

Rued Langgaard (1893–1952)

Music of the Abyss

Signe Asmussen, soprano
Esbjerg Ensemble

English horn – Eva Vrtacnik
Oboe – Pina Mohs
Flute – Kerstin Thiele
Clarinet – Ron Chen-Zion, Bue Skov Thomassen (1)
Bassoon – Antti Salovaara
Horn – Joke Wijma, Renske Wijma (1)
Violin 1 – Bogdan Bozovic
Violin 2 – Amane Horie
Viola – Michel Camille
Cello – Pau Codina Masferrer
Percussion – Christian Giuseppe Martinez Alegria

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|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Septet , BVN 95 (1915)
for flute, oboe, 2 clarinets, 2 horns and bassoon | 14:15 |
| 2 | Augustinusiana (En musikalsk spøg / A musical joke) , BVN 63 (1914)
for two violins and cello | 4:51 |
| | I blomstringstiden (In the flowering time), BVN 136 (1917)
for soprano and string quartet. Text by Alvilde Prydz | 9:55 |
| 3 | I. Allegretto | 6:19 |
| 4 | II. Animato giocoso | 3:36 |
| 5 | Scherzo over motiverne C A og “Ach, du lieber Augustin”
(Scherzo on the Motifs C A and ‘Ach, du lieber Augustin’), BVN 62 (1913)
for two violins and cello | 4:59 |
| | Lenaustemninger (Lenau moods), BVN 138 (1917)
for mezzo-soprano and string quartet. Text by Thor Lange | 14:42 |
| 6 | I. Roligt (Calmly) | 5:15 |
| 7 | II. Ikke hurtigt (Not fast) | 3:30 |
| 8 | III. Hurtigt (Fast) | 1:12 |
| 9 | IV. Temmelig langsomt (Rather slowly) | 4:45 |
| 10 | Humoreske (Humoresque), BVN 176 (1922-23)
for flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet, bassoon and military drum | 13:12 |
| | Afgrundsmusik (En sonate) (Music of the Abyss (A sonata)), BVN 169 (1921-24)*
Arranged for ensemble by Allan Gravgaard Madsen (b. 1984) (2015/2017) | 13:44 |
| 11 | I. Inflexibile mostrooso (Strengt, rædselsfyldt / Strictly, horrifying)
– Maestoso rigoglioso | 7:37 |
| 12 | II. Frenetico, quasi rondo | 6:07 |

Total 75:39

* World premiere recording



Rued Langgaard, 1918

Music of the Abyss

By Esben Tange

Rued Langgaard was divided, both as man and as composer. We experience this, manifest to an extreme, in the chamber music for winds, strings and voice he wrote between 1913 and 1924, while he was in his 20s. During this period his personal view of the world changed radically, following his upbringing in the protected bourgeois milieu of Copenhagen, characterised by romantic ideals.

Rued Langgaard experienced the greatest success in his life, in the Spring of 1913, when he was 19. The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra performed his large-scale Wagner-inspired *Symphony No 1, Cliff Pastoral*, to an excited audience and he received high praise in the descriptions in the press following the event.

After an international debut like this, it was clear to everyone that the young Copenhagen composer was an unusual compositional talent at the beginning of an adventure.

But when Rued Langgaard's greatest supporter, his father Siegfried Langgaard, died in January 1914, his circumstances changed, and the young composer was hit by both personal and artistic difficulties which continued into the following year.

In the two works for string trio, *Augustinusiana. A musical joke* and *Scherzo on the Motifs C A and 'Ach du lieber Augustin'*, we are still in the safe world of his youth. This is also true of the *Septet* for winds, which incorporates an element of Danish folk music and is backward-looking, written in the language of the musical classics, a compositional preference of his which, to the surprise of his contemporaries, he maintained for the rest of his life.

Things had changed a few years later. In *Lenau Moods* and *Mountain Flowers* for voice and string quartet, atmospheric art of the most refined kind, the personal crisis Rued Langgaard lived through can be sensed as a dark musical undercurrent. As in his visionary great work from the same period, *Music of the Spheres*, Langgaard immerses himself in a magical dream world in which nature's sights, his inner existential battle and religious presentiments are all part of his musical texture.

Music of the Abyss, originally written for piano, is presented here in an arrangement for the Esbjerg Ensemble. It and *Humoresque* were written at the beginning of the 1920s, when Langgaard was deeply absorbed in work on his apocalyptic opera, *Antichrist*. Using expressionistic words and sounds, Langgaard played modern human delusions of grandeur while at the same time setting himself apart from Danish

musical life more and more. From his position as an outsider, Langgaard now composed music in which the demonic played a leading role in stretching between ecstatic manifestations of life and the deepest existential fall into the abyss.

Septet

During the course of three summer days in 1915, while he was staying in the beautifully set Tyringe Bathing Sanatorium in Skåne, Southern Sweden, Langgaard composed his *Septet* for wind, which has the character of a carefree summer fantasy. The presence of an extra clarinet and a horn added to the normal classical wind quintet give the work a somewhat orchestral quality, apparent from the outset, while the music is driven forward by marked rhythms.

The traditional sounding music can sound, at first, musically anachronistic, but each section is sharply separated by clear fractures which

resemble similar elements in contemporary cubist art.

