

Muohta – Language of snow

by Nils Henrik Asheim

The Composer

Nils Henrik Asheim (b.1960), a Norwegian composer and organist, is also active as a pianist and curator. He has written several chamber music pieces, works for symphony orchestra, organ and choir, as well as projects in public space and also using theatrical elements.

Asheim's compositional style is characterized by a modernist attitude, often focused on sonic and tactile aspects. His music is usually built up of several parallel layers of time, where recurring material is varied, creating a form that seems open and self-generating.

Asheim has been acclaimed by critics for his personal style of improvisation on the organ. Since 2012 he has made his mark as the resident organist of the new concert hall in Stavanger. Here he has displayed an innovative way of programming activities around the organ and managed to get a large audience for the instrument.

Asheim started as a composition pupil of Olav Anton Thommessen and made his debut at the UNM nordic festival for young composers in Helsinki at the early age of fifteen. In 1978 he was awarded the EBU Rostrum prize for his work Ensemblemusikk for 5. He subsequently went on to study organ and composing at the Norwegian Academy of Music and the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam.

In 2018 Asheim was awarded the prestigious Nordic Council Music Prize for "Muohta – Language of Snow". He is also a recipient of the Arne Nordheim prize, the Edvard prize and the Lindeman prize, as well as twice the Spellemannspris (Norwegian "Grammy"). In 2018 Nils Henrik Asheim was made a Knight of the Royal Order of St.Olav.

Muohta - Language of snow

Written for choir and string orchestra in 2017, Nils Henrik Asheim's *Muohta - Language of snow* is structured in 18 small movements, or miniatures, each drawing inspiration from Sámi words used to describe or define snow in different conditions or with different characteristics. The title of the work is the common Sámi word for snow and the subsequent words used as the titles to each movement were chosen to somehow convey Asheim's personal experience of snow whilst also demonstrating the Sámi cultural relation to snow.

In his piece *Reading the surface: an introduction to Muohta*, Simon Cummings notes that “a simple example of this ‘mirroring’ of personal experience can be heard in the way Asheim utilises the performers, using the strings to provide an abstract environment or ‘landscape’ that is then ‘inhabited’ by people or other creatures represented by the choir.”

Using a language largely unknown to an international audience, makes the words function more as sound elements rather than lyrics and the treatment that Asheim makes of them, fragmenting them and deconstructing them in syllables or single phonemes further emphasizes this inkling.

Regarding timbre, texture and orchestration construction, this work is characterized by a great variety of extended techniques and also by a great variety of textural elements. This textural variety encompasses not only dense contrapuntal writing but also pointillism, ostinato and poly-ostinato textures. In some movements, this variety of textural elements seem to convey a connection to the various kinds of snow conditions described in the piece, while in other movements the relationship is more ambiguous which seems to sustain the idea that Asheim does not intend for the music to be “naturalistic” or “authentic” representation of the snow conditions but rather a personal and “poetic” interpretation.

1. ulahat

...snow-covered winter road that is barely visible

Ulahat's structure is based on four short phrases of 5, 5, 3 and 4 measures. The first three phrases are built upon the same musical materials while the last phrase uses contrasting material in all of the musical elements and serves as a bridge to the second movement. This movement is based on a diatonic D-E-G-A-B scale in the choir with an added single C-sharp in measure 9.

In melodic terms, the Altos and Basses carry an angular melodic line, heard sung by the choir at the opening bars:

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The melody consists of ten measures. The notes are: C4 (half), E4 (half), A4 (half), E4 (half), G4 (half), C#5 (half), C4 (half), E4 (half), C#5 (half), and A4 (half). Above the staff, the chords for the first five measures are labeled: C, Em, Am, Em, G. Above the staff, the chords for the last five measures are labeled: C#m, C, E, C#m, A. The notes are placed on the staff as follows: C on the first line, E on the second line, A on the second space, E on the second line, G on the second space, C# on the third line, C on the second line, E on the second space, C# on the third line, and A on the second space.

Example 1 - *ulahat* melody and simplified harmonies in bars 1–10.¹

¹ Adapted from Cummings, Simon, *Reading the Surface*

The orchestral plane is based on the choir's scale but with an added C. In measures 6 and 9, the composer creates harmonic tension with the notes C-sharp and G-sharp juxtaposing the diatonic scale in measure 6 and measure 9. Before the four bridge measures, Asheim introduces an expressive element of minor second E and D-sharp, in the 1st Violins answered by the 2nd Violins an octave lower, in canon style (measures 12 and 13). Despite the textural and timbral contrast with the previous phrases, the last four measures are still based on the initial diatonic scale.

As presented in example 1, the Altos and Basses carry the melodic line in the first phrase, while the Sopranos and Tenors sustain a pedal note. In the second phrase, these roles are inverted but return in the third phrase. The texture in this movement shows an apparent contrast between the choir and the orchestra which might not be perceived as such if you consider the fact that the short homorhythmic eighth notes of the orchestra correspond, in effect, to an overall sustained idea. The last phrase, whilst using the harmonic material of the previous phrases, introduces textural and timbral elements which will be explored in the second movement.

2. čadgit

...the first light and sparse snowflakes appearing before a snowfall

The movement begins connected to the previous one by the Tenors. While, at first glance, the writing in the choral part seems to be harmonically built upon intervals A and C (minor third), the fact that it uses *sprechgesang* technique conceals any real harmonic sense. The timbral and textural elements in the choir are a continuation of the material used at the bridge.

2. čadgit
...de første lette og spredte snøfuggene før snøfall

18

S
a - d a

A
gi - t gi t

T
a č č

B
[de] d - gi d

Example 2 - the pointillistic character of the choral part.

The orchestral parts are also based on the minor-third interval. The successive entrances of the strings using the minor-third create harmonic aggregates with both chromatic and tonal construction.

As an example, we can highlight the chromatic aggregate of measure 18 created by the juxtaposition of 2 minor thirds: F#-A and F-G#(Ab); A tonal example can be found in measure 20: F#-A and C#-E.

