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Appealing to the Muse and Connecting the Dots.

Writing a History of Post-World War II Swedish Art Music

Dedicated to the memory of Bo Wallner (1923–2004)

By Per F. Broman

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When asked what the interest of history is, since, to most people, it is a simple succession of dates to remember, [historians] stress the importance of interpretation, the assigning of meaning to those dates. But then when pushed on this issue, when it is proposed that those meanings are political, presentist, or personal and capricious, they fall back on chronology to demonstrate that they deal in facts (Somekawa and Smith 1988, p. 149).

I have no wish to urge anyone to write history in any particular way. I believe that the history you write is the expression of your individuality, I agree with Mommsen that one cannot teach people to write history, I believe that much more can be gained by encouraging young historians to develop their own personality, their own vision, their own eccentricities, than by setting them examples to follow. Original history is the reflection of an original mind, and there is no prescription which will produce that (Zeldin 1976, p. 237).

Introduction

Imagine a country in which there were no composers of western art music, and that this condition had persisted throughout the twentieth century. Now, would it be possible to write a history of new art music in this country? Yes, a history could be written about the performers, and about the perception and reception of new music from other countries. If we take this fantasy further, what if there were no performers of new music, no radio stations that broadcast new music, and no one had ever been exposed to this kind of music? I maintain that it still would be possible to write a his-

*) An earlier version of this essay was read at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Musical Association, at the University of Cardiff, on September 13, 2003. I am grateful for comments I received during that occasion, as well as for comments from Nora Engebretsen, Bowling Green State University, and Joakim Tillman, Stockholm University, who read the entire manuscript.

tory. It might incorporate discussions of how a society could function without new music, how this condition came about, in what ways this country would differ from other countries, etc. Such a description would be highly appealing from a music-sociological perspective.

My point with this rather silly exercise is to show that the predominant mode of writing music history—the mode departing from individual composers and their works, so common in twentieth-century historiography—is not the only one possible. I have three major problems with the composer-oriented mode. First, the discourse is often set by the composer himself or herself. We tend to adhere to the composer's comments—as a vehicle of self-expression—as if they were cut in stone, revealing the entire truth about the music. Second, quite often a composer-oriented history constitutes a rather dull read. The text may become an array of dictionary articles with incorporated program notes. Third, the composer-oriented mode excludes so many other aspects of the musical life. In short, histories of twentieth-century music often take a simple path, free of independent interpretation.

Is this historiographical problem particularly urgent in contemporary art music? I would argue that it is. It has to do with aesthetic evaluation of unfamiliar music. We tend to cling to the words of the composer or to more or less trivial observations about orchestration or form for guidance as if they were lighthouses on the open sea. Philosopher James Manns has illustrated the problem of evaluating contemporary music in a both striking and illuminating way:

Call a mediocre artist's work boring, and he or she might well reply "I was striving to capture the very essence of boredom"—a job well done, in that case. Judge of a work that it just makes no sense, it doesn't hold together at all, and expect to be told: "Precisely! Neither does life!" [...] In short, every composition accomplishes what it accomplishes, and if our estimate of "what it ought to accomplish" derives directly from our sense of what it in fact accomplishes, it is hard to see how either critic or composer could go wrong. [...] Talk of the inevitable in music, I contend, really boils down to asserting (a) I approve of X the way it is, and (b) I lack the creativity to conceive of any alternative which would be more effective (Manns 1994, p. 86).

It is hard to evaluate and comment on new music. But histories about the art music of our time have to be written. And, as Carl Dahlhaus argued, "The concept 'work,' and not 'event,' is the cornerstone of music history. [...] the material of music history resides not in praxis, or social action, but in poiesis, the creation of forms" (Dahlhaus 1983, p. 4).¹ Although Dahlhaus is somewhat extreme here—praxis and social action are immensely important aspects of much music of the twentieth century—his basic premise is correct: the work of music belongs at the foundation of

1. The original quote reads: "Der Begriff des Werkes, nicht der des Ereignisses ist die zentrale Kategorie der Musikgeschichte, deren Gegenstand—aristotelisch gesprochen—durch Poiesis, das Herstellen von Gebilden, nicht durch Praxis, das gesellschaftliche Handeln, konstituiert" (Dahlhaus 1977, p. 14).

historical writing. But for historical writing really to pick up wind, it needs more than just the foundation. So what else would constitute a music-historical event? That is the crux of the problem.

