



# Carl NIELSEN

## *Suite for String Orchestra, op. 1*

**Carl August Nielsen** (9 June 1865 – 3 October 1931) is widely recognized as Denmark's greatest composer, and is also recognized as being a skilled conductor and a violinist. Brought up by poor but musically talented parents on the island of Funen, he demonstrated his musical abilities at an early age. At first, he did not gain enough recognition for his works to be able to support himself. During the concert which saw the premiere of his first symphony on 14 March 1894 conducted by Johan Svendsen, Nielsen played in the second violin section. However, the symphony was a great success when played in Berlin in 1896, contributing significantly to his reputation. Nielsen became increasingly in demand to write incidental music for the theater and cantatas to mark special occasions, both of which provided a welcome source of additional income. From 1914 to 1926, he conducted the orchestra of Musikforeningen or the Music Society and in 1916, he took a post teaching at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. The strain of his dual career, constant separation from his wife Anne Marie (and the accompanying affairs) and the devastation of World War I greatly influenced his late music, which includes his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, and Clarinet and Flute concerti. While his early music was inspired by composers such as Brahms and Grieg, he soon started to develop his own style, first experimenting with progressive tonality and later diverging even more radically from the standards of composition still common at the time. Sir Colin Davies, who undertook a celebration of Nielsen with the London Symphony Orchestra in 2010, noted that "there's such destructive force in the man and he lets it loose in the most surprising ways."

Written when he was 22 years old and still studying at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Carl Nielsen's **Suite for String Orchestra, op. 1** clearly demonstrates the early talents of Denmark's most prominent composer. The work was first performed on September 8, 1888 at the Tivoli Hall in Copenhagen to rave reviews. One review at the time noted, "The young man obviously has a great deal on his musical mind that he wants to say, and what he told us on Saturday was presented in a beautiful, concise form, modestly and attractively, with excellent part-writing and an appealing fullness of sound that reveals an excellent eye for the string material." The work is written in three movements: Prelude, Intermezzo, and Finale. The first movement is romantic, lyrical, and displays the use of a cyclical compositional method the composer would use in future works. The second movement is a pleasant, jovial waltz, with sporadic flat-seventh grace notes (a technique that would become characteristic in the music of Nielsen). The third movement is composed in a sonata-allegro form, recalling themes from the first movement, starting slow then picking up to a boisterous finale.