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# AN ENERGETIC ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST MOVEMENT OF NIELSEN'S SINFONIA ESPANSIVA

The *Espansiva* as an expression of force, space, accumulation and acceleration

By Svend Hvidtfelt Nielsen

On the following pages I will present another analysis of the often analysed first movement of Nielsen's *Sinfonia Espansiva*. My attempt is to capture in analytical terms the element of 'force' that is often considered as characterising this piece. I will do so through the concepts of the purely *energetic* theory formulated in the writings of Hans Mersmann.

## Energetics

In an article from 2009 and in his groundbreaking book on Nielsen as 'modernist', Daniel M. Grimley draws attention to a connection between Nielsen and the so-called *energetic* movement.<sup>1</sup> Grimley traces the movement back to the German scientist Wilhelm Ostwald and describes its essence as a focus on energy: '[M]aterial is the imagined, a hypothetical concept, ... energy is the actual reality'.<sup>2</sup> The point of departure for Grimley's presentation is an article from the Danish journal *Tilskueren* from 1900,<sup>3</sup> thus showing that this way of thinking was part of a Danish mindset at the turn of the century and therefore may well – as Grimley argues – have influenced Nielsen.

In the field of music theory, the main 'energetic' writers around 1900 are August Halm, Ernst Kurth and Hans Mersmann. In Kurth's writings one finds again and again a focus on music as 'energy': 'Music is ... the experience of its mysterious

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1 Daniel M. Grimley, 'Nielsen's Symphonic Waves. Energetics, the Sinfonia Espansiva, and German Music Theory', in *Carl Nielsen Studies* 4 (2009), 43–54; Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, Woodbridge 2010, 96ff.

2 *Ibid.*, 97.

3 Emil Petersen, 'Energie og Materie', *Tilskueren* 17 (1900), 309–322.

energies within us. ... The overflow of energetic content in its sensual expression, the basic phenomenon of all music that sounds, means its becoming.<sup>4</sup>

And following the focus on energy, we find music described as an unfolding of ‘force’: ‘[T]he supporting content of every melody movement, but also of every single tone that it traverses, is a living force, a peculiar psychological state of tension that pushes out of the tone, which I have called “kinetic energy”.’<sup>5</sup>

In Halm’s writings we find a focus on energy and force articulated as a focus on ‘life’ and ‘movement’, as in the famous quotation: ‘Music is essentially dissonance, viz. life and movement.’<sup>6</sup>

This focus on force becomes a central issue in Mersmann’s monumental *Ange wandte Musikästhetik* of 1926, where it stands out as one of a limited number of central terms through which Mersmann tries to capture and more precisely describe the various kinds of energy-flow found in music.

Grimley points to crucial aspects of Mersmann’s theories of musical form. And throughout his presentations Grimley uses energetic vocabulary, comparing music to ‘force’ and to ‘expansive’ versus ‘centripetal’ motion. This vocabulary, though present also in the writings of both Halm and Kurth, takes on a more specific meaning in Mersmann’s texts. It becomes well defined terms in a theory that takes up the challenge to specify the meaning of energetic terms such as ‘force’ and ‘expansive’ by letting them – together with an array of other concepts – constitute ways to define musical motion. What Mersmann achieves is a theory with the potential to seize and verbalise the way musical energy flows. Although no analysis of music is really ‘verifiable’, some analyses, such as those of Schenker and Riemann, may seem to fit their objects in a manner that makes them more than merely plausible. This is not possible for a Mersmannian analysis. It will never reach a similar degree of concreteness. But it may yet be plausible, on its own terms even convincing. And it may make it possible to draw attention to aspects that in other writings only lie between the lines. What follows below, therefore, is an attempt to present once again

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4 Die Musik ist ... das Erlebnis ihrer rätselhaften Energien selbst in uns. ... Das Überfließen von energetischen Inhalten in ihren sinnlichen Ausdruck, das Grundphänomen aller erklingenden Musik, bedeutet daher ihr Werden. Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik und ihre Krise in Wagners ‘Tristan’*, Bern 1923, 4–5.

5 [D]er tragende Inhalt einer jeden Melodiebewegung, aber auch jedes einzelnen Tones, den sie durchstreift, [ist] eine lebendige Kraft, ein aus dem Tone herausdrängender eigentümlicher psychischer Spannungszustand, den ich als ‘kinetische Energie’ bezeichnet habe. *Ibid.*, 6.

6 Die Musik ist ihrem Wesen nach Dissonanz, nämlich Leben und Bewegung, August Halm, *Harmonielehre* [1900] 1905, 14.

an analysis of a very frequently analysed piece of music: the first movement of the *Sinfonia Espansiva*.

Previous analyses have focused on Nielsen's diatonically-based, ever-changing modality, his use of so-called 'directional tonality', the sheer outburst of force, the motivic cells. All is blended together in Grimley's energetic presentation, where the different approaches are summed up in vivid formulations such as:

The waves that propel the musical stream of consciousness in the Allegro espansivo constantly rise and break through the spiraling gyres of ... spliced sonata structures so that the music carries its own potentially destructive current within its energetic motion, constantly threatening to fracture and pull the symphonic texture apart even as it explodes outwards in its opening bars. ... The complex, interlocking wave structures ... powerfully realise the potential energy ... created by the tension between expansive melodic lines and binding centripetal harmonic forces.<sup>7</sup>

In this, Grimley captures Harald Knudsen's interpretation of Nielsen's tonality as 'bound together in a mortar',<sup>8</sup> Poul Hamburger's description of the main motif as 'thrown out' with 'explosive force',<sup>9</sup> and his pointing out of the 'expansive force', that lies in the 'steeply rising intervals',<sup>10</sup> Robert Simpson's characterization of the music as a 'tonal forge' where 'everything is fluid like molten metal',<sup>11</sup> and Harald Krebs's observation that this symphony 'behaves in part like a sonata form in A, and in part like a sonata form in D minor'.<sup>12</sup> And although Jeppesen's analysis from his lectures held between 1951 and 1954 is not part of Grimley's presentation, the colourful description also seems to embed Jeppesen's comparison of the music to 'mountain ranges rising behind one another in one violent weather of striving and force'.<sup>13</sup>

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7 Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 130.

8 Henrik Knudsen, *Carl Nielsen: Sinfonia Espansiva [Analytical Guide]*, Leipzig 1913, 4.

9 *Hovedmotivet ... udslænges med ... eksplosiv kraft*. Povl Hamburger, 'Formproblemet i vor Tids Musik', *Dansk Musik Tidsskrift* 6 (1931), 97.

10 *Ekspansiv kraft ligger i de stejlt opstigende Intervaller* (*Ibid.*).

11 Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*, rev. edn., London 1979, 61.

12 Harald Krebs, 'Tonal Structure in Nielsen's Symphonies', in Mina Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*. London 1994, 216.

13 *Det er som bjergkæder, der rejser sig bag hinanden i ét voldsomt vejr af stræben og kraft*. Knud Jeppesen 2017, 93). 'Carl Nielsen som Symfoniker. 44 forelæsningsnoter afholdt på Musikinstituttet, Aarhus Universitet 13 sep. 1951- 8. april 1954', ed. Per Cortes, 2017, 93. [https://imslp.org/wiki/Carl\\_Nielsen\\_som\\_Symfoniker\\_\(Jeppesen%2C\\_Knud\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Carl_Nielsen_som_Symfoniker_(Jeppesen%2C_Knud)), accessed 8 December 2025.

Since Grimley's book, at least two more analyses of the movement have been published: Michael Fjeldsøe's vitalistic analysis<sup>14</sup> and – from 2019 – Christopher Tarrant's invitation to hear the symphony as a Type 2 sonata form displaying structural acceleration.<sup>15</sup> Both authors approach *Espansiva* from an angle different from preceding analyses. Where the Danish analyses,<sup>16</sup> besides their focus on the sheer outburst of force, had their focus especially on motivic development, and the Anglo-American analyses very often concentrate on tonality, Fjeldsøe's focus is on the Danish current called *vitalism*.

The vitalistic world view is one that Nielsen must have been familiar with, as it can be found in the works of his wife Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen. However, as Fjeldsøe points out, the term has some problems. It is not used in English in the way it is employed in Danish, and when it is used it means something else. I follow Fjeldsøe in proposing that we 'use the term as it is used in the Danish and German tradition of art history, namely [to denote] art dedicated to the aesthetic of vitality, health, youth and strength'.<sup>17</sup> The vitalist current could among other things be seen as related to the philosophy of Nietzsche. Fjeldsøe quotes the following characterisation of the Nietzschean elements recognised in vitalism: 'a positive, life-asserting line, which affirms the energetic, the active, the simple and healthy, that which is full of life and power'.<sup>18</sup> Both 'energetics' and 'vitalists' focus on energy and on force. For the vitalist, the force is the life-affirming energy of living creatures. For the energetics, force is pure energy itself, which presumably is of the same kind as that resulting in – and reflected by – (healthy, strong) living creatures, but which is not bound to those creatures. The energy of the energetics lies somehow beyond life, as a *prerequisite* for life. Nevertheless, there are basic similarities between the two trends. For both, 'energy' and 'force' are central terms. I will attempt below to show how a Mersmann-based analysis can deepen parts of Fjeldsøe's analysis.

Tarrant's focus is on the way the tonal and cadential distribution in what he calls 'structural acceleration' is gradually condensed throughout the second part of the symphony's first movement. This observation is founded in a formal interpretation of the movement as a Hepokoski/Darcyian 'Type 2' sonata form: the two-part

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14 Michael Fjeldsøe, 'Vitalisme i Carl Niensens musik', *Danish Musicology Online* 1 (2009): 33–55. Fjeldsøe, 'Carl Nielsen and the Current of Vitalism in Art', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 4 (2010), 26–42.

15 Christopher Tarrant, 'Structural Acceleration in Nielsen's *Sinfonia Espansiva*', *Music Analysis* 38/3 (2019), 358–386.

16 Tarrant also refers to Torben Schousboe's analysis from his Magisterkonferens of 1968, which I have not read, *Ibid.*, 367.