The image shows a musical score for measures 18 and 19, featuring four string parts: Vln.1, Vln.2, Vla., and Vcl. The score is written in 4/4 time. Above the staves, there are technical instructions: "legno ricochet: fall med buen (ikke for fort) fra stolen og bortover langs strengen" and "legno" above the notes. The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) and *ppp* (pianissimo). The *ppp* parts include the instruction "alle tremoloer starter uørbart". The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and accents.

Example 3 - Measures 18 and 19, exemplifying the harmonic and textural construction of the strings' writing.

Texturally, this movement can be described as pointillistic, elaborated over short, syllabic, elements in repeated notes, in the choir. The strings also present a pointillistic texture but much more elaborated in terms of its density and melodic, rhythmical and sound construction. The technical instructions provided by the composer for the strings are meant to convey the idea that the tremolos, written in the lower voices of the *divisi*, are intended to start inaudible and as a “resonance” of the “legno ricochet” played by the upper voices of the *divisi*. This “legno ricochet”

is to be produced by hitting the string near the bridge and moving it up towards the neck as the bow bounces over.

3. áinnádat

...fresh snow covering tracks, without making them disappear completely

The idea that dominates this movement stems from the minor second interval, D-sharp - E, presented by the first and second Violins at the end of the first movement (measure 12). This interval is used both vertically, like in the first Violins in measure 1, but also melodically in the Sopranos. The Tenors, whilst using the same motif as the Sopranos, use a major second instead, thus adding a layer of dissonance.

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the third movement, starting at measure 27. It features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and Violin 1. The vocal parts are marked with *p* halv-stemme and include the lyrics "á - inn- á - inn-". The Alto and Bass parts include the lyrics "á - inn- á - da - t á - a-". The Violin 1 part is marked with *p* pont, *mf p*, and *sim.*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Example 4 – Excerpt of the beginning of the third movement showing the E - D-sharp interval used vertically and horizontally.

This movement is made up of three phrases, divided into 4+4+3 measures. This division also has a very clear correspondence in the musical elements used. The first two phrases share three main textural elements: a pedal E carried by the first Sopranos and first Tenors, reinforced by the first and second Violins with a syncopated character; a melodic, syncopated motif, in the second Sopranos and second Tenors; a glissando gesture, the third element, present in the Altos and Basses and reinforced by the Cellos. The Violas also carry melodic motifs that act as counterpoint to the Sopranos and Tenors motif. The Contrabasses reinforce the accents of the first and second Violins. The last phrase, with three measures, has a very different character: the choral part repeats the word "áinnádat" once more but this time the Altos and Tenors have the glissando gesture whilst the Sopranos and Basses present the *sprechgesang* rhythmic element that the Altos sang in the first phrase (measure 28). The strings have two pentachords that move from one to the other in glissando which clearly derives from the Cello material from the beginning of this movement as well as the diatonicism of the first movement.

4. časttas

...relatively small undulations in snow created by wind

This movement is based on two main elements: the introduction of canonic techniques and string material generated through the juxtaposition of eight different ostinato lines. The canonic technique appears in the articulation between the first Sopranos and second Tenors, and the second Sopranos and first Tenors. The ostinatos in the strings exhibit great rhythmical variety of the different ostinato lines that are progressively added, in canonical fashion, from the first Violins down to the Contrabasses. The composer also uses a re-expositional technique: the ostinato line of the 1st Violins is a re-exposition of what was presented in the first movement.

[next page: example 5]

4. častka
...forholdvis små, bølgeformede snævrer dannet av vind

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of the 4th movement. It features vocal parts for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B), along with string parts for Violin 1 (Vln.1), Violin 2 (Vln.2), and Viola (Vln.). The score includes lyrics in Norwegian and dynamic markings such as *pp* and *f*. The vocal parts show a canonic interaction, and the string parts feature a juxta-posed ostinato line.

Example 5 - Excerpt of the beginning of the 4th movement. Notice the canonic interaction between the voices in the choir and the juxtaposition of the ostinato line in the strings.

In measures 43 and 44 there is a re-exposition of the canonic melody in measures 39 and 40 but with a rhythmical augmentation at the end of the phrase.

The movement's harmony is based on the last diatonic pentachord of the 3rd movement. At the end of measure 41, the composer juxtaposes a C-sharp minor chord to this diatonic sonority. Maximum tension is achieved in measure 44 where the diatonic sonority from the beginning is combined with a triad G-sharp, A-sharp and C-sharp and is further emphasized by the D-sharp in the vocal parts. This dissonant climax is resolved in measure 45, resting in a diatonic aggregate. During this entire harmonic process, there is a sense of stability that is provided by the constant repetition in the Violins of the note E, throughout the movement which, together with the rhythmic component of the Contrabasses, also serves as the pulse.

5. muovllahat

...snow so deep that you have to wade to get through

This movement's form is built upon small units comprising one measure with anacrusis. Each of these units is created by the imitative dialogue distributed as follows:

- a. The Soprano and Altos present the principal harmonic element in a syncopated character, emphasizing the perfect fifth interval.
- b. The reply of the Tenors and Basses that, while keeping the syncopated character, do not carry the melodic shape of the Sopranos and Altos but rather use repeated notes or an ascending melodic second in glissando.
- c. String elements, presented in homorhythmic manner in the entire string section, in small motifs, that develop based on the second interval. These elements, although homorhythmic in character, become increasingly complex with the introduction of quintuplets and septuplets.

Harmonically, there is a clear division between the choir and the strings. In the choir, the composer uses aggregates built around the juxtaposition of two or three perfect fifths. When these fifths overlap, chords of tonal character emerge. In measure 47 we can observe the first of these aggregates of 2 perfect fifths: C-G, G-D.

We notice the use of variable harmonic and melodic structures in the strings, starting from measure 48. These are either pentatonic trichords or whole-tone scale elements. This can be exemplified in measure 49 where three pentatonic melodic trichords are present, juxtaposed, in the Violins and Violas, or in measure 50 where the main sonority present is that of the whole-tone scale in all of the strings. In measure 54, the Contrabasses break away from the homorhythmic texture of the strings and introduce an ostinato line over a whole-tone scale which they will carry until measure 59.

Throughout the movement, there is a progressive increase in the textural complexity that goes from a "question-answer" interplay between the choir and the strings to a superimposition of both groups after measure 54.

