



THOMAS JENSEN LEGACY

VOLUME 16



SIBELIUS
SYMPHONIES 5 & 6

DANISH ORCHESTRAL MUSIC *BY*
SCHIERBECK • BRENE • LAURIDSEN

CD 1

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Symphony No. 5 in E flat major, Op. 82 (1915, rev. 1916, 1919) 27:28

[1] I. Molto moderato - Allegro moderato 12:26

[2] II. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto 7:00

[3] III. Allegro molto - Un pochettino largamente 8:06

Live broadcast May 14, 1957, Danish Radio Concert Hall

Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104 (1922-23) 27:07

[4] I. Allegro molto moderato 8:09

[5] II. Allegretto moderato 5:15

[6] III. Poco vivace 3:46

[7] IV. Allegro molto 9:48

Live broadcast November 25, 1962, Danish Radio Concert Hall

[8] Valse lyrique, Op. 96,a (1920) 4:22

Studio recording, September 4, 1947. Tono X25109 (Mtx 3081)

[9] Valse triste, Op. 44,1 (1903-04) 4:32

Studio recording, June 25, 1947. Tono X25109 (Mtx 3032)

Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)

[10] Vltava (Moldau) (from Má Vlast, 1874) 11:37

Studio recording, January 19, 1945. Tono X25041-42

[1] - [7] Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra

[8] - [10] Tivoli Concert Hall Orchestra

CD 2

Laurids Lauridsen (1882-1946)

Little Suite for string orchestra (1939) 7:22

[1] Præludium 2:51

[2] Legende 2:55

[3] Hymne 1:33

Live broadcast February 13, 1962, Danish Radio Concert Hall

Erling Brene (1896-1980)

Concerto senza solennita for flute and chamber orchestra (1933, rev. 1936) 10:13

Johan Bentzon, flute

[4] Allegro vivo 3:11

[5] Andante 3:20

[6] Frettoloso 3:36

Live broadcast February 13, 1962, Danish Radio Concert Hall

Poul Schierbeck (1888-1949)

[7] Chant de Viking Op. 22 (1930) Soloist: Niels Møller 3:27

[8] Ouverture til op. »Fête galante«, Op. 25 (1927) 9:05

[9] Kantate ved universitetets immatrikulationsfest, Op. 16 (1921)

For Strings, Piano, Male Chorus with Solo. Solo: Palle Kibsgaard 11:12

[10] Akademisk festmusik til universitetets immatrikulationsfest, Op. 17 (1922) 4:54

For Stringquartet with Piano

Live broadcast June 8, 1963, Danish Radio Concert Hall

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

Symphony No. 2, Op. 16 'The Four Temperaments' (1901-02) 30:25

[11] I. Allegro collerico 8:54

[12] II. Allegro comodo e flammatico 4:22

[13] III. Andante malincolico 10:08

[14] IV. Allegro sanguineo 6:56

Studio recording, March 17, 1944 by HMV at Stærekassen, Copenhagen,
(DB 17-20, unissued test records)

Thomas Jensen, conductor

Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra

Born on 25 October 1898 in Copenhagen, Thomas Jensen entered the Royal Danish Conservatoire of Music in 1913 where he studied with, among others, Carl Nielsen. Between 1917 and 1919 he was a solo cellist of the Northwest Skåne Orchestra in Helsingborg in Sweden. From 1920 to 1927 he played in the Tivoli Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen, first as 3rd, then 2nd cellist.

The cellist Jensen nurtured ambitions as a conductor which he began to fulfil in 1923, as conductor of the amateur Euphrosyne orchestra. Two years later, his conducting of Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* at Det Ny Theater (The New Theatre) attracted attention, and he decided to further his conducting career with periods of study in Paris and Dresden, returning once in a while to conduct at the Nørrebro Theatre, and at the Tivoli in the event of its permanent conductor Frederik Schnedler-Petersen being indisposed.

