Transformation of Musical Material
The compositional process of *Ej med klagan*

Sakari Ylivuori

Sibelius composed *Ej med klagan* for the funeral of his friend, Albert Edelfelt (1854–1905), who was one of the most renowned painters in Finland. The funeral became a large-scale event, the ceremonies lasting a full day.[1] Sibelius's song *Ej med klagan* ['*Not with Lamentation; To the Memory of Albert Edelfelt*'] was premiered at the funeral held in the Nikolai Church with Sibelius himself conducting the mixed choir. The manuscripts of *Ej med klagan* reveal the work's surprisingly complicated compositional history. The song was initially planned, in fact, not for mixed voices, but an all-male choir. Interestingly, the intention to write the song for male choir was not abandoned at an early stage; instead, in the source chain, one can see a process from sketches to detailed fair copy of a male-choir song practically ready for performance. Thus, my study of the sources brought to light a completely new version of the song.[2] Additionally, it also showed that the evolution of the song did not end with its publication; Sibelius subsequently returned to the material of *Ej med klagan* on at least two separate occasions. Just as is the case with the beginning of this piece's evolution, the later part of its genesis also has not been discussed. In this article, I will describe and analyze the evolution of the song *Ej med klagan* based on the autograph sources.

The sources from sketching to publication

There are eight autograph manuscript sources of *Ej med klagan* which have survived to the present day (see example 1).

for male choir----------

HUL 1027 -> HUL 1025 -> HUL 1023/2 -> HUL 1024

sketches a complete an incomplete a fair copy

draft fair copy

for mixed choir----------

HUL 1026 -> HUL 1023 -> HUL 0209 -> Sib.Mus. -> 1st edition

new sketches a fair copy an incomplete the final facsimile

and a draft fair copy fair copy of Sib. Mus.

combined at Sib.Mus.

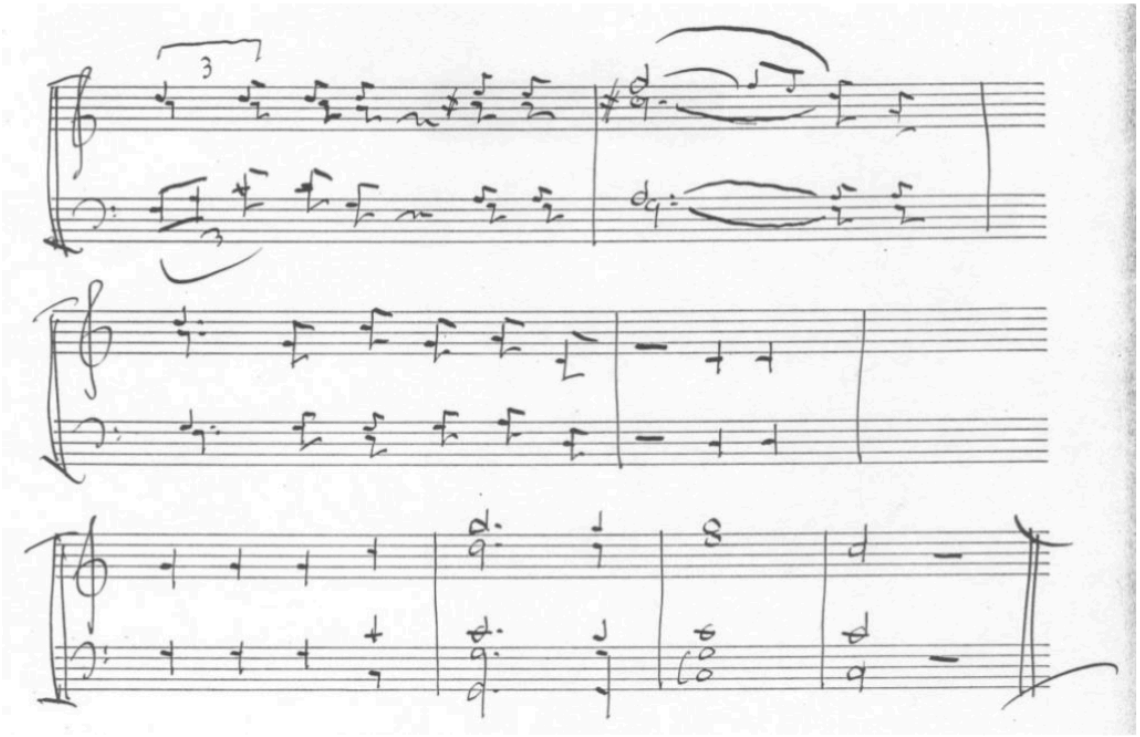
Example 1. Autograph sources.[3]

