



SEATTLE **SYMPHONY** THOMAS DAUSGAARD

NIELSEN

SYMPHONY NO. 1

SYMPHONY NO. 2 THE FOUR TEMPERAMENTS

CARL NIELSEN

Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 7

1	<i>Allegro orgoglioso</i>	9:10
2	<i>Andante</i>	6:15
3	<i>Allegro comodo</i>	8:30
4	<i>Finale: Allegro con fuoco</i>	9:05

Symphony No. 2, Op. 16, “The Four Temperaments”

5	<i>Allegro collerico</i> (“Choleric”).....	9:01
6	<i>Allegro comodo e flemmatico</i> (“Phlegmatic”).....	4:25
7	<i>Andante malincolico</i> (“Melancholic”)	9:47
8	<i>Allegro sanguineo</i> (“Sanguine”).....	6:50

TOTAL TIME63:07

SEATTLESYMPHONY.ORG

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MADE IN USA

SEATTLE SYMPHONY

Led by Music Director Thomas Dausgaard and recognized as one of the “most vital American orchestras” (NPR), the Seattle Symphony is internationally acclaimed for its inventive programming, community-minded initiatives and superb recordings on the Seattle Symphony Media label. With a strong commitment to new music and a legacy of over 150 recordings, the orchestra has garnered five Grammy Awards, 26 Grammy nominations, two Emmy Awards and was named Gramophone’s 2018 Orchestra of the Year. In recent years, recordings made by the orchestra with Thomas Dausgaard have earned critical acclaim and international honors, including a 2017 Gramophone Award nomination for Mahler’s Symphony No. 10, and a 2019 Best Orchestral Performance Grammy Award nomination for Nielsen’s Symphonies Nos. 3 and 4 — the first installment in the orchestra’s cycle of Carl Nielsen’s symphonies. The Symphony performs in Benaroya Hall in the heart of downtown Seattle from September through July, reaching over 500,000 people annually through live performances and radio broadcasts.





THOMAS DAUSGAARD CONDUCTOR

Music Director of the Seattle Symphony, Danish conductor Thomas Dausgaard is esteemed for his creativity and innovative programming, the excitement of his live performances, and his extensive catalogue of critically acclaimed recordings. He is also Chief Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Laureate of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, and Honorary Conductor of the Orchestra della Toscana and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra. Performing internationally with many of the world's leading orchestras, Dausgaard has appeared at the BBC Proms, Edinburgh International Festival, the Salzburg Festival, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, Tanglewood and the George Enescu Festival; and with the Munich Philharmonic, Berlin Konzerthaus Orchester, Vienna Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and the Philharmonia Orchestra. In North America he has worked with the New York Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and with the Toronto and Montreal symphonies. Guest engagements in Asia and Australia have included performances with the New Japan Philharmonic, Hong Kong Philharmonic, and the Sydney and Melbourne symphonies. Among many honors, Dausgaard has been awarded the Cross of Chivalry by the Queen of Denmark and elected to the Royal Academy of Music in Sweden.

SEATTLE SYMPHONY

2019–2020 SEASON

THOMAS DAUSGAARD

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** On Leave

2019-2020 Season

■ Principal on Symphony
No. 2

▲ Temporary musician
2019-2020 Season

Thanks to the following
musicians who also
performed on this
recording:

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Eugene Bazhanov, violin
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Kelly Farris, violin
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THOMAS DAUSGAARD LEADS THE SEATTLE SYMPHONY IN
NIELSEN'S SYMPHONY NO. 2

NIELSEN: A SYMPHONIC TEMPERAMENT

BY THOMAS DAUSGAARD

In 1892 Carl Nielsen finished the first of his six symphonies. They stand as the hallmarks of his compositional development, not unlike his contemporary Sibelius and his seven symphonies (plus *Kullervo*). While the young Sibelius was working on assimilating traditional Finnish music into his musical language, Nielsen's early fascination was with the classics. Mozart was to become his favorite, who Nielsen said, "composed with the sure-footedness of a sleep-walker." At the time of his First Symphony, however, Beethoven and his Fifth Symphony seemed to be Nielsen's fascination. The way in which the first four sounds, "ba-ba-ba-bam," of Beethoven's Fifth led to the highly concentrated musical material of the work became a guiding light for **Nielsen's First Symphony**. In fact, much of the musical material in this symphony comes from its first seven notes, "bam-ba-ba-ba-ba-bam!" And like Beethoven's Fifth, it develops from darkness to light — from minor to major.

