



## SIBELIUS – Finding the Great in the Small

With her new album, Annika Treutler focuses on the rarely performed piano works of Jean Sibelius. Known as a great symphonist straddling late Romanticism and Modernism, his extensive piano output remains overlooked. Annika Treutler sees her recording as a passionate plea for the works' poetic power and distinctive sound. Alongside fifteen selected miniatures, the album also features the Piano Quintet in G minor, performed with the Aris Quartet – a discovery that blends Nordic expansiveness with chamber music intensity.



### SIBELIUS: PIANO QUINTET & MINIATURES

#### Jean Sibelius (1865–1957)

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| [1] Impromptu No. 5 in B minor, Op 5, 5 | [12] Björken Op. 75,4                    |
| [2] Impromptu No. 6 in E major, Op 5, 6 | [13] Granen Op. 75,5                     |
| [3] Esquise Op. 76,1                    | [14] Valse Triste Op. 44                 |
| [4] Elegiaco Op. 76,10                  |  |
| [5] Humoristischer Marsch Op. 97 4      | <b>Piano Quintet in G minor, JS 159</b>  |
| [6] Etude Op. 76,2                      | [15] Grave – Allegro                     |
| [7] Souvenir Op. 99 3                   | [16] Intermezzo. Moderato                |
| [8] Novelle Op. 94,2                    | [17] Andante                             |
| [9] Im alten Heim Op. 74,4              | [18] Scherzo. Vivacissimo                |
| [10] Romance Op. 24,9                   | [19] Moderato – Vivace                   |
| [11] Arabesque Op. 76,9                 | [20] Impromptu No. 1 in G minor Op. 5, 1 |

Annika Treutler *piano* | Aris Quartet

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**Annika Treutler** has already dedicated solo albums to the Romantic composers Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Now, the pianist looks northwards, drawing inspiration from the unique and, at times, austere musical beauty of the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. Born in 1865, Sibelius was known as a significant symphonist on the cusp of late Romanticism and early Modernism; his piano works, however, are often overlooked. He himself expressed scepticism about this aspect of his output. "The piano doesn't interest me because it can't sing," Sibelius is said to have remarked, half-jokingly. Annika Treutler disagrees: "For me, his piano works prove precisely the opposite: Sibelius makes the piano sing, resonate, and vibrate—in a completely unique and unmistakable way." For her new album, released on 27 March 2026, by the Berlin-based **record label decurio**, she has made a very personal selection from a "vast and, in some ways, still hidden treasure trove."

From his youth until his later years, Sibelius composed over 150 miniatures, in which he often captured moods of the Nordic landscape. These short character pieces, such as "Björken" (The Birch) and "Granen" (The Spruce) from the Five Pieces, Op. 75, are often less than three minutes long, some lasting barely a minute. "The **miniatures** act like small windows into a creative, open, and expansive world of thought," explains the pianist, who appreciates the works' concision and focus. The fifteen miniatures she has selected and interpreted here form a thematic bridge, finding the great in the small.

From 1889 to 1890, Sibelius studied at the Academy of Arts in Berlin under Albert Becker, whom he considered rather backward-looking. During a trip to Leipzig, Sibelius attended a concert by his friend, the composer and pianist Ferruccio Busoni, who performed the Piano Quintet by the Norwegian composer Christian Sinding. This highly controversial piece likely inspired Sibelius to create his own contribution to the genre, **the Piano Quintet in G minor (JS 159)**, which Annika Treutler has recorded for this album together with the internationally renowned **Aris Quartet**. The pianist says the piece is heard far too rarely in concert halls. Yet, she adds, the piano quintet is "of impressive scale." At first glance, it might seem unwieldy, given its expansive range. Busoni and fellow musicians performed excerpts of the work in Helsinki in May 1890. The full premiere, however, didn't take place until May 1965 at the Turku Concert Hall, eight years after the Finnish composer's death. For Annika Treutler, the journey back in time goes much further: "**In the end, you feel like you've gotten a little closer to the young Sibelius.**"

### A focus on little-known repertoire

The recording was made at the legendary **Teldex Studio Berlin**, whose exceptional acoustics contribute significantly to the sonic presence and detail of this production.

What does Annika Treutler appreciate about the rarely performed works of Jean Sibelius? Her first encounter with his music was rather accidental, she replies. It was in the anniversary year of 2015, when she stepped in at short notice for a festival. "Since then, his music has accompanied me—with its endless melodies, this blend of clarity, simplicity, and at the same time astonishing depth. Especially on walks through Berlin..."

Since 2018, she has taught at the Hanns Eisler School of Music and currently also at the Carl Maria von Weber University of Music Dresden. As a pianist, she travels extensively, performing in recitals and as a soloist with renowned orchestras at venues including Wigmore Hall in London, the Palau della Música in Barcelona, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Vienna Konzerthaus. She is a regular guest at the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, the Heidelberg Spring Festival, the Verbier Festival and the Krzyżowa Music Chamber Music Festival.

### A passion for chamber music

Alongside her solo engagements, Annika Treutler greatly values chamber music. There's a simple reason for this. "Pianists are often rather solitary creatures," she says with a twinkle in her eye. "They work only for themselves, play only for themselves. So I'm grateful for musical exchange in any form – that's also my inspiration. I really enjoy this mutual storytelling on stage." Her partners include artists such as Kit Armstrong, Daniel Müller-Schott, Jörg Widmann, and Tabea Zimmermann. In 2019, she recorded works by Johannes Brahms with cellist Julia Hagen (Hänssler Classic). Annika Treutler is a **two-time Opus Klassik award winner**: she received the award firstly, for the concert recording for the piano concerto by Viktor Ullmann with the Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester Berlin in 2020 (Stephan Frucht, conductor) and secondly, for the chamber music recording for the piano trios by Robert Kahn with the Hohenstaufen Ensemble in 2023.

### Aris Quartet: "Never be alone"

The musicians of the Aris Quartet came together in 2009 at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts as part of a project initiated by Prof. Hubert Buchberger to found a string quartet. The ensemble still consists of: **Anna Katharina Wildermuth** (violin), **Noémi Zipperling** (violin), **Caspar Vinzens** (viola), and **Lukas Sieber** (cello). They recall: "Even during our studies, we decided to do everything we could to make the string quartet a professional ensemble, as we all believed that this genre represents the ultimate form of music. What makes the string quartet so special for us is the balance between artistic freedom, the opportunity to pursue our own path while simultaneously taking responsibility for one another and remaining flexible without ever being alone."

Since then, the ensemble has won numerous awards, including prizes at the International Joseph Joachim Chamber Music Competition in Weimar and the ARD International Music Competition. The quartet was a BBC "New Generation Artist," has released highly acclaimed CD recordings, and won the prestigious Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2020. Beyond the usual concert halls, the four musicians appreciate intimate venues for artistic encounters—and nature. In August 2025, they performed at an altitude of 2,037 meters, in the summit station of the Fellhorn cable car in Oberstdorf. The quartet played in front of the glass facade of the viewing platform, which, under perfect weather conditions, afforded the audience an unobstructed view of the imposing mountain scenery of the Allgäu Alps.

On their new album, the Aris Quartet, together with pianist Annika Treutler, brings its characteristic blend of precision, sonic transparency, and emotional depth to the table. The result is a captivating yet highly nuanced interpretation that sheds new light on Sibelius's early chamber music and convincingly brings it to the forefront of contemporary listening.

### To the Album

#### SIBELIUS: Piano Quintet & Miniatures



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