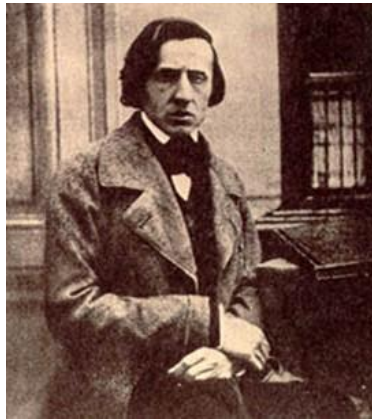


Extract of paper shared with the
Fryderyk Chopin Institute and Edinburgh University

CHOPIN and JENNY LIND

NEW RESEARCH



by

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Brussels, 7 February 2005

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The images of this draft are provided by sources listed in Attachments A and C.
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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper recapitulates all the research findings developed in 2003-2004 on the final year of Fryderyk Chopin's life and his relationship with Jenny Lind in 1848-1849. Comments are invited by scholars in preparation for its intended publication as a *sequel* to the biography, *CHOPIN and The Swedish Nightingale* (Icons of Europe, Brussels, August 2003).

- 1.1 **Background.** The above biography was mainly based on Chopin's own letters. Towards the end of finalizing the book, the authors made unexpectedly a discovery of a 'codeword' in his letter of 28 July 1849, which pointed to Jenny Lind, the Swedish soprano as the donor of the anonymous gift of 25,000 francs in banknotes that Chopin (1810-1849) had just received with the involvement of the clairvoyant Alexis.

Jenny Lind (1820-1887) was at the time one of Europe's megastars and earned the highest fee ever paid to a soprano. Feted by royalty and the public in Europe, her enormous popularity was augmented by her reputation for philanthropy. Later, she triumphed in North America in 1850-1852. She was often called the Swedish Nightingale, because Hans Christian Andersen (1810-1875) wrote his famous story *The Nightingale* as a tribute to her in 1843.

As a result, the authors conducted a comparative analysis of Chopin's letters with her memoir, *Jenny Lind – The Artist: Memoir 1820-1851* (published in 1891), and decided to add three chapters to the biography to document their findings. They concluded in 2003 that "Jenny Lind probably came to Paris with the intention to marry Chopin", and that Jenny Lind seems to be "behind the anonymous donation of the 25,000 francs" that Chopin received in July 1849.

- 1.2 **Long-standing myths.** People interested in Jenny Lind had always accepted a story that she in late 1848 met a "Mr Harris" whom she planned to marry early 1849, and that the marriage was aborted because his religious mother strongly disliked actresses and considered "the theatre a temple of Satan". Nobody seems ever to have questioned the absurdity of this story. Nor why Jenny Lind in May 1849 suddenly travelled to Paris, a city she was known to strongly dislike and where a cholera epidemic and civil unrest then made it an extremely dangerous place.

Independently, Chopin scholars had always assumed that Jane Wilhelmina Stirling (1804-1859), an earlier pupil of his, was the source of the 25,000 francs and other financial support. Some biographers even called her "Chopin's official widow". Few seem to have ever wondered, how Jane Stirling and her sister could have invented the bizarre story about "Alexis" and raised such a large sum of cash. Nor how this six-year older, "boring" and apparently ailing Scottish spinster could possibly, as alleged, have aspired in 1848 to marry Chopin.

- 1.3 **Research I (August 2003).** In May 2003, the authors discussed an initial draft of *CHOPIN and The Swedish Nightingale* with representatives and scholars of the Polish Ministry of Culture, the Frederick Chopin Society in Warsaw, and other institutions. The biography was well received, but it was felt that additional evidence on Chopin and Jenny Lind's relationship would be desirable.¹

¹ *Chopin in the World* (2003 edition), the Polish press and other media also commented favourable on the biography.

- 1.4 **Research II (March 2004).** The authors conducted in the latter half of 2003 additional research Europe-wide in consultation with national archives in the United Kingdom, Sweden and France, and many other organizations (Attachment A), which eventually confirmed their earlier findings on Chopin and Jenny Lind.

The evidence of this work was discussed and endorsed at a roundtable of Chopin experts and a press conference, convened by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute on 1 March 2004 at the Warsaw Philharmonic (Attachment B).² In parallel, the authors posted the main research findings freely accessible at <http://www.iconsofeurope.com> and www.chopinlind.com. Specific issues were further examined in the latter half of 2004, which included a visit to Paris in December.

- 1.5 **Research III (early 2005).** Thus, the present research paper consolidates all the research findings of August 2003, March 2004 and early 2005. The large volume of information is organized under each of the eight key persons involved in order to facilitate the understanding of their roles and motives and the sequence of events. The information includes original letters, official government papers, civic records, and Jenny Lind's tour schedule, as well as selected and verified information obtained from a large number of biographies and other publications (Attachments C and D).

