

NIELSEN

Symphony No. 2 'The Four Temperaments' Symphony No. 3 'Sinfonia espansiva'

Inger Dam-Jensen • Poul Elming Danish National Symphony Orchestra / DR Michael Schønwandt



Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Symphony No. 2 'The Four Temperaments', Op. 16 · Symphony No. 3 'Sinfonia espansiva', Op. 27

A leading influence on Scandinavian music of the present century, the Danish composer Carl Nielsen was born in 1865, the son of a painter and village musician, in whose band he had his earliest musical experience playing the violin. In 1879, after learning to play the cornet, he joined a military orchestra at Odense and by 1884 had been able, with the help of sponsors, to enter the Royal Danish Conservatory in Copenhagen as a student of violin, piano and theory. After graduation in 1886 his compositions began to win a hearing, with a significant success in 1888 for his Opus 1 Little Suite for strings. The following year he became a violinist in the royal chapel, broadening still further his musical experience and in particular his knowledge of the music of Wagner, a subject of his serious study in Germany in 1890. Here he began the first of his six symphonies, completed in 1892. His work as a player in the royal chapel continued until 1905, followed by a growing demand for his services as a conductor. particularly of his own works, while a state pension allowed him to turn from teaching, a hitherto necessary means of survival, to concentrate on composition. His Second Symphony, The Four Temperaments, completed in 1902, characterizes the four humours of early medical theory. A third symphony, the Sinfonia Espansiva, followed in 1911, three years after his appointment as conductor at the Royal Theatre, a position he held until 1914. The Fourth Symphony, The Inextinguishable, was finished in 1916, to be followed in 1922 by the Fifth. The last of the six was completed in 1925, six years before Nielsen's death in Copenhagen in 1931.

Nielsen's work as a composer includes two operas and a number of orchestral works beside the symphonies, with concertos for violin and for clarinet. To choral works and songs may be added three published string quartets, a wind quintet and three violin sonatas, as well as a relatively small amount of music for the piano, an instrument that he had first taught himself as a young

bandsman. His musical language, as demonstrated in the symphonies, is idiosyncratic and individual, essentially tonal, but covering an extended range of keys within a tonal system, with a cogent use of rhythms that adds impetus to an idiom that is, in some ways, a reaction against romanticism, while extending post-romantic harmonic, melodic and rhythmic vocabulary.

The idea of writing a symphony based on the Four Humours arose from the sight of a primitive peasant painting in a village inn and Nielsen's own particular interest at the time in characterization, seeing another character from the inside. The Four Humours of early medicine are the four liquids in the human body, vellow bile, phlegm, black bile and blood, a preponderance of any one of which will give rise to a character that is choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic or sanguine, Nielsen dedicated his Second Symphony to Ferruccio Busoni and it was first performed on 1st December 1902 at a concert of the Danish Concert Society in Copenhagen under the composer's direction. The forthright first movement, in B minor, begins, as Nielsen later wrote, impetuously with a theme that develops together with another little clarinet theme, rising to a fanfare before the appearance of the expressive secondary theme, again impetuously interrupted and leading eventually to a conclusion in the mood of the opening. The choleric is followed by the phlegmatic, in G major, a slow march that is in contrast to the preceding movement. Nielsen explained that he imagined here a young man of seventeen or eighteen, a trial to his teachers, idle in his lessons, but not to be scolded. His nature leads him to the countryside, where birds sing, fish glide through the water and the sun shines. all depicted in a mood remote from energy or strong feeling. The third movement is in E flat minor and characterizes. Nielsen continues, a man of deep melancholy. The theme brings a cry of deeply felt sadness and a sigh, a little plaintive oboe melody, slowly

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developed and culminating in a lament. A calmer episode follows a short transition, now in B flat major, leading to a long static passage. Suddenly the first theme bursts forth again, the various themes together, the movement ending in calm serenity. Nielsen claimed that in the last movement he was depicting a man who acts without reflection, thinking the whole world his and that everything will come his way without effort on his part. There are moments of fear, where he may catch his breath, but all that is soon forgotten, even when the music moves to the minor, his sanguine and rather superficial character always looking on the bright side. From D major the music shifts in conclusion to an impetuous A major.

Nielsen completed his *Third Symphony*, the *Sinfonia Espansiva*, in 1911 and conducted the Royal Danish Orchestra in the first performance, given in Copenhagen on 28th February 1912, in the same programme as his *Violin Concerto*. It was an immediate success and two months later he conducted the work in Amsterdam with the Concertgebouw orchestra and subsequently in Sweden, Finland and Germany. The title *Sinfonia Espansiva*, an afterthought, has been explained by Robert Simpson as suggesting an expansion of the scope of the mind and of the life that comes with it. The first movement, starting with a repeated and emphatic A, turns, eventually, into a great symphonic waltz. The

traditional symphonic form still includes a principal theme, the basis of the later waltz. The energetic opening material is followed by a gentler theme from the woodwind, a mood pursued by the strings with further strongly expressed ideas, leading to a secondary theme from the flute, accompanied by two clarinets, material that is all developed before the great waltz, led by horns, trumpets and trombones. The slow movement, a gentle idyll, with its vocalises for solo soprano and baritone, is pastoral in mood. Here there are three themes, the first two improvisatory in character and the third a lyrical melody for the strings, with the voices blending like instruments with the orchestra at the climax of the movement. The third movement, without the immediate impetuous caprice of a scherzo, nevertheless provides a contrast, returning to the real world from the idyllic countryside of the Andante pastorale and exploring a new tonality, that of C sharp minor, in moving thematic material and moments of contrapuntal development. Nielsen described the last movement as a hymn to work and the healthy enjoyment of everyday life. The rondo breathes a mood of optimism, dominated by its principal theme, which returns in conclusion, after episodes often overtly simple in their thematic material.

