

Gibson was born in Motherwell in 1926 the son of James McClure Gibson and his wife Wilhelmina Williams.

He was educated at Dalziel High School. He excelled at the piano and organ, and at 18 became the organist at Hillhead Congregational Church, Glasgow while studying music at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. In 1943 he matriculated at the University of Glasgow to study Music and English. After his first year, however, the war interrupted his studies and he served with the Royal Signals Band until 1948 when he took up a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London after which Sir Alexander Gibson studied at the Mozarteum, Salzburg under Igor Markevitch, and under Paul Van Kempen at the Accademia Chigiana, Siena.

He was Assistant Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra 1952-54 and conducted two productions for the amateur Glasgow Grand Opera Society in 1954. At the time of his appointment in 1957 as musical director of Sadler's Wells, he was the youngest ever to have taken that position.

Returning to Glasgow, in 1959 he became the first Scottish principal conductor and artistic director of the Scottish National Orchestra, a post he held until 1984, to date longer than any other conductor. Under his leadership the orchestra built an international reputation through recordings and foreign tours and appeared regularly in the SNO Proms in Glasgow, in Edinburgh International Festival, where he also created the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, and in London at The Proms.

Gibson created and launched Scottish Opera in 1962 and was its music director until 1986. Through his artistic achievements the Theatre Royal, Glasgow was bought from Scottish Television and transformed in 1975 to be the first national opera house in Scotland, and the home theatre of Scottish Opera and of Scottish Ballet, and from 1980 the Scottish Theatre Company. In 1987, Gibson was appointed conductor laureate of Scottish Opera and held this title for the remainder of his life. From 1981 to 1983 he was also principal guest conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. He was principal conductor of the Guildford Philharmonic. During his career he made guest appearances with all the major British orchestras and extensively throughout Europe, Australia, the Americas, Hong Kong and Japan.



SIBELIUS

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO. 5 KARELIA SUITE

ALEXANDER GIBSON CONDUCTS THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Symphony No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 82, symphony for orchestra in three movements by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, one of his most popular symphonies. The work premiered on December 8, 1915, on the occasion of the composer's 50th birthday, which had been designated a national holiday in Finland. It was much revised thereafter, and the final version was presented in 1919.

Sibelius wrote the first version of the symphony just after he returned to Finland from a successful American concert tour, and its premiere was given at that time. With World War I in progress and his usual publisher being located in Germany, Sibelius used the enforced delay to revise the symphony before releasing it for publication. The intervening years saw the Russian invasion of Finland and the composer's own struggles with health issues. However, in its final form—which premiered November 24, 1919—the symphony reveals none of this darkness but rather a great deal of heroic determination.

The symphony begins with a serene and stately opening, moves through a largely gentle middle movement with theme and variations, and builds to a majestic conclusion. Much of that conclusion is based on a proud three-note motif that grows and develops as the movement progresses.

Jean Sibelius's Karelia Suite, Op. 11, was written in 1893 for the Viipuri Students' Association. It was premiered in the Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki, Grand Duchy of Finland, under the title Karelia Music. The suite is one of Sibelius's earlier works and remains one of his most popular.

Karelia Music was written in the beginning of Sibelius' compositional career, and the complete music consists of an Overture, 8 Tableaux, and 2 Intermezzi. The music runs about 44 minutes, as opposed to the suite, which lasts about 12 minutes.

The rough-hewn character of the music was deliberate – the aesthetic intention was not to dazzle with technique but to capture the quality of "naive," folk-based authenticity. Historical comments have noted the nationalistic character of the music.

The piece is orchestrated for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling english horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F and E, 3 trumpets in F and E, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, 2 sopranos/baritones (Tableau 1), 1 baritone (Tableau 5), SATB choir (Tableau 8) and strings.

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO. 5 KARELIA SUITE

Alexander Gibson • London Symphony Orchestra

Symphony No. 5

1. Tempo Molto Moderato 12:41
2. Andante Mosso Quasi Allegretto 8:10
3. Allegro Molto 8:58

Karelia Suite, Op. 11

4. Intermezzo 3:23
5. Ballade 5:59
6. Alla Marcia 4:07

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Producer: Christopher Raeburn Engineer: Kenneth Wilkinson

Recorded by Decca for RCA 9-10 Feb 1959 Kingsway Hall



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