NAÏVE ART AND ITS REFLECTION IN SWEDISH MUSIC

by

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NAÏVE ART AND ITS REFLECTION IN SWEDISH MUSIC

Abstract

by

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There has long been a connection made between music and visual art movements of around the turn of the twentieth century. Naïve art, as exemplified by Henri Rousseau, has been virtually lost in such artistic comparisons. Similarly lost in canonic explorations of art in conjunction with music is the work of twentieth century Swedish composers. The simplicity and childish depictions of the world found in the work of Naïve visual artists in both France and Sweden can be seen in musical form in compositions by Swedish composers such as Hugo Alfvén and Wilhelm Stenhammar. This paper examines in detail the way music by Swedish composers working at the beginning of the twentieth century reflects the concepts of Naïve art.
NAÏVE ART AND ITS REFLECTION IN SWEDISH MUSIC
by Adam David Corzatt

Introduction

Music from the turn of the twentieth century has long been discussed as it relates to the most influential styles of visual art. Music surveys typically discuss the Impressionistic music of Debussy and Satie in relation to Monet, Expressionism in Schoenberg’s early works as connected to the work of Kandinsky, and the pointillistic style used by Seurat depicted musically in the dodecaphonic works of Anton Webern. What is frequently neglected from many studies of early twentieth century music is the connection between Naïve art and music.¹ While vast change and advancement seemed to be the vogue for many artistic endeavors, Naïve artists were looking backward, not in a historical context, such as to the time of the Greeks, or the grandiose splendour of the eighteenth century, but back to a time of imagined childish simplicity. Naïve artists looked to a time of happiness and fulfillment such as can be found in the carefree lives of children. Naïveté in painting was not a way to launch the art world into the future, but rather a nostalgic look at nature and rural settings via the mind’s eye of a youthful individual merely for self contentment.

No country better represents the ideals of Naïve art in its music than Sweden. Around the turn of the twentieth century we see movements in art which are paralleled in music in countries such as France, which embraced Impressionism, followed by German Expressionism, and eventually Italy, which bent to the winds of change with the Futurist composers and their intonarumori. These are arguably the three most important and

¹ For example, neither Donald Grout’s A History of Western Music, nor Robert Morgan’s Twentieth-Century Music make any mention of either Naïvism or the premiere proponents of the style. Similarly lacking from both of these texts is any significant discussion of music in Sweden.
influential countries in the history of western music and they all came under the influence of advancements in visual arts. In Sweden, however, we see a different path taken from the rest of Europe. In a country where most of the earlier art and musicians had been transplanted mainly from German speaking lands, the draw was not simply to change what had come before, but rather to create a unique national style in both visual art and music.

Twentieth-century Swedish composers had one iconic figure to look to from the earlier years of Swedish composition. Franz Berwald (1796-1868), perhaps the most influential early nineteenth-century composer of Swedish descent, set the stage for the influence of the Naïve art movement on music in the early years of the twentieth century. Berwald’s fourth symphony (*Sinfonie Naïve*) from 1845, which will be discussed in detail below, created the first major stepping stone for the twentieth-century composers’ concept of “Naïve” music. It was the *Naïve Symphony* that Swedish composers looked to directly for their concept of what Swedish music should be.

While the Swedish artistic scene was searching for a unique identity, the whole of Sweden was feeling the loss of Norway from its territories in 1905 as a major blow to the superiority of the Swedish Kingdom. As Ingvar Andersson points out in his history of Sweden, “Psychologically the effect was similar to that produced by the loss of Finland a hundred years earlier: the Swedes felt that they must now achieve twice as much as before within their own frontiers.”\(^2\) This feeling was the catalyst for a movement of nationalism in both the productivity of general labor as well as artistic inspiration. Economically, a movement of nationalism in general labor meant Sweden had to produce more goods for national export. In art finding a national identity meant developing a new style that could be identifiable as distinctly Swedish. In creating a national musical identity, the Swedes looked

both to the few great Swedish composers of the nineteenth century, as well as to their natural surroundings and traditional folk songs to create music that would uniquely represent the Swedish national identity. It is this use of nature as inspiration, combined with the incorporation of folk songs and melodic and harmonic simplicity that links the world of Swedish music with that of the Naïve painters.

**Primitivism vs. Naïvism**

Prior to delving into the specifics of Naïve art and its reflection in music, a brief discussion of the movement’s connection to Primitivism is necessary. As is frequently discussed in surveys of both art history and music history, Primitivism was an artistic movement embraced by painters such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Gauguin, and Henri Matisse around the turn of the twentieth-century.³

Similarly, the premiere example of Naïve art is found in the work of Henri Rousseau (1844-1910). Considered the originator of Naïve visual art, Rousseau was an untrained painter whose simple artistic style was both appreciated and mocked by the professional artists with whom he spent so much time. Since Rousseau was the first artist to be considered a “Naivist,” and because within the style of Naïvim Rousseau created a vast array of varying works his art will serve as the starting point for our discussion of what makes a work of art “Naïve.” As we will discuss later, Rousseau’s unintentional development of the Naïve style of art was embraced by other young painters, and even appreciated by some of the most prominent professional painters of his own time such as Pablo Picasso. Also, while Rousseau was certainly the one to develop a style of Naïve visual art in the last decades of the nineteenth-century, Franz Berwald had already created a style of Naïve musical art in

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Sweden nearly four decades prior. These two artists’ concepts of what makes art “Naïve” are surprisingly similar, and it is easily discerned what an early twentieth-century Swedish composer would have seen as stylistic inspiration in both the music of Berwald, and the works of contemporary Naïve visual artists.

The question arises, then, as to what exactly Primitivism means in terms of both visual and musical art. In the case of the above mentioned artists, Primitivism is a style of art that shows direct influence and inspiration from aboriginal tribes, folk art and the like.⁴ For Paul Gauguin, for example, this meant simply painting a group of native Polynesians in his own post-Impressionist style. (Figure 1) The artists most frequently discussed as advocates of primitivism were all professional artists with extensive training, sometimes with a firmly established reputation prior to delving into primitivism (as in the case of Picasso, for example).

In La Orana Maria (Figure 1), Paul Gauguin uses bright colors and Polynesian cultural symbols to create an image that represents the lives of natives. Gauguin painted the leaves of the palm tree in minute detail, and even made sure to accurately depict the toes on each person’s feet. It also seems as though Gauguin is trying to show daily native life by including a smiling mother with her child, and even what appears to be a table of food in the lower left corner of the painting.

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The concept of Primitivism in art should not, however, be confused with the primitive itself. Whereas Primitivism is specifically an artistic style embraced by educated artists around the turn of the twentieth century, the primitive itself was in fact the source of the inspiration for these artists. Whether it be Polynesian tribes or African creatures, the Primitivist captured the elements of these places and cultures and depicted in whatever style

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5 Goldwater, 76.
6 Rhodes, 8.
that artist chose to work. Picasso, for example had a more Cubist bent to his Primitivist works than did Gauguin, who worked in a more Post-Impressionist style. Whatever the approach, it was more the subject of the artwork rather than style of composition which deemed it a work of Primitivism.

It is the confusion of the primitive with Primitivism which has caused difficulty in placing the work of the Naïve artists in art history. As an artistic style, Naïve art has been considered a sub-category of Primitivism by many authors on the subject. Perhaps the most appropriate alternative name for Naïve artists is “Modern Primitives,” referring to the fact that the subject of Naïve artists was usually one of modern everyday experience in Europe, rather than the tribes of Africa or native Polynesians, for example. Also, in being considered “Primitives” – rather than artists of “Primitivism” – the designation is being made that these painters have more stylistic similarities to aboriginal tribesmen than to the professionally trained artists of Primitivism.

As Robert Goldwater points out, it is an extremely negative thing to look at a work of art and say that any child could have been the artist. However, this is an observation which is frequently made in reference to Naïve artists in particular. To consider this perspective on a work of art, the viewer must consider the possibility that the artist intentionally

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7 Colin Rhodes, Robert Goldwater, and Susan Hiller all entertain the idea that Naïve art is a form of Primitivism.
8 Goldwater, 178. Another description is “psychological primitivism.” Naïve art has even been considered a form of folk art.
9 This notion can be confused by the “Jungle” paintings of Rousseau which will be discussed in detail later. However, even these scenes of seemingly exotic and foreign subjects can be considered modern everyday experiences, as Rousseau painted these works with the exhibits of the hot houses of the Paris Exhibition Universelle as his source of inspiration, supplemented by his imagination.
10 Goldwater, xix.
11 While this type of comment merely reflects derogatory ideas that critics used to describe the simple work of Rousseau they did not appreciate, it is the work of Paul Klee which would be more fitting of such as comment as his work is actually inspired by the work of children. However, since Klee’s works were only inspired by the art of children, the element of simple, carefree imagination found in Naïve art is distinctly lacking. Rather, Klee’s works have a far less realistic quality to them than anything painted by Rousseau or other Naïve artists.
incorporated both spontaneity of inspiration and simplicity of technique, both of which have come to be taken for granted. In the works of more technically refined painters, it has come to be assumed that the artist will apply the most extravagant of his abilities to create a work that will impress and inspire awe in the audience.

In terms of stylistic qualities, Rousseau’s lack of technical skills not only hampered his ability to create realistic works as he wanted, but also inspired a specific style of art which would come to be admired and adopted by future generations of painters. The reference to being as though a child could have painted the work is one that comes to be appreciated and accepted as more of a positive quality than negative. The lack of technical ability has not kept Rousseau from being deemed a “trained craftsman of delicate sensibility,”12 but it is important to note that it was not because of any specific training in painting that Rousseau had (as he had none) that resulted in his style of composition. As Goldwater remarks, “having reached the limit of his ability, Rousseau was able, as a result of an innate artistic sense and unremitting work, to perfect a means of rendering which, because of this very perfection, we now take to have completely suited his purpose.”13 This means of rendering – the purity of line, exaggerated detail, modern subject, and overall result resembling the work of a child – is the very definition of what makes Naïve art. It is this definition that will be considered in the following examination of both Naïve visual art and its reflection in Swedish music.

12 J.J. Sweeney quoted in Goldwater, 186.
13 Goldwater, 187ff.
Naïve Visual Art

To understand the correlation between Naïveté in visual art and music, we must first explore the history of Naïve painting. Art historians generally place the beginning of Naïve painting in France with the amateur painter Henri Rousseau (1848-1910). Rousseau was an educated man, though he was not formally trained in the arts, musical or visual. He worked for the Paris toll-service, spending long hours sitting at the Paris city gates with nothing in particular to occupy his time. Perhaps it was the inactivity of his job that drew Rousseau to painting, or perhaps it was simply an ambition that he finally decided to realize; whatever the reason, Rousseau began painting sometime around 1880. Even his earliest works, such as A Carnival Evening (1886), showed a fondness for the simplicity and beauty of the outdoors. (Figure 2)

In this image, we see two figures, presumably Pierrot and Columbine, strolling through the woods on an autumn evening. The full moon, slightly clouded sky, and leafless trees create a mild air of darkness and gloominess, but because of the clown figure and his date, one cannot help but see past the gloom. Rousseau’s choice of title for the work, A Carnival Evening, does little to alleviate any feeling of darkness projected by the majority of the image.