Nielsen created a highly original-sounding work in a traditional form, a symphony. Nielsen's First Symphony is full of vitality and character, original harmonic language and an inclination towards a particular kind of counterpoint; the rhythm in the leading voice is almost always complemented by a counter rhythm in the accompaniment. These traits would continue throughout his oeuvre. Some themes have an air of folk songs, or Nordic ballads. No wonder, as he grew up playing violin in his father's village band. He infused the melodic lines with unusual chromatic turns, giving the music a particular tone — as he himself put it: "such a piece will be able to do some good and open ears and eyes to all

the fat and gravy among Wagner's imitators." Nielsen's First Symphony was a reaction to late-Romantic excess and clichés and is an honest striving for an authentic voice. It is as if Nielsen begins a journey here, trying to hear the music he has inside himself — an inner voice that will gradually unfold over the course of his life.

The first movement of Nielsen's Symphony No. 1 begins with a startling signal — the seven notes — full of vitality and pride: thus the unusual tempo marking, *Allegro orgoglioso* (proud allegro). At its softest point, a lonely clarinet is left to meander, and then, strikingly, a fast fugato coda swirls this concentrated movement to an end. A lyrical song opens the second movement, followed by a gently swaying theme, eventually building to a majestic climax. Most touchingly, individual wind instruments echo the opening song in short phrases as the movement blissfully comes to an enchanted end. Not unlike the third movement of Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony, where the oboe constantly plays off-beat almost as if drunk, Nielsen's third movement similarly displays a humorous wind theme out of sync with the rest of the orchestra. An unusual trio provides contrast with a somber brass chorale in *pianissimo*. The finale highlights the swaying between major and minor and at its central climax has the orchestra in a monumental unison. Only in the fast ecstatic coda can we feel convinced about having reached C major as the final tonality — not unlike some of Bruckner's symphonies in minor, where the turn to major only happens in the last minute.

Mention Nielsen's First Symphony to a Danish orchestral musician and they will light up in joy thinking about this pure and charming work. A growing number of international conductors have taken to Nielsen's symphonies, and one of the most significant was

Leonard Bernstein — though he only recorded Nos. 2–5. How did Bernstein feel about No. 1? In 1988 I was lucky to take part in a master class with Bernstein where he conducted another stunning First Symphony — by Shostakovich. Fascinated as Bernstein was by the individuality apparent in Shostakovich's First Symphony, I was hoping to tempt Bernstein to reconsider performing and recording another individual First, Nielsen's! Judging from his enthusiasm for the young Shostakovich, could he likewise warm to the young Nielsen's vitality and originality? So, for Bernstein's 70th birthday a few weeks later, I optimistically sent him a score to remind him of Nielsen's Symphony No. 1. Unfortunately, Bernstein passed away within a few years. Had he lived longer we might have had a chance to hear his take on this wonderful work!

Starting it while working on his first opera, *Saul and David*, **Nielsen's Second Symphony** has an unusual inspiration. In 1931 Nielsen wrote program notes on this work for *Konsertföreningen* in Stockholm. Excerpts from these notes show how Nielsen himself described its gestation and characters:

I had the idea for 'The Four Temperaments' many years ago at a country inn in Zealand. On the wall of the room where I was drinking a glass of beer with my wife and some friends hung an extremely comical coloured picture, divided into four sections in which 'the Temperaments' were represented and furnished with titles: 'The Choleric', 'The Sanguine', 'The Melancholic' and 'The Phlegmatic'. The Choleric was on horseback. He had a long sword in his hand, which he was wielding fiercely in thin air; his eyes were bulging out of his head, his hair streamed wildly around his face, which was so distorted by rage and diabolical

hate that I could not help bursting out laughing. The other three pictures were in the same style, and my friends and I were heartily amused by the naivety of the pictures, their exaggerated expression and their comic earnestness. But how strangely things can sometimes turn out! I, who had laughed aloud and mockingly at these pictures, returned constantly to them in my thoughts, and one fine day I realized that these shoddy pictures still contained a kind of core or idea and — just think! — even a musical undercurrent! Some time later, then, I began to work out the first movement of a symphony, but I had to be careful that it did not fence in the empty air, and I hoped of course that my listeners would not laugh so that the irony of fate would smite my soul.

