

Given the title of the book, which features the word ‘media’ in a prominent place, I was a little disappointed with the fact that only the last pages of the book are dedicated to the latest media technologies and their impact on the ontology of ‘the musical work’. While the emergence of printing technology is given firm attention in the middle sections, I do believe that many readers will feel that this relatively well-known story might have been shortened a bit to make space for a more thorough account of new digital media, something Ulrik Volgsten undoubtedly would be capable of.

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Michael Fjeldsøe  
*Kulturradikalismens musik*  
 Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013  
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Michael Fjeldsøe’s dissertation, which was successfully defended for the philosophical doctorate (habilitation) at the University of Copenhagen on 17 May 2013, is an excellent effort in musicological scholarship.<sup>1</sup> It collects and discusses music and musical matters that have hitherto been scattered; from now on we can refer to KULTURRADIKALISMENS MUSIK (excellently transposed to graphics on the front cover, cf. above) as a well-defined phenomenon. The music of cultural radicalism as a whole can be considered a descriptively well-illuminated and well-exemplified concept. Cultural radicalism, in music specifically as well as in other spheres of art and, more generally, in society, is not and cannot be defined in a strictly theoretical sense. However, as regards musical genres, style(s), specific works and performances – both in institutions of age and tradition (mainly the Royal Danish Theatre) and in newly established, experimental institutions (for example Forsøgsscenen) – and aesthetic, pedagogic and sociological thinking and debate, students, readers and scholars from the humanities have in Fjeldsøe’s book acquired an exhaustive, thorough and well-written standard volume on these issues.

The term ‘kulturradikalisme’ is not easily translatable into English. ‘Radicalism’ implies extremism, as in the following standard English definition, where radicalism is defined as ‘the opinions and behavior of people who favor extreme changes especially in government: radical political ideas and behavior.’<sup>2</sup> The Danish concept of culture radicalism is briefly characterized by Fjeldsøe as ‘a liberal left-wing cultural movement’ (p. 663, my translation). He suggests that the Danish movement is ‘similar to German Neue Sachlichkeit’ (loc. cit., my translation), and he stresses that conceptual considerations of Danish culture radicalism have been made ‘after the fact’: The cultural radicalism of the 1920s and 1930s was a practical effort rather than

1 Official opponents were Professor Magnar Breivik, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim and Associate Professor, dr.phil. Peter Woetmann Christoffersen, University of Copenhagen. Opponent ex auditorio and third member of the evaluation committee was Professor Emeritus, dr.phil. Hans Hertel, University of Copenhagen. The review is a revised version of a review in Danish in the online journal *seismograf*, see <http://seismograf.org/anmeldelse/fremragende-forskning-i-kulturradikalismens-musik>.

2 <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/radicalism>.

a matter of theoretical debate, let alone of mere speculation. It was not until the 1950s that the term 'kulturradikalisme' as a generalizing concept was applied as a label to trends seen in the inter-war period. The concept was now – in the 1950s – associated with phenomena which at that time had disappeared, a movement that had been ousted or forgotten by many, but which was now missed by others in the post-war cultural climate of the cold war.

As far as music is concerned, culture radical music is not just music composed of texts dealing with or performing themes, issues, lifestyles etc. of a culture radical nature. It is not simply accompaniment to otherwise defined activities, performances, texts etc. Neither is it per definition limited to jazz or music derived from jazz idioms, a point which will be discussed in more detail below.

The book is voluminous: approximately 650 pages of text including many illustrations – photos of important active figures in culture radical music (composers, authors, actors, organizers etc.), photos of scenes from theatre performances of central works (theatre genres were an important field of expression in culture radicalism) and a variety of examples in musical notation, mostly edited examples from scores, a couple of facsimiles and reproductions of graphically remarkable front covers of a few published works. The pedagogic, didactic aspect, central to music in a culture radical context, is illustrated with photos of two main figures in culture radical music teaching while at work: Bernhard Christensen, the main figure in jazz-based culture radicalism, and Jørgen Bentzon, the main figure in culture radicalism rooted in contemporary modernism in music.

Fjeldsøe is not aiming at developing or generalizing theory on a level above the subject matter of the dissertation. Instead, theoreticians such as Peter Bürger, Carl Dahlhaus and Andreas Huyssen support important and more general theoretical points. Similarly, Fjeldsøe is neither concerned with developing textual analysis of the music he examines. The book contains no expanded analyses of specific works and only few music examples. These examples are typically of a more illustrative nature such as the above-mentioned short, edited examples of central features of the music and reproductions of some music examples from their argumentative contexts in debate articles and other more theoretical sources from the given period.