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Beginning in 1884, Rousseau worked part-time in Paris as a copyist for the Louvre. At this point he began taking his art very seriously and realized that simply drawing and

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painting the everyday could not satisfy art critics, not to mention the ever critical public. Thus he needed to explore more exotic means of expression, and turned to preexistent images, as did many subsequent artists who painted in a similar style. Rousseau considered his own art to be realistic and representative of scenes from the outside world, so it may seem odd for him to have painted jungle scenes which he surely never saw in his lifetime, given that he never left France. Though these scenes may be recreations of ready made designs such as prints in travel magazines or even a collection of illustrations of animals in the zoo, it can be said that these pre-made pictures were likely little more than visual aides. Rousseau had been inspired by his trip to the hot houses of the Exposition Universelle in 1889; he likely drew upon this direct contact with foreign vegetation in creating his jungle scenes. Thus, what may seem to be a depiction of vast exoticism is actually a representation of what was to be found in Paris—mixed with a bit of artistic imagination.

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19 le Pichon, 139.
20 a.k.a. Green houses
More common than imagined jungle scenes, the majority of Naïve painters who followed Rousseau depicted their own natural surroundings and things that they observed in everyday life. Frequently Rousseau would depict such natural surroundings, although his most popular works today are the jungle scenes, such as *In a Tropical Forest: Struggle Between Tiger and Bull* (1908-09), and *Jungle: Tiger Attacking a Buffalo* (1908). (Figure 3)

In the above image, we see what Rousseau imagined to be a dense forest with a ferocious tiger taking down a buffalo by the neck. Unlike in the Gauguin painting (Figure 1),

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Figure 3
Henri Rousseau: *Jungle: Tiger Attacking a Buffalo* (1908)
The Cleveland Museum of Art, gift of Hanna Fund\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21} Shattuck, *Henri Rousseau*, 213.
where the bushes in the background appear as mere green balls of fluff, Rousseau paints every individual leaf on every individual plant. Also included in the foliage Rousseau portrayed, numerous bunches of bananas can be seen growing alongside a few oranges, a few of which have fallen from the trees to lie on the ground in front of the tiger and buffalo. For an amateur painter who had never traveled out of France, the elements Rousseau included in his jungle scene are almost convincing enough to make the viewer think he had actually witnessed the violent sight.

Despite his lack of formal training, Rousseau painted a number of portraits, including a self-portrait titled *Myself, Portrait-Landscape* (1890) which, aside from showing a rather cartoonish image of the painter, also includes a beautiful and detailed backdrop of a Paris evening along the Seine river. (Figure 4) The images included in the portrait may not be everyday sights in Paris, but they are certainly all aspects of life in the cosmopolitan city. For example, the hot-air balloon in the upper right corner or the large ship with international flags may not be everyday sights in Paris, but likely would have been seen on occasion. As with the jungle scene, Rousseau pays close attention to the details of the tree to the right of the image, which contrasts the plants on the other side of the painting which appear to be nothing more than smudges of color. The perspective of the painting is also somewhat askew, as the image of Rousseau himself seems to be much too large for the surrounding setting, especially given the relative size of the couple walking along the rive bank to the left of the picture. It is also possible to see how art critics would have found problems with Rousseau’s portraits, as the hand holding the palette appears to be bent in an unnatural fashion to display the palette more clearly.
No matter the subject of his painting, Rousseau never missed a chance to incorporate the natural world into the scene, even when there was really no call for it. For example: in *Portrait of Pierre Loti* (ca. 1891) the background includes symbols of both the countryside in the form of trees, and the city in the form of smokestacks. Such a combination of elements is rarely featured by painters of the period with the exception of Seurat and Cézanne.\(^\text{22}\) (Figure 5) As with the other images we’ve seen by Rousseau, every leaf on the tree is depicted in minute detail. The simple smoke stacks in the background show the hustle-and-bustle of city life, while the calm cloudy sky and the cat sitting in the foreground create an image of serenity. Again, Rousseau’s depiction of the subject’s hand is not terribly realistic, but more closely resembles the stiffness of a mannequin.

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\(^\text{22}\) Ibid, 112.
\(^\text{23}\) Ireson, 26.
\(^\text{24}\) Alley, 60.
Amateur though he may have been, Henri Rousseau did not keep his artwork to himself. Beginning in 1885, Rousseau exhibited his artwork at the Salon of the Société des Artistes Indépendants every year until his death in 1910. As expected from a member of such a group of artists Rousseau viewed himself as an independent, quasi-professional painter – and one of equal footing with the other artists of the exhibition – rather than as a mere Sunday-painter. Rousseau had joined a group of artists that included Georges Seurat, Odilon Redon, and many unknowns like Rousseau. After a few years, Paul Cézanne, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul Gauguin, and Vincent Van Gogh joined the group. Each of these artists painted in very different styles, and yet each made a living as a professional artist. Certainly, Rousseau had the desire to live as an artist – evidenced by his retirement from the post at the city gates in 1893 at the age of forty-nine – yet he retained his own personal style of painting, not showing influence from the more successful artists with whom he spent time.

Prior to his retirement and full-time dedication to art, Rousseau’s works had received rather positive public accolade. Between 1886 and 1891, Rousseau very carefully collected any articles that discussed his work. In 1891, however, he received his first negative review, which read, in part, “Monsieur Rousseau paints with his feet with his eyes closed.” Modest interest in his art continued until 1894, when the real cruelty of the art critics began, advising “the scoffing public” to go see the exhibition of Rousseau’s work if they wanted a good

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The exceptions are the 1899 and 1900 Exhibitions, as Rousseau was busy working on his play *The Revenge of a Russian Orphan*, as well as working to enter a competition of decorative art.
26 Alley, 7.
This is one of many derogatory terms used by critics to describe amateur painters striving to be considered at the same level as the professional artists.
28 Ibid, 14.
laugh. Rousseau was called a pre-primitive, referred to as the exhibition’s annual aberration, and even criticized for such things as painting hands without thumbs. The criticism became so insulting that members of the Société des Artistes Indépendants considered dropping Rousseau from the exhibition, but “Le Douannier” (as Rousseau was affectionately known) was defended by Toulouse-Lautrec, allowing Rousseau to retain his place in the show until his death in 1910. Thus, at a time when the public did not look favorably upon his art, and the meager pension from his retirement could not sustain even a simple life, Rousseau had to turn to other means to supplement his income. Rousseau thus returned to teaching music and art with an increased zeal, an activity that had previously been little more than a paying hobby.

None of Rousseau’s students ever became famous painters, but his style of art had a decidedly strong impact on the art world. In his desperation for money, Rousseau would at times sell his paintings for far less than they could possibly have been worth, making his art quite accessible to the world outside of the attendees of the Indépendants’ Exhibitions. Aside from the artists of the Société, subsequent generations of painters were deeply moved by the work of Rousseau. Pablo Picasso purchased several of Rousseau’s paintings and later donated them to the Louvre. Vasily Kandinsky saluted him in 1912 in Der Blaue Reiter as the pioneer of ‘a great new Realism’ based on a simplification, and the Surrealists saw his work, especially the jungle paintings, as convincing examples of non-rational inspiration.

Rousseau’s influence in art extended beyond the mainland in Europe, finding its way into the work of several important Swedish painters who made their artistic debuts with

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29 Ibid, 14.
31 Shattuck, Henri Rousseau, 14.
Naïveté in the 1920’s. Foremost among the young Swedish Naïvists was Hilding Linnqvist (1891-1984), a painter who initially attended the Stockholm School of Technology for two years before being accepted to the College of Art in 1910. The education provided by the school was a disappointment, culminating in a 1912 protest signed by more than half of the student population. However, in the brief time Linnqvist spent at the art school he cultivated strong relationships with Axel Nilsson (1889-1981), Fritiof Schüldt (1891-1978) and Alf Munthe (1892-1971), all of whom would later become known for their Naïve paintings.33 After the 1912 protest, this group set out on their own, renting a studio together in which they could work. As a collective, these young men were influenced by the works of Munch, Renoir, Cézanne, and in a specifically Swedish realm, Ernst Josephson (1857-1906), the last of whom had a particular impact on the burgeoning Naïvists.

Josephson is frequently credited with having an early influence over much of the history of twentieth century Swedish art, but it was specifically the works from the time surrounding his 1888 mental illness which seem to have generated the influence for the Swedish Naïvists of the 1920’s.34 After a brief bout with syphilis in 1876, followed by a decade of declining popularity resulting in a life of near poverty, Josephson seems to have been through more than he could handle. In October of 1888, he spontaneously decided to walk more than thirty-six miles to visit his cousin in Upsala. Upon Josephson’s arrival his cousin decided to call a doctor from the local mental institution. Josephson remained in the asylum for the duration of the winter, taking this time of relaxation and recuperation to work

34 It is also interesting to note that, in much the same way as Rousseau, Josephson frequently copied old masters at the art museum in Stockholm, which apparently improved his technique. If Josephson acquired such good technical ability from this exercise, why is it that Rousseau would retain his Naïveté and childlike abilities from the same exercise? (Mereth Lindgren et al., A History of Swedish Art (Uddevalla: Bohusläningens Boktryckeri AB, 1987), 203.)
on his drawing. (Figure 7) It was these drawings that show a reversion to childish simplicity that attracted the interests of the Naïvists, easily seen when compared to the detailed cowboy themed works from earlier in Josephson’s career. (Figure 6)

As can be seen in Josephson’s *Spanische Schmiedegesellen* (1881), the artist had a keen interest in cowboys and the Wild West. The rugged qualities of the three cowboys are depicted in amazing detail, from the muscled arms to the dirt on the face of the man on the right. Josephson managed to include many seemingly trivial details in the painting as well, such as the twine holding up the pants for the central figure, and the pair of pliers in the same character’s hands. When Josephson turned to sketching in his days of mental illness, his artistic style turned away from cowboys toward things slightly more elegant, if simply depicted. The woman in the sketch is fairly lacking in facial detail, aside from a mark on her chin, and is even missing the left hand which is supposedly holding up the small book.

![Figure 6](image)

Ernst Josephson: *Spanische Schmiedegesellen* (1881)
National Museum in Stockholm

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35 Lindgren, 183.
Perhaps because of his formal education, Linnqvist’s works show a more articulate use of detail than that of Rousseau, fit into a significantly smaller space. While many of Rousseau’s works, particularly the jungle scenes, can stand as high as six feet with a width to match, Linnqvist’s paintings are typically only a fraction of that size, easily being small enough for display on a fireplace mantle. The simplicity of Linnqvist’s paintings is clear to see, as in the case of what is perhaps his most well known work, *Sjukhusalen*, from 1920. (Figure 8) This hospital scene may contain numerous details—nurses, doctors and even a grandfather clock in the background—but the specifics of each detail are very simply depicted. Particularly noticeable are the indistinct features of the central bald doctor, as well

as the fairly mechanical looking movement of the nurse holding the wash bowl. The perspective of the painting is slightly askew, as the nurse in the background seems to be much smaller than she should be given the size of the beds and the grandfather clock on the back wall. It seems, though, that perspective should have been something more easily correctly depicted, as the three dimensional aspects of the room as it fades into the background are accurately portrayed.

