

## **Fuglsang as a musical crossroads: paradise and paradise lost. Röntgen, De Neergaard, Grieg and Fuglsang**

### **Jurjen Vis (Amsterdam)**

Edvard Grieg and Julius Röntgen met for the first time at a party of the Skandinaviske Selskap in Leipzig, Saturday February 27th 1875. Grieg was 31 years old, Röntgen a young man of only 19. Their friendship became really close only nine years later, in December 1883, when Grieg - suffering a midlife crisis and bored with his marriage - planned to stay one night with the Röntgens in Amsterdam. In advance Grieg had written to Röntgen that he hoped this one day in Amsterdam would last 48 hours. In the end it lasted nearly four weeks, since Grieg was exhausted and really not willing to go back to his wife! After the long sleepover, an intense correspondence between the two men flourished until 1907, the year of Grieg's death. In his many letters Grieg often stimulated his friend: 'Do come to Norway!' Already in July 1884, Röntgen went there with his friend the singer Johannes Messchaert, they visited the Hardanger and indeed met Grieg. Seven years later Grieg and Röntgen solemnly celebrated their brotherhood - the ritual of 'Brüderschaft trinken' - in the summer of 1891, and it was Grieg as senior who had taken the initiative. Only since then did they no longer address each other with Sie and Herr, but with Du and lieber Freund.

### **An unforeseen encounter**

In July 1891 Röntgen had gone to Norway together with his wife Amanda Mayer and their sons Julius junior and Engelbert. Röntgen was bound to make the already mentioned trip through Jotunheim, with Grieg and Grieg's best friend Frants Beyer; just the three of them. A week before the start of the enterprise Röntgen, Amanda and their boys stayed four days in Lofthus (18 July-22 July), awaiting the arrival of Grieg and Beyer. There they had a most interesting meeting with great consequences for themselves and their offspring. Röntgen wrote about it in his *Edvard Grieg. Erinnerungen und Briefe*: 'Lofthus hat für uns eine große Bedeutung bekommen, denn es war dort wo wir eine neue Freundschaft für's Leben anknüpften. Der Rittergutsbesitzer Viggo de Neergaard mit seiner Frau - eine Tochter des Dänischen Componisten Emil Hartmann - wohnten mit uns in Utnes Hotel. Bald wurden wir mit einander bekannt - Frau Neergaards Vater war kurz vorher bei mir in Amsterdam gewesen - und im nächsten Sommer - 1892 - waren wir zum ersten Mal Neergaards Gäste in Fuglsang auf der Dänischen Insel Laaland. Seitdem haben wir jeden Sommer dort zugebracht und in Fuglsang uns're zweite Heimath gefunden. [in a rough draft of this text he writes: 'und ich danke Fuglsang die glücklichsten Tage meines Lebens']

Röntgen continues: 'Griegs kamen für einige Tage nach Lofthus und wir machten mehrere Ausflüge zusammen.'

It is remarkable that Röntgen doesn't mention the first name and proper name of Frau de Neergaard. Julius Röntgen junior as well has given an account of the events in his 'Memories' ('Herinneringen', 1944). Even his daughter Agnes Röntgen (1911-2002) has written in detail about the encounter (1985). Agnes Röntgen's manuscript ('Het boek van vroeger') is so valuable since she quotes extensively from two autobiographical books by Bodil de Neergaard: *Sprede traek af mit liv* (*Erindringer*, 1941) and *Minder fra Fuglsang* (*Erindringer*, 1944).

