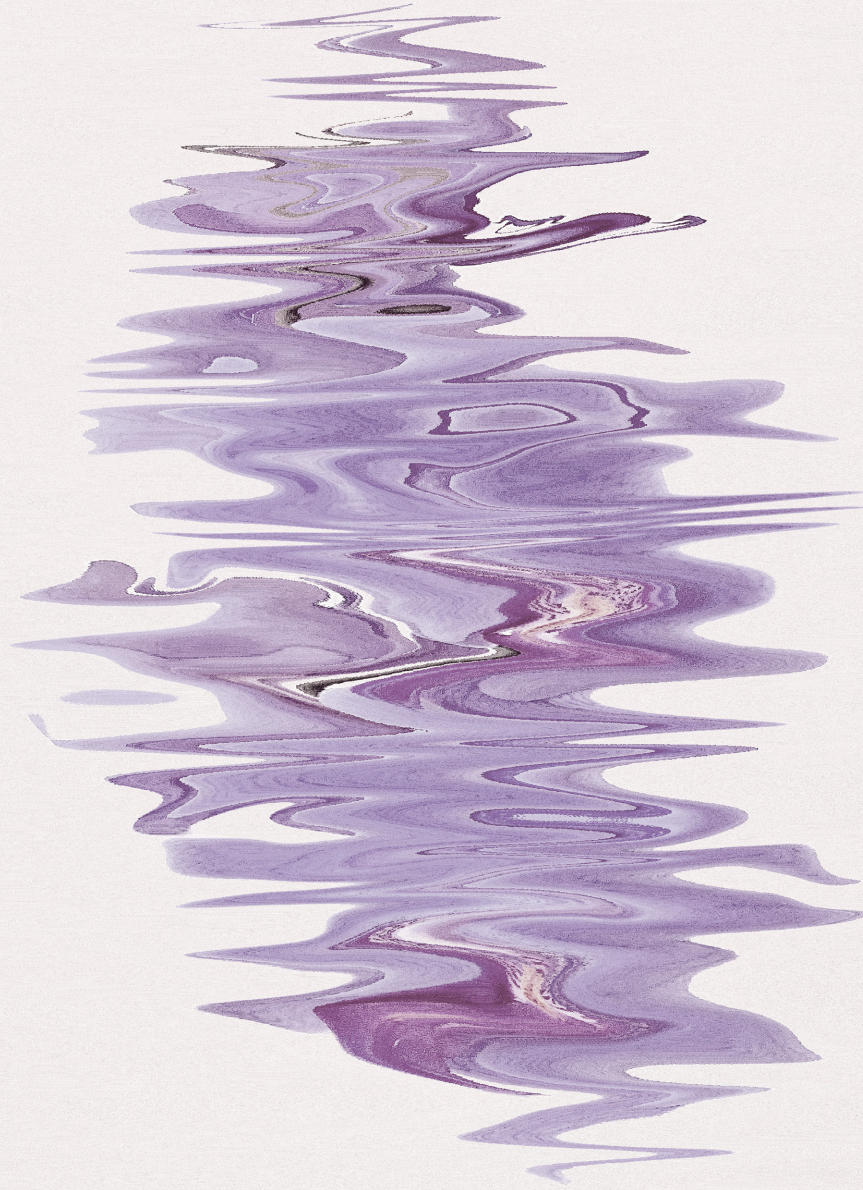


Tage Nielsen

Piano and Chamber Works



Nickie Johansson, Signe Madsen, Brian Friisholm
Oliver Nordahl, Mathias Kjøller, Flemming Aksnes & Erik Kaltoft

Tage Nielsen (1929–2003)

Piano and Chamber Works

Nickie Johansson, soprano
Signe Madsen, violin
Brian Friisholm, cello

Oliver Nordahl, oboe
Mathias Kjøller, clarinet
Flemming Aksnes, horn
Erik Kaltoft, piano

	Tre karakterstykker og en epilog (Three Character Pieces and an Epilogue) (1972–74)	12:09
	<i>for piano</i>	
1	I Mattinale	1:13
2	II Tour de force	1:34
3	III Kinderszene	2:46
4	IV Epilog	6:34
	Trio semplice (1997)	12:29
	<i>for horn, violin and piano</i>	
5	I Sostenuto	6:46
6	II Calmo e sereno	5:42
	Tre Shakespeare-fragmenter (Three Shakespeare Fragments) (1977–78)	8:37
	<i>for soprano, oboe, cello and piano. Text by William Shakespeare</i>	
7	I How All the Other Passions Fleet to Air	3:15
8	II Love Is Merely a Madness	1:22
9	III Whither Should I Fly	3:59
10	A Winter's Tale (1994)	5:06
	<i>for clarinet and piano</i>	
	To nocturner (Two Nocturnes) (1960–61)	6:27
	<i>for piano</i>	
11	I	3:12
12	II	3:15

