

2020

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**M<sup>Q</sup>**



**MUSIC IS THE  
WAY TO GROW  
JOINING VOICES**

**ON MUSIC AND BEYOND  
THE EXTRAORDINARY  
IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC  
IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES**



# EDITORIAL

BY Anu Ahola

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## Moments of music in this most exceptional of years

In 2020 our world was turned upside down in a way that even in January we could not have imagined. This year's print issue of FMQ is a story of music, of composers and of performers navigating this irrevocably changed reality. It is a true story that runs the gamut of emotions and moods, from fear and uncertainty to hope and joy. It also encompasses a great deal of hard work and inventiveness, enormous creativity and robust endurance. Running through all this as a scarlet thread is the extraordinary importance of music in extraordinary times.

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In the first theme package in this issue, we consider the roles that music may play in exceptional circumstances. We asked musicians and music makers to tell us about music that is important to them and what music has meant to them in difficult times. We also explore the importance of music at transition points in life from the perspective of music psychology.

The current circumstances have forced the music industry, like so many other fields, to reconsider its operations and to come up with alternative solutions and models. In articles in the present issue, we ask: could we do things differently, together? The second package in this issue is particularly dedicated to this question, focusing on collaboration and collective authorship in the field of music.

The community dimension of music, its ability to bring people together, has been brought into particularly sharp focus this year, as social distancing has rendered it at times all but impossible to perform and experience music together.

Cooperation and collaboration are also important aspects of music education in Finland today, and this is the focus of our third theme package. Other key elements in Finland's music education today are continuous learning, self-expression and the big picture. Music education institutions aim to produce not just future professionals but

also informed amateur musicians for whom music will become a lifelong pastime. Learning focuses not only on technical proficiency but also on the sharing of music with others.

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Although we have lost control over a number of things, losing absolute control does not mean losing the game. Abandoning self-evident truths may open up doors to new worlds. Although people are separated from one another and borders are closed all around us, in music we do not need to curl up in our misery.

Whatever the crisis, the music has never stopped. Instead, music and the community around it have time and time again shown their strength in seeking and eventually finding new outlets and manifestations. ☺

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi





# CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial**  
By *Anu Ahola*



**6 THE EXTRAORDINARY IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES**

- 8** Music emerging from the pandemic – a view from Finland  
by *Anu Ahola & Hanna Isolammi*
- 10** Music – a meaningful resource at turning points and in times of crisis  
by *Suvi Saarikallio*
- 12** Musicians' thoughts on music in difficult times  
by *Maria Puusaari, Petri Silas, Andrew Mellor & Amanda Kauranne*
- 17** Pandemic proves to be mother of invention  
by *Anu Ahola & Hanna Isolammi*



**18 JOINING VOICES**

- 20** Art of the future – the art of together  
by *Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen*
- 24** Composers in collaboration  
by *Merja Hottinen*
- 28** Listening, improvising and trust  
by *Matti Nives*



**30 ON MUSIC AND BEYOND**

- 32** Over, past, thence and yonder  
by *Lotta Wennäkoski*
- 34** The chrome plated megaphone of destiny  
by *Sid Hille*
- 36** Musicians from all over the world meet in Finland's first Middle Eastern Orchestra  
by *Tove Djupsjöbacka*
- 38** Cecilia Damström: There is no single answer to combating climate change  
by *Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen*



**40 MUSIC IS THE WAY TO GROW**

- 42** "Time to do things differently" – Upheaval at Finland's music institutes  
by *Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen*
- 46** Finnish music institutes take a flying digital leap  
by *Hanna Isolammi*
- 48** A drum teacher's springtime inspiration  
by *Patrik Stenström*
- 49** Lowering the threshold to composition  
by *Jyrki Lähteenmäki*
- 50** Pedagogue-composer Soili Perkiö: Music is life!  
by *Amanda Kauranne*

- 52** Recordings of the year
- 60** Performances of the year
- 66** Notable numbers



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# THE EXTRVORDINARY IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

*The coronavirus crisis has highlighted that music frames various areas of our lives. Musicians want to create and perform music and audiences want to hear it, regardless of the circumstances. In times of uncertainty and isolation, music and musicians have brought comfort to many, and more generally the crisis has drawn attention to the broader significance of arts and culture.*



# MUSIC EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC

## A VIEW FROM FINLAND

BY Anu Ahola & Hanna Isolammi

**Structures in the music sector are struggling, and the very ways in which we make, perform and experience music are shifting. In May 2020 FMQ asked people of influence in Finnish music who have a front-row seat in observing how the crisis is unfolding what its impacts on the music sector will be. Are there any potential positive outcomes?**

The responses from live performers, musicians, creators, orchestras, publishers and music exporters were remarkably similar.

Many respondents stressed the importance of music. In times of uncertainty and isolation, music and musicians have brought comfort to many, and more generally, the crisis has drawn attention to the broader significance of arts and culture. Having said that, we must note that the pandemic has also revealed that the structures of the music industry are not crisis-proof and that freelance musicians and non-institutional organisations are particularly vulnerable.

Operators in the music sector were worried not just about the situation at hand but also about the long-term impacts of the coronavirus crisis, because in the close-knit ecosystem of the industry everything affects everything else.

According to Music Finland this crisis will result in a loss of income of up to EUR 250 million euros in Finland (p. 66). In addition to a dramatic decrease in income, freelance musicians and composers are stressed by the constant pressure that they are under in the music industry to reinvent themselves, and this has only increased during the crisis.

With the imposition of social distancing and the disappearance of live concerts, we have discovered just how important interaction is in music, as in many other areas of life.

### What have we done and what should we do?

With the coronavirus-induced decline of the music sector worldwide, musicians and operators in many countries have joined forces to make appeals on behalf of the sector as a whole. All of our interviewees agreed that a new kind of solidarity has emerged in Finland too as a result of the crisis: the music sector has come together briskly to explore solutions in a show of unity and a spirit of cooperation. Aid mechanisms to which individual freelance musicians and enterprises could apply were whipped up at short notice by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, several private foundations and Music Finland (p. 66).

Yet the music sector needs not just emergency aid but also changes to structures that have been found wanting. Long-term structural subsidies with which the music sector could take concrete measures to prepare for the long-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, such as the decline in royalties, would also be highly desirable.

The coronavirus crisis forces the music industry worldwide to explore new channels and forms of operation. Borders remaining closed represents not only revenue loss but a risk of offerings becoming more limited and nationalist content emerging. This can be turned into a positive if the crisis is not unduly drawn out: local operators now have an unprecedented opportunity for promoting diversity until the borders are opened again. There is room for new material and new names that have so far not been able to break through for one reason or another.

### Towards a more sustainable music sector?

We need to be mindful that at this point in time, scarcely anything has been decided and no pathways have been irreversibly shut down. The future, both in music in particular and in society at large, depends on the choices that all of us make as musicians, as audience members and as citizens, and on how well we can work together.

Above all, now is an opportunity for both artists and audiences to rethink their

values. Could we rebuild the music sector on an ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable basis? The climate crisis has not gone anywhere despite being eclipsed by the pandemic, and many experts around the world have actually seen the pandemic as a foreshadowing of what lies in store for humanity unless we curb climate change.

On the whole, the year 2020 has demonstrated in all corners of the world that people can and do change their behaviour and their habits quickly and radically if need be, even voluntarily. Readiness for change is necessary for enabling sustainable development, not just in music but in other areas of life as well.

We need new practices and sustainable choices in order to find a way to new positive developments in the music sector once the coronavirus crisis is past, so that music professionals will be better able to make a living in the future; so that we will perform, produce and consume music more ecologically than before; so that we would see musical content not as an omnipresent and disposable commodity available free of charge; and so that music could continue to transcend all borders and form a rich and constantly innovative soundtrack to our lives, which themselves will of course also be changed. Our lives will be changed not only because the coronavirus has forced them to change but also because we ourselves want our lives to change. © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).  
See also the article *Pandemic proves to be mother of invention* on page 17.



EMO Ensemble © Maarit Kyröharju

Our interviewees pointed out that what is essential in support measures in the current circumstances is to consider the financial ecosystem of the music sector as a whole, including not just individual creators and performers but also the undertakings of all shapes and sizes that exist in the field. It is also important to safeguard plurality in the music sector and to ensure continued potential for international activities.

### Outside the box

We asked our interviewees to share their thoughts on the post-coronavirus future of the music industry.

As with all crises, there will be winners and losers. Traditional organisations receiving public funding are financially in the best position in Finland, while others face a new unknown. We should note, though, that public funding must not be taken for granted, even in Finland. When governments face financial problems, arts and culture are typically at the top of the list of budget cuts.

It also seems highly unlikely that we will return to things being exactly as they were before all this. But on the other hand: would that even be ideal? Would we want that? Is not every crisis also an opportunity, assuming that it does not destroy absolutely everything?

We have surely not seen everything to be generated by the pandemic in terms of musical content. It is the function of art to invent, and this crisis will surely be no exception. Not only creators and performers but also organisations and enterprises now have the opportunity to think outside the box.



# MUSIC

## A MEANINGFUL RESOURCE AT TURNING POINTS AND IN TIMES OF CRISIS

BY Suvi Saarikallio

**Why does music prompt such a powerful emotional response? How does music reach our emotions and play on them? Music psychology researcher Suvi Saarikallio discusses the meaning of music for individuals and communities at turning points.**

Music is a resource in our lives in many ways. It brings us together, provides us with memorable experiences and gives us inner strength. The power of music is in its ability to plumb our emotions, subtly and profoundly. Many of my interviewees have described how meaningful music has been to them, particularly at difficult times in their lives: a source of solace, conduit for emotions and companion along the way.

© Siiri Koutola



**MUSIC SYNCHRONISES US,  
IMMERSES US IN THE SAME  
WORLD OF NUANCES AND  
CREATES THE ILLUSION OF US  
BEING AS ONE.**

As a music psychology scholar, I have long been interested in the ways in which music forms a meaningful part of our lives at its various stages: how music supports the growth of children and adolescents, why music prompts such a powerful emotional response and why people identify music as such an important source of well-being. The coronavirus pandemic forced all of us to contemplate our capacity for coping with crisis. The meaning of music for well-being in everyday life and even for our mental health became an object of keener interest than before.

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Music research has widely explored the ways in which music serves as a source of everyday strength. I am currently leading a research project funded by the Academy of Finland on music as emotional support for adolescents. Young people are adept at seeking out both reinforcement for good feelings and help for bad feelings in music. Some listen to it, others seek release in playing it. Our research on emotional regulation shows that music is a resource of near-infinite diversity. On the one hand, it represents immersion in happiness, joy and beauty, offering experiences transcending the mundane world, providing relaxation and helping us forget our everyday cares. On the other hand, it creates a safe haven for encountering the darker shades of life, allowing bad feelings to pour out and intimating that someone else hears and understands what we are going through, and acting as a catalyst for more positive and insightful thoughts on our life experiences.

How exactly does music do this? How does music reach our emotions and play on them? An important part of this is that music is an idiom that operates on the emotional level – a language that everyone can understand. Music hits us at a corporeal and affective level. Even infants are able to interpret the emotional communication of their carers by the colour, tone, tempo and rhythm of their speech. Later, the emotional language of music is enriched as we experience more and learn more, acquiring cultural interpretations, memories and symbolic meanings. Yet through all of this we retain the ability to be influenced and influence others at this very primitive emotional level. When the music starts, we are plunged into an experiential wonderland of colour and sound.

The various impact mechanisms of music manifest themselves in the way music creates a variety of moods. Memories play an important role in fostering a sense of belonging together and tenderness. Tempo and tonal colour – or, more generally, what the music sounds like – are important factors for relaxation. Sorrow and melancholy perceived in music may cause painful responses if associated with personal negative memories, but music can also prompt pleasurable sadness where the experience is more about experiencing and enjoying the content of the music.

