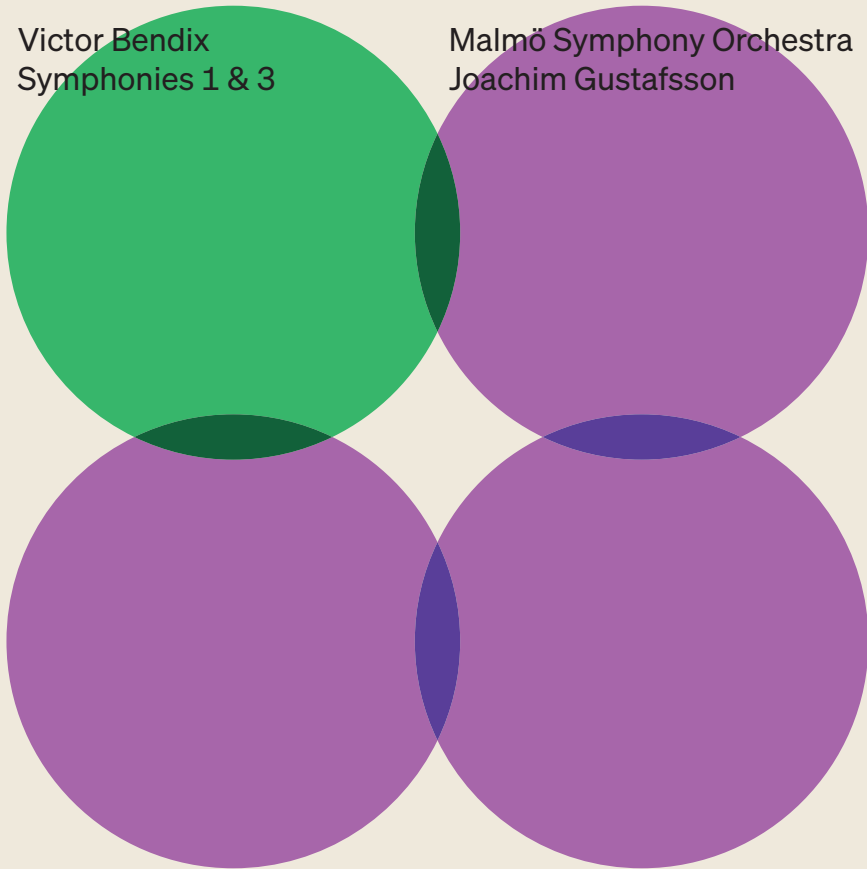


Victor Bendix
Symphonies 1 & 3

Malmö Symphony Orchestra
Joachim Gustafsson



Victor Bendix (1851–1926)

Symphonies 1 & 3

Malmö Symphony Orchestra

Conducted by Joachim Gustafsson

Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 16, *Ascension* (1877–78)

34:07

1 I Ouverture. Adagio ma non troppo. Allegro moderato

11:47

2 II Notturmo. Allegro vivace

6:14

3 III Marcia solenne. Andante sostenuto

8:18

4 IV Finale. Allegro animato

7:48

Symphony No. 3 in A minor, Op. 25 (1891–92)

35:37

5 I Fantasia

13:43

6 II Scherzo appassionato. Molto vivace. (Bunte Bilder)

7:30

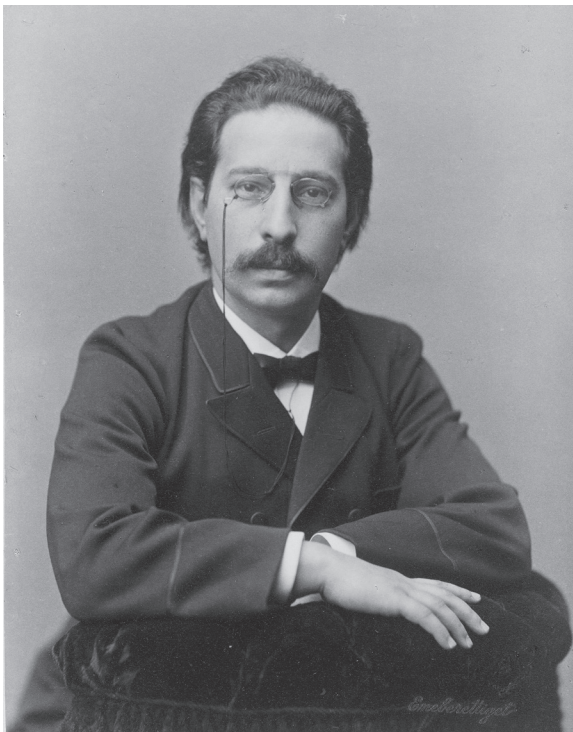
7 III Elegie. Lento, ma non troppo.

