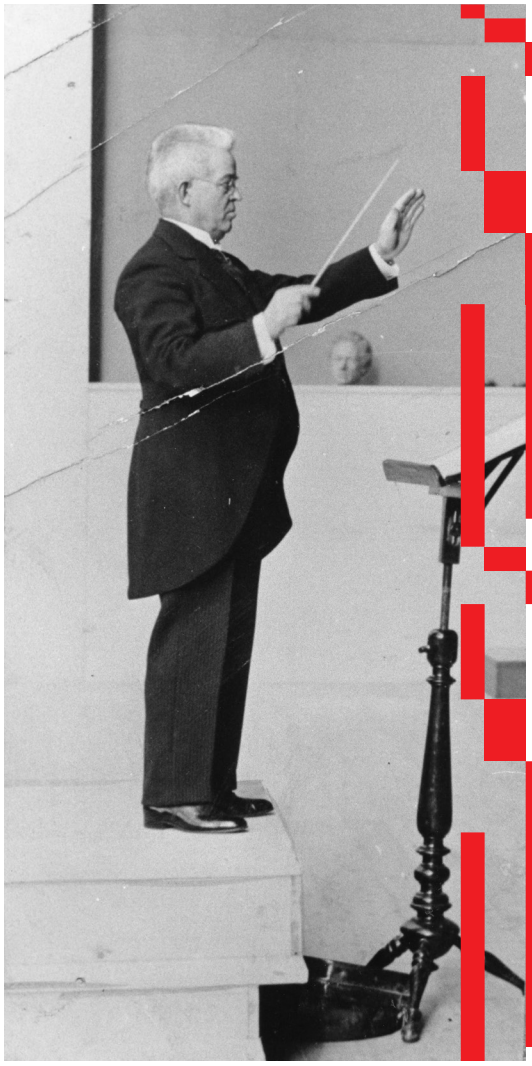


International Carl Nielsen Conference 2026

Carl Nielsen and Beyond

Music, Musical Cultures and Future Nielsen Studies Thursday 22 October – Saturday 24 October 2026

Venues: Carl Nielsen Centre, Museum Odense

H.C. Andersen Centre, SDU Odense

Danish National Academy of Music (Syddansk Musikkonservatorium), Odense

Conference committee:
David Fanning (University of Manchester, UK)
Christopher Tarrant (Newcastle University, UK)
Bjarke Moe (Royal Danish Library, Copenhagen)
Thomas Husted Kirkegaard (Aarhus University)
Michael Fjeldsøe (Museum Odense, Carl Nielsen Centre, editor-in-chief of Carl Nielsen Studies)

Day 1:
Thursday, 22 October

Venue: H.C. Andersen Centre, SDU, Odense Adelige Jomfrukloster, Albani Torv 6

12.00-12.40: **Arrival, lunch and registration.**

12.40-12.45: **Welcome** (Michael Fjeldsøe, Head of Carl Nielsen Centre)

12.45-17: **Conference Theme 1. CREATIVE PROCESSES AND PERFORMATIVE PRACTICES.**

The creation of musical works and beyond What can we learn from studying the creative processes from sketches and drafts to practice-based feedback from rehearsals and performances?

Chair: Christopher Tarrant

12.45-13.30 **Invited speaker**: Associate Prof. **Ane Grum-Schwensen**, Hans Christian Andersen Centre, University of Southern Denmark, PI of the digital edition of Andersen manuscripts.

The paper shows how the Andersen edition works with genetic criticism and reflects upon cross-disciplinary methodological aspects of genesis of texts within literature and music.

13.30-14.00: **Carl Nielsen's Flute Concerto – a multilayered work**

Speaker: Michael Fjeldsøe, Head of Carl Nielsen Centre and Curator of the Carl Nielsen Museum, Odense.

14.00-14.15 **Coffee break**

14.15-15.00 **Invited speaker**: **Karol J. Borowiecki**, Professor of Economics, University of Southern Denmark.

