

REVIEWS

Daniel M. Grimley: Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism. The Boydell Press. Woodbridge 2010, 314 s.

Despite the relatively wide dissemination of Carl Nielsen's music, he is still underestimated, is the cry at the outset of Daniel M. Grimley's new book on Carl Nielsen; perhaps Carl Nielsen is actually the most underrated composer in the international specialist literature and research world.

With his book, Grimley would correct this situation; he wants to give Carl Nielsen a distinctive voice in the musicological and music-history dialogue.

In this the book succeeds in every respect; the book is at once interesting, original and absorbing reading. It not only places Carl Nielsen and his music in relation to complex music theoretical and historical issues, but also thoroughly and surprisingly in relation to Denmark's cultural history. All the many contexts are blended brilliantly together with close reading of selected main works from Carl Nielsen's production: in this way Carl Nielsen and his music receive, in this book, their own essential role in the birth of modern European music.

Naturally, as a reader you cannot pretend not to know about Nielsen be-

forehand, if in fact you do know. But it is nonetheless my feeling that the book can easily be used by a broader circle of international readers interested in music, who wish to have more detailed information about Carl Nielsen and the great complex of cultural history in which his music is placed. The analyses take a convenient position in relation to the narrative, theoretical and philosophical stuff. And one can easily read the book's text first and so postpone a deeper reading of the analyses while listening to the works or reading the scores, to the second read-through. On the way through the text there appear, too, technical terms from Heinrich Schenker's music theory, but one can still follow well even without knowing Schenker.

The book is, in other words, wholly faithful in facing Carl Nielsen's double position as a popular [*følgelig*] Danish composer and an international, advanced symphonist; it moves with impressive insight through Danish cultural history, even into the Danish landscape, right back to the Danish Golden Age painters, Lundbye, Købke and Dankvart Dreyer.

On the other hand, Grimley allows Carl Nielsen's music to be seen structurally, in

relation to an international theoretical position: in addition to Schenker, August Halm, Ernst Kurth and – unknown to me – Hans Mersmann. There are also references to vitalism, new ideas after the turn of the century about energy being a new and universal concept in relation to subject and substance. There are references to Bergson and Herbert Spencer, and to Danish music theoreticians like Finn Høffding and Knud Jeppesen. And much more, and many more, amongst others Mikhael Bakhtin.

It sounds overwhelming when one reckons up the individual themes and figures, but there is no name dropping in the book: all the artists, thinkers and various cultural tendencies are naturally and meaningfully integrated into the run of the text. In this way the book can also be appreciated as a paradigm of a musical and music-theoretical cultural history.

At first look one is certainly surprised that the book, whose title mentions both Carl Nielsen's name and the label 'Modernism', doesn't undertake closer analysis of the 4th and 5th symphonies, even though they are, naturally, discussed. Instead, one gets analyses of the 1st and 3rd symphonies, and – certainly not surprisingly – the 6th symphony.

But all this has a deeper meaning: on the basis of the book's very securely executed double-relation to both Danish cultural history and international music theory and aesthetics, Grimley is able to undertake what one might call a meth-

odological coup, which determines the whole book's distinctive quality.

In order to grasp the book's reach, one can add that to actually understand the concept of 'the modern' in Denmark becomes a problem if one comes from music and gets involved in discussion with literary colleagues. For them, modern culture begins in the 1870s with Georg Brandes and what follows thereafter, whereas music people would relate 'modernism' to neo-classicism, twelve-tone music, the emancipation of dissonance and so on – in short, with the 1920s.

For Grimley, on the contrary, Carl Nielsen is modern, so to say, from the start. This he demonstrates by combining two disciplines that use the same word: 'gennembrud'/'breakthrough'. On the one hand we have Danish literature's, 'the modern breakthrough' or even clearer, Brandes' book, 'The Modern Breakthrough-Men'. On the other hand 'breakthrough' – *Durchbruch* – in Adorno's book on Mahler of 1960 is a kind of general category which Grimley also uses of Nielsen's music. In this way cultural history and its 'breakthrough' of something new can be combined in a new way with observations of breakthrough in the works.

Adorno's idea of *Durchbruch*, can point out sublime instances in the works that dispute – or reveal a dialectic relationship to – a given form. In Mahler's 1st symphony, Adorno emphasises that at the place in the first movement where the reprise should arrive according to the norms of sonata form, there comes

instead a battery of fanfares with violent strength, over a signal which one has heard, though only suggested, in the slow introduction. This breakthrough changes the development of the form of the whole of the rest of the movement.

