

Hidden Gems: A Scandinavian Celebration

Saturday, November 14, 2015 • 7:30 PM
First Free Methodist Church

Orchestra Seattle
Seattle Chamber Singers
Clinton Smith, conductor



JEAN SIBELIUS (1865 – 1957)
Preludio from *Press Celebrations Music*, JS 137

Andante (ma non troppo)

CARL NIELSEN (1865 – 1931)
Sønnen, Op. 18

Andante tranquillo — Molto agitato — Andante tranquillo

JEAN SIBELIUS
Snöfrid, Op. 29

Allegro molto — Andantino — Pesante — Andante (ma non troppo lento)

Dana Durasoff, speaker

—Intermission—

CARL NIELSEN
Symphony No. 2, Op. 16 (“The Four Temperaments”)

Allegro collerico
Allegro comodo e flemmatico
Andante malincolico
Allegro sanguineo

Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.

Special thanks to First Free Methodist Church for all of their assistance in making OSSCS's 46th season possible, and for providing refreshments during intermission. Donations left at the refreshments tables help support FFMC and its programs.

Orchestra Seattle • Seattle Chamber Singers
Clinton Smith, music director • George Shangrow, founder
PO Box 15825, Seattle WA 98115 • 206-682-5208 • www.osschs.org

Vocal Texts

Søvnen

Milde Søvsn, du store Moder,
ved hvis Bryst vi Hvile finder,
som ved store, stille Floder,
der i Fred og Mørke rinder.
Dagen lang mod dig vi stunder,
blide Hjem, hvortil vi stræber.
Salig er den Mand, som blunder,
Som har lukket sine Læber.

En Kval, en Tynge . . .
Vé mig — er jeg vaagen?
Jeg trues, jages . . .
Bag mig følger Nogen,
jeg véd ej hvem —
jeg véd ej Vejen frem.

Ak, mørke Huler
hænger lavt og haardt
Ned over mig . . .
Jeg vilde gerne bort —
Men jeg er fangen, bunden —
Foden glipper . . .
Ak, skal jeg dø blandt
disse skumle Klipper?

Vand siver ned —
det drypper tungt i Dybet,
Jeg snubler, styrter,
glider ud paa Krybet.
Er jeg en levende
paa Gravens Bunde,
og skal i denne Grav
jeg gaa til Grunde?

Hjælp mig! Jeg kvæles!
En Dødsangst vil knuse mig!
Jeg synker! Jeg synker!
Almægtige, o frels mig! Jeg dør!

Drømme svinder, Syner falme,
Blændværk blegner hen.

Fromme Søvsn, vor milde Moder,
giv mig atter Fred og Hvil;
lad mig ved dit Hjerte finde
nye Kræter, nye Smil.
Søvsn, vor Moder, Søvsn, vor Søster,
med det milde Glemsels Bæger,
hil dig, du, som lindrer, kvæger,
du, som trøster!
Dagen lang mod dig vi stunder,
blide Hjem, hvortil vi stræber.
Salig er den Mand, som blunder,
som har lukket sine Læber.
Salig, salig!

—Johannes Jørgensen

Sleep

Gentle sleep, beloved mother,
pious mother, at whose bosom all find
comfort, refuge from inclement weather,
sweet respite from weary effort.
Tranquil home beyond the mountains,
lead us to thy groves and fountains,
Blissful is the man who slumbers,
he whose mind sleep disencumbers.

A pang, a burden,
Help me! Am I waking?
I'm threatened, hunted,
something from me taken!
I've lost the way,
forever doomed to stray!

Oh, gloomy caverns,
clammy rock and clay
weigh over me,
I want to run away!
but I am captive, hobbled,
foothold failing.
Oh, must I die
among those dismal vales?

Water seeps down,
it plummets in the abyss.
I stumble, tumble,
headlong into darkness.
Am I condemned to live
my life in anguish,
consigned to languish,
must I die in black vales?

Help me! I smother!
These torments will shatter me!
I'm sinking! I'm sinking!
Omnipotent, oh, save me! I die!

Visions fading, dreams dissolving,
phantoms fade away.

Gentle sleep, beloved mother,
give me once again thy peace;
let me, our pious mother,
at thy bosom discover new release.
Sleep, oh mother, sleep, oh sister,
sweet oblivions tender mistress
hail to thee our sweet deliv'ress,
our comforter!
Tranquil home beyond the mountains
lead us to thy groves and fountains.
Blissful is the man who slumbers,
he whose mind sleep disencumbers.
Blissful! Blissful!

