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## STEPS TO MODERNISM

### Carl Nielsen's String Quartets

By Friedhelm Krummacher

That the four string quartets Nielsen published in his lifetime have until now not been a focus for research may seem at first sight comprehensible. For the first three works were already composed before 1900; only the last quartet comes later. So if it is only this single quartet that can count as representative of the mature phase in the composer's output, then the rest are all the easier to dismiss as mere early works.<sup>1</sup> But it is quite another matter if we ask what steps Nielsen needed to take in his development in order to find his voice. For then the string quartets acquire a different significance, since they appear in his early output more regularly than any other comparable genre. And their importance increases still further if we include the numerous quartet movements that precede the printed works and that for the most part remain unpublished.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly a few short remarks on these are necessary, before the works that follow can be more precisely characterised. Only then can we judge the significance of the step represented by the last quartet, the only one Nielsen was able to publish in Leipzig, enabling it to achieve broader dissemination.

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1 An overview is provided by Charles M. Joseph, 'Structural Pacing in the Nielsen String Quartets', Mina F. Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*, London 1974, 460-488; based on proportional statistics of the lengths of movements and sections, Joseph discusses formal contents rather than structural criteria. See also Povl Hamburger, 'Orchestral Works and Chamber Music', Jürgen Balzer (ed.), *Carl Nielsen: Centenary Essays*, London 1965, 19-46; Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*, London 1952, 143-152; Friedhelm Krummacher, 'Nationaler Ton und Gattungstradition. Über Streichquartette von Nielsen und Stenhammar', Robert Bohn and Michael Engelbrecht (eds.), *Weltgeltung und Regionalität. Nordeuropa um 1900*, (Studia septemtrionalia, 1, Frankfurt am Main 1992, 213-239, reprinted in Siegfried Oechsle et al (eds.), *Musik im Norden: Abhandlungen zur skandinavischen und norddeutschen Musikgeschichte*, Kassel 1996, 160-187.

2 An exception are two movements, which are preserved in an arrangement for string orchestra (see. fn.17). For copies of materials and many points of information my warmest thanks go to Lisbeth Ahlgren Jensen and Niels Krabbe. These quartet movements will be published by the Carl Nielsen Edition in a future volume, *Juvenilia, Addenda, and Corrigenda*.

### Premises in Early Studies

In later life Nielsen thought he remembered that a String Quartet in F major was the first work of his to have been publicly performed in Copenhagen (in 1888).<sup>3</sup> However, it has since been shown that he was wrong in this, since his debut took place a year earlier with two movements for string orchestra, heard on 17 September 1887 in a Tivoli Concert.<sup>4</sup> These in turn went back to two early movements for string quartet, which presumably on account of this performance were revised and supplied with an additional part for double bass. Just as this date tells us little about when the original quartet movements were composed, so the chronology of all the remaining early movements remains uncertain. In the autograph manuscripts none of them are dated, and they are hardly mentioned in Nielsen's letters and diaries, so that we can at best make guesses as to the order of succession. In order not to prejudge their chronology, I shall name only the most important sources, with tonality and metre, in the order of their catalogue entries, before a brief discussion of each.<sup>5</sup>

- CNS 32 *Allegro* F major 6/8 – *Finale. Allegro molto* F-major, 2/2  
 CNS 33 *Andante sostenuto* F sharp minor 3/4  
 CNS 34 *Andante tranquillamento* B flat major 3/4; *Menuetto* G minor – *Trio* B flat major 3/4 (also CNS 35)  
 CNS 36 *Scherzo* D minor 6/8 – *Trio* B flat major 2/4  
 CNS 37 *Quartetto No. 1* D minor: *Allegro vivace*, 4/4; *Andante* D minor, 2/4; *Scherzo Allegro* D major 3/4 – *Trio* G minor 3/4; *Finale Allegro molto*, 6/8  
 CNS 39d *Allegro* G minor 4/4<sup>6</sup>  
 CNS 42 *Allegro moderato* F major 3/4 'Studie efter Beethoven' [Study after Beethoven, Op. 18 No. 1, first movement]<sup>7</sup>

3 Torben Schousboe (ed.), *Carl Nielsen: Dagbøger og brevveksling med Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen*, Copenhagen 1983, vol. 1, 324 (25. 1. 1912) and 342 (25.1. 1913); Irmelin Eggert Møller & Torben Meyer (eds.), *Carl Niensens Breve*, Copenhagen 1954, 130 f. (20.1. 1913).

4 Cf. *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 1998, II/7, (eds.) Peter Hauge and Thomas Michelsen, Preface, xi.

5 Not taken into account are shorter sketches, cf. Birgit Bjørnum and Klaus Møllerhøj, *Carl Niensens Samling: Katalog over komponistens musikhåndskrifter i Det kongelige Bibliotek*, Copenhagen 1992, 42 f., 47, 50 and 212 f. (quoted as CNS). On the other hand the work list by Dan Fog, *Carl Nielsen, Kompositioner: En Bibliografi*, Copenhagen, 1965, 5-7, 11 and 14, turns out to be not wholly dependable. A first survey of the repertoire was made by Helge Teglgård Hansen, 'Carl Nielsen's utrykte satser for strygekvartet', *Specialeopgave*, Aarhus 1986 (unpublished typescript), where the themes and forms of the movements are described in some detail. Instead of structural and genre-historical characteristics, however, he takes on the tricky task of identifying historical antecedents in isolated details of melody, rhythm and harmony.

6 In CNS, 45, erroneously described as a sketch for Op. 13.

7 In *ibid.*, 47, the indication for CNS 42a is: 'Quartet hoven [!] Op. 18, Nr. 1'.

It is mainly a question of individual movements; only the D minor work, CNS 37, constitutes a four-movement string quartet. It is therefore natural to connect with it a statement that Nielsen in his youth composed two quartets in D minor and F major.<sup>8</sup> This certainly fits with the fact that this work is not only unusually brief but also relatively simple in its construction. Over tonic-dominant alternation the main theme of the first movement begins with two-bar groups, which are soon shortened to one-bar sequences (Ex. 1). The repetition of this eight-bar phrase is followed by a transition, which goes back at the most indirectly to the germ of the main theme and breaks off on the dominant, whereupon the second subject enters in the relative major (from b. 33). Within the themes the other parts have to subordinate themselves to the top voice, and this also applies to the connecting sections, which show only a slight inclination towards thematic work. And accordingly the rudimentary development section (bb. 61<sup>II</sup>-78) contents itself with transposed thematic references and free spinning-out, in which the trill indicating the head-motif wanders through the parts just once. In the three-part Andante, which sticks to the tonic and consists of only 52 bars, the thematic substance is distributed to the outer voices, and once again the remaining parts only have an accompanimental function in the texture. Just as simple is the impression given by the harmony in the Scherzo, which switches to the tonic major, while the Trio moves to G minor. The finale is a small rondo with only three refrains; however, along with the restricted harmonic reach, the strictly regulated phrasing is as striking as in the other movements, the groups of bars being marked off by clear caesurae, not

Allegro vivace

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of Nielsen's String Quartet in D minor (CNS 37), measures 1-8. The score is for Violino 1, Violino 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked 'Allegro vivace'. The music features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings include *p*, *f*, and *ff*. A piano solo section is indicated in the final measure with the word 'solo' and 'dim.' markings.

Ex. 1: String Quartet in D minor (CNS 37), first movement, *Allegro vivace*, bb. 1-8

8 Cf. Fog, *op. cit.*, 5.

linked as in those movements. In this respect the work suggests the Haydn lineage, represented already before 1800 by composers such as Leopold Kozeluch, Franz Anton Hoffmeister or Ignaz Pleyel.<sup>9</sup>

Quite distinct from this quartet, which is all too obviously a student work, are two movements in F major (CNS 32), which perhaps functioned as the outer movements of the F major Quartet whose performance on 25 January 1888 – as mentioned above – Nielsen would remember much later.<sup>10</sup> The antecedent and consequent phrases of the main theme in the first movement are linked not only by their 16-bar breadth but also by the swinging melodic line, whose shape is varied and extended in the consequent (Ex. 2a). Its contours are reflected both in the lower parts and in the transition, which makes some modulatory exploration before the antecedent returns (bb. 33-41). While the bar-groups are not unskilfully linked together, the succeeding fugato, which after three entries even appears in diminution (bb. 41-76), admittedly no longer refers back to the first subject, whose cantabile character is only maintained by the contrapuntal voices. Balancing this, the second subject, which again takes up the cantabile of the first, is framed by an accompaniment which for its part enters as an inversion

The image displays a musical score for the first system of 'Allegro in F major (CNS 32), bb. 1-14'. The score is written for a string quartet, with four staves: Violino 1, Violino 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 3/4 time and F major. The first system (bars 1-6) shows the beginning of the piece with a 'V' marking above the first violin staff. The second system (bars 7-14) continues the piece, featuring dynamic markings such as 'f' and 'ff'.

Ex. 2a: *Allegro in F major (CNS 32)*, bb. 1-14

9 Cf. Teglgård Hansen, *op. cit.*, 15-26. On the genre-historical context see Friedhelm Krummacher, *Das Streichquartett (= Handbuch der musikalischen Gattungen, Bd. 6), Teilband 1, Von Haydn bis Schubert*, Laaber 2001, 86-99; on Nielsen's works: *ibid.*, Teilband 2, *Von Mendelssohn bis zur Gegenwart*, 124 ff.

10 Teglgård Hansen, *op. cit.*, 27-47. See also Emilie Demant Hatt, *Foraarsbølger. Erindringer om Carl Nielsen [Torrents of Spring. Reminiscences of Carl Nielsen]*. Edited by John Fellow, Copenhagen 2002, 108.

of the fugato theme’s falling line (bb. 74 ff.). And as the continuation passes through numerous sequential variants of this material, the 144 bars of the exposition alone surpass the entire first movement of the D minor Quartet. The development section begins with fragments of the previous accompanying figures in a reduced number of voices and only then takes up the beginning of the first subject. Starting from B flat minor it then combines admittedly only curtailed thematic elements of the outer parts with hammering repeated notes in the middle parts. Without any conspicuous skill it finally reaches the dominant in wide-ranging arpeggios in both violins over the last thematic fragments in the bass register. The accompanying note repetitions are carried over into the somewhat expanded recapitulation, which otherwise largely corresponds to the exposition, until the brief *presto* Coda concludes the movement effectively.

