



# The King and His Costumes

*Discoveries in the archives of Gustaf III of Sweden provide unique performance costumes for scholars' examination*

BY MAARIT KALMAKURKI

**K**ing Gustaf III of Sweden (1746–1792), known as the “Theatre King,” differed from his predecessors by having a keen interest in and talent for performing arts; he especially valued the role of costumes in court performances. In addition to supporting theatrical arts by founding theatres and funding performances, Gustaf III altered theatrical traditions in Sweden through his attention to and financial support of production processes. An avid performer and devotee of masquerades, he was, perhaps fittingly, assassinated while in costume in 1792, despite his courtiers’ attempts to use costumes to fool the shooter. Extant archival material including costumes and designs reveals the depth of his involvement in productions, and his desire to support performance throughout Swedish culture while linking it to contemporary and classical European traditions. Included amid this special archive of clothing is his bloodstained costume, with the clearly visible hole from the fatal shot.

While Gustaf III, as a playwright and an actor, has attracted wide scholarly interest outside the Nordic countries, English-language publications on his highly active role in the costume design process of the plays and operas are lacking. The research presented here focuses on his involvement in designing performance costumes at the Swedish court during his reign and features costume drawings executed according to his vision and detailed photographs of some unique extant performance costumes, now in the collections of the Royal Opera and Royal Armory (Livrustkammaren) in Stockholm. The author conducted this research in Stockholm during spring and autumn 2015 and used a range of sources for the content that follows, including produc-

tion programs, estate inventories, and visual analyses of the historical extant costumes.

## EARLY INFLUENCES

Gustaf III, the son of King Adolf Fredrik and Queen Lovisa Ulrika, reigned in Sweden following his father’s death from 1771 to 1792. The Drottningholm Court Theatre started to be used again during Queen Lovisa Ulrika’s tenure. Because she was keen to renew the theatrical life in Stockholm, in 1753 she founded a court theatre, Confidencen, in the Ulriksdal castle; the first performance was *Le Philosophe Marié*, staged by a French Dulondel Theatre group, who had been commissioned to migrate to Stockholm by Queen Lovisa





Images 1-2: Costume sketches, drawn by Jean Erik Rehn, were done mostly from Gustaf III's visions for the characters. These drawings depict the Greek choir. Photos courtesy of the Royal Opera.

Ulrika a few months earlier. The Dulondels settled into private upstairs apartments in the theatre house. The theatre group was highly respected at the court and influenced Gustaf III's life in many ways. The Dulondels performed for and with Gustaf III, and Madame Dulondel's son Louis became Gustaf's first dancing teacher. Furthermore, Pierre Léfèbvre, Madame Dulondel's brother-in-law was, Gustaf's fencing teacher (Hadorph 1999, 17 and 19; Forslund 2015).

Consequently, opera and theatre played key roles in Gustaf III's life. At the age of three, he acted for the first time on stage and his involvement continued in various theatrical productions throughout his life. After his coronation, Gustaf III immediately began to renew the Swedish theatre life by promoting Swedish actors

and Swedish language in productions. By the end of the 1780s, he had founded the Royal Opera (focusing on ballet and opera) and the Royal Swedish Dramatic Theatre (Kungliga Svenska Dramatiska Teatern; performing comedies, tragedies, and dramas). Although he had been highly influenced by the Dulondels and other French theatre groups all his life, one of his first acts as a king was an order for the grand marshal Nils Bielke to dismiss all French theatre groups from the court. This action supported his aim to create an entirely new theatrical tradition in which plays could be used to influence the minds of his court and nation to enhance his political status (Fogelmarck, 1991: 47). To improve the development of Swedish language writing and to spread the honor of Swedish language around the world, Gustaf III founded a *Swedish Academy* in 1786 (where the Nobel Prize in Literature has been awarded since 1901). The *Academy* had started a few years earlier in weekly gatherings by small elite groups, called "*Society for the Improvement of the Swedish language*" (Cassirer 1991: 31). Gustaf himself was very productive in playwriting around the same time. For example, between the years 1782 and 1783 he wrote five plays in Swedish (*Gustaf Adolfs Ädelmod*, *Helmfelt*, *Frigga*, *Gustaf Adolf och Ebba Brahe* and *Drottning Cristina*). Between 1788 and 1792, the Royal Swedish Dramatic Theatre performed four plays that were written by Gustaf III: *Siri Brahe och Johan Gyllenstjerna* (1788), *Helmfelt* (also called *Den Återfundne sonen*, 1789), *Gustaf Adolfs Ädelmod* (1789), and *Birger Jarl* (1790) (Carlborg-Mannberg & Hjertstrand-Malmros 1991: 136-143, *author's translation*).

