

Reviews of Encyclopedias and Biographical Works

Heather Tiffany

The general topic I chose was: Finnish nationalism
<p>*Specific question(s) that I looked up:</p> <p>How is Sibelius tied to Finnish nationalism? Which composers influenced Sibelius's work?</p>
<p>Person associated with the topic that I looked up was (give full name):</p> <p>Jean (Johan Christian Julius) Sibelius</p>
<p>Special-subject encyclopedia reviewed:</p> <p><i>New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i>. (multi-volume, print)</p>
<p>General encyclopedia reviewed (give full title and indicate whether it was Print or Online):</p> <p><i>Encyclopædia Britannica Online</i>. (online)</p>
<p>Biographical encyclopedia reviewed:</p> <p><i>Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians</i> (multi-volume, print)</p>
<p>Condensed encyclopedic work (can be biographical or general-topic, give full title, indicate Print or Online):</p> <p><i>Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary</i> (single volume, print)</p>
<p>Free Web resource (give name and URL of the home page):</p> <p><i>Wikipedia</i>. http://www.wikipedia.org</p>
<p>Your Choice – must be from the List, but can be from any category (give appropriate information):</p> <p><i>Houghton Mifflin Dictionary of Biography</i> (single volume, print)</p>

BIOGRAPHICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA REVIEW CHART

Kuhn, Laura, and Nicolas Slonimsky, eds. 2001. <i>Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians</i> . Centennial Edition. New York: Schirmer Books. 6 volumes. ISBN 0-02-865525-7 (set). Price: \$990.
Description of the work (word limit 150 words): This set covers musicians associated with both traditional and popular musical styles and provides a good starting point for researching more than 15,000 well-known or less famous musicians. The work contains photographs of some composers as well as lists of works and bibliographies. The first volume includes a Preface and Publisher's Note, and each volume begins with a list of abbreviations used in the set. The sixth volume includes a Genre Index, a Nationality Index, and a Women Composers and Musicians Index. The writing is accessible to those with or without a musical background and will likely be used by both casual and serious researchers, although serious researchers will need to look elsewhere for greater detail. It is appropriate for use in high school, academic, and public libraries.
Description of the entry related to your person (word limit 150 words): The 4 page entry begins with the composer's full name and dates and places of birth and death as well as a brief description of Sibelius's contributions: "Finnish composer," and "opened a modern era of Northern musical art." The article describes his early life, musical training, personal habits, important events, musical works, and the effects of his music on his country and the world. The article mentions Sibelius's use of native legends, such as the <i>Kalevala</i> , and the way he used patterns from folk music to create variations on a basic theme. The article concludes with a list of compositions and a bibliography.
Question related to your person that this work would answer. How is Sibelius tied to Finnish nationalism?
Give the answer to your question and tell how you located it. Sibelius tried to create a Finnish music, using chords and rhythmic patterns from Finnish folk music to compose his symphonies. He also used text from portions of the national epic, the <i>Kalevala</i> , for both performances and inspiration. Another composition, <i>Finlandia</i> , became the song that patriotic Finns identified with the desire for Finnish independence. It was necessary to read the entire entry for Sibelius, as professional accomplishments and personal life were intermingled to present a chronological picture.
Review clip from a professional source: An <i>ARBAOnline</i> review explains that the centennial edition "will be a necessary addition to any library or personal collection in which a solid, basic music section is important" (2002).

SPECIAL-SUBJECT ENCYCLOPEDIA REVIEW CHART

Stanley, Sadie, and John Tyrrell, eds. 2002. <i>The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i> . 2 nd Ed. New York: Macmillan Publishers. 29 volumes. ISBN: 1-56159-239-0 (Set). Price: \$1500.
Description of the work (word limit 150 words): Subjects of the more than 29,000 articles in this set include performers, composers, musical genres and styles, musical events, locations associated with a type of music, music of countries or ethnic groups, musical instruments, and more. Individual entries vary in length, and brief entries may include cross-references to articles on similar topics. The work includes photographs, artwork, musical manuscripts, and bars of sample music. Volume 1 includes an Introduction, Preface, and

Publisher’s Note, and all volumes include a list of Abbreviations. Volume 28 consists entirely of appendices, including lists of private collections, music libraries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, periodicals, the contributor list, and illustration acknowledgments. Volume 29 is devoted to a General Index and a useful Index of Composers, Performers, and Writers, with individuals arranged by composition date or performance medium. This work is highly useful for research, particularly for those already familiar with the musical concepts and terminology mentioned.

Description of the **entry related to your topic (word limit 150 words)**: The 29 page entry on Jean Sibelius begins with the dates and places of the composer’s birth and death as well as his role – “Finnish composer” - and the birth name (Johan Christian Julius) which he later changed. The introductory paragraph tells of Sibelius’s major contributions and musical style and is followed by a list of the article’s sections. Due to article length, there are seven chronological sections, covering personal life, compositions, and musical growth, with titles such as “1889-91: the transformation” and “1905-11: modern classicism.” The entry includes several photos of the composer, a copy of an original manuscript, Kalevalaic paintings, and a number of bars of sample music. The article explains how Sibelius used the *Kalevala* in his music, explaining the chords, meters, and patterns of traditional Kalevalaic recitation and singing. The article concludes with a lengthy list of works and a four page bibliography for further research.

