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N I E L S E N A N D T H E F R E N C H P R E S S (1 9 0 3 - 1 9 5 1)

By Jean-Luc Caron. Translated by Michelle Assay

Nielsen had good reason to be fond of Paris. He met and married his wife there on 20 March 1891, after less than a week's acquaintance, during his mind-expanding first Grand Tour of Europe on the Ancker Scholarship. The calendar suggests that their first child, Irmelin, born on 9 December that year, was conceived at almost exactly the same time. During the composer's six-and-a-half week stay in the French capital, his diary almost dries up. But this is explained by the 'whirlwind of happiness' he was experiencing with Anne Marie and the cultural feast they were enjoying in each other's company.¹ Even in the midst of their marital crisis 28 years later, she wrote to him, 'When I think back, the happiest moments in my life were in Paris and Italy.²

It would be nearly 30 years before Nielsen would return. On the first of two visits to Paris in April/May 1920 he met his old friend, Busoni, and on the second he 'made the acquaintance of Consul-General Prior,³ who is very musical and is chairman of a 'Franco-Danish Society'.⁴ It is not recorded whether he established any more direct contact with that society; by this time he was evidently as interested in the career opportunities the city had to offer as in its social opportunities.

Even so, the cultural life of the capital remained firm in his affections, as emerges from a letter of 24 August 1923 to Oluf Ring, composer, author and co-editor with Nielsen of the *Folkhøjskolens Melodibog*. Ring had evidently sought his advice on a congenial place to further his studies in composition:

[I]n your position I would definitely go to Paris. There are many concerts and opera productions there, together with a way of life and at the same time – if

1 Diary entry of 30 March 1891, CNL, 87.

2 Letter of 24 August 1919, CNL 462.

3 Ferdinand Prior (1868-1948), bank director, Consul General in Paris 1919-1933.

4 CNL, 477.

you can find a good location – some peace and quiet for work that I don't believe can be found in any other city in the world. I don't know what you think about the visual arts, but there are certainly wonderful collections of first-rate works from all times and countries in Paris. If you really must have a composition teacher, I shall see about getting the best information in this regard, and then you can just write to me./ I would envy you a stay in Paris, and I don't think you would regret it. If you can just speak a little French, you will realize afterwards that you've been in a vivid, intoxicating, stimulating environment that you will long for ever after.⁵

From 21 November that year he made another short trip in Paris, after which he reported back in a letter to his son-in-law, Emil Telmányi:

I've been in Paris for about 10 days and had a really fine trip. You know that there was a concert down there with Danish music. My Quartet was a great success, and Christiansen played my [Theme and] Variations on a different day at a matinée, which went down well with the musicians. But I don't think there's much significance to the whole story. The French musicians were very amiable, and we were treated excellently, but we are still very different. French taste amounts to delicious sound and exquisite but bloodless music.⁶

His reserve towards 'French taste' in music may have been not unconnected with the behind-the-scenes machinations associated with this event.⁷ Be that as it may, his reservations found a mirror image in the reaction of certain influential French critics to his music, as will be seen. Although he himself only engaged fully with the musical life of the French capital beginning in October 1926, the French press reported on the main performances from which his reputation benefitted in Paris from as early as 1903. Since a full account of this reception in major French newspapers of the time has never been given, this article offers a chronicle, with minimal commentary but extensive quotations, covering everything from brief factual notices to more considered critical evaluations. The largest part of this account will document the reception of his October 1926 visit, which included the premiere of his Flute Concerto. In the following, misprints in original reviews are silently corrected, unless specially indicated.

5 CNL, 570-71.

6 CNL, 579.

7 For a detailed account, see John Fellow's introductory essay to CNB VII, 43-57.

Early mentions in the French press (1903-1926)

On 8 February 1903 in the journal *Le Monde artiste: théâtre, musique, beaux-arts, littérature*,⁸ Paul Milcour⁹ presented information on Nielsen, who was practically unknown in France at the time, drawing attention to the extent of his reputation in his native country:

The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen recently gave the first performance of an opera entitled *Saul and David*, which the composer, M. Carl Nielsen, himself conducted. It seems to be a very remarkable work, in particular dramatically, and it has enjoyed a brilliant success. Shortly beforehand, the composer had offered the public a work of another genre, which, however, was quite bizarre – a symphony which he called *The Four Temperaments* (!) which is more of an orchestral suite than a real symphony. This work was performed in one of the sessions of the Danish Musical Society, a new concert society recently organised by young composers in order to make themselves known to the public.

On 16 December 1906 the same journal informed its readers briefly that ‘The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen has presented [the opera] *Maskarade*. The Danish composer, Nielsen, conducted his work himself. Although Copenhagen is a mere 1250 kilometres away from Paris, we know nothing more about this event.’

Danish music was generally less strongly represented in Paris than that of its northern neighbours. One of the first works of Carl Nielsen to be performed there was probably the song ‘Silkesko over gylden læst’ (Silken shoe over golden last), a setting of a text by Jens Peter Jacobsen, composed in 1891. It was performed on Thursday 25 November 1920 at the Salle Gaveau, by the tenor Mischa-Leon¹⁰ who also championed songs by Merikanto, Lie, Sinding, Sibelius and Grieg. No reviews have been discovered for this event.

On 18 July 1921 *Le Temps*¹¹ informed readers from Copenhagen: ‘With his very personal inspiration, the composer Carl Nielsen knew how by combining old tunes,

⁸ Weekly journal, published in Paris 1862 to 1914.

⁹ French journalist, contributor to the diary and obituary sections of *Le Monde artiste* between 1901 and 1905.

¹⁰ Mischa-Léon (1889-1928), real name Harry Haurowitz, was a Danish tenor. He sang in the 1922 French premiere of Janáček’s *Diary of One who Disappeared* at the Paris Conservatoire.

¹¹ French conservative daily newspaper, published in Paris, 1861-1942, styled ‘A reference newspaper for the elites’.

even hymns of the Entente,¹² to unleash enthusiasm, where the aristocracy of Mme B. Hennings personified the Fatherland.' [Signed Lugné-Poe.]¹³

On 13 February 1922 *Comoedia*¹⁴ reported from Denmark:

the main attraction of the second concert of the Music Society in Copenhagen was the premiere of Carl Nielsen's Fifth Symphony. The composer's tendencies were revealed as the same as in his other works, *Aladdin* and *The Mother*. This symphony, whose construction recalls certain pages from Berlioz, comes across more as music for the theatre than as an orchestral work. Nevertheless, it has made a strong impression, and in Denmark it is hoped that Nielsen's work will be appreciated abroad.

