The Real Group

Evolution of sound

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C-uppsats 2002
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Abstract


The purpose of this thesis is to track the cause of The Real Group’s evolution of sound by means of analyzing song recordings from three chronologically selected albums. The areas of components used for the analysis are self-formulated and based on a variety of material and sources.

In order to heighten the reader’s understanding of the relatively new and abstract term, *sound* is described within the realm of pop and rock and applied to a cappella jazz. This is mainly accomplished with the help of Per-Erik Brolinson and Holger Larsen’s previous studies within the realm of rock. Certain sound components from their analysis have been selected for use in my analysis. In my thesis, the history of a cappella is overviewed, as is the history of The Real Group.

Lennart Reimers’ essay from *Choral music perspectives* is used in combination with American Richard Sparks’ book *The Swedish Choral Miracle: Swedish A Cappella Music Since 1945* to describe how The Real Group has been affected by the Swedish a cappella tradition. Reimers’ presents three sets of “isms” that contribute to the formation of the Swedish a cappella tradition and Sparks bases his six components on Reimers’ “isms.”

The analysis of the songs is based on the following areas of components: Vocal skill, Choice of repertoire, Diction, Effects processing, Overall “feel” and Text content. The eight selected songs fit into the following categories: Ballads, Upbeat/fast tempo songs and Swedish songs.

The results of the study conclude that the most motivating factors of change include vocal maturity, steadily increased skill, need for musical growth and expansion and change in personal maturity and perspective. The results are highlighted by personal accounts given by group member Peder Karlsson.
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Foreword

During the beginning of Spring Term, after attending Professor James Daugerthy’s seminar on choir acoustics, I was thoroughly convinced that I should begin my C level thesis on this very subject. I have listened to jazz a cappella extensively and would use this as my focus. He probed and pinpointed many of the choral questions I had considered for several years. Professor Daugerthy made a point of mentioning that very little research had been done in the field, which later proved to be to my disadvantage. Lack of existing research material made it very difficult to formulate my own theories based on others’ research. Professor Daugerthy referred me to Researcher Sten Ternström, whom he regards to be the foremost authority in the field of choir acoustics.

In a meeting with Sten Ternström, he encouraged me to conduct my own scientific study. Time restraints would not allow me to perform an effective, practical study of this type. He did, however, supply me with a wealth of ideas to consider and those things from which to steer clear.

After much topic revision, a great deal of discussion and guidance from Gunnar Ternhag, as well as help from the other thesis-writing members in my group, I was able to focus in on a related problem. While still being able to adhere to jazz a cappella, I discovered that there existed sufficient research within the concept of sound to be able to form my thesis. I deduced that the most efficient and informative way of conducting my thesis would be to choose one jazz a cappella group, track their sound transformation, then try to explain the cause. I constructed my thesis development in such a way that I was still able to enhance some my explanations by referring to choral acoustics.

In this case, I have chosen to study The Real Group. It not only belongs to and reflects a rich Swedish A Cappella tradition, but it has also succeeded in remaining together as a group since 1984. My research of The Real Group’s sound transformation has led me down an interesting and enlightening path where my own insights have played an almost equally important role.
1. **Introduction**

As a participant in the choral movement since early childhood, I have developed an awareness of the varying factors that constitute a choir. Throughout the years, as my musical and choral awareness has been somewhat refined, a wider range of inquiries and reflections have presented themselves. These range from considering why a certain group has been more enjoyable to sing with than others, to why certain groups sounded better singing traditional art music than jazz. I was aware there were factors, but thought that they were mainly items of taste and general vocal skill. Settling for my own explanation, I placed the matter at the back of my mind.

These considerations were awakened while attempting to identify and narrow down an appropriate subject and theory to discuss in my thesis paper. After deciding that the sound development of a group placed under the category of *jazz a cappella* deserved a closer look, I was left with the decision of which group to analyze. There are a number of groups that have been singing and producing together for quite some time, especially in the United States, my native country. My Swedish colleagues and classmates offered a sufficient list of groups that could be found in Sweden, as well as existing sources and research about sound within rock, pop and jazz music. One of the groups suggested, The Real Group, was quite familiar to me as I had seen them perform at the International Association for Jazz Educators convention in Los Angeles, California, at the beginning of 1994.

As for the research on sound, a common sentiment resonated throughout the material read. In order for a scientific analysis to be concise and representative, it is often necessary for abstract terms to be used. Indeed, my analysis summaries in this thesis result in more abstract explanations than I had initially expected. There does exist, however, scientific strata for the analysis of rock and pop, which can also be applied to jazz. Stemming from the components used in traditional art music, a whole additional set of strata presents itself due to the very nature of this more modern music.

I decided to start the production of my thesis with chapter 2.1-*Defining A Cappella-History and Background*. After presenting this chapter during the first class meeting to discuss our newly written texts, the Swedish members of the group reminded me that Sweden has its own unique a cappella tradition. A rich history exists along with a number of
stylistic features, which developed along the way. I was first exposed to this custom during the “Valborgsmässoafton” festivities on the last day of April. I was new to the language and customs, only having arrived in Sweden two weeks previous. That evening, I observed an all-male a cappella chorus, which was (as I was informed by natives) “singing in the spring.” The only way to describe the visual and aural impression they relayed is that of “feeling the history.” I sensed that both the repertoire and choral setting were steeped in tradition. (Why else would they wear curious little white hats, each displaying a dainty flower near the front brim?)

I was previously unaware of any additional history, so this was a welcome piece of the puzzle that makes up The Real Group. I found myself in a unique position. I was now able to analyze The Real Group’s sound transformation by using my own choral and jazz experience, then tying in rich Swedish a cappella history while I used existing legitimate explanations as my scientific backbone.

1.1 Theme
The theme of this thesis is to track the Real Group’s sound transformation, using six areas of components, self-formulated from various sources, that most profit my analysis of this particular group. Before description or analysis, the reader is supplied with preparatory information ranging from the group’s personal background to general a cappella history. Hopefully, those things that motivate my choice of components, as well as my method of analysis, will serve as some sort of example for others attempting to write about the sound phenomenon within jazz a cappella or even jazz in general.

1.2 Outline
Before listening to the selected albums of The Real Group, I define a cappella by outlining its general history and background. Briefly describing a cappella from its very beginnings in 6th century Eastern Europe, I track its development both in Europe and in the United States up to the present day. I also include how jazz and a cappella have unified and developed into the art it is today. Swedish choral expert Lennart Reimers’ essay about The Swedish Choral Miracle within a cappella is described and discussed. After this information is presented, a thorough background of The Real Group is given, along with each of its members.

The first section of chapter three contains a description of the concept of sound and how it applies to my thesis. This is mainly achieved with the help of Per-Erik Brolinson
and Holger Larsen’s published research on rock’s sound and its parameters. Jazz perspectives
are tied in as well.

I found it necessary to carefully formulate a categorical process of elimination in
order to develop the most accurate set of components and analysis possible. It was most
prudent to place the details of my procedure at the beginning of chapter 3.2-Transformation of
Sound, instead of listing them in detail during this section. This is most fitting, as this
important procedure is to be kept fresh on the mind of the reader, being a part of the logical
chain of events that occur in my thesis. If considered in terms of a guide, as mentioned above
in the Theme, this is also the most logical manner of order. Also during chapter three, I
summarize my analysis of the three chosen song categories as well as the soprano part, which
occupies a significant portion of these analyses. The last section of chapter three discusses to
what extent Lennart Reimer’s theories and terms tie into my discussion of The Real Group’s
sound and its components. Richard Sparks’ theories, also applied to The Real Group, support
Reimers’ as he focuses on choir director Eric Ericson.

After finalizing and supporting my own theories, I base chapter four on an
interview with The Real Group itself. There was no additional research to be found on the
sub-titles listed under chapter four. The Real Group’s comments about their own sound are
dispersed throughout the thesis and used to enhance my own theories.

Chapter five summarizes the thesis paper in its entirety and discusses why The
Real Group is such a prime object of study. I then briefly discuss additional sound
experiences from groups not so unlike The Real Group as well as contemplate possible sound
developments within this type of a cappella. All literature and sources used to aid me during
this thesis are located in the Bibliography.

1.3 Method, Literature and Sources
Presentation of the method used in this thesis will be described in chapter 3.2-Transformation
of Sound. As stated above in the outline, this is the most suitable opportunity to present my
procedures.

The material used in this thesis is constituted from a variety of scientific works
that are relevant to my research. The most significant material used in this thesis is that which
aided my selection of appropriate components of sound for comparison of the three chosen
albums. The most important and most discussed research in this thesis is that of Per-Erik
Brolinson and Holger Larsen, who have written several books with varying views of rock.
Their doctoral dissertation Rock... and and roll (1981) contain key discussions around the
characteristics of rock music, both instrumental and vocal.¹ I had first searched for equally valid research that focused on just jazz a cappella, or even jazz alone. My search resulted in works that were either too brief or too vague to support and/or apply to scientific discussion, although they are used as minor references. Among others, they include the web site for The Contemporary A Cappella Society of America, or CASA, an association that supports jazz a cappella and the groups who practice and perform it and a brief abstract description of jazz’s sound found in Paul F. Berliner’s book Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation (1994). This book concentrates primarily on jazz musicians’ methods and experiences as well as the history and background within jazz improvisation, which was not directly applicable to my discussion.

The rare scientific description in Brolinson and Larsen’s dissertation was the most useful to me in describing the concept of sound beyond the world of art music. The concept of sound must be understood before the components of sound are discussed, as is thoroughly done in their dissertation. In order to create the most productive discussion, it was vital for me to assemble components tailored to The Real Group’s sound. Most, but not all of Brolinson and Larsen’s components are used in my analysis, as their components mainly refer to the rock and pop sound. Their dissertation is entirely in Swedish while a 31-page English summary is found at the conclusion of ...and Roll. Quotes are taken from both the Swedish and English portions of the books. Swedish quotes are translated in the footnotes.

Mårten Nilsson’s D-level thesis Rockanalys i musikvetenskapliga uppsatser. En undersökning och handledning (1999) helped me to comprehend and apply Brolinson and Larsen’s parameters/components.² Using modern examples of C and D level thesis papers within musicology, Nilsson analyses rock’s musical parameters and develops a methodical guide for rock analysis for those authoring thesis papers. (Although his target group is for those writing rock thesis papers, his procedure and modern examples prove helpful in composing my own formulations, especially in aiding my comprehension and application of Brolinson and Larsen’s parameters.)

The second most significant piece of material used for my sound comparison is that which is found in Lennart Reimers’ essay A Cappella. The Story Behind the Swedish “Choral Miracle” (1993). Reimers, choral researcher and former Professor of Music Education at the Royal College of Music, uses the metaphor of a tree with roots and branches to explain the background and development of Sweden’s unique tradition of unaccompanied

¹ Brolinson, Larsen 1981a and b.
choral singing. He assigns each individual root and branch to an “ism.” Reimers makes no mention of jazz, which is one of the reasons his “isms” are not included in the actual analysis of the selected songs. However, his “isms” certainly apply to the Real Group members’ background, both educationally and stylistically. This is where Reimers’ descriptions and theories have been of most use. This essay is an essential part of my background discussion and is singled out in its own section during my analysis, applying Reimers’ theories and terms in relation to The Real Group. Choral music perspectives (1994) is a collection of musicological essays edited by Reimers and Bo Wallner. Reimers’ theories are complimented with outsider American Richard Sparks, with theories from his book The Swedish Choral Miracle: Swedish A Cappella Music Since 1945 (2000). Sparks sheds a unique light on the movement, using Eric Ericson as his focus. He points out special situations that may not be as obvious or foreign to an insider Swede as would an outsider non-Swede. Sparks also emphasises the extremely exclusive situation Sweden has been in since 1945 in relation to the a cappella tradition that exists in there today. His theories are based on a combination of 6 self-formulated roots. Both Reimers’ and Sparks’ theories are made particularly valuable as they are sustained by Peder Karlsson’s comments and experiences, principally in relation to Ericson.

