

Introduction

The two works in the present volume, Overture in E major (JS 145) and *Balettscen* (JS 163), are the very first orchestral works Sibelius composed.¹ At the time of composition, in the spring of 1891, he studied in Vienna. Originally, he planned the works as movements of a symphony, but in the end, he mailed the two finished movements home to Helsinki to be performed. Both works were performed a few times during the 1890s, *Balettscen* more frequently, but fell into oblivion after some occasional performances around 1910 and 1915. The works were not published during Sibelius's lifetime.

Background

After completing his studies on composition and violin playing at the Helsinki Music Institute in 1889, Sibelius continued them abroad in Berlin (1889–1890) and Vienna (1890–1891). In Berlin, he took lessons in violin playing and studied under composer Albert Becker in the Scharwenka Conservatory.² Much of Sibelius's composition consisted of contrapuntal exercises, especially chorale settings for mixed choir. In addition, he composed some sonata allegros and chamber music, as well as larger works, namely Allegro for brass septet (JS 25) and Piano Quintet in G minor (JS 159).

In Vienna, Sibelius's plan was to study composition with composer and conductor Hans Richter (1843–1916) or Anton Bruckner (1824–1896). Richter had previously taught Martin Wegelius (1846–1906), who was Sibelius's own music theory and composition teacher in Helsinki.³ Sibelius's plans did not, however, materialize as such, as he reported to his fiancée Aino Järnefelt (1871–1969) soon after his arrival in October 1890: "I have had bad luck with my plans for my studies. Richter does not take any pupils. Bruckner is deathly ill."⁴ Finally, Sibelius managed to get two teachers, Karl Goldmark (1830–1915) with Wegelius's references and Robert Fuchs (1847–1927), whom Richter had recommended. Sibelius was pleased to write to Aino in November: "I succeeded in getting Goldmark interested in me. (Surely you know that G. is one of the greatest composers of our time and, above all, an orchestra-tor). I am so happy about this."⁵ The reason for occupying another teacher was, according to Sibelius's explanation to Wegelius, that Sibelius felt he needed "a more matter-of-fact tuition than Goldmark can offer." Fuchs being a "fully experienced orchestrator and successful also as a composer," would meet this need. In addition, Sibelius speculated that through Fuchs's influence, he would be able to have his works performed more easily.⁶

During his stay in Vienna, Sibelius not only composed and studied, but also visited the opera and concerts frequently. He heard works by Bruckner, Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner, Johann Strauss II, Mascagni, and Goldmark, to mention but a few.⁷ Some concerts made an indelible impression on him. Hearing Bruckner's Third Symphony, for example, proved so overwhelming an experience for him that he wrote to Aino that Bruckner is the greatest living composer. After hearing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Sibelius was so powerfully moved that he wept.⁸

Sibelius also continued to play the violin and joined the Conservatory student orchestra, which Fuchs conducted. Sibelius aimed even higher in his violin playing: in January, he auditioned before the opera board for a post as a violinist in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. He failed, however, at least partly due to stage fright. He described the audition to Aino: "I have had a great sorrow. On the day before yesterday, I auditioned before [concert-master Jacob Moritz] Grün and the opera board and in the orchestra. Unfortunately, I could not control myself all the time. After having played for an hour, I became sick, nervous, and got that metallic taste in my mouth. Their opinion was that I play 'gar nicht schlecht,' but me being so nervous, he (Grün) advised me to give up violin playing altogether. You cannot even guess how this feels, my own beloved."⁹ After this, Sibelius reduced his violin playing and concentrated on composing.

Overture in E major

Before arriving in Vienna in October 1890, Sibelius had composed chamber music and several songs. He continued with these genres in addition to some exercises for his teachers. Moreover, he now very eagerly began to compose for the orchestra also.¹⁰ His first orchestral composition was an overture, which he finished as early as on 18 November. On the following day, he showed it to Goldmark and reported immediately to Wegelius: "I just came from Goldmark. – Had composed an overture. There was 'manches schlechtes und manches gutes; als 'Anfang' ganz gut.' I had handled the instruments quite correctly, except in one passage, where the flutes were too wild. Besides, he was very friendly and said a glad 'auf Wiedersehn.' Then he criticized the overture in more detail. I spent half an hour with him."¹¹

After his first meeting with Goldmark, Sibelius worked hard with his overture: he composed, crossed out, and recomposed. He frequently opened up to Aino about his feelings and his hard times: "It is once again one of those times when criticism and doubt consumes one's entire soul." Two weeks later, he continued: "This endless discarding and the resulting emptiness thereof [...] make me anything but worthy of envy." Despite his ups and downs, Sibelius was determined to carry on his work and explained to Aino: "It is strange enough this thing of being made for something. Even if one fails and mistrusts, the fire still burns inside one. I am simply like that."¹²