When Johan Hye-Knudsen left the Scala Theatre in 1925 to join the more prestigious Royal Theatre, Jensen was encouraged to apply for the vacancy. He chose instead to become conductor of the Philharmonic Society in Aarhus. The post enabled him to take on more purely orchestral repertoire, even when coupled with work at the Aarhus Theatre, but he probably also saw the opportunities afforded by the city's cultural

potential. Plans were afoot for a university (founded in 1928) and even a permanent symphony orchestra. This ambition took another decade to bear fruit with the Aarhus Civic Orchestra, founded and named in January 1935 by Jensen himself.

In the meanwhile, Jensen did not restrict his work to the relatively provincial Aarhus. In 1931 he was invited by the head of Danish radio, Emil Holm, to apply for a new post as a second conductor to the radio's symphony orchestra, assisting the work of Launy Grøndahl and Emil Reesen (and from 1936 Erik Tuxen). Even though several board members suggested hiring him without further ado, the management (mostly Holm) insisted on an open audition. Jensen came third, and the post went instead to the Austrian conductor Fritz Mahler, whose father was a cousin of the composer Gustav Mahler. Jensen's reputation had preceded him, however, so that he nevertheless returned to the DRSO as a guest conductor.

1935 was a watershed year for Jensen. As well as founding the Aarhus City Orchestra he made his debut with the DRSO in November with a programme of light popular music. The two ensembles continued to lie at the centre of his work for the next two decades. With 26 permanent members, the Aarhus Civic Orchestra was a Classically constituted ensemble, whereas the radio orchestra was more than twice as large, expanding from 55 musicians in the 30s to an 'international standard of 92 musicians in 1948. From 1936 to 1948 he also led regular concerts with the Tivoli Orchestra, acting as deputy to Svend Christian Felumb during the Aarhus orchestra's annual summer break.

Jensen's background as a cellist surely influenced his repertoire choices as a conductor. He had played in the Danish premieres of Beethoven's Ninth and Mahler's Fourth and Ninth symphonies, given by the Tivoli Orchestra with Schnedler-Petersen. He had also played in the first performances of Nielsen's Fourth and Fifth symphonies, as well as most of the symphonies by Sibelius, under the baton of the composers. From 1937 onwards he gave only symphonic concerts with the DRSO, declining invitations to take on light-music programmes. His debut in the DRSO's regular Thursday concert series, the most prestigious of their engagements, took place on 2 December 1937 with a programme including the First Cello Concerto of Saint-Saëns and the Symphony by César Franck, and thereafter he gave one or two

concerts in the series each season.

Jensen's connection with the DRSO deepened during the early 50s. The orchestra had come to international attention in concerts led by Fritz Busch at the 1950 Edinburgh Festival, and given a critically acclaimed account of Nielsen's Fourth in London under Launy Grøndahl the following year. In 1952 they embarked on an ambitious tour of the US, giving 39 concerts in 38 cities over 47 days. The punishing schedule did not suit the ageing Grøndahl, and the orchestra's members petitioned for Jensen to replace him. Sharing duties with Erik Tuxen, Jensen conducted 20 performances of Nielsen's Fourth Symphony, as well as works by Dvořák, Grieg and Richard Strauss. This led to a part-time post with the orchestra in 1953, and when Grøndahl retired in 1956 and Tuxen died the following year, Jensen was finally offered the coveted chair of permanent conductor in the autumn of 1957.

The offer came at a propitious time for Jensen. His relations with the management of the Aarhus Civic Orchestra had become frosty over time, and he departed in anger in the spring of 1957. Standing in front of the DRSO musicians for his first rehearsal as permanent conductor a few months later, he was welcomed with applause. However, Jensen, now close to 60, was not the conductor he had been a quarter of a century earlier at that unsuccessful audition. He had begun to suffer from progressive deafness, and he quietly remarked to the musicians that his appointment with them might have come a little too late. The orchestra itself was beginning to feel the pressure of success, which demanded both more concerts and a more challenging repertoire, leaving its musicians less time to rehearse and perform the international repertoire that had made them renowned both in Denmark and beyond.

