

A beat that goes straight to the floor

Voices on the music and legacy of Calle Jularbo

Daniel Fredriksson

Abstract

This article examines how musical value is ascribed to the legendary Swedish accordionist Calle Jularbo's music in contemporary discourse. Based on responses to a web survey conducted by the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research, it analyses how Jularbo's music is described and evaluated by listeners. Drawing on a distinction between symbolic, aesthetic, and use values, the article explores how these dimensions are expressed in the responses.

The analysis focuses on a survey question asking why Jularbo was so popular and identifies four main areas: nostalgia, sentimentality, and authenticity; mediatisation and innovation; compositions; and danceability and rhythm. Descriptions of rhythm and swing are particularly prominent, detailed, and precise, and are repeatedly emphasised as central to Jularbo's playing and its relation to listening and dance. The responses also show how the descriptions draw on recurring ways of talking about his playing across different contexts.

The article concludes that descriptions of Jularbo's music repeatedly return to rhythm and swing while encompassing melodic expression, nostalgic associations, narrative formulations, and practices of listening and dance. Musical value in these descriptions is constructed and conveyed through recurring formulations that circulate between listeners, media, and memory.

Daniel Fredriksson

E-post: dfr@du.se

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1479-6260>

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Key words: Jularbo, accordion, rhythm, survey, Sweden, dance music.

Calle Jularbo drömde om Claude Debussy,
om Beethoven, Bach och Bizet.

”Aldrig någonsin blir jag så bra som ni”

sörjde Jularbo, fylld av förtret.

Men så tänkte han:

”Jäklar, det skiter jag i”

Och så skrev han en lättsam och käck melodi –

ganska många blev glada för det.

Calle Jularbo dreamt of Claude Debussy,
of Beethoven, Bach, and Bizet.
“I will never be as good as you”.
Jularbo mourned, filled with regret.
But then he thought:
“Dammit, I don't give a shit!”
And so he wrote a light-hearted, cheerful tune –
quite a few people were happy about it.¹

This article presents and analyses an online survey conducted as part of the research project “Calle Jularbo och Gammeldansen: Musik, Nätverk, Mediatisering” (Calle Jularbo and the Gammeldans: Music, Networks, Mediatization) in collaboration with Svenskt visarkiv (Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research) 2023. The article focuses explicitly on those parts of the material that concern the reception of the musician and composer Calle Jularbo and his music, in light of his musical achievements and celebrity.

Calle Jularbo (1893–1966), born Karl Karlsson in Östanbyn outside Avesta in Dalarna, was one of Sweden's most celebrated musicians of the twentieth century. Growing up as one of eleven siblings in a family of *resande*², he became rooted in local musical traditions while emerging within the rapidly

1. Poem ascribed to “Holmberg” (possibly a pseudonym for Alf Henriksson), recited by Lena Jularbo-Brauner, Ransäter 2018. Video recording published on YouTube by Jan Olsson (2023). Translated by the author.
2. *Resande* is the term for a Swedish Romani group, whose ancestors have lived in the country since at least the 1500s and whose language and culture have developed within a longstanding Swedish context (cf. travellers) (Casinge 2021; Vilå-Valls et al. 2023; Minoritet.se 2021).



Fig. 1. Carl Jularbo performing in Kalmar on 3 April 1965, one year before his death. Photo: Allan Bernving/Kalmar County Museum. Public Domain Mark.

expanding infrastructures of early popular entertainment. From performing at neighbourhood dances as a child prodigy to touring with a renowned soirée company, accompanying silent films, and excelling in accordion competitions, he established himself early as a prominent figure in Swedish musical life. Over the course of his long career, he recorded more than 1 500 gramophone discs for labels such as Pathé, HMV, Odéon, Sonora, and Cupol, achieving his first major success with the waltz “Livet i finnskogarna”. His career unfolded in close interaction with the developing national and international music industry, and through his extensive touring and prolific recording activity he became one of the most widely recognized Swedish musicians of his time. Jularbo was once an extremely well-known figure in Sweden and Norway, but also in Finland, Germany and USA (Burlin et al. 2024). When he was inducted into the Swedish Music Hall of Fame in 2017, he was celebrated as a pioneer and a legend, whose influence predated the very emergence of the concepts of rock and pop stardom (Burlin et al. 2024:144).

Jularbo was active in the musical genre that is usually referred to as *gammeldans* or old-time dance music. *Gammeldans* is the present-day term for the popular social dance music tradition that developed in Sweden during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was the mainstream popular dance of its time, closely affiliated with new media such as radio and gramophone recordings, as well as the emergence of *folkparker* (Swedish-style people's parks, community-owned outdoor venues for popular entertainment, music, and social events). It included dance-tunes such as the waltz, schottische, and polka. The music centred around the accordion, an instrument on which Jularbo was a virtuoso.

In a survey carried out by Nordiska museet 2003, respondents were asked to share their thoughts and feelings about the accordion and its music. Bohman (2007:167) describes the respondents' statements in terms of the organising concepts *symbolism*, *aesthetics*, and *use*.³ As a symbol, the accordion is associated with nostalgia, a bygone era, and Swedish “folksiness” (cf. Fredriksson 2023), often linked to summer, barn dances, and older generations. Aesthetically, the music is described as cheerful, accessible, and danceable, but rarely as artistically advanced, and with low status in relation to other musical genres. In terms of use, the accordion is described as an instrument for social contexts, mainly dances and parties. Bohman shows that the accordion is not simply a musical instrument but also a symbol of community and tradition, while its status and use have changed over time. A statement typical of the responses reads:

When I think of accordion music today, it is mainly in connection with dancing on piers and outdoor parties in the countryside.
(Nordiska museet 2003, in Bohman 2007:179)⁴

From this description of the accordion as an instrument, it is easy to get the impression that Calle Jularbo, as the best-known and most idolised accordionist in Swedish history, was appreciated on precisely these grounds: that his music spread joy through its simplicity and naturalness, and through its connection to qualities and ideas of idyll and of nostalgia. It is conceiv-

3. These are translations of the original Swedish terms *symbolik*, *estetik*, and *bruk* (Bohman 2007). All translations from Swedish to English in this text are the author's.

4. “När jag idag tänker på drag-spelsmusik är det framför allt i samband med dans på bryggor och fester utomhus på landet” (Nordiska museet 2003, in Bohman 2007:179).

able that he would be associated primarily with ordinary people and community rather than individual stardom; that he would be deeply rooted in social contexts such as barn dances and communal festivities rather than in recordings and media and that he would be seen as part of a tradition rather than as an innovative artist.

Indeed, such descriptions of Jularbo can be found in, for example, the opening poem recited by Jularbo's granddaughter Lena Jularbo-Brauner. At the same time he was a big star with a very individual luminosity. Many journalistic and biographical texts about Jularbo emphasise his special playing style as his main strength, rather than the symbolic values mentioned. A kind of discrepancy between nostalgia and virtuosity can be sensed here, which raises the discussion about how we value music.