Grimley characterises such a breakthrough as a destabilization, showing that it may be found in many places in the works of Nielsen, actually already at the beginning of the 1st symphony: the strange C major opening in the midst of a wholly different tonal landscape. In passing one ought to mention that Grimley has reservations about analysing too much G minor in the movement. The book also points to a series of other points of breakthrough and destabilisation: there are strange passages with jarring clusters in both the *Chaconne* and the *Theme with Variations for Piano*; Grimley also mentions the timpani in the last movement of the 4th symphony, and the side drum in the second part of the first section of the 5th; and the violent and rapid mechanical entry of the brass with strings at the highly uneasy tempo in the first movement of the 6th symphony.

But Grimley also finds the 'breakthrough' appearing in more humble and surprising places, again in earlier works: the J.P. Jacobsen song, *Genrebillede* and the 'Arabesque' in *Five Piano Pieces*, Opus 3.

But I think this idea of breakthrough is not only an analytical tool for 'finding places'. Once the thought is formulated in the book, it leads to a more intense attentiveness, a sharper

preparedness on the part of listeners, every time one listens to Nielsen and experiences the sudden shifts and unheard of changes in his music; continually, and right back to the 'Little Suite'.

Modernism and *Durchbruch* go side by side through the rest of Grimley's book like a leitmotiv. The innermost thought – and the deepest interpretation of Nielsen as a modernist – is revealed in the book's last chapter, which deals with the 6th symphony. Carl Nielsen's modernism is not that modernism which relies on a decline or a loss or on chaos, upon 'things falling apart', as is said with a reference to Yeats. Carl Nielsen's modernism is, 'rather part of a rich and more playful dialogue, at *novelistic* texture that might be interpreted more positively as a musical response to the diversity of the modern world' (237).

That is excellently formulated. It looks as if Grimley does not like to call Carl Nielsen's 6th symphony postmodernist, but his own definition of Nielsen's modernism is yet on the way towards something which reminds one of postmodernism: as an aesthetic category rather than a new ideology, claiming that nothing is of any consequence and that one need not look after one's affairs. But this is only a jest: the sentence I have quoted is, I think, the most important in the whole book.

When it comes to the *Espansiva* symphony, people have – and I had better include myself – understood its movements, and especially the first, as

monolithic, *aus einem Guss*. But one gets a clear message and many other things to think about in Grimley's approach and contextualising of the the work. Immediately one can spot something special in the table representing the form of the first movement, in which the main theme is seen as linear, the secondary theme as circular.

Consequently, Grimley must also oppose ideas about the work having the character of a line towards a goal. Instead he distinguishes between *event-space* and *event-time* on the one hand, and a wholly chromatic space on the other. According to Grimley both aspects exist at the same time in the *Espansiva*, which must be the same as claiming that all in this music can be seen as a series of events. At the same time the thought must be that one should not listen to the movement as a diatonic or tonal movement which takes various chromatic liberties. It is the other way round: the work's first movement is rather a tension, a flux, between the music's triadic foreground and its chromatic background.

One can also say that Grimley points out that the musical world was, so to say, already chromatic when Carl Nielsen wrote his work, but certainly not only in Wagner's meaning of the term. And in the new chromatic world there are new possibilities for the diatonic or the tonal.

The thoughts in this enormously thorough and innovative chapter lead on to a discussion of the horizontal

and vertical in music, and deals with Heinrich Schenker, August Halm, Ernst Kurth, Hans Mersmann and their respective theories. Not least, the discussion of Mersmann's wave theories in relation to music is highly interesting.

August Halm seems to be the nearest to Nielsen. Grimley claims Halm sees the tonal cadence as the innermost part of music, but in such a way that he judges triads as having a kind of dissonant function; perhaps that reminds one a little of what Finn Høffding, whom Grimley also refers to in another place, calls affinity between the chords, a key concept in Høffding's view. It shows again – to return to Halm – that it is the dissonances which generate the forward drive of the music.

Heinrich Schenker on the other hand begins and ends with triads. His theory leads to new insights, new layers in the work and an eye for its dynamic forces. It can also give new insight into Nielsen's music, both here in Grimley and in David Fanning's contribution to *The Nielsen Companion*.

Grimley observes that Schenker would probably not have approved of Carl Nielsen's music as he, on the whole, was critical of all music of his own time and hardly accepted any composer later than Brahms.