Bodil de Neergaard - for friends: Boel - describes in her books how she made a holiday trip with her husband in Norway near the Sörfjord. Close to the Hardangerfjord she suddenly saw a young couple, artists, with two cute little boys, one of eight and one of five years old. They boarded the same boat and spent several days in the same hotel. 'The family spoke German and we felt ashamed we couldn't express ourselves in that language. As soon as the man heard my name he asked me: 'Do you know Emil Hartmann from Copenhagen?' Then the ice was broken. Emil was my father and he knew Julius Röntgen from Leipzig, where he had been studying at the Conservatory. Father had been staying several times with the Röntgens in Amsterdam. The couple was very friendly and they played music for us. Whilst making a trip together we found that they were close friends of the Griegs. The Griegs came along as well. We had a happy time together. At the farewell we promised to visit each other soon. Already the next summer they came to us, and from then on it was a good tradition that they came to Fuglsang every year, at least for one month in summer. The outbreak of the First World War put an end to it. Amanda unfortunately died in 1894 and a good friend of her, Mien van der Hoeven, married Röntgen in 1897. Everybody was very fond of the two boys - Julius en Engelbert.'

### **Emil Hartmann and J.P.E. Hartmann**

The encounter in July 1891 was a pure coincidence and the composer Emil Hartmann (1836-1898), Bodil's father, was the connecting link, not Edvard Grieg. Bodil's grandfather, the well known composer Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann (1805-1900), was one of the founding fathers of Danish music. He not only was the father of Emil but the father in law of Niels Gade as well. Grieg and Röntgen called J.P.E. Hartmann 'der alte Hartmann' and both knew him well. The young Grieg got to know the old Hartmann in 1863 in Copenhagen, on his return from Leipzig. Grieg was very fond of Hartmann senior and more than that: it was the old man who gave him the inspiring example using folk music as a basis for newly composed music. Röntgen had

been living in Leipzig from his birth in 1855 until 1878 and in the early seventies he had often heard music of the old Hartmann.

Thanks to his girlfriend and future wife the Swedish violinist Amanda Mayer, who was studying in Leipzig, Röntgen was well informed about Scandinavian music, musicians and music students in Leipzig. At a meeting of the Skandinaviske Selskap in 1875 he had met Edvard Grieg. In march 1876 Röntgen wrote in his diary that one evening the entire Selskap had visited the Röntgen family at Lehmannsgarten in Leipzig. Three days later two prominent members, Emil Hartmann and Johann Svendsen, came along a second time. Bodil's father knew Julius Röntgen well and they remained in contact with each other. In 1891 and 1892 Hartmann junior stayed with the Röntgens in Amsterdam, visiting the city when his music was performed in the Concertgebouw.

## **Viggo de Neergaard**

Some remarks about Viggo de Neergaard (1837-1915), Bodil's husband. He had been a friend of Grieg since his youth. Viggo was six years Edvard's senior. He was born in 1837 in Roholte at Sjaelland as son of a landowner who in 1819 had come in the possession of two large, medieval, adjacent estates: Fuglsang and Priorskov. In 1840 the family ordered a new castle to be built but it turned out to be a failure. In 1866 Viggo inherited the estates and he had to rebuild Fuglsang since all the new woodwork was already rotten. His nephew, the well known architect J.G. Zinn, designed the new Fuglsang (1868-1869) in the so called Rosenberg style. In 1885 the 47 year old Viggo de Neergaard married Bodil Hartmann (1867-1959) who had just turned 18. Despite the big age difference, they had knew each other for a long time. Viggo was an old acquaintance of the Hartmann family, and a good friend of the already famous writer Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1870). Andersen had stood godfather at Bodil's baptism.

## **Summer music**

Although built in a classical style, Fuglsang was a comfortable new building. The castle and its surroundings formed a beautiful ensemble: the castle was surrounded by a park, greenhouses, meadows, horse stables, bike lanes, lakes with bathhouses and sailing boats, and deserted islands. Everybody would eat fruit from the trees and taste the most delicious berries from the fields. Fuglsang was a blessed place on earth, a little paradise. Between 1885 and 1915 - the year of Viggo's death - the place was a lively centre of summer music. The entrance was limited to relatives, friends, acquaintances, colleagues and their wives and children, making about 20 to 30 people staying at the same time. The summer music had been the initiative of Bodil:

she was a musician herself, a competent singer, and she had the talent for attracting musicians to come over and make music with her and others. Bodil presented herself as the hostess and not only that. During the summer of 1902, she closed every day with the well known song *Morgen* of Richard Strauss. 'Und Morgen wird die Sonne wieder scheinen.' Röntgen wrote to Grieg: 'Bisjetzt hat es aber nicht geholfen und es regnet und regnet in infinitum. Dass dabei noch mehr als sonst musicirt wird, kannst du dir denken.'

