

Music History and Cosmopolitanism / abstract

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Session 1b / Wednesday June 1, 2:30–4 pm

Jean Sibelius as an American Import

There are numerous images of the man called Jean Sibelius (1865–1957). For Finns, as well as for many other people, Sibelius and his music are exclusively associated with Finland. Sibelius is the Finns' national property, an icon that embodies the Finnish nation. Yet in North America and to a considerable degree in the UK, Sibelius is also viewed as national property – of Americans, Canadians and Britons. This kind of cosmopolitanism will be addressed in my presentation “Jean Sibelius as an American Import.” I will focus on how his persona and many of his compositions were transferred to the New World and demonstrate some of the changes that took place to his image and to his music in that new environment. The presentation will also show that the transfer was not a one-way affair: social and other exchanges took place that shaped ideas and even music on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.