CONTEMPORARY FOLK MUSIC 2019
THE PERFECT SOUND
MUSICIANS COPING WITH A CHANGING WORLD
CREATE, SING, PLAY, REPEAT!
Music driving change

It is commonplace to say that the only constant is change, but even so, there are many signs that we are currently witnessing a global change of unusually large proportions. Changes in the climate, in our operating environments, in global politics and in individual attitudes emerged as key themes in multiple contexts in 2019, the FMQ not excepted. In the course of the year, we have explored in our online articles how these changes are reflected in the work of musicians. Equally importantly, we have reflected on whether music can be an agent for change.

This is also the focus of the first theme package in this issue, discussing digital sheet music, musicians combating the climate crisis, and ecological sustainability in instrument building. The theme of change underlies other articles too, including our new series highlighting historical women who wrote music.

Our second theme package explores sound quality. We take a look at the technical solutions used by Finnish loudspeaker manufacturers and review the art of designing concert halls – honestly believing that even a slight improvement in sound quality when listening to music can improve our quality of life. The third theme package gives voice to interesting musical personalities in, from and beyond Finland. We invited their thoughts on what it is like to make music in today’s society, within multicultural vibes and often multiple roles.

In October 2019 folk music and world music professionals from around the globe came together in Tampere, Finland, for the WOMEX World Music Expo. It provided an excellent opportunity for Finland as the host country not only to showcase our own rich field of folk music but also to examine those traditions in the context of the great global family of music. Accordingly, our fourth theme package is about contemporary folk music in Finland. Throughout history, periods of uncertainty have prompted people to resort to art and spirituality to search for answers. We cannot yet know how technological, political or legislative developments in the future will influence music itself and its forms, or how a work of music is even defined.

Singing and music-making will perhaps not save our ecosystem, but musicians and their art can affect how we live in our world. Amid the upheavals of our time, art is excellently placed once again not only to reflect the world but also to actively change it.

We at FMQ choose to believe in the power of music to catalyse change and wish to offer our readers inspiring reading in print and on our website, and also, to paraphrase Kaija Saariaho (p. 20), a new, hopeful vista.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
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Although change is a natural and constant state of affairs for humanity and for the universe at large, there are many signs that we are currently witnessing a change of unusually large proportions. Global megatrends such as digitisation and climate change have brought humanity face to face with new and huge issues. In the following articles we look at a number of manifestations of this change from the perspective of musicians.
Although printed sheet music is still very much the predominant source material in the field of classical music, digital sheet music is increasingly making inroads into the everyday lives of musicians and music institutions. Digitisation brings obvious benefits, including rapid access and ease of use. But there are persistent and quite justifiable doubts about whether completely paper-free music will ever be a thing.

Scepticism aside, the conventional wisdom is that digital sheet music will become hugely more common in the near future. The main issue is how service developers will cater to the needs of musicians.

**Improved accessibility for sheet music**

Let’s begin with where sheet music comes from. Digitisation has facilitated an unprecedented streamlining in the music publishing business, as sheet music editions can be published both digitally and in hard copy. Jari Eskola, Publishing Director at Fennica Gehrman, still views paper as overwhelmingly the best user interface for music, although he readily admits that digitisation of sheet music is not only inevitable but also essential.

One of the key outcomes of digitisation is accessibility. A major step in this development was taken in autumn 2018 with the launch of a pioneering sheet music streaming service, nkoda. Billed as ‘Spotify for sheet music’, the service is accessible via a monthly subscription fee. Eskola feels that nkoda is the most interesting new thing to hit the music publishing industry for a long time. The service was established by Lorenzo Brewer, a Brit in his twenties who envisioned it from the perspective of digital natives such as himself: a sheet music repository combining ease of use, communality and flexibility.

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**Demand improves usability**

Eskola believes in nkoda, because it was built from the ground up with a sensitivity to the needs of the various parties and with a respect for music. “It’s the first of its kind, and I believe it’ll become a major player and attract new users at an accelerating rate,” he says.

Musicians tend to be critical of nkoda because it best suits scholars, composers and other people who wish to study sheet music; for actual music-making – rehearsing and performing – it is unreliable and impractical.

At present, the most widely used sheet music reader on tablets for performances is forScore. Newzik, intended for orchestral use, was launched a few years ago, and the most recent arrival is Beatik, introduced at the Frankfurt Music Fair in April 2019.

In 2015 Apple launched the 12.9-inch iPad Pro, with which using digital sheet music for performance at last began to make sense. Accordingly, the demand for improved digital
availability has skyrocketed. Jari Eoka believes that the trend will pick up speed as orchestras acquire more musicians who have grown up in the digital age.

**Freedom through digital sheet music**

The most prominent Finnish “digital musician” today is violinist Pekka Kuusisto, who has been seen operating a foot pedal to turn digital pages on the music stand for years. Musical polymaths Marko Honka (cello) and Emil Holmström (piano) also often use an iPad to display sheet music.

For soloists who use the sheet music mainly as a memory aid in performance, a tablet is a good solution – as long as the tablet and page-turner pedal can be trusted. Musician and conductor Taavi Oramo is also a convert. For the moment, ForScore and a smart pen for making annotations, and finds it convenient.

“I obtained a better iPad and a digital pen at that time. ‘Your pedal technique improves and gradually integrates into your body language. Also, you always have all your scores with you, and forScore always keeps them in order, unlike my bookcase back home,’ says Oramo. A conductor reading a tablet to conduct an orchestra is still a rarity; almost every time someone in the orchestra remarks on the fact to Oramo.

Soprano Tuuli Lindberg first sang from a tablet as a soloist in Bruckner’s Requiem last Easter. She has been using digital sheet music increasingly since autumn 2018, particularly when practising. Although printed sheet music is still the primary source for her, she sees the many advantages of its digital counterpart.

“There are still lots of little things that you have to remember to take care of yourself. Because of this, digital sheet music is not yet a completely transparent and universally applicable thing,” Oramo says. He considers that tablets should become cheaper and more reliable for digital sheet music to become more widespread. “I do believe that we will give up hard copy at some point. Digital sheet music just has so many advantages. But do we have hardware good enough to enable it?”

**Infrastructure needed for orchestras to make digital leap**

The Newzik application is based on the premise that orchestras must be allowed to make better use of technology. The company has run several pilot projects with orchestras in developing sheet music reader tailored for orchestral musicians. The musician surveys reported by Newzik on behalf of some orchestras have given much food for thought. The Newzik application has run several pilot projects with orchestras in developing sheet music reader tailored for orchestral musicians. The musician surveys reported by Newzik on behalf of some orchestras have given much food for thought.

Composers of new works tend to send new pages with corrections as the premiere approaches, and all this is easy to keep in order using a pad, also, when memorising a new opera, for instance, Lindeberg can work anywhere at all. For her, the major drawback in using a tablet is that it is cumbersome to make annotations.

“There are a lot of special markings that singers use. It is a bother to enter things like ornaments and text notes in ForScore when you have to do it on the fly, such as in an orchestra rehearsal.”

**Building confidence?**

Emil Holmström also uses ForScore and a smart pen for making annotations, and finds it convenient.

“Initially, I was extremely irritated by how clumsy it was to enter annotations, and I didn’t use a tablet for practice, only for performances. But with a well-functioning digital pen, it is quicker to make annotations than by hand, and it doesn’t distract from the learning process.”

That said, Holmström prefers to practise using printed sheet music, because a tablet screen is not pleasant to stare at for hours for end, not to speak of having to keep an eye out for battery life. In most cases, he shifts to digital sheet music for the final stretch, and he performs with a tablet and turns pages using a pedal.

“Printed and digital sheet music exist side by side in my world, and I hope that this arrangement could be perpetuated and improved,” he sums up.

Reliability is paramount when talking about digital sheet music. Taavi Oramo notes that a single glitch can destroy one’s confidence in the system if it happens during a concert. He has tested several pedals and selected the one he feels suits him best. He is comfortable with using technology and is adept for instance at changing the page size in sheet music files.

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“There is no sense in having a copy of every single piece of music on the shelf at home, considering what a huge amount of repertoire I go through every year,” says Lindeberg, who specialises in Baroque and contemporary music.

“There are many great public-domain editions available in the subscription-based International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP), and I can easily practise contemporary pieces with the sheet music on a tablet.”

**Newzik assures users that it has addressed the concerns related to tablet use: scores with user annotations are stored in the cloud, and performances can be made safely in offline mode. They have even given thought to digital eye strain, or screen fatigue.**

For all these bright examples, however, the notion of an orchestra going fully digital still seems like a pipe dream, at least if one asks someone in the thick of an orchestra’s sheet music management: a music librarian. Sebastian Diop-Jobacka, music librarian of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, reports that the music librarian profession has been actively pursuing the adoption of the new technology for some seven years now. For instance, they were involved in beta-testing skodka, which Diop-Jobacka considers a highly promising service.

Digital sheet music is already being used by the FRSO in many ways: in planning, material preparation and home practice. For the music librarian, the major threshold for the idea of performing concerts using digital sheet music is how to ensure accessibility of the material. Generally, he feels that digital sheet music is not quite yet a suitable replacement for hard copy, as printed sheet music is still far more comfortable to look at and more convenient to use. The bright screen of the iPad may even constitute a health hazard. Besides, having a hundred tablets for a hundred musicians would require a complex infrastructure for keeping every device charged up and in working order, not to speak of the issue of device security and functioning.

“But digital sheet music will come to orchestras at some point, certainly. The question is when and how. Music librarians want to be actively contributing to this,” says Diop-Jobacka.
Audiences can be reached both by using public authorities and rhetoric, and directly through art. Even small actions matter, but the largest responsibility falls on those who enjoy the greatest public authority. One recent example is the rap group Gasketti, who lent their support to a campaign titled Korvaamaton [Irreplaceable] during the recent Finnish parliamentary election. The campaign was run by various environmental and development organisations in order to identify the climate crisis as the number one issue in the election.

Although the American online magazine Pitchfork recently remarked that songs on the current pop charts are anything but upbeat and fun, we still have not seen many songs about climate change hitting the charts. Tiainen from Greenpeace points out that in addition to using their public authority, music-makers can directly influence gig presenters and festivals, for example: “Musicians, too, have to be active in sending a message to their presenters about the importance of environmental responsibility through actions such as using renewable energy or offering more plant-based catering options.”

Bands at the beginning of their career hardly dare to bite the hand that feeds them, which means that all eyes will be on the most influential stars to lead the action.

Choose green
Folk music fiddler and singer Suiyi Oskala says she has been suffering from eco-anxiety for years. She is currently trying to alleviate her distress through her work with a multi-art group, creating a staged work which takes a stand against ocean plastic pollution. In addition, she also tries to commit to small environmental actions. “Whether it is commuting by public transport or bicycle, looking after my work equipment to maximise its lifespan or adding a carbon offset to top of my international fare quotes – every small action is a step in the right direction. A universal change requires actions from other industries as well, but a shift in our attitude can just as well slowly begin from our lefty-green bubble of the arts,” she reflects.

Many environmentally conscious musicians identify travel as their most painful eco-issue, a fact underlined by Finland’s remote geographical location. A few years ago, jazz musician and bassist Eero Tikkanen did several tours from Finland to Central Europe and back by land and sea only. “I felt it was important for me to find out whether it was possible, and it certainly turned out to be. But it does require a lot more time and a bit more money as well. I also had to be more proactive in my trip planning as it wasn't as simple as buying a one-click airfare.” Finding the overall experience positive, Tikkanen also attracted a lot of attention and amazement, especially in the eyes of his Central European presenters. Since then, he has had to make compromises in terms of flying, but he remains conscious of environmental issues. He tends to avoid isolated gigs and instead tries to bundle together several performances into practical tours, something that has proved challenging for someone performing marginal music.

“This is something I have reflected upon and discussed a lot with my colleagues as well. Everyone knows it’s not ecologically sustainable to fly, but is the solution to stop performing altogether? Is there another way of compensating? Could the music have a valuable message, for instance, which others could compensate for a flight?”

Having gigs closer to home makes it easier to choose a green transport option. Bicycle-riding musicians can be found in the ranks of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, for example. Oskala’s colleague, violinist Emilia Laun SJ, completed her first-ever carbon-free folk music tour in 2015 by cycling through Finland, continuing her cycling adventures in summer 2019 with Oskala.

Unite, acquire and share information
Few music-makers have the power or status to be able to achieve big changes on their own. Individual musicians and small organisations may have a better chance of getting their message through by combining forces, whether through an innovative initiative or a consumer boycott.

In 2014 Europe Jazz Network partnered with Julie’s Bicycle, a pioneering charity working on environmental sustainability in the arts. Their joint initiative “Take the Green Train” has mapped the environmental challenges in the arts industry and endeavoured to find solutions through seminars and conferences, among other activities. In conjunction with the initiative, saxophonist Evan Parker undertook a pilot green tour in 2016, choosing the most environmentally sustainable transport methods, creating a “green” rider and coming up with more sustainable ways of organising and marketing his concerts.

