

F O R O R D

P R E F A C E

I G E N E S I S

After Carl Nielsen had finished the choral work *Hymnus amoris* at the end of 1896, he began to plan an opera – his first, and at the same time his most ambitious composition project so far. According to Carl Nielsen’s own recollection he pondered several different subjects before the plans resulted more concretely in an opera based on the Old Testament account of the two Israelite kings Saul and David. In connection with a performance of *Saul and David* in Gothenburg in 1928 Carl Nielsen recalled in a newspaper interview:

“I went around with plans to write my first opera. I read a whole lot of texts. Collaborated with several authors, but no subject was suitable. For a while I was strongly minded to set ‘The Merchant of Venice’¹ to music. Things went so far that the librettist had the first act finished. But that was not a subject I could settle into. Choosing an opera subject is like trying on a suit. If you are to do something with the subject, it must fit you and then you must feel comfortable in it.”²

That several years were to pass before Carl Nielsen really made progress with his opera was not only due to difficulties finding a suitable subject, however. The external circumstances of his life far from permitted him such a time-consuming task as composing an opera. During this period he was employed as a violinist in the Royal Orchestra,³ and in the summer months of 1897 and 1898 he participated very actively in the running of his parents-in-law’s farm, Thygesminde near Kolding.⁴ Alongside the early reflections on opera subjects, Carl Nielsen was working on a more modest scale with the string quartet in E flat major, opus 14, in the years 1897-1898.

1 Carl Nielsen had seen *The Merchant of Venice* on his first extended European journey in January 1891. The plans for an opera based on the play are confirmed by the correspondence between Carl Nielsen and his wife Anne Marie; in a letter of 2.9.1897 she discusses the play as a possible opera subject; cf. Torben Schousboe (ed.), *Carl Nielsen. Dagbøger og brevveksling med Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen*, Copenhagen 1983, pp. 35 and 149. According to Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen. Kunstneren og Mennesket*, Copenhagen 1947-1948, vol. 1, p. 159, Carl Nielsen also had plans for an opera based on J.P. Jacobsen’s novel *Marie Grubbe*. However, this is based on a misunderstanding, since this idea only emerged in 1911, cf. letter from Einar Christiansen to Carl Nielsen, 3.7.1911 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.b.).

2 *Göteborg-Tidningen*, 27.11.1928, quoted from John Fellow (ed.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid*, Copenhagen 1999, pp. 505-506.

3 Second violinist in the period 1889-1905.

4 Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

I T I L B L I V E L S E N

After at Carl Nielsen havde afsluttet korværket *Hymnus amoris* i slutningen af 1896, begyndte han planlægge en opera – hans første og samtidig hans hidtil mest ambitiøse kompositionsprojekt. Ifølge Carl Nielsens egen erindring tumlede han med flere forskellige emner, før planerne udmøntede sig mere konkret i en opera over den gammeltestamentlige beretning om de to israelitiske konger Saul og David. I forbindelse med en opførelse af *Saul og David* i Göteborg i 1928 erindrede Carl Nielsen i et avisinterview:

“Jag umgicks med planer på att skriva min första opera. Jag läste en hel mängd textböcker. Samarbetade med flera författare, men inget ämne ville passa. En tid var jag starkt betänkt på att sätta ‘Köpmannen i Venedig’¹ i musik. Det gick så långt, att librettisten hada första akten färdig. Men det var inte det ämne jag kunde finna mig tillrätta med ått välja en operasujet, det är som att prova en kostym. Skall man kunna göra något av ämnet, måste det passa en och så måsta man trivas i det.”²

At der skulle gå flere år, før Carl Nielsen for alvor kom i gang med sin opera, skyldtes dog ikke alene vanskeligheder med at finde et egnet emne. Hans ydre livsvilkår tillod ham langt fra en så tidsrøvende opgave som at komponere en opera. Han var i denne periode ansat som violinist i Det Kongelige Kapel,³ hvortil kom, at han i sommermånederne 1897 og 1898 deltog meget aktivt i driften af svigerforældrenes gård, Thygesminde ved Kolding.⁴ Sideløbende med de tidlige sonderinger af operaemner arbejdede Carl Nielsen i et mere beskedent format med strygekvartetten i Es-dur opus 14 i årene 1897-1898.

1 Carl Nielsen havde set *Købmanden i Venedig* på sin første store Europarejse i januar 1891. Planerne om en opera over dette skuespil bekræftes af brevvekslingen mellem Carl Nielsen og hans hustru Anne Marie, idet hun i et brev fra 2.9.1897 diskuterer dette stykke som et muligt operasujet, jf. Torben Schousboe (udg.), *Carl Nielsen. Dagbøger og brevveksling med Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen*, København 1983, s. 35 og 149. Iflg. Torben Meyer og Frede Schandorf Petersen, *Carl Nielsen. Kunstneren og Mennesket*, København 1947-1948, bd. 1, s. 159 skulle Carl Nielsen endvidere have haft planer om opera over J.P. Jacobsens roman *Marie Grubbe*. Dette beror imidlertid på en misforståelse, idet denne idé først dukker op i 1911, jf. brev fra Einar Christiansen til Carl Nielsen, 3.7.1911 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.b.).

2 *Göteborg-Tidningen*, 27.11.1928, citeret efter John Fellow (udg.), *Carl Nielsen til sin samtid*, København 1999, s. 505-506.

3 Andenviolinist i perioden 1889-1905.

4 Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, s. 147.

The details of how and when the idea of a *Saul and David* opera took form cannot be established with certainty.⁵ Carl Nielsen’s own recollections are rather vague on this point. In an autobiographical sketch from 1905 he says among other things about his method of working that it is important for him:

“that the ideas for my works come from myself. By this I mean not just the purely musical, but also the literary part of them. The idea for my ‘Hymnus amoris’ thus arose from me fully fledged in all its details as far as text and content are concerned, one night when I lay unable to fall asleep. The same was the case with the opera ‘Saul and David’ [...]”⁶

This statement might suggest that Carl Nielsen himself had conceived the idea of a *Saul and David* opera, but many years afterwards he remembered the following event in connection with the genesis of the opera:

“I have always felt strongly attracted by the ‘dramatic’ in art, for is not all art actually dramatic? Nevertheless it was difficult for me to find the right subject for an *opera*, despite the fact that I had as experienced and cultivated a guide as *Einar Christiansen*,⁷ who visited me one evening and spoke with me about several ‘opera ideas’ he had for me. But none of them quite appealed to me, I must confess. Out in the lobby, when he was putting his coat on, he turned suddenly to me and exclaimed: ‘Well, what do you think of my old idea ‘Saul and David’?’ In a flash I then experienced the Bible story of my childhood and was gripped by its Old Testament atmosphere. The sublime in it, all that was so far from ‘reality’ and everyday life, captivated me in a special way.”⁸

Whether the idea for *Saul and David* was Carl Nielsen’s own, or it was Einar Christiansen’s, it seems certain that in the course of 1898 the two agreed to collaborate on an opera on this theme.

With the choice of Einar Christiansen as librettist Carl Nielsen had found an experienced man of the theatre as his partner. Einar Christiansen was at this time the editor of *Illustreret Tidende*, but from 1899 became director of the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. He had a substantial output behind him as both dramatist and opera librettist,⁹ and he had translated operas into Danish. The libretto for *Saul and David* was created in a very short period, in the course of January 1899.¹⁰ We have no further testimony to the collaboration between

5 According to Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 159, Carl Nielsen had been thinking about *Saul and David* since 1896 and began the work in September 1898. But it has not been possible to verify this information.
6 DK-Kk, CNA, I.D.3., quoted from John Fellow, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
7 Danish author and journalist (1861-1939).
8 *Berlingske Tidende*, 26.02.1929, quoted from John Fellow, *op. cit.*, p. 518.
9 August Enna’s *Cleopatra* (1893), Frederik Rung’s *Den trekantede Hat* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*) (1894), Alfred Tofft’s *Vifandaka* (1897).
10 According to Einar Christiansen’s note in the printed edition of the libretto from 1902 (Source **Qa**).

De nærmere omstændigheder med hensyn til, hvordan og hvornår idéen om en *Saul og David*-opera tog form, lader sig ikke fastslå med sikkerhed.⁵ Carl Nielsens egne erindringer er noget tvetydige på dette punkt. I en selvbiografisk skitse fra 1905 hedder det blandt andet om hans arbejds-metode, at det er vigtigt for ham:

“at Ideerne til mine Værker opstaa hos mig selv. Hermed mener jeg ikke blot den rent musikalske-, men ogsaa den literære Del deraf. Ideen til min ‘Hymnus amoris’ opstod saaledes hos mig fuld færdig i alle Enkeltheder, hvad Texten og Indholdet angaar, en Nat, jeg laa uden at kunne falde i Søvn. Det samme var Tilfældet med Operaen ‘Saul og David’ [...]”⁶

Denne udtalelse kunne tyde på, at Carl Nielsen selv havde undfanget idéen om en *Saul og David*-opera, men mange år herefter erindrede han sig følgende hændelse i forbindelse med operaens tilblivelse:

“Jeg har altid følt mig stærkt tiltalt af det ‘dramatiske’ i Kunsten, thi er nu ikke al Kunst dramatisk? Alligevel var det svært for mig at finde det rigtige Emne til en *Opera*, uagtet jeg havde en saa erfaren og kultiveret Vejleder som *Einar Christiansen*,⁷ der besøgte mig en Aften og talte med mig om forskellige ‘Operaidéer’ han havde til mig. Dog ingen af dem tiltalte mig helt, maa jeg tilstaa. Da han ude i Entréen var ved at tage Frakken paa, vender han sig rask imod mig og udbryder: ‘Naa, hvad mener De saa om min gamle Idé ‘Saul og David’? Som i et Lyn oplevede jeg da min Barndoms Bibelhistorie og følte mig grebet af dens gammeltestamentlige Stemning. Det ophøjede deri, alt det, der var saa langt borte fra ‘Virkeligheden’ og Hverdagen, fængslede mig paa en særlig Maade.”⁸

Hvad enten idéen til *Saul og David* var Carl Nielsens egen, eller det var Einar Christiansens, så synes det sikkert, at de to i løbet af 1898 aftalte et samarbejde om en opera over dette emne.

Med valget af Einar Christiansen som librettist havde Carl Nielsen fået en erfaren teatermand til samarbejdspartner. Einar Christiansen var på dette tidspunkt redaktør ved *Illustreret Tidende*, men blev fra 1899 direktør for Det Kongelige Teater. Han havde en anselig produktion bag sig som både skuespil-forfatter og operalibrettist,⁹ ligesom han havde oversat operaer til dansk. Librettoen til *Saul og David* blev til på ganske kort tid i løbet af januar 1899.¹⁰ Der foreligger ikke nogle nærmere vidnesbyrd om samarbejdet mellem Carl Nielsen og Einar

5 Iflg. Torben Meyer og Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, bd. 1, s. 159 havde Carl Nielsen tænkt på *Saul og David* siden 1896 og påbegyndte arbejdet i september 1898. Disse oplysninger har dog ikke kunnet verificeres.
6 DK-Kk, CNA, I.D.3., citeret efter John Fellow, *op. cit.*, s. 51.
7 Forfatter og journalist (1861-1939).
8 *Berlingske Tidende*, 26.02.1929, citeret efter John Fellow, *op. cit.*, s. 518.
9 August Ennas *Cleopatra* (1893), Frederik Rungs *Den trekantede Hat* (1894), Alfred Toffts *Vifandaka* (1897).
10 Iflg. Einar Christiansens note i den trykte udgave af librettoen fra 1902 (kilde **Qa**).

Nielsen and Einar Christiansen in connection with the creation of *Saul and David*, but Carl Nielsen appears to have been very satisfied with the libretto and only made minor changes in Christiansen’s text.

The subject *Saul and David* has formed the basis for a wealth of musical versions since the mid-seventeenth century, mainly in the form of oratorios, but also of operas.¹¹ In this connection it merits special attention that in the years 1864-66 Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann¹² was working on a *Saul* opera to a text by Hans Christian Andersen.¹³ To the great regret of Andersen, though, Hartmann never finished the opera, and later Andersen had the full text published in his collected works.¹⁴ It is not possible to document whether Carl Nielsen knew of Hartmann’s opera project, but it should be mentioned that he attended a dinner party with J.P.E. Hartmann on 12th May 1897 – that is, precisely in the period when he was looking for a suitable subject for his opera.¹⁵

Hans Christian Andersen’s *Saul* libretto was later used by Johan Adam Kryggell¹⁶ in the opera *King Saul* (1880, never performed). According to the readers of the Royal Theatre, in the 1893-94 season a work submitted entitled *King Saul* was rejected. However, it is not clear whether this was an opera, and in that case if it was Kryggell’s work, although one must assume this was the case.¹⁷ As with Hartmann’s *Saul* fragment, there is no evidence either that Carl Nielsen knew of Kryggell’s opera.

On the other hand it is difficult to imagine that Einar Christiansen knew nothing of Hans Christian Andersen’s opera libretto *King Saul* when he wrote his libretto for Carl Nielsen’s opera. Einar Christiansen’s plot, the selection of episodes from the Old Testament and a number of the respects in which the text differs from the Biblical account very accurately reflect Andersen’s text (cf. below, pp. xxv ff). This might suggest that Einar Christiansen was very much inspired by Hans Christian Andersen, although the characterization and the conflict between Saul and David are much more sharply drawn than in the older text.

Although the text for *Saul and David* was ready in January 1899, a few months seem to have passed before Carl Nielsen started in earnest on the composition. On 27th July his wife asked in a letter to Carl Nielsen: “Is Samuel coming?”¹⁸ – a

Christiansen i forbindelsen med tilblivelsen af *Saul og David*, men Carl Nielsen har tilsyneladende været meget tilfreds med teksten og har kun foretaget mindre ændringer i forhold til Christiansens tekst.

Sujetet *Saul og David* har været grundlag for talrige musikalske bearbejdelser siden midten af 1600-tallet, fortrinsvis i form af oratorier, men også som operaer.¹¹ I denne forbindelse fortjener det særlig opmærksomhed, at J.P.E. Hartmann¹² i årene 1864-66 arbejdede på *Saul*-opera til tekst af H.C. Andersen.¹³ Til eventyrdigterens store fortrydelse fuldendte Hartmann imidlertid aldrig operaen, og H.C. Andersen lod senere den fulde tekst offentliggøre i sine samlede værker.¹⁴ Det er ikke muligt at godtgøre, hvorvidt Carl Nielsen har haft kendskab til Hartmanns operaprojekt, men det skal dog nævnes, at han var sammen med J.P.E. Hartmann ved et middagsselskab den 12. maj 1897 – altså netop i den periode, hvor han søgte efter et egnet emne til sin opera.¹⁵

H.C. Andersens *Saul*-tekst blev siden anvendt af Johan Adam Kryggell¹⁶ i operaen *Kong-Saul* (1880, aldrig opført). Ifølge Det Kongelige Teaters censur i sæsonen 1893-94 afvistest et indleveret arbejde, netop med titlen *Kong Saul*. Det fremgår dog ikke, hvorvidt det drejer sig om en opera, og om det i givet fald er Kryggells værk, der er tale om, skønt man må formode, at dette er tilfældet.¹⁷ Som det gjaldt for Hartmanns *Saul*-fragment, er der heller ingen vidnesbyrd om, at Carl Nielsen at skulle have kendt Kryggells opera.

