

SIBELIUS

Main story: Spellbound by music

Janne Sibelius is a young boy. There are many things simmering inside him, and he is soon to leave for his law studies in Helsinki. He is at Aulanko, sitting and enjoying the magnificent scenery when Elli Palander happens to pass by. Elli persuades Janne to visit her brothers, and this turns out to be a real source of joy. The Palander boys are younger than Janne, but it does not matter – they play games and sports and come up with adventures together.

Janne, Elli, and the Palander boys decide that they will prepare a one-act play for Edward Palander's name day party. Janne belongs to the lyceum orchestra that will be performing at the party. Their play has knights, maidens and big feelings, like a good play should.

Janne accompanied the play on the violin. The Palander boys played knights of various heights, all competing for the attention of Elli, who was the maiden of the castle. Everything went well until the maiden's frills got stuck in her little brother's shield. Fortunately, Janne and his violin stole the attention.

Sibelius's birthplace: Son of a cold winter day

On a cold winter day, in the midst of the misery of the famine years, a boy was born of whom everyone would later hear about. The odds were against it: it was unthinkable that a doctor's son would become an artist. A good profession was what was needed, especially after the father of the family died just a few years later of typhus. The family had to move in with their grandmother, and all their possessions were auctioned.

The boy, called Janne, was talented. After a while, the family settled in a spacious house with the grandmother and aunts, and soon music filled the house. Janne's singing voice maybe made you cringe, but he played the piano and, later, the violin, beautifully.

Janne, his sister and brother made up a trio. Compositions also started to appear. His academic talents were not as obvious, and his homework was often decorated with notes, too.

To the grandmother's surprise, Janne managed to pass the matriculation exam. He moved to Helsinki and enrolled at the university to study law. He only made progress in his studies at the conservatory, though.

Soon, the whole nation was talking about him, known by his stage name, Jean Sibelius, that he had picked from his uncle's business card.

Hämeenlinna Church: "The city is on fire"



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Osmo, the sexton of the Church of Hämeenlinna, is in the sacristy when he hears someone crying. He finds a little boy in the church, sobbing,

"The city is on fire!" a clear voice echoes around the amphitheatre-style nave of the church.

"Who is it hiding here?" Osmo asks gently.

"It's just me, Johan Sibelius, or Janne as everyone knows me."

Osmo takes the boy to the window. The city outside is quiet and the Kirkkopuisto Park is blazing with autumn colours.

"Please calm down now and tell me why you are in such a panic!"

"I was fishing at the Vanajavesi lake and my fishing mate told me about the city fire that happened over thirty years ago. Almost the entire city burnt down, and only the church survived. I don't know if it was my imagination or if I fell asleep, it felt so real! I ran to the church to be safe."

Janne's eyes brighten up as he looks around.

"Here, in the Pantheon of the north, you can almost feel like you are in Rome!"

The organist has climbed on the organ loft and begins to play the clear tone of the oboe organ stop. Closing his eyes, Janne lies down on the church pew.

Aulanko: at Aulanko in 1892

Jean Sibelius was leaning against the trunk of a pine tree on Kärmeskallio cliff. He had been sitting there for a good while, watching and listening to the summer night, all its sounds and sights. The area around Vanajavesi lake was glowing blue and green in the height of the summer.

Something in Sibelius's appearance gave away that he was tired. He was irritated to hear steps nearing on the path.

"Can I still call you Janne?"

Jean jumped to his feet and grabbed Elli Palander for an embrace.

"Elli, how did you know that you would find me here? And you can always call me Janne!"

"Congratulations. Kullervo was so well received, it has been praised all over!"

"Thank you. That is exactly why I am here, in my childhood landscape. I wanted to escape the hustle and bustle and soak up strength from this scenery and its rugged and stately beauty. I want to be able to express it all in my music."

"Can I sit with you for a while. In silence," Elli said, sensing what he needed.

