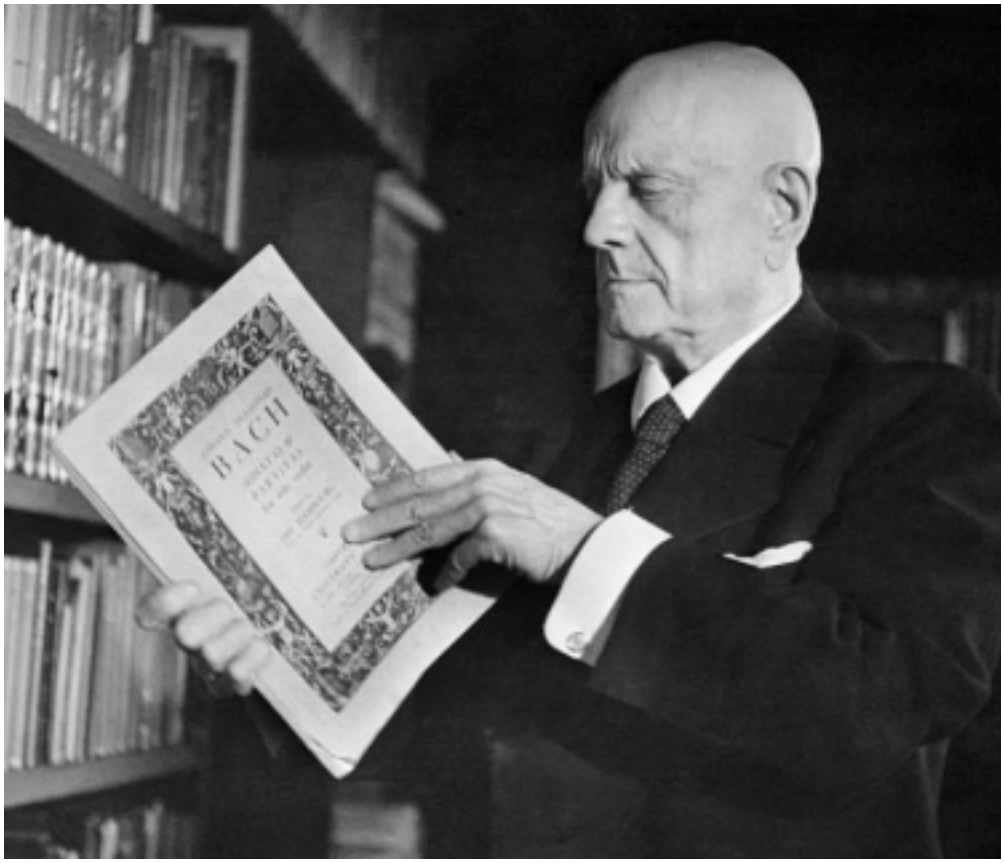
Innovation in Sibelius's Sixth Symphony



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Abstract

Sibelius's Sixth Symphony has often been understood as comparatively backward-looking, especially compared to the Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Symphonies. I propose that this piece is highly innovative in its engagement with what it meant to be writing a symphony in 1923, especially outside Germany & Austria. This will be considered formally, in terms of critiquing the formal schemes that have been proposed to try and account for the work, and in relation to contemporary symphonic expectations. Essential to this is how Sibelius articulates form: the piece appears not to explicitly introduce thematic material allied with contrasting tonal centres, and so it is important to consider Sibelius' other approaches, and how and to what degree it achieves the 'organic unity' that was a hallmark of the symphonic tradition and an ideal referred to by Sibelius. This will reveal how innovative the piece actually was, which will be framed within a consideration of its reception, both in academia and performance.

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Introduction

Titling a piece 'symphony' in 1923 was a statement of intent. This genre was loaded with expectations, and any piece with this title would be understood within the context of that tradition. Likewise, any composer writing such a piece would engage in dialogue with symphonic norms in the piece. In considering Sibelius's Sixth Symphony, it is initially important to outline symphonic conventions by the 1920s, before assessing this symphony's engagement with them.

By this stage in symphonic composition, it is problematic to try to establish a paradigmatic framework that a symphony 'should' fit into. Previously, the symphony was characterised by its forms: typically consisting of four movements of a fast-slow-minuet/scherzo-fast disposition, with a sonata basis to the opening movement. Particularly relevant is the articulation of form through the coordinated, and later intentionally uncoordinated, combination of tonality, thematic disposition, and texture. It was largely scale and formal sophistication that gave the symphony its prestige as, possibly, the defining genre of classical music. However, practitioners had exploded these formal features (e.g. Mahler, whose symphonies precede Sibelius's Sixth). Nonetheless, the symphony retained its conservative associations, especially compared to the formal experiments of apparently more progressive composers like Schoenberg, Stravinsky, or Debussy, all of whom eschewed conventional symphonic composition.

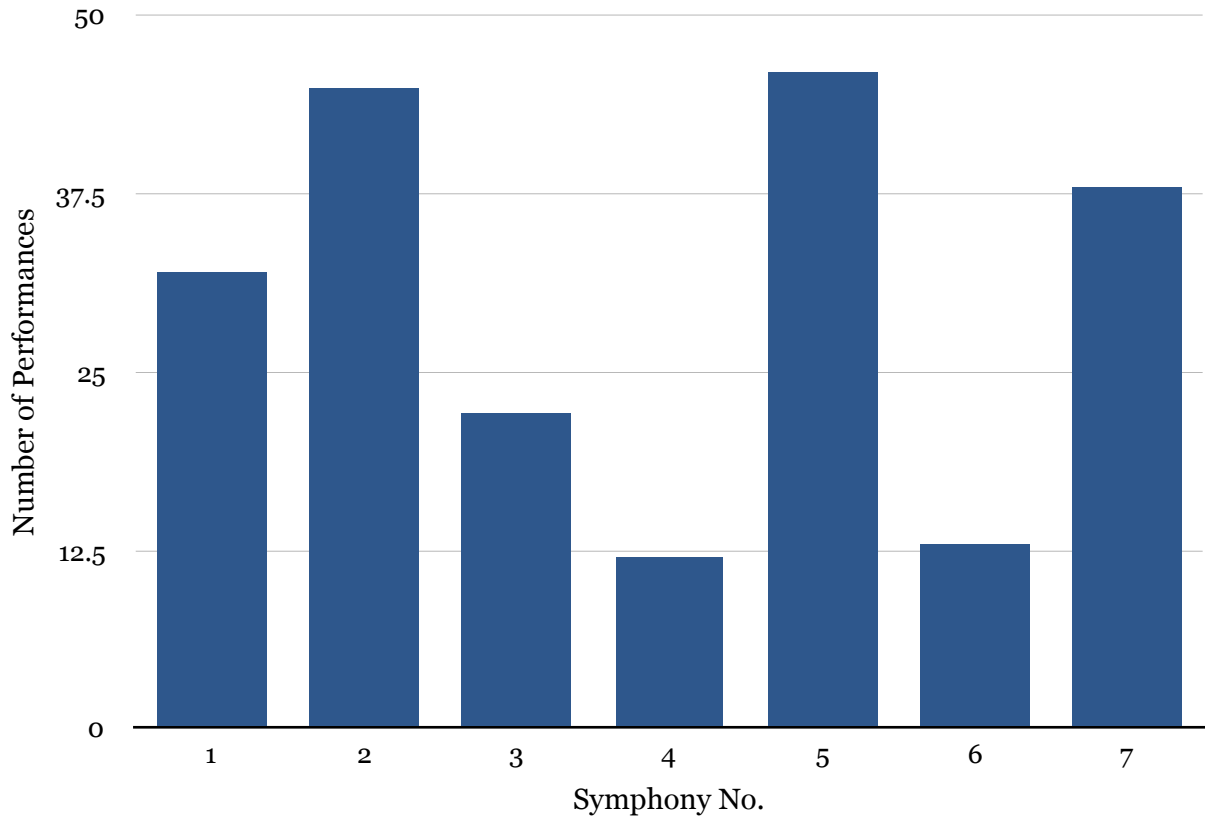
For Sibelius, the symphony was supposedly characterised by its "profound logic that created an inner connection between all the motives" (Ekman, 1936, 176). This quotation is historically problematic, as the only record of it is Ekman's (his secretary) testimony. However, in a 1918 letter, Sibelius wrote, "I am a slave to my themes and submit to their demands" (Ekman, 1936, 239), indicating his mystical conception that musical themes have their own agency, and dictate form. This draws attention to his keen focus on thematic material and the thematic process. Given the rather organicist leanings of these quotations, it will thus be crucial to consider the degree to which his symphonies are formally unusual, and how much they subscribe to existing formal schema.

Compared to some of Sibelius's other symphonies, the Sixth does not superficially appear innovative. Indeed, it seems backward-looking, without the dissonance of the Fourth, or the formal compression of the Fifth or Seventh. Its four-movement structure seems immediately more conservative than the symphonies that surround it (or the Second, with its *attacca* transition from the third into fourth movements). Likewise, it employs several seemingly historicist features: the quasi-Renaissance polyphony of the opening, better understood from a topical than a stylistic perspective; its modality; even the duration of the symphony (approximately 25 minutes), stays away from Mahlerian or Webernian extremes. The

