

SIBELIUS

Night Ride and Sunrise Belshazzar's Feast • Kuolema

**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Pietari Inkinen**



Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Night Ride and Sunrise • Belshazzar's Feast • Pan and Echo • Kuolema Dryad and Tanz-Intermezzo

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 completed in 1929, but destroyed. The rest was silence. For the last 25 years of his life Sibelius wrote virtually 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 completed *Night Ride and Sunrise* in November 1908. The more obvious inspiration might be thought to have come from a ride he took in a horse-drawn sledge, driving from Helsinki to Kervo, and experiencing the sight of the sunrise. To others he claimed that the idea for the work had come to him when he was at the Colosseum in Rome, and no doubt both reflect feelings that came together in his symphonic poem. The work falls broadly into two sections, with the sound of the horses' hooves heard after the opening discords, growing in intensity, with their insistent rhythm. The pounding hooves become quieter, the strings playing *sul ponticello*, before a second thematic element is introduced by flute and oboe, above the continuing iambic rhythm. A more introspective *Moderato assai* is marked by the appearance in the lower register of violins, with the violas, of a characteristic figure, a section leading finally to a *Largamente* transition and the brief suggestion of bird-song, heralding the dawn and with a hymn-like passage for bassoons and horns, soon joined by the other

woodwind instruments. The music continues in its suggestion of a Nordic sunrise, in a language that is immediately identifiable as that of Sibelius.

Pan and Echo (Tanz-Intermezzo No. 3) was written in 1906, its general mood and form suggested in the title. It opens with an ascending bassoon *arpeggio*, with Pan's flute briefly heard before the entry of the strings with the main thematic idea. A second section, marked *Comodo*, has a brief figure from the clarinet, echoed by the flute, and the piece grows in excitement, now more of a dance intermezzo than an evocation of any classical pagan world.

Sibelius provided incidental music for various stage productions, including Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1905, and in 1906 interesting music for an otherwise undistinguished play, *Belsazars gästabad* (Belshazzar's Feast) by the composer's friend Hjalmar Procopé. Sibelius devised a suite from the incidental music the following year. The story of the play is in general the familiar biblical one and both the concert suite and the incidental music open with an *Oriental March*, setting the atmosphere of Belshazzar's Babylon. *Solitude*, originally *The Jewish Girl's Song*, with a delicate accompanying string *ostinato*, is followed by evocative *Night Music* and the final *Khadra's Dance*, derived from the original *Songs of Life and Death*.

The Dryad, described in its subtitle as a tone picture for orchestra, dates from 1910 and is impressionistic in style, its *Lento* opening section leading to the lilt of a waltz and a *Vivace*, accompanied by plucked string chords, before the mood of the opening returns. The work is paired with the earlier *Tanz-Intermezzo, Op. 45, No. 2* written in 1904 and revised three years later. This starts with harp glissandos, followed by an oboe melody, marked *Comodo e tranquillo*, soon to be followed by a

livelier major key and a theme for the cornets, a section of the work that finds a place for castanets in reinforcement of the prevailing rhythm, as its takes its light-hearted course.

In 1903 Sibelius wrote incidental music for the play *Kuolema* (Death) by his brother-in-law Arvid Järnefelt. From this he compiled a suite, using four of the pieces. The first of these, *Valse triste*, has won the widest popularity, for better or worse. In the play the son dreams, by the bedside of his sick mother. The room is suffused with light and the sounds of a waltz can gradually be heard. His mother rises from her bed and starts to dance to the music, summoning guests to join her. Dying, she tries to see the faces of the mysterious dancers, but none will look at her. As she sinks down on the bed, the music pauses, but, with renewed energy, she rejoins the dance, now in wilder rhythms than before. At the height of the dance there is a knock at the door and Death stands waiting. The second piece, given the title *Scene with Cranes*, has its title reflected in the sound of the clarinets, memory of a sound and sight familiar to the composer. In 1911, when the play was revived, Sibelius added two more pieces, the *Rondino der Liebenden* and *Vals-Intermezzo*, known respectively as *Canzonetta* and *Valse romantique*. Scored for strings, the *Canzonetta* opens with muted instruments, its melody entrusted to the first violins. It was later arranged by Stravinsky for four horns, two clarinets, harp and double bass as a tribute to Sibelius on the award to Stravinsky of the Sibelius Prize. The concert suite ends with *Valse romantique*, a movement more fully scored but less successful than its opening counterpart, the *Valse triste*.

