



## Symphony No. 5 Op. 90 in A minor "*Sinfonia brevis*" by Erkki Melartin

The five first of the six symphonies by **Erkki Melartin** (1875–1937), dated from 1903 to 1916, represent the National Romantic Finnish musical heritage based on Austro-German symphonic tradition. Back in Melartin's time, their premieres became substantial, patriotic events, as was the case with the type of national symphony concerts introduced by **Jean Sibelius**. Typical for these concerts was the immediate presence of the composer. Accordingly, Melartin conducted all the premieres of his symphonies himself. After the occasions he always was greatly applauded and celebrated with great floral tributes. In addition, the critics of the time gave great acknowledgement to Melartin's symphonies.

Melartin considered himself primarily as a composer, although he also was a professional conductor, a professor of music theory and composition, and from 1911 on he also worked as the director of the Helsinki Conservatory – later the Sibelius Academy – for 25 years. In his large oeuvre, e.g. the symphonies and the opera *Aino* are significant works when considering their artistic importance, but were left in oblivion after the composer's death and during post-war Modernism. Since Melartin's large-scale works were left unpublished during the composer's lifetime – apart from Symphony No. 6 –, there has been an unnecessarily high threshold for bringing up or getting acquainted with them.

In 2006, the Erkki Melartin Society launched an editing and clean-copying project for Melartin's symphonies. The aim was to promote their performing, and help them become a living part of the music culture in Finland. Besides the works of Jean Sibelius, the public of today should be given a possibility of hearing the more lyrical symphonic music of Melartin, which has been more influenced by the Finnish folk songs, the Finnish scenery, and the idyll of summer.

The editing and clean-copying project has also the objective of facilitating the work of symphony orchestras, since the autograph scores and handwritten orchestral parts have mistakes, incoherencies and interpretation problems. Until now, orchestras and conductors have made a remarkable effort in turning the contents of the sometimes unreadable photocopies of Melartin's scores into performable shape. In addition, the works have sometimes been radically shortened in recordings and historical radio broadcasts. Therefore, it has been

considered important to produce the orchestral materials in the forms in which the composer has originally written them.

In 2006 and 2008, the Finnish Cultural Foundation gave the Erkki Melartin Society a considerable grant for the editing and clean-copying work of these symphonies. Because of this grant, Melartin's Symphony No. 5 from 1916 has now been edited for publication. The score and the orchestral parts are available from the Finnish publisher Fennica Gehrman. The edited score can be viewed and scrutinized at the home page of the Erkki Melartin Society <http://erkkimelartin.fi>.

*Sinfonia brevis*, premiered on 13 January 1916, can be considered one of the most complete and harmonious of Melartin's symphonies, and most architectural in form. It is hard to find the scope or content of the epithet "brevis", as this without question is a full-fledged symphony. Rather, "brevis" in this work might be a certain type of orchestral suite like feature: all movements of the symphony are in the same key (A major, A minor), which is a highly unique solution. As is typical for Melartin, this work contains thematic processing methods tying different movements of the symphony together, so that in the last movement, the themes finally culminate in a spectacular way. The finale movement is an extensive four-themed fugue, a masterpiece of the contrapuntal composition techniques that were typical for Melartin.

According to research, Melartin began to compose a symphony in A minor in the summer of 1908. At the time, its four-themed fugue finale was something which he every now and then mentioned in his diary notes. Originally, Melartin seems to have had a more limited entity in mind, as he for a long time spoke of the symphony as the "Sinfonietta". In 1916, the first edition of the *Tidning för Musik* Magazine included an anonymous, descriptive analysis of this symphony and the occurrence of its different themes. The choice of words and the examples of the notes bring one to the conclusion that the anonymous article was in fact written by the composer himself.

This edition is based on the autograph score, which is preserved at the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra archive. The symphony's original orchestral parts can be found in the Orchestral Library of the Sibelius Academy. The editing process has been challenging, but at the same time rewarding and fascinating. One cannot help but think that Melartin presumably has written his score in a terrible hurry, because minor mistakes and small entries requiring interpretation occur from time to time. The texture of the notes is partly so dense that ink-written marks get mixed up and are quite difficult to read, which makes it harder to interpret the big picture. Even with the autograph score, it is not possible to fully determine the composer's final approach, since it contains multiple layers of various conductors' entries.

The aim of this editorial work is an attempt to get as close to the composer's original ideas as possible. As Melartin seems to have been having very little time, the autograph score has a lot of conflicting indications and shortcomings. For example in the recapitulation section of the first movement, there are articulations that do not occur in the exposition. Even on theme occurrences, articulations may differ from each other at different instances.

In this edition, missing entries have been added without comments if they clearly seem to be mistakes or forgetfulness's. Square brackets [] have been added to such editorial suggestions which may be possible, clarifying or perhaps originally designed by the composer, but whose inclusion in the actual musical text cannot be justified. The increased knowledge of Melartin's handwriting and the history of both genesis and performances of his compositions as well as numerous discussions with conductors and orchestral musicians have facilitated editing the symphony. Conductor **Atso Almila** has made a notable effort by reviewing the edition of the symphony and also giving special contribution to the amendments.

All in all, the purpose of the Melartin Society is to offer performing materials that serve both conductors and musicians. The objective has therefore not been to present new editions based on critical research, but rather to produce usable material for the performing of these symphonies.

The editing and clean-copying of the symphony has been made by editor and engraver **Jani Kyllönen**. The chair of the Melartin Society, Dr. **Tuire Ranta-Meyer**, has led the edition project of the symphonies. Other members of the working group have been the vice chair of the society, **Ari Nieminen** and his colleague **Henna Salmela** from the publisher Fennica Gehrman, and Jani Kyllönen. More information on this project is available by e-mailing [tuire.ranta-meyer@metropolia.fi](mailto:tuire.ranta-meyer@metropolia.fi).

The Melartin Society would like to give its warm thanks to the Finnish Cultural Foundation, to the conductor **Atso Almila** and principal lecturer **Pekka Helasvuo** who have commented and given fruitful suggestions during the editing process, and to professor **Ulf Söderblom** for giving his kind support to the idea of clean-copying Melartin's symphonies.

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Tuire Ranta-Meyer

Jani Kyllönen