

Herman D. Koppel - A Musical Polymath

There are three elements in my art and my life - the creative, the practical, and the pedagogical - that I strive constantly to bring into harmony. This demands considerable strength; I teach, I play, I compose, my days are full, 24 hours seem insufficient, but if the inspiration is sufficiently strong even the pressure from the outside world will eventually find its way onto the music paper, in spite of every physical and psychological barrier. In 1966 Herman D. Koppel gave this description of himself. The description would have been equally apt 30 years earlier or 20 years later since it mirrors the fact that for more than half a century Koppel managed to be among the best, as pianist and teacher as well as composer. In the 18th and 19th century, this was common practice, but in our modern age, it is highly unusual. Herman D. Koppel's personal and artistic repertoire was enormous. He would get up at five in the morning in order to compose before making breakfast for his children, as was his custom. Having got through these basic tasks, he felt ready to tackle the business of the day. He created more than 250 compositions ranging from symphonies and oratorios to short, pedagogical pieces, film music, and the popular song, Sangen om Larsen (The Song about Larsen). Besides covering a wide spectrum of musical styles Herman D. Koppel also managed to embrace two widely different cultures. The son of Jewish immigrants Koppel grew up with the conflict between Judaism with its rigid rules and strict regularity and an increasingly individualistic secularised Denmark. Isak Koppel - Herman D. Koppel's father - was a tailor, a Polish Jew who taught his children that politeness and industriousness were sine qua non for success in life. Herman D. Koppel did not choose to become an artisan like his father, and later in life, he even gave up his membership of The Jewish Community, but he still adhered to his father's rule of conduct throughout his life. Herman was the first-born of Isak and Manja Koppel, and even before his birth on October 1, 1908, they had bought him a piano. Neither of the parents played, and music did not play a more prominent role in their home than in other homes of the period, but both parents saw the profession of pianist as one that might lead to fame and wealth. Manja Koppel had a beautiful singing voice and it is from one of her songs that Herman D. Koppel has borrowed the theme for the only work of his which links up with his Jewish roots: the string trio, Variationer over en jødisk Folkedans (Variations on a Jewish Folkdance, 1932). Herman had his first piano lessons at five, and when he was twelve, he started improvising, and composing short pieces, that were written down in slim, black music-books. In 1925, seventeen year old, Herman D. Koppel became a pupil of Rudolph Simonsen, one of the leading pianists of the time, and in a few months, Simonsen had prepared him to take the entrance examination admitting him to the Copenhagen Conservatory. For his examination, he played the third movement of Bach's Italian Concerto and a little piece from one of his own music-books, Gammel Dans (An Old Dance), a small composition in three parts in a cheerful, popular strain. Carl Nielsen, who was on the admittance board, went up

to Koppel and looked with interest over his shoulder while he was playing. When Koppel had finished playing Carl Nielsen exclaimed, "You have an excellent sense of form, Mr. Koppel". Forty years earlier Niels W. Gade, the dominant figure in Danish musical life at the time, had said the same to the young Carl Nielsen.

Carl Nielsen

Carl Nielsen and his music were lifelong sources of inspiration to Herman D. Koppel. "Not that I have deliberately imitated his music, but I have always felt committed to, and, in a positive sense, dependent on the standards, musical and ethical, which he laid down for compositional work. As a pianist, moreover, I have played his music more often than that of anyone else". For his debut in March 1930, he played Carl Nielsen's Tema med Variationer (Theme and Variations, 1917), and for his first performance as a professional pianist - October 1930 - the programme consisted exclusively of works by Carl Nielsen. The ring was closed in June 1995 at a magnificent concert in Louisiana art museum, celebrating his 65th anniversary as a pianist, when Koppel played all of Carl Nielsen's great piano works. Herman D. Koppel's opus 1, Sonata for Piano in E minor (1928), contains many echoes of Carl Nielsen especially in the first lyrical movement in which melodic simplicity is a dominant characteristic. The angular, third movement, however, with its subtly original rhythmical pattern, is very much Koppel's own. In the autumn of 1928 Herman D. Koppel worked as a pianist for the rehearsal of Nielsen's Hymne til Kunsten (Hymn to Art) - a grand cantata for chorus and wind instruments - that was to be performed, together with Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto, in the newly opened Forum in Copenhagen. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the work; he borrowed the score, and obtained Nielsen's permission to attend the rehearsals. This brought him much closer to Nielsen, and the two men saw a good deal of each other after this. Koppel played to Nielsen the whole programme of his 1930 piano recital before the actual performance. Koppel was one of the few pianists of his generation who had had close personal contact with Nielsen, and he saw it as an important mission to perform his music. Thus, he became the Carl Nielsen interpreter par excellence among pianists. With their integrity, lucidity, and pianistic thrust, Herman D. Koppel's recordings of the piano works of Carl Nielsen are among the most authoritative.

The Big Three

Herman D. Koppel made no secret of his likes and dislikes among the composers of his time. As early as 1932, when he was 23 years old, he wrote a long article in Dansk Musiktidsskrift in which he drew enthusiastic attention to Strawinsky and Bartok while utterly rejecting Webern. With age, he moderated his tone, but he remained faithful to his models: Carl Nielsen first and foremost, but also Strawinsky, Bartok, and Prokofiev. His choice of repertoire is evidence of this. As a

teacher of numerous pianists he was anxious that they should all become acquainted with the big three: Carl Nielsen, Bartok, and Stravinsky. Further, he showed them respect by composing in a manner, which built partly, at least, on their musical idiom. Take as an example the fugue from *Variationer og fuga* (*Variations and Fugue*, 1928) which shows close affinity with the Neo-Classical style we meet in, for instance, Stravinsky's *Sonata* (1924). Above all, however, *Variationer og Fuga* is an example of the concertante style which Koppel developed and to which he adhered for the rest of his life. The fundamental element is the rhythmical energy, which invests the musical idiom with dynamic force but, at the same time, leaves room for a certain elegiac melodiousness while giving the music dramatic weight. In the *Klaverkoncert nr 1*. (*Piano concerto no.1* 1932) the influence of Bartok is noticeable in the rhythmically aggressive first movement. Here one also notices a certain element of virtuosity, a feature, which was strongly rejected by a functionalist and rationalist zeitgeist, but early in his career, Koppel decided that a certain room for virtuoso display is indispensable. As a pianist, he found this in Stravinsky's *Petrushka* suite, one of his favourite works, which he played at a piano recital in 1932 to the not unqualified enthusiasm of the Copenhagen public. Many - including Rudolph Simonsen, Koppel's teacher - took exception to this kind of music, which, according to them, seemed to cultivate outward sparkle and empty virtuosity.

