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Niels Krabbe (consultant), and Christopher Tarrant

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# N I E L S E N ' S   U N R E A L I S E D O P E R A   P L A N S <sup>1</sup>

By Niels Krabbe

It is a well-known fact that Carl Nielsen's oeuvre includes only two complete operas: *Saul and David* and *Maskarade*, both composed in the years between 1899 and 1905. Later he composed incidental music for a great number of plays, but no more operas. As will be seen from the present article, however, he nourished ideas for further works within the opera genre, and both before and after the two finished works he had opera plans which in the end he never realised.

The fates of the two known operas, both at their first appearance and during their reception in the following years up to today, have been very different. *Maskarade* was an enormous success at the premiere, as well as in later restagings during the composer's life both in Denmark and Sweden, and after his death and till now it has obtained a position as the 'Danish National Opera'. It was thus – quite naturally – included in the list of twelve selected musical works included in former culture minister Brian Mikkelsen's now forgotten cultural canon from 2006.<sup>2</sup> Even in spite of Kasper Holten's modernisation of its most recent production at The Royal Theatre in the 2010s – far from the world of playwright Ludvig Holberg on which the story was based – with an open-plan kitchen, Arv as a Polish guest worker, and the switch between when as human beings we wear masks and when we do not, it still seems to have survived.

*Saul and David* on the other hand, seems to have had more problems. First of all, it has had far fewer performances than *Maskarade*, both in Nielsen's time and after. Secondly and contrary to *Maskarade*, it received a somewhat lukewarm public

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1 This article is a slightly revised version of my 'Carl Niensens ikke-realiserede operaplaner', *Fund og Forskning*, 56 (2017), 297-334. Used by kind permission of the editors.

2 For a critical approach to the minister's canon project, see my article 'Den Danske musikkanon – generelle overvejelser og bemærkninger til udvalgte værker' [The Danish music canon – general reflection and comments on selected works], in John T. Lauridsen and Olaf Olsen (eds.), *Umisteligt. Festskrift til Erland Kolding Nielsen*, Copenhagen 2007, 695-718.

and critical reception at its premiere in 1902. *Politiken's* review discharges the following ironic torrent of words:

If you add up Marshall Stig, Hans Heiling and Nouredin<sup>3</sup> and calculate the mean, you will get a clear picture of this Saul, writhing with the most unbelievable operatic anguishes. The moment when the king falls on his sword, whirls round, makes a number of little jumps, and then collapses was one of the most dreadful death scenes we have ever experienced.

Later, however, a more urbane choice of wording is made for the criticism of the work in general – words, which later have been part of any review of the opera: that it is too stagnant because of the prominent position of the passages for choir:

If you want to benefit to any extent from Mr. Nielsen's new opera, don't go there with an expectation of an ordinary, theatrical opera, and do not expect to be overwhelmed by effects, but rather be prepared to stand face to face with a stern, serious, determined musician. You will not be facing a person who trims his opera with a kind of routine that is not unusual these days. Be prepared more than once during the evening to be confronted with an oratorio rather than with a music drama.<sup>4</sup>

After having praised the power of Vilhelm Herold's voice (in the role of David) and the magnificence of the choir, *Jyllands-Posten* ends its review with the following prophetic words: 'And yet – one does not feel absolutely certain that "Saul and David" will captivate the audience in the future.'

The last sentence has proved to be correct. None of the productions of the opera since the 1960s which I know of has caught on, and the most recent performances at the Royal Opera in Copenhagen, during the Nielsen jubilee year of 2015, in the English director David Poutney's staging, are no exception. This treatment of the opera, which by that time had not been performed at our national opera stage in the previous 25 years, was dismal. It is understandable – when it comes to that – that a director will feel inclined to make the story of the Old Testament relevant to a modern audience by moving the plot to a non-specified Middle East totalitarian state. But the

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3 Reference to the important characters in three operas which had been at the repertoire of The Royal Theatre in the years up to the premiere of *Saul and David*: Marshall Stig in Peter Heise's *King and Marshal*, Hans Heiling in Heinrich Marschner's opera carrying his name, and Nouredin in C.E.F. Horneman's opera *Aladdin*.

4 *Politiken*, 29.11.1902.

radical change of important details in the story, such as Samuel's merely simulated death leading to his overthrow of the anointed David at the final chord of the opera, is a violation of both the words and the music. Indications of such a conflict between the prophet and the royal throne are to be found neither in Einar Christiansen's libretto nor in the Old Testament model. To which should be added that the chronology of the story breaks down.<sup>5</sup> Rehabilitation of the work will probably last many years; who would – after this – dare to plunge into this masterwork once more?

The above observations on the reception of the two operas are thrown into relief by the fact that Nielsen himself felt quite the opposite: at every new performance he found that there were problems with *Maskarade* ('The girl with the crooked back' as he called the third act), whereas as late as in 1929 he expressed a general satisfaction with *Saul and David*. In an interview from that year, he summed up his view on the two works in the following words:

By the way, isn't it strange that when *Maskarade*, my latest opera, was performed again recently, there were many things on which I would take a different view and passages where I would accept both changes and abridgments, whereas in *Saul and David* I could after all not think of any change. I suppose this is because when you are merry and gay, you will act rather casually, whereas when one deals with serious and elevated matters, you have already considered the situation and looked around for solutions.<sup>6</sup>

### Unrealised Opera Plans

Both before and after his two complete operas, each of which in its own way stands as a milestone in Danish opera history, Nielsen, as mentioned above, entertained plans for a number of other operas, which, however, never reached further than a preliminary stage.

The sources related to Nielsen's life and work include information about an additional five opera projects, which in the end came to naught. For three of them loose sketches for the plot are available, and in some cases short musical sketches or individual 'numbers' are to be found. Nielsen's working titles for four of the works in question are *Judith*, *Psycke*, *The Silent Woman*, and *Portia* – the last-named no doubt being the most interesting. Plans for the fifth unrealised opera project – based on

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5 It should be mentioned, however, that in 1 Samuel chapter 8 there is a certain antithesis between Samuel and the Israelites concerning the wish of the people to have a king to govern the country. But this part of the Books of Samuel has nothing to do with the story of Saul and David as unfolded in Nielsen's opera.

6 Interview in *Politiken* 26.2.1929 – see *Samtid*, Copenhagen 1999, vol. 2, 519.

Jens Peter Jacobsen's famous novel *Fru Marie Grubbe* [Mrs. Marie Grubbe] from 1876 – were probably given up mainly because the librettist Einar Christiansen considered the topic ill-suited for dramatic adaptation, as appears from his thorough explanation in a letter to Nielsen from 1911, ending in the following words:

I am very sorry about this, because I would very much like to serve you and work together with you. But if this were to happen, we would have to find a different basis for our collaboration. I shall probably be back in town sometime this week, and then I shall telephone you. But I feel certain that not even during a conversation you will be able to make me change my mind when it comes to 'Marie Grubbe'.<sup>7</sup>

### **Judith (1890?), CNW A 2**

Already in the years around 1890 Nielsen had plans to write an opera built on the dramatic story from the Old Testament Apocrypha about Judith and her beheading of the enemy military commander, Holofernes.

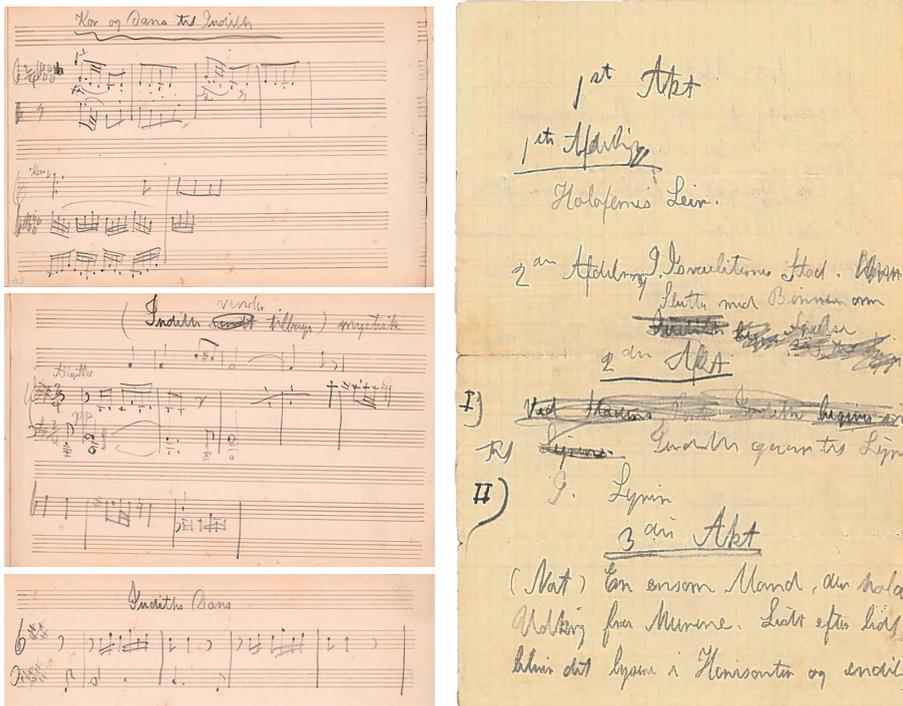
Two different sources document this work: among the *Portia* papers (see below) there are three sheets in Nielsen's hand, which in very general terms sketch the plot of a future opera on Judith;<sup>8</sup> and in his little book of sketches, which he began at the end of the 1880s and apparently carried with him on his journey to Rome in 1900, a small unison piece with the title *Judith, Hyrdedrengens Melodi* ('Judith, tune of the shepherd lad') for oboe (CNW 416, facsimile in CNU IV/1, 283) together with a number of unfinished fragments with the titles *Judith, Kor og Dans til Judith, Judiths Dans* and (*Judith vender tilbage*) *mystisk* ('Judith, choir and dance for Judith', 'Judith's dance' and 'Return of Judith, mysterious').<sup>9</sup> The sketches only comprise a few bars each and from them one cannot form any impression of how the work would have developed. Neither in letters from the time nor in retrospect did Nielsen ever mention a possible opera about this episode from the Old Testament. It is possible that this interest in aspects of the history of the Israelites – not least the role 'the people', according to Nielsen's synopsis, were to have taken – may have inspired him to start work on the story of Saul and David some years later: the more so, since there is a clear parallel between Judith's fight on behalf of the Israelites against the Assyrian leader, Holofernes, and David's against the Philistine warrior, Goliath.