14:24

Total 69:46



Danish Arts
Foundation



Victor Bendix, 1877

Endeavours and Reverses

By Jens Cornelius

Victor Bendix (1851–1926) was a complex figure in Danish music, central but at the same time an outsider. Despite being a highly respected composer, pianist and conductor he never quite received the recognition he dreamt of.

Bendix's early life showed great promise: he was a child prodigy born to a cultivated family living in the centre of Copenhagen, and began composing when he was only a young boy. As a fifteen year old he became a pupil of the king of Danish musical life, Niels W. Gade, and for a time he appeared likely to become Gade's successor. But rather than following his mentor's conservative ideals, he turned instead towards Liszt and Wagner. Bendix developed a taste for the new music of the time

and gradually lost Gade's support as a result.

At 19, Bendix became a répétiteur at the Royal Danish Theatre, working on, amongst other things, the first Danish performances of Wagner's *Lohengrin* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. With his fee, he went on a pilgrimage to Wagner's Bayreuth Festival, and was the only Dane present when Wagner laid the foundation stone for his *festspielhaus* and conducted Beethoven's 9th Symphony in 1872. Bendix was also there four years later, when the whole of the *Ring* cycle was performed for the first time.

These trips were of decisive importance for Bendix, who made many connections with German musical life. He additionally used the trip in 1872 to seek out Franz Liszt, who at that time lived in Weimar. Several times in the following years, Bendix traveled to Weimar, where Liszt very kindly welcomed him, reviewed his

compositions and played four-handed piano with him.

But there were other reasons besides musical taste which kept Bendix out of Copenhagen's inner circles. Bendix was Jewish, and he was also politically radical, an atheist like his famous cousin, the much-discussed man of letters, Georg Brandes. In Denmark's conservative musical life, this made him stand out, while his penchant for polemic and sharp sarcasm only intensified the voices against him. It was also an open secret that the charismatic Bendix was a womaniser with numerous erotic affairs, including with his own piano students.

These purely personal matters were probably decisive, as Bendix never obtained a leading position in Danish musical life. Instead, he forged his own path, and there was often an element of defiance, as he showed when he stepped forward and demonstrated his great talents: Denmark's finest musical institu-

tions evidently thought they could do without him. He directed the first Danish performances of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Verdi's *Don Carlos*, which he mounted at his own expense because the Royal Danish Theatre would not take on the responsibility – nor would they have anything further to do with Bendix himself.

As a composer, Bendix was highly self-critical. Of his around 150 compositions only 33 were given opus numbers. Two of his key works are his Symphonies 1 and 3: they stand as high points in his life, as well as constituting a poignant narrative of his artistic fate. Symphony No. 1 (1877–78) is his hopeful, ambitious debut, while the melancholic Symphony No. 3 (1891–92) is marked by resignation and fatalism.

Symphony No. 1 (1877–78)

Symphony No. 1 was Victor Bendix's first orchestral work, and was

entitled *Fjeldstigning (Ascension)*. In its idea, form and technique, the symphony was a purposeful breakthrough in Danish music. Before its first performance, Bendix showed the score to Liszt, who gave his approval of the symphony. It deliberately lives up to Liszt's ideas for a renewal of musical language, combining an abstract four-movement form with programmatic content, like a symphonic poem. In other words, it is a symphony with a 'plot'. Additionally, it is structured using cyclical themes, another one of Liszt's principles.

Nothing similar had been written by a Dane before, and it was quite a battle for Bendix to get his symphony performed in Denmark. It was on 4 March 1882 when he conducted it at Musikforeningen (The Music Society) in Copenhagen, which was usually steered by the strong hand of Niels W. Gade. Before the concert, Bendix had asked one of Denmark's best-known authors, Holger Drachmann,

to write an accompanying poem to the music. But the idea of combining poetry and music was altogether too demanding for the Copenhagen public. 'The audience couldn't find their way in or out, and *Ascension* did not have much success', wrote a newspaper about the premiere.

Later, Bendix replaced the poem with a foreword which explained the work as a description of endeavour and idealistic ambitions:

'Drawing a picture of a laborious hike towards the temple on the mountain peak, the symphony deals with a person's emancipatory development from frivolous aimlessness to a life guided by a higher idea.

In the first part of the symphony – the struggle before the decision – three motives embodying the ideal, despair and hope interact.

The second part, a Nocturne, presents a nocturnal ramble through the mountain woods, which alluring monuments of the past seek to hinder.

In the third part, Marcia solenne, the induction into the temple is portrayed. Finally, in the last part, we have a picture of the joy of a life lived through work in the service of the idea.'

This description can easily be taken as a self-portrait of the composer and his development. The objective is clear to him, but requires that he should defeat both despondency and obstacles ('the nocturnal ramble through the mountain woods') and distracting traditions ('alluring monuments of the past'). In the end he reaches the ultimate objective of being acknowledged by the elite ('induction into the temple), and on this triumphant level his existence can unfold with new meaning.