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There are individual and cultural differences in the emotional responses prompted by music. We compared meaningful musical experiences of people in Finland and in India in one of our studies. In both cultures, respondents underlined the importance of music as a resource recalling happy memories, providing beauty and aesthetic experiences and serving as an everyday emotional tool – a source of relaxation, energy and motivation, of joy and pleasure, and of alleviation for anxiety and stress. What emerged as a clear difference was that Finns more prominently pointed to how music allows you to accept your own vulnerability, to face your personal difficulties and to feel empowered about coping with such difficulties.

The corporeal-affective experiencing of music facilitates not only probing one's own emotions but also a profound, unspoken feeling of community. Through music, we can collectively experience the same mood, whether at a concert, a band rehearsal or a funeral. Music synchronises us, immerses us in the same world of nuances and creates the illusion of us being as one. This is perhaps what many have missed most during the coronavirus pandemic: shared moments of live music.

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However, music does also foster a sense of community over remote connections. Even when we listen to music alone, we are reminded of important moments in our lives, of our loved ones, or even of the feeling that people unknown to us who enjoy the same music share our feelings on some level.

We can hear in music precisely those meanings and experiences that are important to us at any given time, yet at the same time we can feel a shared, unspoken emotional bond with other people. So let's let music connect us with ourselves and with each other! © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

Suvi Saarikallio is Associate Professor of Music Education and Docent of Psychology at the University of Jyväskylä.



# Violinist Maria Puusaari: A life marked by music

BY Maria Puusaari

**Violinist Maria Puusaari writes about music that is significant for her, and about the role of music in her life during important turning points and times of crisis.**



© Touko Hujanen

When I think of musical works related to the different stages of my life, some unexpected combinations emerge. The beginning of a new relationship – IGOR STRAVINSKY’S *Fire-bird*. First date – RICHARD WAGNER’S *Götterdämmerung* from his *Ring* cycle (well, it does give you six hours to hold hands). Crushing grief – the light-filled passages of FRANZ SCHUBERT’S Symphony in C major and LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN’S Sixth Symphony.

The overall moods of my preferred pieces of music during change and crisis are often entirely different to the events taking place in my actual life. The works I have played or listened to during important life moments have become some sort of sonic memorials for my life’s events, with their significance deepening each time I return to them. Some works have helped me identify specific grievances; others have awoken new thoughts or directed my playing towards a new path.

The personal significance of music is often connected to my own playing, with the concentration required helping to forget my acute life situation. Playing has a calming effect in the middle of change or a crisis, directing my attention to music and interaction with other musicians. I have escaped my current coronavirus-induced concert hiatus through the everyday routines of a violinist: scales, technical exercises and core repertoire.

Being a musician is a holistic identity. Some of the worst imaginable crises for musicians include getting injured and losing the ability to work. When I was recovering from a strain injury in my arm, I could not even listen to music as my hand reacted with pain, thus preventing recovery. I had to take a break from music to regain my ability to work.

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I work as a violinist in the FINNISH RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA and in the contemporary music group UUSINTA ENSEMBLE. Musicians gradually learn to be sensitive to each other’s body language and to understand the nuances of ensemble music. Any feelings are contagious. I have cried and laughed in both rehearsals and concerts. Music strikes when you least expect it: when I play, I am defenceless against those feelings that music can bring to the surface. The power of music became really clear to me in a rehearsal for ANTON BRUCKNER’S Ninth Symphony, conducted by HERBERT BLOMSTEDT. While he was fine-tuning some of the intricacies of the score, I was suddenly overcome with emotion and could not hold back tears. That moment of utter concentration when contemplating music remains one of my most significant and sacred musical experiences.

You can never predict how and when music will strike. OUTI

TARKIAINEN’S work *Metsän hiljaisuuteen* [Into the Woodland Silence], performed at the 2012 Tampere Biennale by AILI IKONEN and the UMO JAZZ ORCHESTRA, unearthed something hidden within me, and I could barely thank the composer through my sobbing. Since that moment, Tarkiainen’s music has spoken to me. I predict that my personal musical memento of this coronavirus spring will be Tarkiainen’s string quartet work *Trois Poèmes*, which I had the opportunity of performing with my colleagues at the Radio Symphony Orchestra’s streamed chamber music concert.

I also perceive my life through the works of my life companion, composer OSMO TAPIO RÄIHÄLÄ. His works have become dear to me because our life and all its events are present in them. I remember tracing the poems of his quintet *Zen* in a Buddhist monastery in Paris, the specific artworks that inspired his violin and piano duet *Three Sketches for Stephan Dill*, or how his string orchestra work *Stream* burst forth. I follow the process of his compositions, give feedback on violin-related details in his works, and in the end often take on the role of interpreting his work.

Sometimes an extramusical narrative can assist in adding a personal significance to a piece of music. In autumn 2017 ERIK BERGMAN’S violin and guitar duet *Janus* was waiting on my music stand, but I really struggled to grasp the work. Finally, I decided to learn about Janus, the ancient two-faced Roman god who can see the future and the past at the same time. Holding a key in his right hand, Janus is a god of all beginnings, ends, gates, doors, and change. Through this narrative I finally managed to add to the work my own significances and musical interpretations, rising from my reflections about life at that time.

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I seldom listen to music during my free time. I enjoy concerts, but I find it difficult to sit still as my body would prefer to join in the playing. I listen

to music in order to learn new repertoire, to understand small details in the works or to improve my own performance through recording myself. When I walk, my head is full of music as my mind continues to rehearse, or the tunes from the concert the night before wriggle around as earworms.

Listening is also a part of playing, and after a workday saturated with sound, I crave silence. Acknowledging this fact is a requirement in maintaining a peaceful home life: progressive rock is only allowed after having a proper rest!

There is, of course, music that I actively choose to listen to. I never get tired of Schubert’s lieder or ROBERT SCHUMANN’S *Dichterliebe*. Somehow the mood is always right to listen to them. My own life experiences keep adding depth and personal feelings to the songs, which music then helps to process, sometimes through raw pain, sometimes from a distance. And I am guilty of self-medicating my broken heart with an overdose of melancholy ballads and JACQUES BREL’S chansons!

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While writing this text, I have been listening to GUSTAV MAHLER’S symphonies. In that music, time stands still and my own life, with all its sensitivity and fragility, with my joys and sorrows, is magically present.

My coronavirus spring ended with two working days at the Radio Symphony Orchestra. After the isolation, it felt immensely important to be able to play together with my colleagues. In the end, the most meaningful thing about music is the interaction with others: when players and audiences come together to experience music. © Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi/mariapuusaari.net](http://fmq.fi/mariapuusaari.net)

# Trumpeter Verner Pohjola: Music giving solace and strength

BY Petri Silas

**Trumpeter Verner Pohjola spent the weird spring of 2020 pretty much the same way as all professional musicians worldwide: taking part in streamed concerts and honing his chops and working on new music at home. His new album *The Dead Don't Dream* was released in May. At FMQ’s request, Pohjola spoke to Petri Silas about the music that gives him solace and strength when the going gets tough.**



© Perttu Saksa

“Much as I admire and respect how the sublime 1969 MILES DAVIS album *Filles de Kilimanjaro* functions as an intact and poised piece of art or how craftily CANNONBALL ADDERLEY handles the alto saxophone in his solo on Miles’ arrangement of the COLE PORTER classic *Love for Sale*, I must confess that my go-to piece of music in times of trouble does not come from the realm of jazz at all. Hand on heart, my personal ‘strength song’ is the poignant and heart-rendingly beautiful *It’s Not Up to You* by BJÖRK.

My relationship with the Icelandic singer’s totally idiosyncratic, always inventive and often otherworldly music began in full when her fifth album *Medúlla* was released in the fall of 2004. We had already recorded and released our reading of Björk’s *Anchor Song* on *March of the Alpha Males*, the debut album by ILMILIEKKI QUARTET, but the impetus had originally come from pianist TUOMO PRÄTTÄLÄ. At that point, I had the singles *Oh So Quiet* and *Hyperballad* but never really thought about interpreting Björk’s music in any kind of electronic setting. This was to change a bit later when nu-soul group WARP! invited me along on their tour of Finland, where the set

list comprised almost exclusively of Björk’s material.

The album that really captured my imagination was *Medúlla*’s predecessor *Vespertine* (2001). That’s where I found *It’s Not Up to You*. Written by Björk and Danish electronica composer THOMAS KNAK, this disarming track blasted my defences and immediately made it to my ‘power play’ list. I was enthralled by the charismatic album and the ease with which Björk managed to conjure up an entire universe of colours, possibilities and wonder.

*Vespertine* laid out vistas I had never experienced before. And have yet to experience again. On the surface, it comes across as a solid electronic pop album where one song follows the other. But in fact, *Vespertine* is an organically evolving entity where the climaxes are built up very naturally and inexorably. The structure follows its own logic, weaving a thread that flows through the entire duration of the disc.

Aside from the regular array of samples on a turn-of-the-millennium pop album, the sonics on *Vespertine* comprise a wide array of sounds produced by using kitchenware,



other household items and noises recorded in the wild. Elements such as a children's choir and ancient keyboard instruments are combined with influences from modern classical music and woven into the tapestry of the album.”

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“After a fashion, this open method of experimenting appeals to me as a musician. On the one hand I would like to try and work in a similar manner. But on the other, I'm afraid or at least apprehensive because I might not have the stamina to pull off such a project. I'm not that proficient at noodling with electronic gear and my attention span when working on minute details like that is not the best in the world. Luckily I have friends such as SAMULI KOSMINEN and TUOMAS NORVIO with whom such an undertaking might one day become reality.

But all in all, I guess I'm an improviser at heart and that attribute will always steer me in a certain direction. For me, it is natural to create a narrative and a dramatic structure in music through real-time playing instead of plotting out a secure path in advance.”

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“A defining factor of my deep connection with *It's Not Up to You* is the song's uplifting and gracious message. The lyrics first come across as very simple. But the layers open up ever more as one concentrates on the words. And this combination of something hidden and something very straightforward appeals to me.

There is no great mystery or riddle to be solved in the lyrics, but the song carries a very powerful message. The feeling of solace and peace combined with an underlying sense of power has carried me through some tough times and rough patches. With the situation in the world now being what it is, I'm sure I will be needing the strength, hope and confidence *It's Not Up to You* gives me in the future as well.” ©

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi.verneripohjola.com](http://fmq.fi.verneripohjola.com)

## Conductor Klaus Mäkelä: Music that matters

BY Andrew Mellor

**In August 2020 conductor Klaus Mäkelä became the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra's youngest chief conductor at the age of 24. Last spring Mäkelä spoke to Andrew Mellor about how and what kind of music has been sustaining him through the period of Covid-19.**



© Marco Borggreve and Oslo Philharmonic

“I came home from Paris in the middle of March, and the scale of things really hit me when I got to the airport in Helsinki. I started to realise that everyone is going to be affected by this. Coming concerts were cancelled immediately but, gradually, concerts much further ahead started to be cancelled; I became very worried for my festival in Turku [Mäkelä is the artistic director of the Turku Festival] and then for the start of my tenure at the OSLO PHILHARMONIC.

Like everyone, I suppose my thoughts were going through various phases. Then I thought this might be a brilliant opportunity to study new repertoire and find new approaches and new perspectives to other music. But there came a time when I started to wonder when I would actually get to conduct again, and in what circumstances.

A conductor without an orchestra is a musician without an instrument. I was lucky in that I immediately had some time with my cello. Playing an instrument, you are at least connected somehow to sound – you have a physical connection to music.”

