A black and white portrait of a young man with a prominent mustache and wavy hair, looking slightly to the left. He is wearing a dark suit jacket with a white collar. The background is a faded, sepia-toned image of musical notation on staves.

**UNITED KINGDOM
SIBELIUS SOCIETY**

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United Kingdom Sibelius Society Newsletter - Issue 84 (January 2019)

- CONTENTS -

	Page
1. Editorial	4
2. An Honour for our President <i>by S H P Steadman</i>	5
3. The Music of What is <i>by Angela Burton</i>	7
4. The Seventh Symphony <i>by Edward Clark</i>	11
5. Two forthcoming Society concerts <i>by Edward Clark</i>	12
6. Delights and Revelations from Maestro Records <i>by Edward Clark</i>	13
7. Music You Might Like <i>by Simon Coombs</i>	20
8. Desert Island Sibelius <i>by Peter Frankland</i>	25
9. Eugene Ormandy <i>by David Lowe</i>	34
10. The Third Symphony and an enduring friendship <i>by Edward Clark</i>	38
11. Interesting Sibelians on Record <i>by Edward Clark</i>	42
12. Concert Reviews	47
13. The Power and the Glory <i>by Edward Clark</i>	47
14. A debut Concert <i>by Edward Clark</i>	51
15. Music from WW1 <i>by Edward Clark</i>	53
16. A concert in honour of the Armistice in 1918 <i>by David Matthews</i>	55
17. Sir Simon Rattle performs Sibelius <i>by David Matthews</i>	57

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Editorial

Welcome to 2019. The newsletter is a bit of a bumper issue with articles from members on a range of diverse and interesting matters. I hope they act as stimulators for the dark days ahead of spring. Thanks to all the contributors without whose enthusiasm and effort we would all be the poorer.

Last year was a good year for me and, I hope, for everyone. I entered full remission after 18 months treatment for and recovery from Multiple Myeloma, a rare bone marrow cancer. I enter the new year full of confidence for resuming my passion for tennis in the spring. Did you know Schoenberg and Gershwin were tennis pals in Los Angeles? I would like to thank all my well-wishers' messages, which offered massive support for me in my darker moments.

Towards the end of the year I received a phone call from H.E. The Finnish Ambassador, Ms Päivi Luostarinen to inform me of my being awarded Knight of the Order of the Lion of Finland for services to Sibelius and Finnish music. As I was not expecting such a phone call it took a little while for such good fortune to dawn upon me but I managed to regain my composure and reply that I considered such an honour with great delight but in the context my doing something that has come entirely naturally to me since my teenage years. I thank S.H.P. Steadman, our Chairman, for his eloquent words in this issue. Little did I know when I commissioned him to paint my portrait in the aftermath of my diagnosis that he would not only paint something I regard as significant in the art world but that he would favour me with his enormously kind words soon after. I do think all our members deserve similar recognition for your abiding love and admiration for the wonderful, life enhancing music of Jean Sibelius. Between us we are the only membership Sibelius Society in the world and our coverage confirms this.

We announce two society concerts in 2019 in this Newsletter. One now in January where we support an English pianist, Rudi Eastwood playing Sibelius in northern Finland; the second in July at a church in Raynes Park, SW London, when we will hear Sibelius in the guise of organ composer, a rare opportunity indeed. Our soloist is Theodore Frazer, a keen improviser who will use the 11 bar theme Sibelius was asked to supply for an improvisation at a London recital in 1933, to play his own improvisation which will likely be the first since 1933. Please put this date in your diary now as it will not appear again before the July Newsletter.

Keep your articles coming. The purpose of the Newsletter is to share our thoughts and love for the many-sided genius of Sibelius's creativity. I send you all a very Happy New Year.
Edward

An Honour for our President

By S.H.P Steadman

Chairman of the United Kingdom Sibelius Society

Today is Christmas Day and a time to be thankful.

It will profoundly please any member of this Society to know that our President's tireless efforts to promote performances, to disseminate knowledge and to invite the continual reconsideration and enjoyment of the music of Sibelius has been shown the official recognition that it deserves. On the 27th November 2018, Edward Clark was presented with Knight of the Order of the Lion of Finland by the Finnish Ambassador, Ms Paivi Luostarinen, at a ceremony in the Residence at Kensington Palace Gardens.

One of the aspects that has most struck me over the decades about how he speaks on the subject of Sibelius is that he talks about the music as if he had first heard it only a few days before, when it had entered

as a new presence in his life and he had then quickly read up on it so that his aroused interest might be fed by the circumstantial facts and amplify his initial feelings.

That is one of the most precious things I think Edward has achieved, to have kept the flame alive and refulgent, rather than just to have dutifully tended the ashes.

We should all be grateful for what Edward has done and continues to do so.



The Music of What Is

By Angela Burton

In my journey of deepening awareness and intuiting of Sibelius's music I have found some creative insight from within a Celtic context: on a previous occasion this was expressed by relating to Welsh Celtic-ness, whilst this time I draw on an Irish Celtic tradition, where the intriguing phrase '*the music of what is*' holds much force and meaning.

With the aid of this linguistic tool I am exploring Sibelius's Seventh Symphony, because as I listen to the developing themes, I hear wild and primal utterances balanced with sublime empty stillness. And I find that I can sense a power relating to the notion of '*the music of what is*,' a notion which in its traditional context somewhat defies definition and logic, yet, acquires strength as a construct of Sibelius's own poetic and psychic nature, providing insight from the opening bars, containing an elemental, creational overtone, which spills out with great reverence and wonder so that this symphony can be heard to be emerging as a prayer to the universe - and paradoxically expressed *by* the universe. What a gift Sibelius gives us!

Author Jason Kirkey,¹ throws further light on this paradoxical equation in his exploration of the embedded cultural nature of Irish mythology when he describes a sense of "our Being"... "becoming consonant with the ground of Being from which the cosmos unfolds"(p228). By realising such an intimate and ultimate level of continuity with the universe it becomes possible to think of ourselves as expressions of it, such as waves are an expression of the ocean and leaves are an expression of a tree.

Biographer, Santeri Levas refers to Sibelius's spirituality as being largely pantheistic in nature. He also describes Sibelius's often

uncanny instinctual reasoning and awareness. In the context of ‘the great cosmic prayer’ the Seventh Symphony conveys to me that we are hearing and engaging with form *and* formlessness, spirit *and* matter, in a space between inner *and* outer landscapes: all polarised energies being expressed masterfully as oneness.

It is revealing that Sibelius is noted as having told Aino, in reference to his Seventh Symphony, that he could no longer compose without consuming alcohol: not an uncommon admission amongst creative geniuses. For the sake of argument, I want to interpret this as meaning, when his critical and, importantly, self-critical, brain was more relaxed, allowing an essence of sound scape to emerge with implicit meaning from beneath the surface of normal reality. Perhaps he was using his alcohol consumption as a means of parking his rational thinking brain to one side in order to hear intuitively his inner music describing both a vastness and an intimacy of ‘*what is*’ - the whole thing: the great prayer of ‘*what is.*’

Such innate creative knowledge ingrained as part of the composer’s DNA, with or without his understanding of cosmic unity, had for centuries before been the domain mainly of Druids and mystics, which had somehow gone to sleep in a great organisational sweep by the time Sibelius was expressing his art. And was again, in the 1920’s, only then, re-emerging from ancient storytelling, shifting to being located within a burgeoning scientific community initially with a very different agenda. Whereas fifty years on the eco-theologian-teacher, Thomas Berry, was then able to describe in his masterpiece, “The Dream of the Earth,”

“The unity of the entire complex of galactic systems (being) among the most basic experience of contemporary physics. Although this had been perceived by primitive peoples, affirmed by great civilisations, explained in creation myths the world over, nowhere was the full relatedness of the universe presented with such clarity as by the scientists of the twentieth century.”² p 46.

Sibelius was nonetheless a child of his time and he needed to launch his work into a yet psychically sleeping world, not at all used to the language of cosmic connections, *per se*. That he had something different to say and to contribute which would be better and more completely understood by future generations must have challenged his inhibitions considerably. In recognition of this I want to refer to two very different recordings of this symphony:

a) “Jean Sibelius 1865-1957 Historical Recordings and Rarities 1928-1945.” Warner Classics: CD 5, tracks 6 - 9, Serge Koussevitzky, BBC SO.

b) “Sibelius: The Symphonies, Tone Poems, Violin Concerto,” Vladimir Ashkenazy, Philharmonia Orchestra. Decca, CD 4, track 4, (1983)

In part I have been guided by the reviews which accompany both CD sets. The recording of the Koussevitzky being possibly the first recording made. Each come within box sets and both are reviewed by Robert Layton: well not exactly, since, on closer reading of his notes in the earlier set, it is apparent that the performance and recording of *this* symphony has been graciously overlooked by Robert Layton, as he sweeps along, referring briefly to the conductor’s “...set with the Boston Symphony Orchestra being enormously powerful” (but not

included in this set!). Whilst he is lucid and generous in his reference to all the other inclusions in the set! Such omission speaks volumes about this particular interpretation with the BBC SO lasting 20.2 minutes and lacking all nuances in a race to the finale.

Conversely, the Ashkenazy interpretation lasting fractionally more at 22.3 mins. describes a different world. Not surprisingly my inspiration to write comes from listening to this version where the cosmic prayer is tangible and sustained throughout. Robert Layton describes it here as being “epic in character, the climax of Sibelius’s work: the process of thematic, metamorphosis is so sophisticated that the listener is barely aware of it. The sections are indefinable, seamless,” Layton says.

Perhaps the earlier version did manage to say something to that slowly awakening world of the psych. Yet I wonder and question whether that interpretation was ever capable of conveying such depth as was presumably perceptible from the composer’s manuscript.