Question **related to your topic** that this work would answer.
Which composers influenced Sibelius’s work?

Give the answer to your question and tell how you located it.

Influential composers included: Liszt, Wagner, Bruckner, Haydn, Beethoven, Grieg, Sinding, Svendsen, & Tchaikovsky. Because the entry was so long and because much of Sibelius’s great work was produced in the 1890s, I focused on the section entitled “1891-8: Forging a Finnish National Music.” Within this section, I paid particular attention to a paragraph that began with the statement: “Sibelius’s modern nationalism of the 1890s was a confluence of several musical streams.” I finished reading the section, noting the composers who were listed.

Review clip from a professional source: In 2001, a *Choice* review of the second edition stated: “Its reputation for preeminence among English-language music encyclopedias continues undimmed with this edition, whose size and scope are considerably greater.”

GENERAL ENCYCLOPEDIA REVIEW CHART

Hoiberg, Dale, ed. 2010. *Encyclopædia – Britannica Online Encyclopedia*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. <http://www.britannica.com>. Site content updated every two weeks. Fee-based website. (*I entered via the online subscription through GALILEO Scholar. Pricing was not available.*)

Description of the work (**word limit 150 words**): *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* articles are divided into four main categories: “History & Society,” “Arts & Entertainment,” “Travel & Geography,” and “Science & Technology.” Users can browse featured articles within these categories and special feature collections, or browse the article listings from A to Z. Other highlighted research tools include “World Atlas,” “On This Day,” “Timelines,” “World Data Analyst,” and “Compare Countries.” A user looking for a particular topic may search with either a basic or advanced search. Articles and pictures can be printed or saved, and links can be emailed or shared via social networking sites. Users can also create a personal login to save an article or portions of an article to a personal workspace. Because the site involves a subscription, there are no

advertisements. The website is very attractive, and includes many color photos and videos. Both site content and design should appeal to a wide audience.

Description of an entry related to **either your topic or person** (word limit 150 words): The article for Jean Sibelius begins with the composer's original name, places and dates of birth and death, and contribution: "Finnish composer, the most noted symphonic composer of Scandinavia." The article focuses primarily on Sibelius's musical career and compositions, with no mention of his personal life or family. The article mentions his seven symphonies, his symphonic poems, and other works in the discussion of his musical growth. A photo of Sibelius in his later years accompanies the text. At the conclusion of the article, recommended additional readings and a number of useful internal and external links are found. Internal links are to other articles in which Sibelius is discussed, listed under the subheadings "Assorted References," "People," "Places," and "Other." Eleven external links direct the reader to biographies of Sibelius at mainly .org, .net, and .fi (Finland) websites.

Question **related to either your topic or person** that this work would answer.

How is Sibelius tied to Finnish nationalism?

Give the answer to your question and tell how you located it.

The Encyclopædia Britannica article indicates that the composer's style is in the nationalist style: "Sibelius' compositions of the 1890s are those of a nationalist composer working in the Romantic tradition." This answer was found in the article entitled "Jean Sibelius," although a similar answer can also be found in the article entitled "Romanticism."

Review clip from a professional source: A 2006 *Booklist* review indicates that *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* has "current, authoritative information at several reading levels and an excellent selection of Web links."

CONDENSED ENCYCLOPEDIA WORK REVIEW CHART

Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary. 1995. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. ISBN: 0-87779-743-9. Price: \$29.95.

Description of the work (word limit 150 words): *Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary* is a single-volume work containing more than 30,000 entries for persons throughout the world and from all periods of history, with the exception of living persons. The volume begins with the Preface, Explanatory Notes, a Guide to Pronunciation, a list of abbreviations and a quick reference page of Pronunciation Symbols. Entries are listed alphabetically by surname where applicable, and exceptions and rules are delineated in the Explanatory Notes. Each entry begins with this name, shown with end-of the-line division, followed by pronunciation, prenames, titles or other known names, birth and death dates, and an identifying phrase which includes nationality or ethnicity as well as major accomplishment. These quick facts are followed by a paragraph detailing the individual's most important achievements, actions, or roles. The volume is intended for quick reference and would be more useful for the general public than an academic audience.

Description of an entry related to **either your topic or person** (word limit 150 words):

Like the rest of the entries in this work, the entry for Jean Sibelius is very brief and limited to major highlights, summarized in nine lines of text. The entry identifies Sibelius as a Finnish composer and indicates that he "established himself as leading Finnish composer of his generation with *Kullervo* Symphony," which is true, although oversimplified. Musical styles and influences are included, although the *Kalevala*, Sibelius's

main inspiration, is noticeably absent from the entry. His musical compositions are summarized, listing the creation dates of 3 of his 7 symphonies, a violin concerto, the names and dates of 4 symphonic works and 2 pieces of “incidental music” [*sic*], and mention of songs and other works.