Keith Anderson

Pietari Inkinen



Pietari Inkinen is fast establishing himself as one of the most exciting talents of the new generation of conductors. In January 2008 he began his tenure as the Music Director of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and will combine this position with invitations to the Dresden Staatskapelle, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Orchestre National de France, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Bayerischer Rundfunk, WDR Cologne, Israel Philharmonic, Maggio Musicale, Orchestre National de Belgique, BBC Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, Cincinnati Symphony, and Japan Philharmonic. He has already worked with a number of important orchestras including the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Bamberg Symphony, NDR Hannover, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, RAI Torino, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano G. Verdi, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, the BBC Scottish Symphony, Bourmemouth Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, and KBS Symphony Orchestras and has enjoyed successful collaborations with soloists such as Vadim Repin, Hilary Hahn, Nikolaj Znaider, Elisabeth Leonskaja and Pinchas Zukerman. A

recording by Pietari Inkinen with the Bavarian Chamber Philharmonic was voted the *BBC Music Magazine's* recording of the month, and he has recorded two discs of Sibelius and Rautavaara with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra for Naxos, as well as a chamber opera by Lotta Vennäkoski with the Avanti Chamber Orchestra. Inkinen is similarly accomplished as a violinist, playing a Carlo Bergonzi violin, and has appeared as a soloist with many leading Finnish Orchestras. He is also involved in chamber music collaborations with the Inkinen Trio, with which he has made successful appearances at St John's, Smith Square, and the Wigmore Hall, in London.

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 looms large in the orchestra's activities. All its main symphonic programmes are presented in Auckland and Wellington, and as well as this, the orchestra visits some thirty New Zealand towns and cities annually. In 2005 the orchestra undertook a highly successful tour that included performances at the BBC Proms, the Concertgebouw, Snape Maltings and the World Expo at Aichi in Japan. Pietari Inkinen was appointed as the orchestra's 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 orchestra during his tenure include Alexander Lazarev, Dimitri Sitkovetsky, David Atherton, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Edo de Waart. Soloists who have worked with the orchestra include Lynn Harrell, Lang Lang, Hilary Hahn, Vadim Repin, Steven Isserlis, Jonathan Lemalu and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra has an extensive catalogue of CD recordings. As part of a commitment to promote and encourage music by New

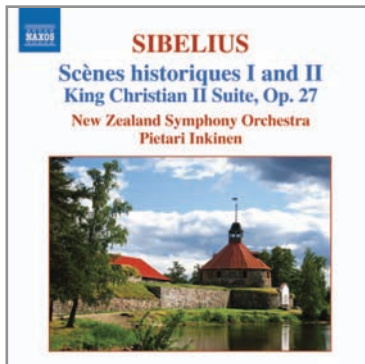
Zealand composers, the orchestra records at least one CD of New Zealand music annually. The NZSO has a strong relationship with Naxos, recording repertoire as diverse as Elgar (three discs), Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven, Bernstein, Copland, Lilburn, Sculthorpe, Frank Bridge, Akutagawa, Mendelssohn, Honegger, Liszt, and Vaughan Williams. Over one million of these CDs have been sold internationally in the last decade and they have received critical acclaim. NZSO discs (Hummel, Elgar and Bernstein) were chosen for the “Editor’s Choice” section of *Gramophone* in 2004 and Lilburn’s *Orchestral Works* (8.557697) was chosen in 2006.

Website: www.nzso.co.nz

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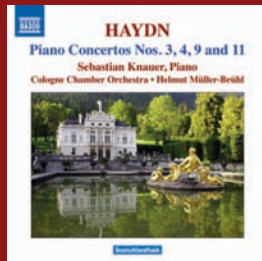


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While the beloved *Valse triste* and *Scene with Cranes* from *Kuolema* are virtually signature tunes for the great Finnish composer, much of Sibelius' orchestral and theatrical music remains undeservedly less familiar. From the incidental music for the play *Belshazzar's Feast* Sibelius drew four richly scored orientalist movements. The tone poems *Pan and Echo* and *Night Ride and Sunrise* respectively evoke the world of ancient myth and a nocturnal journey towards a Nordic dawn. A lilting waltz dances at the heart of the impressionistic *The Dryad*, while castanets enliven the light-hearted mood of the *Tanz-Intermezzo*, Op. 45 No. 2.

Jean SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

- ① Night Ride and Sunrise,
Op. 55 16:38
- ② Pan and Echo (Tanz-Intermezzo
No. 3), Op. 53a 04:51

- Suite from Belshazzar's Feast,
Op. 51 14:31
- ③ I. Oriental Procession 02:47
- ④ II. Solitude 03:22
- ⑤ III. Night Music 04:22
- ⑥ IV. Khadra's Dance 04:00

- Two Pieces for Orchestra,
Op. 45 08:37
- ⑦ I. The Dryad 05:46
- ⑧ II. Tanz-Intermezzo 02:51

- Kuolema (Death),
Op. 44 and Op. 62 19:57
- ⑨ Valse triste, Op. 44, No. 1 05:05
- ⑩ Scene with Cranes,
Op. 44, No. 2 06:27
- ⑪ Canzonetta, Op. 62a 04:12
- ⑫ Valse romantique, Op. 62b 04:13

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra • Pietari Inkinen

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