15.00-15.30: **Hans Christian Andersen Confronts the Danish People's Party: Exotic Style and the Early Twenty-First Century Politics of Belonging in Pele Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's Moving Still (2004)**

Speaker: Mikkel Vad, PhD, Assistant Professor of Musicology, University of Copenhagen.

15.30-16.00: **Carl Nielsen – The Dramatist. Reflections on his dramatic compositional style**

Speaker: Jonas Faurholt Høegh, MA in Musicology, Research Assistant at Carl Nielsen Centre Odense.

16.00-17.00: **Conducting Nielsen: Talk on Performative Practices**

With conductors Helen Harrison, Christian Øland and Christopher Tarrant with Michael Fjeldsøe:

17.30: **Official opening of the Carl Nielsen Centre**

Venue: Tid – Museum for Odense, Møntestræde 1, Odense.

19.00: **Concert with Odense Symphony Orchestra**

Venue: Carl Nielsen Symphony Hall, Claus Bergs Gade 9, Odense.

Day 2:
Friday, 23 October

Venue: Danish National Academy of Music (Inside Odeon), Odeons Kvarter 1, Odense, Room 3.1. (on third floor)

9.00-12.00**:** **Conference Theme 2. INCORPORATING THE PAST: Counterpoints. 'The Culture of the Line'.**

How did Nielsen's interest in counterpoint and music from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries influence aesthetic ideals and stylistic developments in his music and beyond? Chair: Bjarke Moe.

9.00-9.45: **Form and Historical Substance in Nielsen's Violin Concerto**

Invited speaker: Steven Vande Moortele**,** Professor of Music Theory, Centre for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Music, University of Toronto.

9.45-10.00: **Break**

10.00-10.30: **Carl Nielsen's Four Temperaments: Texture and Musical Constructions of Personality**

Speaker: Dr. Christopher Tarrant MA (Oxon) MMus PhD, President, Society for Music Analysis, Senior Lecturer in Music Analysis, Newcastle University.

10.30-11.00: **Transformational Prolongation in Carl Nielsen's Slow String Quartet Movements**

Speaker: Thomas Husted Kirkegaard, Tenure-Track Assistant Professor, PhD, Musicology, School of Culture and Communication, Aarhus University.

11.00-11.15: **Break**

11.15-12.00: **Invited speaker: Robert Rival,** composer, adjunct prof. of theory and composition, University of Ottawa.

12.00-13.00: **Lunch**

13.00-14.00: **Keynote: Nielsen as Symphonist**

Speaker: Professor Julian Horton MA Mphil PhD (Cantab), HDip (NUI), Department of Music, Durham University.

14.00-19.00: **Conference Theme 3:**
RE-CREATING HISTORIOGRAPHY: Marginalized composers and artists of Nielsen's time.

How does the current interest in female and marginalized composers and artists reshape the contexts and concepts of musical and artistic cultures in Nielsen's time and beyond? What can we learn from the approach of the Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Centre?

Chair: Thomas Husted Kirkegaard.

14.00-14.10: **Introductory remarks** to the theme by chair Thomas Husted Kirkegaard.

14.10-14.30: **Remembering the sound of women's struggle: The International Women's Music Festival, 1978**

Speaker: Elise Ligaard, PhD Fellow, University of Copenhagen.

14.30-14.50: **Rewriting art history's hierarchies. The approach of the Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Centre, Museum Odense**

Speaker: Laura Nørholt, Curator, Research and Curatorial Coordinator, Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Centre.

14.50-15.00: **Discussion.**

15.00-15.15: **Coffee Break**

15.15-15.45: **Rewriting Music History One Note at a Time: Publishing the Works of Nanna Liebmann (1849-1935)**

Speaker: Maria Claustad, MA in Musicology, Project Manager & Publisher at Edition·S.