I am reminded of a conversation I heard quoted on Radio 3 some years ago, as part of a concert which included Vaughan Williams’s Fifth Symphony. In the interval commentary the speaker referred to a conversation once related to him by a close friend of V.W. who had visited him a few days before his death. She, the visiting friend, had asked the dying man, “Will you be doing music in your next life?” V.W. replied, “No! I will be *being* it.”

In being ‘*the music of what is*’ Sibelius’s great gift continues to be delivered.

The Seventh Symphony

Simon Rattle/LSO

By Edward Clark

The article above by Angela Burton arrived a few days after I had attended a Barbican, London concert in January, including the Seventh Symphony given by the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Simon Rattle.

He gave a deeply considered performance where the opening Adagio marking is taken literally, causing a very slow climb up the opening scale on strings before reaching the plateau on brass and wind which opens up the ambiguity of the whole symphony. David Matthews, the distinguished British composer, was my companion and he regards the whole enterprise in heroic terms, hearing the end as a just climax reaching the goal of C major in the way that confirms the positive side of the human spirit. I said that I thought the whole work was a struggle from the opening beauty of the string threnody through increasingly anguished storms where the solo trombone tries, in increasingly hostile environments, to quell the anxiety of the music before reaching the calm recollection of the opening theme for flutes which somehow resolves into the finality of the very end of the rising cadence on the strings. Colin Davis told me once this ending was the final nails in the coffin of Romanticism. David was querulous in making sense of his understanding of this meaning (if such applies) to the work.

Simon Rattle describes the work “almost like a scream.” I thought his performance justified this view when his urging of the playing near the end, where the orchestra erupts into a sound not far from the scream noted by the conductor. To my mind this is pure anguish from the pen of an aging composer trying to figure out his future direction as a creative artist but uncertain about his conclusions, tempered as they were by his over consumption of alcohol and beset by worry and anxiety as to his mortality.

Perhaps David is the sensible person here when he literally feels as well as hears the heroic effort behind the music. I only wish I could agree. Life would be so much simpler!

Two forthcoming Society concerts

A Piano Recital

Rudi Eastwood plays Sibelius in Finland

Thursday 17th January

St. Paul's Chapel, Saariselka, Finland

Programme

Sibelius Sonatina No. 1

Grieg Lyric Pieces Op.12

Sibelius Sonatina No. 2

Grieg Lyric Pieces Op.43

Sibelius Sonatina No.3

Grieg Lyric Pieces Op.65

Rudi's 8 year old son plays three pieces from the Oskar Merikanto Suite Op.31

An Organ recital

Theodore Frazer plays rare organ works by Sibelius

Saturday 13th July, 7.30pm

St. Saviour's Church, Grand Drive, Raynes Park, SW20 9DL

Programme

Works by Sibelius:

Intrada Op.111a 1925

Surusoitto – Funeral Music Op.111b

Improvisation on a Sibelius Fragment (Theme) written in 1932 at the request of the London Organ Society

Finlandia

And

Alexandre Guilmant

An improvisation on three themes used by Bruckner in 1884

Boellman

Both concerts are planned and sponsored by the Society with the cooperation of the soloists.

The Finnish concert in January demonstrates the Society's support for a British soloist performing Sibelius in his home country.

Delights and revelations from Maestro Editions

A review by Edward Clark

The New Year brings forth a series of rare (sometimes historic) Sibelius recordings newly made available on CD and downloads, often for the first time.

My LP collection contains some if not all of these quite masterful performances of symphonies 2, 4, 5 and 7 plus *Kullervo*, some of the rare symphonic poems and smaller pieces but, now, to have them in good sound is manna from heaven indeed. My thanks to The Antal Doráti Centenary Society which is behind Maestro Editions.

Details for acquisition are below.

My first CD features very rare recordings of **symphonies 4 and 5** plus *Finlandia* and *Praeludium* by Armas Järnefelt (Sibelius's brother-in-law).

Artur Rodzinski's recording of the Fourth Symphony was made in 1946 with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra for the Columbia label. It is the most terrifying performance I have ever heard. It is

superbly executed by the orchestra and is totally uncompromising in its intensity and command of the many (often ignored) dynamic gradations in the score. Here loud means loud and soft means soft. This is travelling through very severe and dark terrain of the human mind. Marvellous if you can take it (occasionally!).

Rodzinski's Fifth Symphony was made, also for Columbia, in 1941 with the Cleveland Orchestra and the sound, although improved enormously on this CD transfer, is not as good as the later 1946 recording. The performance is more astringent than what we are used to today which allies the work closer to the earlier "edgy/modern" Fourth. As with the Fourth Rodzinski has a tight grip on his material which accentuates the dynamic flows more than usual. The accompanying strings in the first half of the first movement have never conjured a sound more frigid nor more frightening. This is an interesting and highly original view of "the greatest work of the 20th century" (Peter Paul Nash - who am I to argue?)

We can welcome back the *Praeludium* (recorded in 1941) which used to be very popular for understandable reasons. *Finlandia* (recorded in 1939) goes with a real swing, both with the Cleveland players. Rodzinski was evidently one of the great individualists of his era, if these recordings are anything to go by. Like many of his European contemporaries (Koussevitzky, Reiner, Szell, Toscanini, Ormandy and Stokowski to name the best known) he made his reputation in America but had mixed fortunes and his career waned after the war.

Maestro Editions

A double CD set - £12

ME.013

Digital transfers from 78's by F. Reeder, edited by Chris Brereton

-

The critic, Rick Jones has written that listening to Finns performing Sibelius is like watching fish swimming in water.

No better description is apt after hearing the great Finnish conductor, Tauno Hannikainen's definitive performances of the **Fourth Symphony and *The Lemminkäinen Suite (Four Legends)***, surprisingly played by two Russian orchestras and recorded at about the time of Sibelius's death in 1957.

If Rodzinski terrifies in the Fourth Symphony then Hannikainen bewitches our senses. He was entrusted with performing the *il tempo largo* slow movement from this symphony at Sibelius's funeral. There is an indescribable naturalness about Hannikainen's way with both the mature, austere Fourth Symphony and the early, utterly romantic *Lemminkäinen Suite*, where the sexual impulse dominates in the marvellously evocative first of four movements, *Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of the Island*. The *Suite* is played by the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, not with perfection maybe but with spirit.

Hannikainen chooses, in my opinion, the very best speeds for the four movements of the Fourth Symphony; basically slow, fast, slow, fast so that the work constantly holds the listener's attention by deed of the contrasting nature of the music. The playing by the USSR State Symphony Orchestra is marvellous too and this issue on a two CD set sounds clear and atmospheric, with better balances than in some modern recordings. I regret the absence of a big "thwack" on the timpani at the climax to the recapitulation in the first movement but that is just me talking. The performance is stunning in its replication of a soul constantly looking for salvation but ultimately being denied full relief of the earlier darkness by the simple, taciturn end.

Even today this supremely great work is denied hearings in our country.

John Drummond, an ex-Head of The Proms, once told me he couldn't find a conductor willing to play the Fourth! It never appears on our concert programmes and rarely on the BBC. To its credit Classic FM broadcast it in its first week of existence! This "Complete Melodyia recordings" set allows us to appreciate the profound integrity of a work that allows a listener access to the inner sanctum for the illumination of darkness.

As bonus tracks we have *Terchenniemi*, the last movement from *The Karelian Rhapsody* by Unno Klami; *Berceuse* and *Praeludium* by Armas Järnefelt, Sibelius's brother-in-law, *Valse Triste* and *Finlandia*. The surface noise on the *Praeludium* track comes as a surprise. All are played by the same combination as for *The Lemminkäinen Suite*.

ME.007

A double CD set- £12

Transfers to CD from LP by Chris Brereton

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Antal Doráti was not really known for any particular Sibelian affinities up to his recording of the **Second Symphony** with the Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra in 1967. Soon after he made a stunning impression with recordings of three of the very greatest tone poems, *Luonnotar*, *Night Ride and Sunrise* and *The Oeneides* with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1969. It is combining all these wonderful works onto one CD that allows our view of maestro Dorati to be positively assessed in the annals of Sibelius interpreters.

The Scandinavian orchestra brings all the right attributes of tradition in Sibelian performance. I hope the conductor was as impressed as I am in the playing. His own skills in choosing the right tempi shines forth from the very opening with a forward moving momentum achieved to launch the extraordinary first movement. This is a superb performance that I am guilty of neglecting in the past.

The three tone poems were always highly regarded by critics and listeners alike. I was certainly astonished at their first appearance as if out of blue! Gwyneth Jones sings with power and astonishing dexterity in one of the great concert aria challenges in the repertoire. It really is a frightening piece of music, inspiring a whole generation of contemporary French Spectralist avant garde composers. The other two great nature pieces penetrate to the core of our sensibilities with care taken over dynamics and structure by Doráti. This CD is a great bargain for all Sibelius lovers.

The Dorati Edition - ADE 034 - £8

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The double CD set of Gennady Rozhdestvensky (whose recent death is a serious loss to music lovers) conducting a range of Sibelius's music allows the listener to hear Sibelius's first and nearly final thoughts of writing for the orchestra.

When I attended this performance of *Kullervo* with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall in 1979 I thought the opening was measured. Hearing it again and listening intently to the entire organisation of the five-movement structure, I hear how Rozhdestvensky makes sense of the disparate styles and speeds the composer uses in this epic work. His experience conducting the great Russian epic operas must have been useful in this respect. I am very impressed at the way *Kullervo* coalesces under his grip of this ever-changing material, all of which has incredible melodic invention that is both vivid and memorable.