17 Fjeldsøe, 'Vitalisme i Carl Niensens musik', 27.

18 *Ibid.*, 32.

sonata form consisting of exposition and something else. In this interpretation, the question of the recapitulation becomes redundant because, as Tarrant explains, "Type 2 sonatas do not have recapitulations at all, in the strict sense of the term".<sup>19</sup> Tarrant argues that the second 'rotation' of the first movement – that is the music starting at b. 288, a phase that previous commentators normally define as the *development section* – represents a *telescoped version* of rotation one. This telescoping is partly done, as the term indicates, by leaving out or, as Tarrant puts it, overriding certain passages, and thus speeding up the structure.<sup>20</sup> My Mersmannian analysis will provide a commentary on this interesting approach, partly clarifying, partly contradicting Tarrant's observations. First, however, we must become acquainted with Mersmannian terminology.

### Mersmannian terminology

Mersmann's terminology is unfolded in his impressive *Angewandte Musikästhetik* from 1926, where he comments on almost every aspect of the classical tradition. This is done from an explicit phenomenological position, which 'removes the work of art from all associations and subjective relations and values it as a phenomenon. It is thus the natural basis for a discussion that tries to replace a poetic paraphrase with an exact analysis.'<sup>21</sup>

The intention, therefore, is *precision* and *sobriety*. For this, a firm terminology and some basic concepts are required. The most basic of these turns out to be the concept of 'force'. To Mersmann, instrumental music 'appears as a complex of forces that are repeatedly intertwined and inter-penetrative.'<sup>22</sup> Mersmann describes the 'determination of these forces as the essential, the crucial act of analysis.'<sup>23</sup> In a musical analysis, '[t]he question must be asked how and on which lines all these "moving sounds" come together to form the totality of the work of art.'<sup>24</sup>

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19 Tarrant, 'Structural Acceleration', 370, quoting James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata*, New York 2006, 354.

20 Tarrant, 'Structural Acceleration', 380, 378.

21 *Der phänomenologische Standpunkt löst das Kunstwerk aus allen Assoziationen und subjektive Beziehungen ab und wertet es als Phänomen. Er ist also die natürliche Grundlage einer Betrachtung, welche an die Stelle poetisierender Umschreibung eine exakte Analyse zu setzen versucht.* Hans Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*. Berlin 1926, 3.

22 *Instrumentalmusik [erscheint] als ein Komplex vielfach in einander verschlungener und einander durchdringender Kräfte.* *Ibid.*, 15.

23 *Diese Bestimmung der Kräfte aber ist das Wesentliche, die entscheidende Tat der Analyse.* *Ibid.*, 720.

24 *Es ist zu fragen, wodurch und auf welchen Linien alle diese „tönend bewegten“ Kräfte sich zur Totalität des Kunstwerks zusammenfügen.* *Ibid.*, 15.

To do so, we need precise concepts.

In Mersmann's phenomenologically-based theory, these concepts take on a philosophical flavour. Not only do they appear as polarised, as concept and counter-concept, but their precision is of a kind that calls for explanation and interpretation. The most important of his polar concepts are:

- 1 Expansive – Centripetal
- 2 Force – Space
- 3 Accumulation – Acceleration

In Mersmann's view, therefore, 'force' is an underlying concept of music generally as well as part of one of the defined basic polar pairs.

But what does it all mean?

I will try to answer this question mainly by allowing Mersmann to speak for himself. Thereafter, I shall attempt to convert Mersmannian language into more accessible ways of understanding the terminology.

First, then: What is meant by *expansive/centripetal*?

The idea of expansive force that unfolds outwards until a centripetal force forces it back to its outset seems immediately and intuitively comprehensible. The idea of music as an unfolding of 'expansion' and 'centripetality' is found also in Halm's *Von Zwei Kulturen der Musik*, albeit with use of the less catchy term 'zentrifugal' as the polar opposite to 'zentripetal'.<sup>25</sup> Hamburger also knew the term 'expansive', and in his analysis of the *Espansiva* first movement he emphasises '[t]he *expansive*, the will to as free and unhindered an unfolding as possible of the powers of the movement', as something significant to the horizontal dimension, melody.<sup>26</sup>

Mersmann applies the principle to every dimension of musical activity, from cadence to the construction of a melodic line to an entire sonata form. And the main concept of Kurth's writing is the 'tension' that is generated when 'force' manifests itself in an 'expansion' which at a certain point is taken over and driven back by a 'counterforce' (a 'centripetal' force):<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Halm, *Von zwei Kulturen der Musik*, Munich 1913, xxv.

<sup>26</sup> *Det expansive, Viljen til saa fri og uhæmmet Udfoldelse som muligt af de Bevægelseskræfter, der ligger bagved al Musik, har altid fundet stærkest Udtryk i den horisontale Dimension.* Hamburger, 'Formproblemet', 90.

<sup>27</sup> The idea appears in statements such as 'The archetypal form of musical volition ... are psychological tensions that, after being released, urge movement' (*Die Urform musikalischer Willensregung ... sind psychische Spannungen, die nach Auslösung in Bewegung drängen*). Ernst Kurth, *Romantische Harmonik*, 3; '[The music's] real and original, supporting and formative contents are psychic tension developments, and these it conveys only in the sensual form in which it

Tension has two components: the urging forwards of force from its origin and the necessity of its return. The first part of this force-process is positive: in the force (a note, a sound, a motif, a theme, a phrase) lies the principle of its growth. This force has the power of a germinal cell; it has the urge to penetrate above and beyond itself into tonal space: the note into the interval, the interval into a greater melodic unity, the triad into a cadence, the motif into development. Its power is its expansive nature. It is unbounded and aimless; its tendency is indeterminate. Here simultaneously is the opposing force that binds it. This opposing force is centripetal. It unifies, orders, it works back towards the root and drives the synthesis of oppositions into a higher unity. The opposition of expansive and centripetal forces is one of the concepts through which all musical events can be characterized. It works at every level and in all dimensions. In the simultaneity of both forces, the expansive growth in space and the centripetal relations to the origin is based on the concept of tension.<sup>28</sup>

One might demonstrate this thought through Nielsen's melody to 'Jeg ved en lærkerede' (I Know of a Lark's Nest). Without the centripetal force it could, in an unhindered expansion, take on this form (Example 1):



Ex. 1. 'Jeg ved en lærkerede', hypothetically, without the centripetal force.

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penetrates the ear' (*Ihre wirklichen und ursprünglichen, die tragenden und gestaltenden Inhalte sind psychische Spannungsentwicklungen, und diese vermittelt sie nur in der sinnlichen Form, in der sie ans Ohr dringt. Ibid., 1.*)

28 Spannung hat zwei Komponenten: das Fortdrängen einer Kraft von ihrer Basis und die Notwendigkeit ihrer Rückkehr zu ihr. Der erste Teil dieses Kräftevorgangs ist positiv; es lebt in der Kraft, sei es ein Ton, ein Klang, ein Motiv, ein Thema, ein Satz, das Gesetz ihres Wachstums. Sie hat die Triebkraft des Keimes, sie drängt über sich hinaus in den Tonraum: der Ton in das Intervall, das Intervall in die größere melodische Einheit, der Dreiklang in die Kadenz, das Motiv in die Entwicklung. Diese Kraft ist ihrem Wesen nach expansiv. Sie ist grenzenlos und ziellos, sie drängt ins Unbestimmte. Hier setzt gleichzeitig die Gegenkraft ein, welche sie bindet. Diese Gegenkraft ist zentripetal. Sie eint, ordnet, bezieht, sie wirkt auf die Wurzel zurück und führt die Verschmelzung der Gegensätze auf einer höheren Einheit herbei. Der Gegensatz expansiver und zentripetaler Kräfte ist einer der Begriffe, unter dem man das Wesen alles musikalischen Geschehens erfassen kann. Er wirkt in allen Graden und Dimensionen. In der Gleichzeitigkeit beider Kräfte: des expansiven Wachstums in den Raum und der zentripetale Beziehung auf die Basis wurzelt der Spannungsbegriff. Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*, 99, as cited and translated in Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 115–116.



netic energies. ... the force is essentially expansive and pushes beyond itself; if the moment of space predominates, then at the same time a centripetal tendency is given.<sup>32</sup>

'Force' is the expression of *energy*, of *expansion*, while 'space' expresses *ornamentation*, time itself as it appears in the centripetal movement back to the root. Force is expressed through the musical motif, through the forward drive of harmonic function. Space is expressed through free-flowing melody and the immovable sound colours of harmony. Even gender can be used to express the poles:

Force and space are opposed to each other. The masculine ending, an expression of the open, to the development of the urgent principle of form, is power; the feminine ending [is] closed, unfolded, space capable of no development. From here it is possible to grasp the essence of dualism even more precisely. Its powers have no denominator, they work in different dimensions.<sup>33</sup>

So, force is embedded in the 'motif as a carrier of concentrated power, pent-up energies, [it] dispenses with all features of form and external appearance. It is hostile to sound, to ornament, to lingering circumlocutions; it is only force, germ, often of a self-denying, non-sensuous hardness of appearance.'<sup>34</sup> Mersmann continues by stating once again, that in the concept of 'force', '[h]armony lives ... only as a function, not as a colour.'

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32 Die Gegensatz von Kraft und Raum ist hier nur aus terminologischen Gründen aufgestellt, um zwei Typen des Formgeschehens zu bezeichnen, deren Verschiedenheit von tragender, immer wiederkehrender Bedeutung ist. Sie sind die Wurzeln des Formbegriffs, erste wahrnehmbare Äußerung einer musikalischen Formgebung. Aus diesen Wurzeln wächst nun die Form selbst durch den Ablauf der Kräfte in der Zeit. Auch dieses Wachstum vollzieht sich nach dem gleichen Gesetz expansiver und zentripetaler Bewegungsenergien. ... die Kraft ist wesentlich expansiv und drängt über sich hinaus; überwiegt das Moment des Raumes, so ist damit zugleich eine zentripetale Tendenz gegeben. Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*, 103.

33 *Kraft und Raum stehen einander gegenüber. Die männliche Endung, Ausdruck des offenen, zur Entwicklung drängenden Formprinzips, ist Kraft; die weibliche Endung geschlossen, entfaltet, keiner Entwicklung fähig ist Raub. Von hier aus ist es möglich, das Wesen des Dualismus noch genauer zu fassen. Seine Kräfte haben keinen gemeinsamen Nenner, sie wirken in verschiedenen Dimensionen. Ibid.*, 87.