When the Danish psalm melody, 'Nu hviler mark og enge' (built on Heinrich Isaac's 'Innsbruch, ich muss dich lassen') is heard in an organically formed andantino section, it is with a moving intensity that reflects the old texts' confidence and belief in a heavenly peace in the hereafter. There is both witchcraft and whispering in the treetops when, in other sections, the wind instruments are set free in their shared journey.

Despite the work being a compound of various elements, the music of the *Septet* for wind has its own internal balance. In sharp contrast is a letter Langgaard wrote a few days after completing it: he signs off a letter to his cousin with the words, 'You and many others are lucky to be healthy, normal people who ride bicycles and just live their life.'

Augustinusiana, a musical joke

Like the *Scherzo on the Motifs C A* and 'Ach du lieber Augustin', *Augustinusiana* is written for the unusual combination of two violins and cello. Both works were written with private performance in mind, at the home of the tobacco manufacturer Christian Augustinus in Charlottenlund, north of Copenhagen. Augustinus and his wife, Louise were related to Langgaard, who had often stayed with them as a child. Augustinus was a patron of Langgaard's, for example supporting the first performance of the first *Symphony* in Berlin.

Augustinusiana comprises a series of grotesque scenes from the Augustinus family's home, ranging from a ball scene with a lusty waltz to a situation characterised by great sadness in the movement *Andante tranquillo sostenuto*, whose end is marked 'to be played as though in a deep sleep.'

Augustinusiana is music of the moment, whose musical expression

is frequently transformed radically, without warning, and in which the cello especially appears as the principal disturber of the peace, with sudden marked musical commentaries. It is a musical character sketch of the Augustinus home, filled with a friendly humorous mood and at the same time a lively picture of the unstable mental state that was, for good or bad, possessed by its composer.

At flowering time

From the age of 20 and in the years which followed, Langgaard composed a wealth of songs in widely differing styles, from the stormy romantic to the most intimate. The songs recorded here, 'At flowering time' and 'Lenau Moods', are distinctive because the four accompanying strings give the composer the opportunity to write an especially deep and nuanced music which closely reflects the spiritual content of the texts.

In the two hymns which make up 'At flowering time', we find ourselves in a religious sphere: the texts by the Norwegian author Alvilde Prydz originate from a group of poems originally called 'Devotion' and 'In church'. In the first song, now beginning with the words 'Bells ring over the town', the music is rich in light and shade, a refined synthesis in which bells, twilight and fantastic images run together, being praised by the arrival of summer.

In the second song, 'Calm Organ Sound', Langgaard expresses himself on a subject with which he had a close relationship: he was not just an organist; he also had a clear sense that the organ played a decisive role in the religious atmosphere. In an interview many years later, he said, 'Church music must be atmospheric', and 'the organ is the poetry in the church.'

At any rate, 'Calm Organ Sound' is characterised by its dynamics and contrasts, which serve a higher objective that has to do with a happy

unease which culminates in a proclamation of the organ sound's capacity to carry a 'strong dream about God!'

Scherzo on the Motifs C A and 'Ach, du lieber Augustin'

The sister work to *Augustinusiana* is more convivial in tone, and contains a flash of salon music. It is a chamber musical idyll which can remind us, in miniature form, of those of Richard Strauss's tone poems in which he paints a picture of his own family's private life. Here, with Langgaard, we're back at the home of the Augustinus family. The notes C and A (chosen to represent the host, Christian Augustinus, who is thus literally woven into the music) are at play, in retrograde too, at the beginning of the main theme, and are presented as early as the second bar.

The experience of bourgeois harmony is challenged, however, when Langgaard asks the two deepest voices to be phrased in an 'indignant'

way, in contrast to the main melody which, with natural self-confidence unfolds in broadly singing long melodic lines. The Viennese folk melody 'Ach, du lieber Augustin', which also popped up briefly in *Augustinusiana*, and which H.C. Andersen quotes in his adventure, *Svinedrengen* (The Swineherd), introduces a contrasting and alien energy.

But like the bitter-sweet story about the cheerful ballad singer Augustin, we find that everything suddenly falls away, so *Ach du lieber Augustin* only has our musical attention for a brief moment. When the notes C and A return, played with an affectionately gentle sound in both violin parts, peace returns, even more than at the outset.

Lenau Moods

With texts by Thor Lange, who was inspired by the romantic poet Nikolaus Lenau, the religious plays an important part in the *Lenau*

Moods, as it did in 'At flowering time'. Here, though, it is experienced through a veil of decay characterised by 'weltschmerz', melancholy and religious trust.

The first of the *Lenau Moods* songs paints a sensitive picture of an autumnal scene, touched by a longing for death. The musical language is quiet, with rocking melodic fragments which are repeated again and again in parallel to the text, which describes the leaves that gently fall. The effect is suggestive, and with music dominated by light transparent harmonies which circle around the subject of longing for death, and come to rest in a transfigured translucence in *Bleg, stille falmen alle vegne*.

Something similar is in evidence in the last of the songs, *Sol derovre går til hvile*, which also focuses on the mental state of saying farewell, with thoughts of a youth which has passed, while the sun goes down. In musical terms we are guided

downwards towards the night by a steadily falling song of eternity. With a quartet movement resembling a psalm and the text's promise of a star's fire in the distance, the song is born of a deep religious trust.

