

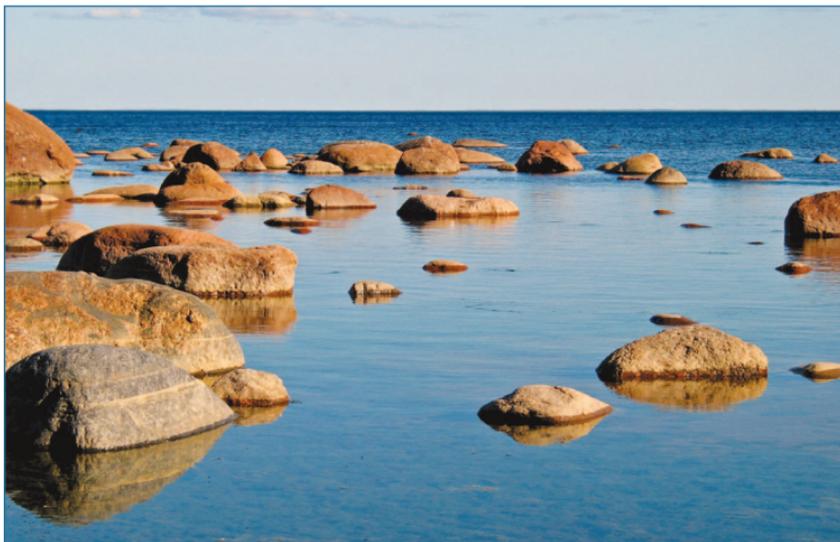
NAXOS

# SIBELIUS

## Songs • 1

**Black Roses • The Tryst • Was It A Dream?**

**Hannu Jurmu, Tenor • Jouni Somero, Piano**



**Includes World Première Recordings**

**Jean**  
**SIBELIUS**  
(1865-1957)  
**Songs, Volume 1**

1	Illalle (To Evening), Op. 17, No. 6	1:37
2	Våren flyktar hastigt (Spring is Flying), Op. 13, No. 4	1:37
3	Den första kyssten (The First Kiss), Op. 37, No. 1	1:54
4	Svarta rosor (Black Roses), Op. 36, No. 1	2:03
5	Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte (The Tryst), Op. 37, No. 5	2:50
6	Säv, säv, susa (Reed, reed, rustle), Op. 36, No. 4	2:33
7	Var det en dröm? (Was it a Dream?), Op. 37, No. 4	1:57
8	Demanten på marsnöen (The Diamond on the March Snow), Op. 36, No. 6	2:45
9	Lastu lainehilla (Driftwood), Op. 17, No. 7	1:33
10	Souda, souda, sinisorsa (Row, row, duck), JS 180	1:45
11	Kaiutar (The Echo Nymph), Op. 72, No. 4	3:13
12	Segelfahrt (Sailing), JS 166	1:51
13	Im Feld ein Mädchen singt (In the Field a Maid Sings), Op. 50, No. 3	3:03
14	Sehnsucht (Longing), Op. 50, No. 2	1:51
15	Die stille Stadt (The Silent City), Op. 50, No. 5	2:45
16	Serenadi (Serenade), JS 167	3:02
17	En visa (A Song), JS 71	1:41
18	Den första kyssten (The First Kiss), JS 57 *	2:10
19	Orgier (Orgies), JS 143 *	2:21
20	Säv, säv, susa (Reed, reed, rustle), JS 42 *	2:08
21	Soluppgång (Sunrise), JS 87 *	2:31
22	Vänskapens blomma (The Flower of Friendship), JS 215 *	2:44
<b>Six Songs, Op. 88</b>		
23	No. 1: Sinivuokko (Blåsippan: The Anemone)	0:52
24	No. 2: Kaksi ruusua (De bägge rosorna: The Two Roses)	1:19
25	No. 3: Valkovuokko (Vitsippan: The Wood Anemone)	1:19
26	No. 4: Vuokko (Sippan: The Primrose)	1:03
27	No. 5: Villiruusu (Törnet: The Thorn)	2:17
28	No. 6: Kukkasen kohtalo (Blommans öde: The Flower's Destiny)	1:33
29	Narsissi (Narciss: Narcissus), JS 140	2:17
30	Hymn to Thais, the Unforgettable, JS 97	2:03

\* World Première Recording

## Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

### Songs, Volume 1

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 his country. His musical abilities 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 with Martin Wegelius, then in Berlin and, more effectively, 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. During this period he supported himself 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, particularly with his series of symphonies, the first in 1898 and the seventh in 1924. An eighth symphony was probably completed around 1932, but was destroyed. The rest was silence. For the last 28 years of his life Sibelius wrote next to 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 1914 war in Germany, France and Vienna. He died in 1957 at the age of 91.

