

Pelléas et Mélisande, is incidental music in ten parts written in 1905 by Jean Sibelius, for Maurice Maeterlinck's 1892 drama Pelléas et Mélisande. Sibelius later on slightly rearranged the music into an nine movement suite, published as Op. 46, which became one of his most popular works for the theater.

The opening movement of the suite for orchestra is called "At the Castle Gate." The strings introduce an atmospheric, brief theme, which is then restated with help from the woodwind. This introduction is closed by austere chords. This section is familiar to British television viewers as the theme of the BBC's long-running monthly astronomy programme The Sky At Night, presented by Patrick Moore.

Then the character Mélisande is introduced with characteristically strong material presented by a cor anglais solo. This is succeeded by a brief intermezzo, "At the Seashore," which Sibelius regarded as dispensable in concert performances.

The strings present the dense sonorities of the melodic material of "A Spring in the Park," which is followed by the "Three Blind Sisters," in which another cor anglais solo is answered by monolithic orchestral harmonies.

The sixth movement, "Pastorale," is scored for woodwind and string instruments and exhibits the subtlety of chamber music.

The seventh, "Mélisande at the Spinning Wheel," presents the largest and most dramatic image heard so far, which is followed by an Entracte. This immense movement could serve as a symphonic finale in its own right but the pace of the drama demands an epilogue. With the moving "The Death of Mélisande," the tragic story of the doomed love affair reaches its conclusion.

Sibelius later made a transcription of the suite for solo piano, excluding the 'At the Seashore' movement.

SIBELIUS

Violin Concerto in D minor Op.47

Ruggiero Ricci (violin)

Øivin Fjeldstad conducts the

London Symphony Orchestra

Pelléas et Mélisande, Op. 46

Sir Thomas Beecham conducts

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

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Sibelius Violin Concerto

The Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47, was written by Jean Sibelius in 1904.

Sibelius originally dedicated the concerto to the noted violinist Willy Burmester, who promised to play the concerto in Berlin. For financial reasons, Sibelius decided to premiere it in Helsinki, and since Burmester was unavailable to travel to Finland, Sibelius engaged Victor Novacek, a violin teacher at the Helsinki Conservatory. The initial version of the concerto premiered on 8 February 1904, with Sibelius conducting. Novacek played poorly and the premiere performance was a disaster. However, Sibelius had barely finished the concerto in time due for the premiere, most likely because of his alcoholism.

Sibelius withheld this version from publication and made substantial revisions. He deleted much material he felt did not work. The new version premiered on 19 October 1905 with Richard Strauss conducting the Berlin Court Orchestra.

Sibelius was not in attendance. Willy Burmester was again asked to be the soloist, but he was again unavailable, so the performance went ahead without him, the orchestra's leader Karel Halíř stepping into the soloist's shoes. Burmester was so offended that he refused ever to play the concerto, and Sibelius re-dedicated it to the Hungarian "wunderkind" Ferenc von Vecsey, who was aged only 12 at the time. Vecsey championed the Sibelius concerto, first performing it when he was only 13, although he could not adequately cope with the extraordinary technical demands of the work.

The initial version was noticeably more demanding on the advanced skills of the soloist. It was unknown to the world at large until 1991, when Sibelius's heirs permitted one live performance and one recording, on the BIS record label; both were played by Leonidas Kavakos and conducted by Osmo Vänskä. The revised version still requires a considerably high level of technical facility on the part of the soloist. The original is somewhat longer than the revised, including themes that did not survive the revision. Certain parts, like the very beginning, most of the third movement, and parts of the second, have not changed at all. The cadenza in the first movement is exactly the same for the violin part, but Sibelius employed a bass tremolo to add drama in the revision. Some of the most striking changes, particularly in the first movement, are in orchestration, with some rhythms played twice as slow.

This is the only concerto that Sibelius wrote, though he composed several other smaller-scale pieces for solo instrument and orchestra, including the six Humoresques for violin and orchestra.

One noteworthy feature of the work is the way in which an extended cadenza for the soloist takes on the role of the development section in the sonata form first movement. Donald Tovey described the final movement as a "polonaise for polar bears." However, he was not intending to be derogatory, as he went on: "In the easier and looser concerto forms invented by Mendelssohn and Schumann I have not met a more original, a more masterly, and a more exhilarating work than the Sibelius violin concerto".