The Concertante Style

Herman D. Koppel was attracted to the classical concerto form with its solo-tutti division. In 1930, on Carl Nielsen's recommendation, he made his debut in the Tivoli Concert Hall as soloist in Beethoven's *Piano Concerto no. 5*. From then on for more than 60 years, Koppel was among the most sought-after soloists for the performance of piano concerti with a repertoire ranging from Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto no.5*, (Koppel played the harpsichord solo) to Hans Werner Henze's *Piano Concerto no. 2*. Koppel frequently challenged the prevailing taste of the period, and he presented the Danish public with new and hitherto unnoticed concerti. He played Tchaikovsky's highly Romantic *Piano Concerto no. 1*, for the first time in 1933 in the Tivoli Concert Hall. This was the fulfilment of a long cherished dream. He had wanted to play it already as a student at the Conservatory but had been prevented by the puritanical Rudolph Simonsen who insisted that his pupils shun this kind of music. However, such music became increasingly popular with time, so in this Koppel stood up for the general public against the scepticism of the inner circle of Danish musical life. However he was also an enthusiastic ambassador for the new music, presenting such works as Bartok's *Piano Concertos nos. 1-3*, Stravinsky's *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments*, and Jolivet's *Piano Concerto* to the Danish public. Koppel's style, whether he played the great Romantic repertoire or the sober, modern one, was marked by precision and a deep insight into the style and texture of the music. Further, he was unconditionally loyal

to the composer and his work, a characteristic, which lent his musical interpretation a certain severity that compelled respect and guaranteed musical honesty. As a composer, Herman D. Koppel wrote thirteen instrumental concerti - among them four piano concerti - that are often cast in the three movements of the classical concerto: fast-slow-fast. Nevertheless, Koppel's musical idiom is new, his style changing from the rhythmically inciting manner of the early concertos to a pronounced modernist expression in what Koppel himself called free tonality as, for instance, in his *Otte Variationer og Epilog for solo klaver og tretten musikere* (Eight Variations and Epilogue for Solo Piano and Thirteen Musicians, 1972). Among the most extreme of Koppel's works is the *Klaverkoncert nr. 2* (Piano Concerto no. 2, 1938) with its almost percussive treatment of the piano in the first and last movements, that gave the work a martial character according to contemporary critics. Koppel withdrew the work because of its chilly reception, but fortunately, he changed his mind and allowed it to be played at a concert in 1994. To modern ears, the fact that the work was rejected by the critics certainly tells us more about the bigotry of the time than it does about the actual content of the music. *Strygekvarteret nr. 2* (String Quartet no.2, 1939) shows a marked affinity with the above-mentioned piano concerto. It is the motoric force of the third movement, which gives this string quartet its powerful, futuristic character despite the many playful, melodious elements in the three movements.

Brahms

Herman D. Koppel's unprejudiced view of music is reflected in the close kinship he felt with Brahms whose music was regarded as florid romanticism in the 20s and 30s. In 1933, in an article in *Dansk Musiktidsskrift* Koppel writes, "Let us not skip lightly over the Romantic period, but let us penetrate deeper into its essence and discover its worth". In the article, Koppel shows that there is a close connection between Brahms and the modern composers of the new age: Carl Nielsen, Bartok and Stravinsky, and he argues for a rehabilitation of Romantic music as it finds expression in the music of Brahms. He followed his own convictions and played Brahms at his own concerts. In February 1932, at his second piano recital, he played one of Brahms's major works for piano: the *Handel Variations* (1861). In the years following this, he played Brahms regularly, solo piano works as well as chamber music and the two piano concerti. The robustness, which is characteristic of Brahms's music, had a direct appeal to Koppel's musicianship, and there are many traces of this in his own works e.g. *Klaverkvintet* (Piano Quintet , 1953) with its classical use of motif, its clear form, and its thrilling expressivity which is both modern and firmly rooted in tradition. Koppel's music builds on the very principles, which characterize the music of Brahms: insight, concentration, and respect for the musical form. The feeling of close affinity with Brahms remained with Koppel to the end. When he was close to 90 and no longer able to play or

compose as he wanted to, he used to listen to Brahms's Symphony no. 4, "it has it all".

Genre-breaking

As a composer, Herman D. Koppel was mainly self-taught. He had had some instruction in orchestration and compositional theory at the conservatory, but apart from this, he learnt from other composers' works and from the orchestration manuals of Berlioz and Richard Strauss, which were among the most important books in his library. Because of his lack of schooling, Koppel had to use the trial and error method, often imitating the great composers of the time, as for example in *Symfoni nr 1* (Symphony no.1, 1930), which was generally cut to pieces by the critics. Later, Koppel dissociated himself from this work and from his *Koncert for Violin og Orkester* (Violin Concerto, 1929) marking both works with the label, "Not to be performed". Despite such setbacks, Koppel continued composing with unabated enthusiasm. In the 30s Herman D. Koppel's work as a composer shows some influence from the intellectual leftism of the day. Without paying lip service to the movement in any way, he still created a series of works, which met the movements demands, that petty-bourgeois norms and the Authorities of the establishment - among them the classical musical institutions - be abandoned. In collaboration with his friend Bernhard Christensen, Koppel wrote, among other things, *Thrymskvadet* (The Thrym Lay), and *Trompetkvadet* (The Trumpet Lay) with texts from The Elder Edda. These pieces, which have the character of functional music intended for amateurs, mingle jazz and modern European music. This also applies to *Syv Tostemmige Stykker for to Violiner* (Seven Pieces in Two Parts for Two Violins, 1931) and he made a veritable hit with the *Here's a Song about a Man Called Larsen* written for the play, *Melodien der blev væk* (The Melody that Was Lost), a piece of social criticism by Kjeld Abel. This song bears witness to Koppel's musical flair and to his instinctive understanding of the popular tradition as was practised by street musicians. *Melodien der blev væk* had its first performance in 1935, and became an immediate success. In fact, this was the first time that Koppel really made money as a composer. The money was indeed welcome as that same year Herman married Vibeke Clausen-Bruun, sister of the violinist Else Marie Bruun who, a couple of years earlier, had married Herman's brother Julius, also a violinist. Vibeke came from an ordinary Christian Danish background, a fact which was strongly resented by Herman's parents who regarded it as a catastrophe that their first-born should marry a non-Jew. This led to a break between Herman and his parents. Despite the fact that, for several years, Herman did not have any contact with his family - except for his brother Julius - he kept close contact with the Jewish community and had many friends among Jewish musicians as well as being the leader of the Jewish male choir from 1937-41. After the success of *Melodien der blev væk*, Herman D. Koppel wrote the music for the ballet *Den Tykke Mand* (The Fat Man, 1936-37). Because of its anti-capitalist angle,