The two soloists, Heljä Angervo, mezzo-soprano and Usko Viitanen, baritone sing with impassioned fervour in their important movement where the incestuous relationship between Kullervo and his sister

is revealed. The choir, London Voices, captures the darkness of *Kullervo's Death* to perfection. The recording is reverberant as suited to the location but the ear adjusts and this transfer is excellent.

The fact that Sibelius immediately set it aside, never allowing its re-entry into his concert programmes is truly astonishing given its amazing fertility and invention. *Kullervo*, a symphonic cantata, was a road not taken but stands today as a remarkable statement of youthful artistic individuality.

The shorter works are all worthwhile hearing. Rozhdestvensky was rarely a boring conductor. David Oistrakh dazzles in **two of the Six Humoresques, Op.87 nos 1 and 2 for Violin and orchestra** (1917/18) - it is a great shame he did not record all six on this evidence, marvellous pieces as they are; the *Romance for Strings* and *Valse Triste*, played by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, both sound as if they were lavished with love and care and the end of the second CD contains the **Seventh Symphony**, which with the two Humoresques are with the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra.

This was Rozhdestvensky's second recording of this symphony on the Melodiya MK label, made more relevant as being part of his recording of the complete cycle. It followed his earlier recording of the Seventh made, I seem to recall in mono and with a rather coarse sound and an explosive trombone solo! This second recording can be set in comparison with another Russian recording of a live performance by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under Yevgeny Mavrinsky, made in 1965.

The difference between the two views is apparent at the very beginning. Whereas Mravinsky begins with a firm upward pulse on the rising string scale Rozhdestvensky is much more measured. Mravinsky seems to be declaring his intention to confront Fate square on and secure salvation

by indomitable force. It becomes a view that rages against the dying of the light, a refusal to buckle under the undefined forces that afflict the work throughout. Rozhdestvensky's opening heralds a questioning of what lies ahead, a sense of trepidation of the unknown.

The prominent trombone theme which binds the various elements of the musical argument is performed very differently; with Rozhdestvensky it is a beacon of light trying to penetrate the gathering darkness heard in the growing discontent in the orchestra. With Mravinsky the trombone challenges this increasingly disruptive element and confronts Fate, seeking a resolution of relief from suffering. In many respects Rozhdestvensky offers a spiritual dimension, whereas Mravinsky grasps the nettle and leaves nothing to happenstance.

Both views reinforce the universality of the music where an individual is entitled to take a stand and declare his or her belief in where truth lies. I could not live without both as they enshrine such disparate interpretations of Sibelius's unique symphonic canvas that allows me to avoid the question of which is right. The symphony becomes a personal document of great power and insight into the human condition and, as such, is limitless in its emotional ambiguity.

ME.001

A double CD set - £12

Transfers to CD by Dean Strutt and Chris Brereton

Downloads on all CDs are £4 each

To order these CDs contact Richard Chlupaty, The Antal Doráti Centenary Society, on chlupatyrichard@gmail.com

Music You Might Like (8)

By Simon Coombs

In this edition of the Newsletter, we have reached the letter I, and such is the paucity of composers whose names begin thus, that it will be necessary to talk also about those who follow, in order that readers should have a reasonable selection of music to consider. Of the fifty 'I's recorded by Naxos, my CD collection numbers a mere eight. Three of these find a place in the top ten this time, but I have with regret to leave out Jacques Ibert (a charming *Flute Concerto*), Mikhail Ippolitov-Ivanov (the splendid *Caucasian Sketches*) and Ludwig Irgens-Jensen (the powerful *Symphony in D minor*).

The letter J fares a little better in terms of numbers – 166 recorded by Naxos and twelve on my shelves – but only two of these make it to the list. On the other hand, there are several honourable mentions here. Gordon Jacob, whose orchestrations of others' music are perhaps more important than his original output, Joseph Joachim, whose violin concertos are less memorable than those he inspired, and Joseph Jongen, whose *Symphonie Concertante* for organ and orchestra is a fine work. Then of course there is Armas Jarnefelt, Sibelius's brother-in-law, whose two delightful miniatures, *Berceuse* and *Praeludium*, are readily available on CD, but whose more important works have been largely neglected.

The letter K provides the other five entries in our top ten. From a Naxos choice of 406, I muster a modest twenty-two. I am sure that the Finnish quartet of Kajanus, Klami, Kuula and Kuusisto is well known to our readers, while the rather better-known trio of Kabalevsky, Ketelby and Kreisler all wrote music that is enjoyable in its own way. Lovers of the post-Brahms piano concerto might like to hunt down Eduard Kunneke's 1935 offering, which is available on the CPO label.

We begin the top ten with the little-known Spanish composer, Antonio Jose, who was only 33 when he was executed during the Spanish Civil War. His *Sinfonia Castellana* is definitely worth exploring and the Naxos recording of it (8.557634) also contains agreeable lighter music such as the *Suite ingenua* for piano and strings.

Vasily Kalinnikov, at No 9, is particularly noted for his *Symphony No 1 in G minor*. This is a beautiful work, especially the first movement and is coupled with his *Symphony No 2* on CHANDOS 9546. If this music appeals, a Melodiya triple-CD (MELCD 1001995) offers both symphonies and a number of shorter works as well.

Another composer who died tragically young was Mieczyslaw Karlowicz. He was only 32 when he was killed by an avalanche while skiing in the Tatra Mountains. His music is grave and darkly melodic. Much of it has been recorded in recent years, and you can choose between Naxos and Chandos, both of which companies have released the symphonic poem, *Eternal Songs*, which is a good place to start.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold is at No 7 in the list. He is best known as a composer of film music in Hollywood in the 1930's and '40's, but as a child prodigy born in Brno, he wrote serious music from an early age. His *Songs of Farewell* are a cross between Mahler and Richard Strauss and coupled with his post-war *Symphony in F sharp major* on Chandos 10431X, they make a good introduction to this under-rated composer. His opera *Die Tote Stadt* is available on both CD and DVD, and for a more thorough investigation of his music, CPO have released a 4-CD box of his orchestral music (999 1502).

Charles Ives wrote four symphonies, three of which are amongst the most original works of the twentieth century. They are not the easiest or the most comprehensible essays in symphonic form, and I

hesitate to recommend them to any but the most open-minded reader. Ives's *First Symphony*, however, is a very different matter. Written for his degree at Yale, it is a delightful late Romantic work, with an exceptionally beautiful slow movement, and Andrew Litton and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra do it full justice. It is on Hyperion CDA 67540, coupled with the much more challenging *Symphony No 4*.

At No 5 is the Hungarian composer, Zoltan Kodaly. His most popular work is the *Hary Janos Suite*, in particular the *Intermezzo*. This and many others of his orchestral works are available on a Double Decca (4430062) with the Philharmonia Hungarica under Antal Dorati. The recordings are more than forty years old, but the last word in authenticity. Those readers who enjoy chamber music might like to investigate Kodaly's early *Cello Sonata*, which is available on Naxos (8.553160) and also on a two CD set from Nimbus (NI 5901) which in addition offers music by Dohnanyi and Liszt, played by Raphael Wallfisch, into the bargain.

Those readers who like the music of Vincent D'Indy have not taken me to task for leaving him out of the D's and now their patience is rewarded! His *Symphonie cevenole (Symphony on a French Mountain Air)* has been a favourite of mine for half a century or more – it is one of those pieces which seems to be unlike anything else in its genre. Any of the following pianists are worth hearing in this beautiful work – Jean-Yves Thibaudet (Australian Eloquence), Francois-Joel Thiollier (Naxos) and Aldo Ciccolini (Testament). Chandos have issued five CD's of D'Indy's orchestral music, but I'm sorry to say that in general it is somewhat unmemorable, though easy enough on the ear.

At No 3, we come to the only English composer in my top ten recommendations. John Ireland is perhaps best known for his *Piano Concerto in E flat*, but there are any number of other works worth investigating. Why not start with a Naxos disc of Roderick Williams and Iain Burnside which includes twenty-seven songs (Naxos

8.570467)? *Sea Fever* and eight Hardy settings are among them. Ireland's orchestral works are not the most memorable or distinctive examples of the English Renaissance, but *A London Overture* on Chandos 10110X and the *Piano Concerto* with *Mai-Dun* on Chandos 8461 will make a good introduction for those who are unfamiliar with Ireland's music.

I have for many years had a soft spot for the music of Aram Khachaturian, Armenia's leading composer. At a very young age, I used to listen to a 78rpm record of two movements from his *Masquerade Suite*, the *Waltz* and the *Romance*. The whole suite is most attractive, and ought not to be in the shadow of its more famous counterparts, *Gayaneh* and *Spartacus*. I suggest that readers to whom Khachaturian is a newish discovery might do well to invest in a recent Melodiya release (MELCD 1002146), which offers on five CD's a broad range of his orchestral output.

Top of the list this time is Leos Janacek, a composer whose most successful music was written towards the end of his life. His *Sinfonietta* from 1926 is his best-known work, written when he was in his seventy-second year, and is available on a Virgin Classics CD (0777 7590762 9), coupled with his *Violin Concerto* and *Taras Bulba*. There is much good music in his operas, and for those who like 'bleeding chunks', Naxos have released three discs of orchestral extracts (8.570555, 8.570556 and 8.570706). The same company has explored Janacek's early works, with interesting results. Try the *Suite, Op 3* (8.555245) and *Idyll* (8.572698) for Czech music of a more traditional kind. His piano music is also worth investigation. A Zig-Zag Territoires CD (ZZT 080902) makes a good introduction, with *Sur un sentier recouvert* and *Dans les brumes* played sensitively by Helene Couvert.

