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THE ADOPTION OF RUNOSONG TECHNIQUES IN ESTONIAN ANTIPHONAL PSALMODY: TOWARD A CIRCULAR MODEL OF CHANTING*

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ABSTRACT
This interdisciplinary hymnological article reflects on some aspects of a creative journey within the evolutionary process of Estonian-language antiphonal psalmody from 2010 to 2024. It investigates the integration of performance elements from the archaic communal folk singing tradition of Estonian runosong (*regilaul*) into the contemporary prose-rhythm Estonian ecclesiastical chant, or *pühalaul* ('sacred chant'), with a particular focus on antiphonal psalmody. Employing an artistic research approach, intertwined with autoethnography, the study draws on long-term artistic experimentation with *pühalaul* to explore how this idiomatic style for communal chanting in the Estonian language came into being. This research addresses a long-standing challenge in Estonian hymnology: the need to create an idiomatic ecclesiastical chanting practice aligned with the prosodic qualities of Estonian prose texts and local communal singing traditions, rather than relying on musical models and traditions, including rhythmic patterns shaped by German and other Indo-European languages, which were introduced through historical contact and adopted over time. While the broader repertoire and melodic foundations of Estonian antiphonal psalmody were shaped during earlier stages of the artistic research process, the present focus is on elaborating specific performance techniques for chanting, to achieve a runosong-like uninterrupted flow. Drawing on selected features of runosong, such as the circular musical phrase, anticipatory entry (*leegajus*), and ingressive phonation (inward speaking), the study culminates in the formulation of a circular model of antiphonal psalmody offering a new approach to communal ecclesiastical chanting.

KEYWORDS: Estonian prose-rhythm ecclesiastical chant • runosong • Jesus of Nazareth • Christian communal singing • circular model of antiphonal psalmody

* This article is dedicated to my Teacher and example in musicology, to an unprecedented interdisciplinary scholar, a colleague, and friend Jaan Ross. I owe cordial thanks for the completion of this article to the School of Sacred Chant, to the peers who reviewed my text, and to the editors Liina Saarlo, Taive Särg and Janika Oras, who toiled with my article with an unprecedented patience.

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INTRODUCTION

In addition to the archaic ethnic traditions of folk singing, there is another ancient practice of communal singing within the cultural discourse of the Occident that transcends ethnic boundaries in many significant ways. This is Christian communal singing, particularly the chanting of the Psalms[1] of the Old Testament, known as (antiphonal) psalmody or prose-rhythm and/or prose text ecclesiastical chant, for which I have created the term *pühalaul* ('sacred song') in Estonian (SVHT 2025a). The term *pühalaul*, however, applies in this article to prose-rhythm and/or prose text ecclesiastical chant, regardless of language.[2] For example, the repertoire commonly known as Gregorian chant or (Western) plainchant contains a substantial body of chants set to prose text – that is, Latin *pühalaul* or (Medieval) sacred Latin prose-text monody.

This article, essentially a hymnological study, investigates the integration of selected elements from the performance practice of Estonian archaic folk song tradition of runosong (*regilaul*) into contemporary Estonian *pühalaul*. The impetus for my long-term artistic experimentation with Estonian *pühalaul* (2010–2024) was the reliance of Estonian ecclesiastical chanting on Indo-European (mainly German) models, traditions, and 'musical habits', including rhythmic reflexes of the German language as well as the absence of a full scale Estonian chant psalter until 2020 (cf. Jõks 2020b), best expressed by the words of the distinguished hymnological expert Toomas Siitan (2020: 8): "Ecclesiastical chant in the Estonian language is entirely borrowed. We are so used to this fact that we have almost given up the search for original idiomatic thinking that is essential to the Estonian language."[3] This statement underscores the previously noted fact that ecclesiastical chant, along with our professional musical culture, originates entirely from the European cultural sphere, shaped by Indo-European languages, which differ in several essential features from Estonian – a language of the Western Finnic branch within the Uralic language family.[4]

The article reflects a creative and exploratory journey into the development of Estonian *pühalaul*, which led to a specific performance style of antiphonal psalmody, characterised by: 1) circular musical phrase (cf. Figure 6); 2) *leegajus* – an anticipatory entry on the last syllables of the 'other vocal unit' (see below); and 3) ingressive phonation or inward speaking. These techniques help to create a runosong-like uninterrupted musical flow in communal antiphonal psalmody, maintaining the natural prosody of the Estonian prose text.

In this study, I navigate two intertwining roles: as an artistic researcher, shaping Estonian prose-rhythm ecclesiastical singing practice; and as an autoethnographer, describing, observing, and analysing the process and results. I am a musicologist and practicing church musician, whose interest in the matter deepened during doctoral studies at the University of York (2004–2010) and has since been realised through long-term artistic experimentation with Estonian *pühalaul*.

The article contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural dynamics in musical adaptation and offers practical guidelines for achieving a more culturally resonant form of ecclesiastical chant in Estonia.

PÜHALAUL AND RUNOSONG

Ecclesiastical Chant

This study focuses on ecclesiastical chant, the singing tradition within the Christian church. It was born together with Christian culture in the first century AD[5] and evolved into two main branches: Western and Eastern, also called Orthodox. In this article I consider only the Western branch, particularly Roman Catholic and later Lutheran traditions.

Ecclesiastical chant can be divided into two categories: 1) prose-text or prose-rhythm chant, primarily from the Psalms, such as a large portion of the Medieval sacred Latin prose text monody or Medieval Latin *pühalaul*, and 2) strophic hymnody with stanzaic texts such as the Lutheran chorales.

> Although the Psalms are Hebrew poetry, they are chanting-specifically prose texts because the words do not divide into lines with a fixed number of syllables, which would follow the same pattern in each verse and thus can be easily set to a recurring melody [or static melodic formula] for each stanza (Jõks 2021: 145).

Ecclesiastical chant has always served a functional role within religious ritual. David Hiley (1993: 1) defines chant as "liturgical music, music to be performed during the celebration of a divine service. The performance of the music is not, generally speaking, an end in itself but part of a religious ritual." In medieval Europe, Latin *pühalaul*, including antiphonal psalmody, transitioned from oral to written tradition in the 9th and 10th centuries, resulting, among other developments, in the creation of musical notation. This historical background provides a wider context for understanding how psalmody in particular – ecclesiastical chant using flexible (dynamic) melodic formulae rather than fixed (static) melodic formulae – could serve as a foundation for new vernacular chanting traditions based on local languages.

The Estonian ecclesiastical chanting tradition is deeply influenced by Western models for historical reasons. Lutheranism has been the main and dominant denomination in Estonia over the past five centuries and thus has multifariously influenced local social and cultural life. Estonian Lutheran chant has its roots in German-language music, especially in chorales (chants using static melodic formulae).

Although references to Christian chanting in Estonia date back to medieval chronicles (see for example Kleis 1982: 155; Eelmäe and Tarvel 2003: 22), much of the older chant heritage was lost during the Reformation in the 16th century and beyond. *The New Estonian Hymnal* (UL 1899) and the *Hymn- and Prayerbook of the Church* (KLPR 1991) shaped Estonian Lutheran ecclesiastical chant practices primarily according to the German Lutheran tradition.

Pühalaul *and the School of Sacred Chant*

The term *pühalaul* is a recent addition to Estonian scholarly language.[6] I introduced this concept slightly more than a decade ago to provide, for the first time, a precise Estonian term for prose-text and/or prose-rhythm ecclesiastical chant – for example, one can speak of Latin *pühalaul* – moving beyond the earlier vague term 'Gregorian chant' that

was, and still is, used for all types of Latin monophonic ecclesiastical chant regardless of whether the text is prose or metrical and stanzaic (for example, Siitan 1989; 1998).[7] *Pühalaul* is defined hymnologically as "prose-rhythmical ecclesiastical chants and chanting [regardless of language] based mainly on Bible [prose] texts, usually monophonic and typically without instrumental accompaniment" (SVHT 2025a).[8]

Inspired by Medieval sacred Latin prose text monody (Latin *pühalaul*), especially Franco-Roman[9] *pühalaul*, but striving to express the unique qualities of the Estonian language, I formulated and shaped a conception of Estonian *pühalaul* through an artistic process that involved two stages: 1) crafting a systematic repertoire based on the church calendar and other liturgical needs; and 2) designing teaching materials (Jõks 2019; 2020a; 2020b).[10] Ultimately the process can be summed up as the methodology of idiomatic Estonian ecclesiastical chant. The key concept in developing a singable prose-text chant was the notion of 'language music' (*keelemuusika*), defined as "the interplay of the three characteristics or dimensions or parameters of prosody (duration, loudness and height), their attentive observation; reflection (singly or all together) in the melody and/or application to the composing and/or performance of a particular chant" (SVHT 2025b).

