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The Nielsen Project

North American Reception of Carl Nielsen's Symphonies

Regitze Ida Tetzlaff

The Nielsen reception in USA, including concerts and recordings, has been crucial to the composer's international reputation since the 1960s. As part of The Nielsen Project, which was a collaboration between the Danish record label Dacapo and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, all Nielsen's symphonies and concertos were recently performed and recorded in the new DXD format and released as a CD box set celebrating the composer's 150th anniversary in 2015.¹ This article, which is based on visiting New York, conducting interviews with the leaders of the project, and carrying out research in North American archives, presents an investigation of how the new project relates to the North American reception of earlier decades. The article investigates how views on Nielsen as a composer, and in particular his symphonies, have changed in reception of Nielsen in the USA. To examine the reception, it is necessary to go back to the first performance of the composer with the New York Philharmonic and create an overview of other American orchestras that have played Nielsen's symphonies. It is the first presentation of such a mapping on Nielsen performances in USA.²

Mapping

In order to examine how The Nielsen Project relates to broader Nielsen reception in the United States, it is crucial to have an understanding of how prominent Nielsen's symphonies have been in the concert hall. As The Nielsen Project has its main emphasis on Nielsen's symphonies, the research has been focused on the reception of these works. During the archival research, I came across material on his operas, songs, and concertos; these will be included when relevant to the research on the symphonies.

By studying the material at the New York Philharmonic archive and the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, it has been possible to establish an overall picture of the performances of Nielsen's symphonies in the United States from 1951 to 2014.

¹ In 2008, the Danish record label Dacapo and The New York Philharmonic agreed to collaborate and record three of Nielsen's six symphonies. Later it was agreed to record all of Nielsen's symphonies and concertos as part of The Nielsen Project; cf. <http://www.dacapo-records.dk/udgivelser/nielsen-symfonier-og-koncerter>.

² The present article is based on research presented in my MA thesis 'The Nielsen Project. Amerikanske forestillinger om Carl Nielsen og hans symfonier' (University of Copenhagen, 2014).

In addition, also information obtained from the Carl Nielsen Company archive, the archives of the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra is included. Appendix 1 contains a full list including all the concert performances evident in the archival material. In all, there are 126 performances with various US orchestras. A summary of the information from the list is presented below. Table 1 shows the number of performances of the six symphonies as well as period. The orchestras that do not appear in this table may be found in Appendix 1. It must be kept in mind that the material available for the study does not necessarily include all performances of Nielsen's symphonies.

Work	Number of performances	Period
Symphony No. 1	8	1967–2014
Symphony No. 2, 'The Four Temperaments'	19	1965–2014
Symphony No. 3, 'Espansiva'	19	1964–2013
Symphony No. 4, 'The Inextinguishable'	38	1952–2014
Symphony No. 5	36	1951–2014
Symphony No. 6, 'Sinfonia Semplice'	6	1965–2014

Table 1. Performances of Nielsen's symphonies in the USA.

Table 1, which sums up the US performances of Nielsen's symphonies, shows that the Fifth Symphony has been performed 36 times (according to my research), the most recent entry in 2014 being Alan Gilbert conducting the work as part of The Nielsen Project. The table also reveals that four of Nielsen's symphonies (Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5) appear regularly, and are represented in the concert repertoire in roughly equal measure with Nos. 4 and 5 as the most popular. However, there are two symphonies that have not received much attention: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 6. According to the archival material, the First Symphony has only been performed once by the New York Philharmonic – this took place quite recently, during The Nielsen Project's recordings in March 2014; the same applies to the Sixth Symphony which has only been performed during The Nielsen Project in October 2014.

In the 1960s, North American audiences could for the first time hear the New York Philharmonic perform Nielsen's music and all of their live performances of Nielsen may be found in the orchestra's online archive.³ The archive reveals that on 5 April, 1962, the chief conductor Leonard Bernstein introduced Nielsen's music with a performance

³ See <http://archives.nyphil.org/index.php>.

of the Fifth Symphony: The performance in Carnegie Hall in New York was Nielsen's first real breakthrough in the United States. Since then, the New York Philharmonic has performed the work on five occasions. As Nielsen's symphonies at the time had not been played much outside of Europe, it was Bernstein who placed Nielsen on the American music scene. Bernstein's enthusiasm for Nielsen led him to record some of his symphonies: the Second Symphony in February 1973, the Third Symphony in September/October 1965, the Fourth in January/February 1970, and the Fifth in April 1962; thus not all six works were recorded. Despite Bernstein's work and passion for Nielsen's symphonies, he did not make them an integral part of the New York Philharmonic's regular repertoire.

