

Problematic sources for Jean Sibelius's tone poem *En saga*

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§ The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius's tone poem *En saga* is one of his most performed and beloved works. Although the work was warmly welcomed, Sibelius revised it completely after ten years. The critical collected edition *Jean Sibelius Works* published both versions of *En saga* in 2009, whereby the early version was published for the first time. The editing of this work was challenging due to the shortage of sources and the lack of autograph sources. Namely, for the early version only an unknown copyist's copy of the full score and a set of parts survive and for the revised version only printed full score and a set of parts survive. The sources of the early version, made by an unknown copyist, contain many problems. It seems as though the copyist was not an experienced musician and perhaps did not fully understand the notation. The printed materials for the revised version are much clearer, but not altogether consistent and errors, like incorrect pitches, missing or misplaced markings, occur there too. Another question is also discussed: can these two versions act as reference sources for each other despite differing from each other musically and also being separated by ten years of time.

§ *En Saga* è uno dei più eseguiti e amati lavori di Jean Sibelius. Sebbene la composizione fu calorosamente accolta e apprezzata fin dall'inizio, Sibelius dieci anni dopo ne rielaborò una seconda versione (entrambe le versioni sono pubblicate in *Jean Sibelius Works*, 2009). La curatela di questo lavoro ha richiesto particolare impegno per la concisione delle fonti e per la mancanza di testimoni autografi. Della prima versione esiste solo una copia della partitura, di un copista anonimo, e un insieme di parti staccate; della seconda versione esiste solo la partitura a stampa e altre parti staccate. Le fonti della prima versione presentano molti problemi dovuti al lavoro di trascrizione del copista che, da ciò che si può evincere, non era un musicista esperto. Le fonti a stampa della seconda versione sono più comprensibili, ma nel complesso non sono del tutto coerenti e prive di errori (note errate, mancanza di segni o loro presenza in posizioni sbagliate). E infine un'altra questione da affrontare: queste due versioni possono fare da fonti di riferimento l'una per l'altra nonostante le differenze e il periodo cronologico che le separa?

Introduction

The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius’s (1865-1957) tone poem *En saga* was composed in 1892. It is an outstanding work in his oeuvre in at least two ways: it was the first tone poem in the long row of others to come and it was the first orchestral work by Sibelius to attain a steady position in the concert repertoire. Although the work was warmly welcomed and frequently performed, Sibelius revised the work completely ten years later, in 1902. That happened because he was asked to perform the work abroad, in Berlin. The critical collected edition *Jean Sibelius Works* (hereafter JSW) published both versions of the tone poem *En saga* in 2009, which was the first time the early version was published.¹

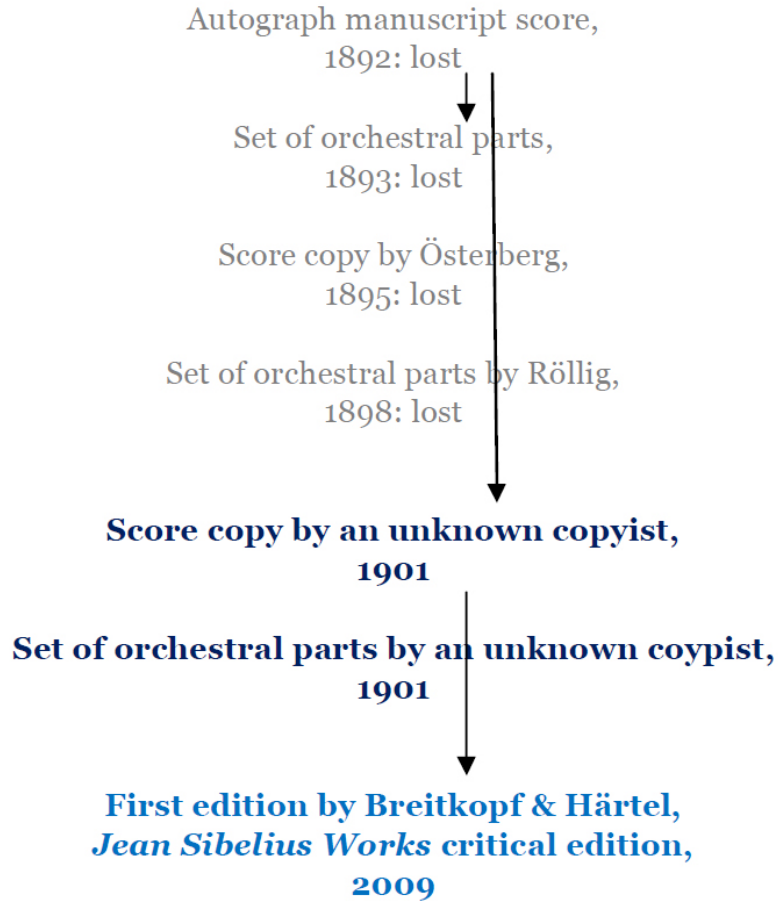
The following text discusses the challenges of the critical editing process, mainly caused by the special source situation, that is, the shortage of musical sources and the lack of autograph manuscript sources. Namely, for the early version of *En saga* only an unknown copyist’s copies of the full score and the orchestral parts survive and for the revised version only printed score and parts survive.

