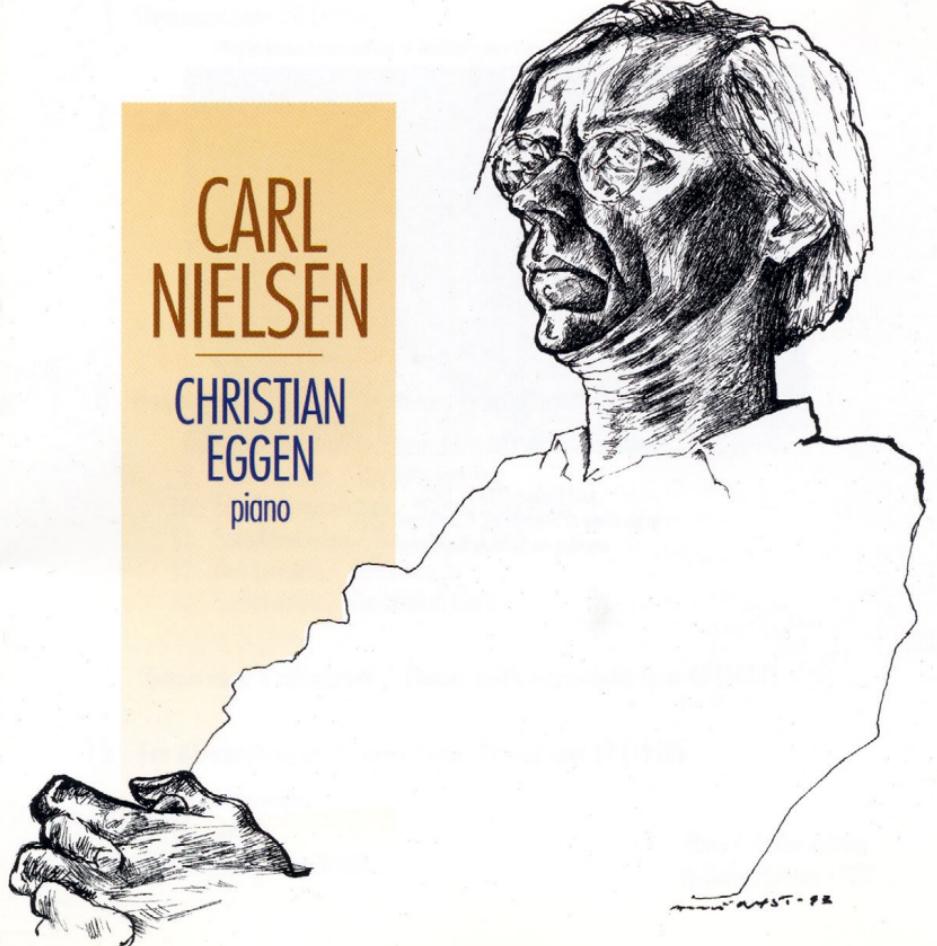
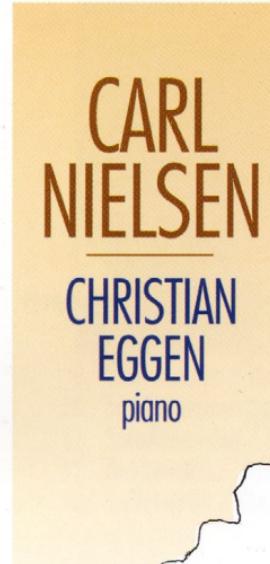


**CARL
NIELSEN**
—
**CHRISTIAN
EGGEN**
piano



- 1 Chaconne opus 32 (1916)** 8' 56"
(World premiere recording of Nielsen's own version)
- 2 Suite opus 45 (1919-20)**
- | | |
|--|--------|
| 2. Allegretto un pochettino - un poco meno - Tempo I | 3' 39" |
| 3. Poco moderato | 2' 13" |
| 4. Molto adagio e patetico | 5' 51" |
| 5. Allegretto innocente | 1' 45" |
| 6. Allegretto vivo | 1' 21" |
| 7. Allegro non troppo ma vigoroso | 7' 21" |
- 8 Humoreske-Bagateller / Humoresque-Bagatelles**
opus 11 (1894-97)
- | | |
|--|--------|
| 8. Goddag! Goddag! / Good Morning! Good Morning! | 0' 58" |
| 9. Snurrefoppen / The Spinning Top | 0' 45" |
| 10. En lille langsom Vals / A Little Slow Waltz | 1' 44" |
| 11. Sprællemanden / The Jumping Jack | 0' 46" |
| 12. Dukkemarch / Doll's March | 1' 12" |
| 13. Spilleværket / The Musical Clock | 0' 49" |
- 14 Thema med Variationer /Theme with Variations** 17' 16"
opus 40 (1917)
- 15 Tre Klaverstykker / Three Piano Pieces** opus 59 (1928)
- | | |
|------------------------|--------|
| 15. Impromptu | 2' 33" |
| 16. Adagio | 2' 56" |
| 17. Allegro non troppo | 4' 19" |

Total playing time 65' 15"





Carl Nielsen (1865 - 1931)
in his study at Vodroffsvej, Copenhagen 1911,
working on Sinfonia Espansiva.

1 Chaconne opus 32 (1916)

(World premiere recording of Nielsen's own version)

2 Suite opus 45 (1919-20)

2. Allegretto un pochettino - un poco meno - Tempo I
3. Poco moderato
4. Molto adagio e patetico
5. Allegretto innocente
6. Allegretto vivo
7. Allegro non troppo ma vigoroso

8 Humoreske-Bagateller / Humoresque-Bagatelles opus 11 (1894-97)

8. Goddag! Goddag! / Good Morning! Good Morning!
9. Snurretoppen / The Spinning Top
10. En lille langsom Vals / A Little Slow Waltz
11. Sprællemanden / The Jumping Jack
12. Dukkemarch / Doll's March
13. Spilleværket / The Musical Clock

14 Thema med Variationer / Theme with Variations opus 40 (1917)

15 Tre Klaverstykker / Three Piano Pieces opus 59 (1928)

15. Impromptu.
16. Adagio
17. Allegro non troppo

*Mina F. Miller edition
Wilhelm Hansen 1982*

MED LIVSFØLELSSEN SOM VERKTØY

av Christian Eggen

Jeg ble for alvor kjent med Carl Nielsen - eller med hans musikk, burde jeg kanskje si - midt på 70-tallet da jeg var elev ved Norges Musikhøgskole. En studiekamerat som spilte fløyte trengte hjelp til å gå på jakt i repertoaret. Vi møttes derfor tidlig en regntung høstmorgen, med hver vår noteaug under armen. Så stakk vi oss vekk i "Halli", en kald og mørk sal et stykke ned i gaten fra skolen. Her pleide Bondeungdomslaget å danse i ring på kveldene.

Vi satte oss til med instrumentene våre og gikk løs på bunken. Midtveis dukket Nielsens fløytekonsert opp. Jeg bekjenner at vi åpnet noten med mistrosig skepsis, vi håpet i beste fall på litt fynsk sjarm av typen "Taagen letter" eller "Jens Vejmand", i det minste en smule avveksling fra den jevne strøm av parfymert, sentimentalt fløytepludder som bunken viste seg å være.

Vi bråvåknet etter ganske få takter. Vi sluttet å prate, vi stirret i notene, ivrige etter å få det riktig, tok om når det gikk for galt - rastløst irriterte fordi vi ikke maktet å henge

med i den besettende musikk som åpenbarte seg for oss. Det var som å lese i en kriminalroman. Vi kunne nesten ha smugføtt på siste side.

