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■Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

■“Rakastava,” suite Op. 14 (15')

Sibelius’s *Rakastava (Lover)* Suite for Strings, Timpani, and Triangle, Op. 14 was completed in 1912. The composition is based on the composer’s earlier work for male choir consisting of four songs, which Sibelius first composed in 1894. He then arranged it for male voices and string orchestra, also in 1894, and for mixed choir in 1898. The text is from a collection of ancient Finnish poems titled *Kanteletar*, published in 1840. The premiere of the Suite took place in Helsinki on March 16, 1912, with the composer himself conducting the Helsinki Orchestral Society (today’s Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra). A comparison between the vocal and instrumental versions reveals that the first and last movements of the string orchestra arrangement are much more polyphonic than the original choral setting. The texture of the second movement is much lighter than the two outer ones, but the rhythms here are more complex than the vocal version. When the Suite premiered, Sibelius witnessed how listeners immediately became attracted to it. As a result, he frequently included the piece in his concert programs.

[Akira Ishii]