Two interviews were performed and are included to highlight this thesis. Gunnel Fagius, a classmate and music consultant for the state church in Uppsala, attended a sound workshop presented by The Real Group and discussed it with me. She also suggested a number of her own ideas regarding components of sound, which she thought pertinent from a choral director’s view. The second interview was performed in Stockholm, at the home of group member Peder Karlsson. The purpose of this interview was to examine a group member’s thoughts concerning changes and influences in the group’s sound. None of the other members were available for interview. It would have been more desirable to be able to interview the group as a whole. I could have extracted an overall group conception/evaluation instead of an individual member’s perception of the group. I repeatedly confirmed throughout the interview, to the best of my amateur interviewing ability, that he echoed the sentiments of the absent group members. Karlsson’s interview lasted slightly longer than an hour and is preserved on cassette tape as well as hard copy.

Contact was made with voice researcher Sten Ternström, who gave me tips on what to avoid during my own research, as well as introduced new literature, such as Mattias
Becker’s doctoral thesis, *Zur Geschichte und Musik des vokalen Jazzensembles* (1989),\(^3\) which gives a history of vocal jazz ensembles, not all necessarily a cappella. Although it is in German, I was able to select literature from Becker’s bibliography to aid in the assemblage of my section concerning a cappella’s history and background. Ternström’s insights from his study, *Acoustical Aspects of Choirs Singing* (1989), were useful when describing vocal acoustics in explaining my soprano bias. His dissertation analyses and discusses particular acoustic properties within choral singing. Johan Sundberg, a colleague to Ternström within the same field, technically describes vocal acoustics on a more individual basis in his article, *To Perceive One’s Own Voice and Another Person’s Voice* (1981). His technical descriptions were useful in explaining soprano vocal behavior, as well.

The Internet was the most useful source in finding detailed information about The Real Group. Best of all was the group’s own homepage: www.realgroup.se. Here they describe themselves, their history, their albums and their current and future plans. It was unfortunate that I could not find this more detailed information in books or periodicals, as the contents on the internet are frequently changed or removed, making it difficult for readers to refer directly. I tend to prefer searching the Internet in this case, as where the most recent information is typically found. The information I used from the Internet exists in hard copy form in my possession.

In explaining the success of The Real Group, I am aided by Paul Guise’s theories in his master’s thesis about group dynamics: *Group Dynamics and the Small Choir: an application of select models from behavioural and social psychology* (1999). He analyzes select models within group dynamics and evaluates the small choir from a behavioral and socially psychological standpoint. His comparisons of “choral singers” verses “solo singers,” as well as behavioural and psychological components within a group support and clarify why The Real Group continues to be successful.

When searching for material concerning jazz a cappella, the Internet is one of the few places I have been able to find anything useful. Information about the outlook and predictions around the development of a cappella has been scarcer, even when searching for recent information on the Internet, so I rely mainly on my own formulations.

A number of other works were used as supplementary material in this thesis. They include: Articles and interviews with and about The Real Group via Internet and periodicals, books, and musical catalogues and dictionaries. Again, I have kept in mind that

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\(^3\) Becker’s work gives an overview of the history and music of the vocal jazz ensemble.
the scientific community prefers material in form other than the Internet as information found on the Internet has a tendency to change or disappear.

1.3.1 Presentation of Three Albums
In tracking The Real Group’s sound up to the present, it was a given that I should select both the first and the most recent albums: *Debut* (1987) and *Commonly Unique* (2000). Since I was not familiar with every album The Real Group has produced, it was somewhat more challenging to select a third album, one that would be most representative of its mid-way sound. Since the group has come out with consistently spaced albums, I found it only logical to select the album from the exact middle-point of its career: *Varför får man inte bara vara som man är?* (1994). After thorough listening, my logical instincts proved right. This album fit superbly into my sound transformation analysis. These three albums are my main objects of study and have proved to be the most valuable and dependant main sources. I carefully and repeatedly listened to them and selected eight representative songs: three from the first two albums and two from the most recent. I listened repeatedly to these eight songs, each time for a certain component for my analysis. From this point, I formulated sections 3.2 through 3.8.

The Real Group’s *Debut* album was first released on vinyl in 1987; however, the re-released CD album (1995) was used during this thesis. It consists of 13 separate tracks, all arranged by the male members of the group (but not collectively) and recorded after about two years of singing as a group. The initial recording was done in March of 1987, engineered by Jan Apelholm and Lennart Ström and mastered by Peter in de Betou. No specific record label is listed, except for *Edenroth production AB*.

*Varför får man inte bara vara som man är?* was released by *Gazell Music AB* on CD in 1994, except for track 9, which was produced by *Sonet/Knäppup*. This all-Swedish album contains 14 separate tracks and features two guest vocalists: Povel Ramel in track 5, and Frida Lyngstad-Reuss (from *Abba*) on track 14. The Real Group and Jan Apelholm produced it. Group members wrote the musical arrangements. Per Magnus Byström, Povel Ramel and Gene Puerling contributed arrangements also. The album is engineered by Jan Apelholm and Jan Hansson and is mastered by Peter in de Betout.

*Gazell Records AB* released *Commonly Unique* on CD. This album contains 13 separate tracks and is produced by Anders Edenroth and Pål Svenre with Henrik Hawor being the executive producer. It was engineered by Jan Apelholm and Pål Svenre and mixed by Apelholm, as well. Group members and Apelholm do all arrangements, except for Magnus.
Lindgren on track 9, Pål Svenre on track 10 and Svante Henryson on track 13. Guest performers include Doug Harrington on track 1, André de Lang Ardis on track 3 and André Ferrari on track 6.

In chapter 3.3.2 *The Most Representative Songs*, I list the 8 tracks selected from the 3 albums as well as the 3 self-formulated categories these tracks are listed under: ballads, upbeat, or fast tempo songs and Swedish songs. When choosing the eight tracks, I not only attempted to select the songs that were most representative of the group’s sound within that particular category, I chose songs in which the 6 components of sound I had assembled were most identifiable. In other words, I chose the songs that most exhibited the individual components of the group’s sound that I was attempting to analyze—the most analysis-friendly songs. These became, in turn, the most useful for my analytical purposes.

To the advantage of this thesis, I was able to do a “clean listening” of these songs and albums. That means that I had not previously and completely listened to them. True, I’ve heard part of songs from the albums, but nothing that entailed close or careful listening. Because of this “clean listening” opportunity, I was not distracted by any pre-formulated opinions of the albums or songs and was able to do a first-time thorough listening specifically for the purposes of those discussed in this thesis paper. As a result, my selection of songs became even more useful.

As mentioned in the Introduction, I came into writing this thesis with my own various pre-existing singing and listening experiences. This has made necessary the following two sections: *The Soprano Bias* and *Additional Biases.*

1.3.2 The Soprano Bias

Modern thought within humanistic research considers subjectivity to be an asset. This procedure has been adopted largely in order to maintain both an interesting and productive argument. This is also true if the author has an intense interest or love for the subject.

In order to justifiably explain such a perceivable yet abstract subject, it is vital to include that certain biases were formed, due to varied choir experience, long before listening to the three albums. I am particularly biased of the soprano part.\(^4\) As I have sung in the soprano register, both as a soloist and a choir member, I feel my biases are at least partially grounded. Difficult to master as it is, this voice frequently pierces through and/or overpowers

\(^4\) The average range of the soprano voice, which is female, is C4 to A5, with allowance for extension at either end. For a more realistic picture to fit my description, the soprano range will be: G3 (the G just below middle C) to C6 (the C on the ledger line). Jander 1980, p. 531.
the choir, which not only disrupts the intonation, but compromises the intricate blend and balance of the choir as well. Whether or not the participating soprano(s) are aware they are straying, a lack of professionalism and consideration for the rest of the choir is shown. A soprano may notice that her voice is not as warm as the rest of the choir’s and will therefore try to compensate by adding vibrato. This may add warmth, but “reduce[s] the intelligibility of harmonies and is therefore used only in soloistic melody parts or for special effects.”

Acoustically speaking, when compared to the other voices, the soprano voice has the highest amount of partials. Despite its abundance of partials, the soprano voice often lacks those of lower frequency, that is, those that produce warmth. Lower frequencies also produce resonance and roundness, resulting in a mixture of components that blend exceptionally well. Since female voices produce higher fundamental frequencies than males, advantage cannot be taken of lower frequency chest wall vibrations.

With voices of higher pitch, it is more difficult to produce clear and intelligible vowel sounds. After reaching the pitch of C5, vowel intelligibility declines and is almost unidentifiable by the time A5 is reached. Non-uniform vowel production also disrupts blend and warmth to some extent. An unpublished synthesis experiment concluded that an evenly intoned four-part chord, sounding well-tuned at a low listening level, was perceived as flat in the soprano part when heard at a higher listening level, even though the “phonation” frequencies were identical. The soprano is therefore assigned the additional task of careful listening and then adjusting her pitch accordingly.

Based on the above findings, we can certainly conclude that the soprano part in a choir is the most difficult part to successfully master.

1.3.3 Additional Biases

While listening, I noted diction and pronunciation just as quickly. Careful attention was automatically paid to the manner in which the words were pronounced, especially during the jazz numbers sung in English. This is partly due to the fact that I knew this was a group of native Swedish speakers before listening. Performing in a foreign language poses a higher risk

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5 Ternström 1989 p. 16
6 Wood, Bowsher 1975 pp. 62-63. The higher the pitch of the note, the greater the vibrating segments, or partials.
7 Sundberg 1981 p. 81.
8 Ibid pp. 88-89.
9 Ternström 1989 p. 15.
of inconsistent diction amongst the singers.\textsuperscript{10} This is complicated by the fact that vocal jazz in itself calls for a special type of diction.\textsuperscript{11}

Because of previous language experience, I listened for common inconsistencies a native Swedish speaker might encounter. Many were subtle, but significant to my ears.

As one who has tinkered in the recording studio and somewhat worked with microphones and sound equipment, I quickly took note of microphone and possible special effects/enhancements created in the studio.

To some, The Real Group is the flawless cream of the a cappella crop. I, by no means, share this seemingly dogmatic perception, nor have I ever done so. I will confess that at one time, there were other a cappella groups that I, along with other fellow teenagers, relentlessly swooned over, being blinded by the fact these groups were also, far from perfect. As for the present day, I no longer “swoon,” but listen with a more critical ear. There are other a cappella groups that not only better fit my taste, but seem to appear more skilled than The Real Group. Again, this is a matter of bias and also subject to discussion. (This will not be discussed, as it does not significantly contribute to the theme of this thesis.) The advantage of my present situation puts me in a position to analyze The Real Group’s sound in a less subjective manner.

Additional biases are certainly present in my observations and analysis, however slight they may appear.

\textsuperscript{10} Interview with Peder Karlsson 2001-11-17.
\textsuperscript{11} The lengthy and argumentable details of jazz diction will not be discussed in depth during this thesis.
2. History and Background Within A Cappella

2.1 Defining A Cappella—History and Background

In order to discuss a cappella, one must be familiar with the term's content and background. A layman's description of a cappella might be, "singing without instrumental accompaniment." Or just simply, "barbershop, doo-wop or choral music." Modern definition is difficult, as the style has transformed markedly.

As with the majority of musical terms, the word "a cappella" has Italian roots. A cappella's literal meaning is "in the chapel" or "in the style of the chapel." It is essential to stress that a cappella does not connote "unaccompanied," nor is it a style of music. It is merely a choice of instrumentation. Instrumental accompaniment, however, is not separate. A vocal part may be doubled and therefore strengthened by any choice of instruments. A violin, for example, might be used to strengthen the melody in a soprano vocal part. For future reference, the term unaccompanied shall refer to separate accompaniment.

Once considered strictly liturgical, a cappella has branched out and blossomed into a plethora of styles. Originating from religious roots, the flowering evolvement has spread itself from medieval holy places, to Renaissance barbershops, to the modern mainstream musical world.

The term "vocal band" has also immersed within contemporary a cappella circles. Deke Sharon, CASA President, explains, "The term ['Vocal Band'] is an attempt to create a new image in the minds of the uninitiated." She continues to state that many current groups do not fit under the generalized categories in which the outside world places them. A cappella styles have evolved and diversified considerably, as well as the number of categories.

