
THE ROSENHOFF AFFAIR

By Lisbeth Ahlgren Jensen

Of all the teachers at Copenhagen's Conservatory of Music it was undoubtedly Orla Rosenhoff (1844-1905) who was of the greatest significance for Nielsen.¹ Nielsen acknowledged this in dedicating his first major choral work, *Hymnus amoris*, to Rosenhoff in 1896 and also in various statements about his teacher's professional and human qualities, as for example in an interview in 1894:

In passionate, enthusiastically streaming words, Nielsen tells of his extraordinary indebtedness to Rosenhoff – the outstanding teacher and fine human being, but also excessively modest, gifted musician, who a few years ago was thrown out of the Conservatory in the most shameful manner. 'That wretched institution', Nielsen quivers, clenching his teeth and his fists.²

The assertion about Rosenhoff's 'shameful' dismissal from the Conservatory is immediately remarkable. How could it come about that such a highly respected teacher could be 'thrown out of the Conservatory?' What was behind it? And what was the significance of his treatment in this way? These are some of the questions that this article seeks to answer. The aim is on the one hand to give an insight into theory and composition teaching at the Conservatory of Music during and immediately after Nielsen's studies, and on the other hand to investigate what kind of reputation the Conservatory had at the time. Both Nielsen's declaration about 'that wretched institution' and the coverage of the Rosenhoff affair in the press may give us cause to shake up the time-honoured view of the Conservatory of Music as an indisputable stronghold of musical education. Even when this valuation is not explicitly voiced, it underpins many an account, and it therefore functions as a point of orientation for evaluating the development of Danish musical culture. Nevertheless it is not my in-

1 Kjøbenhavns Musikkonservatorium (The Copenhagen Conservatory of Music) was founded in 1867 as a private institution; later it became the leading musical college under its present name Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium (The Royal Danish Conservatory of Music).

2 Interview with Charles Kjerulf, *Politiken* 14.3.1894

tention in this article to condemn the Conservatory's fickle policies, as they appear to be in the last decade of the nineteenth century, when there was a power vacuum after Niels Gade's death. Irrespective of whether Rosenhoff's dismissal was based on a misunderstanding or was the result of a deliberate educational and personnel policy decision, it had immediate consequences, both on the personal and institutional level, and there is therefore good reason to go into the 'Rosenhoff affair',³ as it was dubbed in the daily papers. It is my conviction that the circumstances of Rosenhoff's removal may be seen as an example of how Danish cultural politics – at least in the field of music – in some cases rest as much on coincidences or on faulty decisions as on the well-considered resolutions of wise men.

The Rosenhoff affair occurred in 1892, when Copenhagen's Conservatory of Music was celebrating its 25th anniversary, and the coincidence of the two events presumably contributed to the fact that Rosenhoff's dismissal was more in the public eye than if it had taken place at another point in time. But the very fact that it was linked with such an otherwise favourable circumstance as the celebration of a jubilee also has the effect that the Conservatory's reputation at the time can be illuminated in a more nuanced manner than if the jubilee had merely been praised in panegyric phrases.

As an introduction I shall illustrate press coverage of the matter; then I shall seek to pin down what Orla Rosenhoff stood for as a teacher; finally I shall attempt to place the Conservatory's decision to dismiss him in the context of the place that music theory subsequently acquired in music education.

Press Coverage of the Rosenhoff Affair

The matter of Rosenhoff's dismissal was first made public knowledge in an article in the daily paper *København* on 17 February 1892, under the heading 'The Conservatory of Music and Mr. O. Rosenhoff'. The sequence of events may be broadly described as follows: approximately a year after Gade's death, Rosenhoff asked the Board of Directors of the Conservatory for permission to guide his pupils right through to their final exams, instead of merely giving them elementary instruction in theory. In Rosenhoff's opinion, this would mean formalising a practice that had existed with the Board's approval for several years. The Board seemed at first to be positively inclined towards Rosenhoff's recommendation, but it asked him to submit a written request. This was done, but since Rosenhoff regarded it as a formality, he did not do to any great trouble over his request, though he did underline that he would leave the Conservatory if it was not approved. His surprise was therefore all the greater when after the Christmas 1891-92 vacation he presented himself for the new academic year

3 *København* 26.2.1892.

and learned that the Board's refusal was in the post. Thus, in reality Rosenhoff was sacked because the Board wished to continue the previous arrangements for theory instruction and had therefore not accepted his request.

