

Anthony Collins recorded the first complete Sibelius Symphony cycle outside of Scandinavia with the London Symphony Orchestra for Decca between 1952 and 1955 – these recordings were restored and XR remastered for release by Pristine in 2022 (PASC 671, 675, 677), and have only gained in stature and renown since their original LP issues.

Overlapping these recordings Collins also recorded a number of shorter works by the composer, initially for Decca with the London Symphony and, in 1957, for HMV with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. As with the Decca recordings, these later HMV discs were also mono-only, the label being generally somewhat later to adopt stereo recording than much of the competition.

It has proved impossible to fit all of these recordings onto a single disc, hence I've made a selection of works from both the Decca and the HMV releases, and brought Pristine's Ambient Stereo remastering to both to what I hope you'll agree is great effect.

If questions were raised by some contemporary critics with respect to Collins' interpretations of the symphonies, his recordings of these shorter works were very well received at the time:

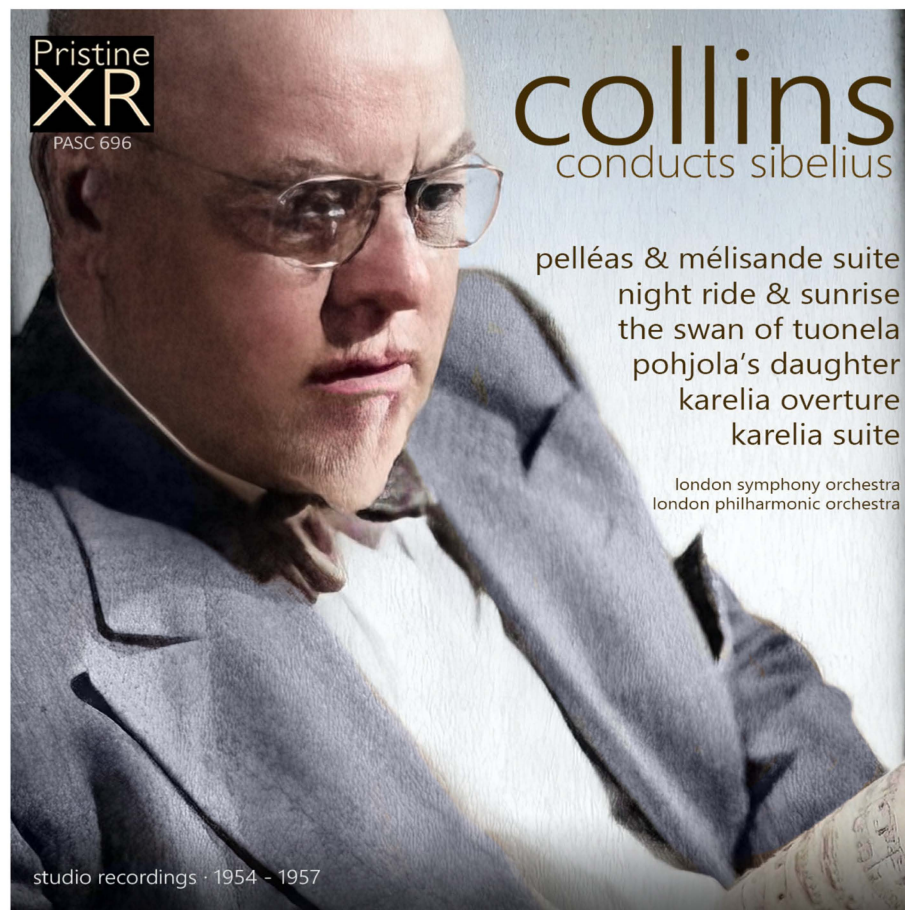
"The disc makes a good investment for the new Sibelius collector who doesn't, for one reason or another, want the symphonies. It also makes a convenient appendage to Anthony Collins's other Sibelius records; he's done the *Karelia* overture but not the subsequent suite. This isn't as you might expect incidental music to a play, but a musical souvenir of a particular part of Finland where the people are remarkable by Finnish standards for their vivacity and friendliness. The *Intermezzo*, which might be likened to a forest procession of riders approaching gradually through the overhanging leaves, and the *Alla Marcia* with its two bonhomous times, are both well known and often played. The intervening *Ballad* doesn't seem to have been recorded before; it's a long, gaunt composition, which extends and gradually elaborates a very Sibelian (but surely not Karelian?) melody; the ballad is scored mostly for strings. Collins builds up the climaxes well in the outer pieces, and conveys the impressiveness of the ballad; the rhythm of the march is not quite as lively as one might wish.

The other pieces are all otherwise available. Collins's version of the famous *Swan*, gliding in majesty round the Scandinavian Styx, is finely done, with admirable recorded presence; the percussion and the string patterns emerge with wonderful clarity, and Leonard Brain plays his celebrated solo with real artistry."
(*The Gramophone*, August 1958)

The movements from the *Pelléas et Mélisande* Suite were originally issued across two releases, with the second, seventh, eighth and ninth appearing as filler to the Symphony No. 6 in late 1955, whilst the other movement recorded by Collins, the sixth, *Pastorale*, would appear a few months later on a ten-inch Decca LP to accompany the *Karelia* Overture referred to in the review above, as well as the other movements that had already appeared on the symphony disc.

In today's world of multiple exhaustive recordings of most major composers' complete works, available freely at the touch of a button or click of a mouse, it's worth remembering a time when real dedication was needed just to hear some of these works and build an even vaguely comprehensive collection – not to mention the dilemma of whether, after spending the present-day equivalent of £61.20 (about \$78 US) on the Symphony LP you could afford to spend a further equivalent of £32.75 (\$41.75) just to add two and a quarter minutes of extra *Pelléas et Mélisande* music and seven minutes of the *Karelia* Overture to your collection. Decisions not taken lightly!

Andrew Rose



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SIBELIUS ORCHESTRAL WORKS
COLLINS, LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

collins

conducts sibelius

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PASC 696

XR Remastered by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Anthony Collins

Total duration: 73:22

1. SIBELIUS Pohjola's Daughter, Op. 49 (12:48)

A Decca recording, 5-6 May, 1954

2. SIBELIUS Night Ride and Sunrise, Op.55 (14:26)

A Decca recording, 2-3 June, 1955

SIBELIUS Pelléas et Mélisande Suite, Op. 46

3. 2. Melisande (2:17)

4. 6. Pastorale (2:23)

5. 7. Melisande at the Spinning-Wheel (2:35)

6. 8. Entr'acte (2:39)

7. 9. The Death of Melisande (6:24)

A Decca recording, 2-3 June, 1955

8. SIBELIUS Karelia Overture, Op.10 (7:03)

A Decca recording, 2-3 June, 1955

SIBELIUS Karelia Suite, Op. 11*

9. 1. Intermezzo. Moderato - Più moderato (3:38)

10. 2. Ballade. Tempo di menuetto - Un poco più lento (6:33)

11. 3. Alla marcia. Moderato - Poco largamente (4:20)

An HMV recording, 11 & 13 September, 1957

SIBELIUS Lemminkäinen Suite, Op. 22*

12. 2. The Swan of Tuonela (8:16)

Leonard Brain, Cor Anglais

An HMV recording, 11 & 13 September, 1957

London Symphony Orchestra

*London Philharmonic Orchestra

conducted by Anthony Collins

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