However, until Jensen's sudden and early death on November 13, 1963, he and the orchestra made a heroic effort to preserve and pass on a fast-vanishing heritage. They were the guardians of a performing culture derived from Nielsen, and from the orchestra's distinguished early conductors. After 1963, years passed without the DRSO engaging a permanent conductor, and both its playing and *esprit de corps* suffered accordingly. Thus the recordings in this series represent something of a last gasp of a lost tradition.

The present compilation explores Jensen's affinity with Danish and Nordic music. Having become familiar with both Sibelius and his symphonies as an orchestral cellist, Jensen conducted them on many occasions such as the two broadcasts reissued here.

The Fifth Symphony was first heard in December 1915 at a gala concert to mark Sibelius's 50th birthday, which was celebrated in Finland as a public holiday. The composer was making revisions to the score even during rehearsals, and after its premiere he continued to work on it, most significantly in the telescoping of the first two movements into a single, continuous span. What turned out to be an intermediate version was performed a year later, and the premiere of the symphony as we know it now took place in December 1919. The opening horn theme is germinal to much that follows, and indeed the whole first movement evolves in a continuous state of development even while enclosing recognisable episodes of development, and in this way the movement prefigures the single-movement Seventh.

The join between what had been the first two movements is marked by an increase of tempo and relaxation of tension, but from that point Sibelius achieves a steady accumulation of momentum through to the tumultuous final bars, which apparently occurred to him only at the last moment. The Andante is one of his song-without-words intermezzo pieces in the mould of his incidental music for the theatre, though it surreptitiously builds towards a crisis which is not so much resolved as brushed aside by the deadpan end to the movement. Following on without a pause, the finale is celebrated for another majestic horn theme which apparently came to Sibelius as he watched a flock of swans above his home one day, though a more prosaic clue to their presence might also be detected in the honking and chattering of the strings beneath.

This self-critical process of elision eventually and perhaps inevitably resulted in Sibelius producing nothing at all for the last 25 years of his life (though alcoholism, celebrity and a generous state income surely played their own part in his great silence). Before reaching that point, Sibelius wrote two more symphonies, though the formal closures of the Sixth emulate the Andante of the Fifth; the middle two

movements stop in mid-thought as though he had run out of manuscript paper. On either side of them, the opening and closing movements contain the smoothest, most untouchable polyphony in his output; the critic William Mann once compared this later style of his to a ball dipped in machine oil.

Between the two symphonies, Sibelius wrote a *Valse lyrique* in 1920 which is (undeservedly) less well-known than the *Valse triste* from 1903-4. In both waltzes, the example of Tchaikovsky draws from Sibelius string writing of the utmost delicacy. There is, though, a story behind the *Valse triste*, which Sibelius composed as part of the incidental music for a play, *Kuolema* (Death) by his brother-in-law, Arvid Jarnfelt. It accompanies a scene where a sick woman rises from her bed to join a gathering of spectral figures in the dance. She endeavours to catch their gaze, but they elude her. She falls back, exhausted, and then rejoins the dance in a frenzy, until she hears a knock at the door. As the ghostly visitors vanish, the figure of Death himself enters.

The story of the course of the river Vltava is told by Smetana in no less vividly naturalistic terms, as the best-known tone-poem of the six which make up *Má Vlast*. The two sources for the river dance and entwine on flutes and clarinets before flowing into the string theme that represents the river's broad flow. It passes a hunt, and then a village wedding with a polka, before night falls, and Rusalka-like water nymphs play on the water. The Vltava theme gathers pace before it is broken to evoke the St John Rapids, and soon makes a triumphal arrival in the city of Prague. As though we had sailed down the river, we watch it recede into the distance, on its way to join the Elbe.