[next page: example 6]

A

B

Example 6 - The different textures created by the choral and instrumental parts, shifting from "question-answer" (A) to a superimposition (B) after measure 54.

This texture is broken down in the last measure of the piece where Asheim introduces a melodic element in the Altos and Sopranos which does not have a fixed rhythmical definition, being *senza misura*, and is meant to be repeated for about 20 seconds while descending microtonally at each repetition up to the maximum range of a fifth.

59 *p* (= *mf* *lontano*) *)

Senza misura - ca 20 sec

ad lib, impro, langsam mikrotonal nedgang (max 1 kvint totalt)

S

A

*) skal klinge svakt, åen som et fjernt kor som synger sterkt.

Example 7 - The *senza misura* repeated melodic elements of the Sopranos and Altos that closes the movement.

6. rådnu

...game trail in the snow, in particular from hare

The structural form of this movement is divided into three phrases, the first with two measures and the others of five measures each. The first two measures serve as an introduction and the last five are a variation of the second phrase.

Harmonically, the first chord, comprising the notes G - F-sharp - D-flat - B in the strings, establishes the harmonic environment for the entire movement. Throughout the movement, some of these notes will remain fixed creating in this way a sense of harmonic stability.

The interaction between the orchestra and choir is carried over by a repeated note motif in the Sopranos that is reinforced by the 1st Violins that also works as an echo of the Sopranos.

These interactions are also noticeable in the use of extended techniques: the indications of “whisper” and “sotto voce” in the voices are articulated with “col legno”, “saltato”, “finger tremolo”, “bow creak”, etc.² in the low strings. These gestures in the low strings create a texture of contrapuntal nature whilst the Violins, the 1st only until measure 65, and Violas use different tremolo techniques throughout the movement.

² The reader is advised to consult the glossary available on the webpage to get a better grasp over the Norwegian expressions used in the piece and also to better understand the composer’s intent with some of the more “poetic” ones.

The image displays a musical score for an excerpt from movement 6, "rádnu". It is divided into two systems. The first system contains three vocal staves labeled A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). Each staff shows a melodic line with a specific phoneme "rr" marked below the notes. The second system contains five instrumental staves: In.1 (two staves), In.2 (two staves), Vla. (two staves), and Vcl. (two staves). The In.1 part starts with a *mp* dynamic and includes the instruction "bank med myk finger på et klangfullt sted på instrumentet". The In.2 part has a *p* dynamic and the instruction "(flytt begge fingre)". The Vla. part features a sustained melodic line. The Vcl. part includes a triplet and the instruction "bueknirk, så kort som mulig (vri bue ned i streng)".

Example 8 - Excerpt of movement 6, "rádnu". Notice the connection between the phoneme "rr" and the extended techniques in the strings.

7. goahpálat

...moist snow that sticks to your clothing and other things

This movement can be divided into four short phrases. It starts with a brief introductory phrase of two measures with the choir announcing the work “goahpálat” and the low strings introducing the pointillistic pizzicato elements that they will carry throughout the movement. The second and third phrases each have three measures and the last one has five. The third phrase is a variation, both in the choir and in the orchestra, of the second phrase and the last phrase has a closing character. The textural construction is created by the interaction of three elements with distinct harmonic, rhythmic and melodic characteristics. These are juxtaposed over the entire movement. The first element, with a pointillistic character, is presented by the strings, except the 1st Violins, all playing in pizzicato. The second element, introduced between measures 75 and 76, is carried by the choir and is a heterophonic texture created over the syllable “go-ah”. The third element is brought by the 1st Violins, always in tremolo, and characterizes itself for being very chromatic. The last phrase presents a slightly different character in the choir, with sustained notes evolving chromatically over longer rhythm values, which can be seen as a variation by augmentation of the material of the previous phrases.

[next page: example 9]

7. goahpálat
 ...fuktig snøvær som fester seg i klær og andre ting
 Piú mosso $\text{♩} = 72$

73 S pá-la - t
 73 A h- pá-la
 [svært kort "o" før hh]
 73 T go-ah
 73 B go-ah

73 Vin.1 skrapende (nær frosten), men med pitch
 73 Vin.2
 73 Vla.
 73 Vcl.
 73 Cb.

Example 9 - Excerpt of movement 7, "goahpálat", illustrating the three main musical elements developed throughout the movement.

The polyphonic nature of the texture is carried over to the harmonic structure of the movement. We can highlight the relevance of the minor 7th chord in the texture of the 2nd Violins, Violas, Cellos and Contrabasses. In the first measure, the Cellos and Contrabasses present two harmonic aggregates of three notes each, shaped over the structure of a minor 7th chord,

created over E and F-sharp. Throughout the movement, these harmonic aggregates are presented and constructed following a harmonic march of E - D - C-sharp - B - A in the bass. The two homorhythmic melodic lines of the 1st Violins are juxtaposed at an interval of a minor second which adds to the overall expressive character of the movement.

The choir inherits harmonic characteristics of both strings' elements. On the one hand, all of the choir's motifs inherit the minor second interval characteristic of the 1st Violins, while the entrance notes of each voice in each of the phrases find a parallel in the pointillistic harmonic and "melodic" elements of the other strings.

8. veaḏahat

...an area partially or fully exposed after the wind has blown the snow away

This movement is structured in one single phrase of eleven measures that is characterized by the rhythmic ostinato of the 1st Violins, pedal notes in the choir interjected with short motifs and effects in both the choir and the strings and a melodic ostinato in the Contrabasses in measure 90 to 93.

Harmonically, the movement is based on the diatonic A-minor natural scale. Progressively, to this scale, the composer incorporates chromatic elements. The mentioned scale is created by the pedal notes in the choir and the melodic elements in the Contrabass. After measure 90, the composer progressively adds the notes from the aggregate F-sharp, G-sharp, A-sharp and C-sharp. This process begins with the A-sharp in the 1st Violin and moving on to G-sharp and C-sharp in the 1st Violins, 2nd Basses and 2nd Tenors and culminating with the F-sharp, again in the 1st Violins, in measure 92. As a by-product of the juxtaposition of the two harmonic structures identified above, expressive elements based on the vertical minor second emerge. Examples of these can be found in measures 92, in the Tenor and Bass voices, and 95 between 2nd Altos and 1st Tenors.

