

Photo: Jukka Myllynen



Pietari Inkinen

Pietari Inkinen, now working internationally at the highest level, was appointed Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra in 2008. He has won unanimous praise from audiences and critics both for his performances on tour in New Zealand and for his recordings with the orchestra on Naxos. He was also invited in 2009 to become Principal Guest Conductor of the Japan Philharmonic Orchestra. As guest conductor, he has already worked with major orchestras throughout Europe and the United States, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus, La Scala Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Dresden Staatskapelle, and enjoys successful collaborations with leading soloists. He also appears regularly in the operatic pit and has been invited to make his debut conducting productions at the Bayerische Staatsoper and the Berlin Staatskapelle. In the studio his recordings for Naxos with the New Zealand and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestras, including Rautavaara's *Manhattan Trilogy* and the Brahms *Violin Concerto*, have been greeted with particular critical acclaim.

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1946, is the country's leading professional orchestra. It has an establishment of ninety players and performs over a hundred concerts annually, touring within New Zealand and offering its main symphonic programmes in Auckland and Wellington. Tours abroad have included concerts for the Beijing Olympic Cultural Festival, and earlier appearances at the BBC Proms, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and the Snape Maltings in England, and at the World Expo at Aichi in Japan. Pietari Inkinen was appointed Music Director from January 2008, succeeding James Judd, who held the position from 1999 to 2007 and is now Music Director Emeritus. Other conductors who have worked with the NZSO include Xian Zhang, Alexander Lazarev, Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Atherton, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Edo de Waart. Soloists who have appeared with the orchestra recently include Lang Lang, Simon Trpceski, Lynn Harrell, Cho Liang Lin, Hilary Hahn, Vadim Repin, Yefim Bronfman, Simon O'Neill, Steven Isserlis, Jonathan Lemalu and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The NZSO has an extensive catalogue of CD recordings, mostly on the Naxos label. Over one million of these CDs have been sold internationally in the last decade and they have received critical acclaim. www.nzso.co.nz

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SIBELIUS

Symphonies Nos. 4 and 5

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Pietari Inkinen

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Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) Symphony No. 4 in A minor, Op. 63 • Symphony No. 5 in E flat major, Op. 82

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 with Martin Wegelius, then with the pedantic Becker 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 com-

mittee'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 improvisation, 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 successful *Symphony No. 1* of 1898 was followed by the still more successful *Finlandia*. Busoni had tried to arrange for the publication of his music by Belyayev, patron of the later nineteenth-century Russian nationalist composers, on the excuse that the Finns were, in a sense, Russians, or at least citizens of a Russian grand-duchy. This came to nothing, but subsequent publication by Breitkopf and Härtel ensured a wider public abroad than provincial Finland itself could ever offer. *Symphony No. 2* in 1902 won an unprecedented success in Helsinki. This was followed by the *Violin Concerto*, *Symphony No. 3*, and after an illness that put an end for the moment to his indulgence in alcohol and tobacco *Symphony No. 4*, 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.

In 1908 Sibelius underwent successful treatment in Berlin for a throat tumour. A more fortunate result of his illness was, for the moment, enforced abstinence from his habits of drinking and cigar-smoking. There were, however, money difficulties, as his debts accumulated. His change of publishers from Breitkopf and Härtel to Lienuu seemed to promise immediate aid, but the new contract made heavy demands on him that he was unable to meet. In 1909 he returned to Breitkopf and it was in October of the same year that he began to sketch his *Symphony No. 4 in A minor*. Progress was relatively slow and interrupted by other commissions, but the work was eventually completed at the beginning of April 1911, in time for a first puzzling performance in Helsinki. The symphony represents a change of mood from its immediate predecessor, its original inspiration the mountains of North Karelia, which he had visited in the autumn of 1909 with his brother-in-law Eero Järnefelt, to whom the symphony is dedicated. Sibelius seems at first to have envisaged a symphonic poem, although the finished work is in no sense programmatic or pictorial in content. The first movement, originally conceived as *La Montagne*, a suggestion later repudiated, opens with a motif 'as harsh as Fate', as Sibelius said. From this the principal theme emerges with a solo cello, to continue its development in canon, before the brass affirm a shift of key to F sharp major. The dark mood of the introductory movement is lightened by a passing shaft of sunlight, before the conclusion. The following *Allegro molto vivace* seems to promise contrast, but a more ominous atmosphere soon starts to prevail, particularly in the trio section of this scherzo, in which the return of the first section is very much shortened. The slow movement, at one time with the title 'Thoughts of a Wayfarer', is in three sections, the longest at its heart, the whole mysterious and other-worldly, from the opening flutes to the gradual emergence of the principal theme. The final rondo, with its inspired use of a solo cello and a colourful glockenspiel, includes

in its development music originally intended for an unfinished setting of Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven*. By the end of the movement, however, a feeling of bleak desolation has returned, concluding a work that Sibelius himself described as 'a psychological symphony'.

Sibelius had contemplated a *Fifth Symphony* as early as 1912. The first version, written largely in 1915, had been given its first performance in December of that year in a celebration of the composer's fiftieth birthday. A second version, combining the first and second movements into one and extending the finale to make a balancing second half to the work, was first heard in 1916, but still failed to satisfy Sibelius. The final revision was delayed by the aftermath of the revolution in Russia and the resulting civil war in Finland but completed in 1919. The first movement opens with the horns in expansive mood, followed by the woodwind in thirds, the entry of the strings delayed. The dramatic tension of tremolo strings leads to a second subject. The centre of the movement takes the place of a scherzo, with a solo trumpet theme, a suggestion of what is to follow in the last movement. The second movement is in the form of a G major theme and variations, its opening melody given to plucked strings and flutes in thirds, moving, as the music proceeds, from the idyllic to the passionate. The massive finale starts with the busy, swelling activity of the strings, after which the well-known theme that dominates the movement emerges in all its strength, with a secondary, complementary theme from the woodwind, as the trumpets declare what had become known to Sibelius and his friend and adviser Baron Axel Carpelan, who died before the new version was finished, as the 'swan-theme'. This had been suggested to Sibelius by the sight and sound of swans circling above him in the haze of early spring sunshine. It remains the most familiar of all themes in a symphony that has always enjoyed popularity.

Keith Anderson