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IMPRESSIONISTIC NOTES ON PRESENTING PETTERSSON'S **SIXTH** AND **ELEVENTH** AT THE  
CONSERVATORY CITY OF VIENNA UNIVERSITY

17. January 2013: About 20 people showed up, including a lady from the Swedish Embassy in Vienna, whose financial support had made my work possible. The conservatory's Professor Susana Zapke, who had organized the seminar, provided an introduction, while Dr. Peter Kislinger of the Vienna University, who has done some excellent radio programs for the Austrian Radio ORF on composers such as Pettersson, Eliasson, and Aho, kindly served on short notice as moderator.

I kept the Pettersson biography short and simple. The arthritis was certainly crippling and real, but that Gudrun had money so that Allan could compose also seems to be real. Just reeling off the same highly emotional AP quotes about this and that is in my opinion, 33 years after Allan's death, essentially counterproductive. What we have and what we should deal with is HIS MUSIC.

He had studied not only in Stockholm with renowned Swedish composers but also in Paris with René Leibowitz, and through Leibowitz thoroughly absorbed the music of the Second Viennese School. And this often comes through—when I hear the beginning of AP's FIFTH I sense in the four-pitch groups something subliminally reminiscent of Webern's (weak and cramped) String Quartet Op. 28—here set free by Pettersson into experiential time and space.

Ah yes, time and space. There is a concept or model or field or archetype for Scandinavian symphonic writing that I find to be fundamentally different from that of Central European thinking: one grounded not on consciously worked-out contrast and dialectic but rather on the intuitive experience of the symphony as JOURNEY through time and space. So I called the score of Pettersson's SIXTH a MAP, and holding up a topographic map of the mountainous Sarek National Park in the far north of Sweden, referring to my personal experience, called that map a SCORE. If we hike a rugged circle around the multi-peaked massif Akka, its continuous presence and changing form yield a rondo-like Gestalt. If we camp to the northwest of the mesa-like mountain Kisuris and then ascend to the icy lake at 1254 meters to the east of its summit, we are totally enclosed by somber talus slopes. Scrambling to the top of one of these slopes yields a view, an open panorama, and a complete transformation of the experiential musical tissue. A journey of several days from north to south or from east to west will involve lots of uneventful monotonous marching between gradually transforming shapes, whereby memories recur and fantasies develop: a symphony in time and space. More prosaically, I remember reading how Kalevi Aho drew on mountain shapes in northern Finland for the melodic lines of his Tuba Concerto.

Back to Allan Pettersson and to the beginning of his SIXTH. A bass creature appears, apparently self-sufficient, "soft but sonorous": G#-B-F-E-F#. Here I have to think of Pettersson's study with

Leibowitz: is this part of a Webern row? NO: it remains self-sufficient, circles irregularly around itself, its slow dragon breathing slightly pulsating: longer, shorter.

I call this first field *Das Vorhandene*, **that which Exists**. The upper strings trace soft lines over the sleepy dragon; the shapely sequence G-C#-C-A-G#, sluggishly but repeatedly intoned by the second violins and violas, though not the highest voice, achieves a profile within this primal ooze.

At Figure 6 this sequence, transposed a fifth higher, in a faster tempo, tonally supported by wobbling F minor pillars, acquires the status of a theme. I call it *Das Ich*, **the Self**. In the course of the work it will prove persistent: sometimes inhibiting, sometimes initiating. Characteristic for “the Self” is also that it has by Figure 8 already begun to disintegrate into four-note groups (which suggest the workings of the ELEVENTH ... but I’m getting ahead of myself). In the voice played by oboes and high cellos in the third and fourth measures after Fig. 8 one actually finds key four-note cells from the ELEVENTH (B—C—D—E) and TENTH (F—E—D—C#) symphonies, micro-premonitions within this brief disintegrating field which is then stiffened at Fig. 9 through an E—G—B—D#--F# sequence repeated three times by low woodwind and low strings. I call it *Riegel*, **Bolt**. Its harmonic compression E—G—F#--D# is then after Fig. 10 also repeated three times by low winds, brass, and percussion. I call it *Fluch*, **Curse**. These repetitions do not convey reassurance. They suggest rather a morbid fairy tale: *things I tell you three times are TRUE!* The interval molecules, capable of building up into melodic compounds, also suggest to me the influence of twelve-tone thinking, transmitted through Leibowitz.

Five measures after Fig. 11, over an **ascending snake** drawn out from the last three tones of **that which Exists**, violas and then timpani hurriedly tap uneasy triplets on F. These triplets will often return.

One measure after Fig. 13, over the snake and the triplets, a new aggressively descending idea is hammered out by the violins. I call it *Knote*, **Knot**. Its sequential extension leads only to empty space and then, one measure before Fig. 16, to a more extensively worked-out return of **the Self** (the theme-like structure of Fig. 6), which is then connected back to the **Knot** in the third and fourth measures after Fig. 18.