In the next edition of the Newsletter, I shall have enough composers beginning with L to justify a whole article, including some very

special personal favourites, with the British well represented. Before then, however, I want to revert to the letter B, and tell readers about a discovery I've made since I wrote that article. The German composer Walter Braunfels is remembered chiefly for his opera *Die Vogel*, for which I did not feel able to find space. A recent release on the CPO label (999 882-2) combines two works, the *Fantastic Appearances of a Theme by Hector Berlioz* and the *Serenade in E flat major*. Both are delightful and the slow movement of the *Serenade* is especially gorgeous. Lovers of Romantic music will be glad that they read this article to the very end!



Walter Braunfels

Desert Island Sibelius

By Peter Frankland

This article was inspired by the long running BBC radio programme 'Desert Island Discs' which was created by Roy Plomley back in 1942. As many will know, the format consists of a well-known guest being invited to select eight recordings which they would choose to have with them if marooned on a desert island. Following Plumley's death in 1985 the presenters have been Michael Parkinson, Sue Lawley and Kirsty Young. I was recently looking up a number of celebrities who happen to have chosen music by Jean Sibelius. Here are a few castaways from over the years with the Sibelius that they chose on their desert island.

Robert Hardy [1925-2017]

Robert was an English actor with a long and distinguished career, including stage, film and television. He came to prominence in the TV series 'All creatures great and small'. Robert won a Bafta in 1981 when he played Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years. He was an ardent music lover.

Music choice: Sibelius Sixth Symphony.

Adam Faith [1940-2003]

Adam was a British pop idol of the 1950's and 60's. He also starred in the 1970's television series 'Budgie'.

Music choice: Sibelius Second Symphony.

Peter Sallis [1921-2017]

This fine actor appeared in countless films, but Peter is perhaps remembered best for his role as 'Norman 'Cleggy' Clegg in the BBC's long running 'Last of the summer wine'.

Music choice: Sibelius Fifth Symphony.

Tony Hancock [1924-1968]

Great English comic famous in the 1950's and 60's. One of his memorable BBC series was 'Hancock's half hour' with Sid James.

Music choice: Sibelius *The Swan of Tuonela*

Peter Scott [1909-1989]

British ornithologist and son of Antarctic explorer Robert Scott. His natural history series 'Look' ran from 1955 to 1981.

Music choice: Sibelius First Symphony.

Robert Beatty [1909-1992]

Canadian actor working in film, TV and radio. He featured in one of my favourite films 'Where Eagles Dare' [1968]

Music choice: Sibelius: *The Swan of Tuonela*

Sir Robert Helpman [1909-1986]

Australian ballet dancer and actor. He appeared in the 1948 film 'The Red Shoes' and was the child catcher in 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang'

Music choice: Sibelius *The Bard*

Simon Russel Beale [b. 1961]

English actor. Simon fairly recently presented an excellent television series on the History of the Symphony.

Music choice: Sibelius Violin Concerto.

Gerald Priestland [1927-1991]

Formally a foreign correspondent and later a religious commentator for the BBC.

Music choice: Sibelius *Kullervo*

Sir William Walton [1902-1983]

Fine English composer born in Oldham. His friendship with the Sitwell

family led to the composition of *Façade*. The Oratorio *Belshazzar's Feast* dates from 1931. His First Symphony appeared in 1933-34 and shows a Sibelian influence, a composer that Walton greatly admired. Walton also wrote a number of film scores. Symphony No. 2 dates from 1960. The composer struggled with a Third Symphony for a number of years, but as with the Sibelius Eighth it never saw the light of day.

Music choice: Sibelius Fifth Symphony.

Tasmin Little [b. 1965] and Nigel Kennedy [b. 1956] are both virtuoso violinists.

Music choice: Sibelius Violin Concerto.

David Wall [1946-2013]

Became the youngest male principle in the history of the Royal Ballet at the age of 21.

Music choice: Sibelius *Kullervo*.

Joanna Lumley [b. 1945]

English actress who found fame in the television series 'The New Avengers' and as Patsy Stone in 'Absolutely Fabulous'. Joanna is a keen human rights activist.

Music choice: Sibelius Second Symphony.

Peter Cushing [1913-1994]

A fine British actor. He achieved fame in a series of Hammer horror films playing characters such as Baron Frankenstein and Dr Van Helsing.

Music choice: Sibelius First Symphony.

Sir Malcolm Arnold [1921-2006]

Brilliant English composer and a former Hon. Vice President of the UK Sibelius Society. He completed nine symphonies, many concertos, film scores and works for brass band. Sir Malcolm was a great admirer of Sibelius and he was on record in rating the Sibelius Fourth as the greatest orchestral composition of the twentieth century.

Music choice: Sibelius Fourth Symphony.

Jean Pougnet [1907-1968]

Fine violinist born in Mauritius to British parents. He was leader of the London Philharmonic orchestra from 1942-45.

Music choice: Sibelius *Tapiola*.

Amando Iannucci [b. 1963]

Scottish writer and satirist. Passionate about classical music.

Music choice: Sibelius Fifth Symphony.

Dame Beryl Grey [b. 1927]

Outstanding English ballet dancer who was the first western guest artist to dance with the world-famous Bolshoi ballet.

Music choice: Sibelius Third Symphony.

John Thaw [1942-2002]

English actor. He appeared in stage, film and television roles. Many will remember 'Inspector Morse', 'The Sweeney' and 'Kavanagh QC'.

Music choice: Sibelius Fifth Symphony.

Anna Neagle 1904-1986]

Popular English stage and film actress. She was also a talented singer and dancer.

Music choice: Sibelius Second Symphony.

John Lill b. 1944]

Fine English concert pianist. He won the prestigious International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1970'

Music choice: Sibelius Violin Concerto.

Dame Joan Hammond [1912-1996]

Australian operatic soprano. Also a fine golfer.

Music choice: Sibelius *The Swan of Tuonela*.

Harriet Cohen [1895-1967]

Brilliant English pianist and the love of composer Arnold Bax. Both were admirers of Sibelius and visited the master at Ainola. Bax dedicated his Fifth Symphony to Sibelius.

Music choice: Sibelius: *Tapiola*

Warren Mitchell [1926-2015]

A fine actor and best remembered as Alf Garnett in the TV series 'Til Death Us Do Part.' He was twice a Lawrence Olivier Award winner.

Music choice: Sibelius Second Symphony.

Rita Tushingham b. 1942

Rita was born in Liverpool and made her film debut in Shelagh Delaney's drama 'A Taste of Honey' [1961] for which she won a Bafta. 'Dr. Zhivago' appeared in 1965 plus many television rolls. I do recall that when she appeared on Desert Island Discs, she commented that the Fourth Symphony of Sibelius always made her feel so sad.

Music choice: Sibelius Fourth Symphony.

In the second part of this essay around the popular radio series 'Desert Island Discs' I myself have made a list of the recordings I would take with me of the Sibelius symphonies. As one is allowed eight records, I have included *Kullervo*.

Kullervo [symphonic poem for soloists, male chorus and orchestra]
Ever since Paavo Berglund's pioneering first recording of *Kullervo* back in 1971 I have loved this amazing score that put Sibelius firmly on the musical map. I named my house after this music and not surprisingly I possess many fine recordings. My current favourite is relatively recent and is a live performance from the 2015 proms Sibelius *Kullervo* opus 7: Johanna Rusanen-Kartano, Waltteri Torikka and Polytech choir with BBC Symphony orchestra and chorus conducted by Sakari Oramo.

Sibelius First Symphony

My first introduction to this symphony was by Sir Malcolm Sargent with the BBC Symphony orchestra. Recorded in 1958, this music made an indelible impression on a teenager just beginning to discover the music of the Finnish master. My current favourite recording is on a Phillips LP.

Sibelius First Symphony in E minor opus 39: Dresden Philharmonic orchestra conducted by Carl Von Garaguly.

Sibelius Second Symphony

Competition is exceptionally strong in this symphony. Stokowski, Barbirolli, Beecham and many more come to mind. However I have settled for a live performance from Tokyo back in 1970 given by the Cleveland orchestra under George Szell. The orchestra was on a tour of the Far East. Despite a cancer that would kill him just two months later, the maestro gives an account of this symphony that is the stuff of legend.

Sibelius Second Symphony in D major opus 43: Cleveland Orchestra conducted by George Szell.

Sibelius Third Symphony

Kajanus, Kamu, Vanska and C. Davies have all given superb accounts of No.3. But for my desert island I have selected a fine recording from 2010. The young Finnish maestro Pietari Inkinen conducts the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in a lean and powerful performance of the symphony that Sibelius described in intimate circles as 'his beloved and least fortunate child'.

Sibelius Third Symphony in C major opus 52: New Zealand Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pietari Inkinen.

Sibelius Fourth Symphony

For me, the greatest symphony of the twentieth century. Competition is strong but I have gone for Ansermet in one of his finest recordings. In the finale the maestro opts for bells rather than the glockenspiel, Sibelius himself used bells at the premiere in April, 1911. The second printing of the score in 1940 stipulated glockenspiel [Sibelius disliked the use of large bells which he thought sounded too oriental] however in 1954 after years of confusion, the master finally admitted that he had wanted bells all along. The final and profound exchanges between flute and oboe in this recording win the day for me.

Sibelius Fourth Symphony in A minor opus 63: L' Orchestre de La Suisse Romande conducted by Ernest Ansermet.

Sibelius Fifth Symphony

My choice for this powerful symphony goes to Sergiu Celibidache. This Romanian born conductor was curiously opposed to commercial recordings. However, a great number of his live concert performances

have been released with the consent of his family. One such concert dates from March, 1971 and is a sublime account of the Fifth Symphony with the Swedish Radio SO. In the first movement the maestro moves imperceptibly from the slow, gradual dawning of the symphony into a pace that recalls a Beethoven scherzo. In the final earth-shattering six hammer blows, Celibidache spaces the chords to perfection.

Sibelius Fifth Symphony in E flat major opus 82: Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sergiu Celibidache.