One of the problems in the arts industry could be as basic as the lack of information. Help can be found through various associations and organisations. Julie’s Bicycle maintains a website with many practical guides towards more environmentally conscious practices in the creative industries. Festivals are another forum for sharing information and searching for solutions. For instance, Stockholm’s Baltic Sea Festival presented in August 2019 a programme with many music or spoken word events focusing on sustainable development.

Finland Festivals, the umbrella organisations for Finnish festivals, has been involved in developing the EcoCompass certificate, which seeks to define common guidelines for events and businesses. A dozen music festivals have already committed to the initiative. For a small organisation with limited resources, however, committing to the process is not always self-evident or straightforward: each participating festival is subject to a rigorous auditing process as well as having to budget for extra costs.

Demand changes as a music consumer
A layman might falsely assume that listening to recorded music is eco-friendly in this era where physical recordings have been replaced by streaming services. A recent research collaboration between the University of Glasgow and the University of Oslo, however, demonstrates the opposite: while the amount of plastic produced by the music industry has declined since the golden era of vinyl records, the rise in streaming services has caused even more environmental challenges. The study concluded that streaming businesses are experiencing massive growth and all of the involved operators are huge electricity consumers. Musicians and private consumers can ask Spotify, for example, to disclose the electricity provider for their servers and how clean the power is. The streaming service providers are entitled to demand information and better operational models. Even better if they can do so publicly.”

The same goes for all forms of customerism. If you notice that your favourite club keeps providing plastic straws or requires that you print out your ticket, why not give feedback?“The more we do so, the more likely it is that we will see changes. N”

Translation: Hanna Mari Latham

More discussion on musicians in a changing world in FMQ’s Special Feature 2/2019 at fmq.fi.

BY Riikka Hiltunen

FMQ FEATURE: MUSICIANS COPING WITH A CHANGING WORLD

WHILE MUSIC AS A PROFESSION OR HOBBY IS NOT THE WORST IMAGINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTER, NO-ONE IN OUR TIME AND AGE CAN AFFORD TO THINK THEY ARE ABOVE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Many music professionals and organisations are gradually waking up to their responsibilities for global environmental action. While it seems that individual music professionals and amateurs have the motivation to pitch in, it is challenging to find the right methods and avenues in order to achieve real change. The following article, compiled with help from environmental experts and musicians, gives some practical suggestions on what an individual musician or music consumer can do.

Speak, play and sing
In his manifesto for activist music research, ecomusicologist Jura Törnqvist writes that music itself can help in the waking up to their responsibilities for global environmental responsibility.

While music as a profession or hobby is not the worst imaginable environmental polluter, no-one in our time and age can afford to think they are above environmental responsibility.

FMQ FEATURE: MUSICIANS COPING WITH A CHANGING WORLD

ENOUGH TALKING, WHAT CAN A MUSICIAN DO?

WHAT CAN A MUSICIAN DO?

AND CLIMATE CHANGE, PART 2: WHAT CAN A MUSICIAN DO?
Deforestation unbalances ecosystems, erodes biodiversity and depletes carbon sinks. This year, forest fires and accelerating destruction of the rainforest in Brazil have prompted worldwide alarm and made us all a bit more conscious of the forests of our planet.

Instrument building is an extremely marginal business compared with many other industries that use wood as their raw material, not to speak of agriculture. Yet many instruments are made of wood, and the wood has to come from somewhere. It would be odd if no thought at all were to be given to the origin of raw materials in the world of music.

Classical instruments represent the utmost in refined craftsmanship. Their purpose is to produce an aesthetically pleasing sound, and they are rarely even thought of in terms of being material artefacts with physical properties – the properties of wood.

There are numerous requirements for the wood to be used in instruments, and different kinds of materials are needed for different parts of an instrument. For example, fingerboards require a very hard yet workable type of wood, typically a tropical hardwood. Also, different kinds of wood resonate in different ways.

Endangered materials

Maija Lampela has given a lot of thought to the woodiness of instruments. She is a viol player and a bog researcher who completed a doctorate on the restoration of tropical swamps in December 2018. Also in 2018, she graduated with a Master of Music degree from the Sibelius Academy.

Tropical wood is a subject dear to her, and she takes a serious interest in how instrument building may affect forests of various kinds.

Guitar makers occupy a key position in this consideration. Acoustic and electric guitars are among the highest-selling instruments in the world, and guitars traditionally incorporate exotic kinds of wood that have now become endangered.

“The largest producers of tropical wood are Indonesia and Brazil,” says Lampela, who collected the material for her dissertation in Indonesia. “There’s certification, of course, but oversight is not always a simple matter, and you cannot always trust that a particular grade of wood has been sustainably harvested even if it claims to be.”

There is no mention of sustainability on the websites of the world’s largest guitar manufacturers such as Gibson or Guild. By contrast, Taylor of California has introduced responsibility as part of its brand and prominently publicises its project in Cameroon to produce sustainable ebony.

Lampela notes that while the volume of instrument building is tiny in the big picture, many instruments traditionally require materials that are now endangered or unsustainable. As an example, piano keys and detail work on bows used to be made of ivory, but this was replaced years ago with synthetic materials – or with mammoth ivory found in melting permafrost.

For a long time now, the most coveted type of wood among guitar builders has been Brazilian rosewood (Dalbergia nigra), which in 1991 was listed in the highest protection category in CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) because of overuse. At the moment,
it is only legal to harvest Brazilian rosewood from the stumps of trees felled before 1991. However, this regulation is difficult to enforce. In rural areas, people may secretly take down protected trees in order to make a living, and it may be practically impossible to find out the origin of any particular quantity of wood.

**Locally sourced wood**

Most of the wood for classical string instruments is traditionally found close to home: alpine spruce for the top plate, maple for the ribs and plates. Related tree species are also found in China, which is now a source for plenty of affordable string instruments of good quality.

Maija Lampela has considered whether it would be possible to source wood for instruments in Finland. "The quality requirements are really strict, though, and the rapid-growth forests of Finland do not really produce spruce trees that are thick enough, even enough in structure and free of branches."

When Lampela recently acquired a new bass violin from the south of France, she found that the builder had used materials sourced as locally as possible: pearwood and boxwood. "Instrument builders may also have stashes of old wood acquired from builders long ago and dating back heaven knows how many decades. This is because the wood used for instruments needs to be really dry," says Lampela.

The ecological sticking point in string instruments is the bow, which requires a very hard yet flexible wood. Such stuff is only found in rainforests. Current bows mainly use Pernambuco wood, which is an endangered species. "Carbon fibre is ok for practice, but there’s no substitute for a natural material. What options are there available for bows? It’s a real problem," says Lampela.

**New options**

Alternative materials – types of wood not previously used as well as synthetic materials – are needed to replace endangered types of wood.

Lauri Niskanen has been building historical string instruments in Tampere for almost eight years and has customers around the world. His lutes and theorbohs contain woods that seem very familiar, such as curly birch (sourced from Kajaani), roasted flame maple, pearwood and alpine spruce. He does use exotic woods as well: padouk from pterocarpus trees that grow in Africa and South East Asia, and sapele from Africa. Niskanen mentions that he has experimented with replacing ebony with Blackwood Tek, a product made of New Zealand pine treated and stained to resemble ebony. Guitar makers are already familiar with this material.

"I’ve also dyed walnut myself using vinegar and steel wool, and the end result was a pretty nice black and flexible wood," says Niskanen.

The need for a new approach to materials has penetrated the guitar industry. The new wave is represented by operators such as Madinter, an ecologically oriented online shop for music instrument materials based in Spain. They have promoted Blackwood Tek, among other things.

Material innovations have been made in Finland too, fostered by awareness of the endangered nature of traditional instrument materials and by a demand for more sustainable alternatives. Partones from Salla in Lapland, founded by Kristiina Aatsinki and Armin Seebass, has developed alternatives for ivory and ebony and are working on others.

Flaxwood, created in North Karelia, is a wood fibre composite intended for electric guitars. "The decision to use wood fibre composite in guitars was not based solely on the material being an ecological choice. The sound properties of the material are a major factor in Flaxwood guitars: WFC is highly resonating, stable and dynamic," according to the Flaxwood website. The company continues to develop instruments.

**Open hearts, open minds**

"Each and every experiment with alternative materials is welcome. We need new ideas and solutions, because instrument builders are gradually running out of their stocks of wood," says guitar player Petri Kumela. He is very familiar with the materials in his instruments and their origins, and ecological sustainability is an important factor for him when selecting an instrument, "just as it is in buying anything else."

"For me, when I select an instrument, its materials must meet certain ecological standards, but beyond that the choice is down to other properties, although the material used of course affect those too," says Kumela. "I’ve been working with an Italian guitar maker for many years, and we’ve been able to talk about these things over time and think about the structure of the guitar in ways that facilitates a desirable outcome."

Maija Lampela feels that wind players typically have a more flexible attitude to their instruments than string players. Wind instruments have changed a lot over the centuries, and experimenting with carbon fibre and synthetic materials to replace rare woods in them is nothing new. Lampela notes that people have a lot of emotional investment in particular materials.

"There are many conceptions about which materials provide the best sound. String instruments have remained unchanged for centuries, and there is a lot of mysticism around them. In those circumstances, it may be more difficult to gain approval for new materials. Yet people are the ones making the instruments and playing them, not the wood," says Lampela. © Partones

Read also articles on unusual tuning systems, KuuM Drums and the sound ideal of jouhikko in FMQ Special Feature 4/2019 at fmq.fi (due to be published on 16 December).
In 2019 FMQ again met many composers and musicians working around the world with multiple roles. In the following pages, we present highlights of their interviews and columns.
KAIJA SAARIAHÖ: THE WORLD IS A MOSAIC

July is ending. In front of me on the table lies the half-completed orchestral work Väst. Behind me are several composition courses given across Europe.

Actually, I have been teaching more this summer than I ever have. I usually reserve the summer for my quiet, painstaking composition process. But I am happy with how these lively and noisy summer days turned out: meeting young composers from various countries highlighted just how diverse the field is today.

I had some concerns about how to get back into my stride when returning to my own work, having had so many new scores whissh past my eyes. In the end, it was remarkably easy to retreat into my own world. Although I always strive to find new angles and untried paths, the landscape remains familiar.

One of the challenges with Väst is the orchestration. I omitted the harp, piano and celesta, all of which are very dear to me.

This may not seem like a radical departure to the casual observer, but the omission forces me to think about the orchestra in a way that is not usual for me, since I am used to using the piano and the harp in particular as sonority links between other instrumental sections. Now I have to adopt a different strategy for smoothing the seams, or else just let the sections be more distinct.

The days go by quickly when writing an orchestral work, although progress is slow because there are so many notes. Yet I do find it calming and relaxing to work on a purely instrumental texture after so many years immersed in writing an opera. That was a project so long and heavy that when I finally put it behind me towards the end of last year, my relief was unimaginable — I felt I was seeing the world around me with new eyes! It was this vision of freedom that provided the title for my present work in progress.

But as buried as I am in my own work, I still think a lot about the junior colleagues I have recently met. Their circumstances, faced with incredible pressure and the bugbear of worldwide competition, are very different from the environment in which I grew up to be a composer.

One of my composition courses this summer was at the ManiFeste event in Paris, organised by IRCAM at the Centre Pompidou. I told my students — who had been born in the 1980s and 1990s — about my experiences at IRCAM in 1982 when I took my first computer music course. There were no such things as laptops, of course, and the students spent time with IRCAM employees on a massive Digi- tal Equipment Corporation PDP-10 computer. It seemed awesome and technologically revolutionary at the time, but it is sobering to think that these days the computing capacity of a humble smartphone is more than a thousand times greater!

This being the case, back then practically nothing worked in real time, particularly in the daytime when there were several dozen people accessing the computer simultaneously. The best time to work was at night, when there were fewer users and the computer was faster (in relative terms).

Even so, we had to wait for the results of our computer runs. Minutes, hours, sometimes an entire night.

Nostalgia aside, this way of working now seems quite idyllic: there was time to chat at the coffee machine, and when a really massive batch was processing, one could go to the cinema or have dinner.

I have been working with computers in composing ever since, and it has been an inspiring and important process for me to see just how hugely technology has progressed over the past decades.

Technological advancements have provided humanity with unprecedented capacity for expanding our knowledge and skills, yet they have also facilitated the global production and distribution of purely commercial products, music not excepted. And, of course, technological advancements have enabled the planet-destroying, ultra-commercialised lifestyle that is now slowly smothering us.

The contrast between the lightning-quick flood of instant information running around the world and the slowness of the composing process and the concentration it demands seems to be growing all the time.

Today’s young generations have no experience of a life before digital technology. We who grew up before the digital revolution may find it difficult to identify with their world, but we nevertheless bear a responsibility for them.

For me, a key question is how to retain a human contact with one’s own senses, with the living environment and with one’s own body. My soapbox speech these days is about learning manual skills in childhood, even as these are being phased out of the school curriculum: for example, to my mind it is an inconceivable and short-sighted decision to stop teaching longhand writing in Finland’s internationally celebrated school system.