The work with the overture continued, though Sibelius also composed a few songs in the meantime.¹³ In early January, he showed part of his overture to Fuchs, whom he considered "the best theorist here. He thought it [the overture] was barbaric and raw."¹⁴ Sibelius continued to improve the overture, explaining to Aino: "I found out that I had lied in my latest composition (the overture) and crossed out that passage. If you do not find anything else in me, you will still find the will to be truthful. I believe in truth."¹⁵ Near the end of January, Sibelius reported to Aino: "I have crossed out half of my orchestral work and shall redo it again. It does not help. One feels like crying. – I know I can do it better."¹⁶ A week later, Sibelius had drawn his conclusion and told Aino what had happened: "I understood a few days ago that the work I have now been composing for half a year is bad. [...] The consequence was that I drew a cross over that illusion. – You can surely imagine how it feels. Especially while my whole poor heart was so deeply attached to it. [...] You may believe I laughed scornfully when I lit the fire with the score. It felt abundantly good." But as before, Sibelius was already looking hopefully to the future: "Perhaps you will laugh when I now tell you that I again have ideas for a new composition. I am again, as always, convinced that it will be good. [...] I am going to get down to this new work energetically and I will overcome."¹⁷

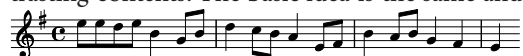
Sibelius realized that he would have to send something home to convince his financiers. On 10 February, he explained his new plans to Aino: "I am planning to create a new form, a kind of a suite or, actually, a symphony. It will begin with an overture, which immediately sets the atmosphere. The other movements are really only episodes, though independent and 'abgeschlossene.' I will now have a lot of work, but should I succeed, it will be wonderful!! I already have the overture in my head: it is spring air and love. The second theme is you, wistful and feminine, yet passionate. You know, I really was born to compose; I can see it clearly."¹⁸

Although Sibelius told Aino he had burned the score of the overture, probably something remained from the earlier attempt. This seems plausible according to Sibelius's explanation to Aino a week later: "I have returned to my earlier ideas and detected that the fault lay in the treatment of the ideas, not in the ideas themselves."¹⁹ Another fact suggesting that not everything of the overture was burned is the mention in a letter to Wegelius, also about a week

after the apparent burning of the score, in which Sibelius told that he had been composing his work at hand for two months.²⁰ The most convincing piece of evidence is, however, the fact that Sibelius showed the new overture (the first movement of the symphony) to Goldmark as early as 12 February. He again reported immediately to Wegelius: “He [Goldmark] said I have made substantial progress on the whole, but finds too much ‘Machen’ in it. The themes are not meaningful enough. The second one, however, is rather good. For the rest, he said nothing definite. He said he could not form a fair opinion of it by merely reading it. He also said that because I am a Finn, my music, which has such a national impression, will impress more my fellow-countrymen than him. [...] You know, best friend, I think my expectations of myself exceed my abilities. It is unfortunate that people now demand compositions of me at least yearly. Working always becomes forced. I have such a need to really study for a year and not just compose like an old master. But what is studying, really, if not just composing. Be that as it may, I will send it to you for performance. Kajanus will, I think, surely play it. It is, nevertheless, rather good. [...] Goldmark said ‘reflect more on your themes; that way, you will get more content. Beethoven rewrote his themes fifty times.’”²¹ In his letter to Aino, Sibelius mentioned yet another instruction Goldmark gave him, namely to “strive for simplicity,” which Sibelius describes to Aino as being “the most difficult thing.” He continues: “When I wrote, for example, your little piece [Theme and Seven Variations, JS 198], I constantly had difficulties not to get out of character and atmosphere.”²²

Balettsцен

It seems that Sibelius began composing the symphony’s second movement, *Balettsцен*, in late February 1891; at least then, he first mentioned that he had begun a new work. A few days later, the symphony plan was still a secret, but Sibelius again described it to Aino a bit: “It is in three or perhaps four movements, with contrasting contents. The basic idea is the same and Finnish



a little 'respect' for them; if good, no respect at all. They are both (compositions) bad. It is a joy that I can write frankly to you, my own beloved darling."³⁶

In the first concert, Overture was performed between Schubert's Symphony in C major (No. 9) and Wagner's Overture from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. The critics were a bit confused by Sibelius's Overture, but agreed that it was a brilliant debut for this young and highly talented composer. *Päivälehti's* critic described: "To tell the truth, we were not yet wise to what the composer wants to express with it. It is like an unruly outburst of agitated mood put on paper, like an instant expression of powerful and fascinating, if still unclear, thoughts. And when it is played, it often feels like an elf of fury suddenly takes over the entire orchestra and makes each man rub his instrument as intensely as its hair will allow without knowing even himself what he is playing. Peculiar, utterly peculiar and original it nevertheless is; a product without a hint of that commonplace (banality) which is so specific to mediocre wit. On the contrary, it contains – as one can already notice on the first time – such masterly, overwhelmingly instrumental high points that it must, at least in that respect, be a joyful acquaintance for a friend of music, and especially for a music enthusiast. With a bit more moderation and sense of entity, this young artist will find a more artistic form for his products, a form which ordinary people would, at least approximately, also be able to grasp."³⁷

The critic of *Hufvudstadsbladet* formulated his view a bit more bluntly: "Among excellent, magnificently beautiful episodes of the overture, emerged bizzareries which, in the opinion of the signee, were so preposterous and unmotivated that one was ready to throw them out the window."³⁸ The critic of *Uusi Suometar*, however, found a new angle on these strange features: "[W]hat seems to be immature is, in fact, just a successful depiction of the immaturity and restlessness of our times."³⁹