15.45-16.15: **Diatonically Convincing without Keys? Voice Leading and Compositional Strategies in Carl Nielsen's Songs**

Speaker: Sanne Lorenzen, MA, music theorist, organist, PhD-scholar at University of Graz, DozentIn für Musiktheorie, Hochschule Luzern

16.15-16.45: **Orla Rosenhoff – the overlooked generation between Nielsen and Gade.**

Speaker: Nanna Staugaard Villagomez, MA in Musicology, Editor at Multivers.

17.00-19.00: **Concert with Christina Bjørkøe and Friends performing piano works and lieder from the time of Carl Nielsen.**

Venue: National Academy of Music Concert Hall, Odeon, Lower Floor.

20.00-22.30: **Conference Dinner at Madklubben – Odense.**

Please note: Participation is limited to participants who have purchased a dinner ticket.

Day 3:
Saturday, 24 October

10.00-13.00: **Conference Theme 4: FUTURE (of) NIELSEN STUDIES**: How do we imagine and shape the future of Nielsen scholarship?

Venue: Kirkesalen, Museum Odense, Overgade 48, Odense, entrance through the courtyard of the old red building.

Chair: Michael Fjeldsøe.

10.00-10.15: **Welcome and Coffee**

10.15-11.00: **State of the art of Nielsen studies and where to go from here**

Opening statements from 'insiders' David Fanning, Michelle Assay and Daniel Grimley.

11.00-11.15: **Break**

11.15-12.00: **Perspectives on Nielsen Studies from 'outside' Nielsen scholarship – what is needed and how to achieve it**

Panel discussion: Trine Boje Mortensen (Artistic Director of Odense Symphony Orchestra), Anne Gry Haugland (PhD, Head of Artistic Research, Royal Danish Academy of Music), Pia Quist (Professor, Head of Centre of Excellence TRANSITION, University of Copenhagen) and Claus Skjold Larsen (Rector, Danish National Academy of Music).

12.00-12.15: **Break**

12.15-13.00: **Open discussion: Future Nielsen Studies – Strategies for the Carl Nielsen Centre**

Openings remarks by Michael Fjeldsøe: The Carl Nielsen Centre.

13.00: **Thank you – and lunch**

14.00: **Guided tour of the Exhibition of Sealed Letters, TID, Museum Odense.**



Abstracts – Day 1

Michael Fjeldsøe:

Carl Nielsen's Flute Concerto – a multilayered work

How are we to approach a musical work like Nielsen's Flute Concerto? The paper will explore the potential in studying Nielsen's drafts and sketches in line with genetic criticism in order to discuss Nielsens approach to musical form in the second movement, which presents an extraordinary case with its two different endings.

The story goes that Carl Nielsen after composing his Wind Quintett in 1922 got the idea of composing a concert for each of the instruments of the Wind Quartett, and that he specifically had the musicians of the Copenhagen Wind Quintett in mind. At this time in his life, Nielsen embraced the idea that each instrument had its own character and in his Wind Quintett he had developed this idea further. This was in line with the new European trend of Neue Sachlichkeit, which held that each instrument should be clearly audible according to its own sound, instead of blending the sound into a unified whole. Each voice should be heard individually, which calls for musical works in which each voice contributes melodic lines that develop alongside other melodic lines – music written in the tradition of counterpoint. This was already a prominent feature of Nielsen's music, and he took it to the next level in the 1920s.

Nielsen composed the Flute Concerto within a few months in 1926. The idea for the piece came to him while he was considering writing a Concerto for Clarinet. In July, he had not yet started work on the clarinet piece. Instead, he mentioned that 'from time to time I get ideas that would "go" well for flute. – Maybe I should write a flute piece first?' This is telling, as Nielsen refers to his recent musical ideas as suited for the flute and not for the clarinet. When it came to the second movement, he suggested in mid-September: 'The second part will be an interweaving of an allegretto and andante, somewhat rondo-like in form; but that is as yet only in my head as I have had to send the fair copy [of the score] and the copy of the solo part to Copenhagen'. He had employed a similar approach in his Symphony No. 5, writing it 'in two parts instead of the usual four movements, folding together what would traditionally have been three movements into a second part.

