



NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION

Tucson Chapter of Finlandia Foundation National® <http://www.TucsonFinnishAmericanClub.org>

Lolakuu (October) 2015

S150elius

2015

2015 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Janne Sibelius. To commemorate this anniversary, a Sibelius Jubilee 150 Celebration has been taking place within Finland and around the world. **In commemoration of this Jubilee, the Finnish-American Club of Tucson (FACT) presented a series of six stories about the composer.** This Special Edition of the FACT Newsletter consolidates these individual stories into a single article, providing a high-level history of the man and his country. Written by Club member **Sinikka Garcia**, she has translated and presented excerpts from Erik T. Tawastjerna's monumental biography, **Sibelius**. As a personal friend of Sibelius, Tawastjerna had been given unrestricted (and exclusive) access to the maestro's personal diaries.

JANNE SIBELIUS 1865-1957

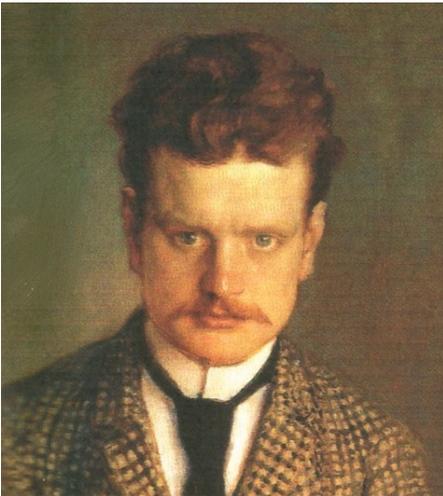
The name **Sibelius** and the maestro himself – composer and conductor – is probably the best known of all persons in Finland. He is and was well-respected and loved for his music – *especially* for his wonderful **Finlandia**, the theme of which describes Finland's soul in her scenery of lakes and forests; her struggles against larger enemies; and the dawning of her morning as she gained her 1917 independence. Beloved are also his *Valse triste* and *Andante festivo* among his many shorter compositions, and of course, there are his seven symphonies and hundreds of songs for solos and choruses, hymns, and varied instrumental pieces.

He was called Janne (after his uncle) for the twenty years in his hometown Hämeenlinna, and "Sibelius" by most everybody after that. The French "Jean" was his artist name after he became well-known. As he wrote in his diary, "It was mostly used for signing bills."

Sibelius's hometown was of land-owning upper class people, just north of Helsinki. It had lovely countryside scenery – water, fields and forests. It is also the home of Finland's first castle from the year 1200 that gave the town its name. The town had music events, active theater groups, and a Russian garrison, all of which greatly influenced Janne. The families formed musical groups and performed in events.

Janne's father, Christian Sibelius, was a garrison and town physician, and the head of the Health Department. His mother was Maria Borg of a musical family from Pohjanmaa on the west coast. Both parents and their relatives were musically accomplished. The family language was mostly Swedish at this time.

Janne was two years old when his father suddenly died leaving the family in financial distress. Everything they owned had to be auctioned off, even the father's doctoral hat from the University of Helsinki. The family – Maria with her two children Linda and Janne – moved to live with grand-mother Juliana. Soon another son, Christian, was born into the family. Juliana was a capable controller of matters having to do with the household. However, she didn't believe being a musician was a reputable profession. As a result, she had a hard time understanding little Janne, whose thoughts took him off to dreamland and who just wanted to play the piano as soon as his fingers could reach the keyboard. He had a sharp ear for music and a wild imagination that took him often away. Janne loved to play with other children, but many times he wandered off onto the bank of the local river just to sit and listen to nature and to imagine things.



1894 Portrait of Sibelius

Before the Finnish Normal Lyceum was established in Hämeenlinna, Janne got private tutoring. His Finnish language skills developed during these early school years. He needed

constant encouragement to stay with the lessons because of his daydreaming and "his head full of notes." In the upper grades, he composed music and with his friends formed a choral group and an orchestra. He took a liking to the violin and wanted to become a violin virtuoso. He composed "Water Music" among other pieces when he was just 11.