The New York Philharmonic concert programme from 1962, when Bernstein conducted Nielsen's Fifth Symphony, explains that 'The United States première was given by the National Symphony of Washington DC under the guidance of Danish Erik Tuxen on January 3rd 1951.'⁴ The work, then, had its première in the United States long before Bernstein took up the challenge in April 1962.

Nielsen's Sixth Symphony has suffered a poor reception during the twentieth century. In 1952, Robert Simpson published his first edition of *Carl Nielsen. Symphonist*, in which he reviewed and analysed all Nielsen's symphonies. He criticized the Sixth Symphony, especially the final three movements, for being only 'a kind of appendix in which Nielsen descends from objectivity to subjectivity: none of it has either the stature or the power of organisation of the first movement.'⁵ Simpson also claimed that Nielsen 'fell into a low state, physically and mentally' while writing on his composition;⁶ these are very critical statements. Since Robert Simpson was an important promoter of Nielsen reception in the UK, his views might have affected the fate of the symphony. For English readers, few texts on Nielsen were available until the 1980s. Simpson published a second edition of his book in 1979 in which he retracted his judgement of the work. In the introduction, Simpson writes: 'The chief alteration is a radically new analysis of the Sixth Symphony, which I had seriously misjudged in 1952. The impression I had formed then (from score reading only) was disappointing and has been justly criticised in the intervening years';⁷ and later in his chapter about the symphony he writes that

My first impressions of No. 6, based only on score-reading (at that time I had not heard it played), were regretfully (and regrettably) set out in the first edition of this book. The disappointment conveyed there persisted even after many hearings of

4 Edward Downes, 'Notes on the programs', 3, in the programme for the concerts on 5, 6 and 8 April 1962, available at <http://archives.nyphil.org/index.php>.

5 Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen. Symphonist* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1952), 115.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen. Symphonist*, 2nd rev. edn. (New York: Taplinger, 1979), 12–13.

the symphony, but gradually this feeling evaporated as the music became increasingly convincing and impressive and ceased to appear to embody a descent from objectivity to unworthy subjectivity.⁸

An interesting piece of information appeared while I was working with archival material at the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. I discovered that Nielsen's *Prelude, Theme and Variations* for violin was performed at the Town Hall in New York in February 1924.⁹ The performance is the earliest I have been able to find, and, although I am primarily focused on Nielsen's symphonies, it is relevant to know of other such performances as these may also have influenced Nielsen's reception. It was Nielsen's son-in-law, Emil Telmányi, who performed the work at the Town Hall, though the archives of the New York Public Library of Performing Arts do not confirm this.¹⁰ Material at the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts also shows that Nielsen's other works, for example the Clarinet Concerto, the Violin Concerto, and the *Helios* and *Masquerade* overtures, were played frequently during the 1960s. This may be because Nielsen's music first began to engage the American audience in relation to Bernstein as well as the New York Philharmonic's performances and recordings. An awareness of and curiosity towards Nielsen's music was the result.

We know that Nielsen's symphonies have been on the concert repertoire in the United States since 1951 – well over ten years before Bernstein conducted them with the New York Philharmonic. It is no surprise, however, that the New York Philharmonic is well represented in this study, both because of Bernstein's work with Nielsen's music, and because New York is and always has been a multicultural centre where foreign artists have had a greater chance of a breakthrough. It is surprising that Nielsen's symphonies have been played as much as the above table indicates. In particular, it is notable that so many different orchestras have worked with Danish compositions. Although each piece has not been played often, there is a good geographical spread (Nielsen's symphonies have been performed in San Francisco, New York, Washington, Iowa, Minnesota, Cleveland, Detroit, North Carolina, Buffalo, Houston, Boston, Philadelphia, Utah, Chicago, Oregon, and Atlanta) and with a good representation across his symphonic output. Nielsen's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies are doubtlessly the most popular, though all his symphonies are represented and have been played in North America since 1951. A single university orchestra is also represented in the material that was available. The University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra played Nielsen's Second Symphony in 2008 – an event which is important to acknowledge, first of all in order to give the most complete

⁸ Ibid. 113.