By extension, music education and more generally arts education should be a right enjoyed by every child. This is essential not only for building motor skills and cognitive skills but also for developing emotional intelligence.

The author Amin Maalouf wrote in his essay collection In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong (Les identités meurtrières, 1998) that it is important to recognise the multiple identities that we all have, because that prevents us from identifying for example with the hate thought of extremist groups:

“The world is a mosaic, the world is a mosaic of beliefs, of languages, of varied communities, and the question is not whether it is possible for them to coexist but how their coex- istence could be facilitated, because we have no choice.”

With my teaching this summer, I have found a new and hopeful vista opening before me. Musicians of the young generation are already living together in that mosaic. Through music studies they have obtained the tools for building individual and pluralist identities of their own. Actually, they see today’s reality, with all its pressures and seemingly insurmountable problems, as a domain of new opportunities rather than as a huge challenge, which is often the perspective of my generation. 

This column is part of FMQ’s series On my music and beyond, where composers and other music-makers write about their music.
Kalle Kalima’s discography contains dozens of albums, and the diversity of his projects is mind-boggling: we find him playing with the heavily amplified and sample-supported solo project Pentasonic, reimagining Americana on the album High Noon, reinventing prog rock with kuu! and, not least, crossing the border into the world of opera. So who exactly is Kalle Kalima and why? To find answers, I am meeting him on one of the rare days that he is able to spend in his home town, Berlin.

Gorki Park, a Russian-themed café in the Prenzlauer Berg district seems a good choice, given that Kalima and his wife and two children have their home only slightly to the north. He has just come in from Trondheim, where he played with Frank Möbus (guitar) and Christian Lillinger (drums), and finished mixes for a new album. His drink of choice today is camomile tea.

Kalle Kalima was born in Helsinki in 1973, and initially there was nothing to even suggest that he would become a professional musician 25 years later. Both his parents were lawyers, and Kalle almost went down the same path. But music proved stronger.

As a teenager in the 1980s, his musical preferences were rather retro—The Beatles, Pink Floyd and Jimi Hendrix. “I was probably the only kid in eastern Helsinki who was listening to that kind of music,” he says and laughs. “The boys were into IRON MAIDEN and TWISTED SISTER, the girls listened to A-HA and MICHAEL JACKSON. Those were the 1980s. Not the best time for interesting music. Well... the Police, U2, Prince... they were around, but I really liked the music of the 1960s and 1970s. And I was into prog rock too. Pretty uncool.”

Uncool then, maybe. But rather cool today, as bands such as KUUF, KUHN-FU, FRANKE and EIN NULLE are proudly channeling that almost buried and forgotten era in the history of rock.

Sound creator

In childhood, Kalle learnt classical guitar and piano. But alongside classical in his musical world there were classic rock and guitar heavyweights such as WRK MONTGOMERY, FRED-DIE KING and B.B. KING. “I was always riding on different tracks, sucking up influences, mixing them as I wished,” he says.

Later, Kalima proved good enough to be accepted at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, where he studied with RAULI BÖRJERHIM. “Raoul was a great teacher,” he says. “He helped me in finding my own sound. I was too much a fan of JOHN SCOFIELD at the time.”

Kallma’s sound today is indeed distinct. His guitar often has a grim distortion reminiscent of the guitar players in CAPTAIN BEEFHEART’s MAGIC BAND, a group of which Kalle is very fond.

“Raoul made it clear to me that this distorted rock sound offers so much more expression in jazz. This singing sound. I started to transcribe solos by SONNY BOLLINS, JOHN COLTRANE and MILES DAVIS and played them. I was fortunate to be able to play with TOMÁŠ STARÁK. I learnt a lot from horn players. I love JIM HALL, but I don’t want to sound like him.”

Every guitar player will tell you that however much you use effects gear, most of the sound is generated by your fingers. In order to shape a perfect sound, Kalima had a custom-made instrument built for him by FRANK DEIMEL. This unique guitar combines the qualities he enjoys in the Gibson Les Paul and the Fender Stratocaster.

Free experimenter with a healthy disregard for boundaries

In 1998 Kalle Kalima moved to Berlin to polish his craft at the Hochschule für Musik “Hanns Eisler”. At the time, the German capital was far from being the European hot spot for creative music: that it is today, but it was home to some good musicians and teachers—and new opportunities.

“Finland has a great scene,” says Kalima, “but it’s a small country. Berlin felt like there were no boundaries.” He studied with JOHN SCHRODÉ. “I learnt a lot. John’s idea of teaching was getting together while he played the drums and I played guitar. I learnt to fuse a rock sound with jazz improv. The scene expanded, and together with the multi-cultural vibe of this city it influenced me a great deal.”

Ignoring boundaries. Maybe that is what makes Kalle Kalima who he is.

“We are all influenced by US-American culture. Music, cinema. So it makes a lot of sense to play jazz. It is actually part of our own folklore. Yes, of course, I do a lot. But it is not for financial reasons. If I find something interesting, I’ll do it. I don’t want to limit myself. I see myself as an experimenter.”

As an experimenter, he is no stranger to bold departures. For instance, 15 years ago he collaborated with director DAVID MARTON on an adaptation of MOZART’S Don Giovanni. “I wouldn’t call it an opera,” he insists. “It was more of a musical play.”

Music theatre composer

Last year, David Marton approached Kalima with a new project for the festival Via et destina at the Opéra national de Lyon in France. The project involved a piece named Didò et Enèe, remembered, and it was rather challenging for Kalima. The set showed an archaeological dig where Jupi-tér and Juno are searching for remains of our civilisation, going deeper and deeper into the ancient sand. Kalima had to decide how to set this to music.

“I was asked to write an overture, four minutes of music that would finally blend into Puccini’s original score. So I had to find out what sand would sound like. And how would Puccini come out of the sand? The whole thing, 40 minutes of music for orchestra and choir, took me about a year to complete.”

After a bit of an argument with Chief Conductor PIerre BLUSE, everything turned out fine. Didò et Enèe, remem-bered was booked for the distinguished Ruhr-Triennale in August and will be produced in Antwerp later.

When I ask Kalle Kalima whether there is anything that he has not done yet, he prefers to look forwards: “I am working on a solo programme that is quite different from Penta-sonic. Rather old-school, just a guitar and a few effects. With kuu!, we are working all over Europe while writing new material.”

And then there is Klima Kalima, Kalle’s longest-lasting group, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year: “We are working on songs dealing with the problems of space science!” And he is not kidding.

Whoever Kalle Kalima is and why he is what he is, the sky was never the limit, and now space is the place to be.
Conductor Dalia Stasevska: “Everything has gone the way it should”

When Dalia Stasevska describes her crucially important gig at the Royal Albert Hall in London in August, one can tell by the glow in her eyes that the memory is fresh in her mind even with everything that is going on with her this autumn.

Stasevska made her conducting debut with some of the hardest perennials in the core repertoire: Sibelius’s Karelia Suite and Tchaikovsky’s Symphonie Pathétique. Soon after that, she led two symphony orchestras at the Helsinki Festival in a merger of minimalism, hip hop, modernism and tradition. Both concert programmes came equally naturally to her: “I can do everything! I’m curious and interested in many kinds of music and don’t need to pigeonhole myself.”

Yet Stasevska hints at the possibility of conducting something far more adventurous at the Proms next year.

Step by step, steady as she goes

Born in Ukraine, Dalia Stasevska has been living in Finland since she was a child. Her pathway to becoming a conductor was a typical one: instrumental studies, an interest in orchestral music and then via the Sibelius Academy to study with legendary conducting teacher Jorma Panula in Stockholm.

Having graduated in 2012, Stasevska has progressed to conduct orchestras of increasing importance while also conducting a fair number of opera productions. Yet the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London is her first major permanent engagement.

“The BBC Symphony Orchestra play all kinds of music, so being their Principal Guest Conductor is an ideal fit for me. Of course the competition is fierce in London, but it’s just one part of the great playground of music, where the only boundaries are those you set for yourself.”

A typical example of this was the first concert that Stasevska conducted as Principal Guest Conductor. “In Britain, the soloist is what is generally used to sell a concert, but I wanted the ‘soloist’ to be a choir. It was well received.”

Stasevska sees her engagement not as a step up but as part of a continuum. “Everything has gone the way it should, slow and steady.”

Stasevska’s CV does not contain anything that one might point to as a breakthrough moment, and she considers this a good thing. “After I finished my studies, I had the opportunity to work with bigger and bigger ensembles at a gradual pace. And I’m happy about the time I spent as assistant to Paavo Järvi, because it was a safe place to learn about the technicalities of the job and its various aspects, with these excellent mentors. It’s a harsh reality if you just set forth unprepared as a conductor, either you’re invited to conduct or you’re not. The workload is huge, and the travelling is arduous.”

She can point to a step in her career continuum, though: being signed up by the HarrisonParrott agency – which brings much more than just the booking of gigs. Stasevska describes the relationship as a professional marriage: she and the agency are in contact on a daily basis, sharing both ups and downs.

Realism and true grit

The market is merciless, and the only way for a young conductor to make a success of it is to work hard and never stop learning. Practising is different for a conductor compared with an instrumentalist, but it takes up just as much time. “I need to listen to the concert recordings and watch the videos, because if you want to do better, you have to examine what you’re doing right. There are also trusted colleagues whom I can turn to for feedback. We go to each others’ concerts quite a lot.”

“You can anticipate certain difficulties just by looking at the score, but you won’t know what’s going to work until you hear it in rehearsal. Shaping my interpretation is a fascinating process.”

So revisiting core repertoire time and again is a learning experience, but how does one motivate oneself to conduct, say, Fartein Valen on an isolated guest gig in Norway? “Part of a conductor’s job is to maintain and nurture the canon – in other words, to showcase music of importance. In Norway, Valen is important. Besides, I’m sure that all composers put their heart and soul into their music, and as a conductor I need to have the empathy to sense the core meaning of a work. It’s like being an actor. You have to believe in the role to be able to perform it.”

It’s all about attitude

It is part of the nature of the beast when giving concerts that one cannot always succeed. Stasevska has come to terms with this: “I just review things calmly to see what I can do better next time. I try not to take things too personally and I remind myself that I’m doing what I love – making music.”

Stasevska takes an equally no-nonsense attitude to musical challenges. Even with her triumphant Proms debut she came up against vestiges of the dusty patriarchal past, as the concert reviews focused mainly on the conductor’s wardrobe and she was suspected of being simply a token female appointee.

“The world of music is a big ship that turns slowly, and for the moment that sort of thing is still part of this profession. I’ve developed a Teflon skin against comments like that; they just show that some people don’t have a clue what’s going on.”

Stasevska refuses to name even the constant travelling as a downside in her profession. “People say that there’s no time to read these days, but in this job there is! I listen to audio books when I travel, so I’m in fact reading more than ever, and it’s fantastic. Literature helps me remain open to influences and to understand history and the human mind.”

If everything continues to go the way it should, what will that mean for Dalia Stasevska’s career? The things that she is at liberty to discuss at the moment have mainly to do with the USA and Australia. It would seem that Dalia Stasevska will continue to have plenty of time to read in the future.

Translation: Jarkko Mäkeläri

The full interview at fmq.fi.
Jaakko Mäntyjärvi: composer, choral music, music by Mäntyjärvi, Helsinki University Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki University, Helsinki University of the Arts, Sibelius Academy, THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR is a composer – is something of a musical outlier.

His music is constantly being performed abroad. In Finland, he is known as a composer of choral music and an active singer. Regular readers of FMQ will recognise him as one of our house translators. Jaakko Mäntyjärvi is something of a musical outlier.

Choral music has formed the core of the output of composer Jaakko Mäntyjärvi from the very first. Nearly all of his works are for choir, most of them commissioned by a wide range of parties, from the 700th anniversary of Turku Cathedral to the World Symposium on Choral Music and including celebrated ensembles such as the King’s Singers. But things might have turned out quite differently.

“When I had moved to Helsinki to study, I heard the Savolainen osakunnan laulajat student choir and was inspired to join them. At that time, I had also joined the Helsinki University Symphony Orchestra as a percussionist, so orchestral music might just as well have become my thing.”

Mäntyjärvi studied English language and literature at the University of Helsinki and also music theory and, later, choir conducting at the Sibelius Academy. He never received formal training in composition. After university, trans- lation became his principal occupation, and as a full-time freelance translator today, he considers himself very happy with the balance in his professional life. Composing being a freelance occupation, he has very little time to compose. But things have turned out quite differently.

“My harmonic language is mainly very sonorous, not tonal but largely consonance-driven. I do use effects and other contemporary means if required for the text or atmosphere at hand. I used to avoid simple solutions but am less self-conscious about that nowadays. A musical idea does not need to be complex to be effective.”

Musical exports

Nearly everything in Mäntyjärvi’s catalogue was written to commission. His most recent commissioned work, Das Abendmahl, is a poem to Bahnin Maria Rilke, was premiered in Copenhagen in early May 2019 by the Hymnia chamber choir. The choir had commissioned six new works internationally to honour the 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci.

