
ANALYTICAL AND AESTHETIC ISSUES in Carl Nielsen's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra¹

By Daniel Grimley

Outside Denmark, Carl Nielsen scholarship has tended to privilege his symphonic output over his works in other genres. While the symphonies have attracted a good deal of attention individually, the concertos have tended to be treated superficially as a group, as part of some biographical or symphonic survey.² Were the reception of Nielsen's concertos simply a case of critical neglect, the situation might be easily remedied and therefore not especially remarkable. But the relative lack of detailed theoretical writing on concerto forms is a broader generic problem, and so not particular to Carl Nielsen. The concerto's relative resistance to interpretative abstraction, in comparison with the entrenchment of the sonata-form model in discussions of symphonic music, explains why the genre has hitherto been regarded as analytically lightweight. Concertos are perceived as structurally 'messy', whereas the overriding impression of symphonic music is of its apparent rigorousness and concision. Even more problematic is the way in which the virtuoso tradition has been critically received. The type of brilliant passagework associated with the concerto genre is conventionally considered to be inherently less meaningful or expressive than that of a fugal composition. Furthermore, for many critics the public display of instrumental proficiency often seems of little substantial intellectual interest. This perhaps reflects our common tendency to seek to decorporalise our critical accounts of musical events, a practice that has led, in semiotic terms, to the elevation of the poetic and

1 This article is based on a chapter from my doctoral thesis, *Nielsen, Nationalism and Danish Musical Style* (University of Cambridge, 1998), and was originally read as a paper at the 13th Nordic Musicology Congress, University of Aarhus, Denmark, 15 – 19 August 2000. I am very grateful to Dr W. Dean Sutcliffe for his comments on my preliminary discussion.

2 This is the case, for example, with Robert Simpson's book, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*, revised edition, London 1979, reprinted 1983, as well as in the anthology edited by Jürgen Balzer, *Carl Nielsen Centenary Essays*, Copenhagen 1965, and Mina Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*, London 1994. A brief survey of the available doctoral dissertations suggests that the symphonies and operas are rather better covered than the concertos.

neutral levels of musical composition over the aesthetic.³ Though Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto is noteworthy for its seemingly symphonic qualities, such as the lack of overtly virtuosic figuration (compared with many late nineteenth-century concertos) and its demonstrable structural cohesion, it nevertheless appears to have suffered from such familiar patterns of generic reception.

The downbeat critical treatment of the Clarinet Concerto raises sharper issues concerning our perception of Nielsen's work. The over-emphasis on his symphonic output represents a desire to 'symphonise' Carl Nielsen's music, in order to assimilate it within the canon. Though documentary and internal musical evidence suggests that Nielsen engaged creatively with the notion of a peripheralised musical discourse, as a Danish composer working on the edge of continental Europe, his relationship with the perceived mainstream European repertoire was more complex than has often been assumed.⁴ Furthermore, Nielsen's concertos have made less satisfactory biographical material than their symphonic counterparts; they are fewer in number than the symphonies, and their chronology militates against any firm sense of compositional development. Ironically, the late date of the two woodwind concertos (1926 and 1928 respectively) has only tended to exacerbate their marginalisation. Rather than being heard symbolically as epigrams, or exemplars of a consummate 'late style', the concertos have been regarded more commonly as a sub-plot, unfinished business that was undertaken once the primary narrative interest of the symphonic cycle had been brought to a close.

The most technically sophisticated account of Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto in Anglo-American writing can currently be found in Robert Simpson's monograph, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*. As is well known, the central contention of Simpson's book is that Nielsen's major instrumental works are each driven by an evolutionary harmonic process, involving the movement from one tonality to another in carefully-controlled

3 The terms poietic, neutral and aesthetic are defined in Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, trans. Carolyn Abbate, Princeton 1990, 15-17. Nattiez explains what he perceives as the over-emphasis on poietic levels of musical analysis as the result of the metalinguistic nature of discourse on music. Hence, he points to the 'surrogate symbolic behaviour' of musical analysis: 'to analyse the processes of creation, interpretation, and perception, and to analyse the structures of the [musical] work in addition, is to establish, on an analytical plane, a web of interpretants that proposes itself as a model for interpretants "natural" to the work in the *real* process of composition, interpretation and perception' [p. 153; original emphasis]. From a post-modern perspective, it is difficult to see exactly where Nattiez's *real* process might be situated.

