

Meridian Music of the Week!

Issue No. 27

Even though Meridian is currently closed for most children – our music newsletter will STILL come out each week! Just as before, there will be a new piece of music to listen to. But this time, there will also be some **ideas for activities** which children might want to try if they're at home – connected to the music in some way.

As always, all the music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.



This week's music...

'Finlandia' by Jean Sibelius (1899)

To watch a video introduction to the whole piece, and listen to some of it, check out the short BBC video which you can find [HERE](#).



You can also listen to the whole thing, with some nice video about the country of Finland, [HERE](#).

I've chosen this week's music because I'd like to get you **SINGING!** Even if you're stuck at home, I thought it might be fun to try and join in singing with an **on-line choir**. Look at the end of this newsletter for details on how to try it!

The music this week is by the most famous composer that ever came out of the country of Finland – Jean Sibelius (pronounced 'see-bay-lee-us'). He was born in 1865 and he is so famous in Finland that his face was on their 100 Mark banknote right up until 2002 (see the picture above) when Finland joined the Euro. 10 Marks was about £20 in British money.

For a lot of its history, Finland wasn't an independent country, it was part of the Russian Empire. The people of Finland didn't like the Russians who were ruling them and they wanted to be free to run their own country. This is what this piece of music is about...

At the time when Sibelius wrote it, the Russians banned lots of the arts in Finland. They particularly didn't like art that encouraged people to be proud of Finland.

'**Finlandia**' is definitely a piece of music that celebrates the Finnish country, landscape and its people. To stop the Russians banning it, Sibelius would change the title of the music each time it was performed so that the Russians wouldn't become suspicious!

The music starts with some very dark, grumbling and threatening sounding notes on trombones, tubas, French horns and tympani drums. This is supposed to represent the Russians who are the enemy of the Finnish people.



A French horn

After that the music changes and becomes softer. This is supposed to represent the beautiful landscape and countryside of Finland. However, the music is still quite sad and slow to show how the people of Finland were sad at being ruled by a foreign country.

At about 3:30 minutes in the BBC video, you can hear a **melody** (tune) that is the most famous part of this music. It is like a church hymn, and many people think that Sibelius stole the tune from a famous hymn to include in his music. But they're wrong! It was all Sibelius' own work.

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This tune became so well known in Finland that people wrote words to it. It later became famous throughout the rest of the world – and eventually became the tune to an actual church hymn called ‘**Be Still My Soul**’. There are lots of lovely versions of this hymn on YouTube – one of my favourite versions can be found [HERE](#).



Finland finally did become independent and free from Russia in 1917 when Sibelius was 52 years old.

The end of Sibelius' composing career was slightly odd. Many musicians carry on writing, as best as they can, right up until their death (remember Beethoven who composed after he became deaf?) But not Sibelius.

In 1926 he pretty much simply sopped writing altogether! He lived for another 30 years, but hardly wrote a note in all that time. Supposedly, he said that his 7th symphony (the last one he wrote) was the best that he could ever do – so why bother even trying after that! Nevertheless, even today the people of Finland still celebrate Sibelius' birthday every year – and it's known as 'Finnish Music Day'. That's how famous he is in Finland!

Listen, enjoy and **stay safe!**

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher



Activity on the next page!

ACTIVITY



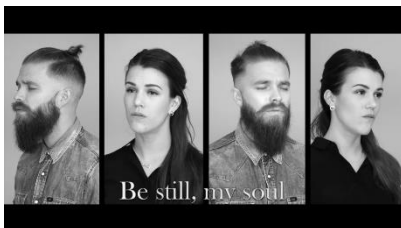
Join in the with the BBC Singers!

Watch and listen to [this web page & short video](#) to find out about the activity (look for 'Week 4: Sing with the BBC Singers')...

The singers Ed and Emma from the BBC Singers will explain the activity this week. They're going to give you an on-line singing lesson! You will learn to sing the tune to the hymn theme from 'Finlandia'. Then, you can join in signing it with the whole choir – just as if you were in a Zoom choir!



Once you've learned the tune, you might even want to practise singing with the words. You can play [THIS VERSION](#) on YouTube and sing along to it.



Or, if you want a more modern, cool version, try [THIS ONE](#). They've invented their own chorus for this one!

Why not record yourself? I'd love to hear you! As always, you can send in any recordings to school using the usual email address - office@meridian.e-sussex.sch.uk

Be Still My Soul

Be still my soul the Lord is on thy side
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain
Leave to thy God to order and provide
In every change He faithful will remain
Be still my soul thy best, thy heavenly friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end

Be still my soul when dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in the vale of tears
Then shalt thou better know His love His heart
Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears
Be still my soul the waves and winds shall know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below

Be still my soul the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord
When disappointment grief and fear are gone
Sorrow forgot love's purest joys restored
Be still my soul when change and tears are past
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last