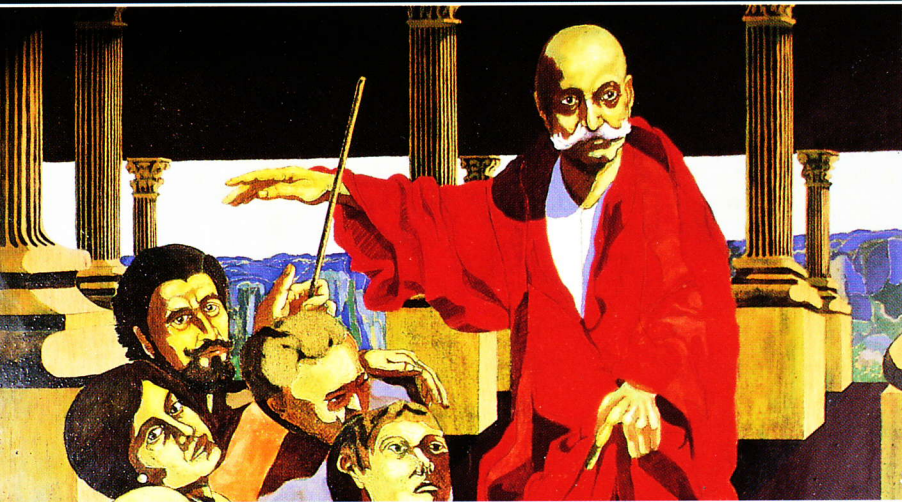


# LANGGAARD

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*The Complete Symphonies Vol. 5*

**Symphonies nos. 10 · 11 · 12**



**Ilya Stupel**

*conducts*

**Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra**

## **Rued Langgaard**

(1893 - 1952)

- 1 **Symphony no. 10** (1944/45) BVN 298 29:22  
“**Hin Torden-Bolig**” Yon Dwelling of Thunder (Manuscript)
- 2 **Symphony no. 11** (1944/45) BVN 303 5:59  
“**Ixion**” (Manuscript)
- 3 **Symphony no. 12** (1946) BVN 318 7:42  
“**Hélsingeborg**” (Manuscript)
- 4 **Sfinx** (1909-10/1913) BVN 37 8:32  
Tone Poem for orchestra. (Wilhelm Hansens Musikforlag)

## **Ilya Stupel**

**Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra**

BVN refers to: Bendt Viinholdt Nielsen: Rued Langgaard's Compositions.  
An Annotated Catalogue of Works. Odense Universitetsforlag 1991.

**Rued** (Rud) Immanuel **Langgaard** was born in Copenhagen on 28th July 1893, the only child of the composer and pianist Siegfried Langgaard (1852 - 1914) and his wife, the pianist Emma Langgaard, née Foss. He grew up respecting the classical-romantic tradition in Danish music, which spanned from Niels W. Gade to Horneman, and admiring foreign composers such as Wagner and Liszt. Siegfried Langgaard had studied with Liszt for two periods during 1878 - 79, and the piano concerto he composed was the first instance of the great late-romantic concerto in Denmark.

Rued was given his first piano tuition by his mother aged only five, and within two years he had mastered Chopin's mazurkas and Schumann's Davidsbündler-Tänze. His father then took over the training of the young boy, who at about this time produced his first compositions. His further theoretical studies took place at the Horneman Conservatoire of Music, and he studied the violin and organ with Messrs. C. Petersen and G. Helsted respectively.

Langgaard's first public appearance was at a recital in Copenhagen's Marmorkirken in 1905, at which he improvised at the organ. Grieg was present and expressed his admiration for the prodigy. His *début* as a composer came in 1908 with the choral work *Musae trium-*

*phantæ*, which he had completed two years earlier, but it was not well received. During the same year he commenced work on his first symphony which was given its first performance in 1913 by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under no less a figure than Max Fiedler. The symphonic poem *Sfinx* was premiered at the same concert, which thus established Langgaard as a highly-gifted and extremely promising young composer.

After the death of Langgaard *père* in 1914, the young man's mother became the focal point of his life, watching and (over-)protecting her remote and introverted son's artistic development. In a letter to a family friend the lady quoted her son as follows: "I (Rued Langgaard) want to wander on sacred paths, paths open not unto mankind but unto the spirit alone. Earthly spheres are too low for me; human emotion, in so far as it adheres to the body, too imperfect". Evidence indeed of a sensitive and original young person!