Rosenhoff's threat to resign was therefore either not taken seriously or seen as a welcome opportunity to get rid of him, unless the dismissal was actually an unforeseen turn of events.

Press coverage was not confined to articles *about* Rosenhoff's dismissal, but also included contributions from the parties involved, which is to say from Rosenhoff himself and from the Board of the Conservatory. In addition there were consequences in the form of a report from Rosenhoff to the Ministry of Culture.⁴ So the affair can be illustrated with many written statements, and curiously enough they are amazingly uniform so far as the substance of the matter is concerned, but naturally they illustrate the matter from various points of view, depending on the interests of the protagonists.

Stimulated by the press attention, Rosenhoff himself wrote a lengthy article, which was printed in *Dagens Nyheder* on 25 February 1892. For the sake of thoroughness he chose an historic approach and retold how in 1881 he had been invited by Gade to take over instruction in harmony following on from Johan Christian Gebauer. At that time the subject was not in any great favour, he claimed, in that 'Discipline in the lessons was slack, and only few of the pupils were in the habit of preparing themselves for them, so that there was much to tackle.'⁵ As a means of making the subject more rigorous, Rosenhoff persuaded Gade to introduce examinations in music theory, which not only had a beneficial effect on discipline but also, according to Rosenhoff, could be interpreted as an appreciation of his efforts. Having worked as a theory teacher for one year, he was additionally entrusted with the task of instructing some of the pupils in 'Music Theory's next discipline: counterpoint and fugue', which for the previous 14 years had been J.P.E. Hartmann's 'speciality'. According to Rosenhoff, that testified to the great significance of the subject, and he therefore felt himself further reassured that the Board of Directors appreciated his efforts:

I venture to claim without immodesty, that the fact that both Gade and Hartmann (together with the third director, [Holger Simon] Paulli) trusted me to teach *independently* alongside Hartmann, shows that these men had the feeling that it would be unreasonable to confine me to the initial levels of music theory.⁶

4 Ministry for Church and Education. Office No. 3. Item No. 205/92. Rigsarkivet. Letter from Orla Rosenhoff, 23.3.1892.

5 *Dagens Nyheder* 25.2.1892. Rosenhoff's view is borne out in Angul Hammerich, *Kjøbenhavns Musikkonservatorium 1876-1892*, 1892, 35.

6 *Ibid.*

So the situation for many years had been that Rosenhoff 'led the instruction in harmony, counterpoint and fugue, for a large proportion of the Conservatory's pupils, while music theory's third field of discipline (form, in conjunction with instrumentation and music history) was Gade's responsibility'.⁷

However, since Gade could not manage to teach all the many pupils admitted by the Conservatory, he allowed Rosenhoff to give some of the most talented students exercises in free composition, and he gave him a free hand in that respect, which suited Rosenhoff very well: 'I used to the full the opportunity this provided to allow the students to make practical use of their theoretical knowledge.' Up to Gade's death in December 1890, Rosenhoff therefore enjoyed an 'untroubled and satisfying period of activity' at the Conservatory. However, after the death of the powerful Director, there should in his opinion have been discussion as to what should happen. Either 'Gade's position should have been considered a kind of place of honour', which could only be filled by a figure of comparable authority, or the classes should have been shared out among the suitable theory teachers. But neither of these things was done:

They gave Gade's chair to Professor Otto Malling and thereby maintained the old order of teaching, with special teachers in harmony, counterpoint and composition – an arrangement which in itself is wholly unreasonable, and which so far as I know is unheard of at the best foreign Conservatories.

Although we may doubt whether Rosenhoff's point of view was as widely shared as he claimed, it is interesting to note how he viewed the relationship between theory and practice:

The view has long since been accepted that the harmony teacher, right from the first stages of his teaching, should also function as a composition teacher, making practical use of the material taught, in parallel with its acquisition by the student, by means of free exercises. Accordingly it must always be arbitrary to want to introduce composition teaching as a special subject at a certain later point in time. Composition is there from the very first moment, and it continues to be there so long as studies continue. It relates to harmony roughly as written language exercises do to basic drills and grammar. But even apart from this illogicality of principle, it is important to recognise that it may always be disturbing for pedagogical consistency when the same teacher does not guide his students from the beginnings of the subject to the end.

