CARL NIELSEN STUDIES

VOLUME VI · 2020

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Edited by Michelle Assay, David Fanning (editor-in-chief), Daniel Grimley, Niels Krabbe (consultant), and Christopher Tarrant

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this volume:

CNB	*Carl Nielsen: Brevudgaven* [Carl Nielsen, Letters Edition], vols. 1-12, Copenhagen 2005-2015
CNL	*Carl Nielsen: Selected Letters and Diaries*, Copenhagen, 2017
CNS	*Carl Nielsens Samling, Det Kongelige Bibliotek* [The Carl Nielsen Collection, The Royal Library]
CNU	*Carl Nielsen Udgaven* [The Carl Nielsen Edition], Copenhagen 1997-2009
CNW	*Catalogue of Carl Nielsen's Works*, Copenhagen 2016
Samtid	*Carl Nielsen til sin Samtid* [Nielsen to his Contemporaries], ed. John Fellow, three vols., Copenhagen, 1999

EDITORIAL

Since the fifth of its volumes in 2012, *Carl Nielsen Studies* has been in abeyance. Nielsen studies have not, however. In addition to the various projects summarised in the Reports section (*infra*), the composer's 150th anniversary celebrations in 2015 and their aftermath brought forth a significant number of academic conference papers, several of which are gathered in the present volume alongside new contributions specially commissioned.

One reason for the suspension of the journal is that in 2013 it lost its founder and guiding light, Niels Krabbe, to retirement. For various reasons both his replacement at The Royal Library and the other Danish members of the editorial team found it impossible to continue his work on *Carl Nielsen Studies*. Meanwhile, conditions for music research at the Library, for decades so favourable to music under the institution's director Erland Kolding Nielsen, became less hospitable with his passing in January 2017 (see Obituaries, also *infra*). Later that year, supported by a seed-corn grant from the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester targeted specially at collaborations with Copenhagen, funding was gained from the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Foundation for three further issues of the journal. These issues are to be issued at intervals, with David Fanning as Editor-in-Chief, a reconstituted Editorial Board, and the agreement of the Royal Library to continue to host the publication, now online only, on its platform tidsskrift.dk. We thank Svend Larsen, Chief Executive of the Royal Library, for the permission to allow this continued hosting.

That the editorial team should now be based entirely in the UK is in some ways a pity, because it suggests – wholly misleadingly – that Nielsen is still a 'prophet without honour'. But the move is not entirely surprising, since Nielsen's music has been more warmly received and more intensively studied and performed in Britain than anywhere outside Denmark, at least for the past 70 years. It is tempting to put this state of affairs down to affinities of national temperament: a shared inclination, perhaps, towards pragmatism rather than dogmatism, a particular appreciation of the virtues of excitement, adventure, freedom, comedy and empathy in music, yet all

held in moderation and balance. Such national stereotypes, as Nielsen himself knew perfectly well, are dangerous, however, and in any case not so much conclusions to be argued over as topics for ongoing investigation. For a carefully considered examination, see Paolo Muntoni's MA thesis, 'Den britiske reception af Carl Nielsen', Copenhagen 2011, and his article 'Carl Nielsen in the United Kingdom', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 165-95, especially its final sections 'Anglo-Danish affinities' and 'Empirical humanism'.

National reception is precisely the focus of Jean-Luc Caron's article for *Carl Nielsen Studies* 6, which we are pleased to include because its author has long been a champion of the composer in France, a country that continues to view him with almost total indifference. Otherwise the articles in *Carl Nielsen Studies* 6 are variously synthetic, interpretative and supplementary, and in some instances a combination of two of these. They are synthetic in the sense of drawing together hitherto dispersed fragments of information under one heading; interpretative in the sense of examining well-known works from fresh perspectives; and supplementary in the sense of bringing to light previously unexamined archival sources or materials not previously referenced in the Nielsen literature.

Niels Krabbe considers Nielsen's unfinished opera projects, with special attention to *Portia*, a version of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* that reached the stage of a complete scenario in Nielsen's hand and a libretto for Act 1 by his collaborator, Sophus Michaëlis; both sources are here presented in commentated translations. David Fanning and Michelle Assay bring together the fragments of Nielsen's documented connection with Shakespeare, which lead them to propose a new understanding of the Flute Concerto as an embodiment of character-archetypes from *The Tempest*. In their respective articles about *Saul and David*, Marie-Louise Zervides and Paolo Muntoni examine the opera in the light of Symbolism and the Italian opera tradition. Carsten Eskildsen and Claus Røllum-Larsen probe Nielsen's complicated relations with major figures in Danish music history – Niels W. Gade and Louis Glass, respectively. Jean-Luc Caron offers a round-up of Nielsen's ambiguous reception in the French press and the volume is completed by Niels Krabbe's above-mentioned Reports and Obituaries.

A conspicuous absence from *Carl Nielsen Studies* 6 is any contribution founded principally on musical analysis. This, then, may be a good place to draw attention to Dr. Christopher Tarrant's fine article on 'Structural acceleration in Nielsen's *Sinfonia espansiva*', in *20th-century Music*, 38/3 (October 2019), 358-86. We hope that this may stimulate analytical contributions to the Nielsen Conference currently being planned by Dr Tarrant – co-editor of this journal but not responsible for this particular advertisement – at the University of Newcastle for April 2021. It is anticipated that the

conference papers will provide the backbone for *Carl Nielsen Studies* 7, alongside those from the Copenhagen Nielsen conference, which has been postponed from April 2020 to a date as yet unknown. Meanwhile, papers may be submitted for inclusion in future volumes of *Carl Nielsen Studies*: to david.fanning@manchester.ac.uk.

The editors wish to thank their counterparts at the *Danish Music Yearbook*, *Fund og Forskning*, and *Musikvidenskabelige kompositioner: Festskrift til Niels Krabbe* (Copenhagen 2006) for their kind permission to re-use four of the articles printed here. We express our collective gratitude to our consultant Prof. Emeritus Dr. Niels Krabbe for his unstinting support at all stages in the rebirth of the journal he founded and steered so wisely and energetically through its first five issues.

David Fanning

NIELSEN'S UNREALISED OPERA PLANS[1]

By Niels Krabbe

It is a well-known fact that Carl Nielsen's oeuvre includes only two complete operas: *Saul and David* and *Maskarade*, both composed in the years between 1899 and 1905. Later he composed incidental music for a great number of plays, but no more operas. As will be seen from the present article, however, he nourished ideas for further works within the opera genre, and both before and after the two finished works he had opera plans which in the end he never realised.

The fates of the two known operas, both at their first appearance and during their reception in the following years up to today, have been very different. *Maskarade* was an enormous success at the premiere, as well as in later restagings during the composer's life both in Denmark and Sweden, and after his death and till now it has obtained a position as the 'Danish National Opera'. It was thus – quite naturally – included in the list of twelve selected musical works included in former culture minister Brian Mikkelsen's now forgotten cultural canon from 2006.[2] Even in spite of Kasper Holten's modernisation of its most recent production at The Royal Theatre in the 2010s – far from the world of playwright Ludvig Holberg on which the story was based – with an open-plan kitchen, Arv as a Polish guest worker, and the switch between when as human beings we wear masks and when we do not, it still seems to have survived.

Saul and David on the other hand, seems to have had more problems. First of all, it has had far fewer performances than *Maskarade*, both in Nielsen's time and after. Secondly and contrary to *Maskarade*, it received a somewhat lukewarm public

1 This article is a slightly revised version of my 'Carl Nielsens ikke-realiserede operaplaner', *Fund og Forskning*, 56 (2017), 297-334. Used by kind permission of the editors.

2 For a critical approach to the minister's canon project, see my article 'Den Danske musikkanon – generelle overvejelser og bemærkninger til udvalgte værker' [The Danish music canon – general reflection and comments on selected works], in John T. Lauridsen and Olaf Olsen (eds.), *Umisteligt. Festskrift til Erland Kolding Nielsen*, Copenhagen 2007, 695-718.

and critical reception at its premiere in 1902. *Politiken's* review discharges the following ironic torrent of words:

> If you add up Marshall Stig, Hans Heiling and Noureddin[3] and calculate the mean, you will get a clear picture of this Saul, writhing with the most unbelievable operatic anguishes. The moment when the king falls on his sword, whirls round, makes a number of little jumps, and then collapses was one of the most dreadful death scenes we have ever experienced.

Later, however, a more urbane choice of wording is made for the criticism of the work in general – words, which later have been part of any review of the opera: that it is too stagnant because of the prominent position of the passages for choir:

> If you want to benefit to any extent from Mr. Nielsen's new opera, don't go there with an expectation of an ordinary, theatrical opera, and do not expect to be overwhelmed by effects, but rather be prepared to stand face to face with a stern, serious, determined musician. You will not be facing a person who trims his opera with a kind of routine that is not unusual these days. Be prepared more than once during the evening to be confronted with an oratorio rather than with a music drama.[4]

After having praised the power of Vilhelm Herold's voice (in the role of David) and the magnificence of the choir, *Jyllands-Posten* ends its review with the following prophetic words: 'And yet – one does not feel absolutely certain that "Saul and David" will captivate the audience in the future.'

The last sentence has proved to be correct. None of the productions of the opera since the 1960s which I know of has caught on, and the most recent performances at the Royal Opera in Copenhagen, during the Nielsen jubilee year of 2015, in the English director David Poutney's staging, are no exception. This treatment of the opera, which by that time had not been performed at our national opera stage in the previous 25 years, was dismal. It is understandable – when it comes to that – that a director will feel inclined to make the story of the Old Testament relevant to a modern audience by moving the plot to a non-specified Middle East totalitarian state. But the

3 Reference to the important characters in three operas which had been at the repertoire of The Royal Theatre in the years up to the premiere of *Saul and David*: Marshall Stig in Peter Heise's *King and Marshal*, Hans Heiling in Heinrich Marschner's opera carrying his name, and Noureddin in C.E.F. Horneman's opera *Aladdin*.

4 *Politiken*, 29.11.1902.

radical change of important details in the story, such as Samuel's merely simulated death leading to his overthrow of the anointed David at the final chord of the opera, is a violation of both the words and the music. Indications of such a conflict between the prophet and the royal throne are to be found neither in Einar Christiansen's libretto nor in the Old Testament model. To which should be added that the chronology of the story breaks down.[5] Rehabilitation of the work will probably last many years; who would – after this – dare to plunge into this masterwork once more?

The above observations on the reception of the two operas are thrown into relief by the fact that Nielsen himself felt quite the opposite: at every new performance he found that there were problems with *Maskarade* ('The girl with the crooked back' as he called the third act), whereas as late as in 1929 he expressed a general satisfaction with *Saul and David*. In an interview from that year, he summed up his view on the two works in the following words:

> By the way, isn't it strange that when *Maskarade,* my latest opera, was performed again recently, there were many things on which I would take a different view and passages where I would accept both changes and abridgments, whereas in *Saul and David* I could after all not think of any change. I suppose this is because when you are merry and gay, you will act rather casually, whereas when one deals with serious and elevated matters, you have already considered the situation and looked around for solutions.[6]

Unrealised Opera Plans

Both before and after his two complete operas, each of which in its own way stands as a milestone in Danish opera history, Nielsen, as mentioned above, entertained plans for a number of other operas, which, however, never reached further than a preliminary stage.

The sources related to Nielsen's life and work include information about an additional five opera projects, which in the end came to naught. For three of them loose sketches for the plot are available, and in some cases short musical sketches or individual 'numbers' are to be found. Nielsen's working titles for four of the works in question are *Judith, Psycke*, *The Silent Woman*, and *Portia* – the last-named no doubt being the most interesting. Plans for the fifth unrealised opera project – based on

5 It should be mentioned, however, that in 1 Samuel chapter 8 there is a certain antithesis between Samuel and the Israelites concerning the wish of the people to have a king to govern the country. But this part of the Books of Samuel has nothing to do with the story of Saul and David as unfolded in Nielsen's opera.

6 Interview in *Politiken* 26.2.1929 – see *Samtid*, Copenhagen 1999, vol. 2, 519.

Jens Peter Jacobsen's famous novel *Fru Marie Grubbe* [Mrs. Marie Grubbe] from 1876 – were probably given up mainly because the librettist Einar Christiansen considered the topic ill-suited for dramatic adaptation, as appears from his thorough explanation in a letter to Nielsen from 1911, ending in the following words:

> I am very sorry about this, because I would very much like to serve you and work together with you. But if this were to happen, we would have to find a different basis for our collaboration. I shall probably be back in town sometime this week, and then I shall telephone you. But I feel certain that not even during a conversation you will be able to make me change my mind when it comes to 'Marie Grubbe'.[7]

Judith (1890?), CNW A 2

Already in the years around 1890 Nielsen had plans to write an opera built on the dramatic story from the Old Testament Apocrypha about Judith and her beheading of the enemy military commander, Holofernes.

Two different sources document this work: among the *Portia* papers (see below) there are three sheets in Nielsen's hand, which in very general terms sketch the plot of a future opera on Judith;[8] and in his little book of sketches, which he began at the end of the 1880s and apparently carried with him on his journey to Rome in 1900, a small unison piece with the title *Judith, Hyrdedrengens Melodi* ('Judith, tune of the shepherd lad') for oboe (CNW 416, facsimile in CNU IV/1, 283) together with a number of unfinished fragments with the titles *Judith, Kor og Dans til Judith*, *Judiths Dans* and *(Judith vender tilbage) mystisk* ('Judith, choir and dance for Judith', 'Judith's dance' and 'Return of Judith, mysterious').[9] The sketches only comprise a few bars each and from them one cannot form any impression of how the work would have developed. Neither in letters from the time nor in retrospect did Nielsen ever mention a possible opera about this episode from the Old Testament. It is possible that this interest in aspects of the history of the Israelites – not least the role 'the people', according to Nielsen's synopsis, were to have taken – may have inspired him to start work on the story of Saul and David some years later: the more so, since there is a clear parallel between Judith's fight on behalf of the Israelites against the Assyrian leader, Holofernes, and David's against the Philistine warrior, Goliath.

7 Letter from Einar Christiansen to Nielsen, 3.7.1911, CNB IV, 86-87.

8 The Royal Library, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV, 2.

9 See CNU IV/1, *Introduction*, l and 283, and Nielsen's book of sketches, CNS 358a, fols. 22^{r}, 50^{v}, 54^{v}, 50^{r}, and 55^{v}.

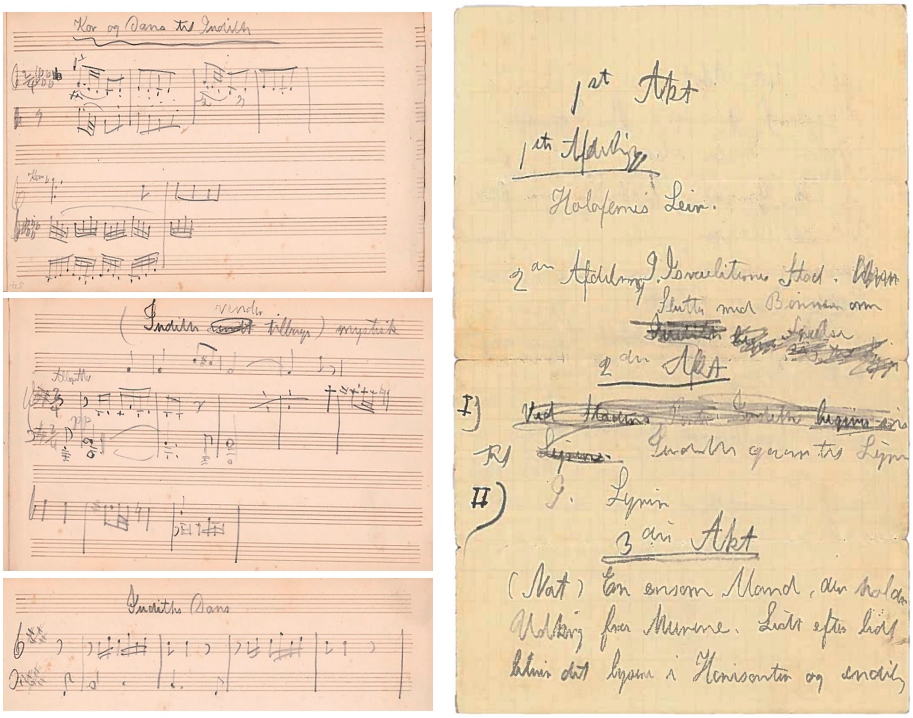


Plate 1: Left-hand column – sketches for *Judith* in Nielsen's sketch book from 1890s (The Royal Library, CNS 358a, fols. 54^{r}, 54^{v}, 55^{v}). Right-hand column – first page of Nielsen's synopsis of the plot of *Judith* (The Royal Library, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV, 2): 1st Akt / 1st Afdeling / Holofernes Lejr. / 2^{den} Afdeling I Israeliternes Stad / Slutter med Bønnen om / Frelse / 2^{den} Akt / I) Judith gaar til Lejren / II) I Lejren / 3^{die} Akt / (Nat) En ensom Mand, der holder / Udkig fra Murene. Lidt efter lidt / bliver det lysere i Horisonten og endelig" [Act 1, first part, Holofernes' camp; second part, In the city of the Israeli, ends with the prayer for salvation. Act 2, I, Judith goes to the camp; II, In the camp. Act 3, (night). A lonely man who keeps a lookout from the walls. Gradually it becomes more and more light in the horizon and finally].

Amor and Psyke (1898)

Nielsen's plans to write an opera based on the Greek myth about Amor and Psyche, known from a Roman source from the second century,[10] are evident from an unfinished draft of the plot of the story written on the back of a letter of 28 March 1898 to some of his friends.[11] The draft includes the first two acts of the opera, thus being

10 The story of Amor and Psyche is known from Lucius Apulejus' novel, *The Golden Ass.*

11 Letter from Sofie and Axel Olrik of 28 March 1898, CNB II, 32.

broken off before the myth has come to an end. At a certain point the composer even indicates his wish for a duet. Apart from this, no further references, not to speak of musical sketches, are known. The project does not seem to have gone any further, and soon Nielsen would be fully absorbed in work on *Saul and David*. The full draft reads:

Act 1
The oracle is consulted and answers that Pysche is to be dressed as a bride and placed on the desolate rock that is seen hanging precariously out over the sea. Psyche is called forth and adorned. She ascends the rock, to the grief of the people. Darkness falls, and the wind begins to blow. The torches go out. (Scene change). A grove with Amor's golden castle on the right.

Spirits and genies surround Psyche who has been borne thither by the wind. They receive her as their mistress, and give her food and drink. A fanfare announces Amor's arrival. The genies place a veil around Psyche's face and command her not to open it in order to see the ruler of the castle.

Amor and Psyche (duet).

Closes with the two lovers entering the castle to tender caresses, embracing one another.

Act 2
Psyche alone. Later come her sisters (sneaky and wicked) to whom she shows all her splendour. The sisters walk through the castle and look at everything with curiosity. At a moment when Pysche is alone, Pan comes and warns Psyche of a danger that hangs menacingly over her head; he strengthens her conviction not to inquire who her master and lover is. The sisters return from their tour of the castle and now call upon Psyche to slay Amor at night in order thus to free herself. They give her a dagger. Darkness falls. Psyche lies down on a couch. Amor returns. While he is asleep, Psyche secretly gets up and fetches a lamp[12]

Portia (1898)
Among the five unrealized opera projects which were on Nielsen's mind at various points, an opera on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (under the working title *Portia*) seems to be the one which was closest to being realised and in which Nielsen was most whole-heartedly absorbed.[13] His work with Shakespeare's text took place in late 1898 and the beginning of 1899, but as late as 1928 he mentioned his old plans

12 Translation by David Fanning, CNL, 166.
13 In the following discussion, *The Merchant of Venice* will be abbreviated MV.

in an interview with a Swedish paper in connection with a performance of *Saul and David* in Gothenburg. Here he recalls his old ideas:

> *Saul and David* was written around the turn of the century. I had plans to write my first opera. I read a lot of text books and collaborated with various authors, but could not find a suitable subject. At a certain stage I was much obsessed with composing music for *The Merchant of Venice.* It got to the stage where the librettist had finished the first act. But still, this was not a subject I felt comfortable with. To select the theme for an opera is identical with trying on a costume. If you are to get something out of the subject, it has to fit and you must thrive in it.[14]

Probably during the autumn of 1898 Nielsen had begun a collaboration on Shakespeare's opera with the poet Sophus Michaëlis, who was the same age as him. It is not known which of the two took the initiative. A few years earlier Michaëlis had written the libretto of *Aucasin and Nicolette* with music by August Enna – a work which Nielsen had attended at The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen without in any way finding it especially interesting. [15]

Sources are available from both collaborators which until now do not seem to have evoked any interest on the part of Nielsen scholars: a complete fair copy of the libretto of the first act in Michaëlis' hand (16 pages), and pencil sketches in Nielsen's hand of the whole plot of the opera with numerous corrections (eight pages, see facsimiles and translation below).[16] During the process of work, however, Nielsen seems to have lost interest in the project, without informing Michaëlis, as may be seen from two letters by Michaëlis to the composer. In the first, from December 1898, he apologizes for not having started work soon enough, at the same time promising to send a sketch for the first act as soon as possible. That promise seems to have been fulfilled by the fair copy mentioned above:

> Dear Carl Nielsen – I do think I bear most of the blame for the fact that 'the damp has leaked out'. But this needs a long explanation. For two or three months I was so busy in Odense that I couldn't work with anything related to literature. You were patient and did not remind me at any time. I have never experienced anything like that before. The very fact that you showed no impatience whatsoever made me suspicious: didn't he on relfection like the plan we

14 Original in *Göteborg*-Tidningen, 27.11.1928, repr. in *Samtid*, 505-07.
15 See CNB I, 430.
16 The Royal Library, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV, 2.

> had formed? I gradually came to view what I now understand was thoughtfulness on your side, as a tacit negation. That's how weirdly a person can run rings around himself. In the end I thought that your silence – for which I owed you gratitude because it was actually indulgence – was a silent breach of our agreement. Now I urgently ask for your apology. Besides, long ago I did a great deal of the work, and now that I've finished other jobs, I shall begin the fair-copying. In a few days I shall send the first act to you, and the rest will follow soon.
>
> [...]
>
> A few days after Christmas we are going to Berlin, Vienna and Venice by land. I am especially looking forward to Venice. – I've always thought I might get some new inspiration for something beautiful in 'Portia'.[17]

Almost a year later it seems that Michaëlis had still not heard a word from the composer and therefore felt obliged to send the following reproach:

> I don't know whether you have left already. But I would like to know what intentions you have with the text which you ordered from me last year. In December I sent the first act to you, but I did not hear anything about whether you had received it. You may remember how hesitant I was when it came to writing opera texts – after previous bad experience. I didn't send any more to you because you didn't utter a word about what you had already received. Now, today I have heard from informed sources that you are working on an opera – but not to *my* text. I was hurt by this. I don't understand why you have told me nothing whatsoever about this. Admittedly we hadn't made a contract which, as you will probably remember, I had wanted. But by receiving *the beginning* without sending it back again you were in any case anyway not released from the preliminary agreement between us.
>
> As I said, I am very aggrieved at this behaviour which until now is quite incomprehensible to me.[18]

Later on, the two of them must have been reconciled, since Nielsen composed music to no fewer than five works by Michaëlis during the years to come.[19]

17 Letter from Sophus Michaëlis to Carl Nielsen, 13.12.1898, CNB II. 92-93.

18 Letter of 2.11.1899, CNB II, 150.

19 *Hymn to Life* (1921, CNW 376), *Hymn to Art* (1929, CNW 113), incidental music for *Cupid and the Poet* (1930, CNW 23), the song 'We love you, our far North' (1930, CNW 419) and *Song for the Danish Cremation Society* (1931, CNW 354).

There is much to indicate that it was Georg Brandes who aroused Nielsen's interest in Shakespeare.[20] Since the early 1890s he had associated with Brandes, and in a note in his diary from May 1893 he mentions a private visit to Brandes, including an enthusiastic description of his intellectual gifts.[21] A year later, he asked Brandes for a letter of recommendation to the German painter and sculptor Max Klinger (giving Nielsen the chance to study Klinger's ongoing work with his Beethoven monument).[22] Probably the most decisive impetus, however, was Brandes' epoch-making book on Shakespeare published in three volumes in the years 1895-96. In the Nielsen couple's correspondence there are several references to Brandes' monograph, and in one of her letters Anne Marie straightforwardly urges Nielsen to take an interest in *The Merchant of Venice*:

> His (i.e. Brandes') Schakespeare [*sic*] is written very vivaciously and is very interesting. How would The Merchant of Venice work as an opera[.] According to Brandes' description I think it must be extremely appropriate, both because there is a fine atmosphere and merry details in it, and because it has a number of thorough character types in it.[23]

Perhaps it was simply the presentation of Shakespeare's work by Brandes that inspired Michaëlis and Nielsen to change the original title to *Portia.* Brandes focuses to a great extent on her character in a gentle, almost infatuated description:[24]

> Portia's nature is health, its appearance is joy, and its bright happiness is the element of her life. She descends from happiness, she grew up in happiness, she is surrounded by all the conditions and attributes of happiness, and she is distributing happiness with both hands. She is noble, right to the bottom of her heart; she is not a swan born in the duck-yard,[25] but she is in harmony with her surroundings and with herself.

20 See also the article by David Fanning and Michelle Assay in the present volume.

21 'Brandes' gift is both glittering and shining. He is constantly wide awake. I have the same feeling when I speak with him as when I fence with foils against Bertelsen' – diary entry, 28.5.1893, CNB I, 297; CNL, 102.

22 Letter from Nielsen to Brandes 19.11.1894, CNB I, 394-96.

23 Letter from Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen to Carl Nielsen, 2.9.1897, CNB I, 530-31.

24 Brandes' Shakespeare monograph is still one of the finest portrayals of Shakespeare's life and work in Danish. The section about Portia can be found in his *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. 8, Copenhagen 1901, 185 ff.

25 Reference to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, *The Ugly Duckling.*

Sophus Michaelis was also a great admirer of Brandes. It is thus difficult to decide which of the two text sources – Nielsen's synopsis of the whole opera or Michaëlis' first act – is the original and which is the derivation (see Tables 1 and 2 below). Most likely, however, Nielsen wrote the synopsis for the whole opera first, after which Michaëlis then began to work out the libretto based on the composer's cues. Apparently, he never got any further than the first act as it is written in his manuscript and to which he waited in vain for a reaction from the Nielsen.

Both documents indicate that the final result would have been quite different from Shakespeare's model, both when it comes to the plot and to characterisation. Immediately one notices that the character of Antonio, who in Shakespeare is the one that pawns a pound of his own flesh in order to get a loan from Shylock the Jew, is totally missing in Michaëlis' list of characters for the first act and strongly played down in Nielsen's synopsis (see Table 1). Generally speaking, the serious and conflict-ridden parts of the plot seem to have been left out, in favour of the comical and lyrical parts. As an example, Nielsen's text ends in complete harmony, totally leaving out the tiff in the fifth act of Shakespeare's original in connection with the two lovers having given away their rings. Nielsen's overall preoccupation in those days with joy, sun and light – which is to say the so-called 'vitalism' project that was prominent in certain circles at that time and in Nielsen's cantata *Hymnus amoris* and his *Helios Overture* – dominates the end of the fourth act, and thus the whole opera:

> After that Portia throws away her disguise. (I find such behaviour better in an opera, where it becomes more lucid). Then Shylock arrives, casting a shadow over the whole scenery. When he has left again the sun rises far away above the golden domes and spires of Venice. Hymn to the sun, light, life, light and happiness (see the synopsis, p. 8).

Michaëlis's text as it is known from the fifteen handwritten pages in the Royal Library only comprises the first act of the planned opera, by and large equivalent to the first three pages of Nielsen's sketch. Michaëlis' list of characters includes all Shakespeare's main characters except Antonio, Tubal, the Clown and Giobbe. As may be seen on the facsimile of the first page, five of the characters' names are underlined, probably indicating that they are meant to have singing parts in the work (see Appendix 2, below).

The libretto's relation to Shakespeare's model is somewhat loose. Some of the wording is very close to Shakespeare's text; this goes for Bassanio's description of his lady in Belmont (MV 1,1, 161-175), Shylock's famous comparison of the feelings and senses of a Jew and a Christian (MV 1,3, 102.2-124 , but without Antonio being

present in Michaëlis' libretto, and MV 3.1, 48-66). On the whole Michaëlis's first act consists of a selection of scenes taken from the first three acts of Shakespeare's play, in a mix that focuses mainly on three aspects of the plot of the original play: the deal of the loan of the 3000 ducats (again without any mention of Antonio as the borrower); Lorenzo's success in his carrying off Shylock's daughter, Jessica; and Shylock's despair at the loss of his money and his daughter.

There is no inner dynamic in the way the scenes are linked together, and there is none of Shakespeare's characterisation of his cast. One could say that a certain pre-understanding of the Shakespearean text would have been a *sine qua non* for the audience, if they were to attend an opera on the text presented here in Michaëlis' suggestion to Nielsen. And one might add that it was a stroke of luck that nothing came of the plans for *Portia, an opera by Sophus Michaëlis and Carl Nielsen*.

Michaëlis' manuscript of the First Act is a mixture of prose and poetry in fixed meters and rhyming lines, the latter probably hinting to Nielsen that here an aria would be appropriate. The English translation below of the Danish original does not reflect the Danish rhymes (see Table 2).

Pages 1-3 were probably the source for Michaëlis' libretto of Act 1.
Contrary to Michaelis' text, Antonio's name is actually mentioned here.

	[**Page 1**]
	1st Act
	(Outside Shylock's House)
MV 1.1	Antonio, Basanio and ~~Gratiano~~ Lorenzo.)
	Basanio asks Antonio to lend him money for his courting trip (?) to Belmont.
	Antonio, who has no cash, ~~makes Shylock ..[?] lend to him~~. S. who all the time has been sneaking into and out of his house grumbling at the three gentlemen,... to lend Bassanio the money in exchange for the ~~well known~~ bond Gratiano and Bassanio invite Shylock to take part in a festivity (They leave)
MV I.3, 102-124	S's. monologue full of poison and hate ~~towards~~
	[Page 2]
	~~his enemies~~. Comment: During the previous scene Gratiano has constantly been looking up at Jessica's window, something which has not escaped the Jew's attention.

MV 2.5 ~~It became~~ It begins to get dark. S. leaves for the festivity, but before that he instructs ~~Lancelot~~ and Jessica to take good care of the house. Calmness. Moonlight. Jessica opens the window facing the canal and ~~sings~~ has a monologue with a melancholic and soulful content ~~which~~

[Page 3]

MV 2.6 ~~is proper for moonlight and longing for passion~~. Then Gratiano arrives and carries her off as in Schackespeare [sic]. S., who suspects ~~returns~~ Jessica returns home and finds an empty house ~~...shouts and cries aloud ...~~

MV 2.8 [?] He shouts and cries like as a wild animal. (See Scha 1st Act 8th Scene). A number of [...?] people and urchins arrive. The boys whistle though their fingers towards S. [who...?] He ~~walks~~ runs across the bridge to the town shouting: My ducats! Law! Justice! my Daughter! The Duke! The whole crowd follows him, yelling and whistling, and thus they disappear further and further away.

[Page 4]

MV 2.7, 2.9 Act 2. Belmont

~~Portia and her chambermaid stand working with ...[?] are busy with~~

~~This act ought to begin straight away [?] quietly, little by little working itself up. Perhaps~~

MV 3.2 Scene with a number of comical and touching suitors. Then Bassanio's arrival (perhaps also a ballet) Portia's and Bassanio's love. [...?] Her fear at letting him choose from the caskets (see Act 3 Scene 2). ~~His firm decision to want to ...his great confidence?]~~ His belief in his lucky star and fortune. He begins his choice, placing himself

[Page 5]

in front of ~~the caskets,~~ the three caskets singing to the glory of Portia and of his love. When he has made his choice everyone bursts out in joy and thus the act ends.

<u>Act 3.</u> <u>The courtroom</u>

A small scene which takes place before the ~~court is in session~~ People arrive for the meeting ~~have arrived and the court is in session~~ we are told (either through Antonio or Bassanio ~~who have hurried early to meet up~~ who may have arrived earlier or through some court attendants who are tidying up in the court room), that Bassanio in the highest moment of his happiness has had to leave his beloved in order to save his friend. ~~Then people arrive~~

	[Page 6]
MV 4.1	Then the whole court scene as in S., in such a way, however, that the duke ~~concludes~~ after t Shylock's exit concludes with words of praise addressed to Portia about ~~thus the court will stay victorious forever and a description of the laws of Venice which once again have appeared to be~~ and some general remarks on justice and humanity, which will always defeat wickedness and vindictiveness. The people shout 'Long live the Duke'. Thus the act ends in a serious, dignified and grandiose tone. 4de Act Lorenzo and Jessica report that Portia and her chambermaid are staying in a convent while Bassanio is in

The final intrigue of the plot of MV about the missing rings is not included in Nielsen's synopsis.

Nielsen here makes a mess of who says what to whom.

MV 5.1	[Page 7] Venice. ~~Then the scene as in S.~~ The infatuation by moonlight as in S. Then Bassanio and Antonio arrive. Later, Portia and her chambermaid in lawyers' cloaks. They have been invited by Bassanio but have taken another route. Portia [in disguise] tells Bassanio that she doubts that Portia and her chambermaid have visited the said convent while Bassanio was in Venice. ~~Bassanio~~ She swears by all that is holy that she has seen both of them in Venice. Little by little Bassanio becomes worried and jealous. Finally, Portia throws off

In MV Shylock is not on the stage in the final act

	Page 8 her disguise. Comment (I think this is better suited to an opera, it is more lucid). Then Shylock arrives, casting a shadow over the whole scenery. When he has left again the sun rises far away above the golden domes and spires of Venice. Hymn to the sun, ~~light~~, life, light and happiness.

Table 1: Carl Nielsen's synopsis for the whole opera, annotated translation of a diplomatic transcription of the Danish text in the manuscript (see facsimile of the manuscript at the end of the present article).

The following characters in Shakespeare's play are missing in Michaëlis' list of characters: Antonio ('The Merchant' in Shakespeare's title), Lancelot (Shylock's servant, who leaves him in favour of Bassanio) and Lancelot's father Gioppe (see Table 2).

It is both striking and radical that Antonio never appears in the first act, and apparently, according to the plan, was not meant to appear at all in Michaëlis' libretto.

[page 1]

Portia
Opera in four Acts by Carl Nielsen
Text after Shakspeare's [sic] *'The Merchant of Venice'*
by Sophus Michaëlis

Duke of Venice
Portia
Prince of Marocco, Prince of Arragonia } Portia's suitors
Bassanio
Gratiano, Bassanio's friend
Lorenzo, Jessica's lover
Shylock
Jessica, Shylock's daughter
Nerissa, Portia's maid

In MV Antonio's melancholy, not Bassanio's, is the topic of the introductory conversation of the play.

[page 2]

MV 1,1

First act

Public square in Venice. In the background a canal crossed by a bridge. To the right, Shylock's house.

Bassanio and Gratiano meet each other

Gratiano
Bassanio, my friend, welcome!
Always weighed down and thoughtful like one, who is deeply considering
the art of creating gold.

Bassanio
The art of creating gold –
rather call it: creating debt!

[side 3]

Gratiano
This art you have practised for a long time –

Bassanio
And still I do not master it!

Gratiano
Look at these empty pockets!
Easy come, easy go.

Bassanio
I fired all my golden arrows
towards the golden bird of Mrs. Fortuna –
now I only need one shot
MV 1.1, 140-152 (paraphrased) to make the lady finally smile at me.
Everything has been shot away –
provide a little powder for me,
then things will go smoothly:
I shall hit the mark.

Gratiano
Where does the bird sit on which you are aiming?

[page 4]

Bassanio
MV 1.1, 161-175 In Belmont lives a lady, rich in inheritance,
but a thousand times more by virtue and beauty.
The reputation of beautiful Portia is known far and wide,
for the wind blows suitors her way,
The same reference to Jason's journey to Kolchis as in MV as if the sunshine ringlets of the fair
were the golden skin of Kolkos' strand .
Still, her gaze has tacitly promised me victory:
I believe that Eros made me into a Jason,
if only my ship could get somewhat better sails!
(pointing to his clothes and opening his worn mantle)

Gratiano
Indeed, your outfit could do with some improvement.

Bassanio
Get me 3.000 shabby ducats,
then I shall bring back the golden fleece.

Gratiano
A little golden rain, yes!
from where should it be raining?
Is there no cloud in heaven,
that can shed a little gold into this hat?

Linkage of 1.3 (the covenant of the loan of 3000 ducats) and Lorenzo's plans to carry Jessica off (MV 2.3, 16 ff.)

[page 5]

Psst, Lorenzo! Look, look –
why are you tip-toeing like a cat?

Lorenzo (from the bridge)
Hush! Behind these windows
a God is living, a God of all Gods!

Gratiano
Who is living in the house?

Bassanio
Shylock, the Jew.

Gratiano
Ha, ha! Lorenzo. You are wooing his purse?

Lorenzo
No, his daughter.

Gratiano
And here Bassanio to his ducats.
Then unite!

Lorenzo
I do not ask permission of the Jew.

Bassanio
He will not lend me a brass farthing without a bond.

In MV it is Antonio, who makes the covenant of the loan of 3000 ducats, offering a bond of a pound of his own flesh as security (MV 1.3, 139-49)

[page 6]

Lorenzo
Nonsense, you must try!
Let us get the Jew out here! I will knock at the door at once,
if only to get a glimpse of Jessica!

Shylock (at the door)
What do you want of me?

Gratiano (drags him out, while Lorenzo adroitly puts his head through the door-opening)
Listen! You must raise money!

Shylock (quickly turning round)
Away from the door! Are you going to commit burglary? *(slams door locked)*

Lorenzo (aside)
Now it has happened! Here is my loot *(hides a letter)*

Gratiano
Lend us 3000 ducats!

Shylock
The bond? Is it a good bond? Is it a good man?

Gratiano (pointing at Bassanio)
See for yourself! Here is – the good man.

Bassanio
Joking apart! Lend me 3000 ducats!

In MV the whole of this exchange of words is between Antonio and Shylock, not between Bassanio and Shylock.

The important adversarial relationship between the two 'merchants', Shylock and Antonio (culturally, economically and religiously), has completely disappeared from Michaëlis' text.

[page 7]

Paraphrase of Shylock's long monologue in MV 1.3, 102-24

Shylock (stares fixedly at Bassanio for a long time)
Tell me, master, has a mongrel –money?
Oft you have scold me for being a lousy dog!
Do you believe that I can now spit out golden ducats
in return for every time you have spat at my beard,
when I ran my business at the Rialto?

Bassanio
A blodsucker you were – therefore I spat:
You never lent out without bloody usury.
But if only you had had a Christian soul towards me,
by my God, we would never forget that you are a Jew!

Shylock
.... and become a friend of mine! I see, I see ...
Dear Sir, do forgive me that only now do I forget
how you spat and scorned me!
In thanks for your fair Christian spirit,
do take my money without interest and without a bond.
Am I kind towards you now?

Bassanio
If you meant this, that would show kindness.

Shylock
Done! You shall have 3000 ducats.

The contract is signed between Bassanio and Shylock, not, as in MV, between Antonio and Shylock.

[page 8]

Bassanio
Without a bond?

Gratiano og Lorenzo
Has the Jew gone mad?

Shylock
Without the bond!

Bassanio
Bravo, Shylock!
You may depend on my friendship!
You will be as dear to me as flesh and blood.

Shylock
O yes – like your flesh and blood – for my money I will have your flesh and blood – What do you think if we state in the contract, that if you do not pay back in due time, then you shall pay – shall we say – a pound of flesh, which I myself can take from your body wherever I may choose ?

Bassanio
Three months' credit? *(Shylock nods)*
If so, there is no danger!

Shylock
Danger? O Father Abraham, how can you have any fear?
MV 1.3, 156 ff. What should I do with a pound of your flesh?

[page 9]

I think even beef is worth more than that.
I only want to be your friend. Do step inside,
then we will draw up the contract!
(enters the house with Bassanio)
(to Lorenzo) Away from my door!

Gratiano
Lorenzo, you are shining like a reflection of the Jew's bright gold.

Lorenzo
Yes, this letter is the sun, the white letter of my bliss – though even
MV 2.4, 12-14 whiter is the hand that wrote bliss to me!
Fair Jessica is mine! I can hear the beating of her heart:
towards mine, towards mine it flies through house and battens.
She is as wise and pure as the pure diamond, and she is fair if ever mine eyes speak truly!
So fair and wise and honest from hair to heel
shall she live and forever thrive in my faithful soul!

Gratiano
When is your break-in to take place, Lorenzo?

Lorenzo
Tonight she shall flee with me – dressed up in a page's cloak.
Masked I shall steal away from Bassanio's feast.
Through the window she will descend like a sun.

[page 10]

Gratiano
And I shall meet you with a fast gondola!
(both exit in different directions.)

Bassanio og Shylock

Bassanio
Shylock, you are my friend.
Never did I meet such a worthy Jew.
Make me happy, come to me immediately tonight
and have a meal with me and my friends!

Shylock
I shall come. But, Signor, remember:
do not tempt me with pork!
(Bassanio leaves)

Shylock (spitting after him)
Shame! Your own flesh tempts me.
I hate you and all Christian dogs
who have pushed my people into the dust
– Vendetta I would have, if only I could!
Israel's tribe is exiled in the dessert,
accompanied by the whips of mockery with bended heads,
and not a drop to quench our thirst in the drought,
while we are wandering around, born to be scorned.

[page 11]

MV 3.1, 48-66, when it has turned out that Antonio will not be able to pay.

Has not a Jew eyes, mouth and limbs
and senses like the Christian? Is the blood of Levi not red?
Isn't he fed by the same nourishment, poisoned by the same venom
and dying the same death?
Cannot his lips smile, his eyes cry, and when he is wounded, will he not bleed then, and when kicked, must he not glow with vengefulness?

Revenge! God of Israel, let the enemy fall into my hands!
Sentenced to your – the judge's – sharp knife!
Once and for all I will quench in flesh and blood
the grudge saved up for millions of lives!
Revenge! God of Israel,
let the enemy fall into my hands!

(he goes to the door, waving at Jessica)

MV 2.5, 11 ff.

Jessica, take my keys, protect my house!
I have been asked out tonight– I only accept out of hate,
to gorge on the lavish Christians – they fawn on my gold.
Look after the house, don't look out of the window
at the bawl and farce of the Christian fools.!
Bolt all the shutters of my sober house!

(carefully locking the door and leaving)

Dusk has approached. Bright moonshine falls on Shylock's house, glittering in the water of the canal.

[page 12]

Jessica (opening the window facing the canal)

MV 2.6, 1-50

Wave, do you gurgle down there –
towards the sea, towards the sea –
The swan is rocking from her nest.
Soon I myself shall spread my wings,
follow like a migratory bird
the call from the sea, towards the sea,
build my nest on the mountaintop

Come Lorenzo, long awaited,
bring me the burning glow of life.
It is cold here in the stuffy room –
proudly the ship will sail along
towards a mild and sunny beach,
where – like bridal candles on the meadow –
young hearts are on fire!

Gratiano (arriving with the gondola)

Friends, let the lagoon sway
to the amorous tones of the lute!
Upon the singing waves
the torchlight will skim like gold.

[page 13]

Lorenzo (from the bridge: masked)
Jessica, your happiness is calling!

Jessica (in the window)
I wonder who stands before the door here?

Lorenzo
Jessica, your happiness is calling –

Jessica
And I move towards the happiness.

Lorenzo
Come, my boy, my torchbearer!

Jessica (jumps out; disguised as a page)
Extinguish your torch! Hide my shame!

Lorenzo
No, my page is my admirer.

Jessica
Oh, I blush in my skin.

Lorenzo
Come, you are tarrying too long –
our escape must be fast!

[page 14]

Jessica (handing him a casket)
Here are gems and money – our escape shall be golden!
(they leave in the gondola with Lorenzo and Gratiano)

Gratiano (The song becomes distant)
Friends, let the laguna swing
to the starry sound of the lute!
Upon the singing waves,
the torchlight will skim in gold.

Total silence. The stage remains empty for some time. Shylock comes sneaking, anxiously and quickly, stops, and suddenly notices the open window with the rope ladder hanging down, rushes into the house – goes to the window – and then out of the door again.

Shylock (shouting)
My daughter!
My ducats!
My daughter has run away!
run away with a Christian,
run away with my gold!
Damnation. Damnation!
Justice!
Stop them!
Stop the thief! Stop my daughter!
Stop my ducats!
Two bags of ducats!

In MV 2.8, 12-22 it is Salanio, who tells us of Shylock's reaction, not Shylock himself who expresses his grief.

[page 15]

People crowd together. Urchins howl and whistle through their fingers.

Chorus
His daughter – his ducats –
Ducats and his daughter!
Hahahahahaha!
Haha! We shall die from laughter!

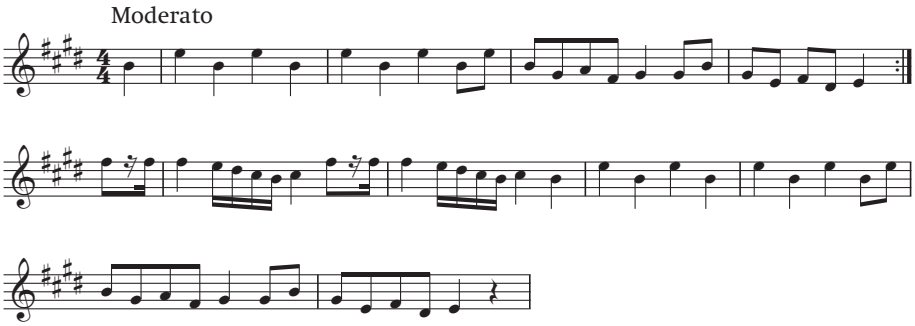
Shylock (furiously towards them)
What are you laughing at, spawn of a lizard!
May cancer devour your tongues!
Justice!
The law shall seek them!
The law shall find them!
Give me back my daughter. Provide my gold!
Get me back my jewels!
I wish she were lying dead at my feet
with the stones in her ears
and the ducats in her coffin!
Justice!
The law!
The Duke!

My daughter!
My ducats!

(Runs across the bridge, followed by the howling and whistling crowd).
CURTAIN

Table 2: Sophus Michaëlis' libretto of the first act, annotated translation of manuscript in Torben Schousboe's Collection XIV, 2 (see facsimile of the whole manuscript at the end of the present article).

A single musical source is known in addition to the above-mentioned textual sources, namely the following unison ten-bar sketch with the heading 'Comic courting (Prince of Aragon?)' and the tempo marking *Moderato* (see Nielsen's synopsis above, page 4):



Ex. 1. Transcription from Nielsen's sketchbook, The Royal Library, CNS 358a, fol. 72.

The Silent Woman (1926-1930), CNW A 2

For more than four years Nielsen was pondering writing an opera on the English playwright Ben Jonson's comedy *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*, performed in London in 1609. According to his own information, he got the idea from reading 'Taine's book on English literature' (see letter to Ove Jørgensen below).[26] Later on, he seems to have discussed the idea with his wife Anne Marie, which is evident from a letter to her from May 1926 with the following short instruction: 'Thank you for the postcard. If you have not contacted The Royal Library yet, don't bother about Ben Jonson'.[27] About

26 Hippolyte Taines, *Den engelske Litteraturs Historie* (French edition, 1863-64; Danish translation, 1874-77)
27 Letter from Nielsen to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, 12.5.1926, CNB IX, 190.

a month later he reports from Damgaard that he and his old friend from Conservatoire days, Margrethe Rosenberg, are in full swing translating Jonson's comedy into Danish, adding somewhat sarcastically: 'I even think it's good for her to ponder on something else than her perpetual "Dreigliederung" and Steiner'.[28] The most exhaustive report on the work – which at the same time is an exposition of the main elements of Jonson's plot – is found in a letter from the summer of 1926 from Nielsen to another friend from his youth, Ove Jørgensen:

> Talking about Jonson! It is not in order to learn English that I am going over *The Silent Woman*. The gist of the matter is that some months ago I was in bed and read about this comedy in Taine's book on English literature and – to tell you a deep secret – I felt like writing an opera on this topic; and as the comedy is neither available in any Scandinavian language nor in German or French, I got hold of an old English edition in The Royal Library and asked Miss Rosenberg to assist me in the translation of it. It is a masque comedy and the plot is the usual one with a rich uncle who cannot stand the slightest noise without flaring up etc., and a nephew who makes a fool of him, almost as in Holberg. Don't you see the musical potential? Nothing can be more fortunate for a composer: first the servants' silence and whole attitude which may be interrupted by a barrel organ in the courtyard; then the master's anger, again silence expressed through whispering music, after that the visit by the disguised and simulating 'Silent Woman' by whom he becomes tricked into marrying; after that intruding and congratulating friends and guests who make a hell of a noise (as agreed on beforehand). And then 'The Woman', who as soon as he has signed the marriage contract exposes herself as a chatty, noisy, rowdy and crazy slut, which fills him with insane horror. And finally at the very end a conciliatory solution.[29]

It seems, however, that Nielsen soon got cold feet, even if thoughts on *The Silent Woman* were still rummaging around at the back of his mind. In a letter to his wife from July 1928 – that is, two years later – he returned to the matter, but now including reflections about how at his age it would probably be more 'appropriate' – as he puts

28 Letter from Nielsen to Anne Marie 4.6.1926, CNB IX, 235; CNL, 641. Margrete Rosenberg was absorbed in theosophical issues. The 'Trichotomy of the Social Organism' (*Soziale Dreigliedrung*) in Steiner's teaching consists of *Geistes leben, Rechtsleben* and *Wirtschaftsleben*, being the equivalent of the three ideals of the French Revolution (Liberté, égalité, fraternité).

29 Letter to Ove Jørgensen 13.6.1926, CNB IX. 257-58; CNL, 646-47.

it – to engage with a topic more serious than Ben Jonson's tomfooleries, for example *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, which Anne Marie seems to have suggested to him.[30]

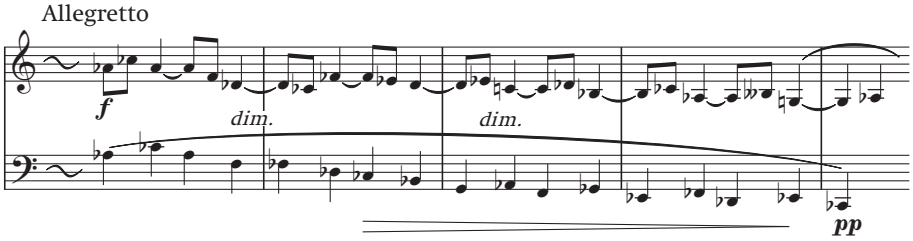
The last time Nielsen mentioned his opera plans was in an interview with the Swedish newspaper, *Göteborg-Tidningen*, from 14 December 1930, although it is not absolutely clear whether it is actually *The Silent Woman* he is talking about.[31] Asked by the journalist, he says that he has a text ready for a new comic opera in two acts, which he is already working on, and which he intends to have performed in Gothenburg when it is finished. But he does not mention which text he is talking about.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that musical ideas for *The Silent Woman* were on his mind during these years, at the same time as he was occupied with other works. In six of the sources for these works one can find short sketches explicitly labelled as ideas for *The Silent Woman*; the manuscripts in question – all in Nielsen's own hand – are:

a) Draft (autograph) of the *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* (CNW 43, source **B**, spring 1928): on page 19 of the draft there is a twelve-bar sketch with the title 'Allegretto moderato (Rondo?) or "The silent Vife [sic]"'.

b) Fair copy (copy and autograph) of *Rhapsody Overture. An Imaginary Journey to the Faroe Islands* (CNW 39, source **A**, 1927), end-dated 'Copenhagen 6 November 27'

On the verso of the last sheet is a five-bar sketch for two voices (treble and bass clefs) with the heading 'End of stanza in *The Silent Women* [sic!]' with the tempo indication *Allegretto.* The sketch has a considerable number of articulation and dynamic indications [see Example 2].



Ex. 2.

30 Letter of 25.7.1928, CNB X, 244; CNL, 711.
31 *Samtid*, 568-69.

c) Pencil draft of *29 Little Preludes for Organ or Harmonium* (CNW 96, source **D**, beginning of 1929):

Page 7 (in the middle of Prelude no. 7): two bar motif with the heading *The Silent Woman* (in Nielsen's hand).

Pages 33-34 (after Prelude no. 29 and pencil draft of the song 'Flower pollen from profusion', CNW 343): the first 12 bars of an *Andantino* for piano (CNW 91), which is known in full from three other sources (one autograph and two copies). The marking *Andantino* in Nielsen's hand is followed by a later (librarian's?) addition in brackets: *[The Silent Woman];* in bb. 3 and 4 the left-hand stave is blank. It clearly looks like a casual sketch with corrections and deletions. The movement is included in facsimile in *CNU* IV/1, Add. 25, source **A** with the following cryptic addition, also in Nielsen's hand: 'This piece is fixed and insured in "The United Jutlandic Fire Insurance under the brand "Poplar Leaf"'. One of the two copies of the movement in The Royal Library is part of the uncatalogued material of the *Carl Nielsen Collection* whereas the other copy carries the signature C II, 10. Both copies have the heading in a foreign hand: *The Silent Woman*. As may be seen above, none of the titles of the four sources for *The Silent Woman* are in Nielsen's hand; they are all added by another. The connection between the movement and the planned opera thus seems to rest on a very fragile foundation. Both the added text mentioned above and the musical appearance of the movement rather indicate some kind of joke. If, on the other hand, this sketch does belong to the opera, it is the only fully written-out movement of *The Silent Woman.*

Page 36 (after the pencil draft of the song 'It's over for a short respite'):[32] eight-bar sketch in two parts with the title *The Silent Woman* and the tempo indication *Allegretto vivo.*

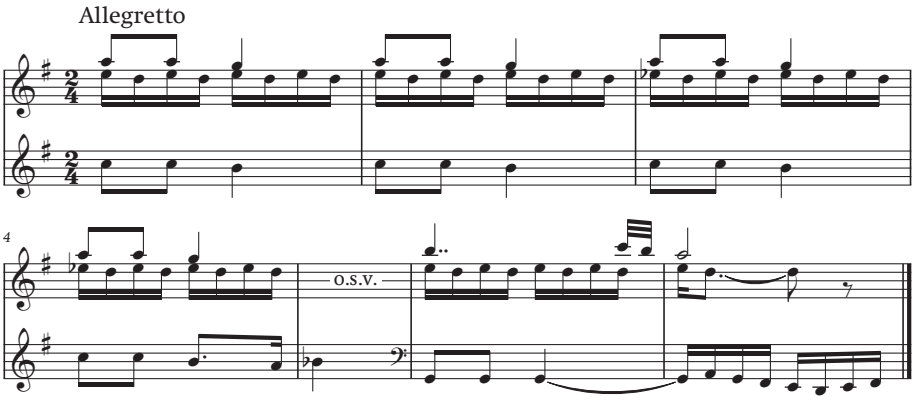
d) *Three Motets* (CNW Coll.24), pencil sketch **C**, spring1929.
Motet no. 3, page 2, lower system: Two bars followed by a repetition mark with the title *The Silent W.* in Nielsen's hand. The sketch is followed directly by a sketch of the alto and bass motifs in bb.46 ff.

e) *Amor og Digteren* (CNW 23), spring 1930.
Complete pencil draft of the overture to Michaëlis' play, end-dated 'Klintholm 9-4-30'. On the reverse of the first folio of the overture are added several indetermi-

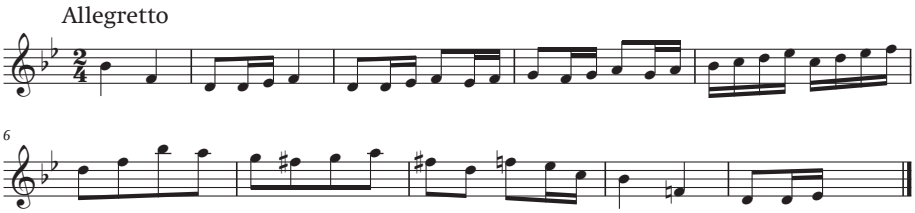
32 The two songs in this manuscript on pages 33 and 35 (CNW 343 and 344) were published as *To Skolesange af Viggo Stuckenberg sat i Musik af Carl Nielsen* [Two School Songs by Viggo Stuckenberg set to music by Carl Nielsen], Birkerød [State School], 1929.

nate sketches in ink and pencil. At the top of the page a single two stave-system with 7 bars (bar 3 crossed out) is added with the title in Nielsen's hand 'Allegretto. Silent Woman'.

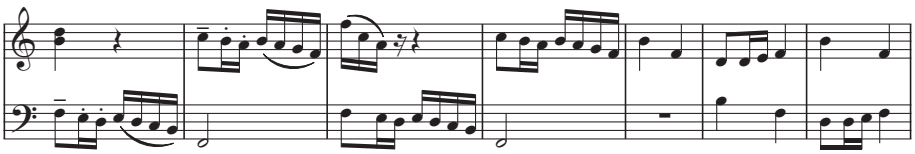
f) Unidentified musical bifolio in Nielsen's hand with the title *The Silent Woman* (CNS 357b/2): half of an A4 bifolio with music on both sides, comprising four incipits, each notated on two systems (see Examples 3-6 below).



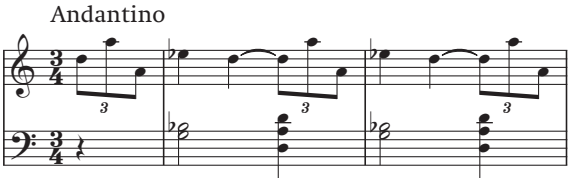
Ex. 3



Ex. 4



Ex. 5



Ex. 6

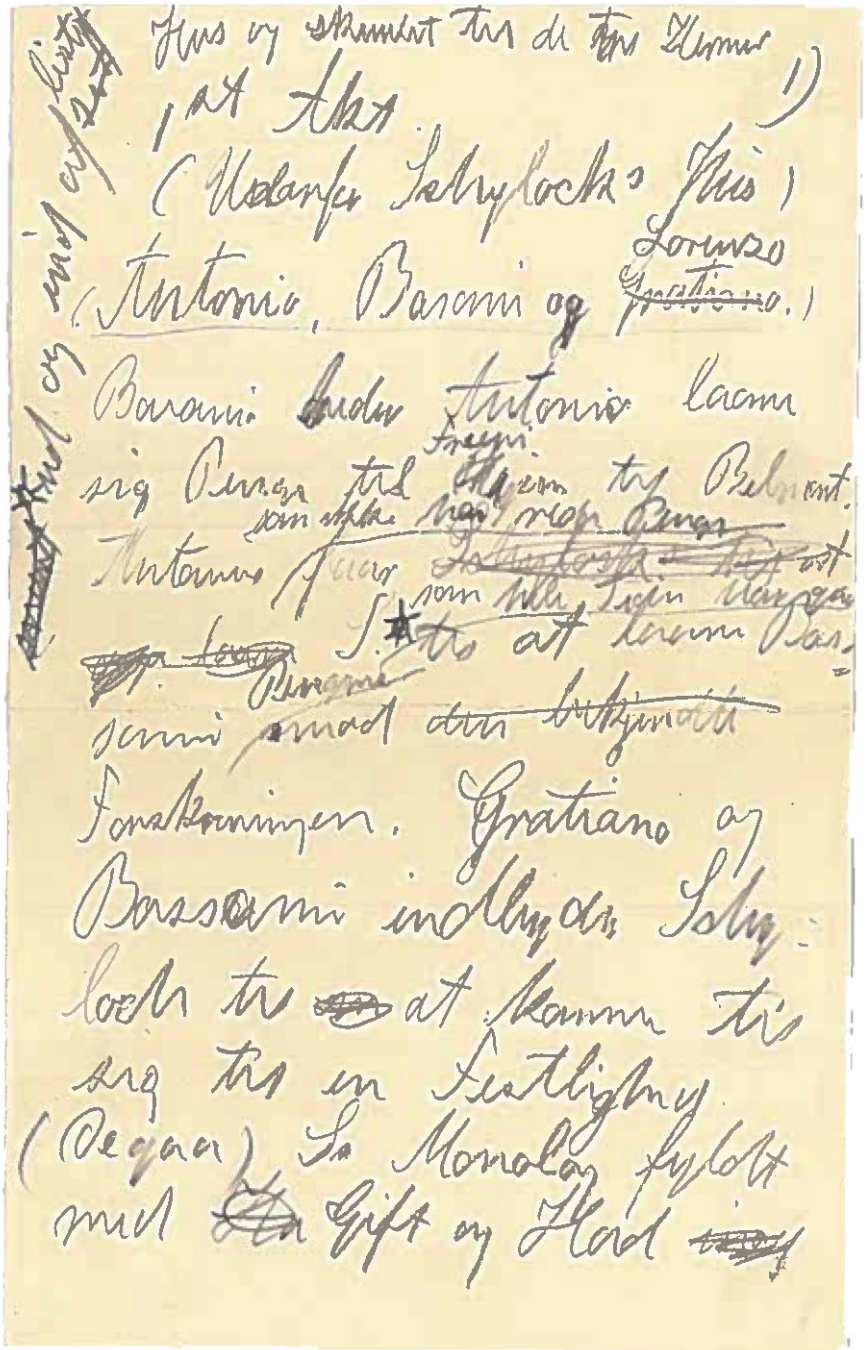
These short musical sketches related to *The Silent Woman* were apparently notated casually and spontaneously, on manuscript paper containing music of other works on which the composer happened to be working. As is apparent from the list above, Nielsen seems to have used any manuscript paper that was to hand at a given time, writing down his ideas on any stave that happened to be free. The sketches over a period of four years, combined with Nielsen's own remarks in the interview quoted above about his ongoing work on a new opera, could indicate that at a certain time more substantial material for an opera on Ben Jonson's *The Silent Opera* existed. If so, this is now lost. But in any case it seems beyond doubt that he was preoccupied with such a work and that ideas came to his mind concurrently with his work on other compositions.[33]

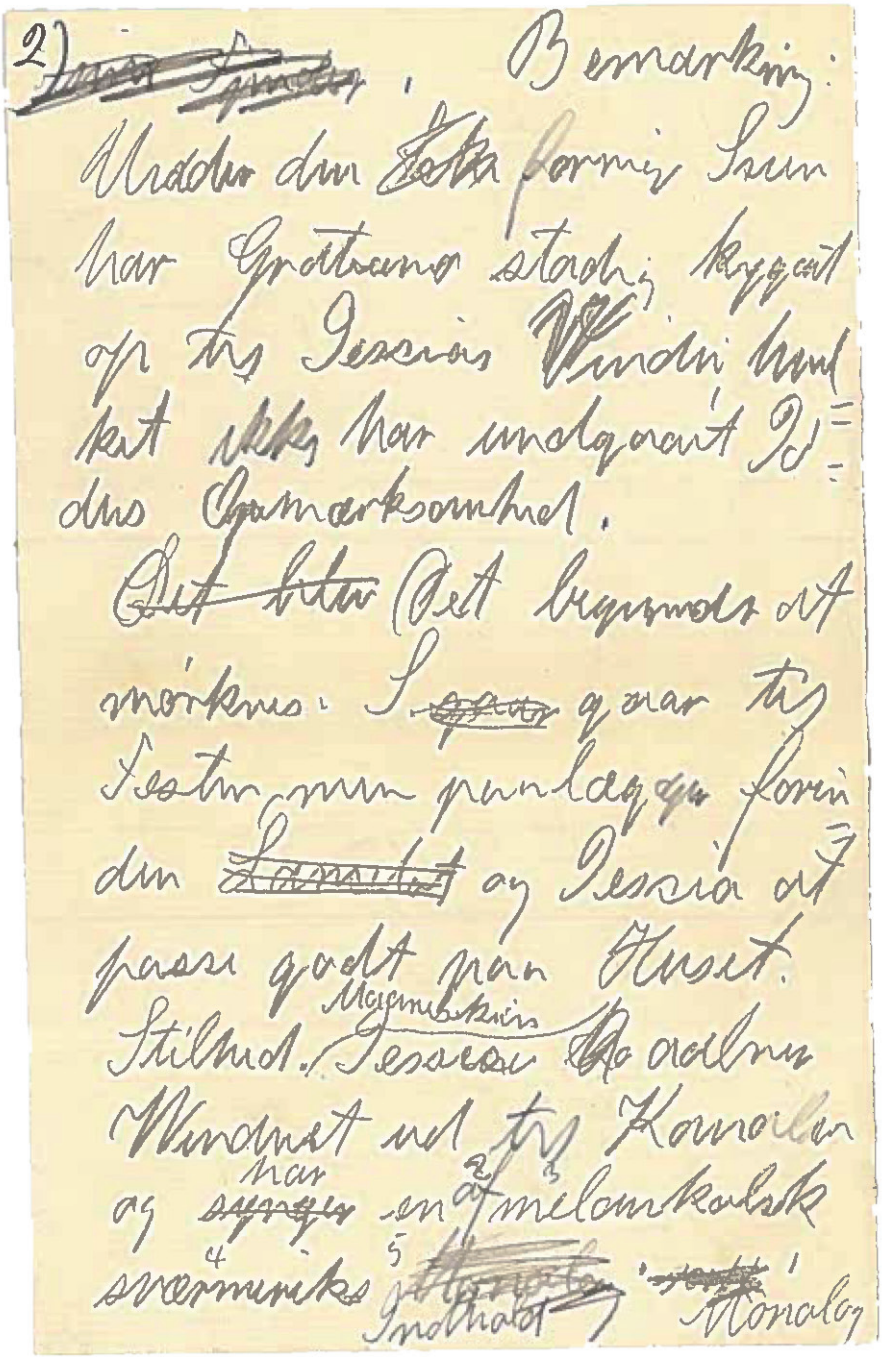
One by one, and for various reasons, Nielsen's opera plans, as sketched above, came to nothing, and as we all know, he never finished other operas than the two well-known works from the beginning of the century, *Saul and David* and *Maskarade*. The five fragments, however, show how at certain periods of his life he had thoughts on further contributions to the opera genre – in the early years as a logical consequence of his great interest in international opera, in connection with his self-educational tours, and towards the end of his life perhaps rather as a token of the fact that he had by then overcome his many frustrations with regard to The Royal Theatre – the only theatre in Denmark at that time that would have had the resources to mount a new opera by him.

33 Five years after Nielsen had given up Ben Jonson's comedy, Richard Strauss wrote his opera, *Die schweigsame Frau*, based on the same text!