Derimod er det vanskeligt at forestille sig, at Einar Christiansen ikke skulle have kendt H.C. Andersens operatekst *Kong Saul*, da han skrev sin libretto til Carl Nielsens opera. Einar Christiansens handlingsgang, udvalget af episoder fra Det gamle Testamente samt en række af de punkter, hvorved teksten afviger fra den bibelske beretning, modsvarer ret nøje H.C. Andersens tekst (jf. nedenfor, s. xxv ff.). Disse forhold kunne tyde på, at Einar Christiansen i ganske høj grad har ladet sig inspirere af H.C. Andersen, selv om persontegningen og konflikten mellem Saul og David er trukket langt skarpere op her end i den ældre tekst.

Selv om teksten til *Saul og David* var klar i januar 1899, gik der tilsyneladende nogle måneder, før Carl Nielsen for alvor kom i gang med kompositionen. Den 27. juli spurgte hans hustru i et brev til Carl Nielsen: “Kommer Samuel”¹⁸ – en

11 Alexander Reischert, *Kompendium der musikalischen Sujets. Ein Werkkatalog*, Kassel 2001, vol. 1, pp. 868-871.
12 Danish composer (1805-1900).
13 J.P.E. Hartmann’s fully written-out score *Saul* is a torso of just 100 pages. The manuscript remained in Hartmann’s private possession until 1902, when it was transferred to the Royal Library (DK-Kk, Hartmanns Samling). It sets Hans Christian Andersen’s text to music up to the end of Act One, where David has announced that he will go to battle against Goliath. The first performance of *Saul* took place in *Dansk Koncert-Forening* on 10.12.1928 (cf. programme in DK-Kk, J.P.E. Hartmann, *Saul*), long after Hartmann’s death and long after Carl Nielsen’s work with the material.
14 H.C. Andersen, *Samlede Skrifter*, Copenhagen 1878 (2nd. edn.), vol. 11, pp. 435-466.
15 Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
16 Danish composer (1835-1915). *Kong Saul. Opera i 5 Acter. Text af H.C. Andersen, Claverudtog af Comp.*, manuscript in DK-Kk, C II, 10; dating “1880” according to Alexander Reischert, *op. cit.*, p. 870.
17 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 220. G. Censur. Indsendte Stykker, Kasse 410, 1893-1899, ‘Skrivelser vedr. Censursager 1893-94’.
18 Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

11 Alexander Reischert, *Kompendium der musikalischen Sujets. Ein Werkkatalog*, Kassel 2001, bd. 1, s. 868-871.
12 Komponist (1805-1900).
13 J.P.E. Hartmanns fuldt udskrevne partitur *Saul*, er en torso på knap 100 sider. Manuskriptet forblev i Hartmanns privateje, indtil det i 1902 blev overdraget til Det Kongelige Bibliotek (DK-Kk, Hartmanns Samling). Det sætter H.C. Andersens tekst i musik frem til slutningen af 1. akt, hvor David har meddelt, at han vil drage til kamp mod Goliath. Førsteopførelsen af *Saul* fandt sted i Dansk Koncert-Forening 10.12.1928 (jf. program i DK-Kk, J.P.E. Hartmann, *Saul*), længe efter Hartmanns død og længe efter Carl Nielsens arbejde med stoffet.
14 H.C. Andersen, *Samlede Skrifter*, København 1878 (2. udg.), bd. 11, s. 435-466.
15 Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, s. 146.
16 Dansk komponist (1835-1915). *Kong Saul. Opera i 5 Acter. Text af H.C. Andersen, Claverudtog af Comp.*, manuskript i DK-Kk, C II, 10; dateringen “1880” iflg. Alexander Reischert, *op. cit.*, s. 870.
17 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 220. G. Censur. Indsendte Stykker, Kasse 410, 1893-1899, ‘Skrivelser vedr. Censursager 1893-94’.
18 Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, s. 161.

reference to the text at the beginning of Act One. And on 6th October Carl Nielsen wrote to her: “It is still going rather slowly – but forward – with my opera, but I think it will soon get better and come faster.”¹⁹ Before the end of the year he had finished the rough draft of the first act and begun composing Act Two.²⁰ He was wholly absorbed by the subject, and in a newspaper interview from 1929 he recollected:

“This great, strange material [...] captivated me and pursued me, so that for long periods I was totally unable to be free of it, and in my infrequent leisure hours thought only about it; wherever I was – even when I sat there in the Orchestra and worked away at the second violin for ballets and vaudevilles, and when I was travelling. Some of the opera was incidentally composed while I was abroad. For example I still remember clearly how I wrote the Entry Hymn in Act Two after David’s victory over Goliath in a small hostelry garden in Pompeii,²¹ where I sat wearing shaded glasses to protect myself from the burning sun. Another important section was written at a less idyllic place, hanging from a tram. This was the fugue theme for the great chorus in Act Three, for which I had long had difficulty finding a form – and now I rushed home to scribble it down”.²²

As Carl Nielsen mentioned, a good deal of the opera was composed abroad, during a stay in Italy from December 1899 to June 1900 – a stay that had been made possible by travel grants to both Carl Nielsen and his wife.²³ About this stay the couple’s friend, the art historian Vilhelm Wanscher,²⁴ wrote the following in a memoir article:

“At the turn of the century Carl Nielsen and his wife Mrs. Anne Marie Carl Nielsen were living in Rome. They had a small flat, like Goethe in his time, in the Via del Babuino (‘Baboon Street’),²⁵ which runs in a straight line from the Piazza di Spagna to the Piazza del Popolo. The old-fashioned traffic in the street did not bother the composer, who worked on the first act of his opera ‘Saul and David’; he sat at an upright piano over by one of the windows and hammered the keys with his stubby fingers to hear how it sounded, seized the pencil he had across his mouth like a horse-bit, wrote on the big manuscript draft and tried again. All was quiet around him. He

hentydning til teksten i begyndelsen af første akt. Og den 6. oktober skrev Carl Nielsen til sin hende: “Det gaar endnu kun ret langsomt men dog fremad med min Opera dog jeg tænker det skal snart blive bedre og komme mere Fart deri.”¹⁹ Inden årets udgang havde han afsluttet kladden til første akt og påbegyndt kompositionen af anden akt.²⁰ Han var ganske opslugt af emnet, og i et avisinterview fra 1929 erindrede han:

“Dette store og mærkelige Stof [...] betog mig og forfulgte mig, saa jeg i lange Tider slet ikke kunne frigøre mig for det og i min sparsomme Fritid kun tænkte paa det. Hvor jeg saa var – ogsaa naar jeg sad derinde i Kapellet og syslede paa Anden-violinen til Balletter og Vaudeviller, og naar jeg var paa Rejse. En Del af Operaen er for øvrigt komponeret mens jeg var ude. Jeg husker saaledes endnu tydeligt, hvordan jeg skrev Indtogshymnen i anden Akt efter Davids Sejr over Goliath i en lille Beværtningshave i Pompeji,²¹ hvor jeg sad med blaa Brilller for at beskytte mig mod den knaldende Sol. Et andet vigtigt Afsnit blev til paa et mindre idyllisk Sted, nemlig udenpaa en Sporvogn. Det var Fugatemaet til det store Kor i tredje Akt, som jeg længe havde haft Besvær med at finde Form paa – og nu styrtede jeg hjem for at rable det ned”.²²

Som Carl Nielsen nævner, er en del af operaen komponeret i udlandet, nemlig under et ophold i Italien fra december 1899 til juni 1900 – et ophold, som var muliggjort af nogle rejsestipendier til såvel Carl Nielsen som hans hustru.²³ Om dette ophold skrev ægteparrets ven, kunsthistorikeren Vilhelm Wanscher,²⁴ blandt andet følgende i en erindringsartikel:

“Ved Aarhundredskiftet boede Carl Nielsen og hans Hustru Fru Anne Marie Carl Nielsen i Rom. De havde en lille Lejlighed, ligesom i sin Tid Goethe, i Via del Babuino (‘Baviangaden’),²⁵ der fører i lige Linje fra Piazza di Spagna til Piazza del Popolo. Den gammeldags Færdsel i Gaden generede ikke Komponisten, som skrev paa første Akt af sin første Opera ‘Saul og David’; han sad ved et opretstaaende Klaver henne ved et af Vinduerne og hamrede med sine korte Fingre i Tasterne for at høre, hvo[r]dan Klangene lød, greb den Blyant, han havde paa tværs i Munden som et Bidsel, skrev paa den store Manuskript-Kladde og forsøgte igen. Alt var stille omkring ham. Han tænkte kun paa

19 *Ibid.*, p. 163.

20 Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 173.

21 The recollection is confirmed by the dating “Pompei den 19-5-1900” on p. 64 in the draft of Act Two (Source **B**).

22 *Politiken*, 26.2.1929, quoted from John Fellow, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

23 Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen had received the grant *Kauffmanns Legat*, while Carl Nielsen received state support of Dkr 600 for a study trip; cf. Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

24 (1875-1961).

25 Until the end of January (perhaps the beginning of February) Carl Nielsen lived at Via Consolazione 62^{III} (cf. letter from Carl Nielsen to Alfred Wilhelm Hansen, 6.1.1900 (*DK-Kk*, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, Avisudklip 890-1918 (1914)), after which he moved to Via Babuino 52^{III} (cf. letter from Carl Nielsen to Alfred Wilhelm Hansen, 14.2.1900 (*DK-Kk*, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, Avisudklip 1890-1918 (1914)).

19 *Ibid.*, s. 163.

20 Torben Meyer og Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, bd. 1, s. 173.

21 Erindringen bekræftes af dateringen “Pompei den 19-5-1900” på s. 64 i kladden af 2. akt (kilde **B**).

22 *Politiken*, 26.2.1929, citeret efter John Fellow, *op. cit.*, s. 520.

23 Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen havde modtaget Kauffmanns Legat, mens Carl Nielsen fik statslig understøttelse på 600 kr. til en studierejse, jf. Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, s. 168.

24 (1875-1961).

25 Indtil udgangen af januar (måske begyndelsen af februar) boede Carl Nielsen på Via Consolazione 62^{III} (jf. brev fra Carl Nielsen til Alfred Wilhelm Hansen, 6.1.1900 (*DK-Kk*, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, Avisudklip 1890-1918 (1914)), herefter flyttede han til Via Babuino 52^{III} (jf. brev fra Carl Nielsen til Alfred Wilhelm Hansen, 14.2.1900 (*DK-Kk*, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, Avisudklip 1890-1918 (1914)).

thought only of David and Michal, and he heard in his inner ear how Herold²⁶ would sing the role of David. He was alone in the mornings – I think he got up rather late – for at that time his energetic wife was working as a pupil of one of the French sculptors²⁷ up in the French Academy on Monte Pincio.”²⁸

During the Italian stay Carl Nielsen composed large parts of Act Two. It was moreover in connection with this trip that he began composing his orchestral writing directly on the score draft, instead of as before only conceiving the work in piano arrangement or short score. Carl Nielsen is said to have met an Italian composer who taught him this way of working.²⁹ The story is in fact confirmed by the pencil draft of the opera: the first two acts are written in short score, while the draft for the third and fourth act is written in full score (see facsimiles, pp. xxxii, xxxiii, xxxv).

The work on *Saul and David* continued up to the spring of 1901, since the draft for Act Three is end-dated 28th February 1901, while the draft for Act Four is end-dated 20th April 1901. The end of the actual composition work was celebrated with a small party for a few close friends. In a letter postmarked 18th April 1901 to his friend Vilhelm Herold, Carl Nielsen writes:

“Today or no later than sometime tomorrow I can write the last note in my score for my opera. I would therefore like to ask you if you would like to eat an innocent dinner at Langelinie tomorrow at 5.30; all in our everyday clothes, since in a way I will be coming straight from the workshop and am superstitious about celebrating this (for me) solemn occasion. So my idea was to go out on the pier and see my wife’s large work, and then back home to us where we have an excellent Frascati wine just in from Italy in an extra glass container. Only you and the Borups!³⁰ Please do your best to come, it means so much to me[.]”³¹

It must be assumed that Carl Nielsen fair-copied the opera in parallel with the actual composition work. Thus, shortly after finishing the composition work he was able to submit the work for acceptance at the Royal Theatre.³² By 31st May 1901 the conductor Johan Svendsen³³ made the following very positive statement in the adjudication minutes:

David og Mikael, og han hørte i sit Indre, hvordan Herold²⁶ vilde synge Davids Parti. Han var alene om Formiddagen – han stod vist temmelig sent op – thi paa den Tid arbejdede hans energiske Frue som Elev hos en af de franske Billedhuggere²⁷ oppe i det franske Akademi paa Monte Pincio.”²⁸

Under Italiens-opholdet komponerede Carl Nielsen store dele af anden akt. Endvidere var det i forbindelse med denne rejse, at han begyndte at komponere sin orkestersats direkte i partiturladde, i stedet for som hidtil først at koncipere værket i klaversats eller partitel. Angiveligt skulle Carl Nielsen have truffet en italiensk komponist, der lærte ham denne arbejdsform.²⁹ Historien bekræftes i øvrigt af blyantskladden til operaen: de to første akter er skrevet i partitel, mens kladden til tredje og fjerde akt er skrevet i fuldt partitur (se facsimiler, s. xxxii, xxxiii, xxxv).

