

### **ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND DRAMA**

## The Art of Canon

An artistic approach to the unpublished collection of Cyrillus Kreek.

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This project explores the 75 unpublished choral pieces from a collection of 150 mixed choir canons written by Cyrillus Kreek. A closer artistic look is being taken at three selected pieces – "Kas sureb nii mu kõige armsam elu?", "Den signade dag, som vi nu här se" and "Oh Jeesus, sinu valu". The thesis starts with outlining my analytic approach as a journey towards the three canons and follows with the artistic and technical work done with the pieces. My aim at beginning of the thesis was to conclude the project with a concert, which, however, could not be realized due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Music examples on a domestic harmonium are given as attachments, instead. The discussion in the last part of the thesis concerns the following topics – estimating the analytic approach taken to explore Kreek's unpublished compositions, trying to answer the raised questions, looking at new research possibilities, and estimating the practical outcome of the thesis.

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### Introduction

Estonia, the country of my origins keeps and honours its music culture in certain ways. The most well-known and perhaps of widest impact is the Estonian Song Festival (*laulupidu*). The song festival, having turned 150 years old in 2019, can be summarized as a big scale open air concert of traditional cultural choral pieces which are either specially commissioned or selected from the works of past composers. In addition to the song festival, occurring every five years, one notices quickly that musicians and composers are in general held in high esteem, often being opinion leaders in media. One of these people was the composer Cyrillus Kreek.

During my Erasmus exchange studies in the conducting class in the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2018/2019, I had the chance to get more closely than before immersed in the Estonian choral music tradition. One of the most performed composers of the chamber choir of the music academy was Cyrillus Kreek and his popularity is big both in and outside of the national borders.

Therefore, one may reasonably ask what has caused the popularity of the music of C. Kreek. How can this composer from the past century enrich the societies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What are the contexts forming the composer and his works? *Are there pieces of music that have so far got undeservedly insignificant attention?* 

## **Background**

In 1889, a ninth child Karl Ustav was born in the family of Maria and Gustav Kreek, a schoolteacher at the North-West coast of today's Estonia, then Governorate of Estonia of the Russian Empire. After getting a teaching position in a Russian Orthodox school on the nearby island of Vormsi (Urmsö), the family moved and Karl Ustav would be named Kirill. The young Kirill was brought up in a musical environment, learning to sing, play the piano, organ, harmonium, and trombone which remained for him an important musical instrument for many coming years. In 1908 Kirill Kreek started studying trombone in St Petersburg Conservatoire, where most of the Estonian musicians would be educated at the time. Four years later, in 1912 Kirill started his studies in composition and theoretical subjects which had to remain unfinished due to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

In 1918 the Governorate of Estonia and partly Livonia became the Estonian Republic. Meanwhile, Kirill – soon to take the artistic name *Cyrillus* – had started doing trips collecting traditional national folklore, folk melodies. Organised collecting trips to diverse regions of the country was a popular practice in the first Estonian Republic and music students as well as linguists would be encouraged to make such trips during summer. For Kreek, folk melodies would become deep interest and inspiration that remained in an important place for him throughout his life. As a result of his lifelong trips and copying, Kreek formed a personal collection of about 5500 folk melodies out of which he would use many in his numerous choir compositions. In fact, most of Kreek's compositions are based on borrowed musical material, folk music.<sup>1</sup>

It is said of Kreek that he was a thorough person in everything he did and indeed, looking at his manuscripts reveals what a great amount of detailed information he includes about each piece. In the draft copy manuscript of his 150 canons for 4-part mixed choir, for instance, the composer has included in most cases – hymn title in Estonian (or Swedish) and German, hymn number in one of the hymnbooks (often Punschel's), from where and whom the folk hymn was collected, composer of the original Lutheran hymn, volume numbers of other pieces of the collection connected to the same hymn, indications of current canonic voices and finally his name with the full date of composition. Kreek is also described as a very humble person who would not actively promote his pieces even if he as the organizer of local song festivals and many choir concerts, would have had a chance for doing so. 3

Among Cyrillus Kreek's contributions to Estonian music are development of folk music and choral polyphony, writing the first Requiem and developing the genre of wind chamber music in the later part of his life. Despite his thorough and prolific work, Kreek's music was seldom performed until the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recent times have seen, however, a clear rise in the popularity of his music both in Estonia and abroad.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Anu Kõlar, "Cyrillus Kreek ja eesti muusikaelu" PhD diss., Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, 2010, 247-249.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Results of examining Kreek's draft copy in the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Kõlar, "Cyrillus Kreek ja eesti muusikaelu", 249.

## **Defining the problem**

### Purpose

Being one of the most outstanding 20<sup>th</sup> century Estonian composers of choir music, it is more than well deserved that the complete works of Cyrillus Kreek should be critically published. Among Kreek's more than 2000 works, over 800 remain unpublished, meaning that much work is still to be done.<sup>4</sup> In this research a small part of this vast number of unpublished pieces is taken into focus – the 75 canons for mixed choir written on Estonian-Swedish religious folk tunes.

Since the middle ages, Estonian Swedes (*aibofolke; estlandssvenskar*) have been a continuous national minority living primarily at the west coast and isles of today's Estonia.<sup>5</sup> Lying geographically in the outskirts of the Swedish culture and being isolated in small villages, the Estonian Swedes had developed a unique culture that lasted until the Second World War. In 1944, the bigger part of the native Estonian Swedes fled to Sweden, which marked the end of the Estonian-Swedish minority along with their traditions and customs. C. Kreek who was in close ties with the Estonian Swedes of his time, having collected folklore in these regions and speaking fluent Swedish himself, would see both the rise and fall of this culture, which must indeed have meant very much for him.<sup>6</sup> Researching Cyrillus Kreek's music that uses traditional Estonian-Swedish folk hymns as a base material could, therefore, also contribute to the research of the Estonian-Swedish culture in general.

So, on the one hand, getting knowledge of these choir compositions serves as a step towards publishing C. Kreek's unprinted works and on the other hand, it can function as a time machine that might give us new insights into the Estonian-Swedish culture. Thus, being motivated by two separate points of research interest, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute drawing attention to some of the yet unpublished choir compositions of C. Kreek.

My work plan for attaining the purpose follows three chronologic stages: 1) the analytic stage, 2) the practical and artistic preparation and 3) the concert performance.

In the analytic stage, I create myself a framework of the subject by familiarizing myself with the composer, the historical and cultural background of the Estonian Swedes, looking into the textual themes of the 75 canons, getting a look at Kreek's manuscripts and planning the concert. The stage ends with making an informed decision and picking the most suitable three pieces to be prepared for the concert.