The early version

Obviously, the autograph manuscript existed when Sibelius finished the composition in December 1892 and also orchestral parts were made for the first performance in March 1893 based on the autograph. Unfortunately, both these sources are presently lost. According to the surviving bills, another copy of both the full score and the parts were made later in the 1890s, but also these sources are presently lost; see the stemma in Example 1. What still does exist, is a copy of the score plus a set of orchestral parts made by an unidentified copyist in 1901. These surviving copies were made for conductor Georg Schnéevoigt, who was then beginning his career and conducted an orchestra in Riga, Latvia. Probably the copyist was a local person, because no other copies in his hand exist among Sibelius’s surviving musical manuscripts. Sibelius himself probably never saw these materials. How reliable, then, are these sources and what can the editor of a text-critical edition do?

These surviving sources contain various problems, many of them due to the original and ambiguous handwriting by the copyist. He probably was not an experienced musician and not fully aware of all the details of the notation. The copyist, for example, has placed accidentals before wrong pitches, his whole notes may fill up a space for two pitches, he has misplaced markings and omitted some notation.

¹ The volume I/10 of *JSW* was published by Breitkopf & Härtel, edited by Tuija Wicklund. The volume also includes information on the composition, revision, and publication processes as well as the early reception of both versions. For more about the critical edition *JSW*, see its webpages at <<http://www.nationallibrary.fi/culture/sibelius.html>>.



Example 1. Stemma of the early version of *En saga*.

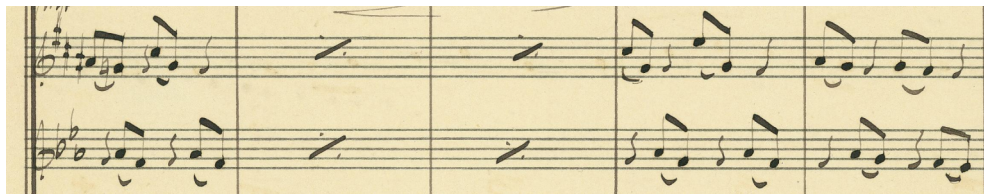
One bar from the score, seen in Example 2, is illustrating. There, in b. 331 for the first and second trumpet, a third appears on beat 2 with one flat between the note heads. The flat should appear before *b*. Additionally, on beat 1 the existing pitch is *e*[♭], although it looks more like *f*[♭]. Furthermore, the second trumpet has no notation (not a pitch nor a downward stem) on beat 1. In the orchestral part *e*[♭] appears as well as in the similar bar a little earlier in both sources. These kinds of missing stems appear every here and there in the score and they have been tacitly added in the JSW score in cases where the pitch can be found in the orchestral part.



Example 2. Score of the early version, trumpets I and II, b. 331. This entire page can be seen as Facsimile IV in the JSW Vol. I/9.

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Another of the copyist's confusing marking to do with pitches is surprisingly the quarter rest. In many occasions it looks much like a quarter note with a little curvy stem and may thus lead to interpretation with some additional pitches. In Example 3, the clarinets have only eighth notes and quarter rests (no quarter notes):



Example 3. Score of the early version, clarinet I (A) and II (B), bb. 122-126. This entire page can be seen as Facsimile II in the JSW Vol. I/9.

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As seen, on the one hand the copyist has caused confusion by his peculiar handwriting and by making some errors. On the other hand, however, it seems as though the copyist copied this score from the autograph score and some inaccuracies therefore derive from the composer. As an example, it is typical for Sibelius's own handwriting that the endings of slurs are not always carefully drawn, but slurs often end between pitches and also inconsistently on similar motives when they are repeated. It is still possible that the copyist has been careless and made errors and thus increased the confusion. In practice this means that a certain pattern in the score may be slurred differently in the similar adjacent bars, but also differently in analogous parts elsewhere in the score and still differently in the orchestral parts.

One case in point concerning the slurs that end inconsistently can be found in Example 4. This passage begins on page 29 of the score, where a melodic idea – the scale – appears for the first time on the two topmost staves, later also on other staves. The focus is on the ending of the slur: should it end at the end of the bar on the last eight-note, or on beat one of the following bar.