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7 Letter from Einar Christiansen to Nielsen, 3.7.1911, CNB IV, 86-87.

8 The Royal Library, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV, 2.

9 See CNU IV/1, *Introduction*, 1 and 283, and Nielsen's book of sketches, CNS 358a, fols. 22<sup>r</sup>, 50<sup>r</sup>, 54<sup>r</sup>, 50<sup>r</sup>, and 55<sup>r</sup>.



**Plate 1:** Left-hand column – sketches for *Judith* in Nielsen’s sketch book from 1890s (The Royal Library, CNS 358a, fols. 54<sup>r</sup>, 54<sup>v</sup>, 55<sup>v</sup>). Right-hand column – first page of Nielsen’s synopsis of the plot of *Judith* (The Royal Library, Torben Schousboe’s Collection, XIV, 2): 1<sup>st</sup> Akt / 1<sup>st</sup> Afdeling / Holofernes Lejr. / 2<sup>den</sup> Afdeling I Israeliternes Stad / Slut-ter med Bønnen om / Frelse / 2<sup>den</sup> Akt / I) Judith gaar til Lejren / II) I Lejren / 3<sup>die</sup> Akt / (Nat) En ensom Mand, der holder / Udkig fra Murene. Lidt efter lidt / bliver det lysere i Horisonten og endelig” [Act 1, first part, Holofernes’ camp; second part, In the city of the Israeli, ends with the prayer for salvation. Act 2, I, Judith goes to the camp; II, In the camp. Act 3, (night). A lonely man who keeps a lookout from the walls. Gradually it becomes more and more light in the horizon and finally].

### Amor and Psyke (1898)

Nielsen’s plans to write an opera based on the Greek myth about Amor and Psyche, known from a Roman source from the second century,<sup>10</sup> are evident from an unfinished draft of the plot of the story written on the back of a letter of 28 March 1898 to some of his friends.<sup>11</sup> The draft includes the first two acts of the opera, thus being

10 The story of Amor and Psyche is known from Lucius Apulejus’ novel, *The Golden Ass*.

11 Letter from Sofie and Axel Olrik of 28 March 1898, CNB II, 32.

broken off before the myth has come to an end. At a certain point the composer even indicates his wish for a duet. Apart from this, no further references, not to speak of musical sketches, are known. The project does not seem to have gone any further, and soon Nielsen would be fully absorbed in work on *Saul and David*. The full draft reads:

*Act 1*

The oracle is consulted and answers that Psyche is to be dressed as a bride and placed on the desolate rock that is seen hanging precariously out over the sea. Psyche is called forth and adorned. She ascends the rock, to the grief of the people. Darkness falls, and the wind begins to blow. The torches go out. (Scene change). A grove with Amor's golden castle on the right.

Spirits and genies surround Psyche who has been borne thither by the wind. They receive her as their mistress, and give her food and drink. A fanfare announces Amor's arrival. The genies place a veil around Psyche's face and command her not to open it in order to see the ruler of the castle.

Amor and Psyche (duet).

Closes with the two lovers entering the castle to tender caresses, embracing one another.

*Act 2*

Psyche alone. Later come her sisters (sneaky and wicked) to whom she shows all her splendour. The sisters walk through the castle and look at everything with curiosity. At a moment when Psyche is alone, Pan comes and warns Psyche of a danger that hangs menacingly over her head; he strengthens her conviction not to inquire who her master and lover is. The sisters return from their tour of the castle and now call upon Psyche to slay Amor at night in order thus to free herself. They give her a dagger. Darkness falls. Psyche lies down on a couch. Amor returns. While he is asleep, Psyche secretly gets up and fetches a lamp<sup>12</sup>

**Portia (1898)**

Among the five unrealized opera projects which were on Nielsen's mind at various points, an opera on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (under the working title *Portia*) seems to be the one which was closest to being realised and in which Nielsen was most whole-heartedly absorbed.<sup>13</sup> His work with Shakespeare's text took place in late 1898 and the beginning of 1899, but as late as 1928 he mentioned his old plans

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12 Translation by David Fanning, CNL, 166.

13 In the following discussion, *The Merchant of Venice* will be abbreviated MV.

in an interview with a Swedish paper in connection with a performance of *Saul and David* in Gothenburg. Here he recalls his old ideas:

*Saul and David* was written around the turn of the century. I had plans to write my first opera. I read a lot of text books and collaborated with various authors, but could not find a suitable subject. At a certain stage I was much obsessed with composing music for *The Merchant of Venice*. It got to the stage where the librettist had finished the first act. But still, this was not a subject I felt comfortable with. To select the theme for an opera is identical with trying on a costume. If you are to get something out of the subject, it has to fit and you must thrive in it.<sup>14</sup>

Probably during the autumn of 1898 Nielsen had begun a collaboration on Shakespeare's opera with the poet Sophus Michaëlis, who was the same age as him. It is not known which of the two took the initiative. A few years earlier Michaëlis had written the libretto of *Aucasin and Nicolette* with music by August Enna – a work which Nielsen had attended at The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen without in any way finding it especially interesting.<sup>15</sup>

Sources are available from both collaborators which until now do not seem to have evoked any interest on the part of Nielsen scholars: a complete fair copy of the libretto of the first act in Michaëlis' hand (16 pages), and pencil sketches in Nielsen's hand of the whole plot of the opera with numerous corrections (eight pages, see facsimiles and translation below).<sup>16</sup> During the process of work, however, Nielsen seems to have lost interest in the project, without informing Michaëlis, as may be seen from two letters by Michaëlis to the composer. In the first, from December 1898, he apologizes for not having started work soon enough, at the same time promising to send a sketch for the first act as soon as possible. That promise seems to have been fulfilled by the fair copy mentioned above:

Dear Carl Nielsen – I do think I bear most of the blame for the fact that 'the damp has leaked out'. But this needs a long explanation. For two or three months I was so busy in Odense that I couldn't work with anything related to literature. You were patient and did not remind me at any time. I have never experienced anything like that before. The very fact that you showed no impatience whatsoever made me suspicious: didn't he on reflection like the plan we

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14 Original in *Göteborg-Tidningen*, 27.11.1928, repr. in *Samtid*, 505-07.

15 See CNB I, 430.

16 The Royal Library, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV, 2.

had formed? I gradually came to view what I now understand was thoughtfulness on your side, as a tacit negation. That's how weirdly a person can run rings around himself. In the end I thought that your silence – for which I owed you gratitude because it was actually indulgence – was a silent breach of our agreement. Now I urgently ask for your apology. Besides, long ago I did a great deal of the work, and now that I've finished other jobs, I shall begin the fair-copying. In a few days I shall send the first act to you, and the rest will follow soon.

[...]

A few days after Christmas we are going to Berlin, Vienna and Venice by land. I am especially looking forward to Venice. – I've always thought I might get some new inspiration for something beautiful in 'Portia'.<sup>17</sup>

Almost a year later it seems that Michaëlis had still not heard a word from the composer and therefore felt obliged to send the following reproach:

I don't know whether you have left already. But I would like to know what intentions you have with the text which you ordered from me last year. In December I sent the first act to you, but I did not hear anything about whether you had received it. You may remember how hesitant I was when it came to writing opera texts – after previous bad experience. I didn't send any more to you because you didn't utter a word about what you had already received. Now, today I have heard from informed sources that you are working on an opera – but not to *my* text. I was hurt by this. I don't understand why you have told me nothing whatsoever about this. Admittedly we hadn't made a contract which, as you will probably remember, I had wanted. But by receiving *the beginning* without sending it back again you were in any case anyway not released from the preliminary agreement between us.