34 *Das Motiv als Träger einer geballten Kraft, gestauter Energien, verzichtet auf alle Merkmale der Form und der äußeren Erscheinung. Es ist feindlich dem Klang, dem Ornament, den verweilenden Umschreibungen; es ist nur Kraft, Keim, oft von entsagender, unsinnlicher Härte der Erscheinung. Harmonik lebt in ihm nur als Funktion, nicht als Farbe. Ibid.*

The definition of space is less clear-cut:

While force as a motif can be clearly defined in terms of its nature and form, the counter-concept of space remains more difficult to define. What characterises it is initially only negative: precisely the absence of all those characteristics that were claimed for the motif. ... It is the unformed that remains here, the pure layering of the elements. The typical preponderance of melody makes this alone the basis for recognition; because it is the melody that presses into the space and fills it. ... Harmony, which was completely missing in relation to the force or was limited to a simple constructive change of function ... now attains a completely new meaning. The sound lives in it, the colour; it emphasizes the lingering, binds the melodic happening and burdens it.<sup>35</sup>

Mersmann supplements the description with graphic illustrations, where force is expressed through a rising arrow, which pushes a line – it could be a timeline – almost vertically upwards as an expression of a sudden increase of intensity, while space is represented as an underground, more horizontal movement (Figure 1):

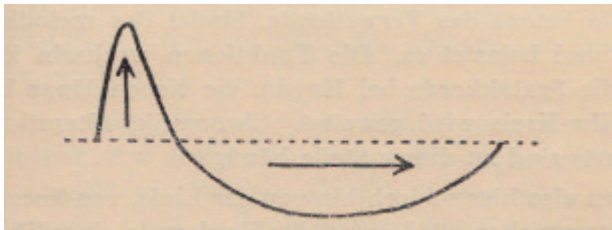


Fig. 1. Illustration of force and space from Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*, 87.

In 1929 we find the relation illustrated in figure showing ‘space’ as a slow – centripetal – levelling out of the initial increase of intensity, the result of ‘force’.

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<sup>35</sup> Während die Kraft als Motiv ihrem Wesen und ihrer Form nach klar zu definieren ist, bleibt der Gegenbegriff des Raumes schwieriger zu bestimmen. Was ihn kennzeichnet, ist zunächst allein negativ: eben das Fehlen aller jener Merkmale, welche für das Motiv in Anspruch genommen wurden. ... Es ist das Nichtgeformte, was hier zurückbleibt, die reine Schichtung der Elemente. Das typische Überwiegen der Melodik macht diese allein zur Basis für das Erkennen; denn die Melodik ist es, welche in den Raum drängt und ihn erfüllt. ... Die Harmonik, welche zur Beziehung der Kraft ganz fehlte oder sich auf einen einfachen konstruktiven Wechsel der Funktion beschränkte, ... gelangt nun zu ganz neuer Bedeutung. In ihr lebt der Klang, die Farbe, sie betont das Verweilende, bindet das melodische Geschehen und belastet es. Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*, 88.

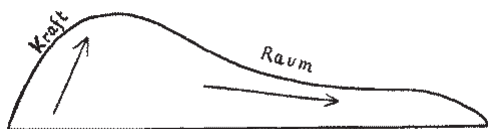


Fig. 2. Illustration from Mersmann, *Musiklehre*, 7.

This graphic illustration might as well be illustrated through 'Jeg ved en lærkerede' (Example 3). Force and space here cover the exact same areas as the expansive and centripetal forces:



Ex. 3. Force and space distribution in 'Jeg ved en lærkerede'.

With the pair of *accumulation/acceleration* things get a bit more complicated. The German 'Stauung - Beschleunigung' could also be translated as 'congestion - acceleration'. But as congestion seems to emphasise the end result, the point where things are about to break down, I find 'accumulation' a better translation since it clarifies the *movement towards* the point of 'congestion'. Another translation that has certain benefits is 'damming up', as this encompasses the idea of 'holding back' that is clearly part of Mersmann's definition. We might imagine a dam that is continuously filled with water until it bursts. Or we might think of a queue of cars on a European motorway in the summer vacation. Here the withholding of energy shows itself in the speed exhibited when, finally, cars are allowed to proceed again.

But for now, I use 'accumulate' as a euphonious counterpart to 'accelerate':

Accumulation means a concentration of energies. The steady outflow of power is impeded, a weir is pushed in, stopping the flow; the force pushes against it with exponentiated energy. An expression of such a build-up is in the literal sense the persistence of the melody or its revolving around a few tones.<sup>36</sup>

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36 Stauung bedeutet eine Konzentration der Energien. Das gleichmäßige Ausströmen der Kraft wird gehemmt, ein Wehr schiebt sich ein, das den Fluß unterbindet; die Kraft drängt mit potenziierter Energie dagegen an. Ausdruck einer solchen Stauung ist in wörtlichen Sinne das Verharren der Melodik auf demselben oder ihr Kreisen um wenige Töne. *Ibid.*, 173.

Accumulation describes the holding back of a musical flow, such as when a circular repeated melodic phrase builds up tension precisely by going nowhere. The dichotomy signifies the fact that music seldom maintains the same level of tension. Tension seems to build up to the point where it is released. And here, ‘acceleration’ sets in:

If accumulation is concentration, then *acceleration* is decentring of tensions. It is based on a shifting of forces in the opposite direction, a dissolution of heaviness, which often becomes visible when motoric impulses predominate over the actual melodic force. Acceleration values transform the striding or flowing melody into a gliding and swinging one.<sup>37</sup>

It seems that ‘Jeg ved en lærkerede’ might also exemplify accumulation/acceleration (Example 4):

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Jeg ved en lærkerede'. The notation is in 2/4 time and consists of a single melodic line. The lyrics are written below the notes: 'Jeg ved en lær-ke - re - de, jeg si - ger ik - ke mer; den find-es på en he - de et sted som ing - en ser'. Above the staff, there are two annotations with arrows. The first, 'damming up', points to the first four measures, where the note values are quarter notes. The second, 'acceleration', points to the remaining six measures, where the note values transition to eighth notes, indicating a change in tempo.

Ex. 4. ‘Jeg ved en lærkerede’ as accumulation and acceleration.

The three dichotomies seem to tell the same story in different terms, and therefore, with slightly different accents. Expansion/centripetal focuses on moving away and coming back. Force/space focuses on outwards energy versus more contemplative energy. Accumulation/acceleration focuses on the shift from a holding-back, building-up tension to the release of this tension. This is *not* force, precisely, because the acceleration flows – so to speak – downwards, all by itself, demanding no renewed energy. So, this acceleration might also take on the form of ‘space’. And it may be dominated by a centripetal force.

When talking about rhythmic forces, new aspects are revealed in the accumulation/acceleration terminology:

The outward sign of the acceleration process is the gradual interpenetration and replacement of the basic time values by their next smaller ones,

<sup>37</sup> Ist Stauung Konzentration, so ist Beschleunigung Dezentration der Spannungen. Sie beruht auf einer Verschiebung der Kräfte in umgekehrter Richtung, einer Auflösung der Schwere, die oft durch ein überwiegen motorischer Impulse über die eigentliche melodische Kraft sichtbar wird. Beschleunigungswerte verwandeln die schreitende oder fließende Melodik in eine gleitende und schwingende. Ibid. 174.

crotchets by quavers, quavers by semiquavers. However, accumulated rhythmic power becomes visible through the coexistence of opposite, non-adjacent time values.<sup>38</sup>

Acceleration moves on a straight line, doubling or halving its rhythmic values. Accumulation uses non-adjacent time values. This viewpoint may call for a preparatory look at the first movement of the *Espansiva*. For isn't this exactly how the symphony starts?: by an accumulation of rhythmic energy, that bursts out in 'acceleration' when the theme sets in. But all of this is simultaneously – and here is why the three dichotomies are not redundant – an unfolding of 'force'. 'Accumulation/acceleration' describes a certain weight distribution of energy *within* the dominant exercise of 'force' (Example 5)

The image shows a musical score for the opening of Nielsen's *Sinfonia Espansiva*. The score is written in a single system with two staves. The top staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a series of rhythmic patterns starting with quarter notes, then moving to eighth notes, and finally to sixteenth notes. Above the staff, there are two horizontal lines with labels: 'force!' above the first line and 'accumulation' above the second line. Below the staff, there are two horizontal lines with labels: '(force)' above the first line and 'acceleration' above the second line. The score includes measure numbers 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25. A 'Motif' is indicated at the end of the first staff. The bottom staff continues the rhythmic patterns with various note values and rests.

Ex. 5. Accumulation and acceleration at the opening of the *Sinfonia Espansiva*.