Figure 8
Hilding Linnqvist: *Sjukhusalen* (1920)
Moderna Museet, Malmö

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It is also important to note a distinct resemblance between the work of Linnqvist and Rousseau. A comparison of one work from each artist will show the similarities between Naïveté in Sweden and the originator of Naïve art in France. The first image (Figure 9) is a work of Henri Rousseau from 1908. In this painting, *View of Malakoff*, we see a street scene with plain square buildings, nearly formless citizens, power lines, and a street lamp. All of these are certainly things that would be seen in everyday life and, as is common with Rousseau, the depiction of modern technology is emphasized by the use of strongly contrasting black and white for the poles holding the power lines. Linnqvist’s work *Boulevard Edgar Quinet* from 1921 (Figure 10) is a depiction of a Paris Metro station which shows not only the same blocky buildings and formless individuals, but also a similarly strong interest in modern technology. Central in this painting is the car (depicted in profile in the middle of the painting) as well as the Metro station, while the more old-fashioned form of travel (the horse drawn trolley) is heading out of the scene as if making a statement about the future of the world. The most important aspect of this painting, however, is that Linnqvist is depicting a scene of everyday life in Paris, including all of the most important aspects of modern invention.
Figure 9
Henri Rousseau: *View of Malakoff* (1908)
Private Collection, Switzerland\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38} Shattuck, *Henri Rousseau*, 207.
We have seen that the works that influenced Naïve artists in Sweden were those of immense complexity, as in the work of Renoir and Munch, as well as childish simplicity, as in the drawings of Josephson. From these works, Swedish Naïve painters combined the childish depictions of people and objects with the possible complexity of a single scene to create a unique style of Naïveté. The complex incorporation of numerous, simply depicted objects within a single painting is essential to a truly Naïve painting. It is, after all, complexity in art that helps to keep the viewer interested.

39 Blomberg, Plate 15.
Aspects of Naïve Art

We can ultimately delineate two principle qualities of Naïve art in Sweden that encompass the entire genre of painting. First is the influence of daily life, and the depiction of the natural world surrounding the artists. This concept of the natural world can itself be divided into two different elements. First is the depiction of nature itself, from the trees, mountains, streams, etc. one may see while hiking, to the more twentieth century view of the cosmopolitan “jungle” of a metropolitan area. While this depiction of nature is easy to distinguish in visual art, in music the concept can be easily confused with the other element of the natural world, the depiction of the pastoral scene. Most easily recognized in the Sixth Symphony of Beethoven, the concept of the pastoral is less about physical elements of nature and more about the concept of an idealized country life. Whether purely fictional, as in Mozart’s setting of Metasasio’s Il re pastore, or more directly based on country life as in Hugo Alfvén’s Midsommarvaka (as will be seen later), the depiction of a pastoral country life was another element found regularly in Naïve art.

The other important aspect of Naïve art is the incorporation of simplicity within the work. Specifically, this type of simplicity means that when drawing a portrait, for example, it need not have a three dimensional photographic accuracy to it, while still retaining an easily identifiable image. Similarly, a house in the distance may be nothing more spectacular than a square with simple nondescript windows and doors – enough to show that it is indeed a house, but not so much detail that the viewer can distinguish exactly which house in the neighborhood it is. This is easily seen in the background buildings in Rousseau’s View of Malakoff. (Figure 9) Conversely, while each element within a Naïve painting may be simply depicted in near cartoon-like fashion, the entire work combines numerous simple pieces to
create a larger, more complex scene. The self portrait of Rousseau, for example, contains several simple elements: the image of Rousseau, the boat, the river and Paris in the distance. (Figure 4) Each taken separately would seem to be nothing more than amateur sketching. When combined, however, all of these simple elements combine to create a work that is easily as complex as a painting by Renoir, Seurat, Munch or any other popular painter.

**Naïve Art Portrayed in Music**

With the most important aspects of Naïve painting laid out, we can consider how these elements can be portrayed in music. The use of nature as a muse or inspiration for a musical work is not unusual; we have examples from Continental composers, such as Felix Mendelssohn’s *Hebrides Overture*, Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony*, or Richard Strauss’ *Alpine Symphony*. Some Swedish composers of the twentieth century, however, used nature as a source of inspiration not because of some mythical tale that surrounds the area, as with Mendelssohn, but because it was a way of promoting a love of their homeland which had fallen on adverse times, as mentioned earlier. We shall later see that the depiction of nature in music can be nothing more than to describe in sounds the straightforward beauty of flowers, or as complex as a pastoral summer’s evening. As with all of Naïveté, the beauty of nature was more than enough to inspire a work of art.

The second element of Naïvism—simplicity—may lead to some difficulty when applied to music. After all, how can one describe a thirty minute work for full symphony orchestra as “simple?” In this case, there are two specific ways in which a twentieth century composer can be simplistic. The first is a matter of relativity – how a given work compares with other styles of contemporaneous composition – which, as we shall see later, manifests
itself in the symphonic work of Wilhelm Stenhammar. For a composer known to write in a style more like the German symphonists of the late nineteenth century, it seems odd that, in 1903, Stenhammar would write his first symphony in a manner more reflective of Haydn’s *Horn Signal Symphony* than a Mahler symphony or something else more current. This resemblance to late eighteenth-century music is particularly interesting since this reversion to an earlier style of composition is done without intentionally trying to create a Haydn-esque work as did Prokofiev in his “Classical” Symphony. This first venture into symphonic writing turned out to not be a fluke, as Stenhammar’s second symphony retains a similar level of simplicity. In this way it breaks down to the relativity of what can be thought of as simple, and must be considered on individual cases within each specific composer’s output. For a composer of fairly complex late Romantic music to turn to a smaller scaled, less harmonically complex style of composition is certainly one way to incorporate the simplicity of Naïveté into their work.

In spite of how similar this shift may seem to the change to neo-classicism in Stravinsky’s works, these Swedish works are not actually considered “neo-classical,” but rather a specific category called “the 1890s style” was created by mid-twentieth century musicologists to describe the works of Stenhammar and Wilhelm Peterson-Berger. These works of Stenhammar merely represent a phase in Swedish orchestral composition when there was a return to an early Romantic style of composition, such as the late style of Haydn or the early style of Mendelssohn. “Neo-classicism” itself, however, is another approach a composer can employ to write simplistically in a way representative of Naïveté. Whereas

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40 Stenhammar’s Concert Overture *Excelsior!* *op. 13*, for example, could easily be mistaken as a tone poem of Richard Strauss.
with French neo-classical works there remains a sense of melody, and traditional structural elements, in Sweden we see a style of neo-classicism that reflects Franz Berwald’s *Naïve Symphony* in the distinct lack of a clear melodic line, as well as the moderate change in the use of classic forms. Composers known in Sweden for writing in the neo-classical style include Lars-Erik Larsson (1908-1986), Gunnar de Frumerie (1908-1987) and Dag Wiren (1905-1986), the latter of whom I will explore in more detail later.  

**Franz Berwald**

The depiction and incorporation of Naïveté in Swedish art music actually begins quite some time before Rousseau began his work in painting. Quite fittingly, it was the man who is considered the father of Swedish composition, Franz Berwald, who first created an association between Naïveté and musical expression. Unlike Rousseau who later in life decided to dedicate himself to a life of art, Berwald was born into a musical life. Considered by some to be a child prodigy, Berwald received formal education in little other than music, and began playing in the Stockholm court orchestra at age sixteen. Yet the life of a court musician was not the life Berwald sought, and therefore in 1829 he was granted a stipend to study in Berlin. Berwald spent a considerable amount of time and effort in Berlin working on new compositions and studying the German compositional style. After a few years of only middling success with music composition in the German capital, he had to turn to other means of producing income. In October 1835, Berwald founded the Orthopedic Institute of

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42 The difficulty with calling this music “neo-classical” is that Sweden did not really have a classical musical period from which twentieth century composers could derive direct influence. Certainly it is possible that they could use the classical periods of other countries as influence, as was certainly the case with the more well known French composers of neo-classical music.

Berlin, which prospered far beyond his expectations. Historically speaking, for a largely uneducated musician to be such a successful businessman is a rarity, yet Berwald seems to have mastered the financial realm in a way that composers such as Beethoven and Schubert could only dream. The success of the Orthopedic Institute liberated Berwald from the financial strains felt by so many other composers of the time so that he was free to write music in a manner that was more in line with his personal tastes rather than simply to appeal to the critical public.

In March of 1841, Berwald moved to Vienna for a year, hoping to have his music performed in what was then the musical capital of Europe. It was not until the very end of his time in Austria that Berwald’s music was heard, and with a positive reception. A March 1842 performance of the *Reminiscences of the Norwegian Alps* (1842) met with a very favorable response which would have likely had a bittersweet impact on Berwald. While it is always good that a composer’s work is enjoyed by the public, the *Reminiscences* were not written in a typical Berwald style, implying that at least for a time Berwald was perhaps attempting merely to please the public rather than hold true to his artistic ideals. Listeners typically found no melody in Berwald’s music, and often “his music was considered odd and painfully dissonant.” The *Reminiscences*, however, makes use not only of clear melodies and fairly traditional harmonies, but also incorporates genuine Scandinavian folk tunes – an unusual approach in Berwald’s compositions.

Spurred on by his eventual success in Vienna, Berwald returned home to Stockholm to begin an intense period of composition. Between 1842 in Vienna and 1845 in Stockholm, Berwald composed all five of his large-scale Romantic-style symphonies (one of which has

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44 Ibid., 64.
unfortunately been lost in the intervening century and a half.\textsuperscript{46} Each symphony was given a semi-programmatic title in addition to its number and key designation: the first symphony is the \textit{Sinfonie Sérieuse}, in the key of G-minor, the second is a D-major symphony, the \textit{Sinfonie Capricieuse}, and the third is the C-major \textit{Sinfonie Singuliére}.\textsuperscript{47} Of particular interest here is Berwald’s last symphony, \textit{Symphony Nr. 4 in E-flat}. By the end of 1845, Berwald realized that his musical life in Sweden was not as positive as the one he had had on the Continent. The following year involved another journey abroad, this time beginning with a trip to Paris in the hope that François Auber, director of the Paris Conservatoire, would program a performance of the E-flat symphony. Berwald’s desire for a performance continued until 1848 when the Paris revolution dashed any chance Berwald had for a performance in the French capital.

Prior to the Revolution, Berwald tried everything he could to get his symphony heard in Paris, from sending the manuscripts ahead to the Swedish ambassador to partake of his political influence, to omitting the title he had chosen for the work. Berwald had originally called the piece \textit{Sinfonie Naïve}, creating a connection to nature and simplicity.\textsuperscript{48} It seems, however, that the word “naïve” had already begun to take on a negative connotation on the continent, a transition that had not yet occurred in Sweden. To alleviate any negative associations with the work Berwald changed the title simply to \textit{Sinfonie in Es}. Unfortunately for Berwald, all of his efforts to have the work performed in Paris were in vain, and it seems he never again tried so hard to have the work performed.

\textsuperscript{46} Berwald’s first symphony is from around 1820, and has been lost as well, except for an incomplete manuscript. The remaining four symphonies have been renumbered 1 through 4 with the first being \textit{Sérieuse} and the last \textit{Naïve}.
It was not only the quality of the work itself which seems to have hindered Berwald’s ability to attain a performance; a complicated and somewhat confusing reputation also preceded him. One view was that his work was either too dark or too placid, an opinion that was found more readily in France and Austria, where light and enjoyable music such as Offenbach’s *Gaite Parisienne* and Schubert’s light-hearted songs were extremely popular. As Erik Frederich Jensen describes the situation in France, “it is difficult to believe that Auber – himself a prolific composer of light, unpretentious opéra comique – found much to admire in Berwald’s austere work.”49 Berwald had also received a negative reputation at the hands of critics and audience members in Sweden, who considered him to be a composer of overly dark, dissonant and unpleasantly non-melodic music, thus preventing performance of much of his music in his own homeland. As if it were not bad enough to be known for unpleasant music, the reputation he received in the German speaking lands were perhaps worse, where Berwald was considered a composer of simple and out-dated music.