The second stage focuses on preparing the three selected canons for the concert performance. This work encompasses transcribing the pieces from the manuscripts, supplying texts, musical interpretation, and the rehearing process with the choir.

Although the content and planning for the concert plays an important role in my work, the performance could not take place within the frames of this project due to the COVID-19

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Kõlar, "Cyrillus Kreek ja eesti muusikaelu", 249.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> *Eesti Entsyklopeedia*, s.v. "Estonian Swedes", accessed June 4, 2020, http://entsyklopeedia.ee/article\_eng/estonian\_swedes1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Jüri Kreek, telephone conversation, April 17, 2020.

global pandemic. The third stage is, therefore, replaced by harmonium recordings of the choir canons under Attachment 4. Even if there is a big difference in hearing a choral piece performed by a choir or an instrument, one can at least get a "preview" of the music with its characteristic melodies and counter point. Also, my choice of instrument is perhaps not so far-fetched as the harmonium was not at all foreign to Kreek himself.

#### Questions

The thesis aims to work directly with some of the pieces taken from the unpublished 75 choir canons within the framework of artistic research. This means that the knowledge to gained will be that of "embodied" rather than a musicological kind. As I have not found any artistic research so far done on C. Kreek's Estonian-Swedish mixed choir canons, I hope this thesis could give some valuable insight to these works and perhaps awaken interest for more extensive research on this topic in the close future.

The research questions are as follows:

- 1. What are the benefits and possible risks of approaching an unpublished collection with an analytic perspective?
- 2. What are the new questions arising during my research? Which of them can be answered by myself with the newly gained knowledge?
- 3. Will any new threads for future research unfold?
- 4. Will this research give any practical outcome for performing musicians?

### **Previous research**

When looking for previous articles and research about Kreek and his music, I realized quite soon that almost the entire published material was written by Estonian researchers and therefore most easily available in Estonian music databases. The materials I used could be categorized as follows – publications about Kreek's life, Kreek's works and the Estonian-Swedish cultural context during Kreek's lifetime. The sources used include the anthology "Gamla psalmmelodier", series of podcasts about the life of C. Kreek ("Helilooja ja tema aeg", Klassikaraadio), published and unpublished articles and materials from an Estonian musicologist Mart Humal, video material from the Estonian Literary Museum, the doctor's dissertation of Anu Kõlar, *et cetera*. However, the most important sources that this work is based upon are C. Kreek's manuscripts, and next to them a very helpful source – M. Humal's rewritings of the 25 last canons of the draft copy manuscript. Without these sources the completion of this work would have been questionable.

Reading some of the mentioned articles showed that there is active research interest in the field of Estonian-Swedish culture and in C. Kreek's unpublished works. The latter was perhaps most obvious in M. Humal's article "Sacred canons among Cyrillus Kreek's late works" ("Vaimulikest kaanonitest Cyrillus Kreegi hilisloomingus") published in Teater. Muusika. Kino. cultural journal in 1989/11. There he points out the exceptional polyphonic qualities of the 150 canons and motivates the need for publishing the entire collection. In 1996, 75 canons of the same collection were published but the remaining 75 canons on Estonian-Swedish tunes were left out. In spring 2020, 24 years after the initial printing of half of the canons and one year after the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of C. Kreek, the collection in its entirety is still waiting to be printed.

As the other side of the coin, I realized that C. Kreek is also seen by many as an important link between the Estonian and Estonian-Swedish societies in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, Anu Vissel mentions in her article "Cyrillus Kreek – folkmusikinsamlaren" that C. Kreek was deeply interested in the Estonian-Swedish ethnomusical culture and had become especially fascinated by their religious melodies. In "Cyrillus Kreek och estlandssvenskarnas musik" the author A. Kõlar points out that Kreek had proven to be both a bridge between the Estonian and Estonian-Swedish communities and an important fosterer of the musical activities of the latter. In the same anthology, Swedish researchers such as Dan Lundberg and Ingrid Åkesson note that it is often seen that some of the longest preserved traditions of a particular culture are found in its regional peripheries. By saying this, they point to the Swedish singing tradition as something "genuinely Swedish" and of great value.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Mart Humal, "Vaimulikest kaanonitest Cyrillus Kreegi hilisloomingus", *Teater. Muusika. Kino.* (1989): 45.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Anu Vissel, "Cyrillus Kreek – folkmusikinsamlaren", in *Gamla psalmmelodier*, ed. Dan Lundberg et al. (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv och författarna, 2004), 148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Anu Kõlar, "Cyrillus Kreek och estlandssvenskarnas musik", in *Gamla psalmmelodier*, ed. Dan Lundberg et al. (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv och författarna, 2004), 77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Dan Lundberg, "Det vore i hög grad önskligt att hela detta insamlade material bleve publicerat", in *Gamla psalmmelodier*, ed. Dan Lundberg et al. (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv och författarna, 2004), 55; Ingrid Åkesson, "Nu sjunga de ej så vackra och sorgliga melodier som förr". Något om de folkliga koralernas sångare, repertoar och melodier", in *Gamla psalmmelodier*, 120.

Furthermore, Margareta Jersild says a deeper analysis of some traditional Swedish folk tunes could shed light to their origins and their historical contexts.<sup>11</sup>

It seems apparent to me that there is a serious interest by researchers for C. Kreek's music and the musical and cultural context that played an important role in his composing. As it is suggested, the question of his musical writings fits in and could contribute giving answers to the bigger questions of Estonian-Swedish singing tradition, their historical context and therefore perhaps even in the field of interpreting Swedish history and culture.

<sup>11</sup> Margareta Jersild, "Folkliga koraler – en genreöversikt", in *Gamla psalmmelodier*, ed. Dan Lundberg et al. (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv och författarna, 2004), 32.

### Method

As stated above, the purpose of the thesis is to contribute drawing attention to some of the yet unpublished choir compositions of C. Kreek. The way I intended to reach the given purpose was by the common principles of artistic research, that is, where "artistic experience" lies in the heart of the work. Therefore, three stages of the work were identified, and the rising questions-dilemmas of the process are to be answered in the thesis.

The selective process has its start with describing the birth of the idea and its end when the pieces to be worked with were decided. The process is described chronologically with emphasis on decisions taken at possible crossroads and knowledge that was gained at each step. The method I used for selecting the pieces was in a way both analytic and spontaneous at the same time. Before getting to the point of selecting pieces, I first decided to focus on the journey towards them – to learn about the composer, the cultural context, get an overview of the collection, study the manuscripts, start planning the performance and finally look just at the works themselves. I this way I aimed to gather knowledge that would be used later in performance purposes and ensuring that I make informed decisions in the next phases of the work.

The study process and rehearsing with the choir covers the work from the point of having selected the pieces to be worked with until the final rehearsals before the planned concert. In this phase, many questions of textual research and musical interpretation arose, on which an important part of the Discussion is based.

