Quartet for the perpetuity of time

As we witness worrying divisions and oppositions all around the world and hate speech fosters tensions between population groups, music as a positive force that brings people together is becoming all the more important.

In the first of the four thematic sections in the present issue, we focus on music, community and identity, discussing the role of music in building communities on the one hand and specialised, music-based communities on the other.

The second thematic section is about a selected handful of music-makers who represent the rich diversity of music as an artform. This section also includes the first entry in a new series of columns, where music-makers write about their own music.

In order for music to enhance its position at the core of society and to improve its ability to communicate with various audiences, the key issue must be how music professionals of the future should be trained. In our third thematic section, we take a look at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, which appears to have struck an excellent balance between in-depth specialisation and diversity, and is today more international than ever.

Building the future requires us to take a closer look at our past too. Our fourth thematic section discusses the long shadow cast by the wars of the 20th century and their aftermath on the work of composers and music in Finland, art music in particular.

Music is a mirror of its age, and as such it has the right and the duty not only to offer experiences and insights but also to underscore difficult issues and anomalies. Climate change is a problem that worries all of us, but as yet it has scarcely been addressed at all in music. In this issue, we present a few committed climate action pioneers in the music sector in Finland, and there is more to come. The public debate on diversity and equality must also continue until they become established as self-evident in the music sector.

I fondly hope that FMQ issue 2018 will offer you, dear reader, food for thought and valuable insights, and also a certain something intangible that could be described using the title of MAGNUS LINDBERG’S new work premiered in November – the Triumph to Exist. Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
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Through the ages, music has served as a means for raising the spirits of communities of all shapes and sizes. Music can foster and bolster a sense of belonging among a group of people, enshrining their goals or ideology, and transform individuals into community members.
As a worldwide subculture, heavy metal is an excellent example of the specialised communities that emerge in modern society, governed by individual preferences rather than a shared physical environment.

In eastern Finland with a population of 3,000. With 13 bands, Lemi has a metal density of 42.26 bands per 10,000 inhabitants. The runner-up was Joensuu, also in eastern Finland, with 177 bands in a city of 75,000 and hence a metal density of 2.34.

Though conducted with a humorous streak, the campaign strikingly illustrates how layered musical communities are in today's mediatised world. Local bands slogging away in their digs and playing local gigs promote the heavy metal community spirit both in their own locales and in the Finnish metal community at large. This, in turn, feeds directly into Finnish cultural diplomacy abroad. Fans were also invited to participate in the campaign, because, as stated on the campaign website: “It’s all about the community, and what would the metal community be without the fans?”

In our networked world, local scenes can become translocal or virtual communities. The more marginal the music genre, the more benefit there is in networking.

Communities of common taste
The campaign showed that the metal scene differs widely from town to town in Finland. The community feeling experienced by a metalhead can be quite different in Joensuu with its 177 local metal bands than in places that only have one metal band each, such as Nurminjarvi, Raisio or Hamina. This is an issue not only of enthusiasts and fan base but also of infrastructure. In Joensuu at least, the scene is catalysed by the existence of a number of rock music venues and major festivals such as Liosaarikrock, and some years ago the Joensuu Rock Academy was set up specifically to give budding bands concrete support and a leg up. Momentum is also built by bands of international stature originating in the leading hotbeds of heavy metal, such as Insomnium from Joensuu and Stamina from top-ranking Lemi.

Much research has been undertaken internationally concerning the music scenes in various cities and regions, and several common features have been identified that can be found regardless of location or genre. Generally speaking, a “music scene” could be defined as a regional “community of common taste” that eventually breeds an infrastructure that in turn nurtures emerging music. The music scene can turn out very different indeed from place to place, as like-minded musicians and audiences shape the scene to their liking in active interaction. A music scene also often gives rise to artist collectives, fan enterprises or DIY activists who carry the music scene forwards with their efforts.

In our networked world, local scenes can become translocal or virtual communities. The more marginal the music genre, the more benefit there is in networking. As an example, the experimental music scene in Finland is active in several common features have been identified that can be found regardless of location or genre. Generally speaking, a “music scene” could be defined as a regional “community of common taste” that eventually breeds an infrastructure that in turn nurtures emerging music. The music scene can turn out very different indeed from place to place, as like-minded musicians and audiences shape the scene to their liking in active interaction. A music scene also often gives rise to artist collectives, fan enterprises or DIY activists who carry the music scene forwards with their efforts.

From collective emotion to national representation
Ever since the pioneering classic works of sociology, the feeling of belonging has been regarded as a key element in building communities. This feeling may stem from a personal relationship or from mass media as described by Anderson. This collective emotion is crucial in fostering what Michael Maffesoli has described as “neo-tribes,” the postmodern community equivalent of tribes in the pre-modern era.

Although not all of today's communities fit into Maffesoli's definition of tribalism, the description seems particularly apt in the case of the transnational metal community. The metal tribe has always sought to differentiate itself from the mainstream and commercialism and to remain in the margins, questioning and opposing the dominant norms.

Paradoxically, much of heavy metal has actually entered the mainstream, particularly in Finland where metal music has become a building block of the national identity, especially since Lordi won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2006. Also, metal music is now a huge business, and the largest and most successful bands tend to be the ones that get all the press.

This, perhaps, is the ultimate reason why the Capital of Metal campaign comes across as profoundly communal. In this project, superstars like Nightwish and Children of Bodom were considered simply as bands among bands, and they did not even gain the most likes from fans responding to the campaign. The hand with the most likes, surprisingly, was the doom metal band Yeti from Kemijärvi in northern Finland. A good reminder that in a world of likes, the community can get you to the top.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
Community members and the brass band of the Finnish utopian colony Sointula (British Columbia, Canada) in 1903.

THERE IS POWER IN THE UNION

MUSIC IN THE FINNISH AMERICAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

BY Suijelena Rantanen

North America attracted more than 350,000 Finnish migrants between the mid-1860s and the late 1920s. Conditions driving migration included continuous crop failures and population growth in rural areas as well as political reasons. On the other hand, curiosity and a sense of adventure tempted young people to try their luck on the other side of the Atlantic. The majority of immigrants were unmarried young men who came from a working-class background and who were between 15 and 25 years of age.

Due to their working-class background, Finns were open towards the labour movement from the very start. This had a direct and significant impact on the development of the immigrants’ music culture as a big part of local musical activities were centred around labour unions.

Music provided an important way of socialising for immigrants. It was present at all occasions, from meetings to summer festivals and speaking tours. On a local level, the cornerstone of musical activity was provided by brass bands and choirs, which everyone was welcome to join. Apart from creating a strong sense of community, music served as an ideological tool which was used for many kinds of ideological and educational purposes, such as recruiting new members, spreading the political agenda and trying to reduce alcohol use.

Halls as meeting places

The most important music performance venues were the Finnish American halls, which were at the heart of the Finnish immigrant communities’ busy cultural scene. Halls were custom-built or rented to serve every Finnish community. They were mainly used for dances, evening socials and concerts by local music groups or touring musicians. Dancing was by far the most popular form of entertainment for the immigrants, providing an easy way to form social contacts.

In addition to providing a place for social gatherings, Finnish American halls formed an important network of performance venues for individual artists and groups. Musicians who performed at the halls were most often either Finnish musicians who had migrated and made their careers in North America or visiting professional musicians from Finland. These performers would travel from one Finnish community to another, often playing Finnish music.

Integration and the IWW

Especially in the early days, Finnish immigrants – including working-class audiences – preferred music programmes with strong Finnish influences. In time, immigrants’ musical tastes became influenced by their new environment. This subsequently allowed Finns to expand their networks outside of their own community.

These changes were first seen in the brass band scene. In time, immigrants’ musical tastes became influenced by their new environment. This subsequently allowed Finns to expand their networks outside of their own community.

THE IWW SONGS EMPHASISED THE DEMAND FOR EQUALITY, CALLING FOR AN EQUAL STANDING FOR WOMEN AND MEN AS WELL AS FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES. THIS EXPLAINS WHY MANY FINNISH IMMIGRANT WOMEN EMERGED AS PROMINENT ACTIVISTS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT.

The general patriotic ethos within the labour movement, which helped sustain Finnish identity, was significantly weakened by the 1910s, when poor working conditions drove increasing numbers of Finns to turn to the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In the 1920s Finns formed the largest individual ethnic group within the organisation. The IWW’s catchphrases were direct action, sabotage and general strike. Music was the organisation’s most important operational tool in the battle against capitalism. Its central role is aptly represented in the IWW’s moniker “The Singing Union”.

The recent immigration wave into Europe has proved that where there is no common language, music and art can provide an important communication avenue between immigrants and locals. Through art, immigrants are able to express their own culture but also to give a voice even to their most harrowing experiences. Likewise, music played a pivotal role for Finnish immigrants in America at the turn of the 20th century. It enabled them to maintain their Finnish identity in the new environment and to integrate into American society.

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The movement’s songs highlighted radicalism, bloodshed, solidarity, anti-war and anti-religious sentiments, the Red Flag and the power of community in improving conditions for the working class. Some songs among the Finnish Wobblies, as the Finnish union members were called, also depicted the horrors of the Finnish Civil War (1918).

For equality

In line with the organisation’s aims, the IWW songs emphasised the demand for equality, calling for an equal standing for women and men as well as for ethnic minorities. This explains why many Finnish immigrant women emerged as prominent activists within the movement. They formed their own associations, wrote songs and participated in demonstrations.

The most famous IWW song about the battle of women is titled Rebel Girl. It was written by Joe Hill, the movement’s most significant songwriter, and it has been translated into Finnish as well. While imprisoned, Hill wrote the song for his friend Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, role model for Finnish women activists. They formed their own associations, wrote songs and participated in demonstrations.

That’s the Rebel Girl, the Rebel Girl! To the working class, she’s a precious pearl. She brings courage, pride and joy To the fighting Rebel Boy.

We’ve had girls before, but we need some more In the Industrial Workers of the World, For it’s great to fight for freedom With a Rebel Girl.

True to its ideals of equality, the IWW accepted members from every profession and trade. I conclude my article with a verse from a rarely heard and tragic song as an example of the destiny many immigrant women had to face. Langenneen laulu [Song of the fallen one], by an anonymous writer, is found in the book Palkkaorjain lauluja [Songs of the wage slaves] which was published by the Finnish Wobblies in 1925:

I am led like a lamb to the slaughter, With no escape from the cruel death. I am shunned by the “chaste” ones, Who have trodden me down to the mud.

The song is likely to be the only published Finnish-language song which defends sex workers and their rights.

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Read also Saijaleena Rantanen’s article The Singing Union on fresh interpretations of the IWW songs, and more about the fascinating network of relationships between music, community and identity in FMQ Special Feature 3/2018 at fmq.fi.
“We maintain a positive attitude and base our teaching to keep the flow going. Some students go far and some even further – that’s all there is to it.”

Mauno Järvelä

“The Näppäri movement is a method and a music education forum which enables everyone to participate and experiment as well as experience the joy of playing in a group,” says the father of the method, violinist and folk fiddler Mauno Järvelä. There are no auditions required to join, and the arrangements are made to allow everyone to participate according to their individual skill level.

The Näppäri method started to take form when violinist Mauno Järvelä returned to his hometown of Kaustinen in the late 1970s. “The violin first arrived in Finland in the 1700s,” says Järvelä. “Soon after, folk music was played on violins in the Perhonjokilaakso region. Järvelä took a position as a music teacher at the community college in the autumn of 1980, initially for a few hours a week. By the following summer, his children’s group performed under the name Näppäri at their own village festival – which just happens to be the oldest and biggest folk music festival in Finland!”

The Näppäri method rapidly started to gain momentum and, by 1985, Järvelä was employed full-time. Today the Näppäri courses spread the gospel of playing together by touring to different music institutes and towns in Finland and abroad.

At last year’s Kaustinen Folk Music Festival, the traditional Näppäri concert set a new record in terms of participation. The audience, which includes students from any skill level can start a jam when meeting another player, as stated in a book edited by Antti Huntus, titled Näppäripedagogiikka [The Näppäri Method].

For the audiences, Näppäri concerts provide moving experiences as a stage full of children and their teachers make music not only at a high standard but also with great enthusiasm. The oldest and most advanced students stand at the back on the highest risers, and row by row the players get smaller, until you get to the very front row with the smallest players, who play open strings when not busy singing at the top of their voices or using their bows to sword-fight with their fellow players.

The significance of local tradition

“The violin first arrived in Finland in the 1700s,” says Järvelä. “Soon after, folk music was played on violins in the Perhonjokilaakso region and the tradition continues. Kaustinen also has a long history of classical music, with the first local string quartet formed a century ago. The fact that both traditions are active makes for an interesting dynamic. In 1986 I gave a lecture about the basis of my own work and already pointed out that we should try to change the course a bit and start including local traditions at our music institutes as well. If our traditions cease to live on, we will have to go to the archives to find information. If traditions are forgotten altogether, we lose colours and nuances. We have access to a much more interesting music scene if local traditions are alive and strong.”