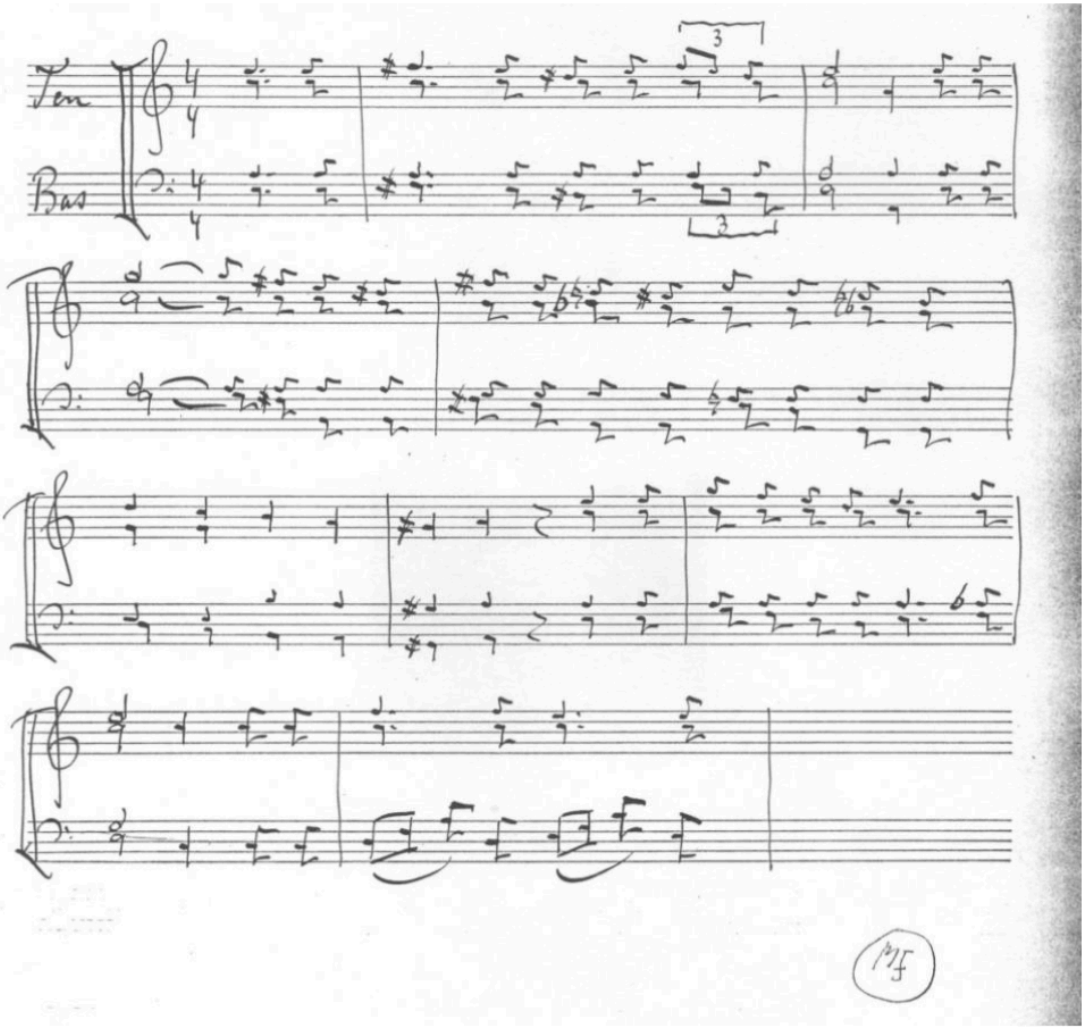
These manuscripts can be accurately dated. Since Albert Edelfelt died unexpectedly of a heart attack on 18 August 1905, and since the first edition of the song was prepared for the funeral that took place on 24 August, it can be deduced that the entire compositional process presented in Example 1 took place within those six days. In addition, there is a letter sent by Sibelius to his patron Axel Carpelan, dated 20 August, in which he writes: "I am currently writing something for Edelfelt's funeral. I cannot describe how much I miss him. Life is short!!"[4] Based on the letter, 20 August is the probable date of the composition.

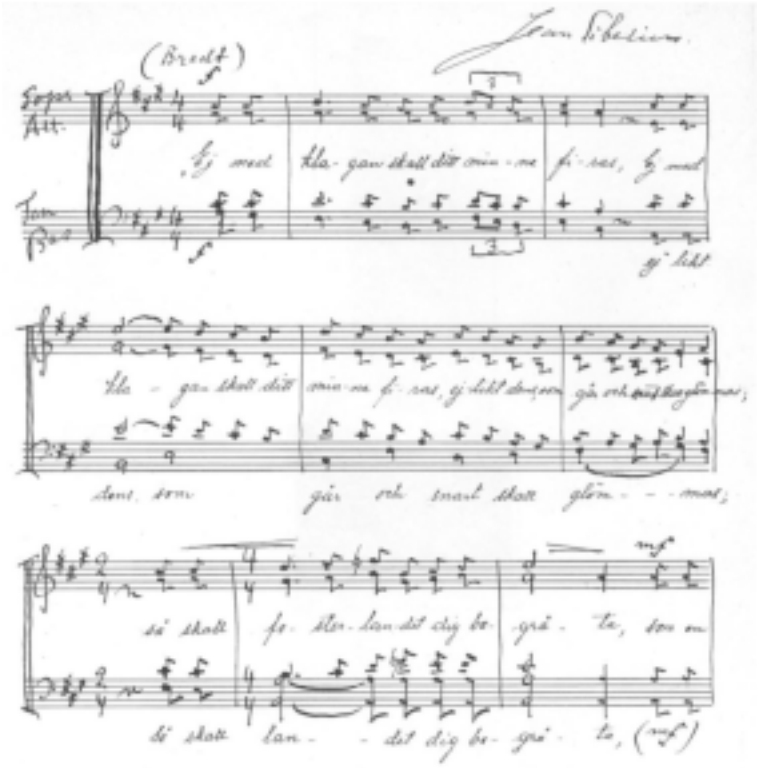
Since the song was composed only a few days before the funeral, there was no time to produce a proper typeset edition. Instead, it was published as a printed photograph of the composer's autograph manuscript. Thus, the first edition is, in fact, a facsimile. The publication of the song as a facsimile edition characterizes the source chain, since the fair copy had to be made unusually "fair". Obviously, that was not an easy task; of the eight surviving manuscripts, three are incomplete fair copies. The reason for their incompletion is that they include a writing error or an emendation that would normally have been altered by scraping off or just by writing over it. But, when making a facsimile edition, such alterations were not an option; instead, each time the writing had to be restarted from the beginning.[5] There is one very unusual feature of the fair copy of the male-choir version (*HUL 1024*, presented in Example 2), namely, that there

are no texts in the manuscript. It may seem odd that I call a manuscript without any texts ‘a fair copy,’ but it becomes understandable when one compares the male-choir fair copy to the photograph of the final fair copy, which was published as the first edition at the funeral (presented as Example 3). As is seen in Example 3, the text in the final fair copy is written, not by the composer, but in the beautiful handwriting of Aino Sibelius. Thus, the manuscript paper of Example 2 was in all likelihood intended as a fair copy, but before the text was inserted by Aino Sibelius, the composer decided to abandon the male-choir version and make a new one – this time for mixed choir.[6] It is also worth noting that the layout of the fair copy of the male-choir version is similar to the layout in the final fair copy for mixed voices.