From here up to three measures before Fig. 29, the music, with its extensions and intervallic expansions of already existing cells, has aspects of classical *Durchführung*, development. Then a new acoustic space appears: that of suspended empty waiting, where violins sustain B natural in three octaves while high woodwinds and other strings twine around (or struggle to untie?) the **Knot**. Different event densities, that of concentrated development and that of empty almost eventless suspension, are here juxtaposed, in a manner different from but parallel to that of juxtaposing different thematic or harmonic structures. This variation in event density will turn out to be the ultimate forming principle for the macrostructure of the whole symphony.

This brief seminar is not the place to get into an exact blow-by-blow description of every motivic happening and detail. The point is that Pettersson works up his music here through differing combinations and extensions of several more or less related molecules, not through the presentation of contrasting groups. Phases interpenetrate one another. Starting three measures before Fig. 41, the cell we named **that which Exists** (the idea of the Introduction) returns in the bass register, underpinning figures of the **Knot** and the **Self**.

Four measures after Fig. 43, the descending tritone of that which Exists underpins a new cell: high woodwind playing the ascending tones F—A flat—G. I call this *Raubvogel*, **bird of prey**. Starting one measure after Fig. 44, it provokes a transposed spinoff of the F—E—F# segment of that which exists: violins repeatedly playing G flat—F—G, in rapidly dashed-off dactylic rhythm.

And the figures further interact. Reaching Fig. 49 I note that the cells have no clearly laid-down primary or secondary roles, but seem rather to be the acoustic equivalent of figures in a landscape: what one sees (hears) depends on where one turns one's head, or on where the composer's composing consciousness turns. I recall Pettersson's statement: "the work of art lives deep in the subconscious. I'm just a kind of gate-keeper, helping it to get out."

We don't have time here to detail every development, but I do want to point out one remarkable new shape: that played by piccolo and xylophone starting at Fig. 89. I call it *Kakerlaken*, **cockroach**. At first it crawls with wriggling antennas through a moronically insistent rhythmic ostinato of flutes and tenor drum, laid over molecular instabilities of **the Self** in the low register. Starting two measures before Fig. 92, other woodwinds, some brass, and the second violins provide a slimy chromatic background enabling more rapid and effective crawling. A more coherent version of **the Self** played by first violins and trumpets starting two before 95 leads, not unexpectedly, to cockroach-like behavior of the entire orchestral apparatus, which finally (one measure after 104) has knocked, shaken and wriggled its way through to an intensive statement of lines derived from **the Self**, a statement which shows how this self has developed: the parts are marked "desperate". I also note the ascending lines played by the low instruments from two before 105 to three before 106. I hear these as being a premonition of a much later phase of the work.

The hypertrophic tutti starting two before 114 and going up to two after 115 astounded many of those who were at the seminar hearing the piece for the first time: *Richard Wagner meets Edgar Varèse*: several cells contrapuntally combined over the thunder of timpani and SIX percussionists.

But of course it dissolves. And when the intensive triplet movement returns, at Fig. 118, it does not just carry out an empty expectant or threatening pulse but presents rather an (*how could Pettersson be so academic? This must mean something!*) AUTHENTIC FUGATO! The density and velocity of this fugato quickly transform it into a noise-like background for a dense counterpoint of more coherent albeit distressed figures related to the **Self** and the **Knot**.

This field breaks off, one measure after Fig. 123, as high woodwind and first violins sustain the third B—E flat. The second violins—and ONLY the second violins—play the first five notes of the **Self**. Here the topos of suspension has been welded to what seems to be the most thematic essence of the piece. And the second violins repeat this cell, with the last two notes drawn out. I've asked myself if this might perhaps be a miscalculation in the matter of orchestration. After years of thinking it over (and also relating it to my own compositional experience), I think Pettersson was right on target here. It is sometimes dramaturgically appropriate or even essential that essential ideas be delivered "from the side" or "from behind". They MUST struggle and strain to be heard. A spotlighted orchestration of this repeated utterly important cell would be banal.

What follows at Fig. 125 is regarded by virtually every listener as the turning point (peripetia) of the symphony, and has for me the character of an epiphany: a deep sudden awareness that will never be repeated. I call it *Todesbewußtsein*, **awareness of mortality**. The C minor tonality is completely unambiguous. The line played by the trumpets has the character of a chorale, but also anticipates—

while only suggestively and inexactly-- another important long-drawn-out line that we will later hear. The counterpoint of the horns and second violins draws upon developed elements of the **Self** and the **Knot**.

That the minor ninths so quickly turn into octaves C—C is not rationally justifiable. It has rather the character of a miracle, or a very sudden change in the weather or of a fluid camera pan over the figure of an androgynous Shiva. And, two measures before Fig. 130, C major is there. The epiphany was tough but at least briefly sweet.

#### **At this point, I stopped the CD player.**

I asked the participants for their reflections on what they had just heard and on their thoughts about how the piece might continue. I must mention here that I had in almost the last minute decided to use the 1976 live recording with Okko Kamu conducting the Norrköping orchestra. While the recently released BIS CD studio recording with Christian Lindberg conducting the same orchestra is in almost every aspect the best and most accurate realization of this work available on CD, I finally felt that the earlier recording still makes the best introduction to the piece.