Etter 1. sats lot vi våre motvillige instrumenter ligge, og tok notene med inn på kaféen vegg i vegg. Her kastet vi oss over vårt nye bekjentskap, opprørte og inspirerte, bladde frem og tilbake og pratet begeistret i munnen på hverandre.

Omkring i kaféen satt andre studenter og lærere, uvitende om vårt funn. Vi svulmet av viktighet. Det suste en historisk vind av gjenoppdagelse der i vår lille krok på Kaffistova. Gjenoppdagelse, slik var det. Hvordan kunne en ellers forklare at vi - som befant oss i landets mest kunnskapsrike musikkmiljø - aldri hadde hørt tale om denne musikken?

Eller hadde vi kanskje det, kanskje læreren en gang mumlet Nielsens navn i en bisetning, med ryggen til klassen, for å legge klar en plate Sibelius.

Men om så var - her satt vi nå, sprekkeferdige av musikalsk iver, i en tilstand skolen ikke kunne påført oss om den ville aldri så mye. **"Om Musikhistorie kan man læse i ethvert Leksikon, så bliver man noget klogere, men næppe mere musikalsk"** skriver Nielsen i sin essaysamling *"Levende Musik."* Min venn og jeg havnet uforvarende i et musikalsk stormkrater, lykkelig befridd for læreanstaltens metode og planmessighet. Det var selve vår evne til musikk som ble utfordret, og virkningen fikk ekstra kraft fordi vi var intetanende og uforberedte.

Det ble ingen forelesninger på oss den dagen. Men henimot kvelden snek jeg meg opp på skolens bibliotek for å finne ut hvor upåaktet Nielsens musikk i virkeligheten var. Hovmot sto for fall. Jeg fant en mengde grammofoninnspillinger, deriblant et sett

komplette orkesterverk ledet av selveste Bernstein! En slukøret musikkstudent sto ansikt til ansikt med sin egen ignoranse. Den eneste trøsten var at platene virket bortimot ubrukete.

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Den følgende tid dukket jeg ned i en mengde Nielsen-stoff, og satte stadig ut på lignende forandringsreiser.

Musikken henvendte seg med energisk fortellertrang. Uten å bry seg med forførende lekkerteheter eller utenpåklistret virtuoseri, uten ønske om å tilfredsstille ordinær nytelsessyke. Musikk med utøylet uttrykksevne, drevet frem av impulser og behov, fri for konvensjonens tvangstrøye, renset for musikalsk sømmelighet gjennom frekk omgang med tilvante mønstre. Den ville noe, denne uvanlige musikken. Den hadde et viktig anliggende, som den bragte frem på en forbausende direkte måte; det var som om den fornekket sitt egentlige opphav og ville konvertere til det virkelige liv, skjønt heldigvis - fortsatt i form av musikk.

"I henseende til konkret eller positivt Tankeindhold er Musikken fuldkommen stum. Den meddeler os intet som helst om, hvad dette eller hint betyder, og kan ikke oversættes på Ord eller Billede" skriver Nielsen i "Levende Musik". Han foraktet tidens herskende "Musiksentimentalitet", som laet musikkopplevelsen med svulstigheter og dybdepsykologi. Musikken trengte ikke å tilpasse seg symboler eller skjule seg bak åndelige mysterier, dens krefter er av reneste liv; den former bevegelse, med typiske mønstre vi kjenner fra naturen eller fra den menneskelige bevissthet; kreftene som får et blad til å rasle i vinden, den lille impulsen som får et menneske til å snu seg, tyngden av et vognlass som ruller frem langs landeveien.

"I de sidste Dage ved Kærerne var der også en lille stribet Flue, som flere Gange viste seg for mig midt i Solskinnet. Den stod lige foran mit Ansigt i Luften og dirrede som en Stålfjeder; så gav den et Lyn-Sæt til Siden og blev atter stående. Den vilde mig noget; det var Lystighed, og aldrig kunde jeg fange den, endda det var mit højeste Ønske," leser vi i selvbiografien "Min fynske Barndom".

For Nielsen var denne situasjonen spekket med bevegelse og energi, som han kunne modellere et musikalsk forløp etter. Han preget sin musikk med tilværelsens foretelser: "De skal blot forestille Dem en bedugget Mand der søger at opretholde sin Værdighed og oprejste Stilling ved hjælp af en Lygtepæl", sier han om slutten av det første klaverstykket i opus 59. Og om finalen i *Thema med Variationer*:

"(Dersom) vi betragter Var:15 som et vildt Forsvar af en Mand der kæmper med Ryggen mod et Isfjeld og tilsidst, ligesom drukken og bedøvet af Kampen vakler bort, så er det riktigt, at hele Slutningen skal være "uinteressant", såsandt en Person (i et Drama) der har kæmpet ud og går sin Vej ikke længere bør tilvende sig Hovedinteressen og heller intet Krav har derpå." Musikken skulle favne den menneskelige erfaring. Den måtte ribbes for intetsigende velklang, styrke sin meddelelsesevne, vinne betydning for lytteren - på utelukkende musikalske premisser. Med dette for øye kvesset Nielsen sin penn og rendyrket visjonene. Han lot seg inspirere av en intens livsfølelse og sitt sterke opplevelsesapparat, og formet et uttrykk der *sinnets dynamikk* er grunnmønster. Nielsen beskriver en passasje i fløytekonserten på denne måten:

"Et Tema afbrydes pludselig af Paukerne ... og jager en Solobasun ud af sin forrige Tilstand. Soloflojen bliver helt nervøs og skriger op ... og nu kommer der mere Liv i Tingene. Efterhånden bliver Orkestersatsen også fyldigere og mere bevæget, dog det varer ikke længe; thi Fløjten kan ikke fornægte sin Natur, den hører hjemme i Arkadien og foretrækker de pastorale Stemninger; Komponisten er derfor nødt til at rette sig efter det blide Væsen, ifald han ikke vil risikere at stempler som en Barbar."

Slik møter vi menneskelige størrelser i klingende form. Ikke gjennom evindelig, høystemt føleri, ikke gjennom beskrivende programmusikk, men som å erfare sansenes liv

ved hjelp av musikalske bevegelser. Nielsens visjoner er først og fremst motoriske, skriver Tom Kristensen. Selv sier Nielsen:

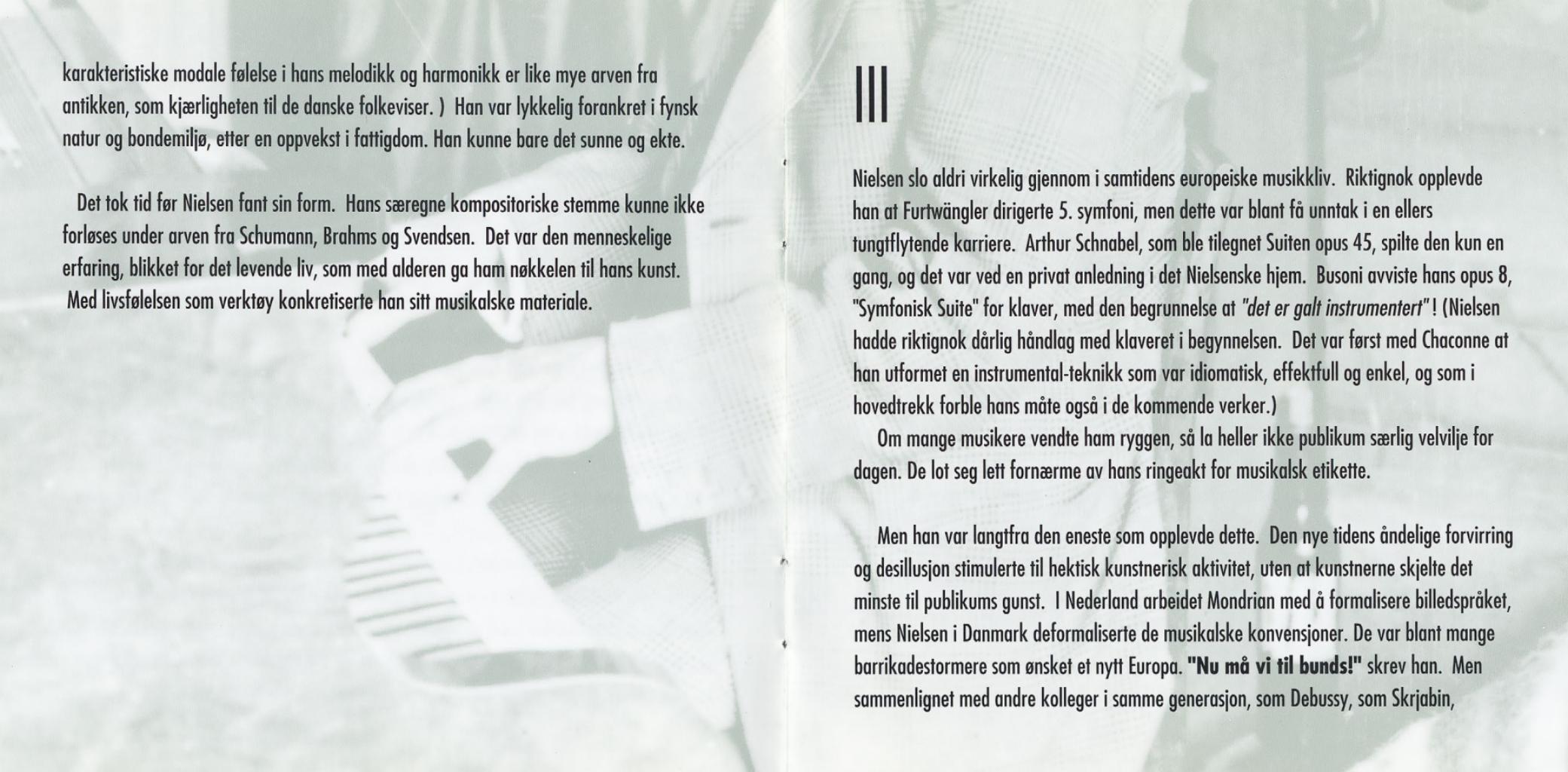
"Hvis der skulde være lidt ved min Musik, er det den ene Ting, at der er en vis Strom, en vis Bevægelse i den, og hvis den bliver brudt, er der overhovedet intet ved den!"

Nielsen komponerte alltid langsmed denne strømmen, styrt av innfall, uten på forhånd å utarbeide en grunnleggende plan. "Ja, vi aner jo ikke, hvor vi ender" pleide han å si. Slik frigjorde han levende natur.

Han hadde ingen ting til overs for den ekstreme avant-garde, som dyrket forskning og konstruksjon i beste l'art pour l'art-manner. **"Jeg er tit så uhyggelig stemt når jeg hører eller ser moderne Kunst"** skriver han. **"Den kan blænde, imponere, forbløffe, forbavse og et Øjeblik vække Ens Beundring, men så bliver der pludselig tomt inden i En, og så er altting så koldt og fattigt, meget værre end før."** Han ironiserte over Bartok, som ønsket Nielsens bekreftelse på at han var tilstrekkelig moderne.

Men Nielsen var uten interesse for "trender" eller moteriktig jáleri. Han higet etter å kjenne *livet*. **"Min fynske Barndom"** gir oss bildet av en engasjert filantrop som setter pris på de forskjelligste menneskelige særegenheter, og som har for vane å lytte bak ordene for å tildele seg informasjon av en videre størrelsесorden.

Han var en klassisk humanist, overordentlig bevandret i kulturhistorien. (Den



karakteristiske modale følelse i hans melodikk og harmonikk er like mye arven fra antikken, som kjærligheten til de danske folkeviser.) Han var lykkelig forankret i fynsk natur og bondemiljø, etter en oppvekst i fattigdom. Han kunne bare det sunne og ekte.

Det tok tid før Nielsen fant sin form. Hans særegne kompositoriske stemme kunne ikke forløses under arven fra Schumann, Brahms og Svendsen. Det var den menneskelige erfaring, blikket for det levende liv, som med alderen ga ham nøkkelen til hans kunst. Med livsfølelsen som verktøy konkretiserte han sitt musikalske materiale.



Nielsen slo aldri virkelig gjennom i samtidens europeiske musikkliv. Riktignok opplevde han at Furtwängler dirigerte 5. symfoni, men dette var blant få unntak i en ellers tungtflytende karriere. Arthur Schnabel, som ble tilegnet Suiten opus 45, spilte den kun en gang, og det var ved en privat anledning i det Nielsenske hjem. Busoni avviste hans opus 8, "Symfonisk Suite" for klaver, med den begrunnelse at "*det er galt instrumentert!*" (Nielsen hadde riktignok dårlig håndlag med klaveret i begynnelsen. Det var først med Chaconne at han utformet en instrumental-teknikk som var idiomatisk, effektfull og enkel, og som i hovedtrekk forble hans måte også i de kommende verker.)

Om mange musikere vendte ham ryggen, så la heller ikke publikum særlig velvilje for dagen. De lot seg lett fornærme av hans ringeakt for musikalsk etikette.

Men han var langtfra den eneste som opplevde dette. Den nye tidens åndelige forvirring og desillusjon stimulerte til hektisk kunstnerisk aktivitet, uten at kunstnerne skjelte det minste til publikums gunst. I Nederland arbeidet Mondrian med å formalisere billedspråket, mens Nielsen i Danmark deformaliserte de musikalske konvensjoner. De var blant mange barrikadestormere som ønsket et nytt Europa. **"Nu må vi til bunds!"** skrev han. Men sammenlignet med andre kolleger i samme generasjon, som Debussy, som Skrjabin,

Schönberg eller Stravinskij, kan Nielsen neppe kalles utpreget revolusjonær. (På den annen side: Prokofiev og Shostakovitsj var henholdsvis 26 og 41 år yngre!) Den klassiske forankring slapp aldri helt taket, men dette utnyttet han kreativt. Gamle og nye modeller opptrer side om side, noe som i seg selv lader stoffet. I senere år, med et stadig større behov for å fornye ressursene, orienterte han seg en stund mot 12tone-teknikken. I denne genren var det Hauer, og ikke Schönberg, som imponerte ham. Det tredje klaverstykket i opus 59 er det vesentligste av disse forsøkene. Men også her er det som om stoffet sprenger seg ut av rammen han prøver å snekre.

Nielsen fallt mellom mange stoler. Kanskje var dette prisen han måtte betale for sin ekstreme subjektivitet. Vi kjenner en rekke eksempler på store kunstnere som forblir ensomme i historien, som skyter seg avgårde i den ene eller andre retning uten å bli fulgt av noen. De fleste av disse kunstnere er kanskje konsekvente. Men få har arbeidet med så storlått oppriktighet som Carl Nielsen.

Så finnes det heller ikke mange skjulesteder, når man gir seg i kast med det største av alle kunstens mål: Livet.

Pinds Café, Aarhus
14 IX 1994

CHRISTIAN EGGEN

ble født i 1957, debuterte som pianist i 1973 og har senere gitt tallrike konserter i inn- og utland med strålende mottakelser. Han var Norges deltaker i "Biennale for Nordiske Solister" i 1984.

