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# LOUIS GLASS AND CARL NIELSEN

## Opposites in Danish Musical Life<sup>1</sup>

By Claus Røllum-Larsen. Translated by Marie-Louise Zervides and David Fanning

What has previously been said about a certain competitive relationship between the rising genius Carl Nielsen and a number of his contemporary composer colleagues, who inevitably felt this new force in Danish music as a hindrance to their own careers, especially applies to Louis Glass, whose fate from birth – he was born on 23 March 1864, thus a year before Carl Nielsen – and throughout his life was to be viewed in relation to his great fellow artist.<sup>2</sup>

These words by the composer and vocal coach Ejnar Jacobsen (1897-1970) set the agenda for this article. First and foremost on the basis of the few existing letters from Glass (1864-1936) Carl Nielsen (1865-1931), I shall consider firstly how their development grew in different directions despite there being some parallels, and secondly how their mutual relationship was influenced by the two very different stances they would represent in the Danish musical life of their time.

The generation of Danish composers born in the 1860s is a varied group with very different destinies and places in music history. Only three of these managed to make a name for themselves in Danish music history: namely Louis Glass, Fini Henriques (1867-1940) and Carl Nielsen. It would be natural to mention another composer from that generation, Gustav Helsted (1857-1924), who although he was performed

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- 1 This article is a revised and expanded version of the author's article 'Louis Glass og Carl Nielsen – modsætninger i dansk musik. Deres forhold belyst hovedsagelig gennem breve fra Louis Glass', in Anne Ørbæk Jensen, John T. Lauridsen, Erland Kolding Nielsen and Claus Røllum-Larsen eds.: *Musikvidenskabelige kompositioner. Festskrift til Niels Krabbe 1941. 3 October 2006* (= Danish Humanist Texts and Studies 34, edited by Erland Kolding Nielsen), Copenhagen 2006, 591-602. Reprinted by permission of the editors.
  - 2 *Hvad der foran er sagt om et vist Konkurrenceforhold mellem det fremtrængende Geni Carl Nielsen og en Del af hans samtidige Komponistkolleger, der nødvendigvis maatte mærke denne nye Kraft i dansk Musik som en Hindring for deres egen Udfoldelse, gælder især for Louis Glass, hvis Skæbne det blev saa at sige fra Fødselen – han er født den 23. Marts 1864, altsaa Aaret inden Carl Nielsen – og hele Livet igennem at blive stillet i Relation til sin store samtidige Kunstfælle, Ejnar Jacobsen and Vagn Kappel, Musikkens Mestre. Danske Komponister.* Copenhagen 1947, [vol. 2], 354.

until the beginning of the 1920s in a contemporary music context – albeit with only one single piece, his String Quartet No. 6 in F minor, Op. 33 (c. 1917)<sup>3</sup> – would soon be largely forgotten after his death in 1924. Fini Henriques composed both large works for the stage and a number of chamber works, but after the turn of the century he focused on songs and pieces for piano and violin and is therefore not directly comparable to Helsted and Glass. It does, however, make sense to mention Glass in the same breath as Carl Nielsen: not because he competed with Nielsen for the title of leading Danish composer of their era, but because there were clear parallels, certainly in their early years, between the output of the two composers, which means that as a pair they have become representative, not least for future generations, of two contrasting musical movements – Glass of Late Romanticism and Nielsen of Modernism. This is of course what Ejnar Jacobsen was driving at.

The parallels may be found first in that Glass and Nielsen were the two from their generation who were active to a significant extent in the symphonic and other weighty instrumental genres. Not long after 1900, they had each produced two symphonies, as well as a number of string quartets, a violin sonata and also songs to texts by J.P. Jacobsen and others. Both regarded their symphonies as milestones along the way of their composing careers, but stylistically they were far apart, right from the beginning, and after the turn of the century they moved if anything even further away from one another.

In their early careers, they belonged to the same group of young composers who wished to define themselves within a Danish musical life which for them seemed reactionary and closed. Thus their paths crossed at the end of the 1880s as they both became members of the board of the *Symphonia* society at its formation in 1889. The society would become the harbour for young, hard-working composers and would enable performance of their works.<sup>4</sup> Nielsen left the board probably before 1892, while Glass and Helsted, together with the publisher brothers Jonas (1850-1919) and Alfred Wilhelm Hansen (1854-1923), ran the society until its dissolution in 1895.

Both Glass and Carl Nielsen had their works performed in *Symphonia*. Glass premiered Nielsen's first large-scale piano piece, the Symphonic Suite, Op. 8 on 5 May 1898. But the composer was clearly not pleased with the performance. In a letter to his

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3 Claus Røllum-Larsen: *Impulser i Københavns koncertrepertoire 1900-1935: Studier i præsentationen af ny, især udenlandsk instrumentalmusik* (= Danish Humanist Texts and Studies Volume 25, edited by Erland Kolding Nielsen), Copenhagen 2002, vol. 1, 159, and Røllum-Larsen. 'Musikskelskabet af 14. Marts 1896. En rekonstruktion og en karakteristik af dets repertoire', *Fund og Forskning* 58 (2018), 131-87.

4 According to the article 'Symphonia', dated Copenhagen March 1890, the Royal Danish Library, Collection of Pamphlets and Corporate Publications: Angul Hammerich's Programme Collection: *Koncertprogrammer 1889-1890*.

Swedish composer colleague Bror Beckman (1866-1929), he wrote: ‘Glass did a great job studying and playing my Suite by heart; but despite many good moments in his interpretation, he hasn’t grasped the spirit of my music.’<sup>5</sup> It is difficult for us to know what displeased Nielsen in the performance; perhaps it was Glass’s generous rubato and his rich pedalling.<sup>6</sup> But there is no doubt that the two composers had already placed themselves in different positions on the stylistic map at the time; Nielsen had taken his starting point in the works of Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák and Johan Svendsen, while Glass, who in the 1880s had studied at the Conservatoire in Brussels, had clearly learned from César Franck, Bruckner, and towards the turn of the century perhaps even Mahler. We can only speculate whether this difference in musical stylistic outlook was apparent in Glass’s performance of the Symphonic Suite.

Less than a year after the dissolution of Symphonia, another society for contemporary music came into existence: The Music Society of 14 March 1896, founded on the initiative of the civil servant and writer on music William Behrend (1861-1940), together with Glass and Helsted. Among the roughly 25 founding members was also Nielsen.<sup>7</sup> How much Glass and Nielsen encountered one another in this connection is difficult to ascertain, and Nielsen’s letters do not show any evidence of his participating in the society’s gatherings. The repertoire at the concerts was also quite extraordinary, including performances of symphonies by Bruckner and Mahler in versions for piano four hands or piano duo, and for some of the members, these musical experiences left a lasting impression. This was the case for editor Carl Behrens (1867-1946), who in his memoirs wrote:

Bruckner’s symphonies arranged for two pianos brought tidings from Austria’s great, yet here almost unknown, symphonist. Behrend was an indefatigable guide with his introductions, [while] Gustav Helsted’s sarcasm and Louis Glass’s artistic mind were the abiding memory of those now so distant, meaningful evenings.<sup>8</sup>

5 Letter of 4-5.5.1895 to Bror Beckman, CNB I, 416, CNL, 143. *Glass havde gjort et stort Arbejde ved at indstudere og uden Noder spille min Suite; men Aanden i min Musik har han, trods mange gode Momenter i Opfattelsen, ikke faaet fat paa.*

6 Characteristics identified in Gerhardt Lyng: *Danske Komponister i det 20. Aarhundredes Begyndelse*, 2nd. revised and abridged version, Copenhagen 1917, 94.

7 *Referatbog fra Musikselskabet af 14 Marts 1896*, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Håndskriftsamlingen: NKS 1748 2°. For more on the Society, see Claus Røllum-Larsen: *Impulser i Københavns koncertrepertoire 1900-1935*, vol. 1, 117f.; and Røllum-Larsen: ‘Musikselskabet af 14. Marts 1896’.

