
C A R L N I E L S E N U N M A S K E D

Art and Popular Musical Styles in *Maskarade*

By Anne-Marie Reynolds

Our art is the rousing, impassioned enemy of silence, just as dance is the unremitting foe of stillness. These two, music and dance, are the highest expression of our two most important senses's need, and through them we resist and repel death as long as we can hear and see.

– Carl Nielsen, 1909¹

Carl Nielsen is best known internationally for his symphonies, yet in Denmark he is equally beloved for his vocal music. In fact, his national reputation depends on no single work more than his second opera, *Maskarade* (Masquerade), written between 1904 and 1906. It is Nielsen's most popular composition, and, arguably, the favorite Danish opera ever written. The wry humor, sudden segues into melancholy, infectious dance rhythms, and folk-like melodies give it a national character, not to mention that it was based on a comedy written by another native son, Ludvig Holberg, and adapted by yet a third, Vilhelm Andersen.²

Within Nielsen's development, this opera is a keystone because it was written at a critical juncture. Masquerade incorporates the two contrasting musical styles, art and popular, that he was to cultivate from then on, resulting in his most significant contributions in both symphony and song. Throughout the next decade, he wrote vocal music in a folk-like style, these works growing simpler in inverse proportion to the complexity of his instrumental music. Thus, *Maskarade* is a strategic work containing the key to Nielsen's future artistic growth, a microcosm of the stylistic range that came to characterize his entire output.

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- 1 *Vor Kunst er Stillehedens æggende, lidenskabelige Fjende, ligesom Dansen er Stilstandens uforsonlige Modstander. Disse to: Musikken og Dansen er de højeste Udtryk for vore to vigtigste Sansers Behov, og derigennem benægter og bekæmper vi Død og Tilintetgørelse, saalænge vi kan høre og se.* Review of Godtfred Skjerne, 'Plutark's Dialog om Musikken' [Plutark's Discussion on Music], *Orkesterforeningens Medlemsblad* 9/11 (1909), reprinted in John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid* [Carl Nielsen to his Contemporaries], Copenhagen 1999, 143. All translations are my own.
 - 2 Ludvig Holberg, Danish playwright, 1684-1754. Vilhelm Andersen, Danish literary historian, 1864-1953.

This musical opposition mirrors several tensions Nielsen experienced in his personal life. Indeed, he was caught up in a jumble of contradictions that he spent his whole life trying to reconcile. First, he was a laborer's son from the provinces who sought to make his way as a professional composer in the nation's capital. Given the reverence long since afforded him in Denmark, it is striking that into his forties, Nielsen continued to face setbacks at the hands of Danish critics and members of Copenhagen's music establishment.³ He described the treatment he was subjected to at the Royal Theater, for example, as nothing short of 'persecution'.⁴ Nielsen's predicament is an example of the sort of provincialism that faced many an artist from a small nation at the turn of the century. More specifically, it illustrates a Scandinavian tendency to discourage a person's standing out from the crowd called 'the Law of Jante'.⁵ Any extreme attempt to stretch the limits of one's abilities, particularly beyond the borders of the country, was perceived as a criticism of the status quo and a willful attempt to undermine the community. Nielsen was aware of the pressure to conform and balked at warnings against making waves. 'I was ... a bone of contention ...' he said, 'because I wanted to protest against the typical Danish soft smoothing-over, leveling. I want stronger rhythms and more advanced harmony.'⁶

A second source of conflict was his relationship with Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, renowned in her own right as a sculptress. Their marriage was quite modern in its partnership which, in the best sense, meant they admired and supported each other in their artistic endeavors. But it also meant they were pulled in different directions by the competing demands of two careers and a family. More often than he liked, Nielsen was left watching their house and three children, while holding down a job at the Royal Theatre and composing, so that his wife could travel for her work. During the composition of *Maskarade*, after a five-month separation with no end in sight, Nielsen found his wife's absence intolerable, and wrote to her request-

3 Frits Eibe, 'Carl Nielsen og den offentlige musikkritik' [Carl Nielsen and the Published Music Criticism], *Dansk Musiktidsskrift* 7/1 (1932), 44-9.

4 Nielsen bitterly recounts the sordid saga in a letter to Wilhelm Stenhammar, in 'Carl Nielsen's Letters: A Selection,' translated by Alan Swanson, in Mina Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*, London 1994, 633-4.

5 This term was coined by the Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose (1899-1965). Jante is a small town in one of his novels, where the townspeople live by the rule 'Thou shalt not believe thou art something' - hence the name. Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg and Ingmar Bergman, to name a few other artists, have also been faulted for transgressing this law. William Mishler, 'Norwegian Literature, 1910-1950,' in Harald S. Naess (ed.), *A History of Norwegian Literature*, Lincoln and London 1993, 265.

6 *Jeg var ... et stridens Æble ... fordi jeg mente Protest mod dette danske, bløde, udglidende, udjevne, jeg vil den stærke Rytme, det videregående i harmonisk Henseende.* Carl Nielsen, interviewed in *Verdens Gang*, 5 (December 1908), in Fellow, *op.cit.*, 124.

ing a divorce.⁷ Anne Marie returned home immediately and the couple reconciled, for a time, but this crisis set a pattern for their tumultuous relationship. Health concerns added another layer of anxiety to Nielsen's existence. The heart problems that would eventually kill him were always lurking in the background, a constant reminder of his mortality.