“Today, I commissioned, of course need to know what the group is like, and I’m also interested in the context in which the work is to be premiered. If the group is a top-notch ensemble, I have to be a bit careful not to play to their strengths too much that no one else would be able to perform the work later.”

Mäntyjärvi’s works are performed constantly around the world, particularly in the USA and Japan, and regularly in Europe as well. He cordially attributes this success to his publisher Reijo Kerkkonen, the publishing director of Sulasol [the Finnish Amateur Musicians’ Association]. Kerkkonen, an active choral singer himself, recognised the value of Mäntyjärvi’s music at a very early stage.

In choral music, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi is an international celebrity. In Finnish music circles, he could rather be described as an outsider.

“If I say that choral music is a marginal genre, it sounds like I’m being bitter. But it’s no more than the truth, if one considers what the public at large sees as the mainstream genres in classical music. In Finland, choral music is still perceived as largely an amateur pursuit that is not expected to have any particularly great artistic ambitions. A composer focusing on choral music will have a very different public profile (if any) from a composer of orchestral music or opera.”

Text is paramount

Mäntyjärvi almost always starts with a text when writing his vocal music. His selection of texts betrays a wide-ranging interest in languages and cultures, with settings of texts from Finnish and Swedish to Basque and Japanese.

Mäntyjärvi’s output includes a number of works inspired by folk music. He began his studies in the early 1980s, which was when the Department of Folk Music was established at the Sibelius Academy and the trend subsequently labelled “new folk music” began. “The revitalisation of folk music around that time was a big thing – it was a refreshing notion that it was actually possible to create new music in that context instead of just performing existing pieces as if they were museum exhibits.”

He also draws parallels between folk music and minimalism, a style for which he has a great appreciation: the notion of “slow change” is essential to both. Something of this may be seen in the aforementioned commission premiered in Copenhagen. The poem by Rilke is inspired by Leonardo’s fresco of the Last Supper; the musical idea in Mäntyjärvi’s setting is stretching out a single moment to extremes.

“I took as the structural outline the briefest of choruses in Bach’s St Matthew Passion: ‘Herr, bin ich’s?’ This depicts the same moment in the narrative as Leonardo’s fresco. Jesus has just said that one of his disciples will betray him. I slowed down this 10-second chorus to make it last five minutes, and over this foundation I laid chromatic melodic lines setting the Rilke poem.”

Apart from composing, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi has been active in a number of other musical contexts, including being artistic director of the Tampere Vocal Music Festival in 2013. He continues to sing in several choirs, and in 2015 he established his own group, chamber choir CC Freia, which has recently been exporting Finnish music that he feels should be better known abroad.

“Bengt Johansson, for instance, is very little known outside Finland, even though his neoclassical, hitonal style is very accessible to today’s choral audiences. There isn’t even a language barrier as with Toivo Kuula – another Finnish composer who should be better known abroad – because much of Johansson’s choral output is in English or Latin.”

Looking ahead, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi notes that what choral music needs is a change in its public image, but this is a difficult process, as attitudes are hard to shift.

“We have this pastime that has thousands of participants around the country, from kids to old age pensioners. You can begin it with practically no pre-existing skills. You can study it, but there are no formal qualifications to be had. You can progress to become a professional in it, but the vast majority prefer to have it as a leisure pursuit. It can have a powerful emotional impact on both participants and spectators. It provides a sense of achievement and fosters a sense of community, and it also has scientifically proven health benefits... Now, just consider how sharply different attitudes can be, for instance to the question of whether such an activity should be supported by taxpayer euros, depending on whether the above is represented as describing choral music – or football!”

The Full interview at fmq.fi.

The history of Finnish music is unexpectedly rich in women who have written music. Several dozen interesting personalities may be found in the 19th and early 20th centuries alone. FMQ’s new series of articles discusses the lives and music of these women. The present article introduces composer Ida Moberg. She wished to command ensembles that produced a large sound while also touching human emotions: most of Moberg’s output is for orchestra or choir or both. The topics of her works largely have to do with the individual’s spiritual metamorphosis.

Composer and conductor Ida MOBERG (1859–1947) began her career as a singer and music teacher in the 1880s. She studied with singer MARIA COLLAN and pianist ALFIE LINDBERG in her youth. From 1879 to 1883, she studied voice with ELIZABETH ZWANZIGER and FRIEDERIKE GRÜN-SADLER at the St Petersburg Conservatory. However, in her thirties she dedicated her career to composition and to conducting choirs and orchestras.

Moberg studied composition at the orchestra school of the Helsinki Philharmonic Society (now the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra), where her teachers were JEAN SIBELIUS (1893–1895) and ILMARİ KROHN (1900–1903). As late as in her forties, she sought further instruction in composition, studying with FELIX DRAESEKE at the Royal Conservatory in Dresden from 1902 to 1905. At that time, she also attended lectures on anthroposophy given by RUDOLF STEINER.

Moberg was influenced by theosophy; a philosophy according to which art is a portal to a transcendent spiritual realm. She was active in theosophical and anthroposophical circles in Finland and abroad throughout her adult life. Her identity as a Swedish-speaking Finn, folk education and women’s rights were also important to her. The symbolism of freedom is a key element in her output.

Ida Moberg

Ecstatic sweeps and ethereal evaporation

Moberg studied music pedagogy in Berlin and Dresden from 1910 to 1912. Her studies at the institute founded by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze at Hellerau (Dresden) proved particularly significant. Indeed, Moberg meant to settle in Dresden permanently, but after the outbreak of the First World War she had to return to Finland instead.

She brought Dalcroze’s body movement-based solfège to Finland, teaching the subject at the Helsinki Music Institute (now the Sibelius Academy) from 1914 to 1916. Understanding music through bodily movement became an integral part of her musical thinking.

Moberg created an extensive career as music teacher at the Swedish-language primary school teacher seminary in Helsinki. She also gave private lessons in music theory, orchestration, composition, improvisation and the piano. Stylistically, Moberg’s music draws on Symbolism, Impressionism and Expressionism. Her textures are harmonically static but rhythmically mobile, with a decisive pulse and recurring motto-like subjects. There is a strong sense of kinaesthesia and dance, and she was partial to word and tone painting. Tone colour and a sense of “now” are important elements in her music. Images of light, mystery, eternity and spirituality are typical. Many of her works end in an ecstatic sweep or an ethereal evaporation.

Orchestral works

The concept of the spiritual struggle of a human individual is apparent in the titles and subjects of Moberg’s works as well as in their musical idiom, imagery and structure. Moberg described many of her orchestral works – even her Violin Concerto – as tone poems (bändliik), emphasising their narrative nature. Soluppågång [Sunrise] (1909), for instance, consists of four movements: I Soluppågång [Sunrise], II Preludi or Verksamhet [Activity], III Afton [Evening] and IV Stillhet [Stillness]. In Symbolist fashion, Moberg’s evocations of nature serve as metaphors for the spiritual processes of the human mind and for communing with the universe.

Many of Moberg’s known orchestral works have been lost, such as the Symphony in D minor, Meditations, Mikaelintunnelma [Michaelmas mood] and Kalevala-fantasia. Some works survive in various versions or only as sketches. However, quite a few do exist in fully performable form.

Works for choir and orchestra

Moberg wrote her Symphony in Dresden and conducted it herself at a concert of her compositions in the Great Hall of the University of Helsinki on 28 February 1906. The programme also included the Overture in A minor, the orchestral work Landlig dans [Country dance] and Vaken! [Awake!] for baritone, male choir and orchestra. Moberg conducted concerts in Helsinki and Vipuri in the 1900s and 1910s, and her works were also performed by the Helsinki Philharmonic Society under ROBERT KAJANUS (e.g. Soluppågång in 1909) and the Andante for cello and orchestra in 1914. The Akademiska Sångföreningen and Muntra Musikanter male choirs performed Moberg’s choral works, as did the Theosophical Choir, which Moberg herself conducted.
TONE COLOUR AND A SENSE OF “NOW” ARE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN MOBERG’S MUSIC. IMAGES OF LIGHT, MYSTERY, ETERNITY AND SPIRITUALITY ARE TYPICAL. MANY OF HER WORKS END IN AN ECSTATIC SWEEP OR AN ETHEREAL EVAPORATION.

There are many works in Moberg’s output that could be described as canta-tas, for instance Livskamp (Life’s struggle) for male choir and orchestra to a text by Jacob Tekengren and Före striden (Before the battle) to a text by Bertel Gripenberg. Tyrannens natt (Night of the tyrant), a setting of a poem by J.J. Wick-SELL, for tenor or soprano soloist, male choir and orchestra, won the composition competition held by the Muntra Musikanter male choir in 1909. Nearly all of the texts set by Moberg are by Finland-Swedish authors. Munificentia (1936) for mixed choir and strings is based on the mystic penitential psalms of Nino Runeberg. Its three movements are I Munificentia (Munificentia), II Amor mortis (Love of death) and III Amor proximi (Neighbourly love). Another Nino Runeberg setting may be found in Ex Deo nascitur (From Deity), for tenor or soprano soloist, male choir and orchestra, at concerts of the Savonia Musical Society in Kuopio and Varkaus on 28 and 29 March 2020 respectively. She is also planning a performance with the Wegelius orchestra, at concerts of the Savonia Musical Society in Kuopio and Varkaus on 28 and 29 March 2020 respectively. She is also planning a performance with the Wegelius orchestra, at concerts of the Savonia Musical Society in Kuopio and Varkaus on 28 and 29 March 2020 respectively.

Many of Moberg’s a cappella choral works also address the topic of spiritual struggle, as with the mixed choir works Skymning (Twilight), Mänska vakna! (Awake, O human!) and Vad skall du dessa? (What shalt thou love?).

Light from the East

In 1910 Moberg began to write an opera based on the life of Gautama Buddha, titled Asiens lju (The Light of Asia). She continued to work on it until the end of her life. It was never performed in its entirety, though extracts were performed as separate works – Balletto (Ballet scene) and Kehtolaulu (Lullaby) on 17 and 18 May at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Sibelius Academy. The libretto is based on The Light of Asia: The Great Renunciation (1879) by English philosopher EDWIN ARNOLD, a poetic biography of Siddhartha Gautama, which in turn is based on the Sanskrit text The Lalitavistara Sutra. Arnold’s book represented one of the earliest efforts in popularizing the life of Buddha in the West. Moberg adapted her libretto from a Swedish translation of the book with her friend, theologian AGNES GLUD.

The opera is about the awakening of Prince Siddhartha to the suffering of the world and his decision to renounce his privileged life. Colourful tone painting and light symbolism characterise the work. At times, the singers and dancers are called upon to move according to the eurhythmic patterns devised by Steiner. The work culminates in a cosmic nirvana.

Recently, the Savonia Musical Society in Finland has taken it upon itself to reconstruct and perform the opera. Its subject seems quite timely in today’s world: it focuses on spiritual development instead of technological and economic advancement, replacing selfishness and the exploitation of the weak with compassion and a sense of community.

The esoteric tradition

Ida Moberg continued to search for the meaning of life through compos- ing music up until the last days of her life. Her vision of music as a conduit to the mystery of existence links her to the tradition of esoteric aesthetics, which is an important strand in Finnish classical music (exposed for instance by Oskar MERIKANTO, ERIK MELARFIN, VÄINÖ BAFTIO, HELVI LEVYKÄ, HEIDI SUNDBLAD-HALME, ERIK BERGMAN, EINOJUSANI RAUTAVAARA and KAJA SALMAHON). Moberg was one of the earliest and remains one of the most important proponents of this approach, and yet, apart from a few choral pieces, virtually none of her works has been recorded to date.

Along with the Savonia Musical Society, violinist MIKKA MALMI has been championing Moberg’s music in recent years. She will perform Moberg’s Violin Concerto, or Töndikt för violin och orkester (Tone poem for violin and orchestra), at concerts of the Savonia Musical Society in Kuopio and Varkaus on 28 and 29 March 2020 respectively. She is also planning a performance with the Weeglius Chamber Strings in Helsinki in May 2020.

Most of Moberg’s orchestral works can be found in the manuscript collection of the Sibelius Academy library at the Music Centre in Helsinki, only a few metres from the hall where the Helsinki Philharmonic and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra perform today. It will be exciting to see when this music makes its way on to that stage. We have already had a teaser: the world premiere of Om fotspår och ljus (Of footsteps and light) by Lotta Wennäkoski contained a quote from Moberg’s opera Asiens lju.

Translation: Jukko Mäntyjärvi

A CELEBRATION OF HISTORICAL FINNISH WOMEN WHO WROTE MUSIC

The new series of articles for FMQ: by Susanna Välimäki and Huppu Koivisto, derived from their book project titled Säveltävät naissä Suomen historiassa 1700-luvun lopulta 1900-luvun alkaun (Daughters of music: Finnish Women Composers, from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries), discusses the lives and music of historical women composers in Finland.