This interpretation of 'accumulation' as a certain energy distribution *within* an unfolding of force can be seen in Mersmann's explanation of how:

this force of natural, linear growth is decisively changed in its course by some typical transformations and impacts. If a natural inner balance in the flow of forces is presupposed here, then these changes are based on an intervention and a threat to this balance. One of these, essentially musical, is the *accumulation* of power. Like all the forms of appearance that have been singled out as typical here, it occurs in many dimensions. It means a build-up of strength when a melody falters at the limit given by its harmonic context

38 Das äußere Kennzeichen des Beschleunigungsvorgangs ist die allmähliche Durchdringung und Ablösung der Grundzeitwerte durch ihre nächstkleineren, Viertel durch Achtel, Achtel durch Sechzehntel. Gestaute rhythmische Kraft aber wird sichtbar durch das Zusammenstehen entgegengesetzter, nicht benachbarter Zeitwerte. *Ibid.*, 239.

and only requires the tension of a new function in order to be able to grow further; ... The counter-concept to the blocked flow of forces is its increase or acceleration.<sup>39</sup>

Mersmann seems to sum up all this:

In the work of art, accumulation and acceleration mostly work together, again in the sense of a complementary complement of expansive and centripetal energies. A natural connection exists externally between accumulation and rising, between acceleration and falling melodic evolution. ... The interaction of accumulating and accelerating forces in melodic evolution is shown in the natural sequence that an initial accumulation is followed by a later acceleration. ... Accumulation and acceleration are roots, but by no means the only manifestations of the pushing forces.<sup>40</sup>

‘Expansive’, ‘force’ and ‘accumulation’ express different aspects of energetic increase, while ‘centripetal’, ‘space’ and ‘acceleration’ describe aspects of energetic decline. To distinguish between the first three terms, we might say that ‘expansive’ denotes the *result* of what ‘force’ initiates; ‘force’ is needed in order to create expansion; ‘accumulation’ is a certain aspect of ‘force’, in that it denotes the kind of ‘force’ that is not continuously outward moving, but instead seems to be ‘damming up’, to lead to a kind of overload. Of the concepts of energetic decline, ‘centripetal’ denotes a moving back to the roots; ‘space’ may be part of such a move, but need not be so; ‘space’ describes music that instead of revealing ‘force’ seems in some way to

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39 *Diese Kraft des natürlichen, gradlinigen Wachstums wird in ihrem Verlauf durch einige wiederum typische Umformungen und Einschlüge entscheidend verändert. Wenn hier ein natürliches inneres Gleichmaß im Fluß der Kräfte vorausgesetzt wird, so beruhen diese Veränderungen auf einem Eingriff und einer Bedrohung dieses Gleichmaßes. Eine solche, wesentlich musikalische, ist die Stauung der Kraft. Sie tritt, wie alle die hier als typisch herausgelösten Erscheinungsformen, in vielen Dimensionen auf. Eine Kraftstauung bedeutet es, wenn eine Melodik an der durch ihren harmonischen Zusammenhang gegebenen Grenze stockt und erst der Spannung einer neuen Funktion bedarf, um weiter wachsen zu können; ... Der Gegenbegriff zu dem gestauten Fluß der Kräfte ist seine Steigerung oder Beschleunigung. Ibid., 77.*

40 *Im Kunstwerk wirken Stauung und Beschleunigung meist zusammen, wiederum im Sinne einer komplementären Ergänzung expansiver und zentripetaler Energien. Eine natürliche Verbindung besteht äußerlich zwischen Stauung und steigender, zwischen Beschleunigung und fallender melodischer Evolution. ... Das Zusammenwirken stauender und beschleunigender Kräfte in der melodischen Evolution zeigt sich in der natürlichen Folge, daß auf eine anfängliche Stauung eine spätere Beschleunigung einsetzt. ... Stauung und Beschleunigung sind zwar Wurzeln, aber keineswegs einzige Erscheinungsformen der abdrängenden Kräfte. Ibid., 175.*

express time itself or to mark a sort of motionless oasis within the unleashing of 'force'. Not infrequently, such music leads to a kind of ending. It is centripetal. Even though 'acceleration', too, is reaction to a certain kind of force, it is as a reaction to 'accumulation' not necessarily connected to either 'centripetal' or 'space'. Acceleration is the *unhindered* outburst of force, or rather, the reaction to a 'dammed up' force, that finally breaks through its boundaries and flows ahead. Drowning whatever comes in its way. As Example 5 suggests, 'accumulation' and 'acceleration' are ways in which the energy within an overall expansive, force-characterised musical flow can be distributed.

I will try to demonstrate how these concepts can shed new light on the *Sinfonia Espansiva* on every formal level, ranging from details of phrase building, through formal considerations, to the relation between the symphony's four movements. As Mersmann's concepts are linked to melody and harmony but not tonality, the analysis will differ from Anglo-American analyses such as Simpson's, Krebs's, Tarrant's and others', in that my argument for the different types of energy will be based on melodic motivic action, not on tonality and actual or avoided cadences. In this respect, the Mersmannian focus is very compatible with the normal focus of most Danish analyses, where motivic and melodic activity tend to be heard as the most important element of music, which surely – even if only incidentally, as a by-product – often (but not always) will generate tonality.

### Primary theme zone as 'accumulation' and 'acceleration'

There is no doubt that the first 120 bars of Nielsen's first movement must be described in Mersmannian language as an outburst of 'force'. But this 'force' unfolds in shifting energies. Example 5, above, already shows such an energy shift: an accumulation of energy builds up to a flowing, ever-growing melodic line. Both elements exhibit 'force', but in two ways: as 'accumulation' and as 'acceleration'. I will try to demonstrate that this dichotomy is fundamental not only to the first part of the first movement; it is a guiding principle for the construction of the entire first movement.

Before demonstrating the accumulation-acceleration construction of the primary zone, I make another claim: that we may hear the primary zone as one long melodic line, that has been cut up. Bars 1–109 may be heard as structured around four varied presentations of a basic theme, the primary theme, first heard at b. 15. This is hardly a controversial claim; but let us take a look at these four presentations isolated from their surroundings (Example 6):

Ex. 6. The four theme entries as a continuous melody.

The second version of the theme starts off in b. 45 at the same note, that first version ends on. The last note of the second version functions as a leading-note to the third version, b. 66. The third version could easily continue stepwise into the fourth at b. 99. The four versions could thus be played as a continuous melody.

This observation opens up an interpretation of the primary thematic zone as one of a continuous play between theme and interpolations. But this interpretation alone does not really account for what is happening. Already in his 1951–1954 lectures, Jeppesen noted the interplay between different themes. But what is at stake is a certain ‘energy distribution’, of the same kind that opens the entire movement: an interplay of ‘accumulation’ and ‘acceleration’. Before each thematic entry, the music seems to be ‘damming up’, accumulating energy that will be released in the continuation of the theme. Example 6 only shows the melody line, and it sets off where Example 5 stopped: at the accelerated energy outburst that marks the first theme entry.

In Example 7 the figures marked X indicate a gesture that turns out to be a marker of ‘accumulation’.

**Acceleration**

110 15 20 X

25 X 30 X'

**Accumulation**

35 40 X

**Acceleration**

45 X

50 55

**Accumulation**

60 X canon! hemiolas 65

**Acceleration**

70 X' f f

75 80 85

**Accumulation**

hemiolas 90 note the conflict in hemiolic downbeats from b. 93 X the accumulation marker X' downbeats hemiolas

95 **Acceleration**

100 105

Ex. 7. Primary theme zone from b. 15.

The ‘accumulation/acceleration’ terminology allows us to hear a new aspect of this passage. It helps to define the different tensions that we may intuitively feel.

Accumulation of energy is characterised partly by its rhythmic deviation from the ongoing line of quavers, partly by rhythmic concentration. At b. 38, – the point where the music, according to Simpson, reaches F sharp minor – accumulation is obtained by the absence of flowing quavers, the falling harmonic line attacked by vehement rising series of quavers. At bb. 60 and 86 we find rhythmic concentration. At b. 60 it is obtained by a kind of hemiola chord strokes combined with a version of the striving quavers from bb. 27–28, at b. 60 marked with an ‘X’. At b. 86 the accumulative energy is obtained by creating an extreme tension again through the use of hemiolas, which at b. 93 is extended to two hemiola lines interfering with one another.

In his article on vitalism from 2009, Michael Fjeldsøe lets the *Espansiva* first movement stand as an example for the kind of vitalism that can be summarized as ‘a positive life affirming line, where the energetic, the active, the vital, the simple and healthy, the force- and life-full is celebrated’.<sup>41</sup> Fjeldsøe supported his attempt by quoting Nielsen’s programme note: ‘The symphony is a result of many forces. The first movement is intended to be a burst of energy and acceptance of life out into the wider world.’<sup>42</sup>

The elements Fjeldsøe here finds defining for vitalism are the very same that I find defining for the energetic viewpoint: ‘many forces’ and ‘burst of energy’. Only ‘acceptance of life’ seems to be genuine vitalistic. As for the ‘many forces’, this is exactly what Mersmann’s terminology points towards. And Fjeldsøe exemplifies with passages that in the Mersmannian light have been termed ‘accumulation’: the rhythmic tension of the opening, and the contrasting hemiolas of b. 86. The former he describes as ‘accumulation of energy by increasingly stronger concentration of rhythmic energy’;<sup>43</sup> the latter he describes as a ‘further element, that contributes to the progress’ of the movement<sup>44</sup> – that is, elements of ‘force’ and ‘energy’. My attempt at a Mersmannian analysis in Example 7 shows the exact energetic result of these ‘contractions of figures to a two-measure length’.<sup>45</sup>

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41 Carl Niensens 3. symfoni, *Sinfonia expansiva* (1911), kan gælde som eksempel på den form for vitalisme, som Anders Ehlers Dam sammenfatter i formuleringen ‘en positiv, livsbekræftende linje, hvor det handlekraftige, det aktive, det vitale, det enkle og sunde, det kraft- og livfulde hylde’. Fjeldsøe, ‘Vitalisme i Carl Niensens musik’, 39.

42 Værket er et Udslag af mange Slags Kræfter. Første Sats er tænkt som et Kast af Energi og Livsbejaelse ud i den vide Verden. *Ibid.*, 39. The translation is taken from Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 96.

43 Energiophobning ved stadig stærkere koncentration af rytmisk energi. Fjeldsøe, ‘Carl Nielsen and the Current of Vitalism in Art’, 40.

44 *Ibid.*, 42.

45 *Ibid.*

### Secondary theme zone as space and local centripetality

From now on the music – in a Mersmannian hearing – moves from b. 109 towards a new kind of energy. Bars 1–110 all exhibit ‘force’ and ‘expansion’. From b. 110 the energy changes from ‘force’ to ‘space’, as we approach the secondary theme zone. On a local level, the ongoing expansive force is momentarily confronted by a centripetal force, taking the music not only to the introduction of the secondary theme zone, but all the way to ending of this zone in a coda.

The idea of ‘local’ energy description is important. What on one level may seem centripetal on another may still be part of an expansive force. And what locally might seem an outburst of ‘force’ on a higher level may still be part of a passage of overall ‘space’.

Just like the primary theme zone, this zone is based on a fundamental theme complex which is interrupted by material of a fundamentally different kind. If we describe the energy type of the secondary (S) theme as ‘space’, we might hear the interruptions as echoes of the ‘force’ of the primary theme zone. Indeed, the first interruption is a very direct echo: The melody, that in bb. 60–64 was followed by a canonic imitation appears b. 154 in a somewhat lighter version. Without the canonic disturbance and the hemiola chord attacks it seems less ‘accumulating’, and more like a shadow of ‘force’. This is a point where the relatively loose terminology opens to interpretation. Maybe this little interruption should be heard more like just a memory of force than actual force (Example 8)? Maybe it should still be heard as ‘accumulation’?