The Näppäri groups play Finnish and sometimes Scandinavian folk music. Instead of teaching them mainstream children’s songs, Järvelä custom-makes songs that offer a wealth of information about, for instance, significant figures in Finnish history, laced with a healthy dose of humour.

“When learning about history, men tend to be more prominent as active women were not traditionally allowed into the spotlight. We justify making songs about these men because we have succeeded in including girls as players. Today they represent a majority in our groups.”

Other song subjects have included operas, Baltic Sea projectile missions and the 250th anniversary of the free press. “What could be better topics for children’s songs?” Järvelä grins.

A jam for everyone

The Näppäri method is very non-restrictive, almost custom-made. “It is simply not possible to fit all students into the same mould,” Järvelä explains. “We maintain a positive attitude and base our teaching to keep the flow going. Some students go far and some even further – that’s all there is to it. The main thing is to create a good relationship with music, which is what music institutes are now also aspiring to. This is something we have to think about all the time, and with each and every student.”

A good relationship with music does not mean that you eventually quit playing and move on to the audience, but perhaps move on to a more difficult level of playing. “It is hard to know the exact numbers as anyone who has managed to figure out the concert set list and to materialise on the stage is welcome to join in!”

Never too late to learn

Each set of new Näppäri materials, which are prepared each year, includes arrangements with different sets, parts, in order to cater to each player’s skill level. It also includes a lot of songs so that students who have just recently started playing also get a chance to join in the concert, at least through singing. “We also produce some instrumental tunes specifically for our more advanced students. But in this summer’s concert, everyone was able to join in from the fourth piece onwards to the very end,” Järvelä remembers.

“That those who have been playing for a long time are important role models for the younger ones. They provide motivation to keep playing, and the children tend to look forward to being able to move on to a more difficult part. This is how it’s always been – folk musicians listen to those who know more and try to copy them. It is a healthy progression.”

“When you start playing as a child, it’s easier to grasp the fine motor skills required, but it’s never too late to start playing. A human being is a lifelong learner, even though learning gets a bit slower when we are older,” Järvelä emphasises. In addition to directing children’s groups, he has been leading the adults’ folk fiddling group for decades.

That shared feeling

In Kaustinen, anyone who wants to is welcome to join the Näppäri group. There is a limited number of spaces at the community college but the Näppäri group has a supporters’ association which sources funding for expenses. The Näppäri concerts create a community and together into a larger group that seems to experience the same feelings in that moment. Music brings people closer together, especially when music is made in a large group. It gives access to those kinds of feelings that you would want everyone to have access to. A soccer match, for instance, is a different thing altogether: it is easy for the winners to be happy. The ones who lose have to work hard to process their loss and regain their positivity and will to go on. In music there are no losers. We only have winners.”

Translation: Hanna Mari Latham
There is no need to fear silence in a libretto. Words generate echoes, and in that resonant space music can say a lot,” says author and musician Maritza Núñez. Here she discusses the art of writing a libretto.

Daniel Filippo. Libretto by Maritza Núñez, music by Max Savkangas, Lauri Tovio and Toomas Turriso.

A libretto should not contain too much or too little. This, of course, applies to all good art.

When a libretto is finished, I never want to give it up. • Translation: Jaakko Wannjari

Maritza Núñez has written the librettos for 42 operas to date. In 2019, operas based on her libretti were performed in Finland, Estonia, Russia, Peru, Spain, Argentina, Venezuela and Japan.

In opera, obviously, the libretto and the music are of equal importance, and they must work well together. A good libretto has an interesting story that allows solid dramaturgical development. The characters are complex, realistic and convincing. The architecture, structure and language are organically related to the work’s temporal dimension.

A libretto consists of words and silences and is inherently musical. After all, the end product is a musical work, not a play. Personally, I aim for a synthesis of expression in my libretti, a level of abstraction such as in poetry. The language explores a wide range of characters and colours, yet at the same time stylistic unity must be ensured.

A libretto should not contain too much or too little. This, of course, applies to all good art. The dramatic tension in an opera dissipates if it is unjustifiably long; but on the other hand, the story and the characters may remain underdeveloped if they do not have enough time to unfold.

The internal timing of a work is crucial: the macro and micro levels of the structure must be designed with the precision of a Swiss watch. The librettist must be able to envision the text in a musical space. The libretto must clearly indicate how long a line is, the space for breathing between lines, dramatic pauses, the pace of the dialogue, the bridges between scenes and the condensation and expansion of internal time. This time plan provides the skeleton for the composer’s work.

No composer has ever asked me to make cuts to my libretti. The opposite has happened, a composer defending a particular fragment of text because he or she liked it. I am not afraid of the red pencil. I actually enjoy crossing out a line, because I feel then that I am able to let something go that was never needed in the first place.

There is no need to fear silence in a libretto. Words generate echoes, and in that resonant space music can say a lot. In some of my libretti, I have written scenes with stage directions and characterisations only, without actual dialogue. Why use words if a scene can work with music alone, reflecting everything that words can only inadequately express?

There are many ways in which one may begin a collaboration with a composer.

Sometimes I start with a subject or a story that I am interested in writing about. I envision a musical environment that I can associate with a particular composer. In most cases, composers have been interested in the subjects and stories that I have proposed.

In other cases, I have been interested in working with a particular composer and have contacted them with a suggestion for a subject or a story. Sometimes a subject may emerge in conversation; sometimes the composer or a third party may suggest a subject. When collaborating with a composer, I like to get acquainted with as much of their work as possible, so as to be familiar with their style and aesthetics.

When I began to write fiction, I took this suggestion on board in a deep analysis of the text. Not because the composer asked for changes or because my first version was poor, but because some other word fits the melodic line better. All this is done in dialogue with the composer, of course. Sometimes the composer asks for changes to the text, a request I respect. I do not think there is any reason to ignore a suggested change if it can improve the text.

When a libretto is finished, I always engage in a creative discussion in which ideas bounce in both directions in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I accept suggestions made by the composer, and provide the composer with musical ideas through the libretto. For instance, in the genesis of the opera Frío y Diego (2004) I had an excellent connection with Kalevi Aho, who had already written five operas by then. He suggested that we swap two scenes around, and I found this to be a good idea. Conversely, in the libretto – and in the play on which it was based on - I envisioned music in 1920s Berlin cabaret style underlying the parody of Hitler and the marching of the characters. Aho took this suggestion on board in his score.

Artistic collaboration of this kind is only possible if we accept the principle that I am 100% responsible for the final shape of the libretto and the composer ditto for the music. This mutual respect is also suitable for the process of staging an opera. The director is responsible for staging the opera, but consultation between the librettist, the composer, the director and the conductor is vital. The director then also engages in discussion with the set, costume and lighting designers, the choreographer and the make-up artist.

The "table read” with the singers is a very important moment in the early days of the rehearsal process. This involves a deep analysis of the libretto, characters and music. Sometimes minor changes to the music need to be made following rehearsals with the singers, and later with the orchestra and conductor. Therefore it is very important for both librettist and composer to be able to follow this part of the process too.

Every opera is a mystery. The process of generating a subject is fascinating, and I never want to give it up.
The year 2018 was brimming with exciting works, publications and collaborations in all genres and generations of music. New ideas were flying. Some translated tradition into folk hop. Others made it in Manhattan. And limits turned to freedom.
Sampo Haapamäki has been employing quarter-tones in his music for more than a decade. In his new work, premiered last summer at the Time of Music festival in Viitasaari, he combines a large chamber ensemble and electronics.

Complex study path
Haapamäki grew up in Central Ostrobothnia. His path to becoming a musician progressed from instrumental study to composing music for an ensemble of seven musicians playing quarter-tones. In his new work, premiered last summer at the Time of Music festival in Viitasaari, he combines a large chamber ensemble and electronics.

When Sampo Haapamäki talks about his music, the listener is bombarde with mind-boggling terminology—"live electronics module", "motion-sensor technology", "spectral frequencies", "quarter-tone resolution", among other things. At IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique) in Paris, he focused on electronic music, and in New York he studied with Tristan Murail, one of the key developers of spectral music.

**Fine-tuning in quarter-tones**
Soon after his breakthrough with the energetic virtuoso work *Signature* (2003), Haapamäki adopted quarter-tones in his work, meaning that he began to use a scale where the octave is divided into 24 steps rather than the conventional 12. This lends his music a fascinating timbre of its own. His first work in this idiom was *Haljennut* (Split) (2004), and since then all of his work has employed quarter-tones.

Most of Haapamäki’s works are performable on conventional instruments, quarter-tones notwithstanding, although it can be a challenge. "Orchestral musicians have been wonderful about tackling the challenges of playing quarter-tones. I have great respect for the independent practice that they put in and appreciate that it can take time to come to grips with this idiom," says Haapamäki.

In some cases, his music required the construction of entirely new instruments. To date, these include the quarter-tone accordion of Juuso Niemi and the quarter-tone piano of Elisa Järvi. Haapamäki was involved in the development process of the instruments and has used them as solo instruments in concertos.

Haapamäki intends to continue working with quarter-tones. His publicised future projects include a piece for MIDI ensemble, an ensemble of seven musicians playing quarter-tone instruments, and an orchestral work for the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra in 2022.

Musicians, electronics and sound files
**Johan Tallgren**, artistic director of the Time of Music festival, describes the origins of Haapamäki’s *IDEA*. "Sampo’s music has been of international interest for quite some time, so the idea of a joint commission with Frank Strohmeier, artistic director of IRCAM, was not a particularly hard sell."

Because electronics play a prominent role in the work, Haapamäki spent a fair amount of time at IRCAM, one of the foremost centres of excellence in the field. "It is wonderful that I had the opportunity to work at IRCAM studios for a total of nine weeks. The first studio period was in July 2017 and the last in June 2018," says Haapamäki.

Haapamäki’s principal collaborator at IRCAM is Serge Lemorton, a computer music designer who has been at IRCAM for 25 years and has worked on more than 50 projects with various composers.

"The electronics element is very important," says Haapamäki, describing the role electronics play in *IDEA*. "The spatial sound surrounding the audience, played through eight channels, includes both pre-created sound files and live electronics that modify the sounds of the live instruments in real time. The live electronics enable time travel of sorts: the sound of an instrument can be recorded in the course of a performance and later played back, either as is or modified."

A tiny sensor is attached to the conductor’s hand or baton to follow his movements. The movement data is fed into a computer, which deduces where in the score the conductor is.

Generally speaking, Haapamäki sees the use of electronics as involving both opportunities and challenges. "Electronics enables a vast landscape of micro-intervals, because on a computer you can create things to a hertz and millisecond precision. But electronics has its challenges. Computers are very good at calculating algorithms, but creating an illusion of living sound is much harder. On the other hand, while a live musician is traditionally considered to guarantee a sensitive and feeling performance, the human body has its own limitations."

"Bringing these two worlds together is an exhilarating challenge. What I mean is the seamless integrating of the sound from the speakers with the sound of a live ensemble. *IDEA* is an attempt to bring three elements together in an organic and vivid way: acoustic sound, live electronics and sound files."

This article was jointly commissioned by the FMQ and Rondo magazine.

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**SAMPO HAAPAMÄKI**

- **Born in Tocolampi, Central Ostrobothnia, in 1979**
- **Studied composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki under the guidance of Veli-Matti Puumala and Tapio Nevanlinna. Graduated with a Master of Music degree in 2005**
- **Studied in New York, Leipzig and IRCAM in Paris**
- **Received the Gaudeamus Prize and the ISCM-CASH Young Composer Award for his energetic virtuoso work *Signature* (2003) for chamber orchestra**
- **Has developed quarter-tone instruments in collaboration with musicians**

**Johan Tallgren**, artistic director of the Time of Music festival, describes the origins of Haapamäki’s *IDEA*. "Sampo’s music has been of international interest for quite some time, so the idea of a joint commission with Frank Strohmeier, artistic director of IRCAM, was not a particularly hard sell."

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A tiny sensor is attached to the conductor’s hand or baton to follow his movements. The movement data is fed into a computer, which deduces where in the score the conductor is.

Generally speaking, Haapamäki sees the use of electronics as involving both opportunities and challenges. "Electronics enables a vast landscape of micro-intervals, because on a computer you can create things to a hertz and millisecond precision. But electronics has its challenges. Computers are very good at calculating algorithms, but creating an illusion of living sound is much harder. On the other hand, while a live musician is traditionally considered to guarantee a sensitive and feeling performance, the human body has its own limitations."

"Bringing these two worlds together is an exhilarating challenge. What I mean is the seamless integrating of the sound from the speakers with the sound of a live ensemble. *IDEA* is an attempt to bring three elements together in an organic and vivid way: acoustic sound, live electronics and sound files."