⁷ *Ibid.*

So Rosenhoff compared the pedagogy of music theory with that of language, in which exercises in writing were practical tasks that gave the pupil the chance to try out what he had learned (and the teacher the chance to check that the material had been understood). That he gave the most talented students ‘free exercises’ and therefore encouraged them to take a *creative* attitude to music, shows also that he was an advocate for a special way of fostering talent. All in all Rosenhoff depicts himself as a teacher who placed the emphasis on giving his students craftsmanly foundations, and on continuity both in content and method between theory and practice, just as he found it essential to stimulate the most talented students. At first glance this may not exactly sound pedagogically ground-breaking, but at least one of his pupils – Carl Nielsen – perceived his pedagogy to be a welcome alternative to Gade’s methods, of which he observed:

In my third year at the Conservatory I had classes with Gade, but I cannot honestly say that I learned much in them. We were in a group of something like 14 or 15 students, and Gade told us a lot about Raphael, Charlemagne, Øhlenschläger and the like, but occasionally he also played for us, and that was always both beautiful and entertaining. However, the whole thing was fragmentary and remarkably incoherent, and since he frequently glanced at his beautiful gold watch, I understood that he had probably higher things on his mind and that he couldn’t wait to get home to his own work.⁸

One gets an impression of the extent to which Gade’s views on music differed from Rosenhoff’s from a statement by another pupil at the Conservatory. To a question about how to compose ‘beautiful’ melodies Gade is supposed to have replied:

Well, you see, that is actually a secret, namely inspiration – for ‘all good gifts come from heaven above’, and that creates both melody and harmony in our hearts. And then, well, then one composes. Therefore, my young friend, always remember that in order to create a composition you must first have an inspiration – a singing theme – which one then fashions again in harmony.⁹

According to this romantic way of thinking, which valued the *inspired* and the *intuitive* higher than the craftsmanly, it would seem almost superfluous to become acquainted with the theoretical foundations of music, and this was probably also Gade’s motivation for delegating part of his theory teaching.

8 William Behrend (ed.), *Minder om Niels W. Gade. Kendte Mænds og Kvinders Erindringer* [Remembrances of Gade. Reminiscences of famous men and women], Copenhagen 1930, 83-84.

9 Organist Johannes Beck, in Behrend, *op. cit.*, 59-60.

The newspaper *København* maintained that the actual reason why Rosenhoff at the end of the academic year 1891 sought to formalise his right to guide his students to their finals was that Otto Malling had guided some of Rosenhoff's students to the examination:

Malling, who inherited Gade's chair, held an examination in composition shortly before Christmas. He had compositions performed by two ladies who for three years had been students of Rosenhoff and only in the last of these three years had been taught by Malling. This 'skimming off the cream' of Rosenhoff's work had the effect that the latter made moves to have his position changed for the better ...¹⁰

In the same issue of the newspaper there was also a reply from Malling, who declared that he had naturally wanted to show the results of his tuition: 'That is why I presented the written work they [the students] had produced and why I had them play the miniatures they had composed. That there were, by coincidence, a couple of Rosenhoff's students among them was not something I could really do anything about.'¹¹

To the journalist's enquiry whether the students in question had not been trained in 'composition' by Rosenhoff, Malling answered:

Possibly he had given them a simple task once in a while. But the subject he actually took them for was harmony and counterpoint – in other words just theory. I cannot believe that Gade handed over to him more authority. In any case the registers indicate that Gade kept *all* his students in his classes right to the end.¹²

Malling agreed, however, that the Conservatory produced 'too many inferior female teachers, and that the exams should be arranged more sensibly – but that is the kind of thing one is unwilling to talk too much about'.

Apart from adopting a non-conflictual position with regard to criticisms of the Conservatory, Malling therefore also played down the theoretical subjects – harmony and counterpoint – that Rosenhoff placed so much emphasis on. And what-

¹⁰ *København* 26.2.1892. Article signed *Presto*. The two young ladies were Christiane Rützow-Olsen (1870-1962) and Tekla Griebel Wandall (1865-1940), as appears from Rosenhoff's application to the Board of Directors, enclosed in the file at the Ministry of Culture (see note 4, above).