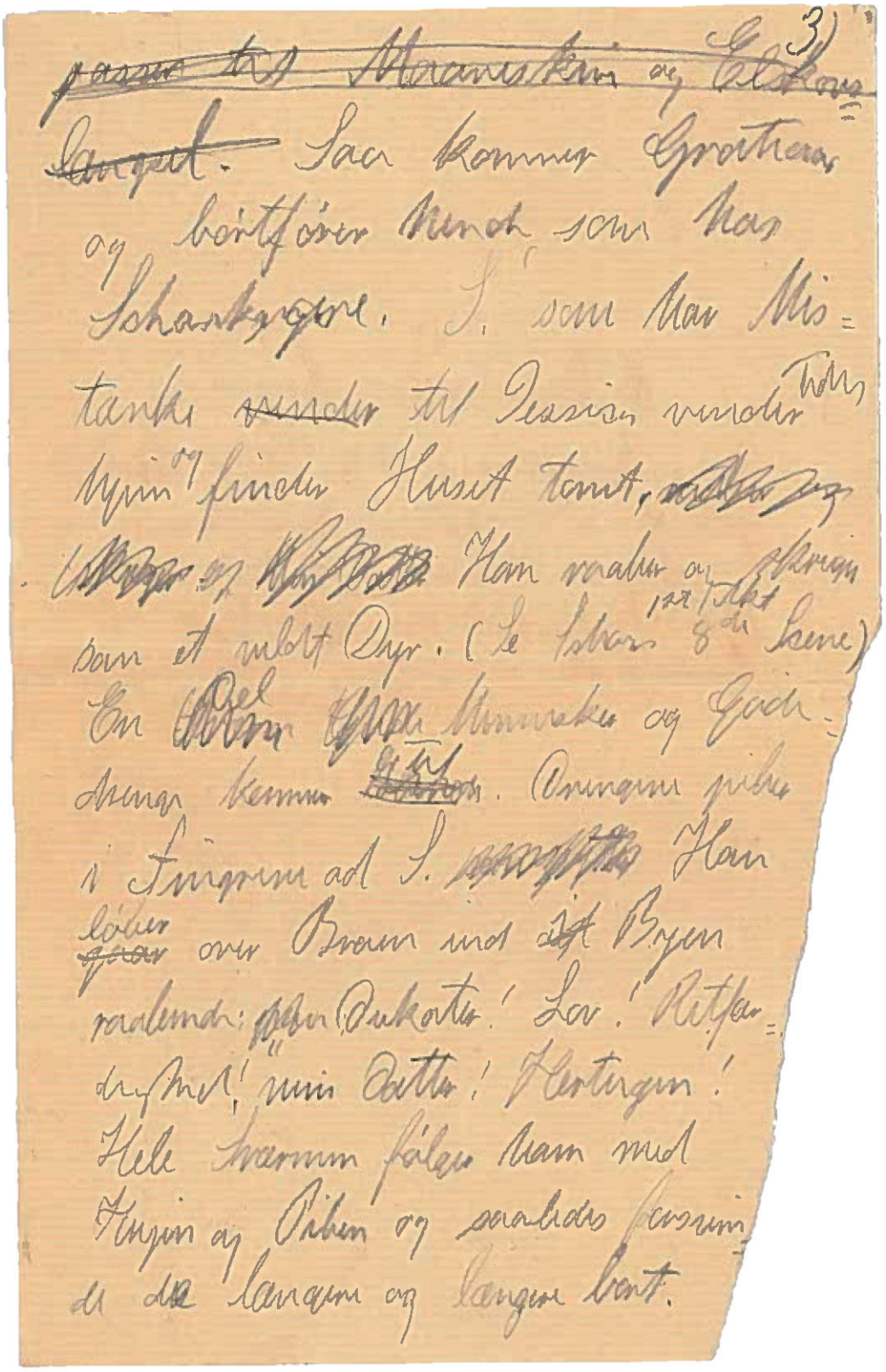
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: *Nielsen's synopsis of the whole opera (excluding the two pages between pp. 5 and 6 with a synopsis of the beginning of Judith), manuscript in The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV,2.*



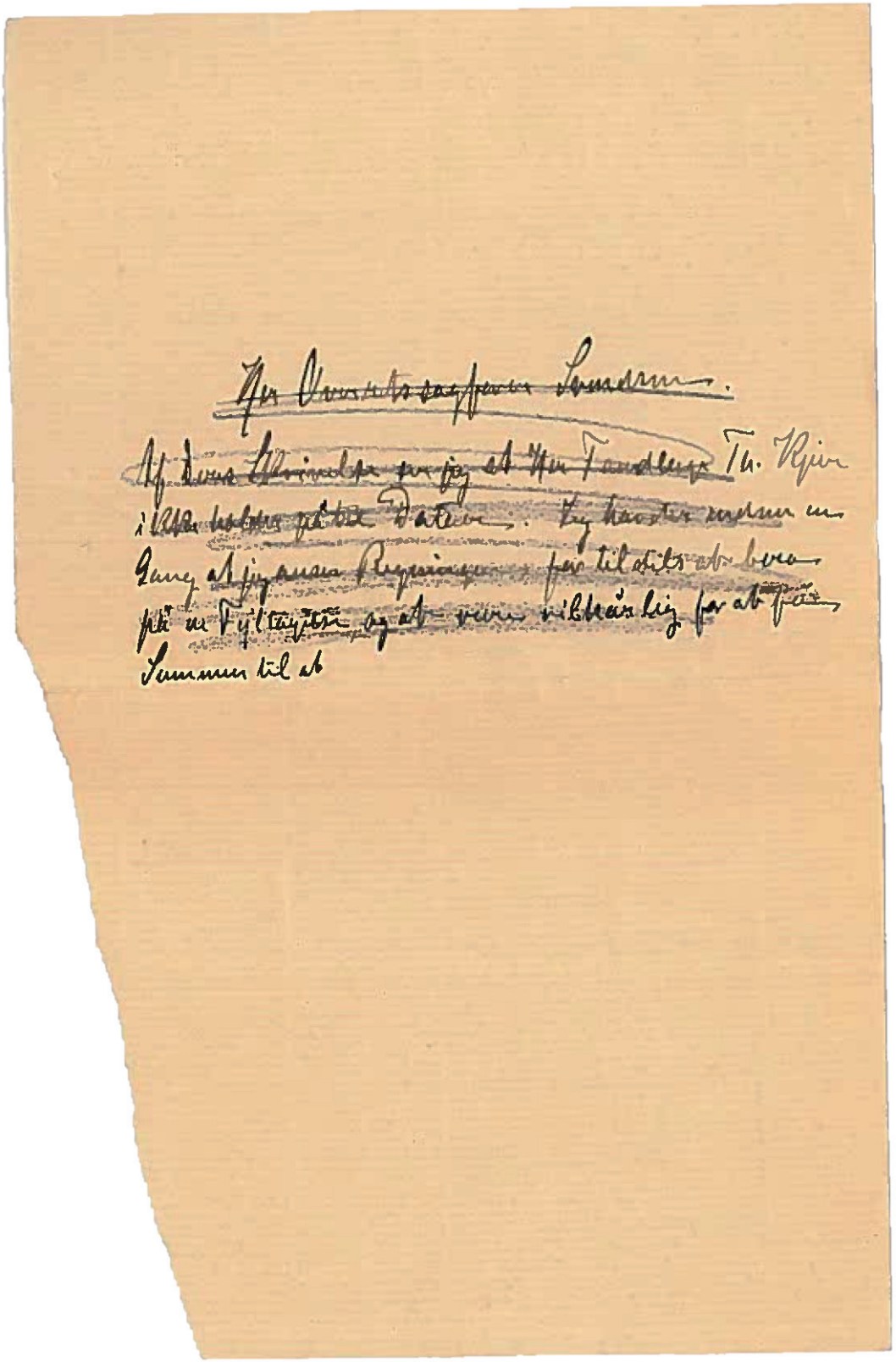


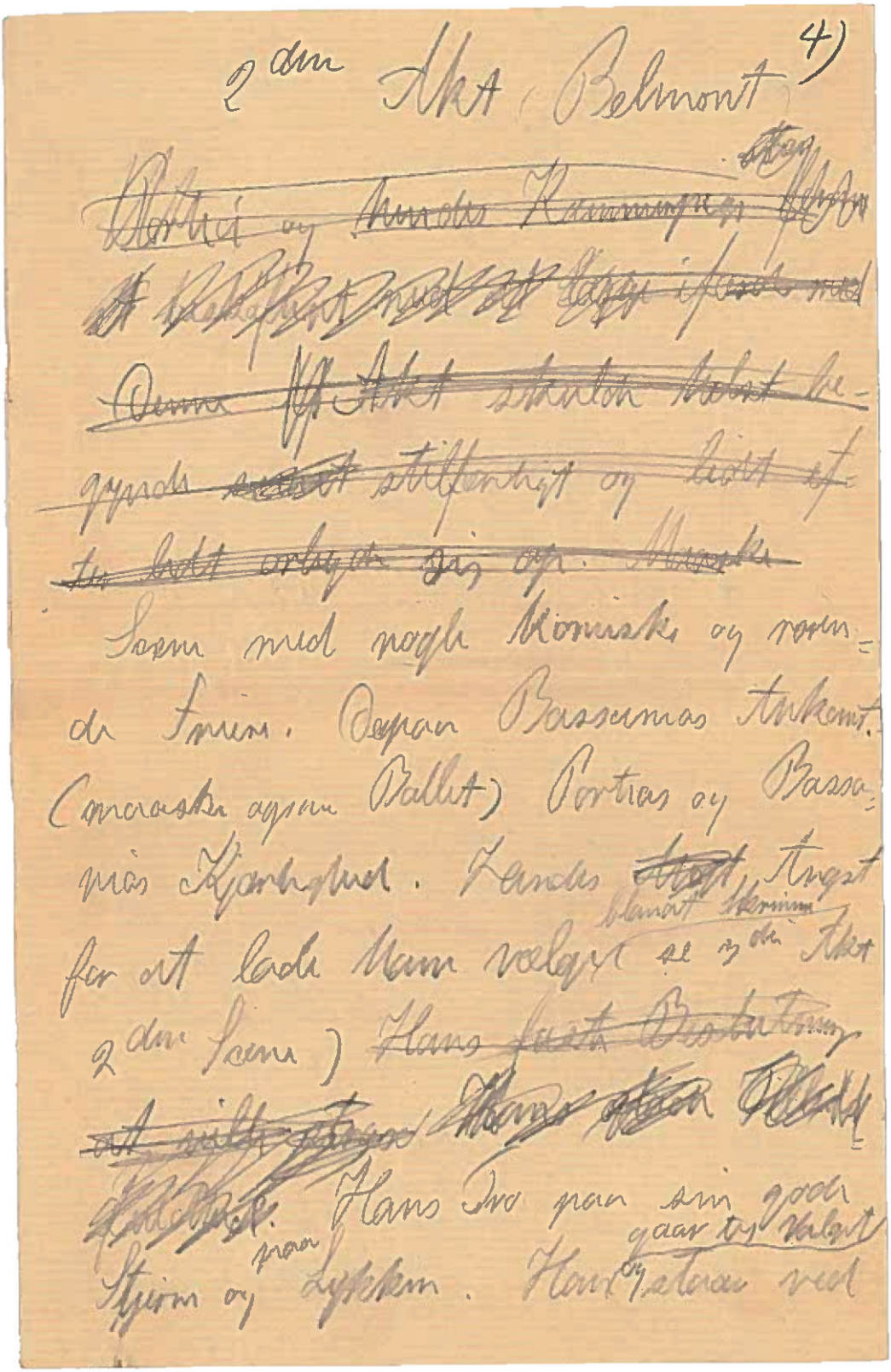
2) ~~Jacob Spandet~~. Bemærkning:
Uagtet den Tid, forrige Sam-
lær Grotianus stadig kaldes
op til Sessions Vinding, hand-
let ikke har undgaaet Dom-
mes Opmærksomhed.
~~Det blev~~ Det begyndes at
mørkes: Sessionen gaar til
Fastelavnsmandag, da forrige
dom ~~Landstinget~~ og Sessia at
passe godt paa Huset.
Stilled. Magnusbrevs Sessen adelsmand
Vinding ved sin Kammerjunker
og ~~skyttegut~~ har en af 2 3 melankolske
svenneriks 4 5 ~~Hovmester~~ Grothaal ~~Kammerjunker~~ Mondag



3)

~~paaen til Akademiet~~ og Eleven ~~Lauget~~. Saa kommer Grethens og berätter Mindt som Han Skandegore. I som Man Mis-tanke ~~mander~~ til Desuden vender Tom Hjem og finder Huset tomt, ~~og~~ ~~og~~ Han raaber og skriger som et vildt Dyr. (se Skitsen 8de Scene) En Del ~~Elever~~ Kammerater og Gade-drenge kommer ~~til~~. Ovenpaa piber i Fløjten ad I. ~~Hun~~ Han løber ~~paa~~ over Scenen mod ~~det~~ Byen raabende: „Den Onkel! Lev! Retfær-dighed! min Onkel! Hævnen! Hele Skaren følger Man med Fløjten og Piben og raabende forsvin-der de længere og længere bort.





2den Akt (Belmont) 4)

~~Portrait og Aandens Kommen til Stede~~

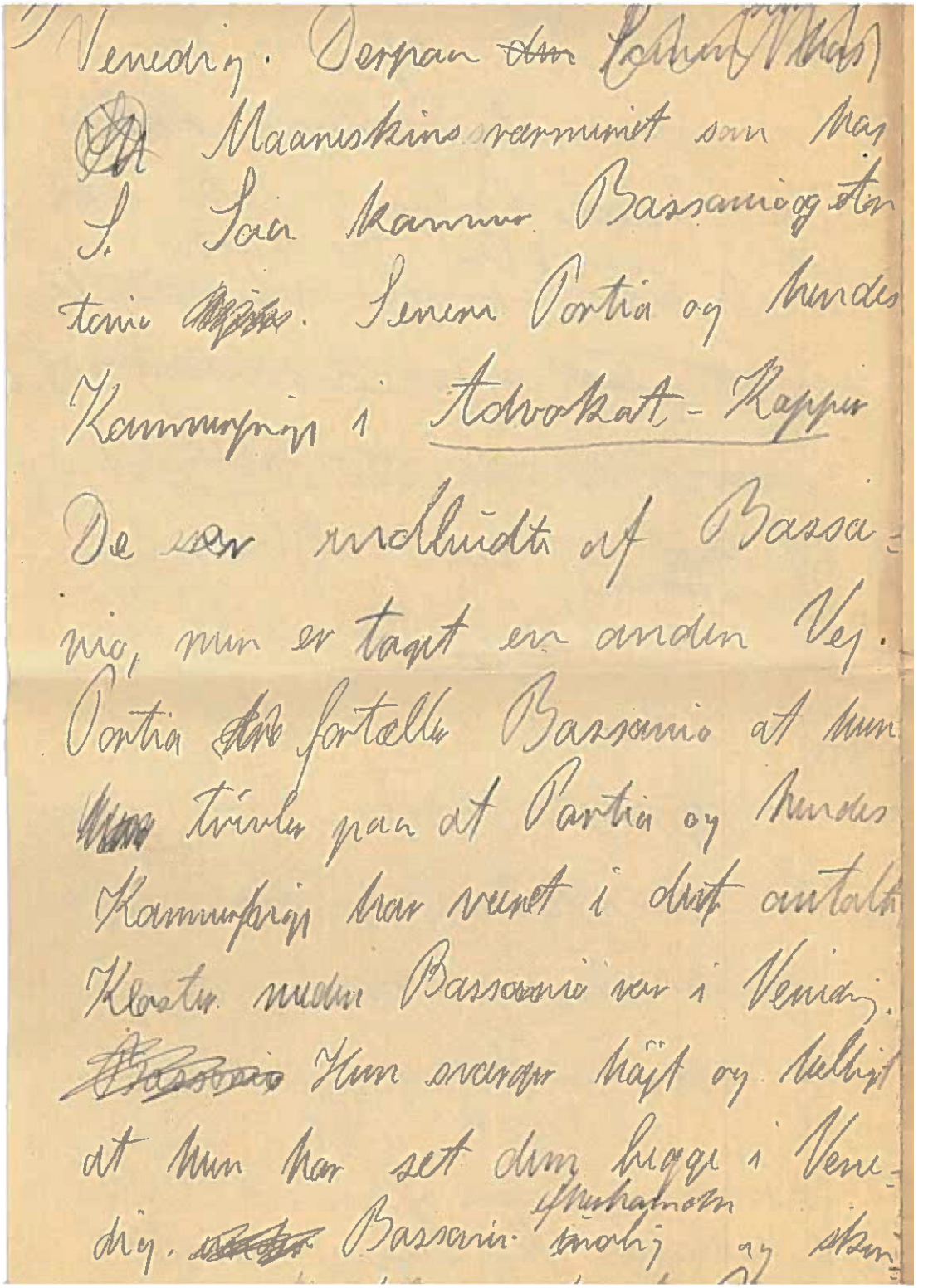
~~Dette Akt staaer helst le-~~
~~gnedes ~~ved~~ stilfærdigt og lidt ef-~~
~~ter helst ordnet dig op. Musik~~

Scene med nogle Komiske og roman-
de Scener. Derpaa Bassernas Ankomst.
(Concertante eppaa Ballet) Portræs og Bassa-
nios Kjærlighed. Kandes ~~Aftt~~, Angst
for at lade Nam valgt se 3den Akt
Belmont Herrinn
2den Scene) ~~Hans Fest Beskrivelse~~
~~at vælge~~ Hans ~~Valg~~ Valg
~~Kjærlighed~~. Hans Tro paa sin gode
Stjern og paa Lykken. Hans ~~og~~ gaar og valgt
og staaer ved

de ~~tre~~ Skrin 5)
~~Skrinen~~ och synger sig Porthar Iris
och om sin Skjönhet. Naar han
har vaalt bryder alle ud i Glæde
og saalydes endes Akten.

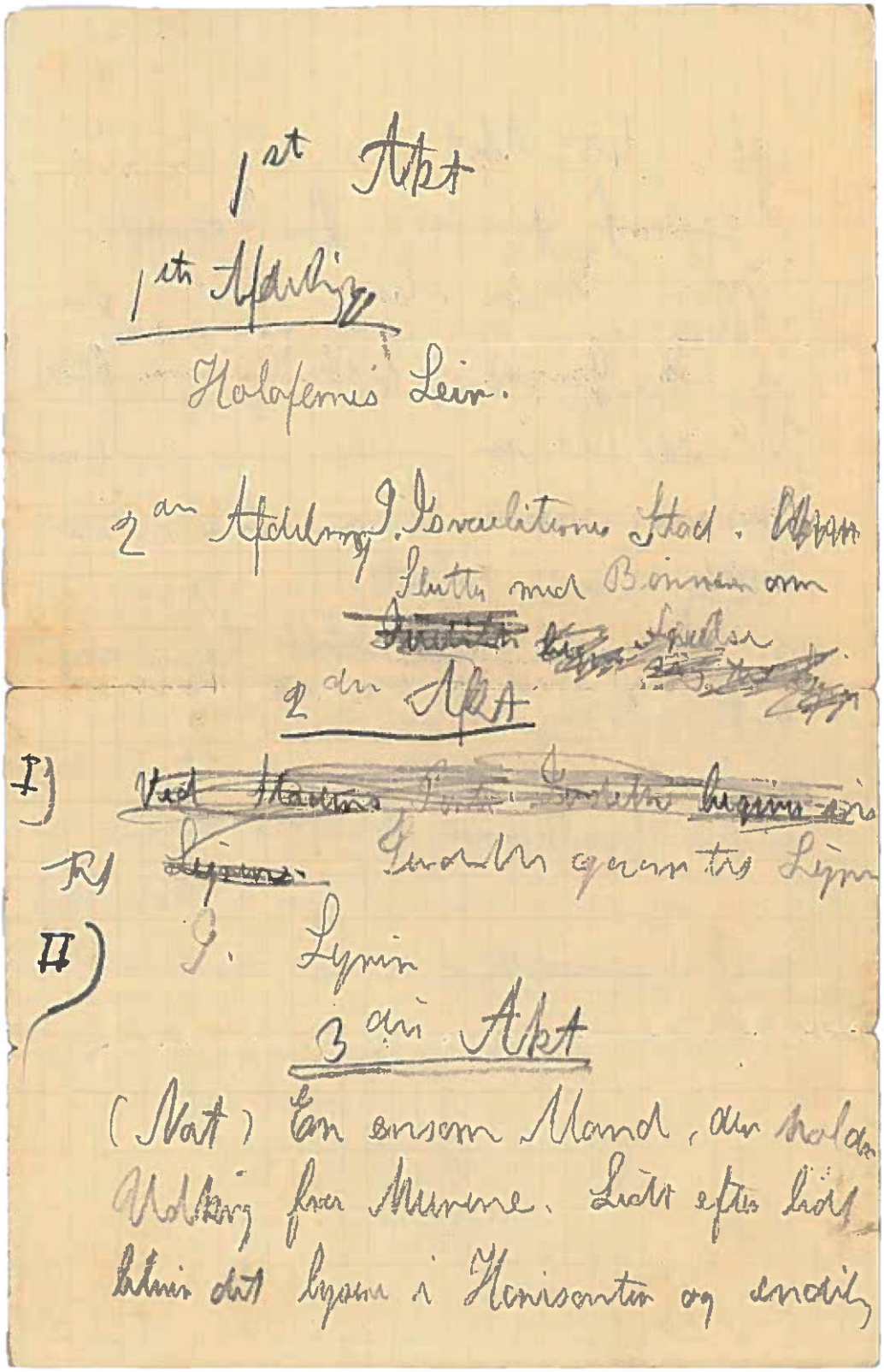
3 dje Akt Retssalen

I en lille Sofare som fremgaar indtil
~~Retten er~~ Salen ~~er Forsamlet~~ kommer til Mødet
~~Retten~~ ~~er~~ ~~sat~~ Dr Skytterne og
~~Retten~~ ~~er~~ ~~sat~~ faar man at vide (enten
gjennem Bassanio som ~~har ogsaa~~ ~~skrevet~~ ~~skrevet~~ kan tænkes ~~at~~
at vore meget tidligt
~~bedrøvet~~ for at ~~snedes~~ eller gjennem
nogle Retsbetjente som gaar og ordner
det i Salen) at Bassanio i sin
Lykkes Øieblik har vaaget
reist fra sin Elskede for at frelse
sin Ven. — ~~Her kommer Folk~~



Venedig. Derpaa [illegible] Maaneskinsvarmmet som Nat
I. Scen Rummet Bassanio og Portia
tale [illegible]. Senere Portia og Nerides
Kammerpige i Advokat-Kappe
De [illegible] modtaget af Bassa-
nio, men er taget en anden Vej.
Portia [illegible] fortælle Bassanio at hun
[illegible] tvivler paa at Portia og Nerides
Kammerpige har været i dette omtalte
Kloster medens Bassanio var i Venedig.
[illegible] Hun svarer kort og koldt
at hun har set dem ligge i Vene-
dig. [illegible] Bassanio [illegible] og staar

Forklædningen. Dette fortæller vi dem i en Sang, det er mum ansvarligt. Saa kommer Forlod og kaster en Skygge over det Hele. Da kom alle gaar Solen op og kaster Lyset Lidt, Lyset og Lykken.



1st Akt

1ste Afdeling

Holofernes Leir.

2an Afdeling I. Israelitarne Stad. Udsen
Slutter med Bønnen om
Sejren

2den Akt

I) Ved Holofernes Telt. Omtrent begynder
Nat Lysene. Gradvis gennem Leiren

II) I. Lysin

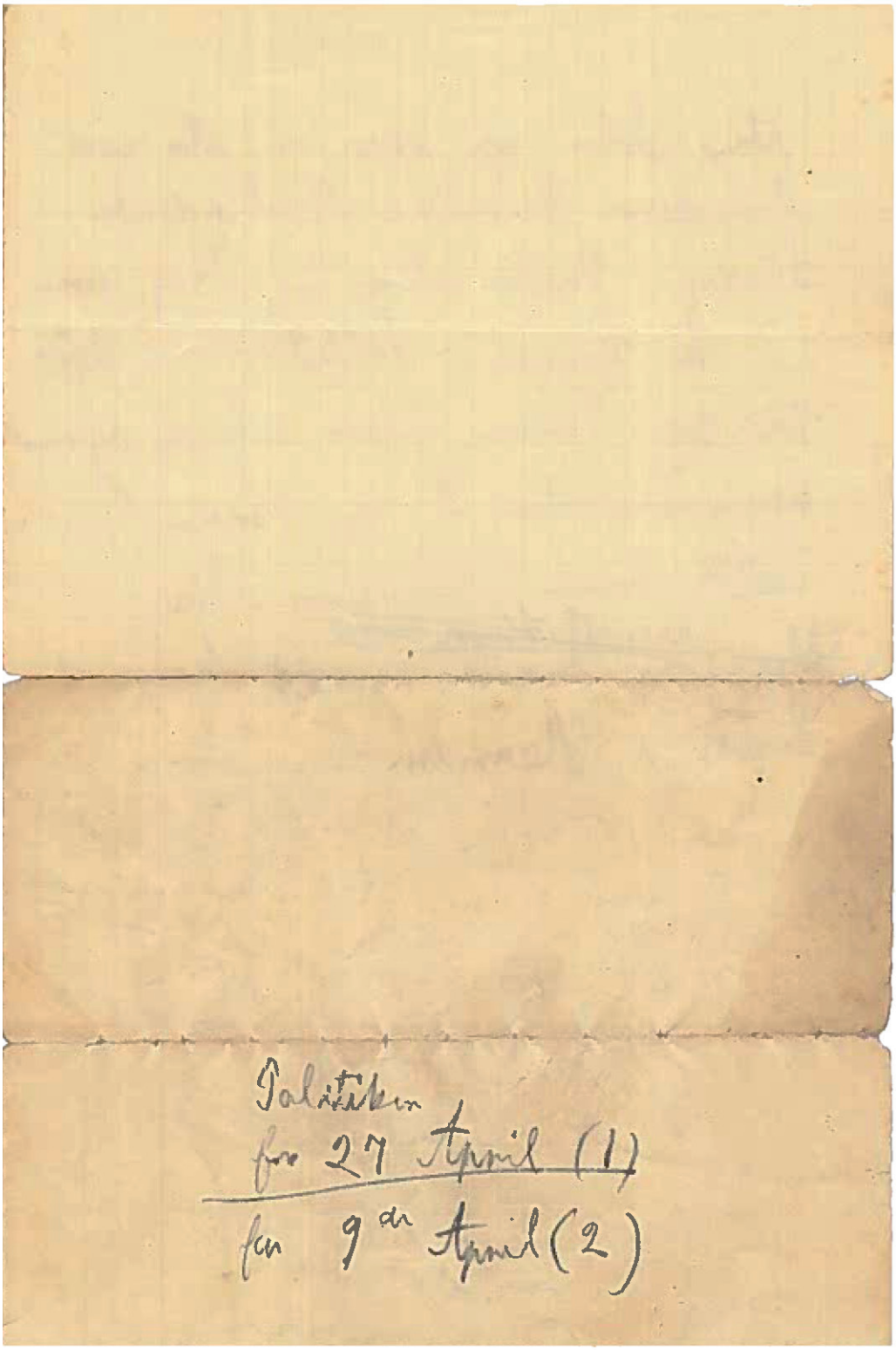
3die Akt

(Nat) Ensom Mand, den holof.
Afdeling fører Musene. Lidt efter lidt
bliver det lyst i Fenisenten og endelig

1ste Akt

II Fest. Norsk Kæmpeliv fore.

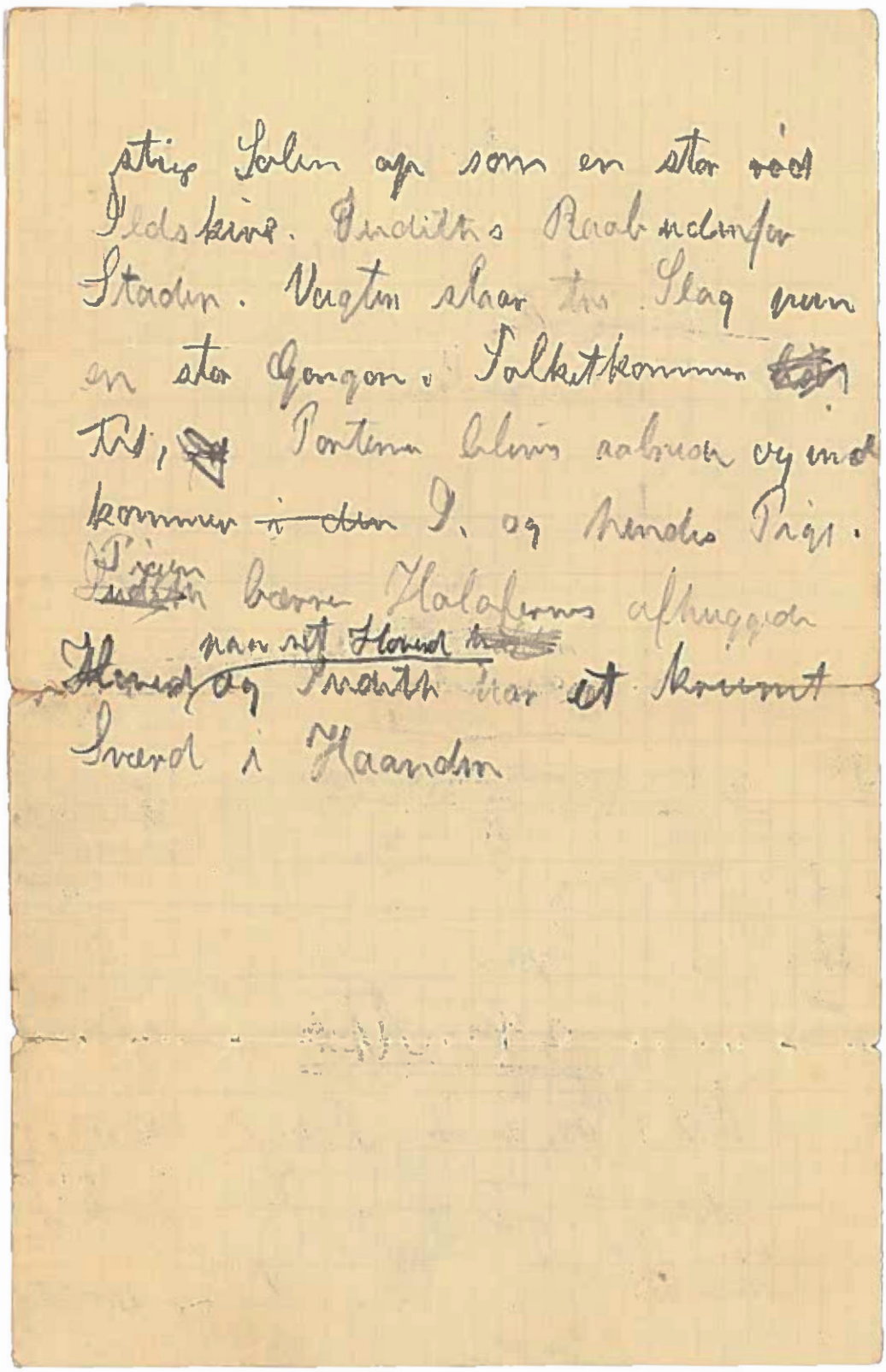
Achior ind. Hans Hoved er kommet
paa Ryggen. Den festlige Fest Glade forstyr-
res lidt efter lidt paa Grund af den Del-
tagels og stigende Spænding. Alt Fortælling
vækker iblandt Folket. Der strømmer Folk
og Flere til. En enkelt Gruppe vagt
højt Hvirvelen omkring Lystighed, men
snart forstummer Øjnene dem og alt Folket.
omkring Øverstepræsten Raadet i Syndom er
nu forsamlet omkring Achior og ~~hans~~
~~Raadet fra den~~ hvert Øre fortælle


Saltærkæren
fra 27 April (1)
fra 9de April (2)

Scen ikke Retoscenen som hos F.
dog saaledes at Fortrinnet
ogsaa Selvfølgelig Portræt slutter med
vor vasmeg Ord til Portræ
mogle om ~~at saaledes med Rettelse~~
~~storartet Papir og en Karakteristik af~~
~~Venetiske Love som altid har vist sig~~
~~at være~~ og mogle almengyldige
Bemærkninger
Sat om Ret og Humanitet, der
altid vil sejre over Ondskab og
Slethed gjennem Aand. Folket raaber
et „Leve Fortrinnet“. Hele Slutte
scenen gaar i en alvorlig, værdig
og grandios Tone.

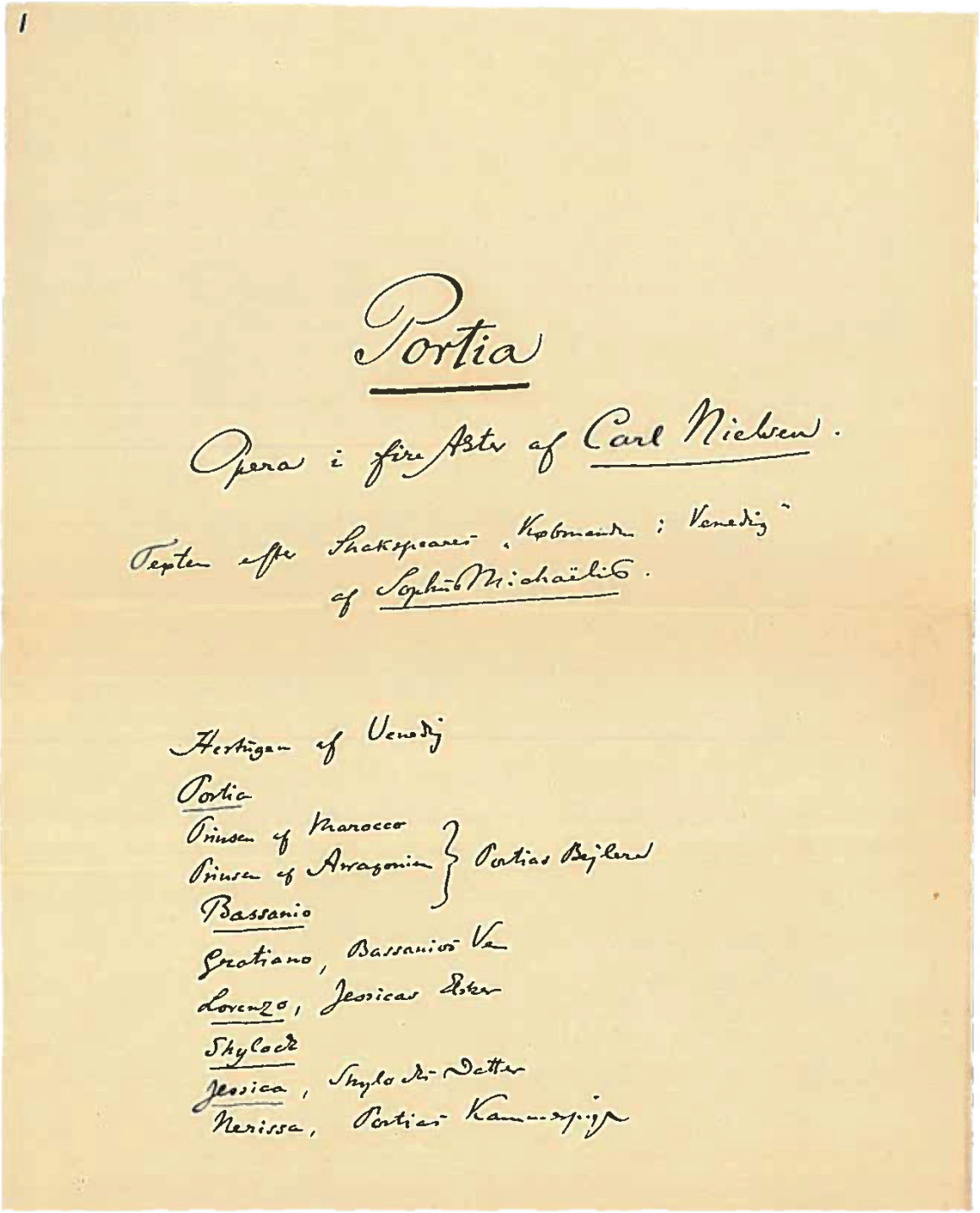
4de Akt

Lorenzo og Jessica oplyser at Portræ
[illegible]



stiig Solen op som en stor rød
Feldskierre. Bindidts Raab melder for
Staden. Vagtm slaar tre Slag mum
en stor Gong. Folket kommer
til; Portene lukkes aabnes og ind
kommer i den D. og Mindre Prigt.
Prinsen bærer Halvlemmes afhuggede
Hoved og Prindts har et Krandt
Sverd i Haanden

Appendix 2: *Sophus Michaëlis' libretto of Act 1, manuscript in The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Torben Schousboe's Collection, XIV,2.*



1

Portia

Opera i fire Akter af Carl Nielsen.

Digtet efter Shakespeares „Købmanden i Venedig"
af Sophus Michaëlis.

Hertugen af Venedig
Portia
Prinsen af Marocco
Prinsen af Aragonien } Portias Bejlere
Bassanio
Gratiano, Bassanios Ven
Lorenzo, Jessicas Elsker
Shylock
Jessica, Shylocks Datter
Nerissa, Portias Kammerpige

2

Første Akt

Offentlig Plads i Venedig. I Baggrunden Kanal, hvorover en Bro. Til højre Shylocks Hus.

Bassanio og Gratiano møder hinanden

Gratiano

Bassanio, min Ven, vel mødt!
Alt jeg har og tænker på
som en, der grandsker dybt
den Kunst at gøre Guld.

Bassanio

Den Kunst at gøre Guld —
sig heller: gøre Gæld!

3

Gratiano

Du kunst di dyrked Lamp —

Bassanio

Og kan den ej alligevel!

Gratiano

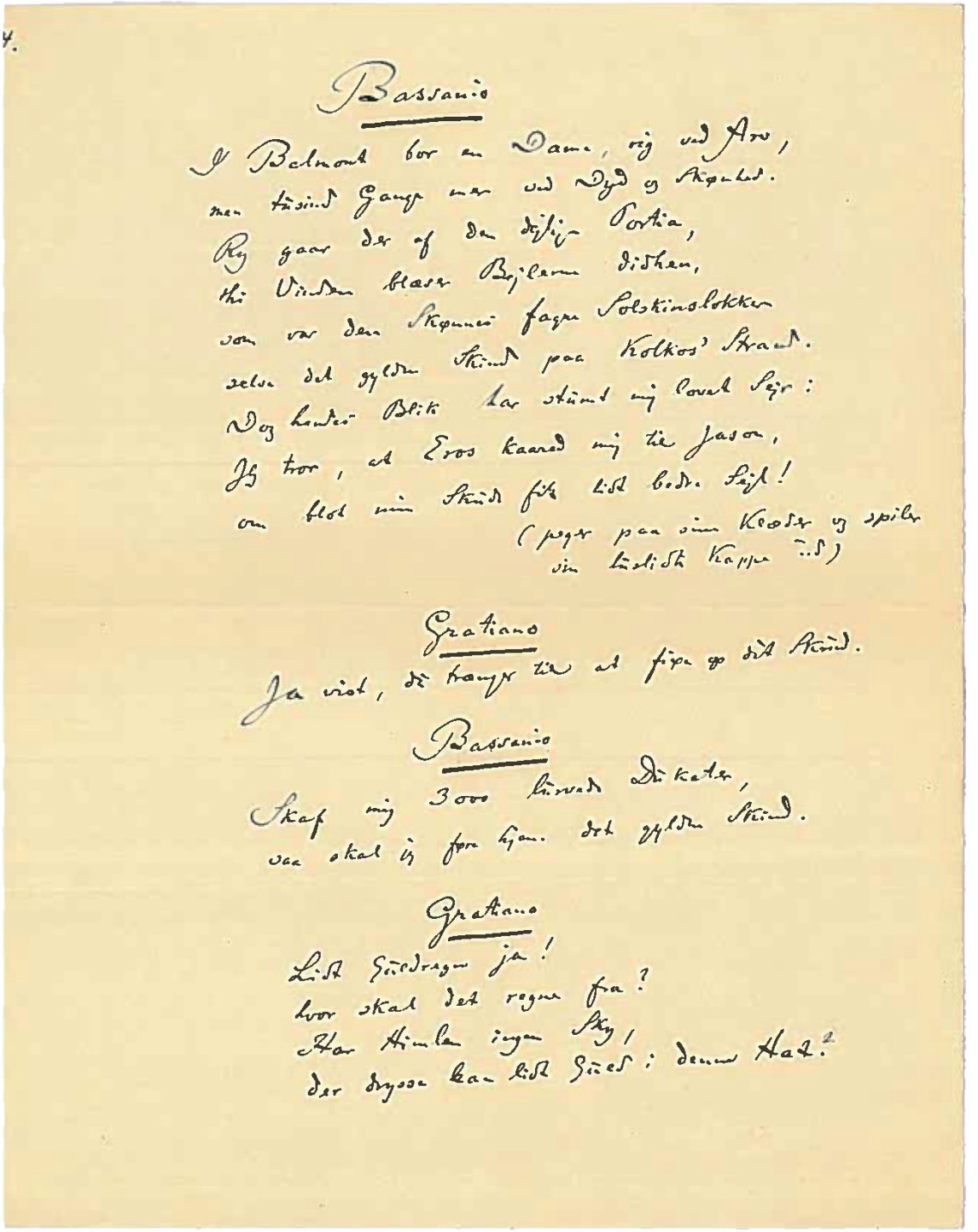
Se disen tomme Lommer!
Let gaar, hvad let dr kommer.

Bassanio

Mod Fru Fortunas Gjestfrihed skjød
vi alle mim gyldne Sil —
nu ydes mij Sim dt sidste Skind,
at ædle Damen skal tie mij vemik.
Alt bort e skjøt —
skaf mij dit Kunst,
saa gaar dt let:
Ramm ih skal
hjælp: Slet.

Gratiano

Hvor sidder Fuglen, di har sigte paa?



4.

Bassanio

I Belmont bor en Dame, rig ved Art,
men tusind Gange mer ved Dyd og Skjønhed.
Ry gaar der af den dejlige Portia,
thi Vinden blæser Bejlere didhen,
som var den Skjønneste fagre Sølvkinslokken
selve det gyldne Skind paa Kolkos' Strand.
Dog hendes Blik lar stundt mig Lovet Sejr:
Jg tror, at Eros kaared mig til Jason,
om flod min Skude fik lidt bedre Sejl!
(peger paa sine Knoster og spiller
sin tyrkiske Kappe til)

Graziano

Ja vist, de trænger til at fipe op dit Skind.

Bassanio

Skaf mig 3000 blanke Dukater,
saa skal jg faa hjem det gyldne Skind.

Graziano

Lidt Sødvand ja!
hvor skal det regne fra?
Har Himlen ingen Sky!
Der dryppe kan lidt Sæd: denne Hat!

5.

Sol, Lorenzo! Se, se —
hvorfor gaar di paa Tvers som en Krabbe?

Lorenzo (fra Broen)

Tys! bag disse Ruder
der bor en Gud, en Gud for alle Guder!

Gratiano

Hvem bor i Hitsel?

Bassanio

Jøden Shylock.

Gratiano

Haha! Lorenzo, di bjeler til hans Ring?

Lorenzo

Nej, til hans Datter.

Gratiano

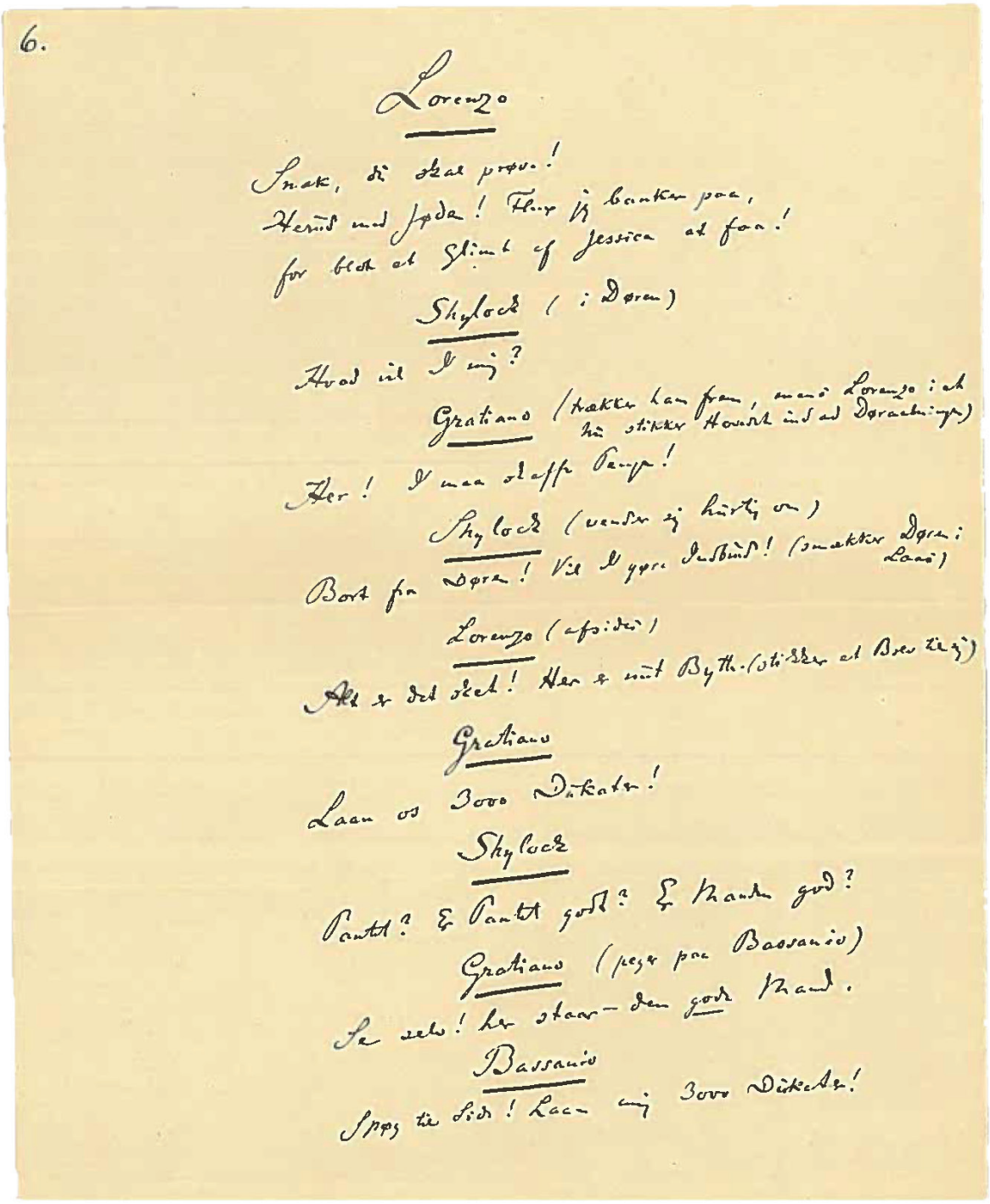
Og der Bassanio til hans Dukater.
Saa slut jer sammen!

Lorenzo

Jg opgiver ikke Jøden en Perle.

Bassanio

Nej laaner han ej en Hvidt fremde Pund.



6.

Lorenzo

Snak, di skal prøve!
Herods med Jøde! Her vi banker paa,
for blot at stjæle os Jessica at faa!

Shylock (i Døren)

Hvad vil I mig?

Gratiano (trækker Kaa fra, mens Lorenzo i al
Hast stikker Hovedet ind ad Døraabningen)

Her! I maa skaffe Damp!

Shylock (vender sig hurtig om)

Bort fra Døren! Vil I gøre Indbrud! (smækker Døren i
Laas)

Lorenzo (afsides)

Ak, det skete! Her er nu Byttet (stikker et Brev til sig)

Gratiano

Laan os 3000 Dukater!

Shylock

Dantes? En Dantes gæld? En Kristen gæld?

Gratiano (peger paa Bassanio)

Se selv! Her staar den gode Mand.

Bassanio

Spar de Ord! Laan mig 3000 Dukater!

7.

Shylock (se længe stivt på Bassanio)

Sig, Herre, har a Kjøter — Penge?
Hvor tit har I mig skældt a ækelt Hund!
Tror I, jg må kan spytte Gjødskader
for hver Gang, I har spyttet i mit Skæg,
naar på Rialto jg fortrædiug dem?

Bassanio

Blodhund vor I — derfor spytted jg:
I laant aldrig ûden blodig Aager.
Men hvad I a Kristen skal engang med mig,
ved Gud, om jg jg glemmer, I er Jyde!

Shylock

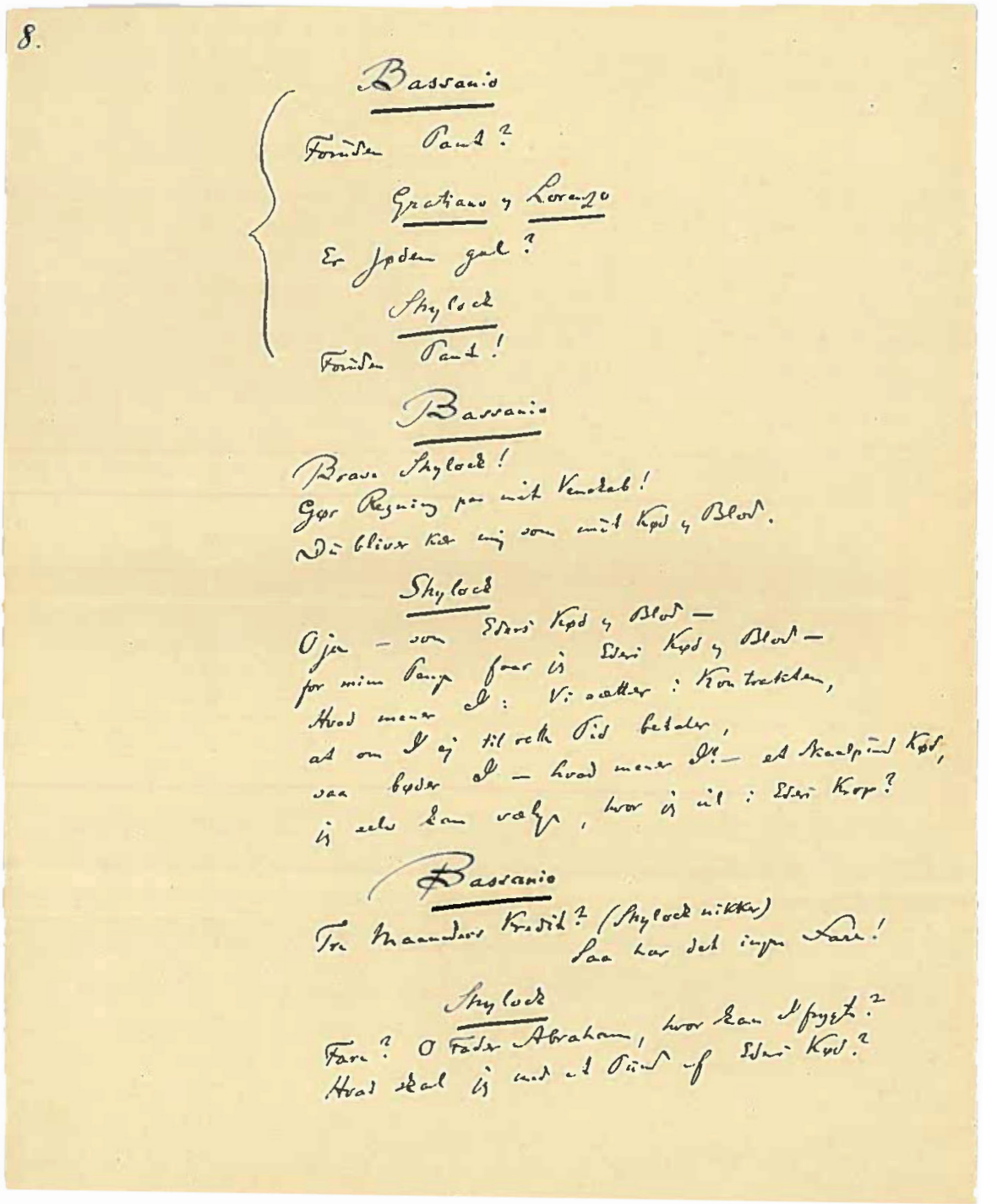
... og blir min Ven! Ja saa, ja saa ...
Kjære Herre, tilgiv dog, at først må jg glemme,
hvordan I spyttet og forhaanet mig!
Til Tak for Eders smukke Kristenord,
tag mine Penge må forsøde Eder
og ûden Pant. Er må jg god?

Bassanio

Mente di det, at ikke vær Gjæld!

Shylock

Gjæld! I skal få 3000 Dukater.



8.

Bassanio

Forstår Dan?

Gratiano & Lorenzo

Er Jøden gal?

Shylock

Forstår Dan!

Bassanio

Brav Shylock!
Gør Regning på mit Kendetegn!
Du bliver kun mig som mit Kød & Blod.

Shylock

Ojo – som Dit Kød & Blod –
for mine Penge findes Dit Kød & Blod –
Hvad mener I: Vi ordner: Kontrakten,
at om I ej til rette Tid betaler,
saa byder I – hvad mener Dr.– et Skaalpund Kød,
jeg selv kan vælge, hvor jeg vil: Dit Kød?

Bassanio

Du Skamløse Kreatur? (Shylock nikker)
Saa har det ingen Fare!

Shylock

Fare? O Fader Abraham, hvor kan I sige?
Hvad skal jeg med et Pund af Dit Kød?

9.

Jg tror, vels Oxekød er mere værd.
Jg vil kun vær Eders Ven. Tro imidlertid,
saa sætter i Kontrakten ogsaa!
(gaar ind med Bassanio)
(til Lorenzo) Bort paa min Ære!

Gratiano

Lorenzo, de straaler som et Gudebud
af Ungdom blank og Fred.

Lorenzo.

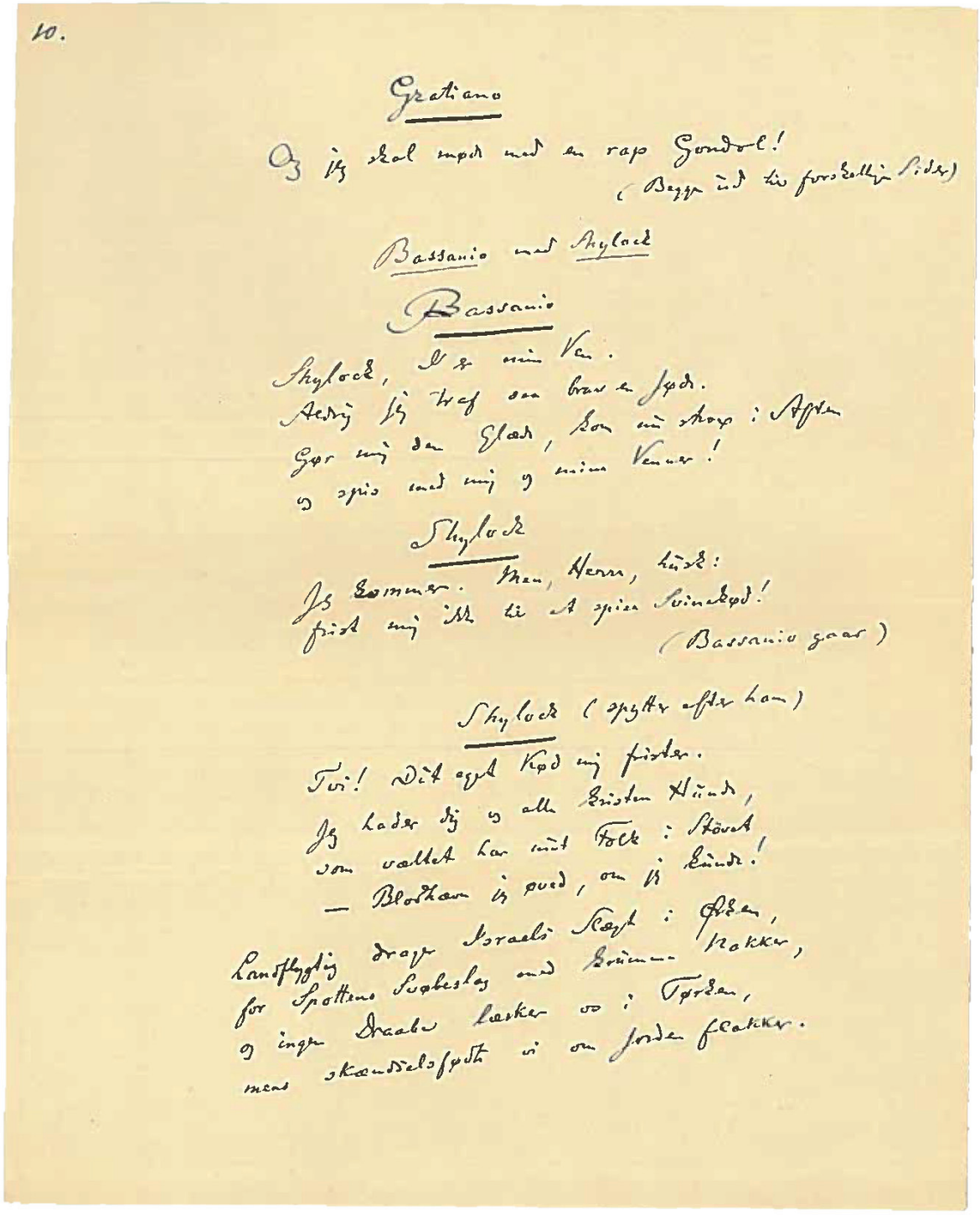
Ja, dette Brev er Sølv, min Lykkes hvide Brev —
Jeg hilser en Ven, som Lykken til mig sender!
Skøn Jessica er min! Jg kan høre Hjertet banke:
mod mit, mod mit det flyver gennem Mur og Mørke.
Hun er saa vis og ædel som den store Diamant,
og skøn hun er saa sandt som mit Øre taler sandt!
Saa skøn og vis og herlig og sand for Haar til Hæl
skal hun evig bo og bygge i min trofaste Sjæl!

Gratiano

Naar skal dit Ægteskab ske, Lorenzo?

Lorenzo

I Aften følger hun med mig — i Pagedragt.
Maskerede Gæster bord til for Bassanios Gilde.
Gennem Vinduet ned hun stiger som en Sol.



10.

Gratiano

Oj ij skal mød med en rap Gondol!
(Begge ind til forskellige Sider)

Bassanio med Shylock

Bassanio

Shylock, I se min Ven.
Actrij ij træf en brav a Jød.
Gør mij den Glæd, Jon nu skrap: Aften
o spis med mij o mine Venner!

Shylock

Ij kommer. Men, Herre, hørk:
fristk mij ikk til A spise Svinekød!
(Bassanio gaar)

Shylock (spytter efter ham)

Fui! Dit eget Kød mij frister.
Ij lader dij o alle Kristen Hund,
som vælter sig mit Folk: Skørk
— Blodhan ij pued, om ij kunde!
Landflygtig drage Israels Skæbt: Ofren,
for Spottens Svøbeslag med Grums- Rakker,
o ingen Drabe kaster os i Fordan,
mens skandelsfyldt vi om Jorden flakker.

II.

Har du en Jøde Øie, Mund og Lemmer
og Sanser som de Kristne? Lider Blod ej rødt?
Hvis I os ætser Gift, skal vi ikke hele?
Hvis I os forgiver os samme Synd og dør den samme Død?
Kan vi lære Lede le, lære Hævn gøre,
og vaare os, vaare os da ej ligesom
og spottes I, af Hovedtørst fetergjort?
Herre! Israels Gud, giv Hænder: mit Haand!
Kæmpefolde til din skarpe Dommerstrid!
Opsparet Had for Millioner Liv
i slikke vil synge: Kjød og Blod!
Herre! Israels Gud, giv Hænder: mit Haand!

(gaar til Døren og vinker ad Jessica)

Jessica, tag mine Nøgler, vogt mit Hus!
Jeg er bidt til Aften — gaar ikke til Hav,
at tjene paa de gode Kristne — de sleske for mit Gitter.
Pas vel paa Huset, Jeg vil ej til Vinduet
efter de Kristne Narres Skraal og Mummespil!
Stænge alle Døre for mit ædrue Hus!
(lukker omhyggelig Døren og
(gaar)

Skimringen er falden paa. Stakkels Naarsdin folder
over Shylocks Hus og Gitter: Kanalens Vand.

12.

Jessica (saaben Vinduet ind til Kanalen)

Bølge, klukker du dernede —
bort med Havet, bort med Havet —
Svanen vugger fra sin Rede.
Snart jeg selv skal Vingen sprede,
følge som en Trækfugl Kravet
bort med Havet, bort med Havet,
bygge Klippehjem min Rede.

Kom, Lorenzo, ventet længe,
bring mig Livets Hammelpod!
Ha a Gold: Stuen stænge —
stolt skal bølge Skibets Gange
med en mild og sollys Strand,
hvor som Brudelys: Engle
unge Kjærter stå: Brand!

Gratiano (kommer med Gondolen)

Venner, ros Lagunen gynge
til den Sølvs Klang af Lith!
Hen ad Bølgerne, som synge,
Fakkelen slaa gyldne Smæk.

13.

Lorenzo (fra Broen; maskeret)

Jessica, din Lykke kalder!

Jessica (i Vinduet)

Hvem mon her for Døren staar?

Lorenzo

Jessica, din Lykke kalder —

Jessica

Og tie Lykken vil jeg gaa.

Lorenzo

Kom, min Dag, min Fakkelbær!

Jessica (skjør ivrig) forskrækket over Dag).

Slik din Fakkel! Skjul min Skam!

Lorenzo

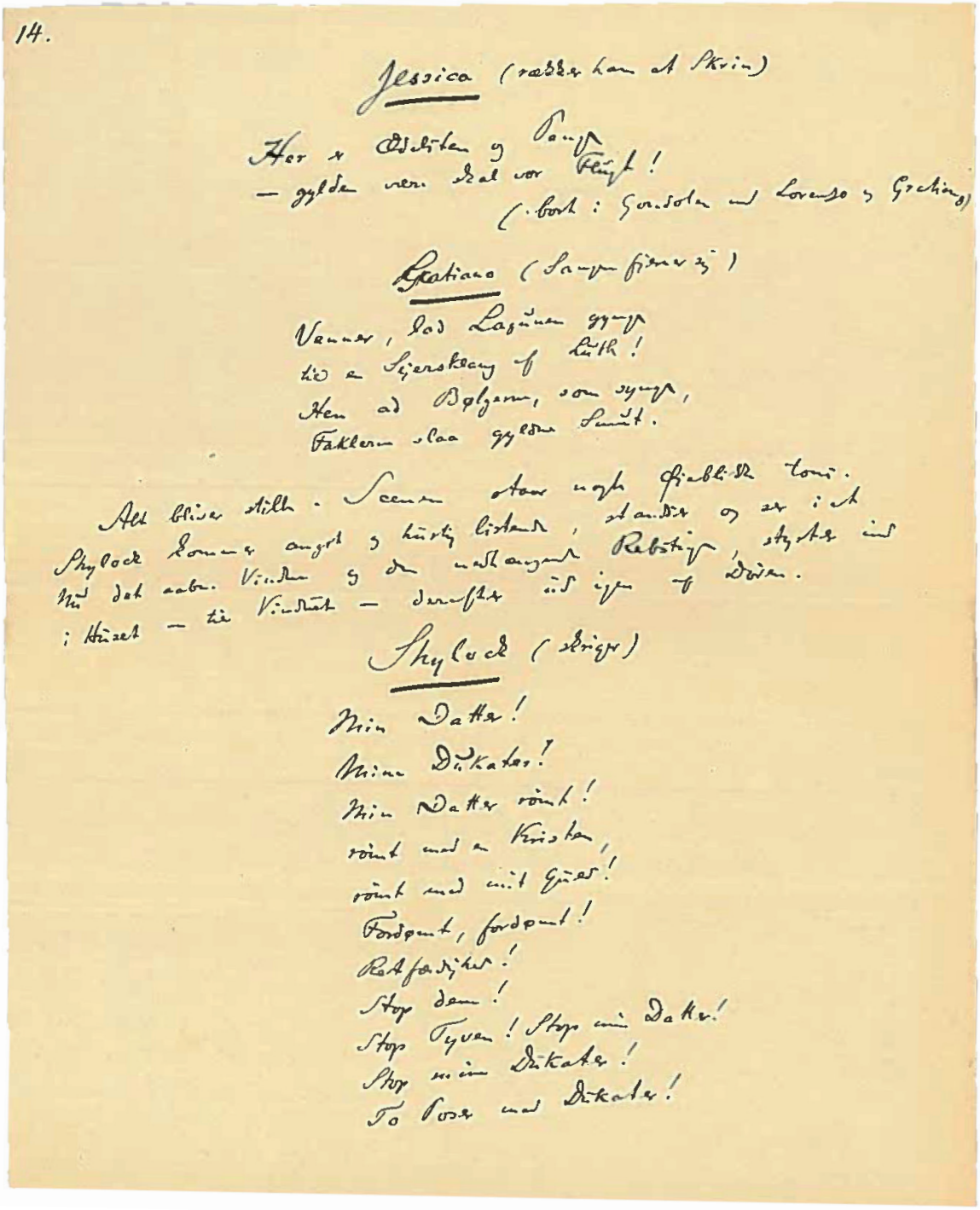
Nej, min Dag mig besværer.

Jessica

Aa, jeg ryddes i min Ham.

Lorenzo

Kom, din tynde altfor lange —
hastig vrenge maa vor Flugt!



14.

Jessica (rædder kan ut Skrin)

Her r Skatten g Sorg
– gylden vern Ideal vor Kunst!
(i bork: Gondola ud Lorenzo s Gratiano)

Gratiano (Sangfigur 3)

Vennen, lad Lagunen gynge
lid a Gjenskuen af Lyst!
Hen ad Bølgerne, som synge,
Fakkelen slaa gyldne Lunst.

Alt blive stille. Scenen staar ugsa ofteblikk tom.
Shylock kommer angst g hastig indenfor, standser og ser ind
Mod det aabne Vindue g da nedslagen Rabstige, skynder sig
; Hænder – tie Vindue – derefter ud igen og bort.

Shylock (strigsk)

Min Datter!
Mine Dukater!
Min Datter rømt!
rømt med en Kristen,
rømt med mit Guld!
Fordømt, fordømt!
Retfærdighed!
Stop dem!
Stop Tyven! Stop min Datter!
Stop mine Dukater!
To Sække med Dukater!

5.

Folk stimler sammen. Gadedrengene hyler og piber i Kirkerne.

Kor

Hai Dekka — Lai Dikaka —
Dikakam y Lai Datter!
Hahahahaha!
Haha! vi dør af Latter!

Skylock (rasende imod dem)

Akad spine I, I Skylaunger!
Gid Kraft forlade Eder Tunger!
Retfærdig!
Loven skal øves dem!
Loven skal finde dem!
Gid mig min Datter, skæv mig mit Eie!
Skaf mig mine Juveler!
Gid kun Loa dyde dr for mine Fød
ind Skenene: sit Øre
y Dikakerne: sin Kirke!
Retfærdig!
Loven!
Oldtiden!
Min Datter!
Min Dikaka!

(Lyder over Broen, fuldt af den hylende y pibende Mængde).

Tæppet.

A B S T R A C T

In addition to the two finished operas of Nielsen, scattered sources show that throughout his life he had at least five other opera projects in mind, which for various reasons were given up at different stages in their progress. The article presents the sources that are available for these projects, comprising the following works: *Judith*, *Psycke*, *The Silent Woman*, *Portia*, and *Fru Marie Grubbe*. The focus of the article is on Nielsen's plan to compose an opera based on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* under the working title *Portia*. Two important manuscripts in the Royal Library show that Nielsen himself had worked out a complete synopsis for the opera, and that the librettist, Sophus Michaëlis, had made a full text of the first act. A comparison of the two manuscripts and Shakespeare's play reveals that the opera would have been quite different from the model with its focus on the character of Portia and the leaving out the merchant Antonio. Nielsen apparently gave up the idea, and no music from the work in progress worth mentioning is known.