The symphony begins with a short introduction which presents the three principal motives in quick succession: the striving, ascending fanfare, the 'ideal'; then 'despair', which is intro-

verted and plaintive in the minor; and finally, the consolatory theme 'hope', which is in the major.

The three themes and their respective moods alternate through the whole of the first movement. Bendix works contrapuntally, especially in the development's speculative, hushed sections, leading to a fugue based on the 'ideal', while 'hope' blends in. By the close of the movement, 'despair' is overcome by the more optimistic themes, but buried thoughts of doubt continue to gnaw away.

The 2nd movement's nocturnal forest scene, 'Nocturne', is orchestrated with refinement and takes us through a misty wilderness. The 'ideal' accompanies our journey in a new transformation and shows the way. A chorale motive can be heard in the bassoons and clarinets: this may be one of the 'alluring monuments of the past' mentioned in the accompanying text. On the way up the mountain, new inspiration emerges: the

opening theme is cheerfully modified, and a little violin solo lights up like a brief floral idyll. But the ascent must not come to a standstill, and with a call from the trombones, the 'ideal' reminds us of the purpose of the entire nocturnal hike. This gets the mountaineer to stop, shocked, with 'hope' played by a lone bassoon.

The journey's goal is near, and the 3rd movement, 'Marcia solenne', takes us towards the induction procession in the temple. The key is E flat major, Beethoven's heroic key, and the hymn grows, pure and dignified. The symphony continues directly to the 4th movement, where the main character can now unfold freely and as part of cultured society. The movement's optimistic main theme is derived from 'hope' while a side-theme is related to the temple theme from the 3rd movement. Bendix's contrapuntal high point arrives at the end of the movement, as the 'ideal' is played by trombones accompanied by gong-strikes as tribute. The targeted effort

has led the mountaineer to the liberation he has been seeking.

The symphony was performed nine times in Bendix's lifetime, including a performance by the Berlin Philharmonic, and it was acknowledged as a significant work. Carl Nielsen, who had a very close and inspiring friendship with Bendix in the 1890s, conducted the symphony in 1921, in both Copenhagen and Gothenburg. Amongst the younger generation of Danish composers, *Ascension* became something of a model, not least for Rued Langgaard, whose Symphony No. 1, *Cliffside Pastorals* (1911) had nearly the same programme, about a spiritual mountain climb but in a greatly enlarged form. But remarkably, *Ascension* has not been performed since 1929, and has had only a couple of studio recordings. Even if Romantic music generally has had a very difficult time in Denmark during the 20th century, it is a truly astonishing fate for a landmark

work which is clearly a 'missing link' in Danish music history.

Symphony No. 3 (1891–92)

In 1888, Bendix presented his next symphony, which was very different. The title of his 2nd symphony is *Sommerklange fra Sydrusland* (*Summer Sounds from South Russia*). The music was inspired by those contemporary Russian composers whose works Bendix had come to know in Germany. Bendix often stayed in the great German cultural cities during the 1880s, and Symphony No. 2 was performed in, among other places, Dresden and by the Berlin Philharmonic.

Gade's death in 1890 provided an opportunity for Bendix to gain employment in Denmark, and he offered himself as a candidate for the post of conductor of the Music Society in Copenhagen. As a showcase for himself, he arranged a concert at which he conducted *Ascension* and Beethoven's Violin Concerto, with the famous

Adolph Brodsky as soloist. But it didn't help much: in the election for the top post in 1891, Bendix received no votes at all. The unbearable sides of his personality were probably decisive.

This defeat coincided symbolically with his new Symphony No. 3 in A minor, written the same year. It appears to be without programmatic content, but knowing Bendix's way of thinking and his personal history points us toward an explanation.

The symphony has just three movements, of which the 1st has the unusual title, 'Fantasie'. The beautiful minor main theme swells from its place like a dark grey sea whilst the composer fantasises. The melancholic mood is interrupted by a march theme that calls the composer back to reality – and to the struggle. A lyrical passage, beautifully scored for string quartet, provides inspiration and leads to the gentle closing theme and the hope that darkness can be turned to light. Later in the movement melancholy gains a new intensity, and

a brief return of the hopeful theme cannot change things: the fantasy ends in resignation.

The 2nd movement is the symphony's scherzo, and has a German title, 'Bunte Bilder' ('Variegated Pictures'). It is a restless movement which seeks to sweep worries away with hectic creativity. After a short introduction we hear the chasing main theme twisting itself into a delirious dance. The variegated pictures proceed with elegant transformations from a tripping motive, until a rustic peasant dance and a pastoral serenade for the oboe. When the main theme returns it does so with a very assertive character, doomed to end abruptly – which it does, much like a drunkard stumbling and falling over.