⁹ From records at The New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. According to the *Catalogue of Carl Nielsen's Works*, it was performed in New York on 28 February 1924, see <http://www.kb.dk/dcm/cnw/navigation.xq>.

¹⁰ *Carl Nielsen Works*, vol. II/10, *Chamber Music 1*, p. xviii.

overview of the performances as possible; secondly, because it demonstrates a diversity in interest when a university orchestra performs Nielsen's music. Thus, knowledge of Nielsen has reached a layer deeper when it comes to the American classical music scene. Now it is not only an exclusive inner circle that is exposed to Nielsen and his symphonies, but a wider (and especially younger) audience. Obviously, this does not per se establish Nielsen's status in the USA, but it may be regarded as an important step for Nielsen and Danish music. It is likely that other university orchestras may have done the same as in Iowa. Based on the material to which I had access, the Iowa performance was the only of its kind.

Analysis

The mapping helped us understand how much and where Nielsen's symphonies have been performed in the USA; however, it does not help us to an understanding of how Nielsen's symphonies are being perceived. In order to understand how Nielsen's symphonies are received and examine how *The Nielsen Project* is placed in the American reception it is crucial to study the discourses used in the material shelved in the archives of The New York Philharmonic, of other American orchestras and in the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts. The archival material of the mentioned institutions, which previously has never been gathered and compared, provides the primary foundation for the analysis presented below. In addition, the primary material incorporates reviews from the 1960s and 1970s when Bernstein conducted the New York Philharmonic performing Nielsen's works, as well as articles about Nielsen in programme notes from every decade including *The Nielsen Project* in the 2010s. Based on the collected material, the analysis provides insight into the North American conceptions and characterizations of Nielsen and his symphonies, and how new ways of articulating these ideas have been introduced over time. While working on the analysis, a great variety of terms occurred as part of the discourse. In order to navigate, the analysis is divided into smaller parts based on the main focus or words used to form the terms of reference. The division reveals certain trends in American notions of Nielsen and his symphonies.

The terms are placed in a Venn diagram (see Figure 1) which helps to demonstrate how Nielsen and his symphonies were received in USA, and on which narratives the reception was built. Such discourses are present in promotional material, pre-concert talks, programme notes, reviews, and popular and scholarly literature, all of which form a complex body of interdependent texts. I introduce five main categories which are outlined below.

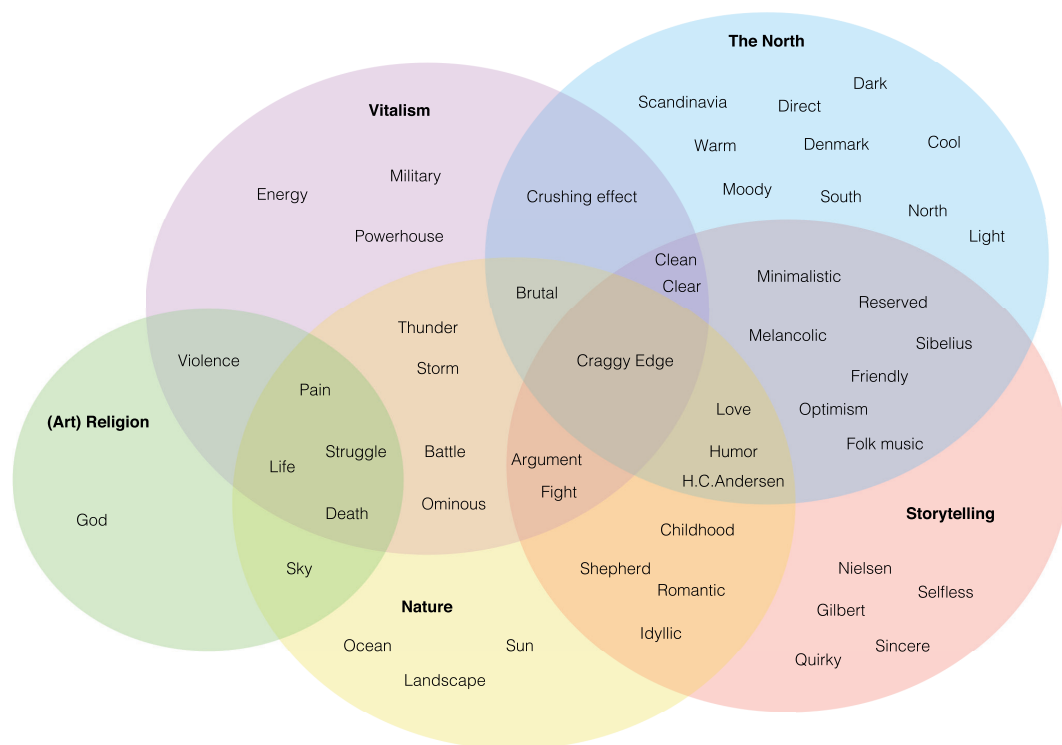


Figure 1. Discourses in the reception of Carl Nielsen in USA.

