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Sir Alexander Gibson (11 February 1926 – 14 January 1995)

Gibson was born in Motherwell, North Lanarkshire, Scotland, and studied music at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow, as well as in London, Salzburg and Siena, Italy. At the time of his appointment in 1957 as musical director of Sadler's Wells, he was the youngest ever to have taken that position.

Returning to Glasgow, in 1959 he became the first Scottish principal conductor and artistic director of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, a post he held until 1984, to date longer than any other conductor. From 1981 to 1983 he was also principal guest conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. He was principal conductor of the Guildford Philharmonic.

Gibson founded Scottish Opera in 1962 and was music director until 1986. Through his artistic achievements the Theatre Royal, Glasgow was bought from Scottish Television and transformed in 1975 as the home theatre of Scottish Opera and of Scottish Ballet, and the first national opera house in Scotland. In 1987, Gibson was appointed conductor laureate of Scottish Opera and held this title for the remainder of his life.

He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1967, was knighted in 1977 and became president of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, where in his memory, the Alexander Gibson School of Opera was opened in 1998. It was the first purpose-built opera school in Great Britain.

Gibson had a particular affinity for Scandinavian music, particularly Jean Sibelius, whose work he recorded several times, and Carl Nielsen.

Alexander Gibson died from complications following a heart attack. He was 68.

Gibson is also commemorated by a bust in foyer of the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, home of Scottish Opera.



SIBELIUS

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO. 5 KARELIA SUITE

ALEXANDER GIBSON CONDUCTS THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

THE SWAN OF TUONELA

MORTON GOULD CONDUCTS HIS ORCHESTRA

Sibelius was commissioned to write this *symphony* by the Finnish government in honor of his 50th birthday, which had been declared a national holiday. The *symphony* was originally composed in 1915. It was revised first in 1916 and then again in 1919.

The original version was premiered by Sibelius himself with the Helsinki City Orchestra on his own 50th birthday, 8 December 1915. The second version (only part of which has survived) was first performed by the Orchestra of Turun Söitännöllinen Seura in Turku exactly one year later. The final version, which is the most commonly performed today, was premiered by Sibelius conducting the Helsinki City Orchestra on 24 November 1919.

The 1910s were a decade of change in the symphonic form which had existed for over a century. In 1909 Schoenberg continued pushing for more dissonant and chromatic harmonies in his *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 16. From 1910–1913 Igor Stravinsky premiered three revolutionary ballets *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, and *The Rite of Spring* (Le Sacre du Printemps). Ravel and Debussy were at work developing and performing their impressionistic forms. And in 1911 the premiere of Richard Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier* further pushed music toward a new style. Though having spent nearly 30 years in the public spotlight, Jean Sibelius found his works receiving poor reviews for the first time with the 1911 premiere of his *Fourth Symphony* and, as James Hepokoski theorized, the composer "was beginning to sense his own eclipse as a contending modernist."

These events perhaps brought Sibelius to a point of crisis in his career, maybe forcing him to choose between changing his style to fill the more modern desires of audiences or continue composing as he felt best. The first version of this *symphony* kept his orchestral style (consonant sonorities, woodwind lines in parallel thirds, rich melodic development, etc.) while further developing his structural style. Hepokoski calls this structural development "sonata deformation" or the change and development of sonata form itself. The success of this change is reflected in the popularity of the *Fifth Symphony* to the present day.

The first version of the *Fifth Symphony* still has much in common with the more modernist *Fourth Symphony* as it features some bitalonal passages; the version from 1919 seems to be more straightforward and classicist. Sibelius commented on his revision: "I wished to give my *symphony* another - more human - form. More down-to-earth, more vivid."^[1]

The *symphony* is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

Structure

This *symphony* is unusual in its structure:

- Tempo molto moderato - Allegro moderato (ma poco a poco stretto) - Vivace molto - Presto - Più Presto
- Andante mosso, quasi allegretto - Poco a poco stretto - Tranquillo - Poco a poco stretto - Ritenuto al tempo I
- Allegro molto - Misterioso - Un pochettino largamente - Largamente assai - Un pochettino stretto

The form of the *symphony* is symmetrical when it comes to tempo: the first movement starts in a slow tempo but ends with the fast "scherzo". The second movement is neither really a slow movement, nor fast; it forms a calm "intermezzo". Then follows the third movement, which begins in a fast tempo but ends slowly. The duration is approximately 32 minutes.

