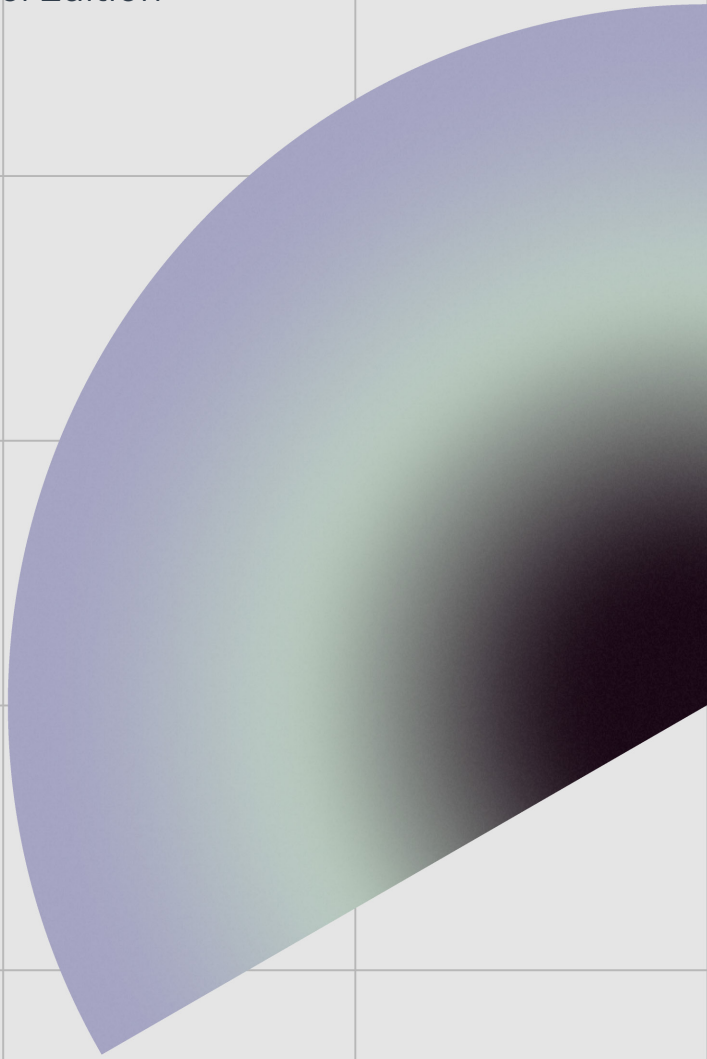


Herman D. Koppel Edition
Vol. 3

Piano Suites



Christian Westergaard

Herman D. Koppel (1908–98)

Herman D. Koppel Edition, Vol. 3: Piano Suites (1933–88)

Christian Westergaard, piano

1	Gammel dans (Old Dance) (1924)	1:04
	10 Piano Pieces, Op. 20 (1930s)	7:51
2	I Andantino	0:32
3	II Giocoso	0:19
4	III Dolente	0:38
5	IV Andantino	0:44
6	V Poco allegro	0:39
7	VI Andantino	0:36
8	VII Allegro	0:32
9	VIII Allegretto	0:46
10	IX Allegro	0:47
11	X Allegretto (Theme and Variations)	2:11
	From 26 Small Piano Pieces, Op. 111 (1983–84)	2:07
12	X Svævende sommerfugl (Floating Butterfly)	0:36
13	XIII En pige synger (A Girl Sings)	0:41
14	XIV En dreng synger samme sang (A Boy Sings the Same Song)	0:49
15	Piano Piece, Op. 7: Allegro (1930)	2:14
	Suite for Piano, Op. 21 (1934)	8:46
16	I Allegro marcato	3:44
17	II Andante, ma non troppo	3:50
18	III Molto allegro	1:12