Sibelius Sixth Symphony

Beecham, Kurt Sanderling, Bernstein and Segerstam all feature on my short list. This towering masterpiece is the serenest and essentially the happiest of the master's seven symphonies. However, my choice on the desert island goes to Karajan. For me, the maestro gets to the heart of this work. The opening of the finale [one of Sibelius's greatest] should not be rushed and many, even great Sibelians come unstuck here! In the final coda Karajan is unmatched as the music rises to a sublime climax before fading into eternity and beyond.

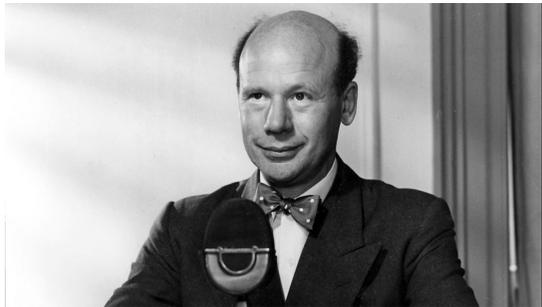
Sibelius Sixth Symphony in D minor opus 104: Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Herbert von Karajan.

Sibelius Seventh Symphony

Historically the seventh has produced some wonderful recordings of Sibelius's final symphony. Koussevitzky, Stokowski and Mravinsky all come readily to mind. More recently we have had towering performances from the likes of Colin Davies, Bernstein and Vanska. Georg Tintner was much underrated in a live recording from 1999 with Symphony Nova Scotia, at 24'-57 broad but crucially never sluggish. However, for my desert island choice I have gone for Kurt Sanderling in a performance from the mid 1970's endowed with grandeur and power.

Sibelius Seventh Symphony in C major opus 105: Berliner Sinfonie-Orchester conducted by Kurt Sanderling.

I hope that you have enjoyed a look at music by Sibelius which has been chosen by a number of celebrities from various walks of life. Desert Island Discs was the inspiration behind my selection of recordings of the Sibelius symphonies that I would take with me to my desert island, assuming of course that I also had a gramophone! [As Roy Plomley used to say] nowadays it would be streaming or some other modern technology. I must confess that during the preparation of this essay, it was a far from easy task to arrive at my final selection. The sheer wealth of Sibelius's music available which go right back to the early years of the recording industry made my own choices extremely difficult. The art of interpretation has given us some towering performances on record and of course a few best forgotten! That great maestro Wilhelm Furtwangler did not regard the printed notes of the score as a final statement but rather as so many symbols of an imaginative conception, ever changing and always to be felt and realised subjectively. The wonderful music of Jean Sibelius is profound enough to accommodate vast aspects of interpretation. If I am to remain castaway on my desert island for the rest of my days then this music will surely lift my spirits and bring me ever closer to my maker. Long may the wonderful Desert Island Discs programme continue.



Roy Plomley

Eugene Ormandy – A great Sibelian

By David Lowe

I have been listening to recordings made by Eugene Ormandy recently. I suppose the older I get the more appealing I find the music making of past maestros. This penchant goes in phases, so I can admit to also hearing with great pleasure recordings by Toscanini (in Beethoven and Wagner), Reiner (in Debussy's *La Mer*) and Charles Munch (in Berlioz and Saint Saëns).

In general terms Ormandy and I agree on just about everything to do with the choice of tempi in what I have listened to; so, his Rachmaninov symphonies (I remember being startled by his pioneering recording of the First Symphony), his Nielsen 6 and Shostakovich 4 offer me ideal readings in what can be difficult repertoire.

This article is being written for a Sibelius readership so I had better now focus on my taking recent pleasures in listening to my collection of Sibelius recordings by Ormandy. The first thing to say is that his Hungarian pedigree is very sympathetic to Sibelius's Finnish nationality in subliminal ways. The two languages come from a common root, quite unlike their neighbours' tongues. This gives me a sense of Ormandy's innate skill in choosing the right way in hearing Sibelius in both tonal manner and choice of tempi.

Over time he did change some aspects of his interpretations as any great maestro is entitled to. He also tended to slow down in some of the symphonies, becoming broader often to the advantage of the music. The Fourth Symphony illustrates this, I think. His earliest recording I have is of the First Symphony with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in 1935; it is far more romantic in tone than any of his later

recordings. This can be heard in the sumptuous portamento on the strings which heralds the return of the great, surging main theme in the first movement. My heart skips a beat whenever I play this version. A few years later, in 1941, after he had replaced Stokowski (by the way another favourite conductor on mine in Sibelius) in Philadelphia, this romantic surge (and, alas, portamento!) has disappeared. It never returned in any subsequent recording, being out of step with the times he then lived in.

In 1940, he recorded an exciting *Lemminkäinen's Return* with his new Philadelphia Orchestra and went on to play the whole *Lemminkäinen Suite* twice in c.1954 (mono) and 1978 (stereo). To me there is little variation in speeds adopted nor in romantic feeling for these unjustly neglected tone poems. Obviously, the later version sounds better, indeed of demonstration standard. This last one ranks high in my extensive list of recordings of the first great masterwork by Sibelius.

I have often wondered why, like Stokowski, Karajan and Beecham, to name three doyens of Sibelius, he never recorded a cycle of the symphonies. He omits nos 3 and 6 from his otherwise splendid recordings of the others. Edward Clark has written that Ormandy is quoted as saying he never “understood” the Third Symphony (probably a bit like Karajan – it wasn’t played by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra until Simon Rattle conducted it in recent times). But why did Ormandy exclude the luminosity of the Sixth? This is a real puzzle in my mind. Oh, those Philadelphia strings cry out to be heard in this most beautiful of all the seven symphonies. If anyone knows please do tell me. Perhaps we can glean a clue from the three Karajan recordings of how a great string section makes all the difference in the listening experience in this work.

So, what is there by Ormandy in the symphonies he did record and

how does his legacy match up today?

One partial help in seeking answers is to buy the RCA box set of 8 CDs, offering gems galore; two versions of symphonies 1 and 7 and the violin concerto plus a rare outing for symphony 4 (in stereo) – for this I had to buy my LP in New York as it was not generally released in the UK. The list of symphonic poems includes *The Oceanides*, *Tapiola*, *The Swan of Tuonela*, *Finlandia* (one with choir), *Valse Triste*, *Pohjola's Daughter* and *En saga*. The rare *Karelia Overture* and the *Suite* are there too.

Ormandy recorded symphonies 4 and 5 in 1954 for the 90th birthday celebrations (1955) on a Philips LP (mono). My copy is so worn out I had to find a fresh one from a charity shop. This was a seminal recording of no 4 that showed me a side of Sibelius I had never encountered; austere, dark and seemingly lacking in any grandeur I had come to expect from the then known works. Ormandy's version was, apparently, highlighted on the BBC radio programme "Interpretations on Record" back in the 1960's. RCA recorded it in 1978 with superior sound and a better perspective of the inner landscape of the composer's imagination.

Comparing the twin versions of various works is instructive, more for the difference in sound than interpretation; the Violin Concerto, an amazingly appealing work and today widely played, comes from the great Isaac Stern (1969) in rather forthright sound and the less well known Dylana Jensen (1980), who showed this great feast of romanticism appealed to female players as to their more frequent male counterparts. Indeed, today the balance between the ladies and men in modern recordings must be about equal.

This box set is incomparable for anyone interested in hearing legitimate performances that Sibelius would have admired. There is a lovely

photograph of Ormandy and his orchestra in front of *Ainola*, Sibelius's home, paying homage to the venerable and aging composer.

A month of my life has gone by listening to Ormandy's recordings of Sibelius and a few other composers. I find there is something "right" in what he gives me. Symphony 5 often disappoints me in performance, either too fast or too slow; Ormandy is perfect in judging the tricky moments of change of pace that permeate this master work and his view of the most magisterial music in the first and last movements rings so true. His No 7 is underpinned by a sense of forces almost out of control; vehement, violent and terribly frightening. Yet he recognises the balance Sibelius provides in the beauty of the opening string melody that gives no premonition of the disruptions to come. This is all done within a spacious framework to allow the sheer sounds to make their effect. *The Oceanides* explores natural forces beyond our control, huge surges of sound in a tumultuous seascape. *Tapiola*, likewise, excludes any real humanity until the very end when Sibelius moves from the minor to the major tonality, saying surely, there is hope in the future if we recognise our limitations in the great scheme of nature's inimitable ways. All we can do is protect nature and not change it.

Today, Ormandy, for me, ranks high in the pantheon of Sibelius interpreters. His views are genuine and honest. He never gilded the lily as some others do. The sound he achieved is nothing short of spectacular, aided by his locations and engineers, no matter what the era. He enhances my love for Sibelius and for that I can be truly grateful.



Eugene Ormandy

The Third Symphony and an enduring friendship

By Edward Clark

Hands up who claims the Third Symphony to be their favourite?

For me it was the first work I ever heard of Sibelius, introduced to me by my violin teacher, David Thompson, who soon after performed the Violin Concerto with a visiting orchestra at my school. The Third Symphony has remained in my heart ever since. The recording was by Anthony Collins on the Decca Ace of Clubs label; too fast in every movement, but even now, intensely exciting. The trouble is the middle movement is thereby diminished in feeling and fails to enhance the stature of an underestimated masterpiece. It is not the “transitional” work as described by past biographers but a clear step forward into the future of symphonic thought. It is worth repeating Sibelius’s conversation with Mahler in 1907. Talking about the symphony, Sibelius referred to the “profound logic that created an inner connection between all the motifs the inner parts”. Mahler replied, “No! The symphony must be like the world. It must be all-embracing.” Sibelius had just finished his Third Symphony and Mahler his Eighth. Two more contrasted contemporary works I cannot imagine, but both beautifully summarise their composer’s beliefs.