8 *Bruckners Symfonier omsat for to Klaverer bragte Bud om Østrigs store, herhjemme næsten ubekendte Symfoniker. Behrend var den utrættelige Vejleder i sine Indledninger, Gustav Helsteds Sarkasme, Louis Glass’ Kunstnersind er Erindringen om hine nu saa fjærne betydningsfulde Aftener.* Carl Behrens, *Erindringer: Mennesker og Begivenheder*, Copenhagen 1937, 157.

These performances also left a great impression on Glass; but as already noted, we do not know whether Nielsen even participated in any other meetings than the founding one.

After the turn of the century, both Nielsen and Glass continued their work on new, large-scale pieces; Nielsen had his first opera *Saul and David* performed in 1902, and in 1906 his next one, *Maskarade*. Then in 1911 he completed both his Violin Concerto and Symphony No. 3, *Sinfonia Espansiva*, works that would establish his international reputation. In 1900-1901, Glass wrote his most popular piece, the Symphony No. 3 in D, Op. 30, *The Forest*, which was performed in both Sweden and Germany over the next decade,<sup>9</sup> and with his Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 43, from c. 1905-1908, he would create one of the largest, most monumental Danish symphonies to date (around 60 minutes in duration). Already during these years, however, Glass nevertheless felt himself becoming disconnected from the Danish mainstream. In 1907 he wrote to Edvard Grieg: 'It is difficult for me to comprehend that I in particular, who truly crave "the new", should have to sit back, half uncomprehending, not even with the desire to be part of the dance; for how odd does this sound: that I'm feeling rather good in my somewhat isolated position.'<sup>10</sup> It is reasonable to assume that it is Carl Nielsen he is referring to.

The opposition between the two composers' works, which already seemed quite considerable, would become even more conspicuous around the years of World War I. Crucially, Carl Nielsen in this period would be fully immersed in the composition of folklike songs, thereby taking a definitive step in the direction of becoming a popular composer. With the appearance of the two collections with the title *A Score of Danish Songs* in 1915 and 1917, he would help to lay the groundwork for a public singing culture, which is especially linked to the folk high school [*folkehøjskolen*] and its melody book, of which Carl Nielsen would be the first co-publisher in 1922.

Almost like a 'mirror-image' [*modbillede*], the journey of Louis Glass moved in the years just before the War into theosophy – a movement which at the time attracted a number of artists, including composers. Many of Glass's most important works may be considered as auditory expressions of this exclusive world-view, which becomes clearly apparent in the motto on which Glass based his *Fantasia for Piano and*

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9 A comparison between the programme notes for Glass's *Forest Symphony* and Nielsen's overture *Helios* may be found in Claus Røllum-Larsen, 'Skovstemninger og stærkt sollys', in Henrik Wivel (ed.), *Drømmetid: Fortællinger fra Det Sjælelige Gennembruds København*, Copenhagen 2004, 78-87.

10 *Det er mig lidt svært at forstå at netop jeg, der så gerne vilde 'det ny', skal sidde tilbage, halvt uforstående, ja neppe engang følende lyst til at være med i Dansen, thi hvor besynderligt det end lyder: jeg føler mig ganske vel ved min lidt isolerede Stilling.* Letter from Glass to Edvard Grieg, dated January 1907, Bergen Public Library, Grieg collection.

*Orchestra* from 1913: 'From the eternal dwellings of the spirit tones resound, which summon man. And man turns away from the world, in order to find peace within.'<sup>11</sup>

But already several years before he started to work on his fantasy, Glass had changed his compositional focus. In December 1916 – that is, the same year as Carl Nielsen's Symphony No. 4, *The Inextinguishable*, had been premiered and performed another three times in Copenhagen – Glass wrote the following to the conductor and composer Peder Gram (1881-1956):

My Fourth Symphony draws a division between two periods: an earlier one in which the external life sought to connect with the internal and exalted, and a later one in which this exalted life expanded and the internal became secondary and transitory, which continues to seek explanation and justification. The symphony therefore deals with the urge and longing for life, that is to say, life in its higher sense. Once on a summer's day, when I was walking through a forest of birdsong, it was just like I had completed the instrumentation sketch for the ending of the first Allegro – I had an astounding experience, only simply having to listen in order to hear the entire section being played. Despite previously having encountered something similar – for all composers are probably familiar with this phenomenon – I can't forget this day, so strong was the impression it made on me that it was I who appreciated the throbbing pulse of life./ It is strange that it has not previously occurred to me that very similar thoughts propelled Carl Nielsen during the composition of his Fourth Symphony, and the reason for this is surely that he uses other words. ... In the Adagio of my symphony, I tried to find expression in the warmth of the heart, in love for everything that lives. ... [The Scherzo is] a tone poem about 'Avalon', that island of happiness and peace which we yearn for in this deafening world. This sacred place is the goal of all longing./ The Finale is a reinforced expression of these heaven-storming longings./ Therefore my Fourth, too, is an expression of life, that is, of that life which we vaguely imagine we are able to approach – to extend ourselves towards – and hold within ourselves as a higher form of consciousness and a greater happiness.<sup>12</sup>

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11 *Fra Aandens evige Boliger lyder Toner, der kalder paa Mennesket. Og Mennesket vender sig bort fra Verden for i sit Indre af finde Freden.*

12 *Min 4de Symfoni danner ligesom Skel imellem to Perioder, en tidligere, hvori det ydre Liv søgte at stille sig i Rapport til det indre og højere, og en senere, hvori dette højere Liv fik større Vækst og det ydre blev det sekundære og forbigående, der i hint søgte sin Forklaring og Begrundelse. Symfonien handler derfor om Trangen til og Længslen efter Livet, d.v.s. Livet i højere Forstand./ Da jeg en Sommerdag gik igennem den af Fuglesang opfyldte Skov – det var netop som jeg havde tilendebragt Instrumentationsskitzen til*



Glass mentions that Nielsen must have had similar thoughts when he wrote *his* Symphony No. 4, *The Inextinguishable*. Let us therefore consider the programme note for the latter work:

The composer, in using the title *The Inextinguishable*, has attempted to suggest in a single word what only the music itself has the power to express fully: the elementary will to life./ Faced with a task like this – to express life abstractly, where the other arts stand without resources, forced to go roundabout ways, to extract, to symbolise – there and only there is music at home in its primal region, in its element, simply because by being itself it has performed its task. For it is life there, where the others only represent and write about life. Life is indomitable and inextinguishable; the struggle, the wrestling, the generation and the wasting away go on today as yesterday, tomorrow as today, and everything returns./ Once more: music is life, and like it inextinguishable. For that reason the word that the composer has set above his work might seem superfluous; however, he has used it to emphasise the strict musical character of his task. No programme, but a signpost into music's own domain.<sup>13</sup>

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*Slutningen af 1ste Allegro – havde jeg en Oplevelse af ejendommelig Art, jeg behøvede nemlig kun at lytte for at høre hele dette Afsnit blive spillet. Selv om jeg tidligere har oplevet noget lignende – thi alle komponister kender sikkert dette Fænomen – så kan jeg dog ikke glemme denne Dag, så stærkt var det Indtryk, som jeg modtog, det var mig, som fornåm jeg selve Livets Pulsslag./ Det er besynderligt, thi det er ikke tidligere faldet mig ind, at det netop er lignende Tanker, som har sysselsat Carl Nielsen under Udarbejdelsen af hans 4de Symfoni, og Grunden hertil er vel kun den, at han bruger andre Ord. ... I Adagioen søgte jeg Udtryk for Hjertevarmen, for Kærligheden til alt det, som lever. Scherzoen er et Tonedigt om 'Avalon', denne Lykkens og Fredens Øe, som vi midt i Verdenslarmerne stirrer ud efter. Dette fredhellige Sted – alle Længsler Mål./ Finalen er et forstærket Udtryk for disse himmelstormende Længsler./ Altså også min 4de er et Udtryk for Livet, d.v.s. for det Liv, som vi har en dunkel Følelse af at kunne komme nærmere – at kunne udvide os til – at kunne indfange i os som en højere Bevidsthedsform, og som en større Lykke. Letter from Louis Glass to Peder Gram, dated Villa 'Toften' 6.12.1916, Danish National Archives, Private archive no. 7430, Correspondence.*