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“The whole world stopping is, hopefully, a once-in-a-lifetime event – a moment the whole world has shared.

That makes you think a lot. It's hard to put into words, but I've been trying to ensure that I evaluate things when I eventually get back to work – that I consider what the role of the chief conductor actually is, and in particular, what the connection with our audience actually means. This is something we take for granted.

When the quarantine was in full force, I couldn't think of a day without music; we were listening to different types of music for maybe five or six hours a day. I have been immersing myself in GUSTAV MAHLER, and for partly professional reasons. This has been the perfect time for it.

Mahler is a composer in whom you just have to immerse yourself and you rarely have that kind of opportunity in normal life, because – just like Mahler, ironically – you're conducting other people's music all the time. I'll be doing a lot of Mahler in this coming season and in the season after that.

He grew up in a world where death was more a part of life. Of course, his music is so powerful and so emotional and so tragic, but it also has this tendency to suddenly change mood, from darkness to light. It combines this tragedy with an overwhelming beauty that almost seems to come from somewhere else. For me, that is a very good description of living in

quarantine – journeying through all these different moods.

Mahler's First Symphony [performed in Mäkelä's inaugural concert in Oslo in August], is precisely such a symphony, with one of those moments: in the middle of a funeral march, when a melody from *Songs of a Wayfarer* suddenly appears. It looks very possible that we will go ahead with that concert. It would be *such* a moment.

To be honest, playing any piece with an orchestra right now – even just a miniature of a few minutes – would mean so much emotionally to me and to the musicians. Mahler's First Symphony would be quite a symbolic gesture.

But of course, when an orchestra hasn't been playing together for half a year, we need to think about how quickly can we get up to a certain level, because we are not just happy with anything – we want to aim high. So I am glad that the orchestra musicians in Oslo have been playing together in some form, broadcasting concerts under the wonderful *Interlude* project.”

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“At some point I should be completing a BEETHOVEN symphony cycle that I started two years ago with the TAPIOLA SINFONIETTA. We had to cancel the Eighth Symphony and have the *Missa solennis* and the Ninth Symphony still to do.

The *Missa solennis* has been a great inspiration over these past months. Somehow, the piece just makes me think about everything so much and continues to have a huge emotional impact. It's like looking at a great building or a great artwork: you cannot help but look at it and think, how can somebody write something like this? I always thought that when listening to it, but now I have had the time to really, really read the piece from the score. I still don't really understand how it can be possible for someone to write something like this.” ©

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi.klausmakela.com](http://fmq.fi.klausmakela.com)

## Violinist Alina Järvelä: In a chain of players

BY Amanda Kauranne

**Violinist and educator Alina Järvelä, who grew up in Kaustinen, specialises in folk and early music. In the middle of the Covid-19 spring, she reflected upon her musical journey – learning and playing music.**



© Tero Ahonen

“My musical journey is far from usual, having grown up in such a peculiar place as Kaustinen,” Alina Järvelä says. The Kaustinen fiddling tradition has been nominated for inclusion in UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, in recognition of a culture of fiddle-playing that has thrived in the region ever since the 1700s. Järvelä's own extended family is full of folk musicians, or pelimannis in Finnish.

“My family was always playing, and I was given my first violin so young that I have absolutely no recollection of that moment. For a Kaustinen child, however, my musical journey was pretty standard. Playing was a part of everyday life, just like going to school, and even teenagers accept that as the status quo. After finishing the local music high school, I continued my studies with a music performance degree, and later graduated as a music teacher from the Pirkanmaa University of Applied Sciences, although it was definitely teaching that had interested me ever since my early teens. I somehow thought it would be more difficult to get into the music education programme!”

“While studying classical music full-time, I kept playing a lot of folk music at the same time. It was a lifesaver for me, something that felt less like practising and more like fun.”

### Frixx got trampled by coronavirus

Folk music is an important part of Järvelä's professional life, with her ensemble FRIGG being one of Finland's most successful folk groups. While still at music high school, she founded the ensemble together with her brother ESKO and their cousin ANTTI. When Antti later began his studies at the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department, he started to see the group's potential and invited his fellow students, plucked-string specialists TUOMAS LOGRÉN and PETRI PRAUDA, to join the ensemble, as well as the Norwegian LARSEN brothers. Frigg have continued to engage audiences around the world for over two decades, despite slight line-up changes over the years.

Frigg's anniversary year and the launch tour of their anniversary album *Frixx* was completely derailed by the coronavirus pandemic. The ensemble had planned to tour the Finnish festival circuit in the summer and the United States and England in the autumn, as well as playing some gigs in Europe. In the end, they had only one streamed gig at Our Festival in Tuusula.

### Anchored by music

“At the turning points of my life, music





continued ➤

has helped me so that when faced with difficulties, I have been able to direct my thoughts elsewhere through playing. It is not so much about the musical genre or instrument, but about concentrating on the activity. I am lucky to have had the opportunity to learn how to play,” Järvelä reflects. “Though sometimes I wonder whether I am a real musician at all, seeing that I cannot listen to music at times when things are going badly for me. Music invokes memories and feelings that are just too strong. But even then, it feels natural to pick up the violin and gather my thoughts through playing. It has helped me many times.”

Music also helped Järvelä to find a new direction after returning from Denmark, where she had spent a couple of years working. “I didn’t know where I wanted to live so when I landed in Helsinki, I simply stayed here,” she laughs. “I didn’t know the local scene well, and I wanted something useful to do and new skills to learn, so I decided to apply to the Sibelius Academy to study early music.

“There is a lot of shared ground between folk and Baroque music,

but as both genres are so extensive it is difficult to define that crossover exactly,” Järvelä muses. “But just in general, folk and Baroque music share a dance-like quality and the forms are associated with dance. Both genres also include improvisation – often in the form of variation and ornamentation, which is based on thorough knowledge of the stylistic language of the genre. It is by no means free improvisation!”

Although Järvelä follows the Baroque music scene in her professional capacity, her CD shelf is dominated by folk music. “Folk music to me, deep down, is a sincere form of music. I find it touching how folk music pieces, the ‘trads’, were originally born through some uneducated person who just happened to like that particular tune.”

#### Chain of players

“I play our local Kaustinen pieces in the style of my grandfather, because it was his versions of the traditional tunes that we all learned growing up,” Järvelä says. “It felt like nothing special back then, but now it’s great to play the same pieces and be a part in the continuum of generations. Inno-

vation is important, but so is fostering traditions. Music is a message from the generations before us. Their tunes used to live with them and now they live through us. It is more difficult to preserve material tradition – things go missing, houses rot down, even landscapes keep changing, but music is something that remains.

“I want to pass the tradition of playing on to my own child as well,” Järvelä says. “I want him to be able to be part of this chain of generations and to learn at least one way of processing his feelings through playing. I don’t need him to become a top musician, I just want him to learn the skills needed to play for his own enjoyment or to find comfort in a moment of loneliness, for example. I have the same wish for my own students: that they keep going long enough to acquire a solid playing technique, so that they can then use it to express and defuse their feelings. To me, that is the most important thing in learning and playing music.”

© Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi/riigg.fi](http://fmq.fi/riigg.fi)

# Pandemic proves to be mother of invention

BY Anu Ahola and Hanna Isolammi

For all the grief that the coronavirus pandemic has caused, it has also brought out a great many strengths in the music sector – people in the arts are no strangers to creative, solution-orientated thinking and reactivity. The following is a selection of highlights among the new operating models and solutions adopted in Finland in 2020.

#### Interaction goes digital

When restrictions on gatherings were put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic, music quickly went online. Orchestras and opera houses released their digital performance archives for free viewing, and bands and musicians began to post content online, accessible to everyone.

Indeed, one of the most prominent positive outcomes of the coronavirus spring in the music sector was the interaction between audiences and musicians on social media. Video messages – by both individual musicians and entire orchestras – podcasts, streams and commissioned videos were very well received, and it seems likely that some orchestras will retain these as part of their regular operations.

One example of social media content attracting widespread praise and numerous views is the video released by SINFONIA LAHTI in April featuring 62 musicians performing Sibelius’s *Finlandia* – each in their home studio.

#### Music Club via mobile app

The G LIVELAB clubs in Helsinki and Tampere have had a mobile app in place ever since they were opened. This app has facilities not only for ticket purchases but also for ordering refreshments directly to your table. The latter has been especially useful for ensuring safety and avoiding close contacts, given the restrictions that have been in place since it became permissible to have gigs again.

The G Livelab concept also included streaming from the very first, well before the pandemic ever broke out. There was thus a system in place for professional live-streaming for which a fee could be charged. The G Livelab mobile app has also proved useful for tracing contacts among attendees if exposure to an infected person should make that necessary.

#### Tuska Utopia online show concept

Tuska Utopia is a concept conceived and produced by the Tuska metal music organisation. It merges metal concerts, state-of-the-art music video aesthetics and a travel show. Launched in November, episodes in this series each feature a concert and an artist interview, followed by an introduction to the location as in a travel show on TV. Each location features both an actual place in Finland and a fantasy location created for the show. The bands playing in the Tuska Utopia show are industrial metal ensemble TURMION KÄTILÖT (at the Suvilahti gas bell), power metal band BATTLE BEAST (at the secret stone castle) and cello metal pioneers APOCALYPTICA (at the ruined church of St Michael at Pälkäne).

#### Digital leap in music exports

The pandemic also served to escalate the digital leap in music exports and promotion. MUSIC FINLAND has been facilitating networking and international discussions online in many ways while accumulating expertise in music exports for the post-coronavirus era. The first virtual export tour, to Mexico, was organised in the spring, and in the autumn the concept was extended to other markets. International songwriting camps were organised on a hybrid model: at the sessions, Finnish songwriters were present in person, while their foreign colleagues attended virtually. © Translation: Jaakko Mäntytjärvi

For more novel concepts and operating models see *Performances of the year*, pp. 60–65. The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](http://fmq.fi).



# JOINING VOICES



*On these pages, we address manifestations of collective creativity and authorship in music at a time when humanity perhaps more than ever needs to be able to work together and to adapt to the new and unknown. Can things be done differently, together, through dialogue?*



# ART OF THE FUTURE

# THE ART OF TOGETHER

BY Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet has launched an extensive project to integrate cutting-edge technology into the world of art in multiple ways, seeking synergies and tools for new kinds of cooperation and communality in both planning and audience relations.

Ancient art forms rest on a foundation of tradition, and as such they can easily become trapped by their history. Innovative departures are all very well, but it is a challenge to get them to drill down to the foundations and to ensure that they attain lasting value instead of just scratching the surface. The Finnish National Opera and Ballet (FNOB) has taken this issue to task by launching a comprehensive project of exploration called *Opera Beyond*.

The purpose of this project is to explore the artistic applications of cutting-edge technology across multiple platforms and thus introduce new means for producing meaningful experiences at various levels of an opera production. The potential of technology can act as a catalyst and challenge conventional thinking right down to the core of the art form, from the conception of what an artwork is to the relationship with the audience and to the creative process.

"We're going on an expedition. We've never done anything like this," says LILLI PAASIKIVI, Artistic Director of the Finnish National Opera. "We need to be open to the opportunities that this project will bring up. There are a lot of unknowns here, and it's exciting that we can't know at the outset what we're going to find!"

"Now that people have secluded themselves because of the pandemic, experiencing art in digital form has become hugely more important. In this context, the aims of the *Opera Beyond* project are very timely. Communality and encounters with art have found new forms in this time of isolation," Paasikivi adds.