For each production Gustaf III wrote, he was very keen to contribute to the visual designs. One example is *Thetis och Pelée*, Gustaf's first opera, which he wrote shortly after his coronation. It premiered at the *Bollhuset* (Ball House) in 1774 and was the first Swedish opera with music by the court *Kapellmeister* Francesco Antonio Uttini (Cassirer 1991: 29-30). During the production of *Thetis och Pelée*, Gustaf was eagerly involved in choosing costumes for the opera. He had made notes about what kinds of costumes he preferred for each character and the drawings were then made by court designer Jean Erik Rehn. Moreover, the king allowed a remarkable costume budget for *Thetis och Pelée*. Invoices in his estate inventory show how much money was put into the materials and labor for this particular production. The costumes were either made at the court or provided by Gustaf III from his own wardrobe (Eriksson 1974: 14, 19, *author's translation*). This was not at all a common practice in theatres during that time; for example, in France, actors had to acquire their own costumes for the plays in which they were involved.

Providing his own clothing and hiring court tailors to make new ones for the performances show how highly he respected the visual quality of the costumes.



That Gustaf expended so much money on costumes is perhaps not surprising as he was one of the most extravagant sartorial kings in Swedish history, with a strong interest in the latest and most lavish French fashions, which he saw during his own travels. Gustaf used dress and historicizing elements, such as the famous Swedish National Dress, to underscore his relationship with the past (see: Rangström L 2002; Rangström L 1997; Bergman 1937). He used his regular travels to enhance his political status and international relationships, but also to acquire historical inspirations for his own theatre productions in Sweden.

The costume drawings for *Thetis och Pelée* (Image 1) indicate that Gustaf III wanted to have Greek costumes for the choir through text underneath each rendering; for example, “*Grekiska Grigare, Chor i Thetis och Pelée*” means Greek Soldier, Choir in *Thetis and Pelée*. The male costumes greatly resemble the conventional theatrical heroic costume seen across Western Europe since the late Renaissance, which originates from the ancient Greek and Roman soldiers’ clothing. In theatrical use, this heroic costume includes features of the soldier’s body-fitting breastplate with hanging panels suspended from the waist. It is worn over a knee-length tunic and typically includes a plumed helmet. The interpretation

of the Greek soldier’s clothing in *Thetis och Pelée* shows two types of breastplates: one close-fitting, depicting a heroine’s muscular upper body, and one resembling fish skin pattern. The second costume drawing also shows additional notes for two different patterns; these most likely refer to the shape of the black and white patterned garments worn over the tunics.

The great success of *Thetis och Pelée* encouraged Gustaf III to build an opera house in Stockholm. It opened in 1782 on the premises where the Royal Opera still stands today (Cassirer 1991: 30). The first ballet master at the Royal Opera was Louis Gallondier, who had been working as a choreographer in most of the court productions and founded the Royal Ballet School in Sweden (Ralf 1974: 9-10, Hadorph 1999: 21, *author’s translation*). Gustaf III’s appreciation and value of costumes can be seen in his decision to commission a costume wardrobe at the new opera house. The wardrobe was a place in which costumes were properly stored and sometimes manufactured. Designer Jean Erik Rehn was appointed as the wardrobe manager. This is a significant development because until then costumes were made by the court tailors or ordered from outside the court. Neither of the court theatres had a special wardrobe for theatrical costumes.

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Images 3-4: Costume designs for *Gustaf Vasa*. On the left are designs for Swedish courtiers and noblemen and right, costume design drawings for the Danish Courtiers. Photos courtesy of the Royal Opera.