¹¹ *København* 26.2.1892. Article signed *Kurt*.

¹² *Ibid.*

ever a pair of female pupils of Rosenhoff had managed to compose on the basis of the latter's elementary instruction could consequently not be characterised as other than 'miniatures'.

The Board of Directors of the Conservatory had for many years consisted of the triumvirate of Hartmann, Gade and Paulli, but after Gade's death in December 1890 and Paulli's resignation in April 1891 it came to consist of Hartmann, August Winding, Carl Helsted and Friedrich Julius Georg Vilhelm Stemann. The expansion with a fourth member – Stemann, who was Head of Department in the Ministry of Culture – was motivated by the fact that since 1883-84 the Conservatory had been in receipt of an economic subsidy from the State,¹³ which made for a legitimate public interest in the affairs of the institution.

When Rosenhoff received the unexpected decision that the Board of the Conservatory had rejected his application, he first thought that it was 'Professor Helsted and Head of Department Stemann' who must have had most say in it, and when he asked August Winding why the Board had changed its opinion, Winding answered that 'his father-in-law [Hartmann] did not recall having had a conversation' with Rosenhoff about the matter. As the reason for his own changed attitude Winding gave 'the vague and evasive answer: "We did not believe that you were serious in wanting to leave us" etc. etc.' Rosenhoff concluded, 'I then understood that I had been sacrificed for the sake of other interests, and I bade Hr. Winding and the Conservatory farewell.'¹⁴

Rosenhoff therefore found that the Board was split into two factions, with Hartmann and his son-in-law Winding making up the weaker one, Helsted and Stemann the powerful one. In pointing to the last two as responsible for having turned down his application, Rosenhoff was at the same time indicating that it was Hartmann and Winding who were advocates for everything remaining as it was, while Helsted and Stemann stood for an attitude of greater renewal.

Rosenhoff himself had set the stage for a peaceful co-existence with his colleagues by establishing the boundaries between the subjects:

But it soon became clear that such a discussion about the students' needs was not to be allowed. Right at the beginning of the new academic year I sought to initiate one such discussion with Professor Malling, but I was turned away with the remark that our subjects did not have anything to do with one another. Later in the year, when it became apparent that a discussion could nonetheless not be entirely avoided, he defined his view of the demarcation between our subjects in terms of its being my job *to teach the students what they*

¹³ Hammerich, *op. cit.*, 40.

¹⁴ *Dagens Nyheder* 25.2.1892. Article by Orla Rosenhoff, entitled 'The Conservatory of Music'.

could all learn, whereas it fell solely to him to make it possible for the students (especially the talented ones) to make practical use of their theoretical knowledge – as already stated, a completely impossible task with respect to the entire student body of the Conservatory – and I then felt that my position in reality was reduced to that of *teaching assistant*.¹⁵ [Rosenhoff's emphasis]

Rosenhoff's arguments made no impression on the Board, however, which merely brushed him aside with the comment that it did not see itself as being in a position to interfere 'by fiat... in an arrangement that was deliberately established by the Board of Directors itself a year ago, and to take students from Professor Malling against his wishes, once they have been entrusted to him.'¹⁶

With this the Board therefore assented to an arrangement that consisted in 'Music theory's third discipline (form in conjunction with instrumentation and music history)' only being offered to a portion of the students, just as it approved that only Malling should handle this part of the curriculum. If we ignore instrumentation,¹⁷ which must be seen as a highly specialised discipline for the benefit especially of composers in the making, it was therefore subjects such as form and music history that were thereby isolated from practical music education, i.e. subjects which could have instilled in the students some analytical tools for comprehending the formal construction of musical works, and could also have helped them to reflect on the historical and aesthetic dimensions in music.

The evening edition of *Berlingske Tidende* of 25 February 1892 printed a statement from the Conservatory's oldest director, Hartmann, who did not directly deny that he had at first been sympathetically inclined to Rosenhoff's suggestion:

... if, as has been said, in certain quarters in the meantime or beforehand some sympathy for, or at any rate understanding of, Hr. Rosenhoff's wishes may have been unofficially voiced (viewed exclusively from his particular point of view), it is nevertheless clear that such remarks could only have been made under the firm condition that agreement on the matter be reached between the two teachers.