Snöfrid

Snöfrid, hur fager du är i din silverskrud!
Snöfrid, vi gunga på våg mina drömmars brud.
Gunnar! Gunnar! vi syna guld, i månlyjus natt,
kom gosse, tag din lycka fatt!
Vi skola dig fria från armods skam!
giv oss din själ, då får du vår skatt!
Gunnar, där kommer Utgård's vilda jakt.
Giv oss din själ, och i minnets värld,
Gunnar, ditt namn skall stråla med ärans prakt!
Gunnar, vänd hit din stäv!
Dig väntar en hydda i lundens sköt,
en trohet, som aldrig sitt löfte bröt,
där drömme du ljuvt vid strandens säv!
Den vänaste arm, som ett famntag knöt,
Gunnar, skall väva med kärlek din levnads väv.

Bättre är kämpens ädla armod
än drakens dolska ro på guldet,
bättre är hånad död för det goda
än namnfrejld, vunnen i självisk ävlan,
bättre än fridens är farans famntag.
Väljer du mig, då väljer du stormen.
Ty de hårda hjältelivets runor lyda:
svärd mot snöda jättar draga,
modigt blöda för de svaga,
glad försaka, aldrig klaga,
strida hopplös strid och namnlös dö.
Det är livets sanna hjältesaga.
Leta icke efter lyckans ö!

Gunnar! Gosse!
Många vägar öppna sig till griften;
om bland dem du väljer kämpens stig,
genom oro, kval och hårda skiften,
genom tvivlets töcken för han dig.
Trött och ensam
kämpe i sitt blod den man, som lyfte
sköld till värn för denna världens små,
och ju himlen närmare hans syfte,
desto tyngre fjät han måste gå.
Dock, du gosse,
är du dina bästa drömmar trogen,
återser dig huldran någon gång,
leker med dig som vi lekt i skogen,
sjunger för dig tröstlig runosång,
öppnar för dig
dina barndomsminnens blomstergårdar,
när från strid du längtar dit igen,
där på Idavallen nornan vårdar
morgonlivets gyllne tavlor än.

—Viktor Rydberg

Snöfrid, how beautiful you are in your silver dress!
 Snöfrid, bride of my dreams, how you rock on the waves.
 Gunnar! Gunnar! We see gold in the moonlit night,
 come, lad, take hold of your good fortune!
 We shall free you from the shame of poverty!
 Give us your soul, you will receive our treasures!
 Gunnar, here come Utgård's wild hunters.
 Give us your soul, and in the world of memories,
 Gunnar, your name will shine with the splendor of honor!
 Gunnar, turn your staff this way!
 In the shelter of the grove a cottage awaits you,
 a faithfulness that never broke its promise,
 here you may dream sweetly by the rushes on the shore!
 The fairest arm that ever clasped an embrace,
 Gunnar, shall weave with love the web of your life.

Better the noble poverty of battle
 than the dragon's deceitful repose upon the gold,
 better a scorned death for what is good
 than renown won from selfish deeds,
 better the embrace of danger than that of peace.
 If you choose me, you choose the storm.
 For the hardy poems of the hero's life say:
 Draw your sword against vile giants,
 bleed valiantly for the weak,
 deny yourself with pleasure, never complain,
 fight the hopeless fight and die nameless.
 That is the true heroic saga of life.
 Do not seek the isle of happiness!

Gunnar! Lad!
 Many ways open themselves towards the grave;
 if from among them you choose the path of war,
 through unrest, suffering and hard work,
 through the haze of doubt it will lead you.
 He who lifts his shield
 in defense of the weak in this world
 fights tired and alone in his blood,
 and the nearer his purpose is to heaven.
 The heavier his footsteps must be.
 But, o lad,
 If you are faithful to your best dreams,
 your maiden of the woods will see you again some day,
 she will play with you, as we played together in the forest,
 she will sing you comforting songs,
 she will open for you
 the garden of your childhood memories,
 when, from battle, you long to be there again,
 there in Idaval the Norn still cherishes
 golden pictures of morning life.