The School of Sacred Chant (*Pühalaulu Kool*) established at Tallinna Toompea Kaarli Church[11] in 2012, served as a practical laboratory for crafting and testing Estonian *pühalaul* repertoire and practices in a real liturgical setting. The school has no restrictions on participation, for example no limits on age, religious views, or musical ability. The chanters' aim is rather a fellowship, a collective spiritual expression in one breathing and voice, than artistic outcome. In this community there is a simple rule: if you think that you are too good a singer to sing together with those who can't sing as perfectly as you, you are not yet up to communal singing and you still have to grow (Jõks 2014b: 22–23).

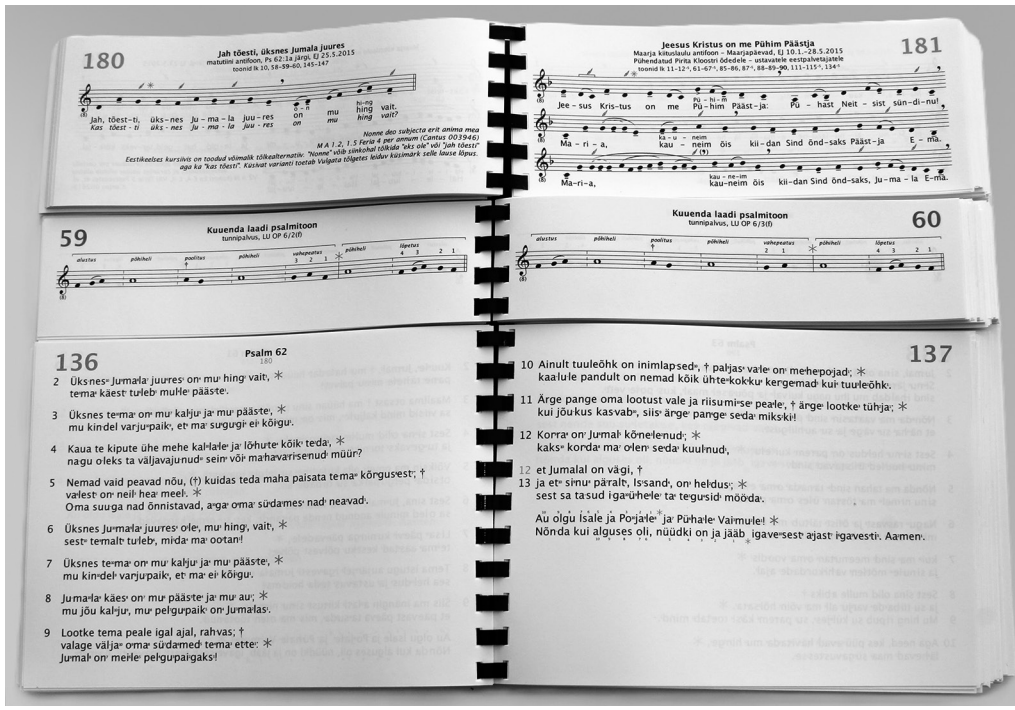

Photo 1. The Estonian Chant Psalter *(Jõks 2020b). Courtesy of author's archive.*

During my work with The School of Sacred Chant I formulated a theory for language-wise ecclesiastical chanting in Estonian (Jõks 2017; 2021); and shaped the core repertoire of the Estonian *pühalaul* (Jõks 2020b) as well as other publications with *pühalaul* repertoire and teaching material (Jõks 2019; 2020a; 2020–2022; see also Jõks 2015; 2016). There is – in fact even a method for composing *pühalaul* melodies that reflect the language music – a creative journey from "prosody to melody" (Jõks 2017: 71–73). *The Estonian Chant Psalter* (Jõks 2020b) serves as the central repertorial source for *pühalaul* (Photo 1):

> *The Estonian Chant Psalter* is a unique section-book that can be browsed simultaneously in three sections and gives an instant combination of 150 psalms with 180 psalm tones. The book also comprises the largest selection (300) of Estonian antiphons ever published. (Jõks and Raju 2023: 130)

Runosong

Runosong represents the communal folk singing tradition that was most deeply rooted in the Estonian mentality until the 19th century and to some extent even later, and which has been actively promoted by folklore revivalists since the 1960s. As part of the broader Finnic runosong tradition, it is characterised by trochaic metre with four stresses per line (Finnic tetrameter); the simultaneous use of alliteration and parallelism; lack of stanzas and end rhyme; use of archaic language, traditional poetic formulae and motifs; and a distinctive linear melodic style (Sarv and Oras n.d.).

Historically performed in a village community where a lead singer initiated the song and the group responded, runosong was a collective participation rather than professional musical performance. Singing in turns between the leader and chorus enabled the use of communal breathing techniques, achieving an uninterrupted flow of sound without the usual arch-shaped musical phrasing, segmented with breathing pauses. In this article the term 'arch-shaped musical phrase or musical sentence' refers only to the shape of the musical phrasing, which is characterised by common breathing pauses at the beginning and end of the phrase (the arch). It has no connection to the melodical blueprint, i.e., melody moving up and down, as it might be understood in folkloristics (see also Figure 3).

Urve Lippus (1950–2015), Ilse Lehiste (1922–2010), and Jaan Ross (b. 1957) have shown how runosong reflects the ancient musical thinking and prosodic structure of the Estonian language, linking musical rhythm and melodic contour to natural speech patterns (Lippus 1995; Ross and Lehiste 2001). Kristiina Ross (b. 1955) has further explored the cultural transition from oral runosong to the written tradition of translated Lutheran hymns, emphasizing the sharp and incomplete nature of Estonia's transition to modern culture compared to neighbouring Finnic peoples in the 19th century (Ross 2015).

Similarities and Differences Between Runosong and Pühalaul

Despite their different origins – runosong arising from Uralic linguistic culture and ecclesiastical chant from Indo-European traditions – runosong and *pühalaul* (particularly psalmody) share similarities in performance practice. Both traditions 1) empha-

sise, at least in their primal essence, communal participation rather than professional performance; 2) require two vocal units (a soloist and a chorus; two singers or two choruses), including a person of knowledge (a lead singer or cantor) to guide the assembly; 3) rely on a fluid, continuous flow of singing, where musical phrasing follows the logic of the text. Another similarity that can be highlighted between runosong texts and the Psalms of the Old Testament is parallelism.[12]

The key differences lie primarily in their textual structure: runosong is strophic (the main structural unit being a single verse line that is formed of four trochaic feet) and metrically regular, while *pühalaul* is based on prose texts with free (non-metric) rhythm, where musical expression must adapt to the natural flow of speech prosody.

The involvement of runosong in this study does not go beyond performance techniques (see above), for example the relationship between the text and melody, because the literary characteristics of the texts of runosong and *pühalaul* are substantially incompatible.

METHODOLOGY

Artistic Research and Autoethnography: A Combined Approach

This interdisciplinary hymnological study integrates two qualitative research methodologies: artistic research and autoethnography. These postmodern methodologies are intertwined to explore the development of *pühalaul* over the last 15 years. Artistic research, as defined in the Estonian scholarly framework, is "research expressed in and based on creative activity, the aim of which is to create new knowledge, new forms of culture, and new creative and research methods or techniques" (EARFA n.d.: 3).[13] Artistic research is characterised by methodological diversity, openness, and a creative process often summarised as bricolage, i.e. crafting with available materials (Pesti 2022).

Autoethnography on the other hand, is a qualitative research method that uses personal experience to describe and critique broader cultural, social, and political processes, practices, contexts. Autoethnography values reflexivity, subjectivity, and emotional engagement as legitimate components of knowledge production (Ellis 2004; Adams et al. 2015; Poulos 2021).

In this study, artistic research and autoethnography are inseparably combined. Artistic research serves as the creative method, shaping the repertoire, performance practices, and pedagogical materials of *pühalaul*. Autoethnography serves both as a methodological device within artistic research (guiding creative experimentation) and as a critical reflection tool, analysing the process and outcomes. Together, artistic research and autoethnography generated not only scholarly insights but also artistic outcomes, particularly the circular model of antiphonal psalmody. The integration of artistic research and autoethnography allows for a holistic exploration of both practical musical creation and the personal-experiential dimensions of this hymnological research.