The history of A Cappella dates back as far as 6th Century Eastern European Chants, which were sung in unison by monks and nuns. Written a cappella appears in

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13 Personal layman's definition.
14 Holmes 2001, p. 46.
15 Ibid.
16 CASA—Contemporary A Cappella Society of America. A non-profit organization formed in the United States in 1990 to foster and promote a cappella music of all styles.
17 http://members.aol.com/casawa/faq1.html.
Western European 11th and 12th century Gregorian chants. Because of the exceptional and reverberant acoustics of the picturesque abbeys, resonating harmonics (overtones) encouraged in-tune singing. Octavial singing followed soon after, and in turn, the 5th and subsequent 3rd was added. As the number of sung parts increased, the addition of overtones multiplied as well.

As the 14th century approached, major and minor triad chords appeared within holy music. The congregationally sung melody was often found in the tenor line as choirboys sang the parts of a higher register. Most importantly, strict attention was paid to lyrical content, which was maintained by way of expression, timbre and dynamics. This a cappella style continued into the 16th century.

By the end of the 16th century, a cappella passed through the gates of the monastery and made its way into the barbershops, particularly in England. No longer confined to religious boundaries, a cappella was sung whilst waiting for the barber's services. Yes, the self-proclaimed barber/surgeon sang as well, but mostly to drown out the excruciating screams of the patient to whom he was currently administering. The madrigal19 developed from this unique situation and was secularly sung by Barbers and church choristers alike. Humor began seeping into the repertoire around this time, quite possibly as a "result of the [a cappella choristers'] drinking habits and as a release of tension from the necessary intensity of singing to God."20 Latin words were exchanged with irreverent English lyrics, personifying the English parody of the time. The seventh chord (dominant) and a more complex chord progression were introduced into composers' creations and J.D. Heinichen coined the term "circle of 5ths"21. The a cappella tradition became increasingly secular and widespread. Explorers and travellers who shared their goods and songs all over the world became exposed to locals who possessed their own individual musical customs.

Barbershop as we know it today took its form in the USA during the late 1800's, flourishing between 1895 and 1930.22 Not unlike the chords of southern Negro spirituals, dominant and diminished 7th chords, as well as half-diminished 7th and augmented 6th chords were used. However, major 7ths, flattened 9ths and 13th chords, which are more indicative of today's jazz a cappella and create a tighter sound, were considered stylistically

19 Although cultivated in northern Italy during the 14th century, the madrigal did not achieve international popularity and status until the 16th and early 17th centuries. The latter madrigals possessed higher literary quality and musical construction of increased complexity. In this instance, only English madrigals are referred to. http://search.britannica.com/search?query=madrigal
20 http://www.labbs.org.uk/educ/roots.html
21 "Circle of 5ths" consists of all 12 pitches, which are arranged in such a way that any pair of adjacent pitches represents the interval of a perfect 5th. http://www.acappellafoundation.org/essay/bbshistory.html
inappropriate. This became more acceptable as roots of gospel and jazz crept into the repertoire around the 1950’s, particularly in the south.

In addition, towards the end of the 19 th century, popular songs became available for purchase and consequently ended up in the homes of families. Popularity spread rapidly due to the growing importance of media. Performances were advertised by way of mass-produced posters, newspapers, phonograph and radio. The spirit of parody was maintained throughout America and Europe in Vaudeville and various music halls. Current religious, classical and popular songs were parodied. In 1910, the term “Barbershop” was recognized by music scholars and recorded as “harmony featuring the seventh chord and associated with Negro music.”

The circle of 5ths previously referred to, was stretched to its limit when ragtime composers, such as Scott Joplin, came onto the scene. They produced excitingly modern music, which provided continual suspense until the final return to the tonic chord. Popular songs became increasingly complicated as they made their way through “Tin Pan Alley.” As the radio, film and later the TV industry demanded new forms of musical entertainment, songs became increasingly more complicated, and therefore more difficult to sing. Compositions were geared toward the professionals at this point.

Sam Cooke linked a cappella gospel to rock & roll in 1952, with his group The Soul Stirrers with tunes such as It Won’t Be Very Long. By 1972, a new studio technique called a cappella overdubbing was developed. Gene Puerling used this state-of-the art technique in his group’s album, The Singers Unlimited. A Capella. The Manhattan Transfer was formed on October 1 st of that same year. The continuation of the 70’s and 80’s showed a steady increase in the number of a cappella groups. Among other breakthrough albums, Bobby McFerrin appeared on the scene and by 1988, released Simple Pleasures, which featured the number one single Don’t Worry Be Happy.

At this point, there was an incredible surge in the amount of a cappella groups, especially those of the collegiate sort. With the growing popularity of jazz a cappella groups in the 1980’s and 90’s came “vocal techniques that replicate the sound of guitars and percussion along with traditional harmonies.” This is exactly where The Real Group lies.

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22 Hicks 2001, p. 697.
23 Ibid.
24 http://www.labbs.org.uk/educ/roots.html
25 Tin Pan Alley was a close quartered neighborhood in New York where career-minded composers plunked out hopeful new hits. The sound that emerged from their opened windows resembled the mismatch clanging of pans.
According to members of the successful a cappella group *Rockapella*, the modern surge of popularity is due not only to the music itself, but "people reacting against a high-tech culture."²⁸ By this, they mean there are no electronics between themselves and the audience. The group is entirely accessible to them during live performances, as is certainly the case for The Real Group.

### 2.2 The Swedish A Cappella Tradition

Lennart Reimers remarks in his essay about Swedish a cappella that there exists a "specific Swedish choral sound" whose roots "go back primarily to the period between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 20th."²⁹ This "choral miracle," which Reimers speaks of is a "crystallization of various historical, cultural and national traditions."³⁰ He divides these traditions into three sets, each containing six separate categories of "isms."³¹ The first and most encompassing of the three describes the (six) historical roots of Swedish unaccompanied singing. They are as follows: Professionalism, Amateurism, Scholarism, Nationalism: romanticism and local patriotism, Popularism: popular movements and choral movement, and Cecilianism: history and renewal.³²

The first of the six roots, professionalism, is one of the most significant.³³ Choral music has produced a remarkable output of a majority of leading Swedish composers, such as August Söderman och Hugo Alfvén. A number of choral and solo teaching establishments arose during the 18th century providing excellent but rivaling systems of training. Many of these schools approved the admittance of women, allowing for greater opportunity to perform SATB a cappella music. By the 19th and early 20th century, professionalism formed as a significant root of Sweden’s unaccompanied mixed choral singing.

The 19th century is often referred to as the century of amateurism, and political symbolism was part of the movement. Following the German example, Swedish music or "harmony" societies were formed. Popularity was almost instantaneous as these societies spread rapidly throughout the country. According to Reimers, "the mixed choir also reflected

²⁹ *The entirety of chapter 2.2 is based on Reimers’ article.* Reimers 1993, p. 141.
³³ *The following 6 paragraphs provide a clearer picture of the 6 historical "isms" mentioned in Reimers article.* pp. 142-170.
something of the first phase in the emancipation of women, which as a result became a part of 'middle-class public life.' Simultaneously, polyphonic vocal music became increasingly emancipated from instrumental accompaniment. Many amateurs were consequently allowed several opportunities to partake in professional productions, obscuring the line between professionalism and amateurism.

*Scholarism* is, in essence, the result of church/state intertwining. As four-part congregational singing was an old Protestant ideal, school children were exposed at an early age. Four-part singing was done during the weekdays in school as well as during church services with their parents every Sunday (where attendance was mandatory until the mid 19th-century.) *Unaccompanied mixed choral singing* was almost the backbone of the upper secondary school students.

The surges of Swedish *national romanticism* were extensive and frequently repeated. These surges were mainly expressed by way of choral singing. Collections of Swedish folks songs were published, most including a portion of *unaccompanied choral singing*. By the 1890’s, this was ever present as a line of composers, such as Wilhelm Stenhammar, Wilhelm Peterson-Berger and Hugo Alfvén, exclusively composed a cappella arrangements.

Choral singing took pride of place during *Swedish popular movements*. By 1860, Swedes were permitted to participate in other religious denominations and were allowed to leave the Lutheran church (also known as the Church of Sweden). Religious revivalist movements have been one of the greatest impacts in mixed choral singing. Much was forbidden, but singing was allowed. Many songs were imported from other countries, mainly those that were Anglo-Saxon. Many successful musicians sprang from free churches: Hugo Alfvén, Eric Ericson, Karl-Erik Anderson, to name a few.

Around the beginning of the 19th century, attempts were made to restore early church music. Doing so is called *Cecilianism*. The “purest” type of music came from composers such as Palestrina, Dufay and Josquin and was ideally performed without any instrumental accompaniment. An additional characteristic of *Cecilianism* is “a process involving constant feedback between cause and effect.” This early choral music proved to be a major source of creative inspiration for composers and, in turn, supplied the same inspiration for choral directors and instructors.

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34 Reimers 1993 p. 155.
The second set of "isms" describes the different stylistic strata of the repertoire. These include: Classicism, Romanticism, Traditionalism, Folklorism, Modernism, and Historicism. 36 Reimers remarks that these stylistic strata, which began to appear in Sweden by the end of the 18th century, "do not crop up one after another and then disappear...[but]...frequently overlap...[and] remain alive down to the present day." 37 The final, and most particular, set of "isms" characterizes the (six) properties of the sound body within unaccompanied choral music. These include: Intonationism, Pianissism, Non-vibratism, Aliquotism, Consentism and Precisionism. 38 These properties are all interconnected in various manners.

The goal of Intonationism is to achieve pure overtone intonation. As Dan-Olof Stenlund maintained, "Pure, accurate intonation is essentially Swedish..." 39 Speech instructor Anna Bergström-Simonsson encouraged school choirs to practice "unforced" voice production, which can also be called Pianissism. 40 Pianissism is beneficial to pure intonation. A greater degree of straightness in tone (Non-vibratism) enhances the possibility of pure intonation, as well. Aliquotism, or acoustic socialization, essentially occurs when a singer sets aside his or her own personal singing style in favour of the choir's personality. A part of choral socialization is Consentism, which Reimers describes as "the consistent and united positioning of consonants." 41 Precisionism, which is temporal precision, benefits from the maintenance of Consentism. These elements are related to the "new classical repertoire" and "survive in a variety of symbioses." 42

This portion of the thesis has been dedicated to discussion of Swedish a cappella tradition, mainly in recognition of its ubiquitous existence and connection to The Real Group, whose members not only perform a cappella, but are Swedish natives as well. The Real Group, in its own unique way, continues this well established and deeply rooted a cappella tradition.

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37 Ibid, p. 171.
38 Reimers 1993, p. 181-185. A more in-depth explanation of these properties is given in Reimers' article Finns det ett svenskt kor sound? (1993).
39 Ibid, p. 182.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid, p. 183.
42 Ibid, p. 185.
2.3 The Real Group Formation

The Real Group is one of the foremost vocal jazz ensembles in the world.\(^{43}\) The group’s emphasis and strength lies mainly in jazz a cappella. In large, they write, arrange and produce themselves. Current group members include: Anders Edenroth, counter tenor, Peder Karlsson, tenor, Anders Jalkéus, bass, Margareta Jalkéus, high soprano and Katarina Stenström, alto. All members have extensive and diverse musical backgrounds but they were admitted, attended and eventually met at The Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm, Sweden. All members had music pedagogy as their main course of study.

Originally, the intentions of forming this group were not aimed towards jazz a cappella. Students Anders, Anders and Peder, the male founding members, desired to assemble a pop band, but were unable to locate a drummer. It was also given an assignment to form an ensemble. The female counterparts soon joined the "band," which was immediately transformed into a "jazz group," - a group that wrote and sang its own arrangements using The Real Book\(^{44}\) as their inspiration.

The Real Group’s formation was official in 1984. The group’s debuting album was recorded and released in 1987, producing 2500 vinyl edition copies. (This early recording was re-released on CD in 1995.) This first album was recorded with only two microphones and straight into a two-track tape deck with no mix down. In addition to the group’s first recording, it has produced seven additional albums for the Swedish market, one specifically for the U.S. market and one for the European market. It has performed over 1,200 concerts and sold more than 300,000 albums.