The slow 3rd movement, 'Elegie', forms the climax of the symphony – or rather, its deliberate anti-climax. The movement feels its way forward, first with a mournful theme that is replaced by a peaceful theme in the high strings. But in the midst of this

clarification comes a confused outburst and the sorrowful conclusion: the darkness from the symphony's beginning has grown stronger. The movement's true main theme reveals itself to be a solemn lament that grows in strength in order to stress that the proud struggle is lost. Reminiscences of the motives from the 1st movement pass in review before they disappear again, as brief glimpses of a brighter time that has passed.

Bendix himself held the symphony's final movement in high regard, quite understandably. Unfortunately the Danish audience were puzzled at the first performance on 14 November 1893, conducted by Gade's successor at the Music Society, Franz Neruda. What was the idea of the unusual work and its elegiac finale? The best analysis came from the music critic Robert Henriques, who argued that the symphony was autobiographical: an expression of the mature artist's disappointment that what he had hoped for in his youth had not

been fulfilled. Henriques, who himself was Jewish and a friend of the Bendix family, likely had an insider's view when he wrote in his review:

'In the 1st movement he clearly shows us his ambitious youthful dreams, sunlit and fresh as they were when he completed his *Ascension*. The 2nd movement is a wild scherzo whose energetic rhythms are meant to illustrate the tribulations of life and the composer's defiance of them. The 3rd movement is a melancholic elegy, depicting resignation and renunciation. The struggle has been given up without fully reaching the great goals. The stone which the young Sisyphus, with the expenditure of all his spiritual and bodily strength forces up to the mountain's top, rolls down again, time after time, though the goal be ever so near, so near.'

Symphony No. 3 was performed by Staatskapelle Dresden (then the Dresden Court Orchestra) in 1895,

then in 1903 by the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by the composer himself. In more recent times it has been performed in Japan (Hiroshima, 2007), US (Oakland, 2015) and Colombia (Bogotá, 2023), but this truly well-written symphony has not been played in Denmark since the year of its premiere, 1893. Bendix's experience of being rejected by the Danish music scene was reaffirmed.

Victor Bendix ended his career as a symphonist with his Symphony No. 4, which was premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1907 under the direction of Karl Muck. At this point Bendix was a fairly scandalous figure in Denmark, having had a child out of wedlock with a well-known pianist who later attempted to shoot him! The attempted murder and the paternity case ended up on the front pages of the newspapers, and for the following few years, Bendix maintained a low profile and spent much of his time in Germany.

In his later years, he significantly reduced his compositional work. Just as when he was young, he felt himself 'in opposition to the ruling taste', as he put it, but it was no longer because he was too radical. On the contrary, he insisted on the learned, classical skills in a new century which saw many great changes. He felt, with some bitterness, underrated as 'a representative of a kind of art that had outlived itself'. It would have delighted Victor Bendix that his distinguished symphonies, with all their Romantic ideals, are now resounding again, nearly 100 years after his death.

Jens Cornelius is the author of the biography, Victor Bendix (Multivers, 2021).

The **Malmö Symphony Orchestra** is one of Sweden's leading symphony orchestras. Performing at a high international level with a broad classical and contemporary repertoire, the orchestra also collaborates with prominent composers on new commissions. In recent years, the repertoire has expanded under their renowned former principal conductors Vassily Sinaisky, Marc Soustrot, and Robert Trevino. Since 2019, Sweden's internationally acclaimed trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger has been the Honorary Artist of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and a leading representative for contemporary music. The Malmö Symphony Orchestra has won critical acclaim from *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine* and *The New York Times* for its numerous recordings with leading record labels, including distinctions such as the Cannes Classical Award and Diapason d'Or.

Over the years, many successful international tours have been

undertaken, including performances at the Semperoper Dresden, Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, among others.

The Malmö Live concert hall, with its world-class acoustics, has put Malmö on the musical map of Europe and attracted leading orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra and Gewandhausorchester Leipzig. In 2025, the Malmö Symphony Orchestra will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

Joachim Gustafsson is widely recognised as one of the most versatile Scandinavian conductors of his generation. He studied conducting in Vienna with the esteemed Karl Österreichischer and Otmar Suitner, receiving guidance from notable mentors including Sixten Ehrling, Siegfried Köhler, Leif Segerstam, and Okko Kamu. In 1988, he was awarded first prize in the AICE competition 'Jugend und Musik' in Vienna. Gustafsson collaborates

with orchestras across the globe. In 2021, he was appointed Music Director of the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra, where he has been a regular guest conductor since 2012. He also holds the position of Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Borås Symphony Orchestra in his native Sweden.

His repertoire is extensive, with a strong focus on Austro-German music. He is particularly esteemed for his interpretations of Czech repertoire, conducting lesser-known works by composers such as Dvořák, Smetana, Martinů, Janáček and Suk as well as other notable 20th-century composers.

Gustafsson is also a prominent advocate for contemporary music, having premiered over 200 new works both as a violinist and conductor. Notable premieres include Niels Martinson's *Snehvides spejl* (Snow White's Mirror) and Thomas Agerfeldt Olesen's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the latter of which was released as a

critically acclaimed DVD by Dacapo Records in 2014.