As I said, I am very aggrieved at this behaviour which until now is quite incomprehensible to me.<sup>18</sup>

Later on, the two of them must have been reconciled, since Nielsen composed music to no fewer than five works by Michaëlis during the years to come.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Letter from Sophus Michaëlis to Carl Nielsen, 13.12.1898, CNB II. 92-93.

18 Letter of 2.11.1899, CNB II, 150.

19 *Hymn to Life* (1921, CNW 376), *Hymn to Art* (1929, CNW 113), incidental music for *Cupid and the Poet* (1930, CNW 23), the song 'We love you, our far North' (1930, CNW 419) and *Song for the Danish Cremation Society* (1931, CNW 354).

There is much to indicate that it was Georg Brandes who aroused Nielsen's interest in Shakespeare.<sup>20</sup> Since the early 1890s he had associated with Brandes, and in a note in his diary from May 1893 he mentions a private visit to Brandes, including an enthusiastic description of his intellectual gifts.<sup>21</sup> A year later, he asked Brandes for a letter of recommendation to the German painter and sculptor Max Klinger (giving Nielsen the chance to study Klinger's ongoing work with his Beethoven monument).<sup>22</sup> Probably the most decisive impetus, however, was Brandes' epoch-making book on Shakespeare published in three volumes in the years 1895-96. In the Nielsen couple's correspondence there are several references to Brandes' monograph, and in one of her letters Anne Marie straightforwardly urges Nielsen to take an interest in *The Merchant of Venice*:

His (i.e. Brandes') Schakespeare [*sic*] is written very vivaciously and is very interesting. How would *The Merchant of Venice* work as an opera[.] According to Brandes' description I think it must be extremely appropriate, both because there is a fine atmosphere and merry details in it, and because it has a number of thorough character types in it.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps it was simply the presentation of Shakespeare's work by Brandes that inspired Michaëlis and Nielsen to change the original title to *Portia*. Brandes focuses to a great extent on her character in a gentle, almost infatuated description:<sup>24</sup>

Portia's nature is health, its appearance is joy, and its bright happiness is the element of her life. She descends from happiness, she grew up in happiness, she is surrounded by all the conditions and attributes of happiness, and she is distributing happiness with both hands. She is noble, right to the bottom of her heart; she is not a swan born in the duck-yard,<sup>25</sup> but she is in harmony with her surroundings and with herself.

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20 See also the article by David Fanning and Michelle Assay in the present volume.

21 'Brandes' gift is both glittering and shining. He is constantly wide awake. I have the same feeling when I speak with him as when I fence with foils against Bertelsen' - diary entry, 28.5.1893, CNB I, 297; CNL, 102.

22 Letter from Nielsen to Brandes 19.11.1894, CNB I, 394-96.

23 Letter from Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen to Carl Nielsen, 2.9.1897, CNB I, 530-31.

24 Brandes' Shakespeare monograph is still one of the finest portrayals of Shakespeare's life and work in Danish. The section about Portia can be found in his *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. 8, Copenhagen 1901, 185 ff.

25 Reference to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, *The Ugly Duckling*.

Sophus Michaelis was also a great admirer of Brandes. It is thus difficult to decide which of the two text sources – Nielsen's synopsis of the whole opera or Michaëlis' first act – is the original and which is the derivation (see Tables 1 and 2 below). Most likely, however, Nielsen wrote the synopsis for the whole opera first, after which Michaëlis then began to work out the libretto based on the composer's cues. Apparently, he never got any further than the first act as it is written in his manuscript and to which he waited in vain for a reaction from the Nielsen.

Both documents indicate that the final result would have been quite different from Shakespeare's model, both when it comes to the plot and to characterisation. Immediately one notices that the character of Antonio, who in Shakespeare is the one that pawns a pound of his own flesh in order to get a loan from Shylock the Jew, is totally missing in Michaëlis' list of characters for the first act and strongly played down in Nielsen's synopsis (see Table 1). Generally speaking, the serious and conflict-ridden parts of the plot seem to have been left out, in favour of the comical and lyrical parts. As an example, Nielsen's text ends in complete harmony, totally leaving out the tiff in the fifth act of Shakespeare's original in connection with the two lovers having given away their rings. Nielsen's overall preoccupation in those days with joy, sun and light – which is to say the so-called 'vitalism' project that was prominent in certain circles at that time and in Nielsen's cantata *Hymnus amoris* and his *Helios Overture* – dominates the end of the fourth act, and thus the whole opera:

After that Portia throws away her disguise. (I find such behaviour better in an opera, where it becomes more lucid). Then Shylock arrives, casting a shadow over the whole scenery. When he has left again the sun rises far away above the golden domes and spires of Venice. Hymn to the sun, light, life, light and happiness (see the synopsis, p. 8).

Michaëlis's text as it is known from the fifteen handwritten pages in the Royal Library only comprises the first act of the planned opera, by and large equivalent to the first three pages of Nielsen's sketch. Michaëlis' list of characters includes all Shakespeare's main characters except Antonio, Tubal, the Clown and Giobbe. As may be seen on the facsimile of the first page, five of the characters' names are underlined, probably indicating that they are meant to have singing parts in the work (see Appendix 2, below).

The libretto's relation to Shakespeare's model is somewhat loose. Some of the wording is very close to Shakespeare's text; this goes for Bassanio's description of his lady in Belmont (MV 1,1, 161-175), Shylock's famous comparison of the feelings and senses of a Jew and a Christian (MV 1,3, 102.2-124), but without Antonio being

present in Michaëlis' libretto, and MV 3.1, 48-66). On the whole Michaëlis's first act consists of a selection of scenes taken from the first three acts of Shakespeare's play, in a mix that focuses mainly on three aspects of the plot of the original play: the deal of the loan of the 3000 ducats (again without any mention of Antonio as the borrower); Lorenzo's success in his carrying off Shylock's daughter, Jessica; and Shylock's despair at the loss of his money and his daughter.

There is no inner dynamic in the way the scenes are linked together, and there is none of Shakespeare's characterisation of his cast. One could say that a certain pre-understanding of the Shakespearean text would have been a *sine qua non* for the audience, if they were to attend an opera on the text presented here in Michaëlis' suggestion to Nielsen. And one might add that it was a stroke of luck that nothing came of the plans for *Portia, an opera by Sophus Michaëlis and Carl Nielsen*.

Michaëlis' manuscript of the First Act is a mixture of prose and poetry in fixed meters and rhyming lines, the latter probably hinting to Nielsen that here an aria would be appropriate. The English translation below of the Danish original does not reflect the Danish rhymes (see Table 2).

Pages 1-3 were probably the source for Michaëlis' libretto of Act 1.

Contrary to Michaelis' text, Antonio's name is actually mentioned here.

	[Page 1]
	1 <sup>st</sup> Act (Outside Shylock's House)
MV 1.1	Antonio, Basanio and <del>Gratiano</del> Lorenzo.) Basanio asks Antonio to lend him money for his courting trip (?) to Belmont. Antonio, who has no cash, <del>makes Shylock ...[?] lend to him</del> . S. who all the time has been sneaking into and out of his house grumbling at the three gentlemen,... to lend Bassanio the money in exchange for the well-known bond Gratiano and Bassanio invite Shylock to take part in a festivity (They leave)
MV I.3, 102-124	S's. monologue full of poison and hate towards
	[Page 2]
	his enemies. Comment: During the previous scene Gratiano has constantly been looking up at Jessica's window, something which has not escaped the Jew's attention.

MV 2.5 ~~It became~~ It begins to get dark. S. leaves for the festivity, but before that he instructs Lancelot and Jessica to take good care of the house. Calmness. Moonlight. Jessica opens the window facing the canal and ~~sings~~ has a monologue with a melancholic and soulful content ~~which~~

[Page 3]

MV 2.6 ~~is proper for moonlight and longing for passion.~~ Then Gratiano arrives and carries her off as in Schackespeare [sic]. S., who suspects ~~returns~~ Jessica returns home and finds an empty house ~~...shouts and cries~~

MV 2.8 ~~aloud ...[?] He shouts and cries like as a wild animal.~~ (See Scha 1st Act 8th Scene). A number of [...?] people and urchins arrive. The boys whistle though their fingers towards S. [who...?] He ~~walks~~ runs across the bridge to the town shouting: My ducats! Law! Justice! my Daughter! The Duke! The whole crowd follows him, yelling and whistling, and thus they disappear further and further away.