The scenographers (set and costume designers) who worked in Gustaf III's productions can be traced from employee records of the Royal Theatres. The records categorize a scenographer as a *dekorationsmålare*, a decoration painter, and according to this title, it is difficult to say whether the decoration painters worked with costumes. The first all-decoration painter at the Opera was Johan Gottlob Brussel, who also started working for the court in 1781, a year before the opera house was completed. However, the principal scenographer at the Swedish court was Louis Jean Desprez, who is documented in the employee records as "*Dekorationsdirektör*," literally a decoration director. (The French sometimes used the word *ensemblier* to describe such activity.) Gustaf III met Desprez during his regular travels in Italy and signed a contract with him in Rome on April 28, 1784, that indicated Desprez's tasks once he arrived at the court. The contract also stated that Desprez would have the assistance of two other scenographers (Dahlgren 1886, 426, *author's translation*).

Like many other court designers, such as Inigo Jones in the early 17th century British court, Desprez designed both costumes and sets. At first he was ordered to be in charge of the scenery workshops of the court

for two years. His first production was a set design for *Drottning Cristina*, performed at the Gripsholm Theatre in 1785. The success of his designs, especially for the opera *Gustaf Vasa* in 1786 made Gustaf III renew his contract, which lasted until 1798. Some of Desprez's own original costume drawings have survived; however, there are also several drawings that were made by his assistants Carl Johan Hjelm and Per Estenberg (Dahlgren 1886, 426, *author's translation*, Stribolt 1991, 123-125).

*Gustaf Vasa*, which premiered at the Royal Opera in 1786, became one of Gustaf III's most successful operas. His many responsibilities for this production included libretto writing, costume designing, and performing. While Louis Desprez was the principal costume designer for *Gustaf Vasa*, Desprez mostly designed and brought Gustaf III's visions to life. The king had made a preliminary list of all the costumes he wished to have in the performance, including many detailed descriptions (Mattsson 1991, 14). Sources often show designs only for characters Gustaf Vasa and Norrby. Presented here are other drawings not available elsewhere, such as designs for the Danish and Swedish courtiers and noblemen (Images 3-4). The differences between these two countries are indicated with colors based on country

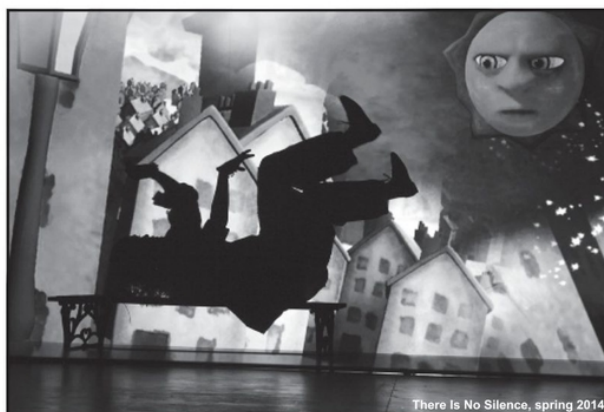
flags; the Swedish roles have blue and yellow in their costumes, and Danish roles use red and black. Here, color is emblematic of a Kingdom and indicates the significance that color would continue to have for what came to be known as nation states or republics in the twentieth century.

### CAROUSELS AND TOURNAMENTS

During Gustaf III's reign, several tournaments, also called carousels, were held at the center of Stockholm or at the Drottningholm, Ulriksdahl, or Gripsholm castle grounds. Gustavian tournaments included elements from freemasonry, mystique, and romanticism and combined dancing, theatre, and chivalrous sports. The main inspirations for these events came from France, where romantic chivalry was flourishing in the performing arts during the 18th century, inspired by the medieval revivals. They also followed the old tournament tradition in Sweden and other European countries. However, Gustaf pushed these events even further, turning them into theatrical phenomena. Because he was seeking a "total aesthetic experience" with the tournaments, every event had a special theme (Rangström L 1984: 30, Rangström T 1992: 244). Gustaf III's interest in costume reached to the planning of tournaments, in which all participants had strict rules on how to dress. Costumes for the tournaments were either made especially for the occasion or were borrowed from the Royal Armory or Royal Opera wardrobes.

