

NAXOS

# SIBELIUS

Original Works and Arrangements for  
Cello and Piano

**Finlandia • Malinconia • Valse triste**

**Jussi Makkonen, Cello • Rait Karm, Piano**



## Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

### Original Works and Arrangements for Cello and Piano

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 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.

Finland, from the earlier eighteenth century, had enjoyed a measure of autonomy as a grand duchy under Russian sovereignty. Growing nationalist aspirations of the mid-nineteenth century, however, suffered a setback in 1899 when the governor-general Bobrikov issued his so-called February Manifesto, removing the legal powers of the popular assembly, and going on to dissolve the Finnish army and introduce Russian as the official language. Opposition to these measures, with a popular appeal to the Tsar rejected, found an outlet largely in passive resistance by younger Finnish nationalists. The freedom of the press was now seriously curtailed by the temporary or permanent closure of some newspapers, with consequent difficulties for journalists thus deprived of their means of livelihood. Sibelius provided music to accompany a series of patriotic tableaux in a three-day festival in Helsinki in aid of the Press Pension Fund. The composition marks the first overtly political gesture of Sibelius, with a prelude and six illustrative pieces for full orchestra, the last of which, under the title *Finlandia* was later separately published, to enjoy continuing popularity, with a piano version provided by Sibelius himself.

In common with other composers of the time Sibelius found a regular means of increasing his income in a series of piano pieces, the first in the 1880s and the last in 1929. The *Ten Pieces, Op.24*, written between 1894 and 1903, include an E minor *Nocturno* and the well known *Romance*, both composed in 1901 and here arranged for cello and piano by Rait Karm.

Sibelius' brother Christian played the cello, but Sibelius wrote very little for the instrument. These compositions include a duo for violin and cello in 1887 and a *Fantasia* for cello and piano in 1889, while other groups of pieces for violin and piano, *Op.77* and *Op.78*, allow the cello as an

optional alternative to the violin. *Malinconia* (Melancholy), an original work for cello and piano, was written in 1900, perhaps reflecting the composer's feelings after the death of his infant daughter Kirsti, or perhaps, it has been suggested, inspired by a painting of the same name by Magnus Enckell. A fantasia, the work was given its first performance in 1900 by Georg and Sigrid Schnéevoigt at a concert in Helsinki to raise funds for a tour by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra.

The *Rondino, Op.81, No.2*, written in 1917, is taken from a group of five pieces for violin and piano, and *Granen* (The Spruce) is the last of the 1914 *Five Pieces, Op.75*, a set of piano pieces suggested by different trees. Other arrangements are taken from songs. From *Six Songs, Op.36*, comes *Svarta rosor* (Black Roses), an 1899 setting of words by the painter and poet Ernst Josephson. Three of *Five Songs, Op.37*, are included. The fifth of the original set, *Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte* (The girl returned from meeting her lover), otherwise known more succinctly in English as *The Tryst*, is a ballad-like setting of a poem by Johan Ludvig Runeberg, completed in 1901. *Var det en dröm?* (Was it a dream?), written in 1902, was originally a setting of verse

by Josef Julius Wecksell, and *Den första kyssten* (The First Kiss), written in 1900, of words by Runeberg.

*Valse triste* has long been isolated from its context. The piece was dramatic in origin, written as part of the incidental music for the 1903 play *Kuolema* (Death) by Sibelius's brother-in-law, Arvid Järnefelt. 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. At the height of the dance there is a knock at the door and Death stands waiting.

The second of *Four Pieces for violin and piano, Op.78*, is a charming *Romance*, written in 1915, and published with alternative instrumentation for cello and piano. The nostalgic *Souvenir* from *Eight Little Pieces, Op.99*, is the third of the 1922 set of piano pieces, designed, as always, for an immediate commercial market.