Texturally, the movement shows different elements being superimposed on the ostinato of the 1st Violins. We can highlight the rhythmic tapping elements in the 1st solo Cello, marked as "dark tapping sound" and a second rhythmic element in the 2nd solo Cello marked "light tapping sound". In the first six measures, the 2nd Violins and Violas maintain an unpitched glissando element in the highest string, to be played with a very "airy sound". This glissando element, which was introduced by all of the strings, finds a parallel in the whispered, pitchless sweeps of the voices over the syllables of the word "veaḏahat" in the first two measures.

The image displays a musical score for Example 10, an excerpt from movement 8, "veadahat". The score is divided into two systems, both starting at measure 89. The first system features four vocal staves: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). Each vocal line includes lyrics, with the vowel 'a' appearing in various rhythmic patterns. Dynamics such as *p* (piano) are indicated. The second system includes instrumental parts: Violin 1 (vln.1), Violin 2 (vln.2), Flute (fla.), Clarinet (fcl.), and Cello/Double Bass (Cb.). The violin parts feature rhythmic ostinato patterns. The flute part consists of pitchless glissandi. The clarinet part is marked "lys bank" and features percussive elements. The cello part is marked "arco" and features a melodic ostinato. The double bass part features a melodic ostinato. Dynamics like *p* are also present in the instrumental parts.

Example 10 - Excerpt of movement 8, "veadahat", illustrating the pedal tones in the choir, the ostinato in the first violins, the pitchless glissandi in the 2nd Violins and Violas, the percussive elements in the cellos and the melodic ostinato of the Contrabasses.

9. doavdnji

...the first ski or sledge conditions of the season

This movement is divided into two phrases. The first, lasting for the first three measures with an introductory character, and the second one of ten measures.

The juxtaposition of different aggregates is the main harmonic characteristic of this movement. The first phrase combines two whole-tone scale structures in the voices, one for the female and one for the male voices and a cluster structure in the strings. The cluster elements in the strings oscillate, expanding and contracting intervals from measures 97 to 99, without losing the dense texture of the cluster.

The second phrase is characterized by *ostinati* or ostinato character elements in the strings, and canonic elements in the choir, especially after measure 103. Here, the composer introduces new overlapping harmonic structures. In the strings, the 1st Violins present a descending E Oriental scale, omitting the F, while the Contrabasses present a pentachord of the Lydian scale, with an emphasis on the tritone F-sharp and C. This scale will later be used as the base for the canonic phrases of the choir after measure 103. Over these two elements, the Violas carry melodic structures based on the whole-tone scale. The canonic phrases that start after measure 103 do not present a faithful repetition of the melodic and rhythmical patterns but rather introduce small variations within each entrance of the voices. The successive entrances of the canonic phrases, and subsequent improvisation over them, create progressively more complex harmonic structures.

Texturally, the first phrase is typified by the use of two short canonic motifs, one in the choir and the other in the strings. Both of these elements are based on glissando gestures.

The textural character of the second phrase emphasizes a contrast between the choir and the strings. The choir initially presents short textural elements, with an interjection character, with Tenors and Basses still carrying forward the canonic motif of the first phrase. Starting from anacrusis to measure 104, the composer introduces a melodic canon in the Altos, Tenors, Sopranos and Basses. After each presentation of the canonic melody, there is an improvised variation on the melodic material in each voice. The textural material in the strings is dominated by polyostinati. While the 1st Violins carry a continuous and repeated ostinato, the 2nd Violins and Violas present ostinatos of a more disrupted nature that, in the case of the Violas, intensifies throughout the phrase. In the Violas, the ostinato motifs become increasingly more intense with shorter intervals between each repetition. A final glissando gesture in the lowest string of all of the orchestra closes the movement.

The image displays a musical score for a choir and string ensemble. The top section features eight staves of vocal parts, each with the lyrics "do-a - v - dn-jie" and "jie jic v - n". The vocal lines are marked with *fp* and *f* dynamics. The bottom section shows the string ensemble, including two staves with glissando markings and six staves with cluster structures and ostinato lines, also marked with *f* dynamics.

Example 11 - Excerpt of movement 9, "doavdnji", showing the short canon motifs of the choir and the cluster structure of the strings which characterize the first phrase and some of the ostinato lines of the strings and unpitched interjected element in the female voices at the beginning of the second phrase.

10. seaḡaš

...corn snow, the porous bottom layer that you use for melting into water

This movement can be divided into five short phrases. The first phrase, lasting only two measures, is an introduction. The second phrase is made up of two measures, the third is a three-measure phrase and the fourth and fifth phrases are both four measures in length. The fourth phrase repeats, varies and expands the material of the second phrase while the fifth phrase repeats, varies and expands the third phrase.

Harmonically we can identify the presence of the diatonic tetrachord C-sharp, D-sharp, E and F-sharp, which is introduced by the 2nd Violins and Violas in the first measure. In the harmonic content of the choir, this tetrachord is also present as part of a C-sharp minor scale. In measures 115 to 120, a pentatonic trichord of F, G and B-flat is juxtaposed to the minor scale creating vertical dissonances which are characteristic of this movement. After measure 121, the juxtaposed pentatonic trichord changes to D, F and G.

Whilst the initial tetrachord is also present in the strings, namely as pedal tones in the various voices (e.g. in measures 114, 116 and 119), it alternates with chromatic harmonic moments throughout the movement.

Texturally, this movement presents some elements reminiscent of serial music. On the one hand, the composer creates a dense pointillistic texture by using short motifs or isolated notes alternating with rests, in both the choir and the strings. On the other hand, the textural writing in the strings is based on symmetries. Taking, for example, measure 113 we can identify four different symmetrical relations with interval inversions:

- The first voice of the 1st Violins and the second voice of the Cellos
- The second voice of the 1st Violins and the first voice of the Cellos
- The first voice of the 2nd Violins and the second voice of the Violas
- The second voice of the 2nd Violins and the first voice of the Violas

solo *p*
p \wedge 2 *a*
c-*ŋ*
p \wedge *a*
c-*ŋ*
p \wedge *ŋ*
c-*ŋ*
p \wedge 2 *a*
p \wedge *c*-*ŋ*
ŋ
p
a

som isnóler... aksenter mf ved spissen
x-pont
p
x-pont
p
p
p
x-pont
p
x-pont
p

Example 12 - Excerpt from movement 10, "seanáš". Notice the pointillistic nature of the writing and the symmetries between the different lines in the strings.