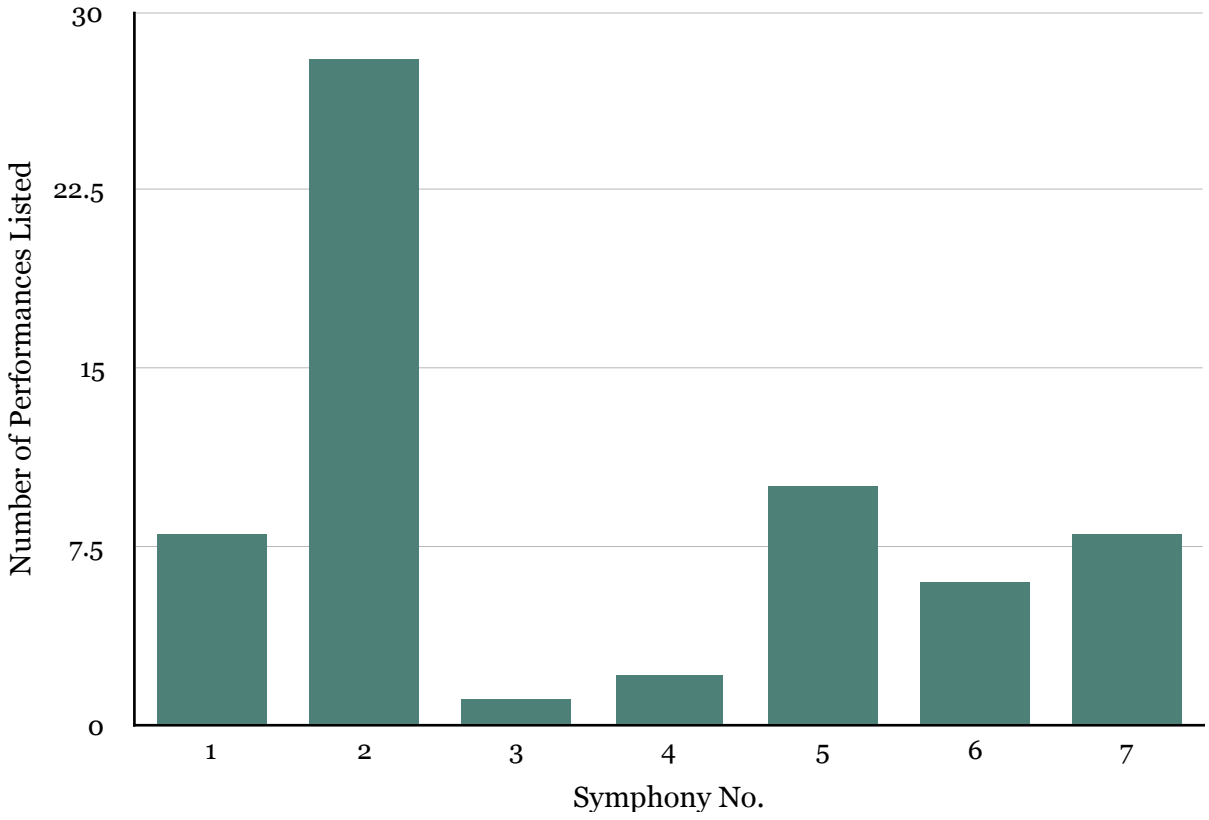
instrumentation similarly suggests a restrained attitude, with double wind (with bass clarinet); a full brass section (excepting tuba); only timpani as percussion; and a harp within an otherwise conventional string section. Much of the string writing is divisi: whilst this is not uncommon by this time, it certainly indicates the densely contrapuntal nature of this piece, especially given this tends to be independent parts rather than octave-doubling. In terms of the melodic-contrapuntal writing, another superficial aspect of this piece is its lack of clear, tuneful melodies, such as characterise the Second and Fifth Symphonies. On the surface level, at least, this might suggest connotations of earlier, pre-Baroque music, prioritising the contrapuntal whole over a melodic identity. On the surface, then, this symphony appears to be backward-looking; the following analysis will attempt to assess the ways in which it is actually rather innovative. The choice of this adjective is particular, avoiding both 'progressive', with its connotations of teleological history and explicit radical behaviour (more appropriate for the Seventh Symphony); and 'modernist', due to its particular chronological associations (typically ascribed to the Fourth). The Oxford Dictionary of English instead defines to innovate as: "[to] Make changes in something established, especially by introducing new methods, ideas, or products." Thus, 'innovative' suggests that the composer engages with pre-existing materials, retaining their basic identity, in this case the concept and surrounding associations of the symphony, but altering them to produce something new.

Before delving into the detail of the symphony, it is worth considering the rather poor reception of this symphony: in academic literature, little is made of it on its own terms; instead, it is usually covered within books devoted to all of Sibelius' symphonies.[1] Performing reception of this symphony has likewise been limited. Ex.1a shows the number of performances for the Sibelius Symphonies at the BBC Proms, from 1924 onwards (the year of the Seventh Symphony's completion).[2] The Proms provide a clear picture of programming at a major Classical music festival over the past near-century, and seem an appropriate way to consider Sibelius's reception, given that it has been notably positive in the UK (Gray, 1996). As can be seen, the Sixth is the second least-popular. It is also interesting to note that of these 13 performances, 5 took place in full cycles of Sibelius' symphonies, and 2 further performances were given alongside other Sibelius symphonies. Rarely, then, has this symphony been allowed to 'stand on its own', rather than as part of comparative programming with other Sibelius works. A more contemporary snapshot is given by the Bachtrack listings of upcoming concerts. Ex.1b gives a chart for this, correct as of 23rd February 2017.[3] Interestingly, the Sixth has apparently become far more popular, with 6

[1] The bibliography lists most significant scholarship on this work: very little focusses on this symphony.
[2] See Appendix 1a.
[3] See Appendix 1b.



Ex.1a: Proms performances of Sibelius Symphonies, 1924-present



Ex.1b: Bachtrack listings of upcoming performances of Sibelius Symphonies

upcoming performances (the mean average per symphony is 9). Nonetheless, in half of these performances this symphony is to be performed alongside other works of Sibelius (in all cases including the Seventh Symphony). Clearly the Sixth has never had the celebrity status of the adjacent symphonies, nor of the Second.

In assessing the innovation of this symphony there are several important viewpoints which, though often interlocking, provide different perspectives on the work. First, there is the overall question of form. This is relevant both in considering what structural approaches Sibelius employs for each movement, and in terms of the symphony as a whole. One of the crucial avenues of exploration for post-Beethovenian composers was integrating the different movements of the symphony into one whole, and this is certainly of major relevance here. On both formal levels, the usual concerns of symphonic composition are paramount: tonality (or here, modality), and thematic material. Not only is this crucial for the articulation of structure within individual movements, but the large-scale disposition of these elements is also vital to understanding the ways in which the symphony as a whole operates.

Forms

Though nineteenth-century symphonic practice had been dominated by formal experimentation, there remained vague expectations of the structures of particular symphonic movements, however loosely they were employed. Crucial to considering these forms is Hepokoski & Darcy's idea of 'deformation', introduced primarily in relation to sonata-movement practice, but applicable to any pre-existing formal schema (Hepokoski & Darcy, 2011). Whilst Horton has outlined the problems with this terminology, primarily that it suggests that there was a strictly codified conception of these forms, which did not exist, it remains a useful way of considering these movements (Horton, 2004, 153-156). Assessing Sibelius's formal decisions is a very helpful way to consider how innovative the symphony is, by ascertaining the degree to which he subscribed to symphonic norms, and the ways in which he diverged from these.

Movement I of this symphony is a perfect example of Sibelius's innovative thinking: cast in sonata form, as expected, and even starting with a symphonic slow introduction (bb.1-28[4]), it appears fairly traditional. Ex.2 gives the structure of the movement. Whilst the Exposition remains, at least globally, fairly traditional, and the Development had little to adhere to in any case, the Recapitulation really demonstrates the formal deformations, primarily through the bizarre format: splitting the Second Group in two, and presenting the second section first,

Section	Subsection	Bars
Slow Introduction		1-28
Exposition	First Group	29-66
	Transition	67-79
	Second Group: First Section	80-84
	Second Group: Second Section	85-94
Development		95-167
Recapitulation	First Group	168-190
	Transition I	191-203
	Second Group: Second Section	204-213
	Transition II	214-219
	Second Group: First Section	220-229
Coda		230-267

Ex.2: Movement I: Structure

[4] See Appendix 2 for a conversion of rehearsal figures into bar numbers.

indicating Sibelius' exploitation of the cellular nature of his thematic material. Right at the start of the Recapitulation, however, Sibelius divorces the thematic and modal structure: the thematic arrival at b.168 that appears to signal the start of the Recapitulation is undermined by a prominent C in the bass. Sibelius' refusal to allow the start of the Recapitulation to function as the primary moment of resolution was not revolutionary in itself, Brahms had explored this in his sonata forms, but it is still highly significant as a deformation of a crucial part of the structure.

In previous sonata movements the point in this was to shift the burden of resolution onto the coda of the movement. In this movement, however, this is not the case. A crucial feature of the first three movements is their lack of effective conclusion. The ways in which this is achieved will be discussed below, but it is certainly the case that these three movements are all structurally truncated; Sibelius carefully manages the proportions of different sections such that these movements cannot conclude. In Movement I, the Coda takes up only 7% of the total number of bars: there simply is not time for it to effectively resolve. By delaying the resolution in both the Recapitulation and Coda, Sibelius leaves the movement requiring continuation.

The following three movements are drawn together by a common formal approach: Hepokoski's 'Rotational Form'. Interestingly, Hepokoski has himself considered the final movement of this symphony from that perspective: whilst his analysis will be discussed below, that formal plan fits Movements II & III too. It is worth quoting Hepokoski to outline his view of the basic elements of Rotational Form:

> "a rotational structure is more of a process than an architectural formula. In such a process Sibelius initially presents a relatively straightforward 'referential statement' of contrasting ideas. This is a series of differentiated figures, motives, themes, and so on […]. The referential statement may either cadence or recycle back through a transition to a second broad rotation. Second (and any subsequent) rotations normally rework all or most of the referential statement's material, which is now elastically treated. Portions may be omitted, merely alluded to, compressed, or, contrarily, expanded or even 'stopped' and reworked 'developmentally'. New material may also be added or generated. Each subsequent rotation may be heard as an intensified, meditative reflection on the material of the referential statement." (Hepokoski, 1993, 25)

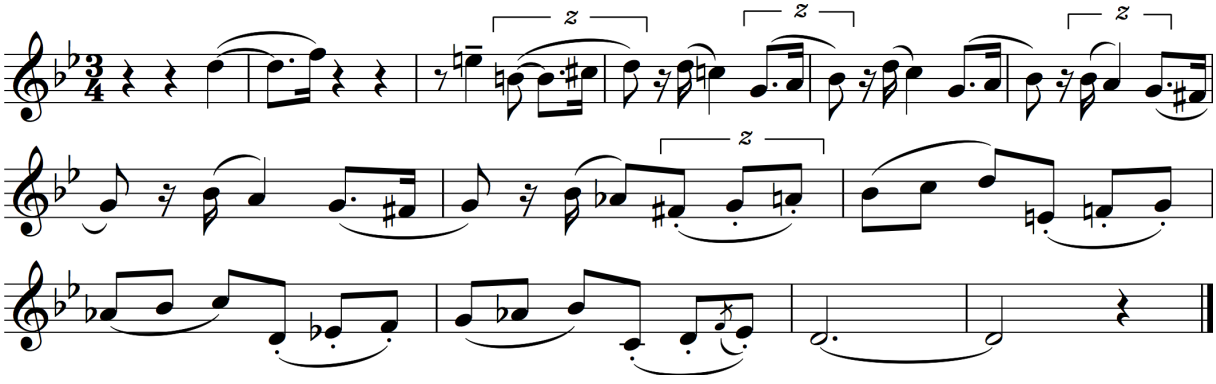
There are several features worth drawing attention to, before discussing Rotational Form in this piece. Hepokoski's understanding of it as more procedural than prescriptively structural means that it continues to interact with other formal schema, and also implies the sort of organic formal thinking that Sibelius supposedly sought. Conversely, a potential drawback is how much it can admit: the final three sentences of the quotation reveal vague criteria for a

rotational form. Where Rotational Form is used to describe the following movements, then, decisions are justified by considering the interplay of thematic, textural, and modal structures, rather than Hepokoski's exclusively thematic approach. Though Hepokoski has outlined the potential background of this formal strategy in Finnish folk and Russian music (Hepokoski, 1993, 23-26), it is important to note just how innovative this formal approach is, especially in a symphonic context: not only does it introduce a cyclical temporal framework, but it allows for the complex management of structural goals and articulation in a highly fluid, and original, manner.

