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■Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

■“Finlandia,” tone poem Op. 26 (8')

Sibelius composed his tone poem *Finlandia*, Op. 26 in 1899 (originally titled *Finland Awakes*) and revised it in 1900. It was premiered by the Helsinki Orchestral Society in Helsinki on July 2, 1900. This was around the time when Finland bore the oppression from the Russian Empire. The piece was originally intended for performance at a secretive gathering, the purpose of which was to protest against Russian censorship on Finnish politics and ideology. This is reflected in the composition, which is filled with inflammatory melodies and motives. For instance, the opening chords, played by French horns, trombones, tuba, bassoons, and double basses, show continuously written *crescendo* marks, leading to a series of profoundly sounding long notes, many of which carry *fortissimo* marks. After this introductory section, Sibelius opens the main section in a faster tempo (*Allegro moderato*), retaining the incendiary mood at the beginning by introducing trumpet fanfares consisting of fast moving notes, followed by melodic themes that are instigative in nature and consistently marked *crescendo*.

Evoking nationalistic sentiment is the obvious function of the composition. This becomes particularly apparent in the end, where Sibelius writes a serenely hymn-like melody. He later made the tune into independent hymn, which eventually became known as *Finlandia* Hymn. It continues to touch people in Finland, and the tone poem is sometimes performed with male chorus singing the hymn.

[Akira Ishii]