Bodil's invitation to Röntgen and his family turned out to be her most successful depth investment. The facilities she could offer were impressive: Fuglsang had a huge concert room with two beautiful grand pianos; the musicians could rehearse all day and play their concerts in the evening for an interested audience. Afterwards there was a luxurious dinner. The whole repertoire of chamber music was played: all string quartets, quintets and sextets of Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Brahms and of course many other composers. Apart from instrumental music - string and wind ensembles - there were vocal quartets with piano accompaniment.

From 1892 till 1914 Röntgen visited Fuglsang with his two wives, his only daughter, and his six sons, altogether more than twenty times. Röntgen himself, his wives and five of his sons were outstanding - and soon to be professional - musicians: three pianists, two violinists and two cellists. Röntgen himself was a good pianist and viola player. Although there are no sources about this delicate matter, I presume Röntgen only paid for his trip from Holland to Laaland - he went by train to Hamburg and then further by boat to Denmark - and the Neergaards paid the remaining costs for him and his family: the lodging and the food. I can't imagine they ever paid him a salary. They did everything to make him feel at home. They even built him a wooden cabin as a kind of accommodation on an island near Fuglsang. Keilsø was the private Röntgen island.

In 1892 Julius and Amanda visited the Neergaards for the first time. Röntgen wrote to Grieg: 'Hier verleben wir sehr angenehme Tage - Neergaards Besingung ist wundervoll, ein kleines Fürstenthum; der Aufenthalt in seinem Schloß außerdordentlich behaglich.' The next years, Röntgen came back and took his friends and colleagues, the singer Johannes Messchaert, the violinist Bram Eldering (1901), the composer Geert Von Brucken Fock (1902-1906), and the cello player Karel van Leeuwen Boomkamp, and their wives and children with him. The composers Peter van Anrooy and Oscar Posa (1873-1951) came to Fuglsang as well. In 1904 Röntgen met the Danish composer Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) at Fuglsang. It was friendship at first sight. Röntgen often patronized his ten years younger colleague in a way Grieg had often been doing to him. However, he supported and assisted Nielsen as well.

And then the beautiful Bodil. She was not only a great hostess but a very tender, caring and sensitive person as well. She often was there when Edvard or Nina Grieg suffered hard times and needed to have somebody

around, she comforted Röntgen after the death of his first wife in 1894 and she offered him a refuge in his many depressions around 1900. His sons were always welcome at Fuglsang and could stay with her, without their father and even without their mother. When the boys were ill they could stay with aunt Bodil as long as they needed and wanted. She took care of everyone and the smallest kids enjoyed their meals with her in the kitchen. The boys developed themselves as musicians, and played an increasingly more substantial part in the summer music, as the years progressed.

### **Variations on a theme of J.P.E. Hartmann**

It is evident from Röntgen's diaries and his correspondence with Grieg that Fuglsang was constantly on his mind and that it sometimes caused tension between the friends. Generally, Röntgen first would stay at Fuglsang for a few weeks, then he would visit Grieg on a short trip that would take him a week, and afterwards he would return to Fuglsang to rejoin the music and pick up his wife and children. Now and then he would have to choose between the two.