The finale is another sonata-form movement, notated *alla breve*, without, however, the slightest trace of historical regression, as the beginning of the first subject clearly shows. For over running quavers in the bass register the upper parts form a scalar rising sequence, whose line is broken up by rests and at the same time in its anacrusis quavers establishes the driving impulse, until the top note moves over into swinging broken chords in the opposite, falling, direction (*Ex. 2b*). This model is extended in the working-out, while the transition (from b. 17) in its move to the neapolitan D flat major only pairs the anacruses with scales and moves stepwise into downbeat statement (bb. 17-22). In its downbeat form the second subject is then able to enter in quite regular fashion on the dominant. As modestly – and with the most straightforward accompaniment –

FINALE  
Allegro molto

The image shows a musical score for the finale of Nielsen's String Quartet No. 32. The title is 'FINALE Allegro molto'. The score is for Violino 1, Violino 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The key signature is one flat (F major). The time signature is alla breve. The score shows the first subject with a driving impulse in the bass register and a scalar rising sequence in the upper parts. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 5. The first system contains measures 1-4, and the second system contains measures 5-9. The score is written in a standard musical notation with stems and beams for the strings, and a grand staff for the piano accompaniment.

Ex. 2b: *Finale. Allegro moderato* in F major (CNS 32). bb. 1-9

as this theme for quite some time handles the basic harmonic functions (not avoiding parallel fifths in b. 85), just as surprising is the effect thereafter of a mediant excursion into A flat major (bb. 105-16). All the same, it proceeds from the thematic germ of the second subject, until finally the concluding thematic group takes up the impulse of the first subject anew. The development section is not especially ambitious, even if it does largely draw on the anacrusis rhythms of the first subject. Nonetheless at this point the harmonic excursions of the exposition here reveal that they are not without consequence, in that the movement shifts between B flat minor and D flat major and returns via a German sixth resolution to the C major dominant (bb. 161-84). Similarly the otherwise normative recapitulation expands the corresponding passage in the exposition, in so far as D flat major is now understood enharmonically as C sharp minor (b.301), from which the way back to C major passes through E major to E minor.

Therefore there is an unmistakable attempt to link harmonic extension with thematic support, in a way that was not possible in the D minor Quartet. Even if measured by Nielsen's later works, the two F major movements still give the impression of apprentice pieces, their expanded dimensions indicating a considerable advance, which is also visible in the linking of paragraphs, the more extensive thematic structure, the motivic working, and the harmonic strategies. All this presupposes a later phase of genre history, in which the ideal of flowing songfulness was established, as represented by the song-style in the early works of Schubert or Mendelssohn. Accordingly if the four-movement work did appear earlier, then it may be dated to the beginning of Nielsen's student years after 1882. But if the F major movements are to be dated later, it cannot be ruled out that they should be considered parts of that F major Quartet that was first performed in 1888.

In that case the remaining individual movements would have to be dated to the intervening years, among which the separately surviving Allegro moderato in F major (CNS 42) stands out. For we could see in it almost a pendant to the previously mentioned F major first movement, were it not explicitly titled 'Study after Beethoven'.<sup>11</sup> The formal and harmonic layout both take Beethoven's Quartet, Op. 18 No. 1 as a model, to which this study is indebted, with quite independent material. The procedure may be most appropriately described in the words that Nielsen himself chose in his advice to his Stockholm colleague Bror Beckman, whose songs he found to be not sufficiently firm and sure in their working-out<sup>12</sup>:

...do a lot of practice in counterpoint and modulation; they will cleanse, ripen and consolidate your talent. And once you have tackled larger forms, you will

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<sup>11</sup> As a mere study, the movement was not discussed at all by Teglgård Hansen.

<sup>12</sup> *fast og sikker i Udarbejdelsen.*

Allegro moderato

Violino 1  
Violino 2  
Viola  
Violoncello

8  
f  
p  
cre - scen -

16  
f  
pp  
do  
do  
do  
do

Ex. 3a: *Allegro moderato in F major (CNS 42, Study after Beethoven), bb. 1-23*

find things easier in the smaller ones. For example, as an exercise write a quartet just like the first Allegro of Beethoven's Op. 18 No. 1: the same number of bars, the same modulations and the same working-out all the way through. You'll see; it'll be worth it.<sup>13</sup>

In just this way Nielsen's own study follows Beethoven's formal model down to the details of bar-groups, paragraphing, harmonic disposition and cadences, as a detailed comparison would reveal. The fact that his movement takes 275 bars as against Beethoven's 313 is entirely due to the more concise conclusion. While Beethoven's recapitulation after a general pause in b. 249 is further expanded (bb. 250-73) before the Coda

13 Øv Dig meget i Kontrapunkt og Modulation, det vil rense, modne og fæstne Dit Talent. Og tag saa engang fat paa større Former saa har Du lettere ved de mindre. Skriv f. Expl. til Studium en Kwartet ganske som Beethowens Op. 18 Nr. 1 1'ste Allegro. Samme Antal Takter, samme Modulationer og samme Udarbejdelse helt igjennem. Du skal se, det lønner sig. Møller & Meyer, op. cit., 38 (23. 5. 1897).

Violino 1  
Violino 2  
Viola  
Violoncello

10

*p* *f* *p* *cresc.* *p*

Ex. 3b: Beethoven, Op. 18 No. 1, first movement, b. 1-20

begins (bb. 274-313), Nielsen's study has a four-bar continuation (bb. 249-53) followed by a much shorter Coda (bb. 254-75). All the more striking, however, are the differences in thematic substance, which are especially significant in the first subject. With Beethoven the first subject is put together from variants of a two-bar motivic cell, characterised by a stylised turn-figure, separated by rests in the opening bars, and recurring more than a hundred times (Ex. 3b). By contrast Nielsen's first subject certainly begins with two two-bar phrases, but these are linked without rests and are completed by a songful line before the analogously constructed consequent phrase (Ex. 3a). Just as it is impossible to extract a motivic cell from this, so the remaining sections are seamlessly grafted on. As opposed to Beethoven's fragile second subject, which does not even play a part in his development section, Nielsen's again consists of groups of the same length. Its rests, however, are once again bridged over by the contrapuntal parts, while the energetically dotted figurations of the following transition are carried over into the concluding group. Although these premises do not allow for any motivic condensing in the Beethoven manner, the development section, with its tripartite fugato (bb. 129-46) still seeks to follow the Beethoven model (bb. 129-44) and to condense into a canon at the end, admittedly without being able to achieve comparable structural weight. As opposed to the cadence-metrical flow of the Viennese Classics, which is defined by the relationship between groups of bars



and cadences,<sup>14</sup> Nielsen's Study is built on the premise of a flowing continuity, which was only established in the wake of the Romantic era. The procedure therefore corresponds so precisely to Nielsen's recommendation to Beckman that we might initially be tempted to place the Study chronologically alongside the letter cited above. But that would mean that it appeared only in 1897, long after the first two published quartets and moreover directly before work on Op. 14, which in its turn – as will be shown below – demonstrates a high degree of individuality. Therefore it would not be easy to allocate a movement so indebted to tradition to a time when Nielsen had already reached a considerable sovereign command of craftsmanship. We can certainly not rule out the possibility that in his 1897 letter to Beckman he was remembering a much earlier phase in his own studies.

Equally uncertain too is the dating of a few other individual movements.<sup>15</sup> A three-part Andante in F sharp minor in 6/8 metre (CNS 33) appears to be especially isolated, not least in its tonality. In the A section its first phase corresponds to the manner of a Mendelssohnian Barcarole, and only this eight-bar group, which is expanded by a two-bar opening and a four-bar extension, is taken up in the concluding section and completed with a cadential appendix. Although at the beginning of the movement further phrases are added, the first of these refers back in its transitional function with its chromatic inflections to the chromatically falling bass, which in the opening two-bar unit only coloured the tonic of the inner parts. On the other hand later phrases are in the relative major; but they hardly relate to the main sections that frame them and hardly approach thematic status in the movement. In the middle section, transposed versions of the thematic cell are accompanied by note-repetitions, whose dotted rhythms previously underpinned the conclusion of the A section. So the little movement is poised in a curiously indecisive way between isolated chromaticisation and a mere succession of phrases that allow for no thematic concentration. A brief Minuet in G minor, with a Trio in B flat major (CNS 34b and 35), has still less individuality. It sticks quite formally to the textbook norm, with two repeated sections in both the Minuet and the Trio. The classical dance texture is admittedly modified in the Trio, insofar as the accents are shifted from the downbeat to the upbeat crotchets.

If this movement as a whole remains in the frame of convention, then we may range alongside it an Allegro in G minor, which is found amid the sketches for the G minor Quartet, Op. 13 (CNS 39c). Up to now this brief sonata-form movement has been considered a draft for Op. 13, with whose thematic substance, however, it has nothing in common. However, before its publication in 1898, Op. 13 was apparently thoroughly revised by Nielsen, and since the first version, composed ten years earlier, has not sur-

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14 Cf. Stefan Kunze, *Mozarts Opfern*, Stuttgart 1984, 352 ff.

15 See also Teglgård Hansen, *op. cit.*, 48-69.

vived, the individual movement may indeed date back to this early phase.<sup>16</sup> Yet every comparison must be made with the final version of Op. 13, and the questionable individual movement is so far removed from the level of craftsmanship of that final version that further speculation is superfluous. For the main theme in the first violin arises from the initial alternation of the outer parts, to the accompaniment of even quavers in the inner ones; the transition shifts to free figuration without motivic derivation, and just as simple as the second theme with its dotted rhythms is the codetta, playing with the cadence in place of a concluding group. The development takes its cue from this appendix, confining itself to transposed allusions to the second and then the first theme, whilst after a faithful recapitulation there is no coda. Just like the G minor Minuet, the movement therefore seems to belong to that early stage of Nielsen's studies which is primarily represented by the four-movement D minor Quartet.

Just how problematic an unambiguous clarification of chronology remains is shown, however, by the two Quartet movements (CNS 34-35) which were heard in the arrangement for string orchestra in 1887 at Tivoli and which have been published in this version.<sup>17</sup> For although the original version is to be classified with his student works, Nielsen considered precisely these movements viable for public performance, with revisions that only depart from the original version in details such as the voice-leading in the bass register.<sup>18</sup> In the B flat major Andante the three-part basic scheme is once again modified by the recapitulation's additional recourse to the contrasting section, with concluding coda. The straightforward melodic writing in 3/4 metre which comprises the A section (bb. 1-16) is primarily allocated to the upper part, with the other lines subordinate to it, although the two opening four-bar phrases are linked, not without skill, by a canon between the outer parts (bb. 3-5), which in the concluding part (bb. 45-61) is replaced by a mere interrupted cadence (b. 49). However, the contrasting sections (bb. 29-45, 62-89) have at the same time a developmental function, in that – admittedly with a quite abrupt fortissimo – they add hefty figuration to the dotted chords of the accompaniment. But soon the return to the framing sections begins, whose motivic working runs through the parts and is then overlaid with fragments of the contrasting figurations. If at the return of the A section only the accompaniment is slightly varied, the contrasting section is transposed down a fifth, and for rounding-off the coda is content with a concentrated statement of the melodic model and its cadential appendix. Even more straightforward is the Scherzo in D minor, which recalls Mendelssohn's scherzos only in its fast running figures in 6/8 metre, without emulating Mendelssohn's contrapuntal ingenuity. Accompanied by pizzicato chords, the scalic figures

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16 Information from Lisbeth Ahlgren Jensen.