The North

The reviewers and music critics in the USA hold a general perception of Nielsen inasmuch as they all state that he is a remarkable and underrated composer. Though he took a traditional approach to the symphonic form, the works possess unique qualities that lend him a distinctive compositional voice. These qualities vary from reviewer to reviewer, but often Nielsen is seen to embody exotic characteristics (i.e., something especially Danish or Nordic). There is no logical pattern in the way the authors differentiate between descriptors such as ‘Danish’, ‘Scandinavian’, or ‘Nordic’ in their conceptions of Nielsen. The three terms are used interchangeably and often mixed together without a proper distinction between their particular characteristics. Words with connections to this category include *dark*, *moody*, *minimalistic*, *friendly*, *light*, *cool*, *brutal*, *colourful*, *sincere*, and *selfless*.

When discussing Nielsen’s ‘Nordicness’, it is important to mention the Nordic Cool festival in Washington in 2013, which took place prior to the grand finale of The Nielsen Project in 2014. Nordic Cool was a month-long festival focusing on theatre, music, literature, design, film, and gastronomy from Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, and Denmark (including the Faroe Islands and Greenland). Everything Nordic was and is still popular in the US, and the festival might have affected the perception of the Nordic countries

and culture. By branding it as something ‘cool’, an American audience is likely to sympathize with this way of thinking. Denmark was, furthermore, proclaimed the happiest country in the world in 2012 and 2013 by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The nomination might appeal to the American public in combination with festival. It may be argued that the Nordic Cool wave helped Nielsen’s image and reputation. Many Americans may not have noticed or known much about Nielsen. However, providing a context, in which he may be perceived as something cool or from a country that had been flourishing, seems to have worked. The Nordic Cool wave could also be one of the reasons why the distinctions between terms such as Danish, Nordic, or Scandinavian are blurred. All Nordic countries appeared in a mix-and-match set-up and this may have made it difficult for Americans to separate one from another.

Nature

References to nature are present in virtually all the reviews in one form or another, and the term is still used in the press material from *The Nielsen Project*. However, it is used differently from review to review. Nature describes the *quiet, idyllic* image of Nielsen but is also employed for the *cool* and *reserved* part of both Nielsen and the symphonies. It is not without reason that nature is very important in Nielsen reception since he said that he found great inspiration for his compositions by listening to nature.¹¹ References to nature are not a new way of describing Nielsen. In review from 1962 Irving Kolodin (*The New York Times*) writes about Nielsen’s Fifth Symphony arguing that ‘its thematic seeds are nurtured into orchestral growth of radiance and power. It proceeds from movement to movement with a sure sense of direction.’¹² Kolodin uses a reference to nature when describing how Nielsen’s thematic material is like a seed being planted – growing big and strong. The idea of nature’s role and its connection to Nielsen’s symphonies is a common and recurring theme in the US Nielsen reception. In Kolodin’s rhetoric, everything beautiful and natural becomes directly equated to Nielsen’s Fifth Symphony which, according to Kolodin, is otherwise not very accessible to an untrained listener but ‘highly performable’.¹³ His descriptions indicate a strangeness in Nielsen’s musical language that can be difficult to understand for listeners unfamiliar with it. However, it does not preclude enjoying the music: similar to the planted seeds, the symphony grows and gets bigger.

Musicologist and music critic Edward Downes described in 1962 Nielsen’s poor childhood in the countryside on the island of Funen where he was forced to work as a shepherd.¹⁴ Downes’s description appears in one of the few articles in which the story of

11 Lewis Rowell, ‘Carl Nielsen’s Hometown Philosophy of Music’, in Mina Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 41.