"Would you do that? We can go down together afterwards, and you can tell me all about your brothers, I have not heard from them in such a long time."

Sibelius Forest: Origins of Finnish music

There it is. The Sibelius Forest. Jean Sibelius would often let his eyes wander over the forest when he was on top of Aulankovuori Hill, where the viewing tower is now. It is a conservation area.

"It is a place for nature conservation, along with the conservation of Finnish national landscape and the birth place of some of the greatest music created in Finland," a young teacher explains to a group of school children on their way to a class trip on Aulanko.

They have just climbed up to the viewing tower and are now standing on the cliffs beneath the tower, listening to their teacher.

The teacher is searching for the right words. It happens to many people here: when facing something so stately, so beautiful, you are at a loss for words.

"This place inspired Jean Sibelius. His music inspired someone to say that a mighty stream of Finnish tunes emerged and rushed down from the wilderness. Jean Sibelius loved the wilderness, and he used to walk here often. He was happy to dip into the lake and listen to the sounds of nature: maybe they were turned into musical notes in his head."

Lyceum Upper Secondary School: Ghosts roam the hallways

A December afternoon was growing dark, with only a little light coming in the windows to the hallways of the Lyceum school building.

"All the others have gone, hurry up", Anni told Mirva. The girls had started upper secondary school in the autumn and they thought the massive stone building was both majestic and a bit scary. There were rumours of old students of the school haunting the hallways.

The school had been established in 1873, and its famous alumni included Jean Sibelius, the Finnish president J. K. Paasikivi, professor E. N. Setälä and poet Eino Leino.

"Do you still believe in ghosts? These were the good guys, Sibelius and Leino," Mirva says, as she only comes up with two names.

"I'd still be scared. At least if it was Irwin, the singer", Anni continued looking serious: "and so would you, if you saw Sibelius approach us with his violin."

Just as she said that, they heard the sound of a violin somewhere. The girls looked at each other and dashed towards the exit, breaking their personal sprint records. In the music class, a teacher was trying out the violins before the orchestra practice. But the girls did not know this.

Sibelius Park (musical benches): Common language

Young Jean Sibelius is closely watching what is happening at the Sibelius Park. He does have a vantage point over there.

"Ah, a young couple arrives. They are sitting near the rowan tree. I will play from my tree series, *When the Rowan Blossoms*. Maybe they are not sure which one of the trees is the rowan, let us add some light."

Sibelius is pleased. The faces of the young couple are first lit with surprise, as they start to listen, completely quiet and still. When the music ends, you can read its effects on their faces. It is more than joy. Something has touched their soul.

The two youngsters wonder what is up next. He signals them to listen to *Spruce*, a slow waltz. They are delighted and try all the musical benches, where Sibelius continues to conjure up music of the lonely pine tree, the aspen and the birch.

As the couple stops by Sibelius's statue, he realises that they are not from around here and speak a foreign language. But music is a language we all share; it can touch us and make lasting impressions.

Sibelius is pleased. He has done his job, written music that touches people regardless of age and nationality.

The main story continues...

Because Janne was playing, it is unlikely that anyone even noticed the maiden's ripped veil or her quick, blushing exit from the stage. The tunes of Janne's violin spellbound people as they listened. Big and small people, young and old alike.

Janne, however, thought that he did not play well enough. He was not a virtuoso and he only played the violin to play something – but now he was playing a piece of his own, and there was something utterly touching about it. The white cirrus clouds of summer were floating, blue ripples were lapping on the surface of the lake. In this very time, when Finnishness was something that was emphasised, sought and longed for.

The Palander boys were amazed by the applause they received when the play ended, and the music faded – they thought the play had gone awry! The applause echoed down the streets from the open windows of the Palander house.

As Janne bowed to the audience, it warmed his heart to realise that the listeners had grasped the very essence of his music – the message he wanted to communicate to everyone and the Finnish audience in particular.