

Behind Musical Stages: The Role of Concert Bureaus in the Musical Life of Kristiania in the First Decades of the 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

The first two decades of the twentieth century were a very vivid period in the musical life of Kristiania. Except for symphonic concerts given by the orchestras of Musikforeningen and the Nationaltheatret audiences had an opportunity to attend many solo and chamber music performances. The organizers of these were first of all concert bureaus existing in the city. Each of them served a group of its own artists – both Norwegian and foreign. The aim of this text is to show what musical life in Kristiania looked like behind the concert stages. The press reviews also revealed a connection between the impresarios' and the music publishers' business. Besides, a comparison between the Norwegian and European impresarios revealed that the period under scrutiny was the moment of transition in the profile of this profession in Norway.

KEYWORDS

concert bureau and offices, impresario, Norway, musical life, early 20th century

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At the beginning of the twentieth century the capital city of Norway, Kristiania,¹ had quite a vivid musical life. The city had at that time two orchestras – of the Musikforeningen (Music Society) and National Theater (Nationaltheatret). It also possessed several concert stages and venues (Gamle Logen, the University Aula, Brødrene Hals' concert hall and a big hall in the Calmeyergate Missionshus) which contributed to the development of musical activities in the city. Besides, in the second decade of the twentieth century, due to Norwegian neutrality during the First World War, the location obviously became an attractive target for many European artists, also of the highest caliber, searching for an opportunity to continue their career and earn money for a living. Browsing through the daily newspapers of the first twenty years of this century, the period with which this study is concerned, one can find numerous advertisements informing the reader about upcoming concerts by both Norwegian and foreign soloists, chamber musicians and orchestras. Audiences had the opportunity to attend musical events several times a week, sometimes even twice a day, nearly all year round. The organizers of these numerous musical events were almost always concert bureaus – private institutions which have been operating in the city since the nineteenth century. In the period considered in this research five concert offices existed in Kristiania. They were: Warmuth's Koncertbureau, Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau, Oluf By's Koncertbureau, Rudolf Rasmussen Koncertbureau and Peter Vogt Fischer Koncertbureau.² Despite the concert bureaus' contribution to Kristiania's musical life, a study on this subject has not yet been carried out. Although some works refer to single impresarios, all of them concentrate first of all on other spheres of the main figures' activities – their editorial work and instrument-making.³ The main reason for the dearth of studies on their concert management activities is probably due to the fact that this new perspective of studying the musical life of the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries has been raised only recently. In the latest printed edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001) definitions of terms such as “music agent” and “concert office/bureau” do not appear. The term “impresario” is explained, however, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*.⁴ It refers there, due to the subject of the publication, mainly to an opera manager, originally an Italian profession upon which more research has been undertaken. The term is also associated with an “agent nurturing and exploiting artists, singers and dancers in particular” in the latter part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The picture of a music agent has been drawn in a much wider and lighter manner by American historian William Weber, the main scholar in the studies on this subject. In a paper from 2002, Weber gave an interesting and detailed explanation of the need for agents from which a new profession was born, taking into consideration both social and organizational circumstances in Western Europe, mainly in Berlin and Vienna. Several cases of

¹The name of the town changed officially in 1897 from “Christiania.”

²I am using the original spelling of the concert offices as they appeared in the first decades of the twentieth century.

³Øyvind NORHEIM and Harald HERRESTHAL (eds.), *Carl Warmuth. Kongelig Hof-Musikhandler. Christiania 1843–1993. Festskrift til 150-årsjubileet* (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag, 1993); Arvid O. VOLLSNES (ed.), *Norges Musikkhistorie, Vol. III*. (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1999), 299–301; Kari MICHELSEN, *Butikk og musikk. Carl Warmuth og hans hus* (Oslo: Universitet i Oslo, 2010); Kari MICHELSEN, “Musikkhandel i Norge fra begynnelsen til 1909,” Diss., Universitetet i Oslo. See: <https://www.hf.uio.no/imv/forskning/prosjekter/norgesmusikk/musikkhistarkiv/notetrykk/KariM_bok/KariM_hele.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2018).

⁴John ROSSELLI, “Impresario,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. by Stanley SADIE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), vol. 2, 789.



music agents from various periods of the nineteenth century were discussed there. Literature referring to music publishing, biographies and written sources such as letters and diaries constitutes the fundamental part of this study. Further research shows a clear continuation in the tendency to zoom in on the picture of a concert agent. Dana Gooley analyzed Franz Liszt's abilities and motivations as an entrepreneur.⁵ Laure Schnapper worked on the co-operation of Bernard Ullman with a virtuoso and piano factory owner, Henri Herz. She described the former's way of becoming experienced in the new profession and his new way of perceiving the job as a business.⁶ Meanwhile Simon McVeigh focused on concert promoters and entrepreneurs in later nineteenth-century London.⁷

The reconstruction of a detailed picture of the profession of music agents is still far from being completed. Many questions on their common and individual working procedures, ways of co-operation with agents from other countries while organizing international trips, incomes, shares with musicians or their mutual relationships are still waiting to be answered. The lack of valuable sources such as bills, calendars, address books or notes belonging to the agents is the main obstacle to building up a comprehensive picture. There are, however, rare cases, as the Norwegian example shows.