Arbejdet med *Saul og David* fortsatte frem til foråret 1901, idet kladden til tredje akt er slutdateret den 28. februar 1901, mens kladden til fjerde akt er slutdateret den 20. april 1901. Afslutningen af selve kompositionen fejredes med et lille selskab for nogle få nære venner. I et brev, poststempolet den 18. april 1901 til vennen Vilhelm Herold, skriver Carl Nielsen:

“Idag eller senest i Løbet af imorgen kan jeg skrive den sidste Node i mit Partitur til min Opera. Jeg vilde derfor gerne bede Jer om I ikke vilde være med til at spise en uskyldig Middagsmad paa Langelinie imorgen Kl 5 1/2; alle i vort daglige Tøj da jeg paa en Maade jo kommer lige fra Værkstedet og er overtroisk med at feste i denne (for mig) højtidelige Anledning. Saa var det Meningen at gaa ud paa Molen og se min Kones store Arbejde, og dernæst hjem til os hvor vi har en fortrinlig Frascati-Vin lige kommen fra Italien i en Extra Glasbeholder. Kun Jer og Borups!³⁰ Gjør nu endelig alt for at komme det er mig saa meget[.]”³¹

Det må antages, at Carl Nielsen renskrev operaen sideløbende med selve kompositionen. Således kunne han kort tid efter kompositionens afslutning indlevere værket til antagelse ved Det Kongelige Teater.³² Allerede den 31. maj 1901 afgav kapelmester Johan Svendsen³³ følgende meget positive udtalelse til teatrets censurprotokol:

26 Vilhelm Herold (1865-1937), dansk tenor, sang Davids parti ved uropførelsen af *Saul og David*.
27 Den franske billedhugger Victor Joseph Ségoﬀin.
28 Vilhelm Wanscher, “Erindringer om Carl Nielsen”, *Politiken*, 8.06.1935.
29 Torben Meyer og Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, bd.1, s. 177.
30 Violinisten Julius Borup (1865-1938) og dennes hustru, pianisten og solfège-pædagogen Dagmar Borup (1867-1959).
31 *DK-Kk*, CNA, I.A.d.
32 Det kan dog ikke udelukkes, at han har indleveret dele af operaen i blyantskladde.
33 Norsk komponist og dirigent (1840-1911).

“A highly interesting work, bearing throughout the stamp of an independent gifted artist. There are no borrowings from elsewhere here. The composer goes his own way, with clarity and assurance. Without looking to left or right, he aims at his goal: to give the dramatic action musical characterization in an original manner. –

I warmly and earnestly recommend this work for acceptance and early performance.”³⁴

Apparently the libretto was not sent to the Theatre’s reader Peter Hansen³⁵ until 20th August 1901.³⁶ In a statement dated 7th September 1901 he gave Einar Christiansen’s libretto the following appraisal:

“The excellent dramatic material in the Old Testament tale of the first two kings of Israel has been given here in a greatly compressed form and with frequent use of the Biblical expressions. One must I think predict a considerable theatrical effect for the opera libretto that has thus emerged.”³⁷

On 12th September 1901 a letter went off to Carl Nielsen saying that the opera *Saul and David* had been accepted for performance at the Royal Theatre.³⁸ Prior to the formal acceptance he was probably given advance notice. At all events Johan Svendsen was asking Carl Nielsen for a piano arrangement as early as August 1901.³⁹

Even before the opera was fully composed, Carl Nielsen succeeded in having the Prelude to Act Two performed at a concert on 17th November 1900 by the Royal Orchestra under the baton of Johan Svendsen.⁴⁰ The reviewers were far from agreed in their assessment of the music. For example Gustav Hetsch⁴¹ (-st-ts-) wrote in *Nationaltidende* on 18.11.1900:

“Mr. Carl Nielsen, who seems to compose by virtue of an urge and will matched by no fertile creative gift, should learn from both Gade and Tchaikovsky to sing from the lungs. If he has something to say, with his talent he should say it straightforwardly, and refrain from seeking the oddest expression, speculating in the most ingenious combinations. He should write music with air in its lungs and blood in its veins, and not sit down to construct contrapuntal exercises [...] and

“Et i høj Grad interessant Værk, der helt igjennem bærer en selvstændig begavet Kunstners Stempel. Her er intet Laan andetstedsfra. Klar og sikker gaar Komponisten sin egen Vej. Uden at se til venstre eller højre gaar han løs paa sit Maal: paa original Måde at give den dramatiske Handling musikalsk karakteristik. –

Varmt og indtrængende anbefales dette Værk til Antagelse og snarlig Opførelse.”³⁴

Tilsyneladende blev librettoen først fremsendt til teatrets tekstcensor Peter Hansen³⁵ den 20. august 1901.³⁶ I en udtalelse dateret den 7. september 1901 gav denne Einar Christiansens tekst følgende skudsmål:

“Det ypperlige dramatiske Stof i det gl. Testamentes Fortælling om Israels to første Konger er her benyttet i stærkt sammen-trængt Form og med hyppig Anvendelse af de bibelske Udtryk. Den saaledes fremkomne Operatext tør man vist spaa en betydelig scenisk Virkning.”³⁷

Den 12. september 1901 afgik der brev til Carl Nielsen om, at operaen *Saul og David* var blevet antaget til opførelse ved Det Kongelige Teater.³⁸ Forud for den formelle antagelse har han sandsynligvis fået et forhåndstilsagn. I det mindste rykkede Johan Svendsen Carl Nielsen for et klaverudtog allerede i august 1901.³⁹

Endnu inden operaen var færdigkomponeret, lykkedes det Carl Nielsen at få opført forspillet til anden akt ved en koncert den 17. november 1900 med Det Kongelige Kapel under ledelse af Johan Svendsen.⁴⁰ Anmelderne var langt fra enige i deres bedømmelse af musikken. Således skriver Gustav Hetsch⁴¹ (-st-ts-) i *Nationaltidende* den 18.11.1900:

“Hr. Carl Nielsen der synes at komponere i Kraft af en Trang og en Villie, hvortil der ikke svarer en frodig Skaberevne, burde lære af baade Gade og Tchaikovsky at synge fra Lungerne. Naar han har Noget paa Hjerter, saa skulde han med sit Talent sige det lige ud og lade være med at søge de særeste Udtryk, udspekulere de sindrigste Kombinationer. Han skulde skrive Musik med Luft i Lungerne og Blod i Aarerne, og ikke sætte sig til at konstruere kontrapunktiske Opgaver [...] Og

34 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1787-1911. G. Censur. Indsendte stykker. 397.
35 Journalist, literary and theatrical historian (1840-1905). He was a reader at the Royal Theatre from 1899 until his death.
36 Cf. Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1392. Indsendte stykker 1897-1930.
37 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1787-1911. G. Censur. Indsendte stykker. 397.
38 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1392. Indsendte stykker 1897-1930.
39 Cf. letter from Carl Nielsen to Henrik Knudsen, 23.8.1901 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.).
40 Also played in this concert were Niels W. Gade’s concert overture *Michel Angelo*, two pieces from Carl Nielsen’s music for Holger Drachmann’s melodrama *Snefrid*, Camille Saint-Saëns’ *Introduction and Rondo capriccioso*, Jules Massenet’s *Meditation* from *Thaïs* and Peter Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony.
41 Danish author and music critic (1867-1935).

34 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1787-1911. G. Censur. Indsendte stykker. 397.
35 Journalist, litteratur- og teaterhistorisk forfatter (1840-1905). Var censor ved Det Kongelige Teater fra 1899 til sin død.
36 Jf. Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1392. Indsendte stykker 1897-1930.
37 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1787-1911. G. Censur. Indsendte stykker. 397.
38 Rigsarkivet, Det Kongelige Teater og Kapel. 1392. Indsendte stykker 1897-1930.
39 Jf. brev fra Carl Nielsen til Henrik Knudsen, 23.8.1901 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.).
40 Ved denne koncert spilledes endvidere Niels W. Gades koncertouverture *Michel Angelo*, to stykker fra Carl Nielsens musik til Holger Drachmanns melodrama *Snefrid*, Camille Saint-Saëns *Introduktion og Rondo capriccioso*, Jules Massenets *Meditation* fra *Thaïs* samt Peter Tjajkovskijs 5. symfoni.
41 Forfatter og musikkritiker (1867-1935).

the Prelude to Act Two of the opera ‘Saul and David’ was played yesterday evening for the first time. It did not suggest that the composer, in this new major work of his, has any feeling of what it was he lacked, or was able to remedy the lack. There was much in this fragment that sounded most odd, even ugly; other parts that appeared rather banal. But one must suppose it was thus the composer wished it to be. The will of man, the Heaven of man!”

Far more positive was Charles Kjerulf⁴² (*Ch. K.*), who wrote in his review in *Politiken* on 18.11.1900:

“The prelude to the new opera was even more effective, its sounds rose stately and passionately and appeared as a tonal painting full of beauty and character. If the work itself keeps the promise of this foretaste, Carl Nielsen is thus taking a great step forward, for the independence and novelty of this music at no moment turned into the distortion of these grand qualities, as has happened before to the impetuously onrushing composer. The audience were extremely delighted and with great applause called Mr. Carl Nielsen forth from his modest second-violin seat in the orchestra.”

The two attitudes expressed in these reviews were highly characteristic of the reception of Carl Nielsen’s works in this period.

II THE PREMIERE

The performance material for *Saul and David* was fully copied in the spring of 1902 by, among others, Eduard Büchner, who had been engaged in February as the Royal Theatre’s opera and ballet stage manager. The soloist parts were thus distributed to the singers in March and April,⁴³ but it was only after the summer holiday in September 1902 that both the orchestra rehearsals and the piano rehearsals were begun. Since this was a new work, time was found for many rehearsals – often directed by the composer himself. Thus eighteen piano rehearsals were held with the singing soloists as well as rehearsals with the orchestra with and without soloists. At the beginning of November the first full rehearsals of the opera were held alongside rehearsals of arrangements, sets and lighting. The sets too were extensive, as is evident from the preserved photographs, stage drawings and descriptions, and several of the reviewers made much of the impressive scenery and colourful costumes. All in all, there were some 47 rehearsals before the premiere on 28th November, and judging from the Theatre’s records there appear to have been no significant problems with soloists or orchestra, either during the initial rehearsals or the dress rehearsal, of the kind Carl Nielsen was later to experience with his second, far more popular opera *Masquerade* in 1906.⁴⁴ All the same there are some indications that not everything went completely smoothly. Not long after

Forspillet til 2. Akt af Operaen ‘Saul og David’ gik i Aftes for første Gang. Det tydede ikke paa, at Komponisten i dette sit nye store Arbejde har følt, hvad det var, der manglede ham, eller har formaaet at udfylde Savnet. Der var meget i dette Fragment, der klang højst besynderlig, ligefrem grimt, andet, der tog sig ret banalt ud. Men det var vel saaledes, Komponisten vilde have det skulde være. Mands Villie, Mands Himmerig!”

Langt mere positiv er Charles Kjerulf⁴² (*Ch. K.*), der i sin anmeldelse i *Politiken* den 18.11.1900 skriver:

“Forspillet af den nye Opera var endnu mere virkningsfuldt, pompøst og lidenskabeligt rejste dets Klange sig og forbandt sig til et Tonemaleri, fuldt af Skønhed og Karakter. Holder selve Værket, hvad denne Mundsmag lover, gør Carl Nielsen hermed atter et stort Skridt frem, thi Selvstændigheden og Nyheden i denne Musik slog intet Øjeblik om i disse herlige Egenskabers Vrægebillede, hvad jo før er hændt for den hidsigt fremadstormede Komponist. Tilhørerne var overmaade henrykte og fremkaldte under stærkt Bifald flere gange Hr. Carl Nielsen fra hans beskedne Sekund-Violin-Pult i Orkestret.”

De to holdninger, der kom til udtryk i disse anmeldelser, var i høj grad karakteristiske for receptionen af Carl Nielsens værker i denne periode.

II UROPFØRELSEN

Opførelsesmaterialet til *Saul og David* var færdigkopieret i foråret 1902 af blandt andre Eduard Büchner, som i februar var blevet ansat som Det Kongelige Teaters opera- og balletregissør. Solistpartierne blev således fordelt blandt sangerne i marts og april,⁴³ men det var dog først efter sommerferien i september 1902, at både orkesterprøverne og klaverprøverne påbegyndtes. Da der var tale om et nyt værk, blev der afsat ganske mange prøver – ofte under komponistens egen ledelse. Således afholdtes 18 klaverprøver med sangsolisterne foruden prøver med orkestret med og uden solister. I begyndelsen af november fandt de første samlede prøver på hele operaen sted sideløbende med arrangements-, dekorations- og belysningsprøver. Dekorationerne var da også omfattende, hvilket fremgår af de overleverede fotografier, scenetegninger og beskrivelser, ligesom også flere af anmelderne hæftede sig ved de flotte kulisser og farverige kostymer. Alt i alt blev der afholdt omkring 47 prøver før premieren den 28. november, og ifølge teatrets journalbøger var der tilsyneladende ingen nævneværdige problemer med solister eller orkester hverken under prøverne eller generalprøven, sådan som Carl Nielsen senere skulle opleve det med sin anden, langt mere populære opera *Maskarade* i 1906.⁴⁴ Alligevel er der noget, som tyder på, at ikke alt forløb gnidningsløst: ikke længe efter at prøverne med

42 Danish composer and music critic (1858-1919).
43 Cf. *Critical Commentary*, ‘Sources’ (Gb), p. 622.
44 Cf. *Det Kongelige Teater*, Journalbog 15.8.1896-1.6.1904.