So far as I understand, having followed the literature from a distance, Schenker and his theories can awaken the greatest passions and discussions for and against. I am not competent to judge on my own account, but can, like many

others, have difficulty in grasping 'Ursatz' and 'Umlinie' as the only hierarchical point. By contrast consider, for example, Per Nørgård, who also acknowledges hierarchies in music, but works with – both in his works and in theory – 'open hierarchies'.

Schenker's own philosophy, his philosophical *Ursatz* in the foreword to *Der freie Satz*, is based on a way of thinking where the genius-concept is indisputable and may be understood as an intellectually aristocratic view of music in the line established by Nietzsche. This stands in sharp contrast to that outlook in which music is the most democratic of the arts, that which can best abolish the boundaries between men.

Grimley should certainly not be held responsible for Schenker's philosophy, indeed, it seems as if the difference between Schenker and Carl Nielsen makes a kind of productive tension in the analysis.

In the course of his discussion of the *Espansiva*, Grimley sees something which the undersigned reviewer also sets very, very high: he finds clear parallels or analogies in art of some of Nielsen's movements. This is always a little risky and intuitive, but at the same time tremendously enlightening for understanding historical context. The last movement of the *Espansiva* corresponds, in the book, to Peter Hansen's 'Pløjemanden vender' (1900 – 1902) – brilliant! And the *Espansiva*'s first movement is compared with Kai Nielsen's sculptures on Blågård's

Plads (1912-16) – incredibly apt, excellent, splendid!

Unfortunately I had to pass over two large chapters in the book, in which the author shows a rare capacity to find those concepts that can gather together large parts and vital aspects of Carl Nielsen's universe. The first chapter handles Nielsen's use of counterpoint, with many references to Bach (there are far more references to Bach in the index than to Mozart). The second chapter addresses the Fyn landscape's influence as a symbol in a great part of Nielsen's production. But it is impossible to reproduce many tracks in the book, because there are many layers in the contextualisation, not only unequivocal cultural pictures or cultural causal relationships; this is praiseworthy and must be wholly in accordance with the subject.

Carl Nielsen's 6th symphony as we all know was unknown for many years. Grimley explains that when Robert Simpson published the first study in English of Carl Nielsen's symphonies in the 1950s, it hadn't been possible for him to actually hear the work. But as you know, in the last thirty or forty years the symphony has been recognised as one of the most challenging works in Carl Nielsen's production.

I hope that it isn't just of interest to me when I explain that for some years I have worked with sonata form in western music, especially that magic moment when the reprise appears. But it was impossible for me to find a reprise-

point in the first movement of Carl Nielsen's 6th symphony by following the criteria which I had set up. Now Grimley has found it, in bar 215. In the labyrinth or the spiral in this movement Grimley also finds a sonata form: that is certainly extraordinarily interesting.

When a couple of listenings are still necessary for a change of mind the background is that David Fanning in *The Nielsen Companion* has given a splendid overview of distortions or disengagements, so to speak, of all the motives in the symphony's first movement, a technique which Fanning himself calls a 'brutalising' of the motives, a term which Grimley adopts.

There is also a small alienation of the first main motive in bar 215, and one has certainly heard – and may hear? – this moment without hearing any musical incision right there.

It entirely fits Grimley's basic view that he does not see the 6th symphony as an isolated work in Carl Nielsen's symphonic output. But one can still be amazed over the speed with which Carl Nielsen shifted the signals between the 5th and 6th symphonies; also Grimley's understanding of 'modernism' must have a history. If one takes the official dates in the register of works, the 5th symphony was written in 1921-1922, and the 6th in 1924-1925. In actual fact there is a little longer between the two works, but if one takes the dates as they stand, there is only a single year between the two works. Namely the

year 1923, the year which Jan Maegaard, again in *The Nielsen Companion*, discusses as the fatal year of the new music in Europe. Anyway, one cannot rule out that Carl Nielsen had fetched some help or inspiration in a changed *zeitgeist*, also even if it is difficult to point out, and also even if we are naturally talking of something that comes from inside – not an outer force, as has been said about the 6th symphony.

It is not only the overall scheme or table of the 6th symphony that is inspiring. All the tables are extremely interesting – also the tables of the harmonic progressions in each phase of the movements; the tables can connect one with an 'immediate' or a new way of hearing of the works.

In this connection it is essential, in my view, that Grimley has not the least fear of contact when it comes to sonata form and its ordinary theory.

It is also in relation to this that one wishes to go a little further in turning back to one of Grimley's main thoughts, the relationship between *Durchbruch* and sonata form.