The company of course always keeps a sharp lookout for new trends in performance technologies, but this project entails a deliberate step away from the comfort zone of opera to seek new and concrete approaches. The potential of artificial intelligence and virtual reality has been tested in an immersive installation named *Laila*, a collaborative effort by ESA-PEKKA SALONEN, singer-songwriter and actress PAULA VESALA and the EKKO COLLECTIVE, premiered in August 2020. Salonen provided the music, Vesala created the dramaturgy, and the work was executed by the Ekho Collective, which won the ideas competition for an interactive and immersive artwork held by the FNOB. Nearly 200 applications from 32 countries were received.

## Sharing ideas

*Opera Beyond* is the result of a snowball effect. In 2016 Esa-Pekka Salonen became Artist in Association of the FNOB. "When we started talking about cooperation with Esa-Pekka, he expressed his interest in new technologies.

**"WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES, BECAUSE THAT ENSURES THAT OPERA AS AN ART FORM WILL NOT BECOME STAGNANT."**  
- LILLI PAASIKIVI



I took him up on this word, because it was a good idea for a development project for us," says Lilli Paasikivi.

The contemplation of new technology evolved into a broad-based project, described at the FNOB as an "ecosystem". It includes experimental productions, innovative concrete production tools and collaboration development.

A conference was planned for May 2020 to bring together performing arts people to discuss new technology, but cancelled due to Covid-19. Paasikivi would be pleased for the *Opera Beyond* project to be able to offer a forum for such a meeting of professionals.

"We want to give space to dialogue, to interaction and to ideas – and I hope it will translate into concrete benefits for operators in this field!"

The Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation was on board with *Opera Beyond* from the start. It was a condition of the Foundation's funding that the knowledge generated in the project would be shared with the entire sector. The approach was international from the first. "All opera houses explore new technologies, but the FNOB project is one of the most extensive. We should be able to learn from each other more," says Paasikivi, who goes on to explain that the visual element in opera has been constantly changing over the decades and that production teams have always been interested in new possibilities. Projections and video art have become commonplace in the performing arts in the past 20 years or so, and they have improved hugely in the process. Technological advances progress rapidly, and this poses a challenge for arts institutions.

"We have an obligation to explore the potential of new technologies, because that ensures that opera as an art form will not become stagnant," says Paasikivi. "It's not about replacing something valuable with technological tricks; this can enrich opera and bring it up to the present day, making it relevant in a new way."



*Laila* is a pilot work for testing new technology, an installation within a dome-like structure that can be exported from the FNOB and function as a calling card for the *Opera Beyond* project. Paasikivi notes that the next step is to introduce new technologies to productions on the main stage.

Paula Vesala, who is responsible for the dramaturgy of *Laila*, points out that the marriage of technology and art goes back a long way. “Film-makers have developed camera equipment, musicians have built new instruments such as synthesisers from scratch, people interested in acoustics and sound reproduction have created new systems, and so on. For me, technology is a tool for exploring communication and how to create meanings and experiences in new ways and in new environments,” she says.

Cooperation creates a virtuous circle

Visual designers, programmers, service designers. Artists from various branches of the arts. Experts in the moving

image, audio and robotics. The Ekho Collective is a multi-disciplinary cluster of people who share an interest in technology, experientiality and immersion. The working group came together as a result of being inspired by the *Opera Beyond* ideas competition; its seven members (now eight, TUOMAS NORVIO having joined later) were excited by the idea of testing their skills in the context of art.

“We were really excited that the National Opera wanted to do something like this,” says SAARA MÄKINEN, and MINJA AXELSSON and IINA TAIJONLAHTI agree. Mäkinen and Axelsson are experiential designers; Mäkinen is also a visual designer and Axelsson is a programmer. Taijonlahti is a dance artist and choreographer.

“We’d all been waiting for a chance to combine art and technology in an unanticipated way, opening up new artistic potential,” explains Minja Axelsson.

The working group describes *Laila* as “an interactive, immersive work that invites the audience to build a world of its own. The musical and visual world of the work is shaped

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- PAULA VESALA

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© Kari Ylitalo/Suomen kansallisooppera

THE PROTOTYPES FOR THIS  
WORK BEGAN WITH LEGO  
FIGURES AND MIXING BOWLS,  
AND ENDED UP AS VIRTUAL  
SIMULATIONS DESIGNED FOR  
EXPLORING VARIOUS KINDS  
OF EXPERIENCES.

in interaction between audience members and the artificial intelligence.”

The work is a laboratory that explores not only the potential of technology but also the potential of multidisciplinary cooperation. The Ekho Collective brings together multiple perspectives that joined forces with the visions of Esa-Pekka Salonen and Paula Vesala.

Prototypes and testing

The trio emphasise that *Laila* was built around the experience, not around the technology. In creating the world of the work, they first decided what kind of an experience they wanted to create and then investigated what technological solutions would be needed to achieve it.

At the time of this interview, in February, the Ekho Collective was about to begin building the actual hemispherical installation in a physical space.

“When technology plays such a huge role, the process is rather special: it’s iterative, testing,” says Saara Mäkinen. “When you divide things up into smaller components and share them in various forms, everyone knows where we are and we can validate which designs work. It’s prototyping.”

The prototypes for this work began with Lego figures and mixing bowls, and ended up as virtual simulations designed for exploring various kinds of experiences. At the final stage, the completed work will be tested on actual people.

“What is interesting is that in this work, technology is the object of study and even of criticism,” says Minja Axelsson. “Our hope is that the immersive nature of the work will make the technology more tangible and help to deconstruct the mythology that the media have spun around artificial intelligence.”

An essential part of this is that in *Laila* – as in immersive and interactive art in general – the objective is to make audience members active participants. Iina Taijonlahti explains how traditional artworks are put on display for visitors to look at, while immersion means that visitors can, indeed, immerse themselves in the work and be active participants. In *Laila*, the presence and movements of the visitor have an impact on the world of the work.

She says that the key artistic question in *Laila* has to do with agency – both that of a human and that of technology. “What kind of agency does technology have, how can we use agency as material for an artwork, what is our relationship to technology?” Taijonlahti says. “Technology and human reflect off each other. Technology can be used to take humanity forwards, but technology cannot exist without human agency.” (More about *Laila* on page 64.)

Positive questioning

Lilli Paasikivi is happy that *Opera Beyond* has opened up channels for a new kind of dialogue between branches of culture and to the corporate world. The partnership of *Opera Beyond* with the Experiments in Arts and Technology department at Nokia Bell Labs was announced in February.

From the perspective of the FNOB, this involves questioning its own operations in a positive way: could we do things in ways other than those that we are used to? “We have to ask ourselves what opera will be like in a few decades. We can stand with one foot in tradition and the other in the present day, looking towards the future and keeping our ears open to what’s happening in the world,” says Paasikivi. The expectation is that *Opera Beyond* will yield new ideas for both artistic content and operations more generally. Paasikivi also hopes for courage in the world of opera to seize the potential of technology. “It’s entirely possible that not everything will work, but we have to be able to try things out. I don’t want us to consider opera to be overly sacred and untouchable.”

*Opera Beyond* examines and carries forwards the marriage of art and technology in the history of humankind. As Paula Vesala says: “Technology is sometimes seen as inhuman and even as frightening. Actually, it has helped us communicate in many new ways, to extend our lifespans and to operate globally. In the face of climate change, pandemics and all other great challenges facing humanity and the Earth, the role of art is clear: it explores humanity and interprets the meaning and character of life – something that no code or clinical analysis can ever fathom.” © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi



# COMPOSERS

## IN COLLABORATION

BY Merja Hottinen

The Heinä team © Jouni Jalainen

Collaborative composing is not common among Finnish composers of art music, and the approach raises several critical questions. Is it even possible to share musical creation and innovation with another person? Does group work inevitably lead to bland or incoherent compromises, or can it produce art of a high quality? Is the incentive for co-authoring works that it is trendy or that commissioners want it that way, or do composers have other reasons for engaging with it? Despite numerous reservations, some composers have found collaboration to be an enriching aspect of writing music.

Collaboration is one of the keywords of contemporary society. Many areas of culture and authorship, such as non-fiction and visual art, are embracing the collective approach. Collaborative composing initiatives have occasionally been put forwards in Finland over the past few decades, beginning with the “happenings” of the 1960s and the collective works of the 1980s, and more recent examples such as *Massahumu* [Mass buzz] produced by the Ears open! society for the 60th birthday of ESA-PEKKA SALONEN or the works written by composers of that society in teams of two for the Musica nova Helsinki festival in 2019.

Having said that, we must note that the phenomenon is not widespread among Finnish composers. Art music remains largely an individual pursuit, with the music being exposed to an audience and to wider debate only when the score is finished and can be shared, first with performers and then with listeners. Collaboration is far more common at junctures between branches of the arts, or with or between performing musicians.

For all the buzz that it is generating, collaborative composing is a relatively new phenomenon. One symptom of this is that it is not yet definitively clear what the term actually means. “Collaborative composing” has been used to refer to any number of communal projects, crowdsourcing, composer collectives, cooperation between composer and musician, well-established music-writing partnerships and other kinds of contributing or co-authoring.

There is a similar plurality in the reasons why such works are being created, both in art music and in other branches of the arts. HANNA KUUSELA, who has studied collaboration in literature, has found that in her discipline the motivation may have to do with breaking out of isolation, renouncing individualism or riding the trend. For some, the motivation may simply have to do with achieving a better end result or involving multiple voices.

### Two sets of ideas

SANNA AHVENJÄRVI and TAPPIO LAPPALAINEN have forged separate careers as composers, but they have also created four works together to date. The most recent, *Water*, is a piece with a climate change theme; it was scheduled to be premiered at the Tampere Biennale in April 2020 until the festival was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Based in northern Finland, Ahvenjärvi and Lappalainen are a couple with children. They initially ended up writing music together just to simplify the division of household duties in the face of a looming deadline and to give them equal opportunities to spend time both with their work and with their family. The experience was a positive one and prompted them to continue; they report that writing music together has done a lot of good, not least by bringing a social dimension to an otherwise rather lonely pursuit.

In research literature, collaborative composing has been categorised in multiple ways. There are different ways of sharing responsibilities and different hierarchies of authors.

Composer ALAN TAYLOR, in his study (2016), distinguished between *consultative*, *co-operative* and *collaborative working*. In a genuine collaboration, composers have an equal share in the actual writing of the music and in the decisions concerning the work being written.

With Ahvenjärvi and Lappalainen, it is very much a case of the latter. They work on sections of a composition in true dialogue, and the end result displays the hallmarks of them both. “One of us may have an idea and write it down, and the other can take it from there. There are two sets of ideas overlapping, because we both bring our own style and our own ideas into the mix,” they say.

“There have been many times where I’ve thought, wow, I wouldn’t have come up with that,” says Ahvenjärvi. As an example, Lappalainen’s background in music technology led to the introduction in *Water* of a hydrophone frozen into a block of ice, giving off a sound when a percussionist hits the ice in concert. More generally, a second pair of eyes is useful for seeing the big picture when one of the duo has been closely working on a particular section – providing insights into moving material around, for example, or in trimming unnecessary additions.

### Dialogue changes a composer

For composer RIIKKA TALVITIE, the motivation for entering collaborative projects was to open up the work of a composer and the aesthetics of contemporary music to wider discussion. She is completing a doctorate at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki focusing on broadening the work of a composer from the perspectives of shared authorship and communality. Talvitie has just begun a composition project with composer LAURI SUPPONEN and musicologist JUHA TORVINEN, and their work, which is to have a Baltic Sea theme, will be performed at Meidän Festivaali [Our Festival] in Järvenpää in 2021.