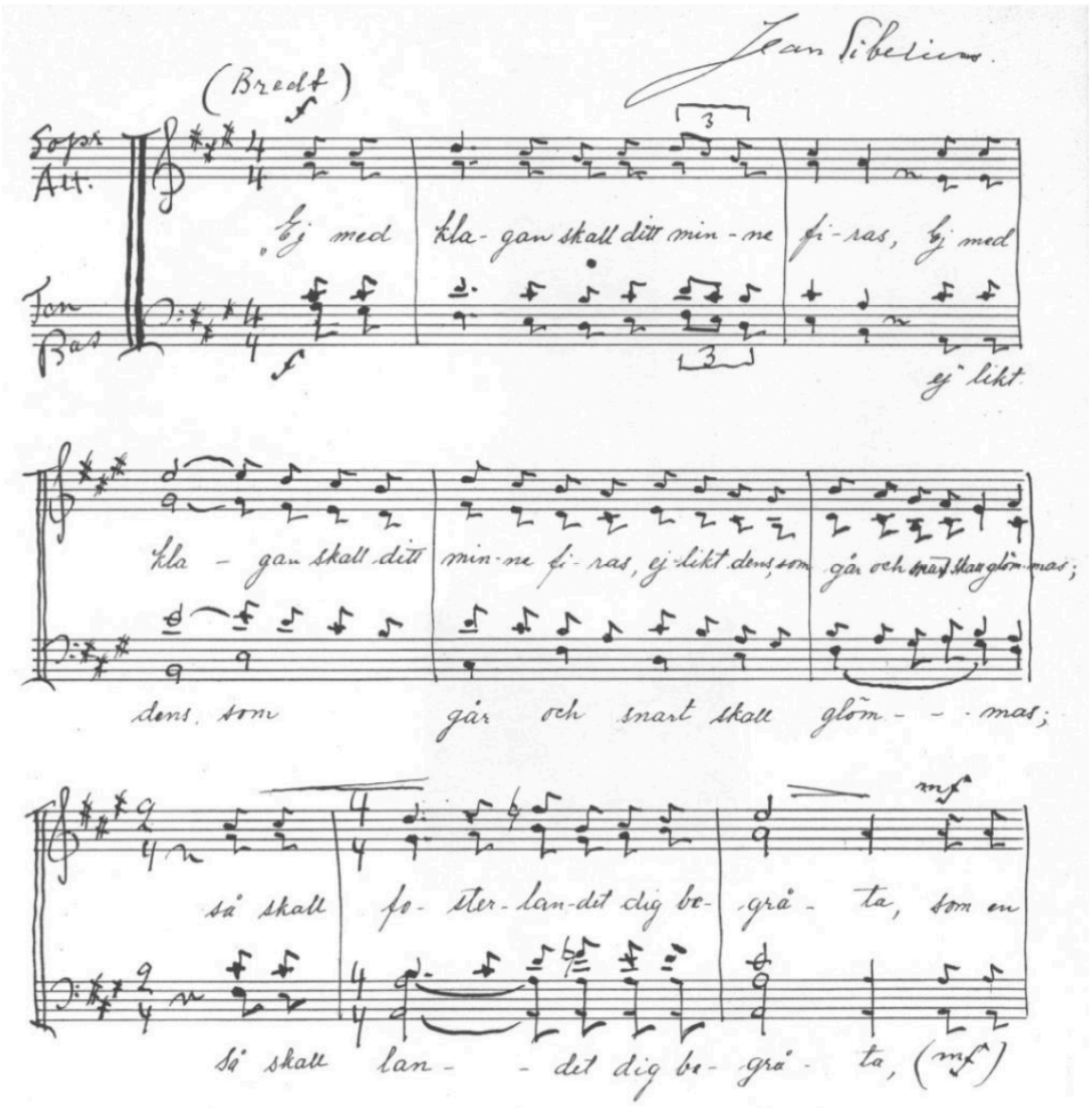
Example 2. The autograph fair copy of the male-choir version (HUL 1024).