It can begin with the sentence of Carl Nielsen which was written quickly in a letter to Henrik Knudsen in answer to his description of the *Espansiva* symphony, and which as I will trust, most people who are engaged with Nielsen, are attracted to and would like to interpret; it goes like this: "We should try at once to get away from the keys and still work convincingly diatonically. This is

the gist of the matter; and in this I feel a yearning within me for freedom.¹

Grimley seeks to show what it is to act diatonically convincingly and answers by referring to his own particular differentiation between the chromatic background space and the event-space. The triadic passages in the foreground are diatonically convincing, but the chromatic procedure suggests that the composer no longer acknowledges the keys' mutual hierarchic relationships.

But Carl Nielsen maintains sonata form, as is clearly documented in Grimley's book. Thus one's perspective is extended and one has come back to the relationship between sonata form and the modern category, breakthrough. The idea appears in many places in modern thinking, for example in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* – 'There is basically only one problem in the world, and that is: how does one break through?' – and in modern philosophy and theology. Maybe one can put it thus: we say that in the classic sonata form there are movements from note to note and from bar to bar according to the same system that constitutes the larger form, cadences, tonality, modulations and so on. The micro- and macro level unfold in the same way.

In contrast to this, the twelve tone music of Schönberg and others marks a

whole new way of movement from note to note and from bar to bar. But it appears not as a corresponding transformation of the larger form; it moves in different phases, not least and surprisingly in some of Schönberg's first movements and other works in sonata form.

It has been objected that sonata form is knitted so tightly to the tonal system that it is really no longer the same form, although it can be heard without any further theory.

However, one can turn the whole thing round: instead of hinting at an emergency solution, a backwards step or something that stick to to the old, one can see sonata form in twelve tone works as a great renewal of sonata form, a new phase in its history.

Twelve tone works that model themselves on sonata form embody the form through a pure experience of time passing, of time's proportions, unique phase divisions and systems of repetition, but wholly outside the impact of traditional tonality, including harmony's psychological impact in classic romantic music. Like a kind of cleansing, phenomenological 'insight into the essence' of a sequence in time. So far as I'm aware Nielsen never actually uses the expression 'twelve tone music', but his use of sonata form – away from keys and yet diatonically convincing – is still relevant in in this special and probably not so frequently discussed connection.

What concerns the close relationship between the category 'break-

1 "Vi skulde paa engang se at komme bort fra Tonearterne og alligevel virke diatonisk overbevisende. Dette er Sagen; og her føler jeg mig i en Stræben efter Frihed". (letter to Henrik Knudsen, 19.08.1913, *CNB*, vol. 4, No. 708.

through' on the one hand and sonata form on the other, *Durchbruch*, is, according to Adorno, something which comes from sonata form, but still also something which turns itself towards the form, making a distance, a critic or establishing a meta-consciousness. And according to Adorno one of the reasons why Mahler's music cannot be understood as 'Sunday religion with a decorative justification of the ways of the world', as he writes. He thinks that the Viennese classical texture is no longer fit for the conditions that Mahler is subject to. But it is difficult not to see sonata form as a phenomenon in Western culture as an alternative way of experiencing time, in relation to history and nature. It is in one way an alternative to a pure ritual experience of time and an alternative to the linear, evolutionary or revolutionary consciousness of time's passage. It unites continuity and interruptions, procedural and architectonic form in the same movement. With a single intensified repetition at the moment of the reprise. And never wholly in flight with or parallel to the passage of time in the world.

One can could also just as well say that breakthrough is a function of the modern sonata form as it is something that is a stranger to the form and on the edge of time.

'Breakthrough' in most of the named Carl Nielsen works, but not them all – and in Mahler's 1st symphony – is not a meteor that comes from outer space. Even though it can sound like that

in the case of Nielsen's two piano works, *Chaconne* and *Theme and Variations*. Nearly all the instances that are characterised as 'breakthrough' by Grimley are either intensified repetitions of something else one has heard – or at any rate hinted at – earlier in the movement; or are themselves repeated, for example in the two piano works, which are not in sonata form, but amongst other things obtain their sharpness from the way they follow set forms that are older than sonata form. In any case, the breakthroughs are time and form elements.

The destabilising, unease-awakening breakthrough is not balanced by, but is integrated into a form that itself has incorporated the break. In the first movement of the 1st symphony, the C major chord and the following G minor motive at the moment of reprise – it must be so, because the 'root' of the key has been prepared in the previous bars – is transformed into a G minor chord plus the G minor motive, but now with the motive in two tempi at the same time.

