



Jean Sibelius – The Lonesome Pine

The musical field of Finland in the late 19th century was an empty space: a kingdom without a king. The nationalist movement struggling for independence was strong in all cultural fields. All artists and intellectuals had an enormous eagerness to show what Finnish culture was capable of producing.

Music was an essential ingredient for the cultural legitimacy of the young nation, to justify its status among old sovereign states. Sibelius was the perfect answer to this need.

Johann Julius Christian Sibelius (1865-1957), as his full name is stated, was born on 8 December in Hämeenlinna. His father was a doctor, but died when Jean was very young.

Jean's musical gifts were spotted early on and after graduating from high school, he went to Helsinki to study law and music. Jurisprudence soon gave way to full time musical studies.

Sibelius was soon recognized as a student of great promise and was sent to study in Berlin and Vienna. The symphonies of Bruckner were a strong influence on Sibelius at this time, as was the music of Wagner – although Sibelius's relationship with Wagner was always uneasy. Sibelius's sympathies were clearly on the side of the musical radicals of the day, and on one occasion he even involved himself in a fistfight against the Brahmsians!



Ainola, the house designed for the Sibelius family by Lars Sonck in 1904