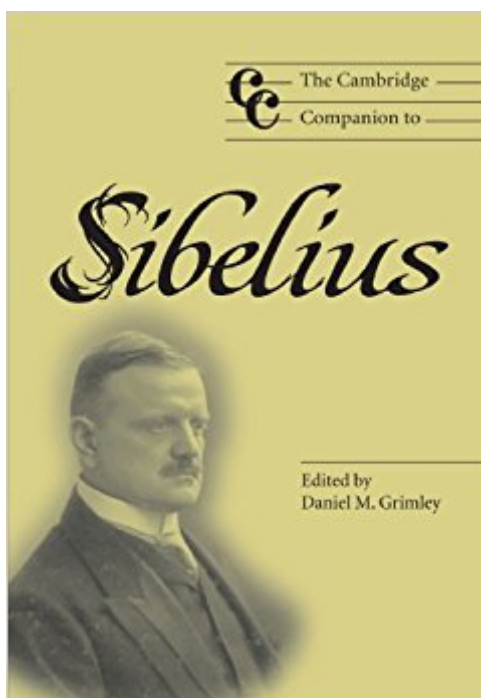


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The Cambridge Companion To Sibelius (Cambridge Companions To Music)



Synopsis

This Companion provides an up-to-date introduction to the life and music of Finland's greatest composer, Jean Sibelius (1865-1957). Divided into four sections, it explores Sibelius's early career, his major musical achievements, historical reception and influence, and the performance and interpretation of his work. Sibelius emerges as one of the most striking figures in twentieth-century music. The book will be of interest to performers and the general public as well as serious scholars.

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"...includes especially illuminating surveys of the songs and of the miniatures..." J. Behrens, The Glenn Gould School, The Royal Conservatory of Music, Choice

This Companion provides an accessible, vivid and up-to-date introduction to life and music of Finland's greatest composer, Jean Sibelius (1865-1957). The book will be of interest to a wide readership, including performers and members of the general public as well as serious scholars. Divided into four sections, the Companion explores Sibelius's early career, his major musical achievements, his historical reception and influence, and the performance and interpretation of his work. Placed in this wider perspective, Sibelius emerges as one of the most striking and individual figures in twentieth-century music.

The CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO SIBELIUS is a 2004 collection of fifteen papers by some of the most prominent Sibelius scholars from the English-speaking world and Finland. Unlike some entries in this series, this book's appeal goes beyond academics and will be great fun for ordinary Sibelius fans too, provided they have some training in music theory. The editor Daniel M. Grimley has divided the contributions into four parts: "Forging a voice: perspectives on Sibelius's biography", "Musical works", "Influence and reception" and "Interpreting Sibelius". Not everything in this collection interested me, so I'll limit my comments to the chapters I paid especial attention to. Arnold Whittall's "The later symphonies" examines the musical drama and stylistic progressions (and retentions) from the Third on. Whittall takes the opportunity to respond to James Hepokoski's *Cambridge Music Handbook*'s analysis of the Fourth and Fifth. Jukka Tiilikainen's "The genesis of the Violin Concerto" gives not only the external facts of this great piece's commission and premiere, but also takes the reader through Sibelius's writing process, looking at the manuscripts. The author was able to take the first version of the concerto (recorded only once on a BIS disc) into account and describe how Sibelius revised the piece to produce the version we normally know. Julian Anderson's "Sibelius and contemporary music" notes that Central European interest in Sibelius was awoken by composers who came of age in the post-serialist era and he describes some of the features of Sibelius's music that fit with what the new schools were doing. He gives examples from France, the Nordic countries, and Britain and the USA. I had no idea that Murail and Dufourt drew such direct inspiration (even quotation) from the Finnish master. The Nordic composers highlighted are Per Norgard and Magnus Lindberg. The British and American composers are Peter Maxwell Davies, Oliver Knussen, George Benjamin and Morton Feldman. Bethany Lowe's "Different kinds of fidelity" is a brief (7-page) description of some Sibelius recordings, highlighting different interpretative approaches. The last chapter consists of two separate interviews that Daniel M. Grimley carried out with Sir Colin Davis and Osmo Vänskä respectively. These are very interesting for elucidating the approaches found in these two conductor's Sibelius cycles (on Decca and BIS respectively). Davis claims, for example, that there are 105 different tempos in "Tapiola", while Vänskä claims that the conductor must distinguish a mere three.

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