

Chandos

CHAN 8389



The Scottish National Orchestra photographed in the concert hall of their fine Glasgow headquarters.

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Chandos
DIGITAL

Jean Julius Christian Sibelius
Symphonies 3 & 6



Scottish National Orchestra
Sir Alexander Gibson

General
Accident

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**General
Accident**

In association with Chandos Records Limited, General Accident is pleased to bring to music lovers this production of Sibelius's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies by the Scottish National Orchestra. This is the second of a series of digital recordings of the seven Sibelius Symphonies by Sir Alexander Gibson and the Orchestra.

General Accident hopes that it will provide many hours of pleasure, and, at the same time, further enhance the SNO's reputation and distinctive contribution to the world of recorded music.

Recording producer: Brian Couzens
Sound engineer: Ralph Couzens
Recorded in the SNO Centre, Glasgow
Cover design: General Accident Design Unit

FROM No.3 ONWARDS each of Sibelius's symphonies contrasts strongly with its neighbours, yet each is highly personal and could have been written by no other composer. It has been justly claimed that Sibelius was the first since Beethoven to expand the formal conception of the symphony. His most significant step in this direction, prior to the Fourth Symphony, is to be found in the last movement of the Third, which combines the functions of scherzo and finale. Without underrating the importance of this innovation, it must be pointed out that with Sibelius form was the inevitable result of the content; he was not concerned with innovation for its own sake. There has been a tendency, especially as far as the first symphonies are concerned, to rate movements which fall readily into established moulds less highly than those which do not. The Fourth Symphony was begun in 1910 and completed the following year. With its starkness and its brooding character, the latter underlined by much syncopation, it is no wonder that this Symphony has never been among the more popular of Sibelius's seven, yet many connoisseurs regard it as his finest.

The slow opening movement, occupying a mere thirteen pages of the score, is laid out in sonata form. Apart from one omission—the recapitulation of the first subject—the structure is as classical as in any nineteenth, or even eighteenth, century. To begin with a four-note motive (C—D—F sharp—E) is heard in the bass. It is to play a major role, as is the interval of an augmented fourth (C—F sharp) formed by its outer notes. For the moment the last two notes (F sharp—E) oscillate, and against them a solo muted cello introduces the first subject, which gradually spreads to the other strings. The second subject group contains three elements, the first being divided between the brass and the upper strings. After this has been repeated in a varied form, a four-note motive appears on the first pair of horns. It is also repeated, muted and at half the speed, by the third and fourth horns. Finally this section ends with a one-bar phrase for the brass. This whole second subject group occupies a mere twelve bars. It is followed by a closing section that returns to the first subject material as well as the initial four-note phrase. Stark though the writing has been so

far, it becomes still more so in the development. To begin with the music is mostly in one part, but the texture gradually becomes richer as the recapitulation is approached. This starts with the second subject material, now reduced to eight bars, but the original closing section is extended, and the four-note motive has the last word.

Although not so called, the short second movement is a scherzo and trio, but the usually overall A—B—A plan is not followed. The opening section of the scherzo in 3/4 time is followed by a stark episode in 2/4. With the return of triple metre a sequence of sustained chords is introduced, after which the flutes in thirds appear to be embarking on a wholly new section. However they are answered by previously heard material. A recapitulation of the movement's opening leads to a short linking episode, and the trio (*doppio piu lento*) follows. This is concerned with a single melodic idea finishing with a falling augmented fourth. Shortly before the end of the movement it would seem that Sibelius is paving the way for the return of the scherzo, but the music is abruptly cut off by three taps on the timpani.

Like the first movement the third is slow, but its construction is far more rhapsodic. In the main it consists of two alternating groups of material, the first begun by the flutes and briefly taken over by a clarinet, before being continued by a solo flute against a sparse accompaniment consisting of no more than a bass line. The second piece of thematic material is introduced by the horn quartet. This theme gradually grows with each statement until it eventually forms the movement's climax.