13	Improvisation og fuga (Improvisation and Fugue) (1983) <i>for clarinet, cello and piano</i>	4:59
	Piano Sonata, Op. 3 (1950)	12:52
14	I Lento non troppo, allegro energico	4:23
15	II Lento, quasi improvisando	4:37
16	III Allegro grazioso, prestissimo	3:51

World premiere recording

Total 62:42



Tage Nielsen

The Refined Master of Moderation

By Henrik Friis

‘No, my talents are simply not great enough for that’, Tage Nielsen responded in his customary modest style when asked by music historian Erling Kullberg in a 1989 interview if he had ever wished for a full-time life as a composer. The answer was friendly yet firm and precise, much like his music. No, he did not consider himself a true composer.

Listening to Tage Nielsen’s incisive and captivating chamber music today, his humble statement comes across as almost false modesty. Yet Nielsen always had an understated quality about him, reflected in his music too. Born in 1929 and passing away in 2003, throughout his approximately 50 active years as a composer, he was infinitely respected and admired by his colleagues, whether composers or performing musicians. And although he did little to promote his own works, his music continues to be frequently performed around the world.

The fact is, Tage Nielsen devoted much of his energy elsewhere than at the piano and manuscript paper. After graduating with a music degree from university, he embarked on a promising career in music broadcasting at DR, and from 1963 spent 20 years as the beloved president of the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus. To everyone’s delight – except perhaps his list of compositions.

It was not until 1983 when he became director of the Danish Academy in Rome, and then retired six years

later, that works began to truly flow from his pen. He composed just under half of his total output of around 60 works during his retirement.

Perhaps precisely because of the limited time Nielsen had available, there is a refreshingly precise and thoughtful quality to his music. There is an idea behind the music, and there do not appear to be any superfluous moments. The forms are short and concise, with only a single extensive work among them: the truly successful chamber opera *Laughter in the Dark* written between 1986-91 to a libretto by Vladimir Nabokov. It premiered at the Helsingør Theatre (The Old Town, Aarhus) in May 1995, performed by the Danish National Opera. Later, it was staged in Berlin with a tour stop in Denmark.

This album presents music from all five decades of Tage Nielsen’s career – from the impassioned piano sonata, only his third work completed in 1950, to the maturely balanced horn trio *Trio semplice* and the little sonatina for clarinet and piano written in the late 1990s. We hear the two modernist nocturnes from 1960, a watershed year in Danish musical life, the deeply fascinating character pieces for piano that bring the many styles of the 1970s in Denmark into play, and the impressionistic reveries of *Improvisation and Fugue* from the 1980s. With the three songs to Shakespeare fragments, we get a small, hyper-concentrated insight into Nielsen’s fascinating abilities as an opera composer. Altogether highly varied music that curiously breaks with the currents of its time yet remains condensed, precise and clear in thought and expression.

On one hand, Tage Nielsen was a composer who took on

the colouring of his era – or perhaps even shaped it himself – trying new paths for himself. On the other hand, he remained true to his sober self throughout his life. And from this came truly listenable music. ‘Moderation’ is the virtue he ascribed to himself and Danish musical life in an early analysis of his time published in the Danish Music Journal in 1962: Not deviating too much when trying something new. Tage Nielsen knew his limits early on.

The piano work *Three Character Pieces and an Epilogue* from 1972–74 beautifully illustrates how Nielsen managed both to maintain an ingenious musical thought and create captivating music. According to his publisher, the work is among the most frequently performed Danish piano pieces. Taking just a quarter of an hour in total, it consists of three short character pieces – ‘Mattinale’, ‘Tour de force’ and ‘Kinderszene’ – forming one half that each displays their own delicate sound world, followed by the epilogue as the other half.

The first character piece opens a small, bright world. A two-note signal sounds again and again as a harbinger of the second piece, which develops into music of increasing fullness as it formulates itself in complex, composite phrases that run towards and away from each other – almost like handfuls of notes being tied together in mild anger. The third character piece then takes on a 1970s hippy-ish character with trilling notes that flow together into shimmering tone clusters, lifting themselves into the sonic landscape with shimmering overtones that grate against each other.

