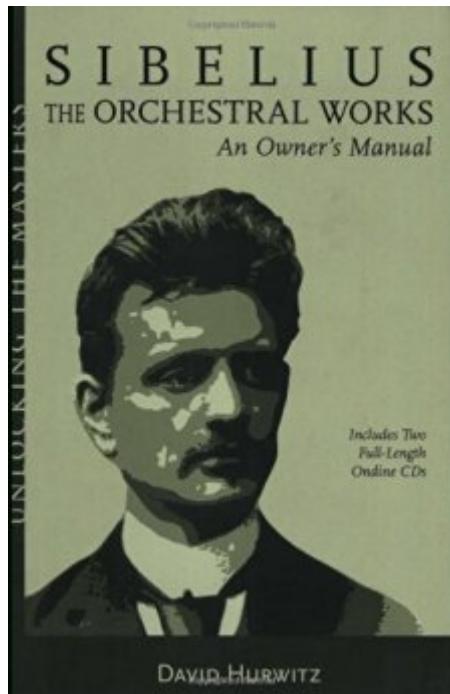


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# Sibelius Orchestral Works: An Owner's Manual (Unlocking The Masters)



## Synopsis

(Unlocking the Masters). Jean Sibelius was not only Finland's greatest composer, he was one of the most distinctive and appealing musical voices in the first half of the 20th century, especially renowned for his characterful handling of the romantic symphony orchestra. His example has led directly to an unprecedented cultural flowering in his homeland, making this small country of 5 million people a powerhouse in the world of classical music composition and performance. Sibelius The Orchestral Works An Owner's Manual considers over 80 individual orchestral pieces, from songs and choruses to symphonies, tone poems, overtures, and theatrical music. Along the way, readers are invited to identify and enjoy the fascinating mix of elements that make up Sibelius's colorful personal idiom. Two CDs accompanying the text offer not only a rich selection of music by Sibelius, including two complete symphonies and two of his most popular tone poems, but also a representative selection of the best Finnish music by his contemporaries and successors. This approach offers a unique opportunity: to hear Sibelius in context and gain an understanding of exactly what distinguishes him from his contemporaries, how he influenced later generations, and how it was that he came to be viewed as the musical spokesperson of an entire nation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When I call the book Gigantic, I'm not referring to its physical size, which is quite modest. I'm talking about its intent and accomplishment. Writing about classical music is difficult. Much of the terminology is unfamiliar to most readers, and there's always the temptation to go in one of two unwelcome directions: either over-popularizing the subject or being dry and academic. The effective path lies along a fine line between those two extremes, and David Hurwitz walks that line beautifully. I'm so impressed by this treatise on Sibelius that I'm going to immediately start collecting the rest of his similar books on Dvorak, Mahler, Haydn, and anybody else he's covered that I don't know about yet. Although the market for a book like this one must be incredibly narrow, Mr. Hurwitz has waxed expansive and entertaining. His insights into the composition techniques employed by the Finnish master are unparalleled. The illustrative samples on the two included CDs are both wisely chosen and luminously recorded-- bravo! I should probably explain that I consider myself somewhat of an expert on Sibelius and his music, having studied both the composer and his output for well more than fifty years. David Hurwitz, who is considerably younger than I am, has nevertheless studied these subject even more deeply than I have, and his analyses and evaluations ring absolutely true. From now on, when people ask me about Sibelius, I will quote Hurwitz rather than myself! For anyone familiar with the jargon of classical music essays and with an interest in the subject, this book is a godsend. I had high expectations for it, and it exceeded them.

David Hurwitz's book on the orchestral works of composer Jean Sibelius is definitely a must-have for anyone doing extensive research on Sibelius's music. This book offers a highly detailed analysis on all of Sibelius's symphonies, tone poems and shorter works and puts these works under the microscope so-to-speak. Granted, after reading this book, you'll probably never listen to a Sibelius piece the same way again. Additionally, the book comes with two audio CDs. One is nearly 80-minutes worth of highlights from Sibelius's masterworks including the third and seventh symphonies heard in their entirety. The second disc is a compilation of music from various Finnish composers who have followed in Sibelius's footsteps. Brief bios of these composers are spread throughout the book as well. Mr. Hurwitz has definitely performed his research well in writing this book. I personally have never read such an analysis on Sibelius's music that cuts right down to the most minute detail until this book was released. It's about time too. Definitely a must-have for die-hard Sibelians!!!

Written by radio commentator David Hurwitz, *Sibelius the Orchestral Works An Owners Manual* is a

book and CD set celebrating the classic creations of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. The text discusses Sibelius' musical language, symphonies, violin concerto, tone poems, theatrical music, and more, while two full-length CDs offer a beautiful cross-section of not only Sibelius' work, but also the compositions of his contemporaries and successors. An in-depth, at times modestly technical analysis, written especially for dedicated music lovers and musicologists, and a "must-have" for anyone interested in learning about and experiencing the Finnish master.

This book, one of several in a series on various composer's, does a truly wonderful job of discussing musical details -- without getting too detailed -- of Jean Sibelius' orchestral works. For someone like myself, who has listened a great deal but never been trained in the technical aspects of music theory or performance, it's a nice and informative read, about on a par with books on quantum physics written for lay people who have at least little grasp of mathematics and the physical world. David Hurwitz first explores the composer's musical language, with attention to Sibelius' own personal idiom. From there it's off to explore the aspects of various works, movement by movement. Accompanying compact discs help to illuminate the discussion, in case you don't already own recordings of your own. I do agree with one or two other reviewers that the time (and disc space) taken up with other Finnish composers is in a sense a waste -- while many of those other composers interest me, I'm buying the book in order to learn primarily about Sibelius. Still, I found the volume useful. In passing, I'd also recommend Michael Sternberg's book *The Symphony*, which covers compositions in this form by Sibelius and many others.

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