Violin

Dean Drescher
 Alexander Hawker
 Stephen Hegg
 Jason Hershey
 Manchung Ho
 Maria Hunt
 Fritz Klein**
 Pam Kummert
 Flora Lee
 Gregor Nitsche
 Stephen Provine*
 Davis Reed
 Theo Schaad
 Lily Shababi
 Janet Showalter
 Kenna Smith-Shangrow
 June Spector

Viola

Grant Hanner
 Lauren Lamont
 Chyna Mapel
 Emily O'Leary
 Stephanie Read
 Rebecca Rodman
 Sam Williams*

Cello

Terry Cook
 Peter Ellis
 Christy Johnson
 Patricia Lyon
 Katie Sauter Messick
 Valerie Ross
 Carrie Sloane
 Matthew Wyant*

Bass

Jo Hansen
 Ericka Kendall
 Kevin McCarthy
 Steven Messick*
 Chris Simison

** *concertmaster*

* *principal*

+ *section leader*

Flute

Virginia Knight
 Shari Muller-Ho*

Piccolo

Doug Gallatin

Oboe

Rebecca Rice*
 Derek Stephenson

Clarinet

Steven Noffsinger*
 Chris Peterson

Bass Clarinet

Cynthia Ely

Bassoon

Jeff Eldridge
 Judith Lawrence*

Horn

Barney Blough
 Don Crevie
 Laurie Heidt*
 Jim Hendrickson

Trumpet

Rabi Lahiri
 Mat Montgomery
 Janet Young*

Trombone

Cuauhtemoc Escobedo*
 Chad Kirby
 Jim Hattori

Tuba

David Brewer

Percussion

Kathie Flood
 Dan Oie*

Soprano

Barb Anderson
 Ann Bridges
 Sue Cobb
 Crissa Cugini
 Olivia Davis
 Kyla DeRemer
 Joan Dirksa
 Dana Durasoff
 Cinda Freece
 Kiki Hood
 Ashley Hussman
 Jill Kraakmo
 Peggy Kurtz+
 Kathleen Sankey

Alto

Cheryl Blackburn
 Jane Blackwell
 Deanna Fryhle
 Rose Fujinaka
 Ellen Kaisse
 Lorelette Knowles
 Theodora Letz
 Lila Woodruff May
 Jennifer Mayer
 Laurie Medill+
 Annie Thompson

Tenor

Ron Carson
 Alex Chun
 Ralph Cobb
 Jon Lange+
 German Mendoza Jr.
 David Zapolsky

Bass

Timothy Braun
 Andrew Danilchik
 Douglas Durasoff
 Daniel Hericks
 Stephen Keeler
 Dennis Moore
 Steven Tachell
 Richard Wyckoff+

Program Notes

"Sibelius was not merely the most famous composer Finland ever produced," writes Alex Ross in *The Rest Is Noise*, "but the country's chief celebrity in any field." Until marathoner Paavo Nurmi ("the flying Finn") captured two gold medals at the 1920 Summer Olympics, music historian Michael Steinberg notes, "Sibelius was the only Finn whose name was known throughout the world." Even today, as Ross points out, "[w]hen Finns are asked to characterize their culture, they invariably mention, along with such national treasures as the lakeside sauna, Fiskars scissors, and Nokia cell phones, 'our Sibelius.'"

By a coincidence of the calendar, Sibelius came into the world almost exactly six months after Carl Nielsen, the musician universally acknowledged as the greatest composer of his homeland, Denmark. "When 22nd-century musicologists write the history of the symphony, they may well see the 20th century as even more of a glory period . . . than the 19th," writes Steinberg. "The six symphonies of Carl Nielsen make up one of the most remarkable and . . . indispensable treasures in that great flowering."

The son of a Swedish-speaking doctor (who died of typhus before the boy reached age three), Sibelius learned Finnish at prep school, later changing his given name of Janne to the French Jean. Nielsen, the seventh of 12 children, grew up in relative poverty on the island of Funen. Both youngsters took up the violin: the Finn originally sought a career as a celebrated violinist until a disastrous audition for the Vienna Philharmonic shifted his focus to composition; the Dane would labor for 16 years in the second violin section of the house orchestra at the Royal Danish Theater as a means of supporting his family while pursuing his first love, composing.

