CARL NIELSEN

Symphony No. 3, Op. 27, "Sinfonia espansiva"

	TOTAL TIME	70.54
8	Allegro	8:41
7	Poco adagio quasi andante—	9:41
6	Poco allegretto—	4:43
5	Allegro—	11:02
	Symphony No. 4, Op. 29, "The Inextinguishable"	
	Estelí Gomez, soprano; John Taylor Ward, baritone	
4	Finale: Allegro	9:22
3	Allegretto un poco—	6:13
2	Andante pastorale	9:37
1	Allegro espansivo	11:31

SEATTLE**SYMPHONY.ORG**

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The Seattle Symphony is one of America's leading symphony orchestras and is internationally acclaimed for its innovative programming and extensive recording history. Under the leadership of Music Director Ludovic Morlot since September 2011, the Symphony is heard from September through July by more than 500,000 people through live performances and radio broadcasts. It performs in one of the finest modern concert halls in the world — the acoustically superb Benaroya Hall — in downtown Seattle. Its extensive education and community engagement programs reach over 65,000 children and adults each year. The Seattle Symphony has a deep commitment to new music, commissioning many works by living composers each season. The orchestra has made nearly 150 recordings and has received three Grammy Awards, 23 Grammy nominations, two Emmy Awards and numerous other accolades. In 2014 the Symphony launched its in-house recording label, Seattle Symphony Media.





THOMAS DAUSGAARD, CONDUCTOR

Thomas Dausgaard is Principal Guest Conductor of the Seattle Symphony, Chief Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Honorary Conductor of the Orchestra della Toscana (ORT) and Honorary Conductor of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, having previously served as its Principal Conductor from 2004–11. He is renowned for his creativity and innovative programming, the excitement of his live performances and his extensive catalogue of critically acclaimed recordings.

Dausgaard performs with the world's leading orchestras and is a committed advocate of contemporary music, having premiered works by many living composers. He has made over 50 recordings, including a variety of complete symphonic cycles and a highly acclaimed recording of Mahler's Symphony

No. 10 (Cooke version) with the Seattle Symphony. Currently, he is completing a Brahms cycle for BIS; and, with the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, a project that combines J.S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos with a set of six newly commissioned companion works.

Dausgaard has been awarded the Cross of Chivalry by the Queen of Denmark and was elected to the Swedish Royal Academy of Music. His interests beyond music are wide-ranging, including a fascination with the life and art of indigenous communities. He lives in Copenhagen with his family.

ESTELÍ GOMEZ, SOPRANO

Praised for her "clear, bright voice" (*The New York Times*) and "artistry that belies her young years" (*Kansas City Metropolis*), soprano Estelí Gomez is quickly gaining recognition as a stylish interpreter of early and contemporary repertoires. In 2014 she was awarded a Grammy with Roomful of Teeth for best chamber music/small ensemble performance; in 2011 she received First Prize in the Canticum Gaudium International Early Music Vocal Competition in Poznan, Poland. An avid performer of early and new music, Gomez can be heard on the Juno-nominated recording Salsa Baroque with Montréal-based Ensemble Caprice, as well as Roomful of Teeth's self-titled debut album, for which composer Caroline Shaw's *Partita* was awarded the 2013 Pulitzer Prize. Originally from Santa Cruz, California, Gomez received her Bachelor of Arts from Yale University and Master of Music from McGill University, studying with Sanford Sylvan. She currently travels and performs full time.

JOHN TAYLOR WARD, BARITONE

John Taylor Ward's performances have been praised for their "stylish abandon" (Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*) and their "finely calibrated precision and heart-rending expressivity" (*Washington Post*). He is a frequent collaborator with Paul O'Dette, Stephen Stubbs and the Boston Early Music Festival; William Christie and Les arts florissants; Sir John Elliott Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists; the Grammy Award-winning ensemble Roomful of Teeth; and Christina Pluhar and L'arpeggiata. Other credits include the U.S. premiere of Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus* under the direction of Peter Sellars as well as appearances at the Salzburg and Berlin Festspieles, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and the Edinburgh International Festival. Ward is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music and holds three advanced degrees from the Yale School of Music. He is a founding core member of the chamber ensemble, Cantata Profana, and is the Founding Associate Artistic Director of the Lakes Area Music Festival

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MUSIC OF **NIELSEN**BY THOMAS DAUSGAARD

Carl Nielsen was a force in Danish musical life, showing the way towards a new kind of music: direct and impassioned, less dependent on foreign influences as he wanted to find an alternative expression to the late Romantic musical language. He wanted music with integrity, music uncovering, or at least reflecting, the deep questions of life, the origins of everything, life at its most elemental.