A further conflict was that, as hard-earned as Nielsen's national reputation was, it may have worked against success beyond the borders of his homeland. The more loudly he was proclaimed Denmark's greatest composer, the more it seemed he was branded a 'regional treasure' abroad. In the years immediately following his death, even assessments of his legacy were contradictory. At home Nielsen was considered a radical, alternately blamed for sounding the death knell of Danish romanticism⁸ and credited with bringing Denmark into the twentieth century.⁹ At the same time, he was often viewed from afar as a conservative, responsible for blocking his country's advance into the modern age.¹⁰

The root of the confusion may be that Nielsen was at a crossroads stylistically, torn between the virtues of tradition and the attractions of modernity. On the one hand, he admired past composers, Mozart above all, and stressed the importance of studying their music. Nielsen was critical of 'modern' composers who 'begin by expressing moods, feelings, colors, and sensations instead of studying part-writing and counterpoint and so forth.'¹¹ He objected when the term was applied to himself, insisting that '[t]here is no break with tradition in my output, but rather a development of certain [fundamental] principles'. On the other hand – indeed in the very next sentence – Nielsen admitted: 'my music is perhaps to a certain degree "radical", for what does "radical" mean other than that a person goes against the opinion of the day?'¹²

7 Letter from Nielsen to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen (March 23, 1905), in Torben Schousboe (ed.), *Carl Nielsen: Dagbøger og brevvæksling med Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen* [Carl Nielsen: Diaries and Correspondence with Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen], Copenhagen 1983, 138.

8 The composer Rued Langgaard (1893-1952) accused Nielsen not only of quashing romanticism but of symbolizing 'all that was evil in Danish music.' Jan Jacoby, 'A Survey of Art Music,' Knud Ketting (ed.), *Music in Denmark*, Tønder 1987, 38.

9 Frede Schandorf Petersen, 'Status over et halvsekel' [Status Over a Half-Century], *Ny musik i Norden* [New Music in the North], Stockholm 1953, 20.

10 Nils Schjørring, 'Carl Nielsen i sin samtids musik' [Carl Nielsen and the Danish Music of His Day], *Dansk Aarvog for Musikforskning*, 6 (1972), 22.

11 ... *de begynder med at udtrykke Stemninger, Følelser, Farver og Fornemmelser istedetfor at lære Stemmeføring, Kontrapunkt o.s.v.* Letter from Nielsen to Wilhelm Stenhammar, January 27, 1911 quoted in Irmelin Eggert Møller and Torben Meyer (eds.), *Carl Nielsen: Breve* [Carl Nielsen: Letters], Copenhagen 1954, 113.

12 *Der er ikke i min Produktion Brud paa nogen Tradition, men snarere en Videreførelse af visse Principer. Min Musik er maaske til en vis Grad radikal, thi hvad vil radikal sige andet end dette, at man gaar imod en øjeblikkelig tidsbestemt Opfattelse.* 'Interview' with 'Frib' in *Politiken*, January 23, 1924, quoted in Fellow, *op.cit.*, 308.

Originality was as vital to him as a sense of history. He eschewed repetition, setting out in a new direction with each composition.

Even more than his words, obviously, Nielsen's music is the source of his conflicted legacy. He made no value distinction between the popular music of his youth and the art music he encountered later, and his compositions, like Ives's and Mahler's, were criticized for 'unresolved stylistic dichotomies' and 'naïvetés'.¹³ While Nielsen generally cultivated art and popular musical styles separately, he sometimes brought them together within a single composition as a means of creating contrast. He admired Mozart most for his 'marvelous power of combining opposing themes in a dramatic situation',¹⁴ and believed 'conflict is necessary that we may have clarity'.¹⁵ A number of analysts have noted that Nielsen's compositions frequently involve a dialectic that must ultimately be resolved. But since the genres have typically been studied in isolation,¹⁶ no one has demonstrated that he makes an audible distinction between disparate elements largely by means of opposing his art and popular styles. Nielsen felt that music is the compulsion to move forward toward a goal despite encountering obstacles. It surely comes as no surprise to find this scheme underlying his compositions, when it is a struggle Nielsen knew so intimately in his own life.

Nowhere is Nielsen's opposition of art and popular styles more effective than in *Maskarade*. Holberg's comedy of 1724 provided Nielsen with a surprisingly current dramatic framework in which to play out the tensions he was experiencing midway through his career. His different styles are juxtaposed as a means, first, of characterizing the key players in terms of social class, age and perspective, and second, of differentiating among the dramatic themes. The action centers on a single event: a masquerade. On one level, it is merely a diversion from the boredom and hardships of real life. But beyond this, it is an analogy for freedom within a restrictive society, as though one may reveal one's true self only when hiding behind a mask. And perhaps most importantly, as one character observes, 'masquerades show people the natural equity that was their situation, before one person considered it beneath his dignity

13 John Waterhouse, 'Nielsen Reconsidered,' *Musical Times*, 106 (1965), 426 and 516.

14 ... en aldeles genial Evne til at forene helt modstridende Motiver i en dramatisk Situation. 'Mozart og vor Tid' [Mozart and Our Time], in *Tilskueren* (March 1906) and in *Levende Musik*, quoted in Fellow, *op.cit.*, 81.