Sibelius wrote around a hundred songs. Most of these are settings of Swedish words, texts in what was, after all, the composer's first language, with eight settings of German verses and a handful only of Finnish, although a larger proportion of his choral works use texts in this language. It is natural that the German songs have enjoyed wider international currency, leaving other songs generally to those more familiar with the language of the texts.

The earliest of the songs included here date from 1888. *Serenade* [16] was the first song by Sibelius to be published and is a setting of a poem by the Finnish poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg, many of whose poems Sibelius set. The son of a sea captain of Swedish descent, Runeberg was born in 1804 and taught classics in Helsinki. He has been regarded as Finland's national poet, writing in Swedish and author of the ballads of *Tales of Ensign Sïdl* in which he was able to draw on military acts of heroism in the struggle against Russia. He died in 1877. The other song from 1888 is a gently lyrical setting of a poem by Baeckman, *En visa* (A Song) [17]. From the same period comes the forthright and challenging *Orgier* (Orgies) [19], a setting of a poem by Lars Jakob Stenbäck. 1891 brought Sibelius's first setting of Runeberg's *Den första kyssen* (The First Kiss) [18], set again in 1900 and published as part of Op. 37 [3].

In 1892 Sibelius published a group of seven poems by Runeberg, not a song cycle so much as settings of separate poems with no particular narrative connection. Here included is the fourth song, *Vären flyktar hastigt* (Spring is Flying) [2], which the composer later orchestrated, a sensitive reflection of changing moods. Individual poems set in the last decade of the century are

*Souda, souda, sinisorsa* (Row, row, duck) [10], with Finnish words by Forsman who, as others of his generation, later changed his name from its Swedish origin to Aukusti Valdemar Koskimies, in consequence being sometimes known as Forsman-Koskimies. 1899 also brought a setting of *Segelfahrt* (Sailing) [12] with German words by Johannes Ohquist, a Finnish writer who also used the pen-name Wilhelm Habermann.

*Illalle* (To Evening) [1] takes another Finnish text by Forsman-Koskimies, written for his fiancée Ilta Berghöy and therefore concealing a double meaning in its title. It is included among the seven songs of Op. 17, and was written in 1898. Following it in Op. 17 is *Lastu lainehilla* (Driftwood) [9], again in Finnish, with a text by another writer, Ilmari Calamnius, who took the Finnish name Kianto. It dates from 1902.

The group of six songs published as Op. 36 opens with *Svarta rosor* (Black Roses) [4]. This setting of a poem by the Swedish painter and poet Ernst Abraham Josephson was made in 1899, its accompanying arpeggios breaking off for climactic moments of dramatic declamation. The fourth of the set, with its gently rippling accompaniment, is a second setting of the poem *Säv, säv, susa* (Reed, reed, rustle) [6] made in 1900, with the earlier version made shortly before [20]. It is among the best known of Sibelius's Swedish songs and sets words by Gustaf Fröding, his characteristic alliteration making an immediate appearance. The set ends with *Demanten på marsnön* (The Diamond on the March Snow) [8], a setting of a poem by the poet and playwright Josef Julius Wecksell.

The five songs published as Op. 37 start with a second setting of Runeberg's *Den första kysen* (The First Kiss) [3], composed in 1900 and finding a place for dramatic romanticism. The fourth of the set, *Var det en dröm?* (Was it a Dream?) [7] again takes a poem by Wecksell, and the D flat major fifth, *Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte* (The Trust) [5], with its historicist ballad-like opening, sets a poem by Runeberg. Another setting of Tor Hedberg's *Soluppgång* (Sunrise) [21], written in 1902 and first recorded here, differs from the version in Op. 37 primarily in its vocal line.

Six German songs of 1906 make up Op. 50. The second song, *Sehnsucht* (Longing) [14], sets a poem by Emil Rudolf Weiss, with music that seems to prefigure post-war Weimar. The third, the melancholy *Im Feld ein Mädchen singt* (In the Field a Maid Sings) [13] has a text by Margarete Susman, describing the girl's lament for her dead lover. The moving and effective fifth song, *Die stille Stadt* (The Silent City) [15] chooses words by the German poet Richard Dehmel.

A rare attempt at an English setting is heard in the 1909 *Hymn to Thais* [30], with a text by the composer's friend Arthur Borgström. The words 'Thais, she who cannot be forgotten' seemed to have a certain resonance for Sibelius, although the language was not one with which he had unlimited familiarity. The same year brought a setting of Josephson's *Vänskapens blomma* (The Flower of Friendship) [22].

The six songs of Op. 88 are dated 1917 and include settings of three poems by Frans Mikael Franzén and three by Runeberg, united by their subject of flowers. These are sung in the Finnish translation by Johannes Gebhard. The first song *Sinivuokko* (*Blåsippan*: The Anemone) [23] is a delicately evocative little work. It is followed by the tenderly plaintive *Kaksi ruusua* (*De bägge rosorna*: The Two Roses) [24]. The third song, *Valkovuokko* (*Vitsippan*: The Wood Anemone) [25] continues in the same mood. It is followed by the lively setting of a Runeberg poem, *Vuokko* (*Sippan*: The Primrose) [26]. *Villiruusu* (*Törnet*: The Thorn) [27] brings a certain drama, and the group of songs ends with the poignantly lyrical *Kukkasen kohtalo* (*Blommans öde*: The Flower's Destiny) [28].