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Space' and contains measures 138 to 140. It features a melodic line with a rising quaver pattern marked with an 'X' above it. The bottom staff is labeled 'force or accumulation' and contains measures 154 to 155. It features a similar rising quaver pattern marked with an 'X' below it.

Ex. 8. First S-theme presentation and first interruptive accumulation.

The X above the rising quavers of the secondary theme and the X over the accumulation marker familiar from the primary theme zone (Example 7, bb. 27, 30, 39, 41, 60, 73, 88 and 91) could imply a relationship between the secondary theme structure and accumulation structure.

An interruption of a similar energy level appears at b. 166, where the secondary theme is carried through a seemingly frictionless continuation, which, however, turns out to be something very different from the secondary theme itself.

‘Space’ 160 X 165 (‘force’/‘accumulation’?) X Y

Ex. 9. Second S-theme presentation followed by second accumulative interruption.

Now also a Y-motif is detected. This motif will return both as part of other accumulations and as a part of a final development of Primary Theme.

From b. 175 a variant of the secondary theme, still exhibiting the non-developmental characteristics of ‘space’, is counterpointed with scalar motions based on the accumulative X-motif.

‘Space’ 175 X 180 W (combined with ‘force’?)

Ex. 10. Third phrase of S-theme. The X-motif has been augmented into crotchets, leaving room for accumulative X-movement beneath the S-theme. For comment on the W-motif, see below.

At b. 191 a truly developmental kind of music – I have called it ‘Z-music’ – sets in, seemingly turning the energy to ‘force’ and ‘expansion’. At b. 199 it turns into a fugato, building partly on the Y-motif of b. 167. However, it all seems to fade out at bb. 219–220, until unison quavers – equivalent to bb. 154–158 – propel the music to the climax of b. 226 (se Example 8 and 12, above, which of course is the very same S theme that previously signaled ‘space’).

Force seemingly takes over: Expansion? 191 Z-music X 199 X 200 W Y X 220 X-culmination 225 pp X ff

Ex. 11. Z-music and accumulation towards the Secondary Theme zone coda.

I have marked a W-figure, linking the activity of b. 181 (Example 10) and 194–195 to the activity of bb. 199–200. In bb. 179–181 (Example 10) X and W stand as start-

and end-point of the accumulative movement. In Example 11, both X-W passages bring the two motifs in a continuous motion, thus underlining the effect of the X-material beneath the third phrase of *ST* as accumulative. The similarity gives the impression that the accumulative movements of bb. 199–200 are taking up from bb. 194–195.

This last attack sheds new meaning on the three interruptions (bb. 154–158, 166–174, 191–225). The two first two could be heard as ineffective attempts to turn up the energy level. The second attempt links the X-motif with a new continuation, starting off with a new motif, Y. The disturbing X-motions starting in b. 175, might be heard as yet another unsuccessful attempt. Only at the third attempt does the interruption – presenting material including X, W, and Y-motifs – finally succeed in changing the energy level from ‘space’ to ‘force’. Or so it seems. Because this climax also marks a clear direction towards cadence, i.e. ‘centripetality’. In spite of its climatic sound, this is not a developing, expansive music, but a coda. It is a finalising centripetal music, the kind of energy Mersmann has labelled ‘space’ (Example 12).

Ex. 12. Coda of Secondary theme zone.

As Example 12 shows, the forceful repetition of the secondary theme continues through a melodic line very similar to the one developed out of the primary theme. Example 13 shows the similarities: compare bb. 54–56, 66–68, 74–76 with bb. 238–245. We find a long note followed by descent. In the primary theme zone the descent moves from stepwise (or quasi-stepwise) movement to arpeggios. In the secondary

theme zone, we find only arpeggios. Each of the three examples from the primary zone is intensified by starting off from a higher point than the previous one. In the secondary theme zone, we find the opposite tendency: each of the three lines sets off from a lower position (Example 13).

Ex. 13. Motivic similarities between the continuation of primary and secondary themes.

Whether it is due to the reprise of the secondary theme itself, or the reprise of (directionally reversed) motivic material from the primary zone, this final outburst of energy feels like a representation of an overall centripetal energy, of a basically static section of music, mostly elaborating time itself in a coda zone. In other words: 'space'.

#### The development zone: the waltz

Above I have described the centripetal energy as 'local'. This is because – as we know – the music continues. All commentators agree that what comes next should be characterised as a developmental zone. We are still on the way. On a global level, we are still in a zone of expansive force. By naming what now follows 'development', two questions are raised: is what happens in this passage really *more* developmental than the entire opening up to the second theme zone?; and how long does this developmental zone last? The second question leads to the problem of where the recapitulation zone begins, which over time has raised different answers.

Hamburger conceived the movement as different from a sonata movement, consisting essentially of a large burst of energy in two parts, from bb. 1–287 and 288–734 respectively. If such a thing as a 'recapitulation' could be found, Hamburger would place it at the return of the second theme at b. 483. Grimley supports this reading. However, Simpson and Jeppesen both feel a point of recapitulation slightly earlier, at b. 452, and Krebs marks it at b. 584 (the return of the second theme in the original tonic of D minor).

Tarrant, by contrast, interprets the movement as a Hepokoski/Darcyan Type 2 sonata, which is to say a sonata in two 'rotations', or a sonata form that is characterised by often *not* having any recapitulation. Like Hamburger, he places the second rotation at the start of the movement's second part: b. 288. But Tarrant's interpretation also contains a link to Krebs, since he characterises the music from b. 584 as

a 'coda-rotation'. A kind of third part of the movement sets off exactly at the same spot, where Krebs felt *his* third part, the recapitulation, started.

Hamburger, too, had the feeling of coda elements integrated in his model. His interpretation shows two almost equal 'rotations'. Or rather, as the first theme in its progression already had traces of development, we might say that the two rotations are to all intents and purposes equal, since both consist of a developmental section leading to the second theme, which again leads into a coda section:

|          |          |                 |
|----------|----------|-----------------|
| 1. Theme | 2. Theme | Coda            |
| b. 1     | b. 138   | b. 226          |
| develop. | 2. Theme | Coda + 1. Theme |
| b. 288   | b. 483   | b. 562          |

Before going deeper into this aspect, I shall return to question one. How does Nielsen create a development section that is *more* developmental than the primary theme zone? As we shall see, he does not.

The section opens with a motif briefly stated once before at b. 191 in the second theme zone, where I named it 'Z-music'. This music turns out to be a constant factor, functioning as a ritornello in bb. 288–436. As we hear it in b. 288, it has a forward drive, an expansive force. This force is shortly afterwards interrupted by repeated canonic gestures, accompanied by slow trills. That is, the expression of this build-up 'is in the literal sense the persistence of the melody or its revolving around a few tones',<sup>46</sup> which is Mersmann's definition of 'accumulation'. At this point one might also invoke the Adornian concept of 'suspense',<sup>47</sup> which would seem a fitting characterisation for this little canon. The interesting thing about this insertion of accumulation is that the canonic repeated notes are actually our primary theme itself, presented in its original form, only now as an energy transformed from 'force' to 'accumulation' (Example 14). The music of bb. 288–306 is repeated. The kind of 'acceleration' this 'accumulation' leads into seems more accurately labelled 'force'; it does not sound as the result of a discharge.

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<sup>46</sup> Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*, 173.

<sup>47</sup> Adorno describes these 'suspensions' in connection with Mahler's music, where they, "tend to settle into episodes". Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: eine musikalische Physiognomik*, Frankfurt [1960] 1978, 60. [*Die Mahlerschen Suspensionen sedimentieren sich mehr stets zu Episoden*]. In the first movement of the *Espansiva* they appear as interruptions only. Still, one could with Adorno still characterise them as '[d]etours that retrospectively turn out to be direct ones' (*Ibid.*) [*Umwege, die rückwirkend als die die direkten sich erweisen*].

288 *Z music* 290 295

*pp*

canon: primary theme

300 305 *Z music*

Ex. 14. The beginning of the so-called ‘development’.

After the (transposed and slightly varied) repetition of the Z-music+canon-module, the third presentation of the Z-music ritornello now leads to the final and seemingly definitive transformation of the primary theme: the great waltz (Example 15).

330 335 *Z music*

the ostinato in the top gives a quite new energetic impression.  
The impression of ‘accumulation’.

340 345 *Z music*

Ex. 15. The waltz + start of fourth Z-music ritornello.

When the Z-music ritornello returns, its bass ostinato has been added on top, with the striking effect of changing the energy of the passage from ‘force’ to ‘accumulation’. As it turns out, this is the first of what could be heard as a series of accumulations.

If we stick to the idea of Z-music as ritornello (bb. 343–354) – now functioning as the first of three ‘accumulations’ – we could hear the fugato, based on the end of the waltz (bb. 355–371, Example 12, above), as another primary theme-based episode, the second ‘accumulation’. In b. 372 it transforms into an ostinato, which is coupled with the initial falling fifth of the Z-music. ‘Ritornello’ and ‘episode’ combine to intensify the accumulation, which reaches a climax in b. 380 (Example 16), that finally leads to a powerful ‘acceleration’ heralding the return of the waltz.

355 compare to b. 339-343

372 waltz-ostinato and Z-music

380 intensification

Ex. 16. The last three of the four accumulating passages between the two waltzes.

This time the final passage, which from b. 355 was used as ‘accumulation’, has been left out. Instead, the waltz continues in a long, singing primary stepwise melody, ending in the exact same passage that ended the secondary theme zone (Example 17).

390 395

compare to b. 254-56 (ex. 12)

400 405 410

415 420 NB: The Y-motif

compare to b. 54-56 (ex. 7)

424 'End sign' 425 430 435

Ex. 17. The second waltz and its continuation. Compare bb. 424–435 to bb. 260–270.