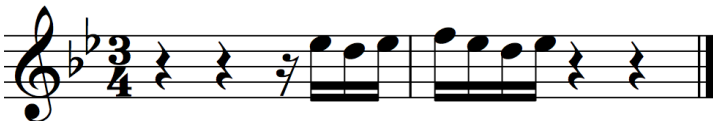
Ex.3 gives a table of rotations for Movement II. It is worth immediately acknowledging that the fourth rotation fits much less effectively. Each of the first three rotations is constructed from three sections: the opening $^{6}8/^{3}4$ oscillation; the dotted-rhythm melody (Ex.4); and the ascending scalic passages introduced at b.34, with various alterations as the rotations progress. As Ex.3 shows, the first three rotations also get successively shorter, achieved as much through a redistribution of the proportions of the different sections as a wholesale compression. Across these first three clearly differentiated rotations there is a sense of cumulative development: despite the cyclical form, there appears to be something of a linear progression towards b.116, where the texture suddenly radically changes. Quieter and more active, the material seems to be apparently new, and the bottom register is removed (a very common trait within this symphony); after this texture is set up, it is overlaid with more obviously thematic cells in the winds (e.g. Ex.5), before the return of the scalic section. It is this return that suggests the tenuous interpretation of this as Rotation 4. If bb.116-162 is

Rotation	Bars	Duration
1	1-45	45
2	46-82	36
3	83-115	32
4	116-166	50

Ex.3: Movement II: Rotational Structure



Ex.4: Rotation: Second Section



Ex.5: S-Motive

understood as a reworking of the second section material, then this can be understood as the third section.

Simultaneously, however, we should understand this movement in ternary form: the A section, consisting of the first three rotations, is clearly separated off from the B section (bb. 116-162) thematically, texturally, and modally, and the return of this scalic passage can then be understood as attempting to recapture the A section. Thus, it is very similar to the end of Movement I: the movement ends before it has really had a chance to conclude. Across the course of this movement, then, there are two intersecting formal archetypes playing out, both of which are denied their conclusion.

Many of the same features pervade Movement III, which functions as a quasi scherzo & trio. Ex. 6 gives the rotation-structure for this movement; immediately noticeable is the wide variety in the durations of these different rotations. Of course, this is something that is perfectly acceptable within Hepokoski's definition of the formal process, but it is nonetheless an interesting aspect of the structure, indicating Sibelius's formal freedom.

As in Movement II, the rotations follows a clear structure, articulated through coordinated thematic, modal, and textural change. The first section is primarily characterised by prominent double-dotted rhythms. This is developed into a more melodic section juxtaposing

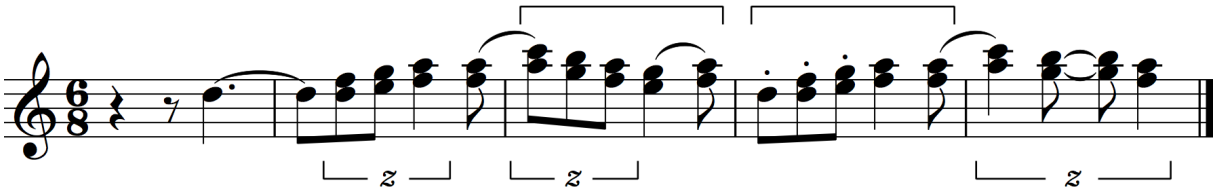
Rotation	Bars	Modality
1a	1-8	D Mode
1b	8-32	D Dorian
1c	32-44	D Mixolydian
2a	45-110	A Mode 53: G Mode 65: D Mode 99: Transition
2b	110-134	D Dorian
2c	134-146	G Mode
3a	147-217	D Mode 167: A Mode 203: Transition
3b	218-225	D Dorian

Ex.6: Movement III: Rotational Structure

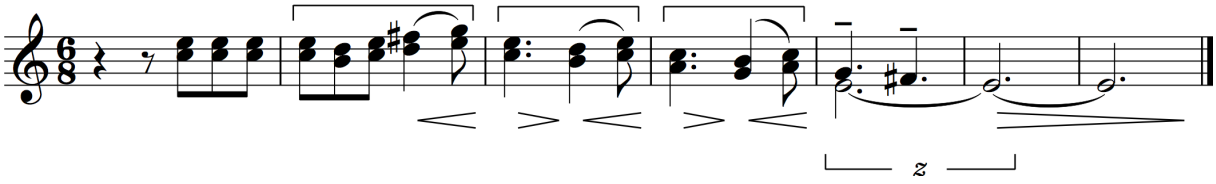
melodic fragments (Ex.7) with scalic passages. Gradually, the scales dominate before cascading down into a new section, which essentially consists of a two-part texture: a quaver ostinato-pattern in the strings, above which the winds sound apparently new material (Ex.8). Like in Movement II, Sibelius alters the structure as it proceeds: in Rotation 2a, Sibelius introduces another theme (Ex.9), presented canonically between flute and harp, and thus treats the double-dotted material, previously the musical surface, as accompaniment. Likewise, Sibelius continues this expansion and development in Rotation 3a.

Much as in the earlier movements, however, it is the end that is formally the most interesting. Rather than fulfilling the total structure of the rotation, Sibelius instead fragments the second section melodic material, scoring it antiphonally at ***ff*** dynamics, leading to a violent, abrupt end to the movement. The similarities to earlier movements could hardly be clearer: again an allusion to a final concluding section is made, but as soon as it has had enough time to be recognised it is cut short, denied a conclusion.

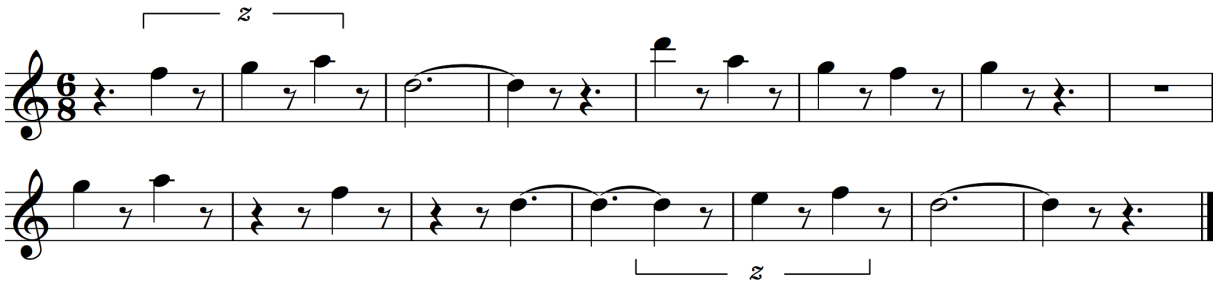
Movement IV is more formally ambiguous than any other, and, consequently, scholars have suggested many different interpretations (see Murtomäki, 1993, 226 for an exposition of these). The most convincing is Hepokoski's rotational-form understanding of this (Hepokoski, 2007). He proposes nine rotations, structured around a quasi-arch form whereby the telos is introduced in the third repetition, repeated in the fourth, and 'shattered'



Ex.7: Movement III: Second Section Theme



Ex.8: Movement III: Third Section Theme



Ex. 9: Movement III: New Theme for First Section

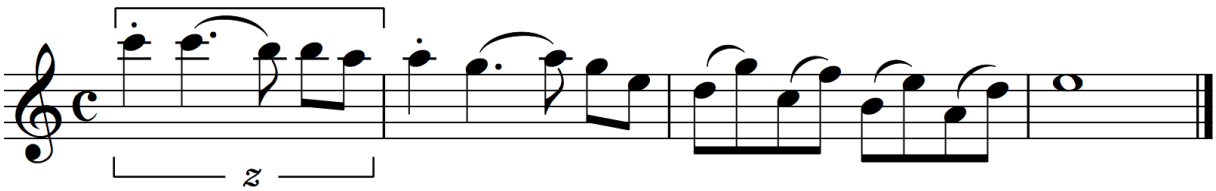
in the fifth, before a gradual decay through the final rotations. Whilst the basic rotational understanding is sound, his local choices of rotation have problems, and there are more productive ways to consider the overall structure. Ex.10 outlines an alternative reading of the structure, which also shows a global A-B-A'-Coda form.

With this overall structure outlined, it is worth turning to the inner structure of the rotations themselves. Rotations 1-3 are based on a tripartite division of material: a descending theme (Ex.11a); an ascending theme (Ex.11b); and a further section based on a descending triplets theme (Ex.11c). In Rotation 1, the first two of these themes are juxtaposed as an antecedent-consequent pair (e.g. bb.1-8; 9-16), and alteration happens within these units; in Rotations 2-3, these two themes are split up to form different sections of the rotations.

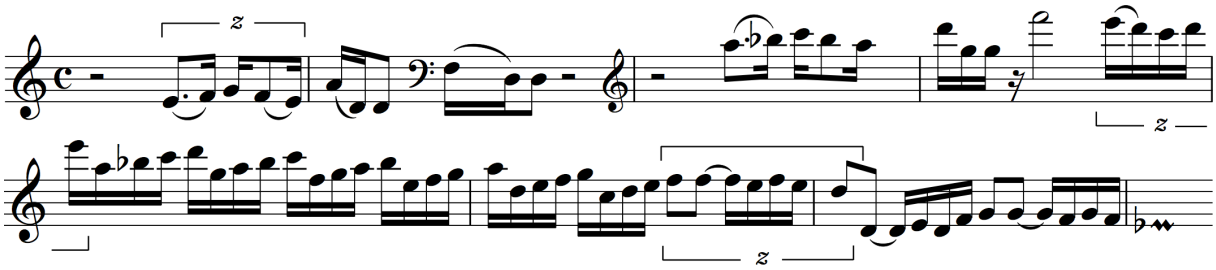
Rotation 4, the final rotation of the B section, despite being the longest, dispenses with the third section of the structure, now just treating the first two themes as different sections. This bipartite structure also sets up the final three rotations, which reprise the opening material more closely, though with modal changes. Crucially, these rotations return to the form of Rotation 1 by immediately juxtaposing the two themes, and developing repetitions of the pair of juxtaposed themes, rather than separating the themes into different sections; the difference is the lack of the third theme. It is also worth outlining the structure of Rotations 6 & 7, as they diverge slightly from Rotation 5. In Rotation 6, the crucial feature is the addition of an introductory 8 bars, based upon a melodic cell (Ex.12) derived from the opening of Ex. 11ai. In Rotation 7, this introductory section is preserved, and each section is then 'doubled up', as shown in Ex.13. Finally, at the end of Rotation 7 comes the Coda, marked off by the halving of the tempo and the calming of the music, and at b.224 an apparently new theme (Ex.14). This movement thus provides an excellent example of the formal ingenuity with which Sibelius treated his Rotation Forms, exploring all sorts of structural variations.

