

NAXOS

SIBELIUS

Songs • 2

Finlandia Hymn • Song of My Heart

Hannu Jurmu, Tenor • Jouni Somero, Piano



Includes World Première Recordings

Jean
SIBELIUS
(1865-1957)
Songs, Volume 2

1	Finlandia-hymni (Finlandia Hymn), from Op. 26	2:53
2	Jääkärien marssi (March of the Jaeger Battalion), Op. 91a	2:28
3	Aamusumussa (In the Morning Mist), JS 9a	1:56
4	Ateenalaisten laulu (Song of the Athenians), Op. 31, No. 3	2:22
5	Sortunut ääni (The Broken Voice), Op. 18, No. 1	1:33
6	Isänmaalle (To My Country), JS 98a	2:17
7	Karjalan osa (Karelia's Fate), JS 108 *	5:10
8	Siltavahti (The Guard of the Bridge), JS 170	2:38
9	Uusmaalaisten laulu (Song of the Uusimaa People), JS 214	2:32
10	Laulu ristilukista (Fool's Song of the Spider), Op. 27, No. 4	4:08
11	Kullervon valitus (Kullervo's Lament), from Op. 7	2:11
12	Kolme sokeaa sisarta (The Three Blind Sisters), Op. 46, No. 4	3:27
13	Tule, tule kultani (Come, come, my darling), JS 211 *	1:33
14	Miss' on, kussa minun hyväni (Where is my beloved?) from Rakastava (The Lover), JS 160c	1:41
15	Mummon syntymäpäivänä (Grandmother's Birthday Song), JS 136 *	2:05
16	Partiolaisten marssi (Scout March), Op. 91b	2:48
17	Koulutie (The Road to School), JS 112	5:19
18	Tuule tuuli leppeämmin (Blow, wind, more gently), Op. 23, No. 6a (arranged by Olavi Pesonen)	3:25
19	Sydämeni laulu (Song of My Heart), Op. 18, No. 6	2:34
20	Kallion kirkon kellosävel (Bell Melody of Kallion Church), Op. 65b	3:02
21	Herran siunaus (God's Blessing), JS 95 *	2:30
22	Soi kunniaksi Luojan (May the hymn of honour now resound), Op. 23, No. 6b	2:26

* World Première Recording

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

Songs, Volume 2

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

probably completed around 1932, but was destroyed. The rest was silence. For the last 28 years of his life Sibelius wrote next to 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 1914 war in Germany, France and Vienna. He died in 1957 at the age of 91.

Sibelius wrote around a hundred songs. Most of these are settings of Swedish words, texts in what was, after all, the composer's first language, with eight settings of German verses and a handful only of Finnish, although a larger proportion of his choral works use texts in this language. It is natural that the German songs have enjoyed wider international currency, leaving other songs generally to those more familiar with the language of the texts.

The earliest of the songs here included is *Kullervon valitus* (Kullervo's Lament) [1] taken from the third movement of Sibelius's 1892 symphonic poem *Kullervo*, the hero's lament at the wrong he has done to his sister, the girl he had abducted. The song was revised into its present form in 1917-1918. From the same year, 1892, comes the arrangement of the folk-song *Tule, tule, kultani* (Come, come, my darling) [2]. 1894 brought *Rakastava* (The Lover) [3], a setting of words taken from the collection *Kanteletar*, folk poems collected by Elias Lönnrot. Sibelius set four of these for male chorus and tenor soloist, and it is the first of these, *Miss'on kussa minum hyväni?* (Where is my beloved?), that was later arranged in its present form. Sibelius wrote *Soi kunniaksi Luojan* (May the hymn of honour now resound) [4], originally a choral setting of 1894, arranged in 1899, with a text by the writer August Valdemar Forsman, who would later take the Finnish form of his name, Koskimies, rather than the original Swedish form.

Two songs from 1897 are included here. *Aamumussu* (In the Morning Mist) [3] was originally written for a children's choir, and later underwent various adaptations. The text is by Juhana Henrik Erkkö. *Tuule tuuli leppeämmin* (Blow, wind, more gently) [10], arranged by Olavi Pesonen in 1943, has a text by Forsman/Koskimies and is taken from a *Cantata* for university graduation ceremonies. Songs from 1898 include *Sortunut ääni* (The Broken Voice) [5], with a text from the *Kanteletar*, originally written for male choir and then variously adapted. *Laulu ristilukista* (Fool's Song of the Spider) [10] is taken from incidental music for the patriotic play *King Christian II* by Adolf Paul, later expanded into a concert suite, and *Sydämeni laulu* (Song of My Heart) [19] was originally one of a group of songs for male voices.

Political events in 1899 aroused Finnish feelings of patriotism. In February Tsar Nicholas II abrogated the constitution that had allowed Finland a measure of autonomy. This was the year of Sibelius's *Finlandia*, originally part of music for a historic pageant mounted for the Press Pensions Fund, and from this, among the most famous of Sibelius's works, was drawn the *Finlandia Hymn* [1], with a text by Koskenniemi, which has achieved the status approaching that of a national anthem. It was arranged in 1948 for choir a *cappella*. *Ateenalaisten laulu* (Song of the Athenians) [4], its original Swedish words by Viktor Rydberg but heard here in its Finnish version by Yrjö Weijola, draws inspiration from the same political circumstances. *Isänmaalle* (To My Country) [6], written in 1899 for male voices, with a text by Paavo Cajander, is again a direct product of the mood of the time.

In 1905 Sibelius provided incidental music for performances of Maurice Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, mounted in a Swedish translation, this at a time when he was dealing with the necessary revision of his *Violin Concerto* and the composition of his *Third Symphony*. From the incidental music comes the simply evocative strophic song *Kolme sokeaa sisarta* (The Three Blind Sisters) [12].