Many different sources inspired Gustaf III to design costumes for himself and the participants in the tournaments. For example, during his travels to France, he witnessed theatrical costumes by watching French performances. He was known to try on a costume from Belloy's play *Gaston et Bayard*, which displayed male and female costumes resembling the late 17th century French fashions (Rangström L 1997: 146, *author's translation*). Furthermore, his wardrobe inventory reveals that in 1777, Gustaf III borrowed a doublet and a pair of breeches belonging to the preceding king, Gustaf Vasa, for examination from the Royal Armory archive. Gustaf had also requested from the guard at the court to give him a private tour of the preceding king's wardrobes (Rangström L 1997: 148, *author's translation*). This demonstrates that Gustaf did historical costume research himself and adapted these ideas to the costumes worn on tournaments and in his own plays and operas.

Possibly as a result of Gustaf's interest in older fashions and his adaptation of them for tournaments and theatre productions, a new type of performance costume, a "Burgundian" costume evolved at the Swedish court. This style incorporates and re-interprets elements from historical clothing; up until the late 18th century, theatrical costumes mostly resembled everyday fashion. Historical depictions were mostly interpretations of Greek and Roman soldier's clothing. The historically inspired Burgundian costume became regularly used in Gustavian tournaments and in Gustaf's own plays. The earliest example of the Burgundian costume



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Image 5: Gustaf III's Burgundian costume for the 1777 tournament at the Adolf Fredriks Square. Photo: Royal Armory [image no.6283].



Image 6: The lower right corner of Per Hilleström's oil painting *Dianas fest* depicts Gustaf III's brother Duke Karl on horseback wearing a Savage's dress, which is a leopard printed costume with a cloak imitating bear skin. The actual costume is below in image 7. Photo: National museum, Stockholm [inventory no. NMDrh 545].



Image 7: Savage's costume. Photo courtesy of the Royal Armory [image no.11606].

is from 1760, when Gustaf III ordered *Burgundisk karuselldräkt*, a Burgundian carousel costume, to be made for one of his plays. After this, Burgundian costumes were commonly used as performance costumes, in the tournaments, in an opera *Arséne*, and in some of Gustaf's historical dramas (Rangström T 1992: 244). Furthermore, in 1770 a French theatre group performed Charles Collés's *La Partie de chasse de Henri IV* in Stockholm, which used theatre costumes "enligt förra tiders bruk," meaning "according to the customs of the past times." These costumes resemble Gustavian Burgundian costumes to a great extent. The costumes of *La Partie de chasse de Henri IV* can be seen in one of Roslin's paintings, depicting Henri and his counsellor Sully (Rangström L 1997, 145-146, *author's translation*). In this painting, both characters are wearing slashed doublets and short breeches with white silk pulled through the slits. They also wear small millstone collars, which might have also been worn with the Burgundian costumes during the Gustavian era; however, these kinds of accessories get very easily lost or damaged and are therefore missing from the archives and inventory lists.

A Burgundian costume was also used in a four-day carousel, held at the Adolf Fredriks square, starting on May 30, 1777. The program, written by Gustaf III, instructed what participants should wear. Costumes for this carousel should be "*gammalt Svenska*" meaning "*old Swedish fashion*." The program begins by introducing the history of the carousels, and then gives instructions about the knight's costume. "On this second day, his Royal Majesty has founded a new riding school and instead of armor, costumes should look like old fashion..." states part of the program for the carousel (Rangström L 1997: 145, 1992: 426, *author's translation*). Ladies who represented the court were instructed to wear a white court dress. Following the instructions of the program, Gustaf III wore a Burgundian costume on the second and third day of the event. He had borrowed garments for the participants from his own personal and the court





Image 8: Two pads underneath the skirt are made with linen and padded with horse hair. Photo by Maarit Kalmakurki



Images 9 & 10: Bearskin cloak, with red silk lining, brown flannel, and metallic claws. Photos by Maarit Kalmakurki

wardrobes. Furthermore, all royal theatre wardrobes loaned costumes for the event (Rangström L 1997: 145, 151, *author's translation*).