the work fell into discredit with the increasingly nazi-dominated authorities and was not performed. The music for the ballet has been played subsequently, and it turns out to be rhythmically inciting orchestral music with an emphasis on wind instruments and percussion as solo instruments, and with elements of jazz, modernist rhythms, circus music, and operetta travesty. These different stylistic expressions are skilfully gathered together in a story-telling musical idiom, which inspires bodily movement, and bears witness to Koppel's flair for writing theatre and film music. Throughout the years, he had around a hundred commissions of this kind, which certainly enhanced his compositional skill, this type of work demanding strict timing and control over the emotional tone. His unprejudiced relations with different musical expressions made Herman D. Koppel impatient with compositional systems the purpose of which was to generate music according to a certain technical formula. This does not mean, however, that he accepted inconsistency in the creative process, about which he says, "in the first place I look for some kind of foundation, maybe only a few bars, a kind of law that may serve as a starting point for the creative process". This means that each individual work has been created according to its own inner logic, at the same time reflecting other aesthetic trends. This applies particularly to the works, which are predominantly dodecaphonic such as Concertino for strygeorkester nr. 2 (Concertino for String Orchestra no. 2, 1957). The Klaversuite (Piano Suite, 1934) is strongly inspired by the Gamelan music of Bali with its emphasis on the rhythmical, which in Koppel's work acquires an almost magical, incantatory tone, particularly in the second movement. Thus, Koppel is akin to the French composer André Jolivet in his attempt to restore the primitive magical attributes of music to a modern musical idiom. There is no indication that Koppel had any contact with Jolivet at the time of his study tours to Paris in 1933 and -35, but we know that he sought him out later, having played Jolivet's exotic and highly virtuoso Piano Concerto. Koppel's Piano Suite is an original work but typical of its time, and it is the first work of his that was published and played abroad by a foreign pianist. The musical idiom was felt to be so radical that the music critic Povl Hamburger called it a "typical example of the decadence of modern music - nothing but soulless rhythms from beginning to end".

War

In October 1943 Herman D. Koppel fled to Sweden together with Vibeke, his wife, and their two daughters Therese and Lone, born in 1936 and -38 respectively. It was a hairbreadth escape as the Gestapo had already started to hunt down Danish Jews. During the first years of the war in Denmark and the last years in exile in Sweden, Koppel went on composing, and he gave concerts, although the number of engagements dwindled due to his Polish-Jewish origin. Despite impending danger, while still living in an occupied country, Koppel was able to compose, among other things *Sekstet for klaver og blæserkvintet* (Sextet for Piano and Quintet for Wind

Instruments, 1942) a cheerful and diverting work which is among his most popular. "During those years, I never found it difficult to compose. It was as if the music accumulated inside me and found immediate expression the moment I started writing it down". Koppel goes on to say that he felt like a medium through whom the music found expression. This is not to say that Koppel lived and worked completely unmoved by the war. In his Clarinet Concerto (1941), the keynote is dark, and although this is not a programmatic work, it is difficult not to connect it with the war. Koppel exploits the whole range of elegiac possibilities of the clarinet in this work, thereby avoiding the rhapsodic effects one often finds in concertos for woodwind instruments. Back in Denmark after the war, Koppel wrote his Koncert for violin og viola med kammerorkester (Concerto for Violin and Viola with Chamber Orchestra, 1947) and Piano Concerto no.3, (1948) that are both counted among his most important instrumental music. The double concerto, dedicated to and performed for the first time by Herman's brother Julius Koppel and his sister-in-law Else Marie Bruun, is characterized by a lyric tone and an at times almost minimalist use of the orchestra, which lends the concerto a dreamlike quality. The closing rondo is a display of virtuoso musical tightrope-walking. The Piano Concerto no. 3 is a continuation and further elaboration of this line, and with its more than fifty performances, it has become Koppel's biggest classical success. A few years after the first performance Niels Viggo Bentzon, the composer, described the work as "a renewal of the virtuoso 19th century piano concerto. A work like this is without precedence in Danish music". The sumptuous mixture of elegance, rhythmical weight, sophisticated timbre, and smooth artistry of the concerto still merits this characterization.

The Teacher

In 1936 Herman D. Koppel began teaching piano at The Copenhagen Conservatory and from 1954 until his retirement in 1978 he was a professor there. He had numerous private students as well, he taught at The Royal Institute for the Blind, while he had, in between, a number of hopeful, young pianists living in his home in Copenhagen. Despite the fact that Koppel himself felt that he treated his pupils like his children, he, nevertheless, had the reputation of being a strict teacher who made heavy demands on the technical and artistic skill of his students. "Nobody has ever left one of his classes without having concepts like self-discipline, work-discipline, concentration, thoroughness, precision, reflection, imagination, and independence ringing in their ears. These criteria for excellence have left an indelible impression on us all, however frightening they may have seemed during the process of learning. We knew that there was no getting around them". Thus says Anne Øland, one of the many pianists who carry the mark of their encounter with Herman D. Koppel. He demanded great technical skill and an exceptional degree of thoroughness in the preparation of individual works. He himself set the standard, by always working with scrupulous care. Besides investing an enormous amount of

work in his students, he also produced several pedagogical works. His *Halvtreds korte klaverstykker* (Fifty Short Pieces for Piano, 1977) is a kind of functional music, so popular at the time, and it is music, which demands only limited technical skill. In addition, these small pieces reflect Koppel's ability to express himself with terse economy to create small musical gems. On a slightly larger scale, so do works like *Ti Klaverstykker* (Ten Pieces for Piano, 1933), and *15 Miniaturer for Klaver* (15 Miniatures for Piano, 1976).

A Message

Herman D. Koppel took a radical step with his *Fem bibelske sange* (Five Songs from the Bible, 1949). After a few sporadic attempts during the 30s, Koppel now began to compose vocal music in earnest, mainly at the instigation of the Danish tenor, Aksel Schiøtz. Koppel and Schiøtz had worked in close collaboration both before and after the war, and in 1949 after a concert in Esbjerg, Schiøtz asked once again, "why don't you ever write some songs for me?" Not receiving any answer, he reached for the Bible on his bedside table and turned up the Song of Songs. After this interlude, vocal music flowed from Koppel's pen intermittently for many years. During 1949, he wrote four works based on Biblical texts out of a total of twelve works. Among these are *Fire kærlighedssange* (Four Love Songs, 1949) to texts from the Song of Songs, *David's 42nd Psalm* (1960), *Three Songs*, and *Fem bibelske sange* (Five Songs from the Bible). This is his first composition, and already here one notices something new, a new sense of expression. The music is carried by emphatic pith, which does not shun the declamatory or the dramatic. Koppel also wrote songs to non-biblical texts, e.g. *Tre Sange* (Three Songs, 1950), *Fem sange til tekster af P. La Cour* (Five Songs to Texts by P. La Cour, 1957), and *Tre sange*, (Three Songs, 1971). The texts of this last collection by the German-Jewish poet Nelly Sachs describe the terrible fate of the Jews during the Second World War. Koppel's own experiences during the war and, in particular, the sudden realization of what had happened in the German concentration camps acted as a liberating force for a hitherto unknown source of artistic strength brought to the fore by the Biblical texts, as Koppel discovered their potential as texts for vocal music. Paradoxically, immediately after the war Koppel gave up his membership of the Jewish Community, a fact that may indicate that his preoccupation with the fate of the Jews has nothing to do with his religious conviction. Koppel composed, besides the songs, three great works for solo, chorus, and orchestra, *Davidssalmer for tenorsolo, blandet kor, drengekör og orkester*, (The Psalms of David for Tenor Solo, Mixed Choir, Boys' Choir, and Orchestra, 1949), the oratorio *Moses* (1963-64), and *Requiem* (1965-66). With these works, Koppel passes on a message, not as a fully articulated thesis, but by taking sides in the conflict between Good and Evil in the life of human beings. In the Psalms "written to commemorate human suffering during the Second World War 1939-1945", the music moves between the menacing abyss and a jubilant hallelujah. The fear and invocation of the 13th