Three months after the death of his father Langgaard made his conducting *début* at the Copenhagen Music Society. During this period he was also assistant organist at the Marmorkirken and Garnisonskirken churches while, as a composer, the years from 1910 to the early 1920's were his most productive and artistically successful. He was awarded a

number of grants as well as a life-long annual bursary from the Danish government. Between 1920 and 1923 he travelled to Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy, conducting his own works (the 4th symphony in Heidelberg and Darmstadt) and hearing the interpretations of others (the 2nd symphony in Vienna, in 1922). It was also at this time that he began to withdraw from the established Danish, or rather Copenhagen, musical life. A series of vehement attacks by his mother on the new musical ideals of the age dragged Langgaard and his late-romantic idiom into the struggle between what was seen to be performable and what was no longer considered *comme il faut*. The new purist attitude to church music similarly left Langgaard's subjective and evocative artistry out in the cold. While his artistic ability was of course all his own, there can be little doubt that his domineering parents, with their roots in the earlier generation's esthetic ideals, and in particular his father's theosophical beliefs, left the young Langgaard in a situation that was to the benefit of neither himself nor Danish music in general. He had - like the hero of an inverse Hans Christian Andersen fairy-tale - turned from a white duckling into an ugly swan.

His mother died in 1926 and, one year later, Langgaard married Valborg Constance Tetens, who was two years his sen-

ior and who had been living with the family for four years. Apart from a brief tenure as organist at the church of Christiansborg Castle in Copenhagen from 1926 to 1929 his applications for a permanent position as an organist were in vain.

During the 1930's Langgaard's output, which by then totalled more than 200 works, began to fall dramatically. Apart from the revision of the 5th symphony only one major work - *Messis*, a drama for organ in three "evenings" - appeared during this period. In 1927 he founded his own Classical music Society, in order to 'counterbalance the horrors of modern music', but it came apart after only three concerts.

In 1940, at the age of 47, he was made organist at the cathedral of the small West Jutland town of Ribe, an appointment he himself considered his final banishment from Copenhagen musical life. A large number of his liturgical organ works were composed in Ribe, as were the last seven symphonies. Much of his production from this latter period were to remain unperformed, among them the 16th and last symphony, composed the year before his death on 10th July 1952.

After her husband's death Constance Langgaard made a great effort to bring order and system to the wealth of music he had left, and her list was the only catalogue in existence until Bendt Viinholt

Nielsen in 1991 published his complete, annotated catalogue on Odense University Press. Upon Constance Langaard's death in 1969 the composer's works were entrusted to a foundation.

Langaard's output was prodigious. The total of more than 400 works, including adaptations, arrangements and numerous revisions and reworkings are difficult to survey. The symphonies were performed but a few times: many received their first performances only several years after Langaard's death, partly because only a few of them were ever printed. The music is powerful and direct, but the many revisions of the large-scale works in particular failed to tighten up their form, or limit the sudden and abrupt outbursts. It is at once full of contrasts and primitivist, if also invariably genuinely human in its constant swings in mood. As a late-romantic Langaard was not after the merely ostentatious and calculated breadth of a Tchaikovsky or a Rachmaninov, but more the immediate and pure sentiment such as chaotically seized him as he composed.

His skill in orchestration was no less than masterly and, without regard to any orchestral difficulties, he created quite unexpected sonorities and harmonic effects based on the classical ideal he never betrayed. This goes not just for the 16 symphonies: the piano and organ works

too take the maximum advantage of the possibilities of their instruments. The chamber music and the more than 150 songs show great melodic inventiveness paired with a keen poetic sensibility.

The works from between 1910 and 20 are for the most part influenced by the great late-romantic manifestations of the time, and both Richard Strauss, Wagner and others are hinted at. Towards the 1930's there is a shift towards a more subdued, refined expressiveness with a clear, transparent structure. The great orchestral piece *Sfærernes Musik* (The Music of the Spheres) would be an example. Starting with the third symphony the symphonies tend to be of one movement, varying in length from half an hour to just six minutes. During the early period nature was a great inspiration to Langaard - his family's summer holidays in Sweden in particular were to leave their mark on his music - but before long this lyricism was to fuse with an almost overpowering sense of religion, where his contestation of (and fascination with) the triumph of evil over good, the struggle between light and dark, God and Satan, and fear of the inferno and perdition were to find powerful expression in his music. In no piece does he demonstrate his humane concern and basic philosophy more forcefully than in the biblical opera *Antikrist* (Antichrist), recognized

as being one of his masterworks.