For Talvitie, this is the first project in which she shares composing duties with another professional composer, but it is by no means her first collaborative project. She has worked in various contexts with material contributed by audiences, communities or the young musicians who were to perform the piece, and she has also collaborated with artists in other fields. A case in point is the video work *Heinä* [Grass], on which she worked with dramaturge PIPSA LONKA, literally side by side, making decisions together and exploring where the work was going; in genuine collaboration, in other words, to use Taylor’s term.

“It’s been baby steps, but I’ve been trying to introduce an element of dialogue to my composing,” says Talvitie. Her experiences have been of great importance to her composer identity. “I’ve found that

Sanna Ahvenjärvi and Tapio Lappalainen © Satu Renko





dialogue changes me irrevocably. I can no longer claim the exclusive right to decide.”

On the other hand, with genuine collaboration comes new power. “Multimedia works operate in the interfaces between art forms, and I’ve learned that I can have an opinion and a say in content issues beyond my sphere, so to speak, in a collaborative project. That’s been hard to come to terms with, because composers have traditionally not been consulted on this kind of content,” says Talvitie.

#### Opening up composing with communication

One difficult aspect of sharing this traditionally lonely occupation is communication, because a composer may find it difficult to verbalise his or her ideas or choices in the midst of the process. Ahvenjärvi, Lappalainen and Talvitie all emphasise the importance of communication and trust in collaborative composing.

Communication does not necessarily have to be verbal. “You can communicate directly with music, non-verbally, by trying out things in parallel or even at the same time,” notes Talvitie.

For Ahvenjärvi and Lappalainen, communication largely works by writing out and processing musical ideas, but it may nevertheless be difficult to understand the other person’s ideas without having a conversation in words. A frequent exchange of ideas ensures that both are on the same page, figuratively speaking, about where the work is going. “Talking about your ideas as early as possible is hugely important,” says Lappalainen. “Sometimes you get so invested in your own material that you feel insulted if someone else takes it and runs with it in another direction. I don’t think I could work with anyone else but Tapio, because with him I can be myself, with all my vulnerabilities and emotional exposure,” adds Ahvenjärvi.

Riikka Talvitie agrees that working with new people is always a risk. “You can never know how the group dynamic will work, what conflicts will emerge – as sometimes happens. If you want to collaborate, you have to be prepared to negotiate and engage in discussion,” says Talvitie. “I’ve gradually begun to enjoy it, actually!”

#### One voice or many?

Collaborative experiments have often been criticised for producing either bland compromises or incoherent and conflicting end products. In a column published in the *Rondo* music magazine in 2019, composer OLLI VIRTAPERKO expressed his concern that joint projects might cause composing to lose something of its edgy artistic risk-taking and innovation, and to degenerate into a lacklustre exercise that produces “safe, familiar and listener-friendly” music.

Riikka Talvitie does not see this as an inevitable evolution. On the contrary, her experience is that collaboration can import a lot of interesting elements into a work. “Group work can lend a fresh edge and added polish to the end result.

**“IF YOU WANT TO COLLABORATE, YOU HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE AND ENGAGE IN DISCUSSION.”**  
– RIIKKA TALVITIE

Also, each contributor can play to their strengths,” says Talvitie. “I’m sure that many people feel that this would lead to the weakening of large-scale musical structures. But with the world full of ambitious people, it doesn’t have to be that way. Collaboration is not the same as commercialisation.”

A relevant issue brought up by Virtaperko and others is whether the motivation to engage in joint projects comes from the composer himself or herself, or whether it is the commissioning party that is keen to climb on the bandwagon of this much-discussed phenomenon. Hanna Kuusela poses the same question: will trendiness prod people towards collaborative authoring even when that approach produces no meaning or meaningful content, even for the creator himself or herself, or when for whatever reason it would feel better to work alone?

For Virtaperko at least, an individual character and a personal voice are cornerstones of a composer’s identity. “Artistic freedom with maximum opportunities to express yourself on your own terms is the only real and meaningful motivation for a composer,” writes Virtaperko.

Talvitie, however, points out that the role of the conventional individualist composer may be a restrictive one. She came to engage in communal experiments partly because she did not feel entirely comfortable with the traditional role of a composer. On the other hand, she also feels that a composer’s “voice” could be discussed in more analytical terms than is usually the case. “You might have composition students practise various kinds of musical expression, for example by writing in someone else’s style or ‘voice.’”

There may even be multiple voices within a single work. “You don’t have to have a single unifying logic within a work. Diversity is just as valuable and may even be regarded by the audience as an important element,” says Talvitie. “Nowadays, with electronics and multimedia and so on, there is even less justification for requiring a work to be integrated or traditional in its form and appearance.”

#### What matters, the method or the music?

One of the courses announced for the Time of Music festival 2020 [later cancelled due to Covid-19] was to focus on collaborative composition. The instructors, SANDEEP BHAGWATI and CATHERINE MILLIKEN, are members of the

© Maarit Kytöharju



Riikka Talvitie, Minna Leinonen and Kristina Kuusisto at Tampere Biennale 2018.

trans-traditional ENSEMBLE EXTRAKTE based in Berlin. Its operating principle is to foster communication and inspiration between musical traditions and to create music collectively, without a headline composer.

Bhagwati is a composer known particularly for combining Indian traditional music with Western contemporary practice in innovative ways. The objective of the course is to discover ways of creating music collectively in a group consisting of composers with varied backgrounds, including ways of making music together imported from outside the realm of Western art music.

Composer JOHAN TALLGREN, artistic director of the Time of Music festival, sees potential in collaborative composition for improving the working potential of composers on the one hand and fostering multicultural integration on the other. “Many of the people applying for Bhagwati’s course are composers in mid-career who want to learn new ways of making music,” says Tallgren. “And if the collective approach genuinely produces multicultural interaction, it becomes confrontative in an interesting way, compared with a situation where you only have five white men or five white women together. You get this discussion about traditions, orally transmitted traditions and meanings. Collab-

orative composition is not a new thing outside Western cultures; it appears in many traditions,” says Tallgren.

“Having said that, it is true that processual art has an inherent challenge in that doing things together can easily become more important than the end result. It’s almost like a therapy thing. In collective visual art, for example, scholars have criticised it for removing itself from the sphere of aesthetic discourse,” notes Tallgren. It is certainly true that in many cases communal projects aim to break free of the autonomy of aesthetics and focus on communal experiences instead.

One key to reconciling the different value systems involved might be a discussion of the nature of composing as advocated by Talvitie and of what the outcomes of collaboration are or should be, and of the strengths and weaknesses of the method itself.

It does not help that communal composition initiatives are often one-off projects that do not have a natural niche in the monolithic-work world of art music. “Projects requiring new ways of working can require a huge effort and are then never repeated,” notes Riikka Talvitie. © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi



# LISTENING, IMPROVISING AND TRUST

BY Matti Nives

Saxophonist Jukka Perko has taken his musical communication ideas into other fields of working life with successful lectures combining musical thinking and everyday workplace dynamics. Can listening to improvisation in music teach us something about working together and communicating?

March 2020. The coronavirus pandemic has taken hostage the whole world and especially the fragile ecosystem of cultural entities. Small and large businesses are scratching their heads for new innovations to aid the process of steering clear of the challenges in a sustainable way. Innovation, specifically digital innovation, is needed. Where does that leave the ancient act of making music by improvising together, collectively?

“Well, if it’s any indication, I just hosted my first distance learning session for my students at the Sibelius Academy,” says saxophonist JUKKA PERKO with amusement. Based in Helsinki, he is teaching a course aimed at equipping future jazz musicians with the tools needed on the road to becoming professionals. “We initially had two hours reserved for the session, but ended up spending three.”

One of the most successful Finnish jazz musicians of all time, Perko is no stranger to thinking about the possibilities

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## THE COMMUNITY REQUIRES TRUST IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT BOLD DECISIONS TOGETHER. – JUKKA PERKO

and pitfalls of human communication, be it within a jazz group or any kind of organisation. Both situations involve people who benefit from making their ideas flow effortlessly – in other words: improvising together. For more than a decade, Perko has been taking his musical communication ideas into other fields of working life with successful lectures combining musical thinking and everyday workplace dynamics.

“It all has to do with trust,” he says. “The community, whatever it is, requires trust in order to implement bold decisions together. And sometimes that takes a long time to develop.”

Perko says that each individual in a group needs trust as a building block for situations in which it is possible to turn one’s attention outwards, away from the self. “This feeling comes naturally, and it helps us to connect with something bigger than any one of us.”

“I’m often drawn to thinking about the words around this, the difference between ‘trust’ and ‘reliability,’” he says. “In Finnish culture, we’re strongly drawn towards reliability, but we shouldn’t forget the trust that is also needed. Reliability might be about being on time for work each morning, which is important, but in order for the actual work to evolve, trust is needed. That goes both ways. Leaders need to take risks and be vulnerable in order for the others in an organisation to feel safe to do so. The same applies for a band working together.”

### To stay open, ready to listen

Improvisation is not restricted to jazz music. As Perko notes, it exists between the lines in all kinds of musical expression.

“Sure, improvisation is more obvious in jazz, but I would characterise it essentially as making the music true in any given moment,” he explains. “In that sense, there’s no music without it and there is something very pure in it when it happens.”

“The same goes for life in an everyday workplace environment. It might be more evident in the so-called ‘creative industries’, but process-based work also needs communication and innovation. That being said, probably nobody would want to hear that their upcoming brain surgery is ‘based on improvisation,’” he says with a smile. “Still, no two brain operations are alike, and so basically everything requires adapting to the circumstances and working well with others in trying to achieve the task at hand.”

Sometimes unusual circumstances and limitations make improvising together and listening to others easier. Perko mentions a “Dark Concert” held at the We Jazz Festival in Helsinki in 2013 as an experience where less was more for the musicians involved.

“I just talked about that gig with my students today. The fact that there was no visual element made the situation somehow more intense. After the concert, we remained there in the dark with the audience and had a nice discussion. That elevated the experience even further, I think. I

also noticed that everybody was listening to each other, there was no talking over other people in the dark.”

Listening is something that comes up repeatedly in this discussion. It is a key element for turning outwards, for improvising; Jukka Perko highlights its role in the process of communication and also offers insights on the role of the listener in both live and recorded music. Can listening to improvisation in music teach us something about working together and communicating?

“Yes, absolutely!” says Perko. “The listener always has an active role where he or she communicates with the music based on previous expectations, experiences and the context at large. It’s important to stay open and to be ready to listen. When done right, listening can be one of the cornerstones of all improvisation. Again, it’s about the music becoming real in the moment, and that can happen through the listener on a very personal level, too.”

### In the dark room together

Could the present Covid-19 situation with all of its restrictions bring forth new forms of communication and improvisation?

“Yes, perhaps,” says Perko. “My students at the Sibelius Academy mentioned that they had a Finland–Tallinn jam session via Skype. It had worked well, as the connection was seamless and created a real feeling of being in the room together and creating something on the spot. That goes well beyond the technical side of things.”

For the flow of improvising and collective creation, Jukka Perko offers a step-by-step formula – seemingly simple but ultimately quite demanding.

“Communication happens in turns. In music, I listen to what you play, and you listen to what I play. I’m influenced by what you play and you in turn by what I play. Your expression tells me that you heard me, and I’ll play my part in a different way after listening to you.