This article was jointly commissioned by the FMQ and Rondo magazine.

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**SAMPO HAAPAMÄKI**

- **Born in Tocolampi, Central Ostrobothnia, in 1979**
- **Studied composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki under the guidance of Veli-Matti Puumala and Tapio Nevanlinna. Graduated with a Master of Music degree in 2005**
- **Studied in New York, Leipzig and IRCAM in Paris**
- **Received the Gaudeamus Prize and the ISCM–CASH Young Composer Award for his energetic virtuoso work *Signature* (2003) for chamber orchestra**
- **Has developed quarter-tone instruments in collaboration with musicians**

**Johan Tallgren**, artistic director of the Time of Music festival, describes the origins of Haapamäki’s *IDEA*. "Sampo’s music has been of international interest for quite some time, so the idea of a joint commission with Frank Strohmeier, artistic director of IRCAM, was not a particularly hard sell."

Because electronics play a prominent role in the work, Haapamäki spent a fair amount of time at IRCAM, one of the foremost centres of excellence in the field. "It is wonderful that I had the opportunity to work at IRCAM studios for a total of nine weeks. The first studio period was in July 2017 and the last in June 2018," says Haapamäki.

Haapamäki’s principal collaborator at IRCAM is Serge Lemorton, a computer music designer who has been at IRCAM for 25 years and has worked on more than 50 projects with various composers.

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Jazz bass player Kaisa Mäensivu is now creating a career in various ensembles in the USA and Finland. How did she end up becoming a jazz professional? And how would she compare her experiences of the jazz scene in Helsinki and New York?

Jazz has been a part of Kaisa Mäensivu’s life ever since childhood, as her mother was a die-hard jazz fan who took her daughter with her whenever there was a jazz gig in their home town, Hämeenlinna. “I played classical piano to begin with, but I soon realised that it wasn’t what I wanted to do,” says Mäensivu of the origins of her musical life.

The double bass came in at the age of 14. Kaisa saw a music video with a woman playing double bass. “I said at home: ‘I want to play that too,’ and my mother immediately had me taking double bass lessons,” says Kaisa with amusement.

Gigs were few and far between for a young double bass player in Hämeenlinna, and Kaisa began seriously to think about moving to Helsinki during her last years in comprehensive school. “It was in upper secondary school that I learned to listen to jazz. It just sounded so interesting, and I wanted to find out what was going on and what the people playing that music were doing.”

At the same time, she began to study bass at the Pop & Jazz Conservatory, and later at the Department of Jazz at the Sibelius Academy.

Making it in Manhattan

At the Sibelius Academy, Kaisa Mäensivu made a far-reaching decision. After completing her B.Mus. degree, she applied for and was admitted to the master’s degree programme at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, where she studied with Jay Anderson.

Kaisa describes the teaching at both the Sibelius Academy and the Manhattan School of Music as being of extremely high quality, but with many notable differences. The most significant of these is the price tag.

“School in New York is incredibly expensive, in Helsinki not so much. That means that in Helsinki more people have the possibility to study.”

Kaisa notes that in her experience, students are encouraged to be distinctive and individual to a greater extent in New York than in Finland. She also reckons that she did much more homework while studying in New York than at the Sibelius Academy. Also, the importance of composing and arranging was particularly emphasised in her jazz studies at the Manhattan School of Music.

The Sibelius Academy, meanwhile, has the advantage of having a small jazz department — about six students admitted per year — which guarantees a higher rate of one-on-one tuition and potential for students to influence the content of the teaching. At the Manhattan School of Music, Kaisa was in a class of 30 to 40 students, of whom six were bass players. “There’s something to be said for a large group. It’s a great thing to have colleagues in your class with whom you can talk about bass stuff.”

Kaisa would have a hard time ranking the schools, though. “For me, the ideal situation would be to have the Sibelius Academy Department of Jazz on Manhattan,” she says.

The jazz scene in New York is highly competitive, and there is no end of musicians striving for their big break. There is enormous stylistic variety within the city, even between districts. Jazz sounds different in Brooklyn than it does in Greenwich Village, for instance.

KAISA MÄENSIVU

- Born in Hämeenlinna in 1990
- Lives on Manhattan in New York City
- Studied in Helsinki at the Pop & Jazz Conservatory and the Sibelius Academy Jazz Department under the guidance of teachers including Ville Herrala and Antti Lötjönen
- Completed her M.Mus. degree at the Manhattan School of Music in 2017
- Her own band, Kaisa’s Machine, released their debut album in the Key of K in December 2017
- Plays with several jazz bands in both Finland and the USA
- Young Artist of the Year at the Pori Jazz Festival, 2018
- First prize at the Biga Jazz Stage, 2019
- Keiko Viitamäki Prize, 2017
- Third prize in the Esko Linnavalli Big Band Composition Competition, 2017

“In New York it’s maybe easier to choose a niche for yourself, whatever that may be, because you can be virtually sure of finding like-minded people and clubs. In Finland, things tend to sound pretty much all the same,” says Kaisa Mäensivu.

“Live music is pretty well available. If there were more venues, then maybe there wouldn’t be enough listeners to go around. But I would like to see more diversity, to hear different types of jazz at different clubs.”

What she would export from Finland to New York is a dose of humility.

“People often have such a self-satisfied attitude when they show up to play at a jam session. There’s also a lot of praise and encouragement in New York, but all that is really pretty shallow.”

The machine goes on

Kaisa Mäensivu completed her studies at the Manhattan School of Music in May 2017 but stayed on in New York. “Maybe I’ll return to Finland one day, we’ll see. My artist visa just came through. That means I’ll be allowed to work in the USA for three more years.”

At the moment, Kaisa plays with several combos in New York as what is known as a sidewoman. Every now and again, she gets her own compositions performed.

Kaisa enjoys the role of sidewoman: “It’s much easier to be a sidewoman than to be out there performing your own music. I’m really happy with these bands and their members. At the moment, I have no need to perform my own music in New York,” she says.

However, being a sidewoman and writing your own music are not mutually exclusive — quite the contrary. “Those two roles feed into each other. Because I know how to lead a band, I can be a better sidewoman.”

Kaisa often visits Finland, where she keeps a band named Kaisa’s Machine rolling and plays with them as much as possible. “What I like about my job is the diversity and the ability to make music in all kinds of projects. I hope to be able to maintain a good balance between being a band leader and being a sidewoman,” she says, describing her artistic profile.

Asked about the future of jazz, Kaisa hopes for both the upholding of tradition and the creating of new traditions. “For me, the most important thing is that jazz stays alive. I’m not so worried about it languishing in the margins, because jazz will always go on, one way or another.”

In spring 2019 Kaisa aims to complete a master’s degree in the Department of Jazz at the Sibelius Academy. Her dream is to play in a band with her idols and to tour the world. “But I need to do a lot of work out there to make that happen. It’s a long haul! As long as I can play with good musicians, I’m happy — wherever I may be playing.”

© Aini Mäensivu
Tuuletar are a vocal ensemble of four women who have skyrocketed to international fame in recent years. Although their music is firmly anchored in the soil of folk music, they seek to avoid being boxed or categorised, preferring instead to interpret tradition liberally.

Combining folk-oriented a cappella expression with beatboxing, Tuuletar, the name might be rendered as Maiden of the wind, describe their music as vocal folk hop, drawing not only on the Finnish tradition but also on a wide range of pop music and world music influences. Venla Ilona Blom, Sini Koskelainen, Johanna Kykkoski and Piia Säilyn-Öst say emphatically that they are above all a band; they just happen to use their voices as instruments. Their music is created only using the human voice; they use electronics to layer the sound and to produce effects.

The rich diversity of their music stems from four musicians interested in different kinds of music joining forces around a common core of Finnish folk music. The four women first met while they were all exchange students in Denmark. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and Finnish folk music began to exert a powerful pull on them. Making folk music together ignited a spark that has never dimmed since.

“We looked at our first gig before we had written any pieces of our own,” says Johanna Kykkoski with amusement.

The beatboxing was also initially an experiment, as the band’s beatboxer, Venla Ilona Blom, explains:

“First time I’d ever heard a woman beatboxer,” says Blom. “I realised that I could actually do that!”

Out to conquer the world

At Finland’s first Ethno-Gala in autumn 2017, Tuuletar were nominated for Folk Music Songwriter of the Year. But Tuuletar have been attracting even more fans abroad than at home.

Their album Tules maas vedes taivaan [In fire, on earth, in water, in the sky], released in summer 2016, lodged in the Top Ten of World Music Charts Europe for months. In October 2017 Tuuletar went on an extensive tour of Taiwan, and early in 2018 they performed at the Sur Jahan Festival in India.

Tuuletar’s UK debut was up next. The prestigious Songlines magazine invited them to perform at their annual Songlines Encounters Festival on 1 June. The band soon returned to the UK, as the WOMAD festival selected them to appear at a concert on the festival stage in Charlton Park, Wiltshire, on 28 July. In addition to the UK and Finland, Tuuletar also appeared in Sweden, Estonia and Switzerland in summer and autumn 2018.

“The tradition is there for everyone, and anyone can interpret it in any way they wish. We are getting so much out of Finnish folk tradition as fuel for our own music. If someone decides that it’s not folk music any more, then so be it!” says Blom.

Tuuletar would like to see new folk music gain a higher profile without being trapped in the box of folk music. They would also like it to be performed far and wide so that it can be heard by people who are not specifically out to look for folk music.

“We are insanely great bands in new folk music today, and they deserve to be heard just about anywhere,” says Blom. “They just simply make great music!” agrees Piia Säilyn-Öst.

This interview follows a hectic day of performances at three schools in Espoo. School concerts are an important part of what Tuuletar do in Finland. Their agenda is to show children and adolescents just how diverse folk music can be.

The schoolkids are always stunned when Venla begins to beatbox, says Sini Koskelainen, laughing. “After a school concert we might get someone coming up to us and asking where they could get a copy of the Kalevala. If we can get even just one kid excited about the tradition by presenting it in a new light, it’s an important achievement,” says Venla Ilona Blom.

For all of the influences that go into them, the songs of Tuuletar depend on the basic building blocks of folk music: text, rhythm, simple melodies and repetition. And the Finnish natural environment, of course.

“We want to express powerful, deep emotions,” explains Johanna Kykkoski. The band is convinced that folk poetry and music can speak directly to people today. On their newest, rap-styled single titled Ubo [Bravado]. Tuuletar tackle modern hate speech through the ancient tradition of hyperbolic bluster.
I had never heard of 26.

By Sebastian Hilli

At the Sibelius Academy I realised that, paradoxically, studying composition was largely about imposing various constraints on music and operating within those constraints. We studied RACHI counterpoint and PALESTRINA and wrote exercises using strictly limited set classes.

In writing one’s own compositions, it was important to define the limits and then remain rigidly within those limits. Suddenly there was little room for improvisation. I noticed myself tending towards a kind of purism in my music in order to avoid references to any other music or to extra-musical elements. I wanted my music to be difficult to understand, abstract, complex and intellectual – perhaps as an extension of my youthful rebellion against traditional classical music, although I was not aware of that at the time.

My gradual departure away from these limitations and restrictions, both self-imposed and institutionally mandated, began with my master’s degree studies. I spent a year in Vienna as an exchange student studying with a teacher who was hardly interested in what kind of music I was writing. I was given little if any guidance and feedback and was thus completely free to experiment with new means of expression. Furthermore, interestingly, I had no access to a piano for the entire year, and for the first time I had only my imagination to rely on in creating music. These conditions were ideal for starting the journey towards the liberation of creativity and consequently discovering my own style and composer identity.

Having returned to Finland, I was faced with the music of the Romantic era once again, since I was involved in a project at the Sibelius Academy with the task of writing a work that had to have something to do with SIBELIUS. Purism was not an option here. This project proved to be, in a way, a turning point in my journey to discovering my style and deeper reflection on my composer identity.

I wrote the first work of the Paraphrase series, in which I paraphrased Sibelius. By reflecting on a historical style through my own music, I rediscovered the deeper emotional connection to traditional classical music that I had been avoiding in the past. My major realisation was that I wanted to tear down all the limitations and restrictions I had imposed on myself. By opening myself up to influences both musical and extra-musical, I discovered something new and exciting about myself.

I wanted to search consciously for new sources of inspiration to broaden my mind and to challenge my thinking. In the next work of my Paraphrase series, I took up free jazz and acid house. Subsequently, I have written music that addresses emotions, psychology, biology, physics, words, poems and texts. The third Paraphrase work deals with the music of GESUALDO. Musical and extra-musical ideas are catalysts for creativity. Yet creating music is largely intuitive – many musical ideas emerge through intuition, just like in improvisation. The element of surprise and freedom that improvisation offers remains to this day present in my music and in the way it is experienced. It is specifically the experience of music that has become fundamentally important for me – music lives in the moment. Nothing else can express the same thing in the same way that music does; music is alive only in the moment when it is heard, and that is what makes the moment so beautiful.