Röntgen felt at home at Fuglsang. For him Fuglsang was the best place. Although the nature and wild life of Norway had made a huge, overwhelming impression on him, in Denmark he felt more at ease. In 1896 he confessed to J.P.E. Hartmann: 'Ich betrachte Dänemark wie meine zweite, liebe Heimath'. He never said or wrote that about Norway! Röntgen's efforts in meeting Grieg were not always successful. In his *Erinnerungen und Briefe* he describes that during his first summer at Fuglsang he went to Norway as well, but missed Grieg. Sending letters and telegrams took time, there was no telephone and in some parts of Norway the means of transport were very primitive. In this case the friends had been waiting for each other for days, to no avail.

Amanda was often very ill those years. However, in 1893 Röntgen left her and the boys with Bodil, so he could make the trip to Trolldhaugen. Grieg always wanted to have Röntgen for himself - 'Du kommst dieses Jahr nach Norwegen' - and in fact was not interested if this was convenient or suitable for Röntgen's family life. The most important thing for Grieg was that the two friends would come together and the wives should do their utmost to make this possible. In May 1894 he wrote to Röntgen, that Amanda - ill as she was - might take her rest at Fuglsang. Bodil would look after her, so that Röntgen could visit him. As it happened, Amanda died that June and Röntgen didn't go to Fuglsang and Norway at all.

Next summer, the young widower left his two boys with Bodil, and again made the trip to Norway. Accompanied by good friends, he went to the North Cape by boat. Meanwhile he did everything to arrange a meeting with Grieg as well. However, Grieg had already left Trolldhaugen and Röntgen met Grieg's wife Nina who was there alone. She sang him Grieg's recently

composed song cycle Haugtussa, whilst accompanying herself at the piano. Röntgen in turn played her his new piano composition: Variationen und Fuge über ein Thema von J.P.E. Hartmann. Röntgen was just in time to catch his boat back. In those days, there already were tourist boats from Trondheim to the Cape, taking 9 days to do the trip. The composer completed his set of Variations at sea. The first page of the manuscript reads that the piece was composed between the 2nd and 23rd of July, 'zwischen Nordcap und Aalesund'. The theme of the work is Hartmann's well known church hymn 'O Guds Lam! (som borttager världens synder, förbarma Dig över oss)', which is the same as 'Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis'.

The piece possibly reflects the state of mind of the widower Röntgen. However, already the 28th of June he had written to Grieg about a set of variations he was bound to compose or already composing: 'Ein schönes thema. Du siehst ich komme vom nordischen nicht los!' Apart from Röntgen's own situation, there was a good reason to compose the piece. Röntgen had congratulated the old Hartmann with his 90th birthday at the beginning of May and had hinted that he would come to Fuglsang that summer and pay the old man a visit as well. As Röntgen had just turned 40, Hartmann was exactly fifty years his senior! Of course Röntgen would play him the Variations and leave a copy of the score as a birthday gift.

After having visited the North Cape, Röntgen stayed in Norway a little longer, and with Frants Beyer he made a trip through Jotunheim a second time. Grieg wanted to join them, he had been waiting for his friends several days, but had missed the connection. On his way back to Holland Röntgen went to Fuglsang and stayed there some time with his sons and friends. He had first visited the old Hartmann in Copenhagen and had played him his new composition. It is remarkable however, that he didn't dedicate the piece to him, but to his granddaughter and her husband, apparently to thank them for their friendship and hospitality for lodging his boys: 'Herrn und Frau de Neergaard auf Fuglsang gewidmet'. The score was printed the same year by Edition Rieter-Biedermann in Leipzig. Back in Amsterdam Röntgen wrote to Grieg that he was playing the piece in Vienna the same year at his concerts with Messchaert. If this was the case, Johannes Brahms who attended all the concerts of the duo in Vienna, must have attended the premiere of this very Brahmsian composition.