The basis for this study comes mainly from daily newspapers, concert programs and letters written by Norwegian artists. The aim of this article is to draw a picture of the activities of the Norwegian concert agents operating in Kristiania in the first decades of the twentieth century based on the sources available. I will introduce the main actors working behind the musical scene, indicate which artists they worked with, what concerts they organized and show how they contributed to a better acquaintance of music by their audiences.

1. CONCERT BUREAUS IN KRISTIANIA

Concert bureaus are quite new institutions in the music world. The first ones came into being in the mid-nineteenth century. As William Weber states, in the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth centuries, musicians used to organize trips themselves using their own connections or the connections of their patrons. Mutual services constituted the basis for such journeys.⁸ To handle the contacts properly was considered a delicate matter, so the artists preferred to do it themselves.⁹ By the mid-nineteenth century musical life had become complex and institutionalized, and therefore to organize such a tour became a difficult task. Consequently, the need for help arose. Due to a lack of professional agents, the artists co-operated either successfully, as the case of Liszt shows, or not, as in the case of Paganini, with people willing to perform such jobs.¹⁰

⁵Dana GOOLEY, "Franz Liszt. The Virtuoso as Strategist," in *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700–1914. Managers, Charlatans, and Idealists*, ed. by William WEBER (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 135–161.

⁶Laure SCHNAPPER, "Bernard Ullmann–Henri Herz. An Example of Financial and Artistic Partnership 1846–1849," in WEBER (ed.), *The Musician as Entrepreneur*, 130–144.

⁷Simon MCVEIGH, "An Audience for High-Class Music. Concert Promoters and Entrepreneurs in Late-Nineteenth-Century London," in WEBER (ed.), *The Musician as Entrepreneur*, 162–182.

⁸GOOLEY, "Franz Liszt. The Virtuoso as Strategist," 146.

⁹William WEBER, "From Self-Managing Musician to Independent Concert Agent," in id. (ed.), *The Musician as Entrepreneur*, 106–107.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 112–113.



As early as at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Maurice Schlesinger, a publisher, used to bill the concerts of his artists. In the 1830s he organized performances of the artists whose music he published, foreshadowing the new profession. Concert agents appeared in many European cities by 1850, at first usually combining this activity with their primary jobs as music publishers or music shop owners. It was not until the 1880s when the first independent music agent, Herman Wolff, started his concert office in Berlin.¹¹

The first concert bureaus appeared in Norway just a few years later than in Central Europe. The first one, Warmuth's Koncertbureau, was founded in 1862 by the German Carl Warmuth. He arrived in Norway in 1840 as a horn player with a group of wandering musicians called „der Harzmusikverein.”¹² The band gained much popularity playing music addressed not only to the higher social classes but also to a wider audience.¹³ Carl Warmuth settled down in Kristiania, and after he had quitted the job in the band he earned his living selling instrument strings from his house. In 1843 he opened a music shop with a colleague from the ensemble. In 1851 he started a publishing house. The shop later moved to one of the streets in the very center of the capital city – Kirkegaten 17.¹⁴ There they opened a sheet music library which offered as many as 65,000 titles until 1895, the year Carl Warmuth Jr. died.¹⁵ Moreover, the company had an initiative to publish the first Norwegian musical magazine and the third one in Scandinavia – *Nordisk Musiktidende* in 1880.¹⁶ Eventually, they opened the first Norwegian concert bureau, which began with selling tickets for concerts and later organized them from scratch. This was when the musical scene in Kristiania started to appear like that in other European towns which had music agencies and major music shops (e.g. Ferdinand Ries in Dresden, Albert J. Gutmann in Vienna).¹⁷ After the death of Carl Warmuth Jr. his wife led the firm, and the main director was Oluf By, another impresario-to-be. In 1900 the company was bought by the Swedish Bank and in 1908 by the Hals Brothers company – which will be introduced next – together with a Danish leading music publisher, Wilhelm Hansen. In January 1909 Warmuth's and Hals' publishing houses merged and constituted the Norsk Musikforlag – a music editing company which exists up to this day and is the main operator in the music publishing scene in Norway.¹⁸

The Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau was the second concert agency established in Kristiania. Two brothers – Karl and Peter – were educated as piano constructors in Denmark and Germany. They opened a piano factory, which was the first one in Norway. Later they also produced grand pianos.¹⁹ In 1880, nine years after Peter's death in 1871, the firm established Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau and opened its concert hall as Pleyel had done in Paris over fifty years

¹¹Ibid., 117, 120.

¹²Børre QVAMME, *Musikkliv i Christiania fra Arilds tid til Arild Sandvold* (Oslo: Solum, 2000), 37–38.

¹³MICHELSEN, *Butikk og musikk*, 21.

¹⁴Ibid., 39.

¹⁵Ibid., 43.

¹⁶H.W., “Carl Warmuth,” *Ny illustreret Tidende* (June 3, 1887), 210.

¹⁷WEBER, “From Self-Managing Musician to Independent Concert Agent,” 123.

¹⁸Kari MICHELSEN, 2017. “Carl Warmuth,” in *Store norske leksikon* (2017) <https://nbl.snl.no/Carl_Warmuth> (accessed March 25, 2019).