Mikkel Vad:

Hans Christian Andersen Confronts the Danish People's Party: Exotic Style and the Early Twenty-First Century Politics of Belonging in Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's Moving Still (2004)

Musical, aesthetic, and social ideals of nationalism and Danishness looms large in the reception of Carl Nielsen. Despite efforts to "de-nationalize" Nielsen somewhat, his music keeps getting caught up in conflicts over Danish identity, as exemplified in the infamous 2018 scandal surrounding "Den danske sang er en ung blond pige." Furthermore, because of Nielsen's status in the Danish canon, almost all subsequent Danish composers have had to confront the question of national identity.

This paper explores a theme of Danishness in Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's Moving Still (for voice and string quartet) that can be traced back to two sons of Funen: Carl Nielsen and H.C. Andersen. Written for the Andersen bicentenary in 2005, Moving Still sets texts by Andersen and plays with and transforms notions about Danishness, Americaness, and orientalism. The first movement uses "Om Årtusinder," an essay imagining how "the young Americans" return to Europe in a millennium. This quasi sci-fi story is a mediation on time and distance between the Old and the New Worlds, represented with a use of US minimalist styles. Gudmundsen-Holmgreen juxtaposes this with Andersen's national romantic "I Danmark er jeg født," which he transforms in a series of stylistic changes from boogie-woogie to "oriental" scales.

This paper traces Gudmundsen-Holmgreen's use of stylistic tropes that work as a Schein des Bekannten in the Danish composerly tradition from J.A.P. Schulz and Carl Nielsen. Focusing primarily on a musical analysis of the melodic transformation in the second movement's setting of "I Danmark er jeg født," the paper demonstrates how Gudmundsen-Holmgreen develops the melody through chromaticism, modal mixture, reharmonization, and other exoticizing techniques to create an uncanny representation of Danish musical identity. Placing the work in the context of 2000s Danish and international politics, I argue that Gudmundsen-Holmgreen employs musical exoticism in Moving Still not simply to represent the Other, but rather to a political critique the Self.

Jonas F. Høegh:

Carl Nielsen – The Dramatist. Som reflections on his dramatic compositional style

The relationship between Carl Nielsen's music-dramatic works and his symphonic output has been the subject of only limited scholarly interest. Although research has often highlighted the dramatic as a central feature of Nielsen's musical language, this concept has generally been used descriptively rather than analytically, and its application has primarily been confined to the study of his operas alone.

In this paper, I examine Carl Nielsen's understanding of the dramatic, drawing on a letter (CNB 11:370) from 1931 in which Nielsen reflects on what he means by the concept of 'dramatic music'. Here, Nielsen distinguishes between 'theatrical music' and 'dramatic music' and argues that musical drama does not stem from stage effects or naturalistic illustration, but rather from a 'tension [which] must lie in [a] certain symphonic (purely musical) unfolding'. The letter thus opens up an understanding of a specific musical-poetic stance, which Nielsen himself associates with his work on Saul and David (CNW 1) and Maskarade (CNW 2), but which at the same time points beyond opera as a genre.

Building on this, the paper examines how Nielsen's concept of dramatic music manifests itself in specific compositional strategies across his output. Through analyses of selected works, I argue that the dramatic element in Nielsen's work should not primarily be understood as a characteristic of music drama, but as a general compositional principle.

The paper thus contributes to Nielsen research by re-examining the relationship between music drama and symphonic works in his oeuvre. At the same time, it proposes a new understanding of the dramatic as a central analytical concept in the study of Nielsen's musical poetics and compositional thinking.