I asked if the chorale-like passage just heard might perhaps turn out to be the heart and eventual culmination of the piece, an idea now to be subjected to development and evolution, but didn't get much in the way of answers. Reservation and puzzlement seemed ubiquitous. One young Austrian lady studying horn at the conservatory was very impressed by the heroic horn playing she'd heard in these 25 minutes and asked me if six or eight horns were used. I could only reply that there are four parts in the score, whereby it's conceivable that the orchestra might have staggered these among six players.

So: we continued. The tones F and A flat soon color the C major triad. Emphatic clockwork pushing and shoving on the part of trumpets and horns intensifies and at two before 134 the triplet pulsation on the insistent F returns. Starting at two before 136, we experience the extension and expansion of the three-note group that we first heard at Fig. 44. Pettersson's way of gnawing and expanding upon a little intervallic cell sometimes subliminally reminds me of some aspects of Indian classical music. One can at least fantasize the microtones in the Raga AP 6.

Once again: this seminar is not the place to get into every magnificent little detail of this score. But as I remarked on the "ticking clock" character of the Pettersson viola F triplets starting at Fig. 145, Dr. Kislinger made the interesting observation that digital technology will (or already has) made this association virtually obsolete. I don't want to get too off-topic, but would like to mention that the Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer has suggested "museums of extinct or endangered sounds".

Starting at four after 157, oboes and clarinets play a line that indirectly suggests the trumpets' statement heard at the epiphanic Fig. 125. At Fig 159 this line is fragmented into smaller interval groups. Three before 161, the upper strings, "*Con accento doloroso*", draw us definitively into the sorrowful hollow of E flat minor. When the strings (and only the strings) reactivate at Fig. 166, with moving bass lines and some interconnecting dialogue between the voices, this has for me the character of a **vestibule**: a space that one most briefly go through to again reach the main hall of the piece. Two after 166 and two after 167, first violins and the upper cellos emphasize the cell D flat—C—F. This looks back to the epiphany and forward to a coming open acknowledgement. Some

figures in this **vestibule**, particularly the ascending cello line starting three after 171, also look forward to the TENTH and ELEVENTH symphonies.

At Fig. 172 we see that this tangent has only served to draw us back down into the E flat minor hollow, even deeper. But at Fig. 176, the bass note changes to F.

**Three measures after Fig. 177, I stopped the CD player**, and we cut directly without interruption to another (small portable) CD player with rather tinny sound, positioned BEHIND the listeners, playing **Han ska släcka min lykta**, #24 of Pettersson's **Barefoot Songs**. At the end of the song: a direct cut back to the SIXTH. This montage had an effect not unlike some passages in the music of Charles Ives, for example from his **Fourth Symphony** or **Second Orchestral Set**.

I find it significant that Pettersson presents the orchestral version of his long-drawn-out song line through mixed timbre, that of cellos and English horn. Might it be conceivable to also have an alto voice sing along, not to the fore but blended in, so that the words of the text could be just half-perceived, with dreamlike or hallucinatory effect? This section also has a generally soft but insistent almost-martial tenor drum accompaniment, marked "sempre solo" in five-measure phrases that cross against the phrasing of the song. Presenting this appropriately in the sense of orchestral balance is certainly not easy. I have the feeling that the brain splits here: hypothalamus and frontal lobes are occupied with the song and its accompaniment, whereby the ticking of the tenor drum happens in the cerebellum, a mechanical process manifesting the eroding progress of time. If I could conduct and were to conduct this piece, I would at least experiment with having this passage played by a distant (offstage) tenor drum, playing *ff*, heard in the hall as *piano*. This radical opening-out of the acoustic space might perhaps correspond to Pettersson's (half?) conscious thoughts. Such things in this section also remind me of Birtwistle's orchestral piece **The Triumph of Time**, composed in 1971.

I find it quite good that the line of **Han ska släcka min lykta** corresponds only elliptically to the line played by the trumpets in the above-mentioned epiphany at Fig. 125. But if the trumpets had in the second measure after 125 played as their second tone not D but **D flat** ... another world ... such small details have the capacity to decisively change the effect of a long work.

The oscillating minor third E flat—C hangs on insistently two measures after 193 and then even more emphatically at Fig. 213. These are two of the moments in what we perceive as the second half of this symphony where I recall Stockhausen's vocal sextet **Stimmung**, composed in 1968. Pettersson lets a **black Aeolian harp** hang in the breeze, like a background drone instrument in Indian classical music, a harp that yields the tones B flat—C—D flat—E flat—F—G flat. Stockhausen's B flat overtone structures and the E flat prelude to Wagner's **Das Rheingold** are, for my way of hearing, not far away. Christian Lindberg's recording does in my opinion the best job of expressively animating the contours of these drone-filled Petterssonian fields of sorrow.