If we accept the idea of the primary theme zone as basically an interrupted unfolding of the potentialities of the primary theme (Examples 6 and 7 above), and if we are able to hear the melodic line towards the end of the secondary theme (bb. 226–270 of Example 12) as a further variation on primary theme possibilities (Example 9) with a focus on the downward triadic arpeggio, we may hear this line as a final culmination of the primary theme and its potential for development. Where the secondary theme zone in its resumption of primary-theme movement focused on the falling triad (Example 13), the continuation of the waltz focuses on the stepwise motion found in bb. 58–60 (and one could hear an incorporation of motif X here as well). Besides this, we find a characteristic combination of upward and downward leaps (b. 405: g-d-f<sup>#</sup>-e<sup>#</sup>-g<sup>#</sup>) that might be heard as a further development of the one-note shorter movement in bb. 254–255 (e-a-c-e<sup>b</sup>) (Example 18).

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled "Second phrase of the primary theme" and contains measures 46, 50, 55, and 60. It features a melodic line with various intervals and a "stepwise motion" section. Annotations include "see b. 252-53" and "compare to b. 421-423". The bottom staff is labeled "Extract from the ending of second theme zone" and contains measures 250, 255, and a section marked "a variation?". It includes annotations "compare to b. 53, 57, 59" and "compare to b. 405-406".

Ex. 18. Extracts from primary and secondary theme zones.

Finally, to the Y-motif. It appeared as a common denominator of the accumulative insertions at bb. 166 and 199 in the secondary theme zone (Examples 9 and 11). This motif also seems to be incorporated in the continuation of the waltz (b. 422, Example 18). From a melodic point of view, the second waltz stands out as a synthesis of the melodic energy that seems to be providing an underlying structural coherence from the outset until now.

From this angle, the movement has by now said all it has to say. From now on, the remaining task is to find a way to closure. The aim of synthesising all important melodic gestures in the second waltz leads us to an ending similar to that of the second theme zone. Not only melodically but also energetically, we are back at the exact same spot. And as previously, the music decays and dies out – energy-wise as pure ‘space’. As an echo of the giant melodic climax, the bass line continues in paraphrase of the melodic gestures we have just heard (Example 19).

The image shows two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The top staff starts at measure 436 and ends at 440, showing a melodic line. The bottom staff starts at measure 445 and ends at 450, showing a bass line that continues the melodic gestures from the previous staff.

Ex. 19. The echo of melody.

Even though the bass line continues, there is no doubt that a section ends at b. 436.

Was this the development section? If we give it that name, we must accept a development section with much less development than the primary theme zone. In fact, this development section, with its implicit ritornello layout of interactions between Z-music and primary theme music unfolding different energetic roles, seems

much more like a 'primary theme zone' than the actual primary theme zone itself. As I interpreted the second waltz as a synthesis of melodic gestures, and as such as the very climax of the movement, it is the culmination of expansive energy. From now on, centripetal force will lead us to the end. However, I choose not to call it development but rather by the more neutral term: 'the waltz zone'.

The waltz zone ends melodically and energetically the same way as did the secondary theme zone. Tonally there is a difference. The secondary zone ended on C, the waltz zone on C sharp. At the very least, this avoids tonal redundancy. But finding a deeper meaning, or some kind of intricate tonal relationship, is problematic, perhaps unrealistic in terms of how the music is experienced. Furthermore, Nielsen makes sure that the continuation from the waltz zone leads to the same point that the continuation of the secondary zone might have led to: the C of the secondary zone could have been used as a dominant to F. Nielsen uses the C sharp of the waltz zone as a D flat, as  $^bVI$  of F.

As the second theme zone and waltz zone end with identical melodic gestures, they signal that they could be heard on equal terms, as two independent sections of a music, each of which tries to create its own form-world. These two sections express very different energy levels, the secondary theme zone being overall 'space', while the waltz zone exhibits vast amounts of 'force'. We might conceive the primary zone as a developmental prelude, that in the secondary and waltz zone finds a firmer framework. And yet, there is no doubt that primary and secondary zone are linked together as a unit, and that the waltz zone stands out as a new start, leading to an unfolding of the motivic potential in a culminative synthesis.

### **Memory zone – recapitulation?**

I have suggested that the musical material has by now received all the development possible, and that all that is left is to wrap up the movement. So, is what follows a new section with simply the purpose of 'wrapping up'?

Simpson and Jeppesen found that what happened at b. 452 was to be conceived as a recapitulation. Grimley accepts the idea, but notes that it is aborted. We hear a line divided between flute and oboe in a way that might conceal how much of the primary theme we actually do hear. In fact, we could hear the line as a demonstration of exactly the connection between the first and second entries of the primary theme that Example 6, above, proposes. The top line of Example 20 shows the primary theme from bb. 15 to 22 linked to b. 46. The second and third lines show the melodic line that Simpson and Jeppesen heard as recapitulation.

Ex. 20. Primary theme: comparison between bb. 15–22, 46–48 and 452–461.

The very same melodic gestures – the ‘end sign’ – that initiate the endings of the second theme- and waltz-zone – terminate the unfolding of primary theme. So, by now all the main theme-zones – second theme, waltz and now a rudimentary primary theme zone – have been concluded through the same little motif, the ‘end sign’. This time the ‘end sign’ does not continue into falling triads but into the music that constantly interrupted the second theme, the X-motif.

From a Mersmannian point of view it is hard not to hear the connection between the waltz zone and what comes after it as similar to the relation between primary and secondary theme zones: as one of ‘force’ turning into ‘space’. Even though the flute entry at b. 452 might signal something ‘forceful’, the abortion reveals the force as an illusion. This impression is further confirmed by the entry of the secondary theme, which is presented in its entirety (compare bb. 138, 160, 175 and 226 [Examples 8, 9, 10, 12 above] to bb. 483, 505, 521 and 562 [Examples 22 and 23]). It would be possible to read the score as if the second theme zone music lasts throughout the rest of the movement. When in spite of this neither Hamburger, nor Krebs nor Tarrant hear a recapitulation here, it may be because they hear it somewhat in the same way as I do: the way Tarrant formulates as:

Rather than hearing the next sounding of the primary theme as the start of some sort of abortive recapitulation in F minor, in the Type 2 reading it is experienced as an aftermath or reminiscence of its previously stormy incarnation, a point of lowest ebb after the energy of the developmental music has been fully expended.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Tarrant, ‘Structural Acceleration in Nielsen’s *Sinfonia Espansiva*’, 375.

The description of the passage as 'aftermath' and 'reminiscence' fits exactly my hearing of the music. But – and this is important – it is an aftermath that does not imply closure and centripetality. It is an aftermath that somehow still moves on.

Tarrant bases his experience on his Hepokoski/Darcyan Type 2 sonata form reading. He does not hear the primary theme as the start of a recapitulation. Nor does he – contrary to Grimley (and maybe Hamburger) – hear the secondary theme as a point of recapitulation, even though the secondary theme literally is being recapitulated. Maybe he does not hear the start of a recapitulation for the simple reason that the entry of the second theme does not mark a new beginning, even though the music from bars 483 to 562 is formed very similarly to the second theme zone.

Everything appears as an 'aftermath', as 'reminiscence'. The experience equates to looking at pictures of how things once were. In the secondary theme zone, the presentations of the theme were interrupted by material dominated by motifs X and Y. In various forms these motifs returned and created – in a way similar to the interaction between Z-music and primary theme/waltz in the waltz zone – their own ritornello-like form. In what we could call the 'memory zone', this X-material takes us from the primary theme to a passage that again might best be described through the Adornian term 'suspension'. As it turns out this passage now takes on the same role of accumulative, interrupting material that X and Y motifs had in the second theme zone; only now this 'suspension'/'accumulation' is built on pizzicato versions of the primary theme (Example 21).

The image displays a musical score for Example 21, consisting of several staves of music. The score is annotated with various labels and bar numbers:

- Staff 1 (Bass clef):** Labeled "First Primary Theme (PT) echo preparation for ST" with bar numbers 468 and 470. It includes the instruction "pizz." (pizzicato).
- Staff 2 (Bass clef):** Labeled "Secondary Theme (ST)" with bar number 483.
- Staff 3 (Treble clef):** Labeled "500 Second PT - interruption" with bar numbers 499 and 505. It includes the instruction "pizz.".
- Staff 4 (Treble clef):** Labeled "517 Third PT - interruption" with bar number 517.
- Staff 5 (Treble clef):** Labeled "520 ST variation" with bar numbers 520 and 533. It includes the instruction "pizz.".
- Staff 6 (Bass clef):** Labeled "X-material leads once more to a new section" with bar numbers 535 and 535.
- Staff 7 (Bass clef):** Labeled "Z-music" with bar number 535.
- Staff 8 (Bass clef):** Labeled "The fugato motif from b. 199" with bar number 545. It includes the instruction "pizz." and has motifs X and W marked.
- Staff 9 (Treble clef):** Labeled "The transition to ST-coda from b. 221" with bar numbers 557 and 560.

Ex. 21: Continuation of the 'memory zone'.

The constant intersections of pizzicato lines modelled over the primary theme keep the second-theme presentation together as a unit within this section. They simul-

taneously link the occurrence of the second theme with the initial primary theme as something belonging to one large section. We have primary theme (bb. 452–466, Example 20) moving on through intersections to the secondary theme zone, which is presented in its entirety, with three ST-presentations followed by Z-music (b. 537, Example 21 – compare to Example 11, above), a fugato motif with X and W motifs (b. 545, Example 21 – compare to Example 11, above), a forceful transition to coda zone (bb. 558–561, Example 21 – compare Example 11, above) and finally the coda zone itself, beginning at b. 562 just as it did in the second theme zone (compare Examples 12, above, and 22).

**'Force' as an overall energy: acceleration**

The musical score for Example 22 is presented in two staves: a piano part on the bottom and a violin part on the top. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 562. The piano part features a series of chords and single notes, while the violin part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. Measure numbers 562, 565, and 570 are indicated above the staff.

Ex. 22. Secondary theme as the beginning of a coda zone.

The transitions from primary theme to second theme to Z-music and finally to coda zone are all established through X-based intersections. The internal transitions between the three phrases of second theme are based on primary theme material. In this way the second theme becomes linked to the primary theme as something that is part of an ongoing formal unit, something that in itself cannot be heard as a starting point.

Tarrant advances the idea of structural acceleration. The foundation for his doing so is the presence or absence of cadences, the distribution of different tonal fields that he identifies, and some conclusions based on the assumption that tonality is the driving power of the symphony.