This inverted symmetrical writing is also present in some passages of the choir, for example, in measures 115 and 116, we can identify this between the first and second Altos or between the Altos and the second Tenors in measures 119 and 120.

We can also identify an increasing importance of the arpeggio of the perfect minor and major chord throughout the movement in the melodic and textural construction. This arpeggio, seen for the first time in the second voice of the 2nd Violins in measure 113, develops a special importance in measures 120 and 121 and again from 123 to 125. Here, the arpeggio motif presents itself not only in canon but also symmetrically inverted. The 1st and 2nd Violins present the arpeggio in descending order whilst Cellos and Violas play the inverted symmetrical, and thus ascending, version of the arpeggio.

In the last measure, the aforementioned canonic arpeggios in the strings become more constant and repeated.

It is also noteworthy the instructions given to the strings asking the players to play with an “ice needle sound” with all the accents played *mf* at the tip of the bow”. In measures 120 and 121, the Contrabasses are instructed to finger a C-sharp and use the bow *coll legno* rebounding across the string, from the bridge to the fingerboard.

11. čieħpa

...indent in the snow where grouse or other animals sleep

We can identify four phrases in this movement. The first, which can be considered an introduction, lasts for 4 measures, the second lasts 2 measures, the third 3, and the last one, the longest, spanning 7 measures.

In the introduction, Tenors and Bass carry a small glissando motif over sustained pedal notes in the strings. The second phrase is elaborated over a dialogue between the Cellos and the 1st Violins over repeated and two short glissando motifs of the second 2nd Violins. The third phrase is a repetition of the second phrase with an added measure acting as a variation. The last phrase, of seven measures, has a conclusive character and includes three variations on the material of the second phrase.

In terms of the harmonic content, we can identify two major writing procedures: poly-modalism and poly-harmony. In the introduction, the composer presents the juxtaposition of two chords: G minor and F major. In the harmonic content of the 1st Violins, the composer uses the juxtaposition of the notes of a Phrygian tetrachord. The first of these appears in measure 130, starting on an F-sharp; the second one in measures 132-133, starting on a G-sharp and the third one in measure 135 starting on a C-sharp. In the last phrase, starting in measure 135, the composer emphasizes the Ionian mode in the Altos and Sopranos. This Ionian mode is used juxtaposed with the other harmonic elements already described: Phrygian tetrachords in the 1st

Violins and Cellos and the juxtaposed chords, this time in the second voice of the Violas and Contrabasses.

The persistent textural characteristic of this movement is the use of pedal notes. These occur both in the strings as well as in the Bass voices after measure 129. The other main textural elements present are small descending glissandi in the voices, repeated 16th notes in the Cellos and 1st Violins, playing *col legno*, short melodic fragments, also with *glissandi*, in the 2nd Violins, *glissandi* of harmonics in the Contrabasses and an *arpeggio* of harmonics in the Violas.

The image shows a musical score excerpt for movement 11 "čieħpa". It is divided into two systems. The first system includes vocal parts with lyrics "čieħpa" and "i - e" and string parts with dynamics like "pp" and "poco". The second system features complex string textures with "col legno" markings, "arpeggio" and "harmonics" in the Viola and Contrabass, and dynamic markings like "mf" and "mp". The score is in 3/4 time and features various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Example 13 - Excerpt illustrating part of the last phrase of movement 11 "čieħpa".

12. skárta

...thin, ice-like snow on the ground, frozen into lichen and moss

The main expressive element of this movement is the minor second interval enriched with quarter-tone elements which the composer presents and develops in different ways throughout the movement. The three main approaches the composer takes on these intervals are: vertically, associated with pedal notes; as a melodic ostinato, in the 1st Violins, after measure 145; lastly, in a horizontal plane, associated always to pedal notes in the Cellos and Contrabasses after measure 145.

Formally, this movement is constructed as a single unit where the perceived logic of growth of the formal construction in this movement arises from the gradual development of minor second and quarter-tone intervals that progressively grow into a broader harmonic space of chromatic nature.

Although the movement has a dynamic flow brought about from the gradual growth of the intervallic elements, it is, by contrast, very static in nature due to the use of long notes and to the static nature and regularity of the *ostinati* in the 1st Violins.

[next page: example 14]

148

S

A

T

B

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vcl.

Cb.

ord. sim. pont. ord. pc

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Example 14 - Excerpt of movement 12, skárta. Notice the alternating ostinato line in the 1st violins and the long notes in the choir and strings with juxtaposed half-step and quarter-tone intervals.

The juxtaposition of pedal notes, both long and rhythmically varied, is what mostly characterizes this movement. To these long notes, the composer combines elements of note repetition, in 16th notes, in the Cellos and Contrabasses as well as alternating ostinato elements in the two voices of the 1st Violins. These ostinato components in the 1st Violins are an important expressive element of the movement and consist of syncopated glissando motifs of microtonal nature.

13. muohtaruivi

...strong, densely drifting snow

The formal structure of this movement can be analysed as a continuum evolutive process of the harmonic, rhythmic and textural elements that appear in the first measures. This evolutive process is gradual, both in the choir and in the strings, creating a single formal section with a very dynamic character.

The movement starts with textural elements in the choir, in canonic imitation throughout the voices in *Sprechgesang* style. These textural elements are presented in four independent voices, two in the Sopranos and two in the Altos, that are doubled by the male voices. Although the writing suggests a pitch contour in the choir lines, the choral part is non-pitched, sometimes reduced to spoken syllables without any rhythmic or pitch hint whatsoever.

