

ESPANSIVA

CARL NIELSEN

WORKS FOR 4 HAND PIANO

FROM THE OPERA SAUL OG DAVID

1. Prelude to the Fourth Act, Allegro burrascoso 3.20
2. Battle Music with the Curtain Down, Allegro violente 4.03

SYMPHONY NO. 3, SINFONIA ESPANSIVA, OP. 27

3. Allegro espansivo 11.31
4. Andante pastorale 8.43
5. Poco allegretto 6.27
6. Finale - Allegro.....9.10

NIELS JØRGENSEN/CARL NIELSEN ARR. KRISTOFFER HYLDIG

7. Højby Riffle Club March (Højby Skyttmarch) 2.28
- Total:.....45.44

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DISCOVERING CARL NIELSEN

By Rikke Sandberg

Who has not dreamt of chancing upon a completely unknown piece of music up in an old attic by one of the really great masters? A great great grandmother Anna who had briefly known Brahms and had a short romance dedicated to her. Just think. When I, because of a concert query about a piano duet, with Carl Nielsen as the prime focus of a music festival, was googling around trying to find some four-handed piece by Carl Nielsen – knowing full well that such a piece did not exist – I was very, very surprised indeed to suddenly come across the mention of Carl Nielsen's third symphony, *Sinfonia Espansiva*, in the composer's own four-handed arrangement. I contacted various Carl Nielsen societies and associations, but it was not until I got in touch with a librarian at *The Royal Library* that I struck gold. Of course – librarians know everything! The library did have Carl Nielsen's own arrangement of his third symphony, in manuscript form and, in all probability, not performed since Carl Nielsen felt the need to promote his symphony to various conductors and musical directors and therefore performed it, often with the pianist Henrik Knudsen, his good friend and colleague, at his side.

It was, then, not exactly a new or unknown work, but in this arrangement, carried out originally by the composer himself, it was quite a thing to be the first pianist to unearth it.

The first frame of reference for studying it was of course the numerous recordings of the symphony that exist played by an orchestra. But... if one plays the four-handed version with the same force and zest that an orchestra is capable of, it can be a bit of

an earful to listen to it coming from a piano. On the other hand, it opens up a whole world for forming and phrasing, for bringing into the light parts that are difficult to make out in the tutti orchestra and, in general, for moulding the symphony into a new and independent work for a four-handed piano. The rehearsal time one has, two pianists together, is far more detailed and fuller of possibilities than the few days an orchestra has to shape it with a conductor before a concert or recording. The opportunities for performing the work at concerts are also far more numerous than those an orchestra has during a season. So we have allowed the work to grow on us and become its own four-handed composition, rather than a copy of a symphonic work. Kristoffer and I have developed certain modifications. We have added certain parts from the orchestral score which we felt were lacking, have octavated certain passages that seemed rather thin and corrected harmonies and notes that diverged from the orchestral score. In other words, we have taken certain liberties. Well aware that Carl Nielsen was well known for listening attentively to musicians and not infrequently changing his works as they suggested, we have not had any pangs of conscience about this, as we have at no point changed anything that was not in agreement with the orchestral score and thereby the composer's own indications.

In connection with immortalising the work, Kristoffer and I contacted *The Royal Library* once again since, who knows, there might just be more four-handed material? And there was. Though extremely short. There are two sections of the piano score of *Saul and David*, arranged by Carl Nielsen himself for four-handed piano. The rest of the piano score has been arranged by Henrik Knudsen, but the two short sections, the *Prelude to Act IV* and *Battle Music with the Curtain Down*, were taken care of by Carl Nielsen himself. Rather difficult to organise really if one is rehearsing the opera, for an extra pianist has to be called in for the two sections, but a gift to Kristoffer and me and our recording project.

Just when we thought that was everything, my partner asked me if I had seen in the newspaper a while back that the *Tivoli Amusement Park*, while tidying up their archives, had come across a four-handed work by Carl Nielsen. He found the article for me, and I contacted Tivoli – yes, that was the case. *Højby Rifle Club March* had been discovered. Kristoffer and I were provided with the score and were slightly surprised at how fragmentary and deficient it was. But the idea was there, and the story behind it, both regarding Klaus Berntsen, to whom the *Højby Rifle Club March* was dedicated, and regarding the theory that it is the only composition by Carl Nielsen's father, Niels 'Painter' Jørgensen, were just too good to ignore.