In this essay I will discuss one path taken in writing a history of Swedish twentieth-century art music, one characterized by a multifaceted approach. I will depart from my chapter “New Music of Sweden” which appeared as part of *New Music of the Nordic Countries* (pp. 445–588), a collection edited by John D. White, completed in 1999 and published in 2002. I will discuss my considerations prior to writing the chapter, discuss what I actually wrote, and provide a few problematic examples from my text. Some of my theorizing has been done from hindsight, as many of the problems I encountered are of a general nature and could only have been discussed after the completion of the text. I will stay focused on this particular project—a book on the recent art music of the Nordic countries—with a few excursions into methods and philosophies of general history. Thus, I will neither problematize the notion of writing about music in terms of national categories, nor the inclusion of musics other than western art music.²

In Theory

Prior to beginning my work, I was stunned by the thought of all the different, equally plausible histories that I could form—something very obvious for the experienced historical writer—but not for me at that point. Scholarship and criticism of contemporary music is often about making specific comments on current events, rather than shaping comprehensive patterns from a very recent past. I found encouragement in Keith Jenkins, who, echoing Karl Popper, argued that historians

often seem to assume that interpretations just do derive from the “always already there facts,” and that what is actually a temporary and local interpretation really is true/accurate as such; that at “the centre” lie the facts of the matter in some given, uninterpreted way (Jenkins 1991, p. 33).

Richard J. Evans adds, “The concept of historical causation is itself merely an element in the arbitrarily constructed discursive formation of professional historiography” (Evans 1999, p. 120). Interpretations of historical events are not pre-existing objects waiting to be discovered, but are brought forth by the historian, and are most likely to change over time.

In general, causation has had a limited importance in musical historiography, compared to other fields, except for local observations such as “Stravinsky’s collaboration with Diaghilev resulted in highly successful ballets,” or “the end of the Second

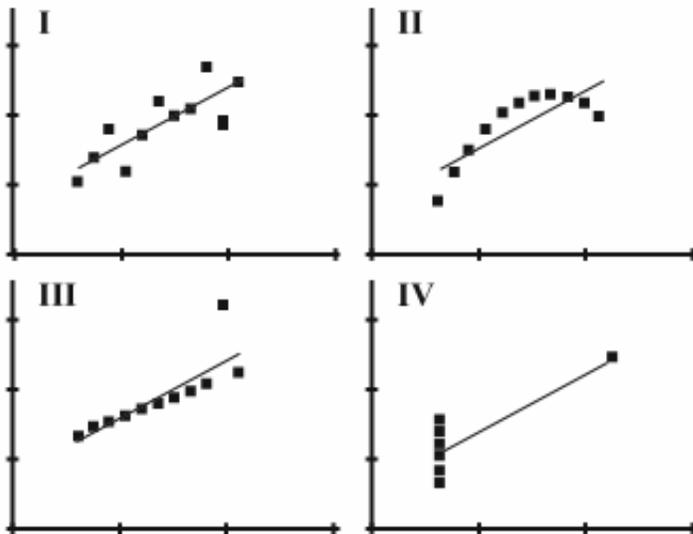
2. For an excellent overview of general problems in twentieth-century music historiography see Tillman (2000).

World War provided the young Swedish modernist composers with possibilities to travel abroad and to get in contact with the new trends in central Europe, resulting in a stylistic change.” The reason being that we are interested in particular artworks—in their style, genesis, and reception—rather than some kind of chain of cause and effect. It is harder to talk convincingly about causation; a “just the ‘facts’” approach about the individual work is safer and easier. But nevertheless, in many cases causation provides important pillars for building the narrative.

Related to causation is the aim of a historian to write about general tendencies over time, to connect the dots. Historians Ellen Somekawa and Elizabeth Smith insisted,

there are no rules for the process of constructing a story out of the disparate pieces of evidence. None of the conventions of historical discourse which signal that we are writing about the real past and not a fictive past address this dimension of our craft; critical practices within the profession set standards for making inferences from evidence, and footnotes offer a mechanism whereby scholar scan verify the existence and content of each other’s sources. When it comes to creating a coherent account out of these evidential fragments, the historical method consists only of appealing to the muse (Somekawa and Smith 1988, p. 152).

If they are right, we seem to be on considerably looser scientific ground here. This is not just a problem for the traditional approaches within the humanities. Not even mathematically exact methods may suffice. Consider the graphs below. The straight lines in all the examples provides mathematically accurate representations of the data at hand. The ascending tendency is clear in all four cases, but conceptually thee of the graphs (II–IV) are erroneous. Let us make up some fictional data to be plotted on the different graphs, where the x-axis represents time. Graph number II could



illustrate the development of musical modernism in Sweden between 1950 and 2000 as measured by the number of commissioned works, and the ascent of the line might make it appear to be the dominating mode of composition. Number III could represent the number of premieres of a certain kind of work in a given year. There were many more works performed during one year, but it could be coincidental. Number IV could represent the public support for culture during the period. The increased level on the right-top corner does not necessarily imply an overall, long-time increase but a temporary influx.

If this appears to be problematic, add the preceding data-gathering step. As Somekawa and Smith so correctly pointed out, “Interpretation does not begin after the facts are gathered; interpretation creates the evidence and the facts. It is historians’ very human need to place coherence on the passage of time which compels them to take the scraps they call evidence and create entire worlds out of them” (*Ibid.*).