	From 50 Short Piano Pieces, Op. 99 (1977)	12:48
19	XI Aften (Evening)	1:07
20	XIX Mærkelig lyd (Peculiar Sound)	0:21
21	XXX Hellig dans (Sacred Dance)	1:20
22	XXXI Lille tryllekunst (A Little Trick)	0:30
23	XXXIII Herren er min hyrde (The Lord is My Shepherd)	0:54
24	XXXVII Små klokker (Small Bells)	1:13
25	XXXIX God nat (Good Night)	1:26
26	XXXXIV Store klokker (Big Bells)	0:57
27	XXXXIV Leg med kvinter (Playing with Fifths)	1:31
28	XXXXVII Sorg (Sorrow)	1:06
29	L Vi mødes igen (We Meet Again)	2:18

Total 34:53

Land of Childhood

By Christian Westergaard and Esben Tange

Life and music were closely intertwined for Herman D. Koppel. He grew up in a tradition-rooted Jewish family with strong values and notions, where the individual's needs took a back seat. Therefore, it led to a deep family crisis when Herman, the firstborn, married Edel Vibeke Bruun, who was not Jewish, at the age of 27. For several years, there was a rift between Herman and his parents. Nevertheless, he remained a family man for whom togetherness with – and support for – his closest relations was of great importance. And this also applied when it came to music.

Several of Koppel's works are composed with close family members in mind. Many of these works have an educational purpose, such as the 10 Piano Pieces, Op. 20 (1933), written for his 11-year-old sister Anna – which also became the focal point of his grandson Benjamin Koppel's bestselling book *Annas sang* (Anna's Song) (2022). This also applies to the 50 Short Piano Pieces, Op. 99 (1977) and 26 Small Piano Pieces, Op. 111 (1983–84), largely composed with Koppel's 12 grandchildren in mind.

Koppel's interest in pedagogy followed him throughout his life and was animated by Carl Nielsen, who in 1929 urged contemporary composers to write accessible music for educational purposes. Already the following year, he had a couple of short pentatonic piano pieces printed in the publication *Vor tids børnemusik* (Children's

Music of Our Time). This went hand-in-hand with Koppel's work as a piano teacher.

Private students and teaching at the Danish Institute for Visual Impairment in Copenhagen provided an important income as a newly graduated pianist in the 1930s, and already in 1936 Herman D. Koppel began teaching at the Royal Danish Academy of Music. At times, he had aspiring pianists living in his home, which from the late 1940s until 1969 was an apartment in Frederiksberg, Copenhagen.

In addition to Carl Nielsen, Béla Bartók was a significant inspiration. This is evident in the short pedagogical pieces, where Bartók's 153 piano pieces entitled *Mikrokosmos* (1926–39), form a monument of progressive difficulty for educational use. Similarly, the Piano Piece, Op. 7 (1930), and the Suite for Piano, Op. 21 (1934), are both effective concert hall music characterised by assertive rhythms in the style of Bartók, which Koppel experienced firsthand when Bartók played his piano sonata in Copenhagen in 1929.

Gammel dans (Old Dance) (1924) holds a special significance in Herman D. Koppel's life. In this merry piece, there is a whiff of the folk music that would later come to play an important role for Koppel, and we are close to the classical sonatina style that he knew inside out as a diligent piano student in his boyhood years.

When Koppel auditioned for the Royal Danish Academy of Music as a 17-year-old in 1925, he played the piece *Gammel dans*. Carl Nielsen was on the admission committee, and after hearing the little piece, he

reportedly exclaimed: 'You have an excellent sense of form, Mr. Koppel!' Herman D. Koppel was then admitted to the conservatory with the remark 'exceptionally talented and promising'.

The **10 Piano Pieces, Op. 20**, are small musical glimpses with a twinkle in their eye. Here, Koppel celebrates simplicity by using melodies that often span only five notes. We are in a confined world where the music floats and plays like in the land of childhood that his younger sister Anna inhabited when the music was created. At the same time, there are new tones that were dubbed 'musical functionalism' and were part of a wave of 'utility music' composed around 1930.