<sup>13</sup> Komponisten har ved Anvendelsen af Titelen 'Det uudslukkelige' med et enkelt Ord søgt at antyde, hvad kun selve Musikken har Magt til fuldt at udtrykke: den elementære Villie til Liv./ Overfor Opgaver som denne: at udtrykke Liv abstrakt, hvor de andre Kunstarter staar uformuende, tvungne til at gøre Omveje, gøre Udsnit, symbolisere, dér og først dér er Musikken hjemme paa sit Ur-Omraade, ret i sit Element, simpelthen fordi den, ved kun at være sig selv, har løst sin Opgave. Thi den er Liv dér, hvor de andre kun forestiller og omskriver Liv. Livet er ukueligt og uudslukkeligt, der kæmpes, brydes, avles og fortæres idag som igaar, imorgen som idag, og alting vender tilbage./ Endnu engang: Musik er Liv, som dette uudslukkeligt. Derfor kunde det Ord, Komponisten har sat over sit Værk, synes overflødig; han har imidlertid anvendt det for at understrege sin Opgaves strengt musikalske Karakter. Intet Program, men en Vejviser ind paa Musikens eget Omraade. Programme note for the Music Society's 658th concert, the second concert in its 80th season, 1915-1916, Tuesday 1 February 1916, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Collection of Pamphlets and Corporate Publications.

It is certainly true that both composers refer to *Life*, but there is a fundamental difference in their notion of this; while Carl Nielsen praises life as an elemental force in its broadest sense, Louis Glass understands life as an exalted, ideal, condition or state of consciousness. The letter to Peder Gram was written in 1916, five years after the premiere of Glass's Symphony No. 4. Whether this is in fact a rationalisation following his encounter with theosophy, which appears to have occurred some years after his work on the symphony, presumably around 1912,<sup>14</sup> is hard to say, but is quite possibly the case. For the description of the symphony is similar to the desire for dreaminess and romanticism that prevailed in Glass's childhood: 'The illusion we like to call reality always disturbed me. I led a life of dreams, and if possible I would spend parts of the night fantasising and composing.'<sup>15</sup> On a later occasion, in an article from 1920, he spoke similarly of his childhood: 'The more I look for something in my recollections that could put me in a somewhat favourable light, the less likely I am to find anything. That is to say, I was always fascinated by the world I found inside myself and thus generally I did not acknowledge what was around me.'<sup>16</sup> After Glass became acquainted with theosophy, he gained a set of concepts by means of which to explain the content and mission of his music more concisely; this is evident in the motto for his Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra. This succinctness shows itself musically as well. This becomes apparent in his next symphony, No. 5, *Sinfonia Svastika* (1919-1920), which utilises one of the symbols of theosophy, specifically the swastika or wheel of life, as an image of the cycle. Glass describes his symphony in a letter: 'but full understanding is again dependent on how the thoughts and ideas that inspired me to create the work are not completely foreign to the person who wishes to immerse themselves in the work in order to consider it from this side.'<sup>17</sup> We may note here how Glass is dealing with a kind of consciousness in his work. Of the Finale he says, for instance, 'Therefore the dawn is to be understood as a sunrise in the soul of Man, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep" [Genesis I, 2]. But now there is light. The soul has triumphed on the Last Day – "It is finished" – this love, which is true and will support everything that is created, is now liberated. The portal to "Life" has opened to "pure" thought; the "pure" fool has

14 The earliest recorded documentations of Glass's connection with theosophy is his collaboration in the Danish section of the *Stjernen i Øst* society's first meeting in the Theosophical Society's lodge rooms in Copenhagen's Amaliegade, 12.5.1912. See *Stjerne-Bladet. Organ for Ordenen 'Stjernen i Øst'*, vol. 1, 1913.

15 Gerhardt Lyng, *Danske Komponister i det 20. Aarhundredes Begyndelse*, 92.

16 Louis Glass, 'Da vi var unge (V)', *Hver 8. Dag* 26 (5.11.1920), 45.

17 *Men den fulde Forståelse er dog atter afhængig af, at den Tankegang og de Idéer, som har inspireret mig til at skabe Værket, ikke er helt fremmede for den, der ønsker at trænge dybere ind i Værket for at betragte det fra denne Side.* Letter from Louis Glass to Hjelm Cohrt, dated 31.3.1924, Danish Music Museum, Copenhagen.

opened it.<sup>18</sup> Glass is here referring both to the Bible – Genesis, as indicated, and Jesus’s last words on the Cross: ‘It is finished’ (John XIX, 30) – and to *Parsifal*, where the pure Fool (i.e. Parsifal) brings the Holy Spear back to the castle and thereby enables Amfortas’s wound to heal. The symbolic purification a human being must undergo throughout his life corresponds to Glass’s programme text for the *Sinfonia svastika*.

Some years before, Glass had recognised that he had moved into an aesthetic and stylistic realm that was not generally accepted. In a letter from 1915 to the music critic Gustav Hetsch (1867-1935), he declared that he would rather not have any reviews for his concerts – which must have been his Conservatoire concerts – and continued:

I understand the difficulty in your position and realise that you have a certain obligation to keep harmful influences and movements at bay, but you – several of your colleagues – have been so successful in this difficult mission – that for me, personally, there could be a reason to declare a ceasefire. As a composer, my position is such that there is nothing more to be remedied, not a single symphony to be published, not one single work to be performed in The Music Society etc. – there is hardly anything to accomplish here.<sup>19</sup>

In October 1919, Glass once again expresses his despair and disappointment in a letter to Hetsch:

I feel there is not the slightest interest here in me or my music, yes, I am indeed feeling it in an incredibly real way. But how can this be? I am going against my age – it is surely this age that is oppressing the bearers of spiritual force and inner law. Melody is dethroned, harmony becomes something frightful, and rhythm becomes its opposite: Chaos. Can anyone believe that there can be found a way ahead, when such goals have been reached? But to

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18 Derfor er Morgengryet at opfatte some en Solopgang i Menneskets Sjæl, ‘thi der var øde og tomt, og Mørke rugede over Afgrunden. Men nu er der bleven Lys. Sjælen har på den sidste Dag sejret – “det er fuldbragt” – den Kærlighed, som er den sande, der vil fremhjælpe alt det skabte, er bleven fri. Porten til “Livet” er åbnet den “rene” Tanke, den “rene” Dåre har åbnet den.’ Ibid.

19 Jeg indsér det vanskelige i din Stilling og erkender, at Du har en hvis [sic] Forpligtigelse til at holde skadelige Indflydelser og Retninger nede, men denne vanskelige Mission er jo for Dig – og for flere af dine Kolleger – lykkedes så godt, at der for mit Vedkommende kunde være nogen Anledning til at holde lidt inde med Skydningen. Som Komponist er min Stilling en sådan, at der næppe mere kan bødes derpå, ikke en eneste Symfoni forlagt, ikke et eneste Værk opført i Musikforeningen o. s. v. – der er jo næppe mere her at udrette. Letter from Louis Glass to Gustav Hetsch, dated 22.3.1915, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: NKS 3887, 4<sup>o</sup>.

stand among epigones and decadents is a difficult position, for inner originality deprives one of immediate recognition. Isn't there something in this?<sup>20</sup>

Four years later Glass wrote to Hetsch again, asking him to refrain from any public criticism of his concerts: "You know very well how I have enemies, and when my friends are certainly not helping me when the opportunity rises, then I think it is best if I stand by myself in absolute silence."<sup>21</sup>