Opera is another area of expertise for Gustafsson, and he is a frequent guest conductor at the Danish National Opera, where in 2019, he conducted the late-Romantic opera *Kleopatra* by the Danish composer August Enna. The recording of this performance, released by Dacapo Records in 2020, garnered high praise and was nominated for Germany's ECHO Music Prize.

For Dacapo Records, Gustafsson has also conducted Else Marie Pade's orchestral works on *The Orchestral Album* (2022), which received great critical acclaim, as well as an album of works for orchestra by August Enna (2023).

Stræben og nederlag

Af Jens Cornelius

Victor Bendix (1851-1926) var både en hovedperson og en outsider i dansk musik. Han var højt respekteret som komponist, pianist og dirigent, samtidig med at han af forskellige årsager aldrig helt fik den anerkendelse, han drømte om.

Det havde ellers tegnet meget håbefuldt for Victor Bendix. Han var vidunderbarn, født i en kultiveret familie i centrum af København, og han komponerede allerede, da han var lille dreng. Som 15-årig blev han elev af dansk musiklivs konge, Niels W. Gade, og i en periode lignede han Gades oplagte efterfølger. Men Bendix fik smag for en ny tids musik og mistede derfor efterhånden Gades opbakning. I stedet for at følge sin mentors konservative idealer orienterede han sig hellere mod Liszt og Wagner.

Som 19-årig blev Bendix repetitør på Det Kongelige Teater, blandt andet ved de første danske opsætninger af Wagners *Lohengrin* og *Mestersangerne i Nürnberg*. For sit honorar valfartede han til Wagners festspilby, Bayreuth og var som den eneste dansker til stede, da Wagner i 1872 lagde grundstenen til sit festspilhus og dirigerede Beethovens 9. Symfoni. Bendix var også med, da man fire år senere for første gang opførte hele *Nibelungens ring*.

Rejserne fik afgørende betydning for Bendix, der knyttede mange kontakter til tysk musikliv. Han benyttede også turen i 1872 til at opsøge Franz Liszt, som på det tidspunkt boede i Weimar. Flere gange de følgende år rejste Bendix til Weimar, hvor Liszt meget venligt tog imod ham, gennemgik hans kompositioner og spillede firhændigt klaver med ham.

Men der var andre årsager end den musikalske smag, der holdt Bendix udenfor inderkredsene i København. Bendix var nemlig jøde, og han

var også politisk radikal og ateist ligesom sin berømte fætter, den stærkt omdiskuterede litterat Georg Brandes. I det konservative danske musikliv fik det ham til at skille sig ud, og hans hang til polemik og skarp sarkasme gjorde ikke modstanden mod ham mildere. Dertil var det en offentlig hemmelighed, at den karismatiske Bendix var en forfører, der havde mange erotiske affærer, ikke mindst med sine klaver elever.

Disse rent personlige årsager blev formentlig afgørende for, at Bendix aldrig fik nogen af de fremtrædende stillinger i dansk musikliv. I stedet gik han sine egne veje, og ofte var der et element af trods, når han trådte frem og demonstrerede sine store evner, som musiklivets fineste institutioner åbenbart mente, man godt kunne undvære. For eksempel dirigerede han de første danske opførelser af Wagners *Tristan og Isolde* og Verdis *Don Carlos*, som han for egen regning stablede på benene, fordi Det Kongelige Teater ikke ville tage opgaverne

på sig – og heller ikke længere ville have noget med Bendix selv at gøre.

Som komponist var Bendix meget selvkritisk. Ud af hans cirka 150 kompositioner fik kun 33 et opusnummer. To af nøgleværkerne er hans Symfoni nr. 1 og Symfoni nr. 3, der står som milepæle i hans liv og samtidig danner en sigende fortælling om hans kunstneriske skæbne. Symfoni nr. 1 fra 1877-78 er den håbefulde, ambitiøse debut, mens den melankolske Symfoni nr. 3 fra 1891-92 er præget af resignation og fatalisme.

Symfoni nr. 1 (1877-78)

Symfoni nr. 1 var Victor Bendix' allerførste orkesterværk og fik titlen *Fjeldstigning*. Både i sin idé, form og teknik var symfonien et målrettet brud i dansk musik. Inden uropførelsen havde Bendix vist partituret til Liszt, som blåstemplede symfonien. Den lever bestemt også op til Liszts tanker om en fornyelse af musikkens sprog ved at kombinere en abstrakt, firesatset form med et programmatisk

indhold som i en symfonisk digtning. Det er med andre ord en symfoni, der har en "handling". Desuden er den opbygget med brug af cyklisk tematik, endnu et af Liszts principper.