Despite all negativity directed toward his music, Berwald persevered with his composing. He had a particular concept in mind surrounding his compositions: not to create a national compositional style for Sweden, as one might expect, but to create music that would be interesting from start to finish and pleasing to the ear (despite what many audience members felt). In August of 1838, Berwald even went so far as to claim that “Art may be coupled only with a cheerful frame of mind. The weak willed should have nothing to do with it. Even if interesting for a moment, in the end every sighing artist will bore listeners to death. Therefore: liveliness and energy – feeling and reason.”50 Oddly enough, his most

cheerful, lively, and energetic work – the *Sinfonie Naïve* – would not be performed until 1878, ten years after the composer’s death. Remembered today as perhaps one of the greatest of all Swedish composers, it was not until near the turn of the twentieth century that Berwald’s music began to receive real attention in Sweden.

The generation of Swedish composers contemporaneous with Claude Debussy, Arnold Schoenberg, and Charles Ives were the first to be truly inspired and influenced by the music of Berwald. Rather than break long-standing tradition, or attempt to develop a new style, as was the case in much of Western musical culture at the time, the Swedes embraced the music of Berwald and created works that reflected the history of Swedish composition and art. Berwald’s posthumous reputation somehow shed all the negativity directed towards him during his lifetime. The April 1878 premiere by Ludvig Norman and the Royal Orchestra of the E-flat Symphony was hailed as an overwhelming success. The *Dagens Nyheter* review from the following day asserted that “The concert began with Berwald’s E-flat Symphony. A true musical idyll, a pure poetic euphony was served to the public.” The next day, a review in the *Stockholms Dagblad* declared that the piece was “a highly notable work in which the first and last movements are particularly rich in original ideas and masterful formal touches.”

The subsequent years meant even more success for the growing legend of Franz Berwald. In 1905, Swedish composer Wilhelm Peterson-Berger wrote in *Dagens Nyheter* that Berwald was “our most original and modern composer.” Berwald’s new stature spread to other Scandinavian countries: Danish composer Carl Nielsen wrote to Wilhelm

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51 Berwald, Preface.
52 Ibid.
Stenhammar in 1911 regarding some of the more artistically naïve aspects of Berwald, stating that, “neither the media, money nor power can damage or benefit good Art. It will always find some simple, decent artists who forge ahead and produce and stand up for their works. In Sweden you have the finest example of this: Berwald.”

As with Naïve visual art, no amount of ridicule or, conversely, fame, can influence a truly Naïve artist or composer. The work is meant to please the creator, and if the outside world enjoys it or not is of no real consequence. In this way, Franz Berwald and Henri Rousseau are certainly connected. Despite any negative reception that both artists received, they continued to retain their individual styles. With Rousseau, this meant continuing to paint with simple inelegant lines and cartoon-like depictions of his subject. With Berwald this meant continuing to compose with a seeming lack of melody. Despite the imposing of the term “Naïve” on the work of Rousseau by critics posthumously, his concept of art was similar to that which Berwald had cultivated in the Naïve Symphony five decades earlier.

The philosophy behind artistic creativity was not the only connection between Berwald and Rousseau. After all, “Naïve” could not have been an arbitrary title given to the E-flat symphony. In many ways, the fourth symphony was Berwald’s attempt to regain the simplicity and formal precision of the earliest years of his compositional studies at the turn of the 19th century, reflecting a time when Haydn was still alive and Beethoven was working on a comparatively smaller scale in orchestral composition; a time when melody was of great importance, and harmony was fairly straightforward. Berwald could not simply mimic a symphony of Schubert and consider the work an artistic success. Each element of the E-flat Symphony may have a naïve aspect about it, but the entirety of the composition adheres to

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the relative complexity for which Berwald was known, creating a unique melding of simple
and complex that is reflected in the works of later Swedish composers. The following brief
analysis of the work should help to clarify this point, so that an examination of the works of
more modern composers may yield a connection between the philosophy behind, and final
product of musical Naïveté.

The first element of the E-flat symphony that one notices is the instrumentation. This
work was written in 1845, a time when orchestras were being expanded to unheard-of sizes,
and including instruments never before seen on an orchestral stage. Some prime examples of
this would be the works written for the French Grand Opera by Meyerbeer calling for a half-
dozen harps, and certainly the Symphonie Fantastique by Berlioz which included the seldom
heard ophicleide. Yet the instrumentation that Berwald employs is much more reminiscent of
Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, featuring only pairs of woodwinds, standard strings, four
French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, and only a pair of timpani for percussion. This
symphony thus hearkens back to an earlier, simpler musical time when smaller performing
forces were used. On top of this paring down of instruments from the current standard, the
third movement—the scherzo-trio movement—omits the trumpets, trombones and timpani to
leave an orchestra that resembles a late eighteenth-century ensemble, aside from the
overabundance of French horns.

The movements themselves seem fairly straightforward upon first glance. The first
movement is a standard sonata form, though Berwald turns the introduction into a part of the
first theme. The opening repeated note fanfare in the horns followed by tutti orchestra firmly
establishes the key of E-flat major, though the solo line in the ‘cello beginning in measure
three breaks down the tonic feeling of E-flat by ascending by third until arriving at C-natural
nearly two octaves higher. (Example 1) Certainly it seems as though this is all part of an introduction, and that feeling continues on until the long cadence in measures sixteen through twenty. It seems to be rather curious that this might be nothing more than introductory material, when the entire twenty measure segment returns as the opening to the recapitulation. Being only twenty measures, though, the return of the introduction appears only to be Berwald’s way of re-establishing the tonic key after the development, as well as playing with sonata-form tradition.

After establishing the key, Berwald then launches into an unexpected treatment of the first theme. (Example 2) Along with a syncopated accompaniment, which Berwald was known to use regularly, the ‘cellos and basses play a theme that does not have the melodic quality one might associate with a theme from this period (though such a lack of melodiousness was to be expected from Berwald). The theme opens with the feeling of being in E-flat, but the B-natural on the downbeat of the second measure implies the key of C-minor. That aspect too is fleeting as the third and fourth measures give the feeling of a more F-minor quality with their abundance of F’s and A-flats. Finally E-flat is again established as two octaves of B-flat are played to lead into a restatement of the theme, giving the feeling of an authentic cadence, weak though it may be. In spite of the confusion of tonality in this first theme, the simplicity of the theme should be clearly evident, from the simple duple rhythm to the diminished instrumentation. This simplicity combined with the quasi-complex treatment of the accompaniment clearly depicts the naïve feeling behind the symphony.
The second theme (Example 3), beginning in measure eighty-nine, is no less evocative of Naïveté in music. Again, the orchestration has been pared down to only strings and woodwinds, though this time there are three musical lines playing. The woodwinds play the theme with a songlike quality that may remind a modern listener of “Morning Mood” from Grieg’s 1876 incidental music to Peer Gynt, perhaps showing the influence Berwald would later have, even on composers in foreign countries. The violins are again providing a syncopated accompaniment, this time in larger forces as both first and second violins are playing in unison. It is the lower strings that deliver a real measure of complexity not provided in the first theme. This line seems to be more like a counter-subject than an accompaniment, providing a sort of symmetry with the dotted-eighth-sixteenth motion in the woodwinds.

The development section is quite drawn out, comprising one third of the entire movement, nearly twenty measures longer than the entire exposition and introduction.
combined. This seemingly excessive length may have been Berwald’s way of showing that even out of the simplicity of Naïveté something extraordinarily complex can grow. For example: the strings begin a restatement of the second theme in measure 224, though this is played over a subdominant (A-flat) pedal in the basses. The full statement of the theme and its counter-subject-like accompaniment occurs in the violins, and then is taken up by the flutes and clarinets, again played in full. The first measure of the theme is then taken as a fragment, played three times and then inverted to lead to the F of the dominant B-flat major chord in measure 244, still with an A-flat pedal in the bass. The next four measures are an extended version of the opening fanfare, creating a smooth re-transition into the recapitulation material. However, by using the opening fanfare from the symphony’s introduction, Berwald alters the traditional sonata form. With the alteration, however, sonata form is somewhat simplified by means of a direct repeat of all material before the development, rather than beginning at a mid-point in the repeat of the exposition.
Example 4
Finally it seems as though the movement is about to end as we reach the tutti fanfares in measure 389, only to be surprised by a fortissimo fanfare flourish on a fully diminished seventh chord in the key of the dominant, B-flat (viiº7). (Example 4) The end of the movement is delayed for another twelve measures as the orchestration again simplifies to only strings, and the second thematic material returns as a long statement of the tonic key, not the subdominant as in the end of the development. The return to simplicity in the final bars of the recapitulation is perhaps the strongest example of the Naïve element of the movement since, as Rodger Cardinal points out, a Naïve artist can only remain Naïve so long as they reject the fame and fortune of the popularity so embraced by artists of other realms. The grandeur that Berwald builds up to may be what the public wanted to hear, but in the end he remained true to himself and his art and returned to the Naïve simplicity of his work. Berwald’s compositional ideas of simplicity which he incorporated in the Naïve Symphony influenced the generation of composers who lived and worked around the turn of the twentieth-century, as shall now be examined.

Wilhelm Peterson-Berger

The work of Wilhelm Peterson-Berger represents the earliest showing of music by a twentieth-century Swedish composer whose music shares similar qualities with Naïveté in art (both visual and musical). Born in 1867 in Ullånger, Ångermanland, Peterson-Berger was raised with an appreciation of music and literature, familiarizing himself with the works of Beethoven, Grieg, August Söderman, Ibsen and Björnstjern Björnson. Peterson-Berger’s

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earliest musical training was as a keyboardist, beginning with piano lessons from his mother as a schoolboy; he eventually graduated in 1889 from the Stockholm Conservatory as an organist. In his time at the Conservatory, Peterson-Berger began composing in a fairly traditional German-Romantic style, largely influenced by Beethoven.

Upon graduation, Peterson-Berger’s own personal style of composition began to develop. The summer after graduation was consumed by a hiking trip though the mountains of Jämland, marking the beginning of a life-long love for nature and the landscape of his homeland. From this point onward, Peterson-Berger frequently spent his summers hiking the Swedish countryside. His musical works reflect the natural environment with which Peterson-Berger was so fascinated. As Lennart Hedwall observed, Peterson-Berger’s choral compositions were written primarily for social occasions. Several of these works even originated during the mountain hikes which Peterson-Berger, ever the nature worshipper, embarked on with friends and family.

Choral compositions created during hiking trips can lead to some difficulties in placing the inspiration. After all, a song about nature could be inspired by the beauty of the composers’ natural surroundings, or simply as a reflection of the text that the composer chose to set. For Peterson-Berger, however, the connection to an inspiration from nature becomes clearer when we consider some of his other, purely instrumental works. Take, for example, his most well-known set of works: the three sets of piano pieces entitled Frösöblomster. These small character pieces are inspired by the beauty of the Frösö Islands off the coast of

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid. 3
60 Ibid. 4
Sweden. Later we shall see that depictions of Sweden’s landscape became a popular theme of inspiration for composers as well as Naïve visual artists.