The theme of CD2 is Jensen's dedicated work on behalf of Danish composers often overlooked even in his homeland. Laurids Lauridsen (1882-1946) became blind as a child, and learned music at the Royal Institute for the Blind in Copenhagen. He went on to study at the conservatoire as an organist, completing his studies in 1904, but the capital afforded few opportunities for work. Eventually he found a position in the north-Jutland city of Skive, where he lived and worked until his death in 1946. Alongside many pieces for organ, his output includes songs and chamber music, much of it unpublished in standard notation, having been composed in braille;

several manuscripts were probably destroyed in a fire at Tivoli in 1944 during the German occupation.

The *Lille Suite* (Little Suite) is late Romantic in style, especially the opening movement, though the spirit of Nielsen makes itself felt in the searching character of the finale's main theme. Lauridsen creates a dense weave of string texture in all three movements, which he develops from small motifs such as the F-G-F-D-E-F motif of the central *Legende*. Like the rest of his music, the suite is hardly known now, but the Århus Civic Orchestra played it under Jensen in 1939, and in several more broadcast performances during the war. The Danish Radio SO played it on just one occasion, at this broadcast concert from February 1962 which also featured the *Concerto senza solennita* by Erling Brene.

Brene only began to study music after graduating from business school. He was already 25 years old when he joined the violin and composition classes at the conservatoire in Copenhagen in 1921, and he soon left to pursue private studies with the composer Ludolf Nielsen. His style took a neoclassical turn during the 1930s; around this time, encouraged by Knudåge Riisager, Brene made contact with the politically engaged Forsøgsscene, for which he composed stage music, and Det unge Tonekunstnerselskab (Young Composers Association), which performed a number of his chamber and orchestral works. However, he never broke through to achieve wider recognition.

Premiered in 1933 under the aegis of Det Unge Tonekunstnerselskab and the Dansk Koncertforening, this concerto for flute and chamber orchestra bears the imprint of Riisager and Stravinsky in its light, neoclassical vein. Emil Reesen conducted both the first performance and the broadcast premiere two years later. The soloist on both occasions was Johan Bentzon, who became the longstanding principal flautist of the DRSO, and a central figure in the orchestra's upturn of fortune and reputation during the postwar era. Bentzon is the soloist once more in this 1963 performance, playing the revised version of the concerto made by Brene in 1936.

In contrast to Lauridsen and Brene, Poul Schierbeck took a central role in Danish musical life which is reflected by this 1963 broadcast of a concert to mark the 75th

anniversary of his birth. Having learnt several instruments as a child, he read Law at university with the intention to make it his career. Changing tack, he turned to music, studying piano with Henrik Knudsen (a friend of Carl Nielsen's) and organ with Paul Hellmuth, as well as theory and composition with Thomas Laub and Carl Nielsen himself. In 1916 Schierbeck took up a post as organist at the church in Skovshoved, a coastal town north of Copenhagen, where the choir included the soprano Sylvia Larsen, whom he married in 1919.

Schierbeck's output as a composer naturally centres on vocal music: songs, cantatas and church music. Best known are his lyrical patriotic songs, but *Chant de Viking* shows Schierbeck from a different angle, as an individual and mature composer who has shaken himself free from the dominant influence of Nielsen on his contemporaries. The source of the piece is *Bjarkemål*, a poem by N.F.S. Grundtvig based on an 11th-century epic, telling the death of the legendary Danish king Rolf Krake. Schierbeck set the text in a French translation by Paul Verrier; this performance features the dramatic Danish tenor Niels Møller (1922-95) on top form.

Composed between 1926 and 1930, *Fête galante* is the only opera by Schierbeck to reach the stage. It was put on at The Royal Theater in 1931 and taken off the bill after seven performances. Schierbeck made cuts and revisions at the behest of the theatre, but they did not restage it until 1960, when *Fête galante* found a place in the repertoire for a few seasons. In 1922, he was commissioned for pieces to mark the matriculation of students at the university in Copenhagen: Op.16 is a celebratory cantata to a text by Hans Hartvig Seedorff, to be sung by a choir of university students. Op.17 is a set of pieces for piano quintet, designed for performance after the cantata; it shares with the *Academic Festival Overture* of Brahms both the solemnity of the occasion and the high spirits of university life.