When I realized that a history is local and of limited temporal validity, and that I created, not recreated, history, writing became easier. This was particularly true regarding setting an end date for the narrative. Swedish historical writings have avoided recent events. One of the authors of *Musik i Norden* [*Music in the Nordic Countries*], for example, gave a frequently maintained³ reason for this approach: It is harder to write a history of more recent events, since time has not weeded out events and works (Andersson 1997, p. 308). That statement implies that historiography operates as a constant casting-like process, in which history takes a definite shape through time. It also implies that historical writing about music by default departs from secondary sources in order to find out what was important, what passed the historical filter. I do not think that is true, necessarily. Writing history is not about confirming the canon—although the canon must be addressed—but about making a selection—often a subjective selection—out of as many historical events as possible, and connecting them to create a narrative.

In my chapter, I went so far as to mention works and events dating from the very same year the manuscript was due. These works and events did illuminate, contradict, and confirm some of the historical threads. Undoubtedly, my selection includes what will be considered a few misjudgments, a discussion of works that will have no place in the canon or significance in other ways, but it will certainly reflect the time of the publication and the author’s stance at a given point in time. My goal for including these works was not to try to establish a new canon, but to show that history has not ended. I also wanted to extend the number of threads and show that several aesthetic categories all coexist, rather than being defined in opposition to some other category: Aesthetic positions have often been manifested as simple binary oppositions on a number of levels: autonomous aesthetics versus heterogeneous aesthetics; modernism versus postmodernism; modernism versus traditionalism; con-

3. See, for example, Danuser 1984, p. 5.

cert versus happening; electro-acoustic music versus instrumental music; communication versus truth, etc. The pairs are chosen from Swedish music historiography; add to these two composer-centered pairs such as Schoenberg versus Stravinsky, and Brahms versus Wagner, and the extent of this mode of thinking within musical scholarship become clearer. Nelson Goodman exemplifies a binary opposition in two different histories of the Renaissance period, or two different Renaissance worlds as he calls them, illustrating the concept of weighting: “one that, without excluding the battles, stresses the arts; and another that, without excluding the arts, stresses the battles [...] This difference in style is a difference in weighting that gives us two different Renaissance worlds” (Goodman 1978, pp. 101–02). Since World War II, Sweden has developed into a complex multi-aesthetic and multi-ethnic, artistically complex society where politics, individual composers and other artists, and societal trends in general have impacted the musical scenes. It is too complicated a picture to be represented in terms of binary oppositions. In hindsight, I wish that I had lent even greater emphasis to this trend by writing more about music outside the ethnic Swedish mainstream.

By giving two brief narrative strategies departing from Sven-David Sandström’s Requiem I will illustrate Goodman’s notion of weighted narratives in the context of Swedish art music after the Second World War, and the consequence of such narratives. The first narrative outline departs from the traditional chronological path: the Blomdahl and Lidholm legacies (The Monday Group)→Sven-David Sandström→Sandström’s style (Modernism→Stylistic change→Postmodernism)→Requiem:

Lidholm’s foremost student was Sven-David Sandström who had great international successes with his modernist works such as *Through and Through* (1972). His large-scale Requiem *Mute the Bereaved Memories Speak* created a major controversy over the sexually explicit text by Swedish poet Tobias Berggren. In this piece Sandström explores what later will become his major aesthetic trait during the 1980s: romanticism.

This highly condensed paragraph would take several pages to develop, of course, which is also the case with narrative number two, the discourse-centered narrative: Discourses and debates (twelve-tone tribunal, music and society)→Requiem→*High Mass* (leading back to another debate on Modernism versus Postmodernism):

Ideologic and aesthetic debates have had a major function in forming a historiographic consciousness in Swedish art-musical life. Important debates were The Twelve-Tone Tribune, etc. Sven-David Sandström’s Requiem marks an important aesthetic event in that there was a large public discourse over a contemporary musical work that displayed fundamental differences among Swedish composers and critics.

The distinction between the two modes of history telling is not merely a matter of how to organize the different topics. Even if exactly the same facts were included about the work, the narrative structure would be different, and so too would be the

way in which we would perceive the story. A piece that sticks out to as great an extent as the Requiem most likely played an immense role in Sandström's development, but also should be an important work overall, for different reasons: The two historical modes will emphasize either stylistic properties of the work or the mode of public reception, and could alter our perception of the work in the most personal sense: we hear the music more or less embedded in controversy.

Central to my initial work was a line of reasoning presented by Arthur C. Danto: "history is all of a piece. It is all of a piece in the sense that there is nothing one might call a pure description in contrast with something else to be called an interpretation. Just to do history at all is to employ some overarching conception which [...] go[es] beyond what is given" (Danto 1985, p. 115). Just by selecting certain historical events, we are making an interpretation. Furthermore, we need to connect the bits and pieces we have, "we cannot really make historical sense of whatever bits and pieces we may possess of 'history-as-record' until we are able to find a narrative for them to support" (p. 122). History is narrative, not chronicle. The New York City phone directory is not history, even if it is being used in historical research. To qualify as a history, according to Danto, a narrative must "(a) report events which actually happened; and (b) report them in the order of their occurrence, or, rather, enable us to tell in what order the events did occur" (p. 117). But these are not sufficient conditions to complete the historical narrative either. Let me paraphrase an example provided by Danto, one that will satisfy the two conditions:

Karl-Birger Blomdahl was born in 1918; then Allan Pettersson wrote 15 symphonies between 1952 and 1979; then Per F. Broman took the 8 o'clock flight to Cardiff from Amsterdam on September 12, 2003, to present an earlier version of this paper at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Musical Association.⁴

Historical events have to be connected in a narrative that explains what happened. But my example would not be useful even if I analyzed the events—they are simply too disconnected, there is no narrative plan, and, although the events are all related to twentieth-century Swedish music, they cannot be connected in any non-trivial way. A very simple narrative, like a chronologically ordered list of works and composers with connecting statements, represents the composer-oriented approach. Consider the following paragraph, and imagine the content to be expanded over ten pages:

Karl-Birger Blomdahl wrote three symphonies. The style was neoclassical. Among his colleagues in The Monday Group was Ingvar Lidholm. Lidholm composed the following works... The style became increasingly modernistic. He was an important pedagogue. Among his students was Sven-David Sandström, who composed in a highly modernistic style, et cetera.

This is a more interesting history than my earlier random chronicle, since it includes

4. Danto uses an equally absurd list of events, see p. 117.

facts and observations that connect works and composers. Still, I argue that this kind of narrative is not enough, even if we flesh it out with more details and more insightful observations about individual works. It is too one-dimensional: composers and works turn into bricks in a domino game. But traditional Swedish musical historiography has, to a large extent, departed from this kind of narrative, and disciplinary traditions can become very strong force fields, indeed. Hayden White has argued that history is not a “science that utilizes technical languages, hypothetico-deductive arguments controlled by experimental methods [...]” but is “rather a craftlike discipline, which means that it tends to be governed by convention and custom rather than by methodology and theory [...]” (White 1995, p. 243, quoted in Evans 1999, p. 56). It is hard, almost impossible, to break with the prevalent mode of historiography.

A widespread tradition of writing focuses on the narrative of progress: music history as the history and development of compositional techniques. There is a specific reason for this, a reason that goes beyond the accepted practices of writing twentieth-century music history. The notion of progress followed by a decline and the catastrophic end of history like a historiographical rendition of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*—as in “the development of Romanticism through Wagner eventually gave room to atonalism, dodecaphony, and integrated serialism, to the collapse through Cage and instrumental theater”—has an advantage: it constitutes a special case of causation; the notion of progress too creates a great narrative as one thing (technique, technical innovation) logically and inevitably leads to another. Moreover, it not only shows causation, it also presents a comprehensive chronological story. Stylistic development constitutes the glue that keeps the history together in a beautifully logically crafted fashion. History gets its main road, although for a heavy price: Non-modernist musics become sidetracks away from the freeway of modernistic progress and music is presented as constantly striving for improvement.⁵ This trend ties into my composer-centered critique of writing, as it is one encouraged by many composers: A composer typically wants to be perceived as progressive, as advancing the compositional craft and raising timeless questions in the choice of extra-musical references. But traditionalism and eclecticism are not crimes. I tried to avoid this trap through extensive discussion of non-modernist music.

I did not succeed in treating that repertoire during the 1950s as anything other than a sidetrack, however. The 1950s were a fascinating period in Swedish cultural history—and mostly so from a modernist perspective. There are more historical modernist events to talk about as well as individual works. Society, performance, other art forms, and music blend together into a wonderfully rich and interesting narrative. Virtually all substantial texts written during the 1950s and 60s were by

5. For an extensive critique of a prevalent mode of writing twentieth-century music history, see Williams (1993).

musicologists, critics, and composers associated with the modernist movement and in particular with The Monday Group, a loosely connected gathering of young composers, musicians, and musicologists who met in Karl-Birger Blomdahl's apartment during the 1940s and 50s. Although it was a fairly heterogeneous group, one that would hardly constitute a school of composition in any stylistic sense, and although its meetings were informal in character, its impact on Swedish musical life would be enormous and would last well into the 1990s. The Monday Group's members' skills were put to use in documentation and performance, as several members were musicians, who provided performance opportunities for the composing members. The scholars of the group realized the importance of critical support of the new music, and I believe the modernist 1940s and 50s to be the most well-documented decades in the history of Swedish music. The work of The Monday Group would result in a major modernization of Swedish musical life. By modernization I mean the reformation and expansion of the support structures for music in general, and contemporary music in particular. Musically, however, its best-known members were not the most radical composers. Even in his twelve-tone works, Blomdahl would depend heavily on neo-Classicism. Still, the Monday Group narrative has traditionally become the great narrative of Swedish modernism, and I do not think that a historian should neglect that fact. Although a historian should avoid following previous historical accounts too closely, he or she should try to keep a dialogue with previous historiography. The reason is both trivial and deep: Historiography is also history. History consists of historiographical accounts.