Example 4. Score of the early version, woodwinds on pp. 29-30, bb. 249-268.

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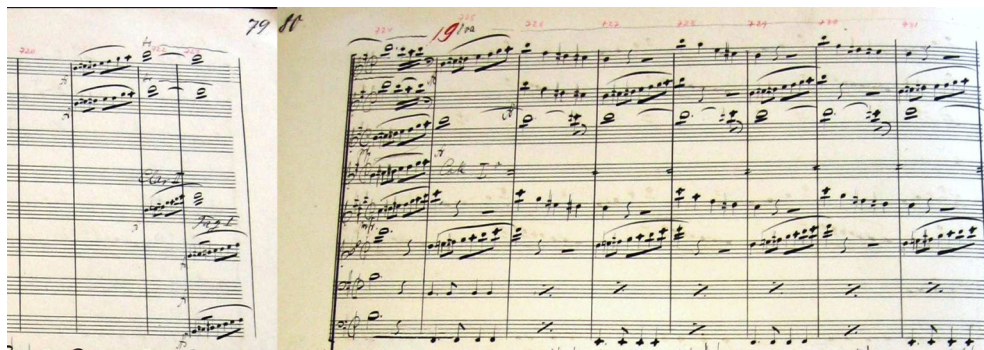
I have checked and compared all the occurrences of that melodic idea in the entire work. In this passage on page 29 onwards the slur mostly ends on the last eighth-note, but twice on the bar line and once in the following bar. However, when the same idea appears again later (p. 39 on), the slur ends fairly consistently on beat one of the following bar, as can be seen in Example 5. This seems to be the practice also in the other four appearances of the same idea still later in the music. Nevertheless, as Example 6 shows, the slur might, a few times, end a bit ambiguously on the bar line as well. However, if a trill follows or a new repeated pattern as in oboes (b. 725ff., seen in Example 6), the slur always ends on the last eighth-note. The orchestral parts

also follow the score with only few exceptions in both ways. Therefore this principle has also been consistently followed in JSW.



Example 5. Score of the early version, woodwinds on p. 39, bb. 333-341.

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Example 6. Score of the early version, woodwinds on pp. 79-80, bb. 720-731.

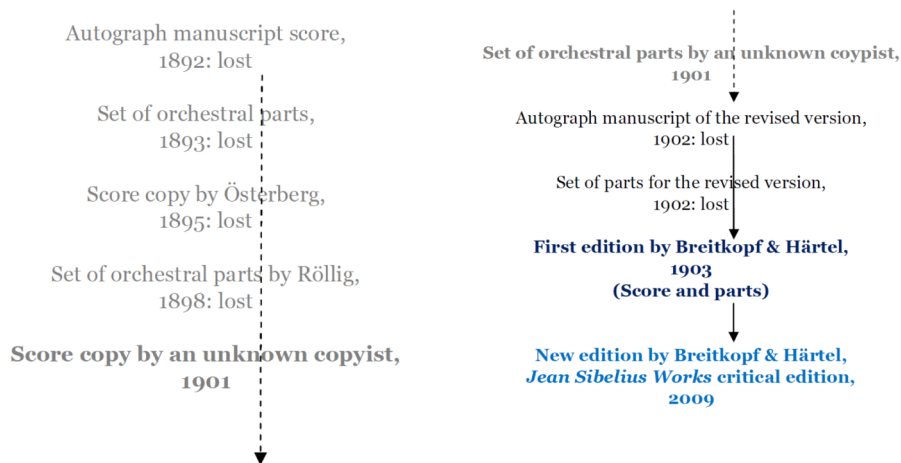
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In the same Example 6, on page 79, two other kinds of situations that appear a few times elsewhere in this score as well can be seen. Namely, the slurs in the bassoons that continue to the right margin thus showing continuation to the following page do not have the endings of the slurs there, although they should. Furthermore, two instruments, this time the second clarinet and the first bassoon, are notated on wrong staves, that is, one staff too high (they were notated on staves 5 and 6 from the top, instead of staves 6 and 7). However, the parts continue on the correct staves on the following p. 80.

This kind of emendation has taken place during the critical editing. In the end, editorial intervention took place about 600 times during the editing process. These are mostly additions, such as adding dynamic or articulation marks and slurs by analogy with similar parts in the orchestral score, adding missing accidentals and even notation. Besides additions, other emendations are mostly corrected pitches.