17 *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 1999, II/ 7, 1-11. It is to be hoped that the quartet version of the two movements will also be published.

18 For details see *ibid.*, *Critical Commentary*, 127-129.

are entirely in the upper parts, and although in the modulatory middle section they wander off once into another instrument, they only ever appear in one part at a time. The little Trio section in B flat major also follows the traditional scheme, with two repeated sections. It turns to 2/4 metre and is additionally bracketed off from the main dance movement by its chordal writing in crotchets.

It is worth considering whether these movements constitute the original inner movements of the F major Quartet whose outer movements have already been discussed. That would explain the fact that the inner movements have come down to us separately, after they were separated from the framing movements, when Nielsen worked on their arrangement. The tonalities as well as the level of craftsmanship are also appropriate. But it would also mean that these movements were heard again in the following year at the performance of the F major Quartet. Although it cannot be discounted that Nielsen may have been encouraged towards this by the echo of their orchestral versions, this question must remain open for the time being.

Meanwhile we should beware seeing in Nielsen's early quartet sketches much more than student works and even seeking premonitions of his later technical procedures. Their regular periodic phrasing and their only modestly chromatically coloured harmony in an extremely transparent quartet texture correspond to a much earlier stage of genre history, without traces yet of Schubert, Schumann or Brahms. Certainly the movements clearly show how precisely the composer was aware of the tradition of the genre. He was evidently very familiar with the norms of the inherited quartet texture, but knowledge of the early works allows us to measure the growing decisiveness with which he nevertheless released himself from those norms in the published quartet movements, finally recapturing the transparency of the early studies in Op. 44.

### **Steps in Op. 13 and Op. 5**

However distinct the first two published quartets may be from the earlier studies, this is least of all the case in terms of large-scale form. For Nielsen's respect for the genre tradition – just as with Reger or even Schoenberg – compelled him to maintain the traditional formal canon all the way to Op. 44, only modifying it in various details. Indicative of the progress already marked by Op. 13 is above all the texture, and this progress is revealed by the relationship of the instrumental parts to the thematic material and to the harmonic and rhythmic construction.

According to the autograph, the G minor Quartet Op. 13 was composed as early as 1887-88: not long after the early F major Quartet. The dates on the manuscript presumably apply not to the first movement but to the following ones, since the first was thoroughly revised before the work was published in 1900 with its correspondingly

higher opus number.<sup>19</sup> Yet even in the main movement, which according to tradition is especially weighty, the revision touched neither the thematic nor the harmonic substance, as the corrections in the autograph score show.<sup>20</sup>

In the opening *Allegro energico* the melodic substance of the first subject seems initially not especially remarkable, in that its upwardly directed curve essentially only decorates the basic functions with passing notes. Similarly the B flat major second subject which follows in the cello as early as b. 27, only offers a constricted main motif, repeated above the tonic in the space of a third before the melodic line is extended and raised.<sup>21</sup> More striking in both themes, however, is the thick texture, resulting from the simultaneous participation of all the instruments. In addition we may note the abundance of syncopation which characterises the main motif in the first subject, made up of dotted crotchets which after an internal upbeat begin on unaccented beats and are placed effectively in relation to the regular movement of the lower parts, until after the melodic culmination from b. 5 duplet and triplet quavers are overlaid (*Ex. 4a*). By contrast the dotted crotchets in the second subject fall on accented beats and the now complementary note-repetitions of the upper parts produce a nervous tremolando effect. Chromatic passing figures, as already heard initially in the bass register, may at first appear as mere passing coloration, but in connection with the characteristic rhythm they prove more decisive for the movement's internal processes than the melodic contours of the themes. For the return of the first subject in the lower voices from b. 11 is already harmonically extended after only four bars, accentuated by chromatically rising minims in both violins. This declares a potential which is admittedly at first withdrawn, when the brief transition discharges into rapid semiquaver motion, around which the dotted quavers of the outer voices remain the last motivic relics. More stable is the second subject in its threefold presentation, whose middle section deflects from B flat to G flat major (bb. 27-35), before proceeding via the neapolitan to regain F major as the dominant of the movement's relative major.

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19 While the second movement was begun on 21 January 1888 and finished on 29 January, the next two are dated 23 December 1887 and 6 January 1888, cf. CNS 39 a, autograph. That Nielsen received an advance for the printing in 1896 (cf. Schousboe *op. cit.*, 127), suggests that the revision was begun at this time and completed before the performance on 3 February 1898. On the dating and printing see also *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, *Preface*, xxiii f. und xvi f.

20 Cuts of a few bars in the first movement only apply to harmonically closed groups of bars in the development, recapitulation and coda, while an episode was added to the slow movement (bb. 15-23), see *ibid.*, xxvii.

21 Disregarding the preceding upbeat, the main motif corresponds to the so-called 'Grieg motif', characterised by the fall of a fourth from the main note, with the insertion of the variable seventh degree.

Allegro energico (♩ = 132)

Violino 1  
Violino 2  
Viola  
Violoncello

5  
10  
14

*f*  
*f*  
*f*  
*f*

*p* cre - scen -  
*p* cre - scen -  
*p* cre - scen -  
*p* cre - scen -

do  
do  
do

*f*  
*f*  
*f*  
*f*

*p*  
*p*  
*p*  
*p*

*cresc.*  
*cresc.*

*f*  
*f*  
*f*  
*f*

poco rall.

Ex. 4a: String Quartet in G minor, Op. 13, first movement, Allegro energico, bb. 1-18

Meanwhile the latent chromaticism suggested in the exposition has its consequences for the development, whose first part is conventionally devoted to the first subject, while the working-out of the second subject follows on until the retransition to the first subject. The chromatic line with which the exposition concludes in the bass sets up the development, insofar as the new section begins straight away in E flat minor, then switches via enharmonic reinterpretation of G flat as F sharp major to B major

(Ex. 4b). At the same time the syncopations of the first subject are pointed up by regular dotted values in the inter-relation of the outer parts, with similar figures in the middle parts completing a texture of complementary semiquavers. However, the harmonic design aims further than B major to a stable section in E minor, in which only the triplet or dotted figures remind us of the thematic material. At the same time the change to the second subject is prepared rhythmically; after modulation through A minor and C major, this enters unexpectedly in D flat major, only to divert again enharmonically through C sharp minor towards E major, leading via reinterpretation of a diminished seventh chord towards D minor. Before the recapitulation, however, the characteristic rhythmic features of both themes are conjoined in a narrow space in pairs of instruments, indicating the goal and highpoint of the thematic and harmonic process (bb. 130-135). But this process also has consequences for the recapitulation, in which after the condensed reappearance of the first subject a harmonic excursion to G flat major is added, which leads chromatically from D flat major towards D major. Even the coda is not entirely untouched by this but moves once again via an interrupted cadence from D major to E minor, returning to the tonic via G major and C minor.

So rhythmic acceleration is paired in the compositional process with chromatic extension, while thematic work has to take a subordinate role. In this way a tendency comes to the fore that was already announced in the F major Quartet, but radicalised

The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, specifically the development section of the first movement of the String Quartet in G minor, Op. 13, measures 74-80. The score is written for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The key signature is G minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 74-77) begins with a piano (p) dynamic and an 'arco' marking. The second system (measures 78-80) includes lyrics: 'poco a poco cre scen' and 'poco a poco cre scen'. The score shows complex rhythmic patterns, including syncopations and dotted values, and a chromatic harmonic progression.

Ex. 4b: String Quartet in G minor, Op. 13, first movement, development, bb. 74-80

in the way the compact structure of all the voices forces the melodic substance of the themes to recede. The differences from the early works could not be sharper. At the same time, however, these differences point to the flexibility with which the basic harmonic degrees are subject to chromatic reinterpretation, foreshadowing strategies that Nielsen was to pursue with ever more single-mindedness from the Third String Quartet on.

The same procedures – though not with the same consequentiality – may be seen in the E flat major *Andante amoroso*, which otherwise has to be called thoroughly conventional, both formally and thematically. The frame is the A section in 9/8. However, while the thick chordal opening is largely based on a pedal-point, the second phrase moves to rocking quaver accompaniment, while in the concluding section chains of accompanying semiquavers enter, which follow on from the last phase of the B section. Even without the rhythmic complications of the first movement, the second remains just as tonally rich, thanks to the continuous participation of all the instruments. However, once again the middle section (bb. 26 ff.), which accelerates to an *agitato*, unfolds not so much the melodic line of the A section as a chromaticism that initially contents itself with the function of passing coloration and a brief mediant change to G flat major (bb. 13 ff.). But in the middle the movement shifts down twice by a major third, firstly as an F minor chord with added sixth moves to C sharp minor by enharmonic respelling of its third and by leading-note motion in the other parts (bb. 47-48), then by repeating the procedure a little later in the move from B minor to G minor (bb. 54-55).

The intervening sections remain much more stable in their internal harmony, and the retransition is also more restrained, as it moves by rising fifths through D and A minors to G major and to the rocking accompaniment on which already the opening of the final section is based, leading back through C minor to the tonic.

The C minor Scherzo on the other hand, whose basic outlines follow the textbook norm, confines such harmonic shifts to mediant inflections in the modulatory middle section. Even metrical surprises of the kind that formerly characterised classical dance movements, are reduced to the occasional insertion of duplet quavers in 6/8. These do at the same time prepare for the change to duple metre in the Trio, which is based on the tonic major of the quartet on a pedal-bass with regular fifths motion in the bass. It is the rhythmic model of the Trio's modulatory middle section that the coda takes up, without further reference to the material of the Scherzo.

By contrast the Finale is more problematic, and not only because it aims towards the effect of a cyclic montage of themes in the concluding *Résumé* (bb. 249 ff.). The first subject contents itself with off-beat quaver motion, and only simplified derivations of it remain in the transition and development. These derivations make do with decorative passing-notes in semiquavers, without reference to the contours of the theme.