In 1885, at the age of 20, Sibelius left his hometown and went to Helsinki to continue his studies. To accommodate the wishes of some of his relatives, he chose law along with his music. The times were changing from the romanticism of Runeberg and Topelius, as well as from conservatism, to realism in the writings of such writers as Canth (the play "Workman's Wife") and the Norwegian Ibsen. In politics the problem was between those who preferred Swedish over Finnish (the "Fennomen and Svecomen"), and in Russia there were rumbles over the czar's (Alexander II) lenient ways with Finland as a Grand Duchy.

During his first year at the university Sibelius spent time with his Swedish-speaking friends. Helsinki, being the center of culture, there was a lot of partying.

Important people who influenced Sibelius's musical career were his piano teachers Mitrofan Wasiljeff and Martin Wegelius, and an Italian-German concert pianist by the name of Ferruccio Buson. The Finn Robert Kajanus, a composer, conductor and competitor, was also helpful. Later, Adolf Paul and Alex Carpelan became important as agents and advisors.



Sibelius at age 11

Sibelius's first year ended in a good note or "as expected of him." He also passed the exam in the Finnish language competency. He received a stipend, provided by his many relatives, which helped the finances. At least his first two summers were spent on an island of Korppoo in the Gulf of Finland in nature with his musical family and friends. Here music was made for many instruments and numerous performances took place.

By the next year of studies in 1887 Sibelius still did typical conservatory work, and performed in many concerts as second violin in Mozart quartets and Beethoven ensembles. His mind that was set for becoming a violin virtuoso, was changing and he grew more and more aware of his need to compose and to become a composer. He didn't like the modern techniques and was becoming depressed and discouraged – although his piece in C-major for piano, violin, and cello was very well received.

In 1887 Sibelius got to know Armas Järnefelt, a fellow student, and his large family of musicians and writers who were on top of the cultural setting of the Young-Finns group in Finland. This connection got Janne involved with an active Finnish language group that had international members. The head of the family, Gen. Alexander Järnefelt liked Sibelius. That's how he met Aino, the 17-year old daughter of the family. Aino and Sibelius met passing each other on a staircase, and it is said that Aino's eyes hypnotized him right then and there. He could look into her soul, he said! And that's how Sibelius became a Fennoman!

With his close friend Ferruccio Busoni, Sibelius made music; Busoni looking at Nature with intelligence, Sibelius with his feelings, living in the



Aino Järnefelt Sibelius,
age 17

Nature. He got to know Finland's top artists Sakari Topelius, a national writer, Fredrik Pacius, composer, Albert Edelfelt, an already famous painter with a shining personality.

After performing his A-minor Quartet in 1889, Robert Kajanus, who later conducted a lot of Sibelius's music, knew Sibelius was better than he. It was a break-through; Sibelius had found his Finnish tone in music.

In 1889 Sibelius had his first study trip abroad – to Berlin. There he struggled with piano teacher Albert Becker

who first almost rejected him but then later changed his mind.

Sibelius needed encouragement. He attended many concerts, including Richard Strauss's "Don Juan", which Strauss himself applauded. From Kajanus's "*Aino Symphony*" in Berlin, he learned that the Kalevala had musical content in it. It opened his eyes to Finnish music.



Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924)
Sibelius' Closest Friend

From Beethoven's sonatas he learned organization and interpretation; how it was as if "God were playing" the violin in one of the pieces. He met several Scandinavian musicians and the Werner Söderhjems, who offered him advice,

especially Mrs. Söderhjelm, who sincerely scolded him about his “catastrophic ways of handling money!” Meanwhile, in Finland his Aunt Eveliina was ardently praying for God to help Sibelius when he was ill in hospital and still composing in bed. Prof. Wegelius also visited him as did Busoni who took him to Leipzig to hear Sinding’s piano Quartet which inspired Sibelius to write music. No more doing nothing!