Ah yes, songs and drones. I take it that the title of Pettersson's **Barefoot Songs** was suggested by the text of Schubert's **Der Leiermann** (The Hurdy-gurdy Player), the 24<sup>th</sup> and last song of the **Winterreise**: "*Barfuß auf dem Eise wankt er hin und her*" (barefoot on the ice, he staggers here and there). **Han ska släcka min lykta** is also #24 of its cycle and has clear harmonic connections to Schubert's model.

Insistent fast triplets on F, probably the "little light" of the song's title, are played by the piccolo starting at two after 215, then joined by the first violins (playing in harmonics) at two after 221.

The line played by the first trumpet, flutes, and clarinets starting at Fig. 212 incorporates the little three-note chromatic figure we first heard at one after Fig. 44. I love this aspect of Pettersson's large-scale forms. Relatively small details can be presented 30 or 40 minutes apart in time and experiential space, and have for me the effect of the same mountain seen from different angles in the course of a long trek. Two after 218 flutes, oboes, and clarinets (a distinctly Mahler-like sound here) begin to play and to draw out a diatonic version of the same contour. Its repetitions lead me to microtonal fantasies.

After this figure has been expanded with octave leaps (Fig. 226-227, in a faster tempo) we can feel the hush two before 228 as a new element of mostly offbeat stabbing chords infiltrates and then takes over. These are of course the pitches of the previously mentioned ubiquitous **black Aeolian harp**. I described the passage from three before 229 to three after 234 as a "*Blanketparty für den Protagonist*". I didn't know how to express this in German but most people understood after I referred to a scene in Kubrick's **Full Metal Jacket** and after Dr. Kislinger noted that the idiom "*ihm die Decke geben*" was current in Austrian usage up into the 1960's. But one could also think of Allan's blacksmith father hammering away.

Two contrapuntally intertwined melodic lines struggle to be heard through the stifling stabs of brass and percussion, second violins and violas. Both have motivic connections to the song. The higher line, marked "espr. molto", played by the first violins doubled by the flutes and later also by the piccolo, gets through. The lower line, "con passione", played by the cellos on their (highest) A string, has a harder time. I find this to be perhaps an error of Pettersson's orchestration. The two clarinets, which rest in the first part of this passage and then join the oboes in unison two after 231, adding little to the sound, should in my opinion play together with the cellos throughout this entire passage. Actually, two BASS clarinets might work well here, playing in their clarino register parallel to that of the high cellos.

The ascending line in the bass instruments starting three after 232 suggests **Parsifal**, and has, as I previously pointed out, been fleetingly anticipated at two before Fig. 105. It clearly serves the processes of dissolution and reconciliation, processes furthered by the descending line of the first violins starting at two after 241, a line that we had first heard from the woodwind at four after 157.

The eighth note triplets on F which we first heard at three before Fig. 12 show up for the last time two after 248, quite strangely: played by the first desk of basses, interspersed between glissandi where they moan a minor ninth down from their high G flat.

After Fig. 250 B flat minor is total and we hear the last long line of the piece, drawn from the song, played by the first trumpet and first violins. Four after 257 F major, *pp*; and then B flat minor to the end. Pettersson will reverse this progression at the end of his NINTH. The last sound of the piece: a soft bass drum roll and the contra B flat of basses and contrabassoon, whereby I would have the contrabassoon play an octave lower, sub contra B flat.

After a couple of minutes of near-silence it gradually became possible for Prof. Zapke, Dr. Kislinger and I to draw out reactions from the twenty or so listeners. Connections were felt to Bruckner and Sibelius, and at first also to USA minimalists like Glass and Riley. But we soon agreed that Pettersson's use of repetition is fundamentally different from that of the more-or-less-mellow minimalists, in that his repetitions tend and intend to convey psychic disturbance and oppression. Dirk d'Ase, who teaches composition at the conservatory, referred to Pettersson's repetitions as

“*verbohrt*”, a word that means something between “pigheaded”, “stubborn”, and “cranky”. He also pointed out the tendency to use the orchestra as more or less a mass, with relatively little use of solo instruments, including a quasi-choric use of the percussion, with the persistent triangle in unusual contexts getting a particularly thorough workout. The young lady hornist felt that “*die Musik vermittelt Leid, und JA, man kann mitleiden*” (the music conveys sorrow, and yes, one can feel along).

I tried to provoke thoughts as to whether a dramaturgically different unfolding of the symphony after the **epiphany** at Fig. 125 might have been possible. Could this chorale-like idea have entered into conflict with what we had previously heard, and then either lost out, or perhaps come to dominate the work? Or could the opening cells of **that which Exists**, or the theme-like structure of **the Self**, perhaps have played a crucial role in the work’s later phases, either linearly or as compressed harmonic structures? And was the ultimately hymnic presentation of **Han ska släcka min lykta** consciously planned from the beginning of the composition, which stretched out from 1963 to 1966, and is said to have been interrupted for reasons of poor health? My intuitive feeling is NO. I suspect Pettersson decided on the so prominent presentation of the song at some point around or somewhat before the middle of the composition. The fact that the motivic cells of the song begin to clearly emerge only *after* the epiphany speaks for my theory. But we would need to see his sketches (in the Uppsala University archives?) to know for sure.