The Research Strategy

The research strategy follows an applied humanities model, combining hymnology – along with its core subdisciplines musicology, linguistics and theology – and folkloristics, into a multifaceted interdisciplinary approach. From my scholarly perspective, I acknowledge the tension between modernist and postmodernist views of academic knowledge. Modernist research emphasises objectivity, rationality, and empirical generalisation (Chalmers 2013 [1976]), while postmodernist approaches, especially in the humanities and social sciences, recognise subjective, context-dependent, and culturally constructed forms of knowledge (Lyotard 1984; Wall 2016).

Without intending, even in the slightest, to serve as an apologist for a postmodernist mindset, I must nevertheless acknowledge that the combination of artistic research and autoethnography represents the most suitable strategic choice for achieving the aims of this study on a foundation of academically valid results. In this framework, the present study accepts artistic research as a legitimate academic method, despite its inherent "insurmountable scientific blind spot – the creative component that is unique and unrepeatable" (Jõks and Raju 2023: 111).

I also embrace the concept of *theologia prima*, the notion that liturgy itself – the lived worship experience – generates the first-instance theology that is supreme over academic theology (*theologia secunda*) (Kavanagh 1984: 73–75). *Theologia prima* in this sense parallels the way artistic practice generates new scholarly knowledge in artistic research.

Through autoethnographic reflection, I aim to examine in detail the complex process of artistic research, which is devoted to creating and evolving the way of ecclesiastic chanting. The subjectivity of the reflection might be regarded as a deficiency of the study, but this is arguably compensated by the value of having information about the human creative processes directly from the primary source, the author's immediate impressions and memories. Thus, while maintaining scholarly discipline, the research strategy allows space for subjective insight, spiritual experience, and creative intuition as essential components of the study.

Data Collection and Sources

The data for this study were collected through participant observation, artistic experimentation, autoethnographic reflection and scholarly literature.

Participant observation was carried out within the School of Sacred Chant in the role of cantor, tutor, and leader. It also embraced my previous experience in antiphonal psalmody, for example in the Community of the Resurrection, in Mirfield, England. Artistic experimentation with antiphonal psalmody was also executed with the School of Sacred Chant. The evaluation of the success of chanting was based on my extensive personal experience as a choir singer and conductor, as well as feedback from co-singers (see Jõks forthcoming).

Autoethnographic reflection allowed me to provide a deep, introspective narrative that linked my personal experience with broader cultural and social phenomena of communal singing, as well registered the steps on the artistic research. The information

was partly recorded in my field journals (FM: Jõks 2012–2016). Literature on hymnology, prosody, musicology, and artistic research served as the theoretical foundation. This diverse body of material provided both empirical and experiential insights into the process of adopting runosong techniques to Estonian *pühalaul*.

Synopsis: A Graphical Depiction of the Research Model

Considering the methodological complexity and the unusually multi-layered nature of the interdisciplinarity of this study, I developed a graphic research model for this article that conveys the content, nature, and synthesis principle of input as well as discussing the nature of the "insurmountable black spot" (Jõks and Raju 2023: 111) in this research (Figure 1).

TOWARDS A CIRCULAR MUSICAL PHRASE IN ANTIPHONAL PSALMODY

Recognising the Importance of Language Music

In this section, I outline the process, 1) from recognising that for ecclesiastical chant to feel natural in Estonian, the musical prosody must align with the specific suprasegmental features of Estonian prose text, 2) to the ultimate goal of this artistic research: identifying an appropriate approach for Estonian psalm chanting in the form of the circular model of antiphonal psalmody.

Some aspects, such as recognising the role of language prosody, pertain to the period before 2010, which serves as the prologue. An important input for my artistic research was composer and legendary promoter of runosong Veljo Tormis (1930–2017), who wrote:

> In my opinion, one of runosong's greatest values is its artistic originality and stylistic wholeness. To this I can add words customarily used in referring to one's mother tongue: for me, my folk song [song of my folk or my nation] is the very best, the most beautiful, and the most worthwhile. (Tormis 1972 quoted in Daitz 2004: 69)

The researchers of Estonian folk songs have proved that several musical features of folk song indeed reflect the prosodic features of the language (Rüütel 1986; Lehiste 2000; Ross and Lehiste 2001: 84, 89; Särg 2005). This underscored the importance of the language component in *pühalaul* and confirmed that the idea to search for inspiration for designing *pühalaul* performance practice in traditional singing techniques of Estonian runosong was correct.

I have been engaged in systematic chanting of Medieval Latin *pühalaul* since 1994 and so I am well aware of the strong, nearly inseparable bond between text and melody in this repertoire (for example Apel 1958; Hiley 1993). However, I had not fully realised this on an experiential basis. During my doctoral studies, I had a valuable opportunity to consult with Godehard Joppich (1932–2024), a student of the legendary semiologist

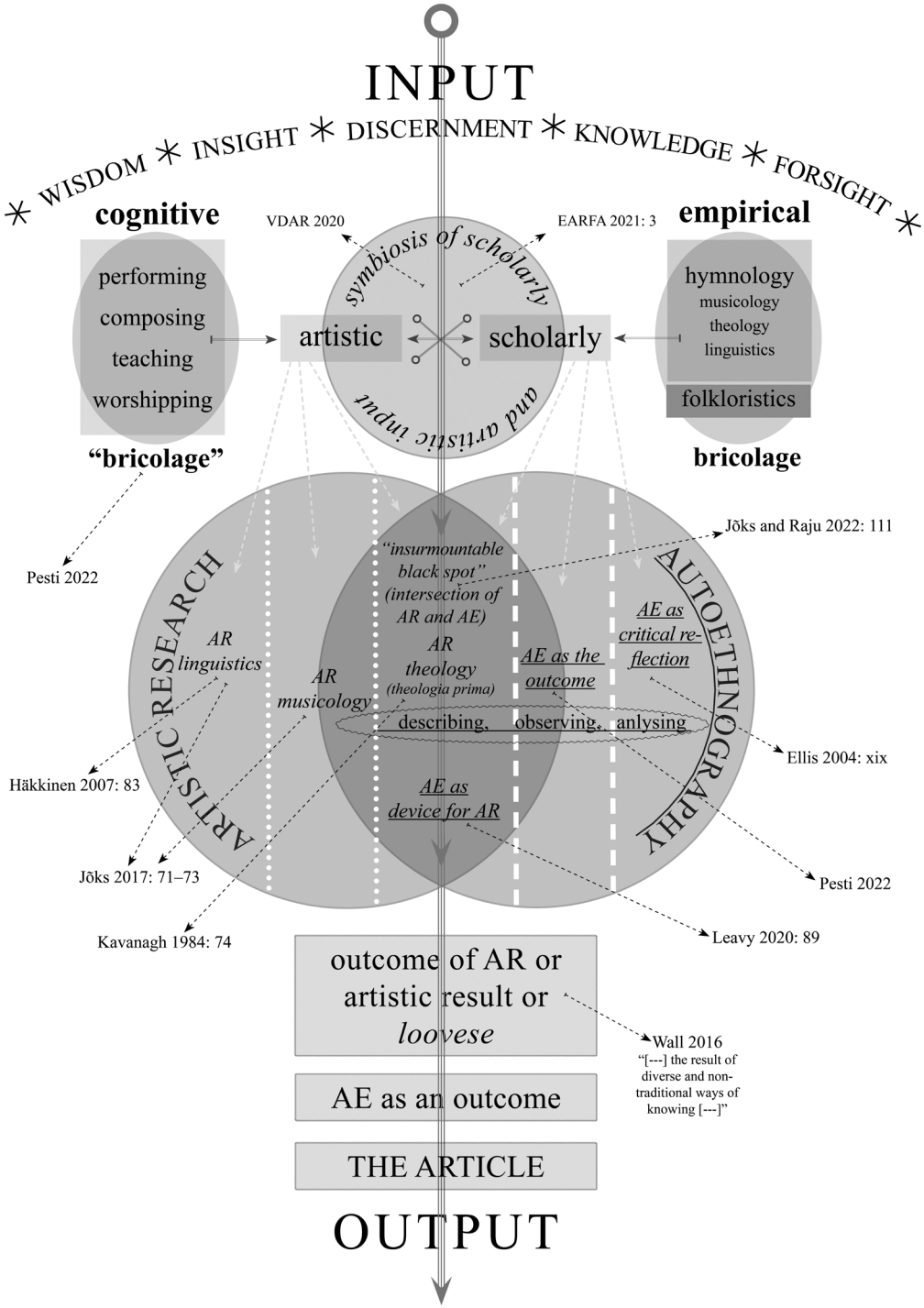

Figure 1. A graphic depiction of the research model.