In the central song of the group, the religious is exchanged for a nerve-stretched decadence. In *Gennem krat og dunkle bregner* we are witness to a night scene by a deeply wooded lakeside that harbours a 'flood of half-forgotten song' and is sensed from 'sukkes boblelyd på stille vand' (sighs' bubbling sound on still water). Speaking purely musically, too, we are on uncertain ground with pizzicato notes which start in the depths of the cello, rise into the air and enter a dynamic exchange with the other deep voices below the melody.

Following the decadent mood of foreboding which dominates *Gennem krat og dunkle bregner*, the nervous mood carries over to *Vindstød over søen fare*, where the

sonic picture is agitated and the music is whipped up by quivering instruments. In this crisis-music, we experience a searching soul, one who has lost their orientation on a stormy night. 'God's starlight' gives way to 'black shadows, cold shivers'.

Humoreske

Humoreske is unusually double-edged music, composed in a period when Rued Langgaard had just finished *Antikrist*. He was waiting, excited, for an answer from the Royal Danish Theatre saying whether they would perform the opera, which would later be seen as one of his most important works. Langgaard waited in vain.

Langgaard's original title for this new piece was 'Symphony', but he changed the name to *Humoreske* while waiting to hear from the Royal Theatre. The choice of instruments is unusual: a wind quintet in which the horn is replaced by a *cor anglais*, giv-

ing extra intensity and a dark colour to the sound. Langgaard also added a military drum. Like the side-drum in Carl Nielsen's *Symphony No. 5*, which received its first performance with great success shortly before Langgaard wrote *Humoreske*, the drum has a destructive role in the piece.

It was during this year that Carl Nielsen's standing as Denmark's great composer was established, while Rued Langgaard was perceived as a musical eccentric, despite the fact that during this period he composed some of his most weighty and innovative works. In a way, we find all of this here, in *Humoreske*. The world's evil, in play in *Antikrist*, and the experience of a personal rejection, appropriate themes for a symphony, but here they hide behind the more non-committal title *Humoreske*, allowing free play to the absurd.

First we hear a chorale, marked 'Solenne Crudele' (really ugly), far from peaceful, more like the intro-

duction to a black mass. Then follows a series of variations, but not cheerful ones like those in the variation finale of Carl Nielsen's wind quintet, based on the well-loved chorale, *Min Jesus, lad mit hjerte få*. At the climax of Langgaard's movement is a 'Fuga con disperatezza' (Fugue with desperation) in which the flute is isolated amongst a crazy, hysterical run in the high register, in conflict and competition with the other instruments. This is a picture of a soul in pain.

In the second part of *Humoreske*, which begins with a clarinet solo, the music flows with a charming lightness, but something lurks below the surface. It is to be played 'Semplice lusinghiero' (simply, flatteringly). It is music that awakens false hope, and which, in the end, bears the commentary of the military drum, 'Lento minaccioso' (slow and threatening). Humoresques are most frequently humorous and innocent. That is not the case here.

Music of the Abyss

Like *Humoreske*, the piano piece *Afgrundsmusik* is closely related to *Antikrist*. Rued Langgaard's first inspiration for the opera came to him on a trip to Venice in early Spring, 1921. It was during his stay in the city of canals that Langgaard began to compose *Music of the Abyss*, and as with the opera, in it he engaged with some of the most destructive cancers of his time, of existence.

'The Abyss is taken here as the *strongest* expression of the idea of evil. "The philosophy" is not immediately brought to the idea that Music is a spontaneous expression of "life"; said Langgaard in 1924.

This statement by Langgaard, made when *Music of the Abyss* had been completed, expresses a contradiction: this description of the abyss is closely related to the idea of 'the individual's megalomania' which Langgaard presents in *Antikrist*. Here, for a time, he lets Antikrist rule

in the world, in the hope that evil and human egocentricity will die, once and for all. At the same time, Langgaard is referring to Carl Nielsen's motto in relation to his *Symphony No. 4*, that 'music is life, which cannot be extinguished', which contains the belief that music has a strength of its own.

A drama unfolds in the first section of *Music of the Abyss*, in which Langgaard introduces an aggressive motive borrowed from Liszt's B minor sonata, hammered out, which stands, unintegrated with the loudly played choral theme. The religiously-coloured music is torn apart by foaming insanity which concludes in the Liszt motif towards the end of the *Music of the Abyss*, swiping everything else away during the course of a hysterical ride.

Music of the Abyss is amongst Rued Langgaard's most expressive works; it is as if he sought to blow apart its instrumental movements

from within, to overstep the physical possibilities of the piano. Allan Gravgaard Madsen's transcription for the Esbjerg Ensemble's members (wind quintet, percussion and string quartet) adds new dimensions to this inner tension.

The richly coloured exchanges between the wind instruments and the strings in the first movement emphasise the music's flattering and attractive character, and in the strength of the xylophone, which according to Gravgaard Madsen can sound 'ghostly, like dead bones that rustle', a Gothic shiver can be felt to an even higher degree. The restless manic repetitions in the second movement have a more all-encompassing character because of the strengthened instrumental setting. As the musical space widens, so the music feels more claustrophobic: it is clear that an inextinguishable craziness of fire is burning in this music.