psalm, expressed in heavy ground bass beats, yields to an exultant sense of deliverance in the 150th psalm, expressed with reverberating brass instruments, cymbals, and tom-toms. Koppel said, "these highly polarized moods ranging from deepest contrition to ecstatic joy contain an inner tension which finds release in musical expression". In the Psalms Koppel accepts the evil in this world, but he finds solace in a religious dimension which transcends death. Whereas The Psalms were marked by existential expressionism, the Moses is epic in character. Central episodes from The Old Testament are unfolded in a monumental style, which may be viewed as a modern staging of the stories of the Bible. Moses is the central figure responsible before God that humankind lives according to the letter of the law as God demanded. A solo soprano, originally sung by Herman's daughter Lone Koppel, constitutes the pivotal point of the oratorio commenting upon and reacting against the conditions offered to mankind in the world of The Old Testament. The Requiem, like Moses, is a monumental work, but the former is marked by a brooding, lyrical mood, which corresponds with the chosen texts, which lack the drama of the story of Moses and the Jewish people. The Requiem is above all a sincere and urgent work, which invites reflection. In certain passages, a dynamic interchange between soloists, choir, and orchestra echoes the antiphonal singing of the early church. The culmination of the large-scale Choral works was Macbeth, (1967-68), Koppel's only opera. At its first performance in 1970 at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, the staging was far from satisfactory. In his previous, large ensemble choral works, Koppel treats universal human problems based on biblical texts. In his opera, based on Shakespeare's Macbeth, he creates a drama of fate in which the universal human feelings are linked to a specific set of characters. The musical idiom, which is marked by spontaneous expressivity, thus becomes directly connected with the individual singers. The opera was coldly received by the press, but the opera has qualities which might warrant a revival in a new and more satisfactory staging. Koppel's encounter with the biblical texts called forth a new sensitivity, which can be traced in Seks sange (Six Songs, 1951) with texts by Poul la Cour, and the song cycle Årstiderne - Syv Sange (The Seasons - Seven Songs, 1957). Altogether, Koppel's vocal music, particularly from the 40s and 50s, has done much to renew the Danish song tradition, which is heavily indebted to the songs of Carl Nielsen.

The Symphonist

In Symfoni nr. 3 (1944-45) and Symfoni nr. 4 (1946) there are hints of the serious note which is so prominent in Fem bibelske sange. In Symfoni nr. 3, composed during the exile in Sweden, "the musical idiom is sombre, coloured by the fear and anxiety of war", according to Koppel. Symfoni nr. 4, although composed after the liberation, is equally marked by an underlying gravity, which makes the music critic Gunnar Heerup place Koppel among "the composers who reject the diverting as definitive musical principle". This development may be traced in works like the

Sonate for klaver, (Piano Sonata, 1950-56) and Klaverkoncert nr. 4, (Piano Concerto no. 4, 1960-63) in which the concertante element is linked with a strikingly serious note. In this, as in the Klaverkvintet (Piano Quintet, 1953), Koppel builds on a classical form, developed by Brahms and others. He treats the rhythmical and melodic motifs with great consistency, and employs a highly developed harmonic complexity, which gives the work a note of compressed power. Symphonies 5-7 contribute substantially to the renewal of the classical symphony. Symfoni nr. 5, (Symphony no. 5, 1955) has a lyrical keynote which is deeply rooted in nature. This in combination with the inherent energy gives the work its individualistic and personal character. With this symphony, Koppel took part in the competition for a new symphonic work to celebrate the opening on May 1st 1956 of the Tivoli Concert Hall. Koppel won the competition, which secured his symphony a prominent position. It also procured him a much-needed, large sum of money. With the birth of Thomas and Anders 1944 and 1947, Koppel's family had grown to six members, all of whom had to be provided for by his work as a teacher, concert pianist, and composer. In Symfoni nr. 6. Sinfonia breve, (Symphony no. 6, Sinfonia breve, 1957) , Koppel turns back to a simple, straightforward style. In a condensed, one-movement sequence, Koppel demonstrates his virtuoso handling of the orchestra while at the same time succeeding in merging highly different elements into an open, symphonic style. Koppel's last symphony, Symfoni nr. 7 (Symphony no. 7, 1961) is by far the weightiest. In this, he makes the orchestra into a medium through which an existential battle finds expression. Like Shostakovich, he employs the symphony as a genre through which he expresses the hope and fear of humanity engendered by the power display of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Koppel's Symfoni nr.7, created during the cold war and with the Second World War fresh in people's memory, is a rare example in Danish music of contemporary realism. From the opening cry throughout the symphony, the serious tone prevails, often with an undertone of something fateful, particularly in the abrupt attacks of the strings, the intensely ticking wind chords, and the quietly unfolding melody. The symphony is proof that although Koppel's music is characterised by a certain joie de vivre and a desire to be heard, his music never becomes mere entertainment. Koppel was no pessimist, but he was true to his time, and it seemed natural to him to write "more pessimistic tunes than optimistic ones".

Discovery

Severity and curiosity existed side by side in Koppel's life, not as opposites but as two different but comparable qualities which together guarantee receptiveness and high quality in his relations with art. A second-generation immigrant from a family with no musical background to speak of, Koppel did not find admittance into Danish musical life particularly easy, a fact that contributed to his life-long, deep respect for the art of music. He worked extremely hard, and everything he did as

both practising musician and creative artist was based on a well-balanced and loyal study of the music and its contents. He shrank from the too personal, which has made some critics term his style, as pianist as well as composer, dry and academic. However, there was never any doubt that his interests were centred on art itself. Occasionally, this turned into a cause of disagreement, particularly in Koppel's collaboration with Aksel Schiøtz. Koppel represented the law i.e. the music on the page, while Schiøtz demanded a certain artistic licence. Koppel regarded curiosity as a fundamental human quality, and it was one of the guiding principles of his own life: "At the piano recitals I have given from time to time I have quite deliberately sought out works and composers which in earlier periods of my life I have avoided". This explains why Koppel as a pianist could embrace such widely different composers as Bach, Tchaikovsky, Schönberg, and Hans Werner Henze. By his unprejudiced approach to his art, Koppel succeeded until late in life in widening his own musical horizon, and in remaining one of the dominant figures of Danish musical life. His work with Schönberg is a good example: In his youth, Koppel had rejected Schönberg's music, finding it "decadent and unhealthy", but when he was seventy, after his retirement in 1978 from the Conservatory, Koppel decided to practise Schönberg's piano works, all of which he later recorded for Radio Denmark. At a series of brilliant Schönberg concerts, which he later gave, he managed to throw new light upon a highly controversial composer by filtering Schönberg's music through his own musician's mind while remaining faithful to Schönberg's intention. While opening his mind for new composers, he yet remained faithful to the heroes of his youth, Carl Nielsen, Stravinsky, Bartok, Prokofiev, and Brahms. In Koppel's old age, however, one composer far outshone all others, namely Mozart. For his first concert in 1930 Koppel had Mozart's Sonata in D major KV 576 on the programme, and in 1994 for one of his last performances he played Mozart's Fantasia in d minor KV 397 with serene thoughtfulness which held great beauty but also great sadness.