The epilogue gathers the ideas together. Both the utterly simple, the brisk and complex, and the merging, insistent

sonorities unite into a music that simultaneously comes across as assured and searching, challenging and accessible. With a repose that manages to accommodate the three musical poles in the small field of thought Nielsen has constructed. It is dramatic music that is easy to slide into and sink down into – without any single climax or main point allowing itself to be singled out.

In an introduction to Tage Nielsen’s music, the musicologist Jens Brincker has suggested that the three character pieces express the composer’s commentary on three different stylistic trends among Danish composers amid the stylistic confusion of the 1970s: In the first movement, the Danish ‘New Simplicity’ – formulated as the little two-note motif with rocking perfect fifths as a Danish hallmark; in the second, the brutal European modernism that Nielsen instructs in the score is to be played ‘convulsively’; and finally, the third movement pointing ahead towards the rising American minimalism. It could well be accurate.

Writing music that is both engaging and interesting – while also displaying an intellectual glint in the eye – would fit well with the impression one is left with after listening through this album.

The two works from the 1990s resound with a romantic wistfulness. The mere 12 minutes that the horn trio *Trio semplice* from 1997 lasts, offers a glimpse back towards the First Viennese School with three instruments in mutual balance. The mood is serene and calm, with discreetly searching music in the first movement where horn, violin and piano each unfold their role – like a small chamber play. The violin is restless and hunted, the horn

has a soft, melancholic melody, and the piano lays out spicy tone clusters one after another at a walking pace. Halfway through, they swap roles, all while the overall sonic image grows increasingly dense. The second movement too is searching, but here the world is yearning and somewhat hazy, where the instruments can meet with their distinct characteristics and form a beautiful, simple, communicating musical world – not unlike a small group of people walking around and talking together about what matters to them.

A Winter's Tale is a more modestly conceived little piece for clarinet and piano written over a couple of winter months in 1994. Almost a bagatelle built from a simple, scurrying figure that the clarinet plays again and again, making variations on it while the piano lays out calm wintry sonorities underneath – when it is not accompanying the dancing woodwinds, that is. Music with simple yet fully realised ideas.

Tage Nielsen could truly achieve a great deal with limited means. *Three Shakespeare Fragments* for soprano, oboe, cello and piano from 1978 last barely 10 minutes in total yet manage to build up immense dramatic tension in the sonic landscape. The first fragment, 'How All the Other Passions Fleet to Air', sets some of the beautiful Portia's lines from *The Merchant of Venice* about love, fear and green-eyed jealousy – in under four minutes. The next fragment, 'Love Is Merely a Madness' from the comedy *As You Like It*, is utterly different – light and merry in its gentle observation of love's nature. The final fragment, 'Whither Should I Fly', returns to tragedy in *Macbeth*, where Lady Macduff powerlessly has to conclude that she lives in a world where evil is rewarded

and good is merely a stupid mistake. So why lament that she has done no harm? Chillingly staged by Tage Nielsen with very limited means.

Improvisation and Fugue for clarinet, cello, and piano from 1983 takes yet another new path. Despite the title, it is a fully notated work that is simply supposed to sound improvised. In the first part, the three instruments are searching, out of sync and melodically rambling – just like three improvising musicians without regard for joining up their entries. In stark contrast, it then becomes a fugue – with slightly Baroque undertones – in the second part, where the melodic lines in a tighter composition comment on each other as in the 1700s and allow themselves to be embellished with trills and blurring grace notes like remnants of a bygone era.

The two early piano works on the album, both the *Piano Sonata, Op. 3* from Nielsen's pure youth and the *Two Nocturnes* from 1960-61, recount with refined pianism a story of Nielsen as a composer for the instrument. He was himself accomplished at the piano – already at 15 years old he performed a movement from one of Beethoven's piano concertos in a competition – and one can easily sense that this is music that lies well under the fingers. Whereas the piano sonata sounds somewhat like the impassioned neo-classicism of Bartók or that of Denmark's leading piano professor of the time, Herman D. Koppel, in the *Two Nocturnes* one detects the storm of European modernism. If one is familiar with the famous scores of a notorious serialist like Stockhausen, one will nod in recognition at the sight of Tage Nielsen's five minutes of music. Tempo, dynamics and rhythms shift almost by the second, resulting in the music becoming

points on a surface more than coherent music. Yet there remains something almost friendly and non-modernist about the small, chattering notation figures. And then we know that, in Nielsen's own words, we find ourselves in a musical world where a certain self-imposed moderation prevails.