This same critic, Cis, paid attention to the Finnish character of the Overture: "Sibelius's Finnish nationality becomes clear from this composition, too, when one takes a closer look at it; it especially shows up in the second theme, which could be interpreted as a folk melody, and in the additional theme emerging in the development, which the brasses burst into air so dizzyingly wildly."⁴⁰

The Overture was performed anew a few days later (28 April 1891) in a popular concert, after which the critics agreed that, on this second listening, the work appeared clearer and more understandable.⁴¹ *Balettsцен* premiered in this concert, and its first hearing evoked mixed feelings among the critics; K. of *Nya Pressen* wrote: "Several repeats of *Balettsцен* would also be necessary to make this extraordinary composition as noticed as it with reason deserves. Of all the extraordinary we have heard in music, we would consider this, Mr. Sibelius's newest orchestral work, the most extraordinary. It is more a ballet *vision* than a ballet *scene*. A vision, strange, demonic; a pantomime with the most fantastic properties. [...] The work is brilliantly orchestrated and shows what a sovereign master of secrets of orchestral effects Mr. Sibelius already is on his way to becoming."⁴²

Pseudonym Cis, who interpreted Overture as strongly Finnish in character, heard a French connection in *Balettsцен*, but also a depiction of our times similar to that in Overture: "His Ballet composition, on the contrary, as beautiful as it is, feels like a replica of Bizet's 'Carmen', but a mysterious kinship usually does appear between Finnish and French music. The work, as I understand it, depicts a strange world where, beyond the luxurious splendor and blood-boiling sensual grace, our modern-day terrible cancer lies; even in the middle of a most dizzying whirl, one feels the pain of reality's shame."⁴³

The ending of *Balettsцен* caught the attention of critics, who found it surprising, if too long: "The vision vanishes into thin air at once now, a tinkle, a hissing stroke on the cymbal, two solitary tones of a chord – God knows which – and the fantastic vision has ended."⁴⁴ Another critic depicts the ending thus: "And with this very strangeness, this work must please until the very last sounds,

which to the listener, who probably awaited a completely different kind of ending, seem to offer a five-fingered salute."⁴⁵

After Sibelius had returned to Finland, he himself conducted both Overture and *Balettsцен* in November 1891 in Helsinki. This performance was his debut as an orchestra conductor. The critic of *Uusi Suometar* described his conducting as follows: "Mr. Sibelius's conducting was not cut out for bringing forth all the various emotional expressions of the work. The hand of the proficient young composer seemed not yet to be accustomed to conducting an orchestra, which appeared to follow its leader's all too regular waving of the baton heavily, almost reluctantly."⁴⁶ The other critic to comment on Sibelius's conducting, this time of *Päivälehti's*, observed that Sibelius "moved his baton a little nervously."⁴⁷ Sibelius himself was enthusiastic and described to Paul that "[c]onducting was marvelous. I was not nervous at all. I just felt a head taller. If only the compositions had not been such shit."⁴⁸

One new piece of information was available in *Nya Pressen's* review in November 1891, which mentioned that "[i]n *Balettsцен*, we heard for the first time an instrument which has not been found in Mr. Kajanus's orchestra before, namely, a bass clarinet."⁴⁹ Whether the part was simply omitted or replaced with some other instruments in the premiere in April remains unknown. On the other hand, the mention could be interpreted such that the critic only now informs the readers of this novelty, which had already played in April.

Programmatic references of *Balettsцен*

Sibelius offered no program for his *Balettsцен* in public, but did write a few words about it to Wegelius. After criticizing his Overture, Sibelius continued: "It is different with *Balettsцен*. It is based on a sad, sad memory. There is something of 'intoxication' and 'thigh' in it. If you have heard it, you must admit that I have taken a step forward at least. I have never wept as much as I did when composing it."⁵⁰

To his friend Paul, who asked about the poetic content of *Balettsцен* a year later, Sibelius stated more baldly: "It is difficult for me to think of any motto. One night I sat in a whorehouse in Vienna. The whores were dancing [...] and in the end one became so wonderful a state of melancholy – a little à la 'o vanitas, vanitatum vanitas.' 'All the vanities.' The thing is now just that all flesh must rot, all people, whatever they were – become carcasses! I do not want to deny *Balettsцен's* certain impression of power – hm – –. It could, of course, be called, for example, 'Vienna through Finnish spectacles.' When I speak such banalities, I get a 'rank stink' in my nose."⁵¹ On the last page of the score copy, which Sibelius sent to Paul in Berlin for a performance, Paul wrote "O vanitas! Vanitatum vanitas!"⁵²

Revision of *Balettsцен*

In January 1892, Adolf Paul wrote from Berlin and asked Sibelius to send him *Balettsцен* and some songs, because he might be able to arrange them to be performed there.⁵³ At the time, Sibelius was staying in Loviisa composing *Kullervo*. He was excited about the plan and revealed it in a letter to Aino as a secret. He also wrote that he will let Ernst Röllig copy the score and parts.⁵⁴ After Röllig had finished copying them in February, Sibelius still decided to change the ending of the work, because "it is, namely, almost too boyish."⁵⁵ Of course, the critics' amazed comments on the ending may also have given him the impulse to revise it. After inserting the new ending, Sibelius sent the score to Paul in Berlin.