Soprano **Signe Asmussen** has established herself as one of the most sought-after, charismatic and versatile Danish singers of her generation. She has long been lauded as one of Denmark's finest lied singers, and in 2009 she was awarded the Aksel Schiøtz Prize for her exceptional efforts. She performs regularly as a soloist with the major Danish orchestras. Committed to the contemporary repertoire, she has recorded numerous CDs in continuous, close collaboration with Danish ensembles and composers. Her work was recognised in 2014 when she was awarded the Danish Composers' Society's Award for Musicians.

Esbjerg Ensemble was founded in 1967 as the first professional chamber ensemble in Denmark, instigated by local forces and

the Ministry of Culture. Esbjerg Ensemble has since kept the flag flying as a role model for similar ensembles in Denmark and abroad. The ensemble plays the complete canon of classical music, is recognized for its innovative and versatile programs, and is especially known for its reliable interpretation of contemporary works. Since the beginning, the ensemble has had a close cooperation with composers of our time, and pivotal figures like Karl-Aage Rasmussen, Hans Abrahamsen and Peter Bruun have been artistic directors over the years – a relationship that continues to develop through the annual workshop for young composers, initiated by Frederik Gislinge in 1980. For Dacapo Records, Esbjerg Ensemble has released several CDs with music by, among others, Per Nørgård, Peter Bruun and Bent Sørensen.

Afgrundsmusik

Af Esben Tange

Rued Langgaard var splittet som menneske og komponist. Det oplever vi i ekstrem grad i kammermusikken for blæsere, strygere og vokal fra 1913-1924, hvor Rued Langgaard var i 20-årsalderen, og hvor hans personlige verdensbillede ændrede sig radikalt efter en opvækst i et beskyttet borgerligt miljø i København præget af romantiske idealer.

I foråret 1913, som 19-årig, oplever Rued Langgaard sit livs største succes, da Berliner Filharmonikerne uropfører hans stort anlagte Wagner-inspirerede *Symfoni nr. 1 Klippepastoraler* for et begejstret publikum og med rosende presseomtale. Efter en international debut, hvor det står klart for alle, at

den unge københavnerkomponist er et usædvanligt kompositorisk talent, ligner det begyndelsen på et eventyr.

Men da Rued Langgaards vigtigste støtte, hans far, Siegfried Langgaard, dør i januar 1914, indvarsles en ny tid, hvor den unge komponist bliver ramt af personlige og kunstneriske anfægtelser, der tager til i de følgende år.

I de to værker for strygetrio *Augustinusiana. En musikalsk spøg* og *Scherzo over motiverne C A og "Ach, du lieber Augustin"* er vi dog stadig i den tidlige ungdoms trygge verden. Og i *Septet* for blæsere med indslag af dansk folketone er tonesproget klassisk og tilbage-skuede – et kompositorisk spor, Rued Langgaard, til stor forundring i sin samtid, dyrkede med jævne mellemrum resten af livet.

Anderledes er det nogle få år efter i *Lenaustemninger* og *Fjeldblomster* for vokal og stryge-

kvartet, der er stemningskunst af den mest forfinede slags, og hvor den personlige krise, Rued Langgaard gennemlever, fornemmes som en mørk musikalsk understrøm. Ligesom i det visionære storværk *Sfærernes musik*, fra samme periode, begiver Rued Langgaard sig ind i en magisk drømmeverden, hvor natursyner, indre eksistentielle kampe og religiøse forestillinger indgår i et vekselspil.

I *Humoreske* og klaverværket *Afgrundsmusik*, der her præsenteres i et arrangement af Allan Gravgaard Madsen for Esbjerg Ensemble, er vi i begyndelsen af 1920'erne, hvor Rued Langgaard er dybt optaget af dommedagsoperaen *Antikrist*. I ekspressionistiske ord og toner hudfletter Langgaard det moderne menneskes storhedsvanvid, samtidig med at han i stigende grad opfatter sig selv som en aparte skikkelse i dansk musikliv. Fra en position som out-

sider komponerer Rued Langgaard nu en musik, hvor det dømoniske spiller en hovedrolle i spændet mellem ekstatiske livsytringer og afgrundsdybe fald.

Septet

I løbet af tre sommerdage i 1915, hvor Rued Langgaard opholdt sig på det smukt beliggende Tyringe Badesanatorium i Skåne i Sverige, komponerede han *Septet* for blæsere, der i høj grad har karakter af en ubekymret sommerfantasi. Dog giver tilføjelsen af en ekstra klarinet og et horn til den klassiske blæskvintet værket et lidt mere orkestralt præg, der høres lige fra begyndelsen, hvor musikken drives fremad med markante rytmer.

Den traditionelt klingende musik kan umiddelbart lyde som en musikalsk anakronisme, men de enkelte afsnit er skarpt adskilt med tydelige brudflader, som elementer i den samtidige kubistiske kunst.

Når den danske salmemelodi *Nu hviler mark og enge* – bygget over Heinrich Isaacs *Innsbruch*, *ich muss dich lassen* – høres i et organisk formet andantino-afsnit, er det med en bevægende inderlighed, der afspejler den ældgamle teksts fortrøstning og tro på en himmelsk fred i det hinsides. Derimod er der både troldereri og susen i trætoppene, når blæserne i andre afsnit sættes fri i et fælles ridt.