[Page 4]

MV 2.7, 2.9 Act 2. Belmont

~~Portia and her chambermaid stand working with ...[?] are busy with This act ought to begin straight away [?] quietly, little by little working itself up. Perhaps~~

MV 3.2 Scene with a number of comical and touching suitors. Then Bassanio's arrival (perhaps also a ballet) Portia's and Bassanio's love. [...?] Her fear at letting him choose from the caskets (see Act 3 Scene 2). ~~His firm decision to want to ...his great confidence?~~ His belief in his lucky star and fortune. He begins his choice, placing himself

[Page 5]

~~in front of the caskets,~~ the three caskets singing to the glory of Portia and of his love. When he has made his choice everyone bursts out in joy and thus the act ends.

### Act 3. The courtroom

A small scene which takes place before the court ~~is in session~~ People arrive for the meeting ~~have arrived and the court is in session~~ we are told (either through Antonio or Bassanio ~~who have hurried early to meet up~~ who may have arrived earlier or through some court attendants who are tidying up in the court room), that Bassanio in the highest moment of his happiness has had to leave his beloved in order to save his friend. ~~Then people arrive~~

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MV 4.1	<p>[Page 6]</p> <p>Then the whole court scene as in S., in such a way, however, that the duke <del>concludes</del> after t Shylock's exit concludes with words of praise addressed to Portia about <del>thus the court will stay victorious forever and a description of the laws of Venice which once again have appeared to be</del> and some general remarks on justice and humanity, which will always defeat wickedness and vindictiveness. The people shout 'Long live the Duke'. Thus the act ends in a serious, dignified and grandiose tone.</p> <p>4<sup>de</sup> Act</p> <p>Lorenzo and Jessica report that Portia and her chambermaid are staying in a convent while Bassanio is in</p>
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The final intrigue of the plot of MV about the missing rings is not included in Nielsen's synopsis.

Nielsen here makes a mess of who says what to whom.

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MV 5.1	<p>[Page 7]</p> <p>Venice. <del>Then the scene as in S.</del> The infatuation by moonlight as in S. Then Bassanio and Antonio arrive. Later, Portia and her chambermaid in <u>lawyers' cloaks</u>. They have been invited by Bassanio but have taken another route. Portia [in disguise] tells Bassanio that she doubts that Portia and her chambermaid have visited the said convent while Bassanio was in Venice. <del>Bassanio</del> She swears by all that is holy that she has seen both of them in Venice. Little by little Bassanio becomes worried and jealous. Finally, Portia throws off</p>
--------	--

In MV Shylock is not on the stage in the final act

---

Page 8	<p>her disguise. <u>Comment (I think this is better suited to an opera, it is more lucid)</u>. Then Shylock arrives, casting a shadow over the whole scenery. When he has left again the sun rises far away above the golden domes and spires of Venice. Hymn to the sun, <del>light</del> life, light and happiness.</p>
--------	---

Table 1: Carl Nielsen's synopsis for the whole opera, annotated translation of a diplomatic transcription of the Danish text in the manuscript (see facsimile of the manuscript at the end of the present article).

The following characters in Shakespeare's play are missing in Michaëlis' list of characters: Antonio ('The Merchant' in Shakespeare's title), Lancelot (Shylock's servant, who leaves him in favour of Bassanio) and Lancelot's father Gioppe (see Table 2).

It is both striking and radical that Antonio never appears in the first act, and apparently, according to the plan, was not meant to appear at all in Michaëlis' libretto.

[page 1]

Portia

*Opera in four Acts by Carl Nielsen*

*Text after Shakspeare's [sic] 'The Merchant of Venice'*

by Sophus Michaëlis

Duke of Venice

Portia

Prince of Marocco

Prince of Arragonia

} Portia's suitors

Bassanio

Gratiano, Bassanio's friend

Lorenzo, Jessica's lover

Shylock

Jessica, Shylock's daughter

Nerissa, Portia's maid

In MV Antonio's melancholy, not Bassanio's, is the topic of the introductory conversation of the play.

[page 2]

MV 1,1

First act

*Public square in Venice. In the background a canal crossed by a bridge. To the right, Shylock's house.*

*Bassanio and Gratiano meet each other*

Gratiano

Bassanio, my friend, welcome!

Always weighed down and thoughtful like one, who is deeply considering

the art of creating gold.

Bassanio

The art of creating gold –  
rather call it: creating debt!

---

[side 3]

Gratiano

This art you have practised for a long time –

Bassanio

And still I do not master it!

Gratiano

Look at these empty pockets!  
Easy come, easy go.

Bassanio

I fired all my golden arrows  
towards the golden bird of Mrs. Fortuna –  
now I only need one shot  
to make the lady finally smile at me.

MV 1.1, 140-152  
(paraphrased)

Everything has been shot away –  
provide a little powder for me,  
then things will go smoothly:  
I shall hit the mark.

Gratiano

Where does the bird sit on which you are aiming?

---

[page 4]

Bassanio

MV 1.1, 161-175

In Belmont lives a lady, rich in inheritance,  
but a thousand times more by virtue and beauty.  
The reputation of beautiful Portia is known far and wide,  
for the wind blows suitors her way,  
as if the sunshine ringlets of the fair  
were the golden skin of Kolkos' strand .  
Still, her gaze has tacitly promised me victory:  
I believe that Eros made me into a Jason,  
if only my ship could get somewhat better sails!

The same refer-  
ence to Jason's  
journey to Kol-  
chis as in MV

*(pointing to his clothes and opening his worn mantle)*

Gratiano

Indeed, your outfit could do with some improvement.

Bassanio

Get me 3.000 shabby ducats,  
then I shall bring back the golden fleece.

Gratiano

A little golden rain, yes!  
from where should it be raining?  
Is there no cloud in heaven,  
that can shed a little gold into this hat?

---

Linkage of 1.3 (the covenant of the loan of 3000 ducats) and Lorenzo's plans to carry Jessica off (MV 2.3, 16 ff.)

---

[page 5]

Psst, Lorenzo! Look, look –  
why are you tip-toeing like a cat?

*Lorenzo (from the bridge)*

Hush! Behind these windows  
a God is living, a God of all Gods!

Gratiano

Who is living in the house?

Bassanio

Shylock, the Jew.

Gratiano

Ha, ha! Lorenzo. You are wooing his purse?

*Lorenzo*

No, his daughter.

Gratiano

And here Bassanio to his ducats.  
Then unite!

*Lorenzo*

I do not ask permission of the Jew.

Bassanio

He will not lend me a brass farthing without a bond.

---

In MV it is Antonio, who makes the covenant of the loan of 3000 ducats, offering a bond of a pound of his own flesh as security (MV 1.3, 139-49)

---

[page 6]

*Lorenzo*

Nonsense, you must try!

Let us get the Jew out here! I will knock at the door at once,  
if only to get a glimpse of Jessica!

*Shylock (at the door)*

What do you want of me?

*Gratiano (drags him out, while Lorenzo adroitly puts his head through the door-opening)*

Listen! You must raise money!

*Shylock (quickly turning round)*

Away from the door! Are you going to commit burglary? *(slams door locked)*

*Lorenzo (aside)*

Now it has happened! Here is my loot *(hides a letter)*

*Gratiano*

Lend us 3000 ducats!

*Shylock*

The bond? Is it a good bond? Is it a good man?

*Gratiano (pointing at Bassanio)*

See for yourself! Here is – the good man.

*Bassanio*

Joking apart! Lend me 3000 ducats!

---

In MV the whole of this exchange of words is between Antonio and Shylock, not between Bassanio and Shylock.

The important adversarial relationship between the two ‘merchants’, Shylock and Antonio (culturally, economically and religiously), has completely disappeared from Michaëlis’ text.

---

[page 7]

Paraphrase of  
Shylock's long  
monologue in  
MV 1.3, 102-24

*Shylock (stares fixedly at Bassanio for a long time)*

Tell me, master, has a mongrel –money?

Oft you have scold me for being a lousy dog!

Do you believe that I can now spit out golden ducats  
in return for every time you have spat at my beard,  
when I ran my business at the Rialto?

*Bassanio*

A blodsucker you were – therefore I spat:

You never lent out without bloody usury.

But if only you had had a Christian soul towards me,  
by my God, we would never forget that you are a Jew!

*Shylock*

... and become a friend of mine! I see, I see ...

Dear Sir, do forgive me that only now do I forget  
how you spat and scorned me!

In thanks for your fair Christian spirit,

do take my money without interest and without a bond.

Am I kind towards you now?

*Bassanio*

If you meant this, that would show kindness.

*Shylock*

Done! You shall have 3000 ducats.

---

The contract is signed between Bassanio and Shylock, not, as in MV, between Antonio and Shylock.

---

[page 8]

*Bassanio*

Without a bond?

*Gratiano og Lorenzo*

Has the Jew gone mad?

*Shylock*

Without the bond!

*Bassanio*

Bravo, Shylock!

You may depend on my friendship!

You will be as dear to me as flesh and blood.

