"A Trip to Sweden for 50 cents": Screenings of Swedish Films in the Swedish-American Community in Seattle until 1950

Wallengren, Ann-Kristin

2016

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

• Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
• You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
• You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.
Abstract for the conference *Nordic Immigration in the Pacific Northwest, Then and Now*

Ann-Kristin Wallengren  
Professor in Film Studies  
Centre for Languages and Literature  
Lund University

“A Trip to Sweden for 50 cents”: Screenings of Swedish Films in the Swedish-American Community in Seattle until 1950

The Swedish immigrants in the United States created a cultural community and identity by publishing newspapers and Swedish-American literature, setting up theatrical performances etc. Besides that, the Swedish-American diaspora organized film screenings with various types of films: documentaries, travel films, short films, feature films. From about 1920 until about 1950, screenings of Swedish films constituted an essential part of the Swedish-American cultural life, and that also became a widespread entertainment for the immigrants to Seattle. In this presentation, I discuss which films were shown to the Swedish immigrants, how and where these films were screened, and how the Swedish-American newspaper in Seattle *Svenska Pacific Tribunen* (*Swedish Pacific Tribune*) wrote about the films. The presentation starts with a discussion about which cinema theatres in Seattle that was used for these screenings, where they were geographically situated, and how the screenings were marketed. With the articles in the newspaper *Svenska Pacific Tribunen* as a departing point, I discuss what kind of memories and conceptions of the old country that was reproduced and how these conceptions was part of a new transnational Swedish-American identity. To some extent, it was the same movies that were popular in the U.S. and in Sweden, but as a cultural artifact they took on different meanings; meaning is changed by the social and cultural context, and also by how the films are “used”. The Swedish-Americans’ reception of Swedish films were in part different from the Swedish reception because the films were, besides being entertainment and a cultural experience, perhaps above all a channel to see Sweden, to experience the familiar and the known, and to maintain contact with the old homeland.