In a letter of 17 November 1923 to his son-in-law, the violinist Emil Telmányi then in the United States, Nielsen wrote:

There's going to be a Danish Chamber Music concert down there, which is excellent. The Breuning Quartet will play my E flat [String Quartet No. 3, CNW 57], [Christian] Christiansen my [Theme and] Variations, etc. We are guests of the French state, and the whole thing is highly official. There are forces (all the Danish artists and the French Minister) lobbying for me to conduct *The Inextinguishable* in the Pasdeloup Concerts.¹⁵

This hope was never to be realised. However, the event did not pass unnoticed in the Press. The forthcoming concert at the hall of the Conservatoire was announced in the *Journal*¹⁶ on 18 November 1923, and in *Comoedia* the next day. On the 20th of that month, *Le Gaulois*¹⁷ published a column under the byline A. Garo,¹⁸ informing its readers:

12 The Triple Entente between France, Britain and Russia of 1907, formed in opposition to the Alliance of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy.

13 Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poe (1860-1940), actor, director, theatre director, and founder of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

14 Cultural journal published 1907-1914 and 1919-1937, first as a daily then weekly.

15 CNL, 578.

16 Paris-based daily, published 1892-1944.

17 Daily French literary and political newspaper, published between 1868 and 1929. Having become conservative and legitimist (i.e. in support of the deposed French monarchy) it was read mainly by the nobility and the upper middle classes until 1914. In 1929 it merged with *Le Figaro*.

18 Probably a pseudonym. No further details known.

Following the concert of French music that took place on 21 March in Copenhagen, the French Association for Expansion and Artistic Exchange has taken the initiative to give a concert of Danish music in Paris. This concert will take place by invitation in the hall of the Conservatoire ... on Friday 23 November. The programme includes works by Carl Nielsen, Louis Glass, Paul [Poul] Schierbeck, Peder Gram, Rud Langgaard [Rued Langgaard], Peter Heise, P.-E. Lange-Müller and Knudåge Riisager, performed by the Breuning-Bache Quartet, pianists Max Rytter and Chr[istian] Christiansen, and singers Mlle. Thyre Larsen from the Royal Opera in Copenhagen and M. Aage Thygesen. [Signed A. Garo.]

The same information was repeated in *Le Journal des Débats*¹⁹ the next day, 21 November 1923, and in *Le Temps* of the same day.

On 30 November 1923 in *Le Ménestrel*,²⁰ René Brancour²¹ wrote:

Danish musicians came to present to us a selection of compositions of their recent or current masters. This was certainly an interesting initiative, as we know hardly anything about foreign music, which should not be really surprising given that we know so little of our own, apart from a few exceptions that invariably occupy the platform. The evening began with a string quartet by Monsieur Carl Nielsen, 'the leader of the neo-classical school', as we learned from a notice written in rather fanciful French. 'He formally follows classical traditions but his special Danish naturalness is never hard to find. He speaks in a quite modern language.' Thankfully not quite! And the *Allegro [recte Allegretto] pastorale*, interrupted by a spirited *Presto*, testifies to a very classical taste ... The ensemble, consisting of Mlle. Gunna Breuning, M. Gerhard Rafn, Mlle. Ella Faber and M. Poulus Bache, proved to be of great quality, except in a few high-pitched violin notes which would have gained from less imperious assertiveness. M. Poulus Bache deserves a special mention. This cellist has a magnificent sound, especially in the lower registers, and he phrases with penetrating simplicity. Finally Messrs. Max Rytter and Christian Christiansen took the piano parts with perfect mastery, never departing from the necessary subordination that is so rarely granted to the soloists. In sum, this was an

19 Published 1789-1944 and discontinued after the Liberation because of its appearance during the German occupation.

20 Prestigious weekly musical journal, published in Paris 1833-1940.

21 French composer and writer (1862-1948), taught at the St Louis in Paris, music critic, curator at the Museum of the Paris Conservatoire.

interesting occasion, which should result in making us more attentive to the often harmonious echoes that reach us from across borders.

Paul Damly²² of *Le Petit Journal*²³ reported on 28 November 1923:

There has never been a better time for musical propaganda than at this time when the French school can claim supremacy. This is a done deal, and its direction is in safe and vigilant hands. In response to the hospitality which some of our compatriots, including M. Albert Roussel, received a few months ago in Denmark, the most eminent official patrons honoured the concert given on Friday at the Conservatoire ..., during which we heard two string quartets by Messrs. Nielsen and Riisager, songs by Messrs. Glass, Heise and Muller, and a Sonata for Piano and Violin by M. Peder Gram. The Danish musicians were known to us only through Buxtehude, beloved ancestor for organists, and through Niels Gade, whose name inspired Schumann to write an exquisite page in the *Album for the Young*. The aforementioned works attest to a personality and to ethnic characteristics that are only waiting to be freed from a Germanic influence, hitherto fatal.

On 14 June 1924, *Le Journal des Débats* announced the performance of Nielsen's song, *Irmelin Rose*, based on a poem of the same title by Jens Peter Jacobsen, set to music in 1891. In the course of this Concert Touche,²⁴ alongside Nielsen's song which the author of the article, 'F.V.'²⁵ described as 'a beautiful madrigal', American baritone Reinald Werrenrath (1883-1953), singing in four languages, had also performed the aria 'Aprite un po' quegli occhi' from *The Marriage of Figaro*.

On Wednesday 14 April 1926, at the Salle Gaveau, the Paris Philharmonic Orchestra under the Danish conductor Frederik Schnedler-Petersen put the spotlight on several important, more or less popular scores. The daring choice of repertoire was indicative of the great variety of music that Paris offered almost every day to its listeners. Of note are the *Suite ancienne* by Norwegian Johan Halvorsen, the final scene of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, the *Cockerels' Dance* from Nielsen's second opera *Maska-rade*, composed 1904-1906 and highly appreciated in Denmark but at that time totally

22 Pseudonym for Paul Locard (1871-1952), magistrate, musicologist, music critic.

23 Leading French newspaper, republican and conservative Parisian daily, published 1863-1944.

24 Francis Touche 1872-1937), French cellist and conductor, director of the Concerts Touche on the Boulevard de Strasbourg in Paris 1906-1926. See Jean-Luc Caron, 'Un défenseur fidèle de l'œuvre de Grieg: Monsieur Francis Touche', *Bulletin de l'Association Française Carl Nielsen*. No. 11 (1994), 109-14.

25 Identity unknown.

unknown elsewhere. The programme also included Mozart's Piano Concerto in E flat major as well as the famous orchestral piece entitled *Midsommarvaka* or St John's Night (Swedish Rhapsody No. 1) by the Swede Hugo Alfvén, which apparently received a fine performance. Then there was Wagner's 'Prelude and Liebestod' from *Tristan and Isolde*, which was played just before two works by the Italian Vittorio Gnechi.