*Shylock*

O yes – like your flesh and blood – for my money I will have your flesh and blood – What do you think if we state in the contract, that if you do not pay back in due time, then you shall pay – shall we say – a pound of flesh, which I myself can take from your body wherever I may choose ?

*Bassanio*

Three months' credit? (*Shylock nods*)

If so, there is no danger!

*Shylock*

Danger? O Father Abraham, how can you have any fear?

MV 1.3, 156 ff.

What should I do with a pound of your flesh?

---

[page 9]

I think even beef is worth more than that.

I only want to be your friend. Do step inside,  
then we will draw up the contract!

*(enters the house with Bassanio)*

*(to Lorenzo)* Away from my door!

*Gratiano*

Lorenzo, you are shining like a reflection of the Jew's bright gold.

*Lorenzo*

Yes, this letter is the sun, the white letter of my bliss – though even whiter is the hand that wrote bliss to me!

Fair Jessica is mine! I can hear the beating of her heart:

towards mine, towards mine it flies through house and battens.  
She is as wise and pure as the pure diamond, and she is fair if ever mine eyes speak truly!

So fair and wise and honest from hair to heel  
shall she live and forever thrive in my faithful soul!

*Gratiano*

When is your break-in to take place, Lorenzo?

MV 2.4, 12-14

*Lorenzo*

Tonight she shall flee with me – dressed up in a page's cloak.  
Masked I shall steal away from Bassanio's feast.  
Through the window she will descend like a sun.

---

[page 10]

*Gratiano*

And I shall meet you with a fast gondola!  
*(both exit in different directions.)*

*Bassanio og Shylock*

*Bassanio*

Shylock, you are my friend.  
Never did I meet such a worthy Jew.  
Make me happy, come to me immediately tonight  
and have a meal with me and my friends!

*Shylock*

I shall come. But, Signor, remember:  
do not tempt me with pork!  
*(Bassanio leaves)*

*Shylock (spitting after him)*

Shame! Your own flesh tempts me.  
I hate you and all Christian dogs  
who have pushed my people into the dust  
– Vendetta I would have, if only I could!  
Israel's tribe is exiled in the dessert,  
accompanied by the whips of mockery with bended heads,  
and not a drop to quench our thirst in the drought,  
while we are wandering around, born to be scorned.

---

[page 11]

MV 3.1, 48-66,  
when it has  
turned out  
that Antonio  
will not be able  
to pay.

Has not a Jew eyes, mouth and limbs  
and senses like the Christian? Is the blood of Levi not red?  
Isn't he fed by the same nourishment, poisoned by the same venom  
and dying the same death?  
Cannot his lips smile, his eyes cry, and when he is wounded, will he  
not bleed then, and when kicked, must he not glow with vengeful-  
ness?

Revenge! God of Israel, let the enemy fall into my hands!  
Sentenced to your – the judge’s – sharp knife!  
Once and for all I will quench in flesh and blood  
the grudge saved up for millions of lives!  
Revenge! God of Israel,  
let the enemy fall into my hands!

*(he goes to the door, waving at Jessica)*

MV 2.5, 11 ff.

Jessica, take my keys, protect my house!  
I have been asked out tonight– I only accept out of hate,  
to gorge on the lavish Christians – they fawn on my gold.  
Look after the house, don’t look out of the window  
at the bawl and farce of the Christian fools!  
Bolt all the shutters of my sober house!

*(carefully locking the door and leaving)*

*Dusk has approached. Bright moonshine falls on Shylock’s house, glittering  
in the water of the canal.*

---

[page 12]

MV 2.6, 1-50

*Jessica (opening the window facing the canal)*

Wave, do you gurgle down there –  
towards the sea, towards the sea –  
The swan is rocking from her nest.  
Soon I myself shall spread my wings,  
follow like a migratory bird  
the call from the sea, towards the sea,  
build my nest on the mountaintop

Come Lorenzo, long awaited,  
bring me the burning glow of life.  
It is cold here in the stuffy room –  
proudly the ship will sail along  
towards a mild and sunny beach,  
where – like bridal candles on the meadow –  
young hearts are on fire!

*Gratiano (arriving with the gondola)*

Friends, let the lagoon sway  
to the amorous tones of the lute!  
Upon the singing waves  
the torchlight will skim like gold.

[page 13]

*Lorenzo (from the bridge: masked)*

Jessica, your happiness is calling!

*Jessica (in the window)*

I wonder who stands before the door here?

*Lorenzo*

Jessica, your happiness is calling –

*Jessica*

And I move towards the happiness.

*Lorenzo*

Come, my boy, my torchbearer!

*Jessica (jumps out; disguised as a page)*

Extinguish your torch! Hide my shame!

*Lorenzo*

No, my page is my admirer.

*Jessica*

Oh, I blush in my skin.

*Lorenzo*

Come, you are tarrying too long –  
our escape must be fast!

[page 14]

*Jessica (handing him a casket)*

Here are gems and money – our escape shall be golden!

*(they leave in the gondola with Lorenzo and Gratiano)*

*Gratiano (The song becomes distant)*

Friends, let the laguna swing  
to the starry sound of the lute!  
Upon the singing waves,  
the torchlight will skim in gold.

*Total silence. The stage remains empty for some time. Shylock comes sneaking, anxiously and quickly, stops, and suddenly notices the open window with the rope ladder hanging down, rushes into the house – goes to the window – and then out of the door again.*

*Shylock (shouting)*  
My daughter!  
My ducats!  
My daughter has run away!  
run away with a Christian,  
run away with my gold!  
Damnation. Damnation!  
Justice!  
Stop them!  
Stop the thief! Stop my daughter!  
Stop my ducats!  
Two bags of ducats!

---

In MV 2.8, 12-22 it is Salanio, who tells us of Shylock's reaction, not Shylock himself who expresses his grief.

---

[page 15]

*People crowd together. Urchins howl and whistle through their fingers.*

*Chorus*  
His daughter – his ducats –  
Ducats and his daughter!  
Hahahahahaha!  
Haha! We shall die from laughter!

*Shylock (furiously towards them)*  
What are you laughing at, spawn of a lizard!  
May cancer devour your tongues!  
Justice!  
The law shall seek them!  
The law shall find them!  
Give me back my daughter. Provide my gold!  
Get me back my jewels!  
I wish she were lying dead at my feet  
with the stones in her ears  
and the ducats in her coffin!  
Justice!  
The law!  
The Duke!

My daughter!  
My ducats!

*(Runs across the bridge, followed by the howling and whistling crowd).*

CURTAIN

Table 2: Sophus Michaëlis' libretto of the first act, annotated translation of manuscript in Torben Schousboe's Collection XIV, 2 (see facsimile of the whole manuscript at the end of the present article).

A single musical source is known in addition to the above-mentioned textual sources, namely the following unison ten-bar sketch with the heading 'Comic courting (Prince of Aragon?)' and the tempo marking *Moderato* (see Nielsen's synopsis above, page 4):



Ex. 1. Transcription from Nielsen's sketchbook, *The Royal Library, CNS 358a, fol. 72.*

### The Silent Woman (1926-1930), CNW A 2

For more than four years Nielsen was pondering writing an opera on the English playwright Ben Jonson's comedy *Epicœne, or The Silent Woman*, performed in London in 1609. According to his own information, he got the idea from reading 'Taine's book on English literature' (see letter to Ove Jørgensen below).<sup>26</sup> Later on, he seems to have discussed the idea with his wife Anne Marie, which is evident from a letter to her from May 1926 with the following short instruction: 'Thank you for the postcard. If you have not contacted The Royal Library yet, don't bother about Ben Jonson'.<sup>27</sup> About

<sup>26</sup> Hippolyte Taines, *Den engelske Litteraturs Historie* (French edition, 1863-64; Danish translation, 1874-77)

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Nielsen to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, 12.5.1926, CNB IX, 190.

a month later he reports from Damgaard that he and his old friend from Conservatoire days, Margrethe Rosenberg, are in full swing translating Jonson's comedy into Danish, adding somewhat sarcastically: 'I even think it's good for her to ponder on something else than her perpetual "Dreigliederung" and Steiner'.<sup>28</sup> The most exhaustive report on the work – which at the same time is an exposition of the main elements of Jonson's plot – is found in a letter from the summer of 1926 from Nielsen to another friend from his youth, Ove Jørgensen:

Talking about Jonson! It is not in order to learn English that I am going over *The Silent Woman*. The gist of the matter is that some months ago I was in bed and read about this comedy in Taine's book on English literature and – to tell you a deep secret – I felt like writing an opera on this topic; and as the comedy is neither available in any Scandinavian language nor in German or French, I got hold of an old English edition in The Royal Library and asked Miss Rosenberg to assist me in the translation of it. It is a masque comedy and the plot is the usual one with a rich uncle who cannot stand the slightest noise without flaring up etc., and a nephew who makes a fool of him, almost as in Holberg. Don't you see the musical potential? Nothing can be more fortunate for a composer: first the servants' silence and whole attitude which may be interrupted by a barrel organ in the courtyard; then the master's anger, again silence expressed through whispering music, after that the visit by the disguised and simulating 'Silent Woman' by whom he becomes tricked into marrying; after that intruding and congratulating friends and guests who make a hell of a noise (as agreed on beforehand). And then 'The Woman', who as soon as he has signed the marriage contract exposes herself as a chatty, noisy, rowdy and crazy slut, which fills him with insane horror. And finally at the very end a conciliatory solution.<sup>29</sup>

It seems, however, that Nielsen soon got cold feet, even if thoughts on *The Silent Woman* were still rummaging around at the back of his mind. In a letter to his wife from July 1928 – that is, two years later – he returned to the matter, but now including reflections about how at his age it would probably be more 'appropriate' – as he puts

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28 Letter from Nielsen to Anne Marie 4.6.1926, CNB IX, 235; CNL, 641. Margrete Rosenberg was absorbed in theosophical issues. The 'Trichotomy of the Social Organism' (*Soziale Dreigliederung*) in Steiner's teaching consists of *Geistesleben*, *Rechtsleben* and *Wirtschaftsleben*, being the equivalent of the three ideals of the French Revolution (Liberté, égalité, fraternité).

