

## ***Musikbladet* (1884-1895)**

*Musikbladet* [The music magazine] [MBL]—subtitled *Ugerevue for Musik og Theater* [Weekly review for music and theater]—was published in Copenhagen from October 1884 to March 1895 by the music publisher Wilhelm Hansen.<sup>1</sup> Financial support came from advertisers and subscribers with, one can assume, support from its wealthy publisher when necessary.

From its inception through 2 May 1885 *Musikbladet* appeared weekly and contained eight pages. A double issue of twenty-one pages was published on 14 May 1885, and weekly single issues of eight pages appeared on 23 and 30 May 1885. On 13 June a double issue of twelve pages appeared, with two single issues (eight pages each) following on 20 and 27 June. Only one issue appeared in July 1885. Thereafter the journal was published twice monthly for the remainder of the year. Clearly, weekly publication was too ambitious a goal as was the publication of eight-page issues.<sup>2</sup> Between 1 January 1886 and [December] 1892 the journal published (albeit irregularly) twenty-four numbers each year consisting of both single and double issues. In 1893 five double and two single issues were published.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, publication concluded with two double issues (of twelve and sixteen pages respectively), one dated October 1894, the other March 1895. With the exception of its last two issues the journal's size was, with some variation, 21.7cm x 30.6cm.<sup>4</sup> Throughout, its text is printed in a two-column format, and its pages are numbered consecutively from the outset of each new year.

The chief editor of MBL, Henrik Vissing Schytte (1827-1903), grew up in Århus in Jutland, and, during his childhood studied guitar, piano, and violin. At fourteen however he chose the 'cello as his principal instrument. Later he moved to Copenhagen to study philology at the university before turning to teaching and journalism. From 1870 to 1883 he owned a music shop named Plenges Musikhandel. Schytte pursued a career as a writer on music and other subjects, contributing articles and reviews to several newspapers in the capital—starting in 1868 with *Dagens Nyheder*, followed by *Dagbladet* and *Børstidende*, and, finally, in 1891 the *Berlinske Tidende*, a well-known Copenhagen daily paper. Schytte could be sharp in his opinions, but he was highly regarded for his proficiency, professionalism, skill, knowledge, and the directness of his approach. In addition, Schytte was also a respected chamber-music performer who was very knowledgeable about string literature. While editor of MBL he wrote and published the first Danish music dictionary, the *Nordisk Musiklexicon* (2 vols., 1888-1892),<sup>5</sup> and nearly completed a supplementary volume

<sup>1</sup> In 1857 Wilhelm Hansen, a Danish music publishing firm founded by Jens Wilhelm Hansen, opened a music shop in Copenhagen. By 1879 the firm had taken over two music publishing firms (Lose, and Horneman & Erslev) and more or less obtained a monopoly over the music trade in Denmark.

<sup>2</sup> In the masthead of the 1 September 1885 issue the subtitle *Ugerevue* [Weekly review] changed to *Revue for Musik og Theater* [Review for music and theater]. The size of the journal also began to fluctuate between four, six, and eight pages, with four-page issues becoming usual in the third year.

<sup>3</sup> These contain neither an indication of day nor month.

<sup>4</sup> The dimensions of the final two issues are 15cm x 22.5cm.

<sup>5</sup> While in part based on Hugo Riemann's *Musiklexikon* (Leipzig, 1882), the excellence of Schytte's

(1906). For almost half a century Schytte's music dictionary served as the authoritative Danish-language reference on the music and musicians of Denmark.<sup>6</sup>

In the forward to MBL, Schytte explains the importance of creating an ongoing music journal, stating that there had been many less than successful attempts throughout the years to do so. Ever since the first local journal was created by Berggren<sup>7</sup> in 1836, music journals in Denmark had been short-lived. There was however a growing number of individuals who cultivated music, and therefore it seemed increasingly important to produce a domestic music journal. In the northern countries of Europe, Schytte states, Copenhagen is regarded as the center of musical life, and as such should have a music periodical similar to those as in Christiania [Oslo] and Stockholm where music journals long ago gained a foothold.<sup>8</sup>

Schytte outlined *Musikbladets* objectives in the introduction to the journal's first issue:

While omitting all irrelevant subjects treated in foreign journals, *Musikbladet* will, as much as possible, keep its readers informed about everything that can be of interest in the field of music. There will be less information in the journal than in the daily newspapers about the previous week's concerts and performances in concert halls and theaters. However, the main events will be referred to extensively and in detail. The journal's purpose will all along be the treatment of musical subjects in general. Emphasis will be placed upon short, but comprehensive statements about everything of significance in the theaters and concert halls in Denmark and abroad, and upon informative articles about works and notable personalities.<sup>9</sup>

The content of the journal is, in general, composed of biographical studies, articles of historical interest, thorough examinations of newly-published music, notes concerning forthcoming events at home and abroad, concert and opera reviews, miscellaneous notices from abroad, anecdotes, and advertisements. Lead articles, reviews of new publications, concerts and operas, miscellaneous news and advertisements are featured on a regular basis. As the journal develops, new subjects are introduced and treated between concert reviews and miscellaneous notices; these include the repertoires of the theaters, significant births and deaths of musicians and their relations, anniversaries, the addresses of artists living abroad, and humorous stories.

Beginning in 1888 and appearing in all but the final two issues, music supplements—for piano solo or duet, and, for voice and piano—are inserted into the journal.<sup>10</sup> The first supplement (which appears on a single page) is a folk tune from Hallingdal (Norway), "Sjugur aa Trollbrura," arranged for piano by Edward Grieg.<sup>11</sup> Among the Danish composers

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dictionary was later acknowledged in its own right.

<sup>6</sup> *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*, 3rd ed. (Copenhagen, 1983) 13: 271.

<sup>7</sup> *Musik Tidende*, 1836. Twenty numbers were published.

<sup>8</sup> See *Musikbladet*, I, no. 1, 4 October 1884: 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Music supplements consist of one to six pages.

<sup>11</sup> *Musikbladet*, V, no. 3, 17 February 1888: 107.

whose works appear as music supplements are Carl Nielsen—his song “Solnedgang,”<sup>12</sup> and piano piece “Alfedan” [Elfindance]<sup>13</sup>—J.P.E. Hartmann, Emil Hornemann, and Louis Glass. Among the Norwegian composers featured in the music supplements are Christian Sinding and Agathe Backer Grøndahl.<sup>14</sup>

In the first years the lead articles—which at times contain music examples—concern foreign composers for the most part. These focus either on the characteristics of composers’ works—such as the natural painting element in Haydn’s music<sup>15</sup>—on the analyses of significant compositions (such as Méhul’s *Joseph and His Brothers*,<sup>16</sup> Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman*,<sup>17</sup> and Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis*),<sup>18</sup> on comparisons of composers’ styles, for example, Anton Rubinstein and Hans von Bülow,<sup>19</sup> or, on biographies of composers such as Franz Schubert.<sup>20</sup>

Beginning in 1888 the subject matter of the lead article frequently shifts away from composers to other areas ranging from social issues (the place of musicians in society,<sup>21</sup> music from a hygienic point of view),<sup>22</sup> to psychological items (music and character,<sup>23</sup> and true and false originality),<sup>24</sup> to theoretical topics (the teaching of harmony,<sup>25</sup> an music criticism).<sup>26</sup> In fact, analytical articles gradually became more frequent and nearly replace biographies of composers as lead articles.

In the early years the composers most often discussed in the journal are Beethoven and Schubert; in later years discussions of Wagner and his music become predominant subjects. Significant articles meriting mention from the early years are the large number of “national contributions” including one by Grieg,<sup>27</sup> one about J. P. E. Hartmann’s eightieth birthday,<sup>28</sup> and another, a tribute to Niels W. Gade on his seventieth birthday.<sup>29</sup> The critical examination

<sup>12</sup> MBL, IX, no. 8-9, [1892]: 1-2 inserted between pages 54 and 55.

<sup>13</sup> MBL, VIII, no. 15-16, 27 August 1891: 68-69.

<sup>14</sup> Other music supplements include compositions by Handel, J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, Gluck, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Massenet, Carl Nielsen, Christian Sinding, Adolph Jensen, and many lesser-known Scandinavian composers. The supplements to years five and six contain music by foreign and Danish composers. The supplements of the following year and thereafter, contain in the main works by Danish composers.

<sup>15</sup> MBL, [I], no. 2, 11 October 1884: 17-20.

<sup>16</sup> MBL, [I], no. 3, 18 October 1884: 20-21.

<sup>17</sup> MBL, [I], no. 1, 4 October 1884: 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> MBL, [I], no. 6, 8 November 1884: 41-43.