Exactly the same thing happens in the first movement of *The Inextinguishable*. The first bar is so uneasy and destabilised, that one nearly cannot appreciate everything that's happening. In the reprise, on the other hand, there is a great energetic outpouring which is wholly transparent, tonally speaking. Only the point in both places is that if Nielsen – which is completely unthinkable, but if one still imagines it – used the form of the reprise at the movement's begin-

ning, there would have been no outcome, in any event not as strong as now. The breakthrough as a category and sonata form find themselves in a reciprocal dependency, a dialectic, which amongst other things may be explained by the unique relationship between the exposition's and the reprise's beginnings.

Sonata form has not, which Grimley definitely hasn't written, but others think so, served out its role. It is not an accidental holster, but a vital element in the creation of modern music.

In a way all of this is written between the lines, if one adds up everything Grimley's book, the tables, the analyses, the Danish cultural history and theory's history. But there might be a possibility to go further here. And others will go further down other channels.

Beyond discussion is, that this is a brilliant and original book, in all ways on a level with its subject, and with innumerable new perspectives and fresh insights. One may hope that the book gets widely read: I give it my best wishes on the way.

Jørgen I. Jensen

Anne-Marie Reynolds: Carl Nielsen's Voice: His Songs in Context. Copenhagen, The Royal Library, Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010.

Let it be said straight away: the American music researcher Anne-Marie Reynolds' book about Carl Nielsen's songs is nothing less than a gift for research on the composer. As it says in the book's foreword, no-one has published a monograph that deals with a particular genre of Nielsen's compositions since Robert Simpson's book on the symphonies in 1952, and this study is the first to give both a cultural-historical and an analytic introduction to Nielsen's songs. He came close to composing in the region of 300 songs in the period which stretched from his time at the Conservatoire in the 1880s to 1930, the year before he died. The songs have, on the grounds of their language, been primarily reserved for Danes or those who speak Danish. This has, amongst other things, led to the publication of a series of recordings of the songs under the banner, 'the lesser-known Nielsen', but with Anne-Marie Reynolds' book it is now possible for non-Danish-speaking Nielsen enthusiasts to make themselves familiar with this genre, which many – including the undersigned – consider to be one of the composer's most important musical contributions to the Danish cultural inheritance.

Even though the songs supposed to be that part of the composer's production which Danes know best have, until

now, not received much scholarly interest, either from Danes or foreign music researchers. The tendency seems to be that the songs are considered as an important part of Danish cultural heritage, but also at the same time something that should be looked at from a respectful distance. Anne-Marie Reynolds' interest in the songs was awakened in her childhood, much of which she, together with her family, spent in Denmark. She learned the songs – in the same way as many Danes – by singing them as morning songs in school. Her interest was put into practice in a doctorate on the songs, and it is this dissertation which has now been reworked, and come out in book form. People outside Denmark shall no longer know Carl Nielsen only as one of the twentieth century's great symphonists, but also as a composer of songs. With this goal in view, in her book Reynolds analyses the songs as, 'compositions significant in their own right due to their sheer number, the fact that many of them were based on some of Denmark's finest poetry, that Nielsen wrote them over the course of his entire career and valued them highly, and, not least, because the Danish people have embraced a number of them as their own folk music' (p. 48). Reynolds objects to the view often put forward in the literature, that there is a discontinuity between the composer's symphonic music and his songs. She supports this view with many citations from Carl Nielsen himself, in which the composer argued that all his music was interrelated

in its use of the same compositional technique: 'Look closely at the basic motive of my compositions, and you will find that it is the same in both the large symphonies and the small songs' (p. 24).¹ Because all Nielsen's music is built on the same basic principles, Anne-Marie Reynolds thinks that it doesn't make sense to handle the songs in isolation, and as the book's subtitle indicates, she therefore sets the songs in a wider context, for example considering them in relation to the first symphony and *Masquerade*.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is a lengthy introduction in which Anne-Marie Reynolds sketches the background to Carl Nielsen's songs and gives readers a quick overview of the evolution of his song production. One also finds here an excellent account of Carl Nielsen research up to now. Hitherto the symphonies' complexity has attracted the most analytical attention, while interest in the songs has been directed towards their national significance, that is, to Nielsen's place in the Danish song tradition. After a discussion of what, according to Carl Dahlhaus and Carl Nielsen themselves, constitutes a national song, Reynolds argues that it is possible, through thorough analysis, 'to tease apart the musical strands that connect Nielsen to the European folk song tradition and those that ema-

1 *trænger man ind til Grundcellen i mine Kompositioner, vil det sikkert vise sig, at denne Celle er den samme baade i de store Symfonier og i de smaa Viser.*

nate from his distinctive compositional persona' (p. 42), and that is, amongst other things, what she sets out to show through her analysis.

