musikteaterprogrammet på universitetet och arbetar när GP tittar in med att koreografera framförandet av ett stycke av Jason Robert Brown, ung, prisad musikkompositör.

För de amerikanska studenterna, som sällan rest utanför delstaten, är resan en stor sak.

— De inser att Kalifornien inte är

hela världen, säger Anne-Charlotte Harvey. De inser att musikalen bär utomlands och att problemen är desamma på andra håll. Vi puffar ut dem ur redet så de kan skaffa sig kontakter och stärka tilltron till sig själva. De är entusiastiska över vad de ser, inklusive arkitekturen och de stora danssalarna. Konst har ingen hög prioritet i USA.

Och vad kan de svenska eleverna lära?

— Kropp och framställning, tror jag, för röstvärd är de redan mycket bra på. Lära sig arbeta med att finna en roll. Göra en djupdykning i dans och koreografi.

— ... och, understryker Harvey, lära sig göra en snabb presentation av sig själva, effektivt och utan choser.

Kan man inte göra en bra audition kommer man inte långt, förklarar Anne-Charlotte Harvey. Hon vet vad showbusiness kräver, inte minst i USA. I bästa fall har

man tre minuter på sig, men den som testas i vad som kallas "cattle calls" kan få ett "rack" redan efter tio sekunder. Det är en hård, kommersiell värld.

ULF JOHANSSON

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## MUSICAL TOGETHER WITH AMERICAN STUDENTS

(*GöteborgsPosten*, March 24, 2004)

**MUSIC:** During one week [actually 4 ½ days] fourteen American and Swedish musical theatre students have been working together on the presentation "It's Our Time." Tonight it can be enjoyed at Artisten [the performing arts training and performing complex in central Gothenburg].

We are hopeful that this will be the beginning of a more comprehensive collaboration, says Sven-Eric Dahlberg, Director of the Musical Theatre Program at the Gothenburg University School of Theatre and Musical [Teaterhögskolan]. His broad smile vies with that of Anne-Charlotte Harvey, Professor of Theatre at San Diego State University and one of those who have made this exchange possible. With a little bit of luck and money the six Swedes will be able to pay a return visit to California next year.

Eight American students have accompanied Professor Harvey and her colleagues Terry O'Donnell, Rick Simas, Wendy Thomson and Paula Kalustian [to Gothenburg]. Kalustian is the Director of the Musical Theatre Program at [San Diego State] University. When *GP* [*GöteborgsPosten*] looks in [at Artisten], she is busy rehearsing a piece by the young lauded musical composer Jason Robert Brown.

To the American students who rarely travel outside their home state this trip is a big deal indeed.

--They realize that California is not the whole world, says Anne-Charlotte Harvey. They realize that the musical genre carries validity abroad and that its challenges are the same, no matter where you are. We push them out of the nest so that they can network and gain increased self-confidence. They are enthusiastic about what they are seeing [here at Artisten], from the architecture to the big dance studios. The arts are not a priority in the US.

And what can the Swedish students learn?

--Physical expression, I think, because they are already very well trained, vocally. To learn to work on finding a character. To do a deep-dive into dance and choreography.

--...and, adds Harvey, to learn how to do a quick presentation of self, efficiently and simply. If you can't do a good audition, you won't get far, Anne-Charlotte Harvey explains. She know what show business demands, not least in the US. You've got three minutes, at best [to show what you can do], but the performer who is auditioning in what is known as a "cattle call" can hear a "thank you" after as little as 10 seconds. It is a tough, commercial world.

(Ulf Johanson—ulf.johanson@gp.se)

Note: *GöteborgsPosten* is the major daily newspaper in Gothenburg (Göteborg), Sweden's second largest city and the cultural and commercial center on the West Coast.

Sv. Dagbl. A. 12/3 -04  
Kultur

## Musikallinjen får Amerikabesök

Göteborg har blivit en musikalstad sedan Teaterhögskolans musikallinje inrättades. Utbildningen är eftertraktad och nu har studierektorn, pianisten Sven-Eric Dahlberg ordnat ett samarbete med San Diego-universitetets konstnärliga utbildning. Den 24 mars presenteras en helaftonskonsert på Artisten där åtta studenter från San Diego och sex från Teaterhögskolans musikallinje medverkar. Regissör, koreograf och musikalliska instuderare följer med från USA till Göteborg, och musikallinjen bidrar med sånglärare, regissör och pianist. Både nyskriven och klassisk musikallmusik skall framföras.

Det är meningen att studenterna varje år skall turas om att besöka varandras skolor. Det här samarbetet ger oss förstahandsinformation om den nya musikalen som den utvecklas i dess hemland USA och en möjlighet att mäta oss med artisterna där, säger Sven-Eric Dahlberg.

MARGARETA ARTSMAN

Svenska Dagbladet, March 12, 2004

## Musikalsamarbete över Atlanten

**MUSIKTEATER.** Göteborgs universitet och universitetet i San Diego, USA, har inlett ett samarbete mellan sina musikallinjer. På onsdag 24 mars ger åtta studenter från San Diego och sex från Göteborg en gemensam konsert i Artisten i Göteborg. Studenterna ska därefter turas om att besöka varandra på respektive skolor och genomföra liknande projekt. Förhoppningar finns också om att utveckla samarbetet till att omfatta nya musikaler och forskning.

En länk mellan universiteten har varit professor Ann-Charlotte Harvey, lärare i drama och teaterhistoria vid universitetet i San Diego. Hon är på plats i Göteborg och fortsätter sedan till Uddevalla för att vara med om uppförandet av operan Fritjof och Ingeborg, skriven av en utvandrad Uddevallason på 1800-talet.

Bohusläningen,  
March 17, 2004

# Inbjudan!

# It's Our Time

14 studenter från San Diego State University, USA tillsammans med Teaterhögskolans musikallinje vid Göteborgs Universitet. I ett unikt samarbete mellan dessa universitet framförs sånger på engelska och svenska, från det nyaste nya till den klassiska musikalerna

Presentatör: **Rick Simas**

Pianister: **Wendy Thomson, Terry O'Donell  
& Sven-Eric Dahlberg**

Konserterna, Artisterna  
onsdag 24 mars Kl 19.00

VÄLKOMMEN!

Ring eller maila så reserverar jag biljetter efter dina önskemål.

Anna Franséhn 031-7734101, [anna.fransehn@scen.gu.se](mailto:anna.fransehn@scen.gu.se)