Nielsen died of a heart attack in 1931. Sibelius would live another 26 years, but during that time produced virtually no new works. Their symphonies stand among the major achievements in all of music, yet only (some of) Sibelius' seven entries in that genre have attained a place at the core of the orchestral repertoire. Although we live in a time when recordings of virtually all of their music are accessible instantaneously, the vast majority of their compositions make all-too-rare appearances in the concert hall.

The works heard this evening all date from the turn of the 20th century, at a moment when these composers each began to hone their unique and highly individualistic compositional styles. Sibelius' *Preludio* and *Snöfrid* fall between his first symphony, which in many respects looks backward toward 19th-century romanticism, and his second, which anticipates his increasingly spare musical language. Nielsen's *Sleep* and Symphony No. 2 herald the Dane's transition from a working violinist who composed music to a full-time composer and conductor.

Sibelius' *Preludio* received its North American premiere at Meany Hall in 1991, while Nielsen's "The Four Temperaments" had its first — and, until this concert, apparently its only — local performances in 1967 with Morton

Gould conducting the Seattle Symphony. The two choral works on this program are almost certainly regional premieres, even though they were composed more than 110 years ago by acknowledged giants of 20th-century music.

Jean Sibelius

Preludio from *Press Celebrations Music*, JS 137

Sibelius was born in Tavestehus, Finland, on December 8, 1865, and died at Jävenpää on September 20, 1957. He conducted the Helsinki Philharmonic in the premiere of his Press Celebrations Music on November 4, 1899. The Preludio calls for pairs of woodwinds, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, cymbals, timpani and strings.

An 1899 decree by Tsar Nicholas II of Russia (the "February Manifesto") aimed to Russify Finland through a variety of edicts, which included subjecting Finnish newspapers to Russian censorship. Finnish artists soon responded with works of protest, among them Sibelius' *The Song of the Athenians* (for male voices, brass and percussion, setting a text by Swedish poet Viktor Rydberg) and *The Breaking of the Ice on Oulu River* (an "improvisation" for reciter, male chorus and orchestra), both managing to deliver a clear patriotic message to the Finnish public while avoiding any explicit criticism of Russian oppression. Later that year, Sibelius provided music for six historical tableaux presented at Helsinki's Swedish Theater, ostensibly to raise funds for a journalists' pension fund, but in reality designed as an opportunity to publicly support freedom of speech.

Sibelius' music for this gala event included a brief prelude for winds and percussion along with six illustrative pieces, several of which the composer reworked in the first of two suites dubbed *Scènes historiques*. ("Much was lost in the festive turmoil," a reporter wrote about the proceedings, "and the audience did not seem to have time for deeper artistic meanings.") Sibelius adapted the closing number, "Finland Awakens," into his symphonic poem *Finlandia*, which became by far his most well-known composition, gaining him fame around the world and according him the undying love of his countrymen. The *Preludio*, however, lapsed into obscurity until a 1990 recording by Neeme Järvi, which led to the North American premiere of the work at the University of Washington on March 12, 1991.

Carl Nielsen

***Søvnen*, Op. 18**

Nielsen was born in Sortelung, Denmark, on June 9, 1865, and died in Copenhagen on October 3, 1931. He completed this work on November 27, 1904, conducting the first performance with the orchestra and chorus of The Music Society in Copenhagen on March 21, 1905. In addition to chorus, the score calls for 3 flutes (two doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, gong, glockenspiel and strings.

Over the course of his career, Nielsen dutifully produced a dozen commissioned choral works — for occasions as varied as the inauguration of a student union building, the centenary of the Chamber of Commerce, and the Chris-

tening of public swimming baths—in addition to three more personal and substantive cantatas for chorus and orchestra: *Hymnus amoris* (“Hymn to Love”), *Søvnen* (“Sleep”) and *Fynsk Forår* (“Springtime in Funen”).

During the spring of 1903, after the premieres of his Symphony No. 2 and the opera *Saul and David*, Nielsen took a sojourn to Greece. In Athens he composed his *Helios Overture*, writing to Julius Lehmann (the stage director of *Saul and David*) that “since I am still brimming over with music, I must plunge into something else.” He requested that Lehmann provide him with a text for a planned choral work on the subject of sleep, but when the director declined, Nielsen made an unsuccessful attempt himself. By November 1903, the poet Johannes Jørgensen had supplied a text acceptable to Nielsen, who wrote the following month that he had “at last begun properly on *Sleep*. So far the way it goes is that I almost fall asleep every time I get to work. . . . I wonder if it’s because the music covers the idea or because I am a lazy dog?”