In Practice

It is not necessarily easier to write after having acknowledged a number of philosophical problems in historiography. Causation, chronology, and artist-centered narratives are problematic, but I perceived of no way of eliminating them altogether, particularly not chronology. During the initial stages I identified six categories to cover, most of which were interrelated. These six categories served initially as parts of a multi-dimensional puzzle for a historical narrative of Swedish art music after 1945:

- The individual work
- The genre or the group of works
- The composer
- Aesthetic and societal trends
- Organizations
- Musicians and ensembles

I treated them only partly thematically, as most of the threads were built into an introductory chronological, but non-composer centered, narrative, which makes up

about half of the chapter, and some were discussed in the context of certain repertoires. The individual works were the hardest to select. They must be representative of the outputs under consideration and must represent high-quality work, but I also wanted to show the breadth of compositional practices, and thus a few works that are normally not considered as part of the canon were included.

Works

A reader of a history of contemporary music naturally expects to find a narrative that discusses the individual work and its relationship to other works. But such a text cannot be a comprehensive listing of the important works. Even if we show caution about presenting a history of progress, the question remains, which works should one talk about? I departed from those that received a strong public response—works that have been either widely embraced or forcefully questioned by the Art World at large, such as Ingvar Lidholm's *A Dream Play* or Jan Sandström's *Motorbike Concerto* from the former category, and compositions by Dror Feiler or Jan W. Morthenson's "Nonfigurative" music, from the latter. I was also interested in anti-works that are disputed or outright rejected by the Art World, such as the concept works by Staffan Mossenmark. I also discussed some of the large number of well-written but often lesser-known mainstream compositions by highly skilled composers, for example, Mats Larsson-Gothe's *Clockworks* or John Fernström's *Symfonisk prolog*. I chose a compromise that would illustrate the extent of stylistic variety, one that selected a wide range of highly interesting (provoking, well-written, acclaimed, rejected) works. The downside to this approach, of course, is that it admits a smaller selection of the most celebrated works. I also had to be economical, trying to make each work illustrate several points. The almost completely unknown "Et verbum caro factum est" by Claude-Loyola Allgén illustrates the great breadth within the Monday Group as well as being a very interesting work, stylistically ahead of its time. Hilding Rosenberg's *Orchestral Concerto No. 2* is used to tie into the different approaches to the incorporation of Swedish folk music, which culminate with the vocal works of Karin Rehnqvist. Sven-David Sandström's *Requiem* was discussed in the context of the dominating role of the modernist tradition and the impact of Lidholm during 1970s, Anders Hillborg's *muoyayoum* relates the choral style with the instrumental and illustrates how a developed choral culture attracts composers to write highly artistic works.

I did include one binary opposition in a thread that runs through the entire chapter, classifying approaches to composition as the *searching* and the *confirming* modes, a set of terms I borrowed from Bo Wallner. The searching mode represents a constructivist "from-scratch" approach and the confirming mode a way of addressing an existing tradition. As examples I assigned Hilding Rosenberg, Karl-Birger Blomdahl,

and Per Mårtensson to the former mode, and Sven-Erik Bäck, Allan Pettersson, Jan Sandström, Karin Rehnqvist, and Dror Feiler, to the latter. The selection indicates that style is not the deciding factor, but rather a perceived attitude. Although vague, the set was not as blunt a tool as one would expect from a binary construct. It did away with terms such as traditionalists and progressives and brought to the fore general trends and aesthetic similarities throughout at least a century of music history.

Genres

In twentieth-century Swedish historiography, quite a few genres have had a great impact and deserve to be considered separately in individual subchapters: electro-acoustic music, choral music, symphonic music, and opera. These particular genres have their own institutional networks and their own traditions.⁶ Opera, in particular, makes for great narratives. The genre is challenging from the perspective of thematic organization, including the plots of the operas. Not surprisingly, these rely quite a bit on folk tales, however they do not include as much gloomy Strindberg as one might expect. This was a relatively problem-free section to write, as the repertoire and number of composers engaged in writing opera is limited. In fact, the limited repertoire allowed me to make an overview beginning during the nineteenth century, including *Harald Viking* by Andreas Hallén, making a point about the break with the French opera tradition. A few threads left open in earlier discussions could be closed, including relationships between The Monday Group and other art forms, the Blomdahl–Lindegren collaboration, and how the political 1970s resulted in provocative works such as *Animalen*, a completely different political statement than many avant-garde happenings or electro-acoustic works. The opera section also opened up questions about the increasing plurality of musical institutions, the focus on Stockholm as the music center prior to the 1970s and the importance of the radio medium for distribution of art music.

Electro-acoustic music was more problematic. It is hard to describe this music, as there are typically no notated scores and is often little extra-musical content. There are exceptions, including Åke Hodell's explicitly political *Mr. Smith in Rhodesia*, whose genesis and message provide an interesting story that illustrates the activist 1970s. Moreover, the EAM discourse is often detached from the mainstream twentieth-century music discourse, which was both advantageous and disadvantageous: Swedish composers of electro-acoustic music belong to a tightly-knit community. The EAM world becomes one self-contained, albeit isolated and compartmentalized, unit where technique, composers, works, and society all bond with very little effort.

