



*Scandinavian Classics*

CARL NIELSEN

SYMPHONY NO.4 »THE INEXTINGUISHABLE«, A.M.O.  
ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, DOUGLAS BOSTOCK



## **CARL NIELSEN - DENMARK'S GREATEST SYMPHONIST**

No one could predict at his birth that Carl August Nielsen would become Denmark's hitherto greatest symphonist. He was born on 9 June 1865 in a two-family farm worker's cottage near the village of Nørre Lyndelse on Funen as the seventh of twelve children. The family was poor and in many ways followed the pattern of the poor agricultural families of the period: the first child was born before the parents were married, three of the children died in infancy or adolescence, and six sought their fortune outside of Denmark, one in Australia and five in America.

### **SYMPHONIC RHAPSODY**

Nielsen's first attempt at a symphony dates from 1888, but it got no further than the first movement, and was put aside. In the 1892-93 season, Nielsen's fellow composer, Victor Bendix (1851-1926), had, in the meantime, been employed as conductor at the Popular Concerts, which took place every Sunday in the Koncert palæ (later becoming Odd Fellow Palæ) in Copenhagen. Bendix undertook the first performance of the first movement of the concert on 26 February 1893, where it was given the title, Symphonic Rhapsody. On the same evening, Nielsen wrote in his diary: "My piece was well taken and a success; but the audience apparently expected more to follow and for once they were right. The piece is not suited to stand alone."

### **GENRE PICTURE, OPUS 6 NO. 1**

Nielsen published five songs under Opus 4 in 1892, and he showed his respect for J. P. Jacobsen's (1847-85) arabesque-like, symbolic poems by entitling the collection Music To Five Poems by J. P. Jacobsen. Five more Jacobsen songs were published in 1893 as Opus 6 and were dedicated to his friend, Rudolph Bergh (1859-1924), doctor, composer and musicologist. In the first song of the collection, the ironic Genre Picture, the piano sets the scene immediately with its opening horn fifths: this takes place in days gone by. While the horn fifths continue in the piano, the vocal part, in a simple melody, gets down to telling the story of the love-sick page who cannot find words to express his love. The missing words are coined in melismata, which turn via Nielsen's favourite interval, the minor seventh, but we note, used without its normal tonal conclusion. Instead, the page seizes his horn and blows out his pangs in a completely different melodic language, namely that of the opening. But with a reminiscent melisma at the end - has he really given vent to his need for love?

### **SYMPHONY NO. 4, THE INEXTINGUISHABLE**

The first performance of Nielsen's Symphony No. 4 was set for 1st February 1916 in the Music Society, for which he had recently been appointed director of music and could therefore hardly fail. He first finished the symphony on 14 January. He subtitled it The Inextinguishable and wrote an explanatory note, which was printed in the programme at the first performance. It was built up around a maxim which he found difficult to formulate: "Music is life and like it inextinguishable".

The music is characterised by conflict. An example is the conflict between minor and major, which appears already in the very first bar of the music, where a triplet figure appears first in D minor and immediately after in D major. According to the page of the score Nielsen sent to Gerhardt Lyngø for his book, Danish Music at the beginning of the Twentieth Century (Aarhus, 1917), before the symphony had been completed, the piccolo also played triplets. This, however, Nielsen omitted in the final version and it is not therefore played on this recording. None the less, let us hope it is possible to hear these triplets, which play a significant role in the further development of the music. The symphony was given a somewhat mixed reception but one of the leading critics, Charles Kjerulf of Politiken, surrendered completely when, on 14 April in the same year, Nielsen again put it on the programme at an evening of his compositions with a bigger and better orchestra: "For the first time he has here managed to create a masterwork that towers up into the sky, but at the same time

has both feet planted firmly on the ground". The symphony remained in Nielsen's active concert repertoire. Outside of Denmark he conducted it in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Oslo, Bremen and London.

#### ARIEL'S SONG

1916 was the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and to mark the occasion the Danish Society of Authors organised an open-air performance at Elsinore Castle on 24 June. The performance ended with an abridged production of "Hamlet", which opened with a prologue written by Helge Rode (1870-1923). Carl Nielsen was asked to compose music to the prologue for three vocal soloists, mixed chorus and orchestra. A single number from this singular, Ariel's Song, was printed separately with piano accompaniment and it even made it into the concert halls.

