



# CARL NIELSON

## *Flute Concerto*

**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.

Carl Nielsen's *Concerto for Flute and orchestra* (D.F.119) was written in 1926. The concerto, in two movements, was generally well received at its premiere in Paris in October 1926 where Nielsen had introduced a temporary ending. The first complete version was played in Copenhagen the following January. The flute concerto has now become part of the international repertoire. In 1921, Nielsen heard the Copenhagen Wind Quintet rehearsing some music by Mozart and was struck by the group's tonal beauty and musicianship. That same year, he wrote his Wind Quintet expressly for this ensemble. Furthermore, he promised that he would write a concerto for each member of the quintet, and started with the flautist Holger Gilbert-Jespersen (1890-1975). As a result of poor health, he was only able to complete one more concerto before his death, the Clarinet Concerto, for the group's clarinetist, Aage Oxenvad, which he completed in 1928. An advance from the rather traditional style of Nielsen's Violin Concerto, it reflects the modernistic trends of the 1920s and lacks tonal stability. The work is generally neoclassical in style, but includes only two movements instead of three, as in classical concerto form.