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Kerstin Jonmyren

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The Strindin family, in Sweden and in America

In the late 1800s it was not easy to be a travelling actor

By KERSTIN JONMYREN

Some years ago in *Swedish American Genealogist* (2010:1) I told about a Swedish actor, *Edvard Strindin*, the leader of a theater company which was touring in Sweden during the last decades of the 19th century together with his family. There is more to add.

First some details to repeat:

Edvard Strindin was born on 27 Aug. 1842, in Sundsvall city, in the northern part of Sweden. On Aug. 6 1870,¹ as a rather young man, he moved south to Stockholm intending to start a career as an actor. He was a very good-looking young man and obviously had a talent for acting, too. There in Stockholm he met a young girl who surely was as interested in theater as he was.

On 27 August 1870, Edvard married Johanna Charlotta Adolfina Andersson in Hedvig Eleonora parish, Stockholm.^{2, 3} The bride was born on 15 October 1849, in Maria Magdalena parish, Stockholm.⁴

Edvard Strindin was noted as an actor in different records, and I have found him on the staff of a Stockholm theater company in 1902, performing in a play by the famous Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen. Newspaper clippings from Stockholm's *Statens Musikverk* show Edvard in a company with *Svenska Teatern* from 1898-1907. On this occasion he is acting in a play by August Strindberg about the Swedish king Gustaf Vasa. Most of the time after his marriage, however, he would have been touring all over Sweden and Finland



Edvard Strindin.



Hanna Strindin.

together with his acting wife. Their first child, daughter Hilda Julia Catharina was born 28 Dec. 1871 in Viborg, Finland,⁵ but she died in 1872 July 27 in Jakob parish, Stockholm.⁶

The Strindin couple had children, one after each other, in 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, 1879, (probably) 1880, 1882, (probably) 1883, 1884, 1885, and 1888 (all listed in SAG 2010:1:21). During a period of 16 years Johanna gave birth twelve times, most of the time while she was out touring with their theater company. She would have been almost constantly pregnant during her acting period.

Being on the road was surely laborious for all touring actors of the time, travelling by railway, by horse coach, even by horse and carriage or

walking: in snow, hail, rain, and summer heat. The actors were adults anyway, but imagine how such travelling would have affected newborn babies. So, most of the Strindin babies died, one after the other, all under the age of one. Three of the

Teater i Karlstad.
Kristi himmelsfärdsdag Torsdagen den 22 Maj
1879 kl. 1/2 8—10 1/4 e. m.
gifver
Medlemmar af f. d. Novanderska Sällskapet
för andra gången:
Flickorna Blom,
Folkkomedi i 4 akter af A. L'Arronge.
Öfversatt af C. E. S.
Biljetter till vanliga priser säljas alla dagar
uti Hr P. F. Yhnells konditori samt spektakel-
dagarne från kl. 5 e. m. uti Teaterns biljett-
kontor.
Obs. Sista representationen.
Å Sällskapets vägnar:
E. STRINDIN.

Wermlands läns tidning 20 May 1879.



Johanna Catharina Andersson, née Pettersson, mother of Hanna Strindin.

children managed to survive childhood, just by chance as it seems: numbers 5, 11, and 12 in the row.

The family background

Edvard Strindin's father was a sea captain in Sundsvall, the main city of Medelpad district, situated on the coast of the Baltic Sea in the north of Sweden. Edvard's grandfathers had been merchants in the area. The Strindin name was originally taken by a man coming from Strinne village in Bjärträ parish in Väster-norrland län, (the famous Swedish writer August Strindberg had his roots there too).

Johanna (Hanna) Charlotta Adolfina Andersson was the daughter of a civil servant, Per Gustaf Andersson, and his wife Johanna Catharina Pettersson. Per Gustaf was born 26 March 1818, and worked as a janitor at the Stockholm Magistrates Court (*Rådhusrätt*). He died 11 July 1889 of heart failure in Adolf Fredrik parish in Stockholm. In his estate inventory⁷ his daughter Hanna Strindin and her husband Edvard are mentioned as well as Hanna's siblings. His widow Johanna Catharina Andersson, née Petterson, was born 22 Nov. 1826. Sometimes she worked as a midwife, and survived her husband until she died of old age on 18 Sep. 1916 in Engelbrekt parish, Stockholm.⁸

The surviving children

Three Strindin children survived their childhood: *Anna, Per, and Karin*, but their first years would hardly have been happy ones.