NIELSEN, SHAKESPEARE AND THE FLUTE CONCERTO

From Character To Archetype[1]

By David Fanning and Michelle Assay

From Berlioz to the present day, Shakespeare has held a privileged position among authors favoured by composers for setting to music. In quantitative terms, a measure of his international importance in this regard may be taken from the list of some 380 theatrical works composed to his plays up to 30 years ago,[2] and from the many thousands of entries – covering concert as well as stage music – in the five-volume catalogue published around the same time.[3] For Berlioz, perhaps the most obsessive of all Shakespeare-composers, it was a matter of music freely composed to his own adaptations of Shakespeare's scenarios. For Verdi and Britten, librettists smoothed the way. Others, such as Nielsen in the case to be examined below, worked to commission for a specific event or theatrical run, to scenarios controlled by others and with a presumed degree of ephemerality in mind.

These categories are by no means fixed, however. 'Applied music' (from the German *angewandte Musik*) to Shakespearean themes, whether for stage or screen, has not infrequently involved front-rank composers, and occasionally it has made the leap to the concert repertoire (Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Walton), generally leaving the original production unlikely ever to be seen again (Sibelius for *The Tempest*). Sometimes, too, the process of transfer from ephemerality to permanence seems to have been a case of musical imagery conceived in 'applied' contexts but subsequently reconfigured – superficially or radically, consciously or otherwise – for concert use in works unrelated to the original Shakespeare context. Sometimes the extent of such reconfiguration may even make it impossible to agree on the nature of the relationship between source and destination. Our article deals with an instance of this last

1 This article originated as a conference paper for the conference 'Music and the Nordic Breakthrough', University of Oxford, July-August 2015.

2 See Christopher R. Wilson, 'Shakespeare, William', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera,* London 1992, vol. 4, 338-47.

3 Bryan N.S. Gooch and David Thatcher, *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue*, Oxford 1991.

category, examining how a single idea from a one-off stage event became productive in a concert work composed ten years later that has since gone on to become one of the most often performed of 20th-century concertos: namely Nielsen's Flute Concerto.

Among musical engagements with Shakespeare in the Nordic region, the one that stands out is Sibelius's 34-movement, hour-long score for a production of *The Tempest*. The music was composed in 1925, premiered in Copenhagen in March 1926, and recast into two concert suites that have been widely acknowledged as among the most important of his late-period works.[4] Less well-known, but certainly worth more than the negligible attention it has received, is Nielsen's music for the tercentenary Shakespeare celebrations at the Kronborg castle in Helsingør (Elsinore), performed there in June 1916. Given the venue, this event was naturally enough built around the story of *Hamlet*. However, it also included two song-settings for the characters of Ariel and Caliban from *The Tempest*, which will provide the focus for the second half of our article as we work towards a proposed new understanding of one of Nielsen's most important works.

Nielsen is rarely if ever discussed in relation to Shakespeare. A Google search for 'Nielsen and Shakespeare' brings up, after the Complete Edition score of the Shakespeare celebration, the 1921 silent film of *Hamlet* with Danish actress Asta Nielsen in the title role, followed by comedienne Kristine Nielsen's acting of Puck, and obituaries for Leslie Nielsen mentioning his role as Commander John J. Adams in the much-derided *Tempest*-related science-fiction film of 1956, *Forbidden Planet*. Apart from the incidental music we are about to describe, it is true that Carl Nielsen had no direct creative engagement with Shakespeare, and we are certainly not proposing some kind of deep-rooted affinity that has gone unnoticed and of which we should all suddenly sit up and take notice. However, a round-up of the various snippets of documented indirect contact at least opens up the possibility that Shakespeare may have permeated the composer's consciousness rather more than has been acknowledged.

Our argument is the product of three converging lines: David Fanning's long-standing engagement with diverse aspects of Nielsen's life and work; Michelle Assay's fostering of a new research community for 'Shakespeare and Music'; and our joint selection, translation and commentary of Nielsen's letters and diaries.[5] Our article on Nielsen and dualities[6] provides an additional intellectual framework for the present

4 Described and analysed in Daniel Grimley, 'Storms, Symphonies, Silence: Sibelius's *Tempest* Music and the Invention of Late Style', in Grimley (ed.), *Sibelius and his World*, Princeton 2011, 186-226. For Sibelius's own dissatisfaction with the Copenhagen production and further description of its style, see ibid., 193-95.

5 David Fanning and Michelle Assay, *Carl Nielsen: Selected Letters and Diaries*, Copenhagen 2017 (CNL).

discussion, since we shall be steering towards another instance of the composer's predilection for musically productive oppositions, once again as embodied in a two-movement work. Operating with drastically polarised dualities is one of Nielsen's most distinctive contributions to the renewal of large-scale instrumental forms, and it supplies a crucial ingredient in the process of transfer from the ephemeral to the permanent, as we understand it.

The 1916 Shakespeare Celebration

The now annual Shakespeare festivals at Hamlet's castle of Kronborg in the city of Helsingør (Shakespeare's Elsinore) 45 kilometres north of Copenhagen, are claimed to constitute 'the longest-standing continuous Shakespeare performance tradition in the world'. They date back to 1816, the Shakespeare bicentenary year, when *Hamlet* was performed at the castle for the first time.[7] The other centenaries have naturally been accompanied by special events. Most recently, in 2016 the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's death, coinciding with the Festival's 200th anniversary, was marked by what was billed as the first Nordic opera on *Hamlet*, with music by Hugi Guðmundsson entitled *Hamlet in absentia*, which won the Icelandic Music Prize the following year.[8]

On 24 June 1916 the Shakespeare tercentenary and 100th anniversary of the Festival were celebrated in no less style, with leading figures in the country's intellectual and artistic life being approached for their input. Predictably enough, part of the event was given over to extracts from *Hamlet*, though without any specially composed music, so far as the records tell. These extracts were preceded by a newly commissioned Prologue, with words by Helge Rode and music by Carl Nielsen (CNW 15).

Rode (1870-1937) was a well-known writer, critic and journalist, of the same generation as Nielsen. The two men would enjoy a second, rather more famous collaboration four years later with another gala play, entitled *Moderen* (The Mother, here in the sense of Motherland) to celebrate the return of Southern Jutland to Danish rule following the post-War plebiscite (the area had been annexed to Prussia since 1864 and to Germany since 1871) (CNW 18). This latter score was the occasion for what would become two of Nielsen's most beloved songs in *folkelig* (folk-like or folk-popular, in the sense of being easily memorable and appropriate for amateur or community singing) style: 'My girl is as bright as amber' (*Min Pige er saa lys som Rav*) and

6 Fanning and Assay, '"Dreams and Deeds" and other Dualities: Nielsen and the Two-movement Symphony', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 26-48.

7 http://esfn.eu/festivals/shakespeare-festival-at-hamlets-castle, accessed 16 April 2020.

8 Description and video excerpt at http://nordicopera.dk/en/hamlet-in-absentia/, accessed 16 April 2020.

'As a fleet ready to set sail' (*Som en rejselysten Flaade*).[9] Nielsen and Rode corresponded on and off for many years, and Rode was among the many who sent congratulations on the composer's 60th birthday in June 1925, doing so in a specially written poem of 19 stanzas.[10]

Rode's poetry has been ranged under the heading of a Danish 'neo-Romantic revival' in the 1890s. One of his main claims to fame was as a critic of Georg Brandes (1842-1927) and in particular the latter's concept of the Modern Breakthrough, which had been mooted in 1871 and elaborated over the coming years as an influential label for contemporary trends in Nordic literature. Rode's critique was most powerfully formulated in his 1913 essay entitled 'Det sjælelige Gennembrud' [The Breakthrough of the Soul]. Where Brandes had stressed the virtues of Darwinist realism, common sense and rational scientific explanation, Rode's priorities were Christian idealism and mysticism. He regarded the individualist-atheist Brandes as a false prophet. Rode's concept of the Breakthrough of the Soul was first announced in a lecture by him in 1911, then written up as an essay in 1913 but only published, with some adjustments, in 1928, in a collection of writings under the common title *Det sjælelige Gennembrud*. The idea seems to have originated in a mystical, transformative experience of oneness with Nature which he experienced during a stay in the Norwegian mountains in 1891. Rode came to apply the term to general cultural trends in the 1890s, in conscious opposition to Brandes.[11]

Brandes himself gave a speech at the 1916 Shakespeare celebrations.[12] Apart from being the being the theorist of the Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavian literature, he was spiritual father of the movement that became known as 'cultural radicalism', which played an important role in the arts in Denmark from about 1930, i.e. from shortly after Brandes's death in 1927 and around the time of Nielsen's own in 1931.[13] He was also an international authority on Shakespeare. His three-volume study was published in 1895 and 1896,[14] and soon translated into French and English.[15] Hugely influential, not least on the likes of Sigmund Freud and James Joyce, it was reprinted in 1913. Not long after that, on 23 July 1916, Nielsen wrote to his friend, the philologist Ove Jørgensen:

9 For more on the symbolic-nationalist tone of *Moderen* and on its Danish reception, see Hanne Engberg, *En digters historie: Helge Rode 1870-1937* [A poet's story: Helge Rode 1879-1937], Copenhagen 1996, 289-96.

10 See CNB VIII, 372-75.

11 See Engberg, *En digters historie*, 54, 206-17.

12 Published in *Politiken*, 25 June 1916.

13 See Marie-Louise Zervides's article in the present volume.

14 Georg Brandes, *William Shakespeare*, three vols., Copenhagen 1895-1896.

15 Brandes, *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, London 1905, rev. with two additional appendices, 1920.

> Recently I've read nearly two volumes of Brandes's *Shakespeare*. You probably remember that we talked about both of them when we were last together. I've also read *Timon of Athens*, which I didn't know at all, and *Romeo and Juliet* again. But actually I'm a poor reader, because I let myself get carried away and therefore have to wait to gain a general impression until I've let it settle peacefully and looked it up again. Anyway, there are many fine things in Brandes's work, and I feel constantly inclined to get hold of other works about Shakespeare.[16]

If by 'general impression' Nielsen meant something that his musical personality could relate to and potentially turn to productive creative use, then that would accord strongly with the argument we are preparing to make.

Nielsen had personal contacts with Brandes dating back to the 1890s, though it is not known how their connection was first formed. Brandes was a generation older, and the young composer addressed him initially as Doctor, later Professor. In a diary entry of 28 May 1893, not long after completing his First Symphony, Nielsen mentioned going to Brandes's house, where he borrowed the latter's manuscript of the translation of the 'Song of Songs', and the two 'talked for a long time about Napoleon, Voltaire, Christ and the Inner Mission', the last of these being a movement to strengthen pious Christian principles within Danish society. Their conversations were evidently sparky, because Nielsen compared them to the fencing lessons he was taking at the time.[17] He evidently continued to consider Brandes a major intellectual figure. On 19 March 1915 he wrote him a supportive letter in connection with his polemic against French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, in which Brandes had defended Denmark's position of neutrality during the First World War.[18]

There is more that could be said about Nielsen and Brandes, but it would be unwise to try to force the point about Nielsen's connection with the 'Modern Breakthrough', or indeed with Rode's reconfiguration of the concept. The topic is not one that appears as such in any of Nielsen's writings, and whatever he may or may not have thought about it can only be inferred. He was certainly prepared to comment, albeit laconically, on other movements of his day – such as socialism and nationalism. But in general he seems to have been far more interested in being an active part of the 'Breakthrough', however designated, than in taking any particular attitude towards it.

16 CNL, 403; CNB VI, 421. Four days later, Nielsen reported that further reading of Brandes's *Shakespeare* had left him less convinced, in particular over the connections Brandes had drawn regarding 'Shakespeare's personal relationship to the dramas' (ibid., 390). For more on Brandes's *Shakespeare*, and *The Tempest* in particular, see Grimley, 'Storm, Symphonies, Silence', 195-97.

17 CNL, 102; CNB I, 297.

18 CNL, 369-70; CNB V, 214-15.

If anything, his professed stance towards 'modernism', even when responding to a complimentary application of the term to him, was sceptical,[19] though this is not to deny that from the present-day historical perspective the apparent oxymoron 'popular modernism' captures his own somewhat paradoxical musical-political outlook rather well.[20]

The 1916 Shakespeare celebration was not an occasion for scholarly reflection, either during or after the event. Rather it gave three of Denmark's cultural icons an occasion to explore philosophical and character affinities between the playwright and their country. Rode had all the more reason to rise to the occasion, since February of that year had marked his 25th anniversary as a writer, and the perfunctory celebration of that occasion had caused him sore disappointment.[21] Part of Rode's text for the Prologue consisted of five songs – two for solo voices, two for solo with chorus, and one for chorus alone – and these were set to music by Nielsen in what it is safe to say is one of his least known works. The complete text of the Prologue was published later in the year,[22] and it is helpfully summarized by Kirsten Flensborg Petersen in the Foreword to Volume 6 of Series 1 in the Nielsen Complete Edition. This is also the only place where all five songs and their texts are published.[23]

Apart from the two solo songs, delivered in Nielsen's settings by a tenor in the guise of Ariel and a bass as Caliban, respectively, the non-musical sections contained parts for a Prologue in person, for a fictional citizen of Elsinore named Jeppe Jeppesen, and for a stranger from England who engages the Prologue in conversation about Danish and English Kings and about the plots of various Shakespeare plays. There is no drama as such. Rather, the songs for Ariel and Caliban stand as auditory incarnations of a whole web of thoughts about the light and dark sides of the human mind. The Prologue frames the presentation with a homage to summer at the beginning, and a call for freedom of the imagination at the end. In June 1916 the homage to summer turned out to be somewhat ironic, since the premiere of the Prologue had to be postponed a few days because of rain, and even then strong winds played havoc with the outdoor acoustics, as reviews attest.[24]

The first song in Rode/Nielsen's Prologue, for solo and chorus, is an apostrophe to Shakespeare's all-encompassing humanity. It is couched in the striding triple time that Nielsen occasionally used for his *folkelige* songs. At this time, he had recently

19 See Hans Tørsleff, 'Carl Nielsen og "Modernismen"', interview in *Dagbladet* (Oslo), 6 October 1931, repr. in *Samtid*, 616-19.

20 See Mikkel Bruun Zangenberg, 'Breaking Down the Breakthrough', in Daniel Grimley and Phillip Ross Bullock (eds.), *The Nordic Breakthrough, Musical Modernity and Cultural Exchange, 1890-1930*, Woodbridge forthcoming.

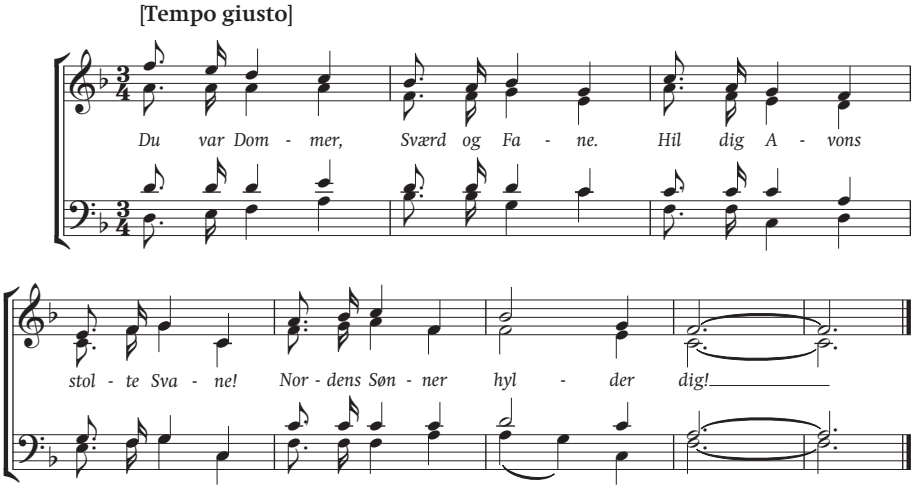
21 Engberg, *En digters historie*, 247-49.

22 Helge Rode, *Shakespeare: Et lille Festspil*, Copenhagen 1916.

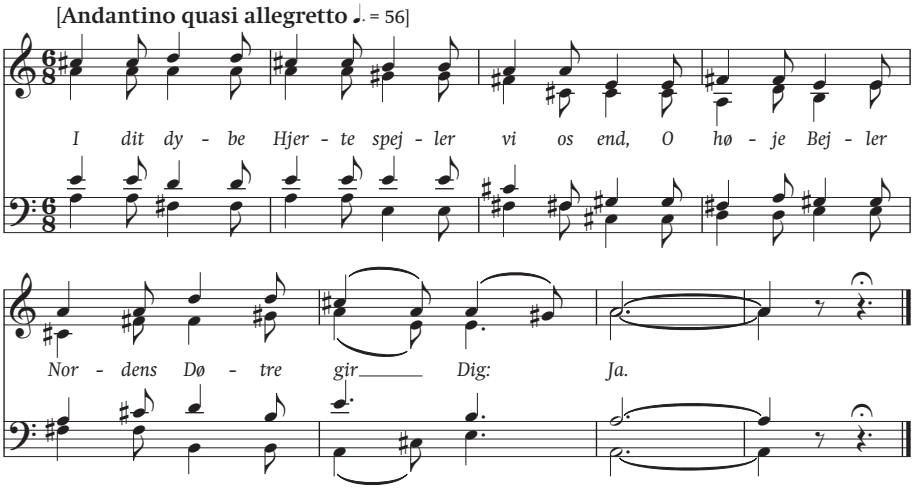
23 CNU I/6, Copenhagen 2007, 271-85.

24 Ibid., lviii.

finished his Fourth Symphony (*The Inextinguishable*), which itself features a redemptive triple-time theme in symphonized quasi-folklike style, and his main ongoing project was the folk-popular songs that would appear in various collections over the coming years. The fifth and final verse concludes: 'You were judge, sword and flag,/ Hail to you, proud swan of Avon!/ The sons of the North give you praise!' (Example 1). Picking up from this image, and addressing the apparent gender imbalance (not to say stereotypes), the second song concludes: 'In your deep heart we find our mirror-image./ O great suitor, the daughters of the North give you their consent' (in the sense of: 'plight you their troth') (Example 2).



Ex. 1: Prologue to Shakespeare, *Song 1, conclusion*



Ex. 2: Prologue to Shakespeare, *Song 2, conclusion*

Then we come to the songs for Caliban and Ariel. Rode's texts broadly follow Shakespeare's characterisation in *The Tempest*, in that Caliban is consumed by self-loathing and misanthropy, while Ariel has the gift of music and magic, and carries the promise of freedom, even though, like Caliban, he is for the time being Prospero's slave. They are spirits of the Earth and the Air, respectively: a common enough interpretation, to be found in, amongst other places, Henry Norman Hudson's 1909 commentated edition of the play,[25] though their duality may of course be interpreted in other ways.

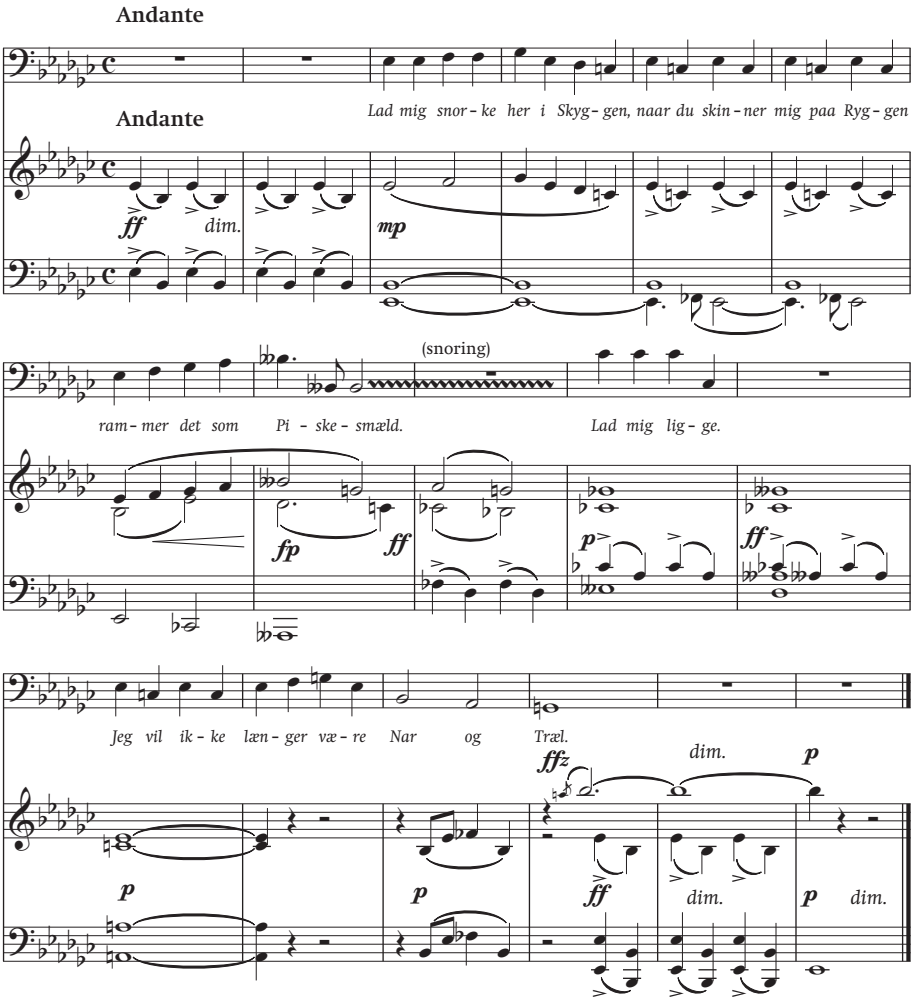
Nielsen's setting for Caliban's song is in a plodding E flat minor, a key he reserved for some of the darker moments in some of his otherwise brightest works, for instance the Melancholic Temperament of the Second Symphony, the appearance of Corporal Mors to announce the de-masking near the end of *Maskarade*, and the first movement of the Flute Concerto. In the last of these, to quote Michael Steinberg, building on Nielsen's own commentary: 'The first music that sounds like a theme rather than an introductory flourish is in fact in E flat minor' (Examples 3 and 4).[26]

The text of the first verse of Caliban's Song, addressed to the sun, runs: 'Let me snore here in the shadows; / when you shine on my back,/ it hurts me like the crack of a whip. / Let me lie. / No longer would I be a jester and a slave.' Nielsen lets the harmony drift flatwards from E flat minor into double-flattedness: in the last bar of this drift (b. 11 in Example 3, above) the non-functional French-sixth harmony is notated as D flat, G double flat, A double flat, C flat, though the ear probably registers nothing more bizarre than the extreme darkness that goes with the initial tonality and the flatwards drift. Just before this point the voice-part gives up on pitch altogether and the singer is directed to snore – probably not too gently, given the accompanying *fortissimo* in the orchestra. Nielsen wrote Caliban's song with Emil Holm in mind.[27] This prominent Danish bass was also something of an activist on Nielsen's behalf; when working in Stuttgart he agitated for many months for a performance of Nielsen's Third Symphony. In later life he was founder-director of the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Sadly, no recording was made of Caliban's Song at the time – indeed none exists to the present day – which makes it hard to gauge the effectiveness of the

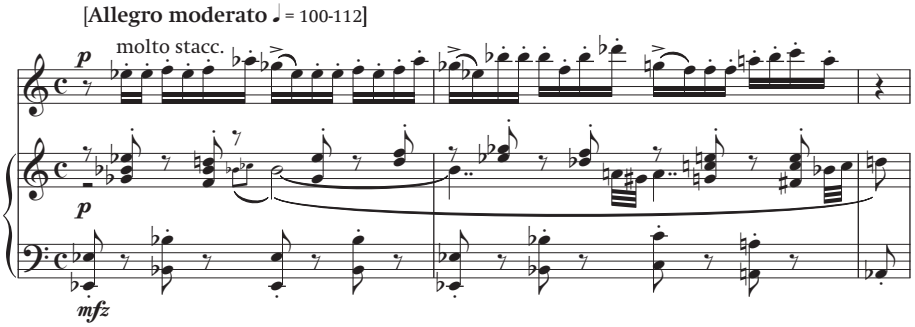
25 Boston, Ginn, 1879.

26 Michael Steinberg, *The Concerto: A Listener's Guide*, New York 1998, 335. In a programme note for a performance on 12 February 1930, Nielsen himself referred to this passage as a 'little, more definite' motif, compared to the 'free, fantasizing tone' of the opening of the Concerto – see CNU, II/9, Copenhagen 2002, xxxiii. The preceding instrumental flourish resembles the opening of Smetana's *Bartered Bride*, albeit in a more tonally and emotionally chaotic presentation. Nielsen had previously echoed Smetana's opening gambit in the 'Humoresque' from his 1889 Fantasy Pieces for Oboe and Piano, CNW 65.

27 See CNB V, 391.



Ex. 3: Caliban's song, with text to verse 1



Ex. 4: Flute concerto, first movement, bb. 12-14

'snoring' direction. Whether it was interpreted literally only for the first verse, with its initial reference to that condition, is not recorded. Be that as it may, the characterisation of Caliban as an uncivilised, darkly comic figure, with words and music in close agreement, is unmistakable.

In complete contrast is Ariel's Song. This is assigned to tenor, which is interesting in itself, because although the play assigns male gender to Ariel, it has been traditional from the mid-17th century on for it to be taken by a female, as it often is today, not least in Thomas Adès's 2004 opera, where Ariel's strato-coloratura timbre is perhaps the work's most instantly striking feature. Nielsen's setting itself is no less effective when performed by a soprano.[28] But in its original version for tenor and orchestra, it is the only movement from the Prologue that has been recorded to date.[29]

Rode's words for Ariel seek to assuage the darkness and cynicism of Caliban's Song. The first verse goes, again in literal translation: 'Even when the thunder rolls, the ether is light and clear. / Hear me! Ariel sings, and music is the Gods' answer. / I can whisper through the noise, / through cold bring warm light. / Keep me in your bosom. / If you feel your happiness has gone,/ Don't believe that, but remember that I, / Ariel, am your music' (Example 5, where the accompaniment is a reduction of the orchestral version rather than a reproduction of the more florid piano re-write). That Rode tailored the words closely to the demands of the occasion is clear from a comparison with the poem likewise entitled 'Ariel's Song' that appeared in the 1924 collection of 38 poems under the title *Ariel*; there both the song and the volume as a whole reference the many-faceted but mainly wind-associated spirit, as found not only in Shakespeare but also in Homer, Goethe and Shelley.[30]

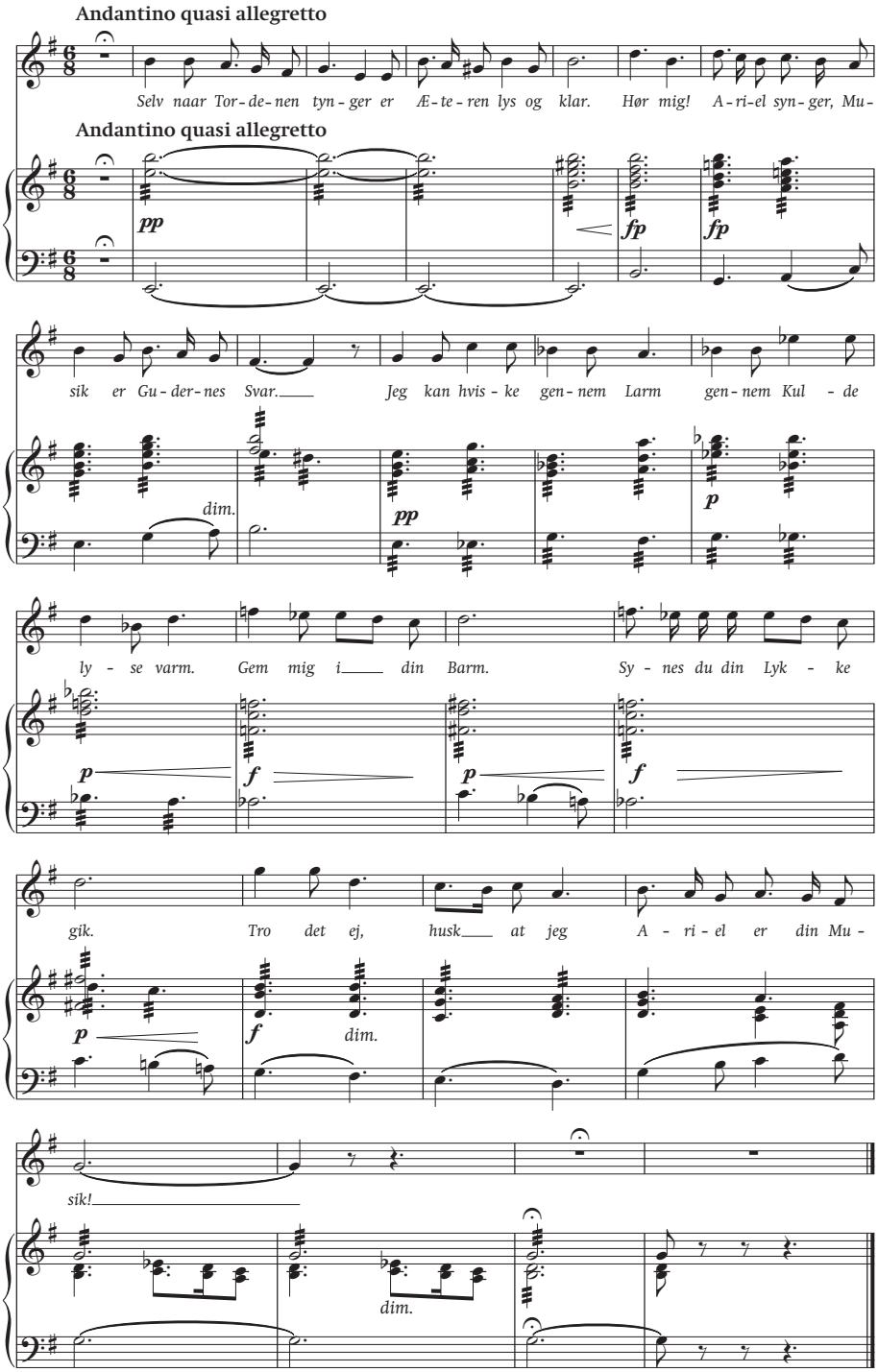
The equation of Ariel with music comes straight from the play, where song is the medium to which he/she tends. The words 'Full fathom five' are the most famous part of Ariel's Song – certainly for musicians, given their settings by Purcell (accredited, in the semi-opera to *The Tempest*), Stravinsky (*Three Songs from Shakespeare*), Tippett (*Songs for Ariel*), Sibelius (as a separate number in his *Tempest* music, and indeed a version possibly used in early productions by Shakespeare's contemporary Robert Johnson. In fact this part of the text is the beginning of the second stanza in Shakespeare's original.

Nielsen devises a very simple harmonic analogy for the imagery of the opening verse, moving from E minor ('Though the thunder roar') via E major ('The ether

28 As it is, in the composer's later voice-and-piano version, by Merete Hjortsø, EMI 754317-1 [1990, LP].

29 By Jan Lund, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Douglas Bostock, on Classico CLASCD268 [2000].

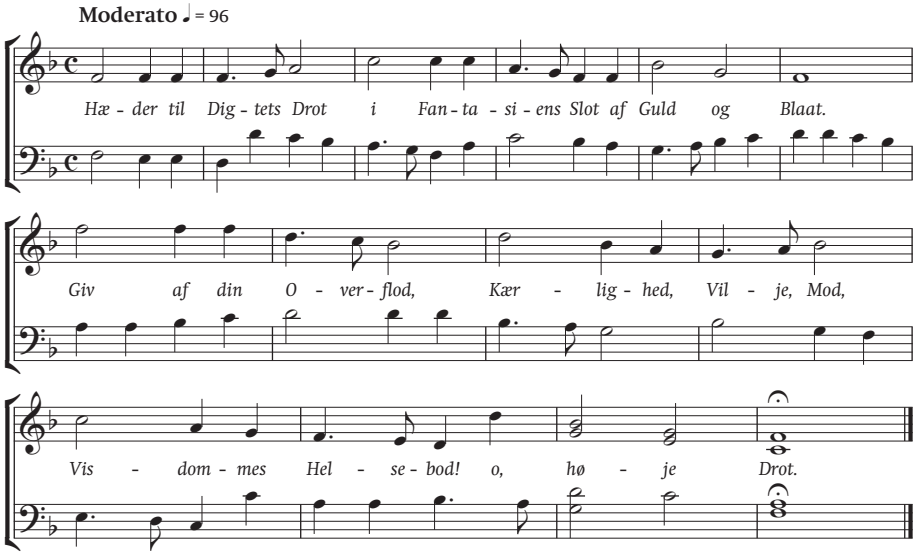
30 See Engberg, *En digters historie*, 218-19.



Ex. 5: Ariel's Song (verse 1)

is light and clear') finally to G major for 'Ariel is your music'. G major is generally a euphoric/pastoral key for Nielsen: witness all six symphonies apart from No. 3, the *Espansiva*. As for E major, it features most prominently in the respectively clamorous and reconciliatory affirmations at the end of *The Inextinguishable* and the Flute Concerto. By this we do not mean to assert a meaningful inter-textual cross-referencing, only that Nielsen was highly sensitive to connections between tonality and affect: connections that he inherited yet also contributed to and personalised.

'Ariel's Song' caught on rather well after its debut in the Shakespeare Celebration. At his publishers' encouragement, Nielsen put out a solo version in the same year, and it was widely sung in concert.[31] Even more successful was the final song of the Rode/Nielsen Prologue. This was originally to have been sung to the tune of 'God save the King', but for political reasons connected with Denmark's neutrality in the Great War, the composer was asked to supply a new melody.[32] Even though the metre in Nielsen's setting is quadruple rather than triple, the words themselves fit easily with the familiar tune of 'God save the King' (Example 6). The stern two-part writing, whose effectiveness was not lost on reviewers of the 1916 event, clearly contributes to the song's statuesque quality.



Ex. 6: Final song, verse 1. Text: Geetings to the King of poetry in the gold and blue castle of fantasy. / From your abundance give love, will and courage – health-giving wisdom! / O mighty King!

31 CNU I/6, lx. The voice-and-piano version, with rippling piano figuration in place of the more chordal orchestral writing, is reprinted in CNU III/5, 367-69; for more details see CNU III/7, 88.

32 CNU I/6, lvii.

The new melody proved so catchy that it in turn gained new words in the following year, penned by Valdemar Rørdam (1872-1946). He, like Rode, was a national-conservative by inclination; his reputation was blighted near the end of his life, when he penned a poem in support of Hitler's attempt to annihilate Bolshevism. His re-write of Rode's words under the title: 'Danmark i tusend Aar' (Denmark for a thousand years) (CNW 226), combined with Nielsen's music, became the most famous of the composer's patriotic songs, and even a contender for the status of national anthem.

From ephemeral to eternal

We shall now argue that Nielsen's inadvertent anthem was not the only enduring legacy of the 1916 Shakespeare celebrations. Already on 11 August, two months after the performance of the Prologue, the composer wrote to Ove Jørgensen:

> I'm thinking that these two characters [Caliban and Ariel] are elemental and in reality very musical, by which I mean suited for musical treatment, also in absolute musical forms. They encompass all the feelings I've long been dealing with (also in my last symphony [*The Inextinguishable*]), and are in reality inexhaustible [*uutømmelige*, literally un-emptiable] like eternally gushing springs, also in terms of artistic contrast effect. What do you think?[33]

He added a clarification on 26 August, seemingly in response to a communication from Jørgensen that has not survived, but which seems to have got the wrong end of the stick:

> When I wrote to you the other day I mentioned Ariel and Caliban. My intention wasn't to make these two into principal characters in an opera, but to use them as stimuli to absolute music. I was thinking of a string quartet (chamber music) in one continuous movement, where there should take place, so to speak, a kind of conversation or exchange of feelings between these two elemental beings. In my inner ear I heard the two men's [*Herrers*] voices for some days. But now they've disappeared again, and I'm good for nothing, so it won't come to anything for the time being. And perhaps it's best to wait until I get back to something like normal, if that happens.[34]

Nielsen's depressed tone came not least from the fact that his marital crisis had flared up earlier in the year, following the full revelation of his infidelities. It had

33 CNL, 403; CNB V, 438.
34 CNL, 404; CNB V, 451.

now finally hit home that he might not ever be able to repair things, and his exchanges with Jørgensen in 1916 contain some especially frank disclosures. Nevertheless, we will argue that the engagement with Ariel and Caliban did eventually bear creative fruit some ten years later, in the Flute Concerto. If we are correct, this would be the most significant creative result of an engagement with Shakespeare that can be traced back at least as far as the composer's early professional years.

It has been said that as one of twelve children growing up in rural Funen, and the product of a 'thatched village school',[35] Nielsen was self-conscious about the patchiness of his education. How he repaired his deficiencies is itself a patchy story. Best documented is his ravenous devouring of visual art during his first state-subsidised European trip, especially in Dresden, from September 1890, a year after his first professional appointment, as second violinist in the Royal Theatre Orchestra.[36] Precisely which Shakespeare plays or poems he encountered in his youth is not known. But that he knew his Shakespeare from an early age we can gather from a fragmentary letter of 23 October 1889 to his sweetheart Emilie Demant – he was 24 at the time, she barely 16. To Emilie he made some fascinating confessions about his own weaknesses: weaknesses of a moral nature, which in another confession he said had driven him to the point of buying a pistol and walking up and down the streets of Copenhagen wondering how to do away with himself:

> I'm sitting here with thoughts of death, my darling, and I can't get rid of them. Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and Ophelia! The churchyard with white bones in the black night. No salvation! None at all! In 50 years' time we may already be lying there, the gravedigger kicking our skull around while singing or piping a jolly tune.[37]

On 1 December the following year, three months after beginning his first European tour, he made a diary entry, subsequently much quoted, where the context is his surprise that the Germans ranked Carl Maria von Weber so highly:

> I'm coming to the conclusion that Weber will be forgotten in a hundred years. There's something jelly-like about much of his music, which won't stand the test of time. After all it's a fact that he who brandishes the hardest fist will

35 Finn Mathiassen, 'Music and Philosophy', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 3 (2008), 67.

36 CNL, 57-60. See also Colin Roth, 'Carl Nielsen's Cultural Self-Education: His Early Engagement with Fine Art and Ideas and the Path towards *Hymnus Amoris*', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 302-27.

37 CNL, 49; CNB I, 91.

> be remembered the longest. Beethoven, Michelangelo, Bach, Berlioz, Rembrandt, Shakespeare, Goethe, Henrik Ibsen and the like have all given their times a black eye.[38]

One interesting thing here is that while Nielsen clearly revered everyone on his list, there were others he would go on to write about with less qualified enthusiasm. Beethoven he would come to find too subjective beside his beloved Mozart; Michelangelo he admired but came to rate below Albrecht Dürer; Berlioz, who surely had a huge influence on his early style,[39] and whose works he conducted on occasion, receives little mention in his correspondence and essays, certainly compared to Wagner, who curiously does not feature on Nielsen's 'hardest fist' roster at all; and while Nielsen clearly knew his Ibsen, he was by no means uncritical in his appreciation.

So too, in a way, it was with Shakespeare. In Nielsen's extensive output of songs there are none to Shakespeare's words. Nor are there any operas, though in fact there nearly was one. In a diary entry for 5 January 1891, a month after the 'hardest fist' entry, Nielsen noted that he had been to see *The Merchant of Venice*: 'Previously I didn't like Shakespeare, but now it's different. Maybe you have to be completely mature before you approach him. Am I that? I hope not.' That experience seems to have planted a seed. In September 1897, his wife wrote to him about Brandes's newly published *Shakespeare* book, singling out *The Merchant of Venice* and remarking that Brandes's comments on its 'well-defined characters' (*udprægede Typer*) had made her think how good it might be as an opera. Nielsen seems to have acted on this idea almost straight away, because in the following year a letter from Sophus Michaëlis – well-known poet, novelist and playwright, and an almost exact contemporary of Nielsen's – indicates that he and the composer had been discussing the possibility of an opera based on that very play, to be titled *Portia*. A draft scenario in Nielsen's hand is preserved in the Torben Schousboe collection of the Royal Library, Copenhagen, together with Schousboe's marginal annotations.[40] On 13 December 1898 Michaëlis promised a fair copy of the first act in a few days, and the rest shortly afterwards. However, nearly a year went by and Michaëlis wrote again to express his disappointment that Nielsen had not replied and had moreover now begun work on a quite

38 CNL, 68; CNB I, 160.

39 See David Fanning, 'Carl Nielsen under the Influence: Some New Sources for the First Symphony', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 3 (2008), 9-27, here esp. 13-14.

40 Torben Schousboes Samling, XIV/2, transcribed in Niels Krabbe, 'Carl Nielsens ikke-realiserede operaplaner', *Fund og Forskning* 56 (2017), 297-334, translated and elaborated in the present volume.

different opera.[41] So we never got *Portia*, or *Portia and Shylock*. Instead Nielsen had become obsessed by another drama of extremely 'well-defined characters', namely *Saul and David*. He recalled that chain of events in an interview of 1928 in connection with a revival of his Biblical opera in Gothenburg,[42] confirming that on the earlier occasion his librettist had prepared the first act.

Otherwise documentary sources for Nielsen's thoughts about Shakespeare are at best tantalising. Among the snippets we have are a couple of references to the famous line: 'Macbeth hath murdered sleep', from the time when Nielsen was casting round for a text for his Cantata, *Sleep*, in 1903. But as for mature reflections, we are starved of information. The Brandes volumes, which we know Nielsen read, at least in part, do not survive in the collection of his books housed at the Carl Nielsen Museum in Odense; so we cannot even go hunting for marginalia or highlighted passages. On his tours he recorded going to see various other plays – including *The Merchant of Venice, Othello* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – but beyond a few generally positive remarks, he recorded no detailed impressions.

The Flute Concerto and *The Tempest*

What we do have is his music. And here we are about to propose at least one example of a deep-seated affinity that has previously gone unremarked. We recognise that without corroborating evidence of Nielsen's intended reference to Shakespeare, such affinities might be found in virtually any composer of serious, large-scale works, such is Shakespeare's range and depth of human commentary. So each case needs careful consideration. Shostakovich, for instance, did engage directly, and very interestingly at various points in his life – from the *Hamlet* incidental music of 1932 up to the late songs, via two more scores for *Hamlet* and two for *King Lear*[43] – but is his Fifth Symphony truly 'Hamletian', as has been suggested? If so, in what ways and with what relation to his documented intentions for the work? The dangers of wish-fulfilment – of seeking to add value by association with the Shakespeare brand – are all too obvious. Not that absence of evidence of direct engagement has stopped scholars from producing studies such as 'Pushkin and Shakespeare', 'Musorgsky and Shakespeare', or 'Wagner and Shakespeare', and having worthwhile things to say in

41 For a fuller commentary on *Portia* and Nielsen's other unfinished opera projects, see ibid.

42 In *Göteborg-Tidningen*, 27 November 1928, repr. in *Samtid*, 505-07; see also ibid., 853, n.3.

43 For more on Shostakovich's Shakespeare-themed works, see Michelle Assay, '"Hamlet" in the Stalin Era and Beyond: Stage and Score/ Les mises en scène et mises en musique d'Hamlet à l'ère stalinienne et après', PhD thesis, Universities of Sheffield and Paris Sorbonne, 2017.

the process.[44] But in general the topic is fraught with pitfalls, because the analogies are too easy to make.[45]

What we are looking for, then, are cases in which circumstantial evidence is strong, and in which the outcome of investigation enhances understanding in a way not afforded by approaches from any other angle. We consider the Flute Concerto to offer just such an example.

To recapitulate briefly: in 1916 Nielsen set words assigned to the characters of Caliban and Ariel, and not long afterwards he was considering the possibility of composing an instrumental work somehow based on those characters or the archetypes they represented. These archetypes he considered to be related to the driving forces of his Fourth Symphony: by which he can only have meant the antagonism between life-affirming and life-threatening forces, resulting in an affirmation of the latter.

The next chapter in the story is that Nielsen's wife saw *The Tempest* in May 1926, in the production with Sibelius's music that played in Copenhagen that year. She had mixed impressions of the music, and it is not known whether Nielsen himself saw this staging. Even so, in the same month he began to formulate the concept for a clarinet concertante piece, gradually realising, however, that he was more drawn to the flute.[46] The first evidence we have for the composer's work on the Flute Concerto is from August 1926, when he was abroad investigating methods of radio transmission; the commission for the concerto came, coincidentally, from the same Emil Holm who had sung the part of Caliban in the 1916 Celebration.[47]

One of the most distinctive features of the Flute Concerto – as indeed of the Clarinet Concerto, which followed two years later – is its duality between the solo protagonist and an opposed musical persona, in this case the bass trombone. In principle, this was hardly an unprecedented ploy. Richard Strauss, for example, had given his cellist in the quasi-concerto *Don Quixote* a side-kick violist to represent

44 Mikhail Alekseyev, 'Pushkin i Shekspir', in Alekseyev, *Pushkin: Sravnitel'no-istoricheskiye issledovaniya* [Pushkin: comparative-historical studies], Leningrad 1972, 240-80; Nikolay Zakharov, 'Pushkin i Shekspir', Znaniye. Ponimaniye. Umeniye, 5 (2008), http://www.zpu-journal.ru/e-zpu/2008/5/Zakharov_Pushkin&Shakespeare/, accessed 16 April 2020; Emiliya Frid, 'Musorgsky i Shekspir', in Lev Raaben (ed.), *Shekspir i muzïka*, Leningrad 1964, 189; Edgar Istel, 'Wagner and Shakespeare', *The Musical Quarterly*, 8 (1922), 495-509.

45 Nielsen himself once noted, in a letter to Julius Rabe of 19 June 1920: 'Of course there are dangers in analogies, in that many false analogies can look like really true ones; but if we confine ourselves to using them as pointers or as a kind of wake-up call, they can never do harm' – CNL, 482; CNB V, 440.

46 See Elly Bruunhus Petersen, 'Concerto for Flute and Orchestra', in CNU II/9, xxiv-xxv.

47 Ibid.

Sancho Panza; but there the viola plays a supportive rather than challenging role, as a foil rather than an antagonist. So far as later examples are concerned, Shostakovich's First Piano and First Cello Concertos (1931, 1959) contain significant obbligato parts for solo trumpet and solo horn, respectively; but again the duos work complementarily rather than antithetically. Nielsen's clarinettist, on the other hand, is definitely at odds with the side drum (revisiting and reconfiguring their relationship in the first movement of the Fifth Symphony); and this antagonism is even clearer in the Flute Concerto, where the bass trombone is a coarse intruder on the flute's guileless cavortings.

Nielsen himself made remarkably little of that duality in his programme note for the work, though he did memorably sum up the flute's Ariel-like character: 'The flute cannot deny its nature. It belongs in Arcadia and prefers pastoral moods; the composer therefore has to indulge the gentle creature, if he does not want to be stigmatised as a barbarian.'[48] But of course the bass trombone is precisely *not* inclined to indulge the flute, any more than Caliban is prepared to concede that the island setting of *The Tempest*, once inhabited by his mother Sycorax, is not rightfully his, as opposed to Prospero's and Ariel's. Too bad if the trombone is 'stigmatised as a barbarian'. That is precisely the feature that enables Nielsen to edge the Flute Concerto from a character study towards a drama of psychological archetypes.

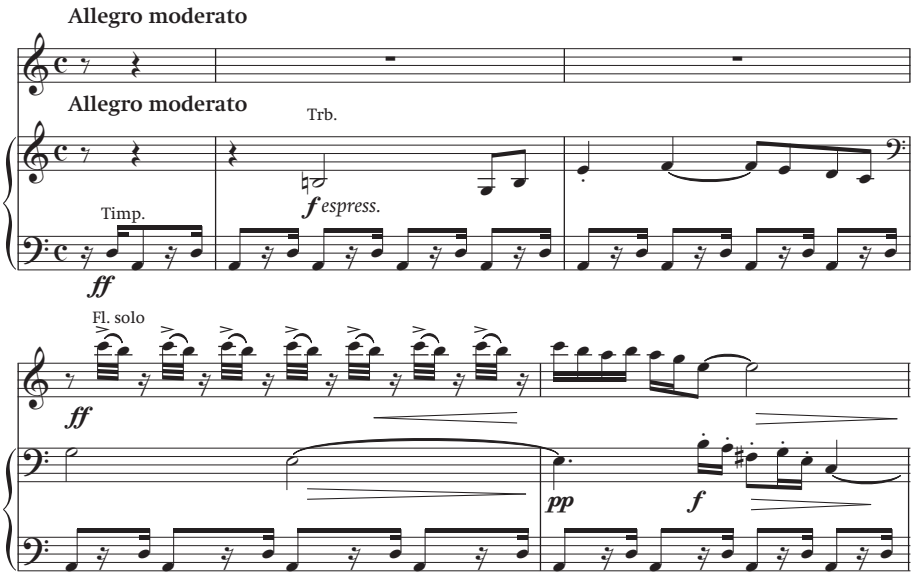
It fell to Robert Simpson in 1952 to articulate best what is rather obvious in the score:

> There comes a dissonant passage [from b. 80 in the first movement], with the marked entry of none other than the flute's *persona ingratissima*, the bass trombone. This coarse individual spreads himself all over the score with a grotesque and aimless blether, as if looking for something he has never even remembered to forget, while the aristocratic flute expresses its outraged sensibilities.[49]

Even 63 years on, the eloquence and aptness of Simpson's descriptions (the Latin phrase he borrowed, with acknowledgement, from his rather unlikely supporter Kaikhosru Sorabji) are striking. No less so is the fit with Ariel and Caliban (see Example 7).

48 Ibid., xxxiv, translation slightly adapted. Two movements at least in the incidental music to *Moderen* show the Arcadian metaphor in action: 'The fog is lifting' and 'Faith and Hope are playing'.

49 Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*, London 1952, 128; rev. edn., London 1979, 140.

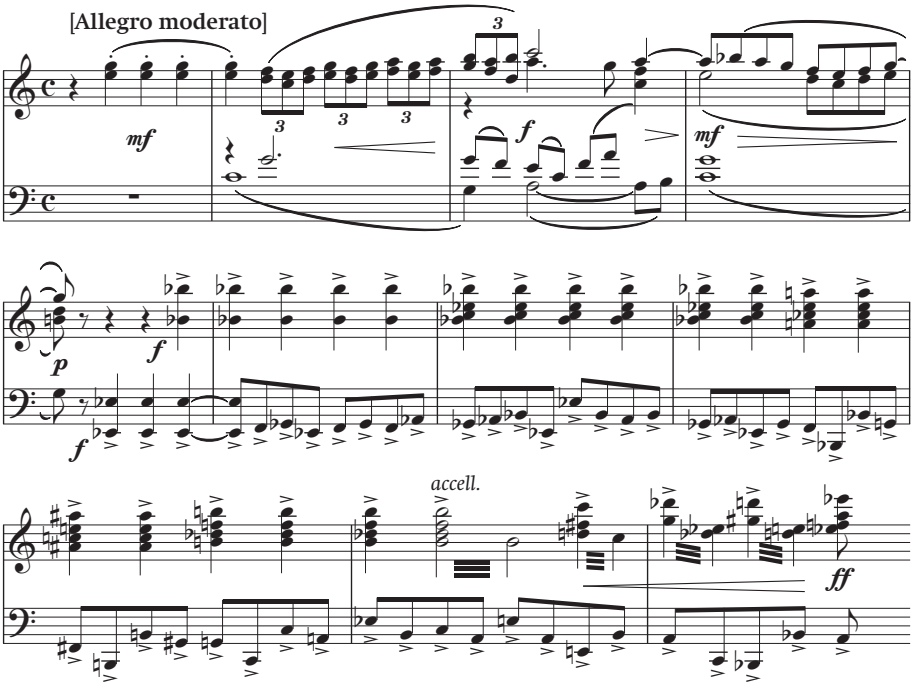


Ex. 7: Flute Concerto, first movement, bb. 80-84

Set up by the inability of the second subject to sustain its tranquil mood without deviation into anxious flurries (bb. 58ff.) and premonitions (bb. 74ff.), this sixteen-bar passage, whose relatively mild opening only is shown in Example 7, knocks the sonata design of the first movement sideways, and with that its psychological equilibrium. What follows is a reconfiguration of development, two cadenzas (so marked, though respectively short and accompanied) and recapitulation, in a structure that is apparently rhapsodic, certainly emancipated from textbook design, and serving only the dramaturgical interests of the trauma of the flute/trombone confrontation. The long-term rebalancing process is enhanced by a new theme, redemptively lyrical in character, which soothes the agitation of the first subject (from b. 101) and is soon taken up by the flute (from b. 110) as an even more definitive expression of Arcadian stability than the second subject. The E major tonality of this crucial flute presentation will supply Nielsen with the eventual tonal 'solution' to the work (in the second movement from b. 231). The fact that this trajectory eluded him in the first, provisional, ending composed for the premiere goes to show that the overall plan of the work must have been largely intuitive, but it does nothing to invalidate the hypothesis of shared tonal symbolism across works, already hinted at above.[50]

50 See Tom Pankhurst, '"We never known where we'll end up": Nielsen's alternative endings to the Flute Concerto', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 2 (2005), 132-51, and Kirsten Flensborg Petersen, 'Carl Nielsen's Flute Concerto: Form and revision of the ending', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 2 (2005), 196-225.

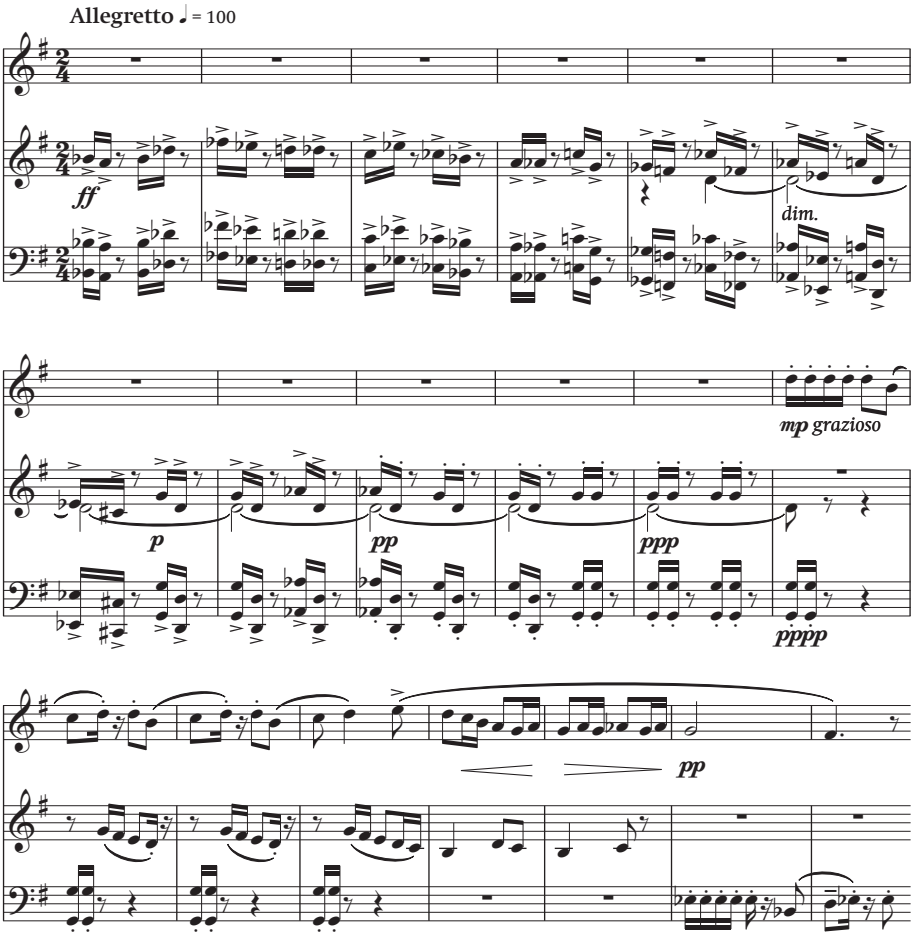
The association of disparate yet specific tonal regions with character dualism may easily be traced back to the songs for Ariel and Caliban from the Shakespeare Prologue, provided we are not expecting any hard-wired connections. As we have observed, Caliban's key of E flat minor is also the first relatively stable key in the Flute Concerto, albeit one where the flute is still searching for – not yet in – Arcadia (see Ex. 4, above). The first moment of alarm, which connects the pastoral security of the second subject's C major to the first solo entry of the bass trombone, is initially in E flat minor again, the key arriving this time out of the blue and provoking serious disruption (from b. 74 in Example 8).



Ex. 8: Flute Concerto, first movement, bb. 70-80

As in Ariel's song, the tonalities of Arcadia, where the flute is properly at home, are G major and E major. These frame the second movement, which revisits and more definitively heals the painful duality of the first (thereby replaying the scenario of the two-movement Fifth Symphony at a more intimate, chamber-like level). In an opening similar in principle to the first movement, the flute brings euphony out of asperity, this time in a G major far more stable and Arcadian than the first movement's E flat minor (Example 9). Nielsen retains the one-sharp key signature as far as the coda (231

out of 267 bars), despite passing through a myriad of keys and associated shades of security and conflict along the way.

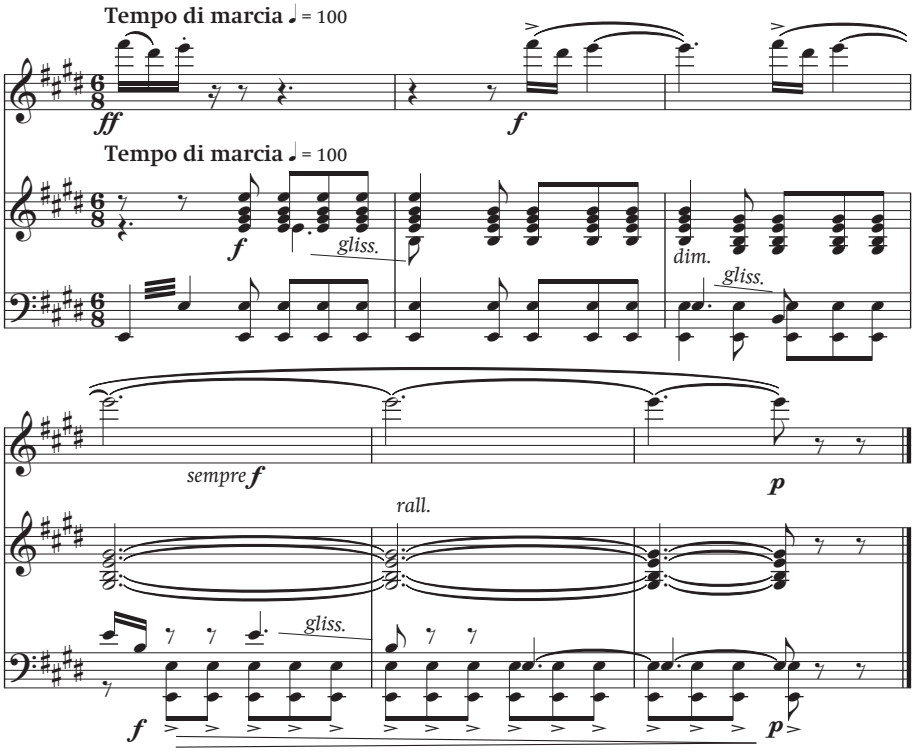


Ex. 9: Flute Concerto, second movement, bb. 1-18

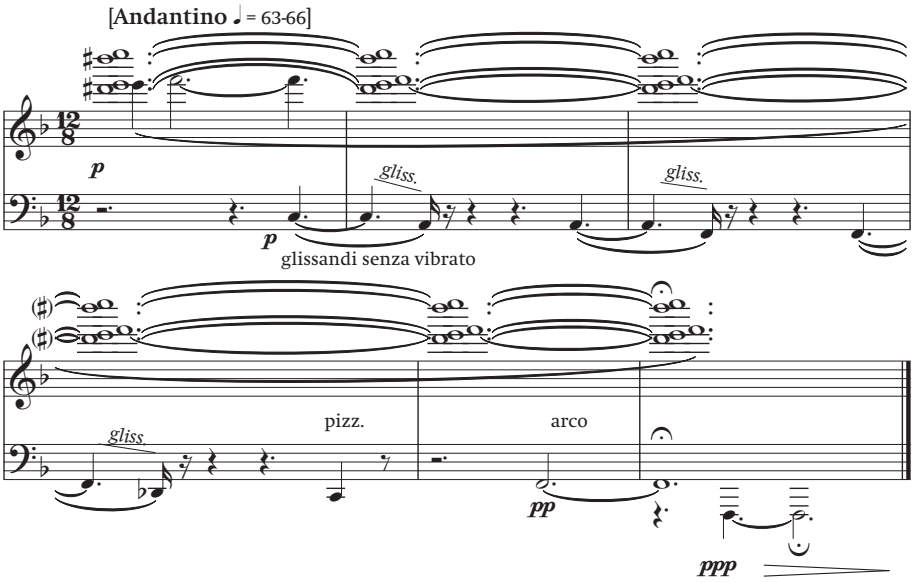
The second movement is a kind of character-rondo, with returns of the *grazioso* Arcadian theme in its G major home key at bb. 93 and 145. The first two intervening episodes are brief, highly chromatic Adagios, in which the home tonality is more tenuous yet still unmistakable as an underpinning (bb. 73-84, 138-44). The third (bb. 186-95) is really a disguised reconfiguration of the Arcadian theme, designed as if to assuage the asperity into which that theme has inadvertently and anxiously relapsed (bb. 161-86). This passage heralds the bass trombone's rude interruption, which seems

hell-bent on replaying its antagonistic role in the first movement, before it blithely drifts into E major and dares to serenade the flute in a kind of Beauty and the Beast union. E major then functions as the affirmative destination of the coda, in which the bass trombone is silent until its final acquiescent glissandos.

Those trombone sighs – so emollient in effect compared to the instrument's scathing contributions to the 'Humoresque' second movement of the Sixth Symphony – echo the shy glissandi at the end of Nielsen's 1918 Ovid-based tone poem *Pan and Syrinx*. This is another Beauty-and-the-Beast-like tale of base lust pitched against chaste virtue, the opposites being loosely personified in Nielsen's work by opposed wind instruments: skirling clarinet versus lyrical low flute and cor anglais. Thus its conclusion is another symbolic dissolution of mythic opposites; it also happens to be the most delicately scored and fastidiously annotated passage of any in a Nielsen score, softening the apparent extreme dissonance of the harmony by means of register and timbre. In the Flute Concerto it is as though the trombone has at an idealist-symbolic level purged its own – or is it Nielsen's? – choler (Examples 10, 11).



Ex. 10: Flute Concerto, conclusion



Ex. 11: Pan and Syrinx*, conclusion*

From duality to reconciliation

It might be wise to end on a note of caution. If we do not need a knowledge of *The Tempest* in order to understand the oppositions in *Pan and Syrinx*, perhaps we do not need them for the Flute Concerto either, any more than we do to interpret other conspicuous dualities in Nielsen's work, as we have attempted to do elsewhere.[51] Perhaps the duality-fixation was so deeply implanted in him that it took on a life of its own, needing no external stimulus. And yet it cries out for further investigation, precisely because since it is such a strong marker of his artistic individuality. Is it not remarkable that if we look for parallels to the strongest character-archetype duality of all in his output, *Saul and David* (which is to say, two title-characters unconnected by a love interest), probably the only one in the established repertoire that comes to mind is Schoenberg's *Moses and Aaron*. So it seems that if the figures of Caliban and Ariel did find their counterparts in the Flute Concerto, they did so only because they were planted in a psychological field already richly fertilised by archetypal soil. Indeed, looking globally at the role of dualities in Nielsen's output and his position as some kind of paradoxical popular-modernist, perhaps we can most fruitfully associate him with the maxims of Carl Jung, as pithily re-formulated by Michael Tippett in *A Child of Our Time*: 'I would know my shadow and my light,/ so shall I at last be whole'.

51 Fanning and Assay, '"Dreams and Deeds"'.

Even so, it seems that while dualities were a lifelong preoccupation for Nielsen, the experience of composing songs for Ariel and Caliban may have served as a specific, if delayed-action, catalyst for a new manifestation in the Flute Concerto. For us, the previously uncommentated reference in Nielsen's correspondence to the possibility of an instrumental work about Ariel and Caliban is the decisive piece of evidence that makes this particular exercise more than a flight of fancy. Nor would this be the only instance of Nielsen applying images from his incidental music in more archetypal guise in a major concert work: several themes from his score to *Aladdin* (CNW 17, composed 1918-19), along with whole scenes such as its 'Battle between Good and Evil', surely transferred in this way to his Fifth Symphony (1920-22).[52] Admittedly the close temporal proximity of these two works makes the hypothesised connection easier to validate. Similarly, though in reverse, the relationship between incidental and concert music has been productively investigated by Daniel Grimley in the case of Nielsen's 1930 music for Sophus Michaëlis's music for *Cupid and the Poet* (*Amor og Digteren*) and its relationship to the Sixth Symphony (1924-25) and the two wind concertos.[53] And Leah Broad has done something similar for Wilhem Stenhammar's 1920 incidental music score for a production of *As you Like It*, albeit in a study more focused on that score itself than on its afterlife.[54]

If the flute in some sense may be thought of as a reincarnation of Ariel and the trombone of Caliban, may Prospero too be said to have some presence in the Flute Concerto? Commentators starting with Edward Dowden in 1875, and indeed some productions, have identified this apostrophiser of 'the great Globe itself' as none other than Shakespeare. Georg Brandes was quite cautious in his interpretation, but he still ventured to say, amongst other things, that 'it is Shakespeare's own nature which overflows into Prospero'.[55] As we have seen, Nielsen himself was uncomfortable with Brandes's tendency to read autobiography into Shakespeare's works; and Shakespeare is equally often equated with Hamlet or Macbeth, or indeed with none of the above, because all those characters are in a more important sense us, and we them. But setting aside such cautionary notes, if Shakespeare is at some level to be understood as embodied in Prospero, might it not be interesting to understand Nielsen, in the particular instance of the Flute Concerto, in an analogous

52 As argued in David Fanning, *Carl Nielsen: Symphony No. 5*, Cambridge 1997, 22-27, 109 n.5.

53 Daniel Grimley, 'Nielsen on the Boulevard: Modernism and the Harlequinesque in *Cupid and the Poet*', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 94-106.

54 Leah Broad, '"Clear, Happy, and Naïve"': Wilhelm Stenhammar's Music for *As You Like It*', *Music and Letters*, 99 (2018), 352–85.

55 Brandes, *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, 663.

light?[56] The reconciliation of the flute and trombone has no precise parallel in the relationship of Ariel and Caliban, and while Ariel ultimately wins his freedom, Caliban remains a servant of Prospero. Yet the urge for reconciliation and forgiveness is precisely what drives Prospero to disarm: to renounce his magic, breaking his staff, allowing human reconciliation to take place. One lesson of close engagement with Nielsen's letters is that in his last decade he too was looking for reconciliation, after all the bitterness and antagonism he had experienced in his prolonged personal and professional mid-life crisis. And it is his compositional conjuring that brings about the symbolic reconciliation in the Flute Concerto.

Probably the least that can be said about Nielsen's obsession with dualities, including the Ariel/Caliban one, is that it helped him symbolically to look inside himself – for which read also ourselves. This is precisely the thrust of Helge Rode's Shakespeare Prologue text. For all its modest dimensions and scoring, the Flute Concerto – now recognised as one of the finest examples, possibly even *the* finest, of its genre – is at once humane and magical, as it transforms the ephemerality of its stage origins into the permanence of the concert repertoire. Its final reconciliation, like most things of value in life, feels the more rewarding for being hard-won, against heavy resistance. Ariel, Caliban and Prospero were all there in archetypal guise to assist the work, the composer, and ultimately ourselves, on that journey.