So Kristoffer took the march into his loving care, supported by Nielsen's own arrangements for solo piano and military ensemble. He also did a fair copy of the scores from *Saul and David* and chose here to add some song parts to the piano parts to improve the form, cohesion and harmony. And so here we are, with Carl Nielsen's collected works for four-handed piano in a world-first recording. We chose to play on two grand pianos rather than one, because it gives us a far greater chance to phrase and use pedals individually and also produces a larger, finer sound picture. We used a Fazioli for the secondo parts, as this instrument has an incredibly rich and round bass, and a Steinway for the primo parts, as the descant on this instrument is exceptionally sparkling and beautiful. We hope that you will enjoy this first recording of Carl Nielsen's own four-handed piano arrangement of his orchestral works.

CARL (AUGUST) NIELSEN

Carl Nielsen was born on 9 June 1865 in Sortelung, near Nørre Lyndelse on Funen. His father, who was a painter, was also active as a village musician, and while still a boy young Carl played in his father's dance band. At the same time, he took part in the local amateur orchestra, *Braga*, whose repertoire, apart from entertainment and dance music, also included symphonies from the (Vienna) classical period. When only 14 years old, he gained a position as a trombone player in the regimental band in Odense. Alongside his work in the band, he played string quartets with his friends and, on his own, studied Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*. These years saw his first real attempts at composing – mainly works of chamber music in the classical style.

Thanks to benefactors, Carl Nielsen got the opportunity to travel to Copenhagen, where he studied at the *Copenhagen Conservatory* from 1884 to 1886. His main instrument was the violin, which he studied under a former pupil of Professor Joseph Joachim, Valdemar Tofte. In addition, he received lessons in music theory (J.P.E. Hartmann and Orla Rosenhoff), piano (Gottfred Matthison-Hansen) and the history of music (Niels W. Gade). After his time at the conservatory, he continued to study music theory under Rosenhoff, and in 1888 he felt mature enough to publish his op. 1, *Suite for Strings*. The following year, he was appointed as violinist in *The Royal Danish Orchestra*, a position he held right up until 1905. In recognition of his talent, he was awarded *Det Ancker'ske Legat* in 1890, which enabled him to take a study trip to Europe. During his travels in 1891, he married the sculptress Anne Marie Brodersen, who remained his wife for the rest of his life, though the marriage went through serious crises for several periods.

During the 1890s, Carl Nielsen consolidated his position as one of the country's promising young composers, with works such as his *Symphony no. 1*, op. 7 (1890-92), the J.P. Jacobsen songs, op. 4 and 6 (1891), the *Violin Sonata*, op. 9 (1895) as well as the choral work *Hymnus amoris* (1896-97). The years around the turn of the century further saw two operas, *Saul and David* (1898-1901) and *Masquerade* (1904-06), the latter quickly gaining the status of a *Danish National Opera*. From 1901, he was granted a Civil List pension, which meant that he was no longer obliged to take private pupils in order to earn a living for his family. A couple of years later, he signed a contract with the publishing firm Wilhelm Hansen, which published practically all his works up until 1924.

Alongside his career as a composer, Carl Nielsen held a number of key positions in Danish musical life: in the 1908-14 period he was Kapellmeister of *The Royal Theatre*, after which, between 1915 to 1927, he conducted the concerts of the *Music Society*. In 1915, he became a member of the executive committee at the conservatory, where he also taught theory and composition from 1915 to 1919. Lastly, he was also an executive committee member of both the *Danish Association of Composers* and *The Society for the Publication of Danish Music* (now Edition S).

From his very earliest works, Carl Nielsen's compositions were permeated by a classicist aesthetic one that consciously sought to avoid any trace of late-Romanticism. But during the 1910s and 1920s, he gradually oriented himself towards the new tendencies in European music. Little by little, he incorporated more modernist elements into his music, but without ever renouncing his highly characteristic personal style.

Alongside the increasingly modernist instrumental works, Nielsen collaborated with, among others, his friend Thomas Laub in reforming the popular Danish song tradition. This resulted in a series of collections of simple strophic songs that consciously sought to develop further the ideal that typified J.A.P. Schulz's *Lieder im Volkston* (1784).

