



THE LAUNY GRØNDAHL
LEGACY

Volume 2



Launy Grøndahl

danacord

CD 1

Launy Grøndahl (1886-1960)

Trombone Concerto (1924) 15:35

[1] I. Moderato assai ma molto maestoso 5:09

[2] II. Quasi una Legenda: Andante grave 5:05

[3] III. Finale. Maestoso (Rondo) 5:15

Thorkild Graae Jørgensen, trombone.

Recorded August 12, 1954, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Studio 1

Violin Concerto, Op 6 (1916) 24:23

[4] I. Allegro non troppo 10:05

[5] II. Nocturne. Andante, molto cantabile 6:06

[6] III. Finale. Allegretto, vivace 8:04

Milton Seibæk, violin.

Recorded August 8, 1956, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Studio 1

Bassoon Concerto (1942) 18:59

[7] I. Allegro moderato 6:05

[8] II. Adagio quasi una fantasia 6:55

[9] III. Rondo giocoso 5:55

Carl Bloch, bassoon.

Recorded June 3, 1956, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Studio 1

CD 2

[1] Pan and Syrinx, Symphonic Poem, Op 5
(1915) Adagio 11:15

Recorded June 3, 1956, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Studio 1

Horn Concerto (1954) 19:28

[2] I. Allegro, molto moderato, maestoso 6:42

[3] II. Tranquillo e semplice 5:28

[4] III. Tempo di Marcia, moderato 7:12

Ingbert Michelsen, horn.

Recorded June 1, 1957, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Studio 1

Symphony, Op 9 (1919) 33:12

[5] I. Andantino con molto moto –
allegro con molto passione 16:47

[6] Intermezzo. Allegretto con moto 6:26

[7] II. Allegro non troppo maestoso e
brillante – Andantino con molto passione 9:57

Recorded June 3, 1956, Danish Broadcasting Corporation, Studio 1

The Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra
Launy Grøndahl, conductor

Grøndahl conducts Grøndahl

Launy Grøndahl's central place in Danish musical life could hardly have been anticipated. Neither his parents nor his four elder brothers had much in the way of musical experience or background, but the boy Launy, born in 1886, must have shown some interest: a local carpenter and folk musician was hired to teach him the violin, for the unusual fee of half a Danish crone per hour and free supper and brandy.

Aged 11, Launy came under new instruction, from the headmaster of the local school in Ordrup, in Copenhagen's northern suburbs. His new teacher was also a composer, now best known as the author of the famous Danish lullaby *Den lille Ole med paraplyen* (The Little Sandman with the Umbrella), and Launy made swift progress: at 14 he played for an audience at the Ordrup Hotel, and he determined on a career in music.

Many full-time musicians play two instruments, and Grøndahl supplemented his violin study with trumpet lessons. In 1902 he took lessons with the noted Danish violinist Anton Bloch, and in 1904 he secured his first professional engagement, as a member of a restaurant band in the seaside town of Skodsborg. The band-leader was Christian Jensen, who later toured Sweden with his ensemble (and Grøndahl). The life of a restaurant musician held little appeal: the salary was poor, and musicians steered clear for fear of damaging their technique and tone by producing 'café-sound' day after day. So, in 1906, Grøndahl jumped at the invitation of Ferdinand Hemme to become a second violinist in Copenhagen's Casino Orchestra. Still studying, unlike most of his colleagues, he became a pupil of Axel Gade (son of the composer Niels W. Gade) and expanded his ambitions, to join either the Tivoli Orchestra or the orchestra of the Royal Chapel (Det Kongelige Kapel, now known as the Royal Danish Orchestra).

However, Grøndahl stayed with the Casino Orchestra for the next 13 years, except for a period of two years where an oboist was required in the orchestra and the orchestra's precarious finances forced Hemme to dismiss him. Finally, in 1919, he broke free and played as a freelance violinist in Copenhagen's best orchestras – not

only the two previously mentioned but also the ensemble belonging to the city's Zoo, where he was in company with many fine musicians under the directorship of Olfert Jaspersen.

Grøndahl's compositions

Besides the violin, Grøndahl studied composition with Ludolf Nielsen, and his first extant work dates from 1908. All his early music is scored for strings except his incidental music Op. 7 to the Norse legend *Tyrfing*, for wind band. Further notable early pieces include a String Quartet Op. 3 (1914), the symphonic poem *Pan and Syrinx* Op. 5 (1915), a Violin Concerto Op. 6 (1916) and a Symphony Op. 9 (1919). He won belated recognition as a composer in 1924, receiving a grant from the Copenhagen Orchestral Association with the blessing of both Carl Nielsen and the conductor of the Royal Danish Orchestra, Georg Høeberg. The grant enabled Grøndahl to undertake a tour of Europe in the first months of 1925. Accompanied by his wife he visited Paris, Vienna and Milan among other cities. Grøndahl's musical language belongs to its time and place, influenced by his contemporary Nielsen and an older tradition that can be traced from Gade's music back to Mendelssohn, while later works have a French accent. He wrote idiomatically for each instrument of the orchestra, as the concertos on this album attest, and in some ways his orchestration has a sophistication lacking in the rougher-hewn textures of Nielsen. He favoured rhapsodic forms which present themes in a sequence of contrasts, without developing them in orthodox fashion; a more germane comparison to Classical forms would be with the Rondo (in fact Grøndahl later added the term to the head of the Trombone Concerto's finale). Early reviews of the Symphony criticised its lack of development while praising the orchestration; the concertos are more balanced in this regard.