Sibelius in 1889

Busoni and the Music School quartet played Sibelius’s G-minor Quartet, the beginning of which was declared “wonderful” and led to a grant from the Finnish Senate.



At a musical evening in Helsinki with Aino Järnefelt, Sibelius finally asked for her hand in marriage – telling her that she was his “soul,” the kind it should be....

His B-major Quartet was brilliant, the first violinist being Johan Halverson. On the next trip to Vienna, Sibelius sailed in 3rd class – a lesson learned – and Aino’s sister handed him a youthful picture of Aino to take along. It was the beginning of their correspondence for tens of years to come; he writing in Swedish, she in Finnish, uniting them and enriching the flow of Sibelius’s language as well as his “Finnishness.” He was still playing the violin and thinking of becoming a teacher of violin or conductor of the University of Helsinki Orchestra. Janne was composing, and at times tearing up, his compositions “the cry in my throat.” Aino’s letters and influence kept him going and growing in

appreciation for his native land and language. *The Kalevala* became his reading material and his appreciation grew in its traditions. He realized *The Kalevala* was modern – “made of sorrows”, as the proverb says.

Now his thoughts were of Aino and a home they needed.

In 1892 he and Aino got married and spent their honeymoon in Karelia visiting with Minna Canth and Juhani Aho among other notables.



**Aino Sibelius (née Järnefelt)
about 1891**

A part of the time he spent alone visiting old rune singers, such as Larin Paraske, who to Sibelius was a human connection to *The Kalevala* world in which he was right then living – composing *Kullervo*. Larin `was wise, direct, not shy at all, and sometimes even vulgar. The best laughs Sibelius ever had were with her. When he told her that he could hardly wait to hear her sing, she answered him that she sounded good! And then, when the lady of the house where they were visiting scolded her for bragging, Larin said, “You’d be insane to heap abuse upon yourself, and that no bird messes up her own nest”, Sibelius was choking with laughter at the fancy dinner table. He really got a kick out of Paraske’s “raucous songs” also, loving the amazing language. Paraske didn’t like Sibelius’s “*Kullervo*” story for children because “there was sin in it.”

The first of the six Sibelius daughters, Eva, was born in 1893. Those were the ten busiest years

in his life of teaching music theory and conducting at the Music Institute and the Orchestra School.



**Sibelius' favorite rune singer,
Larin Paraske**

He played in chamber music groups. There never was enough money and he needed his friends. He became the newest notable Finnish composer with his series on *Lemminkäinen* and *Satu*. *Lemminkäinen* was a great success in Germany where he and Aino were visiting. He was enchanted by the tonal quality and the classic-romantic harmony of Finnish poem melodies.

Sibelius' circle of friends was of much importance to him: the Järnefelts, Gallen-Kallela, Merikanto, Kajanus, Adolf Paul, and Busoni. He was noticed by the students who included him in their fraternity that had nationalistic views.

In 1897 Sibelius got a stipend from Russian czar Nikolai II for ten years. He composed hymns, and then "when storm clouds were gathering on Finland's skies," *The Song of the Athenians* was born to encourage Finns -- as "Russification" had started and Nikolay Bobrikoff had become the Governor General of Finland.

Then in 1903, the Finn, Eugene Schaubman, assassinated Bobrikoff and then killed himself, bringing both a joy and a sorrow that bound the Finnish people together. Even Leo Tolstoy supported the passive resistance movement; Finnish men refused to enlist in the Russian Army.

The 1900 Paris World's Fair was coming and preparations for it had been started. Just then Sibelius's 2-year old daughter died of typhoid, saddening his and everybody's life so suddenly. She was his "brilliant child" at whose funeral he played his *Song of My Heart* on his violin to her. How sad it was!