Measures 159 and 160 are used as transformation points where the composer deconstructs the textural motif of the choir into a single syllable, which is then repeated freely. The syllables “mu-oh-ta-ru-i” of the word “Muohtaruivi” are then repeated freely in the choir from measures 161 to 164. In measure 165 the choir borrows the glissando gesture from the strings and repeats it freely, rapidly and with intensity. The choir then repeats these *glissandi*, with an added long note over the syllable “i” which is similar in character to the unpitched tremolo that the violas started on measure 162, until the end of the movement.

[next page: example 15]

The image displays a page of a musical score, page 26, for movement 13, "muohtaruivi". The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains vocal parts for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B), each with two staves. The lyrics are: "ru-i - vi ru-i - vi ru-i - vi mu-oh-ta - ru-i - vi mu-oh - ta ta ta ta ta mu-oh - ta". The second system contains instrumental parts: Violin 1 (Vln.1), Violin 2 (Vln.2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vcl.), and Contrabasso (Cb.). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The page number 158 is visible at the top left of the first system.

Example 15 - Excerpt of movement 13, "muohtaruivi", illustrating the "pivot" measures 159 and 160 that are used to deconstruct the initial texture.

The developmental process in the strings starts with a dialogue established between the Contrabasses, Cellos, Violas and 2nd Violins in one hand, and the 1st Violins in the other. We can emphasize the symmetrical nature of this texture. Violas and Cellos present inverted tonal arpeggios that create, by juxtaposition, a chromatic tonal atmosphere. In the 2nd Violins and Contrabasses, we see also an inverted harmonic relation, but this time associated with a whole-tone scale. The 1st Violins respond with a short, ascending gesture created by the juxtaposition of two different arpeggiated trichords.

In the anacrusis to measure 157, the composer introduces a glissando element in canon between the 2nd Violins and the Contrabasses. After measure 159, the canonic imitation of the glissando element begins to intensify with a *divisi* in both the 2nd Violins and Contrabasses and then by the addition of the 1st Violins after measure 160. The Violas, which were still carrying the arpeggio element with the Cellos, change in measure 162 to a rapid, unpitched, circular-tremolo. This new element spreads throughout the orchestra, starting from measure 163, gradually replacing the *glissandi* until it dominates the texture in measure 166.

14. gaskageardni

...solid layer of ice or snow between loose layers of snow

This movement is a small miniature constructed over two repetitions of a short, two-measure phrase (measures 175-176) with a variation on the second repetition. Formally, this movement can be sketched as a structure of 1+2+2+4 measures.

In the last phrase, lasting four measures between measures 179 to 182, the composer repeats and introduces variations on some of the elements presented before.

Harmonically this movement is characterized by the juxtaposition of different elements. In measure 174, which serves as an introduction, we can identify an E pedal note presented by two soli 1st Violins, a soloist of the 2nd Violins and a soloist of the Cellos. The other element is the juxtaposed pentatonic trichord, A-flat, B, D-flat, in the rest of the instruments. The E pedal on the two solo 1st Violins is carried over, with improvised rhythms, until measure 180.

The choir entrance, on measure 175 has its harmony created by the juxtaposition on two different chords: G Major chord and B-flat minor. This polyharmony is superimposed over the two elements already described for the strings.

A new element is introduced in this first phrase, starting in the anacrusis to measure 176. Presented by the 2nd Violins and Violas, this is a rapid alternation between superimposed microtones played in extreme *pizzicello*.

28 14. gaskageardni
 ..hardt is- eller snalag mellom lesere snalag
 Tempo 1, ♩ = 52

174 *mp* *mp*

S
 [merk 'o'] [gæ']
 ga gea ga

A
 [ɔ] [ɔ] ka [ɔ] ka

T
 ka r [ɔ] hvi ka r [ɔ]

B
 [ɔ] [ɔ] d - ni ga

2 soli
 174 *p* *sim., improv*

Vln.1
 gli altri *pizz.* *mp* *sim.*

Vln.2
 solo *pizz.* *mf* *arco* *x-pont* *mf* *ord.°* *p*

Vla.
 gli altri *pizz.* *mp* *arco* *p* *x-pont* *mf*

Vcl.
 solo *mf* *p* *pizz.* *arco* *mf*

Cb.
p *pizz.* *p*

Example 16 - Excerpt of movement 14, gaskageardni.

The first repetition of the two-measure phrase, which happens between measures 177 and 178, introduces a harmonic and textural variation which is expressed by the juxtaposition, of

microtonal character, of long notes in the 1st Violins, solo 2nd Violin and second voice of the Cellos. The third phrase, from 179 to 182 is a repetition of the previous phrase which is expanded by two measures. In these extra measures, the composer expands the rhythmic values of the textural elements in the 2nd Violins and Violas and, in measure 181, introduces a half-step glissando in the Violas which seems to precede the character of the glissando gesture of the following movement.

Texturally, this movement is again based on the use and superimposition of pedal notes, both long or rhythmically short and varied, with short motifs. There is a clear complementary connection between the Choir and the instrumental parts of Contrabasses and the second voices of Cellos and Violas.

15. jolas

...trails in the snow, revealing animals have followed one another

When we look at the harmonic, melodic and textural character of the choral writing we can divide this movement into two phrases of 5+8 measures that are contrastingly different.

Contrarily, the composer maintains a consistent repetition of a short canonic gesture in the Violins, Violas and Cellos. The Contrabasses superimpose, after measure 188 and coinciding with the second phrase of the movement, glissando elements over the other strings' gesture. These glissandi, although rhythmically defined, seem to have a quasi-improvised nature, and are meant to be un-pitched and produced over the different strings.

In the first phrase of the choir, the Sopranos and Altos carry descending and ascending glissando gestures that span a major second interval. The Basses present similar elements but without glissando. The Tenors, written in *divisi*, sustain a microtonal interval of F and lowered G-flat throughout the entire phrase.