12 Irving Kolodin, ‘Music To My Ears. Bernstein Conducts Nielsen, Gould Plays Brahms’, *New York Times*, 7 April 1962.

13 Kolodin, ‘Music to My Ears.’

14 Downes, ‘Notes on the programs’, 2.

Nielsen's upbringing is allowed to take up column space, and this could be explained by the fact that it constitutes one of the earliest performances of Nielsen's symphonies in the United States. The 1962 concert was the New York Philharmonic's first encounter with Nielsen's music, and it is therefore not surprising that Downes highlighted the story of Nielsen's upbringing and childhood in the concert programme. It should also be mentioned that in 1962 not much English literature existed on Nielsen, with the exception of a translation of Nielsen's autobiographical *My Childhood on Funen* which may also explain why the childhood story on Funen occupies so much space. Downes's article focuses on Nielsen's Danish roots and they are reflected through his rural childhood and descriptions of nature. The references to nature continue to be present throughout the US reception of Nielsen.

Vitalism

The Nielsen Project contributes to a new way of describing and perceiving Nielsen, namely in terms of vitalism, which is interesting because it forms very strong images. Music critic David Hurwitz states that 'The New York Philharmonic is a powerhouse orchestra, Nielsen is a powerhouse symphonist, and Alan Gilbert revels in the music's energy and dynamism';¹⁵ and musician and blogger Phil Catelinet describes Nielsen's Fourth Symphony as 'crisp and stormy, with the winds and brass completely on point with short, loud blasts'.¹⁶ The terms *stormy*, *crisp* and *powerhouse* contribute strongly to the identity of Nielsen and Scandinavia. Kolodin's description of nature as seeds that grow into larger organisms also acts as a vitalistic description of growth conveying an idea of strength and a will to live which are basic ideas of vitalism. Kolodin is therefore represented in both categories. It may also be argued that the vitalistic descriptions of Nielsen are complementary to the naturalistic images discussed above. The vitalistic terms focus on the powerful passages in Nielsen's compositions where brass and drums add to a dramatic feeling, and those natural references are articulated in the form of nature's harsh forces such as *thunderstorm*, *energy* and *strength*. Michael Fjeldsøe's article of 2009, discussing the vitalistic trends in fine arts of the late nineteenth century, is an important contribution to this field of study. Also in his article 'Vitalism in the music of Carl Nielsen' (2010), Fjeldsøe introduces and argues for the idea of a vitalistic reading of Nielsen's music.¹⁷ Indeed, Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, with the motto 'Music is life', contains important vitalistic elements as does his Third and Fifth Symphonies; it is argued that the two latter bear the trappings of vitalism, not only by Fjeldsøe but also by reviewers of The Nielsen Project.

15 David Hurwitz, 'The Nielsen You Need', *Listen*, Winter issue, 2012.

16 Phil Catelinet, blogpost 'Beethoven, Sibelius, and Nielsen: "New" music at the New York Philharmonic', *Phil's Occasional Musings*, 29 January 2011.

17 Michael Fjeldsøe, 'Carl Nielsen and the Current of Vitalism in Art', *Carl Nielsen Studies*, 4 (2009), 26–42; and Fjeldsøe, 'Vitalisme i Carl Niensens musik', *Danish Musicology Online*, 1 (2010), 33–55.

Storytelling

The analysis reveals furthermore the importance of the conductor in the reviews. The description of Bernstein's and Gilbert's commitment to and enthusiasm for Nielsen characterizes the reviews; however, in some cases it completely takes the focus away from Nielsen. The reviews reveal a desire for many more Americans to become familiar with his lively and exciting symphonies. In addition, the stories of the conductors – how they are connected to Scandinavia, Denmark, or Nielsen's music – are very prominent in the reviews. Gilbert's connection to Stockholm (Gilbert lived in Stockholm 2000–08 while working as conductor for the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra) suggests that he had a personal relationship to Nielsen's works as there are hardly any distinctions between what is Danish and what is Scandinavian. This connection may seem rather tenuous, but it is, nonetheless, highly valued in the US reception. It is interesting to consider why the Nielsen symphonies are only now beginning to emerge in the USA in earnest. First, the large collaborative project between Dacapo Records and the New York Philharmonic and its accompanying press material has made a significant impact on the classical music scene. It is clear that such massive investment in and support for Nielsen would gain great interest among the American media and thereby reach a wider audience than would be the case with a single concert performance. Furthermore, a meeting with the General Consulate of Denmark in New York confirmed that Nordic culture in general is extremely popular in America (especially as it relates to the 'Nordic Cool'). This hype may have affected the terms of The Nielsen Project, and it should not be underestimated how important it may have been for Nielsen's popularity. Although several previous conductors (Leonard Bernstein, Herbert Blomstedt, Sixten Ehrling) have made great efforts to promote Nielsen's symphonies and solo concertos, the recent Nielsen Project is unprecedented, and much of the composer's popularity may be due to something as simple as timing. There are of course many other factors at play, but after having delved into the project it is clear how much influence the American press have and how a conversance with Nordic culture is so important for an American audience.