From her early years Anna stayed with her grandparents, Hanna's mother and father.

Per was sent to a farmer in Österhaninge, close to Stockholm, as a foster child. The farmer had some six foster boys in his house all the time, boys who surely were to help at the farm as they arrived.

Karin was put into an orphanage in Stockholm which was run by the Swedish church with a pastor as a manager.

However hard this may seem, it allowed the children to survive childhood and grow up.

In America

1) *Anna* Emilia Katarina was born on 29 Dec. 1876, in Jakob parish, Stockholm, according to her birth record. Still there is a note telling of her being baptized just two weeks later in Jönköping city, some 300 kilometers away. Could such an immediate journey of mother and newborn child really have been possible in those days, and in the middle of the winter? Such a trip seems almost insane.

Already at the age of 16, Anna left Sweden for America. She immigrated on 22 Dec. 1892, to Lynn, MA. Many Swedish girls were employed as housemaids when newly arrived over here, and according to what I have read, they were looked upon as reliable and good workers, so they had no problem getting hired. In 1900 Anna was noted as a servant of a family Stone in Winchester.

2. *Per* Erik Gunnar was born 1 Aug. 1885 in Stockholm. When he was 19 years old, in 1904, he left Sweden for Boston, and then came to Winchester, where he had his sister. There he had different kinds of jobs, but never managed to feel satisfied. After a number of years he went back to Sweden and to Stockholm, although he never managed to live a happy life here either. He died un-



Anna Strandin Miller.

married on 11 Mar. 1957 in Gustav Vasa, Stockholm.

3. *Karin* was born 16 Aug. 1888 in Adolf Fredrik parish, Stockholm. She immigrated to her sister in Winchester in 1907 at the age of 19. Like her sister, who started her life in Winchester as a maid, she was hired by a city family. The reason is unknown, but obviously her employers considered Karin mentally disturbed. They arranged for her to be sent to an asylum - and there she was to stay locked up for decades.

All this is open for questions?

What on earth did these parents think, when their babies died one after the other? Why was Hanna not staying with her newborn babies in their flat in Stockholm where the couple stayed between their tours? Also: Why did the parents not take care of their children themselves, those few who survived their first years?

We do not know, but let us look upon this in a hypothetical way: It is easy to imagine that acting was Hanna's life, that her acting part was necessary in their theater company, or both. The theater always was her first priority.

Were the parents alcoholics? Alcoholism was very common at the time, in Stockholm particularity. Yes, they

could have been.

Another idea: Karin was diagnosed with mental problems. Her mother could very well have had those problems too.

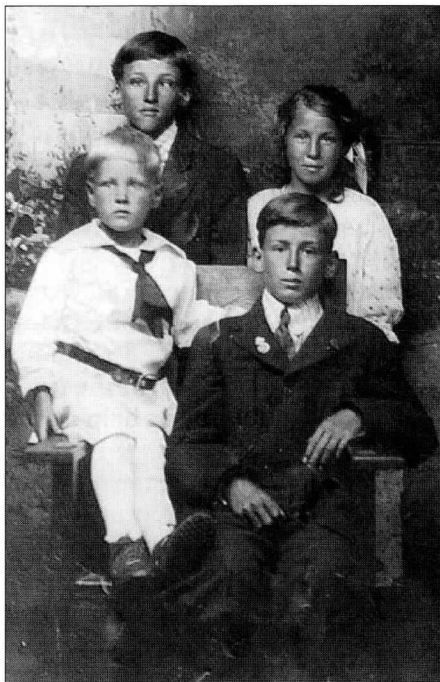
If you are suffering from a bipolar disease or depression, it may perhaps still be possible to perform as an actor. You know exactly what to sing or say. But to take care of a family is something else. Little babies were the responsibility only of the mothers, not of the fathers, in those days.