In Peterson-Berger the music creates a link between mere “national romanticism” (a term used by Bo Wallner in *A Short Survey of Music in Sweden* to describe the musical trend of the 19th century to write in miniature forms such as songs and lyrical piano pieces) and a more Naïvist style of composition found in the earliest years of 20th century Sweden. Wallner, however, focuses his interest on the way composers moved into using “larger and more complicated forms of music.” As evidence of this change in forms, Wallner cites the influence Peterson-Berger had from the music of Wagner in creating his 1909 opera *Arnljot*, as well as the influence from Grieg and Nordic folk music. What is not mentioned is that the compositional style of Wagner is not what influenced Peterson-Berger, but rather was Wagner’s philosophies about music that influenced the way Peterson-Berger approached musical criticism and in some small way his own compositions.

If a connection with a composer of the classical canon is needed in order to better understand the work of Peterson-Berger, then that composer would have to be Edvard Grieg as opposed to Wagner with whom there is no similarity in compositional style. Between the nationalistic style of composition and the harmonic language of the mid-19th century, Peterson-Berger and Grieg must be considered as connected. Peterson-Berger’s most well known works are those composed on a smaller scale, such as the aforementioned *Frösöblomster* piano miniatures. Peterson-Berger did compose a few larger-scaled works, but

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61 Other examples of nature inspired works by Peterson-Berger include the Symphony No. 2 “Sunnanfär” (*Journey of Southerly Winds*), and Symphony No. 3 “Same-Ätnam” (“Lapland Symphony”).
most have yet to see the popularity accorded the smaller works written specifically for the enjoyment of the public.

As observed by musicologists Jan Kask and Göran Bergendal, Wilhelm Peterson-Berger was influenced by the Scandinavianism movement at the turn of the century. The emphasis of this movement was to develop a style of art which not only reflected a national ideal, but also reflected the entirety of Nordic culture. In the work of Peterson-Berger this Scandinavianism was combined with a fondness for popular and regional tradition as well as Nordic culture and nature.⁶⁴ Scandinavianism was a way for the Swedes to compensate for the aforementioned loss of Norway from their kingdom. As with any type of nationalist movement, however, the way in which each country’s composers dealt with the issue of representing their homeland was unique. With Béla Bartók in Hungary, for example, national folk music was represented in an extremely complex way, taking a folk tune as the basis for a work, and altering it to fit into a more modern and cosmopolitan musical setting. This complexity of music is even evident in the seemingly simple piano pieces of the *Mikrokosmos* collection. As we shall see with Peterson-Berger and other Swedish composers, the compositional style of choice was one of simple harmonic and rhythmic motion, including authentic folk tunes to represent musically an image of Swedish country life.

The 8 *Sånger för Blanded Kör, op. 11* consists of poetry not only selected and set to music by Peterson-Berger, but also translated (as needed) into both Swedish and German by the composer himself. While not all of the songs reflect the natural world which Peterson-Berger was so famous for depicting (as in the song *Dans ropete felen*, or *Dance called the fiddle*), six of the eight songs are about nature. This discussion will focus on two songs in

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particular, *I fyrreskoven* (*In the forest*) and *Killebukken* (*Little Billy Goat*), as these songs most clearly demonstrate the incorporation of Naïve art qualities.

The first song in the collection, *I fyrreskoven* sets poetry of the Swedish poet and writer Helena Nyblom found in her collections of poems called *An Schweden*. The poetry describes the simple majesty of the forest, if somewhat indirectly through the vagueness of Nyblom’s poetic style. (Figure 11) From the purity of air, to the happy and free dance of the stream, Nyblom was certainly describing the scene Peterson-Berger experienced every time he went hiking with friends through the Swedish countryside. The choice of text is extremely fitting for a song that was likely written on such an expedition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Fyrreskoven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by Helena Nyblom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Der er en Renhed i din Luft,  
en Trolddom i den wilde Duft  
fra Fyrreskovens Ranker. |
| Hvor Bækken danser glad fri,  
så glad og fri,  
og Elven glider tavs,  
så tavs forbi i dybe Alvorstanker. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Im Föhrenwald</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>trans. Wilhelm Peterson-Berger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Es athnet Reinheit deine Luft,  
ein Zauber weilt im wilden duft  
von Förenwaldes Ranken. |
| Wo’s Bächlein tanzet froh und frei,  
so froh und frei,  
der Flusser gleitet stumm,  
so stumm vorbei in tiefen Ernst’s Gedanken. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the forest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>trans. Adam Corzatt</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| It breathes purity in your air,  
a magic because in the wild scent  
of forests grow. |
| Where the stream dances happy and free,  
so happy and free,  
the river glides dumbly,  
so dumbly past in deep serious thought. |
The way Peterson-Berger sets the text is distinctly simplistic—quite fitting for simple subject of streams and air described in the text—and intended amateur performance of the song. So simple, in fact, that the first fourteen measures (of twenty-five) of the alto and soprano parts consist of nothing more than constant, nearly monotonous eighth notes. These accompanying lines move along fairly rapidly, but are marked *murmurando*, making the text somewhat difficult to understand. Clarity comes with the entrance of the tenor voice, not only repeating the text, but also presenting the first sign of melody. (Example 5) The bass line, which enters in measure five, acts as a countersubject to the tenor melody, mimicking the arpeggiation of the tenor for each line of text.

![Example 5](image)

The second section of text set in a very similar manner, though the redundant soprano and alto eighth notes are replaced by some similarly simple, repetitive phrases that alternate between the upper and lower pairs of voices. (Example 6) Accompanying these phrases is the melody of the first section, though paired with a harmonizing alto line of intervals of sixths and thirds. (Example 7) Just as the first statement of the melody was followed by a countersubject in the bass voice, so too is this version of the melody accompanied by the
same light-hearted countersubject. The simple beauty of the song’s melody may reflect the similarly simple beauty of the forest. However, the concluding cadence seems a bit more complex than one would expect from such a thematically simple song. The progression from the tonic A-flat major chord to G-dim7 over a pedal A-flat and back to tonic, however, is nothing more than a progression of neighboring motion in the upper three voices. (Example 8)

Example 6

Example 7

Example 8

The song *Killebukken* is one of extreme lightness and simple hilarity; after all, how serious could a fast-paced patter song about a little Billy goat be? The redundancy of the opening line of text (“Killebukken, Lammet mit,”65)—particularly in the monotone bass and

65 “Little Billy Goat, lamb of mine,”
tenor lines throughout the first half of the song—is relieved by the simple soprano melody in measure five. (Example 9)

\[\text{Example 9}\]

The character of the music changes drastically for the second half of the song. Here, rather than the rapid patter of the first half, the music is somewhat slower, with an unexpected elegance given the light-hearted aspects of the opening. Particularly notable is the soprano solo at the end of the first and second endings. (Example 10) The music here does not correspond with any text, but is rather a simple melodic line sung without words over similarly untexted E-dominant-seventh chords in the lower three parts.

\[\text{Example 10}\]

The final aspect of Killebukken to note is the third ending. Given the simple, light-hearted qualities of the first half of the song, it should come as no surprise that the piece ends in a similar manner. Whereas the first and second endings are beautiful and chordal, the third ending seems more like it is supposed to continue on into a repeat or attaca to begin the next song. The abruptness of the final two chords and lack of a pause on the final chord seem almost silly, as though there should be yet another repeat of the opening material. (Example 11)
Example 11

The theme of nature and light-heartedness already discussed are not limited to only these two songs. Other songs in the set, such as *Vesleblomme* (*Little Flower*), and *Ved havet* (*By the sea*) have texts that deal with natural elements, while other songs such as *Dans ropte felen* (*Dance called the fiddle*) have jocular and uncomplicated elements. Because of Peterson-Berger’s incorporation of such elements in this work, not to mention so many of his other works, it is certainly feasible to classify such songs as being similar to Naïve art, and reflective of the style.

**Hugo Alfvén**

Hugo Alfvén, perhaps the most well known of all Swedish composers, created works that exemplify the Swedish nationalist movement. Still Alfvén managed to maintain an air of simplicity in spite of the fact that they were created at the same time as some of the most adventuresome of musical works by continental composers. Born on 1 May 1872 in Stockholm, Hugo Alfvén was the fourth of six children born to master tailor and church choir leader Anders Alfvén.66 At the age of 15, Alfvén began his studies at the Stockholm Music Conservatory, as well as beginning training in painting with Otto Hesselbom and Oscar

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Törnå (a series of studies that included working as a copyist for the national Museum, the same position held by both Ernst Josephson in Sweden and Henri Rousseau in France).  

Ultimately Alfvén’s calling was to music rather than painting; he held several positions as a violinist while attending the Conservatory. Alfvén also began composing around 1888, though he was refused admission to the counterpoint and composition classes at the Conservatory in 1889. It was not until 1891 that Alfvén finally received training in composition from Lars Zetterkvist, an experience that resulted in Alfvén giving up painting entirely in 1892 and devoting his life to music. The following years were filled with travel and performance on violin, as well as continued composition and even one full year studying conducting in Dresden under Hermann Kutzschbach (1901-2). To this point, Alfvén’s compositions were fairly traditional, and could even be mistaken as works of Grieg or perhaps Brahms, as they exhibited hardly any Swedish national characteristics, such as the incorporation of folk or popular melodies and rhythms.

Once completing his training with Kutzschbach, Alfvén began to exhibit his own approach to a national identity in music, first with the opus 17 set of three piano pieces titled Skärgårdsbilder (Pictures from the Archipelago, 1902), and most significantly with the first of his three Swedish Rhapsodies for orchestra, Midsommarvaka (Midsummer Vigil, 1903). Perhaps Alfvén’s most popular work, Midsommarvaka is a piece whose success, as Anthony Hodgson points out, is all the more surprising since its melodies are taken from genuine Swedish folk songs. Jan Kask and Göran Bergendal in Music in Sweden, however, seem to take this use of folk tunes as a negative aspect, stating: “The work shows evidence of another

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 4.
69 Ibid.
70 Hodgson, 107.
typical symptom of that time, namely the ambition to be ‘Swedish’ by referring to folk music and using transcriptions of folk tunes as the basis of a symphonically constructed rhapsody.”\textsuperscript{71} Whether “symptom” or useful melodic tool, it can be said that the use of folk themes by Alfvén in \textit{Midsommarvaka} is a practical way of representing Swedish country life, as will be explored in detail later.

In 1954 Hugo Alfvén wrote an article for the international magazine \textit{Musikrevy}, a publication that promoted Swedish music, from folk to orchestral and even including the occasional article about Swedish popular music. Alfvén’s article was titled “A Midsummer’s Vigil”; in it he explained the history behind the composition of \textit{Midsommarvaka}, as well as some of the programmatic elements he incorporated into the work. As already mentioned, \textit{Midsommarvaka} was completed in 1903, but the original inspiration for the work came in the first five years of the 1890s when Alfvén went to spend summers in the outer Stockholm archipelago.\textsuperscript{72} From his time in the quiet, country setting of the archipelago, Alfvén wrote, he “gradually […] came to feel an increasing urge to express in music something of the delight of the Midsummer’s Eve.”\textsuperscript{73} Alfvén described the piece as a tone poem with “a purely visual program.”\textsuperscript{74} Despite his description that the program is merely made up of musical depictions of visual occurrences, there are a few qualities to the work which are much more than mere visions of a Midsummer’s Eve. Such depictions include a few failed attempts by revelers to start the “Pointing Dance,” (Example 13c) and even the sounds of a shepherd’s reed. More of these programmatic elements will be discussed later in connection with an analysis of the work. What is important to note is that Alfvén himself described the work as

\textsuperscript{71} Bergendal, 13.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
“a paean to the Swedish character and Swedish nature at Midsummer time.” It is this
description by the composer that draws upon the same elements of artistic inspiration (such
as the Swedish landscape) as the Swedish Naïve visual artists.