6. Although I sympathize with Danuser's claim (1984, p. 3) that genres have lost their impact as structural categories, I find them quite useful in the context of a relatively closed Swedish cultural environment.

The mode of writing was also different: the notion of causation did apply in this section to a larger extent. It was possible to write narratives that departed from technical progress: The creation of the EMS in 1965, composers' encounters with major studios in Europe, and the early dichotomy between electronic and *concrète* sounds, for example, had real impact on the music. But the section also opened up to less progress-oriented topics such as Text-Sound Composition.

The section "The Swedish Choral Miracle" became somewhat of a celebration of Swedish choral culture, to which the amateur and professional communities both make great contributions. The challenge was to analyze the origin and development of this culture, as well as the properties of the Swedish choral sound. Also this section provided opportunities to expand The Monday Group discussion, as Eric Ericson was closely associated with several members. I also used the opportunity to expand upon the art musical focus in the rest of the chapter by including discussion of *Visan* [the plain popular song], providing a brief link between the art musical and the popular, a link used by several composers, including Allan Pettersson.

Composers

Discussing individual composers was another story, and here we get to the core of what makes music history special. Although I tried to deemphasize composer narratives, such stories have to be told. Most composers were discussed in the context of genre sections (Börtz, orchestra; Gefors, opera; Edlund, choir; Bodin, EAM, etc). One example, that of Allan Pettersson, will illustrate some of the problems associated with composer-oriented narratives, and how hard it is to escape the established modes of narrative.

There are several reasons why Pettersson must be discussed in depth. His international success during the 1990s is unrivaled in the history of twentieth-century Swedish music. Pettersson was without a doubt the foremost symphonic composer ever in Sweden. His works have been recorded and re-recorded by Swedish and international companies alike. Much, definitely too much, attention has been given to Pettersson's background and upbringing, but I felt it was necessary to address his life as it has been historiographically closely associated with his music. He was a "self-made man" whose personal struggles can be mapped onto the music with very little effort. His background constitutes an obvious marker for authenticity. Moreover, as he did not belong to any particular school or group of composers in Swedish musical life, it becomes tempting to map the music onto the man, rather than onto a particular developmental phase. I chose to discuss Pettersson in the section Symphonic Outsiders, a section of the Orchestra subchapter, with composers such as Eduard Tubin and Blomdahl. The following three paragraphs constitute a slightly altered version of Pettersson's section in my chapter.

Pettersson was the youngest of four children of an abusive father and a devout mother. The family lived in a poor working-class neighborhood in Stockholm. He earned the money to purchase a violin by selling Christmas cards and taught himself to play it. As a teenager, he tried to perform at every opportunity. He entered the Royal College of Music in Stockholm in 1930, and eventually became a viola player in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in Stockholm. Though already a professional orchestral musician, he felt inclined to pursue further studies and went to Paris for composition lessons with Arthur Honegger and René Leibowitz between 1951 and 1953. At this time he began to experience a pain in his joints that would later be diagnosed as chronic rheumatoid arthritis. Over the next fifteen years Pettersson began to gain recognition as a composer. His major breakthrough occurred with the premiere of his seventh symphony by the Stockholm Philharmonic conducted by Antal Doráti in 1968. It was a success of unheard dimensions for a newly composed work. In the beginning of September 1970 Pettersson had to be hospitalized for nearly nine months, but continued to work. He was then confined to his apartment until his death in 1980.

The public fascination with Pettersson's music departs from several facts beyond the biographical: His romantically flavored, yet modernistic musical language is very personal; the way he works with thematic and dramatic contrasts invites the listener to approach the musical experience through a narrative structure; and his output is stylistically consistent—almost like one single piece. He never went through phases of serialism or instrumental theater. For a Swedish TV audience, the three documentaries (Hammar 1974, Berggren 1979 and 1987) also established the image of Pettersson's life and work as one very powerful unit.

Another reason for his popularity lies in the fact that Pettersson built a narrative around himself in which he never spoke about compositional technique, only about human commitments, and then often in direct and striking language. In a letter he wrote:

When I sat in Paris in the beginning of the 1950s and with religious passion studied the music of Anton Webern, I did not sense that there would appear thousands of chromosome Webers around the world. Anton could have been enough. [...] And then the dissolving of the laws of noise, indeed, the pornography wall was broken. A nude female playing the cello dressed in a plastic bag. (Why not without a plastic bag?) This happens while half the population of the earth is tormented by famine and sufferings. [Pettersson was referring to a concert in 1966 featuring American avant-garde cellist Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik] (Aare 1968/69, p. 55).