Just as in architecture, all external ornamentation was stripped away, leaving only the bare framework. In the instances where Koppel does break the pattern and lets a single tone stand out, the effect is all the greater. This is the case, for example, toward the end of the vitally dancing second piece 'Giocoso' and part way through the following 'Dolente', where a magical light is suddenly cast over music that otherwise seems to be going in circles. In the final piece, a theme with variations, Koppel breaks out of the constraints. With an insistent rhythmic pounding motive, it is playful music that dwells on gently singing dissonances before running rampant. A window onto a new world beyond childhood.

In three movements from the **26 Small Piano Pieces, Op. 111** (1983–84), we meet Koppel as an elderly man well into his 70s. The hovering lightness is intact, but now in a more narrative, atonal style marked by poetry and reflection.

In the two movements 'En pige synger' (A Girl Sings) and 'En dreng synger samme sang' (A Boy Sings the Same Song), simplicity is no longer the goal. We are once again visiting the land of childhood, but with a dreamy musical language rich in nuances, the music resonates with a life lived.

When Koppel composed **Piece for Piano, Op. 7**, in late 1930, he had earlier that year debuted as a pianist from the Royal Danish Academy of Music and was now embarking on a career as a concert pianist. With an insistent rhythmic energy from the very first note, it is the raw forces of music that are cultivated, akin to Bartók's *Allegro barbaro* (1911), which Koppel often performed in concerts. With a steady marching rhythm and chords hammered on the keys again and again, Koppel here cultivates a virtuoso style perfectly suited to thrill a concert audience, and which he fully unleashed when he used this very music toward the end of his Piano Concerto No. 1.

With the **Suite for Piano, Op. 21** (1934), Koppel created a radically new work where the music of the time is connected with ancient cultures' veneration of the ritual and ecstatic. During a study stay in Paris, he experienced Balinese gamelan music, inspiring him in the final movement of the suite to write music where the piano is treated like a percussion instrument. The notes are hammered out as if a drumroll, and the music is irresistible. In contrast, the middle second movement is delicate and flowing, and with constant repetitions, time is suspended, offering a glimpse into eternity before a single powerful chord ends it all.

With the piano suite, Koppel truly stepped onto the international stage as a composer, and the suite was published, printed and performed abroad. But it was music that divided opinions. The music critic Povl Hamburger described the piano suite in a column in *Politiken* as 'one of the most typical examples of the decay of contemporary music – soulless rhythmic music from start to finish.'

The **50 Short Piano Pieces, Op. 99** (1977), occupy a special status among Koppel's works. The year before, his wife Edel Vibeke passed away, and after more than 40 years of marriage, Herman was now alone. But through 50 Short Piano Pieces, which Koppel composed for his grandchildren, he forged new bonds with the large family that had grown up around him. Once again, as in his youth, he had written music with an educational purpose. In a simple aphoristic style, he introduced the new music and special piano techniques challenging for young musicians.

In addition, the 50 Short Piano Pieces can be seen as a reference catalogue to important aspects of Herman D. Koppel's life. With 'Små klokker' (Small Bells) and 'Store klokker' (Large Bells) there is a connection back to the magical percussion world that he encountered in his youth in 1930s Paris. In the hopeful 'Herren er min hyrde' (The Lord is My Shepherd) the religious strings are struck that took hold of Koppel in the time after World War II. With 'Sorg' (Sorrow) and the final piece 'Vi mødes igen' (We Meet Again), he comes very close to the difficult life situation he was in at the time. At the same time, deeply personal and accessible to everyone.



Christian Westergaard

Christian Westergaard (b. 1980) is a Danish pianist and accompanist who trained at the Royal Danish Academy of Music under Amalie Malling, Niklas Sivelöv, and Tove Lønskov.