Gustaf III's Burgundian tournament costume consisted of a doublet, breeches, cape, and ankle length shoes. All garments, except the doublet, are still in good condition and archived at the Swedish Royal Armory. Every piece of this costume ensemble is made of gold cloth which has horizontal lines and small dots woven in the material. Light blue silk satin is pulled through the slashed breeches. The back side of the breeches show signs of alteration from the waist and hip area. There are several places where the main material was replaced with similar-looking, lighter colored gold silk. Perhaps the breeches were originally tight fitting, following the

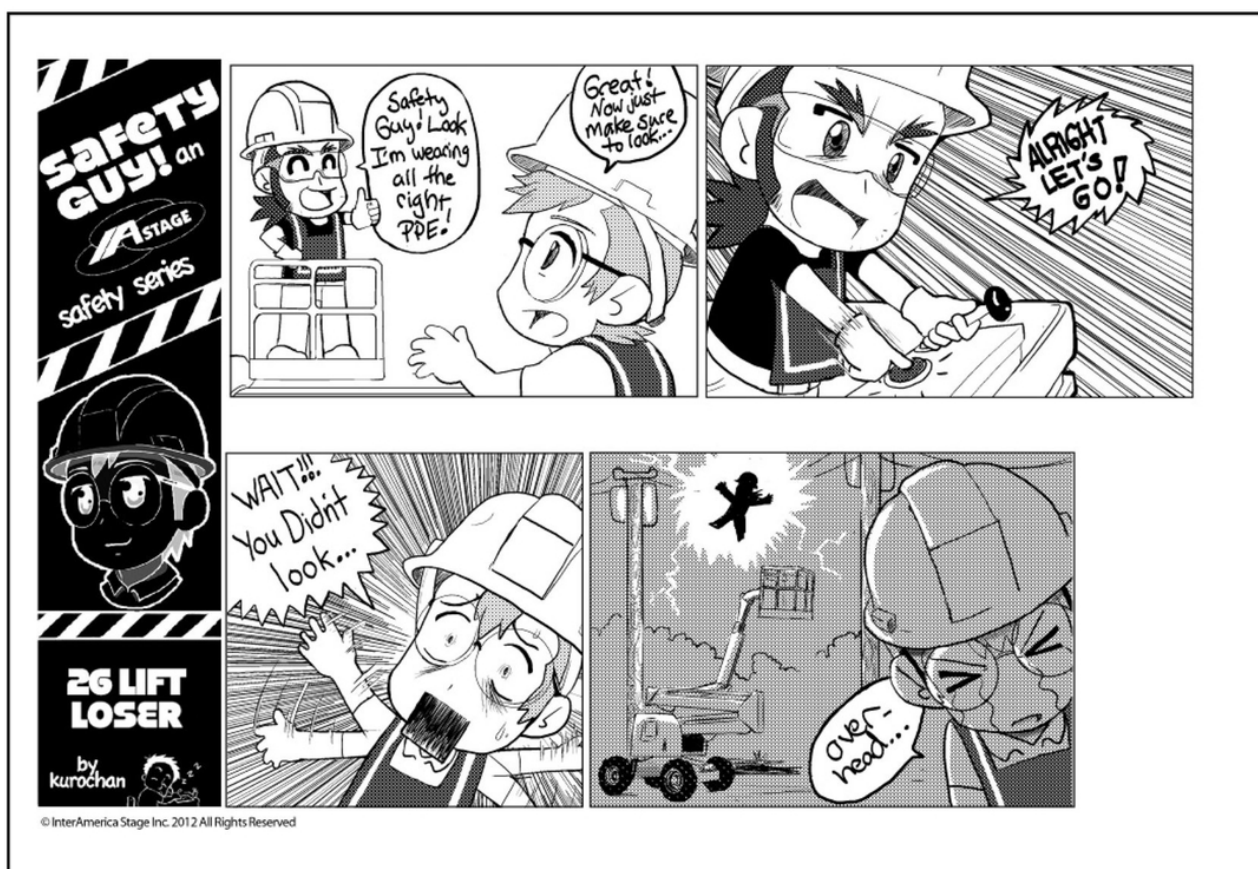
contemporary fashion, and altered for this theatrical event. Most likely, the slashing continued in the doublet, a similar construction to Gustaf Vasa's costume, which Gustaf III had examined before the tournament. It seems that he designed this costume. His cape is made with light blue silk and is lined with orange "atlas" (a fine quality) silk. The collar is made with a gold cloth, which frames the edges of the cape. Gold lace decorates his cape and breeches. The estate inventory compiled after the death of Gustaf III's brother Duke Karl includes costume inventory lists from a Rosersberg's Theatre. This costume is also found from this list and it states that the costume includes a black velvet hat, decorated with plumes and diamonds. However, this item has unfortunately disappeared.