International Style

Despite the fact that Herman D. Koppel lived his whole life in Denmark - apart from the years of exile in Sweden - he is not a typical Danish composer, if one leaves the earliest Carl Nielsen-inspired works out of account. The cellist, Erling Blöndal Bengtsson points to an international stamp noticeable in for instance the works for cello, which Koppel composed for him: Ternio for violoncel og klaver, (Ternio for Violoncello and Piano, 1951), Koncert for violoncel og orkester, (Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra, 1952), Sonate for violoncel og klaver, (Sonata for Violoncello and Piano, 1956), and Suite for cello solo, (Solo Suite for Cello, 1971). These, like most of Koppel's other works, bear no specific relation with a Danish musical tradition, but emanate from Koppel's experience as a practising artist. He possesses the musician's firmly rooted knowledge that music must be imparted directly to the audience by means of a certain artistry. There is evidence of this

even in some of his modernist works, e.g. Klavertrio, (Piano Trio, 1971) with its angular melodic and almost pointillistic character. He never loses sight of the concertante element, however, but by virtue of the artistic style, he challenges the individual musician to yield his utmost.

Synthesis

Herman D. Koppel's *Koncert for orkester* (Concerto for Orchestra, 1978), among his weightiest works, is closely related to other great works in the 20th century tradition of expressive, virtuoso orchestral works like Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps* and Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*. During the concerto's four movements, Koppel makes use of a wide register of expression with a certain emphasis on a sombre, dramatic timbre. Even in the dreamingly calm third movement, one may distinguish a passionate undercurrent of smouldering forces waiting to break loose. The concerto bears witness to Koppel's ability to invest the unbridled energy inherent in virtuoso orchestral music with an elegiac undertone. This creates an extra dimension of depth, investing the individual musical layers with new meaning, which works towards a synthesis. The same applies to Koppel's *Forspil til en symfoni*, (Prologue to a Symphony, 1981). With this work, he succeeded in rounding off his career with a flourish: *Forspil til en Symfoni* was written for - and played at - the 25th anniversary of the Tivoli Concert Hall in Copenhagen, and is a prologue to Koppel's own *Symfoni nr. 5* (Symphony no. 5), that was performed at the inauguration of that same concert hall. The prologue as well as the symphony is characterized by an unprejudiced use of various stylistic expressions, which, together with an emphasis on the rhythmical energy, gives the music a playful, entertaining note. In *Symfoni nr. 5* this is coupled with an evocative, lyrical tone whereas in the Prologue Koppel sets to work in a totally different manner. In a grandly expanded fugue, he contrasts the complex with the diverting. The encounter between the two moods does not leave a feeling of pent-up conflict but of dynamic co-existence, which gives the listener a sense of liberation. With *Duo concertante* (1984) for clarinet and piano Koppel picks up the thread to an old love, the clarinet. His interest for the clarinet goes back to his study in 1929 of Carl Nielsen's *Klarinetkoncert* (Clarinet Concerto) and continues with his own *Klarinetkoncert*, (1941), *Variations pour clarinette et piano* (1961), and finally *Trio for Clarinet, Violoncello and Piano* (1986). In *Duo concertante* Koppel quotes his own 40 year old clarinet concerto, and although the two works are widely different they share the same wish to explore the timbre of the clarinet. In the *Klarinetkoncert* Koppel focuses on the elegiac element, whereas in the *Duo concertante* he explores the jarring, and the lyrical, singing quality of the instrument. Add to this - in accordance with the title of the work - a concertante element, which is generated by an, at times, almost percussive piano part, and a rhythmically inciting use of the clarinet as a proper virtuoso instrument. Altogether, this is a sparkingly youthful work full of zest and compositional timing.

Such timing bears witness to the compositional expertise of the, by now, elderly Herman D. Koppel; an expertise which enabled him to compose with striking simplicity and naturalness to great effect. This is evident also in such works as Duo for violin og guitar, (Duo for Violin and Guitar, 1987), Musik for blæseroktet (Music for Wind Octet, 1991), and in Giocattolo (1993), a well-turned game of tag between flute, clarinet, percussion, cello, and piano. Here Koppel has found that playfulness which is at the heart of all chamber music. Herman D. Koppel's last work Memory (1994), for string orchestra, harks back to the past. The work is based on the emotions evoked by the war 1940-45. Memory, with its intense, aggressive idiom is closely linked with the concertante thrust of the compositions of Koppel's youth. However, in this last work, in its quest for beauty, one detects a persistently elegiac mood. In this, there is an echo of the mood of the vocal works of the 40s. Despite the fact that this is instrumental music, it contains a clear message, thus becoming a symbol of the continuity, which, despite the multiplicity, is the distinguishing feature of Herman D. Koppel's life's work. Esben Tange Kristensen Copyright 2001

Herman D. Koppels koncerter

af Mogens Andersen

Koppels tolv værker for soloinstrument og orkester fordeler sig jævnt gennem hans produktion, fra en violinkoncert i 1929 som han siden trak tilbage, og til Otte variationer og epilog for soloklaver og tretten instrumenter i 1973. I de mellemliggende årtier skrev Koppel fire klaverkoncerter, en capriccio for violin og orkester, en kammerkoncert for violin og strygere samt koncerter for klarinet, cello, obo og fløjte. Til solokoncerterne slutter sig dobbeltkoncerten for violin og bratsch og en concertino for violin, bratsch, cello og lille orkester fra 1983. De tre værker fra 1940'erne der udgives her følger lige efter hinanden i rækken af koncerter, men de er alligevel meget forskellige i form og udtryk. Af de fem værker for klaver og orkester er 3. klaverkoncert den mest udadvendte og den hyppigst opførte. Den første klaverkoncert fra 1932 har endnu mindelser om både Carl Nielsen og Stravinskij. Nummer to blev trukket tilbage efter uropførelsen i 1938, der blev mødt med kølige anmeldelser. Koppel har siden kaldt den "et kæmpende værk". Han gik dog med til at spille orkesterpartiet i udgaven for to klaverer i 1994 sammen med dattersønnen Nikolaj Koppel, hvis præsentations-cd som Årets Kunstner 1996 indeholder tredje sats. Fjerde klaverkoncert og de Otte variationer er præget af større eftertænksomhed end nummer tre, der i 1952 fik en indgående og medlevende omtale af den elleve år yngre Niels Viggo Bentzon i Dansk Musiktidsskrift : Om indledningen skriver Niels Viggo Bentzon at "klaverets venstrehandsakkompagnement nok kan opfattes som en Strawinsky-reminiscens, men senere i satsen bliver en væsentlig rytmisk bestanddel i det musikalske,

