

453 426-2 

JEAN SIBELIUS
(1865-1957)

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | Pohjola's Daughter op.49
Symphonic fantasia | [12'05] |
| 2 | Night Ride and Sunrise op.55
Symphonic poem | [14'49] |
| | Four Legends from <i>Kalevala</i> op.22
<i>(Lemminkäinen Suite)</i> | [43'28] |
| 3 | Lemminkäinen and the Island Maidens | [15'04] |
| 4 | The Swan of Tuonela
Björn Bohlin, <i>English horn/Englischhorn/cor anglais</i> | [7'37] |
| 5 | Lemminkäinen in Tuonela | [14'22] |
| 6 | Lemminkäinen's Return | [6'25] |

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra
(Göteborgs Symfoniker)
NEEME JÄRVI

 © 1997 Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Hamburg · [70'37]
www site address: <http://www.dgclassics.com>


Deutsche
Grammophon

SIBELIUS · THE SWAN OF TUONELA

4 Legends · Pohjola's Daughter · Night Ride and Sunrise
Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra · Neeme Järvi



5 3. **Lemminkäinen in Tuonela**

Lemminkäinen à Tuonela
II tempo largamente

[14'22]

6 4. **Lemminkäinen's Return**

Lemminkäinen's Heimkehr · Le Retour de Lemminkäinen
Allegro con fuoco

[6'25]

Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra
(Göteborgs Symfoniker)

NEEME JÄRVI



Recordings: Göteborg, Konserthuset, 3/1994 (op.49), 8/1995 (op.55), 4-5/1996 (op.22)
Executive Producer: Nigel Boon
Recording Producer and Supervisor: Lennart Dehn
Balance Engineer: Michael Bergek
Editing: Torbjörn Samuelsson
Publishers: Robert Lienau, Berlin (opp. 49 & 55); Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden (op.22)
© 1997 Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Hamburg
© 1997 Deutsche Grammophon GmbH, Hamburg

SIBELIUS: FOUR LEGENDS
POHJOLA'S DAUGHTER · NIGHT RIDE AND SUNRISE

In addition to his seven, "abstract" symphonies Sibelius also wrote over a dozen substantial tone poems – six of them are included in this recording. Throughout his career he was drawn by the opportunities for formal experimentation and striking orchestral color that the tone poem encouraged. As he wrote in a burst of enthusiasm to his wife Aino in 1905, "This is my genre!! Here I can move freely without feeling the weight of tradition."

Sibelius based several tone poems on ancient tales collected in the *Kalevala*, the epic that was the defining document of Finnish cultural identity at the turn of the century. He composed the four Kalevalaic *Legends* in 1895-96 and revised them in the years immediately surrounding the First Symphony (1899). Throughout the 1890s he was striving to establish an idiosyncratically Finnish ("national-romantic") musical style, one that often evoked the bleak, reiterative recitation formulas of folk performers. Two of the four tone poems, *The Swan of Tuonela* and *Lemminkäinen's Return*, were published in 1901 with enormous success; both played pivotal roles in establishing the young Sibelius's reputation in Europe. The remaining two were long withheld from publication: Sibelius revised them again in 1939, and they were finally published in 1954.

When performed as a set, the *Legends* give the impression of a programmatic, four-movement symphony in E flat major with interrelated movements. The first, *Lemminkäinen and the Island Maidens*, opens with an introduction launched by a resonant, repeated chord in the horns – a blurry, dreamlike gateway into the world of Finnish cultural memory. It soon proceeds into a free sonata form that illustrates material from Runo (canto) 29 of the *Kalevala*. In this story, "handsome" and "gentle" Lemminkäinen of the "far-reaching mind" (as the young protagonist is persistently and ironically called) takes refuge from war on an island for three years before deciding to leave; during this time he seduces the entire young female population (save one). The playful, folklike themes gain in intensity and sensuousness as the work proceeds, driving toward a single-minded cadential culmination triggered by the return of "folk-memory" material from the introduction.

The two inner "movements" evoke the mythological realm of the dead, "Tuonela" (from *tuoni*, "death"). In Runo 14, as part of a bargain to win a wife, Lemminkäinen is given the task of slaying the sacred swan swimming in the dark river of the underworld. *The Swan of Tuonela*, with its famous English horn solo and rich, *divisi* strings, depicts that gloomy,

minor-mode scene. The work is an impressive study in the slow transformations of orchestral sonority and chromatic harmony, and it, too, builds toward climactic textural events near the end: a sonorous *cantabile* lament in the strings, underscored with funereal drum-strokes in the timpani and low brass.