As soon as the accompaniment is replete with semiquavers, quavers phrased over the beat enter; but these already prepare the outlines of the second subject, which enters more straightforwardly still, with 'hunting fifths' in a two-voice texture, until the closing thematic group reaches back to the previous relics of the first subject. The harmony is also less ambitious, making do with the insertion of bar-groups in B flat minor and E flat major and only evolving a chromatically falling bass line in the concluding phase of the second subject. The development too has to turn out more meagrely, since it alternates between the head-motif of the second subject and the variants of the first subject, which are twisted round to an emphatically intensified major variant (bb. 155-61). The recapitulation only briefly returns to the first subject in its basic form, which is rapidly neutralised in motivic particles, whereas the second subject is at first dispensed with, only to return after the *Résumé* when the coda is already under way (Ex. 4c). As soon as the recapitulation comes to a halt on a diminished seventh chord, the rhythm of the dance movement in 6/8 reintroduces itself in the viola, having been anticipated in the first violin three bars earlier, while its head-motif sounds in the violins (bb. 241-48). In addition in the thematic montage (bb. 249-72) the syncopated theme of the first movement's first subject enters, and while its hint in the exposition remained an inconsequential insertion in uneven/triple metre (bb. 37-40), the allusion is concretised in the combination of characteristic contours of the first themes from the three fast

Résumé  
a tempo

249

256

*marcato*

Ex. 4c: String Quartet in G minor, Op. 13, Finale. Allegro (*inquieta*), *Résumé* bb. 249-262



movements, while the Andante is shunned as an untouched foreign body. The coda again amalgamates the rhythmic characters of both finale themes, without having much more to offer than the inflated G major conclusion.

Therefore the work initially makes an ambivalent impression, in that it plays off formal conventions – including the crowning thematic quotations – against a harmonic language that at least in the first movement and partially also in the Andante follows a methodical strategy. Before Niels Wilhelm Gade died in 1890, he was able to get to know the Quartet by his former student; according to one report his opinion was 'A muddle, but a talented muddle'.<sup>22</sup> This backhanded compliment, betraying disapproval and respect in equal measure, may have applied to the compact texture, in which the thematic process recedes behind the rhythmic and harmonic unfolding. While the themes only partake in the transitional and working-out phases by means of variants with little character of their own, greater weight falls to their harmonic and rhythmic implications. In this Nielsen was building not on the Brahmsian tradition but on Grieg's Quartet, composed barely a decade earlier, albeit without sharing its folkloristic features.<sup>23</sup> Ingenious modulations may be found in the works of other contemporaries too, but particularly characteristic of Nielsen are the rapid shifts that emphasise the closed phrases and do not impact on the overall modulation scheme. Therefore, if we do not measure Op. 13 by the standard of much later works, Nielsen was here at the cutting edge, as a glance at the quartets of Friedrich Gernsheim, Hugo Kaun or Felix Draeseke would show.

Although the second acknowledged quartet Op. 5, which appeared in score and parts at the end of 1892, was begun in Copenhagen in the summer of 1890, it was only worked out during a study tour in Dresden and Berlin.<sup>24</sup> As a result of this situation – and contrary to Op. 13 – the genesis of this work is more often mentioned in Nielsen's diary and letters, and from these references it is apparent that his work on it proceeded by no means rapidly or without difficulty, until on 24 November 1890 from Berlin he was able to announce its completion.<sup>25</sup> He encountered particular problems with the

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22 *Det er noget Roderi, – men det er talentfuldt Roderi!*. See Thorvald Nielsen, 'Carl Nielsens kammermusik', *Dansk Musiktidsskrift* 7:1 (1932), 36. After the performance of the first version, it was only after the performance on 3 February 1898 that the revised version found a public echo, which, however, contrary to Nielsen's recollection, was quite positive; see *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, xxiv ff.

23 See Friedhelm Krummacher, 'Streichquartett als 'Ehrensache': Linie und Klang in Griegs Quartett Op. 27', *Studia musicologica norvegica* 25 (1999), 90-107.

24 See the summary in *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, xxvii-xxxii.

25 Schousboe, *op. cit.*, 26 (13.11.1890) with the anxious question 'Will it be understood?' (*Mon den vil blive forstaaet?*), see also Møller & Meyer, *op. cit.*, 15 (24.11.1890, to Orla Rosenhoff).

Andante and the Finale, both of which needed several reworkings,<sup>26</sup> before the Quartet was performed on 18 December, after several rehearsals, in the presence of Joseph Joachim, who admittedly found it 'too radical'.<sup>27</sup> Especially revealing is Nielsen's remark that the players had problems with exact intonation, because the work contained, many modulations and frequent enharmonic progressions'.<sup>28</sup> From this it is clear how important the harmonic unfolding was for him and how consciously it was intended.

Even if the harmony in Op. 5 as a whole is not as complex as in Op. 13, the blanket assertion that the work is 'almost cantankerously rooted to its tonic' is unjust.<sup>29</sup> For already in the first movement the repeated first subject, whose rising line initially measures out the space of the tonic triad as in Op. 13 (*Ex. 5a*), shifts unexpectedly from F minor to C sharp major in the continuation (bb. 10-12). In the diminished seventh chord, which functions as a secondary dominant in a move to C minor, one note is enharmonically respelt ( $E^b/D^\sharp$  sharp), until the outer parts move chromatically in parallel sevenths just as quickly back to F minor (bb. 13-14). This episode is admittedly part of the first subject, as its expansion in the recapitulation shows. Nevertheless its consequences are not primarily harmonic like its counterpart in Op. 13. Motivically the episode does not continue the first subject's dotted quavers but rather augments them to dotted crotchets, which in the course of the movement acquire greater significance than the head-motif itself and at the same time point ahead to the rhythmic character of the second subject. In its accompanying inner voices the transition section harks back to the first subject, from whose continuation the canonic motivic work of the outer parts is derived. This transition remains largely in the region of the tonic and only its conclusion is modified by a chromatic falling bass line (bb. 42-49). As in Op. 13 the gradually built-up second subject in C major only shows in its middle section a mediant expansion towards E flat major (bb. 80-84); if the next phrase relates once again to the annex of the first subject, now a stable *fortissimo* C major is reaffirmed after a chromatic rising modulation back (bb. 85-91-108). The chromatic shading of the epilogue to the exposition is more conventional, and after an initial shift from A flat to A major (bb. 134-145), the development nevertheless slips straight back to the second subject in A minor and D minor (bb. 146-77). Even more remarkable is the fact that

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26 Schousboe, *op. cit.*, 24 und 27f. (5., 20. and 28.11.1890), Møller & Meyer, 15 (24.11.1890). See also Elly Bruunshuus Petersen's article in the present volume pp. 152ff.

27 Schousboe, *op. cit.*, 32 (18.-20.12.1890). Nielsen could not accept the changes Joachim wished to see, see *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, xxx. Brahms became acquainted with the work during Nielsen's visit to Vienna, but without declaring his reaction to it, see Schousboe, *op. cit.*, 114f.

28 *mange Modulat[i]o[n]er og ofte enharmoniske Historier*. Møller & Meyer, *op. cit.*, 17 (15.1.1891).

29 David Fanning, 'Carl Nielsen', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, (2000), vol. 17, 891.

Allegro non troppo ma energico Op. 5

The image displays a page of musical notation for Nielsen's String Quartet in F minor, Op. 5, first movement. The tempo is marked 'Allegro non troppo ma energico'. The score is in 3/4 time and F minor. It features four string parts: Violino 1, Violino 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a 'sul G' marking above the first violin. The second system shows measures 5-10, and the third system shows measures 11-16. The music is characterized by rhythmic patterns and melodic lines in the strings, with some dynamic markings like 'f' and 'p'.

Ex. 5a: *String Quartet in F minor, Op. 5, first movement, Allegro non troppo ma energico, bb. 1-16*

afterwards it is not the head-motif of the first subject that appears, to the accompaniment of semiquaver figuration, but its erstwhile annex, which increasingly comes to stand in its stead. Without being worked over in the development, the head-motif of the first subject only reappears in the recapitulation, and the expanded episode (bb. 237-45) this time moves from F minor to C sharp minor via the dominant G sharp major (bb. 237-238). Like the second subject, the continuation only moves to F major, and after the epilogue basically only the brief coda returns to the melodic and rhythmic features of the main theme.

Therefore the first main theme is less decisive for the course of the movement than its annex, which is emphasised by means of the harmonic extension. In that this annex largely has to stand in for the head-motif itself, there results a detectable displacement of relative weight. As in Op. 13 both inner movements follow the standard three-part form. The Andante in particular does not betray the compositional effort

Nielsen expended on it – the framing sections in pure C major lead into a middle section in the minor with the little third-oscillation which derives from the head-motif and is now expanded sequentially (bb. 26-41). From this the process derives its unexpected intensification; however, it flows into the chromatic descent of the middle parts, to which the upper instruments only partially react (bb. 42-49), while the triplet accompaniment of the the final phase of condensation also infiltrates the concluding part of the movement. It may be such subtle details that Nielsen's work was devoted to – details which by contrast are less conspicuous in the Scherzo, characterised by its scurrying theme. Only occasionally does this movement show chromatic inflections, where small particles are momentarily displaced, and only the brief Trio in C major (bb. 81-138) moves in its B section from D flat major (bb. 95 ff.) to C sharp minor (bb. 103 ff.), returning via a circle of fifths.

All the more remarkable is the *Allegro appassionato* finale, in which the thematic accents are yet more displaced than in the first movement. The first subjects of both movements share not only an insistence on the tonic and the leap of a fourth but also the dotted quavers, which in both instances are stretched to crotchets in the continuation (Ex. 5b). But the finale theme divides its head-motif into repeated two-bar phrases, each of which breaks off with a falling fourth; and it is also a falling fourth which in the transition is first paraphrased then isolated, until the broad cantabile second subject emerges from its continuation (bb. 28-41, 42-75). If this has the air of music from the age of Gade, it returns not only with a chromatically shaded accompaniment but also with increased weight, thanks to octave displacement at its repetition. In the epilogue, too, a variant with initial falling fourth is heard (bb. 69 ff.), with which the development also begins in A flat minor (b. 86). Instead of the first subject itself, however, only its dotted rhythms appear in three two-bar phrases in E major, marked off by their chordal texture (bb. 98-103), while it is only with dotted crotchets that the concluding phase refers to the continuation of the first subject; the first subject itself only reappears after a sudden intensification in the recapitulation. Compared to the first movement, the function of the first subject is therefore weaker still, and we could almost call it a deliberate consequence that in the recapitulation it is curtailed to its four-bar incipit and then freely spun out (bb. 144-60). It is even more surprising, however, when after generous preparation (bb. 160-73) there only remains a small derivation from the second subject, this derivation having previously appeared in the epilogue (bb. 174-202).