Eugène Cardine (1905–1988). Joppich was one of the initiators of the game-changing book *Gregorian Semiology* (Cardine 1982; see Jõks 2009 vol 1: 106–107). I wanted to interview him because of his close affiliation with Cardine. What was initially planned as a single visit turned into a series of meetings in Frankfurt, during which Joppich introduced me to his performance principles and taught me the chanting of Latin *pühalaul*. Throughout our lessons, he explained his understanding of the emergence of the melodies of Medieval Latin *pühalaul*. (FM: Joppich 2005–2008) This hypothesis, although it cannot be proven empirically, was and still is highly inspiring. For me, it remains a plausible attempt to explain the emergence of Medieval Latin *pühalaul* melodies in different regions of Europe in a remarkably similar manner.

Joppich believed – and I still share this belief – that the melodies of Medieval Latin *pühalaul* represent the traditional Christian faith, embedded in the sacred texts through the meaningful utterance of these texts. The monks knew the Psalter by heart because they chanted the entire 150 Psalms every single week. Although manuscripts of the Holy Scripture already existed, the low level of literacy and the scarcity of expensive manuscripts meant that the texts of the Psalter and the New Testament in monastic communities were transmitted orally from generation to generation.

> For hundreds of years, monks learned all the texts this way only. The elder monk pronounced it to them [novices] and he did not pronounce only the words – he pronounced his faith and not the faith from the point of view of his subjective understanding. He pronounced what he had heard from another elderly monk, who had heard it from another. Nobody dared to change even a little nuance in it because if you change the sound, you also change the sense. (FM: Joppich 2005; Jõks 2009 vol 2: 398)

"By the middle of the fourth century at the latest, the liturgies of the West were being celebrated in Latin rather than Greek" (Gy 1986: 45). During the subsequent centuries – according to Joppich (FM: Joppich 2005) – the Christian faith was deposited in intonations of uttering the Latin texts. The intonations gradually turned into melodies and were written down at the turn of the millennium, which represents the beginning of written musical culture in the Occident.

Without the background in ethnomusicology that deals with the historical emergence of music, including speech-based melodies (for example Stumpf 1883; Nettl 2005), the information was new for me. The hypothesis of speech-based development of melodies appealed to me very strongly and from this point forward I begun to pay much more attention to the Latin text and subtle nuances described in Medieval neumatic notation. It seemed, at least to me, that I made good progress. Joppich however, pushed the boundaries even further.

I recall a lesson with him (FM: Joppich 2007). He was teaching me chanting Latin *pühalaul*, a communion antiphon *Ecce Virgo concipiet* ("Behold, a Virgin Shall Conceive"). When Joppich was explaining fine tuning of the last syllable of the final word of the piece "Emmanuel" to me, he suddenly asked how well I know Latin. I explained that I understand the meaning of the words, but I do not read, write or speak Latin. He was very surprised and asked how on earth I expected to achieve a plausible result in ecclesiastical chanting if I did not know the language in which I was chanting. I tried to excuse myself with the fact that most of the texts are from the Holy Scriptures and I can

always refer to the particular verse in a language that I know. He was not convinced at all and told me how, during his time as a Benedictine monk, he was sent to study in Rome, where he wrote his doctoral dissertation in Latin. This dissertation was in economics. Then I understood the reason why his interpretation of Latin *pühalaul* was so good: he understood and perceived, in the deepest sense, the significance of every sentence, word, syllable, and phoneme. His understanding of Latin was so profound that he was able to acknowledge and appreciate intrinsic intertextual nuances including intra-word and intra-syllable nuances. My chanting of Latin *pühalaul* was fake – Joppich realised that from my performance. It was mainly a musical act; it stood on enjoyable aesthetics of melodies of the Latin *pühalaul*, and my personal spiritual perception of the particular text, but not on the deep and comprehensive physical indulgence of the text, its intrinsic logic and inseparable interaction with the melody. This was a major turning point. I realised that Latin *pühalaul* is founded on – what I later conceptualised as – Latin prose text language music (Latin-language music). Latin *pühalaul* was ungraspable for me because I did not know the language well enough, in other words, I did not comprehend Latin language music.

Experimentation

In 2017 I published my first scholarly work (Jõks 2017) that used the term 'language music' (*keelemuusika*). It came up in the context of a method, which I named 'a method of speech curves' and which was designed for composing melodies[14] of Estonian *pühalaul* antiphons and responsories. Following the example of Joppich's theory I trained myself to listen very closely to the way I pronounce the texts of the Holy Scriptures. I made special meditative sessions for myself during which I repeated a relatively short text, usually a sentence, sometimes more than a hundred times. With every repetition I tried to increase my conviction. I concentrated on how my spiritual conviction was reflected in the prosody in all three phonetic suprasegmentals – duration, accent and intonation (pitch). In fact, I tried to accomplish with Estonian *pühalaul* – in accelerated process – what Joppich believed had happened with Latin *pühalaul* over the course of centuries. I tried to reveal a melodic blueprint for a certain text through my personal Christian faith. Afterwards it was necessary to apply the blueprint to a musical mode, for example a natural major or Phrygian mode. This conclusively means that I was not trying to compose a melody and superimpose it on the text. I rather tried to find out or, if I may, 'ask' the text what kind of melody she hid within her prosodic architecture. I named this style in *pühalaul* a 'declarative style' or 'declaratory style' (Jõks 2017: 70–71) because the melodies originated from and included a declaration of the Christian faith. Most of the melodies in the green book of the *Estonian Chant Psalter* (Jõks 2020b) were composed using this method – they represent faith becoming melodically audible through the Word, the *Logos* (the method is available in Jõks 2017: 71–73).

In the same way, rather ironically, the ignorance of language music, more precisely the input of the third phonetic suprasegmental – pitch, forming the intonation – became crucial in outlining another style of *pühalaul* that I named the 'contemplative style' (Jõks 2017: 62–71). When composing a *pühalaul* melody in the declarative style it is necessary to engage all three parameters of prosody. But what happens when we 'switch off'

our personal interpretation in speech intonation and start uttering syllables at a single pitch? I reached this phenomenon while testing Joppich's hypothesis with Estonian texts, and it remains the most astonishing 'wow effect' in all my hymnological research, as it offers a plausible explanation for the nature of formula-based psalmody in Medieval Latin *pühalaul*. If we remove all personal intonation-based interpretation from our speech and leave only so to say the 'pure text' by uttering syllables on a single pitch the result closely resembles chanting on a single pitch. The phenomenon of contemplative utterance, for me, is the foundation of the contemplative style of *pühalaul*. This phenomenon is also referred to as recitation or recitative (for example, see Apel 1958: 21; Hiley 1993: 47). It is very important to note that a certain monotony in contemplative uttering arises only in terms of one prosodic parameter, that is, pitch. In fact, contemplative uttering on a single pitch remains expressive, sensitive, and rich in nuances in terms of duration and volume; unless these are forced to be monotonous due to certain mental inertia. (Jõks 2017: 62–63)

The specific prose text language music of the Estonian vernacular however, does not have enough original influence in the mainstream Estonian ecclesiastical singing for three reasons: 1) traditional Punschel-like[15] isometric – and usually quite loud and in many places rather slow – organ playing quantizes syllables into equal durational categories, and the misrepresentation of the natural language rhythm makes joint singing too mechanical; 2) the so-called rhythmic or rhythmisised chorale tunes (an opposite to isometric tunes) that derive from German or Anglo-American language music distort the rhythm of the Estonian language; 3) Estonia has been a Lutheran nation for many centuries. The vastly dominant genre of ecclesiastical chant has been the chorale. Therefore, Estonian prose rhythm ecclesiastical singing is scarce in Estonia and there is no adequate 'point of reference' from where to establish proper language-wise singing. For these three reasons the realisation of Estonian-language music in ecclesiastical chant is rather modest.

Challenges with Formula-based Psalmody

This section describes how communal chanting of antiphonal psalmody with coordinated stops, lengthenings, and breathing techniques was established.