42 Komponist og musikkritiker (1858-1919).
43 Jf. *Critical Commentary*, ‘Sources’ (Gb), s. 622.
44 Jf. *Det Kongelige Teater*, Journalbog 15.8.1896-1.6.1904.

the rehearsals with the singers had begun, Carl Nielsen wrote a letter to his old composition teacher, Orla Rosenhoff:

“Now the rehearsals of my opera have begun, by the way – of course with trouble. Singers are really a unique and strange race of creatures, touchy as crabs without a shell, and we have already had rowing and bickering that I shall tell you about when we see each other.”⁴⁵

It should be noted however that before this Vilhelm Herold, who sang David, had praised his part “to the skies”,⁴⁶ and although some singers had apparently been sceptical about the new opera, they ended up taking the work to their hearts.⁴⁷ Nor did the composer find any reason during the rehearsals to make any major changes or cuts in the opera, as was later the case with *Masquerade*; in an interview with *Politiken* many years later Carl Nielsen said:

“As a matter of fact, isn’t it strange that when *Masquerade*, my later opera, was recently staged again, I could well have wished to do several things differently, and was willing to agree to both rearrangements and cuts, while I actually couldn’t imagine any changes at all in *Saul* and *David*.”⁴⁸

The world premiere was on 28th November 1902 with the following cast:

- Saul: Niels Juel Simonsen
- David: Vilhelm Herold
- Jonathan: Peter Cornelius
- Samuel: Helge Nissen
- Michal: Emilie Ulrich
- Abner: Max Müller
- Abishai: Margrethe Lendrop
- The Witch of Endor: Elisabeth Dons

Originally Max Müller was to have sung the role of Samuel, but on the morning of the premiere he did not feel quite well, so arranged for himself and Helge Nissen to exchange roles. While Carl Nielsen was reviewing Christiansen’s libretto before the actual composition process had begun, he had already decided that Elisabeth Dons – one of his close friends whom he had met in Italy while he was still working on Act Two of *Saul and David* – or perhaps Johanne Krarup-Hansen, was to sing the role of the Witch.⁴⁹

sangerne var begyndt, skrev Carl Nielsen et brev til sin gamle lærer i komposition, Orla Rosenhoff:

“Nu er Prøverne paa min Opera ellers begyndt, naturligvis med Vrøvl. Sangere er jo et enestaaende og underligt Folkefærd og saarbare som Krebsdyr uden Skal og vi har allerede haft Strid og Kiv som jeg skal fortælle Dem om naar vi ses.”⁴⁵

Det skal dog bemærkes, at forud for dette havde Vilhelm Herold, som sang David, rost sit parti “i høje Skyer”,⁴⁶ og skønt nogle sangere åbenbart havde stillet sig skeptisk overfor den nye opera, endte de dog med at tage værket til sig.⁴⁷ Under prøverne fandt komponisten heller ingen anledning til at foretage de store ændringer og følte sig ikke foranlediget til forkortelser af operaen, således som det senere blev tilfældet i forbindelse med *Maskarade*; i et interview til *Politiken* mange år senere siger Carl Nielsen:

“Er det for Resten ikke mærkeligt, at mens jeg, da *Mascarade*, min senere Opera, for nylig kom frem igen, udmærket godt kunne tænke mig adskilligt anderledes og gaa med til baade Forskydninger og Forkortninger, saa kan jeg i Grunden slet ikke tænke mig nogen som helst Forandring i *Saul* og *David*.”⁴⁸

Urpremieren fandt sted den 28. november 1902 med følgende besætning:

- Saul: Niels Juel Simonsen
- David: Vilhelm Herold
- Jonathan: Peter Cornelius
- Samuel: Helge Nissen
- Mikal: Emilie Ulrich
- Abner: Max Müller
- Abisaj: Margrethe Lendrop
- Troldkvinden i Endor: Elisabeth Dons

Oprindeligt skulle Max Müller have sunget Samuels parti, men på premiere-formiddagen følte han sig ikke helt tilpas og foranledigede derfor, at han og Helge Nissen byttede partier. Allerede mens Carl Nielsen gennemgik Christiansens libretto før selve kompositionsprocessen var begyndt, havde han besluttet, at Elisabeth Dons – en af hans nære venner, som han havde mødt i Italien, mens han endnu arbejdede på anden akt af *Saul og David* – eller eventuelt Johanne Krarup-Hansen skulle synge rollen som troldkvinden.⁴⁹

45 Letter of 22.9.1902, quoted from Irmelin Eggert Møller & Torben Meyer (eds.), *Carl Nielsens Breve. I udvalg og med kommentarer*, Copenhagen 1954, p. 45; Orla Rosenhoff, composer and music theorist (1844-1905).
46 Letter from Carl Nielsen to Henrik Knudsen, 21.8.1902, quoted from Irmelin Eggert Møller & Torben Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
47 Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 179.
48 *Politiken*, 26.2.1929.
49 Cf. Carl Nielsen’s pencil addition in the libretto (Source **S**) and Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 175.

45 Brev af 22.9.1902, citeret efter Irmelin Eggert Møller og Torben Meyer (udg.), *Carl Nielsens Breve. I udvalg og med kommentarer*, København 1954, s. 45; Orla Rosenhoff, komponist og musikteoretiker (1844-1905).
46 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til Henrik Knudsen, 21.8.1902, citeret efter Irmelin Eggert Møller og Torben Meyer, *op. cit.*, s. 45.
47 Torben Meyer og Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, bd. 1, s. 179.
48 *Politiken*, 26.2.1929.
49 Jf. Carl Nielsens blyantstiltøjelse i librettoen, (kilde **S**), og Torben Meyer og Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, bd. 1, s. 175.

The performance appears to have aroused great enthusiasm among parts of the audience; we can read in the Theatre’s records that “the opera, staged by the director Julius Lehmann,⁵⁰ was received with long, enthusiastic applause. After Acts One and Two the applause was particularly persistent. Once the curtain had fallen on the last act, the audience went on clapping for about two minutes until the composer appeared on the conductor’s podium. The composer, Mr. Carl Nielsen, conducted the orchestra.”⁵¹

In the review of the event the next day Angul Hammerich noted a little tartly in *Dagens Nyheder*:

“The composer can be satisfied with this first evening. For the tightly packed house applauded his work with almost demonstrative clapping after the end of each act and would not leave until Mr. Carl Nielsen, who was making his debut not only as an opera composer, but also as a conductor, had shown himself to thank them in the orchestra pit.”⁵²

Despite loud applause from some of the audience, most of the reviewers were less convinced of the success of the opera. The most negative, however, was *Middagsposten*, whose article caused a minor furor among some of Carl Nielsen’s supporters, including William Behrend from *Politiken*.⁵³ That the circle around Carl Nielsen was present – and very clearly showed their enthusiasm – is very obvious from the remark in *Middagsposten*: “An artificial success was created by determined clapping by Carl Ploug’s son, Dr. Rudolph Berg’s son and Orla Lehmann’s nephew. For Carl Nielsen belongs to the clique.”⁵⁴ The newspaper, which was incidentally often rather sarcastic in its articles, had nothing positive to say either about the opera or about Carl Nielsen’s abilities as a composer. In a letter to the composer a few days after the premiere, Behrend draws attention to the negative review in *Middagsposten*, to which Nielsen replies that he has had “the content of the awful article summarized” by several people, but does not wish to take any steps against “that kind of insinuations”. On the other hand the composer acknowledges Behrend’s own far more sober article in *Politiken*.⁵⁵ Behrend’s review, which is one of the longest, expresses very well what most of the critics dwelt upon. After a short preamble saying that the performance of a new Danish opera by Carl Nielsen is a special event, Behrend continues:

“The event yesterday took the form, viewed from the outside, that after Act One there was lively applause, which was however continued by some people beyond the point where the audience as a whole could follow. The next two acts ended to

Opførelsen vakte tilsyneladende stor begejstring blandt dele af publikum; man kan således læse i teatrets journalbog, at “Operaen, der var sat i scene af Hr. Instruktør Julius Lehmann,⁵⁰ modtoges med begejstret og langvarigt Bifald. Efter 1ste og 2den Akt var Bifaldet særlig vedholdende. Da Tæppet var faldet for sidste Akt, vedblev Publikum at klappe i ca. 2" indtil Komponisten viste sig på Dirigentpladsen. Komponisten, Hr. Carl Nielsen dirigerede Orkestret.”⁵¹

I anmeldelsen af begivenheden den følgende dag bemærker Angul Hammerich i *Dagens Nyheder* lidt spidst:

“Komponisten kan være tilfreds med denne Førsteaften. Thi det tæt besatte Hus aplauderede hans Værk med næsten demonstrativt Bifald efter hver Aktslutning og skiltes ikke, før Hr. Carl Nielsen, der debuterede ikke blot som Operakomponist, men ogsaa som Kapelmester, havde vist sig takkende i Orkesterummet.”⁵²

På trods af kraftigt bifald fra en del af publikum, var de fleste af anmelderne mindre overbeviste om operaens succes. Den mest negative var dog *Middagsposten*, hvis artikel skabte et mindre røre blandt nogle af Carl Nielsens støtter, heriblandt William Behrend fra *Politiken*.⁵³ At kredsen omkring Carl Nielsen var til stede – og med stor tydelighed tilkendegav deres begejstring – fremgår meget klart af bemærkningen i *Middagsposten*: “En kunstig Succes skabtes ved ihærdig Klappen af Carl Plougs Søn, Dr. Rudolph Bergs Søn og Orla Lehmanns Dattersøn. Carl Nielsen hører nemlig til Kliquen.”⁵⁴ Avisen, som i øvrigt ofte var noget sarkastisk i sine artikler, har intet positivt at sige hverken om operaen eller Carl Nielsens evner som komponist. I et brev til komponisten nogle dage efter premieren gør Behrend opmærksom på den negative anmeldelse i *Middagsposten*, hvortil Nielsen svarer, at han fra flere sider har fået “Indholdet af den hæslige Artikel refereret” men ikke ønsker at foretage sig noget imod “den Slags Insinuationer”. Til gengæld anerkender komponisten Behrends egen langt mere sobre artikel i *Politiken*.⁵⁵ Behrends anmeldelse, som er blandt de længste, er et ganske godt udtryk for, hvad de fleste kritikere hæfter sig ved. Efter en kort indledning om, at opførelsen af en ny dansk opera af Carl Nielsen er en særlig begivenhed, fortsætter Behrend:

“Begivenheden i Gaar formede sig udadtil saaledes, at der efter første Akt var livligt Bifald, der dog af nogle enkelte fortsattes ud over, hvad Publikum som Helhed kunde følge. Under lignende Bifald sluttede de følgende to Akter. [... Komponisten]

50 Danish theatre and opera director (1861-1931).
51 *Det Kongelige Teater*, Journalbog 15.8.1896-1.6.1904.
52 *Dagens Nyheder*, 29.11.1902; Angul Hammerich (1848-1931), music historian and music critic.
53 William Behrend (1861-1940), music historian and music critic.
54 *Middagsposten*, 29.11.1902. Carl Ploug’s son was Hother Ploug (1856-1932), author, music historian and composer; Rudolph Bergh’s son was Rudolph Sophus Bergh (1859-1924), zoologist og composer; Orla Lehmann’s nephew was either Helge Rode (1870-1937), author, or Ove Rode (1867-1933), journalist and politician.
55 Letter from Carl Nielsen to William Behrend, 22.9.1902 (DK-Kk, NKS, 5155, 4^o).

50 Skuespil- og operainstruktør (1861-1931).
51 *Det Kongelige Teater*, Journalbog 15.8.1896-1.6.1904.
52 *Dagens Nyheder*, 29.11.1902; Angul Hammerich (1848-1931), musikhistoriker og musikkritiker.
53 William Behrend (1861-1940), musikhistoriker og musikkritiker.
54 *Middagsposten*, 29.11.1902. Carl Plougs søn er Hother Ploug (1856-1932), forfatter, musikhistoriker og komponist; Rudolph Berghs søn er Rudolph Sophus Bergh (1859-1924), zoolog og komponist; Orla Lehmans dattersøn var enten Helge Rode (1870-1937), forfatter, eller Ove Rode (1867-1933), journalist og politiker.
55 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til William Behrend, 22.9.1902 (DK-Kk, NKS, 5155, 4^o).

similar applause. [... The composer] had conducted the performance with great assurance and with quite natural zeal, and just as naturally with some nervousness, which was evident from a little too much gesturing and pointing. Mr. Nielsen then thanked the audience from the conductor’s podium for the continuing applause. [...] How solid a foundation this success rests upon now, or in other words, whether Saul and David will win the same applause from the large audience which one hopes will in time attend its performances, as from the one that received the opera with such enthusiasm yesterday evening, the future will show. [...] But to the audiences who will hear *Saul and David* on subsequent occasions, one can at all events say this: if you wish to gain any benefit and pleasure from Mr. Carl Nielsen’s new opera, do not go there expecting an ordinary theatrical opera, do not expect to be overwhelmed by effects, prepare yourselves to stand face to face with a rigorous, serious, zealous musician, not one who trims his opera to suit the routine that is not so uncommon today. Be prepared [...] to feel that you are looking more at an oratorio than a music drama. [...] Nor could one help observing, on the other hand, that it sometimes almost suffers from a fear of abandoning itself, of giving the warmth inherent within it expression in more common musical phraseology – this was no surprise in Mr. Carl Nielsen, who after all suffers in his music from an exaggerated urge towards independence. But it was a pity for the impact of the work: some truly warm, lushly melodious outbursts would have gone down well in this Music, which now here and there tastes too much of sober scientific work with small motifs.”⁵⁶

Like Behrend, several other critics point out – although without necessarily meaning that it should be understood as a weakness or flaw – that *Saul and David* cannot be said to be an opera in the classic sense, but with its symphonic treatment, its cool dramatic approach and its large choral pieces, is more like an oratorio. Carl Nielsen himself wished to prevent music becoming a mere “stimulant” full of sentimentality. For example he replies to a letter from L.C. Nielsen⁵⁷ on the occasion of the performance of *Saul and David*:

“If it is so, as you wrote to me, that my music may possibly clear away some of the musical sentimentality that one now finds almost everywhere, then I will feel happy and proud. For so deep have we sunk that music is perceived and cultivated, not only by most of the public, but almost also by its performers, as a stimulant under the effect of which one sinks into a sensual-blissful state of torpor of the kind opium and morphine put people in. I would so like to see the audience pull themselves together so to speak and be alert and healthy even during the greatest ecstasy.”⁵⁸

56 *Politiken*, 29.11.1902.
57 L.C. Nielsen (1871-1930), author.
58 Letter from Carl Nielsen to L.C. Nielsen, 3.12.1902, quoted from Irmelin Eggert Møller & Torben Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

havde dirigeret Forestillingen med stor Sikkerhed og med en ganske naturlig Iver og en lige saa naturlig Nervøsitet, der ytrede sig i lidt for mange Armbevægelser og Fingerpeg. Hr. Nielsen takkede derefter fra Dirigentstolen for det vedholdende Bifald. [...] Hvor fast Bund nu denne Sukces hviler paa, eller med andre Ord, om Saul og David vil vinde det samme Bifald hos det store Publikum, der efterhaanden gerne skulde møde til dets Opførelser, som hos det, der i Gaar Aftes modtog Operaen saa begejstret, maa Fremtiden vise. [...] Men til det Publikum, der de følgende Gange vil høre *Saul og David*, kan man i hvert Fald sige dette: Vil I have noget Udbytte og nogen Glæde af Hr. Carl Nielsens nye Opera, saa gaa ikke derhen med Forventning om en almindelig teatralisk Opera, vent ikke at blive overvældede af Effekter, forbered Eder paa at staa Ansigt til Ansigt med en streng, alvorlig, nidkær Musiker, ikke overfor én, der skærer sin Opera til med den nutildags ikke ualmindelige Rutine. Vær forberedt paa [...] at maatte føle Eder mere overfor et Oratorium end overfor et Musikdrama. [...] At den paa den anden Side undertiden næsten lider af Ængstelse for at give sig hen, for at give den bundne Varme Udtryk i almindeligere musikalske Vendinger, kunde man heller ikke undgaa at iagttage – dette undrede ikke hos Hr. Carl Nielsen, der jo i sin Musik lider af en overdreven Selvstændighedstrang. Men det var Synd for Virkningen: nogle rigtige varme, brusende melodifyldte Udbrud havde gjort godt i denne Musik, der nu hist og her smager for meget af nøgternt, videnskabeligt Arbejde med smaa Motiver.”⁵⁶

I lighed med Behrend gør flere andre kritikere opmærksom på – dog uden at det nødvendigvis skal forstås som en svaghed eller skavank – at *Saul og David* ikke kan siges at være en opera i klassisk forstand men med den symfoniske behandling, den kølige dramatik og sine store korsatser mere minder om et oratorium med de store korsatser, den symfoniske behandling og den kølige dramatik. Selv ønskede Carl Nielsen at undgå, at musikken blev til et rent “Nydelsesmiddel” fyldt med sentimentalitet. Således svarer han på et brev fra L.C. Nielsen⁵⁷ i anledning af opførelsen af *Saul og David*:

“Hvis det er saaledes som De skrev til mig at min Musik muligvis vil kunne udrydde noget af den Musiksentalitet som man nu snart finder overalt, saa vil jeg føle mig lykkelig og stolt. Thi saa dybt er vi nu sunkne, at Musiken ikke alene af den største Del af Publikum men snart ogsaa af dens Udøvere opfattes og dyrkes som et Nydelsesmiddel under hvis Indvirkning man hensynker i en sanselig-salig Uvirksomhedstilstand af lignende Art som den Opium og Morfin man hensætter Mennesket i. Jeg vilde saa gjerne at Tilhørerne ligesom skulde stramme sig op og være vaagne og sunde selv under den største Extase.”⁵⁸

56 *Politiken*, 29.11.1902.
57 L.C. Nielsen (1871-1930), forfatter.
58 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til L.C. Nielsen 3.12.1902, citeret efter Irmelin Eggert Møller og Torben Meyer, *op. cit.*, s. 46.