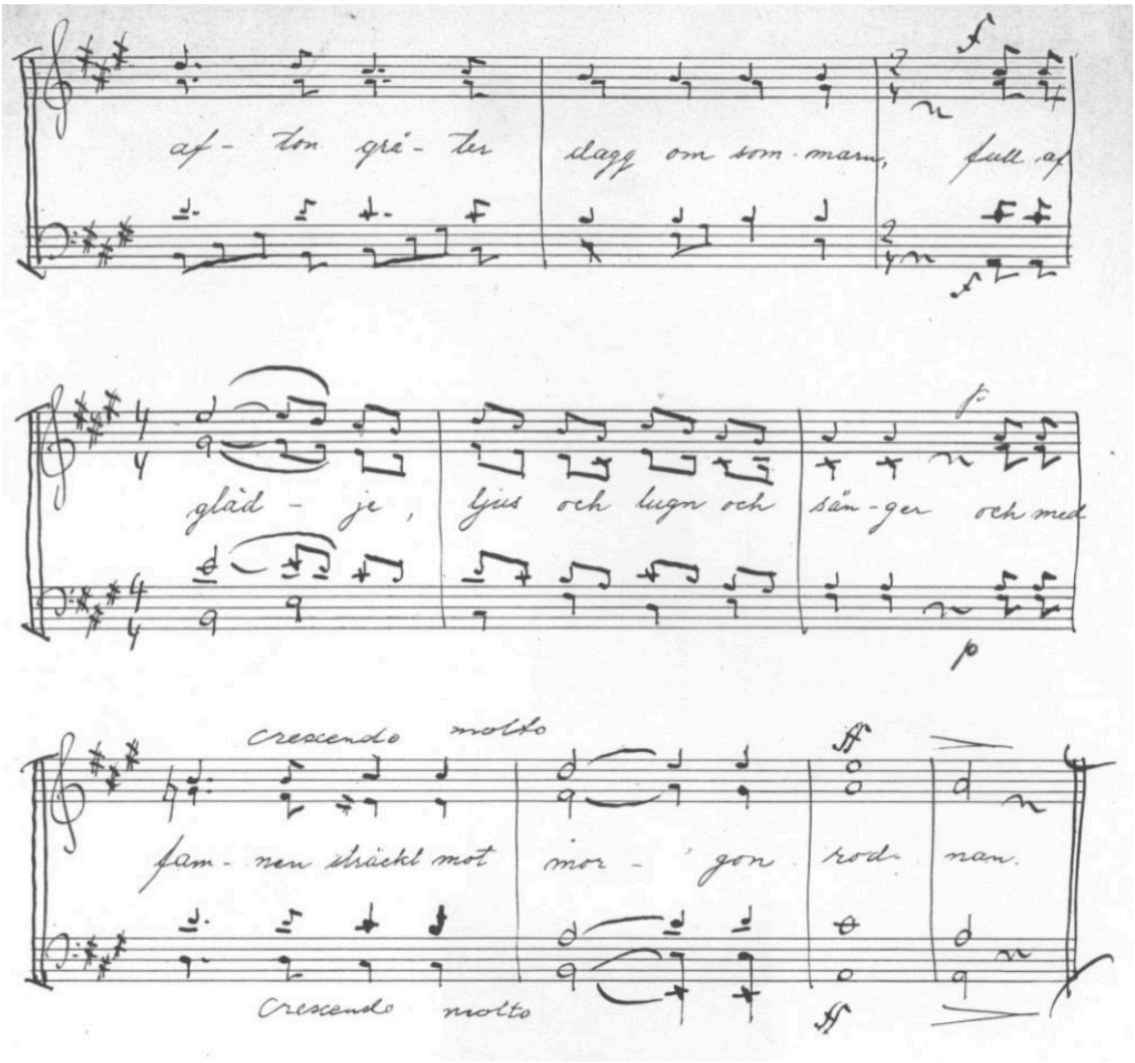



Ten
Bas
3
3
mf



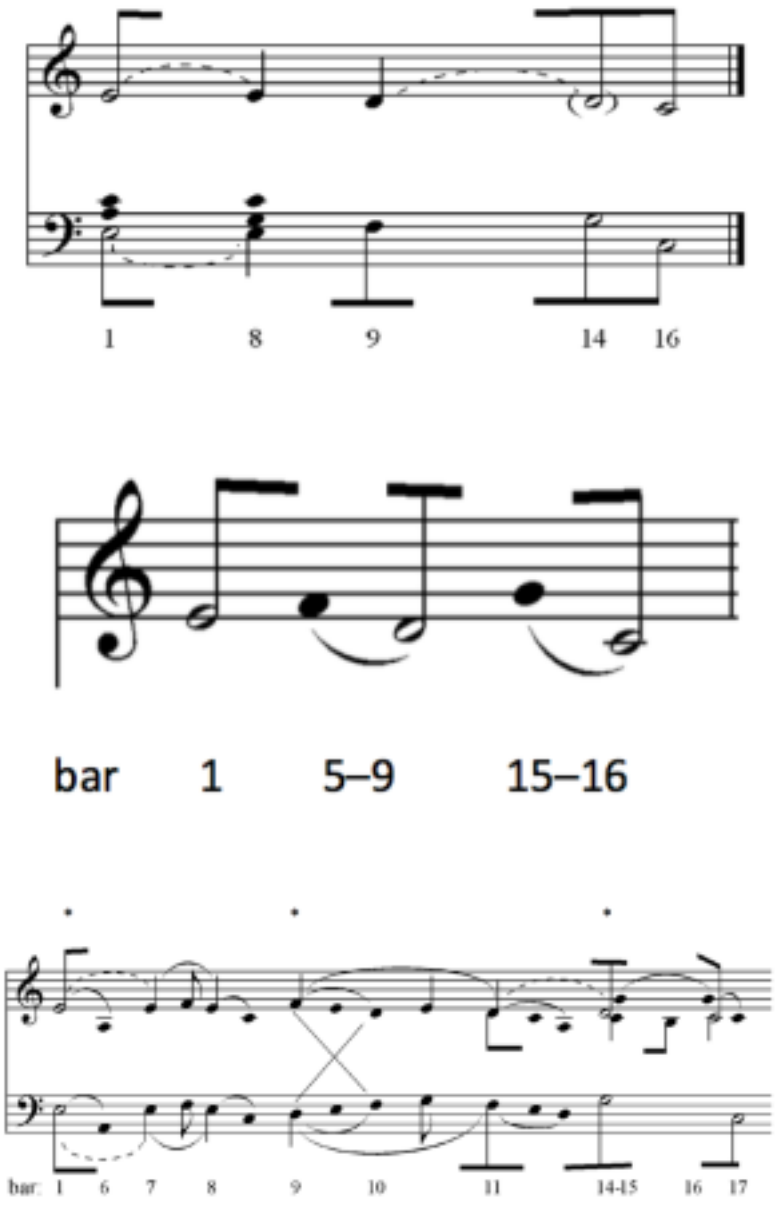
Example 3. The first edition of the mixed-choir version.


Jean Sibelius.
(Bredt)
Sopr.
Alt.
Ton
Bas
Ej med kla-gan skall ditt min-ne fi-ras, ej med
ej likt
kla-gan skall ditt min-ne fi-ras, ej likt dens, som går och snart skall glöm-mas;
dens, som går och snart skall glöm- - - mas;
så skall fo-ster-land-det dig be-grå-ta, som en
så skall lan- - det dig be-grå-ta, (mf)
mf



From the male-choir song to the mixed-choir song

The music of the male choir version is characterized by a sense of direction towards stability. The fundamental voice-leading structure (presented as Example 4) is based on an auxiliary cadence, in which the tonic of the song, the stable C major chord, is reached only as the last chord at the end of the song. The sense of instability seems especially prominent at the beginning and it is underlined by two factors: firstly, bars 1–7 prolong a $^{6}_{4}$-chord, which is by its nature unstable, and secondly, the chromatic harmonies obscure the prevailing A Dorian mode in the first six bars. The unstable A minor $^{6}_{4}$-chord resolves to a C major $^{5}_{3}$-chord in bar 8. After the resolution of the $^{6}_{4}$-chord, the song turns in a whole new direction, leaving the A Dorian world behind and starting a journey towards a new tonal center. At the shift of the tonal center the texture too changes drastically. In the first eight bars the texture is based on the outer voices moving in parallel octaves. This pattern is broken in bars 9 and 10 by the ultimate counter-motion – the voice-exchange. Also, the chromaticism predominant in the texture at the beginning of the song eventually gives way to more diatonic progressions.