#### CHRISTMAS AT HOME

In 1923 Carl Nielsen was well on the way to becoming a national monument but his finances were still nothing to brag about. One way out that year was to sell newly composed Christmas songs. "Hjemlige Jull!" (Christmas At Home) with text by Emil Bønnelycke (1893-1953) was printed as a facsimile version of Nielsen's manuscript in the newspaper Politiken's "Magazine". But already on the preceding Sunday Nielsen had conducted an orchestral version of the Bønnelycke song, sung by the audience at Politiken's Christmas concert in Odd Fellow Palæet.

#### CUPID AND THE POET, ORCHESTRAL SUITE

The music written by Carl Nielsen for a festival play, which was to open a gala night at Odense Theatre on 12 July 1930 to celebrate Hans Christian Andersen's 125th anniversary, should originally have been a cantata. In the orchestral suite from "Amor og Digteren", which was performed in Copenhagen on 2nd March 1931 at a concert arranged by the society formed in memory of Niels W. Gade, the programme contained the overtures Nos.2, 3 and 4 of the score for the stage music. Carl Nielsen's son-in-law, Emil Telmányi, conducted instead of the composer who was ill at the time. On the instructions of the composer, four horns replaced the chorus behind the scene in No.3. The recitations originally included in Nos.2 and 4 were omitted in the concert version. In this recording, we have supplemented this concert suite No.1 of the score, a short cello solo also originally accompanied by spoken lines.

With his overture, Nielsen has created a small gem entirely in his later style, with a particularly transparent orchestral movement seasoned by the snare drum and with an imaginative solo for clarinet.

**JAN LUND - tenor.** Graduated in 1990 as pianist and as singer 1994. Further studies in Copenhagen, London and Rome. Has received several prizes and awards. Has sung in the major Danish concert halls and churches as concert and oratorio singer as well as on radio and tv. Has recorded music by a.o. Carl Nielsen, Saint-Saëns and Niels Viggo Bentzon.

**DOUGLAS BOSTOCK (born in 1955)** is the chief guest conductor of the Munich Symphony Orchestra and principal guest conductor of the Chamber Philharmonic of Bohemia. From 1991 to 1998 he was director of music of the Carlsbad Symphony Orchestra in the Czech Republic. A former student of Sir Adrian Boult, maestro Bostock is one of the outstanding British conductors of his generation. After his tenure as director of music in Konstanz, and close collaboration with the Southwest German Philharmonic, he embarked on an international conducting career which has taken him to guest engagements with leading orchestras in Europe, America and Asia. In Great Britain he has worked with the BBC Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestras. Numerous CD recordings of a wide and varied range of music, radio and television productions, and frequent appearances at international music festivals, document his versatile musical personality. Douglas Bostock's extensive repertoire covers a broad spectrum of genres and styles.

# CARL NIELSEN

(1865 - 1931)

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## **Symphony No.4, op.29 "The Inextinguishable"**

1	I. Allegro . . . . .	10:45
2	II. Poco allegretto . . . . .	5:13
3	III. Poco adagio quasi andante . . . . .	10:28
4	IV. Allegro . . . . .	8:19

## **Cupid And The Poet**

5	Overture . . . . .	5:19
6	No.1 Andante . . . . .	0:39
7	No.2 Andantino . . . . .	2:29
8	No.3 Andantino . . . . .	0:46
9	No.4 Andante quasi sostenuto . . . . .	1:33

10	<b>Genrebillede, op.6, No.1</b> . . . . .	1:54
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11	<b>Ariel's Song</b> . . . . .	2:45
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12	<b>Hjemlige Jul</b> . . . . .	4:15
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13	<b>Symphonic Rhapsody</b> . . . . .	8:32
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Total Time: 63:51

Jan Lund - tenor (10 - 12)  
Jonathan Aasgaard - cello (6)  
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra  
Douglas Bostock - conductor