In this article, I want to explore how musical expressions and artistic practices are understood, valued, and retold through listeners' descriptions as reported in the surveys. By analysing the thematic patterns, narrative structures, and aesthetic categories that emerge in the descriptions, the study sheds light on the cultural and medial mechanisms that influence perceptions of musical authenticity, genre affiliation, and aesthetic value. The study thus aims to examine how discourse on musical practices are shaped and renegotiated in relation to changing social, technological, and historical contexts. The main research questions are:

How is Jularbo's music ascribed symbolic, aesthetic, and use values in the responses to the survey?

This includes examining the extent to which the music is understood as a bearer of different types of symbolic values, such as tradition and identity, how its aesthetic qualities are perceived in relation to genre affiliation and virtuosity, and how its use values are linked to social and cultural contexts.

How are notions of musical value constructed and conveyed in descriptions of Calle Jularbo's music?

This involves identifying themes that emerge in the survey responses, analysing how these are used to justify and structure perceptions of his musical significance, and exploring how such notions are mediated and circulated through broader discourses about Jularbo in the media and popular culture.

Web survey and methodological discussion

In a Nordic ethnological context, questionnaire-based surveys constitute a long-standing archival method for collecting distributed qualitative accounts, used collaboratively between academic researchers and cultural-history archives (Hagström & Marander-Eklund 2005). The web survey that constitutes the main material in the study was conducted by Svenskt visarkiv at the initiative of the research project "Calle Jularbo and the Gammeldans: Music, Networks, Mediatisation." The ambition was to collect qualitative

data based on people's recollections of Calle Jularbo. The survey was prompted by the understanding that fewer people in today's society have a clear relationship to Jularbo, the accordion, and the musical genre with which he is associated (Ronström 2023:107; Lundberg, Malm & Ronström 2003:196). In addition to providing some basic information about their relationship to *gammeldans* and the accordion, respondents were therefore asked to share their memories of Jularbo.⁵

The survey could be completed by following a link to an external survey tool provided by Svenskt visarkiv. It was distributed through digital channels within music and dance communities and remained open between November 2022 and July 2023. In total, 89 responses were received, ranging from short comments to lengthy, highly personal accounts. Most responses were in Swedish, and one in Norwegian. The respondents largely represented individuals with strong ties to musical practice: approximately half described themselves as accordion players or folk dancers, many of whom had long-term experience or were active in organised settings of music and dance. Among those who reported their occupation were music teachers, folk musicians, and other professional musicians, but also people with entirely different professional backgrounds who nevertheless had experience of *gammeldans*, accordion music, or folk-music environments. As a result, the material is characterised by a high degree of practical experience within the field. This shapes which aspects of the music are emphasised in the responses, particularly details relating to playing style, rhythm, and dance functionality.

The question that received the most detailed responses and that prompted the questions in this article was formulated as follows:

Why do you think Calle Jularbo's music was so popular? Was there something special about his playing that touched you or made it extra danceable? What do you think of his music? What made his music good or bad? Please try to describe in as much detail as possible. (Svenskt visarkiv 2023b, Appendix)⁶

The responses to this question form the basis of this article and the thematic analysis. The ambition has been to identify and categorise recurring patterns in the questionnaire responses (Braun & Clarke 2006) and discuss them in relation to a wide range of supplementary material, such as statements from newspaper articles and films, author-conducted interviews, previous research, and other contextual material. Some of the responses have been reproduced here in the article.⁷

Analysing such material means tackling a number of methodological problems. The main material analysed is based on survey responses from living people, which means that the perspectives are retrospective and filtered through contemporary experiences, values, and contexts. Only a few of the respondents heard Jularbo live or met him, and a long time has passed since they did. I am, therefore, not analysing the actual reasons for Jularbo's popularity during his lifetime, but rather the ways in which people

5. The survey was shared on several different platforms, among them Facebook (Svenskt visarkiv 2023a).
6. "Varför tror du Calle Jularbos musik var så populär? Var det något speciellt med hans spel som berörde eller gjorde den extra dansant? Vad tycker du själv om hans musik? Vad gjorde hans musik bra eller dålig? Försök gärna beskriva så detaljerat som möjligt."
7. The author has taken the liberty of correcting the language in some responses quoted in the article. Responses written in languages other than Swedish have been translated by the author, and, in a next step, all responses have been translated into English.

today remember, value, and talk about his musical work. Thus, the material does not necessarily reflect the values of Jularbo's own time, but rather his significance as perceived in the present. To maintain analytical clarity, contemporary retrospective accounts in the survey are kept distinct from earlier written and media sources, which are used only as contextual complements.

There is also a selectivity in terms of who has participated – those who received the questionnaire and were motivated to answer it are probably people with a positive relationship to and keen interest in Jularbo and/or *gammeldans*, which means that critical perspectives or alternative voices are missing. In this material, two main interpretative orientations are discernible: one in which Jularbo is perceived to be a specific, exceptional individual among accordionists, and another in which he is understood more generally as a representative of accordion music and its associated social and emotional meanings. The distinction likely reflects the respondents' varying degrees of personal or musical investment and is considered throughout the analysis. This distinction further illustrates that notions of musical value are relational and context-dependent, a point emphasised by Frith (1996:18), who argues that musical value is always created in an ongoing social and historical process rather than something fixed or objective. Thus, these survey responses should be evaluated in relation to Jularbo's musical and artistic work and legacy.

The article draws on discourse analysis in a pragmatic sense. While not following a single codified method, the approach is informed by broader discourse-theoretical perspectives (Laclau & Mouffe 1985; Glynos & Howarth 2007), which guide the analysis toward how meanings and evaluations are constructed and circulated. The thematic coding of responses serves as an entry point, and these themes are then interpreted with sensitivity to how recurring formulations draw on wider discursive patterns surrounding Jularbo's music. In this way, the study combines inductive thematic analysis with a discourse-analytic orientation to how notions of musical value are articulated and reproduced across contexts. The analysis combined manual coding and the exploratory use of large language models (ChatGPT and CoPilot) to assist in the categorisation of the anonymised data. Although the tools enabled faster initial sorting, it also generated false responses ("hallucinations")⁸, which had to be carefully identified and manually removed. As Braun & Clarke (2006:7) emphasise, themes do not simply "emerge" from the material, and the analysis must always involve subjectivity. Thus, even if the process was AI-assisted, it mainly comprised iterative validation, manual correction and categorisation, which allowed me to engage with the material in ways I found analytically productive. While a full discussion lies beyond the scope of this article, working with AI in this process raised an interesting consideration. This way of working shows that prompting can be an analytical act in the same way that *transcription* is an important step in analysing interview material (Klein 1990) and that *fieldnotes* are crucial for understanding one's experience of fieldwork (Barz & Cooley 2008:217).

8. As an example, a sentence which the LLM (Large Language Model) hallucinated was: "Jularbo's accordion playing is pure folk music – and it's got that special swing."

Why was Calle Jularbo's music so popular?