It is this procedure that a remark in Nielsen's drafts seems to refer to: 'the second time the second subject *does not* return: but a fragment of the coda from the first section appears in its place but with many special harmonies.'<sup>30</sup> A postscript refers to

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30 *2den Gang kommer Sidetemaet ikke: men en Stump af Codaen i Første Dæl optræder som saadant men med mange sære Harmonier. Carl Nielsen, Works, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, xxx.*

FINALE  
Allegro appassionato (♩ = 80)

The musical score is presented in four systems, each containing four staves (two for piano and two for string quartet). The key signature is F minor (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Allegro appassionato' with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The score begins with a piano introduction marked 'ff' (fortissimo) in measures 1-4. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The string quartet enters in measure 9, playing a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The score concludes in measure 16 with a final chord in the piano part.

Ex. 5b: String Quartet in F minor, Op. 5, Finale, Allegro appassionato, bb. 1-16

Jusepe de Ribera's painting 'Diogenes with the lamp', which Nielsen had previously seen in the Dresden Art Gallery: 'remember *special*, little Carl. Think of Ribera'.<sup>31</sup> By this he may have meant the peculiar harmonic flavour which the group from the 'Coda' acquires here when it substitutes for the second subject. For after it has been introduced in F minor, its continuation unexpectedly shifts to E major, until it rocks to and fro repeatedly in the bass and is overlaid by a succession of falling first inversion chords in minims, which initially only point back to A major and finally shift almost without mediation to C major as the dominant of F major (*Ex. 5c*). After a rapid surge the coda begins unceremoniously, its task being to lead the head-motif of the first subject to the crowning climax, all in F minor. So Nielsen was conscious of the fading out of the second subject, which thereby becomes merely an episode in the ex-

195

201

207

*pp* *poco a poco cre*

*pp* *poco a poco cre*

*pp* *poco a poco cre*

*pp* *poco a poco cre*

Ex. 5c: String Quartet in F minor, Op. 5, Finale. Coda bb. 198-211

31 Husk 'sære', lille Carl. Tænk paa Ribera!!

position. But at the same time his decision had a price. The fact that the function of the themes themselves is progressively weakened is not entirely compensated for by the harmonic working-out of a detail.

Apart from the formal outlines of the movements, Nielsen's Quartets Op. 13 and Op. 5 have in common not only their virtually orchestral body of sound, which results from the almost continuous participation of all the instruments. Both early works are also characterised by the fact that the transitional and developmental phases of their outer movements are only partially directed by the thematic material. Instead at central turning-points prominent harmonic constructions come to the fore, which admittedly take on distinct functions in relation to the thematic structure. While in Op. 13 harmonic implications of the main themes are worked out, with only derived variants from the themes themselves remaining, in Op. 5 the continuation of the first subject in the first movement is marked out by a harmonic deflection, and this continuation in its turn comes largely to stand in for the head-motif. In this work the themes recede even further in the Finale, in that the second subject shrinks to a mere episode, which at the end is compensated for by a harmonically emphasized variant. Not only the thick texture but also the harmonic unfolding may remind us of Grieg, but this is not motivated by quotations from folk music but results rather from Nielsen's habit of deploying the scale-degrees through chromatic alteration. In a peculiar balance between diatonic and chromatic modulation, individual notes of the chord are used as pivots, in order to throw new light on important phases in the movement by means of harmonic relationships. Nielsen may later have expressed himself sceptically about enharmonic progressions, but he did not forget the experiences that are set out in his early quartets.

#### Consequences in Op. 14 and Op. 44

The pair of early works and the two following quartets are separated by nearly a decade – a longer period therefore than the six years separating Op. 14 and Op. 44. But in the E flat Quartet, Op. 14, begun after the summer holidays in 1897 and completed by autumn 1898, procedures are more clearly evident than before that will then be fully carried through in Op. 44.<sup>32</sup> After a first performance on 1st May 1899 had attracted scarcely any attention, the next had to wait until 4th October 1901 and only aroused rather divided opinions. With only a few exceptions the reviews spoke mainly of 'gibberish' ['Kaudervælsk'] and 'Confusion' ['Virvar'], especially in the first movement.<sup>33</sup> The cause was presumably less the lack of thematic connections, which are actually

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32 On the process of creation see Schousboe, *op. cit.*, 152 and 157f. (between December 1897 and summer 1898) and *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, xxxv ff.; the score was published at the end of 1900, while the parts followed in 1901, see *ibid.*, xli and xliii. Cf. CNS, 46, on the autograph, which indicates no date (CNS 40).

33 See also *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, xxxviii f.

worked out more precisely in Op. 14 than previously, than the harmonic language, in which sudden shifts of the kind observed earlier now form only a part. In addition – and still more significant – are the manifold chromatic alterations of individual notes, which support the primarily diatonic themes often only in the accompanying voices. In that they proceed without care for clear formulation and are no longer regulated by functional harmonic concerns, they contribute to the ambivalent sound world which characterises this work almost all the way through, despite the energy of its material.

The first movement resembles a rondo only externally, when the first subject at the beginning of the development returns in the tonic like a second refrain and initially leads us to believe that the exposition is to be repeated. Contrary to a regular sonata rondo the themes thereafter are intensively worked, without allowing room for additional material, as would otherwise have been possible. Rather the thematic layout – as later in Op. 44 – functions as an affirming re-establishment of the tonic, against which the iridescent tonality of the other phases stands all the more clearly in relief. In addition the thematic design is not only more complex than in the preceding works but also worked out with greater precision and at the same time more variety, as just a few examples will suffice to show.

The first subject is defined by an upbeat semiquaver after a dotted rest, giving an anacrusic impulse already within the first bar (*Ex. 6a*). This returns several times on the last beat of the bar in the bass, while in the top voice it is modified by syncopation and two upbeat semiquavers. Against this in the middle parts we hear legato quavers, into which syncopations are similarly woven, while the basic harmonic functions are at first just coloured by chromatic alteration, until the cadence brings the players together in a *marcato* (bb. 1-15). The significance of the upbeats becomes evident in the transition, whose legato lines begin imitatively and are syncopatedly accented (bb. 15-24), being combined in the next phase with scalic semiquaver figures (bb. 25-35). It is into these figurations that chromatic inflection increasingly penetrates, as the rapid move from A major to E flat minor shows (bb. 28-29). After a brief dissipation the second subject follows on the dominant, only superficially corresponding to earlier processes (bb. 40-56). For as in the first subject, emphatic upbeats precede syncopatedly tied-over pedal notes, the melodic span frees itself from their repetition, and in the voice-exchange the four-bar phrases form a rising chain of fifths (B<sup>b</sup>-F-C-G-D). After a mediant displacement, the second subject approaches the first through an expanded overlaying of the syncopations, which leads *fortissimo* into a combination of the second subject with simultaneous triplet and duplet quavers (bb. 78-95). Finally an epilogue, which refers to the second subject, runs after renewed dissipation immediately into the first subject in the tonic, which opens the development (bb. 118-26), and the tonal ambivalence clearly increases when an E flat major cadence is displaced by a deflection to E major



(bb. 126-27). In the course of the following pages such alterations increase in direct proportion to thematic elements being broken off and reconnected (bb. 131-57). Admittedly the leading voices maintain their decidedly diatonic orientation, against which, however, the accompanying instruments are opposed, as at the very beginning. Similarly chromatic colouring now pushes further into the working-out of the second subject, which in this respect too displays its affinity for the first subject. And the retransition aims forcefully at the first subject's re-entry, after which the recapitulation largely follows the groundplan of the exposition, down to the smaller modifications. Yet it appears objectively logical, when, after a last reference to the second subject, the coda concentrates on the first subject, whose tonal ambivalence is most sharply bunched together at the point where over a tonic with open fifth pedal in the bass the formation of the upper parts moves to D and E majors (Ex. 6b). For the simultaneous coupling of these elements produces a quite bitonal effect, surely exceptional for a string quartet at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Allegro con brio (♩ = 144) Op. 14

The image displays a musical score for Nielsen's String Quartet in E flat major, Op. 14, first movement, measures 1-13. The score is for Violino 1, Violino 2, Viola, and Violoncello. It shows the beginning of the piece with a tempo of Allegro con brio (♩ = 144). The key signature is E-flat major. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *sf*, *pp*, *p*, and *dim.* A section marked 'A' begins at measure 13. The bass line features a tonic with an open fifth pedal point.

Ex. 6a: String Quartet in E flat major, Op. 14, first movement, Allegro con brio, bb. 1-19

Ex. 6b: *String Quartet in E flat major, Op. 14, first movement, coda bb. 350-357*

As a result of the continuous presence of the instruments, the extremely thick texture of the movement persists as before, made even more potent by the quite ubiquitous syncopations. But it is remarkable how skilfully the previously perceptibly regular phrase-structure is now modified by expansion of the phrase-lengths, yet how naturally even cadential caesuras are disguised in such a way that the course of the movement is only cleft by a few decisive incisions. Thus, for example, right at the beginning the first subject's cadence is absorbed by the entries of the transition spliced onto it (b. 15), and the transition for its part only reaches a short cadential progression with the entrance of the second theme (b. 40). Accordingly it is understandable that such a movement should initially have confused its listeners and could only enjoy greater acceptance once they had got used to further modernism advances, as represented by the works of Debussy, Ravel or Reger.