Bars	Rotation	Section
1-48	1	A
49-77	2	B
78-107	3	
108-146	4	
146-172	5	A'
173-188	6	
189-220	7	
221-256	Coda	

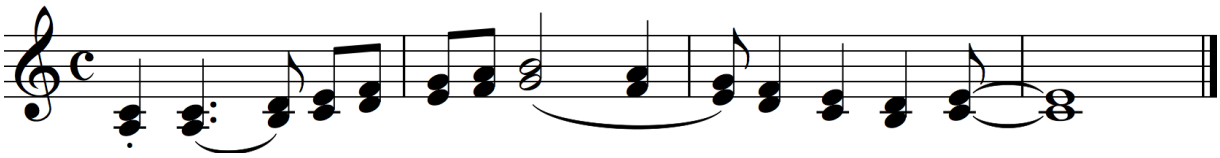
Ex.10: Movement IV: Rotational Structure



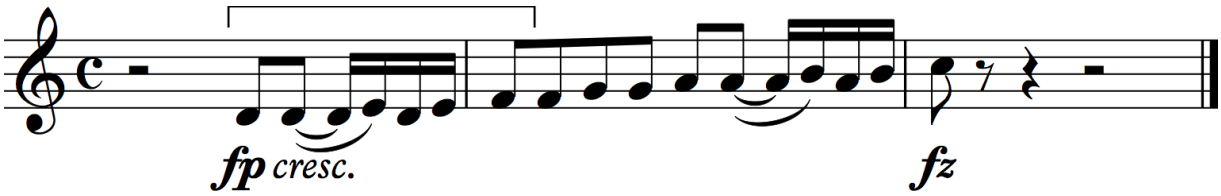
Ex.11ai: Rotation 1: Descending Theme



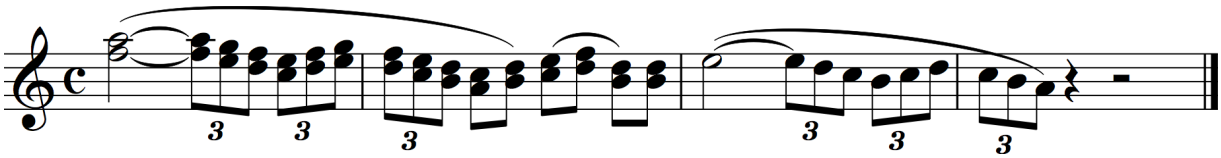
Ex.11aii: Rotation 2: Descending Theme



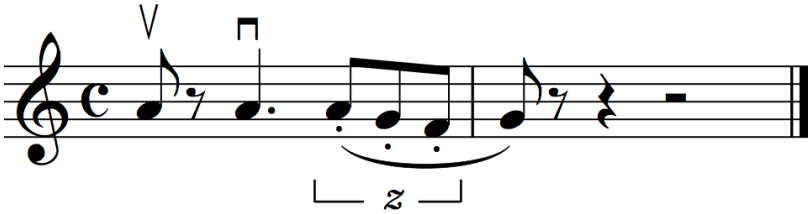
Ex.11bi: Rotation 1: Ascending Theme



Ex.11bii: Rotation 2: Ascending Theme



Ex.11c: Descending Triplets



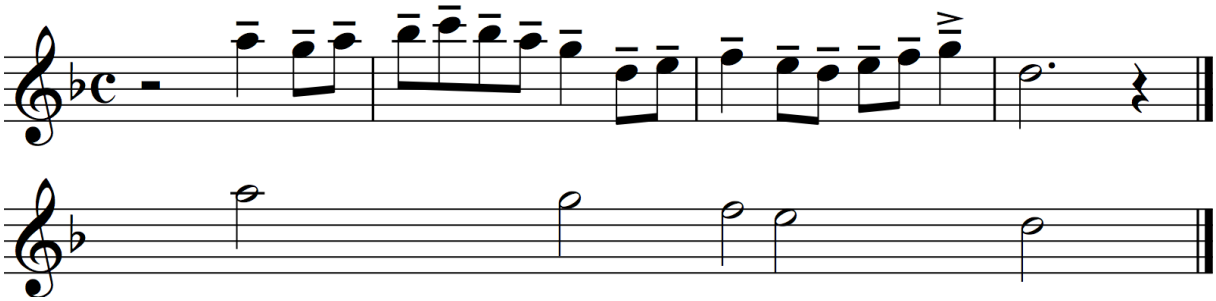
Ex.12: Introductory Section Melodic Cell

There is a crucial difference with the ending of this movement, however: it is given space to conclude. Whereas the previous movements were violently cut short, and so demanded continuation, this movement is given a coda which not only resolves the harmonic and

melodic questions of the symphony, but calms the music with the decrease in rhythmic activity and the gradual diminuendo, and is given an adequate proportion of the total duration to achieve this.[5] As this analysis has shown, formally this symphony is very innovative: not just due to Sibelius's highly original Rotation Forms, but also the resultant formal flexibility, and his use of these forms alongside more traditional archetypes.

Bars	Section
189-196	Introductory Section 1
197-204	Introductory Section 2
205-208	Ascending Theme Statement 1
209-212	Descending Theme Statement 1
213-216	Ascending Theme Statement 2
217-220	Descending Theme Statement 2

Ex.13: Rotation 7: Structure



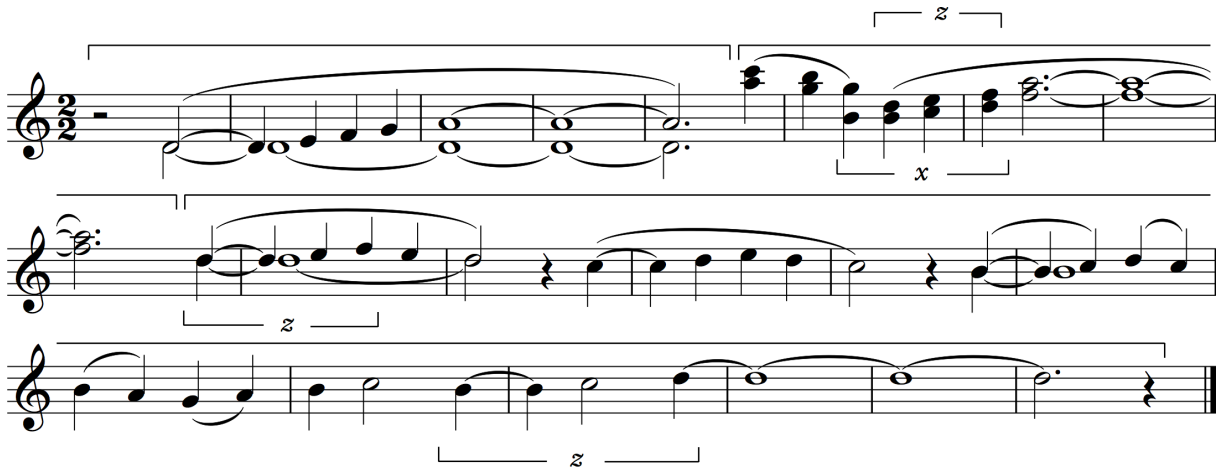
Ex.14: Coda Theme

[5] See Appendix 3 for a comparison of the Coda-durations of Movements I & IV.

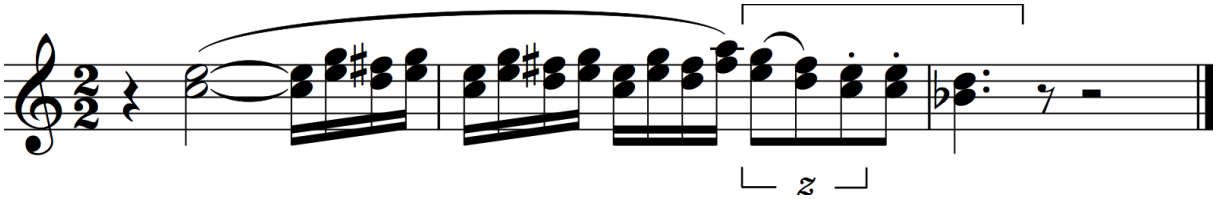
Thematic Material

The overall thematic structure has been laid out above, and so this discussion will concentrate mainly on thematic manipulation and its long-term implications. Before engaging with this, though, it is worth noting how crucial the thematic material is for the articulation of the structure throughout. In particular in the last three movements, the form of the various rotations is principally articulated by the thematic and textural material. Not only are there particularly innovative features in the construction of the thematic material, but its disposition across the symphony has crucial structural ramifications, binding the movements together, and creating a linear form despite the cyclic structures.

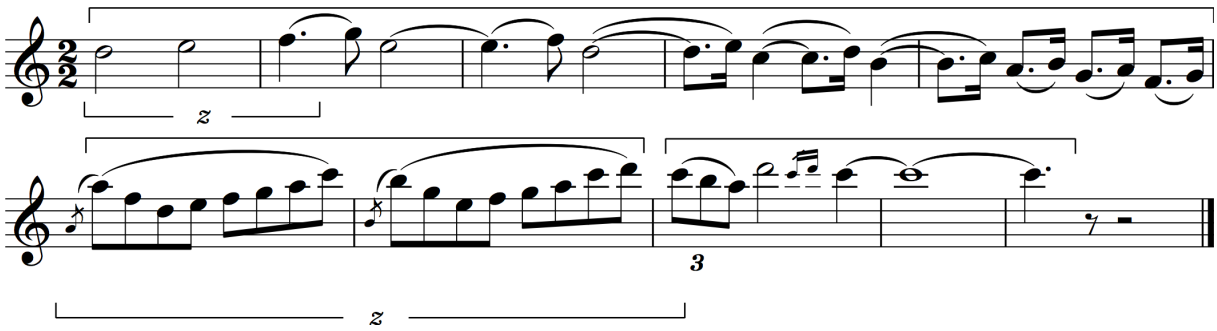
This is much the case in Movement I, where the thematic material articulates the sonata structure: Exx.15, 16, & 17 give these themes from the Exposition. Highly significant is their potential for subdivision into smaller groupings (brackets), often articulated through orchestration as well as melodically, which is particularly significant in the Development and Recapitulation. In all of these themes, some of these subgroups are similarly constructed from cellular fragmentation and repetition, which is also the manner of thematic treatment that Sibelius employs for the transition (Ex.18 shows these various stages), and the Development. The deformations that take place in the Recapitulation also employ this method of cellular division (see Ex. 2). Likewise, the material for Transition I is largely built from a two-part theme (Ex.19), which seems new. In fact, it can be understood as deriving



