



Schnéevoigt conducts Sibelius



Finnish conductor Georg Schnéevoigt (1872-1947) led a number of Scandinavian orchestras (Malmö, Riga, Oslo, Stockholm, and Helsinki) between the wars. He was always closely associated with the music of his compatriot Sibelius, making the very first recording of the composer's Sixth Symphony, with the Finnish National Orchestra for HMV in 1934. His recorded legacy, however, is very small. Other than the Sibelius symphony, Grieg's *Norwegian Dances* and *Peer Gynt*, both recorded in the 1920s, make up the entirety of his surviving commercial recordings. Although a few other live concerts survive, this NBCSO concert adds considerably to his discography.

The New York World's Fair ran between 1939 and 1940. Billed as 'the world of tomorrow' it showcased the latest technologies alongside exhibitions from all over the world. It was also a major cultural event with nations commissioning new musical works (the British commissioned Arthur Bliss's Piano Concerto for the occasion for instance) and displaying their own cultural treasures. The Finnish government decided to sponsor a concert honouring their leading composer, Sibelius. As the composer's friend, and a leading interpreter of his music, Georg Schnéevoigt was brought from Finland to conduct, but rather than import an entire orchestra the NBCSO was made available for his use. The concert was not one of the regular Sunday evening broadcasts from the NBC studio in New York. Instead, it was Thursday evening concert live from Carnegie Hall.

The concert opened, somewhat inevitably, with *Finlandia*, the hymn to Finnish pride and nationhood. This piece was not part of the radio broadcast as otherwise the concert would have exceeded the two-hour slot NBC allocated. Fortunately for us, NBC turned on its microphones at the start of the concert for the reference recording they made. The most significant parts of the concert were the premieres of two movements from the *Lemminkäinen* suite. Two of the four movements of this suite, No.2 '*The Swan of Tuonela*' and No.4 '*Lemminkäinen's Homecoming*' were well-known but movements No.1 '*Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of Saari*' and No.3 '*Lemminkäinen in Tuonela*' were withdrawn shortly after composition in 1895, and only revised in 1939 for performance. This is their American premiere, and almost certainly the earliest known recording.

The concert ended with Sibelius' heroic Second Symphony, one that never failed to enthuse audiences. Olin Downes, reviewing the concert for the New York Times noted some differences between Schnéevoigt's interpretation and those usually heard in the United States, but praised his 'contagious sincerity' and conceded that the conductor undoubtedly had 'the quoted authority of Sibelius' himself. Indeed, what Schnéevoigt gives us in this unique concert is Sibelius' music how his friend Sibelius actually wanted it to sound.

N.B. The concert also featured a performance of Sibelius' 7th Symphony, the beginning of which was lost during the announcer's introduction to the broadcast. A little over 16 minutes of this unique Schnéevoigt recording remains, and has been included as a bonus track for download when you purchase this CD at Pristine Classical.

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sibelius
symphony no. 2
finlandia
lemminkäinen and the maidens of saari
lemminkäinen in tuonela

nbc symphony orchestra
conducted by georg schnéevoigt
live broadcast recording, 1939

Georg Schnéevoigt

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SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO. 2, FINLANDIA, LEMMINKÄINEN SUITE
SCHNÉEVOIGT, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

schneevoigt

conducts sibelius

COMPACT
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SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO. 2, FINLANDIA, LEMMINKÄINEN SUITE
SCHNÉEVOIGT, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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PRISTINE
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1. SIBELIUS Finlandia (8:15)

SIBELIUS Lemminkäinen Suite

2. 3. Lemminkäinen in Tuonela (13:28)
3. 1. Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of Saari (15:07)

SIBELIUS Symphony No. 2

4. 1st mvt. - Allegretto (9:04)
5. 2nd mvt. - Tempo andante, ma rubato (13:37)
6. 3rd mvt. - Vivacissimo (5:13)
7. 4th mvt. - Finale: Allegro moderato (13:35)

NBC Symphony Orchestra
conducted by Georg Schnéevoigt

XR Remastered by **Andrew Rose**
Cover artwork based on a photograph of Georg Schnéevoigt c. 1928
Live broadcast concert from Carnegie Hall, New York City, 28 September 1939
Total duration: **78:19**

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