The first aspect of Midsommarvaka to note is its scale. The work is only about twenty
minutes in duration, yet requires considerable orchestral forces. This is a contrast to the more
prevalent notion of the tone poem, such as that employed by Richard Strauss, who wrote long
works with enormous orchestras. In addition to a traditional Romantic orchestra with double
winds, four horns, three trombones, timpani, etc., Alfvén also calls for one flautist to double
on piccolo, one clarinetist doubling on bass clarinet and E-flat clarinet, one tuba, two harps,
cymbals, triangle, and even a cembalo. With such a large orchestra required for a mere
twenty minutes of music, professional orchestras could be deterred from a performance of the
work simply for financial reasons. At the work’s opening, the large-scale ensemble is not
terribly evident, though along with the strings, two French horns and one clarinet in the
beginning few measures are included the two harps. Measure fifty-three, however, reveals
the extent of the performing forces as a timpani roll with a crescendo leads into a tutti (save
for the two harps) unison presentation of the opening thematic material.

Despite the scale of the orchestra, the enormity is not reflected in the musical
program or the thematic material. There could just as easily be an orchestra of half the size
playing such music without diminishing its effectiveness in presenting light-hearted, cheerful
material. The opening theme (Example 12) played by a solo clarinet, for example, is no less
cheery than any of the subsequent presentations of the same material by increasingly larger
performing forces. The playfulness of the theme remains whether played by solo clarinet or
by forty violins with full orchestral accompaniment. The childish qualities of this theme are

75 Ibid., 12.
both folk-like in their conception and very fitting for the program Alfvén had in mind. For
these opening measures he envisioned that “a group of excited youths is marching along the
road on their way to the barn. A number of people have already gathered there, for it is
Midsummer’s Eve, and there is going to be dancing, and the beer and akvavit are already
flowing.”

Example 12

The entry to the Midsummer’s Eve festivities continues until measure eighty-nine
where “a hoarse bass tries to start the >>Pointing Dance>> but does not hit the right notes.”

This hoarse bass is represented by the first bassoon (Example 13a), and is followed by an
English horn playing the same tune with different wrong notes, representing “the squeaky
voice of an old woman [who] makes the same attempt, but […] also fails.” (Example 13b)

Finally, in measure 103 the dance tune is presented accurately by a quartet of two bassoons
and two French horns (Example 13c). The use of the right notes comes as a relief to the
listener (as might be expected after hearing attempts at music by drunken revelers), though
not entirely fitting with Alfvén’s program, as the fiddlers are the ones who are supposed to
relieve the boredom of the evening by beginning the dance. In the music, the violins do not
take up the tune of the dance until measure 131, after it has already been presented several
times by various groups of instruments.

76 Ibid., 11.
77 Ibid., 11.
78 Ibid., 11.
The agreeable nature of the dance tune is not long lived, however, as the music builds in intensity to match the raucousness of a quarrel that has broken out among revelers. It is at this point, between measures 147 and 187, that the music actually loses the clarity and simplicity found in the remainder of the work. The intent of Alfvén’s change from simplicity is purely to fit within a program and therefore does not hinder viewing the work as representational of music reflective of Naïve art. The sporadically placed trills, the rushing triplet sixteenth-note runs and the leaping staccato sixteenth-notes in the flutes all connote a rowdy party behavior and so fits within the work as representative of what happens at a real
Midsummer’s Even festival. Rather than create a work which is purely fictional in its story with a fairy tale-like pleasantness, Alfvén has included some realistic grit, and in that way he is remaining true to the Naïvist way of representing real life in a simple child-like manner.

The brawling eventually subsides and the dance music returns, retaining a bit of the rapid lines found in the previous section. Rather than representing a quarrel, Alfvén writes that these rapid lines symbolize a young man who wants to steal away from the party with his girl to find some time alone in the surrounding forest: “He whispers in her ear, and she nods in agreement. He skips out from the barn on the rapid sixteenths of the first tune, and she follows close behind on the same theme; it is a so-called canon.” This is a “so-called canon” because the music is merely a staggered entrance of the same music between the flute and clarinet found in measure 199. (Example 14)

![Example 14](image)

Upon arriving in the forest, the music changes dramatically. Suddenly the sounds are dark and melancholy in a slow Andante section (measure 231). The Pointing Dance is heard occasionally in the distance, but there is a new theme that prevails throughout this section.

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79 Ibid., 12.
(Example 15) It is this tune, first heard played by the English Horn in measure 255, that Alfvén calls “a melancholy melody, breathed forth by the spirit of the forest with the timbre of a shepherd’s reed.”\textsuperscript{80} The music of the forest continues until the measure 330 transition to a new \textit{Allegretto} section. A new theme is presented here, again in the simple playful style of the opening of the work. The light staccato theme is representational of the morning time in the forest from the rising of the sun to the awakening of the denizens of the forest, including the boy and girl. The two return to the barn just in time to participate in the final dance of the festivities.

\begin{center}
\textit{Example 15}
\end{center}

The final dance begins in measure 420 with a transition to $\frac{3}{4}$ and a lively \textit{Allegro con brio}. The tune is the “Jössehärad Polska” (Example 16) which builds up to another rather raucous section of the music, though this time the lively dance is always present and played as though at a real festival. As Alfvén describes the final scene:

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 12.
The boy is dancing as he never danced before. He is dancing so that his heels hit the back of his neck, and he twirls his girl as easily as if she were a reed. The other youths are not far behind them – shoes crack against the floor, skirts are flying, there is screaming and crying when the girls are thrown up into the air. A tornado rages over the floor. The Midsummer’s Vigil ends with this whirling climax.81

Example 16

It should not be difficult to see that Alfvén was trying to create in *Midsommarvaka* a work that accurately represented the goings-on of a traditional Midsummer’s Eve festival. It should also become clear from the style of Alfvén’s writing that his inspiration was more than simply his time in the Stockholm archipelago. The simplicity and child-like qualities of the thematic material, particularly the first theme, certainly resembles the work of both the Naïve art of Rousseau (which had by this point found its way into the artistic circles of Scandinavian artists), and the work of Franz Berwald in his *Naïve Symphony*.

As mentioned, the use of Naïve elements does not mean only writing with the natural world as inspirational subject. While visual Naïvism certainly had elements of nature, Berwald’s concept of what was “Naïve” really had nothing to do with nature or the pastoral. For Berwald, to be “Naïve” was to be simple and reflective of the less bombastic works of late eighteenth-century composers. It is this view of the Naïve, the concept of simplicity,

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81 Ibid., 12.
which relates to composers such as Wilhelm Stenhammar and Dag Wirén. These men wrote works which did not resemble the music of their contemporaries, but rather seems to look back toward the same early musical education upon which Berwald was drawing.

**Wilhelm Stenhammar**

The Swedish composer whose works demonstrate the earliest signs of a return to the musical simplicity of the late eighteenth century must certainly be Wilhelm Stenhammar. Born in 1871 in Stockholm, Stenhammar grew up in a home where music held great importance, especially given that his father[^82] was a well-respected composer of church music[^83]. From an early age, Stenhammar seemed destined to live a life in music, as he began composing in the 1880’s before any formal instruction[^84]. Stenhammar also developed a keen interest in the musical philosophies of Richard Wagner at this time, though this “Wagner worship,”[^85] as Bo Wallner calls it, never developed into a compositional influence for Stenhammar’s works, merely a minor philosophical influence. Perhaps more compositionally influential was the time Stenhammar spent studying piano with Richard Andersson – a pupil of Clara Schumann – beginning in 1887. The connection to the works of Clara Schumann can be seen in the way Stenhammar uses the concept of the small character piece for solo piano as a mere starting point for a more emotionally complex and even programmatic short work. The connection to Fr. Schumann can also be seen in Stenhammar’s impressive pianistic abilities. Beginning in 1892, Stenhammar set out on what would become a more modernized version of the life of a virtuoso performer-composer than that of Clara Schumann, Franz

[^82]: Per Ulrik Stenhammar (1829-1875)
[^83]: Litell, 79.
[^85]: Ibid.
Liszt or Niccolo Paganini. This life was modernized in that he was performing mostly works of Beethoven, rather than his own compositions or those of his contemporaries as would have been the case with an earlier 19th century performer-composer, starting with his debuts as composer, piano soloist, and ensemble musician with the Aulin Quartet.

Despite Stenhammar’s clear connection with the performing world, as a composer he is not quite so easy to place in a historical context. In the list of “Leading Swedish Composers of the Twentieth Century” provided by Gösta Percy in the 1954 issue of Musikrevy International, Stenhammar is described as “a sterling representative of the 1890-period in Swedish cultural history, which opposed the rationalism and internationalism of the 1880’s.”

Percy goes on to say that Stenhammar is also a “late romanticist with strong roots in the tonal art of Wagner and Liszt,” as well as having “a pronounced classicistic leaning – Beethoven, Brahms and Haydn.” In the end, Percy seems resigned simply to call Stenhammar extremely individualistic, and does not attempt to position him firmly into a place in history. Ignoring for a moment that this assertion disregards an enormous amount of historical information, it is really not terribly flattering to be considered “individual” in this case. The seeming insult comes because Percy appears to view being similar to the more canonic composers as a positive aspect, while being “individual” would be the polite way of describing Stenhammar’s work as “not as good.” What makes Stenhammar’s music “individual” is the simplicity of the work, giving the impression that he was merely uneducated and unable to compose more complex music – essentially the same critical opinion applied to the works of other Naïve artists.

86 Litell, 79.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
If Gösta Percy seemed confused by Stenhammar’s placement in history, then it was musicologist Bo Wallner who began to shed some light on where Stenhammar might fit. In 1952, Wallner wrote that “Stenhammar’s artistic aim was to write romantic warmth of feeling and lyrical sensibility with the strict discipline of form.” The same could be said about a Naïvist painting, though “strict discipline of form” may cause some difficulty in an association with the almost child-like representations of the subject.

The next attempt at placing Stenhammar’s work in a historical context came in 1972 with the publication of a brief biographical pamphlet by the Swedish Institute of Music by Bo Wallner. Here, observations about Stenhammar’s interests, philosophies and studies were combined to demonstrate their various impacts upon his compositional style. In particular, there are a few instances of Stenhammar’s opinions that help to place his works in a historical stylistic context. The first is his view on how to set a poem to music, specifically that there should be “a simple melody which hugs the sound of the words,” a concept more in line with the work of Schubert nearly a century prior. Also interesting is a quotation from a letter in which Stenhammar considers an argument in favor of artlessness:

> With every day that passes I realize more and more that what is called original, interesting, daring etc. in art is the most sheer, worthless nonsense; the only ONLY thing which is necessary, and which is the condition for all real art, is expressiveness.