Noget lignende havde ingen dansker før komponeret, og det var lidt af en kamp for Bendix at få symfonien opført i Danmark. Det lykkedes 4. marts 1882, hvor han dirigerede den i Musikforeningen i København, som ellers blev styret med fast hånd af Niels W. Gade.

Inden koncerten havde Bendix fået en af Danmarks kendteste forfattere, Holger Drachmann, til at skrive et ledsagende digt til musikken. Men idéen om at kombinere poesi og symfoni var alt for krævende for det københavnske publikum. "Tilhørerne kunde hverken finde ud eller ind, og *Fjeldstigning* gjorde ikke stor lykke," skrev en avis om uopførelsen.

Senere erstattede Bendix digtet med et forord, der redegjorde for værket som en beskrivelse af stræben og idealistiske ambitioner:

"Under billedet af en møjsommelig vandring mod templet på bjergtinden behandler det et menneskes frigørende udvikling fra letsindig planløshed til en af en højere idé ledet tilværelse.

I den første del af symfonien – kampen forud for beslutningen – brydes de tre motiver, som skildrer idealet, mismodet og håbet.

Anden del, nocturnen, er den natlige vandring gennem bjergskoven, som dragende fortidsminder søger at standse.

I tredje del, Marcia solenne, skildres indvielsen i templet, og endelig i sidste del livsglæden gennem arbejdet i idéens tjeneste."

Beskrivelsen kan nemt fortolkes som et selvportræt af komponisten og hans udvikling. Målet står ham klart, men kræver, at han skal overvinde både mismod og forhindringer ("den natlige vandring gennem bjergskoven") og distraherende traditioner ("dragende fortidsminder"). Til sidst

nås endemålet om at blive anerkendt af eliten ("indvielsen i templet"), og på dette triumferende niveau kan hans tilværelse udfolde sig med ny mening.

Symfonien begynder med en kort indledning, der præsenterer de tre hovedmotiver i tæt rækkefølge: Den stræbsomme, opadstigende fanfare "idealet"; derefter "mismodet", der er indadvendt og klagende i mol; og til sidst det trøstende tema "håbet", som er i dur.

Gennem hele første sats veksler de tre temaer og deres sindsstemninger. Bendix arbejder meget kontrastpunktisk, især i gennemførlingsdelens spekulative, lavmælte afsnit, som videreføres i en fuga afledt af "idealet", mens "håbet" samtidig blander sig. Ved satsens slutning er "mismodet" overtrumpet af de lyse temaer, men tvivlens undergravende tanker gnaver stadig.

2. sats' natlige skovscene, "Nocturne", er instrumenteret med raffinement og tager os gennem et

tåget vildnis. "Idealet" er med i en ny forvandling og viser vej. Et koralmotiv høres i fagotter og klarinet – det må være et af "de dragende fortidsminder", som programteksten omtaler. Undervejs op ad bjerget opstår der ny inspiration: Begyndelsestemaet bliver opmuntrende forvandlet, og en lille violinsolo lyser op som kortvarig blomsteridyl. Men opstigningen må ikke gå i stå, og med et kald fra basunerne minder "idealet" os om formålet med hele nattevandringen. Det får bjergbestigeren til at stoppe chokeret op – med "håbet" spillet af en enlig fagot.

Rejsens mål er nær, og 3. sats, "Marcia solenne", tager os med til indvielsesprocessionen i "templet". Tonearten er Es-dur, Beethovens heroiske toneart, og hymnen vokser med både renhed og værdighed. Symfonien fortsætter direkte til 4. sats, hvor hovedpersonen nu kan udfolde sig frit og som del af det høje selskab. Satsens optimistiske hovedtema er afledt af "håbet", mens sidetemaet er

beslægtet med tempelhymnen fra 3. sats. I slutningen af satsen kommer Bendix' kontrapunktiske clou, da "idealet" som kronen på værket spilles af basunerne, ledsaget af gongslag som hyldest. Den målrettede anstrengelse har ført den søgende bjergbestiger til den befrielse, han havde stræbt efter.

Symfonien blev i Bendix' levetid opført ni gange – blandt andre af Berliner Filharmonikerne – og den var anerkendt som et betydeligt værk. Carl Nielsen, der i 1890'erne havde et meget tæt og inspirerende venskab med Bendix, dirigerede symfonien i 1921 i både København og Göteborg. Blandt yngre generationer af danske komponister blev *Fjeldstigning* noget af et forbillede, ikke mindst for Rued Langgaard, hvis 1. Symfoni fra 1911, *Klippepastoraler*, i stærkt forstørret form har næsten samme program om en åndelig bjergbestigning. Men mærkeligt nok har *Fjeldstigning* slet ikke været opført siden 1929, kun lavet i et par studieindspilninger. Selv

om romantisk musik generelt havde det meget vanskeligt i Danmark i 1900-tallet, er det en virkelig forbløffende skæbne for et skelsættende værk, som helt klart er et 'missing link' i dansk musik.