		†		✳					
alustus *initium* intonation	põhiheli *tenor* tenor	poolitus *flexa* flex	põhiheli *tenor* tenor	vahepeatus *mediatio* mediation	2. alustus *2. initium* 2. intonation	(2.) põhiheli *(2.) tenor* (2.) tenor	(poolitus) *(flexa)* (flex)	(2.) põhiheli *(2.) tenor* (2.) tenor	lõpetus *differentia* final cadence

Figure 2. The basic structure of a dynamic psalm tone or a dynamic musical formula with the names of the components in Latin and Estonian (Jõks 2017: 63). English terms are added for this article.

The structure of a psalm tone in *pühalaul* is universal – the same model is applicable with endless melodic variants and can be used with all Psalms. Figure 2 shows a basic structure for a psalm tone with the names of the components in Latin, Estonian and English. In the historic formula there is no flex in the second half of the formula. This

was added by me as an experimental idea. The initial publication of Figure 2 was the first instance where Estonian terminology for the components of the formula was used in scholarly writing. The verse is divided into two parts with a red asterisk. The asterisk marks the middle point of the psalm verse, the border between two verse halves. In practice the asterisk usually denotes a longer pause. There is no unequivocal understanding for this longer pause. There is speculation that it is to allow the echo in a large church building to die down before singing continues.

Was there a theological meaning to the asterisk? As a symbol it has been the subject of scholarly attention in many subjects (Dictionary n.d.). In chant books the asterisk might have more than one meaning. I have found three types of asterisk in chant books: 1) five-pointed asterisk or a star ⋆, 2) six-pointed asterisk ∗, and 3) eight-pointed asterisk ✳. In chant books and literature there is not much about the asterisk in the middle of a psalm verse.

A Theoretical and Practical Manual of Gregorian Chant states that "Every verse of a Psalm is divided into two parts, the point of division is marked with a colon : or *asterisk **" (Haberl 1892 [1864]: 163). *The Book of Common Prayer* explains: "An asterisk divides each verse into two parts for reading or chanting. In reading, a distinct pause should be made at the asterisk" (BCP 2007: 583). The asterisk is also believed to "refer to indicate a non-final pause" (Universalis 2021). In the *Liber Usualis* with English rubrics the asterisk is called "the star". There is no direct information about interpretation of the star. However, there are some indirect guidelines. "There must be no cut or break interrupting the regular flow of the recitation from the beginning to the Mediation [here is the star] and thence to the Final Cadence." (LU 1934: xxxij–xxxiij)

Ethan Jewett (2016) discusses the nature of the asterisk as follows:

> I have been in congregations where the asterisk is completely ignored, and in others where the pause is so long and plodding that it makes me want to jump impatiently out of my seat. I think there is wisdom in that tiny asterisk, whether the pause is long or short, because it forces us to take a breath and stop. We should do a lot more of that. The pace of the world is so furiously fast that we often fail to pause and think before we speak and act.

In the main the asterisk is treated as a structural symbol to indicate the middle point of a psalm verse. Sometimes it relates to a suggested longer pause. Jewett goes further and tries to give this pause the content-based explanation of "taking a breath and stop". Further in his text he connects this stopping with a spiritual experience and concludes that "Maybe that little asterisk is an open space to let the Holy Spirit in and speak to us." (Ibid.) By specifying the asterisk as a 'gateway' for the Holy Spirit into our lives Jewett has come closest to my interpretation of the asterisk that has its beginning in 2012.

In 2012, I realised something that still amazes me. In fact, this finding – or even I dare to say revelation – has become the central spiritual foundation of *pühalaul*. I wrote in my field journal on December 15, 2012:

> Today at the swimming pool, I had a couple of very good ideas. First, the asterisk between the psalm lines should be replaced with the Christogram. This provides a very clear focus – everything points towards Christ and from there proceeds from Christ to converge back into Christ… Good ideas come to mind at the swimming pool – it's a pity I can go there so rarely. (FM: Jõks 2012–2016)

Because in some chant books of Latin *pühalaul* a six-branch asterisk is used I saw a Greek monogram of Jesus of Nazareth in it (Christogram or *Chi Rho*). "I" is overwritten with "X". I learned to interpret this as a mystical silence, which is not the result of our decision not to make a sound, but is because sound is not possible. The asterisk does not mark a formal position for breathing, rather it is a simulation of eternity – due to timelessness and spacelessness a sound is not possible. "Every psalm verse acts as a pilgrimage to Jesus Christ" (Jõks 2019: 11). When you reach the asterisk, you reach Him. You breathe out and concentrate, trying to absorb the silence, absorb the eternity, and absorb fellowship with Christ. (Ibid.)

The only formal technical position for breathing is between the verses. This conception becomes crucially important in the following comparison of arch-shaped and circular musical phrases.

By that time, in 2012, the first three experimental editions of the *Estonian Chant Psalter* (Jõks 2020b) were ready[16] and the first meeting of the School of Sacred Chant was held two days earlier on December 13 (FM: Jõks 2012–2016). In the first, second and third trial versions of the *Estonian Chant Psalter* five-pointed asterisks are used. So, the initial version of the Psalter had existed for nearly two years; the idea of the Christogram came only when the book was tested in the act of communal chanting.

Musical or Textual Story

During my doctoral studies I lived for one year in The Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield, a monastic community, and participated on their prayer services. This Anglican Christian community was founded in 1892 and moved to Mirfield in 1898 (for a history of the community see Wilkinson 1992). Prayer services at the Community are in English and according to the monastic tradition the services consist largely of chanting the Psalms mainly using antiphonal psalmody. The musical quality of chanting is good, even more so during the joint services with the students at The College of the Resurrection. The College functions on the same premises as the Community.

Everybody who has an acquaintance with formula-based Latin psalmody, or performance of Latin *pühalaul* in general, knows "the smooth and velvety sound" of the best Gregorian chant choirs (Brunner 1982: 317; Jõks 2014a: 182). This sound describes a purely musical-acoustical phenomenon, which creates a rewarding listening experience or "musical flow" (Wrigley and Emmerson 2013) both from the point of view of performers and listeners (Diaz 2013). The smooth and velvety sound of Latin *pühalaul* is acoustically so seductive that there is an immediate invitation to repeat the same, if necessary, in vernacular.

During prayer services at the Community of the Resurrection I recognised the smooth and velvety sound – the trademark of Latin psalmody, although the actual chanting was in English. Even if the musical result of communal psalmody at the Community might vary slightly from time to time the quality of the cantor who sings half of the psalm verses was vocally very enjoyable. The smooth and velvety sound represents in this article, what I call, a musical storytelling, which is well known from instrumental music, especially from programme music.[17]

Occasionally in some prayer services at the Community the Psalms were read rather than chanted. I realised that narration, considered so important in reading the Holy Scriptures, became a musical performance when the monks began to chant. Considering the vigorous and engaging character of music (particularly the smooth and velvety sound) it is possible that the textual storytelling could fade into the background. My question was, would it be possible in communal psalmody to retain both storytelling lines?

Experimentation with communal chanting of *pühalaul* went towards idiomatic or text governed or textual storytelling psalmody. I have tried many times to imitate Estonian psalmody with professional early music singers with immaculate 'smooth and velvety' vocal production and the result was as expected – acoustically seductive. This however sounded like Latin psalmody with Estonian words rather than Estonian psalmody. If one is dealing with an act of communal singing with ordinary parishioners, who are in most cases not qualified to sing even in a church choir, the aim can't be 'smooth and velvety' sound. This sound has very good potential for communal listening and musical meditation but not much realistic potential for imitating an act of communal singing with a worshipping assembly. If there is still an aspiration to achieve a result from communal singing that is aesthetically 'tolerable' to listeners according to mainstream understanding, and is spiritually nourishing for the chanters as well as the listeners, there must be some kind of different approach.

However, it seemed impossible to combine musical and textual storytelling in communal psalmody with the School of Sacred Chant and it took me a considerable time to realise why. The reason was actually very simple and related to musical phrasing. Every musical event consists of a series of musical sentences that are usually formed by a *ritenuto* at the points of partition of the phrase. However, it is not adequate to tell every textual story like that. In the following sentences, beginning with "Can you imagine …" I have marked with italics the words that will be seized into a *ritenuto* when phrasing is musical. The *ritenuto* begins with the first italicised syllables and will continue until the end of the italicised text. When the text is in normal font again it means *a tempo*, in other words returning to the original speed of speaking (see Figure 3).