Chronologically *Narsissi* (*Narciss*: Narcissus) [29] is among the last of Sibelius's songs, written in 1925, with Swedish words by Bertel Gripenberg, a leading literary figure of the composer's generation, translated into Finnish by Kyllikki Solantera. It has a perfection all its own, a song that is an example of the composer at his best in this handling of a small form of which he is equally in command.

Keith Anderson

## Hannu Jurmu

The tenor Hannu Jurmu began his studies at the Oulu Conservatory in 1982. He continued to study music and singing at the Sibelius Academy from 1984 onwards, finishing his first Master of Music degree in 1989. In 1994 he entered the Sibelius Academy Opera School to continue his vocal studies, and in the spring of 2005 he finished his second Master of Music degree. Since 1994 he has appeared as a soloist in operas, operettas, oratorios and concerts in Finland as well as Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Russia and the United States. His operatic rôles range from Mozart's Tamino, Ferrando and Don Ottavio to Puccini's Rodolfo and Pinkerton, and in 2001 he took the rôle of Count Zedlau in the film version of Johann Strauss's *Wiener Blut*. He has appeared as a soloist in numerous concerts in a wide range of great masterpieces and has a broad repertoire of Lieder, Christmas and sacred music. Hannu Jurmu has taken part in many Finnish vocal competitions. He won the second prize in the Kangasniemi Singing Competition of 1994, and first prize in the Turku National Operetta Competition (1996) as well as the Somero Tenor Contest (1998). He was also chosen as one of the finalists in the Lappeenranta Singing Contest of 1996. In October 2002 he was awarded the Beniamino Gigli Prize for his work in the field of opera.

## Jouni Somero

Born in 1963, Jouni Somero is one of the most active performers among present Finnish musicians. So far he has given over two thousand concerts all over the world, including Australia, Japan, Ukraine, Germany, Sweden, Estonia, Russia, Brazil, Canada and Finland. He began studying the organ when he was eight years old but switched to the piano at the age of twelve. He studied piano in Switzerland and at the Music Academy in Cologne under Herbert Drechsel, and under the legendary Hungarian pianist György Cziffra, he deepened his knowledge of the interpretation of Liszt's music. Michael Ponti, the American virtuoso, has also acted as Somero's musical advisor. During 1981-89 Somero lived in Germany, working, among other things, as an assistant at the Music Academy of Düsseldorf. From 1990 Somero has pursued his career solely as a concert pianist. He was awarded a diploma at the International Music competition in Rio de Janeiro. His recording career began in 1989 with Liszt's *Twelve Transcendental Etudes*, after which he has made some forty recordings for different labels. These include Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* and *Die Kunst der Fuge*, Liszt's *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses*, Liszt's arrangements of Beethoven's Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5, the Bach arrangements by Busoni, Brahms and Kempff, Henselt's *Concert Etude, Op. 2*, Schubert's *Wanderer-Fantasy*, and the world première recording of several piano works by Felix Blumenfeld. His wide repertoire includes almost all the solo piano works of Rachmaninov and Bortkiewicz as well as seldom heard music by, among others, Alkan, Godowsky, Henselt, Blumenfeld and Gottschalk. He has also made many piano arrangements of orchestral, operatic and pop music.



Hannu Jurmu (right) and  
Jouni Somero (left) in the garden  
of Ainola, Sibelius' home

Photo: Niklas Rautio

Although Sibelius wrote around a hundred songs over a period of more than thirty years – mainly settings of Swedish texts, with eight in German and only a handful in Finnish – they have suffered comparative neglect alongside his larger-scale orchestral and choral music. The best of the songs are essentially nature pieces, dark-hued, vividly characterized, intensely melancholic and vocally demanding. Sibelius considered them to represent his “innermost self”.

WORLD PREMIERE  
RECORDINGS

Jean  
**SIBELIUS**  
(1865-1957)  
Songs • 1

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6 Säv, säv, susa	2:33	19 Orgier*	2:21
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8 Demanten på marssnön	2:45	21 Soluppgång*	2:31
9 Lastu lainehilla	1:33	22 Vänskapens blomma*	2:44
10 Souda, souda, sinisorsa	1:45	23-28 Six Songs, Op. 88	8:23
11 Kaiutar	3:13	29 Narsissi	2:17
12 Segelfahrt	1:51	30 Hymn to Thais, the Unforgettable	2:03
13 Im Feld ein Mädchen singt	3:03		

\*World Première Recording

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A full track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

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Production assistant: Minna Pentti • Engineer: Enno Mäemets, Editroom Oy

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