Wallner’s assertion that Stenhammar is arguing for artlessness seems to be a bit pretentious, suggesting that art must be daring and unique in order to be worthy of consideration, rather than merely expressive, as Stenhammar states. Rather, what Stenhammar seems to be saying is that music need not be complex and innovative to be good art; as long as music expresses something there is no restriction about it not being simple.

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89 Wilhelm Stenhammar, Symphoni op. 34 (Stockholm: Carl Gehrmans Musikförlag, 1952), Introduction.
90 Wallner, Wilhelm Stenhammar, 7.
91 Ibid.
The notion of “Wagner worship” arises when comparing Stenhammar’s demand for and use of simplicity with his admiration for Wagner’s work. These two elements seem to epitomize a conflict of styles, yet worked well together in Stenhammar’s compositions. The end result was “a classic-romantic [composer] who in his artistry now tried to capture the Naïve tone of a folksong, now cultivated the technically ingenious, even complex, with the intensity of his will, now gave himself up to moods – dreamy, passionate, delightfully poetic.”92 Despite the seemingly contradictory confluence of styles, in the work of Stenhammar “clarified articulation was an ideal to strive for,”93 and as Bo Wallner reminds us, “simplicity can be defined in many ways.”94 In this case simplicity must be defined as the incorporation of folksong qualities and clear rhythm and articulation more akin to an early 19th century composer than one from the turn of the 20th century.

Written in 1915, Wilhelm Stenhammar’s Symphoni op. 34 för Orkester reflects not the overtly dramatic elements found in the popular “Neo-Romantic” style of the time, but rather a more simplistic return to the earliest styles of the Romantic era. Rather than a bombastic orchestra of hundreds, Stenhammar’s work is scored for an ensemble more closely resembling Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony.95 This includes paired woodwinds, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani and five string parts. In Stenhammar’s work, the percussion, quadruple winds and expanded brass complement popular in works by Stravinsky, Richard Strauss, Mahler and others has been completely forgotten. “The

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92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 It should be noted that Beethoven’s use of trombones and trumpets in the Sixth Symphony (though in a lighter way than the Fifth Symphony which uses essentially the same instrumentation but in a more bombastic manner) resembles Berwald’s transition from the more bombastic Third Symphony to the lighter Naïve Symphony.
composer himself said that […] he wanted to write ‘sober and honest music with no frills.’”\textsuperscript{96} The resulting symphony is certainly one that reflects this desire for simplicity.

Despite the shrunken orchestra, the standard four movement symphonic structure and the duration of a mere forty-five minutes, Stenhammar still managed to incorporate a few inconspicuous “frills” into the symphony. For example, though the work is said to be written in G-minor (according to Stenhammar’s own title for the piece), the first movement is actually written in the Dorian mode. This is an aspect only hinted at to the listener in the sixth measure with the use of an F-natural, and not a single occurrence of an E or E-flat in the entire opening nine-measure phrase – a unison melodic line between the bassoons, violas and cellos. (Example 17)

\begin{example}
\begin{music}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{b}
\new基调{b}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{b}
\new基调{Tone}
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\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{b}
\begin{music}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
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\new基调{Tone}
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\new基调{Tone}
\new基调{Tone}
\end{music}
\end{example}

Any small amount of frill aside, though, the overarching aspect of the work is one of simplicity. So much so that the main theme of the first movement contains elements of Swedish folk music\textsuperscript{97} that, in and of itself, is very simple in both rhythm and melody, particularly when compared to the complexities of Hungarian folk tunes.

The simple, duple rhythm found in the opening phrase is a common element for almost the entirety of the first movement. The one exception to this is the brief six measure \textit{Molto Energico} section (after rehearsal number 42) that acts as re-transitional material.

\textsuperscript{96} Stenhammar, Introduction.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
leading into the *Ben Tenuto* section. This music then repeats the material found in the measure eighty-seven *Tranquillo* (after rehearsal number 9). The *Molto Energico* is perhaps the most rhythmically complex section of the first movement, though melodically the entire six measures consist of nothing more than a series of rising scales in the upper woodwinds and falling scales in the upper strings. Each of the other parts merely fills in the chordal motion accompanying these scales. What makes the section noteworthy is the fact that while the woodwinds are playing scalar material in steady triplets, the brass and strings are playing a dotted-eighth-sixteenth note rhythm, creating a strong conflict between duple and triple rhythm. (Example 18)

The second movement of Stenhammar’s *Symfoni* is an *Andante* set of variations. Certainly this might suggest the very virtuosic type of music that one would find in a set of variations by Liszt or Brahms, however what Stenhammar does is something completely
different. The opening motive is reminiscent of the Allegretto movement from Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, beginning with a simple duple rhythm in the upper divided viola part. (Example 19) The progression of variations then seems more like a fugue or canon than mere variations, as the most distinct difference in each ensuing variation is the addition of instruments. As expected, there are alterations in rhythm with the incorporation of triplets in the third variation. There are also alterations in key, seen in the move from C-Major to C#-minor and C-minor. The steady duple motion in the lowest voice, however, keeps the feeling of a funeral march constant throughout the movement, with only fleeting feelings of something more pleasant.

The marche funabre quality throughout the Andante is something that may be a bit unexpected in a variation set, as it would be more common for at least one of the variations to move into a sprightly feeling. The funeral march aspect is even more unexpected upon learning that Stenhammar’s inspiration for the movement was Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound. The movement does not resemble the plot of the ancient drama in any way; rather, the inspiration for Stenhammar was on a more philosophical level, creating a work that represented “the theme of the light-hearted Prometheus as ‘human love’s hero and – martyr.’” In representing a hero and martyr, Stenhammar was certainly right in using a

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98 Ibid.
funeral march, even though for Prometheus there was no funeral procession in which to march.

The third movement of Stenhammar’s Symfoni is a traditional Scherzo. The movement is lively and energetic, demonstrating that not everything in the cold north need be stoic and depressing. The dance-like qualities of the quick triple-meter movement seems to reflect the German Ländler of the previous century. This movement could easily depiction a peasant’s life filled with dancing and raucous behavior similar to that depicted in Hugo Alfvén’s Midsommarvaka. The conventionalism of symphonic form seems to be made into a mockery here, particularly in the closing measures of the movement. (Example 20) The pizzicato strings and staccato oboe create a comic-sounding ending that sounds out of place in a serious symphonic work. This light-hearted and simple music epitomizes the simple, child-like way Naïve painters created their own works.

Example 20
The most substantial portion of Stenhammar’s Symfoni is taken up by the Finale movement, itself divided into four distinct sections. The first section is a brief 32-measure Sostenuto that firmly re-establishes the key of G-minor. The resulting chordal music is something reminiscent of a work by Brahms or Grieg, seeming entirely too Romantic for the type of “no-frills” music Stenhammar was attempting to write. However, because of the minor and chordal qualities of these opening measures, a link is created tying the funeral march of the second movement with the dance-like third movement, represented by the second section of the Finale.

Example 21
The second section is a return to simple, dance-like motion with a lively *Allegro Vivace*. The insistent eighth-note motion in the opening phrase of the lower strings establishes both the rhythmic feeling as well as the motivic idea used consistently over the next 100 or so measures. (Example 21) The lack of melody is likely something inspired by the work of Berwald, and it is easy to see how such a style of composition could have led to the criticism of being boring or redundant. The attempt perhaps to mimic the developmental style of Beethoven falls a bit short as the motive is merely used in an unchanging manner. The savior of Stenhammar’s seemingly boring music comes in the final ten measures of this section. Here, the music builds increasingly intense with the inclusion of the full orchestra, by crescendos to fortissimo, and an acceleration of tempo into the final three tutti unison notes. (Example 22)
Example 22

The intensity of the second section is relieved almost instantly when the third, *Tranquillo* section begins. Here, the change of key by tritone from G-minor to C#-minor offers proof to the listener that perhaps this is not music of Schubert or an earlier Classical-era composer who would never dream of changing key by tritone directly. The link to
modern music ends there, however, as this section is composed as a very traditional style of fugue beginning with the subject in the second clarinet part. The fugue ends after a mere twenty-eight measures, however, with a fourteen bar re-transition back to G-minor via C-Major and a series of contrapuntal chordal movements.

The final section, *Allegro ma non troppo, poco a poco animando*, is a return not only to G-minor, but also to the simplicity that Stenhammar intended in the first three movements. The first thirty measures consist of nothing more than pizzicato strings playing only on the most emphasized beats (1 and 2 in 2/2 time). The entrance of the clarinet in the thirty-first measure is almost comic with its descending three notes on the last beat of the measure. Simplicity is even represented in the visual aspects of Stenhammar’s score, as the string parts are written in cut time for the first 92 measures while playing only on beats one and two (as mentioned), though the other parts are all written in 6/4. This difference in meter is really nothing more than a way for Stenhammar to avoid writing extra rests in each measure of the strings, and not a way to complicate the rhythms. The insistence of constant quarter-notes established in the first measures of this section are alleviated only a bit at the *Passionato* section where the violins play a simple melodic line atop continuous the quarter-notes of the clarinets, bassoons, French horns, and violas. The redundant repetition of quarter-notes combined with whole-note chordal motion seems to be the over-arching theme in this final section, particularly given that there is again a lack of any discernable melody.

Overall, there is really no clear connection between the sound of this Stenhammar symphony and the work of his continental contemporaries, as this symphony fits more easily into the repertoire of early 19th century composers. This relationship with the music from an earlier and simpler time is the defining quality of the work and an aspect that makes it fit
neatly under the heading of a Naïve style of music. The simple rhythmic motion, solidly
tonal harmonic qualities, diminished orchestral size and lack of melodic material tie this
work in, not only with the general musical scene of the early 19th century, but also directly
with the work of Franz Berwald and his Symphony Naïve in particular.

**Dag Wirén**

The 1930’s in Sweden saw the rise of a compositional style called, for lack of a better
term, “neo-classicism.” This description is frequently used in combination with an assertion
that the neo-classicists in Sweden were merely the second phase in the rise of musical
modernism. The first phase was a movement that began with Hilding Rosenberg and Gösta
Nystroem, both of whom had broken from the “Swedish National Romantic School” of the
1890’s, typified by Peterson-Berger and Alfvén. The 1930’s transition to “neo-classicism”
was a movement in composition led by Lars-Erik Larsson, Gunnar de Frumerie, Erland von
Koch and “one of the most popular of serious contemporary composers,” Dag Wirén.100

Born in 1905, Dag Wirén was raised by parents who were not terribly talented
musicians, but would be better described as enthusiastic amateurs possessing more than
middling ability, as Wirén’s mother was his first music teacher. The young Dag Wirén
showed early musical abilities, beginning piano lessons and composing small pieces at the
age of five.101 He attended the Stockholm Conservatory of Music from 1926-31 despite
being turned down for admittance three times previously.102 Upon graduation from the
Conservatory with a degree in organ performance, Wirén moved to Paris until 1933 where he

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100 Hodgson, 116.
102 Ibid.
studied orchestration and composition with the Scriabin pupil Leonid Sabanieff. It was because of this brief two year stint in Paris that discussions of Wirén’s compositional style have typically focused only on Wirén, the “Paris-trained” composer. As Lennart Hedwall points out, however, “it cannot be said that Wirén has been greatly influenced by Sabanieff, [whose] mastodont [sic] phantasies could never inspire Wirén.” Wirén’s compositions do not show any discernable connection to his Parisian lessons, but rather show a stronger connection to the simplicity of composition found in the work of Wilhelm Stenhammar.