Then we got into what is in Vienna certainly a relevant theme: comparing Allan Pettersson’s way of integrating his songs into his symphonies with that of Gustav Mahler. Just considering Mahler’s first four symphonies, we find on the one hand songs which are actual symphonic movements (**Urlicht** in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, then the fourth and fifth movements of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the last movement of the fourth), and on the other hand movements where the original song is expanded and serves as a source of “material”: the first and third movements of the 1<sup>st</sup>, the third movement of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and the third movement of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. There is no movement in any symphony by Pettersson that just consists of a song. In our SIXTH the song is gradually arrived at and then presented whole like a faded picture from an old family album. In the FOURTEENTH the song basically functions as a passacaglia theme. In the **Second Violin Concerto** the long culminating presentation of the song is something that is *striven* for. In other symphonies (such as the unfinished FIRST) the song appears as a brief image or quote.

And then we talked about the global form, the *Gestalt* of Pettersson’s SIXTH. In almost everything written about this work one reads that the second half of the symphony is some kind of “coda”. I disagree. In the terms of the Viennese classics a coda carries on a further phase of what happened in the course of the development, drawing further conclusions, and fundamentally using similar principles of formation, albeit perhaps in a concentrated or diluted way. What happens in Pettersson’s piece is for me quite different. The epiphany situation of Fig. 125 acts to dissolve the music’s ability to form complex syntax and is (despite several polyphonic protest rallies along the way) the inciter not only of time extension but also of musical tissue degeneration, meant here not pejoratively but existentially. In the terms of dream logic the symphony’s shape is not that of ONE or of TWO, but that of ONE WHICH IS BROKEN, quite original and unusual in the symphonic literature.

Yes, dream logic. Sigmund Freud spoke of “*Verdichtung, Verschiebung, und Verdrängung*” as being the fundamental processes of dream (or art) formation. Condensation, displacement, and repression (or: supersession) are concepts that can help with the understanding of Pettersson’s music.

What about the stature and value of Pettersson's SIXTH? I agree with Christian Lindberg's opinion that AP's SIXTH is on the level of Mahler's SIXTH, and could (should) several decades after Pettersson's death become as well known and highly regarded as Mahler's SIXTH did in the course of the 1960's and 70's. The reactions of the participants to this statement were generally thoughtful and reserved, but not negative.

*We took a break. An Iranian student who had been deeply impressed and was fascinated by the idea of "Scandinavian symphonic thinking" showed me the information on Pettersson recordings that he had collected through spotify on his smartphone.*

Seven years separate the completion of Pettersson's SIXTH from that of his ELEVENTH. He had in this time experienced not only a remarkable success with the premiere of his now relatively well-known SEVENTH, but also a serious deterioration in his health that resulted in a nine-month hospital stay. Recalling this experience, he wrote about what he called the "tunnel of death". His TENTH and ELEVENTH are said to have been jointly conceived during this period. The TENTH is a hard, loud, and nasty fighting machine. In the ELEVENTH, which (like the TENTH) unfolds only in fast tempos, life, faced with imminent death, flows rapidly through and down but not quite out the tunnel. We can try to understand the frescoes and figures and graffiti on the tunnel's walls.

Over the first measure one reads: half note = 80; (*sempre cantato e un po' agitato*) = always lyrical and a bit agitated. And we start *in media res*, not with a preparatory texture or with a theme or motivic cell, but with an immediately unfolding polyphonic field of gently intertwined ascending and descending lines. A middle voice played by the cellos, rising from the E of their tenor register to their highest C, is marked in the score as *solli*, but is unfortunately not adequately emphasized in either of the two available CD recordings of this piece. The modally inflected tonality of a minor is pretty clear. Four before Fig. 2, the violas, doubled by the first flute, are once again marked *solli*, and play up to three after Fig. 4 something that certainly has the character of a theme being presented after a brief introduction. The first and second violins are here muted, keeping their gently ascending or descending rhythmically even lines in the background. Violas and flute: but the flute already splits off from the violas on the second note, playing D sharp against the violas' F, then doubles in thirds for two measures before taking its own gently spiraling path. The bifurcation of individual lines within a generally three- to six-part polyphonic texture is in this work not unusual, and sometimes the norm.

Four after Fig. 4, after the violas have finished singing out their emblematic theme-like song, (which we will hear again only **at the very end** of the piece) we hear ascending and descending tissue from the opening measures, which then at Fig. 5 receives a new impulse from the syncopated figure of the oboes. Agitated syncopated figures move up and down, while the violas and then the cellos play a line that seems to belong to the string quartet literature somewhere between Beethoven and Reger. Let's note the interlocking of the basses, cellos, and contrabassoon on the upbeat to three before Fig. 6: a single voice turns into dirty heterophony, not uncommon in this piece. Important as well is the cell played by the first violins in the two measures before Fig. 6: expanded, it will later wave like a flag in the wind. Two before Fig. 7, the piccolo, marked "solo", suggests the beginning of the pseudotheme that we had recently heard from the violas. But this pseudotheme has no dominant status: four-note figures in quarter- or eighth note movement move up and down, are intensified through expanded orchestration (including the new timbre of the celesta), rock back and forth on the



tritone B—F natural, and then, four before Fig. 10, settle into a fast eighth-note pulsation on the fourth F—B flat.