The peculiar harmonic language which defines the first movement is brought to bear in a different way in the inner movements. In the *Andante sostenuto* the thick web of voices has a part to play in this, as suspensions and their resolutions are overlaid and clash with chromatic steps. This is made clear already in the eight-bar introduction, in which the opening interval of a sixth is to be understood as an F sharp minor chord without root, as shown by the entry of the chromatically falling bass line (Ex. 6c).<sup>34</sup>

34 See also Joseph, *op. cit.*, 464 ff.

Andante sostenuto (♩ = 52)

Andante sostenuto (♩ = 52)

6 poco rit. Andante (♩ = 60)

12 A

18

Ex. 6c: String Quartet in E flat major, Op. 14, second movement, Andante sostenuto, bb. 1-23

In this context the chord progression that results is far from regular in functional harmonic terms ( $f^{\#}-f-e-e^{\flat}-d$ ), before the first progression by a fifth leads to the tonic E flat major. Above a tonic pedal the first thematic arc then begins (bb. 9-17), which initially leads to the dominant and concludes the A section with a return to the tonic

(bb. 41-50). Initially this first theme admittedly has a mixolydian shade ( $D^b$ ), which, however, with further chromatic alteration ( $C^b$  and  $G^b$ ) moves towards A flat and E flat minors. However, in the next segment, which consists of two transposed and spliced-on five-bar units (bb. 17-25), the chromaticisation of the accompanying parts is taken further, without taking account of the suspensions and resolutions in the leading voices. The result is a highly concentrated succession of only weakly articulated chord changes, which can hardly be defined unambiguously in functional harmonic terms. In the three-voice passage (bb. 17-20) the middle parts might be interpreted in terms of D minor (b. 18), but the corresponding root in the bass is only reached on the third beat, when the viola has already moved on chromatically, and with the fifth of the lower parts ( $G^b$ - $D^b$ ) the second violin collides in the next bar ( $c^b$ '), while after C flat major and E flat minor once again the viola contradicts the third of D minor (b. 20). In the four-voiced varied texture (bb. 21-25) the phrase is transposed up a sixth, but the changing tonality, which results from the varying chromatic alteration of degrees, is only stabilised in the return to the modified theme (bb. 26-40). The middle section forms a contrast not only by its accelerated tempo, but also with its chains of dotted quavers, and from a C major starting-point the tonal relations clarify as soon as isolated turning figures produce rapid scalar figures. However, the concluding section, which returns to the thematic structure of the beginning, leads the material into a dynamic accumulation, which will only be relieved in the coda.

In the following 2/4 *Allegretto pastorale*, by contrast, which formally corresponds to a Scherzo, the stable C major of the head-motif of the theme is at first only playfully loosened by chromatic insertions, which, however, are not without consequence for the further course of the movement. For already in the second entry of the main theme the continuation diverts to B flat minor, and the next groups shift around correspondingly in sequences (bb. 9-29). The repetition of the theme is again differently continued, however, inasmuch as the lines are now pointed by gracious note-repetitions (bb. 40-49). The Trio, by contrast, is a *Presto* in 6/8, which stakes out the A minor frame with repeated fifths, above which the other parts at first only hint at the seventh. The procedure is quickly repeated but over B flat and C minors, then diverting back via E flat minor; however, the repeated thematic germ is followed by three falling fifths, whose dissonant outer notes are repeated over seven bars (bb. 105-21). The more the motivic separation progresses in the working-out, the quicker the tonal orientation changes, until a renewed aggregation of fifths forms the opposite pole before the retransition to the *Allegretto* (bb. 175-82).

Like the first movement, the finale – an alla breve with the heading *Allegro coraggioso* – is a regular sonata-form movement, whose development is more strictly laid out thematically than before. The relatively tightly rhythmical first subject, characterised

by dotted values and repeated falling fourths, is quite rustic thanks to the offbeat chords of the accompanying instruments, and this rustic quality makes a curious contrast to the voice-leading (Ex. 6d). If at the beginning in the diatonic aggregate of the upper part only the leading-note third of the dominant is associated with chromatic lowering, this procedure is extended in the lower parts to the thirds of the main harmonic functions ( $D^b-G^b-C^b$ ), and accordingly a second entry begins in A flat major, only to move back to E flat major at the removal of the chromatic alterations (bb. 17-33). With a reduction in the number of voices the first phrases of the transition are based on held notes, against which, however, the interjections of the opposing parts are set in curiously ambivalent relief (bb. 33-46). But the more the continuation appears to solidify in a four-voice texture, the more rapidly the harmonic relations simultaneously become fluid (bb. 47-71). They move forward by alternating major and minor chords based on rising minor thirds (F sharp major – A major – C major) with rapidly falling fifths (F minor – B flat major – E flat minor – A flat major – D flat major), until in the lower parts the thematic head-motif itself is chromaticised and counterpointed with whirling chains of quavers. After a cadence in E flat minor the second subject begins in G flat major (bb. 72-89); its transposed repetition is filled out with triplet accompaniment to a four-voice texture and expanded by continuing figuration (bb. 90-104). It is from the first subject that the repeated oscillating fourths in dotted crotchets

FINALE  
Allegro coraggioso (♩ = 116)

The image shows a musical score for the finale of Nielsen's String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 14. The score is in 4/4 time and E-flat major. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (bb. 1-8) shows a four-voice texture with dynamics ranging from forte (f) to fortissimo (ff). The second system (bb. 33-41) is marked 'A' and 'tranquillo', with dynamics including piano (p), fortissimo (ff), and mezzo-piano (mp).

Ex. 6d: *String Quartet in E flat major, Op. 14, Finale. Allegro coraggioso, bb. 1-8, transition bb. 33-41*

emerge; to the extent that the technique of chromatic alteration continues, however, it entails partial enharmonic reinterpretation. At the same time syncopated suspensions in the contrapuntal texture result in pointed dissonances, which emerge especially in augmented variants against the rapid figuration of the viola (bb. 105-212), until the concluding group in the return to the second subject turns to B flat major (bb. 121-33).

In view of the latent counterpoint of the movement it is not surprising that the development should set off as a fugato. Since, however, the first subject is reformed as a regular succession of even pizzicato crotchets, a strictly chordal texture emerges, which at the same time drives forward the procedure of chromatic alteration (bb. 133-70). As a result of the analogies between the themes the next group is able to refer back to the emphasized suspensions that previously appeared between the second subject and the concluding group (bb. 170-210), and a variant of the ambiguous transition (bb. 211-18) is followed by the working-out of the second subject, whose dotted values are heightened into chordal repetitions (bb. 220-58). In accordance with its thematic concentration the development profits from the harmonic procedures of the material, until after a slightly altered recapitulation the tonal tensions are finally alleviated in the coda.

All four movements in Op. 14 are therefore driven to varying degrees by a strategy in which the basic harmonic degrees are susceptible to various kinds of chromatic alteration. No longer do chromatic shifts help to mark off self-contained phrases or sections, as they still did in Op. 5. Rather the procedures, which up to this point could be described as successive layering or simultaneous concatenation, accelerate to extraordinarily rapid progressions, in which the tonal reference points are in many respects displaced. The term 'progressive tonality', which Simpson coined for Nielsen's later works,<sup>35</sup> admittedly reminds us terminologically of that historical phenomenon, which cannot be dissociated from the music of this time, even if we refuse to worship at the shrine of progress. Although it would be better to speak of 'progressing' or 'wandering' tonality, its principles are already foreshadowed in Op. 14. In this respect the distance to the last quartet, Op. 44, shrinks to a mere gradation; yet Op. 14, despite its concern to introduce sections and thematic groups in a reduced number of instruments, still displays the thick sonorous texture of the preceding works. While in Op. 14 harmonic and thematic development are united for the first time since the student works, Op. 44 would see the first reappearance of the kind of transparency that had its early incarnation in the early F major Quartet.

That the last F major Quartet, of 1906, was composed much more speedily than the earlier ones may be an indication of Nielsen's mature mastery, and it is therefore all the

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35 Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*, 175 etc.; *idem*, 'Carl Nielsen and Tonality', *Dansk musiktidsskrift* 40 (1965), 89-93; cf. also Joseph, *op. cit.*, 463 ff.

more astonishing that its publication had to wait until 1923.<sup>36</sup> After the work was rehearsed in private on 9th August 1906, the first public performance was not until a year later, on 30th November 1907; apart from isolated voices of approval, this was received for the most part with scepticism or even straightforward rejection. Admittedly this reaction changed with later performances, at which the quartet was designated Op. 19 or 24 and with various movement titles.<sup>37</sup> Yet Nielsen can scarcely have lacked the opportunity for publication, and we can only conclude that he was concerned to have the work published in Leipzig, where the score and parts were brought out by Edition Peters in 1923 – now as Op. 44.<sup>38</sup> Even its preceding revision did not affect the substance, which in all essentials was already defined in 1906.<sup>39</sup>

How conscious Nielsen was after the first trial run that he had reached a new stage with this Quartet is shown by a letter of 9th August 1906 to Henrik Knudsen: 'Apart from which it is remarkable how many years you have to pay court before such a delicate creature as a string quartet, before she capitulates. Only now do I feel I have become somewhat reconciled to its elusively character.'<sup>40</sup> These words apply first of all to the relationship between the instruments, which has indeed become notably more transparent compared to the preceding works and thereby bears witness to a preoccupation with Mozart.<sup>41</sup> As well as the more precisely weighed-out participation of the partners, the rhythmic design also contributes, avoiding syncopated constructions and mere padding in the accompanying figures. Yet even before the public premiere, in a letter of 17th May 1907 to Knud Harder in Munich, Nielsen was writing: 'Why not try for once composing simple tonal melodies without harmony (just one voice); imagine that you don't dare to move beyond the eight notes of the scale, that

36 Cf. *Carl Nielsen, Works*, Copenhagen 2004, II/10, xlv. The autograph score gives dates of 9 February and 21 March 1906 for the first two movements, the others being finished on 21 June and 2 July that year.

37 Cf. *ibid.*, xlv ff.; *ibid.*, xlvii f. on the publication and on further performances and their movement titles.

38 Cf. *ibid.*, xlvii, the preceding quartets had been published by Wilhelm Hansen in Copenhagen, which despite its Leipzig branch was not as prominent as Peters in the German market. It was probably not without a sense of satisfaction that Nielsen handed over the work to the same firm that had published Grieg's G minor Quartet Op. 27 nearly half a century earlier.

39 Cf. *ibid.*, xlix f., which identifies the most significant alteration as the cut of four bars in the finale that originally led back to a repeat of the exposition.

40 *Forresten er det forunderligt som man i mange Aar skal lokke og kjæle for et saa sart Væsen som en Strygekvartet inden hun gi'r sig. Først nu synes jeg at være kommen nogenlunde overens med dens vigende kydske Karakter.* Møller & Meyer, *op. cit.*, 78.

41 Nielsen's preoccupation with Mozart's music is evident from his opera *Maskarade* and from his revealing essay of March 1906, 'Mozart og vor Tid' [Mozart and our Time], in John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid*, Copenhagen 1999, vol. 1, 78-86.

each one is a sacred being, and that you may not touch them without effect, under pain of death.' Voice-leading and counterpoint were to be studied, '... not so as to become learned and intricate, but on the contrary in order to gain greater power and simplicity through them'. And the general motto was: 'Tonality, clarity and strength'.<sup>42</sup>

In the essay 'Musical Problems' [Musikalske Problemer] this line of thought would be taken up again – this was in August 1922, probably therefore during the revision of Op. 44 – and clarified with a turn against Wagner, using examples from Mozart und Beethoven: 'We should persuade the overfed that a melodic third should be seen as a gift of God, a fourth as an experience and a fifth as the greatest joy'.<sup>43</sup> Admittedly he added, 'Mindless gorging undermines the health'; but that does not mean 'turning back to the music of former times'. Rather it is the case that rhythm 'should be organic; it should develop just as logically and naturally as the current in a brook'.<sup>44</sup>

Of course these demands are directed rather at performance practice than at compositional theory, and they cannot be unconditionally applied to Op. 44. And yet it is reasonable to suppose that in his composing Nielsen recognised the decisive importance of intervals for the kind of music he envisioned. Contrary to an expanded harmonic language, which primarily had to serve chromatic modulation, the upper hand was gained by diatonicism, which had to result from linear voice-leading. At the same time, therefore, there had to be a corresponding rhythmic language, which should follow the melodic lines, without entailing mere complication. It remains to be seen how this applies to Op. 44.