That there is no single answer to why Jularbo was so popular is reflected in the survey responses. The vast majority emphasise danceability, rhythm, and tempo as the main reasons for Calle Jularbo's popularity, describing his music as swinging, energetic, and irresistible to dance to. Another prominent category is that of nostalgia, sentimentality, and authenticity, his music evoking strong emotions and memories of a bygone era, perhaps of growing up, family, or special moments. Many responses also emphasise his compositions and the fact that he composed so many songs that have become immortal evergreens as a key factor. For some, his importance is more a matter of genre and innovation, where he not only preserved a tradition but also developed accordion music through his playing and arranging. Innovation and mediatisation also play a role in some responses. Some suggest that his popularity resulted from the distribution of his music through records and radio. Overall, the responses show a broad picture of why Jularbo became so popular, but it is clear that danceability and rhythm are by far the most emphasised factors.

Based on these categorisations, the analysis proceeds through several interconnected themes. It begins with nostalgia, sentimentality, and authenticity, followed by an examination of mediatisation and innovation. I then turn to compositions before addressing respondents' descriptions of danceability, rhythmic articulation, and what is often referred to as the "Jularbo swing." A subsequent section on mediated discourse considers how recurring formulations circulate across interviews, media representations, and listener narratives. The article concludes with a synthesising discussion that returns to Bohman's framework and explores additional ways of understanding narratives surrounding Jularbo's fame.

A feeling that goes straight into your body

Imagine a cool summer evening in the countryside. You take in the scents, sense the room. You hear the tones of an accordion – Calle Jularbo's. That's where I want to go, where I want to be part of it, where I have a part of my musical heart.^{9,10}

Three clear and related categories that emerge in the material concern *sentimentality*, *nostalgia*, and *authenticity*. The music "speaks to your heart directly"¹¹ with "a feeling that goes straight into your body"¹² as two of the statements read. In contemporary discourse, Jularbo's music is often described as sentimental by both admirers and critics. This applies not only to Jularbo, but also to *gammeldans* and the accordion in general, where both representatives of educated art music scene and the emerging folk music movement described the accordion as simple and unsophisticated. Among accordionists, Jularbo seemed to have been seen as less refined and more clearly rooted in the popular sentiment: in Bo Gäfvert's book on Swedish accordionists, he is described as "the people's accordionist" ("*folkets dragspelare*") in contrast to Ragnar Sundqvist, who is more clearly described as



Fig. 2. Concert poster advertising Carl Jularbo as "The King of Accordionists," Örebro Concert Hall, 1948. Photo: Örebro Stadsarkiv. CC BY.

9. "Tänk en sval sommarkväll på landet. Du känner dofterna, förnimmer rummet du hör dragspelstoner, Calle Jularbos, ditt [sic] vill jag, där vill jag vara med, där har jag en del av mitt musikhjärta." (Svenskt visarkiv 2023b: #38).
10. For readability, the full reference (Svenskt visarkiv 2023b) is only written out the first time; the following quotes will only include the informants' reference number.
11. "Den talar till ditt hjärta direkt" (#38)
12. "En känsla som går rakt in i kroppen" (#23)

a virtuoso: “the accordionist’s accordionist” (“dragspelarnas dragspelare”, Gäfvert 2006:125).

Toivo Burlin has examined sentimentality in a few Jularbo tunes that have been set to lyrics (Burlin 2025). Sentimentality is described by Solomon (1990:310) as the display of overly “tender” emotions, as emotional excess or weakness, as a form of self-indulgent emotionality, or as the expression of emotions judged to be “false” or “fake”. This can be heard in the vocal performance of the male crooners such as Sven-Olof Sandberg (1905–1974), in the lyrics by Anna Myrberg (pseud. Svarta Masken, 1878–1931) and Peter Himmelstrand (1936–1999), and in how certain melodies shift between major and minor. But Solomon also links sentimentality intimately with feelings of *nostalgia* (Solomon 1990:321). Nostalgic longing recurs in some of the survey material, and there are several voices that emphasise Jularbo’s connection to *the past* as an important factor. However, *place* also seems to be a prominent aspect. The respondent whose statement opens the chapter continues:

I think that in the melodic language, which for [me] is Nordic, there is an inbuilt recognition factor, a nostalgia that cannot, of course, be touched, but it is there.¹³

As Johannisson notes, longing for place, in the form of clinical homesickness, was what the term nostalgia originally connoted. Only later was this meaning expanded to include a temporal dimension as well (2001:28). The music is perceived as sounding Nordic, and for the survey respondent, that creates a nostalgic feeling, which is described here as positive. It should be mentioned that in the statements that make up our material here, there is otherwise no mention of swedishness or any other type of connection to nationalistic ideas linked to Jularbo. At the same time, it is noteworthy that Jularbo’s background in a family of *resande* does not appear in the material. This silence does not in itself allow for conclusions about respondents’ attitudes, but it highlights the uneven circulation of Jularbo’s biographical elements. In contrast to the emphasis on musical qualities, sentimentality and place, his minority background does not feature as a meaningful interpretative resource in the respondents’ accounts.

Instead, it is the places that are highlighted in the material, not least the dance floor, and also other geographical places that had come to be associated with Jularbo’s fame. One of the responses describes how the village Jularbo (with which his family was closely associated) and especially the river Avestaforsen and the community hall have been imbued with a special atmosphere or feeling:

It is impossible to grow up in Avesta and Skogsbo without being confronted with Jularbo. Singing “Avestaforsens brus” was a given every day (twice) that I cycled across Avestaforsen. Having a dance rehearsal in the community hall in Jularbo had a special atmosphere – even when not a single Jularbo song was played.¹⁴

Sverker Hylltén-Cavallius (2014) has used the concept *musical wormholes* to

13. “Tror att i melodispråket som för [mig?] är nordiskt finns en inbyggd [sic] igenkänningsfaktor, en nostalgi som såklart inte går att ta på men den finns där” (#38)

14. “Omöjligt att växa upp i Avesta och Skogsbo utan att konfronteras med Jularbo. Att sjunga Avestaforsens brus var självklart varje dag (2ggr) som jag cyklade över Avestaforsen. Att ha dansövning i ordenshuset i Jularbo hade en speciell stämning – även då det inte spelades en enda Jularbolåt.” (#43)

describe a sensory time shift, where the listener travels between now and then through the places of the music. In his text, he mentions a dance floor as an example of such a place. In our material, the respondents' memories of Jularbo's music are likewise strongly anchored in place, linking it to cottages, kitchens, and dance floors as lived cultural settings: Jularbo was "warmly received in the cottages and on the dance floors."¹⁵ Jularbo himself describes in his autobiography how his first encounter with dancing to accordion music was not on a dance floor but in the kitchen of the small rural home where he grew up, in Jularbo outside Avesta. The concept of musical wormholes helps clarify how such places operate in the respondents' recollections. Just as Jularbo's own memories are tied to the kitchen of his childhood home, listeners today imagine his music through the spaces where it was once lived and experienced.