From the point of view of themes and motifs, this idea is rather obscure. But if we think of acceleration on a *thematic/motivic* basis it could very well be applied to the 'memory zone'. The feeling of 'memory' could be transformed to a feeling of recapitulation. In that case, this section could be heard as a structural acceleration of primary and secondary zones. This interpretation fits the score. However, its placement as an aftermath to the waltz zone totally alters this impression. The overall feeling of the music is tentative, curious and, most of all, retrospective. We are presented with well-known fragments of music that in no way suggest new evolution.

Maybe this is why only Hamburger (only reluctantly) and Grimley have advocated for a reversed recapitulation, starting with the re-entry of the second theme. Yet even though the score clearly tells us that this is a recapitulation, Nielsen has

managed to make it all sound as if it is really not the case. He has done this – I would argue – solely by altering the *energy level*. In Mersmannian energetic terms, it lacks the feeling of centripetality, the feeling of an ordering power taking the music back to its roots, which, as Mersmann puts it, one should expect from a recapitulation zone. On a global level, expansive power still rules. So, for the music up to this point I suggest an energetic description of expansive and centripetal in two levels, a local and a global. The global displays an uninterrupted ongoing line. The local displays a move from expansive to centripetal to expansive. And if we try to locate the dichotomy of ‘force’ and ‘space’, we could propose a third layer of interpretation (Figure 3):

|           |                    |       |                      |       |            |       |             |
|-----------|--------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|------------|-------|-------------|
| Global:   | Expansive          | ..... | .....                | ..... | .....      | ..... | .....       |
| Local:    | Expansive          | ..... | Centripetal          | ..... | Expansive  | ..... | .....       |
|           | Force              |       | Space                |       | Force      |       | Space       |
| Sections: | Primary theme zone |       | Secondary theme zone |       | Waltz zone |       | Memory zone |

Fig. 3. Elements of expansive, centripetal, force and space in the *Sinfonia espansiva*, first movement.

Figure 3 indicates an energy structure that groups the four sections in two parts, both moving from force to space. Maybe this structure is the reason that when the recapitulation of the second theme zone climaxes in its coda, this now stands as a coda for the entire movement. The climax, the sheer outburst of force once more, simultaneously signals that the end is in sight. Centripetal force takes over.

One might hear what comes thereafter as one gigantic Coda.

### Coda zone

Hamburger and Tarrant, who agree on the interpretation of waltz and memory zone as in some way united, also both identify a Coda. Hamburger hears it when the music breaks off in isolated chords at b. 600. This makes sense, because after these chords Nielsen places a transposed repetition from the primary zone, bb. 74–106, the part that leads up to what Hamburger described as a ‘steel hard A flat minor’.<sup>49</sup> Tarrant

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49 Hamburger's point is in line with what I have described as a ‘Danish’ approach to the music. Hamburger explains the choice of A flat minor as the result of ‘absolute sonorous’ reasons, not linked to any kind of ‘harmonic logic’, and thus not of importance on a higher level than motivic considerations. [Aabenbart drejer det sig her om en absolut-klanglig (altsaa ikke harmonisk-logisk) Effekt, idet den overraskende Indførelse af den ligesom ‘staalhaarde’ as-mol er blevet foretrukket for den svagere Virkning af den forventede og afgjort blødere f-mol for derved at forstærke Udtrykkets Energi pa dette Sted.] Hamburger, ‘Formproblemet i vor Tids Musik’, 95–96.

hears it differently, however. In his reading a ‘coda rotation’ sets in at the same place where Krebs heard the recapitulation, i.e. at b. 583.<sup>50</sup> The argument is the same as Krebs’s: it is determined by the presence of the D minor tonality.

A Mersmannian hearing would have some reservations. The primary theme is *not* presented in the expansive, ever-growing form we know from both primary theme and waltz zones. It is presented rather in the repetitive accumulative form it had in the first two accumulating inter-punctuations of the Z-music in the waltz zone. The character of this music is thus not ‘recapitulative’ but ‘accumulating’. The accumulating effect is enforced through the addition of a repetitive version of second theme.

The interpretation of b. 562 to the end as a coda zone entails hearing this part not as structural acceleration but as structural delay or even better postponement. This hearing connects to the interpretation of the primary theme zone as basically one long melodic line that has been interrupted by accumulation. The same thing, I argue, is at stake in what I should now term the ‘coda zone’. The coda of the second theme zone has been split up. It opens with the first 10 bars of the theme, but the last 36 bars are postponed until a few bars before the ending. In other words, the coda zone has been enlarged. This is done partly through insertions of a series of accumulations, partly through transposed but otherwise unaltered repetition of no less than 36 bars (bb. 73–109), the concluding bars, of the primary zone. The psychic prerequisite for this construction is the fact, that we – in principle – know what is going to happen. The fanfare-like version of secondary theme will be followed by a long melodic line ultimately resulting in the ‘end sign’ and the following wavering triadic movements that leads to closure. To this we might add the experience of Nielsen’s way of composing in this movement through constant juxtapositions of material of different energy types, mostly accumulation and acceleration.

This feeling of ‘knowing what’s going to happen’ is my argument for hearing a turn of energy from expansive to centripetal, which again is my argument for hearing this section as a final entity, as simply an enlarged version of the music that ended the secondary theme zone, which again is the music that ended the entire first part of the music. The music that – in a Type 2 interpretation – ended the first rotation (bb. 1–272) thus also ends the second (bb. 273–734). Its energy level makes me hear bb. 562–734 as a separate ‘coda rotation’.

The opening acceleration of energy as a response to the preceding accumulation (Example 21, above) can be seen in Example 22. Instead of continuing to the long

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50 Tarrant, ‘Structural Acceleration in Nielsen’s *Sinfonia Espansiva*’, 368; Krebs, ‘Tonal Structure in Nielsen’s Symphonies’, 219.

melodic line of the second theme-zone's coda it is interrupted by insertion of the waltz zone, resulting in no less than three different kinds of accumulations. What in the 'waltz zone' presented itself as Z-music-based ritornello (Example 23, 'Accumulation 1') followed by canonic P-theme-based 'accumulation' (Example 23, 'Accumulation 2') now *all* functions as accumulation, in as much as it is interpolated before the expected continuation of Example 22. This presentation of the primary theme *after* Z-music, in a canonic setting referring to its accumulative status in waltz zone, makes it hard to hear this as a new start, not to mention a recapitulation point. In its form as an immovable ostinato, it signals either ending or interruption, an impression that is only amplified when second-theme material ostinato is put on top of it (Example 23, 'Accumulation 2a'). This presentation of primary theme does not initiate a new beginning. On the contrary. It is followed by an abortion of the musical flow, by a third kind of accumulation (Example 23, 'Accumulation 3'), that takes us back to the very opening of the movement, with its gigantic, isolated chord strokes. Although I hear it differently, I can easily follow Hamburger in hearing this point as a formal marker.

The image displays three musical excerpts from Nielsen's *Sinfonia Espansiva*.  
**Accumulation 1: Z-music** (measures 572-581): A piano accompaniment featuring a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes in both hands, with a key signature of one flat.  
**Accumulation 2: P-theme** (measures 582-585): A piano accompaniment showing a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a key signature change to two flats.  
**Accumulation 2a: P+S-theme** (measures 594-600): A piano accompaniment with a complex melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, featuring a key signature change to three flats. Arrows labeled 'Breaks' point to specific measures in the right hand.

Ex. 23. Coda zone: first series of accumulations.

This is followed by the aforementioned insertion of the 36 concluding bars of the primary-theme zone. Note how well this music fits into secondary-theme zone, as the melodic gestures are similar to the gestures heard after the first ten bars in the second-theme zone presentation of the second-theme coda (see Example 12, above): long notes followed by downward triadic arpeggios. In fact, these arpeggios are the central feature of this part of the recapitulated primary-theme-zone music (Example 24, see also Example 13).

613 **Acceleration (b. 613-649 = b. 73-109)**

*ff*  
**Accumulation**

626

**Acceleration**

639

645

Ex. 24. Coda zone: insertion of primary-theme zone music.

As we may remember from the primary-theme zone, the insertion contains shifts between ‘acceleration’ and ‘accumulation’ energies. We can by now ascertain that shifting between these two types of energy is a basic component in the construction of the musical flow of this entire movement. The last acceleration leads in the primary-theme zone to a forceful presentation of the primary theme itself. Here in the coda zone it leads to a seemingly directionless dissolution of thematic energy. Instead of the energy of the primary theme we get yet another accumulation. Or is it a suspension?. The non-developmental theme version leads into a zone of repetitive notes: the epitome of ‘accumulation’ (Example 25).

**Accumulation 1: instead of the ‘steel hard a flat minor’**

647

650

655

**Accumulation 2: ‘space’. The accent and X**

656

660

**Accumulation 2a**

673

675

Ex. 25. Coda zone: second accumulation zone.

Finally, the awaited continuation of the coda zone’s opening sets in. If we anticipated that the insertion from the primary zone was the way this should sound, we now

recognise the original melody: this is the third time we hear this music. We know it means that a cadence is in the offing (Example 26).

**Acceleration: continuation of codal zone**



**Accumulation**



**Acceleration**



**Primary Theme-canon initiates final 24 bars of continued acceleration**



Ex. 26. Final part of secondary-zone coda plus further extension.

Note, that the 'end sign' music, which by now we have heard three times, is omitted. And so are the concluding triadic movements. Instead, we for the fourth time hear primary theme canon. Followed by more inserted material, that might be heard as accumulation. If so, we would have to conclude that the movement finishes off with accumulative energy (Figure 4)!

