

NAXOS

SIBELIUS

Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7

Finlandia

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Pietari Inkinen



Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104 • Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105 Finlandia, Op. 26

The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, the son of a doctor, was born in 1865 in a small town in the south of Finland. The language and culture of his family, as with others of their class and background at the time, was Swedish. It was at school that he was to learn Finnish and acquire his first interest in the early legends of a country that had become an autonomous grand-duchy under the Tsar of Russia, after the defeat of Charles XII of Sweden. Throughout the later nineteenth century there were divisions between the Swedish-speaking upper classes and the Finnish-speaking people, the cause of the latter embraced by influential nationalists and accentuated by the repressive measures introduced by Tsar Nicholas II, before the revolution of 1905. In this society Sibelius was deeply influenced by his association with the family of General Järnefelt, whose daughter Aino became his wife. Nevertheless linguistically Swedish remained his mother tongue, in which he expressed himself more fluently than he could in Finnish.

The musical abilities of Sibelius were soon realised, although not developed early enough to suggest music as a profession until he had entered university in Helsinki as a law student. His first ambition had been to be a violinist. It later became apparent that any ability he had in this direction was outweighed by his gifts as a composer, developed first by study in Berlin and with Goldmark and, more effectively, Robert Fuchs in Vienna.

In Finland once more, Sibelius won almost immediate success in 1892 with a symphonic poem, *Kullervo*, based on an episode from the Finnish epic *Kalevala*. There followed compositions of particular national appeal that further enhanced his reputation in Helsinki, including the incidental music to the patriotic student pageant *Karelia*, *En Saga* and the *Lemminkäinen Suite*. During this period Sibelius supported himself and his wife by teaching, as well as by composition and the performance of his works, but it proved difficult for him to earn enough, given, as he was, to bouts of extravagance, continuing from his days

as a student. In 1896 he was voted the position of professor at the University of Helsinki, but the committee's decision was overturned in favour of Robert Kajanus, the experienced founder and conductor of the first professional orchestra in Helsinki. As consolation for his disappointment Sibelius was awarded a government stipend for ten years, and this was later changed into a pension for life. The sum involved was never sufficient to meet his gift for improvidence, inherited, perhaps, from his father, who at his death in 1868 had left his family in some difficulty.

Sibelius continued his active career as a composer until 1926, his fame increasing at home and abroad. The success of *Symphony No. 1* of 1898 was followed by the still more successful *Finlandia*. *Symphony No. 2* in 1902 won an unprecedented success in Helsinki. This was followed by the *Violin Concerto*, *Symphony No. 3* and, after an illness that put an end for the moment to his indulgence in alcohol and tobacco *Symphony No. 4*, by travel to the major musical centres of Europe, leading to international honour. *Symphony No. 5* was written during the war, after which Sibelius wrote only four works of any substance, *Symphony No. 6* in 1923 and, in the following year, *Symphony No. 7*, incidental music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and, in 1926, the symphonic poem *Tapiola*. An eighth symphony was completed in 1929, but destroyed. The rest was silence. For the last 25 years of his life Sibelius wrote nothing, remaining isolated from and largely antipathetic to contemporary trends in music. His reputation in Britain and America remained high, although there were inevitable reactions to the excessive enthusiasm of his supporters. On the continent of Europe he failed to recapture the earlier position he had enjoyed before the war of 1914 in Germany, France and Vienna. He died in 1957 at the age of 91.

Sibelius made sketches for his *Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104*, while at work on his *Fifth Symphony*, which he followed with a group of *Humoresques* for

violin and orchestra and smaller pieces. The new symphony was completed in 1923 and first performed in Helsinki in April, followed by performances in Stockholm and Gothenburg. He had first planned a work that was to be wild and passionate, with pastoral contrasts and a stormy finale, but he later described the finished work as tranquil in character and outline. This aptly describes the opening, with its long-drawn Dorian melody from the strings. The thematic material remains predominantly modal as the music unfolds in a version of sonata form that has proved open to varied interpretation. This leads abruptly enough to a second movement of gentle mystery, apparently simple in its material and seeming to draw inspiration from the Finnish countryside bathed in northern spring light. There is vital energy in the scherzo, in its relentless progress, to be followed by the luminous chant-like opening of the final *Allegro molto*, developing into music of stormier intensity, before the close, with a string melody in which the Sibelius scholar Erik Tawaststjerna detected traces of traditional *Kalevala* motifs.