## **Master of the music**

In 1897 Röntgen married for the second time. Mien van der Hoeven was warmly welcomed in the Fuglsang- and Troidhaugen families and she immediately felt at home. Mien was a gifted pianist. For Julius and Mien, Fuglsang became their happy island, their 'Isle Joyeuse'. Apart from the friendship, the hospitality - being looked after and taken care of - and the company of musicians of their own level - for Julius, visiting Fuglsang was

like returning to his youth. As a child at home, he had experienced making music at the highest level every day. His mother had been a brilliant pianist, his father was the second concert master of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and his younger nephew Julius Klengel - who lived next door - was the soon highly to be acclaimed famous cellist. And then there were the other gifted members of the families Röntgen and Klengel and colleagues and friends of his father's. As a child, Röntgen had grown accustomed to getting recognition and applause: the child prodigy had always been the master of music, everywhere.

Röntgen more or less had the same experience in Amsterdam but with more competition and distraction, and there he had more worries and even anxieties about his children, family, colleagues and pupils at the conservatory. However his biggest frustration in Amsterdam was that he was not taken seriously any longer. Since 1898 he was completely ignored by Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. Mengelberg pressed him down continuously. Röntgen's art was considered 'irrelevant'. His music - in the style of the old fashioned Leipziger Schule of Mendelssohn, Robert and Clara Schumann and Brahms - didn't represent the future, but the past. The Neu-Deutsche Schule (Liszt, Wagner, Richard Strauss and Mahler) was in favor.

At Fuglsang, Röntgen didn't have to hide himself. At Fuglsang he had nothing to be ashamed of. He was the central figure again, the undisputed master of the music, and he was cherished and loved by everybody. Thanks to Röntgen every music season was a success. Of course he didn't always have a relaxed time. Generally he woke up at five in the morning and at 6 he was already busy working, writing out fingerings and exercising at the piano. All day long he would rehearse old and new repertoire with Bodil and others. He had to go to bed early.

## **Grieg at Fuglsang**

Every year Röntgen tried to combine Fuglsang and Trolldhaugen but each time he had to decide which was to be first. The holidays had to be nice and satisfying for everybody. Fuglsang was the ideal mix of holiday, leisure, sporting and music for his adolescent boys. However Röntgen had to maintain his friendship with Grieg as well. Generally Grieg was in feeble condition; he was in poor health and couldn't do much travelling, so Röntgen had to visit him. It's puzzling however that whereas Grieg stayed in Copenhagen every year some weeks or even months, he never made the trip to Denmark when Röntgen was in Fuglsang. When Röntgen was not able to come to Norway, Grieg felt as unhappy and wronged like a child.

The Griegs and Neergaards were friends as well, and met on a regular basis, preferably not at Fugslang, but in Copenhagen, Christiania or even Trolldhaugen. In Copenhagen Edvard and Nina felt at home. They couldn't stay at Trolldhaugen in winter time and went to Christiania or Copenhagen to

live in hotels. In Christiania their refuge always had been Hotel Westminster, in Copenhagen it was the König von Dänemark and Phoenix (in 1907: Bristol). Nina Grieg was a worldly woman and she preferred city life above country life. And above that, she considered herself to be a child of Denmark. Although she had been born in Norway - in Bergen - from an early age she had lived in Denmark. She had had her vocal training in Copenhagen and it was there that she had met Grieg. Grieg had been living there from 1863 till 1866. From the nineties onwards, the Griegs spent several weeks or even months in Copenhagen, every year.

According to the Fuglsang literature and recent Fuglsang and Danish music websites, Edvard Grieg was a regular guest at Fuglsang and had often taken part in the music season as well. This is simply not true. Grieg had only been there twice, with his wife Nina, and only at Christmas (1898 and 1899). Grieg didn't like the place, although it is not exactly clear why. Presumably it was the combination of coldness and humidity that he couldn't stand. In September 1904 the composer wrote to Röntgen: 'Glücklicherweise verlief der Sommer ohne bronchitis und dafür bin ich sehr dankbar. Oft dachte ich daran Euch auf Fuglsang zu besuchen. Es wäre aber unklug und gewagt gewesen. Ich war zwei Mal auf Fuglsang und fühlte mich dort jedes Mal körperlich unwohl. Der Ort ist nichts für mich. Auf meinem jetzigen Standpunkt darf ich es deshalb nicht mehr riskieren.'