Nickie Johansson is a lyrical soprano who trained at the Danish National Academy of Music, Odense. Since then, she has built a successful solo career, performing at venues such as The New Opera, The Funen Opera, Valdemar's Castle Summer Opera, and Øresundsoperaen. She has portrayed numerous roles, including Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Serpetta in Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*, Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Annina in *La traviata*, and Drusilla in Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*. Johansson has also performed as a soloist with several Danish symphony orchestras, including Copenhagen Phil, where she has sung works such as Carl Nielsen's *Fynsk forår* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Contemporary music plays a significant role in her career, and she achieved considerable success with her performance of *Émilie Suite* for soprano and orchestra by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho, alongside Århus Sinfonietta.

Violinist Signe Madsen trained at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus under Professors Henrik Sachsenskjold and Tutter Givskov, graduating from the soloist class in 1992. She continued her studies in London with David Takeno and in the USA with Ronald and Almita Vamos. Early in her career, she won the principal solo seat

in the second violin section of the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. Since 1999, she has been the leader of the second violins in the Odense Symphony Orchestra and has remained an active chamber musician. Additionally, she has served as guest concertmaster, soloist, and chamber musician with various ensembles, including the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Randers Chamber Orchestra, Ensemble MidtVest, and Esbjerg Ensemble. Madsen is a highly sought-after chamber musician, with a repertoire that spans from Baroque music to contemporary works. She is the concertmaster of Århus Sinfonietta and a member of the MIRA string quartet.

Brian Friisholm is a cellist trained under Professor Harro Ruijsenaars at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus and with Walter Nothas in Munich. He made his debut at the Royal Academy of Music in 2000, performing with the Jutland Ensemble under conductor Thomas Søndergård. From 1998 to 2008, Friisholm was a cellist with the Jutland Ensemble. Since 2007, he has been a member of the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, and he joined the Artos Quartet in 2015. Recently, he released a solo album titled *Old Oak, New Acorns*, featuring works by Bach, Bo Gunge, Jesper Koch, and Nikolaj Bentzon. Additionally, Friisholm is the festival director and founder of the Artos Festival in Aarhus.

Oboist **Oliver Nordahl** began his musical journey with the Tivoli Youth Guard. He has studied under esteemed teachers, including Professor Max Artved, Professor Ole-Henrik Dahl, Bjørn Carl Nielsen, and Joakim Dam Thomsen. He has also participated in masterclasses with renowned oboists such as François Leleux, Gordon Hunt, Hansjörg Schellenberger, and Jacques Tys, and made his debut at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in 2014.

Nordahl's career has taken him across the globe, and he is currently the principal solo oboist with the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. He also teaches at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus. As a principal solo oboist, he has performed with all the Danish symphony orchestras as well as many Nordic orchestras. He has appeared as a soloist with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Odense Symphony Orchestra, and Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. Among the accolades he has received are the J.C. Hempel Music Prize, the Sonning Talent Prize, and the Aennchen and Eigil Harby Foundation Scholarship.

Mathias Kjøller entered the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus in 2004, studying under John Kruse, and by 2007, at just 21, he became the principal clarinetist of the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. He continued his studies in Copenhagen with Lee Morgan, winning the soloist competition and performing the Nielsen Concerto with conductor Michael Schønwandt. Kjøller also studied with renowned clarinet professor Yehuda Gilad in Los Angeles. In 2011, he was appointed associate principal clarinet in the Danish National Symphony Orchestra but returned to Aarhus Symphony Orchestra in 2013. The same year, he won second prize and other awards at the International Carl Nielsen Clarinet Competition. As a soloist, Kjøller has performed with the Copenhagen Phil, Odense Symphony Orchestra, and Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. Kjøller has received numerous awards, such as the Sonning Talent Prize, Victor Borge Music Prize, and the Danish Arts Council's Young Elite Scholarship. His debut album, released in 2018 on Orchid Classics, features works by Schumann, Reinecke, Debussy, Berg, and Corigliano.

Flemming Aksnes is a Norwegian horn player and princi-

pal horn of the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra. He began his studies with Paul Farr in Stavanger and continued with Professor Frøydis Ree Wekre at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, where he earned a master's degree in horn and chamber music. He has furthered his training with renowned teachers such as Gail Williams, Rex Martin, and Radek Baborak. Aksnes has performed as a soloist with various Scandinavian orchestras and has held positions including 3rd horn in the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, principal horn in Malmö Opera, and low horn in the Royal Danish Orchestra. Since 2007, he has been principal horn of the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra and regularly appears in chamber music performances.