In 1918 Sibelius had written to his loyal friend and supporter Alex Carpelan outlining his plans for three new symphonies. The third of these, *Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105*, which was eventually completed in 1924 and given its first performance in Stockholm, was to have been in three movements, ending in a 'Hellenic rondo', and imbued with a feeling of *Weltschmerz* or world-weariness. In the event the work was in one movement, an opening *Adagio*, a scherzo and a rondo, with a final

return to the *Adagio*, and was first described as a *Fantasia sinfonica*. In many ways it may seem, in its massive unity of structure, a summary of the composer's achievement. A solemn trombone theme assumes importance on the three occasions on which it appears. The busy scherzo appears, a natural progression from what has gone before, the trombone returning over the stormy texture. The rondo section is at first lighter in mood, introduced by the French horn, gradually growing more sombre, although the dance predominates until the majestic trombone theme is heard again in a dramatic climax. The shimmering strings form a background to final thematic reminiscence, as the work draws to a triumphant end.

Finlandia had its origin as the finale of a set of pieces intended as accompaniment to patriotic historical tableaux, written in 1899 to form part of a Press Pensions Celebration, in fact a plea for press freedom under Russian Tsarist restrictions. Sibelius later revised the piece, which had become a symbol of Finnish freedom, a rôle it continued to fulfil. This epitome of the spirit of Finland has become among the best known of all that Sibelius wrote, its thematic material having all the appearance of a national origin, although the melodies are the creation of the composer. It was introduced to an international public in a Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra programme at the Paris International Exhibition in 1900, although Russian sensibilities prevented the use of the title *Finlandia*.

Keith Anderson



Pietari Inkinen

Pietari Inkinen, now working internationally at the highest level, was appointed Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in 2008. He has won unanimous praise from audiences and critics both for his performances on tour in New Zealand and for his recordings with the orchestra on Naxos. He was also invited in 2009 to become Principal Guest Conductor of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra. As guest conductor, he has already worked with major orchestras throughout Europe and the United States, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus, La Scala Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Dresden Staatskapelle, and enjoys successful collaborations with leading soloists. He also appears regularly in the operatic pit and has been invited to make his début conducting productions at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, the Berlin Staatskapelle and a complete Ring Cycle at Teatro Massimo, Palermo.

In the studio his recordings for Naxos with the New Zealand and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestras, including Rautavaara's *Manhattan Trilogy* and the Brahms *Violin Concerto*, have been greeted with particular critical acclaim.

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

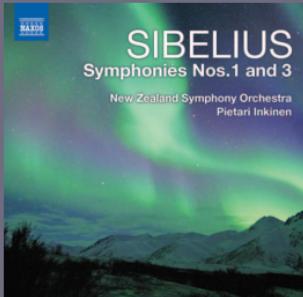
The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1946, is the country's leading professional orchestra. It has an establishment of ninety players and performs over a hundred concerts annually, touring within New Zealand and offering its main symphonic programmes in Auckland and Wellington. An acclaimed international tour in 2010 included appearances at Vienna's Musikverein, Lucerne's KKL, Geneva's Victoria Hall and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Earlier tours have featured concerts at the Beijing Olympic Cultural Festival, the BBC Proms, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Snape Maltings in England and the Aichi World Expo in Japan. Music Director Pietari Inkinen succeeded James Judd in January 2008. Other conductors who have worked with the NZSO during his tenure include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Alexander Lazarev, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Edo de Waart. Soloists who have worked with the orchestra include Pinchas Zukerman, Hilary Hahn, Vadim Repin, Yefim Bronfman, Simon O'Neill, Steven Isserlis, Freddy Kempf and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The NZSO has an extensive catalogue of commercial recordings, mostly on the Naxos label. Over one million of their CDs have been sold internationally in the last decade and they have received critical acclaim. www.nzso.co.nz



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With this fourth volume, Finnish conductor Pietari Inkinen completes his cycle of Sibelius's numbered symphonies, of which the *Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3* (8.572305) were acclaimed as 'warm and poignant' (*Classical Music Sentinel*), *Symphonies Nos. 4 and 5* (8.572227) as having 'raw intensity' (*Guardian*) and *Symphony No. 2* (8.572704) as 'entrancing ... highly recommended' (*Allmusic.com*). The tranquil and sunny poetry of *Symphony No. 6* joins the majestic single-movement *Symphony No. 7*, coupled with *Finlandia*, the work which established Sibelius's fame and became a symbol of Finnish freedom.

Jean
SIBELIUS
(1865–1957)

Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104 29:19

- [1] I. Allegro molto moderato** 8:43
- [2] II. Allegretto moderato** 6:19
- [3] III. Poco vivace –** 3:46
- [4] IV. Allegro molto** 10:20

Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105 21:04

- [5] Adagio – Vivacissimo – Adagio – Allegro molto
moderato – Allegro moderato – Presto – Adagio –
Largamente molto – Affettuoso**

[6] Finlandia, Op. 26 8:55



**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Pietari Inkinen**

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