His symphonies take us on a journey through just that: the first an impetuous opening up of a wild and mostly joyful, ecstatic world; the second portraying the four personality types of man in strong-willed music; the third finding the roots for harmony between nature and man; the fourth threatening this harmony yet ultimately triumphing; the fifth rocking the boat even more, taking us to new dangerous levels of struggle between good and evil; and in the sixth, perhaps suggesting that the perfect world of the third is only a dream.

Nielsen made the journey from countryside to capital, from peasant music, songs and dances with his father's village band to complex symphonic structures. From discovering music in pieces of dry wood, which he lined up and played on when he was 6, to the toyshop of percussion in his last symphony. From writing a polka for his father's band at 8, to composing music expressing deeply felt reflections on human life

His discovery of the classical composers wasn't always easy. There is his own telling description of how, at age 14, he could not make sense of a Bach Prelude and Fugue he was learning on the piano. How he then thought of the stories he had heard of the North American Indians and how they made fire by rubbing two pieces of wood against each other until they began to glow. Similarly, he played the Bach Prelude again and again, until perhaps "after 50 times" it began to resonate with him, to catch fire. Elemental processes like this surely became fundamental to him as a composer, reaching for more than nice music, for music meaningful to us, music with a message for us fellow humans.

A brilliant side of his talent was his ability and interest in writing songs in the Danish tradition of ballads; for all their subtle inventiveness, his songs would at the same time have something timeless in them, making us believe that they had always been around. This "low" music was often composed at the same time as his most ambitious symphonic works, and sometimes filtered into them, like in the finale of the "Sinfonia espansiva." His Third Symphony is the essential bridge between those two worlds.

Himself eventually an esteemed conductor, Nielsen's intimate knowledge of the great symphonic works of the past was surely an inspiration. The beginning of "Sinfonia espansiva" — the strikes of lightning and the following "heroic" melody — is unthinkable without Beethoven's Eroica, the first great Third Symphony. The contours of much melodic material in "The Inextinguishable" is unthinkable without Schubert's "Great" C-major Symphony. In spite of Nielsen wanting to separate himself from the Romantic tradition, Brahms is strongly felt, whether in the hymn-like theme of the "Sinfonia espansiva" finale or in the sometimes richly doubled scoring of strings and winds, and the continuous movements of a symphonic work as large and

sprawling as "The Inextinguishable" is probably inspired by the scope and primeval world of Richard Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

Yet Nielsen's language has a very personal tone, clearly developed by the time of "Sinfonia espansiva." Here are major and minor chords mostly as we know them, but very often in a rather different order than we are used to hearing them. Our sense of harmonic functionality is stretched not so much by their dissonant richness as by the unusual way they progress. "Nordic" oscillations between major and minor play a role right from his earliest works, and throughout his production they develop into brutal dissonances: harmonic as well as tempo-wise, rhythmic and melodic. Negative forces come in a variety of expressions, and they are gradually given more space in his compositions.

His collaboration with musicians sharpened his sensitivity to the inherent characteristics of particular instruments, as well as of the musicians drawn to playing them. This is developed particularly in the last two symphonies. Also, a certain theatrical element — he was after all a conductor at the opera until he composed "The Inextinguishable" — challenges the otherwise standard size and use of the orchestra he employs in the symphonies. No heroic cymbal clashes, no sweeping harps, no shrill E-flat clarinet or imposing Wagner tubas. But in "Sinfonia espansiva" he enlarges the orchestra with two vocalists, and in "The Inextinguishable" he puts a second pair of timpani right at the edge of the stage, involving the audience in what eventually unfolds as a drama, much like if they were right next to the protagonist in a play. In the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, percussion is introduced, including an "evil" side-drum, going berserk and improvising freely against the whole orchestra in his Fifth Symphony. Not even Berlioz or R. Strauss had tried that!

My first piano teacher was a student of Nielsen. Together with my grandmother, she studied piano at the Conservatory in Copenhagen in the late 1920s when Nielsen was its Director. He taught them harmony, and they were both fascinated with his charming and caring personality. But regarding his own music, they were in perfect agreement that his idea of bringing animal-like sounds from the farmyard into his music was something they appreciated very little: who would want to go to the concert hall or the opera to be confronted with these kinds of primitive sounds, coming from surroundings which many people had spent their lives trying to escape from?

Though these sounds play less of a role in many people's lives today, I hope that when listening to his music the imagination of music lovers is ignited to imagine where these and many other sounds in his music might come from. What follows is an outline of how I hear the two works on this album.