Thanks to his absolute mastery of the orchestra, enabling him to compose complicated *divisi* for the strings, prescribe doublings in the wind section (where frequently the piccolo and E flat clarinet are to sound together, for instance) and the eclectic selection of percussion instruments of which he avails himself, Langgaard was easily carried away by his emotions and in many of his major works he anticipates composers such as Ives, Hindemith and Messiaen. But wherever Langgaard found his inspiration, his music was never less than religious: it was through his compositions that he fought his religious struggle. At the same time, despite the bizarre titles and programme notes some of the works bore - strange word combinations of his own invention, and onomatopoeic words as headings for the works - his music is also absolutely "pure" music. An example of his choice of words would be the direction to play something "white-hot"; among his tempo indications are to be found "furioso mortifero", "schnervole" (mockingly) and "pesante colerico". Other replacements for the more common character indications included those inspired by nature, such as "Forest Roar", "Brightening Weather" and "Thunderclouds". Such ambiguous titles might create the impression that Langgaard's music is little more

than the undisciplined music of ecstasy, but in fact he is always in control of the physical framework of his settings, and as a symphonic poet he is a great storyteller. But in the symphonies - which would be more properly classed as symphonic poems, as they are not in a classical sense symphonic of form - his choice of title and descriptions frequently creates more confusion than clarification.

Langgaard has been criticized for recycling often fairly large chunks of earlier pieces in new works, but he could see nothing wrong in returning to emotions and moods that held him on earlier occasions and quoting them in new works where the message he was trying to get across was the same. These emotions are easily recognized given Langgaard's clever utilization of all the orchestra's possibilities: from the ironic and sarcastic to the transfigured, appealing and profoundly fervent. Langgaard mastered the harmonic tonal idiom to perfection, and saw in it the enduring capacity of music to affect the human spirit.

His mission went through music and when he sat composing, frequently very early in the morning, the music would seize him so that the end result - however pastiche-like and rhapsodic it might at times seem - always bore witness to an honest and genuine human struggle, one that leaves no-one untouched.

## Symphony no. 10

“Yon Dwelling of Thunder”

Initial sketches of the symphony were made in Ribe between 8th and 18th August 1944, and Langgaard completed the orchestration on 20th February the following year. The work's title originates from the description by the Danish poet Blicher of the rocky peninsular in Southern Sweden called *Kullen* as, “that rock... dwelling of wind and thunder”. During his childhood and youth Langgaard spent many summers at Kullen and was much taken by the magnificent and varied landscape there.

The symphony's motto is adapted from a line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: “What if it tempt you... to the dreadful summit of the cliff.” The line itself is Horatio's warning to Hamlet just as the Prince of Denmark is to meet his father's ghost on the ramparts of Kronborg Castle at Elsinore, from which the silhouette of the cliff of Kullen can be seen on the other side of the sound separating Denmark and Sweden. In one sketch Langgaard indeed named the work the “Kronborg-Kullen Symphony”, and in another the Shakespeare motto is denoted the “Kullen quotation from Hamlet”. Yet apparently Langgaard decided to preclude any narrow, geographic-programmatic reading of the work, for in

the event he chose for a title Blicher's less precise and more connotative words, and abandoned the descriptive subtitles he had given the different sections of the single movement symphony.

This symphony, all of whose motifs derive from the introductory horn theme, is probably the single Langgaard orchestral work which displays the influence of Richard Strauss most clearly. Wagner, too, would appear to have inspired certain passages: among the subtitles under consideration was “The Flying Dutchman over Kullen”. In orchestral terms this, the longest of the single movement symphonies, attains its own, personal coloration from the use of not less than three piccolos and five clarinets in an otherwise unextravagant scoring. In 1947 the conductor Launy Grøndahl made the first studio performance with the Danish Radio Orchestra.

## Symphony no. 11 "Ixion"

This very short symphony, or rather symphonic mood, ranks as one of the 20th century's most unusual and original pieces. More than perhaps any other single composition this feverish, intense movement reveals Langgaard's horror and desperation.

The instrumentation, with its large symphonic forces, expanded percussion and piano, borders on the unrealistic in certain passages. Towards the end Langgaard even calls for four bass tubas, "to be positioned at the front of the rostrum".

A number of different titles have been appended to the work, among them "Eternal War", "Sun Terror", "Burning Sun", "Under Satan's Sun", "War of the Phantom Ship", "As Lightening is the Second Coming" and "The Devil Himself". Langgaard sent the score to the broadcasting network with a vain request for a performance and refused from that day onward to take it back. Only after his death was it entitled "Ixion" by Constance Langgaard, on the basis of an unreasoned note from her husband's hand. Ixion is the name of a figure from Greek legend who for his hubris was tied to a constantly-rotating, flaming wheel in the land of the dead.

The symphony was not performed un-

til 1968 when the Odense Municipal Orchestra gave it a studio performance under Aksel Wellejus.

## Symphony no. 12 "Hélsingeborg"

Langgaard started to work on this symphony on 6th August 1946 and only thirteen days later he completed the score, saying "My Symphony no. 1 all over again, but in *concentrated* form." With a reduction from the more than 60 minutes of the first symphony to the just eight of the twelfth, concentrated would seem to be the operative word. The first symphony is in fact not directly quoted in the later work, although there is some similarity between certain of the motifs of the two.