29 Letter to Ove Jørgensen 13.6.1926, CNB IX, 257-58; CNL, 646-47.

it – to engage with a topic more serious than Ben Jonson's tomfooleries, for example *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, which Anne Marie seems to have suggested to him.<sup>30</sup>

The last time Nielsen mentioned his opera plans was in an interview with the Swedish newspaper, *Göteborg-Tidningen*, from 14 December 1930, although it is not absolutely clear whether it is actually *The Silent Woman* he is talking about.<sup>31</sup> Asked by the journalist, he says that he has a text ready for a new comic opera in two acts, which he is already working on, and which he intends to have performed in Gothenburg when it is finished. But he does not mention which text he is talking about.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that musical ideas for *The Silent Woman* were on his mind during these years, at the same time as he was occupied with other works. In six of the sources for these works one can find short sketches explicitly labelled as ideas for *The Silent Woman*; the manuscripts in question – all in Nielsen's own hand – are:

a) Draft (autograph) of the *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* (CNW 43, source B, spring 1928): on page 19 of the draft there is a twelve-bar sketch with the title 'Allegretto moderato (Rondo?) or "The silent Vife [sic]"'.

b) Fair copy (copy and autograph) of *Rhapsody Overture. An Imaginary Journey to the Faroe Islands* (CNW 39, source A, 1927), end-dated 'Copenhagen 6 November 27'

On the verso of the last sheet is a five-bar sketch for two voices (treble and bass clefs) with the heading 'End of stanza in *The Silent Women* [sic!]' with the tempo indication *Allegretto*. The sketch has a considerable number of articulation and dynamic indications [see Example 2].

Allegretto

**pp**

Ex. 2.

30 Letter of 25.7.1928, CNB X, 244; CNL, 711.

31 *Santid*, 568-69.

- c) Pencil draft of 29 *Little Preludes for Organ or Harmonium* (CNW 96, source D, beginning of 1929):

Page 7 (in the middle of Prelude no. 7): two bar motif with the heading *The Silent Woman* (in Nielsen's hand).

Pages 33-34 (after Prelude no. 29 and pencil draft of the song 'Flower pollen from profusion', CNW 343): the first 12 bars of an *Andantino* for piano (CNW 91), which is known in full from three other sources (one autograph and two copies). The marking *Andantino* in Nielsen's hand is followed by a later (librarian's?) addition in brackets: [*The Silent Woman*]; in bb. 3 and 4 the left-hand stave is blank. It clearly looks like a casual sketch with corrections and deletions. The movement is included in facsimile in *CNU IV/1*, Add. 25, source A with the following cryptic addition, also in Nielsen's hand: 'This piece is fixed and insured in "The United Jutlandic Fire Insurance under the brand "Poplar Leaf"'. One of the two copies of the movement in The Royal Library is part of the uncatalogued material of the *Carl Nielsen Collection* whereas the other copy carries the signature C II, 10. Both copies have the heading in a foreign hand: *The Silent Woman*. As may be seen above, none of the titles of the four sources for *The Silent Woman* are in Nielsen's hand; they are all added by another. The connection between the movement and the planned opera thus seems to rest on a very fragile foundation. Both the added text mentioned above and the musical appearance of the movement rather indicate some kind of joke. If, on the other hand, this sketch does belong to the opera, it is the only fully written-out movement of *The Silent Woman*.

Page 36 (after the pencil draft of the song 'It's over for a short respite'):<sup>32</sup> eight-bar sketch in two parts with the title *The Silent Woman* and the tempo indication *Allegretto vivo*.

- d) *Three Motets* (CNW Coll.24), pencil sketch C, spring 1929.

Motet no. 3, page 2, lower system: Two bars followed by a repetition mark with the title *The Silent W.* in Nielsen's hand. The sketch is followed directly by a sketch of the alto and bass motifs in bb.46 ff.

- e) *Amor og Digteren* (CNW 23), spring 1930.

Complete pencil draft of the overture to Michaëlis' play, end-dated 'Klintholm 9-4-30'. On the reverse of the first folio of the overture are added several indetermi-

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32 The two songs in this manuscript on pages 33 and 35 (CNW 343 and 344) were published as *To Skolesange af Viggo Stuckenberg sat i Musik af Carl Nielsen* [Two School Songs by Viggo Stuckenberg set to music by Carl Nielsen], Birkerød [State School], 1929.

nate sketches in ink and pencil. At the top of the page a single two-stave-system with 7 bars (bar 3 crossed out) is added with the title in Nielsen's hand 'Allegretto. Silent Woman'.

- f) Unidentified musical bifolio in Nielsen's hand with the title *The Silent Woman* (CNS 357b/2): half of an A4 bifolio with music on both sides, comprising four incipits, each notated on two systems (see Examples 3-6 below).

Allegretto

Ex. 3

Allegretto

Ex. 4

Ex. 5



Ex. 6

These short musical sketches related to *The Silent Woman* were apparently notated casually and spontaneously, on manuscript paper containing music of other works on which the composer happened to be working. As is apparent from the list above, Nielsen seems to have used any manuscript paper that was to hand at a given time, writing down his ideas on any staff that happened to be free. The sketches over a period of four years, combined with Nielsen's own remarks in the interview quoted above about his ongoing work on a new opera, could indicate that at a certain time more substantial material for an opera on Ben Jonson's *The Silent Opera* existed. If so, this is now lost. But in any case it seems beyond doubt that he was preoccupied with such a work and that ideas came to his mind concurrently with his work on other compositions.<sup>33</sup>

One by one, and for various reasons, Nielsen's opera plans, as sketched above, came to nothing, and as we all know, he never finished other operas than the two well-known works from the beginning of the century, *Saul and David* and *Maskarade*. The five fragments, however, show how at certain periods of his life he had thoughts on further contributions to the opera genre – in the early years as a logical consequence of his great interest in international opera, in connection with his self-educational tours, and towards the end of his life perhaps rather as a token of the fact that he had by then overcome his many frustrations with regard to The Royal Theatre – the only theatre in Denmark at that time that would have had the resources to mount a new opera by him.

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<sup>33</sup> Five years after Nielsen had given up Ben Jonson's comedy, Richard Strauss wrote his opera, *Die schweigsame Frau*, based on the same text!

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Nielsen's synopsis of the whole opera (excluding the two pages between pp. 5 and 6 with a synopsis of the beginning of Judith), manuscript in The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV.2.

*Handwritten synopsis in Danish:*

Hus og skændet for de to Lærere  
 , at skat. )  
 (Udlever Selvfølgelig Hus )  
 Antonio, Bassami og <sup>Lorenzo</sup> ~~Gratiano~~ )  
 Bassami lader Antonio læse  
 sig over til <sup>Frederik</sup> ~~den~~ tryk Prebent.  
~~Antonio~~ <sup>Antonio</sup> ~~for~~ ~~selvfølgelig~~ ~~at~~ ~~ost~~  
~~for~~ ~~Antonio~~ ~~for~~ ~~selvfølgelig~~ ~~at~~ ~~ost~~  
~~Antonio~~ ~~for~~ ~~selvfølgelig~~ ~~at~~ ~~ost~~  
 Bassami smad den bekjendte  
 Forskningen. Gratiano og  
 Bassami indlyder Selvfø-  
 lsel til at komme til  
 sig til en Festlighed.  
 (Begge) La Monolog fyldt  
 med en Gift og Hvid ~~ind~~

2) ~~Jens Jensen~~, Bemærkning:  
 Udder den ~~este~~ formig Igen  
 har Grøtens stadig klyget  
 op til Jessias Vindri kend  
 ket ikke har undgået D=  
 des Opmærksomhed.