Basses, timpani, and low woodwind persistently pulse on this fourth up to two before Fig. 12. Overlaid on this background are not only the shifting four-note motivic cells that dominate much of this work, often imitated and mirrored in not-too-exact mirrors, but also, starting two before Fig. 10, a figure beginning with a D flat—D flat octave leap, played successively by the first and second violins, violas, and cellos. This octave creature will get prominent intensely canonic exposure towards the end of the work.

One before Fig. 14, we meet another new creature: a rhythmically aggressive motif played by the low strings and then immediately imitated by the horns, counterpointed by dactylic leaps and sighs of the violins and by an ascending somewhat permuted whole-tone scale of the first trombone. The aggressive motif seems to have a “summoning” role and indirectly recalls the fanfare-like figure that appears at the beginning and then shapes much of the progress of the TENTH. It soon gets hard to differentiate primary and secondary voices within this thicket of sound. I don’t mean this in any negative sense. The zone between polyphony and heterophony is a great place to explore. But when I hear AP’s TENTH and ELEVENTH I sometimes think of the *Rondo-Burleske* movement from Mahler’s NINTH. While Mahler, drawing upon his own experience as conductor, orchestrated with clear dynamic differentiations yielding an orchestral sound of intense plasticity, Pettersson often just gives us the *prima materia* without much dynamic differentiation, thereby making the task of conducting and properly realizing his music even more difficult. A more differentiated structuring of dynamics could in my opinion have helped Pettersson better realize his intentions, even though the situation that voices MUST sometimes struggle to be heard seems to be an integral part of his artistic intention.

Up to Fig. 20, the fanfare-like figure appearing at Fig. 14 acts as the prime mover; then the music briefly seems to want to return to regular eighth note pulsation, as it did four before Fig. 10, this time in F major + minor. Fast ascending figures recalling the openings of both the NINTH and TENTH symphonies soon stifle this, but by two before Fig. 22 we have entered a zone where a syncopated quarter-note pulsation alternating between E flat minor and the B flat—F fifth serves a backdrop for the rapid interlocking of motivic cells that freely interact and combine within the steady pulse.

This kind of activity begins to exemplify the fundamental texture of the ELEVENTH: intensely polyphonic, fluid, deeply logical, but ultimately irrational, and slippery as an eel. In his later symphonies 10-16 Pettersson achieves, far more than in his more widely appreciated symphonies 5-9, something close to a stream-of-consciousness kind of composition, something close to the surrealist *écriture automatique*.

Even more than in the case of the SIXTH, this brief seminar is not the place to get into every detail of this immensely complex score, which consistently unfolds at a more rapid pace than that of the earlier work. But I do want to note the entrance of the xylophone at five after Fig. 26: an instrument that played an important role in the TENTH. In the following measure, interlocking quintuplet eighth notes of two flutes and the first oboe, all in their low registers, laid over *five* other voices, show that Pettersson is pretty utopian about can be conveyed and heard. I like this. Two measures later, some woodwind experience a brief flashback to the very beginning of the TENTH. The mosaic is dense and its pieces are often small.

Two after 28, the basses begin to ground events by insistently plucking F natural. F and B flat have established themselves as dominant fields respective to the opening a minor. When, at four before Fig. 30, the timpani begin to double the F of the basses, I begin to get the feeling of a soft shamanistic drum, perhaps ultimately related to Sibelius' **En saga**. Persistent throughout this passage, found in many voices, is the little rhythmic cell: eighth rest—eight note—two slurred descending eighth notes, recalling “sighing” motifs of the Baroque, drawn into a hyperactive but hushed motoric movement.

The passage beginning four before Fig. 33 is the most complex and intense tutti that we have up to now heard in the piece. All three trumpets, the first trombone, and the cellos play a broad motif ultimately derived from the figure of the first violins in the two measures before Fig. 6. Vastly extended, it does now waves “like a flag in the wind” over a complex texture. The ascending and then descending figure played by tuba and contrabassoon, D—F—B—E—A flat—E—B—F, will prove significant in the further unfolding of the work, but (apart from the just-mentioned “flag”) no less than SIX distinct lines, as well as several accompanying or semi-decorative structures, compete for attention. The composer's intentions have here utopian aspects that could however be fairly well realized with a spatial distribution of the orchestra or with the changing amplification of different groups.

