



## Rued Langgaard: Symphony No. 2 “Awakening of Spring” Original version (BVN 53[a])

Critical first edition by Bendt Viinholt Nielsen

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### Preface

#### About “Awakening of Spring”

According to an early note the composition was begun in March 1912.<sup>1</sup> As late as 1948, though, Langgaard mentioned January 1912 as the composition date for the third movement.<sup>2</sup> In July 1912 the composer’s father Siegfried Langgaard mentioned the symphony under the title *Vaarbrud* (“Awakening of Spring”) in a letter to his son,<sup>3</sup> and all three movements are said to have existed the same year in a first draft of some kind.<sup>4</sup> The earliest extant music source consists of two undated sketch sheets which, judging from the handwriting, are from 1912, and which contain hardly recognizable drafts for passages at the end of the first movement. A number of sketches for the third movement have been preserved. They probably go back to mid-1912, and are evidence of the meticulous composition work that preceded the first complete written version of the symphony – a so-called short score where all the parts of the work are notated on a reduced number of staves, in this case from three to six. The short score was drawn up in the course of the summer and autumn of 1913. The third movement was the first to be finished, on 3rd July 1913 during a summer stay at a place called “Rosengården” (The Rose Garden) in Kyrkhult, Blekinge (Sweden).

The second movement only found its form in September 1913; in the sketch it is end-dated 10th September. And finally, the sketch for the first movement was drawn up with the end-date 1st October 1913. The fair-copying of the manuscript was begun immediately afterwards, and the beautifully executed manuscript was dated 17th January 1914 (after the first movement) and 5th March 1914 (after the third movement). In its earliest form the symphony was divided into two parts, since the second movement passed without a pause into the third one.

On 24th October 1914 Rued Langgaard, in his mother Emma Langgaard’s words, dated a “little explanation or account in words which my son – on being asked – put above his Symphony No. 2 for his friends”.<sup>5</sup> The note is given here, but it should be emphasized that it was not intended for publication in connection with performances of the work, and that the text must be assumed not to apply fully to the second movement, which in this edition is presented in an altered form at least as regards the ending.

Awakening of Spring.

Symphony for Orchestra No. 2

*‘Alles vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis’* [“All that perishes is but a parable”] could almost stand as a motto above the Symph[ony].

*Blessed are the pure of heart* is I suppose the fundamental tone of the adagio –  
*for they shall see God* even if at present only in parables.

Und ich glaub’ das alte Märchen  
daß die Lerchen hoch im Blau’n  
unser’ m Herrgott in den Himmel  
und die schönen Engel schau’n<sup>6</sup>

I *Allegro con anima*

*Alles vergängliche* – yet the soul of the child does not know this; in his childlike faith he forms his world outside time and boundaries, – the first budding of the spring of life. From his range of ideas the child animates his world, and hurries forward, forthright, communicative – how long, how far, he does not know – –

*Alles ist nur ein Gleichnis*

(Lento) Yet that is the depth of the awareness of his nature; sooner or later he stands a stranger, homeless, and can only listen to the quiet voices that are never silent, those that shaped a life of childlike faith in the most beautiful parable.

II *Lento religioso quasi adagio.*

And the prayers of the dust rise up, while the answer  
from above descends with heavenly voice,  
and the sorrow that was planted in our breasts,  
when it has been kept faithfully until its time  
rises from the depths of our heart as joy!<sup>7</sup>

Quietly listening to the inner voices, the human soul sits humbly waiting and hope leaps up to a home of peace.

(Con moto) Like a prayer it fades away in the sighing of the summer wind over lands and forests; as if transfigured it returns – answered – in the gentle wind that caresses the hot brow, while the gaze tearfully smiling glides out over the dew-fresh meadows in the cool morning hour when all is still – – .

III (with soprano solo)

Only the larks trill high above the lands of the perishable, and above them, in the summer mists, the power and light of the sun strive to break forth. And the summer's day dawns – sun and heat spread towards noontide and our thought follows the larks, which seem to disappear into the ever-bluer sky.