I hope that through my music, the listener can feel some sense of freedom, similar to the freedom I experience when I improvise. Ultimately, though, that freedom is an illusion. In reality, limits and restrictions are crucially important tools for composing. Imposing mechanisms and setting limits forces one to explore ideas and find solutions to execute one’s distinct vision. Limitations create a direction, focus the mind and foster the process of compositional thinking. Thus, in order for creativity to flourish fully, we need both of the above – freedom and limits.

Nothing else can express the same thing in the same way that music does; music is alive only in the moment when it is heard, and that is what makes the moment so beautiful.

- Sebastian Hilli

This is the first entry in a new series of columns, where composers and music-makers write about their own music and its origins. Composer Sebastian Hilli (b. 1990) won the Gaudeamus Award 2018.

© Sara Kokko

I began my music studies by playing classical piano at a music institute. In conventional fashion, the lessons featured music mainly by composers who lived centuries ago – music that is firmly rooted in tonality and compliant with its rules. I heard a lot of early music at home as well, but my father heard me play and said: “That sounds pretty good. Reminds me of MAGNUS LINDBERG.” I had never heard of Magnus Lindberg, but I found a cd of his on our record shelf at home, and I was infatuated. I listened to it over and over again and continued improvising. I went on to study composition at the Sibelius Academy.

...
A LOOK AT THE SIBELIUS ACADEMY IN 2018

The Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki has been steadily increasing its reputation in recent years and is now more international than ever. In the following pages, we take a look at some special departments and training offered by Finland's only university-level music institution.
MIKA VÄYRYNEN has had a front-row seat at the accordion class of the Sibelius Academy almost from the start: he began in what is now the Junior Department and went on to complete a master’s degree and a doctorate as a solo instrumentalist. After a few years abroad, he returned as an accordion teacher in 1999. He is one of the few accordion players to have gone through all the stages of training provided by the Sibelius Academy, and having returned he seems to have settled in for the long haul.

“I have seen this programme grow, with teething troubles and successes alike, for nearly 40 years,” says Väyrynen, looking back at his connection with the Sibelius Academy.

Accordion teaching at the Sibelius Academy was begun by Professor Matti Rantanen in 1977. He drew inspiration from university-level classical accordion teaching in Copenhagen and decided to emulate that programme in Finland. Väyrynen notes that initially the Finnish class followed the Danish example very closely, particularly in the emphasis on contemporary music.

“Actually, although it was admitted that I was highly talented, with an exceptional capacity for learning and quick fingers, I was denounced for being subversive in my programming,” says Väyrynen with amusement, describing his disagreements with the Copenhagen-style policy.

In an interview conducted at the Sibelius Academy, Matti Rantanen says that his aim was to level the playing field for the accordion with regard to other classical instruments. Väyrynen notes that Rantanen’s handiwork is still apparent in many areas at the Sibelius Academy. He was the first to commission pieces specifically for accordion, and after it was easier for other accordion players to approach composers. This pioneering effort is considered highly important by Väyrynen.

“Matti is a smart man with great social skills, and he was able to lead accordion teaching at the Sibelius Academy in the direction he desired,” says Väyrynen. He points out that there were many more people in the background in this effort than is usually understood, though, and singles out the contributions of Timo Kinnunen, Juri Salmesvuori and Marjutt Tynkkynen, among others.

The multi-dimensional accordion

The accordion is much used in folk music, yet it is excellently suited to performing art music too. During his master’s-level studies, Väyrynen introduced the term “art accordion”, which he felt was the best way to encapsulate artistic ambitions on the instrument. Years of experience have taught him about the many dimensions of the accordion and also about its shortcomings and failings. Väyrynen says that the accordion can do almost everything except imitate other instruments. “Its strengths are its own: sonority and dynamics.”

Internationally respected training

The classical accordion class at the Sibelius Academy is internationally highly respected, and there are many foreign applicants every year. How has it come to this? According to Mika Väyrynen, credit should principally go to the Finnish music community, which he believes is crucially important for the high esteem in which the training is held. Collaboration with composers has been close ever since the 1970s, and it was through this that the accordion found a niche for itself at the Sibelius Academy.

“Thanks to the Sibelius Academy, Finnish accordion players have been accepted into the musical community at large. I don’t think that we are exceptionally brilliant compared with the competence of musicians in general, but we have been very well received.”

Väyrynen notes that composers have been interested in writing for the accordion. On the other hand, they also have a habit of writing extremely demanding works that stretch performers’ technique and competence to the limit. “It’s, like, either you don’t play it or you learn it. And we learn it!”

Väyrynen considers that this is the major reason why Finnish accordion music is so advanced. Accordionists acquire and develop musical skills when faced with demanding works and other challenges. If the training had not improved and renewed itself, the international reputation of the Sibelius Academy would not be what it is today. When Väyrynen gives lectures abroad, he is often asked to talk about the Finnish education system too. No place on earth has an instrument-specific curriculum as broad as the Sibelius Academy. At the moment, there is about an equal number of Finnish and foreign students in the accordion class. The quality is very high.

“A degree certificate from the Sibelius Academy is a platinum card out in the world,” says Väyrynen with pride, and adds that even the bar for applying to the Sibelius Academy is quite high. Väyrynen considers that classical accordion training could probably not be at a higher standard than it is now, but he does not dare speculate on the future.

“In order to be able to give tuition, you have to have students to teach.”

Read also reminiscences and comments on the accordion class by accordionist-alumna Lore Amenabar Larrañaga, Veli Kujala and Kristina Kuusisto at fmq.fi.

The classical accordion class attracts international interest

By Laura Korhonen

The accordion can do lots of things but few perceive it as an instrument for performing classical music. Yet the classical accordion class at the Sibelius Academy celebrated its 40th anniversary in March 2018. Accordionist Mika Väyrynen reflects on the popularity of the programme.
Composer Veli-Matti Puumala has been Professor of Composition at the Sibelius Academy since 2005. He has seen a sea change occurring in Finland over the past two decades. It is no longer assumed that teaching at another institution is “wrong” or that a student entering the Sibelius Academy would have to “unlearn” certain things learnt up until then.

“Of course the Sibelius Academy has to move with changes in society at large,” says Puumala. “Teachers must be adaptable and work with the student to build a path forwards, be able to see the student’s strengths and shortcomings. A teacher’s job is to open up opportunities.”

The Sibelius Academy is known worldwide for quality. In composition teaching, there are a few key points that attract foreign composition students. One is the ability to engage for a long period of time: composition studies take at least five and a half years.

“If you achieve a relationship of trust between student and teacher, you have a broad base for learning. A student may study composition with a single teacher throughout the degree programme if he or she so wishes,” says Puumala. He stresses that “the teacher must be there for the student at all times”. Teachers must be capable of “sympathetic imagination, which is also fruitful for the teacher’s own composing work, because when you light the path for someone else, you also challenge your own thinking.”

The degree programme at the Sibelius Academy includes a broad spectrum of supporting subjects, a robust package of theory studies to augment the student’s composing. The Sibelius Academy is particularly known for its strong tradition in what might be described as historically informed analytical composition exercises – known in German as Satzlehre, referred to here as “harmony and voice-leading” under the broader heading of “structural awareness of music.” Many foreign students simply refer to the subject by its Finnish name satsioppi when they return home. The importance of craftsmanship cannot be over-emphasised. In Finland, the Sibelius Academy is the only institution to offer such a package.

The Sibelius Academy today forms part of the University of the Arts Helsinki, which was created by merging the Sibelius Academy, the Theatre Academy and the Academy of Fine Arts. There are plenty of opportunities for inter-art projects and for effortless collaboration, especially if the students themselves actively seek such collaboration. In the best cases, this may result in career-long partnerships. It is a particularly excellent bonus that composition students have the chance to work with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. Students have access to these, the finest orchestras in Finland, through composition workshops, allowing them to hear what their music actually sounds like.

The Sibelius Academy is the only university-level music school in Finland. For decades, it was the only institution of any kind to provide tuition in composition. How can the Sibelius Academy respond to future challenges with the range of applicants becoming ever more diverse?

Composer Veli-Matti Puumala has been Professor of Composition at the Sibelius Academy since 2005. He has seen a sea change occurring in Finland over the past two decades. It is no longer assumed that teaching at another institution is “wrong” or that a student entering the Sibelius Academy would have to “unlearn” certain things learnt up until then.

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and to fine-tune their writing as a result. Similar preparatory workshops are available with the practice orchestra of the conducting class at the Sibelius Academy. Moreover, there are concert series focusing on contemporary music within the Sibelius Academy that bring together composers and musicians. (See also the article, p. 36)

The challenge of plurality

Veli-Matti Puumala is firmly rooted in central European modernism in his own work as a composer. How can the only Professor of Composition at the Sibelius Academy avoid imposing his own aesthetics or stylistic ideals on composition teaching?

“If I disagree with a student on stylistic issues, I always stress that it is only my opinion. Regarding the details of a composition, I encourage students to make decisions for themselves.” — Juhani Nuorvala

Is it possible to compose “wrongly”? “Composers can best get their message through if their technique and their expressive desire are balanced. Composition technique helps you realise your intuition. But in an aesthetic sense there is no such thing as composing ‘wrongly.’” — Juhani Nuorvala, Lecturer in Composition at the Sibelius Academy since 2011, feels that although the general atmosphere in composition teaching at the Sibelius Academy in terms of technique and style has become freer over the years, “the hegemony of central European modernism is still firm, but then again that is true of the Finnish contemporary music scene, too — again”.

“It was not so many years ago that I had a discussion with my composer colleagues about whether it would even be possible to graduate as a composer from the Sibelius Academy if one only wrote tonal music,” says Nuorvala. “The fact that we were discussing such a thing at all in itself felt very 20th-century to me, even though we are well into the 21st. My counter-question is whether it would be possible to graduate with a portfolio containing nothing but atonal music of the past.”

Puumala notes that “even if there were people coming to the Sibelius Academy who wanted to specialise in composing tangos, for instance, they would still need to study the wider context of contemporary music. It could scarcely do them any harm.”

Nuorvala points out that the Sibelius Academy has an excellent Music Technology Department where students can study both sound art and composition. Many composition students take music technology units. In the future, concept art using sound may well prove to be a robust alternative to composition in the traditional sense. Then again, someone interested in writing film music has very different craftsmanship needs.

“One composer who is now creating a career in Hollywood said that our tansingi studies had provided a strong foundation and an important advantage in his work as a film composer,” says Nuorvala.

Students applying for composition studies now come from increasingly diverse backgrounds. Some may have been working more with computer software than with music staves since entering the music institute. Nuorvala toys with the idea of changing composition teachers on a yearly basis, “like they do at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester.”

“A student might gain much more in that way,” says Nuorvala. “Of course, we need to strike a balance in the question of whether the Sibelius Academy is a service provider or a university aiming for degree completion.” But Nuorvala is also fine with an extended teacher-student relationship if it feels right for the student.

Juhani Nuorvala’s guideline in composition teaching is something that John Cage said to Ben Johnston when the latter sought to study composition with Cage: “I will not as a teacher change any of the directions that you’re going in because I think that’s not appropriate. What I’ll do is criticise as best I can what you bring me and try to help you make it work, or advise you that I don’t think it will.”

Equality

“We strive for equality and plurality in our choice of teachers,” says Veli-Matti Puumala. “Selection processes are slow. We want to have even our part-time teachers commit for an extended period of time. They grow slowly to fill their respective niches.”

Each year, some 40 young people apply for the composition degree programme, but only a handful can be admitted. Even now, the overwhelming majority of them are men. Gender equality has not yet been achieved, although the trend is favourable.

Of course, equality is also sought in offering a wide palette of teaching to cater to young people coming from very different musical backgrounds. In fact, we may be repeating history in the sense that it used to be the case that composers were also eminently competent performing musicians, and hands-on expertise in performing music gives a very different set of tools for composing than current teaching methods.

“But it would not make sense to begin tweaking the curriculum according to current trends, not even experimentally,” Puumala points out. “The Sibelius Academy has a tradition of music theory subjects that is heavy on craftsmanship. It is quite demanding for students, but successfully completing those studies guarantees a firm technical competence.”

One possible solution for coping with the challenges of the future would be to establish a second university-level music education institution in Finland, its profile being complement the composition teaching given at the Sibelius Academy.

Juhani Nuorvala describes an experience from last year. He had been invited to be on the examination board at a master’s recital at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre.

“Six students were graduating. They were all very good and very different from one another in the music they were creating. There was sound art, there was traditional chamber music, there was modernist orchestral music and electronic music. All of them were women.”

UNIVERSITY-LEVEL COMPOSITION TEACHING IN FINLAND

At the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, students may study composition as a main subject in Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes in Composition and Music Theory and in Jazz Composition or issues related to composition may also be the focus of a doctoral candidate. Composition and sound art can be studied in degree programmes in Music Technology. In Folk Music, the creating of new music is integrated into instrumental and ensemble performance tuition. Students of Church Music are meant to develop skills for composing and arranging practical and pedagogical sacred music for liturgical use.