Initially the finale, which sets out in A major, forms a strong contrast with all that has gone before. By comparison the mood is almost jovial and the orchestral palette opulent. A glockenspiel adds its distinctive colour, although it is largely restricted to a single four-note phrase. Incidentally, the published score specifies glocken (bells), but this is a misprint. During the course of the movement Sibelius extends his use of the augmented fourth to cover the simultaneous use of keys separated by that interval. He even makes this clear to the eye by setting key signatures with three flats and three sharps against each

other. The movement can be analysed as a sonata form structure, but little is gained by so doing, since almost all the development would then appear during the exposition and recapitulation sections. With the coda the energy and comparative warmth forsake the movement: A minor returns, and the Symphony ends as starkly and as broodingly as it began.

Listening to the Fourth Symphony one would suspect that it gave the composer a great deal of trouble, whereas each movement of the heroic Fifth would appear to have been written in a single burst of inspiration. In truth the reverse is the case. The Fifth was completed in 1915 and had its first performance that year at a concert celebrating Sibelius's fiftieth birthday. The composer was far from satisfied with the work and immediately set about re-writing. The result was performed the following year, but it still left the composer dissatisfied, and it was not until 1919 that he produced the score as we know it today. There are, therefore, three versions of the Symphony, the second of which remains unknown, as until recently did the first. This consists of four separate movements, the first two of which apparently became linked together in the second version. Interesting though a comparison between the initial and final versions of the work may be, there can be no question of regarding them as alternatives, as in the case of Prokofiev's Fourth Symphony, which exists in two forms under different opus numbers. In Sibelius's case the final version is so superior that the initial one has no place in the concert hall. The differences between them are marked indeed, the only section substantially the same being the first part of the finale. Even the opening horn theme is missing in the first version, while the silences that separate the unpredictably spaced chords at the end are filled in.

As it stands today the only indication of the work having once been in four movements is to be found in the first movement's reference lettering. Having proceeded from A to N it then begins again at A, this time reaching S. The second A appears shortly after the change from *Tempo molto moderato* to *Allegro moderato*, but in fact the basic pulse is barely affected. It is merely the notation that is different, four bars in 3/8 time now equalling one bar of the previous 12/8. Structurally this is one of

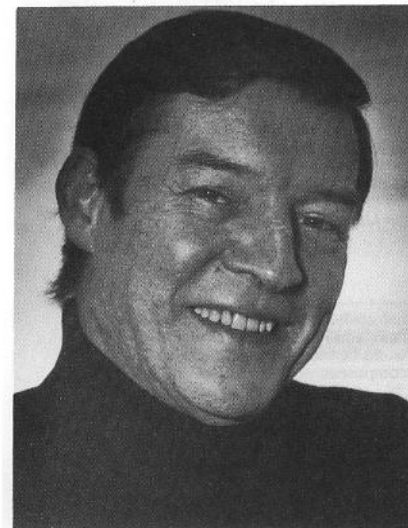
Sibelius's most original movements, although it opens with a fairly normal exposition containing two groups of subject material. The dividing line between them is easily recognisable, the beginning of the second group coinciding with the first entry of the accompanying strings. Having stated all his material Sibelius then repeats it, but not literally or according to classical procedures. The development starts by seizing on a fragment that had been omitted from the second exposition, and gradually builds up to a climax, apparently paving the way for the recapitulation. What in fact occurs is a combination of scherzo and recapitulation, the old material returning, somewhat transformed yet easily recognisable, and new material being added. Among the latter is a trumpet tune that cuts right across the 3/4 metre—a passage that did not appear in the original 1915 version. Other additions are the passages in still faster tempo that conclude the movement.

In marked contrast to the structural complexity of the first movement is the simplicity of the second. This is virtually a set of variations on a single theme—one might almost say a single rhythm of five equal notes, the second and fourth of which fall on the beat. All the same the movement is not lacking in dramatic quality. Listeners concentrating on the melodic aspects can easily fail to notice the bass part, which in one variation anticipates, and in another duplicates, the principal theme of the last movement.