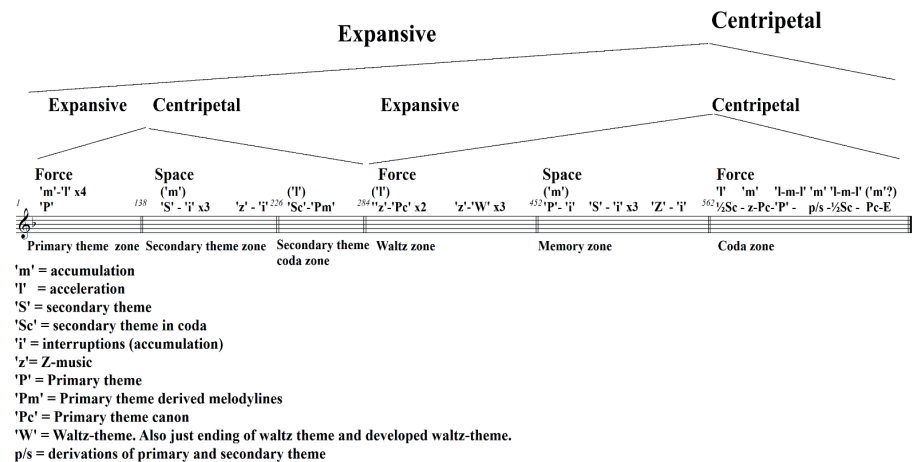


Fig. 4: Overall multilayered distribution of energy types.

The energetic analysis shows a multilayered play of the three different dichotomies Mersmann developed to characterise the various kinds of energy involved in the unfolding of a piece of music. It demonstrates the alternation between ‘accumulation’ and ‘acceleration’ as a basic structural component in Nielsen’s distribution of material and in his design of phrases. These constantly changing energy-types blend together to build up larger formal units, which in themselves also group according to energy types. At this level, it is the alteration between ‘force’ and ‘space’ that determines the overall impression. The last dichotomy, ‘expansive’/‘centripetal’, displays on the highest level an overall arch going from expansive to centripetal. However, on the lower hierarchical levels, it seems that yet another ‘local’, display of centripetal force may be detected, namely in the secondary-theme zone. This coincides with the shift of energy-type from ‘force’ to ‘space’. What is interesting is that such a change was *not* detected in the next shift between ‘force’ and ‘space’, namely the movement from ‘waltz’ to ‘memory’ zone. To this we may add another aspect of Mersmann’s energetic thinking. What locally displays a change of energy-types may itself express one single overall energy type. The many local shifts of accumulation and acceleration are reflected on a higher level by the interchange between ‘force’ and ‘space’, where ‘space’ in itself can be regarded as a piling up of the latent energy that just awaits a change to again flow into – from an overall view – unhindered acceleration. The same thing can be found at the level of the symphony’s four movements. The first movement exhibits an overall ‘force’. The second movement typically – and certainly this is the case for *Espansiva* – displays ‘space’: that is, a movement of pure sound, the display of ‘time’ in its purest form. Such a movement builds up energy and thus represents ‘accumulation’. This runs freely into the third movement, where many different kinds of energies are displayed. Primarily its energy is force and acceleration. From an energetic view the third and fourth movements are in this way linked. In the fourth movement, ‘force’ and ‘acceleration’ are to the fore, in a music, that strives toward the end as a climax.

Mersmann’s graphic representation of this seems designed for the first movement of the *Sinfonia Espansiva* (Figure 5):

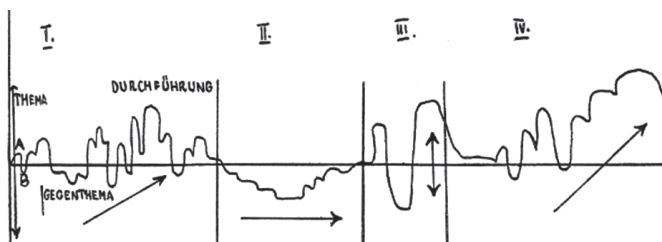


Fig. 5. The energy levels of the four movements of an archetypal symphony. Activity above the midline reflects ‘force’; activity below reflects ‘space’. See Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*, 506.

If we return to first movement and take in account the fact that all the central elements – including a large chunk of the primary-theme zone – were represented, we might consider this Coda zone as a kind of Recapitulation zone. However, as former commentators have argued, there are plenty of reasons *not* to think in terms of recapitulation. Mersmann himself has some additional arguments. In his monumental book, he naturally also has a chapter on sonata form, where he distinguishes between different types. Just as with his archetypal formal layout, one of these, the *antithetic*, seems virtually to have been modelled on the *Sinfonia Espansiva*.

A last type of sonata form is ... antithetic. In terms of the position of the forces, it agrees with the idea of sonata form. But it still means that the forces of development have a decisive predominance over form. The starting point for this type of development is the antithetical theme, in which the contrast between the two parts of the exposition already stretches to the point of conflict. Such a concentration of conflict within the theme also pushes the sonata tradition completely out of place. The secondary theme, but above all the contrast between the two areas of development lying on different harmonic levels, loses all meaning. The course of the form shifts completely; the 'development', for the occurrence of which only the establishment of the conflict was a prerequisite, begins immediately after the primary theme. The secondary theme is already becoming an exponent of the development and sometimes already indicates a first climax. In this case, the development part of the sonata form means only a further increase and intensification of the developmental forces, the expression of which is often their projection into polyphony. The decisive point in this development type, however, is the third part of the sonata form. Up to this point, the demands of the course of the form could at best be combined with those of the development of the content; but here they diverge. Neither 'reprise' nor 'solution' is internally possible.<sup>51</sup>

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51 Mersmann, *Angewandte Musikästhetik*, 484–485. Ein letzter Typus der Sonatenform ist ... antititisch. Er stimmt also in der Lage der Kräfte mit der idee der Sonatenform überein. Aber er bedeutet dennoch ein entscheidendes Übergewicht der Entwicklungskräfte über die Form. Der Ausgangspunkt für diesen Entwicklungstypus ist das antithetische Thema, in welchem sich der Gegensatz der beiden Teilsätze bereits bis zum Konflikt spannt. Eine solche Konzentration des Konflikts innerhalb des Themas drängt die Sonatentradiation ebenfalls völlig aus ihrer ursprünglichen Lage ab. Das Gegen-thema, vor allem aber der Gegensatz der beiden auf verschiedenen harmonischen Ebenen liegenden Entwicklungsflächen verliert jede Bedeutung. Der Formverlauf verschiebt sich völlig; die 'Durchführung', für deren Eintreten ja nur die Aufstellung des Konflikts Voraussetzung war, beginnt unmittelbar nach dem Thema. Das Gegenthema wird bereits zu

In itself, Nielsen's primary theme might not be antithetic in the way Mersmann describes. But the handling of the theme throughout the primary-theme zone is decisively antithetic in its constant shifts of energy from 'accumulation' to 'acceleration' and back again. Also it is evident that development takes predominance over form. Not until the secondary-theme zone do we reach a formal design comparable to the symmetrical phrase-building of the classical and romantic styles. If this is not decidedly exponent of development or a climax in a dynamic sense, it certainly is so in a tonal or relaxational sense. And not until the secondary theme do we get a hint of where all this energy is going. Mersmann's observation, that the development section in this kind of sonata form is not something new, but rather an increase of what has preceded, is pertinent. Nielsen's way of dealing with this problem is – as we saw – to organise this 'development section' (or whatever we should call it) more tightly than the exposition, turning to a kind of ritornello organisation. Nielsen too uses polyphony – as small fugatos and as primary theme canons. The problem for this kind of sonata form is that in a music that constantly evolves, the supposed conflict, that should have been resolved between clearly-cut primary and secondary themes, has already been dissolved through developmental action. There is no sense in trying to repeat such a developmental music in a recapitulation. Developmental music must keep on developing.

It is remarkable how elegant Nielsen's formal solution is. The essence of recapitulation – the 'memory zone' – is made possible through a shift of energy level that makes the music seem anything but a recapitulation. The establishing of the necessary centripetal force is effected by means of a coda-like section placed at the end of the second-theme zone, which in an enlarged version can function as a combination of end-oriented drive and restatement of the movement's central themes.

The application of Mersmannian analysis is no straightforward affair, and certainly not one that may be based on rigidly defined categories. As such it demands a degree of goodwill on the part the reader. However, it is an attempt to capture significant aspects of how the music is experienced: aspects that have evaded other more or less theoretically based accounts. Given that the first movement of the *Sinfonia espansiva* stands as one of the most significant embodiments of Nielsen's ideals as a symphonist and artist, that attempt is surely worth the effort.

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*einem Exponenten der Entwicklung und bezeichnet manchmal schon eine erste erreichte Höhelage. Der Durchführungsteil der Sonatenform bedeutet in diesem Falle nur noch eine weitere Steigerung und Intensivierung der Entwicklungskräfte, deren Ausdruck häufig ihre Projektion in die Polyphonie wird. Die entscheidende Stelle dieses Entwicklungstypus aber ist der dritte Teil der Sonatenform. Bis hierher ließen sich die Forderungen des Formverlaufs mit denen der inhaltlichen Entwicklung allenfalls vereinen; hier aber klaffen sie auseinander. Weder 'Reprise' noch 'Lösung' ist innerlich möglich.*

## A B S T R A C T

The first movement of Nielsen's Third Symphony, the *Espansiva*, has over the years given rise to a wide range of analyses as it at one and the same time seems to follow and yet diverge from standard sonata form. The main question is: if this is a sonata form, where do we place the recapitulation?

I attempt to answer this question through an 'energetic' analysis based on the theories of Hans Mersmann. The core ideas of Mersmann are that everything in its essence is *energy* or *force*. What Mersmann does is to categorise different types of energy and setting them up in polar pairs, such as 'expansive-centripetal'. The thought is not unfamiliar to Nielsen, as the ideas of the energetic movement in many ways coincide with the so-called 'vitalistic' trend, which Michael Fjeldsøe has shown to have great significance for Nielsen. Fjeldsøe demonstrates this through analysis of *Espansiva*.

I show how the energetic approach can clarify Fjeldsøe's analysis. The energetic approach demonstrates also why spotting the recapitulation point has led to disagreements between theorists; and it shows a certain energetic technique that penetrates the foreground structure of the movement, namely the phenomena of 'damming up' and 'letting loose': in Mersmann's terms: 'accumulation' and 'acceleration'.

A Mersmannian reading of the *Allegro espansivo* reveals an energetically hierarchical music that underneath an overall arch of 'expansive', 'centripetal' energy reveals smaller arches of 'force' and 'space' which again characterise the main energy levels of a foreground unfolding through waves of 'accumulation' and 'acceleration'.