In chapters two and three, Anne-Marie Reynolds addresses Carl Nielsen's art songs. She wants to show through her analysis that, despite their superficial dissimilarities in terms of character, style, key, thematic relationships and overarching progressions, the songs are related to each other in their unified musical technique and structure in the same way that one can find thematic unity, images and speech in the poetry which provides their texts. Before undertaking her basic analysis, Anne-Marie Reynolds clothes her reader well with background knowledge. She sketches, amongst other things, the time when these songs were composed, and discusses which authors' texts Nielsen made use of. She provides, too, an overall characterization of the poetry and the songs. Finally, she also shows how these early art songs were treated in the reception literature.

Reynolds bases her analysis on a representative selection from the art songs, namely the three volumes of songs with texts by J.P. Jacobsen and Ludvig Holstein (*Music to Five Poems by J.P. Jacobsen*, op. 4, 1892, *Songs and Verses by J.P. Jacobsen*, op. 6, 1893, and *Songs to Texts by Ludvig Holstein*, op. 10, 1897, that comprise, respectively, 5, 5 and 6 songs). The author thinks that each of these functioned as a sort of testing ground for those compositional techniques and forms which

Carl Nielsen was to explore later in his symphonies. Many of them show stylistic traits that are characteristic of his compositions in their overall form, whilst others herald the popular tone which he gradually cultivated in the coming years. A more simple style is already anticipated in the publication of *Strophic Songs* (1907), and so just as Nielsen's style in the art songs is becoming established, he gradually departs from it again in exchange for the popular [*folkelige*] style.

Anne-Marie Reynolds thinks that it is no coincidence that Carl Nielsen, at this early point in his career, should choose to set poems by J.P. Jacobsen and Ludvig Holstein. In comparison to romantic poetry from the first part of the 19th century, their lyrics were more experimental and have a more colourful and sensual character which invited a correspondingly expressive musical clothing. The analysis of the art songs shows that Carl Nielsen, in his work in setting Jacobsen's and Holstein's poems, was clearly determined to preserve the correct declamation of the words and – in most circumstances – also to preserve their verse structure, but according to Reynolds his prime concern was to reveal each poem's particular character and underline it with all possible musical means. Whether the issue is the overall formal structure, the accompaniment's working out, the formation of the melody or the harmonic progression, it can, in Reynolds' opinion, be explained by the tight relationship between text and music. 'The

means he used range in complexity from simple features at the surface to sophisticated techniques operating at the level of structure – techniques that would come to characterize Nielsen’s purely instrumental music, but were originally motivated by the experimental aspects of Jacobsen’s and Holstein’s poetry” (p. 67). Overall, Anne-Marie Reynolds thinks that Carl Nielsen’s songs inspired by poetic sources show both organic unity and development even if in a miniature format.

In her analysis of the songs Reynolds shows again and again how nearly all the musical parameters of Carl Nielsen’s early songs are more or less directly led by their text. For my taste this focus is taken too far at times, so that some of her conclusions seem somewhat laboured. But that does not change the fact that the analyses are thoroughly worked through, and that the author argues strongly for her point of view through the whole book.

In the book’s second main section (chapters 4 and 5), Anne-Marie Reynolds concerns herself with Carl Nielsen’s popular songs. In extending the scope of his style from art songs to popular songs, Carl Nielsen came to be one of that prominent group of composers including Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Mahler and Reger who have followed the same practice. For Nielsen, as for these other composers, the motivation for writing popular songs can be traced back to J.A.P. Schulz’s *Lieder im Volkston*, published between 1782 and 1790, and fur-

ther still to Johann Gottfried Herder’s essay, *Die Lieder alter Völker*, of 1773. In order to evaluate Carl Nielsen’s contribution to the genre of ‘the popular song’, Anne-Marie Reynolds therefore places a relatively strong emphasis on outlining the historical background with the intention of positioning Nielsen in terms of the original German and Austrian tradition.