Leaving the question of key sequences and contrasts aside, the finale may be said to parallel sonata form. If this format is used for analytical description, the first subject consists of a kind of atmospheric, but themeless, *perpetuum mobile*, while the second, which enters in the same key, is the heaving tune, initially stated by the horns, that has its origin in the already mentioned bass progression of the previous movement. Against this theme is soon set an important, flowing counter-melody. This is the entire material of the movement. The *perpetuum mobile* returns during the development section, which also hints at the horn theme, and the former counter-melody reappears in its own right. With the recapitulation (or the part of the movement that substitutes for it) the horn theme, now

taken over by the brass section, dominates, but only during the expansive coda, forming the climax of the whole work, is the home key of E flat re-established.

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Sir Alexander Gibson. In 1978 Sir Alexander became one of the few recipients of the Sibelius Medal 'for his outstanding contribution to the appreciation of Sibelius's music throughout the world'.

The Scottish National Orchestra

Founded in 1950, the Scottish National Orchestra grew out of the old Scottish Orchestra—a seasonal body of players which existed in Glasgow from 1891, performing under such conductors as Herschel, Sullivan, Barbirolli and Szell. During Walter Susskind's conductorship, from 1946 until 1952, the orchestra became a permanent organisation. Susskind's successors were Karl Rankl, Hans Swarowsky and, since 1959, Sir Alexander Gibson—the first Scot to hold the post of musical director.

Today the orchestra makes over one hundred and fifty appearances annually throughout Scotland and appears frequently at most of the major festivals as well as fulfilling an ever-increasing number of recording

engagements and London appearances. Three major European tours have been undertaken and, in 1975, the Scottish National Orchestra made its highly successful North American debut. In 1981, it made a twenty-city United Kingdom tour and in 1982 accepted a long-standing invitation to return to the United States and Canada for a sixteen-concert tour.

As well as playing a large part in the success of Scottish Opera, the Scottish National Orchestra has given many important world and British premières and, now acknowledged to be an orchestra of the highest international calibre, it was honoured, in 1978, with the grant of patronage by Her Majesty the Queen.

Sir Alexander Gibson C.B.E.

Sir Alexander Gibson was born in Motherwell. He was educated at Dalziel High School, Glasgow University, the Royal College of Music, the Mozarteum in Salzburg and the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. He spent two years as Assistant Conductor of the BBC Scottish Orchestra before going to Sadler's Wells in 1954 as a Staff Conductor. He was appointed Musical Director and Principal Conductor of the Scottish National Orchestra in 1959. Three years later he founded Scottish Opera and became its Artistic Director.

In establishing Musica Viva in 1960 and, more recently, Musica Nova, he demonstrated his commitment to the performance of contemporary music and

has conducted an impressive number of both world and British premières of works by many of today's major composers.

His recordings have won him two Prix de Disque awards and in 1978 he became one of the few recipients of the Sibelius Medal 'for his outstanding contribution to the appreciation of Sibelius's music throughout the world'. He was the first musician to be appointed an Honorary Member of the Royal Scottish Academy and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He was created CBE in 1967 and was made a Knight Bachelor in the Queen's Jubilee Honours List in 1977.

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Jean Julius Christian Sibelius
Symphonies 3 & 6

Symphony No. 3 in C major, Op. 52

- 1 First movement : Allegro moderato (9:32)
2 Second movement : Andantino con moto, quasi allegretto (8:30)
3 Third movement : Moderato—Allegro (ma non tanto) (8:06)

Symphony No. 6, Op. 104

- 4 First movement : Allegro molto moderato (7:56)
5 Second movement : Allegretto moderato—Poco con moto
Tempo 1 (6:03)
6 Third movement : Poco vivace (3:38)
7 Fourth movement : Allegro molto—Allegro assai
Doppio piu lento (9:29)

DDD

Scottish National Orchestra
(leader: Edwin Paling)

conducted by
Sir Alexander Gibson

Recorded in association with General Accident

**General
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