



London Philharmonic Orchestra

SIBELIUS

SYMPHONY NO. 5

SYMPHONY NO. 6

THE SWAN OF TUONELA

PAAVO BERGLUND *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

SWANSONG: BERGLUND'S LAST SIBELIUS



Rehearsing with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for his series of Sibelius performances in the mid-2000s (which resulted in a critically acclaimed release of Symphonies No. 2 & 7

on the LPO Label, LPO-0005), Paavo Berglund hardly said a word. He was growing old, but his economy with speech was more about purpose and results than seniority or restraint. When he did address the musicians, he was usually loud and commanding – one or two words hurled over the top of the music. His death in January 2012 was talked of as a goodbye to one of the last conductors of the ‘old school’. That was certainly true of his rehearsal style: no names, no discussion and few pleasantries.

Despite that, and his harsh, frowning glare, the musicians of the Orchestra loved to play for Berglund. He made them hear new things, they reported. He was a hard worker and a straight talker. You could tell, in rehearsal even more than in performance, that he wasn't in it to be liked. But liked he was.

The affinity Berglund felt with the music of Jean Sibelius went beyond shared nationality

and personal acquaintance. Berglund revealed a rare physicality in Sibelius's scores. It was there in his three recorded symphony cycles, but in these late London performances it emerged in a different, darker light. Berglund wasn't as meticulous about observing marked tempi as some of his younger compatriots are. Instead he was impulsive, rugged and heartfelt. But his instincts always seemed to serve the musical architecture, the curious symphonic meta-flow unique to Sibelius.

That reaches its apex in the last three symphonies – in the natural flight of the Fifth and the freefall journey of the Sixth. The former powers forward in this performance, and towards something quite unusual. The third of its six concluding chords appears relaxed, and the fourth tightened. In the concert, it seemed like Berglund knew he'd acted unlawfully but felt compelled to from within. Whatever our reaction now, it was part of what made his concerts unique.

Profile & programme notes © Andrew Mellor

Andrew Mellor is Reviews Editor at Gramophone magazine and has a special interest in the music and culture of the Nordic countries. He worked in the marketing department of the London Philharmonic Orchestra from 2003–08.

JEAN SIBELIUS

SYMPHONY NO. 5 IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 82

In the early 1910s, Jean Sibelius could add to his own financial and health problems those of his beloved Finland itself. Russia was strengthening its grip on the province, suspending parliament and attempting to drive out the Finnish language. As Europe slipped towards war, Finland, aligned with Russia, faced mass slaughter and the annihilation of its timber exporting industry. 'In a deep mire again, but already I am beginning to see dimly the mountain that I shall ascend', wrote a knowing Sibelius. 'God opens his door for a moment and his orchestra is playing the Fifth Symphony.'

So the work was rapidly forming in Sibelius's mind. Themes included the onset of spring and the spirit of the composer's country home at Järvenpää. Then, on 12 April 1914, Sibelius witnessed a sight that would affect him profoundly and write the Fifth Symphony's main theme for him. It was a flock of 16 swans, soaring upwards from the Järvenpää lake for their migration. 'One of my greatest experiences', Sibelius wrote in his diary, 'the Fifth Symphony's final theme ... legato in the trumpets.'

At the time of the Symphony's Helsinki première on 8 December 1915, there were

four movements, Sibelius later amalgamating his first movement and scherzo into the published opener. After the initial theme on glowing horns and woodwinds, the music gains momentum and folds outwards, the orchestra falling over itself in contrary motion towards the proclamation of a major fourth by the trumpet. The opening motif soon appears again, returning in another form as the Symphony is injected with optimism by an upward-pining theme – again in the trumpets.

Those gestures sow the seeds for Sibelius's finale, in which the double basses are soon heard spelling out a fifth which augments as the bottom note drops twice, stepping back up in the manner of an ostinato. Here are the Järvenpää swans. As it's taken up by the horns, the theme gains the pace and grandeur of flight, like the graceful rise and fall of a wing. Suddenly, the music shifts key: Sibelius's pedal-note disappears like the falling away of a runway, and the swans – magically, gloriously – take flight. Soon thereafter they can be heard in the distance, returning as if for a last salute. Again they soar inspiringly upwards, cutting through a tangling orchestral texture as if to break free from their creator's earthly concerns. Six resigned orchestral jabs bid them a final farewell.

SYMPHONY NO. 6 IN D MINOR, OP. 104

As other symphonies by Sibelius soar like gliding birds or cruise like breeze-propelled yachts, the Sixth can feel like a swift descent of a steep hill on a nimble bicycle. The Symphony's singular feeling of glistening light and playfulness has its roots in Sibelius's childhood in the countryside of Hämmenlinna, which inspired its initial sketches. But by 1922 when Sibelius came to knit those sketches together, dark clouds had returned to his life. The death of his brother Christian in July threw the composer into a sustained period of grief, and his financial situation grew ever more precarious. But his concentration on the Symphony remained steadfast and on 19 February 1923, the work was given its première in Helsinki.

Though the Symphony stands apart even in Sibelius's output, it does include gestures that are unmistakably those of its creator. There's the distinct mysteriousness of the strings, so often busily repetitive or stepping through sequences. There are typically bird-like effects in the woodwind, and brass gestures which are thick-set like rock formations.