“Maybe it’s good to be together in the dark sometimes,” Perko says, referring to the aforementioned concert experiment. “Again, I wouldn’t advise brain surgeons to try it, but for the rest of us it can be healthy to be in a surprising situation once in a while, to be without all of our normal options. It may teach us something about working together.” ©

jukkaperko.com





# ON MUSIC AND BEYOND

*In 2020 we again asked composers and musicians to share their thoughts on their music and their work, reflecting on their world yesterday and today.*



# OVER, PAST, THENCE AND YONDER

BY Lotta Wennäkoski

April: the landscape is bare, and the light is as harsh as it always is at this time of the year. And just as I tend to do at this time of the year, I've been reading T.S. ELIOT. — *I was neither/ living nor dead, and I knew nothing,/ looking into the heart of light, the silence./ Oed' und leer das Meer.*

This spring, those verses carry a different kind of charge now that the coronavirus pandemic has stopped our busy world in its tracks, including the concert scene. It seems that the word in the title of this column series, *beyond*, is forcing its way into the limelight. This is despite the fact that my own everyday life has so far remained more or less unchanged, with the obvious exception of cancellations of concerts and long-awaited performances.

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I LIKE TO IMAGINE THAT  
I'M KNEADING SPACE INTO  
MY TEXTURE, IN ALL THE  
IN-BETWEEN SPACES,  
INCLUDING VERTICAL ONES  
- IN OTHER WORDS, SILENCE.

I continue to sit in my basement office, spending most of my time composing. I'm working on a commission from the Savonlinna Opera Festival, my opera *Regine*, which will still need months of solitary work. The opera is about SØREN KIERKEGAARD's bride – and thus about REGINE and Søren's famous and at times obsessive love story, which has provided a context for those reading and researching the philosopher's literary output. The main characters' central struggle involves distinguishing their own will from that of God's – a topic that seems not too distant in this spring of the coronavirus, regardless of one's worldview. Something quite unexpected has occurred, disturbing our lives and showing our personal choices in an entirely new light: not only their consequences but also the possibility of making our own choices.

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Nevertheless, about music. I would summarise my composing like this: I make timbral music, while also pursuing a dynamic form (instead of a static one). I often choose to include some "conventional elements" such as melodic fragments, but my textures are nevertheless coloured by unusual playing techniques and non-traditional sounds. The key words are combining and proportioning – the former is related to how the vertical takes shape, the latter to the horizontal form.

Another element I always crave is a sense of airiness and space: I like to imagine that I'm kneading space into my texture, in all the in-between spaces, including vertical ones – in other words, silence. Clarity is equally important: in my predecessors' music, I tend to love an economical approach and ideas with a crystallised identity more than overabundance or extended durations. When searching for strange sounds, I try to focus on the ease of producing them on an instrument. My relationship with composing, in general, is largely driven by concrete requirements and practical considerations. For example, symphony orchestras interest me not only as an instrument but also as a collective of top musicians and simply as a workplace, and I try to consider all these aspects when I compose.

On the other hand, when I begin a new piece, I almost always try to discover some sort of an overarching idea beyond the music itself, and I mount and examine my musical ideas against this central concept. My starting point can be a phenomenon, like a double entendre which inspired my orchestral work *Flounce* (2017), or different types of fabrics awakening different mental images, which I used in my flute concerto *Soie* (2009). A single note or sound can sometimes suggest an identity for an entire work – this happened with the sound of rubbing in my guitar concerto *Susurrus* (2016). Tone-painting is another technique I am drawn to: if a poem describes a softly folding cloth (such as in the Hungarian-language movement of my choral work *Ommel*), I may write a whole passage based on descending glissandi, refining and sometimes reworking them in the process.

Words are typically important – I remember how invigorating it felt to sit in my Francophone friend's kitchen at the time of composing my flute concerto and leaf through dictionaries to consider different meanings and etymological dimensions of different title suggestions, not to mention the phonetic qualities. The words chosen for my composition titles are always tied to the specific language in question, and I don't wish them to be translated unless it is temporary and done simply to help comprehension. Yet I'm also delighted when another language unexpectedly gives a word a broader significance, to the extent that I sometimes seek it on purpose.

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But then: starting points, concrete or otherwise, are still just starting points. The resounding reality of the finished piece, music, simply refuses to return to its starting point or be defined by its details. (And maybe this is the very reason they should be discussed in slightly more hesitant tones.)

What is it then? Everything being well, it is about recognition, I think. Musical material, through working and proportioning, begins to carry meanings which are borne precisely within the context of that particular piece, in the web of meanings that it creates. A certain material, tone combination or chord is nothing on its own, but in the context of a work, it and its significance reach beyond itself. And similarly, a musical entity can – when all pieces click together – reach over and beyond music as a phenomenon, to interpret humanity. To be available to others, to be recognised: as evidence of what it means to exist.

Of course, this is maybe, perhaps, embarrassingly and intolerably, a vision all too pretentious to apply to my own music. I return to the T.S. Eliot book on my desk: *These are only hints and guesses,/ hints followed by guesses; and the rest/ is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.* Spring is coming, through a harsh light.

© Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham

[lottawennakoski.com](http://lottawennakoski.com)



# THE CHROME PLATED MEGAPHONE OF DESTINY



© Maarit Kyöharju

BY Sid Hille

I was a little nervous when I dialled the number my piano teacher in the Netherlands had given me. Nobody answered. “Of course not,” I thought. “He must be a busy man.”

I had arrived in Los Angeles a few days earlier. Every corner in that city seemed familiar from the countless films I had watched. “What seems to be the problem, officer?” I would sit on my balcony in Santa Monica with my morning coffee and recite lines from those films. I bought a pair of roller skates and floated up and down the boardwalk of Santa Monica beach trying to identify celebrities among the people I saw – and I realised that they looked at me in just the same way. Could I be a celebrity?

“Fischer,” a man answered the telephone a few days later.

I had heard CLARE FISCHER’S name for the first time in Hamburg, as some musician friends of mine were discussing PRINCE’S new album *Parade*. Clare Fischer had written the wonderfully weird string arrangements for some of the songs.

Soon after that, I began studying jazz piano and improvisation in Utrecht in the Netherlands. I remember one evening when my piano teacher BERT VAN DEN BRINK had invited me for dinner in his home and we listened to Clare Fischer’s piano solo album *Alone Together* several times, both of us in complete awe at the mastery. “It’s frightening how immaculate this is,” Bert said.

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*Alone Together* was recorded at the MPS studio in Villingen, a small town in the south of Germany – the same studio where I had recorded a boogie-woogie album in 1978.

Back then, at the age of 17, I was considered a young talent, a minor local ‘celebrity’ in the small town of Donaueschingen right next to Villingen. My wealthy aunt had read a newspaper article on my piano trio (two pianos and drums) and had offered to pay for a recording session. The other pianist in my trio was the really talented one. What I had going for me was a desire, a thirst – a quest, if you will – for the sounds I was hearing in my dreams at night.

Growing up in Donaueschingen included laughing at the funny academic-looking people with scores in their hands who descended on our town once a year for the Musiktage festival. What was it in that strange music that attracted people from all around the world?

I loved THE BEATLES and admired CHICK COREA and KEITH JARRETT, but it was FRANK ZAPPA’S *The Chrome Plated Megaphone of Destiny* that created the link that gave me the push to check out the Musiktage myself.

I went to concerts of the SOUTHWEST GERMAN RADIO ORCHESTRA, conducted by ERNEST BOUR. Later I learned that Bour had also conducted LIGETI’S *Atmosphères* for KUBRICK’S film *2001: A Space Odyssey* and that *Atmosphères* had been commissioned by the same Radio Orchestra and performed for the first time in 1961, the year I was born.

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**WHAT I HAD GOING FOR ME  
WAS A DESIRE, A THIRST –  
A QUEST, IF YOU WILL – FOR  
THE SOUNDS I WAS HEARING  
IN MY DREAMS AT NIGHT.**

So here I was now, in Los Angeles in 1991, talking to Clare Fischer on the phone and asking him whether he could possibly spare some time for me to meet him. “I am a very busy man, as you can imagine – but how about tonight?”

It took me an hour and a half, by freeway, to drive to the other side of town, through the Hollywood Hills into Laurel Canyon. Nobody answered the door, but in anticipation of this Clare had told me to just walk around the house and come straight into the back yard. There I saw Clare Fischer for the first time, a white-haired man plucking weeds from between the tiles of his terrace.

“I’m hungry. Are you hungry? Let’s go for a pizza,” he said. During the previous year of my studies in Utrecht I had

added theory of music and composition to my curriculum. I knew I wanted to be a performer, but the traditional jazz piano wasn’t where my heart was. I had studied Clare Fischer’s harmonic concepts, which seemed to open windows towards the contemporary classical sounds I had heard in Donaueschingen. Yet, oddly, Clare’s own music sounded rather conventional.

“You can be a big fish in a small pond or a small fish in a big pond,” Clare told me at the pizza place.

When he had first come to Los Angeles and played his first few recording sessions, Clare recalled, he had always felt uncomfortable. Somehow he failed to adjust to the groove of the other studio cats – until he realised that he himself had perfect timing and everybody else was wrong.

One of Clare’s musical heroes was HENRI DUTILLEUX, another was DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH. Later, we sat around the piano in his home, and he explained how boring the typical jazz piano left-hand voicings with their stacked fourths were: “If you play all different intervals in a chord, there is a much richer spectrum of harmonics...”

“It’s all about voice-leading. So-called dissonances get resolved, the line moves on, but at any given moment, new tensions arise. The music is always in movement. The fourth of a chord resolves into the major third, which in its own turn is only a suspense note towards the minor third. In the meantime, the fifth moves chromatically upwards.”

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I spent my days in LA practising, composing, roller-skating and watching films at matinees (ah, the secret pleasure of coming out of a movie theatre in the middle of the day). Clare invited me to listen to a recording session with ROBERT PALMER, three days at Chick Corea’s Mad Hatter studio. At one point, I was invited to contribute to another acquaintance’s film scoring session, playing 20 seconds of background bar piano.

When I got back to the Netherlands, I knew what to do. I recorded my first professional album as a pianist and composer, *Dunjiin’s Dance*, in that same year, 1992.

Clare Fischer’s concepts, Zappa, Ligeti, Dutilleux and Shostakovich, the Beatles, Corea and Jarrett are still somewhere at the core of my creativity, and in retrospect everything seems very coherent and logical. If I went to a class reunion today, nobody would be surprised about my having turned out to be a professional musician.

Except for myself. I feel that no such deliberate decision was made by me at any point. I just followed the signs. Maybe it was the Chrome Plated Megaphone of Destiny that sucked me in. ©

sidhille.com





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## MUSICIANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD MEET IN FINLAND'S FIRST MIDDLE EASTERN ORCHESTRA

BY Tove Djupsjöbacka

**When Ali Haithem emigrated from Iraq to Finland in 2015, he did not know anyone in Helsinki but often spent time at the Music Centre café in order to get to know people. Four years later, he was in Camerata hall in the same building playing the oud with the Middle Eastern Orchestra that he had founded.**

Founded by ALI HAITHEM in 2019, the MIDDLE EASTERN ORCHESTRA is a collection of nearly 35 musicians from all around the world. They are enthusiastic to explore this particular music, which for some of them was previously completely unknown.

In the Middle East, music is driven principally by melody and rhythm, and even in a large orchestra the main focus is on bringing together instrumental colours in the service of melody. Based in Helsinki, the Middle Eastern Orchestra

does not strive for authenticity in its performances of music from the Middle East; its players have introduced elements that are more familiar to Western listeners. They arrange their music themselves and boldly incorporate harmony, a concept not traditionally found in the music of the Middle East.

This kind of orchestra is rare in Europe, as similar ones currently only exist in Germany and the UK.

### First you have to find an audience

A key person in the orchestra project is LOTTA-MARIA PITKÄNEN, a versatile Finnish violinist who is extensively familiar with Arabic music and has performed with Ali Haithem for many years, for instance in BAGHDAD BAND, which was formed by Iraqi musicians. Pitkänen was involved in the genesis of the Middle Eastern Orchestra from the start as a sparring partner, leader, coach and arranger.