Individual composition units are attended by students from all departments; and as of autumn 2019, any student may take a secondary subject module in Composition.

The music programme at the Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK) used to include a composition module. In autumn 2017, however, the TAMK council decided that no new students would be admitted to this pathway as of spring 2018. In the same decision, it was specified that the composition and music performance modules would continue to form part of the training for a music teacher’s qualification.

The Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki offers a four-year programme in music-making and production. Only students with a background in popular music are admitted to this programme, which focuses on songwriting and music producing in Western popular music.
This training is at present available for string and wind players only, not brass, percussion or harp. Tuula Saroite, General Manager of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, says that the training was actually launched on the initiative of the string and wind teachers at the Sibelius Academy. Generally speaking, she says, all benefit from the apprenticeship scheme: “The main thing is, of course, always what the students get and learn from us, not the other way round, but we all agree that the keen young players have been a cheering phenomenon.”

Workshops
Conductors and composers also study orchestral music at the Sibelius Academy. For them, the Orchestra Academy provides learning opportunities as assistant conductors and in workshops.

Jaan Ots was assistant to Hannu Lintu, Chief Conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, during the 2015–2016 academic year. This involved being present at FRSO rehearsals and assisting with “anything that needed help”. Hannu Lintu was, Ots reports, also always open to suggestions and ready to discuss things with his assistant. If something unexpected cropped up, the assistant might find him- or herself standing in for the conductor at a concert.

Ots also conducted a new music workshop held with the Helsinki Philharmonic in spring 2016. The five composers taking part were studying for a master’s in the Composition and Music Theory Department at the Sibelius Academy. They worked with the players and conductor at two sessions and the outcome was a composition for large orchestra.

One of the composers at the new music workshop was Mikko Yokoyama, now in the final stage of a master’s degree in composition. She began studying at the Sibelius Academy in 2015. Yokoyama got useful feedback about techniques that did not work well or were unnecessarily difficult. After the workshops, the composers and conductors met to analyse what had happened at the rehearsals. Yokoyama felt that the collaboration between the students worked well.

Translation: Susan Sinisalo
A recent promotional video released by the Lahti Symphony Orchestra portrays musicians dressed differently to their regular concert attire: everyone, including the conductor, is wearing a bicycle helmet. The orchestra aims gradually to achieve carbon neutrality, as the first such orchestra in the world.

Their project, titled “Carbon-Free Lahti Symphony Orchestra”, began in 2015 through collaboration with the Myrskyvaroitus [Storm Warning] association which facilitates various climate action projects. According to the orchestra’s general manager TRENTA KIRJONEN, it was already clear after the very first workshop that the project should go ahead. “For us, the decision to participate was unanimous.”

To begin with, the orchestra commissioned an assessment to calculate its carbon footprint. The next steps will be to minimise emissions as much as possible and to compensate for the rest.

“One important observation was that what makes a big difference is how our audiences travel to our concerts. Playing Sibelius in our home town does not in itself represent a big environmental burden, but the audience transport proved to be a significant area for change.”

According to Kirjonen, Lahti is an ideal city for an environmentally conscious orchestra, with its active and ambitious endeavours to profile itself as an environmentally friendly city. Encouraging its citizens to ride bicycles is one of its key projects.

**Role as an awakener**

The Lahti Symphony Orchestra’s original approach has managed to attract international attention. In spring 2018 their project was awarded the Classical NEXT Innovation Award, and Kirjonen has been in demand giving presentations about the project. He says the project has faced no criticism so far, and even those who were initially amused have since come to understand the significance of the endeavour and begun to reflect on their own contribution to environmental action.

“As a symphony orchestra, we are under no illusions that we alone can save the world – everyone needs to roll up their sleeves. From the very beginning, our aim was to also assume the role of an awakener to others: if we can do this, what reasons do others have not to take action?”

It is possible that this overarching theme will manifest itself in the orchestra’s programming and artistic direction as well. Kirjonen says that many composers have already started to reflect on the theme. “Music, of course, is still the main focus of our activities and we remain as ambitious as ever about it. But if we can reach people through art, and if we are able to introduce this important issue on the side, why wouldn’t we do it?”

**A conscious festival for conscious audiences**

The Flow Festival, organised in Helsinki each August, is one of the world’s first carbon neutral festivals. The festival has continued to compensate for its carbon footprint since 2009 by contributing to various environmental projects. This year the festival announced its success in saving the CO2 emissions caused by energy consumption.

“Despite attracting larger audiences compared to last year, we managed to reduce the amount of waste by 21%,” explains the festival’s marketing manager MILA VALJUS. “In addition, we achieved a 9.5% reduction in the CO2 emissions caused by energy consumption.”

The conscious urban audiences tend to make choices that make it easier for Flow to commit to its own responsibility programme, “Sustainable Flow”. Valjus says that as many as 46% of the meals sold during the 2018 festival weekend were either vegetarian or vegan. Audiences make their way to the festival mainly by foot, by bicycle or by public transport.

However, presenting a large international festival does not come without its environmental challenges.

“Most of our carbon emissions are caused by our artists’ flights, and this is something that is difficult to address if we want to keep our programme content international and interesting. Let us hope that the future will bring a range of alternative travel methods and that airlines will increase their use of more sustainable aviation fuels.” Valjus says.

One future goal for the festival is to increase further the availability of vegetarian and vegan foods. “Perhaps our future festivals will also introduce edible plates and cutlery, which would further reduce the amount of waste,” Valjus envisages.

**More public opinion shaping**

Information and measuring tools

Greenpeace Finland’s digital marketing manager JANI SIPILÄ, who also has years of experience of working in the music industry, sees the shaping of public opinion as one of the central ways for the music industry to be able to chip in. As an example, he mentions Hands Off the Antarctic, a song released in October by THOM YORK in support of Greenpeace’s campaign to protect the Antarctic. In Finland, Greenpeace has collaborated with the violinist PEKKA KUUSIHEITO.

However, there are many other avenues to explore for making a difference, due to the many and varied facets of the music industry: travel, transport, energy consumption, food production and waste processing. It is particularly the massive-scale events that really need to wake up.

“The first step could be to measure a base level so that we could introduce a common measuring scale for all Finnish festivals, for instance, as well as setting a time target for reducing their carbon footprint.”

The music industry’s environmental responsibility was the topic in a panel discussion at the Music & Media Finland conference this October, and an idea was raised to create a common list of goals for all Finnish festivals. Sipilä states that while Finnish and Scandinavian festivals are generally very progressive in terms of issues like recycling, there has to be more information available and the standards need to be set even higher.

So far, it has been fairly quiet on this front – something that has to change, Sipilä says. “The music industry has to pitch in just like everyone else.”

"The music industry has to pitch in just like everyone else.”

Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham

Lahti Symphony Orchestra.
One hundred years ago, Finland fought a traumatic Civil War. We present here some examples of how wars, political intrigue and superpower relations in the 20th century have been reflected in the work and music of Finnish composers.
THE POLITICS OF APOLITICISM

BY Jula Levien

Erik Bergman was a pioneer in modern composition techniques in Finland. He was awarded practically every Finnish recognition and prize that it is possible for a creative artist to receive. It is a little-known fact that for his first studies abroad he went to Nazi Germany.

Erik Bergman (1911–2006) went on four study trips to Germany. On the first of these, he went to Berlin in early summer 1937 and he was dazzled by a city that had seemingly innumerable swastika flags, the second busiest city traffic in Europe, underground trains and a population larger than that of the whole of Finland. Performing venues habitually billed world-class stars such as Jan Kiepura, Beniamino Gigli and Wilhelm Kempff. However, the purpose of Bergman’s trip was not to be dazzled but to study with Heinz Tiessen. Heinz Tiessen (1887–1975) was born in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) and studied composition with Philipp Rüfer, among others. He was appointed Professor of Composition and Music Theory at the Staatliche Akademische Hochschule für Musik Berlin, in 1925. His most prominent students were Eduard Erdmann, Sergiu Celibidache and Vladimir Vogel, with whom Bergman also studied later, in the 1930s. In the Weimar Republic, Tiessen was a member of a radical left-wing group known as the Novembergruppe. When the Nazis came to power, this kind of “Bolshevik” activity and associating with Jewish publishers spelled disfavour. Tiessen was allowed to continue teaching, but he lost many of his other posts in the music sector. His works practically vanished from concert programmes.

Tiessen was an Expressionist whose music was characterized by jagged rhythms, melodic writing that eschewed broad arcs, and an incisive though tonally rooted harmonic language. Bergman had adopted very similar solutions in his student works. But achieving a fruitful teacher–student relationship required more than just an affinity of styles; it required favourable stars, quite literally. Tiessen was a committed astrophile, and as such drew up hundreds of horoscopes for his students and colleagues, including Bergman. Tiessen and Bergman also shared a fascination with connections between music and the natural environment.

Several trips

On the second of his trips to Germany, in summer 1939, Bergman went not only to Berlin but also to Paris and Frankfurt before going on to Tiessen’s home city of Königsberg. Soon, however, foreign nationals were advised to leave the country: armoured troops were already on the way to the Polish border. Bergman returned to Finland only a few days before war broke out.

Bergman again went to Berlin in late summer 1942 and continued to Vienna for a brief period of study with the composer Joseph Marx. Bergman’s last and longest study trip to Germany began in November 1942 after he had received a scholarship to the Klinworth-Scharwenka Conservatory in Berlin. He subsequently received a Humboldt scholarship enabling him to study with Tiessen once more at the Hochschule, staying until June 1943.

Pleading health reasons, Bergman cancelled his planned return to Berlin for the academic year 1943–1944. The turning of the tide in the war may also have played a part; the Hochschule had been crippled by air raids. Bergman was not to visit Berlin again until 44 years later.

Influence of Tiessen

Tiessen and Bergman became close friends. It is indicative that in Tiessen’s autobiography Bergman is the only one of his former composition students that he favours with the distinction “unserer Schüler”.

Bergman’s first eight numbered works were written more or less under the tutelage of Tiessen. It appears that none of them was performed in Germany at the time, though. Despite promises, his extensive piano work Sonate concor- tante op. 7 (1941–1943) was never programmed and had to wait until spring 1945 for its premiere in Finland.

Tiessen’s uncompromising outlook and his broad-minded fascination with natural phenomena, literature and para-sciences such as archaeology had a profound impact on Berg- man. It was partly due to Tiessen’s influence that even at his most constructive – as in his serialist period in the 1950s – Bergman based his developments of composition technique on explorations of poetry, myth, nature and foreign cultures.

Politics or not?

There were many reasons for Bergman to go to study in Germany in particular. First, Finnish cultural circles had maintained close connections with the German-speaking world ever since the 19th century. Second, Bergman’s friends and colleagues in Berlin had gone to Berlin to study with the composer Max Trapp only a short while earlier. Moreover, German was the only foreign language that Bergman knew. Added to all this, we should note that during the war in many countries were of course off limits for Finnish students.

Bergman was the only Finnish composition student at the Hochschule, but he was by no means the only Finnish musician studying or creating a career in Berlin. In his diary, he mentions the singers Aune Antti and Aino Palomäki, composer and choir conductor Taneli Kuvisto, violinist Peppa Hailala and pianists Elga Aho, Lea Isofalo, Ernst Linko and Kosti Veihanen.

Throughout his life, Bergman made a point of being apolitical.

There is no direct evidence of Bergman ever being any kind of Nazi sympathiser. Yet, unwittingly or not, he did promote the German political agenda, for instance by reporting on musical life in Austria and Germany for the Swedish-language daily newspaper Hufvudstadsbladet back home in Finland. His writings, having passed the censorship of the German Ministry of Propaganda, were effusive and devoid of criticism. Bergman even took a course held by the Ministry. He also made features on music for the Finnish and Swedish services on German radio – obvious propaganda vehicles.

Even the Humboldt scholarship carried a political hue: it was only awarded to selected and vetted individuals. A political slant may also be found in Bergman entertaining Finnish SS volunteers first with violinist Pippa Haikala in Graz (in April 1943) and then with soprano Aune Antti at Waldstein Castle (in May 1943).

On the other hand, Bergman was a favourite student and close friend of Tiessen, who was shunned by the Nazis. It is not an unreasonable stretch of the imagination to think that it may have been Bergman’s friendship with Tiessen that prevented his works from being performed in Nazi Germany.

Throughout his life, Bergman made a point of being apolitical. His works display no political leanings, apart from a couple of unpublished works written in wartime. Indeed, Bergman appears to have been politically naïve, and as such accepting of current circumstances, whatever they might be – democracy or dictatorship.