Other parts of the series at fmq.fi:
Part 1: Koivisto & Välimäki: Activists alive for gender equality
Part 2: Välimäki: Agnes Tschetschulin
Part 3: Koivisto: Laura Meielz

Ida Moberg’s Lokuppning (1919). Extract from the manuscript score of the first movement (University of the Arts Helsinki, Sibelius Academy Library, manuscript collection).
In the following pages, we explore the mysteries of sound quality and present a number of solutions and applications that ultimately have the same goal: to produce a listening experience as perfect as possible.
BRUTALLY HONEST AUDIO

BY W.F. Steiger

Finnish high-end audio firms aim for blunt, simple honesty.

“We should remember that music is not a frequency curve, but a transfer of emotion from one person or party to another.”
— ANSSI HYVÖNEN

“Aesthetic values come into the picture when we have to decide what kind of imperfections we will tolerate. If we talk about boring things like amplification and digital-to-analogue conversions, they’re already close to perfection. But as soon as we start to talk about recording and loudspeakers, things get really, really complicated and imperfect. That’s where the magic lies – making the right compromises and combinations of choices.”

Home to studio - and back again

Genelec, which celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, is world-renowned among audio professionals for industry-standard studio monitor speakers, moving more recently into consumer and live-venue audio. “Genelec’s core market is the professional market, as when the company was founded,” says Janflod. “However, we’ve spread our wings into other segments like home audio and AV installation.”

Amphion, established 20 years later, has gone the opposite route, first becoming known for its home speakers and only later gaining a reputation for professional studio monitors.

“Though we only launched the pro products five years ago, they already make up most of our turnovers,” says Hyvönen. “Both pro and home speakers have clear roles in the chain of transferring the emotion present in the studio to the end listener. We should remember that music is not a frequency curve, but a transfer of emotion from one person or party to another.”

The biggest difference between studio and consumer usage is that “typically the professional products are used at a listening distance of 1–2 meters, which tends to be quite a bit shorter than at home,” he points out. “And the room acoustics also tend to be different” – a decisive factor.

“The digitalisation of music-making in recent years, music is made in literally any kind of environment,” notes Janflod. “Bedroom studios are now common. What notes Janflod. “Bedroom studios are now common. What industry heavy-hitters

Knif Rauman joins the ranks of Finnish hi-fi loudspeaker exporters, including Aurelia, Gradient and two industry heavy-hitters, Genelec and Amphion.

“In line with clichés about Finns, all three firms emphasise simplicity and no-nonsense honesty in their products – which can mean revealing the shortcomings in a musical recording.”

“There’s a tendency to alter things to one’s liking, even in the professional field,” says Amphion’s founder and managing director, Anssi Hyvönen. “One can claim that the Mona Lisa would look hotter with a bit of make-up on. But she would no longer be the Mona Lisa that Leonardo da Vinci painstakingly created. Our job is to reproduce what’s in the recording as faithfully as possible. For better or for worse; nothing more and nothing less.”

“We believe in simplicity.” Hyvönen goes on to say. “For us the loudspeaker is first and foremost an acoustic device. Whatever we can achieve acoustically, we don’t have to fix electrically. Whatever we can remove from the signal chain improves transparency and resolution, and brings us closer to the music.”

Genelec takes a similar view.

“In our philosophy of sound reproduction, the key word is neutral,” says Senior Advisory Officer Lars-Olof Janflod. “Our speakers are designed to reproduce the original audio signal as truthfully as possible.”

“I also design Knif Audio equipment to be pretty close to neutral because I find strong colorations alien to my view about what mastering equipment is really about,” says Knif.

Industry heavy-hitters

Knif Rauman joins the ranks of Finnish hi-fi loudspeaker exporters, including Aurelia, Gradient and two industry heavy-hitters, Genelec and Amphion.

“In line with clichés about Finns, all three firms emphasise simplicity and no-nonsense honesty in their products – which can mean revealing the shortcomings in a musical recording.”

“There’s a tendency to alter things to one’s liking, even in the professional field,” says Amphion’s founder and managing director, Anssi Hyvönen. “One can claim that the Mona Lisa would look hotter with a bit of make-up on. But she would no longer be the Mona Lisa that Leonardo da Vinci painstakingly created. Our job is to reproduce what’s in the recording as faithfully as possible. For better or for worse; nothing more and nothing less.”

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Sitting on a sofa in Helsinki’s Kruununhaka district on a grey March morning, I was startled when Miles Davis and his late ’60s quintet suddenly appeared in front of me.

Keyboardist Herbie Hancock hunched near the window and meditated behind a hulking Knif amp while the Prince of Darkness glowered a metre away, his trumpet slicing and electrifying the air.

This is the kind of high-end musical experience for which audiophiles pay astonishing sums. In this case, it was provided by a pair of 168cm-high wooden sculptures, the first pair of Knif Rauman Nº1 loudspeakers.

Since 2005, Knif Audio has attracted a stellar reputation – and long waiting lists – for its handcrafted pro studio components and a cult-favourite analogue synthesiser, the Knifonium.

Now founder Jonte Knif and designer Janne Rauman have set up a new firm, Knif Rauman, to enter the crowded high-end loudspeaker market. The towering Nº1 speakers were launched internationally at the High End Munich trade fair in May 2019.

Like Knif Audio’s sought-after equalisers, they will be made to order, at a price tag of close to €50,000 a pair – “quite a competitive price in this market,” says Knif drily.

“Any flexibility in the production process would no longer be the Mona Lisa that Leonardo da Vinci painstakingly created. Our job is to reproduce what’s in the recording as faithfully as possible. For better or for worse; nothing more and nothing less.”

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In a bad room the result is a mess, no matter how good the speakers are,” says Knif. “Typical boxed speakers need quite a good room to offer decent resolution, because they radiate sound all over the place.”

As rooms vary, so do listeners’ musical diets – which naturally shapes demands on speakers.

For instance, says Janflod, “some genres such as hip hop, rap and EDM require playback to be loud and deep in bass, so that calls for bigger monitors.”

According to Knif, “unfortunately some styles are not recorded and mixed to be enjoyed with a system which offers good resolution. Our Knif Rauman speakers offer such a clear window into the production that mainstream pop or heavy becomes mostly unlistenable. It’s just too compressed, too harsh. It’s often a big disappointment for people to hear the speakers are,” says Knif. “Typical boxed speakers need the speakers to work better in different acoustic environments and ‘offers the possibility of ‘seeing’ the instruments in three-dimensional space,’” he adds.

“Other than that, the only real difference between excellent speakers for different styles of music is bass extension. If you only listen to classical guitar or harpsichord music, you don’t need bass extension. But great speakers are great for everything – except for bad recordings of course!” he says.

State-of-the-art live sound
Speakers include drivers that deliver bass, mid-range and treble frequencies, which are split up by crossovers, an area where Amphion takes a different approach from many other producers.

“For some reason a lot of speaker manufacturers put their crossover point in the area where human hearing is the most sensitive, around 2000–5000 Hz,” explains Hyvönen. “Our approach is to move the crossover to the area where the ear’s sensitivity is lower, so we can create a seamless transition from one driver to another.”

The speakers’ waveguide – which physically guides the sound waves – allows speakers to work better in different acoustic environments and ‘offers the possibility of ‘seeing’ the instruments in three-dimensional space,’” he adds.

Virtually all Genelec speakers, meanwhile, have a trademark rounded shape, created with leading Finnish designer Harri Koskinen, also known for his similarly curved LP storage units. While the speakers look simple, they are quite complex.

“We make active speakers, which means we not only design the speaker but also the amplification driving it,” says Janflod. “This allows us to build in features to further enhance the reproduction, such as s.a.m.”

Genelec fine-tuned this system for Helsinki’s state-of-the-art music club G Livela (the “G” refers to the company name). In 2016 Genelec supplied the audio system for this intimate venue, including more than 70 speakers of various types.

“G Livela has certainly opened people’s eyes to the fact that you can also use monitor loudspeakers in a live environment, although it’s limited to special projects like this,” he says.

In August 2019 a second G Livela, also owned by the Finnish Musicians’ Union, was opened in Tampere. “It’s the same concept but the room in Tampere is bigger, so the audio rig will also have to be too – since the G Livela concept revolves around having loudspeakers close to the audience,” says Janflod.

Old-school handicraft
The clubs offer a showcase for Genelec, but how else do these relatively small Finnish audio firms manage to succeed in the crowded global market?

“The Finnish personality of listening more than talking seems to be a good foundation for the development of audio products,” suggests Hyvönen. “Generally we Finns tend to be stronger with products than with marketing, which is maybe why the companies tend to be more focused on the professional markets. Keeping in mind the tiny size of the country, Finnish audio has done well for itself in the highly competitive global market.”

Janflod points to “the amazing amount of research going on at Helsinki’s Aalto University, which certainly has an impact on the global market”.

Both Amphion and Genelec estimate that close to 80 per cent of their design and manufacturing is Finnish, though Hyvönen explains that the components for his firm’s relatively new line of amplifiers, which are assembled in-house, mostly come from abroad.

While the other firms, both based in eastern Finland, praise their local craftspeople’s work, the Helsinki-based Knif is more blunt. “Finland might be the most liveable country in the world, but for subcontracting well-made stuff, this is a bad place to be. I finally found a good metal machining firm for Knif’s drivers, but good surface treatment is very hard to find,” he says.

Still, all three also stress the role of old-school handicraft from design through manufacturing.

“Especially during development, the human ear cannot be replaced, as it senses things which the measurement microphones cannot pick up,” says Hyvönen. “Solid, correct measurement data is only a starting point for turning a good product into a magical one.”

Read also articles on recording producers and engineers, the “Orchestration Balancer” application and the cultural meanings assigned to hi-fi in FMQ’s Special Feature 1/2019 at fmq.fi.
“We can’t hear anything!” an audience member shouted in the middle of a concert. This outburst by a frustrated concert-goer seated behind the orchestra at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg revived a perennial debate: how is it possible to build a concert hall which costs €800 million but where the audience cannot hear the soloist? After all, the acoustic designer was supposed to be the best acoustician in the world, backed up by computer simulations, scale models and an army of engineers!

In today’s world, new concert halls are massive construction projects that, when completed, are hoped to become tourist attractions in their respective cities. This was certainly the case in Hamburg, where the glittering Elbphilharmonie perched on the Elbe River appears in nearly every tourist brochure published in the city, and concert tickets are sold out six months in advance. The new Music Centre in Helsinki was inaugurated in 2011. It also managed to inject a new enthusiasm into musical life in Helsinki. The Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg and the Helsinki Music Centre out in the world: in Los Angeles, Copenhagen, Shenzhen, Miami and Paris, and a new one is being designed for London. They all share the same acoustical problems, which raises the question: have we not learnt anything? Why do we keep building halls like this if they do not serve the music performed on stage?

There are several arena-type concert halls like the Elbphilharmonie and the Helsinki Music Centre out in the world: in Los Angeles, Copenhagen, Shenzhen, Miami and Paris, and a new one is being designed for London. They all share the same acoustical problems, which raises the question: have we not learnt anything? Why do we keep building halls like this if they do not serve the music performed on stage?

These experiences of audiences and critics alike are corroborated by the most recent research findings: modern concert halls are unsatisfactory for symphonic music. The bass register lacks warmth and power, the strings and brass lack brilliance, and nowhere in the auditorium does the music embrace and envelop the listener. These circumstances serve to make the listening experience somewhat flatter, since the dynamics of the music played on stage is not conveyed to the listeners.

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The acoustics of concert halls have been studied scientifically for more than a century, and how sound behaves physically in an enclosed space is already quite well understood. The sound of a musical instrument radiates in all directions, albeit at varying dynamic levels depending on the instrument and the notes played. The sound is conveyed from the stage to the listener directly, besides being reflected off the walls thousands of times. These reflections constitute reverberation, which enriches the sound and creates the acoustical foundation that ties phrases and harmonies together. There is ample information available on the properties of wall materials and shapes, and computer simulations can predict sound reflections very accurately. Major concert hall projects include the building of scale models in which acoustics can be physically measured (with certain limitations) before the hall is built.

In other words, the acoustics of a concert hall can be predicted to a considerable degree of accuracy on the basis of how concert halls are planned, and those plans can thus be tweaked as necessary to achieve the acoustics desired. The biggest problem in determining what a good acoustic should be is the human element. It is difficult to measure an individual listener’s musical experience in objective terms, let alone relate that experience to the physical properties of the sound in the hall. The traditional way to explore this dimension is to distribute questionnaires to audience members and to canvass their opinions. The challenge here is how to control for variables: the results can be influenced hugely by the music performed, the visual information, the musicians’ workplace that is being designed. Musicians tend to recommend an environment where it is easy for them to do their job, to hear each other and to be the focus of the audience’s attention. In vineyard-shaped or arena-shaped concert halls, conductors tend to be the centre of attention, and it is easier to be in contact with the audience.

There is a tendency to create “wow” architecture for the purpose of attracting large numbers of tourists. Considering all this, it is hardly surprising at all that buildings like the Elbphilharmonie and the Helsinki Music Centre continue to be built. It is concert-goers who are left with the short end of the stick in this approach, as these halls virtually never allow listeners to be immersed in and surrounded by the music as they are in the great traditional shoe-box-shaped concert halls in Vienna, Amsterdam or Boston.