Det bliver det bekræftet at  
 mærkes. I ~~den~~ g. var til  
 fest, men pålægge forin  
 den ~~Lanset~~ og Jessia at  
 passe godt på Huset.

Stil med <sup>Megmubstien</sup> Jessen de adbr  
 Vindmet ud til Kammer  
 og <sup>har</sup> ~~synes~~ en af melankolsk  
 sværme <sup>4</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>5</sup> ~~indhold~~ <sup>1</sup> ~~konolog~~





2<sup>de</sup> Act Belmont 4)

~~Portia og hendes Kammerpige~~  
~~at beklædt med et læge iført med~~  
~~Denne 1<sup>de</sup> Act skulde helst be-~~  
~~gynde ~~med~~ stilfærdigt og lidt af~~  
~~te lidt arbejde sig op. Mærke~~

Løse med nogle komiske og rovin-  
 de Scener. (Sepan Bassamas turkent.  
 Concraska og sin Ballet) Portia og Bas-  
 mas Lykkeskud. Hendes ~~støt~~ Angst  
 for at lade ham velgøre <sup>blant hemme</sup> se 2<sup>de</sup> Act  
 2<sup>de</sup> Scene) Hans faste ~~Protestation~~  
~~at vilde ~~stige~~ hans ~~stærk~~ ~~Blod~~~~  
~~glædeligt.~~ Hans Tro paa sin gode  
 Hjerte og Lykke. Hans <sup>man</sup> ~~stærk~~ ved <sup>gaar til valgt</sup>





Forklædningerne. <sup>1720</sup> Dei finis is beem  
 i en Opaa, det er mum anskueligt.

Saa kommer Lod og Kort en  
 Skjæge over det Alle. Da man  
 atter gaar stær Solen og Sagnet  
 bort over Vinedigs gylden Kupler  
 og Spir. Sagnet tes Solen, Sagnet  
Linet, Sagnet og Lykke.

1<sup>st</sup> Akt1<sup>st</sup> Afdeling

Holofernis Leir.

2<sup>de</sup> Afdeling I. Israeliternes Stad. ~~Abraham~~  
Slutte med Binnem om  
~~Israeliternes~~ ~~by~~ ~~spæls~~2<sup>de</sup> AktI) ~~Ved Holofernis Leir. Israeliternes by~~  
R) ~~Lignende~~ Lignende gennem tre LignII) I. Lignin  
3<sup>de</sup> Akt(Natt) En ensom Mand, der holder  
Vokning frae Mennene. Ligt efter lidt  
bliver det lysene i Horisonten og endelig

1<sup>ste</sup> Aft

## II Fest. Nogle Paroliter blev.

Achiv ind. Hans Heren er kendt  
 ved Røggren. Der festlige for glade fester  
 med lidt efter lidt paa Grund af den Del-  
 tagels og stignende Sparvins A<sub>2</sub> Fortælling  
 vilke i blandt Folket. Der strømmen Lær  
 og Fleer til. En enkelt Gruppen var  
 borte hihvorden enden Lyngstuen, men  
 snart festerne ogsaa den og alt Folket.  
 enden Gjennemprøvet Røddet i Lyngden er  
 nu ferskvedet om Achiv og den ~~med~~  
~~Røddet~~ ~~for~~ ~~den~~ blev den festlige

Palitiken  
for 27 April (1)  

---

for 9<sup>de</sup> April (2)

Læs nu Petracchens som hos 1.  
 dog saaledes at Hertugin slutter  
 efter skyldes Portgans, slutter med  
~~en~~ <sup>rosmeget</sup> Ord til Portgans  
 nogle ~~en~~ at saaledes vil Petracchens  
~~stærklig seer og en Karakteristisk af~~  
~~Vendige Love som atter har vist sig~~  
~~at være~~ og nogle almindelige  
~~Bemærkninger~~  
 Ord om Ret og Humanitet, der  
 altid vil seje over Ondskab og  
 Levnlige gerninger. Folket venter  
 et "Lem Hertugin": Aden slutter  
 saaledes på en alvorlig, værdig  
 og grandios Tone.

Lorenzo og Jessica oplyser at Portgans  
 og ~~Manden~~ <sup>4 de</sup> ~~Portgans~~ <sup>sket</sup>

stier Løben og som en stor rød  
 Hedske. Indtils Raabender  
 Staden. Væsten slaaes til Slag man  
 en stor Gønge. Folket kommer ~~til~~  
 til, ~~og~~ Portene bliver aabne og ind  
 kommer i den I. og hendes Pige.  
 Pigen bliver Halafrens afhuggen  
~~han et Hoved~~  
 Hoved og Sværdet har et krummet  
 Sværd i Haanden

Appendix 2: Sophus Michaëlis' libretto of Act 1, manuscript in The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV,2.

# Portia

Opera i fire Akter af Carl Nielsen.

Texten efter Shakespeares "Købmand i Venedig"  
af Sophus Michaëlis.

Hertigen af Venedig

Portia

Prinsen af Marocco

Prinsen af Aragonien

} Portias Begjæret

Bassanio

Gratiano, Bassanios Va

Lorenzo, Jessicas Bøder

Shylock

Jessica, Shylocks Datter

Nerissa, Portias Kammerpige

## Første Akt

Offentlig Plads i Venedig. I Baggrunden Kanal,  
hvorover en Bro. Til højre Skypeters Hus.

Bassanio og Gratiano møder hinanden

Gratiano

Bassanio, min Ven, vel mødt!  
Altid tungs og tantefærd  
som en, der grænker dykk  
den Kænd at gøre Gæld.

Bassanio

Den Kænd at gøre Gæld —  
sig heller: gøre Gæld!

3

Gratiano

Den kind di dyked lang -

Bassanio

Og kan den ej alligevel!

Gratiano

Se disse tomm Kommer!

Lad gaar, hvad lad der kommer.

Bassanio

Hod fra Fortinas Giesfigt skad  
 is alle min galden til -  
 nu falkes mig bin det sidste kind,  
 at endelig Damer skal tie mig smil.

Alle bond e skid -

skaf mig lidt kridt,

sa gaar det let:

Ramme is skal

lige i blod.

Gratiano

Hvor sidde sigler, du har sigte par?

Bassanio

I Belmont bor en Dame, rig ud Arv,  
men tusind Gang mere ud Dyd og Akuel.

By gaar der of den dijje Portia,  
thi Vinden blaar Bylarn dithen,

som var den Kønne fage Solkinslokken  
selv det ynde Skind paa Kolkos' Strand.

Dog hender Dets her stund mig Lovel Segr:

It tror, at Eros kaard mig til Jason,  
om blot min Skind fik lidt bedre Lij!

(pegt paa sin Kædet og spile  
sin luelike Klæde ...)

Gratiano

Ja vist, de kæng til at fixe og dit Skind.

Bassanio

Skaf mig 3000 Livad di Kæde,  
som skal is for hæn det ynde Skind.

Gratiano

Lidt Gædregu ja!

hvor skal det regne fra?

Har Himlen ingen Sky!

der dyose kan lidt Gæd: dennu Hat?

5.

Vel, Lorenzo! Se, se -  
hvorfor gaar du paa Tax som en Kat?

Lorenzo (fra Broen)

Tys! bag disse Ruder  
der bor en Gud, en Gud for alle Guder!

Gratiano

Hvem bor i Huset?

Bassanio

Jøden Styloek.

Gratiano

Haha! Lorenzo, du byder til hans Ring?

Lorenzo

Nej, til hans Datter.

Gratiano

Og her Bassanio til hans Datter.  
Saa slid jer sammen!

Lorenzo

Jeg spørger ikke Jøden om Loven.

Bassanio

Mig laaner han ej en Hvid foruden Pand.

6.

Lorenzo

Snak, di skal prøv!  
 Herud med Jøde! Her er banker paa,  
 for bed at skind af Jessica at faa!

Shylock ( i Dorn )

Hvad vil I mig?

Gratiano (trækker han frem, mens Lorenzo i et  
 hi stikker hoved ind ad Dorninge)

Her! I saa sluffe Damp!

Shylock (vender sig hurtigt om)Bort fra Dorn! Vil I gøre Dumb! (smækker Dorn i  
 Lani)Lorenzo (afside)

Aks &amp; det skal! Her &amp; mit Byth. (stikker ad Dorn til sig)

Gratiano

Laa os 3000 Dikater!

Shylock

Pantet? &amp; Pantet godt? &amp; Manden god?

Gratiano (pejer paa Bassanio)

Ja selv! her staa - den gode Mand.

Bassanio

Spas til Side! Laa mig 3000 Dikater!

7.

Shylock (se længe stift på Bassanio)

Sig, Herre, har en Kæber - Penge?  
 Hvor tit har I mig skaldet en skævet Hånd!  
 For I, is mit kan spytte Gieddikalen  
 for hver Gang, I har spyttet i mit Kæber,  
 naar på Rialto is Forretning drar?

