

CARL NIELSEN, EBBE HAMMERIK AND THE FIRST SYMPHONY¹

By Niels Krabbe

In Torben Meyer and Frede Schandorf Petersen's 1948 biography of Nielsen² there is a story about Nielsen's *First Symphony* which has been reproduced in later literature on the composer – a story which, despite its originator's central position in the Nielsen tradition, should nevertheless be taken with a pinch of salt, as the following article will seek to show.

Meyer markets the episode as one of what he calls the 'little anecdotes' circulating about the symphony. The story goes that a conductor (unnamed) was once due to conduct the work. The composer and his son-in-law Emil Telmányi were present at one of the final rehearsals and noticed that the conductor had made a number of significant alterations in the phrasing, which angered Telmányi to the extent that he wanted to intervene. However, the more cool-headed composer held himself back, saying 'Let him do it – it's not so important'. Nevertheless, according to the anecdote, the following day Nielsen arranged that he himself should conduct the symphony a fortnight later, in order to show how it should really go. According to Meyer, 'Nielsen conducted it perhaps better than he had ever done before or ever would do again. He wanted to show what he really had in mind with the symphony.' Who the conductor was who presumed to take liberties with the work, we are not told.

But it is not difficult to find out. The conductor's name, the date of the concert and therefore also Meyer's source for the episode may be found in Telmányi's reminiscences, which came out 30 years after Meyer's biography under the title *Af en*

1 The present article is a revised conflation of two articles: 'Ebbe Hammeriks påståede korrumpning af Carl Niensens første symfoni eller Om nytten af kildestudier' [Ebbe Hammerik's supposed Corruption of Nielsen's First Symphony, or On the Usefulness of Source Studies], *Fund og Forskning i Det Kongelige Biblioteks samlinger*, 39 (2000), 121-47 and 'Revisionerne af Carl Niensens første symfoni: Nielsen eller Hamerik – et korrigerende supplement' [The Revisions of Nielsen's First Symphony: Nielsen and Hamerik – a corrective Supplement], *Fund og Forskning i Det Kongelige Biblioteks samlinger*, 40 (2001), 229-32.

2 Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen (eds.), *Carl Nielsen. Kunstneren og Mennesket* [Carl Nielsen. The Artist and the Man], Copenhagen 1947-1948, 119.

musikers billedbog [From a Musician's Picture-book].³ The conductor was Ebbe Hamerik, the date 13th February 1928, and the source naturally Telmányi himself, who was one of Nielsen's many friends and pupils upon the basis of whose testimony Meyer built his classic biography.

In his reminiscences Telmányi devotes a whole page to this episode from 50 years before and goes into more detail than he evidently had done when he told Meyer the story. Having praised Hamerik as a conscientious, diligent musician, he reports his many alterations of phrasing in Nielsen's score before the performance, and continues:

But Hamerik was not content with altering the original phrase-markings; he also cut a substantial passage in the fourth movement and composed an even longer one in its place. He considered that the form was not so successful, and he thought that he had found a better solution. He showed Nielsen what he had done before the rehearsal, but the composer was remarkably taciturn ... I sat dumbfounded at Nielsen's side in the rehearsal; he continually put his forefinger to his mouth and said nothing. In rebellious mood I jostled Nielsen and asked him whether he wanted to submit himself to this misrepresentation, but he simply answered, 'Just let him'. To be honest, I was irate about Nielsen's compliance, which was degrading.

Telmányi concludes by reporting that the very next day he found Nielsen at the telephone, in the middle of arranging a new concert, this time with himself conducting.

I rejoiced inwardly that after all he had enough of the misrepresentations at the concert and was now going to show how he wanted things to go.

Telmányi witnessed Nielsen's performance two weeks later, on 26th February in the Koncertpalæ, and he relates that 'there was a packed house,⁴ and I could hear that the symphony was being played from the original materials ... And how! – It was the most glorious performance the symphony could ever receive.'

So here we have one among many reports in the Nielsen tradition of conductors feeling called upon to 'improve' the composer's scores, based on the well-known myth that Nielsen was not so handy at instrumentation. But also – as opposed to

³ Emil Telmányi, *Af en musikers billedbog*, Copenhagen 1978, 106-7.

⁴ Here Telmányi's memory is inaccurate; the concert review reads 'of any great influx of the public there was not a trace in the hall. The fine Sunday weather may have been partly to blame', *Nationaltidende* 27.2.1928.

many other cases – it testifies that in this instance the conductor went too far, to the point where Nielsen had to take steps to put things right.

Torben Schousboe takes Telmányi's comments further. In his comprehensive commentary to Nielsen's diaries and letters he writes, in connection with Nielsen's cursory remarks on having attended Hamerik's performance: 'Hamerik had undertaken a host of corrections in the score ... ; this led to CN asking Fr[ederik] Schnedler-Petersen for permission to conduct the Symphony himself at the next Palæ Concert.'⁵ Schousboe cites Telmányi as his source.

This then is the story of Ebbe Hamerik's intervention in Nielsen's First Symphony, as reported by Telmányi. But as the following study will show, there are various indications that it needs significant amendment. Here, as in so many cases, it is worth going back to the sources!

Ebbe Hamerik's copy of the printed score (source A)

At the *Carl Nielsen Edition* we were naturally interested to see this legendary intervention made by Hamerik. In July 1999 a request to his widow Brita Hamerik⁶ led straight away to a friendly agreement that we could borrow his score. Apart from Hamerik's many additions of dynamics and articulation, together with three handwritten pages of score pasted into the last movement in place of the corresponding printed passage (see *Fig. 1*, p. 113), the score contains two interesting endorsements. On the reverse of the inserted sheets Hamerik states: 'Alteration by the composer. Ebbe Hamerik. 3rd Feb. 1928',⁷ and on the first page of the score, in Carl Nielsen's characteristic handwriting:

'To my young highly gifted / friend Ebbe Hamerik, with thanks / for his excellent and perfect / performance of this work / from his grateful / Carl Nielsen / 25-II-28'⁸

The first endorsement – Hamerik's own assurance of Nielsen's approval of the alterations – is interesting in this context, but of course not in itself conclusive refutation of Telmányi's version of the affair. Taken in isolation it is merely an assertion, but it can be shown to hold up: this really was the composer's alteration. The second endorsement – the composer's dedication – shows similarly that Nielsen, far from being

5 Torben Schousboe (ed.), *Carl Nielsen: Dagbøger og brevveksling med Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen* [Carl Nielsen: Diaries and Correspondence with Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen], Copenhagen 1983, 536.

