

Jean Sibelius – Kullervo Op.7 (1985)

Written by bluesever

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1 No. 1, Introduction 11:50 2 No. 2, "The Youth of Kullervo" 13:50 3 No. 3, "Kullervo and His Sister" 23:11 4 No. 4, "Kullervo Leaves for the War" 10:16 5 No. 5, "Kullervo's Death" 9:40
Karita Mattila – soprano Jorma Hynninen – baritone Laulun Ystävät Male Choir Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra Neeme Järvi – conductor

Kullervo, Op. 7, is an early symphonic poem for soloists, chorus and orchestra, written by the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius.

The work, based on the character of Kullervo from the epic poem Kalevala, premiered to great critical acclaim on 28 April 1892. The soloists were Emmy Achté and Abraham Ojanperä, with the composer conducting the Orchestra of the Helsinki Orchestra Society, founded in that year. Kullervo had only four more performances in Sibelius's lifetime, the last one taking place on 12 March 1893. Sibelius repeatedly refused to publish it; only at the very end of his life (1957) did he give permission for it to be published posthumously, having re-orchestrated the final section (Kullervo's Lament) of its third movement.

There was much controversy arising from the première, some having to do with Sibelius' idiosyncratic style, and some a result of language politics: Finland was divided between Swedish nationalists, the Svecomans, and promoters of Finnish (Suomi) language and culture, the Fennomans. The lyrics to Kullervo, taken from the relatively recently published Kalevala (1849), were in Finnish, which led the "Svecomans" to regard Sibelius, whose mother tongue was Swedish, as a defector.

There were performances of isolated movements before Sibelius's death (the fourth movement

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two days after the premiere and again in 1905 and in 1955; the third movement for a centenary celebration of the "Kalevala" in 1935). It was next performed in 1958, a year after Sibelius's death, with Jussi Jalas, Sibelius's son-in-law, conducting the work. A limited edition release of the 1958 Jalas live performance became available in the early 1970s. The first studio recording was made by Paavo Berglund and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in 1971. The first performance in the United States was given in Milwaukee with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra under Kenneth Schermerhorn. Schermerhorn took his orchestra on tour and performed it in Washington, D.C. and at Carnegie Hall in New York. Since then many orchestras have performed and recorded the work. –wikipedia

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