The title *Hélsingeborg* refers to the town in southern Sweden, across the Sound from Hamlet's Kronborg, and in a foreword to the score Langgaard noted, "Hél-singeborg from 'Hel' where the Goddess of Death dwells, keeping an eye on the slackers. Helsing, the Swedish term for Hell!"

Langgaard's efforts to have his work performed and preferably broadcast by the state radio system may seem anomalous given that he submitted the score for consideration with the words, "...to be on the safe side I have termed my 12th symphony 'unfit for performance', but I don't really mean it". The symphony had

to wait until 1977 for a studio performance by the Ålborg Municipal orchestra. Two years later it was given, in Helsingborg, at a joint concert of the Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra.

The symphony's tempo directions are pure Langgaard: Furiously! Wildly! Amok! The rather abrupt conclusion to the work is explained by Langgaard's final direction: A composer explodes (!)

## Sphinx

Sphinx was first performed at the same concert as the first symphony, under Max Fiedler in Berlin. The work amply demonstrates its sixteen-year-old composer's skill at orchestration, and doubtless impressed the German audience. Prior to the performance Langgaard revised and reworked some of the orchestra parts, and it was this revision that appeared in print form the publishers Wilhelm Hansen in 1914.

Langgaard used as a motto for the work a poem by the Swedish lyricist Victor Rydberg, but in the altered, printed version he appended, "Sphinx, what is thy command? Only want and radiance, that turned to dust".

In 1914 Langgaard conducted the first Danish performance at the Music Society

in Copenhagen, and two years later he gave it again, in Stockholm. It is one of the few works that were performed regularly during his lifetime, mostly by Launy Grøndahl, but Sphinx was also conducted by the international figure Nicolai Malko.

The producer would like to thank the following individuals and foundations: Messrs. Sten Uldal and Bendt Viinholt Nielsen.

Langgaard Fonden

Hotelejer Andreas Harboes Fond

Konsul George Jorck og hustru Emma Jorck's Fond

Johanne og Ejnar Flach-Bundegaards Fond.

*©Jesper Buhl*

English translation: Per Sommerschild.

**Ilya Stupel** - a rising star in the musical firmament who has been described as one of the greatest conducting talents in the world - was born on 13th December 1949 in Vilnius, Lithuania. He grew up in a family whose rich musical traditions went back for several generations. He first started playing the piano aged only three, and was referred to as a child prodigy after he had joined the Conservatory in Vilnius. In 1957 Ilya Stupel moved to Poland where he continued his musical training; at the same time he was engaged as assistant to the famous conductor and teacher Bohdan Wodiczko of the Katowice Radio Symphony Orchestra (WOSPR). Stupel's Jewish descent has had a strong bearing on his fortunes, and every time his career has seemed to be in the ascendant he and his family have been forced to tear up their roots and start again in another country. So it was that in 1968 Stupel and his family left Poland and settled in their present home country, Sweden.

After comprehensive studies in Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Italy (conducting, composition, piano and jazz) Stupel devoted himself to composing and to his new appointment as conductor at the Malmö Municipal Theatre. After a number of years of work in Scandinavia (as Head of Music at the theatre

in Helsingborg and appearances in Malmö, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Copenhagen, Aalborg, Aarhus etc.) and beyond (U.S.A., Spain, France), he was in 1990 appointed Head of the renowned Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra in Lodz, Poland, which has worked with such conductors as Stokowsky, Kletzki and Khatchaturian.

Critics have declared unanimously that Stupel's great strength as a conductor is his ability, by means of his unorthodox interpretations, full of vitality and sheer musicianship, to reach out to every single member of his audience, as witness the enthusiasm that greets all his performances and follows him from appearance to appearance.

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and the Artur Rubinstein  
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Piano Concerto no. 3  
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**Langgaard**  
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**Langgaard**  
Symphonies no. 2 and 3  
DACOCD 405

**Langgaard**  
Symphonies no. 4 and 6  
DACOCD 406

**Langgaard**  
Symphonies no. 5, 7 and 9  
DACOCD 407

**Langgaard**  
Symphonies no. 10, 11 and 12  
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Langgaard: Symphonies nos. 10 · 11 · 12  
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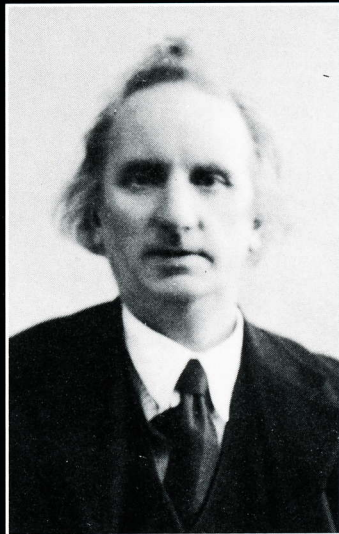
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