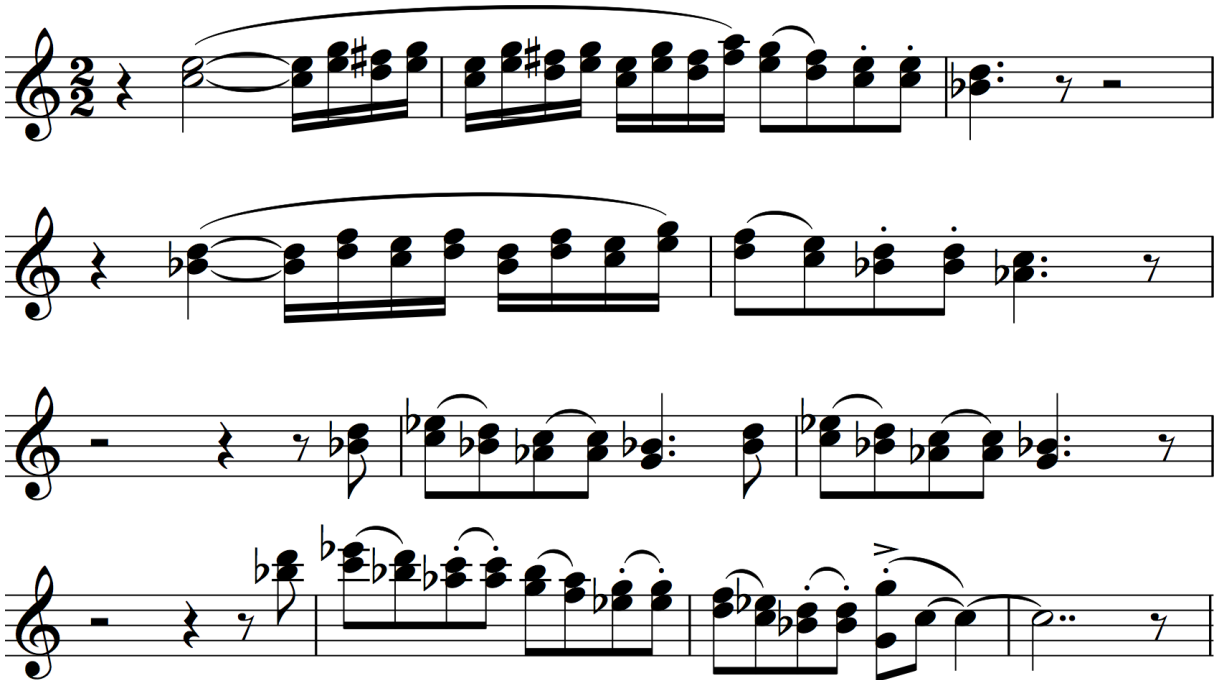
Ex.15: First Group



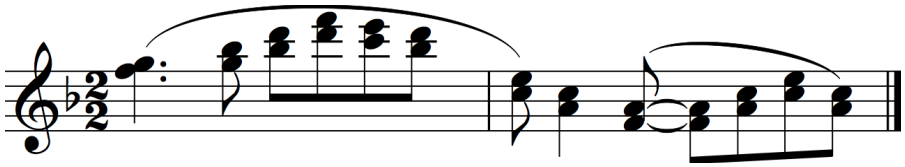
Ex.16: Transition



Ex.17: Second Group



Ex.18: Transition Material Transformation



Ex.19: 'New' Theme

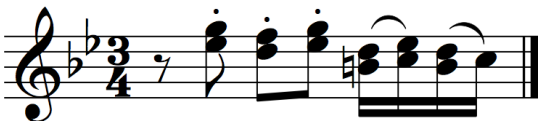
from the middle section of Ex.17. The first bar of Ex.19 essentially inverts it; the second bar is just built from the first three notes, now given an identifiable syncopated rhythm.

In Movement II, the thematic and textural material is equally crucial for the articulation of successive rotations. The first section of Rotation 2, for example, continues the opening material in the winds, underlaid with rising scalic passages in the strings. These passages continue through the second section of the rotation, before being taken up in full in the third section, characterised by exactly this sort of scalic writing. The effect of this is, to some degree, thematic synthesis, blurring the boundary between the end of the first rotation and

the second, but it also articulates this rotation as structurally different and creates a greater sense of onward motion. Likewise, it continues the duple/triple dichotomy that was set up right at the beginning, with the metric ambiguity of the opening material. The same general effect takes place during Rotation 3: the first section is again underlayed with scalic passages, this time filling in triplet-quaver subdivisions, and with triplet-semiquaver and demisemiquaver flourishes too. When the central theme takes over, the accompaniment now provides all the semiquaver subdivisions. Though this specific rhythmic impetus is not continued into the scalic passage, Sibelius instead expands this section by increasing the orchestration and counterpointing descending scales against the ascending ones, as well as by introducing new material at b.108 (Ex.20).

Both Movements III and IV function in largely the same way, but there are a few comments to make on thematic transformation in Movement IV. Whilst the various structural restatements of the material through Rotations 2-3 are easily apparent, it is worth outlining the thematic links between Rotations 1 and 2 (Ex.11), especially given the character of the music is so different (hence the global move from the A-section to the B-section), and given Hepokoski's reading actually subdivides Rotation 1 into two separate rotations (at b.17). The second and third of these themes are clear, with only minor alterations; it is the first that is perhaps the least explicit in its motivic links, which thus plays an interesting part in the articulation of the form: because the restatement of this first theme initially appears unrelated, it seems to mark the start of a new section; only as it progresses do we actually understand it as repeating the first rotation. What takes place in this first theme is a reordering of events, with the addition of a new, thematically unrelated, introductory section. The third bar of Ex.11ai is expanded into 1.5 bars (Ex.11aii: bb.5-6): whilst the similarities are fairly clear in this semiquaver passagework, Sibelius makes the point explicitly by harmonising each of the quavers of Ex.11ai as triads in the Second Violins & Violas. The first two bars of the initial statement of this theme are transplanted to the end of the second statement and rhythmically diminuted: the brackets in both examples show the location of each of these cells.

The other major feature of significance in relation to the thematic material is its ambiguity and inter-movement links. This symphony lacks any climatic melodic section, largely because the thematic material is very economical in its construction. Ex.15, for example, has very little in terms of characteristic rhythmic material, but also the first and third subsections are essentially stepwise. With a lack of clear pitch-interval content they fail to assert a strong



Ex.20: Movement II: Rotation 3, Third Section 'New Theme'

identity. Indeed, the first subsection is simply an ascending scalic pentachord, which gives rise to the third subsection too, though here the pentachord is contracted into a trichord. Ex. 11 suggests the same ideas: though there are some more characteristic rhythmic patterns, with the exception of Ex.11aii almost the entirety of the material is stepwise in construction.

In the case of Movement II, the material is metrically ambiguous, most obviously at the start of the movement: not only is the music essentially in $^{6}_{8}$, but it is syncopated. This is particularly interesting given that Sibelius does not outline this syncopation to the listener: there is no referential downbeat. Instead, it conveys a feeling of unease, as the performer treats the start of each impulse as both an emphatic new note, and a less certain upbeat-figure. Sibelius further explores this in the latter part of the second section of the rotation (Ex.4), partitioning the ascending scales into two, again suggesting $^{6}_{8}$. Indeed, there is additional metric instability in this theme: it feels as if it should be a beat earlier, also emphasised by the winds.

Movement IV exemplifies how Sibelius links the themes. The transformation from Rotation 1 to 2 has already been discussed, but it is worth detailing the links between the themes themselves, which again rely upon their cellular construction. The cell from the first bar of Ex.11ai, for example, is repeated in Ex.11ai b.2, but also gives rise, in inversion, to the first bar of Ex.11bi. Likewise, the last two bars of Ex.11ai are essentially refined to give the last two bars of Ex.11bi. Similar links exist between the themes of Rotation 2: the rhythmic cell in Ex. 11aii (bb.6-7) recurs in Ex.11bii both at the start and the end, again in inversion.

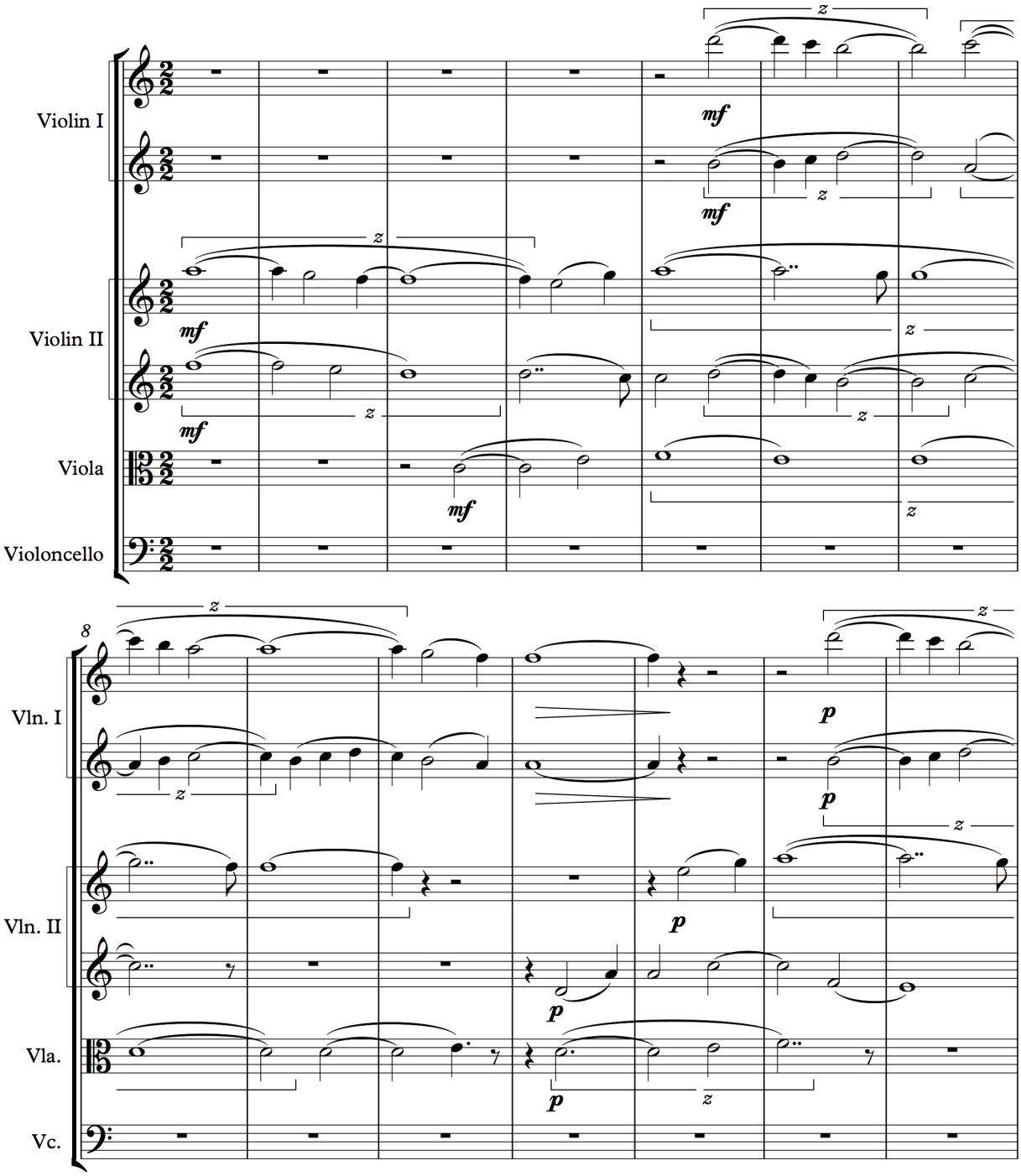
Perhaps the most important thematic link, however, comes in the first three bars of the entire piece (Ex.21): two syncopated voices articulating $\hat{5}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{3}$ & $\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$. It seems ridiculous to claim that three stepwise pitches could constitute a motive, let alone that this could bind the symphony together, but considering the many bigger themes cited earlier, groups of three ascending or descending stepwise notes are thematically crucial (marked *z*). In terms of the Slow Introduction itself, though the writing appears largely athematic, it is saturated with these 3-note groupings (Ex.22[6]). It is almost inevitable that three stepwise notes would come up regularly, but they are particularly relevant to much of the thematic material of this