Compared with March 2004, this paper includes *new findings* on several subjects. For example, on Chopin and Jenny Lind's stay in Manchester; what the London press said about "Mr Harris"; the precise location of the former 74 Rue de Chaillot; Chopin's overall economy in 1848-1849; the meaning of several of Chopin's letters (e.g. "Lucrezia" and "March (the 8th)"; Meyerbeer's role at the funeral; the monuments for Bellini and Chopin at Père-Lachaise; the role of Jane Stirling and her elder sister in 1848-1851; and Liszt's views in 1851.

An initial draft of the consolidated paper, dated 20 December 2004, was reviewed on 11 January 2005 with three musicologists associated with the University of Edinburgh and the University of St Andrews. They found the evidence "persuasive" (Attachment B), including the findings on the Scottish sisters. They also made helpful suggestions on specific sections and the presentation format.

Further research is currently being conducted on how the publication of Chopin's posthumous and other works were instigated and financed (e.g. the *17 Polish Songs* and the *Stirling Collection*) and on other subjects.

- 1.6 **Technology used.** The whole research and publication process has been greatly facilitated by the use of the Internet, online archives of many institutions in especially the United Kingdom and North America, and online networks of antiquarians.

Cecilia and Jens Jorgensen
7 February 2005

² The same research documentation was made available to the Royal Academy of Music, Stockholm in March 2004.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Overtuning several historical assumptions of the past 155 years, the above reconstruction of important events in 1848-1849 and later years lead to the following major conclusions on the final year of Chopin's life, his relationship with Jenny Lind, and his legacy.



- 4.1 **Jenny Lind.** A few days after her opera farewell in London, Jenny Lind travelled in May 1849, with the knowledge of Queen Victoria, incognito to Paris in an unsuccessful attempt to marry the ailing Chopin. His letters show that he from the outset, in London in May 1848, admired Jenny Lind as an artist and liked her. Chopin's letters expressed no interest in getting married. However, he must have given her some hope in November 1848 or later that marriage was conceivable. Her story about a "Mr Harris" was a smokescreen for Chopin.

Indeed, Jenny Lind made a gigantic cover-up of her whole relationship with Chopin. Mourning her failure to marry him and then his death, Jenny Lind also continued for the rest of her life to honour the life and music of the composer.

- 4.2 **Chopin's economy.** Few of Chopin's friends and pupils, many living as artists on erratic income, could have afforded to support the expenses he incurred for his suddenly improved living standard since August 1848, and to provide the huge sums of cash needed for his upkeep in Paris, the spectacular funeral, and many of the commemoration initiatives in the post-1849 period. Some friends even got paid to sing at Eglise de la Madeleine and to create the Père-Lachaise monument.



The evidence points to Jenny Lind as having financed a large portion if not the bulk of these expenses and cash needs in at least the 1848-1849 period – through the £ 1,000 loan in 1848 and the anonymous gift of 25,000 francs in July 1849, and perhaps through other yet undiscovered outlays that she could easily have afforded.

- 4.3 **Scottish sisters.** The Scottish sisters were "boring" and no doubt well-meaning admirers of Chopin, but they did not have the resources to support his lifestyle in London and Paris, nor to help financing his funeral as alleged by various sources in the past. While their role in 1848-1851 has been misstated, they apparently served as intermediaries for Jenny Lind's financial assistance on several occasions before and after his death. They also helped Ludwika in handling Chopin's estate. Jane Stirling's own letters show that her elder sister Katherine Erskine rather than she was in charge.
- 4.4 **Further research.** It should therefore come as no surprise, if further research will provide new information to illustrate how Jenny Lind supported Chopin in the final stage of his life, and to uncover how she indeed was behind many initiatives to commemorate his life and music in many years thereafter.

These conclusions are based on a multitude of elements and pieces of information from many different sources, which put together in a coherent body of evidence apparently leave few if any significant questions unanswered for the 1848-1849 period.



SOURCES OF INFORMATION

It has been a major principle to use original papers such as personal letters and official documents as prime sources, obtained through national archives and public institutions, and *not* to rely on none-referenced information provided by various biographies, papers and web sites.

Original letters and important publications with authentic letters

- *The Life of Chopin: Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician*, Frederick Niecks, 1888
- *Chopin's Letters*, Henryk Opieński and E.L. Voynich, New York, 1932
- *Chopin: His Life and Letters*, Moritz Karasowski (1879), London, 3rd edition 1938
- *Correspondance de Frédéric Chopin*, Bronislas Edouard Sydow, 1981 (in French)
- *Jenny Lind – The Artist: Memoir 1820-1851*, H.S. Holland and W.S. Rockstro, 1891
- Handwritten letters by Jenny Lind, 1848 and 1849 (in German and Swedish)
- *Jenny Lind utom scenen: Förtroliga brev till H.M. Munthe*, Lotten Dahlberg, 1928 (in Swedish)
- *The Lost letters of Jenny Lind*, W. Porter Ware and Thaddeus C. Lockard, Jr., 1966
- *Jane Wilhelmina Stirling 1809-1859*, Audrey Evelyne Bone, London, 1960
- *Gioacomo Meyerbeer: A Life in Letters*, Heinz and Gudrun Becker, 1989 (translated from German)
- Handwritten letters by Nassau W. Senior (and his correspondence with Alexis de Tocqueville)
- Handwritten letters by Thomas D.A. Tellefsen, Britain and France, 1848 and 1849 (in Danish)
- *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen from 1840 till 1870*, Hanna William
- *Breve til Hans Christian Andersen*, C. St. Bille & Nikolaj Bøgh, Kjøbenhavn, 1877 (mainly Danish)