However, several of the reviewers had far more reservations than Behrend, and for some it was difficult to assess the significance of the opera and its place in the age after only hearing it once. In addition some criticized the text for lacking drama and content, while a few others doubted Carl Nielsen’s abilities as a composer and instead emphasized the libretto:

“For it is certain that ‘Saul and David’ is not a work that already with the first assault takes its public by storm. On the other hand the music exhibits much ingenuity and inventiveness, especially in the construction, and will therefore undoubtedly turn out to have values of various kinds. [...] Einar Christiansen’s libretto stands out on this occasion to advantage with its dramatic life and changing situations. The subject is in fact highly appropriate for musico-dramatic treatment. [...] As a composer Mr. Carl Nielsen has moved along many paths, including strange ones, but he does have a face of his own, that is certain. Whether this is naturally inclined towards opera composition might be doubted. For this one requires first and foremost the broad strokes, the grand lines in the music, and precisely this is not his strength. His motifs are in general small; on the other hand he arouses interest with his artful and meticulous treatment of these small motifs.”⁵⁹

In particular there are complaints that the contrasts between the two main figures of the opera, Saul and David, are not emphasized clearly enough, and that Saul appears as the opera’s weightiest and most thoroughly conceived character at the expense of David. The opera was compared to Wagner’s works, and although Carl Nielsen’s symphonic treatment of the orchestra was similar, one missed Wagner’s *Leitmotiv* technique. Nielsen showed that he could write dramatic music, but one would not describe *Saul and David* as a music drama. The reviewer on *Socialdemokraten* deals with this situation:

“Again a highly talented Danish opera which unfortunately in all likelihood will founder on a subject lacking in ideas and a dull libretto. [...] The performance yesterday evening may have been a success, even a great success; the composer, who himself conducted, was applauded out after the last act into the orchestra pit to enthusiastic ovations, and this was well deserved, given the ability he shows in his music to illustrate what happens on the stage, and to express emotions and moods – but the unfortunate thing is that too little of importance happens to captivate and move the audience. [...] Something excellent could of course have come of this, but it was not sufficient simply to set the two opposites up against each other; one had to be interested in them, see them in conflict, struggling with each other. However, one does not see this, and in this consists the dramatic weakness of the opera.

Flere af anmelderne var dog langt mere forbeholdne end Behrend, og for nogen var det vanskeligt at bedømme operaens betydning og placering i tiden efter kun at have hørt den en enkelt gang. Desuden kritiserede nogle teksten for at være uden dramatik og indhold, mens enkelte andre tvivlede på Carl Nielsens evner som komponist og til gengæld fremhævede teksten:

“Thi sikkert er det, at et Værk, som strax i første Anløb tager sine Folk med Storm, er ‘Saul og David’ ikke. Derimod rummer Musikken megen Sindrigheid og Opfindsomhed, især af konstruktiv Art og vil derfor uden Tvivl vise sig at indeholde Værdier af forskellig Art. [...] Einar Christiansens Text udmærker sig dennegang fordelagtigt ved dramatisk Liv og skiftende Situationer. Emnet er i Grunden højst indbydende for musikdramatisk Behandling. [...] Hr. Carl Nielsen har som Komponist bevæget sig ad mange Veje, ogsaa ad sære Stier, men et Fysiognomi har han, det er sikkert. Om dette just er naturligt anlagt for Opera-komposition, kunde være tvivlsomt. Der hører hertil først og fremmest de brede Aandedrag de store Linier i Musikken, og netop dette er ikke hans Sag. Hans Motiver er i Almindelighed smaa, Interessen vækker han derimod ved disse smaa Motivers kunstfærdige og sirlige Behandling.”⁵⁹

Specielt ankes der over, at modsætningerne mellem operaens to hovedpersoner Saul og David ikke er trukket klart nok op, og at Saul fremstår som operaens vægtigste og mest gennemarbejdede karakter på bekostning af David. Man sammenlignede operaen med Wagners arbejder, og skønt Carl Nielsens symfoniske behandling af orkestret lignede, så savnede man Wagners ledemotivteknik. Nielsen viste, at han kunne skrive dramatisk musik, men alligevel ville man ikke betegne *Saul og David* som et musikdrama. Anmelderen ved *Socialdemokraten* gør rede for disse forhold:

“Atter en højst talentfuld dansk Opera, som desværre efter al Sandsynlighed vil strande paa et idéløst Æmne og en kedsommelig Tekst. [...] Forestillingen i Aftes var nok en Succes, endda en stor Succes; Komponisten, som selv dirigerede, blev efter sidste Akt klappet frem i Orkestret under begejstrede Ovationer, og det var velfortjent, saa betydelig en Ævne han viser til i sin Musik at illustrere, hvad der foregaar paa Scenen, og til at udtrykke Følelser og Stemninger – men Ulykken er blot, at der foregaar for lidt af Betydning til at fængsle og gribe Tilhørerne. [...] Det kunde der naturligvis være blevet noget udmærket ud af, men det var da ikke tilstrækkeligt blot at stille de to Modsætninger op mod hinanden, man maatte interesseres for dem, se dem i Konflikt, kæmpende med hinanden. Det gør man imidlertid ikke, og deri bestaar Operaens dramatiske Svaghed. Hovedvægten er lagt paa Sauls Karakter; [...] Og David

59 Dagens Nyheder, 29.11.1902.

59 Dagens Nyheder, 29.11.1902.

The main emphasis is placed upon the character of Saul [...] and David is on the other hand too insignificant, too lyrically insipid, light and mawkish, sweet and melodious. [...] In other words nothing comes of the drama itself. [...] What remains is the framework, the scenery. And here Carl Nielsen shows himself as the very excellent and independent musician he is. [...] For example he does not use Leitmotivs to delineate his characters, he will not imitate Wagner, although of course like all others he is influenced in this instrumentation by the great master of colour-mixing. [...] In all these symphonic orchestral paintings Carl Nielsen shows himself as the young master he is, and one whom there was good reason to celebrate yesterday evening. ‘Saul and David’ has not become a music drama, but after this significant work there is no doubt that the composer can write dramatic and singable music – may he find a better drama to compose next time! [...] But the evening ended, despite everything, with a question mark.”⁶⁰

In sum, it can be noted that almost all the reviewers agreed in singling out Carl Nielsen’s abilities as a symphonist, and that from that point of view he had managed the task well. Nevertheless many thought that the composer had not been able to give the soloist roles character and dramatic content. It was against this background that the great majority of the reviewers doubted that the opera would achieve great popularity.

III PERFORMANCES IN CARL NIELSEN’S LIFETIME

Saul and David was only revived a few times at the Royal Theatre in the composer’s lifetime. In the 1904/5 season the opera was performed in the original production with Carl Nielsen as conductor and Julius Lehmann as director; however, the Theatre chose only to perform the work twice. It was not taken up again until 1912 – this time in a new production by Helge Nissen, who had sung Samuel in the earlier performances. After the new production on 6th December Nissen in particular was strongly applauded for his work. Once more *Saul and David* achieved only two performances. After that seventeen years passed before one could again see the opera at the Royal Theatre, and in 1929 the composer left the conducting of the seven performances of the season – one of which was broadcast on the radio⁶¹ – to Johan Hye-Knudsen.⁶²

As early as January 1903 – before the piano score had been printed – Carl Nielsen was in Dresden to try to get the opera accepted at the Hoftheater there.⁶³ In the course of the spring, when he was in Greece, he worked determinedly with Henrik Knudsen⁶⁴ to get the opera performed in Dresden, and they

er paa den anden Side for ubetydelig, for lyrisk udvandet, lys og kælen, sød og melodios. [...] Altsaa selve Dramaet bliver der ikke noget ud af. [...] Tilbage er Indfatningen, Rammen, Sceneriet. Og her viser Carl Nielsen sig som den meget fremragende og selvstændige Musiker, han er. [...] Han anvender f. Eks. ikke Ledemotiver til at betegne Personerne, han vil ikke efterligne Wagner, selv om han naturligvis som alle andre i sin Instrummentation er paavirket af den store Farveblandings-Mester. [...] I alle disse symfoniske Orkester-Malerier viser Carl Nielsen sig som den unge Mester, han er, og som der i Aftes var god Grund til at fejre. Et Musikdrama er ‘Saul og David’ ikke blevet, men at Komponisten kan skrive dramatisk og sangbar Musik, er der efter dette betydelige Arbejde ingen tvivl om – gid han næste Gang maatte finde et bedre Drama at komponere! [...] Men Aftenen endte, trods alt, med et Spørgsmaalstegn.”⁶⁰

Sammenfattende kan det konstateres, at næsten alle anmelderne var enige om at fremhæve Carl Nielsens evner som symfoniker, og at han ud fra det synspunkt havde klaret opgaven godt. Alligevel mente mange, at komponisten ikke havde formået at give solistpartierne karakter og dramatisk indhold. Det var på den baggrund, at den overvejende del af anmelderne tvivlede på, at operaen ville opnå større popularitet.

III OPFØRELSE R I CARL NIELSENS LEVETID

Saul og David blev kun genopført få gange på Det Kongelige Teater i komponistens levetid. I sæsonen 1904/5 blev operaen opført i den oprindelige opsætning med Carl Nielsen som dirigent og Julius Lehmann som instruktør; teatret valgte dog kun at opføre værket to gange. Først i 1912 blev den taget frem igen – denne gang i en nyopsætning af Helge Nissen, som havde sunget Samuel ved de tidligere opførelser. Ved nyopsætningen den 6. december modtog specielt Nissen stort bifald for sit arbejde. Endnu en gang opnåede *Saul og David* kun to opførelser. Derefter gik der 17 år, før man igen kunne se operaen på Det Kongelige Teater, og i 1929 overlod komponisten ledelsen af sæsonens syv opførelser – hvoraf en enkelt blev sendt i radioen⁶¹ – til Johan Hye-Knudsen.⁶²

Allerede i januar 1903 – før klaverpartituret forelå trykt – var Carl Nielsen i Dresden for at forsøge at få operaen antaget ved Hofteatret.⁶³ I løbet af foråret, hvor han befandt sig i Grækenland, arbejdede han ihærdigt sammen med Henrik Knudsen⁶⁴ på at få operaen opført i Dresden, og de pressede på for at få

60 *Socialdemokraten*, 29.11.1902.
61 Jf. *Det Kongelige Teater*, Journalbog 1.12.1928-juni 1933, og Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, s. 563-564; radioudsendelsen fandt sted 23.5.1929.
62 Dirigent og komponist (1896-1975).
63 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til Ferruccio Busoni, 9.1.1903 (*D-Bsb*, NL Busoni B.II).
64 Pianist (1873-1946).

60 *Socialdemokraten*, 29.11.1902.
61 Cf. *Det Kongelige Teater*, Journalbog 1.12.1928-juni 1933, and Torben Schousboe, *op. cit.*, pp. 563-564; the radio broadcast was on 23.5.1929.
62 Conductor and composer (1896-1975).
63 Letter from Carl Nielsen to Ferruccio Busoni, 9.1.1903 (*D-Bsb*, NL Busoni B.II).
64 Danish pianist (1873-1946).

pressurized the music publisher Wilhelm Hansen to arrange a demonstration performance.⁶⁵ In the course of the spring both the German translation and the piano score had apparently been in Frankfurt, and later the translation was presumably sent to Berlin.⁶⁶ Later in the autumn of the same year, when Knudsen began studying in Vienna, he tried to arouse interest in *Saul and David* there. Carl Nielsen himself did not believe deep down that the opera would be performed in Vienna, but he was pleased that Knudsen made the attempt. Moreover, through Wilhelm Hansen Nielsen tried to get the work accepted in Altona. In 1929 he asked the music publisher to send a piano score to the theatre in Kiel, since “Director Härtmann at the theatre (Opera) is interested in it.”⁶⁷ But at none of these places were they successful in getting Carl Nielsen’s *Saul and David* accepted for performance.