The Rosersberg's Theatre estate inventory contains several Burgundian costumes, listed under headings *Tragedy and Comedy Costumes* and *Carousel Costumes*. The Burgundian costumes are further detailed as either pages, corporals, or armor bearer costumes. One of the page's costumes dated 1770-1780 is very much like Gustaf III's Burgundian tournament costume presented earlier. Even though the era when the costume was made matches with the tournament date and looks nearly the same, it is not known if these two costumes were worn together in the same tournament. The page costume consists of a doublet and breeches made of gold cloth with silver lace and light blue taffeta silk. The light blue silk is pulled out from the vertical slashing on the gold doublet. Similar to Gustaf's costume, the knee length breeches are also slashed, combining the same gold and light blue silk. Three Burgundian costumes in the inventory list are described as combining gold and black silk. Gustaf III and his quadrille wore costumes made of blue and gold fabric, whereas Duke Karl, who led the king's defenders, wore black and gold (Rangström 1992: 222). The color choices for Gustaf's and Duke Karl's quadrille differentiated these two groups that were otherwise wearing Burgundian costumes in a similar style. This suggests that the black and gold Burgundian costumes found from Roserberg's Theatre estate inventory could have belonged to Duke Karl and his quadrille.

A theatrical carousel with a classical mythological theme *La Fête Diane, The Festival of Diana*, was held in 1778 at the Drottningholm court grounds. No literary sources or material evidence show what Gustaf wore during the carousel in his role as the hunter's captain *Meleager*. However, his brother Duke Karl, playing the role of Nessus, the leader of the *fauns*, wore a *Savage's costume*. It is also documented in the inventory of the Rosersberg's theatre with a title "*En Wildes Klädning, Wild Man's Costume*". Pehr Hilleström's painting *Dianas Fest* (1778) portrays this same carousel and it depicts Duke Karl on horseback wearing the *Savage's costume* (Riksarkivet inventory report; Rangström L 1992: 439). This is a rare example when one can examine a painted depiction of a theatrical costume and the actual costume. Such comparisons are rare within Europe due to the loss and destruction of royal wardrobes.

Duke Karl's *Savage's costume* has a white silk bodice with long sleeves, lined with linen. Green silk oak leaves are sewn across the bodice and the stitching of this decoration can be observed from the lining. The back of the bodice has a lace fastening and the holes are delicately sewn in the lining and are not visible in the silk. Inside one sleeve is a mark "Duke Karl" made with ink. The writing in the sleeve is *H. K. höghet*. H stands for hertig, which means duke and K for Karl, which is his first name. Höghet means his royal highness. This







Images 11-12: A Watteau Costume dates to the late 17th century and was possibly used for a *Commedia dell'arte* character. However, in the estate inventory of the Rosersberg Theatre, this costume is listed as a *carousel costume*, which was popular during the Gustavian era. Photos by Maarit Kalmakurki.



same marking can be found from the cloak lining. The skirt is attached to the bodice and it is approximately knee length. It is made of beige silk, painted with dark brown leopard print and lined with cherry red silk and linen. Red silk lining is visible on the right side of the garment, as part of the hem of the skirt is lifted up and attached to the waist line. Oak leaf decoration continues to some parts of the skirt (Image 7). One can still admire the charm of these cut-out leaves that look almost modern in their simplicity. From a distance, they would have resolved well, which is a good indication of one of the elements of a successful costume design.

Inside the costume, two separate pads, which are made of linen and padded with horsehair, are attached in the waist seam (Image 8). Interestingly, the pads are not positioned evenly in the costume; one is attached closer to the back seam than the other. The purpose of these supporting pads is unknown, and none of the sources mention them either. As Duke Karl rode horseback in this carousel, it is possible that they are related to the posture when riding a horse. Once holding the garment from correct places, it enhances the overall look of the costume on horseback.

