Side 1

SONATINE Op. 67, No. 1
I – Allegro
II – Largo
III – Allegro moderato
SONATINE Op. 67, No. 2
I – Allegro
II – Andantino
III – Allegro

GLENN GOULD PLAYS SIBELIUS

Produced by
Andrew Kazdin

Side 2

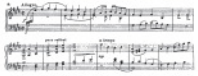
SONATINE Op. 67, No. 3
I – Andante; Allegro moderato
II – Andante; Allegretto
KYLLIKKI, THREE LYRIC PIECES FOR PIANO, Op. 41
I – Largamente, Allegro
II – Andante
III – Commodo

Of the 119 opus numbers that comprise the lifework of Jan Sibelius, seventeen are devoted to music for the piano. Many of these digits, moreover, represent "Songs without Words"–like collections–packages of ten or more independent selections–and, by that token, Sibelius' keyboard output numbers well over a hundred compositions. Either way it's an astonishing total, not least because Sibelius' metier was the post-romantic orchestra, and, as the critics would have it, post-romantic symphonists traditionally gave short shrift to the keyboard. It's true, of course, that the bulk of Sibelius' output belongs to the bagatelle genre–programmatic trifles with titles like "The Spruce Five" or "The Village Church" to define the scope of their parlor-music ambition. But there are, in their midst, works of substance–among them a sonata and two rondinos, in addition to the repertoire surveyed by the present disc–and these, or so it seems to me, by no means deserve the neglect which has thus far been their lote.

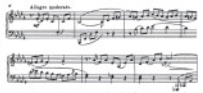
For one thing–and, given the era, it was no small achievement–Sibelius never wrote against the grain of the keyboard. At its best, his style partook of that spare, bleak, melancholy stingy counterpoint that nobody south of the Baltic ever seems to write. And of–not its worst–its most conventional, perhaps, his keyboard manner is still a far cry from the generalized, octave-doubling-prone textures espoused by most of his contemporaries.

It should not, of course, come as a surprise that Sibelius was disinclined to provide for virtuoso display; one need only contemplate the austere and dignified violin role in his Concerto for that instrument, or the superbly integrated vocal line in his "tone-poem" for soprano and orchestra, Luonnotar, to form an impression of his attitude toward solo exhibitionism. But Sibelius is not simply asserting against the prevailing modes of post-romantic keyboard writing; there's no hint of a nose-thumbing neo-classicism here. Further, in the Sonatines, Op. 67, demonstrate, he discovered, through the development of Haydnesque textures and pre-classical contrapuntal forms, a means by which to extract the best the piano has to offer without placing the instrument in a disconcertingly competitive position vis-a-vis those orchestral sonorities which, in his day, were deemed to constitute the sonic norm. In Sibelius' piano music, everything works, everything sounds–but on its own terms, not in lieu of other, presumably more symphonic, musical experiences.

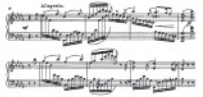
The first movement of the 2nd Sonatine, for example, is built from diatonically unresolful canons.



In the 3rd Sonatine, the opening movement is principally occupied with two-part-invention-style textures, harmonically enriched by the occasional figured-bass fill-in.



This Sonatine, however, is idée-fixedly concentrated on the motive quoted above and, by the end of its second and last movement, has metamorphosed into a texture that would be right to home among Richard Strauss' early lieder accompaniments.



Its companion pieces, however, eschew inter-movement relationships and the first movements of all three works, in fact, function as compact, development-truncated sonata-allegros, complete with the sort of literal recapitulations that would be blue-penciled by even the most conservative of pedagogues. All three Sonatines were written in 1912, during a period when Sibelius was otherwise engaged with his most radical form-as-process experiments in symphonic development (the Fourth Symphony, the first drafts for the Fifth) and, by the yardstick employed for those particular works, these are remarkably conventional structures. Viewed from a slightly different perspective, however, the conformity of the architecture frequently serves to emphasize imaginative key relationships.