It was not until the end of November 1928 that *Saul and David* had its first performance abroad; this was in Gothenburg at Stora Teatern with Kirsten Flagstad in the cast as Michal, Poul Kannerworf as director and Olav Kielland as conductor;⁶⁸ of the last of these Carl Nielsen writes:

“The young conductor Mr. Kjelland (a Norwegian) had exactly the right tempi. The orchestra (46 members) perhaps sounded a little hard, but there was life and movement in it all and gradually as I got used to the sound (acoustics?) I was stirred and followed the activity on the stage and in the orchestra with the greatest interest.”⁶⁹

Carl Nielsen himself conducted the last of the performances in Gothenburg, where the opera aroused great enthusiasm among the reviewers.⁷⁰ A couple of years later – in 1931 – it was given its first production in Stockholm under the baton of the conductor Armas Järnefelt, but the composer, who attended some of the rehearsals and the premiere, remarks in a letter to his son-in-law Emil Telmányi that “Järnefelt is certainly a fine, talented musician, but several tempi were not right (in four places too slow and once too fast) and so we put that right.”⁷¹ In Stockholm the opera was performed fourteen times, there too with great success.

musikforlaget Wilhelm Hansen til at arrangere en forespilning.⁶⁵ I løbet af foråret havde både den tyske oversættelse og klaverpartituret tilsyneladende været i Frankfurt, og senere blev oversættelsen formentlig sendt til Berlin.⁶⁶ Da Knudsen om efteråret senere samme år begyndte at studere i Wien, prøvede han at vække interesse for *Saul og David* der. Carl Nielsen selv troede inderst inde ikke på, at operaen ville blive opført i Wien, men han var dog glad for, at Knudsen gjorde forsøget. Derudover prøvede Nielsen gennem Wilhelm Hansen at få værket accepteret i Altona. I 1929 bad han musikforlaget om at sende et klaverpartitur til teatret i Kiel, da “Direktør Härtmann ved Theatret (Opera) interesserer sig derfor.”⁶⁷ Men ingen af de nævnte steder lykkedes det at få antaget Carl Nielsens *Saul og David* til opførelse.

Først i slutningen af november 1928 fik *Saul og David* sin første udenlandske opførelse; det var i Göteborg på Stora Teatern med blandt andre Kirsten Flagstad som Mikal, Poul Kannerworf som iscenesætter og Olav Kielland som dirigent;⁶⁸ om sidstnævnte skriver Carl Nielsen:

“Den unge Kapelmester Hr. Kjelland (en Nordmand) havde fuldstændig rigtige Tempi, Orkestret (46 Md) klang maaske lidt haardt, men der var Liv og Bevægelse over det hele og efterhaanden som jeg vænnede mit Øre til Klangen (Akustiken?) blev jeg greben og fulgte Livet paa Scenen og i Orkestret med den største Interesse.”⁶⁹

Carl Nielsen dirigerede selv den sidste af opførelserne i Göteborg, hvor operaen vakte stor begejstring blandt anmelderne.⁷⁰ Et par år senere – i 1931 – fik den sin første opsætning i Stockholm under dirigenten Armas Järnefelts ledelse, men komponisten, som overværede nogle af prøverne samt premieren, bemærker i et brev til svigersønnen Emil Telmányi, at “vel er Järnefelt en fin og begavet Musiker, men flere Tempi var ikke rigtige (4 Steder for langsomme og en Gang for hurtigt) og det fik vi saa i Orden.”⁷¹ I Stockholm blev operaen opført 14 gange, også her med stor succes.

65 Letter from Carl Nielsen to Henrik Knudsen, 25.3.1903 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.); letter from Carl Nielsen to Ferruccio Busoni, 9.1.1903 (D-Bsb, NL Busoni B.II).

66 Letter from Carl Nielsen to Henrik Knudsen, undated, May 1903 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.); letter from Carl Nielsen to the music publisher Wilhelm Hansen, 22.3.1903 (DK-Kk, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, brevpakke 1912-35, K-R).

67 Cf. letter from Carl Nielsen to Wilhelm Hansen, 22.4.1929 (DK-Kk, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, 1923, Nielsen A-G).

68 Kirsten Flagstad (1895-1962), Norwegian soprano; Poul Kannerworf (1896-1958), Danish stage director; Olav Kielland (1901-1985), Norwegian conductor and composer.

69 Letter from Carl Nielsen to Emil Telmányi, 12.12.1928 (DK-Kk, CNS, C II, 10); cf. Torben Meyer & Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 184.

70 Cutting in ‘Carl Nielsens Scrapbog’, DK-Kk, CNA, I.E.b.2.

71 Letter from Carl Nielsen to Emil Telmányi, 17.1.1931 (DK-Kk, CNS, C II, 10). Emil Telmányi (1892-1988), Hungarian/Danish violinist. Armas Järnefelt (1869-1958), Finnish conductor and composer.

65 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til Henrik Knudsen, 25.3.1903 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.); brev fra Carl Nielsen til Ferruccio Busoni, 9.1.1903 (D-Bsb, NL Busoni B.II).

66 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til Henrik Knudsen, udateret, maj 1903 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.); brev fra Carl Nielsen til musikforlaget Wilhelm Hansen, 22.3.1903 (DK-Kk, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, brevpakke 1912-35, K-R).

67 Jf. brev fra Carl Nielsen til Wilhelm Hansen, 22.4.1929 (DK-Kk, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, 1923, Nielsen A-G).

68 Kirsten Flagstad (1895-1962), norsk sopran; Poul Kannerworf (1896-1958), dansk sceneinstruktør; Olav Kielland (1901-1985), norsk dirigent og komponist.

69 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til Emil Telmányi, 12.12.1928 (DK-Kk, CNS, C II, 10); jf. Torben Meyer og Frede Schandorf Petersen, *op. cit.*, bd. 1, s. 184.

70 Udklip i ‘Carl Nielsens Scrapbog’, DK-Kk, CNA, I.E.b.2.

71 Brev fra Carl Nielsen til Emil Telmányi, 17.1.1931 (DK-Kk, CNS, C II, 10). Emil Telmányi (1892-1988), ungarsk/dansk violinist; E. Armas Järnefelt (1869-1958), finsk dirigent og komponist.

IV PRINTED EDITIONS

As with Carl Nielsen’s second opera *Masquerade*, the score of *Saul and David* was not printed in the composer’s lifetime – and has remained unprinted until the present edition. What did appear as early as 1904 was a complete piano score, to which a number of smaller extracts from the opera for various ensembles were added later.⁷² The printed piano score was made on the basis of the piano score that Henrik Knudsen had drawn up in connection with the world premiere, and Carl Nielsen himself made a thorough revision of the piano arrangement. This may be why no arranger is mentioned on the title page. In the hope that the opera might make an impact on the German opera stages, the piano score was furnished with a German translation by Ida Malling.⁷³ The title page of the piano score was drawn by the painter Suzette Holten,⁷⁴ one of Anne Marie and Carl Nielsen’s good friends. It is an allegorical representation of the two title roles of the opera, Saul as an old oak tree toppled by a storm, and David in the form of a straight young beech tree (see facsimile, p. xxxviii). The piano score was published in a number of instalments (fascicles), which were afterwards bound together. Carl Nielsen put a lot of work into this piano score, although he made no bones about the fact that the proof-reading by no means amused him. For example on 26th November, 1903, he writes to Henrik Knudsen:

“I have been extremely busy with the piano arrangement. Now the first act is ready for printing, [...] Act Two and Three are ready for engraving and delivered yesterday. It has been a great effort; for I have as far as possible also polished it so that the piano arrangement too will be the one I in fact have; on the other hand there are several places where I have restored your first arrangement, which I could do by simply rubbing out the crossings-out in pencil; as a whole it is likely to be more difficult than before. One must after all be able to ask people to make a little effort, don’t you think? Reading proofs is a devil of a job. After the second proofs, in order to be quite sure, I have had a young pianist, Miss Herløv, play it through slowly, and since she is no great reader I think I can be sure that there are no errors in Act One. [...] So in about ten days I’ll send Act One [...]”⁷⁵

In the middle of February – after Act One had been printed – Carl Nielsen was still at work on the proofs, and judging from the following quotation from a letter of 15th February to Henrik Knudsen he taxed the publisher’s patience considerably:

“If only you knew how much work it is! The whole margin full of corrections. Often I change it in the first proofs so that Wilh. H.[ansen] is almost in despair. But now I am over the worst. Act One printed and of Acts Three and Four I have now read one proof, and two of Act Two.”⁷⁶

72 Cf. *Critical Commentary*, ‘Sources’, pp. 617-627.
73 The reference is probably to the composer Otto Malling’s wife Ida Vilhelmine, née Bargum (1848-1904).
74 (1863-1937). She also drew the cover for the first edition of *Helios*, opus 17.
75 DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.
76 DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.

IV TRYKTE UDGAVER

I lighed med Carl Nielsens anden opera *Maskarade* forblev partituret til *Saul og David* utrykt i komponistens levetid – og har været det helt frem til nærværende udgave. Derimod udkom allerede i 1904 et fuldstændigt klaverpartitur, hvortil senere kom en række mindre uddrag af operaen for forskellig besætning.⁷² Det trykte klaverpartitur blev til på grundlag af det klaverpartitur, som Henrik Knudsen havde udarbejdet i forbindelse med uropførelsen, idet Carl Nielsen selv foretog en omfattende redigering af klaversatsen. Muligvis er dette grunden til, at der ikke er anført nogen arrangør på titelbladet. I håbet om at operaen kunne gøre sig gældende på de tyske operascener, blev klaverpartituret forsynet med en tysk oversættelse udarbejdet af Ida Malling.⁷³ Titelbladet til klaverpartituret blev tegnet af maleren Suzette Holten,⁷⁴ en af Anne Marie og Carl Nielsens gode bekendte. Det er en allegorisk fremstilling af operaens to titelpersoner, Saul som et gammelt egetræ, væltet af stormen, og David i form af et rankt ungt bøgetræ (se faksimile, s. xxxviii). Klaverpartituret blev publiceret i en række leveringer (hæfter), som herefter blev indbundet sammen. Carl Nielsen lagde et stort arbejde i dette klaverpartitur, skønt han heller ikke lagde skjul på, at korrekturlæsningen på ingen måde morede ham. Således skriver han den 26. november 1903 til Henrik Knudsen:

“Jeg har haft uhyre travlt med Claverudtoget. Nu er første Akt færdig til Trykning, [...] 2^{den} og 3^{die} Akt færdige til Stikning og afleverede i Gaar. Det har været et stort Arbejde; thi jeg har saavidt muligt alligevel filet det saaledes at ogsaa Klaversatsen bliver den som jeg nu engang har; men til Gjengjæld er der flere Steder hvor jeg har bragt Deres første Sats frem igjen hvad jeg kunde gjøre ved blot at viske Blyantoverstregninger bort; i det hele taget bliver det snarere vanskelige[re] end oprindeligt. Man maa jo kunne forlange at Folk skal gjøre sig lidt Ulejlighed. Ikke sandt? At læse Korrektur er et Satans Arbejde. Efter den 2^{den} Korrektur har jeg for at være helt sikker ladet en ung Klaverspillerske, Frk. Herløv, spille det langsomt igiennem og da hun ikke læser saa særlig godt Noder kan jeg vist nok være sikker paa at der ingen Fejl er i 1ste Akt. [...] Om en halv snes Dage sender jeg altsaa 1^{ste} Akt [...]”⁷⁵

I midten af februar – efter trykningen af første akt – var Carl Nielsen stadig i gang med korrekturarbejdet, og at dømme ud fra følgende citat af brev fra den 15. februar til Henrik Knudsen har han trukket store veksler på forlagets tålmodighed:

“De skulde vide hvad det er for et Arbejde! Hele Margen fuldt af Rettelser. Ofte laver jeg om paa det i 1ste Korrektur saa Wilh. H.[ansen] er nærmest fortvivlet. Nu er jeg dog over det værste. 1^{ste} Akt trykt og paa 3^{die} og 4^{de} har jeg nu faaet læst en Korrektur og paa 2^{den} to.”⁷⁶

72 Jf. *Critical Commentary*, ‘Sources’, s. 617-627.
73 Antagelig drejer det sig om komponisten Otto Mallings kone Ida Vilhelmine f. Bargum (1848-1904).
74 (1863-1937). Hun tegnede også omslaget til førsteudgaven af *Helios*, opus 17.
75 DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.
76 DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.

In the course of April 1904 the whole piano score was printed.⁷⁷ Despite Carl Nielsen’s persistent proof-reading the result was far from flawless, and in connection with the drawing-up of a second edition in 1929 Carl Nielsen once more went through the music and made a number of corrections.⁷⁸

V EINAR CHRISTIANSEN’S LIBRETTO AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

By and large the libretto follows the Bible story as it is told in 1 and 2 Samuel,⁷⁹ although it departs from the Biblical chronology, partly by moving episodes around, partly by combining several episodes in one. In certain passages the wording is very close to the original, while other passages are free invention; there is also some inspiration and wording from a couple of the Psalms and the Song of Solomon, the details of which are given below.⁸⁰

The biggest departure from the Bible story is the character of Michal, who on the whole – like Jonathan – plays a more prominent role in the opera than in the Bible. In the *OT* (1 *Sam* 18,20-28) Saul marries his daughter to David, ostensibly as a reward for David’s willingness to go to battle against the Philistines, but in reality as a ruse to ensure that he is killed in battle. In the opera there is more emphasis on the love between Michal and David, and Saul’s deceitful motive for consenting to the marriage is omitted. Only after the acclaim of the people, which arouses Saul’s envy (Act Two, bb. 862 ff), does Saul curse both of them, and Michal follows David in his escape from Saul (end of Act Three).

It will be evident from the above that the characterization and conflicts of the opera in all essentials follow the Biblical original: David, the poor shepherd-boy blessed with good fortune as the chosen one of God, as opposed to Saul, who with his disobedience to the Lord, his envy and his sick mind, appears as the defeated man who in the end takes his own life in a mixture of defiance of the Lord and pathetic despair. As in the Bible the conflict is set in motion by a cultic offence (in the *OT* two episodes – see below), where Samuel enters as judge and messenger announcing the wrath of the Lord over Saul with the subsequent appointment of David as his successor.

In his way of mixing Biblical quotation, Biblical paraphrase and free invention, Einar Christiansen has created a tight, content-rich Biblical libretto as a highly suitable textual basis for an opera.

I løbet af april 1904 forelå hele klaverpartituret færdigtrykt.⁷⁷ Trods Carl Nielsens ihærdige korrekturlæsning var resultatet dog langt fra fejlfrit, og i forbindelse med udarbejdelsen af en 2. udgave i 1929 gennemgik Carl Nielsen endnu engang noderne og foretog en række rettelser.⁷⁸

V EINAR CHRISTIANSENS LIBRETTO OG DET GAMLE TESTAMENTE

Librettoen følger i store træk den bibelske beretning, således som den fremtræder i Første og Anden Samuels Bog,⁷⁹ idet dog den bibelske kronologi er brudt, dels ved at episoder er flyttet rundt, dels ved at flere adskilte episoder er slået sammen til én. For visse afsnits vedkommende ligger ordvalget meget tæt op ad forlægget, mens andre afsnit er fri digtning; hertil kommer inspiration og ordvalg fra et par af de Salmernes Bog og Højsangen, således som der i detaljer er gjort rede for i det følgende.⁸⁰

Mest afvigende fra den bibelske beretning er Mikals person, der i det hele taget – ligesom Jonathan – spiller en mere fremtrædende rolle i operaen end i forlægget. I *GT* (1 *Sam* 18,20-28) bortgifter Saul sin datter til David, angiveligt som belønning for Davids villighed til at drage i kamp mod filistrene, men reelt som en list, der skal bevirke, at han bliver dræbt i kampen. I operaen lægges der mere vægt på kærligheden mellem Mikal og David, ligesom Sauls svigefulde motiv til sit samtykke til giftermålet helt er udeladt. Først efter folkets hyldest, der vækker misundelsen i Saul (anden akt, t. 862 ff.), forbander Saul dem begge, og Mikal følger David på hans flugt for Saul (afslutningen på tredje akt).