Concert performance – the last phase would have had its focus on the unpublished works in a real concert situation. In a sense, this phase was meant to be the peaking point of the work and a kind of a test to see how Kreek's compositions work in a concert situation. At the same time, this is the phase that covers by far the shortest timespan when compared to the first and second phases of the work. Due to the COVID-19 situation, this stage of the work is substituted by the harmonium recordings found under Attachment 4.

## **Approaching the canons**

#### From idea to action

In a broad sense, the whole project got its quite unexpected start during a conversation with an Estonian musicologist Mart Humal in July 2019. Having edited various Kreek's choir works for publishing, along with research and numerous conference presentations on Kreek's music, Humal is seen as one of the authoritative figures in musicology and studies of Estonian music. From him I learned more about Cyrillus Kreek's excessive trips to the Estonian-Swedes to collect their folk music. Humal also explained that there is a big number of choral works by Kreek written on the collected Estonian-Swedish tunes which are for a bigger part unknown to the public. This captivated my interest immediately because in the Estonian context, C. Kreek is a very well-known composer and might have for many a similar status to what Johann Sebastian Bach could have in Germany or Jean Sibelius in Finland, for instance. It seemed to me as an obvious gap that such a big part of works of a composer as important as C. Kreek had not yet been thoroughly researched and published. Not just being "unfair" at the first glance, but the ignorance of the collections of these choir canons affects directly the musical life in- and outside the national boundaries because a possibly great resource in music is being unused. Seeing the possibility of exploring and performing the unpublished works of a famous composer seemed also a very exciting project to be working with.

To give another point of interest I saw in the project of Kreek's unpublished choir pieces, it appeared as a very good way of uniting two (musical) cultures I have been closely in touch with, namely the Estonian and the Swedish. In a deeper level, it is not just about the joy of introducing something new and unknown but is also addressing the question of uniting poles within oneself. One such a set of poles I intended to resolve with each other was the Estonian culture of my origins and the Swedish culture which I have begun to know and love since 2016. <sup>12</sup> I believe that music, being a characteristic and intimate part of a culture, can serve this purpose very well.

When speaking of exploring C. Kreek's unpublished Estonian-Swedish works, the 75 mixed choir canons are not at all the only collection that deserves to be worked with. Between the years 1916 and 1947, Kreek was working on his collection of 443 choir canons for female voices, based again on Estonian and Estonian-Swedish religious folk melodies. <sup>13</sup> Of the 443 canons, 172 are arrangements of Estonian tunes and 271 of the Estonian-Swedish. Until today the 271 female choir canons have shared the fate of the 75 mixed choir canons, that is – are mostly unknown and have not been published as a collection. <sup>14</sup>

The reason why I decided to work with the mixed choir pieces instead of the female choir is mainly related to my own context and better familiarity with the mixed choir genre. Practically thinking, I could also see most obvious opportunities for performing the works

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Due to my studies in at the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Estonian Music Information Centre, s.v. "Kreek, Cyrillus", accessed April 22, 2020, https://emic.ee/?sisu=heliloojad&mid=58&lang=eng&action=view&id=43&method=teosed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Mart Humal, "Cyrillus Kreek and Estonian Swedish folk hymn variants", book, 2003, paper copy, 17.

with some of the mixed choirs that I already had contacts with. Therefore, my choice for the 75 mixed choir canons came relatively easily.

#### The action

Having decided what too approach, I needed to know how to do it. Even if the what was clearly the 75 choir canons, the *how* could still be quite different things. A way of approach could have been, for example, to get quickly to the musical material without very much focus on the external aspects of it, such as the composer, the texts, the historical and cultural context. After all, the focus of the artistic research is the "artistic experience" – in this case music making itself – and "embodied knowledge" being its main goal. <sup>15</sup> However, despite being an artistic research, I decided to approach the topic in a wider way, taking also into notice the "surroundings" of the compositions. This decision came to me almost instinctively and could be justified very straightforward by the fact that as a musician I usually pay considerable attention to the facts and stories that in a way outline the music as metatexts. However, to complement the motivation for my decision, I am convinced that relevant information supplying a composition is needed in order to interpret music in a convincing manner. Therefore, all the information gathered before or while "doing music", will become music and give its contribution to the outcome of the embodied knowledge. So, a short answer to the question I posed above is: my how was a "journey" through the context of Kreek's life, the cultural context of his time, the musical base materials and texts, finally ending up with the compositions themselves.

My journey towards Kreek's vocal canons set off with the first task of searching for sources that would provide me with a picture of the context(s) surrounding the 75 canons. At the same time, I was actively searching for any researches conducted about the canons or Kreek's Swedish-Estonian works in general. I also began acquainting myself better with Kreek's musical language by periodically listening to his music. The first step of finding previous materials about the topic was made easier thanks to materials received from Mart Humal. The materials consisted of a few musicological articles, a research on Estonian-Swedish folk hymns, Olof Andersson's book "Folkliga svenska koralmelodier" and rewritings of the 75 canons from Kreek's manuscripts. A larger part of these materials formed the core of my used sources, however, also much information was fetched from elsewhere. As an example, a good general framework of Kreek's life and historical-cultural context was provided by a series of radio podcasts "Cyrillus Kreek. Composer and his time" made by Estonian Public Broadcasting in 2009.

The next phase of the work was to approach more directly the canons themselves. With this I started by looking more closely at the technical details of the collection. For the first, I needed to make a clear distinction between the works published and unpublished. The fact that half of the 150 – that is 75 canons for Estonian melodies – had appeared in print already in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century while the remaining 75 Estonian-Swedish canons were left unpublished, was not sufficient knowledge alone when looking for *unpublished* pieces to work with. This is because a small number of Kreek's compositions on Estonian-Swedish tunes have been printed individually or as parts of research projects. The printed works include six mixed

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Julian Klein, "What is Artistic Research?", *Journal for Artistic Research* (2017), accessed June 4, 2020, <a href="https://www.jar-online.net/what-artistic-research">https://www.jar-online.net/what-artistic-research</a>.

choir pieces – two composed in the 1920s, one in 1933 and three in the years 1943-1944. Of course more works from Kreek that fall under the category as "Estonian-Swedish" might have been published for research purposes, however, to my knowledge, no other works intended for practical use have been printed so far. So, when picking any of the 75 canons for preparing for a musical performance, not a big possibility existed for it not being a *musica incognita*.