Example 4. The voice-leading structure of the male-choir version.

Yet an important feature in the drama of the male-choir song is the way in which the song reaches its final cadence by avoiding any sense of firm closure. Although structurally the descending line is the primary one, from the drama's point of view the ascending line reaching g' at the final cadence seems to be of at least equal if not more importance. It brings the drama that begun in the highly unstable A Dorian world to a conclusion on a stable yet open-ended tonic.

The transformation of the song from the male-choir version to the mixed-choir version as it was eventually published is fascinating. The two versions have a lot of musical material in common: the melody in bars 1–6, the voice-exchange passage in bars 9–10, and the closing gesture in the last two bars. In addition, they both make use of a kind of three-part texture in the beginning: in both versions there are two parts moving in parallel octaves. Although the versions are based on much the same material, they almost come across as two different songs. The fundamental difference between the versions becomes evident when we compare the middleground structures. In the mixed-choir version there is no striving towards stability, as was the case in the male-choir version, which was based on the auxiliary cadence. Instead, the mixed-choir version begins on a stable A major tonic and also ends with that same tonic. The dramatic effect of the two versions could hardly be more different.

Although the transformation of the first phrase from the Dorian male-choir version to the major mode mixed-choir version contains several intriguing features, I will focus on only one detail: namely, the harmonization of the upbeat. The upbeat, which is harmonized with a $^{6}_{4}$-chord in the male-choir version, is harmonized with a tonic in the root position in the mixed-choir version. From the manuscripts it can be deduced that Sibelius originally planned to begin the mixed-choir version with a $^{6}_{4}$-chord too. Apparently the decision to change the beginning was made at the latest possible moment. In all the manuscripts for mixed-choir there are two *e*'s, instead of *a-g#*, for basses on the upbeat. The *e*'s are even visible in the final fair copy, which was photographed and published as the first edition. Sibelius did his best in trying to alter the bass line by scraping the *e*'s off with a sharp tool. This was, however, unsuccessful, since the ink had been absorbed so deep into the paper that any further scraping would have created a hole in the paper – there is almost a hole in the extant manuscript, but the ink is still clearly visible (see Example 6). However, the *e*'s are not visible in the published facsimile picture (Example 3). Thus, a confusing fact remains: the photograph and its object are not identical; the photo was retouched in the negative stage.

This last-minute change of the upbeat is especially interesting, since it alters the tonal structure of the first bar. In the published version the song seems to "land" on the D major chord in the beginning of bar 1, which is then prolonged through the first bar. Thus, bars 1–2 form a plagal I–IV–I structure. In the version of the manuscripts, the structural weight of the subdominant chord is significantly weakened; with the $^{6}_{4}$ beginning, the first bar seems to prolong the $^{6}_{4}$ chord for its duration with neighboring motion and the first beat of bar 1 is left with no structural weight.

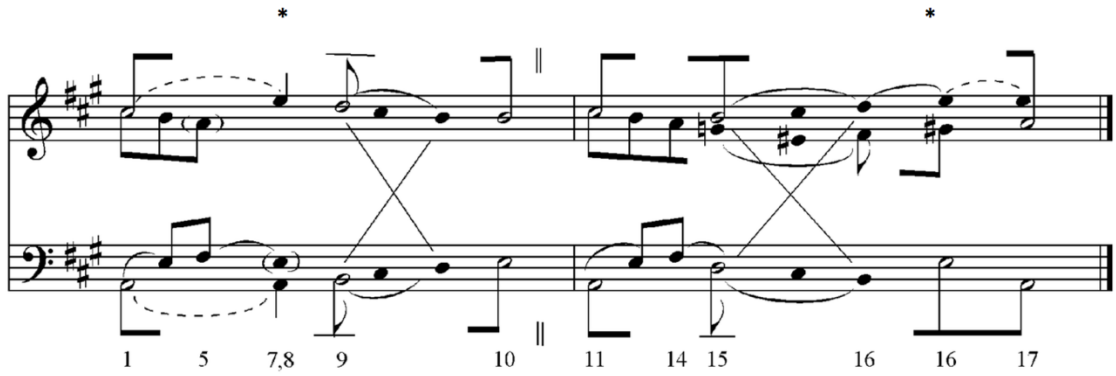
There are many similarly interesting small details in the transformation process too. But the most interesting feature in the process concerns the text; the male-choir and the mixed-choir versions use the text very differently. The text Sibelius chose for the song consists of the last six lines of Johan Ludvig Runeberg's (1804–1877) epic poem *Molnets broder*. In the poem, these lines are spoken by a young girl and the words are addressed to a fallen hero. The six last lines, composed by Sibelius, consist of a single sentence, divided into two clauses, forming a structure that could be described as *not – but rather*. In the first clause – represented in bars 1–6 – it is stated that the memory of a hero should not be honored with lamentations, since we lament those people who are soon to be forgotten. In the second clause – starting from bar 7 – it is stated that, instead, we should mourn the death of a hero "like the evening mourns the summer morning's mist," which means "facing the sunrise full of joy, light, tranquility, and songs." In other words, the poem takes in the second clause a transcendental turn that is typical of Runeberg's poetry: it associates the ideal of mourning with a natural phenomenon. According to Runeberg's aesthetics, the natural world is a representation of divine laws and power.[7] For Runeberg, who was a passionate anti-Hegelian and promoter of Christian values, death meant an awakening to 'real' reality. Death is seen as the beginning of the actual life, which in the poem is represented by the sunrise – the new morning.

It seems that in the version for male choir the music takes the hero's point of view: the drama of the music goes through a transition from the utmost grief and instability to the joyous and celestial stability of the conclusion. It is not difficult to draw the parallel between the drama of the music and the poem's idea of the hero's death and his awakening to a celestial life. It is worth noting that the change of the texture and of the tonal center in the music occurs at the beginning of the second clause in the poem, where the *not* part is changed to the *but rather* part. Thus, the connection of music and text is almost literal. In the version for mixed choir it seems that the music assumes the speaker's point of view: the grief is not underlined in the beginning, just as the young girl reciting the words tells us: "ej med klagan" ("not with lamentations"). It is interesting that when Sibelius composes for male choir, the music seems to take the male character's perspective, but when the melody is sung by sopranos, Sibelius composes from the female character's point of view.