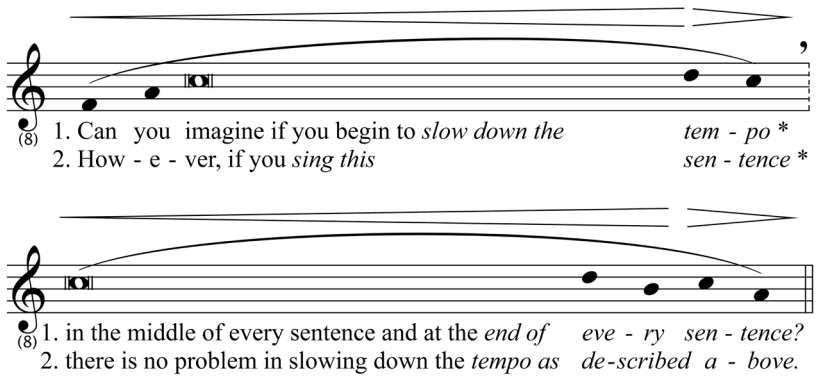

Figure 3. Example of singing the text: "Can you imagine if you begin to slow down the tempo …" with a fifth mode psalm tone form the Liber Usualis *(LU 1934: 115). Italics mark the words that will be seized into a* ritenuto*. The slurs indicate arch-shaped musical phrases.*

That was another important turning point. I realised that formula-based chanting of the Psalms, despite constant mumblings on the "importance of text" in ecclesiastical chant, is in fact very music-oriented or formula-oriented. Singing unmistakably strives towards a cadenza: the words in the cadenzas receive the most durational attention, each verse is a well-formed musical sentence, there is a *ritenuto* in the middle and at the end of the verse, the second verse can begin only when the first sentence is properly finished musically. This is musically captivating but radically diminishes textual storytelling.

Circular Musical Phrase: Tutelage of Runosong

What we were witnessing earlier is an arch-shaped musical phrase, formulated by breathing cycle – the archetype of mainstream musicality in the Western musical culture. To make good music a musician must learn how to design and execute a musical structure, including the phrase.

In his children's book *Everything Is a Miracle*, from 1985, Estonian writer and musician Tõnn Sarv (1949–2025) has presented a splendid graphic depiction of a circular musical phrase in runosong (Figure 4). There are no common breathings and consequentially no *ritenuti* at the partition points of the phrases, thus the continuous flow of singing and storytelling line is never interrupted. Two vocal units, 'lead singer' (*eeslaulja*) and group (might include all others) sing continuously following a circular musical phrase. While lead singer is breathing, the group covers with singing and vice-versa. For two years (2018–2020) I taught the Estonian Culture and Language course at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre to overseas students. We chanted runosong and I was fascinated to see how the circular musical phrase captivated Indo-European students, not to mention the Asian ones. One of the most 'shocking' features was the lack of *ritenuti* – even at the end of the song.[18]

The circular musical phrase has always captivated me because of its ring-formed universal perfection. The resemblance of antiphonal psalmody with runosong allowed realising a circular musical phrase also in formula-based psalmody.

In runosong the circular musical phrase is achieved using a specific device of runo singing called *leegajus* (also *liegajus*). *Leegajus* is an anticipatory entry on two last syllables of the other vocal unit. In the Figure 4 the *leegajus* is on the last two syllables of the word "vel-le-ke-ne" ('brother'). It would have been stylistically inappropriate, even distastefully eclectic, to use *leegajus* in antiphonal psalmody. Therefore, I made a combination of *leegajus* and ingressive phonation. Ingressive phonation or inwards speaking is also a device of runo singing serving well for the realisation of the circular phrase. Ingressive phonation means that a singer is breathing in during a syllable while he/she is pronouncing it. The School of Sacred Chant chanters are expected to read during antiphonal psalmody the text of other vocal unit *sotto voce*,[19] or whisper it or say it in their imagination. Instead of saying the last syllable they breathe in when pronouncing the last syllable. Chanters of the School have used the method of ingressive phonation for many years now. And not just in the above-described situation but in other positions as well. Mastering this technique gives such a freedom and natural flow to both textual and musical storytelling.

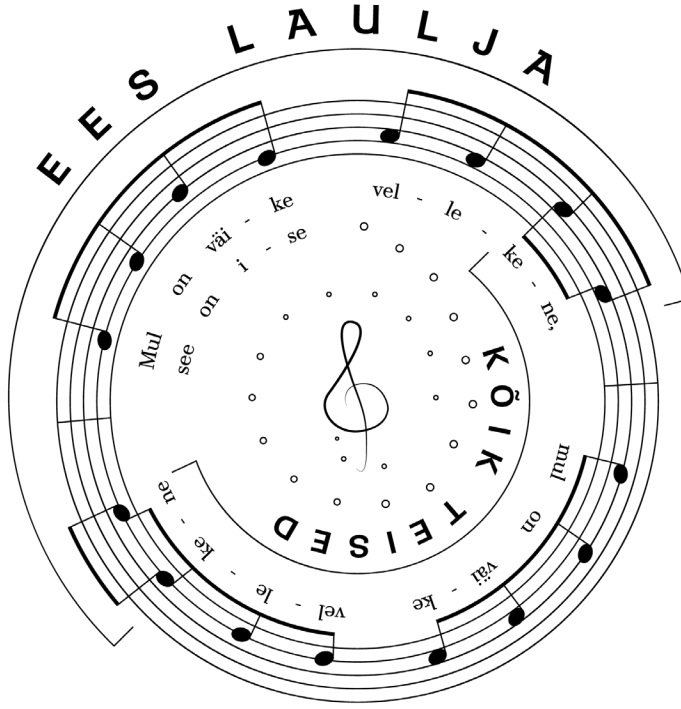

Figure 4. A graphic depiction of a circular musical phrase by Tõnn Sarv (1985: 51). While the soloist is breathing, the group covers with singing and vice-versa. The last syllables of the lines are sung together.

The 'Magic Syllable' as a Concept

In the process of remoulding an arch-shaped musical phrase into a circular musical phrase a problem occurred. With elimination of the *ritenuti* the chanting lost its elasticity and warmth becoming 'stiff' and hasty. Together with *ritenuti*, peace and tranquillity also left. This – I must confess – was a moment of crisis and I was nearly ready to return to the good old arch-shaped musical phrase. However, I concentrated in my chanting on the question, why am I making a *ritenuto*? Is there something else besides musical aesthetics? I realised that in vocal music the *ritenuto* at the partition points of a phrase have yet another function, that of preparing the singer for breathing. To execute proper breathing a singer must make a *ritenuto* to resolve 'the tension of the phrase'.

Through this kind of analysis and contemplation the crucial question arose: what if I would be able to resolve the tension of the phrase before the cadenza. Through experimentation I established the concept of the 'magic syllable'. To test its efficiency I highlighted these syllables on some occasions. (In Figure 5 they are underlined.) The magic syllable is the last long[20] syllable before the cadenza (*mediatio* and *differentia*, see Figure 2). One-syllable words are usually excluded from selection. I was thrilled at how efficient this was: the magic syllable acted as a shock absorber or a sponge for tension. It was enough to concentrate on this syllable and prolong it slightly to get rid of the need

for the *ritenuto* at the end of the phrase. After that, it was very simple to finish the phrase in an effortless manner – all stiffness and haste was gone.