Septet for blæsere er trods værkets sammensatte karakter musik i balance med sig selv, og det står i skærende kontrast til et brev, Rued Langgaard nogle få dage efter færdiggørelsen af musikken skriver til sin fætter, og hvor han efter at have beskrevet sin egen uformåen afslutter med ordene: "Du og mange andre er da heldigvis et sundt og normalt Menneske, som kør Cycle og lever!"

Augustinusiana. En musikalsk spøg *Augustinusiana* er ligesom *Scherzo over Motiverne C A* og "Ach, du lieber Augustin" for den sjældne instrumentkombination to violiner og cello. Begge værker er skrevet med tanke på private opførelser i tobaksfabrikant Christian Augustinus' hjem i Charlottenlund nord for København, hvor Rued Langgaard ofte opholdt sig i sin ungdom. Christian Augustinus og dennes hustru, Louise, var i familie med Rued Langgaard, og virkede desuden som mæcen for ham ved blandt andet at støtte opførelsen af *Symfoni nr. 1* i Berlin.

I *Augustinusiana* karakteriseres en række til tider groteske scener fra Augustinus-familiens hjem, lige fra en balscene, hvor der spilles op til dans med en lystig vals, til en situation præget af stor tristesse i afsnittet "Andante tranquillo sostenuto", hvor der mod slutningen skal "spilles som i dyb søvn".

Augustinusiana er øjeblikkets musik, hvor det musikalske udtryk ofte ændrer sig radikalt uden varsel, og hvor især celloen optræder som fredsforstyrrer med pludselige markante musikalske kommentarer. En musikalsk karikaturtegning af det augustinusianske hjem sprængfyldt af venligt stemt humør samt et vitalt billede på det ustabile sind, der på godt og ondt var Rued Langgaards.

I blomstringstiden

Fra Rued Langgaard var omkring 20 år gammel og i årene efter, komponerede han et væld af sange i vidt forskellig stil, fra det stormfuldt romantiske til det mest inderlige. Her spiller *I blomstringstiden* og *Lenaustemninger* en særlig rolle, idet Rued Langgaard udnytter de fire strygeres klanglige muligheder til at komponere en sælsom dyb nuanceret musik i tæt samspil med teksternes åndelige indhold.

I de to hymner i *I blomstringstiden* befinder vi os i en religiøs sfære. Teksterne er af den norske forfatter Alvilde Prydz og stammer fra digte, der oprindeligt havde titlerne *Andagt* og *I kirken*. I den første sang, der begynder med ordene *Der ringer klokker over by*, er musikken rig på skyggevirksomheder, og i en forfinet syntese, hvor klokkeklang, aftenrødme og fantasibilleder løber sammen, prises sommerens gennembrud.

I den anden sang, *Stille orgelklang*, udtrykker Rued Langgaard sig om et emne, som han havde et nært forhold til. Ikke blot var Langgaard organist, han havde også en klar forestilling om, at orglet spillede en afgørende rolle i den religiøse stemningskunst. I et interview mange år efter udtalte Rued Langgaard: "Kirkemusik skal være stemningsfuld" og "orglet er poesien i kirken."

Ikke desto mindre er *Stille orgelklang* præget af dynamik og kontra-

ster. De tjener dog et højere formål, idet vi har at gøre med en glædesfyldt uro, der kulminerer med en forkyndelse af orgelklangens evne til at bære "stærke drøm om Gud!".

Scherzo over Motiverne C A og "Ach, du lieber Augustin"

Søsterværket til *Augustinusiana* er mere gemytligt i tonen og med et strejf af salonmusik. En kammermusikalsk idyl, der i miniatureform kan minde om nogle af Richard Strauss' tonedigte, hvor Strauss i stor stil karakteriserer sit eget familieliv. Her hos Rued Langgaard er vi igen på besøg hos Augustinus' familie, og med tonerne C og A, der spilles i omvendt rækkefølge i begyndelsen af hovedtemaet, og som høres første gang allerede i anden takt, er familiefaderen Christian Augustinus så at sige vævet ind i musikken.

Oplevelsen af borgerlig harmoni udfordres dog undervejs, når Rued Langgaard beder om, at de to dybe-

ste stemmer fraseres "harmfuldt" i kontrast til hovedmelodien, der med naturlig selvfølelse udfolder sig i bredt syngende, lange melodilinjer. Og med wienerfolkemelodien *Ach du lieber Augustin*, der også dukkede kortvarigt op i *Augustinusiana*, og som H.C. Andersen citerer i eventyret *Svinedrengen*, introduceres en kontrasterende og udefrakommende energi.

Men som i den bittersøde fortælling om den muntre balladesanger Augustin, der pludselig oplever, at alt og alle er væk, tager *Ach du lieber Augustin* dog kun den musikalske opmærksomhed for en kort stund. Og når tonerne C og A til slut spilles med kælen dolceklang i begge violinstemmer, er freden mere intakt end nogensinde før.

Lenaustemninger

Med tekster af Thor Lange, der er inspireret af den romantiske digter Nikolaus Lenau, spiller det

religiøse – som det er tilfældet med *I blomstringstiden* – også en vigtig rolle i *Lenaustemninger*. Men nu oplevet igennem et slør af forfaldsstemninger præget af weltschmerz, melankoli og fortrøstning.