The problem with this kind of narrative is obvious. It tries to integrate life and music. The music expresses, even mimics his pain. I and many other writers on Pettersson want desperately to write a great story, and we want music to make sense outside of the limited musical world. Pettersson has become a Beethoven-like figure in Swedish music history, quite natural in a country with very few composing superstars. We want to create a mythological larger-than-life figure. But verbal support

could impose on the music. Danto gives an example of irrelevant information that may become relevant: Someone reports from a trial during which a fly flies through the courtroom. This is nothing to be mentioned in the text; and if it is, it is because it had a direct impact—the lawyer loses his thread, for example, and loses the court case.⁷ In musical scholarship, by including biographical information connecting it to the music, we not only make that information part of the narrative, but also part of the musical experience. Roger Scruton has implied that that would be a good thing: “The good critic is not the one who ranks works of music in an order of merit, or assigns credit marks to each, but the one who alters our perception of the thing we hear, so as to persuade us of his judgement” (1997, p. 373). He may be right in general, but in the Pettersson case we may be dealing more with mythmaking.

Society

“Any history of music that attempts to reconstruct part of the past as a structural, aesthetic, and social reality, rather than merely collecting major works in an imaginary museum, must deal not only with the history of composition but with the history of reception as well,” Dahlhaus argued (1989, p. 2).⁸ To further advance my analysis, and to put works and reception in context, I made a point of emphasizing the infrequent, but important public debates about individual works since World War II. These debates go beyond the daily newspaper critiques of newly performed works. Important events are the Schoenberg reception in 1949, the Tribunal on twelve-tone music in 1951 (Tillman 1995), The Grand Music Debate 1957 (*Ibid.*), the Composer and Society Conference in 1968 (n.a. 1968), and the *High Mass* Debate 1994–95 (Lundman 1995 and Terenius 1995). These events explain what has been considered important regarding both the individual work and aesthetics in general. The *High Mass* Debate, for example, attracted a great number of highly engaged writers and definitely gave a clear indication of the issues at stake, as well as of the lack of common basic understanding of aesthetic categories, that went far beyond Sandström’s work. I claim the debate was a watershed and the last attempt for quite some time to maintain the dichotomy between high and popular culture within art music. This debate leads to a discussion of perceived problems with plu-

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7. He writes that if the fly is mentioned a reader expects to know about more it: “But if there is no ‘what about,’ if this is only ‘part of what happened during the trial,’ then it does not belong in the account of the trial at all. When I say, then: ‘tell me the whole story, and leave nothing out’ I must be (and am) understood to mean: leave out nothing significant: whatever belongs in the story I want to be told of it (p. 131).”
 8. The original quote reads: “Musikgeschichtsschreibung, die ein Stück Vergangenheit als musikalisch strukturelle, ästhetische und soziale Realität zu rekonstruieren versucht—statt sich darauf zu beschränken, herausragende Werke in einem imaginären Museum zu versammeln—, muß außer der Kompositions- auch die Rezeptionsgeschichte umfassen” (1980, p. 2).

ralism among composers and connects back to the 1950s. As Arne Mellnäs expressed it:

In the fifties there was the older generation that was never questioned, such as Larsson, Wirén, and von Koch, together with Larsson's well-behaved pupils. And then there were Lidholm, Blomdahl, and Bäck who were the rebels of their day. It was as simple as that. You were either one thing or the other and they had little feuds and called each other names. It was all very organized: each composer did his own thing and all of them were played more or less [...] (Ahlbom and Hamrén 1990, p. 20).

It is harder to write about later events, but not necessarily from the perspective of the sprouting canon formation: There are simply more historical events to take into account during recent years and there are more participants on the musical stage.

To write a history that would provide a fuller background of Swedish musical life for a non-Swedish reader, I wrote a narrative that would suggest causation outside of the relationships of compositional practices. This is perhaps the most speculative section of my chapter. Although this kind of causation is hard to show, the music does not reside in a vacuum and provides a richer picture of the cultural life in general. I made an attempt to suggest a causation different from direct musical influences: How the Swedish welfare state had an impact on musical life and how the organizational development of Sweden through organizations such as *Rikskonserter* [The National Concert Bureau] and the new cultural policies of the 1970s provide quite a few insight into musical trends and aesthetics as well. Philip Tagg gave a plausible explanation as to why the new art music gained such importance in Sweden during the 1950s and 60s in a quote included in my chapter. Tagg argues that

[o]ne obvious contributing factor [was] Sweden's lack of high-cultural historical ballast in relation to other nations. To put it simply, Swedes did not have to contend with the legacy of the likes of Bach, Bacon, Beethoven, Descartes, Debussy, Dante, Da Vinci, Gallilei, Goethe, Haydn, Hegel, Mozart, Pascal, Purcell, Sartre, Schiller or Shakespeare: they just had Strindberg, so to speak, and recent experience as one of Europe's poorest rural nations (Tagg 1998, p. 220).