### Three personal letters

It seems that Louis Glass's mood had hit rock bottom in 1923, and if we look at the relationship to Carl Nielsen, this simply confirms the assumption. A few letters exist to and from Nielsen from the years around 1907-1903, and from these, one can sense a good, even warm, relationship between the two composer-colleagues, but some letters from the beginning of the 1920s have a very different tone. As we already know, an apparent problem of principle for Glass was having his *Sinfonia Svastika* performed at The Music Society, where Carl Nielsen had been conducting concerts since 1915. The symphony had had its premiered at The Danish Concert Society on 31 January 1921, and within two years it was presented in Helsinki, Warsaw, Vienna, Berlin and Munich, as well as twice in Copenhagen. These many performances presumably pleased Glass, but it disappointed him greatly not to have had his work performed at The Music Society. It seems that Glass perceived this as a lack in official acknowledgement of his key work, perhaps partly because The Music Society for him still represented the legacy of Niels W. Gade, with whom Glass had felt a strong affinity and for whom he held great admiration,<sup>22</sup> and partly because it was Nielsen who ran the overall programming at the society. It should also be mentioned that Glass's Fantasy

20 *Jeg føler det, som var der ikke den ringeste Interesse herhjemme for mig og min Musik, ja, jeg kommer jo endda til at føle det på en særdeles realistisk Måde. Men hvor kan det være? Jeg går imod min Tid – det er sikkert nok, Tiden, der sprænger Bærerne af den åndelige Kraft og det [sic] indre Lov. Melodien detroniseres, Harmonien bliver til Alteration og Rytmen til sin Modsætning: Kaos – Kan nogen tro, at der findes Vej frem, hvor slige Mål er nået? – Men, at stå midt imellem Epigonerne og Decadenterne er en vanskeligt Stilling, thi den indre Originalitet unddrager sig den umiddelbare Erkendelse. Er der ikke noget om det?* Letter from Glass to Gustav Hetsch, dated 10.10.1919, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: NKS 3887, 4°.

21 *Du ved meget godt at jeg har Fjender, og når mine Venner heller ikke hjælper mig, hvor der er Lejlighed dertil, så tror jeg, at jeg bedst står mig ved absolut Tavshed.* Letter from Glass to Gustav Hetsch, dated 23.11.1923, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: NKS 3887, 4°.

22 *Iblandt alle mine Lærere staar jeg maaske – foruden til min Fader – i størst Gæld til Niels W. Gade. Ja, Gade var vel nok en af de faa af mine Lærere, der baade som Menneske og som Kunstner indtog en saa høj Rang, at jeg kunde føle hele den Glæde, som ubegrænset Kærlighed og Agtelse beriger én med. Gerhardt Lynge: Danske Komponister i det 20. Aarhundredes Begyndelse, 93.*

for Piano and Orchestra had actually been performed at *The Music Society* on 28 January 1919 with Nielsen conducting and the composer as soloist. In a letter from 14 July 1923 to Nielsen, Glass does not hide his disappointment regarding *The Music Society's* neglect of his work:

Since I can't expect you to know that I shall be 60 next March, I'm not going to draw your attention to the fact./ On the other hand, you must surely remember that on the return journey from Helsingfors you offered to perform my Fifth Symphony in Gothenburg, just as you well know that you didn't fulfil your promise but instead chose another Danish symphony by a younger composer./ I hardly need to say that this was a disappointment for me./ It's really rather painful for me to have to remind you that *The Music Society* can hardly refuse to perform some work by me in the coming season without giving the impression that the Society is deliberately avoiding me and my output./ Since this is surely not your intention, and since this can hardly be the reason why didn't play my symphony in Gothenburg, whereas I for my part could certainly have expected to hear from you about your change of mind and the reason for it, I should now like to ask you whether on this occasion you could make things right again by putting my Fifth Symphony on the programme. Perhaps I could conduct it myself./ Think this over, and consider whether we might not have a chance to end our days with a better mutual understanding, since we each only have the shortest time left./ Well, this is what I wanted to say to you, and I remain – in the hope that you will understand the justness of my request –/ yours sincerely, Louis.<sup>23</sup>

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23 *Da jeg jo ikke kan forlange at Du skal være vidende om, at jeg til næste Marts fylder 60, så betænker jeg mig ikke på at henlede Din Opmærksomhed derpå./ Derimod husker Du vel nok, at Du på Hjemrejsen fra Helsingfors tilbød at opføre min 5te Symfoni i Gøteborg, ligesom Du jo ved, at Du ikke opfyldte hvad Du havde lovet, men valgte en anden dansk Symfoni af en af de Yngre./ At dette var mig en Skuffelse behøver jeg vel ikke at sige Dig./ Det er jo lidt pinligt for mig selv at skulle gøre Dig opmærksom på, at Musikforeningen ikke godt kan undlade at opføre noget Arbejde af mig i den kommende Sæson, uden at det må få Udseendet af at Foreningen tager Afstand fra mig og min Produktion./ Da dette sikkert ikke er Din Mening, og da Årsagen til, at Du ikke spillede Symfonien i Gøteborg vel heller ikke skal søges heri, medens jeg på den anden Side vel nok kunde have haft Krav på en Meddelelse om Din dengang ændrede Beslutning og Årsagen dertil, så vil jeg spørge Dig, om Du ikke ved denne Lejlighed vil gøre dette godt igen ved at sætte min 5te Symfoni på Programmet. Eventuelt vil jeg gerne selv dirigere den./ Tænk nu lidt over Sagen, og tænk på om vi ikke kan få Lov til at ende vore Dage i bedere [sic] gensidig Forståelse, vi har jo begge det korteste Afsnit tilbage./ Ja, det er hvad jeg vilde sige Dig og jeg er – i Håbet om at Du vil forstå min Anmodnings Berettigelse –/ Din hengivne/ Louis. Letter from Glass to Nielsen, dated Gentofte 14.7.1923, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: CNA I.A.b.*

After Glass had received a response, a letter now unfortunately lost, in which Carl Nielsen apparently showed interest in programming the *Sinfonie Svastika* – it was performed at The Music Society on 26 February 1924 with the composer conducting – Glass wrote a long and very personal letter to Nielsen on 18 July 1923. Here he underlined how greatly he had struggled to have his symphony performed at The Music Society, and how this could only be perceived as a result of Carl Nielsen's lacking acknowledgement of his output: 'Your pupils, who are gradually taking up leading positions as critics, have in any case treated me in such a way that in some instances has to be called unseemly.' Glass decided to abandon conducting after the music critic Gunnar Hauch (1870-1937) wrote a 'condescending' review of his performance of the *Helios* Overture at the Danish Concert Society on 3 December 1917. Later in the same letter, he states:

It's not my intention to suggest that you are responsible for my fate. You can't help it if your great gifts have made your way for you and brought with them followers and influential positions. But the isolated life that I lead – of my own volition – and the few personal friends I have, are the reasons why I am only able to do so little to advance myself. There's also the fact that the ideas I stand for can no longer be said to be contemporary. I'm a guardian of the natural inheritance of our predecessors, but I'm also a renewer in the deeper sense. This is something that isn't understood in an age when a painter may be called unoriginal if he paints a portrait with a nose placed between two eyes and with blond hair just because the model has it. Therefore I stand for a musical culture whose subtlety and individuality can only be perceived by those who are on that same wavelength, and whose natural, fresh qualities can only be appreciated if it is apparent that it sets its sights beyond the user's time we are living in at the present. Therefore I cannot succeed without support on your side that can appreciate my good qualities, even though of course you're not blind to my faults. But these faults are due to my multi-facetedness, in the sense that I have access to all moods, from the most deeply serious to the most light-hearted. This double nature of mine has made my development problematic./ Dear Carl Nielsen, since it's now you who stand in the general consciousness as our leader in Danish music, then it's also you in the first instance who should be able to set this injustice aright, if you consider that there has been such an injustice. But I do believe that in your innermost being you have a feeling for this. It's this 'mutual understanding', which you say has left its mark on you, and it's this indebtedness – of whose extent only God can be the judge – that I was thinking of when I wrote of the short span of life we can still count upon. So it's not Gothenburg I'm thinking of but Copenhagen.