My appreciation for the Third Symphony grew from the early sense of energy and buoyancy towards a real sense of profundity through various succeeding discoveries. The first was the release on LP in 1973 of the historic recordings, including the Third Symphony, by Robert Kajanus in London in the early 1930’s. This came as a jolt initially, so slow were the tempi in the first two movements. Then in 1977 a box set of the symphony cycle was issued, conducted by Sir Colin Davis and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. I noticed the same steady tempi. By this time, I had been won over by the Kajanus view, helped

by the advocacy of Robert Layton, the esteemed Sibelius biographer. My mind was made up. This, surely, was the way to appreciate the greatness of the Third Symphony. I retain this view despite the fact that most succeeding conductors still perform the middle movement too fast. In fact, it takes a lot of courage and conviction on the part of the conductor to take over ten minutes in this movement.

I first met Sir Colin in the early 1990's when we were both connected with the London Symphony Orchestra, me as a fund raiser for the enormously ambitious *Tender is the North* Festival, he as conductor of the symphony cycle at the Barbican Centre in London. Our friendship grew in the intervening years until he passed away in 2013. Listening to many subsequent performances and recordings of Sibelius by Sir Colin, I learnt manifold secrets to the inner meaning of the music. Quite early on I asked him, "Why do you like Sibelius?". He replied. "Look in the mirror!". Cryptic and ambiguous, just like the best of Sibelius. And he is right. Self-reflection is something gifted to us in various degrees. It is up to us as listeners to learn more about our world, our circumstances and our feelings.

Sir Colin had grown up before WW2, listening to his father's set of the Kajanus recording on 78's. He told me he inherited the steady tempi from this experience and never changed his view. The Third Symphony was often his chosen work if asked to conduct a youth orchestra. I heard him rehearse and perform it with the Julliard Orchestra in New York, The Sibelius Academy Orchestra in Helsinki and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain in London; initially, with the latter orchestra he was asked to conduct the Sixth Symphony but said he preferred the Third. With good reason. On each occasion he converted the sound of really good student orchestras to a truly authentic Sibelian sound, in ways that remain a mystery to me. He was simply a conducting genius. I have a fond, if sad, memory of his rehearsing the Third with the LSO

at the Barbican late in his life and remarking to him that the passing of time might make it the last time I would hear him do this. (I always found his rehearsing Sibelius to be as illuminating as his eventual performance). “Oh, don’t say that “, he said but it was. I still hear those mutinous double basses wandering around the background half way through the middle movement, undermining everything going on above. In fact, the very last performance of a Sibelius symphony I heard from Sir Colin was the Fourth with the Royal Academy Symphony Orchestra. We spoke afterwards. “Why did you choose the Fourth, Colin?”. “I didn’t, they asked me to do it”. Years earlier I had been asked by a grandson of Sibelius to extend an invitation to Sir Colin to make his Finnish debut at a charity fund raising concert on behalf of the Sibelius Academy, hence the performance of the Third Symphony at Finlandia House in front of the then newly elected female Finnish President (I was firmly told she would not come as she only liked jazz; but come she did and expressed her pleasure and enjoyment at the after concert dinner in Sir Colin and Lady Davis’s honour.” After the Fourth’s performance in London he told me he was off to Prague the following week to conduct *The Oceanides* “Did you arrange that?” he asked to my acute embarrassment. One of my life’s regrets is that I did not catch a plane to hear him in that concert. Sir Colin conducting the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in *The Oceanides*. Wow!

Sir Colin’s steady, sometimes majestic choice of tempi (the introduction of the second subject in the Third’s first movement is perfection personified), is not the only view. If you listen to Kirill Kondrashin you will probably be blown away by his brisk baton guiding us through this work at a breath-taking pace. Vasily Sinaisky once told me (having studied under and worked with Kondrashin) that the Russian maestro thought Finnish conductors were too slow in Sibelius. This recording (last known to be on Globe 6011) includes the Fifth Symphony which seems to just vanish into thin air!

There was a long gap between the Kajanus and Sir Colin's Boston recordings (he later added two more cycles, both with the LSO); forty years or so. There had been a world war and other incalculable changes to our way of life. Anthony Collins Decca recording was followed by the Third and Seventh Symphonies conducted by Sir Alexander Gibson on the Saga label in 1965 and by many others, adopting similar brisk tempi, particularly in the middle movement but the arrival of Sir Colin's LP set finally allowed the listener a choice; in those days of the 1970's only Paavo Berglund chose similar tempi to his Finnish predecessor and Sir Colin. Sir John Barbirolli's symphony set from this era sometimes sounds sluggish rather than genuinely felt.

I don't want to diminish other composers, least of all Mahler, by saying that no one was writing a more far sighted symphony, in form and content, at the time of the Third's composition (1905/7) than Sibelius in his glorious and deeply felt work. Without the wisdom and strength of character shown by Sir Colin I would be much the worse for understanding the true nature and stature of this work. I asked Sir Colin, "What do you think is happening at the beginning of the middle movement?". "It feels like something crawling out from under a stone" was his reply. Ambiguous? Just like the music, hence his stature as a truly great Sibelius interpreter.



Sir Colin Davis

Interesting Sibelians on record

By Edward Clark

Sibelius has generally been the preserve of so-called specialists, people who adopt the music and play it regularly. This relates to recordings and concerts - apart from the ubiquitous Violin Concerto and the Second Symphony. Names drop off the tongue from the 1930's onwards: Serge Koussevitzky, Thomas Beecham, John Barbirolli, Malcolm Sargent, Anthony Collins, Lorin Maazel, Eugene Ormandy, Leonard Bernstein, Sixten Ehrling, Adrian Boult, Colin Davis, Basil Cameron, Maurice Abravanel, Erik Tuxen, Thomas Jensen, Alexander Gibson, Charles Groves, Kurt Sanderling, Gennady Rozhdestvensky and Leopold Stokowski to name some obvious conductors.

Today we can add Simon Rattle, Mark Elder, Adrian Leaper, Herbert Blomstedt, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Neeme Järvi (and his sons) and Herbert Blomstedt as performing all seven symphonies in concert and on record. Not to exclude the numerous excellent Finnish maestros from Robert Kajanus to the present day.

There are, however, some names who recorded only a little Sibelius and whose identification with Sibelius today is little recognised. I thought it would be a pity not to recognise their contribution to our enjoyment of Sibelius in various guises. Here are some suggestions.

Eugen Jochum

This great German maestro was an early admirer from evidence of his recording the Seventh Symphony in war-time Germany and tone poems a little later. What makes him so fascinating is how he "lost" Sibelius in his recording career from 1960 onwards. This is a huge loss given that his three tone poems recorded in the 1950's for the Deutsche Grammophon (DG) label, *Night Ride and Sunrise*, *The Prelude to The Tempest* music and *The Oceanides* are among the very best I know. It was his near contemporary, **Herbert von Karajan** who continued the Sibelius DG regime onwards. An earlier contribution from him

was recorded in London for EMI with the Philharmonia Orchestra; symphonies 4, 5, 6 and 7 plus *Tapiola*. For his inaugural concert with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 1957, von Karajan insisted on including the Fourth Symphony against the wishes of the orchestra Board. This alerted DG to his credentials and interest in Sibelius, which were not shared on his part then for any love for Bruckner. So Jochum recorded Bruckner and von Karajan Sibelius. The dye was cast and we say farewell to Jochum in Sibelius, in my view a great loss. Like Eugene Ormandy, Karajan never performed all the symphonies, in his case no 3 was permanently omitted. More recently Simon Rattle has said he gave the BPO premiere of the Third Symphony only a few years ago!

Karajan was, nevertheless, a staunch champion of Sibelius all his life. He conducted the Sixth Symphony in Stockholm before the War and recorded many of the symphonies more than once for both DG and EMI. Robert Layton disliked his Fourth recording on DG in stereo but came around later. Karajan does smooth out the dissonances in Sibelius but his Fifth Symphony finale is magnificent in sound and splendour, apart from his disregard for the proper pauses between the final chords. I love his Sixth Symphony for its beauty of tone but his Seventh is too elongated alas. He did keep Sibelius's name in front of audiences in post-war Germany at a time when Sibelius was widely disparaged for being a Nazi stooge. For that alone we can be very grateful, let alone for his performances on record.

Georges Prêtre

This great French maestro had a wide concert repertoire, much of which he recorded, including a Beethoven symphony cycle with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra before Karajan's first cycle. His belief in Sibelius is heard on a solitary RCA LP (1968) coupling the Fifth Symphony with *Night Ride and Sunrise*. Both are masterful

performances and only add to my regret he was not allowed to add other important works to his legacy.

Ole Schmidt

Schmidt recorded in short order, on a two freezing days in London, a remarkable cycle of the Nielsen symphonies, capturing the impetuous nature of the music in utterly spontaneous ways. His only Sibelius symphony recording is a fine interpretation of the Fifth Symphony, quite speedy but forthright and exciting. It is a shame he was not asked to repeat his Nielsen efforts in a Sibelius cycle.

Artur Rodzinski

Rodzinski is little known today. Born on the Dalmatian coast in the late 1890's, he trained in Vienna but WW1 interrupted his ambition to be a conductor. He was wounded in action on the Eastern Front and after the War made his way to America where he established an enviable, though sometimes controversial, reputation as chief conductor of various orchestras.

His 1940's recordings of symphonies 4 and 5 are written about in my article elsewhere in this Newsletter praising the enterprise of the new Maestro Edition label. Rodzinski was capable in encompassing modernity with favourite Romantic repertoire. These two recordings are excellent examples of how he achieves this in the most formidable way.