On 23 April 1926 the columnist of *Le Ménestrel* summed up the concert:

M. Petersen is a calm conductor, with no unnecessary gestures and nothing for show, but this does not in any way affect the warmth and precision of the performance. M. Petersen had the good idea of bringing us three works that had not been performed in France ... The fragments of the ballet by the Danish composer, M. Nielsen ... show more originality: there is verve and good humour and the orchestration is amusing. Whatever one might think of the works themselves, the most important point is that by introducing them to us M. Schnedler-Petersen has in effect fulfilled the purpose of artistic exchanges for which these concerts with foreign conductors seem to be planned. It is much more interesting for us to see these conductors perform works of their country, or at least of their race [!], than to find out how they understand our own works or the works of other civilisations. As a result, the concert led by M. Petersen was one of the most interesting in the series given by the Paris Philharmonic Orchestra. V.M.²⁶

Belated recognition of a master (October 1926)

After spending some time in Italy, Nielsen arrived in Paris for a fourth visit in October 1926. His reputation as the most illustrious living Danish composer had preceded him. On Friday 22 October the *Semaine à Paris*²⁷ put the information succinctly: 'Concert of the Danish composer, Carl Nielsen'. Similarly, on 21 October, *L'Humanité*²⁸ confined itself to an advertisement of the concert, without accompanying commentary. Posters announced the event, which found echoes in the French press.

On Thursday 21 October, *Le Figaro*²⁹ stated simply: 'Salle Gaveau, a symphonic concert conducted by Carl Nielsen and Emil Telmányi.' An edition of 14 October had previously announced in a few words:

26 V.M. were the initials of Marcel de Valmalète, founder of the famous Valmalète Bureau des concerts in 1924. He died in 1957.

27 Illustrated weekly journal (Paris-Guide) appearing on Fridays, published 1922-1944.

28 Newspaper founded in 1904 by Jean Jaurès, socialist in orientation until 1920, then communist.

29 Daily newspaper founded in 1826, right-wing, liberal and conservative in its editorial tendency, the oldest daily French newspaper.

a concert of high artistic significance dedicated to the works of the celebrated Danish composer Carl Nielsen will take place at the Salle Gaveau on Thursday evening 11 [sic] October, featuring the Orchestra of the Society of Concerts of Conservatoire conducted by Messrs.. Carl Nielsen and Emil Telmányi. Also taking part will be violinist M. Peder Møller and flautist M. Holger Gilbert Jespersen, both Danish musicians.

The 16 October issue of *Chantecler*³⁰ had advertised:

Carl Nielsen concert, next Thursday, 21 October, at the Salle Gaveau. The celebrated Danish composer Carl Nielsen will give a concert of his own works... The programme will include works that mark out the composer's vast output. M. Nielsen is already well known in Parisian musical circles, perhaps even too well-known for it to be necessary to issue a reminder of his fine and distinguished career He is certain to receive a warm welcome from our regular concert goers.

For its part, on 15 October *Le Courrier Musical*³¹ previewed the 21 October event as follows:

... a great symphonic concert devoted to some masterworks by Carl Nielsen, the illustrious Danish composer... A great success in perspective... The magnificent programme will include the Overture to Act 2 of *Saul and David*, the Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 5, the Flute Concerto and five pieces from *Aladdin*. A great success in prospect. Impresario: Marcel de Valmalète.

Emil Telmányi recorded that : 'The concert is to take place in the Salle Gaveau, a medium-sized hall [1000 seats] with a pleasant acoustic. The orchestra is that of the Conservatoire, with magnificent, first-rate musicians.'³²

All the participants applied themselves to create a great show, which received a public ovation. Telmányi conducted the *Prelude*, the Fifth Symphony and the Flute Concerto;

³⁰ Literary, satirical and humouristic journal. Its administrative seat was in Hanoi. Published 1932-1942.

³¹ A journal of advertisements, information and music reviews. French music periodical, published in Paris, 1897-1922. Renamed *Courrier musical et théâtrale* until the 1930s.

³² Quoted in Mogens Rafn Mogensen, *Carl Nielsen. Der dänische Tondicher*, Arbon, Verlag Eurotext Arbon, 1992, 964.

Nielsen conducted his Violin Concerto and the music from *Aladdin*. After this unique and memorable concert, Nielsen wrote to his daughter Irmelin and her husband:

The concert yesterday evening was one of the greatest experiences of my life. The Salle Gaveau was full to bursting (lots of tickets were sold, but of course we'd also sent out many complimentaries). The famous Conservatoire Orchestra played superbly. The gentlemen began the rehearsals very diffidently [*rettirè*], but in the end there was glowing enthusiasm! The top musicians were there. Roussel and Honegger, together with several German conductors, presented themselves, and the two above-named modern composers praised me. The public, a real French one, was engaged throughout the evening, and after [extracts from] *Aladdin* – which I conducted myself – well now!! Today I was invited to breakfast (highly official) with various ministers, Brussel³³ (Director of the Académie des Beaux-Arts) and Paul Léon,³⁴ who are in charge of cultural life, *et al.* At the end there was a flattering speech in my honour, and Paul Léon informed me that the President had appointed me *Officier* of the *Légion d'honneur*,³⁵ tucked the rosette into my button-hole and kissed me on both cheeks (great applause!). This took place in a beautiful palace with a large garden outside, and you can imagine that the whole ceremony and the breakfast were fine!! Emil conducted the Symphony [No. 5] and was warmly appreciated; he did it excellently too. Because of my heart condition, which I actually don't notice, I only conducted the Violin Concerto and *Aladdin*. Peder Møller had a great success, the new Flute Concerto likewise (Gilbert Jespersen played very beautifully). We're being showered with praise these days, and there are many who want to write about me and talk to me. The whole thing is a great experience and quite new for me.³⁶

An account of the concert by Maurice Imbert³⁷ appeared in the 1 November 1926 issue of *Le Courrier Musical*:

We have just become acquainted with a significant number of works by M. Carl Nielsen, one of the leaders of the Danish musical school and director of the

³³ Robert Brussel (1874-1940), French civil servant. Nielsen may have confused his position with that of Paul Léon.

³⁴ Paul Léon (1874-1962), French civil servant, historian of architecture, director of the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris 1919-1933.

³⁵ Second up in the five ranks of France's highest honour, above chevalier and below commandeur.

³⁶ CNL, 659-60.

³⁷ French composer and music critic (1893-1961).

