

Sibelius Violin Concerto

Written in 1902 by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, his first and only violin concerto is said to be an expression of his dashed dreams to become a violinist. He had an “overriding ambition to be a great virtuoso”, but faced setbacks from his late start with the instrument and the provincial level of even the best teaching available in Finland. In addition, he was noted to have neither the physical coordination and temperament for such a career. He eventually gave up, and this work is seemingly embedded with his massive but unfulfilled passion towards the instrument, and the farewell of the pursuit of his greatest wish.

The first movement is known for its the extended violin cadenza, which leads the development section of its form. Sibelius insistently opposes the solo and orchestral material, with a brave sequence of contrasting ideas carrying a search for unity. The broad and sonorous second movement features passing of the first theme between the solo and orchestral parts, and a contrastingly plaintive and polyrhythmic second theme that develops into the climax, which is a variation of the first theme. Remarkd as “evidently a polonaise for polar bears”, the boisterous and charming third movement displays giddy and inventive rhythms that brings the entire work to an end in utmost drama and brilliance.