*Alles vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis.*

The first performance was held under the auspices of the society *Dansk Koncertforening* in the large hall of the Odd Fellow Palæ on 17th November 1914. The conductor was the composer Louis Glass, who was on this occasion making his debut as the regular conductor for the society. With Symphony No. 2 the Copenhagen public was presented for the first time with a large symphonic work by Langgaard. However, this did not lead to the breakthrough the 21-year-old composer had undoubtedly expected. The reviewers made much of Langgaard's "proficiency" and his amazing control of the orchestral apparatus, but the general attitude was that the composition was far too reliant on models like Gade, Wagner and Richard Strauss, and that the overall form of the work was a failure. "It all [came] pell-mell, almost a little puppy-like", wrote Charles Kjerulf in *Politiken* (18. Nov. 1914), and Gustav Hetsch concluded in *Nationaltidende* (the same day) that the symphony "was and is misbegotten!". It was also thought that Langgaard had posed the soprano soloist Ellen Nørregård-Hansen incredible problems in the final movement, and Hetsch even considered this movement "incoherent". Whether the performance itself may have affected the critics' view of the matter is difficult to say, but the composer was greatly dissatisfied with Louis Glass's interpretation. Not long afterwards, Emma Langgaard said quite bluntly that the work was mishandled in the performance.<sup>8</sup>

Already at an early stage, perhaps even before the first performance, Langgaard made a change in the second movement. If the chronology is not clear it is because of lacunae in the preserved score material, and the fact that one first-hand source of knowledge of early revisions of the work, the original set of parts, has been lost. It is evident from the score, however, that on two occasions pages were replaced in the middle section of the movement (bb. 73-89). The sketches show two different forms of the passage between b. 80 and b. 90, and at an early stage Langgaard appears to have replaced the version selected first with the other – twice as long – version. He even inserted two alternative long versions in the score, calling them "I" (20 bars) and "II" (17 bars). According to a sketch dating, though, he returned as early as September 1915 to the original solution, which was not changed afterwards and therefore corresponds to this edition's bb. 81-89. The passage called "I" was later used again, first in *The Music of the Spheres* (BVN 128) and later in a new ending for the second movement of the symphony (cf. below).

Before the new performance of the symphony in 1917 the second movement was separated from the third. How this was dealt with we do not know, since the original score pages with the end of the second movement have been lost. Perhaps Langgaard simply left out the eleven-bar ending of the movement that can be seen in the short score. At any rate this accords with later versions of the ending. The early changes in the work also include a few corrections and additions made in the score in red ink, first and foremost a change in horn part 1 and 2 in the first movement, bb. 125-141, and the metronome markings cited in this edition in the third movement.

The second performance of the symphony was given on 7th December 1917, when Langgaard presented the work as the final piece in a concert of his own compositions that he had arranged in the large hall of the Odd Fellow Palæ. The soloist this time was Mimi Klein and Langgaard himself conducted the Copenhagen Philharmonic Orchestra. The press reported that there was a large audience, and said that the reception of the piece had been extraordinarily positive. However, the attitude of the critics was in all essentials unchanged.

In 1919, or more likely in 1920 before the third performance, in the Tivoli Concert Hall on 26th June 1920 with Frederik Schnedler-Petersen conducting, Langgaard made a few corrections, and it was presumably on the same occasion that he added triangle and cymbals in the last 22 bars of the work. Most importantly, the end of the second movement was reworked. Two score folios (now lost) were replaced with two new folios whose content is identical to bb. 117-165. A significant section – bb. 129-146 – was however taken almost unchanged from the middle section “P” described above, which had earlier been included in the movement for a short period. In the meantime this passage had been incorporated in *The Music of the Spheres* (1916-18), where it appears with few changes as b. (10)11 after fig. 17 up to and including b. 8 after fig. 18 (in the main orchestra). Although these 18 bars or so had been written in 1913-14 in a different context, they fit naturally into the distinctive sound-world of *The Music of the Spheres*. The same is not the case in Symphony No. 2, and Langgaard’s reinsertion of the passage in the second movement (plus an added harp part) must certainly be based on some programmatic idea: perhaps a glimpse of the cold bright spheres meant to put the movements’ otherwise consistently warm, religiously meditative mood into perspective? The composer Alfred Toft had a rather different association when he heard the performance in Tivoli in 1920, as is evident from his positive review in *Berlingske Tidende* (27.6.1920):