© Sibelius Museum, Turku

Erik Bergman, probably in Austria in 1942.
White side – in Viipuri in May 1918. Kuula is remembered for his Impressionistically tinted solo songs and choral works, but as an instrumental composer he was only just getting started. His death cast a pall over the music profession as it emerged from the shadow of war.

The end of the Civil War was never celebrated with monumental victory hymns, even though a substantial body of nationally tinted occasional music was written. Most composers had been onlookers in the war, and many of them were in actual danger, such as Sibelius in the southern part of the country, which was held by the Reds. Sibelius was evacuated from his home at Ainola to Lapinlahti in Helsinki. The composer AARRE MERIKANTO, 26 years old at the time, was in the war as a member of the Civil Guard; he was taken prisoner in defending Suittia Manor in February 1918. Immediately after the Civil War he wrote his Second Symphony, which was not well received even on the winning side. Critic "bis" wasenius slammed the new work: "The grotesque and brutal treatment of a childishly conceived war-like theme was destroyed by horrible harmonies and an obviously chaotic orchestration."

By contrast, the Second Symphony of LEKKI MADETOJA was received in December 1918 as a masterpiece with which the composer fulfilled the great expectations vested in him. Nothing about the title of or commentary on the symphony alluded to the very recent national tragedy, but stylistically the work represented the kind of "ethical" art seeking reconciliation and balance that Madetoja greatly admired.

"The emotional charge of the symphony, rising from a dark and tragic fundament, excellently captures the spirit of the time," wrote KATILA in Helsingin Sanomat.

Sibelius had been the most prominent composer in the drive for independence, writing Finlandia and other compositions that amounted to passive resistance. One of his most defiant works, however, is Jäähärrien marssi [March of the Jaegers], written in autumn 1917 as a homage to the Finnish soldiers being secretly trained in Germany. As Finland was still part of Russia and Russia was at war with Germany, this was technically an act of treason and therefore punishable by death. One might imagine that Sibelius would have celebrated independence with a magnificent grand work, but between 1915 and 1919 he could spare thought for little else than his Fifth Symphony. After the Civil War, he did write three cantatas in short succession – Oma maa [Our native land, 1918], Jordens sång [Song of the Earth, 1919] and Mään virsi [Hymn to the Earth, 1920]. These were created in a spirit of moderation and reconstruction, a far cry from the passion and enthusiasm of his earlier nationalist works.

Tones of victory and defeat

Less than 20 years later, in 1939, the Winter War began as STALIN'S SOVIET UNION invaded Finland. The war was short, brutal and ruinous, but unlike the Civil War it brought the nation together. The spirit of these times was captured most aptly in TANELI KUUSISTO'S Suomalainen ruhos [Finnish prayer], premiered just before war broke out. It is a devout and humble wish for finding the right path. Always a favourite with Finns, it found its way into the Hymnal of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland in 1986. The Winter War was followed by a brief interim peace, cut short when Finland joined Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the Continuation War began. This generated a number of works of musical propaganda. AARRE SÖNNINEN, for instance, wrote his Ishkarjalanen surja [East Karelian suite, 1942] and Venalainen surja [West Karelian suite, 1943] while working at the radio station at Aunus deep in captured Soviet territory. Sibelius contributed to the war effort by arranging the Finlandia Hymn for male choir in 1940, although this took quite a lot of persuasion.

Aarre Merikanto combined male choir bravado with powerful orchestration in Ueki (1938–1943), but in Ther- mopylais laulu [Song of Thermopylae, 1943] he reverted to his 1920s Expressionist style. A male choir was also selected by the most pro-Nazi of Finland's leading composers, VYRÖ KIILINEN. His cantata Nordische Heerfahrt [Nordic
THE DARK UNDERTONE LEFT BY THE WAR PERSISTED WELL INTO THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

With my life.” Englund considered his Third Symphony, “Barbarossa” (1971), to be his true war epic; it was not until then that he was able to process the enormity and trauma of the war. Similarly, Klami did not give voice to his innermost feelings about the war until Luulu Kuusijärvesti [Song of Lake Kuusijärvi, 1956], which merges the grotesque, surreal and elegiac qualities of war.

A long-lasting echo

Some heroic orchestral epics were written early on in the Continuation War, but as the inevitability of the end became clear, optimism gave way to sorrow and discord. Lauri Saikkola's Karjalu palats [Karelia is burning, 1940] and Sinfonia Tragica (1946) are laments over the loss of Karelia to the Soviet Union and the evacuation and forced resettlement of more than 400,000 Karelians. The shadow of war touched upon works that are very different from one another, such as the symphonic ballad Lautokki [Ladoga, 1944] by Taneli Kuusisto, dedicated to the memory of his fallen brother; Palmgren's Fifth Piano Concerto; or the opera Kaleki kuningatart [Two Queens, 1944] by Väinö Raitio, set in plague-devastated Naples in the 16th century.

Raitio's wartime works Danse macabre and Ballet grotesque were even more graphic in describing the horrors of war. Tauno Pykkänen's opera Mare ja hänen poikansa [Mare and her son, 1943] is an intense study on the conflict between maternal love and patriotic love. Erkki Salo- nen's Second Symphony, subtitled “Hiroshima” (1949), enjoyed a brief but substantial international success. The hegemony of National Romanticism was one of the great losers of the Second World War in Finland. Modernist perspectives, European connections and a cosmopolitan outlook were the winners. The dark undertone left by the war persisted well into the second half of the 20th century. For composers in the generation that had personal experience of the war – such as Joonas Kokenen and Aulis Sallinen – it meant a legacy of memories of austerity and hardship. The cultural cold war between the superpowers that began after the Second World War played a major role in shaping the international arts and culture scene as we know it today. A series of articles by Tanja Tiekso discusses the impacts of cultural diplomacy, particularly that of the USA, on Finnish music from the days of the Cold War to the present.

The first part of the series, A war ends, a war begins, focuses on the years immediately after the Second World War. Finnish music came back to life immediately after hostilities ceased, and a new international era dawned.

The second part, The complexities of cultural diplomacy, sheds light on the complex and diverse network of cultural diplomacy efforts aimed at Finland by the USA in the 1950s.

The third part will be published around New Year 2019.

The complexities of cultural diplomacy...
In summer 1979 a number of Finnish composers and musicians attended a summer course in Siena, Italy. Three of them hit on an idea for a practical joke, which led to a grand swindle that prompted hilarity on the music scene and had many authoritative figures ending up with egg on their face. The hoax was masterminded by three composers: Eero Hämeenniemi, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Magnus Lindberg.

BY Pekka Hako

Scene 1. The Great Horse Race

Booze-up.

Three friends, Eero, Magnus and Esa-Pekka, are living it up in Siena while also studying composition. They hear of Il Palio di Siena, the oldest horse race in Italy, in which districts of the city (contrade) compete against one another twice a year. The day of the race begins with each horse and rider being blessed in a church in their own contrada.

The contrada in which the three friends live, Leocorno (Unicorn), comes in next to last in the fierce race, the winner being Aquila (Eagle). Because the friends reckon that this is the only time they will be attending the horse race, they decide to gate-crash the Aquila victory party held nearby. Tables are laid out on the streets and wine is freely available in a large tun. The Finns party with a vengeance, and by the end of the night only a couple of Germans manage to keep up with their visits to the vastly depleted wine tun.

Scene 2. The Kitchen Table

Conception.

The next morning, a quiet moaning may be heard at the kitchen table. Magnus is staring at a bottle of red wine, an excellent choice for breakfast. Being a cautious man, he has packed a pair of woolies: he imagined that it might get cold in Italy in the summer. Now he has found a practical use for this item: he has soaked it in cold water and wrapped it around his head like a turban. Pouring a glass of wine, he muses: “What can you do on a day like this?”

Eero is also rather subdued. He too pours a glass of wine and suggests that the two of them write a piece that will win the composition category of the Sibelius Violin Competition. This composition competition has been announced in order to find a new piece for solo violin that will become the compulsory piece in the aforementioned distinguished international violin competition held in Finland. Eero has already penned two pieces for the competition and Magnus has produced one, but they both already know that they will not do well, knowing who is on the jury. Here, in the bleak Siena morning, a new possibility dawns.

Eero digs out a sheet of music paper. Sitting at the kitchen table, he twirls out a clef and writes Adagio above it. He thinks for a moment, writes half a line of notes and then shoves the sheet towards Magnus. Magnus looks at these opening measures, chuckles and continues writing. Then Eero writes some more and passes the ball to Magnus again. They agree that neither is allowed to continue until he has criticised the other’s previous work. The goal is that the piece must on no account become “too contemporary”. They must keep their urges strictly in check. Eero writes again, and then Magnus.

The tentative opening motifs acquire a firmer shape, and then Eero spurs out two and a half lines of a soaring melody that Magnus considers quite too much to stomach. “We have to have that,” Eero argues. “You can’t succeed in this competition if you don’t have something like that.”

Over the unabashed melody, Magnus writes come Brahms. The writing continues through the morning, but by the time the friends forget their headache, they also forget about the half-finished collaboration.

Scene 3. Don’t Leave Your Apples in the Sun.

Esa-Pekka, also still with his friends in Siena, receives a telegram from Veikko Helasvuo, Rector of the Sibelius Academy.
requests that Esa-Pekka travel to Zagreb to attend the annual European meeting of Jeunesses Musicales. His mission: to talk to the leadership of Jeunesses Musicales to explore whether it would be worthwhile to set up a Finnish chapter of the organisation, because there is already one in almost every other European country. Esa-Pekka agrees to do the job, and Eero and Magnus join him on the train for the fun of it: it is never a bad idea to have company on the train on a journey lasting an entire day.

En route from Siena to Zagreb in what was then Yugoslavia (now Croatia), the friends arrive at the Italian border town of Trieste. It is a sweltering day, and flies buzz around the sweating travellers. Eero and Magnus seek refreshment and cast eyes at the fruit peddled by an elderly woman at the station. Despite Esa-Pekka’s warning words, they buy an apple each and eat them right away. Bad idea. No sooner have they entered Yugoslavia than they are beset with cramps and explosive diarrhoea. Feeling even worse than on the morning after the horse race victory party, the sufferers realise that this is the right time to continue the piece that they have left unfinished.

Laid by the steady clacking of the train, the young composers begin to scribble notes on scraps of paper, affixing the smudged sketches in the right order to the pages of a newspaper. They agree that they need two kinds of music that must meet each other on certain pitches according to a certain logic, thus forming a seamless whole. Eero begins to write melodies, while Magnus works on virtuoso bowing and scraping. A Mozart scrap, an Eero scrap, a Magnus scrap, an Eero scrap, an Eero scrap.

By the time the company arrives in Zagreb, the piece is almost finished. Eero cannot even manage to walk; it is all he can do to lurch to the shelter of the park outside the railway station, supported by Magnus. Magnus stands over his fellow sufferer crouching in the bushes, the tattered patchwork violin piece under his arm. This sorry sight is the last that Esa-Pekka sees of his friends that morning as he heads for the meeting.

Eventually, that afternoon, the bad apple survivors feel invigorated enough to arrive at the meeting venue. The Secretary General of Jeunesses Musicales undertakes to give the Finnish delegation a tour of the city, and takes them to a concert that does not particularly impress them in content or execution. Then it is time for dinner, and the Secretary General asks: “Well, do you think that there is a need to set up a Finnish chapter of Jeunesses Musicales?” “Not really,” says Esa-Pekka. “OK,” says the Secretary General.

The delegation has completed its mission. And to cap it all off, Eero and Magnus finish the violin piece on the way back.

Scene 4. THE GREAT AMOUR. ITALIAN ESCAPE. The three friends having returned to Finland, Magnus suggests that they play the joke out to the finish. They take their scruffy sketches to a copyist who prepares a nine-page manuscript in an elegant hand. At least it is now possible to identify the composers by their handwriting. But the real fun is only just about to start. The three masterminds must think of a name and a CV for the composer of this new piece, and they come up with Juhani Pursiainen, the theatre musician.

Juhani Pursiainen was born in Finland but was evacuated to Gotthenburg, Sweden, as a child during the war. He was raised there and received his initial musical education at the Conservatory. Subsequently he became a ballet conductor and theatre composer in Malmi. When a Polish dance company visited Malmi, Pursiainen fell ardently in love with a Polish ballerina and followed her to Poland. He was out of sight for years, but eventually the marriage soured and the embittered Pursiainen fled to Italy, where he was engaged as conductor at the Municipal Theatre in Vittuone, where he remains to this day. Pursiainen’s extensive output includes a Lamento for oboe and strings, a few chamber operas and incidental music to seven Shakespeare plays – entirely natural considering his theatre career.

Vittuone is an actual place in Italy, a tiny town that Esa-Pekka found on the map while studying in Milan. (Its meaning in Italian is obscure, but to a Finn it sounds delightfully like the Finnish word vittu which, begging the reader’s pardon, means “c**t.” Moreover, the Italian suffix –one is an augmentative, making the meaning even stronger.) This is a perfect name to be associated with the hoax being hatched by the three conspirators which is now taking on a life of its own. Because the mailing address of Juhani Pursiainen in Vittuone is not known, the two friends give Eero’s address in Finland as the contact information for Mr Pursiainen in their submission to the competition committee.