understreget gennem den symfoniske udnyttelse af hovedtemaet i det store orkestertutti [3'36] . Denne udnyttelse af den oprindelige rytmiserede tuttupræsentation viser koncertens forankring i den klassisk romantiske klaverkoncertlitteratur og er i sit musikalske princip langt fjernet fra Strawinskys musikalske stil (...) Hos Koppel sker der det, at de i den rytmiske periode overtagne stilistiske specialiteter... ophøjes til integrerende bestanddele i en helhedsstil, hvorved traditionen netop fornyer sig så meget, som den kunstneriske balance kan tåle. Netop heri ligger den musikalske værdi i et værk som den tredje klaverkoncert, hvis hele udformning iøvrigt lægger an på de store linier, både hvad angår det orkestrale og selve klaversatsen, der til tider virker helt brahmsk som f. eks. i det første soloindslag i den langsomme sats [2'14] hvor den til grund liggende tradition netop er fornyet så meget, at man ikke er i tvivl om, at den her citerede harmonik er undfanget i det 20. århundrede, selvom den satsmæssige struktur viser en konservativ holdning. Udformningen af den langsomme sats bygger iøvrigt på et modsætningsforhold mellem hovedtemaets "klagende" karakter og den her citerede soloreplik, først præsenteret successivt men dernæst samtidigt [3'57] hvorved en symfonisk spænding opstår, hvis rødder kan søges hos Carl Nielsen (...) men psykisk og rent stilistisk er der ingen lighedspunkter, idet Koppel ved hovedtemaets "slaviske" tone tilfører traditionen en fornyende ingrediens, der sammen med soloreplikens karakteristiske harmonik er de væsentlige kendetegn på stilen i denne langsomme sats. - I sidste sats kaster Koppel sig ud i den burleske tone, som bl. a. har fortilfælde i den hyppigt spillede "Festouverture" for stort orkester. Det virtuose har her overtaget over de rent musikalske kvaliteter (...) balancen mellem det solistiske og det orkestrale overalt i værket er så overbevisende ikke mindst i finalen, der ligesom understreger værkets helhedskategori nemlig som en fornyelse af det 19. århundredes virtuose klaverkoncert. Et værk som dette er uden fortilfælde i dansk musik og er kommet på hvad man kalder et "tørt" sted i nordisk musik overhovedet. - Det rent klavermæssige er sådan set det mindst interessante i værket, idet det er ret clichépræget med reminiscens fra Prokofiev (...) hvorimod størstedelen af det musikalske stof har det "rigtige" forhold til fortiden, nemlig som "omvurdering" af overleveringen lige langt fra pastichen og det stilistiske eksperiment." Allerede i 1949 spillede Koppel koncerten i Paris med Erik Tuxen i fransk radio. Den optagelse der udgives her er transmissionen fra Radiosymfoniorkestrets Hollandsturné 1953. Koppel har fortalt at han her fik "skrappe anmeldelser"; én betegnede koncerten som "rodfæstet i senromantikken med dens undertiden lumre lyrik, og teknisk står den ikke langt fra Liszt" medens andre fandt den for stærkt Prokofiev-påvirket. Alle var dog enige om at Koppels klaverspil var i høj klasse, og i avisen De Volkskrant stod der at han spillede mesterligt. ...Men det var ikke alene som pianist, men også som komponist at han viste en bemærkelsesværdig præstation. Måske var han i de hurtige afsnit for afhængig af Prokofiev (slutningen af rondoen var imidlertid et smukt stykke musik). De mest markant gode afsnit fandtes i midtersatsen." Haarlems Dagblad kaldte Koppel en moderne Liszt,

bortset fra "den motoriske musiceren à la Poulenc (...) Men lysten til det brillante klaverspil...minder om den store Franz. Desuagtet har Koppel gjort sin langsomme midtersats til et interessant forhold mellem et mildt og lyrisk stemt orkester og en egenrådigt herskende solist, som til sidst dog også bliver mere tilpasset og imødekommende." Om koncerten for violin, bratsch og orkester har komponisten fortalt at den var en tak for de mange gange Else Marie Bruun og Julius Koppel havde fremført hans og andre moderne værker. Gennem mange års sammenspil kendte han dem som "to instrumentalister der i eminent grad er afstemt overfor hinanden: hendes perlende spil og hans faste strøg og rytme." Han beskriver begyndelsen af første sats som "en pastoral idyl, hvor de to soloinstrumenter kontrapunktisk vugger gennem et melodiskt landskab" og anden sats som "en springsk rondo, hvor ynden og elegancen dog fortsat dominerer." - Første sats er den længste og stemningsmæssigt mest afvekslende, der først efter en mosaik af stadig mere energiske udladninger genopretter den indledende idyl [4'36]; i en lang kadence minder de to solister om det forudgående, og efter en langsom episode foregriber de den hektiske andensats, før orkestret genopretter idyllen. I anden sats afbrydes danserytmerne først af en kort eftertanke få takter før slutningen. Værket blev uropført 1948 af Tivolis Symfoniorkester dirigeret af Svend Christian Felumb. Den ni år senere opførelse der udgives her blev modtaget med begejstring af både publikum og anmeldere. I Dagens Nyheder beskrev Sigurd Berg værket som "meget charmerende" og omtaler førstesatsens "smukke vekselspil mellem hovedtemaets nydeligt flydende melodiske linje og det stærkt motorisk prægede sidetema. De to solisters fornemme sammenspil kulminerer i den krævende solokadence, som de spillede med et sandt mesterskab." Om den dansende anden sats hedder det at den "viser hen til sydøst-europæisk folkemusik, som vi har lært den at kende gennem Bartok. Det er et højst fængslende værk, som også i aften gjorde stor lykke og skaffede det solistiske ægtepar en lang række fremkaldelser." Julius Koppel er født 1910 og bror til Herman D. Koppel. Han er uddannet på Det kgl. danske Musikkonservatorium som elev af Thorvald Nielsen og havde sin debutkoncert 1932. Julius Koppel optrådte i mange år hyppigt sammen med Herman D. Koppel; ved dennes komponistdebut i 1929 uropførte de Herman D. Koppels 1. violinkoncert. I 1934 uropførte Julius Koppel broderens Capriccio ved en koncert med Det Unge Tonekunstnerselskabs orkester dirigeret af Emil Reesen. Efter nogle år som koncertmester i dette orkester og studierejser i udlandet blev Julius Koppel ansat i Det kgl. Kapel, hvor han var koncertmester fra 1939 til 1979. Han var i mange år lærer ved Det kgl. danske Musikkonservatorium og har bestredet en lang række tillidsposter i musiklivet, blandt andet som kunstnerisk leder af Kammermusikdagene på Hindsgaul Slot indtil de ophørte 1975. Julius Koppel har været virksom som solist med blandt andre Carl Niensens soloviolinværker og som kammermusiker; han stiftede i 1935 Koppelkvartetten, der indtil 1985 koncerterede i Danmark og i udlandet, medvirkede i radio og i gramfonindspilninger af blandt andet dansk musik fra Carl Nielsen til Per Nørgård. Else Marie Bruun, født 1911, søster til Herman D. Koppels hustru