Westergaard regularly collaborates with renowned international vocalists such as soprano Elsa Dreisig, baritone Bo Skovhus, and soprano Mari Eriksmoen, as well as numerous leading Nordic singers. He has performed concerts at prestigious venues including London's Wigmore Hall, Hamburg's Musikhalle, and throughout France, Italy, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.

In 2021, Westergaard garnered international acclaim for his monumental CD box set release, *Peter Heise: The Song Edition*, on Dacapo Records, comprising 11 CDs and standing as one of the largest Danish classical new releases to date. His Dacapo Records album, *Tangos, Waltzes and Cinema Music* (2010), featuring piano works by Jacob Gade, also received international recognition.

As a musical entrepreneur and programmer, he has made a mark with Liedkompagniet, which for several years was a central concert venue for Lieder in Denmark and on several occasions commissioned premieres of new Danish music. In 2008, the festival *Herman and David* presented a complete performance of Herman D. Koppel's songs over three concerts. Together with bass-baritone Jakob Bloch Jespersen, Westergaard has launched the project New Danish Songs, which has led to premieres of Danish music for voice and piano by Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, Niels Rosing-Schow, Simon Steen-Andersen, Jexper Holmen, Nicolai Worsaae, and Simon Løffler.

As a solo pianist, Westergaard holds a special affinity for Danish piano music, having cultivated an extensive repertoire of core works by Niels W. Gade, Carl Nielsen, Herman D. Koppel, and Niels Viggo Bentzon.

Barndommens land

Af Christian Westergaard og Esben Tange

Liv og musik var for Herman D. Koppel nært forbundne. Han voksede op i en traditionsforankret jødisk familie med stærke værdier og forestillinger, og hvor den enkeltes behov kom i anden række. Derfor førte det til en dyb familiær krise, da Herman, der var den førstefødte, som 27-årig giftede sig med Edel Vibeke Bruun, der ikke var jødisk. Gennem flere år var der kold luft mellem Herman og forældrene. Ikke desto mindre forblev han et familiemenneske, for hvem samværet med – og støtten til – de nærmeste var af stor betydning. Og det gjaldt også, når det drejede sig om musik.

Adskillige af Koppels værker er komponeret med tanke på nære familiemedlemmer. Mange af disse værker har et pædagogisk sigte, eksempelvis 10 klaverstykker, op. 20 (1933), der er skrevet til hans 11-årige søster Anna – og som i øvrigt blev omdrejningspunktet i barnebarnet Benjamin Koppels bestsellerbog *Annas sang* (2022). Det gælder tillige 50 korte klaverstykker, op. 99 (1977) og 26 små klaverstykker, op. 111 (1983-84), der i høj grad er komponeret med tanke på Koppels i alt 12 børnebørn.

Interessen for det pædagogiske fulgte Koppel gennem hele livet og blev animeret af Carl Nielsen, der i 1929 opfordrede tidens komponister til at skrive folkelig, letfattelig musik til undervisningsbrug. Allerede året efter fik han trykt et par små femtonige klaverstykker i udgivelsen *Vor tids børnemusik*. Det gik hånd i hånd med Koppels virke som klaverlærer.

Privatelever og undervisning på Institutet for Blinde og Svagsynede i København udgjorde en vigtig indtægt som nyuddannet pianist i 1930'erne, og allerede i 1936 begyndte Herman D. Koppel at undervise på Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium. Indimellem havde han håbefulde pianister boende i hjemmet, der fra sidst i 1940'erne og frem til 1969 var en lejlighed på Frederiksberg i København.

Foruden Carl Nielsen var især Béla Bartók en vigtig inspiration. Det gælder i forhold til de korte pædagogiske stykker, hvor Bartóks i alt 153 klaverstykker med titlen *Mikrokosmos* (1926-39) udgør et monument, når det drejer sig om stykker af progressiv sværhedsgrad til undervisningsbrug. Det samme gælder i forhold til Stykke for klaver, op. 7 (1930) og Suite for klaver, op. 21 (1934), der begge er effektiv koncertsalsmusik præget af pågående rytmer i stil med det, Bartók dyrkede, og som Koppel oplevede, da Bartók spillede sin klaversonate i København i 1929.