In the exposition of the first movement from the Sonatine No. 1, for example, the tonic key–F sharp minor–is nowhere to be found. Through a combination of cogently entries for the right hand and chord support for what, with hindsight, we recognize, as the sub-mediant, sub-dominant, and supertonic relations in the left, Sibelius postpones the moment of reckoning. Eventually, however, the structure comes to rest on–as to preserve Tovey's distinction, "in"–C sharp minor and, by appearing to confirm a dominant, Sibelius slyly lets us in on where the tonic really was all along. (Even here, however, just to keep us on our toes, Sibelius' alternate chord of preference–a D major triad–serves not only as the neapolitan relation of the secondary key but as a melancholy disconcerting reminder of its initial, sub-mediant appearance.)

Again, from this perspective, the sequential non sequitors of the "development" which appears to rush with unseemly haste toward the recapitulation (the "development" sections in each of the Sonatines are treated with Mozartean dispatch), the central episode from the first movement of the second of these works is but nine bare lines long) and the de facto dominant-to-tonic transfers of the recapitulation contribute to the plot in direct relation to the exposition's ambiguity. In fact, as things turn out, only the final twenty-five bars of the movement–"the second thematic group" of the recapitulation plus a brief coda–can be said to locate in the "home key" F sharp minor. And that statistically improbable situation is but one of the gentle, subtle, let-us-strike-go-for-nought touches with which Sibelius endows these remorselessly restrained but touchingly evocative works.

"Restraint" is not a word that comes to mind when describing Kyllikki, Sibelius' Op. 41. On the other hand, it might not be the word that comes to mind when describing the relationship of Lemminkainen and his abductee-wife, as depicted in the 11th Rune of the Kalevala either. As rendered in W.F. Kirby's metrically unyielding translation:

"Father came the ruddy scoundrel,
There drove lively Lemminkainen,
With the best among his horses,
With the horse that he had chosen,
Right into the green arena,
Where the beauteous maids were dancing.
Kyllikki he seized and lifted,
Then into the sledge he pushed her;
And upon the bare skin set her;
Then upon the sledge sea lying
With his whip he lashed the stallion,
And he crushed the lash above him,
And he started on his journey;
And he cried while driving onward:
"O ye maidens, may ye never
In your lives betray the secret,
Speak of how I drove among you,
And have carried off the maiden."

Its difficult to see just how the finale of this work–a slightly giddy mix of Chopin and Cluthner–relates to the unhappy outcome of their liaison; but the rather blustery first movement, with its diminished seventh cascades and silent-movie tremolandos, does come reasonably close to the mood of the first Lemminkainen-Kyllikki encounter. (This movement also contains the most elaborately redundant cycle of falling fifths this side of the "Asterix" from the Beethoven Op. 111. Unlike Beethoven's shameless prol, however, Sibelius' episode stops well short of being a literal sequence–the harmonic root-rhythm is decidedly irregular, and the whole episode is concealed within a whirlwind of activity. Its not one of Sibelius' more ingratiating moments but, if you enjoy musical detective work, perhaps I should just tell you that the root cycle goes from B to B and wish you happy sleuthing.)

In any event, the middle movement of Kyllikki–a brooding, ternary-shaped nocturne–needs no extra-musical props. It provides striking testimony that, even within the more traditional constraints of his earlier, quasi-virtuoso style, Sibelius was able to make a substantial contribution to the all-too-limited piano repertoire from the post-romantic era.

* * *

In addition to receiving a rare and revealing look into a little-known corner of Sibelius' oeuvre, the listener to this recording will be able to participate in another unusual experience. For want of a better term, let's call it "acoustic orchestration."

Ever since the very first recording of a solo piano, there have been a wide variety of concepts of exactly how the instrument should sound on disc. Should it be projected in a tight, chamber-music-like intimacy?–or across the reverberant span of the concert hall?–or something in between? Record producers have each solved this problem in their own way. However, no matter what solution the combined taste of the artist and producer has yielded, one factor seems to have equal meaning for all of them: the acoustic ambiance must be "right" for the music. Debussy seems to require a more reverberant surrounding than Bach; Rachmaninoff should be bathed in more "grandeur" than Scarlatti.

