

R E V I E W S

The Carl Nielsen Edition (Copenhagen, The Royal Library and Wilhelm Hansen) Series I: Stage Music, volumes 4 and 5, *Saul and David* (2002). Full score, £ 239,95; Series II: Instrumental Music, volume 9, *Concertos* (2002). Full score, £ 129,95; Series III: Vocal Music, volume 1, *Cantatas 1* (2002). Full score, £ 79,95

The Carl Nielsen Edition, published by Edition Wilhelm Hansen, is an independent project under the auspices of the Music Department of the Royal Library, Copenhagen. Under the direction of its Editor-in-Chief, Niels Krabbe, the Edition is now half-way through the publication of its projected 32 volumes. The symphonies and *Maskarade* are among those works already published, while some orchestral music, much of the choral music, and all of the songs, solo instrumental music and chamber music are still to come. The list of volumes shows what a daunting task faces the team of editors responsible for this project. Moreover, the Edition is not merely producing full scores: vocal scores and instrumental parts are also to be published. That so much has been done in only nine years is a very considerable achievement and gives one confidence that the edition will be completed

within a reasonable time-scale – a hope that has often not been fulfilled for other complete editions.

It must be said immediately that these volumes meet one's hopes and expectations for the definitive edition of a major composer. The individual volumes are beautifully produced in a large format that allows full scores to be entirely legible: the quality of the music-processing and printing is high, including the very clear underlay of vocal texts in Danish and English where appropriate. As far as I can see, too, the proof-reading has been exemplary: certainly I have found few errors in the course of using these weighty and complex volumes (although I am, admittedly, unable to assess the Danish texts).

The volumes seem easy to use, apart from the obvious problems of their weight and size. Evidently, matters of design, layout and content were thoroughly discussed at an early stage. The preliminary material is given in parallel Danish and English versions (except for vocal texts in other languages). Although this makes for small print, especially in the footnotes, the result is clear, legible and visually very attractive. Each volume begins with a General Preface, which in-

cludes a statement of Editorial Principles; then follows a preface to the individual volume, which sets out in generous fashion the history of the work(s) involved, including reception history, and, in the case of vocal works, an essay on the texts and their sources, as appropriate. The preliminary material ends in each case with some excellent facsimiles – in colour where necessary – of the musical and other sources, and these are a real bonus.

Following the music in each volume is an exhaustive critical commentary, preceded by a description of each source and a discussion of the sources' relationships. This material is in English only. For most works this is the first time that the sources have even been listed, and this section will be invaluable to scholars and of great interest to knowledgeable amateur enthusiasts. Here we have detailed information about the materials on which the edition is founded. The process of making this complete edition has involved the reassessment of sources, including some relatively recently-discovered materials: but it has also led to the rediscovery of sources previously assumed lost or destroyed.

The critical commentaries themselves are as full as one could reasonably wish. Variant readings are given for all sources, and editorial amendments are clearly described. One might object that the great majority of readers do not require such a detailed scholarly commentary on music that is not, in general, in

doubt. To this there are two main answers: first, that the commentary is the record of the scholarly work carried out by the editors, and the proof of the thoroughness with which the work was done; and second, that composition is never quite a completed activity, and to understand a piece of music fully it is helpful to have access to the record of the composer's thought-processes. In these editions the decision taken has evidently been to offer as comprehensive a commentary as possible. One reason for this is the principle that the musical text itself shall be as uncluttered as possible. As a result, the page as presented to the reader has no unnecessary material on it: the editorial decisions have been made, and the evidence for those decisions is consigned to the commentary. Although there are dangers in doing this – decisions are not always clear-cut – the editors must take full responsibility for their decisions and explain what they have done and why. The very handsome look of the uncluttered pages, then, is a result of scrupulous scholarly activity as well as of sensible and visually attractive design.