Gammel dans fra 1924 har en særlig betydning i Herman D. Koppels liv. I det muntre stykke er der både en duft af den folkemusik, der siden skulle komme til at spille en vigtig rolle for Koppel, og så er vi tæt på den klassiske sonatinstil, som han kendte ud og ind som flittig klaverelev i drengeårene.

Da Koppel i 1925 som 17-årig søgte ind på Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium spillede han netop *Gammel dans*. Carl Nielsen var med i optagelsesudvalget, og efter at have hørt det lille stykke udbrød han efter sigende: "De har en udmærket formsans, hr. Koppel!" Han var herefter optaget på konservatoriet med skudsmålet "særdeles flink og lovende".

10 klaverstykker, op. 20 er små musikalske glimt med øjet. Her gør Koppel en dyd ud af enkeltheden med brug af melodier, der ofte kun spænder over fem toner. Vi er i en afgrænset verden, hvor musikken svæver og leger som i det barndommens land, som hans lillesøster Anna befandt sig i, da musikken blev til. Samtidig er der tale om nye toner, der fik betegnelsen ”musikalsk funkis”, og som var en del af en bølge af ”brugsmusik” komponeret i årene omkring 1930.

Ligesom inden for arkitekturen blev al ydre pynt skrællet af, og skelettet træder frem. I de tilfælde hvor Koppel så bryder mønstret og lader en enkelt tone træde frem bliver effekten desto større. Det gælder for eksempel mod slutningen af det vitalt dansende andet stykke ”Giocoso” og undervejs i det følgende ”Dolente”, hvor der pludselig kastes et magisk lys ind over en musik, der ellers lader til at være gået i ring.

I det sidste stykke, der er et tema med variationer, sprænger Koppel rammerne. Med et insisterende rytmisk bankemotiv er der tale om en drilagtig musik, hvor der undervejs dvæles ved blidt syngende dissonanser, inden musikken løber løbsk. Et vindue ud mod en ny verden hinsides barndommen.

I tre satser fra **26 små klaverstykker, op. 111** fra 1983-84 møder vi Koppel som ældre langt oppe i 70’erne. Den svævende lethed er intakt, men nu i en mere fortællende, fritonal stil præget af poesi og eftertanke. I de to satser ”En pige synger” og ”En dreng synger samme sang” er enkelthed ikke længere et mål. Vi er igen på besøg i barndommens land, men med et drømmende musikalsk sprog rigt på nuancer klinger musikken af levet liv.

Da Koppel komponerer **Stykke for klaver, op. 7** sidst i 1930 er han tidligere dette år debuteret som pianist fra Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium og er nu i gang med at opbygge en karriere som koncertpianist. Med en insisterende rytmisk energi fra første tone er det musikkens rå kræfter, der dyrkes på linje med Bartóks *Allegro barbaro* (1911), som Koppel ofte spillede til koncerter. Med en taktfast marchrytme og akkorder, der hamres i tangenterne igen og igen, dyrker Koppel her en ”klaverløvestil”, der er som skabt til at begejstre et koncertpublikum, og som blev udfoldet i stor stil, da han brugte netop denne musik i slutningen af sin Klaverkoncert nr. 1.

Med **Suite for klaver, op. 21** fra 1934 skaber Herman D. Koppel et radikalt nyt værk, hvor den tids nye musik forbindes med oprindelige kulturers dyrkelse af det rituelle og ekstatiske. Under et studieophold i Paris oplever han balinesisk gamelan-musik, og det inspirer ham til i sidste sats af suiten at skrive en musik, hvor klaveret behandles som et slagtojsinstrument. Tonerne hamres ud, som var det en trommehvirvel, og musikken er uimodståelig. I den midterste anden sats er musikken til gengæld delikat og letløbende, og med stadige gentagelser ophæves tiden og der kastes et blik ind i evigheden inden en enkelt kraftig akkord gør alt forbi.

