

Lars Adolf Evald Holmqvist

Lars Adolf Evald Holmqvist, born in Helsingborg on 25 March 1868 and died there on 26 February 1954, worked in Helsingborg as a composer and music critic, but supported himself working as a bank clerk. In his youth he studied music theory, composition and orchestration under Otto Malling in Copenhagen. Holmqvist was a founding member of the Northwestern Skåne's Orchestra Association in 1911 and was a member of their Board of Directors for many years. His compositions include orchestral works, vocal music and piano works.

Life

Early years

Evald Holmqvist was born in Helsingborg and graduated from high school there in 1888. That same year he was employed as a temporary clerk in the customs office. His great interest in music moved him to study music theory, composition and orchestrations with the organist and composer Otto Malling in Copenhagen during the years 1889–1892.

Bank clerk, music critic and composer in Helsingborg

Evald Holmqvist was employed in 1891 as a bookkeeper for the bank, Sparbanken, in Helsingborg and in 1907 he became an accountant there, a job he held until his retirement. In 1936 he was given the task of writing down the bank's 100-year old history, which resulted in an extensive monograph: *Sparbanken i Helsingborg 1836–1936*.

Alongside his work at the bank, Holmqvist was continuously engaged in music. Early on he made contact with Olof Lidner, who had been the music director for Skåne's hussar regiment in Helsingborg since 1894. Together they developed the idea of building a symphony orchestra in Helsingborg. Their hard work resulted in the establishment of the Nordvästra Skånes Orkesterförening (Northwestern Skåne's Orchestra Association) – NSO, now known as the Helsingborgs symfoniorkester – in 1911. It was a professional orchestra, which with national and local financial support gave ca. seventy concerts every year in Helsingborg as well as nearby communities such as Landskrona, Höganäs and Ängelholm.

The orchestra premiered most of the larger works composed by Holmqvist. Several of these, including *Två miniatyrer* (from around 1920) and *Elegisk symfoni* (1922), were part of the orchestra's standing repertoire at least until the end of the 1940s and were performed relatively often. Holmqvist's contacts within the Danish music scene meant that his works were sometimes performed in Denmark as well.

Evald Holmqvist had a given place on the Board of Directors from the beginning of the Nordvästra Skånes Orkesterförening and was a member through the 1946–47 season. In addition he was a music critic during the first two decades of the 1900s for the *Helsingborgs Dagblad* and was engaged in authoring other writings as well. These included translation and commentaries for the publication *Propertius och Cynthia: Några konturer, uppdragna mot bakgrund af skaldens egna elegier* (1903) – poems by the Roman poet Propertius.

After Holmqvist's death in 1954 his music was performed less and less and then later forgotten. No personal archive which would presumably consist of sketches and drafts or autographs of compositions that were mentioned in sources from his time period has been located.

Works

The earliest known work by Evald Holmqvist was the ballad *Bergakungens brud* for soloists, choir and orchestra that was published by Wilhelm Hansen's music publisher in Copenhagen. Material from this work was gathered into an orchestra suite that was performed by NSO in 1916. Judging from summaries of NSO's repertoire, he composed works during the 1920s for small orchestra or string quartets; for the number of musicians NSO had at that time (which was a maximum of 25). He went on to compose *Festvertyr op. 14* for the inauguration of Helsingborg's concert hall in 1932. During the 1940s he created the suite, *Dockornas Herdaspel*, *Serenad* for string orchestra and *Den övergivna klockan*, a legend for soloists, choir and orchestra. *Festvertyr* as well as the short piano piece from 1937, 'Akwarell', are available from Svensk Musik.

The composer Knut Håkanson reviewed a performance of three songs with orchestra by Holmqvist from the Sydsvenska musikfesten (Southern Swedish Music Festival) in Helsingborg in April 1928. He found them to be 'discrete, emotional and surprisingly modern set of pieces, showing that the then sixty-year old composer was fully in step with the times.' Many of the titles that Holmqvist chose for his works imply that his musical fantasy was stimulated by the world of sagas. The piano piece, 'Akwarell' belongs to an idealistic late romantic tradition without an overly complicated harmony.

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Trans. Jill Ann Johnson

Summary list of work

Theatre music (Hans Excellens Guvernören), orchestral works (Elegisk symfoni, mostly works for smaller orchestra), vocal works with orchestra (*Bergakungens brud*, *Den övergivna klockan* and others), piano music, songs.