Saul and David (I/4, 5) comes in two volumes, containing two acts each. Volume I/4 has the preliminary material, including facsimiles, while volume I/5 contains the source-descriptions and critical commentary. Although the editors state that their work was not complicated by 'later revisions, adaptations and abridgements' of the opera (I/4, p. xxx), the fact that there are 34 sources in all suggests

the immensity of the task. In fact, the editing was a piece of team-work: Niels Bo Foltmann was responsible for Acts 1 and 3, Peter Hauge for Acts 2 and 4, and Niels Krabbe for the libretto, but one assumes that a good deal of consultation took place. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the critical commentary – or list of ‘Editorial emendations and alternative readings’, as the edition has it – takes up 62 pages of closely-packed typescript in double-column format (and here, as noted above, not in two languages). This critical commentary uses musical notation where necessary, which is perhaps why only one very short passage is given as an appendix: the original version of five amended bars from Act 3.

In addition to the original Danish, the vocal lines are underlaid with a singing text in English. This is based on Geoffrey Dunn’s translation of the libretto, with some amendments by David Fanning. It seems to sing very well, although this is hard to judge from an armchair. The English versions of the stage directions are based on the translations of Roger Clegg.

Volume II/9 contains the three concertos. It is a surprisingly large volume, at 1x+318 pages, when one considers that there are only three works, and two of those with considerably reduced orchestras. But the Violin Concerto of 1911 is a true Romantic work of suitable proportions (125 pages), while the concertos for flute and for clarinet (63 pages and 54 pages, respectively) are hardly chamber

concertos. Seeing these three works together – and especially the wonderful wind concertos (1926, 1928) from Nielsen’s last decade – underlines the tragedy of the composer’s inability to start work on the other three projected concertos.

The critical commentary for this volume is again extensive (62 pages) and fascinating. In the case of the Flute Concerto, the sources concerned include those showing Nielsen’s original ending of the work, although that ending itself is not shown, no doubt because the material came to light too late in the publication process. In one sense this does not matter, since critical opinion at the time was clear that the revised ending was a great improvement on the original. At some stage, though, it will be necessary to publish the original ending so that those of us who wish to can read and play it, study it and listen to it. The human spirit is one of enquiry: and there will be those who demand the right to experience Nielsen’s original conception at first hand, to test the composer’s and others’ opinion of the relative merits of the two endings, and to understand why Nielsen originally wrote what he did.

Volume III/1 is the lightest of these volumes, but it is only the first of those presenting the cantatas. If a volume of a collected edition could ever be popular in any real sense, perhaps this would have a chance: it includes *Hymnus Amoris*, *Sleep* and *Springtime on Funen*, surely a collection of deservedly well-loved choral works.

The preliminary and critical materials are detailed, as in other volumes, and include English and Danish translations of the Latin text of *Hymnus Amoris*. What is particularly fascinating here – as also in the case of *Saul and David* – is the story of the development of ideas embodied in the text and explored by the composer. The editor's work in presenting extracts from letters and other materials enables a very direct and relevant biographical narrative to be compiled, setting each individual work in its historical and literary context. It is fascinating, for instance, to read of Nielsen's written instructions to Nancy Dalberg for the orchestration of *Springtime on Funen*, and to learn that she did not follow his instructions in all details, but that the composer nevertheless must have approved the final result. In what respects, one wonders, might the orchestration have been different had Nielsen been able to undertake it all himself?

Such questions are largely fruitless, of course, and the answers, could we know them, perhaps of little significance. What is far more important in these volumes is the careful presentation of the evidence and its meticulous assessment. The Carl Nielsen Edition will surely become a major factor in the success of our continuing search for understanding of that composer's music.

Richard Rastall

Emilie Demant Hatt: *Foraarsbølger: Erindringer om Carl Nielsen* [Spring Torrents: Reminiscences about Carl Nielsen]. Edited by John Fellow. (Multivers, 192 p., Dkr. 248)

Once in a while there is treasure right in front of our eyes, but we simply can't see it. This was certainly the case with a story of young love, accompanied by photographs and other materials, deposited in the Royal Library by an old lady sometime in the 1950s on condition that it should be embargoed for 25 years. When those 25 years had gone by, nothing happened; no one thought that this manuscript, and its meticulous indications of where the illustrations belonged, contained a heart-rending story about one of the greatest figures in Danish musical history – Carl Nielsen – and his young love. More than that, it told us, or rather tells us, of a young passionate genius's struggle with 'titanic eros', to use an expression employed by Nielsen's contemporary Johannes V. Jensen to describe the obsessive, all-consuming erotic feeling which threatens to take the ground from under the unfortunate one who experiences it.