4 For a consideration of these issues in the context of the Fifth Symphony, see my article 'Modernism and Closure: Nielsen's Fifth Symphony', *The Musical Quarterly*, 86 (Spring 2002), 149-173, also John Fellow's historical account, 'Carl Nielsen, Wien und die europäische Wende', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, 51 (1996), 11-62.

stages. Often, this process focuses on a conflict between two or more key centres that is only resolved in the final cadence of the work. The widespread acceptance of Simpson's analyses in Anglo-American scholarship has led to a rationalisation of Nielsen's music so that virtually every large-scale work is automatically assumed to contain elements of directional tonality. For critics such as Mark Devoto and Harald Krebs, directional tonality is also a historical trace that defines Nielsen's place within a perceived common early-Modernist harmonic practice.⁵ It is by no means obvious, however, that such a generalised approach is necessarily the best way to understand Nielsen's music. Though the directional tonal model works well for pieces such as the Fourth Symphony, closer examination suggests that it is less relevant for the Clarinet Concerto, and we are wrong to regard directional tonality as a standard operating procedure for Nielsen's music as a whole.⁶ Clearly, if we are to understand the Clarinet Concerto in a more constructive critical context, we need to treat Simpson's account with a greater sense of critical distance.

Simpson's commentary highlights the conflict between two key centres, F and E, that he perceives running throughout the work. Preliminary evidence lends a good deal of credence to this reading. The way in which the brittle opening eight-bar unit, for instance, swings away from F towards C flat immediately creates a strong sense of tonal polarisation (see *Ex. 1*). The conflict is then apparently stated emphatically by the chromatic displacement in b. 27, where the opening phrase is restated on E rather than F. The striking rhythmic syncopation and *stretto* imitation in b. 27 exaggerate the jolting harmonic effect and reinforce the sense that the passage constitutes a structural counter-statement rather than merely an altered repetition. Though, as Simpson notes, the C-orientation of what subsequently appears to be a lyrical second subject (b. 79) momentarily strengthens the opening key, F has been fatally weakened as a stable tonic centre. Further support for Simpson's hearing can subsequently be found in the recapitulation of the first movement. The bassoons's entry after the clarinet's first extended solo cadenza (b. 134) seems to prepare a restatement of the opening on F. At the very last moment, however, the re-entry of the side drum twists the music sharpwards, so that the opening is restated on E, as at b. 27. Indeed, the deceptive success of this false reprise is reinforced by the bitonal effect at the start of the second movement, where the bassoons initially articulate an unambiguous E-triad

5 Mark Devoto, 'Non-classical diatonicism and polyfocal tonality: the case of Nielsen's Fifth Symphony', and Harald Krebs, 'Tonal structure in Nielsen's symphonies: some addenda to Robert Simpson's analyses' in Miller, *op. cit.*, 257-88 and 208-49.

6 The notion of a 'standard operating procedure' is borrowed from David Rosen's article, 'The composer's "standard operating procedure" as evidence of intention: the case of a formal quirk in Mozart's K.595', *Journal of Musicology*, 5/1 (1987), 79-90.