56 And he may not have been the only one. For Sibelius's self-identification with Prospero, see Erik Tawaststjerna, *Jean Sibelius*, vol. 5: 1919-1957, Stockholm 1997, 20: 'For Sibelius, Prospero was a symbol for creative mankind, and thereby for himself, just as Ariel came to symbolise his inspiration and Caliban his demoniac side'.

A B S T R A C T

In June 1916 Nielsen supplied incidental music for the tercentenary Shakespeare celebrations in Hamlet's castle of Kronborg, Helsingør (Elsinore). The three choruses and two songs he composed constitute one of his least-known works. But they had a legacy, and not only in the final choral number, which, to other words, subsequently became a candidate for Danish national anthem. Shortly after the event, Nielsen confided that he found Ariel and Caliban (for each of whom he had composed a sharply characterful song) so fascinating that he was considering writing an instrumental work based on their contrasting temperaments. This he never did, at least not overtly. However, ten years later the drastic instrumental contrasts in his Flute Concerto invite a reading based on the Ariel/Caliban duality. The distinctiveness of the concerto's confrontation between the flute solo and the orchestral bass trombone has long been recognised. However, this duality takes on a more focused and at the same time broader significance when viewed in the light of Nielsen's life-long, albeit mainly indirect, engagement with Shakespeare. Suggesting how a composer's occasional character-music may re-emerge in their concert work in the guise of archetypes, our article seeks to contribute to a growing field of investigation into the relationship between 'applied' and concert music.

NIELSEN, *SAUL AND DAVID* AND THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

Cultural-Historical Perspectives

By Marie-Louise Zervides

In his 1991 biography, *Carl Nielsen – Danskeren* (*Carl Nielsen – The Dane*), the Danish theologian and literary critic Jørgen I. Jensen argued the importance of symbolism in Carl Nielsen's artistic development. He stated: 'Carl Nielsen's art originates in short from a symbolist culture; it is musical symbolism.'[1] Nielsen never publicly associated himself with the term, however. In fact, he was resistant to it.[2] Nevertheless, as we shall see, he was deeply involved in the symbolist milieu of the 1890s and shared many of the same ideas and artistic techniques as the symbolists of his time. In this study, I will explore the concept of symbolism and the artistic environment around Nielsen in the 1890s, including Nielsen's own encounters and early engagement with art – both in Denmark and on his travels to Europe – to discuss how, where and if it is possible to construct a symbolist reading of Nielsen's first opera, *Saul and David* (1898-1901).

Saul and David has only rarely been addressed by the scholarly community, or produced in opera houses. In the few existing studies of the opera, it has been understood as a tragedy, as well as significantly Danish; it has been compared to Wagnerian music dramas, and the libretto to the biblical story.[3] However, never before has

1 Jørgen I. Jensen, *Carl Nielsen. Danskeren*, Copenhagen 1991), 92: 'Carl Nielsens kunst udgår kort og godt fra en symbolistisk kultur; den er musikalsk symbolisme.'

2 In a letter to Danish writer Gustav Wied, Nielsen criticises writer Holger Drachmann for shouting: 'Listen Carl Nielsen, we youths, we symbolists!' (*hør Carl Nielsen, vi Unge vi Symbolister!*) – see letter of 18.4.1897 in CNB I, 500f.; and CNL, 158 , where Nielsen underscores his deep irritation towards Drachmann and concludes: 'The symbolist nonsense! Don't you think?' (*Det symbolistvrøvl! Ikke sandt?*).

3 Anne-Marie Reynolds, 'Nielsen's *Saul and David* as Tragedy: The Dialectics of Fate and Freedom in Drama and Music', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 236–57; Jørgen I. Jensen: 'Carl Nielsens Saul og David: ambivalensen i den danske sjæl', in Jørgen I. Jensen (ed.), *Mødepunkter, Teologi–kultur–musik*, Copenhagen 2004, 125–28; Patrick McCreless, 'Strange Bedfellows: The Hebrew Bible and Wagner, in *Saul and David*', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 4 (2009), 107–44.

Saul and David been explored within a symbolist context. In doing precisely this, this study aims to offer a deeper understanding of both the opera and the composer in a cultural-historical – and broader European – context around the turn of the century. It is not my intention to draw a conclusion that tells us whether the opera is or is not symbolist. Instead, the study aims to explain how the work might have elements that can make it possible to understand it as a symbolist opera.

We will first consider the background to the rise of the symbolist movement of the 1890s and explore the symbolist turn both in and outside Denmark. This will help us understand the cultural-historical context around Nielsen and his contemporaries before studying the composer's own encounters with art, artists, and ideas leading up to *Saul and David* – the latter having recently been made possible with the 2005-15 publication of Nielsen's complete letters and diary entries in the twelve-volume Carl Nielsen Letters Edition.[4]

When analysing symbolism in Nielsen's opera, it is essential to be able to locate the specific elements that invite such a reading. This is not an easy task, as the concept of symbolism is complex and the styles of symbolist art are varied. Furthermore, the task of analysing symbolism in *Saul and David* becomes even more complex as the art form of opera is inevitably created out of a literary text, a dramatic stage performance, and music. Therefore, when looking for symbolism in *Saul and David*, it will be necessary to draw from theory on symbolist art in various forms, including painting, literature, music, and drama.

Emerging modernism

During the nineteenth century, artists and thinkers were responding to the increasingly uncertain and complex modern world. The scientific revolution had created a modern, rational approach to the natural world and to a growing faith in the scientific method and technological progress. Cities were growing as a result of a population shift from rural to urban areas. Furthermore, discoveries in the field of human biology, Charles Darwin's theories of evolution, and the growing amount of bible critique made the nineteenth century an age of increasing secularisation.

In Denmark, the literary critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927) was welcoming the profound cultural changes, and with his lectures at Copenhagen University from 1871 and the 1883 publication of his critical essays, *Det moderne gjennembruds mænd* (*Men of the Modern Breakthrough*), he was reacting against romanticism in the arts and introducing Scandinavian writers such as Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), August Strindberg (1849-1912) and J.P. Jacobsen (1847-1885). Brandes called for a progressive,

4 CNB I, 500f..

naturalistic art where artists would engage themselves in social issues and the concrete reality of the world. His lectures and essays were instantly translated into several languages and would not only, according to Danish writer Johannes Jørgensen in 1905, make Danish art 'aware of its own modernism' but also place Scandinavia as a starting point for a wave of modernism across Europe.[5]

According to Michael Fjeldsøe, the period of the 1870s and 1880s was one of optimism in relation to the early ideas of Brandes. By the end of the 1880s, however, a sense of pessimism started to emerge as Brandes' discoveries of the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche led to a series of lectures in 1888, named 'aristocratic radicalism', in which Brandes would be the first in Europe to present Nietzsche's ideas to the modern world.[6] Through Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, Brandes proclaimed 'the death of God' and a revaluation of man's moral values. The biological nature of man meant there was no metaphysical shield against man's inevitable death and this called for liberation in life, and for 'free spirits' to control one's own destiny and individuality in modern society.[7] According to the Danish literary critic Henrik Wivel, Brandes' introduction to Nietzsche would lead to enormous cultural change across the arts over the following ten years, which would position Scandinavia as the epicentre of the 1890s symbolist movement.[8]

A new cultural atmosphere was emerging by the 1890s. A whole generation of young intellectuals, poets, painters, and musicians was responding to this realist and naturalist vision and against the rational, 'dispirited' materialism of the science-dominated world.[9] Some felt a spiritual loss in modern society and wished to regain a metaphysical dimension in the arts. Artists were therefore starting to turn away from the naturalist, objective representation of the external world, instead looking inward to illuminate facets of subjective experience.[10] The symbolist movement is regarded as one of the most important examples of this revaluation in the arts. It started as a literary movement in France with Jean Moréas's Symbolist manifesto in *Le Figaro* (1886). Rejecting naturalism and materialism in the arts, including the 'scientifically' investigative novels of Émile Zola, Moréas proclaimed the 'validity of pure subjectiv-

5 Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, Woodbridge 2010, 26, quoting Johannes Jørgensen, 'Romantikken i moderne dansk Literatur', *Tilskueren* 22 (1905), 98.

6 Michael Fjeldsøe, *Kulturradikalismens musik*, Copenhagen 2013, 61.

7 Henrik Wivel, 'Det sjælelige gennembrud – dekadence, idealisme og vitalisme i 1890ernes kultur', in Lise Busk Jensen (ed.), *Dansk Litteraturs Historie*, vol. 3: *1870–1920*, Copenhagen 2009, 269; Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 29–31.

8 Wivel, 'Det sjælelige gennembrud', 266.

9 Fjeldsøe, *Kulturradikalismens musik*, 62–64.

10 Nicole Myers, 'Symbolism', in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, New York 2007, 1.

ity and the expression of an idea over a realist description of the natural world'.[11] Though it began as a French literary concept, symbolism soon developed into a cultural movement across the arts and quickly spread to the rest of Europe.

Many symbolists were expressing the same *fin-de-siècle* feelings of alienation, anxiety, and emotional crisis toward modern life – a cultivation of Nietzsche's metaphorical night-side in *Zarathura*'s 'Midnight Song', the dark side of the German philosopher on the brink of mental breakdown.[12] This led to a strongly subjective artistic approach with intensely personal emotion and expression. Edvard Munch's *The Scream* of 1893 exemplifies these torn feelings of isolation, disillusionment, and psychological anguish with its distorted forms and expressive colours.[13]

Young artists from Denmark, including painters J.F. Willumsen (1863–1958), Mogens Ballin (1871–1914), Agnes Slott-Møller (1862–1937), Harald Slott-Møller (1864–1937), and poet Sophus Claussen (1865–1931), were travelling to Paris to follow the latest innovations in modern art and literature. Many would find inspiration in the French artistic environment, and the symbolist movement was quickly growing in Denmark as both an alternative to and a continuation of Brandes' progressive modernist project. Sophus Claussen spoke of a 'significant difference between the young generation of today and the realist writers who followed Brandes' in an interview published in the avant-garde periodical *Taarnet* in 1894:

> I can see now that there is a profound difference between the younger generation of today and the realistic writers advocated by Georg Brandes. Who believes now that a poet should represent the elements that anyone can see and hear every day? ... Our time – our youth – has returned to the ancient idea that a poet should be spiritual [*beaandet*], an advocate of the obscure, strange relationship between things.[14]

11 Ibid.

12 Jens Brincker, Finn Gravesen, Carsten E. Hatting, and Niels Krabbe, 'Fremtidstro og pessimisme', in Knud Ketting (ed.), *Den europæiske musikkulturs historie 1740-1914* (Gyldendals Musikhistorie vol. 2), Copenhagen 1990), 287.

13 Julius Kaplan, 'Symbolism', *Oxford Art Online*, https://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000082761, accessed 20 May 2020, and Myers, 'Symbolism', 2.

14 Sophus Claussen (1894) in Wivel, 'Det sjælelige gennembrud', 287: *Der er – ser jeg nu – alligevel en dyb Forskel paa Nutidens Unge og paa de realistiske Skribenter, som fulgte Georg Brandes. Hvem tror vel nu mere, at det for Digteren gælder om at efterligne, genfortælle de Ting, som Hvermand hver Dag kan se og høre? ... Vor Tid – de unge – er vendt tilbage til den ældgamle Opfattelse, at en Digter helst bør være beaandet, en Forkynder af Tingenes dunkle og forunderlige Sammenhæng.*'

The Danish writer and founder of *Taarnet*, Johannes Jørgensen (1866–1956), was writing in a similar manner in his Danish symbolist manifesto 'Symbolisme' (1893) in which he proclaimed:

> All genuine art is and becomes symbolic. Throughout our great masters, one finds Nature conceived as an outer sign of inner spiritual life. Therefore, many of their products appear dark and obscure: their works are like those painted window panes with which Goethe compares his poetry: they must be seen from inside.[15]

Quoting from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, Jørgensen concluded: 'It is my firm conviction that a true view of the world must necessarily be mystical. The world is deep. And only shallow minds fail to perceive that.'[16]

Nielsen's artistic milieu in the 1890s

It is unclear whether Nielsen himself was attending Brandes' lectures. However, Emilie Demant Hatt[17] recalled in her memoirs of the composer how Nielsen and his circle of friends from the Copenhagen Conservatoire in the late 1880s actively discussed the critical topics of the time: 'They read both old and new literature. They were all musical. They interested themselves in art, philosophy and religion. They practised 'free thinking' in all domains.'[18] Furthermore, Nielsen would be conversing with Brandes in the 1890s. In a diary entry from 1893, for example, we read that Nielsen visited Brandes, talking 'for a long time about Napoleon, Voltaire, Christ and the Home Mission.'[19]

15 Johannes Jørgensen, 'Symbolisme' (Nov. 1893), in *Taarnet: En Antologi af Tekster*, ed. Carl Bergstrøm Nielsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1966), 58: *Al ægte Kunst er og bliver symbolsk. Overalt hos de store Mestre finder man Naturen opfattet som et ydre Tegn paa et indre sjæleligt Liv. Derfor synes saa mange af deres Frembringelser den Udenforstaaende dunkle og ufattelige; deres Værker er som hine gemalte Fensterscheiben, hvormed Goethe lignede sine Digte: de maa ses indenfra.*

16 Ibid., 59: *Det er tilmed min faste Overbevisning, at en sand Verdensanskuelse nødvendigt maa være mystisk. Verden er dyb. Og kun de flade Aander fatter det ikke.*

17 Painter, writer and anthropologist, Emilie Demant Hatt (1873–1958). Nielsen met the 14-year-old Emilie Demant Hansen (married name Hatt) in 1887 just after graduating at the conservatory when he was 22 years old. The two began a romantic relationship which lasted three years.

18 Emilie Demant Hatt, *Forårsbølger: erindringer om Carl Nielsen* [Spring Torrents: remembrances of Carl Nielsen], ed. John Fellow, Copenhagen 2002, 84: *Der læste man baade gammel og nyt Litteratur. Der var alle musikalske. Der interesserede man sig for Kunst, Filosofi og Religion. Der praktiseredes 'fri Tænkning' paa alle Omraader.* Nielsen's conservatoire friends included Margrete Rosenberg and (cousins of Brandes) the brothers Albert and Emil B. Sachs – see Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 48.

19 CNB I, 297, diary entry 413 (28.5.1893): *Vi talte længe sammen om Napoleon, Voltaire[,] Christus og den Indre Mission*; CNL, 102.

However, it is clear that the young Nielsen may have been more sceptical about the technological progress of the time, stating, just two months before: 'Inventions and discoveries do not bring man's spiritual development one bit forward.'[20] This statement was written during his visits at the *Free Exhibition* in Copenhagen in 1893, an annual exhibition of art works by modern Danish and international artists, including Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh. The *Free Exhibition* was arranged by Danish painters Johan Rohde, Vilhelm Hammershøi, J.F. Willumsen, Agnes and Harald Slott-Møller, as well as Nielsen's own wife, the sculptor Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen.

Agnes and Harald Slott-Møller, as well as J.F. Willumsen, are seen by many scholars as key figures of the symbolist movement in Denmark and would share life-long friendships – and, arguably, mutual artistic inspiration – with Carl Nielsen and his wife. Harald Slott-Møller painted several portraits of Anne Marie, one of them exhibited at the *Free Exhibition* in 1891, which was greatly inspired by medieval art and symbolism through its simplified, non-naturalistic representation and bold colours.[21]

Carl Nielsen's deep interest in art began at a young age and was partly influenced by his teachers Niels W. Gade and Orla Rosenhoff who, during his conservatory years in 1884–86, had encouraged him to seek out a wider artistic experience than purely a musical one.[22] His interest became especially clear during his long study tours in Europe in the 1890s, firstly in 1890–91 when he visited major artistic centres in Europe, including Dresden, Berlin, Leipzig, Paris, Milan, Florence, Rome, and Venice; and secondly, on his second extended tour in 1894 when he visited Berlin, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Munich, Salzburg, and Vienna. His diary entries and letters are full of lengthy descriptions of the pictures and sculptures he would encounter, as well as the many artists he would meet.

During his stay in Berlin in 1890, Nielsen wrote a remarkable letter to his old friend Emil B. Sachs (1855–1920):

> The old paintings suffer more than the modern from being reproduced in photogravures and woodcuts, I think; perhaps that is because their spiritual content is somewhat foreign to us; they are not our feelings and thoughts that

20 CNB I, 295, diary entry 406 (31.3.1893): *Opfindelser og Opdagelser bringer ikke Menneskenes aandelige Udvikling et eneste Gran fremad.*

21 Harald Slott-Møller: *Anne Marie Brodersen* (1891), painting at the Carl Nielsen Museum, Odense, Denmark. Claudine Stensgaard Nielsen: 'Harald Slott-Møller', *Den Store Danske,* downloaded 11 June 2015 from www.denstoredanske.dk/Kunst_og_kultur/Billedkunst/Danmark_1850-1910/Harald_Slott-M%C3%B8ller .

22 Colin Roth, 'Carl Nielsen's Cultural Self-Education. His Early Engagement with Fine Arts and Ideas and the Path towards Hymnus Amoris', *Carl Nielsen Studies*, 5 (2012), 302–04.

> the pictures are an expression of, not our ideal which is portrayed; but the way in which it is done is, I think, exactly the same.[23]

In this letter, Nielsen describes the idea of a 'spiritual' dimension in an artwork, as well as the feelings expressed and ideals portrayed in art. A month later, he considered whether music could be composed like the modern impressionist paintings – swimming in clouds of mood [*Stemningstaage*].[24] As I shall discuss below, the merging of 'moods' and emotional expression, as well as the idea of a spiritual dimension in art, were defining features of symbolism during this decade.

Nielsen would often write in a far more detailed and positive manner on the subject of painting and sculpture than he would about music. A clue to this might be found in a letter to his wife, while in Berlin in 1894:

> It is like my soul's pores are open when I am travelling. It isn't true with music, though. There I am always sceptical and rather cold and feel no enrichment, because I always feel that I can both conduct and compose better than these people. / The gallery had acquired two new Italian pictures by an old artist whose name I cannot remember. They were very strange and had their own personality behind them. He lived before Raphael. Tomorrow I will go back again.[25]

In this letter, we find Nielsen's interest in an Italian artist who 'lived before Raphael'. In fact, we repeatedly read in his letters and diary entries of his interest in the old masters of early renaissance art, the ancient classics, and medieval art.[26] As we shall see, this interest in archaism was shared by many symbolists during this decade, including Agnes and Harald Slott Møller, as well as the Pre-Raphaelites before them. Furthermore, Nielsen's fascination in antiquity was a part of the broader Hellenic

23 CNB I, 138f., letter 109 to Emil B. Sachs from Berlin (30.10.1890): *De gamle Malere taaler mindre end de moderne at gjengives i Fotogravueres og Træsnit, synes jeg; maaske har det sin Grund deri, at deres aandelige Indhold er os noget fremmed; det er ikke vore Følelser og Tanker de Billeder ere et Udslag af, ikke vort Ideal som bliver fremstillet; men Maaden det er gjort paa synes jeg er akkurat den samme.*

24 CNB I, 159, diary entry 145 (Berlin, 30.11.1890): CNL, 68.

25 CNB I, 338f., letter 479 to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen (Berlin, 14.10.1894): *Det er ligesom alle min Sjæls Porer er aabne, naar jeg er paa Rejse. Det gjælder dog ikke overfor Musik. Der er jeg altid skeptisk og temmelig kold og føler ingen Berigelse, fordi jeg føler bestandig at jeg kan baade dirige[re] og componere bedre end disse Folk.* CNL, 109.

26 CNB I, 345, letter 483 to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen (Berlin, 19.10.1894): *Jeg gaar hver Dag i Gallerierne. Idag har jeg atter været i den italienske Afdeling og i den gamle tyske; men det var mest Skulptur idag. Tingene fra Pergamon blev grundigt gjennemgaaet. Naturligvis er det godt; men bagefter var jeg ovre i Skuret og saa "Olympiafundene"!! Hvad er dog det! Hvilken Magt og Storhed!*

movement in late-nineteenth-century Europe with a rebirth of ancient Greek ideals in modern life and art.[27]

Carl Nielsen was also fascinated by the modern art of his contemporaries, including the works of Vincent van Gogh, Max Klinger, Auguste Rodin, and Paul Gauguin.[28] Although the artists Nielsen engaged with on a personal level were mostly Danish, scholars have noted Nielsen's encounter with Edvard Munch in Berlin in 1894.[29] Four years later, Munch would exhibit four artworks at the *Free Exhibition* in Copenhagen. However, there are no records of Nielsen visiting the exhibition in 1898, nor experiencing Munch's work at any other occasion during this decade.

Of modern writers, we read of Nielsen's fascination with the French symbolist writer Maurice Maeterlinck during his trip to Paris in 1891, in particular the work *Les Aveugles* (1890) which 'in all its simplicity left a strong impression' on him.[30] During Nielsen's stay in Paris, he met several Danish artists who were studying modern art, including J.F. Willumsen, Mogens Ballin, and his future wife, Anne Marie Brodersen. In 1895, we read of Nielsen's interest in the Danish writer Viggo Stuckenberg and his *Romerske Scener*.[31] Stuckenberg broke from realism with the drama *Den vilde Jæger* (1894), of which the first scene was included in *Taarnet* with the title 'Medieval' ('Middelalder').[32] Stuckenberg would become a part of Nielsen's circle of friends and acquaintances during the 1890s, along with many young symbolist artists and critics associated with *Taarnet*, including Johannes Jørgensen, Sophus Claussen, Sophus Michaëlis, Mogens Ballin, as well as J.F. Willumsen. According to Willumsen's memoirs, the three men, Carl Nielsen, Sophus Claussen, and J.F. Willumsen,

27 On the Hellenic movement in Denmark, see Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen, 'Hellas under Northern Skies', in Gertrud Hvidberg-Hansen and Gertrud Oelsner (eds.), *The Spirit of Vitalism: Health, Beauty and Streng in Danish Art 1890-1940*, Copenhagen 2011, 58–87.

28 CNB I, 214, diary entry 253 (Paris, 7.3.1891): *Saa Billeder af Gauguin og Rodin, som synes at være vor Tids Mestre*; *CNB* I, 215, diary entry 255 (Paris, 8.3.1891): *Saa for første Gang Billede af Vincent (van Gocken) [van Gogh] der gjorde det stærkeste Indtryk paa mig*; CNB I, 394, letter 523 to Georg Brandes (19.11.1894): *Har bl.A. været i Leipzig hvor jeg saa et plastisk Arbejde, Salome, af Max Klinger, som interesserede mig i høj Grad*. CNL, 134.

29 CNB I, 343–45, diary entry 482 (19.10.1894): *Vi traf dèr den norske Maler Munck [Edvard Munch] som jeg spillede Billard med.* CNL, 113.

30 CNBI, 216, diary entry 259 (Paris, 12.3.1891): *Læste 'Les Aveugles' af [Maurice Maeterlinck] færdig. Denne mærkelig, uhyggelige Bog gjør i al sin Simpelhed et stort Indtryk*.

31 CNB I, 427, letter 551 to Viggo Stuckenberg (28.12.1895): *Efter at have læst 'Romerske Scener' maa jeg sige Dem at jeg var forbavset over at finde saa megen Evne og Villie og en saadan prægnant og sluttet Gjennemførelse hos en ung dansk Forfatter, og jeg tror ikke at nogen anden af vores Forfattere er istand til at skabe Karakterer af et saa tungt og stærkt Stof.*

32 Ursula Fugmann, 'Viggo Stuckenberg', in *Den Store Danske*, www.denstoredanske.dk/Kunst_og_kultur/Litteratur/Dansk_litteratur/1870-1900/Viggo_Stuckenberg, accessed 20 May 2020.

supposedly enacted Claussen's comic play *Frøken Regnvejr (Miss Rainy Weather*) as a private puppet theatre performance in 1894, which suggests the trio must have been very close indeed.[33] Although Nielsen never actually set Claussen's poetry to music, he did collaborate with other symbolist writers, including Johannes Jørgensen on the cantata *Søvnen* (*Sleep*) in 1903, as well as Sophus Michaëlis on the cantata *Hymne til Livet* (*Hymn to Life*) in 1921 and the play *Amor og Digteren* (*Cupid and the Poet*) in 1930.

We have established that Carl Nielsen was an integral part of the Copenhagen avant-garde scene, actively engaging with the circle of painters, writers, and academics associated with the *Free Exhibition* and *Taarnet* with whom he would discuss art and share many of the same ideas and interests. Furthermore, Nielsen would seek wider artistic inspiration on his study travels to Europe at a time when symbolism was dominating modern art and ideas. In the next section I shall explore how Nielsen may have been inspired by the symbolist movement in his own work as I consider his first opera *Saul and David* in a symbolist context.

Symbolism in *Saul and David*

Nielsen began to plan an opera by the end of 1896 when he had just finished the choral work *Hymnus Amoris*.[34] His choice to compose an operatic work was not surprising; Nielsen showed a great interest in opera during his European travels in the 1890s, and was especially fascinated by the music dramas of Richard Wagner.[35] Furthermore, he would become familiar with a wide range of operas in the orchestral pit of the Royal Danish Theatre where he had been employed as a violinist since 1889. During 1898, Nielsen agreed to collaborate with Danish librettist Einar Christiansen on an opera following the Old Testament narrative of Saul and David. Christiansen was an experienced man of the theatre, both as a dramatist and opera librettist, collaborating with

33 Jens Ferdinand Willumsen, *Mine erindringer fortalt til Ernst Mentze*, Copenhagen 1953, 108.

34 Niels Bo Foltmann, Peter Hauge, and Niels Krabbe, 'Preface', in Carl Nielsen, *Saul og David, Opera in four acts*, CNU I/4; Copenhagen, 2002, xi.

35 Nielsen was deeply interested in Wagner's works on his first Europe trip in 1890–91: 'Studying "Siegfried" every day and admiring Wagner more and more for each day, if it is even possible to admire as much as I do.' (*Studèrer hver Dag "Siegfried" og beundrer Wagner mere Dag for Dag, hvis det overhovedet er muligt at beundre i højere Grad end jeg gjør.*), CNB I, 194, diary entry 219 (Leipzig, 3.2.1891). On his second Europe trip in 1894, however, we read of Nielsen's first critique of Wagner's abilities as a music dramatist: 'As a dramatic poet he is nothing and as a dramatic composer likewise nothing. When he tries to force life and passionate movement, it becomes bad.' (*Som dramatisk Digter er han intet og som dramatisk Componist heller ikke[,] saasnart han forsøger at fremtvinge Liv og lidenskabelig Bevægelse, bliver det skidt.*) CNB I, 384f., diary entry 513 (Vienna, 9.11.1894). CNL, 128. Nielsen retained a lifelong fascination with Wagner, as he continued to comment on his works, both negatively and positively.

P.E. Lange-Müller on the opera *Vikingeblod* [Viking Blood] from 1900 and translating many operas into Danish.[36] At the time, Christiansen was also the editor of the magazine *Illustreret Tidende* and would become the artistic director of the Royal Danish Theatre in 1899. As a writer, Christiansen broke from realism in the 1890s into a more introverted and intimate style in his dramatic works.[37]

Christiansen's libretto for *Saul and David* was created in January 1899 and the opera composed over the following two years. It was composed both in Denmark and during Nielsen's six-month stay in Rome between December 1899 and June 1900. Like many Danish artists and scholars, Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen was studying art in the ancient capital as part of the archaic revivalism of the time.[38] Nielsen finalised the composition of *Saul and David* in Copenhagen in April 1901 and the opera had its premiere at the Royal Danish Theatre in November 1902.

Choice of subject matter

In an interview for *Berlingske Tidende* in 1929, Nielsen recalled the following incident in connection to the choice of the opera's literary subject:

> Out in the lobby, when [Einar Christiansen] was putting on his coat, he suddenly turned to me and exclaimed: 'Well, what do you think of my old idea "Saul and David"?' In a flash, I then experienced the Bible story of my childhood and was gripped by its Old Testament mood. The sublime in it, all that was so far from 'reality' and everyday life, captivated me in a special way. Yet neither was it so unfamiliar for me to give it expression; in *Hymnus Amoris* I had just been enthralled by something in a similar vein.[39]

36 Danish composer P.E. Lange-Müller (1850–1925) composed music to many symbolist dramatic works, including Drachmann's *Middelalderlig* (Medieval, 1896) and *Renaissance* (1901).

37 These works include *Cosmus* (1897), *Fædreland* (1910) and *Thronfølger* (1913); Uffe Andreasen and Hans Strange, 'Einar Christiansen', *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*, 3rd edn., Copenhagen 1979–84.

38 Anne Marie was studying with the French sculptor Victor Ségoffin while Nielsen was working on his opera. Other Danish artists and scholars living in Rome at the time included Vilhelm Wancher, Hans Nikolaj Hansen, and Thomas Laub (CNB II, 10). Nielsen composed large parts of Act Two during this stay.

39 'Carl Nielsen om "Saul og David"', *Berlingske Tidende*, 26.2.1929, reproduced in *Samtid*, 518: *Da han ude i Entréen var ved at tage Frakken paa, vender han sig rask imod mig og udbryder: "Naa, hvad mener De saa om min gamle idé 'Saul og David'?" Som i et Lyn oplevede jeg da min Barndoms Biblehistorie og følte mig grebet af dens gammeltestamentlige Stemning. Det ophøjede deri, alt det, der var saa langt borte fra "Virkeligheden" og Hverdagen, fængslede mig paa en særlig Maade. Og heller ikke stod jeg helt fremmed over for at udtrykke det; i "Hymnus Amoris" havde jeg nyligt været optaget af noget lignende.*

Although we must be cautious about holding onto a quotation uttered 30 years after the opera was composed, it is indeed a remarkable one when read within a symbolist context. As we have seen, Nielsen's fascination with 'all that was so far from "reality" and everyday life' was a crucial part of 1890s symbolist thought, shared by many artists at the time who were distancing themselves from realist art. The symbolists often found their imagery in mythical figures from biblical stories, Greek mythology, and the Middle Ages to create works with themes far from reality and to imbue their works with spiritual value.[40] According to Jørgen I. Jensen, Johannes Jørgensen referred to how the symbolists found inspiration in old expressions and forms without, however, moving away from the artwork's connection with its own age.[41] Agnes Slott-Møller's paintings of medieval pages, Sophus Claussen's Hellenic hexametric poems, and J.F. Willumsen's Egyptian ceramics, as well as Oscar Wilde's tragedy of Salome, are just some examples of the symbolists' archaic interests. As we have seen, Carl Nielsen was greatly interested in this archaic subject matter and in the artworks of the old masters. He even used archaic elements in his own compositions. The music and choice of text of his Opus 4, *Music to Five Poems by J.P. Jacobsen* (1892), for example, was strongly inspired by medieval motifs which are likewise present on the title page: a copy of the tapestry *The Lady and the Unicorn* (La Dame à la licorn) which Nielsen and his wife had encountered in Paris at the museum of medieval art, *Musée de Cluny* in 1891 (Plate 1).[42]

Plate 1: Carl Nielsen Opus 4: Music to Five Poems by J. P. Jacobsen (1892), title page, Carl Nielsen Museum, Odense; and *The Lady and the Unicorn*, c. 1480 (unknown artist), tapestry, wool and silk, Musée de Cluny, Paris.

40 Myers, 'Symbolism', 1.

41 Jørgen I. Jensen, 'Carl Nielsen: Artistic Milieu and Tradition: Cultural-Historical Perspectives', in Mina Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*, London 1994, 60–61.

42 The two works are compared in Anne Christiansen: *Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen – født Brodersen*, Odense 2013, 62–63.

The choice of an ancient biblical story was therefore not surprising when considering the archaic tendencies in the arts of the time. Furthermore, Nielsen had often been drawn to the mystical mood of the biblical stories. In 1892, for example, he wrote to Anne Marie of his experience of the beginning of the Gospel of John, comparing it to the mystery of the Early Renaissance painting *Primavera* (1482) by Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510):

> Do you not think it is remarkably deep and mystical? Just the first verses. I am especially fond of this: 'And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.' But there is overall a strange dim mystery over it. It reminded me of the forest in Botticelli's *Primavera*. The trees are half plant half human and when they speak together, it sounds like a mixture of wind and human voice.[43]

But why, then, were Christiansen and Nielsen especially drawn to the Old Testament story of Saul and David? We cannot know for sure, as there is no existing correspondence between Nielsen and Christiansen. However, there are many reasons why they might have been drawn to this subject in particular. First, they might have been intrigued to write an opera on Saul and David to continue the project of Hans Christian Andersen and the Danish composer J.P Hartmann who were writing a *Saul* opera in 1864–66 but, to the great regret of Andersen, would never finish it.[44] There is no evidence of Nielsen knowing about Hartmann's opera project; however, Nielsen did attend a dinner party with Hartmann in 1897 at the time when he was looking for a suitable subject for an opera.[45] Christiansen, on the other hand, must have known about Andersen's opera libretto as his choice of episodes from the biblical account very closely reflects Andersen's text.[46] Secondly, Nielsen might have remembered his deep fascination with an Italian painting of David and Goliath that he had encountered in Berlin in 1894.[47] In addition, as we shall see below, the characters, themes,

43 CNB I, 263, letter 345 to Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen (27.8.1892): *Synes Du ikke det er forunderlig dybt og mystisk? Blot de første Vers. Især synes jeg om det: Og Lyset skinnede i Mørket. Mørket begreb det ikke. Men der er i det Hele taget en sær dæmpet Mystik over det Altsammen. Jeg kom til at tænke på Skoven i Bottichellis Foraaret. Træerne ere halvt Mennesker halvt Planter og naar de taler sammen lyder det som en Blanding af Susen og Menneskerøster.* CNL, 95.

44 Foltmann, Hauge, and Krabbe, 'Preface', xiii.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 CNB I, 340, diary entry 480 (Berlin, 16.10.1894): *Men især husker jeg et Billede af en Maler jeg slet ikke kjender noget til forud, nemlig Piero Pollajuolo. Det er en David som har fældet Goliat. Kompositionen er saa enkel som muligt. David staar ret op og ned skrævende lidt ud med Benene og den ene Haand i Siden, omtrent som Verocchios bekjendte Broncestatue. Hans Holdning er ungdommelig, kjæk og sejersstolt. Mellem hans Ben på Jorden ligger Goliats afhuggede Hoved. Baggrunden er ènsfarvet, saavidt jeg kunde sè var det en Slags Mur af Farve nærmest sortegrøn.* CNL, 110. The work is Antonio del Pollaiuolo's 'David Victorious' (*c.*1472), Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

and situations of this story in particular reflect some of the predilections of the symbolist movement.

The pained king and a joyous nature boy

The libretto adheres relatively closely to the Biblical account, although the character of King Saul is more prominent than David in the libretto than in the Bible.[48] We follow Saul's despair and inner turmoil from his disobedience to God and conflicts with the young David to his moral collapse and lonely suicide on Mount Gilboa. David is less emotionally complex. He is described as a beautiful, young shepherd boy, loved by the Israelite people and especially Saul's young daughter, Michal. David's character is more boyish and untroubled than in the Bible with added traits from the male lover in the Song of Solomon. He lives harmoniously with God, life, and Nature. Saul's character, however, is darker than in the Bible and is reminiscent of the brooding figure of Job. He is implacable towards God, is constantly conscious of his own death and feels that his suffering is unjustified.[49]

It is the emotionally complex psychological characterisation of Saul that leads the drama in Einar Christiansen's libretto. Saul's demise frames the drama – from his impatience and sinful offerings to his death – and the drama progresses in tandem with his psychological reactions:

ACT 1: Saul's disobedience (→ *offerings* → *1st prophecy*) → Saul's defiance (→ *David's comforting song*) → Saul's contentment (→ *love duet of David and Michal*)

ACT 2: Saul's apathy (→ *Michal awaiting David who is fighting Goliath* → *David's victory*) → Saul's joy (→ *praise from the people*) → Saul's jealousy and anger

ACT 3: Saul's remorse (→ *reconciliation of Saul and David* → *2nd prophecy*) → Saul's anger

ACT 4: Saul's irresolution (→ *consulting the Witch of Endor* → *3rd prophecy*) → Saul's downfall and suicide (→ *David's mourning and the people hailing David as their King*)

The pessimistic *fin-de-siècle* feeling of alienation and anxiety is clearly depicted in the tragic figure of Saul. This psychological characterisation may have been of deep interest not only for Einar Christiansen – as well as many other young artists of the time – but also for Nielsen, who led an emotionally turbulent life and was often

48 For a direct comparison of the libretto and its Biblical source, see McCreless, 'Strange Bedfellows', 122–27.

49 Bodil Ejrnæs has contributed to this reading of the relationship with the Biblical account in her talk at the Saul and David seminar on 15 April 2015, The Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen: 'Einar Christiansens libretto og Det gamle Testamente'.

concerned with the inner world of man. We often read of Nielsen's sufferings in his letters and diary entries. In 1889, for example, the young Nielsen writes to Emilie Demant Hansen of his painful condition, explaining his flaws, emotional swings and unbalanced state of mind, which he connects to being a real artist.[50] Nielsen even plans to commit suicide, writing in his farewell letter to her: 'I suffer so much but now I must end it. – If I cannot die spiritually, I must kill my body.'[51] According to John Fellow, 'Nielsen's old crisis was always just around the corner and his longing for death never far away.'[52] Art historian Herschel Chipp suggests that many young artists of the 1890s 'turned away from the exterior world and inward to their own feelings for their subject matter', which might explain Nielsen's interest in this story and in Saul in particular.[53]

According to art historian Michelle Facos, symbolism enabled artists to confront the increasingly uncertain modern world, to which pessimists responded with themes of decadence and degeneration and optimists with idealism and reform.[54] I would argue that both pessimism and optimism, decadence and idealism – the decay of the pained king and the beauty of the joyous nature boy – are indeed present in the story of Saul and David, both in the biblical account and in Christiansen's and Nielsen's dramatic and musical interpretation of the story.

The mythic figure of the mentally unstable king has been used many times in the arts, from Richard Wagner's wounded Amfortas in *Parsifal* (1882) to Johannes V. Jensen's irresolute Christian II in *Kongens Fald* (1901). Sophus Claussen was also drawn to the figure of Saul and the King's encounter with the Witch of Endor in the decadent poem *Hos Hexen i Endor* (1898) from his 1904 collection *Djævlerier*.[55] It is highly possible that Claussen, who we know was a part of Nielsen's circle of close friends, might have been inspired by Nielsen's choice of subject matter. In Claussen's version, the witch is a sinful temptress, leading the decadent Saul into a bed 'made of [her] flowing hair'.[56] Claussen often depicted women as liberated *femme fatales* – in the style of Charles Baudelaire, J.K. Huysman, Paul Verlaine and many other decadent

50 CNB I, 75–79, 90–96, letters 16 (17.1.1889) and 25–28 (23.10.1889 and Nov. 1889) to Emilie Demant Hansen.

51 CNB I, 92, letter 26 to Emilie Demant Hansen (November 1889); CNL, 49. His attempt was foiled, however, at the last minute, after meeting an old friend.

52 John Fellow, 'Carl Nielsen – The Human Crisis, Then and Now', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 54.

53 Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, Berkeley 1968), 48.

54 Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context*, Berkeley 2009, 5.

55 Sophus Claussen, 'Hos Hexen i Endor' (1889), in Claussen, *Djævlerier*, Copenhagen and Kristiania 1904), 123–24.

56 Ibid., verses 23–24: *Hør Hex, jeg er søvnig, red mig en Seng i dine udslagne Lokker!*'

symbolists – destroying men with their dangerous sexuality.[57] Nielsen's Witch, however, is mild and kind, helping Saul to communicate with the deceased Samuel. The women in *Saul and David* – the Witch and Michal – are pure and virgin-like. They are counter-images to the decadents' females, in the style of the Pre-Raphaelites and their successors – including symbolists Agnes and Harald Slott-Møller – greatly inspired by the figures of courtly love poems and medieval ballads. The characters of the pure, young lovers, David and Michal, could also be seen in this light.

Symbolist strategies

So far I have explored Nielsen's choice of subject matter and analysed some chosen characters in the libretto in connection with symbolism and the general artistic interests and tendencies of his time. However, as I am exploring an opera, it is also important to consider how both the dramatic and musical elements can be understood in terms of symbolism.

In his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera* from 2005, Philip Weller discusses symbolist opera around the turn of the century, especially drawing on Claude Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1898), based on the symbolist play by Maeterlinck. Weller argues that symbolist opera composers could convey human content 'more directly and authentically, with greater subtlety and complexity, by ignoring the lure of realism and illusionism and concentrating instead on finding a language of atmosphere and evocation'.[58] It is noteworthy that Nielsen expressed his interest in the operatic subject of Saul and David specifically in terms of its 'Old Testament' *mood*, i.e. atmosphere. In 1911, Nielsen also refers to his use of mood as a vital compositional strategy in opera:

> 'You put' the text forward and read it carefully. Then you navigate; choose your direction. From here to there, you must be within *one* mood [*Stemning*]; then, it must be succeeded by one more. In the first act of *Maskarade*, I let the disgruntled bassoons portray the dark, muggy room until Leander opens the shutters and the light pours through and makes the music bright as day.[59]

57 Wivel, 'Det sjælelige gennembrud', 277–79.

58 Philip Weller, 'Symbolist opera: trials, triumphs, tributaries', in Mervyn Cooke (ed): *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, Cambridge 2005, 62.

59 'Regnormen' (interviewer) and Carl Nielsen (interviewee), 'Hos "Maskarades" Komponist' (*Riget*, 18.1.1911), in *Samtid*, 156–59: *'Man tager' en Tekst for sig og læser den grundigt igennem. Saa navigerer man, tager sit bestik. Herfra og dertil maa man være inden for én Stemning, dér skal den afløses af en ny. I 'Maskerade's første Akt lader jeg gnavne Fagotter skildre den mørke, lumre Stue, indtil Leander aabner Skodderne og Lyset strømmer ind og gør Musikken dagklar.*

According to Danish musicologist Esben Tange, symbolist works of music 'find expression in moods [*Stemninger*],' the musical 'mood' being the 'perceivable symbols'.[60] Therefore, these works are also often characterised by 'violation of the traditional logic of musical development ... leading to essentially different stylistic modes of expression'.[61] This way of composing is clearly present in *Saul and David*, which indeed incorporates a mixture of musical styles and moods. The music of the opera transforms the moment-to-moment psychological action into free musical form, continuously unfolding, following the characters, emotions and situations on stage. This becomes especially clear in the contrasting characterisations of Saul and David. The musical mood around David is lyrical, pure, and bright, whereas Saul's music is clearly darker and more complex. Another clear example of Nielsen's musical characterisation is found at Saul's and Samuel's initial meeting in Act 1 (see Example 1). Here, the contrast between Saul's complex and unstable mind and the strong, authoritative stature of the Prophet Samuel is clearly underscored musically, both in the accompaniment and vocal lines. A sense of unease is present in Saul's music, both harmonically and melodically, with unstable chromatic language and anxious semiquaver rhythms. Samuel's music, on the other hand, is characterised by strict diatonicism, stable metre, and shrill tritones (bb. 316–17), underscoring his dispassionate and stable mind.[62]

Weller speaks of the symbolist's use of 'continuous unfolding of orchestral materials', enabling a 'rapidity and responsiveness to nuance in the psychological texture of the piece, which stands at the heart of both the symbolist and expressionist vision.'[63] Although the orchestra plays continuously from scene to scene in *Saul and David*, Nielsen distils any excessive orchestral substance, contrasting with the 'hypersensuous' timbre and texture of the 'endless melody' of Wagnerian music dramas, as Patrick McCreless points out in his analysis of the opera.[64]

According to Weller, this reduction of orchestral and dramatic excess is indeed characteristic of symbolist opera – a form of *stylisation*, one of the other main artistic techniques the symbolist artists used to express a subjective vision through a simplified and non-naturalistic style. Through stylisation, the artist simplifies the symbolist work of art with physical characteristics treated selectively and in greater isolation

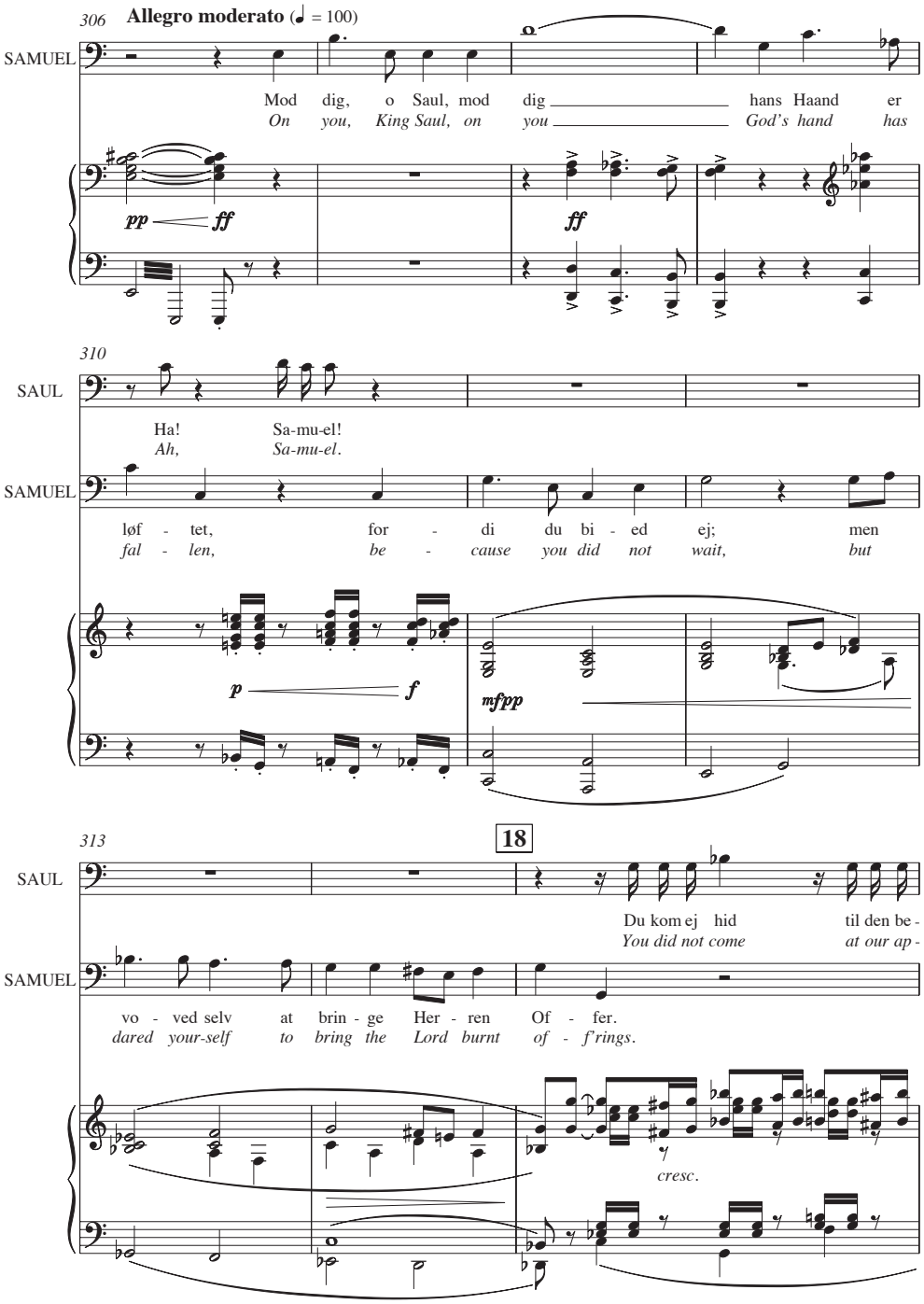
60 Esben Tange, 'Musikalsk symbolisme', *Danish Yearbook of Musicology*, 29 (2001), 56.

61 Ibid.

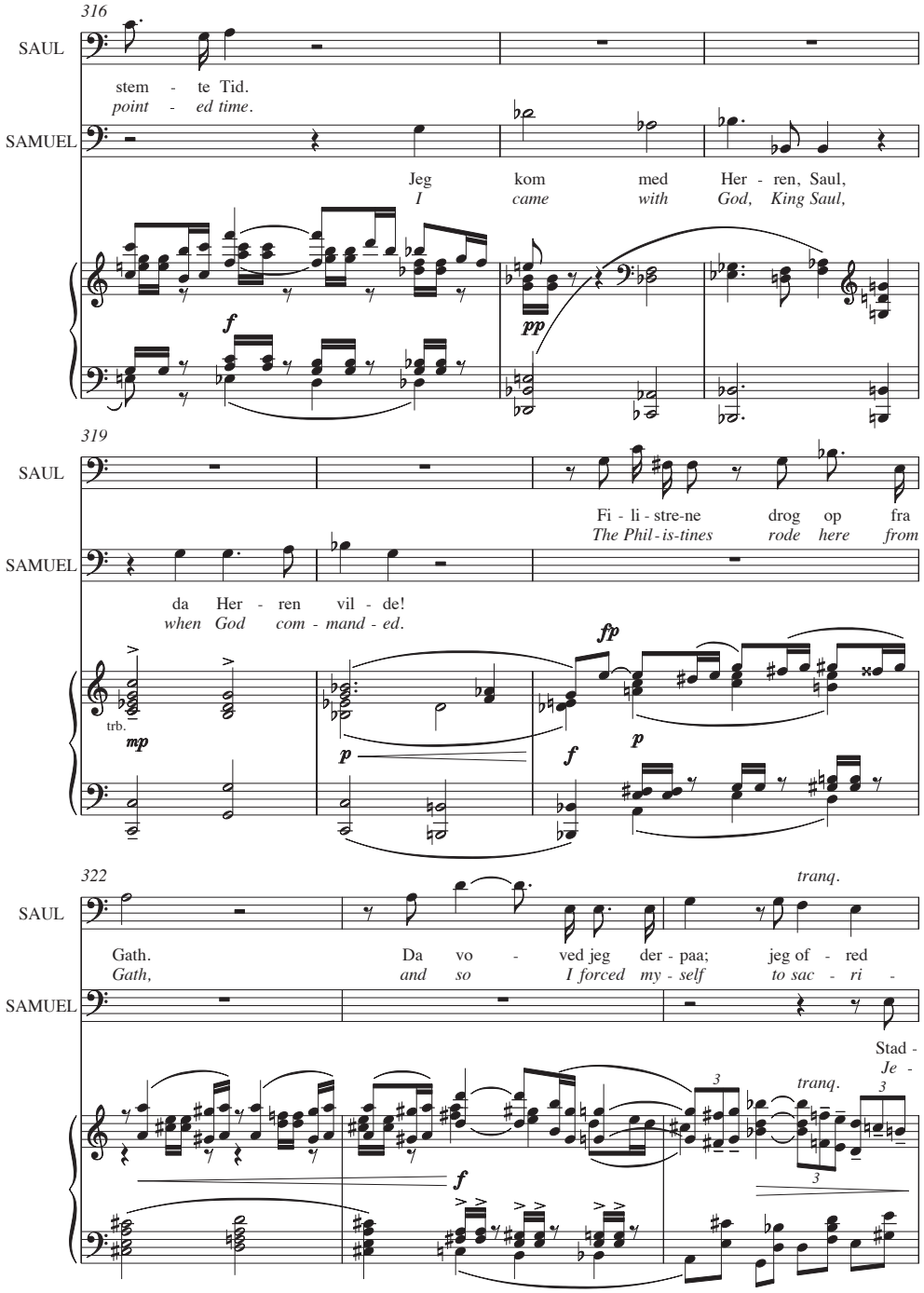
62 Saul's music is heard at bb. 310, 315–16 and 320–25 and Samuel's music at bb. 307–9, 311–14 and 317–320.

63 Weller, 'Symbolist opera', 75.

64 McCreless, 'Strange Bedfellows', 142.



Ex. 1: Saul and David, *Act 1, bb. 306–24.*



Ex. 1 continued

than within a fuller, more cluttered realist context. In this way, there is an intensity of focus on the important themes and images.[65] Paul Gauguin's works, with their pure, vibrant colours applied in broad flat surfaces, are an example of this technique.

This stylised technique is not only present in the music of *Saul and David*, but also dramatically. The opera lasts just two hours and the action unfolds quickly. Christiansen creates a shortened and simplified version of the biblical story with clearer characters, themes, and situations, which are underscored musically by Nielsen.

I have already looked at archaism in connection to subject matter, namely the symbolists' inspiration from ancient tropes and myths as well as Nielsen's choice of the Old Testament story for his opera. I will now consider how archaic elements may similarly be present in the music and drama of *Saul and David*.

When considering the dramaturgical methods and character choices of Christiansen, it is clear that archaism is present in the drama of *Saul and David* when noting its affinities with the tragedies of ancient Greece. Anne-Marie Reynolds has identified Nielsen's opera as a tragedy against Aristotelian criteria.[66] Reynolds not only makes the suggestion that Christiansen changed the biblical story to highlight its tragic elements, but also demonstrates that Nielsen underscores Saul's demise and torment musically.

I would furthermore argue that a shared trait between this opera and the ancient dramas is clearly found in the large chorus parts, which enact the vital role of the Israelite people. Just as the choruses of the Greek tragedies comment on the events of the plot, the chorus in the opera comments with a collective voice on the drama on stage. In addition, the Biblical story of Saul can be traced back further to the Homeric poems. In a mythological comparison of the Odyssey and the Bible, for example, Saul's consultation with the Witch of Endor to raise the deceased Samuel clearly parallels Odysseus's consultation with Circe to raise the deceased Tiresias.[67] Shortly after the turn of the century, Nielsen's interest in Hellenism grew considerably to engage ancient Greek music, which resulted in his *Helios* overture composed in Greece in 1903 and a lecture on the subject at the Greek Society in Copenhagen in 1907.[68] Given Christiansen's and Nielsen's interest in Hellenism, it is highly probable that these connections to Greek tradition would not have been lost on them.

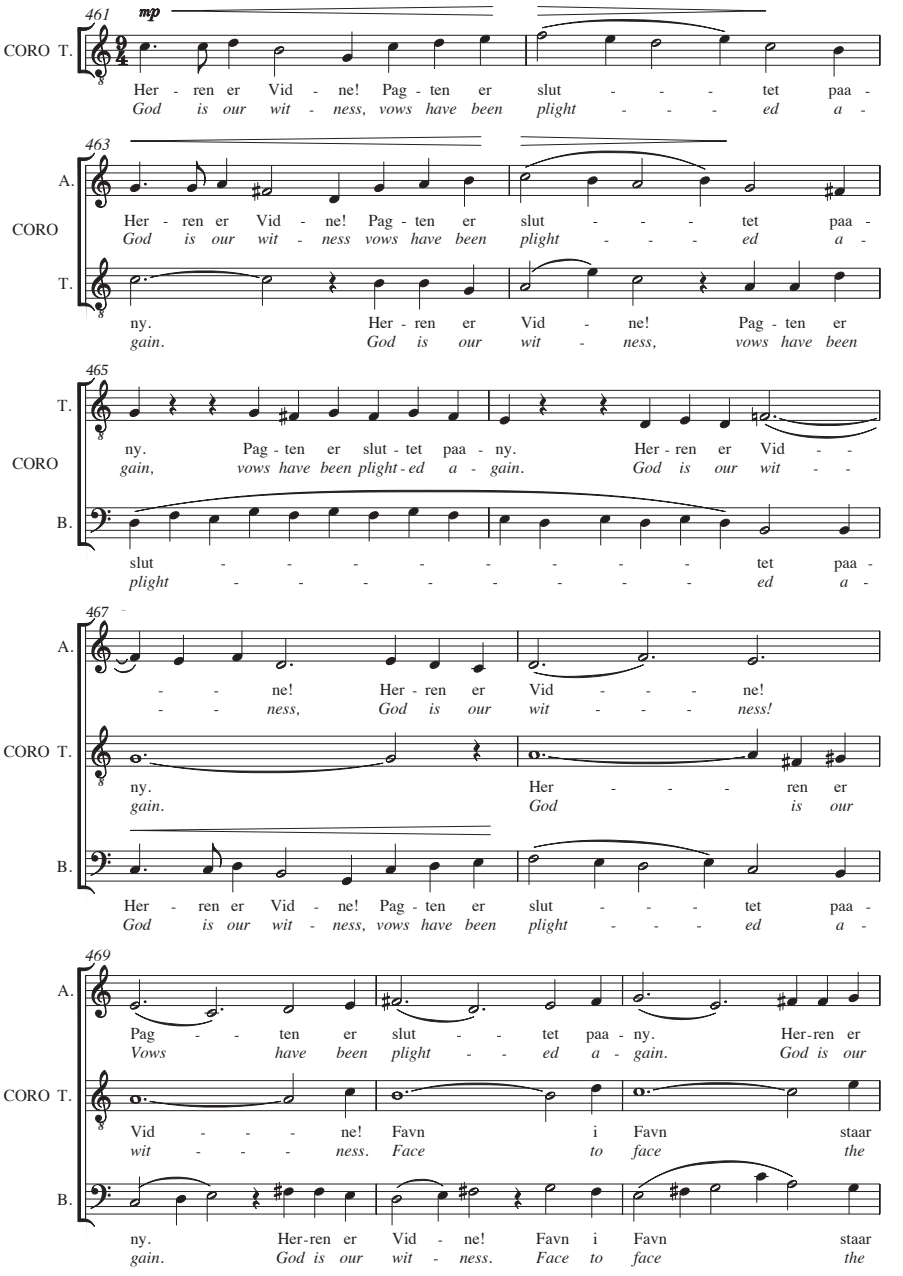
65 Weller, 'Symbolist opera', 70, 72, 79.

66 Reynolds, 'Nielsen's *Saul and David* as Tragedy', 236–39.

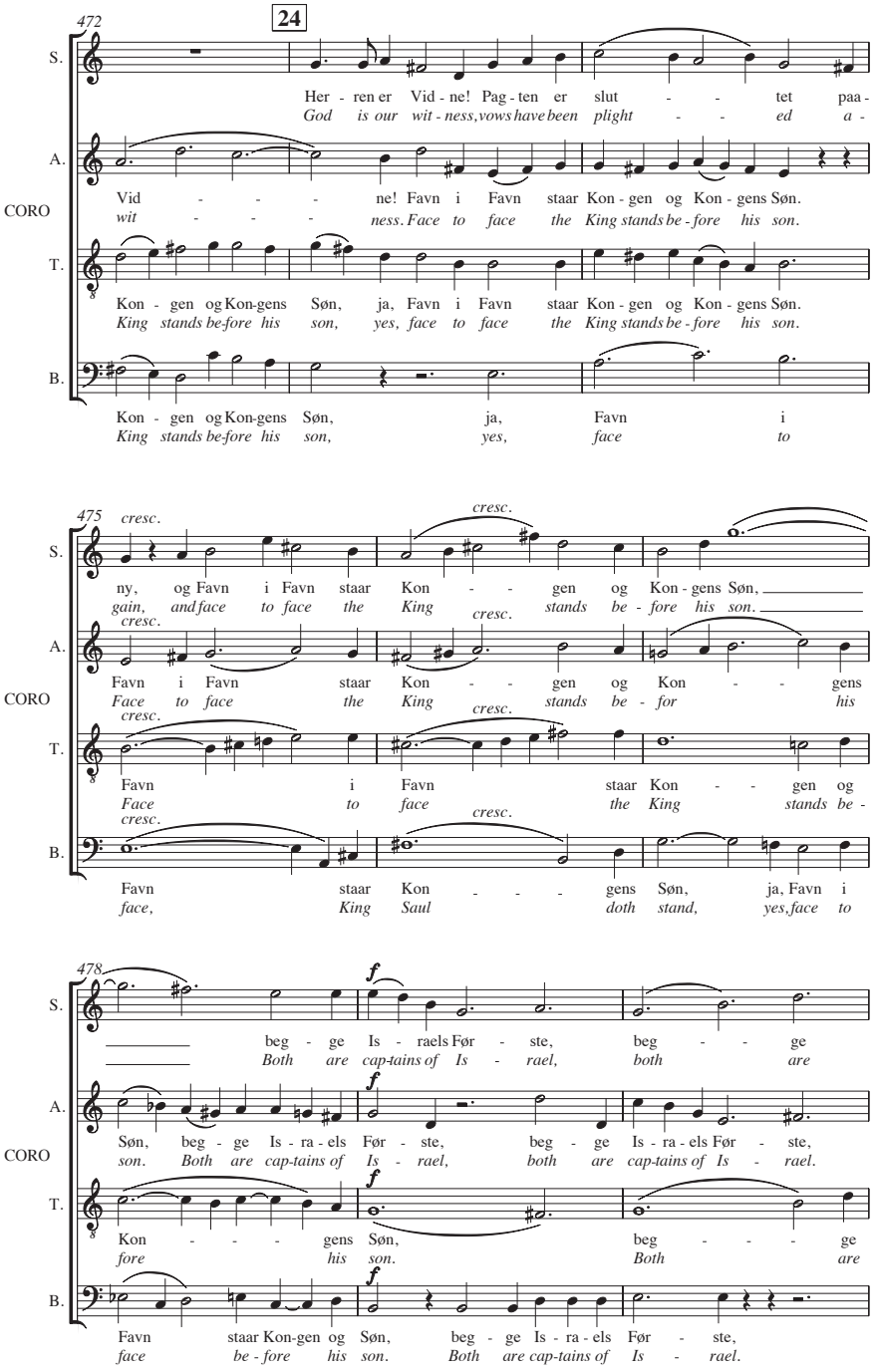
67 Teresa Carp, 'Teiresias, Samuel, and the Way Home', *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, 12 (1979), 65–76.

68 Thomas Michelsen, 'Carl Nielsen og den græske musik – nogle kilder til belysning af den musikæstetiske konflikt mellem komponisten og hans samtid i begyndelsen af århundredet', *Fund og Forskning*, 37 (1998), 231.

Nielsen's use of archaic techniques is also clearly present in *Saul and David*. One of the clearest examples is found in the choral celebration of Saul and David's momentary reconciliation in Act 3 (see Example 2).

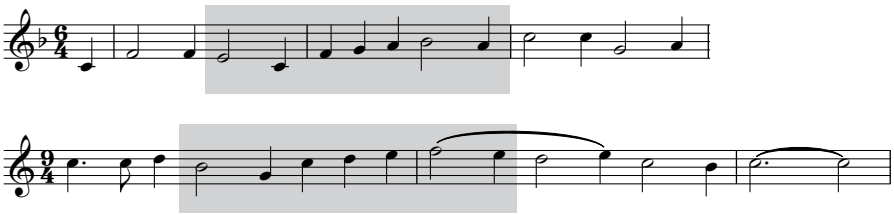


Ex. 2: Saul and David, *Act 3, 'Herren er Vidne', bb. 461–76 (choral part only).*



Ex. 2 continued

The musical celebration is composed as a fugue. The melody itself is reminiscent of the Danish composer Thomas Laub's (1852–1927) vast output of hymns in the old Reformation style and triple time, specifically the hymn 'Alt, hvad som fuglevinger fik' (1915) in which the melody follows Nielsen's theme with astonishing similarity (see Example 3). Nielsen met Laub during his stay in Italy in 1899 and would later collaborate with him on a selection of Danish songs in the beginning of the twentieth century.[69]



Ex. 3: Comparison of Thomas Laub, 'Alt, hvad som fuglevinger fik' (1915), bb. 1–3 (above) and Nielsen, Saul and David, *Act 3, 'Herren er Vidne' (1901), tenor part, bb. 461–63 (below).*

Nielsen's revival of old contrapuntal forms clearly resonates with Tange's characterisation of musical symbolism. 'In musical symbolism', Tange suggests, 'stylistic permutation occurs when various stylistic expressions – often from different historical periods – are combined in one musical composition.'[70] Although the music in *Saul and David* is largely contemporary in style, including an extensive use of diminished-seventh chords and other means of expression typical of the time, there are clear examples of archaism in the opera. Nielsen's use of these compositional techniques, furthermore, clearly emphasises his vision of an archaic 'Old Testament' mood.

A European symbolist work

I have aimed in this article to offer a deeper understanding of both Carl Nielsen and his first, much-neglected opera *Saul and David* in a wider cultural-historical and pan-European context.

The idea of Nielsen's 'Danishness' – a packaging all too often wrapped around the composer – has been challenged by treating Nielsen and his works as inherently

69 *En Snes danske viser I* and *II* (1915 and 1917) and *Folkehøjskolens Melodibog* (1922). Carl Nielsen and Thomas Laub would begin their collaboration in the autumn of 1914. See Birgit Bjørnum and Klaus Møllerhøj, *Carl Nielsens Samling. Katalog over komponistens musikhåndskrifter i Det Kongelige Bibliotek*, Copenhagen, 1992), 289.

70 Tange, 'Musikalsk symbolisme', 47.

European.[71] The vast treasure trove of Nielsen's diary entries and letters has shown us that he was deeply inspired by the artistic developments in modern Europe, having travelled extensively and engaged himself in art and with artists at the time. Nielsen travelled throughout Europe at a time when symbolism was dominating the modern art scene. In Copenhagen, he actively met with symbolist artists, writers, and thinkers associated with the *Free Exhibition* and *Taarnet.* It is also evident that Nielsen shared many of the same ideas and artistic interests as his circle of symbolist acquaintances in and outside Denmark.

In my analysis of *Saul and David*, I presented elements in Nielsen's work that correspond to different ideas of symbolism – in terms of the opera's literary subject, its dramaturgical elements, and the musical composition. Just like the symbolists of his time, Nielsen concentrated on creating a language of mood: in expressing a subjective vision through simplified and non-naturalistic styles, and in a fusion of archaic materials and forms with contemporary musical techniques. Given these considerations, I would argue that is it instructive to view *Saul and David* through a symbolist lens, and as an important product of the symbolist movement.

This has been the first symbolist reading of *Saul and David* so far, and one of the few symbolist readings on Nielsen's works in general.[72] However, I hope I have shown that such a reading is indeed fruitful and could be considered as a research strategy when dealing with Nielsen's compositions from the 1880s to the turn of the century.

71 Daniel Grimley offers an insightful discussion of Nielsen's Danishness: *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 10–21.

72 Grimley discusses Nielsen's symbolism with readings of 'Har Dagen sanket al sin Sorg' (1892) from *Musik til fem Digte af J. P. Jacobsen*, Op. 4/5, 'Genrebillede' (1893) from *Viser og Vers af J. P. Jacobsen*, Op. 6/1 and 'Arabesk', *Fem Klaverstykker* (*Five Piano Pieces*), Op. 3/3 – see Grimley, chapter 'Carl Nielsen: Symbolist', in *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, 25–47.

A B S T R A C T

This article explores the position of Nielsen and his first opera *Saul and David* in the European symbolist movement of the 1890s. Through a study of Nielsen's published letters and diary entries from the period, it is possible to present the composer's wide interest in art and engagement with artists – both in Denmark and on his extensive European travels – at a time when symbolism was dominating the modern art scene. Furthermore, one can trace artistic strategies in Nielsen's early work – in this case, the opera *Saul and David* – that correspond to different ideas of symbolism. This includes combining archaic materials with contemporary techniques, as well as creating a subjective expression through mood and simplified, non-naturalistic styles.