Thus Hartmann did not wish to deny that Rosenhoff's demands were reasonable, but he maintained that the support of the Board would have been conditional on Malling and Rosenhoff reaching agreement on the allocation of students. To this we should

¹⁵ *Dagens Nyheder* 25.2.1892.

¹⁶ *København* 26.2.1892.

¹⁷ Malling published *Instrumentationslære til Brug ved Undervisning og til Selvstudium* [A Manual of Instrumentation for Teaching and Self-tuition], Copenhagen 1894.

merely add that if such agreement had been reached, then Rosenhoff's approach to the Board would have surely been superfluous, and in such a case Hartmann would not have been called upon to take a position on the problem!

But the consequence of the Board's lack of backing was that Rosenhoff's threat to leave the Conservatory came into force. Whether he 'went' or 'was pushed' is in this connection not nearly as interesting as to seek out the reason why the conflict between him and Malling had such a drastic outcome.

The coverage of the affair in the press shows that there was broad dissatisfaction with the Conservatory's attitude: a dissatisfaction, which especially focused on unapproachability and nepotism, but to a certain extent also on professional standards and aims. For example, *København* reported:

In general it is high time that conditions at the Conservatory should be publicly examined. Over 25 years the public has been systematically kept out of its business. Its examinations have been held in conditions of strictest secrecy, so that no uninitiated person could gain admission to the mysteries of the inner sanctum, nor have even managed to sneak in. This secretiveness – which conceals a fair amount of tyranny exerted by the family that seems to have monopolized all teaching positions for its own and its friends' use – must soon come to an end. With its 10,000 kroner of government subsidy, the Conservatory of Music can no longer behave like a private institution. We must see it in the full daylight of public scrutiny.

The Rosenhoff affair will perhaps contribute a little towards cleaning up the Conservatory's conditions. We did not gain much respect for its activities through reading Hr. Hammerich's pointless *Festschrift* and Hr. Bondesen's pretentious statistics about the numerous, nameless female music teachers ... the Conservatory has churned out.¹⁸

The accusation of nepotism was of course directed at the omnipresent Hartmann-Gade dynasty, which for good or ill had controlled the Conservatory throughout its 25-year existence, either through members of that dynasty occupying the teaching positions or by itself neglecting the need to discuss the institutions aims. Even the otherwise loyal Angul Hammerich, who was only distantly related to the Hartmann family,¹⁹ does not disguise in the Conservatory's silver jubilee report that there were originally more extensive plans for the institution than those that had been come to

¹⁸ *København* 17.2.1892.

¹⁹ Hammerich's mother, Julie Scheuermann, was a cousin of Hartmann's first wife, Emma Zinn, and had grown up with her in the Zinns' merchants' house at 3 Kvæsthusgade by Copenhagen harbour.

pass; for example, with respect to offering orchestral playing and as regards music history: 'the lectures that were in prospect for various musical subjects – music history, aesthetics and the like – did not work well to any significant extent. In connection with classes in form, Gade later took it upon himself to impart occasional music-historical information.'²⁰

'Occasional music-historical information', which moreover was only offered to the most talented students, was therefore all that the original fine intentions had produced.

We may suppose that the appointment of Helsted and Stemann to the Board of Directors of the Conservatory was motivated precisely by the wish to clean up the Conservatory's operations, and that this project was presumably reckoned to have the best chance of success after Gade's death. The appointment of Otto Malling to Gade's former position, which is to say maintaining Gade's powers, was presumably an element in such a 'cleaning plan', whereas there was scarcely a thought of removing Rosenhoff from his post. That the conflict nevertheless had this result can be blamed on the fact that he was the sacrifice in an undeclared power-struggle between the two factions on the Board, of which the now weak but previously powerful one had not previously had a need to argue for its arrangements and therefore did not actively back up Rosenhoff's request (cf. August Winding's reply: 'We did not believe that you were serious' and Hartmann's evasive observation that the Board's support was conditional on the two teachers reaching agreement), while the two strong members of the Board – Helsted and Stemann – either did not understand the significance of holding on to such a committed and progressive teacher, or perhaps did not dare to restrict Malling's freedom of action. Rosenhoff's dismissal was therefore hardly a consequence of anyone wanting to be rid of him, but rather of the *precautions* that had been taken in order to counter, amongst other things, nepotism and lack of transparency at the Conservatory.