Sibelius's autograph score remained in Helsinki, and *Balettsцен* was performed in a popular concert on 27 February 1892 under Kajanus's baton. This performance was the first time Sibelius heard *Balettsцен* from a distance, which gave him the opportunity to criticize it. He decided a "sad thing": not to permit its performance in Berlin. He explained his thoughts to Aino: "It [*Balettsцен*] is a rather interesting study, but not a work of art. There is much good,

but the rest is bad. Above all, it is the expression of my ideas in which I have not yet succeeded. It does not ‘resound.’ [...] I can-not let it be performed in Berlin. It is hard, sure, but my own darling Aino certainly understands me. – I learned ‘terribly’ much about orchestration yesterday. [...] You see, my compositions have always had some content all right, but the way of presenting it – Do not become depressed now, beloved; I beg you as sincerely as I can. I cannot do otherwise. You would surely act the same way, angel.” Another letter dated the same day continues: “I have forgotten that misfortune with *Balettsцен*. We should be glad, angel, that we have so much self-criticism. It drives one forward.”⁵⁶

Balettsцен was still performed after this in Helsinki a few times in the 1890s and again in 1909 and 1910. Whether the work was performed with the new ending or according to the autograph manuscript remains uncertain. The autograph manuscript remained in Sibelius’s possession, but Röllig’s copy, including the final ending, and all the parts (two sets), including all endings, were housed at the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra Library. The oboe part, which bears a player’s annotation of a date in 1910, does not include the last ending.

Sibelius also thought about revising *Balettsцен* after revising the ending in 1892. His diary of February 1910 contained a list of works he planned to revise that included *Balettsцен*. The date may have to do with the performances in March 1910 after a pause.⁵⁷ In March 1913, the diary again lists *Balettsцен* – with opus number 7 –, together with five other works under the heading “owe to my friends” (skyldig mina vänner), meaning perhaps that the works on the list should be revised in order to make new performances possible.⁵⁸ To a Danish-Swedish music critic, Gunnar Hauch Sibelius mentioned in his letter in April 1913 that *Balettsцен* “will soon be published as revised.”⁵⁹ The plans to either revise or publish the work never materialized.

Although Overture saw only a few performances and soon fell into oblivion, it had significant meaning to Aino. She was fascinated after hearing both of Sibelius’s works in concert on 24 November 1891 in Helsinki. After returning to her home in Vaasa, she wrote to Sibelius, who in turn stayed in Loviisa at his aunt’s home: “I generally have only your music in my head these days. Those orchestral works have so strangely imprinted on my mind. And you know, in the overture, there is that one melody which, according to my memory, appears twice, do you know what I mean, which is so poetic and sounds like [it stands] alone, that is such comfort to me alone here. Although it is so melancholy per se, it soothes my sorrow and longing and almost reminds of something distant, overwhelmingly beautiful and peaceful. And then life feels so sweet, and one does not notice she is sitting alone in Vaasa, it is a dark and hard winter, acres of snow.”⁶⁰

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- 1 Sibelius constantly used the title *Balettsцен* until 1930/31, when he, in a work list probably made for Cecil Gray, wrote *Scène de ballet*. This form appeared in Gray’s biography (*Sibelius*, London: Milford, 1931) and thereafter in some other biographies. In JSW, Sibelius’s original title has been retained.
- 2 Sibelius’s violin teacher was Becker’s associate, Fritz Strauss.