Professor Lokki’s research team at Aalto University has developed a unique method for recording the acoustics of a concert hall. At the core of this invention are anechoic recordings and a “loudspeaker orchestra”. Together, they form a calibrated symphony orchestra simulator where the locations and directional patterns of the loudspeakers are carefully selected to emulate the various instrumental groups of an orchestra as placed on stage. Read more about the method in the article Tapio Lokki’s ‘loudspeaker orchestra’ brings the concert hall into the lab at fmq.fi.
In October 2019 folk music and world music professionals from around the globe came together in Tampere, Finland, for the WOMEX World Music Expo. Inspired by the event, FMQ dedicates its Special Feature to folk music: what is happening in contemporary folk music in Finland today? How did we arrive here and why?
A small country must learn how to adapt, cooperate and innovate. Agility is key. Finland has a high degree of social equality, and in music this means that basically anyone can do anything. Creativity and curiosity are the wellspring of the vitality of contemporary Finnish folk music.
When we look at the map, we can see that Finland lies between Sweden and Russia. As the saying goes: location, location, location. In the course of history, Finland has been ruled in turn by the King of Sweden and the Czar of Russia. As part of their respective realms, we have adopted their administrative and judicial systems, traded with them, learnt their languages, fought their wars and fought each other—and gained cultural influences, music included.

Given this past, it is scarcely surprising that western Finland and eastern Finland differ from each other in so many ways. A few years ago, the science periodiclly Tiede went so far as to claim in a headline that Finland is home to two peoples. There is undeniably a case to be made for this, as western and eastern Finns even have a different genetic make-up. Today western Finland is more urbanised and has a more diverse business profile than eastern Finland. In folk music, both have a rich tradition, with a key distinction that can be simplified thus: the West is about instruments while the East is about singing.

The pelimanni music, or traditional dance music of western Finland is rooted in the Swedish tradition. There have been direct connections by sea across the Gulf of Bothnia since time immemorial, and music has passed both ways. Musicians of this tradition played many of the same pieces as those in Sweden and indeed elsewhere in northern Europe—polkas, minuets, polkas, schottisches, waltzes and so on. Listening to a performance by a pan-Nordic ensemble today, it is hard to distinguish from which country each of the musicians comes. Among recent names, we may point to the Floating Sofa Quartet, for instance.

Turning to eastern Finland, the focus is quite naturally on runo singers and vocal groups. This stems from a culture that far predates fiddler music. Its archaic aesthetics share a foundation of tradition with areas of Russia and the Baltic states—even if Finnish folk singing was originally monophonic, unlike that of many of our neighbouring areas. Today the postmodern “eastern feeling” is perhaps most originally captured by the hilarious SUSTAMON SÄHKÖ hand. It combines a Karelian feel (from both sides of the border between Finland and Russia) with techno music, rap and an unfettered stage show in a sort of Karelian ethno-techno.

From National Romantic kantele to trance accordion
As a result of the National Romantic narrative, Finland's national instrument, the kantele, is perceived as having emerged in eastern Finland. However, various versions of the instrument have been played elsewhere in Finland too. And we should also remember that there are related instruments among the Baltic peoples: the kanūla in Estonia, the kolk in Latvia and the kanxles in Lithuania. The simplest Finnish kantele model, the five-string kantele, is today mainly used in early childhood music education, and an instrument scholar might regard it as a modest effort among the various box zithers of the world. The modern diatonic concert kantele, on the other hand, is a rich and refined instrument, and as such is favoured in both folk music and modern classical music.

Those Finnish contemporary folk music artists who play the kantele generally also sing. MAIJA KAUPANEN, who has recently gone from strength to strength at prominent world music events, is a one-woman band who sings, plays the kantele and adds percussion—impressive even when considered purely as a physical feat! KARDEMUMMI, a group who tour frequently in the USA, also trust in the bright sound of combined kantele and voice. The jouhikko, a four-string bowed lyre, is far more of a rarity than the kantele, yet there are performers proficient on this ancient instrument in Finland, even at the professional level. The best-known of these is PEKKO KÄPPI, who is capable of building up jouhikko riffs within his band K.H.H.L. to a psychedelic rock trance reminiscent of LED ZEPPELIN. On stage, Pekko Käppi transforms into an ancient shaman and iconic rock star all in one.

Among more recent arrivals, the accordion has established itself as a highly important instrument in Finland, and our best performers on this instrument are well known abroad. There is JOHANNA JUSOLA, who plays colourful fantasy tango and often has a visual element to her performances; the brilliant single-row and two-row accordion specialist MARKKU LEPISTO (ACCORDION SAMURAI, JOINNA KLEEMER, PA-VÄRTTÄINÄ), and the melodic wizard MARIA KALANIEMI, master of “bellow poetry” and an important proponent of the folk music of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland. Kalaniemi is also a prominent teacher who has brought up an entire generation of Finnish and also Swedish and Estonian accordionists. ANTTI PAALANEN has made it into the accordion major league with a combination of traditional folk music and trance. And then of course we have KIMMO POHJONEN, an accordion visionary completely in a class of his own, who has developed his performances into a fierce and furious ‘surround sound’ show.

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The municipality of Kaustinen in Central Ostrobothnia is known for its folk music festival and for its fiddler music tradition, the cornerstone of which is the ensemble of violin, harmonium and double bass. With a population of only 5,000, Kaustinen is home to a number of celebrated musician families, first and foremost among them the JÄRVELÄ family. The JPF ensemble—the acronym deriving from its original name JÄRVELÄ Pikkupelimannit [Järvelä little fiddlers]—was founded 37 years ago and is still going strong. FRIIGI, formed by members of the next Järvelä generation,
have taken their music towards a modern groove. The violin
by far the predominant instrument on the western coast
of Finland, the Swedish-speaking population not excepted.

The power of singing in groups
On the whole, new folk music in Finland is instrument-
centred. We do not have star singers as in fado, morna, son,
Afrobeat or even British folk. Finns tend to sing in groups
when performing folk music, and one of the most accom-
plished groups active today is Tuuletar, a quartet with a
sovereign command of the entire toolbox of vocal music
tricks, including effects and beatboxing. Their music
captures such a fascinating ancient and timeless mood
that one of their tracks was selected for inclusion in the
soundtrack of the TV series Game of Thrones.

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Ancient Finnish singing is dressed in new clothes, but
with a more ethnic feel than Tuuletar, by the legendary
long-established Värttänen and the more recent arrival
okra playground. Both derive inspiration from Finland’s
national epic and origin story, the Kalevala, and its compan-
ion volume of lyrical folk poetry, the Kanteletar. The poetry
in this tradition is typically not rhymed and features heavy
alliteration. The tunes are narrow in compass and in their
purest form quite monotonous, even if the characteristic
5/4 metre may seem exotic and exciting to a foreign listener.
New folk music groups tend to use Kalevala-style singing, or
ruo singing, not in its pure form but as a basis or inspira-
tion. The proof of the pudding is usually in the arrangements.
The most lyrical manifestations of ruo singing, often with
no instrumental accompaniment, may be found in perfor-
mances by Liisa Mayrinen and Tellu Turko (Suden Aika (Time
of the Wolf)) and the Philomena women’s choir.

The Kalevala is making a comeback this year! Stage
director and author Jura Hurme and nationally cele-
brated singer-songwriter Tuomari Nummio have fostered
a project entitled Kalevala elävänä tai kuolluen (Kalevala
dead or alive) to address the question of what the signifi-
cance of the Kalevala today might be.

The yulk, the traditional singing style of the Sámi, the
indigenous people of northern Europe, is practised by a
number of internationally successful Finnish performers.
Wimme and Villa Pirttiäväri are old hands, while Solju
and Viidla are newer arrivals on the scene. Originally.
The yulk involved no pitched instruments, allowing modern
performers to build interesting settings and ambiences with
a combination of influences to underpin the ancient singing.
(See also pp. 48–49) The music of the Roma is also a valua-
ble vocal music tradition in Finland; Hilja Grönfors has
been its most prolific public proponent for many years.

Contemporary folk music – what does that even mean?
When discussing music made by Finnish professionals in
Finland, people tend to avoid the terms “folk music” and
“world music”. The correct term here seems to be “contem-
porary folk music”, even though this is a bit of an anom-
aly in the international context. Out of Finnish ensem-
bles, Finns only apply the epithet “world music” to those
that include immigrants or foreign musicians, such as
BaranBand and Ma Rouy, inspired by the sounds of the
Middle East under Marouf Majidi, or Helsinki-Cotonou
Ensemble combining Afrobeat with jazz and funk, or the
Finnish-Senegalese Galaxy. The Global Music Centre in
Helsinki compiles and shares information on the world’s
music cultures and has contributed significantly to the work
of immigrant musicians in Finland.

Generally, new Finnish folk music makes do without a
drum kit and bass guitar, preferring instead to seek inspi-
ration in jazz, tango, classical music, cabaret or European
chanson. It is concert music for professionals, principally
performed by academically educated virtuosos. A remark-
able percentage of those performing contemporary folk
music have a doctorate in music.

Master of Music and Doctor of Music programmes are
offered by the Sibelius Academy of Uniarts Helsinki, where
a Department of Folk Music was set up in 1983. In 2008
the Department received the Womex “Award for Profes-
sional Excellence”. Heikki Laitinen, the Department’s
first Professor, established the far-reaching policy of artis-
tic freedom as a guideline in teaching. Instead of turning
folk music into a museum exhibit, it was nurtured to develop
further. Musicians were encouraged to use the old, the new
and the alien and to invent things for themselves. Profes-
sor Kristina Ilmonen has perpetuated this policy, and
multiculturalism has become ever more important with the
introduction of the Global Music degree programmes.

Finnishness is non-exclusive
By international comparison, Finland is a giant in classical
music, a heavy mediumweight player in folk music and on a
par with its physical size in popular music. Contemporary
folk music is well established in many ways in Finland, one
manifestation of this being the organising of the Womex
event in Tampere.

Finnish folk music today has not been harnessed for
nationalist purposes or as a vehicle for exclusive identity
policy. Music remains music. Recently, though, a feminist
perspective has emerged to question how well women are
represented in the structures of folk music. Cultural appropriation is also an important
current topic, particularly in academic circles.

Of course, no Finnish music is purely Finnish. Composers
and musicians have always also looked further afield for influences. Värttäin in their heyday
performed polyphonic folk singing that had never
occurred indigenously in Finland, their harmonies
being sourced from a number of other peoples, from
the Baltic lands and Bulgaria. Or, to take another,
more recent example, the roots of Frigg are in Kaus-
tinen in Finland but bluegrass and Celtic influences
are at least as important in their music.

So what exactly is Finnishness in contemporary
folk music? Foreign fans and commentators repeat-
edly describe it as a natural feel, freshness and clar-
ity of expression. With a dash of Finnish madness, of

“FINNISH FOLK MUSIC TODAY
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OR AS A VEHICLE FOR
EXCLUSIVE IDENTITY POLICY.”
Music has long been important in increasing international awareness of the Sámi. Their yoik – the Sámi word for a musical form of oral literature – is used to convey stories, songs, and information. The Sámi language is unique in that it can be heard in every word and in every sound, and it is closely tied to the Sámi culture. The Sámi language is spoken by the Sámi people, who are the only indigenous people living within the EU. The Sámi live in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. The Sámi language is recognised as a threatened language by the United Nations, and there are only around 15,000 to 25,000 speakers. Only a handful of the world's indigenous people have more speakers who use their language daily.

The Sámi language is rich in cultural traditions, and the Sámi people are proud of their heritage. They believe that their language is a key part of their identity, and they strive to preserve it for future generations. The Sámi language is used in various contexts, including music, literature, and daily conversation. The Sámi language is a living language, and it is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the Sámi people. The Sámi language is a vital part of the Sámi culture, and it is a symbol of their identity. The Sámi language is a treasure that must be preserved for future generations.
Andy Warhol in an opera focus

BY Pekka Hako

“My idea of a good picture is one that’s in focus and of a famous person.”

Flash Flash - Two Holograms and An Intermission, a chamber opera created by composer Juhani Nuorvala and librettist Juha Siltanen, fulfills the requirements set by Andy Warhol for his art as presented in the above quote. This Finnish opera is an unusual depiction of Warhol’s various existences, a portrait of a famous lonely man surrounded by the masses.

“True enough. The audience is looking at the same image as the main character; he voices the audience’s thoughts. And the reverse is also true: we are forced to identify with the viewer who turns out to be Andy Warhol, to see with his eyes and hear with his ears.”

So we get to experience what it was like to be Andy Warhol.

“Exactly.”

“Tension can be built by varying the properties of a continuous surface. When something shocking, like an image of an electric chair or a car accident, is repeated often enough, its meaning fades and the shocking content becomes just wallpaper.”

But feeling good can be self-deception.

“At least until you’re on your deathbed.”

“Isn’t life a series of images that change as they repeat themselves?”

There is a lot of variation in your music, although your aesthetic is minimalist or post-minimalist. You use blocky surfaces but build a drama through contrasts and how they are paced.