Uusmalaisten laulu (Song of the Uusimaa People) [9] was written in 1912, originally for male voices, and *Kallion kirkon kelloävel* (Bell Melody of Kallion Church) [20], from the same year, with its simple unison accompaniment, echoes the sound of the church bells, with a text by Heikki Klemetti. The stirring *Jääkärien marssi* (March of the Jaeger Battalion) [2], composed in 1917, originally for male voices and piano, with a text by Heikki Nurmio, was later given an orchestral accompaniment. The following year brought *Partiolaisten marssi* (Scout March) [16], originally for mixed voices and piano, with a text by Jalmari Finne, and revised in 1950-1952 with texts in other languages. In 1919 came *Mummon syntymäpäivänä* (Grandmother's Birthday Song) [15], written for his mother-in-law Elisabeth Järnefelt's eightieth birthday.

Koulutie (The Road to School) [7] has a text by Koskenniemi and was originally for children (1924). It was followed in 1925 by *Herran siunaus* (God's Blessing) [21], for possible church use. After years in which he wrote little or nothing, Sibelius composed his setting of Wäinö Sola's *Siltavahti* (The Guard of the Bridge) [8] in 1928, with two versions, one for a solo voice and one for male voices. The last song included here, in order of composition, is *Karjalan osa* (Karelia's Fate) [7], written in 1930 and with words by Aleksi Nurminen. This came at a time of political tension, now that Eastern Karelia had been ceded to the Soviet Union, and Communists in Finland posed a threat to the stability of a country already also divided by language disputes between the Finnish-speaking majority and speakers of Swedish, a language that allowed wider contact with other Scandinavian countries. The increasingly right-wing anti-communist Lapua movement, with which Sibelius was at first in sympathy, was the immediate motivation for the song.

Keith Anderson

Hannu Jurmu

The tenor Hannu Jurmu began his studies at the Oulu Conservatory in 1982. He continued to study music and singing at the Sibelius Academy from 1984 onwards, finishing his first Master of Music degree in 1989. In 1994 he entered the Sibelius Academy Opera School to continue his vocal studies, and in the spring of 2005 he finished his second Master of Music degree. Since 1994 he has appeared as a soloist in operas, operettas, oratorios and concerts in Finland as well as Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Russia and the United States. His operatic rôles range from Mozart's Tamino, Ferrando and Don Ottavio to Puccini's Rodolfo and Pinkerton, and in 2001 he took the rôle of Count Zedlau in the film version of Johann Strauss's *Wiener Blut*. He has appeared as a soloist in numerous concerts in a wide range of great masterpieces and has a broad repertoire of Lieder, Christmas and sacred music. Hannu Jurmu has taken part in many Finnish vocal competitions. He won the second prize in the Kangasniemi Singing Competition of 1994, and first prize in the Turku National Operetta Competition (1996) as well as the Somero Tenor Contest (1998). He was also chosen as one of the finalists in the Lappeenranta Singing Contest of 1996. In October 2002 he was awarded the Beniamino Gigli Prize for his work in the field of opera.

Jouni Somero

Born in 1963, Jouni Somero is one of the most active performers among present Finnish musicians. So far he has given over two thousand concerts all over the world, including Australia, Japan, Ukraine, Germany, Sweden, Estonia, Russia, Brazil, Canada and Finland. He began studying the organ when he was eight years old but switched to the piano at the age of twelve. He studied piano in Switzerland and at the Music Academy in Cologne under Herbert Drechsel, and under the legendary Hungarian pianist György Cziffra, he deepened his knowledge of the interpretation of Liszt's music. Michael Ponti, the American virtuoso, has also acted as Somero's musical advisor. During 1981-89 Somero lived in Germany, working, among other things, as an assistant at the Music Academy of Düsseldorf. From 1990 Somero has pursued his career solely as a concert pianist. He was awarded a diploma at the International Music competition in Rio de Janeiro. His recording career began in 1989 with Liszt's *Twelve Transcendental Etudes*, after which he has made some forty recordings for different labels. These include Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* and *Die Kunst der Fuge*, Liszt's *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses*, Liszt's arrangements of Beethoven's Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5, the Bach arrangements by Busoni, Brahms and Kempff, Henselt's *Concert Etude, Op. 2*, Schubert's *Wanderer-Fantasy*, and the world première recording of several piano works by Felix Blumenfeld. His wide repertoire includes almost all the solo piano works of Rachmaninov and Bortkiewicz as well as seldom heard music by, among others, Alkan, Godowsky, Henselt, Blumenfeld and Gottschalk. He has also made many piano arrangements of orchestral, operatic and pop music.



Hannu Jurmu (right) and Jouni Somero (left) in the garden of Ainola, Sibelius' home

Photo: Niklas Rautio

Also available:

NAXOS

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Songs • 1

Black Roses • The Tryst • Was It A Dream?

Hannu Jurmu, Tenor • Jouni Somero, Piano



Includes World Première Recordings

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Although Sibelius wrote around a hundred songs over a period of more than thirty years – mainly settings of Swedish texts, with eight in German and only a handful in Finnish – they have suffered comparative neglect alongside his larger-scale orchestral and choral music. The best of the songs are essentially nature pieces, dark-hued, vividly characterized, intensely melancholic and vocally demanding. Sibelius considered them to represent his “innermost self”. Volume One of this two-disc survey is available on Naxos 8.570019.

8.570020

DDD

Playing Time
60:58

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A detailed track list with English translations of the song titles can be found on page 2 of the booklet.

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Production assistant: Minna Pentti • Engineer: Enno Mäemets, Editroom Oy

Booklet Notes: Keith Anderson

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