Symfoni nr. 3 (1891-92)

I 1888 præsenterede Bendix sin næste symfoni, der var meget anderledes. Titlen på hans Symfoni nr. 2 er *Sommerklange fra Sydrusland*, og musikken er inspireret af samtidens russiske komponister, hvis værker Bendix havde lært at kende i Tyskland. Bendix opholdt sig i 1880'erne helst i de store tyske kulturbyer, og Symfoni nr. 2 blev blandt andet opført i Dresden og af Berliner Filharmonikerne.

Da Gade døde i 1890, opstod der en ny mulighed hjemme i Danmark for Bendix. Han kandiderede til posten som dirigent for Musikforeningen, og som fremstød for sig selv arrangerede han en koncert, hvor han dirigerede *Fjeldstigning* og Beethovens Violin-

koncert med den berømte Adolph Brodsky som solist. Lige lidt hjalp det – ved afstemningen om top-posten i 1891 fik han 0 stemmer. De unævnelige sider af hans person var formodentlig udslagsgivende.

Nederlaget passede symbolsk med hans nye Symfoni nr. 3 i a-mol, skrevet samme år. Den er tilsyneladende uden programmatisk handling, men kender man Bendix' tankegang og personlige historie, træder en oplagt fortolkning igennem.

Symfonien har blot tre satser, og 1. sats har den usædvanlige titel "Fantasie". Det smukke mol-hovedtema bølger af sted som et mørkegråt hav, mens komponisten "fantaserer". Den melankolske tilstand afbrydes af et marchtema, der kalder ham tilbage til virkeligheden – og kampen. En lyrisk passage, smukt instrumenteret for strygekvartet, giver inspiration og fører til det milde sluttema og håbet om, at mørket kan vendes til lys. Men senere i satsen får melankolien ny intensitet, og en kort tilbagekomst af

det håbefulde tema ændrer ikke ved, at fantasierne ender i resignation.

2. sats er symfoniens scherzo med den tyske titel "Bunte Bilder" ("Brogede billeder"), en urolig sats, der forsøger at feje bekymringerne væk med hektisk kreativitet. Efter en kort introduktion hører man det jagende hovedtema, der forvandler sig til en delirisk dans. De brogede billeder fortsætter med elegante forvandlinger fra et trippende motiv videre til en rustik bondedans og til en pastoral serenade for obo. Da hovedtemaet vender tilbage, er det med en meget påståelig karakter, dømt til at ende brat – hvad det også gør, som når en druktur slutter med, at hovedpersonen dejser om.

Den langsomme 3. sats, "Elegie", bliver symfoniens klimaks – eller rettere sagt det bevidste antiklimaks. Satsen føler sig frem, først med et sørgetema, der afløses af et fredfyldt tema i de høje strygere. Men midt i afklaringen kommer et fortvivlet udbrud og den sørgelige konklusion: Mørket

fra symfoniens begyndelse er groet fast. Satsens egentlige hovedtema bliver en højtidelig klagesang, der vokser i styrke for at understrege, at den stolte kamp er tabt. Efterklange af motiverne fra 1. sats passerer revy, inden de forsvinder igen som kortvarige glimt af en lysere tid, der var engang.

Bendix satte selv særlig pris på symfoniens sidste sats, og det kan man godt forstå. Desværre var det danske publikum i vildrede ved uropførelsen 14. november 1893, dirigeret af Gades efterfølger i Musikforeningen, Franz Neruda. Hvad var tankerne med det usædvanlige værk og den elegiske finale? Den bedste analyse kom fra musikanmelderen Robert Henriques, der opfattede symfonien som selvbiografisk. Et udtryk for den modne kunstners skuffelse over, at det, han håbede som ung, ikke var blevet opfyldt. Henriques, der selv var jøde og en ven af familien Bendix, har nok haft en insiderviden, da han i sin anmeldelse skrev:

“I første stykke skildrer han åbenbart sine ærgerrige ungdomsdrømme, sollyse og våfriske, som de var, da han havde fuldendt sin *Fjeldstigning*. Andet stykke er en vild scherzo, hvis energiske rytmer skal illustrere livets anfægtelser og komponistens trodsen – imod. Tredje stykke endelig er en melankolsk elegi, der skildrer resignationen og forargelsen. Kampen er opgivet, uden at de store mål ganske er nået. Den sten, som den unge Sisyfos med anspændelse af alle sine åndelige og fysiske kræfter ville tvinge op på bjergets top, er atter og atter rullet ned, da målet var så nær, så nær.”

Symfoni nr. 3 blev opført i 1895 af Dresdens Statskapel (dengang Dresdens Hofkapel) og i 1903 af Berliner Filharmonikerne, dirigeret af Bendix selv. I nyere tid har den været opført i Japan (Hiroshima, 2007), USA (Oakland, 2015) og Colombia (Bogotá, 2023), men denne virkelige velkomponerede symfoni har slet ikke været spillet i Danmark siden

premiereåret 1893. Bendix' oplevelse af, at dansk musikliv valgte ham fra, kom til at holde stik.