Before he can kill the swan, however, Lemminkäinen is speared through the liver and heart by a herdsman, then cut to pieces by "Death's son" and cast into the river. The third tone poem, *Lemminkäinen in Tuonela*, concerns the story in Runo 15 in which his mother descends to Tuonela, recovers the fragments of her son's body with an iron rake, and joins them together by means of magic spells, thus restoring him to life. Much of the work is dominated by intertwining, twisting figures, forlorn woodwind and brass outcries – the dark, amorphous underworld. The mysterious central section begins *ppp* in the upper strings with a static, circular, repetitive melody that may represent the mother's formulaic recitation of the magical charms.

Lemminkäinen's Return refers not to his restoration to life but to unrelated episodes from Runos 29 and 30, reinterpreted by Sibelius to suggest the hero's breathless ride on horseback, beginning far from home and eventually crossing over into his familiar "home-districts" (as the Finnish title indicates). This narrative is vividly represented in the music: an incessant surge of perpetual motion begins off-tonic in C minor ("away from home") and drives forward, through gradual changes and compelling accumulations, to resolve in E flat major, the home-key of the entire set of *Legends*.

Pohjola's Daughter, completed in 1906 (between

the Violin Concerto and the Third Symphony), provides us with another "homeward journey" from the *Kalevala* – a sleigh-ride from Runo 8, taken through the North ("Pohjola") by a different hero, "steadfast, old," white-bearded Väinämöinen. Along the way he spots the beautiful "daughter of the North," seated on a rainbow, weaving a cloth of gold. He asks her to join him, but she replies that she will leave only with the man who is able to perform a number of challenging tasks – most notably, building a boat from fragments of her distaff. Although Väinämöinen attempts this, he is thwarted by evil spirits, injures himself with an axe, and finally abandons the task to continue his journey alone. Much of this tale may be readily followed in the music. A slow introduction featuring a solo cello conjures up the mythic world of the *Kalevala*. This becomes progressively more animated and soon generates the broad oboe melody – the beginning of the sleigh journey – that launches the sonata-exposition and grows into the full force and momentum of "Väinämöinen's fanfare" in the brass. A sudden shift of texture to strings, woodwinds and luxurious harp articulates the second theme, the vision of Pohjola's daughter.

Still another journey is suggested in *Night Ride and Sunrise*, composed in 1908 (after the Third Symphony). This piece, however, does not illustrate a story from the *Kalevala*; instead, it represents a subjective, spiritual experience of nature by (as Sibelius claimed) "an ordinary man." It unfolds in three contrasting parts: a galloping section whose length and dogged, "minimalist" determination produce one of Sibelius's strangest utterances; a brief, hymnic transition in the strings; and an exquisite

Northern sunrise whose first rays emerge in the horns. Sibelius's later description of a spectacular sunrise that he had once experienced captures perfectly the effect of this glorious music: "The whole

heavens were a sea of colors that shifted and flowed producing the most inspiring sight until it all ended in a growing light."

James Hepokoski

FINNISCHE MYTHEN

Finnlands Nationalepos wurde in der ersten Hälfte des vorigen Jahrhunderts niedergeschrieben: Elias Lönnrot, Arzt und enthusiastischer Erforscher seines Heimatlandes, legte 1835 ein Epos von rund zwölftausend Versen vor, das er »Kalevala« nannte (Betonung auf der ersten Silbe, wie stets im Finnischen) – »Das Land des Kaleva«, eines mythischen Helden in urzeitlichem Finnland. Lönnrot hat nichts Eigenes erdichtet, sondern das zu einem – naturgemäß etwas heterogenen – Ganzen zu ordnen versucht, was er vom lebendigen Vortrag der Epensänger, denen er überall im Lande nachspürte, nach und nach gesammelt hatte. 1849 schon ließ er eine zweite Fassung des »Kalevala« erscheinen, nun fast doppelt so umfangreich.

In einer Zeit, in der das finnische Volk um die Bildung eines Nationalstaates zu kämpfen begann (das Land war lange unter schwedischer, dann ab 1809 unter russischer Herrschaft und wurde erst

1817 selbständig), kam diesem nationalen Epos im gesamten politischen und kulturellen Leben eine außerordentliche Bedeutung zu; das »Kalevala« war gleichsam ein Rückhalt, stärkte die Identität, ermutigte zu eigenständigen Schöpfungen – so in der Malerei im Werk von Axel Gallén-Kallela, in der Musik im Schaffen von Robert Kajanus (mit dem in den achtziger Jahren ein nationales Musikleben in Finnland überhaupt erst begann) und Jean Sibelius. Das erste größere Werk, das Sibelius komponierte, ist eine fünfsätzigte Symphonie (mit Vokalpartien) über die Kullervo-Gestalt des »Kalevala«. Der übertragende Erfolg, den das Werk 1892 in Helsinki (damals noch Helsingfors) errang, wird sich vor allem dem nationalen Sujet verdankt haben; denn die Symphonie, von ungeschliffener Rücksichtslosigkeit und kühner Modernität, räumt die Publikumskonventionen trotz beiseite – es ist, als hätten die brutalen Gestalten des »Kalevala« Sibelius