Scene 5. THE GREAT HOAX EXPOSURE. Quite some time goes by. One day, as Eero is in a composition class at the Sibelius Academy, Rector Helasvuö enters the room. “Can I see you a minute, Eero?” he says from the door. He reveals that the jury of the Sibelius Violin Competition has just held a meeting and that third prize in the composition competition has been awarded to Juhani Pursiainen. “So who is this fellow, anyway?” he asks, the assumption being that Eero knows Juhani because the contact address is Eero’s. Blindfolded, Eero decides not to lie to the Rector but instead reveals the hoax. The Rector appreciates the joke, but it later emerges that many of the jury members are rather less than pleased at being hoodwinked like this. Because falling for a hoax represents a substantial embarrassment for these authoritative figures, the matter is hushed up and never spoken of outside of a small inner circle. The competition rules state that all prize-winning works will be printed. The two tricksters are pressured to publish the work under their own names, but they are adamant about seeing the process through to its logical conclusion. And so it is that to this day there exists a solo violin piece titled Canzona by a certain otherwise unknown Juhani Pursiainen.

A photo of Juhani Pursiainen must now be obtained. Esa-Pekka goes to Helsinki railway station, wearing sunglasses and a stolen bowler hat, unshaven and with his teeth blackened with charcoal. The railway station photo booth spits out four black-and-white photos. These are the only known images of Juhani Pursiainen.

Scene 6. I CAN SAY THIS ON THE RADIO BECAUSE IT’S AN ACTUAL PLACE! Because Canzona has won a prize, it has to be given a public performance. At a concert given two weeks after the Sibelius Violin Competition, violinist Hanna helene Segerstam premieres the piece in the chamber music hall at Finlandia Hall. The concert is broadcast on radio, hosted by eccentric radio personality hannu yaa. Both European Segerstam and Taanila are on the in the show. Before the concert, disconcerting rumours have emerged to the effect that Pursiainen is not a real person. There is thus a need to reinforce the narrative. Esa-Pekka is studying in Milan at the time, and – always ready to step up to the team – travels by bus to the town of Vittuone and mails a letter in which “Juhani Pursiainen” expresses great resentment at his existence being called into question. Live on air, Taanila reads out the postmark multiple times to impress even upon the slowest of listeners that the letter was actually mailed from a place whose name sounds like Pursiainen’s, but Juhani Pursiainen’s writing is so bad that the letter is not allowed to say the radio.

One critic writes: “Taanila first read out a confusing letter that explained about the composers behind Juhani Pursiainen. It was not entirely clear to me who had actually created this piece, whether it is a piece of music or simply some kind of bizarre performance art.” Others are not allowed to say on the radio.

Some days after the concert, Eero and Magnus are out on the town in Helsinki. They happen to meet Hannele Segerstam, who tells them with a twinkle in her eye: “The only thing I don’t understand is that you both write such crappy stuff for violin but Juhani Pursiainen’s writing is so wonderfully natural!”

Magnus Lindberg and Esa-Pekka Salonen turned 60 in June 2018. To celebrate the occasion, FMQ published a selection of articles on and by them from its archives at fmq.fi.

For more on concerts celebrating the anniversary of Lindberg, Salonen and other composers in 2018, see page 61.
Contemporary and classical albums 2018

Fagerlund: Höstsonaten
[Autumn Sonata]
Anne Sofie von Otter, Erika Sunnegårdh, Tommi Hakala, Helena Juntunen, Nicholas Söderlund, Chorus and Orchestra of the Finnish National Opera, cond. John Storgårds
BIS-2357

“It’s more about words than action, and, musically, more about continuity than sharp contrasts. Fagerlund’s music is charged with eruptive energy, however, and provides a dark and sorrowful autumnal setting for the characters’ emotional struggles. Anne-Sofie von Otter is impressive in the role of the pianist mother, who has the choir as her audience, while Helena Juntunen as the mentally handicapped other daughter has the most fascinating vocal part.”
– Anna Pulkkis

Aho: Timpani Concerto, Piano Concerto No. 1
Ari Pekka Liimatainen, Sonja Fräki, Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. Erkki Lasonpalo, Eva Ollikainen
BIS-2306

“The assurance of the two soloists is matched by performances of pyrotechnical brilliance from the Turku Philharmonic players under their two conductors. One imagines that the performances are authoritative (the composer must have been there), the recorded sound is of the usual BIS standard of excellence, and the album as a whole is a valuable addendum to the label’s ongoing representation of this indefatigable figure.”
– Martin Anderson

Hille: Farbformen
Sid Hille Camerata (Maija Linkola, Elna Vetasaari, Lotta Poijärvi, Markus Hohti, Sid Hille)
SatnaMusic CD 171

“The chamber music works of Sid Hille draw from many sources. [- -] While the second quartet is inspired by colours, the third one is about physical forms (hence the title of the release, Farbformen). [- -] The various stylistic influences from post-tonal classical to blues and jazz blend seamlessly together in Hille’s compositions; what is common in them seems to matter more than what is incompatible. A worthy principle to follow in any area of life.”
– Juha Torvinen
"Each solo work could also be regarded as a kind of symphonic poem for accordion, with a narrative compressed into the same kind of density as the style. But the density is not a hangover from Kaipainen’s modernist past: it’s a reflection of the extraordinary concentration of the imagination at work here.” – Martin Anderson

"It is always exciting to encounter a recording that includes a selection of works by different composers, hand-picked by the performer(s). Pianist Risto-Matti Marin has formed a meaningful musical whole out of five works, all recorded for the first time, by four contemporary composers living in Finland. As Marin points out, the works draw from a variety of traditions. However, they also share certain characteristics, such as repetitive textures.” – Anna Pulkkis

"Commissioned to celebrate the centenary of Finland’s independence, MAGNUS LINDBERG’S orchestral work Tempus fugit (2016–2017) was premiered on 6 December 2017 by the FINNISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA under HANNU LINNU and recorded for Ondine during the following days. The results are mightily entertaining. Lindberg makes use of characteristic stepwise harmonic progressions and a gorgeously bright orchestration, with brass fanfares and outbursts of solo piano. Lindberg wrote his Violin Concerto No. 2 for Frank Peter Zimmermann, who [...] excels on the recording. The violin takes on an assertive role right from the beginning of the three-movement work, and the orchestra is an alert companion, its material broadening and enriching the soloist’s part. The recurring romantic motif is almost intolerably catchy.” – Anna Pulkkis

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"One imagines that NORDGREN would have been thrilled by the playing of the KORKOLA QUARTET and their guests, he might even have approved the occasional rough touch in the String Quartet and Quintet as evidence of their commitment.” – Martin Anderson

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"Cellist Tanja Tetzlaff and pianist Gunilla Süssman’s recording of REMOJUHANI BAUTAVAARA’S works for cello and piano gives a glance into the composer’s expressive endeavours over five decades, starting with Two Preludes and Fugues (1955), [...] Tetzlaff and Süssman’s vision of this music is lucid and profound, never overly sentimental but always highly expressive.” – Anna Pulkkis

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Folk albums 2018

**Frost on Fiddles**
Frigg
FRIGG00011

“Frigg’s latest release shows exquisite playing through with wicked humour, infecting the audience with a compulsion to dance, and still weeping a gentle tear of deep Nordic melancholy. Frigg’s crazy brilliance lives on!”
– Fiona Talkington

**Divan jäljet – Shadow of a Diva**
Johanna Juhola
Johanna Juhola Music

“JOHANNA JUHOLA is a confident accordion star who has created her own unique style. Despite turning the limelight on the accordion, her music portrays a strong vision beyond just one instrument: all the musicians and especially the programming are organic parts of the same vision.”
– Tove Djupsjöbacka

**Matilda**
Pekko Käppi & K:H:H:L
Svart Records

“PERKO KÄPPI & K:H:H:L’s new album Matilda is both a sophisticated and a raw continuation of its predecessor, the brilliant Sanguis Meus, Mama!”
– Riikka Hiltunen

**Twined – Nordic Guitar Music**
J-P Piirainen
Bafe’s Factory / Nordic Notes NN099

“[Guitarist J-P Píirainen’s] sensitivity and sense of intimacy is ever present in his recent release Twined, his natural melodic ability coupled with a carefully thought-out approach to dynamics creating an excellent introduction to his work for anyone new to Píirainen’s music.”
– Fiona Talkington

**Alku – The Beginning**
Päivi Hirvonen
Nordic Notes NN102

“PÄIVI HIRVONEN approaches music with focus and attitude, but then lets it speak for itself. Her music-making is quite intimate but at times incorporates a lot of different layers, expanding herself into an orchestra or a choir.”
– Tove Djupsjöbacka

**Human**
Wimme & Rime
ZENCO 2164

“Stop! Listen! The tempi and moods keep changing, but the tried-and-tested combination forms the backbone of WIMME and BINNE’s new album, Human.”
– Riikka Hiltunen

**Korpin marssi [March of the Raven]**
Juuri & Juuri
Nordic Notes NN115

“What I like the most about Enkel is the way they treat tradition. [...] They are naturally pushed towards a fresh take on the repertoire, and the result is a set of very freely breathing tunes with a lot of air in the arrangements.”
– Amanda Kauranne

**We are Enkel**
Enkel
Nordic Notes NN112

“Each time I listened through the recording, a new piece seemed to emerge as a favourite, which is a testament to the many-layered quality of the pieces. [...] A twelve-track album with twelve highlights – not a bad score!”
– Riikka Hiltunen

**Sisaret [Sisters]**
Suden aika
Laika Records 3510358.2

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– Amanda Kauranne

**Sväng plays tango**
Sväng
Galileo MC GMC081

“The material is well chosen to represent the different characterististics of the Finnish tango, and of course Svang build on the story with their own compositions [...] Once more I also take my hat off to the arrangements.”
– Tove Djupsjöbacka

# Translations: Hanna-Mari Latham
Jazz albums 2018

**Whispers and Cries**
Frank Carlberg; Noah Preminger
Red Piano Records RPR14599

“A key feature on this album is the amalgamation of both traditional approaches and contemporary touches.” – Jan-Erik Holmberg

**Form**
Aki Rissanen Trio
Edition Records EDN1101/EDNLP1101

"Displaying Teppo Mäkynen’s love for trad jazz and his roots in hip hop and sampling, Form is a calm and collected trip through uncharted territories.” – Petri Silas

**Illusion**
Eero Koivistoinen Quartet
Svart Records Svart124CD

“Saxophonist and composer Eero Koivistoinen is considered a true living legend of Finnish jazz.” – Jan-Erik Holmberg

**Return of Robert Dickson**
Teemu Viinikainen III
Eclipse Music ECD-201753

“His light touch on the delay, sustain and looping pedals creates a spacious, floating sound that triggers all kinds of pleasure synapses.” – Wif Stenger

**Another North**
Mopo
We Jazz WJLP07

“The surface tension of Aki Rissanen’s improvisations and the intense lyrical beauty of his compositions seem inherent.” – Petri Silas

**Mopocalypse**
/ Paul Lyytinen Magneti Orkesteri
Eclipse Music ECD 207151

“A secret destined to come out globally sooner than not, PAULI LYYTINEN IS THE CURRENT FINNISH JAZZER to follow.” – Petri Silas

**Anemone**
Elfinvete
Eclipse Music ECD-201860

“The sound palette of the trio is definitely interesting, and even exciting, despite all the ear candy that has reached one’s auditory organs for decades.” – Jan-Erik Holmberg

**Awakening**
Juha Jutilainen & Rauli Björkenheim
Eclipse Music ECD-201862

“The feel, mood and volume of the concert stayed within certain parameters, making the intensity snowball into something quite unexpected.” – Petri Silas

**Vim and Vigor**
Sonja Virtanen Quartet
Presence Records PRECD 065

“The sound is warm and, in a good sense, somewhat rough around the edges.” – Jan-Erik Holmberg

**Anemone**
Elfinvete
Eclipse Music ECD-201860

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**XX**
Joona Toivanen Trio
CamJazz CAMJ 7920-2

“A tasting menu of contemporary Finnish jazz recorded at Berlin’s Monarch Bar.” – Wif Stenger

**Berlin 27.10.17**
Bowman Trio / Jaska Lukkarinen Trio / Black Motor
We Jazz Records WJLP09/WJCD09

“IT IS IRO HAARLA’s inimitable, spectral touch that carries the music at least as far as it originally travelled.” – Petri Silas

**TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT, THERE ARE MORE MUSICIANS, BETTER TUNES, AND THE ENTIRE PRODUCTION IS FANCIER.” – JAN-ERIK HOLMBERG

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**KUU!**
KUU!
ACT 9857-2

“KUU! references a vast amount of influences yet still manages to project a firm and original identity.” – Petri Silas

**Live @ Koko Jazz Club**
Riitta Paakki Quartet
Koko Records 92934788928

“The interplay between the hard-charging and the low-key provides a tantalising backdrop for FAAK’s masterly playing and compositions.” – Wif Stenger

**Around Again - the Music of Carla Bley**
Iro Haarla, Ulf Krokfors & Barry Altschul
TUM CD 054

“It is IRO HAARLA’s inimitable, spectral touch that carries the music at least as far as it originally travelled.” – Petri Silas

**Lampedusa Lullaby**
KUU!
ACT 9857-2

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In 2018, several Finnish composers celebrated significant anniversaries, and accordingly there were a number of concerts and world premieres to mark these occasions. In May, the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra premiered the Third Symphony of their composer-in-residence Mikko Heininen (70). The Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki paid tribute to Paavo Heininen, Professor Emeritus of Composition (80), with two concerts including no fewer than seven premieres from this grand Finnish modernist.

