
DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

Linda Morrison, M.C.M.

Denton, Texas

August, 1984

The lecture recital was given on March 25, 1984. Commotio by Carl Nielsen was performed following a lecture on that particular organ composition. The lecture included a discussion of Carl Nielsen, characteristics of his six symphonies, a detailed analysis of Commotio, and the symphonic characteristics found in Commotio. Some examples from the symphonies as well as other works were performed during the lecture to illustrate the similarities between Commotio and his orchestral works.

In addition to the lecture recital, three other public recitals were performed, all of which consisted of solo compositions for the organ.

The first solo recital, including works of Couperin, Bach, Hindemith, and Durufle, was performed on October 30, 1980.
On May 6, 1981, the second solo recital was performed. Compositions by Raison, Buxtehude, Bach, Reger, and Martin were included in the program.

The third solo recital which included works by Weckmann, Tunder, Lübeck, C. P. E. Bach, and Vierne, was performed on April 25, 1983.

The four programs were recorded on magnetic tape and are filed with the written version of the lecture material as a part of the dissertation.
Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas State University Library.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Solo Recital</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Solo Recital</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Solo Recital</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Recital</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commotio: Nielsen's Symphony for Organ</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliography</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Sketch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nielsen's Symphonic Style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphonic Characteristics found in Commotio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliography</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iv
North Texas State University
School of Music

DMA Recital
LINDA MORRISON EPLEY, Organ

Monday, October 27, 1980  5:00 p.m.  Main Auditorium

I

Messe pour les Paroisses. . . . . . . . . François Couperin
   Dialogue
   Tierce en Taille
   Dialogue sur les Grands jeux

Prelude and Fugue in B Minor (S. 544). . . . J. S. Bach
   (1685-1750)

II

Sonate II. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Paul Hindemith
   Lebhaft
   Ruhig bewegt
   Fuge

(1895-1963)

III

Suite - Opus 5. . . . . . . . . . . . . . Maurice Duruflé
   Prélude
   Sicilienne
   Toccata

(b. 1902)
North Texas State University
School of Music

DMA Recital

LINDA MORRISON EPLEY, Organ

Wednesday, April 29, 1981  8:15 p.m.  Main Auditorium

I

Passacaglia in D Minor. . . . . . . . Dietrich Buxtehude
(1637-1707)

Trio en Passacaille. . . . . . . . . . André Raison
(Christe, from Messe du Deuxième Ton)
(c. 1650-1719)

Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor (S. 582). . . . J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

II

Passacaille pour Orgue. . . . . . . . . Frank Martin
(1890-1974)

Introduction and Passacaglia, Op. 63
Nos. 5, 6. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Max Reger
(1873-1916)
Graduate Recital
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
DENTON, TEXAS
MONDAY, APRIL 25, 1983 5:00 P.M.

LINDA EPLEY, organist

I

Fantasia in D Minor
Matthias Weckmann (1621-1674)

Chorale-fantasia: Christ lag in Todesbanden
Franz Tunder (1614-1667)

II

Prelude and Fugue in D Minor
Vincent Lübeck (1656-1740)

Sonata No. 5 in D Major
C.P.E. Bach (1714-1788)

Allegro di molto
Adagio e' mesto
Allegro

III

Symphony No. 3, Op. 28
Louis Vierne (1870-1937)

Intermezzo
Cantilene
Finale

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree.
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

LINDA MORRISON

in a

Graduate Lecture Recital

Sunday, March 25, 1984  2:00 P.M.  Second Presbyterian Church
Louisville, Kentucky

COMMOTIO:  NIELSEN'S SYMPHONY FOR ORGAN

Commotio, Op. 59 (1930-31)

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Structural Analysis of <em>Commotio</em></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, m. 18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, m. 319</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, mm. 39-43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, Andante sostenuto, mm. 258-262</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Symphony No. 2, 4th movement, mm. 207-208</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, mm. 224-225</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Symphony No. 6, 1st movement, mm. 98-100</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, mm. 441-450</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Symphony No. 4, 3rd movement, mm. 58-62</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, mm. 79-84</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Symphony No. 3, 2nd movement, mm. 32-37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, mm. 1-2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, mm. 296-300</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Symphony No. 6, 3rd movement, m. 23</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, m. 10</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1, 1st movement, mm. 56-59</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, mm. 271-274</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1, 1st movement, mm. 55-56</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td><em>Commotio</em>, m. 12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. <strong>Symphony No. 4</strong>, 1st movement, mm. 51-57</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. <strong>Symphony No. 4</strong>, 2nd movement, mm. 26-27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. <strong>Commotio</strong>, mm. 411-416</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commotio: Nielsen's Symphony for Organ

Carl Nielsen is generally recognized as Denmark's most significant composer. While his international reputation rests chiefly on his six symphonies, his creativity encompassed many genres. First as violinist and later as conductor of the orchestra of the Danish Royal Theater in Copenhagen, he began composing chamber music, symphonies, songs, and operas. Compositions for the organ were completed in the last few years of his life, including twenty-nine little preludes, most of which have the appearance of sketches. Commotio, his only major composition for the organ, was completed in 1931. The major purpose of this presentation is to define Nielsen's symphonic style and show how that style is reflected in Commotio, a work of symphonic dimension and scope. The lecture includes a short biographical sketch of Carl Nielsen.

Biographical Sketch

Carl August Nielsen, born June 9, 1865, on the island of Fyn, was one of twelve children born to Niel Jorgensen and Maren Kirstine. His father was a house painter and an amateur musician. Nielsen's early musical education came

---

through his father, who played violin at local meetings and dances. Carl learned to play the violin and cornet and took part in providing music for local events. Through his mother's love for folk songs, qualities such as irregular meter, flowing modal melodies, and simple, clear form became enduring elements of his style.\textsuperscript{2} During the years he played in his father's band, his musical creativity developed extensively as he improvised countermelodies and variations to the Danish dance and folk tunes.\textsuperscript{3}

Nielsen entered the Royal Conservatory in Copenhagen in 1884, where his association with Niels Gade (1817-1890), director of the Conservatory and one of Denmark's most important composers, enriched his concept of composition and performance.\textsuperscript{4} He began composing during this period, and in 1887 wrote two movements for string orchestra which were performed in Tivoli Concert Hall in Copenhagen. A String Quartet in F major was completed the following year. Nielsen's first major success came with the performance of the \textit{Little Suite for Strings}, op. 1, in Tivoli (1888).\textsuperscript{5}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 184.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 186.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Nielsen became second violinist in the Royal Orchestra at the Opera in 1889. After a year studying the operas of Wagner while touring France, Germany, and Italy, he returned to his position as violinist in Copenhagen. This year of study, and his position as violinist playing Wagner's music, gave him a clearer insight into the extensive use of chromaticism incorporated in the inner voices of Wagner's music, as well as a general knowledge of Wagner's compositional style. In his adult years, Nielsen came to regard Wagner's style as being excessively exaggerated. He states in his book, *Living Music*, his disapproval of a theme from the "Ring":

It is the taste, excessive and unwholesome, in Wagner's theme that is intolerable. The only cure for this sort of taste lies in studying the basic intervals. The gluttoned must be taught to regard a melodic third as a gift of God, a fourth as an experience, and a fifth as the supreme bliss. Reckless gorging undermines the health.

Nielsen's reputation as a composer grew steadily after his return to Copenhagen. He was influenced by many sources during this formative period, like most young composers are, as he sought out and observed already established styles, even while trying to develop an individual and original style.

---


uniquely his own. According to Simpson, Nielsen's most important biographer, Brahms was one of his favorite composers. It is this composer's logical approach to form plus the clarity of themes found in his chamber music and piano works that strongly influenced Nielsen's own style.\(^9\)

The music of Dvorak was another influence on Nielsen at this time. The well thought-out technique of scoring found in Nielsen's early symphonies, especially Symphony No. 2 (The Four Temperaments), can be attributed to Dvorak's influence.\(^10\)

The chamber music and symphonies of Beethoven and Franck as well as other Romantic composers, were apparently studied by Nielsen, and his ideas concerning development of themes, i.e., cyclicism, variations, and transformation, seem to have been strongly influenced by these composers.

Nielsen became acquainted with the works of Palestrina and increased his understanding of counterpoint and the use of simple intervals, i.e., major and minor seconds, thirds, etc., through his observations.\(^11\) His use of fugatos in all of the symphonies except the First, indicates the value he placed on imitative writing and on this particular logical approach to the development of themes.\(^12\)


\(^10\)Ibid.


\(^12\)Ibid.
The premiere of Symphony No. 1 in March, 1894, was well received by the public. The Hymnus Amoris, a choral work inspired by a painting by Titian which depicts a man killing his beloved, exemplifies his interest in personality and psychology. Symphony No. 2 was a success, also, but Nielsen was already becoming a controversial composer. He was moving in the direction of modern musical practices, even though most of the Danish musical thought centered around and desired a continuation of traditional German Romanticism.\textsuperscript{13} He gained more support as time went on and soon established his own style, which was not necessarily avant garde, but was not the traditional musical offering of familiar composers and compositions found at Danish concerts.\textsuperscript{14}

Nielsen's symphonies were his most important musical contribution; however, he was a versatile composer. He wrote two operas, five choral works with orchestra, an impressive number of songs and other vocal works, both solo and ensemble, four string quartets, one string quintet, two sonatas for violin, two chamber works for wind instruments, concertos for flute, clarinet, and violin, and incidental music to various plays.\textsuperscript{15}

Nielsen accepted an appointment as conductor at the Royal Theater and served in that position until 1914. In 1915 he became a member of the governing board of the

\textsuperscript{13}\textsuperscript{Ibid.} \textsuperscript{14}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, p. 35.

Copenhagen Conservatory, and taught composition and theory there from 1916 to 1919. From 1915 until 1927, Nielsen also was the conductor of the orchestra of the Konsert Musikforeningen in Copenhagen, performing six to eight concerts a year.

Commotio, the subject of this paper, was written in 1931 and was to be the first in a projected series of large organ works. His contemporaries were not interested in organ composition and, apparently, his purpose in writing this work was to inspire interest in composing for the organ. Commotio was first performed by Peter Thomsen for a private group of friends on April 24, 1931 and the first public performance was for the Aarhus Tourist Association by Emilius Bangert, organist at the Royal Conservatory. In a letter to Bangert, Nielsen explained his ideas about performing the work:

I should not like to have anything about improvising in it. The work is so strict in form and counterpoint that I'm not able to make it firmer. The word Commotio really applies to all music, but here is especially used as an expression for self-objectivization. In an extended work for that mighty instrument called the organ, whose sounds are derived from the natural element called air, the composer must try to repress all personal and lyrical feelings. The task becomes great and strenuous and demands a severity instead of sentiment, and must rather be judged by the ear than seized upon the heart.


Carl Nielsen died in 1931, Commotio being the only large organ work completed in the proposed series.

**Nielsen's Symphonic Style**

Nielsen's symphonies are Classical in several respects. They are laid out in the customary design of four movements, with the exception of the Fifth, which is in two movements. Each of the movements has a form recognizably close to the Classical pattern. The Classical techniques of counterpoint and motivic development are employed, and while some titles are programmatic, the music is, in fact, non-programmatic.

It is in his treatment of tonality that Nielsen departed from the Classical style. The tonal plans of individual movements, as well as of the symphonies as a whole, depart from the traditional Classical patterns that are most familiar. Rather than restablishing the underlying tonality of a movement or entire symphony at the conclusion, after digressing to other tonal regions, Nielsen would often move away from the original tonic through other tonal areas, affirming a new tonality at the conclusion. This procedure has been discussed by both Simpson and Schousboe and labeled either "progressive" or "evolving" tonality. According to Schousboe, this characteristic feature of Nielsen's style is "the formal result of the melodically determined 'extended tonality' which Nielsen developed early in his career."[^19]

[^19]: Ibid.
All of the symphonies, and much of Nielsen's other work, could illustrate his particular approach to tonality. Symphony No. 1 is used as an example. The first movement begins in g minor and ends in that key; yet, it is not firmly established in the Classical sense of functional tonality. By the sixth measure he has established a new tonal area, and moves through two others by the time he re-establishes g minor in measure twelve. This frequent tonal change continues throughout the symphony. The second movement begins in G major, quickly moves through C major to g minor in measure nineteen, with a return to G with the lowered seventh step (mixolydian coloring), finally and firmly concluding in G major. The third movement begins and ends in E flat, moving again through several tonal areas, but never staying with one particular key for any significant duration. The fourth movement begins in g minor and ends in C major.

Although Nielsen does establish definite tonal areas of limited duration within a movement, the harmonic progressions within the tonal area are never carried out in the Classic harmonic idiom. His harmonic language is ambiguous, in that fluidity of modulation and freedom of chord choice often seem to be more important than definition of the tonality. These aspects of lessened functionality of harmony, along with some freedom of dissonance treatment, are steps on the way to atonality, but Nielsen went no further. His harmonic language remained tertian, and his formal structures remained tonally oriented.
Nielsen's symphonies include a number of features often found in nineteenth-century symphonies. The programmatic element, typical of many Romantic composers, is present in several titles: e.g., Symphony No. 2, "The Four Temperaments," Symphony No. 3, "Sinfonia Espansiva." The Fourth is known also as "The Inextinguishable," and the Sixth is subtitled "Sinfonia Semplice." Beautiful lyricism and melodic charm occur often in Nielsen's symphonies, e.g., the opening measures of the second movement of the First Symphony, the opening of the third movement of the Second Symphony, and the beautiful melody played by the oboe beginning in the seventh measure of the third movement of the Third Symphony. Solo melodic passages take on an exotic quality in the modal context of his Danish musical heritage.

The orchestral colors of the Romantic symphony are also evident in Nielsen's symphonies. More of a traditionalist in orchestration, Nielsen did not invent such unusual instrumental combinations as characterize the music of his contemporaries Debussy and Richard Strauss. His approach to orchestration more closely resembles that of Brahms and Dvorak.\(^{20}\) Nielsen gives the woodwinds solo passages occasionally, as well as the French horn. The other brass instruments have less solo work but sometimes are used as an independent group without strings or woodwinds.\(^{21}\)

\(^{20}\)Wilson, op. cit., p. 40. \(^{21}\)Ibid.
symphonies as well as the other works. The freedom with which he modulates from one key to another, the extended tonal plans of individual movements, and the flowing, elongated melodies are filled with this particular Romantic trait. Also, Nielsen's symphonies are characterized by the cyclic use of themes, especially in the first movement of Symphony No. 4 and throughout Symphony No. 5, where Nielsen's use of thematically-related materials is clearly evident. This device enabled composers to connect ideas and reuse themes in other movements or sections of their compositions.

The Romantic qualities in Nielsen's music are best illustrated in Symphony No. 4. Even though the music is not specifically designed to "portray" its programmatic title, "The Inextinguishable," Wilson agrees "that there might be a programmatic element in the work, and in this case the suggestion proves to be true."\(^{22}\) Simpson speculates that "the name of the fourth symphony refers, not to the composer's opinion of his own composition, but to a clear-cut feeling that he found he could express with peculiar accuracy in music."\(^{23}\) Melodic passages are expanded, extended, and continued, rather than rounded off into self-contained units. Lyrical melodic moments are evident in the first movement, where the clarinets play a long, serene melody in thirds, followed by the same passage in the strings. Sonata form is evident in the first movement, showing here Nielsen's

\(^{22}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 229. \quad ^{23}\text{Simpson, op. cit.}, \ p. \ 67.\)
adherence to conventional structure. Chromaticism is immediately apparent in the ninth measure of the first movement, where a chromatic triplet passage in the woodwinds is supported by a chromatic pattern in a different rhythm in the strings. Cyclicism, a technique used frequently by Franck and Liszt, as well as by other Romantic composers, gives a sense of unity to the entire symphony.

In the first movement, a fortissimo opening section is followed by a serene hymn-like section; at the end of the first movement this theme appears again as a forceful conclusion. The hymn-like theme reoccurs to conclude the last movement.²⁴

A clearer understanding of Nielsen's symphonic style can be determined by looking closely at each of the six symphonies. Several features can be illustrated through an examination of his unusual harmonic and melodic language, his concept of form and techniques of writing. Following is a brief synopsis of the six symphonies.

Symphony No. 1 (1891-92)

Beginning with a forte passage, the first movement is in sonata form and includes the use of two main subjects. Both are developed, then return in normal sequence in the recapitulation.²⁵ The coda employs the first subject. The second movement is episodic, with the first section centering

²⁴Wilson, op. cit., p. 229. ²⁵Ibid., p. 59.
around G major. A second section, starting in measure 20, is in g minor. The third movement, according to Wilson, resembles a scherzo, yet, because of recurring themes, it could be called a rondo. The fourth movement is in sonata form, beginning in C major, moving to g minor, and ending in C major. The first subject begins and ends in g minor but contains a number of modulations. The second subject consists of four themes which are later developed. The important role of evolving tonality in the First Symphony of Nielsen has been explained above (see p. 7). In this instance of evolving tonality, an overall unity pervades the opposition of the g minor and C major tonalities, since, the flat seventh degree of the mixolydian scale on C has produced the g minor triad, instead of the more conventional G major triad in the dominant function. This has been interpreted as yet another example of the influence of the modal flavor of Danish folk music on Nielsen's musical language.

Symphony No. 2 (1901-02), The Four Temperaments

Nielsen himself has attributed the inspiration for the character of each of the movements to a set of paintings illustrating the four temperaments which he once saw hanging in a country inn. The themes and their treatments were

26Ibid., p. 60.  27Simpson, op. cit., p. 9.  28Ibid., p. 42.
meant to reflect the nature of the respective temperaments (sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic), as if to be a latter-day example of the Baroque "doctrine of affections."

Again, a vigorous forte passage opens this symphony. The first movement, in B minor, includes much more rhythmic complexity than the preceding symphony. A rhythmic figure consisting of a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth note dominates the movement. The second movement is marked Allegro commodo e flemmatico, indicating a more active motion than the traditional slow movement. The melody hovers around the minor second interval in several passages, and sparse imitative writing continues the mood he sets forth. This movement ends quietly on a unison g which is repeated in the final nine measures by the string section. The third movement is slow, incorporating a change of key in the middle section. After the introduction of one and a half measures, the theme begins, followed by a "sighing" motive played by the oboe, which is slowly developed. A long, static passage follows: the first theme returns in full force, tying other motives together while building to an intense climax. Finally the movement comes to a calm and relaxed ending. The fourth movement contains only two themes without extensive development, and is in sonata form. The second subject appears in the form of fugato in c minor, is then developed further, and the movement ends with a coda based on the first subject.
Symphony No. 3 (1910-11), Sinfonia Espansiva

In contrast with the first two symphonies, both of which open with well-shaped themes, this symphony begins fragmentally, and the thematic content is gradually formed. A unison "a" is heard in the string and brass sections, then is repeated in various rhythms for fourteen measures. After unison sounds enter in the woodwinds, the texture becomes more complex as the melodic lines and rhythmic structure develop. The first movement is longer than usual, ending strongly in A major. The second movement, Andante pastorale, exhibits techniques typical of Nielsen: unison writing; chromaticism; rhythmically complex melodic lines imitated in various instruments, and dotted eighths followed by sixteenths. The third movement, marked Allegretto un poco, introduces a new combination of rhythmic patterns, i.e., triplet sixteenth notes played simultaneously against dotted eighths followed by sixteenths. Unison writings and repeated minor thirds abound; melodic lines are centered around the minor second interval. The movement ends quietly. The vigorous fourth movement begins in D major, moves through several keys, including a striking key change to B flat, modulates back to D, and finally concludes in A major. This scheme thoroughly exemplifies Nielsen's approach to tonality.

Symphony No. 4 (1914-16), The Inextinguishable

There are four separate movements; however, they are linked by connecting episodes, causing the composition to
appear as one continuous work. Nielsen apparently sees the individual movements as not being self-sufficient, since he does not divide them into four separate sections as he had in the three preceding symphonics. Also, there is no complete break between the first and second movements and the second and third movements, but merely a gradual thinning of texture, with a solo passage leading into the next section. Between the third and fourth movements, a one-measure Grand Pause is indicated. The first and last movements are longest and contain the greatest amount of thematic development. This symphony is somewhat experimental in its harmonic language, indicating a new period of growth in Nielsen's compositional style. Other notable features are the expanded use of the tritone as a melodic interval, and the increased importance of harmonic dissonance.

Symphony No. 5 (1920-22)

This symphony has been regarded as the most outstanding of the last three symphonies.29 Certainly, its formal structure is the most innovative. The two large movements that make up this symphony can each be divided into sections where themes are developed, repeated and restated, even more often than in Symphony No. 4. Also, cyclicism is a factor in this symphony, as fragmentary motives are gradually built up into more complex themes. The first movement is divided into two sections, the first in a fast tempo, and the second

29Wilson, op. cit., p. 401.
in a slow tempo. There are two contrasting themes in the first section, with some development, followed by a recapitulation. The second section is basically monothematic. The second movement contains four main sections and is in sonata form. There is an increased use of polychords and quartal harmony; remote modulations are used extensively.\textsuperscript{30} Two fugal sections assume importance as evidence both of Nielsen's contrapuntal technique and of his intention to shape and control his material.

\textit{Symphony No. 6 (1924-25), Sinfonia Semplice}

Nielsen returns to the four movement form, with a continuation of the various techniques mentioned before with more tonally ambiguous passages. This is his most rhythmically and melodically complex symphony. The first movement contains considerable development of melodic fragments and there are extensive unison passages. The second movement, entitled \textit{Humoreske}, contains two main themes, the first being quite disjunct. The second is folk-like, with melodic qualities quite different from the first. The third movement contains modal writing, with the two main themes being developed together at the end of the movement. The fourth movement is in B flat major, containing no cyclical use of themes; further use of polychords occurs here.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 322.
The analysis thus far identifies three main features of Nielsen's symphonic style. These features—evolving tonality; treatment of melodies; and form are summarized below.

1. **Evolving tonality**—The most outstanding feature, upon observation of these symphonies, is Nielsen's expanded concept of tonality. To Nielsen, "evolving tonality" meant that the ultimate tonal center of a symphony could be evolved as the music unfolded, much like themes that are evolved or developed from motivic fragments, rather than being prescribed by the key in which a symphony begins. This idea was unorthodox at the time the First Symphony was written, and Nielsen made it characteristically his own.\(^31\)

The seemingly vague or ambiguous quality of Nielsen's harmonic language also contributes to a sense of instability, as the listener tries to grasp a functional harmonic system. Upon examination or analysis of the harmonic progression, however, a tonally-centered progression is revealed, unorthodox though it may be. Nielsen simply took full advantage of his harmonic creativity and freedom, and the music ultimately and finally ends in a tonal arena that is achieved rather than given. Wilson states that "this tonality is established in all six symphonies through: melodic lines with strong tonal implications; the use of pedal points and static harmony; and the use of chords common to a given key but with distinctly peculiar root movement."\(^32\)

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 399. \(^{32}\)Ibid.
2. **Treatment of melodies**—Another feature found in Nielsen's symphonic writing is the treatment of melodies. These fall into several categories: simple folk-like tunes; incisive, concise themes; extended lyrical passages; and themes with elaborate turns and exaggerated contours. One of the characteristic features in his melodic writing is a hovering around a central tone, from which the melody expands to intervals of various sizes. Particular prominence is given to the lowered seventh degree of the major scale, thus giving a mixolydian flavor to his music.\(^{33}\) One finds a freedom of melodic interval choice and of chromatic inflection which facilitates the occurrence of non-functional chord progressions. Nielsen employs this freedom often, giving the feeling of tonal fluctuation. Nielsen's manner of combining late Romantic, atonal, modal and folk styles produces a sophisticated quality which is quite distinctive.

3. **Form**—Nielsen's preference for the traditional four-movement order has been confirmed through an examination of the six symphonies. The exception is the Fifth Symphony, which could conceivably fit the pattern by dividing the two large movements into two sections each. Sonata form is present in the first movements of all six symphonies. The fourth movements of each of the first five symphonies also are closely related to, if not in, sonata form. In the first

\(^{33}\text{Stone, op. cit., p. 30.}\)
three symphonies the content is fairly traditional, with two main subjects being used. These subjects, especially the second, are generally composed of groups of contrasting thematic ideas. The two main subjects are both treated in the development sections, and appear in normal order in the recapitulation. The movement usually ends with a coda based on a fragment of the first subject. The exposition, development and recapitulation are usually clearly defined. The last three symphonies deviate from the clear-cut traditional form through cyclicism and greater freedom of tonality, but an adherence to the structure can still be found.

Several other specific techniques of writing are also identified through the analysis of the symphonies. In the following section, illustrations of how these techniques found in the symphonies are also incorporated in Commotio are presented.

A dissertation by Dean Clarke Wilson, entitled "An Analytical and Statistical Study of the Harmony in Carl Nielsen's Six Symphonies," includes a comprehensive analysis of the writing techniques used by Nielsen in his symphonies. The techniques he identified are

Unison writing
Two part writing
Three or more part writing

Wilson, op. cit., p. 59.
Tertian Chords  
Quartal Chords  
Chords with added tones  
Harmonic Rhythm  
Passing tones and passing chords  
Auxiliary chords involving two passing tones and one neighboring tone  
Neighboring tone chords  
Appoggiatura Chords  
Repeated chord progressions  
Pedal points  
Double pedal points at the perfect 5th  
Suspensions and Neighboring tones  
Polyharmony  

Wilson's dissertation, it must be acknowledged, has been of great assistance in the present study, particularly in identifying and illustrating various techniques as they appear in the symphonies.

Symphonic Characteristics found in Commotio

Commotio clearly fits a broad definition of a symphony, such as the one found in The New Grove Dictionary: "A term now normally taken to signify an extended work for orchestra . . . the adjective 'symphonic' applied to a work implies that it is extended and thoroughly developed."35 Commotio is a large, multi-section work with connecting episodes; long-range tonal relationships are present, as are contrast and balance in thematic material and development. Nielsen's recognition of the programmatic element is evident in the title, Commotio, which means movement.

The organ symphonies of Widor and Vierne, the best-known representatives of this form from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, likewise fit a broad definition of a symphony. The French organ symphonies are more conservative than progressive, however, seldom venturing further in formal inventiveness or sophistication than the orchestral symphonies of Schumann. Widor, in particular, was careful to honor the essentially static quality of organ tone, hardly ever venturing from a terraced-dynamics plan of organ registration. His musical forms likewise had a static character, more presentational than developmental. For him, the overall symphonic form was a series of self-contained movements, a collection of character pieces. Vierne progressed somewhat further than Widor, particularly in his harmonic language, but his basic concept of the organ symphony remained the same as Widor's. Nielsen, on the other hand, came to the organ as a symphonist, not as an organist with preconceived notions about the limitations of the instrument which might influence his musical conceptions. Though not a symphony in name, Commotio is clearly a symphony in scope, extension, and development.

Seen from a symphonic point of view, Commotio can be regarded as a work in four movements, with interludes and continuous transitions. The opening movement begins with two successive pedal points, G and C-sharp, and continues with a section beginning in F-sharp minor. In this section,
motives are introduced which will be utilized later. The second movement is a fugue in G major, whose development passes through several tonal areas. The third movement begins with an Andante section in G major. It serves as a prelude to the fourth movement, a fugue beginning in C major, which has an extensive development in D minor in a different meter. The coda presents another exposition and development of the C major fugue subject. An analysis of the work in this four-movement format can be seen in Figure 1.

A closer examination of each section will disclose characteristic stylistic features. In the opening section, wide-ranging declamatory figuration is heard over continuously shifting harmonies and a G pedal point. When the long pedal point G shifts to C-sharp—a tritone up—the initial figuration and accompaniment are inverted in strict contrapuntal fashion, and the opening material is again presented. In measure 18, the left hand begins a figuration (Fig. 2) prophetic of the second fugue, in C major (Fig. 3). After a single-voice transition, the next section (Andantino quasi allegretto) begins with a theme in F-sharp dorian mode, developing into a lyrical, folksong style. Two features are significant in this theme: the emphasis on the minor third interval, and the circling above and below a central note, in this instance C-sharp (Fig. 4). The four-note motive in measure 40, beginning with the central note C-sharp and including both an ascending fourth and a descending third
I. (Fantasia) Adagio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>m. 1 - 15</th>
<th>14 - 20</th>
<th>21 - 24</th>
<th>25 - 28</th>
<th>29 - 38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g to e to a</td>
<td>c# to Ab to d</td>
<td>a to f#</td>
<td>c# pedal point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Declaratory theme (A) | (A) transition | (A) modified |

Andantino

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>39 - 52</th>
<th>53 - 77</th>
<th>78 - 94</th>
<th>95 - 112</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f#</td>
<td>e to c#</td>
<td>eB to G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modal theme (B) | transition | (B) in canon | transition |

II. (Fugue I)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>113 - 138</th>
<th>139 - 152</th>
<th>153 - 179</th>
<th>180 - 195</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>(C) four voice exposition</td>
<td>(C) episodes</td>
<td>(C) with (B) as episodic transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modulating</td>
<td>C, c', g#, B</td>
<td>a, c, eB, f#, B, E</td>
<td>, Bb, c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. Andante

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>196 - 205</th>
<th>206 - 234</th>
<th>235 - 257</th>
<th>258 - 270</th>
<th>271 - 282</th>
<th>282 - 318</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>(C) (B) and (C) transition</td>
<td>G to e</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>transition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modulating</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>chorale theme</td>
<td>arpeggiated (E) and (D) theme (E)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. (Fugue II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>319 - 355</th>
<th>356 - 400</th>
<th>441 - 479</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>d and modulating</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) four voice expositions</td>
<td>(F) stretto and episodes</td>
<td>interlude and transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and episodes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Coda)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>489 - 512</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C with digressions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1--Structural Analysis of Commotio
Fig. 2--Commotio, m. 18

Fig. 3--Commotio, m. 319

Andantino quasi allegretto.

Fig. 4--Commotio, mm. 39-43
(C-sharp, F-sharp, D-sharp, C-sharp), provides material for subsequent transitions and developments. Following a canonic presentation of the folksong melody, now in E minor, a new motive, consisting of alternating seconds and thirds, is first heard in the pedal in measure 96, and then emerges in measure 113 as the subject of the first fugue in G major, the second movement of Commotio.

As Nielsen begins this fugue, four voices are employed in the exposition of an angular four-measure subject, which is not accompanied by a countersubject at this point. There are episodes of irregular lengths between the second, third, and fourth entries. The subject is stated three times in the following development section, beginning in measure 153, where it is accompanied by a countermelody derived from the lyric melody in F sharp which began the interlude. A brief episodic climax is followed by a restatement of the subject in the pedal (measures 196-200) and another statement in the upper treble part (measures 200-204). Following a further developmental climax, the Andantino tranquillo passage in B flat major (measure 240) anticipates the countour of the theme of the slow movement which follows.

The third movement, Andante, begins calmly. Nielsen's creativity is at its best in his ingenious use of harmonic progressions, and often a single chord may produce a striking effect, such as the unexpected F major chord in the midst of G major and E minor harmony (measure 266). As the
contrapuntal development in the subsequent measures reaches its climax marked with a fortissimo G major chord, the fourth movement, a fugue in C major, begins (measure 319).

The two-measure subject of this second four-voice fugue is cast in 12/8 meter and is accompanied by free material. At the beginning of the development, the subject is completely stated once, with subject fragments appearing in the remainder of this section. Then the meter changes to 3/4, and the subject is restated in a shortened form, employing four-voice stretto, and continues to a climax in measure 416, where a fortissimo pedal entrance concludes the development.

The coda concludes the composition with a four-voice statement of the second subject, ending in a fortissimo stretto declamation of the main theme in C major.

Further conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing description and the analytical sketch (Fig. 1) concerning evolving tonality, melodic treatment, and form.

1. **Evolving tonality**—The overall tonal plan of *Commotio*, G minor--G major--C major, is simple, but the path from one tonal area to another is far from direct. The initial tonal change from G to C-sharp in the opening section destroys the natural tendency to modulate to the dominant or relative key. The subsequent movement to F-sharp minor is a further deviation from the original tonic
key. In the first fugue in G major, tonal stability is maintained through the initial sections, but the development of the subject leads away from G major to keys more and more remote. In the dynamic climax of this movement (measures 206-225), the feeling for G major, or for any other key, is completely negated by the succession of unrelated chords. The transition to the slow movement centers on B-flat major, and the G major chord which begins the slow movement thus comes as a surprise.

Much the same procedure is followed in the second fugue as in the first. After an exposition of tonally stable character, subsequent moves are to remote key areas. It is necessary that the coda again presents a fugal exposition to reestablish the C major tonality, but even there, a further development of the theme once again departs from the ostensible tonality, only to return through the Neapolitan and the minor subdominant triads, D-flat major and F minor, to C major on the final chord.

2. **Treatment of Melodies**—Several characteristic Nielsen melodic types, mentioned above in the discussion of the symphonies, are prominent in Commotio. The melody in the F-sharp Andantino section has already been mentioned as an example of the type of melody which circles around a central note. The initial melody in the G major slow movement also shares this trait, as it hovers around the note D (Fig. 5).
Melodies built on thirds have a more than usual importance in Commotio. The initial melodic declamation in the Fantasia section features third intervals in alternating repetition patterns and in major and minor inflections. The minor third interval is a striking feature of the modal theme in the F-sharp Andantino, and in its subsequent transformations. The third, major and minor, is the essential building block of the C major fugue theme; this theme was foreshadowed in the introductory Fantasia, particularly in the left hand passage in measure 18, as mentioned above.

