



**LYRIC
FEST**



Sibelius at 150

Anne Marie Frohnmayer
Soprano

Suzanne DuPlantis
Mezzo Soprano

Anthony Schneider
Bass

with
Laura Ward
at the piano

Tuesday, December 8, 2015, 6:00pm at The Academy of Vocal Arts

JEAN SIBELIUS
8 December 1865 20 September 1957

Welcome to Sibelius's world of fire and ice. Welcome to his native land of glistening snow and mystical forests; of lonely cranes arched across a leaden sky; of long, frigid, starry nights and all-too-brief summers.

Finnish composer Jean Sibelius was born on this day 150 years ago. He grew up in a Swedish speaking home and spent a (fatherless) childhood enchanted, consoled and nourished by the natural world and the rich folklore of Finland. He learned violin from an uncle who encouraged his imagination and piano from an aunt who rapped his knuckles. In his youth he began to improvise music. Sibelius studied composition of course, and soon was on his way to becoming an accomplished composer – he changed his given name from “Janne” to “Jean.”

Sibelius married for love and fathered six daughters. (He grieved the one lost in infancy.) Rarely was there enough money, but somehow he managed to build “Ainola,” a house for his family just far enough away from Helsinki to shut out the hustle-bustle of the city, when that was he wanted. There he composed in silence at his writing desk, pouring over manuscripts, reworking and reworking until a symphony might remind him of “the scent of the first snow.” His own unrest and the lure of the city often beckoned him back to Helsinki, however, where he ran up un-payable bills, and where he ate and drank to a point that threatened his life.

Throughout the next decades, through personal ups and downs, political discord and war, Sibelius still managed to compose some of his greatest works. He was becoming an international music figure and a revered national hero who helped to shape a Finnish identity, just as it was shaking off Russian oppression. But an increasingly self-critical Sibelius found himself fraught with exhaustion and nervousness – and more and more dependent on alcohol. Finally, in 1926, with the 7th Symphony complete, but still only 51 of his ninety years lived, Sibelius austensibly stopped composing: “If I cannot write a better symphony than my Seventh, then it shall be my last.” His wife Aino, who felt it was her life's calling to support his work as a composer, recalled,

In the 1940s there was a great auto da f3 at Ainola. My husband collected a number of the manuscripts in a laundry basket and burned them on the open fire in the dining room. Parts of the Karelia Suite were destroyed – I later saw remains of the pages which had been torn out – and many other things. I did not have the strength to be present and left the room. I therefore do not know what he threw on to the fire. But... after this my husband became calmer and gradually lighter in mood.

After this time, Sibelius entertained guests and followed the music world via the radio in his living room. He rarely spoke of his music publicly, even as his symphonic works and songs were being celebrated world-wide. But sometimes the world came to him: In 1955, for his 90th birthday, the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy traveled to Finland for a special performances of his music. Following, the entire orchestra came to Ainola to greet him personally in his living room.

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Sibelius produced over 100 songs throughout his compositional life. Of his songs, five were in Finnish, nine in German, one in English and the rest in Swedish. The poetry, mythology and folklore of Finland dominated his library and inspired most of his vocal works. It should be noted that although he and others orchestrated many of his songs, Sibelius preferred the “original character” of the piano versions. “One cannot express little things by means of a large orchestra.” he would say.

Welcome, then, to Sibelius's world of song. (S.D)

PROGRAM

Laura Ward, piano

I have traversed the forests of Tapio, I have heard tales from Kullervo's blade. I have scored the chorus of tempests, and transcribed the scent of drying hemp into song. I have caressed the smooth shell of Luonnotar's egg, and I have wept farewell for Runeberg's bard.

Evening Songs

Illalle

Anne Marie Frohnmayer

Die stille Stadt

Anthony Schneider

Den första kyssen

Suzanne DuPlantis

Winters of our (dis)content

Norden

Anthony Schneider

Demanten på marssnön

Anne Marie Frohnmayer

Våren flyktar hastigt

Suzanne DuPlantis

Remembrance

Hållilå, uti storm och regn

Anthony Schneider

Säf, säf, susa

Suzanne DuPlantis

Var det en dröm?

Anne Marie Frohnmayer

Roses

Flickan kom ifrån sin älsklings möte

Suzanne DuPlantis

Rosenlied

Anne Marie Frohnmayer

Svarta rosor

Anthony Schneider