

The Society for the Publication of Danish Music

The following article was first printed in the book published on the occasion of the Society's centenary on 18th December 1971 and provides a very good overview of the first century of the Society's history.

SAMFUNDET til Udgivelse af Dansk Musik (The Society for the Publication of Danish Music or Edition SAMFUNDET) is a private, non-commercial society which over the last 100 years has been active in the promotion of Danish music by printing and publishing important works by Danish composers.

On a summer-day in 1871 a circle of friends of our national music were assembled at the summer-residence of the composer Peter Heise in order to discuss “by which means the knowledge of our national music might be advanced and spread, and how to salvage many important works, now idling in the archives, from oblivion”.

Similar intentions had already been known; in Copenhagen “Musikforeningen” (The Music Society) was founded in 1836 for the purpose of publishing first of all Weyse's compositions. This led to the publication of a total of 14 works, whereafter the Music Society became a concert institution. In 1839 Commer's *Musica Sacra* was founded, Proske-Haberl's *Musica Divina* dates from 1853, and the first secular series appeared in 1861 – Farrenc's “*Le Trésor des Pianistes*”. In 1869 national monumental editions were started in Holland and Sweden, but the first national series of music from past and present, sacred and secular, to survive was Edition SAMFUNDET. On December 18, 1871, the general assembly was held, and the objects clause was given the following wording: “The purpose of Edition SAMFUNDET is to further Danish music by defraying the costs of, or subsidizing, the publication of compositions of lasting significance, both old and new, and particularly such works, the publication of which would otherwise involve difficulties”.

Already 1872 the first volume was published, and in this first series up till 1887 24 volumes were issued, mainly vocal scores and piano arrangements of orchestral works. Historical works were generally issued with a biographical introduction and with the composer's portrait. From the start great care was taken that the editions were correct and of a handsome appearance. Series 1 includes a number of outstanding dramatic works of earlier days, particularly opera and singspiel of the period 1774-1849.

In 1887 the objects clause was revised, giving priority to contemporary compositions, and in consequence of this a second series was established.

With 40 issues it covers the period up to 1917. While series 1 was equally distributed over historical and contemporary editions, the second series consists of 35 new and only five older works. Once more we find that the repertoire consists of vocal scores and of piano arrangements of orchestral works. The reason for this is easily accounted for: up till then it was a natural thing to publish orchestral or chamber music in piano arrangements – a medium which would today appear practically out of order. It must be kept in mind that score reading was in those days an art mastered only by a very small minority, and that gramophone records and radio were still to be invented. Traditionally the piano arrangement for solo or duct was the version the public studied. Interesting in this connection are the

words of Carl Nielsen (in his preface to Gustav Smith: "Om Musikkens Dobbelt-Virkning", 1928): "The author justly points to the piano as a particularly suitable instrument for one who desires to study the masterpieces, and he warmly defends the piano-arrangements that are so often underestimated. Only because people are accustomed to regarding music from a restricted acoustical point-of-view, the enormous cultural importance of the work thus rendered accessible to the individual, could be neglected".

Another decisive change was marked by the opening 1918 of series III, when finally the original idea of publishing scores was realised. Still contemporary music was dominating, but the scope of publications was broadened so that chamber music was published in score and parts. Also full scores of orchestral works were now introduced, and the beginning was made by maybe the most significant – and performed – Danish work: Kuhlau's overture to *Elverhøj*. Composed as early as 1828 it was – and still is – considered the most national Danish orchestral work, for which the score remained unpublished until Edition SAMFUNDET's edition from 1924! Series III offers a variety of compositions for almost any combination of instruments, but increasing attention was paid to the larger orchestral forms.

Over the years a vast number of Danish composers have been represented in Edition SAMFUNDET-publications. The non-commercial organisation may account for the fact that a considerable amount of works were published by Edition SAMFUNDET rather than by commercial publishers. Practically all Danish composers of any standing are found in the Edition SAMFUNDET catalogue, and in many cases they are represented by their most prominent works. But apart from promoting the contemporary music the society has still kept in mind the obligation to our historical composers.