Our spacious kitchen was a very popular meeting place for the dancing youth of the neighbourhood. Yes, even the elderly occasionally dropped in for a swing, because dancing was one of the few pleasures available in those days. /.../ Those who love to dance say that their legs tingle when the music plays, but in my case, it was my fingers that performed a funny dance on an invisible keyboard. Imagine being able to play like my father. It was a wish that completely filled my childhood heart. (Jularbo 1946)¹⁶

Jularbo's own retrospection is characteristic of the autobiographical medium itself. In his case, however, the retrospective is clearly linked to the love of the accordion and dance, rather than a general longing for a time gone by. It is the traditional practice of accordion playing and dancing that interests him. This can also be seen in the respondents' contemporary accounts as a kind of claim to authenticity:

He held on to the old accordion tradition from which he came. I think maybe it gave a sense of "authenticity" or naturalness that spoke to people. /.../ People usually talk about how he didn't play with his thumb, but that's how many diatonic accordion players play.¹⁷

Being the 'accordion king' that he was, Jularbo followed the technical development of the instrument: he started playing the diatonic accordion and adopted newer models as they came along. Yet it is true, as the accounts say, that despite adopting the chromatic accordion and composing melodies that could only be played on it, Jularbo seems to have retained aspects of older playing techniques (Burlin et al. 2024). As one respondent mentions, he did not play with his thumb on the treble side. This is a practice that probably comes from the diatonic accordion tradition, where the thumb is often held in a leather loop on the back of the treble side, to facilitate the handling of the bellows. Another aspect of what constitutes his claim to authenticity concerns his practice as a performer. Just as Jularbo retained older ways of playing newer instruments, he did not change his stage personality or body language as a performer. He sat straight up and down on a chair as he played. One respondent describes this as him having a "poker face"¹⁸ when he played, and another describes his "confident style sitting backwards leaning

15. "...gick hem i stugorna och på dansbanorna" (#86)

16. "På den tiden var det inte så vanligt med särskilda dansbanor, utan man dansade i hemmen eller på logarna. Vårt rymliga kök var en mycket omtyckt samlingsplats för traktens dansanta ungdom. Ja, även de äldre tittade emellanåt in för att få sig en svängom, ty dansen var ett av de få nöjen som fanns att tillgå på den tiden. /.../ Den danslystne brukar tala om att det spritter i benen när musiken spelar upp, men hos mig var det fingrarna, som utförde en lustiger dans på en osynlig klaviatur. Tänk att kunna spela som far. Det var en önskan, som helt och fullt fyllde mitt barnahjärta." (Jularbo 1946)

17. "Han höll också fast vid den gamla dragspelstraditionen som han kom ifrån. Jag tror att det kanske gav en känsla av "äkt-het" eller naturlighet som talade till folk. /.../ Folk brukar prata om att han inte spelade med tummen, men det är ju många durspelare som spelar så." (#11)

18. "Poker face när han spelade" (#81)

with one leg over the other.”¹⁹ His way of playing seems to have projected a sense of authenticity for some listeners:

It’s genuine. It’s true. It’s music that was first heard inside Calle’s head, and then he played it.²⁰

One way to understand Jularbo’s music is as part of a *chronotope*, a certain configuration of a specific time and place (Ronström 2019:18). Ronström draws on Bakhtin (1981) when he identifies chronotopes as central to the construction of Nordic folk music. In our material, the chronotope emerges through respondents’ perceptions of Jularbo’s stage persona and playing style, which for some are imbued with a sentimental charge. Some survey answers emphasise this chronotope as a collective and shared experience, highlighting the function of the music for dancing. Other answers focus on the individual experience, where music functions as an emotional link to a past time and place. Johannisson claims that nostalgia is always related to personal history, a longing rooted in lived experience rather than in an imagined past, even if the two can intertwine.

I can relate to Jularbo in the sense that my grandfather also played the accordion, so it’s a feeling of nostalgia for past times when one used to hear more people play musical instruments, especially the accordion, live – and not like now, when everyone listens to Spotify on their phones.²¹

Thus, we see both perspectives in the survey. Some respondents situate Jularbo simultaneously within their own personal history and within a more general sense of “the past”, connecting his music to loved ones as well as to a longing for simpler times. These are contemporary recollections of an earlier musical world. At the same time, however, the figure of “Jularbo” – the public persona and cultural brand associated with him – was, in his own time, an unmistakably modern phenomenon (Ronström 2021), as will be discussed in the next chapter.

At the right time

Jularbo is synonymous with the gramophone!
(Nils Fläcke, personal communication, 19 September 2025)

While Jularbo and his playing style is often associated with nostalgia and bygone times, he was very involved with technological innovations of his time, most notably the gramophone. This is highlighted in the quote from an interview with accordionist Nils Fläcke (conducted by myself and my colleague Totte Mattsson). Jularbo himself showed a keen interest in new technologies, as evidenced in his autobiography.

Escaping the darkness and seeking the light is a perfectly natural and healthy reaction. It is still dark and gloomy in our days in the countryside, but imagine how much worse it was before electricity, film and radio. (Jularbo 1946:80)²²

Similarly, many of our respondents articulate a seemingly paradoxical

19. “Hans självsäkra stil sittande bakåtlutad med ena benet över det andra.” (#85)

20. “Det är äkta. Det är sant. Det är musik som första gången hördes inne i huvudet på Calle, sen spelade han den” (#73)

21. “Jag kan relatera just till Jularbo på det viset att min morfar spelade dragspel också, så det är en känsla av nostalgi på de förflutna tiderna då man hörde fler spela musikinstrument, särskilt dragspel, live, och inte som nu när alla lyssnar på Spotify på sina mobiler.” (#45)

22. “Att fly mörkret och söka sig till ljuset är en fullt naturlig och sund reaktion. Mörkt och dystert är det ännu i våra dagar på landsbygden, men tänk då så mycket värre det var före elektriciteten, filmen och radion.” (Jularbo 1946:80)

understanding when compared with nostalgia-oriented perspectives: that Jularbo's greatness derived not from his connection to "the past" but from his capacity for *innovation*. Several respondents explain Jularbo's greatness as resulting from his being at the right place at the right time, especially in relation to the technological advances of the time. He is described in several statements as the first accordionist to make full use of the new forms of media established in the first part of the 20th century: the gramophone and radio.

[Jularbo] came just at the right time, when radio, the gramophone, and the community life were flourishing.²³

New media – 78 rpm records and radio – allowed him, more than anyone else, to step into the public spotlight.²⁴

Jularbo is arguably the most recorded musician in Sweden.²⁵ His extensive output, comprising 1577 unique recordings between 1913 and 1966 – although several melodies were recorded several times – is probably unrivalled in the history of the Swedish music industry in the 20th century (Burlin et al. 2024). One explanation for this productivity is, as the responses suggest, that his career took off in parallel with the commercial gramophone industry, and that, being the entrepreneur that he was, he saw fit to utilise this new form to disseminate his music (Burlin et al. 2024). In addition to this entrepreneurial ethos, several respondents highlight that a significant part of his achievement was that he contributed in large part to shaping the genre of music commonly known as *gammeldans*.

