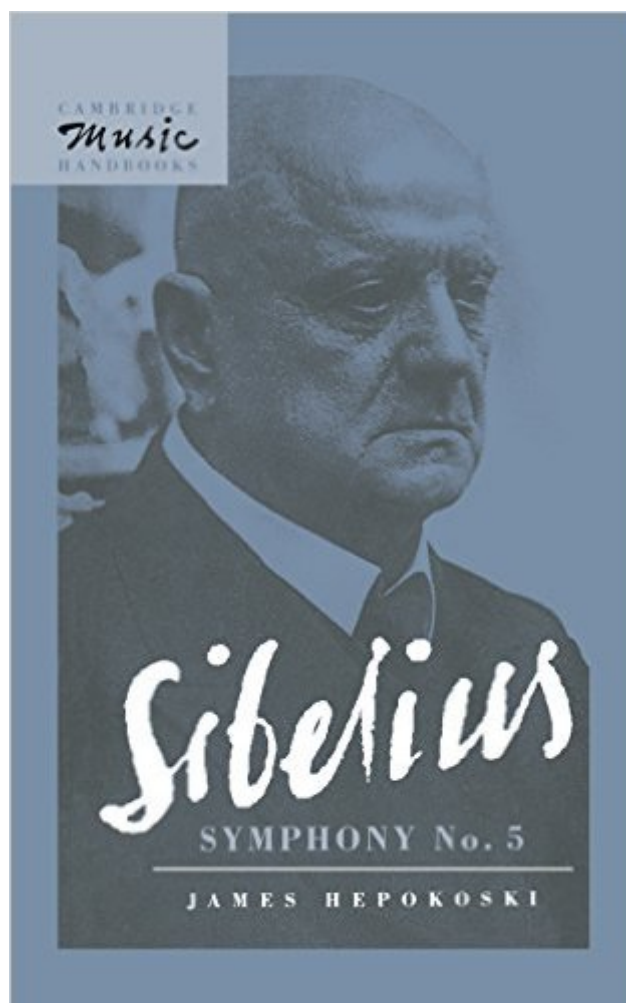


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Sibelius: Symphony No. 5 (Cambridge Music Handbooks)



Synopsis

Sibelius's Fifth is one of the great late-Romantic symphonies. In this searching account, based on a wealth of new information, James Hepokoski takes a fresh look at the work and its composer. His findings have implications beyond Sibelius himself into the entire repertory of Post-Wagnerian symphonic composition. The early chapters place the Fifth Symphony squarely within the general culture of European musical 'modernism' and focus in particular on the problem of the clash of that culture with the more radical 'New-Music' experiments of an emerging younger generation of composers. Subsequent chapters include a probing consideration of Sibelius's style and meditative aesthetic; an account of how the symphony was composed; and a descriptive analysis of the final, familiar version. The book concludes with a discussion of the composer's own prescribed tempos for the Fifth Symphony, along with a comparison of several different recordings.

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Customer Reviews

Jean Sibelius' Symphony No. 5 is one of the great achievements of late Romanticism and stands as the Finnish composer's most widely loved works in that genre. It is a piece ingenious in its internal

workings and with a great history behind it and, and James Hepokoski presents this all to us in his entry in the Cambridge Music Handbooks series. Before even talking about the symphony itself, Hepokoski gives us a great deal of background. We see Sibelius, the composer of the radical Fourth symphony where dissonance is unleashed, meets the music of Schoenberg. He realizes that he can't compete in that area and decides to blaze his own unique path. This, Hepokoski notes, was only one episode in a great encounter between "modernists" (the generation of the 1860s) and makers of the "new music" (the Second Viennese School and others). Out of this encounter Sibelius fashioned between 1912 and 1915 five central concepts for his music: content-based forms ("fantasias"), rotational form (varied multisectional strophes), teleological genesis ("phenomenological" reflection), Klang meditation, and the interrelation and fusion of movements. Once all this is established, Hepokoski gets to the Fifth itself. We follow the long course the symphony took towards completion, amply illustrated by extracts from Sibelius' diaries and correspondence. Many of his musical sketches are here, and it is remarkable how so much of the material that Sibelius was writing during this time found its place in the Sixth and Seventh symphonies, making this guide useful for fans of those as well. The exact modifications Sibelius made in the rewriting of the Fifth in 1916 and 1919 are clearly explained, and the reasons for these changes are suggested from the critical reaction to the earlier two performances.

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