Keith Anderson

Poul Elming



Poul Elming sang as a baritone in the early years of his career before making his début as a tenor in 1989 in the rôle of *Parsifal* at the Royal Opera in Copenhagen. Following his Bayreuth début as Siegmund in 1990 he has appeared in most of the world's leading opera houses including the Met, Vienna, Covent Garden, Munich, Berlin, Dresden, Paris and Amsterdam with conductors including Barenboim, Rattle (with whom he sang Parsifal at the Proms), von Dohnányi (with whom he recorded *Die Walkiire* and Levine. His Bayreuth Siegmund with Barenboim is released on CD and DVD. Poul Elming is also an active concert and recital singer.

Photo by Suste Bonnén

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Danish National Symphony Orchestra / DR



Founded in 1925, the Danish National Symphony Orchestra / DR is regarded as Denmark's leading symphony orchestra. It has performed under many of the 20th century's greatest conductors, including Nicolai Malko, Bruno Walter, Eugene Ormandy, Leopold Stokowski, Rafael Kubelik and Daniel Barenboim, and has collaborated with composers as soloists and conductors such as Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Hindemith, Boulez, Lutosławski, Stockhausen and Henze. Regular conductors have included Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Giuseppe Sinopoli, and now include Yuri Temirkanov as Principal Guest Conductor, Herbert Blomstedt, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Michael Gielen and Marek Janowski. Chief Conductors have been Herbert Blomstedt (1967-77), Leif

Segerstam (1988-95), Ulf Schirmer (1995-98) and Gerd Albrecht (2000-04). In 2004 Thomas Dausgaard took up the appointment as Chief Conductor. From its home in Copenhagen the orchestra undertakes extensive concert and recording activities, and makes regular tours in Denmark and abroad. The orchestra's discography includes Sibelius and Mahler symphony cycles as well as a long succession of Danish works – including several operas – for Dacapo, Chandos, EMI and Decca. *Photo: Agnethe Schlichtkrull*

Michael Schonwandt



Michael Schønwandt was born in 1953, and is Chief Conductor at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen and of the Royal Danish Orchestra. Since his début in the Tivoli Gardens in 1977 he has been one of the most sought-after conductors of his generation. He has been Chief Conductor of Collegium Musicum from the founding of the orchestra in 1981. In 1987-91 Schønwandt was Principal Guest Conductor of the opera and symphony orchestra in Nice, and in 1989-2000 he was Principal Guest Conductor of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra/DR. Finally, in 1992-98 he was Chief Conductor of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. Besides his permanent connection with Danish musical life he appears regularly with the leading orchestras of Europe. The Berlin Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, the French Radio Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra in Lordon the French Radio Symphony Orchestra are just some of the

orchestras he has conducted in recent years. The opera houses in London, Paris, Vienna, Brussels, Nice and Stuttgart have also been regular ports of call for him. In 1987 and 1988 he was the first Scandinavian conductor ever to conduct at the Wagner Festspiele in Bayreuth. He has headed successful performances of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, where he has conducted a succession of operas since 1979. *Photo by Marianne Grøndahl*

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Inger Dam-Jensen



Winner of the Cardiff Singer of the World Competition in 1993, Inger Dam-Jensen began her formal music education at the Royal Danish Academy of Music before moving to the Danish Opera School in 1990 to study with Kirsten Buhl Møller. She has appeared with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Colin Davis, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra under Bernard Haitink, the Philharmonia Orchestra under Christoph von Dohnányi, the Orchestra of the Bastille under James Conlon, and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra under Edo de Waart, among others. Inger Dam-Jensen's operatic rôles include Pamina for Opéra Bastille, and Despina, Blondchen, and Lisa in La Sonnambula for Covent Garden. At home in Denmark with the Royal Danish Opera she has undertaken a series of leading rôles with equal distinction. She appears widely in recital and has a number of distinguished recordings to her credit.

