

## Bipolarity in Music: Carl Nielsen's Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, Op. 57

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### Carl Nielsen: Life and Influence Leading to the Clarinet Concerto, Op. 57

Phase/Year	Key Influence	Reflection in Clarinet Concerto
<b>1865: Early Life</b>	Rural upbringing, folk traditions, father's music	Directness and emotional depth in clarinet's voice
<b>1879: Military Band</b>	Discipline, mastery of wind/brass instruments	Contrasts between gentleness and sudden intensity
<b>1884-1886: Conservatoire</b>	Study of Bach/Mozart, structural innovation	Progressive tonality and thematic development
<b>1890s: First Symphony</b>	Progressive tonality, emotional journeys	Emotional layers and transitions in clarinet lines
<b>1910s-1920s: Modernism</b>	Abstraction, dissonance, WWI's impact	Tonal ambiguity and musical tension
<b>1928: Clarinet Concerto</b>	Life's complexity, introspection after illness	Open-ended journey, unresolved contrasts, emotional layers

### Aage Oxenvad's Life and Influence on Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto

Year/Phase	Key Event/Theme	Reflection in Clarinet Concerto
<b>1884: Early Life</b>	Born in Gettrup, father introduced him to music	Rooted in artistic sensitivity and expressive depth
<b>1896: Clarinet Study</b>	Began studying clarinet at age 12	Developed a dynamic, emotional, and unpredictable playing style
<b>1909: Danish Orchestra</b>	Joined Royal Danish Orchestra	Cemented as Denmark's leading clarinetist; inspired concerto
<b>1928: Premiered Concerto</b>	Premiered Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto	Embodied emotional extremes; clarinet described as "wild"
<b>Bipolar Disorder</b>	Affected personality and artistry, with mood swings	Reflected in emotional highs and lows of the concerto
<b>Wind Quintet</b>	Member of Copenhagen Wind Quintet	Inspired Nielsen's personality-driven writing for instruments

## Understanding bipolar disorder in the context of Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto

State	Characteristics
<b>Manic/Hypomanic</b>	High energy, euphoria, irritability, impulsiveness, reduced need for sleep.
<b>Depressive</b>	Profound sadness, exhaustion, detachment, hopelessness, feelings of helplessness.

## Historical context and background of the Clarinet Concerto's composition

Aspect	Details/Timeline	Impact
<b>Philosophy</b>	"Absolute music" focuses on pure emotional expression.	Evokes contrasts of lightness and intensity.
<b>Oxenvad's Influence</b>	Reflects Oxenvad's dynamic and unpredictable personality.	Clarinet part mirrors mood swings and expressive extremes.
<b>Health Challenges</b>	Interrupted composition; completed by summer 1928.	Resulted in a raw, emotionally intense work.
<b>Premiere</b>	Sept. 14, 1928 (private); Oct. 11, 1928 (public in Copenhagen).	Showcased Oxenvad's performance and concerto's originality.
<b>Instrumentation</b>	Unique use of snare drum alongside clarinet.	Highlights mood contrasts and tonal variety.
<b>Technical Demands</b>	Wide emotional and technical range.	Challenges performers, reflecting Oxenvad's style.
<b>Reception</b>	Mixed: praised for originality, criticized for dissonance.	Established as innovative yet polarizing.
<b>Legacy</b>	Early recordings lacked intensity; later captured full depth.	Cemented its place in clarinet repertoire.

## Overview of Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto and the Snare Drum's Role

Aspect	Details
Structure	Continuous, unbroken piece in four movements.
Instrumentation	Strings, bassoons, horns in F, snare drum, solo clarinet in A.
Comparison to Other Works	Unlike Violin Concerto (heavier orchestration) and Flute Concerto (classical setup); emphasizes solo expressiveness.
Snare Drum's Function	Challenges the clarinet, creating more conflict and tension.

2

### Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester

Carl Nielsen, Op. 57

The musical score is for the first movement, "Allegretto un poco" (♩ = 82). It features the following instruments and parts:

- Fagotti III**: Part of the woodwind section.
- Corni I II in F**: Part of the brass section.
- Tambour petit**: A small snare drum.
- Klarinet Solo in A**: The solo clarinet part.
- Violino I** and **Violino II**: First and second violin parts.
- Viola**: Viola part.
- Violoncello** and **Basso**: Cello and double bass parts, playing a rhythmic pattern marked *mp*.

Figure 1: The orchestration of the Clarinet Concerto

## The First Movement

Section	Details	Measures	Key Features
<b>Exposition</b>	First Theme A	mm. 1–61	Folk-inspired melody with perfect fifths and rhythmic motifs.
	Transition (with snare drum)	mm. 62–78	Aggressive dynamics and rapid exchanges.
	Second Theme B	mm. 79–101	Lyrical and reflective, centered on a minor third.
	Codetta (materials x, with snare drum)	mm. 101–133	Returns to rhythmic tension.
<b>Development</b>	Cadenza (folk theme)	mm. 133	Showcases dynamic contrasts and clarinet virtuosity.
	Codetta (materials x)	mm. 133–158	Stormy arpeggios and key modulations.
<b>Recapitulation</b>	First Theme A	mm. 159–166	Return of folk-inspired motifs in a new key.
	Retransition (with snare drum)	mm. 167–182	Escalating tension with aggressive counterpoint.
<b>Coda</b>	Clarinet and snare drum duet	mm. 198–218	Intense interaction before flowing into the second movement.