Som dirigent fikk han sitt internasjonale gjennombrudd under Verdensmusikkdagene i 1990, og siden har han og hans ensemble, CIKADA, opptrådt ved konserter og festivaler verden over. Ifølge Svenska Dagbladet er han "*troligen den främste dirigenten i Skandinavien för nutida musik*". Han har arbeidet med Helmuth Lachenmann, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, James Dillon og Witold Lutoslawski, og med musikere som Kyung-Wa Chung, Subramaniam, Jan Garbarek og Terje Rypdal. Han er også kunstnerisk leder av OSLO SINFONIETTA og dirigent/pianist i BOREALIS ENSEMBLE. Han har gjort en rekke plateinnspillinger, bl. a. med Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Han har skrevet orkestermusikk, kammermusikk og musikk for teater, film og TV.

WELDING WITH THE SPARK OF LIFE

by Christian Eggen

I really got acquainted with Carl Nielsen - or rather with his music - in the mid-seventies, as a student at the Norwegian State Academy of Music, when I was asked by a fellow student, a flutist, to help him pick suitable pieces out of the standard repertoire. We met on a rainy autumn morning, each carrying a pile of music, and settled down to work in a dark and chilly hall a couple of blocks away normally used for traditional country dancing.

Starting at the top of the stack we worked our way through the flute standards. Halfway down we found Carl Nielsen's Flute Concerto. I must admit that we both eyed it rather sceptically, anticipating, at best, a repeat of the Danish charm displayed in the composer's well-known *The Fog is Lifting*, and, hopefully, something a little more interesting than the perfumed and sentimental jabber usually offered to flute players.

It didn't take more than a few bars to get us wide awake. We stopped talking, we glared at the music, eager to get it right, repeating the difficult passages, more and more annoyed

whenever we didn't immediately get the hang of these obsessive phrases. It was like reading a crime mystery, continuously fighting the impulse to turn to the last page.

Having worked our way through the opening movement, we left our instruments and brought the music to the neighbouring café to discuss it in detail, turning the pages back and forth and getting still more excited. Fellow students and teachers were sitting all around, deplorably unaware of our discovery. We suddenly felt immensely important. How would anyone explain that we - living as we did in the middle of the country's most omniscient musical environment - had never heard of this music?

Or, maybe we had - maybe some teacher actually mentioned Carl Nielsen's name once in passing, turning his backside to the class in order to put some Sibelius on the turntable.

Even so - there we sat, bursting with a musical fervour never generated by our Academy. «**Reading about the history of music in a dictionary may make you a little wiser, but it will not improve your musicianship,**» Carl Nielsen rightly wrote himself in his book *Living Music*. Unexpectedly, my friend and I had got ourselves caught in a musical typhoon, where scholastic methods and planning were happily forgotten. Instead, we were confronted with a challenge to our personal ability to make music, and the effect became especially noticeable because we were completely unprepared.

We dropped all our lectures that day. In the late afternoon, however, I sneaked into the school library in order to see for myself how shamefully neglected my Danish discovery really was. Alas, pride will have a fall. I found quite a lot of gramophone recordings of his

works, among which a complete series of his orchestral output conducted by no less a person than Bernstein. Crestfallen, the young music student was faced with his own ignorance. His only comfort was that practically nobody seemed to have ever listened to these records.

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During the following months and years, the more I delved into Nielsen's music and writing, the more he surprised me. His music addressed me personally with its unusual energy and narrative power. Directly and accurately he hit me without resorting to seductive niceties or outward virtuosity and without trying to satisfy the listener's self-indulgence. Here I found an unbridled expressive power alimented by its own impulses and necessities, unfettered by the strait jacket of convention, playing impudently with every accepted pattern, ruthlessly disregarding all musical decorum. This unusual music wanted to achieve something. It pursued an important goal and told me so in a very straightforward manner. It was as if it tried to deny its real origins and convert to real life, fortunately without ceasing to sound like music.

«Concerning any possible concrete and positive thought content, music is completely mute. It tells us nothing about what this or that means and does not translate into words or pictures,» Nielsen wrote in his book *Living Music*. He had a profound dislike for what he called «*the musical sentimentalism*» of his time, that is its tendency to weigh down the musical experience with turgidities and depth psychology. Music has no need to adjust to symbols or hide behind spiritual mysteries. Its force is the force of life itself, the force which gives shape to a movement according to patterns well known in Nature and in the way we perceive things, the force that makes a leaf rustle in the wind, the impulse that makes a man turn around, a sudden surprise, the weight of a carriage coming down the road. «**During our last days in the marsh a small, streaked fly made several appearances in the sunshine. It stopped in mid-air in front of my nose, trembling like a steel spring, then made a sudden move sideways and stopped again. It wanted to tell me something. It was all very funny, and I never managed to catch it, however eagerly I tried.**» (*My Childhood on Fyn*). To Nielsen, such a situation seemed loaded with movement and energy and worthy of being reproduced in music. On the whole, he liked to fill his music with everyday happenings. This is how he describes the end of the first of his Piano Pieces op. 59: «**You should simply try to imagine a tipsy fellow striving to maintain his dignity and his erect position by holding on to a lamp post.**» And about the end of his Theme with Variations: «**If we look upon the fifteenth variation as the frantic gestures of a man defending**

his life with his back to an iceberg until, stunned by fatigue, he gives up and totters away, then it is quite correct to make the end sound "uninteresting". The character who, in a play, has given up fighting and is leaving the stage, is not interesting any more and can no longer claim our attention.»

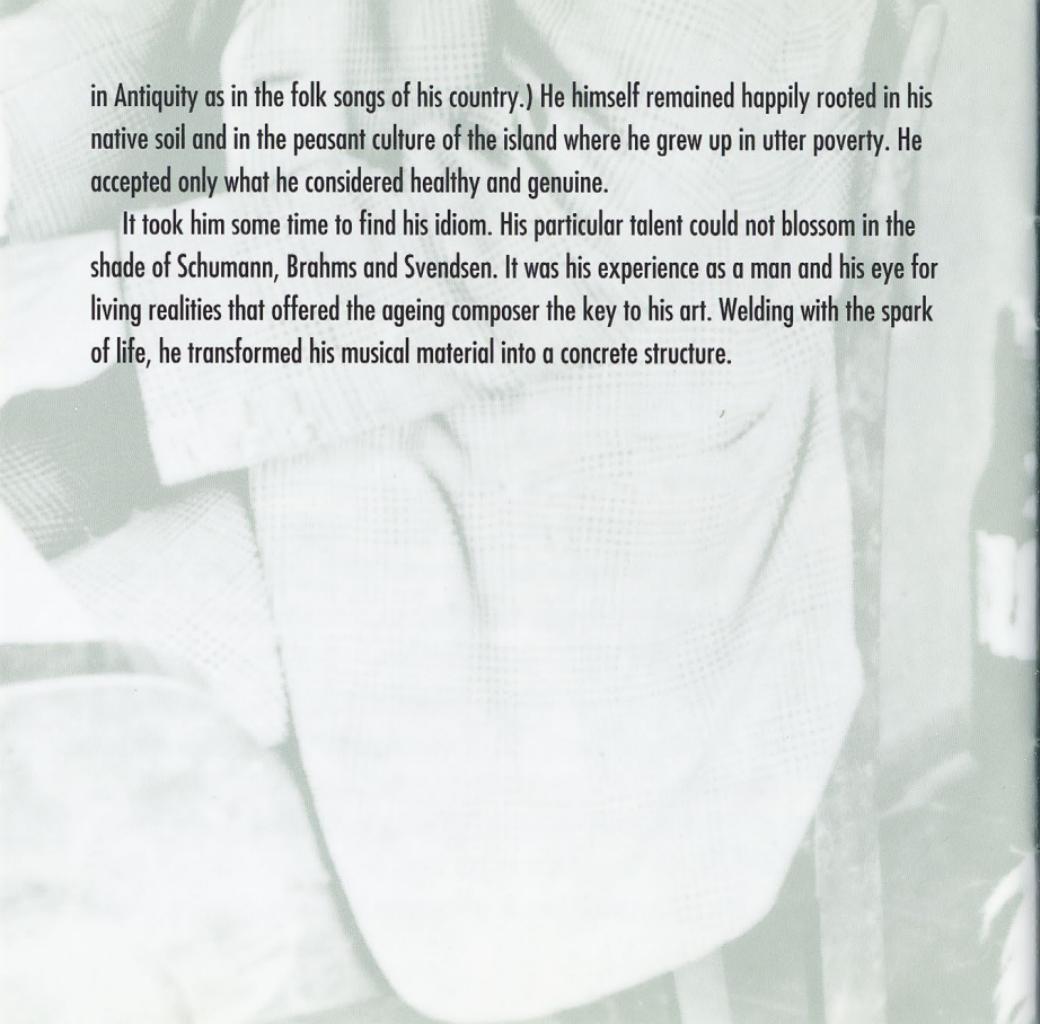
He wanted music to encompass all human experience. He wanted to strip it of all pointless beauty in favour of a more intense power of communication. It should become significant to the listener - but only by its own musical means. To this end he sharpened his plume and cultivated his visions. Inspired by his intense sensitivity and his highly developed faculty of perception, he moulded a mode of expression in which the «dynamics of the mind» are essential.

