

nationalist composition, while others believe that he wrote the piece with an independent Finland in mind. Finnish composer Sulho Ranta said, "There is something about this music - at least for us - that leads us to ecstasy; almost like a shaman with his magic drum."

The symphony has been called "one of the few symphonic creations of our time that point in the same direction as Beethoven's symphonies". However, Virgil Thomson wrote in the New York Herald Tribune that the symphony was "vulgar, self-indulgent, and provincial beyond all description". Sir Colin Davis quoted Wordsworth for one of his recordings of the symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra:

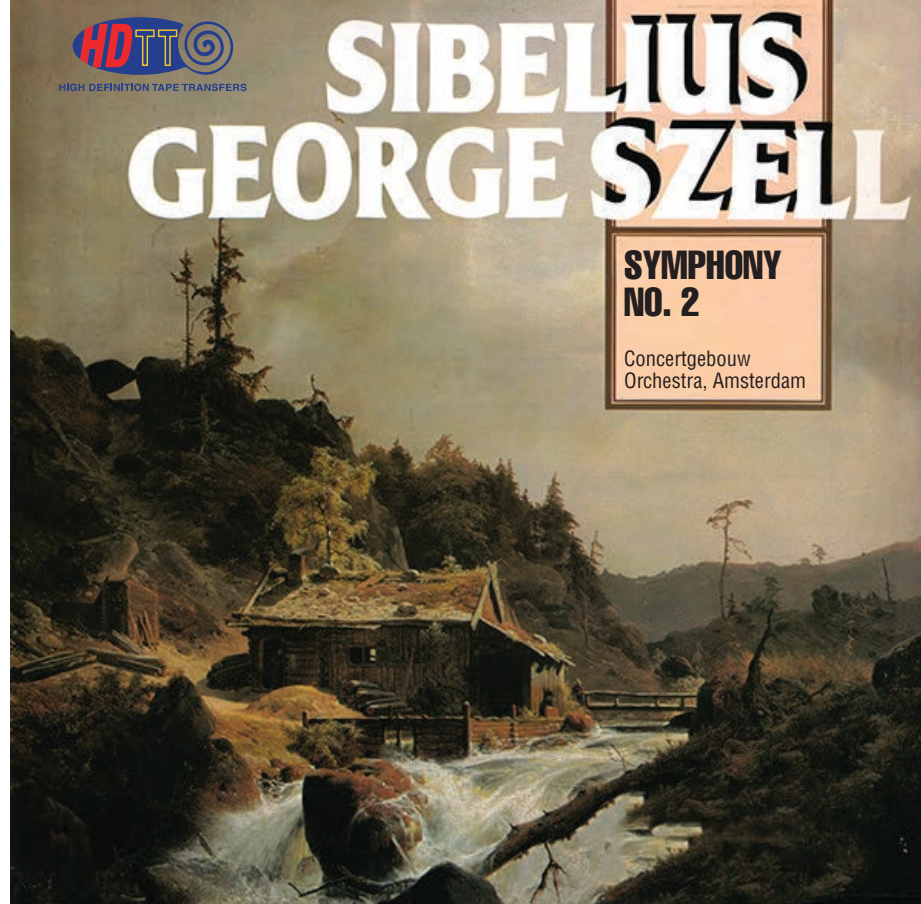
Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
Through which the homeless voice of waters rose
That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged
The Soul, the Imagination of the whole.



SIBELIUS GEORGE SZELL

**SYMPHONY
NO. 2**

Concertgebouw
Orchestra, Amsterdam



The Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 43, by Jean Sibelius was started in winter 1901 in Rapallo, Italy, shortly after the successful premiere of the popular *Finlandia*, and finished in 1902 in Finland. Sibelius said, "My second symphony is a confession of the soul."

Baron Axel Carpelan, who gave Sibelius' well-known tone poem *Finlandia* its name, wrote to the composer shortly after its successful premiere: "You have been sitting at home for quite a while, Mr. Sibelius, it is high time for you to travel. You will spend the late autumn and the winter in Italy, a country where one learns cantabile, balance and harmony, plasticity and symmetry of lines, a country where everything is beautiful – even the ugly. You remember what Italy meant for Tchaikovsky's development and for Richard Strauss." Although Baron Carpelan was penniless, he raised sufficient funds for Sibelius to stay in a mountain villa near Rapallo, Italy. Here, Sibelius jotted down the first notes to his

second symphony.

More than a year after the first motifs were penned, the second symphony was premiered by the Helsinki Philharmonic Society on 8 March 1902, with the composer conducting. After three sold-out performances, Sibelius made some revisions; the revised version was given its first performance by Armas Järnefelt on 10 November 1903 in Stockholm. Oskar Merikanto exclaimed that the premiere "exceeded even the highest expectations".

While critics were divided following the symphony's premiere, the public generally admired the piece as its grandiose finale was connected by some with the struggle for Finland's independence, so that it was even popularly dubbed the "Symphony of Independence", as it was written at a time of Russian sanctions on Finnish language and culture. Sibelius's reaction to this has been widely debated; some claim that he had not intended any patriotic message and that the symphony was only identified by others as a

Sibelius Symphony No. 2

George Szell Concertgebouw Orchestra

- 1 Allegretto - Poco Allegro - Tranquillo,
Ma Poco A Poco Ruvvivano Il Tempo All'Allegro 9:25
- 2 Tempo Andante, Ma Rubato - Andante Sostenuto 12:39
- 3 Vivacissimo - Lento E Suave - Largamente 5:43
- 4 Finale: Allegro Moderato 13:44

Recorded by Philips at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, November 1964
Engineers – Henk Jansen, Cees Huizinga Producer – Jaap van Ginneken



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