6 Ebbe Hamerik died already in 1951, Brita Hamerik in 2001.

7 *Komponistens Ændring. Ebbe Hamerik. d. 3. Feb. 1928.*

8 *Til min unge højtbegavede / Ven Ebbe Hamerik med Tak / for hans fortræffelige og helstøbte / Udførelse af dette Værk / fra hans hengivne / Carl Nielsen / 25-II-28.* See *The Carl Nielsen Edition* Vol. II/1, xxviii.

dissatisfied with Hamerik's adjustments, found them to be entirely appropriate, not least when we observe that the dedication was written less than a fortnight after the very concert that Nielsen was supposed to have been so dissatisfied with and the day before the one – perhaps on the day of the final rehearsal and with Hamerik himself present – where he himself conducted the work, allegedly in order to rectify Hamerik's offence. Nothing in Nielsen's nature makes it likely that he would disown Hamerik's version in front of Telmányi and Schnedler-Petersen, while at the same time expressing to Hamerik his admiration for it by his dedicatory words.⁹

Set of parts of the Music Society (source B)

In 1927 Hamerik had succeeded Nielsen as conductor of the Music Society (*Musikforeningen*). He would be the last to hold this office, since the Society closed in 1931 and its music archive was transferred to The Royal Library. The parts from Hamerik's 1928 performance can thus be studied today; the individual parts clearly contain the same dynamic and articulation markings as in the above-named score (source A); similarly the recomposed section in the finale is written by hand and pasted in at the right place in the printed parts. It is also extremely important that several of the parts contain pencil additions giving the date of the concert in The Music Society, together with the conductor's name, 'Hamerik'. But even more interesting in this case study is the fact that the parts also bear the date of the Palæ Concert a fortnight later, with the perfectly correct conductor's name 'Carl Nielsen'! In other words: according to these pencil annotations, Nielsen used exactly the same parts for his performance as Hamerik, *with* Hamerik's alterations, with the newly written-out passage in the finale, and without the slightest sign in the parts that the musicians were asked to go back to the composer's 1894 original. This state of affairs can hardly be reconciled with Telmányi's report of Nielsen's dissatisfaction and his enthusiasm for the composer's performance on 26th February, where Telmányi finally 'could hear that the symphony was being played from the original materials.'

Diary entry, Monday 13th February 1928 (source C)

In his diary for the above date Nielsen wrote: 'The Music Society concert. My G minor Symphony under Ebbe Hamerik.'¹⁰ This and nothing more. We might surely expect that, had Nielsen been dissatisfied with the performance, he would probably have put something or other in his diary to that effect.

9 Ebbe Hamerik's copy of the score, in Brita Hameriks possession until 2000, is now in DK-Kk.

10 *Musikforenings Konsert. min g moll Symfoni under Ebbe Hamerik.*

Set of parts in Danish Radio (source D)

The Radio Symphony Orchestra's set of parts was purchased from Wilhelm Hansen, the music publishers, in 1928 and used regularly through the years, up to and including 1955.¹¹ In many of these parts various musicians have written in dates and places of performance, together with the names of some of the respective conductors.¹² Only in 1955 were the parts replaced by a new set, as we learn from a letter to the Head of Music, Vagn Kappel, in which it is suggested that a clean set of parts should be purchased, because the old one 'has gradually become so cluttered up with re-instrumentations, alterations of nuances etc, made by Fritz Busch and Grøndahl, amongst others'.¹³ On 19th October 1928 Launy Grøndahl, principal conductor of the Radio Orchestra since 1st April 1926, conducted Nielsen's First Symphony for the first time at a Radio concert, with *Helios* and duets from *Saul og David* and *Maskarade* also on the programme (the last-named with piano accompaniment). In Grøndahl's comments about the concert we read that 'the composer was present at the rehearsals',¹⁴ and Nielsen's diary shows that he went to the concert as well (or at least that he heard it on the radio).¹⁵ The performance naturally took place using the Radio's own parts, which is confirmed partly by the presence of the date 18.10.1928 (see note 12) and partly by Grøndahl's own handwritten register of the Radio's part-materials;¹⁶ the decisive point in this connection is that these parts have Hamerik's pasted-in notation of the alteration in the fourth movement, which indicates that all performances of the Symphony with the Radio Symphony Orchestra, both in Denmark and abroad, between 1928-1955 (including the gramophone recording of 1952 and at the Carl Nielsen Festival in 1953) were of Hamerik's supposedly corrupt version. Remarkably this alteration was not mentioned in the above-quoted letter to Vagn Kappel, despite the fact that it was the most radical of all; perhaps it had become so much second nature that it was no longer thought relevant even to mention it.

According to this evidence the gramophone recording from 1952 should contain the alteration of the fourth movement; but this turns out not to be the case, as

11 Danish Radio Music Archive, no. 1735.

12 18.10.1928 (Radio); 24.1.1930 (Berlin); 26.9.1934 (Warsaw, Polish Radio); 18.9.1935; 20.1.1938; 4.6.1941; 9.4.1942; 4.10.1945; 14.4.1947 (Fritz Busch); 28.10.1947 (Helsinki); 8.9.1949; 22.4.1951; 27.12.1951 (Launy Grøndahl, Malko [contradictory indications of conductor]); 31.1.1952 (Bergen); 15-16.6.1952 (gramophone recording); 2.9.1953 (Nielsen festival).

13 The letter is with the set of parts, no. 1735 in the Danish Radio Music Archive.

14 [Launy Grøndahl]: 'Statistics of symphony concerts directed by me since my appointment at Danish Radio ...', DK-Kk, Ny Kgl. Saml. 2551,20.