I den første af sangene i *Lenaustemninger* udmales en fintfølede efterårsstemning iblandet døds-længsel. Tonesproget er tyst med vuggende melodistumper, der gentages igen og igen i samklang med teksten, som beskriver bladene, der sagte falder. Effekten er suggestiv, og med en musik domineret af lyse, gennemsigtige harmonier, der kredser om døds-længsel, hviler der et forklaret skær over *Bleg, stille falmen alle vegne*.

Noget lignende gør sig gældende i den sidste af sangene, *Sol derovre går til hvile*. Også den står i afskedens tegn. Tanker om ungdommen, der er forbi, alt imens solen går ned. Rent musikalsk føres vi nedad mod natten af en støt faldende evig-

hedssang. Men med en salmelignende kvartetsats og tekstens løfte om en stjernes ild i det fjerne er sangen båret af en dyb fortrøstning.

I de to midterste sange er det religiøse fraværende til fordel for en nervespændt dekadence. I *Gennem krat og dunkle bregner* er vi vidne til en aftenstemning ved en dyb skovsø, der gemmer på et “væld af halvglemte sang” og anes som “sukkes boblelyd på stille vand”. Rent musikalsk er vi også på gyngende grund med pizzikerede toner, der fra et udspring i det dybe celloleje stiger til vejrs og indgår i et dynamisk vekselspil med de øvrige dybe stemmer under melodiens spejl.

I kontrast til den anelsesfulde dekadence i *Gennem krat og dunkle bregner* slår den nervøse stemning over i affekt i *Vindstød over søen* fare, hvor nodebilledet er oprevet og musikken piskes op af sitrende instrumenter. I denne krisemusik oplever vi en søgende sjæl, der

en stormende nat har mistet orienteringen. “Guds stjernelys” er vejet for “sorte skygger, kuldegys.”

Humoreske

Humoreske er sjældent dobbeltbundet musik, komponeret i perioden hvor Rued Langgaard netop har færdiggjort *Antikrist*. Nu venter han spændt på svar fra Det Kgl. Teater om, hvorvidt de vil opføre det, som skulle vise sig at være et hovedværk. Rued Langgaard kom til at vente forgæves.

Rued Langgaards oprindelige titel på det nye stykke er “Symfoni”, men på et tidspunkt ændrer han titlen til *Humoreske*. Besætningen er usædvanlig: en blæserkvintet, hvor hornet er erstattet af et engelskhorn, hvilket giver en ekstra intens og mørk klang. Og så tilføjer Rued Langgaard en militærtromme. Ligesom lilletrommen i Carl Nielsens *Symfoni nr. 5*, der, kort før Rued Langgaard skrev *Humoreske* blev

uropført med stor succes, har den en destruktiv rolle.

Det er i disse år, der begynder at tegne sig et billede af Carl Nielsen som Danmarks store komponist, hvorimod Rued Langgaard bliver opfattet som en musikalsk særling, til trods for at han i denne periode komponerer nogle af sine mest vægtige og banebrydende værker. Og det er, som om det hele mødes her i *Humoreske*. Verdens ondskab, der er på spil i *Antikrist*, og oplevelsen af på et personligt plan at være forsmået. Temaer, der er en symfoni værdig, men som her i skjul af den mere uforpligtende titel *Humoreske* kan lade det absurde få frit spillerum.

I begyndelsen hører vi en koral, der med karakterbetegnelsen “Solenne Crudele” (højtideligt grusomt) er alt andet end fredfyldt. Snarere indledningen til en sort messe. Siden følger en række variationer. Men det er ikke muntre

variationer som i Carl Nielsens samtidige blæserkvintet over den elskelige koral *Min Jesus, lad mit hjerte få*. Højdepunktet hos Rued Langgaard er en "Fuga con disperatezza" (Fuga med desperation), hvor fløjten isoleres i et amokløb i det høje hysteriske leje, på konfliktkurs med de øvrige blæsere. Et billede på en forpint sjæl.

I anden del af *Humoreske*, der indledes med en klarinetsolo, flyder musikken med charmerende, legende lethed, men der stikker noget under. Der skal spilles "Semplice lusinghiero" (enkelt, smigrende). Musik, der vækker falske forhåbninger, og som til slut kommenteres af militærtrommen "Lento minaccioso" (langsomt og truende). Humoresker er oftest humoristiske og uskyldige. Det er ikke tilfældet her.

Afgrundsmusik

Ligesom *Humoreske* er klaverværket *Afgrundsmusik* nært knyttet til

Antikrist, som Rued Langgaard fik sin første inspiration til i Venedig i det tidlige forår 1921. Det var også under opholdet i kanalbyen, at Rued Langgaard begyndte at komponere *Afgrundsmusik*, og ligesom i operaen beskæftiger han sig her med nogle af tidens og tilværelsens mest destruktive kræfter.

"Afgrund – tages her som udtryk for det stærkeste, det vil sige det såkaldte 'onde'. 'Filosofien' her vedkommer imidlertid ikke denne musiks spontane udtryk for 'liv'."