To get a more personal relationship with the whole collection, I decided to visit the archive of Estonian Theatre and Music Museum in Tallinn where C. Kreek's manuscripts are preserved. It was a special event for me to "meet" the music and its composer in a new way – by seeing the paper and ink used, the composer's handwriting, his corrections and the dimensional size of the scores. The 150 canons are written in two manuscripts, the draft copy and the fair copy. Whereas the draft contains all of the 150 canons, with mostly written-in texts, the fair copy consists of "only" 125 canons and does not contain any titles or texts by Kreek. <sup>17</sup> Finding reasons for Kreek omitting 25 canons and texts in his second copy certainly exceeds the topic of this thesis, though it provides an interesting and even an intriguing context for the collection. As there appears to be not much research nor unanimous standpoints for this question - and generally concerning Kreek's intentions for writing big collections of religious vocal music during harsh political conditions in the 1950s - a further study uncovering Kreek's possible intentions with the late 150 canons could shed new light on the whole collection. <sup>18</sup>

It was quite moving to see that in the draft copy the format of the paper was relatively small. The whole collection consisted of six small notebooks that Kreek would probably have purchased from a usual music shop in Tallinn, like anybody else wishing to write down some notes! In his article, Mart Humal draws a comparison between Kreek's religious contrapunctal works and the "Art of Fugue" of J. S. Bach, naming them both works composed solely urged by an inner need. And indeed, composing big collections or religious music during an open oppression of religiosity by the Soviet regime, raises questions. In my opinion, the size of the notebooks also expressed something of the nature of the works – Kreek, having bought the first notebook, surely could not have had intentions for starting a big grandiose work, but something of a smaller scale. Yet, it would be something that he would work on for six years (1949-1955) putting into it his effort, expressed by the contrapunctal technique and consistency, and something very intime. So, even when just looking at the manuscript, the comparison of the Art of Fugue and the 150 canons seems to be an accurate one.

The last step before the beginning to select the pieces to work with was to think about the setup of the concert. Quite soon the best way of realizing the concert seemed to be doing it as a part of another concert hosted by the Vocal Ensemble of Christ the King (*Kristus Konungens Vokalensemble*). The theme of the concert was taken after the liturgical calendar which at that time was at Lent. This gave a quite clear indication for how to select pieces to be performed. Another input in terms of context was musical – I received the program for the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Humal, "Cyrillus Kreek and Estonian Swedish folk hymn variants", book, 2003, paper copy, 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Hymn texts and titles copied from the draft copy have been later added to the fair copy by M. Humal.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> This topic is presented in Kõlar's "Cyrillus Kreek ja eesti muusikaelu".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> In a telephone conversation in 4/17/20 with Cyrillus Kreek's son Jüri Kreek, he mentioned that his father would write much music solely for himself, not for outward purposes.

concert and intended to use it as a map and try to find pieces that would best fit in and contribute to the rest of the concert program.

Knowing roughly the setup of the concert, I had to get to know the individual pieces of the collection. One of the parametres I took to define the pieces in the project was the text. This I did because the folk hymns are generally seen as tight inseparable mixtures of text and melody – and I think it is also reasonable to believe that Kreek who would be familiar with folk melodies and their culture, would not look at the folk hymns plainly as instrumental lines without the meaning of their texts.

Tracing the texts of the individual works turned out to be much bigger task than first expected. This was partly because Kreek supplied most of his manuscripts with one verse of the hymn, using the current Estonian hymn book (Punschel) instead of the Swedish hymn book where the original hymn melodies come from. Also, some of the canons are supplied with no text material and a few even with no titles. While these preconditions make tracing of the texts challenging, they also make it more exciting. In my textual analysis I was primarily based on the texts written in the manuscripts – that is, the "original texts" of the compositions but not always of the folk hymns – since Kreek was replacing many of the originally Swedish texts with Estonian hymn texts that would work syllabically well. As a result, some of the Swedish melodies have got Estonian texts that do not correspond with the original hymns. In my categorization the canons have been divided into different thematic groups according the texts written in by Kreek.

The fact that the canons can have several texts, opens possibilities for varied interpretation and new research, which again exceed the dimensions of this thesis. The categorization of the canons by their texts played an important role in picking up final compositions to be performed and studied further, however, I did not eliminate completely the other canons with other themes. So, the lent time canons were central, yet not excluding others completely.

Having "mapped" the pieces by their themes, I started to play the selection through at the piano, looking at first hand into all the lent time canons or those connected to mourning, suffering, death or evening motives. At this stage I had finally come to the point of looking at the musical side of the works individually. As first priority, I marked down the pieces that were musically speaking to me. Secondly, I was also thinking about creating connections with the rest of the concert program. Thirdly, I turned attention to having musical and textual variation between to pieces and thought about the pieces that would suit well the choir.

Finally, I decided to work with three canons from the collection and additionally a fourth relatively well-known piece in international choir circles. The three canons in Kreek's draft copy are as follows: "100. Kas sureb nii mu kõige armsam elu?", "120. Den signade dag, som vi nu här se", "148. Oh Jeesus, sinu valu". For the musical features I would describe the first one, "Kas sureb", as a short relatively consonant piece, suggesting a calm tempo and thus being a soothing miniature, however mourning in its text. "Den signade dag" is in my interpretation a lighter and a bit more moving piece, being also quite consonant throughout. It starts with a similar ascending motive as does also "Kas sureb", but is itself more a joyful (morning, Christmas) hymn and is a longer canon than the first. The 3/4 metre of "Den signade dag" provides a good variation in the canon-set. The length of "Oh Jeesus, sinu valu" is between "Kas sureb" and "Den signade dag", however it is quite different in its musical

aspects. In this piece Kreek uses a very ornamented folk hymn, setting it in a canon – this results with a lively and passionate piece with fast altering dissonances and consonances. The text is again a very serious one, coming from a popular German hymn "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden". As the additional piece for the concert, I took Kreek's Psalm of David no. 141, a more homophonic piece with a solemn character and stylistic impacts from Russian orthodox church music tradition. This would hopefully give some balance to the otherwise thoroughly polyphonic and rather "light" set of pieces.

When the preliminary selection of the pieces was done, I started checking their possible fittingness to the program by making plans how and where in the program each piece could work at its best. After a discussion with my supervisor, I decided to present the works of Kreek as a "bouquet" of three pieces preceded by the Psalm of David that would give context to the following unpublished canons. It turned out that the keys of the canons and the Psalm would fit with each other very well, forming smooth transitions from one to another. Had there been a need for starting tones between each short canon, it would have created a "spreading apart" effect in the concert. However, having the possibility to sing all the four pieces right after each other would strengthen the "bouquet-effect" and create a variation in the concert program. I was fortunate to find a place toward the middle of the program where the transition from a piece before after the bouquet would be noticeable yet natural.