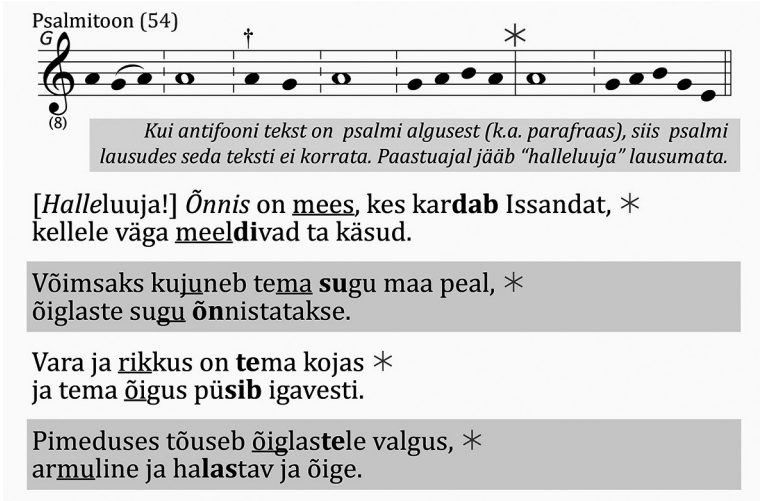

Figure 5. III psalm of Sunday, Psalm 112:1–4 in Jõks 2016. "(54)" on the left is the number of this psalm tone in the blue book of The Estonian Chant Psalter *(Jõks 2020b); "G" is the recommended pitch to start chanting; the rubric under the psalm tone says that "If the antiphon's text is from the beginning of the psalm (including paraphrases), it is not repeated when uttering the psalm. During Lent, 'Hallelujah' is omitted."; the square brackets reiterate the possible omission of Hallelujah; bolds syllables signify the point when chanting deviates from the main pitch of uttering and the cadenza, either "mediation" or "final cadence" is to be executed (see also Figure 2). The magic syllables are underlined. The first verse is chanted by a cantor. Grey shading represents the verses chanted by the assembly.*

Formulating the Circular Model of Antiphonal Psalmody

These discoveries culminated in the formulation of the circular model of antiphonal psalmody, where two vocal units alternate seamlessly, ingressive phonation replaces formal breathing pauses and magic syllables absorb phrase tension naturally (Figure 6). Moments of silence (at asterisks) symbolise eternal stillness rather than formal breathing, interpreted spiritually as a mystical encounter with Christ. When we cease to make sound God speaks in silence.

This model was tested and refined within the School of Sacred Chant, where practical application demonstrated its viability for communal liturgical singing. The circular model preserves both musical flow and textual storytelling, offering a new idiomatic form of Estonian ecclesiastical chant rooted in both ancient tradition and contemporary practice.

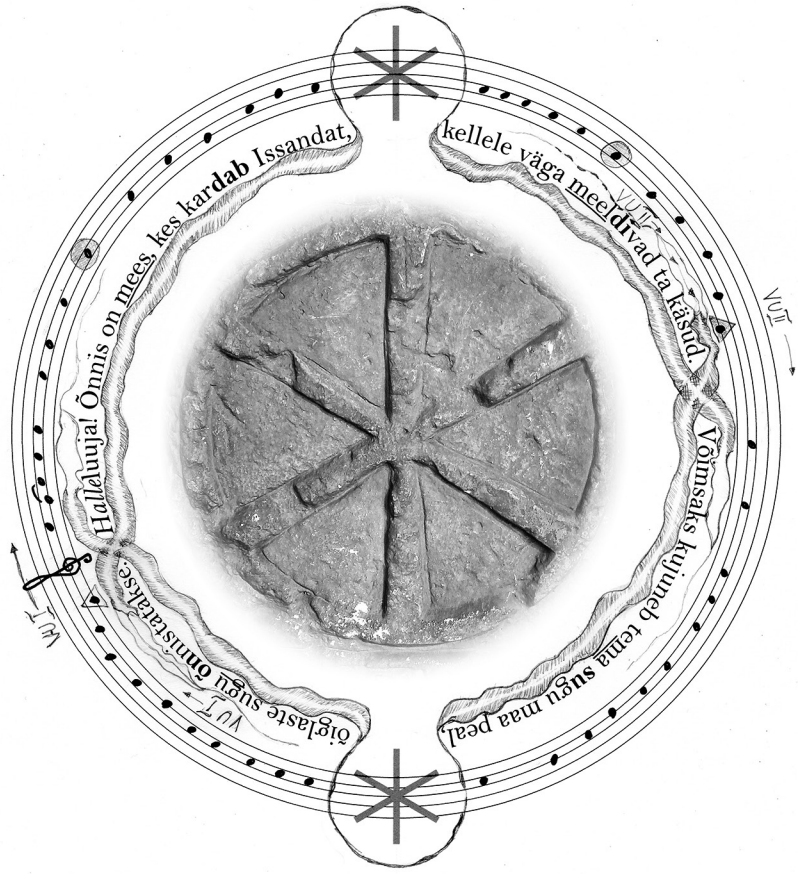

Figure 6. The circular model of antiphonal psalmody. "Praise the Lord. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, ∗ who find great delight in his commands. Their children will be mighty in the land; ∗ the generation of the upright will be blessed." (Ps 112:1–2) Vocal unit one is marked with cursive raster left to right and vocal unit two with cursive raster right to left. The lines of vocal units depict an uninterrupted flow of chanting. Magic syllables are underlined and the corresponding note marked with a circle. Notes that are marked with rectangles signify the syllable where the leegajus is executed using ingressive phonation. When the lines cross the circular model and 'travel' around the monographs of Christ, they signify the simulation of eternity, the meeting with Christ in absolute silence.

In the centre of the model: a fragment from the cover of a Merovingian sarcophagus (Musée de Saint-Germain-en-Laye), dated 550–650 AD.

POST FACTUM REFLECTION

This section was written *post factum*, as a reflection on the research project to analyse the whole process of the artistic research and its result – the artifact.

Reflecting on the Methodology: The Research Model

Looking back at the research process, it becomes clear how deeply intertwined artistic research and autoethnography were in the unfolding of the circular model of antiphonal psalmody. The hybrid methodology allowed the merging of empirical observation, creative intuition, and subjective spiritual experience into a coherent scholarly outcome. This approach resonates with broader trends in the arts and humanities, where traditional academic boundaries are increasingly challenged (Ellis 2004; Wall 2016), and subjective and "non-traditional ways of knowing" are increasingly valued as critical components of knowledge production (Wall 2016; Leavy 2020 [2008]). Rather than seeking purely objective, universal knowledge, this research acknowledges the importance of personal perspective, lived experience, and cultural specificity in the creation of new artistic and scholarly knowledge.

The interdisciplinary approach of this research, drawing from linguistics, musicology, theology, and folkloristics, illustrates how personal religious and artistic practices can inform broader cultural conversations, particularly in the context of ritual and worship.

While my scholarly foundation remains rooted in modernist traditions – valuing empirical data and structured argumentation (for example Jõks 2009: 112–235; Jõks and Soom 2016) – the acceptance of postmodernist elements, such as the legitimacy of subjective knowledge, was essential for the success of this study. According to Henk Borgdorff (2012) artistic research is legitimised through its ability to generate knowledge and understanding via artistic practice itself.

In particular, the concept of the "insurmountable scientific blind spot" (Jõks and Raju 2023) proved crucial, recognising that the core creative insights of artistic research – the "black box" where intuition, inspiration, and lived experience meet – are by their nature unverifiable, yet still form the heart of new knowledge creation.

The Interplay of Empirical and Experiential Knowledge

The research model developed in this study highlights two distinct but interrelated pathways of knowledge input: the objective and verifiable (scholarly knowledge from hymnology – that is, musicology, theology, and linguistics – and folkloristics); and the subjective and experiential (creative practice, worship experience, and reflective observation). Artistic research and autoethnography intertwined through these two streams, resulting in a layered understanding where the empirical and the experiential are not separated, but rather enrich and inform one another. This dual input was not merely additive but symbiotic, creating a complex methodological landscape where creative intuition was guided by scholarly insight, and scholarly reflection was deepened by lived artistic practice.

Challenges and Self-Critical Reflections

Conducting this research revealed several challenges, such as personal involvement, legitimacy of outcomes and limits of generalisation.

As both the researcher and the practitioner, I had to navigate the delicate balance between subjective immersion and scholarly distance. Full detachment was neither possible nor desirable; instead, the aim was honest reflexivity, acknowledging personal involvement as a strength rather than a weakness.

Legitimacy of outcomes rests on clarity of process documentation, transparent reflection, and practical demonstration within a communal setting. Study's artistic outputs – the circular model and the new chanting techniques – are based on lived experience rather than quantifiable data.

Limits of generalisation are defined by the fact that the model is deeply rooted in Estonian linguistic and cultural contexts. However, its main idea, that the invention of tradition (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 2014 [1983]) must align with the local cultural context and language, may inspire adaptations elsewhere rather than being designed as a universal solution for all languages or traditions. These reflections underscore the nature of the conducted research as a sincere, culturally embedded artistic exploration.

The Spiritual Dimension

One of the most profound aspects of this research is its spiritual dimension, particularly the understanding of silence at the asterisk points in antiphonal psalmody not merely as technical breathing spaces, but as moments of mystical encounter. This spiritual understanding informed the entire artistic process, bearing in mind that chanting was not merely vocalisation, but an act of prayer and storytelling, and that silence was not emptiness, but a space of presence and listening.