First movement

Sibelius had originally intended this to be two separate movements, but manages to link the slower introduction with the faster, waltz-like "scherzo" section to create a single form. The movement opens with a "horn call", containing much of the musical material of the work.

Though written in sonata form, the first movement of Sibelius's *Fifth* can structurally be analyzed in many different ways. Many Sibelian scholars – Cecil Gray (1935), Gerald Abraham (1947), Simon Parmet (1955), Robert Layton (1965), and Hepokoski (1993) – each have their disagreements and own individual ideas as to the formal divides of the movement. They argue such points as its separation into two movements, the existence of two expositions, how to functionally describe the Scherzo and Trio, and the exact location of the beginning of the recapitulation and coda.

Differing analytical views

Gray, the first musicologist to write on the structure of the *Fifth Symphony*, makes no mention of sonata form in his discussion, yet refers to the existence of two different subjects that seems to imply that he feels the movement is in sonata form. Abraham is one of the first to analyze the work in terms of sonata form and clearly lays out where he believes each section begins and why. He shows that the work opens with a double exposition, each with distinct A- and B-group material, then moves into the development of this material. He explains the distinctly melodic section beginning at the "Allegro moderato" as a Scherzo and Trio used as a substitute for the second half of the development. However, Layton disagrees with Abraham and considers the Scherzo to be the beginning of the recapitulation.

Most musicologists agreed with this formal analysis until Hepokoski's research, published in his 1993 text "Sibelius: Symphony No. 5," offered an altogether different interpretation. He explains that the *Symphony* can only be analyzed in terms of what he has called "rotational form." Here, he maintains the same divisional sections of the movement – double exposition, Scherzo, and recapitulation – however he has created new vocabulary for its analysis. Hepokoski shows how Sibelius allows the material itself to determine form in many of his works, developing by the necessity of the music and not by a pre-ordained eighteenth or nineteenth century form. From here, Sibelius uses a circular form of rotation or strophe that passes through sections of material, further developing it with each rotation. Through this he maintains the general location of sectional changes as described by the earlier musicologists and agrees that the movement can roughly be analyzed in sonata form.

Fusion of movements

The first analytical point at which musicologists have disagreed is how to confront the clear separation of the first movement of Sibelius's *Symphony No. 5* into two parts. In fact, in the first two versions of the work, Sibelius grouped his *symphony* into four movements with the *Allegro moderato* section of what is now the first movement separated to form a Scherzo movement. In the final 1919 version, the character changes at this point with what Gray describes as "superficial dissimilarity and independence of each other." Earlier musicologists like Parmet analyzed the movement as two separate parts while Gray stressed the separateness of these sections while acknowledging their coexistence in one movement. They did so because of the clear meter change from 12/8 to 3/4. Furthermore, after this meter change, where rehearsal letters should continue from N to the end of the alphabet, they return back to A, thus showing a clear sign for a beginning of a new movement at this point.

More recent musicologists however disagree with this separation into two movements on the basis that both sections are based on the same material and in combination allow for analysis in sonata form.

Abraham cites as precedent the fusion of these sections in Sibelius's *Symphony No. 2* and *Symphony No. 3* where the Scherzo and Finale movements have been combined into one. Nationally, there is source for this fusion as well. Though there is a change in meter at measure 114, the tempo and compound division of the beat do not change; four measures of the 3/4 *Allegro moderato* correspond to one measure of the previous section. The gradual *accelerando*, which begins at the end (the climax) of the opening tempo *molto moderato* and which leads into the *Allegro moderato* Scherzo, continues uninterrupted to the end of the movement; indeed, without access to a score, it is difficult for the listener to identify exactly where the Scherzo section begins. Most importantly, the clear use and development of the same materials throughout indicate that this is indeed one movement. In fact, Sibelius himself most likely thought of it as one movement as he published and performed the first movement of his final 1919 version without break.

