

Another Swede in Hollywood

by Harry H. Anderson

Many Swedish Americans are familiar with Swedes who have become famous for their starring performances in Hollywood motion pictures, including Greta Garbo (who at one time had close connections to Milwaukee), Ingrid Bergman, and for a somewhat older generation, Warner Oland, who played the title role in many early Charlie Chan features in the 1930's.

Much less well known is the fact that a member of the Swedish royal family also had a brief Hollywood career in the 1930's, not as an actor, but as what was called a "technical advisor" in at least one popular film of this period.

In the David O. Selznick 1937 production of "The Prisoner of Zenda" starring Ronald Colman and Madeleine Carroll, the name of Prince Sigvard Bernadotte appeared in the screen credits (along with a Colonel Ivar Enhörning, possibly another Swede) as a "Technical Advisor" for several spectacular royalty scenes in this black and white film. Sigvard Bernadotte (b. 1907) was a grandson of the Swedish king Gustaf VI Adolph (1887-1973) and an uncle of Carl XVI Gustaf (b. 1946), the present Swedish monarch.

The scenes in "Zenda" that Prince Sigvard probably provided guidance for included the dramatic coronation of King Rudolph at an elegantly staged cathedral ceremony and for a later coronation, all in which Colman and Carroll are the featured personalities. Undoubtedly Prince Sigvard had witnessed some comparable incidents at European courts during his younger years (without, of course, the political intrigue and adventures that highlighted this film).

When "The Prisoner of Zenda" was reproduced in Technicolor in 1952, Stewart Granger played the dual role of the imprisoned king and his look-alike cousin Rudolph Rassendyll. The Madeleine Carroll part in the 1952 picture was played by Deborah Kerr. This later version almost entirely duplicated the 1937 film, even down to much of the word-for-word dialogue, but the introductory screen credits contained no reference whatsoever to the technical advice on the ways of European royalty provided by Prince Sigvard Bernadotte a decade and a half earlier.

Alfred Newman, who wrote the musical score, received his first Oscar nomination for it. He would go on to receive an additional 44 nominations in his lifetime. In 1991, the film was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" by the United States [Library of Congress](#) and selected for preservation in its [National Film Registry](#).

Of the small roles in the film, one of the most memorable – the comical [orchestra conductor](#) who is forced to cease and resume conducting the [Künstlerleben](#) Walzer by Strauss every time the royal couple stop and start waltzing – is played by [Al Shean](#), uncle of the [Marx Brothers](#).

This is no place for details on the often complicated story-line of "Zenda", but a very reasonably-priced CD of both versions is still available for anyone interested in seeing evidence of the contributions by a Swedish prince of the Royal House of Bernadotte to Hollywood history.

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