Thus, the research does not merely propose new artistic techniques, but offers a vision of chanting as a holistic, spiritually alive practice where text, music, body, breath, community, and mystery are woven together.

To conclude the methodological explanation, it is proper to cite Borgdorff (2012):

> In raising the issue of the specific place and quality of artistic research, we should not seek confrontations with experimental research in the empirical-deductive exact sciences, nor with socially engaged empirical-descriptive research in the social sciences, and also not with the cultural-analytical, aesthetic, or critical-hermeneutic interpretive approaches in the humanities. However, to adopt one-sidedly the 'natural science' model, the 'social science' model, or the 'humanities' model … will produce a myopic understanding of what is really going on in the arts.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to explore and develop a new idiomatic form of Estonian prose-rhythm ecclesiastical chant (*pühalaul*) by integrating performance techniques from the archaic Finnic communal singing tradition of runosong. The research addressed the

long-standing challenge of developing an ecclesiastical chant style that resonates with the phonetic, prosodic, and performance traditions of the Estonian language and culture, rather than relying solely on Indo-European musical models and reflexes.

Estonian *pühalaul* is reflected on and analysed using a hybrid methodology that combines artistic research and autoethnography; a long-term creative process of creation, experimentation, reflection; and refinement of an ecclesiastical chant style. This process included: 1) recognising the importance of language music in shaping melodic prosody; 2) extensive experimentation in the context of the School of Sacred Chant, which served as a laboratory for Estonian *pühalaul*; 3) drawing inspiration from runosong's musical phrasing and breathing techniques and adapting them to *pühalaul*; 4) discovering new performance strategies such as the lengthening of some syllables, i.e. use of the 'magic syllable', to maintain perception of the seamless musical flow and textual storytelling.

The result of this research is the circular model of antiphonal psalmody: a method that allows uninterrupted, fluid communal chanting aligned with the natural characteristics of the Estonian language and the spiritual needs of the worshipping assembly. The model maintains musical and textual storytelling simultaneously, supporting both aesthetic and spiritual experiences. It was tested and refined within the School of Sacred Chant, confirming its practical viability for communal liturgical use.

The study demonstrates that adopting traditional communal singing elements carefully can create a new, culturally faithful form of ecclesiastical chant, deeply rooted in a local linguistic and musical heritage.

NOTES

1 In this article the term psalm refers only to the 150 psalm texts in the Old Testament.

2 Following the introduction of the term *pühalaul* into Estonian hymnological scholarship, I was surprised to discover that, even in English, no consistent terminological distinction is made between chants set to prose texts and those composed in metric verse. The term plainchant (Lat. *cantus planus*) encompasses both hymns and sequences (set in metrical verse) as well as psalms (which, in the context of chant, are set to prose texts).

3 The quotations in the article are translated by the author.

4 For a brief overview of certain features of spoken Estonian in English, see Jõks and Raju 2023: 113–114.

5 There is an abundant bibliography about the Western ecclesiastical chant from various viewpoints. In the context of the medieval repertoire of Latin chant there are both thorough studies as well as comprehensive treatments. Among the latter, the two most significant works are Apel 1958 and Hiley 1993. These two are extensive handbooks that include generous bibliographies with wide selections of particular scholarly studies. For a more condensed treatment, please see Hiley 2009. There are also more – what we could call – personal scholarly treatments, for example Crocker 2000.

6 *Pühalaul* is not entirely a neologism. I found three examples of earlier use. 1) In the novel *Harsh Sea* (1938) by Estonian writer August Gailit (1891–1960). 2) It was used – written separately as *püha laul* – by the Estonian disciples of Iegor Reznikoff (b. 1938) who, among other interesting undertakings, taught overtone singing. He had a rather large group of pupils in Estonia who were learning spiritual balance through chanting and especially group-based overtone vocal exercises. Reznikoff was also a performer of Latin *pühalaul* with a very distinctive style. He chanted very slowly, in the lower tessitura of his voice, usually in churches with large acoustics, creating a

mystical and captivating soundscape. 3) *Püha laul* is also used sporadically to describe evangelical worship music (for example, see Underground C 2012).

7 For a terminological-critical analysis see, for example, Jõks 2006.

8 In addition to this definition, there are also specific theological and linguistic definitions of *pühalaul* (see SVHT 2025a).

9 Franco-Roman chant is the scholarly term for Gregorian chant. It is one of the many 'dialects' of the Medieval sacred Latin monody, for example Ambrosian, Old-Roman, Mozarabian. Music historians have presented several different interpretations of the origin and development of the chant repertoire (see for example Hughes 1980 [1974]: 89–92). The basic feature of the Franco-Roman repertory is – just as the name itself suggests – a bicultural contribution. It is believed that during the Carolingian Renaissance, Latin chant was transferred from Rome to the Frankish kingdom, was modified by the Franks and then exported back to Rome, after which the Franco-Roman chant became a central musical dialect in the Roman Catholic Church's liturgy.

10 Most of the relevant writings are listed in the References section; for the full list and digital copy of Estonian *pühalaul* repertoire and teaching materials please find my profile on the Estonian Research Information System (Jõks 2025).

11 The Tallinna Toompea Kaarli Congregation belongs to the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church.

12 In the context of the Psalms, parallelism is a defining feature of Hebrew poetic literature. It involves the arrangement of corresponding ideas, phrases, or grammatical structures within a line or couplet, enhancing the rhythm and deepening the meaning of the text. The most commonly observed forms of parallelism in the Psalms include synonymous parallelism, where the second line restates or reinforces the idea presented in the first line, and antithetical parallelism, which juxtaposes contrasting ideas within a couplet. (Cf. Alter 1985) In the realm of runosong, parallelism emerges as a fundamental characteristic in the oral poetry of the Finno-Ugric peoples. Similar to the Psalms, runosongs utilise parallelism to create rhythm and convey meaning, often seen through semantic and grammatical parallelism. Mari Sarv (2017) noted that this poetic form recognises various types of parallelism, and while much research has documented its existence, there remains a need to define the canonical forms specific to runosong.

13 There are also international declarations concerning creative research such as The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research (VDAR 2020).

14 The term 'melodies' does not apply to the psalm tones or dynamic melodic formulae.

15 Johann Leberecht Ehregott Punschel (1778–1849) was a Lutheran minister who conducted a chorale reform in 19th-century Estonia and Livonia. One of the characteristics of this reform was the organ accompaniment in isochronous (equal length) rhythmic values. The original German chorale tunes were usually rhythmisised, i.e. notated with various rhythmical values. Punschel equalised most rhythmic values into quarter notes. There was an obligatory fermata at the end of every line of the chorale text.

16 First version before May 2011, second version in May 2011, third version in November 2012, and fourth version in January 2013.

17 Programme music is a type of instrumental music that is intended to evoke images or convey the impression of a specific story, scene, or idea. Unlike absolute music, which is meant to be appreciated for its formal and structural elements alone, programme music is often accompanied by a narrative or descriptive text, called a programme, to help guide the listener's interpretation of the music. For further reading see Taruskin 2005.

18 Not all runosong singing styles have the isochronic rhythm, but many of them have the rhythm with longer note(s) or *ritenuti* at the phrase endings. The existence of *ritenuto* in runosong depends on the historical or regional singing style and singer. For example, lengthenings or longer notes at every phrase end is a stylistic feature of north Estonian ritual songs, although

they are performed with a leader and chorus. In addition, the styles of runosong solo songs have breathing between the verses, for example Seto herding songs. (See Tampere 1956.)

19 In a quiet voice, as if not to be overheard.

20 The concept of the 'long syllable' is related to the Estonian system of three quantity degrees. Long syllable in this context means the first syllable of a word of third quantity degree and second syllable of words of the first and second quantity degrees. In other words, these are the syllables that can be prolonged without distorting the word and/or changing its meaning.

SOURCES

FM – Author's fieldwork materials from 2005 to 2016:

FM: Joppich 2005–2008. Conversations with Godehard Joppich in Frankfurt (Main), Hanau. Some of the material is published in Jõks 2009 vol 2: 395–404; 415–419. The recordings of the interviews are held in the authors digital archive.

FM: Jõks 2012–2016. Pühalaulu päevik. Author's field journals, unpublished manuscript. Tallinn: Pühalaulu Kool / Kaarli kogudus. The manuscript is held in the author's digital and paper archive.

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