Arturo Toscanini

Rodzinski was Toscanini's rehearsal conductor in his early American career but the Italian wizard also had the measure of Sibelius in the Fourth Symphony. His Second is simply pure excitement from beginning to end in more than one of his recordings. Few Italians have taken up the cause of Sibelius; in the past de Sabata springs to mind but both Abbado and Muti in modern times have ignored Sibelius (Simon

Rattle says Abbado “loathed Sibelius”!). Toscanini knew the value of Sibelius both in popular (No 2) and less familiar (no 4) forms and his *En Saga* is engrossing in its inexorable drive towards the far horizon.

Eugeni Mravinsky

Mravinsky has given us a magisterial, if scary, recording of the Seventh Symphony taken from a live performance. He is compared elsewhere in this Newsletter with his Russian compatriot, Rozhdestvensky, in this work in their very different approaches to this epic masterpiece. Suffice to say here I defy anyone in not hearing one of the most searing and searching performances of the Seventh. It blazes with conviction as also is heard in the various recordings by Colin Davis and both capture the poetry and inestimable beauty in a work that summarises Sibelius’s contribution to symphonic form in the 20th century onwards. Mravinsky’s Third Symphony is available on an obscure Japanese label (Altus) and must be heard for its two forms, in mono and quasi-stereo, taken from a live performance in St Petersburg in 1963. It has a sense of purpose throughout, driving the innovative finale to its heroic conclusion.

I applaud many other fine conductors whose recordings are, alas, too few:

Carl von Garaguly- Symphonies 1, 2 and 7. Tapiola

Utterly reliable of both these tough and popular scores, equally successful in either.

Herbert Kegel – Symphony 4

A super surprise from a little-known conductor to us Brits. A great choice of tempi throughout allowing the right bleak atmosphere to be heard.

Paul Kletzki – Symphonies 1, 2 and 3

Chosen by Walter Legge, EMI producer to tackle the earliest symphonies as von Karajan showed no interest in them when recording the others with the Philharmonia Orchestra in the early 1950s. Romantically inclined, these were highly regarded in their day and stand the test of time.

Hans Rosbaud – Symphony 6. *Tapiola*

This great German conductor was drawn towards the harder repertoire when recording Sibelius. He was invited by the BBC to broadcast from Maida Vale in the 1950s and chose the Fourth Symphony. Here the Sixth is unusually measured. *Tapiola* has terrific force.

Erich Leinsdorf – Symphony 5

This Viennese trained, American based conductor was not known for his Sibelian sympathies and it took an invitation from the London Philharmonic Orchestra in London for Decca in 1946 to set down the Fifth plus the delectable *Alla marcia* from the *Karelia Suite*. His Fifth is well worth hearing coming from this unusual background.

Charles Munch – Symphony 7 and *Legends* 3 and 4

This seventh is strong and powerful from the marvellous baton in Boston. The two *Legends* are also successful.

Paul Paray – Symphony 2

Paray was based in Detroit and conjures up a marvellously urgent Second in bright sound from the vintage Mercury label.

George Szell – Symphonies 2, 3 and 4

The composer, Robert Simpson told me this Fourth was the best he had ever heard.

The Second is famously successful too and the Third was broadcast and recorded in his first year with the Cleveland Orchestra in 1946; quite brisk.

Loris Tjeknavorian – Symphonies 1, 2, 4 and 5

Only ever on LP alas. Idiosyncratic performances but interesting too. The Fourth takes no prisoners. The Fifth is played without a break between the movements.

Kirill Kondrashin – Symphonies 3 and 5

I was told by a fellow Russian conductor that Kondrashin thought Finnish conductors were too slow in Sibelius. This accounts for his swift tempi in both symphonies; the Fifth was twice recorded, in Moscow and Amsterdam. Nevertheless, there is no harm in hearing (occasionally!) these interpretations as they are buoyant and spirited showing another side to Sibelius's character, one where speed makes the desired effect for a certain exhilaration in the music.

CONCERT REVIEWS

The Power and the Glory

Review by Edward Clark

Maestro Kenneth Woods has reenergised the English Symphony Orchestra (ESO) to a point where it is one of the premiere orchestras in the central/western side of our country. Evidence of his superior planning and execution of concerts is the arrival for this concert of Stephen Bryant, the esteemed leader of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, as Guest Leader. It was held on Sunday 7 October at Hereford Shirehall, a splendid venue for concerts that don't need vast resources.

The orchestra is a factory for new music with its commissions now appearing frequently in its programmes; an ambitious series of new

symphonies is underway and the latest Artist in Association is David Matthews, himself a noted symphonist whose Ninth Symphony received its premiere recently after being commissioned by Woods and his orchestra. Matthews knows a thing or two about the symphonic tradition and this concert was devised around single movement symphonies at the opposite ends of the Romantic era; first the Fourth Symphony by Robert Schumann, followed nearly one hundred years later by the Seventh Symphony of Sibelius. Sir Colin Davis once told me this work represented the driving in of the coffin nails of Romantic music.

Woods gave secure and often impassioned accounts of both works. The Schumann achieves its status mainly due to linking the third and fourth movements. Otherwise the differentiation between the four-movement structure remains close to the model of early/middle period Beethoven. It must have still come as a shock to early listeners though and Woods way with the music permitted the closeness of the material to be fully established. The playing was keen and enthusiastic for demonstrating the latent power of the various musical impulses that Schumann imbues so craftily into his work. The conclusion was suitably uplifting, showing how innovative the whole process had been.

The symphony as an art form went through various phases in between this work and that by Sibelius. German Romanticism, typified by the thoroughness of Brahms' mind, complimented the many sided National Romantic movements, all contributing to the rich panoply of musical expression. Sibelius, himself, was an early adherent to this style of writing in his first two symphonies before breaking away in the first decade of the 20th century from the fully emerged Mahlerian expansionism where each symphony was to be a world, embracing everything. The climax of Sibelius's contribution to a reformed and reenergised symphonic style came in 1924 with his final symphony,

the Seventh. Here he condensed and compressed all his material into barely twenty minutes of the most concentrated way, using a simple rising scale on the strings to create the organic means of allowing a diatonic contrast and tension in the music to become a work of great power and glory; a fitting end to his symphonic quest for honesty and a lack of flamboyance, to which he had eluded in his remark after the premiere of his Fourth Symphony: “Nothing, absolutely nothing, of the circus about it”.

This work is complex and strains our comprehension of what processes are actually being deployed by Sibelius when he writes a single movement work with the title of symphony. Many conductors fail to offer insights into the mind set of the symphonic genius before the audience. Woods had clearly done his homework and presented this mighty work in a convincing, ever evolving way that reached its conclusion with a shrug of a final rising chord on the full orchestra. Such words fail to describe the pain and suffering contained in the music and Woods never deviated nor avoided this side to Sibelius’s musical character. The players were consistent in keeping their concentration throughout and the ever-rising turbulence, the offspring of an early solo trombone motive, here played perfectly by Julian Turner, was both deeply effecting and also disturbing. No wonder the composer needed copious amounts of whisky to keep him going in his exploration of the outer reaches of symphonic thought. Numerous attempts at emulating the single movement symphony have been made by composers, none of them scaling the heights of Sibelius’s Seventh, an epoch changing work if ever there is one.

This came as the climax to an exhilarating concert, begun with the Schumann symphony, before embracing one of his close contemporaries, Liszt with his rarely performed *Totentanz (Dance of Death)* for piano and orchestra, the soloist being the extraordinarily talented, though still young, Roman Kosyakov, of Russian parentage. The demands

made by the supreme pianist of his age are huge but were met by stunning virtuosity; he dazzled the audience with his cascade of notes which open the work before being allowed to display an outpouring of pianistic fireworks, the like of which the world had never heard before nor hardly since. The interludes of calm interspersed throughout the work were idylls of poetic feeling.

An interval was needed to move our senses from such resounding sounds to the altogether quieter atmosphere of *The Swan of Tuonela*, by Sibelius. But it was Liszt, through his sequence of symphonic poems, who inspired the young Sibelius to change his mind over writing an opera in Wagnerian style to modifying his musical material required for a set of four symphonic poems, *The Lemminkäinen Suite*; *The Swan of Tuonela* was one of these. Woods settled his orchestra down superbly and we entered a hushed world of sonorous strings accompanying a lonely cor anglais solo, here played with poise and great atmosphere by Graeme Adams. It was an early masterpiece in the Sibelius canon and Woods' direction allowed us to appreciate its extraordinary individuality in using sparse orchestral resources for maximum emotional effect.



Kenneth Woods

A debut concert with the London Philharmonic Orchestra

Review by Edward Clark

This concert was held on Wednesday 10 October at the Royal Festival Hall, London and heralded the debut by Karina Canellakis, conductor, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra; a shrewd decision as she made a stunning impact in a varied programme.

As well known for her violin virtuosity as her emerging conducting prowess, Canellakis is the newly appointed Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. Born in New York city, of Greek and Russian background, she hails from a musical family. Whatever she has been endowed with her ambition to reach for the sky in the conducting rolls of honour has been nurtured by spending fruitful time learning this “mysterious art” as Sir Thomas Beecham once described it. Her programme displayed a healthy respect for three composers best known for their devotion to their home countries; first Sibelius in his too often overlooked Symphonic Fantasia, *Pohjola's Daughter*. This is contemporary with the Third Symphony but is far more romantic in its feeling for story telling than the “classical” outline of the symphony. As such it represents Sibelius's urge for recognition in Germany as a composer worthy of the stature of Richard Strauss. To achieve this, he wrote a highly charged, fully orchestrated work to emulate the richness of scores by his German contemporary. Canellakis was equal to the demands of a pictorial work that ranges from a soft opening and close to a full bloodied climax in the middle proclaiming the big tune in all its glory.