NIELSEN'S *SAUL AND DAVID* AND ITALIAN OPERA[1]

By Paolo Muntoni

The popular image of Carl Nielsen is more strongly associated with his symphonies and songs than with the theatre, even though he wrote two operas that are among the finest Danish examples of their kind. If *Maskarade* has always been regarded as a success, and has recently begun to attract international reappraisal, *Saul and David* by contrast has remained in the shadow of its younger sister. The 'strange and serious stuff' that Nielsen chose as the basis for his work became an overwhelmingly difficult and absorbing task.[2] And yet, he later stated that he would not wish to change anything in his first opera, unlike his other compositions (including *Maskarade*):

> Isn't it strange that when *Maskarade*, my later opera, recently came forward again, I would have thought of various passages differently and concede to both displacements and cuts, but so as *Saul and David* is concerned, I basically wouldn't like to change anything at all. And the reason must be that when you are merry, you don't take it so neatly, but when it is about the tragic and elevated – as it is the case here – you must have thought a big deal about it before.[3]

The destiny of *Saul and David* was in fact similar to that of many other operas from the period that were not based upon a realistic subject. After winning favour in France

1 The present essay was first published in the 41st issue of *Danish Yearbook of Musicology* (2017) – used by kind permission of the editors.

2 'This great, strange material ... captivated me and pursued me, so that for long periods I was totally unable to be free of it', CNU, I/4, xiv. The full interview, 'Før Slaget', with Hugo Seligmann, for Politiken (26 February 1929) may be found in *Samtid*, 519-20.

3 *Er det ... ikke mærkeligt, at mens jeg, da Mascarade, min senere Opera, for nylig kom frem igen, udmærket godt kunde tænke mig adskilligt anderledes og gaa med til baade Forskydninger og Forkortninger, saa kan jeg i Grunden slet ikke tænke mig nogen son helst Forandring i Saul og David. Og det ligger vel i, at naar man er lystig, saa tager man det ikke saa nøje, men naar det som her drejer sig om det tragisk-ophøjede, saa har man tænkt sig om og set sig før*, ibid. 519. All translations are by the author, unless otherwise stated.

and later Italy, *verismo* marked the final phase of the non-naturalistic operatic genre, which had been in crisis across the whole continent. The situation was particularly critical in Italy, where the long tradition of Italian opera, predominant for three centuries, was in its twilight, forcing composers to look elsewhere for suitable models. It is therefore surprising that Nielsen chose to work in Italy while composing part of *Saul and David.* Applying for a sabbatical in Rome, he claimed:

> It is my intention, in the case I am awarded such a major travel grant, to take one year's residency in Italy, partly in order to study the art of singing, partly, at the same time, in order to plan and compose an opera, *Saul and David,* for which Mr. Einar Christiansen has provided me with the text.[4]

In this essay, I focus on the music-cultural context in which *Saul and David* was composed, as Nielsen approached opera for the first time. This will cast new light on his independence and originality, but also offer the possibility for some seemingly unlikely comparisons, revealing that the work is more tightly integrated with Nielsen's broader European musical experience than has previously seemed – especially as an alternative to naturalism. I will therefore consider the Italian context before, during and after the rise of *verismo*, focusing particularly on the anti-naturalism debate, to which *Saul and David* also belongs. Nielsen's work follows a path that parallels the shift from the so-called noir dramas of the 1880s, which will be briefly presented later, to the work of Ildebrando Pizzetti, via the almost completely unknown operas of Antonio Smareglia. Unusual as it may be, I believe that this comparison will support the idea of a composer who, while working in the genre of musical drama, was in constant dialogue with his European contemporaries.

I will start by presenting the challenges faced by composers in writing an opera in the late nineteenth century, and then reflect upon the musical and dramatic quality of *Saul and David.* I will argue that Nielsen was able to enhance his drama by providing it with a highly original musical characterisation and by alternating moments of stasis with moments of action. The most important element in this respect was his use of the chorus, which led some commentators to suggest similarities with oratorio. This fact, together with Nielsen's interest in Renaissance polyphony, suggests a comparison with Italian contemporary composer Lorenzo Perosi (1872-1956), whom Nielsen met while in Rome. Subsequently, by viewing *Saul and David* as an anti-naturalistic tragedy,[5]

4 Letter from Nielsen to the Ministry of Church and Education, dated 29 March 1899, in CNB II, 100-01.

5 Anne-Marie Reynolds, 'Nielsen's *Saul and David* as a tragedy – The Dialectics of Fate and Freedom in Drama and Music', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5 (2012), 236-57.

I will discuss how it anticipates some future tendencies of Italian opera, as expressed first by Busoni, who saw the necessity for a new anti-naturalistic musical theatre, and then by the composers of the so-called 'generation of the 1880s'. One of them in particular, Ildebrando Pizzetti, may be compared to Nielsen in terms of aesthetic principles. Finally, I will reflect on the similarities based on the choice of topic and in the shape of the drama between *Saul and David* and Pizzetti's *Débora e Jaèle*, the only Biblical opera written by an Italian composer in the first part of the twentieth century.

With these comparisons, I do not presume to suggest any direct influence on Nielsen's work, or any issuing from it. I simply suggest some similarities of a musical, dramatic, and structural nature, in order to reflect on two aspects: the broad common currency of operatic language at the turn of the century, and Nielsen's versatility and receptivity toward his cultural and musical environment. The fact that *Saul and David* is in many respects an unusual and peculiar work that reveals very little trace of influence or derivation, does not mean that it should be regarded as an isolated phenomenon. On the contrary, I believe that considering it within its contemporary cultural context can only enrich our understanding of the work, as well as enhancing our appreciation of Nielsen's ability to capture and synthesise diverse aesthetic impulses, ultimately producing something highly personal. It is this eclecticism that, allied with his deeply individual poetics, became one of the most characteristic elements of the composer's mature work from the Fourth Symphony onward.

1880s and 1890s Italian opera between anti-naturalism and *verismo*

Previous commentators have generally placed *Saul and David* far from either Wagner or Italian opera, even though echoes of both worlds can be identified.[6] We know of

6 Balzer compares Iago's monologue in Verdi's *Otello* to Saul's defiance of God in the first act of Nielsen's opera, see Jürgen Balzer, 'Den dramatiske music', in Jürgen Balzer (ed.), *Carl Nielsen i hundredåret for hans fødsel (1865-1965),* Copenhagen 1965), 77-78. Saul's monologue is again called Iago-like in Reynolds, 'Nielsen's *Saul and David* as a tragedy', 253-54, as well as in Roger Noel Clegg, 'The writing of Carl Nielsen's Saul and David', (MA thesis, University of Leeds, 1989), 10-13. Recently, Patrick McCreless has also reflected on the 'unlikely' match of Nielsen and Wagner – see McCreless, 'Strange Bedfellows. The Hebrew Bible and Wagner in "Saul and David"', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 4 (2009), 107-44, while Nielsen's use of the half diminished chord (also known as Tristan chord, and as such the bearer of associations with the Wagnerian musical world) has also been examined in Reynolds, 'Nielsen's *Saul and David* as a Tragedy', 244-53. Even though Nielsen scarcely mentioned Verdi, at least in the available written sources, *Otello* was performed in Copenhagen while the composer was a member of the second violins in the Royal Theatre Orchestra. According to Clegg's list of the operas that were performed at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen between 1883 and 1903, *Otello* was premiered in Denmark on 20 April 1898 and was also repeated in the following season 1899-1900, Clegg, 'The writing of Carl Nielsen's Saul of David', 135-36. See also Balzer, 'Den dramatiske musik', 74.

very few statements about Italian opera from Nielsen himself,[7] but the fact that he chose to work in Italy during the composition of *Saul and David* can arguably be seen as an indirect reflection of his attitude towards Wagner. Nielsen may have been indifferent towards Italian music theatre, but he had pretty strong opinions about Wagnerian music drama.[8] Italy allowed him to distance himself from Wagner, not least since Danish composers traditionally gravitated to Germany because of geographical and cultural proximity.

7 The only evidence of Nielsen attending a performance of a local opera in Italy can be found in his correspondence from the 1891 trip: 'Have heard [Mascagni's opera] *Cavalleria Rusticana*: no trace of anything new in the music, but well put together' [*Har hørt "Cavaliere Rusticana"* [sic]*; ikke Spor af Nyt i den Musik, men godt tillavet!*], letter to Hother Ploug of 22 May 1891, CNL, 90, CNB I, 229-30. That Nielsen did not appreciate Verdi's operas from his 'middle period' is evident from these words: 'The dominating Italian opera style was organised first of all with the purpose of giving the singers an occasion to shine with all the possible singing techniques, no matter if they were appropriate to the dramatic situation or not. You will still be able to experience rehearsals of this insane nonsense when you go to the Royal Theatre for *Trovatore* or *Traviata*.' [*Den herskende italienske Operastil var saaledes beskaffen at det først og fremmest kom an paa at give Sangerne Lejlighed til at brilliere med alle Slags Sangkunster, ligemeget om det passede til den dramatiske situation eller ikke. De vil naar de går hen i det kgl. Teater til 'Troubadoren' og "Traviata" endnu kunne høre Prøver på dette vanvittige Nonsens*'], in 'Gluck, Haydn og Mozart', talk by Carl Nielsen in the society for 'Liberal Youth', in *Samtid*, 65. On the other hand, the composer praised Verdi's last work, *Falstaff*, as reported by his son-in-law, Emil Telmányi: 'We were captivated by a brilliant performance with amazing displays of singing ... Nielsen was so taken by the first two acts that he poked me. He eventually wanted to greet the maestro [Toscanini]' [Vi blev fængslet af en strålende skuespilkunst med prægtige sangpræstationer ... . Carl Nielsen blev så betaget af de to første akter, at han puffede til mig. Han ville nu alligevel op og hilse på maestroen [Toscanini]'], Emil Telmányi, *Af en musikers billedbog,* Copenhagen 1978, 175.

8 After an initial infatuation during his Grand Tour to Germany in 1890, Nielsen started to get tired (after only a few days, as Clegg observes), of Wagner and especially of his use of the leitmotif technique: 'I admire Wagner and find that him the greatest spirit of our century; but can't stand the way he spoon-feeds his listeners. Every time a name is mentioned, even of someone who's been dead and buried many years ago, the respective leitmotif pops its head out. I find it highly naïve and it makes an almost comic impression on me', diary entry of 15 September 1890, in CNL, 59, CNB I, 117. Four years later, after a performance of *Tristan und Isolde*, Nielsen wrote in high praise of the first act and the first part of the second one, nevertheless adding these words: ' As a whole I'm still as far as ever from being a Wagner enthusiast; there's such a mass of poor taste and empty effect in this as in almost all his operas – perhaps with exception of *Meistersinger* – that I can't do otherwise than take offence at it', diary entry of 9 November 1893, CNL, 129, CNB, vol. 1, 383. This is not the place to discuss Nielsen's relationship with Wagner, however. The topic is covered exhaustively in McCreless, 'Strange bedfellows'.

There is no reason to doubt Nielsen's claims that he had much to learn from the Italian tradition, especially regarding vocal scoring and technique, even though the presence of his wife Anne Marie in Rome must have contributed to his application.[9] What is unclear is whether he was referring to an older or a newer tradition, especially given his inclination towards Palestrina and his fondness for polyphonic passages, particularly in choral writing. Moreover, this was exactly the period when Palestrina had become an almost mythical figure in the history of counterpoint, a topic to which we will return later in the essay.

At the same time, however, contemporary Italian opera was struggling. Though the sudden success of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and the rising popularity of Puccini would assure a prominent place for Italian opera in Europe and beyond for decades, there is little evidence of a distinctively Italian approach to the genre in the work of the 'Giovine Scuola'.[10] In other words, it was much easier for Nielsen to rely on a highly established tradition – polyphonic vocal writing from the Renaissance – and to reinterpret it within his own musical world, than to approach the very eclectic and uncertain field of Italian contemporary opera.

Verdi's mature works, which had already incorporated elements from other traditions, especially French Grand Opera,[11] suggest an unprecedented balance between vocal and orchestral textures, as well as the almost entire abolition of closed forms, even though lyrical singing is still present. This was a consequence of the rising popularity of Wagnerian music drama, with its complete synthesis of music and dramatic action. Before becoming influential in matters of musical character, however, Wagner gained popularity among a group of intellectuals, artists and writers known as the 'Scapigliati', literally meaning 'dishevelled'. One of the artists who was associated with the 'Scapigliatura' was Arrigo Boito, composer and poet, author of the

9 Anne Marie had already been granted a scholarship and the possibility to study with one of the leading French sculptors of his generation, Victor Ségoffin, at that time based in Rome.

10 Sometimes the adjective 'verista' is added at the end, so that musicians such as Pietro Mascagni, Ruggiero Leoncavallo, Umberto Giordano, Francesco Cilea and, though with some caveats, Giacomo Puccini – and to a lesser extent Antonio Smareglia, Alfredo Catalani and Lorenzo Perosi, sometimes joined by Franco Alfano – are said to belong to the 'giovine scuola verista'. But it would be appropriate to avoid the adjective 'verista': firstly because some of these composers were only remotely influenced by *verismo*; secondly because even composers such as Mascagni experimented with a variety of subjects, which sometimes brought them far from the realistic world that the most famous of their operas depicted.

11 Guido Salvetti, 'Dal Verdi della maturità a Giacomo Puccini', in Alberto Basso (ed.) *Musica in scena – Storia dello spettacolo musicale*, vol. 2, Gli italiani all'estero – L'opera in Italia e in Francia, Turin 1996, 385.

opera *Mefistofele*.[12] The movement influenced many opera composers especially during the 1880s, with its post-romantic propensity for the fantastic and the supernatural, and its predilection for the magic element, especially black magic: this decade's operatic plots and librettos are often set in Nordic environments or taken from the realm of myth and legend. The musical theatre that was later called 'melodramma nero'[13] is exemplified by works such as *La Fata del Nord* (1884) by Guglielmo Zuelli, Puccini's first two operas, *Le Villi* (1884) and *Edgar* (1889), *Flora Mirabilis* (1886) by Spiros Samara, *Asrael* by Alberto Franchetti (1888), and Alfredo Catalani's *Loreley* (1890), a revision of his earlier *Elda* (1880).

The first anti-naturalistic phase of Italian opera, however, proved to be very short: Mascagni's great success with *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890) imposed *verismo* as the new dominant genre and prompted many turn-of-the-century-composers to choose realistic subjects in order to achieve a similar fortune. Some of the works that followed *Cavalleria* have actually little to do with the *verista* paradigm, as they are set in urban environments, while the origin of *verismo*, as a literary movement, was rural. Historical dramas, *Traviata*-like love stories and vernacular tales imbued with exoticism are unified only by the common naturalistic frame. For this reason many scholars prefer the term 'urban naturalism' for most of the works of the 'Giovine Scuola', leaving the *verista* label only to dramas set in the countryside. Besides being justified by its broad spectrum, the variety of the subjects within the naturalistic genre hides an anxiety, which is evident in composers' ceaseless search for suitable subjects. Whether we use the terms *verismo* or urban naturalism, the choice of a realistic plot was in fact no guarantee of success. Among the composers usually associated with the 'Giovine Scuola', only Puccini managed to achieve lasting, prosperous fortune, while Mascagni, Leoncavallo, and to a lesser extent Umberto Giordano and Francesco Cilea, only experienced real, enduring success with one opera each.[14]

This desperate search for a suitable subject, combined with the fear of failure, also haunted those composers who did not work best in naturalistic dramas (such as Catalani and Smareglia) but who nevertheless tried their hand in the genre. It is these composers who presented a valid alternative to *verismo* in the twenty years

12 Boito was particularly influential in Italy, while abroad he was probably best known for writing the libretto for Verdi's *Otello*. His first opera, *Mefistofele,* had a curious history: its premiere in 1868 was a failure. After two revisions (first in 1875 and then again in 1876), however, the work gained a fair amount of success, leading opera composers to new paths in terms of choice of subject matter.

13 Rodolfo Celletti, *Storia dell'opera italiana*, Milan 2000, 521.

14 Respectively with *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890), *I Pagliacci* (1892), *Andrea Chénier* (1896), and *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902). The rest of the four composers' works are hardly ever staged nowadays.

around the turn of the century. The realistic frame that surrounds the story in *La Wally,* for example, cannot be compared to that of other *verista* composers, which justifies the claim that the opera 'creates a balance between dream and reality'.[15] Even less naturalistic are some of Smareglia's operas, particularly *La Falena* (1897), *Oceána* (1903) and *Abisso* (1914), which represent the products of the collaboration between the composer and the poet Silvio Benco. Particularly significant in this respect is *La Falena,* which, despite its evident Wagnerian influence in the musical language, anticipates some of the future tendencies of anti-naturalistic theatre, while the element of black magic is reminiscent of the noir dramas of the 1880s. The opera's thin plot (not much more than a parable), undefined settings, and evanescent characters (not much more than allegories) are all elements that define it as a part of the symbolist world that can be connected to Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938), one of the main representatives of European 'decadence'. The author of influential literary works as well as of several opera librettos, D'Annunzio would become a constant reference point for Italian composers of tragic operas in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a point we will come back to later in the essay.

The legend created by Benco in *La Falena,* which by his own admission can be summarised as 'an idyll overturned into tragedy',[16] also stands out for another reason, notably its absence of lightness or irony. This is even more striking in relation to the dominating trends dictated by *verismo* composers, who merged high and low, elevated and plebeian, tragic and comic registers, according to a recipe that was reminiscent of early 1800s opera semiseria. Even in the most tragic of the *verista* operas there is place for light and cheerful moments, as in the first acts of *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly.*[17] These characteristics make *La Falena* the linking point between melodramma nero and decadent tragedy, which would gradually distance itself from the Wagnerian influence to acquire a more specific musical identity, particularly with the works of Zandonai and Pizzetti. At the same time and despite the substantial aesthetic differences between the two composers, we can identify some similarities between Smareglia's opera and *Saul and David*. The thoroughly tragic sense, the element of black magic (limited to a few scenes in Nielsen's opera,[18] more pervasive in

15 Salvetti, 'Dal Verdi della maturità a Giacomo Puccini', 401.

16 See, for example, Guido Salvetti, *La nascita del Novecento,* Turin 1991, 243.

17 In both operas the germs of an imminent tragedy manifested themselves at the end of the first act, while the beginning of it is occupied by more trivial matters. The second act unveils the tragedy and the third brings it to a dramatic climax.

18 *Saul and David*, though far from this symbolist realm, maintains a loose relationship with the narrative devices of noir dramas, both in the king's curse operated by Samuel, which is responsible for Saul's mind being controlled by an evil spirit, and especially in the last act's opening's scene, when the spirit of the prophet is evoked by the witch of Endor.

La Falena), and the sense of indefiniteness and atemporality are connected to the out-of-this-world-quality both works express.

Musical characters and dramatic choruses: Nielsen's individual touch

The 'globalisation' of opera at the turn of the century was responsible for important changes, and its consequence was the gradual abandonment of the principles that had characterised Italian opera during the eighteenth century, namely the use of closed numbers (and the separation between action and reflection); the supremacy of vocal melody; and the social and musical distinction between opera buffa and opera seria (and between high and low genres).[19] As a result of this, the need to maintain dramatic cohesion without giving up lyrical singing became a problem of major importance for opera composers. In order to do so, the transition from recitative to closed numbers had to become smoother; hence the more frequent use of the recitativo arioso. Another major preoccupation was to avoid unnecessary pauses in the action; for this reason, closed numbers were placed either at the beginning or at the end of the act, or, in some cases, took the form of musical episodes of a diegetic character.

In *Saul and David* Nielsen makes extensive use of some of these devices. The most striking example of music perceived diegetically occurs at the beginning of the second act, after the prelude, when David sings for the sick King Saul.[20] The episode is notable because of the clarity with which Nielsen outlines two musical planes: David's performance is accompanied by the harp, an instrument strongly associated with the act of singing, while the orchestra, representing the plane of the dramatic action, interrupts his song and eventually stops it. Later in the act David sings again and is once more interrupted. But even in the first act, he is associated with singing as a therapeutic means of soothing Saul's troubled mind. Although we do not hear the harp initially, the stage indications reveal that David is actually singing and is accompanied by the instrument,[21] while Saul's reactions to the young man's appearance also point to his song.[22] The end of the first act is also a perfect example of Nielsen exploiting a natural break in the action in order to create a musical opportunity. The love duet between

19 Although there are many examples of opera semiseria, where both tragic and comic elements and characters from high and low classes were mixed, the distinction between opera buffa and opera seria stands until *verismo*.

20 The 'meta-musical' quality in David is also noted by McCreless, with a reference to 'what Carolyn Abbate calls "phenomenal performance" – music that the onstage audience can hear as music' – see McCreless, 'Strange bedfellows', 131.

21 '[David] steps forward a bit and sings to the harp' [*gaar lidt frem og synger til Harpen*], CNU I/4, 101. The harp is silent, though, until b. 40, when David intones a psalm – ibid., 107. He will be doing the same, again accompanied by the harp, in the already mentioned episode at the beginning of the second act.

22 Saul: 'Who's there? Who's singing there?' [*Hvad nu? Hvo synger her?*], ibid. 103; Saul: 'Sing on! Sing on! Now all is peace and quiet!' [*Ja, syng! Ja, syng! Nu blev her lyst og stille*], ibid. 106.

David and Mikal takes place immediately after everybody has been called to war. A similar device is used to situate the duet between brother and sister, Jonathan and Mikal, at the beginning of Act 3, in a way that does not interfere with the rest of the action.

While the elements presented above show Nielsen operating in a way that is in line with most of his contemporaries, there are aspects of his musical and dramatic shaping of the work that justify the independence of thought and originality for which *Saul and David* has so often been praised. An example of this can be found in the second act, where Nielsen incorporated the song of a thrush he heard in the garden of Villa Medici in the orchestral score of *Saul and David*.[23] What had the potential to become an impressionistic touch – a common practice in many works of the period – was handled by Nielsen in a totally different manner. Had he been a *verista* composer, he might have reproduced the song more literally, to add a touch of reality to his work. Instead, he incorporates it into the score in a way that makes it almost impossible to recognise the original melody. Similarly, he brings into the musical discourse elements from musical traditions other than the operatic, such as popular song and Renaissance sacred polyphony.

Another original feature of Nielsen's musical discourse in the opera is the prevalence of the diatonic element over the chromatic. While both the anti-naturalist and the *verismo* composers shared a post-romantic aesthetic, inclined towards the chromatic regions, Nielsen, in contrast, preferred a personal and idiosyncratic diatonicism, which is sometimes pushed to an extreme, when the independence of the single voices results in dissonances that in a way resemble Busoni's concept of a fully developed polyphony.[24] Nielsen does employ chromaticism in the opera, but its function is more illustrative of the action or of a particular character (notably Saul), which is to say that chromaticism is used in a manner close to that in pre-classical music, where it was the bearer of a specific extra-musical meaning.

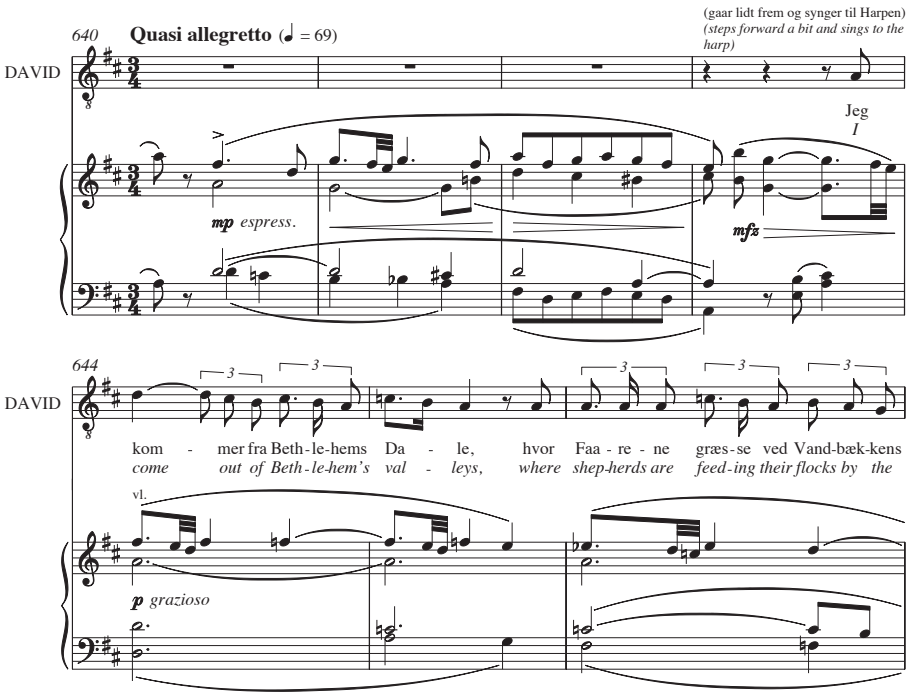
If Saul's at times chromatic singing is a key to understand him as a character, it is not an isolated attempt of musical characterisation. On the contrary, the creation of musical types revealing a perfect cohesion with their respective dramatic role is one of the most notable features in *Saul and David*.[25] Being the motor of the opera's plot, Saul is given an aria that forms the dramatic climax of the first act; almost all of its musical weight, however, is carried in the orchestra, with no extended lyrical

23 See Torben Meyer and Frede Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen – Kunstneren og Mennesket: En biografi*, Copenhagen, 1947-1948, 177, and CNB II, 183. Both sources reproduce a facsimile from Nielsen's diary, dated Villa Medici, 18 April 1900, 5:30am.

24 Michael Fjeldsøe, *Den fortrængte modernisme – den ny musik i dansk musikliv (1920-1940)*, Copenhagen 1999, 143-47.

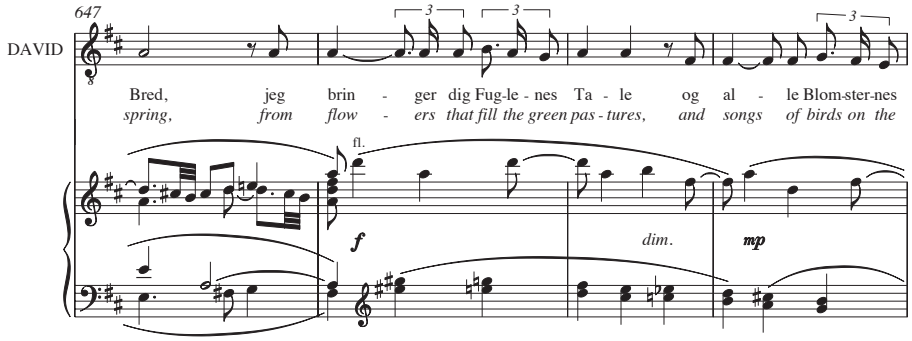
25 The use of musical characters in *Saul and David* is also discussed in Ludvig Dolleris, *Carl Nielsen – En musikografi*, Odense 1949, 72-73.

passages for the singer. The traditional balance of the aria is hence transformed into something new.[26] The rest of Saul's arioso passages are similarly brief, including the first section of the two-part aria before his suicide. Such type-casting, however, is not limited to Saul alone. David is a warrior, a shepherd and a king-in-waiting, but he is first of all a musician, hence offering the composer the perfect opportunity for lyrical expansiveness. His first appearance in the opera is perfectly in line with this characterisation: his aria di sortita is cleverly disguised as a song (as we have seen when speaking of diegetic musical episodes), of the same kind as in Mascagni's *Cavalleria,* where Lola's first lines are the verses of a Sicilian stornello (Examples 1 and 2). Having established himself this way, David retains his role even when he is not singing diegetically, as in his love duet with Mikal. Nielsen thus intensifies the first of the symbolic contrasts upon which the opera is built: Saul as the personification of drama, and David as the personification of music.

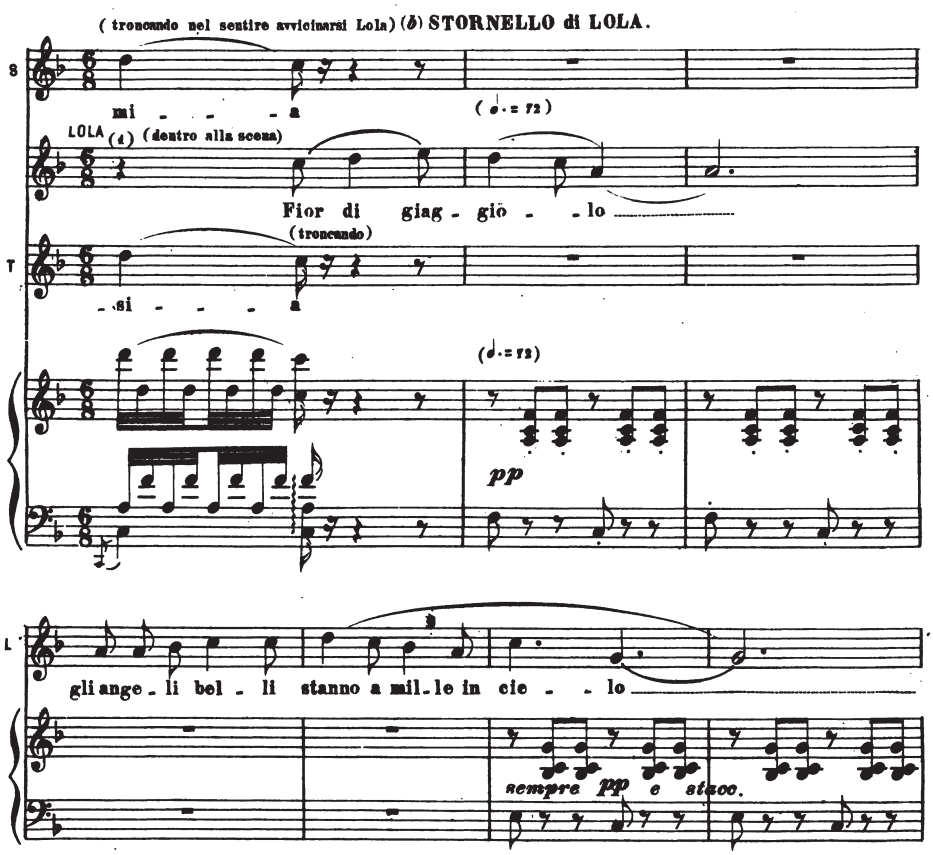


26 Even more than in Iago's monologue with which the Israelite King's has so often been compared. In the passage from *Otello* Verdi does provide the orchestra with a prominent role, but Iago's vocal part maintains a typical Verdian melodic quality.

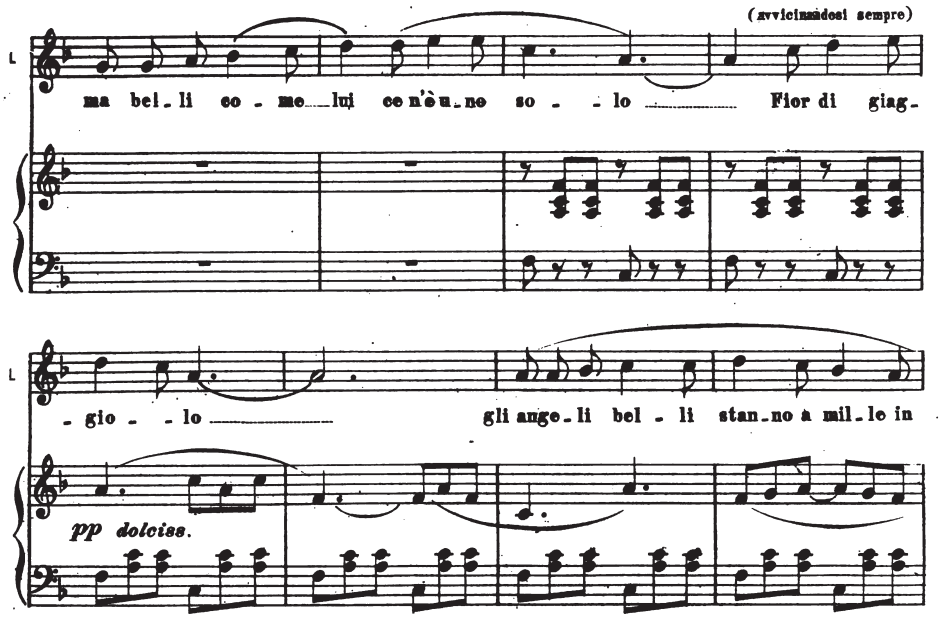
Example 1 continued



Example 1: Nielsen, Saul and David, *David's entrance, Act 1, bb. 640-65.*



Example 2 continued



Example 2: Pietro Mascagni, Cavalleria rusticana*, 'Stornello di Lola', piano reduction (Sonzogno 1891), pp. 91-92.*

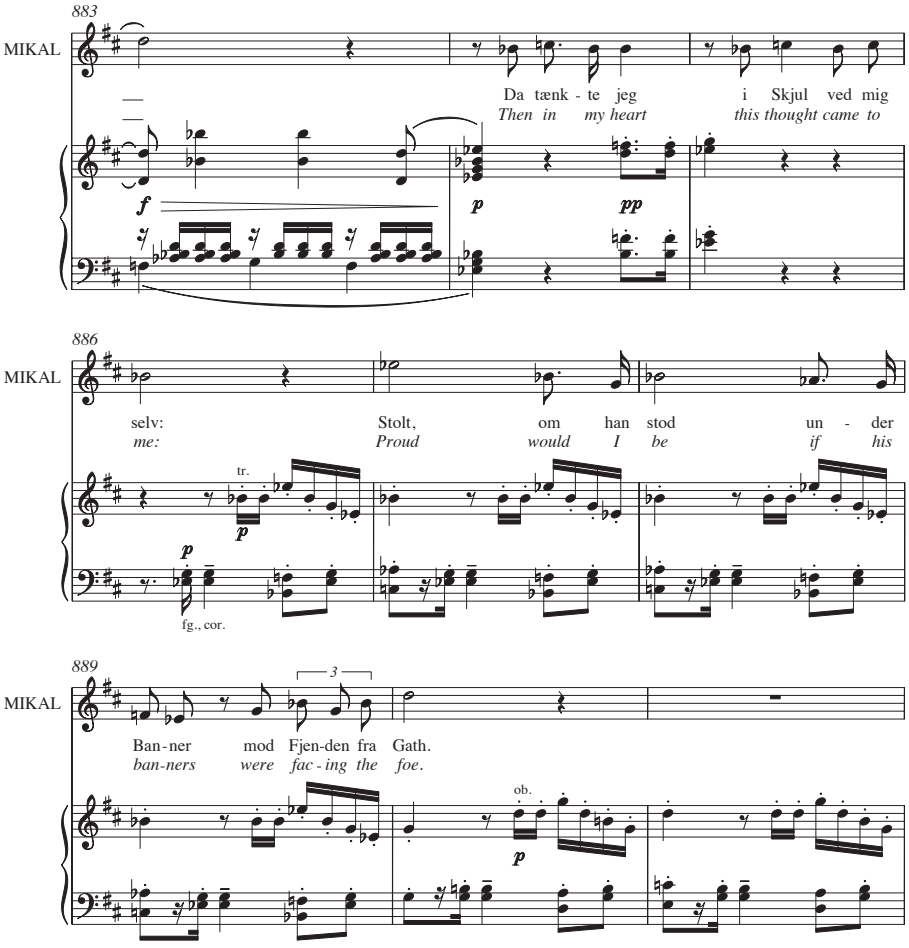
This characterisation by musical types is supported by the other characters: Abner rarely abandons dry recitative, being almost constantly accompanied by militaristic trumpets; Samuel's alternation of declamation and psalmody, which by no means lacks lyricism, is neatly aligned with his dramatic role as the servant of God (and, as Patrick McCreless observes, as his deputy).

One role in particular illustrates both Nielsen's approach to characterisation and also why he may have referred to a specific Italian vocality when he applied to study in the country. The fiery quality of characters such as Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Canio in *Pagliacci,* Michele in *Tabarro,* and Tosca, all reflect archetypical, sometimes even stereotypical, representations of an 'Italian temperament'.

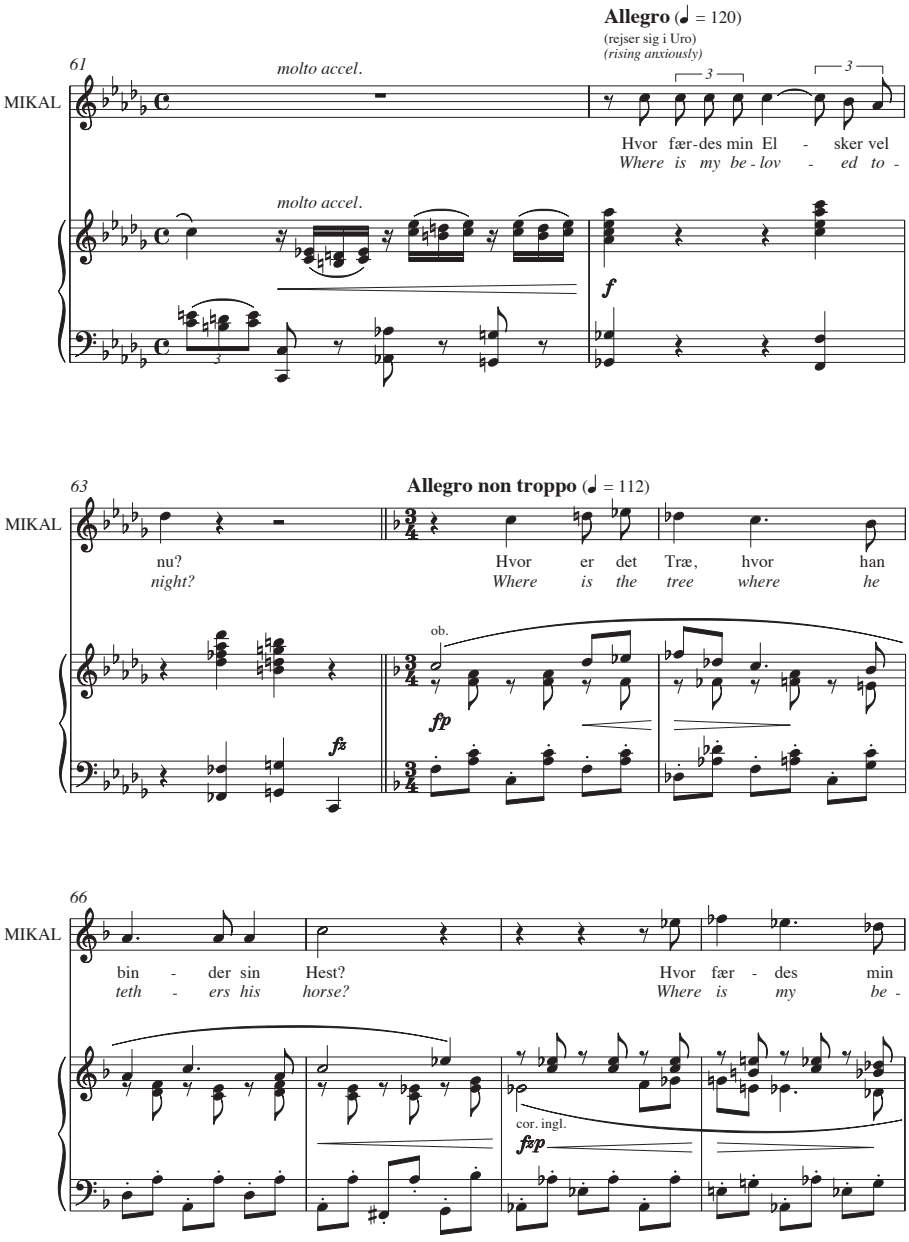
This idea of a fiery personality also describes Mikal, Saul's daughter, who, according to Torben Schousboe, demands a typically Italian vocal style.[27] And it is true that her music is more passionate than lyrical, exhibiting some of the traits

27 See Torben Schousboe's introductory commentary to the recordings of *Maskarade* and *Saul and David*, Danacord DACO357-359, as well as Jürgen Balzer's statement, 'Mikal reveals already in the duet some substantial traits of her temperament', Balzer, 'Den dramatiske musik', 81.

that characterise *verista* vocal writing, especially wide intervals, passages when she sings in a quasi-declamato style, and her sudden changes of dynamic (Examples 3a and 3b). These are evident both in the second act, where and her maids are awaiting news from the battle between David and Goliath, and in the third, when she openly stands in the way of her father, defending David and then escaping with him. But already in the first act's love duet it is clear that it is David, not Mikal, who will be responsible for the scene's lyricism, with his lover instead displaying strong and even martial traits. Her temperament is announced even in the first measures by a change in tempo (marked *agitato*), while later, imagining David as a victorious warrior, she is accompanied by trumpets, an instrument that in *Saul and David* always recalls war. The trumpet motif is then taken over by the oboe, which represents David's pastoral nature and introduces a new lyrical phase, once again for the male character.



Example 3a: Saul and David*, Mikal's vocal line, Act 1, bb. 884-96.*



Example 3b: Saul and David, *Mikal's vocal line, Act 3, bb. 61–79.*

Nielsen most probably wrote the scene from the second act during his stay in Italy, whereas there are contradictory statements regarding the composition of the love duet in the first.[28] The nocturne that opens the third act, one of the most poetic moments in the score, was written in Denmark, but is still perfectly in line with Mikal's character. Here it is Jonathan, rather than she, who sings lyrically, while her part is notable for its sudden changes of tempo and dynamics as she worries about David's whereabouts. A sudden dynamic change (*molto accelerando*) from Andante con moto to Allegro and then Allegro non troppo introduces her singing, while her vocal line is fragmented and more notable for its dramatic quality then for its melody.

All three passages (where Mikal has a major role) were added by Christiansen and Nielsen to give the opera's leading female character greater prominence than she has in the Biblical account, where her importance is limited to the act of saving David once. Although Nielsen and Christiansen maintain her alliance with David, they also allow her to defy Saul openly at the end of the third act. The editors of the Carl Nielsen Edition agree that 'the biggest departure from the Bible story is the character of Mikal'.[29] They also suggest in the preface to the score the possibility of Christiansen knowing a libretto by Hans Christian Andersen:

> It is difficult to imagine that Einar Christiansen knew nothing of Hans Christians Andersen's opera libretto King Saul when he wrote his libretto for Carl Nielsen's opera. Einar Christiansen's plot, the selection of episodes from the Old Testament and a number of the respects in which the text differs from the Biblical account very accurately reflect Andersen's text.[30]

28 Art historian Vilhelm Wanscher, one of Nielsen's friends, states that he was composing part of the first act while in Rome: 'the old-fashioned traffic in the street did not bother the composer, who worked on the first act of his opera "Saul and David"' ... He thought only of David and Michal', Vilhelm Wanscher, 'Erindringer om Carl Nielsen', *Politiken*, 8 June 1935, quoted in CNU I/4, xiv-xv. According to the editors of the Carl Nielsen Edition, Nielsen 'composed large parts of Act Two in Italy", ibid., xv. Meyer, on the other hand, states that only the celebration scene after David's victory was composed in Italy – see Meyer and Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen*, 175-77. It is tempting to believe that from the end of the first act to the celebration scene (the part of the opera where Mikal is almost constantly on stage) the opera was in fact composed in Italy. If we accept this hypothesis we would have to contradict Meyer, but we could accept both Wanscher's and the CNU's claims.

29 *The Carl Nielsen Edition*, I/4, xxv.

30 Ibid., xiii.

But there are also evident similarities with the 1784 tragedy *Saul* by the Italian poet Vittorio Alfieri. In this work Mikal (here called Micol) is similarly provided with a significant role and also appears together with Jonathan (Giònata in the Italian), where brother and sister are awake during the night and Mikal wonders about David, in a scene comparable with the opening of Nielsen's third act.[31]

It is not possible to verify whether Nielsen was influenced by Italian vocality when he wrote Mikal's part, in the absence of any explicit commentary from him on *verista* operas. It is nevertheless true that she is the closest character to the Italian soprano drammatico that dominated the musical scene of early twentieth-century Italy, which supports Nielsen's statement that 'especially as regards singing and vocal scoring there is much to be learnt here'.[32]

The use of the choir is the element with which Nielsen most definitely departs from the paradigm of contemporary Italian opera. This has less to do with the fact that Italian fin-de-siècle opera never provided the choir with such a leading role as in *Saul and David,*[33] than with the position of the choruses within the structure of the work and with their musical character. The most striking thing about the choral parts in Nielsen's opera is their musical significance. Each act has at least one big chorus: the two-part offertory scene in the first (divided into male and female choir); another two-part chorus ('Hallelujah' followed by 'Frydesang Paukesang'), preceded by a scene where Mikal sings with a choir of maids in the second; the third act has

31 The nocturne scene in the Italian tragedy can be found in the third scene from the first act of Vittorio Alfieri's *Saul*, Turin 1954, 23-24. It is not possible to verify that Christiansen knew the play, but it the similarities are indeed compelling. The character of David is, as in the opera, depicted without the flaws described in the Biblical account, which gives him less dramatic weight and concentrates the attention on Saul. Alfieri was also conscious of the musicality of the subject; in the fourth scene of his third act, David is provided with an interlude, where the actor is instructed to either recite or sing the verses with an unspecified musical accompaniment (ibid., 52-58). It is also interesting that, as in the opera, David's singing is preceded by Giònata's words: 'move your voice so he can calmly recompose himself, o brother. In sweet obedience already many times you brought him such celestial chants' [*la tua voce, a ricomporlo in calma, muovi, o fratello. In dolce oblìo l' hai ratto già tante volte coi celesti carmi*], ibid. 52. These words are quite similar to Jonathan's in *Saul and David:* 'Sing to him, David, often your singing has conforted me' [*Leg paa din Harpe; trøst ham som ofte du trøstede mig*], CNU, vol. I/4, *100; and 'So take your harp and sing him to rest', [Tag Harpen frem og syng ham til Ro],* ibid., 320.

32 From Nielsen's application to extend his Roman residency, letter from Carl Nielsen to the Ministry of Church and Education, dated 9 March 1900, in CNB II, 172.

33 Maybe with the exception of Mascagni's *Iris*, whose highlight is the initial Hymn to the Sun.

only one chorus, but it is the most majestic in the whole opera and probably its highlight; the fourth also has a single chorus, but it is similarly of large proportions, and it has the responsibility of closing the work. Patrick McCreless has reflected on the role the choir as an ensemble in *Saul and David,* where it embodies the community of the Israelites, and he argues that this is one of the reasons why the opera should not be confused with an oratorio, where the chorus serves a contemplative or illustrating function rather than a dramatic one.[34] In this respect Nielsen's work can be compared with Verdi's *Nabucco*, another opera where the Israelites' destiny was at stake, and where the People's actions and perspective are reflected in the choruses.

The position of the choruses is often significant. As we have seen Nielsen was careful to place the opera's 'closed' numbers either at the end or at the beginning of the acts, in order to allow the action to flow freely (Saul's monologue is only a partial exception because it does not have the characteristics of a traditional aria). The choruses in the second and third acts, however, are precisely in the middle of each section, and although they are dramatic (celebrating David's victory in Act 2, and Saul and David's reconciliation in Act 3), their weight and length is such that the action *is* stopped. Moreover, with its strict contrapuntal writing, 'Herren er vidne' draws attention to itself as a musical rather than a dramatic number. The only reason Nielsen would have wanted to create a pause in the action was for dramatic purposes, and the temporary break accentuates the sudden turning point both in the second act (when Saul's illness returns and he tries to pierce David with a spear) and in the third (when the appearance of Samuel turns out to be the real crux in the second part of the opera).

For this reason, we find ourselves in front of a musical drama that is more based on the contrast between action and stasis than on a sense of continuity. The fluidity of action that Nielsen is perfectly capable of creating is deliberately interrupted. The opera has on various occasions been criticised precisely because of this, commentators regarding the lengthy choruses as an unnecessary moment of stasis. And it is interesting that *Saul and David* can be perceived as lacking in drama, while several of Nielsen's orchestral work (particularly his last three symphonies and the two concertos for flute and clarinet) are often praised for their dramatic quality. It appears, however, that in *Saul and David* the way he animates his drama is consistent with one of the most important elements in his music, namely the conflict – or contrast – between two opposed forces. The dualism between stasis and action can be added to many others in the opera: the characters of Saul and David, with their contrasting temperaments and personifications of drama and music; Saul and God (as proposed by McCreless); David and Mikal (as lyrical character versus passionate), and so forth.

34 McCreless, 'Strange bedfellows', 113-15.

For this reason it is clear that in *Saul and David* Nielsen was already working along a path he would pursue throughout his whole career.

Nielsen, Perosi, Busoni and Pizzetti

The choruses are in fact the key to fully understanding the originality of Nielsen's opera. Their counterpoint – in a 1900 opera – was something of a sensation, revealing at the same time the composer's interest in Italy's polyphonic tradition, especially Palestrina. Nielsen had previously been inspired by Palestrina's style in *Hymnus Amoris,* his first great choral piece. According to Torben Meyer, the Dane studied the Italian master's technique during the work's gestation,[35] something he would return to later in his life during the composition of the *Three Motets*, Op. 55. The choice of Palestrina as a model is not surprising, given his almost legendary status in the nineteenth century. The rise of the Cecilian movement in several parts of Europe, beginning with Germany,[36] had emphasised the need for clarity and simplicity in music, principles that Nielsen himself held dear.

During his stay in Rome Nielsen and his friend Thomas Laub, who had similar aesthetic beliefs and with whom he would later work on Danish popular song, met Lorenzo Perosi, the composer who was then hailed as the new Palestrina[37]. The author of many masses and much other sacred music, Perosi became a real phenomenon in the final years of the nineteenth century, and his oratorios enjoyed particular success both

35 Meyer and Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen*, I, 132.

36 The Cecilian movement was an attempt to renew church music, by pursuing values such as objectivity, intelligibility of the sacred word, collectivity against individualism, sobriety and simplicity. As a means to purify church music, it addressed its attention towards the need for composers to look back to the music of the past, especially that of the great polyphonic masters from 1500. The movement was initiated by the German composers based in Regensburg, especially Haberl and Haller – see Arcangelo Paglialunga, *Lorenzo Perosi*, Rome 1952, 25; 53. In Denmark a Cecilian association was founded in 1851 by Henrik Rung – see Niels Martin Jensen, 'Denmark', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 7, London 2001, 207.

37 Adelmo Damerini writes that Perosi can be viewed as 'a re-enactor of the great Italian musical spirit' [*come un rievocatore della grande anima musicale italiana*], in contrast to other contemporary composers who were more inspired by German music; in his music it is possible to hear the voices of Palestrina, Frescobaldi, Gabrieli, Carissimi – Adelmo Damerini, *Lorenzo Perosi*, Milan 1953, 11. In Arcangelo Paglialunga's biography of Lorenzo Perosi, which contained several excerpts from contemporary sources about the composer, we can read that 'In Perosi our classic Italian history has remained; Palestrina is revived in him', article quoted from the newspaper *La Difesa*, 8 January 1897, anonymous writer – see Paglialunga, *Lorenzo Perosi*, Rome 1952, 97. In the same work, Paglialunga also reports the point of view of the French music critic and composer Alfred Bruneau, who also finds in Perosi's music the 'direct influence of Palestrina' (ibid., 243).

in Italy and abroad. Perosi's works, according to the most positive reviews, revealed genuine emotion and affinity with the sacred word, while at the same time maintaining a stylistic balance of modern tonal techniques, modality and Gregorian chant.[38]

In reality, his oratorios use Palestrina only as a reference, instead adopting a musical language that was entirely post-Romantic, in line with contemporary operatic trends. Even though he never composed an opera, Perosi was often associated with the 'Giovine Scuola', because of the highly affective and often dramatic quality of his works; the comparison was often meant as a criticism, alongside the sentimental tendency of *verismo* operas.[39] This was also Laub's opinion, who attended a performance of one of Perosi's works and found it deeply irritating.[40] It is not clear whether this happened before or after his meeting with the composer in Rome, but it is clear that he was unenthusiastic. We do not know of Nielsen's opinion, but it is hard to imagine that Perosi's blend of mysticism and devotion would have appealed to the much worldlier Dane. The only point where the two composers converged was in their use of Palestrina, a model that in both cases was filtered through their own musical personalities: Perosi owed much to Wagner, whereas Nielsen sought liberation in objectivity, simplicity and clarity.

After his sudden success, Perosi became a rather obscure figure; in retrospect, his importance for early twentieth-century Italian music lay in drawing attention to vocal music of the pre-classical era.[41] This element proved crucial for later composers such as Pizzetti, Respighi, Malipiero, Casella and Zandonai. That is not to regard Perosi as a precursor to the so-called 'generation of the 1880s', to which all the composers named above are affiliated. Unified not only by similar stylistic traits and aesthetic beliefs, but also by the common intent of liberating contemporary music from Romanticism, they had a real spiritual father in Ferruccio Busoni, rather than in Perosi.

38 This point of view can be found particularly in the already mentioned works by Damerini and Paglialunga.

39 Paglialunga, *Lorenzo Perosi,* 198.

40 'An oratorio of the new Italian Lorenzo Perosi, "of whom it is said that he resurrected ancient music" irritated him strongly: "modern cheap effects mixed together with some quite pretty, very old-fashioned, not exceptional things"' [*Et Oratorium af den nye Italiener Lorenzo Perosi, 'der siges at have genfødt den gamle musik', misagede ham stærkt: 'moderne knaldeffekt rodet sammen med enkelte ganske kønne, stærkt gammeldags, ikke udprægede ting'*] – Povl Hamburger, *Thomas Laub – Hans Liv og Gerning*, Copenhagen 1942, 75.

41 'Perosi can in this sense be considered as the joining link between the golden Italin polyphonic tradition and the modern revival of the Pizzettian choir' [*Perosi può considerarsi in questo senso l'anello di congiunzione fra l'aurea tradizione polifonica italiana e la ripresa moderna del coro pizzettiano*], Damerini, *Lorenzo Perosi*, 54.

Only one year younger than Nielsen, Busoni grew up, like the Dane, in the Romantic era. In Nielsen's early compositions the post-Romantic influence is obvious, and only later, convincingly and steadily, did he begin to distance himself from Romanticism. Busoni, meanwhile, immediately reacted against it and developed the concept of Junge Klassizität, whose chief characteristics have several parallels with Nielsen's aesthetics:

> With Young Classicism I include the definite departure from what is thematic and the return to melody again as the ruler of all voices and all emotions (not in the sense of a pleasing motif) and as the bearer of the idea and the begetter of harmony, in short, the most highly developed (not the most complicated) polyphony.[42]

The influence Busoni was able to exercise upon Italian composers was limited both because of his decision to live and work outside Italy and also because of his choice of German for his opera librettos (with the exception of *Arlecchino*). But inevitably works such as his satirical musical comedy *Arlecchino* and his musical fable *Turandot* (both premiered in 1917) anticipate the new wave of anti-naturalistic operas that would characterise Italian music in the 1910s and 1920s.

Besides comedy and musical fable, the other important genre at the beginning of the twentieth century was decadent tragedy, represented by operas such as Franchetti's *La figlia di Iorio* (1906), Mascagni's *Parisina* (1913), Zandonai's *Francesca da Rimini* (1914), Pizzetti's *Fedra* (1915), and Italo Montenezzi's *La nave* (1918). Their librettos were all written by D'Annunzio. These works, which, as we have seen, had a precedent in Smareglia's *La Falena* (it was no coincidence that the librettist of *La Falena*, Silvio Benco, was a great admirer of D'Annunzio), aspired to literary richness, and evoked atemporality or temporal remoteness (notably the ancient or medieval world).

Ildebrando Pizzetti's *Fedra* in particular is the work of a composer who, while embracing the refinement of decadent aesthetic and its dramatic topoi – here the reference is to Greek tragedy – did not indulge in extreme aestheticism. His writing, in contrast with the poetic text, was severe and controlled; in fact the musical restraint in *Fedra* was inversely proportional to the quality of the libretto, and was necessary in order to avoid verbosity. Already with his first opera Pizzetti demonstrated a special affinity with tragedy; this genre became for him the most powerful

42 Letter from Busoni to Paul Bekker, quoted from Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley, New York 1957, 21.

way to express his theatrical ideas, which echo Busoni's but are also strikingly similar to some of Nielsen's thoughts about the relationship between words and music. According to Pizzetti's point of view, opera is first of all a musical drama, that is to say the representation of action, not contemplation; therefore it should avoid unnecessary lyrical pauses. Following this line, it was therefore necessary for composers to create a dramatic musical language in which words are only subject to the requirements of the drama they create, and not to any musical necessity.[43] Regarding the relationship between poetry and music, Pizzetti believed that the former provided ideological characterisation, while the latter was able to enhance this characterisation from a spiritual point of view, since music is able to reach the audience in a way that goes beyond the merely linguistic level. Poetry, however, has to be granted major prominence, otherwise dramatic music would risk having the appearance of a body without a skeleton.[44]

The following commentary by Nielsen can also be related to this aesthetic belief, which is once again perfectly in line with Pizzetti's ideas about musical theatre:

> What is the relation of music to words? We have to admit that it is a purely decorative relation; not, it is true, in the generally accepted sense of the word decorative, but in the sense of the sun's relation to things, illumining and colouring them, radiating and imparting lustre to them, besides warming and vitalizing them, so every potentiality can develop ... Hence it is nothing degrading for music to regard itself as decorative and to serve humbly.[45]

Besides being inspired by the spirit of Greek tragedy, Pizzetti tried to capture it musically by studying the Greek modal scales. But his success in this field was doubtful; the precise makeup of Greek scales and modes still remains unclear, and they were even more so at the beginning of the twentieth-century, when they nevertheless constituted an object of great interest among musicians. Nielsen himself gave a talk about Greek music[46] and was a member of the 'Græsk Selskab' (founded in 1905 by himself, J.L. Heiberg, A.B. Drachmann, Harald Høffding and Georg Brandes). But Nielsen and many other composers resorted to the better-known modal language of

43 Franco Abbiati, *Storia della musica – Il Novecento*, Milan 1953, 126.

44 Ibid., 129-30.

45 'Words, Music and Programme Music', in Carl Nielsen, *Living Music*, translated by Reginald Spink, London 1953, 31-32.

46 As evident from the talk entitled 'Græsk Musik' held on 22 October 1907, *Samtid*, 99-110.

the Latin church, with the aim of achieving 'an integration between the liturgical gravity in the melodic design, the archaic harmonic colour and the personal means proper to the artist, filtered through a balanced modernity'.[47]

Saul and David, Débora e Jaèle

By viewing *Saul and David* as a tragedy, as Anne Marie Reynolds has suggested,[48] it is then possible to compare it both to opera seria, with its elevated tone, and to Pizzetti's music dramas. It is clear that the elevated style and subject, and the absence of any light-hearted or comic element (which in Pizzetti's case was consistent with his choice of Gabriele D'Annunzio as a librettist) was an anti-*verista* move, which suited the aesthetic beliefs of the 1880s generation, who favoured a return to the schemes of early opera.

In this sense Nielsen's choice of subject, besides being in line with Busoni's thought,[49] is therefore more closely aligned with the future of Italian opera than with its present. The same is true of the Biblical setting, something highly unusual in fin-de-siècle opera. Verdi's two 'biblical' operas, *Nabucco* and *Aida,* for example, owe little to the Scriptures other than Old Testament atmosphere. It is therefore worth noting that the only early twentieth-century biblical opera by an Italian composer was written by Pizzetti. *Débora e Jaèle*, his second major opera (premiered in 1922), is usually recognised as his best. While maintaining the dramatic principles and musical qualities that had characterised *Fedra*, the new work reveals a renewed freedom in the relationship between text and music, caused by the fact that Pizzetti himself wrote the libretto, loosely based on Chapters 4 and 5 of the *Book of Judges*.

It is of course tempting to compare the narrative and musical strategies the two composers used in the construction of an opera based on a biblical subject, especially given their aesthetic similarities. But the operas are relatively far apart chronologically, since *Saul and David* predates *Débora e Jaèle* (composed 1917-21) by 20 years. For this reason, Pizzetti's modally coloured diatonicism is more far-reaching than Nielsen's. In the choice of topic and in the shape of the drama, however, the two works display striking similarities. In this respect it should be noted that Christiansen's plot was closer to the Scriptures than Pizzetti's. Even though he altered some

47 The comment is expressed by musicologist Cesari and reported in Abbiati, *Storia della Musica*, 125.

48 Reynolds, 'Saul and David as a Tragedy'.

49 We know of their friendship and their similarity of opinion about many musical matters from their correspondence, published in Michael Fjeldsøe, 'Ferruccio Busoni og Carl Nielsen: brevveksling gennem tre årtier', *Musik og Forskning,* 25 (1999-2000), 18-40, and from the same author's examination in Fjeldsøe, *Den fortrængte modernisme*, 143-47.

characters, displaced some episodes, and cut other passages, the core of Christiansen's story in *Saul and David* is faithful to the Biblical narrative: the contrast between an old and a new order, represented by Saul and David respectively, and the tension between human and divine law, represented by Saul and Samuel. Pizzetti had to work on much slenderer material both in terms of plot and characters: in the Bible, Déborah and Jaèle are both depicted as strong women, with little difference between them in terms of personality. To create a suitably dramatic work, Pizzetti therefore had to intervene more drastically, and he reinterpreted Jaèle's character from scratch. He also made Sisera, who in the Bible had a minor weight, the third main character of the drama, and invented a love story between him and Jaèle. Like her counterpart in the Bible, she eventually kills him, but does so out of mercy, in order to save him from the Israelites, and only after she has realised that her previous attempts, discovered by Débora, had been in vain.

With these changes Pizzetti created a story which, like *Saul and David*, was centred on the contrast between divine and human law, with Samuel and Débora (as prophets of God) as representative of the former, and Saul and Jaèle of the latter. The contrast is between an infallible order and one that contemplates the possibility of change, mistake, freedom, forgiveness, elements that stand in conflict with the necessity, impassiveness and immutability represented by the Prophets and divine rule. The sense of Jaèle's rebellion, prompted by love, can thus be compared to that of Saul, prompted by his freedom of will, which simply does not fit within the system. And even though Nielsen's opera is titled *Saul and David* and not 'Saul and Samuel', as McCreless notes, its real tension is between Saul and God (with Samuel as His messenger).[50] Both dramas are hence based on the interplay between three main characters: a divine representative (Samuel / Débora) and two human beings, whose relationship is doomed to failure, even in an antithetical way: David, called to be Saul's servant but who ultimately becomes his enemy, and Sisera, supposedly Jaèle's enemy, with whom she falls in love and whom she eventually kills.

If *Saul and David* is the tragedy of a single man, *Débora e Jaèle* is the tragedy of a man and a woman, victims of a rigid and severe order that does not contemplate forgiveness. Both Jaèle and Sisera express their humanity in contrast to the indifference of God. When the heroine is asked by Débora in the final moments of the opera, after she has reluctantly killed her lover: 'Have you heard the Lord's voice?', she answers: 'Not of your God, but of another you don't know'.[51] Sisera, finding himself lost before he can enter Jaèle's tent, cries out: 'Invisible inimical God, I call on you, I call

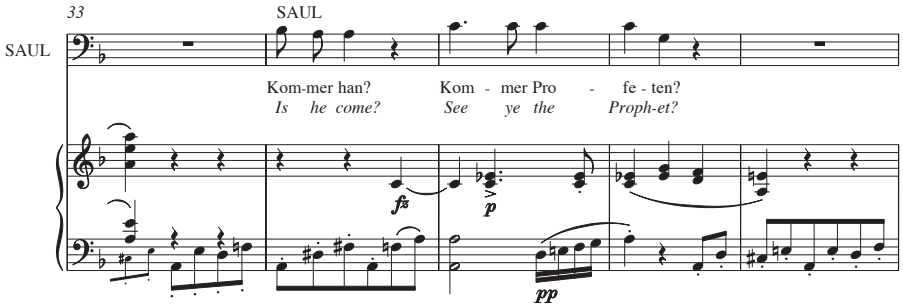
50 McCreless, 'Strange bedfellows' 110.

51 Ildebrando Pizzetti, *Débora e Jaèle*, Milan, Ricordi, 1922, 463.

on you and defy you!'[52] Nielsen's character expresses similar defiance, from which he retreats both in his Act 1 monologue 'Kunde jeg rejse mig mod dig' and especially in his final words:

> My Lord and my tempter, forever thou mockest in heaven! Thou hast racked me with endless disasters that thou hast prepared for my soul! Thou grim old mocker, that taunteth my afflictions! Lo, I spatter my blood on Thy heaven! Wash Thyself clean of my sin, if Thou canst![53]

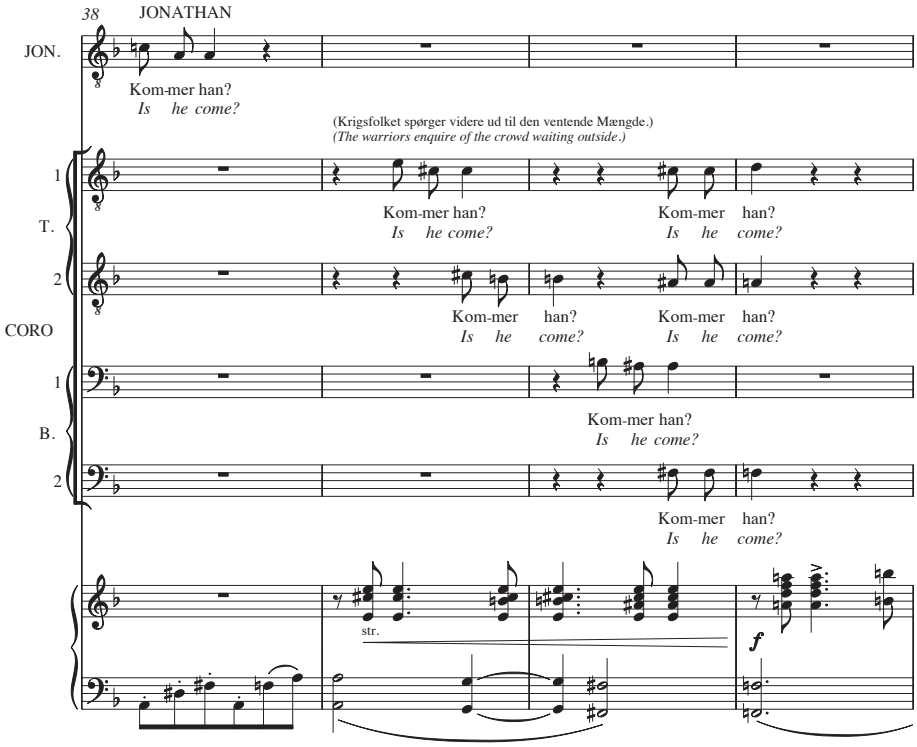
The opening pages of the two operas are also similar: in Nielsen's work, Saul and the people await the arrival of Samuel and the King's question 'Kommer han?' ('Is he coming?') is immediately repeated by the people (Example 4). Pizzetti generates a similar feeling of anxious agitation: the Israelites await the arrival of their prophetess Débora. At first her arrival is questioned by two of the characters (the Blind Man and Scillem, Example 5a), and then is invoked by the people, who have in the meantime entered the scene (Example 5b) This emphasis on the people, whose destiny is at stake because of the war, is given appropriate musical support by the choir, who gain prominent roles in both operas.