Allegretto un poco

vc. cb
mp

8 F → C_b

fg. va.
mp

14 cl. solo
mp

upper strings

20 *mf* *f*

25 Displaced restatement of opening on E
tutti + cor. *ff*

Ex. 1: Carl Nielsen, *Clarinet Concerto*, opening.

against a vague modal melody in the first horn. The intensity of the tonal conflict generated in the first movement is such that the work is unable to return to F convincingly until the very final bars. Even this resolution, as Simpson notes, is exceptional: none of Nielsen's other mature large-scale instrumental works finish in the same key as that with which they began. 'The piece cannot therefore be called pessimistic', Simpson concludes, 'for while it analyses a personal struggle, it underlines the fact that such a struggle is the result of self-isolation.'⁷

Despite such evidence, Simpson's account is problematic for a number of reasons. Most seriously, the structural significance of the F-E conflict is compromised by the redundant status of diatonic key centres within Nielsen's harmonic syntax. Consequently, it is difficult to discriminate between locally expressive musical details, and events that have more large-scale structural importance. As Tyler G. White has noted in his perceptive analysis of the Fourth Symphony, 'almost any occurrence of pitches from the goal key's diatonic collection can become an intimation of universal intent, regardless of local aural evidence ... goal keys act as abstract, unseen, and all too frequently unheard presences motivating the harmonic course of events'.⁸ Accordingly, it is hard to accept Simpson's assertion that the opening of the scherzo section (b. 305) is a straightforward prolongation of the dominant of E (see Ex. 2). The crucial structural point about the violins' subsequent semiquaver figure is that it is a thematic transformation of the horn's modal melodic idea from the opening of the *Adagio* (b. 210), rather than a point of precise harmonic articulation. Furthermore, though we might retrospectively hear the reprise of the *Adagio* (b. 524) as being based on E, as Simpson suggests, given that the finale begins on A (b. 540) before moving towards a restatement on D, there is little local sense of a stable tonic harmonic centre. Evidence of large-scale fifth-movement remains schematic at best, and is inevitably undermined by the lack of a clear structural dominant function within the work as a whole. Consequently, the closing bars of the concerto sound effective precisely because the F major conclusion is unprepared.

Simpson's reading also fails to account for a good deal of the pitch structure of the Concerto. His analysis makes little sense, for example, of the central episode in the slow movement (bb. 244-282), which operates entirely outside the boundaries of tonal harmonic syntax. Nielsen's sketches for the work offer no evidence of systematic pitch organisation.⁹ Though the horn melody with which the scherzo opens (b. 305) contains eleven notes of the chromatic scale (the single pitch omitted from the complete chromatic set is $g^{\sharp 4}$), for instance, there is no evidence to support the assertion

7 Simpson, *op. cit.*, 146.

8 Tyler G. White, 'The Music's Proper Domain': form, motive and tonality in Carl Nielsen's Symphony no. 4 Op. 29 (*The Inextinguishable*), Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1991, xxii.

9 DK-Kk, CNS 70d; see *Carl Nielsen, Works*, vol. II/9, 'Source I', 256

Poco Adagio

cor.
p espress.
fig.

cl. solo
va., vc.

Ex. 2A: Clarinet Concerto: Poco Adagio (bb. 210ff.)

Allegro non troppo

cor.
ppp
pp

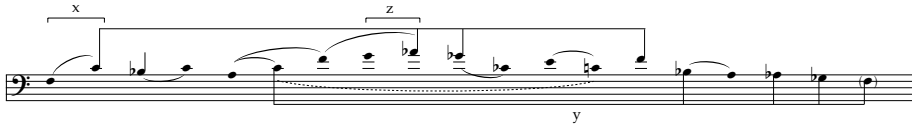
lower strings
rall.
vl. *a tempo*

Ex. 2B: Clarinet Concerto: Scherzo (bb. 305ff.).

that Nielsen employed any kind of serial process in the Concerto.¹⁰ Closer examination suggests that Nielsen's compositional procedure is governed more by linear-intervallic factors than tonal harmonic ones. Often, these are combined with a high level of motivic organisation. The opening eight-bar theme, for instance, contains many of the major thematic events in the work (see Ex. 3). The first bar, with its confident rising fifth [x] and distinctive rhythmic profile, is the most prominent