Also, vital to Sibelius's late symphonies and carried forward in this example from the developments of the Fifth, is the feeling of a

broad, controlling 'meta-flow' to which all the individual tempi and moods must feed – like small tributaries into a large river. And if the Sixth feels somehow more luminous than its predecessors – lit by a different sort of light – it might be connected to Sibelius's use of the Dorian mode, which is overt in the *Scherzo* third movement but present throughout the Symphony, which appears to somehow float between major and minor.

What there isn't in the Sixth is the typically Sibelian 'big tune', the hymn-like striving that characterizes its companions. Sibelius suggests why when he describes the piece as 'pure, cold water' against the champagne and liqueur soundscapes offered by other composers of the time. We can hear that purity in the Symphony's more rhapsodic, carefree moments – in the freewheeling first movement, punctuated by moments of abandon from fluttering flute and darting harp, and in the tumbling modulations of its kinetic *poco vivace*.

THE SWAN OF TUONELA (FROM LEMMINKÄINEN SUITE, OP. 22)

Finland is at the heart of nearly everything Sibelius wrote. The country's distinctive landscape and natural life infuse the symphonies included on this recording, and its touchstone mythological poem, the *Kalevala*, directly shaped numerous other works. One of them was *The Building of the Boat*, an opera based on *Kalevala* narratives, which Sibelius started to commit to paper in 1803. The project was fraught with problems and eventually sank entirely, but Sibelius re-used the overture to form part of his orchestral suite telling the story of Lemminkäinen, a striking blond youth who formed one of the *Kalevala*'s most prominent (and typically unfortunate) heroes.

The descriptive exactitude of the music remained unchanged in its new incarnation: it depicts the black waters above Tuonela, the *Kalevala*'s land of the dead, on which a single singing swan floats (the swan Lemminkäinen tried to catch). In a masterstroke of instrumentation, Sibelius chose a twisting, reedy cor anglais to represent the swan's slow passage and its brutal, curvaceous, feathered neck. The instrument sings troubled melodies above thick, muted strings, punctuated by just one sustained moment of optimism in the form of a long C major chord.

PAAVO BERGLUND *conductor*

Born in 1929, Paavo Berglund enjoyed a long association with the orchestras of his native Finland, including periods as Principal Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra (1962–71) and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (1975–79). He was Principal Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra from 1972–79 and Principal Guest Conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra from 1981–85. He also worked with most of the major European orchestras, including the London, Berlin, Stockholm and Oslo Philharmonic orchestras; the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra; and the Orchestre National de France. In the USA he conducted, among others, the San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland, New York Philharmonic and Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestras.

Berglund's discography includes works by Shostakovich, Smetana and Dvořák, and his Nielsen symphony cycle won the French Diapason d'Or award. It is for his recordings of the symphonies of Sibelius, however, for which he is possibly best known. Berglund conducted the world première recording of Sibelius's *Kullervo* Symphony, and recorded the complete symphony cycle no fewer than three times. Paavo Berglund died in January 2012.

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The London Philharmonic Orchestra is known as one of the world's great orchestras with a reputation secured by its performances in the concert hall and opera house, its many award-winning recordings, its trail-blazing international tours and its pioneering education work. Distinguished conductors who have held positions with the Orchestra since its foundation in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham include Sir Adrian Boult, Sir John Pritchard, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt, Franz Welser-Möst and Kurt Masur. Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003 and became Principal Conductor in September 2007. The London Philharmonic Orchestra has been Resident Symphony Orchestra at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall since 1992 and there it presents its main series of concerts between September and

May each year. In summer, the Orchestra moves to Sussex where it has been Resident at Glyndebourne Festival Opera for over 40 years. The Orchestra also performs at venues around the UK and has made numerous tours to America, Europe and Japan, and visited India, Hong Kong, China, South Korea, Australia, Oman, South Africa and Abu Dhabi.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings on 10 October 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. These recordings are taken mainly from live concerts given by conductors including LPO Principal Conductors from Beecham and Boult, through Haitink, Solti and Tennstedt, to Masur and Jurowski. lpo.org.uk



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'These performances generate excitement no studio version could capture.' *The Guardian*

LPO-0057



'One of the best recordings around of Sibelius's Fifth. And Lutosławski's Concerto can never have been more brilliantly played.' *The Guardian*

LPO-0036



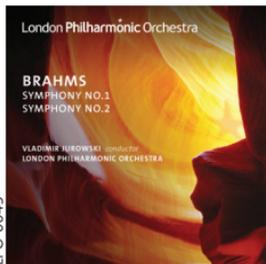
'Vänskä's account of the Third Symphony is a marvel of measured, uninflated eloquence.' *The Sunday Times*

LPO-0004



'In these dedicated performances both works cast a powerful spell.' *BBC Music*

LPO-0043



'This pair of CDs demonstrate how, in the right hands, the first two symphonies can thrill and delight.' *The Arts Desk*

LPO-0055



'A joy from beginning to end.' *The Sunday Times*

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

31:40 Symphony No. 5 in E-flat major, Op. 82

- 01 13:41 Tempo molto moderato – Allegro moderato
02 8:22 Andante mosso, quasi allegretto
03 9:37 Allegro molto – Un pochettino largamente

28:35 Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104

- 04 8:47 Allegro molto moderato
05 6:19 Allegretto moderato
06 3:52 Poco vivace
07 10:46 Allegro molto
08 9:12 **The Swan of Tuonela (from Lemminkäinen Suite, Op. 22)**

PAAVO BERGLUND *conductor*

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Pieter Schoeman *leader (tracks 1–3 & 8)*

Boris Garlitsky *leader (tracks 4–7)*

Recorded live at Southbank Centre's **ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL**
and **QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL**, London