15 The diary states laconically 'Radio-concert' (see Schousboe, *op. cit.*, note 3, 554).

16 The list, which so far as most of the works are concerned, gives precise details from Danish Radio's Music Archive, follows Grøndahl's survey mentioned in note 14.

we can hear from Thomas Jensen's recording, reissued on CD.¹⁷ Here Nielsen's original version is played! How can this be reconciled with the above indication that the parts with Hamerik's corrections were used? Did the musicians make that annotation on one set of parts while in fact making the recording known from the CD from another set? This seems indeed to have been the case, as is suggested by a handwritten annotation on the diary page for Friday 13th June 1952, in Denmark Radio's Music Archive at Islands Brygge, where the day's music programmes are cut out from the radio programmes and pasted in. On this page there is added in pen: '*Gramophone recording / Thomas Jensen / 2785+ Sibelius: Karelia-Suite / NB: Both our materials and one set from WH. / 1735+ Carl Nielsen: Symphony No. 1 / ... / Our score of Carl Nielsen No. 1 / ...*'¹⁸

Assuming that the line beginning 'NB' refers to the following line about Nielsen's First Symphony and not to the preceding one about Sibelius, it suggests the following state of affairs: two sets of parts were used. The rehearsals began with the Radio's set with Hamerik's alterations, and during one of these the musicians as usual wrote on the parts the date of the relevant performance. At some point in the course of rehearsals, Jensen discovered that he did not wish to use these parts and asked for a clean set from the publisher Wilhelm Hansen, which was then used for the recording itself. The weak point in this hypothesis are the three contradictory indications of date: the Radio's diary page is from 13th June, the LP gives the dates 14th/15th June, and the handwritten annotations on the Radio's set of parts give the dates 15th and 16th June. Whether this divergence is merely an everyday lapse or conceals a different sequence of events, cannot be more precisely determined.

The theory is *confirmed*, however, by eye-witness from musicians who took part in the 1952 recording. Asked about this directly,¹⁹ flautist Poul Birkelund related that his wife remembers him coming home earlier than expected from the rehearsal on the relevant day, since Jensen had asked for a different set of parts from the one on the stands! Furthermore Birkelund enquired of his then colleague, flautist Johan Bentzon, who could not remember that episode, but who confirmed Jensen's basic attitude of not wishing to perform from materials that other conductors had had a hand in.

These statements from musicians who played under Jensen in 1952 do not prove that things went as described above, but they do make it probable, and at the same time they clarify the discrepancy between the Radio's materials and the preserved sound record. All the same, they do not contradict the theory that the Radio's set of parts, *with* Hamerik's (and Nielsen's) alterations, were used for a whole series of performances between 1928 and 1955.

17 Dutton Laboratories CDLXT 2502.

18 *Grammofonoptagelse / Thomas Jensen / 2785 + Sibelius: Karelia-Suite / NB: Baade vort Mat. + 1 mat fra WH. / 1735 + Carl Nielsen: Symfoni Nr.- 1 / ... / Vort Part til Carl Nielsen Nr. 1 / ...*.

19 Letter from the author to Poul Birkelund, 5th October 1999.

Letter from Nielsen to Ebbe Hamerik, February 1931 (source E)²⁰

Nielsen held Hamerik in high esteem. This Brita Hamerik reported when I met her in July 1999, and it is confirmed in the very gracious letter Nielsen wrote to Hamerik little more than six months before his death, at a time when Hamerik had many severe difficulties, stemming from reasons other than those dealt with in the present article. Brita Hamerik kept this letter until her death, as one of the most beautiful reminders of her husband and of his relations with Nielsen. It is given here in its entirety:

Damgaard, Fredericia. 17-II.31

Dear Ebbe Hammerich!²¹

After your visit this Monday, I have thought of you often; now I am sitting here in peace and quiet and am sending you a friendly thought. It was a pleasure for me to exchange thoughts with you, and I wish to tell you – straight out – that my interest in and sympathy with you after this conversation have not diminished since. I can see that a pure flame burns in your young spirit, and I know already how diligent and gifted you are, so it's no wonder if I offer you my support. The reason I am writing to you today is that you uttered some despondent words about your work and even talked about giving everything up at some point. I told you that that would not do, and I repeat myself here: take up the fight and show all those wretched hindrances and opponents that you can triumph with what you have so intrepidly and courageously begun. I believe fully and completely that you can bring the newly established orchestra to full glory, provided that you can now gradually get certain players replaced. And you must remember that the young folk you have assembled look up to you and trust in you as their guide and teacher, and that if you now lose some of your courage it would be very sad. There has never been such a situation in Danish music as now, and never greater need for young courage and talent in its leaders. I ask you – not for my sake, but for the greater good, to hold on! And may I just say once again that if you should have need of my advice or support I am ready and willing – in so far as my influence, my age

20 Until 2000 in private ownership; now in *DK-Kk*, Manuscript and Rare Books Department.

21 Ebbe Hamerik's father, Asger Hammerich, changed the spelling of his surname to 'Hamerik', ostensibly because it was always pronounced wrongly outside Denmark, and this form of the name was given to his son Ebbe at his birth. On his appointment as conductor at The Music Society in 1927, Ebbe Hamerik reinstated the original spelling, but then altered it once again to Hamerik in 1932. Cf. newspaper announcement (clipping without indication of source in Hamerik's own scrapbook in private ownership).

and experience will allow. In any case you can always count on my understanding and friendship.

My greetings to your wife, and best wishes to yourself from your devoted

Carl Nielsen.

I am here for 10-12 days in order to put the finishing touches on a large organ work that I have wanted to tackle for many years²²

I shall return to the reason for this very personal letter, written by Nielsen just six months before his death. But in this connection it should be said: Nielsen would hardly have written in this tone to a young colleague, had the latter a couple of years earlier vandalised a work from Nielsen's own youth, one that he had increasingly come to esteem very highly. On the contrary, we see here unconditional trust and support from the honoured focal point of Danish musical life for the young 32-year-old composer/conductor.

22 Damgaard pr Fredericia. 17-II.31

Kære Hr Ebbe Hammerich!