Citatet, der stammer fra 1924, hvor Rued Langgaard færdiggjorde *Afgrundsmusik*, udtrykker en dobbelthed. Beskrivelsen af afgrund er nært beslægtet med forestillingen om "jeg'ets storhedsvanvid", som Langgaard udfolder i *Antikrist*. Her lader han for en tid Antikrist råde i verden, i håb om at onskaben og den menneskelige egocentri vil rase ud én gang for alle. Samtidig refererer Rued Langgaard til Carl

Nielsens motto udtrykt i forbindelse med *Symfoni nr. 4*, "musik er liv, som dette uudslykkeligt", hvori der er en tro på, at musikken besidder en kraft i sig selv.

Allerede i det første afsnit af *Afgrundsmusik* udfoldes der et drama, da Rued Langgaard lader et aggressivt udhamret motiv, lånt fra Liszts h-mol-sonate, stå uformidlet over for et højtideligt spillet koraltema. Den religiøst farvede musik bliver her til en kastebold i et frådende vanvidsspil, der afsluttes med, at Liszt-motivet mod slutningen af *Afgrundsmusik* rydder alt af vejen i et hysterisk ridt.

Afgrundsmusik er blandt Rued Langgaards mest ekspressive værker, og undervejs er det, som om han forsøger at sprænge den instrumentale sats indefra, at overskride det fysisk mulige på et klaver.

I Allan Gravgaard Madsens transskription for Esbjerg Ensembles besætning (blæserkvintet, slag-

tøj og strygekvarteret) tilføres disse indre spændinger nye dimensioner.

Det farverige vekselspil mellem blæserne og strygerne i første sats understreger musikken indsmigrende og lokkende karakter, og i kraft af xylofonen, der ifølge Gravgaard Madsen kan lyde "spøgelsesagtigt som døde knogler, der rasler", fornemmes der i endnu højere grad et gotisk gys.

Og de maniske rastløse gentagelser i anden sats får i kraft af den større instrumentale besætning en mere altomfattende karakter. I takt med at det musikalske rum udvides, bliver det tiltagende klaustrofobisk. Det står klart, at der brænder en uudslykkelig vanvidsild i denne musik.



Esbjerg Ensemble

Sopranen **Signe Asmussen** har for længst slået sit navn fast som en af sin generations mest efterspurgte, karismatiske og vidtfavnende danske sangerinder. Hun er en af Danmarks fineste liedsangere, og i 2009 blev hun tildelt Aksel Schiøtz Prisen for sin store indsats for liedens udbredelse. Signe Asmussen optræder jævnligt som solist med de danske orkestre, og i kraft af sit store engagement i kammermusikscenen og den ny kompositionsmusik har hun indspillet talrige cd'er i kontinuerlige, tætte samarbejder med fremtrædende danske kammerensembler og komponister – en indsats, som hun i 2014 blev belønnet for med tildelingen af Dansk Komponistforenings Musikerpris.

Esbjerg Ensemble blev dannet i 1967 som det første professionelle kammerensemble i Danmark på initiativ af lokale kræfter og Kultur-

ministeriet. Ensemblet har siden holdt fanen højt som rollemodel for lignende kammerensembler i Danmark og internationalt. Ensemblet spiller hele den klassiske musiks kanon, er anerkendt for sin nyskabende og alsidige programlægning og er i høj grad kendt for sin stilsikre fortolkning af samtidens værker. Ensemblet har siden starten haft et nært forhold til samtidens komponister, og centrale navne som Karl-Aage Rasmussen, Hans Abrahamsen og Peter Bruun har været ensemblets kunstneriske ledere igennem tiderne – et forhold, som fortsætter at udvikle sig igennem den årlige workshop for unge komponister, startet af Frederik Gislinge i 1980. Esbjerg Ensemble har udgivet en lang række cd'er, blandt andet for Dacapo Records med værker af Per Nørgård, Peter Bruun og Bent Sørensen.

I blomstringstiden
Alvilde Prydz (1846-1922)

I
3 Der ringer klokker over by
i aftenmelodier –
Der bygges slotte over sky
af strålers fantasier.
Og luften løftes lys og fin,
som åbned den til himlen ind!
Og jorden ligger varm og fuld,
der brister knopper, dufter muld!
Det er sommeren, der kommer –
Stille, I mennesker, stille!

Hør, klokkernes dybe drømmeri
og luftens luende rødme
de smelter sammen i sympati,
i hymner til livets sødme!
Det ringer sammen til lyst og fryd
aftnen er fuld af løfters lyd,
af lyse løv, af sansers ild,
af andagtsfuld længsel, lyttende smil:
Det er sommeren som er her –
Stille, I mennesker, stille!

In the Flowering Time
Alvilde Prydz (1846-1922)

I
Bells ring over the town
in evening melodies.
Castles are built above the clouds
by sunbeam fantasies.
And the air is lifted bright and fine
as if to open Heaven!
And the earth lies warm and full;
buds break, the smell of soil!
It is the summer that comes –
Quiet, o people, quiet!

Listen, the deep dreams of bells
and the flaming red of the air
melt together in sympathy,
in hymns to the sweetness of life!
Ringing together to pleasure and joy
the evening is full of the sound
of promises,
of bright leaves, of the fire of
the senses,
of devout longing, listening smiles:
It is the summer that is here –
Quiet, o people, quiet!

II
4 Stille orgelklang,
glæden elsker dig og sorgen,
du har nat og du har morgen,
tåren hos dig bor!
Dybe, uudgrundelige
syner frem for sjælen stige –
du gir smerten ord!