However, Grieg's letter to his editor Max Abrahams in Leipzig at Christmas 1898 was set in a complete different tone: 'Wir wohnen hier wie König und Königin auf einem Rittergut, das heißt, in einem Schloß, haben zwei wundervolle Zimmer und ein enormer Park zu unserer Verfügung. Die Ruhe tut gar wohl. Denn man ist hier ganz frei und braucht nur bei Table d'hote zu erscheinen.' Grieg had been in Copenhagen since early December and wanted his friend Röntgen to come to Fuglsang as well. Röntgen, however, was suffering from a depression and couldn't make the trip. Grieg wrote to him at the end of the year, and I believe he was honest this time: 'Eine sehr grosse Enttäuschung dass Du ausgeblieben bist! Hätte ich es vorher sicher gewußt, dann wäre ich - unter uns gesagt - nicht hierher gekommen.'

In 1899 again the Griegs started their winter season in Copenhagen and the day before Christmas they went to Fuglsang. Again Grieg chided his friend: 'Das chromatische Kindergeschrei ist für Dich gar nicht gut. Es bekommt Dir viel besser einige Tage nach Fuglsang zu gehen. Mien hat vorläufig mit der Mutterliebe genug zu thun! Dürfen wir eine leise pianissimo Hoffnung haben?' Röntgen however was too busy and again didn't make the trip.

Although Grieg was at Fuglsang only twice - off season and so he never took part in the summer music - he met the Neergaards regularly. But he treated them the same as Röntgen: who wanted to see Grieg, had to come to see him. This was only partly due to his health problems. Anyway, the Neergaards often went to Christiania even to Trolldhaugen and of course

to Copenhagen to meet the Griegs. The friendship with the Röntgens, however, was not the same one way traffic for them. Röntgen visited them every year at Fuglsang and the Neergaards visited Röntgen in Amsterdam several times: they were there in 1898, they took part in the festivities of Röntgen's silver jubilee in 1903 and in spring 1906 they attended the Griegfestival in the Concertgebouw. The Neergaards had travelled to Amsterdam together with the Griegs; a year before they had accompanied Grieg on his trip to Warschau.

## Zulu-Ruh

Although Grieg didn't like Fuglsang, the thought of being there had not left him entirely. At Fuglsang he could after all have enjoyed the company of 'alle lieben Fuglsänger'. In August 1902 he wrote to Röntgen: 'Hätte ich nur Zeit dazu, dann ginge ich - hole mich der Guckuck - direct nach Fuglsang.' Of course Grieg had not been considering seriously making the trip. Röntgen however kept stirring up his friend. In 1903 he wrote to him that he should come in the summer. Maybe he wouldn't then suffer from his bronchitis. The so called Zulu-life was beneficial to Röntgen and would do Grieg good as well.

Zulu-life? On his private island Keilso, all the Röntgen men, young and old, went naked, sometimes dressed and made up as Zulu warriors. They called it 'playing Zulu'. Summer 1904 Viggo de Neergaard built Röntgen a wooden cabin on the island, primitive but comfortable. In a letter to his friend the violinist Carl Flesch of August 1904 Röntgen describes how Zulu-Ruh - the resting house of the Zulu - was officially inaugurated: 'Dort verbringen wir die meisten Nachmittage und geniessen das absolut ungebundene Leben wie im Paradiese vor dem Sündenfall.'

Röntgen's new cabin made Grieg a bit envious. The little building would bind his friend more and more to Fuglsang. In the summer 1905 Grieg had to give up the fight: 'Also Neergaard hat euch ein eigenes Haus gebaut! Alle Achtung. Das ist wohl für uns keine Hoffnung mehr. Wir müssten denn auch ein Haus und dazu ein schöneres bauen! Ich melde dass Neergaard hat gesiegt.'