**Keith Anderson**

## **Jussi Makkonen**

Jussi Makkonen (b.1979) began his studies on the violoncello at the age of seven in the Music Institute of Northern Karelia, Finland. In 1996 he embarked on university studies at the Sibelius Academy with Professor Martti Rousi, graduating from the Academy in 2005 with a Master's degree in Music. In addition, he studied conducting with the world-famous conductor Jorma Panula. Makkonen was awarded First Prize in the national EBU Competition for Young Soloists, and since then has performed throughout Finland and in most European countries, as well as in the USA. In addition, he has performed on radio and television programmes of the EBU, the BBC, the YLE (the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation) and the Romanian radio. Makkonen is also active in chamber music, and performs with such leading musicians as pianists Folke Gräsbeck, Risto Lauriala, Violeta Petrova and Rait Karm. Sponsors in recent years include the OKO Bank, the Finnish Cultural Foundation and the Sibelius Academy. Makkonen plays a 200-year-old German cello courtesy of the Finnish Cultural Foundation and the Wihuri Foundation. For information on concerts and other news, please visit the artist's homepage [www.jussimakkonen.com](http://www.jussimakkonen.com)

## **Rait Karm**

Rait Karm (b.1972) began his studies on the piano in Tallinn Music School, Estonia, where he studied with Professors E. Saviauk and I. Ilja. In 1991, he commenced studies at the Sibelius Academy with professors L. Pohjola, V. Berzon and S. Novikov, graduating from the Academy in 2005 with a Master's degree in Music. Karm pursued postgraduate studies in *Lied* and Chamber Music at the Zurich School of Music, Drama and Dance. He has been awarded prizes in

competitions for young pianists in Czechoslovakia and Estonia. Karm has performed widely as a soloist, chamber musician, entertainment and *Lied* pianist in Finland, Estonia, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Hungary Czech Republic and the USA. He has worked with a number of artists including Johanna Rusanen, Helena Juntunen, Pille Lill, Marion Melnik, Angelika Klas, Heli Veskus, Petteri Iivonen, Jussi Makkonen, and Sami Junnonen. Sponsors in recent years include The Foundation for Finnish Art Music, the Estonia Foundation, the Paulo Foundation and the Wihuri Foundation. Karm is a founding partner of the music agency Music Nova ([www.musicnova.fi](http://www.musicnova.fi)) and is currently its Artistic Director. For information on concerts and other news, please visit the artist's homepage [www.raitkarm.com](http://www.raitkarm.com)



**Jussi Makkonen  
and Rait Karm at  
Sibelius' home,  
Ainola, Finland**

*Photo by Lido Salonen*

Sibelius wrote very little for the cello, although some of his violin pieces allow alternative instrumentation. Some of his songs and piano pieces, and the popular *Finlandia*, are here given in effective arrangements for cello and piano, in addition to the original cello fantasia *Malinconia*, perhaps inspired by the death of his infant daughter.

Jean  
**SIBELIUS**  
(1865–1957)

**Original Works and Arrangements for Cello and Piano**

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|--|-------|--|------|
| <b>1</b> <i>Finlandia, Op. 26</i><br>(arr. Matti Makkonen)             | 8:01  | <b>8</b> <i>Five Songs, Op. 37</i><br>No. 5: Flickan kom ifrån sin<br>älsklings möte (The girl returned<br>from meeting her lover) | 2:47 |
| <b>2</b> <i>Ten Pieces, Op. 24</i><br>(arr. Rait Karm)                 | 3:42  | <b>9</b> <i>No. 4: Var det en dröm?</i><br>(Was it a dream?)   | 1:57 |
| <b>3</b> <i>No. 8: Nocturno</i>  | 3:25  | <b>10</b> <i>No. 1: Den första kysen</i><br>(The First Kiss)   | 1:48 |
| <b>4</b> <i>Malinconia, Op. 20</i><br><i>Five Pieces, Op. 81</i>       | 10:41 | <b>11</b> <i>Valse triste, Op. 44, No. 1</i><br>(arr. Friedrich Hermann)   | 4:28 |
| <b>5</b> <i>No. 2: Rondino</i>   | 2:13  | <b>12</b> <i>Four Pieces, Op. 78</i><br>No. 2: Romance   | 2:34 |
| <b>6</b> <i>No. 5: Granen (The Spruce)</i>                             | 3:12  | <b>13</b> <i>Eight Pieces, Op. 99</i><br>(arr. Rait Karm)  | 2:47 |
| <b>7</b> <i>Six Songs, Op. 36</i><br>No. 1: Svarta rosor (Black Roses) | 1:52  |  |      |



**Jussi Makkonen, Cello • Rait Karm, Piano**



Recorded in the Concert Hall, April–May 2007 (tracks 1–4, 7–11) and in the Chamber Music Hall, July 2007 (tracks 5, 6, 12, 13) of the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, Finland  
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