¹⁹Edvard BULL and Einar JANSEN, “Karl Marius Anton Johan Hals,” in *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon, vol. V.* (Grosch-Helkand), edited by Edvard BULL et al. (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1931), 278–280.



earlier. The concert hall was situated at one of the main streets in Kristiania – Stortingsgaten 24–26, parallel to the principal street Carl Johan gate.²⁰ In 1887 the firm also owned a publishing house and a music shop.

In contrast to the previous concert bureaux, the concert office of Rudolf Rasmussen concentrated only on event management. Rasmussen, a lawyer with an interest in theater, worked in Kristiania as an artistic director in Eldorado Theater, as an actor, secretary and manager in Centralteatret.²¹ He founded his own concert bureau in 1900, and after that he worked as an impresario. Rasmussen used to organize not only concerts in Kristiania, but theater, poetry and dance events as well.²²

Oluf By had been connected with the Warmuths' company since 1880. He opened his own instrument wholesale business by Nedre Slotsgt. 15. Thereafter, in 1901, he founded his concert office and a publishing house. In 1902 By moved to the main quarter in the principal street in Kristiania, Carl Johans gate 45, where he opened a music shop, stocking sheet music and instruments. He used to sell scores he published himself, as well as sheet music released by foreign publishers such as Universal Edition or Peters. In 1925 Oluf By's firm was bought by the Norsk Musikforlag.²³

Finally, the last concert bureau in Kristiania at that time was founded by Peter Vogt Fischer, who was educated as a musician "in larger European cities".²⁴ However, after coming back to Norway from his studies he realized there was a need to cover another area – running the music scene.²⁵ He joined the Hals Brothers concert agency.²⁶ Later, in the autumn of 1894, encouraged by Gina Oselio, a Norwegian singer and wife of an actor, Bjørn Bjørnson, who was the son of a poet, the Nobel prize winner Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, organized his first tour of Norway for her and her husband.²⁷ Afterwards, in 1898 he ran performances in several Norwegian towns by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and his daughter Bergliot Ibsen, a singer and daughter-in-law of the writer Henrik Ibsen. As one can see from concert advertisements which were published in the Norwegian press, Vogt Fischer's intensive activity in the impresario's area started after 1905 and reached its peak in the second decade of the twentieth century. He gained immense popularity among Norwegian artists and journalists. Information about his birthday receptions were published in the press.²⁸ In these texts he was called "the most recognized figure of musical life in Oslo"²⁹ or "the first impresario of Norway" who worked "in the manner of a foreign impresario".³⁰

²⁰Finn BENESTAD (ed.), *Edvard Grieg: Letters to Colleagues and Friends* (Columbus, Ohio: Peer Gynt Press, 2000), 330.

²¹Paul GJESDAHL, *Centralteatrets historie* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1964), 7.

²²Ulrik MØRK, "Nationen" 19/294 (December 18, 1936), 3.

²³MICHELTSEN, "Musikkhandel i Norge fra begynnelsen til 1909," 184–185.

²⁴*Aftenposten* 74/330 (July 6, 1933), 4.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶"Femogtyve aar som impresario. Nogen ord med jubilanten," *Aftenposten* 60/469 (September 25, 1919), 3.

²⁷"Direktør P. Vogt Fischer," *Aftenposten* 78/34 (January 20, 1937), 8.

²⁸U.M., "P. Vogt Fischer 75 år," *Nasjonen* 21/153 (July 6, 1938), 3., J.A., *Morgenbladet* 115/227 (July 6, 1933), 3., *Aftenposten* 64/385 (July 5, 1923), 1.

²⁹J.A., *Morgenbladet* 115/227 (July 6, 1933), 3.

³⁰*Aftenposten* 74/330 (July 6, 1933), 4.



From preserved materials it is possible to state that the concert offices functioned in Kristiania with varied intensity and length. Since the Warmuth's firm was bought by other publishing houses, its concert office had the shortest existence in the examined period. Still, it organized important events such as the concert of the then world-famous pianist, Teresa Carreño.³¹ The activity of Oluf By in this field was quite limited – he advertised some concerts in the period between 1902 and 1910. Other concert offices maintained the cultural life of Kristiania. The leading music impresario from 1900 was the Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau – basically, it organized most of the concerts which were advertised up until 1905. Rudolf Rasmussen was also very active as soon as he founded his company. Peter Vogt Fischer's activity did not surpass that of the Hals Brothers until 1911. Afterwards, however, it was he who organized the largest number of events and cooperated with the greatest number of artists. Already in 1919 he estimated the number of organized concerts to be between four and five thousand.³²

It looks like the simultaneous activity of the impresarios did not lead to major conflicts between them, even though it was not entirely free of competition.³³ Every concert bureau had a selection of artists who in general, apart from a few exceptions, did not co-operate with a competing agency. Similarly, accompanists and so-called co-operating artists (*medvirkende*) – who performed separately during a concert from the main soloist – were selected from those musicians connected to the impresario who was responsible for the concert. There were a few cases when artists changed their impresario – for example the case of Madame Charles Cahier, who first came to Norway when invited by Peter Vogt Fischer (in the years 1907–1908), then later by the Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau (1909), or the case of Ignaz Friedman, who was usually invited to Norway by Vogt Fischer but in 1916 by Rasmussen, or again the case of Paul Stassevitsch, who initially came to Norway invited by Rudolf Rasmussen, then later – by Vogt Fischer (1918, 1919). The last example might be explained by the fact that Stassevitsch married the Norwegian pianist Johanne Margrethe Sømme – an artist working with Vogt Fischer (Plate 1).