Copenhagen Conservatoire. In all these, there was nothing that we Latins would dream of finding; no evocation of those atmospheres, those colours, those customs of Nordic life for which our curious minds are nostalgic; these are international expressions, if I may say so, where memories of César Franck's language (M. Nielsen seems to have a weakness for the *Symphonic Variations*) co-exist with that of Brahms, R. Strauss, even Stravinsky. Possessing a robust technique, from a contrapuntal or orchestral point of view, M. Nielsen has perfectly assimilated his personal values in an evolved manner. In the Flute Concerto, for example, the combinations of timbres points to a very modern conception, worthy of the author of the *Histoire du soldat*, while the syntax would hardly have alienated Th. Dubois himself;³⁸ and similarly the 'Market at Isphahan' is quite Stravinskian in its construction and its very classical structure with a most charming polymelody. For me the architecture is more nebulous; I find it difficult to grasp the direction of the discourse: perhaps this music requires to be felt rather than reflected upon. The Symphony [No. 5] Op. 50 is very curious, with its percussion playing an important descriptive and emotional role despite the fact that it is written in an accessible style. It is a programme symphony rather than pure music. The Violin Concerto was performed by a first-rate violinist, M. Peder Møller, and the Flute Concerto by M. Jespersen, a top-class flautist, both of whom were trained in France, incidentally. Conducting the superb orchestra of the Société des Concerts, M. Nielsen and his son-in-law Emil Telmányi, took turns at the podium. Both received an ovation.

On 25 October *Le Gaulois* published a review by Louis Schneider:³⁹

The overture to *Saul and David* has no shortage of force or vigour. The Violin Concerto is bristling with difficulties, and the technique here kills the inspiration; only the final rondo is not lacking in originality; the violinist Peder Møller took advantage of it as a display vehicle. Conducted by the composer's son-in-law, the Symphony No. 5 takes on the appearance at times of an oriental rhapsody with percussive instruments. The convoluted and ponderous [*lourd*] Flute Concerto found an excellent performer in M. Jespersen. The most savourable moment of the concert was the suite from *Aladdin*, which has colour, clarity and the advantage of being made up of short pieces; this work was a real success for the composer.

38 Théodore Dubois, highly conservative French composer (1837-1924).

39 French dramatist, music critic and translator (1861-1934).

Also on 25 October Robert Brussel reported in *Le Figaro*: ‘The Carl Nielsen concert gave us the triple pleasure of hearing a gifted conductor (M. Telmányi), a finely-schooled violinist (M. Peder Möller), and an excellent flautist (M. Jespersen), as well as to appreciate the considerable output of the Danish master in all its variety.’

On 29 October a lengthy notice by H. de Curzon⁴⁰ appeared in *Le Ménestrel*:

Nothing is more interesting to study than a well-chosen selection of works by a foreign composer who is still unknown to us, in a perfect performance. The French Association for Artistic Expansion and Exchange ... arranged for a concert of works by M. Carl Nielsen, promoted by the Société des Concerts, which was very warmly received. M. Nielsen, who was born on the island of Funen in 1865, was first a village musician, then a pupil at the Copenhagen Conservatoire, violinist at the Royal Theatre Orchestra, later a conductor and finally director of the Royal Conservatory Royal of Music; he did not reach his current status of composer until much later. The works he chose to bring to our attention all date from 1902 to 1926. These are all orchestral, but we are told that many of his popular melodies, little Danish songs, are constantly sung by ‘adults and children’; and the oldest of the works presented here is from an opera-oratorio entitled *Saul and David*. We heard a kind of symphonic interlude from the opera: the opening of the second act, brilliant in style, warmly characterised by the brass, but enveloped by the strings. In general, M. Nielsen’s orchestra is very flexible [*plastique*], very vivid in its colours, choice of sounds and the liveliness of picturesque expressions. I do not see exactly an architectural plan followed in his compositions, but rather a conception especially enamoured of the freedom of the dream, and which, often, and no doubt because of this, does not indulge in excessive length. The Violin Concerto, in two movements, disappoints a little in this respect. If the style is very modern, the violin retains the somewhat abusive omnipotence of older concertos. It begins without orchestral prelude and does not stop, the more so since it has a pedal point in each movement. The second movement especially is engaging, with its penetrating, dreamy Adagio and its picturesque rondo. The performer, an excellent musician, was M. Peder Möller, who is by the way no stranger to us. Do you remember the concerts performed at the Palmarium in the Jardin d’Acclimatation? He was the one who ran them, and they were often most remarkable. The Symphony No. 5, also in two movements, is also

⁴⁰ French translator, historian, musicologist and archivist (1861-1942).

not exempt from a somewhat tiresomely drawn-out development. It is clear, moreover, that it is the need for evocative expression that is the cause. In the first movement, a beautiful harmonious wave [presumably the G major *adagio*] succeeds a series of almost discordant, yet blended sonorities: it is a vision full of imagination, which the second movement seems to allow to flourish with more externalised nuances – over a deep pedal. M. Nielsen immediately followed it with a Flute Concerto, which he has just completed, and where I still see free discourse and capricious echoes of the sounds of nature rather than an actual composition. M. Holger Gilbert Jespersen, who performed it, has a very beautiful sound – pure, round and delicately nuanced. He was a pupil of Hennebains⁴¹ and Philippe Gaubert.⁴² Conducted by M. Nielsen and placed at the end, though composed seven years earlier, were five orchestral pieces from the fairy-tale *Aladdin* by [Adam] Oehlenschlaeger, the Danish national poet, which Nielsen composed for the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. Their significance is probably less than that of the previous works, but they had a greater effect on the audience, thanks to their originality, verve and the picturesque expression of their evocations. We heard a march, rhythmicised by brass and percussion; a Hindu Dance, with measured, slow meanderings in the woodwind, really charming in its shape; another dance, a kind of sound-painting of the ‘Market at Isfahan’, which was fully successful; here the winds again make their embroideries on a light background of strings; and finally a Negro Dance, fast and feverish./ M. Nielsen conducted these last pieces himself. The other works were conducted by his son-in-law, the violinist Emil Telmányi, with great flexibility and precision.