15 *Der maa altsaa strides, for at faa Klarhed*. Review of Thomas Laub, *Tolv Viser og Sange af danske Digtere*, in *Politiken*, April 10, 1921, and in *Levende Musik*, quoted in Fellow, *op.cit.*, 248.

16 The symphonies have principally been the subject of English studies, notably Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist, 1865-1931*, London 1952, reprint 1979; and David Fanning, *Nielsen: Symphony No. 5*, Cambridge 1997. The vocal music has been addressed almost exclusively by Danish writers. My dissertation, *The Songs of Carl Nielsen* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Rochester, 1999), is the first study in English on the subject.

to associate with another; for as long as the masquerade lasts, the servant is as good as his master.¹⁷ In this sense, the masquerade is a symbol of progress. Finally, it mirrors life's brevity, 'a shooting star,' the dancers reflect as the evening ends. 'When death calls out for the "break-up dance", every star must fall.'¹⁸

After writing a serious opera, Nielsen wanted to try something new: 'It was the element of masque comedy,' he said, 'that interested me.' He was most attracted to the character of Henrik, the wise servant (à la Figaro), because he is 'quite modern in his feelings; he even says socialistic things.'¹⁹ Nielsen surely felt an affinity for this character because of his own frustrations with the Danish society of his day. In a sense, Henrik is Nielsen's 'voice' in the opera, representing his impatience with convention. Indeed, the librettist, Vilhelm Andersen, described Henrik as 'the restless element in a society about to fall apart from sheer modesty and reserve.'²⁰ One might also imagine that for Nielsen the older bourgeois character, Jeronimus, represented the Director of the Royal Theatre, Johan Svendsen, who wielded considerable influence over Nielsen's career. Whether or not this is specifically the case, there is no question that Jeronimus personifies the status quo in general.

Dramatic Themes and Stylistic Associations

It has been said that in *Maskarade* Nielsen took part in 'an anti-romantic reaction',²¹ and indeed, the nineteenth-century Italian operatic style in vogue at the time figures only occasionally, mostly in the exchanges between the young lovers, Leander and Leonora. But the notion of modernity, ironically, is represented by dance tunes and rhythms, even though they hark back to the Classical period. The Enlightenment is, after all, the analogy for modernity in both the setting and the story, so that reference to an eighteenth-century musical style makes sense. In adopting this approach

17 *thi de forestiller Menneskene den naturlige Liighed, hvorudi de vare i Begyndelsen, førend Hofmod tog Overhaand, og et Menneske holdt sig for god at omgaaes med et andet; thi saa længe Mascaraden varer, er Tierenen lige saa god som Herren.* Ludvig Holberg, *Mascarade* (Act II, Scene 3), in F. J. Billeskov Jansen (ed.), *Ludvig Holberg Værker i 12 Bind* [Ludvig Holberg's Works in Twelve Volumes], 4, København 1969, 201 (also in the Arkiv for Dansk Litteratur www.adl.dk).

18 *Thi Livet er et stjernesku. Naar døden raaber sit Kørud, saa Jord og Himmel gjalde, maa alle Stjerner falde.* Carl Nielsen, *Maskarade*, piano score by Torben Petersen, Copenhagen 2000, 414-5.

19 *det var vel nærmest Intermediet, det maskekomedieagtige, der interesserede mig ... Og saa er han jo i Grunden ganske moderne i sine Følelser; han siger ligefrem socialistiske Ting.* 'Maskaraden' (The Masquerade), interview with Hj. Clausen, in *Politiken*, 15.10.1905, in Fellow, *op.cit.*, 55.

20 *Henrik er Uroen i et Samfund, der er ved at falde i staver af lutter Ærbarhed ...* Interview in *Tilskueren*, January 1906, quoted in Ludvig Dolleris, *Carl Nielsen: en musikografi* [Carl Nielsen: A Musicography] Odense 1949, 98.

21 *... en antiromantisk reaktion ...* Jürgen Balzer, 'Den dramatiske Musik' [The Dramatic Music], in Jürgen Balzer (ed.), *Carl Nielsen: i hundredåret for hans fødsel* [Carl Nielsen: Centenary Essays] København, 1965, 86.

already in 1905, Nielsen anticipated Strauss's Neoclassical operas. Within this pseudo-eighteenth-century framework, Nielsen drew on a variety of musical idioms. *Maskarade* runs the gamut from *opera seria* through *buffa* to folk-like songs and hymns – that is, his entire range. That Nielsen put serious and comic opera, secular and religious idioms, and art and popular styles on an equal footing, underscores Holberg's main point: the masquerade models a liberated society, in which for a brief time a person's age, social standing, and economic status are irrelevant.

The different musical styles serve specific dramatic ends. The first extreme, with complex harmonies and counterpoint, is invoked only rarely, to express powerful emotions. The other extreme, stepwise melody and homophonic texture, occurs more often, as a parallel for duty, authority, and tradition, a stance personified by the father figure, Jeronimus. The midrange of this continuum, a pseudo-Mozartian *opera buffa* style, takes center stage, the many dance tunes and rhythms representing pleasure, youth, and modernity, as well as characterizing the servant, Henrik. In this opera, then, Nielsen is setting up a musical opposition to match the dramatic conflict between modernity and tradition, an opposition that depends not so much on 'romantic' versus 'anti-romantic' idioms as on the contrast between art and popular styles.