- 3 Martin Wegelius was a composer who, in 1882, founded the Helsinki Music Institute, the present Sibelius Academy. Wegelius studied under Richter in Leipzig in 1877.
- 4 Many biographers, beginning with Karl Ekman (*Jean Sibelius: Taiteilijan elämä ja persoonallisuus*, Helsinki: Otava, 1935), state that Sibelius also had a letter of introduction to Johannes Brahms, who, in the end refused even to meet Sibelius. The letter was written by pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), who taught at the Helsinki Music Institute in 1888–1890 and was Sibelius’s friend. Tomi Mäkelä (*Jean Sibelius*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), however, suggests that the letter, dated September 1890, was addressed to Heinrich Freiherr von Herzogenberg in Berlin (see Mäkelä 2011, pp. 171–173). Sibelius to Aino on 29 October 1890 (National Archives of Finland, Sibelius Family Archive [later NA, SFA], file box 94): “Otur har jag haft med mina studiefunderingar. Richter tar ej några elever. Brückner [sic] är dödsjuk.”
- 5 Sibelius to Aino on 13 November 1890 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “Det har lyckats mig att få Goldmark att intressera sig för mig. (Du vet ju att G. är en bland vår tids största komponister och framför allt instrumentator). Jag är så lycklig häröfver.”
- 6 Sibelius to Wegelius on 11 January 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 121): “[...] en mera på sakgäende undervisning än Goldmark kan gifva. [...] genom routinerad instrumentator och äfven som kompositör lycklig.”
- 7 For details, see, e.g., Hartmut Krones, “...das alte liebe Wien wiederzusehen...” in *Jean Sibelius und Wien*, ed. by Hartmut Krones (Wien: Böhlau, 2003), pp. 23–28.
- 8 Sibelius to Aino on 21 December 1890 and 13 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94).
- 9 Sibelius to Aino on 11 January 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “Jag har haft en stor sorg. Jag spelade i förrgår prof för Grün och opera direktionen samt i orkestern. Tyvärr kunde jag ej hela tiden beherska mig. Efter att ha spelat en timme blef jag sjuk, nervös och fick den der metallismaken i mun. Deras utlåtande var att jag spelar ‘gar nicht schlecht’ men att så nervös jag är skulle han (Grün) afråda mig alldeles från violinspelet. Huru detta kännas kan Du ej ana, egen älskling.”
- 10 The earliest surviving samples of Sibelius’s orchestral writing are two settings for mixed choir and orchestra (*HUL 1260* and *1262*) made as exercises for his teacher Becker in Berlin.
- 11 Sibelius to Wegelius on 19 November 1890 (NA, SFA, file box 121): “Jag kom just nu från Goldmark. – Hade komponerat en ouvertur. Det var ‘manches schlechtes und manches gutes; als ‘Anfang’ ganz gut. Instrumenterna hade jag behandlat alldeles rätt så när som på ett ställe der flöjterna voro för vilda. Förresten var han mycket vänlig och sade ett gladt ‘auf Wiedersehn.’ Han kritiserade sedan mera i detalj ouverturen. En half timme var jag hos honom.”
- 12 Sibelius to Aino on 30 November 1890 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “Det är åter en af de der tiderna då kritik och tvifvel taga ens hela själ i anspråk.”; and 13 December 1890: “Detta eviga kasserande och derpåföljande tomhet [...] göra mig till allt annat än afunds värd. [...] Nog är det underligt med detta att vara skapt till något. Ehuru man misslyckas och tviflas så brinner elden dock inom en. Jag är nu engång sådan.”
- 13 The completed songs include *Likhet* (JS 120), *Drömmen* (Op. 13 No. 5), and later during the spring, *Hjärtats morgon* and *Vären flyktar hastigt* (Op. 13 Nos. 3 and 4), as well as *Sov in!* and *Fågellek* (Op. 17 Nos. 2 and 3).
- 14 Sibelius to Aino on 6 January 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “[...] den bästa teoretiker här. Han tyckte den var barbarisk och rå.”
- 15 Sibelius to Aino on 8 January 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “Jag kom underfund med att jag ljugit i min sista komposition (i ouverturen) och strök ut detta ställe. Om Du ej finner annat i mig så finner Du åtminstone en vilja att vara sann. På sanningen tror jag.”
- 16 Sibelius to Aino on 27 January 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “Af min orkesterkomposition har jag strukit hälften och skall göra det om. Det hjälper ej. Nog käns [sic] det så man ville gråta. – Jag vet att jag kan göra det bättre.”
- 17 Sibelius to Aino on 3 February 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “Jag insåg för några dagar sedan att det verk jag nu i ett halft års tid arbetat på är dåligt. [...] Följden var att jag strök ett streck öfver den illusionen. – Huru det kännas kan Du nog ana. I synnerhet då jag varit med hela min stackars själ dervid fäst. [...] Du må tro jag hänskrattade när jag tände brasan med partituret. Det gjorde riktigt godt. [...] Du skrattar kanske då jag nu säger att jag återigen har ideer till en ny komposition. Jag är nu igen, som alltid, öfvertygad om att den blir bra. [...] Jag kommer att ta ihop med detta nya arbete med energi och jag skall segra.”