Efter Deres Besøg hos mig i Mandags har jeg tænkt flere Gange paa Dem og nu sidder jeg her i Fred og Ro og sender Dem atter en venlig Tanke. Det var mig en Glæde at udveksle Tanker med Dem og jeg vil sige Dem – saa ligefrem – at min Interesse og Sympathi for Dem med denne Samtale ikke er blevet mindre. Jeg ser med Forstaaelse at der brænder en ren Flamme i Deres unge Sind og jeg ved i Forvejen hvor dygtig og begavet De er, saa det er jo heller ikke underligt om jeg følger Dem med min Tilslutning. Hvorfor jeg ellers skriver til Dem idag er fordi De lod nogle mismodige Ord falde angaaende Deres Arbejde og De talte saagar om at komme bort fra det hele i nogen Tid. Jeg sagde Dem at det kunde ikke gaa an og jeg gentager det her: Tag Kampen op og vis alle usle Hindringer og Modstandere at De kan føre det til Sejr som De saa frejdigt ja, tappert har begyndt paa. Jeg tror fuldt og [helt] paa at De kan bringe det nyoprettede Orkester til fuld Glans, navnlig hvis De nu – efterhaanden – kan faa enkelte Stemmer remplacerede. Og De maa huske at de unge Folk, De har samlet, ser op til Dem og stoler paa Dem som en Fører og Lærer og ifald De nu taber noget af Modet vilde det være meget trist. Der har aldrig i dansk Musik været en saadan Situation som nu og aldrig større Brug, end nu, for ungt Mod og Begavelse som Føreremne. – Jeg beder Dem – ikke for min men for det Heles skyld: hold ud! – Maa jeg blot endnu sige Dem at ifald De skulde have Brug for mit Raad eller Støtte er jeg – saaviidt min Indflydelse og min Alder og Erfaring rækker – altid rede for Dem. Min Forstaaelse og mit Venskab kan De ihvertfald altid regne med.

*Hils nu Deres Frue og modtag selv de bedste Hilsener fra Deres hengivne
Carl Nielsen.*

Jeg er her en 10-12 Dage for at lægge sidste Haand paa et større Orgelværk som jeg mange Aar han ønsket at prøve paa.

Letter from Nielsen to Vera Michaelsen, 7th February 1928 (source F)²³

From Lillehammer, Nielsen gives details of a winter vacation in Norway and of his skiing despite having to endure a broken rib. He goes on:

We are returning home by steamship on Sunday morning. Because at 12.30 I must, as promised, attend the final rehearsal of my First Symphony at the Music Society. Hamerik has really studied the piece with great thoroughness and love, as I can tell from his letters and our discussions before I travelled, and also from the various questions he asked me.²⁴

Here we can see once again that Nielsen was aware at every stage of Hamerik's work on the Symphony, and that Hamerik asked his advice along the way, which is also confirmed by source G (see below). Unfortunately there is no trace today of the letters mentioned as giving details about the Symphony. They might perhaps give chapter and verse for Nielsen's attitude.²⁵

Music manuscript in The Royal Library, CNS 62 f (source G)²⁶

These two notated pages are described in the section on the First Symphony in the printed catalogue of the Carl Nielsen Collection in the Royal Library²⁷: 'Contains a suggestion for an alternative instrumentation of the fourth movement by Emil Telmányi. No indication of composer.' This identification undoubtedly originates in the fact that the Nielsen expert Torben Schousboe, when he sorted through large parts of the library's Nielsen holdings in the early 1980s, wrote in pencil at the bottom of the first manuscript page: 'Emil Telmányi's handwriting: suggestion for an al-

23 DK-Kk, Manuscript and Rare Books Department, accession number 1995/55, Michaelsen.

24 *Vi kommer hjem Søndag Morgen med Damper. – Kl. 12.30 skal jeg nemlig – efter Løfte – til Generalprøve paa min 1ste Symf: i Musikforeningen, som Hamerik virkelig har studeret med stor Grundighed og Kærlighed, hvad der fremgaar af Breve, Forhandling inden jeg rejste samt ved forskellige Spørgsmaal han har gjort.*

25 Three days later Nielsen wrote to his daughter Irmelin – also from Lillehammer: 'I would have liked to remain, and I thought about not going to the concert in the Music Society (my First Symphony) which I had promised to hear and which young Hamerik has learned as it were inside out, but [your] mother is against such cheating ... We are taking the ship that goes home on the 12th, the day after tomorrow' (*Jeg var gerne blevet og jeg tænkte at snyde for den Koncert i Musikforeningen (min I Symf.) som jeg havde lovet at høre paa og som den unge Hamerik har lært saa at sige helt udenad men Mor sætter sig imod Snyderiet ... Vi rejser med Skib som er i overmorgen den 12te hjemme*) (DK-Kk, CNA, IIIA.a.1).

26 Reproduced in the Appendix to *Carl Nielsen, Works*, vol. II/1 (*Symphony No. 1, Opus 7*, (ed.) Peter Hauge, Copenhagen 2001, 155 ff.).

27 Birgit Bjørnum & Klaus Møllerhøj, *Carl Nielsens Samling. Katalog over komponistens musikhåndskrifter i Det kongelige Bibliotek / The Carl Nielsen Collection. A Catalogue of the Composer's Musical Manuscripts in the Royal Library*, Copenhagen 1992, 58.

ternative instrumentation of the First Symphony, fourth movement.’ This interpretation was then taken over into the printed catalogue.

However, it is not correct. A comparison of these notated pages with Hamerik’s pasted-in pages in the printed score (source A above; see also *Fig. 1*) shows first that the handwriting is the same (Hamerik’s rather than Telmányi’s as indicated in the Royal Library’s catalogues), and secondly that the manuscript follows the pasted-in pages note for note and therefore must also be Hamerik’s pencil notation of the pages later pasted in, rather than Telmányi’s altered instrumentation! The only difference between the two manuscripts is that in connection with Hamerik’s notation of bars 238-242,²⁸ CNS 62f has the following additional comment, also in Hamerik’s hand (see *Fig. 2*):

At this point the scoring is as indicated below. In its place I have used the instrumentation from eight bars before the cut, because the oboe then sounds fresh at its entry with the theme. Should this phrase be major or minor?²⁹

All these aspects of this manuscript would be incomprehensible if it had been written by Telmányi (in which case we would have to believe that Telmányi arrived at precisely the same alteration of the passage in question as Hamerik; or worse: that he was presenting as his own something that he had taken from Hamerik, and, moreover – in his reminiscences from 1978 – declared to be deleterious to Nielsen’s work!). Whereas when it is shown to come from Hamerik, the whole thing falls into place.

The notation and the additional comment, together with the clear folds in the manuscript showing that it was at one point placed in an ordinary envelope, all point towards the following sequence of events:

We have here Hamerik’s first pencil notation of the passage in the fourth movement, which he sent by post in order to get Nielsen’s opinion on it (cf. source F above, with the composer’s remarks to Vera Michaelsen that he had had correspondence with Hamerik about alterations in the Symphony before Hamerik’s performance of the work). Hamerik’s additional comment, directed to Nielsen, alerts us to the fact that at the point in the score where the alteration leads back into Nielsen’s original version (i.e. bar 238) he carried out a minor alteration in the instrumentation, letting the clarinet have the melody the first time instead of the oboe, to ensure

28 The bar-numbering refers to *Carl Nielsen Works, op. cit.*, which is to say the passage between rehearsal letters K and L.