Well, all this is speculation. Obviously the parents found it better for their children having other people take care of them - those who survived their first years. We also have to add that six years of school was mandatory for all children in Sweden in those days, and that was not possible to combine with a touring life. Although Edvard Strindin probably had received some higher education in Sundsvall, there is no sign that he tried to arrange for something similar for his children.

The happy end of this tragic story

Anna found a good man from Sweden, Karl Gustav Möller, (Americanized to Miller) born 2 Nov. 1877 in Malmö, Sankt Petri parish, he died Dec 25, 1946 in Woburn, Massachusetts. The couple had four children. Anna had a healthy mind, but she had a fragile body and unfortunately died when her children were very young, on 3 Dec. 1919. Her fragility may very well have been a result of her childhood.

When Anna's children were grown



The only Strindin grandchildren: Back left is Axel Edward Theodore (Ted) Möller, born on 3 November 1901 in Woburn, MA. The girl is Dagmar Amelia Johanna Miller, born on 5 September 1905 in Beverly, MA. My father, Carl Victor Hugo Moller, is front right and born on 8 January 1904 in Woburn, MA. Left front is Walter Gunnar Miller, born 19 December 1909 in Woburn, MA. (Picture from Carl Miller, San Diego, CA, U.S.A.).

they went to see their aunt Karin in the mental hospital and found her surprisingly mentally healthy, so they helped her to get out of there and live a normal life, which she accomplished in the end.

All of Anna Miller's children grew up and lived good lives in Massachusetts. All of them had descendants, too; there are quite a number of them today.

Hanna died in Stockholm on 17 July 1920 in Gustav Vasa parish. Edvard died 15 June 1921 in Maria parish, also in Stockholm. No one knows if they had any contact with their children in America, or knew of the grandchildren there.

Now, during the last years, Anna Strindin's grandson Carl Miller has come in contact with his distant cousins of the Strindin family in different parts of Sweden. He and his wife have been invited to visit them in Sweden and they are all enjoying a very good friendship and family contacts.

Endnotes:

- 1) Hedvig Eleonora BIa:17 (1869-1870) Img. 171 / Page 270. Moving-in records.
- 2) Hedvig Eleonora EIb:2 (1833-1872) Img. 119. Banns.
- 3) Hedvig Eleonora EII:6 (1862-1878) Img. 126. Marriages.
- 4) Maria Magdalena CIa:13 (1834-1854) Img. 320 / Page 630. Births. [Note that the father is recorded with the wrong first name.]
- 5) Hedvig Eleonora CI:26 (1870-1872) Img. 199 / Page 367a. Births.
- 6) Jakob och Johannes FIa:5 (1853-1872) Img. 484 / Page 473. Deaths.
- 7) Stockholms rådhusrätt 1:a avdelning F1A:715 (1889-1889) Img. 8690 / Page 524. Estate inventory for Per Gustaf Andersson.
- 8) Engelbrekt FI:3 (1915-1919) Img. 550 / Page 51. Deaths.

Kerstin Jonmyren is a Swedish genealogist living in Nyköping, Sweden. Her e-mail is <swedgenco@home.se>



Nisswa-stämman, Scandinavian Folk Music

The annual *Nisswa-Stämman* takes place in Nisswa, Minnesota. The festival is located in the Nisswa area, 15 miles north of Brainerd, Minnesota on Highway 371. Nisswa is about a 2 1/2 hour drive north of Minneapolis/St. Paul.

The festival takes place 12-13 June this year (sorry, too late for SAG!), and this year is the 16th time it is held. There are already the dates

for 2016-2018 on the web site, so you can start planning ahead.

The program includes fiddlers from many places in the Midwest, and even *nyckelharpa* (key fiddle) players.

Search for videos on Youtube with the word *Nisswa-stämman*.

Links on page 30.