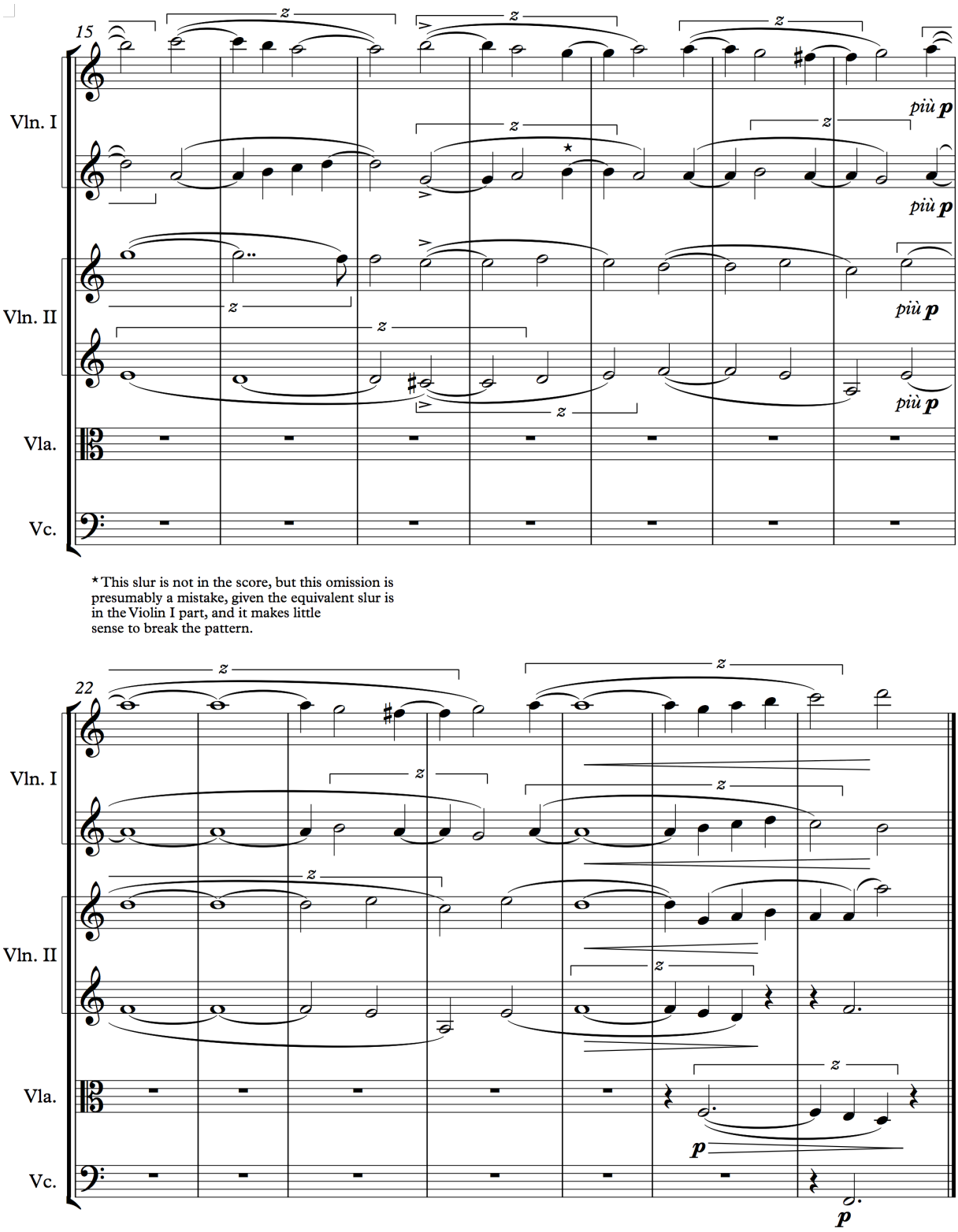
Ex.21: Bb. 1-3

[6] Only the most explicit are marked here, largely where they are reinforced by Sibelius' phrase markings.

symphony. Howell has labelled this sort of thematic analysis 'Germ-Motive' Theory, but in his analysis he considers this three-note motive only as relevant in terms of functioning as a scale-segment, rather than as a motive on its own terms (Howell, 1989, 123).

These sort of links between themes independent of their further transformation have several important ramifications, primarily significant because by linking the themes together, Sibelius creates clear relationships both within and across the movements, thus creating a strong sense of the symphonic whole. Though this was a common aim for symphonic composers, the extent to which he achieves this is remarkable: a clear example of his





Ex.22: Movement I: Slow Introduction

innovative approach. In particular, this means that having finished movements inconclusively, successive movements can pick up and further develop the thematic material, creating linear progression. The crucial part of this comes in considering the theme of the Coda. Ex.14 shows how the 'new' coda theme ornaments a stepwise descent from $\hat{5}$-$\hat{1}$, an

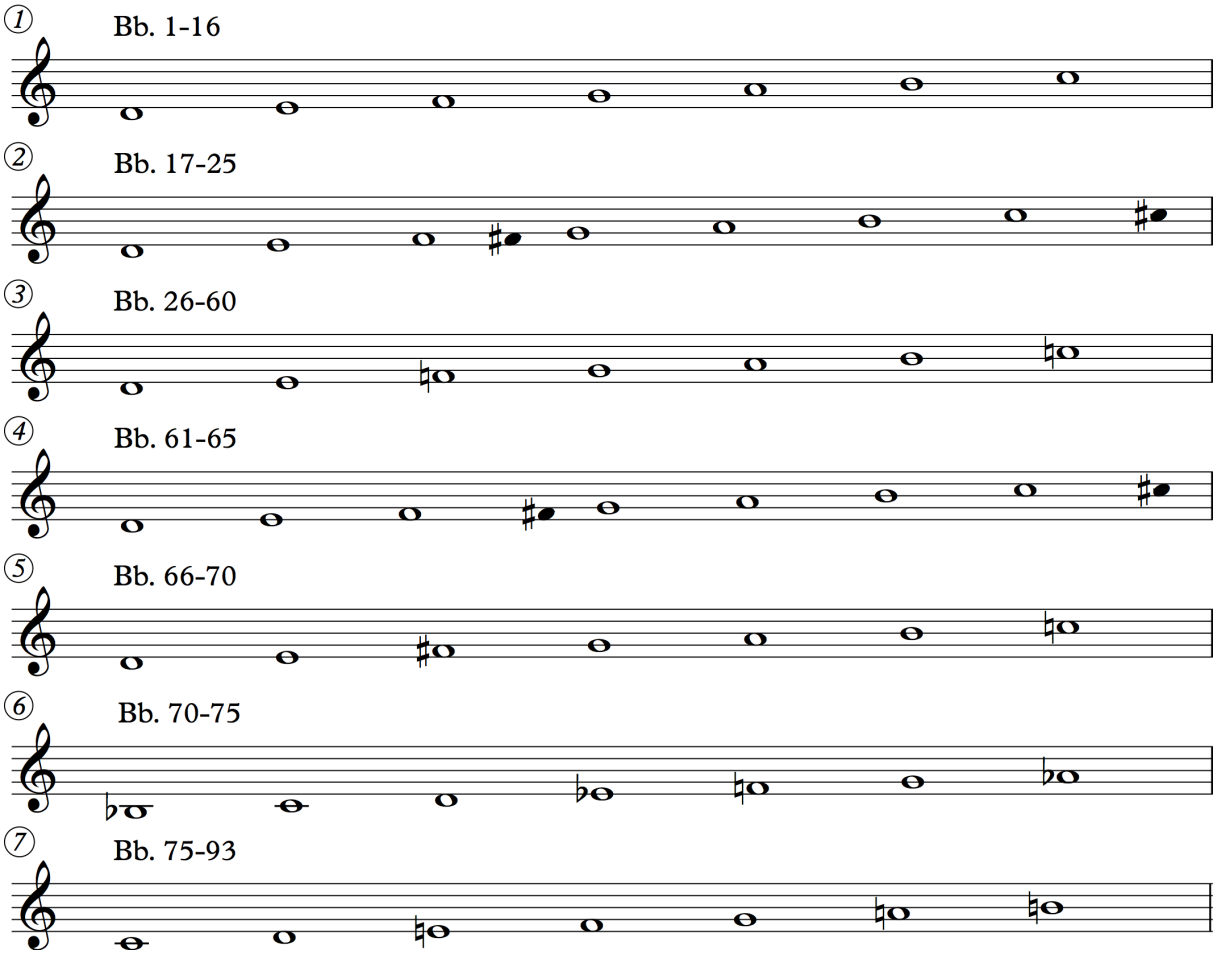
expansion of the $\hat{5}$-$\hat{4}$-$\hat{3}$ and $\hat{3}$-$\hat{2}$-$\hat{1}$ motifs. The almost entirely stepwise nature of the theme links it to much of the earlier thematic material, whilst the compass of a minor seventh recalls Ex.11b, and the twisting nature of the first four beats suggests Ex.5 (further emphasised by the inverted version in the violas and cellos).