Jularbo had his own way of playing that is genre-forming.²⁶

He created his own genre and style of accordion music. You can still hear which accordionists know their Jularbo.²⁷

Jularbo's heyday coincides with the *gammeldans* finding its form.²⁸

If we follow popular music scholar Franco Fabbri in viewing the creation of new genres as "transgressions to the rules of other genres" (1981:6), it becomes relevant to consider how the use of accordion music for dance contributed to new musical and social conventions. As Ronström (2023) has shown, Jularbo was in many respects a modernist figure. His recordings from the 1910s and 1920s were technically innovative and stylistically contemporary, even including one of the first Swedish jazz recordings, "American Rag". At the same time, what is today referred to as *gammeldans* or *old-time dance music* first began to be labelled as such in contrast to the emerging modern dance styles based on jazz. During the 1920s, the distinction between dance music as "modern" and "old" became institutionalised, for example, in the genre lists of Radiotjänst (the Swedish national broadcasting service). Jularbo himself later positioned his music in relation to this divide, expressing a reluctance to play *modern dance music* and instead identifying with *gammeldans*, or as it was simultaneously called: *cultural dancing*. The naming of *gammeldans* as *cultural* (or *kultis*) might be seen as an ambition to position the genre hierarchically and to signal proximity to more sophisticated cultural contexts (cf. Arvidsson 2002).

23. "Carl Jularbo /.../ kom precis rätt tid när radion grammofonen och föreningslivet blomstrade" (#59)

24. "Nya media – 78:or och radio – gjorde att mer än någon annan kunde komma fram i rampljuset." (#34)

25. At least until the advent of the digital era – when it became virtually impossible to quantify the vast number of recordings made by innumerable musicians and producers.

26. "Jularbo hade ett eget spelsätt som är genrebildande i den typen av dragspelsmusik." (#87)

27. "Han skapade en helt egen genre med egen stil inom dragspelsmusiken. Det hörs än idag vilka dragspelare som kan sin Jularbo." (#30)

28. "Jularbos storhetstid sammanfaller med att gammeldansen finns [sic] sina former." (#34)



Fig. 3. Calle Jularbo playing the accordion at the Swedish national broadcasting service Studio in Stockholm, photographed in 1926. The microphone is a Marconi model, known as “the cradle”, used for a short period in 1925–1926. Photo: Swedish Radio

When Jularbo began his career, dancing to an accordion was in no way regarded as a retrospective practice. It was the popular dance of its time, rooted in 19th-century dance music and emerging within the burgeoning music industry through phonogram recordings and tours of the people's parks. As the genre developed, the ensemble configuration also evolved – primarily from solo accordion playing, via simple accompaniment by violin or another accordion, to a full ensemble with guitar, double bass, and other instruments. In a previous text (Burlin et al. 2024), we discussed how an important part of the popularisation of *gammeldans* was precisely its wide distribution on phonograms, a point also made by Alf Björnberg (2019:136–137). An initial aspect to consider here, however, is the purely technical design and function of the accordion itself, not least its loudness, which made it an excellent mediator of sound both in live performance and on record. This is also mentioned in the survey material by a respondent who clearly had some knowledge about the accordion as an instrument:

This was in an era before microphones and sound systems, and in order to make the beat stand out clearly on a gramophone recording or in dance music, his style of playing was most effective and became very popular. Diatonic accordions at the time were not good enough to create such compression in the bellows, but this became possible with the advent of chromatic accordions. Jularbo was the first to exploit this.²⁹

The manufacture of bellows-based instruments similar to the accordion began in central Europe in the first half of the 19th century, and from there spread north. In the latter part of the 19th century, the accordion became increasingly widespread and popular as a “pastime” in bourgeois parlours in Sweden, while already being associated with the countryside (Kjellström 1976:16). In parallel, the accordion can be seen as one of the earliest industrial rationalisations of music and was marketed as a symbol of modernity: a harbinger of the future that carried the allure of the new (Kjellström

29. “Dette var jo i en tid før mikrofoner og lydanlegg kom, og skulle takta komme godt fram i en gramofoninnspilling eller på dansespilling, var denne spillemåten mest effektiv og ble svært populær. Durspill på den tiden var ikke gode nok til å lage slik kompresjon i belgen, men dette ble mulig når trekkspillet kom. Jularbo var den første som utnyttet dette.” (#74)

1976:27, 33).³⁰ This way of looking at the accordion and accordion music as being linked simultaneously to the past and to the future is probably at the centre of Jularbo's fame: he was a virtuoso on this instrument rooted both in the past and in the present, city and country. Ronström (2021) makes this same point as he describes Jularbo being on a progressive trajectory of *becoming someone* in Swedish society that was becoming increasingly modern. But to understand such aspects of cultural history, as Ronström points out, one also needs to sit down and listen to the music that it is all about (Ronström 2021: 111).

A light-hearted, cheerful tune

You can experience Jularbo's music in two ways, as dance music or as music you listen to. I do the latter, and the best characterisation that has been made of it is, in my opinion, "Abba-Benny" Andersson's words from 1989: "gammeldans-music sounds tired, but Calle Jularbo sounded as if he wanted something with his music".³¹

While the accuracy of the quote attributed to Benny Andersson remains uncertain, it is well established that the ABBA songwriter holds Calle Jularbo in high regard.³² A recurring theme in the survey responses is the appreciation of Jularbo's melodic talent – his music is frequently described as beautiful, with melodies that are "enticing", "melodious", and "refined".

What makes songs popular and well known is not obvious. In musicology, this is investigated in the field of "hit song science". Most often, melody is seen as a central factor, with a short but memorable hook (Burgoyne et al. 2013). A balance between repetition and variety is seen as important – too much repetition becomes boring or annoying, whereas too much new information makes the song difficult to grasp (Huron 2006). In the survey responses, Jularbo's music is described as beautiful, melodious and 'enticing', as well as clear and simple:

I think a lot of his music is good. As an ear player, I find it very easy to follow his songs because they are so clear.³³

His own compositions are elegantly simple – they stick in your memory immediately.³⁴

Not only was the quality of the melodies mentioned, but also their quantity and popularity. Jularbo's large repertoire, both as a composer and as a traditional musician, is likewise cited as a reason for his popularity. Freitas et al. (2018) have shown that *familiar* melodies are perceived as appealing to a listener, and several of Jularbo's melodies became widely known *evergreens*, as discussed in earlier research (Burlin et al. 2024:143). It is difficult to say what comes first – are Jularbo's compositions appreciated and well known because of their melodic content, or is it the way he played them, combined with his great celebrity, that has made the melodies "immortal"?

30. "ett framtidens frö" and "det nyas lockelse" (Kjellström 1976:27, 33).