And it's The Music Society – which under the leadership of any other outstanding musician would have opened its doors to me – that I now think should do this./ Have I said too much, or is my meaning unclear? Am I unjustified? I don't want to judge anyone, and I know my place and why it is as it is. But he would offer me their hand – not with friendly words but with manly actions – will doubtless come to feel that he has not behaved badly. So, farewell and accept this sincere greeting from your grateful Louis Glass.<sup>24</sup>

At the end of September, this serious letter is followed up by an even more lengthy and piercing one, in which Glass initially but briefly expresses delight at having his *Sinfonia Svastika* chosen for performance at The Music Society. He then details his notion of the human condition and the foundation of his own artistic endeavours. The letter ends thus:

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24 Dine Elever, som jo lidt efter lidt indtager ledende Stillinger som Kritikere, har jo i hvert Fald behandlet mig på en Måde, ... der i enkelte Tilfælde må kaldes usomme-  
lig. ... Nu er det ikke min Mening at gøre Dig ansvarlig for min Skæbne, Du kan jo  
ikke gøre for, at Dine store Evner baner Vej for Dig og forskaffer Dig Tilhængere og  
indflydelsesrige Stillinger, men det ensomme Liv, som jeg af egen Trang fører og de  
få personlige Venner, som jeg har, er Skyld i, at jeg kun formår at udrette så lidet til  
min egen Fordel. Dertil kommer at de Ideer, jeg repræsenterer, ikke længer kan siges at  
tilhøre Nutiden. Jeg er Bevareren af den naturlige Arv fra Fædrene, men tillige Fornye-  
ren i dybere Forstand, dette er noget, der ikke forstås i en Tid, hvor en Maler vil blive  
kaldet uoriginal fordi han maler et Portræt hvor Næsen har sin Plads imellem begge  
Øjnene og Håret er blondt, og det kun fordi Modellen er skabt således. Derfor repræ-  
senterer jeg en musikalsk Kultur, hvis Finhed og Særegenhed kun kan erkendes af  
dem, der er på Højde med den, og hvis Ligefremhed og Friskhed kun vil blive vurderet  
hvis det viser sig, at den bærer ud over den Brydningernes Tid, som vi for nærværende  
oplever. Derfor kan jeg heller ikke klare mig uden Bistand fra deres Side, der kan  
vurdere mine gode Sider, selv om de selvfølgelig ikke er blinde for mine Mangler. Men  
disse Mangler skyldes min Alsidighed, idet jeg har haft alle Stemninger til min Råd-  
dighed, fra de dybest alvorlige til de mest letsindige. Denne – min Dobbeltnatur – har  
vanskeliggjort min Udvikling./ Da det nu er Dig – kære Carl Nielsen – der står i den  
almindelige Bevidsthed, som vor første Mand i dansk Musik, så bliver det også Dig,  
som det i første Række må komme til at gøre sket Uret god igen, hvis Du mener, at der  
er sket en sådan Uret. Men jeg tror nu, at Du inderst inde vil have en Følelse heraf. Det  
er denne 'gensidige Forståelse', som Du siger har gjort Indtryk på Dig, og det er dette  
vort Mellemværende – om hvis Omfang kun Gud kan dømme – som jeg tænkte på, da  
jeg talte om det ringe Spænd af År, som vi to endnu kan gøre Regning på. Derfor er  
det ikke Gøteborg, jeg tænker på, men København. Derfor er det Musikforeningen, –  
der under enhver anden fremragende Musikers Ledelse, vilde have åbnet sine Døre for  
mig – som jeg nu mener må gøre det./ Har jeg sagt for meget, eller er min Tankegang  
uklar? Er jeg uretfærdig? – jeg vil dog ikke dømme nogen, jeg kender jo min Stilling  
og véd hvorfor den er, som den er. Men den, der rækker mig Hånden – ikke med ven-  
lige Ord, men med mandig Handling – vil uden Tvivl få at føle, at han ikke handlede  
ilde./ Og lev nu vel og modtag en hjertelig Hilsen fra Din hengivne Louis Glass. Letter  
from Louis Glass to Carl Nielsen, dated Gentofte 18.7.1923, The Royal Library,  
Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: CNA I.A.b.

Dear Carl Nielsen, do understand me correctly: I don't want to set myself up in judgment over you. I would be sad and disappointed if I was tempted to do so. I recognise that you are an outstanding artist, and I acknowledge your importance. But you can't have the same importance for me, because we're too different – happily for Danish music, but sadly for our mutual relationship and friendship. Can't this be understood by both of us, so that we can save our friendship and so that our collegial relationship can be as it should be? Can't you see it this way: that we both have significance for Danish music? We are like North and South, or East and West, whatever you want, but opposite poles. How often have we been happy to be together; how often have we spoken to each other from the heart! So why can't we come together now in mutual understanding – in a true friendship? Give this some thought. But if I represent some kind of danger to your musical convictions, to your faith and ideals, then send my letter back and I shall know where I stand. Some kind of diplomatic middle road won't be a happy way forward./ Yours sincerely, Louis Glass.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that the symphony had now been performed only meant that Glass could now focus on the fundamental problems in the relation between Nielsen and himself.

### Two provocative feature articles

No more than two years would pass before the differences between Glass and Nielsen would once again – and for the last time – be displayed in public. Glass had two features published in *Nationaltidende*, on 15 and 17 September 1925,<sup>26</sup> in which he expressed great concern about the crisis that, according to him, was reigning in contemporary music.

25 Forstå mig nu ret, kære Carl Nielsen, jeg vil ikke gerne opkaste mig til Dommer over Dig. Jeg er fortvivlet og bedrøvet hvis jeg skal fristes dertil. Jeg erkender at Du er en fremragende Kunstner og jeg erkender Din Betydning, men du kan ikke få den samme Betydning for mig, dertil er vi to for forskellige – heldigvis for dansk Musik, og beklageligvis for vort gensidige Forhold og Venskab. Kan dette ikke forstås af os Begge, så vi kan redde Venskabet og således, at vort kollegiale Forhold, kan blive, som det bør være. Kan Du ikke sé det således, at vi begge har Betydning for dansk Musik? Vi er som Nord og Syd, eller Øst og Vest, hvad Du end vil, men Modsætninger. Hvor ofte har vi ikke været glade ved at være sammen, hvor ofte har vi ikke talt ud fra Hjertet til hinanden, hvorfor kan vi ikke mødes i gensidig Forståelse af hinanden – i virkeligt Venskab? – Tænk nu herover – men er jeg en Fare for din musikalske Overbevisning, for din Tro og dine Idealer, så send mig mit Brev tilbage, så kender jeg min Stilling. Her kan ingen diplomatisk Mellemvej få nogen lykkelig Udgang./ Din hengivne/ Louis Glass. Letter from Glass to Nielsen, dated 29.9.1923, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: CNA I.A.b.

26 Louis Glass, 'Musikalske Problemer. Komponisten Louis Glass skriver her om "Geni og Talent" og vil i en følgende Kronik undersøge den nye Tids Udvikling paa Musikens Omraade', *Nationaltidende* 15.9.1925; and Louis Glass: 'Musikalske Problemer. Komponisten Louis Glass undersøger den Udvikling, der paa Musikens Omraade kendetegner den nye Tid', *Nationaltidende* 17.9.1925.