This is how Nielsen describes a passage from his Flute Concerto: «A theme is interrupted by the timpani... routing the solo trombone out of its former state. The solo flute, suddenly very nervous, cries out... and things start moving. The orchestral structure also gets thicker and more agitated, but only for a little while. The flute, in fact, cannot for long disown its real nature: it hails from Arcadia and prefers the pastoral mood. The composer, therefore, had better comply with its gentle manner if he wants to avoid being called a barbarian.» Thus, behind the sounds, we perceive human proportions. Not as long-drawn gushes of grand feeling, nor as descriptive programme music, but simply as musical movements that help us realize those of our senses.

According to Tom Kristensen, the famous Danish writer, Carl Nielsen's visions are of a motory nature. And the composer agrees: «If there is anything special about my music at all, it must be that there is a certain movement in it, a kind of steady current. If that flow is broken, the music is nothing at all.» Nielsen always let his pen follow this current, guided by his whims, without any preconceived structural plan. «We never know what we're going to end up with,» he used to say. That was his way of letting nature have its way.

He had little liking for the avant-garde extremists, their research and their structural fixations, which seemed to him l'art pour l'art mannerism. «I often become quite depressed by hearing modern music and looking at modern art,» he wrote. «One may be dazzled, impressed, and surprised, one may even feel a certain admiration, but very soon one feels only emptiness inside, everything seems so cold and destitute, much more so than before.»

He also talked sarcastically about Bartók, who wanted him to certify that he - Bartók - was sufficiently modern. Nielsen was not interested in fashionable trends and felt no need to show off. His concern was to get in touch with life. His auto-biography, *My Childhood on Fyn*, leaves us with the picture of a passionate lover of Humanity, a man who appreciated the peculiarities of our race and liked to penetrate behind the words for information that no words could convey. He was a classical scholar well versed in the history of civilization. (The modal colour characteristic of his melodic lines as well as of his harmony is rooted as deeply



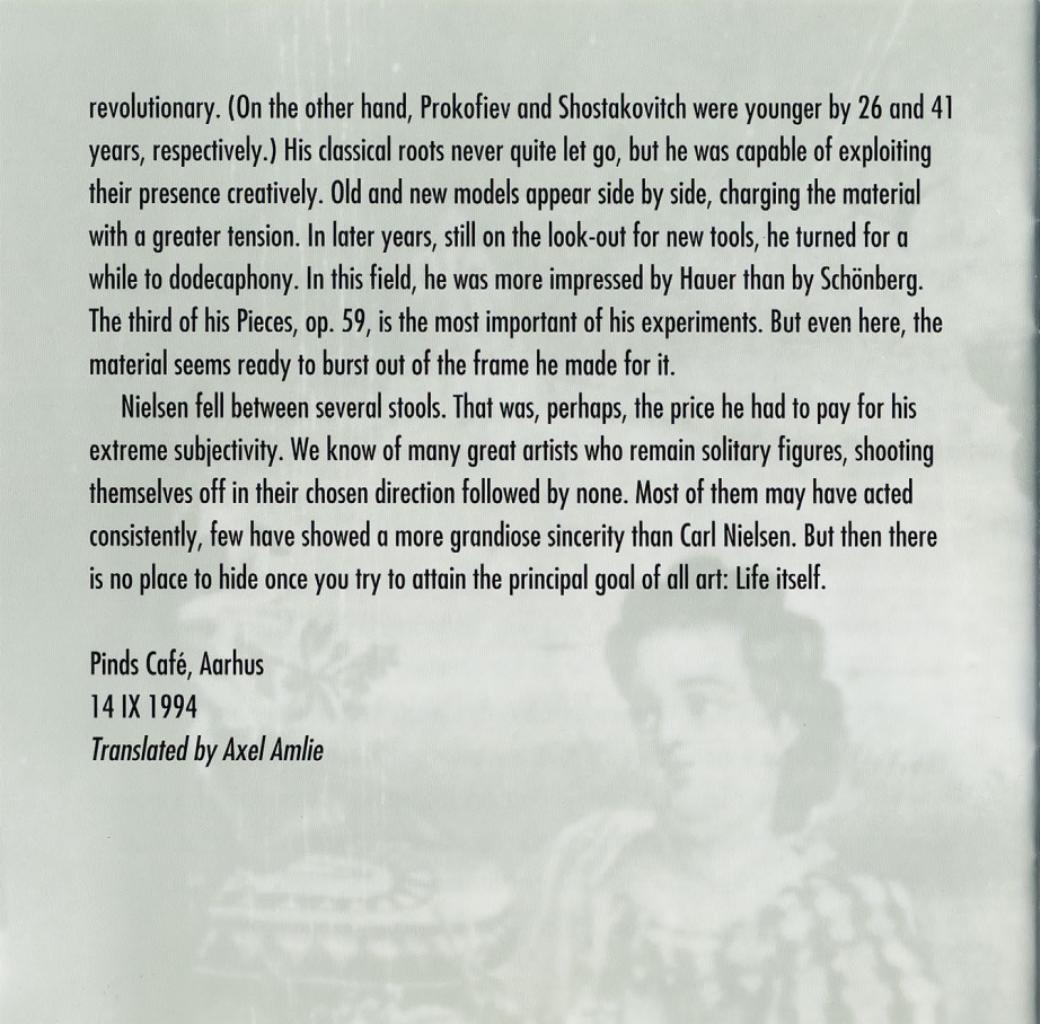
in Antiquity as in the folk songs of his country.) He himself remained happily rooted in his native soil and in the peasant culture of the island where he grew up in utter poverty. He accepted only what he considered healthy and genuine.

It took him some time to find his idiom. His particular talent could not blossom in the shade of Schumann, Brahms and Svendsen. It was his experience as a man and his eye for living realities that offered the ageing composer the key to his art. Welding with the spark of life, he transformed his musical material into a concrete structure.