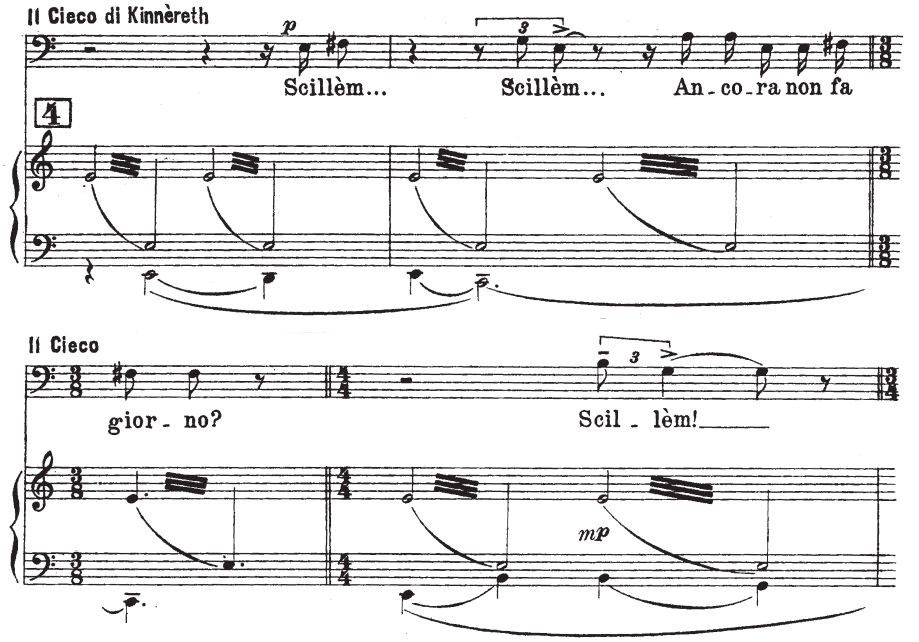
52 Ibid. 386-87.

53 *Min Herre og Frister! Du evige Spotter deroppe! Du har pint mig med evige Kvaler, du selv har din skabning beredt! Du gamle Spotter, der ler ad mine Kvaler! Se, nu sprøjter mit Blod mod din Himmel! Tvæt dig da ren for min Synd, om du kan!*, CNU, I/5, 581-86.

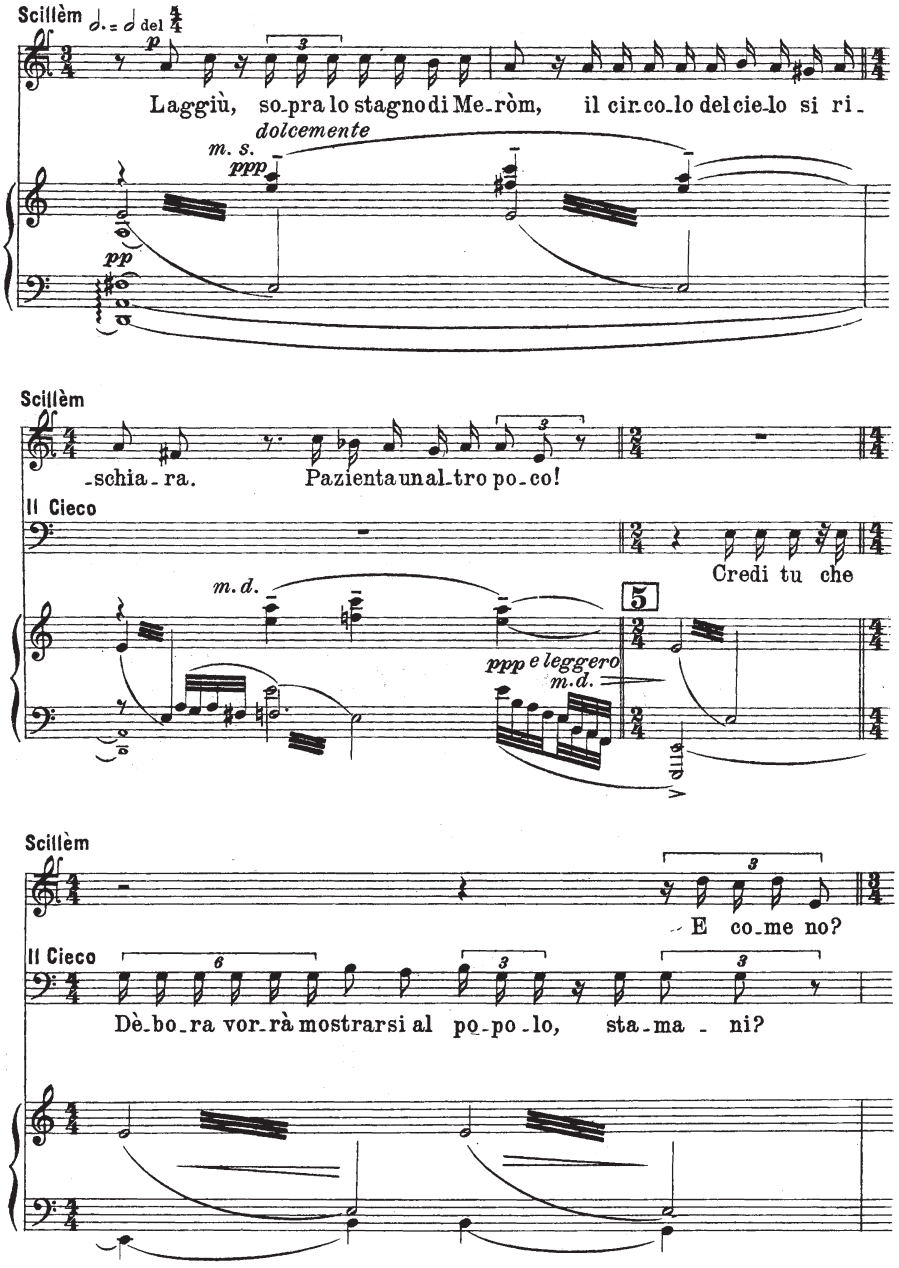
Ex. 4 continued



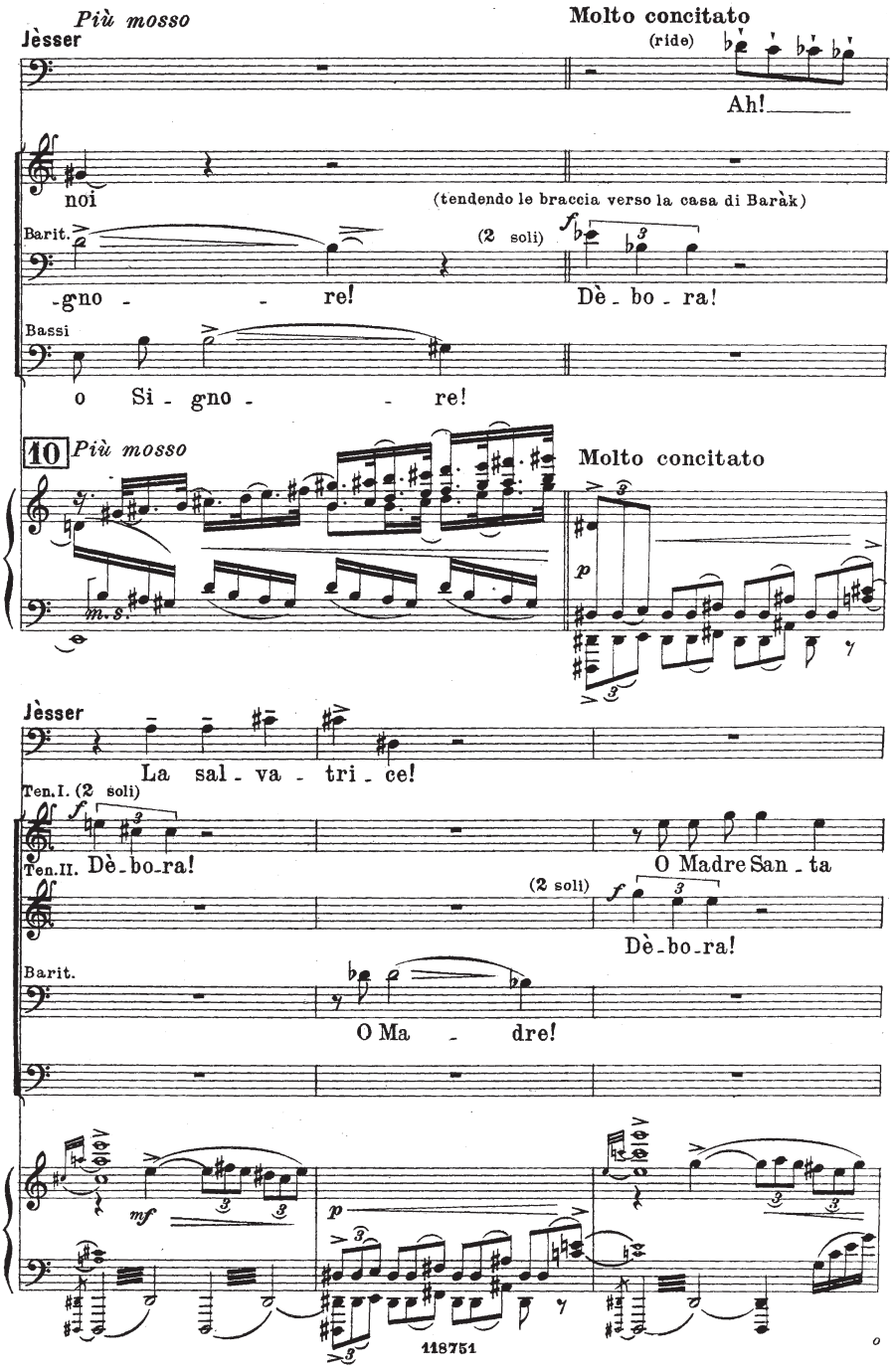
Ex. 4: Nielsen, Saul and David, *Waiting for Samuel, Act 1, bb. 34–39.*



Ex. 5a continued



Ex. 5a: Pizzetti, Débora e Jaèle, *Waiting for Débora, the Blindman and Scillem (vocal score, Ricordi, 1922, pp. 5-6).*



Ex. 5b: Pizzetti, Débora e Jaèle, *Waiting for Débora, the People's invocation (vocal score, Ricordi, 1922, p. 16).*

Similarities between the two works can also be identified in their final acts: both start with an orchestral prelude (very short in Pizzetti's opera) recalling a storm; and both close with a celebratory chorus, alternating homophonic and polyphonic textures, a characteristic that received considerable attention from their reviewers.[54]

According to the available source material, Nielsen and Pizzetti never met. Their personalities were very different. Pizzetti, like his dramas, was thoroughly serious, while Nielsen had a flair for humour, evident both in his letters and his music. But at least in *Saul and David*, this lightness is totally absent, so that Nielsen here, like Smareglia in *La Falena*, anticipated what Salvetti called 'the tragic hieraticness of Ildebrando da Parma'.[55] Nielsen's initial intentions to 'learn from Italians' did not prevent him from thinking outside the box and creating a work that, without being directly influenced by local composers, parallels the line that runs from the noir dramas of the 1880s and 1890s through *La Falena*, the tragic and larger-than-life story portrayed in *Débora e Jaèle*. And while in other respects the similarities exist only in the conception of a 'tragic drama' and the occasional use of modal colour, we can reasonably maintain that Nielsen anticipated some of the aesthetic tendencies and musical characteristics that would later be fully expressed in Pizzetti's work.

It is tempting to imagine Nielsen working on a similar opera in the 1920s, the period of his stylistic maturity. But it is difficult to believe he would have chosen another tragic subject, given the success of his comic opera, *Maskarade,* and the direction the rest of his music took from the *Wind Quintet* onwards. Most of his works from the 1920s are notable for expressing a special kind of musical humour, alternating with more 'serious episodes'. That is particularly the case in the Sixth Symphony, where the title of the third movement, 'Proposta seria' might equally well apply to the first, whereas that of the second, 'Humoreske', could also refer to the fourth. It is true that after the drama and gravitas of the Fifth Symphony, the irony expressed by the Sixth, sometimes caustic and sometimes more cheerful, led to a new type of composition in which the tragic (or better, the serious) and the comic existed side by side. The duality expressed by the Fifth-Sixth Symphony pairing is in this sense the same as that between *Saul and David* and *Maskarade*, whose comedy offers food for thought on more than one occasion.[56] It is

54 The high level of Pizzetti's choruses is also documented by Waterhouse and Gatti: 'An outstanding feature of most Pizzetti operas (and the main saving grace of some of the weaker ones) is his richly imaginative, often highly dramatic choral writing' – John C. G. Waterhouse and G. M. Gatti, 'Pizzetti, Ildebrando', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 19, London 2001, 819.

55 Salvetti, 'Dal Verdi della maturità a Giacomo Puccini', 463.

56 See, for example, Daniel Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism*, Woodbridge 2010, 260-63, 280-93.

easier to imagine another opera of this kind than a larger-than-life drama such as *Saul and David.*

Looking at Nielsen's opera production, we are confronted by two totally different works, which offer the image of a composer who remained extremely receptive to his stylistic and aesthetic environment in spite of his musical independence. For this reason, different as they may be, the two works are both expressions of that eclecticism which was a substantial part of Nielsen's poetic thought, which aligned him with his contemporary European experiences in a way that goes beyond local or national traditions, and which demonstrates that even in an era of ideological nationalism, European musical language was assuming an increasingly international character. Nielsen's *Saul and David* may be seen as the first, monumental example of this utterly personal and individual musical syncretism.

A B S T R A C T

In this essay, I focus on the music-cultural context in which Carl Nielsen's *Saul and David* (1899–1901) was composed, as Nielsen approached the operatic genre for the first time. This will cast new light on his independence and originality, but also offer the possibility for some seemingly unlikely comparisons, revealing that the work is more tightly integrated with Nielsen's broader European musical experience than has previously seemed – especially as an alternative to naturalism. I therefore consider the Italian context before, during and after the rise of *verismo*, focusing particularly on the anti-naturalism debate, to which *Saul og David* also belongs. Nielsen's work follows a path that parallels the shift from the so-called noir dramas of the 1880s to the work of Ildebrando Pizzetti, via the almost completely unknown operas of Antonio Smareglia. Unusual as it may be, I believe that this comparison will support the idea of a composer who, while working in the genre of musical drama, was in constant dialogue with his European contemporaries.

NIELSEN AND GADE

Landmarks of Musical Denmarks

By Karsten Eskildsen

Where did it all come from? This is a fair question not only in relation to Nielsen but also to most artists. So where did Nielsen collect all his skills, ideas and ambitions? For decades, Danish musical tradition has had it that young Nielsen was a country lad who through his own will, professional musicianship at the military band in Odense, and three years at Copenhagen Conservatoire was able in his maturity to transform the folk music experience of his childhood into mastery and universal art. This narrative relies partly on readings of Nielsen's justly renowned autobiography[1]. This is a highly personal account of his youth, and not surprisingly it leaves out many details that have been unfolded in recent years through archival research. For instance, we now understand the full extent of the support he was given by the retired Odense-merchant, Jens Georg Nielsen, and his wife, Marie.[2] We also know that Nielsen already in his Odense years, 1879-1883, when playing in the military orchestra, was musically very ambitious: he managed to buy a piano, he took violin lessons, and he wrote his own music, including an entire string quartet, which he brought with him to Copenhagen sometime in 1883 and showed to Niels W. Gade, Denmark's internationally renowned composer and director of the Conservatoire. This was a quartet he was quite proud of in later life, although he recognised that it was a juvenile work, noting that there was 'no originality there, but it's fresh and alive'.[3] The work was important enough for him to keep throughout his life, and it is included in the complete edition of his works.[4]

1 'Min fynske Barndom' (hereafter MfB), orig. pub. Copenhagen 1927; Eng. trans. as 'My Childhood', London 1953.

2 Nielsen himself mentioned the fact in a newspaper interview as early as 9 November 1905 – see *Samtid*, 59 – and it was first published in Gerhard Lynge, *Danske Komponister i det 20. Aarhundredes Begyndelse*, Copenhagen 1917, 214.

3 MfB, Martins Forlag, 15th edition, Copenhagen 1976, 183.

4 CNU IV/1, 59-77.

What was Nielsen's inspiration, and what kind of role models did he have? There is a string of important people that he met on his musical path in his youth: his father and his fellow country musicians, including the fiddler and schoolteacher, Christian Larsen, who had some professional training experience, some of his own colleagues in the military orchestra in Odense, and the organist and cantor at St. Knud's Church, Carl Larsen. But arriving in Copenhagen was quite another matter. And Nielsen of course knew this beforehand, because 'this other matter' was the very reason he made the transition.

Of course, there are many threads of background, inspiration, personal relations, finance, teaching, and playing music that must be picked up and identified in order to see how they all merged together in the mind of the young Nielsen. This article proposes to follow just one of them: his encounter and experiences from meeting – and having as a teacher – the most important Danish composer at the time of his musical education and earliest professional years: Niels W. Gade.

Nielsen and the Copenhagen Conservatoire

First and foremost, we know of Nielsen's first encounter with Gade from his own accounts, in MfB and elsewhere,[5] but also on this matter Nielsen's recollections are not precisely accurate. In MfB he states that without anyone knowing, apart from his superior officer, Captain Jacobsen, and his very important Funen benefactor, the member of parliament (and future prime minister) Klaus Berntsen,[6] he went to Copenhagen in May 1883 in order to meet the director of the Conservatoire, Niels W. Gade, and also its leading violin teacher, Valdemar Tofte. In Nielsen's account in a letter from March 1895,[7] however, he states that in fact *nobody* knew about his Copenhagen trip except for his superior officer. The reason was that even though the Funen and Odense benefactors had encouraged him to apply for the Conservatoire, they were also uncertain as to the young man's real talent. Therefore, he simply went to present himself to Gade and to Tofte. Even in a letter to Berntsen from 1905,[8] Nielsen claims that nobody knew about it, but according to his accounts in 'Recollections of Gade'

5 As in further autobiographical sketches, such as the manuscript for a biographical account in Lynge *Danske Komponister*; a short autobiographical account on receiving a royal knighthood 1913; a remark in an interview in *Berlingske Tidende*, 26 November 1927; and Nielsen's contribution to William Behrend (ed.). *Recollections of Niels W. Gade*, Copenhagen 1930. All four accounts in *Samtid*, 49-50; 168; 456; 536 respectively.

6 Berntsen himself describes the matter in his autobiography, where he argues that he in fact persuaded Gade to meet Nielsen – see Klaus Berntsen, *Erindringer*, Copenhagen 1923, vol. 2, 142-44.

7 Letter of 11 March 1895 to William Behrend, CNB I, 407.

8 Letter of 3 March 1905 to Klaus Berntsen, CNB II, 480.

and quite convincingly in MfB, Berntsen was part of the plan, enabling Nielsen with a letter of introduction, and during their meeting, Gade also referred to a previous conversation with Berntsen in Copenhagen.

In the two published and rather late accounts, MfB (1927) and 'Recollections of Gade' (1930), of this first encounter with Gade, Nielsen set the chronology to May 1883. Thus, he became quite persistent, even though he was obviously mistaken! He may have been somewhat uncertain as to the chronology, because in a much earlier letter from November 1901,[9] and in this letter alone, the time is set as 'the autumn' of 1884 [sic!]. We do not know of any military records of his leave, but Nielsen's vivid account in MfB (and 'Recollections of Gade') of his first encounter with the city of Copenhagen quite clearly define the trip to sometime between September and October 1883. He describes in some detail the hurdy-gurdy in the streets because of the visit of the Emperor of Russia, Tsar Alexander III.[10] The tsar and his Danish born empress, Maria Feodorovna, daughter of King Christian IX,[11] were crowned and anointed on 27 May 1883, and the already by then imperial couple had no chance for a quick excursion to Denmark. Probably the journey to Denmark later that year may already have been planned, because a cruise across the Baltic was no easy day trip: the Emperor and his Empress arrived in Copenhagen on Thursday 30 August onboard the imperial yacht *Derzhava*, with a crew of more than 200 men, including a musical band of 50,[12] and stayed at the Danish royal castle in Fredensborg[13] for six weeks before returning to St. Petersburg on Thursday 11 October. During the stay, the imperial couple passed through downtown Copenhagen on several occasions, including the days of arrival and departure and at least Tuesday 11 September, Tuesday 18 September, and Thursday 4 October.[14] So, Nielsen's personal recollection of the events must refer to one these five dates.

The Russian visit was of course carefully planned, and the logistics involved considerably more than sailing on the *Derzhava*. During the stay, royalty from the United Kingdom and Greece also came to Fredensborg, including the Prince of Wales, who had married another of King Christian IX's daughters, Alexandra, and King George of Greece, who was the second son of the Danish king. The background for all this goes beyond the scope of this article, but these weeks in the early autumn

9 Letter of 6 November 1901 to Angul Hammerich, CNB II, 226.

10 MfB, 184.

11 Born as Princess Dagmar of Denmark, 26 November 1847.

12 Some sources mention 65 musicians and 15 choir singers, but according to the newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* from 8 September 1883, a collection of 50 musicians entertained guests at Fredensborg Castle.

13 C. 40 km north of Copenhagen.

14 According to accounts in more Danish newspapers, such as *Berlingske Tidende.*

of 1883 have become known in Danish history as 'the Fredensborg Days', hosted by 'the father-in-law of Europe', King Christian IX. Along with the principal guests, these days brought with them a number of royalties – from the Russian court alone six grand dukes and duchesses – the total royal group consisting of 32 individuals, as depicted on Laurits Tuxen's colossal Fredensborg painting.[15] It may have been a somewhat informal gathering, but it also included political meetings, e.g. with the British prime minister William Gladstone, who made a holiday cruise to Copenhagen and met both the Tsar and the Russian ambassador to the United Kingdom.[16]

Thus, Nielsen's first meeting with Gade took place during these historic days. Nielsen's accounts are well known from MfB, and it is very understandable that in his personal retrospect they are more occupied with impressions of Gade than with the royal events that mostly went on outside Copenhagen. It is also no surprise that these accounts vary, leaving behind the essence that Gade turned the pages of the *Andante* of the young Nielsen's D-minor quartet and finished the visit by complimenting Nielsen's sense of form. However, it is interesting how Gade reacted to Nielsen's outspoken wish to enter the Conservatoire. In most of Nielsen's accounts, Gade concluded that the young man could enrol provided that Valdemar Tofte accepted his violin playing. The accounts vary on the matter of which of the two Nielsen visited first. In the late accounts, MfB and 'Recollections', he had already played to Tofte[17] before visiting Gade, whereas in earlier – and shorter – ones, he only stated that Gade asked him to go and play to Tofte.[18] The chronology of the two visits may not be important, but there is a striking parallel between Nielsen's memory of the two men's evaluation; both seem to have told him that he had the necessary qualifications for entering the conservatory, and that he would be accepted, provided only the other agreed.

In MfB and 'Recollections', Nielsen felt 'confident' about his acceptance, and in an interview about the forthcoming publication of MfB he even stated that Tofte 'promised' him to this effect.[19] It is only fair to wonder why Nielsen in these accounts never hinted at the two men mentioning the Conservatoire's formal audition, tradi-

15 The Royal Reception Rooms, Christiansborg Palace, Copenhagen (5 x 7 m, 1883-1886).

16 Gladstone and his wife made the virgin voyage of the vessel 'Pembroke Castle', accompanied by its owner (and liberal MP) Sir Donald Currie, and the poet laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson – a voyage allegedly much to the displeasure of Queen Victoria.

17 Valdemar Tofte's address is given in *Kraks Vejviser* 1884 as Rigensgade 21, København, but we do not know whether Nielsen played to him at his home or elsewhere.

18 Letter to Berntsen – see n. 8.

19 Interview in *Berlingske Tidende* 26 November 1927, *Samtid*, 456.

tionally held in early December. In a letter to William Behrend from 1895,[20] Nielsen stated that having been reassured concerning his entrance into the Conservatory, he went back to Funen, left the military, passed the audition and began his studies 'soon after'. Also, at the very end of MfB, he briefly interpolated the audition in December between the intensely described father-son showdown and the visionary summing up of his childhood in Funen.[21]

There was indeed an audition on 2 December 1883 for free places at the conservatory for the following year, but evidence of Nielsen's participation cannot be verified. From 1 January 1884, the Conservatoire was granted a yearly state subsidy of DKK 10,000, including DKK 6,000 in principle financing no fewer than 27 non-paying students, each with a yearly budget of DKK 224.[22] The institution formerly having a little under 40 students, this would obviously have been too burdensome an expansion, and from January 1884, the beginning of Nielsen's education, a total of 50 students in all three year groups were enrolled.[23] According to the institution's records,[24] 23 applied for free scholarships, of whom eleven actually began their education after New Year 1884. The audition register identifies the teachers present as Mr. Frederik Rung, Mr. Bondesen, and P.J. Paulli, but the results of the auditions are not systematically recorded, accompanied only occasionally by a written remark by Gade himself (who obviously was also present, but not entered in the register), for instance recommending that a particular applicant should be 'asked to apply again in six months'. But the records of this audition in December 1883 are without any trace of Nielsen.

However, Nielsen is mentioned in another Conservatoire register: 'Student entrance 2 January 1884',[25] alongside another six students actually enrolled for the year 1884. It is unclear whether a special or alternative audition was made for these students, but probably there was not, because two students on the same list were already listed for the audition in December. Furthermore, another three students appear

20 See n. 7.

21 The short statement about the audition and the entrance at the Conservatoire is in Nielsen's manuscript for MfB, followed by personal thoughts of what it all came to mean for his life. These lines were erased in the published book – see the annotated edition of MfB, Odense 2015, 150.

22 The value is hard to assess in modern currencies, but DKK 224 was until 1884 the yearly tuition fee. A careful estimate corresponds to c. DKK 60,000 (Euro 8,000).

23 Calculated by counting listed students in Angul Hammerich: *Kjøbenhavns Musikkonservatorium 1867-1892* (cop. 1892), statistic listings made by J.D. Bondesen, composer and teacher at the Conservatoire 1883-1901.

24 In Rigsarkivet (National Archives), Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium, Students/curriculum, Register of admittance (1884-1950) 6: 1884–1894.

25 In Rigsarkivet (National Archives) Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium, Students/curriculum, Student entrance (1866-1885) 382: 1866–1885.

during the curriculum records for 1884 without being listed in either register. One may easily get the impression that the management of the Conservatoire was not exactly streamlined, and we look in vain for any published curriculum, in contrast to most Danish grammar schools at the time, not to mention the Copenhagen University. But the Conservatoire was not authorised by law, and despite stately subsidies, it remained in principle a private institution until 1949.[26] Furthermore, in 1883-1884, Gade was still the supreme head of the institution, having held that position since its foundation in 1867, probably organising matters more or less as they had been since then. A small piece of evidence for this management may be seen in the Conservatoire's Prospectus[27], a sheet with short, but nice outlines of disciplines, subjects, levels and teachers. But the Prospectus was printed in 1870, and according to the archives, it was still in use – with handwritten updates – at least until 1881, apparently without need for a new edition.

We cannot finally conclude whether the young Nielsen in fact attended any audition, but he most probably did not. And from all the evidence that Nielsen himself has given us of his meetings with Gade and Tofte during his short stay in Copenhagen in September-October, he was no doubt at the same time offered a place at the Conservatoire on the basis of the two men's mutual agreement. It was as a fact and by tradition in their power to do so. Therefore, any audition in December would have been a pure formality and moreover a waste of time for somebody Gade wanted to welcome at the Conservatoire and who would have had to spend time and money for another two-day (at least) trip to Copenhagen. The register of 'Student entrance 2 January 1884' not only mentions Nielsen, but also states that 'C.A. Nielsen is 18 and a half years old, comes from Odense, has learned the violin from cantor Larsen for one year, and taught himself the piano', adding 'Violin. Son of housepainter Nielsen near Odense'. Whether these remarks testify to a kind of audition or rather to an interview on arrival, we do not know. In any case, nowhere is there to be found the word 'accepted' or something similar.

Sometime during Nielsen's first year at the Conservatoire, all students were evaluated by their teachers (this year not including Gade), and besides the overall nice reviews: violin (Tofte) 'now progressing well'; piano (Matthison-Hansen)[28] 'hard-working, progressing well', and in music theory (Rosenhoff)[29] 'skilful, hard-working', at the

26 Henrik Engelbrecht: *Musik og uddannelse: Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium i 150 år*, Copenhagen 2017, 15.

27 Rigsarkivet (National Archives), Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium, Arkivserie: Almindelige korrespondancesager, Løbenummer 4, Indhold 1866–1919.

28 Gottfred Matthison-Hansen (1832-1909), composer, organist, piano teacher at the Conservatoire 1867-1905, and director 1900-1906.

29 Orla Rosenhoff (1844-1905), teacher of harmony and counterpoint at the Conservatoire 1881-1892.

top of the same page in the same hand as 'Mr. C.A. Nielsen' is noted 'Violin (Leonard)'. For this first year evaluation, Nielsen played an Etude by Fiorillo, so the indication of Leonard may very well be hinting at a piece by Hubert Léonard, which according to MfB[30] Nielsen played to Tofte on their first meeting in 1883. The actual meaning remains unclear, but it may have been recorded as a kind of 'point of departure' for the first year of study. In any case, whoever made this comment had evidently heard the piece before, so no doubt it was written by Tofte, referring to a previous performance, either privately in September-October or repeated at an informal audition.

Becoming Carl Nielsen

Nielsen himself stated that he did not see much of Gade during the first two years at the Conservatoire, which would be quite in line with the Prospectus that made Gade responsible for teaching music theory to third year students only. In Nielsen's accounts of these classes, the 69-year old Gade did not seem very ambitious as a teacher, and the students did not receive much exact learning. The lessons appeared to be strangely unorganised and inconsistent, and in Nielsen's memory, Gade often looked at his 'beautiful gold watch', indicating that he may have had more important matters to attend to, which – one might add – is not exactly conducive to any kind of tuition. According to the Prospectus, music theory at the third year included musical form and analysis, composition,[31] word-setting in vocal music, instrumentation, and playing from score.[32] But according to Nielsen, Gade seems to have been more interested in presenting European cultural history including the great personalities and important historical facts.[33] However, at some point, Nielsen must presumably have had the opportunity to present some of his own work to Gade, as Gade must have taken time to look at it.

At least we know that Gade was fully aware of Nielsen's studies, for not only was he the head of a rather small institution, he was also present at all Nielsen's three annual examinations. Although Gade's handwriting cannot be identified in the register for the first examination in 1884, he certainly witnessed the other teachers' evaluations that year, as mentioned above. For the second year, Gade himself inserted in the examination register at least one remark concerning Nielsen: 'Very good and hard-working',[34] and to the fine general assessment of his

30 This piece may indeed have been by Léonard, even if Nielsen in MfB remembers the title incorrectly: 'Souvenir de Boulogne' for violin solo is not by Léonard but by Charles de Bériot (1802-1870).

31 Composition only in this year of the curriculum.

32 *Formlære og Analyse. – Compositionsopgaver. – Textbehandling i vocale Compositioner. – Instrumentation. – Partiturspil.*

33 'Recollections', in *Samtid*, 538.

34 Danish: 'Udm[mærket] flittig'.

violin-playing: 'Progressing well in all respects – fine tone, beautiful trills, purity, and nice bow'; the addition of 'beautiful execution' is probably also made by Gade. At the final exam in the late 1886, Nielsen was highly praised for his violin playing:[35] 'Extremely clever and bright. Full tone. Nice staccato. Musical understanding. Musically gifted.'[36] And this time Gade, being the current teacher of music theory, went so far as to state 'Musical talent. Has composed a string quartet, revealing no small composing ability (NWG)'.[37]

Even though he did not recall learning much from the master, the young and bright Nielsen no doubt took a keen interest in Gade's interpretation of European culture, adding to the foundation of his lifelong focus on European history, philosophy and cultural traditions. Admittedly he never made a connection between these early impressions and his own occupation with the 'classics' of art and literature – and even with Greek philosophy – but it may hardly be an exaggeration to conclude, that Nielsen carried ideas with him from the time spent with Gade. In order to unfold his artistic ambitions, no-one represented European culture in Denmark more than Gade. In the following works Nielsen did not so much interpret the actual contents of Gade's lessons, but he surely benefitted from them in the unfolding his own ideas within a Classical framework:

- *Hymnus Amoris* (1896) was allegedly inspired by Titian and deliberately used the Latin language to carry the content, although Axel Olrik's original text was in Danish
- *Saul and David*, opera (1902) took its plot of youth meeting old power from the Old Testament
- *Helios,* Overture for orchestra (1903) takes its idea from the god-like representation of the Sun in Greek mythology

35 Nielsen played the first movement of Bernard Molique's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 5 in A minor, Op. 21. At the final exam sometime late 1886 (dates not recorded), he played Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, first movement, and received similar positive comments, only shorter.

36 *Særdeles flink og opvakt. Fuld tone. Godt staccato. Musikalsk opfattelse. Musikalsk begavet*.

37 The identity of this string quartet is unknown. It may be connected to the *Andante tranquillo e scherzo*, first performed in September 1887 or to the two movements from a Quartet in F major, printed in CNU IV, add. 9-10. But if these movements are connected to Nielsen's remark in a letter to Emilie 24-25 December 1887 about a quartet that he had 'recently completed' (CNB I/56; CNL, 29), they do not match Gade's statement about a quartet eighteen months earlier. If in fact related to any known fragment, this quartet from 1886 may be associated to the student-like (and Beethoven-based) movement, CNU IV, add. 11.

- *Saga Dream* (1908) is based on the Icelandic epos, The Saga of Njal, from the 13th century
- *Pan and Syrinx* (1918): another Greek theme
- Concerto for Flute and Orchestra (1926) – its inspiration can hardly be understood without including the idea of 'Arcadia', the classical tradition of an unspoiled Utopia – in the Renaissance and later abstractly located in Tuscany

In addition, especially in the last fifteen years of his life Nielsen often relied stylistically on the (pre-)classical tradition of musical forms such as above all the principle of variations (*Theme with Variations* as the *for* Finale of Symphony No. 6, and *Prelude, Theme and Variations* for Violin Solo, CNW 46) and towards the very end of his life the *Three Motets* and *Commotio* for organ.

Nielsen's inspiration from the main European traditions is rather more obvious than with most of his Danish contemporaries, who to a higher degree and quite in line with contemporary national romanticism tended to find subjects and ideas in Danish cultural traditions, national history and legends, Nordic mythology, and the fairy tale world of Hans Christian Andersen – for instance Louis Glass' *Koldinghus*, *Elverhøj* and *Skjoldungeæt*, Fini Henriques' *Vølund Smed*[38] and *The Little Mermaid* (ballet music), and August Enna's nowadays best-known music, the opera *The Little Match Girl*.

After Nielsen left the Conservatoire at the end of 1886, Gade would for the remaining four years of his life still have been aware of his talented student. He could not have known how far the young man would progress, but as we will see, Nielsen did his utmost to keep Gade's attention. Not only to Nielsen, but to most musicians and musical audiences, Gade was still a landmark not only of musical Denmark, but also of the nation. After the devastating defeat against Germany on 1864, and after the death in 1875 of the celebrated Hans Christian Andersen, Denmark did not have much claim to fame and glory. Therefore, even though Gade did not travel abroad after 1882, his international reputation was widely respected at home. Whenever his music was performed or his management of concerts in the Copenhagen Music Society was commented on by the critics, there was a 'golden thread' of respect and overall sympathy – despite some specific criticism concerning both some of his own compositions and his responsibility for the repertoire in the Music Society as well as at the Conservatoire.[39] There are many examples, but one instance from 1886 may illustrate the musical atmosphere in Copenhagen. The Music Society's fourth subscription concert

38 'Kolding Castle', 'The Elves' Hill', 'Heirs of King Skjold', and 'Vølund, the Blacksmith', the last two being based on prehistoric Danish legends.

39 See Inger Sørensen, *Niels W. Gade, et dansk verdensnavn*, Copenhagen 2002, 262ff.

on 11 February 1886 included Brahms's Symphony No. 3 and Gade's *Frühlings-Fantasie*. Angul Hammerich was a renowned and respected critic of the *Nationaltidende*, and his writings were and remain worth reading; yet he stated that Brahms's symphony did not have 'much impact on the audience', whereas Gade's vocal work 'swept people off their feet', and on his own behalf he made it clear that this music 'represents the divine power of inspiration – universal and for ever valid'.[40] Nielsen was of course aware of other people's criticisms, but Gade was still too important a person in Danish musical organisations to be ignored, and Nielsen certainly did not do that.

Nielsen's musical life, 1887-1889

All in all, we do not know very much about Nielsen's life from the end of MfB and his settling in Copenhagen 1883/1884 until he obtained his position as violinist with the Royal Orchestra in 1889 and the following year left for his grand European tour, including meeting his future wife, Anne Marie, in Paris. Luckily, however, since around 2000 we have gained much more insight into his life in the years 1887-1889, due to the edition of Nielsen's letters[41] and especially their unveiling of his romance with Emilie Demant Hansen. Several of his letters to her include vital sources also for his relations with Gade. However, when meeting Emilie in the summer of 1887, she was 14 and he was 22, and she lived in the northern part of Jutland, a whole day's journey from Copenhagen. Nielsen's professional life therefore went on in Copenhagen, however little we may know of it. From the beginning of 1887, Nielsen was a trained musician and had to make a living from it. Besides still having the financial backup of Jens and Marie Nielsen, we know that he was occasionally paid by amateur pianists to play chamber music with them.[42] And from the famous first performance of his Suite for Strings in 1888, we know that he was at least occasionally employed at Tivoli's concert hall orchestra, conducted and organised since 1873 by Balduin Dahl.[43] The Music Society's orchestra should have been another place to work for a young talented violinist, especially given that its conductor, Niels W. Gade, had been aware of him since the early days at the Conservatoire. But only one single instance of Nielsen playing with this orchestra is documented: according to Nielsen, Gade one day pulled

40 *[Musikken] repræsenterer Inspirationens guddommelige Magt, den algyldige og evige*. *Nationaltidende*, 12 February 1886.

41 CNB I includes 19 letters from Nielsen to Emilie Demant, written between 17 September 1887 and 26 March 1890. See also CNL, 23-77. Emilie was born Emilie Demant Hansen and in 1911 married as Emilie Demant Hatt.

42 CNB, I, 44. The letter only mentions one instance, but this occupation was widespread, and no doubt Nielsen had more jobs like it.

43 See Knud Ketting, 'Carl Nielsen and Tivoli', *Carl Nielsen Studies* 1 (2003), 83. Nielsen had supposedly deputised in the orchestra since 1886, though no documentary evidence survives.

him aside during an orchestra rehearsal to tell him that he had not been awarded that year's Ancker Travel Grant but at the same time promising him the following year's grant.[44]

This rehearsal was of course no isolated single incident, and it is sufficiently documented that Gade really took an interest in Nielsen and as a matter of course employed him on more orchestral occasions. On a professional level, they met more times, including when Nielsen was working on his Suite for Strings in 1888. As has been comprehensively documented, Nielsen made decisive alterations in the Suite's last movement after consulting Gade, who had seen the music and blamed Nielsen for making 'too much a mess'![45] When Nielsen in fact received the Ancker Travel Grant for 1890, he, preparing for his departure, went to visit Gade on 2 September, the day before he embarked for Berlin. This visit made a profound impact on the young composer. We know of this last encounter with Gade from a short entry the very same day in Nielsen's diary and from the more extensive account in 'Recollections' in 1930. Nielsen went to see Gade at his summer residence in Fredensborg north of Copenhagen and in Nielsen's own words (1930), it turned out to be an 'unforgettable experience'. Gade invited Nielsen to lunch with him, his wife, and his mother-in-law, the awe-inspiring Madam Erslev. After lunch, the two men took a long walk in Fredensborg Gardens, and on Nielsen's departure Gade presented him with introductory letters to major musical personalities in Germany. Furthermore, Madam Erslev gave him a rose as a souvenir of this special day. Of course, it would have been wonderful to know what the two composers were discussing during their walk in the gardens, but Nielsen only noted that this day signified a 'certain tone' to him, because it turned out to be the last day he spent with this 'rare man'.[46]

We know much more of another similar meeting in January 1889, where Nielsen paid Gade a visit after his first application for the Ancker Travel Grant. Nielsen simply wanted to plead his cause and discuss the matter with Gade, who was on the board of the grant. This at least testifies to Nielsen's ambitions, and even more so because he later actually managed to include his String Quintet in the programme of the Chamber Music Society on 13 February primarily in order to give Gade the

44 In an interview in *Ekstrabladet* published 9 November 1905, see *Samtid*, 59. The rehearsals in question were most likely for a concert on 14 March 1889 (the grant's decision was made public on 17 March) – even though Nielsen remembers that they were rehearsing 'a Schumann symphony'. In fact Schumann was not on the March programme, and at the previous concert, on 13 December 1888 Schumann was indeed programmed, but represented by the Manfred Ouverture. Nielsen only applied for the 1889 grant on 20 December 1888.

45 Peter Hauge, 'Carl Nielsens første opus', *Fund og Forskning*, 35 (1996), 223-237.

46 CNB I, 112, and 'Recollections...' in *Samtid*, 539.

opportunity to hear it.[47] It also testifies to Gade's importance in the eyes of Nielsen: he tried solely to influence Gade, though the chairman of the Ancker (music) board was the by then 84-year old composer Hartmann.[48] To Nielsen, Gade was the one who mattered, and quite simply the one he knew better. Nielsen writes extensively about the meeting in a letter from 17 January 1889 to Emilie, and it is in many ways a description of both composers at the time, pointing forwards to Nielsen's future ambitions as a composer, and retrospectively describing Gade's self-perception as an artist over the previous more than 40 years:

> Yesterday I was at Gade's place. He was having lunch when I arrived, and so I had the chance to look around his room; it's a real artist's apartment, with reproductions of Raphael and Rembrandt,[49] and drawings and sketches by famous artists living and dead. On his writing desk there was the opening of a work for chorus and orchestra, and around it lay loose leaves with little sketches and isolated melodies. Finally Gade came in, clearing his throat loudly, as is his wont. I told him that I had sent in an application for the Scholarship and was there to ask the professor to take an interest in me in connection with the decision. First he began to get hot under the collar; he said that everybody these days wants to be a composer and that it would be much better if one were to take on the task of working for the dissemination of classical works to the general public; but instead everyone nowadays wants to make their mark and put themselves and their shoddy produce on display. So I said that it wasn't ambition that drove me to compose, and that the proof of this was that I wrote exclusively large works of a serious nature, which no publisher could profit by publishing for the time being, and that I could not therefore garner honour and glory from the public at large. He liked that and said: 'Yes, yes! You seem to have really serious ambitions. One should always occupy oneself with big projects; any dilettante or fool these days can write songs and little piano pieces.' Then we spoke for a long time about music and art, and it was so interesting. He also got around to religion, and he asked whether I had any interest in the modern faith; to which I answered that I couldn't deny it. Then you should have heard him. He rushed up and down in the room and fumed. [According to him] it was all accursed filth, and I, as a

47 Whether Gade in fact was present at the concert, we do not know, even though it is stated as a fact in Meyer and Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen I*, 74.

48 Claus Røllum-Larsen, 'Det Anckerske Legats rejsestipendier for komponister 1861-1915', *Danish Yearbook of Musicology*, 30 (2002), 75-87.

49 Raphael (Rafaelo Santi, 1483-1520), Italian painter and architect; Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669), Dutch painter and graphic artist.

> composer, should damned well know that there was something divine, something spiritual within us, which could not die. I had to draw in my horns and said that it was possibly just a phase that everyone has in their youth. Then he calmed down. He showed me several sketches for new works, which I was obviously happy to see./ Finally he had to go. I helped him on with his frock coat and then we went downstairs together. ... Then we went together into town, and I can't deny that I got a strong and lasting impression of him. I have never been especially enthusiastic about Gade as a person, but now I realized that he is a great and original mind and immensely interesting.[50]

This account is almost an outline of the two Danish composers' place in history, and altogether it is like a crystal prism of the two composers' previous and future careers. The beginning is more or less a follow-up to Nielsen's account of the lessons in music history at the Conservatoire; like Gade's teaching, so his study is also filled with the great personalities of European culture. In the following, and in Nielsen's words, Gade shows off his patriarchal prejudice towards contemporary music, almost beforehand including the young composer. However, Nielsen easily evades the indirect rebuke, stating that he only writes music that no publisher dares to publish, thus declaring that he is not 'in it for the money'! And we may only wonder how Nielsen carried Gade's following remark with him – after the meeting and far beyond: 'You should always engage in big tasks'! At least for the following c.25 years, this became Nielsen's identity as a composer, in his own mind as well in the eyes of the public. Until 1915, he primarily wrote symphonies, a violin concerto, string quartets, choral works, music for the theatre, and other orchestral works – all music on a large scale except for two early collections of piano pieces, four collections of songs (of which several are quite demanding), and very rarely, small pieces (really only the *Phantasy Pieces*, Op. 2, and the *Festive Prelude*). The extensive production from 1915 and beyond of popular songs may actually not be contradictory to this, if we simply regard them as together constituting a cohesive and totally new project. But that is a discussion beyond the scope of this article.

Gade the international composer

Maybe not surprisingly, the 72-year old Gade was not too keen on the music of contemporary composers: he found the musical milieu filled with unimportant songs and small piano pieces. In other words, music in Denmark was not what he hoped it would be. And he could hardly think of anyone but himself who for 40 years had worked as much to develop the musical life of his native country, especially in his

50 CNL, 41-44.

capacity of musical organiser and conductor, but also – as will be discussed below – as a composer. However, there is really no evidence to support the idea of Gade being a disappointed old man. Though not having conducted abroad for seven years, in 1889 he kept up many duties and was still principal of the Conservatoire, head of the Music Society, organist at the Church of Holmen, and engaged in all sorts of tasks, such as being on the board of the Ancker Grant, corresponding extensively and internationally, planning new editions with Breitkopf and Härtel, and – as we have seen – still meeting and counselling young musicians.

All in all, Gade was and may also have quite rightly regarded himself as above the everyday competition, gossip, and envy of the Copenhagen musical life. This is also a decisive difference between him and Nielsen, who precisely at this time now had to forge for himself a place in this very same musical environment as well as being a composer in his own right. An important part of Gade's significance in Denmark during the last decades of his life rested on his well-known international reputation, founded in his Leipzig years, 1843-1848. Back in Denmark in the 1850s, this short, but important period of his career became an integral part of consolidating his national position, for instance in developing the Music Society. Apart from his personal tragedy of losing his young wife and soon after also a small daughter,[51] the 1850s became a decade of complete success – including a new marriage and more children – in which his music was repeatedly performed without delay, whether premiered at home or abroad. Moreover, his reputation abroad as well as in Denmark still went back to the profile of his impressive breakthrough in Leipzig: as a classic romantic with a Danish/Nordic tone to it. In other words, in Denmark he had the accepted role of defining Denmark in musical terms, while in Germany he was still seen as the young master of original and authentic music from the North. Producing a large number of piano pieces and songs – occasionally in collaboration with his good friend, Hans Christian Andersen – intended for private use, he quickly became a household name throughout middle- and upper-class Denmark, thus like Andersen being a cultural bridge between Danish identity and the cultural world of Europe.

Gade's Danish legacy

Already in his own life-time and almost conclusively in the 20th century, it has been widely considered that Gade so to speak lost his artistic grip after returning to Denmark and especially with *The Elf King's Daughter* (*Elverskud*) behind him. Of course, this

51 Gade's first wife, Sophie Gade (1831-1855), was the first-born child of the composer J.P.E. Hartmann. Sophie and Niels W. Gade had twins on 20 May 1855, Felix and Emma, but sadly Emma died 24 October 1857, shortly before Gade's marriage to Mathilde Stæger (1833-1915).

is nothing more than a prejudice, and it would be futile to try to determine any loss of artistic competence or musical skills in the last symphonies or even more so in the large-scale choral works from the 1860s onwards. But from a modern 21st-century perspective, Gade's part in Danish cultural history may seem to show a lack of ability to take in and make the changes of society and historically-defined ideologies a living part of his art. Everybody agrees that his output from the 1840s is in many ways an integral and musical symbol of the romantic era, even with an original sound to it (especially in terms of melodic form and development). But once established in Leipzig also as a highly skilled conductor and organiser, his later music bears no trace whatsoever of the impressions of his own rather dramatic age. He simply composed new music, and the obvious differences between, for example, his Symphonies Nos. 3 (1847) and 4 (1850) cannot to any meaningful extent be attributed to his returning to Denmark.

There is of course a striking fact around Denmark's 'hour of destiny', the catastrophic defeat of 1864. There seems to be no evidence of Gade's personal reaction either to the growing bad news from the Danish-German confrontations or to the outcome of the military defeat and political consequences. In fact, in the dramatic year of 1864, we only know of two letters from Gade: one of them to Peter Heise in February, referring to the fact that the latter's song *Genoveva* had been performed at the Music Society 'despite its German text',[52] and the other in the autumn to his sister-in-law commenting on the Symphony No. 7 that was the outcome of the summer of 1864:

> As I know, you take an interest in what my Muse is doing, I can tell you that this summer she brought to me a new symphony; and accordingly, a happy thing: a fresh and cheerful symphony. In truth, it has to do neither with war nor peace, and even less with politics, but I am certain that it will nevertheless be interesting for you to hear it.[53]

The devastating war may not have been as far from Gade's mind as he claimed. At least it is not too difficult to hear what we might call 'Echoes of Dybbøl'[54] in the Andante, but perhaps also to hear some kind of renewed determination in the rising theme of

52 Inger Sørensen (ed.), *Niels W. Gade og hans europæiske kreds*, vol. 2, Copenhagen 2008, 638.

53 Ibid., 648 (translated by the author).

54 Dybbøl: the site of the decisive battle in the war with Prussia, 18 April 1864 – 'Echoes' refers to Gade's sensational début with his concert overture, *Echoes of Ossian*, 1841.

the first movement. Even so, in the letter above he ostentatiously announces that the music does not represent anything beyond the music itself. In this, Gade was far from alone: Modern music history usually defines three lines of art music from c. 1850 onwards: the 'classical romanticism' based on, for example, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms, the national romanticism of, amongst others Smetana, Glinka and early Gade, and 'neoromanticism' identified above all with Liszt and Wagner, both of whom explicitly added extra-musical content to their works: the former especially in his symphonic poems from the 1850s, and the latter of course with his operas, including the idea of German spirit in the cycle of *The Ring of the Nibelung* and after that a quest for Christian identity in *Parsifal*. In fact, these three lines were never isolated tracks, but were within reach for all composers in the second half of the 19th century. Brahms, for example, though apparently firmly rooted in the 'classical' tradition, wrote his *Triumphlied* (1871) openly paying tribute to the redefined Germany, and even Wagner seems to have intended to take up his younger ambitions of symphonic writing shortly before his sudden death at 69.[55]

Gade's mature ambitions

It can hardly be denied that Gade's 1864 Symphony No. 7 lies within the Mendelssohnian tradition, thus – with or without 'Echoes of Dybbøl' – presenting exactly an alternative to Denmark's political tragedy: in music, the healing of troubled souls can take place. Though Hans Christian Andersen in his letters and diary showed much more agony because of the war and also suffered a genuine artistic crisis, he returned to writing stories by insisting on a similar ambition: poetry and art defining an alternative to the sufferings of the world. This is the content of such stories as Andersen's first attempt after the breakdown, *The Will-o'-the-Wisps are in Town*, which defines the importance of poetry and inspiration, or the war-story *Golden Treasure*, about how art and love survive the atrocities of war.

However, despite 25 years of close association with both the classical-romantic tradition and the national romantic idea, Gade soon turned towards 'music of ideas' in the form of the 'dramatic poem'. He more or less invented the genre himself,[56] having already used it in *Comala* (Leipzig 1846), and now returning to it for *The Crusaders* (Copenhagen 1866) and *Kalanus* (Copenhagen 1869). Probably shortly after finishing *The Crusaders*, Gade decided to make it the final part of a trilogy. We do not know if at the time he already had ideas for the next two parts, but when *The Crusaders* was published in the winter of 1866/67, he had it marked as Opus 50, leaving opus 48 and

55 Article 'Wagner', in *Sohlmans musiklexikon*, Stockholm 1979, vol. 5, 728.

56 The genre before Gade is only known from a couple of forgotten works by Joseph Dreschler (*Rosa von Viterbo*, 1822) and Bernhard Klein (*Dido*, 1823).

49 for the two following – or in content rather: two preceding – works. While working on *Kalanus* in 1868, Gade finished the outline of the trilogy and explained it in a letter to his Swedish composer friend, Jacob Axel Josephson, in September: *Kalanus*, that he is just about to finish, will be the first part of the trilogy and is about 'paganism, where the longing for the true light senses as a clue in a single individual'; the second part – in 1868 still without a name, but when composed in 1874 called *Zion* – will take its theme from the history of Jews, 'where a people has learned about the promise'; and *The Crusaders* – in 1868, performed and published two years before – will form the trilogy's keystone, 'where the light has come into the world, but where suffering and perils on one side and temptations and illusions on the other often may lead from the right path until by the difficult and weary pilgrim's path you are brought to the heavenly Jerusalem'.[57]

Thus *The Crusaders* became the first step in what may be interpreted as Gade's artistic answer to his troubled times: a philosophical and epistemic build-up of ideas presenting a universal truth – no more, no less! By this, he forged a new identity as a Danish composer with an international background. Previously, he had the identity of a composer with a fine international career, thus making his outstanding position in Denmark more than legitimate. With these new 'dramatic poems', he set his ambitions as a composer and as a leading cultural personality in Denmark even higher. Separately, these became his largest works – only *Comala* has comparable dimensions – and with his trilogy, he had embarked on his largest project ever, vastly supplementing his Nordic identity and dismissing his Leipzig fame.

The qualities of *The Crusaders* are really beyond question, whereas *Kalanus* arguably has some drawbacks regarding the profile of the characters and perhaps also regarding the musical moods of certain parts. But still, these works could have secured Gade a unique position when offering the listeners this universal cognition, corresponding intimately with Gade's own Christian convictions. Nor did he later waver in this, as may be seen in Nielsen's account of their meeting in 1889. However, his ambitions were really contrary to the audience's expectations who always were looking for 'the old Gade', and thus this music was not able to make his philosophical and religious standpoint convincing as an artistic answer to the challenges of time, including the reconstruction of Danish identity in the years following 1864. On top of this, only a few years later, romanticism would no longer be considered a valid basis for artistic or philosophical thinking in Denmark, and the 'golden age', that had produced so many artists, writers and composers, was inevitably fading. More

57 Sørensen (ed.), *Niels W. Gade og hans europæiske kreds*,, vol. 2, 740 (Gade's underlining).

artists saw it coming, for instance Hans Christian Andersen, who still wrote stories until 1872 but published his last novel *Lucky Peer* in 1870, in fact summing up his poetics together with his life-long artistic ambitions. Like Andersen, Gade in *The Crusaders* and *Kalanus* (and *Zion* 1874) tried to overcome changing conditions by summoning all his creative skills and at the same time in the content of these works by enshrining his beliefs as a composer and as a person.

Nielsen and modernity

It is difficult to find or to create a comprehensive outline of what happened in Denmark during these years regarding literature, philosophy, and the whole mindset of the nation. Still, it is obvious that a number of developments – the Constitution of 1849, the defeat of 1864, the liberalisation of commerce, organising new rural enterprises, the popular movements, the upcoming of new classes etc. – together contributed to a new cultural environment, one that neither Gade nor Andersen found it easy to come to terms with. This new environment may be hard to define, but it has got a name: the Modern Breakthrough. The term is associated with Georg Brandes's'[58] university lectures in 1871, where he defined Danish literature of the past and highlighted new literary and ideological movements abroad, thereby pointing out what he saw as deficiencies in the cultural traditions of 19th-century Denmark. The present age no longer needed to define literature and art as ways of transcending into the 'blue flower of poetry'; now art was rather defined as being much more realistic and attaching itself to the real world, in other words making art – and the understanding of art – dependent on its exterior conditions.

This was the environment that the young Nielsen became part of. His personal background was so to speak the embodiment of Brandes's definition of contemporary realism. Though Gade was not born into a wealthy family, Nielsen's social conditions had been far worse, with no possibility of formal musical training until he won a place in the military music in Odense. And his further musical development was the result of his professional military life combined with adequate talent and youthful ambitions (and support from at least one financial source!). His own strong mind overcame the traditional scepticism of his family, and from his arrival at the Conservatoire in 1884, and nourished by fellow students and their educated and wealthier background, he opened up to the modern thinking of the Copenhagen intelligentsia. We do not know much about the religious life in his family home, but Nielsen's childhood memories bear no trace of anything in particular. From a

58 Georg Brandes (1842-1927), critic and scholar, theorist behind the 'Modern Breakthrough' of Danish culture.

Christmas letter to Emilie, in 1887, we learn that he was already on the 'modern side' in matters of religion, which in fact may be defined as being an atheist – although with an explicit respect for true believers. Discussing religion with Gade thirteen months later,[59] he was still a non-believer, and he stayed that way even after marrying the religiously more positive Anne Marie.

In this respect, Gade and Nielsen did not share personal values, but on the other hand, Nielsen – maybe unwittingly – lived to fulfil one of Gade's ambitions: to make music an ideological part of people's lives. Where *The Crusaders* and *Kalanus* did not reach the minds of the audience in time to offer a musical frame for understanding the secrets of life, Nielsen became the most important composer of his generation to interpret the big questions of his age. While a religious cantata was out of the question for young Nielsen, he turned to symbolically unfolding other big issues of life: love (the cantata *Hymnus Amoris*), the nature of man (the symphony *The Four Temperaments*), the life-giving daylight (*Helios*), and the nourishment of rest (the cantata *Sleep*).

Notwithstanding Gade and Nielsen's seven-year acquaintance in Copenhagen, as we have seen, they in fact lived in mutually estranged ages. Even so, meeting Gade, combined with the personal acquaintance with Gade's fame, work, and personality, still made a strong impact on Nielsen. In fact, Gade was the personification and to some extent a role model not only for an impressive musical career but also as regards what being an artist and a composer was all about. From an early age Nielsen was under the heavy influence of Gade's legacy, as may be seen from Nielsen's many musical tasks: besides composing, also conducting and organising, which in his eyes was the way a professional musician should be working. But above all, he carried on Gade's ambition on behalf of the importance of the symphonic genre. Never did Nielsen neglect Gade's encouragement to 'always to engage in big tasks'!

59 CNL, 41-44.

A B S T R A C T

The article describes, examines, and to some extent interprets the relationship between Nielsen and his 48-years-older teacher and colleague, Niels W. Gade. It includes a tidying-up of previous descriptions and biographical notes – including Nielsen's own – and highlights the professional connections between the two during the seven years they knew each other. Also, the article makes a comparison between the two with regard to their respective careers and ambitions: Gade as a romantic, and Nielsen on the brink of modernism. The article concludes that even though Nielsen dissociated himself from the Gade legacy at a young age, the older composer nevertheless became a role model with respect to artistic ambitions and to the demands of a composer with high standards.

LOUIS GLASS AND CARL NIELSEN

Opposites in Danish Musical Life[1]

By Claus Røllum-Larsen. Translated by Marie-Louise Zervides and David Fanning

> What has previously been said about a certain competitive relationship between the rising genius Carl Nielsen and a number of his contemporary composer colleagues, who inevitably felt this new force in Danish music as a hindrance to their own careers, especially applies to Louis Glass, whose fate from birth – he was born on 23 March 1864, thus a year before Carl Nielsen – and throughout his life was to be viewed in relation to his great fellow artist.[2]

These words by the composer and vocal coach Ejnar Jacobsen (1897-1970) set the agenda for this article. First and foremost on the basis of the few existing letters from Glass (1864-1936) Carl Nielsen (1865-1931), I shall consider firstly how their development grew in different directions despite there being some parallels, and secondly how their mutual relationship was influenced by the two very different stances they would represent in the Danish musical life of their time.

The generation of Danish composers born in the 1860s is a varied group with very different destinies and places in music history. Only three of these managed to make a name for themselves in Danish music history: namely Louis Glass, Fini Henriques (1867-1940) and Carl Nielsen. It would be natural to mention another composer from that generation, Gustav Helsted (1857-1924), who although he was performed

1 This article is a revised and expanded version of the author's article 'Louis Glass og Carl Nielsen – modsætninger i dansk musik. Deres forhold belyst hovedsagelig gennem breve fra Louis Glass', in Anne Ørbæk Jensen, John T. Lauridsen, Erland Kolding Nielsen and Claus Røllum-Larsen eds.: *Musikvidenskabelige kompositioner. Festskrift til Niels Krabbe 1941. 3 October 2006* (= Danish Humanist Texts and Studies 34, edited by Erland Kolding Nielsen), Copenhagen 2006, 591-602. Reprinted by permission of the editors.

2 *Hvad der foran er sagt om et vist Konkurrenceforhold mellem det fremtrængende Geni Carl Nielsen og en Del af hans samtidige Komponistkolleger, der nødvendigvis maatte mærke denne nye Kraft i dansk Musik som en Hindring for deres egen Udfoldelse, gælder især for Louis Glass, hvis Skæbne det blev saa at sige fra Fødselen – han er født den 23. Marts 1864, altsaa Aaret inden Carl Nielsen – og hele Livet igennem at blive stillet i Relation til sin store samtidige Kunstfælle,* Ejnar Jacobsen and Vagn Kappel, *Musikkens Mestre. Danske Komponister*. Copenhagen 1947, [vol. 2], 354.

until the beginning of the 1920s in a contemporary music context – albeit with only one single piece, his String Quartet No. 6 in F minor, Op. 33 (c. 1917)[3] – would soon be largely forgotten after his death in 1924. Fini Henriques composed both large works for the stage and a number of chamber works, but after the turn of the century he focused on songs and pieces for piano and violin and is therefore not directly comparable to Helsted and Glass. It does, however, make sense to mention Glass in the same breath as Carl Nielsen: not because he competed with Nielsen for the title of leading Danish composer of their era, but because there were clear parallels, certainly in their early years, between the output of the two composers, which means that as a pair they have become representative, not least for future generations, of two contrasting musical movements – Glass of Late Romanticism and Nielsen of Modernism. This is of course what Ejnar Jacobsen was driving at.

The parallels may be found first in that Glass and Nielsen were the two from their generation who were active to a significant extent in the symphonic and other weighty instrumental genres:. Not long after 1900, they had each produced two symphonies, as well as a number of string quartets, a violin sonata and also songs to texts by J.P. Jacobsen and others. Both regarded their symphonies as milestones along the way of their composing careers, but stylistically they were far apart, right from the beginning, and after the turn of the century they moved if anything even further away from one another.

In their early careers, they belonged to the same group of young composers who wished to define themselves within a Danish musical life which for them seemed reactionary and closed. Thus their paths crossed at the end of the 1880s as they both became members of the board of the *Symphonia* society at its formation in 1889. The society would become the harbour for young, hard-working composers and would enable performance of their works.[4] Nielsen left the board probably before 1892, while Glass and Helsted, together with the publisher brothers Jonas (1850-1919) and Alfred Wilhelm Hansen (1854-1923), ran the society until its dissolution in 1895.

Both Glass and Carl Nielsen had their works performed in *Symphonia*. Glass premiered Nielsen's first large-scale piano piece, the Symphonic Suite, Op. 8 on 5 May 1898. But the composer was clearly not pleased with the performance. In a letter to his

3 Claus Røllum-Larsen: *Impulser i Københavns koncertrepertoire 1900-1935: Studier i præsentationen af ny, især udenlandsk instrumentalmusik* (= Danish Humanist Texts and Studies Volume 25, edited by Erland Kolding Nielsen), Copenhagen 2002, vol. 1, 159, and Røllum-Larsen. 'Musikselskabet af 14. Marts 1896. En rekonstruktion og en karakteristik af dets repertoire', *Fund og Forskning* 58 (2018), 131-87.

4 According to the article 'Symphonia', dated Copenhagen March 1890, the Royal Danish Library, Collection of Pamphlets and Corporate Publications: Angul Hammerich's Programme Collection: *Koncertprogrammer 1889-1890*.

Swedish composer colleague Bror Beckman (1866-1929), he wrote: 'Glass did a great job studying and playing my Suite by heart; but despite many good moments in his interpretation, he hasn't grasped the spirit of my music.'[5] It is difficult for us to know what displeased Nielsen in the performance; perhaps it was Glass's generous rubato and his rich pedalling.[6] But there is no doubt that the two composers had already placed themselves in different positions on the stylistic map at the time; Nielsen had taken his starting point in the works of Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák and Johan Svendsen, while Glass, who in the 1880s had studied at the Conservatoire in Brussels, had clearly learned from César Franck, Bruckner, and towards the turn of the century perhaps even Mahler. We can only speculate whether this difference in musical stylistic outlook was apparent in Glass's performance of the Symphonic Suite.

Less than a year after the dissolution of Symphonia, another society for contemporary music came into existence: The Music Society of 14 March 1896, founded on the initiative of the civil servant and writer on music William Behrend (1861-1940), together with Glass and Helsted. Among the roughly 25 founding members was also Nielsen.[7] How much Glass and Nielsen encountered one another in this connection is difficult to ascertain, and Nielsen's letters do not show any evidence of his participating in the society's gatherings. The repertoire at the concerts was also quite extraordinary, including performances of symphonies by Bruckner and Mahler in versions for piano four hands or piano duo, and for some of the members, these musical experiences left a lasting impression. This was the case for editor Carl Behrens (1867-1946), who in his memoirs wrote:

> Bruckner's symphonies arranged for two pianos brought tidings from Austria's great, yet here almost unknown, symphonist. Behrend was an indefatigable guide with his introductions, [while] Gustav Helsted's sarcasm and Louis Glass's artistic mind were the abiding memory of those now so distant, meaningful evenings.[8]

5 Letter of 4-5.5.1895 to Bror Beckman, CNB I, 416, CNL, 143. *Glass havde gjort et stort Arbejde ved at indstudere og uden Noder spille min Suite; men Aanden i min Musik har han, trods mange gode Momenter i Opfattelsen, ikke faaet fat paa.*

6 Characteristics identified in Gerhardt Lynge: *Danske Komponister i det 20. Aarhundredes Begyndelse*, 2nd. revised and abridged version, Copenhagen 1917, 94.

7 *Referatbog fra Musikselskabet af 14 Marts 1896*, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Håndskriftsamlingen: NKS 1748 2°. For more on the Society, see Claus Røllum-Larsen: *Impulser i Københavns koncertrepertoire 1900-1935*, vol. 1, 117f.; and Røllum-Larsen: 'Musikselskabet af 14. Marts 1896'.

8 *Bruckners Symfonier omsat for to Klaverer bragte Bud om Østrigs store, herhjemme næsten ubekendte Symfoniker. Behrend var den utrættelige Vejleder i sine Indledninger, Gustav Helsteds Sarkasme, Louis Glass' Kunstnersind er Erindringen om hine nu saa fjærne betydningsfulde Aftener.* Carl Behrens, *Erindringer: Mennesker og Begivenheder*, Copenhagen 1937, 157.

These performances also left a great impression on Glass; but as already noted, we do not know whether Nielsen even participated in any other meetings than the founding one.

After the turn of the century, both Nielsen and Glass continued their work on new, large-scale pieces; Nielsen had his first opera *Saul and David* performed in 1902, and in 1906 his next one, *Maskarade*. Then in 1911 he completed both his Violin Concerto and Symphony No. 3, *Sinfonia Espansiva,* works that would establish his international reputation. In 1900-1901, Glass wrote his most popular piece, the Symphony No. 3 in D, Op. 30, *The Forest*, which was performed in both Sweden and Germany over the next decade,[9] and with his Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 43, from c. 1905-1908, he would create one of the largest, most monumental Danish symphonies to date (around 60 minutes in duration). Already during these years, however, Glass nevertheless felt himself becoming disconnected from the Danish mainstream. In 1907 he wrote to Edvard Grieg: 'It is difficult for me to comprehend that I in particular, who truly crave "the new", should have to sit back, half uncomprehending, not even with the desire to be part of the dance; for how odd does this sound: that I'm feeling rather good in my somewhat isolated position.'[10] It is reasonable to assume that it is Carl Nielsen he is referring to.