General-Governor Nikolay Bobrikov

This was right after the recent proclamation by the Czar that the official language of Finland would be Russian! The February Manifest had just happened. The Paris exhibit could not contain anything referring to separatism – and the Exhibit Hall for Finland was called "*Section Russie*." The years 1900–1901 were very crucial for Finland. A tour by the 70-piece Philharmonic Orchestra of Helsinki in all western European countries was an undertaking that ended at the Paris World's Fair for which Finland sent her best in all arts: Saarinen, Geselius, Lindgren for the Jugend-style pavilion of castles and gray stone churches to contrast the rest of the pavilion's "Bankers' style". Gallen-Kallela painted frescoes and arches in the hallways, Edelfelt made sure the name of Finland appeared on the same sign as "Russie". Kajanus conducted his own pieces and Sibelius's *Finlandia* which was called "*La Patria*" and his 1st Symphony. Sibelius – with caution - registered as an individual without pay – and only appeared on stage to thank the audience for their applause. They loved the music. (*Finlandia* was called that only in Sweden and Norway. It was "*Suomi*" in Copenhagen and "*Vaterland*" outside of Scandinavia.) The tour was a success. The good critique in Berlin was a deciding triumph. Sibelius was the star, and he was happy. Richard Strauss found depth in

Sibelius and loved his “sparkling melodies”. Sibelius became a new name in Germany.

Alex Carpelan, his very good friend, was urging Sibelius to go to Italy to work. His family was back in Finland and he wrote to his daughters about Rome’s wonders and about the birds that were being mistreated there as they were waiting for the spring to return to Finland. He was analyzing himself as he often did, getting more polished and yearning for the dusk of his land. Before returning home he was called to conduct his “*Tuonelan joutsen*” and “*Lemminkäinen-series*” in Heidelberg. Suffering from stage fright all his life, Sibelius “grew” to the job most of the time, and was well received all over Germany. Then back to Finland and Helsinki where he conducted his “*Satu*” and was happy about it. His 4th daughter was born. He conducted his 2nd symphony in Turku. He was at his peak composing a new symphony, a violin concerto, and his best solo song, “*Voces Intimae Quartet*” that was harmonic and impressive.



Sibelius about 1910

Then it was again to Germany and Italy where he came up with the main theme for his “*Andante festivo*”. He couldn’t compose at home because he needed to be alone in total silence. There were very many absences from Aino and he felt guilty and wrote to her often, also asking her to show her love more. There were increasing pressures of earning to support his growing family; he had to sell smaller pieces while the symphonies had to wait. There was agony or ecstasy all the time. His music was spreading to England, Belgium and America; his “*Valse triste*” was a “gold lode”.

Then the general strike hit Finland: the Whites

(students mostly; the Patriots) vs. the Reds; (Socialists). It was the calm before the storm. The atmosphere was agitated. By their background, the Sibelius family belonged to the “Whites” but with their connection to the Järnefelts (Aino, etc.); they did not dislike the working class either. However, an invitation to England to perform helped the situation and the city of Liverpool loved Sibelius and his *Finlandia* that had to be repeated at a concert. An invitation to Russia – St. Petersburg and Moscow – the reception to his 3rd Symphony was not favorable. He was not well; he had complained about his voice and throat, and had a cyst removed in Berlin. He recovered and gave up cigars and alcohol for seven years. He was full of life and creativity and composed “*Luonnotar*”, “*Aallota*” and started on Symphony #5. This time his trip and concerts in St. Petersburg were well received; “*Pohjolan tytär*” (*Daughter of the North*), the premier, was excellent, its “color wonderful, reminding of Samojed originality,” was the comment.



Many were the times of stress and anguish – monetary mostly – when Sibelius couldn’t compose. He had to leave home to have peace and quiet. There never was enough money. He felt sorry for Aino and was gentle and loving toward her. Their conflicts often ended “in a wall of silence.” That was Aino’s nature: darker, more pessimistic than her husband’s. Yet, she felt her life’s work was to support him and she did her best trying to make the circumstances favorable for his work.