Violoncello  
Basso  
*mp*  
*Allegretto un poco (♩ = 120)*

Figure 2: The motive of the first theme

m. 62

snare drum's entry  
solo clarinet's entry  
*fff*  
*p*  
*mf* *molto f*  
*fff*  
*pizz.*  
*fff*  
*fff*  
*fff*  
*fff*  
*fff*  
*fff*

Figure 3: Mm. 62-63, snare drum's first entry

m. 64 m. 65  
Tarró  
Solo  
*ff*  
*fz*  
*fz*  
*fz*  
*fff*  
*ff*  
*ff*

Figure 4: Mm. 64-66, solo clarinet and snare drum with unexpected *fz*s



M. 150

Flug. I, II

Cor. I, II

Tromb.

Solo

VI. I

VI. II

Viola

Vcllo.

Basso

The strings present the first theme A

pp

mfz

p

pp

pp

pp

pp

Figure 7: Mm.150-155, the recapitulation

M. 195

M. 198 *Tempo I* (♩ = 72)

Flug. I, II

Cor. I, II

Tromb.

Solo

VI. I

VI. II

(p) *Tempo I* (♩ = 72)

p

mfz

p

molto

molto

Figure 8: Mm. 195-204, the solo clarinet and snare drum duet

M. 63

The regular fingering of High G

The recommendation fingering of High G

Figure 9: Mm. 63-65, the solo clarinet with the standard and recommended fingerings of High G for mm. 63-64

*a tempo ma tranquillo*

5

*p espressivo*

Figure 10: The recommended fingering for the circled D-flats

M. 22

Tag. II

Solo

VI. I

VI. II

Vla.

Vcl. Basso

Figure 11: Mm. 22-26, sudden tension

The image shows a musical score for a duet with snare drum. It consists of four staves: two for Tarrb (Trombone) and two for Solo (Soloist). The top two staves are for the first instrument, and the bottom two are for the second. The snare drum part is indicated by a 'Tarrb' label above the staff. The score includes various dynamic markings: *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *molto*. There are also some performance instructions like *espress.* and *alleg.* visible in the Solo part.

Figure 12: Mm. 198–205: Duet with snare drum

### The Second Movement

Section	Theme	Measures	Description
A	Theme C	mm. 219–253	Lyrical and introspective; Theme C introduced by horns, echoed by the clarinet in a melancholic tone.
B	Theme D	mm. 253–291	Contrasting character with a playful, exaggerated dance in the orchestra and biting sarcasm.
A'	Theme C	mm. 292–314	Returns to Theme C with subdued, introspective material, reflecting balance and closure.

The image shows a musical score for Theme C, starting at measure 219. The tempo is marked *Poco Adagio*. The score includes parts for Fag. I, II (Bassoon), Cor. I, F (Coronet), Solo (Soloist), Vla. (Viola), and Vcl. (Violin). The Solo part is highlighted with a red box. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano) and *espress.* (espressivo). There are also some performance instructions like *alleg.* and *alleg.* visible in the Solo part.

Figure 13: Theme C



M.288 18 Poco Adagio

Fig. 17: Mm. 288-295, violas and cellos with pizzicato in m. 292

M. 257

M. 265



The suggested fingering for High G



The suggested fingering for High F-sharp

Figure 18: Mm. 257-279, solo clarinet part with suggested fingering for High G and High F-sharp

M. 278

*ff*

The snare drum

The solo clarinet

M. 281

*sf sf sf*

Figure 19: Mm. 278-284, solo clarinet and snare drum

### The Third Movement

Section	Theme	Measures	Description
A	Scherzo-like Theme E	mm. 314–385	Begins with a subdued horn introduction, transitioning to lively material in the strings and clarinet.
B	Theme F	mm. 386–466	Smooth, melodic interplay between clarinet and strings, providing lyrical contrast.
C	Fugal Theme	mm. 466–547	Fugal texture introduced by bassoon, leading to a dramatic cadenza and thematic recall.

M.324

*rall.* *α tempo*

*pp*

*dim.* *pp*

*serzo solo* *arco*

*serzo sord.* *pp*

*dim.* *pp*

*rall.* *α tempo*

Figure 20: Mm. 324-333, the scherzo-like material E

M. 382

Flg. I

Tamb.

Solo

VI. I

VI. II

Vla.