The initial popularity and success of their blended voices led The Real Group to apply for a two-year program at the Royal College of Music solely for the dedication of sound and skill. They were the first jazz group to be accepted into the program and were fortunate enough to be able to structure their own education, receiving instruction by mentors such as musician Monica Dominique. After graduating, they adopted the life of successful career musicians.

The Real Group has won a number of awards, its most recent in February of 2001. The group was presented with a Swedish Grammy for their year 2000 album,

\(^{43}\) This history is based on information from the organisation Primarily A Cappella, and their publication, The Vocal Jazz Catalog, along with a group profile, also supplied by the organisation. Additional sources include album covers, various magazine and newspaper articles and web pages.

\(^{44}\) The Real Book, in several different versions, is a large collection of chord-voicings and text for jazz standards.
Commonly Unique. Their first major award was presented in 1994, at the CARA Awards.\textsuperscript{45} The ensemble won additional awards in every consecutive year from 1994 to 1998.

Members of The Real Group have extensive and diverse backgrounds, which ultimately affects and contributes to their sound. Margareta Jalkéus was raised in a musical family that constantly sang. She started playing the piano at four. At the age of twelve, she began studying the harp and soon became a proficient harpist. In 1984, she was admitted to the Royal College of Music for the express purpose of honing her harp skills.

Katarina Stenström started singing at the age of eight and started singing at the age of eight and plays both the piano and the cello. She has worked as background vocalist for a number of Swedish artists and has expanded her vocal interests by exploring soul singing in jazz music.

Anders Edenroth is the member of the groups who writes most of the musical arrangements. He spent five years at the Royal College and trained to be a pianist, but quickly transformed into a vocalist when the group was created. He claims that preparing Thai cuisine influences both his compositions and his vocal performance.

Anders Jalkéus was raised with folk music and began with the violin and piano when he was six. By the time he was accepted into the College, he was proficient with almost any instrument. While a student, he focused on singing and graduated as a cantor. He has also worked with a number of choirs, sharing his vocal talent and inspiration. Outside of jazz, his favorite vocal genres are Swedish “romance” choral music as well as serenades in “hjältetenorläge.”\textsuperscript{46}

Peder Karlsson loves books as much as music. He plays the guitar, piano and especially enjoys the violin. He often sits with his guitar and creates new obscure strains. All of the above factors have affected and continue to affect the Real Group’s arrangements as well as their overall sound.

The Real Group has been influenced by a number of idols. These include artists from Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell, ABBA and The Beatles, to Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Chet Baker, Weather Report, Maurice Ravel and Felix Mendelssohn. It has also worked with such musical talents as George Martin, Bobby McFerrin, Povel Ramel, Barbara Hendricks, Toots Thielemans, Van Morrison and Frida Lyngstad-Reuss.

\textsuperscript{45} An annual award ceremony sponsored by CASA.
\textsuperscript{46} English translation of “hjältetenorläge” is “high tenor.”
The influences and factors discussed in this section have contributed to the diverse whole of The Real Group and have given it the edge and essence to maintain and continually develop its sound.
3. Sound Metamorphosis

3.1 The Concept of Sound

The whole concept of “sound” appeared in the vernacular of modern musicians sometime during the birth of rock and roll in the 1950’s. This term is most often associated with rock, pop and jazz music. Identifying and describing the somewhat abstract components of sound has been fairly difficult. Sound lacked appropriate terminology for analytical description until the early 1980’s. A dated definition of sound is found in D. Laing’s simple description. He suggests that sound, “includes the role of each instrument, and the particular qualities and roles of the voices [. . .].” W. Sandner claims the term is defined by way of total musical impression, including visual influence as well as amplification equipment. He insists that sound if defined by more than one sense, and encompasses electronic influence.

Per Erik Brodin and Holger Larsen have managed to most accurately describe the situation in identifying the contents of sound within non-art and specifically rock music. They tackled this task in their book Rock...Aspekter på industri, elektronik & sound (1981) in which they scientifically discuss and clarify sound. Continued discussion focusing on vocal aspects is found in part two of their dissertation. They state that both Laing’s and Sandner’s depictions of sound fail to encompass its full meaning.

Defining sound requires some sort of analogy. In the portion of their book entitled Sound, Brodin and Larsen give light to the term by presenting a familiar situation. Imagine sitting in front of a radio and scanning through the pre-set stations in order to find a piece of music one enjoys. In order to accomplish this, one would need but a few seconds to determine if correct station selection has been achieved. An additional but archaic example is presented by means a record player. Arbitrary placement of the record needle in random grooves can establish if any tracks on the current LP possess the desired features at that particular moment. (A modernized example retains the same principle if “record player” is

47 Laing 1969 p. 98.
48 Sandner 1977.
49 Future references to the term “rock,” unless otherwise specified, encompass non-art music, particularly, pop and jazz.
50 The authors concentrate mainly on the sound phenomenon within the idiom of rock music with occasional mentions of jazz and pop sound. The factors that make up rock sound can also be applied to jazz and pop sound.
51 Brodin, Larsen 1981b.
replaced with “compact disc player.”) Sound is the dimension by which we determine our favorite musical selections in the above examples. It is the experienced totality of all musical elements, as it is perceived during a short time segment.  

Brolinson and Larsen speak of the musical “now” or “presence.” This musical “presence” is not solely a point in time. It is an event within a time segment that depends upon numerous factors. “The experience of the musical present is the vital dimension of perception.”

What is the make-up of this bite-sized musical portion? The factors that display themselves within this brief segment are representative of the sound, which continues throughout the whole of the piece notwithstanding possible sound variations within the duration of the song.” Carl Dahlhaus sheds an alternate light on this concept by describing Edmund Husserl’s perception of the “present” (or presence). He states that it is, “no fleeting punctual now, but rather as a stretch of time whose extent depends on the duration of a process that fills it up, a process felt as cohering without a break.” The contents of the “presence” construct, maintain and define it. Time is merely the vessel it is transported in.

One can speak of sound on different levels. The spectrum ranges from broader concepts of sound, such as those characteristics that make up the soulistic “Motown-sound,” to the group, to the album and finally to the individual piece. I will mainly concentrate on the latter three. The particular concepts of sound contained in these three levels shall be expounded upon during the analysis portion of this thesis.

Within music analysis, there are general parameters such as harmony, rhythm, timbre, structure and dynamics. Elements such as figures, motive, phrases, melodies, chords, chord changes and rhythm patterns are part of these parameters. According to Brolinson and Larsen, one of the biggest differences between western art music and rock is that, in rock, the borderline between piece and performance is virtually non-existent; with art music, it is the exact opposite. A rock/pop/jazz piece is more intensely susceptible to interpretation.

Within rock analysis exclusively, or analysis of its sound, certain parameters may be more important or active than others in generating the particular character of the individual sound. The most important factors are timbre and volume. Rhythm and beat propulsion come second. Rhythm is followed by vocal texture, then vocal delivery. Phrasing

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55 Dahlhaus 1999 p. 74.
is listed as the last parameter. These terms will be clarified and used to compare the sound evolution of The Real Group.

Mårten Nilsson, in his D-level thesis about rock analysis,\textsuperscript{58} presents a list of parameters and compares their significance in rock as well as their importance in analysis. He states that sound is important, but rhythm and beat are not always important.\textsuperscript{59} In jazz, beat and rhythm are one of the most significant and distinguishing traits. Paul F. Berliner, who wrote about jazz improvisation, gives the following example:

\begin{quote}
Even if two drummers perform the same time-keeping pattern, experts can identify them by the subtle differences in their placement of quarter notes in relation to the main beat, that is, in their rhythmic phrasing.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

All other traits in jazz follow the same sentiment as rock, as there is no constant state of importance in the position of parameters. Timbre is also a significant trait within jazz. Its importance is equally vital to jazz as it is rock. In fact, “jazz musicians place great emphasis on creating the particular tone colors they want.”\textsuperscript{61}

Rock, pop and jazz, in essence, all have the same roots.\textsuperscript{62} They developed during the three hundred years of slave trade and manifested themselves as slave work songs, Negro spirituals and ring shouts became well established by the 1800’s. The slaves sang for the sake of expressing the song. These songs were filled with raw emotion, which demanded release. The slaves were set free, but their song tradition lives on. It developed into Blues, Gospel, Ragtime and Rhythm and Blues, and further evolved into Soul, Rock and Pop music. Structurally speaking, Lars Lilliestam points out that there constantly exists a “\textit{blues twelfth}” in both jazz and rock.\textsuperscript{63} Because of these roots and this development, the parameters of sound within rock and jazz can be similarly compared.

Why is sound so difficult to describe? To produce the most accurate picture of sound, terms often considered subjective are required. Brolinson and Larsen point out that, “A

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. pp. 135-138.
\item\textsuperscript{58} Nilsson 1999, p. 30.
\item\textsuperscript{59} Nilsson is careful to point out that the most important parameters are dependant on varying factors, such as stile, genre, geographic area, and period of time.
\item\textsuperscript{60} Berliner 1994 p. 127.
\item\textsuperscript{61} Gridley 1988 p. 389.
\item\textsuperscript{62} Schunnesson 1988 pp. 10-11.
\item\textsuperscript{63} Lilliestam 1995 p. 108.
\end{footnotes}
fundamental problem concerns the relationships between acoustical properties and perceptual qualities.\textsuperscript{64}

They continue with the following example:

\begin{quote}
Om man lyckas analysera fram att en viss klangfärg karakteriseras av en stark betoning av de udda partial tonerna […] och vissa små och oregelbundna variationer av grundfrekvensen samt ett inslag av brus, så är detta som ett led i en musikalisk beskrivning mindre klargörande än en kvasi-deskriptiv karakteristisk av typen från, skärande och hes.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

Paul F. Berliner echoes a similar thought:

\begin{quote}
The many components of sound serve both as primary vehicles for affective performance and as signature traits. […] Finding words to describe musical subtleties like tone color and affect is a challenge that the verbally agile and creative jazz musician meets with the descriptive language of personality and emotion found in poetry.\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

A unique trait of jazz sound is that instrumentalists try to mimic vocal characteristics, and vice versa. The Real Group prides them self on being able to imitate instrumental sound. In fact, soprano Margareta Jalkéus is featured as a "horn" in both their most recent album, \textit{Commonly Unique} (2000), and their all Swedish album, \textit{Varför får man inte bara vara som man är?} (1994). This is just a taste of the numerous “instruments” included in their albums that add to their overall sound.

3.2 Transformation of Sound

As I cross over into the relatively new musicological territory of analyzing sound transformation within jazz a cappella and other borderline genres within a cappella, both my manner of component selection, as well as of my method of analysis, are fueled by self-formulated procedures based on research, logic and musical instinct. In going about the task of pinpointing and analyzing the components that have most transformed The Real Group’s sound, I was compelled to formulate fours sets of procedure. Because of the overwhelming amount of components that comprise the group’s sound, I began by listing the main traits of each album. I continued listing the traits that had changed in each album, then asked myself

\textsuperscript{64} Brolinson and Larsen 1981b p. 135.

\textsuperscript{65} “If successful analysis is accomplished by describing a particular tone color as being characterized by a strong emphasis of odd partial tones accompanied by a number of minute irregular ground frequency variations, as well as a touch of static, then it is certainly a less clarifying musical description than that of the quasi-type: Raspy, harsh and freyed.” Brolinson and Larsen 1981a pp. 185-186.

\textsuperscript{66} Berliner 1994 p. 126.
which songs most exemplify these changes in each of the three albums. I kept in mind that, 
more often than not, there are subtle components that contribute to the sound. It is difficult at 
times to identify components that are not directly noticeable.

After carefully listening to the selected songs, I found it more prudent to 
concentrate on Brolinson’s properties (or elements) and descriptions of sound. Brolinson’s 
methods bear more weight for The Real Group’s sound as their repertoire focuses mainly on 
jazz.\textsuperscript{67} The six properties of the sound body that Reimers discusses are considered and used, 
but are deemed to be more appropriate for the analysis of the “art music” realm of a cappella. 
Using Reimers’ properties to describe the sound in jazz a cappella bears slightly less weight 
than comparing jazz to the sound of rock or pop music.\textsuperscript{68} Nonetheless, the properties 
mentioned above are discussed in relation to The Real Group during this thesis in a later 
chapter, along with Reimers’ first two sets of “isms.” This specific chapter exists in order to 
emphasize, depict and apply how these three sets are a vital part of The Real Group’s 
background and sound.

As described in chapter 3.1, the relationships between perceptual and acoustical 
properties have difficulty coinciding. In achieving my goal of employing these properties as 
clearly and perceptibly as possible, the six self-formulated areas of components have been 
supplied with a balance of both. Maintaining this balance, I present the overall image of sound 
from each of the three albums, analyze each song within the selected category, and then 
summarize the analyses within each group. As the borderline between piece and performance 
within rock is relatively diffused, it is the same case within jazz. Brolinson and Larsen remind 
us that the recording of a song is the most natural study object in this case, as “the recording 
of a song tends to achieve the status of a musical work.”\textsuperscript{69} As the influence of the studio 
becomes increasingly evident throughout the course of the Real Groups albums, this statement 
becomes progressively applicable as well, clearly validating Brolinson and Larsen’s 
description of sound and its components.

\textsuperscript{67} Brolinson and Larsen concentrate on the concept of sound within rock music, but refers to additional genres; 
jazz being one of them. (Brolinson & Larsen 1981a, pp. 175-216.;Brolinson & Larsen 1981b, pp.135-138.)
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, p. 134.
Because the transformation of sound is the main goal of this thesis paper, special attention has been paid to all areas that could possibly affect The Real Group’s sound, necessitating the need for a considerable amount of background information. The line of procedures taken in this thesis paper, as well as the detailed descriptions, will hopefully help to orient others exploring this relatively new realm of musicology.

3.3 Overall Sound Picture of the Three Albums
I was able to better identify my experience of The Real Group’s sound after listening to all three albums. Each album possesses its own type of beauty, its own kind of sound.

Debut: Five young potent voices bursting with potential, excitement and thrilling spontaneous energy. Eyes wide open, they journey into a new, unknown horizon, partly unaware of the raw talent emerging from their presence. This is not the sound of a thoroughly honed, habitually rehearsed, set-routine group of mature, established, stable voices. They sing for the pure high and thrill of it. Hardly able to contain their own energy, group members concentrate on performing the music to the best of their ability, not completely sure what wonders their voices will produce next. Certain factors are automatically present, such as good background blend, timing and precision. The dawning of their now-trademark, prodigious technical expertise is heard. They sing mostly jazz standards. By daring to wander out into difficult unknown territory, a number of errors unmistakably occur. These will be mentioned, along with further analysis in discussing particular songs during the latter portion of this thesis.

Varför Får Man Inte Bara Vara Som Man Är?: The Group sounds somewhat more confident, controlled and comfortable in their roll. The voices sound more settled-in, possibly because this album is mostly Swedish. The group has mastered most "basic" skills, allowing them to work on fine-tuning the more subtle aspects of their music. They still bubble with energy and spontaneity, but are more able to channel innovativeness. Studio effects are noticed and used in moderation. Instead, the singers use more experimentation with instrument imitation and mouth/body percussion. The group sounds proud as they sing some of their own creations, both arrangements and entire numbers. Moderate amount of jazz with a number of "audience-pleasers." (Songs meant to address the audience.) This album contains the most balanced mixture of excited fresh energy and channeled honed skills of the three; consequently, it is the most appealing.

Commonly Unique: After studying this album, it is quite apparent that this group had been together for at least 14 years. Completely comfortable in their roles, group members
leave nothing up in the air. Everything has its place, as each member knows exactly what the other member is going to do and how it’s going to be done. Innovation and experimentation is still essential, as the use of effects processing has taken a dominant roll. Most of the numbers on the album are written by group members and contain poetic and/or philosophical lyrics. This album contains the least amount of jazz in comparison to the other albums and an overwhelming amount of adult contemporary style. The group has plenty of energy, but it is completely contained harnessed and productive, allowing for further development.

3.3.1 Chosen Components of Sound for Comparison

Before listening, I prepared myself with a complete list of possible sound criteria. These include the traditional components of sound, such as suggested in Lennart Reimers’ essay while expounding upon his third set of “isms” (discussed in chapter 1.2 of this thesis), plus those suggested by Gunnar Fagius, music consultant for the state church in Uppsala. These include: Intonation, blend, balance, diction/pronunciation, dynamics, phrasing, microphone technique/studio effects, glissando, vibrato, word choice, and voice quality/technique. Brodin and Larsen’s most important parameters for the shaping of sound in rock as mentioned in chapter 3.1 were next in order. These include: timbre/textured, volume, rhythm, beat and propulsion, vocal texture and phrasing. I also added my own components of “instrument imitation” and “type of energy/feel expressed.” Lastly, I took Reimers’ first two sets of “isms” into sparse consideration. Some of the components listed above play a more vital role in my analysis than the others, especially when certain combinations are formed. After listening thoroughly and by process of elimination, I listed six areas that had most affected The Real Group’s sound. There are a number of sound components in each of these areas. These consistently occur, as well as most significantly display, the sound transformation, motivating my final selection. The areas and components are as summarized:

1. Vocal skill, both as a group and amongst soloists. This includes mainly technique, vocal texture/timbre, vocal maturity and intonation.
2. Choice of repertoire. This includes music style variations and the rhythms therein, as well as word choice.
3. Diction. This includes mainly Swedish vs. English diction.
4. Effects processing. Influence of the recording studio and instrument imitation as well as sound effects.

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70 Interview with Gunnar Fagius 2001-03-27.
71 These components are also briefly mentioned by Brodin and Larsen.
5. Overall “feel.” The type of energy portrayed.

6. Text content. This includes both the identity of the lyricist as well as the arranger.

It is sometimes difficult to discern between the cause and the effect of a phenomenon, as the cause can be viewed as the effect, and vice versa. Consider area four: The presence of instrument mimicking may have caused the increased use of effects processing just as easily as increased effects processing may have encouraged more frequent experimentation in mimicking instruments. The process of one event cannot be fully existent without the other. It is more of a cycle than a domino effect.

Further description of the content of these six areas is demonstrated throughout the following analyses.

3.3.2 The Most Representative Songs

In order to give the most representative picture of the three albums and how the group’s sound has evolved, I chose three categories consisting of eight songs. Three ballads were chosen from each album as well as three upbeat-or fast tempo-songs. Two Swedish songs were chosen from the first and second albums. The third album in this study contains only songs in English. The songs are grouped as follows:

The Three Ballads:

From the Debut album: Lil’ Darlin’.
From the Varför får man inte bara vara som man är? album: Du är det vackra jag ser i mitt liv.
From the Commonly Unique album: Stay.

The Three Upbeat/Fast Tempo Songs:

From the Debut album: Joy Spring
From the Varför får man inte bara vara som man är? album: Flight of the Foo-birds.
From the Commonly Unique album: Lift Me Up.

The Two Swedish Songs:

From the Debut album: Båtlät.
From the *Varför får man inte bara vara som man är?* album: *Sommar och vinter.*

The three albums will be referred to as albums 1, 2 and 3 from this point forward.

### 3.4 The Ballads

*Lil’ Darlin’*, arranged by group member Anders Jalkéus, and written by Neal Hefti, is the most prominent ballad on album 1. It displays both the strengths and the weaknesses of the newly assembled group at the time of recording. Margareta, the soprano, carried the solo throughout the duration of the song. One might say that the skill of singing the solo in a jazz ballad was not one of her original strengths. The tone quality of her voice wavered and sometimes disrupted the intonation of the rest of the group, as they sang tight back-up vocals. She used vibrato in precarious places and also as a tool to cover-up a possible lack of support that appears at the end of a number of phrases. Without adequate and consistent support, volume control deems to be inconsistent. On occasion Margareta masks the blend of her “supporting” backup vocals. Despite the negative overtones directed at the soprano, she still erupts with intense youthful energy and displays remarkable agility during portions of this song.

As far as diction is concerned, the group again displays both strengths and weaknesses. Because this song is in English, not all of the consonants and vowels are consistently pronounced and/or placed. For example, when the soprano sings “don’t care,” the "o" vowel is vocalized the same as a Swedish “o,” which is different from an English or jazz “o” in this situation.\(^{22}\) Some consonants may be more difficult to pronounce in unison than others. The group simultaneously pronounces all the “b’s,” but occasionally misses the “d’s,” like in “darlin’.” Although it is obvious that the group is trying, this does not totally follow the same pronunciation pattern as mainstream jazz ballads. (The jazz ballads on albums 2 and 3 are more typical of this mainstream jazz diction.)

No effects processing or studio effects were detected during this song, or during the other two songs that will be discussed from album 1. Both the text content and the arrangement fit the energy and mood of the album: one of whimsy and youthfulness. This is the same for the other two songs on album 1.

*Du är det vackra jag ser i mitt liv* is arranged by the legendary Gene Puerling who leads both the "Hi-Lo’s" and "Singers Unlimited." Lars Nordlander translates it from

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\(^{22}\) The Swedish "o" can be differentiated from the American or jazz "o" in saying that the Swedish "o" has a cleaner, deeper, rounder and more pronounced sound than the American or jazz "o", which contains a more closed sound as well as a slight diphthong.
English. In comparison with the ballads from albums 1 and 3, this ballad displays the most neutral balance of energy, along with a number of other components. The effects of studio influence are directly noticeably as the voices have been somewhat warmed up, most likely with the reverb function. Margareta carries her solo at an optimal volume. She neither overpowers the rest of the choir nor lets herself get lost amongst the melting chords. Vibrato is used, not to cover up any potential support problems, but to beautify and add emotion. This song emits an incredible amount of emotion, yet is not too personal for the group’s members, nor too cryptic for the listener. The words, and especially the consonants, are carefully pronounced with gentleness and delicacy. Dripping emotion drives the song; the sound is precise, but somehow relaxed. This gives the impression that the task of performing this ballad requires a minimum of effort, and because of this effortless portrayal, the group is able to bring forth the pure emotion of the song and its contents. The sound becomes perplexingly lucid during the “doo’s.” The group displays near-flawless intonation, and the diction is just as consistent. Only after several listening occasions did I realize that the soprano and alto occasionally sang in unison during phrases throughout the song.

The final ballad is Stay, which is on album 3. The music is written by four of the members, not including alto Katarina Stenström. The lyrics are written by soprano Margareta Jalkéus. The words are limited to “Stay with me/Don’t go away,” repeated several times throughout the song. The music speaks more to the listener’s inward senses and appears to be more personal for those performing. Background rhythms are consistently even and are used with similar accompaniment, urging listeners to search within themselves. The listener turns to meditation, perspective and contemplation, as the energy is continuous and perpetual, more calming and deep. Wisdom, maturity and experience are heard in the group’s voices, including the solo soprano’s voice. The honed and lifelike trumpet solo, also presented by the soprano, follows the same spiritual and ethereal mood of the song. Studio work is most present in ballad 3 as the entire song is kept very warm and the voices are recorded to sound “further away,” adding to the spaciousness of the song. Intonation is excellent, but sounds suspiciously tampered with by studio effects.

This song is not immediately recognizable as “classic jazz,” (jazz with a “driving swing”) but makes one think of the early 90’s albums of modern jazz guitarist Pat Metheny and his group of instrumentalists. The guitar background in “Stay” sounds incredibly similar to Metheny’s style and feel.

73 Original English title: “What are you doing the rest of your life?”
3.4.1 Analysis Summary of the Ballads

As ballads are meant to explore the more sensitive side of both the performer and the listener, it is easier to expose the emotions being presented. A jazz musician is often known to bear his or her soul with this performance style; the music is entirely personal. This is especially true for the singer, as the message is produced directly by the human voice, instead of an external interpretive appendage, such as a trumpet or piano.

The analyzed ballads greatly reflect the stage of life, or even more so, the emotional state of life for these young musicians. A change in emotional maturity and priorities is revealed. Because of lack of life experience, a younger musician may tend to borrow or mimic another singer’s emotion to the best of his skill. This is sometimes difficult to detect, as in The Real Group’s case with their first album, but is evident when compared to the mature sound of album 3. Though abstract and difficult to explain, it is obvious by album 3 that all members of the group, especially the soprano, have children of their own. Emotions are quite close to the surface, almost transparent, and extremely genuine, despite the intrusion of studio effects. Experienced and mature voices beget skills of the same nature, which beget energy and sound of the same breed, as well.

One might question what parenthood has to do with the group’s sound. In my interview with group member Peder Karlsson, he confirms my suspicions by saying, “The way you live changes how you are and changes how you sing. You can hear more of that with singers (than with instrumentalists) because it’s part of their body.” Karlsson explains that the group physically manifests what’s inside itself when singing, especially when performing an emotionally packed ballad. Being true and spontaneous to these emotions constructs a distinctive part of The Real Group’s sound, according to Karlsson. Lyrical content in the latter albums expresses reflective parental priorities. When asked if being a parent has influenced the group’s sound, Karlsson answers with a simple and direct, “Of course.”

3.5 The Upbeat/Fast Tempo Songs

The lyrics to Joy Spring are written by jazz great Clifford Brown. The group sings this arrangement created by its own Anders Jalkéus. One can almost “hear” the smiles on their

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74 In reference to the section entitled The Soprano Bias found in the introduction.
75 Parenthood is clearly revealed by examining the cover to album 3, showing a variety of family photos.
faces as they vigorously perform this arrangement, mainly for their own joy and secondarily for the audience’s pleasure. In the beginning, it is evident that the group does not have a thorough handle on the jazz diction, as previously described when discussing album 1. All the words in the first sentence are pronounced identically and precisely by every member, but are over-enunciated, giving the start of the song a rather tense feel. This also slightly exposed the group’s classical training.

However, as the soprano starts her *vocalese*\(^{27}\) solo in the very next line, the song swings hard all the way through to the very last note. The group’s most intense talents are projected in this song. Despite the misleading first line, the group, especially the soprano, effectively and almost effortlessly handles the *vocalese* through the entire piece. It is through this that the group’s best overall strengths in diction are displayed, particularly in terms of technical skill. Skills in intonation are successfully put to the test, especially in light of the level of technical skill required to correctly perform the above-mentioned *vocalese*.

This song has the most concentrated burst of energy on album 1. The group puts forth every ounce of effort, including their whole self without any holding back. It occurred to me that The Real Group’s recording of this song felt and sounded better, even swung harder, than Manhattan Transfer’s version (sung with an almost-identical arrangement). This is not because of skill, but due to the fact that the Real Group is projecting a non-commercialistic feel. They are singing for themselves, as previously mentioned.

It is fortunate this recording was not manipulated by heavy mixing in the studio. Effects processing would have completely compromised the energy and freshness of this song. This is a pure preservation of absolute realness.

*Flight Of The Foo-birds*, sung in all-scat style, is written by Neal Hefti and is arranged by Anders Jalkéus. The group transcribed Count Basie’s version of this song from the album *The Atomic Mr. Basie*. The increase in the soprano’s vocal agility is immediately noticed, as is her expanded vocal skill. She sings the first solo with ease, showing no signs of a pressed voice. As far as diction is concerned, scat pronunciation, as well as scat word choice, is as consistent as with any mainstream jazz recording. The group’s main goal in this recording is to sound identical to the instruments from Count Basie’s recording. Their performance is more consistent than in the previous album, especially in the bass line, which is so vital to the driving swing beat.

\(^{27}\) *Vocalese* occurs when the singer attempts to "scat" real words and sentences at an extremely fast tempo.
Each member receives an opportunity to present a solo and fit in perfectly with the rest of the arrangement, portraying the “assigned” instruments to the best of their ability. The dynamics of this performance do not vary as much as they do in Basie’s recording (or other versions I’ve heard.) This may be due to the common argument that intensity cannot be as effectively conveyed on compact disc as it is with a live performance, or even LP.\textsuperscript{78} Presence is somewhat compromised.

The group has taken help from the microphones especially when producing percussion sounds, but not heavy effects processing. The occurrence of percussion is more frequent and advanced than in the previous album. The entire recording has been slightly warmed over in the studio by use of reverb.

The level and type of energy portrayed in this particular recording is consistent to that of the ballad previously discussed and found on the same album. They show enough developed skill to be able to fine-tune their sound while still being able to supply a moderate amount of youthful energy abounding from album 1.

The music to \textit{Lift me up}..., the third of the upbeat/fast tempo songs discussed in this thesis, is written by Margareta Jalkéus, and the lyrics are by another group member, Anders Edenroth. Several rounds of listening were required in order to identify the specific style of this piece. This is partly due to the fact that there are traces of a number of different styles that surface along the way. The best description would be that of contemporary upbeat gospel/soul. Effects processing are extremely evident throughout the song, especially with the reproduction of instruments. Although the instrument imitation is produced by vocals, the sound has the effect of being somewhat “manufactured.” The group has experimented with a larger variety of instruments than in previous albums, but has increasingly employed more studio effects as a part of their experimentation. Instruments in this song include: organ, horn, and electric guitars, among others. The electric guitar sound that appears towards the end of the song sounds nothing like a human voice and has inevitably been altered by studio effects.\textsuperscript{79}

Along the lines of manufactured sound, it seems as if the background contains previously recorded sequences that are played and repeated throughout the song. This is especially true when hearing interchanging sequences overlap between left port/right port

\textsuperscript{78} LP=Long Playing Vinyl Record

\textsuperscript{79} This brings up the definitive (and even moralistic) question of whether or not and to what extent studio equipment may or may not be considered an instrument. According to the Real Group, it does not, stating in its cover from album 3 that, “No instruments [were] used on this album.”
signals. The type of energy portrayed follows this “manufactured” theme. Diction and intonation, along with vocal texture, are at their peak, but have undoubtedly been tampered with in the studio. Looking beyond the effects of the studio, disciplined and experienced voices are still present.

The text content of this song is also consistent to that of the entire album 3. The words introduce images and ideas that encourage the listener to stop and think and interpret, considering any deep meaning that could be lurking about in the text. Often the words contain irony mixed with a level of humor. Philosophically speaking, this balanced mixture is one of the few ways we humans are able to effectively deal with the more serious issues facing our world and lives at this time, or at least from the Real Group’s perspective. The words to this song are expressed by a female voice that feels non-productive, worthless and in a downward spiral. She manages to see a small glint of light and cries for help. Despite the seriousness of the text, the words are sung in a fast-paced positive manner. The mood of the music is more cryptic and ironic than the text, which is plainly and starkly straightforward.

3.5.1 Analysis Summary of the Upbeat/Fast Tempo Songs
Although much is summarized and compared throughout the discussion of these three songs, an overview is still beneficial. The differences between The Real Group’s sound are most accentuated through comparison of these three songs. These songs reveal most of the typical sound that The Real Group represents and how it has transformed. This is mainly true for the components of its sound, revealing its uniqueness and setting it apart from other contemporary a cappella groups. These include: The vocalese and unified scat diction to start with. Each member unifies and consistently expresses the same type and amount of energy in each song. Overall steady musical development is heard, each member progressing at the same rate and level.

In reference to the analysis summary of the ballads, this development may largely be due to similarity in age, background and lifestyle. Individuals with these similar attributes are more likely to experience life changes at the same rate and in the same manner.

3.6 The Swedish Songs
Robert Broberg wrote the words and music to Bålåt, and group member Anders Jalkéus wrote the arrangement. This Swedish piece from album 1 cannot be distinctly identified as

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80 Within a stereo system, left port is sent to the left speaker and right port is sent to the right.
jazz from the beginning; however, jazz chords are periodically dropped in throughout the duration of the piece. The developing bass line has some minor pitch and support problems. As with most of the songs on album 1, the featured soloist is the soprano. She shows forced vibrato at some points, indicating lack of air and in turn, a lack of support. However, this "lack" is only noticed during her solo, not while singing with the rest of the ensemble. Compared to the other songs from album 1 that are studied in this thesis, the group has not only more overall support, but also increased dynamics and smoother blend. This is attributed to the fact that the group is singing in their native tongue, Swedish, and is able to concentrate on the smaller details of its singing. Of the three chosen songs from album 1, this one also has the best diction, again, attributed to the Swedish text. The group sounds more comfortable as well.

This is a most innocent, fun-loving and whimsical song, closely following the youthful feel of the album. The group awakens the listener's juvenile senses as they journey through this fanciful fairytale about two boats in love, rolling along at a waltz tempo. And of course, the finale is a happy ending.

The words, music and arrangement to Sommar och vinter from album 2, all come from member Peder Karlsson. The introduction to this song fades in with warmth, reverb and heavy echo, and fades out in the same manner towards the conclusion. This song demonstrates the Real Group's turn towards more developed themes in album 2. They have not, however, reached the deepness or philosophical exploration found on album 3. The text reflects upon cycles that exist in life and portrays different perspectives during different stages of life. This theme is backed by the symbolic cycle of the four seasons. The group is also confident and well established enough to be able to sing about their own experiences and personal thoughts. This approach might not have been as successful with album 1 because the group was only known in smaller circles.

A blend of soft rock and light Latin mark the style of the song. There is little trace of any forceful driving background beats. In comparison to words sung in English, the vocals sound almost cleaner when sung in Swedish. Swedish vowels have a purer sound regardless, as mentioned previously in the discussion about Lil' Darlin' from album 1. Vocal skill is consistent to the descriptions from the other songs chosen from album 2. In comparison to the other songs discussed from album 2, the overall "feel" and type of energy portrayed in Sommar och vinter is somewhat more reminiscent of album 3's overall feel.
3.6.1 Analysis Summary of the Swedish Songs

Much is also summarized throughout discussion of the two Swedish songs. Details apart, overall tendencies are noticed. An air of tradition pervades these two songs, as well as the rest of the Swedish numbers I heard.\(^{81}\) Commonplace, everyday tradition, such as that expressed in *Sommar och vinter*, is at least as important as historical tradition and celebration. Practicing these rituals provides comfort and order, which are underlying, yet clearly conveyed in *Sommar och vinter*. The mere act of singing in the native language of Swedish is in itself part of tradition. The Real Group reflects both kinds of tradition as it sings not only other Swedish composers’ work, but also its own.\(^{82}\) Pride and sentimental overtones are heard in *Bålåt* as *Sommar och vinter* has quite a reminiscent feel.

It would have been enlightening to further analyze a Swedish song from album 3; however, all the words are in English. According to group member Anders Jalkéus, this was done mainly to cater to the European and American markets.\(^{83}\)

My analysis of the Swedish songs differs from analyses of the first two in that I am forced to maintain more of an outsider’s perspective. By this, I mean that my living experience in Sweden is limited to a total of less than five years and Swedish is not my native language. I am best able to analyze (at a deeper level) the songs in my native language, English. Because of this apparent outsider situation, subtleties such as those noticed in the first two analyses are not as easily detected, if at all. In other words, I am not able to be as directly observant when approaching this analysis, as I am clearly an outside observer. Despite this, I have deemed it appropriate to include discussion and analysis of selected Swedish songs for the purpose of maintaining a balance and a well-rounded perspective in this thesis paper, regardless of the level of analysis development.

3.7 Analysis Summary of the Soprano Part

As biases were mentioned during the Introduction of this thesis, it is only prudent that the soprano’s development be summarized. A marked change was tracked with the soprano, Margareta Jalkéus, during the course of the three albums. Her vocal skill and diversity seemed to broaden and expand, becoming increasingly versatile as a consequence. This is not taking into account any possible changes made in the studio. (As stated previously, the latter two

\(^{81}\) Referring to tradition discussion in Introduction and in Reimer’s theories.

\(^{82}\) Though not an object of study, the group arranges a number of songs written by Povel Ramel, a classic and well-known Swedish composer of more light-hearted nature.