The second point that musicologists have disputed regarding the first movement of the *symphony* is the existence of two expositions. The *symphony* begins with soft calls in the horns, the first horn playing what becomes the main material of the A-group while the others play long notes below. The music has its own rhythmic character ("long-short-short-long") and is centred on the interval of the perfect fourth. This first

theme continues in the horns and bassoons while increasingly, the music is developed by the woodwinds playing sixteenth-notes in parallel third motion until the second theme is presented and eventually takes over in measure 9. It is agreed that the B-group begins by measure 18. At this point a third theme is heard in the woodwinds – like the first theme also built on the perfect fourth interval but this time with the defining rhythm "short-long-short" – with tremolo accompaniment in the strings. At measure 28, the fourth theme enters still in G major and distinguished by its duple (equal) subdivision of the beat in the horns and woodwinds as a chorale-like chord progression. This exposition concludes with the return of the third theme, now rhythmically in diminution and melodically climbing, fading away to an afterthought. Hepokoski finds it important to point out that one would expect the end of an exposition to come with a clear cadence in the new key, in this case G major. However, as the third theme fades away it is replaced in measure 36 by the first theme of the A-group here still in G major. Though this next section proceeds in an unexpected key – G major then changing back to the tonic E-flat in measure 41 – Abraham and Layton both consider it to be a second or "counter" exposition, as equivalent to the eighteenth century repeat of the exposition. They both reference the recurrence of both the A- and B-groups almost in their entirety, though here they are used to emphasize the tonic.

Hepokoski disagrees with this analysis and instead uses his rotational form terminology to talk about these two sections as "Rotation 1, bars 3-35 (referential statement: 'expositional space') and "Rotation 2, bars 36-71 (complementary rotation/developmental exposition") respectively. He does so based on Sibelius's choice of keys and the inclusion of developmental qualities that are used to lead toward the climax of the movement. First, whereas the A-group of the first rotation contains no accompaniment, the A-group of the second rotation contains tremolo accompaniment in the strings. Secondly, the key changes much earlier than previously. In measure 41 Sibelius goes back to E-flat major while still in the middle of the A-group and concludes this exposition section in this tonic key as no sonata form exposition would. Finally is the degree to which the second theme in the woodwinds is developed. Here, the sixteenth-note runs are heard sooner and become much longer than before. This section ends just as the previous one does with the third theme in diminution fading away to nothing without cadence in the strings and woodwinds. What follows is a developmental section (or what Hepokoski calls Rotation 3) based on the insignificant transition that anticipated the string entrance before the B-group in the first exposition. This is followed by the development of B-group material which is brought back as the mood changes to *Largamente* in measure 92.

At the *Allegro moderato* in measure 114, the music changes as the second half of the movement begins in Scherzo style. Though all musicologists talk about this next section as a Scherzo, Abraham and Preston Stedman analyze it as well as a continuation of the development. This has created yet another point at which musicologists have disagreed on the structural analysis of the movement. The new melodic theme that pervades the first half of the Scherzo is ingeniously developed out of the second theme material of the A-group yet based on material from the first theme. These sixteenth-notes act as the pick-ups to this new theme. Though acting statically before, one can almost believe they were always meant to develop into this new material. The key returns to E-flat major at measure 158 (rehearsal letter B) while the Scherzo continues to develop the same material.

Like any traditional Scherzo, Abraham explains that this too has a Trio section that begins at measure 218 (rehearsal letter D). This starts out in E-flat major with an apparently new and distinctive trumpet melody (the timpani reinforcing the rhythm), though quickly changes to B major (bassoon and horns). This section is characterized by this new melodic material, which develops what was heard earlier and is also closely related to material from the A-group. This section can also be considered developmental space as this melody is passed around the orchestra in a quasi-fugal manner. Other musicologists have analyzed these Scherzo and Trio sections very differently.