The Popular Song Style

The most characteristic feature of Nielsen's music is 'shifting diatonicism', where from one phrase to the next the tonal center may change, through stepwise voice-leading and enharmonicism. He always thought diatonically, but did so in an 'unanchored' sort of way. 'We should try for once to get away from [the notion of] keys and yet still write in a convincingly diatonic fashion.' Nielsen said, 'That's the point; and here I feel in me a yearning for freedom.'²² Such harmonic restlessness may be viewed as a metaphor for his attempts to break free from the strictures of propriety – to assert his individuality, musically as personally, within the narrowly-defined niches of common-practice harmony and the Danish society of his day. This 'shifting diatonicism' adapts perfectly to the operatic genre as a means of maintaining a musical momentum matching that of the drama.

It is all the more startling, then, when Jeronimus brings the rapid pace and harmonic fluidity of *Maskarade*'s first Act to a grinding halt. In 'Our streets used to be peaceful',²³ he muses about the 'good old days' to the most memorable tune of the opera. (Jeronimus's Song, Act one, bb. 735-774.)²⁴ 'Our streets used to be peaceful', he complains. 'Before the watchman called out "nine o'clock", 'the lights were out in

22 *Vi skulde paa engang se at komme bort fra Tonearterne og alligevel virke diatonisk overbevisende. Dette er Sagen; og her føler jeg i mig en Stræben efter Frihed.* Letter from Nielsen to Henrik Knudsen (19.08.1918), quoted in Eggert Møller & Meyer, *op. cit.*, 133.

23 *Fordum var der Fred paa Gaden.*

24 All bar numbers refer to the piano score of *Maskarade* by Torben Petersen, *op. cit.*

the closed shops, the city was filled with the scent of evening porridge, and good people were content to go straight to bed after supper.²⁵ Jeronimus's monologue is presented in the folk-like style that characterizes Nielsen's popular songs. As he extols the virtues of a bygone age, the stepwise C major melody, homophonic texture, strophic structure, and syllabic text-setting underscore the temporal gulf between that time and the present day. This folk-like style is out of place, just as Jeronimus feels estranged from a society that no longer espouses his values.

In the song's fourth phrase, melody and accompaniment suddenly grow more active through the addition of embellishments and pizzicato eighth notes. This phrase is more like eighteenth-century art music than folksong. Meanwhile, Jeronimus turns from describing the habits of dutiful people to pleasures they wisely eschewed, whether drinking tea, eating sweets, carousing with friends or – worst of all – attending a masquerade. In enlivening the musical setting at just this moment, Nielsen responded to the shift in Jeronimus's focus from matters of duty to pleasure. While this sort of stylistic juxtaposition is typical of his symphonies, it is rare in Nielsen's songs. Undoubtedly, the motivation here was dramatic. This fleeting stylistic contrast is but a hint of the broader opposition between popular and art music styles played out over the entire opera.

In addition to a popular song style, hymn tunes sometimes convey a sense of authority. An example occurs when the servant, Arv, stands guard before Jeronimus's house, so that his master's son, Leander, cannot leave to attend the evening's masquerade. The night watchman passes by, singing a hymn that Arv takes up to calm his nerves. The text has special significance to the story's central theme. It is a twilight reflection on life, an admonition to embrace traditional values: 'carry out your duty, do penance, be good-hearted, and use your time wisely.' Meanwhile, dusk is also the start of the masquerade – day passes into night, and the old rules give way to the new.

The hymn is in B major, but when Arv sings, it is transposed up a sixth and altered slightly, as though his nervousness raises the pitch and he cannot quite get it right. Indeed, at the words 'no harm will befall a person who does good',²⁶ he falters, as does the harmonic progression, and finally throws over the entire enterprise for a song about the pleasures of food and women. A dance-like tune picks up where the hymn leaves off, and the harmony makes its way around the circle of fifths to A major. (Arv's Hymn and Dance-like Tune, Act two, bb. 97-103 and 107 ff., respectively.) The listener is reminded of the conflict between duty and pleasure when, as Arv sings this comic aria, snippets of the hymn tune intervene like flashes of conscience. This tension recurs when the Watchman rings in the next hour (*Ex. 1*). 'It is nine o'clock,'

25 *Fordum var der Fred paa Gaden førend Vægtren raabte ni. Slukt var Lyset, lukt var Laden, Aftengrøden røg i Staden, Godtfolk gik fra Aftensmaden fredeligt i Hi.*

26 *Mørkets Magter kan ej Skade den der vil og gør det Gode.*

he says, 'time that every man, woman and child was in bed ... The Lord gives you the freedom of choice; be wise and clever, beware of light and fire.' Meanwhile, behind the hymn tune, a pizzicato bass line sneaks in, building gradually into a lively dance in E major that, without a word, counsels otherwise.