10 On serialism in Nielsen's music, see Schandorf Petersen's analysis of the Tre Klaverstykker, Op. 45 in Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen. Kunstneren og Mennesket* [Carl Nielsen. The Artist and the Man], Copenhagen 1947-1948, 265-85. Schandorf Petersen finds evidence of symmetrical pitch constructions and local transpositions and retrograde functions but nothing more substantial. Jan Maegaard, in Miller, *op. cit.*, 96-115, adopts a similar approach in his analysis of the *Preludio e Presto* for solo violin, Op. 52. I have been unable to find any source material that offers evidence of Nielsen consciously working with serial procedures.

motivic idea in the work. The opening theme also activates a compound melodic descent from the C in b. 1 to the F in b. 6. The registral transfer in b. 3 in turn initiates a second descent from the C in b. 3 through the A^b in b. 7 to the F in b. 12. The miniature descents at the end of each phrase are foreground parallels of this melodic pattern. In contrast with the prevailing downward melodic trend, the rising chromatic appoggiatura in b. 3 [z] is an equally important motivic cell, whose influence accounts for the orchestral interjection in b. 23, as well as other disruptive pitch elements in the work's subsequent progress.



Ex. 3: *Clarinet Concerto*: opening bars, voice-leading.

Further examples of linear melodic behaviour can be found later in the work. The continuation of the first movement's opening passage from b. 52, for example, is driven by an increasingly tense contrapuntal harmonic progression that converges on an urgent restatement of the opening motto on D in b. 57 (see Ex. 4).¹¹ Rather than serving as a point of textural and harmonic focus, however, this D-restatement deepens the existing antagonism between soloist and orchestra. The result is a skewed attempt to impose resolution or closure by the horns and bassoons (b. 62), which try to assert harmonic control with a grotesquely dissonant *fortississimo* chord. This in turn induces a burst of 'white noise' from the strings, and the dramatic first entry of the side drum. The soloist and side drum subsequently almost always operate in tandem, much like the trumpet and piano in Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto. The side drum functions as the soloist's *alter ego*: its presence within the score is highly individualised, and it consistently serves to undermine the clarinet's attempt to generate lyric momentum.¹²

11 Notice how this D restatement recontextualises the prominent cello/bass E^b in b. 38, which can be retrospectively heard as part of a large-scale linear descent from F at the opening, through the E natural counterstatement in b. 27, to b. 57 and ultimately the second subject on C in b. 79.

12 The precise role of the side drum needs greater comment than can be afforded here. However, it is important to note that, though the *Clarinet Concerto* is generally more percussive than the *Flute Concerto*, the side drum has a less dramatic function than in the Fifth or Sixth Symphonies. Whereas in the first part of the Fifth Symphony the drum symbolises an aggressive militarism that later explodes into the role of a chaotically uncontrollable free agent, in the concerto it remains far more closely bound up with the soloist. It is also worth noting that the lack of timpani serves to undermine the concerto's harmonic stability: the side drum marks important points of punctuation such as b. 62 without committing itself to any particular group of cadential pitches.

Ex. 4: *Clarinet Concerto: first movement* (bb. 53-58).

The implications of this disruptive gesture, within the context of the music's linear melodic syntax, are highly significant for the subsequent progress of the first movement. One of the most striking features of the recapitulation is that the lyrical 'second subject', first heard in b. 79, is omitted. Instead, the music overheats. As Ex. 5 illustrates, bb. 157-163 articulate a schematic cycle-of-fifths progression from B^b to G that becomes increasingly chromaticised as the passage progresses. This marks the start of a carefully controlled process of compositional collapse. Whereas fifth-progressions are normally associated with harmonic stability, on this occasion the progression has a destabilising effect. From b. 163, Nielsen regularises the fifth-based movement of the preceding bars to produce an (8 – 10) linear intervallic pattern. The enharmonic changes are so severe, however, that the pattern begins to distort: the 8-steps in b. 166 and b. 168 are expanded to form augmented, rather than perfect, octaves. The cumulative effect of these alterations redirects the sequence a second time on b. 170, so that Nielsen abandons the consonant intervals of the previous seven bars and composes out a compressed chain of alternating minor ninths and major sevenths (a 9 – 7 linear intervallic pattern). The metrical pace of the music is doubled, and the downward trend of the preceding sequence is reversed to produce a vertiginous chromatic rise. It is only with the return of the opening theme in the orchestra (b. 196) that the music is able to regain any sense of stability, but the *Allegretto* finishes in a state of fragmentary resignation rather than genuine resolution.

cl. solo

tutti (doublings, side drum omitted)

B \flat F \flat vi/C

Cycle of fifths progression

Regularisation (linear intervallic pattern)

Distortion

G

10 8! 10 8 10 8! 10 8!

