



The Sibelius Festival

All seven symphonies in Lahti

28 August–1 September 2024 (MK 393)

5 days • £2,670

(Including tickets to 4 performances)

Lecturer: Dr Stephen Darlington MBE

Celebrates the music of Jean Sibelius in the lakeside town of Lahti, the composer's home.

The world-famous Lahti Symphony Orchestra and conductor Dalia Stasevska with a guest performance by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

All seven symphonies performed, as well as a piano recital.

A night in Helsinki before moving to Lahti. Concerts are interspersed with visits associated with Sibelius and National Romanticism.

Sibelius's compositions are among the greatest and most universally appreciated achievements of western music. While displaying a range of stylistic influences, they are nevertheless highly original and distinctive, and are rooted in a passion for nature and a sense of the endurance of the human spirit.

Sibelius was also one of the most place-specific of composers. His main literary influences were Nordic, particularly the Kalevala, the great Finnish national epic, and the landscapes which moved him so intensely are the forests and lakes of central Finland. He lived through and gave expression to the period of National Romanticism when Finland rebelled against Russian political and cultural dominance and emerged as an independent nation in 1917.

The 25th year of the International Sibelius Festival presents a number of symphonies interspersed with other orchestral and chamber music. The Lahti Symphony Orchestra, directed by Dalia Stasevska, are joined by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Other highlights include a programme featuring South-African soprano Golda Schultz and a recital of Sibelius's piano works with exciting young pianist Vilina Rainisto, accompanied by readings of Aino Sibelius's letters by celebrated Finnish actress, Seela Sella.

The small lakeside city of Lahti has hosted the festival annually since 2000 with performances taking place in the stunning timber concert hall, renowned for both design and acoustics. Our three nights there are preceded by a night in Helsinki.



Jean Sibelius, New York 1930.

Itinerary

Day 1: London to Helsinki. Fly at c. 10.15am from London Heathrow to Helsinki (Finnair). Begin with a walk through the Neo-Classical heart of the city: the Esplanade, Senate Square, cathedral and Market Square.

Day 2: Helsinki, Lahti. Lecture on the evening performance followed by a morning visit to the Ateneum, Finland's foremost art museum, with a collection of brilliant National Romantic pictures. Afternoon drive to Lahti, a pleasant if unspectacular town with attractive waterfront and adjoining parkland. Time to settle into the hotel before an early dinner and the evening performance. *Concert at the Sibelius Hall: Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Dalia Stasevska (conductor). Symphony Nos 1 & 2.*

Day 3: Hämeenlinna, Lahti. Drive through birch forests to Hämeenlinna, one of the oldest settlements in Finland and birthplace of Sibelius. Visit the Sibelius Museum in the composer's childhood home and the 13th-century Häme Castle. Return to Lahti for a lecture before an evening concert at the Sibelius Hall: Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Dalia Stasevska (conductor), Golda Schultz (soprano). *Symphony Nos 3 & 5, Luonnotar.*

Day 4: Lahti. After a morning lecture, a guided tour of the City Hall designed by Saarinen (1912). An afternoon chamber music concert in Carpenters Hall: Vilina Rainisto (piano). *Six Impromptus, Op.5; Caprice, Op.24 No.3; Valse, Op.24 No.5; Nocturno, Op. 4 No.8; Romance in D Flat, Op.24 No.9.* Actress Seela Sella reads extracts from Aino Sibelius' letters. Some free time before returning to Sibelius Hall for an evening concert: Lahti Symphony Orchestra, Dalia Stasevska (conductor). *Symphony Nos 4, 6 & 7.* Dinner follows the final concert.

Day 5: Lahti, Järvenpää. At Järvenpää visit Ainola, Sibelius's lakeside home from 1903 until his death in 1957, unchanged and preserved as a museum; his grave is also here. Lunch is included at nearby Ainola before driving to Helsinki for the return flight, arriving at London Heathrow at c. 5.00pm.

Lecturer

Dr Stephen Darlington MBE. One of the country's leading choral conductors. From 1985 to 2018 he was Director of Music at Christ Church, Oxford, establishing it as an acknowledged centre of academic musical excellence, and maintained the highest choral traditions of the Church of England in the Cathedral. An extensive discography, comprising over fifty CDs, includes several award-winning recordings. He was awarded the MBE in 2019.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,670 or £2,390 without flights. Single occupancy: £2,890 or £2,610 without flights.

Included: flights (economy class) with Finnair (aircraft: Airbus 350); private coach for airport transfers and excursions; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 3 dinners and 1 lunch with wine, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips to waiting staff and the driver; taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager and visits led by local guides.

Music: tickets (first category) for 3 orchestral concerts plus 1 chamber music concert (seating unassigned) are included, costing c. £130.

Accommodation. Hotel Haven, Helsinki (hotelhaven.fi): smart, boutique hotel close to the harbour. Solo Sokos Hotel Lahden Seurahuone, Lahti (sokoshotels.fi): a modern

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4-star hotel in the commercial heart of town with bar and bistro opening onto the street and contemporary, if smallish, bedrooms (mostly with shower only). *In Lahti most rooms have twin beds, including those for single occupancy.*

How strenuous? To be able to participate fully in the tour, some walking and standing in museums is required. Average distance by coach per day: 50 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania, 11–24 August 2024 (MK 380); Connoisseur's Prague, 2–8 September 2024 (MK 411).* We are happy to advise on linking accommodation and transport.