Pianist **Erik Kaltoft** studied at the Royal Academy of Music in Aarhus and with Yvonne Lefébure in France. A versatile musician, he has performed widely as a soloist, chamber musician, and accompanist, touring internationally with ensembles like the Elsinore Players and LINensemble. Kaltoft has been a prominent figure in Aarhus's musical scene through his long-standing collaborations with the Royal Academy of Music, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Opera, and Aarhus Summer Opera. He has also served as the artistic director of Århus Sinfonietta. His passion for contemporary music is evident in his involvement in the premières of over 200, mainly Danish, works. Kaltoft has also been a professor at the Danish National Academy of Music in Odense.



Erik Kaltoft

Lyrics

Tre Shakespeare-fragmenter

(Three Shakespeare Fragments) (1977-78)

Text by William Shakespeare

I

- 7 How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,
And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy!
O love, be moderate. Allay thy ecstasy.
In measure rein thy joy. Scant this excess.
I feel too much thy blessing. Make it less,
For fear I surfeit.

Portia, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 3, Scene 2

II

- 8 Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves
as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do: and
the reason why they are not so punished and cured
is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers
are in love too. Yet I profess curing it by counsel.

Rosalind, *As You Like It*, Act 3, Scene 2

III

- 9 Whither should I fly?
I have done no harm. But I remember now
I am in this earthly world, where to do harm
Is often laudable, to do good sometime
Accounted dangerous folly. Why then, alas,
Do I put up that womanly defense,
To say I have done no harm?

Lady Macduff, *Macbeth*, Act 4, Scene 2

Mådeholdets raffinerede mester

Af Henrik Friis

”Nej, det er mine gaver sgu ikke store nok til”, svarede Tage Nielsen i vanlig beskeden stil musikhistorikeren Erling Kullberg i et interview i 1989. Spørgsmålet var, om han aldrig havde ønsket sig en fuldtidstilværelse som komponist. Svaret var venligt, men bestemt og præcist. Nøjagtig som hans musik. Nej, en rigtig komponist syntes han ikke, at han var.

Når man i dag lytter til Tage Nielsens skarptskårne og medrivende kammermusik, fremstår hans beskeden udtalelse næsten som falsk ydmyghed. Men Tage Nielsen havde altid noget underspillet over sig, også i sin musik. Han blev født i 1929 og døde i 2003, og i alle de aktive år som komponist, omkring 50, var han både som person og komponist uendelig anerkendt og afholdt af sine kolleger, hvad enten de var komponister eller udøvende musikere. Og selvom han ikke gjorde meget for at udbrede sin egen musik, bliver den stadig spillet ganske meget rundt om i verden.

Sagen er, at Tage Nielsen brugte mange af sine kræfter andetsteds end ved klaver og nodepapir. Som ung musikuddannet fra universitet fik han en lovende karriere med musikformidling i Danmarks Radio og fra 1963 og 20 år frem var han afholdt rektor for Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium i Aarhus. Til alles glæde – bortset fra værklisten. Det var først, da han i 1983 blev direktør for Det Danske Institut i Rom og seks år senere gik på pension, at værkerne for alvor begyndte at strømme fra hans hånd. Han

komponerede lige knap halvdelen af sine i alt cirka 60 værker som pensionist.

Måske netop på grund af den begrænsede tid, Tage Nielsen havde til rådighed, er der noget befriende præcist og gennemtænkt over hans musik. Der er idé bag musikken, og der virker ikke til at være overflødige øjeblikke. Formerne er korte og klare med kun et enkelt omfattende værk iblandt, den virkelig succesfulde kammeropera *Latter i Mørket* skrevet i 1986-91 til tekst af Vladimir Nabokov og uropført af Den Jyske Opera i Helsingør Theater (Den Gamle By, Aarhus) i maj 1995. Senere blev den opsat i Berlin med en turnéafstikker til Danmark.

Dette album præsenterer musik fra alle fem årtier af Tage Nielsens karriere - fra den lidenskabelige klaver-sonate, hans blot tredje værk fra 1950, til den modent balancerede horntrio *Trio semplice* og den lille sonatine for klarinet og klaver skrevet sidst i 1990'erne. Vi hører de to modernistiske nocturner fra brydningsåret 1960 i dansk musikliv, de dybt fascinerende karakterstykker for klaver, der sætter 70'ernes mange stilarter i spil og de impressionistiske drømmerier i *Improvisation og fuga* fra 1980'erne. Og med sangene til de tre Shakespeare-fragmenter får vi et lille, hyperkoncentreret indblik i Nielsens fascinerende evner som operakomponist. Alt sammen meget forskelligartet musik, der nysgerrigt bryder med tidens strømninger, men forbliver kondenseret, præcis og klar i tanke og udtryk.

På den ene side var Tage Nielsen en komponist, som tog farve af sin samtid – eller selv prægede den om man vil – og prøvede nye veje af for sig selv. På den anden side forblev han tro mod sit nøgterne jeg livet igennem. Og

det kom der rigtig lytteværdig musik ud af. "Mådehold" er det prædikat, han giver sig selv og dansk musikliv i en tidlig analyse af samtiden i Dansk Musiktidsskrift i 1962: Ikke at skeje for meget ud, når man prøver noget nyt – Tage Nielsen kendte tidligt sine egne grænser.

Klaverværket *Tre karakterstykker og en epilog* fra 1972-74 viser smukt, hvordan Tage Nielsen formåede både at fastholde en sindrig musikalsk tanke og skabe medriven musik. Værket hører ifølge hans forlag til de allermest spillede danske klaverstykker. Bare et kvarter tager hele værket. Med de tre korte karakterstykker, "Mattinale", "Tour de force" og "Kinderszene", som den ene halvdel, der viser hver sin sarte klangverden – og epilogen som den anden halvdel.

Første karakterstykke åbner en lille, lys verden. Et signal af to toner klinger igen og igen som et forvarsel til det andet karakterstykke, der udvikler sig til musik med stadig større fylde, mens den formulerer sig i komplekse, sammensatte vendinger, der løber mod og fra hinanden – næsten som håndfulde af toner, der knyttes i mild vrede. Det tredje karakterstykke får derpå en halvfjerdsersflippet karakter med trillende toner, der flyder sammen i flimrende klangblokke og løfter sig med sitrende overtoner, der skurrer mod hinanden.

Epilogen samler idéerne. Både det helt enkle, det hastige og komplekse samt de sammensmeltende, insisterende klange forenes til en musik, der på én gang virker sikker og søgende, udfordrende og lettilgængelig. Med en ro, der formår at rumme de tre musikalske poler i det lille tankefelt, Nielsen har konstrueret. Det er dramatisk musik, der er let at glide ind i og synke ned i – uden at ét

bestemt klimaks eller en hovedpointe lader sig udpege. I en introduktion til Tage Nielsens musik har musikhistorikeren Jens Brincker foreslået, at de tre karakterstykker udtrykker komponistens kommentar til tre forskellige stilretninger blandt danske komponister i 70'ernes stilforvirring: I førstesatsen den danske *ny enkelhed* – formuleret som det lille to-tone motiv med vuggende kvinter som et dansk særkende, i andensatsen den brutale, europæiske modernisme, som Nielsen i noderne skal spilles "krampagtigt" og endelig peger tredjesatsen frem mod fremstormende, amerikanske minimalisme. Det kunne sagtens være rigtigt.

At skrive musik, der både er fængende og interessant – og samtidig med et intellektuelt glimt i øjet – ville passe fint på den fornemmelse, man sidder tilbage med efter endt lytning af dette album.

De to værker fra 1990'erne klinger med en romantisk eftertænksomhed. De bare 12 minutter, horntrioen *Trio semplice* fra 1997 varer, giver et kig tilbage mod den wienerklassiske musik med tre instrumenter i indbyrdes balance. Stemningen er afklaret og rolig, med diskret søgende musik i første sats, hvor horn, violin og klaver udfolder hver deres rolle – som et lille kammerskuespil. Violinen er ilter og forjaget, hornet har en blød, melankolsk melodi og klaveret lægger krydrede klangblokke efter hinanden i gå-tempo. Halvvejs bytter de roller, alt imens det samlede klangbillede bliver mere og mere fortættet. Anden sats er også søgende, men her er verden længselsfuld og lidt tåget, hvor instrumenterne kan mødes med deres forskellige egenskaber og danne en smuk, enkel kommunikerende musikverden – ikke ulig en lille flok mennesker, der går rundt og taler sammen om

det, der betyder noget for dem.

A Winter's Tale er mindre anlagt et lille stykke for klarinet og klaver skrevet over et par vintermåneder i 1994. Næsten en bagatel bygget af en simpel, småløbende figur, som klarinetten spiller igen og igen og laver variationer over, mens klaveret lægger rolige vinterklange nedenunder, når det da ikke lige akkompagnerer de dansende blæsere. Musik med enkle, men gennemførte idéer.