After Fig. 35, this field is closed by octave F's of the timpani and by the descending figure A flat—G—F—E, played by two trombones under an emphatically F minor statement by cellos, piccolo, and first violins, soon answered by an emphatically ascending scalar figure of the oboes and clarinets. But fluidity lasts only four measures before being curtly intersected by the soft persistent motoric eighth-note tapping of trombones and horns, A flat and C in octaves, underlined by the timpani's roll on the tonic F of F minor. Pettersson does not present contrasting thematic ideas, but rather alternates fields of ungrounded polyphonic fluidity with fields where the proliferating self-generating diverging lines play out over clear groundings that don't slow down but sometimes rather accelerate the velocity of the lines' bacteria-like asexually reproductive proliferation. Starting at four after Fig. 36, there is some remarkable writing for the basses, with independently eruptive crescendi to *ff*, perhaps recalling and expanding a detail from the last movement of Sibelius' FIFTH. From 5 after Fig. 38 to four after Fig. 39 these basses work out the previously mentioned baroque-like figure in their highest register, whereby the dynamic could perhaps not be just *piano* as written in the score, but rather incorporate waves of  $p < ff > p$ . Or are the written dynamics in this passage perhaps the perfect statement of the composer's intention: everything soft, the rapid interplay of fragile interlocking memories as we slide along and down the tunnel?

Four after Fig. 40 F minor is clearly there, A flat and C being rhythmically animated by the three trombones and tuba, locked in with the F of the timpani, always *piano*, rapidly flowing and hushed. We hear a stream of self-generating polyphony, slippery as an eel, gleefully self-absorbed, a glass bead game played out after the aggressive discharge of the TENTH. Interjections on the part of the celeste, like little jewels or sunlit beads of dew, contribute to the specific color of this passage.

Four before Fig. 48, just after a last interjection of the softly thumping F minor pedal node, the texture suddenly clears a bit, but there is no fundamental change. The two clarinets, imitated by contrabassoon and fourth horn (two bass Wagnertuben might work better) play a line once again recalling Sibelius' **En saga**, whereby the clarinets then diverge, being joined by the first violins playing in harmonics two octaves higher. Four before Fig. 49 the contrabassoon and then the tuba begin to insistently repeat the ascending-then-descending motif that we first noted around Fig. 33. Two

before Fig. 54, doubled in speed, after an increase of density and dynamics, this bass motif has clearly taken on the role of driving force and primary voice, spreading its register through the participation of the piccolo three octaves higher, while the upper strings, moving in five-part polyphony mostly in even half notes, pushed on now and then by the tenor drum, seem to in be searching in the course of their tired long march for a point of cadential repose.

Two before Fig. 57, over continuous five-part string polyphony, an insistent rhythmic figure that has connections back to patterns that were played by the low strings pizzicato starting at two after Fig. 15 is repeated six times by brass and timpani. This insistence is leading to some kind of change—and two before Fig. 59 we find **the very first tempo change in the piece: *stringendo***. Woodwind thirds reminiscent of a motoric passage about 15 minutes into the NINTH, playing against a three-voice string counterpoint, speed up to the tempo whole note = 56. Up to two after Fig. 66, we experience the most homogenous, aggressive, and clearly goal-directed phase heard so far in the piece. Eighth note triplet squirming begun by the basses comes to occupy more and more of the orchestral apparatus. Between Fig. 64 and Fig. 66 we hang in the air, as ascending and descending figures, partly with canonic imitations, cross and intersect. The plucked basses are playing the cell introduced by the first trombone at Fig. 14. “Unmotivated” motivic connections over wide spaces of time are for this work typical. We stand on the mountaintop lookout and turn our heads: in the unconscious time and space are relative, and all elements are simultaneously present.

What begins three after Fig. 66 contains the most intense and aggressive buildup in the piece. The emphatic rhythmic figure begun by cellos, basses, tuba, and tenor drum, gradually joined by other instruments, will be repeated fifteen times. It is descended from what the brass played at two before 57, and is at first counterpointed by ascending two-note groups in the woodwinds that recall the first pages of the TENTH. In its insistence, this motif seems to me to have the character of a political **slogan**, rhythmically shouted in a mass demonstration. It may look forward to the choral TWELFTH, whose text is taken from Pablo Neruda’s *Los Muertos de la Plaza*. Like the “epiphany” chorale theme in the SIXTH, this idea appears only once in the work, and as in the case of the SIXTH seems to represent a determining experience or situation that can by its nature **ONLY** occur once. The orchestral crowd shouts and stamps, while the xylophone (so prominent in the TENTH) stubbornly hammers away on octave E naturals, adamantly opposed to the main tonalities. Between Fig. 69 and Fig. 70, the music *slows down*, returning to the symphony’s basic tempo half note = 80.

One before Fig. 73, as the fifteenth repetition of the **slogan** breaks off, virtually every listener has the feeling of experiencing an archetypical **recapitulation**. But what low woodwind, bass trombone, and tuba pompously intone here is no principal or even secondary idea of the piece, but rather just a tangential thought, that which was played in canonic structures by the strings starting at two before Fig. 54. Very soon, by Fig. 74, ideas of recapitulation have been deflected. Sighing figures and pulsating string patterns, over softly insistent percussion pulsation, are overlaid by two-voice polyphony of the first violins and upper woodwind. Three after Fig. 76, sixteenth notes (with the xylophone) begin to animate the texture, and one after 73 the celesta (so important in this work) once again joins in. This field intensifies in accordance with already established norms, and then breaks off abruptly one measure after Fig. 83.