Important institutions Europe-wide

- Archives nationales, Paris (files burned in 1871); Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
- Bibliothèque Municipale, and Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nice
- British Library, London (British Army records)
- Frederick Chopin Society, and Frederick Chopin Museum, Warsaw
- Fryderyk Chopin Institute, Warsaw
- Mairie de la Ville de Paris, and Cimetière du Père-Lachaise
- National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh; and National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
- Surrey County Council, Woking, England
- The Church of England, Lambeth Palace Library, London; and St Mary's Church, Bathwick
- The National Library, Oslo
- The Rothschild Archives, London
- The Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, Windsor
- The Royal Library; National Archives, Stockholm
- University College London, London
- University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh

Numerous other publications including

- *Chopin: A Biography*, Adam Zamoyski, London, 1979
- *Chopin in Paris*, Tad Szulc, New York, 1999
- *Chopin and The Swedish Nightingale*, Cecilia and Jens Jorgensen, Brussels, 2003
- *Jenny Lind* (1947) and *Chopin og hans kvinner* (1953), two books by Anne-Marie Riiber
- *Life of Chopin*, Franz Liszt, New York, 1863, translated by Martha Walker Cook
- *Half a Century of Music in England 1837-1887*, Francis Hueffer, London, 1889
- *Jenny Lind*, Jenny Maude, Stockholm, 1927 (in Swedish)
- *Jenny Lind och sångens Beateberg*, Curt Munthe, Stockholm, 1960 (in Swedish)
- Large number of monographs of Chopin, other composers and Jenny Lind
- *Punch*, *The Monthly Quarterly*, *The Morning Post*, and *The Times*
- *Un Voyant prodigieux: Alexis Didier 1826-1886*, Bertrand Méheust, Paris, 2003

The authors are also grateful for the information and advice provided by many distinguished scholars: early on by Daniel Blumenthal, Brussels; and Dr Zofia Chechlińska, Grzegorz Michalski, Red. Kacper Miklaszewski, Prof. Irena Poniatowska, and Hanna Wróblewska-Strauss, Warsaw; and most recently by the musicologists Dr Christopher Field, Dr Elaine Kelly and Dr Colin Kingsley, St Andrews and Edinburgh.

EXHIBITS WITH EVIDENCE

Exhibit	Title	Source
C1	British Army records, 1848-1850	British Library, London
C2	Travel information, India – England, 1848	P&O and various web sites
C3	Jenny Lind's letter, London, 27 April 1849	The Royal Library, Stockholm
C4	Mrs Nassau Senior's diary, London, 1849	National Library of Wales
C5	N.W. Senior's letter, London, 22 April 1849	National Library of Wales
C6	N.W. Senior's letter, Paris, 21 May 1849	National Library of Wales
C7	N.W. Senior's letter, London, 28 May 1849	National Library of Wales
C8	The Journal of Queen Victoria, 1855	The Royal Archives, Windsor
C9	Buckingham Palace, 30 May 1856	The Royal Archives, Windsor
C10	Jenny Lind's letter, London, 14 August 1848	The Royal Library, Stockholm
C11	Jenny Lind's letter, Paris, 14 May 1849	The Royal Library, Stockholm
C12	Jenny Lind's letter, Paris, 18 May 1849	The Royal Library, Stockholm
C13	Munthe's application to the King of Sweden	National Archives of Sweden
C14	John Stirling's original will, 1816	National Archives of Scotland
C15	Descendants of Archibald Stirling	http://www.clanstirling.org
C16	Analysis of the 1816 will of John Stirling	National Archives of Scotland
C17	Jane Stirling's death certificate, 1859	National Archives of Scotland
C18	Jenny Lind's letter, Hamburg, November 1849	The Royal Library, Stockholm
C19	Mr Chopin's original account with Broadwood	Surrey County Council, Woking
C20	Cadastral plans showing true location of n° 74	Mairie de Paris, France
C21	Letter from Jenny Lind's personal maid, 1889	The Royal Library, Stockholm
C22	N.W. Senior's Account of Jenny Lind, 1849	National Library of Wales
C23	The substance and style of the Account	National Library of Wales
C24	Marriage allegation, London, 4 May 1849	Lambeth Palace Library, London