The evidence of good relations between the concert offices, although not always without friction as is seen below, is also clear in that both Rasmussen and Vogt Fischer frequently rented the Brødrene Hals' concert hall as well as using the instruments produced by that company for their concerts. This fact shows the difference in cooperation between Norwegian and other European impresarios. The latter usually used to dispose one or several concert halls in a city over which they, in a sense, had a monopoly.³⁴ As is known from a published interview with Vogt Fischer, in such cases the Hals Brothers did not make exorbitant financial demands – one

³¹*Morgenbladet* 90/630 (November 10, 1908), 3. Carreño was an active promoter of Edvard Grieg's music. See: Anna E. KIJAS, "A suitable soloist for my piano concerto: Teresa Carreño as a promoter of Edvard Grieg's music," *Notes* 70/1 (2013), 37–58.

³²"Femogtyve aar som impresario. Nogen ord med jubilanten," *Aftenposten* 60/469 (September 25, 1919), 3.

³³Though in a conversation between a representative of the Hals Brothers and *Aftenposten* newspaper about concerts planned in Kristiania for the new season, he detailed one concert organized by Peter Vogt Fischer and many concerts organized by the Hals Brothers. He underlined that the Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau was the main organizer of concerts by Norwegian artists. See: "Konsertsæsonen begynder. Brødrene Hals fortæller," *Aftenposten* 59/391 (August 7, 1918), 2.

³⁴WEBER, "From Self-Managing Musician to Independent Concert Agent," 117.



Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

Imorgen (Tirsdag) Kl. 8

Universitetets Aula.

Backer Grøndahl

2den og sidste Koncert

under Medvirken af Sangorinderne

Magnhild Rasmussen

Program:

1. Odd Grøner-Hegge: Suite i F-Moll. (Manuskript. 1ste Gang)
2. Brahms: Feldeinsamkeit. Wie Melodien zieht es mir. Nachtigall. Meine Liebe ist grün.
3. Liszt: Sonata i H-moll.
4. Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl: Stemning. Venud. Menuet. Koncertstudie. (Manuskript)
5. Rich. Strauss: Breit über mein Haupt. Zueignung. Freundliche Vision. Heimliche Aufforderung
6. Chopin: Barcarole Op. 60. Schumann: Toccat. Op. 7.

Flygel: Bechstein fra Grøndahl.

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Obs.: Billetter lægges ikke tilside

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Musikforeningen.

Hestbyttende H. M. Dronningen

5te Koncert

Lørdag 23. Februar Kl. 8

i Universitetets Aula.

Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

Tirsdag 26. Februar Kl. 8

Brødrene Hals's Koncertsal.

Den russiske Violinist **Paul Stassewitsch**

Sidste Koncert.

Flygel: Brødrene Hals.

Billetsalget aabnes Torsdag

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Billetpr. Kr. 4, 3, 2.50, 2 og 1.50.

Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

Tirsdag 26. Februar Kl. 8

Brødrene Hals's Koncertsal.

Den russiske Violinist **Paul Stassewitsch**

Sidste Koncert.

Flygel: Brødrene Hals.

Billetsalget aabnes Torsdag

Kl. 9 i Norsk Musikforl. Tf. 12-2

Billetpr. Kr. 4, 3, 2.50, 2 og 1.50.

Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

Onsdag 27. Februar Kl. 8.

Universitetets Aula

Gally Monrad

Koncert under Medvirken af den polske Kapelmester **Ignaz Neumark.**

Flygel: Blüthner fra Belmont

Billetsalget aabnes Torsdag

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Lørdag 2. Mars Kl. 8

Universitetets Aula

Inge Rolf Ringnes

Koncert med Orkester.

Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

6te Koncert (Torsdag) udsolgt!

Fredag Aften Kl. 8

i Universitetets Aula

7de og sidste Ignaz Friedman

Koncert.

Populære Priser: Kr. 2.50, 2.00 og 1.00.

Koncertflygel: Blüthner fra Belmont

Billetsalget aabnes Onsdag

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Arrangement: P. Vogt Fischer.

Musikforeningen.

Hestbyttende H. M. Dronningen

5te Koncert

Lørdag 23. Februar Kl. 8

i Universitetets Aula.

Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

Tirsdag 26. Februar Kl. 8

Brødrene Hals's Koncertsal.

Den russiske Violinist **Paul Stassewitsch**

Sidste Koncert.

Flygel: Brødrene Hals.

Billetsalget aabnes Torsdag

Kl. 9 i Norsk Musikforl. Tf. 12-2

Billetpr. Kr. 4, 3, 2.50, 2 og 1.50.

Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

Onsdag 27. Februar Kl. 8.

Universitetets Aula

Gally Monrad

Koncert under Medvirken af den polske Kapelmester **Ignaz Neumark.**

Flygel: Blüthner fra Belmont

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Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer.

Lørdag 2. Mars Kl. 8

Universitetets Aula

Inge Rolf Ringnes

Koncert med Orkester.

Koncert-Direktion P. Vogt Fischer

6te Koncert (Torsdag) udsolgt!

Fredag Aften Kl. 8

i Universitetets Aula

7de og sidste Ignaz Friedman

Koncert.

Populære Priser: Kr. 2.50, 2.00 og 1.00.