Carl Nielsen had a pronounced literary talent, which resulted in his childhood recollections *My Funen Childhood*, which are surprisingly sober and unsentimental, and the collection of essays *Living Music*, where his anti-Romantic aesthetical ideas are clearly expressed. Furthermore, he was an extremely assiduous letter writer – the printed edition of his correspondence fills no less than 12 volumes.

From his late youth onwards, Nielsen suffered from a weak heart, and he died on 3 October 1931 of a heart attack, 66 years old.





THE PIANO MUSIC FOR FOUR HANDS

During most of his career as a composer, Carl Nielsen wrote piano works, but only works for two hands. On a couple of occasions, however, he arranged his own works for four-hand piano, namely two sections of the opera *Saul and David* and his *Symphony no. 3*.

Saul and David was composed in 1899-1901 and given its first performance at *The Royal Theatre* on 28 November 1902. It was Carl Nielsen's close friend and partner, the pianist Henrik Knudsen, who was responsible for the piano score that was to be used during the rehearsing of the opera. And during the summer of 1901 the two worked intensively on getting the piano score ready for the rehearsals that were about to begin. In a letter dated 25 July 1901, Carl Nielsen writes that Knudsen can start on the piano score for the fourth act, but that for the time being he need not do anything about the prelude and the 'Battle Music with the Curtain Down', i.e. precisely the two passages that Carl Nielsen himself arranged for four hands. There is no concrete statement from Carl Nielsen himself as to why he wished to have these two passages for four hands, but one can imagine that he felt the dramatic character of the music could best be expressed in a four-hand version, even though it is a somewhat unusual plan for a piano score that otherwise is only for two hands. But Carl Nielsen was sure about this, and when the piano score was printed in 1903-04, it was with the two four-hand passages.

Carl Nielsen's third symphony, *Sinfonia espansiva*, was composed in 1910-11 and given its first performance on February 28th 1912 with *The Royal Danish Orchestra*, conducted by the composer. Carl Nielsen personally made a piano arrangement for four hands that was used to promote the symphony at home and abroad. When the German conductor Siegmund von Hausegger visited Carl Nielsen in Copenhagen in April 1913, the

pianists Henrik Knudsen and Christian Christiansen played the symphony for Haus-egger, and shortly afterwards the good friend of Carl Nielsen, the Dutch composer and pianist Julius Röntgen, took part in a private performance of the symphony in Amsterdam, at which no one less than the cellist Pablo Casals and the English pianist and musical analyst Donald Francis Tovey were present. This effort to market the symphony was soon to bear fruit and during the first years after the first performance it was performed at a number of venues in Europe and Scandinavia. In March 1913, Nielsen signed a contract with the publisher C.F. Kahnt in Leipzig for the publication of the symphony in full score, instrumental parts and a piano score, and that same year the publisher had the four-hand piano arrangement in their spring catalogue. But for some unknown reason this publication was never realised. Today, the only preserved complete source of the piano arrangement is the composer's pencil draft, which has been the basis for the present recording.

As mentioned earlier, Carl Nielsen's father, Niels Jørgensen, was a village musician, and in the 1860s the politician and folk high school man Klaus Berntsen had asked him to compose a march for Højby Rifle Club, which Berntsen led. When Berntsen had become prime minister many years later, he managed to ensure that the march on 26 November 1910 was to be carried out with a regimental band at the artillery barracks at Christianshavn – an event which both Carl Nielsen and Berntsen attended. *Højby skyttemarch* [Højby Rifle Club March] became quite popular, and in 1911 the pianist and conductor Olfert Jespersen had it printed in versions for piano, salon orchestra and brass band.

In early 2023, quite unexpectedly, some original Carl Nielsen manuscripts were unearthed in Tivoli in connection with an examination of the amusement park's archives. It turned out that these manuscripts, apart from some unidentified sketches, included two piano arrangements of the Højby march for two and four hands re-

spectively. The one for two hands was complete, whereas that for four hands was incomplete. When Carl Nielsen made these two arrangements remains uncertain, but judging by the writing and compared with the unidentified sketches, it seems likely that they were made around 1910. Since Olfert Jespersen published a printed piano version in 1911, it is hardly likely that Carl Nielsen's version is from after 1911. The four-hand arrangement, which can be heard on this CD, has been prepared by Kristoffer Hyldig on the basis of Carl Nielsen's highly fragmentary sketches.