- 18 Sibelius to Aino on 10 February 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): "Min plan är att skapa en ny form, en art suit, eller egentligen symfoni. Den skall börja med en ouverture som genast angifver stämningen. De öfriga satserna äro egentligen endast episoder, ehuru sjelfständiga och 'abgeschlossene.' Det blifver nu dugtigt med arbete, men lyckas jag så är det härligt!! Overturen har jag redan i hufvudet: det är vårluft och kärlek. Andra temat är Du, vemodigt och qvinligt men passioneradt. Wet Du nog är jag skapt till komponist, nog ser jag det tydligt."
- 19 Ibid.: "Jag har tagit upp de förra idéerna och finner att orsaken låg i bearbetningen af dem, ej i dem sjelfva."
- 20 Sibelius to Wegelius on 12 February 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 121). No sketches for the Overture have survived.
- 21 Conductor Robert Kajanus (1856–1933) was Sibelius's friend and conducted the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. Ibid.: "Han sade att det var öfverhufvudtaget betydende Vortschritt [sic] jag gjort men att han finner för mycket 'Machen' deri. Die Themen sind nicht bedeutend genug. Das zweite ist doch ziemlich gut. För öfrigt sade han ingenting bestämdt. Han sade sig ej komma genom blotta läsandet bilda sig ett rätt omdöme deraf. Han sade äfven att efter jag är finne så anslår min musik som har en så nationell prägel, mer mina landsmän än honom. [...] Wet Du, bästa vän, jag tror att mina förväntningar på mig sjelf öfverstiga min förmåga. Det är olyckligt att menniskorna fordra af mig nu redan kompositioner hvarje år åtminstone. Arbetet blir alltid forceradt. Jag skulle ha ett sådant behof af att i ett års tid verkligen studera och ej bara komponera, som en gammal mestare. Men hvad är egentligen studera om ej just komponera. Hvare huru som helst sänder jag dock den till Dig i och för upförning [sic]. Kajanus tänker jag spelar den nog. Den är ju dock ganska bra. [...] Goldmark sade 'überlegen Sie mehr Ihre temen [sic] so dass der innerliche werden. Beethoven hat 50 mal seine Temen umgestaltet [sic].'"
- 22 Sibelius to Aino on 13 February 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): "sträfvade efter enkelhet", "det svåraste för mig. När jag skref t.ex. Ditt lilla stycke hade jag hela tiden svårt att ej gå ur ramen och stämningen."
- 23 The theme is the beginning of the Finnish folk song "Epäileväälle" (No. 21 in Emil Sivori, ed., *Mäntyharjun kansanlauluja* [Folk songs from Mäntyharju], Porvoo: WSOY 1887), which Sibelius had used in his Allegro for brass septet (JS 25) in 1889 in Berlin. Sibelius to Aino on 26 February 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): "Den är i tre eller kanske fyra satser, med kontrasterande innehåll. Grundtanken är densamma och finska [example] i denna stil."
- 24 The piano work (JS 198), probably dating from February, has not survived, but Sibelius arranged it for a piano quartet (JS 156) in April. The march for Christian is *La Pompeuse Marche d'Asis* (JS 116, possibly for a string quartet), which Christian performed with his friends on 7 February 1891 for the first time. About the *Fencing Music* (JS 80) Sibelius told Aino in a letter dated 3 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94). Sibelius's work is presently lost, and no more information has been found on the winning work or its composer.
- 25 Sibelius to Aino on 1 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): "I dag har jag komponerat på sista satsen af min symfoni. Den är i 3 eller rättare 4 satser går i E dur. Första delen är en ouvertur, som Du vet den andra är en idealiserad balscen ehuru nog realistisk. Tredje börjar med ett recitativ som egentligen är en stegring till den sista satsen, variationer öfver ett 'finskt' hållet tema mycket fritt hållet. Stämningen är alltigenom det der lifskraftiga och dock svårmodiga, vårlika, som Du vet att jag med förkärlek befattar mig med. Det är olyckligt att man skall vara bunden af så mycket sinligt, menskligt, det hindrar en så!"
- 26 Sibelius to Wegelius on 9 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 121): "så att mina många björnar sågo det jag ej varit lat."
- 27 Sibelius to Aino on 4 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): "Det är min symfoni i sammandrag. Jag har mistat lusten att fullborda den af skäl att jag måste tillägna mig mera säkerhet i den gamla symfoniformen. Det är 'ett allegro för orkester' och en 'balscen.'"
- 28 Ibid.: "Jag har skrivit rent nu i 10 timmar nästan oafbrutet. I morgon och öfvermorgon har jag beställt en renskrifvare till mig. Wi komma att lägga nätterna till nu ty det är hårde om."
- 29 Sibelius to Wegelius on 9 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 121): "vi arbetade tillsammans 2 dagar och 2 nätter i ett. [...] Men vet Du det blef ett helvete. Jag rökte starkt och stänkte kring mig Eau de Cologne, men det hjälpte ej. Det lät som ett fyrverkeri."