SYMPHONY NO. 3, "SINFONIA ESPANSIVA"

ALLEGRO ESPANSIVO

In the beginning was the sound. How does the beginning of everything sound? Is there a sound of the earth? The sound of the origin of all things? An A. Then quiet, tension in the air. Another A. Quiet. More As closer together, stammering, stuttering, faster, exploding into a melody. The big bangs of the creation of our orbit catapulting us into music, an expansively rising melody: *espansiva* has taken off. Manic activity, sudden, wild, offbeat accentuations as if in a fight, ecstatic and extremely high-pitched passages and expansive melodies, all set off by the existential sounds of the beginning. So much energy has been generated that, in a way, the whole movement — taking us through an orbit of intimate dances, long build-ups, neurotic outbursts

and larger-than-life waltzing — feels sweeping along in one breath. Man has been brought alive and with him, music.

ANDANTE PASTORALE

Man's first home was in paradise. A slow, timeless second movement follows. A mild unaffected sense of being permeates the long string unisons. Is it nighttime? Stars are lit up by sudden entries of solo winds. Where does man belong in this, with all his passions and longings? The nocturnal idyll is interrupted by outbursts in the strings of just that. Magically, this charged atmosphere transcends into an ornamented version of the timeless beginning, now adorned with a pair of singers performing inside the orchestra. Man's longing is answered when he is joined by a woman, both vocalizing together on an A. This Adam and Eve weave in and out of the orchestral palette, in the end taken over by the pan-like sounds of flutes.

ALLEGRETTO UN POCO-

Time for a bite of the apple! Or at least for food, here perhaps symbolized by hungry hunting horn calls opening the third movement and giving way to a melancholic shepherd song on the oboe. Are we fast-forwarding to pastoral poetry of ancient Greece? Soon the effect of the apple is felt: conflict brews and various sections within the orchestra begin to argue, snapping aggressively and sometimes even brutally at each other. Is this the barbaric people of the northern European forests, which the Romans needed to build a wall against? Or is it the dark side of man, his painful inner life now and then? Grotesque music unfolds in this Humoresque-like movement — a taste of what is to come in Nielsen's later works — until finally calming down in an eerie sense of quiet, charged music.

FINALE: ALLEGRO

Is life worth living after all? Yes! How better to celebrate that than with a hymn, an expansive wide-spun melody over a marching accompaniment. Are we taken to the idealized world of life at one with nature, the peasant of Nielsen's youth? Vitality, strength and happiness in one, the peasant walking behind his plough, singing what could be a traditional Danish hymn. As if people from all corners of the world join in, fugatos are mixed with characteristic animal-like sounds from his farm. When the music finally shows cracks in the surface, the cracks form a gate-post into a long, quiet, static passage over a light-stepped walking bass. Is this paradise on earth? Or is it a fantasy on the half-lit world of the slow dusk in our Northern part of the hemisphere? The peasant daydreaming and becoming a poet? A sudden noise in the horns wakes us up; we take a guick dance in clogs and are called back to an even broader "universal" version of the hymn. Soon the hardworking horses want to go home for a well-deserved meal and with a neighing we are galloping towards the stables, joyfully fighting to get there first, to get back to the sound with which all things began, the now long held A of the beginning of the symphony. Nature and man are in expansive, glorious harmony.

SYMPHONY NO. 4, "THE INEXTINGUISHABLE"

The movements are not specified by Nielsen and they are performed without interruption.

ALLEGRO-

Like "Sinfonia espansiva," "The Inextinguishable" opens with a big bang on the fundamental A, here condensed into just one note, one omnipotent spark igniting a

whole inextinguishable symphony. Immediately we are thrown into tumultuous music, shrill screams flying from all corners of the orchestra — we are reminded that this is music written at the outbreak of World War I, at the time of Nielsen's frustrations leading to his resignation as house conductor at the Royal Danish Opera, and at the time when his marriage to sculptress Anne-Marie Carl Nielsen was irreparably troubled.

The world certainly feels dangerous even as the music calms down into an inquisitive cello solo answered by capricious elfin-dancing winds. At this moment, seeds are sowed for our salvation from the danger. The theme, which at the end of the symphony is going to save us, appears: a peaceful but urgent melody in a pair of clarinets that is gradually developed by the orchestra into a ecstatic climax. The echoes of screams from the opening morph quietly through timpani, flute and horn, and into a chirping bird on the violins... until the violas violently throw a series of tantrums in stammering rhythms.

