

Sibelius: A Composer's Life and the Awakening of Finland

Glenda Dawn Goss

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One of the twentieth century's greatest composers, Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) virtually stopped writing music during the last thirty years of his life. Recasting his mysterious musical silence and his undeniably influential life against the backdrop of Finland's national awakening, *Sibelius* will be the definitive biography of this creative legend for many years to come.

Glenda Dawn Goss begins her sweeping narrative in the Finland of Sibelius's youth, which remained under Russian control for the first five decades of his life. Focusing on previously unexamined events, Goss explores the composer's formative experiences as a Russian subject and a member of the Swedish-speaking Finnish minority. She goes on to trace Sibelius's relationships with his creative contemporaries, with whom he worked to usher in a golden age of music and art that would endow Finns with a sense of pride in their heritage and encourage their hopes for the possibilities of nationhood. Skillfully evoking this artistic climate—in which Sibelius emerged as a leader—Goss creates a dazzling portrait of the painting, sculpture, literature, and music it inspired. To solve the deepest riddles of Sibelius's life, work, and enigmatic silence, Goss contends, we must understand the awakening in which he played so great a role.

Situating this national creative tide in the context of Nordic and European cultural currents, *Sibelius* dramatically deepens our knowledge of a misunderstood musical giant and an important chapter in the intellectual history of Europe.



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