- 30 Ernst Röllig (1858–1928) played the viola in the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra and over the years frequently copied for Sibelius. Sibelius to Wegelius on 9 April 1891.
- 31 Sibelius to Wegelius on 4 May 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 121): "Hos Zola är allting arbete likasom till stor del i min ouvertyr. Den är ej bra. Men nog har den, tycker jag, tekniska förtjenster. Till människor måste jag tillstå att jag komponerat den med 'hela min själ.' Den vanliga ursäkten då jag gjort något med ingen själ als."
- 32 According to Sibelius's letter to Aino dated 20 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94).
- 33 Sibelius to Kajanus on 1 May 1891 (Sibelius Museum): "Du kan ej ana huru stor tjänst Du gjorde mig."
- 34 The reason why Kajanus performed Sibelius's works separately in two concerts remains undocumented. Perhaps both works could not be fitted into the first program or the copying of the orchestral parts for *Ballettscen* was not completed in time.
- 35 Sibelius to Paul on 24 April 1891 (National Library of Finland (later NL), Coll. 206.62.1): "Jag har nämligen rent ut sagt satt knifven i strupan på den der gamla musik jargonen d.v.s. att laga musik enligt recept. [...] så radikalt emot publik- och tante-smak att jag fröjdas. [...] gör hvad jag vill och anser för sant. Det att skifva ur mitt usla hjertas djup har blifvit mig heligt."
- 36 Sibelius to Aino on 24 April 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 94): "Hör Du af Kajanus Ojanperä Armas hade jag i dag ett så lydande telegram. 'Ouverture fortreflich [sic] geklungen. Publicum vielleicht etwas reserwiert wir musiker [sehen] in Dir einen Teufelskerl.' Det var hufvudsaken att det klingade. Det var det jag ville. De måste nu medge att jag har orkestern i min makt och således har detta år ej gått till spillo. Intressant ska bli att se hvad pressen säger. Är det dåligt så kommer jag att ha litet 'högaktning' för dem, är det bra, icke någon. De äro nog båda (komp.) dåliga. Det är en fröjd att få skriva rent ut till Dig, egen älskade älskling."
- 37 An anonymous writer (probably Oskar Merikanto) of *Päivälehti* on 24 April 1891: "Sillä suoraan sanoen, me emme vielä ehtineet päästä selville siitä mitä taiteilija siinä oikeastaan tahtoo ilmituoda. Se on kuin wallattomasti paperille pantu hermottoman mielialan purkaus, kuin woimakkaiden, ja mieltä waltaawien, waan vielä epäselvien ajatusten wälitön ilmaus. Ja kun se soitetaan tuntuu usein siltä, että koko orkesterin äkkiä on wallannut joku hurjuuden haltia, joka pakoittaa joka miehen hiomaan soitintaan mitä ikinä jouhet kestäwät, tietämättä tarkoin itsekään mitä hän soittaa. Omituinen, peräti omituinen ja alkuperäinen se kuitenkin on, tuote, jossa ei ole hituistakaan tuota jokapäiväisyyttä (banaalia), joka on niin omituisia keskinkertaiselle älylle. Päinwastoin löytyy siinä – sen woi jo ensi kerrallakin huomata – niin mestarillisia, waltaawia instrumenttaalisia loistokohtia, että sen jo siinä suhteessa täytyy olla soitannon ystäwälle ja etenkin soitannon harrastajalle hauska tuttauuus. Hiukan enemmän maltillisuutta ja kokonaisuutta wain, niin on tämä nuori taiteilija löytäwä taiteellisemman muodon tuotteilleen, muodon, jonka tawallisetkin ihmiset ainakin osapuilleen woisiwat käsittää."
- 38 Pseudonym Bis [K. F. Wasenius] of *Hufvudstadsbladet* on 24 April 1891: "Bland ypperliga, storartadt wackra episoder dykte i ouverturen upp bizarrier enligt undertecknade åsigt så befängda och omotiverade, att man warit färdig kasta ut dem genom fönstret."
- 39 Pseudonym Cis [Ilmari Krohn] of *Uusi Suometar* on 24 April 1891: "mikä kypsymättömältä tuntuu, se onkin waan onnistunut kuwaus oman aikamme kypsymättömyydestä ja rauhattomuudesta."
- 40 For the second theme, see Sibelius's remark (endnote 18). Cis on 29 April 1891: "Sibeliuksen suomalainen kansallisuus selviää tästäkin säwellyksestä, kun siihen lähemmin tutustuu; etenkin sitä osoittaa toinen teema, jota woisi kansannuotiksi luullakin, ja kehitysosasta ilmestywä lisäteema, jonka messinkipuhaltimet niin huimaawan rajusti räjähyttäwät ilmoille."
- 41 The concert featured a mixed program by Finnish composers: Kajanus's two works for orchestra, Oskar Merikanto's piano pieces, and songs by various composers.
- 42 Pseudonym K. [Karl Flodin] of *Nya Pressen* on 29 April 1891: "Flere repriser af balletscenen vore likaledes af nöden för att göra denna egendomliga komposition så uppmärksammas som den med skäl förtjänar. Af alt egendomligt vi hört i musik väg ville vi anse detta hr Sibelius nyaste orkesterstycke för det egendomligaste. Det är snarare en balletsyn än en balletscen. En vision, sällsam, demonisk; en pantomim med de mest fantastiska rekvisita. [...] Stycket är glänsande instrumenteradt och visar hvilken suverän herskare öfver orkestereffekternas hemligheter hr Sibelius redan är på väg att blifva."
- 43 The reference to *Carmen* may stem from Sibelius's use of castagnettes in *Ballettscen*. Sibelius may have had the impulse to use the castagnettes