Carl Nielsen was never really recognized in his lifetime. True, he heard Furtwängler conduct his fifth symphony, but that was one of the few events of its kind in a slow-moving career. Arthur Schnabel, to whom he dedicated his Piano Suite op. 45, performed it only once, and that was on a private occasion in the composer's home. Busoni refused his op. 8 - Symphonic Suite for Piano - pretending that *«the instrumentation was faulty»*. (It is true that Nielsen's writing for the piano was rather clumsy at first. Only for his Chaconne did he develop the idiomatic, efficient and simple technique that remained his hallmark in most of his later works.)

Not only did a number of his fellow musicians show little appreciation of his work. The general public also turned him down. People were easily offended by his disregard of musical etiquette. In this respect, however, he was not alone. The spiritual confusion and disillusionment of those years provoked artists of all kinds to hectic creative activities during which they did not care much about the public's reactions. In Holland, Mondrian was formalizing the pictorial language, while in Denmark Nielsen was deforming the musical conventions. They were among the numerous iconoclasts who wanted a new Europe. **«Let's go to the bottom!»** Nielsen wrote. Compared, however, to other composers of his generation, such as Debussy, Scriabin, Schönberg or Stravinsky, he was no typical



revolutionary. (On the other hand, Prokofiev and Shostakovich were younger by 26 and 41 years, respectively.) His classical roots never quite let go, but he was capable of exploiting their presence creatively. Old and new models appear side by side, charging the material with a greater tension. In later years, still on the look-out for new tools, he turned for a while to dodecaphony. In this field, he was more impressed by Hauer than by Schönberg. The third of his *Pieces*, op. 59, is the most important of his experiments. But even here, the material seems ready to burst out of the frame he made for it.

Nielsen fell between several stools. That was, perhaps, the price he had to pay for his extreme subjectivity. We know of many great artists who remain solitary figures, shooting themselves off in their chosen direction followed by none. Most of them may have acted consistently, few have showed a more grandiose sincerity than Carl Nielsen. But then there is no place to hide once you try to attain the principal goal of all art: Life itself.

Pinds Café, Aarhus

14 IX 1994

Translated by Axel Amlie

CHRISTIAN EGGEN

was born in 1957, made his debut as a pianist in 1973 and has given numerous recitals in and outside Norway which have earned him enthusiastic press reviews. He represented his country at the 1984 "Nordic Soloists' Biennial".

As a conductor he had his international break-through at the 1990 ISCM World Music Days, and with his CIKADA ensemble he has been appearing at concerts and festivals all over the World since then. According to the Swedish paper Svenska Dagbladet, he is "*probably the best conductor of contemporary music in all Scandinavia*". He has worked with Helmuth Lachenmann, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, James Dillon and Witold Lutoslawski and with soloists like Kyung-Wa Chung, Subramaniam, Jan Garbarek and Terje Rypdal. He is also artistic director of OSLO SINFONIETTA and pianist/conductor of the BOREALIS ENSEMBLE.

He has made numerous recordings with, among others, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also composed symphonic and chamber music as well as music for the stage, for the cinema and for television.



CARL
NIELSEN

CHRISTIAN
EGGEN
piano

Recorded in The University Aula, Oslo, 1993

Steinway Piano technician: Thron Irby

Musical production and editing: Christian Eggen

Sound engineering and CD-mastering: Morten Lindberg

Supervision: Arne-Peter Rognan

Art design: Take-Off Reklamebyrå AS

Front cover: Christian Eggen by Arne Nøst

Photos on back cover (Carl Nielsen 1927) and inside
booklet by courtesy of The Royal Library, Copenhagen

Financed with Support from Norsk Kassettavgiftsfond and

Fond for Utøvende Kunstnere.

Biem /n@b

Total playing time 65' 15"

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First published by Victoria AS in 1994 as VCD 19074

Remastered by Lindberg Lyd AS in 2015 and published as 2L-120

ISRC: NOMPP1511010-170

EAN-13: 7041888521020

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Carl Nielsen Piano Music 2015 remastering

Carl Nielsen had a very original conception of what music can be. It is all about rhetoric, of the way music "talks": how to set musical statements in motion, how to create dynamics and contrasting elements, and how to express different musical situations. When you read his memoirs you are struck by his eye for a situation — the way he picks up the minor drama in some everyday occurrence, and how he conceives it as interplay between contrasting forces. This was also how he experienced music, and he uses models of this type when he composes. For Nielsen, this was the essence of life. This is his own contribution to musical history.

Nielsen is an anachronism, and that in itself makes his music interesting. In his music traditional tonality has to accommodate modern structures, while agitated musical phrases must fit into a harmonic framework and structural fabric that may be constricting. All this energizes the music in all sorts of directions. Any attempt to categorize these factors would be unhelpful, as well as being something Nielsen would have disapproved of. Had he subscribed to a single neat aesthetic model we could perhaps have found something cogent to say about it. But he evades any such commentary because he is himself always looking for something new. He is like a sniffer dog perpetually smelling out new musical possibilities. Nor did he have any regular compositional method. He just began at the beginning and felt his way forward. "We have no idea where we will end up," he used to say.

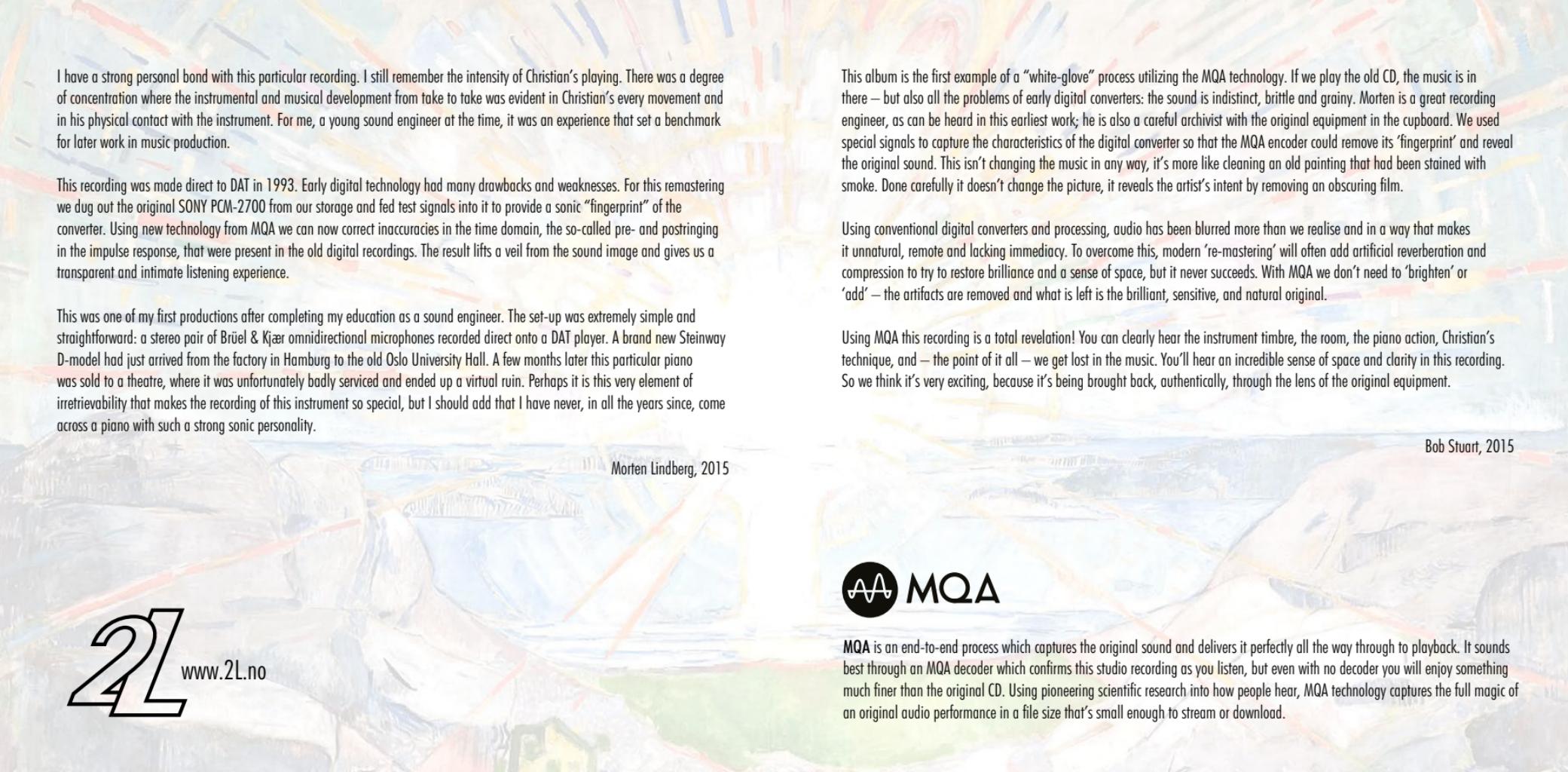
When we talk about a composer's music as bearing their personal stamp, we must ask how we define "personal"? We usually approach a comparison of composers through the criteria of chords and harmonic development. These are musical cornerstones that define epochs: musical history unfolds as they change. They are criteria that determine how "unique" or how "modern" a composer is. This, when you think about it, is a bit odd, for it pushes under the carpet other aspects of music, and thus underplays or even ignores other criteria that can determine the modernity of a composer. Nielsen, for his part, did not need advanced tonality to express his ideas. As we have said, he explored movement and dynamics, not tonality. Perhaps it was his background that pulled him in this direction. Nielsen grew up in the country. He was not what we would call intellectual, nor was he especially well-read or interested in theory. While other composers studied, and developed new theories, he preferred to lie in the grass and look at bumble-bees. He was born and raised in a provincial setting, and was happy in this environment. This meant that a lot of changes sailed past him unseen — his back was turned. It is perhaps going too far to call him narrow-minded, but it is a fact that most of the innovations of his time struck him as artificial and spurious. He ridiculed Mahler — what he saw as his obsession with monster orchestras — and Bartók, who was, in his view, simply out to be modern.