The revised version

Sibelius revised the work ten years later, in 1902, quite quickly, in about two months. He most probably reused the manuscript pages of the early version as much as he could – that is why that autograph manuscript has not survived; see the stemma in Example 7. Within a year the new version was also printed. For this version only these printed sources survive: the full score and a set of parts. These printed materials are clearer than the hand-copied materials for the early version, but still not altogether consistent. And as always in printed scores, errors, like incorrect pitches, missing or misplaced markings, occur here too.



Example 7. Stemma of the revised version of *En saga*.

However, the amount of errors or uncertainties appearing in the score and the orchestral parts of the revised version is considerably smaller than it is in the early version. This is partly due to the fact that along the way of the publishing process the publisher's editor, and/or the engraver has normalized, standardized, and unified the markings of the hand-written notation – at least to some amount. As seen before, the hand-written materials always contain variance in the placement of different markings on similar patterns or in simultaneously

appearing parts and therefore some unifying has to take place. The engraver has, for example, aligned the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* wedges, the beginnings and endings of slurs, and dynamic marks in the similar vertical parts in the score. It has not, however, been an easy task, because differences between the full score and the orchestral parts appear on nearly each page of the full score.² Example 8 illustrates the situation. Example 8a shows p. 194 of the score from the new critical edition and Example 8b shows the same page with differences from the sources marked in red. As can be seen, the lengths of the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* wedges vary between the similar parts as well as the ending of the slur in the fourth bar.

The differences from the printed score are:

- the wedge is short (>) in b. 389 in the flute;
- the slur continues to the half note in the first and third horns in b. 391;
- ***pp*** is missing in the bass drum part.

The ending of the slur in b. 391 needs a short discussion. Strings do not have slurs on that pattern at all in the entire work. Neither do the brasses when this melodic idea appears for the first times. It is only here where the slurs appear for the first time. After examining all the occurrences, it seems that when a wedge appears on the half note, the slur ends on the 8th note. When no dynamic mark is present, the slur continues to the half note. The slurs on this pattern have been placed accordingly in the critical edition (as seen in Example 8a).

- The *nat.* marking (the preceding marking is *sul ponticello*), missing from the bass in b. 388, is missing in both the score and the orchestral part.

All the other differences come from the orchestral parts (in Example 8b):

- the lengths of the wedges differ in the second bassoon, first and third horn and viola in b. 389;
- in the bass drum (considerably) in bb. 389-390;
- in viola and flute in b. 390;
- in the first bassoon, first and third horn (and is missing in the fourth horn) and viola in b. 391;
- Moreover, a wedge appears in the second horn in b. 392 instead of *dim.* and in the fourth horn in bb. 392-393 in addition to *dim.*

² This may, of course, also result from the use of two different engravers, but that fact remains presently unknown.

All in all, in the revised version only little over hundred editorial emendations took place. Most of these are added articulations (by analogy with parallel parts) or corrected pitches.

The relation of the two versions in the editing process

One question that arose during the critical editing process is whether these two versions of the tone poem can be used as reference sources for each other.

To begin with, it has to be stressed that the editorial policy within one work has to be consistent. Obviously, similar passages and parallel parts may be compared with each other, logic or occurring patterns concluded from there, and editorial decisions made thereafter. In the case of *En saga* comparing similar passages between the two versions is, however, not so simple. During the ten years between the two versions of *En saga* Sibelius changed his mind and deliberately made things differently. For these reasons, passages between the two versions are seldom similar and therefore not easily compared with each other.

Namely, the revised version is 142 bars shorter, and Sibelius left out one melodic motive completely from the development section. In addition, the revised version is more stable in harmonic sense since it contains less modulations and more organ points. Furthermore, the orchestration was largely changed and more articulation marks together with dynamics were added during the revision. The following Examples 9a and 9b illustrate this.

Example 9a shows a passage from the early version (bb. 166-180). The same thematic material from the revised version (bb. 148-164) appears in Example 9b. As can be seen, some major changes have taken place. The theme was orchestrated differently: it is firstly played by the viola and cello doubled with the horns (bb. 166-172) and continued by the violins doubled with oboes (bb. 173-175) in the early version. The repetition from b. 176 on includes also the flute. In the revised version, for one, the doublings of the theme by the winds were removed and the theme is played only by the viola and violins. The accompaniment is also different in the revised version, where arpeggio appears in the cellos. In addition, the revised version has more articulation and dynamic markings.

The early version contains much more inconsistencies than the revised version. Using the pages of the revised version as reference sources for the early version is, however, not possible because Sibelius deliberately changed the music and the autograph sources are lost. Changing the early version according to the revised one would reflect Sibelius's views at the time of the revision, not at the time of composition. After ten years, Sibelius inevitably was more experienced and mature as a composer. He had also spent time in Central Europe, where he listened to as much music as he could and also studied scores. Above all, however, Sibelius had composed a lot himself in the

meantime. For all these reasons, the revised version has not been used as a reference source for the early version.