The album ends with the Second Symphony of Carl Nielsen, recorded on 78rpm masters in 1944. It apparently survives in a single test pressing, held by the Royal Library in Copenhagen, which is the source for this remastering. The recording was made for HMV but the company had no manufacturing plant in Denmark. The pressing process usually took place in England, but this was impossible during the German occupation of Denmark. The Electrola plant in Hannover produced other

Danish HMV records during the war until it was partially destroyed by Allied bombardment, during which many original matrices were lost. Despite its sonic limitations, this test pressing holds considerable interest as the first recording of any symphony by Nielsen, and as a cultural artefact produced during a time of struggle and suffering for the Danish people. The symphony's subtitle refers to the four bodily fluids of ancient medical theory: the violent (*Allegro collerico*), the indolent (*Allegro flemmatico*), the melancholy (*Andante malincolico*) and the joyously optimistic (*Allegro sanguineo*). According to the composer, he had once visited a tavern in the rural province of Zealand and found them represented by a comical wall-painting; no deeper programme for the symphony was to be understood.

Furthermore, as Nielsen remarked in a 1926 programme-note, each movement also contains its contrasting expressions: 'The violent character can have its gentler moments, the melancholy its violent or lighter moments, and the exuberantly joyous can become thoughtful, indeed quite serious; yet only for a moment. The torpid, the indifferent type, however, has difficulty getting out of his phlegmatic state, which is why this movement is both short (he can't be bothered) and unvarying in its development.'

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The Thomas Jensen Legacy, Volume 16

Broadcast performances of the Fifth and Sixth symphonies complete a Sibelius cycle within the Thomas Jensen collection on Danacord. Their dramatic sweep and control demonstrate the conductor's special affinity with this music, which he played under the composer's direction as a cellist. Jensen worked tirelessly for Danish composers throughout his career; this volume includes newly published performances of works by three composers, now almost unknown outside their home country, who emerged from the shadow cast by Carl Nielsen to write in a distinctively individual but still quintessentially Danish idiom.

CD 1

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

[1]-[3] Symphony No.5

in E flat Op.82 27:28

Broadcast May 14, 1957

[4]-[7] Symphony No.6

in D minor Op.104 27:07

Broadcast November 25, 1962

[8] Valse lyrique Op.96a 4:22

[9] Valse triste Op.44 No.1 4:32

Studio recording, June 25, 1947. Tono X25109

Bedřich Smetana (1824-84)

[10] Vltava (Moldau) (Má Vlast) 11:37

Studio recording, June 25, 1947. Tono X25109

CD 2

Laurids Lauridsen (1882-1946)

[1]-[3] Little Suite for string orchestra 7:22

Erling Brene (1896-1980)

[4]-[6] Concerto senza solennita 10:13

Johan Bentzon, flute

Live broadcast February 13, 1962

Poul Schierbeck (1888-1949)

[7] Chant de Viking Op.22 3:27

Niels Møller, tenor

[8] Fête galante Op.25 - Overture 9:05

[9] Kantate ved universitetets

immatrikulationsfest Op.16 11:12

[10] Akademisk festmusik til universitetets

immatrikulationsfest Op.17 4:54

Live broadcast June 8, 1963

Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)

[11]-[14] Symphony No.2 Op.16

'The Four Temperaments' 30:25

Studio recording, March 17, 1944 by HMV

at Størekassen, Copenhagen,

(DB 17-20, unissued test records)

Thomas Jensen, conductor

Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra



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DACOCD 926

2 CD

Total playing time:

75:54 + 77:40

First release

CD 1 [1] - [7]

CD 2 [1] - [10]

Transferred by

Claus Byrith

Cover photo

Svend Ravnkilde

Cover design

Hannah Jørgensen

Executive producer

Jesper Buhl

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LC 07075