Vibeke. Hun studerede på Det kgl. danske Musikkonservatorium hos Anton Svendsen og Peder Møller og havde sin debutkoncert 1933. Året forinden blev Else Marie Bruun gift med Julius Koppel, som hun efter studierejser i udlandet efterfulgte som koncertmester i Det Unge Tonekunstnerselskabs orkester 1934. Else Marie Bruun var medlem af Det kgl. Kapel 1936-79 og første violin i Koppelkvartetten. Af en lang række udmærkelser kan nævnes Peder Møller-Prisen, Launy Grøndahl-prisen (to gange), Tagea Brandts legat, æresmedlemskab af Kammermusikforeningen m.m.

Duoen Else Marie Bruun & Julius Koppel

Allerede i konservatorietiden optrådte Else Marie Bruun og Julius Koppel sammen i værker for to violiner af Vivaldi og Bach, og de uropførte i 1931 Syv tostemmige stykker af Herman d. Koppel. For violin og bratsch har de uropført Vagn Holmboes Kammerkoncert nr. 9 der var skrevet til dem; for deres indspilning af Mozarts Sinfonia concertante med Mogens Woldike og Det kongelige Kapel (HMV KBLP 18) modtog de Den danske grammofonpladepris 1958. I 1985 modtog de hver en hædersgave af Mogens Woldikes legat. De har haft talrige koncerter sammen i Danmark og Sverige og desuden i Norge, Holland og England, derunder med hyppige opførelser af Herman D. Koppels dobbeltkoncert. Klarinetkoncerten blev til på foranledning af Aage Oxenvad, der nogle år efter at han havde uropført Carl Niensens klarinetkoncert foreslog Koppel at skrive noget for sit instrument. Koppel fortæller at han i 1941 påbegyndte en symfoni, men opdagede at det musikalske materiale egnede sig til et orkesterværk med klarinetten som soloinstrument. Oxenvad fulgte da med i tilblivelsen, og Koppel citerer ham for at sige om sidstesatsen "Det er som en, der en sommerdag glad kommer vandrende hen ad landevejen". Uropførelsen fandt sted ved åbningen af udstillingen Dansk Arbejde i Forum i København 1942 hvor Erik Tuxen dirigerede. Niels Viggo Bentzon skrev i Dansk Musiktidsskrift at det tjente arrangøren til ære at have valgt "netop dette Værk som Repræsentant for dansk Musik idag." I sammenligning med komponistens tidligere værker fandt han at Koppel ved en forenkling af sit stof havde "formået at skabe Genklang udover den snævre Kreds af "Specialister". I sin udførlige analyse citerer Bentzon koncertens åbning der anslår grundstemningen i første sats, og klarinettemaet [2'31] der "i så høj Grad viser K.'s Begavelse som Melodiker (...) et tematisk Indfald, der ikke er helt almindeligt paa hjemlig Grund og i det hele taget vidner denne Sats om hvor langt der allerede er naaet inden for den nye Musik's Omraade. - 2. Sats er problematisk i dette Ords bedste Betydning. Stykket er formet som een stor Improvisation, og Stoffet er her langt vanskeligere at tilegne sig end i Førstesatsen. Musikken ejer her et voldsomt ekspressivt Drag, en ny Tone i dansk Musik...". - "3. Satsen giver Koncerten's psykologiske Løsning. Den venlige, lyse Tone staar her virkningsfuldt til de to foregaaende Satser." Bentzon citerer den indledende hovedidé i klarinetten, dens videreførelse af fløjten ledsaget af strygerpizzicato som

virkningsfuld kontrast [0'29] og indførelsen af en ny ide [2'40] der "ikke siger saa meget i sig selv, men til Gengæld i høj Grad "gennemsyrer" det videre Forløb i Finalen, og formaar at bibringe den nyt rytmisk Liv." Louis Cahuzac (1880-1960) regnedes for en af sin tids bedste klarinettister, hvadenten det gjaldt det klassiske solo- og kammermusikrepertoire eller værker af samtidens komponister, han indspillede således Hindemiths klarinetkoncert med komponisten som dirigent. Cahuzac turnerede over det meste af Europa og kom til Danmark allerede før anden verdenskrig. Han vendte ofte tilbage som solist med danske orkes tre og i sammenspil med danske kammermusikere, blandt andet indspillede han Mozarts A-dur koncert med Mogens Wöldike og Radiokammerorkestret og den første indspilning af Carl Nielsens koncert med John Frandsen og Det kgl. Kapel; sammen med Koppelkvartetten indspillede han Mozarts kvintet på plade og Brahms' kvintet i radio. Cahuzacs opførelse af Koppels klarinetkoncert foregik som en direkte radioudsendelse i 1948, der her er overført fra en privat lakpladeoptagelse. Den forudgående korrespondance tyder på at aftalen var blevet formidlet af Mogens Wöldike, og den viser at Cahuzac sikrede sig at opførelsen var uden publikum, da han fandt at det var et ret vanskeligt værk at indstudere.

KONCERTPIANISTEN HERMAN D. KOPPEL

André Jolivet (1905-74) var en komponist Herman D. Koppel kom til at fatte stor interesse for. Han indstuderede blandt andet Jolivets store og krævende 2. klaversonate og aflagde besøg hos ham da han var i Paris. Anders Koppel har fortalt, at hans far blev overrasket da det viste sig at komponisten til den voldsomme musik var en lille sirlig mand, der boede på en fin boulevard i en meget borgerlig, smuk lejlighed, men det forandrede ikke hans syn på Jolivet som en original og nyskabende komponist. Forud for opførelsen af klaverkoncerten var dens omfattende slagtojsbesætning blevet omtalt; i koncertprogrammet præsenteredes komponisten som en af tidens mest radikale komponister med forkærlighed for eksotisk rytme og klang, og om værket hedder det: "I første sats taler Afrika både i melodiske vendinger og i rytmen. Anden sats, som er et tema med variationer, fører os til det fjerne Østen, medens den sidste. Allegro frenetico, har polynesiske rytmer som udgangspunkt." Formen betegnes som klassisk, harmonikken som baseret på selvopfundne tonearter. Endelig nævnes det at værket ved opførelser i Frankrig har "givet anledning til kraftige meningsudvekslinger." Også i Danmark vakte værket modstridende reaktioner. I Politiken talte Robert Naur om "tilhørernes uforbeholdne glæde over værket", Jürgen Baltzer skrev om Jolivet "Han spiller paa det sensationelle. Han river i vore nerver, men han naar ikke vore hjerter" (Ekstrabladet), og Ole Willumsen kaldte i Land og Folk værket "noget af det brutaleste musik, man mindes at have hørt". Derimod var der enighed om solistens og orkesterspillet høje niveau. Herman D. Koppels "markante spil var iøvrigt en fabel i sig selv, et festligt eventyr i sort og hvidt, som orkestrets fremragende janitsjargruppe gik op i med djævleblændt dygtighed."

