



Erkki Melartin's Symphony No. 6 (Opus 100)

Of the six symphonies by composer **Erkki Melartin** (1875–1937), the first five, dated between 1902 and 1916, represent a national romantic compositional tradition based on an Austro-German orchestral music heritage. In the past, premieres became major patriotic celebrations according to the genre of *the national symphonic concert* born with Jean Sibelius. The hallmark of these concerts was that the composer himself was present and that the repertoire entirely consisted of his new works. It also meant that Melartin – like few other Finnish composers of the time – personally conducted the premieres of all his symphonies and most of his large-scale orchestral works. Because of the Russification measures that began at the end of the 19th century, the upper crust of the Grand Duchy of Finland was already quite patriotic, and Melartin invariably received great applause and lavish floral greetings from his audience. Furthermore, contemporary music critics gave Melartin's symphonies a lot of appreciation and positive publicity.

Although Finland had already become independent at the time of the first performance of Melartin's sixth symphony in 1925, the external framework in this concert, celebrating composer's 50th anniversary, was very similar to that before. Stylistically, however, the new symphony was completely different from the previous ones, creating an interesting edge to the nationally tinted, lyrical image of the composer. By giving the opus number 100 to this particular work, Melartin also hinted that the work has been of particular significance to him.

The sixth symphony is an exception to Melartin's series of symphonies and major orchestral works, as it was the only one published in print during his lifetime. The composer dedicated this last completed symphony to his Danish friends and supporters, industrial director **Frits Jarl** and his wife **Nanni Jarl**. 10 years later, Jarl's couple paid for its printing as a 60th anniversary gift to the composer. The Danish publishing house Wilhelm Hansen printed it in the late spring of 1935, but unfortunately Melartin, already fatigued and ill, was only left with little time to rejoice in this important stage of his life.

The years of World War I were extraordinarily busy in Melartin's life. He was active as a composer, conductor, organizer of music life, composition teacher, and director of the Helsinki Music Institute. Nevertheless, as the end of the decade approached, he also began sketching a new symphony. During the Christmas holidays at the turn of 1918 and 1919, it began to take shape and almost forced itself out. "I've used every spare 15 minutes to compose, and a few times there has even been a full day available. I have been working from early morning until late into the night," he wrote to friends in Sweden on January 7, 1919.

However, there was not enough time to compose the symphony. In the summer of 1921, after a busy semester, Melartin hoped to get back to the symphony again. Unfortunately, the responsibilities and tasks related to both the Music Institute and his native country that needed capacity building as an independent republic, often took precedence over composing. "*Now I know what has to be done and the completion of my symphony will move far in time. Perhaps too far so that I can no longer do it in full force. But there is no choice when you know what your own duty is*", the composer wrote when he had to interrupt his journey to Europe because of domestic matters in early 1924.

During the spring of 1924, Melartin still sought to take his symphony forward, although everyday work and constant interruptions took their toll on him. A constant hurry and a pressing schedule increased over the autumn, as the composer planned the premiere of the symphony as the main item of his 50th anniversary concert. On December 19, the symphony was finally completed. The orchestral rehearsals began four days before the concert in February, and Melartin thought everything went surprisingly well: It sounded as he had presumed, and the atmosphere among the orchestra was excellent.

In the anniversary concert of the composer on February 7, 1925, Melartin got roaring fanfare from the orchestra as he rose to the podium to conduct his new symphony. The work also received good reviews in daily newspapers. For example, according to **Karl Ekman**, a critic of the *Hufvudstadsbladet*, its intrepid harmonies and strong dissonances, especially in the first movement, showed that Melartin had not escaped the trends that had come to power among the young composers of the time. *Andante*, for his part, "gives the listener such internalized and longing melodies that are already a familiar specialty of the composer."

The new symphony was heard next time at a Tivoli concert in Copenhagen in 1926, after which the composer conducted it in 1930 and 1932 in Helsinki. In the repertoire of the city orchestra, it was again in the autumn season's repertoire in 1948 and 1949, after which it was not until 1982, conducted by **Jussi Jalas**, that the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra made a master archival recording of it. It was performed again in Tampere in 1993 and at a FRSO concert at the Saarijärvi Church in 1999.

There are differences between the 1925 autograph and the score printed 10 years later. Most likely, a copyist's score with corrections by Melartin was sent to Denmark for engraving. However, the original manuscript indicates that Melartin changed his

thoughts along the way. In the first and second movements in particular, bars have been omitted, whereas for the Scherzo and the final movement, these have not been made. The first movement has the most changes to the instrumentation, and eight bars have been completely removed. In the second movement, there are two cuts: first for four and later for 17 bars. The rehearsal numbers have been changed to the printed score for the cuts, which thus no longer shows the deletions. The new edition is based on the 1935 printed score, which can be assumed to have been the composer's latest view of the form of the symphony. Therefore, the omitted bars present in the autograph score have not been included in this edition.

In Melartin's own printed score with its own ex libris, typographical errors have been corrected by hand, but it is not possible to deduce the author from the markings. In addition to Melartin himself, they may be corrections by later conductors. The autograph, on the other hand, reveals that Melartin was clearly in pain with the first two movements. The last movements, on the other hand, bear signs of urgency. The first and second movements are undated, but the third was completed on 31.10.1924 and the final movement on 19.12.1924 (at 4.34)!

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In 2006, the Erkki Melartin Society launched an editing and engraving project for Melartin's symphonies in order to promote their performing, and help them become a living part of the music culture in Finland. Rather than making them into research-driven, critical editions, the aim of the Melartin Society has been to produce materials that are useful to orchestra conductors and musicians, serving the performing of symphonies. The editing and engraving were also intended to facilitate the work of symphony orchestras, as the original handwritten scores contained errors, incoherencies, and interpretation issues. In addition, the works have sometimes been radically shortened in recordings and historical radio broadcasts. Therefore, it has been important to produce the orchestral materials of the symphonies now in the form in which they were intended by the composer.

The editing and engraving of all the symphonies were carried out by board member, editor and professional engraver **Jani Kyllönen**. Society chair, Dr. **Tuire Ranta-Meyer**, has been in charge of the edition project. More information on this project is available online at <http://erkkimelartin.fi/> or via society chair by e-mail tuire.ranta-meyer@metropolia.fi.

With the sixth symphony, a 14-year edition project has been completed. During that time, all of Melartin's symphonies were edited and engraved, as well as the symphonic poem *Traumgesicht*, the tone poem *Marjatta* and the tableau music *Väinämöinen Creates the Kantele*. The scores and prefaces can be freely accessed and downloaded on the Erkki Melartin Society's website <http://erkkimelartin.fi/em/>. Orchestral parts are available from Fennica Gehrman (e-mail hire@fennicagehrman.fi; see also www.fennicagehrman.fi).

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Tuire Ranta-Meyer

Jani Kyllönen