

Aino Sibelius née Järnefelt

1871

Aino (Aina) Järnefelt was born in Helsinki on 10 August 1871.
Parents: General Alexander Järnefelt and Elisabeth née Clodt von Jürgensburg.

1879–1887

Studied at Helsinki Finnish Girls' School. Continued her studies in Kuopio, where the family moved in 1884. Graduated from the Kuopio Girls' School in 1887.

1888–1890

Lived in Helsinki and Vaasa, where her father acted as governor. Wrote and translated texts for *Päivälehti* and *Pohjalainen* newspapers. An active member of the Finnish National Society in Vaasa and the Musical Association of Vaasa. Met Jean Sibelius through her composer brother Armas Järnefelt.

1890–1892

The offer of marriage from author Juhani Aho, which she refused, led to the publication of his sensational work *Yksin* ("Alone"). Fell in love with Jean Sibelius, and they got secretly engaged on 29 September 1890. The wedding was held at Tottesund Manor near Vaasa on 10 June 1892. A combined honeymoon and folk-music collection trip to Karelia, funded by a stipend.

1893–1901

Lived the married life in Helsinki and started a family. Gave birth to daughters Eva (1893), Ruth (1895) and Kirsti (1898). Moved to Kerava in 1899. Daughter Kirsti died in 1900. Travelled with her husband to Germany and Italy. Daughter Ruth fell seriously ill.

1903–1907

In 1903, the family purchased a plot from the Järvenpää Manor and the fourth daughter, Katariina, was born. The construction of Villa Ainola in Kielomäki was completed in 1904. Despite the move, there were financial difficulties and family life was hard. In 1907, Aino stayed at the Hyvinkää sanatorium to rest.

1908–1916

The fifth daughter, Margareta, was born in 1908, and the youngest, Heidi, in 1911. A peaceful period in life at Ainola due to husband's temperance. Became a grandmother in 1915; also the year of Jean Sibelius' 50th birthday.

1931–1941

Aino's 60th birthday at Ainola in 1931. Apartment in Helsinki during the war, 1938–1941, and return to Ainola.

1957–1967

Jean Sibelius died on 20 September 1957.
Life as a grandmother; parties, guests and the quiet life at Ainola.

1969

Aino Sibelius died on 8 June in Helsinki at the age of 98.

*Oh Aino, my lovely,
my darling sweetheart!*

Aino Järnefelt

Aino Järnefelt was born as the seventh child to a pro-Finnish noble family full of artistic talent. Aino's brothers worked in the arts, with merit: Eero as a painter, Arvid as an author, Armas as a composer, and Kasper as an art critic. The family also had to endure the early deaths of four daughters; Aino was the family's only daughter who lived to an old age. The children's upbringing encouraged the development of their personal strengths. Mother Elisabeth emphasised that the girls should learn household skills and live their lives guided by unselfishness, equality and self-discipline.

Aino graduated from Kuopio Girls' School in 1887, but she also attended sculpture schools in Kuopio and Vaasa to improve her manual skills. At sculpture schools, daughters from noble families learned skills such as drawing, ornamentation, calculus and bookkeeping. In addition, Aino often played the piano and liked to read works of fiction. Music, literature and the theatre were important to Aino throughout her whole life. Due to the pro-Finnish literary society founded by Aino's mother Elisabeth, the family home was frequently visited by young students and cultural figures. Through it, Aino also became acquainted with the ideologies of the time.

In 1890, Aino moved to Vaasa with her mother to take care of the household for her father, who had been appointed governor there. Aino wanted to continue her studies, but the family's situation in life required her to participate in household management and social receptions. Her mother's role in the activities of Finnish Women's Association and in advocating women's rights had no effect on this. In Vaasa, Aino became a member of the Board of Directors of the newly-founded Finnish National Society of Vaasa when she was only 19. She was also a member of the Musical Association of Vaasa. Like her sister Elli, Aino acted as an assistant at the local girls' school by giving needlework lessons and playing the piano. While living in Vaasa, Aino also translated texts for the newspaper Pohjalainen, such as August Strindberg's novel Samvetskval, which was published in 1892 under the Finnish title Omantunnon vaivat ("A Guilty Conscience"). A year earlier, Kirjansitojan leski (The Bookbinder's Widow), a text by Aino Järnefelt, was published in the Päivälehti newspaper under the pseudonym "Alma".



My darling Janne!

Marriage

Aino Järnefelt and Johan Julius Christian Sibelius met for the first time at the Järnefelt family home, when composer-brother Armas brought a student friend for a visit.