I found that The Nielsen Project built on ideas and stories about Nielsen, which have existed in the US since the 1950s. The reviews do not differ significantly from previous ones, but there are some patterns in the qualities that are highlighted and in the images created. Andrew Mellor provides a reference to Hans Christian Andersen¹⁸ – a reference that has not surfaced in other reviews of The Nielsen Project but, on the contrary, was present in concert programmes from the 1960s and 70s, for example by Edward Downes.¹⁹ At that time, Andersen may have embodied what American audiences perceived as quintessentially Danish, and Downes may have wanted to emphasize Nielsen's Danishness with such a reference. The fact that Mellor employs the same reference is

18 Andrew Mellor, 'Finally everyone's talking about Carl Nielsen', *Gramophone*, Sep. 2012.

19 Edward Downes, 'Concerto for Flute and Orchestra', *Notes on the Program* (New York Philharmonic Orchestra, 1976), 5 Febr. 1976.

interesting as it suggests that the American perception of what ‘Danishness’ comprises might not have changed significantly over the last thirty years. Initiatives such as Nordic Cool and Andersen’s two-hundredth anniversary in 2005 meant that many Americans increased their notion of Denmark and the Nordic countries, though they have an image of Denmark that will take a very long time to change.

(Art) Religion

David Wright, a former reviewer and writer for the New York Philharmonic, articulates many interesting impressions of Nielsen and is the only author who relates Nielsen with the divine. In the New York Philharmonic notes on the programme from 14 December 2002, Wright describes the composition of the Fourth Symphony as traditional in its form and as an image of conflict of life versus death. This struggle between life and death translates into the symphony’s first movement, where ‘themes of great violence are followed by euphonious passages in thirds ... some do indeed sound here like “a gift from God.”’²⁰ The question of life and death has existed as long as humanity. The wonder of and the fear of what happens to us when we have passed away has always been an important part of the human condition, and out of this wonder and anxiety, religion attempts to explain our existence. Later, science has given us an explanation and shown how our world and the universe are linked. This does not mean, however, that religion has been ousted; on the contrary, in some places it has increased in influence, and there are groups who reject science’s explanations. Religion is today extremely important even when talking about art and music. Wright articulates some strong ideas about Nielsen’s Fourth Symphony, which contains both ‘great violence’ and the sound of a ‘godsend’. Such a description, deifies Nielsen with a ‘God-given theme’ from the voice of God. The conflict between the divine and the ‘great violence’ works well as a view of life and death, where Wright connects the divinity of life and violence with death. Death is not ‘merely’ unpleasant, but full of physical pain too. The agency behind this violence against human beings is not articulated, though it is explained that God (here the Christian, monotheistic conception of God must be assumed) is the creator behind the beautiful and colourful music. Wright’s expressions point in the direction of art religion, the perception being that the artist, through his work, comes closer to God. Wright’s description of the divine can also be seen as a way to connect to the Romantic pantheistic conception of God: that God is in everything and therefore also in the music. Nielsen is a descendant of Romanticism and some ideas of that period are not foreign to him despite his conscious rejection of Late Romanticism. Romanticism’s strong focus on nature is something Nielsen embraced in his symphonies as he said himself: nature plays a big role.²¹

20 David Wright, ‘The making of a Danish symphonist’, *Notes on the Program*, 14 December 2002 (New York Philharmonic Orchestra, 2002), 37.

21 Rowell, ‘Carl Nielsen’s Homespun Philosophy’, 41.

At the same time, Wright's ideas can also be combined with the vitalistic reading where conflict between life and death is reflected in the Fourth Symphony's fierce battle between the two sets of timpani. With its motto, 'Music is Life', the work depicts the elementary will to live, suggesting a vitalist aesthetic where the basic principle is that organic life cannot merely be explained through the laws physics and chemistry. It must also involve a non-material, spiritual force of life, and divinity can be a way to understand it. When life is perceived as an autonomous force that exists in nature, and of which man strives to maintain his ownership, Wright's reference to art religion and pantheism adds an interesting view on Nielsen's Fourth Symphony.