15. jolas

..spor i snøen som viser at dyr har gått etter hverandre

Molto lento $\text{♩} = 40$

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system features two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and three piano staves. The vocal parts are marked with dynamics *pp* and *mp*, and include the lyrics "j - [i] - [y] - [u] - o" and "j[i] - [y] - [u] - o" followed by a long note "o" and the word "las". The piano accompaniment includes various dynamics such as *pp*, *p*, and *ppp*. The second system consists of ten piano staves, each with a dynamic marking: *ppp*, *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *mp*, *p*, and *pp*. These staves contain rhythmic patterns with notes and rests, some marked with "ord." and "5", and specific rhythmic values like $\frac{1}{8}$ t. and $\frac{3}{8}$ t. The notation includes slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

Example 17 - Excerpt of the first phrase of movement 15, "jolas".

The second phrase of the choir is characterized by short, interjecting unpitched elements, with varied rhythmic figuration and varied dynamic contour. In the last two measures of the movement, the composer repeats the elements of the first measure of the phrase as a sort of conclusion.

The canonic gesture in the Violins, Violas and Cellos constitutes a microtonal aggregate within a range of a minor 3rd. In the words of the composer, the overall effect of this repeated gesture is that of a written *doppler effect*. For this effect, the composer used both 1/4 and 1/8 microtonal intervals.

sterk luftstrøm mellom tennene, som vindkast
flyktig, ingen klare tonehøyder

The image displays a musical score for a string ensemble, consisting of Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cellos, and Contrabasses. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows a canonic motif in the strings, with dynamics ranging from *p* to *f*. The second system features microtonal intervals (1/4 and 1/8 tones) and glissandos in the Contrabasses, with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *mf*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Example 18 - Excerpt of the second phrase of movement 15, "Jolas". Notice the canonic motif in the strings creating a sort of written doppler effect by using 1/4 and 1/8 tones and the glissandos in the Contrabasses.

16. sabádat

...tough skiing conditions in frosty weather, especially in severe frost or fresh snow

We can identify a structure that organizes this movement as 5+21+11 measures. The first phrase can be seen as an introduction. The particularity of the second phrase is the clearly defined functions of the choir and the orchestra. While the orchestra maintains the harmonic, melodic and textural material of the introduction, to which a pedal note is added in the Contrabasses in measures 208 to 216, the choir presents melodic material based on disjunct intervals. The choir arrives at a climax point in the last five measures of this section, between measures 216 and 221. The third phrase functions as a coda and features the choir *a cappella*. This last phrase can be further subdivided into two subphrases, the first with four measures and the second with seven.

In this movement, one can recognize different harmonic characteristics in the choir and the orchestra. In the orchestra, the harmonic material is presented in a homorhythmic writing that generates a rhythmic and harmonic ostinato that is kept during the two first phrases of the movement. This ostinato is interrupted in the Contrabasses, in measures 208 to 216. The harmonic base of this ostinato is the A Aeolian scale to which the composer combines a minor third interval gesture in the first voice of the 1st Violins, using B-flat, a foreign note to the scale, thus introducing a dissonant element.

The choral part is harmonically identical to the orchestra in the “introduction” and the beginning of the second phrase, measures 196 to 203. After measure 207 the choral harmonic material shifts to a G Lydian scale with chromatic variations to some notes of the scale. In these first measures of the second phrase, the Altos and Sopranos keep the introductory material. This construction results in the juxtaposition of the C-sharp with a C-natural, one of the foreign notes to the G Lydian scale, in measure 206. The same dissonance, with a foreign note to the scale, occurs in measure 209, this time with the addition of a G in the Basses that creates a dissonance with the G-sharp of the Altos and Sopranos. In the climactic section, in measure 217, the Basses and Tenors introduce a D-sharp, again a chromatic variation to the base scale of this phrase, that generates a dissonance with the Altos.

[next page: example 19]

16. sabádat

..hugt fere i frostvær, særlig ved sterk frost etter nysne

196 Vivoce ♩ = 120

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system contains the vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are: "sa - bá - - - dat sa - bá - - - dat sa - bá - - - dat sa - bá - - - dat a-". The second system contains the instrumental parts: Violin 1 (Vln.1), Violin 2 (Vln.2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vcl.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The instrumental parts include performance markings such as *non vib.*, *sim.*, and *vrengt*. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 120 beats per minute.

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Example 19 - Excerpt of the second phrase and beginning of the second phrase of movement 16, "sabádat".

The harmonic construction in the “coda” is dominated by aggregates constructed over thirds, and inversions of these aggregates. In measure 222 we can hear a sequence of aggregates of six notes, seven notes, five notes. The six and seven notes aggregates in measure 224 are inversions of the previous ones. In the last five measures, the Basses and Tenors maintain a harmonic aggregate already presented in measure 223. The Sopranos and Altos move to what is clearly a harmonic sonority of D-major.

Texturally, the strings convey a perfectly homorhythmic writing with short motifs interjected with pauses that is maintained as an ostinato throughout the first two phrases of the movement.

The choir texture, after the introductory phrase, moves into a heterophonic writing between measures 203 and 215. After this, the writing becomes very texturally homorhythmic. In the last five measures of the movement, the 2nd Sopranos and the Altos diverge from the rest of the choir with a melodic line that can be seen as an echo and a “written *rallentando*” of the syncopated gesture from the previous measures.

17. sievlla

...snow that is moist through to the ground, causing you to sink;

Once again, we can clearly see a distinction of textures between choir and strings. The choir texture is fundamentally heterophonic with ostinato-like characteristics. The rhythmic motifs that constitute this texture are juxtaposed in different combinations.

Of all these motifs we can highlight the repeated E motif, which appears first in the second voice of the Altos in measures 235 to 236. The *sotto-voce* glissando in the Sopranos, that appears for the first time in measure 235, is repeated over the next measures by the Tenors and Basses as a whispered, unpitched gesture, and by the first voice of the Altos in measure 236, this time transposed down a third and also in *sotto-voce*. This texture of the glissando motif, and subsequent repetitions, is used with variations in the order of the voices until measure 239.

[next page: example 20]

The image shows a musical score for a choral part, consisting of five staves. The lyrics are: "si - c - v - lla", "si - c", "li - ll", "lu - ll", "si - [y - u -]", and "si - [y - u -]". The score includes performance markings such as "halv-stemme", "pp", "p", and "hviske". The lyrics are written below the staves, and the musical notation includes notes, rests, and slurs.