The tonal system he inherited from Schumann and Brahms, on the other hand, was, for Nielsen, a firm and rock-solid foundation, containing, as he saw it, music's intrinsic strength. He declared that tones themselves, the tonal register, and intervals are "the alpha and omega of music". Everything else is superficial. Nothing foreign should be included; everything should belong as a natural and organic part of the music — indeed, "natural" and "organic" are two key-words that run through his writings. It is, of course, easy to label him as a conservative. But we should hesitate before we do so. Nielsen exploited to the full the major/minor system. It is indeed an amazing system; like chess, it offers so many options that they can never be exhausted. Moreover, he undoubtedly developed his own very individual musical voice, his dialect if you like, one of its ingredients being his use of older modal scales. And we should add that in his later years he also experimented boldly with harmony.

Nielsen certainly writes idiomatically! He is a superb composer of piano music. But it took a while before he discovered this himself. His first large-scale piano composition, Symphonic Suite, is clumsily written and awkward to play. In it he is preoccupied with purely musical questions, without taking into account the instrument he is composing for. Busoni — one of the great pianists of his time — complained that its instrumentation was all wrong. But as Nielsen matures as a composer, his ability to choose just the right medium to express his every idea becomes one of his great strengths. In fact, as we see in his Flute Concerto and Clarinet Concerto, he masters this aspect of composing so brilliantly that, rather than using the instrument as a more or less fortuitously chosen tool for expressing a musical idea, it is the instrument itself that he is expressing. We find this everywhere in Nielsen's late orchestral works. He has procured a large number of unique musical expressions by coaxing from instruments their truly distinctive sound. This may seem obvious and easily achieved, but it is not. And it is when Nielsen succeeds best here that his music functions best. The lively characterisation, the different sorts of energy that struggle side by side, the individual voices that demand attention. All this is wonderful! No other composer had achieved quite the same. It is most evident in the late orchestral works, in the two concertos and in the Wind Quintet. Of course, a varied group of instruments gives a composer far more opportunities than a single piano. However, in time, this way of thinking about music begins to dominate his whole approach to composition, and it imposes itself on his musical structures. In his final three piano works the different ideas are so individualised that they really belong to different worlds, as if they came from different abstract instruments.

Nielsen's music, being so personal, is full of original features that will delight new listeners. Today, with so many well-worn musical paths, it is his ability to surprise and take us in unexpected directions that is exciting and valuable. Nielsen's originality will always be there. No one else has written quite like him, and no one will do so again. May his music live on!

Christian Eggen, 2015



I have a strong personal bond with this particular recording. I still remember the intensity of Christian's playing. There was a degree of concentration where the instrumental and musical development from take to take was evident in Christian's every movement and in his physical contact with the instrument. For me, a young sound engineer at the time, it was an experience that set a benchmark for later work in music production.

This recording was made direct to DAT in 1993. Early digital technology had many drawbacks and weaknesses. For this remastering we dug out the original SONY PCM-2700 from our storage and fed test signals into it to provide a sonic "fingerprint" of the converter. Using new technology from MQA we can now correct inaccuracies in the time domain, the so-called pre- and postringing in the impulse response, that were present in the old digital recordings. The result lifts a veil from the sound image and gives us a transparent and intimate listening experience.

This was one of my first productions after completing my education as a sound engineer. The set-up was extremely simple and straightforward: a stereo pair of Brüel & Kjaer omnidirectional microphones recorded direct onto a DAT player. A brand new Steinway D-model had just arrived from the factory in Hamburg to the old Oslo University Hall. A few months later this particular piano was sold to a theatre, where it was unfortunately badly serviced and ended up a virtual ruin. Perhaps it is this very element of irretrievability that makes the recording of this instrument so special, but I should add that I have never, in all the years since, come across a piano with such a strong sonic personality.

Morten Lindberg, 2015



This album is the first example of a "white-glove" process utilizing the MQA technology. If we play the old CD, the music is in there – but also all the problems of early digital converters: the sound is indistinct, brittle and grainy. Morten is a great recording engineer, as can be heard in this earliest work; he is also a careful archivist with the original equipment in the cupboard. We used special signals to capture the characteristics of the digital converter so that the MQA encoder could remove its 'fingerprint' and reveal the original sound. This isn't changing the music in any way, it's more like cleaning an old painting that had been stained with smoke. Done carefully it doesn't change the picture, it reveals the artist's intent by removing an obscuring film.

Using conventional digital converters and processing, audio has been blurred more than we realise and in a way that makes it unnatural, remote and lacking immediacy. To overcome this, modern 're-mastering' will often add artificial reverberation and compression to try to restore brilliance and a sense of space, but it never succeeds. With MQA we don't need to 'brighten' or 'add' – the artifacts are removed and what is left is the brilliant, sensitive, and natural original.

Using MQA this recording is a total revelation! You can clearly hear the instrument timbre, the room, the piano action, Christian's technique, and – the point of it all – we get lost in the music. You'll hear an incredible sense of space and clarity in this recording. So we think it's very exciting, because it's being brought back, authentically, through the lens of the original equipment.

Bob Stuart, 2015



MQA is an end-to-end process which captures the original sound and delivers it perfectly all the way through to playback. It sounds best through an MQA decoder which confirms this studio recording as you listen, but even with no decoder you will enjoy something much finer than the original CD. Using pioneering scientific research into how people hear, MQA technology captures the full magic of an original audio performance in a file size that's small enough to stream or download.

