

Compact disc

588



SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

2015

and the
Seattle Symphony

11-10

Present the

Chamber Music of Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Honoring the 150th anniversary of his birth

Performed by

Students of the UW School of Music
and

Members of the Seattle Symphony

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

7:30 pm – Brechemin Auditorium

PROGRAM

CD1

17,278

Remarks, Stephen B

String Quartet No. 4 (1906) 27:49

Allegro non tanto e comodo
Adagio con sentimento religioso
Allegretto moderato ed innocent
Molto adagio

Stephen Bryant, violin
Sue Jane Bryant, violin
Vijay Chalasani, viola
Joy Payton-Stevens, cello

Remarks, Stephen B

Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 35 (1912) 22:20

Allegro con tiepidezza
Molto adagio
Allegro piacevole

Stephen Bryant, violin
Allan Dameron, piano

INTERMISSION

CD2

17,279

Wind Quintet, Op. 43 (1922) 25:42

Allegro ben moderato
Menuet
Prelude - Tema con variazioni

Chengwen Winnie Lai, oboe
Alexander Tu, clarinet
Paul Rafanelli, bassoon
Mark Robbins, horn
Zartouhi Dombourian-Eby, flute

THE INEXTINGUISHABLE NIELSEN

Carl Nielsen is nearly always described as Denmark's greatest composer, and he richly deserves that recognition. This year sees his sesquicentennial anniversary (Nielsen was born in 1865). To mark the occasion, Seattle Symphony will perform his powerful Fourth Symphony, which Nielsen titled "The Inextinguishable." The concerts, on November 12 and 14, will be led by Thomas Dausgaard, the Symphony's Principal Guest Conductor and the composer's distinguished compatriot.

Nielsen's was the first Danish music to attract attention internationally, and certain aspects of his work speak particularly of his homeland. One is its occasional evocation of Danish folk songs and dance tunes. Unlike the Norwegian Edvard Grieg, the Finnish Jean Sibelius, the English Ralph Vaughan Williams or the American Aaron Copland, Nielsen did not have to "discover" folk music as an adult. As a boy, he had listened to his mother sing traditional songs, and he had played violin with a local band at weddings and other events in the coastal village where he was raised. As a result, Nielsen had grown up with Danish folk music, and it was very much in his blood.

The other particularly Danish quality in Nielsen's compositions is a subtle yet important connection to his country's landscape. His music, said Erik Tuxen, a Danish conductor closely associated with Nielsen, "is born out of the ethereal and calm Danish nature, with its soft colors and lack of dramatic features. ... [I]f one is able catch the special, near ascetic language of his music, a door will open to a world of strange beauty, love for nature and deep spiritual feeling."

Yet the most striking qualities of Nielsen's music are neither folkloric nor suggestive of nature, and it diminishes his achievement to think of him simply as a nationalist composer. Rather, it is an exceptional individualism that distinguishes Nielsen and his work. That quality is not easy to describe. Nielsen's harmonic palette is not especially modern for a composer working during the first third of the 20th century, yet it is quite unlike that of any other musician. Similarly, his melodic writing is in no way abstruse, yet it defies comparison or classification. Often Nielsen's thematic ideas seem, paradoxically, at once centuries old and brand new. And his orchestration emphasizes not so much the timbre, the aural color, of each instrument as what Nielsen felt to be its special personality.

Nielsen's six symphonies constitute his most important body of work. Each has its own strong and unique character. The Fourth presents an epic drama between destructive and affirmative musical ideas. While it is easy to hear the work as a reflection of the dire events of World War I, which was raging at the time Nielsen wrote the work, the composer explained the music in more timeless and universal terms. "We can say," he said in discussing the symphony, "that if the whole world were devastated by fire, flood

or volcanoes, and all things were destroyed and dead, nature would still begin to breed new life again, begin to push forward again with all the fine and strong forces inherent in matter. These forces, which are inextinguishable, are what I have tried to express."

—Paul Schiavo

The Seattle Symphony and The University of Washington School of Music enjoy collaborations throughout each season, including tonight's Side-by-Side concert. These performances bring together Seattle Symphony musicians with UW students and provide invaluable mentorship opportunities.

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