Their fifth daughter was born (they had lost one.) and Sibelius loved being the Papa at the family table. The children mostly played their piano lessons at a neighbor’s house, and their parents sometimes played together four-handedly for them. Aino often played her husband’s new compositions for him to hear. At some point, Aino became the schoolteacher for their children and she was also the family gardener. Additionally, the family had a cook, someone to care for the children, and a half-time hired man.

As he had many times before, Alex Carpelan, Sibelius's friend, came up with money donated by the country's richest people. Carpelan brought up the pressure between Finland and Russia and appealed to Sibelius's standing in the international community.

There were no trips in 1913, but in 1914 Sibelius's reputation rose greatly and his trip to America became reality. His supporter for the entire concert tour, the American millionaire Carl Stoeckel, received him like a king, liking his style and ways. There was a practice session in Carnegie Hall with 75 musicians of which he quickly picked the best in each section. *Pohjolan tytär* (*The Daughter of the North*) was the piece they practiced. *Aallotar* was another piece in the program. There was a storm of applause at the end. *Maamme* was sung, the audience standing. President Taft was in the audience and discussed Finland's fight for freedom with the maestro. "The occasion was the most aristocratic and democratic I had ever been in," said Sibelius. The maestro was totally tired afterwards.

New York's architecture and its glamour were a dynamic force. Niagara Falls made him feel religious. At Yale, Sibelius was awarded an Honorary Doctor's degree. He was also invited back.



Sibelius at Yale

As soon as Sibelius got back to Finland, World War I was starting: Austria-Serbia and most of

middle Europe was involved. In spite of it, he had a "wonderful theme" for his Symphony V, and he received the title of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Helsinki. The problem was that officially Finland was at war against Germany, where he had studied and performed so many times. The Russification program was taking effect and President (then Judge) P. E. Svinhufvud was exiled to Siberia. The underground *Jääkäriliitto* (the light infantry group = the Jaegers) was ready in Germany. The thought of an independent Finland was rising.



Sibelius with his youngest daughters Margareta and Heidi, about 1916

During all this, Sibelius composed many small pieces that brought him his "bread money." The publishers liked them. He also was working feverishly on symphonies V and VI with a wonderful theme for the V – "a Godly melody." At home in Ainola for Christmas 1914 "he was wandering through the house humming the melody of his Violin concerto."

When at home, Sibelius took his morning walks by the lake always enjoying "his birds." One morning he saw 16 swans – "the greatest experience of my life," he said. "God, what beauty!" They were flying above him for a long time, and then vanishing into the haze of the sun like "a ribbon of silver."

To him the voices of the cranes were like the sound of the woodwind instruments without tremor, and the swans' voices were close to the sound of trumpets – “a small refrain reminiscent of a young child's cry...mysteries of life's agony”; his final theme for Symphony V.

At 50, he became grandfather to Eva's daughter philosophizing that the age, like the seasons, leaves a mark on all of us. There was a great celebration for his 50th birthday with series of concerts by the best orchestras and conductors, with a poem by Eino Leino for him, congratulatory speeches from around the world and from the Finnish Academy (not the Swedish), pictures of him were on display, 38 wreaths of laurel were presented to him. There was a fine dinner event at Hotel Seurahuone and a folk presentation of 115,000 names with good wishes, thanks, and themes of “You have become our pride and hope.” Many of Sibelius' compositions were played in many concerts, including *Finlandia* and *Alla Marcia* of his Karelia-series. There was a great feeling of triumph.