Abstracts – Day 2

Christopher Tarrant:

Carl Nielsen's Four Temperaments: Texture and Musical Constructions of Personality

In this presentation I propose a way of reading Nielsen's Second Symphony through the lens of Carl Jung's conception of psychological type. To varying degrees, all musical parameters contribute to Nielsen's construction of the different temperaments, extending to tempo, modality, and the musical forms themselves. In this context, texture plays an important role not only in establishing the different personality types, but also in sculpting the ebb and flow of the music and even by generating intrusions that rupture the consistency of the various types.

In Jung's conception of personality, the overriding division that he observed in his patients was between extraverts and introverts. While these categories have filtered into popular culture in a simplistic way, if we return to Jung's original writings their efficacy for musical hermeneutics becomes apparent. Nielsen's training in counterpoint and his predilection for polyphonic orchestral textures helps him variously to express the outward-facing extraversion of the Allegro Collerico and Allegro Sanguineo, as well as the melodically driven Allegro Flemmatico and the inward intensity of the Andante Malincolico. When the categories of introversion and extraversion are combined with Jung's four 'functional' types, the resulting constellation of possible personalities generates a clear screen onto which musical interpretations can be projected. In this talk I am particularly interested in the Jungian conception of 'thinking' when it is combined with the extraverted attitude. This seems to be in evidence most strongly in the opening movement of the symphony, which is continuously outsourcing its 'thinking' to historical modes of expression, such as Beethovenian sonata form and Bachian counterpoint. The music constructs and stages its own ironic downfall towards the end of the movement, with texture and especially counterpoint being a key agent in the musical narrative.

Thomas Husted Kirkegaard:

Transformational Prolongation in Carl Nielsen's Slow String Quartet Movements

Analytical accounts of Carl Nielsen's music frequently describe a tension between two musical logics. Nielsen himself distinguished between vertical and horizontal principles of form (Fellow 1995, II:414), while analyses informed by energetic music theories have framed this tension as one between architectonic or static structures and organic or dynamic processes (Hamburger 1931; Grimley 2009). Although this opposition has been repeatedly invoked in the literature, it has proven difficult to capture analytically, not least because it challenges prevailing notions of prolongation and structural unity (Kirkegaard 2026). Moreover, this tension has typically been explored in analyses of Nielsen's middle and later music, above all in faster sonata-form movements in Symphonies 3–6. Earlier works, particularly slow, lyric movements, have rarely been examined from this perspective.

In this paper, I focus on the slow movements of Nielsen's string quartets, with particular attention to Opp. 5 and 14. I argue that even in this earlier and lyric music where contrasts are less overtly foregrounded, Nielsen employs a technique in which architectonic, structurally stable passages give way to more processual, less end-oriented passages. To capture the dynamic interplay of structure and process, I propose a model of transformational prolongation: a mode of harmonic prolongation in which one chord becomes another through neo-Riemannian voice-leading transformations, while the harmonic entity under transformation retains its function within the work's large-scale structure.

In conclusion, the paper contributes both to Nielsen studies and to a methodological reconciliation of post-Riemannian function theories, neo-Riemannian theory, and Schenkerian theory with broader implications for the analysis of late and post-tonal music.

Laura Nørholt:

Rewriting art history's hierarchies: The approach of the Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Centre

This paper presents some of the methodological and theoretical considerations that form the foundation for the work of the Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Centre, as well as its current research projects. The centre was established last year to create new, groundbreaking research on Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen, strengthen communication and outreach, and establish international networks. Its establishment offers a unique opportunity to rethink her practice from a broader intellectual-historical perspective, with vitalism as the overarching research framework. To this end, we aim to develop methodological approaches to sculpture and material research, including sculpture studies, the intellectual history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and AI and digital humanities. Carl-Nielsen has been described as a "vital naturalist", which invites us to broaden our understanding of vitalism as a current, to read her in light of it, and to consider vitalism in relation to our own time.

