

Sibelius - Four Legends From The Kalevala, Op. 22 (1979)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Lemminkäinen And The Maidens Of Saari* 2 *The Swan Of Tuonela* 3 *Lemminkäinen In Tuonela* 4 *Lemminkäinen's Return* Philadelphia Orchestra Eugene Ormandy – conductor

The Lemminkäinen Suite (also called the Four Legends, or Four Legends from the Kalevala)[/b] is a work written by the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius in the early 1890s which forms his opus 22. Originally conceived as a mythological opera, *Veneen luominen* (The Building of the Boat), on a scale matching those by Richard Wagner, Sibelius later changed his musical goals and the work became an orchestral piece in four movements. The suite is based on the character Lemminkäinen from the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala. The piece can also be considered a collection of symphonic poems. The third section, *The Swan of Tuonela* is often heard separately.

* *Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of the Island*: this is based on Runo 29 ("Conquests"), where Lemminkäinen travels to an island and seduces many of the women there, before fleeing the rage of the men on the island.

* *Lemminkäinen in Tuonela*: this is based on Runos 14 ("Elk, horse, swan") and 15 ("Resurrection"). Lemminkäinen is in Tuonela, the land of the dead, to shoot the Swan of Tuonela to be able to claim the daughter of Louhi, mistress of the Northland, in marriage. However, the blind man of the Northland kills Lemminkäinen, whose body is then tossed in the river and then dismembered. Lemminkäinen's mother learns of his death, travels to Tuonela, recovers his body parts, reassembles him and restores him to life.

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* The Swan of Tuonela: this is the most popular of the four tone poems and often is featured alone from the suite in orchestral programs. It has a prominent English horn solo. The music paints a gossamer, transcendental image of a mystical swan swimming around Tuonela, the island of the dead. Lemminkäinen has been tasked with killing the sacred swan, but on the way he is shot with a poisoned arrow, and dies himself. * Lemminkäinen's Return: the storyline in the score roughly parallels the end of Runo 30 ("Jack Frost"), where after his adventures in battle, Lemminkäinen journeys home.

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