Later sources

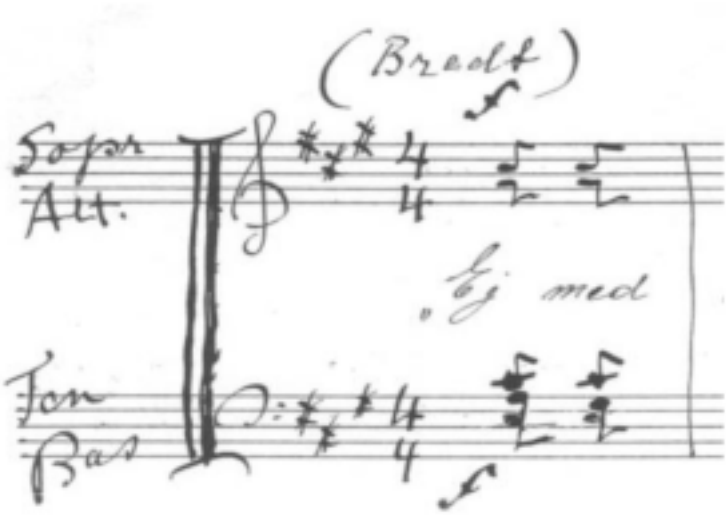
The evolution of *Ej med klagan* did not end with the publication of the mixed-choir version at the funeral, but the song seemed to puzzle Sibelius for years afterwards. In his own copy of the first edition (the so-called *Handexemplar*), Sibelius altered bars 6–8. This change is shown in Example 7. It is interesting how this alteration affects the voice-leading structure of the phrase. In the published version, locally the most important pitch in the voice-leading structure of bars 6–8 is e^2. In the version of the *Handexemplar*, however, the local focus stays on $c\#^2$.

Example 5. The voice-leading structure of the mixed choir version.



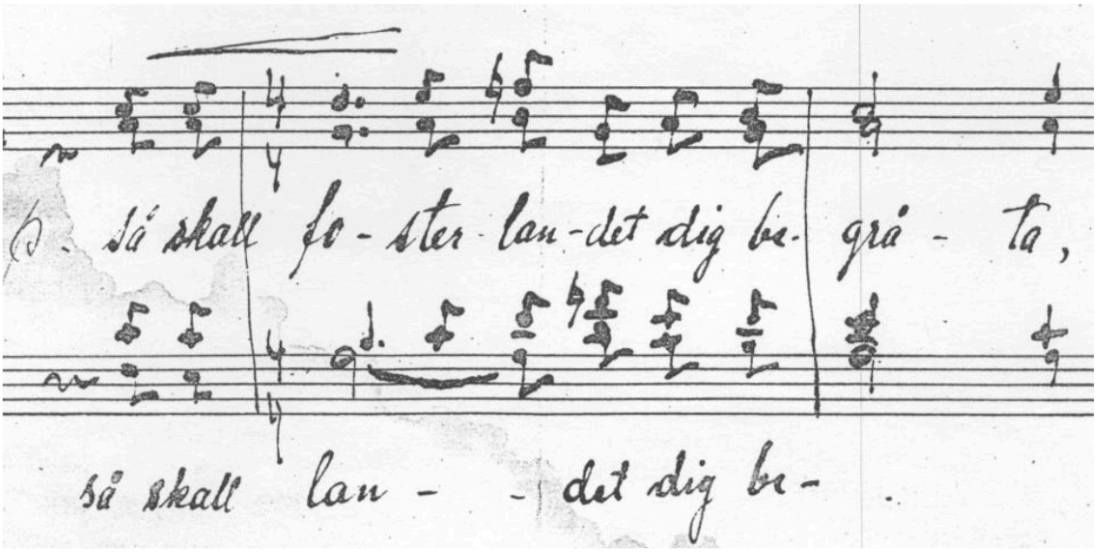
The alteration Sibelius made in the *Handexemplar* can also be seen affecting the overall drama of the song. In the version of the facsimile edition there is an associative connection between the e^2 in bar 8 and the e^2 of the final cadence in bars 16–17 (shown in Example 5 with asterisks). In the version of the *Handexemplar* this connection does not exist, since the structural weight in bars 6–8 is not on e^2 but on $c\#^2$. One may think that the sense of 'reaching' e^2 at the end of the song becomes much more effective when it is not anticipated structurally in bar 8.

Example 6. Upbeat in Sibelius Museum.