31. "Man kan uppleva Jularbos musik på två sätt, som dans-musik eller som musik man lyssnar på. Jag gör det senare, och den bästa karakteristik som gjorts av den är, i mitt tycke, 'Abba-Benny' Anderssons ord från 1989: 'gammaldans låter trött, men Calle Jularbo lät som om han ville något med sin musik.'" (#19)

32. Andersson even composed a tune in classic *gammeldans* style as a tribute to Jularbo ("Calle J:s vals", Andersson 2007).

33. "Jag tycker att mycket av hans musik är bra. Som gehörsspelare så har jag väldigt lätt att hänga med på hans låtar eftersom de är så tydliga." (#39)

34. "Hans egna kompositioner är raffinerat enkla – de fastnar i minnet på en gång." (#34)

A beat that goes straight to the floor

It was the rhythm, in the old-time dance music, that no one can imitate.³⁵

(Gunnar Persson, accordionist. From the documentary *Dragspels-kungen*, Sima 1993)

The vast majority of responses refer to Jularbo's particular way of playing that is perceived as *swinging*, mentioning beat, rhythm, and tempo. Other answers also emphasise that Jularbo's music worked for dancing in a way that no other accordionist's playing could match. It is described as a positive and immediate reaction, what groove-researchers call a "pleasurable urge to move" (Spiech et al. 2025:1):

You get the urge to dance straight away. The music is so alive.³⁶

It makes us up for dancing. I can't describe it any other way.³⁷

A delight when dancing.³⁸

The majority of responses also link dancing to his intricate rhythm. In the first statement reproduced here, with the concept of "the beat straight down into the floor", there is also an apparent kinship with the way rock swing is often described as "four on the floor".

He gained a reputation for being good to dance to, the people need the beat "straight into the floor" so they know when to put their foot down.³⁹

Anyone who couldn't dance could dance to the tunes of Jularbo.⁴⁰

For example, the waltz, where Calle had a calm tempo with a micro silence between each repeated section and then you could turn in the dance and not have to rush, but just enjoy.⁴¹

Jularbo's popularity thus rests not only on his technical skill as an accordionist, but above all on the fact that he used that knowledge to make the music fit into the context in which it was performed. Respondents note that when Jularbo arrived, the dancing was guaranteed to be phenomenal – a result of his distinctive sense of beat and rhythm.

It is not only the rhythm and rhythmic subtleties that are mentioned in relation to the danceability of Jularbo's music. When Ebbe Jularbo talks about his father, he also mentions that Calle had a "special calm tempo" (Sederholm 1980). Some of the answers also emphasise this "Jularbo tempo":

It's easy to dance to his playing, always the right tempo.⁴²

I think it's the steady, calm, but determined tempo that makes dancers like the music.⁴³

We get a kind of "rikslikare"⁴⁴ for rhythm and tempo.⁴⁵

A perception that emerges in our material, as well as in interviews we have conducted (i.e. Fläcke 2025), is that the way Jularbo related to tempo

35. "Det var rytmen, i den gammeldansmusiken, som ingen kan ta efter." (Sima 1993).

36. "Man blir danssugen direkt. Musiken är så levande." (#47)

37. "Den gör oss 'danssugna' Kan inte beskriva det annorlunda." (#60)

38. "En vällust när man dansade." (#75)

39. "I folkmun fick han rykte om att vara bra att dansa efter, takten 'rakt ner i golvet' det behöver folk så dom vet när dom ska sätta ner foten." (#59)

40. "Den som inte kunde dansa den kunde dansa till Jularbos toner." (#29)

41. "Tex vals, där hade Calle ett lugnt tempo med en microtysnad [sic] mellan repriserna och då kunde man vända i dansen och inte behöva jäkta utan bara njuta." (#75)

42. "Det är lätt att dansa till hans spel, alltid rätt tempo." (#88)

43. "Jag tror det är det fasta, lugna men bestämda tempot som gör att dansare gillar musiken." (#85)

44. The term *rikslikare* is an old Swedish term describing a nationally recognised standard or normative model against which others are measured.

45. "vi får någon slags 'rikslikare' för rytmik och tempo." (#34)



Fig. 4. Carl Jularbo on stage at Danspalatset Centrum in Långås, probably photographed at the venue's 25th anniversary in 1964. The image foregrounds Jularbo's status as a master accordionist and a central figure in the Swedish gammeldans tradition, performing together with fellow musicians for a large dance audience. Photo: Rian Museum, Falkenberg. CC BY

changed over his career. There seems to be a perception that Jularbo had a faster tempo in the early recordings and a slower tempo towards the end of his career. A simple overview of Jularbo's recordings supports this view and shows that the tempo in the older recordings is generally faster than the tempo in the later ones, which are also more stable over time. There are several possible explanations for this. One is related to the limited recording time on older mechanical recordings on 78 rpm discs, which might encourage performers to play faster to fit as much music as possible on each side. The recording nerves of a young instrumentalist may be another explanation. A final explanation, which has to do with Jularbo's career and life's work, is his development into a dance musician. It is possible that the reason why the later recordings are both slower in tempo and generally more stable is that he had transitioned from being an accordionist primarily known as a virtuoso always winning the accordion competitions (Burlin et al. 2024), to being appreciated mainly as an exceptionally skilful dance musician. His playing style, swing, and tempo were simply adapted to the needs of dancing.

A microscopic rhythmic shift

Previous researchers have described swing as a combination of steady pulse and subtle, sometimes almost imperceptible, shifts in timing and emphasis (Danielsen et al. 2023, Honing 2001). Many responses in the analysed material that mention terms such as "the Jularbo swing" and "the Jularbo beat" suggest that it was not only a question of tempo or clear pulse but also a particular rhythmic articulation, variation, and phrasing that create the experience. While respondents differ in how they describe these nuances, many appear to have a clear sense of what characterises them. Here are some examples from the survey:

The playing style was unique. Used small variations of triplets in the treble while the bass was rock solid in rhythm and tempo.⁴⁶

It swings more than you think. In the waltzes, there's often a bit of a triplet feel in the bass.⁴⁷

Because he learnt on a two-row system, the treatment of the bellows became important for the rhythm, with almost microscopic rhythmic shifts supporting the dance steps.⁴⁸

[He played with] a micro silence between replays.⁴⁹

Very steady rhythmically but with greatly extended punctuations and emphases.⁵⁰

The respondents try to explain their experience of the swing through almost music-theoretical descriptions of, for example, triplets in the bass and treble, microscopic shifts, emphases, or extended punctuations. Their descriptions vary considerably, reflecting different forms of practical or experiential knowledge, and it is difficult to identify a single common thread. What recurs in the material, and what is supported by analysing recordings, is that *the melody is pushed before the bass*:

His well-known technique of pushing the melody in front of the bass created the tension, the power, of the music.⁵¹

The fact that the bass is a little behind the treble also makes it something special.⁵²

When you combine a constant rhythm (the bass) with a rigorous, relaxed, restrained yet distinctive treble rhythm, you get close.⁵³