Med klaversuiten trådte Koppel for alvor ind på den internationale scene som komponist, og suiten blev udgivet, trykt og spillet i udlandet. Men det var musik, der delte vandene. Musikanmelderen Povl Hamburger omtalte i en kronik i Politiken klaversuiten som ”et af de mest typiske Eksempler paa moderne Forfaldsmusik – afsjælet Rytmemusik fra først til sidst”.

50 korte klaverstykker, op. 99 fra 1977 indtager en særstatus blandt Koppels værker. Året før dør hustruen Edel Vibeke, og efter mere end 40 års ægteskab er Herman nu alene. Men igennem de 50 korte klaverstykker, Koppel komponerer til sine børnebørn, knytter han nye bånd til den store familie, der er vokset op omkring ham. Han har igen, som i sin ungdom, skrevet musik, der har et pædagogisk sigte. I en enkel aforistisk stil introduceres den nye musik og særlige klavertekniske udfordring for unge musikere.

Dertil kommer, at de 50 korte klaverstykker kan opfattes som et referencekatalog til vigtige sider af Herman D. Koppels liv. Med "Små klokker" og "Store klokker" er der forbindelse tilbage til den magiske slagtøjsverden, som han mødte i sin ungdom i 1930'ernes Paris. Med den forventningsfulde "Herren er min hyrde" slås de religiøse strenge an, som fik tag i Koppel i tiden efter 2. Verdenskrig. Og med "Sorg" og det sidste stykke "Vi mødes igen" går han helt tæt på den svære livssituation, han netop stod i. På samme tid dybt personligt og åbent for enhver.

Christian Westergaard (f. 1980) er en dansk pianist og akkompagnatør uddannet fra Det Kongelige Danske Musikkonservatorium hos Amalie Malling, Niklas Sivelöv og Tove Lønskov.

Han samarbejder regelmæssigt med internationalt anerkendte sangere som sopranen Elsa Dreisig, barytonen Bo Skovhus og sopranen Mari Eriksmoen samt ledende sangere fra Norden. Han har optrådt i koncertsale som Wigmore Hall i London, Hamburgs Musikhalle og i Frankrig, Italien, Sverige, Norge og Danmark.

I 2021 modtog Westergaard international anerkendelse for sin monumentale CD-bokssæt-udgivelse, *Peter Heise: The Song Edition*, på Dacapo Records, bestående af 11 CD'er og en af de største danske klassiske nyudgivelser til dato. Albummet *Valse, tangoer og kinomusik* (2010) med klaverværker af Jacob Gade, også udgivet af Dacapo Records, modtog også international anerkendelse.

Som musikalsk iværksætter og programlægger har han markeret sig med Liedkompagniet, der var et centralt koncertsted for Lieden i Danmark i en årrække og ved flere lejligheder foranlediget uopførelser af ny dansk musik. I 2008 præsenterede festivalen *Herman og David* en samlet opførelse af Herman D. Koppels samlede sange over tre koncerter.

Sammen med basbarytonen Jakob Bloch Jespersen har han lanceret Nye Danske Sange, der har tilvejebragt uopførelser af dansk musik for sang og klaver af Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, Niels Rosing-Schow, Simon Steen-Andersen, Jexper Holmen, Nicolai Worsaae og Simon Løffler.

Som solopianist brænder Christian Westergaard særlig stærkt for den danske klavermusik og har opbygget et stort repertoire af kerneværker af blandt andet Niels W. Gade, Carl Nielsen, Herman D. Koppel og Niels Viggo Bentzon.

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Dacapo Records, Denmark's national record label, was founded in 1989 with the purpose of releasing the best of Danish music past and present. The majority of our recordings are world premieres, and we are dedicated to producing music of the highest international standards.