Niels Bo Foltmann, 2024



RIKKE SANDBERG

Rikke Sandberg has been part of the elite in Danish musical life since her studies in New York and Copenhagen, where she gave her debut concert from the *Royal Danish Academy of Music's* Soloist Class in 2002, and is known as an unusually expressive and distinctive pianist. She is ever-present and completely immersed in the music, and her skills and talent seem to have no limits – her repertoire ranges from early baroque to contemporary compositional music.

Rikke Sandberg has been a soloist with most Danish orchestras as well as *Leipzig Chamber Orchestra*, and has also recorded piano concerts with the *Danish National Symphony Orchestra*, the *Luxembourg Philharmonic* and the *Sønderjylland Symphony Orchestra*. She has collaborated with musicians and conductors such as Sabine Meyer, Sergei Dogadin, Radek Barborak, Elsebeth Dreisig, Alondra de la Parra, John Storgårds, Håkan Hardenberger and Adam Fischer.

Most recently, she has recorded a CD with solo works by Brahms and a CD with Herman D. Koppel's 3rd *Piano Concerto* on *Danacord*, both with 6-star reviews in *International Music Magazine*. Previous CD releases have featured solo works by Rachmaninov, Brahms, Rachmaninov's 2nd *Piano Concerto*, Liszt's 2nd *Piano Concerto* and Anders Koppel's *Double Concerto for Piano and Saxophone* with Benjamin Koppel and the *Danish National Symphony Orchestra*, in addition to chamber music and film music with the *Danish Chamber Orchestra*.

Rikke Sandberg has performed at festivals and in concert halls across most of Europe and in large parts of Asia and the USA. In Denmark she is the initiator and artistic director of the *Nordic Chamber Music Festival*.

Rikke Sandberg is, among other things, a recipient of the *Danish Music Critic's Artist Prize*, *Helge and Merete Finsen's Honorary Legacy*, *Jacob Gade's Store Legacy*, *Aennchen & Eigil Harby's Fonds' Legacy*, *Victor Schiøler's Mind Delegate* and *Sonning's Talent Award*. She has been *Classical Musician of the Year* in *Dagbladet Politiken* and received the *P2 AMADEUS award*, *CD of the Year*.

Rikke Sandberg is one of the most sought-after orchestral pianists in Scandinavia and is often included in concerts by the *Danish National Symphony Orchestra*, the *Royal Danish Orchestra's* symphony concerts, regional orchestras and the *Malmö Symphony Orchestra*. Here she has played large solo orchestral parts under the direction of such great conductors as Luisi, Petrenko, Nosedá, Schiff and others.

Rikke Sandberg teaches major students and chamber music at the *Royal Danish Academy of Music*. She is often jury chairman, and jury member of classical competitions such as *Jugend Musiziert*, *Steinway Festival*, *Pianister i Nord*, *Unge Spiller Klassisk* and *Jakob Gade's Junior Competition*.

In 2025, with a large donation from the *Carl Nielsen and Anne-Marie Carl Nielsens Foundation*, Rikke will record the complete works by Carl Nielsen for solo piano on *OUR Recordings*. This recording will include several works and arrangements by Carl Nielsen that have never been recorded before.

A few quotes from reviews:

"Sandberg plays with such authority that few Danish pianists would be able to keep up with her richly nuanced and superbly controlled playing" *Jyllandsposten* (DK)

"She joins cascades of notes into long airy passages with sharply drawn details, colourful nuances and an expressive declamatory presence that commands attention" and *"She is first and foremost an artist, not a performer over-interested in display. The listener gets a sincere, deeply concentrated and completely faithful picture of the music"* *Politiken* (DK)

"Magic took place in the Queen's Hall when the pianist Rikke Sandberg inaugurated the new Steinway grand piano in Den Sorte Diamant. Rarely has one heard such a poetic and soulful interpretation of Brahms's romantic piano sound." *Jyllandsposten* (DK)

"Few Danish pianists make as big a difference to our musical life as she does" *Politiken* (DK)

"In the 'Chaconne for the Left Hand' she leaves room for spontaneity. Nothing sounds heated or overplayed; Sandberg prefers to create calmly and carefully. That does not mean that she loses sight of the virtuoso dimension. Quite the opposite, because she plays the 'Hungarian Dance No. 1 in G minor' full of fire and sparkling esprit. The music flows elegantly and clearly, full of brilliance and Sandberg plays with bold caesuras. The 'Intermezzo No. 3' from Op. 76 appears fine and delicate and this great pianist begins with such restrained dynamics that it takes your breath away." *Piano News* (Germany)