Trombone Concerto

The grant of 1924 also gave new impetus to Grøndahl's composition. 'My joy is unconfined,' he told the *Danish Musician's Journal*. 'The very same morning I received the pleasant news, I was so happy that I composed the entire first

movement of my Trombone Concerto. I hope to complete it in time for a performance with Olfert at the Zoo, and I hope it will astonish both the audience and the zoo's other wild inhabitants!

He dedicated the Trombone Concerto to Wilhelm Aarkrog, solo trombonist at the Royal Chapel for many years and regular member of the Zoo orchestra. Programmes at the Zoo often included virtuoso transcriptions, and Aarkrog would take the limelight at the end of a concert with a romance from Verdi's *La Traviata*, a song from Kienzl's opera *Der Evangelimann* or Rousseau's *Pièce Concertante*. Aarkrog's playing, which Grøndahl heard night after night, surely also stimulated the composer's inspiration. However, Grøndahl did not complete the concerto in time for the orchestra's summer season, and the first performance took place on his 39th birthday, 30 June 1925, with Aarkrog and the Tivoli Harmoniorkester (a wind ensemble) conducted by Ferdinand Hemme.

Grøndahl's sketches for the concerto have not survived, but his practice with concertos was to write in a short score for solo instrument and piano. That the work was originally written for trombone and piano is further suggested by two visits to the composer by Aarkrog and the pianist Walter Schrøder (a friend and colleague from both the Casino and the Zoo) on 6 August and 23 September 1924. If one surmises that they visited Grøndahl in order to play through the concerto – and/or make suggestions and criticism – then this not only points to trombone and piano as the original instrumentation but also fixes the time of the work's completion.

At the time of the premiere, Grøndahl was Chairman of the Danish Society of Young Composers. Members of the society organised portrait concerts of their own music, and Grøndahl seized opportunity to have his new concerto performed; he also had the first movement of his Violin Concerto played by violinist Mogens Hansen. The full orchestration of the Trombone Concerto came 18 months after the wind-band version and replaced it as the composer's final, authoritative score. On this recording he conducts the Danish Radio Orchestra and its principal trombone at the time, Thorkild Graae Jørgensen. The concerto has often been subject to unauthentic octave transpositions and radically faster tempi than envisaged by

Grøndahl; the present version has the stamp of authenticity.

Violin Concerto, Op. 6

Grøndahl composed his Violin Concerto, his second most widely played piece, while a member of the Casino Orchestra. His work on the piece was interrupted by being called up for military service between June and November 1916. Thus the first two movements were written between May and July, while the finale was completed on 6 January 1917. The concert is dedicated to violinist Mogens Hansen, but Peder Møller was the soloist at the concerto's first performance in 1919 in the Tivoli Concert Hall conducted by Grøndahl. Hansen later played the solo part at a Tivoli concert in 1925 and for several subsequent Danish Radio concerts. On this recording the soloist is Milton Seibæk, a member of the Royal Danish Orchestra.

Concertos for horn and bassoon

Once he became Conductor of the Danish Radio Orchestra in 1925, Grøndahl found little time for composition. His two major compositions of that period are the Bassoon Concerto (1942) – his first work since the Trombone Concerto of 1924 – and the Horn Concerto (1954-55, his last work).

Notwithstanding Grøndahl's reputation and the fact that both concertos were written for members of the Radio orchestra, they had to be approved for performance by the Statsradiofonien's bedømmelsesudvalg, an official board for judging new broadcast works. The dedicatee of the Bassoon Concerto was Carl Bloch, who gave the premiere on a radio broadcast of 3 May 1943 conducted by Grøndahl. The present performance was recorded shortly before the conductor's retirement in 1956. He dedicated the Horn Concerto to Ingbert Michelsen, a member of the Danish Radio Orchestra since 1942 and a professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Music from 1957 onwards. The present recording documents the concerto's premiere on 1 June 1957.

Pan and Syrinx, Op. 5; Symphony, Op. 9

Inspired by the myth of the Greek god Pan and his frustrated pursuit of the nymph

Syrinx, Grøndahl's tone poem was completed two years before Nielsen's piece of the same title. The premiere was led by the Danish composer and conductor Louis Glass in November 1916 as part of the Dansk Koncertforening series. Dating from spring 1919, the Symphony Op.9 is written in a three-part, single-movement structure with a central intermezzo; the premiere took place on 23 October 1923, also within the Dansk Koncertforening series, conducted by Peder Gram.

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Olfert Jespersen and the Orchestra of Copenhagen Zoo, for whom Grøndahl wrote his Trombone Concerto





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The Launy Grøndahl Legacy, Volume 2

The rhapsodic, mercurial world of Launy Grøndahl: four concertos, a tone-poem and a symphony, covering the whole span of this Danish conductor-composer's creative output. Newly remastered tapes of definitive, composer-led performances, all issued for the first time on CD, include his well-known Trombone Concerto of 1924 but also earlier and later works which present for the first time a rounded creative portrait of this quintessentially Danish musician.

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