<sup>19</sup> MBL, [I], no. 4, 25 October 1884: 25-26.

<sup>20</sup> MBL, [I], no. 10, 6 December 1884: 73-75; no. 11, 13 December 1884: 81-84; and no. 12, 20 December 1884: 89-92.

<sup>21</sup> MBL, VII, no. 15-16, 31 August 1890: 67-69.

<sup>22</sup> MBL, V, no. 4, 29 February 1888: 111-112.

<sup>23</sup> MBL, VI, no. 15-16, 24 August 1889: 103.

<sup>24</sup> MBL, VII, no. 17-18, 29 September 1890: 75-77, 81.

<sup>25</sup> MBL, V, no. 3, 17 February 1888: 103-104.

<sup>26</sup> MBL, II, no. 27, 15 July 1885: 212-215; VII, no. 2, 6 February 1890: 7-9.

<sup>27</sup> MBL, II, no. 19-20, 14 May 1885: 145-146.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> MBL, IV, no. 3-4, 22 February 1887 is entirely devoted to Gade.

of newly-published music concerns, in all essentials, Scandinavian, and primarily Danish, composers. Two or three compositions, usually for piano, or, for voice and piano are reviewed in many issues, frequently with musical examples illustrating the critical text. Concert reviews are given over to solo performers, the regular activities of societies—such as the Musikforeningen, Cæciliaforeningen, and the Soirées for Chamber Music—and to operas and ballets which are regularly treated. References to new musical instruments and music festivals, a listing of the repertoires of opera houses in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and Munich as well as in Copenhagen begin to appear in 1888. On occasion the journal contains a portrait of a composer in connection with an article.

Apart from the editor's own contributions he engaged several knowledgeable writers. Among these are Angul Hammerich (1848-1931) whose contributions appear during 1884. Hammerich, who had studied 'cello with Franz Neruda, was awarded a doctoral degree in 1892 with a thesis on music at the court of Christian IV, and was subsequently appointed a reader in music history at the University of Copenhagen from 1896 to 1922.<sup>30</sup> Hammerich also contributed to several other Danish journals. The initials "A. M." and "L. R." which appear in the journal's first numbers are identified in later issues as Alfred Møller and Leopold Rosenfeld. Little is known about the former; Rosenfeld however was a composer, professor of voice at the Royal Conservatory, and a member of the Royal Chapel. Contributors during later years are Anton Svendsen (1846-1930), violinist and teacher; Alfred Tofft (1865-1931), composer; Gottfred Matthison-Hansen (1832-1909), organist, composer, and professor at the Royal Conservatory; H. Tofte (1863-1917), composer; and, Otto Mailing (1848-1915), composer and pupil of Gade and J. P. E. Hartmann. In 1890 and 1891 there are remarkably few signed contributions, and in years 1892 and 1893 signatures are almost absent.

MBL also published contributions from foreign correspondents and translations from foreign sources. Among the translated texts are articles, letters,<sup>31</sup> memoirs in letter form,<sup>32</sup> a theoretical essay by Berlioz,<sup>33</sup> reminiscences about Ferdinand Hiller and his contemporaries,<sup>34</sup> and an overview of conditions of musicians in the United States by Joseph Bennett (originally published in Novello's *Musical Times*).<sup>35</sup>

To conform to modern standards nouns are not capitalized in bracketed editorial commentary; they are however capitalized in direct quotations from the journal. This publication is based on a copy of the journal in the University Library, Oslo.

<sup>30</sup> See John Bergsagel, "Hammerich, Angul" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie, ed. (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1980), 8: 70.

<sup>31</sup> Correspondence copied in the journal includes letters from Schumann, Meyerbeer, Saint-Saëns, Wagner, and Jenny Lind, among others.

<sup>32</sup> See the series "Robert Schumanns Ungdomsbreve" in MBL, 4th year, 1887.

<sup>33</sup> See "Violinerne i Orkesteret, efter Berlioz," MBL, 4th year, no. 12-13, 21 July 1887: 45-46.

<sup>34</sup> See Max Kalbeck's "Erindringer om Ferdinand Hiller," MBL, 2nd year, no. 28, 1 August 1885: 218-220.

<sup>35</sup> See Joseph Bennett's "Musikens Standpunkt i Amerika," MBL, II, no. 29, 15 August 1885: 225; and no. 30, 15 September 1885: 234-236, 243-244.