The book can be characterized as a solid effort within the cultural history of music, a broad *reading* of the music of cultural radicalism based on primary sources and a selection of Danish and international literature. The beautiful graphic design contributes to the attractiveness of the volume. The intention is to address a wider circle of readers, not a small circle of Fjeldsøe's musicological colleagues. Thus, the text is not a speculative, internal referential discussion, but an extensive, fascinating, well-written narration on modern music, teaching, jazz and theatre in the years between the two world wars. It expands our knowledge of Danish music from the inter-war period beyond the great music of Carl Nielsen, some specks of modernism, a jazz craze that faded away etc.

Apart from musicology, I imagine that the book will be useful to a broader circle of scholars and students from a wide range of art and culture subjects – both by way of the many subject areas discussed (PH revues, *Danmarksfilm*, Forsøgsscenen, agitprop theatre, culture radical elements in e.g. the repertoire of the Royal Danish Theatre, music pedagogy based on jazz as well as other genres etc.) and by way of Fjeldsøe's approach to these subject areas. It establishes a foundation for seeing music that may sound so different and have such a wide variety of institutional or organizational contexts through a common concept.

Fjeldsøe makes it clear from the beginning that the main part of what can be called culture radical music is composed music, some of which is influenced by jazz and some by other genres (p. 13).

The concept is essentially formulated: What supports the different compositional and organisational ways of practising together is the double effort to combine the artistically modern and the socially relevant (p. 86); it is the problem of modernity and the problem of reaching the audience that have been combined to form a framework and foundation. It is interesting how this view makes it possible to see beyond the traditional division between two apparently very different wings of the young musical circle of the inter-war years. One side comprises composers such as Jørgen Bentzon and Finn Høffding, while the other consists of the composer Bernhard Christensen and his partner Sven Møller Kristensen, and they obviously disagreed on a number of aspects of the musical situation and what had to be done. In 1945 the music historian Povl Hamburger retrospectively labelled the two wings the ‘folk music movement’ and the ‘jazz movement’, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Fjeldsøe shows how the two approaches in fact represented two aspects of the same case, in spite of their obvious differences: Their music sounded differently and had different stylistic backgrounds, but they both articulated an awareness of the problems of modernity and of the relation to the public.

That the music of cultural radicalism includes jazz has been evident from the beginning. Fjeldsøe’s book discusses the field of jazz: The PH revues, *Danmarksfilmen*, jazz-based music teaching etc. are discussed and analysed based on in-depth studies of the sources. Of particular interest is the excellent chapter on *Danmarksfilmen* (chapter 15), an original and well-written account of existing knowledge about this central work within the sphere of culture radicalism. The chapter ‘From syncopé to swing’ (chapter 23) is also central with regard to basic – and controversial – terms within the discourse of ‘rhythmic music’, as the conceptual shift in terms from *syncopé* to *swing* involves an important and didactically very relevant shift of focus from what can be fixed in musical notation to what is heard and what is felt physically, a critical point in the jazz-oriented circles of cultural radicalism.

Throughout the book the subject matter is seen in the light of conflicts and controversies on the political left-wing in Danish politics. During Fjeldsøe’s defence it became clear that a central concept in the book, the concept of a *cultural* left wing, a concept which makes it possible to talk about cultural radicalism on its own terms and not as a movement determined by *political* views in the sense of partisan viewpoints championed by political parties (p. 33), is not recognized by all. To one of the opponents, Professor Hans Hertel, it was completely unacceptable that main figures of cultural radicalism who became members of the Danish Communist Party (DKP) could in any sense be referred to as culture radicals; because, Hertel asked, how can a communist party member in any way be said to be fighting for freedom of the individual, which is a central idea in culture radicalism? Fjeldsøe’s response to this – an important point in relation to the decades between the world wars – was that Danish cultural life was much more open and explorative in this particular period than was the case after World War Two, where the Cold War narrowed the horizon of cultural life.

Finally, I am happy to acknowledge the application in Fjeldsøe’s book of the work of this reviewer since the 1980s in this field, which is so thoroughly presented and understood by him – especially my research on Bernhard Christensen (portraits, obituaries, analyses of early works, surveys on jazz pedagogy etc.), but also more broadly oriented essays and articles on music and cultural radicalism. Many aspects of this work are discussed and documented in Fjeldsøe’s book, and I am proud to have been one of the providers of background material and points of view for this excellent book.

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3 Povl Hamburger, *Kulturkrisen – musikalsk set* (København, 1945).