Photo by Isak Hoffmeyer

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) Symphonie No. 2 'Les Quatre Tempéraments', Op. 16 · Symphonie No. 3 'Sinfonia espansiva, Op. 27

Carl Nielsen, la grande figure de la musique danoise de la période postromantique, naquit le 9 juin 1865 à Sortelung. Violoniste amateur, son père l'initia très tôt à la pratique de cet instrument et ses progrès furent si rapides que Carl put vite se joindre à lui dans diverses manifestations villageoises. Pour sympathiques quelles fussent, le jeune musicien ne s'en contenta bientôt plus et devint membre d'un orchestre amateur où il se familiarisa avec les partitions de Haydn et Mozart - le musicien préféré de Nielsen, Pour subvenir à ses besoins, il joua, de 1879 à 1883 du clairon dans un orchestre militaire d'Odensee complétant par ailleurs sa formation musicale et générale en autodidacte. Des mélomanes fortunés découvrirent son talent et, de 1884 à 1886, subvinrent à ses besoins pendant ses études - violon, piano, harmonie, histoire - au Conservatoire de Copenhague où, parmi ses professeurs, figurait Niels Gade (1817-1890).

Talentueux violoniste, Nielsen participait aux concerts de plusieurs formations de chambre et orchestres

de la capitale danoise. Il découvrait alors la musique de Richard Wagner; son immense enthousiasme pour les drames musicaux du maître de Bayreuth devait s'estomper par la suite... Brahms ne laissait pas non plus le musicien indifférent et l'on peut déceler son influence dans la lère Symphonie (Naxos 8.570737) créée avec succès en 1894. Cependant si Nielsen dut attendre d'avoir composé ses Symphonies Nos. 4 et 5, datées repectivement de 1916 et 1922, pour trouver sa place au devant de la scène musicale danoise, il apparut dès la Symphonie No. 2 en possession d'un style personnel, marqué en particulier par une conception de la tonalité que l'on a justement qualifiée d'évolutive'.

Baptisée 'Les Quatre Tempéraments', la Symphonie No. 2, op. 16 fut écrite en l'espace d'une année, entre 1901 et 1902 et dédiée à Ferruccio Busoni. Son surnom s'explique par le fait que chacun de ses quatre mouvements se réfère à un caractère précis.

Intitulé Allegro collerico, le premier, comme son titre

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le laisse supposer, affiche un ton généralement emporté et d'abondants contrastes. L'atmosphère s'apaise parfois, certes mais la violence domine jusqu'à la puissante coda conclusive. 'Une eau lisse comme un miroir', disait Nielsen du deuxième mouvement Allegro comodo e flemmatico, de son Opus 16. L'image convient on ne peut mieux à une musique d'où la volonté est absente. C'est le caractère mélancolique qui a inspiré Nielsen pour l'Andante malinconico. Dans la tonalité de mi bémol mineur le musicien fait montre ici d'une écriture aux teintes souvent sombres. Que d'éclat en revanche dans le finale Allegro sanguineo, où le tempérament sanguin est suggéré par un style éclatant et fortement contrasté.

Après l'Opus 16, Carl Nielsen attendit près d'une dizaine d'années pour revenir à la symphonie. La No. 3 'Sinfonia espansiva', op. 27 fut en effet composée entre

1910 et 1911 et créée, comme la précédente, sous la baguette de son auteur. Il s'agit sans nul doute là d'une des partitions les plus attachantes du musicien danois du fait de l'atmosphère originale, teintée de panthéisme, que l'on y découvre.

D'entrée de jeu, le geste ample de l'Allegro espansivo initial retient l'attention de l'auditeur. Suit l'Andante pastorale où une écriture d'une grande délicatesse de couleur installe un climat paisible et bucolique. Le troisième épisode, Allegretto un poco, crée un contraste par sa ligne ferme et nerveuse et tire une bonne part de sa force expressive des diverses tonalités auxquelles il fait appel. La remarque vaut également pour le vigoureux Finale: Allegro un poco qui chemine avec éclat jusqu'à sa flamboyante conclusion.

Frédéric Castello

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The most important Danish composer of the first third of the twentieth century. Carl Nielsen was prolific in almost all genres. Dissociating himself strongly from Late Romanticism, Nielsen orientated himself increasingly towards the new currents in European music without at any time abandoning his very personal and idiosyncratic style. The Six Symphonies, which become increasingly adventurous as the cycle progresses, are essentially tonal, emotionally direct works, which alternate long lines of melody with passages of blazing energy. The idea of writing a symphony based on the Four Temperaments - The Choleric, The Sanguine, The Melancholic and The Phlegmatic, came to Nielsen when he saw a primitive peasant painting in a village inn. The title of the Third Symphony, Sinfonia espansiva, an afterthought, has been explained as an expansion of the scope of the mind and of the life that comes with it.



Carl **NIELSEN**

(1865-1931)

The Symphonies • 2

Symphony No. 3, FS 60, Op. 27, 'Sinfonia espansiva' (1910-11)	37:16
1 I. Allegro espansivo	11:44
2 II. Andante pastorale *	9:39
3 III. Allegretto un poco	6:24
4 IV. Finale: Allegro	9:29
Symphony No. 2, FS 29, Op. 16, 'The Four Temperaments' (1901-02)	33:55
5 I. Allegro collerico	10:18
6 II. Allegro comodo e flemmatico	4:42
_ &	4:42 11:25

* Inger Dam-Jensen • Poul Elming Danish National Symphony Orchestra / DR Michael Schonwandt

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