(Vagn Jensen i Social-Demokraten). Den version der udgives her er en kombination af Danmarks Radios ufuldstændige eksemplar (3. sats) og to private optagelser. Koncerten for klaver og blæsere var det første værk af Stravinskij Koppel stiftede bekendtskab med; han blev i sit første konservatorieår bedt om at være repetitør for Emil Telmanyi, der med kort varsel havde påtaget sig at dirigere værket i Budapest med Stravinskij selv som solist. Det næste værk var Historien om en soldat, som Koppel hørte på gramfon, men dybest indtryk gjorde Le sacre du printemps. Derpå kom turen til Petrusjka; klaversuiten af denne ballet blev et hovednummer på hans repertoire, og i tidens løb opførte han adskillige af Stravinskij's værker med og for klaver. Klaverkoncerten med blæsere hørte dog længe ikke til hans favoritter, tværtimod nævner han den i en artikel i Dansk Musiktidsskrift 1932 som eksempel på "den arkæiske del af Stravinskij's samklang" til forskel fra de førnævnte tidligere værker: "Af fødsel er Str. russer, men han er med tiden blevet mere og mere musikalsk og menneskeligt kosmopolit; sikkert har en vis blaserthed hos ham efterhaanden medført den overlegne "internationale" arkæisme." Ti år senere spillede Koppel imidlertid værket til stor succes på en koncert med Thomas Jensen, og de to gentog det sidenhen ved flere lejligheder. Optagelsen i dette album er fra Thomas Jensens første koncert med Radiosymfoniorkestret efter at han i 1957 havde forladt posten som chef for Aarhus Byorkester. Programmet, der indledtes med Koppels Festouverture fra 1939, var med til at markere Stravinskij's 75 års dag og blev modtaget med begejstring; om Koppels udførelse af solopartiet skrev Jürgen Baltzer "... han har næppe nogen sinde gjort det bedre end i aften: Måske udgik der en særlig inspiration fra sammenspillet med, eller rettere: modspillet til Radiosymfonikerne's blæsere, der under Thomas Jensens ledelse ydede en virkelig fin indsats." Det første værk af Bartok Herman D. Koppel lærte at kende var klaversonaten, som han hørte på gramfon og i 1926 oplevede komponisten spille i København, sammen med blandt andet den legendariske Allegro barbaro, der siden blev et af Koppels glansnumre. Blandt andre Bartok-værker Koppel har spillet er foruden 1. klaverkoncert også nummer 3, som han havde opført ti år tidligere. Den opførelse der udgives her fik begejstrede anmeldelser: "I Herman D. Koppel, den vældige rytmiker og den strenge, indtil det glasklare objektive musiker, havde man fundet en ypperlig solist..." (Walter Zacharias i Land og Folk). - "...Herman D. Koppel spillede med overlegen Sikkerhed og indtrængende Forstaaelse" (Poul Rovsing Olsen i Berlingske Tidende). - "...fremragende blev koncerten spillet af Herman D. Koppel, der både som pianist og skabende musiker står i nær kontakt med Bartoks inderste væsen" (Vagn Jensen i Social-Demokraten).

DIRIGENTERNE

Nikolaj Malko (1883-1961) var født i Ukraine, men fik sin uddannelse i St. Petersborg, hvor hans karriere førte til ansættelse som dirigent ved Leningrad Filharmonikerne. Efter turneer i Europa og Latinamerika kom han første gang til

Danmark i 1930, hvor han blev fast gæstedirigent for Radiosymfoniorkestret. Malkos programmer var præget af samtidens russisk-franske repertoire. Herman D. Koppel optrådte første gang som solist med Malko i 1946; ved den lejlighed måtte han med kort varsel ændre program til Brahms' 2. klaverkoncert, da nodematerialet til Stravinskijs klaverkoncert ikke nåede frem. To år senere stod Malko for uropførelsen af Koppels 3. klaverkoncert. Udover Bartoks nr. 1 der udgives her opførte de sammen Tjaikovskijs b-mol og Hilding Rosenbergs klaverkoncert. Erik Tuxen (1902-1957) afsluttede en arkitektuddannelse før han påbegyndte musikstudier i Danmark og i Tyskland. I nogle år var Tuxen teaterkapelmester og dannede det første danske jazzorkester. I 1936 blev han ansat som dirigent ved Radiosymfoniorkestret, hvor han supplerede Launy Grøndahls repertoire med moderne udenlandsk og dansk musik. Tuxen fik et nært forhold til Koppel og hans musik; han dirigerede blandt andet uopførelserne af klarinetkoncerten og af Tre Davidssalmer. Mogens Wöldike (1897-1988) gjorde en betydningsfuld indsats i dansk kortradition med dannelsen af Palestrinakoret, med oprettelsen af Københavns Drengekor og som dirigent for Cæciliaforeningens koncertkor, ikke mindst med baroktidens oratorieværker. Wöldike blev knyttet til Radiokoret i 1937 og til Radiosymfoniorkestret ved oprettelsen af Radiokammerorkestret i 1948. Hans orkesterrepertoire blev efterhånden udvidet med især klassisk og samtidig musik. Af Herman D. Koppel har Wöldike blandt andet dirigeret både klarinetkoncerten og den fjerde klaverkoncert. Thomas Jensen (1898-1963) var uddannet som cellist, men optrådte tidligt som dirigent for amatør- og teaterorkestre. I 1935 var Thomas Jensen medstifter af Aarhus Byorkester, og samme år dirigerede han første gang en torsdagskoncert. Efter Erik Tuxens død i 1957 efterfulgte Thomas Jensen ham som fast dirigent for Radiosymfoniorkestret. Han var meget interesseret i samtidig musik og havde hyppigt værker af Herman D. Koppel på programmet både med Aarhus Byorkester, Tivolis Symfoniorkester og Radiosymfoniorkestret. -----

Kilder:

Flemming Behrendt: Fra et hjem med klaver. Herman D. Koppels liv og erindringer. København 1988.

Dansk Musiktidsskrift (DMT, se fodnoterne).

Martin Granau: Holms vision. Radiosymfoniorkestret 75 år. København 2000.

Danmarks Radios arkiver m.m.