

12-1-2017

Jenny Lind – The Swedish Nightingale

Elisabeth Thorsell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag>



Part of the [Genealogy Commons](#), and the [Scandinavian Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

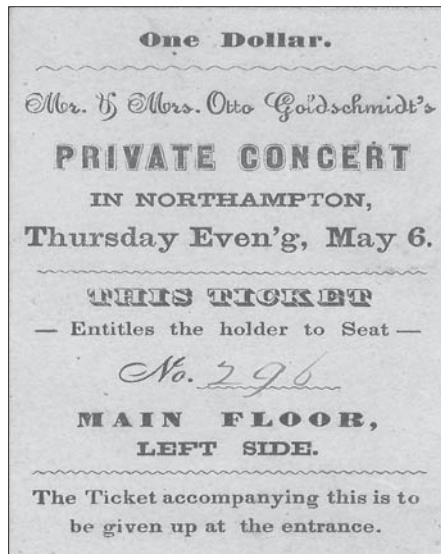
Thorsell, Elisabeth (2017) "Jenny Lind – The Swedish Nightingale," *Swedish American Genealogist*. Vol. 37 : No. 4 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol37/iss4/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center at Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Swedish American Genealogist by an authorized editor of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

Jenny Lind – The Swedish Nightingale

SAG reader *William Jones* sent the interesting item below to be the basis for an article on Jenny Lind, who was the “Pop Star” of the 1850s.



This ticket was possibly from 1852, when Jenny Lind gave a concert in Northampton, MA. The curly script on top says “Mr. and Mrs. Otto Goldschmidt”.

Life of Jenny Lind

Johanna Maria Lind (6 October 1820 in Klara, Stockholm, Sweden – 2 November 1887), better known as *Jenny Lind*, was a Swedish opera singer, often known as the “Swedish Nightingale”. Her father was the bookkeeper *Nils Jonas Lind* (b. 27 Jan. 1798 in Klara, Stockholm, d. 15 Aug. 1858 in Stockholm. Her mother was the divorced woman *Anna Maria Fellborg* (b. 10 Dec. 1790 in Nicolai, Stockholm, d. 25 Oct. 1851 in Stockholm. Jenny’s parents did not marry until 1835, and her childhood was difficult.

One of the most highly regarded singers of the 19th century, she performed in soprano roles in opera in Sweden and across Europe, and undertook an extraordinarily popular concert tour of America beginning in 1850. She was a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music from 1840.

Jenny Lind became famous after her performance in *Der Freischütz* in Sweden in 1838. Within a few years, she had suffered vocal damage, but the singing teacher

Manuel García saved her voice. She was in great demand in opera roles throughout Sweden and northern Europe during the 1840s, and was closely associated with Felix Mendelssohn. After two acclaimed seasons in London, she announced her retirement from opera at the age of 29.

In 1850, Jenny Lind went to America at the invitation of the showman P. T. Barnum. She gave 93 large-scale concerts for him and then continued to tour under her own management. She earned more than \$350,000 from these concerts, donating the proceeds to charities, principally the endowment of free schools in Sweden. She also donated money so the Jenny Lind Chapel could be built in Andover, Ill. This was the first church built by the Augustana Synod.

After 9 months and 93 concerts up and down the region east of the Mississippi, Jenny Lind amicably broke her 100-concert contract with Barnum. She continued to tour on her own and arrived in the town of Northampton, Mass. for a concert in July of 1851. She drew a crowd of 1,800 folks to the Old First Church on Main Street. Lind enjoyed the beauty of Northampton and returned 7 months later after marrying her piano accompanist, *Otto Goldschmidt*, (b. 21 Aug. 1829 in Hamburg, Germany). The newlyweds traveled by train to Northampton, where they spent 3 months quietly honeymooning at the Round Hill Hotel. Jenny Lind Goldschmidt’s farewell concert in Northampton took place at the Town Hall in May 1852.

She returned to Europe in 1852 where she had three children, *Walter*, *Jenny*, and *Ernest*. She gave occasional concerts over the next two decades, living first in Germany, and settling in England in 1855.

Although she refused all requests to appear in opera after her return to Europe, Jenny Lind continued to perform in the concert halls. In 1856 she sang the chief soprano part in the first English performance of the cantata *Paradise and the Peri* by Robert Schumann. In 1866, she gave a concert with Arthur Sullivan at St James’s Hall. *The Times* reported, “there is magic still in that voice ... the most perfect singing – perfect alike in expression and in



Jenny Lind 1850 in New York. Dauguerrotype by Swedish photographer Polycarpus von Schneidau.

vocalization.... Nothing more engaging, nothing more earnest, nothing more dramatic can be imagined.” When Goldschmidt formed the Bach Choir in 1875, Jenny Lind trained the soprano choristers for the first English performance of Bach’s B minor Mass, in April 1876, and performed in the mass. She retired from singing in 1883.

In 1879–1887 Jenny Lind worked with Frederick Niecks on his biography of Chopin. In 1882, she was appointed professor of singing at the newly founded Royal College of Music. She believed in an all-round musical training for her pupils, insisting that, in addition to their vocal studies, they were instructed in solfège, piano, harmony, diction, deportment, and at least one foreign language.

She lived her final years at Wynd’s Point, Herefordshire, on the Malvern Hills, England.

Her last public appearance was at a charity concert at Royal Malvern Spa in 1883. She died, aged 67, at Wynd’s Point on 2 Nov. 1887 and was buried in the Great Malvern Cemetery to the music of Chopin’s Funeral March.

Her husband Otto Goldsmith died in London in 1907.

Elisabeth Thorsell