Sleep begins and ends blissfully but its central section conjures up horrific nightmares. Nielsen biographer Jack Lawson calls this episode “one of the first expressive uses of dissonance to enter 20th-century music,” anticipating *The Rite of Spring* by nearly a decade. “Nielsen was disturbed by music which permitted audiences to sleep during performances,” notes Lawson, “and so it was typical that he should express both aspects of sleep—the alarming as well as the refreshing.”

After the cantata’s 1905 debut, Nielsen called *Sleep* “one of my best, if not the best, of my works so far.” Reviewers of the premiere afforded *Sleep* at best a lukewarm appraisal (perhaps because of their inability to comprehend the central nightmare section) but reported that the audience “acclaimed [*Sleep*] with a storm of applause and several curtain calls.” After a November 1905 performance, a critic called the cantata “one of Carl Nielsen’s most beautiful works,” but *Sleep* would appear on only one more concert during the composer’s lifetime.

Jean Sibelius *Snöfrid*, Op. 29

Sibelius composed this work in 1900. It received its first performance in Helsinki on October 20 of that year with Robert Kajanus conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic. In addition to female speaker and SATB chorus, the score calls for 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, 3 trumpets, trombone, timpani, cymbals, glockenspiel and strings.

For an October 1900 fundraising event held to repay debts incurred by the Helsinki Philharmonic on a recent European tour, Sibelius composed another “improvisation” for reciter, chorus and orchestra, setting excerpts from Viktor Rydberg’s poem *Snöfrid*. (Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar had employed the entire text in a cantata written a decade earlier.) “I composed *Snöfrid* more or less in one sitting,” Sibelius recalled some four decades later, “after coming home from a three-day binge.”

The work begins with with an orchestral evocation of a

storm at sea. Chorus (singing Rydberg’s original Swedish) extols the beauty of Snöfrid, a forest sylph, followed by a forceful episode in which trolls offer Gunnar (the hero of Rydberg’s poem) a Faustian bargain. A romantic interlude in $\frac{6}{4}$ time yields to sustained brass chords, over which the narrator, as Snöfrid, exhorts Gunnar to follow the noble path. In the closing pages, the chorus promises Gunnar that, if he does so, he will see Snöfrid once again.

An anonymous reviewer called *Snöfrid*’s premiere performance “the highlight of the evening,” asserting that the “work as a whole makes an impression of great feeling and warmth; it seems so clear and inspired that it is undeniably to be numbered among Sibelius’ masterpieces.” The audience demanded an immediate encore.

Carl Nielsen *Symphony No. 2*, Op. 16 (“The Four Temperaments”)

Nielsen composed this symphony during 1901 and 1902, conducting the first performance in Copenhagen at the Dansk Koncertforening on December 1, 1902. The work calls for 3 flutes (two doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (one doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani and strings.

“I had the idea for ‘The Four Temperaments’ many years ago at a country inn in Zealand,” Nielsen recalled about an excursion made during the summer of 1901. “On the wall of the room where I was drinking a glass of beer with my wife and some friends hung an extremely comical colored picture, divided into four sections in which ‘the Temperaments’ were represented and furnished with titles: ‘The Choleric,’ ‘The Sanguine,’ ‘The Melancholic’ and ‘The Phlegmatic,’” reflecting a theory (dating back to Hippocrates) that these four personalities stemmed from the influence of bodily fluids: yellow bile, blood, black bile and phlegm.

“The Choleric was on horseback,” Nielsen continued. “He had a long sword in his hand, which he was wielding fiercely in thin air; his eyes were bulging out of his head, his hair streamed wildly around his face, which was so distorted by rage and diabolical hate that I could not help bursting out laughing. The other three pictures were in the same style, and my friends and I were heartily amused by the naïveté of the pictures, their exaggerated expression and their comic earnestness. But how strangely things can sometimes turn out! I, who had laughed aloud and mockingly at these pictures, returned constantly to them in my thoughts, and one fine day I realized that these shoddy pictures still contained a kind of core or idea and—just think!—even a musical undercurrent! Some time later, then, I began to work out the first movement of a symphony, but I had to be careful that it did not fence in the empty air, and I hoped of course that my listeners would not laugh so that the irony of fate would smite my soul. I tried to raise the idea of the pictures to a different plane.”