Much of the violin writing is purely virtuosic, but even the most showy passages alternate with the melodic. This concerto is generally symphonic in scope, departing completely from the often lighter, "rhythmic" accompaniments of many other concertos. The solo violin and all sections of the orchestra have equal voice in the piece.

Although the work has been described as having "broad and depressing" melodies,[citation needed] several brighter moments appear against what is essentially a dark melodic backdrop.

The concerto is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings. Like most concertos, the work is in three movements:

Allegro moderato in D minor and in 2/2 time

Adagio di molto in B-flat major and in 4/4 time

Allegro, ma non tanto in D major and in 3/4 time

First movement

The first movement, marked *Allegro moderato*, opens with a cushion of pianissimo strings pulsating gently. The soloist then enters with a characteristic IV-V-I phrase, in D minor G-A-D. The violin announces the theme and is echoed by clarinet briefly, then continues into developmental material. More low woodwind and timpani accompany the soloist in several runs. Almost cadenza-like arpeggios and double-stops and more runs are accompanied by more woodwind restatements of the theme. The strings then enter brazenly for the first time, announcing a second theme. Developmental material leads to a cadenza which then opens into the recapitulation. The 'Allegro Molto Vivace' coda ends with restatements of past themes.

Although this movement is mainly melodic, it is still largely virtuosic. Particularly difficult passages include one where the performer must play and maintain a trill with the 1st and 2nd finger, while playing a second moving line on the next-lower string, with the 3rd and 1st fingers. Additionally, nearly the entire end is made up of octave double-stops, which poses a challenge to many players. Other challenges of this movement include very quick slides from first to seventh position (and sometimes across strings), broken chords played at very fast tempi, double-stopped sixths that must be perfectly in tune for the effect to work, and glissandi with double-stops.

Second movement

The second movement ('Adagio di Molto') is very lyrical. A short introduction by two clarinets leads into a singing solo part over pizzicato strings. Beautifully dissonant accompaniments by the brass dominate the first part of the song-like movement. The remarkable middle section has the solo violin playing ascending broken octaves, with the flute as the main voice of the accompaniment, playing descending notes simultaneously.

Third movement

The third movement of the Sibelius Violin Concerto ('Allegro Ma non Tanto', not overly fast) is widely known amongst violinists for its formidable technical difficulty and is most assuredly one of the several greatest concerto movements ever written for the instrument. It has been described as "a polonaise for polar bears" but it also has a warlike quality that evokes a battlefield. It opens with rhythmic percussion and the lower strings for four bars (playing 'eighth note-sixteenth note-sixteenth note' figures), before the violin boldly enters with the first theme on the G string. This first section offers a complete and brilliant display of violin gymnastics with up-bow staccato double-stops and a run with rapid string-crossing, then octaves, that leads into the first tutti. The second theme is taken up by the orchestra and is almost a waltz, and the violin takes up the same theme in variations, with arpeggios and double-stops. Another short section concluding with a run of octaves makes a bridge into a recapitulation of the first theme. Clarinet and low brass introduce the final section. A passage of harmonics in the violin precedes a sardonic passage of chords and slurred double stops. A passage of broken octaves leads to an incredibly heroic few lines of double stops and soaring octaves. A brief orchestral tutti comes before the violin leads things to the finish with a D major scale up, returning down in minor (then repeated). A flourish of ascending slur-separate sixteenth notes, punctuated by a resolute D from the violin and orchestra concludes the concerto.

SIBELIUS

Violin Concerto in D minor Op.47

Ruggiero Ricci (violin)

Øivin Fjeldstad conducts the London Symphony Orchestra

- 1- Allegro moderato in D minor 14:33
- 2- Adagio di molto in B-flat major 7:23
- 3- Allegro, ma non tanto in D major 7:15

Total Play Time: 29 minutes, 11 seconds

Sibelius Pelléas et Mélisande, Op. 46

Sir Thomas Beecham conducts Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4-At the Castle Gate | 8-Pastorale |
| 5-Mélisande | 9-Mélisande at the Spinning Wheel |
| 6-A Spring in the Park | 10-Entr'acte |
| 7-The Three Blind Sisters | 11-The Death of Mélisande |

Total Play Time: 27 minutes, 42 seconds

Violin Concerto transferred from a London 4-Track • Pelleas et Melisande from a Angel 2-Track tape

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