Despite an influence from the New German School, this fresh work from such a young talent is genuinely Danish in its fundamental tone; indeed sometimes it recalls the gentle summer sounds we love in Niels W. Gade. There is an awakening spring and budding power in the first movement. The second section [...] consists mainly of dreaming choral sounds, interrupted all of a sudden by strange hypermodern tones which at this point have as surprising an effect as fauns and satyrs would have in our peaceful beech forest. The last movement with the soprano solo is the most significant. With all his heart Langgaard here sings an enthusiastic paean to spring, or rather lets the soprano sing it, and he could have no better interpreter than Mrs Ellen Overgaard, whose impressive soprano lent extra lustre to this very high and challenging part.

With the corrections in 1920 the symphony acquired the form in which it is published here, and which was used for the last four performances of the original version, in Germany and Austria in the years 1921-25. The prime mover in this was the conductor Hans Seeber-van der Floe, who conducted all four performances with Ellen Overgaard as soloist under the German title of the work, *Frühlingserwachen*.

First came a “Nordic concert” in Essen with the local orchestra on 26th October 1921. The composer attended the performance, as did the conductor Max Fiedler, who had premiered Langgaard’s First Symphony in Berlin in 1913. The composer wrote a little – in telegram form – about the rehearsal process, and about the audience reception in Essen, in the postcard<sup>9</sup> he sent home to his mother the day after the concert:

There was great enthusiasm – Had to stand up after the adagio – spontaneous applause despite the fact that here people do not clap between sections of a symphony. Sat beside Fiedler, who gave the ‘cue’ by applauding. Mrs O[vergaard] was impossible – I had to ‘get down on my knees’ to her – threatened not to sing. I made the orchestra terribly nervous with my eternal

remarks from the floor! – They only rehearsed my work – and she could get to (the Grieg song) whenever it pleased me. She was a ‘Neben bei’. I sent flowers – sang the soprano solo rather unkindly, though. But success – I [took] 5 calls.

In *Neue Musik-Zeitung*, Ludwig Riemann wrote in a very short report on the concert that it had deserved a larger audience, since the works performed, by Tor Aulin and Langgaard, moved the listeners with their atmosphere of “refreshing mountain air and their dreamy mood of the fjords” (Vol. 43, 1922, Fascicle 6, p. 94).

After this the symphony was performed in Berlin in Langgaard’s presentation concert with the Blüthner Orchestra on 10th May 1922, where the main item was *The Music of the Spheres* (second performance). The concert was held at the Singakademie under the patronage of the Danish Queen Alexandrine. The critics concentrated their attention on *The Music of the Spheres* and only offered brief comments on the symphony, such as Dr. Heinz Pringsheim’s precise characterization in *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* (Vol. 49, 19th May 1922; p. 423):

Aus der Sinfonie spricht noch die naive, ungebrochene Freude am Wohlklang, am reinen, glänzenden A-dur-Akkord, an feurig-jublenden Wagnerischen Streicherfiguren und an himmlischen Längen.

Ten days later, on 20th May 1922, the work was on the programme in the Grosser Musikvereins-Saal in Vienna with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in yet another “Nordic orchestral concert”, which began with works by Sibelius and Grieg. After the interlude came an all-Langgaard section with *Symphonic Festspil* (BVN 166) and Symphony No. 2. The composer attended the concert. And finally Hans Seeber-van der Floe performed the symphony in a radio concert consisting exclusively of Danish works for Süddeutscher Rundfunk on 3rd April 1925. On this occasion the South German Radio Orchestra also performed works by J.L. Emborg, Fini Henriques, Carl Nielsen and Friedrich Kuhlau.