## Living in Copenhagen

Grieg's health deteriorated rapidly and the composer knew his days were numbered. In July 1907 Grieg wrote to Röntgen that he and Mien should come to Trolldhaugen immediately: 'Alle Beide! Bodil wird eine himmlisch gute Mutter für die kurze Zeit sein. Wir verlangen nach Mien! Eigentlich nach euch Allen! Auch nach Bodil und Neergaard. Seit wie lange haben wir uns nicht gesehen!' However Mien couldn't leave the children; the youngest, Joachim,

was only 6 months old. The others Johannes (8), Edvard (5) and Frants (3) needed her as well. Röntgen went to Norway on his own: 'Meine Frau blieb bei Neergaards und den Kinderen.' He spent several days with Grieg and met Percy Grainger for the first time. It was the start of a lifelong friendship with this remarkable pianist.

Grieg died on the 4th of September, a heavy blow for the vulnerable Röntgen. His depressions grew worse. In Amsterdam he still felt ignored and isolated at the same time. Several of his colleagues had left the city to continue their career abroad - Messchaert, Eldering, Flesch - others had died. The Concertgebouw and Willem Mengelberg had neglected him for a long time, now for almost ten years. Mengelberg dominated the scene; Röntgen was not any longer invited as a composer, pianist or director. In 1906 his soirees for chamber music - a concert series he had been organizing since almost 30 years - came to an end. In October 1907 Röntgen and the then already famous cellist Pablo Casals gave three concerts in Copenhagen and they had a happy time together with Nina Grieg and the Neergaards. A few weeks later, Röntgen wrote to Nielsen that he wanted to leave Amsterdam and settle in Copenhagen permanently. The thought of living and working there with Nielsen and other friends was tempting. However, Nielsen strongly discouraged his friend; musicians and composers could hardly make a living in Denmark. Thus, moving to Copenhagen would be very unwise.

Although Röntgen dropped the idea of a Danish settlement, Fuglsang remained his second, dear homeland for years to come. And, he dared to take more risks there than elsewhere. In August 1908, Grieg's second string quartet was premiered at the musiccastle. Grieg had only roughly finished the 1st and 2nd parts and Röntgen had completed the score, although without permission of Nina Grieg. The quartet was played by the Kneiselquartet - Julius Röntgen junior was the 2nd violinist - and the work was hailed by the Fuglsang friends. Nina however was not sure whether she liked it or not; the music was more Röntgen's than Grieg's. Edition Peters disapproved of it and only published the Grieg parts of the work.

## **Paradise lost**

Since autumn 1907, Fuglsang had become a refuge for Nina Grieg as well. Before Grieg's death, staying there for a longer period of time had been impossible, but after things were different. Through the years Nina's friendship with Bodil became closer. The Griegsammlingen in Bergen keep 14 letters of Bodil to her. The tone is striking. It is always: 'Min egen Nina' or 'Min egen kjaereste Nina' or 'Min elskede Nina' and always she concludes with 'Din egen Boel' or 'Altid din tro Boel' or 'De klaerligste Hilsner fra din egen Boel'. Already the first months after Edvard's death, Nina stayed in Copenhagen and for her first Christmas alone, she came to Fuglsang. During

the summer of 1909, the Beyers, Nina and the Röntgens spent there six happy weeks together.

In August 1914, the golden years of Fuglsang suddenly came to an end. The First World War broke out and in a chain reaction more and more nations got involved. At the end of August the Röntgens were still in Denmark. They were forced to stay much longer and it took them lots of pain to get back home. During the war and the post war years the Röntgens would spend their holidays in Holland. Meanwhile, Röntgen had become director of the conservatory of Amsterdam. More and more he had to be careful with his money, as he had lost all his savings put in banks in Leipzig. In May 1919 he wrote to his friend the musicologist Angul Hammerich that he wouldn't be able to come to Denmark anymore: travelling through Germany, especially with a big family, would have been impossible. In a letter of november 1920 to Hammerich, Röntgen characterizes Fuglsang as 'unser verlorenes Paradies', our lost paradise.