A similar description appears in a 1980s documentary feature about the accordion on Swedish television. There, Calle's son, Ebbe Jularbo, describes his father's swing in almost exactly the same way. Whether it was Ebbe who coined this expression about pushing the melody in front of the bass, or whether he joined the discourse on swing that already existed in accordion circles, is unclear. Ebbe even draws a parallel between the swing of Calle Jularbo and that of Errol Garner:

One might compare him to Erroll Garner, the American jazz pianist, who could play with the timing however he liked in the treble, while the bass stayed perfectly in place. Dad, likewise, would sort of *push* the melody ahead of him a little in the treble. (Ebbe Jularbo in Sederholm 1980)

His comparison with Garner is particularly interesting, because the jazz pianist Garner was well known for his freedom between left and right hand, or bass and treble, as it is expressed here. Goebel (2011:1) has described this as "temporal independence" and uses Baroque music as well as Garner's music as examples, although here it is a matter of a greater time shift. One of the survey's more music-theoretically orientated respondents specifically attributed the Jularbo swing to the Baroque use of tempo rubato:

46. "Spelstilen var unik. Körde med små varianter av trioler i diskanten medan basen var bergfast i takt o tempo." (#58)

47. "Det svänger mer än man tror. I valserna är det ofta lite triol-känsla i basen." (#78)

48. "Eftersom har lärde sig på tvåradigt spel så kom behandlingen av bälgen bli viktig för rytmen, med närmast mikroskopiska rytmiska förskjutningar [som] stöttar dansstegen." (#34)

49. "en microtysnad [sic] mellan repriserna." (#75)

50. "Mycket taktfast men med kraftigt förlängda punkteringar och betoningar." (#63)

51. "Hans välkända teknik att skjuta melodin framför basen skapade spänningen, kraften, i musiken." (#19)

52. "Og at bassen ligger litt etter diskanten, gjør det også til noe spesielt." (#28)

53. "Så när man kombinerar en konstant rytm (basen) med en stringent, avslappnad, återhållsam men ändå distinkt diskant rytmiserat så kommer man nära." (#38)

The theory was that in the Baroque period, they would have played with an almost extreme tempo rubato and when you listen to recordings of opera singers who learnt to sing in the 19th century, especially Salomea Kruschelnytska, you are struck by the shifts in tempo. They must have been drawing on an older tradition, and it makes me think: could the strange rhythm of Jularbo's recordings from the 1910s be reminiscent of when Swedish folk music developed out of the Baroque?⁵⁴

It is wise to be cautious about attributing too much historical significance to the agogics of Jularbo's playing, as this lies beyond the scope of the present article. The perception of Jularbo's swing can be understood both as the result of a specific manner of playing and as something closely connected to how music is discussed and experienced in social contexts.

A mediated discourse

I think his music was so popular because he had his own "beat". He was always slightly ahead in the bass, for instance, with very clear tones and bass lines.⁵⁵

This response describing the relationship between treble and bass reversed the usual formulation, claiming that Jularbo always played ahead in the bass, rather than the other way around. This might be seen as a contradictory analysis. However, if we understand such statements as part of an ongoing discourse or evolving narrative about Jularbo's music rather than strict music-theoretical observations, it's not surprising that the terms get mixed up. This is simply how Jularbo's music is talked about within the accordion community.

Thus, the respondents' accounts must be understood not simply as individual statements, but as situated within a broader context of transmission – among accordionists, within the *gammeldans* scene, and through media representations. Several of the phrases that the respondents use recur almost verbatim across sources: in interviews with accordionists, in newspaper articles and biographies, and in documentaries about Jularbo. For example, the phrase that "Jularbo played so that even those who couldn't dance, could dance" which appears in our material, was uttered by accordionist Gunnar Persson in *Dragspelskungen* (Sima 1993), a documentary produced for Jularbo's centenary. In the same film, Ove Hahn, then Head of Artists and Programming at the amusement park Gröna Lund, describes Jularbo as a *rikslikare*, a national reference point, for the waltz swing of *gammeldans* – and this archaic Swedish word is also used with the same sentiment in our material. And, as previously mentioned, Ebbe Jularbo explains in the SVT feature *Mellan bondfiol och elgitarr* (Sederholm 1980) how Calle "pushes the treble ahead of the bass", which is echoed manyfold in our material.

It is probably true what our material suggests: that Jularbo's steady rhythm combined with subtle melodic variations, agogic accents and phrasing

54. "Teorin gick ju ut på att man under barocken skulle ha spelat med närmast extremt tempo rubato och när man lyssnar på inspelningar med operasångare som lärde sig sjunga på 1800-talet, i synnerhet Salomea Kruschelnytska, slås man av förskjutningarna i takten. De måste ha gripit tillbaka på en äldre tradition och det får mig att tänka: kan den märkliga rytmen på Jularbos 10-talsinspelningar vara en reminiscens från då den svenska folkmusiken utvecklades ur barocken?" (#19)

55. "Jag tror att hans musik var populär eftersom han hade en helt egen 'takt' Låg alltid lite före i basen t.ex. och väldigt tydliga toner och basgångar." (#39)

is what makes Jularbo's music so danceable and swinging, with a sense of forward motion and embodied energy. Jularbo seems to have mastered this more than perhaps any other accordionist. However, descriptions of this quality in his playing – often referred to as “the Jularbo-beat” or “the Jularbo swing” – should not only be seen as attempts at musical analysis, but also as part of a culturally transmitted narrative. These emic expressions convey more than just admiration for a distinctive rhythmic style; they articulate a shared understanding of how accordion music and *gammeldans* can be understood, how it can be danced to, and, in the end – what it means.

The discourse on how Jularbo's playing style is described may also be viewed from a genre-hierarchical perspective. Just as proponents of *gammeldans* began to refer to it as a “cultural dance”, the way in which Jularbo's unique swing is spoken about can perhaps be seen as a kind of search for proximity to more sophisticated cultural contexts, in the same way that jazz sought proximity to art music (Arvidsson 2002). At the same time, beyond the more music-theoretical explanations, there was something in the music's swing that was extraordinarily unique, that directly appealed to the body, and that created in the listeners an irresistible desire to dance.

Symbolism, aesthetics, use

In this article, I have examined how Calle Jularbo's musical popularity is understood through listeners' retrospective accounts. The analysis reveals that rhythm and danceability are central to these perceptions, alongside associations with nostalgia, place, and social contexts. Respondents describe Jularbo not only as a bearer of tradition but also as an innovator whose melodic idiom and technical skill distinguish him from other accordionists. The findings contribute to ethnomusicological debates on how musical value is discursively produced and sustained over time. They highlight the interplay between tradition and innovation in popular dance music and show how notions of authenticity and modernity coexist within the cultural understanding of Jularbo. By situating listeners' narratives within historical and medial contexts, the study extends previous work on mediatization and genre by foregrounding the role of memory and discourse in shaping musical significance.