938 *ad lib.* **Andante sostenuto** (♩ = 60)
(synger) (singt)

VÆGT. *Hov! Væg-ter, Klok-ken-er sla-gen ni! Der - som I vil*
Hörn, ihr Leut', hört! Es hat neun ge - schla - gen! Ta - ges - last ist

940

VÆGT. *Ti - den vi - de Hus - bond, Mad - mor, Pi - ger, Dren - ge,*
nun zu En - de. Va - ter, Mut - ter, Mäd - chen, Bu - be,

943 (♩ = 60) (man hører ganske svagt Dansemusikken inde i Komediehuset)
(Die Tanzmusik ertönt ganz leise aus dem Komödienhaus.)

VÆGT. *da er det nu paa de Ti - de,*
ge - het nun zu Bett be - hen - de

Allegro (♩ = 120)
(Orkester bag Scenen) (Orchester hinter der Bühne)

945

VÆGT. *at I føj - - er*
in der trau - - lich

946

VÆGT.

Jer war - - - til men Seng. Stu - - - be.

947

VÆGT.

Nu be - - - fal Jer
Møg' der der Him - - - mel'

948

VÆGT.

Her ren euch fri, vær nu
mit euch sein, daß euch

949

VÆGT.

klog og snild, vogt Jer
nichts ge - - - bricht. Feu - - - er

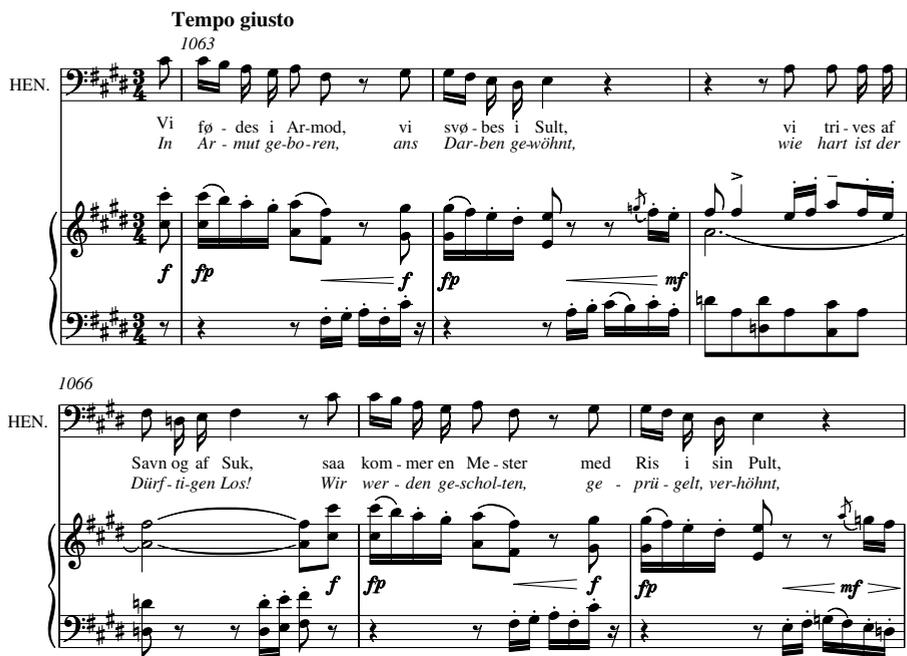
Ex. 1: *The Watchman's Hymn*, Act two, bb. 939-949.

The Art Music Style

Nielsen moves further along the stylistic continuum toward art music, as the subject deepens to human oppression in the aria ‘We’re born into poverty’²⁷ (Ex. 2) Henrik, Leander’s valet, speaks for Holberg, bemoaning the miserable lives servants are destined to suffer simply for having been born into the wrong class. The aria begins in C-sharp minor, is harmonically adventurous, has the free character of an extemporized oration, and an elaborate accompaniment. The most striking difference from the first examples is that it does not have a memorable tune.

But then, at the mention of the masquerade, everything changes. C-sharp minor brightens to major and leads to F-sharp, Henrik raises his voice in celebration rather than anger, and the accompaniment transforms into ‘gaily-colored costumes whirling by’.²⁸ (bb. 1079-1103.) This is pure dance music, representing what the masquerade offers that society does not: freedom for all its members. The bass line flits as quickly as the dancers from one harmony to the next, eventually cadencing in E, the relative major of the original tonic. At long last a tuneful melody soars above the dancing – Henrik’s invitation to come out of the cold, inside where ‘Nød og Fortræd’ (need and misfortune) are forgotten.

Tempo giusto
1063

HEN. 

1066

HEN. 

Ex. 2: Henrik’s Aria, Act. 1, bb. 1063-1068.

27 Vi fødes i Armod

28 Da hvirvler det brogede Masketog

In the examples thus far, Nielsen has run the stylistic gamut from folk-like song to art music, both extremes transforming into eighteenth-century dance music, a metaphor for trading the heavy garments of one's social position for the easy anonymity of a mask.

Nielsen draws on art music to characterize the young lovers, Leander and Leonora. (Act three, bb. 415-436) Leander's declaration of love is reminiscent of Nielsen's symphonies in its contrapuntal orientation and quixotic tonal scheme. (*Ex. 3*) The tonic, G-flat, is left for a string of harmonies spanning a mere twenty measures. Poised atop this perplexing parade of keys is a melody made memorable precisely because of the fluid harmonic support. Leander's statement, then, is a prime example of Nielsen's shifting diatonicism, and his words prove a useful tool in separating the wheat from the chaff in this dense crop of keys.

