

Jørgen Bentzon: (1897-1951) Theme and Variations, opus 14 (1927) total: 6.57**Catalogue No. 9.70868 · UPC: 7 30099 78681 2**

The year 1927 meant a watershed in the musical life of the Danish composer JØRGEN BENTZON, one of Carl Nielsen's relatively few pupils. He had just turned 30, when he arranged a concert in Copenhagen of his own compositions, mostly chamber music, including the newly-written clarinet variations, opus 14; that was in March, and in June he joined Carl Nielsen for the annual international festival of new music in Frankfurt am Main, where that year Furtwängler famously conducted Niensens stark 5th Symphony (1922; preparatory rehearsals led by Horenstein), and where even Bentzon's *Sonatina* opus 7 for flute, clarinet and bassoon (1924) met with success. Quite by chance, during the festival, Bentzon and his near-contemporary, the composer Finn Høffding (even he a close associate of Nielsen's, when not actually his pupil) got acquainted with Hindemith and Fritz Jöde as key figures in the budding German youth music school movement: an extended encounter that was to prove crucial in the lives and careers the two Danes and in the development of music in Denmark after Nielsen, who died in 1931.

The works presented at Bentzon's 'portrait' concert in March 1927 showed how diligently he would study the characteristics of the instruments he wrote for, and actually even the prominent Danish musicians he wrote for, not least the members of the ensemble that Nielsen likewise had in mind in 1922 when he wrote his groundbreaking *Woodwind Quintet*. In the case of Bentzon's ***Theme and Variations*** of 1927, the piece is dedicated to the very same Aage Oxenvad who the following year would receive the greatest accolade of all, Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto*.

The slow and softly-spoken theme and variations 1-6 move in 3/4, variations 6-7 shift to 4/4, and then we are back in 3/4: first in the brisk variation 9 with bars of capricious 5/8 thrown in for good measure and fun before a final repetition of the Theme, now played majestically in forte and reshaped so as to furnish a final variation that reflects and sums up what we and the Theme experienced on our journey together. Notes by Svend Ravnkilde.

Jonas Frølund is principal clarinet and chairman for *The Danish Chamber Orchestra* and a member of the wind quintet *V Coloris*. His debut album *SOLO ALONE AND MORE*, released on OUR Recordings, received an overwhelming response from both the international and national press, including being named "Someone to Watch" in *Gramophone*. Jonas Frølund is also a highly sought-after soloist with orchestras.

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