In the autumn, the Sibelius Academy held major composition concerts for Jukka Tiensuu (70) and Tapio Tuomela (60). Old hands and students joined forces to perform Tuomela’s vocal and chamber music works, while Tiensuu’s incredibly many-faceted and idiosyncratic output was showcased in a representative selection of works including the first performance in Finland of the string trio Collateral, premiered in Stockholm this spring.

Magnus Lindberg and Esa-Pekka Salonen both turned 60. In November, Lindberg’s new work for choir and orchestra Triumph ett finnas till [Triumph to Exist], setting poems by Edith Södergran, brought a Nordic aspect to the concert given by the London Philharmonic in memory of the centenary of the end of the First World War. Salonen was honoured by gala concerts at the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, premiering at Provisorsrock, one of Finland’s largest rock festivals (40), and by the Helsinki Festival (50).

Porti Jazz held a women’s day, where performers included Iro Haarla and Kaira Mäensivu (see page 22). Haarla received this year’s Ted Curson Award, and Mäensivu was given the Emerging Talent of the Year Award. A campaign launched to raise funds for the embattled UMO JAZZ ORCHESTRA culminated in an aid concert held at Finlandia Hall in Helsinki in October.

Tours in Finland were undertaken for instance by singer-songwriter Anni Elif and the AKI HISANKAN Trio, which also toured Germany and France. The JOONAS HAAVISTO TRIO performed at Jazzadall 2018 in Germany and toured in Japan.

Folk music groups did a lot of touring in and outside Finland. Maria Kalaniemi toured with Eero Grundström in Sweden in March. Yvelletar performed in Germany and the UK, the latter visit including the distinguished Songlines Encounters Festival (see page 24). Solju – where Ulla Pirttijärvi and Hildia Länsman combine the Sámi language and yos with modern soundscapes – gave concerts around Finland and at the Folkelarm festival in Norway.

Women, the World Music Expo, will be held in Tampere, Finland, in 2019. This was announced at this year’s Women in Las Palmas, where a performance given by the HELSINKI-COYOTOU! ENSEMBLE served as an inspiring taste of the next Expo.

More highlights of live performances on the following pages.

• By Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen and FMQ.

Classical and contemporary

In December also features the long-expected world premiere of KIMMO RAKOLA’S (60) Symphony.

The festival summer began with the Suvisoitto festival of the AVANTI! CHAMBER ORCHESTRA, with world premieres of a work by OLLI VIITANEN, a new work by JARKKO HARTIKAINEN, a new work by JURI VONAS, and a violin work by JARKKO HARTIKAINEN: CECILIA DAMSTROM, composer-in-residence at the Kokonainen Festival, continued her commissioned trilogy on great Finnish women with the world premiere of the piano quintet Aino. The world premieres at Our Festival were very much in keeping with the character of the festival: new works by sound artist and composer TYTTI ARBOLA and by AKI YLI-SALOMAKI. Also, new works were jointly created by composer-cum-performance-artist CHARLES QUERVILLON and photographic artist MARIA TAMIRO on the one hand and by the electronic wind ensemble Yöölalär and the experimental pop band ELIFANTREE on the other.

The year’s opera premieres once again demonstrated how colourful and vibrant Finnish contemporary opera is. Pyhä Birgitta [St Brigid] by JANI SVEN, premiered at Naantali Church in August, is a powerful mystery play in which the composer combines medieval music and modern sound fields into a free-floating vocal tapestry. Pukaperunatola [Sanatorio Express] by IHO RANTALA to a libretto by MINNA LINDGREN, premiered at the Finnish National Opera in September, is a satire on the well-being jargon of modern times in the spirit of a 19th-century comic opera.

The year 2018 featured a large number of cultural events reflecting on the Finnish Civil War of 100 years ago. The most significant of these was the opera Veljeni vartija [My Brother’s Keeper] by OLLI KORTEKANGAS, premiered in February. In May, the HELSINKI CHAMBER CHOIR premiered the extensive a cappella work Under the Arching Heavens: A Requiem by ALEX FREEMAN.

Folk, jazz and world

The music festival summer was hot and fast in all genres. One of the highlights was Haapavesi Folk, celebrating its 30th anniversary. The roster this year included JAAKKO LAITINEN & VÄLÄRA BABA, the duo of EMMA SALOKOSKI and JOANNA JUHOLA, and the legendary fiddler ensemble JPP. Anniversaries were also celebrated by Provisorsrock, one of Finland’s largest rock festivals (40), and by the Helsinki Festival (50).

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• By Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen and FMQ.

Translation: Jaakko Mantyjarvi
Tampere Biennale seeks meaning in margins and musical experiments

The Tampere Biennale once again showcased a broad spectrum of new music from home and abroad.

This year’s festival was the second of two whose artistic director was composer Sami Klemola, and his signature was very prominent at both. He turned a keen eye towards marginal phenomena, interfaces between genres of music and between various branches of the arts, performance art and experimental projects. [- -] Though experimentation emerged as a theme of sorts, the spectrum of styles was broad.

The Tampere Biennale has traditionally been a major platform for world premieres, and this year was no exception. Veli Kuusela’s Tizz for chamber ensemble was performed at the concert of Ääni-kollektiivi, a newish group formed part of the festival’s investment in sound art and displayed at several galleries.

The largest number of world premieres (5) was logged at the bandoneon recital given by Kristina Kuusisto. The dramaturgy of this programme created what amounted to a single musical entity rather than a sequence of independent works; the performance incorporated speech, elements of drama and the video work Omakuvu [Self-portrait] by Heikki Talstyr. An oboi by Lotta Wennäkoski made the strongest impact. All the composers featured in this recital were women, and gender equality was in general very well served at the Tampere Biennale. Nearly 45% of the works performed were written by women. Another deliberate statement by Klemola, perhaps?

Of the remaining premieres, Angular Objects in Liquid Time by Veeti-Matti Puuimala was exactly what the title promised: angular, edgy, rough and complex, yet also compellingly intense. It was performed by IMP-ENSEMBLE, whose concert was one of the best at the festival overall. All clouds are not data clouds II for flute and tape by Ville Raasakka brought together the sensitivity of the flute and ominous background sounds in a thought-provoking way. Kimmo Kuokkala contributed Industriallis, a stylishly and coherently executed piece based on a simple idea, juxtaposing the shimmering roughness of the strings and the quirky rhythms of the percussion.

The Future of Jazz was a wonderful cavalcade of new works and new composer names, as it featured new works by students for big band.

When Sibafest 2018, the music festival organised by the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki, began in late January, it was 100 years to the day from the outbreak of the Finnish Civil War. “There has been a lot of thought on whether art has anything at all to contribute to social debate,” says conductor and professor Atso Almila, the artistic director of this year’s Sibafest. “The ‘civil peace’ concept quickly fostered angles on how to approach the conflict a century ago, for instance from the point of view of composers, and to relate it to the world we live in today. On the other hand, it is also relevant to consider whether we could employ art to bring people closer together in this age of increasing hate speech.”

Actually, history was probed far further back than just the Civil War a century ago, since the programme included ancient Finnish murder ballads, a project by Heikki Laipinen and Kimmo Pohjonen, European 16th-century works for viol, an oratorio by Handel, music reflecting the nationalist trends of the 20th century and echoes from the Second World War. Finland’s struggle in the Winter War and Continuation War were very much to the fore in A closed-down village by Anne-Mari Riihimäki.
Helsinki presents a Nordic Music Days with style and substance

This was the year the Nordic Music Days included creations from outside the Nordic region in the form of two significant works by the Scottish composer Helen Grime. It was a controversial decision to welcome a non-Nordic country into the festival but one that focused our minds on what makes music from the north distinctive and what Nordic music actually is, if it exists as a distinctive entity at all.

Steve Vai and Jukka Iisakkila – the baton, the guitar and magic

Conductor Jukka Iisakkila lowers his baton. Of all the beautiful, heart-rending and memorable performances he has seen through during his career, this one holds a special significance. We are at the Huvila Festival Tent in Helsinki, at the Nordic premiere of twelve compositions by legendary electric guitar innovator Steve Vai.

The concert has been a resounding success. The crowd has risen to reward the performers with a standing ovation, and all on stage are smiling. Vai, Iisakkila, the entire Tapiola Sinfonietta and pianist Seppo Kantonen, guitarist Marek Nyman, bassist Jaan Wessman and other outstanding members of the jazz-rock band hand-picked by the conductor to tackle the difficult scores.

In more concrete terms, we experienced four lively, varied and stimulating days of music in Helsinki that got the best from the city’s excellent creative infrastructure and pointed in some vital new directions. The visiting Scots reminded us how lucky we are in Finland, and the Nordic region as a whole, to have such opportunities to imagine and foster a bold and relevant future for new art music.

• By Andrew Malcolm. See the full review at fmq.fi.

NORDIC MUSIC DAYS (7–10 November, Helsinki)

Strong voices and rich colours

Two of the three singers accompany themselves on the kantele. The bell-like twinking sound of the kantele adds a typical flavour to the music of Okra Playground, even when Maija Kauhanen and Esmi Mäkikaristrum their instrument like they would a rhythm guitar. The third singer, Aki Hirvonen, whose fiddle playing provides a solid cornerstone to the band’s music, alternates between the modern violin and the ancient jouhikko. [- -] Underneath their catchy surface, the songs are quite complex in structure, cleverly arranged and executed with skill and precision.

But where Okra Playground really shines is in the vocal department. Each of the three female voices is strong in her own right, but blended together there seems no end to the variation in mood and colour they can create. I was deeply impressed with their vocal skills after just a few songs, but it was not until they reached the part in Turmio, the title track of their first album, where they seemingly “stack” harmony upon harmony in an almost metre-less sequence, that my jaw actually dropped. Wow!

• By Ton Maas. See the full review at fmq.fi.

The Turku City Theatre’s original musical depicts Touko Laaksonen’s artistic success while also addressing the painful history of homosexuals in Finland and celebrating difference, acceptance, love and sex.

Tom of Finland, The Musical

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For example, wartime Finland is represented through a certain pattern, it makes chronological allusions to Finnish popular music as the decades pass – deliberately, as Jussi Vanhavalka and Jori Saarinen admit. More than this, the musical manages to poke fun at Finnish music genres while also paying homage to them.

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Sheds new light on Finnish history, breaking the stereotype of Finnishness as a monolithic category by depicting history from the perspective of a sexual minority. Instead of perseveration (suio), a Finnish ideal most comparable to the concept of “gritting your teeth”, we see wartime people, heterosexual and homosexual alike, turning to carnal pleasures as if every moment could be their last.

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NOTABLE NUMBERS

Recording sales in Finland in 2017

According to data collected by IFPI Finland from its member companies, consumption of recorded music in Finland increased by 8.4% on the previous year in 2017. This growth was fuelled by the steady increase in streaming services.

See also the columns on the recording market by Jari Mäki and Juhana Kattajärvi at fmq.fi.

Format changes 2007-2017

Recording sales, digital
Recording sales, physical (EUR million)

Number of opera premieres in Finland 1950-2017

Opera is alive and well in Finland, with some 20 new additions to the repertoire every year. Read Liisamaija Hautsalo’s article Gene technology, local heroes and pipe and drain renovations – Finland is producing new operas like never before and Finnish local opera appeals to thousands at fmq.fi.

Source: Liisamaija Hautsalo, Politics of Equality in Finnish Opera, research project (2017-2022) funded by the Academy of Finland, Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki

Examples of gender distribution in the music sector in Finland (2017)

Customers of the Finnish Composers’ Copyright Society Teosto (total: 32,029)

Full-time musicians of Finnish symphony orchestras

Employees at the Sibelius Academy

Discussion on equality, non-discrimination and diversity in the music sector in Finland continued in 2018. Read more in Heidi Horila’s article Towards equality in the music sector at fmq.fi.
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