29 *Paa dette Sted er Instrumentationen som nedenfor angivet. I Stedet har jeg benyttet Instrumentationen fra 8 Takter før Springet, fordi Oboen saa virker frisk ved sin Indtræden med Temaet. Skal Stedet være Dur eller Moll?* In August 1999 Brita Hamerik affirmed that the handwriting was without doubt that of Ebbe Hamerik.

that when the oboe takes the theme eight bars later its entry would sound fresher than if it had taken the theme both times. In addition Hamerik was uncertain whether the passage should be in E flat major or minor. Whether Nielsen answered this query, and if so whether he did in writing or orally, we cannot know; neither in the Royal Library nor in Brita Hamerik's surviving papers is there a letter from 1928 to be found from Nielsen to Hamerik, but the other circumstances surrounding this matter suggest that Hamerik did receive a response of one sort or another.

But when the manuscript was registered (and included in the printed catalogue of the Carl Nielsen collection) as having been written by Telmányi, it was quite in keeping with the above: it was quite natural that Nielsen should have kept this pencil notation of the alteration among his own manuscripts and papers (Hamerik after all had his own ink fair copy, which he pasted into the score). After Nielsen's death, large parts of his materials went to the family, first and foremost to his daughter Irmelin Eggert Møller. Thanks to Schousboe's mediation, this material was transferred to the Royal Library and registered by Schousboe, who in his hurry thought that this was yet another example of Telmányi's adjustments to passages of his father-in-law's music, overlooking the fact that the pasted-in pages in source A and source G are identical (at first glance Telmányi's handwriting *does* remind one somewhat of Hamerik's).

Reviews of Hamerik's 1928 performance

The numerous reviews of the The Music Society concert of 13th February in the Copenhagen daily newspapers were unconditionally positive.³⁰ That goes both for the programme – Kuhlau, Hartmann, Gade and Nielsen – and for the young conductor's interpretations. For the majority of reviewers the concert's highpoint was unquestionably the performance of Nielsen's First Symphony and the subsequent ovation for both conductor and composer. *Nationaltidende* reported that 'To honour the outgoing conductor and now Honorary Member, Nielsen's First Symphony in G minor was performed for the first time at the Music Society', and the reviewer 'r-h.' concluded:

Mr. Hamerik conducted the symphony with a keen emphasis on its marked singularity, an achievement which in its characterfulness was very much in the spirit of the work.'

William Behrend took the same tone in *Berlingske Tidende*, as did Axel Kjerulf in *Politiken*; the latter concluded his review:

30 Reviews of 14.2.1928 in, amongst others, *Nationaltidende*, *Politiken*, *Socialdemokraten*, *Børsen*, *Ekstra Bladet*, *Morgenbladet*, *Berlingske Tidende*, *Soro Amtstidende*.

Ebbe Hamerik performed the symphony with a mobility and fluidity that at the same time energetically traced its characterful lines and gave us its free fullness of life; it was remarkable, and the applause was well earned as well as being addressed to the composer in attendance.

Most convincing of all in the present context is Kai Aage Bruun, who wrote in *Ekstra Bladet*: ‘There was jubilation after the symphony, addressed to the master himself, who with an eloquent look thanked Hamerik for the powerfully lived-through performance he had given of the work’ – a performance which, moreover, according to *Socialdemokraten* was directed ‘without a score, a brilliant achievement.’ The evening was perceived by several of the reviewers as marking an historic generation-shift in the leadership of the The Music Society, heralding a new period of greatness for the Society (a prophecy which was soon to be painfully belied). This was expressed by Augusta Eschricht in *Sorø Amtstidende* in excessive terms; she begins her review: ‘Hail to The Music Society’s young conductor of genius, Ebbe Hamerik’ and concludes with the words:

The Music Society’s conductor, with whom a new era in the Society’s history has surely begun, re-directed the public’s applause towards the box where Carl Nielsen was sitting. And at this the audience, orchestra and singers united in a genuine, enthusiastic ovation, after which the composer of the Symphony stepped to the edge of the box and bowed his head in thanks.

Certainly very few of the reviewers would have had any intimate acquaintance with the score at this point in time. But their reception of Hamerik’s performance and their description of the subsequent scenario between conductor and composer, receiving the public’s ovation, are nevertheless so unanimous, that any preceding controversy between the two is unthinkable, not to mention any subsequent dissociation on Nielsen’s part. Not a single one of the numerous reviews gives the slightest indication that the performance was anything but entirely at one with the spirit of the work and with Nielsen’s intentions.

Of the fact that Hamerik would fall out with the Music Society two years later and supposedly become at least an indirect cause of its definitive dissolution, there is no indication here in February 1928, shortly after his appointment.³¹

31 In the Spring of 1927 Nielsen had resigned as conductor at the Music Society on health grounds. The last two concerts of the season in Spring 1927 were conducted by Christian Christiansen, but at the start of the new season 1927/28, following a unanimous resolution at the plenary meeting of 25th April 1927, Ebbe Hamerik took over the post of the Music Society’s permanent conductor after Carl Nielsen. (*DK-Kk, Håndskriftsafdelingen, Musikforeningens Arkiv, Kapsel 58*).

The assembling of Nielsen manuscripts in 1935 (source H)

A final, newly discovered source makes the pieces fall into place. In 1935 a group of important figures in Danish musical life began a campaign with the aim of securing for the future Nielsen's surviving manuscripts and letters.³² To begin with they addressed a long list of individuals who had been close to the composer and who might be thought to own Nielsen autographs. These people were asked to declare what they had in their possession and to what extent they might be willing then or in the future to transfer their materials to the Royal Library's newly founded Carl Nielsen Archive. In the present context it is naturally Ebbe Hamerik's reply, dated 17-5-35, that is interesting.