Alongside rotational form, Hepokoski has introduced a formal concept he calls 'Teleological Genesis': "a composition as gradually generative towards the revelation of a higher or fuller condition" (Hepokoski, 1993, 26). This point of arrival, the 'telos', he suggests is typically characterised by "melodic fullness, articulation, climatic texture and dynamics, eruptions of out-bursts, and so on" (Hepokoski, 2007, 329). This telos-theme tends to be apparently new material, but built from the gradual expansion, across various rotations, of some basic generative seed. It would be hard to find a better description of the function of this Coda theme in relation to the symphony as a whole, with its restrained nature suiting the overall character. It is for this reason that the first three movements are denied effective closure: everything builds towards this final Coda, the telos of the entire symphony. Not only do we see an original structural approach, then, creating linearity within the cyclic stasis of the rotational forms, but Sibelius's deft handling of his thematic material works coherently to achieve a unified whole; as ever, a conventional aim achieved in radical ways.

Modality

Perhaps the most unusual feature of this symphony is its modal, rather than tonal construction. Traditionally, large-scale tonal motion, clearly delineated through functional harmony, was an integral part of symphonic composition; within a modal context, this is hugely weakened. Nonetheless, modality certainly has structural function in the symphony. Solely to make this choice of a modal underpinning was remarkably bold: the ways in which Sibelius explores and achieves this further his innovative approach, as he finds equivalents for conventional tonal procedures within his new modal context.

Movement I provides the clearest example of this, with its sonata form basis, a formal approach predicated upon tonal polarisation. Ex.23 gives the pc content of the Slow Introduction and Exposition. Modally, the Slow Introduction sets up D Dorian as the centre of the piece, a departure from the conventional function of the Introduction, which usually begins off-tonic and then approaches the tonic. This happens because it is only really through the consistent use of this pc collection, combined with a melodic emphasis on D, that Sibelius



Ex.23: Slow Introduction & Exposition: Modal Structure

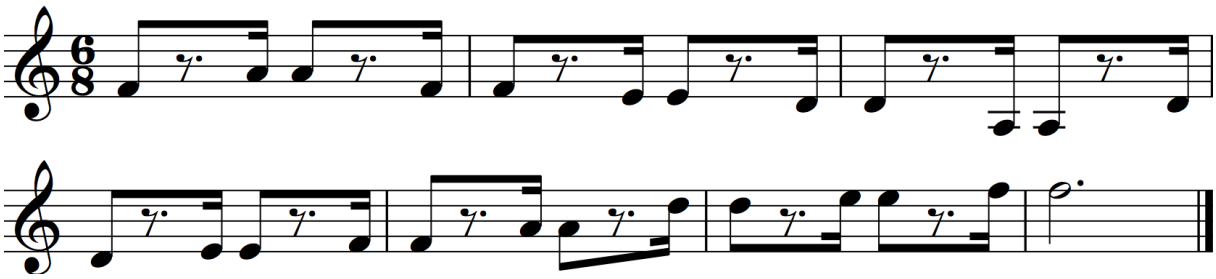
can affirm D Dorian. Thus, despite a few 'musica ficta' notes (filled-in noteheads in Ex.23), the collection is highly consistent, and remains so during the First Group (bb.29-66).

The hierarchy of key relations that had traditionally underpinned the First Group-Second Group distinction no longer applies in a modal context, and Sibelius was thus left to find an equivalent. He chose to retain the pc collection, but reinterpret the root-note, as Ex.23 shows. It is perhaps here that the 'problem' of modal ambiguity is clearest, as the root-note of the collection takes a while to be established. Certainly, the transition has weakened the sense of D as a clear centre: three bars of static C-E harmony hint at a C tonic, before Sibelius uses pcs outside of the previous collection. As Ex.23 indicates, this happens because Sibelius transposes the melodic material through successive modes which, rather than having a long-term structural function, are brief moves. This sort of unusual harmonic freedom is typical of modal harmony; swift and unprepared moves like this are easy to carry out. This certainly weakens the relative security that the Introduction and First Group had established; the Second Group then reorientates the listener to hear C as the root, rather than D. Interestingly, although Sibelius could now use perfect cadences in the newly-understood collection, he does not, and so this reorientation can only take place over time. Thus the end of the transition already returns to the diatonic pc collection, and bb.80-82 even hints at a D-root.

The Development is, on the whole, less significant than the Exposition from this perspective because tonal freedom was expected. Whilst there is rarely a consistent pc collection, and even less rarely a clear root-note to the collections he does establish, there is a predilection for flat-side movement, thus suggesting motion in a quasi-subdominant direction. Whilst this is not in itself unusual, modal moves in the Recapitulation and Coda are likewise often with the addition of flats (e.g. b.214ff.; b.255ff.): all the time negating conventional tonic-dominant motion.

Not only is the start of the Recapitulation modally problematic, but Sibelius also refuses to subscribe to the expected modal plan of the ensuing Recapitulation. Rather than transposing the Second Group material into the 'home' modality of the movement (i.e. D Dorian), he presents the latter two stages of the Second Group (see Ex.2) in the original key of C Ionian, and the 'new' theme (Ex.19) in an ambiguous F major/C Mixolydian region. It is only firmly given some sense of a clear modality at bb.198/199, and here the modality is C Ionian. It is thus clear that across this movement Sibelius goes some way towards articulating the form through the modal structure, but due to this modal underpinning he has to approach structure in a new way.

Movement III is the other movement that provides the best example of Sibelius's use of modality to articulate structure (see Ex.6). In several cases, where no specific mode is

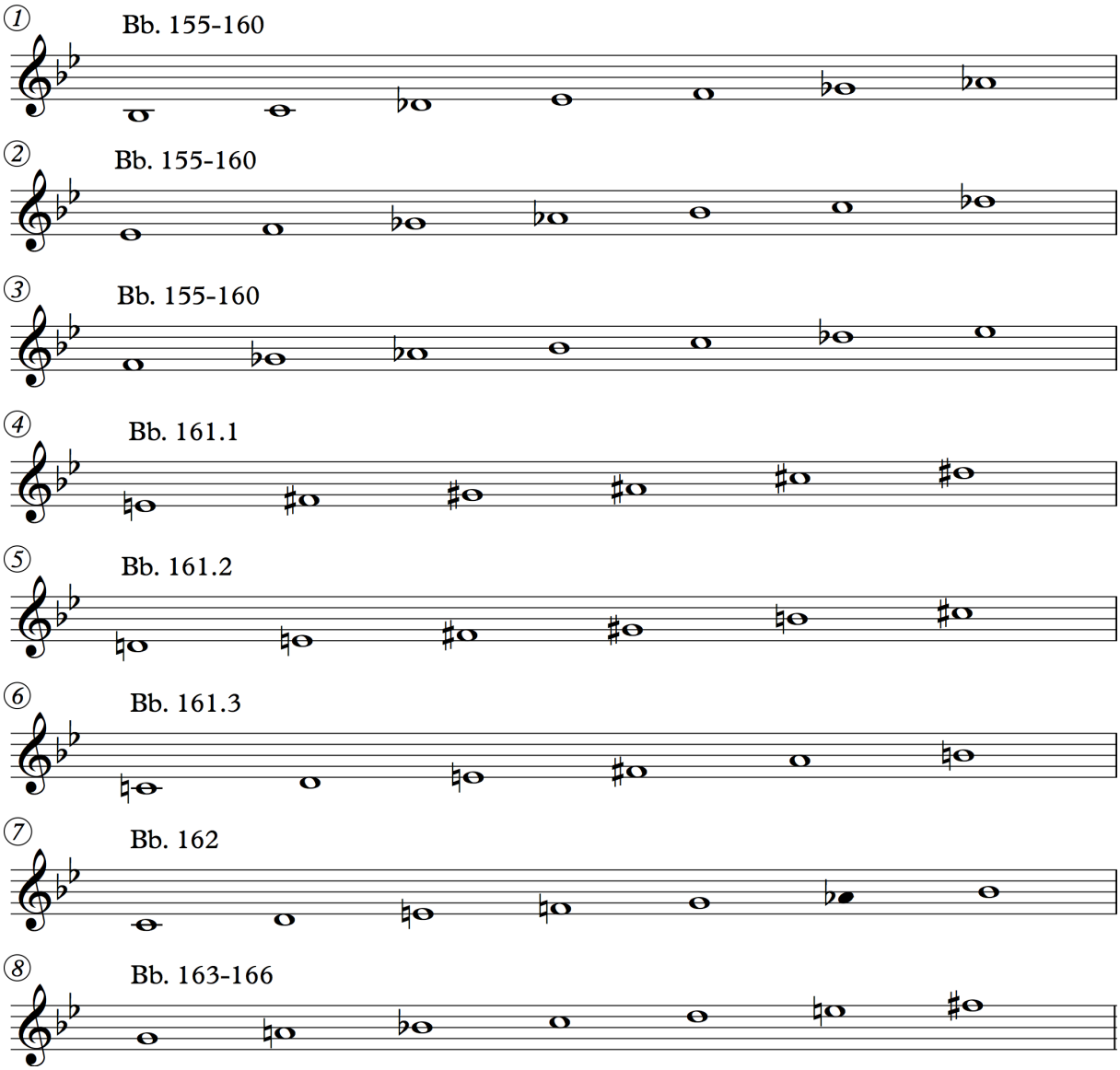


Ex.24: Movement III: Opening Melody

identified, this is because the music lacks all seven pcs, and therefore remains ambiguous. At several points there is something of a disconnection between the melodic writing and the harmony: the opening melody (Ex.24), for example, suggests an F-root mode, but as it is surrounded by D minor harmony, this is what aurally wins out, and indeed this same ambivalence recurs each time this music returns. It is perhaps worth noting that in the surrounding harmony of bb.1-8, only the third horn sounds a D, weakening the clarification of the harmony. This ambiguity is to some extent inevitable in modal music, but Sibelius does make clear use of modal transpositions to articulate the structure of the movement through the different rotations, perhaps most obviously in Rotation 2, which moves outside of the D-root modes of Rotations 1 & 3, and thus provides overall modal motion from and back to D.

As outlined above, one of the most interesting features of this symphony is the manner in which the first three movements fail to conclude, and the modal structures of these movements play a crucial part in this. In the coda of Movement I, rather than asserting D Dorian as a clear 'home' modality, the music is intensely chromatic: indeed, up until b.259 it is modally unclear, and the modality it then reaches is C Ionian, with an ***ff*** C major chord in b.262. This is followed by four bars of D Dorian, but they appear almost as an afterthought, separated from the previous music: not an achievement. The end of Movement II is similarly weak from a modal perspective. Ex.25 outlines the end of the movement: in sum, an ambiguous pc collection (Modes 1/2/3) is altered and then transposed sequentially (Modes 4-5-6) before climaxing in what is essentially C Mixolydian. An abrupt about-turn then drops into a G minor mode, which has four bars to try to assert itself as the 'home' mode of the movement. The similarities to the tonal plan of Movement I are easily apparent, again with a climax in the 'wrong' mode very close to the end, followed, without transition, by a passage in the 'correct' mode. In this movement the large-scale IV-I move is mirrored in the final cadence (Ex.26), with unabashed parallel movement. The inversion of the pre-dominant and dominant chords in what would otherwise be a standard cadential progression, as well as the metric weakening of the cadence create an inconclusive end to this movement.