The most contested point musicologists make is the location of the beginning of the recapitulation. Hepokoski points out this ambiguity early in his analysis as consequence of "sonata deformation." Abraham explains that the Scherzo repeat after the conclusion of the Trio in measure 298 also acts as the movement's recapitulation. This section is still very Scherzo-like but is based on transformed material of the A-group. In measure 274 (rehearsal letter G), the key returns to E-flat major. The texture also changes as the melody fades away and the strings begin a long rising tremolo figure as related to the woodwinds' sixteenth-note pattern of the second theme. In some ways this key change acts as a transition back to the main Scherzo section. Stedman adds to Abraham's analysis by explaining that this return to the Scherzo acts as a recapitulation to the overall sonata form structure. This can be seen in measure 324, with the rising perfect fourth motive in the violins, the A-group is stated once more in a new form in the home key of E-flat. This material is increasingly passed around the orchestra and developed into a staccato quarter-note arpeggiated figure that by measure 401 (rehearsal letter L) completely takes over the texture, leaving the previous material behind. In measure 471 (rehearsal letter O) the second half of Abraham's recapitulation begins with the duple subdivision of the B-group theme still in E-flat major.

Layton disagrees with Abraham's analysis saying that the recapitulation begins in measure 114 with the beginning of the first Scherzo section. He explains that "while not denying the Scherzo-like character of many episodes in the second half of the movement, there is no doubt that it does in fact correspond in broad outline to the recapitulation normal in sonata form." He cites the return to the tonic in E-flat in measure 159 (rehearsal letter B) and the clear origin of the A-group material for both the Scherzo and Trio.

Hepokoski takes an altogether different approach to the recapitulation. First, he structurally considers the Scherzo and recapitulation through the conclusion of the movement to all be part of the fourth and final rotation that he calls "Rotation 4, bars 106-586 ("Scherzo"; "recapitulatory space")." When defining the location of the recapitulation within this rotation, he is unable to give specific measure numbers because it enters in a staggered manner. He shows how "the four defining 'recapitulatory' features, however - theme, tempo, Scherzo character, and 'tonic colour' - are set into place not simultaneously but one after another." The return of the "theme" happens at measure 106 with the A-group materials heard in the brass with woodwind sixteenth-notes above. What he means by "tempo" and "Scherzo character" is the *accelerando* into the 3/4 *Allegro moderato* section. Finally, he shows how "tonic colour" returns in measure 158 (rehearsal letter B), putting into place all elements of the recapitulation. With the entry of the Trio section, the recapitulation is put on hold until the Scherzo returns.

Finally, short debate again surrounds the beginning of the coda: whether it starts in measure 507 at the Presto or measure 555 at the Più Presto as analyzed by Abraham and Hepokoski respectively. An equally plausible starting place is measure 497 (6 before G) (at the end of the final statement of the chordal duple-rhythm B-group theme (which begins at measure 487, letter P)) with its fff syncopated trombone statement of the first four rising notes of the A-group (with which the work began) and the beginning of the E-flat pedal which continues to the end of the movement. This entire ending section races in quarter-note arpeggios towards the conclusion, thus making it difficult to pinpoint the exact location of the beginning of the coda.

Second movement

This quiet movement is a set of variations on a theme of flute heard at the beginning on the strings, played pizzicato. With chirping woodwinds, the mood is lovely and cheerful.

Third movement

This movement begins with a fast melody in the strings, played tremolando. After this is developed, a swaying, triple-time motif begins in the horns, which is said to have been inspired by the sound of swan-calls, as well as a specific instance when the composer witnessed 16 of them taking flight at once. Over this, Sibelius has the flutes and strings play one of his most famous melodies. Both this and the motif are developed, until in the final section the motif returns majestically in the home key. The *symphony* ends with one of Sibelius's most original ideas — the six chords of the final cadence, each separated by silence.

SIBELIUS SYMPHONY NO. 5 KARELIA SUITE

Alexander Gibson • London Symphony Orchestra

SWAN OF TUONELA

MORTON GOULD • HIS ORCHESTRA

Symphony No. 5

- 1. Tempo molto moderato*
- 2. Andante mosso, quasi allegretto*
- 3. Allegro molto*

Karelia Suite

- 4. Intermezzo*
- 5. Ballade, "sung" by a bard*
- 6. Alla Marcia*
- 7. Swan of Tuonela**

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