An especially interesting twofold link between the program and the Kreek section was created by "Oh Jeesus, sinu valu". Firstly, the concert would start and end with J. S. Bach's chorale "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden", so having the same melody, though quite much altered in Kreek's canon, would have created a clear and beautiful structure in the program. Secondly, an ornamented melody written in canon did characterize both "Oh Jeesus, sinu valu" and two motets of James MacMillan to be performed before and after the canon. From the perception of a listener, "Oh Jeesus, sinu valu" would both work as a bridge between the start and end of the concert as well as a bridge between the very personal musical style of MacMillan and the style of Kreek.

So, finally after the enriching journey I arrived at Kreek's canons and made my decision for which pieces to continue working with. The titles and volume numbers of the canons as seen in Kreek's draft manuscript were – "100. Kas sureb nii mu kõige armsam elu?", "120. Den signade dag, som vi nu här se" and "148. Oh Jeesus, sinu valu" (in this work mostly referred to with the Swedish title "O huvud, blodigt, sårat").

## Study, interpreting and rehearsals

At the stage where the necessary research, concert setup and selecting pieces was done, the pieces were still in a small handwritten form making it difficult to read and work with, especially when working in a group such as a choir. Kreek's manuscripts also lacked sufficient choral texts which had to be added. Therefore, one of the first things I decided to do was to rewrite the three canons in a music notation program. My intentions included 1) a kind of *urtext* that would preserve all musical indications written in by the composer 2) supplying

the scores with additional verses in the original languages <sup>20</sup> 3) providing any additional remarks that would indicate my interpretation 4) making the scores easy to use.

As the final part of preparations for the concert the rehearsals would take place. The process of rehearsing would be preceded by my own study and interpreting, yet much of it was also left for testing and trying in the rehearsals, especially in terms of the concert realization of the pieces. This phase of the work with the canons would not differ much from any preparations for a choir concert, perhaps except for some open ends with the scores that I would continue to work with during the period of some first rehearsals.

### Work with the scores (notes and text, layout)

For rewriting the three canons from Kreek's manuscripts, I used the program Sibelius, which is available in the computers of the Academy of Music and Drama of the Gothenburg University. <sup>21</sup>

One of the first questions to arise at the writing process was which sources I was to use to make my own "edition". As we have two preserved manuscripts from Kreek, the draft and the fair copy, it would be possible to either rewrite one of them or combine both. I had partly also a third source which was a rewriting of the 25 last canons in the draft copy, made by hand by Mart Humal.

When doing my rewritings, I intended to include all Kreek's musical material together with any remarks to inform the reader. When comparing the draft copy with the fair copy, the first contains many details about every canon, these would often include – the date of composing the canon, the hymn title usually in Estonian and German, the number of the hymn in the Punschel chorale book<sup>22</sup>, the location and singer of the folk hymn, numbers of other canons written with the same hymn (but a different folk variant), author of the hymn and composer of the canon: C. Kreek. The fair copy, however, would only include the hymn numberings, folk hymn origins, date of composing, and the initials CK. In the initial stage of rewriting my efforts went to the musical and textual parts, however I would later add more details as seen in Kreek's fair copy – presenting all the details found in the draft copy would have made the scores overly complicated to read.

While rewriting the notes and musical layout of Kreek's canons was a relatively straightforward task, supplying text for them was much less so. Taking again a similar step as done during the process of selection with looking for themes of the hymns, I now had to trace the texts of the three canons. This task was made more complicated by the fact that the Lutheran hymns are a very international cultural phenomenon. As I mention above, the canons I work with have their original hymns coming from Estonian-Swedish peoples and therefore the tracing-back ending with the Swedish hymnbook. Kreek, however, wrote many of the canons in Estonian which meant that he was replacing the originally Swedish hymns

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> By originals I mean texts either by the Estonian-Swedish singer or translations by Kreek.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> While I knew how to do simple tasks with Sibelius, I did lack some necessary skills needed for rewriting and formatting the pieces. Therefore, it was thanks to Benjamin Kjell's teaching and contribution that the whole work got done.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> The chorale book by Johann Punschel was widely used in Estonia at the time.

with the Estonian ones (could be traced until Punschel), some texts in their meaning corresponding and some not with the originals. That gives us already two parallel textual contexts. The third parallel context comes out by the fact that Kreek himself actively traces the hymns back to the early German versions. That we see from him constantly providing German hymn titles and their composers at almost every canon in the draft copy. This fact leaves us with at least three parallel contexts opening up for different possibilities and interpretations when choosing texts for each canon.

In this crossroad of many possible threads I decided to take an artistic approach and start with making up my mind on which language(s) I would like to have each canon sung in at the concert. Initially, I had intended to present all of the canons in Swedish because I though this would reflect well the context of Kreek and give a small part of the deserved homage to the past Estonian-Swedes without whom the pieces could not come to existence in the first place.

To start with "Den signade dag", there was not much questioning before I decided to do it in Swedish – even the manuscript provides only the Swedish title without any Estonian or German text at all. For "Oh Jeesus" I also decided to take a Swedish text because the same chorale by Bach would be sung at the concert two times and hearing the same hymn in the same language would hopefully create a strong linking effect for the listener. The case with "Oh Jeesus" was different – the draft copy has an Estonian title and next to it the German title "Ach Gott, erhör' mein Seufzen und Wehklagen", referring to the chorale in the Punschel chorale book. Looking at the hymn indicated by the German title in the hymnbook did not, however, lead me to any Estonian text attached to it, neither did I find sources linking the German chorale to a Swedish text. At first, I thought that this means that the written in Estonian text was the only "vernacular" text for this melody and would be sung domestically by Estonians and Estonian-Swedes likewise. Taking a look at Kreek's collection of folk hymns, however, revealed that there was also an original Swedish text linked to a slightly different folk variant of the same hymn "I hoppet sig min frälsta själ förnöjer". 23 This left me with possibilities to take either a Swedish, Estonian or a German text – all can be seen as originals. Thinking artistically, I liked the idea of singing one canon in Estonian because it could give a good and necessary variation to the canon-set and also help depicting a "meeting point of cultures" – something personal that lies in the heart of the thesis in the first place. Estonian text it was to be!

For finding Swedish hymn texts for "Den signade dag" and "O huvud, blodigt, sårat" I decided to get a brief overview of the texts in different years' hymnbooks. My first idea was to look up the texts that Kreek would have heard the folk hymns sung with and possibly use these texts for the performance. Even if realizing the canons with the old Swedish texts had been an interesting experiment, I realized that it would also have been a problematic one. Taking into consideration that Kreek collected the Estonian-Swedish folk hymns before the outbreak of the Second World War, the hymnbook attached to long singing tradition could not be the new Swedish hymnbook issued in 1937. Using texts from the 1819 hymnbook or older would not have worked so well artistically, so I decided to use modern hymn texts instead. I decided to go after the same principle also with the Estonian "Kas sureb".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> W58 catalogue number written in manuscript.