**“WHEN IRAQ IS IN THE NEWS,  
IT’S USUALLY ABOUT WAR OR  
POLITICS. NO ONE EVER TELLS  
YOU THAT THERE’S GOOD MUSIC  
IN IRAQ!” – ALI HAITHEM**

“When I came to Finland, I didn’t even have an instrument,” says Ali Haithem, who has been playing the oud (a type of lute) since the age of 10. “After I got an instrument, I mainly played Arabic music at private functions and in restaurants and with Oriental dancers. When I got acquainted with Finnish musicians, such as Lotta, I invited them to join Baghdad Band, where all the other musicians had come to Finland as refugees.”

But Ali had bigger fish to fry and gradually set about pursuing his dream. When he was granted a residence permit after two years of waiting, things began to happen. “It was in 2018 that I got serious about my dream of founding an orchestra, but I thought that first you have to find an audience. So I performed once a month at the Ihana café, and after a while people began to show up to make music with me and to listen.”

The orchestra project began to move forwards late in 2018, and the group gave its first concert at the cultural centre Caisa in April 2019. Interest was considerable from the very first: the concert was sold out, and dozens of people had to be turned away.

Ali Haithem specifically wanted to create a multicultural orchestra, a meeting place for musicians from various cultures. “Finns tend to work only with Finns. Our members come from Finland, South America, China, Morocco, Iran, Iraq, Jordan and so on.”

Finnish musicians were not very familiar with Arabic music, with its intricate microintervals. Arabic music was the starting point for the orchestra, but the aim is to expand the repertoire to cover the Middle East more broadly.

### Standard Arabic repertoire with Western seasoning

“We began with pieces that I already knew well, standard Arabic repertoire that people often play in Arabic music jam sessions here,” says Lotta-Maria Pitkänen. “In arranging this music, I introduce Western elements into it. I’m pretty much a harmony-driven person, although of course I have to respect the fact that this music is exclusively melody-driven. Some pieces may have exceptionally long melodic arcs, during which you can do all sorts of things with the harmony. Western music is punctuated by cadences much more than Middle Eastern music, where the melody is also very closely tied to the rhythm.”

“When I arrange a piece, I play the melody on the piano and try out various types of harmony. Sometimes I just use

open fifths if thirds create too much of a conflict. Mostly I use triads, very rarely seventh chords. Then we build the orchestration according to the harmony.”

The orchestra includes a variety of Western instruments: strings and winds, and also accordion, piano, guitar and drum kit. Middle Eastern tonal colour is lent by the ney (a flute), the zither-like qanun, Ali’s oud and the percussion instruments riq and darbuka. Conductor KAAPO IJAS keeps the whole outfit together.

“Many of the members do not read music,” says Pitkänen. “In Arabic orchestras, the instrumentalists always follow the singer, and the performance can quite freely jump from one section of a song to the next, as everyone is familiar with the structure of the piece and can follow each other.”

In the Middle Eastern Orchestra, the pieces have predetermined arrangements, so the musicians who do not read music have to memorise the structure of the piece and learn to use new tools such as rehearsal figures so that everyone knows where they are at all times. Pitkänen also explains that she wanted to bring microintervals into the mix.

“It took some time to encourage the musicians to do it and to satisfy Ali, because he’s very critical about these things. You have to learn to perceive microintervals, to understand where to play them and how.”

### Dreaming on

When he was still living in Baghdad, Ali Haithem played with several prominent orchestras, which is where he acquired his solid knowledge of traditional music. He also studied at university, completing a Bachelor of Physics and Mechanical Engineering degree. When he came to Finland, he did not know enough English to be able to apply for the Sibelius Academy. His English is now much better, and he is considering formal music studies in Finland.

Haithem is only 27 years old, and he dreams on. He hopes one day to teach Arabic music at the Sibelius Academy – he feels there is no teacher for this at the moment. Many alumni and students of the Sibelius Academy’s Global Music degree programme have gravitated to the Middle Eastern Orchestra in order to learn more about this music. Some members live elsewhere in Europe and travel to Finland to perform with the group.

Haithem describes his vision: “I would like the orchestra to be even bigger. I try to give the audience something new in every concert. I can’t stop creating new things. There’s a lot still to be done with this music, and I have a lot of energy. In Iraq, I saw dead bodies and experienced bombings every day. The police stopped and questioned you if you went walking in the city with an instrument. I don’t know about tomorrow, so let’s make it today.

“When Iraq is in the news, it’s usually about war or politics. No one ever tells you that there’s good music in Iraq! I want to tell people something different about the Middle East.” ©

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](http://fmq.fi).



# CECILIA DAMSTRÖM THERE IS NO SINGLE ANSWER TO COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

BY Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen

The music of Cecilia Damström stems from expressiveness and the desire to make a difference. In music, the tiniest gestures can come across as political statements. At the Ung Nordisk Musik festival in Tampere in August 2020, Damström's *Requiem for our Earth* put the theme of this year's event – Music Ecology – up front. "I was able to include an unusually large number of themes important for me in this *Requiem*," says the composer.

"There are so many angles from which to address climate change that I couldn't decide which would be more important than another. There is no single answer to combating climate change," says composer CECILIA DAMSTRÖM. When she was commissioned by FEMALE VOICE CHOIR LYRAN to write a 30-minute work on climate change, she decided not to limit herself. She allowed *Requiem for our Earth* to embrace the multitude of problems, issues and aspects of climate change.

Incorporating dramatised elements, the work brings together a plurality of voices ranging from quotes from GRETA THUNBERG and POPE FRANCIS to official documents, public debate and legal texts. The tape part layers the music with external sounds such as pigs squealing, activists shouting, chainsaws buzzing and icebergs crumbling. The choir leads the way through these scenarios in its memorial for planet Earth, yet the choir part itself does not point fingers or declaim political slogans. The piece is nevertheless an intense and even harrowing experience, prompting listeners to form their own opinions. The listener is likely to end up with more questions than answers, though.

*Requiem for our Earth* was premiered in November 2019 and was one of the key works on the programme of the Ung Nordisk Musik festival, held with an environmental theme in Tampere in 2020. The work was performed by the women of the TAMPERE CAPPELLA and NÄSIN ÄÄNI choirs.

© Marthe Veian

Ung Nordisk Musik is a festival that rotates between the Nordic countries, presenting, as the name states, a cross-section of music by young Nordic composers. The theme of each particular festival is explored in lectures, public discussions and this year also in the festival Zine, which includes articles by JOHN LUTHER ADAMS, RIIKKA TALVITIE and others.

"Most of the composers and performers featured at this festival belong to today's under-30s generation, whose lives have been largely defined by the ecological crisis. The goal is to share experiences, to collect viewpoints and to focus on concrete examples of how music and ecology intertwine in artists' lives," said the producers of the festival, MATILDA SEPPÄLÄ, LAURI SUPPONEN and DANTE THELESTAM.

## A documentary Gesamtkunstwerk

*Requiem for our Earth* consists of ten movements each addressing an area of the natural environment jeopardised by human activity: earth (mining), forests (excess felling), animals (meat industry) and oceans (melting glaciers and dying corals). This modern requiem has a documentary approach: quotes are sometimes sung by the choir and sometimes heard as a recording of the original speaker. In some sections the choir sings a cappella, while at times it performs stage action as a counterpoint to the electronics. The tape and the choir engage in dialogue and often end up in conflict.

The work is powerfully visual, as it incorporates a video work by MAREK PLUCIENNIK that is projected both on the background screen and across the white costumes of the singers. Damström wanted to create a cross-discipline and cross-sensual artwork that would have a greater impact than a work that is only listened to. The video, lighting and movements complement the music and other sounds to create a veritable Gesamtkunstwerk.

"The more senses are engaged, the better the content hits home," says the composer. "It was also important to bring in sounds that are uncomfortable to hear."

Colour symbolism is used to enhance the message and to lend a certain universality to the visual aspect. At the end, the harmonies are associated with colours projected into the performance space by the choir members using torches. The choir surrounds the audience in a representation of dying corals, the colours gradually fading as the colour filters are removed from the torches.

## Who gets to have a voice?

Cecilia Damström's commission calendar has been bursting at the seams in recent years. She completes an average of seven works per year. Most recently, two works were premiered in early August: the song-cycle *Framtidens skugga* [Shadow of the future], written for MONICA GROOP to poems by EDITH SÖDERGRAN; and *Helene*, the last movement of Damström's trilogy on great Finnish women. This

trilogy consists of piano quintets with varying instrumentation dedicated to MINNA CANTH, AINO SIBELIUS and HELENE SCHJERFBECK, and formed part of Damström's residency at the Kokonainen festival.

At the time of this interview, she was working on a chamber music piece for PEKKA KUUSISTO, and an orchestral composition jointly for the JOENSUU CITY ORCHESTRA and the KARELIA STATE PHILHARMONIC under the EU project "Big Music for Small Cities". Damström is pleased to have had highly diverse commissions. But whatever ensemble she is writing for, she always wants to address topics important to herself.

"I think about equality on all levels. Intersectional feminism, animal rights – those are the principal cornerstones in my music at the moment," says Damström. Her orchestral work *Tundo!*, which was recently performed in the USA for the first time, is dedicated to refugees, and her opera *Djurens planet* [Planet of the animals], touring this autumn as a school opera produced by the Finnish National Opera, is described by her as an eco-feminist and post-humanist work.

Damström stresses that contemporary music can make a difference in many ways. Titles and descriptions can put a message across, and the impact can of course be greater if there is a text involved. Vocal music can give a voice to someone, and that is always a choice. "It is important to hear the voices of young women, which is why I wanted to incorporate the voice of Greta Thunberg, a young woman activist, in the *Requiem*," says Damström as an example.

In her quintet trilogy, Damström imagined in musical terms what the lives of well-known women in Finnish history might have been like. In *Helene*, the dance-like mood of her youth and the concrete sounds of domestic chores trace the life experience of a woman artist.

Damström has been impressed by the eagerness with which Finnish choirs make statements with contemporary music. Lyrän basically gave her carte blanche for the climate change commission, and AKADEMISKA SÄNGFÖRENINGEN [the Academic Male Voice Choir of Helsinki] has commissioned her to write one part of a projected trilogy of works about natural elements and renewable energy sources. "Given how limited the financial resources of choirs are, it is wonderful that they are challenging themselves and how we are accustomed to thinking about commissioning contemporary, relevant works," says Damström appreciatively.

Damström describes her music as emotional and expressive. In the modernist tradition, emotions – conventionally seen as feminine – are typically downplayed as nostalgic or even negative features.

"Sometimes you feel that even a triad can be a political statement." © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

[ceciliadamstrom.com](http://ceciliadamstrom.com)

More interviews and columns: Timo Alakotila, Charles Gil, Eija Kankaanranta, Sofie Lithenius, Antti Lötjönen, Pauanne, Sarah Palu, Jennah Vainio, Matthew Whittall at [fmq.fi](http://fmq.fi).





# MUSIC IS THE WAY TO GROW

*In the following articles, we explore recent developments in Finnish music education. But that is not all: in looking at what kind of music is being taught our children and adolescents and how it is being taught, we also see a portrait of society at large and of its values and choices.*



# “TIME TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY”

## UPHEAVAL AT FINLAND’S MUSIC INSTITUTES

BY Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen



© Pirkkanen Music Institute

**The new National Core Curriculum for Basic Education in the Arts in Finland was adopted two years ago. This represented a considerable upheaval for music institutes; for instance, the level performance examinations that were standard for a long time have been largely discontinued. How has all this worked in practice, and what experiences have been gained?**

Finland’s basic education in the arts is a system unique in the international context. Our National Core Curricula – frameworks on which local authorities and individual schools build their specific curricula – are also a very special feature of our system. The curriculum reform undertaken in Finland in recent years resulted in a considerable upheaval for music institutes. Most music institutes decided to discontinue the traditional system of level performance examinations and instead to build learning pathways more flexibly according to students’ needs and abilities. Also, improvisation and composition have acquired a more prominent role.