While the formal layout in Op. 44 is actually clearer in effect than before, Nielsen's procedure can be discerned primarily from the detailed texture, which the opening *Allegro non tanto e comodo* demonstrates in exemplary fashion. With its leap of a fourth, its tonic and third together with a passing-note, the head-motif of the first subject describes the tonic triad in a moderate tempo (*Ex. 7a*). However, as the con-

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42 *Prøv engang at komponere ganske enkelte, tonale Melodier uden al Harmoni (enstemmig); forestil Dem at De ikke tør bevæge Dem udenfor Skalaens 8 Toner og at hver Tone er en Helligdom som ikke under Dødsstraf tør berøres virkningsløst ... ikke for at blive lærd og indviklet, men tvertimod for derigjennem at naa større Kraft og Enfold ... , Tonalitet, Klarhed og Kraft. Møller & Meyer, op. cit., 84f.*

43 *Man maa vise de overmætte, at et melodisk Terzspring bør betragtes som en Guds Gave, en Kvart som en Oplevelse og en Kvint som den højeste Lykke. Fellow, op. cit., 265.*

44 *Tankeløst Praadseri undergraver Sundheden... Tilbagevenden til tidligere Tidens Musik... maa være organisk, den maa udvikle sig ligesaa følgerigtigt og naturligt som Strømmen i Bækken. Ibid., 265, 268.* A further consequence was that in his essay 'Musikvidenskab' [Musicology] (*ibid.*, 286-90) in June 1923 he expressed his complete agreement with the important dissertation by Knud Jeppesen. *Palestrinastil med særligt Henblik paa Dissonansbehandlingen* [Palestrina style, with special weight on the treatment of dissonances], Copenhagen 1923).



Allegro non tanto e comodo

Ex. 7a: String Quartet in F major, Op. 44, first movement, *Allegro non tanto e comodo*, bb. 1-14

tinuation (bb. 4-9) alters the fifth and third of the dominant ( $g'' - e''$ ) to  $g^{\flat}''$  and  $e^{\flat}''$ , the pitch aggregate is unexpectedly expanded in a falling sequence, so that a little later we reach a G flat major triad (via A flat minor), which in the second statement of the theme can be enharmonically exchanged with F sharp major (bb. 9-16). The accompanying lower parts, which mark the flowing 3/4 metre with off-beat crotchets, seem to introduce the proceedings even earlier ( $E^{\flat}$  in b. 2) and thereafter to support it even more. Nevertheless the impression of a rapid modulation from F to F sharp major is deceptive, because instead of harmonically directed chordal progressions we see a voice-leading process that increasingly expands the pitch aggregate with altered degrees. But it is not just a question of substituting for diatonic notes with any old chromatic alternatives. The decisive factor is clearly a particular quality of the intervals, which can for instance be newly accentuated by substituting the expected minor third in the falling sequence by a chromatic variant. By this the process compels the listener to pay attention to the rapid evolution of the intervals in the extremely transparent texture, instead of primarily – as would be usual – giving himself over to the harmonic progressions. Nielsen's logic is demonstrated, for example, by the boundary between the first subject and its imitative expansion (bb. 8-10). With the head-motif in G flat major the cello precedes the entry of the first violin in F sharp major, and the initially simultaneous notation indicates that the enharmonic move results less from the harmony than from the voice-leading. As soon as the initial pitch-aggregate

poco rall.                      a tempo

71

78

arco  
mp

Ex. 7b: *String Quartet in F major, Op. 44, first movement, Allegro non tanto e comodo*, bb. 71-83

is reached via D major for one bar (b. 17), it again serves only to continue the downwards directed alteration technique starting from G minor.

The further progress of the movement cannot be described in as much detail, but at least its salient moments can be briefly characterised. The continuation seems temporarily to stabilise in D minor (bb. 27-38), but it leads into an original construction – chromatically falling thirds in the second violin collide with repeated notes in the bass, then after some emphatic cadencing, in which the dissonances of the upper parts are heightened by trills, the first subject re-enters in D major (bb. 39-51). When this trickles out in repeated progressions in E major, the second subject enters, beginning in C sharp minor (bb. 76-109, *Ex. 7b*), its capricious nature resulting from repeated staccato notes and *acciaccaturas*. With the exception of a prominent episode (bb. 98-103) its tonal ambit remains more narrowly circumscribed, and the short epilogue also sticks to C sharp minor, immediately leading to the development. As in Op. 14 this section is opened by the unaltered first subject, which here functions even more clearly as a short-lived stabilisation (bb. 118-34). However, as soon as it gives way to transitional figures the tonal spectrum broadens once again, passing through B flat minor once again to G flat/F sharp major. Though the second subject then follows in F sharp minor, its continuation now points towards E minor (bb. 169-202), and as it leads into a pacified succession of sequences, a last citation of the first subject in E major ends with a sequential motion, in whose chains of chords pairs of voices are overlaid in a canon at the fifth (bb. 221-48).

Compared to the usual progress of a sonata movement, the large-scale sectional relationships are reversed, inasmuch as an exposition, which extends the tonal radius considerably, is followed by a development section whose phases are comparatively restful instead of broadening the spectrum by modulation. And in the same way, after the recapitulation the coda runs its course, before the movement closes with a reference to the main theme in a clear F major. These indications of tonality are nonetheless – to avoid misunderstandings – not to be taken in the usual sense of modulations, but serve only as points of orientation, in that they identify a few key moments in the sonic ebb and flow, moments that result from the precisely calculated voice-leading.

The Finale is rather more relaxed. Such intersections do not occur quite so often, but they are much more prominent. The complexly articulated first subject is preceded by an *Adagio*, which in just one bar broadly unfolds a C major chord and immediately descends scalically into the *Allegro non tanto, ma molto scherzoso* in F-Dur (Ex. 7c). A further bar establishes the 2/4 motion, which is marked in repeated semiquaver parallel thirds in the violins by the subdominant. After an octave leap the head-motif of a two-bar group enters syncopatedly, and it is completed by repetition and upwards scalic motion. It reappears twice in A flat major and A minor, but two different two-

FINALE  
Molto adagio

Allegro non tanto, ma molto scherzoso

Ex. 7c: String Quartet in F major, Op. 44, Finale. Molto Adagio – Allegro ma non tanto, ma molto scherzoso, bb. 1-11

109 poco rall. a tempo

117

Ex. 7d: *String Quartet in F major, Op. 44, Finale, bb. 109-124*

bar groups are interposed, the first of which serves to add chromaticism to the pitch-aggregate with contrary motion, while the second grows analogously towards quavers slurred over the beat (bb. 7-8, 11-12). And with dotted quavers the continuation finally follows, interrupted for its part once again by the repeated head-motif, now in A major. The dance-like motion does not cease in the second subject, which is heralded in C major by the cello in high register and is then taken over in G major by the first violin in an expanded variant (bb. 49-55, 57-70). Clear as the tonal orientation may seem melodically, it is effectively contradicted by linearly conditioned inflections in the accompanying voices. However, the latent implications which bind the two thematic groups together emerge more clearly in the concluding group, which combines a chromatically falling scalic motion with a capricious broken triads (bb. 84-92, 92-100). The development follows immediately with a little fugato (Ex. 7d), whose chromatically falling subject brings to light the reverse side of the seemingly unambiguous tonality (bb. 111-32). However, before the top voice can join the other three entries, the second subject enters; but as soon as this is dissolved by the first subject, the chromaticism applied to the material comes into play and then determines the further working-out. When this ends in a free cadenza for the upper part, twice measuring out a G major sonority, the Adagio enters in B major, like a signal and lengthened to two bars. It thereby divides the cadenza from the C major opening of the recapitulation, which concludes in concentrated form with the coda of the first subject in pure F major.

Adagio con sentimento religioso

Musical score for the first system, measures 1-4. It features four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass) with dynamic markings of *ff* and *p*.

un poco più mosso

Musical score for the second system, measures 5-8. It features four staves with dynamic markings of *mp* and *p*, and the instruction *p espressivo*.

Tempo I

Musical score for the third system, measures 9-12. It features four staves with dynamic markings of *f*, *pesante*, *dim.*, and *pp*.

A

Musical score for the fourth system, measures 13-16. It features four staves with dynamic markings of *ff* and *p*.

Musical score for the fifth system, measures 17-20. It features four staves with dynamic markings of *p*.

Ex. 7e: String Quartet in F major, Op. 44, second movement, *Adagio con sentimento religioso*, bb. 1-25

Just as in the first movement the conventional harmonic relationships between exposition and development were reversed, so their relative weight is again altered in the Finale. From this it is clear how methodically Nielsen deploys the tonal relations in order to underpin quite different processes. And they are also varied in the inner movements, which admittedly operate on their own terms.

The slow movement is entitled *Adagio con sentimento religioso*, and it begins with a melodic sequence to quasi-modal progressions in regular *fortissimo* crotchets (Ex. 7e). The theme is presented as a variable subject; but its circle-of-fifths sequence (E minor – A minor – D minor – G major – C major – F major) with a phrygian cadence in the uppermost voice ends with an imperfect cadence in A minor rather than E minor, and two further, slightly altered entries ending in A major and F sharp major (bb. 1-6). Once again the *tessitura* expands in the continuation, in which two single-bar phrases with flowing quavers lead to B and C sharp majors, respectively, until its conclusion again circles around B major (bb. 7-12). All the more effectively, another thematic entry is interrupted by dotted figures, its falling motion additionally accentuated by means of *sforzato*. In response the following thematic head-motif dissolves with a pacified chain of triplets, and when triplet and duplet quavers are then spliced together, the pairs of voices are displaced in a canon at the fifth, with an over-layering of both rhythms and at the

same time of the regions of F sharp minor with C sharp minor and of B flat minor and F minor (bb. 17-23). A final thematic entry in the A section makes the internal contrast potent, before it ends by recourse to the continuation in G major (bb. 23-35). The middle section (bb. 36-71) begins with close imitation of the main subject, whose rhythmic model and cadential element are divorced from association with the melodic line. In this way the cadence formula can be varied and combined with fast scales, and the concentration brought about by the dotted contrasting group leads to a harmonic region expanded from A major and G minor in dotted rhythms from the canonically displaced lines to simultaneous layerings in sequences of parallel thirds in the violins and viola/violoncello respectively (b. 60 ff.). The sonorous accumulation in the corresponding model-group from the exposition proceeds accordingly, here transposed; on the other hand it does not appear in the recapitulation, which is further concentrated and ends loudly in C major. Instead of denoting vaguely religious content, the supplementary indication *con sentimento* may therefore point to the special technique of a methodical extension of modal progressions.