From this it transpires that in 1935 Hamerik owned the following four documents:

- Two letters from 1928, which he says he may not be able to find, and which remain undiscovered to this day.
- A letter from 1931, 'which will only be transferred after my death' (source E discussed above).
- A manuscript page for the First Symphony in G minor, which Hamerik describes thus: 'Alteration in the last movement, made in Lillehammer, 1928, and written on a scrap of manuscript paper in short score. Nielsen asked me to do the instrumentation and approved it for the Music Society's performance of the Symphony in Spring 1928.'

With this the sequence of events surrounding the notorious alteration in the Symphony's finale is cleared up: with regard to a revival of this symphony from his youth, Nielsen wanted to tighten up a passage in the fourth movement. During a ski trip at Lillehammer he found time to scribble down an alteration in short score. He then send this to the newly appointed conductor of the Music Society, Ebbe Hamerik, with the request to orchestrate it. Hamerik made a rough draft of a scoring and sent it by post for Nielsen's approval, with a single question (source G). After the composer's acceptance (which can only be indirectly documented) Hamerik pasted in the four corrected pages of score into his own copy of the printed score (source A) and carried out the corresponding changes in the parts.

32 DK-Kk, Håndskriftsafdelingen, *Journalsager nr. 4802*. The letter, which was sent in connection with the 70th anniversary of Nielsen's birth, was signed by Thorvald Aagaard, Emilius Bangert, Jørgen Bentzon, Christian Christiansen, Nancy Dalberg, Svend Godske-Nielsen, Godfred Hartmann, Knud Jeppesen (spokesman for the group, to whom answers were addressed), Ove Jørgensen, Henrik Knudsen, Carl Johan Michaelsen, Peder Møller, Thorvald Nielsen, Aage Oxenvad, Adolf Riis-Magnussen, Poul Schierbeck and Rudolph Simonsen. Under the same catalogue entry all answers received are kept, including Ebbe Hamerik's.

In this way it can be established that the musical substance – though not the orchestral realisation – of the passage in the finale, as it appears in the pasted-in pages in Hamerik’s hand in his own copy of the First Symphony, are the work of Carl Nielsen himself. Any indignation over Hamerik’s behaviour in this matter can be laid to rest.

One must wonder, then, why in connection with the 1928 performance, which both Nielsen and Telmányi attended, the composer did not find occasion to tell Telmányi about the alteration. If he had known what the alteration would subsequently come to mean for Hamerik’s name, he would presumably have behaved otherwise. Only one piece of this puzzle is missing: the manuscript mentioned by Hamerik with Nielsen’s notation of the altered section – which would be the final documentation for the conclusion set out here. Despite energetic searches in both the Carl Nielsen Collection and the Ebbe Hamerik Collection in the Royal Library, this manuscript has not turned up.³³ But that Hamerik did have it in 1935 is substantiated by the source discussed here. What became of it thereafter is open to conjecture.³⁴

These sources and the circumstances surrounding them clearly indicate that the ‘received wisdom’ about Ebbe Hamerik’s 1928 performance of Nielsen’s First Symphony does not hold water. Instead the following picture emerges. Like many other conductors who have performed Nielsen’s symphonies down the years, Hamerik felt called upon to make adjustments and to clarify markings in the score of the First Symphony – in the case of one place in the fourth movement to such an extent that, following the composer’s model, he had to rewrite and expand a whole passage. Since Hamerik had great admiration for Nielsen and held him in high esteem, he constantly discussed his alterations with him, both in personal conversations and by letter, and Hamerik therefore sent Nielsen a pencil version of his suggestion for scoring the al-

33 The manuscript page was apparently never delivered to the library; a checklist (*Journalsager nr. 4802*) of all those approached in the above-mentioned questionnaire notes, in three columns, whether a letter was sent, whether a reply was received, and whether as a result anything was transferred to the library. Opposite Hamerik’s name there are crosses in the first two columns but not in the last, the one which would have confirmed that the material was in fact transferred to the Royal Library. In addition it should be said that in December 2000 Hamerik’s widow, Brita Hamerik, informed the present author that she had never been aware that Hamerik had ‘bequeathed’ this material to the Royal Library.

34 That the new edition of the First Symphony in the *Carl Nielsen Edition* does not reflect the altered passage in its revision but only prints it as an appendix (Vol. II/1, edited by Peter Hauge, Copenhagen 2001, 156 ff.), is due to the fact that the instrumentation is *not* by Nielsen – whereas his own scoring of the same passage in the original version has survived. This only apparently contradicts the Edition’s normal principle of reproducing the work in the last form sanctioned by the composer, although it must be admitted that in this case there was a very difficult decision to be taken.

tered section in the fourth movement, accompanied by a short commentary and a question written on the notated page.

The composer, together with his son-in-law, attended the concert (perhaps also one of the final rehearsals). He confirmed that the alterations were interesting – perhaps even an improvement on the original score (this would not have been the first time he had invited friends and colleagues to ‘help out’ with scoring and articulation), and he decided to use this same version when he had the opportunity to conduct the work two weeks later, using the same parts as Hamerik had done. If he had wanted to conduct his original version, he would doubtless have been able rapidly to obtain a ‘clean’ set of parts, since at this time the parts were printed and so could simply have been ordered from the publishers. In case of mishap he could also have obtained the parts that Telmányi had used for *his* performance in Gothenburg on 16th December 1925.

In thanks for Hamerik’s initiative and interpretation (including the many alterations, great and small, of dynamics and articulation, as well as the scoring of the passage in the fourth movement) Nielsen wrote a heartfelt dedication in Hamerik’s score the day before his own performance – also given with Hamerik’s materials – and maintained great devotion and respect for Hamerik for the rest of his life, as we find expressed, for instance, in the 1931 letter cited (source E). Hamerik’s alteration went straight into Danish Radio’s materials, which were used for three decades thereafter.

This is a very different story from the one circulating in the Nielsen literature.

Analysis of the altered passage in the First Symphony

So what is changed in this notorious passage in the fourth movement, shortly before the arrival of the recapitulation at letter L (bb. 202-270)?