The early Danish composers from the latter part of the 18th century, such as Johan Hartmann, F. L. E. Kunzen, J. A. P. Schulz and Pablo Scalabrini are well represented – equally the great names of the early 19th century: C. E. F. Weyse, Fr. Kuhlau, J. F. Fröhlich a. o. From the romantic period we find Niels W. Gade, J. P. E. Hartmann, Peter Heise, P. E. Lange-Müller and several others. The music of the 20th century quite naturally dominates in Series III, ten of the more substantial works of Carl Nielsen are in the Edition SAMFUNDET edition and virtually all of his successors from Riisager and Weis up to the most advanced of the young generation have here found their forum.

Meritorious are the musicological editions, as early as 1912 the first volume of Buxtehude-compositions appeared, and outstanding first editions of his cantatas were published with critical comments and introductions by Dr. Knud Jeppesen and Dr. Søren Sørensen. In 1934 a special musicological series was opened under the heading *Dania Sonans*, in which Dr. Knud Jeppesen brought to light a magnificent scholarly edition of Mogens Pedersøn's famous collection of madrigals "Pratum spirituale", composed abt. 1620, one of the great monuments from the glorious days of Danish music history. From the last years should be mentioned a facsimile edition of the score for N. W. Gade's *Symphony No. 1*, and the outstanding edition of the complete organ-works of J. P. E. Hartmann, carefully edited and annotated by Jørgen Ernst Hansen. – In 1969 Edition SAMFUNDET celebrated Finn Høffding's 70th anniversary by the publication of a complete Høffding bibliography.

When Edition SAMFUNDET started it was natural to let Danish music appear in print. Technical evolution has, however, made it equally natural that a series of recordings was started, and in the Sixties and Seventies 13 LP records were released; mainly recordings of works published in the SAMFUNDET series. It would seem obvious that the records to a certain degree took over the importance formerly attached to the printed editions.

Edition SAMFUNDET is an idealistic, non-profit organisation, from the outset managed by a committee of 9 members. At the beginning the economy was based on subscription from members, but as early as 1890 the Danish state recognized the Society by financial support. The state support has developed into a considerable amount and it is now the main-source enabling Edition SAMFUNDET to carry on its commendable activity. It should be mentioned that the society has always endeavoured to pay the composers adequately, and that all performing fees are the exclusive property of the composers – Edition SAMFUNDET receives no share whatever. Furthermore it has always been the tradition that the members of the board receive no remuneration for their work.

At an early stage Edition SAMFUNDET endeavoured to spread the knowledge of Danish music beyond the country. A number of early editions have texts in German, English, and French, and especially after World War II this cultural "propaganda" has been intensified. A main catalogue in English was issued in 1956 – with later supplements – which received vivid enthusiasm; in numerous institutions abroad

it has been a source of information about Danish music. The substantial number of orchestral works, for which Edition SAMFUNDET has published scores and parts has led to important performances by radio and concert orchestras all over the world – partly due to the fact that such materials are printed and for sale, while most of the commercial publishers offer similar works for hire only. The immediate access to excellent recordings of Danish music has been evaluated by numerous lecturers and radio stations abroad.

It seems that the bold ideas of the founders of Edition SAMFUNDET when they planned the activities more than 130 years ago have come true to a remarkable degree. The society is in its second century as active as ever, and it has greatly contributed to the spreading of Danish musical culture wherever these unique possibilities have been appraised. ■



The composer, Peter Arnold Heise (1830-79), co-founder of the Society for the Publication of Danish Music (later Edition SAMFUNDET) in 1871



Jacob Fabricius (1840-1919), bookkeeper in the National Bank of Denmark and talented amateur composer. Co-founder and driving force behind the establishing of the Society for the Publication of Danish Music (later Edition SAMFUNDET) in 1871

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