The second movement was conceived as the complete opposite of the first. I do not like programme music, but it may still interest my listeners that when I was working out this piece of music, something like this happened. A young man appeared to me. He seems to have been his mother's only son. The mother was nice and amiable, she was a widow and she loved him. He too was extraordinarily nice, and everyone liked him. He was 17–18 years old, his eyes were sky-blue, confident and large. At school he was loved by all, but the teachers were at the same time dismayed and gently resigned; for he had never learned his lessons; but it was impossible to scold him, for everything that exists of idyll and Paradise in nature was reflected in this young man, so one was completely disarmed. Was he merry or serious, was he lively or slow in his movements? He was none of these! His inmost nature was there where the birds sing, where the fish glide silently through the water, where the sun warms and the wind gently brushes one's locks. He was

blonde; his expression could be described as happy, but not self-satisfied, rather with a small touch of quiet melancholy, so you felt an urge to be kind to him. When the air shimmered in the heat he usually lay on the pier at the harbour with his legs out over the edge. I have never seen him dance; he was too inactive for that, but he might well rock his hips in a slow waltz rhythm and it is in this character that I have completed the movement Allegro comodo é flemmatico and tried to maintain a state of mind that is as far from energy, 'Gefühl' and similar feelings as is really possible.

Only once does it rise to an f. What happened? Did a barrel fall in the water from one of the ships in the harbour and disturb the young man as he lay dreaming on the jetty? Who knows? But no matter: a brief moment, and all is calm; the young man falls asleep, nature dozes, and the water is again as smooth as a large mirror.

The third movement attempts to express the basic character of a grave, melancholy person. In the finale, Allegro sanguineo, I have tried to evoke the basic character of a person who storms thoughtlessly on in the belief that the whole world belongs to him and that roast pigeons fly into his mouth without work and care. There is however a brief minute when he becomes afraid of something, and he gasps for breath for a moment in violent syncopations; but this is soon forgotten, and although the music now goes into a minor key, his happy, rather shallow nature is still manifested.

Just once, though, it seems that he has encountered something really serious; at least he meditates over something that is alien to his own nature, and it seems to

affect him, so that while the final march may be happy and bright, it is still more dignified and not as silly and smug as some of his previous bursts of activity.

The symphony is a virtuosic yet heartfelt display of these characters. Although he called it a symphony, could he also have labeled it as a suite of character pieces? I think not: Nielsen manages in each movement to create a symphonic drama with contrasting themes and atmospheres, so that it can be enjoyed as a symphony without the knowledge of its characters.

The scoring is heavier than in the First Symphony and the twists and turns of melodies and harmonies can sometimes seem more willful. But like the First, it displays an irresistible vitality and joy in its inventiveness. The most unusual and touching moment for me comes in the middle of the finale when the music comes to a surprising halt. Out of the silence grows a slow and quiet, almost eerie, four-part fugato in the strings, eventually dying out in a series of unanswered musical questions. Is Nielsen quietly reflecting on whether the four separate characters exist in reality? How we humans might be more complex than any of these characters — or even, like in this fugato, how we might be individual mixtures of them all? This passage takes up a surprisingly substantial part of this otherwise overly sanguine movement — and the subsequent crescendo and final jubilant march gives a sense of deep fulfillment where the sum of the contrasting characters in this symphony add up to something larger than its parts: a portrait of humanity.

The Seattle Symphony is grateful to Joan Watjen for her generous support of **SEATTLE SYMPHONY MEDIA** CDs in memory of her husband Craig.

Recorded in the S. Mark Taper Foundation Auditorium, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, Washington.

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Nielsen's Symphony No. 2 was recorded live in concert April 4, 6 and 7, 2019.

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Symphony No. 1

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Edition Wilhelm Hansen

Symphony No. 2

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Edition Wilhelm Hansen, Edited by Niels Bo Foltmann

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