In 1921 and 1923 Julius and Mien went to Denmark again, for the first time since years. Julius had retired and apparently felt free to do whatever he wanted. Viggo had already died in 1915 and Bodil was planning to turn the place into a charity centre. In 1925 the Röntgens returned to Copenhagen to celebrate the 80th birthday of Nina Grieg. In February 1929, they spent another week in Copenhagen together with Nina and Bodil. The summer of 1931 was Röntgen's last stay at Fuglsang. He was 76 but still busy composing: he sketched his Faust-symphony in Denmark. Nina Grieg wasn't able to come along any longer. She surprised her friends with a telephone call, something unique in those days. Nina and Bodil expressed their heartfelt condolences when Julius died in 1932. They wrote nice letters as well when Mien published her book with the Röntgen letters in 1934.

## Traces of Fuglsang

Röntgen's sons and even grandchildren continued making the trip to Fuglsang and they never forgot the once promised land. The four sons from Röntgen's second marriage made the Fuglsang pilgrimage together a last time around 1965. Bodil had died in 1959, 92 years old, surviving her husband for 44 years. The magic of Fuglsang was mainly due to this remarkable woman, a mother who didn't have any children herself. She had been a true hostess and a mother to everybody: to Röntgen, to his wives, his children and their children. Bodil had been a great benefactor to Edvard and Nina Grieg as well.

All branches of the Röntgen family have kept their Fuglsang albums to the present day, real treasures, handed over from one generation to the other. Those books all contain roughly the same material. Several grandchildren and even great-grandchildren of Julius are still able to speak Danish. There is the moving story of Julius eldest grandchild, the afore mentioned Agnes

Röntgen (1911-2002), godchild of Viggo de Neergaard, who sometimes started speaking Danish when she was not able to communicate in Dutch. This was only ten years ago. Recently the Amsterdam house of Annemarie Röntgen, who turned 88 this year, had to be cleaned up and I had the privilege to assist one afternoon. A whole lot of Fuglsang treasures and memorabilia emerged. Also printed editions Grieg gave as a Christmas present to 'Herr Röntgen' in 1883, with Grieg's precious handwritten dedications. I found several original, up to now unknown, compositions in manuscript of Geert von Brucken Fock, one of the Fuglsang pilgrims. And last but not least, there were the two books with fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen - Bodil's godfather - in Danish: a gift from 1902 to the then four years old Johannes Röntgen (1898). With a handwritten dedication of Bodil [of course in Danish]: 'To Johannes from uncle Viggo and aunt Bodil.'

Amsterdam-Kopenhagen, May-September 2011

Illustrations:

1

Fuglsang

Photo: S.W. Rasmussen, 2004



2

Fuglsang

Photo: S.W. Rasmussen, 2004



3  
Group at Fuglsang (1903):



Left (with the bike): Julius Röntgen. The two men sitting with sticks: Viggo de Neergaard and Johannes Meschaert (with the white hat). The woman with the white gloves: Bodil de Neergaard. Sitting right: Mien Röntgen.  
Coll. Röntgen, Tinte

4

Group celebrating Röntgen's silver jubilee in Amsterdam (october 1903):  
Raising the glass: Julius Röntgen. Next to him (left): Bodil de Neergaard.  
Standing the man with the grey beard: Viggo de Neergaard. Right from him:  
Johannes Messchaert.  
Coll. Tiadens, Weener



5

Group at Marken (10th May 1906):  
Standing: Tony Hagerup, Mien Röntgen, Bodil de Neergaard, Julius Röntgen.  
Sitting: Nina Grieg and Edvard Grieg. Viggo de Neergaard to the photograph.  
The boy right is Edvard Frants Röntgen.  
Coll. Röntgen, Tinte



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