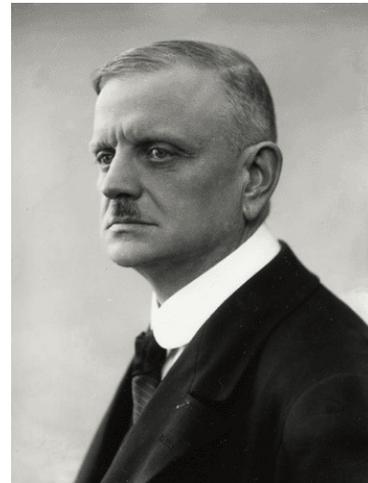
Back to his diary: “I need to work; it gives life its face.” There was a problem about his roots; the discoveries were not what he had secretly hoped for: there was no nobility in his past. Czar Nikolai II was visiting Finland incognito. With World War I still raging, invitations for a concert tour abroad were few. However, funds from his Violin sonnets provided him a trip to Göteborg where *Aallotar* and Symphony II were so very well received, the occasion ending in bravo-calls and an official fanfare of trumpets and loud shouting. It was a “renewal bath” for Sibelius and his orchestra.

He spent the New Year at home redoing his Symphony V. Runeberg's Day in February was a happy day when Ida Ekman, a friend and opera singer, handed him the receipt for payment of a bill worth 1/3 of his total debt in 1914.

In 1917, in the shadows of an imminent conflict with Russia, all the Finnish musicians, poets, writers and painters formed the “Suomi picture” that elevated the nation's self-esteem.

There was serious marital conflict and suffering between Aino and her husband, even divorce

was discussed. To Aino composing was “holy” and drinking ruined it all. She was ill in bed for a long time. In Russia the Revolution was taking place and its temporary government abolished Finland's autonomy. Yet, Sibelius composed his *Humoresk* pieces 3-5. There was anarchy, but Sibelius thought they were both awful and wonderful times! There was a contest for the lyrics for his *Jääkärimarssi* (*The War Song*) he had composed for the Finnish soldiers trained in Germany. Russia was aware of it all. The march was not played at Sibelius's birthday. But the pay for the piece was one of the best ever. Then, at the end of the month of December, Lenin and his government signed Finland's independence. P.E. Svinhufvud, president of the Senate declared the 6th of December to be the Independence Day of Finland (1917). Sweden, Germany, and France acknowledged independence quickly; England and the USA took a while.



Sibelius in the Spring of 1918 after his hunger diet.



The Civil War started when the Reds (Socialists) and the Russians took over the government of Finland: there was no contact abroad, no newspapers, telephone or wire services. Marshall Mannerheim was in Pohjanmaa with his German-trained Jaegers fighting the rebels and moving toward Helsinki. There was shooting in the streets, fear, unfriendly troops searching for weapons and food storages. There were stories of starving prisoners in Suomenlinna. Finland

was cut in two parts; Ainola was in the enemy territory. Fearing for his life, the Sibelius family temporarily moved to Helsinki staying with family members, suffering there from the shortage of food.

Although the Great Strike ended, the struggle of the Civil War continued. Sibelius was working on his Symphonies VI and VII while feeling powerless to help the World War or his suffering country. To entertain his frightened daughters he sat at the piano and played them music. After many months without a concert there was one in May directed by the maestro himself: *Aallottaret* and Symphony II.

There were conflicting opinions about his music (Symphony II and *Finlandia*) at the Copenhagen concerts, yet he thought they were all right – especially since Aino was wonderful! One of his three cantatas in 1918 was for the Opening Ceremonies of the Åbo (Turku) Academy *Jordens Sång - Oma Maa (My Country.)* It was for a mixed chorus and piano; well received. Another important happening was his Symphony V being finished, and the saddest news was the death of his dear friend Alex Carpelan. Then there was the depressing peace, with near famine conditions in parts of the country until the ports were opened and connections to the world again began functioning. There was no end to anxiety or fear over national and domestic problems. Sibelius had to produce and take in not just glowing praise but unfair criticism. He gave many concerts at home for the needy to raise funds and concerts in London and Copenhagen, but rejected invitations to USA (to go to teach composition), and Sweden because he had to work on his Symphonies VI and VII. However, the 1920s were the best times for his music: it was selling well.