Koncertflygel: Blüthner fra Belmont

Billetsalget aabnes Onsdag

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Arrangement: P. Vogt Fischer.

Musikforeningen.

Hestbyttende H. M. Dronningen

5te Koncert

Lørdag 23. Februar Kl. 8

i Universitetets Aula.

Brødrene Hals's Koncertbureau

Til Indtægt for det østerrigske og det ungarske

røde Kors giver

Steffi Ceyer

Daymar Walle-Hansen

Thora Bratt

Gunda Hoff

Alexander Várnay

Koncert

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Bill. a Kr. 5.00, 3.00, 2.50 og 1.50 faaes 9-5 i Norsk Musikforlag. Bill. lægges ikke tilside. Tilf. modtas ikke.

Imorgen Aften Kl. 8

Brødrene Hals's Koncertsal

gjentar **Fotograf**



paa utallige Opfordringer sit

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Dans — Plastik.

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Plate 1. Concerts advertisements in a newspaper. *Aftenposten* 59/76 (February 11, 1918), 6



hundred Norwegian crowns for a concert with two rehearsals and including the cost of electricity.³⁵ The fact that the Brødrene Hals' owned a concert venue could be at least one of the reasons behind the difference between Kristiania and other European cities. The company benefited from renting the concert hall, so it was not in its interest to keep it only for its own events. Apart from this, the offer of several concerts by one impresario made it certainly more financially secure for guest musicians. That might have been a tempting consideration for any performer undertaking a journey to Kristiania.

Moreover, the impresarios co-operated in organizing concerts of "their" artists in other Norwegian towns, for example the Hoffmanns Koncertbureau from Trondhjem³⁶ arranged a concert of Peter Vogt Fischer's artist Ervin Nyíregyházi³⁷ while Brødrene Hals organized a concert of Peter Vogt Fischer's artists (Nils Hansen, Dagny Knutsen) in Bergen.³⁸ In such instances the names of two impresarios appeared on the advertisements, namely the manager of the artist's tour in Norway and the impresario working in the host city. However, no sources reveal how two impresarios shared their duties in such instances. Probably, in the last of the above-mentioned cases, the Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau was responsible for at least booking a concert hall and advertising the event, as from 1918 it also had its concert office in Bergen, having taken over the Wilhelm Harloff's Koncertbureau.³⁹ An impresario's activity in a second city was not likely to be a common phenomenon in other European countries at that time; usually an agent working in a city dealt with concerts by visiting artists.⁴⁰ In this respect the example of the Hals Brothers company is worth emphasizing, especially as already in 1897 it opened its own branch in Stavanger.⁴¹

The structure of musical life in Kristiania was not unusual on the map of Norway. The same distribution of tasks can be observed in other bigger Norwegian towns such as Bergen, Trondhjem⁴² and Stavanger. Concert agents contributed mainly to staging solo and chamber music concerts while those institutions who had their orchestras held symphonic concerts. In Bergen at that time the main operators of chamber musical life were the C. Rabes Koncertbureau, the W. Harloffs Koncertbureau and the Brødrene Hals Koncertbureau (the Notecentralens Koncertbureau began its activity in the 1920s). The Bruns Koncertbureau and the Hoffmanns Koncertbureau functioned in Trondhjem. Stavanger in this period had only one concert bureau, the above-mentioned Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau. It advertised musical events in the press and organized concerts. The Brødrene Hals in this town was represented by local persons.⁴³

³⁵"Teatret. Skal koncerterne stænges ute?" *Stavanger Aftenblad* 23/238 (September 27, 1915), 10.

³⁶In other Norwegian towns musical life was also run by local concert bureaus that will be mentioned in the next paragraph.

³⁷*Trondhjems Adresseavis* 153/61 (March 3, 1919), 7.

³⁸*Bergens Tidende* 51/69 (March 11, 1918), 3.

³⁹*Bergens Tidende* 51/12 (January 13, 1918), 7.

⁴⁰WEBER, "From Self-Managing Musician to Independent Concert Agent," 124.

⁴¹*Stavanger Aftenblad* 5/83 (April 8, 1897), 2.

⁴²In Trondheim this activity began in 1931.

⁴³Initially by a man called Stangeland and from 1917 by Gunnar Fossum "Brødrene Hals." *Stavanger Aftenblad* 25/12 (January 13, 1917), 4.



2. CONCERTS

The reviews of the main newspapers in Kristiania at the specified time (*Aftenposten*, *Dagbladet*, *Morgenbladet*) led me to the conclusion that the impresarios organized the following types of concerts:

- concerts of instrumentalists (solo, chamber and orchestral concerts)
- stage debuts
- compositional concerts
- charity events

The impresarios primarily organized concerts for Norwegian artists. There are most likely three main reasons for this: easier access, lower costs and, I imagine, the wish to promote Norwegian art which had been suppressed for a century by a foreign culture due to political reasons. Still, in the first two categories there were performances of both Norwegian and foreign musicians. Of foreign artists coming to Norway there were both mature musicians as well as young talents, not infrequently child prodigies.

