

## Evert Taube

Otherwise, the most typical troubadour among the twentieth-century Swedish poets is Evert Taube (1890-1976). His ballad art was consciously tied to traditional ballad prototypes: folk songs from various parts of the world, sea shanties, and more. Equally conscious was his opposition to modern poetry's overly contemplative and pessimistic character. Taube's songs aimed to be timeless in their homage to life, nature and love. There is a fresh affirmation of life in his ballads, whether they employ motifs from Latin America (where he spent some years during his youth), from the seven seas, from Italy or from the areas of Sweden he especially celebrated: Bohuslän and Roslagen. Taube performed his ballads himself with great bravura and became an immensely beloved figure. It was more difficult for him to gain recognition in literary life, but this happened, nevertheless, around 1950 when he was honored by the Swedish Academy and respectfully embraced by younger writers. He came to occupy a supreme position as a poet, popular yet also learned, commanding an extensive knowledge of the Provençal and Elizabethan ballad.

— Ingemar Algulin

## Evert Taube

Evert Taube belongs to Sweden's strong tradition of troubadours and is one of its best-known and loved representatives. Taube always nursed ambitions of being considered a "serious artist," but his career as a performer long stood in the way of this goal. He gently defended the dignity of the troubadour by paying homage to Bellman and translating medieval Provençal troubadour verse in the 1950s. Taube began performing shortly after World War I, and his first song collection, *Sju sjömansvisor och Byssan Lull* (1919; Eng. tr. *Sea Ballads and Other Songs*, 1940), introduced his alter ego, Fritiof Anderson. Fritiof is a sailor who has had adventures and romantic entanglements in various parts of the globe. When Taube grew too old to imitate young Fritiof, he invented Rönnerdahl, a mature family man. The geographical setting of Taube's poems shifts from Bohuslän to Argentina, from Roslagen to Cuba and Italy. Common features are romantic dialogues, idyllic natural settings, dance, and an occasional shipwreck. Taube's poetry gained its renown in performance, and his songs, highly original and profoundly Swedish, lose an essential dimension without his music. Defying the accepted artistic criteria of the age in which he lived, they did not win serious recognition until the 1950s; today few people would question his inclusion in the Swedish literary canon.

— Susan Brantly

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Nearly 130 years were to elapse before Sweden would produce a popular songwriter worthy of the lofty title "A Modern Bellman". Evert Taube spearheaded a 20th century renaissance in Swedish song writing, and his life and works touched so many Swedes so deeply that he became a living legend by the time he was 50.

Schooled as an artist, Taube spent some early years working as a merchant sailor; his fascination with life at sea and the Latin American and Caribbean regions permeate his songs. He was a frequent visitor to southern France and Italy, and his travels took him to the USA as well as Australia.

Taube is easily the most cosmopolitan of Scandinavian songwriters, but he forever won the hearts of his countrymen primarily for his loving and lyrically sensitive portrayals of the Swedish seacoasts and people who live there.

Evert Taube — poet, singer, artist, sailor, globetrotter, gourmet, ladies' man, TV personality, environmentalist — evokes and captures something essentially Swedish.

— Roger Hinchliffe

## Så skimrande var aldrig havet

Translated by Martin S. Allwood

The ocean never shimmered so bright  
the beach was never so glorious and free  
the fields, the meadows and the trees were never so fair  
and the flowers never so sweetly scented  
as when you walked by my side  
toward the sunset  
that evening  
the wonderful one  
when your tresses shielded me from the world  
and you drowned all my sorrows  
beloved  
in your first kiss

## Sea ballads and other songs

The ballad of Gustav Blom ~ Balladen om Gustaf Blom  
Calle Schewen's waltz ~ Calle Schewens vals  
Come to my arms ~ Kom i min famn  
Encounter in the monsoon ~ Möte i monsunen  
Fritiof and Carmencita ~ Fritiof och Carmencita  
Fritiof in Arcadia ~ Fritiof i Arkadien  
Honeymoon in Barcelona ~ Bröllopsresan till Barcelona  
A letter ~ Brevet från Lillian  
The sea-eagle's waltz ~ Havsörnsvalsen  
Waltz of the tattooer ~ Tatuerarevalsen

## A talk while dancing

The boarding-house dance ~ Dansen på Sunnanö  
Calle Schewens waltz ~ Calle Schewens vals  
Fritiof in Arcadia ~ Fritiof i Arkadien  
Heav'n blessed soil ~ Himlajord  
The joyful baker in San Remo ~ Den glade bagaren  
The joyful nudist ~ Den lycklige nudisten  
Pepita dances a tamborito in Panama ~ Pepita dansar  
Rose at the ball ~ Rosa på bal  
Samborombom ~ Fritiof och Carmencita  
The serenade in San Remo ~ Serenaden i San Remo  
Sjösala waltz ~ Sjösalavals  
Sleep in my arms ~ Sov på min arm