First the passage as it appears in Nielsen’s original version. Here it is really a question of a very clearly structured forward *drive* towards the recapitulation, logical and stringent in its construction – perhaps even *too* mechanical and a little too elaborate for Hamerik’s (and Nielsen’s?) taste more than 30 years later. The first part of the passage works with just the one theme, consisting of two motivic elements, in *Ex. 1* below marked *x* (the accented note-repetition) and *y* (the stepwise fifth-descent in relation to the note-repetition). These two motivic elements are worked out as a kind of fugato between wind and strings, where the combination *xy* makes up the canonic material, which gradually dissolves, so that only *x* remains. This *x*-motif – but now with a completely different character – subsequently forms a lead-in to a new lyrical contrasting motif (*z* with spinning-out, *Ex. 2*), which after two repetitions introduces a third statement that gradually dissolves and finally leads on into the recapitulation (see *Fig. 3*)

Ex. 1

Ex. 2

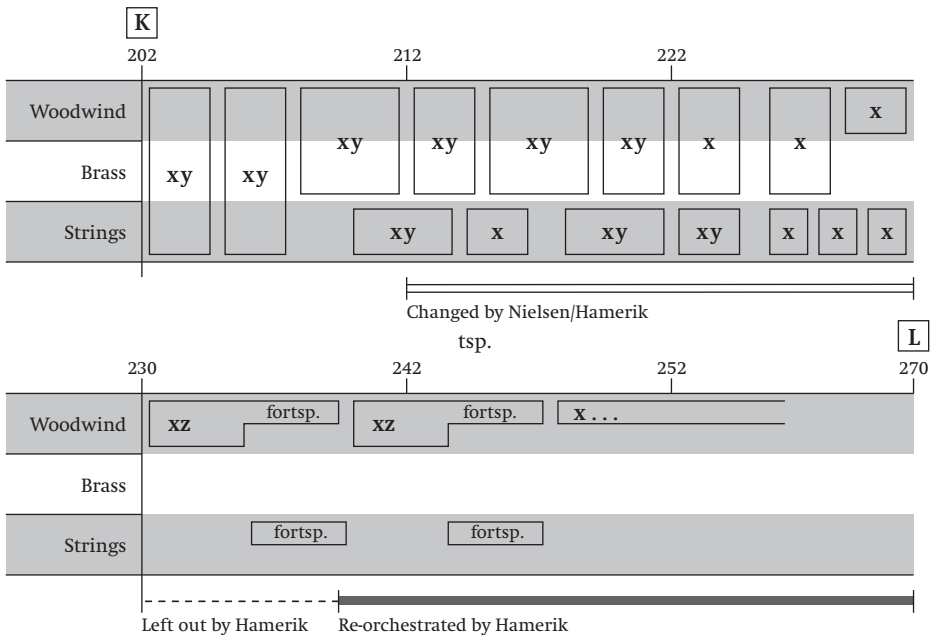


FIG. 3: Diagram of fourth movement, bars 202-270 (letter K to L) showing the 1928 alterations of the original passage (cf. the above discussion).

It is the section with the *x*- and *y*-motifs that Nielsen revises. The first couple of canonic entries are retained, but thereafter the movement marches on in *tutti*, always fugato-like, but over a newly composed motif (Ex. 3) which leads into a little transition consisting of a series of note-repetitions that becomes weaker and weaker (Ex. 4); this all flows into the original version's contrasting motif, but eliminating the original's first rep-

etition of the motif, so that it begins only with the second entry (in b. 238), now with the minor change in instrumentation that Hamerik discusses in the pencil draft cited above, with its concern for the freshness of the oboe entry.



Ex. 3

Ex. 4 shows musical notation for flute (fl.) and clarinet (cl.). The flute part has dynamics *p*, *dim.*, and *pp*. The clarinet part has a dynamic marking of *p*. Below the clarinet part, there is a diagram labeled 'fig.' with two horizontal arrows: one labeled 'x' and one labeled 'z', indicating specific figures or intervals.

Ex. 4

As it turns out, this altered version displays a very conscious ‘softening’ of the original, somewhat hard-edged texture in the interests of a more flexible transition to the recapitulation in the form of greater motivic variety.

Emil Telmányi as guardian of the Nielsen legacy

The above discussion shows that Telmányi either remembered wrongly or else proceeded by unconscious repression. Naturally we can only guess at the reasons.

By virtue of his very close relations with Nielsen – both as friend, colleague and son-in-law – Telmányi felt that he had a special duty to his music after the composer’s death, and he undoubtedly also felt that he was the leading authority when it came to the correct understanding and interpretation of the music. He probably considered himself – and rightly so – as virtually the one who more than any other was chosen to uphold the Nielsen legacy, and he did outstanding work promoting Nielsen’s music at home and abroad. Very soon after becoming acquainted, Nielsen and Telmányi entered into a warm friendship, which lasted right up to Nielsen’s death in 1931, and which resulted both in an extensive correspondence and in a very close collaboration on musical questions in general and on a whole range of details in many of Nielsen’s works in particular (with respect both to performance of the music and to the musical text itself). This naturally applies first and foremost to the violin works (not least the Violin Concerto) but also to a series of other works, especially to *Aladdin*, *Amor og Digteren* [Amor and the Poet] and the Sixth Symphony. The clearest testimony to Telmányi’s special role is a letter from Nielsen, dated 22.11.1925, beginning with the words ‘My dear Emil’; having thanked Telmányi for his perform-

ance of one of the Violin Sonatas, the letter continues with these ringing words: ‘Yes! We two understand one another, my friend, and when die I will place my soul in your hands and ask you alone to be the one true champion and judge of my works. Well, we shouldn’t get so pompous, but still – I do mean it from the bottom of my heart.’³⁵ This is really a form of bestowing a knighthood.

There is much reason to believe that Telmányi was very conscious of this special position and that he took it hard when it was disputed. In various passages in his reminiscences, where he also reproduces the above-cited letter in its entirety and in Nielsen’s hand,³⁶ we hear indignant accounts of his being overlooked and of a lack of recognition in matters to do with Nielsen. Instances are Telmányi’s non-engagement as violinist anywhere in the 1965 Carl Nielsen Festival,³⁷ episodes with younger violinists such as Anker Buch and Jørgen Fischer Larsen, who in various connections were preferred to Telmányi, the supposed neglect of Telmányi’s arrangements of parts of the *Aladdin*-music for the ballet *Asra*, and so on.