“The most exciting attractions are between two opposites that never meet.” I visit composer Juhani Nuorvala at his studio. On the wall is a framed poster with thick black letters proclaiming an Andy Warhol quote: “I like boring things…” I ask him how the opera Flash Flash approaches the character of Warhol and how his art has been incorporated into the work.

“Flash Flash is a work for music theatre. It uses elements of installations, multimedia art and conceptual art, in the spirit of the plays of Samuel Beckett. The opera is about a certain way of viewing reality.”

Warhol himself does not appear as a character in the opera. He is merely an observer.

“At one point in his life, Warhol in a strange way sort of switched off his emotional life and began to regard the world and his life as a show, without living his own life, so to speak. In the opera, this peeping Tom is not the main character on stage; he is the one watching. He comments on what he sees, and the audience hears his voice.”

Because the stage is almost empty during the two acts that frame the busy Intermission, the viewer cannot identify with a main character on stage in the traditional sense.

“So we choose to believe. The viewer, i.e. Andy Warhol, marvels at the opera auditorium and then discovers that he is in a room at a hospital in New York. Eventually, he is forced to encounter his feelings, his fears, his own death – the very things from which he had dissociated himself.”

He also encounters feelings of love that he had previously had.

“Oh yes. He feels a strong erotic attraction to a young tap-dancing man. Librettist Juha Siltanen and I have joked grimly that this is the first-ever autoerotic necrophile requiem with a happy ending.”

The decision to have the main character be a voiceover resembles the idea of a subjective camera: the audience follows the gaze of the main character.

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So we get to experience what it was like to be Andy Warhol.

“Exactly.”

“I’m afraid that if you look at a thing long enough, it loses all of its meaning.” Repetition was essential for the art and the life philosophy of Andy Warhol. What did he mean by that?

“When something shocking, like an image of an electric chair or a car accident, is repeated often enough, its meaning fades and the shocking content becomes just wallpaper. Draining emotional content through repetition was what Warhol employed to produce a ‘good and empty feeling.’ I hope that opera-goers might experience a relaxed and easy reception, as with Warhol’s art, when watching Flash Flash.”

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The Turku Music Festival, Finland’s oldest consecutively running music festival, celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2019, with conductor Klaus Mäkelä in his first year as artistic director. Foreign guest artists included baritone Thomas Hampson and Benjamin Appl, the Concerto Köln ensemble, and pianist Khatchatour Buniatsishvili. The composer-in-residence was Sauli Zinovjev. The Naantali Music Festival, two decades younger at 40, included its 10th anniversary culminated in the Concerto for violin and orchestra Naarasäiti (National Opera and Ballet), featuring music theatre company La Chambre aux Échos from France. This production combined the music for Katharina Blum by Hans Werner Henze and Ophelia/Tiefsee by Juha V. Koskinen into a single dramaturgical arc.

Numerous world premieres were heard in Finland in 2019. To name but a few, these included Tomi Räisänen’s marimba concert Portal and Pertti Jalava’s Concerto for Viola and Orchestra (Kymi Sinfonietta at the IV International Uuno Klami Composition Competition), Jukka Tiensuu’s Trombone Concerto (PBB); Paavo Heininen’s Sinfonia concertante da camera (miikeli Symphony orchestra); Olli-Tarja Ilijainen’s Naurusali (Helsinki Chamber Orchestra); Yeli Kuulaa’s Concerto for violin and orchestra Auseil (HPO); and Markus Kärki’s opera Baby Jane, based on a novel by sofi oksanen, produced by Ooppera Skaala.

Our Festival [Meidän Festivaali] featured the world premieres of MOD for string octet and keyboard by Tuomo Prattala and Benzene for violin, video and electronics by Ville Raassaka. At the opening concert of the Tampere Jazz Happening in October, the theme country was France. There were performers from 17 countries, including the cross currents trio, trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, Das Kapital, and Omar Sosa & Yilian Cañizares, and from Finland the quartet of drummer Jussi Lehtonen, Olavi Louhivuori’s Superposition!, the Manuel Dunkel Quartet, Lauri Pokra’s Flyover Ensemble and Juhani Aaltonen, Belo Laine and Ulf Krookfors appearing with Joe McPhee.

The Finnish Jazz Federation awarded its annual Yrjö Prize to Kaija Saariaho for her opera Frank Wedekind’s The Ballad of Baby Jane (HPO). One of the scarlet threads in this year’s festival programme was ‘transatlantic dialogue’, which manifested itself in the highlighting of composers from the USA, Canada, Iceland and Ireland. The opening concert given by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra presented up front from the aesthetic points that subsequently became very familiar in the course of the week. The concert began with Metacosmos by Anna Thorvaldottir, a monumentally beautiful but melancholic, almost cinematic piece that seemed to underscore how powerless humans are in the face of forces of nature.
Jää opera pushed Jaakko Kuusisto into a new period

Jaakko Kuusisto’s opera Jää [Ice], based on the novel by Ulla-Lena Lundberg, was premiered at the Finnish National Opera and Ballet on 25 January.

Kuusisto’s previous opera, Eligamäle!, which is about composer Oskar Merikanto, was his first full-length grand opera. Jää is another milestone, representing a transition from a gentle biopic to a narrative with profound themes and dramatic human fates. [–] The production was directed by Anna Kelo, and the cast included Mariurre Tepponen, Ville Rusanen, Jussi Merikanto and Jenny Carlstedt.

“[This project] was about such big and dramatic things that I was obliged to take a serious look at my musical idiom. What things do I have in my toolkit? I have had to exceed myself, in a good way,” Kuusisto says.

• By Auli Särkiö-Prikänen. Full interview at fnq.fi

Jää opera was the opening night at the main stage of the Folklandia Festival, a music festival on sea – with all the problems of clashing gigs and everything happening at the same time that come with any festival. [–] There are also spontaneous gatherings that you can’t even plan.

As the cruise goes to Tallinn and back, Estonian bands are the main guest artists at Folklandia. I enjoyed Mandotrio – a lively trio of mando-lins that could work at almost any acoustic music festival – and Rüt, a quartet of two men and two women.

• By Simon Broughton. The full review at fnq.fi

The slogan of the project is “the world’s largest art critique”, because one of the key components of the project is an evaluation app where the young people attending can select adjectives they feel describe their experience, comment on what they have seen and heard and give a point score to the site.

Tapiola sinfoinnettas’ Klasari-basuari has been one of the most popular music events in the Taideestaajat project. Klasari-basuari II for the 2019-2020 season was designed by composer Lauri Supponen, conductor Kero Lehtimäki and pianist Eimil Holmström. The programme includes a new piece to which the schoolchildren can contribute mate-

Jazz on the Beach – cool music from a hot town

In a sun-drenched town only 200 kilometres south of the Arctic Circle, jazz connoisseurs mixed with locals to enjoy their 31st festival of music at the Jazz on the Beach in Raade, Finland.

Frenchman Charles Gil has been at the helm of Raaden Rantatijakt since 2016, and from that time the festival has confirmed its place as the most edgy summer jazz gathering in Finland.

The first night at the main stage featured a mix of local and foreign sounds, both fronted by vocalists singing their own lyrics. Local-born singer-songwriter Lotta Jääskeläinen has two albums to her credit, and sang a selection of intimate self-penned songs backed by a solid double-guitarred folk-rock quartet.

The second band this night, instrumentalists Sole Azul, also featured songs where the intimacy of the lyrics was complemented by the intricacy of the music. Singer Jaakko Laitinen had joined principal composer Harri Kuislärvi in writing the music for five pieces featured in Sole Azul’s set, and the bitter-sweet themes of his works were reflected in the angst and discord of modern tango compositions. [–] The bassist Kero Tiikannen and tenor saxophonist Pauli Liitinen bring some compositions as well as their own experience and radicalism from other contemporary bands (Mopo and Elfantree respectively), making Sole Azul an exciting contributor to what they describe as “post-apocalyptic tango”.

The second day of the festival involved principally Finnish bands. Of the three appearing, the highest profile was the quartet Kaisa’s Machine. The band is led by Kaisa Mäensivu, a prize-winning bassist as well as composer, who is now based in New York, where she completed her studies.

Kaisa’s Machine formed the project Quest of the Invisible, this expressive and enchanting music steered the festival to its climax.

• By Anthony Shaw. The full review at fnq.fi

Folklandia – a music festival on sea

Once a year the Folklandia cruise gathers Finnish folk music and dance lovers together for a 24-hour journey on the Baltic Sea. In January 2019 Simon Broughton got on board.

You can tell it’s no ordinary ferry journey right from the outset. Everyone rolls up to the terminal with the usual wheely bags, but must have an instrument case as well – violin, guitar, accordion or the distinctive trapezoid case of a kantele. This is a give-away. We’re boarding for the Folklandia cruise, an annual 24-hour journey that goes physically between Helsinki and Tallinn, but goes metaphorically into the heart of Finnish music as well. [–] On board there are ten stages, 3,000 people and almost continuous music. Officially there are 130 groups starting at 6 pm and ending at 3 pm the following afternoon.

Folklandia has a “main stage”, where headline bands such as Sväng and Frigg are programmed. [–] The two headline bands show two contrasting sides of Finnish music straight away. Sväng bring an inven-
tive and unique sound – I don’t think there’s another harmonica quartet anywhere in the world – plus a quirky humour. Of course, there’s also something very Finnish about them, combining the tango, sibelius and that understated playfulness. What Frigg demonstrate is the richness of the Finnish fiddle tradition and its heartland in Kaustinen. They too are inventive and exciting, but more about respecting the tradition and taking it to the world. Folklandia is a music festival on sea – with all the problems of clashing
Fast moving, varied and brave: WOMEX 2019 opening concert

The music of the Arctic Fire concert at the WOMEX 2019 was brave and contemporary, yet all of them drew in some way on archaic traditions in Finnish music.

Länsman is a force of nature and her memory of the traditional Sámi occupation of reindeer herding, which Länsman was born into, is extreme, distorting the sound still further and playing it at an extremely high volume. Tuomas Juntunen

The – also surreal – finale was Siustamon Närko, which features a pair of musicians (ANNE-MARI KIVIMÄKI on accordion and the ubiquitous EERO GRUNDSTRÖM on electronics) and a pair of dancer-singers. BEITTA KAIRASILLES is the only dancer I’ve seen wearing an accordion on her waist as a fashion accessory, while TUOMAS JUNTUNEN looked like he was fresh out of the sauna with little more than bathing trunks. Siustamo is a village in eastern Karelia, which was seized by the Russians in the Winter War of 1939–40 and has become an obsession for Kivimäki. The tunes she’s arranged have an infectious swing, laced with subversive humour. The whole show was fast moving, varied and brave, words which are an apt description the Finnish contemporary folk scene as a whole. There’s a clear respect for tradition, but nobody is oppressed by it.

vilá is a duo of Sámi singer HILDÁ LÄNSMAN and accordionist VIVI MARIA SAARENKYLÄ (see pp. 48–49), who met at the Sibelius Academy. Länsman is a force of nature and her voice has an elemental quality that seems to come from the earth itself – at its most dramatic it sounded raw and untameable, although occasionally this was weakened by too much reverb. – Vilá’s opening song was a memory of the traditional Sámi occupation of reindeer herding, which Länsman was born into. – Another song, Utshinko-disko, is about a night out in the northern Sámi town, sung in a jumble of languages. Länsman’s outfit looked like a contemporary re-interpretation of a Sámi tunic and worked as a visual metaphor for the music.

Pauanne are named after the pagan god of Thunder. The trio, featuring violin (KURKA LEHTO), drums (JARNE HAAVISTO) and Hammond organ and electronics (TOMI PENNAKES), are interested in old folk beliefs that are surprisingly similar to some we have today. This is most memorably illustrated by an old folk poem about building a protective wall, juxtaposed with the words of DONALD TRUMP.

PEKKO KÄPPi is a performer I’ve seen and admired a number of times before. His chosen instrument is the jouhikko, an archaic bowed lyre, which has had quite a revival in recent years. It’s a challenging instrument, for both player and audience. It’s pretty scratchy at the best of times, but Käppi’s approach is extreme, distorting the sound still further and playing it at an extremely high volume.

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of Monteverdi, of change and of virtuoso freedom

Third Practice, a new production by the Tero Saarinen Company in collaboration with the Helsinki Baroque Orchestra, was premiered in Cremona, Italy, in May 2019 and given its first performance in Finland at the Kuopio Dance Festival celebrating its 50th anniversary in June 2019.

In Third Practice, the TERO SAARINEN COMPANY takes on the music of Claudio Monteverdi with some of Finland’s finest Baroque musicians from the HELSINKI BAROQUE ORCHESTRA. The music director is Aapo Härkinnen, and the dancers and musicians are joined on stage by tenor TOPI LEHTIPU and virtual soprano NÜHJA RIAS.

Tero Saarinen points to change as a major theme in the production. “In this work, I address those moments in human development where we desire change. What are we as human beings, and what is our responsibility as human beings for holding up a mirror to developments in the world, such as artificial intelligence? And what does history teach us about change?”