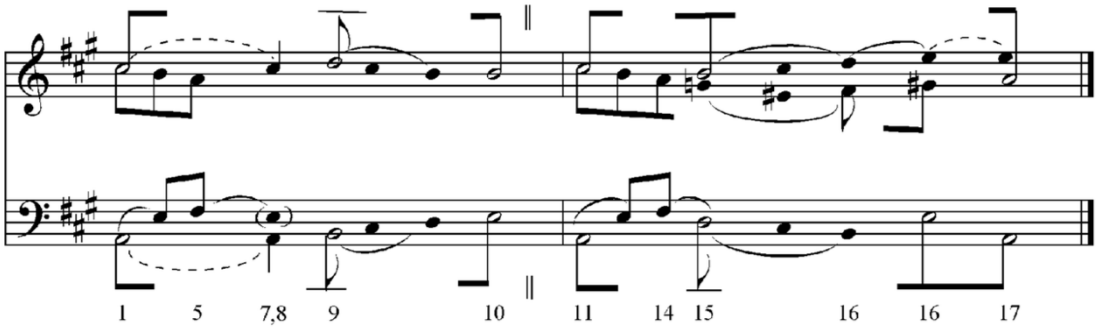


The version in the *Handexemplar* was never published; instead, in all published editions bars 6–8 follow the reading of the first edition. After the first edition, the song was printed three times in Finland during Sibelius's lifetime; thus, Sibelius would have had opportunities to publish the revised version of the phrase. This makes the role of the *Handexemplar* in the source chain highly problematic: should the *Handexemplar* version be considered the final version? Or was it just an idea written down but later rejected by the composer? The latter option seems highly improbable considering the amount of effort that went into making the new version in the *Handexemplar*. As is seen in Example 7, the new phrase in bars 6–8 is not something hastily written over the old notes, but it is written on a set of new staves cut off from a different sheet, and it is carefully glued into the proper place. In addition, the text is also in the new phrase written by Aino Sibelius so that the *Handexemplar* is consistent in appearance even after the emendation. Furthermore, there is a copy of the altered version among Sibelius's possessions, made by an unknown hand.[8] It is difficult to see the reason for all the effort, if it was not intended to be published – and yet it has remained unpublished until now. It will be printed as an *ossia*-reading in the upcoming critical edition (*Jean Sibelius Works*, volume VII/1).

Example 7. Bars 6–8 in the Handexemplar.

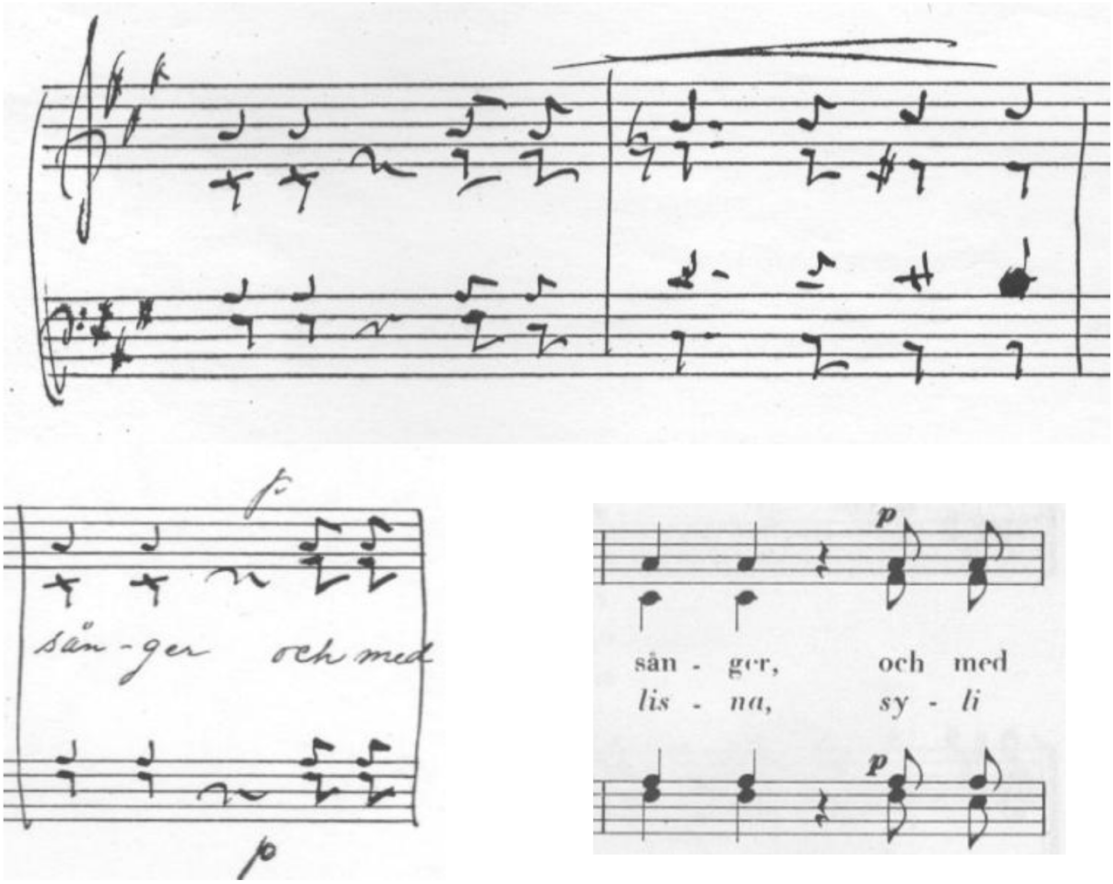


Example 8. The voice-leading structure of the version in Handexemplar.



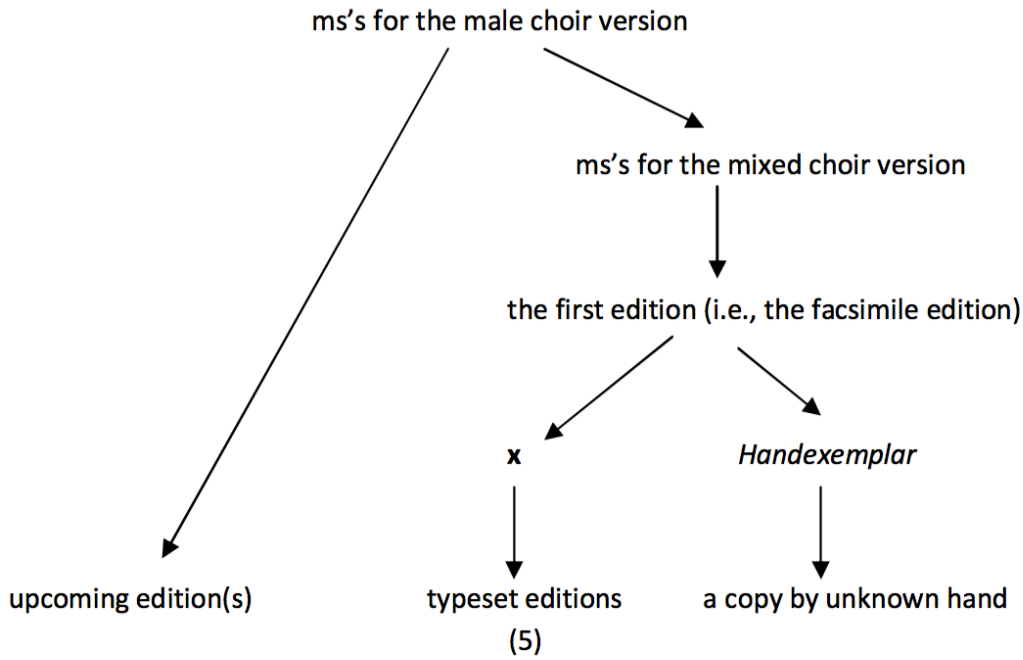
The second edition, dating a few years after the funeral, complicates the concept of "the final version" even more. It includes a small deviation from the first edition sung at the funeral: in bar 14 the last note for bass is *e* instead of *f#* (see Example 9). This alteration is of special interest, since the passing tone *e* is present in both the sketches and in the complete draft, but not in the final fair copy, where for some reason the passing-tone idea has been abandoned. Thus, the question arises: how has the reading from the extant sketches skipped over the fair copy (and the subsequent facsimile edition) to the edition dating few years later? To me it seems highly unlikely that the editor of the typeset edition, Thérèse Hahl, would have made that kind of an alteration by herself, coincidentally ending up with a reading of the early manuscripts. Instead, it seems more likely that when Sibelius gave permission to include the song in the choral collection, he asked her to alter the bass line. Some of the correspondence between Hahl and Sibelius has been preserved at the archives of the National Library of Finland (Suomen kansalliskirjasto) and at Svenska Litteratur Sällskapet i Finland. There is, however, no mention of the song in question, and the source for the differing reading in the typeset editions remains a missing link in the source chain (marked x in Example 10). Naturally, since Sibelius and Hahl knew each other personally, the information may have been passed on orally. In any case, all subsequent editions (5 in total to the present day) follow the passing-tone reading of bar 14.