Tage Nielsen kunne virkelig meget med få midler. *Tre Shakespeare-fragmenter* for sopran, obo, cello og klaver fra 1978 varer knap 10 minutter i alt, men formår alligevel at opbygge en voldsom dramatisk spænding i lydbilledet. Det første fragment, "How All the Other Passions Fleet to Air", er nogle af den skønne Portias linjer i *København i Venedig* om kærlighed, frygt og grøn jalousi – på mindre end fire minutter. Det næste fragment, "Love Is Merely a Madness" fra komedien *Som man behager*, er helt anderledes lys og munter i sin lette konstatering af kærlighedens natur. Det sidste fragment, "Whither Should I Fly", er tilbage i tragedien, i *Macbeth*, hvor Lady Macduff afmægtigt må konstatere, at hun er i en verden, hvor ondt belønnes, og det gode blot er en dum fejl. Så hvorfor begræde at hun intet har gjort? Isnende koldt iscenesat af Tage Nielsen med ganske få midler.

Improvisation og fuga for klarinet, cello og klaver fra 1983 går endnu en ny vej. Trods titlen er der tale om et fuldt nedskrevet værk, der nok bare skal lyde improviseret. I første del er de tre instrumenter søgende, ude af tempo og fabulerende melodisk – netop som tre improviserende musikere uden blik for at ramme hinandens

indsatser. Helt modsat bliver det så til en fuga – med lidt barokke undertoner – i anden del, hvor de melodiske løb i en strammere komposition kommenterer hinanden som i 1700-tallet og lader sig udsmykke med triller og slørende småtoner som rester af en svunden tid.

De to tidlige klaverværker på albummet, både *Klaversonate, op. 3* fra Nielsens pure ungdom og *To nocturner* fra 1960-61, fortæller med raffineret klaverspil en historie om Nielsen som pianistisk komponist. Han var selv habil ved et flygel – allerede som 15-årig stillede han op i en konkurrence med en sats fra en klaverkoncert af Beethoven – og man kan sagtens mærke, at det er musik, der ligger godt i fingrene. Hvor klaversonaten klinger lidt som heftig nyklassik à la Bartók eller tidens store danske klaverprofessor Herman D. Koppel, mærker man stormen fra den europæiske modernisme i *To nocturner*. Kender man berømte nodebilleder af en berygtet serialist som Stockhausen, vil man nikke genkendende til synet af de fem minutters musik af Tage Nielsen. Tempo, styrke og rytmer skifter næsten for hvert sekund med det resultat, at musikken bliver til punkter på en flade mere end sammenhængende musik. Men der er nu alligevel noget næsten venligt og ikke-modernistisk over de småpludrende nodefigurer. Og så ved vi, at vi med Nielsens egne ord befinder os i en musikverden, hvor der hersker et vist selvpålagt mådehold.

Nickie Johansson er lyrisk sopran uddannet ved Syddansk Musikkonservatorium. Hun har opbygget en succesrig solokarriere og optrådt på scener som Den Ny Opera, Den Fynske Opera, Valdemars Slot Sommeropera og Øresundsoperaen. Hun har sunget roller som Pamina i *Tryllefløjten*, Donna Elvira i *Don Giovanni*, Serpetta i Mozarts *La finta giardiniera*, Belinda i Purcells *Dido and Aeneas*, Annina i *La traviata* og Drusilla i Monteverdis *Poppeas kroning*. Hun har også optrådt som solist med flere danske symfoniorkestre, herunder Copenhagen Phil, hvor hun har sunget værker som Carl Nielsens *Fynsk forår* og Orffs *Carmina Burana*. Samtidig har hun markeret sig i samtidsmusikken, særligt med *Émilie Suite* for sopran og orkester af Kaija Saariaho sammen med Århus Sinfonietta.

Violinisten **Signe Madsen** er uddannet ved Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium i Aarhus hos professor Henrik Sachsenskjold og professor Tutter Givskov, hvorfra hun debuterede fra solistklassen i 1992. Hun fortsatte sine studier i London hos David Takeno og i USA hos Ronald og Almita Vamos. Signe Madsen har været gruppeleder for 2. violinerne i Aarhus Symfoniorkester og er i dag aktiv kammermusiker samt 2. koncertmester i Odense Symfoniorkester. Hun har også optrådt som gæstekoncertmester, solist og kammermusiker med blandt andet DR Symfoniorkestret, Randers Kammerorkester, Ensemble MidtVest og Esbjerg Ensemble. Hun er en eftertragtet kammermusiker med repertoire fra barok til samtidsmusik og er koncertmester for Århus Sinfonietta samt medlem af strygekvartetten MIRA.