– By Tove Ólafsdóttir. Translation: Jaakko Mantyjarvi

La Chambre aux échos brought Saariaho’s early work to Viitasaari

One of the international guests at this year’s Time of Music festival in Viitasaari was the music theatre company LA CHAMBRE AUX ÉCHOS. The company’s co-founder, director-dramaturge ALEXEI BARRIÈRE considers collaboration with contemporary composers to be a key element in his work. Recently, one of his principal artistic partners has been his mother, composer KAIJA SAARIOH.

When the company first visited Finland earlier in 2009, it gave a representative cross-section of its idio-synthetic style. First, a music theatre production titled Violence (See, p. 50), and then a chamber version of Kaija Saariaho’s oratorio Le Passion de Simone and a recital production titled Give Me, A Few Words, based on classic contemporary vocal works, at a festival of Saariaho’s work at Tampere Hall.

At the Time of Music, Barrière’s company performed his interpretation of Saariaho’s violin concerto Graal théâtre (1994) and her early music theatre work Study for Life (1961). “The way in which La Chambre aux échos works is never about music and theatre being two separate things brought into collision with one another. A subtle combining of art forms takes a time, and Graal théâtre was no exception. “In Graal théâtre, we delved into the musical texture and searched for seams where we could cautiously interpolate text,” says Barrière. Then Saariaho wrote minor adaptations into the work to give the text space.

In the concert Saariaho’s works were joined by On the Guarding of the Heart by DUBOIS KIVIMÄKI.
"Organist Susanne Kujala, a frequent commissioner and performer of new music, has also taken on the task of introducing composers to the subtleties of her instrument. Kujala’s new Alba recording includes an excellent and fascinating collection of works from five Finnish composers. In Fruits Mondes for organ and electronics (2010–11), Maija Hynninen takes inspiration from the auditory and visual illusions of Jean-Claude Risset and M.C. Escher. In Olli Virtaperko’s Hawkins (2007–2008), the titles of the movements (Replicators, Towards polymorphism, Immortal coils) come from Richard Dawkins’s book The Selfish Gene, and chains of DNA form winding melodies upon a deep pedal tone.


"It’s obvious from the first few bars, where Thomas Dausgaard stupendously observes minor changes of dynamic, that this is going to be a reading that pays special attention to the detail of the score, and again and again throughout these 73 minutes he brings out some aspect of the orchestration, the balance, the tempo, the rhythm, that I hadn’t noticed before. [...] In short, this is a thrilling, wildly exciting release. We all knew that Kullervo was a work of astonishing radicality, unlike anything else in the music of its day. Dausgaard’s achievement is that he reveals just how radical it really was – and still is. If this recording doesn’t sweep up an indecent quantity of prizes, there’s something wrong with the world.” • Anna Pulkkis

"It is a triumph. The works he has chosen all arouse surprised respect – who knew? – and he plays them with unhesitating conviction.” • Martin Anderson

"The artistic level on the recording is thoroughly high, and the richness of the composer’s invention opens up new perspectives on every listening. This is especially true for True Fire (2014), a dark and dramatic song cycle for baritone and orchestra to an intriguing selection of texts by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Reimund Heaney, Mahmoud Darwish and the Native American Tewa people.” • Anna Pulkkis

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“I knew Järnefelt for a fine composer and was looking forward to my encounter with this score, but I was taken aback by the sheer quality of the music – all of it, since there is no padding anywhere here at all.”

• Martin Anderson

HAAPANEN: Reports
Helsinki Chamber Choir, cond. Nils Schweckendiek
BIS-2452

“Kuula was Sibelius’s first composition student, and most of the music here seems to have been written sub specie magistris. [...] A release of this music by Adam Johnson last year beat Janne Oksanen to the draw, but it’s good to see a Finnish player making this music his own. Though there’s not much to choose between the two players, Oksanen has the edge in his projection of atmosphere and feeling.”

• Martin Anderson

JÄRNEFELT: Sången om den eldrøda blomman: complete film score
Gävle Symphony Orchestra, cond. Jaakko Kuusisto
Ondine ODE 1328-2D

“The Ondine recording with works for solo cello by Esa-Pekka Salonen and Kaija Saariaho presents powerful and straightforward interpretations by the US cellist Wilhelmina Smith.”

• Anna Pulkkis

SAARIAHO, SALONEN: Works for solo cello
Wilhelmina Smith
Ondine ODE 1294-2

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• Martin Anderson

KUULA: Complete Piano Music
Janne Oksanen
Alba ARCD 445

“Lotta Wennäkoski plays with the characteristics of different languages. [...] Wennäkoski uses the human voice in a variety of ways. [...] Lamenti by Paola Livorsi is a fine elegy to a deceased friend. The subdued music, saturated with microtonal falling figures, becomes luminous in the choir’s performance.”

• Anna Pulkkis

LUUKANEN: Ommel
Lamenti
Helsinki Chamber Choir, cond. Nils Schweckendiek
ICSM 013

“Maija Hynninen creates spacious, original sound worlds and narratives that leave room for the listeners’ imagination. Each work on the new Ravello recording combines acoustic instruments or voice with electronics.”

• Anna Pulkkis

HYNNINEN: Dawn Breaks
Ravello Records RR8021

“Maija Hynninen (1891–1945) is one of those Finnish composers from the generation after Sibelius and before the post-war boom. [...] Jean Dubé’s virtues here are that he gives the music time to speak and that he reproduces its textures with commendable clarity, to which the recorded sound does full justice. Hanna Isolammi provides informative notes.”

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HYNNINEN: Dawn Breaks
Jean Dubé
SYRPYSY 141001

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“Repetition in any religious ceremony serves the same primitive purpose, and for all the sophistication of Rautavaara’s harmonic language, what he is doing here, basically, is weaving a spell – and I defy you not to be hypnotised by the unearthly beauty of this wonderful music. It cleanses the soul.”

• Martin Anderson

RAUTAVAARA: Vigiló
Niall Chorliss (tenor), Tuukka Haapaniemi (bass), Helsinki Chamber Choir, cond. Nils Schweckendiek
BIS 2422

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Perttu Haapanen typically deconstructs the text by rearranging its constituents, thus creating mixed feelings of alienation and vulnerable immediacy. He also likes to play with the human voice and different ways of producing sound, like creaking or smacking. In this regard, the melancholy Strophes (2006/2010) and Strophes II (2007/2009) are particularly impressive. The latter, the result of a ‘process of decay and disintegration’, is a strangely beautiful avant-garde work where the sounds are quiet and bodily.

On the BIS recording, the singers in the Helsinki Chamber Choir create intriguing sound collages. In Taxi-dermic Peter (2014/2016), they play objects such as squeaky toys, scissors and spoons, but Haapanen also knows how to write luminous choral harmonies.

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Towards the Light
Rautavaara – Wennäkoski – Livorsi
Helsinki Chamber Choir, cond. Nils Schweckendiek
ICSM 013

"Repetition in any religious ceremony serves the same primitive purpose, and for all the sophistication of Rautavaara’s harmonic language, what he is doing here, basically, is weaving a spell – and I defy you not to be hypnotised by the unearthly beauty of this wonderful music. It cleanses the soul.”

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60 RECORDINGS OF THE YEAR

RAITIO: Piano Works
Jean Dubé
SYRPYSY 141001

"Väinö Raitio (1891–1945) is one of those Finnish composers from the generation after Sibelius and before the post-war boom. [...] Jean Dubé’s virtues here are that he gives the music time to speak and that he reproduces its textures with commendable clarity, to which the recorded sound does full justice. Hanna Isolammi provides informative notes.”

• Martin Anderson

HYNNINEN: Dawn Breaks
Ravello Records RR8021

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61 RECORDINGS OF THE YEAR
“Spells, cattle calls, mocking sermons and herdsmen’s tunes from early 20th-century Finland are used inventively and attractively in the band’s arrangements and compositions.” • Riikka Hiltunen

“The first studio album by SANS has done well on international world music charts and earned glowing reviews – with good reason. SANS have captured a rare beauty in delving into the diverse musical backgrounds and skills of the band members.” • Riikka Hiltunen

“Though they have only been around for three years, the quartet Suistamon Sähkö have grown into quite a phenomenon [...] Their second album shows that the band is more than just an experiment in combining Karelian vibes with electronic dance beats.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka

“Western African desert blues is definitely one of my favourite roots music genres – and yuck is another one. On ÅSSU’s debut album these two are combined in a fascinating way.” • Fiona Talkington

“The music itself breathes calmly and is very free, being based more on musical discussion between the performers than on strict composition. The disc begins and ends in jazzy colours, but personally I particularly like the adventures in between, spiced with a certain modal and rhythmic curiosity.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka

“Improvisations and more dynamic pieces build up into a disc that is heartache-inducing and challenging, which is scarcely surprising considering that the topics covered include war, death and forced relocation [...]. Yet this is not a disc of dark despair; among the many shades of sorrow there is hope.” • Amanda Kauranne

Translations: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
Jazz albums 2019

**OK:KO**
Syrtti
We Jazz Records 2019WJCD11

“The band definitely have ideas of their own and the chops to execute them. The music has a spontaneous feel.” • Jan-Erik Holmberg

**EMMA SALOKOSKI & ILMILIEKKI QUARTET**
Ligger du fortfarande i sängen?
Svart Records SVART179CD

**HERD**
Doorbell Music DOORBELL0004

“While the melodies appear timeless and uncomplicated, the performances are pure Ilmiliekki - that is, contemporary jazz with a Nordic twist.” • Jan-Erik Holmberg

**JARMO SAARI REPUBLIC**
Soldiers of light
Membran Music JSR02

“Jarmo Saari masterfully creates atmospheres and meticulous architecture – with a taste for bombastic melodrama.” • Wif Stenger

**SIGURDUR ROGNAVLIDSSON’S DARK FOREST**
Horizon
Eclipse Music ECD-201875

“Rögnvaldssön’s team has grown into a thoroughbred band with a highly developed collaborative consciousness.” • Petri Silas

**SIGNE**
To Sappho
Eclipse Music ECD-201979

“Signe’s sound mingles folk, pop, barbershop and choral singing. [...] The result is utterly original, uncategorisable art – unlike anything else you’ll hear this year.” • Wif Stenger

**JUKKA ESKOLA SOUL TRIO**
Steamy
Timmion TRCD 12009

“The bite-sized songs are multifaceted, both rhythmically and concerning the chord changes, still without losing their charming easy-going feel.” • Jan-Erik Holmberg

**MAX ZENGER GLOBUS**
Art in Motion
Edition Records EDN1134

“The idea of the compositions on this album seems to be a unity of all elements, rather than melody statements followed by solisitic explorations.” • Jan-Erik Holmberg

**ODDARRANG**
Hypermetros
Edition Records EDN1135

“Oddarrang remain champions of dark and haunting instrumental music. Don’t miss them.” • Petri Silas

**HERD**
Doorbell Music DOORBELL0004

“The main attraction of this album is the capricious songs, reflecting ten years of evolution. [...] Herd distils the music into a collective endeavour.” • Jan-Erik Holmberg

**JARMO SAARI REPUBLIC**
Soldiers of light
Membran Music JSR02

“Focused listening gives the feeling of being at a live gig, and there is an irresistible urge to applaud after each solo.” • Laura Korhonen

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**Value of Finnish music exports**

In 2018, the market value of Finnish music exports amounted to 78.3 million euros, representing a one-third increase as compared to the previous year. These gains were especially driven by powerful growth in the field of technology, and reflected in the “other goods and services” sector of music exports, which includes the exporting of audio technology and equipment as well as export revenue from startups utilising music technology and expertise. In terms of value, live music exports continued to be the largest sector. The greatest growth (22 per cent) was witnessed in copyright-related revenue. Source: Music Finland

**Gender distribution of the composers in concert programmes**

Concerts of 15 major orchestras across the world (season 2018/19)

- Male: 97.7%
- Female: 2.3%

Concerts of Finnish symphony orchestras (year 2019)

- Male: 94%
- Female: 3%
- Unknown: 3%

Concerts of 21 Swedish music institutions (season 2018/19)

- Male: 90%
- Female: 10%
- Unknown: 10%

Source: Figures published and compiled by Donne - Women in music and Dharma Musica.
Source: Database of the Association of Finnish Symphony Orchestras; the figures compiled by Helsingin Sanomat.
Source: Statistics compiled and published by the Swedish Society of Composers (FST) and KVAST.

**Wheel of acoustics - Eight categories to describe the concert hall acoustics**

According to the research at Aalto University, the audience members describe the concert hall acoustics with dozens of attributes, which can be categorised to eight main groups. The preferred acoustics is highly individual, and it is formed as a combination of all these eight categories. This wheel developed by Tapio Lokki and Antti Kussmann represents one possible organization of these attributes.

See also Tapio Lokki’s column on pp. 38–39.
Sibafest is a festival of Uniarts Helsinki’s Sibelius Academy. The main venue is the Helsinki Music Centre.

SIBAFEST.FI

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