On 27 October *Le Guide du concert* (Paris journal 1910-1966) P.R. opined:

M. Carl Nielsen is one of the most prominent personalities of the contemporary Scandinavian school. His symphonic output, while considerable and very varied, quite clearly steers away from curiosities of contemporary technique, but is valuable on the other hand for its essential qualities of inspiration – abundant to the point of profusion – and of technical mastery. A rich diversity reigns between the various works on the programme, from the quite classical Interlude from *Saul and David* to the familiar picturesqueness of the oriental Suite from *Aladdin*, via the intense romanticism and powerfully expression of

41 Adolphe Hennebains (1862-1914), French flautist.

42 French flautist, composer and conductor (1879-1941).

the Fifth Symphony, 'Dreams and Deeds' [Nielsen's sub-title in his draft score, presumably mentioned in the programme note]. A very lively and spontaneous reception greeted all these works, as well as the two concertos, for Violin Op. 33 and for Flute (1926), well served by remarkable performers.... The direction of the orchestra under the baton of the composer was original and personal and under that of M Emil Telmányi, perfectly solid. The two took turns at the podium.

On Friday 29 October 1926 Th. Lindenlaub⁴³ described Nielsen's music in *Le Temps*, as follows:

There is no area of music in which this composer, who is currently the leading representative of his country, has not produced remarkable works. From the simple song which speaks directly to the heart thanks to the naturalness of its tone, to the symphony where the most elaborate form embeds the most carefully chosen ideas, Carl Nielsen has tackled all genres, not neglecting the theatre either (*Saul and David* and music for the fairy-tale *Aladdin*). In all this, he has produced significant works ... Now over sixty, he is still in full creative vigour, attesting to the most interesting affinities with the art of today, yet bearing an impeccable taste that comes from the art of yesteryear. This rare ability to adapt appeared in the succession of works presented to us in this interesting concert; including a Violin Concerto (very well played by M. Peder Møller), the Fifth Symphony, and stage music for Oehlenschlaeger's *Aladdin*. M. Nielsen conducted these latter picturesque-spiritual and delicately coloured pieces which reminded me in their discreet and tasteful orientalism of [Legend] Zorohayda [Op. 11] by (Johan) Svendsen, another Scandinavian of the previous generation. M. Nielsen was greeted with the warmest and most deserved applause.

In *Comoedia* of October 24, 1926, Paul Le Flem⁴⁴ attested:

M. Carl Nielsen is the most prominent composer in Denmark. A highly regarded conductor, he has given up this career, in which he had shown remarkable qualities, in order to devote himself entirely to composition ... What is striking in M. Nielsen's works is his mastery in handling of the orchestra. He

⁴³ Théodore Lindenlaub (1854-1929), college professor and journalist, editor of the *Le Temps*.

⁴⁴ 1881-1984, French composer, conductor and music critic, worked for *Comoedia* from 1922 to 1938.

is remarkably skilful in the way he groups the timbres, associates them and draws sharp contrasts from them... The 5th Symphony, which M. Nielsen conducted himself [sic – the Symphony was conducted by Telmányi], is an important and highly developed work in two movements. The first part, restrained in character, is in stark contrast with the second, which is tumultuous and vehemently rhythmic. It seems that this symphony responds to a psychological fact that the composer has imposed on himself in order to remain more in control of his musical ideas and to manage their unfolding. The five pieces from *Aladdin* have above all a picturesque character ... The Market Square in Isfahan curiously places four small orchestras in opposition to one another, each living its own independent life. Two concertos were also on the programme. The Violin Concerto is a highly virtuosic work and a vehicle for M. Peder Møller, a violinist as distinguished as he is a master of his art. The Concerto for Flute and Orchestra, remarkably performed by M. Holger Gilbert-Jespersen, is M. Nielsen's latest work. It is spicy, lively and with no shortage of humour. M. Emil Telmányi took on an important part of the programme with great confidence.

For its part, *Excelsior*⁴⁵ of 28 October 1928 informed its readers:

Carl Nielsen's work reflects all the stages of contemporary aesthetics, assimilated with an impressive wealth of personal inspiration. The orientalism of this Danish composer in the score to *Aladdin* is strikingly objective compared to that of Rimsky-Korsakov, filled with the presence of the inexhaustible *Scheherazade*. With Nielsen the sonic expression is the exact equivalent of a visual evocation ... From the Wagnerism of *Saul and David* (1902) to the shimmering Concerto for Flute and Orchestra (1926) we find passed down the conquests of which our Debussy was the brilliant initiator. [Signed Edouard Tromp⁴⁶]

The day after the concert, Nielsen and his companions went to a so-called intimate lunch which brought together personalities including Henri Rabaud, the director of Paris Conservatoire. On this occasion he was presented with the Légion d'honneur. On 23 October *Comoedia* reported: 'A luncheon at the Cercle Interallié was offered in honour of the great Danish violinist [sic!] Carl Nielsen. It was presided over by M Paul Léon, the director of the [Académie des] Beaux-Arts, who presented him with the rosette of Officer of the Légion d'Honneur.'

⁴⁵ Illustrated daily newspaper, published 1910-1940, whose political orientation gradually shifted to the right.

⁴⁶ French author, dates unknown.

In its edition of 23 October 1926, *Le Gaulois* gave further details:

A luncheon was offered yesterday at the Cercle Interallié in honour of M. Carl Nielsen ... whose concert on Thursday was a great success and was honoured by the presence of Prince and Princess René de Nourbon-Parme and Princess Aage of Denmark. Also present at the luncheon was M Paul Léon, the former minister, who after giving a charming toast presented M. Nielsen with the cross of the Officer of Légion d'honneur. M. H.A. Bernhoft, Danish ambassador in France, M. Engelsted, embassy advisor, M. Helge Wamberg, Danish press attaché, M. Pillat as well as other dignitaries were also present.

Les Annales politiques et littéraires of 14 November 1926, offered similar information.

In gratitude, Nielsen replied with the following speech, quoted in *Comoedia* (23 October 1926):

In my youth, I spent a few months in Paris./ During this period César Franck died and I attended the concert given in memory of the great master./ I had unforgettable impressions of the French spirit, of French culture, of all human values .and of the ever-present sensitivity of your illustrious nation./ My admiration and love were established for everything that has formed your spirit./ Later, I came to France many times, but only for short stays. Now I find myself in your Paris, surrounded by benevolence and sympathy for my art. And I remember today all that I experienced in my youth because, deep down, nothing that then filled my soul has changed in your country: the world still turns, with hope and enthusiasm, towards the immense construction that is French culture and French art in all its categories./ The nerve centre of the world for science, literature and art vibrates in this city, in this people. Gentlemen, you may understand how happy and touched I am at the splendid reception you have given me, and I thank you with all my heart – you, Monsieur le Directeur [Léon], a friend of Denmark and our art, who have graciously honoured this luncheon with your presence, and you, Monsieur Brussel,⁴⁷ director of this active association, which is well known in my country, who have organised my concert so skilfully./ Thank you and au revoir!⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Robert Brussel, director of the French Association for Expansion and Artistic Exchanges.