- from a private performance in Vienna. Apparently, Viennese operatic soprano Pauline Lucca (1841–1908) used castagnettes several times in her performances of *Habanera* from *Carmen* for her guests. After attending one performance Sibelius wrote to Wegelius on 28 March 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 121): “I was mad about her. I felt a chill run up and down my spine exactly as if someone were brushing me.” (“Jag var galen i henne. Det gick kårer öfver ryggen på mig, som hade någon borstat mig.”). Cis of *Uusi Suometaar* on 29 April 1891: “Hänen Baletti-säwellyksensä sitäwastoin, niin kaunis kuin se onkin, tuntuu jäljennökseltä Bizet’n ‘Carmen’ista, mutta onhan tosin yleensä olemassa selittämätön sukulaisuus-suhde suomalaisen ja ranskalaisen musiikin kesken. Kappale ymmärtääkseni kuwailee omituista maailmaa, jossa ylellisen koreuden ja werta kuumentawan aistillisen sulouden alla piilee aikamme kamala mätähaava; kesken huimaawintakin pyörrettä tuntuu todellisuuden häpeän tuska.”
- 44 K. of *Nya Pressen* on 29 April 1891: “Såsom bortblåst försvinner visionen i ett nu, ett pingel, ett hväsande slag på tallriken, två ensliga toner af ett ackord – Gud vet hvilket – och den fantastiska visionen är ändad.”
- 45 An anonymous writer of *Päivälehti* on 29 April 1891: “Ja juuri tuolla omituisuudellaan tämän teoksen täytyy miellyttää aina loppu-ääniin saakka, jotka kuulijalle, joka warmaan ihan toisenlaista loppua odotti, ikään kuin pitkää nenää näyttävät.”
- 46 An anonymous writer of *Uusi Suometaar* on 25 November 1891: “Hra Sibeliuksen johto ei ollut omiaan tuomaan esille kaikkia kappaleen waihtelewia tunneilmaisuja. Nuoren etewän säweltäjän käsi ei näyttänyt wielä tottuneen johtamaan orkesteria, joka tuntui raskaasti, miltei wastenmielisesti seuraawan johtajan liian säännöllistä puikon heiluttamista.”
- 47 Pseudonym O. [Oskar Merikanto] of *Päivälehti* on 25 November 1891: “hiukan hermostuneesti kulettaa tahtipuiikka.”
- 48 Sibelius to Paul on 9 December 1891 (NL, Coll. 206.62.1): “Dirigera var härligt. Jag var ej nervös alls. Kände mig bara ett hufvud högre. Hade komp. ej varit sånt skit.”
- 49 K. in *Nya Pressen* on 25 November 1891: “I ballettscenen hördes för första gången ett instrument, som hittills icke förekommit i hr Kajanus orkester, näml. basklarinet.”
- 50 Sibelius to Wegelius on 4 May 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 121): “[...] Med ballettscenen är det annat. Ett sorgligt, sorgligt minne ligger till grund. Det är något af ‘rus’ och ‘lår’ i den. Om Du hört den måste Du väl medgifva att jag tagit steget ut åtminstone. Jag har aldrig gråtit så mycket som då jag lagade den.”
- 51 Sibelius to Paul on 8 May 1892 (NL, Coll. 206.62.1): “Det är svårt för mig att hitta på något motto. Jag satt en natt på ett horhus i Wien. Hororna dansade [...] och blef till sist så der underbart vemodigt stämd – litet à la ‘o vanitas vanitatum vanitas.’ ‘Allt fäfängelighet’ Det är nu just det der att allt kött måste ruttna, alla menniskor, vore de än – , bli as! Icke vill jag fränkänna Baletten en viss prägel af kraft – hm – – . Man kunde ju kalla den t.ex. ‘Wien sedd genom finska glasögon.’ När jag säger dylika banaliteter kommer det en ‘från lukt’ i min näsa.”
- 52 See the Critical Commentary, source C.
- 53 Paul to Sibelius on 16 January 1892 (NA, SFA, file box 25).
- 54 Sibelius to Aino on 31 January 1892 (NA, SFA, file box 94).
- 55 In his manuscript, Sibelius had already changed the ending once by shortening it. For details, see the Critical Commentary. Sibelius to Aino on 16 February 1892 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “Det är nämligen nästan för pojkkaktigt.”
- 56 Sibelius to Aino on 29 February 1892 (NA, SFA, file box 94): “sorglig sak”, “Den är en ganska intressant studie, men ej något konstverk. Mycket är der bra men annat är der illa. Det är framförallt utförandet af mina ideer deri jag ej ännu lyckats. Det ‘klingar’ ej. [...] Jag kan ej låta den uppföras i Berlin. Nog är det hårdt men min egen Aino förstår nog mig. – ‘Förfärligt’ mycket lärde jag mig i instrumentationsväg i går. [...] Ser Du, innehåll har mina komp. nog haft alltid något men framställnings sättet – Blif nu ej älskling nedstämd jag ber Dig derom så innerligt jag kan. Jag kan ej handla annorlunda. Du skulle säkert göra på samma sätt engel.” Another letter with the same date: “Den der oturen med B.scenen har jag glömt. Wi skola vara glada, engel, att vi har så mycket självkritik. Det är den som för en framåt.”
- 57 The next performances after March 1896 took place in September 1909 as well as in March and September 1910.
- 58 Sibelius’s diary is preserved in NA, SFA, file box 37. The entry can be found in Fabian Dahlström (ed.), *Jean Sibelius: Dagbok 1909–1944* (Helsingfors: SLS, 2005), p. 168. The exact date cannot be deduced from the layout of the original diary. Also, other opus numbers appear in some work lists. For details, see Fabian Dahlström, *Jean Sibelius. Thematisch-bibliographisches Verzeichnis seiner Werke* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2003), p. 681.
- 59 Sibelius to Hauch on 20 April 1913 (NL, Coll. 206.61): “den [Balettscen] skall snart utgifvas omarbetad.”
- 60 Aino’s description may refer to the second theme (b. 66ff.), the very same one that depicts Aino, as Jean wrote from Vienna (see endnote 18). Aino to Sibelius on 20 December 1891 (NA, SFA, file box 27): “Yleensä on minun päässäni näinä päivinä vaan sinun musiikkiasi. Ne orkesterikappaleet ovat niin kummasti painuneet minun mieleeni. Ja tiedätkös, siinä ouverturissa se yksi melodia, joka tulee esille pari kertaa muistaakseni, ymmärrätkö mitä minä meinaan, joka on niin runollinen ja kuuluu noin yksinään, niin se on minulle semmoisena lohduksena täällä yksinäni. Vaikka se itsessään on niin melankolinen, niin se tasoittaa minun suruni ja ikäväni ja ihan kuin muistuttaa jostain kaukaisesta, äärettömän kauniista ja rauhallisesta. Ja silloin tuntuu elämä niin suloiselta, eikä huomaa, että istuukin yksin Vaasassa, on pimeä ja kova talvi, paljon lunta.”