If it was the intention to stamp out nepotism, one must recognise that this did not succeed either. For in place of Rosenhoff the director's son, Gustav Helsted, was appointed. This 'matter of personnel' was also discussed in the press, where it was reported that the appointment had happened without Stemann's knowledge, and that when he discovered what had happened, Stemann demanded that the post should be advertised.²¹ The practice of filling teaching positions with family members had thus in reality simply passed from one family to another! In 1895 Rosenhoff was given a State pension,²² presumably with Stemann's collaboration, which can probably be understood as a sticking-plaster on the wound.

²⁰ Hammerich, *op. cit.*, 23.

²¹ *København* 17.2.1892.

²² Sophus Albert Emil Hagen, 'Rosenhoff, Orla Albert Vilhelm', in Carl Frederik Bricka (ed.), *Dansk biografisk Lexicon*, [Danish Biographical Lexicon], Copenhagen 1900, vol. 14.

A protest concert

For obvious reasons it cannot be determined whether it would have contributed to theoretical subjects gaining a more central position in music education had Rosenhoff remained at the Conservatory. But his insistence on the placing of music theory and music history in the broader picture was precisely one of Rosenhoff's most distinctive characteristics as a teacher, and this is borne out by, amongst others, his private pupil Hilda Sehested. In 1888 she was in Bayreuth, where she heard a Wagner opera for the first time, which made a deep impression on her:

Here it's not a question of an aesthetic entertainment, lightly presented and received. Something much more serious is happening. ... Incidentally I very much long for once to have the opportunity to talk with a very clever man, preferably Rosenhoff, about these things; there are issues that are too big for me, which I cannot deal with, and which make my head ache. It's especially the relationship of 'abstract' music to the dramatic. The significance of Wagner and Brahms in relation to one another – this division of music into two mighty branches during the developments of the past 20 years – that's the kind of questions (and in a way I think they concern the historical side of things) that I cannot deal with, and which I long for the clever person I just named to explain to me.²³

Apparently, it was burning aesthetic questions of this kind that Rosenhoff was prepared to discuss with his students: the division of music into a New German tendency represented by Wagner and Liszt and a classicistic tendency represented by Brahms. Nielsen too stressed that it was one of Rosenhoff's valuable qualities that he was willing to discuss the latest musical developments with his students: 'His knowledge as well as his taste are on the same level, and as a teacher he is invaluable, because at the same time as insisting on strictness in harmony and counterpoint, he nonetheless pays tribute to modern outlooks of the freest kinds.'²⁴

Anger over Rosenhoff's dismissal was so great that a group of his pupils felt called up to react. On 1 April 1892 they held a benefit concert in the lesser hall of the Concert Palæ for an invited audience, and in order not to be short of public attention for the aims of their concert they also invited the press. *Politiken's* reviewer Charles Kjerulf began by mentioning that the concert was intended as a protest against the leadership of the Conservatory:

23 Letter from Hilda Sehested to Inger Marie Bockelund, 20.9.1888. Inger Marie Bockelund's private archive. Rigsarkivet. Cited in Tine Bagger Sørensen and Dorrit Vejen Hansen, *Hilda Sehested (1858-1936). En dansk komponists liv og musik* [Life and Work of a Danish Composer]. Major dissertation, University of Copenhagen, Musicological Institute, April 1993.

24 John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid*, Copenhagen 1999, 50.

The actual occasion for the concert, Hr. Rosenhoff's disgraceful removal from Copenhagen's Conservatory of Music, has been publicly debated in the papers, both by himself and by the leadership of the Conservatory, so that there is little or no point in making any secret of the pupils' protest concert.²⁵