In Denmark Weyse was the first minded to compose popular songs, but gradually the number of new popular songs diminished as the nineteenth century went on, to the advantage of romances and a more art-song-like style. And just at that time, when Schulz’s idea of popular song was about to drown in romantic embellishment, came N.F.S. Grundtvig (1782-1873), the country’s leading philosopher, priest, poet and educationalist, expressing a wish for a simple nationalist song style for church, school and the community. Grundtvig has generally had immense importance for Danish society, not least through the introduction of folk high schools as a place where middle and working class people could live together, studying their country’s language, history and culture – and most important of all – learn from each other about their chosen subject. Singing together was an important element in high school culture, and so from around 1840 and through the rest of the century, a large number of song books were published. Only at the end of the century were the collections published with both texts and music to-

gether. The only criterion for bringing out one of these books was popularity, and therefore they contained a stylistic mish-mash combining folksongs with folk-like songs, psalms, patriotic songs, songs from ballad operas and from the Danish romantic composers like Weyse, Hartmann, Rung, Berggreen, Heise and Gade. Things had come a long way from the ideal which Schulz had formulated a good century earlier, and this was the point at which Carl Nielsen took an interest in popular song.

In the literature Thomas Laub is typically credited, including by Carl Nielsen himself, for Nielsen beginning to compose popular songs. But Anne-Marie Reynolds argues that Carl Nielsen's music was already moving in a popular direction, long before the two men initiated their collaboration, marking a boundary in Danish song history, on the two volumes, *A Score of Danish Songs* (published 1915 and 1917). The progression towards this style can already be seen in the previously mentioned volumes of art songs, with 'Du danske Mand' originally written as a revue song in 1906, and not least in *John the Roadman* (Jens Vejmand), first published in *Strophic Songs* in 1907, which was unusually popular in its own time. This last named song became, to the composer's great regret, thought by many to be his greatest musical achievement, and this at a time when he had, for example, two great symphonies, two operas and a good deal of chamber music behind him. Reynolds goes through the background

to Laub and Nielsen's collaboration and objectives with the publication of the two *A Score of Danish Songs*. She also stresses that the composition of popular songs was, for Carl Nielsen, a duty which he took no less seriously than his other compositional activities. He saw it as a special challenge which reflected his general attitude to composition: 'Folkelig music has always been especially close to my heart. For many, many years the public saw me as a writer of "large forms", and when on occasion I composed simple and popular melodies, people thought they didn't really go together, that it went against my true nature... [O]n the contrary, I feel that precisely the same principles, the same musicality, are required to produce a unified composition, whether large or small' (p. 144). The songs from Laub and Nielsen's collections have had exceptionally strong influence as they have been incorporated in diverse song books. The two men's collaboration on the improvement of popular song culminated in 1922 with the publication of *The Folk High School Melody Book* (Folkehøjskolens Melodibog), the first harmonised melody book for the folk high school movement, which the two men edited together with Thorvald Aagaard and Oluf Ring. The object was to support the Danish community singing tradition and at the same time introduce people to a new generation of Danish poets.

Anne-Marie Reynolds seeks, after this historical sketch, to define the characteristics of Carl Nielsen's popular

song style. Often this style is described in terms of the Schulz-motto, *Schein des Bekannten*, but what is implied in this unclear description is rather harder to establish. In contrast to the earlier art songs which are composed to texts by only two authors, Carl Nielsen employs texts by no fewer than 70 poets for the popular songs. The poems cover a time span of a century, and range from romantic poems to so called regional lyrics, but even so have much in common by way of their subjects. Still it is thought that in writing his popular songs he has had a particular predilection for four authors: Adam Oehlenschläger, Jeppe Aakjær, Poul Møller and H.C. Andersen. Anne-Marie Reynolds thinks that that is because there are common themes in their poetry: love for the fatherland, for the natural landscape in particular, and kindness amongst people as well as the direct and unsentimental tone in which these themes are expressed.

In her analysis of Carl Nielsen's popular songs, Anne-Marie Reynolds concentrates on the two volumes, *A Score of Danish Songs*, because it was here that Nielsen and Laub mainly sketched out the parameters for their style. The focus of the analysis is the concordance between text and music, organicism and thwarted expectations. "A folkelig melody should be molded to the text", he said, "it should fit like a glove on a hand." In fact, in composing his folkelige songs this precise mirroring of the poetic structure seems to have been Nielsen's

guiding principle, taking priority over underscoring the text's meaning, whereas the exact opposite is true of his approach to composing art songs' (p.164). The structure and syntax of the poems were fundamental to the design of Nielsen's musical utterance, and he used a combination of melodic, rhythmic and harmonic means to set off the rhyme scheme. Against this background, Anne-Marie Reynolds notes that when Nielsen said, 'I familiarized myself intensely with the poems until I finally felt I was in that world,' he paid just as much attention to the architecture of the poem as to the thought it contained (p. 178).