Based on source materials the following artistic connections between Norwegian artists/music institutions and impresarios were constituted in the examined period:

Rudolf Rasmussen organized concerts by, among others, a cello player and one of the most prolific Norwegian composers, Gerhard Schjelderup,⁴⁴ and Sverre Jordan – a pianist and student of Teresa Carreño, later connected with the theater Den Nationale Scene in Bergen, where he was a conductor.⁴⁵

The Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau co-operated with Edvard Grieg – certainly because they were active on the market already in the nineteenth century, when he started his musical career. Grieg knew Vogt Fischer very well, and at the end of his life he appreciated him very much.⁴⁶ Besides, the Brødrene Hals' organized concerts by such artists as: Johan Backer-Lunde – a composer and pianist, a student of his aunt Agathe Backer Grøndahl and Ferruccio Busoni, and Dagmar Walle-Hansen – a pianist educated in Vienna by Theodor Leschetizky, who eventually became his teacher's assistant.⁴⁷

Peter Vogt Fischer organized concerts by Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl, a pupil of Ernst von Dohnányi, and the following pianists: Dagny Knutsen, a student of Backer Grøndahl and Alfred Cortot, who worked as a teacher at the Musikkonservatoriet – a music school, the first one of that size in Kristiania,⁴⁸ the aforementioned Johanne Margrethe Sømme – also a student of Dohnányi, Karl Nissen, a pianist and student of Ferruccio Busoni, a conductor in Musikforeningen and a

⁴⁴Schjelderup is best known for music dramas in the style of Richard Wagner.

⁴⁵Rune J. ANDERSEN, "Sverre Jordan," in *Store norske leksikon* (2013) <https://snl.no/Sverre_Jordan> (accessed March 6, 2019).

⁴⁶BENESTAD (ed.), *Edvard Grieg. Letters to Colleagues and Friends*, 299.

⁴⁷Egil BAUMANN, "Dagmar Walle-Hansen," in *Store norske leksikon* (2009) <https://snl.no/Dagmar_Walle-Hansen> (accessed March 6, 2019).

⁴⁸BAUMANN, "Dagny Knutsen," in *Store norske leksikon* (2015) <https://snl.no/Dagny_Knutsen> (accessed April 9, 2019).



teacher at the music conservatory in the capital city, and Nils Larsen, a pianist educated in Berlin, the owner of a piano school in Kristiania.

Of foreign performers, not infrequently the leading exponents of their day, the concert bureaus in Kristiania invited the following persons several times: the Brødrene Hals – the Hungarian violin player Stefi Geyer;⁴⁹ the Australian pianist Percy Grainger – Edvard Grieg's music lover and interpreter; the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe – a pupil of Henryk Wieniawski; the Polish violin player Bronislaw Huberman – a pupil of Joseph Joachim; the Russian violin player Alexander Petchnikoff; and Ellen Gulbrandson – a Swedish singer living in Norway, one of the best interpreters of Grieg's songs.

Peter Vogt Fischer invited to Kristiania the famous Hungarian pianist Ernst von Dohnányi, the Hungarian violin player Emil Telmányi as well as Sergej Rachmaninoff. Rudolf Rasmussen organized concerts for the violin player and teacher Leopold Auer, who lived in Norway as a refugee from Russia for several years, and a very young Chilean pianist named Claudio Arrau (October 1919), later a master interpreter of Beethoven's and Schumann's works. In February 1917 Rasmussen contributed to the first performance in Norway by Richard Strauss. During this concert Strauss's songs were presented by the singer Frantz Steiner from Vienna. The piano part was played by the composer.⁵⁰ Eventually Rasmussen prepared concerts by the singer Lola Artôt de Padilla, a daughter of the famous Désirée Artôt – to mention just a few names. It is not certain what the channels of recruiting musicians for concerts in Kristiania were. They undeniably exploited their private connections. From some press articles it appears that the agents used to travel to hear different musicians in other countries, as for instance Rudolf Rasmussen did,⁵¹ to engage them later for concerts in Norway.

As stated, the impresarios in Kristiania contributed to the stage debuts of numerous Norwegian musicians. The sources reveal that Peter Vogt Fischer and Brødrene Hals especially were eager to help young artists. More than once Vogt Fischer proved himself an expert in finding musical talents. He introduced to the stage among others the Kristiania- and Berlin-educated pianist Inge Rolf Ringnes, a violin player and composer Bjarne Brustad, the pianist Magnhild Styhr – a student of Ernst von Dohnányi, later Alfredo Casella and Georg Gershwin – and the aforementioned Dagny Knutsen (1914). Later he organized numerous concerts for Knutsen.⁵² He took care of a young pianist, Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl, organizing his performances regularly from 1907. In addition, he led numerous concerts of young musicians whose names did not survive their time. He also willingly invited to Norway very young talents from other countries, among others child wonders such as the Russian violin player Toscha Seidel or the Canadian violinist Kathleen Parlow.

Chamber musicians came to Kristiania less frequently. The Hals Brothers arranged concerts by the highly appreciated Brussler String Quartet, founded by Franz Schörg, a pupil of Eugène Ysaÿe. Vogt Fischer was responsible for organizing performances by the Johan Halvorsen Quartet – a group founded in Kristiania on the initiative of Musikforeningen. On several occasions he invited to the city the Klingler Quartet and The London String Quartet. Thanks to

⁴⁹For a period she had a big romance with Béla Bartók, who dedicated his Violin Concerto No. 1 to her.

⁵⁰“Richard Strauss for første gang til Norge,” *Tidens Tegn* 8/45 (February 15, 1917), 2.