Rather than only working within the canon and writing art history centered around biography, and therefore creating an additive model of art-historical writing, that is, a parallel history to the established one, we ask: does it make sense to write an artist into the very same narrative that wrote her out of history? Instead, we seek to overcome the "ghettoization", as art historian Griselda Pollock termed it in Differencing the Canon (1999), by exposing the underlying structures, such as gender bias and the hierarchies of media, senses and reception.

The second part focuses on my own research into the reception of Greco-Roman antiquity in Carl-Nielsen's work, drawing on two case studies. The first examines her centaur figures, Kentaurdreng and Kentaurpige (1902), as life-giving figures in light of vitalism and her stay in Italy in 1899–1900. Here, antique centaur imagery, such as the Pompeian frescoes in Naples, meets a vitalist understanding of antiquity as living rather than historically fixed. The second concerns the reconstructive representations of archaic polychromy that she made in Athens 1903-05, acquired for the Royal Cast Collection and exhibited at SMK – National Gallery of Denmark in 2024. Drawing on Brooke Holmes' Liquid Antiquity and performativity theory, I propose to understand these works as performative: as objects that produce meaning in relation to specific times, places and modes of reception, and that shape, rather than merely depict, our understanding of antiquity.

Maria Claustad

Rewriting Music History One Note at a Time: Publishing the Works of Nanna Liebmann (1849-1935)

This presentation introduces the Danish composer Nanna Liebmann (b. Lehmann) (1849-1935), who represents a generation of female composers around Carl Nielsen's time who, until recently, were totally absent from the Danish history of music. The (re) publishing of Liebmann's works is a part of the ongoing DCM project, a sub-edition to the music publisher Edition·S, that publishes and republishes works in meticulous and reliable practical-scholarly music editions.

Born into a cultured bourgeois family, Liebmann received a thorough musical education as a child and was among the very first students to attend Niels W. Gade's music conservatory in Copenhagen. After losing her husband at a young age, Liebmann supported herself and her son by offering piano and singing lessons. Liebmann primarily composed works for song and piano and had three of her works published. Apart from composing and teaching, Liebmann played a key role in several cultural organisations and events around the year 1900 – for example, she served as chair of the music committee at Kvindernes Udstilling in 1895 and was involved in the founding of Dansk Musikpædagogisk Forening, alongside Carl Nielsen.

With Liebmann as example, this presentation further explores how (re)publishing works by historically overlooked female composers from the turn of the century, like Liebmann, not only helps equalize the gender imbalance in the repertoire statistics today but also shows how myths, genre hierarchies and misconceptions about quality and women who composed have shaped the music history.

Sanne Lorenzen:

Diatonically Convincing without Keys? Voice Leading and Compositional Strategies in Carl Nielsen's Songs

In 1913, Carl Nielsen formulated an aesthetic idea that offers a valuable insight into his compositional thinking: "Vi skulde paa engang se at komme bort fra Tonearterne og alligevel virke diatonisk overbevisende."1 ("We should at the same time move beyond conventional conceptions of key relationships and yet remain convincingly diatonic."). The notion of moving beyond conventional key relationships while remaining "convincingly diatonic" points to a central tension in Nielsen's music and serves as the starting point of this presentation.

The presentation examines Nielsen's four song cycles, op. 4, 6, 10, and 21, as well as the collection Salmer og aandelige Sange (1919). While the early songs largely employ an extended, chromatically inflected tonal language, Nielsen's later works increasingly favour diatonic and modal procedures. At the same time, they develop harmonic progressions and modulatory processes that often challenge straightforward tonal interpretation.