The present article has focused on the discourse surrounding some of the main categories of the Nielsen reception. I have proposed five main categories: The North, Nature, Vitalism, Storytelling, and (Art)Religion. It should be emphasized that within each category there are large variances in the usage of associated words. The North, for example, entails on the one side something *moody* and *dark* and on the other words such as *warm* and *friendly*. The meaning of the chain of words associated with each category therefore only forms an opinion when articulated in a specific way in order to avoid contradiction.

Reflections

It is useful to consider the impact of major British contributions on Nielsen on the North American reception. American Mina Miller's work with *The Nielsen Companion* (1994) is a significant contribution to the perception of Nielsen. Most authors in this volume are British or Danish, and it is interesting to see whether these authors' work had an impact on how Nielsen is perceived in USA. Other British studies are also relevant to mention: Robert Simpson's 'Carl Nielsen Now: A Personal View' in *The Nielsen Companion* and the revised edition of his *Carl Nielsen Symphonist* (1979); David Fanning's *Nielsen: Symphony No 5* (1997) and his contribution 'Progressive Thematicism in Nielsen's Symphonies' in the companion; and Daniel Grimley's *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (2014).²² Since much of the material found on Nielsen in English comes from the UK, British views would have a potential impact in USA. In her 'Prelude', Miller highlights the American professor Lewis Rowell's chapter 'Carl Nielsen's Homespun Philosophy of Music' in which the composer's musical style is characterized as personal, poetic, incisive, naive, unpretentious, easy-going, and exaggerated.²³ Many of these characteristics still appear in the discussion of The Nielsen Project and help to create an image of

22 Simpson, *Carl Nielsen. Symphonist*, 2nd edn.; Robert Simpson, 'Carl Nielsen Now: A Personal View', in Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*, 78–95; David Fanning, 'Progressive Thematicism in Nielsen's Symphonies', in Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*, 167–203; David Fanning, *Carl Nielsen. Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Daniel M. Grimley, *Carl Nielsen and the Idea of Modernism* (Woolbridge: Boydell Press, 2014).

23 Mina Miller, 'Prelude', in Miller (ed.), *The Nielsen Companion*, 3; cf. Rowell, 'Carl Nielsen's Homespun Philosophy', 31–32.

Nielsen as both credible and approachable. Rowell also stresses Nielsen's *My Childhood on Funen* and presents Funen as 'the gentlest of all Scandinavian nature',²⁴ which may be a direct spin-off of the Nielsen reception in the UK, presenting an idyllic vision of the landscape as promoted in Grimley's studies. For a long time, the translation of Nielsen's autobiography, *My Childhood on Funen*, was one of the few available books in English in addition to Simpson's *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist*. Thus there is a natural reason for the way in which much early non-Danish interest in Nielsen accentuates his childhood and the idyllic landscape of Funen.

Though university dissertations on Nielsen are being produced both in the UK and USA, one might argue that studies, such as Simpson's, Fanning's, Grimley's, as well as Miller's edited *Nielsen Companion* might indeed encourage a significant development in the foreign Nielsen reception. That having been said, The Nielsen Project holds a special place in the American Nielsen reception. First of all, the recordings with The New York Philharmonic are the first of their kind completing what Bernstein started in the 1960s; secondly, the project fulfilled what it set out to do: to celebrate Nielsen's 150th anniversary in a high-profiled way.

24 Rowell, 'Carl Nielsen's Homespun Philosophy', 33.

Appendix 1. Performances of Nielsen's symphonies in USA.

Work	Orchestra	Year
Symphony No. 1	Houston Symphony	1967
	Cleveland Orchestra	1977
	Knox-Galesburg Symphony	2006
	Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra	2007
	Lake Murray Symphony Orchestra	2008
	Pasadena Community Orchestra	2011
	Utah Symphony Orchestra	2013
	New York Philharmonic	2014
Symphony No. 2	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1965
	New York Philharmonic	1973
	Spokane Symphony Orchestra	2007
	Sacramento Youth Symphony Premier Orchestra	2007
	New York Repetory Orchestra	2007
	American Symphony Orchestra	2007
	Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra	2008
	The Philadelphia Orchestra	2008
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	2008
	University of Iowa Symphony Orchestra	2008
	Utah Symphony Orchestra	2009
	Beachcities Symphony Orchestra	2009
	Loveland Orchestra	2011
	New York Philharmonic	2011
	Dallas Symphony Orchestra	2011
	Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Utah Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra	2014
Elgin Symphony Orchestra	2014	
Symphony No. 3	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1964
	New York Philharmonic	1965
	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1967
	Cleveland Orchestra	1966
	Cleveland Orchestra	1970
	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1971
	Cleveland Orchestra	1984
	The Curtis Symphony Orchestra	2008
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	2008

