



Johan Julius Christian Sibelius (he later adopted the French form of his nickname Janne) was born into a stressful time for his country, long smothered under both Swedish culture, which dominated the educational system, and the Russian military, which maintained a garrison in his home town of Tavastehus. His passion for music arose only at age 15. Realizing that his training came too late to achieve his aspiration of a career as a concert violinist, he turned instead to composing. He poured into his work not only a vivid imagination but an intense love of nature which became reflected in his deeply personal style rooted in the geography of his homeland – his structures of organic growth from the smallest of motives emulate the processes of nature, their titanic struggles suggest the battle for existence in a harsh climate, his sustained tones reflect the striking terrain of deep-walled fjords, and his lucid sonorities breathe the health of the crisp, clean Northern air.

Finland's Jean Sibelius is perhaps the most important composer associated with nationalism in music and one of the most influential in the development of the symphony and symphonic poem. Sibelius was born in southern Finland, the second of three children. His physician father left the family bankrupt, owing to his financial extravagance, a trait that, along with heavy drinking, he would pass on to Jean. In 1885 Sibelius entered the University of Helsinki to study law, but after only a year found himself drawn back to music. He took up composition studies with Martin Wegelius and violin with Mitrofan Wasiliev, then Hermann Csillag. During this time he also became a close friend of Busoni. Though Sibelius auditioned for the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, he would come to realize he was not suited to a career as a violinist. Sibelius returned to Finland, taught music, and in June 1892, married Aino Järnefelt, daughter of General Alexander Järnefelt, head of one of the most influential families in Finland. The premiere of *Kullervo* in April 1893 created a veritable sensation, Sibelius thereafter being looked upon as the foremost Finnish composer. The *Lemminkäinen* suite, begun in 1895 and premiered on April 13,

1896, has come to be regarded as the most important music by Sibelius up to that time.



Finlandia, Op. 26 is a [symphonic poem](#) by the [Finnish composer Jean Sibelius](#). The first version was written in 1899, and it was revised in 1900. The piece was composed for the Press Celebrations of 1899, a covert protest against increasing censorship from the [Russian Empire](#), as the last of seven pieces, each performed as an accompaniment to a tableau depicting episodes from [Finnish history](#). (See [Grand Duchy of Finland](#) and [Russification of Finland](#) for further historical context)...

In the struggle to defend autonomy, depictions of the lion of Finland, pictures of an anonymous maiden personifying Finland, and the colours blue and white were important instruments of propaganda. Edvard Isto's painting of the maiden, seen defending the book of Finnish law, became known throughout the country in spite of official attempts to prohibit its display. The two-headed eagle, emblem of the Russian imperial house, excellently symbolised the powers of darkness.**

A recurrent joke within Finland at this time was the renaming of *Finlandia* at various musical concerts so as to avoid Russian censorship. Titles under which the piece masqueraded were numerous, a famously flippant example being *Happy Feelings at the awakening of Finnish Spring*.**

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/aa/Jean_sibelius.jpg

**<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finlandia>

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Sibelius Symphony No. 2 and Symphony No. 5

Conductor: Osmo Vänskä

Minnesota Orchestra

BIS SACD 1986 Release: 2011

Repertoire:

Symphony No. 2 in D major (*Breitkopf & Härtel*)

Symphony No. 5 in E flat major (*Wilhelm Hansen*)

Osmo Vänskä, one of the world's great interpreters of Sibelius' music, embarks on a multi-year project with the Minnesota Orchestra to record the seven Sibelius Symphonies. The debut album in the cycle features the Finnish composer's beloved Second Symphony, a work both eloquent and powerful, and the majestic Fifth Symphony, an inspired piece of musical architecture.

The album was recorded as a Super Audio CD (SACD) by BIS in June 2011 recording sessions at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis and was nominated for a 2012 Grammy for Best Orchestral Performance.

For two decades Vänskä was music director of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, which he transformed into one of Finland's flagship orchestras. Under his leadership, the Lahti Symphony has received international attention through its collection of innovative Sibelius recordings on the BIS label and its international performances in London, Birmingham and New York. In May 2008 he became that ensemble's conductor laureate.

<http://www.minnesotaorchestra.org/listen/cds-a-merchandise/358-sibelius-4-5>