Nielsen was multi-talented, as we know. He knew how to compose, how to conduct, how to write (*My Childhood on Funen*) and ... how to love. All through his life he was a bit of a ladies' man, and even though this was not the main reason why his marriage to sculptress Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen was sometimes rocky, it must have played its part. It has always been a

topic for gossip that he had fathered children out of wedlock, and that there were frequently stormclouds at his home.

Until scholars working on the complete edition of Nielsen's letters found the beautiful manuscript which author-painter Emilie Demant Hatt (1873-1958) bequeathed a few years before her death, we knew very little about the young composer's professional thoughts and aspirations, his daily round in Copenhagen or his love-life and emotions. Now all this has been presented in a book with the title *Spring Torrents*, subtitled 'Reminiscences about Carl Nielsen'. And if anyone thought that this would be some kind of mediocre, through-the-key-hole account or a girlish-sentimental presentation, they should think again. Because *Spring Torrents* is a crisp, beautifully written and moving tale about a young love that dies before it fully flowers; and this is combined with the older woman's reflections and thoughts.

This beautiful story has lain for nearly 50 years asleep in its box, like a chaste Sleeping Beauty, and no one knew that there was material here that could cast light on obscure periods and circumstances in Nielsen's life, at the same time as telling a beautiful story about the feelings an old woman could still recall. Now the manuscript has finally been published, and you would have to be made of stone not to be moved by the story of a young genius's passionate love for a much younger, totally innocent girl in the Jutland provinces. They are not des-

tinued to be together; he leaves her for another; it hurts; but life goes on all the same. Many years later they meet, each with their own spouse, and even though they never touch on their past together, their youthful love remains in them both, like a sun-warmed pebble you pick up from the beach on a summer's day. At one of their last meetings, shortly before Nielsen's death, he opens his arms as she walks into his room and says, 'Is it you?'. She quietly answers 'Yes,' but does not raise her arms for an embrace. She simply remains standing. 'The Spring Torrents shimmered for a few brief seconds,' she writes. 'It was the first and only time after those many, many years.'

First love

Emilie was 14 years old when Carl came into her life. He came to visit her parents in Selde, and according to the Emilie's reminiscences it was a life-changing experience, not just because of the unavoidable falling in love: 'No, the experience was meeting such a personality, such charm, intensity and richness of spirit. Apart from which our guest brought a completely new outlook on life – he was a 'freethinker'!' After lunch, when their elders took a nap, the two of them chatted, teased one another, squabbled, laughed and joked: 'Without my really thinking any more about it, those conversations around lunchtime were of lasting importance for me. I am grateful to Carl Nielsen for everything at that time – for joy, for pain, for experience.'

In Selde the young ones amused themselves all day long and went for outings. They dillied and dallied. In the evening Nielsen played his violin for the family, and when he had finished the family went to bed. But not Carl, who now began to work. He went to the piano in the living-room, lit the candles and 'went into his own world, where no one could follow him.'

Carl the writer

When the summer holidays were over, Nielsen travelled back to Copenhagen, where he lived with Emily's Uncle Jens and his wife, Aunt Marie. This Uncle Jens, who was something of an eccentric with a deep love for music, was one of the Odense benefactors who had helped 'a little lad from Odense' to go to Copenhagen for his studies. And for several years Nielsen lived with the couple who at that point had moved to Copenhagen. They helped him a lot, but they are not named in *My Childhood on Funen*. This is why Emilie Demant Hatt writes their memorial in *Spring Torrents* – a beautiful gesture, which nevertheless blurs the focus somewhat. More important is the reproduction of Carl's letters to her from Copenhagen.