Repeated minor seconds, the initial melodic intervals of the G major fugue subject, also appear prominently as accompaniment figures in the development sections of the C major fugue (measures 372-416).

3. Form—While conventional sonata form is not followed in Commotio, balance of tonal areas, contrast of melodic
material, and intensive thematic development are obvious features of the work. In the Fantasia, the reoccurrence of the opening material over a C-sharp pedal point provides a sense of balance which suggests the conventional tonic-dominant areas of a sonata exposition section. The placement of lyrical melodic sections before the two fugues provides areas of contrast and relaxation which strengthen the effect of the more rigorous fugal sections. The prevalence of melodic material built on third intervals gives a cyclical cohesiveness to the entire work.

The thinning and thickening of texture in transition sections is also used as a structural technique. Before the F-sharp Andantino section, the first fugue in G major, the Andante in G major, and the final transition section leading to the Coda, a single voice connects the sections. Before both the C major fugue and the fugal Coda, in contrast, the texture is thickened, and the motion is brought to rest on a sustained chord.

Other similarities between the symphonies and Commotio can be observed. To illustrate these similarities, examples from the symphonies and from Commotio are included below.36

Unison writing—Unison writing appears in all the symphonies and can be found in several places in Commotio. This device gives a welcome relief to the listener, as well as giving more emphasis to the complicated tonal progressions.

36Sixteen types are cited in Wilson, op. cit., pp. 8-20.
Two-Part Writing—This technique is found in all six symphonies, also, and provides opportunity for contrapuntal combination.
Three- or more part writing--This technique can be found frequently in both the symphonies and in Commotio,
giving Nielsen the freedom for imitative counterpoint and canon.

**Tertian chords.** This technique includes triads and seventh, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords, as well as others that will follow. Those just mentioned are easily found in Nielsen's writing, and will not be illustrated through examples. The others include:

1. **Use of pedal point**—It is frequently found in the symphonies, and there are eighteen uses of pedal point in *Commotio*. The use of pedal points gives Nielsen the freedom to experiment with other tonalities while maintaining a strong tonal base.
Fig. 12—Symphony No. 3, 2nd movement, mm. 32-37.

Fig. 13—Commotio, mm. 1-2
2. Use of parallel thirds--Major and minor thirds are used quite often by Nielsen in parallel motion, and with inflections.

Fig. 15--Symphony No. 6, 3rd movement, m. 23
3. **Imitative Writing**—Counterpoint, already mentioned, is an important part of the structure and organization of Nielsen's work. Motives are developed, fragments are expanded, and themes are elongated, enriching the musical content and quality of both symphonies and Commotio.

Fig. 16—Commotio, m. 10

Fig. 17—Symphony No. 1, 1st movement, mm. 56-59
4. **Root movement by ascending tritone**—An unusual effect, it enhances Nielsen's innovative harmonic progressions. The interval of the ascending tritone naturally gives the impression of moving away from a tonal center, yet Nielsen uses it creatively.

---

**Fig. 18**—*Commotio*, mm. 271-274

---

**Fig. 19**—*Symphony No. 1*, 1st movement, mm. 55-56
5. Chorale-like writing—Nielsen makes use of a traditional technique of writing, incorporating a gentle, homophonic texture into an already complex style. An example from Commotio has been given above in Figure 5.

Fig. 21—Symphony No. 4, 1st movement, mm. 51-57
6. Use of minor seconds—Nielsen's music is full of a hovering around the minor second interval which is similar to a written out trill. The expanded use of repeated intervals, major and minor, is another extension of Nielsen's compositional style.

Fig. 22—Symphony No. 4, 2nd movement, mm. 26-27

Fig. 23—Commotio, mm. 411-416
Commotio, a symphonic work for organ written by a symphonist rather than by an organist, is a unique contribution to the repertoire of the organ. The continuous and evolving nature of the texture, along with the gradual and extended dynamic changes, are clear evidence of Nielsen's employment of organ sonority as equivalent to that of the symphony orchestra. The treatment of evolving tonality, melody, form, texture, and of other traits which typify Nielsen's symphonic style, is also present in Commotio. It may even be said that the whole gamut of Nielsen's symphonic stylistic features is exemplified in this, his final work, which, therefore, stands as a testament to his musical language.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Nielsen, Carl, Living Music, Copenhagen, Denmark, Wilhelm Hansen, 1968.

________, My Childhood, Copenhagen, Denmark, Wilhelm Hansen, 1953.


Articles


Peckman, Anson, "Carl Nielsen and his Fifth Symphony," American Record Guide, 17 (June, 1951), 54.


Unpublished Material


Scores

Nielsen, Carl, Commotio, Copenhagen, Samfundet til Udgivelse af Dansk Musik, 1983.


__________, Symphony No. 3, Op. 27, Copenhagen, Engstrøm & Sødring, 1913.


Symphony No. 6, Copenhagen, Edition Dania, 1957.