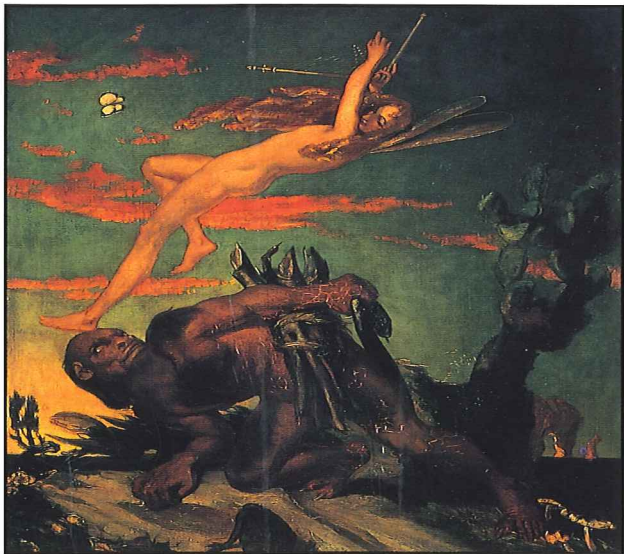


SIBELIUS

Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7 'The Tempest' Suite No. 2

Iceland Symphony Orchestra
Petri Sakari



Jean Sibelius (1865 – 1957)

Symphony No.6, Op.104 • Symphony No.7 in C major, Op.105

The Tempest: Suite No.2, Op.109, No.3

The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius was born in 1865, the son of a doctor, in a small town in the south of Finland, the language and culture of his family being 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 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*, with travel to the major musical centres of Europe and 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, Opus 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.

Sibelius wrote his incidental music to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in 1925 for a production of the play in 1926 by the Royal Danish Theatre in Copenhagen. In many ways the play presented a new challenge, after so many years devoted to the composition of symphonies, and reflected, in a sense, his own feelings. At the end of the play the exiled Duke of Milan, Prospero, abjures his magic. It was not long before Sibelius too would lay his pen aside. The play, with its incidental music, was successfully staged in Copenhagen and subsequently in Helsinki. From it

Sibelius derived two suites, the first for full orchestra and the second for a smaller ensemble. The latter opens with the ethereal *Chorus of the Winds* [5], as Ariel describes how he has raised the tempest but preserved the king's ship and those now shipwrecked on Prospero's island. *The Intermezzo* [6] comes between the third and fourth acts, reflecting the grief of Alonso, King of Naples, that his son Ferdinand seemingly *'the ooze is bedded, drowned'*. *The Dance of the Nymphs* [7], a minuet, forms part of the masque conjured up by Prospero for Miranda and Ferdinand, and Prospero himself is portrayed in formal grandeur in the fourth movement of the suite [8]. The two *Songs* [9] are both for Ariel; the first as Prospero commands the spirit to conjure up the harvest pageant in the fourth act, *Before you can say 'Come', and 'Go'*; and the second as Ariel helps Prospero don his robes in the final scene, *Where the bee sucks, there suck I*. These are followed by a charming picture of the innocent young Miranda [10], an entr'acte before the third act. *The Naiads* [11], sea-nymphs, are represented in thoroughly Sibelian terms, as Ariel is seen in the guise of a mermaid by the yellow sands, and the suite ends with the *Dance Episode* [12] that follows Antonio's interrupted plot to murder Alonso.

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, Opus 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*. 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.

Keith Anderson

Iceland Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1950, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra is probably among the youngest national orchestras in Europe, representing the artistic interests and standards of an intensely musical country of only 270,000 inhabitants. Cultural traditions in Iceland go back to the literature of the medieval sagas, but the first attempt to establish an orchestra was in the 1920s. In 1950 the Iceland Symphony Orchestra was founded with forty musicians and in spite of early difficulties developed over the years, until parliamentary legislation in 1982

provided absolute security. The orchestra now has a complement of 72 permanent players and gives some sixty concerts each season, including fortnightly subscription concerts in Reykjavík and tours in Iceland and abroad, with recent visits throughout Scandinavia and the rest of Europe, as well as to the United States of America. The present Chief Conductor is Petri Sakari, from Finland, successor to a line of distinguished directors.

Petri Sakari

The Finnish conductor Petri Sakari was born in Helsinki in 1958 and started his musical studies as a violinist, later beginning his conducting education at the age of fourteen. He graduated in conducting from the Sibelius Academy in 1981 under Jorma Panula, and later also as a violinist, studying further at the Aspen Music Festival in the United States of America and attending seminars with Franco Ferrara and Rafael Kubelik. He is a frequent guest conductor with leading Finnish orchestras such as the Finnish Radio Symphony orchestra and other leading Scandinavian orchestras and

also regularly conducts opera and ballet, notably the Finnish National Opera and the Gothenburg Opera. Outside Scandinavia he has conducted in England, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Romania, the United States and Mexico. From 1977 to 1993, he was Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, returning to this position in 1996. Together they have previously recorded the complete symphonies of Leevi Madetoja and orchestral works by Sibelius, Uuno Klami, Hugo Alfvén, Edvard Grieg and Icelandic composers, notably Jón Leifs.

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Jean
SIBELIUS

(1865-1957)

**Symphonies No. 6 and 7
The Tempest Suite No. 2**

**Iceland Symphony Orchestra
Petri Sakari**

Playing
Time
71:17

1	Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104	30:22
2	Allegro molto moderato	9:10
3	Allegretto moderato	6:59
4	Poco vivace	3:40
5	Allegro molto	10:33
6	'The Tempest' Suite No. 2, Op. 109, No. 3	18:10
7	Chorus of the Winds	3:47
8	Intermezzo	2:31
9	Dance of the Nymphs	1:55
10	Prospero	1:43
11	Song I & II	2:08
12	Miranda	2:20
13	The Naiads	1:27
14	Dance Episode	2:19
15	Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 105	22:45

The monumental achievement of Sibelius as a symphonist ended with his Sixth and Seventh Symphonies, written in 1923 and 1924. An eighth was destroyed, perhaps unsuited to a world, something of the sorrow of which had been finally expressed in the preceding work. His incidental music for a notable Danish performance of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* in 1925 resulted in two concert suites. The second of these includes musical portraits of Prospero and Miranda and evokes the magic spirit of Prospero's island.

Recorded in The Concert Hall, Reykjavik, Iceland.
from 11th to 12th February and 23rd to 25th March, 2000.

Producer: Paul Myers

Engineer: Bjarni Rúnar Bjarnason, Grétar Ævarsson,
Svevvir Gíslason

Music Notes: Keith Anderson

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