All the three hymns have originally a relatively big number of verses so some selecting had to be done. Following the concert order of the pieces, "Kas sureb" would get five verses, "Den signade dag" and "O huvud" three. Whereas the texts for the Swedish hymns were easy to find in physical hymnbooks and on the internet, "Kas sureb" lacked digital sources at the first glance. Nevertheless, finding a small number of recordings of the folk hymn enabled me to write the verses down. Another possibility would have been to write to the Estonian Literary Museum to provide digital sources. When selecting verses for the Swedish canons, I had in mind the passion theme of the concert and to some extent the texts of other pieces sung. "Den signade dag", for instance, is liturgically sung at Christmas time, but when singing the verses 1, 7 and 9 only, a narrative is created that fits quite well the Lenten themes of death, the evening of life and hope. Not wanting to repeat the verses 1 and 2 of "O huvud" that would be sung together with J. S. Bach's setting of the chorale, I picked up the verses 4-6 that can be characterized by keywords such as: prayer, trust in God and remembrance of one's death. The five verses of "Kas sureb" depict poetically the death of Jesus, exhort the whole nature for mourning and express a trustful prayer about one's own death. So altogether, a mournful yet nuanced set of three canons that would be preceded by Kreek's Psalm of David – a solemn dramatic piece preparing the setting for the canons to follow.

Although fitting in text to polyphonic music is always a task of its own, I could be based quite much on the fair copy of the manuscript that have been later supplied by texts from the draft.<sup>24</sup> While checking the rewritings, I also had an intuitive approach to the task. In the end not many dilemmas arose in the process due to the short length of the pieces and the two canonic voices in each piece which do not leave too much room for interpretation.

Having done the main work with the scores and supplied the texts, the rehearsing with the choir could begin. However, many details, including the layout of the scores, were left to be discovered during the coming rehearsals and my own study. These to be covered in the next paragraphs.

## Rehearsing: rising questions of interpretation and performance, the process

It is a special feeling to hear a composition you have been working with being sung in real life for the first time – a bit like a child being born, I imagine. Like with a yet unborn child, you have done work, planning and have entered a relationship with the piece but to hear it for the first time is an event of its own. It felt also as if "doing the music" revealed quickly some of the weak points or mistakes in my preparation. These could be anything from formatting the scores to interpretation and planning of the performance.

One of the questions arising after having rehearsed the pieces for the first time was Kreek's excessive use of fermatas throughout all the three pieces and, indeed, in the whole collection of the 150. The first problem with the fermatas is that they are placed diversely in the different voices, therefore the prolonging of the notes does not happen simultaneously - this creates difficulties in performing and interpretation because the musical flow gets stopped constantly by the fermatas. Therefore, the problem needed to be examined and interpreted.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> "O huvud" was based on Humal's rewriting and draft manuscript.

Taking a closer look at the placing of fermatas, however, suggests that Kreek probably used them for purposes related rather to form than musical performance. A fermata is found at every end of a metrical section of the folk hymns, thus referring quite clearly to the Punschel chorale book – or any hymnbook, since the titles of the hymns are in almost all cases provided in two, sometimes three languages. So it become clear that the fermatas would most probably not be intended by the composer for performative use but rather for comparing the folk hymns to the "originals", to which fermatas belonged as very common elements. Overall, it would be much to claim to know the full intentions and reasons concerning Kreek working with fermatas (or any other details in the music), but there seems to be an obvious connection of the consistency of the fermatas to the hymnbooks of the time while a direct musical use proved to be almost impossible. As a result, I decided to still include the fermatas found in the manuscript (fair copy) as I wanted the edition to follow the style of modern urtext editions, thus including as much as possible original content from the sources.

Another interesting thing was to compare some differences in the draft and fair copy scripts. Even if it is not surprising that two manuscripts differ from each other in some minor details, all of these differences in their turn open up possibilities of interpretation as they show different ways of realizing things and give context to the composer's final decisions. As in the whole collection so also in the canon "Kas sureb", Kreek uses consistently slurs above grouped eight-notes and shorter note values. However, in bars 2 and 11 three groups of paired eight-notes are left without the usual slur. Checking the fair copy shows usual slurs also in the same bars, thus suggesting that consistent slurs must have been intended throughout the piece. Therefore, in my edition the missing slurs in the bars 2 and 11 have been added.

Much work had to be put into formatting the scores between the rehearsals, especially when placing in additional verses and some details found in the manuscripts. These would include – source and origin of the melody, date of composition, volume number of the work and indication of the voices to follow canonic imitation throughout the piece. Although both the details and layout of the scores would not play a major role in the rehearsing and concert process, I saw them as important factors that could influence the lifespan and spread of the scores – and thus the compositions – in the future.

The interpretation of the music continued with practical work at the rehearsals. I generally saw closing the interpretation stage with the scores as a precondition to allow detailed work to begin at the rehearsals – a common source of knowledge and inspiration which becomes even more crucial when making music in a group, such as a choir. Without a decent score the choir members would not have a form of common information and reference when studying and interpreting the work(s).

The further working process did not differ much from a regular working process of studying new music with a choir. Until the moment when due to the Coronavirus 19 related situation the normal rehearsing had to be stopped, we had got the chance to rehearse and sing through all the three canons. Some was done with singing in *legato*, finding breathing places for each voice, articulation of Estonian text in the "Kas sureb" and separate practice of some more difficult passages. I had also started with the process of trying to find the best character(s) for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Estonian, German, Swedish.

each piece by experimenting with different tempi and ways of "feeling the music". For instance, at the first rehearsal with "Kas sureb" we made an exercise of singing through the piece in two contrasting ways – first version in *legatissimo* and the second version with a "feeling of" 2/4 time signature, meaning that the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> beats of each bar be stressed while the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> beats are relaxed. The reason for doing this exercise was that I had begun to associate the piece both with tight long musical lines and on the other hand with a regular swing-like motion (the 2/4 feeling). Doing the exercise of bringing out the two "extremes" helped me to see how well these ideas work – in this case, I decided to keep both of these elements and "melt" them together into one characteristic. This would in its turn be a building stone forming the character of the piece. Analogical ways of trying and testing would be done with the two other canons in order to find the right character, the "unlocking key" of each piece. In addition, I would talk about the context layout of the pieces, introducing briefly also C. Kreek and the surrounding history.

Given the chance, I would continue rehearsing the pieces in the track that was begun. This would mean working with the pieces on aspects of intonation and dynamics, also rhythm. Provided that time allows it, I would underline the aspect of intonating by paying attention to the functions of voices and resolving different dissonances to their respective consonant sonorities. I would need to create a well-planned rehearsing schedule because working with intonation often is costly in terms of time and one needs to sense the fine line of the group's capabilities. Rhythm also falls under the category of finding a creating a common sense or feeling within the choir, because in a sense "the perfect" simultaneity can never be attained. Therefore, one must be realistic and not forget the importance of maintaining a positive atmosphere in the rehearsing process.

One of the last parts of interpreting and planning the pieces had to do with the way of presenting the canons at the concert. I had started to have thoughts about bringing out the folk hymns of the pieces already at an early stage of the whole work and had planned to try some things at the rehearsals. The idea was to not just sing each of the three canons *tutti* throughout all verses, but to vary the number of voices singing (or pronouncing text) at different verses. Another idea specifically with the "O huvud" was to try combining it with the Bach's chorale "O Haupt" that would have been sung at the beginning and end of the concert. I was playing the two pieces next to each other while replacing sections between the pieces and trying to find a way of alternating between the canon of Kreek and the chorale of Bach – a small "special effect" closing the "Kreek bouquet". The coming rehearsals would have hopefully selected out the ideas to be fruitful in practice.

### **Discussion**

### Looking back

In the beginning of the thesis the purpose was defined as to contribute drawing attention to some of the yet unpublished choir compositions of C. Kreek and generate knowledge about them. The method for reaching the purpose initially consisted of three stages – process of selecting pieces; study, interpretation and rehearsing; concert performance – however, due to changed circumstances caused by the COVID-19, the concert performance could unfortunately not take place. The new situation also meant that a few rehearsals prior to the planned concert had to be cancelled. Nevertheless, the biggest part of the work got done as planned and a number of occurred questions and dilemmas are presented and discussed in the thesis.

To look back, I think the method and plans made worked well and gave clear guidelines for the whole process. The "journey" progressed step by step and gave a lot of occasions for reflecting and thinking over my choices. Because I decided to approach the compositions in a broader sense than just "looking at the music", I think I managed to gather more relevant information about the pieces and the composer than if I had not done so (the 1<sup>st</sup> phase). Moving on to the more hands-on stage of working with the pieces (the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase), the previously collected knowledge and experiences, such as seeing the original manuscripts in the archive, gave me much freedom and space to experiment with interpretation and make informed decisions during the later stages of the work.

A negative side of the method of I chose is that it demands considerable time and effort from the researcher. For someone like me who has had but little experience with (artistic) research, the process demands patience and consistency to be able to continue approaching the goals step by step, whereas one step often needs to be accomplished before the next can be taken. A risk that I experienced with my approach was that it is easy to become meticulous about the details of the work – a good balance between details and the whole is needed, as when playing a piece.

Some of the questions arising during the work were: the context of the 75 unpublished canons among C. Kreek's other works, their relations with the respective folk hymns, the performative possibilities of the three selected canons in a concert program. Whereas the two first points have been briefly researched mainly by Estonian musicologists, the questions concerning interpretation and performing have not to my knowledge been touched by researchers before.

In the current process, the three canons "Den signade dag", "Kas sureb nii mu kõige armsam elu?" and "O huvud, blodigt, sårat" have indeed shown to offer many possibilities for interpretation. One of the interesting points concerns selecting texts for each piece — a variety of choices opens up because of the fact that the "original text" of the pieces can mean different things. For instance, Kreek's manuscripts do not contain full (or any) texts to the canons — the draft copy containing either one verse in Estonian, Swedish or none and the fair copy containing no texts at all written in by Kreek. Only this fact could raise some musicological uncertainties regarding Kreek's intentions regarding the texts. However, when

looking at the pieces in the context of their surroundings – the Estonian-Swedish folk hymns and in its turn, the original (often German) Lutheran hymns – the mission of tracing original texts becomes quite vague or at least needs clear defining. In this thesis my primary musical interest was to present the choir canons together with the Estonian-Swedish melodies and texts that were inspiring Cyrillus Kreek to compose these 75 pieces. Therefore, two of the canons I provided with hymn texts in Swedish and one with a text in Estonian.

A common element found in all the pieces of the collection is an unconventional use of fermatas. When first trying to perform the works according to the given fermatas, it became evident that musically they are very problematic to use because they are almost never written on the same vertical line, homophonically. Taking a closer look at several pieces, however, showed that Kreek writes quite consistently a fermata after each phrase – and because the pieces have a polyphonic structure, the fermatas end up vertically in slightly different places. I drew a conclusion that the fermatas are therefore not meant as guides for performance but as structural elements making it easier to compare the folk melodies with their corresponding hymnbook hymns.

### Looking ahead

During this research, several new questions arose that would need to be studied further. While some of them were identified by myself during my work process, others were lifted up by previous researches and can be found in the *Previous research* chapter.

There were two more general questions arising during my study were 1) C. Kreek's intentions for writing large collections of settings of hymns and folk hymns and 2) possible reasons for Kreek leaving out from the fair copy the 25 last canons in the draft. Even if these topics been touched by previous researches, the primary focus seems not to have been given to these questions. <sup>26</sup> When talking about the individual canons, 3) now 72 of them seem to not yet have been performed nor artistically researched. In addition to the mixed choir canons that have been in focus in this thesis, 4) the 271 Estonian-Swedish canons for 3-part female choir are also yet an undiscovered land.

Having done this somewhat specific work with a few of Kreek's pieces, one may ask – does it have any practical outcome for conductors and church musicians?

For the first, I hope that this work can encourage conductors, singers and even instrumentalists to dare look into music that because of different historical reasons has been forgotten or neglected. C. Kreek's 75 Estonian-Swedish choir canons is just one example of such music – there is much more to discover from Kreek but also from many other composers. A journey to the "unknown" has proved to be for me an interesting and developing one which I believe it will be for anyone deciding to do the same.

A part of the outcome of this work are the scores I made for my practical use and as far as my rights are concerned, these scores may be freely used for performances. <sup>27</sup> I hope that with the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Anu Kõlar writes in her dissertation about Kreek's possible motives for writing collections based on folk hymns (Anu Kõlar, "Cyrillus Kreek ja eesti muusikaelu" PhD diss., Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, 2010, 168-172.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Note that the time of writing, Cyrillus Kreek's works are still protected with the copyright law.

help of the scores, these "new" works of Kreek can become a part of future concert programs and recordings. As Kreek is a relatively well-known composer in international choir circles, singing some of his unpublished works could give a special flavour to any concert or recording.

Another possibility that Kreek's hymn-based works open is to use different texts. Because Lutheran hymns are often very international, it should not be a problem to switch my given texts in Swedish or Estonian with the same hymn text in another language. If the hymn melodies are identical (or almost so), then the hymn texts should also have the same syllabic metres. This makes replacing texts to local ones fairly simple. As a result, I believe that the canons could work well either as concert or liturgical music.