Glass's main focus was the difference between talent and genius. His definition was:

While the genius progresses from an internal drive, innovative and replete with an overpowering urge to realise a vision, the talent works more from practice and a conscious set of tools. The art of the genius will always be intuitive and thus elevated by a rich and abundant subjectivity, consciously or unconsciously altruistic, as the world is reflected in its essence. The talent, on the other hand, is rather intellectual, and usually more impartial and balanced. The genius *has* its goal, whereas the talent sets itself one. In the genius, the many become one, whereas for the talent, the many exist for the sake of the one.<sup>27</sup>

Following this explanation, Glass seems to reach his peroration:

The country's younger generation, who faithfully follow their master Carl Nielsen, seem to have set the responsible goal to abandon the past, and agree without a shred of doubt that the period between Mozart and Nielsen was bad. Their criticism is devastating, and this period becomes an entire Dark Age of music, full of blind superstition, a twilight realm of romanticism, and a world of false profundity, whereas now 'Carl Nielsen's shining blade' – as noted in this newspaper – has 'slashed the blossoming theatre of romanticism'. It cannot be denied that our young generation have prepared their blades as well, except from the fact that the slashing of a blossom blossoming cannot be considered a world revolution or admirable heroism. But what can one put in place of this frightening theatre blossom? We do not receive any comprehensive answer to this.<sup>28</sup>

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27 *Medens Geniet nemlig gaar frem i Følge en indre Drift, nyskabende og opfyldt af en uimodstaaelig Trang til at virkeliggøre sin Idéverden, arbejder Talentet mere i praktisk og bevidst Kendskab til sine Midler. Geniets Virkemaade vil altid være af intuitiv Art og derfor baaret oppe af en rig og omfattende Subjektivitet, bevidst eller ubevidst altruistisk, idet en Verden afspejler sig i dets Indre. Talentet derimod er snarere intellektuelt, det er i Regelen mere uhildet og ligevægtigt. Geniet har sit Maal – Talentet sætter sig det – i Geniet er de mange blevet til een, for Talentet er de mange til for den ene.*

28 *De unge herhjemme, der troligt følger deres Mester: Carl Nielsen, synes at have sat sig det ansvarsfulde Maal at gøre op med Fortiden, og uden al Tvivl er der imellem dem Enighed om, at det ser galt ud i Tidsrummet fra Mozart til Carl Nielsen. Deres Kritik er i hvert Fald sønderflængende, og dette Tidsrum bliver til en hel Musikens Middelalder, fuld af blind Overtro, et Romantikens Skumringsrige og en Verden af forloren Dybsindighed, men nu har 'Carl Niensens blanke Klinge' – som der stod i et herværende Blad – 'flængt Romantikens Teaterflor'. At ogsaa Ungdommen har sine Klinger parate, kan ikke benægtes, rent bortset fra, at det at flænge et Flor ikke kan betragtes som nogen Verdensomvæltning eller beundringsværdig Heltegerning. Men hvad sætter man da i Stedet for dette frygtindgydende Teaterflor? – Herpaa faar vi ikke noget fyldestgørende Svar.*

Glass looks for an answer in vain; he also wants to know which ‘battle cries’ the young generation have, which ‘outlook on life’, which ‘type of spiritual physiognomy’, and so on. A little later, he asks:

Where are the mighty words that can make us fall silent and understand how an entire century’s art has been helplessly exposed? What we have learnt in this regard is quite negative. We have been told that fantasy and feeling are qualities that must not characterise the new age (it certainly says so in [Nielsen’s booklet of essays] *Living Music*). Neither profundity nor pathos – but what should stand there instead?<sup>29</sup>

Glass concludes the article thus:

The dogma about music just being notes and internal relationships is then not an idea of genius, for this dogma is not a restriction, but simply an external reinforcement of the wall that is put up like a materialist philosophy between the objective and spiritual. But no-one who perceives the soul or spirit as a product of objectivity can tear down this wall and create light and air.<sup>30</sup>

In his second feature article, Glass continues with a pursuit of the ‘spiritual physiognomy’ of the younger generation. He asserts that polyphony characterises the modern style. But specifically polyphony ‘without using the vertical, harmonically structuring principle. In the rhythmic dimension, there is an urge to reach the greatest possible sense of freedom, while melody – which used to be the basis – seems to completely vanish.’<sup>31</sup> Glass is especially saddened by the latter, asking rhetorically whether the melodies of the great masters are not ‘like the concentrated essence of their inner being.’<sup>32</sup>

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29 *Hvor høres de bevingede Ord, der maa faa os til at forstumme og begribe, at et helt Aarhundredes Kunst er uhjælpe ligt afsløret? Hvad vi i denne Henseende har lært, er ganske negativt. Vi har faaet at vide, at Fantasi og Følelse er Egenskaber, der ikke maa kendetegne den nye Tid (det staar jo at læse i ‘Levende Musik’), heller ikke Dybsindighed og Patos – men hvad skal der da sættes i Stedet?*

30 *Derfor er Dogmet om Musiken som kun værende Toner og Toners indbyrdes Forhold ikke nogen genial Tanke, thi dette Dogme er ikke Begrænsning, men kun en yderligere Styrkelse af den Mur, som en materialistisk Anskuelse rejser imellem det stoflige og det aandelige; men ingen, der i Aanden og Sjælen ser et Produkt af det stoflige, kan bryde denne Mur ned og skaffe Lys og Luft.*

31 *uden Anvendelse for det vertikale, harmonisk opbyggende Princip. I rytmisk Henseende gaar Bestræbelserne ogsaa ud paa at opnaa den størst mulige Frihed, medens Melodien, der tidligere var det bærende, helt synes at forsvinde.*

32 *ligesom koncentreret Essens af deres inderste Væsen.*

Glass's reference to Nielsen's collection of essays, *Living Music*, which had just been published in commemoration of Nielsen's 60th birthday, relates to the following passage:

In the world of music most have become stuck in the flypapers that were put up in front of them in their youth. We can see them struggling with their back legs to break free, but the paste is too strong, and in the end they lie on their side and draw sustenance from the very thing they would rather escape from./ Let them lie there. For even if we could help them out of it, there would be so much glue hanging off them that their footsteps would be forever damaged. This glue is really dangerous. It consists of the following ingredients: fantasy, feeling, pathos, profundity and the like. As we may see, there is no place for beauty, lightheartedness and humour. And when I shout that the term Fantasy in these folks' eyes is roughly synonymous with 'Feeling', we can see that everything is running in the same direction. So everything is running in the same direction, and this again means that in the deepest sense everything is at a standstill, i.e. there is no movement, or rather, no contrast. But if everything is going in the same direction, or belongs to the same gender, what else can come of this but sterility, emptiness? Maybe it's here that we can find an explanation for why musical works in the so-called 'grand style' – which for the time being dominates the opera house and the concert hall the world over – carries on exceedingly pathetically and grossly emotionally, precisely because in essence there is no contrasting material, which would engender fine, strong life, which would be true to itself and not shout more loudly than it has the power or energy to. The weak always shout the loudest.<sup>33</sup>

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33 *I Musikens Verden er det saadan, at de fleste er blevet hængende i de store Flueplastre, der blev slaaget op for dem i deres Ungdom. Man ser dem arbejde med Bagbenene for at komme fri, men Klistret er for stærkt, og til sidst lægger de sig om paa Siden og æder og lever af det, de helst vilde ud af./Lad dem ligge. Thi selv om man maaske kunde hjælpe dem fri, vilde der dog hænge saa meget Klæbestof ved, at Fodtrippet for altid var ødelagt. Dette Klæbestof er farligt nok. Det bestaar af følgende Ingredienser: Fantasi, Følelse, Patos, Dybsindighed og – ligesindede. Som man ser, er der ingen Plads for Ynde, Letsind og Humor, og naar jeg røber, at Begrebet Fantasi i disse Folks Øjne omtrent er ensbetydende med 'Følelse', saa ser man, at alting løber i samme Retning. Alt gaar altså i samme Retning, og det vil atter sige, at der, i dybere Forstand, er Stilstand, d.v.s. at der ingen Bevægelse er, eller rettere intet Modsætningsforhold. Men i Fald nu alt gaaer i samme Retning eller hører til samme Køn, hvad kan saa heraf følge andet end Goldhed, Tomhed? Maaske ligger her en Forklaring paa, at de Musikværker i den saakaldte 'store Stil', der for Øjeblikket behersker Opera og Koncertsal Verden over, gebærder sig ovenud patetiske og groft-følsomme, netop fordi der i Dybden intet findes af det Kontrastof, der betinger det fine og stærke Liv, som bliver sig selv va'r og ikke raaber højere op, end der er Kraft og Spænding til. Den Svage raaber altid højest. Nielsen, *Levende Musik*, 8th edn., Copenhagen 1947, 63.*

The day after the publication of Glass's second feature article, Nielsen wrote a letter to his student, the music historian Knud Jeppesen (1892-1974):

Dear Knud Jeppesen!

Glass's articles make a decidedly malicious impression on me; so I don't know if there's any point in engaging with him. If only there were some points where engagement could be fruitful and instructive, that would be another matter; but I don't think there are.\*/ A curious farrago!/ Best wishes, your/ C.N.