10 8! 10 8! 10 (8)

Compression

9 (7) 9 (7) 9-7 9-7 9-7

Ex. 5: Clarinet Concerto: first movement, reprise (bb. 158-176).

The organisation of this whole passage is remote from Simpson's F-E conflict. Simpson's tonal scheme is best heard, in fact, as a particular motivic instance of a more general trend towards chromatic slippage and extreme linear melodic behaviour that is exemplified by bb. 157-173. As this passage illustrates, however, pitch no longer operates as the primary structural parameter in Nielsen's concerto. Indeed, the undue prominence accorded to pitch in previous discussions of the work is a result of the pitch-centric bias of our current analytical methodologies, rather than an accurate reflection of the musical language of the concerto. It is at this point that the lack of an established concerto discourse in musicological writing becomes especially acute. Arguably, we need to analyse the work from an alternative perspective that takes greater account of generic convention, if we are to gain a more complete picture of the concerto's individual musical shape.

The musical language of the concerto, especially its strikingly economic scoring, regular phrase rhythm and intensively worked four-movement structure, points to an idiosyncratic neoclassicism. Significantly, given this stylistic domain, the premiere took place in a private performance with an orchestra of twenty-eight players, alongside Mozart's Piano Concerto in A, K. 488 and smaller pieces by Handel and Vivaldi.¹³ Nielsen's writings on eighteenth-century music, particularly his essay 'Mozart and our time',¹⁴ suggest that he turned to the Classical style as a conscious reaction against what he perceived as the over-indulgence of late-Romanticism. The deliberately Classical patterning of the Clarinet Concerto provokes a potentially fruitful new analytical and historical approach that moves beyond Simpson's pitch-based account of the work. Recent discussions of form in the late-eighteenth century Classical concerto have returned to contemporary accounts by music theorists such as Heinrich Christoph Koch. Koch heard concertos as representations of antique Greek dramas,¹⁵ and proposed a rhetorical model for the dialogue between the indi-

13 The concert took place at the Villa Højtofte near Humlebæk, north of Copenhagen, on 14 September 1928, and was supported by the businessman Carl Johan Michaelsen, one of Nielsen's former pupils. The soloist was the work's dedicatee, Aage Oxenvad (1884-1944), one of the members of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet for whom Nielsen had written his Wind Quintet six years earlier; the conductor was Carl Nielsen's son-in-law, Emil Telmányi. The concerto received its public premiere on 11 October 1928 at the Odd Fellow Palæ in Copenhagen.

14 *Mozart og vor Tid*. The article was commissioned by the newspaper *Politiken* but appeared in the periodical *Tilskueren*, 11 November 1906, and was later reprinted in Nielsen's anthology *Levende Musik* [Living Music], Copenhagen 1925. The essay is reprinted in John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid* [Carl Nielsen to his Contemporaries], Copenhagen 1999, 78-86.