The first phrase is lyrical due to the expressive suspensions that embellish the underlying circle-of-fifths sequence. This is one of Nielsen's favorite means of creating a seamless musical surface, and here illustrates the object of Leander's admiration, the cascade of flowers adorning Leonora's gown. The sequence may be reduced to a series of parallel tenths which descend by step to E-flat before breaking off in the fourth measure.

A sudden change in texture and key interrupts the series. Leander is having difficulty expressing his feelings and hesitates, saying, 'Let the flowers on your dress say with their kisses what I do not dare.'²⁹ Imitation, B-flat major harmony, and triplet figuration accompany these words, as though setting out in a new direction. But this gesture is cut short in a return to E-flat harmony, now functioning as II within a C-sharp cadence (bb. 422-423), and the series of descending tenths is picked up again, falling another step. In the text, Leander resumes his amorous narrative, finally addressing Leonora directly. The single B-flat major phrase, then, is an aside in both text and music.

Leander's confession of love leads next from C-sharp major to F-sharp minor, suggesting a continuation of the aborted circle-of-fifths pattern. Instead, there is yet another unexpected turn, this time toward A minor (bb. 426 ff). Just as inexplicably, F-sharp is picked up again a few measures later, and continues by fifth to B minor (bb. 430 ff). Such a fractured harmonic approach is perplexing, but once again, Leander's words provide an explanation. When the progression leads away from C-sharp major to A minor, he shifts his focus from the masquerade inside to the landscape outside, where his 'star of love burns high in the heavens.'³⁰ Then, when he turns back, saying, 'but – in here I am anxious; I don't even know your name, a way to find you amidst

29 *lad dem med deres Kysse sige, hvad jeg ej vover ...*

30 *min Elskovsstjerne brænder.*

415

LEAN.

U - lig - ne - li - ge Pi - ge, mens dis - se Blom - ster drys - se og
 Ach, herr - lich - ste der Fe - en, wenn die - se hol - den Ro - sen mit

f dim. *dim.* 10 10 10

G^b:

417

LEAN.

om dit ly - se Le - gem hen-rykt gli - de, lad dem med
 ih-rem Duft be - rau - schend dich um - we - hen, laß Eins dir

10 10 10 *pp* *pp*

E^b B^b

420

LEAN.

de - res Kys - se si - ge, hvad jeg ej vo - ver: O, maa jeg
 durch ihr Ko - sen sa - gen, laß dir ge - ste - hen: Ich lie - be,

molto espressivo

ii V

423

LEAN.

el - ske dig, du bli - - de Ro - se ved Vin - ter -
 lie - be dich, du zar - - te Ro - se, nur dich al -

p

D^b/C[#]: I F[#]m

426

LEAN.

ti - de. Der - u - de un - der Him - len min El - skovs stjer-ne
 lei - ne! Am Him - mel hoch das Feu - er des Sterns der Lie - be

f *molto dim.*

Am

430

LEAN.

bræn - der. Her æng - stes jeg og ken - der end ej dit Navn, der
 bren - net, hier bëbt mein Herz und ken - net den Na - men nicht, der

mp

F#m Em

433

LEAN.

skil - ler dig fra Vrim - len. Hvad hed - der du, o
 mir vor al - lem teu - er. Wie hei - ðest du, o

f *dim.*

436

LEAN.

Min Her - re, jeg er døbt E - le - o - no - ra. I
 Mein Herr, mein Na - me ist E - le - o - no - ra. Ach,

Flo - ra?
 Flo - ra?

rall. *pp* *dim.*

rall.

Ex. 3: Leander's declaration of love, Act 3, bb. 415-438.

the crowd,³¹ the tonal thread is picked up again. The F-sharp and B minor harmonies connect back to C-sharp in another ii-V-i progression, and the parallel-tenth pattern falls yet another step. (Fig. 1). For the second time in a matter of measures, Nielsen has underscored a dramatic aside with a musical detour. It is several measures before B minor follows suit, functioning as ii in one final cadence. Leander anxiously awaits Leonora's response, and it is only once she tells him her name that the harmonic tension dissipates, and the ii-V-I cadence in A is realized. This arrival continues not only the circle-of-fifths sequence, but also the pattern of descending parallel tenths. (Fig. 2).

Such musico-poetic asides occur throughout Nielsen's texted compositions, the words providing a clue to the underlying tonal scheme. But even in the instrumental works, detecting such patterns is crucial to making sense of Nielsen's shifting diatonicism. In his first symphony, for instance, sonata form provides a sort of 'text' whose familiar plan is interrupted and interpolated, thereby thwarting the listener's expectations. Nielsen's aim in disrupting such patterns is surely to infuse them with new expressive power.

415 musical aside 423 musical aside 431

D^b: ii V I Bm: ii V V I

FIG. 1: *Leander's Declaration of Love*, voice-leading sketch of Act 3, bb. 418-431.

D^b: ii V I Bm: ii V A: ii V I

FIG. 2: *Leander's Declaration of Love*, voice-leading sketch of Act 3, bb. 422-439.