\*But when you write, there's always something in it; so it would still be exciting to see what you come up with.<sup>34</sup>

It appears that Jeppesen may not have replied to Nielsen's letter in writing, but the composer Finn Høffding (1899-1997), who was a student of Jeppesen, did counter Glass with a feature article in *Nationaltidende* on 25 September.<sup>35</sup> This carries the title 'The bygone and the current age'<sup>36</sup> and immediately questions Glass's definition of genius and talent. Noting that Glass refers in his article to Carl Nielsen's use of the terms in his book *Living Music*, Høffding contends that Glass has misunderstood Nielsen's intended meaning. Glass's distinction between the intuitively and intellectually functioning artist, i.e. the genius and the talent, is flawed, Høffding writes: 'with the great masters, both inspiration (a better word for artistic intuition) and artistic reflection (the intellectual) exist in almost perfect balance, usually with one aspect weighing a little more than the other and thereby characterising the artist.'<sup>37</sup> Another supposed misunderstanding on Glass's part – his perception of Nielsen's note on 'fantasy, feeling, pathos and profundity' as a dogma for young composers – is also examined by Høffding, along with Glass's accusation that young composers do not acknowledge 'recovered values, but simply overthrow them',<sup>38</sup> he comments:

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34 Kære Knud Jeppesen!/ Glas' Artikler gør Indtryk paa mig af noget vist ondsindet, saa jeg ved ikke om det har nogen Betydning at imødegaa ham. Var der blot nogle Punkter hvor en Imødegaaelse kunde være frugtbringende og oplysende var det en anden Sag, men det synes jeg ikke engang der er.\*

Et underligt Vævl/ Mange Hilsener Deres/ C.N./ \*men naar De skriver kommer der altid noget, saa det kunde nok spænde mig at se Deres Pen. Letter dated 18.9.1925 from Carl Nielsen to Knud Jeppesen, CNB VIII, 437.

35 Finn Høffding, "Den svundne og den levende Tid." Komponisten Finn Høffding har sendt denne Artikel som "et Indlæg mod Louis Glass til Forsvar for de Unge", feature article in *Nationaltidende* 25.9.1925.

36 *Den svundne og den levende Tid*.

37 *hos de store Skabere staar Inspiration (et bedre Ord for kunstnerisk Intuition) og kunstnerisk Eftertanke (det intellektuelle) nogenlunde i Ligevægt, dog i Regelen saaledes, at det ene er lidt mere overvejende end det andet og derfor karakteriserende Kunstneren.*

38 *indvundne Værdier, men blot kuldkaster disse.*

The younger generation simply does not acknowledge that Romanticism has achieved anything conspicuously valuable, but instead finds value further back in history, with Bach, Handel and Mozart, and *of course also with Beethoven*. It is an exaggeration to accuse the young generation of ‘view[ing] the period between Mozart and our time as a Dark Age in music’. The truth is that the somewhat excessive deification of Beethoven, deriving from the age of Schumann and Wagner, has given way to a more reasonable judgement, while simultaneously interest has shifted more towards Mozart. Still less does the young generation wish to cast any ‘suspicion’ on the great masters of Romanticism. *Who would or could cast suspicion on a Schubert?* But what the young generation rightfully does is to fight against that *false profundity* with which the Late Romantics (from the age of and after Wagner) have sought to disguise their emptiness. These Late-Romantic composers do not think that notes are adequate in themselves, but rather that the works must express a philosophy of life, and the most pretentious titles, which have nothing to do with music but simply muddy genuine musical understanding, are placed as a label above their opus. Can there be any doubt that there is a hundred times more profundity in one of Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos or in Mozart’s G-minor Symphony than in Richard Strauss’s thoroughly hollow Zarathustra Symphony [the tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra*]? What is musical profundity other than an expression of a deeply sensitive and sincere individual? The younger generation wishes to guide music back to its natural ground; they wish to cleanse the melody that all too often has become sentimental and banal, to steer their fantasy and give it resilience in healthy and strong counterpoint./ And here the young generation in Denmark has a lot to thank Carl Nielsen for as its forerunner./ The young generation has great ideals, the same ones as all the great figures in music have had: those ideals that music alone can ask of itself. But it also has to fight the battle against prejudice created by the previous generation and to assert itself against the latter. There may therefore be some exaggeration[s], but the understanding ear knows how to put these in their place. It does a man little honour who by misunderstanding a statement would ‘cast under suspicion’ one of the nation’s greatest sons and publicly misrepresent the younger generation’s ambitions and ideals.<sup>39</sup>

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39 *De Unge anerkender blot ikke, at Romantiken har indvundet noget synderlig værdifuldt, men finder Værdierne længere tilbage i Tiden, hos en Bach, en Händel og en Mozart og naturligvis ogsaa hos Beethoven. Det er en Overdrivelse at beskyldte de Unge for at 'betragte Tidsrummet mellem Mozart og vor Tid som en Musikens Middelalder'. Sandheden er, at den noget overspændte Forguddelse af Beethoven, som stammer fra Schumanns og Wagners Tid, er vejet for en mere rimelig Bedømmelse, samtidig med at Interessen har forskudt sig mere over mod Mozart. Endnu mindre falder det de*

The day after the publication of Høffding's article, Glass wrote a letter to the composer Knudåge Riisager (1897-1974) who apparently had responded to Glass's essays:

Dear Mr. Knudåge Riisager!

Thanks for your letter, which pleased me, because I found in it something I am looking for. My articles were simply an account of the impressions I have had here in my homeland, and of my urge to hear other words than those that occasionally appear publicly. I have not judged, but merely enquired. On the other hand, the response I received yesterday is not suitable to gaining my sympathy./ With warm regards/ Yours/ Louis Glass.<sup>40</sup>

We do not have Riisager's letter to Glass, but in an article from *Nationaltidende* from 30 September,<sup>41</sup> Glass includes a lengthy excerpt from it:

Mr. Riisager writes:

'The War and its consequences showed us the outcome of the actions of the previous generation. Surely it cannot seem odd that we seek connection to

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Unge ind at 'mistæneliggøre' Romantikens store Mestre. Hvem vil og kan mistænkeliggøre en Schubert? Men hvad de Unge gerne og med Rette vil kæmpe imod, det er den forlorne Dybsindighed, som Efter-Romantikerne (fra Tiden med og efter Wagner) søger at dække deres Tomhed med. Disse Efter-Romantikens Komponister mener ikke, at Tonerne er nok i sig selv, – Værkerne maa være Udtryk for en Livs-Filosofi, og de mest pretentiose Titler, der intet har med Musik at gøre, men blot kan forplumre ægte musikalsk Forstaaelse, bliver sat som Etikette over deres Opus. Er nogen i Tvivl om, at der i en af Bachs Brandenburgerkoncerter eller i Mozarts G-Moll-Symfoni er hundrede Gange mere Dybsind end i Richard Strauss' helt igennem hule Zarathustrasympfoni? Hvad er musikalsk Dybsind andet end et Udtryk for et dybtfølede og inderligt Gemyt? De Unge vil føre Musiken tilbage til dens naturlige Grundlag; de vil lutre Melodien, der altfor ofte er løbet ud i det sølcladne og banale, ave deres Fantasi og gøre den spændstig i en sund og stærk Kontrapunktik./Og her har den danske Ungdom meget at takke Carl Nielsen for som Foregangsmanden./De Unge har store Idealer, de samme, som Musikens Store alle har haft, de Idealer, som Musiken alene kan stille sig. Men de har tillige Kampen mod de Fordomme, som det forudgaaende Slægtled har skabt og gør gældende overfor dem. Derfor kan der komme Overdrivelse[r], men det forstaaende Øre véd at sætte disse paa Plads. Det tjener den Mand lidet til Ære, der ved at misforstaa en Udtalelse vil 'Mistæneliggøre' en af Landets største Sønner og overfor Folk forvanske de Unges Bestræbelser og Idealer.