\(^{83}\) http://www.jazzzine.com/artists/realgroup.html
albums have had more studio work than the first.) In accordance to the first album, it seems as though Jalkéus uses more of a solo voice and the other four members use more choral voices. I’m sure the members were both conscientious and focused enough to realize this, so they took advantage of their best skills (which is a skill in itself). Jalkéus sings the majority of the solos during the album. At present, she has the ability to sing two octaves above middle c without the vowels overpowering the lyrics, which is unusual for a soprano.\footnote{Interview with Karlsson 2001-11-17.}

It is not destiny that one is stamped exclusively as either a “choral singer” or a “solo singer.” Guise remarks that voice students are commonly told they are either one or the other.\footnote{Guise 1999, Abstract.} He continues by stating, “one can derive an understanding of those parameters which can allow performers to develop the competencies necessary for performing in a group.”\footnote{Ibid, Abstract.}

3.8 The Applicability of Reimers’ Theories and Terms and in Connection to Eric Ericson

All “isms” within the Swedish a cappella tradition have affected The Real Group’s sound to some degree and on various levels. They are all interconnected in some way, as well. In reference to the first and most encompassing set of “isms,” the individual members of The Real Group have certainly experienced at least a few of these traditions, particularly Scholarism, Popularism and Amateurism. Every member of the group is raised and educated in Swedish schools, from elementary school to the university level. The religious portion of the members has been exposed to Popularism, as it is mainly connected to religious movements. However, since schools have maintained a close link with the Church, all the members have experienced Popularism to some degree. Amateurism, which is also linked to Scholarism, as stated in chapter 1.2, appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries and produced a plethora of Swedish music or “harmony” societies. Their repertoire was mostly unaccompanied. Real Group members have participated and gathered experience from outside choirs before they formed their own group.

The second set of “isms,” containing stylistic strata of the repertoire, occurred not only in Sweden, but also throughout the rest of the world, mainly in Europe. These strata are also present in The Real Group’s a cappella background but cannot be particularly pinpointed, and in either case, are not especially fruitful to this thesis.
The particular and descriptive third set of “isms” is the most identifiable within
The Real Group’s music. These properties certainly contribute to the Real Group’s present
sound and evolution of sound. They coincide with and indicate the quality of the sound more
than the description. In order to simplify my analysis and convey the clearest possible image,
Reimers’ terminology, his “isms” that is, were not listed in the description of the albums or in
the analysis of the selected songs. To do so would not only complicate the discussion, but
appear redundant, as well. The terms and components used in my descriptions and analysis
are the same terms used to define these “isms.”

In order to further illustrate my point, I will explain how The Real Group
demonstrates these “isms.”87 The group displays pure, accurate intonation, as well as
“unforced” voice production, which Reimer’s classifies as Pianissim. The group shows
straightness in tone, called non-vibratism. Aliquotism is accomplished through the group’s
ability to place distance between the individual personalities of the members in favour of the
choir. The group is unsurpassed in maintaining consistent and united positioning of
consonants, exemplifying Consentism. Precisionism is defined by temporal precision, which
the group displays time and time again. Each “ism” is beneficial to each other and dependant
upon on various levels. Evidence of these “isms” is more prominent in the group’s later
albums.

Peder Karlsson remarks that the group has reached such a professional level,
they can sing with an extremely high level of simultaneity (Precisionism).88 This is
particularly true during the modulation of overtones when vowels are changed during a
diphthong (Pianissim). Each member continually and actively listens at a high precision level
while singing. In doing this, they can adjust to each other’s timbre (Aliquotism). This active
listening is more “musical” than “intellectual.” By this, Karlsson means that the adjustments
are made intuitively. The outcome is that a high level of simultaneity is reached in regards to
these small phonetic structures in the music. This creates quite a powerful impact.

Karlsson continues his “intuitive” line of thought by describing his two-year
experience in Eric Ericson’s chamber choir at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. The
blend of the choir was strange in the beginning because the choir was mainly made up of
classical solo singers, and they proceeded to sing as they usually do. Karlsson explains that
Ericson was aware of this, but didn’t say anything. Instead, he booked a tour to five small

87 In reference to chapter 1.2.
88 The following four paragraphs directly refer to a personal interview with group member Peder Karlsson, done
churches in the middle of Sweden and the sound magically came together. I asked just exactly what it was that made the choir change. Karlsson answered me by relaying what happened the following year. One-third of the choir was new and the choir found itself in the same situation it was in at the beginning of the previous year. Ericson booked a five-week tour to various locations around the world. Karlsson continued to say that when the plane left, the choir really didn’t sound very good, but something had changed by the time they landed at their first destination. “Everybody kind of changed without anybody having to say anything.”

Karlsson explains that these solo singers suddenly took up less “choral space.” They slightly adjusted their manner of singing in order to better flow with the sound of the choir. They were able to do this without compromising their individual voice technique. It requires a balance, according to Karlsson. The parts of the choir dared to take initiative, but dared to blend in.

Karlsson admits that all the members of The Real Group grew up amidst this choral tradition that Reimers describes. The majority of the choirs were indeed of the a cappella nature, however, most of them were of more classical style. When they formed the group and decided to sing jazz, they were compelled to adopt a different kind of articulation than that which exists within the classical Swedish choir tradition. Jazz requires a more direct attack, without any type of delay.

Karlsson directed many words of praise towards Eric Ericson and spoke of Ericson’s influence on both a personal and group level. American Richard Sparks pays special attention to Eric Ericson while examining Reimers’ article in his book The Swedish Choral Miracle: Swedish A Cappella Music Since 1945. After summarizing Reimer’s six roots, he lists his own unique set, most significant in helping Swedish a cappella choral composition to flourish. Sparks’ six roots are also applicable to The Real Group’s background as they replicate many of Karlsson’s reflections.

They are as follows:

1. Sweden’s small population and centralization in Stockholm
2. The development of a unique choral instrument
3. An extremely close connection between conductors and composers
4. The high percentage of Swedish composers who have a direct experience with choral music

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89 Sparks 2000.
5. Unique opportunities to learn about and from the most significant musical developments outside of Sweden
6. Institutional support

Sparks states “each of these six elements contributes significantly to the environment which fostered so much high-level a cappella choral music.” He continues by expanding upon his six factors, using Eric Ericson as his focal point. The first factor is described under the title *Sweden’s Size and Centralization*. The most profound statement Sparks makes under this heading concerns Eric Ericson. Sparks accredits Ericson’s work as being one of the primary causes of growing interest in chamber choirs singing mainly a cappella repertoire as well as “the stimulation of composers to write for the a cappella idiom in Sweden.”

Sparks also emphasizes that because of Sweden’s small size and centralization, most potential and flowering musicians went to Stockholm to study, at least up until the early 70’s. The Real Group is, in large, educated in Stockholm. He also claims that Stockholm is the cultural center of Sweden and supplies such examples as: Swedish Radio, the Royal Academy of Music and Royal Opera, among others. This is a logical assessment when viewing Sweden’s small size and population. One third of the inhabitants live in its three largest cities, Stockholm being largest with 1.6 million. The capital measures up to be “culturally dense.”

Sparks continues his discussion of Ericson under the next title *Developing the Choral Instrument*. Sparks states “Ericson has always maintained that the repertoire shaped the sound and the abilities of the choir.” He exemplifies further by using Ingvar Lidholm’s *Laudi* of 1947. The notation in the score called for “full voice, as loud as possible without forcing.” Ericson remembers that they spent many months on this piece, as it demanded skill with new and difficult intervals. His balance of repertoire differed from that of other European radio choirs in that he insisted not less than 80% of the choir’s repertoire be a cappella. Sparks maintains that his insistence is one of the main factors in the development of an incredibly flexible and skilled a cappella ensemble.

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90 Ibid, p. 20.
91 Ibid.
93 Ibid, p. 21.
95 Sparks conducted personal interviews with Ericson, 24 July 1990 and 25 September 1996. 
96 Sparks 2000, p. 21.
Karlsson vividly recalls Ericson’s manner of rehearsal in connection to a cappella:

I’ve watched him carefully, and we’ve done many workshops with him. Many conductors have the sheet music in their hand they talk about what’s going to happen. “We have crescendo here and forte here . . .” etc., but he doesn’t do that. He plays the music through on the piano, so everybody gets used to the intonation by listening to the piano. In the beginning of the practice stage, he might say, “Could you sing more quietly, please, so you can hear the piano?” When he plays the piano, he doesn’t play the score. He doesn’t play in the same range as the singers sing. He plays on or two octaves higher . . . and improvises, because then what he plays doesn’t interfere with the actual frequencies that the singers produce. Shows the phrasing. Excellent piano player. He plays the piano in a range that makes it very easy, actually to intonate. He gets the phrasing and intonation automatically. He’s always open to impulses from the singers. He knows the music, of course, but he’s not a dictator and is happy to do something with the singers’ suggestions.

If the singers are able to get a perfect spectrum of frequencies, the level of performance is lifted several notches. Ericson’s conducting and rehearsal methods have certainly been an example for other groups and conductors. Sparks concludes his second section by stating that the aforementioned laudi piece is still used today to audition young people for the Chamber Choir at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. This demonstrates to what significant degree the choral instrument has been honed.

In reference to Sparks’ third and fourth roots, Karlsson admitted that the group has recently worked with Ericsson. In fact, he has helped the members to produce an album exclusively consisting of Swedish choir music. Karlsson explains their ambition was to sing these century-old songs with a more natural Swedish pronunciation, as they would pronounce the words (such as replacing “dig” with “dej.”) Ericson was not only completely open for adjustments in pronunciation, but adjustments in phrasing, as well. These changes were made to fit The Real Group’s natural sound and style.

The fifth heading in Sparks’ list of factors is Influences from Outside Sweden. Because of centralization and general location, Stockholm has been a crossroads where a wide variety of composers and musicians met, present their ideas and have their works performed. Many came to Stockholm and held seminars at the college, providing the students with a wide access of composers and musicians.
During chapter 3, I was unable to base my method of analysis on one single process, or on any pre-fabricated group of sound components. It was necessary to formulate my own set of components using several different sources, and to organize a tailored method of analysis in order to provide the most fruitful results.

As for the main and most meaningful conclusions sought after in this thesis, I have concluded that The Real Group’s evolution of sound is based mainly on vocal maturity, a steadily increasing skill, a need for musical growth and expansion, and a change in personal maturity and perspective. I heard the most marked vocal change in the voice of soprano Margareta Jalkéus.

Swedish a cappella tradition has clearly affected The Real Group, and the singers display Reimer’s third set of “isms” to show it. The Real Group also reflects Sparks’ theories about the tradition.

The following chapter is necessary, as it provides an enlightening and valuable firsthand account of the influences affecting The Real Group’s sound.
4. The Real Group: Evolution of Performance and Recording Techniques

The Real Group’s constant need for vocal development and change is directly reflected in its manner of performance and recording techniques. The following chapter gives personal accounts within both of these areas and includes other factors that have affected these techniques. For instance, due to the group’s success, there is now more money available for experimentation in sound applications and/or methods. The group’s producer/sound technician introduces additional influence. Supplementary explanations concerning The Real Group’s evolution of sound are also offered and discussed throughout the course of the interview and are incorporated in this chapter.

4.1 Live versus Studio

During the interview, I brought up the subject of singing live versus singing in the studio. Karlsson replied that, in the beginning, the group sang more after the manner of a choir. Because they did this, the basses sang with a completely different sound than one can produce with a microphone. At that time they had no plans to become a professional group. However, the number of booked performances increased, as well as the size of the audience. They determined that microphones were necessary, and in turn, this changed the way they wrote their arrangements. The bass vocals could be used in a totally different way.

As long as they have been together, The Real Group’s policy during live performances has been to not change the sound coming from the speakers. They keep it at a straight frequency with maybe a touch of reverb. Because room acoustics differ from one performance hall to the next, the group uses an equalizer so certain frequencies won’t dominate. Using microphones changed the sound and presented the group with new musical possibilities. The overtone-rich plosives, as well as differences in “airiness” could now be heard. This naturally led to new experimentation with various sound techniques and discoveries. Karlsson explains a few technical theories in singing instrumentally oriented lines. “A tone consists of a transient, as sustain and a decay. That transient can be sharp or soft. If soft is needed, use an “mm” or “oo” instead of a consonant. For a sharp transient, use a

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97 The majority of chapter 4 is based on experiences personally relayed by Real Group member, Peder Karlsson.
“t” or “d.” If you want a soft decay, add an “m” or an “n” on the end.” He provided me with a whole list of effects and added that the group does not write out instrumental syllables when composing arrangements. “We just listen to each other and then find a way of singing the line, which is more musical.”