Berlingske Tidende stressed that according to the invitation the concert was being held by 'two ladies and four gentlemen "who have all studied the theory of composition' (or better, just 'theory of composition') under Orla Rosenhoff.'²⁶ After 'the rather long concert of student works', the review concluded by clarifying: 'Of the six composers, only Mr. Carl Nielsen enjoyed Mr. Rosenhoff's instruction at the Conservatory of Music; the other five are private pupils.' So it was important for the newspaper to underline that the loss of Rosenhoff was nothing to speak of from the Conservatory's point of view, since only one of the composers – even the most talented – had received instruction from Rosenhoff as a pupil at the Conservatory; the others had been private pupils and had not made a particularly interesting impression. *Nationaltidende's* reviewer seems to have chimed in with *Berlingske Tidende*, for in this newspaper too it was emphasized that of the six it was only Nielsen who had studied with Rosenhoff at the Conservatory. Both papers were therefore inclined to play down the significance of Rosenhoff's dismissal.²⁷

The protest concert consisted of music by Hother Ploug (Theme and Variations for two Violins, Viola and Cello), Rudolph Berg (Waltz for piano duet), Hilda Sehested (four little Fantasy Pieces), George Dupont-Hansen (Four Little Piano Pieces, Op. 1), Emma Verdier (Five Songs) and last but not not least Nielsen – his String Quintet, which had been premiered three years earlier. That the concert made a rather protracted impression and presented music by composers who did not go on to make a name for themselves in Danish musical life does not alter the fact that a handful of young, indignant composers hereby demonstrated solidarity with a man whom they considered to be the blameless victim of an obscure power game. Internally it may also have contributed to strengthening the solidarity between them and to confirming their conviction that the musical world was divided into *them* and *us*.

It is very likely that the young Rosenhoff pupils had already several years earlier formed a performing circle; thus Nielsen in 1887 informed his girlfriend Emilie Demant that Rosenhoff considered his newly composed string quartet to be so successful that he wanted to propose its performance in a little music society that he intended to form. In his letter he quoted Rosenhoff as saying 'for I am in the process of forming a society, which will be called The Society of Composers (Componistforening). All our

²⁵ *Politiken* 5.4.1892.

²⁶ *Berlingske Tidende* (evening edition) 2.4.1892.

²⁷ *Nationaltidende* (evening edition) 2.4.1892.

finest musicians and a number of aristocratic families support my initiative, and so I think that your quartet should have its first performance there.’²⁸

In a letter of December 1887 to Hilda Sehested, Rosenhoff also discussed his idea to found a private musical society that was to be called ‘Floridus’.²⁹ The article on Rosenhoff in the first edition of the *Danish Biographical Lexicon* states that such a society was founded by his pupils ‘in recognition of his importance as a music pedagogue’, and that ‘on his departure from the Conservatory of Music it honoured him in various ways.’³⁰ Although there is not much information about the ‘Floridus’ society, it is known that on at least one occasion in 1895 it held a public concert at the Concert Palæ.³¹ These facts indicate that it existed for a number of years and may have begun to be active as early as 1888, which is to say long before Rosenhoff ran into difficulties at the Conservatory. In other words he considered it important that his pupils should have a chance to have their compositions tried out in practice, and he strove to establish a framework for such musical try-outs. But despite the fact that he supported his students so actively, there was still no question that he wanted to promote them at any price. For example, in 1894 Nielsen sought to persuade Rosenhoff to write an article about him for a German paper, which could then be cited in a Danish paper, which Rosenhoff refused to do:

But that [Wilhelm] Behrend and I should write an article at your behest for a German paper, so that the same article should later appear in Danish papers as a *true* indication of what is being said in Germany about the composer Carl Nielsen – no, my dear friend, isn’t that a bit steep? ... spare me, please .. the right person will surely appear out there – just give it time!!!³²

Nielsen and Rosenhoff did not fall out over the episode; on the contrary Nielsen later counted Rosenhoff as his most important teacher (see the introduction to this article), and at Rosenhoff’s funeral in 1905 he gave a fine speech, in which he sought to put his finger on some of his teacher’s qualities:

28 Letter from Nielsen to Emilie Demant 24.12.1887, reproduced in John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen Brevudgaven* vol. 1, Copenhagen 2005, 57.

29 Orla Rosenhoff to Hilda Sehested, 21.12.1887. Hilda Sehested, private archive no. 6344, A12. Rigsarkivet. The letter also includes a draft programme for the first concert, which was to consist of an introductory cantata, Hilda Sehested’s String Quartet in F, songs with piano by Hother Ploug, and songs for female voices and piano by Thyra Schiøler. It is not known whether a concert with this programme took place.