Example 20 - Excerpt of the choral part from the beginning of movement 17, "sievlla". Notice the descending glissando gesture in the Sopranos and first altos and the subsequent imitations as an unpitched glissando in the Basses and Tenors. Notice also the repeated E in the second Altos.

After measure 239 the composer starts to deconstruct this imitation texture and progressively replaces it with new elements of a melodic nature starting with the Sopranos, with a line that the composer characterizes as "almost whistling, like a water stream", and then the Tenors in measure 240 that have an unpitched, whispered line "where the sound "L" should be predominant. These melodic lines, once introduced, are repeated freely until the end of the movement. In the anacrusis to measure 242, the Altos repeat one last time the rhythmic motif over the E and join the Sopranos and Tenors maintaining this motif in an improvised manner until the end of the movement.

The texture of the strings is characterized by the repetition of notes in a complex rhythmical juxtaposition of four, five or three figures which creates a quasi-aleatoric sonority.

Harmonically, although the playing technique required by the composer (the players are instructed to play with their bows vertically, hitting the strings with the hairs and in *pp*) obscures somewhat the written pitches, this section is polyharmonic with the juxtaposition of major and minor chords.

233 slå loddrätt med buehårene

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vcl.

Cb.

Example 21 - Excerpt of the string parts from the beginning of movement 17, "sievlla".

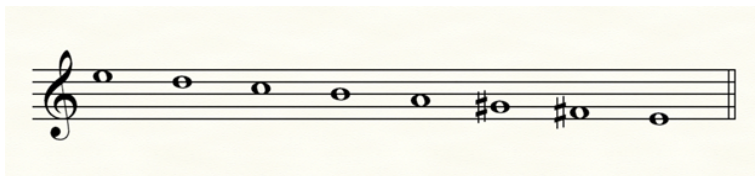
18. njeaðggahat

...an area the wind has covered with snow.

The last movement can be divided into four phrases of five measures each. The first phrase, an introduction, begins connected to the previous movement by pedal notes in the 1st Violins and Contrabasses, played with circular bowing, and by the Sopranos, Altos and Tenors that extend, until measure 249, the improvisation they have introduced in the previous movement.

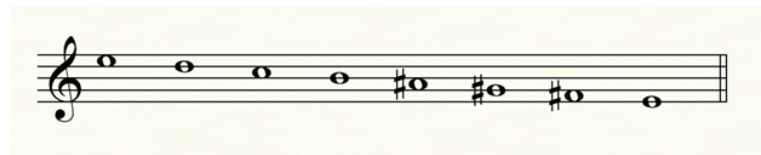
The remainder of the strings introduces a descending scale gesture originated over the note E, with a pulsating, quasi ostinato, rhythm, played with circular bowing. The first scale is presented by the Cellos:

The 2nd scale, still in the first phrase, is introduced by the 2nd voice of the violas:

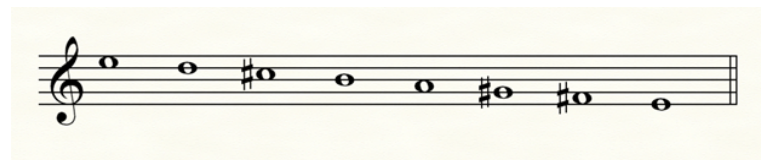


In the second phrase, starting on measure 250, Asheim introduces an ascending melodic line in the Sopranos and Altos also based on an E scale, that can be described as E Aeolian. The strings maintain the descending scale gestures with the exception of the 1st Violins that still maintains a “drone” over the note E that started in the previous movement.

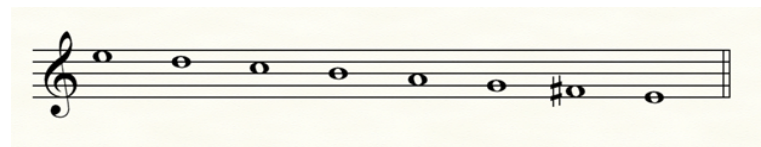
It is worth mentioning another layer that, along with the “drone” of the 1st violins, spans over more than one phrase. This layer is provided by the contrabasses that carry another descending E scale but over whole notes:



In the third phrase, the Tenors and Basses join the Sopranos and Altos melodic line which is a slightly rhythmically varied version over the previous one. In the strings, Asheim not only expands the range of the writing by introducing in the upper voices of the 1st Violins and 2nd Violins an octave higher than the previous phrases but also brings in two other descending scales: the second voice of the 2nd Violins introduces what is the fourth descending E scale:



And finally, the fifth scale carried by the first voice of the 2nd Violins:



In this phrase, after measure 256, the composer instructs the strings to play with “whiter and whiter sound” (more bow and less pitch is the intended technique). In measure 256, Asheim also starts to deconstruct the “pulsating” nature of the strings by introducing triplets, syncopations, quintuplets, etc., that progressively muddles this pulse, which, associated with a decrescendo in measures 259 and 260, dissipates the instrumental element.

The image displays a musical score excerpt for Example 22, covering measures 256 to 260. The score is arranged in five staves, labeled from top to bottom as 'In.1', 'In.2', 'Vla.', 'Vcl.', and 'Cb.'. The music is written in treble clef for the first two staves and bass clef for the last three. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo and dynamics are marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'sim.' (sforzando). The score includes various rhythmic patterns such as triplets, quintuplets, and syncopations. Performance instructions include 'quasi gliss' (quasi glissando) and 'sim.' (sforzando). The score shows a decrescendo in dynamics over the measures.

Example 22 - Excerpt of the third phrase of movement 18, "njeaðggahat ". Asheim starts to deconstruct the “pulsating” nature of the strings by introducing triplets, syncopations, quintuplets, etc.

In the last phrase, the choir repeats the previous melodic line, an exact imitation of the line used in the second phrase but reinforced with the Tenors. The Basses, however, come in only on the anacrusis to measure 261 and, in a *sprechgesang* manner, enunciate the title word of the movement, "njeađgahat". Interestingly this movement is the only one where Asheim does not use the first phonemes of the "title word" at the beginning of the movement, opting to present it only at the very end, closing not only the movement but the entire piece.

37

njeađgahat

Example 23 - Excerpt of the last phrase of movement 18, "njeađgahat".