Vcl. & Basso

rall. - - - - M. 386 *Mero* (♩ = circa 116)

*pp*

*p*

*mp espress.*

*Mero* (♩ = circa 116)

Material F

23

23

*p*

Figure 21: Mm. 382-389, the new material F in section B

M. 471

Flg. I

Tamb.

VI. I

VI. II

Vla.

Vcl.

*I. solo*

*mpo espress.*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

Figure 22: Mm. 471-478, the bassoon's fugal theme and string accompaniment

38  
M. 494 30

Flg. I  
Trarb.  
Solo 30 *mf*  
Vi. I *f p pp*  
Vi. II *f p pp*  
Vla. *p pp*  
Vcl. 30 *p pp*

Figure 23: Mm. 494-502, solo clarinet repeats the fugal theme

*ad lib. con forza*  
**The second cadenza**  
*agitato*  
*segue*  
*diminuendo* *e rall.*  
*molto Adagio* *più vivo*  
*dim.* *Pespr.*

Figure 24: The second cadenza

M. 543 *α tempo* *p* *rall.* *Allegro vivace* *I*

Flg. I, II  
Cor. I, II  
Tromb.  
Solo  
VI. I  
VI. II  
Vla.  
Vcll.  
Basso

*p* *pp* *dim.* *rall.* *pp* *mp* *p* *dim.* *mf* *dim.*

Figure 25: Mm. 543-549, the recall of the previous material

M. 357

Flg. I, II  
Cor. I, II  
Solo  
VI. I  
VI. II  
Vla.  
Vcll.  
Basso

*p* *α 2* *p* *mp* *ff* *mp* *arco*

Figure 26: Mm: 357-360, five-note group alternation

M. 449

The image shows a page of a musical score for measures 449-454. The instruments listed are Fag. I, II; Cor. I, II; Tamb.; Solo; Vi. I; Vi. II; Vcl.; and Vcl. Basso. A red box highlights the Solo part from measure 449 to 454. A blue box highlights the strings (Vi. I, Vi. II, Vcl., Vcl. Basso) from measure 450 to 454. Dynamics include *ff*, *fz*, and *f*.

Figure 27: Mm. 449-454

### The Fourth Movement

Section	Theme	Measures	Description
A	Theme G	mm. 547–600	Bright, simple eighth-note rhythm introduced by the clarinet.
B	Theme H	mm. 601–643	Robust triplet rhythm marked <i>Pesante</i> ; tranquil clarinet melody contrasts with subtle orchestration.
A'	Fragment of Theme G	mm. 643–651	Brief statement interrupted by aggressive clarinet sixteenth notes.
C	Three-note motive	mm. 652–682	Serious and melancholy, with a slower <i>Poco Adagio</i> tempo.
A''	Theme G	mm. 682–710	Recap of Theme G, building to a virtuosic climax.
Coda	Variation of Theme G	mm. 710–728	Theme G drives to a soft, dying-away conclusion.

M. 543 *α tempo* *p* M. 547 *Allegro vivace* *I*

Reg. I. II

Cor. I. II

Tromb.

Solo

Vi. I.

Vi. II.

Vcl.

Basso

*pp* *dim.* *pp* *pp* *mp*

*mf* *dim.*

*solo*

*rall.*

*pp* *mp*

**Snare drum**

**Solo clarinet**

M. 550 *I* [34]

Reg. I. II

Cor. I. II

Tromb.

Solo

Vi. I.

Vi. II.

Vcl.

Basso

*p* *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

**Theme G**

[34] *ff*

Figure 28: Mm. 543-555, snare drum with eighth notes and theme G



M. 672 41 *Poco adagio* (♩ = quasi ♩)

Flg. I. II  
Cor. I.  
Torb.  
Solo  
Vi. I.  
Vi. II.  
Vla.  
Vcll.  
Basso

41 *Poco adagio* (♩ = quasi ♩)

Figure 31: Mm. 672-677, theme C reemerges

M. 705 42 *rall.* M. 710 *Poco meno*

Flg. I. II  
Torb.  
Solo  
Vi. I.  
Vi. II.  
Vla.  
Vcll.  
Basso

42 *rall.* M. 710 *Poco meno*

Theme G by solo clarinet

Theme G

43 *Poco meno*

Figure 32: Mm. 705-712, theme G reappears

M. 646

Figure 33: Mm. 646-651: the recommended fingering for the circled C-sharps

M. 698. 42

*Tag. I. II*  
*Cor. I. II*  
*Tornb.*  
*Solo*  
*Vi. I*  
*Vi. II*  
*Vcl.*  
*Vcll. e. Basso*

The image shows a page of a musical score for measures 698-704. The Solo part is highlighted with a red box. The score includes parts for Tag. I. II, Cor. I. II, Tornb., Solo, Vi. I, Vi. II, Vcl., and Vcll. e. Basso. Dynamics include ff and piz. (pizzicato). The Solo part features a complex melodic line with many sixteenth notes.

Figure 34: Mm. 698-704, virtuosic sixteenth notes

Bibliography:



Recommended Fingerings:

