

Abstract of PhD-project:
Herbert von Karajan als Interpret der Sinfonien von Jean Sibelius

My dissertation examines the preoccupation of Herbert von Karajan with the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. Karajan is a particularly important figure in terms of the performance history of Sibelius's music: Although he was practically the only well-known conductor in the Austro-German tradition to engage with Sibelius, his importance for this repertoire has not been fully recognized within German-language music criticism and musicology. In contrast, in the English-speaking countries Karajan has been considered to be one of the leading interpreters of Sibelius's music for decades. To assess this unique status, my dissertation on the one hand sheds light on the reception of Sibelius's music, particularly within the context of Karajan's early career as he got his start in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Keeping these historical and biographical dimensions in mind, my work then concentrates on Karajan's concrete performances of Sibelius's music, preserved in the form of studio and live recordings. I discuss the individual recordings on their own as well as contrast them with recordings by other conductors as well as further sources (e.g. remarks by Sibelius himself), in order to put these performances into the broader context of international Sibelius reception, to which Karajan contributed for almost forty years.