Cellisten **Brian Friisholm** er uddannet hos professor Harro Ruijsenaars ved Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium og hos Walter Nothas i München. Han debuterede fra Det Jyske

Musikkonservatorium i 2000 med Det Jyske Ensemble under dirigent Thomas Søndergård. Fra 1998 til 2008 var han cellist i Det Jyske Ensemble, og siden 2007 har han været medlem af Aarhus Symfoniorkester. I 2015 blev han en del af Artos Kvartetten. For nylig udgav han soloalbummet *Old Oak, New Acorns* med værker af Bach, Bo Gunge, Jesper Koch og Nikolaj Bentzon. Brian Friisholm er også festivalleder og grundlægger af Artos Festivalen i Aarhus.

Oboisten **Oliver Nordahl** begyndte sin musikalske rejse i Tivoli Garden og har studeret hos blandt andre professor Max Artved, professor Ole-Henrik Dahl, Bjørn Carl Nielsen og Joakim Dam Thomsen. Han har deltaget i masterclasses med oboister som François Leleux, Gordon Hunt, Hans-jörg Schellenberger og Jacques Tys og debuterede fra Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium i 2014. Oliver Nordahl er i dag solooboist i Aarhus Symfoniorkester og underviser ved Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium. Han har virket som solooboist i alle de danske symfoniorkestre og mange nordiske orkestre og har været solist med blandt andet DR Symfoniorkestret, Odense Symfoniorkester og Aarhus Symfoniorkester. Han har modtaget adskillige priser, herunder J.C. Hempels Musikpris, Sonnings Talentpris og Aennchen og Eigil Harbys Fonds Legat.

Mathias Kjøller begyndte på Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium i Aarhus i 2004, hvor han studerede hos John Kruse, og i 2007 vandt han pladsen som soloklarinettist i Aarhus Symfoniorkester. Han fortsatte sine studier i København hos Lee Morgan og i Los Angeles hos Yehuda Gilad. I 2011 blev han udpeget som 2. soloklarinettist i DR Symfoniorkestret, men vendte tilbage til Aarhus Symfoniorkester i 2013. Samme år vandt han 2. prisen

ved Carl Nielsen Klarinetkonkurrencen. Som solist har Mathias Kjøller optrådt med orkestre som Copenhagen Phil, Odense Symfoniorkester og Aarhus Symfoniorkester. Han er modtager af flere priser, blandt andet Sonnings Talentpris, Victor Borges Musikpris og Statens Kunstfonds Unge Elite-legat. I 2018 albumdebuterede han med værker af Schumann, Reinecke, Debussy, Berg og Corigliano på Orchid Classics.

Flemming Aksnes er født i Norge og er i dag solohornist i Aarhus Symfoniorkester. Han begyndte sine studier hos Paul Farr i Stavanger, og tre år senere fortsatte han studierne hos professor Frøydis Ree Wekre på Det Norske Musikkonservatorium i Oslo, hvorfra han har en kandidatgrad i horn og kammermusik. Siden da har han suppleret sine færdigheder hos hornister som Gail Williams, Rex Martin, Radek Baborak og andre. Han har været solist flere gange med skandinaviske orkestre og haft plads som 3. horn i DR Symfoniorkestret, 1. horn hos Malmø Operaen og dybdehorn i Det Kongelige Kapel. I 2007 blev Flemming Aksnes ansat i Aarhus Symfoniorkester. Han har flere gange været solist med Aarhus Symfoniorkester, og spiller jævnligt kammerkoncerter i forskellige konstellationer.

Pianisten **Erik Kaltoft** er uddannet på Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium, Aarhus, med senere studier i Frankrig hos Yvonne Lefébure. Erik Kaltoft har en omfattende karriere som solist, kammermusiker og akkompagnatør, og som medlem af ensembler som Elsinore Players og LINensemble har han turneret over hele verden. Gennem sine mangeårige samarbejder med Det Jyske Musikkonservatorium, Aarhus Symfoniorkester, Den Jyske Opera og Aarhus Sommeropera har han spillet en stor rolle i det aarhusianske musikliv. Erik Kaltoft har desuden været

kunstnerisk leder af Århus Sinfonietta. Hans store interesse for den ny musik afspejles i hans medvirken ved uropførelser af flere end 200 værker, primært danske. Erik Kaltoft har desuden været professor ved Syddansk Musikkonservatorium i Odense.

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In Memoriam

Hjarne Fessel

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