Bassanio

Bloddrage var I - Derfor spytted is :  
 I laant aldrig uden blodig Læger.  
 Men hvad I en Kristen Sjæl angang med mig,  
 ved Gud, om is is glemmer, I en Jøde!

Shylock

... og blir min Ven! Ja saa, ja saa ...  
 Keen Herre, tilgiv dog, at først mit is glemmer,  
 hvordan I spytted og forhaaned mig!  
 Til Tak for Eders smukke Kristenand,  
 tag min Penge mit foride Rentur  
 og uden Pant. Er mit is god?

Bassanio

Meent di det, det ildt var Gørlid!

Shylock

God! I skal for 3000 Dikaler.

8.

Bassanio

Fonden Paul?

Gratiano & Lorenzo

Er Jøden gal?

Shylock

Fonden Paul!

Bassanio

Brave Shylock!

Gør Regning nu mit Venkøb!

Du bliver her mig som mit Kød &amp; Blod.

Shylock

Oja - som Eders Kød & Blod -  
 for min Søns fars er Eders Kød & Blod -  
 Hvad mener I: Vi sælger: Kontraktens,  
 at om I ej til ret Tid betaler,  
 saa betaler I - hvad mener I! - et Kæmpens Kød,  
 is selv den valgt, hvor er det: Eders Kød?

Bassanio

For Maandens Kredit? (Shylock nikker)  
 Saa har det ingen Sars!

Shylock

Fare? O Fader Abraham, hvor kan I flygte?  
 Hvad skal I med et Pind af Eders Kød?

9.

Is tror, selv Oxekød er mere værd.  
 Is vil kun ven Ester Ve. Trod indenfor,  
 saa sætter i Kontraktten og!  
 (saa ind med Bassanio)  
 (til Lorenzo) Bort fra min Dør!

Gratiano

Lorenzo, det strækker som et Genløber  
 af Jorden blanke Guld.

Lorenzo.

Ja, dette Brev er Solen, min Lykkes Rind Brev -  
 dog hvidere en Maanden, som Lykken til mig skrev!  
 Skyn Jessica er min! Is kan høre Hjertet bankte:  
 med mit, med mit det flyver igennem Min og Beante.  
 Han er saa vis og stær som den store Diamant,  
 og skøn høn og saa sand som mit fire taler sandt!  
 Saa skøn og vis og herly og sand fra Haar til Hæl  
 skal høn erig to og Gæve i min trofast Gjal!

Gratiano

Maar skal dit Kludstid see, Lorenzo?

Lorenzo

I Aften Borte høn med mig - i Pagedragt.  
 Maskeret lister bort is fra Bassanio's Guld.  
 Igenom Vinduet med høn stige som en Sol.

10.

Gratiano

Og jeg skal med ud en rap Gondol!  
(Begynde ind to forskellige sider)

Bassanio med ShylockBassanio

Shylock, det er min Ven.  
Aerjig jeg trof om brude Jæder.  
Gør mig den Glad, som mit Skop: Affen  
O spis med mig o min Venner!

Shylock

Jeg Sommer. Men, Herr, kære!  
fisk mig ill til at spise Lundebrød!  
(Bassanio gaar)

Shylock (spytter efter ham)

Tur! Dit øye Kød mig fisker.  
Jeg hader dig o alle kristen Hænder,  
som vattet har mit Folk: Skovet  
— Blodhan is god, om li Lunde!  
Lanfflygtig dragt Israels Kægt: Affen,  
for Spottens Lundebrød med Brim- Rækker,  
o inge Draabe Lækker so: Torden,  
mens skændelsøstet is om Jøde flækker.

11.

Har du en jøde ihl offen, Münd og Lemmer  
 og Lause som du kristen? Er han Blod ej rodt?  
 Hvor kan ihl af den samme Ad,  
 forgives af samme Gifte og dør den samme Død?  
 Han ej han Lale lo, han offen yode,  
 og naar han saaret, maer han da ej blod,  
 og sparkes han, af Haantpørd feterglød?  
 Haan! Israels Gud, giv offende: mi Haand!  
 Kampfælde til din sberpe Dommerdind!  
 Opspæred tag for Millioner Liv  
 hi slukke til enjens: Kød og Blod!  
 Haan! Israels Gud, giv offende: mi Haand!

(gaar til Døren og vinker ad Jessica)

Jessica, tag min Kæpser, voyt mit Hüs!  
 B x büst ind til Aften - gaar bin ind af Had,  
 at taer paa de gode kristen - de slesker for mit Gied.  
 Paa vel paa Hüsset, sig ej ind af Kindert  
 efter de kristne Narres Skraal og Mümnespil!  
 Stang alle Skodder for mit adri Hüs!  
 (Løkke omlyst dit Ding  
 (gaut))

Skinnings x faldet paa.      Stædt Maanndin faldet  
 over Skyloer Hüs og gliter      : Kandelens Vandr.

12.

Jessica (aabur Viindur ið tí Kavalan)

Bely, blíkka di dærna —  
 burt mod Havet, burt mod Havet —  
 Svannur viggur frá síni Redi.  
 Snart þú sérst skal Vindur spræ,  
 bely son a Træfjót Krævet  
 burt mod Havet, burt mod Havet,  
 bygg Elippukjört min Redi.

Kom, Lorenzo, vortu laug,  
 bring mig Livets Skammaspæ!  
 Hei a Goldi; Aveni Stang —  
 stolt skal bely Skibts Gang  
 mod a mist og sollyr Strand,  
 hvor son Brudekys; Eng  
 ingu Hjater staa; Brand!

Gratiano (Lomur og Gensole)

Vener, lad Lagunen gung  
 tí da Salu Keyg of Liith!  
 Hei a Belyum, son eng,  
 Faklamu slau gyldeu Smiit.

13.

Lorenzo (fra Broen; maskeret)

Jessica, di Lykke kalder!

Jessica (i Vinduet)

Men nu er for Døren staa?

Lorenzo

Jessica, di Lykke kalder -

Jessica

Og ta Lykken til is gaa.

Lorenzo

Kom, min Damp, min Fakkelbær!

Jessica (stjærlid) (forstaaet som Damp).

Stik di Fakkel! Stjæl min Ham!

Lorenzo

Nej, min Damp er min Bismær.

Jessica

Aa, is roder i min Ham.

Lorenzo

Kom, di Damp æt for Damp -  
hastig renn mee vor Flygt!

14.

Jessica (rædder hun at skin)

Hvor er Eds betænksomhed og  
 - gylde ven skal vor hjælp!

(.book: Gonzolo og Lorenzo og Gretch)

Platano (Lange finere?)

Vener, lad Lassen gyng  
 til en Lærskole og lath!  
 Men ad Bologna, som syng,  
 Fakteren skal gyng Lunt.

Alle blive stille. Scenen stæv og fiabde tone.  
 Skylock kommer angst og herty listend, stander og er i et  
 med det andre. Vinden og den uheldigst Ræbtig, stykke ind  
 i Huset - til Vindst - derufter ind i en af døren.

Skylock (singer)

Min Datter!

Min Datter!

Min Datter rømt!

rømt med en Kvinde!

rømt med mit Guld!

Fordømt, fordømt!

Rædfærdig!

Stop dem!

Stop Tyven! Stop min Datter!

Stop min Datter!

To Lov og Datter!

5.

Folk stinde sammen. Gadedranjen hyle y pibe : Frynne.

Kor

Hai Datter - hai Di-kater -  
 Di-kater y hai Datter!  
 Hahahahahaha!  
 Haha! i dir ef Latter!

Skyløck (rasent imod den)

Had spine I, I fylgninge!  
 Gud kraft fæstem Eder Tunge!  
 Retfordigt!  
 Lova skal opp den!  
 Lova skal fins den!  
 Gud mig min Datter, sk of mig mit Gid!  
 Skaf mig mine fæder!  
 Gud him laa dyd he for min Sot  
 end Skene : sit fru  
 y Di-kater : sin Kist!  
 Retfordigt!  
 Lova!  
 Skatige!  
 Min Datter!  
 Min Di-kater!

(Læs over Boven, fulgt af den byland y pibeand  
 Mængd).

Færd.

## A B S T R A C T

In addition to the two finished operas of Nielsen, scattered sources show that throughout his life he had at least five other opera projects in mind, which for various reasons were given up at different stages in their progress. The article presents the sources that are available for these projects, comprising the following works: *Judith*, *Psycke*, *The Silent Woman*, *Portia*, and *Fru Marie Grubbe*. The focus of the article is on Nielsen's plan to compose an opera based on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* under the working title *Portia*. Two important manuscripts in the Royal Library show that Nielsen himself had worked out a complete synopsis for the opera, and that the librettist, Sophus Michaëlis, had made a full text of the first act. A comparison of the two manuscripts and Shakespeare's play reveals that the opera would have been quite different from the model with its focus on the character of Portia and the leaving out the merchant Antonio. Nielsen apparently gave up the idea, and no music from the work in progress worth mentioning is known.