However, the couple did not fall in love until autumn 1890. They got engaged quickly. Before the engagement, the enamoured Aino had chosen Armas as her confidant. After a two-year engagement, the couple were married in the drawing room at Tottensund Manor in June 1892. Aino's bouquet was made from lily-of-the-valleys and the guests included the bride and groom's closest family members. For their honeymoon, the newly-weds travelled via Imatra and Joensuu to Lieksa. They brought along a square piano on the trip. On the way back, the couple went in different directions: Janne to Karelia on a folk-music collection trip and Aino to visit her aunt in Kuopio.

Do you understand, Aino, that we will be husband and wife in less than two weeks – then we can kiss each other however and wherever (!) – and live together and share our money – eat and make coffee together – I think it is wonderful.

Janne to Aino, 30 May 1892

Aino's musical talent was absolutely necessary for her to be able to stand by her husband during the upcoming years. Aino often listened to music and went to her husband's concerts. She also had a good understanding of how to interpret Sibelius's music.

But there is one thing I can complement you on, and it is your Second Symphony. It was performed last Monday, at the final symphony concert. I was there, and I enjoyed it immensely. It felt so complete and so very deep. Kajus directed it from his soul, although not completely correctly, but the final part echoed brilliantly. (...) I felt so much admiration for you, and I have been returning to your symphony all week.

Aino to Janne, 26 March 1909



*Be a darling, Aino,
and take good care of our Eeva!*

Aino as a mother

Family life began in Helsinki, where Aino gave birth to the couple's first three daughters: Eva, Ruth and Kirsti. Sibelius's career as a composer and the artist's life were tough on the family. They moved often and, despite his work as a teacher, money was tight. Some financial relief came in the form of a small inheritance after the death of Aino's father in 1896. It enabled Aino and Janne to go on their first trip abroad together, to Berlin. The couple travelled abroad again in spring 1898, but Aino, who was pregnant at the time, had to return home early.

Listen, one more thing. You know, an artist's talent does not necessarily have to suffer after he gets married, if his "wife" does not try to make him a "citizen". Do you understand, my angel?.... You, Aino, will always be my trusted confidante, but you need to be very brave, because you see, once a person goes down that road that I have chosen for myself, he cannot wave the white flag at the first sign of trouble.

Janne to Aino, 6 March 1892

The fast pace of life in Helsinki made the family look for a more peaceful environment for composing and for a new home in Kerava at the Mattila house, at the turn of the century, in 1899-1900. But the family was soon faced with great sadness when daughter Kirsti died of typhoid fever in February 1900. For a long time, Aino Sibelius blamed herself for her daughter's death. With the help of external funding, despite their grief, the family went on a trip together that took them to Germany and Italy, but their misfortune continued: the following year, their daughter Ruth fell seriously ill. I feel like I have been given a great gift, my own child back, Aino wrote after Ruth had recovered from her illness.

The same year that the family acquired a plot for their own house in Järvenpää, in 1903, Aino gave birth to a fourth daughter, Katariina. The youngest daughters, Margareta and Heidi, were born at Ainola. In total, Aino Sibelius gave birth to six daughters. As a parent, Aino Sibelius was responsible and demanding, and she transferred her principles to her children. The girls were home-schooled by their mother and the artists community before entering the state school system. Literature, music and languages played a major role in the girls' education. Of all of Aino's children, Eva, Katariina and Margareta completed the matriculation examination.



*Dear Lanne!
Our home feels so empty
without you here*

Ainola

The home, designed by Lars Sonck and constructed by Rikhard Laine, was completed in Järvenpää in 1904. At first, the timber villa had unfinished exterior walls and a shingle roof, and the family only lived in the rooms on the ground floor. Before the Sibelius family lived there, Juhani Aho, Aino's brother Eero Järnefelt, and Pekka Halonen and his family, had already made their home on the lakeshores of Tuusulanjärvi. In the spirit of the time, Ainola was also designed to be a functional home for an artist's family, suitable for reconciling work and family life.

Aino spent long periods at home alone with the children, but music and composing still had a special status in the building. Sibelius's work required silence and he often worked during the night when the rest of the family was asleep. Composing work affected the atmosphere of the home, especially in the early days. Once the music had started to take shape, the ambience became lighter and the family could live more freely.

Aino Sibelius was interested in decorating her home, and her influence can be seen in every room of the house. Some furniture was brought to Ainola from previous homes, but new pieces were also added to create a fresh look. For example, Aino designed a new table and chairs for the dining room. She also designed fabrics and cabinets for the home, while her largest design work was the sauna, which was completed in 1905.

The sauna burned down in 1925, but it was rebuilt as a copy of the original one. The sauna had some special features, such as a clever water system. Water was lifted from a nearby draw well into a channel, where it flowed directly to the sauna's washing room and into a bath. The system made it easier for the women of the house to heat the sauna and do the laundry.

The interior decor of Ainola was simple and cosy. Through the years, the furnishings were changed to suit the family's needs, and many works of art and artefacts found their way into the home, also as gifts.



Lace crocheting helps you think!

Aino's needlework

In the early 20th century, beautifying the home with fabrics and embroideries was left to women. Sewing skills were necessary for making clothes, repairing them and modifying them to suit trends. Clothes and home textiles were also purchased, but when money was tight, it was useful to know how to make them yourself.

Whenever her husband or sister-in-law, Saimi Järnefelt, travelled abroad, Aino asked them to bring back clothes and fabrics as souvenirs. She also patronised local artisans for clothes and supplies.

Aino's skilful hands created ornamental designs and applications on table cloths, pillow covers, sheets and towels, which show that she drew her inspiration from the plant motifs of the British Arts and Crafts movement and Art Nouveau, and from Karelian symbols. Aino carefully embroidered motifs on all the family's clothes and home textiles, and used a different style of lettering for each family member's initials. She made wool socks, mittens and scarves for everyone in the family, including her grandchildren. Not many of Aino's knitted pieces have been preserved, because they were made for wearing and used for as long as they lasted.

Aino Sibelius was especially skilful at making filet lace, but she also made crochet cloths and lace patterns. Hidden in Aino's room is an array of experimentations in lace crocheting, as well as books on patterns and sewing, showing her passion for needlework. Aino Sibelius was an aesthete, who appreciated sophistication, clean lines and practicality.



*I am never done
with the hoe and shovel*

Aino's garden

Aino Sibelius has said that clearing the ground for a garden is hard work. But already in the first summer following the completion of Ainola, potatoes, peas and flowers grew there. At first, Aino had help from Järvenpää Manor. And while over the years the garden grew more aesthetic, poetic even, a world of its own for Aino Sibelius, it was still primarily a financial necessity and a utilitarian garden.

Salad, peas, gherkins, vegetables, beans, and even sugar beets were grown in Ainola's garden. Tomatoes were grown from seed and, at most, there were 70 seedlings. The fruit garden was especially important to Aino; she grew apples, pears, cherries, plums, rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries and currants. Aino Sibelius's experiments with various apple varieties were awarded prizes at garden shows. Home-grown apples at the Christmas table were a particular source of pride. Ainola's garden used to be much wider than it is now, also covering all the current lawn areas.

Ainola was not totally self-sufficient; some food supplies were also ordered from Pihlgren's store in Järvenpää. Cream and eggs came from Järvenpää Manor, and milk from the neighbours, the Wasenius house. Aino enjoyed harvesting and preserving foods. Her cellar was full to the brim with jam jars and canned goods, some of which are still on display there. Aino was also taught how to gather mushrooms by her mother at an early age.

*I must work hard now, make enough to last through the winter.
I picked a large basket of gherkins, and will start salting them
today. It is so much fun to reap the rewards of all the hard
labour. It will take me all of August and in September come the
mushrooms, if they come, and it will be time for the autumn
chores in the garden. The work never ends. But it is fun.*

Aino to her mother, 5 August 1919



*We started with the coffee
around nine-ish*

Ainola's servants

At the time of the artists' community, it was common also for low-income artist families to have servants. Good ones were not easy to find, though, as Aino Sibelius wrote in her letters to her relatives. Worth their weight in gold to the artist community were the three Vainikainen sisters, who worked as servants at Ahola, Halosenniemi and Ainola. The trusted servants of Aino Sibelius were Helmi "Hellu" Vainikainen and Järvenpää-based Aino Kari, who retired but then returned to Ainola and continued to work there until 1968. Helmi's main responsibility was cooking, while Aino Kari handled the laundry, cleaning and taking care of the animals.

The servants were like part of the family, and the relationship between them and their employer was very casual. Like all family members, they were designated their own flower bed in the garden, and they even helped the master of the house organise his sheets of music. The grandchildren in particular remember how hanging around in the kitchen was their favourite thing to do when visitors came to the house – not only for the delicious food, but for the pleasant and warm personalities of the people there.

Builder Rikhard Laine acted as handyman at Ainola in the early days; other handymen who worked at the house included Usko Siimes and Heikki Sormunen. They were responsible for much of the outdoor work, such as fixing fences, turning the potato patch and chopping firewood.

Later on, when the master and mistress of Villa Ainola grew old, many other locals came to Ainola to help around the house and in the garden.