KRISTOFFER HYLDIG

Kristoffer Hyldig is one of Denmark's leading pianists, recognized for his musicality and a highly personal, sensitive approach to music. Known for his versatility, he is in demand as a soloist, as well as chamber musician and lied accompanist, and his concerts are often broadcasted on *Danish Radio*. He is a founding member of *Messiaen Quartet Copenhagen*, where his work comprises artistic programming as well as closely working with composers, commissioning and premiering pieces. As a passionate chamber musician he has shared the stage with renowned musicians, such as Carolin Widmann and Ray Chen and he nurtures a close musical relationship with the internationally renowned Wagner soprano Brit-Tone Müllertz.

Hyldig made his debut in 2010 at the *Royal Danish Academy of Music* after completing his studies with Niklas Sivelöv and Tove Lønskov. The works of Messiaen have always been an important part of his repertoire, and besides *Oiseaux Exotiques*, the complete songs and *Quartet for the end of Time* Hyldig also performed *Turangalila* with the *Royal Danish Orchestra* conducted by Michael Boder. *Gramophone Magazine*, UK, selected his recording of Messiaen's *Harawi* with Hetna Regitze Bruun as an Editors' Choice.

In 2009 Hyldig received the jury's special prize in the *EU Piano Competition* in addition to being awarded the *Jacob Gade's Grant*, *Léonie Sonning's Talent Prize* and the *Danish Music Critic's Artist Prize*. He has also participated in several *Zentropa* movies both in the soundtrack and on screen as well as providing incidental music used in plays at *The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen*.

His recording of Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant Jesus*, released on *OUR Recordings* in 2023, received overwhelming reviews both national and international, and received the *Danish Radio P2 Award as Album of the Year 2023* and the leading Danish newspaper *Politiken* awarded the release as *Best CD of the year 2023*.

A few quotes from reviews of Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant Jesus*:

Classics Today (US) 10/10 (Max) Jed Distler, August issue 2023

"The pianist's instinctive feeling for and total command of the composer's colorfully intricate piano writing impressed the hell out of me. I imagined just how well Hyldig might fare in Messiaen's solo piano music. Imagine no longer. We now have the reality of Hyldig's new recording of the piano cycle 'Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus', and it's magnificent in every way".

International Piano, UK, Bruce Morrison, September issue 2023

"Even alongside Steven Osborne's superb recording and Bertrand Chamayou's recent account, as well as, of course, Yvonne Loriod's naturally authentic account, Kristoffer Hyldig takes his place among the 'Regards' 'finest interpreters."

Gramophone UK, Harriet Smith, August Issue 2023

"As the cycle unfolds, Hyldig is a persuasive celestial tour guide, bringing out the three main ideas that underpin Messiaen's vast structure while ensuring they're an innate part of the narrative".

Piano News 4-2023, Germany. Carsten Dürer: Interpretation: 6 Klang: 6

"Messiaen's opus is a true cycle, one held together by a few recurring themes that represent something magical-metaphysical. And it is precisely this cohesion that Hyldig

is able to portray, so that the listener is drawn into the spell of the phases of Jesus' genesis and listens to the interpreter with emphasis. It is a remarkably intense and impressive presentation of one of the great piano cycles of the 20th century. Be sure to listen!"

Telegraph, London Newspaper - June 7. Ivan Hewet 2023 5/5 (Max)

"A magnificent new recording of Messiaen's piano masterpiece"









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- IS** Instrumental solo
- ID** Instrumental duo



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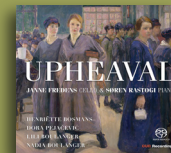
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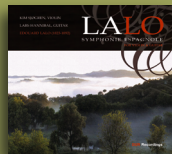
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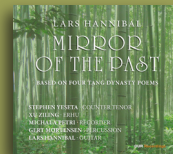
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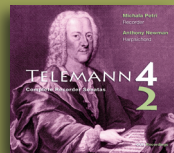
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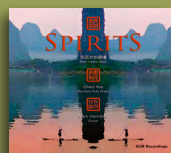
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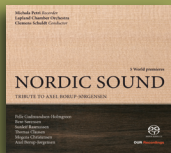
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Mattsson & McGehee



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