Work	Orchestra	Year
(Symphony No. 3)	Mississippi Symphony Orchestra	2009
	MIT Symphony Orchestra	2009
	Minnesota Orchestra	2011
	El Paso Symphony Orchestra	2011
	New York Philharmonic	2012
	Austin Symphony Orchestra	2012
	Cleveland Orchestra	2013
	La Jolla Symphony	2013
	Paducah Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Utah Symphony Orchestra	2013
Symphony No. 4	Danish National Orchestra*	1952
	New York Philharmonic	1965
	Chicago Symphony	1966
	Detroit Symphony	1966
	New York Philharmonic	1970
	Cleveland Orchestra	1972
	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1972
	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1973
	Cleveland Orchestra	1974
	Cleveland Orchestra	1975
	New York Philharmonic	1986
	Cleveland Orchestra	1988
	Cleveland Orchestra	1990
	New York Philharmonic	1994
	New York Philharmonic	2002
	Cleveland Orchestra	2003
	Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra	2006
	Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra	2007
	Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra	2007
	Colorado Symphony Orchestra	2008
	Grant Park Orchestra	2008
	Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra	2008
	Peoria Symphony Orchestra	2008
	Elgin Symphony Orchestra	2009
	New York Repertory Orchestra	2010
	Oregon Symphony	2011
Nashville Symphony	2011	

* Performed at Carnegie Hall, NYC.

Work	Orchestra	Year
(Symphony No. 4)	Cleveland Orchestra	2011
	National Symphony of Washington	2011
	Houston Symphony	2012
	Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Utah Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Virginia Symphony Orchestra	2014
	Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra	2014
	Boise Philharmonic	2014
	New York Philharmonic	2014
Symphony No. 5	National Symphony of Washington	1951
	Cleveland Orchestra	1951
	Philadelphia Orchestra	1951
	Boston Symphony Orchestra	1953
	Houston Symphony	1962
	New York Philharmonic	1962
	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1964
	Pittsburg Symphony	1965
	National Symphony of Washington	1965
	Cleveland Orchestra	1967
	Boston Symphony Orchestra	1968
	Houston Symphony	1969
	Buffalo Philharmonic	1969
	New York Philharmonic	1969
	Cleveland Orchestra	1969
	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1971
	New York Philharmonic	1983
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	1987
	Cleveland Orchestra	1988
	New York Philharmonic	1992
	Cleveland Orchestra	1999
	New York Philharmonic	2003
	Cleveland Orchestra	2006
	North Carolina Symphony	2007
	Academy Festival Orchestra (Santa Barbara)	2007
	Minnesota Orchestra	2009
	New World Symphony Orchestra	2009
Oregon Sinfonietta	2010	

Work	Orchestra	Year
(Symphony No. 5)	Utah Philharmonia	2011
	National Symphony of Washington	2011
	Atlanta Symphony Orchestra	2012
	San Diego Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Chicago Symphony	2013
	San Francisco Symphony Orchestra	2013
	Utah Symphony Orchestra	2014
	New York Philharmonic	2014
Symphony No. 6	Philadelphia Orchestra	1965
	Detroit Symphony Orchestra	1967
	Cleveland Orchestra	1977
	Oregon Symphony Orchestra	2011
	Utah Symphony Orchestra	2014
	New York Philharmonic	2014

Abstract

North American Nielsen reception including concerts and recordings has been crucial to the international reputation of Nielsen since the 1960s. Recently *The Nielsen Project*, a collaboration between the Danish record label Dacapo and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, has performed and recorded all of Nielsen's symphonies and the concertos in the new DXD format, released as a CD box set in 2015. As part of my research for my MA thesis I have visited New York and conducted interviews with the protagonists of this project and done research in American archives. The purpose was to conduct an investigation of how this new project related to American Nielsen reception of earlier decades in order to establish a notion of how views on Carl Nielsen as a composer and of his symphonies have been changing in American reception history.

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