The opposition between the two composers' works, which already seemed quite considerable, would become even more conspicuous around the years of World War I. Crucially, Carl Nielsen in this period would be fully immersed in the composition of folklike songs, thereby taking a definitive step in the direction of becoming a popular composer. Wwith the appearance of the two collections with the title *A Score of Danish Songs* in 1915 and 1917, he would help to lay the groundwork for a public singing culture, which is especially linked to the folk high school [*folkehøjskolen*] and its melody book, of which Carl Nielsen would be the first co-publisher in 1922.

Almost like a 'mirror-image' [*modbillede*], the journey of Louis Glass moved in the years just before the War into theosophy – a movement which at the time attracted a number of artists, including composers. Many of Glass's most important works may be considered as auditory expressions of this exclusive world-view, which becomes clearly apparent in the motto on which Glass based his *Fantasia for Piano and*

9 A comparison between the programme notes for Glass's *Forest Symphony* and Nielsen's overture *Helios* may be found in Claus Røllum-Larsen, 'Skovstemninger og stærkt sollys', in Henrik Wivel (ed.), *Drømmetid: Fortællinger fra Det Sjælelige Gennembruds København*, Copenhagen 2004, 78-87.

10 *Det er mig lidt svært at forstå at netop jeg, der så gerne vilde 'det ny', skal sidde tilbage, halvt uforstående, ja neppe engang følende Lyst til at være med i Dansen, thi hvor besynderligt det end lyder: jeg føler mig ganske vel ved min lidt isolerede Stilling.* Letter from Glass to Edvard Grieg, dated January 1907, Bergen Public Library, Grieg collection.

Orchestra from 1913: 'From the eternal dwellings of the spirit tones resound, which summon man. And man turns away from the world, in order to find peace within.'[11]

But already several years before he started to work on his fantasy, Glass had changed his compositional focus. In December 1916 – that is, the same year as Carl Nielsen's Symphony No. 4, *The Inextinguishable*, had been premiered and performed another three times in Copenhagen – Glass wrote the following to the conductor and composer Peder Gram (1881-1956):

> My Fourth Symphony draws a division between two periods: an earlier one in which the external life sought to connect with the internal and exalted, and a later one in which this exalted life expanded and the internal became secondary and transitory, which continues to seek explanation and justification. The symphony therefore deals with the urge and longing for life, that is to say, life in its higher sense. Once on a summer's day, when I was walking through a forest of birdsong, it was just like I had completed the instrumentation sketch for the ending of the first Allegro – I had an astounding experience, only simply having to listen in order to hear the entire section being played. Despite previously having encountered something similar – for all composers are probably familiar with this phenomenon – I can't forget this day, so strong was the impression it made on me that it was I who appreciated the throbbing pulse of life./ It is strange that it has not previously occurred to me that very similar thoughts propelled Carl Nielsen during the composition of his Fourth Symphony, and the reason for this is surely that he uses other words. ... In the Adagio of my symphony, I tried to find expression in the warmth of the heart, in love for everything that lives. ... [The Scherzo is] a tone poem about 'Avalon', that island of happiness and peace which we yearn for in this deafening world. This sacred place is the goal of all longing./ The Finale is a reinforced expression of these heaven-storming longings./ Therefore my Fourth, too, is an expression of life, that is, of that life which we vaguely imagine we are able to approach – to extend ourselves towards – and hold within ourselves as a higher form of consciousness and a greater happiness.[12]

11 *Fra Aandens evige Boliger lyder Toner, der kalder paa Mennesket. Og Mennesket vender sig bort fra Verden for i sit Indre af finde Freden.*

12 *Min 4de Symfoni danner ligesom Skel imellem to Perioder, en tidligere, hvori det ydre Liv søgte at stille sig i Rapport til det indre og højere, og en senere, hvori dette højere Liv fik større Vækst og det ydre blev det sekundære og forbigående, der i hint søgte sin Forklaring og Begrundelse. Symfonien handler derfor om Trangen til og Længslen efter Livet, d.v.s. Livet i højere Forstand./ Da jeg en Sommerdag gik igennem den af Fuglesang opfyldte Skov – det var netop som jeg havde tilendebragt Instrumentationsskitzen til*

Glass mentions that Nielsen must have had similar thoughts when he wrote *his* Symphony No. 4, *The Inextinguishable*. Let us therefore consider the programme note for the latter work:

> The composer, in using the title *The Inextinguishable*, has attempted to suggest in a single word what only the music itself has the power to express fully: the elementary will to life./ Faced with a task like this – to express life abstractly, where the other arts stand without resources, forced to go roundabout ways, to extract, to symbolise – there and only there is music at home in its primal region, in its element, simply because by being itself it has performed its task. For it is life there, where the others only represent and write about life. Life is indomitable and inextinguishable; the struggle, the wrestling, the generation and the wasting away go on today as yesterday, tomorrow as today, and everything returns./ Once more: music *is* life, and like it inextinguishable. For that reason the word that the composer has set above his work might seem superfluous; however, he has used it to emphasise the strict musical character of his task. No programme, but a signpost into music's own domain.[13]

Slutningen af 1ste Allegro – havde jeg en Oplevelse af ejendommelig Art, jeg behøvede nemlig kun at lytte for at høre hele dette Afsnit blive spillet. Selv om jeg tidligere har oplevet noget lignende – thi alle komponister kender sikkert dette Fænomen – så kan jeg dog ikke glemme denne Dag, så stærkt var det Indtryk, som jeg modtog, det var mig, som fornam jeg selve Livets Pulsslag./ Det er besynderligt, thi det er ikke tidligere faldet mig ind, at det netop er lignende Tanker, som har sysselsat Carl Nielsen under Udarbejdelsen af hans 4de Symfoni, og Grunden hertil er vel kun den, at han bruger andre Ord. ... I Adagioen søgte jeg Udtryk for Hjertevarmen, for Kærligheden til alt det, som lever. Scherzoen er et Tonedigt om 'Avalon', denne Lykkens og Fredens Øe, som vi midt i Verdenslarmen stirrer ud efter. Dette fredhellige Sted – alle Længslers Mål./ Finalen er et forstærket Udtryk for disse himmelstormende Længsler./ Altså også min 4de er et Udtryk for Livet, d.v.s. for det Liv, som vi har en dunkel Følelse af at kunne komme nærmere – at kunne udvide os til – at kunne indfange i os som en højere Bevidsthedsform, og som en større Lykke. Letter from Louis Glass to Peder Gram, dated Villa 'Toften' 6.12.1916, Danish National Archives, Private archive no. 7430, Correspondence.

13 *Komponisten har ved Anvendelsen af Titelen 'Det uudslukkelige' med et enkelt Ord søgt at antyde, hvad kun selve Musiken har Magt til fuldt at udtrykke: den elementære Villie til Liv./ Overfor Opgaver som denne: at udtrykke Liv abstrakt, hvor de andre Kunstarter staar uformuende, tvungne til at gøre Omveje, gøre Udsnit, symbolisere, dér og først dér er Musiken hjemme paa sit Ur-Omraade, ret i sit Element, simpelthen fordi den, ved kun at være sig selv, har løst sin Opgave. Thi den er Liv dér, hvor de andre kun forestiller og omskriver Liv. Livet er ukueligt og uudslukkeligt, der kæmpes, brydes, avles og fortæres idag som igaar, imorgen som idag, og alting vender tilbage./ Endnu engang: Musik er Liv, som dette uudslukkeligt. Derfor kunde det Ord, Komponisten har sat over sit Værk, synes overflødigt; han har imidlertid anvendt det for at understrege sin Opgaves strengt musikalske Karakter. Intet Program, men en Vejviser ind paa Musikens eget Omraade.* Programme note for the Music Society's 658th concert, the second concert in its 80th season, 1915-1916, Tuesday 1 February 1916, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Collection of Pamphlets and Corporate Publications.

It is certainly true that both composers refer to *Life*, but there is a fundamental difference in their notion of this; while Carl Nielsen praises life as an elemental force in its broadest sense, Louis Glass understands life as an exalted, ideal, condition or state of consciousness. The letter to Peder Gram was written in 1916, five years after the premiere of Glass's Symphony No. 4. Whether this is in fact a rationalisation following his encounter with theosophy, which appears to have occurred some years after his work on the symphony, presumably around 1912,[14] is hard to say, but is quite possibly the case. For the description of the symphony is similar to the desire for dreaminess and romanticism that prevailed in Glass's childhood: 'The illusion we like to call reality always disturbed me. I led a life of dreams, and if possible I would spend parts of the night fantasising and composing.'[15] On a later occasion, in an article from 1920, he spoke similarly of his childhood: 'The more I look for something in my recollections that could put me in a somewhat favourable light, the less likely I am to find anything. That is to say, I was always fascinated by the world I found inside myself and thus generally I did not acknowledge what was around me.'[16] After Glass became acquainted with theosophy, he gained a set of concepts by means of which to explain the content and mission of his music more concisely; this is evident in the motto for his Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra. This succintness shows itself musically as well. This becomes apparent in his next symphony, No. 5, *Sinfonia Svastika* (1919-1920), which utilises one of the symbols of theosophy, specifically the swastika or wheel of life, as an image of the cycle. Glass describes his symphony in a letter: 'but full understanding is again dependent on how the thoughts and ideas that inspired me to create the work are not completely foreign to the person who wishes to immerse themselves in the work in order to consider it from this side.'[17] We may note here how Glass is dealing with a kind of consciousness in his work. Of the Finale he says, for instance, 'Therefore the dawn is to be understood as a sunrise in the soul of Man, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep" [Genesis I, 2]. But now there is light. The soul has triumphed on the Last Day – "It is finished" – this love, which is true and will support everything that is created, is now liberated. The portal to "Life" has opened to "pure" thought; the "pure" fool has

14 The earliest recorded documentations of Glass's connection with theosophy is his collaboration in the Danish section of the *Stjernen i Øst* society's first meeting in the Theosophical Society's lodge rooms in Copenhagen's Amaliegade, 12.5.1912. See *Stjerne-Bladet. Organ for Ordenen 'Stjernen i Øst'*, vol. 1, 1913.

15 Gerhardt Lynge, *Danske Komponister i det 20. Aarhundredes Begyndelse*, 92.

16 Louis Glass, 'Da vi var unge (V)', *Hver 8. Dag* 26 (5.11.1920), 45.

17 *Men den fulde Forståelse er dog atter afhængig af, at den Tankegang og de Idéer, som har inspireret mig til at skabe Værket, ikke er helt fremmede for den, der ønsker at trænge dybere ind i Værket for at betragte det fra denne Side*. Letter from Louis Glass to Hjelm Cohrt, dated 31.3.1924, Danish Music Museum, Copenhagen.

opened it.'[18] Glass is here referring both to the Bible – Genesis, as indicated, and Jesus's last words on the Cross: 'It is finished' (John XIX, 30) – and to *Parsifal*, where the pure Fool (i.e. Parsifal) brings the Holy Spear back to the castle and thereby enablesg Amfortas's wound to heal. The symbolic purification a human being must undergo throughout his life corresponds to Glass's programme text for the *Sinfonia svastika*.

Some years before, Glass had recognised that he had moved into an aesthetic and stylistic realm that was not generally accepted. In a letter from 1915 to the music critic Gustav Hetsch (1867-1935), he declared that he would rather not have any reviews for his concerts – which must have been his Conservatoire concerts – and continued:

> I understand the difficulty in your position and realise that you have a certain obligation to keep harmful influences and movements at bay, but you – several of your colleagues – have been so successful in this difficult mission – that for me, personally, there could be a reason to declare a ceasefire. As a composer, my position is such that there is nothing more to be remedied, not a single symphony to be published, not one single work to be performed in The Music Society etc. – there is hardly anything to accomplish here.[19]

In October 1919, Glass once again expresses his despair and disappointment in a letter to Hetsch:

> I feel there is not the slightest interest here in me or my music, yes, I am indeed feeling it in an incredibly real way. But how can this be? I am going against my age – it is surely this age that is oppressing the bearers of spiritual force and inner law. Melody is dethroned, harmony becomes something frightful, and rhythm becomes its opposite: Chaos. Can anyone believe that there can be found a way ahead, when such goals have been reached? But to

18 *Derfor er Morgengryet at opfatte some en Solopgang i Menneskets Sjæl, 'thi der var øde og tomt, og Mórke rugede over Afgrunden. Men nu er der bleven Lys. Sjælen har på den sidste Dag sejret – "det er fuldbragt" – den Kærlighed, som er den sande, der vil fremhjælpe alt det skabte, er bleven fri. Porten til "Livet" er åbnet den "rene" Tanke, den "rene" Dåre har åbnet den.'* Ibid.

19 *Jeg indsér det vanskelige i din Stilling og erkender, at Du har en hvis [sic] Forpligtigelse til at holde skadelige Indflydelser og Retninger nede, men denne vanskelige Mission er jo for Dig – og for flere af dine Kolleger – lykkedes så godt, at der for mit Vedkommende kunde være nogen Anledning til at holde lidt inde med Skydningen. Som Komponist er min Stilling en sådan, at der næppe mere kan bødes derpå, ikke en eneste Symfoni forlagt, ikke et eneste Værk opført i Musikforeningen o. s. v. – der er jo næppe mere her at udrette.* Letter from Louis Glass to Gustav Hetsch, dated 22.3.1915, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: NKS 3887, 4º.

> stand among epigones and decadents is a difficult position, for inner originality deprives one of immediate recognition. Isn't there something in this?[20]

Four years later Glass wrote to Hetsch again, asking him to refrain from any public criticism of his concerts: 'You know very well how I have enemies, and when my friends are certainly not helping me when the opportunity rises, then I think it is best if I stand by myself in absolute silence.'[21]

Three personal letters

It seems that Louis Glass's mood had hit rock bottom in 1923, and if we look at the relationship to Carl Nielsen, this simply confirms the assumption. A few letters exist to and from Nielsen from the years around 1907-1903, and from these, one can sense a good, even warm, relationship between the two composer-colleagues, but some letters from the beginning of the 1920s have a very different tone. As we already know, an apparent problem of principle for Glass was having his *Sinfonia Svastika* performed at The Music Society, where Carl Nielsen had been conducting concerts since 1915. The symphony had had its premiered at The Danish Concert Society on 31 January 1921, and within two years it was presented in Helsinki, Warsaw, Vienna, Berlin and Munich, as well as twice in Copenhagen. These many performances presumably pleased Glass, but it disappointed him greatly not to have had his work performed at The Music Socety. It seems that Glass perceived this as a lack in official acknowledgement of his key work, perhaps partly because The Music Society for him still represented the legacy of Niels W. Gade, with whom Glass had felt a strong affinity and for whom he held great admiration,[22] and partly because it was Nielsen who ran the overall programming at the society. It should also be mentioned that Glass's Fantasy

20 *Jeg føler det, som var der ikke den ringeste Interesse herhjemme for mig og min Musik, ja, jeg kommer jo endda til at føle det på en særdeles realistisk Måde. Men hvor kan det være? Jeg går imod min Tid – det er sikkert nok, Tiden, der sprænger Bærerne af den åndelige Kraft og det [sic] indre Lov. Melodien detroniseres, Harmonien bliver til Alteration og Rytmen til sin Modsætning: Kaos – Kan nogen tro, at der findes Vej frem, hvor slige Mål er nået? – Men, at stå midt imellem Epigonerne og Decadenterne er en vanskelig Stilling, thi den indre Originalitet unddrager sig den umiddelbare Erkendelse. Er der ikke noget om det?* Letter from Glass to Gustav Hetsch, dated 10.10.1919, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: NKS 3887, 4°.

21 *Du ved meget godt at jeg har Fjender, og når mine Venner heller ikke hjælper mig, hvor der er Lejlighed dertil, så tror jeg, at jeg bedst står mig ved absolut Tavshed.* Letter from Glass to Gustav Hetsch, dated 23.11.1923, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: NKS 3887, 4°.

22 *Iblandt alle mine Lærere staar jeg maaske – foruden til min Fader – i størst Gæld til Niels W. Gade. Ja, Gade var vel nok en af de faa af mine Lærere, der baade som Menneske og som Kunstner indtog en saa høj Rang, at jeg kunde føle hele den Glæde, som ubegrænset Kærlighed og Agtelse beriger én med.* Gerhardt Lynge: *Danske Komponister i det 20. Aarhundredes Begyndelse*, 93.

for Piano and Orchestra had actually been performed at *The Music Society* on 28 January 1919 with Nielsen conducting and the composer as soloist. In a letter from 14 July 1923 to Nielsen, Glass does not hide his disspointment regarding The Music Society's neglect of his work:

> Since I can't expect you to know that I shall be 60 next March, I'm not going to draw your attention to the fact./ On the other hand, you must surely remember that on the return journey from Helsingfors you offered to perform my Fifth Symphony in Gothenburg, just as you well know that you didn't fulfil your promise but instead chose another Danish symphony by a younger composer./ I hardly need to say that this was a disappointment for me./ It's really rather painful for me to have to remind you that The Music Society can hardly refuse to perform some work by me in the coming season without giving the impression that the Society is deliberately avoiding me and my output./ Since this is surely not your intention, and since this can hardly be the reason why didn't play my symphony in Gothenburg, whereas I for my part could certainly have expected to hear from you about your change of mind and the reason for it, I should now like to ask you whether on this occasion you could make things right again by putting my Fifth Symphony on the programme. Perhaps I could conduct it myself./ Think this over, and consider whether we might not have a chance to end our days with a better mutual understanding, since we each only have the shortest time left./ Well, this is what I wanted to say to you, and I remain – in the hope that you will understand the justness of my request –/ yours sincerely, Louis.[23]

23 *Da jeg jo ikke kan forlange at Du skal være vidende om, at jeg til næste Marts fylder 60, så betænker jeg mig ikke på at henlede Din Opmærksomhed derpå./ Derimod husker Du vel nok, at Du på Hjemrejsen fra Helsingfors tilbød at opføre min 5te Symfoni i Gøteborg, ligesom Du jo ved, at Du ikke opfyldte hvad Du havde lovet, men valgte en anden dansk Symfoni af en af de Yngre./ At dette var mig en Skuffelse behøver jeg vel ikke at sige Dig./ Det er jo lidt pinligt for mig selv at skulle gøre Dig opmærksom på, at Musikforeningen ikke godt kan undlade at opføre noget Arbejde af mig i den kommende Sæson, uden at det må få Udseendet af at Foreningen tager Afstand fra mig og min Produktion./ Da dette sikkert ikke er Din Mening, og da Årsagen til, at Du ikke spillede Symfonien i Gøteborg vel heller ikke skal søges heri, medens jeg på den anden Side vel nok kunde have haft Krav på en Meddelelse om Din dengang ændrede Beslutning og Årsagen dertil, så vil jeg spørge Dig, om Du ikke ved denne Lejlighed vil gøre dette godt igen ved at sætte min 5te Symfoni på Programmet. Eventuelt vil jeg gerne selv dirigere den./ Tænk nu lidt over Sagen, og tænk på om vi ikke kan få Lov til at ende vore Dage i bedere [sic] gensidig Forståelse, vi har jo begge det korteste Afsnit tilbage./ Ja, det er hvad jeg vilde sige Dig og jeg er – i Håbet om at Du vil forstå min Anmodnings Berettigelse –/ Din hengivne/ Louis.* Letter from Glass to Nielsen, dated Gentofte 14.7.1923, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: CNA I.A.b.

After Glass had received a response, a letter now unfortunately lost, in which Carl Nielsen apparently showed interest in programming the *Sinfonie Svastika* – it was performed at The Music Society on 26 February 1924 with the composer conducting – Glass wrote a long and very personal letter to Nielsen on 18 July 1923. Here he underlined how greatly he had struggled to have his symphony performed at The Music Society, and how this could only be perceived as a result of Carl Nielsen's lacking acknowledgement of his output: 'Your pupils, who are gradually taking up leading positions as critics, have in any case treated me in such a way that in some instances has to be called unseemly.' Glass decided to abandon conducting after the music critic Gunnar Hauch (1870-1937) wrote a 'condescending' review of his performance of the *Helios* Overture at the Danish Concert Society on 3 December 1917. Later in the same letter, he states:

> It's not my intention to suggest that you are responsible for my fate. You can't help it if your great gifts have made your way for you and brought with them followers and influential positions. But the isolated life that I lead – of my own volition – and the few personal friends I have, are the reasons why I am only able to do so little to advance myself. There's also the fact that the ideas I stand for can no longer be said to be contemporary. I'm a guardian of the natural inheritance of our predecessors, but I'm also a renewer in the deeper sense. This is something that isn't understood in an age when a painter may be called unoriginal if he paints a portrait with a nose placed between two eyes and with blond hair just because the model has it. Therefore I stand for a musical culture whose subtlety and individuality can only be perceived by those who are on that same wavelength, and whose natural, fresh qualities can only be appreciated if it is apparent that it sets its sights beyond the user's time we are living in at the present. Therefore I cannot succeed without support on your side that can appreciate my good qualities, even though of course you're not blind to my faults. But these faults are due to my multi-facetedness, in the sense that I have access to all moods, from the most deeply serious to the most light-hearted. This double nature of mine has made my development problematic./ Dear Carl Nielsen, since it's now you who stand in the general consciousness as our leader in Danish music, then it's also you in the first instance who should be able to set this injustice aright, if you consider that there has been such an injustice. But I do believe that in your innermost being you have a feeling for this. It's this 'mutual understanding', which you say has left its mark on you, and it's this indebtedness – of whose extent only God can be the judge – that I was thinking of when I wrote of the short span of life we can still count upon. So it's not Gothenburg I'm thinking of but Copenhagen.

> And it's The Music Society – which under the leaderhip of any other outstanding musician would have opened its doors to me – that I now think should do this./ Have I said too much, or is my meaning unclear? Am I unjustified? I don't want to judge anyone, and I know my place and why it is as it is. But he would offers me their hand – not with friendly words but with manly actions – will doubtless come to feel that he has not behaved badly. So, farewell and accept this sincere greeting from your grateful Louis Glass.[24]

At the end of September, this serious letter is followed up by an even more lengthy and piercing one, in which Glass initially but briefly expresses delight at having his *Sinfonia Svastika* chosen for performance at The Music Society. He then details his notion of the human condition and the foundation of his own artistic endeavours. The letter ends thus:

24 *Dine Elever, som jo lidt efter lidt indtager ledende Stillinger som Kritikere, har jo i hvert Fald behandlet mig på en Måde, ... der i enkelte Tilfælde må kaldes usømmelig. ... Nu er det ikke min Mening at gøre Dig ansvarlig for min Skæbne, Du kan jo ikke gøre for, at Dine store Evner baner Vej for Dig og forskaffer Dig Tilhængere og indflydelsesrige Stillinger, men det ensomme Liv, som jeg af egen Trang fører og de få personlige Venner, som jeg har, er Skyld i, at jeg kun formår at udrette så lidet til min egen Fordel. Dertil kommer at de Ideer, jeg repræsenterer, ikke længer kan siges at tilhøre Nutiden. Jeg er Bevareren af den naturlige Arv fra Fædrene, men tillige Fornyeren i dybere Forstand, dette er noget, der ikke forståes i en Tid, hvor en Maler vil blive kaldet uoriginal fordi han maler et Portræt hvor Næsen har sin Plads imellem begge Øjnene og Håret er blondt, og det kun fordi Modellen er skabt således. Derfor repræsenterer jeg en musikalsk Kultur, hvis Finhed og Særegenhed kun kan erkendes af dem, der er på Højde med den, og hvis Ligefremhed og Friskhed kun vil blive vurderet hvis det viser sig, at den bærer ud over den Brydningernes Tid, som vi for nærværende oplever. Derfor kan jeg heller ikke klare mig uden Bistand fra deres Side, der kan vurdere mine gode Sider, selv om de selvfølgeligt ikke er blinde for mine Mangler. Men disse Mangler skyldes min Alsidighed, idet jeg har haft alle Stemninger til min Rådighed, fra de dybest alvorlige til de mest letsindige. Denne – min Dobbeltnatur – har vanskeliggjort min Udvikling./ Da det nu er Dig – kære Carl Nielsen – der står i den almindelige Bevidsthed, som vor første Mand i dansk Musik, så bliver det også Dig, som det i første Række må komme til at gøre sket Uret god igen, hvis Du mener, at der er sket en sådan Uret. Men jeg tror nu, at Du inderst inde vil have en Følelse heraf. Det er denne 'gensidige Forståelse', som Du siger har gjort Indtryk på Dig, og det er dette vort Mellemværende – om hvis Omfang kun Gud kan dømme – som jeg tænkte på, da jeg talte om det ringe Spand af År, som vi to endnu kan gøre Regning på. Derfor er det ikke Gøteborg, jeg tænker på, men København. Derfor er det Musikforeningen, – der under enhver anden fremragende Musikers Ledelse, vilde have åbnet sine Døre for mig – som jeg nu mener må gøre det./ Har jeg sagt for meget, eller er min Tankegang uklar? Er jeg uretfærdig? – jeg vil dog ikke dømme nogen, jeg kender jo min Stilling og véd hvorfor den er, som den er. Men den, der rækker mig Hånden – ikke med venlige Ord, men med mandig Handling – vil uden Tvivl få at føle, at han ikke handlede ilde./ Og lev nu vel og modtag en hjertelig Hilsen fra Din hengivne Louis Glass.* Letter from Louis Glass to Carl Nielsen, dated Gentofte 18.7.1923, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: CNA I.A.b.

> Dear Carl Nielsen, do understand me correctly: I don't want to set myself up in judgment over you. I would be sad and disappointed if I was tempted to do so. I recognise that you are an outstanding artist, and I acknowledge your importance. But you can't have the same importance for me, because we're too different – happily for Danish music, but sadly for our mutual relationship and friendship. Can't this be understood by both of us, so that we can save our friendship and so that our collegial relationship can be as it should be? Can't you see it this way: that we both have significance for Danish music? We are like North and South, or East and West, whatever you want, but opposite poles. How often have we been happy to be together; how often have we spoken to each other from the heart! So why can't we come together now in mutual understanding – in a true friendship? Give this some thought. But if I represent some kind of danger to your musical convictions, to your faith and ideals, then send my letter back and I shall know where I stand. Some kind of diplomatic middle road won't be a happy way forward./ Yours sincerely, Louis Glass.[25]

The fact that the symphony had now been performed only meant that Glass could now focus on the fundamental problems in the relation between Nielsen and himself.

Two provocative feature articles

No more than two years would pass before the differences between Glass and Nielsen would once again – and for the last time – be displayed in public. Glass had two features published in *Nationaltidende*, on 15 and 17 September 1925,[26] in which he expressed great concern about the crisis that, according to him, was reigning in contemporary music.

25 *Forstå mig nu ret, kære Carl Nielsen, jeg vil ikke gerne opkaste mig til Dommer over Dig. Jeg er fortvivlet og bedrøvet hvis jeg skal fristes dertil. Jeg erkender at Du er en fremragende Kunstner og jeg erkender Din Betydning, men du kan ikke få den samme Betydning for mig, dertil er vi to for forskellige – heldigvis for dansk Musik, og beklageligvis for vort gensidige Forhold og Venskab. Kan dette ikke forstås af os Begge, så vi kan redde Venskabet og således, at vort kollegiale Forhold, kan blive, som det bør være. Kan Du ikke sé det således, at vi begge har Betydning for dansk Musik? Vi er som Nord og Syd, eller Øst og Vest, hvad Du end vil, men Modsætninger. Hvor ofte har vi ikke været glade ved at være sammen, hvor ofte har vi ikke talt ud fra Hjertet til hinanden, hvorfor kan vi ikke mødes i gensidig Forståelse af hinanden – i virkeligt Venskab? – Tænk nu herover – men er jeg en Fare for din musikalske Overbevisning, for din Tro og dine Idealer, så send mig mit Brev tilbage, så kender jeg min Stilling. Her kan ingen diplomatisk Mellemvej få nogen lykkelig Udgang./ Din hengivne/ Louis Glass.* Letter from Glass to Nielsen, dated 29.9.1923, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Manuscript Collection: CNA I.A.b.

26 Louis Glass, 'Musikalske Problemer. Komponisten Louis Glass skriver her om "Geni og Talent" og vil i en følgende Kronik undersøge den nye Tids Udvikling paa Musikens Omraade', *Nationaltidende* 15.9.1925; and Louis Glass: 'Musikalske Problemer. Komponisten Louis Glass undersøger den Udvikling, der paa Musikens Omraade kendetegner den nye Tid', *Nationaltidende* 17.9.1925.

Glass's main focus was the difference between talent and genius. His definition was:

> While the genius progresses from an internal drive, innovative and replete with an overpowering urge to realise a vision, the talent works more from practice and a conscious set of tools. The art of the genius will always be intuitive and thus elevated by a rich and abundant subjectivity, consciously or unconsciously altruistic, as the world is reflected in its essence. The talent, on the other hand, is rather intellectual, and usually more impartial and balanced. The genius *has* its goal, whereas the talent sets itself one. In the genius, the many become one, whereas for the talent, the many exist for the sake of the one.[27]

Following this explanation, Glass seems to reach his peroration:

> The country's younger generation, who faithfully follow their master Carl Nielsen, seem to have set the responsible goal to abandon the past, and agree without a shred of doubt that the period between Mozart and Nielsen was bad. Their criticism is devastating, and this period becomes an entire Dark Age of music, full of blind superstition, a twilight realm of romanticism, and a world of false profundity, whereas now 'Carl Nielsen's shining blade' – as noted in this newspaper – has 'slashed the blossoming theatre of romanticism'. It cannot be denied that our young generation have prepared their blades as well, except from the fact that the slashing of a blossom blossoming cannot be considered a world revolution or admirable heroism. But what can one put in place of this frightening theatre blossom? We do not receive any comprehensive answer to this.[28]

27 *Medens Geniet nemlig gaar frem i Følge en indre Drift, nyskabende og opfyldt af en uimodstaaelig Trang til at virkeliggøre sin Idéverden, arbejder Talentet mere i praktisk og bevidst Kendskab til sine Midler. Geniets Virkemaade vil altid være af intuitiv Art og derfor baaret oppe af en rig og omfattende Subjektivitet, bevidst eller ubevidst altruistisk, idet en Verden afspejler sig i dets Indre. Talentet derimod er snarere intellektuelt, det er i Regelen mere uhildet og ligevægtigt. Geniet har sit Maal – Talentet sætter sig det – i Geniet er de mange blevet til een, for Talentet er de mange til for den ene.*

28 *De unge herhjemme, der troligt følger deres Mester: Carl Nielsen, synes at have sat sig det ansvarsfulde Maal at gøre op med Fortiden, og uden al Tvivl er der imellem dem Enighed om, at det ser galt ud i Tidsrummet fra Mozart til Carl Nielsen. Deres Kritik er i hvert Fald sønderflængende, og dette Tidsrum bliver til en hel Musikens Middelalder, fuld af blind Overtro, et Romantikens Skumringsrige og en Verden af forloren Dybsindighed, men nu har 'Carl Nielsens blanke Klinge' – som der stod i et herværende Blad – 'flænget Romantikens Teaterflor'. At ogsaa Ungdommen har sine Klinger parate, kan ikke benægtes, rent bortset fra, at det at flænge et Flor ikke kan betragtes som nogen Verdensomvæltning eller beundringsværdig Heltegerning. Men hvad sætter man da i Stedet for dette frygtindgydende Teaterflor? – Herpaa faar vi ikke noget fyldestgørende Svar.*

Glass looks for an answer in vain; he also wants to know which 'battle cries' the young generation have, which 'outlook on life', which 'type of spiritual physiognomy', and so on. A little later, he asks:

> Where are the mighty words that can make us fall silent and understand how an entire century's art has been helplessly exposed? What we have learnt in this regard is quite negative. We have been told that fantasy and feeling are qualities that must not characterise the new age (it certainly says so in [Nielsen's booklet of essays] *Living Music*). Neither profundity nor pathos – but what should stand there instead?[29]

Glass concludes the article thus:

> The dogma about music just being notes and internal relationships is then not an idea of genius, for this dogma is not a restriction, but simply an external reinforcement of the wall that is put up like a materialist philosophy between the objective and spiritual. But no-one who perceives the soul or spirit as a product of objectivity can tear down this wall and create light and air.[30]

In his second feature article, Glass continues with a pursuit of the 'spiritual physiognomy' of the younger generation. He asserts that polyphony characterises the modern style. But specifically polyphony 'without using the vertical, harmonically structuring principle. In the rhythmic dimension, there is an urge to reach the greatest possible sense of freedom, while melody – which used to be the basis – seems to completely vanish.'[31] Glass is especially saddened by the latter, asking rhetorically whether the melodies of the great masters are not 'like the concentrated essence of their inner being.'[32]

29 *Hvor høres de bevingede Ord, der maa faa os til at forstumme og begribe, at et helt Aarhundredes Kunst er uhjælpeligt afsløret? Hvad vi i denne Henseende har lært, er ganske negativt. Vi har faaet at vide, at Fantasi og Følelse er Egenskaber, der ikke maa kendetegne den nye Tid (det staar jo at læse i 'Levende Musik'), heller ikke Dybsindighed og Patos – men hvad skal der da sættes i Stedet?*

30 *Derfor er Dogmet om Musiken som kun værende Toner og Toners indbyrdes Forhold ikke nogen genial Tanke, thi dette Dogme er ikke Begrænsning, men kun en yderligere Styrkelse af den Mur, som en materialistisk Anskuelse rejser imellem det stoflige og det aandelige; men ingen, der i Aanden og Sjælen ser et Produkt af det stoflige, kan bryde denne Mur ned og skaffe Lys og Luft.*

31 *uden Anvendelse for det vertikale, harmonisk opbyggende Princip. I rytmisk Henseende gaar Bestræbelserne ogsaa ud paa at opnaa den størst mulige Frihed, medens Melodien, der tidligere var det bærende, helt synes at forsvinde.*

32 *ligesom koncentreret Essens af deres inderste Væsen.*

Glass's reference to Nielsen's collection of essays, *Living Music*, which had just been published in commemoration of Nielsen's 60th birthday, relates to the following passage:

> In the world of music most have become stuck in the flypapers that were put up in front of them in their youth. We can see them struggling with their back legs to break free, but the paste is too strong, and in the end they lie on their side and draw sustenance from the very thing they would rather escape from./ Let them lie there. For even if we could help them out of it, there would be so much glue hanging off them that their footsteps would be forever damaged. This glue is really dangerous. It consists of the following ingredients: fantasy, feeling, pathos, profundity and the like. As we may see, there is no place for beauty, lightheartedness and humour. And when I shout that the term Fantasy in these folks' eyes is roughly synonymous with 'Feeling', we can see that everything is running in the same direction. So everything is running in the sme direction, and this again means that in the deepest sense everything is at a standstill, i.e. there is no movement, or rather, no contrast. But if everything is going in the same direction, or belongs to the same gender, what else can come of this but sterility, emptiness? Maybe it's here that we can find an explanation for why musical works in the so-called 'grand style' – which for the time being dominates the opera house and the concert hall the world over – carries on exceedingly pathetically and grossly emotionally, precisely because in essence there is no contrasting material, which would engender fine, strong life, which would be true to itself and not shout more loudly than it has the power or energy to. The weak always shout the loudest.[33]

33 *I Musikens Verden er det saadan, at de fleste er blevet hængende i de store Flueplastre, der blev slaaet op for dem i deres Ungdom. Man ser dem arbejde med Bagbenene for at komme fri, men Klistret er for stærkt, og til sidst lægger de sig om paa Siden og æder og lever af det, de helst vilde ud af./Lad dem ligge. Thi selv om man maaske kunde hjælpe dem fri, vilde der dog hænge saa meget Klæbestof ved, at Fodtrittet for altid var ødelagt. Dette Klæbestof er farligt nok. Det bestaar af følgende Ingredienser: Fantasi, Følelse, Patos, Dybsindighed og – ligesindede. Som man ser, er der ingen Plads for Ynde, Letsind og Humor, og naar jeg røber, at Begrebet Fantasi i disse Folks Øjne omtrent er ensbetydende med 'Følelse', saa ser man, at alting løber i samme Retning. Alt gaar altså i samme Retning, og det vil atter sige, at der, i dybere Forstand, er Stilstand, d.v.s. at der ingen Bevægelse er, eller rettere intet Modsætningsforhold. Men i Fald nu alt gaaer i samme Retning eller hører til samme Køn, hvad kan saa heraf følge andet end Goldhed, Tomhed? Maaske ligger her en Forklaring paa, at de Musikværker i den saakaldte 'store Stil', der for Øjeblikket behersker Opera og Koncertsal Verden over, gebærder sig ovenud patetiske og groft-følsomme, netop fordi der i Dybden intet findes af det Kontrastof, der betinger det fine og stærke Liv, som bliver sig selv va'r og ikke raaber højere op, end der er Kraft og Spænding til. Den Svage raaber altid højest.* Nielsen, *Levende Musik*, 8th edn., Copenhagen 1947, 63.

The day after the publication of Glass's second feature article, Nielsen wrote a letter to his student, the music historian Knud Jeppesen (1892-1974):

> Dear Knud Jeppesen!
> Glass's articles make a decidedly malicious impression on me; so I don't know if there's any point in engaging with him. If only there were some points where engagement could be fruitful and instructive, that would be another matter; but I don't think there are.*/ A curious farrago!/ Best wishes, your/ C.N.
> *But when you write, there's always something in it; so it would still be exciting to see what you come up with.[34]

It appears that Jeppesen may not have replied to Nielsen's letter in writing, but the composer Finn Høffding (1899-1997), who was a student of Jeppesen, did counter Glass with a feature article in *Nationaltidende* on 25 September.[35] This carries the title 'The bygone and the current age'[36] and immediately questions Glass's definition of genius and talent. Noting that Glass refers in his article to Carl Nielsen's use of the terms in his book *Living Music*, Høffding contends that Glass has misunderstood Nielsen's intended meaning. Glass's distinction between the intuitively and intellectually functioning artist, i.e. the genius and the talent, is flawed, Høffding writes: 'with the great masters, both inspiration (a better word for artistic intuition) and artistic reflection (the intellectual) exist in almost perfect balance, usually with one aspect weighing a little more than the other and thereby characterising the artist.'[37] Another supposed misunderstanding on Glass's part – his perception of Nielsen's note on 'fantasy, feeling, pathos and profundity' as a dogma for young composers – is also examined by Høffding, along with Glass's accusation that young composers do not acknowledge 'recovered values, but simply overthrow them',[38] he comments:

34 *Kære Knud Jeppesen!/ Glas' Artikler gør Indtryk paa mig af noget vist ondsindet, saa jeg ved ikke om det har nogen Betydning at imødegaa ham. Var der blot nogle Punkter hvor en Imødegaaelse kunde være frugtbringende og oplysende var det en anden Sag, men det synes jeg ikke engang der er.**

*Et underligt Væv!/ Mange Hilsener Deres/ C.N./ *men naar De skriver kommer der altid noget, saa det kunde nok spænde mig at se Deres Pen.* Letter dated 18.9.1925 from Carl Nielsen to Knud Jeppesen, CNB VIII, 437.

35 Finn Høffding, '"Den svundne og den levende Tid." Komponisten Finn Høffding har sendt denne Artikel som "et Indlæg mod Louis Glass til Forsvar for de Unge"', feature article in *Nationaltidende* 25.9.1925.

36 *Den svundne og den levende Tid.*

37 *hos de store Skabere staar Inspiration (et bedre Ord for kunstnerisk Intuition) og kunstnerisk Eftertanke (det intellektuelle) nogenlunde i Ligevægt, dog i Regelen saaledes, at det ene er lidt mere overvejende end det andet og derfor karakteriserende Kunstneren.*

38 *indvundne Værdier, men blot kuldkaster disse.*

The younger generation simply does not acknowledge that Romanticism has achieved anything conspicuously valuable, but instead finds value further back in history, with Bach, Handel and Mozart, and *of course also with Beethoven*. It is an exaggeration to accuse the young generation of 'view[ing] the period between Mozart and our time as a Dark Age in music'. The truth is that the somewhat excessive deification of Beethoven, deriving from the age of Schumann and Wagner, has given way to a more reasonable judgement, while simultaneously interest has shifted more towards Mozart. Still less does the young generation wish to cast any 'suspicion' on the great masters of Romanticism. *Who would or could cast suspicion on a Schubert?* But what the young generation rightfully does is to fight against that *false profundity* with which the Late Romantics (from the age of and after Wagner) have sought to disguise their emptiness. These Late-Romantic composers do not think that notes are adequate in themselves, but rather that the works must express a philosophy of life, and the most pretentious titles, which have nothing to do with music but simply muddy genuine musical understanding, are placed as a label above their opus. Can there be any doubt that there is a hundred times more profundity in one of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos or in Mozart's G-minor Symphony than in Richard Strauss's thoroughly hollow Zarathustra Symphony [the tone poem *Also sprach Zarathustra*]? What is musical profundity other than an expression of a deeply sensitive and sincere individual? The younger generation wishes to guide music back to its natural ground; they wish to cleanse the melody that all too often has become sentimental and banal, to steer their fantasy and give it resilience in healthy and strong counterpoint./ And here the young generation in Denmark has a lot to thank Carl Nielsen for as its forerunner./ The young generation has great ideals, the same ones as all the great figures in music have had: those ideals that music alone can ask of itself. But it also has to fight the battle against prejudice created by the previous generation and to assert itself against the latter. There may therefore be some exaggeration[s], but the understanding ear knows how to put these in their place. It does a man little honour who by misunderstanding a statement would 'cast under suspicion' one of the nation's greatest sons and publicly misrepresent the younger generation's ambitions and ideals.[39]

39 *De Unge anerkender blot ikke, at Romantiken har indvundet noget synderlig værdifuldt, men finder Værdierne længere tilbage i Tiden, hos en Bach, en Händel og en Mozart og naturligvis ogsaa hos Beethoven. Det er en Overdrivelse at beskylde de Unge for at 'betragte Tidsrummet mellem Mozart og vor Tid som en Musikens Middelalder'. Sandheden er, at den noget overspændte Forgudelse af Beethoven, som stammer fra Schumanns og Wagners Tid, er veget for en mere rimelig Bedømmelse, samtidig med at Interessen har forskudt sig mere over mod Mozart. Endnu mindre falder det de*

The day after the publication of Høffding's article, Glass wrote a letter to the composer Knudåge Riisager (1897-1974) who apparently had responded to Glass's essays:

> Dear Mr. Knudåge Riisager!
> Thanks for your letter, which pleased me, because I found in it something I am looking for. My articles were simply an account of the impressions I have had here in my homeland, and of my urge to hear other words than those that occasionally appear publicly. I have not judged, but merely enquired. On the other hand, the response I received yesterday is not suitable to gaining my sympathy./ With warm regards/ Yours/ Louis Glass.[40]

We do not have Riisager's letter to Glass, but in an article from *Nationaltidende* from 30 September,[41] Glass includes a lengthy excerpt from it:

> Mr. Riisager writes:
> 'The War and its consequences showed us the outcome of the actions of the previous generation. Surely it cannot seem odd that we seek connection to

Unge ind at 'mistænkeliggøre' Romantikens store Mestre. Hvem vil og kan mistænkeliggøre en Schubert?Men hvad de Unge gerne og med Rette vil kæmpe imod, det er den forlorne Dybsindighed, som Efter-Romantikerne (fra Tiden med og efter Wagner) søger at dække deres Tomhed med. Disse Efter-Romantikens Komponister mener ikke, at Tonerne er nok i sig selv, – Værkerne maa være Udtryk for en Livs-Filosofi, og de mest pretentiøse Titler, der intet har med Musik at gøre, men blot kan forplumre ægte musikalsk Forstaaelse, bliver sat som Etikette over deres Opus. Er nogen i Tvivl om, at der i en af Bachs Brandenburgerkoncerter eller i Mozarts G-Moll-Symfoni er hundrede Gange mere Dybsind end i Richard Strauss' helt igennem hule Zarathustrasymfoni? Hvad er musikalsk Dybsind andet end et Udtryk for et dybtfølende og inderligt Gemyt? De Unge vil føre Musiken tilbage til dens naturlige Grundlag; de vil lutre Melodiken, der altfor ofte er løbet ud i det sødladne og banale, ave deres Fantasi og gøre den spændstig i en sund og stærk Kontrapunktik./Og her har den danske Ungdom meget at takke Carl Nielsen for som Foregangsmanden./De Unge har store Idealer, de samme, som Musikens Store alle har haft, de Idealer, som Musiken alene kan stille sig. Men de har tillige Kampen mod de Fordomme, som det forudgaaende Slægtled har skabt og gør gældende overfor dem. Derfor kan der komme Overdrivelse[r], men det forstaaende Øre véd at sætte disse paa Plads. Det tjener den Mand lidet til Ære, der ved at misforstaa en Udtalelse vil 'Mistænkeliggøre' en af Landets største Sønner og overfor Folk forvanske de Unges Bestræbelser og Idealer.

40 *Kære Hr. Knudåge Riisager!/ Tak for Brevet, som jeg var glad for, fordi jeg deri fandt noget af det, jeg søger. Mine Kroniker var kun en Redegørelse for de Indtryk, jeg har modtaget herhjemme, og for min Trang til at høre andre Ord end dem, der af og til er kommen offentlig frem. – Jeg har ikke dømt, men kun spurgt. – Derimod er et Svar, som det jeg fik i Aftes, ikke egnet til at vække min Tillid./ Med en hjertelig Hilsen/ Deres Louis Glass.* Letter dated Gentofte, 26.9.1925 from Glass to Riisager. Private collection.

41 Louis Glass, 'Musikalske Problemer. En afsluttende Bemærkning', *Nationaltidende* 30.9.1925.

something concrete? That we should move our efforts onto a different basis, one that seems simpler and clearer, in such a way that we can hope to build on firmer foundations? It is this that has led to the reduction in feelings, which you call 'the dogma of the uselessness of fantasy and feeling'. Our feelings are perhaps even stronger than before, but we have attended a strict school, and we have learnt to respond with caution and doubt to the absolute value of feelings – or rather: we have learnt to speak in more subdued tones and in simple words about big things. So when you say that reflection is necessary, you are quite right; I simply think it is more the duty of music to evoke this reflection in the listener than to bestow it upon him in its final state right from the beginning. Precisely in this way, music becomes an expression of what you so beautifully call "the deepest qualities in human nature". I would perhaps prefer to say "the highest", because it leads the mind upwards to those plains that lie outside our actual comprehension and draws us towards a clearer level./ As I am sure you know, I have only spoken inadequately here and have considered specifically these tendencies that concern the young generation worldwide. In a little country like ours, it will always be much more difficult to ensure that new ideas are heard. I believe, then, you will see how we in this nation's young generation are grateful to you for taking up this issue now...'

These words bring the message from the young generation that we in the older generation have been waiting for, and – as Mr. Riisager writes elsewhere in his letter – they also bear witness to 'the humble position the genuine seeker must always take in their art.'

Perhaps we can then agree on the fact that Carl Nielsen in his book *Living Music* does not call things by their proper name, in that on page 67 he should have written sentimentality instead of feeling and delusion instead of fantasy. But with this correction, his ideas would not be new, and there would not be anything to dispute. We could probably assert that purity and nobility have always characterised all outstanding Danish music.[42]

42 *Hr. Riisager skriver:/ 'Krigen og dens Følger viste os resultaterne af det foregaaende slægtleds handlinger. Kan det da synes mærkeligt, at vi søger tilknytning til noget konkret? At vi lægger vor stræben om paa et andet grundlag, der for os synes enklere og overskueligere, saaledes at vi derved gør os håb om at bygge videre paa et fastere underlag? Det er dette, der har fremkaldt den følelsernes reduktion, som De kalder "dogmet om fantasiens og følelsens unødvendighed." Vore følelser er maaske endnu stærkere end før, men vi har gaaet i en haard skole, og vi har lært at stille os afventende og tvivlende overfor følelsernes absolutte værdi – eller snarere: vi har lært at tale sagtere og med enklere ord om store ting. Naar De derfor siger, at reflexionen er nødvendig, har De ganske ret; kun tror jeg, at det er musikens opgave mere at fremkalde denne reflexion hos tilhøreren end at give ham den i tilendebragt stand allerede fra begyndelsen. Netop derved bliver musiken et udtryk for det, De saa smukt kalder "det dybeste i menneskets*

Glass's article is interesting in that it includes a representative of the younger generation, Knudåge Riisager, who did not belong to the circle surrounding Carl Nielsen. Glass thereby managed to explain the situation from a different position. The debate was then rounded off with a number of brief articles from Rued Langgaard[43] and Finn Høffding.[44]

Conclusion

Louis Glass and Carl Nielsen were almost the same age and, as mentioned, they were the only two Danish composers of the 1860s generation who wrote in large-scale forms. Thus a comparison seems quite appropriate. Their positions in Danish musical life were, however, very different. Nielsen attended the Royal Danish Conservatoire of Music and then gained a position in the Royal Danish Theatre Orchestra, then subsequently at The Music Society and the Conservatoire. Glass studied privately and attended his father's Conservatoire, where he would become the director. His platform in Danish musical life would also include the Danish Music Teachers' Association and for a number of years the Danish Concert Society – rather more marginal institutions. Everything points to Glass's network as being quite a lot narrower than Nielsen's. Furthermore, when he became a spokesman for the esoteric movement of Theosophy around 1910, it was inevitable that he would weaken his position in a public sense and also make it more problematic for a general audience to identify with his music. After Nielsen had made his 'move into folk-popular song' and had become one of its most important advocates, the differences were accentuated further. The identification of Nielsen's music with folk-popular style was especially evident after the publication of Folk High School Melody Book in 1922. It is no surprise that Carl Nielsen's *Living Music* should have offended Louis Glass, nor that criticism from Jeppesen and Høffding should have been expected.

natur." Jeg vilde nu foretrække at kalde det for "det højeste", fordi det fører tanken opad mod de egne, der ligger udenfor vor egentlige fatteevne og drager os mod et renere plan. / De vil forstaa, at jeg her kun har talt ufuldkomment og navnlig har tænkt paa de strømninger, der gaar gennem de unge verden over. I et lille land som vort er det altid meget sværere at vinde Ørenlyd for nye tanker. Saa meget mere tror jeg, De vil faa at mærke, at vi unge herhjemme er Dem taknemmelige, fordi De nu har taget sagen op til drøftelse.'/ Disse Ord bringer det Budskab fra de Unge, som vi ældre venter paa, og – som Hr. Riisager siger et andet Sted i sit Brev – bærer de tillige Vidnesbyrd om 'den ydmyge stilling, som den ærligt søgende altid maa indtage overfor sin kunst.'/ Maaske kan vi derfor blive enige om, at Carl Nielsen i sin Bog 'Levende Musik' ikke kalder Tingene ved deres rette Navn, idet han S. 67 burde have skrevet Føleri i Stedet for Følelse og Fantasteri i Stedet for Fantasi. Men saaledes korrigeret vilde hans Tanker ikke være ny, og der vilde ikke være noget at strides om. Man tør vel nok fastslaa, at Renhed og Adel altid har karakteriseret al fremragende dansk Musik.

43 Rued Langgaard, 'Musiken og de Unge', *Nationaltidende* 1.10.1925.

44 Finn Høffding, '"Den svundne og den levende Tid"', response to Rued Langgaard, *Nationaltidende* 2.10.1925.

One may then ask: are the above-quoted letters – including some stricly speaking private ones – an expression of anything other than two colleagues' personal differences and perhaps a bit of jealousy from Louis Glass's side, and is there really any reason to publish them here? Yes, there certainly is, given view that Nielsen and Glass were the most prominent Danish symphonic composers of their generation.

They were both formed within a late-19th century culture, but whereas Nielsen soon moved away from it, it seems the transcendent values of symbolism were more persistent in the work of Glass.

Nielsen's and Glass's development therefore went in different directions. They were 'opposites' – 'luckily for Danish music', as Glass writes. It is, however, evident that ideologically there was really not enough space for both of them at that time in Danish musical life. But if they were complementary to one another in their art – which Louis Glass seems to have believed – we can only hope that posterity will somewhat rectify this sad state of affairs.

A B S T R A C T

Carl Nielsen and Louis Glass were close contemporaries, and their musical careers began in parallel. But their points of departure were different. Whereas Nielsen took off from Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák and Svendsen, Glass was particularly inspired by César Franck and Bruckner. Around the time of World War One, the differences became pronounced. Nielsen gained great popularity with his folk-like songs, whilst Glass submersed himself in theosophy. Symbolic of the differences are Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, *The Inextinguishable*, and Glass's Fifth, *Sinfonia Svastica*, each of which foregrounds the concept of 'Life', but from a different point of view. Glass clearly perceived that he had become cast in Nielsen's shadow, and in a short correspondence with him in 1923 he tried to plead his case that they were both working in the same direction but from different points of departure. He felt that they were complementary. Nielsen's side of the correspondence has not survived, and we therefore do not know his attitude.

NIELSEN AND THE FRENCH PRESS (1903-1951)

By Jean-Luc Caron. Translated by Michelle Assay

Nielsen had good reason to be fond of Paris. He met and married his wife there on 20 March 1891, after less than a week's acquaintance, during his mind-expanding first Grand Tour of Europe on the Ancker Scholarship. The calendar suggests that their first child, Irmelin, born on 9 December that year, was conceived at almost exactly the same time. During the composer's six-and-a-half week stay in the French capital, his diary almost dries up. But this is explained by the 'whirlwind of happiness' he was experiencing with Anne Marie and the cultural feast they were enjoying in each other's company.[1] Even in the midst of their marital crisis 28 years later, she wrote to him, 'When I think back, the happiest moments in my life were in Paris and Italy.[2]

It would be nearly 30 years before Nielsen would return. On the first of two visits to Paris in April/May 1920 he met his old friend, Busoni, and on the second he 'made the acquaintance of Consul-General Prior,[3] who is very musical and is chairman of a 'Franco-Danish Society'.[4] It is not recorded whether he established any more direct contact with that society; by this time he was evidently as interested in the career opportunities the city had to offer as in its social opportunities.

Even so, the cultural life of the capital remained firm in his affections, as emerges from a letter of 24 August 1923 to Oluf Ring, composer, author and co-editor with Nielsen of the *Folkhøjskolens Melodibog*. Ring had evidently sought his advice on a congenial place to further his studies in composition:

> [I]n your position I would definitely go to Paris. There are many concerts and opera productions there, together with a way of life and at the same time – if

1 Diary entry of 30 March 1891, CNL, 87.
2 Letter of 24 August 1919, CNL 462.
3 Ferdinand Prior (1868-1948), bank director, Consul General in Paris 1919-1933.
4 CNL, 477.

> you can find a good location – some peace and quiet for work that I don't believe can be found in any other city in the world. I don't know what you think about the visual arts, but there are certainly wonderful collections of first-rate works from all times and countries in Paris. If you really must have a composition teacher, I shall see about getting the best information in this regard, and then you can just write to me./ I would envy you a stay in Paris, and I don't think you would regret it. If you can just speak a little French, you will realize afterwards that you've been in a vivid, intoxicating, stimulating environment that you will long for ever after.[5]

From 21 November that year he made another short trip in Paris, after which he reported back in a letter to his son-in-law, Emil Telmányi:

> I've been in Paris for about 10 days and had a really fine trip. You know that there was a concert down there with Danish music. My Quartet was a great success, and Christiansen played my [Theme and] Variations on a different day at a matinée, which went down well with the musicians. But I don't think there's much significance to the whole story. The French musicians were very amiable, and we were treated excellently, but we are still very different. French taste amounts to delicious sound and exquisite but bloodless music.[6]

His reserve towards 'French taste' in music may have been not unconnected with the behind-the-scenes machinations associated with this event.[7] Be that as it may, his reservations found a mirror image in the reaction of certain influential French critics to his music, as will be seen. Although he himself only engaged fully with the musical life of the French capital beginning in October 1926, the French press reported on the main performances from which his reputation benefitted in Paris from as early as 1903. Since a full account of this reception in major French newspapers of the time has never been given, this article offers a chronicle, with minimal commentary but extensive quotations, covering everything from brief factual notices to more considered critical evaluations. The largest part of this account will document the reception of his October 1926 visit, which included the premiere of his Flute Concerto. In the following, misprints in original reviews are silently corrected, unless specially indicated.

5 CNL, 570-71.
6 CNL, 579.
7 For a detailed account, see John Fellow's introductory essay to CNB VII, 43-57.

Early mentions in the French press (1903-1926)

On 8 February 1903 in the journal *Le Monde artiste: théâtre, musique, beaux-arts, littérature*,[8] Paul Milcour[9] presented information on Nielsen, who was practically unknown in France at the time, drawing attention to the extent of his reputation in his native country:

> The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen recently gave the first performance of an opera entitled *Saul and David*, which the composer, M. Carl Nielsen, himself conducted. It seems to be a very remarkable work, in particular dramatically, and it has enjoyed a brilliant success. Shortly beforehand, the composer had offered the public a work of another genre, which, however, was quite bizarre – a symphony which he called *The Four Temperaments* (!) which is more of an orchestral suite than a real symphony. This work was performed in one of the sessions of the Danish Musical Society, a new concert society recently organised by young composers in order to make themselves known to the public.

On 16 December 1906 the same journal informed its readers briefly that 'The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen has presented [the opera] *Maskarade*. The Danish composer, Nielsen, conducted his work himself. Although Copenhagen is a mere 1250 kilometres away from Paris, we know nothing more about this event.'

Danish music was generally less strongly represented in Paris than that of its northern neighbours. One of the first works of Carl Nielsen to be performed there was probably the song 'Silkesko over gylden læst' (Silken shoe over golden last), a setting of a text by Jens Peter Jacobsen, composed in 1891. It was performed on Thursday 25 November 1920 at the Salle Gaveau, by the tenor Mischa-Leon[10] who also championed songs by Merikanto, Lie, Sinding, Sibelius and Grieg. No reviews have been discovered for this event.

On 18 July 1921 *Le Temps*[11] informed readers from Copenhagen: 'With his very personal inspiration, the composer Carl Nielsen knew how by combining old tunes,

8 Weekly journal, published in Paris 1862 to 1914.

9 French journalist, contributor to the diary and obituary sections of *Le Monde artiste* between 1901 and 1905.

10 Mischa-Léon (1889-1928), real name Harry Haurowitz, was a Danish tenor. He sang in the 1922 French premiere of Janáček's *Diary of One who Disappeared* at the Paris Conservatoire.

11 French conservative daily newspaper, published in Paris, 1861-1942, styled 'A reference newspaper for the elites'.

even hymns of the Entente,[12] to unleash enthusiasm, where the aristocracy of Mme B. Hennings personified the Fatherland.' [Signed Lugné-Poe.][13]

On 13 February 1922 *Comoedia*[14] reported from Denmark:

> the main attraction of the second concert of the Music Society in Copenhagen was the premiere of Carl Nielsen's Fifth Symphony. The composer's tendencies were revealed as the same as in his other works, *Aladdin* and *The Mother*. This symphony, whose construction recalls certain pages from Berlioz, comes across more as music for the theatre than as an orchestral work. Nevertheless, it has made a strong impression, and in Denmark it is hoped that Nielsen's work will be appreciated abroad.

In a letter of 17 November 1923 to his son-in-law, the violinist Emil Telmányi then in the United States, Nielsen wrote:

> There's going to be a Danish Chamber Music concert down there, which is excellent. The Breuning Quartet will play my E flat [String Quartet No. 3, CNW 57], [Christian] Christiansen my [Theme and] Variations, etc. We are guests of the French state, and the whole thing is highly official. There are forces (all the Danish artists and the French Minister) lobbying for me to conduct *The Inextinguishable* in the Pasdeloup Concerts.[15]

This hope was never to be realised. However, the event did not pass unnoticed in the Press. The forthcoming concert at the hall of the Conservatoire was announced in the *Journal*[16] on 18 November 1923, and in *Comoedia* the next day. On the 20th of that month, *Le Gaulois*[17] published a column under the byline A. Garo,[18] informing its readers:

12 The Triple Entente between France, Britain and Russia of 1907, formed in opposition to the Alliance of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy.
13 Aurélien-Marie Lugné-Poe (1860-1940), actor, director, theatre director, and founder of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.
14 Cultural journal published 1907-1914 and 1919-1937, first as a daily then weekly.
15 CNL, 578.
16 Paris-based daily, published 1892-1944.
17 Daily French literary and political newspaper, published between 1868 and 1929. Having become conservative and legitimist (i.e. in support of the deposed French monarchy) it was read mainly by the nobility and the upper middle classes until 1914. In 1929 it merged with *Le Figaro*.
18 Probably a pseudonym. No further details known.

> Following the concert of French music that took place on 21 March in Copenhagen, the French Association for Expansion and Artistic Exchange has taken the initiative to give a concert of Danish music in Paris. This concert will take place by invitation in the hall of the Conservatoire ... on Friday 23 November. The programme includes works by Carl Nielsen, Louis Glass, Paul [Poul] Schierbeck, Peder Gram, Rud Langgaer [Rued Langgaard], Peter Heise, P.-E. Lange-Müller and Knudåge Riisager, performed by the Breuning-Bache Quartet, pianists Max Rytter and Chr[istian] Christiansen, and singers Mlle. Thyre Larsen from the Royal Opera in Copenhagen and M. Aage Thygesen. [Signed A. Garo.]

The same information was repeated in *Le Journal des Débats*[19] the next day, 21 November 1923, and in *Le Temps* of the same day.

On 30 November 1923 in *Le Ménestrel*,[20] René Brancour[21] wrote:

> Danish musicians came to present to us a selection of compositions of their recent or current masters. This was certainly an interesting initiative, as we know hardly anything about foreign music, which should not be really surprising given that we know so little of our own, apart from a few exceptions that invariably occupy the platform. The evening began with a string quartet by Monsieur Carl Nielsen, 'the leader of the neo-classical school', as we learned from a notice written in rather fanciful French. 'He formally follows classical traditions but his special Danish naturalness is never hard to find. He speaks in a quite modern language.' Thankfully not quite! And the *Allegro* [*recte Allegretto*] *pastorale*, interrupted by a spirited *Presto*, testifies to a very classical taste ... The ensemble, consisting of Mlle. Gunna Breuning, M. Gerhard Rafn, Mlle. Ella Faber and M. Poulus Bache, proved to be of great quality, except in a few high-pitched violin notes which would have gained from less imperious assertiveness. M. Poulus Bache deserves a special mention. This cellist has a magnificent sound, especially in the lower registers, and he phrases with penetrating simplicity. Finally Messrs. Max Rytter and Christian Christiansen took the piano parts with perfect mastery, never departing from the necessary subordination that is so rarely granted to the soloists. In sum, this was an

19 Published 1789-1944 and discontinued after the Liberation because of its appearance during the German occupation.

20 Prestigious weekly musical journal, published in Paris 1833-1940.

21 French composer and writer (1862-1948), taught at the St Louis in Paris, music critic, curator at the Museum of the Paris Conservatoire.

> interesting occasion, which should result in making us more attentive to the often harmonious echoes that reach us from across borders.

Paul Damly[22] of *Le Petit Journal*[23] reported on 28 November 1923:

> There has never been a better time for musical propaganda than at this time when the French school can claim supremacy. This is a done deal, and its direction is in safe and vigilant hands. In response to the hospitality which some of our compatriots, including M. Albert Roussel, received a few months ago in Denmark, the most eminent official patrons honoured the concert given on Friday at the Conservatoire ..., during which we heard two string quartets by Messrs. Nielsen and Riisager, songs by Messrs. Glass, Heise and Muller, and a Sonata for Piano and Violin by M. Peder Gram. The Danish musicians were known to us only through Buxtehude, beloved ancestor for organists, and through Niels Gade, whose name inspired Schumann to write an exquisite page in the *Album for the Young*. The aforementioned works attest to a personality and to ethnic characteristics that are only waiting to be freed from a Germanic influence, hitherto fatal.

On 14 June 1924, *Le Journal des Débats* announced the performance of Nielsen's song, *Irmelin Rose*, based on a poem of the same title by Jens Peter Jacobsen, set to music in 1891. In the course of this Concert Touche,[24] alongside Nielsen's song which the author of the article, 'F.V.'[25] described as 'a beautiful madrigal', American baritone Reinald Werrenrath (1883-1953), singing in four languages, had also performed the aria 'Aprite un po' quegli occhi' from *The Marriage of Figaro*.

On Wednesday 14 April 1926, at the Salle Gaveau, the Paris Philharmonic Orchestra under the Danish conductor Frederik Schnedler-Petersen put the spotlight on several important, more or less popular scores. The daring choice of repertoire was indicative of the great variety of music that Paris offered almost every day to its listeners. Of note are the *Suite ancienne* by Norwegian Johan Halvorsen, the final scene of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung,* the *Cockerels' Dance* from Nielsen's second opera *Maskarade*, composed 1904-1906 and highly appreciated in Denmark but at that time totally

22 Pseudonym for Paul Locard (1871-1952), magistrate, musicologist, music critic.

23 Leading French newspaper, republican and conservative Parisian daily, published 1863-1944.

24 Francis Touche 1872-1937), French cellist and conductor, director of the Concerts Touche on the Boulevard de Strasbourg in Paris 1906-1926. See Jean-Luc Caron, 'Un défenseur fidèle de l'œuvre de Grieg: Monsieur Francis Touche', *Bulletin de l'Association Française Carl Nielsen.* No. 11 (1994), 109-14.

25 Identity unknown.

unknown elsewhere. The programme also included Mozart's Piano Concerto in E flat major as well as the famous orchestral piece entitled *Midsommarvaka* or St John's Night (Swedish Rhapsody No. 1) by the Swede Hugo Alfvén, which apparently received a fine performance. Then there was Wagner's 'Prelude and Liebestod' from *Tristan and Isolde*, which was played just before two works by the Italian Vittorio Gnecchi.

On 23 April 1926 the columnist of *Le Ménestrel* summed up the concert:

> M. Petersen is a calm conductor, with no unnecessary gestures and nothing for show, but this does not in any way affect the warmth and precision of the performance. M. Petersen had the good idea of bringing us three works that had not been performed in France ... The fragments of the ballet by the Danish composer, M. Nielsen ... show more originality: there is verve and good humour and the orchestration is amusing. Whatever one might think of the works themselves, the most important point is that by introducing them to us M. Schnedler-Petersen has in effect fulfilled the purpose of artistic exchanges for which these concerts with foreign conductors seem to be planned. It is much more interesting for us to see these conductors perform works of their country, or at least of their race [!], than to find out how they understand our own works or the works of other civilisations. As a result, the concert led by M. Petersen was one of the most interesting in the series given by the Paris Philharmonic Orchestra. V.M.[26]

Belated recognition of a master (October 1926)

After spending some time in Italy, Nielsen arrived in Paris for a fourth visit in October 1926. His reputation as the most illustrious living Danish composer had preceded him. On Friday 22 October the *Semaine à Paris*[27] put the information succinctly: 'Concert of the Danish composer, Carl Nielsen'. Similarly, on 21 October, *L'Humanité*[28] confined itself to an advertisement of the concert, without accompanying commentary. Posters announced the event, which found echoes in the French press.

On Thursday 21 October, *Le Figaro*[29] stated simply: 'Salle Gaveau, a symphonic concert conducted by Carl Nielsen and Emil Telmányi.' An edition of 14 October had previously announced in a few words:

26 V.M. were the initials of Marcel de Valmalète, founder of the famous Valmalète Bureau des concerts in 1924. He died in 1957.