15 See, for example, Karol Berger's discussion, 'Toward a History of Hearing: The Classic Concerto, a Sample Case', W. J. Allanbrook, J. M. Levy and W. P. Mahrt-Pendragon (eds.), *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of L. G. Ratner*, New York 1992, 405-29. Koch's analysis is in his *Introductory Essay on Composition: the Mechanical Rules of Melody*, Sections 3 and 4, trans. Nancy K. Baker, New Haven 1985.

vidual voice of the soloist and the collective response of the orchestra. As an abstract analytical framework, the notion of dialogue provides a rich way of interpreting the binary texture common to all concerto forms, not simply those of the eighteenth-century repertoire. Fig. 1 presents a schematic map that distinguishes between types of *statement* or monologue announced by a single instrument or instrumental group, and types of *exchange* or dialogue that take place between at least two different instruments or groups. Such patterns of rhetorical exchange are not exclusively limited to the concerto, but they constitute the form's primary structural dynamic. The rich surface variety of musical play that often characterises the concerto is as much the result of the exchange between different types of instrumental dialogue, as illustrated in Fig 1, as of 'middleground' parameters such as tonality or thematic development.

<i>Statement</i> (Monologue)	<i>Exchange</i> (Dialogue)
exposition	concurrence
elaboration	complementarity
reprise	contradiction

FIG. 1: *Abstract Model of Concerto Discourse.*

Though Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto employs other systems of organisation, such as specific types of linear melodic motion and motivic transformation, the music is arguably best understood as an abstracted form of instrumental exchange. This not only responds to the model of concerto discourse outlined above, it also accounts for the sense of deliberate eighteenth-century modelling in various aspects of the work. The unusual concurrence between the soloist and orchestra at the very start of the concerto, for example, is a Mozartian joke. The mock-serious fugal opening suggests a contrapuntal equality of voices that inverts conventional concerto procedure. The gesture is the antithesis of the kind of headline-grabbing entries that are common in nineteenth-century works. The soloist slips in prematurely, in the manner of Mozart's Piano Concerto in E flat, K. 271. Whereas in Mozart's work the piano's complementary response immediately announces the soloist as an individual musical figure, in Nielsen's concerto it is only after the orchestra's insistent semiquavers in b. 23 that the clarinet begins to articulate any genuine musical independence. Subsequently, Nielsen continues to exploit the shifting discursive control between soloist and orchestra. The significance of the curious march, marked *poco più mosso*, that closes the scherzo (see Ex. 6), for instance, is not simply that it returns to the tonality and topical domain of the opening of the work, but also that the bassoon assumes the discursive

role of the soloist with comic swagger. The side drum accompaniment emphasises the deception, and normal service is resumed only after the soloist's final (monologic) cadenza, where the clarinet, having momentarily assumed the position of innocent bystander, once again occupies centre stage.

The complex dialogue of the Clarinet Concerto is partly a response to the character of the clarinet as a solo instrument. As Nielsen remarked in an oft-quoted description of his Sixth Symphony, the instrument 'can be at the same time warm-hearted and completely hysterical, as mild as balsam, and screaming like a tram-car on poorly-greased rails'.¹⁶ However, the implications of the exchanges in the Concerto go far beyond individual instrumental characterisation. Passages such as the middle of the slow movement, where the orchestra and soloist seem trapped in parallel but non-concurrent mechanical modes of behaviour, create a form of discursive dissonance that the remainder of the work seeks to resolve. Dialogue therefore operates at several levels within the concerto, both at an immediate level of foreground exchange and between larger syntactical units. Far from being merely a by-product of a binary texture, dialogue has become elevated to a structural principle.

Nowhere is the importance of dialogue more evident than in the final bars. The conclusion of the Concerto articulates a rare equanimity between soloist and orchestra (see Ex. 7). As Simpson evidently sensed, this is an uncharacteristic ending for a concerto. Closure is achieved without any display of precipitate virtuoso brilliance, but rather with a gesture of extreme concurrence. The solo part simply fades away, so that the clarinet becomes an anonymous member of the orchestra. The historical implications of such a straightforwardly consonant close are potentially shattering. We have become so accustomed to the ambivalence of closure in music from the modernist period that it is almost impossible to hear a simple tonic cadence without any sense of ironic distance. A brief comparison with the conclusion of Alban Berg's Violin Concerto (1935) emphasises the exceptional quality of Nielsen's work. Both compositions reach a quiet final cadence having opened with a deceptively nonchalant solo entry. However, in the context of Berg's finale, built around variations on the Bach Passiontide chorale *Es ist genug*, the return of the violin's initial open-string motto suggests transcendence. The final pages of Nielsen's concerto attain a remarkable state of grace, yet remain firmly earth-bound. Despite the ethereal string harmonics, the soloist remains anchored in the lowest register of the instrument, the upper range having been associated throughout with extreme chromatic outbursts: the more 'hysterical' aspects of the concerto's dialogue. Similarly, the side drum ap-

