

JEAN SIBELIUS (1865–1957):

Theme and Variations in D minor for solo cello, JS 196 (1887)

Historical background

Jean Sibelius wrote his Theme and Variations in D minor for solo cello in 1887, and according to current research it is the earliest work in its genre ever written in Finland. It also remained an outlier for a long time, as apparently hardly any Finnish works for solo cello were written until the avant-garde composers Usko Meriläinen, Aulis Sallinen, Erkki Salmenhaara and Einojuhani Rautavaara took an interest in the genre in the years 1964 to 1969. However, Erkki Rautio, professor of cello, has pointed out that there is a similar shortage of works for solo cello in the standard repertoire from Johann Sebastian Bach all the way to Zoltán Kodály.

From 1885 to 1889, Sibelius studied at the Helsinki Music Institute (later the Sibelius Academy), founded in 1882 by Martin Wegelius. During the academic years from 1885 to 1887, Sibelius studied the violin and theory of music so intently that he did not compose very much; but he made up for this with intense periods of writing during his summer holidays in 1886 and 1887, which he spent with his family in Korppoo (Korpo in Swedish) in the Turku archipelago. In 1887, Sibelius's fruitful stay in Korppoo produced the following:

Works verifiably written in Korppoo:

Au crépuscule ('At Twilight') for piano, JS 47

Trånaden ('Yearning') (E. J. Stagnelius), fantasy for piano and reciter, 5 movements, JS 203

Andantino in G minor for piano trio, JS 43

Piano trio in D major 'Korpo', JS 209

Andante cantabile in G major for violin and piano, JS 33

Menuetto and Allegro for two violins and cello, JS 128

Works probably written in Korppoo:

[Aubade] in A flat major for piano, JS 46

Andante molto in F minor for cello and piano, JS 36

Walse fantastique, Op. 1. Tempo di valse in G minor for cello and piano (piano part lost), JS 193

[Theme and Variations] in D minor for solo cello, JS 196

Serenata for two violins and cello, JS 169

The titles in *italics* above were given by the composer originally, while those in [square brackets] are working titles given in modern times. The JS codes refer to the alphabetic register of works by Sibelius without opus number included in the catalogue compiled by Fabian Dahlström, *Jean Sibelius. Thematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis seiner Werke* (Breitkopf & Härtel 2003).

It is most likely that Sibelius's cellist brother Christian Sibelius (1869–1922) was the first to try out the Theme and Variations for solo cello, as indeed all of the cello parts in the aforementioned chamber music works. This probably includes the *Walse fantastique*, even though it was intended for the cello virtuoso Jaromír Hřímaly, who toured Finland from time to time.

© 2000 Warner/Chappell Music Finland Oy

© Fennica Gehrman Oy, Helsinki

Printed by Painojussit Oy, Kerava 2016

Theme and Variations

for solo cello

JEAN SIBELIUS (1887)

Adagio

Measures 1-4 of the Adagio section. The music is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It begins with a series of chords and a melodic line that ends with a pizzicato (pizz.) marking.

Andantino
arco

Measures 5-10 of the Andantino section. The music is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It features a melodic line with a fermata over the eighth measure.

Measures 11-15 of the Andantino section. The music is in treble clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It continues the melodic line from the previous section.

Measures 16-22 of the Andantino section. The music is in treble clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It continues the melodic line from the previous section.

Var. I

spiccato

Measures 23-25 of Variation I. The music is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Measures 26-28 of Variation I. The music is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It continues the rhythmic pattern from the previous section.

Measures 29-31 of Variation I, first ending. The music is in treble clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Measures 32-34 of Variation I, second ending. The music is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Measures 35-38 of Variation I. The music is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and B-flat major. It continues the rhythmic pattern from the previous section.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Abbreviations

- HUL Helsinki University Library, since 2007 called the National Library.
JS A register of Jean Sibelius's works without an opus number, presented in Fabian Dahlström's catalogue *Jean Sibelius. Thematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis seiner Werke* (Breitkopf & Härtel 2003).
TVV Timo-Veikko Valve, the Finnish cellist who has been consulted as the cellist expert for this edition.

Jean Sibelius: Theme and Variations in D minor, JS 196 (1887)

Sources

- MS The main manuscript of Theme and Variations in D minor, designated with the code HUL 0682 on page 158 in the catalogue by Kari Kilpeläinen:
The Jean Sibelius Musical Manuscripts at Helsinki University Library.
MS2 The second half of Variation VI is written on a separate manuscript HUL 0524c/3 as well as the more elaborate ossia of bar 81. These are found on page 10 of the manuscript HUL 0524, that mainly contains the material of the Trio in A minor for violin, cello and piano, JS 206 (composed in 1884) on pages 1–9 and 11–13.

Evaluation of the manuscripts

Mus. Dr Kari Kilpeläinen, the main expert of Sibelius's manuscripts and hand-writing, has characterized the MS as a 'Fair Copy', however, with the additional distinction in brackets 'or complete draft?'. The sections of the composition could be divided as follows:

Fair Copy: Theme, Var. I–IV, VII, Coda

Complete Draft, containing several corrections: Var. V–VI

Important Remark: Neither the Theme, the seven variations nor the Coda are at any point left fragmentary, i.e. the full length of each section is maintained in the manuscripts. However, there are some errors also in the clearly written out sections, but they have been corrected in this edition, with detailed comments in the following report.

Dr Kilpeläinen also made the estimation of the composition year 1887, which actually has not occurred in any preserved source. He observed similar traits of hand-writing compared to other works from 1887, see the work lists of the presentation text!

Comments

Sibelius didn't indicate any title for this set of variations, and in the MS there is no numbering of the seven variations. The title Theme and Variations is first used in Fabian Dahlström's catalogue *The Works of Jean Sibelius* (Sibelius-Seura – Sibelius-Samfundet r.y. 1987). Both title, the numbering of the variations and the indication of the coda have been added to this edition. If not separately specified, the following comments refer to differences and emendations between this edition and the MS and MS2.