The three-section structure, which corresponds to that of a scherzo, is modified in the succeeding *Allegretto moderato ed innocente*, in that the A section includes a premonition of the middle section. In A minor, the antecedent phrase of the theme is initially aeolian in inflection; only in b. 5 do the middle parts add a non-diatonic

Ex. 7f: *String Quartet in F major, Op. 44, third movement, Allegretto moderato, ed innocente, bb. 1-12*

note (F $\sharp$ ). Then suddenly a vehement tremolo breaks into the movement, in B major and E minor, and then again immediately in C minor and D major (*Ex. 7f*). All the more surprising is a playful extension, whose C major diatonicism allows for some careful chromatic alterations only at the end. Against expectations, however, a return to the theme (b. 21) does not lead into the contrasting group, but instead to the anticipation of the middle section, whose far-reaching cantabile line is coquettishly framed by interjections with *acciaccaturas*. Remaining in the region of B major, this theme for its part is now intercepted by tremolos in E flat major and A flat minor (b. 44), and while the playful group follows, as at the beginning, the tremolos expand the beginning of the middle section more than before (bb. 45-52); this middle section (bb. 53-89) in its turn only briefly works over its material and then shifts into the shortened final section (bb. 90-119, with coda bb. 120-40).

The tonal disposition of the voices, which previously characterised the serious slow movement, now serves therefore – together with the formal interlocking – to modify the characteristic tone of the dance movement. For all the differences, then, all the movements have in common the procedure of using voice-leading first of all to open up diatonic regions and then methodically to differentiate them through internal chromaticism.<sup>45</sup>

Before his work on Op. 44, Nielsen's interest in Reger was once again revived, in whose music he perceived a sense of form, rhythmic pregnancy and modulatory skill but at the same time missed 'genuine melodic originality'.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless he recommended to Knud Harder that he should study with Reger, since Reger was a master of 'true polyphony' as opposed to the 'characterless quasi-counterpoint' of the Wagnerians.<sup>47</sup> Two years later Nielsen still found Reger 'far more sympathetic' than Richard Strauss 'with his dilettante philosophy and timbral problems, and so even if he was 'amazed by the technical adroitness of the Germans nowadays' he nevertheless saw his own goal in op-

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45 Teglgård Hansen, *op. cit.*, 78-86, points to an *Andantino quasi Allegretto* (CNS 353e), which has survived only as an undated autograph fragment from between 1924 und 1928, where the canonically introduced theme according to him leads with its internal tritone to polytonal and partially even atonal formations. But it is questionable whether the source material supports such far-reaching conclusions.

46 *virkelig melodisk Opfindsomhed*. Møller & Meyer, *op. cit.*, 64 f. (to Julius Röntgen, 20.9.1904). With an eye on a planned trip to Germany, Nielsen asked himself self-critically, 'Is it just my imagination that I have as much talent as the best in Germany?' (*Er det Indbildning af mig at jeg har lige saameget Talent som de bedste i Tyskland?*) *ibid.*, 72 (to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, 16.3.1905). Renouncing such plans, however, he explained that, 'My music would strike German musicians as hard, dry, cold and [merely] interesting' (*Min Musik vil forekomme tyske Musikere haard, tør, kold og interressant*) *ibid.*, 90 (to Knud Harder, 2.12.1907).

47 *karakterløs Quasi-Kontrapunktik*. *Ibid.*, 82 f.



position to 'all this complication' as lying in 'a totally new art of the purest archaic nature'.<sup>48</sup> In an article arising from the discussion of a textbook by his former teacher Orla Rosenhoff, Nielsen came to the view that 'our entire concept of modulation demands fundamental reform'. From this it followed that 'The theory of dominant seventh chords as absolutely the only means of help should be annulled', whereas Rosenhoff's theory of counterpoint should be publicised because of its 'purity and rigour'.<sup>49</sup> Evidently, however, it was his engagement with Reger's theory of modulation that led Nielsen to the clarification of his own goals.<sup>50</sup> For in the continuation of this essay we read that Reger's examples, though 'interesting enough', could not be called an art of modulation; they are mere 'mutation'. In the theory of modulation the dominant seventh chord should be put to one side, and only root position and first inversion triads should be used. If 'chromatic alteration of the individual notes or voices is in any way to be allowed', then one should get used to 'doing away completely with our poor major and minor tonalities', which are only 'harmful and ... superficial terms'.<sup>51</sup>

Although Op. 44 is not specifically mentioned here, it should be clear that in his engagement with Reger since 1905 Nielsen clarified the premises of his own work, which centred on the relations between intervals and voice-leading and between modulation and counterpoint. Not so differently from Grieg before him – far apart though they may otherwise appear to be – the harmony proves to be the result of a linear voice-leading, admittedly with this difference, that it is primarily diatonic rather than chromatic progressions that result, in which chromatic lines may then take refuge. If nevertheless the tonal language appears quite consonant, it is evidently not a question of

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48 ... men alligevel er hans Stræben mig langt mere sympatisk end den Retning – som Richard Strauss med sin Dilletant Filosofi og klangtekniske Problemer – er Repræsentant for... Jeg er forbavset over den tekniske Dygtighed Tyskerne har nu til dags og jeg kan ikke tro andet end at denne Komplisethed snart maa have løbet sig træt og jeg ser i Aanden en helt ny Kunst af det rene arkaiske Præg. *Ibid.*, 106 (to J. Röntgen, 16.12.1909). Admittedly individual works are not named; however, since Nielsen was concerned, to 'foster the appreciation of chamber music' (at opretholde Sansen for Kammermusikken) (*ibid.*, 93, to Ludvig Holm, 25.4.1908), Reger's chamber music cannot have remained unknown to him.

49 om ikke hele vort Modulationsvæsen trænger til en grundig Reform...Et kan dog strax siges: Læren om Dominantseptimakkorden som eneste saliggørende Hjælpemiddel bør annulleres. *Fellow, op. cit.*, 140 f. (21.10.1909).

50 Max Reger, *Beiträge zur Modulationslehre*, Leipzig 1903, <sup>2</sup>1904 (with numerous later printings).

51 Max Regers 'Beispiele' er paa en Maade interessante nok...men Modulationskunst kan det ikke kaldes. ... og kun benytter Treklange i Grundform og som Sextakkord, at man paa ingen Maade tillader kromatisk Forandring af den enkelte Tone eller Stemme, at man vænner sig selv og Eleven til at se fuldstændig bort fra vore to fattige Tonearter Moll og Dur og lader, som om disse skadelige og i Virkeligheden aldeles overflødige Begreber ikke eksisterer. *Fellow, op. cit.*, 148 f. (2.11.1909).

‘Emancipation of the Dissonance’. Rather we could speak of an ‘Emancipation of the Intervals’, which are at the same available for fluctuating chromatic alteration within the voice-leading.

Even disregarding the early studies, there is an extraordinary gulf between the first (Op. 13) and last (Op. 44) quartets. In this Nielsen was by no means alone, because the differences between the early and last quartets of composers such as Wilhelm Stenhammar, Sergey Taneyev, Vítězslav Novák or even Ernst Toch are just as great.<sup>52</sup> But Nielsen’s quartets must be measured according to the context of their time and not against later works, if we want to gauge their stature accurately. For within the period shortly after 1900 the procedures that Nielsen developed in such an individual way in Op. 44, appear quite singular. If we want to describe them with an appropriate term, we might almost impose the label Neoclassicism. We are accustomed to associate this only with currents after the First World War, which may be understood as diverse reactions to more radical initiatives in Bartók and especially in the circle around Schoenberg.<sup>53</sup> Yet we should not overlook the fact that Milhaud – who counts as an exponent of French Neoclassicism – had already begun his series of quartets as early as 1912, while similar works were written not much later in Italy. In this respect we might speak of Nielsen in terms rather of premonitions of Neoclassical tendencies, if that were not bound up with the kind of deprecation that arises from taking Schoenberg and his pupils as the only yardstick of progress. Though Nielsen consciously keeps his distance from the notion, he cannot be accused of a lack of up-to-dateness in his Op. 44. Rather with his last string quartet he had found the position that then enabled him with his following symphonic compositions to become an exemplary exponent of Scandinavian Modernism.

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52 For further context see the presentation of the genre history named in footnote 9.

53 While Nielsen called Schoenberg’s sextet *Verklärte Nacht* Op. 4 a ‘very beautiful piece’ (*et meget smukt Stykke*), the Piano Pieces Op. 11 struck him as being ‘very childish in their principles . . . and stupid in their execution’ (*meget barnlige i Principperne ... og dumme i Udførelsen*), see Møller & Meyer, *op. cit.*, 186 (to Angul Hammerich, 23.2.1919) and 197 (to J. Röntgen, 3.1.1921).

## A B S T R A C T

It would seem that the string quartet as a genre is not central to Nielsen’s oeuvre, at least if we consider the F major Quartet op. 44 as his only mature work for the medium. But this picture changes as soon as we count not merely his early apprentice works but also the three further quartets to which Nielsen himself assigned opus numbers and which he had published. After the early quartet studies, in which his familiarity with the classical repertoire may be seen, the following quartets – op. 13, op. 5 and op. 14 – show a progressive emancipation from tradition, which is particularly evident in their harmonic relationships. As the texture becomes far more complex, so the harmonic language achieves an increasing differentiation, going as far as bitonal passages in the E flat Quartet op. 14 (1897-98). The F major Quartet op. 44, composed in 1906, appears as a logical consequence, in that it unites the transparency of the early studies with the fluctuating tonality that thereafter becomes the basis for Nielsen’s output. From this perspective the string quartets acquire a central position, since they reflect his development more clearly than other genres. Moreover, they occupy a unique position when viewed not just against the background of Nielsen’s late works but in the context of the general history of the genre before 1900.

*Translated by David Fanning*