Eventually the whole orchestra is sufficiently provoked to explode into another war-like passage with brass and timpani leading the onslaught. With a sudden change to a long passage of very quiet music, we are back in the static dusk-world that we encountered in the middle of the "Sinfonia espansiva" finale. After a quick return to the wild opening ideas, a moonlit bridge-passage takes us, uninterrupted, into what feels like a second movement.

POCO ALLEGRETTO—

I imagine Nielsen as a boy, lying in his bed at night, hearing sounds of his father's village band playing for dances at a neighboring farm. The very soft and distant

sounding second movement, scored mostly for small wind-band, could be what he heard: a gentle dance, slightly uneven in meter, sometimes tenderly singing, sometimes eerily undulating, as if a storm is brewing, or worse. Delicate pizzicatos add to the nightly feeling, as do some sudden tipsy wind solos as if coming from drunk dancers taking a break outside. Last to leave the party is a clarinet and its extended pauses build tension for what seems like a third moment to break the silence with a high scream.

POCO ADAGIO QUASI ANDANTE-

The innocence of childhood is blown away by an expansive lament in the strings and timpani which opens the third movement. Where to turn for help? Chorale-like music, sometimes like an organ playing hardly audibly for communion — I imagine we have taken refuge in church, listening for comforting music and words. The beautiful music is suddenly interrupted by a chorus of winds, manically and aggressively chanting what seems like a fervent prayer. Upsetting rather than comforting, and before long the rest of the orchestra joins in imitating each other. They eventually create such a chaos that it feels like nobody can listen or understand each other anymore. Babylon!

Eventually the music sinks back into a mysterious passage with fragments of an extremely quiet chorale and fragments of aggressive chanting. It doesn't seem to lead anywhere and there is certainly no sense of comfort left. Just as Nielsen seems to have given up on the church showing a way forward, the radiant sound of the oboe mixes with high string trills — is this a savior, an angel, Jesus?

The strings explode into frenetic scaling up and down, bringing the crucial recitative in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* to mind, where the veil to the temple is torn. The strings pave the way for the spectacular entry of a new instrument in the orchestra, joining at

the tail end of this ecstatic outpouring, creating a cliff-hanger as the whole orchestra holds its breath before plunging into what seems to be the fourth movement.

ALLEGRO

The new instrument is a second set of timpani placed right next to the audience for maximum impact. The joyful beginning of the finale is waltzing and expansive like the first movement of "Sinfonia espansiva," until a shot from the timpani makes the whole orchestra turn on each other in aggressive exchanges and thundering duels between the timpani sets. The primeval feeling of these exchanges reminds us that the drum was man's first instrument. Occasional truces of quiet music bring back the peace motif from the first movement, as if a distant memory. A faster tempo, and we are into the final struggle, with the peace theme in grotesque-sounding horns and blaring brass trying to cut through raging barbaric drums and screaming violins. Yet another accelerando and the peace theme magically transforms into a beautiful apotheosis, submerging all fighting parts into the bosom of its larger-than-life chorale: good triumphs over evil at the last moment.

What strengthens this victory even more is that it came from a seed sowed near the beginning of the whole piece, as if it was something we had in us all along which had the healing powers to transform the world. The village dance and the church visit provided little help, as did the by now old-school "Sinfonia espansiva" waltzing style at the beginning of the finale. It was Nielsen's own peaceful music which rescued us from near-catastrophe and with which he built an inextinguishable arch from its appearance near the beginning to the end of this, his most ambitious work to date. If seen as a self-dramatizing work, these self-healing powers could reflect his optimism for his newfound freedom as full-time composer, having left his secure job as opera

conductor. It could reflect his hopes for the wounds of his marriage to heal, and for his hopes for mankind, that the raging war in Europe would soon be over as man would inevitably strive for peace.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The quasi-traditional forms of "Sinfonia espansiva" are the norm for the first half of "The Inextinguishable," but from the third movement onwards it is as if the music becomes a process governed by the subconscious, like music written in a trance. Perhaps here Nielsen came close to his beloved Mozart, who he said composed with the sure-footedness of a sleepwalker.

While "Sinfonia espansiva" looks back on the origin of things and possibly portrays a harmonious balance between man and nature, "The Inextinguishable" is all about daring to be here and now. The few cracks in the surface of "Sinfonia espansiva" are here let loose, set free to interact when they need to: crisis is welcome, perhaps because we have the seeds in us to overcome it. From now on the cracks would only widen in his music, until the optimistic force of "The Inextinguishable" would become challenged beyond repair.

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