However, no cognizance ever seems to have been paid to the variations of mood and texture which exist within an individual composition. Why should the staccato articulation of an opening theme be wedded to the larger sense of space required by the lyrical second subject?

Long intrigued by this subject, Glenn Gould offers here a bold and fascinating statement on the appropriateness of space to music. The four works of Sibelius contained in this album were recorded on multi-track tape in a simultaneous variety of perspectives. Microphones were placed in several "nests" throughout the studio–some only a few inches from the piano, others at a distance of many yards. In the final preparation of the master tape, a mixing plan was devised that honors the image of the instrument most appropriate to the music of the moment. Great care was exercised in planning this "orchestration," which not only varies with the mood engendered by Sibelius' score but which also serves to underline the inherent structure of the composition.

So, we ask you to put aside any preconceptions growing out of traditional approaches and enjoy the extra aesthetic dimension contained in this recording–a musical process not unfamiliar to Glenn Gould's enlightened audience.

–Andrew Kazdin

Engineers: Kent Worden, Frank Dean Desmond
Cover design: Haenami/Cordah/Cover art: John Perks
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GLENN GOULD
SIBELIUS
3 SONATINES, OP. 67 • "KYLLIKKI," OP. 41

M 34555
Columbia
MASTERWORKS

Jean Sibelius 1865–1957

Sonatine for Piano in F-sharp minor op. 67/1

fis-Moll · en *fa* dièse mineur

1	I	Allegro	4:40
2	II	Largo	4:42
3	III	Allegro moderato	1:37

Sonatine for Piano in E major op. 67/2

E-Dur · en *mi* majeur

4	I	Allegro	2:53
5	II	Andantino	2:42
6	III	Allegro	1:41

Sonatine for Piano in B-flat minor op. 67/3

b-Moll · en *si* bémol mineur

7	I	Andante – Allegro moderato – Tranquillo	3:27
8	II	Andante – Allegretto	4:00

Kyllikki – 3 Lyric Pieces for Piano op. 41

9		No. 1: Largamente – Allegro	3:17
10		No. 2: Andantino	6:13
11		No. 3: Comodo – Tranquillo	3:04

Total Time 38:40

Glenn Gould piano

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December 18/19, 1976 [1–3/7/8]; March 28/29, 1977 [4–6/9–11]
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Liner Notes: Glenn Gould & Andrew Kazdin
Publisher: Breitkopf & Härtel
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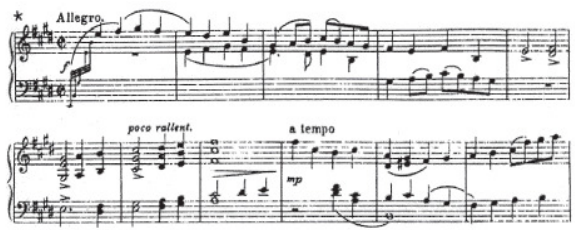

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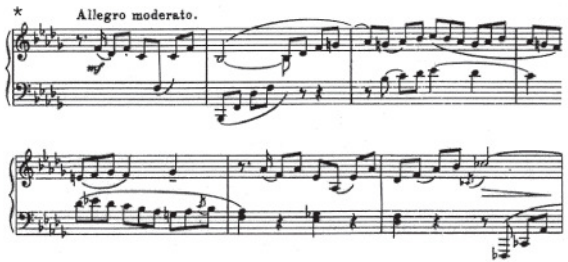

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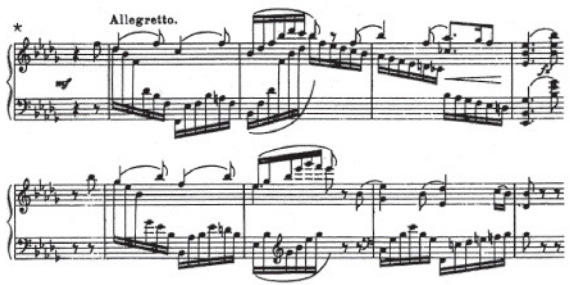

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