Det fremgår af ovenstående, at operaens personkarakteristik og konfliktstof i alt væsentligst følger det bibelske forlæg: David, den fattige hyrdedreng, der som Guds udvalgte har lykken med sig, over for Saul, der i sin ulydighed mod Herren med sin misundelse og sit syge sind fremstår som nederlagets mand, der til slut begår selvmord i en blanding af trods mod Herren og ynkelig selvopgivelse. Som i bibelen sættes konflikten i gang ved en kultisk forseelse (i *GT* to episoder, se nedenfor), hvor Samuel træder ind som den fordømmende og budbringeren af Herrens vrede over Saul med den efterfølgende udpegning af David som hans efterfølger.

I sin måde at blande bibel-citat, bibel-parafrase og fri digtning har Einar Christiansen skabt en stram og indholdsmættet bibelsk libretto som et velegnet tekstforlæg for en opera.

77 Cf. letter from Carl Nielsen to Henrik Knudsen, 29.4.1904 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.).
78 Cf. letter from Carl Nielsen to the publisher Wilhelm Hansen, 22.4.1929 (DK-Kk, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, 1923, Nielsen, A-G).
79 The following abbreviations are used in this section: Old Testament (*OT*), Samuel Books 1 and 2 (1 *Sam*, 2 *Sam*), The Song of Solomon (*Solom*).
80 The university lecturer Bodil Ejrnæs, *cand. theol.*, Ph.D., has kindly contributed a number of details to the section on the relationship with the Biblical account.

77 Jf. brev fra Carl Nielsen til Henrik Knudsen, 29.4.1904 (DK-Kk, CNA, I.A.c.).
78 Jf. brev fra Carl Nielsen til forlaget Wilhelm Hansen, 22.4.1929 (DK-Kk, Wilhelm Hansens Arkiv, 1923, Nielsen, A-G).
79 Følgende forkortelser er anvendt i dette afsnit: Det Gamle Testamente (*GT*), Første og Anden Samuels Bog (1 *Sam*, 2 *Sam*), Højsangen (*Højs*).
80 Universitetslektor, *cand.theol.*, ph.d. Bodil Ejrnæs har velvilligst bidraget med en række detaljer til afsnittet om forholdet til den bibelske beretning.

The following is an overview of the succession of scenes in the opera indicating the relationship with the Biblical account.

ACT ONE

Saul in Gilgal, the sacrificial scene and Saul’s meeting with Samuel (bb. 1-541)

The OT’s two episodes in 1 Sam 13 and 15 are, as mentioned above, combined in a single meeting. Samuel’s crucial proclamation “This day the Lord has rent the kingdom from you” (bb. 379 ff) is a paraphrase of 1 Sam 15,28 (“The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day”). There are a couple of further references to 1 Sam 12,22-25 (the assurance that the Lord will hold his hand over Israel, bb. 399 ff) and 1 Sam 16,15 (“An evil spirit from the Lord”, bb. 419 ff).

Saul’s monologue (bb. 562-627)

Saul’s monologue is freely invented, although the words of the snake, that “Truly shall ye be as God” (bb. 573 ff) are from Genesis 3,5.

David comforts Saul (bb. 628-834)

David’s admission to Saul’s court as someone who could comfort him when “an evil spirit troubled him” is described in 1 Sam 16,14-23, but in the OT Jonathan, who in the opera is the one who takes David to Saul, only appears later in 1 Sam 18,1-4 (about the pact between David and Jonathan) and again in more developed form in 1 Sam 19 and 20.

David’s song with the harp “Sing praises to God” (bb. 698 ff) is a paraphrase of Psalm 104 (“Bless the Lord, O my soul), especially Verses 1, 2, 10 and 11.

The declaration of love between Michal and David (bb. 838-965)

As mentioned above, this theme is emphasized much more in the opera than in Samuel. Inspiration, imagery and wording are clearly taken from the Song of Solomon:

Solom 4,6: “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense” (bb. 838 ff)

Solom 5,11: “His head is as the most fine gold” (bb. 875 ff)

Solom 5,15: “his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars” (bb. 877 ff)

Solom 5,2: “my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night” (bb. 900 ff)

Solom 5,5: “my hands dropped with myrrh” (bb. 906 ff)

Solom 5,1: “I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse” (bb. 940 ff)

Solom 8,6: “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death [...] the coals thereof are coals of fire” (bb. 950 ff).

I det følgende bringes en oversigt over scenegangen i operaen med angivelse af forholdet til den bibelske beretning.

FØRSTE AKT

Saul i Gilgal, offerscenen og Sauls møde med Samuel (t. 1-541)

GT’s to episoder i 1 Sam 13 og 15 er som nævnt her sammen- trængt til et enkelt møde. Samuels centrale proklamation “Idag har Herren revet Riget fra dig” (t. 379 ff.) er en parafrase over 1 Sam 15,28. Hertil kommer yderligere et par referencer til 1 Sam 12,22-25 (forsikringen om at Herren vil holde hånden over Israel, t. 399 ff.) og 1 Sam 16,15 (“en urolig Aand fra Gud” t. 419 ff.).

Sauls monolog (t. 562-627)

Sauls monolog er fri digtning, idet dog slangens ord om at “I skulde blive som Gud” (t. 573 ff.) er hentet fra Første Mosebog 3,5.

David trøster Saul (t. 628-834)

David’s optagelse ved Sauls hof som den, der kan trøste, “Hver gang den onde ånd fra Gud kom over Saul” er skildret i 1 Sam 16,14-23, mens Jonathan, der i operaen er den, der fører David til Saul, i GT først dukker op senere i 1 Sam 18,1-4 (om pagten mellem David og Jonathan) og igen mere udbygget i 1 Sam 19 og 20.

David’s sang til harpen “Lov Herren, min Sjæl!” (t. 698 ff.) er en parafrase over salme 104, specielt v. 1, 2, 10 og 11.

Mikals og Davids kærlighedserklæring (t. 838-965)

Som nævnt ovenfor er dette tema langt stærkere betonet i operaen end i Samuelsbøgerne. Inspiration, billedsprog og ordvalg er tydeligvis hentet fra Højsangen:

Højs 4,6: “Når dagen bliver sval og skyggerne lange, vil jeg gå til myrrabjerget, til røgelseshøjen.” (t. 838 ff.)

Højs 5,11: “Hans hoved det reneste guld.” (t. 875 ff.)

Højs 5,15: “hans skikkelse er som Libanon, prægtig som ceder- træer.” (t. 877 ff.)

Højs 5,2: “Mit hår er fuldt af dug, mine lokker af nattens dråber.” (t. 900 ff.)

Højs 5,5: “mine hænder dryppede af myrra,” (t. 906 ff.)

Højs 5,1: “Nu kommer jeg til min have, min søster, min brud [...]” (t. 940 ff.)

Højs 8,6: “Læg mig som en seglring ved dit hjerte, som en seglring om din arm; for kærligheden er stærk som døden, [...] dens flammer er flammer af ild,” (t. 950 ff.).

ACT TWO

The challenge from the Philistines and David’s decision to go to battle (bb. 125-400)

The introductory description of the giant Goliath and David’s preparations to do battle with him are close to *1 Sam* 17. Here too the love theme is emphasized more, as Michal – unlike in the *OT* – anxiously listens to the conversation between Saul and David.

Michal and the maids (bb. 403-709)

Einar Christiansen inserted this scene to increase dramatic suspense before the outcome of the duel is known – again with imagery and wording taken from *The Song of Solomon*, first and foremost Chapter 5.

David’s defeat of Goliath (bb. 710-737)

In the opera it is Jonathan who gives an account of the duel, while in the *OT* it is more objectively left to the narrator. The episode closely follows the description in *1 Sam* 17,44-51.

Song of praise, Saul’s envy, the banishment of David (bb. 739-1041)

The words of the celebratory song about Saul’s “thousands” and David’s “ten thousands” and the envy of Saul culminating in his attempt to strike David with his spear are taken respectively from *1 Sam* 18,6 ff and *1 Sam* 19,10 (the two spear incidents of the *OT* are combined in one in the opera). David’s preceding song “Lord, I will enter Thy hallowed courts” (bb. 955 ff), recalls Psalm 100,4 (“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise”) and paraphrases Psalm 131,1-2.

ACT THREE

David spares Saul at the hill of Hachilah (bb. 131-453)

This scene, where David and Abishai enter Saul’s camp and remove the sleeping King’s spear and ‘cruse of water’, takes its material from *1 Sam* 24 and 26 (two different episodes with the same content). To the Biblical account freely invented introductory and concluding scenes have been added: the night watch of Michal and Jonathan (bb. 27-106) and the jubilation of the people over the reconciliation of Saul and David (“God is our witness”, bb. 461-539).

Samuel anoints David and the death of Samuel (bb. 541-691)

Here two different Biblical episodes have been combined into one. The death of Samuel – which happens in the opera immediately after the completion of the anointing – is mentioned briefly in the *OT* in a single sentence in *1 Sam* 25,1, while his anointing of David as king already takes place before the duel with Goliath in *1 Sam* 16. Samuel’s outburst in bb. 616 ff (“Earth shall lay open its jaws to devour all who sin ‘gainst the Lord of Israel”) recalls *Numbers* 16,32 and 26,10 (“And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up”).

ANDEN AKT

Udfordringen fra filistrene og Davids beslutning om at gå i kamp (t. 125-400)

Den indledende skildring af kæmpen Goliath og Davids forberedelse til at gå i kamp mod ham ligger tæt op ad *1 Sam* 17. Også her er kærlighedstemaet trukket stærkere frem i kraft af, at Mikal – i modsætning til, hvad der er tilfældet i *GT* – ængstelig overværer samtalen mellem Saul og David.

Mikal og pigerne (t. 403-709)

Denne scene har Einar Christiansen indskudt som en dramatisk opspænding, inden udfaldet af tvekampen er kendt – igen med et billedsprog og et ordvalg hentet fra *Højsangen*, først og fremmest kap. 5.

Davids sejr over Goliath (t. 710-737)

I operaen er det Jonathan, som beretter om tvekampen, mens det i *GT* mere nøgternt er overladt til fortælleren. Episoden følger nøje beskrivelsen i *1 Sam* 17,44-51.

Lovsang, Sauls misundelse, forvisningen af David (t. 739-1041)

Festsangens ord om Sauls “tusinder” og Davids “titusinder” og Sauls misundelse, der kulminerer med hans forsøg på at ramme David med sit spyd, er hentet fra henholdsvis *1 Sam* 18,6 ff. og *1 Sam* 19,10 (*GT*’s to spyd-episoder er i operaen slået sammen til én). Davids forudgående sang, “Herre, jeg gaar i din Forgaard ind” (t. 955 ff.), har mindelser om salme 100,4 (“Gå ind ad hans porte med takkesang, ind i hans forgårde med lovsang”) og parafraserer salme 131,1-2.

TREDJE AKT

David skåner Saul ved Hakila Høj (t. 131-453)

Denne scene, hvor David og Abisaj trænger ind i Sauls lejr og fjerner den sovende konges spyd og vandkrukke, henter sit stof fra *1 Sam* 24 og 26 (to forskellige episoder med samme indhold). Til den bibelske beretning er føjet en frit digtet indledende og afsluttende scene: Mikals og Jonathans nattevagt (t. 27-106) samt folkets jubel over forsoningen mellem Saul og David (“Herren er Vidne”, t. 461-539).

Samuel salver David og Samuels død (t. 541-691)

Også her er flere forskellige bibelske episoder sammentrængt til en enkelt. Samuels død – der i operaen indtræffer umiddelbart efter fuldbyrdelsen af salvingen – omtales i *GT* kort med en enkelt sætning i *1 Sam* 25,1, mens hans salving af David til konge finder sted allerede før tvekampen med Goliath i *1 Sam* 16. Samuels vredesudbrud i t. 616 ff. (“Jorden skal aabne sin Mund og sluge Enhver, der tør knurre mod Herren”) har mindelser om *Fjerde Mosebog* 16,32 og 26,10.

Saul’s curse (bb. 692-771)

The end of Act Three with Saul’s renewed hope of seizing power after the death of Samuel and killing David is freely invented compared with the Biblical account.

ACT FOUR

The Witch of Endor (bb. 144-339)

The scene closely follows the account in 1 Sam 28.

Death of Jonathan and Saul (bb. 443-624)

The death of Saul by his own hand is described briefly in 1 Sam 31, although it is not, as in the opera, the general Abner who refuses to stab Saul with the sword, but the King’s armour-bearer. Perhaps Saul’s cry to Heaven (“My Lord and my tempter, for ever Thou mockest in heaven”, bb. 573 ff) is inspired by Psalm 59,8 (“But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision”).

Lament for Saul, Song of praise (bb. 629-761)

In the Biblical account (2 Sam 1) David is not present at the mount of Gilboa, he only receives the news of the death of Jonathan and Saul later. His lament is a paraphrase of 2 Sam 1,17-27 with wording close to the original. The introductory words to the concluding song of praise (“God is almighty”, bb. 721 ff) begin Psalm 93 (“The Lord reigneth”) and Psalm 99 and also occur in Psalm 96,10. The image of the soft clay (bb. 735-736) is taken from the parable of the Potter in Jeremiah 18 and 33,13 in the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus (Book of Sirach) (“As the clay is in the potter’s hand [...] so man is in the hand of him that made him”).

VI SOURCES FOR THE LIBRETTO

The source situation for the libretto of the opera is rather complex.⁸¹ Three different sources are preserved with the text alone (Sources **Q**, **R** and **S**), to which we must add the text as it appears in Carl Nielsen’s pencil draft (**B**), in the ink fair copy (**A**) and in the printed piano arrangement (**Da**, **Db**). None of these six sources agrees entirely with the others, and the differences among them do not indicate any clear, unique filiation. Einar Christiansen’s printed libretto (**Qa**), which appeared as an offprint in 1902, has the following text printed on it: “The present text was written in January 1899.”⁸² It differs at many points from the libretto of the piano score (wording, missing lines, different stage directions), and there can be no doubt that the bulk of these changes are due to the composer’s intervention. This is confirmed by the other two – almost identical – manuscript sources for the libretto (**R** and **S**), one of which is in Carl Nielsen’s own hand and the other in an unknown hand. Although these two versions are closer to the final version, they are not identical to it. They differ from each other

Sauls forbandelse (t. 692-771)

Afslutningen af tredje akt med Sauls fornyede håb om at kunne gribe magten efter Samuels død og komme David til livs, er fri digtning i forhold til den bibelske beretning.

