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Peter Heise. String Quartets Nos. 1–6

ed. Michael Fjeldsøe

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The first volume in the series Nordic String Quartets, started at the instigation of the Nordic Musical Heritage Network, contains the six string quartets composed by Peter Heise (1830–1879) as a critical edition by Michael Fjeldsøe. Best known from his late opera *Drot og marsk* and songs, Heise's input as a composer of string quartets or other chamber music has not been widely acknowledged. Because none of the string quartets has been printed earlier, the new edition can be regarded as a significant step in completing the picture of Heise's oeuvre.

In addition to the fact that we now have Heise's string quartets in a handsome volume, a particularly valuable characteristic of the publication is the educational aspect connected to the edition project: the publication was prepared as a collaboration between The Danish Centre of Music Editing, The Royal Danish Library, and the Section of Musicology in the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies of the University of Copenhagen. More than ten students attending a music-philology course have contributed to the edition. The educational side of the editorial work on Heise's quartets must be highly applauded. Hopefully, a report on the progress of the work will be published so that we may learn about the experiences of this kind of enterprise.

The edition as a whole does not leave much to be desired. The text parts are compact and contain sufficiently information about the quartets and their sources. The layout of the score is clear and graphics uncluttered; only the placement and alignment of hairpins (crescendo and diminuendo wedges) looks sometimes a little questionable, particularly in the first quartet. The Introduction (in Danish and English) offers a short biography of Heise, in addition to information on the provenance of the sources, reception of the works and some glimpses of the notational practice in the quartets as well as an explanation of the edition's 'revision strategy'. In the discussion about the 'repeated crescendo wedges' (pp. xiv–xv) the reader would have profited from references to movement(s) and bar(s) in the quartets so as to facilitate finding the examples of the notational practice in

question. Furthermore, the somewhat oversimplified formulation of a highly significant editorial principle, '[m]odernizations of a secondary kind, of slurs, of beams, and of orthography that does not involve meaning-related differences have all been made tacitly' (p. xv), leaves the reader slightly concerned: what exactly has been done, where, and why?

Clearly, the dynamics have been one of the central editorial problems in Heise's sources. There are some striking differences or contrasts in dynamics and articulation in the first quartet. Together with questions of placement and alignment of hairpins mentioned above, the numerous hairpins in the first and the second movements placed in a single part only make one's eyebrows raise (mov. 1: e.g., *vc.* in bb. 6, 18, 22, 72; *va.* in b. 95; *vl.2* in b. 98; mov. 2: e.g., *va.* in b. 16; *vl.2* in bb. 41, 43, 77). Likewise, some single dynamics and articulations appear very odd such as in the second movement, *fz* in *va.* in b. 14; *mf/p* and *marcato sign >/sf* in bb. 75 and 78, respectively.

These features presumably result from the source situation: of the six quartets, No. 1 is the only one, where the (autograph) parts have been chosen as the main source for the edition – the edition of the other quartets is based on the autograph score. The fact that the works were not published during Heise's lifetime (although the two last quartets probably were intended to be) is likely another reason for these kinds of problematic details. Hence, the editorial policy has been very diplomatic, perhaps for a good reason.

The source situation of the quartets does not as such leave much choice: only the autograph score of each of the works (plus a sketch for No. 3) and parts – for No. 1 autograph, for Nos. 2–6 'transcripts' (by a scribe) – survive. As already mentioned, for No. 1 the autograph parts have served as the main source; the edition of the rest of the quartets is based on the autograph score. Although the sources appear straightforward, the section on the source evaluation could have been more rigorous and informative, the most striking example being No. 6, where only one of the metronome markings added in the main source (in red pencil) has been included in the edited score. The reason for this solution can be read between the lines; however, the reader would have profited from a more thorough explanation in the commentary – and from the metronome markings included as footnotes in the score.

The score and the parts of the Heise quartets can be downloaded freely (pdf) on DCM's website. The next volume in the series of Nordic String Quartets will contain the Norwegian Iver Holter's string quartets Nos. 1 and 2.

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