Tagg oversimplifies, of course—a number of cultural figures and scientists were Swedes including Alfred Nobel, Anders Celcius, Carl von Linné, and Emanuel Swedenborg—but where music is concerned, he is absolutely right. Sweden's cultural background and the political changes after World War II, including a strong belief in egalitarian society and watered-down socialism, provide a background for the changes in aesthetic consciousness. Contemporary art music became a vehicle, among many others, to promote a modern image of the Swedish society, representing as it would both anti-commercialism and adventurous creativity. The successful economy and the leveling of living standards during the 1960s brought the notion that musical culture should be distributed to a general audience, not only to a cultural elite. The institutionalization of the contemporary musical sphere occurred during the 1950s through 70s and was related to a general improvement of the econ-

omy. As a consequence of this striving for egalitarianism and against commercialism, contemporary art music received particular attention. For example, as I pointed out, Stockhausen gave a tour presenting his music to Swedish senior high schools in 1966 and Terry Riley appeared at a concert together with children outside of Stockholm in 1967. During the 1980s and 90s, composition programs were established at other institutions than the Royal College in Stockholm, despite a job market unable to swallow all the new composers.

These kinds of analyses go beyond a mere tracing of the flow of government funding; they illustrate a vibrant society in which art matters, and in which the belief in culture's power to change the society is immense.⁹ This also goes beyond descriptions of individual works and composers. In such a narrative, society is mirrored after its musical practitioners, and vice versa, but there is not a simple one-to-one mapping.

Finally

The conceptual problems of writing history have been around and acknowledged for a long time. In 1864, British historian James Anthony Froude insisted that "history is like a child's box of letters, with which we can spell any word we please. We have only to pick out such letters as we want, arrange them as we like, and say nothing about those which do not suit our purpose" (Froude 1963 [1867], p. 21, quoted in Evans 1999, 46). The issues I have outlined and theorized over are in no way novel. I certainly do not wish to argue that music history would present any more challenges than writing any other kind of history. But it does contain its own set of problems. Perhaps musical historical writing relates more to the tradition of Theodore Zeldin, a social historian, who in 1976 introduced what he called a *pointillisme* method (Zeldin 1976, p. 243). He argued that causation "has been almost as merciless a tyrant to historians as chronology." So instead of building larger structures from the smaller ones, he reversed his process of working: he reduced complex phenomena into smaller forms making the causation more for the reader to decide: Classes (another "tyrant" of historiography, according to Zeldin) break down into groups, groups into smaller groups, then "the diversity that even the smallest groups contain."

I have gone on, from pointillisme, to study the individual simultaneously from several different sides, as though I were painting not just the obvious face but the back of the head also, and the features rearranged so that they can all be seen at once. I have tried to maintain the richness and contradictions of life in my presentation of it (Ibid.).

9. This is also my conclusion in another recent paper on Sweden's musical life: Despite fierce debates and harsh words for and against ABBA during the 1970s, behind the rhetoric there was a society that deeply cared about the power of music, with a vital and engaged public sphere (Broman 2005).

The description sounds like a cubist painting, and his works appear out of the ordinary, not to say with artistic intentions, from the traditional academic perspective. In a later example, *An Intimate History of Humanity* (1995), Zeldin looks at human sentiments, in real terms, not in psychological categories. In the chapter “How some people have acquired an immunity to loneliness,” his discussions include a present-day tax inspector and ancient Hindus. The topic is timeless but the subjects studied are not the typical sociological groups. In a strange way, this is how I see my project in hindsight. The inclusion of the development and work of the Monday Group, alongside the aesthetics of Dror Feiler, *Clarás* journey into the dark side of the human consciousness in Gefors’s opera, the Seven Goals of Cultural Politics of 1976, Allan Pettersson’s seventh symphony, Eric Ericson’s Seven-thirty Choir, and the building of the Electro-Acoustic Music Studio in Stockholm, ties into a wish for aesthetic and human completion. Often the endeavors were successful, but there were also grandiose failures, and that goes for the historiography too. My role is to go with as well as against this flow, to ask questions along the road. But the wish to combine the individual perspective with the overarching one is indeed not exclusively mine—it is a human one. To paraphrase philosopher Raymond Martin (Martin 1993, p. 31, quoted in Evans, 1999, p. 10), when it comes to understanding *the musical past*, music historians are the acknowledged experts. But when it comes to understanding *how we understand the musical past*, there are no experts; we are all “intruders.”

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Summary

In his *Narration and Knowledge*, Arthur C. Danto has convincingly demonstrated that the notion of narrative constitutes the fundament in the writing of histories, and that there is nothing one can call a description as opposed to an interpretation. But

what is a historical narrative? How does one choose the historical bits and pieces that would make up a historical narrative, and then which events to select and interpret?

In this essay, I will address a few historiographical problems, previously outlined by Danto and others, in relation to my chapter “New Music of Sweden” in *New Music of the Nordic Countries*. I argue for a historical account that incorporates a greater variety of narratives than previously given in Swedish historiography: Individual composers and stylistic developments are not seen as the main elements, but rather as complements to the main stories of societal development and cultural policies. I also argue in favor of the characterization of musical development in terms of genres and discourses rather than works, of limited use of teleological modes of description, such as casting history as the history and development of compositional technique, and of less dependence on individual composers’ own accounts.