⁴⁸ Reproduced in *Samtid*, 398.

A few days later, on 1 November, Luis Vuillemin⁴⁹ reported in *Paris Soir*:⁵⁰ ‘An unfortunate influenza prevented me from hearing [works of Carl Nielsen]. It’s most regrettable, the more so given that M. Nielsen has always been a great friend to our French composers. The government has honoured him with the rosette of Légion d’Honneur... Bravo!’

A musical evening in honour of Carl Nielsen took place on 22 October, the day after the celebrated concert at the Gaveau. A programme of chamber music was led by Peder Møller (violin) and Emil Reesen (piano), including works by Kai Sennius, Nielsen (*Two Humoresque-Bagatelles*), Pugnani, Schubert and Bazzini. Nielsen himself performed several of his *Humoresque-Bagatelles* at the piano. The evening unfolded in the presence of Maurice Ravel, Arthur Honegger and Albert Roussel. It was followed by a nocturnal visit of Paris.⁵¹

In a letter of 13 January to his sister Louise Jacobsen in Chicago, Nielsen wrote:

In October a big concert with my works was put on in Paris. It was Paris’s finest orchestra, and the hall (the Salle Gaveau) was full of the very best French public, who acclaimed me joyously when I appeared to conduct the last piece on the programme [*the Aladdin excerpts*] myself. Telmányi conducted most of the programme, and the whole thing was like a dream, with all that praise. There were celebrations for me (including at the Embassy), and the day after the concert I was invited by the representative of the French government to an enormous fine lunch in a magnificent palace with a view over a park in the middle of Paris – imagine! During the lunch speeches were made, and at the end the government representative stood up and also spoke. When he had finished he brought greetings from the French President,⁵² kissed me on both cheeks and fastened the French red rose in my buttonhole, ceremoniously declaring me ‘Officer of the French Legion of Honour’. That’s a very high order, and you can imagine how pleased I am with it. Whenever I carry the red rose in my buttonhole, soldiers and officers in France are supposed to pay homage to ‘Carl the house-painter’s boy’.⁵³

49 French composer, musicologist and conductor (1879-1929).

50 Paris daily from 1923. One of the most important French papers, it was banned in 1944 because it had continued to publish during the German Occupation.

51 CNL, 661-662.

52 Gaston Doumergue (1863-1937).

53 Letter of 13 January 1927 – see CNL, 664.

Echoes and post-scripts

After his Parisian triumph in 1926, Nielsen did not succeed in seducing the French again for a long time. Although he was willingly acknowledged as the most important contemporary Nordic composer, he was only rarely performed.⁵⁴

Le Gaulois alerted its readers on Friday 18 March 1927: 'Victor Schiøler and Peder Møller will perform Beethoven's Kreutzer sonata, Nielsen's Second Violin Sonata and Franck's Sonata on Monday evening 21 March at the Salle Gaveau, where booking is now open.' The same announcement was repeated in *Le Gaulois* of 21 March, and a similar brief note appeared in *Le Figaro* on 21 March. On 8 April the same paper reported, anonymously: 'The pianist, M Schiøler and the violinist, M Möller [Møller] delivered a secure account of Beethoven, Franck and Carl Nielsen, whose sonata, though not lacking interest, suffered somewhat from being in such company.'

According to Pierre Leroi⁵⁵ in *Le Gaulois* of 29 March 1927:

Unifying their respective talents and communicating with the same artistic zeal, Messrs.. Victor Schiøler and Peder Møller offered a most lively programme of sonatas for violin and piano by Beethoven, Franck and M. Carl Nielsen. This last work was notable for its solid structure and the elevated tone of its style.

On 31 March *Excelsior* wrote of a 'perfect homogeneity and a well-informed sense of appropriate nuances' by the two musicians. And on 28 March André Gresse⁵⁶ wrote in the *Journal Quotidien*:⁵⁷ 'Salle Gaveau... also a sonata by the Danish master, Carl Nielsen'.

The next month, on Sunday 24 April 1927, *Le Gaulois* informed its readers: 'At the Pasdeloup Concerts, Magador Theatre, a special concert ... Symphony No. 2 by Carl Nielsen (premiere in Paris), conductor, M. Schnedler-Petersen, leader of Symphonic Concerts in Copenhagen'. *Paris-Midi*⁵⁸ carried the same information on the same day.

⁵⁴ Jean-Luc Caron, 'L'accueil des compositeurs nordiques', in Danièle Piston (ed.), *Musiques et musiciens à Paris dans les années trente*, Paris 2000, 518.

⁵⁵ Violinist and music critic, active in numerous collaborations with various papers (1896-1962).

⁵⁶ Bass singer (1868-1937).

⁵⁷ Paris daily, published 1892-1944, conservative in its political tendency from 1911-1925), then nationalist and fascist (1925-1944).

⁵⁸ The only Parisian daily appearing at midday, published between 1911 and 1944 (publication of *Paris-Soir*).

The next day, 25 April 1927 *L'Action Française*⁵⁹ reported: 'Yesterday M. Petersen replaced M. Rhené-Baton on the podium for a beautiful programme of Danish music performed by Danish musicians.'

On 26 April 1927 Robert Dezarnaux⁶⁰ in *La Liberté*⁶¹ expanded:

As for Carl Nielsen's symphony, which describes in order the temperaments of 'choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic and sanguine', I don't find much to say... It moved me considerably. Its invention and realisation are old-fashioned. The themes are sincere, naïve and straightforward; the orchestration is massive, where the woodwinds are as if stunned by the bow-strokes of the strings; its ponderous trombones, where there is neither caprice nor fantasy; where one is never surprised by any lively or new features; all this music is learned, and not imaginative, clean and without brilliance, seemingly quite plain and almost old-aged.

Comeedia (26 April 1927) found a more positive tone through Paul Le Flem, who stated: 'M. Carl Nielsen's Second Symphony has a subtitle: *The Four Temperaments*; in it each piece seeks to describe musically the essential features of our personality ... A true lesson in musical psychology'.

Also on April 26, Louis Schneider in *Le Gaulois*, referred to the concert, which took place in the absence of the composer:

The Sunday event at the Pasdeloup Concerts, conducted by M. Schindler-Petersen [sic], the renowned Danish conductor, was of great interest, giving us the opportunity to hear works that are little known and even completely unknown in France. This is how we were introduced to the Second Symphony by the composer Carl Nielsen. This symphony is far from lacking in originality; it is full of ideas developed by a musician in full command of his craft. Entitled *The Four Temperaments*, each of its movements corresponds to a characteristic of various types: Colerico, for example, is impetuous, with rather violent instrumental colourings not too far from the influence of Richard Strauss; Commodo e flemmatico unfolds at a good-natured, easy pace, in the manner of an

⁵⁹ Royalist paper founded in Paris in 1904 as 'Organ of general nationalism'; it was banned in August 1944.