After seven years Sibelius took his last trip to England and in London's New Queen's Hall conducted his Symphony V to an audience of 5000 – who loved his *Valse triste* and *Finlandia*. The piece was “a master piece”; he was called out five times. He gave concerts also in Manchester and Oxford, and then hurried to Oslo

where his three concerts were sold out and he met King Haakon and took flowers to Edward Grieg's tomb.

After the war, international artists flooded Helsinki. Sibelius' beloved younger brother Christian died leaving him devastated with “emergency of my soul”. After a concert in Rome – *Andante festivo* was a triumph – he was “Giovanni Sibelius” there and he received much attention. He stopped to visit his friend Busoni who was sick. Symphony VI was ready. He was becoming famous. There were concerts in Göteborg, Stockholm and Copenhagen. His Symphony VII was well received, the years 1923-1926 being the last years of strong creativity for him. That year Aino refused to accompany him abroad because of his drinking, but at three concerts in Stockholm he conducted his Symphony VII, *Fantasia Symphonica*, better than expected, representing his country proudly, as a work of honor. The death of his good friend Busoni saddened and upset him again. His concert of *Myrsky (Storm)* and *Tapiola* (a *Kalevala* piece) in Copenhagen was a terrific success and it was heard on the radio for the first time ever! This was the last time Sibelius conducted abroad.



Jean Sibelius in 1923

At Finnish President Relander's 60th birthday celebration he received the Honorary Award of Finland's White Rose Cross and a good monetary reward from the People's Collection plus a substantial pension for life from the

Parliament. His *Finlandia* and *Valse triste* continued to be popular, yet the news about his music in the USA was not as encouraging – until 6 years later when conductor Sergi Koussevitzky came through with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In his diary Sibelius writes, in 1927, “America is really playing!” His friend and producer Olin Downs from USA came to visit him at Ainola.

Sibelius reminisced about his victories and losses in Berlin, his favorite place in his youth for study and learning. They were comparing him there to Wagner and Beethoven.

By 1929 in Finland there was restlessness – strikes, disagreements between the Swedish/Finnish speaking Finns, as well as those who wanted to improve the national defenses vs. those who wanted the funding to go to the needy.

Aino and her husband went to Paris to hear new music and to see new faces. “There’s no end to learning”, Sibelius knew. From interviews he had he sensed that France was not yet into his music. They were having fun and even joined a tea party and started mingling with people. However, at some point at Aino’s suggestion – they left the partying and took a taxi back to their hotel. Aino writes to their daughter, “We have been purified from the modern moaning and sickening instrumentalization by hearing Bach’s piece for Three Pianos and Mozart’s E-major symphony.”



Back at home there was pressure from many publishers, musicians, and printers for Sibelius’s Symphony VIII among other pieces. Visitors came: Koussevitzky and Downs from U.S.A., among others. Sibelius escaped to Berlin for the last time. His letter to Aino from there is the last one. He is still struggling with Symphony VIII, afraid of dying before it was ready. In Helsinki, Koussevitzky conducted Sibelius’s *Tapiola*, the VII, and the II magnificently. Sibelius is full of self-critique about having made Aino’s life such a suffering.

In his epilogue he says, “I have to make something of the life I have left. I have to rise

above my environment; I’ll do it.” He notices a complimentary article about himself in *Radiozeit*. He is saddened by the death of his friend/enemy Robert Kajanus, searching peace for his soul. He thought of Kajanus whom he had chosen as the conductor of his music that had been recorded for marketing in London in the 1930s. It had led to His Master’s Voice Company announcing that a Sibelius Society had been established in London, and that his music was the



Sibelius about 1930

sensation of the day in London. Sibelius was reminiscing about the tragedies as well as victories in his life – regretting the suffering he had caused his wife (absences, money problems, drinking) and the pain of never finishing his Symphony VIII that the world was waiting for so long.