Drawing on selected analytical examples, the presentation investigates compositional strategies through which Nielsen challenges established tonal expectations. Particular attention is given to the role of diatonic lines, modal inflections, unconventional pedal points, and modulation techniques that arise less from functional harmonic relationships than from the consequences of voice leading. In this respect, the presentation considers how Nielsen's growing interest in contrapuntal thinking and linear organisation shaped his approach to harmony and tonal movement. The presentation discusses the hypothesis that Nielsen employed diatonic procedures not to restrict harmonic movement, but to enable new ways of relating and connecting tonal centres. By focusing on linear processes, he created a musical space in which traditional tonal hierarchies could be reimagined without abandoning a fundamentally diatonic language. Diatonicism thus appears not as a limitation, but as a source of new compositional possibilities.

Nanna Staugaard Villagomez:

Orla Rosenhoff – The Overlooked Generation Between Gade and Nielsen

When Carl Nielsen's career began to take shape, the critical reception of his music quickly came to focus on its originality. Nielsen – often, incidentally, almost single-handedly – came to represent a 'new' school of music in Copenhagen, whose practices signalled a radical break with those of the conservative Danish Academy of Music, as embodied in the older masters Gade and Hartmann. However, this perception has had the unfortunate consequence of Nielsen having inadvertently overshadowed many of his contemporaries, leaving far less attention to what occurred in between. Since music is not created in a vacuum, it is worth exploring other factors that likely inspired the development of Nielsen as well as other composers of his generation in order to tell a fuller story. One key figure whose importance in this regard deserves emphasis is Orla Rosenhoff.

Rosenhoff (1844–1905) was himself a composer and a student of Gade, with whom he worked side by side at the Academy of Music from its very foundation. Yet despite their close collaboration, their musical ideals were in many respects far apart. Whereas the Academy at the time was notorious for promoting narrow-minded aesthetic ideals, Rosenhoff was a progressive teacher, even controversially so, embracing experimental compositional practices and encouraging innovation, traces of which can also be found in his own compositions.

Many of Rosenhoff's students later singled out his lessons as among the most significant influences on their musical development, not least Carl Nielsen. This paper therefore seeks to reinterpret Rosenhoff as not merely a background figure in Nielsen's biography, but as a central link between the inherited ideals of the Danish musical establishment and the more exploratory idioms of the following generation. By emphasizing Rosenhoff's pedagogical role and compositional outlook, the paper argues that his influence offers a more nuanced understanding of the emergence of the modernist musical style in turn-of-the-century Copenhagen.

Abstracts – Day 3

David Fanning and Michelle Assay:

What is to be done? Some thoughts on the future of Carl Nielsen Research

Lenin's 1901 question points to the dangers of attempting to predict or prescribe, in any field of endeavour. In politics, the diagnosis may prove faulty and/or the administering of the prescription may be catastrophic. In cultural fields, self-righteousness and self-satisfaction lurk beneath the surface, as Richard Taruskin recognised when he echoed the question back in the 1980s, in connection with Russian music scholarship. (Nor were his predictions borne out by history.)

The saving grace for our gathering today is that our forum is pluralistic. Ideas can be put on the table, interrogated, nuanced, swept aside, contrasted with other ideas and replaced by better ones.

Self-congratulation apart, there is much to celebrate in the achievements of Nielsen research since the Danish Ministry of Culture responded to intense lobbying and established the Carl Nielsen Edition back in 1993. That venture, and its spin-off projects, have given us a wealth of information to digest. Recent scholarship, including the new Cultural Biography published in 2024 and 2025, has been drawing gratefully on these sources, and recordings having been helping to fill in some gaps, notably in the area of cantatas and theatre music. The latest volume of Carl Nielsen Studies gave a much-needed boost to the area of analytical/theoretical understanding, with seven articles more or less focused on matters of style, aesthetic and structure.

Our paper will reflect on one or two remaining gaps in foundational research sources and will continue with suggestions for future projects. Two of these latter will proceed from forensic examination of short extracts (from the 'Choleric Temperament', and 'the Market at Ispahan') to thoughts on how such examination might open up broader areas for investigation, recognising current and urgent concerns surrounding Globality and Belonging.