It must have been intoxicating for the young Emilie in North Jutland to receive letters from the enamoured Carl. And he certainly knew how to write. He wrote about his life with Uncle Jens and Aunt Marie, he cracked jokes one after the other, he told her about his composing, about his alternating ups and downs

and about his persistent struggles to gain the prestigious Ancher travel scholarship. That scholarship would mean that he could make the great, mind-broadening journey that all Danish artists since the days of Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844) dreamt of embarking on. Nielsen was convinced that it was even more important for him to get away at this time, and he therefore sought out Niels W. Gade – the estimable composer and head of the scholarship committee amongst other things – at his home. The description of this meeting is extraordinarily vivid. Gade began by being really snooty, mumbling something about everyone wanting to be a composer nowadays and preferring to display their own primitive wares than to play the wonderful music of the old masters. Then he mellowed, until he discovered that Nielsen was not religious: 'Well, you should have heard him', writes Nielsen. 'He strode up and down his room and thundered: that was damned filth; there is something divine, something spiritual inside us that can never die. I had to run for cover, and I said that it might be just a transitional phase that everyone has in their youth. Then he calmed down again.'

Another letter, in the form of a skit in Holbergian style, begins 'My darling Betrothed'. In a third he tells of a childhood Christmas in Funen, possibly an early sketch for *My Childhood on Funen*. And in several others he writes openly of his soul-searching because of erotic escapades with other women in Copenhagen

while Emilie is stuck in Selde in North Jutland waiting for a letter from him. At one point he writes:

‘I wonder if you are actually the same now as you were in the summer. Do you remember how you were always so afraid when someone saw us together; and at such moments I often thought that you could not really love me. But now that’s no longer the case. I know that you love me, darling; but I still think that I love you more than you do me ...’

Emilie Demant Hatt’s commentaries, clarifications and reflections are on nearly the same high level as Nielsen’s. She clearly remembers her feelings and reactions as a young girl, and her unconscious but still very rational resistance to his campaign of seduction. This reaches its height in certain spring months, when in letter after letter he begs her to come to Copenhagen for the Easter holidays. She does not come. We are not told why; she merely writes that she does not remember the reason why the journey did not come to pass. It is perhaps because of this rebuff that the relationship ebbs away. His letters stop, and the reader does not need much imagination to picture her eagerly seeking out the postman, and his shake of the head: No, no letter again today.

Emilie’s later life

Emilie Demant Hatt’s own life-story is in some ways just as fascinating as Carl Nielsen’s, almost more so. She had a striking gift for painting and drawing,

and after the break with Nielsen she entered the Academy’s Women’s School. She too went on long journeys. But she did not follow in his footsteps to Italy or other well-known places; instead she went north, to Lapland. She fell as much in love with this country as other Danes have with Italy. She even learned the Sami language, lived in the same hut as a Sami man, Johan Turi, whom she persuaded to record the history of the Sami people. This she translated into Danish; the book came out in 1904 and was a great success. She exhibited as a painter, and in 1911 she married the cultural geographer Gudmund Hatt. In the legal proceedings following the end of the German occupation of Denmark in 1945 Hatt was removed from his post as professor at Copenhagen University. In the opinion of John Fellow, editor of *Spring Torrents*, this was unjust. Whether the dismissal was reasonable, let alone just, is not for this reviewer to judge, but at all events it meant that the couple were formally stigmatised, and as a result they lost their entire socio-professional circle of contacts. That was a very harsh supplementary punishment.

In later years Emilie displayed a great, indeed almost feverish activity and productivity. One of the results was *Spring Torrents*, whose title is taken from a well-known short story by the great Russian author Turgenev dealing with a young man who is enchanted by a married woman and who leaves his young waiting beloved high and dry. Some time

after his break with Emilie, Nielsen sent this book to her, with the very clear implication that she would probably make the connection. She did so, and she gave Turgenev's title to her presentation of the love-story of their youth.

Mette Winge