⁶⁰ Pseudonym of Robert Kem (1879-1959), French author, journalist and critic.

⁶¹ Paris daily, published 1865-1940.

Allegretto by Brahms; to the Melancolico, which drags somewhat, I prefer the lively rhythm and the generous sonority of the Sanguineo.

Unfortunately the longest review, by Pierre de Lapommeraye⁶² in *Le Ménestrel* of Friday 29 April 1927, was the most negative:

This time M. Rhené-Baton ... had given up his baton and had entrusted his orchestra to M. Frederick Schnedler-Petersen ... M. Schnedler-Petersen is a calm and precise man. His gestures are small but dry when it is necessary to indicate the tempo or the rhythm. He supervises perfectly, with his limpid and soft gaze, the entries of each instrument: there is a something in his bearing of the unction and the modesty of a pastor. He offered us the French premiere of a symphony by Carl Nielsen, entitled 'the Four Temperaments' (Allegro collerico [sic], Allegro commodo e flemmatico, Andante mélancolico [sic], finally Allegro sanguinico [sic]) – there is no need to translate, I believe. M. Nielsen has endeavoured to characterise each of the listed characters with his music. He has done so no great ceremony and above all without much contrast; the *collerico* is not very vehement and the *sanguinico* is neither rubicund nor very jovial: the author avoids extremes, which is perhaps an expression of the Danish temperament. I'm very much led to believe this. The harmonic translation remains in the same middle ground. M. Nielsen seems to not to have got past Mendelssohn and systematically ignores the Wagnerian symphony or the instrumentation of modern composers; there is no surprise either in the predictable developments, and the few audacities of the percussion are quite modest and appear for no apparent reason. M. Petersen left us with a pleasant impression of Danish musical art.

Stan Golestan⁶³ of *Le Figaro* wrote on 1 May 1927: 'We are already familiar with the musical output of Carl Nielsen, the Danish master who is widely admired in his own country. M Schnedler-Petersen fortunately had the inspired idea of offering us his (Nielsen's) Second Symphony, entitled *The Four Temperaments*; this is music that releases a particular vision, in its construction not far from that of Berlioz.'

Almost exactly a year later, on 18 April 1928, a daring programme in honour of contemporary Nordic music was on offer at the Salle Playel. The evening included works by Peder Gram, Palmgren, Rangström, Järnefelt and Nielsen's Third Symphony.

62 No details known.

63 Romanian composer (1875-1956), lived in Paris, teacher and musical critic for the *Figaro*.

Clearly in haste, *Le Matin*⁶⁴ of 14 April 1928 confined itself to a small insert announcing a ‘Scandinavian Festival’ under the direction of Schnedler-Petersen. A similar announcement, framed, appeared in *Le Gaulois* on the same day.

Pierre Leroi of *Le Gaulois* reported on Sunday 23 April 1928: ‘The Philharmonic Orchestra under the firm and accurate direction of M. F. Schnedler-Petersen championed some works by Scandinavian musicians. We heard a symphony by Carl Nielsen, subtitled *Espansiva*, which defines the author’s intentions. A solidly arranged work and with a rather large breath.’

Pierre Wolff⁶⁵ in *La Liberté* on 27 April 1928 wrote: ‘This time he brought us Carl Nielsen’s Third Symphony, called *Espansiva* [sic]. *Espansiva*, ah yes! A beautiful instrumental technique, but with a grandiloquence that can be a bit tiring.’

And what did the chronicler Pierre de Lapommeraye, who had been so luke-warm about the *Four Temperaments* make of the event in *Le Ménestrel* of Friday 27 April 1928?

This time we were invited to hear Scandinavian music, i.e. music by Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish composers, performed under the direction of M. Schnedler-Petersen ... The *pièce de résistance* was a symphony (the Third) by M. Carl Nielsen (Danish, I believe[!!]). It is a classically conceived symphony, with exposition, development, peroration and conclusion. What may be criticised in this kind of composition is its lack of the unexpected: the form is solid, the orchestration well balanced, but the attention is not exactly seized, especially since too often the themes are so-so and the emotion uncommunicative, even though the symphony has the subtitle *Espansiva*. As for any kind of Scandinavian character, it did not appear to us: it is easy, pleasant music, but devoid of any colour. We should acknowledge that M. Schnedler-Petersen conducted it with the same qualities as Nielsen’s Symphony: with perfect mastery, discretion and sobriety.

On Monday 30 April Stan Golestan in *Le Figaro* informed readers that:

The Philharmonic Concerts invited us to a Scandinavian Festival, where, alongside Grieg, whom it is quite natural to find in such occasions, we were able to applaud works by modern composers, a symphony by M. Carl Nielsen

⁶⁴ Daily newspaper founded in 1883 and published until 1944, collaborated with the Vichy regime, with a very large circulation numbering a million in 1914.

⁶⁵ French playwright (1825-1944).

... We must unreservedly praise M. Schnedler-Petersen who conducted the orchestra with a most comprehensive strength and vigour.

On 9 March 1930, *Aladdin* returned to the Parisian concert platform in a Lamoureaux concert at the Salle Gaveau. The programme was announced in *Le Matin* of 6 March 1930. René Brancour⁶⁶ informed his readers in *Le Ménestrel* on 14 March:

M. Anders Rachlew⁶⁷ is undoubtedly a conductor of special quality. He makes no attempt at gymnastic demonstrations; he doesn't imitate the majestic gestures of a diver; he does not cover his musicians with soft compliments any more than with fierce maledictions. And with a minimum of gestures, he achieves the best results. Isn't that extraordinary? ... M. Carl Nielsen, a Danish composer with tendencies that we are told are neo-classical, was revealed to us in the three numbers from an *Aladdin* score: two dances and a march. These are worthy pieces that do not seem to indicate a lively personality, but which offer the unmistakable character of being geometrically rhythmic.

Suzanne Demarquez⁶⁸ had a slightly contradictory opinion, which she explained in her article of 1 April 1930 for *Le Courrier Musical*:

Lamoureaux Concerts, 9 March. The audience follows closely the conducting debut of M Anders Rachlew at the podium of the Lamoureaux. M Rachlew conducts with soberly restrained gestures that succeed in obtaining the desired gradation of effects ... The excerpts from M. Carl Nielsen's *Aladdin* are colourful, but the orientalism is unfortunately rather superficial and is not reinforced by powerful thematic invention.