Nielsen began the symphony while still at work on *Saul and David*, at first progressing quickly (he completed the opening movement on December 28, 1901). During August 1902 he wrote to a friend that the second movement

“now has a fine tail on him, and is thus quite finished” but regarding the finale reported that he still had “no idea of the form the beast will take.” He finally solved the puzzle late that year, wrapping up work on the symphony on November 22, barely a week before the premiere — which came a mere three days after the debut of *Saul and David*.

The composer took pains to discount concrete programmatic associations with his music, even while providing a quite detailed description of his second symphony for a 1931 performance in Stockholm. “The first movement . . . immediately sets in fiercely with [a] motive that is developed with a later small motive in the clarinet, and rises to a fanfare that leads into the second subject, which sings very *espressivo* but is soon interrupted again by extremely turbulent figures and rhythmic thrusts. After a fermata the second subject sings *fortissimo* and expresses itself with greater breadth and power, which gradually wanes, then the modulation section begins working with the motives described above, now wildly and violently, like a person almost carried away, now in a gentler mood like one who regrets his irascibility. At the end comes a coda (*stretto*) with intense passages in the strings, and the movement ends with the same character as it began.

“The second movement was conceived as the complete opposite of the first. . . . A young man appeared to me. He seems to have been his mother’s only son. The mother was nice and amiable, she was a widow and she loved him. He too was extraordinarily nice, and everyone liked him. He was 17–18 years old, his eyes were sky-blue, confident and large. At school he was loved by all, but the teachers were at the same time dismayed and gently resigned; for he had never learned his lessons; but it was impossible to scold him, for everything that exists of idyll and Paradise in nature was reflected in this young man, so one was completely disarmed. Was he merry or serious, was he lively or slow in his movements? He was none of these! His inmost nature was there where the birds sing, where the fish glide silently through the water, where the sun warms and the wind gently brushes one’s locks. He was blonde; his expression could be described as happy, but not self-satisfied, rather with a small touch of quiet melancholy, so you felt an urge to be kind to him. When the air shimmered in the heat he usually lay on the pier at the harbor with his legs out over the edge. I have never seen him dance; he was too inactive for that, but he might well rock his hips in a slow waltz rhythm and it is in this character that I have completed the movement *Allegro comodo e flemmatico* and tried to maintain a state of mind that is as far from energy . . . as is really possible.

“Only once does it rise to a *forte*. What happened? Did a barrel fall in the water from one of the ships in the harbor and disturb the young man as he lay dreaming on the jetty? Who knows? But no matter: a brief moment, and all is calm; the young man falls asleep, nature dozes, and the water is again as smooth as a large mirror.

“The third movement attempts to express the basic character of a grave, melancholy person, but here as always in the world of music, a title or a program is only a hint. What the composer wants is less significant than what the music, on its own terms, from its inmost being, demands and requires.

“After one and a half bars of introduction the . . . theme begins and is drawn heavily towards an intense burst of pain; then the oboe enters with a small, plangent, sighing motive, which gradually develops into something immense and ends in a climax of woe and pain. After a short transitional passage comes a milder, resigned episode in Eb major. A long, rather static thematic development now follows, and finally the parts enmesh like the strings of a net, and everything fades out; then the first theme suddenly breaks out again in full force, and now all the different motives sing with interruptions, and the end approaches, falling calm.

“In the finale, *Allegro sanguineo*, I have tried to evoke the basic character of a person who storms thoughtlessly on in the belief that the whole world belongs to him and that roast pigeons fly into his mouth without work and care. There is however a brief minute when he becomes afraid of something, and he gasps for breath for a moment in violent syncopations; but this is soon forgotten, and although the music now goes into a minor key, his happy, rather shallow nature is still manifested.

“Just once, though, it seems that he has encountered something really serious; at least he meditates over something that is alien to his own nature, and it seems to affect him, so that while the final march may be happy and bright, it is still more dignified and not as silly and smug as some of his previous bursts of activity.”

Both the audience and the press received the symphony favorably at its premiere. When Nielsen led the Berlin Philharmonic in the work the following November, he “got the impression that it aroused a good deal of interest from this blasé orchestra” although the local critics were (typically) far from kind. During the remainder of Nielsen’s life, “The Four Temperaments” would become one of his most frequently performed (and most warmly received) symphonic compositions.

—Jeff Eldridge