During concerts, the group constantly strives to remain flexible and spontaneous, changing the sound in a musical, unforced way. “We never sang a sound just because we like that sound. It’s always in regard to the song. Maybe that’s one of the reasons we sing in so many styles because we become motivated to do a lot of sounds.”

The group’s first two albums were recorded as if the group was singing live. When the time came to record the third album, Röster, they realized that live performance is one thing, but a record is something completely different. Karlsson explains, “It’s so meaningless to have a purist attitude with recordings and only sing how it’s done live. Why not use an effect? Why not do overdub? All those opportunities are available in the studio, so why not do something musically with it?” Since this turning point, the group has continued to explore sound possibilities only available in the studio.

As for group acoustics, Karlsson explains that it doesn’t matter where the members position themselves in relation to each other. Because of in-ear monitors, the members are able to move around freely without affecting group acoustics or dependence on hearing the others acoustically.

4.1.1 Change in Audience; Change in Sound?
I commented to Karlsson that in the beginning of the group’s career, it sang a lot of jazz arrangements, but seemed to move away from that style. He replied that the group still sings quite a bit of jazz during live performances, but admitted to not having recorded a jazz album for quite some time. “Commonly Unique was a more pop-oriented record, but that doesn’t mean that we aren’t going to record jazz music.”

Despite accusations, Karlsson insisted the group has not changed its sound to cater to the appeal of the larger, more general audience it has attracted. The change has happened naturally and has been spurred by the use of microphones. “Maybe that’s one of the reasons we sing in so many styles. We become motivated to do a lot of sounds.” That goes for both live performances and studio work. The group decided to add the multitude of special effects in pop-oriented Commonly Unique because it belongs to the genre. “It’s like asking a
violin player why he uses a bow. Everybody who’s into pop uses compressors and distortion pedals and wah-wah effects, and we do it too. It’s a part of that music.” Of course, even Karlsson admitted there exists the matter of definition whether this album is a cappella or not.

4.2 Recording Studio Discoveries

As mentioned above, The Real Group’s first two albums, Debut and Nothing But The Real Group, were recordings of the group’s arrangements as they sang them live. The first recording was done standing in a half-circle with just two microphones. Soloists took a step closer to the microphones when it was their turn. Each member had a microphone and a pair of earphones while recording the second album. Karlsson recalled it as a terrible experience because, with such limited experience in the studio, they left both the earpieces on and stuck to the same mikes. The members couldn’t hear their own natural voice (from mouth to ear.) They could only hear the sound from the headphones. Hearing all parts at the same levels, the individual could not distinguish his/her own voice. Without thinking, they subconsciously sang sharper to at least hear the overtones, which in turn was bad for the sound of the album.

The group had learned through trial and error and learned to take of one of the earpieces from the third album on. Each member also has an individual mixer to be able to hear themselves a little louder in the headphones. The group also started dividing up recordings, not recording all five members at the same time. This was also made necessary by the fact that the group began experimenting with the sound effects available in the studio.

With Commonly Unique, the group might have up to 50 tracks on a song. Many of the sounds, especially the vocal percussion, was fed into a sampler and played on a midi keyboard. “What we do with percussive tracks on records nowadays is a combination of sampled tracks to have consistency in the sound, but then we also add some live.” Karlsson explained that if there were only machines, then it becomes too machine-like. “But there’s nothing wrong with a machine.”

When asked what the other members think of all the special effects, Karlsson replies that he finds it to be a lot of fun. When they started the recording process of Commonly Unique, soprano Jalkéus was not happy with the direction the group was going. By the time the album was finished, she was quite satisfied, along with the other group members.

4.2.1 Producer Influence

Jan Appelholm plays the role of both a sound engineer and a producer. The group has worked with him for over 12 years and he managed the sound for all of the group’s live performances
since 1989. His responsibilities have increased as the size of production and audience has
grown. With up to 2000 or more people in the audience, it is necessary to have a light
engineer and a whole stage production.

In the studio, he listens from a technical point of view more than anybody else,
but his ears are more sensitive to timbre. With very high standards, he can hear if one
recording on a track of 50 is not going to work in the final mix. He can have performance
suggestions and input on the arrangements, too. However, a balance exists between the group
and Appelholm who decides on the final sound while recording.

Appelholm’s role as a producer has never really changed. As for sound
production, the group members had all taken a turn at the soundboard during recording
sessions. However, with Commonly Unique, the group changed its philosophy and turned the
role of sound engineer completely over to Appelholm.

“He (Appelholm) knows us better than we know ourselves. He’s more like a
member of the group. Sound quality is very important for what we do. And he’s an important
part of that.”

4.3 Sound System Specifications

Earlier in their career, The Real Group used Milab microphones and sound system. However,
they adopted new equipment at the beginning of the 1990’s. The group has employed the use
of Allba Ljud/AKG. For live performances, the AKG wms300 wireless microphone-system is
used, as well as AKG IVM-1 in-ear monitors. While in the studio the group uses a wide array
of microphones. The most common are: ADG C-12 VR, ADG 414, AKG solid tube and AKG c 3000.

According to Jan Appelholm, the group’s sound technician, the microphones
posses an excellent response, which more than handles all vocal nuances.98 “With this type of
microphone system, the group has never had any transmission problems despite the varied
concert locations. So far, AKG’s system has been totally dependable and free of any
problems.” 99 Such a professional system allows The Real Group to expand their experimental
and professional development.

Karlsson added that the in-ear monitors have improved during the last 10 years.
They used to be very noisy, but the present AKG system has very low noise.

"Mikrofonernas utmärkt respons passar mer än väl in på alla vokal nyanser. Vi har aldrig haft några överföringsproblem trots olika förhållanden på våra konsertlokaler. AKG’s system jobbar absolut problemfritt och pålitligt." Ibid.
5. **Summary and Outlook**

Mårten Nilsson reiterates during the final paragraph of his D-level thesis paper, “As for now, one must create his or her own method both based on his/her purpose and the music; there exists no applicable, clear-cut pattern (as does for the analysis of art music).”\(^{100}\) This has been my course of action as I realized the necessity of self-formulating my six areas of components and creating my own method of analysis in adherence to my theme.

In tracking The Real Group’s sound transformation, I have searched for what is responsible for the cause of this change. I have studied and deduced the following:

The members of The Real Group have all, on some level, been affected by *The Swedish A Cappella Tradition*, as discussed by Lennart Reimers and Richard Sparks and as confirmed by member Peder Karlsson. The members continue to be affected today as they work with the driving figure of the Swedish A Cappella movement, Eric Ericson.

My discussion of the *sound* concept in relation to Brolinson and Larsen’s theories are as equally applicable to jazz as to rock and pop. The significance of various components varies greatly within the three areas, unlike traditional art music.

When formulating my six areas of sound components, I used those suggested by Reimers, Fagius, Brolinson and Larsen, as well as my own. These included: Vocal skill, Choice of repertoire, Diction, Effects processing, Overall “feel” and Text content. I chose to study three categories of songs from the past three decades that gave the best overall impression of sound transformation: Ballads, Upbeat/fast tempo songs and Swedish songs.

Using these six areas of components within the three categories of songs, I have concluded the following:

**Vocal skill.** After 17 years of singing together, the group has steadily refined both personal and group vocal skill. Each member is thoroughly familiar with the others’ skills in terms of technique, vocal texture/timbre, vocal maturity, intonation, as well as the area of *Diction*, and is therefore able to coincide with and produce precision sound. This is something only extended years of experience together can create. All of the components under *Vocal skill* have been influenced by both emotional maturity and landmark life experiences, such as raising children. Most affected is vocal maturity.

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\(^{100}\) "Än så länge gäller, att man måste skapa sin egen metod utifrån sitt syfte och musiken; det finns inga färdiga mallar att tillämpa.” Nilsson 1999, p. 33.
The development of Choice of repertoire and Effects processing can go hand in hand, as their transformation is based on similar circumstances: a natural development based on the members' desire to continually expand their repertoire. As the group has expanded to the area of Pop, Effects processing has appeared as an appropriate necessity to fit with the genre. (As for my purist attitude, I feel the group can go without the extra Effects processing, in spite of the genre being sung. This is especially true if the group wishes to continue to call themselves a cappella.) The use of microphones and increased financial ability has also affected these two areas.

Because of heightened and incredibly honed vocal skill, the group is more able to express how they’ve been affected by life changes. This is expressed through both Overall “feel” and Text content. Of the six areas, these two reveal the souls and present development of the group members, abstractly put. We can conclude that transformation of life is directly linked to the group’s transformation of sound.

The Real Group has grown and developed with their sound, continually expanding and discovering new horizons. As previously stated during this thesis, the process of one event cannot be fully existent without the other. It is more of a cycle than a domino effect. I’m sure anyone else who studies music outside of the art music realm will also find this to be true.

5.1 Continuing Success

Why is the Real Group such an appropriate object of study? What makes the Real Group both successful and steadfast? Their performances have been consistent and unwavering for the past 17 years, providing an excellent opportunity for growth and development; that is, to produce and experience a continual transformation of sound.

There are certainly a number of factors that contribute to their stability and dedication as a group. Statistically speaking, they reap the benefits of both a small group and a middle-sized group, by maintaining a total of 5 members. According to Paul Guise’s findings, “middle-sized groups (5-12 members) tend to make more accurate decisions than groups outside that size range [as] small groups (2-5 members) are better able to achieve consensus than large groups [11 or more members].”\(^\text{101}\) Guise adds that groups containing 4-5 members, “foster greater member satisfaction than middle-sized or large groups.”

\(^\text{101}\) Guise 1999, p.7.
With these statistically beneficial numbers, it is no wonder that many other successful a cappella groups contain 4-5 members. These include, among others, those mentioned in chapter 2.1: *The Hi-Lo’s* (4 members, debuted 1957), *The Manhattan Transfer* (4 members, debuted 1975), *The Nylons* (4 members, debuted 1981), *Rockapella* (5 members, formed 1986), *Zap Mama* (5 members, debuted 1993), *Extempo* (5 members, debuted 1995), and *Toxic Audio* (5 members, debuted 2000).  

From his studies, Guise has also found that successful members of a group must possess or develop a number of character traits. These include: "group decision-making, cultivating interpersonal relationships and balancing group conformity with the need for innovation and individual approaches." In an interview conducted by *pm kompetens*, Anders Edenroth resonates Guise’s findings when comparing the group to a successful business, which in essence, it is. The manner in which they have worked has proved to be extremely successful for them. Edenroth concludes the interview by expressing that he can conceive the possibility of The Real Group thriving and surviving for another 15 or 30 years, “så länge jag kan fortsätta att utvecklas och mögna som artist och människa.” From this we can conclude that the future Real Group may be as an equally excellent object of study as it currently is, if not more so.

Towards the end of 2001, The Real Group released a compilation album *Allt Det Bästa. The Real Group*. Although none of the tracks is a new composition, five of them were re-recorded during 2001. It would have been enlightening to compare the recent recording of *Lil’ Darlin’* with the recording from the group’s first album. This was not possible due to time constraints and the fact that the majority of my analysis was already complete.

5.2 Predictions in Further Sound Development of A Cappella

This brings us to the future and continuing sound development of a cappella itself. As for Swedish a cappella, this seemingly strong tradition will most likely continue as long as Sweden exists. In reference to a cappella groups that are connected to the pop realm, future development is somewhat less predictable.

It is my belief that jazz/pop a cappella groups based in Sweden are more likely to be successful than those of the same sort in larger countries, or in those countries where music is not as fundamental and supported as in Sweden. There have existed a number of

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104 http://www.kompetensgruppen.se/artiklar1.2-99.htm
excellent a cappella groups that have attempted to take the professional step, but have disappeared due to competition and lack of financial support/gain. This continues to be so today. There might not be as many resources available to groups in other countries as there have been in Sweden, such as federal subsidies or tuition-free universities and colleges. The Real Group received both special attention and instruction (and therefore funding) at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm.

Financial support or not, it is evident that groups will continue to harmonize and create purely vocal music. It is, after all, the nature of human behavior, despite social or cultural situations. *How* the sound will develop is mostly dependant upon future trends.

105 "[... ] as long as I can continue to develop and mature as both an artist and a person."
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