⁵¹“Musiknyheter for næste sæsongen,” *Dagbladet* 46/168 (May 31, 1914), 1.

⁵²e.g. *Aftenposten* 56/18 (January 11, 1915), 6.



him Norwegian audiences could hear the Marteau – Becker – Dohnányi Trio. Eventually, Rudolf Rasmussen co-operated with ensembles such as the Petersburg Quartet and the Austrian Fitzner Quartett (1910–1918).

Moreover, the concert bureaux in Kristiania used to invite big orchestras or choirs to the city. The Brødrene Hals facilitated three journeys to the city by the Leipzig Philharmonic Orchestra (1901–1903). They advertised the concerts of the Musikforeningen with participation by Edvard Grieg, Iver Holter and Karl Nissen in 1907 – maybe owing to their cooperation with these artists? Thanks to this impresario audiences in Kristiania could hear concerts by the orchestra of the Musikelskabet Harmonien in Bergen (1918), the Berlin Cathedral Choir (1919) and the Swedish National Choir (Svenska Nationalkören, 1916).

It is known that Rudolf Rasmussen had been preparing a concert for the Berlin Philharmonic under the direction of Arthur Nikisch in Kristiania in 1916. The event had been already announced in the newspapers. However, owing to public protests against inviting a German orchestra to Norway during the First World War, the politicians decided to forbid the concert, and Nikisch himself wrote to Rasmussen saying that both he and his orchestra would not come.⁵³

Peter Vogt Fischer organized concerts featuring the Gothenburg Philharmonic Orchestra (1910, 1912) and the orchestra of the Music Society in Stockholm with Georg Schneévoigt, who became the main conductor of the newly established Philharmonic Orchestra in Kristiania in 1919. Moreover, Vogt Fischer was the impresario of Musikforeningen in Kristiania between 1914 until 1919. This led to public objections by artists not connected with the Vogt Fischer concert bureau. They published a critical text in *Morgenbladet* in which they wrote: “The program for the new season of Musikforeningen has just been published. One point is worth noting: all the artists – but one – are connected to the Peter Vogt Fischer concert bureau. . . . Maybe it should be said plainly that anyone who does not co-operate with Vogt Fischer will not be engaged by the Music Society? It was the same last year when Vogt Fischer started his activity as the director of the Music Society.”⁵⁴ Musikforeningen’s answer was published in the same newspaper. It was confirmed that out of ten soloists who had been engaged for the coming season, only three were connected to Vogt Fischer. The decisions on their engagements were taken by the Society’s board, and the artists’ names were proposed by the city board, independently of the impresario – the orchestra of the Musikforeningen was then the city orchestra, so the city board had some rights regarding decisions taken by the Society.⁵⁵

The impresarios contributed as well, as already mentioned, by disseminating the music of the young Norwegian composers and organizing concerts with their compositions. Vogt Fischer presented a concert with works by then well-known composers such as Odd Grønner-Hegge (1919) and Alf Hurum (1916), while the Brødrene Hals staged compositional concerts by Halfdan Cleve (1915) and Trygve Torjussen (1914).

Eventually, concert offices organized performances of music groups which were created by various social organizations (Arbeidersamfundets Sangforening – the Workers’ Song Society,

⁵³Rudolf RASMUSSEN, *Rulle: Tutti Frutti. Minner og meninger om livet på scene og podium* (Oslo: Heroldens Forlag, 1941), 29–39.

⁵⁴“Musikforeningen og dens Solister,” *Morgenbladet* 96/456 (September 7, 1914), 3.

⁵⁵Ibid.



1919, Det Norske Studentersangforening – The Norwegian Students’ Song Society, 1913, 1915 or Handelsstandens Sangforening – the Merchants’ Song Society, 1917). The Brødrene Hals’ Koncertbureau was especially active in that field. It is not certain whether the impresarios used to get paid for such jobs – there are no sources that verify this aspect. If they did, the fact that they were requested to deal with the concerts of such non-professional music organizations is a sign that they were quite well-known outside the musical environment and their experience must have been appreciated. Moreover, the impresarios must have had a good relationship with various cultural bodies in the city and were considered an authority in musical matters. All of this corresponds with the conclusion of the research on the activity and important position of impresarios in other European cities.⁵⁶

3. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONCERT BUREAUS’ WORK

The existing source material found for this research on the music agents in Kristiania in the first two decades of the twentieth century has not made it possible to reveal and reconstruct details of the impresarios’ working procedures. There are still important questions which remain unanswered, such as what was the range of duties that agents used to take on while organizing a concert by an artist, whether artists needed to do anything themselves. It is not clear whether all the Norwegian agents worked in the same way or whether they had other ways of handling their artists and organizing concerts or concert tours. Neither do we know how much agents demanded for their services, what costs they had, how high other costs were that a performer needed to cover, and last but not least whether such concerts in Norway were a profitable business for musicians or whether the income they secured by their performances allowed them to cover only some of the costs necessitated by tours, still they were good commercially for the players. Nevertheless, the study of the existing material has made it possible to draw other conclusions on the developmental stage of the music management business in Norway in the given period and on impresarios’ influence on audiences.