And that in fact ends the history of the present original version of the symphony. In 1925 Langgaard entered a period of crisis when he felt a need to reflect over his previous oeuvre and as a consequence to carry out revisions and abridgements. Although Symphony No. 2 was in reality his most successful and most frequently performed major work, it was not allowed to lie untouched. In the score fair copy of 1914 he now (1925-26) made cuts and corrections, and gave it a substantial formal makeover, inasmuch as the second movement, with a new ending (the fourth), was inserted as a section in the first movement after b. 148 and with a subsequent omission of bb. 149-177. This radical change seems to have been abandoned again when Langgaard, in the summer of 1926, with the help of his later wife Constance Tetens, drew up the second score for the work (RLS 11,3). The revision work was then continued on the basis of this new manuscript, while the original score was left in the above-mentioned edited form. And it is possible that the score as we have it today represents an independent 1926 redaction of the symphony. The revision period only ended in 1933, after which a third score was drawn up (RLS 11,1). The first performance of the final version was a studio performance at the Danish Broadcasting Corporation under the baton of Launy Grøndahl, with Inger Lis Hassing as soloist, on 21st May 1948.

The symphony in the final version is first and foremost considerably shorter than the original version, since only the first half of the original first movement has been retained, corresponding to the present edition’s bb. 1-218. The first and second movement have furthermore been joined in one movement by means of an added ten-bar bridging passage. The abridgement came to mean that the opening first subject of the symphony is at no point repeated – a weakness Langgaard tried to remedy by interpolating a couple of ‘reminiscences’ of the beginning of the theme in the concluding vocal movement.

The score in the present critical edition was given its first performance in the Odense Concert Hall on 12th December 2002 with the soprano Ann Petersen and the Odense Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Man.

*Bendt Viinholt Nielsen, August 2002*

## Notes

- <sup>1)</sup> “Comp. March 1912 – Sept 1913”, note from 1914 in RL’s private archive, the Royal Library, Copenhagen, *KB HA Utilg.* 554, 4.
- <sup>2)</sup> Dating on a vocal score of third movement (RLS 11,2).
- <sup>3)</sup> Letter from SL to RL, RL’s private archive, *KB HA Utilg.* 554,7.
- <sup>4)</sup> According to the list of works from the beginning of 1916 (called *RL 1916*), RL’s private archive, *KB HA Utilg.* 554,1.
- <sup>5)</sup> EL in a letter to Godtfred Skjerne, 17th May 1915, *Musikhistorisk Museum, Skjernes Samling*; a copy of the note is enclosed with this letter, while the original in RL’s hand is in RL’s private archive, *KB HA Utilg.* 554,4. RL’s *Gleichnisz* has been corrected to *Gleichnis*, and the Rittershaus quotation has been cited as in the printed form of the poem.
- <sup>6)</sup> Rittershaus, from the text for the third movement.
- <sup>7)</sup> Frederik Paludan-Müller (according to EL).
- <sup>8)</sup> EL to Godtfred Skjerne, 6th May 1915, *Musikhistorisk Museum, Skjernes Samling*.
- <sup>9)</sup> RL’s private archive, *KB HA Utilg.* 554,8.

*English translation: James Manley*

## Vocal text in movement III

*Emil Rittershaus (1834-97): Lenzklänge*

### I.

Hör' ich rings die Lerchen singen,  
Wenn so mild die Sonne scheint,  
Ist es mir, als hätt' ich nimmer  
Tränen auf der Welt geweint,

Weiß Glöcklein auf der Wiese  
Läuteten den Sonntag an;  
Duft'ge Blumen haben ihre  
Schönen Augen aufgetan.

Und ich glaub' das alte Märchen,  
Daß die Lerchen hoch im Blau'n  
Unserm Herrgott in den Himmel  
Und die schönen Engel schau'n!

In des Windes leisem Rauschen  
Tönt's wie ferner Orgelschall,  
Und die allerschönste Predigt  
Hält im Wald die Nachtigall.

### II.

Schau, die Birken und die Buchen  
Tragen schon ihr Sonntagskleid,  
Denn der Sonntag für die Erde  
Ist die liebe Frühlingszeit.

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Freu' dich, Herz, im Sonnenglanz –  
O laß die volle Lenzespracht,  
Durch deiner Seele Tiefen schweben!

Hundertstimmig singt und klingt es  
Durch die Felder, durch den Hag:  
"Sei begrüßt nach kalten Tagen,  
Sei begrüßt, du Sonnentag!"