The reference to Ebbe Hamerik and his supposed corruption of the First Symphony may be connected with this state of affairs. For Telmányi it may have been difficult to reconcile himself to the fact that here was a young conductor and composer who, at least in this one case, as it were usurped the role that otherwise was reserved for Telmányi: namely the one who with his deep understanding of Nielsen’s entire musical universe could give the music its correct interpretation and contribute to possible alterations when necessary and at the same time repudiate other’s interpretations and interventions if they diverged from what Telmányi understood to be the correct path. Moreover it may have been an aggravating circumstance that Hamerik had shortly beforehand been preferred as conductor for the Music Society, in competition with, among others, Telmányi. These circumstances *could* have been the psychological background for Telmányi’s report of Hamerik’s performance of the First Symphony – a report which, so it transpires, is not confirmed by surviving sources. It is thought-provoking that immediately before the story about the First Symphony we read in Telmányi’s reminiscences two similar reports from the years 1926-27 about other conductors, who according to the narrator had misunderstood one or two things in the Fifth Symphony.³⁸ In both cases Telmányi relates how he was sitting

35 *Min kære Emil ... Ja! vi to forstaar hinanden, min Ven og skulde jeg engang dø, saa vil jeg give Dig min Aand i Dine Hænder og bede Dig alene være den rette Leder og Dommer for mine Arbejder. Naa, vi skal vel ikke [være] højtidelige, men dog – jeg mener det alligevel af Hjertens Grund.*

36 Emil Telmányi, *op.cit.*, 164-65.

37 In his reminiscences he notes: ‘It seemed to me quite remarkable that I, who since 1916 had been a standard-bearer for Nielsen’s music both at home and abroad, especially as a violinist, should not be taking part with my violin in the festival devoted to him’, *ibid.*, 189.

38 *Ibid.*, 105.

next to Nielsen during the performances and that the composer – exactly as in the situation with Hamerik – confidentially whispered to Telmányi his disapproval of what he was hearing; in the case of Furtwängler with the indulgent words ‘just let him’ and in the case of Pierre Monteux with the remark about a string passage in the second movement: ‘I never meant it anything like this; it was better when there was some grit [Danish: *lidt grødet*] in the sound’; concerning the last problem Telmányi adds that he himself knew these difficulties well, since he had just conducted this very work the previous year. In all three cases therefore, Telmányi can point to Nielsen’s own authority as support for his rejection of his colleagues’ interpretations and thereby maintain his own role as the one who carries the torch onwards – doubtless proceeding from his undiminished love for the music and his profound knowledge of Nielsen’s way of thinking, but, at least in this particular case, apparently on the basis of a slip of memory or, as stated above, perhaps a straightforward psychological repression.

Postscript: Ebbe Hamerik and the closure of the Music Society

Although they are beyond the scope of this article, it is worth summarising the circumstances that amongst other things gave rise to the above-cited letter from Nielsen to Hamerik (source E), circumstances which to a large extent may be said to have been the beginning of the end of an epoch in Danish musical history: the closure of the esteemed concert-giving institution, the Music Society, which since its founding in 1836 had been a powerful factor in Copenhagen’s musical life. As indicated, in 1927 Hamerik had replaced Nielsen as conductor for the society, not without resistance both from opposing candidates for the post (including Telmányi) and from members of the administration. For the first couple of years his collaboration with the orchestra was frictionless, but in Spring 1930 a series of powerful confrontations arose between the demanding and somewhat hot-headed conductor and the more phlegmatic musicians. The conflicts were dealt with in minute detail by the daily press,³⁹ which reproduced the verbal scuffles between conductor and musicians in rehearsals, and the whole affair culminated with an open letter dated 4 March 1930 from Hamerik to all the papers, which in no uncertain terms described the orchestra’s incompetence, but also – more prophetically – suggested the setting up of a so-called Symphony-Institution in Copenhagen, financed by the the government, the local authorities and private societies, and with an accountable conductor having sole artistic responsibility.⁴⁰ This led to the orchestra withdrawing its collaboration with the Music Society so long as

39 Cf. the Copenhagen press, especially for 27.2., 28.2., 5.3. and 6.3. 1930.

40 ‘Konflikten i Musikforeningen. Aabent Brev til den danske Musikoffentlighed’ [The Conflict in the Music Society: Open Letter to the Danish Musical Public], *Berlingske Tidende* (and various other newspapers) 5.3.1930.

Hamerik held the baton,⁴¹ which led straight away to Hamerik, with great public support⁴² and amongst other things with a grant of 20.000 kroner from the music publishers Wilhelm Hansen, himself founded the new orchestra he had proposed. This action was successful for Hamerik, but it rapidly ran aground, because the new State Broadcasting Corporation shortly after tempted no fewer than ten of Hamerik's musicians to move from Hamerik to the Radio. The already ailing Music Society could not survive this turbulence, combined as it was with competition from the other music societies and not least from the Radio, and after nearly 100 years it had to put up the shutters. It was just a few days before this hectic and fatiguing turn of events came out into the open that Hamerik sought out Nielsen, and it is against this background that the ageing composer's kind letter to his young protégé was written.⁴³

A B S T R A C T

In 1928, the Danish composer and conductor Ebbe Hamerik gave a performance of Nielsen's First Symphony, containing scattered changes in the original instrumentation and a rather drastic change of a certain passage in the fourth movement, which is clearly to be seen from the score and the parts used by Hamerik for his performance. In the standard literature on Carl Nielsen it is related how Nielsen heard this performance, and how towards Emil Telmányi, his son-in-law, he showed his strong disapproval of Hamrik's intervention – to such a degree that he insisted on performing the work himself a fortnight later in order to show how he, the composer, really wanted the work.

Through a study of a number of sources, illuminating these matters it is shown that Nielsen, very far from disapproving Hamerik's version found it highly convincing and apparently used Hamerik's parts and score for his own performance two weeks later. It even appears that Nielsen himself actually composed the changed passage in the fourth movement and probably sent it to Hamerik to be orchestrated.

Translated by David Fanning

41 Letter of 15.3.1930 from the administration of the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra to the administration of the the Music Society, copy in Hamerik's scrapbook (in private ownership).

42 Without going into the conflict itself, Carl Nielsen thus supports the idea of such a 'Symphony-Institution' in an interview in *Berlingske Tidende* 6.3.1930, 'Carl Nielsen om Symfoni-Institutionen. Der er Musikinteresse nok – den skal bare samles!' [Carl Nielsen on the Symphony-Institution. There is enough interest in music – we just have to bring it together]. (See John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid* [Carl Nielsen to his Contemporaries], Copenhagen 1999, 549 ff.).

43 The whole affair is meticulously documented in Hamerik's scrapbook, in the form of numerous newspaper cuttings.