I hope that the collection of 150 choir canons by Cyrillus Kreek will be soon taken into bigger scale research, both musicologically and artistically. However, the fact that music is not researched or published does not mean that it cannot or should not be performed. May we, musicians, be always encouraged to discover the covered and make gifts of music to the world at our best!

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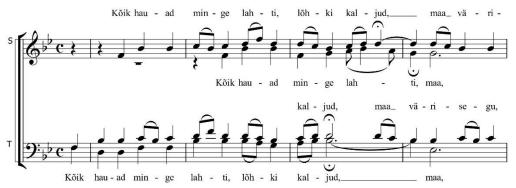
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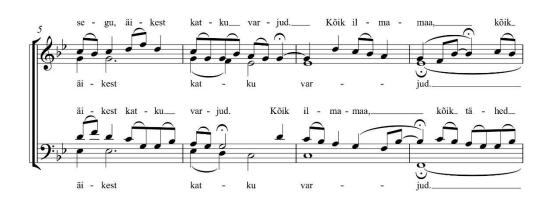
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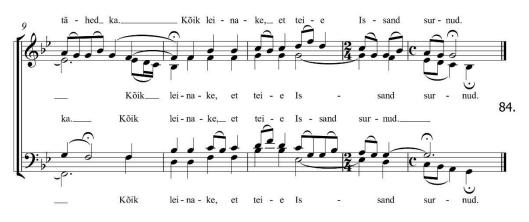
# Attachment 1 – Score "Kas sureb nii mu kõige armsam elu?"

## Kas sureb nii mu kõige armsam elu?







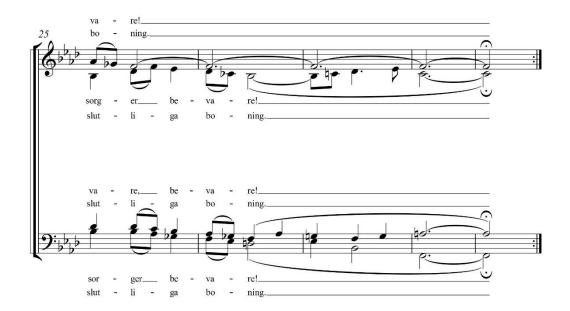


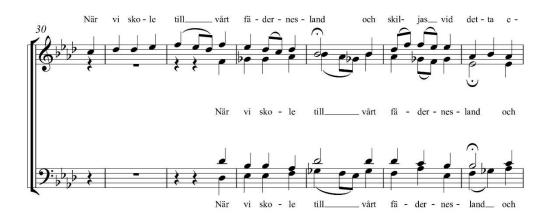
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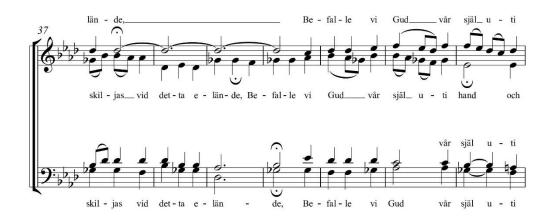
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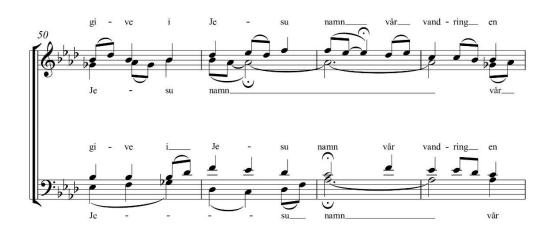














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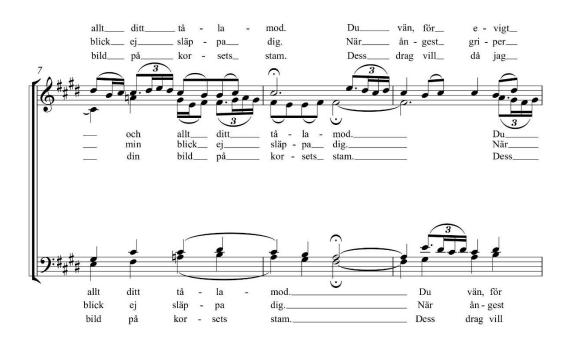
# Attachment 3 – Score "O huvud, blodigt, sårat"

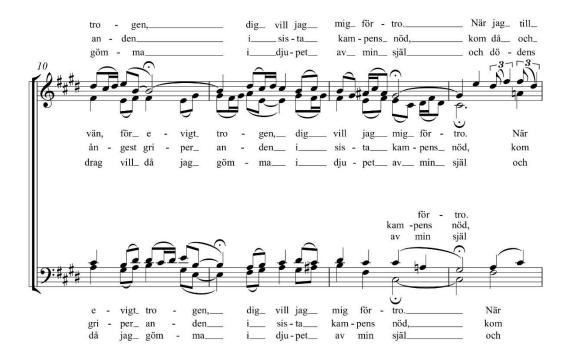
### O huvud, blodigt, sårat

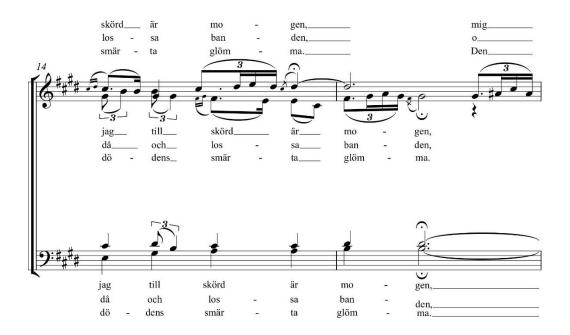
Maria Kornblom f. Nee, Vormsi (Ormsö) Sv. Ps. 144 Cyrillus Kreek 6.6.1955

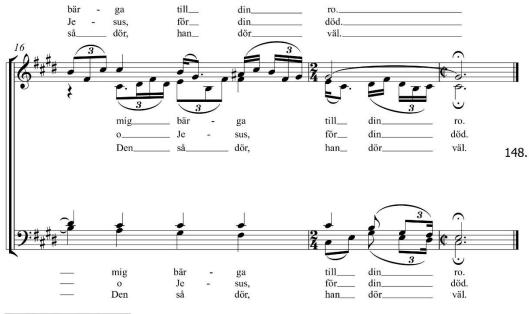












Transcription from manuscript by Arno Humal

# Attachment 4 – Harmonium recordings of the canons

Audio 1: "Kas sureb nii mu kõige armsam elu?", MP3 format.

Audio 2: "Den signade dag som vi nu här se", MP3 format.

Audio 3: "O huvud, blodigt, sårat" ("Oh Jeesus, sinu valu"), MP3 format.