Seen through Stefan Bohman's three analytical concepts – *symbolism*, *aesthetics*, and *use* – several parallels and contrasts emerge between the accordion as an instrument and Jularbo's music. Symbolically, Jularbo's music, like the accordion, is linked to a specific cultural imaginary, functioning as a link to an imagined past associated with summers at dance halls and romanticised images of an earlier time, a chronotope (Bakhtin 1981; Ronström 2019) or a musical wormhole (Hyltén-Cavallius 2014). At the same time, while the accordion is often reduced to a symbol of a broad collective tradition, Jularbo is ascribed a personal musical identity and virtuosity that distinguishes him from this collective framing. He is not only a representative of *gammeldans* music, but a figure whose individual expression elevates

the music beyond a purely functional context. Aesthetically, Jularbo's music is perceived as both accessible and distinctive. While Bohman's material describes the accordion as a carrier of joyful and straightforward music, the survey responses emphasise Jularbo's specific playing style, particularly his rhythmic phrasing, swing, and what is often referred to as the "Jularbo beat." These qualities are frequently described as producing a strong bodily response in listeners, and as positioning Jularbo as a reference point for how old-time dancing can and should sound. In terms of use, his music is closely associated with dance and social contexts, while also being appreciated through listening beyond the dance floor, allowing his recordings to endure as independent musical works. So, answering the first research question, the material shows that descriptions of Jularbo's music repeatedly return to rhythm and swing while encompassing melodic expression, nostalgic associations, narrative formulations, and practices of listening and dance.

Conceptions of musical quality are created and maintained in a discursive process. Musical value does not appear as a fixed or objective property in the material, but as something that is formulated and reformulated in listeners' stories, in journalistic texts, in biographies, and in documentaries. The reproduction of descriptions of Jularbo as a "rikslikare", as someone who "played so that those who couldn't dance could dance" or who "pushed the treble before the bass" shows how specific ideas of his greatness are transmitted and consolidated over time. These recurring formulations illustrate how the valuation of music does not take place in isolation, but in a narrative tradition in which personal memory, interpersonal encounters, and the role of the media are all central. While the discourse surrounding Jularbo has shifted over time, these changes are themselves part of the ongoing mediation through which his musical significance is constructed, negotiated, and re-articulated. The descriptions we have discussed function not merely as expressions of appreciation, but as emic practices through which musical value is made meaningful, shared, and sustained. Answering the second research question, the material shows that musical value in descriptions of Jularbo's music is constructed and conveyed through precise recurring formulations that circulate between listeners, media, and memory, gradually stabilising particular ideas of what makes his music significant.

One important reason why the results of this study differ from those reported by Bohman is that the two investigations operate at different levels of generality: whereas Bohman captures broad attitudes toward the accordion among the wider population, the present material reflects the views of listeners who relate specifically to a single, highly profiled musician on that instrument. Such general symbolic associations are therefore not expected to coincide with the perceptions of a more devoted and musically invested audience. At the same time, the responses also suggest that there is something particular about Jularbo himself that invites an unusually detailed and fine-grained form of appreciation – something that, one suspects, few other major entertainers of his era would elicit to the same extent. Jularbo is characterised by a balance between tradition and innovation, between the

popular and the individual, between the collective and the unique. His music occupies a position where shared cultural memory, bodily experience, and individual artistic expression intersect. Approached through the stories of those who still listen today, musical appreciation emerges as a continuous dialogue in which meanings are both confirmed and renegotiated over time. Rhythm and swing function here not only as musical features, but as points of convergence where symbolic associations, aesthetic judgements, and practical uses meet. Seen in this light, Jularbo's continued significance cannot be explained solely by reference to historical importance or technical skill. Rather, it lies in the ways his music continues to be talked about, remembered, and brought into use, allowing it to remain active within contemporary listening practices. The experiences and reflections shared by our survey participants suggest that musical value is sustained not by permanence, but by repetition and renewal. Jularbo's music endures because it continues to invite engagement: to be listened to, moved by, recalled, and shared. It is within this ongoing movement between sound, memory, and practice that his music continues to find meaning.

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Appendix

All questions to *Call 0005: Jularbo memories*, Svenskt visarkiv 2023:

- First, tell us a little about yourself: what do you do? How are you active in or involved with music?
- When did you first hear or hear about Jularbo?
- Have you ever danced *gammeldans*? Have you played the accordion yourself?
- Do you have any special memories of Jularbo playing at a dance or concert? What was it like? Where and when was it? Which other artists could perform there? Please describe – was there anything special, funny, or remarkable? Were there many or only a few people? How did people dress? Were there people of all ages or just certain groups? Was there shouting? Were people there for Jularbo or to party and dance? Was there anything to eat or drink? Was there any special dancing when Jularbo played? Alt. how was Jularbo's music to dance to?
- Did you listen to Jularbo on the radio (e.g. "Christmas with Jularbo")? Did you listen to records (e.g. 78s, EPs, LPs) by Jularbo? Did you read about Jularbo in the newspapers? Please tell us about this.
- Do you remember how people talked about Jularbo? What was said about him and his music?

- Have you heard anyone talk about what it was like when Jularbo performed?
- Why do you think Calle Jularbo's music was so popular? Was there something special about his playing that touched you or made it extra danceable? What do you think of his music yourself? What made his music good or bad? Please try to describe in as much detail as possible.
- Do you know any songs by Calle Jularbo?
- Do you have a particular favourite Jularbo tune? Why this particular one?

Original in Swedish:

- Berätta först lite om dig själv: vad sysslar du med, på vilket sätt är du aktiv i eller tar del av musik?
- När hörde du eller hörde du talas om Jularbo för första gången?
- Har du själv dansat gammeldans/kultis? Har du själv spelat dragspel?
- Har du några särskilda minnen från då Jularbo spelade till dans eller konsert? Hur var det? Var och när var det? Vilka andra artister kunde uppträda där? Beskriv gärna – hände det något speciellt, roligt eller märkvärdigt? Var det mycket eller lite folk? Hur klädde sig folk? Var det folk i alla åldrar eller bara vissa grupper? Raggades det? Var man där för Jularbo eller för att festa och dansa? Drack eller åt man något? Blev dansen på något speciellt sätt när Jularbo spelade? Alt. hur var Jularbos musik att dansa till?
- Hörde du Jularbo på radio (t ex "Jul med Jularbo")? Lyssnade du på skivor (exempelvis 78'or, ep, lp) med Jularbo? Läste du om Jularbo i tidningarna? Berätta.
- Har du minnen av hur man talade om Jularbo? Vad berättades det om honom och hans musik?
- Har du hört någon berätta om hur det var när Jularbo uppträdde?
- Varför tror du Calle Jularbos musik var så populär? Var det något speciellt med hans spel som berörde eller gjorde den extra dansant? Vad tycker du själv om hans musik? Vad gjorde hans musik bra eller dålig? Försök gärna beskriva så detaljerat som möjligt.
- Känner du till någon låt av Calle Jularbo?
- Har du nån speciell favorit bland jularbolåtarna? Varför just den?