The end of Movement III does not fit this model as easily from a modal perspective: from b. 218-end the modality is unequivocally D Dorian. Nonetheless, the approach to this is less conclusive, primarily due to the Tristan Chords in bb.211-213 & 214-217 (Ex.27). That the

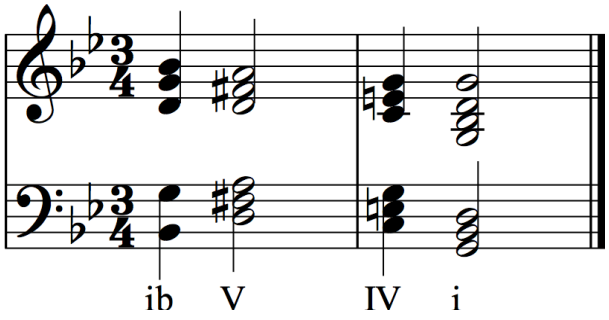


Ex.25: Movement III: Modality at End

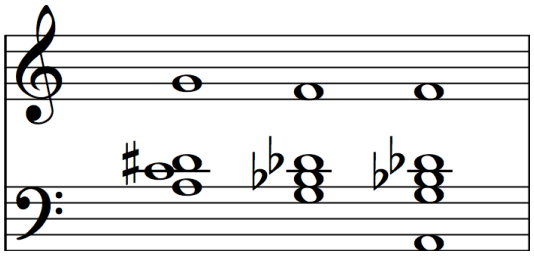
second of these is underpinned with an A proposes it as $A_m{}^9$ with a double appoggiatura (Ex. 28); however, whilst this would support a final conclusion in D minor, the movement finishes in D Dorian. Thus, rather than confirming the modal conclusion of the movement, the B♭ and C#/D♭ interrupt it, only affirmative of D as the root, not the modal identity.

Finally, there is the Coda of Movement IV. Marked off by a new theme, resoundingly in D Dorian, it is this mode that triumphs after the struggle of the symphony. Sibelius does not leave this for the whole of the Coda: b.240 includes a rare sharp-side move, hinting at a C#-based mode, perhaps Dorian or Aeolian; this move is itself a response to the equivalent flat-side interjection at bb.235-237, which perhaps posits F Aeolian, though this is unclear. Both of these are reprised, though condensed, through bb.243-246, before D Dorian wins out. At the very end, Movement IV picks up the D minor chord of Movement III and reduces this further, to a single D, giving an unquestionable ending.

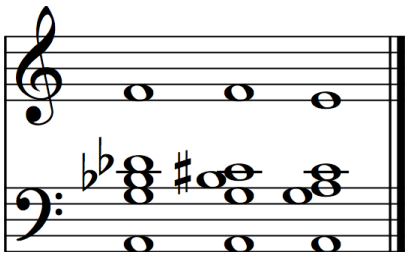
It is hard to underestimate the significance of Sibelius's decision to write a modal symphony. Not only does it require him to fundamentally redefine and revise the conventional tonal structure of symphonic composition, but it gives him remarkable formal flexibility. Perhaps most impressively, rather than finding its ambiguities limiting, he instead manipulates them into highly innovative structural approaches.



Ex.26: Movement II: Final Cadence



Ex.27: Movement III: Harmony Towards End



Ex.28: Second Tristan Chord as $A_m{}^9$ with Double Appoggiatura

Conclusions

Perhaps the single word most associated with this symphony is ambiguity. From its modal underpinning to the thematic material and forms, the entire symphony appears to lack the forceful definition so typical of this genre. Nonetheless, this ambiguity creates a coherent, goal-directed structure, in which all the elements of the music are unified in working towards the same end. In many ways this is a very traditional approach: composers since Beethoven had explored the potential for links between movements to create a single whole, but the ways in which Sibelius carries this out are remarkably original and extreme.

Burnham has posited that composers' later works are often characterised by reduction: a trimming down to the very essence of their ideas and style (Burnham 2011); it would be difficult to find a better example than this symphony. Indeed, this work perfectly exemplifies Sibelius the innovator: throughout the work he deals with conventional ideas, but finds radically new ways to achieve and explore them, in a very refined aesthetic. Whereas in the Seventh Symphony he makes this aim easily apparent by explicitly compressing the traditional symphonic structure into one movement, in this work he retains the dialectical play between four independent movements, and the overall form.

The constraints of this essay have left several interesting features largely unexplored. Further study could involve more detailed enquiry into the developmental methods of the individual movements (not only in the Development of Movement I, but also across rotations in the latter three movements), the interactions of the various simultaneous formal schema (especially in the inner two movements), and further exploration of the overall modal plan of the piece, in particular in terms of its predilection for flat-side movement. Murtomäki, for example, views the heart of the symphony as lying in an attempt to achieve D Dorian, over D Minor or C Major, but has considered this without any assessment of the relative weaknesses of the conclusions (Murtomäki, 1993, 194-202): it would be interesting to pursue some synthesis of these approaches. Nonetheless, the innovative heart behind this symphony remains clear, even despite the detail of these potential areas of study.

In an early review of the piece, a commentator described it thus: "At a first hearing every one of the movements seems too short, because the music is developed up to a point of intensity and stops abruptly when that point has been reached. Whether that is a virtue or a defect is scarcely to be decided offhand [...] The several movements [...] produce a sense of unity" (*The Times*, 22.11.1926). As we have seen, the first comment is certainly a virtue, and indeed contributes to the latter observation. Clearly Sibelius had traditional aims, but his ways of achieving these were radically new. Far from being conservative, then, this is a remarkably innovative symphony.

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Appendix 1a: Data of Proms Performances of Sibelius Symphonies from 1924 to Present

Data from BBC Proms Performance Archive. Accessed http://bit.ly/promsarchive 28.1.17.

Year	Concert 1	Concert 2	Concert 3	Concert 4	Concert 5	Concert 6	Concert 7
2016							
2015	1, 2	3, 4	5, 6, 7				
2014	5	2					
2013	7						
2012	7	4	3, 6				
2011	7	6					
2010	5	2					
2009	1	5					
2008	1	2					
2007	5	7	2				
2006	1	7	5				
2005	3	5	2				
2004	2						
2003	5	3					
2002	1	5					
2001	2	6, 7	5				
2000							
1999	2	1	7				
1998							
1997	2	1	3	5			
1996	2	7	5				
1995	2	5					
1994	1	5	2				
1993	6						
1992	1	5	7				
1991	2						
1990	2						

1989	1	2					
1988	7	5					
1987	2	5					
1986	1	2	3	7			
1985	4	3					
1984							
1983	5	4					
1982	2	1					
1981	2	3					
1980	4	1					
1979	3	2					
1978	5						
1977	7						
1976	1						
1975	1						
1974	7	3					
1973	7						
1972	4	5					
1971	6						
1970	6						
1969	3						
1968	4	5					
1967	7						
1966	5	7					
1965	3	4					
1964	5	2					
1963	2	5					
1962	7						
1961	6						
1960	7	5					
1959	3, 7	2	5				
1958	1	2	5				

1957	3	2	5				
1956	3	2	5	7			
1955	3	1	7	5	2		
1954	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1953	5	2	7				
1952	7	2	5				
1951	5	7	2	1			
1950	2	7	5				
1949	1	5	2	7			
1948	2	1	7	5			
1947	1	5	7	2			
1946	2	1	3	4	5	6	7
1945	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1944	7	5	1				
1943	2	5	1				
1942	5	7					
1941	1	2					
1940	2						
1939	5	2, 3					
1938	2, 3	1					
1937	7	4, 3	1	6, 2	5		
1936	2						
Winter Proms 1935-1936		1					
1935	7						
Winter Proms 1934-1935	7						
1934	7, 1						
1933	5						
Winter Proms 1932-1933							
1932	1						
1931	6						
1930							

1929							
1928							
1927							
1926							
1925							
1924 (year of completion of 7th Symphony)							

Appendix 1b: Bachtrack Listings of Upcoming Performances of Sibelius Symphonies

Symphony	Number of Performances Listed	Further Notes
1	8	In only one of these is Sibelius 1 presented alongside another work of Sibelius' (*Lemminkäinen's Return*).
2	28	In only one of these is Sibelius 2 presented alongside another work of Sibelius' (*Valse Triste*).
3	1	No other work of Sibelius.
4	2	In only one of these is Sibelius 4 presented alongside another work of Sibelius' (*Lemminkäinen's Return*).
5	10	In four of these, Sibelius 5 is presented alongside other of his works.
6	6	In three of these, Sibelius 6 is presented alongside other of his works - in all cases, the 7th Symphony, and various other pieces.
7	8	In five of these, Sibelius 7 is presented alongside other of his works.

Appendix 2: Conversion of Rehearsal Figures into Bar Numbers According to Edition Wilhelm Hansen Revised Edition (1981) Score

Some scores of this piece lack bar numbers: thus, in order to facilitate ease of comparison with a score, a table is provided converting all rehearsal figures into bar numbers.

Movement	Rehearsal Figure	Bar Number	Movement	Rehearsal Figure	Bar Number
1	A	28	**(3)**	D	99
	B	67		E	117
	C	87		F	134
	D	110		G	167
	E	124		H	182
	F	144		I	203
	G	161	**4**	A	29
	H	171		B	49
	I	190		C	61
	J	202		D	72
	K	224		E	82
	L	242		F	93
	M	255		G	108
2	A	17		H	120
	B	34		I	130
	C	51		J	144
	D	63		K	165
	E	84		L	173
	F	101		M	189
	G	116		N	197
	H	139		O	217
	I	155		P	236
3	A	23			
	B	45			
	C	65			

Appendix 3: Comparative Durations of Codas in Movements I & IV

Recording	First Movement Total Duration (Seconds)	First Movement Coda Duration (Seconds)	Coda as % of Total Duration	Final Movement Total Duration (Seconds)	Final Movement Coda Duration (Seconds)	Coda as % of Total Duration
Schnéevoigt: Finnish National Orchestra (1934)	490	96	19.5918367346939	559	182	32.5581395348837
Beecham: RPO (1954)	455	85	18.6813186813187	617	164	26.580226904376
Karajan: Berliner Philharmoniker (1980)	508	84	16.5354330708661	559	160	28.6225402504472
Colin Davis: LSO (1995)	519	95	18.3044315992293	543	154	28.3609576427256
Osmo Vänskä: Lahti Symphony Orchestra (2011)	514	82	15.9533073929961	522	144	27.5862068965517
Osmo Vänskä: Minnesota Orchestra (2016)	542	92	16.9741697416974	547	150	27.4223034734918
Mean Average	504.666666666667	89	17.6734162034669	557.833333333333	159	28.5217291170793