Like the art songs, the popular songs hold the same form of organic unity and development, though in a simpler and sparer fashion. According to Reynolds that is one of the ways in which Carl Nielsen tried to make the desired, 'shine of something well known'. Basing her argument on a number of examples, she concludes: "There are no inexplicable leaps or harmonies; nothing happens without having been prepared through a step-by-step process. Despite their brevity and apparent artlessness, virtually every moment in these folkelige songs is organically connected to a past and a future, as well as to other levels of structure' (pp. 196-97).

Even though Carl Nielsen had intended the songs to have this, 'shine of something well known', Reynolds thinks that what makes the songs both expressive and recognizable is their listeners'

expectations, which in one moment are aroused and the next are not redeemed. Again, she leads back to the original poems and gives, in her analysis, a series of examples showing how this is expressed. It can, for example, be through melodic deviation or a harmony which takes us to an unexpected place. The melodies should be easy to remember, and are therefore often fairly predictable, while there are surprises awaiting in their harmonisation. 'In these folkelige songs, despite their brevity and economy, Nielsen escapes the bounds of the overriding tonic surprisingly often, using stepwise voice-leading as his means' (p. 197).

In the literature about Carl Nielsen it is frequently pointed out that his music is stylistically eclectic. After having analysed Carl Nielsen's art songs and the popular songs, Anne-Marie Reynolds seeks to explain the relationship that can be seen between the songs, whether freestanding or seen together, and the composer's works in larger forms. This is one of the first attempts in the literature to evaluate the relationship between Carl Nielsen's songs and that in other genres, from likenesses on the surface to underlying musical processes that are common to both mature styles. She starts by looking at the first symphony (chapter 6) as it was composed at the same time as the early art songs and shares their musical traits, which stretch from direct quotations of whole musical textures to specific harmonic progressions, contrapuntal techniques

and formal structures – naturally unfolded on a larger scale in the symphony than in the songs.

Her position is that one can see, in a large part of the first symphony, and especially in the first three movements, an influence from the experience he had gained in writing the early songs. It seems as if the early song collections are used as a compositional playground in respect to technique and structure which Nielsen could carry over to his first symphony. The conclusion drawn from this comparative analysis reads as follows: 'In comparing this symphony with the early song collections written at the same time, we find that what was concentrated in the small is magnified in the large. We have learned that in song and symphony alike Nielsen's harmonic scheme is driven by the interaction of two fundamental lines, and melody and harmony are unified by the transfer of motivic material from one realm to the other. Nielsen relies equally on contrapuntal techniques handed down through the centuries – such as the 5-6 technique, invertible counterpoint and imitation – and on more recent harmonic developments – such as modal mixture, ambiguity of tonal function, delayed harmonic resolution, and symmetrical tonal and formal schemes (p. 256).

Masquerade is the other great work which Anne-Marie Reynolds examines in light of her analysis of the songs (chapter 7). She considers the opera to be a cornerstone in the whole of Carl Nielsen's

production, because it was composed at a critical time in his compositional development. The work epitomises the two contrasting styles, the artful and the popular, which Carl Nielsen later developed in the weighty contributions to both the symphonic genre and popular song which followed. In this sense *Masquerade* contains, according to Reynolds, the key to Nielsen's future artistic growth, a microcosm of the stylistic extension which characterises his whole compositional oeuvre. In the opera, Nielsen uses the contrasting styles to represent different dramatic themes as well as to differentiate between the characters. 'Nielsen underscored Holberg's dramatic themes and characterized the main roles with appropriate musical styles drawn from the entire range of his compositional persona, uniting the points along this musico-dramatic continuum with a symmetrical key scheme' (p. 237).

My expectations of the book were high, and I have not been disappointed. Anne-Marie Reynolds demonstrates a thorough knowledge of Denmark and Danish conditions which she uses to give, to both Carl Nielsen connoisseurs and the curious beginner, a splendid introduction to the universe around his songs, from the background to their creation through thorough analysis of text and music, and not least, of the relationship between them. On the way she places the songs in perspective and an overall relationship through great musical knowledge and insight to both Carl Nielsen's other works and to that of other composers. Carl Nielsen's songs are, in spite of their small condensed forms, seen as great by Danish eyes. The book makes it possible for the international public to acknowledge this, and it is my hope that many will make use of this opportunity.

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