31 Her ængstes jeg og kender end ej dit Navn, der skiller dig fra Vrimslen.

Dramatic Themes and Tonal Associations

While analysts have mentioned motivic associations in this opera,³² no one has explored the notion of associative tonality. Yet if Nielsen were making connections of the one kind, he would surely make them of the other, particularly with his reputation as an organicist and his admiration for Wagner's music.³³ Nielsen's reverence for his chosen authors is also well established, so it is likely he would use every means possible to give musical dimension to the drama's characters and themes. In fact, there are several tonal associations in *Maskarade* involving specific people, dramatic themes, and musical styles.

The centrality of the dance music is underscored by the fact that it is typically in A major, the key in which the opera ends, or its dominant. Both Acts I and II close in E major, suggesting that A is a tonal goal – anticipated like the masquerade itself – and attained only after winning out against the competition. More than a diversion, the masked ball is a metaphor for modernity, youth, and pleasure-seeking, ideals Henrik espouses. By extension, A major and its dominant are associated not only with dance music throughout the opera, but also with these themes. Henrik's aria, for example, ranges from the shackles of poverty to the freedom of masquerading, stylistically from romantic music to eighteenth-century dance, and tonally from C minor to E major. In Arv's interaction with the Watchman, food and women, A and E major, and dance-like tunes and rhythms are collective temptations from the virtuous behavior the Watchman exhorts.

Likewise, C major and folk-like song are associated with tradition, authority and duty, embodied by Jeronimus.³⁴ This connection is established in his folk-like song and figures throughout until, at the masquerade, it is eclipsed by A major and its associations. Jeronimus's viewpoint has been progressively marginalized, the gauntlet passed from one generation to the next. The opera as a whole, then, turns on the conflict between modernity and tradition, played out in parallel dramatic and musical realms (Fig. 3).

32 Dolleris, *op.cit.*, in particular, comes to mind.

33 Nielsen's diary from 1890 to 1891, recounting his travels throughout Germany, is full of praise for Wagner's music, even if his enthusiasm was to wane with age; see Schousboe *op. cit.*, 11-46. Regarding associative tonality in Wagner's music see, for example, Robert Bailey (ed.), *Richard Wagner: Prelude and Transfiguration from Tristan and Isolde: A Norton Critical Score*, London 1985, 13-146; and 'The Structure of the Ring and its Evolution', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 1/1 (July 1977), 48-61.

34 C major obviously has this association in other operas as well, for example, Verdi's *Falstaff* (with which, through performances at the Royal Theater during the 1890s, Nielsen was well acquainted) and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Nielsen's favourite among Wagner's operas).

MODERNITY, youth, pleasure	v.	TRADITION, authority, duty
Eighteenth-century dance music		Popular song and hymn
Key of A major		Key of C major
Henrik (servant)		Jeronimus (master)

FIG. 3: *Maskarade's Central Conflict.*

This central tension is flanked by another pair of themes which Nielsen has again matched with specific keys and musical styles.

The dramatic theme most closely linked to the masquerade is young love. Therefore, Nielsen gives it the associative tonality of F, based on the same scale as A major, making it possible to move freely from one to the other as the situation demands. The connection is made at the very beginning, when Leander, who personifies love, tells Henrik about Leonora. Whenever romance is the focus, the tonality returns to F and the style to nineteenth-century art music. In the lovers's first duet, for example, C-sharp gives way to F major as their conversation grows more intimate. Leander's romantic aria, discussed above, is in the enharmonic key of G-flat major.

The fourth theme is death, whose dramatic metaphor is the unmasking that ends the evening. The Masquerade Master signals this final ritual with a steady drum-beat against an E-flat minor background, and says: 'Throw your masks [into the urn], return to ashes and dust!'³⁵ By contrast, the actual unmasking has the soothing character of a lullaby, with repeated melodic fragments, pedal fifth, and E-flat major tonality (Act 3, bb. 1784-1791). The death imagery could scarcely be clearer.

With this final piece in place, a symmetrical tonal plan emerges that spans the stylistic continuum described above, and parallels the dramatic themes (Fig. 4).

Young love	MODERNITY, youth, pleasure	TRADITION, authority, duty	Death, unmasking
19th-century art music	18th-century dance music	Popular song and hymn	Lullaby
F/G ^b (6 sharps/6 flats)	A major (3 sharps)	C major (0 sharps/0 flats)	E ^b (3 flats)
Leander (son)	Henrik (servant)	Jeronimus (master/father)	Masquerade master

FIG. 4: *Maskarade's Symmetrical Musical and Dramatic Plan.*

35 *Kast jer Maske og bliv atter Støv og Aske!* Just before the premiere, Nielsen cut measures 1773 to 1781, and these words were added in the process. He observed the cut and retained these words in all subsequent performances and scores of *Maskarade* in which he was involved. But since the goal of the *Carl Nielsen Edition* was to reproduce the opera in its entirety (Series I/1-3, xxvii), the missing measures have been restored and these words therefore appear only in the Appendix, no. 3.24 (piano score, 435).

The central tension between modernity and tradition broadens to youth and old age, just as the minor third between A and C extends to a diminished-seventh structure. This symmetrical scheme elegantly realizes the masquerade's utopian blurring of class distinctions in a musical sphere; the playing field is level, no one key is favored, just as 'the masquerade implicitly challenge[s] those hierarchical valuations built into the system of cultural oppositions.'³⁶ That the various musical styles align with the equi-spaced harmonies also reflects Nielsen's natural disinclination to privilege one style over any other.