Nielsen passed away in Copenhagen on Saturday 5 October 1931. The French press, which had made such a big thing of his stay in the capital five years earlier, only carried faint echoes of the news. *Le Ménestrel* of 9 October 1931 was content to report: 'We announce from Copenhagen the death of the composer Carl Nielsen.' Like several others, the *Journal des Débats* of Sunday 4 October confined itself to a simple statement: 'Death of the composer Carl Nielsen in Copenhagen. The composer has just died.' The same laconic tone was struck in the *Bulletin périodique de la presse*

⁶⁶ French critic, musicologist and teacher (1862-1948).

⁶⁷ Belgian conductor (1882-1970).

⁶⁸ French composer, critic and professor (1891-1965).

scandinave⁶⁹ on 19 October, in the *Larousse mensuel illustré*⁷⁰ and in *Le Grand écho du Nord de la France*.⁷¹ *Excelsior* added on 8 October 1931: ‘One of the most important figures in Danish music has just died in Copenhagen. A pupil of Gade at the Copenhagen Conservatoire, Carl Nielsen was conductor of the Royal Orchestra, then director of the National Conservatoire and of the Music Society. He was 66 years old.’

Fourteen months after Nielsen’s death the Salle Gaveau programmed a concert with the Danish Quartet, including his Quartet in F major Op. 44, CNW 58, alongside Beethoven’s Quartet Op. 59 No. 3 and Mozart’s K575. The *Semaine de Paris* on 16 December had carried a modest announcement of the event. It is possible to learn more about the 19 December 1932 concert at the Gaveau thanks to the report by Henri Petit⁷² in the *Courrier Musical* of 1 January 1933:

A remarkable ensemble has just made its debut in Paris. Composed of elite individuals... the Danish Quartet is at the same time set apart by the subtly detailed finish that adorns its performances and by the generous ardour which animates its four members when necessary. They introduced to us a quartet, unknown to us, by the Danish composer Carl Nielsen, from which I particularly remember the finale’s melodious Schubertian andante.

On 28 February 1936 *L’Art musical: théâtres, concerts, TSF, disques, cinéma*, offered a very short biographical résumé of Nielsen. A few days later, on Sunday 1 March, in the Hall of the Old Conservatoire, the Société des Concerts, under the experienced baton of Philippe Gaubert, presented a programme of music by Rangström, Hamerik, Schubert, Liszt, Rabaud and Schmitt. Included were two of Nielsen’s songs, with whose orthography the programme struggled: *Sank kun dit Have a blomst* [Saenk kun dit hoved, du blomst] and *Silesko aer Eylden Lost* [Silkesko over gylden læst]. Pianist Edward Kilenyi⁷³ accompanied the singer Helga Wecker⁷⁴ and the Amicitia choir. *Le Temps* had advertised the evening in its February 25 issue. Henri de Curzon reported in *Le Ménestrel* of Friday 6 March 6, 1936: ‘A bouquet of rare flowers, with exotic fragrance ... On the other hand, Mme Helga Wecker shared with us her rich, mellow contralto, full of finesse and sincerity ... and two items by Carl Nielsen, the one expressive, the other serious.’

69 Ministry of War, office of the foreign press, published 1915-1933.

70 Illustrated monthly, published 1907-1957.

71 Daily newspaper, published 1890-1944.

72 French writer (1900-1978).

73 Hungarian-American pianist (1910-2000).

74 Norwegian singer (1862-??).

From a concert featuring the same singer on 1 November 1936, Stan Golestan in *Le Figaro* reported: 'Another singer, Mme Helga Wecker, a constant musical pleasure, brings us from her northern homeland a series of colourful songs by Carl Nielsen.' *Excelsior* of 5 November 1936 confirmed: 'The vocal recital by Mme Helga Wecker was very beautiful.... Monteverdi, Schubert, Beethoven and Carl Nielsen were adorned that evening in a rare way, which will leave a lasting memory.'

Ten years further on, the Symphony No. 3, *Espansiva*, was heard again in Paris on Monday 11 November 1946 at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. The Orchestre National performed under the baton of the Danish conductor, Erik Tuxen.⁷⁵

A week later, on 18 November 1946, the journal *Combat*⁷⁶ simply announced a concert under the aegis of UNESCO, while a few days earlier (11 November) *Le Guide du concert*⁷⁷ had alerted its readers:

This composer occupies a prominent place in Scandinavian music ... [B]y his training as well as his aesthetics, he is similar to a Lalo or a Saint-Saëns. His numerous works, both in dramatic genres as well as in symphony and chamber music, are not unknown in Paris, where his symphonies in particular have received performances. Of the Third Symphony, Paul le Flem wrote in 1928: 'The themes are developed and very judiciously opposed. The melodic plans remain clear and are ingeniously underlined in the orchestra. The instrumentation processes retain the independence of each timbre and avoid doubling so that the texture remains transparent.'⁷⁸

The marvellous *Chaconne* for piano (1916) was performed twice in Paris in 1951, first by Claus Bahnsen⁷⁹ at the Ecole Normale on 9 May and then by France Ellegaard⁸⁰ at the Salle Gaveau on 5 December. The press seems not to have taken notice of either performance.

In short, an abiding silence followed the death of the composer, who, as might be expected, entered a long period of purgatory. Carl Nielsen and his music had to wait many more years before finding the prominent place that was rightfully his – to be

75 1902-1957.

76 Underground French daily founded during the Second World War and organ of the French Liberation movement, published 1941-1974.

77 Paris weekly, published 1910-1966.

78 The original review was published in *Comoedia*, 23 April 1928.

79 Danish pianist and conductor, dates unknown.

80 Danish-born Finnish pianist (1913-1999).

precise, thanks to the repercussions of the Edinburgh Festival in 1950 and the commemorations organised in 1965 for his centenary. The immense interest generated by recordings from the 1950s on amplified his recognition. Nevertheless, while waiting for this salutary renaissance, the French press had helped to shape the image of the great Danish master in the years between 1920 and 1951.

A B S T R A C T

Nielsen loved the French capital, its touristic riches and its abundant artistic life. He went there several times following his first trip in 1890-1891 in the course of studies that also took in Germany and Italy. At the time of his trip to Paris in October 1926 his name was better known than his works themselves. For the greater part of those in French musical life he was the dominant figure in contemporary Danish and Scandinavian music, apart from Edward Grieg, who had been dead nearly twenty years. The concert at the Salle Gaveau, which was entirely devoted to his works and which took place in his presence, enjoyed a wide resonance in the media. The majority of Danish artists who lent their services to his music on this memorable evening did not fail to make a strong impression on the Parisian audience. The press announced and commented on the event extensively.