

### Third Cycle Artistic Research Methods Informing Second Cycle Thesis: Embodying a Repertoire of Gestures in Orchestral Conducting

This proposed paper addresses the question of how artistic research practice and methods may be employed in degree projects in second cycle education, a challenge in Higher Music Education, ever since the implementation of the Bologna process. At the School of Music in Piteå, Luleå University of Technology, all master's projects are supervised by two professors — one within the student's special field of music and the other with a PhD as an artist-researcher. Drawing on a project which is carried out in this academic year, the form of the presentation is a dialogue between a student and two supervisors. This master's project explores how a personal repertoire of gestures and expressive movements can be examined, developed, and embodied by analyzing and imitating iconic conductors, such as Carlos Kleiber. It responds to the research question, *How can I adapt another conductor's gestures to develop my own personal style?*, and is approached through a structured and reflective learning process. This process involves analyzing, adapting, and applying gestures to form a unique, embodied conducting language. The approach is experimental, involving observation, imitation, and personal interpretation. The project's methodology is built on Mikael Bäckman's PhD thesis *"My Bag of Licks: Exploring a Harmonica Player's Voice"* (Bäckman, 2024), which outlines a learning process that begins with imitation, followed by transcription, and culminates in the development of a personal voice. Several video recordings of prominent conductors are analyzed in detail. From this analysis, the student identifies a range of gestures and expressive bodily and facial movements. These gestures are further categorized and used as the foundation for a personalized repertoire. This repertoire is subsequently practiced and embodied through conducting exercises, first with double pianos and later with a professional symphony orchestra. In the proposed presentation, the student will discuss examples from the analysis, as well as demonstrate how these gestures were applied in conducting, including practical examples with one of the supervisors by the piano. A concluding dialogue will follow between the student and the two supervisors: Petter Sundkvist, professor of orchestra conducting, and Åsa Unander-Scharin, PhD, choreographer and professor of music performance.



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**Aron Westblad** is in his final year of the master's program in conducting at Piteå School of Music, where he previously earned a bachelor's degree in church music. He works as an organist with the Church of Sweden. Through his master's thesis, he aims to discover new ways to lead and inspire that truly captivate and engage. **Petter Sundkvist** is Professor of Orchestral Conducting and has appeared as conductor with major symphony orchestras in numerous European countries and has

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held positions in numerous Swedish orchestras. His discography includes some 50 recordings. Petter is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. **Åsa Unander-Scharin** is an artist-researcher and Professor of music performance. Her extensive artistic portfolio serves as the foundation for her research on choreomusical qualities in the convergence of opera, dance, music, robotics and interactive music technology. She has also been member of the Committee for Artistic Research at the Swedish Research Council.