Example 9. Above: bars 14–15 in sketch HUL 1023. Left: bar 14 in Sib. Mus. and in the first edition. Right: bar 14 in typeset editions.



None of the sources contain both changes; neither the *Handexemplar* nor the unknown copyist's copy of it include the passing-tone reading of bar 14. Then again, the typeset editions do not contain the altered bars 6–8 of the *Handexemplar*. This means that after the first edition the source chain actually diverges into two different branches, both of which can justly be seen as authorized (see Example 10).

Example 10. The filiation.



There is still one source that has yet to be mentioned. There is a manuscript paper in the National Library of Finland, in which the material of *Ej med klagan* appears in orchestrated form.[9] The music in the manuscript is clearly extracted from a larger work and the manuscript paper is clearly extracted from a bigger pile of papers – the pages are numbered 32–35. Unfortunately the orchestral work, from which the material of *Ej med klagan* was taken, cannot be deduced based on any of the surviving sources. All that can be concluded is that Sibelius intended to use the material of *Ej med klagan* in some later orchestral work, but then rejected the idea. Interestingly, the orchestration follows the version of the *Handexemplar*, and not that of the published version.

By way of conclusion I can state that the manuscript study of *Ej med klagan* revealed an interesting story, in which the relations between the different versions are surprisingly complicated. For instance, the relationship between the male-choir version and the mixed-choir version is very different from the standard relation between *the original version* and *the arrangement*, and yet these versions cannot be considered independent compositions. More likely, the male-choir version was the first step in the compositional process, and the mixed-choir version the second step. And as both the *Handexemplar* and the orchestration of the song demonstrate, Sibelius also planned to take a third and perhaps a fourth step as well. The question of why these steps were never realized remains unanswered, and the story of *Ej med klagan* has no definitive ending.

References

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Ylivuori, Sakari 2012. *Jean Sibelius Works. JSW VII/1: Choral Works, vol. 1*. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel.

Ylivuori, Sakari (upcoming). *Jean Sibelius Works. JSW VII/1: Choral Works, vol. 2*. Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel.

[1] *Hufvudstadsbladet* published a detailed description of the funeral ceremonies both on 25 and 26 August 1905. The ceremonies began in the morning in Haikko (some 50 kilometers west of Helsinki), where the painter's studio was situated. From Haikko the coffin was carried to Helsinki by steam boat. Most buildings in the city center and all the ships in the harbor – as well as in the yacht club nearby – greeted the arriving steam boat with their flags at half-mast. The shops were closed, but some of them had decorated their display windows with pictures of (or by) the deceased painter. Kauppatori, where the boat came ashore, was full of people following the ceremony on the deck of the ship and the subsequent procession from Kauppatori to Nikolai Church. After the ceremonies in Nikolai Church, the procession continued to Hietaniemi cemetary, where Edelfelt was buried.

[2] The male-choir version was premiered in May 2008 by chamber choir Audite (conducted by Jani Sivén).

[3] *HUL* numbers refer to signums in the National Library of Finland (the library was previously called Helsinki University Library). *Sib. Mus.* is an abbreviation of the Sibelius Museum in Turku. For more detailed description of the sources, see Kilpeläinen (1991) and Jean Sibelius Works VII/1 and 2 (edited by Ylivuori).

[4] Håller som bäst på att skrifva någonting till Edelfelts begrafning. Jag kan ej säga huru jag saknar honom. Lifvet är kort!!

[5] In addition to the surviving manuscript papers, there may have been more such uncompleted attempts that were immediately discarded. E.g., *HUL 0209* has survived, since Sibelius used the paper later for other purposes.

[6] The lack of the texts in the manuscripts of the male-choir version is probably the reason why it has been left unidentified by previous scholars. The manuscript papers of the male-choir version were never missing, but they were misidentified.

[7] For Runeberg's aesthetics and aesthetic discussion in Finland during Runeberg's time, see Kinnunen (1967).

[8] The copy by unknown hand is currently held in the National Library of Finland.

[9] Signum *HUL 1313*.

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Sakari Ylivuori earned his first degree in music theory from Sibelius Academy in 2006. He continued his studies in Sibelius Academy and wrote his doctoral thesis on the sources of Sibelius's works for mixed choir *a cappella* in 2013. Sakari Ylivuori works as an editor in *Jean Sibelius Works*, where he has prepared the volume VII/1 including choral works *a cappella*. Ylivuori conducts two choirs and is a singer in several choirs and vocal ensembles, including the Sibelius Academy Vocal Ensemble.
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