40 Kære Hr. Knudåge Riisager! Tak for Brevet, som jeg var glad for, fordi jeg deri fandt noget af det, jeg søger. Mine Kroniker var kun en Redegørelse for de Indtryk, jeg har modtaget herhjemme, og for min Trang til at høre andre Ord end dem, der af og til er kommen offentlig frem. – Jeg har ikke dømt, men kun spurgt. – Derimod er et Svar, som det jeg fik i Aftes, ikke egnet til at vække min Tillid./ Med en hjertelig Hilsen/ Deres Louis Glass. Letter dated Gentofte, 26.9.1925 from Glass to Riisager. Private collection.

41 Louis Glass, 'Musikalske Problemer. En afsluttende Bemærkning', *Nationaltidende* 30.9.1925.

something concrete? That we should move our efforts onto a different basis, one that seems simpler and clearer, in such a way that we can hope to build on firmer foundations? It is this that has led to the reduction in feelings, which you call ‘the dogma of the uselessness of fantasy and feeling’. Our feelings are perhaps even stronger than before, but we have attended a strict school, and we have learnt to respond with caution and doubt to the absolute value of feelings – or rather: we have learnt to speak in more subdued tones and in simple words about big things. So when you say that reflection is necessary, you are quite right; I simply think it is more the duty of music to evoke this reflection in the listener than to bestow it upon him in its final state right from the beginning. Precisely in this way, music becomes an expression of what you so beautifully call “the deepest qualities in human nature”. I would perhaps prefer to say “the highest”, because it leads the mind upwards to those plains that lie outside our actual comprehension and draws us towards a clearer level./ As I am sure you know, I have only spoken inadequately here and have considered specifically these tendencies that concern the young generation worldwide. In a little country like ours, it will always be much more difficult to ensure that new ideas are heard. I believe, then, you will see how we in this nation’s young generation are grateful to you for taking up this issue now...’

These words bring the message from the young generation that we in the older generation have been waiting for, and – as Mr. Riisager writes elsewhere in his letter – they also bear witness to ‘the humble position the genuine seeker must always take in their art.’

Perhaps we can then agree on the fact that Carl Nielsen in his book *Living Music* does not call things by their proper name, in that on page 67 he should have written sentimentality instead of feeling and delusion instead of fantasy. But with this correction, his ideas would not be new, and there would not be anything to dispute. We could probably assert that purity and nobility have always characterised all outstanding Danish music.<sup>42</sup>

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42 Hr. Riisager skriver: / ‘Krigen og dens Følger viste os resultaterne af det foregaaende slægtleds handlinger. Kan det da synes mærkeligt, at vi søger tilknytning til noget konkret? At vi lægger vor stræben om paa et andet grundlag, der for os synes enklere og overskueligere, saaledes at vi derved gør os håb om at bygge videre paa et fastere underlag? Det er dette, der har fremkaldt den følelsers reduktion, som De kalder “dogmet om fantasiens og følelsens unødvendighed.” Vore følelser er maaske endnu stærkere end før, men vi har gaaet i en haard skole, og vi har lært at stille os afventende og tvivlende overfor følelsers absolutte værdi – eller snarere: vi har lært at tale sagttere og med enklere ord om store ting. Naar De derfor siger, at reflexionen er nødvendig, har De ganske ret; kun tror jeg, at det er musikens opgave mere at fremkalde denne reflexion hos tilhørerne end at give ham den i tilendebragt stand allerede fra begyndelsen. Netop derved bliver musikken et udtryk for det, De saa smukt kalder “det dybeste i menneskets

Glass's article is interesting in that it includes a representative of the younger generation, Knudåge Riisager, who did not belong to the circle surrounding Carl Nielsen. Glass thereby managed to explain the situation from a different position. The debate was then rounded off with a number of brief articles from Rued Langgaard<sup>43</sup> and Finn Høffding.<sup>44</sup>

### Conclusion

Louis Glass and Carl Nielsen were almost the same age and, as mentioned, they were the only two Danish composers of the 1860s generation who wrote in large-scale forms. Thus a comparison seems quite appropriate. Their positions in Danish musical life were, however, very different. Nielsen attended the Royal Danish Conservatoire of Music and then gained a position in the Royal Danish Theatre Orchestra, then subsequently at The Music Society and the Conservatoire. Glass studied privately and attended his father's Conservatoire, where he would become the director. His platform in Danish musical life would also include the Danish Music Teachers' Association and for a number of years the Danish Concert Society – rather more marginal institutions. Everything points to Glass's network as being quite a lot narrower than Nielsen's. Furthermore, when he became a spokesman for the esoteric movement of Theosophy around 1910, it was inevitable that he would weaken his position in a public sense and also make it more problematic for a general audience to identify with his music. After Nielsen had made his 'move into folk-popular song' and had become one of its most important advocates, the differences were accentuated further. The identification of Nielsen's music with folk-popular style was especially evident after the publication of Folk High School Melody Book in 1922. It is no surprise that Carl Nielsen's *Living Music* should have offended Louis Glass, nor that criticism from Jeppesen and Høffding should have been expected.

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*natur." Jeg vilde nu foretrække at kalde det for "det højeste", fordi det fører tanken opad mod de egne, der ligger udenfor vor egentlige fatteevne og drager os mod et renere plan. / De vil forstaa, at jeg her kun har talt ufuldkomment og navnlig har tænkt paa de strømninger, der gaar gennem de unge verden over. I et lille land som vort er det altid meget sværere at vinde Ørenlyd for nye tanker. Saa meget mere tror jeg, De vil faa at mærke, at vi unge herhjemme er Dem taknemmelige, fordi De nu har taget sagen op til drøftelse.' / Disse Ord bringer det Budskab fra de Unge, som vi ældre venter paa, og – som Hr. Riisager siger et andet Sted i sit Brev – bærer de tillige Vidnesbyrd om 'den ydmyge stilling, som den ærligt søgende altid maa indtage overfor sin kunst.' / Maaske kan vi derfor blive enige om, at Carl Nielsen i sin Bog 'Levende Musik' ikke kalder Tingene ved deres rette Navn, idet han S. 67 burde have skrevet Føleri i Stedet for Følelse og Fantasteri i Stedet for Fantasi. Men saaledes korrigeret vilde hans Tanker ikke være ny, og der vilde ikke være noget at strides om. Man tør vel nok fastslaa, at Renhed og Adel altid har karakteriseret al fremragende dansk Musik.*

43 Rued Langgaard, 'Musiken og de Unge', *Nationaltidende* 1.10.1925.

44 Finn Høffding, "'Den svundne og den levende Tid'", response to Rued Langgaard, *Nationaltidende* 2.10.1925.



One may then ask: are the above-quoted letters – including some strictly speaking private ones – an expression of anything other than two colleagues' personal differences and perhaps a bit of jealousy from Louis Glass's side, and is there really any reason to publish them here? Yes, there certainly is, given view that Nielsen and Glass were the most prominent Danish symphonic composers of their generation.

They were both formed within a late-19th century culture, but whereas Nielsen soon moved away from it, it seems the transcendent values of symbolism were more persistent in the work of Glass.

Nielsen's and Glass's development therefore went in different directions. They were 'opposites' – 'luckily for Danish music', as Glass writes. It is, however, evident that ideologically there was really not enough space for both of them at that time in Danish musical life. But if they were complementary to one another in their art – which Louis Glass seems to have believed – we can only hope that posterity will somewhat rectify this sad state of affairs.

#### A B S T R A C T

Carl Nielsen and Louis Glass were close contemporaries, and their musical careers began in parallel. But their points of departure were different. Whereas Nielsen took off from Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák and Svendsen, Glass was particularly inspired by César Franck and Bruckner. Around the time of World War One, the differences became pronounced. Nielsen gained great popularity with his folk-like songs, whilst Glass submersed himself in theosophy. Symbolic of the differences are Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, *The Inextinguishable*, and Glass's Fifth, *Sinfonia Svastica*, each of which foregrounds the concept of 'Life', but from a different point of view. Glass clearly perceived that he had become cast in Nielsen's shadow, and in a short correspondence with him in 1923 he tried to plead his case that they were both working in the same direction but from different points of departure. He felt that they were complementary. Nielsen's side of the correspondence has not survived, and we therefore do not know his attitude.