27 Illustrated weekly journal (Paris-Guide) appearing on Fridays, published 1922-1944.

28 Newspaper founded in 1904 by Jean Jaurès, socialist in orientation until 1920, then communist.

29 Daily newspaper founded in 1826, right-wing, liberal and conservative in its editorial tendency, the oldest daily French newspaper.

> a concert of high artistic significance dedicated to the works of the celebrated Danish composer Carl Nielsen will take place at the Salle Gaveau on Thursday evening 11 [sic] October, featuring the Orchestra of the Society of Concerts of Conservatoire conducted by Messrs.. Carl Nielsen and Emil Telmányi. Also taking part will be violinist M. Peder Møller and flautist M. Holger Gilbert Jespersen, both Danish musicians.

The 16 October issue of *Chantecler*[30] had advertised:

> Carl Nielsen concert, next Thursday, 21 October, at the Salle Gaveau. The celebrated Danish composer Carl Nielsen will give a concert of his own works... The programme will include works that mark out the composer's vast output. M. Nielsen is already well known in Parisian musical circles, perhaps even too well-known for it to be necessary to issue a reminder of his fine and distinguished career .... He is certain to receive a warm welcome from our regular concert goers.

For its part, on 15 October *Le Courrier Musical*[31] previewed the 21 October event as follows:

> ... a great symphonic concert devoted to some masterworks by Carl Nielsen, the illustrious Danish composer... A great success in perspective... The magnificent programme will include the Overture to Act 2 of *Saul and David*, the Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 5, the Flute Concerto and five pieces from *Aladdin*. A great success in prospect. Impresario: Marcel de Valmalète.

Emil Telmányi recorded that : 'The concert is to take place in the Salle Gaveau, a medium-sized hall [1000 seats] with a pleasant acoustic. The orchestra is that of the Conservatoire, with magnificent, first-rate musicians.'[32]

All the participants applied themselves to create a great show, which received a public ovation. Telmányi conducted the *Prelude*, the Fifth Symphony and the Flute Concerto;

30 Literary, satirical and humouristic journal. Its administrative seat was in Hanoi. Published 1932-194?.

31 A journal of advertisements, information and music reviews. French music periodical, published in Paris, 1897-1922. Renamed *Courrier musical et theâtrale* until the 1930s.

32 Quoted in Mogens Rafn Mogensen, *Carl Nielsen. Der dänische Tondicher*, Arbon, Verlag Eurotext Arbon, 1992, 964.

Nielsen conducted his Violin Concerto and the music from *Aladdin*. After this unique and memorable concert, Nielsen wrote to his daughter Irmelin and her husband:

> The concert yesterday evening was one of the greatest experiences of my life. The Salle Gaveau was full to bursting (lots of tickets were *sold*, but of course we'd also sent out many complimentaries). The famous Conservatoire Orchestra played superbly. The gentlemen began the rehearsals very diffidently [*rettirè*], but in the end there was glowing enthusiasm! The top musicians were there. Roussel and Honegger, together with several German conductors, presented themselves, and the two above-named modern composers praised me. The public, a real French one, was engaged throughout the evening, and after [extracts from] *Aladdin* – which I conducted myself – well now!!/ Today I was invited to breakfast (highly official) with various ministers, Brussel[33] (Director of the Académie des Beaux-Arts) and Paul Léon,[34] who are in charge of cultural life, *et al*. At the end there was a flattering speech in my honour, and Paul Léon informed me that the President had appointed me *Officier* of the Légion d'honneur,[35] tucked the rosette into my button-hole and kissed me on both cheeks (great applause!). This took place in a beautiful palace with a large garden outside, and you can imagine that the whole ceremony and the breakfast were fine!!/ Emil conducted the Symphony [No. 5] and was warmly appreciated; he did it excellently too. Because of my heart condition, which I actually don't notice, I only conducted the Violin Concerto and *Aladdin*. Peder Møller had a great success, the new Flute Concerto likewise (Gilbert Jespersen played very beautifully). We're being showered with praise these days, and there are many who want to write about me and talk to me. The whole thing is a great experience and quite new for me.[36]

An account of the concert by Maurice Imbert[37] appeared in the 1 November 1926 issue of *Le Courrier Musical*:

> We have just become acquainted with a significant number of works by M. Carl Nielsen, one of the leaders of the Danish musical school and director of the

33 Robert Brussel (1874-1940), French civil servant. Nielsen may have confused his position with that of Paul Léon.

34 Paul Léon (1874-1962), French civil servant, historian of architecture, director of the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris 1919-1933.

35 Second up in the five ranks of France's highest honour, above chevalier and below commandeur.

36 CNL, 659-60.

37 French composer and music critic (1893-1961).

Copenhagen Conservatoire. In all these, there was nothing that we Latins would dream of finding; no evocation of those atmospheres, those colours, those customs of Nordic life for which our curious minds are nostalgic; these are international expressions, if I may say so, where memories of César Franck's language (M. Nielsen seems to have a weakness for the *Symphonic Variations*) coexist with that of Brahms, R. Strauss, even Stravinsky. Possessing a robust technique, from a contrapuntal or orchestral point of view, M. Nielsen has perfectly assimilated his personal values in an evolved manner. In the Flute Concerto, for example, the combinations of timbres points to a very modern conception, worthy of the author of the *Histoire du soldat*, while the syntax would hardly have alienated Th. Dubois himself;[38] and similarly the 'Market at Ispahan' is quite Stravinskian in its construction and its very classical structure with a most charming polymelody. For me the architecture is more nebulous; I find it difficult to grasp the direction of the discourse: perhaps this music requires to be felt rather than reflected upon. The Symphony [No. 5] Op. 50 is very curious, with its percussion playing an important descriptive and emotional role despite the fact that it is written in an accessible style. It is a programme symphony rather than pure music. The Violin Concerto was performed by a first-rate violinist, M. Peder Møller, and the Flute Concerto by M. Jespersen, a top-class flautist, both of whom were trained in France, incidentally. Conducting the superb orchestra of the Société des Concerts, M. Nielsen and his son-in-law Emil Telmányi, took turns at the podium. Both received an ovation.

On 25 October *Le Gaulois* published a review by Louis Schneider:[39]

The overture to *Saul and David* has no shortage of force or vigour. The Violin Concerto is bristling with difficulties, and the technique here kills the inspiration; only the final rondo is not lacking in originality; the violinist Peder Møller took advantage of it as a display vehicle. Conducted by the composer's son-in-law, the Symphony No. 5 takes on the appearance at times of an oriental rhapsody with percussive instruments. The convoluted and ponderous [*lourd*] Flute Concerto found an excellent performer in M. Jespersen. The most savourable moment of the concert was the suite from *Aladdin*, which has colour, clarity and the advantage of being made up of short pieces; this work was a real success for the composer.

38 Théodore Dubois, highly conservative French composer (1837-1924).
39 French dramatist, music critic and translator (1861-1934).

Also on 25 October Robert Brussel reported in *Le Figaro*: 'The Carl Nielsen concert gave us the triple pleasure of hearing a gifted conductor (M. Telmányi), a finely-schooled violinist (M. Peder Møller), and an excellent flautist (M. Jespersen), as well as to appreciate the considerable output of the Danish master in all its variety.'

On 29 October a lengthy notice by H. de Curzon[40] appeared in *Le Ménestrel*:

> Nothing is more interesting to study than a well-chosen selection of works by a foreign composer who is still unknown to us, in a perfect performance. The French Association for Artistic Expansion and Exchange ... arranged for a concert of works by M. Carl Nielsen, promoted by the Société des Concerts, which was very warmly received. M. Nielsen, who was born on the island of Funen in 1865, was first a village musician, then a pupil at the Copenhagen Conservatoire, violinist at the Royal Theatre Orchestra, later a conductor and finally director of the Royal Conservatory Royal of Music; he did not reach his current status of composer until much later. The works he chose to bring to our attention all date from 1902 to 1926. These are all orchestral, but we are told that many of his popular melodies, little Danish songs, are constantly sung by 'adults and children'; and the oldest of the works presented here is from an opera-oratorio entitled *Saul and David*./ We heard a kind of symphonic interlude from the opera: the opening of the second act, brilliant in style, warmly characterised by the brass, but enveloped by the strings. In general, M. Nielsen's orchestra is very flexible [*plastique*], very vivid in its colours, choice of sounds and the liveliness of picturesque expressions. I do not see exactly an architectural plan followed in his compositions, but rather a conception especially enamoured of the freedom of the dream, and which, often, and no doubt because of this, does not indulge in excessive length. The Violin Concerto, in two movements, disappoints a little in this respect. If the style is very modern, the violin retains the somewhat abusive omnipotence of older concertos. It begins without orchestral prelude and does not stop, the more so since it has a pedal point in each movement. The second movement especially is engaging, with its penetrating, dreamy Adagio and its picturesque rondo. The performer, an excellent musician, was M. Peder Möller, who is by the way no stranger to us. Do you remember the concerts performed at the Palmarium in the Jardin d'Acclimatation? He was the one who ran them, and they were often most remarkable./ The Symphony No. 5, also in two movements, is also

40 French translator, historian, musicologist and archivist (1861-1942).

not exempt from a somewhat tiresomely drawn-out development. It is clear, moreover, that it is the need for evocative expression that is the cause. In the first movement, a beautiful harmonious wave [presumably the G major *adagio*] succeeds a series of almost discordant, yet blended sonorities: it is a vision full of imagination, which the second movement seems to allow to flourish with more externalised nuances – over a deep pedal. M. Nielsen immediately followed it with a Flute Concerto, which he has just completed, and where I still see free discourse and capricious echoes of the sounds of nature rather than an actual composition. M. Holger Gilbert Jespersen, who performed it, has a very beautiful sound – pure, round and delicately nuanced. He was a pupil of Hennebains[41] and Philippe Gaubert.[42] Conducted by M. Nielsen and placed at the end, though composed seven years earlier, were five orchestral pieces from the fairy-tale *Aladdin* by [Adam] Oehlenschlaeger, the Danish national poet, which Nielsen composed for the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. Their significance is probably less than that of the previous works, but they had a greater effect on the audience, thanks to their originality, verve and the picturesque expression of their evocations. We heard a march, rhythmicised by brass and percussion; a Hindu Dance, with measured, slow meanderings in the woodwind, really charming in its shape; another dance, a kind of sound-painting of the 'Market at Isfahan', which was fully successful; here the winds again make their embroideries on a light background of strings; and finally a Negro Dance, fast and feverish./ M. Nielsen conducted these last pieces himself. The other works were conducted by his son-in-law, the violinist Emil Telmányi, with great flexibility and precision.

On 27 October *Le Guide du concert* (Paris journal 1910-1966) P.R. opined:

M. Carl Nielsen is one of the most prominent personalities of the contemporary Scandinavian school. His symphonic output, while considerable and very varied, quite clearly steers away from curiosities of contemporary technique, but is valuable on the other hand for its essential qualities of inspiration – abundant to the point of profusion – and of technical mastery. A rich diversity reigns between the various works on the programme, from the quite classical Interlude from *Saul and David* to the familiar picturesqueness of the oriental Suite from *Aladdin*, via the intense romanticism and powerfully expression of

41 Adolphe Hennebains (1862-1914), French flautist.
42 French flautist, composer and conductor (1879-1941).

> the Fifth Symphony, 'Dreams and Deeds' [Nielsen's sub-title in his draft score, presumably mentioned in the programme note]. A very lively and spontaneous reception greeted all these works, as well as the two concertos, for Violin Op. 33 and for Flute (1926), well served by remarkable performers.... The direction of the orchestra under the baton of the composer was original and personal and under that of M Emil Telmányi, perfectly solid. The two took turns at the podium.

On Friday 29 October 1926 Th. Lindenlaub[43] described Nielsen's music in *Le Temps*, as follows:

> There is no area of music in which this composer, who is currently the leading representative of his country, has not produced remarkable works. From the simple song which speaks directly to the heart thanks to the naturalness of its tone, to the symphony where the most elaborate form embeds the most carefully chosen ideas, Carl Nielsen has tackled all genres, not neglecting the theatre either (*Saul and David* and music for the fairy-tale *Aladdin*). In all this, he has produced significant works ... Now over sixty, he is still in full creative vigour, attesting to the most interesting affinities with the art of today, yet bearing an impeccable taste that comes from the art of yesteryear. This rare ability to adapt appeared in the succession of works presented to us in this interesting concert; including a Violin Concerto (very well played by M. Peder Møller), the Fifth Symphony, and stage music for Oehlenschlaeger's *Aladdin*. M. Nielsen conducted these latter picturesque-spiritual and delicately coloured pieces which reminded me in their discreet and tasteful orientalism of [Legend] *Zorohayda* [Op. 11] by (Johan) Svendsen, another Scandinavian of the previous generation. M. Nielsen was greeted with the warmest and most deserved applause.

In *Comoedia* of October 24, 1926, Paul Le Flem[44] attested:

> M. Carl Nielsen is the most prominent composer in Denmark. A highly regarded conductor, he has given up this career, in which he had shown remarkable qualities, in order to devote himself entirely to composition ... What is striking in M. Nielsen's works is his mastery in handling of the orchestra. He

43 Théodore Lindenlaub (1854-1929), college professor and journalist, editor of the *Le Temps*.

44 1881-1984, French composer, conductor and music critic, worked for *Comoedia* from 1922 to 1938.

> is remarkably skilful in the way he groups the timbres, associates them and draws sharp contrasts from them... The 5th Symphony, which M. Nielsen conducted himself [sic – the Symphony was conducted by Telmányi], is an important and highly developed work in two movements. The first part, restrained in character, is in stark contrast with the second, which is tumultuous and vehemently rhythmic. It seems that this symphony responds to a psychological fact that the composer has imposed on himself in order to remain more in control of his musical ideas and to manage their unfolding. The five pieces from *Aladdin* have above all a picturesque character ... The Market Square in Isfahan curiously places four small orchestras in opposition to one another, each living its own independent life. Two concertos were also on the programme. The Violin Concerto is a highly virtuosic work and a vehicle for M. Peder Møller, a violinist as distinguished as he is a master of his art. The Concerto for Flute and Orchestra, remarkably performed by M. Holger Gilbert-Jespersen, is M. Nielsen's latest work. It is spicy, lively and with no shortage of humour. M. Emil Telmányi took on an important part of the programme with great confidence.

For its part, *Excelsior*[45] of 28 October 1928 informed its readers:

> Carl Nielsen's work reflects all the stages of contemporary aesthetics, assimilated with an impressive wealth of personal inspiration. The orientalism of this Danish composer in the score to *Aladdin* is strikingly objective compared to that of Rimsky-Korsakov, filled with the presence of the inexhaustible *Scheherazade*. With Nielsen the sonic expression is the exact equivalent of a visual evocation ... From the Wagnerism of *Saul and David* (1902) to the shimmering Concerto for Flute and Orchestra (1926) we find passed down the conquests of which our Debussy was the brilliant initiator. [Signed Edouard Tromp.[46]]

The day after the concert, Nielsen and his companions went to a so-called intimate lunch which brought together personalities including Henri Rabaud, the director of Paris Conservatoire. On this occasion he was presented with the Légion d'honneur. On 23 October *Comoedia* reported: 'A luncheon at the Cercle Interallié was offered in honour of the great Danish violinist [sic!] Carl Nielsen. It was presided over by M Paul Léon, the director of the [Académie des] Beaux-Arts, who presented him with the rosette of Officer of the Légion d'Honneur.'

45 Illustrated daily newspaper, published 1910-1940, whose political orientation gradually shifted to the right.

46 French author, dates unknown.

In its edition of 23 October 1926, *Le Gaulois* gave further details:

> A luncheon was offered yesterday at the Cercle Interallié in honour of M. Carl Nielsen ... whose concert on Thursday was a great success and was honoured by the presence of Prince and Princess René de Nourbon-Parme and Princess Aage of Denmark. Also present at the luncheon was M Paul Léon, the former minister, who after giving a charming toast presented M. Nielsen with the cross of the Officer of Légion d'honneur. M. H.A. Bernhoft, Danish ambassador in France, M. Engelsted, embassy advisor, M. Helge Wamberg, Danish press attaché, M. Pillat as well as other dignitaries were also present.

Les Annales politiques et littéraires of 14 November 1926, offered similar information.

In gratitude, Nielsen replied with the following speech, quoted in *Comoedia* (23 October 1926):

> In my youth, I spent a few months in Paris./ During this period César Franck died and I attended the concert given in memory of the great master./ I had unforgettable impressions of the French spirit, of French culture, of all human values .and of the ever-present sensitivity of your illustrious nation./ My admiration and love were established for everything that has formed your spirit./ Later, I came to France many times, but only for short stays. Now I find myself in your Paris, surrounded by benevolence and sympathy for my art. And I remember today all that I experienced in my youth because, deep down, nothing that then filled my soul has changed in your country: the world still turns, with hope and enthusiasm, towards the immense construction that is French culture and French art in all its categories./ The nerve centre of the world for science, literature and art vibrates in this city, in this people. Gentlemen, you may understand how happy and touched I am at the splendid reception you have given me, and I thank you with all my heart – you, Monsieur le Directeur [Léon], a friend of Denmark and our art, who have graciously honoured this luncheon with your presence, and you, Monsieur Brussel,[47] director of this active association, which is well known in my country, who have organised my concert so skilfully./ Thank you and au revoir![48]

47 Robert Brussel, director of the French Association for Expansion and Artistic Exchanges.

48 Reproduced in *Samtid*, 398.

A few days later, on 1 November, Luis Vuillemin[49] reported in *Paris Soir*:[50] 'An unfortunate influenza prevented me from hearing [works of Carl Nielsen]. It's most regrettable, the more so given that M. Nielsen has always been a great friend to our French composers. The government has honoured him with the rosette of Légion d'Honneur... Bravo!'

A musical evening in honour of Carl Nielsen took place on 22 October, the day after the celebrated concert at the Gaveau. A programme of chamber music was led by Peder Møller (violin) and Emil Reesen (piano), including works by Kai Sentius, Nielsen (Two *Humoresque-Bagatelles*), Pugnani, Schubert and Bazzini. Nielsen himself performed several of his *Humoresque-Bagatelles* at the piano. The evening unfolded in the presence of Maurice Ravel, Arthur Honegger and Albert Roussel. It was followed by a nocturnal visit of Paris.[51]

In a letter of 13 January to his sister Louise Jacobsen in Chicago, Nielsen wrote:

> In October a big concert with my works was put on in Paris. It was Paris's finest orchestra, and the hall (the Salle Gaveau) was full of the very best French public, who acclaimed me joyously when I appeared to conduct the last piece on the programme [the *Aladdin* excerpts] myself. Telmányi conducted most of the programme, and the whole thing was like a dream, with all that praise. There were celebrations for me (including at the Embassy), and the day after the concert I was invited by the representative of the French government to an enormous fine lunch in a magnificent palace with a view over a park in the middle of Paris – imagine! During the lunch speeches were made, and at the end the government representative stood up and also spoke. When he had finished he brought greetings from the French President,[52] kissed me on both cheeks and fastened the French red rose in my buttonhole, ceremoniously declaring me 'Officer of the French Legion of Honour'. That's a very high order, and you can imagine how pleased I am with it. Whenever I carry the red rose in my buttonhole, soldiers and officers in France are supposed to pay homage to 'Carl the house-painter's boy'.[53]

49 French composer, musicologist and conductor (1879-1929).
50 Paris daily from 1923. One of the most important French papers, it was banned in 1944 because it had continued to publish during the German Occupation.
51 CNL, 661-662.
52 Gaston Doumergue (1863-1937).
53 Letter of 13 January 1927 – see CNL, 664.

Echoes and post-scripts

After his Parisian triumph in 1926, Nielsen did not succeed in seducing the French again for a long time. Although he was willingly acknowledged as the most important contemporary Nordic composer, he was only rarely performed.[54]

Le Gaulois alerted its readers on Friday 18 March 1927: 'Victor Schiøler and Peder Møller will perform Beethoven's *Kreutzer* sonata, Nielsen's Second Violin Sonata and Franck's Sonata on Monday evening 21 March at the Salle Gaveau, where booking is now open.' The same announcement was repeated in *Le Gaulois* of 21 March, and a similar brief note appeared in *Le Figaro* on 21 March. On 8 April the same paper reported, anonymously: 'The pianist, M Schiøler and the violinist, M Möller [Møller] delivered a secure account of Beethoven, Franck and Carl Nielsen, whose sonata, though not lacking interest, suffered somewhat from being in such company.'

According to Pierre Leroi[55] in *Le Gaulois* of 29 March 1927:

> Unifying their respective talents and communicating with the same artistic zeal, Messrs.. Victor Schiøler and Peder Møller offered a most lively programme of sonatas for violin and piano by Beethoven, Franck and M. Carl Nielsen. This last work was notable for its solid structure and the elevated tone of its style.

On 31 March *Excelsior* wrote of a 'perfect homogeneity and a well-informed sense of appropriate nuances' by the two musicians. And on 28 March André Gresse[56] wrote in the *Journal Quotidien*:[57] 'Salle Gaveau... also a sonata by the Danish master, Carl Nielsen'.

The next month, on Sunday 24 April 1927, *Le Gaulois* informed its readers: 'At the Pasdeloup Concerts, Magador Theatre, a special concert ... Symphony No. 2 by Carl Nielsen (premiere in Paris), conductor, M. Schnedler-Petersen, leader of Symphonic Concerts in Copenhagen'. *Paris-Midi*[58] carried the same information on the same day.

54 Jean-Luc Caron, 'L'accueil des compositeurs nordiques', in Danièle Piston (ed.), *Musiques et musiciens à Paris dans les années trente*, Paris 2000, 518.

55 Violinist and music critic, active in numerous collaborations with various papers (1896-1962).

56 Bass singer (1868-1937).

57 Paris daily, published 1892-1944, conservative in its political tendency from 1911-1925), then nationalist and fascist (1925-1944).

58 The only Parisian daily appearing at midday, published between 1911 and 1944 (publication of *Paris-Soir*).

The next day, 25 April 1927 *L'Action Française*[59] reported: 'Yesterday M. Petersen replaced M. Rhené-Baton on the podium for a beautiful programme of Danish music performed by Danish musicians.'

On 26 April 1927 Robert Dezarnaux[60] in *La Liberté*[61] expanded:

> As for Carl Nielsen's symphony, which describes in order the temperaments of 'choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic and sanguine', I don't find much to say... It moved me considerably. Its invention and realisation are old-fashioned. The themes are sincere, naïve and straightforward; the orchestration is massive, where the woodwinds are as if stunned by the bow-strokes of the strings; its ponderous trombones, where there is neither caprice nor fantasy; where one is never surprised by any lively or new features; all this music is learned, and not imaginative, clean and without brilliance, seemingly quite plain and almost old-aged.

Comoedia (26 April 1927) found a more positive tone through Paul Le Flem, who stated: 'M. Carl Nielsen's Second Symphony has a subtitle: *The Four Temperaments*; in it each piece seeks to describe musically the essential features of our personality ... A true lesson in musical psychology'.

Also on April 26, Louis Schneider in *Le Gaulois*, referred to the concert, which took place in the absence of the composer:

> The Sunday event at the Pasdeloup Concerts, conducted by M. Schindler-Petersen [sic], the renowned Danish conductor, was of great interest, giving us the opportunity to hear works that are little known and even completely unknown in France. This is how we were introduced to the Second Symphony by the composer Carl Nielsen. This symphony is far from lacking in originality; it is full of ideas developed by a musician in full command of his craft. Entitled *The Four Temperaments,* each of its movements corresponds to a characteristic of various types: Colerico, for example, is impetuous, with rather violent instrumental colourings not too far from the influence of Richard Strauss; Commodo e flemmatico unfolds at a good-natured, easy pace, in the manner of an

59 Royalist paper founded in Paris in 1904 as 'Organ of general nationalism'; it was banned in August 1944.

60 Pseudonym of Robert Kem (1879-1959), French author, journalist and critic.

61 Paris daily, published 1865-1940.

> Allegretto by Brahms; to the Melancolico, which drags somewhat, I prefer the lively rhythm and the generous sonority of the Sanguineo.

Unfortunately the longest review, by Pierre de Lapommeraye[62] in *Le Ménestrel* of Friday 29 April 1927, was the most negative:

> This time M. Rhené-Baton ... had given up his baton and had entrusted his orchestra to M. Frederick Schnedler-Petersen ... M. Schnedler-Petersen is a calm and precise man. His gestures are small but dry when it is necessary to indicate the tempo or the rhythm. He supervises perfectly, with his limpid and soft gaze, the entries of each instrument: there is a something in his bearing of the unction and the modesty of a pastor. He offered us the French premiere of a symphony by Carl Nielsen, entitled 'the Four Temperaments' (Allegro collerico [sic], Allegro commodo e flemmatico, Andante mélancolico [sic], finally Allegro sanguinico [sic]) – there is no need to translate, I believe. M. Nielsen has endeavoured to characterise each of the listed characters with his music. He has done so no great ceremony and above all without much contrast; the *collerico* is not very vehement and the sanguinico is neither rubicund nor very jovial: the author avoids extremes, which is perhaps an expression of the Danish temperament. I'm very much led to believe this. The harmonic translation remains in the same middle ground. M. Nielsen seems to not to have got past Mendelssohn and systematically ignores the Wagnerian symphony or the instrumentation of modern composers; there is no surprise either in the predictable developments, and the few audacities of the percussion are quite modest and appear for no apparent reason. M. Petersen left us with a pleasant impression of Danish musical art.

Stan Golestan[63] of *Le Figaro* wrote on 1 May 1927: 'We are already familiar with the musical output of Carl Nielsen, the Danish master who is widely admired in his own country. M Schnedler-Petersen fortunately had the inspired idea of offering us his (Nielsen's) Second Symphony, entitled *The Four Temperaments*; this is music that releases a particular vision, in its construction not far from that of Berlioz.'

Almost exactly a year later, on 18 April 1928, a daring programme in honour of contemporary Nordic music was on offer at the Salle Playel. The evening included works by Peder Gram, Palmgren, Rangström, Järnefelt and Nielsen's Third Symphony.

62 No details known.

63 Romanian composer (1875-1956), lived in Paris, teacher and musical critic for the *Figaro*.

Clearly in haste, *Le Matin*[64] of 14 April 1928 confined itself to a small insert announcing a 'Scandinavian Festival' under the direction of Schnedler-Petersen. A similar announcement, framed, appeared in *Le Gaulois* on the same day.

Pierre Leroi of *Le Gaulois* reported on Sunday 23 April 1928: 'The Philharmonic Orchestra under the firm and accurate direction of M. F. Schnedler-Petersen championed some works by Scandinavian musicians. We heard a symphony by Carl Nielsen, subtitled *Espansiva*, which defines the author's intentions. A solidly arranged work and with a rather large breath.'

Pierre Wolff[65] in *La Liberté* on 27 April 1928 wrote: 'This time he brought us Carl Nielsen's Third Symphony, called *Expansiva* [sic]. Expansiva, ah yes! A beautiful instrumental technique, but with a grandiloquence that can be a bit tiring.'

And what did the chronicler Pierre de Lapommeraye, who had been so lukewarm about the *Four Temperaments* make of the event in *Le Ménestrel* of Friday 27 April 1928?

> This time we were invited to hear Scandinavian music, i.e. music by Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish composers, performed under the direction of M. Schnedler-Petersen ... The *pièce de résistance* was a symphony (the Third) by M. Carl Nielsen (Danish, I believe[!]). It is a classically conceived symphony, with exposition, development, peroration and conclusion. What may be criticised in this kind of composition is its lack of the unexpected: the form is solid, the orchestration well balanced, but the attention is not exactly seized, especially since too often the themes are so-so and the emotion uncommunicative, even though the symphony has the subtitle *Espansiva*. As for any kind of Scandinavian character, it did not appear to us: it is easy, pleasant music, but devoid of any colour. We should acknowledge that M. Schnedler-Petersen conducted it with the same qualities as Nielsen's Symphony: with perfect mastery, discretion and sobriety.

On Monday 30 April Stan Golestan in *Le Figaro* informed readers that:

> The Philharmonic Concerts invited us to a Scandinavian Festival, where, alongside Grieg, whom it is quite natural to find in such occasions, we were able to applaud works by modern composers, a symphony by M. Carl Nielsen

64 Daily newspaper founded in 1883 and published until 1944, collaborated with the Vichy regime, with a very large circulation numbering a million in 1914.

65 French playwright (1825-1944).

> ... We must unreservedly praise M. Schnedler-Petersen who conducted the orchestra with a most comprehensive strength and vigour.

On 9 March 1930, *Aladdin* returned to the Parisian concert platform in a Lamoureux concert at the Salle Gaveau. The programme was announced in *Le Matin* of 6 March 1930. René Brancour[66] informed his readers in *Le Ménestrel* on 14 March:

> M. Anders Rachlew[67] is undoubtedly a conductor of special quality. He makes no attempt at gymnastic demonstrations; he doesn't imitate the majestic gestures of a diver; he does not cover his musicians with soft compliments any more than with fierce maledictions. And with a minimum of gestures, he achieves the best results. Isn't that extraordinary? ... M. Carl Nielsen, a Danish composer with tendencies that we are told are neo-classical, was revealed to us in the three numbers from an *Aladdin* score: two dances and a march. These are worthy pieces that do not seem to indicate a lively personality, but which offer the unmistakable character of being geometrically rhythmic.

Suzanne Demarquez[68] had a slightly contradictory opinion, which she explained in her article of 1 April 1930 for *Le Courrier Musical*:

> Lamoureux Concerts, 9 March. The audience follows closely the conducting debut of M Anders Rachlew at the podium of the Lamoureux. M Rachlew conducts with soberly restrained gestures that succeed in obtaining the desired gradation of effects ... The excerpts from M. Carl Nielsen's *Aladdin* are colourful, but the orientalism is unfortunately rather superficial and is not reinforced by powerful thematic invention.

Nielsen passed away in Copenhagen on Saturday 5 October 1931. The French press, which had made such made such a big thing of his stay in the capital five years earlier, only carried faint echoes of the news. *Le Ménestrel* of 9 October 1931 was content to report: 'We announce from Copenhagen the death of the composer Carl Nielsen.' Like several others, the *Journal des Débats* of Sunday 4 October confined itself to a simple statement: 'Death of the composer Carl Nielsen in Copenhagen. The composer has just died.' The same laconic tone was struck in the *Bulletin périodique de la presse*

66 French critic, musicologist and teacher (1862-1948).
67 Belgian conductor (1882-1970).
68 French composer, critic and professor (1891-1965).

scandinave[69] on 19 October, in the *Larousse mensuel illustré*[70] and in *Le Grand écho du Nord de la France*.[71] *Excelsior* added on 8 October 1931: 'One of the most important figures in Danish music has just died in Copenhagen. A pupil of Gade at the Copenhagen Conservatoire, Carl Nielsen was conductor of the Royal Orchestra, then director of the National Conservatoire and of the Music Society. He was 66 years old.'

Fourteen months after Nielsen's death the Salle Gaveau programmed a concert with the Danish Quartet, including his Quartet in F major Op. 44, CNW 58, alongside Beethoven's Quartet Op. 59 No. 3 and Mozart's K575. The *Semaine de Paris* on 16 December had carried a modest announcement of the event. It is possible to learn more about the 19 December 1932 concert at the Gaveau thanks to the report by Henri Petit[72] in the *Courrier Musical* of 1 January 1933:

> A remarkable ensemble has just made its debut in Paris. Composed of elite individuals... the Danish Quartet is at the same time set apart by the subtly detailed finish that adorns its performances and by the generous ardour which animates its four members when necessary. They introduced to us a quartet, unknown to us, by the Danish composer Carl Nielsen, from which I particularly remember the finale's melodious Schubertian andante.

On 28 February 1936 *L'Art musical: théâtres, concerts, TSF, disques, cinéma,* offered a very short biographical résumé of Nielsen. A few days later, on Sunday 1 March, in the Hall of the Old Conservatoire, the Société des Concerts, under the experienced baton of Philippe Gaubert, presented a programme of music by Rangström, Hamerik, Schubert, Liszt, Rabaud and Schmitt. Included were two of Nielsen's songs, with whose orthography the programme struggled: *Sank kun dit Have a blomst* [*Saenk kun dit hoved, du blomst*] and *Silesko aer Eylden Lost* [*Silkesko over gylden læst*]. Pianist Edward Kilenyi[73] accompanied the singer Helga Wecker[74] and the Amicitia choir. *Le Temps* had advertised the evening in its February 25 issue. Henri de Curzon reported in *Le Ménestrel* of Friday 6 March 6, 1936: 'A bouquet of rare flowers, with exotic fragrance ... On the other hand, Mme Helga Wecker shared with us her rich, mellow contralto, full of finesse and sincerity ... and two items by Carl Nielsen, the one expressive, the other serious.'

69 Ministry of War, office of the foreign press, published 1915-1933.
70 Ilustrated monthly, published 1907-1957.
71 Daily newspaper, published 1890-1944.
72 French writer (1900-1978).
73 Hungarian-American pianist (1910-2000).
74 Norwegian singer (1862-??).

From a concert featuring the same singer on 1 November 1936, Stan Golestan in *Le Figaro* reported: 'Another singer, Mme Helga Wecker, a constant musical pleasure, brings us from her northern homeland a series of colourful songs by Carl Nielsen.' *Excelsior* of 5 November 1936 confirmed: 'The vocal recital by Mme Helga Wecker was very beautiful.... Monteverdi, Schubert, Beethoven and Carl Nielsen were adorned that evening in a rare way, which will leave a lasting memory.'

Ten years further on, the Symphony No. 3, *Espansiva*, was heard again in Paris on Monday 11 November 1946 at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. The Orchestre National performed under the baton of the Danish conductor, Erik Tuxen.[75]

A week later, on 18 November 1946, the journal *Combat*[76] simply announced a concert under the aegis of UNESCO, while a few days earlier (11 November) *Le Guide du concert*[77] had alerted its readers:

> This composer occupies a prominent place in Scandinavian music ... [B]y his training as well as his aesthetics, he is similar to a Lalo or a Saint-Saëns. His numerous works, both in dramatic genres as well as in symphony and chamber music, are not unknown in Paris, where his symphonies in particular have received performances. Of the Third Symphony, Paul le Flem wrote in 1928: 'The themes are developed and very judiciously opposed. The melodic plans remain clear and are ingeniously underlined in the orchestra. The instrumentation processes retain the independence of each timbre and avoid doubling so that the texture remains transparent.'[78]

The marvellous *Chaconne* for piano (1916) was performed twice in Paris in 1951, first by Claus Bahnson[79] at the Ecole Normale on 9 May and then by France Ellegaard[80] at the Salle Gaveau on 5 December. The press seems not to have taken notice of either performance.

In short, an abiding silence followed the death of the composer, who, as might be expected, entered a long period of purgatory. Carl Nielsen and his music had to wait many more years before finding the prominent place that was rightfully his – to be

75 1902-1957.

76 Underground French daily founded during the Second World War and organ of the French Liberation movement, published 1941-1974.

77 Paris weekly, published 1910-1966.

78 The original review was published in *Comoedia*, 23 April 1928.

79 Danish pianist and conductor, dates unknown.

80 Danish-born Finnish pianist (1913-1999).

precise, thanks to the repercussions of the Edinburgh Festival in 1950 and the commemorations organised in 1965 for his centenary. The immense interest generated by recordings from the 1950s on amplified his recognition. Nevertheless, while waiting for this salutary renaissance, the French press had helped to shape the image of the great Danish master in the years between 1920 and 1951.

A B S T R A C T

Nielsen loved the French capital, its touristic riches and its abundant artistic life. He went there several times following his first trip in 1890-1891 in the course of studies that also took in Germany and Italy. At the time of his trip to Paris in October 1926 his name was better known than his works themselves. For the greater part of those in French musical life he was the dominant figure in contemporary Danish and Scandinavian music, apart from Edward Grieg, who had been dead nearly twenty years. The concert at the Salle Gaveau, which was entirely devoted to his works and which took place in his presence, enjoyed a wide resonance in the media. The majority of Danish artists who lent their services to his music on this memorable evening did not fail to make a strong impression on the Parisian audience. The press announced and commented on the event extensively.

REVIEW

Carl Nielsen: Selected Letters and Diaries, selected, translated and annotated by David Fanning and Michelle Assay, *Danish Humanist Texts and Studies*, v. 57, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2017, 832pp.

This beautifully produced book contains fascinating material no matter what your interest, and is eminently readable cover to cover. You do not have to be a musician to find it meaningful, but a student interested in history at the fin de siècle perhaps, or someone who simply enjoys an engrossing true-life story about two famous artists, trying to make their way in the world together. As someone who has studied Nielsen's vocal music for years, I find that this source draws together all of the impressions of him I have accumulated in the process of my research. Though there has been a flurry of publications of Nielsen's writings in recent years – notably *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid* and the *Carl Nielsen Brevudgaven*, both edited by John Fellow – they are in Danish, limiting their usefulness beyond the borders of Denmark. For the first time since the English-language publication of *My Childhood on Funen* and *Living Music* (in 1953), it is possible for non-Danish speakers to get a sense of Nielsen the person, in his own voice; reading these letters and diary excerpts, you come to know him more intimately than through any other single source.

Though this volume (whose publication was supported by the Royal Library) is substantial, it is but a sliver of the complete correspondence (6000 letters in all, both to and from Nielsen) published in twelve volumes over ten years (2005-2015). It would be a futile exercise indeed for a non-native speaker to attempt to read through the whole set with dictionary in hand. Therefore, a huge debt of gratitude is owed David Fanning and Michelle Assay who in 2013, with Niels Krabbe's help, undertook the Herculean task of selecting, translating, and publishing some of the letters in English. They first had to read all twelve volumes and then begin the painstaking process of determining which letters should be included in translation when most, obviously, had to be excluded. That they did this is in some respects more valuable than had they translated all twelve volumes; the most vital information about Nielsen is concentrated here so that the chosen letters and diary entries tell a highly compelling story. In their annotations, Fanning

and Assay provide context when what was left out informed what was left in, and clarify references outside the text, so the reader effectively has a companion in the footnotes guiding their journey, answering questions the moment they arise. Translating the meaning is one thing, but conveying it in a second language as expressively and genuinely as in the original is quite another, yet Fanning and Assay have succeeded admirably in this. As someone who has translated a number of Nielsen's letters, I can vouch for their fidelity to the original Danish. Finally, Fanning and Assay carefully edited the the letters, breaking up Nielsen's run-on sentences, and adding punctuation to his wife Anne Marie's stream-of-conscious writing, where necessary, to facilitate reading and intelligibility.

The ancillary material Fanning and Assay provide is also helpful, including an introduction to Nielsen's life and works, a brief description of the letters and diaries, as well as how this edition builds on the crucial primary research materials published in the 1990s and beyond, and a basic chronology of Nielsen's life and works. This preliminary grounding is balanced at the end of the book by the indices of compositions and names, and a letter concordance. The index, especially, is invaluable if one wishes to look up a particular composition or to follow a particular correspondence thread. Finally, photographs are peppered throughout the letters and diary entries, some of which have never been presented elsewhere (e.g., Nielsen and Anne Marie with Irmelin's mother-in-law, Frederikke Møller, p. 670).

The non-native speaker encountering Nielsen for the first time may be surprised to discover that the voice of Denmark's most famous composer is not sober and aloof, but instead charmingly down-to-earth and often wry, as in this analogy (No. 598):

> [My] feeling [is] that a radio broadcast will never replace a 'real' performance. It's as though the vitamins have got lost in their journey through the air; it tastes like preserved fruit.

Or in this description of reading Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* in English (No. 599):

> It's very witty, and a joy for me, because I can already read it almost without a dictionary. Wilde has an unbelievable lightness; like a mosquito's dance.

Nielsen is also humble, as in this 1922 response to Victor Bendix, who had lambasted Nielsen's Fifth Symphony in no uncertain terms (No. 482). Rather than putting Bendix in his place – as he arguably deserved – Nielsen wrote:

> So what else should I do then? Of course I can give up. I can easily give up; there is nothing in me of what

> they call 'high-minded striving', 'great ideas' or any other ethical-artistic conviction or duty to marshal my gifts. I don't feel that at all; but for that reason there may well be inside a person's soul, behind all the mumbling, tumbling, obscurity and selfishness, some fine threads, which were spun in youth and childhood and which now nonetheless lie there pulling him in the so-called 'right direction.' (No. 483)

Like Charles Ives, he valued the ordinary person's experience over the privileged upper crust, as in a 1918 letter to a member of Parliament, A.C. Meyer (No. 404):

> [I] do agree with you that if anything is to be done it must first and foremost be for the people and not for a few hundred epicures. I'm the son of a poor man of the soil, I've experienced much, and I know how the ordinary man thinks and feels. I know that there are all sorts of possibilities for future development here. And where else should we find them? It's all well and good with royal personages, but I believe the matter is healthier without them; there are so many snobs who can always mess up a good thing.

In fact, Nielsen's expressive, homespun letters and diaries often read like Ives' *Memos* in that the words conjure up the person behind them.

Perusing this volume from beginning to end, one gets to follow the progress of Nielsen's development: to watch him grow from a brash, spirited youth from the country, full of optimism and potential as he seeks to make a unique mark in the big city steeped in tradition, to a young husband and father of three (four, if you count the illegitimate child he was supporting), with all of the attendant responsibilities too soon. The reader then accompanies him through years of hardship, frustration and disappointment, until Nielsen finally matures into a seasoned composer of considerable stature, sure of his abilities and yet somehow still flummoxed by his ultimate success. Fame, by the time he had achieved it, seemed not to give him the satisfaction one might imagine; by his own admission, this was largely due to the eight-year estrangement from Anne Marie, which shook him to his core. Writing to her in 1919 (No. 431), Nielsen notes the irony that when he is finally showered with the accolades he craved twenty years earlier, he cannot enjoy them, because he feels like a charlatan for having wronged her:

> I'm alive even though I should be dead and tortured by the things that could have been my joy; like my work here now, which is on the one hand a kind of recognition but which on the other pains me when I see people believing in me and applying that to my personality, so that I feel

> the urge to shout out: 'Don't believe in what I'm doing; it can't be right. Because I've deceived my best, my only friend in the world and I can't accept your trust and loyalty before this is dealt with and you know all about it.'

The consequence was that his celebrated status did not make him arrogant. At heart he was still the boy with a twinkle in his eyes clowning for the camera (photo, p. 42), aiming to please but constantly in need of reassurance, who loved to be silly – as when he sends a funny poem about a pig-dealer, replete with grunting pigs and farting horses, and teases his son-in-law Emil by switching into broken English so he will not realise he is writing about his birthday present (No. 601) – or to get down on all fours to play with children after a fancy dinner – as in the only extant film footage of Nielsen. Yet he was also the boy who once contemplated suicide (in 1889) and the older man who complained about having squandered his life on the 'tragic obsession' of an artistic career, even as he was being feted nationally for turning sixty (*Politiken* interview from 1925, *Samtid*, 360). No single source draws out the contradictions of Nielsen's character and the extremes of his life experiences more pointedly than this single volume of selected letters and diary entries.

The reader learns as well that Nielsen had wide-ranging interests in art, architecture, literature and science, and frequently made parallels to music. In a 1922 letter to Wilhelm Stenhammar (No. 489), for example, he wrote:

> I believe that it's to music's great advantage that it can't express anything definitively. Poetry, painting and sculpture, which seek to show us the real world, can be vulgar precisely because of this. Music (and architecture) can only be vulgar, ignoble and shoddy by departing from itself, by offending against its own innermost being, or by a stupid and brutal shattering of its own laws. Am I right? Music and architecture cannot – it's just impossible – depict anything that by its plot or its content offends us from an ethical, religious, moral or human standpoint. Therefore these two arts are the only truly elevated ones.

Nielsen said little directly about his compositional process, but one can infer his aims from various oblique comments, as in the 1917 letter to Hortense Panum (No. 397):

> Perhaps unconsciously you touch on the question of whether it is possible to unify the old, legitimate counterpoint with more modern sounds and colours in instrumentation and modulation. This is precisely what seems to me still to be the ideal, and which I can't stop searching for.

Or, from this 1930 letter to Jørgen Bentzon (No. 713), which reflects the sort of dialectic paradigm so often observed in Nielsen's music:

> What is this thing we call strength? Isn't it the essence, or interplay, of something conflictual, which arises when one has strained at the tether, no matter when and with what; only strongly at the tether[?]

Occasionally he is more specific, as when discussing his opera, *Saul and David*, in a 1930 letter to Gunnar Jeanson (No. 712):

> Mozart had proved that music was the first thing in opera; he never got bogged down in the lyrical quality of the words, nor in the pictorial quality of scenes, beyond what – *as if purely coincidentally* – corresponded to the musical element. Therefore I saw how correct it was that the music first and foremost should unfold itself according to its own nature and its own laws, and I strove in every situation to create a certain symphonic-musical form for the various scenes, without too many breaks, even if the text was tempting me to invent new musical motifs. I considered that the dramatic element in music should be sought in the development of simple themes and not in a naturalistic illustration of the individual verses or scenes on stage.

There is also advice offered to his composition students that tells you as much about Nielsen's own music, as in the 1910 letter to Knud Harder (No. 260):

> I find that you have made great progress in the area of compositional technique, but I still miss content in your works. By content of course I don't mean depth, portentous or inscrutable harmonies, but soul pictures, style, unity, experiences or whatever. Lightness if you want, freedom and grace if you can, heaviness and darkness if you dare; just something that leaves a definite impression. Yes, that's it: [do] whatever you want, provided something remains for one to feel afterwards. I don't say something to remember! That's not necessary! But something to feel again, to re-experience as a total impression. What do I *remember* after a dangerous voyage or a sweet rest under blossoming almond trees? But the state of that world I've just left – *that* I can clearly recall. That's what I demand of art. Put me in a state of being outside of the one I know. Give me a drink I have never dreamt of. Take me and swing me round so that my senses are cleaned and purified. In short: let me have an experience! I miss that in your music.

Even though many of Nielsen's most profound musical revelations have appeared in other sources before (e.g., the

conviction that 'Music is Life', and his childhood realisation about intervals being a by-product of two contrapuntal lines, both stated in a 1920 letter to Julius Rabe, No. 445), it is instructive to come upon them within this detailed chronological context. Letters having to do with musical matters appear more frequently towards the end of the volume, because, as Nielsen's reputation and influence grew, he had a broader range of contacts, more performances in the offing, people consulting with him about performance issues and reviews of his music, and composers asking for advice about their own.

What one learns a great deal about is Nielsen's relationship with Anne Marie, and the difficulties they encountered in what was a very modern marriage for the time. Due to the frequent strained, work-related separations, the couple corresponded back and forth, providing us with a window into how they felt and communicated on a number of private issues. When in 1914 Anne Marie discovers that Nielsen's long-term affair has happened under her own roof, it makes for excruciating reading. Without question, by twenty-first century standards, Nielsen was a complete scoundrel. But love is complicated at any point in history, and there is a poignancy to their relationship that you cannot help but be touched and at times even moved by, and whose nuances you can only appreciate by following the dramatic progression from beginning to end. The characters are flawed, but relatable. Nielsen is nothing if not human, and in this respect, one is reminded of his hero Mozart.

Put simply, the conflict in their marriage was because Anne Marie wanted Nielsen to be something he was not, and Nielsen was his own worst enemy, hurting the people he cared most about. His best qualities – spontaneity, charm, and childlike effervescence – were also his greatest weakness, because on the flip side they meant that he was also impulsive and self-indulgent, which got him into trouble time and again. Anne Marie accused him of being a coward (No. 486), but in 1922, after being worn down his relentless pleading for reconciliation, she conceded, in a letter to their friend Ove Jørgensen (No. 490), that Nielsen was actually the stronger one, unwilling to give up on their relationship even after so much time apart:

> By these few words I want to tell you, dear Ove, that Carl has been unable to do without me, and that I will try to draw a line under the past. I fervently hope that I shall succeed, and that I will be able to be more forgiving. ... I did hope to be able to break free completely, ... [b]ut Carl was so unwilling, and now it seems he has been the stronger one.

Even knowing how much they both suffered, it is gratifying to witness their reconciliation, especially reading words like these, in a 1920 letter Nielsen wrote to Anne Marie (No. 446):

> You listen to everyone else's words with interest and understanding, and you look at the tiniest creature with your deep watchful eyes, as if to discover what is going on inside them. So often I've been amazed and delighted when you look inquisitively at everything that lives. You have no idea what you are like, what effect you have on others, often just by your tone of voice or a sudden movement. If only I could swap; so that you could become me and I you, just for a few hours ... so that you could then see yourself and take pleasure in it. It would please you and strengthen you to encounter yourself. Many things would seem to you trivial if you could see your own abundance, observe your own humanity and listen to your own words and thoughts.

In the interim between 1914 and 1922, while Nielsen was lonely and longing for home, sometimes from across the Sound in Gothenburg, Sweden, he was paradoxically unusually productive, writing the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, *Aladdin*, the bulk of his piano music and folk-like songs, and the Wind Quintet.

The letters also illuminate the many other troubles Nielsen had to deal with, such as well-meaning colleagues like Thomas Laub, who offered him unsolicited advice and 'constructive criticism' (for example, the famous complaint that Nielsen had no business writing hymns and spiritual songs when he was not 'a child of the house', No. 394), theatre intrigues, money concerns (he actually made less money than his wife), tax woes, problems with publishers and the press, difficulties getting music performed (for instance in the United States where his friends and family made no headway at all), health issues, and concern over care for their mentally-challenged son, Hans Børge.

A bright spot among the letters is his correspondence with his daughters and sons-in-law; he is consistently loving and supportive of Irmelin, Anne Marie (called Søs, the Danish equivalent of Sis), Emil Telmányi and Eggert Møller, all of whom he whole-heartedly respects and admires, as is evident from a 1921 letter to Søs (No. 478):

> I love to talk about all the things we learn from each other. Because I maybe learn more from you two young ones than you do from me, both in art and ideas, and definitely when it comes to everything human. You have something that is new and enriching for me, something I listen to and can feel when we really sit down together and open up to one another. You two offer that so clearly, and I'm so grateful for it, because in my mind it's often as though something is in conflict and biting me in two with its teeth.

And in a letter to Emil Telmányi in 1926 (No. 496):

> [T]he only thing I can say, and to continue to say, is to thank you for everything you mean and are for me, and to let you know how highly I esteem you and how much I love you. What joy to know that there is at least one person who understands me, where we only need to look at one another in order to gain understanding and sympathy.

During the lengthy separation from Anne Marie, Nielsen frequently confided in his daughters, and asked them to intercede on his behalf with their mother. Irmelin, especially, becomes a sort of proxy for Anne Marie immediately after their split.

In addition to writing to his family members, Nielsen kept up a lively correspondence with a wide range of artistic friends and acquaintances throughout his life. The extended exchanges with Swedes Bror Beckman and Wilhelm Stenhammar are especially helpful for getting a sense of his musical values, as in a 1911 letter to the latter (No. 271):

> [H]ave you noticed how many young composers have approached music from the wrong end, as it were? They begin with atmosphere, poetry, perfume, the flower; the surface of art, instead of with the roots, earth, planting and propagation. In other words: they begin by expressing moods, feelings, colours and sensations, instead of learning voice-leading, counterpoint, and so on. But I suppose I'm very old-fashioned in this respect, and I don't think I can mend my ways.

The various reminiscences and biographical sketches he wrote from time to time (e.g., No. 109 in 1895) are notable for the light they cast on how he saw himself at different points in his life and career. There are also interesting letters to well-known composers, including Brahms, Grieg and Sibelius, as well as assessments of many others (including Wagner and Strauss). The reader will wish to travel back in time when encountering historic performances, such as Wilhelm Furtwängler conducting Nielsen's Fifth Symphony at an international Festival in Frankfurt where Bartók premiered his first piano concerto the same evening (described in a 1927 letter to Anne Marie, No. 619). In conclusion, appreciation and admiration cannot be overstated for this sumptuous volume, which offers so much to Nielsen fans and researchers alike.

If Fanning and Assay have the time and energy, perhaps the next project might be a translation of the notes, lectures and reviews contained within *Carl Nielsen til sin Samtid*?

Anne-Marie Reynolds

REPORTS

After the publication of the last volume of *The Carl Nielsen Edition* (CNU) proper in 2009, two further projects were launched, one of which is finished, while the other is still at the planning stage. At the request of the jury of the chamber music competition in 2015 (see below), a volume with an annotated facsimile edition of the complete **source material for the Wind Quintet** (CNW 70) was published in 2016, including a discussion of the somewhat muddled source situation for the work that has challenged musicians ever since Wilhelm Hansen's first edition in 1923.[1] Since 2009 plans have been elaborated for one or two **supplementary volumes** comprising the following categories: Nielsen's arrangements of his own works, his arrangements of other composers' works, other composers' arrangements of Nielsen's works, and unfinished works by Nielsen. To this point, grant applications have not been successful, but the project has not been given up yet, either in its full scale or somewhat reduced.[2]

The **150th anniversary of Nielsen's birth** was celebrated intensively, both in Denmark and in many places abroad, with concerts, performance of the two operas at the Royal Theatre, Nielsen as featured composer at the BBC London Proms, festivals, books and CD publications, etc. One of the more spectacular achievements was the **website** made for the occasion,[3] which gave an overall survey both of the events during the year 2015, but also of Nielsen as a composer. Undoubtedly the most praiseworthy contribution to the website is Karl Åge Rasmussen's six chapters under the heading *Myten, manden og musikken* (The Myth, the Man, and the Music). Another spectacular outcome of the celebration was the CD series with **The New York Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by Alan Gilbert of the six symphonies and three concertos.[4]

In 2015 the last two volumes of the comprehensive edition of **Nielsen's letters and diaries** (CNB) curated by John Fellow and housed at the Royal Library were published.[5] The twelve volumes

1 *Selected Sources for Carl Nielsen's Works, Vol. 2, Quintet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, French Horn and Bassoon, Opus 43*, ed. Niels Krabbe, Copenhagen, 2016.

2 The preparatory work has been made by senior editor of the Edition, Niels Bo Foltmann, who is also willing to undertake the work if funding can be raised.

3 https://carlnielsen.org, accessed 6 May 2020.

4 DaCapo 6.220623-25 and 6.220556.

5 *Carl Nielsen. Brevudgaven*, Vols. 1-12, edited with introductions and notes by John Fellow, Copenhagen, Multivers, 2005-2015. In this volume, abbreviated CNB.

comprise about 8,000 letters, selected from a corpus of about 13,000 items. At the initiative of Professor David Fanning and the Royal Library an **English selection of 739 letters** (CNL) was published in 2017, translated and annotated by Michelle Assay and David Fanning (see review in the present issue of this journal).[6] The selection and annotation was, of course, governed by the fact that the edition is aimed at non-Danish readers.

In 2015 the need for a new edition of **Nielsen's memoirs, Min fynske Barndom** (My Childhood on Funen) was fulfilled with the publication of an annotated, philologically based edition, which in many respects has heightened the usefulness of the book, not least through its numerous explanatory notes and added biographical information.[7]

In 2015 and again in 2019 the **Carl Nielsen International Chamber Music Competition for String Quintet and Wind Quintet** was held as a collaboration between the Royal Library, Radio Denmark, and the Royal Danish Academy of Music, with movements from Nielsen's string quartets and the Wind Quintet as mandatory parts of the repertoire. The three rounds were held at the three organising venues. It is not yet clear whether the two events will be followed by further competitions in a four-year rotation. The Chamber music Competition is separate from the **Carl Nielsen International Competition**, which has been held in Odense almost annually since 1981, in the initial years concentrating on one of the three instruments for which Nielsen wrote a concerto, and since 2019 with all three instruments in focus at the same competition. Original the organ was also part of the competition.

In 2016 the Danish Centre for Music Editing published a **complete thematic catalogue** of Nielsen's oeuvre (CNW) in continuation of the Complete Edition, supplemented with information from other sources.[8] The catalogue is also available in an online version, which contains information and corrections that are not included in the printed version.[9] It is expected that CNW numbers from the catalogue will be used in future when it comes to precise identification of works by Nielsen.

In 2018 a substantial grant from the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie-Carl Nielsen Foundation enabled the Institute of Musicology at The Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at Copenhagen University to launch a four-year research project aiming at a comprehensive book on **Nielsen's life and work**, to be published both in Danish and English. The project

6 *Carl Nielsen. Selected Letters and Diaries*, selected, translated and annotated by David Fanning and Michelle Assay, (*Danish Humanist Texts and Studies*, Vol. 57, Copenhagen, Royal Danish Library and Museum Tusculanum Press, 2017. In this volume, abbreviated CNL.

7 Carl Nielsen, *Min fynske Barndom*, Kommenteret udgave, Odense 2015.

8 *Catalogue of Carl Nielsen's Works,* edited by Niels Bo Foltmann, Axel Teich Geertinger, Peter Hauge, Niels Krabbe, Bjarke Moe, and Elly Bruunshuus Petersen, Copenhagen, 2016.

9 http://www5.kb.dk/dcm/cnw/navigation.xq, accessed 4 May 2020.

is headed by Professor Michael Fjeldsøe, with Ph.D. student Katarina Engberg and Dr. Bjarke Moe as part of the research and author team. The grant includes funding for future international symposia and conferences.

In 2019 the accumulated online **Nielsen bibliography**, starting with the year 1985, was updated so that it now covers the period 1985-2019. The updated bibliography is only available on the internet.[10]

Also in 2019 Nielsen's so-called **childhood home in the village of Nørre Lyndelse** at Funen reopened, after an intensive restoration process. It looks as if this investment – at least for the time being – is meant as a compensation for the fact that the Carl Nielsen Museum in Odense has been closed. This means that there is no longer a museum dedicated to the composer and his wife in Denmark.

As a *post scriptum* to the above report, it should be mentioned that in December 2019 *The Danish Centre for Music Editing*, which had been housed at the Royal Library since its foundation in 2009, was closed by the Library due to lack of funding. The Centre was established in the wake of the *Carl Nielsen Edition*, both in order to keep and develop the philological expertise built up during the years with the work on that edition and as a kind of information centre for the edition and curator of the online products of CNU's output. It is hoped that the latter function will continue to be looked after by the Library in spite of the closure of the Centre.

Niels Krabbe

10 http://www5.kb.dk/en/nb/dcm/cnu/cn_bibliography.html, accessed 4 M ay 2020).

OBITUARIES

With the deaths of Knud Ketting and Erland Kolding Nielsen, Nielsen research and Nielsen dissemination have lost two eminent Danish ambassadors and contributors of the past three decades.

Knud Ketting (1942-2016)

Knud Ketting graduated from The University of Copenhagen in 1970 with a master's degree in musicology (main subject) and French (secondary subject). He became known as a highly regarded music critic and journalist at leading Danish newspapers and at Radio Denmark. In the years 1984-90, Ketting was head of the Danish Music Information Centre in Copenhagen, after which he became music director of the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra and later (1995-2000) of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra in Sweden. After his return to Denmark in 2000 he took up musical criticism again at the newspaper *Jyllandsposten*.

Ketting had a thorough and almost encyclopedic knowledge of Nielsen's music, and he was able to collect an invaluable body of empirical evidence related to his life and work, which he put at the disposal of a number of ongoing Nielsen research projects, enabling many doubtful or wrong details in the existing Nielsen literature to be corrected.

In 1998 – after more than three years of work – Ketting, together with a number of colleagues, edited the pioneering CDROM *Carl Nielsen, the Man and the Music*, which was both a comprehensive catalogue of Nielsen's oeuvre and an overall biography in text and pictures.

As chairman of the *Danish Carl Nielsen Society* and editor of its newsletter *Espansiva* from 1998 until his death in 2016, he contributed to the dissemination of Nielsen's music in Denmark to the many non-professional Nielsen lovers of the country, through the meetings organised by the society and not least through the competent articles on selected Nielsen topics that he contributed to every issue of *Espansiva.*

Shortly before his death, Ketting made it possible for his comprehensive list of Nielsen performances in the composer's own lifetime, which he had collected in the course of several decades, to

be used in the new *The Catalogue of Carl Nielsen's Works* (CNW), as part of the information of each entry in the catalogue.

Ketting was active in the founding of *Carl Nielsen Studies* in 2003 and contributed important articles to the first two volumes of the periodical.

Erland Kolding Nielsen (1947-2017)

After 15 years as Head of Department at The Royal School of Library Studies, **Erland Kolding Nielsen** became Director of The National Library of Denmark, The Royal Library in Copenhagen (KB), holding this post from 1985 until a few weeks before his death in January 2017. During his 30 years as Director he changed the image, scope and policy of the Library probably more than any other single person in its history during the previous more than 100 years. The conspicuous and lasting monument of Kolding Nielsen's ideas is the iconic building from 1999 at the harbour front, known as The Black Diamond, which changed the library's role from an academic ivory tower to a public cultural institution, with concert hall, restaurant and cafe, conference and meeting rooms, spacious reading and IT facilities etc., most of which was of benefit also to music. Not least the concert hall paved the way for a hitherto unknown contact with musical life at home and abroad.

With his academic background as a historian and his ideas about the role of a national library, Kolding Nielsen gave music and musicology his unfailing attention, both by himself enabling new initiatives in music and by supporting ideas that his members of staff would present to him. During his reign, funding for musical activities in the library was available to a degree not seen before or after his time, and in every case, Kolding Nielsen personally followed the projects with enthusiasm and professional expertise. This certainly applied to the music of Carl Nielsen, and it is probably true to say that under Kolding Nielsen The Royal Library became a centre of excellence in this area, not least due to the support of the Director. Among the projects that were supported by him, and for which funding was secured by his initiative, the following could be mentioned as the most important: *The Carl Nielsen Edition* in 32 volumes (CNU), the collected edition in Danish of letters to and from Nielsen in twelve volumes (CNB), the edition of selected letters in English (CNL), the edition of lectures, newspaper articles etc. in three volumes (*Samtid*), *Carl Nielsen Studies* in six volumes to date, the international chamber music competition carrying Nielsen's name in collaboration with Radio Denmark and the Royal

Academy of music, Nielsen exhibitions, and Nielsen conferences – all of them based on Kolding Nielsen's personal interest and ability to secure the necessary funding.

It is fair to say that Nielsen research and the dissemination of Nielsen's music at home and abroad would not have reached its present status without Kolding Nielsen's unfailing interest and enthusiasm.

Niels Krabbe

CONTRIBUTORS

Michelle Assay is a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow at the University of Huddersfield, working on the topic of 'Shakespeare and Censorship in Soviet/post-Soviet Music, Film and Theatre'. She is currently preparing her PhD dissertation on the topic of 'Hamlet in the Stalin Era' for publication by Routledge. Alongside numerous published articles in this area, she is co-ordinator of an international research group on 'Shakespeare and Music'. Alongside concert appearances as a solo and chamber pianist, for the past seven years she has been currently collaborating with David Fanning on a major life-and-works study of Mieczysław Weinberg for Toccata Press (forthcoming), and the couple also published *Carl Nielsen: Selected Letters and Diaries* (Museum Tusculanum, 2017). Since April 2018 she has been part of the reviewing team for *Gramophone* magazine.
e-mail: michelleassay@gmail.com

Jean-Luc Caron is founder and editor of the Bulletins of the AFCN (French Carl Nielsen Association, 1985-2005), and author of studies and biographies dedicated to Nordic music, in particular its connections with France. He has published life-and-works studies of *Carl Nielsen* (1990), *Jean Sibelius* (1997 and 2007), *Edvard Grieg* (2007) and Allan Pettersson (2007), as well as *Niels Gade et la presse parisienne* (2016), *La musique danoise et l'esprit du XIX^{e} siècle* (2017), *Regards sur Carl Nielsen et son temps* (2018), and *La musique romantique suédoise* (2019).
e-mail: jcaron1387@aol.com

Karsten Eskildsen, MA (musicology/Latin 1984). After lecturing at Denmark's three musicological departments (1984-1990) and at the university college Esbjerg/Ribe, has been leading curator (1994-2004) of the Carl Nielsen and Hans Christian Andersen Department, Odense City Museums. Since then he has held various posts as director of cultural institutions, now freelancing. Many years of writing and lecturing on Nielsen, Andersen, and other topics of Danish musical and cultural history, author of the biography (in Danish and English) *Carl Nielsen – life and music* (Odense 1999).
e-mail: kaes@mail.dk

David Fanning is Professor of Music at the University of Manchester and author and editor of books, articles and critical editions on Nielsen, Shostakovich, Weinberg, and the 20th-century symphonic

tradition. He is co-author with Michelle Assay of a much-expanded version of his 2010 Weinberg biography (Toccata Press, forthcoming), and co-editor with Erik Levi of the *Routledge Companion to Music under German Occupation* (Routledge 2019). As a pianist he partnered the Lindsay String Quartet for 25 years, a role he has continued with its successor as ensemble-in-residence at the University of Manchester, the Quatuor Danel. For many years he has been a critic for *Gramophone* and *The Daily Telegraph*.
e-mail: david.fanning@manchester.ac.uk

Niels Krabbe is Research Professor Emeritus at The Royal Library in Copenhagen, where he was head of the Music and Theatre Department 1996-2009 and head of the Danish Centre for Music Editing 2009-2012. Editor-in-chief of *The Carl Nielsen Edition* and *Carl Nielsen Studies*, vols. 1-5, he was also head of The Department of Musicology of Copenhagen University from 1984-1996.
e-mail: nknielskrabbe@gmail.com

Claus Røllum-Larsen, MA and PhD from Copenhagen University, has been employed at The Royal Library since 1995, first as an editor for the Carl Nielsen Edition, then from 1997 as senior researcher in the Music Collection. His special area is Danish music from 1860-1940, and in this connection he has taken initiatives in Copenhagen's concert life on behalf of repertoire from 1900-1935. He has published books papers about international instrumental repertoire (*Impulser i Københavns koncertrepertoire 1900-1935*, 2 vols., Museum Tusculanum, 2002) and Knudåge Riisager as composer and writer (*Knudåge Riisager: komponist og skribent*, 2 vols., Museum Tusculanum, 2015). He edited Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, *The Inextinguishable*, for the Carl Nielsen Edition and is currently working on a monograph about Louis Glass.
e-mail: crl@kb.dk

Paolo Muntoni holds a masters degree in Musicology from the University of Copenhagen, and a bachelors degree in Arts, Music and Performing Arts from by the University of Padua. His publications include the essays 'Carl Nielsen in the United Kingdom' in *Carl Nielsen Studies* 5, and 'Simplicity and Essentiality: Carl Nielsen's Idea of Ancient Greek Music' in the 9th volume of *Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens* (2019).
e-mail: muntonip@gmail.com

Anne-Marie Reynolds has been a Professor of Music History at the Juilliard School of Music since 2015. She has several publications on Carl Nielsen to her credit, including the first-ever monograph on his songs, entitled *Carl Nielsen's Voice: His Songs in Context* (Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010). Reynolds has presented papers, served on international panels, and lectured throughout the United States, Europe and China. Her accomplishments in music history pedagogy over the past thirty years have been

recognised with numerous teaching awards, and her interests include the arts in the Third Reich, identity and difference in twentieth-century classical and popular music, and modernism in opera. She received her PhD in Musicology (with a minor in Music Theory) from the Eastman School of Music.

e-mail: areynolds@juilliard.edu

Marie-Louise Zervides is a freelance writer, lecturer and dramaturge working in opera and classical music. Her research focuses on nineteenth- and twentieth-century opera with an interdisciplinary approach encompassing fields such as literary theory, cultural and identity politics, and performance studies. She holds an MA in Modern Culture and a BA in Musicology from the University of Copenhagen.

e-mail: marie-louise@zervides.com