When Wirén returned home to Sweden, he began to delve into composition despite economic difficulties that prevented him from making his living as a composer alone. Wirén worked as a music critic for the Stockholm newspaper Svenska Morgonbladet, and was also appointed librarian to the Association of Swedish Composers, a position he held until 1947 when he was able to devote the entirety of his time to composition. The turn to full time composition was spurred onward by Wirén’s initial breakthrough as a composer in 1937 with his Serenade for Strings. “Wirén’s Serenade, light-hearted and humorous – so unusual in Sweden with its heavy and cold climate – had been preceded by a number of compositions, although Wirén, who is very self-critical, has discarded quite a few from his opus index.”

Fortunately, one work Wirén did not discard was his opus 7a Sinfonietta. This work from 1934 demonstrates all of the small-scale and simplistic qualities for which he was known, aspects easily recognizable in the later Serenade for Strings. Work on the

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103 Pleijel, 22.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Hodgson, 117.
Sinfonietta began in 1933 while Wirén was still in Paris. The original version of the work had been intended as a portion of the First Symphony Op. 3, but developed a life of its own through several series of revisions, the last of which occurred in 1940 when Wirén removed the original middle two movements and turned them into a separate work, Two Orchestral Pieces Op. 7b. 109

As it stands in final configuration, the Sinfonietta is a brief (ca. 20 minutes) work that reflects the simplistic ideals of Wirén’s compositional style. In 1966, Wirén wrote an article for the publication Musikalske selvportrætter (Musical Self-Portraits) in which he stated:

I never became a romanticist, but strove to attain the utmost simplicity, a classical discipline of expression, and only during a short transition period could any romanticism be found in my compositions. […] I have often found that my music has become more concentrated than I originally intended. […] When one has such a shortage of ideas one must be sparing with them. 110

These views of how to use sparse amounts of ideas in a simple, economic, classically-oriented style of composition can be seen throughout the Sinfonietta Op. 7a.

Hailed by Lennart Hedwall as “one of Wirén’s most frequently played compositions,”111 the Sinfonietta op. 7a is a work which has primarily been examined in terms of its impact on the op. 11 Serenade – Wirén’s most frequently played and popular work today. While comparing the two works can be a useful way of examining the compositional process for the Serenade, it does rather diminish the truly high quality of the Sinfonietta. Also, this way of looking at the Sinfonietta implies that it was only related to the style used in the Serenade and not an important work in the development of Wirén’s compositional abilities. Important to note, however, is that Wirén’s Sinfonietta was much more important than merely a pre-Serenade composition. The Sinfonietta was one of Wirén’s

109 Wirén, Preface.
110 Rude’n, 14.
111 Pkeijel, 23.
first published works upon graduating from the Conservatory, and could easily be seen as his first real compositional success as few of his earlier works are ever performed publicly. Composed in 1933-34, the *Sinfonietta* was presumably written as an original version of the *Symphony op. 3* which Wirén kept under lock and key (having yet to be performed publicly) as an experiment in the form.  

The small orchestra and extremely brief duration of the work suggest that Wirén’s original intent in writing a full symphony was to create a work more indicative of a classical era symphony. That he finally gave the work the title *Sinfonietta* is not necessarily a reflection of his intention to write a work of smaller scale than any of his other symphonic compositions. Rather, this denotation of being a small scale symphony might simply reflect the fact that the final product was two movements shorter than initially intended for the full symphony. The middle two movements of the original five movement symphony – Gavotte-Musette and Scherzo – were discarded and later published as *Two Orchestral Pieces op. 7b*. The end result of his many years of work and revision on the *Sinfonietta* was a piece which in “its sheer vitality and its attractive, laconic structure forms a link between French Neo-Classicism (Roussel, Honegger, Ferroud etc.) and the unmistakable introverted world of Nordic music.”

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112 Wirén, Preface.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
Scored for pairs of winds, two French horns, two trumpets, one trombone, timpani, snare drum and strings, the *Sinfonietta* immediately gives the impression of being a work written by Haydn or Mozart because of its limited orchestral forces. The opening measures of music, however, with the monotonous swirling of the viola and the humorous bassoon line seem to resemble a work from the 1940s or ‘50s by Leroy Anderson.\(^{115}\) (Example 23) The comedy of this duet is relieved somewhat when the full string section takes over in measure twenty-five. Here, a more march-like upper line drives the music forward, but still retains some of the Pops Concert-like qualities found in Anderson’s music. (Example 24)

\(^{115}\) Anderson, incidentally, was born a mere three years after Wirén to Swedish parents who had immigrated to the United States as children themselves. Anderson grew up with an interest in Scandinavian culture and languages, eventually earning a Ph.D. from Harvard in German and Scandinavian languages.
Not all of the first movement is light-hearted and humorous, however. The second theme of this sonata form movement could even be described as somewhat melancholy. Though the tempo remains constant, the speed of the music is cut significantly as the primary notational duration is the half-note. Played over a muted string section, the solo oboe presents an *espressivo* theme which is derived from the motion in the second violin accompaniment line. (Example 25) The theme is fairly brief, reflected also in the brevity of the entire second
thematic section: about thirty measures, as opposed to the sixty measures of the first thematic section. The first movement concludes with a four measure *meno mosso, attacca subito* in the first flute, and strings, which leads nicely into the *Andante* second movement. (Example 26)
By the conclusion of the first movement, it should have already become clear to the listener that this work is something wholly unique from the sinfoniettas of Janáček, Rimsky-Korsakov and Prokofiev. The bombast and seriousness of other works in the form are completely lost in the light-hearted themes in the first movement of Wirén’s work. Any seriousness that might have seemed to be missing from the first movement is easily made up for in the second movement which sounds more like Ralph Vaughan-Williams’ *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* than a light work by Leroy Anderson. The low piano strings throughout the movement which accompany solo wind instruments or a high solo first violin line reflect the compositional style of Vaughan-Williams, though Wirén’s opening melodic material is in his own simple style. (Example 27)
The slow, sad melodies from the opening of the movement are found consistently throughout the second movement, though in measure thirty-three the accompaniment for the solo French horn is changed to a slightly stately monotone rhythm in the flute and quick lines in the strings which seem to resemble the stereotypical musical metaphor for the rushing of wind. The slow qualities from the opening of the movement return after a mere eight measures, though the flute’s march-like qualities tie the movement into the third movement. Concluding with a transitional four measures of snare drum rolls, the connection with a military march is clear, particularly in conjunction with the *attacca subito* which leads into the opening four measures of solo snare drum rhythm in the final movement. (Example 28)

![Example 28](image)

The third movement of the work is in a clear sonata form, and thus there are two primary themes to be found throughout. The first, introduced by the first bassoon, is a rapid melody which seems to defy the simplicity found throughout the rest of the work. (Example 29) Were the theme played at a slower tempo – the movement is marked *Molto Allegro: 144–152* – the listener would see that despite the complex sound of the theme, it is actually quite simple in construction. The primary focus of the melody is between C and G, with only a few accidentals thrown in to confuse the true tonality of the theme.
The second theme is also introduced by a solo bassoon, though this time rather than being quick and sounding complex, the theme is slower (*Più lento: 96*) and simplified to the point of sounding almost silly. (Example 30) Here again the inclusion of several accidentals seem to confuse the listener as to the true tonality of the melody. Confusing tonality or not, the silly simplicity of the theme is much more fitting with the simple concept employed by the rest of the work than the first theme of the final movement.

Overall, the concept of a simplified Sinfonietta should be clear in this work by Wirén. From the light-hearted music of the first movement to the slow simple melodies in the second movement, and even the silly simplicity of the second theme in the finale, Wirén’s *Sinfonietta* is a prime example of Naïveté in music. The characteristics one might expect to find in a work of art considered Naïve are all present, from simplicity of form to simplicity of melody and pleasurable light-hearted themes. The only aspect of Naïve art lacking from this work is that there is no direct connection to anything specifically Swedish. We have seen with Naïve visual artists that to be considered a Naïve work of art there need not be anything
which directly ties the work to one’s homeland. Linnqvist, for example, painted several works which depict things he experienced while in France. Just as one might expect in a work of absolute music, there is no program which links the work to anything specifically Swedish in character, though had Wirén developed an interest in Swedish folk music the inclusion of such tunes may have made the connection clearer. As it stands, however, Wirén’s *Sinfonietta* represents a final attempt by Swedish composers to present the world with simple light-hearted music which would reflect the musical traditions of their country.

**Conclusion**

As we have seen, Naïveté in art can take many different forms. Visually, Swedish Naïvists were drawing directly on the simplicity employed by Rousseau in his Parisian paintings. The clarity of lines, strong and plain brushstrokes, and simplistic renderings of his subjects were all trademarks of a Naïve painter. These qualities were used in the same way in Sweden with the only major difference being that Swedish artists would frequently paint Swedish subjects. As with so many major art movements around the turn of the twentieth century, Naïvism can be found in the work of composers in Sweden. An examination of the Naïveté style of composition can also be applied to music of other countries. In France, for example, a look at Saint-Säens’ *Symphony on a French Mountain Air* may reveal that his intent in creating the work was similar to that of the Swedish Naïve composers. This look at music in Sweden should merely be a beginning point for a more detailed examination of Naïve art and music in all other countries creating music in the Western Art tradition.

The most notable difference between musical art movements such as Impressionism, Pointillism, and Naïvism is that in Sweden there is a precedent for writing music with a
Naïve quality. The work of Franz Berwald, while not popular in his own time, came to be appreciated and admired by music students just prior to the turn of the twentieth century. With such a drastic increase in performances of Berwald’s works, composers of the era could not help but be exposed to the work of Berwald. In particular it was the Naïve Symphony which can be seen as an influential element in the development of the Swedish compositional style for at least the first thirty years of the twentieth century. The “no-frills” work of Stenhammar, the straightforward melodies of Alfvén, the simple depictions of nature by Peterson-Berger and even the simplicity of Wirén can all be seen as derivatives of Naïve art. Just as Webern can be viewed as as much of a Pointillist as Seurat, these Swedish composers can be seen as Naïve artists, just as Rousseau and Linnqvist.

As with so many art movements which find their way into music, a Naïve style of music in Sweden was not terribly long-lived. Whereas simplicity and Swedish national elements were popular in the early years of the twentieth century, it seems as though it were almost inevitable that the modernism of the continent would find its way into Sweden and become popular. The works of Wirén and his “neo-classical” colleagues were the final element of Naïve art, and perhaps it was this connection with continental neo-classicism that began to draw other musical elements to Sweden. Following the height of “neo-classical” composition in the 1930s and ‘40s, Swedish composers began to see an influence from the complexities of composers like Stravinsky, Boulez, Hindemith and even Messiaen. These Swedish composers, such as Gösta Nystroem, Hilding Rosenberg, Ture Rangström and Kurt Atterburg, had not seen the popularity in Sweden accorded Stenhammar and Alfvén, in the earliest years of the twentieth century. However, as the twentieth century drew onward their music began to become more readily heard in concert. The influence of Naïve art on music
was at an end, but it can accurately be said that the composers whose works best represent this era are remembered as some of the most popular composers in Swedish history.
Bibliography