Question **related to either your topic or person** that this work would answer.

Which composers influenced Sibelius’s work?

Give the answer to your question and tell how you located it.

Sibelius was “influenced by Tchaikovsky and other Romantics.” I found the answer by reading the short entry for Sibelius.

Review clip from a professional source: A 1995 *Reference & Research Book News* review of this edition indicates that “We’ve been frustrated in the past by numerous unsuccessful searches--an inherent limitation of the single-volume format--but as a ready reference it’s nonetheless essential.”

FREE WEB RESOURCE REVIEW CHART

Wikipedia

<http://www.wikipedia.org>

Producer or sponsor: Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.

Description of the work (**Word Limit: 150 words**): *Wikipedia* is an “openly editable” encyclopedia with more than 3.4 million articles in English. Because it is open to editing, anyone may add, subtract, or change article content with or without supporting citations, and article content may change multiple times daily. The website is free to all users, although the Wikimedia Foundation does request sponsorship donations. *Wikipedia* content categories consist of: “General reference,” “Culture and the arts,” “Geography and places,” “Health and fitness,” “History and events,” “Mathematics and logic,” “Natural and physical sciences,” “People and self,” “Philosophy and thinking,” “Religion and belief systems,” “Society and social sciences,” and “Technology and applied sciences.” Users may browse these categories through lists, portals, and the index, or may use the search feature. The site contains internal links to names, places, or phrases used in articles as well as external links to related sites. Articles may include photographs, illustrations, audio files, and other media.

Description of the entry related to **either your topic or person** (**Word Limit: 150 words**): The article for Jean Sibelius begins with a short summary of the composer’s life and work and is then broken into sections, including “Life and Work,” “Musical Style,” and “Reception.” Some quotations and claims in the article text have complete citations, although a few still read “citation needed.” Below the article text is a list of selected works in chronological order as well as a list of books and articles for further reading. The bottom of the page has links to external sites as well as related Wikipedia categories. In addition to article text, the page also contains six photographs and a sound recording of *Valse Triste*. The article mentions Wagner’s influence on Sibelius’s work, but omits the major influence of the *Kalevala*. Those wishing to prepare a report would find a more complete and thorough examination in a music encyclopedia for which the author’s scholarship and credentials are known.

Question **related to either your topic or person** that this work would answer.

How is Sibelius tied to Finnish nationalism?

Give the answer to your question and tell how you located it.

The introductory paragraph on Jean Sibelius describes him as: “a Finnish composer of the later Romantic period whose music played an important role in the formation of the Finnish national identity.” I didn’t have to do any searching to find that answer, I just had to read the introduction.

Review clip from a professional source: Although *Wikipedia* was listed in the “Best Free Reference Web Sites” 2005, the *RUSA* review indicates that, “the obvious drawback to this site is the potential for erroneous information. The site’s creators rely on the popularity of the Internet to help maintain the information’s integrity.”

YOUR CHOICE REVIEW CHART

Tamm, Vali, and Una McGovern, eds. 2003. *The Houghton Mifflin Dictionary of Biography*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. ISBN: 0-618-25210-X. Price: \$48.

Description of the work (**Word Limit: 150 words**): *The Houghton Mifflin Dictionary of Biography* includes over 18,000 entries for persons from various geographic locations, fields of expertise, and historical periods, including living persons of note. The work begins with a preface, notes, and lists of abbreviations and contributors. Most entries are alphabetized according to surname, although the introductory notes indicate variations, and standard practices. Each entry consists of the full name, birth and death dates, the individual’s major role, and a paragraph that includes the individual’s major contributions. Within the paragraph text, bold font indicates an individual who also has a dictionary entry. Cross-references are also available to direct the seeker to the preferred spelling of a name. Although most of the individuals receive a brief summary, some have a longer biography, placed in a feature box. This dictionary should be useful for ready reference in high school, academic, and public libraries.

Description of the entry related to **either your topic or person** (**Word Limit: 150 words**): The paragraph-long entry for “Sibelius, Jean Julius Christian” begins with his years of birth and death and his role as a Finnish composer. The synopsis includes his place of birth and mentions the legal career that was left behind to pursue musical studies. It also describes the role of the *Kalevala* in Sibelius’s music. Several symphonic poems are mentioned by name and date, and it is noted that Sibelius was given a state grant in order to support his composition work. Sibelius’s influence is shown when he is described as a “major 20th-century composer both in Finland and internationally.”

Question **related to either your topic or person** that this work would answer.

How is Sibelius tied to Finnish nationalism?

Give the answer to your question and tell how you located it.

The entry for Sibelius indicates that the man was a “passionate nationalist” and explains that some of his symphonic works are based on portions of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic, which originally sparked much of the interest in Finnish nationalism.

Review clip from a professional source: A 2003 review from *Booklist* explained, “*The Houghton Mifflin Dictionary of Biography* is now the most current one-volume biographical dictionary and is recommended for high-school, public, and academic libraries.”