For the concerto the choice fell on a second-tier piano concerto from the height of the Romantic era, the one by Dvorak; not the wisest decision to seek a better audience as this is simply lacking in the dramatic outline achieved in this composer's more celebrated violin and cello

concertos. It also seemed a waste of the outstanding talents of Pierre-Laurent Aimard, whose nimble fingers, nevertheless, lent sparkle to the many felicitous moments to be enjoyed in this work.

For her grandstanding finale, Canellakis let go with all guns blazing in a truly memorable performance of Bartók's Concerto for *Orchestra*. Although a late work, it surely declares itself as an accessible gateway into the mysteries of 20th century modernism. The conductor appears as if her baton has been part of her anatomy for ever. She uses it extensively to guide and encourage playing of refinement and energy. It is a sight to behold with wonderment. The orchestra responded with a real feeling for the many-sided aspects of this glorious work where home sickness is mixed with loud affirmation for a life drawing to its close in a country that bore little resemblance to his own. Sadness and defiance were projected in equal measure by the refinement of the orchestral members whose skills are sorely tested by Bartók. The great climax that ends the work was as elevating for the human spirit as I have ever heard and is a testament to an evening of music making of great quality.



Karina Canellakis

Music from WW1

Violin Recital

Sponsored by the United Kingdom Sibelius Society

Review by Edward Clark

The WW1 years were fallow for Sibelius. In 1914 he seemed to have emerged from the dark intensities of works written in the earlier decade. The Fourth Symphony (1911), *The Bard* (1913), the Three Piano Sonatinas (1912) and *Luonnotar* (1913) all testify to a desire to compress musical material and avoid any sense of external rhetoric. He wrote about the Fourth Symphony that it was “a protest against the compositions of today. Nothing, absolutely nothing of the circus about it”. The causes for this introspection and re-evaluation of his compositional material and style came from various sources. By 1914 his mood had lightened, perhaps prompted by the commission for short orchestral tone poem from a wealthy family in America. This became *The Oceanides* and established Sibelius’s reputation as a modern master in America. In 1915 he began to sketch his Fifth Symphony ahead of his 50th birthday celebrations, discovering one of the most memorable themes in all 20th century music, the Swan Hymn tune in the finale, inspired when he saw a flock of swans fly over his home. When WW1 was declared in 1914, Sibelius was, therefore, emerging from a dark, intensely private period in his life, and was recovering his earlier optimism that can be heard in the Third Symphony and *Pohjola’s Daughter*. It should have come as no great surprise to hear this new fresh spirit in the Violin Sonata that was composed in 1915. To celebrate the Armistice declared in 1918 following five years of unrelenting suffering and anguish in Europe and Russia, the UK Sibelius Society hosted a concert at Burgh House, Hampstead on Sunday the 30th September. Lisa Ueda, violin and Daniele Rinaldo, piano played repertoire that placed works by Sibelius in the wider context of contemporary music by Debussy and Respighi. All three

were represented by their violin sonatas (Sibelius by his shorter Sonatina) and pieces extracted from the various opus numbers of violin and piano music Sibelius wrote in the war years. He was forced to feed himself and his family by composing short, attractive pieces for violin and piano when his German publisher's fees were denied him after the outbreak of the war.

The concert opened with the Debussy Violin Sonata, his last work written in 1916/17. The elusive nature of the material, sometimes withdrawn, sometimes deliberately flamboyant, was well captured and the shadows cast by the composer were always apparent in the tone of the violin and the supporting compassionate playing by Rinaldo. It made of the loss of this towering 20th century composer the following year all the more unbearable.

The Sibelius Sonatina, new to these players' repertoire, proved that Sibelius could shed his reputation for the seriousness and austerity of the previous period by writing what David Matthews, the composer happily ensconced in the audience, commented on as "genuinely happy music"! Ueda was fully in command of the often-difficult score where the need is to make everything sound effortless. It was a heart-warming performance and one that captured the sunny uplands of Sibelius's imagination. So too were the three miniatures drawn from opus nos for violin and piano Sibelius wrote to ward off the bailiffs during this time. Although he was recomposing and struggling with the complexities of his Fifth Symphony throughout the war period, finally completing the work to his satisfaction in 1919, none of this effort appears in the lightweight, melodic and often delightful sets of miniatures that he wrote simultaneously. The three chosen for this recital were played with a lightness of touch and bravura that plucked at the heart strings.

The concert ended with the big, bold romanticism contained in the Respighi Violin Sonata, composed in 1917. Here the players let rip in the strong, often forceful music that was projected with all the virtuosity needed. Although the earlier works by Sibelius and Debussy could be thought of as chips off the block of 20th century masters, this was simply the best of the Italian magician, straining at the leash of expressing his inclination towards the flourishing of a late romanticism that was increasingly coming under threat from modernist tendencies. It was a superb ending to a thought provoking concert where none of the music seemed to have contact with the outside world of widespread anxiety and suffering.

A concert to honour the Armistice in 1918

By David Matthews

On 30 September 2018 the UK Sibelius Society promoted a chamber concert at Burgh House, Hampstead, to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The programme for violin (Lisa Ueda) and piano (Daniele Rinaldo) was adeptly devised by the Society's President Edward Clark to consist of music written during the War, but all of it far removed from the general mood of the time. It began with Debussy's Violin Sonata, his last work, written in 1917 when the cancer that was to kill him in 1918 was already far advanced. Yet Debussy was able to write a work full of fantasy and love of life in a joyous farewell to composing.

Respighi's 1917 Violin Sonata is a substantial three-movement work. It is rarely played today, though it was recorded by Heifetz, and deserves to be better known as a significant piece of late romantic chamber music, on a par with Elgar's Sonata which was written around the same time. The central *Andantino* in particular is an exquisite piece,

and was played with great feeling by Ueda and Rinaldo. The finale is an impressively serious passacaglia. This fine performance reminded us that we should hear more of Respighi than the ubiquitous *Fountains* and *Pines*.

In addition to these two sonatas, we heard four short pieces by Sibelius, written while he was battling with the Fifth Symphony, which cost him more trouble than any piece he was to write (with the exception of the Eighth Symphony, which defeated him). The Sonatina in E major is utterly charming, and from what Sibelius said about it while he was writing it – “Dreamed that I was twelve years old and a virtuoso. My childhood sky is full of stars – so many stars” – it sounds as if its composition was an entirely happy experience, which the music seems to demonstrate. Ueda and Rinaldo brought out its light-hearted gaiety to the full.

The other three pieces were dance miniatures, the *Tanze-Idyll* and *Berceuse* from Op.79 and the *Mazurka* from Op.81. Sibelius wrote many such pieces primarily to make money (none of his symphonies were commissioned), but he was too great a composer to write anything that can be called trivial, and with his reputation now steadily increasing these short pieces are becoming more widely played. Deservedly so, as in all of them, Sibelius’s true voice can be heard, as well his gift for writing memorable melodies.



David Matthews

Sir Simon Rattle performs Sibelius

By David Matthews

The LSO has inaugurated a series of hour-long concerts at the Barbican beginning at 6.30pm, an attractive time and duration (less attractive is their gimmicky title ‘Half Six Fix’). On 9 January Sir Simon Rattle conducted two works, the Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen’s ‘dramatic monologue’ *let me tell you*, sung by its dedicatee, Barbara Hannigan, and Sibelius’s Seventh Symphony.

The words for *let me tell you* are taken from Paul Griffiths’s short novel of the same title about Ophelia, who was of course Danish. At the end of the novel, and in Abrahamsen’s piece, instead of drowning herself Ophelia wanders off into the snow, an ending that clearly appealed to Abrahamsen, who had written an hour-long piece called *Schnee*. His protracted ending is of astonishing beauty, with fresh use of tonal harmony and strikingly individual sounds from the orchestra. Before he started work on *let me tell you*, Abrahamsen had intensive discussions with Hannigan, and his vocal line exploits her exceptional flexibility to the full. There is much use of melisma, for which Abrahamsen acknowledges his debt to Monteverdi. From where I was sitting, to the side in the stalls, the words were rarely audible, and this may have been partly due to the notorious Barbican acoustic. But since much of the time Abrahamsen is using the voice as an instrument, this didn’t seem to matter: Ophelia becomes a sound of nature.

In his introduction from the stage (a feature of these concerts), Sir Simon said that of the 40 pieces commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic during his tenure, he thought *let me tell you* (which was the only one he didn’t conduct himself: the premiere was given by Andris Nelsons) was the best, and he may well be right. Certainly it has achieved unusual success since its premiere in 2013: it has been

played by eleven different orchestras and in 2016 won the prestigious Grawemeyer Award.

Introducing the Sibelius, Sir Simon said he thought that the ending of the Symphony is tragic, and certainly it sounded more subdued than other performances I have heard, for instance Colin Davis's. But I find in its hard-won C major more heroism than tragedy. Of the three appearances of the majestic trombone theme, the first is the calm culmination of the sublime C major string meditation that precedes it; in the second its noble voice is threatened by the storm clouds in the C minor strings that surround it; the third, in C major once more and rising above tumultuous sounds in the orchestra, is almost triumphant. It is followed by music of passionate intensity: can Sibelius sustain his home key against disruptive forces? It is something like the crisis that precedes the triumphant ending of the Fifth. The phrases become hesitant, questioning, reflective; but at last we reach a dominant seventh pizzicato chord on G, and then C major *fortissimo* in the brass, and the heart-stopping entry of B on the violins that leads to C and confirms that this is indeed home.

Apart from my slight reservation about the ending, I can hardly imagine a better performance than this one: it showed Rattle's masterly control of the transitions from one tempo to another, so that the feeling that we are suddenly in a different world without having noticed it was effortlessly evoked. The LSO were magnificent throughout, especially their strings, which under Rattle are as good as the Berlin Philharmonic's, and more attuned to Sibelius than their German colleagues.

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