The Savage's costume ensemble also includes a brown cloak, which imitates bearskin (Image 9). It is made of brown cotton flannel and lined with the same cherry red silk as the skirt. The structure of the cloak consists of two identical sides sewn together at the center back. The bottom part, which copies the back legs of the bear, is wider than the top, copying the front legs. At the end of each "leg" are five metal claws, imitating

bear paws. Each metal claw is carefully attached to the cotton flannel (Image 10). Although most of the soft flannel has worn out, the material is still visible in some parts, such as in the bear paws. Cotton flannel was an interesting material choice to copy bearskin. Real bear fur was not used, perhaps because of its weight and because it would have been hot and impractical to wear on a summer day. Script in the silk lining verifies that the cloak belonged to Duke Karl.

Originally, the Savage's costume also consisted of a pair of atlas silk breeches, a pair of silk boots, and a black pointed hat, according to the costume description from the Rosersberg's theatre inventory (Riksarkivet inventory report). This can be also verified from the Hilleström's painting, which shows Duke Karl wearing calf length breeches and a pointed hat decorated with oak leaves. Unfortunately, these items have been lost over time. Even though paintings are mostly illustrative depictions of the events and are not necessarily truthful, in this case the inventory matches with the painting and therefore it can be verified that Duke Karl's costume is very accurately depicted in Hilleström's painting.





Image 13: Watteau Costume also includes secret pockets sewn inside the jacket. Hook end eye fastening is clearly visible in the garment. Photo by Maarit Kalmakurki.



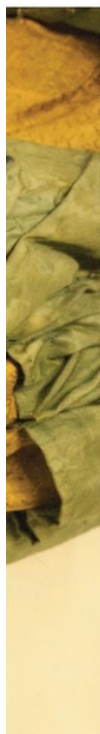
Image 14: Sleeve gusset detail. Gold silk is creped and stitched on top of the blue under arm piece. Gold silk has fine structure woven to the yarn. Photo by Maarit Kalmakurki.



Image 15: Gustaf III's masquerade costume on March 16, 1792, when he was assassinated at the Royal Opera. Photo courtesy of the Royal Army [image no.5563].

Image 16: Gustaf III's cotton vest, which was worn underneath his shirt, reveals the bloodstains from the fatal gunshot by Anckarström, whose mask is on the top right corner of the image. These items are displayed at the Royal Army museum (Livrustkammaren), Stockholm. Photo by Maarit Kalmakurki.





The estate inventory of Rosersberg's Theatre also reports a "Watteau Costume," made approximately in the late 17th century (Images 11-12). Beiger suggests that it was possibly used as a costume for a character in *commedia dell'arte*, as similar costumes were seen in Antoine Watteau's paintings depicting scenes of *commedia* characters in *commedia dell'arte* (1937, 108, *author's translation*). Burgundian costumes from the Gustavian era greatly resemble this Watteau costume, especially in the structure of the breeches. According to this evidence, it is possible that this costume was used as a historical source of inspiration for the Burgundian costumes.

According to the structure of the Watteau costume, it was made for theatrical purposes. The majority of its construction details do not match with the structure of the everyday garments during the time it was made. The costume ensemble consists of a long jacket and breeches made with gold silk and fine blue silk satin. The jacket has a fake V-shape opening at the front and fake button fastening; the jacket is fastened with hooks and eyes from the center front. A belt is attached to the low waist line, to which two fake pockets are joined, made of creped silk satin. The jacket is lined with linen and inside both front sides are two pockets (Image 13) positioned underneath the fake pockets on the right side

of the garment. Often in theatrical garments, these extra pockets are made for carrying accessories or small props. The sleeves of the jacket are made of a combination of gold and blue silk. In both sleeves, there is a gusset sewn on the lower arm (Image 14). Usually these kinds of gussets are used to accommodate a larger range of motion, especially when they are cut on the bias. However, the position of the gusset in this jacket does not function like this. It does not seem like the material had run out either and this additional piece had to be joined to the sleeve. In addition to this interesting detail, the sleeve also has puffed gold silk attached to the lower arm and creped blue silk is added on top of the gold fabric to give a contrast.

The knee length breeches are also made of gold and blue silk and are lined with linen. The blue silk is creped and stitched on top of the main golden fabric, instead of having it puffed out from a slashed material, which was the common structure of the breeches in the 17th century. Some of the breeches in Burgundian costumes during the Gustavian era have a similar structure. It's a much faster way to create a garment and therefore suitable for theatrical purposes.