16 *kan være paa én Gang varmhjertet og bundhysterisk, mild som Balsam og skrigende som en Sporvogn paa daarligt smurte Skinner.* 'Carl Nielsen om Instrumenternes Sjæl' [Carl Nielsen about the soul of the instruments], interview by Andreas Vinding, Politiken, 11 December 1925, in John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid* [Carl Nielsen to his Contemporaries], Copenhagen 1999, 378-79.

(side drum omitted)

strings pizzicato

fg.

mp *espress.*

cl. solo

mf

Ex. 6: Clarinet Concerto: scherzo (bb. 462-487).

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the clarinet solo (cl. solo) in the upper staff and strings (with side drum omitted) in the lower staff. The clarinet part begins with a melodic line marked *Poco meno* and *mf*. The strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system continues the clarinet's melodic development, with the strings becoming more active, marked *pp calando poco a poco*. The third system features the clarinet playing *dim.* and *pizz.* (pizzicato) while the strings play *arco* (arco) with *dim.*, *morendo*, and *lunga* markings, indicating a gradual fading and elongation of notes.

Ex. 7: *Clarinet Concerto: conclusion.*

pears to withdraw consciously from the orchestral texture, and the descending bass line pulls the music flatwards, in a manner that satisfyingly summarises the work's linear melodic syntax. The concluding bars gather together and resolve the various antagonistic aspects of the work's musical dialogue with an exemplary clarity.

In the final newspaper interview published before his death in 1931, Nielsen attempted to articulate his sense of music logic, and suggested that, 'we should have the same feeling about a work of art as when standing at the side of a stream, that place where we stand is a link in a whole, and contains within itself the source and sea, and every point along the length of the stream'.¹⁷ Nielsen's words characteristically offer little

¹⁷ *Man skal over for et Kunstværk have den samme Fornemmelse, man har, naar man staar ved en Bæk, det Sted, man staar ved, er et Led i et Hele, og det rummer i sig baade Kilden og Havet og alle Steder langs Bækken.* Interview with Ole Vinding, *Politiken*, 4 October 1931, reproduced in John Fellow (ed.), *op. cit.*, 614-5.

in the way of substantial technical detail, but stand as a useful warning of the dangers of excessive conceptualisation at the expense of the wider musical context. The classical sense of poise and balance achieved by the concerto may not ultimately be emblematic of a post-Beethovenian 'late style'. Equally, that should not prevent us from hearing the work as a summation of the kind of discursive musical processes that Nielsen sought to develop from at least the Second Violin Sonata (1912) onwards, and which would surely have led him in new creative directions had he lived to complete his planned series of concertos for all five members of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet. Understanding the Clarinet Concerto as a complex series of dialogic statements exchanged between an orchestral group and a series of instrumental individuals not only seems an accurate reflection of the work's musical language, it also allows us to reaffirm the human performative element of the musical work. As an analytical strategy, therefore, it redresses the imbalance noted by Nattiez in our conventional accounts of musical experience. But taken on its own terms, the rich musical dialogue of Carl Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto is one of many reasons why the piece stands out as being among the most engaging and provocative works in twentieth-century music.

A B S T R A C T

Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto is his last large-scale orchestral work, yet it has received considerably less analytical attention than his symphonies. This is partly because of the problematic generic status of the twentieth-century concerto, but also because of the work's unusually complex musical language. In this paper, I outline an analytical technology for the work that builds on the notion of dialogue inherent within the concerto form. Nielsen's concerto raises dialogue to the highest level of structure, and offers one of his most compelling and original musical narratives.