Or better stated, in cinematic terms: we cut to the strings’ self-examination in mirrors. At first, the first and second violins, both divided, canonically imitate figures derived from what we first heard long ago, shortly after Fig. 5. When, starting at one before Fig. 84, divided violas and then divided

cellos canonically imitate (in inversion) the octave leap figure that we first heard two before Fig. 10 and have since then hardly heard and perhaps just barely recall, we can realize that we are in a later phase of life than that which was so intensely presented in the SIXTH, and that memories and images whose origins are widely separated in time can now freely collide and interact. The eight-part rotating canonic tower of the strings—like a distant peak that one could have perhaps made out through the mists at the beginning of this **SYMPHONI no 11** trek—has by Fig. 91 not grown and intensified, but rather gradually wound its spirals back down to structures recalling those we heard long ago, between Fig. 5 and 6.

When at four before Fig. 92 the low woodwind reenter with the “tangential” figure that we heard at the point of “recapitulation” one before Fig. 73, the composer seems to hint that this figure was perhaps, even though tangential, *essentially* tangential to the symphony’s unknown, unknowable, and ultimately (while perhaps fleetingly experienced) unseen center. We can spell it in German: C—H—A—B ... it’s almost B—A—C—H.

Starting at two before Fig. 92, trombones and tuba play a slowed-down version of the prototype for the **slogan**. At Fig. 93, horns in octaves bellow a figure ultimately derived from the rough calls heard at Fig. 14, a figure that will later experience a transformed return in the FIFTEENTH. Then gently ascending and descending lines intertwine, clearly recalling the work’s opening. As at two after Fig. 95 the violas, doubled by the clarinets and by the muted second and third trumpets, play the emblematic pseudotheme heard at four before Fig. 2, we can finally recognize this entity for what it is: the NAME of the symphonic creature, but not necessarily its essence. Six measures after Fig. 95, just one measure is significantly marked *ritenuto*, and voices split: the newly entered first trumpet, unmuted, clashes with A natural against the G sharp of the second and third, after which the music is driven by a quarter note timpani pulsation to an uneasy A minor ending.

WHAT DOES THIS PIECE MEAN? WHERE DOES IT TAKE US? About twelve years ago a well-known German conductor (who has been music director of a major Scandinavian orchestra) was staying with me as house guest. I showed him the score and played him the Segerstam / Norrköping CD of the work. He could only nod in puzzlement and say, “*schwer, darüber etwas zu sagen*” (it’s hard to say something about this).

The participants in the seminar were generally impressed, but also somewhat puzzled by this work.

I can relate to the evident intensity of Pettersson’s creative process and find it remarkable that after a nine-month hospital stay with near-death experiences the metabolic rate of his music didn’t slow down but rather ACCELERATED: transitions are here (relative to the syntax prevalent in Symphonies 5-9) brief or nonexistent. The music has taken on a higher degree of objectivity relative to the composer’s earlier work, and I can here follow Pettersson’s lapidary statement “*I only present information*”. Transformations are often sudden. In the case of the SIXTH, I was able to tag many ideas with names, as if they were Wagnerian Leitmotifs, unfolding and interactively transforming over longer stretches of experiential time. In the ELEVENTH, lasting only 25 minutes, every idea is (at least theoretically) capable of suddenly interacting with every other idea. Names aren’t needed: attractions are sudden and free, and there is little in the way of hierarchical order.

We talked at some length about why Allan Pettersson is still a relatively little-known composer. Seen from a Viennese point of view, coming from Sweden certainly doesn’t help. Those who are involved with what is called “*Neue Musik*” tend to automatically underestimate all works coming from

England or the Scandinavian countries that are not explicitly oriented to a kind of central European thinking that regards itself as “progressive”. And for those with a more “conservative” orientation, the Scandinavian symphony consists of Sibelius and Nielsen and no one else. Pettersson’s works are generally long and demanding, and those of the late period are quite difficult to convincingly play and conduct. His way of writing for the orchestra certainly “works”, in that it conveys a powerful and unique characteristic sound, but his handling of the orchestra doesn’t have the virtuosity of, let’s say, Mahler. His music has little or no connection to what was in his time referred to as the “avant-garde”, but it has a strongly individual character, demanding (and rewarding) concentrated listening. In German one says “*es gerät zwischen zwei Stühle*”, which comes out in English roughly as “it falls through the cracks in the floor”.

I hope that seminars like this can help to close the cracks and provide a small contribution towards giving this great and challenging composer of the second half of the twentieth century the recognition he so richly deserves. But PERFORMANCES of the works are what we really need.

*Wien, am 6. Mai 2013*

July 2013: since I wrote the above, I have learned from an informed source that the sketches for the SIXTH are NOT in the Uppsala University Pettersson Archive.