Victor Bendix sluttede af som symfoniker med sin Symfoni nr. 4, der blev uropført i 1907 af Boston Symfoniorkester og dirigenten Karl Muck. På det tidspunkt var Bendix en temmelig skandaliseret person i Danmark, efter han havde fået barn uden for ægteskab med en kendt pianistinde, der efterfølgende forsøgte at skyde ham! Drabsforsøget og faderskabssagen endte på forsiden af aviserne, og i de følgende par år holdt Bendix lav profil og opholdt sig meget i Tyskland.

På sine ældre dage skruede han kraftigt ned for sit compositionsarbejde. Ligesom da han var ung, følte han sig i “opposition til den herskende smag,” som han formulerede det. Nu skyldtes det ikke længere, at han var for radikal, men tværtimod at han insisterede på de lærde, klassiske kundskaber i et nyt århundrede med store forandringer. Med bitterhed

føjte han sig nedvurderet som “repræsentant for en kunstretning, der har overlevet sig selv”. Så mon ikke det ville have frydet Victor Bendix, at hans fornemt komponerede symfonier, med alle deres romantiske idealer, nu klinger igen, næsten 100 år efter hans død.

Jens Cornelius er forfatter til biografien, Victor Bendix (Multivers, 2021).

Malmö Symfoniorkester er et af Sveriges førende symfoniorkestre, internationalt anerkendt for sine høje standarder og sin stærke forankring i et bredt klassisk og nutidigt repertoire, der også tæller nye bestillinger fra prominente komponister. I de senere år er repertoiret blevet udvidet under deres anerkendte, tidligere chefdirigenter Vassily Sinaisky, Marc Soustrot og Robert Trevino. Siden 2019 har Sveriges internationale trompetstjerne Håkan Hardenberger, som ledende repræsentant for ny musik, været æreskunstner ved orkestret.

Malmö Symfoniorkester har modtaget lovprisninger og rosende omtale fra Gramophone, BBC Music Magazine og The New York Times for sine talrige indspilninger på ledende pladeselskaber samt udmærkelser som Cannes Classical Award og Diapason d'Or.

Gennem årene har orkestret gennemført mange vellykkede internationale turnéer, blandt andet

til Semperoper Dresden, Concertgebouw Amsterdam og Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.

Malmö Live-koncertsalen med sin verdensklasseakustik har sat Malmö på det musikalske landkort i Europa og har tiltrukket ledende orkestre som Berliner Filharmonikerne, London Symfonikerne og Gewandhausorchester Leipzig. I 2025 kan Malmö Symfoniorkester fejre sin 100-års fødselsdag.

Joachim Gustafsson er bredt anerkendt som en af sin generations mest alsidige dirigenter i Skandinavien. Han studerede direktion i Wien under ansete Karl Österreich og Otmar Suitner og modtog vejledning fra en række store dirigentnavne, herunder Sixten Ehrling, Siegfried Köhler, Leif Segerstam og Okko Kamu. I 1988 blev han tildelt førstepræmien i AICE-konkurrencen *Jugend und Musik* i Wien.

Gustafsson samarbejder med orkestre over hele verden. I 2021

blev han udnævnt til chefdirigent for Bogotá Filharmonikerne, som han jævnligt har gæstedirigeret siden 2012. Han er desuden kunstnerisk leder og chefdirigent for Borås Symfoniorkester i sit hjemland, Sverige.

Joachim Gustafssons repertoire er omfattende, med et stærkt fokus på østrigsk-tysk musik. Han nyder særlig anerkendelse for sine fortolkninger af tjekkisk repertoire og dirigerer mindre kendte værker af komponister som Dvořák, Smetana, Martinů, Janáček, Suk samt andre betydelige komponister fra det 20. århundrede.

Gustafsson er også en markant skikkelse inden for den ny musik og har førsteopført flere end 200 værker både som violinist og dirigent. Blandt de fremtrædende førsteopførelser kan nævnes Niels Martinsens *Snehvides spejl* og Thomas Agerfeldt Olesens *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, som blev udgivet på en kritikerrost DVD af Dacapo Records i 2014.

Opera er en anden af Gustafssons ekspertiser. Han gæster hyppigt

Den Jyske Opera, hvor han i 2019 stod i spidsen for August Ennas senromantiske opera *Kleopatra*. Indspilningen blev udgivet af Dacapo Records i 2020 og har høstet stor kritikerros samt en nominering til Tysklands ECHO Music Prize.

For Dacapo Records har Gustafsson desuden, til anmeldernes store tilfredshed, dirigeret Else Marie Pade-albummet *The Orchestral Album* (2022) samt et orkesteralbum med værker af August Enna (2023).

DDD

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