FJERDE AKT

Troldkvinden i Endor (t. 144-339)

Scenen følger meget nøje fortællingen i 1 Sam 28.

Jonathans og Sauls død (t. 443-624)

Sauls død for egen hånd er kort beskrevet i 1 Sam 31, idet det dog ikke som i operaen er hærføreren Abner, der nægter at støde sværdet i Saul, men kongens våbendrager. Måske er Sauls råb til himmelen (“Min Herre og Frister! Du evige Spotter deroppe”, t. 573) inspireret af salme 59,9 (“Men du, Herre, du ler ad dem, du spotter alle Folkene”).

Klagesang over Saul, Lovsang (t. 629-761)

I den bibelske beretning (2 Sam 1) er David ikke til stede på Gilboa Bjerg, men får først budskabet om Jonathans og Sauls død senere. Hans klagesang er en parafrase over 2 Sam 1,17-27 med et ordvalg, der ligger tæt op ad forlægget. Indledningsordene til den afsluttende lovsang (“Herren er Konge”, t. 721 ff.) indleder salme 93 og salme 99 og optræder yderligere i salme 96,10. Billedet med det skrøbelige ler (t. 735-736) er hentet fra Pottemagerlignelsen i Jeremias’ Bog 18 samt 33,13 i den apokryfe Siraks Bog (“Som leret er i pottemagerens hånd, [...] sådan er menneskene i deres skabers hånd”).

VI KILDER TIL LIBRETTOEN

Kildeforholdene omkring operaens libretto er ganske komplicerede.⁸¹ Der er overleveret tre forskellige kilder, der alene indeholder teksten (kilde **Q**, **R** og **S**), hvortil kommer teksten, som den fremtræder i Carl Nielsens blyantskladde (**B**), i blækrenskriften (**A**) samt i det trykte klaverudtog (**Da**, **Db**). Ingen af disse seks kilder stemmer overens, og afvigelserne mellem dem peger ikke på noget klart og entydigt kildehierarki. Einar Christiansens trykte libretto (**Qa**), der udkom som særtryk i 1902, bærer på omslaget følgende trykte angivelse: ”Nærværende Tekst er forfattet i Januar 1899”.⁸² Den afviger på en lang række punkter fra klaverpartiturets libretto (ordvalg, manglende replikker, afvigende regibemærkninger), og der er næppe tvivl om, at hovedparten af disse ændringer skyldes komponistens indgriben. Dette bekræftes af de to øvrige – næsten identiske – håndskrevne kilder til librettoen (**R** og **S**), hvoraf den ene er i Carl Nielsens egen hånd og den anden i en fremmed hånd. Selv om disse to versioner ligger nærmere den endelige version, er de dog ikke identiske med den. Indbyrdes

81 For en indgående diskussion af disse kildeforhold henvises til Roger Noel Clegg, *The Writing of Carl Nielsen’s ‘Saul and David’*, M.Phil. afhandling, University of Leeds 1989, 2 bd.

82 Einar Christiansens tekst fra 1899, der har dannet forlæg for trykket fra 1902, er tilsyneladende gået tabt.

81 For a detailed discussion of these source relationships reference may be made to Roger Noel Clegg, *The Writing of Carl Nielsen’s ‘Saul and David’*, M. Phil. diss., University of Leeds 1989, 2 vols.

82 Einar Christiansen’s text from 1899, which was the source for the print of 1902, appears to have been lost.

only in a few respects, usually such that errors in Carl Nielsen’s autograph version are corrected in the manuscript copy.

These details suggest the following development of the libretto: Einar Christiansen’s original text was written in 1899, and subsequently printed in 1902 (second impression 1929), that is while the composer’s work with the opera was already in progress. Carl Nielsen wanted a number of changes and adaptations that he inserted in his own manuscript copy of the text (**R**). For unknown reasons some other person has copied out Carl Nielsen’s adapted libretto (**S**) (which in turn has some linguistic corrections in Carl Nielsen’s hand), and this may have formed the source for the pencil draft (**B**) and later the ink fair copy of the score (**A**), although it should be noted that in this phase too the composer felt obliged to make a few corrections in the text. Finally, the ink fair copy – once more with a few corrections – must have been the basis for the piano score text, which is thus the last version sanctioned by the composer and is also the main source for the libretto in the Carl Nielsen Edition. The manuscript copies of Acts Two and Four of the piano score with stage directions in Carl Nielsen’s hand (**Ka** and **Kb**) may be the intermediate link between the ink fair copy libretto and the printed piano score.

The differences among the various sources are evident not least from the stage directions; on the one hand they differ in many details, on the other several of the piano score stage directions are missing from the ink fair copy. In this respect too the present edition follows the piano score. All variants in the different versions of the libretto mentioned here are indicated in the editorial commentary, which however disregards the pencil draft (**B**)⁸³ and the two printing manuscripts for Acts Two and Four of the piano score (**Ka** and **Kb**).

In one single respect the manuscript copy of the libretto (**S**) has a special position, since it is quite clear that Carl Nielsen, in the case of Act One and the beginning of Act Two, worked with the composition on the basis of this particular version of the text; for in several places brief comments (“Theme”, “Broad Tempo 4/4”, “bright polyphonic” etc.; see facsimiles, p. xl) or short actual music examples in rhythmic or monophonic notation are added in Carl Nielsen’s hand. A comparison with the final version of the opera shows that in certain cases these suggestions and themes were adopted; in other cases the composer abandoned the original idea. The editorial comments cite all autograph additions to Source **S** of this type. Precisely these additions strengthen the supposition that **S** is the latest of the three purely textual sources.⁸⁴

83 The pencil draft of the score (**B**) is for the first two acts in short score, while the last two acts are more thoroughly written out. In all essentials the text is identical to **A**, although at certain points it is not fully written out. In Act One “Saul Ha” is the only later addition in blue crayon (CN’s hand). There are no stage directions. For these reasons, this source has not been used in the collation of the libretto.

84 These additions by Carl Nielsen in **S** are listed in the *Critical Commentary*, ‘Editorial Emendations and Alternative Readings’, at the following bars: (Act One) bb. 66-82, 77, 104, 121-124, 164, 169, 209-217, 217-219, 287-303, 742, 748, 826; (Act Two) bb. 192-194.

afviger de kun fra hinanden på nogle få punkter, oftest således at fejlskrivninger i Carl Nielsens autograf er rettet i afskriften.

Disse detaljer peger på følgende tilblivelse af librettoen: Einar Christiansens oprindelige tekst er skrevet i 1899, efterfølgende trykt i 1902 (2. oplag 1929), altså mens komponistens arbejde med operaen allerede var i gang. Carl Nielsen har ønsket en række ændringer og tilretninger, som han har indført i sin egen nedskrift af teksten (**R**). Af uforklarlige årsager har en anden person afskrevet Carl Nielsens tilrettede libretto (**S**) (som så igen har enkelte sproglige rettelser i Carl Nielsens hånd), og denne har muligvis dannet forlæg for blyantskladden (**B**) og senere blækrenskriften af partituret (**A**), idet det dog bemærkes, at også i denne fase har komponistens følt sig foranlediget til at foretage enkelte rettelser i teksten. Endelig har blækrenskriften – på ny med enkelte rettelser – været grundlaget for klaverpartiturets tekst, der således er den sidste, af komponisten sanktionerede version, og som også er hovedkilde til librettoen i Carl Nielsen Udgaven. De håndskrevne kopier af anden og fjerde akt af klaverpartituret med regibemærkninger i Carl Nielsens hånd (**Ka** og **Kb**) er muligvis det formidlende led mellem blækrenskriftens libretto og det trykte klaverpartitur.

Forskellene mellem de forskellige kilder viser sig ikke mindst i regibemærkningerne; dels afviger de i talrige enkeltheder fra hinanden, dels mangler adskillige af klaverpartiturets regibemærkninger i blækrenskriften. Også på dette punkt følger nærværende udgave klaverpartituret. Samtlige varianter i de her nævnte forskellige versioner af librettoen er anført i revisionsberetningen, idet der dog ses bort fra blyantskladden (**B**)⁸³ samt de to trykforlæg til klaverpartiturets anden og fjerde akt (**Ka** og **Kb**).

På et enkelt punkt indtager afskriften af librettoen (**S**) en særstilling, idet det klart fremgår, at Carl Nielsen for første og begyndelsen af anden akts vedkommende har arbejdet med kompositionen ud fra netop denne version af teksten; flere steder er nemlig i Carl Nielsens hånd indført korte bemærkninger (“Thema”, “Bredt Tempo 4/4”, “lyst polyfont” etc., se facsimiler, s. xl) eller korte, egentlige nodeeksempler i rytmisk eller enstemmig notation. En sammenligning med den endelige version af operaen viser, at i visse tilfælde er disse bemærkninger og temaer slået igennem, i andre har komponisten forladt den oprindelige idé. Revisionsberetningen anfører samtlige autografe tilføjelser i kilde **S** af denne art. Netop disse tilføjelser bestyrker formodningen om, at **S** er den seneste af de tre rene tekstkilder.⁸⁴

83 Blyantskladden af partituret (**B**) er for de to første akter i partiel, mens de to sidste akter er mere gennemskrevet. Teksten er i alt væsentligt identisk med **A**, idet den dog visse steder ikke er skrevet helt ud. I første akt er “Saul Ha” den eneste senere tilføjelse med blå stift (CNs hånd). Der er ingen regibemærkninger. Af ovenstående grunde er denne kilde ikke inddraget i kollationeringen af librettoen.

84 Disse tilføjelser af Carl Nielsen i **S** er anført i *Critical Commentary*, ‘Editorial Emendations and Alternative Readings’, ved følgende takter: Første akt: t. 66-82, 77, 104, 121-124, 164, 169, 209-217, 217-219, 287-303, 742, 748, 826. Anden akt: t. 192-194.

VIII EDITORIAL STRATEGY

The source material for *Saul and David* – with 34 sources in all – is extensive; nevertheless the interrelationships among the sources are not complicated by later revisions, adaptations and abridgements of the type one finds in Carl Nielsen’s later opera *Masquerade* from 1906. The main source for the music is the ink fair copy (Source **A**), which has been collated with the hand-written copy (Source **C**) that was made in connection with the premiere or shortly afterwards. The latter copy is in many cases more consistent than the ink fair copy and has therefore been used to confirm editorial completions made by analogy. The Royal Theatre’s orchestral and soloist parts (**Ga, Gb**) have a number of corrections and additions, some by the composer, but since these rarely supplement the main source in any meaningful way, this material has been disregarded – however, Carl Nielsen’s changes are documented in the editorial emendations and alternative readings. For the prelude to Act Two, two sets of orchestral parts have been preserved (**Ic, Id**) as well as two manuscript copies of the score (**Ia, Ib**), one of which (**Ib**) is incomplete. The material that was used for concert performances has not proved relevant to the present edition either.

The main source for the libretto is the title-imprint of the printed piano score (Source **Db**), which has been collated with the three purely textual sources (**Q, R, S**) and with Carl Nielsen’s fair copy of the score (Source **A**). These sources have formed the background for a few revisions of the libretto, and all variants are listed in the special section of the *Critical Commentary*, pp. 685-691, which documents the significant differences in the libretto in the sources.

The English translation of the libretto is based on Geoffrey Dunn’s translation of Einar Christiansen’s text. However, the stage directions have been adjusted according to Roger Clegg’s translation.⁸⁵ David Fanning has read the English libretto through and made a few corrections.

The editorial work on *Saul og David* has been distributed as follows among the editors:

Niels Bo Foltmann: Acts One and Three.
Peter Hauge: Acts Two and Four.
Niels Krabbe: Libretto.

The editors

VIII REVISIONSSTRATEGI

Kildemateriale til *Saul og David* er – med 34 kilder i alt – omfattende; alligevel er de indbyrdes forhold kilderne imellem ikke kompliceret af senere revisioner, tilretninger og forkortelser, således som man finder det i Carl Nielsens senere opera *Maskarade* fra 1906. Hovedkilde til nodeteksten er blækrenskriften (kilde **A**), som er kollationeret med afskriften (kilde **C**), der blev til i forbindelse med premieren eller kort efter. Denne afskrift er i mange tilfælde mere konsistent end blækrenskriften og har derfor været anvendt til at bekræfte redaktionelle analogikompletteringer. Det Kongelige Teaters orkester- og soliststemmer (**Ga, Gb**) indeholder en del rettelser og tilføjelser blandt andet foretaget af komponisten, men da disse sjældent supplerer hovedkilden på en meningsfuld måde, er der set bort fra dette materiale – dog er Carl Nielsens ændringer dokumenteret i revisions- og variantfortegnelsen. Til forspillet til anden akt findes overleveret to sæt orkesterstemmer (**Ic, Id**) foruden to partiturafskrifter (**Ia, Ib**), hvoraf et (**Ib**) er ufuldstændigt. Materialet, der har været anvendt ved koncertopførelser, har heller ikke vist sig at være relevant for nærværende udgave.

Hovedkilden til librettoen er det trykte klaverpartitur fra 1903 (kilde **D**), som er kollationeret med de tre rene tekstkilder (**Q, R, S**) og med Carl Nielsens renskrift af partituret (kilde **A**). Disse kilder har dannet baggrund for enkelte revisioner af librettoen, og samtlige varianter er anført i *Critical Commentary*, s. 685-691. Sidstnævnte dokumenterer de betydelige forskelle, som teksten udviser i kilderne.

Den engelske oversættelse af librettoen bygger på Geoffrey Dunns oversættelse af Einar Christiansens tekst, idet dog sceneanvisningerne er justeret efter Roger Cleggs oversættelse.⁸⁵ David Fanning har gennemlæst den engelske libretto og foretaget enkelte korrektioner.

Revisionen af *Saul og David* har været fordelt således blandt udgiverne:

Niels Bo Foltmann: første og tredje akt.
Peter Hauge: anden og fjerde akt.
Niels Krabbe: tekstrevision.

Udgiverne

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85 Reproduced in the programme book for the performance by the *BBC Symphony Orchestra* on 7.12.1992 in London.