The work of the concert bureaus in Kristiania had certainly several very important consequences for the professional musical life, for Norwegian artists and for audiences in the city. First of all, it enriched musical life which, without the impresarios would be, if one considers only solo and chamber music, quite modest. Secondly, impresarios helped to build the careers of young Norwegian performers, and they organized concerts of Norwegian artists in Kristiania, in other Norwegian towns and sometimes also abroad (e.g. the case of Vogt Fischer and Backer Grøndahl or Mlle. Lola Artôt de Padilla).⁵⁷ Thanks to them audiences and Norwegian musicians could experience foreign performers playing in the city, and quite often world-famous artists who could promote their careers there. Finally, audiences had opportunities to become familiar with a wide musical repertoire both of solo and chamber music.

The role of the concert bureaus in Kristiania seems, however, even more crucial thanks to a special combination of activities of some of the concert bureaus – impresarios, music shops and the music publishing business. Companies such as Warmuth’s Konsertbureau, Hals Brothers’

⁵⁶WEBER, “From Self-Managing Musician to Independent Concert Agent,” 119.

⁵⁷For Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl see: *Morgenbladet* 96/484 (September 22, 1914), 2; for Mlle. Lola Artôt de Padilla – *Aftenposten* 58/268 (May 31, 1917), 4.



and Oluf By's (until 1925) contributed also to the spreading of music performed by artists who had been invited by them by printing scores. They published works performed by artists whose concerts in Kristiania were organized by other impresarios. That was for example the case of Oluf By, who released works by David Monrad Johansen (who usually worked with the Brødrene Hals' Koncertbureau) and by Bjarne Brustad (whose debut occurred at a Vogt Fischer concert in 1914).⁵⁸ It seems quite certain that those publishers who did not organize concerts, such as Norsk Musikforlag,⁵⁹ a very big operator on the Norwegian publishing market which used to sell concert tickets in its shop, followed carefully what was happening on the musical scene in the city, too. It offered sheet music of the artists who had recently performed there as well as of those who were going to visit the city, and finally of those who were already well-known in Kristiania such as Gdal Salesski,⁶⁰ Ignaz Friedman,⁶¹ Mischa Mitnitzky or Michael von Zadora. In 1915, the daily newspaper *Dagbladet* informed its readership that the Norsk Musikforlag has just published a piece of Mitnitzky.⁶² The violinist visited the country frequently within the period from 1913 to 1916. The pianist Michael von Zadora gave concerts in Norway at the beginning of 1915 and later that year went on a Norwegian concert tour organized by Rudolf Rasmussen. That year the Norsk Musikforlag published a piece "which was successfully received during his last concerts." The main target of combining the publications with the concerts of artists was certainly to secure additional income from selling both tickets and scores. At the same time such activities probably contributed as well to popularizing music among members of the society who were willing to become familiar with the works of a musician they had listened to at a successful concert.

The combination of several fields of activity – publishing music, music library, instrument production – with a music agency was very common in nineteenth-century Europe, and one only has to mention Wilhelm Hansen in Copenhagen, Albert Gutmann in Vienna, Boosey & Hawkes in London or Ferdinand Ries in Dresden. Thus, the landscape of activity behind musical stages in Kristiania in the first decade of the twentieth century resembled the organization of musical life in other European cities in the second part of the previous century. A similar combination of tasks was also performed by impresarios in other Norwegian towns such as Bergen, Trondhjem and Stavanger. These were e.g. in Bergen Wilhelm Harloff and the daughters of Carl Rabe, who took over the firm after their father's death in 1897, or Andreas Brun and Fredrik Christian Stenbuch Hoffmann in Trondhjem.⁶³ The timespan covered by the article was undoubtedly a transitional period in the music impresario profession in the capital city of Norway. The first music agents began to perform their jobs in a new way – dealing only with music management – both Peter Vogt Fischer and Rudolf Rasmussen went on the path initiated

⁵⁸[Author unknown], "Universitets-Biblioteket," *Norsk Bokfortegnelse for 1917* (Kristiania: Aschehoug, 1918), A 108; "Universitets-Biblioteket," *Norsk Bokfortegnelse for 1916* (Kristiania: Aschehoug, 1917), A 85.

⁵⁹Led by the above-mentioned Norwegian pianist Fridtjof Backer Grøndahl from 1914.

⁶⁰Salesski's concerts in Norway in 1916 were organized by Rudolf Rasmussen.

⁶¹+ [author], "Musiklitteratur," *Morgenbladet* 93/262 (May 11, 1911), 1. In this text the author emphasized that Friedman was inspired by Norwegian artists and arranged their pieces. The advertised scores were often such arrangements. See: *Aftenposten* (1914), and *Aftenposten* (Aftennummer, 1917), 7.

⁶²"Ny musik," *Aftenposten* 56/140 (March 18, 1915), 4.

⁶³MICHELSEN, "Musikkhandel i Norge fra begynnelsen til 1909," 206–211.



by Hermann Wolff in Berlin in 1880.⁶⁴ Similarly, they became very famous figures in the city with a firm position within its musical community, which an investigation of the press from that period confirms. At the same time the Hals Brothers' company opened offices in other Norwegian cities, thus taking a step towards a corporate structure for the music agency, which became a new tendency in music management in the world after 1945.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Edith STARGARDT-WOLFF, *Pathfinder of Great Musicians* (New York: Page Publishing, 2017).

⁶⁵WEBER, "From Self-Managing Musician to Independent Concert Agent," 125.