The themes on the right go hand-in-hand, as do those on the left, the relative-key relationship underscoring the dramatic connection. By the same token, the themes separated by a tritone are diametrically opposed. The Dionysian attitude toward life embraced by young love is incompatible with the Apollonian view represented by tradition, authority and duty, just as the characters who personify these themes are at odds. Their keys are as distant as possible, and the music that characterizes them, at opposite ends of Nielsen's stylistic spectrum. The same goes for the other tritone relationship, A and E-flat. Modernity, youth and pleasure are on one side of possibility while death is on the other, dance music is lively and a lullaby calm, and putting on and taking off a costume are inverse gestures that frame the masquerade. Yet even as these keys are opposed, they act as mediators between the C and F major extremes, just as the polarized images they represent ultimately make moot the differences between the feuding generations and classes. Everyone – young or old, rich or poor – must don a mask and enter the masquerade (that is, experience life) and, at the end of the evening, has no choice but to unmask (to suffer death).

Thus, in *Maskarade* as in his symphonies, Nielsen indulged his predilection for symmetrical tonal schemes and conflict-resolution scenarios. Analysts have frequently posited dramatic motivations for such organic schemes in his instrumental works, but in his vocal music, such artifice is unnecessary. Nielsen is so attuned to his chosen authors that one need only examine the literary model to discover the source of both drama and unity in his compositions. In *Maskarade*, Nielsen underscored Holberg's dramatic themes and characters with appropriate musical styles drawn from the entire range of his compositional personae, fusing this musico-dramatic continuum with a symmetrical key scheme.

Nielsen spoke through the opera's most modern character, Henrik, expressing impatience with convention and longing to take a new artistic path, his personal struggle represented musically in the contrast between art and popular styles. Looking beyond *Maskarade*, it seems that in playing out the conflict here, Nielsen resolved

36 Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*, Stanford, CA 1986, 79.

it. From this critical juncture, he went on to embrace extremes with equal enthusiasm. Awareness of the tensions he was experiencing in both his life and music midway through his career is crucial to coming to terms with the diversity both among and within his compositions. Such knowledge illumines Nielsen's decision to compose songs alongside symphonies, to experiment with Renaissance motets, Baroque organ preludes, and atonality in the twilight of his life, to entwine a folk-like melody with complex counterpoint in the Third Symphony, to create competition between tonal centers in the Fourth, and instruments in the Sixth, and to pit a drummer gone completely berserk against an apothotic folk-like tune in the Fifth. Jonathan Kramer goes so far as to call Nielsen 'prophetic' in this regard, and to describe his music in post-modernist terms, saying it 'revels in eclecticism', and 'does not respect history but rather believes that all kinds of music are part of the here and now.'³⁷ Ironically, in not taking a single artistic path, Nielsen ultimately found his way.

Should we return to something old, then? Absolutely not. We should think in terms of neither old nor new ... We wear the glorious badge of freedom and independence. And should our path take us past our fathers's houses, perhaps one fine day we will admit that they wanted what we want, and we the same as they, but we failed to understand that the simplest is the most difficult, the universal the most lasting, and the straight the strongest, like the pillars that support the dome.

– Carl Nielsen, 1925³⁸

37 Jonathan Kramer, 'Unity and Disunity in Nielsen's Sixth Symphony,' in Mina Miller, *op.cit.*, 293-4.

38 *Er det da noget gammelt, vi skal vende tilbage til? Nej, paa ingen Maaade. Vi skal overhovedet ikke regne hverken med gammelt eller nyt ... Vi har altsaa Frihedens og Frivillighedens herlige Mærke, og falder vor Vej forbi vore Fædres Boliger, indrømmer vi maaske en skønne Dag, at de vilde det samme som vi, og vi som de, men vi kunde blot ikke forstaa, at det simpleste er det vanskeligste, det almene det varigste, det lige det stærkeste som Søjler, der bærer en Kuppel.* 'Tidens Fylde', (1925) in *Levende Musik*, quoted in Fellow, *op. cit.*, 344.

A B S T R A C T

Although Carl Nielsen's international reputation rests on his symphonies, in Denmark he is equally beloved for his songs. Over the course of his life, the former increased in complexity as the latter grew more folk-like, so that Nielsen developed into a Janus-faced composer, a master of both art and popular styles. These genres typically have been studied in isolation so that, though many scholars note that Nielsen's music is full of contrast, few show that this depends on the opposition of two specific styles. Nor has a parallel been drawn between this musical tension and the conflicts Nielsen faced in his personal life, not the least of which was the insidious Law of Jante ("Thou shalt not believe thou art something") that has plagued many a nationalist artist.

Nowhere is Nielsen's opposition of art and popular styles more effective than in *Maskarade* (1904-1906), arguably the Danes's favorite among his compositions, in which the two styles represent conflicting dramatic themes and serve to distinguish between the characters. Ludvig Holberg's eighteenth-century comedy provided Nielsen with a particularly apt and surprisingly current dramatic framework in which to play out the musical and personal tensions he experienced midway through his career. Nielsen's opera is an interdependent literary-musical statement in which he underscored the dramatic themes and characterized the main roles with appropriate musical styles drawn from the entire range of his compositional personae. The masked ball's utopian blurring of class distinctions is modeled musically in the symmetrical key scheme that fuses this musico-dramatic continuum.