What about the other way round then; could the early version be used as a reference source for the revised version? Sibelius reused some of the manuscript pages of the early version while revising the work. He apparently left some pages about as they were, made some changes on the old pages, and rewrote some passages completely. Those pages that were left intact could in principle be used as reference sources for the revised version for some features. In practice, however, due to the lack of the autograph manuscript, it is impossible to know whether a change was deliberately made by Sibelius or whether it was just an error made by the copyist or the engraver. It is also not known whether Sibelius participated the publishing process and thus, how reliable the printed score is. It is also possible that already during the revision in 1902 something was not corrected on the pages of the early version and that something was not added in the full score due to the tight schedule of revision or just in error.

Furthermore, the most difficult questions that arise in course of the critical editing typically appear in passages that have indeed been changed and appear only once in the score and thus no comparison is possible. Therefore, it has not been possible in practise to use the early version as a proper reference source in editing the revised version. However, if a similar kind of situation appears in the early version, it has been checked and mentioned in the Critical Remarks if needed.

In only one case, a similar passage appearing in both versions would have given the same solution: namely, in the question about the ending of a slur in a particular pattern mentioned before (Example 8). In both versions the same conclusion has been drawn: the slur should end on the last eighth note when articulation follows and otherwise continue to the half note. This conclusion has been drawn, however, based on the consistency within one version.

388

Fl. I
Ob. I
Ob. II
Cl. (Bb) I
Cl. (Bb) II
Fg. I
Fg. II
Cor. (F) I
Cor. (F) II
Cor. (F) III
Cor. (F) IV
Gr. c.
VI. I
VI. II
Va.
Vc.
Cb.

Example 8a. Score of the revised version from the critical edition JSW Vol. I/9, p. 194, bb. 388-393.

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194

388

Fl. I

Ob. I

Ob. II

Cl. (Bb) I

Cl. (Bb) II

Fg. I

Fg. II

Cor. (F) I

Cor. (F) II

Cor. (F) III

Cor. (F) IV

Gr. c.

VI. I

VI. II

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

ff

p

f

dim.

a2

tr

mp

mf

Example 8b. Score of the revised version with differences from the sources marked red, bb. 388-393. Based on p. 194 from JSW Vol. I/9.

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The image displays three systems of musical notation for a symphony orchestra. The instruments listed on the left of each system are Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fg.), Oboe (Ob.), Horn (Hr.), Trumpet (Tr.), Trombone (Tb.), Violin (Vl.), Viola (Va.), and Cello/Double Bass (Vc.). The top system (measures 166-180) features a flute part with a 'pizz' (pizzicato) instruction and a dynamic of 'p'. The middle system (measures 176-180) includes a horn part with a 'brist' (brist) instruction and a dynamic of 'f'. The bottom system (measures 176-180) shows a bassoon part with a 'dolce' instruction and a dynamic of 'p'. The score is written in a standard musical notation with various clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings.

Example 9a. Score of the early version, bb. 166-180 from the critical edition JSW Vol. I/9.

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The image shows a page of a musical score for Jean Sibelius's tone poem «En saga». The score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for Clarinet (Bb), Bassoon, Horns (F), Trombone, Trumpet, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 148 with a forte (F) dynamic. The second system starts at measure 156. Dynamics range from piano (p) to mezzo-forte (mf). Performance instructions include pizzicato (pizz.) and arco.

Example 9b. Score of the revised version, bb. 148-164 from the critical edition JSW Vol. I/9.

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Bibliography

SIBELIUS, J., *En saga* [Op. 9], manuscript score of the early version by an unidentified copyist preserved at the National Library of Finland, Helsinki, signum Ö.109.

Jean Sibelius Works (2009), Series I, Volume 10 (*En saga*, two versions), ed. by Wicklund T., Wiesbaden, Breitkopf & Härtel.

Tuija Wicklund works as an editor in the complete critical edition *Jean Sibelius Works*. She has edited two volumes and is currently editing the *Lemminkäinen Suite*, including both early and revised versions. She also prepares doctoral thesis at Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, with different perspectives on Sibelius's tone poem *En saga*.

Tuija Wicklund fa parte dell'équipe di studiosi che stanno curando l'opera omnia di Jean Sibelius. Ha curato due volumi e attualmente sta lavorando su *Lemminkäinen Suite* (prima e seconda versione). Sta preparando la sua tesi di dottorato alla Sibelius Academy di Helsinki sul poema sinfonico *En Saga*.