30 Hagen, *op. cit.*

31 The concert was reviewed in *Dannebrog* 19.4.1895 and included music by Emil Krag-Juel-Vind-Frijs, Thyra Schiøler and Hilda Sehested.

32 Letter from Orla Rosenhoff to Nielsen, 30.10.1894, reproduced in John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen Brevudgaven* vol. 1, Copenhagen 2005, 368-369.

We, his pupils, will always remember Orla Rosenhoff; in a way he has made it impossible for us not to, because in future we will not be able to engage in teaching, influencing or guiding the younger generation without thinking about him – the fine, true teacher and educator, both strict in his demands and at the same time kind and understanding in his judgments when he saw someone making a good effort, or just an effort in the right direction – and probably all of us can truly say that we are grateful to have known him.³³

As an introduction to his pedagogic methods, Rosenhoff published several collections of instructional material, including *450 firstemmige Opgaver som Materiale til Brug ved den musiktheoretiske Undervisning* (450 Four-part Exercises for Use in Music-theory Classes),³⁴ to which his pupil Carl Cohn in 1909 added a *Nøgle til Løsning af Orla Rosenhoffs firstemmige Opgaver* (Key to the Solution of Orla Rosenhoff's Four-part Exercises).³⁵ Cohn's *Key* was warmly reviewed by Nielsen, who once again used the opportunity to hail Rosenhoff for his system of tuition and for the unselfish attitude he brought to his role as educator:

He approached this task with an unusual and comprehensive cultural awareness, sharp intelligence, and the brilliance and character that are the fruits of resignation from the field of production. Through a series of noble and finely crafted compositions he had reached the conclusion that it was not as a composer that he could really excel. Therefore he threw himself passionately into music theory, and here he managed to give us the best we have in that area.³⁶

The saying 'To whomsoever God gives a task, to him He also gives the understanding of it' can be interpreted such that whoever is given a job is at the same time given

33 John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid*, 1999, 54.

34 *450 firstemmige Opgaver som Materiale til Brug ved den musiktheoretiske Undervisning*. Copenhagen, n.d., first collection, vol. 1, first collection vol. 2.

35 *Nøgle til Løsning af Orla Rosenhoffs firstemmige Opgaver til Brug ved Undervisningen i Harmonielære*, Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1909. Carl Cohn (1874-1939) who had lost his eyesight as a child, had private tuition in piano and music theory from Victor Bendix and Orla Rosenhoff and appeared on many occasions as a concert pianist. He worked for many years as a music teacher at the Institute for the Blind and was also the first national president for the Danish Society for the Blind. In 1914 he took his wife's surname and called himself Carl Cohn Haste.

36 John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid*, 1999, 140. Nielsen's review, printed in *Vort Land* 21.10.1909, emphasized amongst other things the importance of being able to modulate exclusively by means of pure triads, i.e. without altered chords and chromaticism, which prompted commentaries from Asger Juul and Carl Cohn that Nielsen in turn answered in *Vort Land* 2.11.1909.

some influence on how that job should be managed. Orla Rosenhoff set a definitive stamp on theory instruction at the Conservatory, but staked his position – and lost – when he was refused permission to guide his pupils all the way to the final examination. Otto Malling, who did not share (literally) Rosenhoff's interest in offering an optimal education in music theory to all, but devoted himself to tuition in instrumentation to a select few, covered himself with glory as an efficient administrator. It fell to Malling to mark out the course for the Conservatory's educational politics at the beginning of the 20th century.

Translated by David Fanning

A B S T R A C T

The article takes as its starting point press coverage of the dismissal in 1892 of Orla Rosenhoff, teacher of music theory at the Royal Danish Conservatory of Music. The aim is to throw light on the position of theoretical subjects in the curriculum during Nielsen's years as a student, and also to discuss the status of the Conservatory at that time. It appears that after Gade's death a number of antagonistic attitudes to the significance of music theory for practical performance came to the surface. Rosenhoff, who was an important source of support and inspiration for Nielsen, argued that all students should be offered tuition in music theory on a certain level; his view did not prevail, however, and later on music theory and history were to be downgraded in the context of practical musical education.