Carl Nielsen Piano Music 2015 remastering

Carl Nielsen hadde en original forståelse av hva musikk kan være. Det har med retorikk å gjøre, hvordan musikken snakker. Hvordan å sette musikalske utsagn i bevegelse, skape dynamikk, motsetninger, iscenesette musikalske situasjoner med ulike karakterer. Når du leser memoarene blir du slått av hans øye for situasjoner, hvordan han fester seg ved dynamikken i en dagligdags hendelse, hvordan han oppfatter det som samspill mellom ulike energier. Det var slik han opplevde musikk også, og det er slike modeller han bruker når han setter musikken i spill. For Nielsen var dette essensen av liv. Dette er hans originale bidrag til musikkhistorien.

Nielsen er en anakronisme, og det i seg selv gjør musikken interessant. Det gamle tonespråket får tåle belastningen av moderne strukturer, rabiate fraser skal tøyles innenfor harmoniske eller andre rammer som kan være for små. Det er et hav av momenter her som lader musikken fra alle kanter. Å kategorisere vil ikke hjelpe oss, dessuten ville Nielsen blitt rasende. Hadde han sverget til en bestemt estetikk kunne vi kanskje sagt noe fornuftig. Men han unnslipper hele tiden fordi han selv er på leting. Han er en sporthund som snuser etter musikalske muligheter. Han hadde heller ingen metode når han komponerte. Han begynte på begynnelsen og følte seg fram. «Ja, vi vet jo ikke hvor vi ender,» pleide han å si.

Hvordan definerer vi «personlig»? De første kriteriene når man sammenligner komponister er gjerne akkordikk og harmonikk. Disse er bæresøyler som definerer epoker og avtegner historiens forløp. Det bestemmer også hvor «unik» eller hvor «moderne» en komponist er. Det er i og før seg et pussig fenomen. For hva med alle de andre aspektene? Nielsen trengte ikke spesielt avansert tonalitet for å uttrykke sine idéer. Som vi var inne på: Han utforsket bevegelsen og det motoriske, ikke det tonale. Kanskje det var bakgrunnen hans som satte ham på dette sporet. Nielsen kom fra landet. Han var ikke det vi kaller intellektuell, ikke spesielt belest, ikke teoretisk interessaert. Mens andre komponister studerte og utviklet nye teknikker lå han heller i gresset og kikket på humler. Egentlig var han en typisk provinsiell, godt fornøyd med sitt eget ståsted. Dermed var det mye i tiden som seilte forbi mens han sto tvært med ryggen til. Skal vi sette det på spissen kan vi si at han var sneversynt. I det meste av det nye så han bare kunstheter og påfunn. Han hånlo av Mahler og hans monsterorkester, som han kalte det, og av Bartok, som ifølge Nielsen var så opptatt av å være moderne.

Det tonale systemet han arvet fra Schumann og Brahms derimot, det var et system som sto fjellstøtt, og som bar i seg musikkens urkretter, slik Nielsen så det. Tonene, tonerekkene og intervallene er musikkens Alfa og Omega, sa han. Alt annet er utvendigheter.

Ingen ting må være fremmedartet, alt skal være naturlig og organisk, det er to nøkkelord som går igjen i tekstene hans. Dette kan fort oppfattes som konservativt. Men Nielsen bruker dur/moll-systemet for hva det er verdt. Det er et fantastisk system. Det er som sjakkspillet. Det har så mange muligheter at det aldri tar slutt. Og Nielsen skapte definitivt sin egen dialekt, blant annet med bruk av eldre modale skalaer. Og rett skal være rett: mot slutten eksperimenterte han også friskt med det harmoniske.

Javisst skriver han idiomatic! Nielsen er en glimrende klaverkomponist. Men det tok litt tid før han fant ut av det. Hans første store klaververk, Symfonisk Suite, er klønete skrevet og ligger ikke godt i hendene. I dette verket er han opptatt av de rent musikalske problemstillingene, og tar ikke hensyn til instrumentet han skriver for. Busoni – en av tidsens største pianister – sa at det er «galt instrumenter». Men etterhvert som Nielsen modnes er det nettopp dette som blir en av hans største styrker: det å finne riktig middel til å uttrykke sine idéer. Faktisk – som du ser i flytekonserten og i klarinettkonserten – mestre han dette til slutt så brillant at det formelig er selve instrumentet han ønsker å uttrykke, istedenfor at instrumentet er et mer eller mindre tilfeldig redskap til å uttrykke en musikalisk idé. Sånt finner du overalt i de sene orkesterverkene. Nielsen har funnet mange unike uttrykk ved å lokke frem instrumentenes særpreg. Dette høres selvfølgelig ut, men er det slett ikke. Det er når Nielsen lykkes med dette at musikken hans fungerer best. Den livlige karakteriseringen, de ulike energitypene som kjemper side om side, de individuelle stemmene som krever oppmerksomhet. Det er glimrende! Ingen annen komponist har oppnådd noe tilsvarende. Det kommer aller best frem i de sene orkesterverkene, i de to konsertene og i blåsekintetten. Et variert instrumentarium gir flere muligheter enn et enslig klavér. Men etterhvert som denne måten å tenke musikk på blir dominerende for ham, så virker det tilbake på de rene strukturene også. I hans siste tre klaverstykker er de forskjellige idéene så individualiserte at de tilhører forskjellige verdener, som om de kom fra ulike abstrakte instrumenter.

Men alt er vel aktuelt, til alle tider? Det eneste som ikke er aktuelt er det du vet fra før. Kunstens aktualitet handler om hvilket rom og hvilken sammenheng den presenteres i, og dermed hvilken forutsetning vi har til å ta imot. Fordi Nielsens musikk er så personlig har den veldig mange originale trekk som vil glede nye lyttere. Ikke minst hans evne til å overraske er verdifull i dag, hvor det er så mange opptråkkede spor. Nielsens originalitet vil alltid være der. Ingen andre har skrevet sånn musikk, og ingen kommer til å gjøre det heller. Leve Nielsen!

Jeg har et personlig sterkt forhold til nettopp denne innspillingen. Jeg husker ennå den underligheten som Christian levde inn i flygelet. En konsentrasjon hvor den instrumentale og musikalske utviklingen fra tagning til tagning lå i Christians opplevelse av egen motorikk og fysiske kontakt med instrumentet. Som ung lydtekniker var dette en opplevelse som satt standard for videre etterlevelse i musikkproduksjon.

Denne innspillingen ble gjort direkte til DAT i 1993. Tidlig digitalteknikk hadde mange feil og svakheter. For denne remasteringen hentet vi frem den originale Sony PCM-2700 fra lager og matet den med testsignaler som dannede et «fingeravtrykk» for konverteren. Med ny teknologi fra MQA kan vi nå korrigere for unøyaktigheter i tidsdomenet, såkalte pre- og postringing i impulsrespons, introdusert i de gamle digitaliseringene. Resultatet løfter et slør fra lydbildet og gir oss en transparent og intim opplevelse.

Dette var en av de første produksjonene jeg gjorde rett ut fra lydkolen. Ekstremt enkelt og rent med to Brüel & Kjær kulemikrofoner direkte til en DAT-spiller. En Steinway D-modell hadde nylig kommet rett fra fabrikken i Hamburg til Universitetets aula i Oslo. Noen få måneder etter innspillingen ble instrumentet solgt videre til et teater og dessverre snart ødelagt av vanskjøtsel. Kanskje er det nettopp det uujenkalelige som gjør forestillingen om dette instrumentet så spesiell, men aldri senere har jeg møtt et flygel med så stor klanglig personlighet.

Morten Lindberg, 2015

