

DE VISU

Magnus Ljunggren
An Unknown Drawing By Ivan Turgenev

The Polish immigrant to Sweden Isaac Philip Valentin was a well-known Jewish musical personality in mid-nineteenth century Gothenburg who is best remembered by posterity for helping to invite the Czech composer Bedřich Smetana to the city. Smetana stayed on for six years under Valentin's patronage and had an important impact on Swedish musical life.¹

Valentin had five children, of whom especially Karl would follow in his footsteps as a dynamic conductor, composer, critic, and popularizer. Karl's elder sister Charlotte (1848-1930) also devoted herself to music, studying first piano under Smetana for a few years in Prague and then beginning in 1867 voice with Pauline Garcia Viardot in Baden-Baden. It was through her that Charlotte became acquainted with Ivan Turgenev, who was living as a member of the family with Pauline and her writer husband Louis Viardot.

As they had done with Smetana and his wife, the Valentins early on became close to the Viardots. This community included Turgenev as well. Young Charlotte and the 40-year-old writer got on so well together that their relationship seems finally to have become something of a platonic romance. In the summer of 1874 Turgenev spent some time in Karlsbad together with the Valentins. In a letter to Pauline in Bougival he described the young Swedish girl in detail: "She has changed in a positive way; she is quite slim

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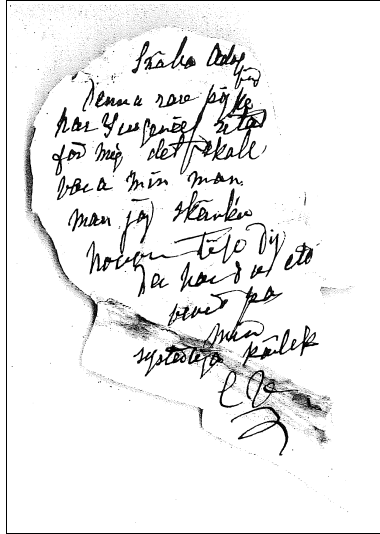
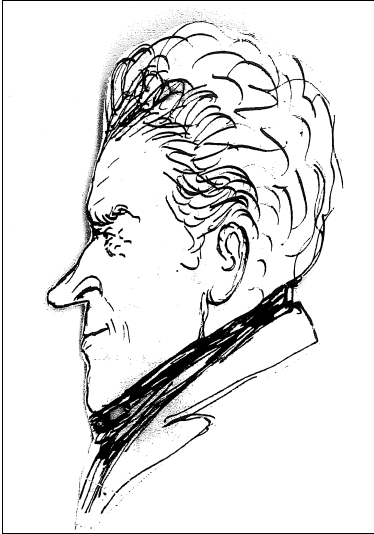
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¹ See Clara Thörnqvist, *Smetana in Göteborg 1856-1862* (Göteborg, 1967).

now, her hair is no longer tousled, her complexion is fresh without being rosy — She is a loyal soul.”²

Soon Charlotte returned to Gothenburg, and from then on she made her living as a voice teacher. In 1875 she sent Turgenev a New Year’s greeting. He answered with a rather long letter in German, the language they spoke with each other, which was published exactly 100 years later by Turgenev expert Alexander Zviguilsky.³ Turgenev writes how pleased he was by her thoughtfulness, promises to send her selected works in translation, and complains about continued problems with starting the new novel that eventually would become *Nov’*.

Charlotte’s archive, which was donated in 1972 to the Royal Library in Stockholm by Karl’s daughter Carola Cewers, contains the letter, a note in Carola’s hand “I’ve kept the photo with dedication,”⁴ a lock of hair that Turgenev had given to Charlotte, and a drawing that he supposedly did of her husband-to-be (as he imagined him).



² Turgenev’s letter of 16 August 1874 in: I. Tourguénev, *Nouvelle correspondance inédite* 1, ed. by A. Zviguilsky (Paris, 1971), 221-22.

³ A. Zviguilsky, “Ein unveröffentlichter Brief Turgenews an Charlotte Valentin,” *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* XXXVII:Heft 1 (1975), 155-56.

⁴ Valentinska familjearkivet, L 112:4, Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm. Unfortunately, the photo seems to have been lost.

On the back of this drawing of a young man with a very prominent nose Charlotte has written: "Dear Adolphine Turgenief has drawn this sweet boy for me it is supposed to be my husband but I'm giving him to you See here proof of my sisterly love C V."⁵ Like Charlotte herself, her eight-year-younger sister Adolphine never married. She seems to have willed the drawing to her niece Carola, who was especially interested in their family history.⁶

Translated by Charles Rougle

⁵ Ibid. The non-existent punctuation is Charlotte Valentin's. See Folke Sandgren, "Valentinska familjearkivet till KB," *Notiser från riksbibliotekarien*, vol. 5, no. 2-3 (1972).

⁶ It is worth noting that Carola Cewers went on to establish a 60-year relationship with Louis Viardot Jr. See Zviguilsky, "Ein unveröffentlichter Brief," 154, n. 13.