“Just as the thunder clouds of the world’s politics were gathering in the sky”, a major concert was given for Sibelius on his 70th birthday in Messuhalli. It was not only to celebrate his accomplishments and to show the country’s appreciation – but to point him out to the world as a symbol of the nation. In the front row of the hall sat Marshall Mannerheim, ex-Presidents Ståhlberg and Relander, and the future president, Kallio, and all of the prime ministers of the Nordic countries. Current president Svinhufvud did not attend due to illness. *Myrsky* was played by the combined 100-man orchestra conducted by no other than Sibelius’s brother-in-law Armas Järnefelt. The surprise was during the intermission hearing the New York Philharmonic

Orchestra broadcast of Symphony II from New York. The applause by the American people touched Sibelius's heart.



Jean and Aino arriving for his 70th birthday celebration at Messuhalli (Exhibition Hall) in 1935

His fame had increased to the point that there was a month-long Promenade festival in London of his music only – by Sir Henry Wood, and another by Sir Thomas Beecham who conducted all 7 of his symphonies because “no other composer could be of more interest.” Sibelius did not attend but was in telephone contact and listened through the radio. Beecham visited at Ainola for Sibelius's 88th birthday. The American friend and conductor Olin Downs got him to conduct his *Andante festivo* for a radio broadcast.

When news about the Soviet Union's attack on Finland on the 30th of November 1939 spread through the music world, many worried about his safety understanding that his compositions *Finlandia* and *Jääkärien marssi* had endangered him. Invitations arrived from many places offering him a safe place. He thanked them but without hesitation, answered that he was too old and wanted to stay in his own country. He was grateful for the food packages from friends in Sweden. When asked by Finland's government, Sibelius sent a plea to “the freedom-loving American people to understand and accept the situation in Finland, knowing that the Bolshevik takeover would destroy not only Finland but the freedom and civilization of this part of the globe.”

For his 80th birthday, the amount of his retirement was increased. Among the

congratulatory addresses were 18 from Russian composers. He couldn't wait to again have the connections to abroad open.

Some of the delightful moments in his later life were letters he received and his music through radio that was being played all around the world. He still took his walks by the lake – loving “his birds.” “There they come, the birds of my youth!” They were flying low and he could see the cranes with his own eyes, as he told Aino. “Suddenly one of the birds left the flock, headed toward him, circled Ainola, and then returned to the flock.” The next day Sibelius, age 91, passed away, Aino and two of their daughters at his bedside.

Thousands of people viewed his coffin in the Helsinki Cathedral, giving their farewells and thanks to the maestro whose Christmas songs had been with them for so long and who's *Finlandia* had sounded as wonderful at situations of utmost need as in the days of jubilant joy. The funeral music was all of his own, among them his hymn all Finland would be singing *Soi kunniaksi Luojan* (“*For the glory of God...*”) uplifting spirits. There was an honor guard of hundreds of students with white caps and Finnish flags stretching for kilometers.



The Procession of Students at Sibelius' funeral

The ribbon on Aino's wreath of lilies of the valley read, “Thankful for a life made holy with your great art.” And the words of English composer R.V. Williams were, “You have lit a candle that will never burn out”.

Thousands of candles were lit on the nations windows in honor of their national hero.



Special Edition Newsletter

Co-editors:

Sinikka Garcia

Tel. 520-742-0266

Email: sinikkag@yahoo.com

Steve Huhta

Tel. 520-829-7496

Email: shuhta@earthlink.net

Left: Grave of Jean and Aino Sibelius in the courtyard of Ainola.

Club email address: TucsonFinnClub@gmail.com

Like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/TheFinnishAmericanClubofTucson>

The Finnish American Club of Tucson
c/o Garcia, 2800 W. Mesa Verde Pl.
Tucson, AZ 85742



Club Website: <http://www.tucsonfinnishamericanclub.org>

Club e-mail: TucsonFinnClub@gmail.com