#### **GUSTAF III'S LAST MASQUERADE**

Fittingly, Gustaf's death occurred while he was in cos-

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tume. At first, conspirators planned to kill Gustaf III at an opera-masquerade ball on March 2, 1792. For many reasons, the plot was then postponed to March 9 and was finally carried out at a masquerade held on March 16, illustrating the sheer number of festivities organized during Gustaf's reign. After seeing *Les Folies Amoreuses* performed by a French theatre company, Gustaf then dined in his own private rooms at the Opera House. There was some awareness of the conspiracy against the king, and he was warned beforehand via personal letter not to attend the ball. Despite the warnings, Gustaf III went to his royal box at the Opera House, revealing himself to the audience. After a short while, he closed the window and said: "If anyone had wanted to kill me, that would have been their best possible chance" (Cassirer 1991, 39). Afterwards, Gustaf went down to the auditorium where people tried to protect him by wearing identical masks. However, Gustaf III was shot in his back above the left hip by Jacob Johan Anckarström, and as he was shot, the king cried: "Ah, je suis blessé, arrêtez-le!" ("Oh, I'm hurt, stop!"). The shot was not immediately fatal; he died two weeks after the event at the Royal Palace (Cassirer 1991, 37-39).

The assassins took the advantage of the theatricality of the event, as evidenced by their costumes. At the masquerade, Anckarström wore a plain white mask and a black domino cape. His mask was bought from Helgeandsholm island from a hat-liner named Martin for 42 skilling (Cassirer 1991, 38-39). Anckarström could easily hide behind the mask and not be recognized since, like his assassins, Gustaf III also wore a white mask and a black domino cape. His costume ensemble also included a cotton vest, which was closest to the skin, a shirt, a doublet and a vest, a long sash belted at the waist, pantaloons, silk stockings, and a black castor hat (Image 15).

Gustaf III's doublet, vest, and pantaloons were made of fine silk knit. The doublet and the vest have silver thread running through the woven fabric, whereas the pantaloons are knitted with blue and gold thread, running vertically in the garment. The pantaloons were bought ready made from *Mazer*, a shop in Stockholm that specialized in knitted garments. An invoice by *Mazer* dated three days after the masquerade states that the court had ordered pantaloons in various colors from the company. It seems that Gustaf III favored this gar-

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ment as his estate inventory reveals a great number of knitted pantaloones in his wardrobe. This was a new garment in fashion, especially made with knitted material. Most likely Gustaf III had introduced this new fashion to Swedish nobles and court. In Swedish theatre, pantaloones had been seen before, usually made of cheaper knitted materials (Rangström 1997, 249, *author's translation*). The name pantaloones originates from *Commedia dell'arte* character *Pantalone*, and the garment was popular fashion, especially during and after the French revolution.

The doublet and the vest were also knitted cloth and were made at the court by Gustaf's court tailor Lindblad, possibly during the years 1791-92. His shirt is made of linen with *Point d'Alençon* lace cuffs and collar and has a small embroidered letter G indicating his name. The hole of Anckarström's bullet is clearly visible at the back of Gustaf's doublet, and the shirt and the vests have several bloodstains in the area of the gun shot (Image 16).

Gustaf III's life was mostly about theatre. Once Earl Fredrik Axel von Fersen wrote about Gustaf III: "When the king got up in the morning, he went to the theatre to rehearse with the actors the plays which were to be performed in the evening. Often His Majesty dined in the theatre, and after the performance was over, the king came to supper with the whole court, dressed in his theatrical costume" (Cassirer 1991, 31). This quote perfectly describes the important role that theatre and costumes played in his life. After Gustaf III's death, his son Gustaf Adolf became the next king, Gustaf IV. Although he had been surrounded by theatrical events through his father's interest in performing arts, theatrical performances decreased rapidly after Gustaf III's death. Carousels and tournaments were no longer organized and the number of theatre performances diminished remarkably. Therefore, Gustaf III's talent and keen interest in theatre and costumes were one of his unique qualities. Because of him, the Gustavian era became one of the most lavish theatrical times in the Nordic countries and with him bequeathing unique performance costumes for the future scholars to examine. That the costumes have survived alongside invoices, descriptions, paintings, and prints makes them unparalleled resources for theatre and costume history.



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