I den lune kvæld
toner og gentoner klangen
i sin rigdoms herlighed:
Du bær sjæle bud:
Hvor du nynner, hvor du taler
hvor du truer, hvor du svaler
stærke drøm om Gud!

II
Quiet organ sound,
joy loves you and sorrow,
you have night and you have morning;
the tear dwells with you!
Deep, unfathomable
visions rise before the soul –
you give words to pain!

In the mild evening
you sound and resound
in the glory of your riches.
You bear a message to the soul:
how you hum, how you speak,
how you threaten, how you refresh,
strong dream of God!

Translation: James Manley

Lenaustemninger
Thor Lange (1851-1915)

I
6 Bleg, stille falmen alle vegne;
lidt aftenvind for skoven kæler,
og smertefrit med kys den stjæler
de blade bort, som lydløst segne.

Tak, forårstid, tak, ungdomsalder,
nok har du elsket, leet og sunget,
farvel da! Blidt af søvn betvunget
knap hørligt sagte løvet falder.

Et pust i grenegitret hvisler,
hvor synligt nu de reder hænge,
som ikke mer til løvskjul trænge;
den gyldne strøm af blade risler.

Godt til dens bløde fald at lytte,
det taler tyst med rolig rinden:
Al død er kærtegn, al forsvinden
er liv mod bedre liv at bytte.

Lenau Moods
Thor Lange (1851-1915)

I
Pale, still fading everywhere;
an evening breeze caresses the woods;
and painlessly with kisses it steals
the leaves away, which soundless fall.

Thank you spring, thank you, years
of youth;
enough you have loved, laughed
and sung.
Farewell then. Softly forced by sleep,
almost unheard, the leaves drop.

A gust in the latticed branches whispers,
how visibly the nests now hang,
no longer needing the cover of foliage;
the golden stream of leaves murmurs.

Good to listen to its soft fall,
it speaks silently, calmly running:
All death is caresses, all vanishing
is changing life for better life.

II
7 Gennem krat og dunkle bregner
går en sti langs breddens brink;
Skyggen falder, skæret blegner,
kun den dybe sø slår blink.

Og når alle stråler slukkes,
kruser svagt sig sivets rand
ved et pust af kvalte sukkes
boblelyd på det stille vand.

Af de boblers bristen rinder
frem et væld af halvglemte sang,
som i søens dyb forsvinder
tyst med dæmpet dråbeklang.

III
8 Vindstød over søen fare,
sorte skygger, kuldegys.
Rene sø, hvor blev dit klare
genskær af Guds stjernelys?

Overtrukket, dødt og slukket,
adskilt fra sit ophavs gnist,
som jeg selv er udelukket
skilt fra hjemmet her og hist.

II
Through scrub and dusky ferns
a path follows the edge of the bank;
the shadow falls, the light pales,
only the deep lake glints.

And when all the rays of light are out
the edge of the rushes ripples faintly
with a breath of stifled sighs'
bubbling sound on still water.

From the breaking bubbles flows
a flood of half-forgotten song
vanishing in the depths of the lake
silently with hushed sounds of drops.

III
Gust of wind across the lake,
black shadows, cold shivers.
Pure lake, where did your clear
reflection of God's starlight go?

Overcast, dead, extinguished,
severed from its sparking source,
Just as I myself am severed
from my home, here and beyond.

IV

9 Sol derovre går til hvile
atter skal en dag nu dø;
nedad duve breddens pile
mod den stille, dybe sø.

Bort jeg så min ungdom ile;
svundne lys, kom, dvæl og bliv!
altfor tungt bag mørke pile
lyder suk af vissent siv.

Bag min smertevandrings mile
står du fjerne klar og mild,
som bag dunkle rør og pile
står en ensom stjernes ild.

IV

Over there Sun goes to rest;
now again a day must die;
down bow the skirting willows
towards the deep, quiet lake.

I saw my youth depart in haste;
vanished light, come, dwell and stay!
All too heavy behind dark willows
sounds the sigh of withered rushes.

Behind the miles of my painful wan-
dering
you stand afar, clear and mild,
as behind dark reeds and willows
burns the fire of a lonely star.

Translation: James Manley

DDD

Recorded at Musikhuset Esbjerg, on 7-9 September, 2020

Recording producer: Sean Lewis

Sound engineer: Sean Lewis

Editing, mix and mastering: Sean Lewis

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Liner notes: Esben Tange

Translation of liner notes: Colin Roth

Translation of song text: James Manley

Proofreaders: Jens Fink-Jensen, Colin Roth

Photo p. 4: © The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Department of Maps, Prints and
Photographs

Photo p. 24: © RedStar

Artwork: Studio Tobias Røder, www.tobiasroeder.com

Publishers: Rued Langgaard Udgaven and Edition Wilhelm Hansen,
www.wisemusicclassical.com

Dacapo Records acknowledge, with gratitude, the support of Augustinus Fonden,
Dansk Solistforbund, Langgaard-Fonden and Solistforeningen af 1921 .



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8.226152

Dacapo Records is supported by the Danish Arts Foundation

**DANMARKS NATIONALE
MUSIKANTOLOGI**

Dacapo Records, Denmark's national record label, was founded in 1989 with the purpose of releasing the best of Danish music past and present. The majority of our recordings are world premieres, and we are dedicated to producing music of the highest international standards.