There was some inevitable resistance to change, and the fears voiced included suspicions that without examinations and repertoire lists, all teaching would be dumbed down to just feelgood music-making with no particular goals. Yet to balance this there was also great enthusiasm: teachers hungry for change now have the tools to do things differently.

The reform has required huge amounts of extra energy and work from educational institutions. Procedures have had to be planned, tested and revised as necessary. Experimentation and the search for best practices are still going on. Although the National Core Curriculum is valid nationwide, as its name says, and although the provision of teaching is mandated by law, the preparatory work is always carried out in cooperation with the field.

### Working with the field

Since the 1990s the number of children and adolescents attending educational institutions providing basic education in the arts has almost doubled in Finland. Music institutes have always been at the forefront of this sector, followed by dance and visual arts.

What makes Finnish music institutes so special? “Basic education in the arts is seen in Finland as a healthy component in the general education system,” says EIJA KAUPPINEN, formerly a Counsellor of Education. “When the National Core Curricula are drawn up, the same educational trends manifest themselves both in general basic education in schools and in basic education in the arts. There is a solid holistic approach to education in Finland, and music education is thus seen as an integral element rather than some-

thing separate and extracurricular.” She notes that it would be useful to make a comprehensive comparative study of arts education in various countries but that so far this has been difficult.

The European Association of Conservatories (AEC) and the Polifonia network recently surveyed the current status of music education institutions in Europe, but there were numerous inaccuracies in the report.

MARJA-LEENA JUNTUNEN, Professor of Music Education at the Sibelius Academy of Uniarts Helsinki, has been studying Finnish curricula extensively and has first-hand knowledge of this.

“There is great variation in practices from one country to another. France, for example, has interesting forms of collaboration geared towards making arts education more accessible. The Finnish system, meanwhile, has two particular strengths: national leadership and national uniformity on the one hand, and robust empowerment of the grass-roots level on the other,” she explains. “These national core curricula are not just written by policymakers at the National Agency for Education; input from the field

**“BASIC EDUCATION IN THE ARTS IS SEEN IN FINLAND AS A HEALTHY COMPONENT IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM.” - EIJA KAUPPINEN**

is always broadly solicited. Then again, teachers are trusted to follow the guidelines and have a lot of autonomy in implementing the core curricula.”

Juntunen ventures that the diversity of content found in Finland’s music education is well ahead of the curve compared with many other European countries. “The debate on the relationship between classical music, folk music and popular music is already a venerable one, and in Finland the various genres now coexist pretty much peacefully,” she says. Advanced use of technology is of course another strength in the Finnish system.

### Multiple ways of evaluation

Eija Kauppinen is now retired. Watching from the sidelines, what has been her experience of the curriculum reform being deployed at the local level? The discontinuing of level performance examinations, which emerged as the major talking point in the reform, prompts her to discuss the importance of developing evaluation practices.



“Evaluation criteria are a major issue now. There is still work to be done at many arts education institutions in this respect,” says Kauppinen. The evaluation criteria are principally intended for when a student has completed an entire programme and is given a verbal evaluation. Number grades are no longer given.

The level performance examination system had the effect of making everyone think that evaluation consisted of a single event on the basis of which a student’s competence was judged. Inevitably, examinations tended to send stress levels through the roof. Today, music institutes come up with concerts, multi-discipline performances, videos and so on – multiple ways in which student competence can be evaluated over a wide range of skills.

### Freedom to explore in depth

Hearing MERJA POKKALA, violin teacher at the Pirkanmaa Music Institute, describe the impact of the curriculum reform, one gains the impression of a change for the better that was worth all the trouble.

“Our staff joined forces to draft our own curriculum. Everyone was involved in thinking about what things we should focus on and what our strengths are. The fact that we took the time to stop and really think about these things was valuable and became the first step towards real change,” says Ponkala, who was on the curriculum team at her institution. The Pirkanmaa Music Institute has some 1,700 students and more than 90 teachers, and operates at several locations, for instance in Tampere and Ylöjärvi.

Ponkala says that without doubt the greatest change was giving up the old level performance examinations. Not all music institutes have discontinued them, because it is not specifically stated in the National Core Curriculum that you *cannot* use them any more. The Pirkanmaa Music Institute team felt that the spirit of the new National Core Curriculum would not be fulfilled if the old examinations and therefore the structure of studies were to be retained unchanged.

“It’s time to do things differently. It was important for us to not just put new labels on old things but to genuinely think up new ways of doing things,” says Ponkala. Progress in studies always requires goals, and thus the old, stress-inducing examinations were replaced by less formal proficiency demonstrations to be given at regular intervals.

“Student-orientated” is the keyword. When students are allowed to have a say in how they are studying, they are also more committed, according to Ponkala. “We set our goals together, appropriately for the needs and capabilities of each student. Teachers are now freer to consider what students actually want to get out of this leisure pursuit.” As a result, students may have widely differing repertoire.

### To share music with others

SAARA NILKKU, 15, is studying violin with Ponkala and is enthusiastic about folk music. “As I prepare for my fifth

proficiency demonstration this year, we’ve planned the repertoire so that it reflects my interests. It does include classical music, of course, but also klezmer and bluegrass,” she says. Nilkku feels that the reform has created fresh potential for her music-making. “The pressures and anxieties of having to play examinations have decreased at least for me, though they haven’t completely gone away. Now that proficiency demonstrations are divided into smaller portions and the repertoire selection is freer, I’ve been able to do my own thing more and use my musical competence to better effect.”

Critics of the new curriculum have feared that the reform will undermine ambitious, goal-orientated music studies. Ponkala points out that the basics of music-making are not going anywhere: students still play scales, but those are now seen as tools for practical music-making rather than a terrifying obstacle course. “It is important to understand that we are working with the same thing as before, but with a different approach to teaching. Our conception of learning has changed, and music institutes must follow along.”

**“OUR CONCEPTION OF  
LEARNING HAS CHANGED,  
AND MUSIC INSTITUTES  
MUST FOLLOW ALONG.”  
– MERJA POKKALA**

The ethos of the new curriculum is also apparent in its holistic approach. Instead of students only learning their own instruments, the aim is now to build up a comprehensive understanding of music for them, to foster their creative skills and to nurture their self-awareness. “My hope is that we could bring up musicians and music lovers with broad horizons and that they would be still opening their violin cases long after they have finished their studies here,” Ponkala sums up.

### Times they are a-changin’

Marja-Leena Juntunen is heading the recently launched project *Musiikinopetus muutoksessa* [Music education in transition] at the Centre for Educational Research and Academic Development in the Arts (CERADA) at Uniarts Helsinki. The purpose of this project is to chart the experiences of stakeholders at arts education institutions in applying the new National Music Curriculum Framework.

© Pirkanmaan musiikkiohjelma



Juntunen notes that many of the elements of the reform that have attracted much public attention, from composition to multi-discipline approaches, have been included in some shape or form in the National Core Curricula for decades. It is just that education is slow to change. Now there are more specific learning objectives, but at the same time there is a greater degree of freedom for individual learning paths and local decision-making.

Juntunen was involved in creating an evaluation tool named Virvatuli [Will-o’-the-wisp] to help arts education institutions assess their own activities. She has also led the ‘Arts Education for All’ group under the Arts Equal research project, examining the accessibility of the system of basic education in the arts. The results of the survey circulated among rectors of arts education institutions were reported in the *Finnish Journal of Music Education* last year. Arts Equal is a major arts education research project, exceptionally large even by international standards.

Juntunen points to available resources as a challenge for accessibility. Teachers are not necessarily able to differentiate their teaching and to address students with special needs as much as they would like. “There are a lot of new things going on in the field, and there’s ongoing change and unfinished business wherever you look. Practices are trans-

forming, slowly but surely. Some arts education institutions are resilient and eager to improve their practices, while others are less flexible,” she says.

The curriculum reform fired up disagreements about for whom music studies are intended. The music institute system in Finland was established in the 1960s initially to provide professional musicians for provincial orchestras, and the aim of turning out future professionals is still very much part of the ethos of music institutes, even if only a couple of per cent of students actually go on to become professional musicians.

The challenge with basic education in the arts is to make it accessible to everyone and to support multiple ways of growing up into a life that embraces music. If and when an arts education institution manages to build its learning pathways so as to match students’ needs and capabilities, as allowed by the new National Core Curriculum, both the students with their sights set on music as a career and those simply enjoying music as a leisure pursuit can gain the maximum benefit from their music lessons. © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](http://fmq.fi).



# FINNISH MUSIC INSTITUTES TAKE A FLYING DIGITAL LEAP

BY Hanna Isolammi

When in mid-March the Government shut down contact teaching in Finland because of the coronavirus pandemic, music institutes also suspended their operations on site and went virtual. From the outside, it seemed that music institute teaching went online with amazing speed and ease. Yet this ease could not have been achieved without a huge amount of sweat and toil behind the scenes.

EIJA KAUPPINEN, acting executive director of the Association of Finnish Music Schools, says that she is still astonished at how quickly the transition to remote teaching was achieved at music institutes. “It means that teachers have had to redesign their teaching on a really tight turnaround. But I’m sure we’re all glad that we’ve been able to continue.”

TUULI TALVITIE, rector of the Käpylä Music Institute, has received much positive feedback from students’ families for facilitating their children’s continued activities in these uncertain circumstances. She says she is proud of how her teachers embraced the remote teaching challenge. “It’s another case of the expertise gained through extensive, high-level education and training showing itself in many ways in this wholly exceptional global situation.”

“This situation also compels teachers to consider their pedagogical approach,” says Eija Kauppinen. “They were

now forced into doing this, but no doubt the process will have been useful in the long run too.”

## Skype concerts and diverse music-making

Some of Finland’s music institute teachers already had experience in using the software, platforms and equipment used for remote teaching. “In remote teaching, I’ve simply adopted many of the digital tools I was thinking about earlier than I’d intended. This is a great way to try them out in real life,” says MIIKA SNÄRE, who teaches the guitar and structural awareness of music at the East Helsinki Music Institute besides being the resident digital tutor.

Snäre sees a lot of positive things in digital teaching. One of them is that it integrates music as a hobby more thoroughly into the student’s life, especially in the case of

middle school pupils and advanced amateurs. “My students make home pages which they can decorate as they wish and where they can document their musical pursuits besides posting their proficiency demonstration videos – their own songs or GarageBand recordings.”

Snäre notes that using studio software prompts students to create a more polished final product, as they are able to listen to and edit their own singing and playing. “It also allows them to perform music across genre boundaries,” he says.

SANNA VAARNI, lecturer in piano at the Espoo Music Institute, was also acquainted with remote teaching in practice before the coronavirus pandemic. “I had given lessons via Skype for students who had moved abroad, for instance,” she says. Also, Vaarni has been using audio and video recordings as teaching tools for quite some time. In the current circumstances, this has become a weekly practice.

Vaarni reports that the highlights of her remote teaching weeks are the two weekly student recitals on Skype. These have been streamed not just among the students but also to nursing homes in Espoo. “The nursing home residents have been really appreciative in their feedback, since visits to nursing homes are now prohibited.”

## Peer learning in social media

In contrast to the above, many teachers were faced with a completely new situation when remote teaching was mandated, and groups were hurriedly set up on music institute websites and on social media to collect knowledge, tips, peer support and general ideas about remote teaching. When reading the Facebook group *Musiikin etäopetus* [Remote teaching of music], it becomes apparent that there is a huge number of programs, applications and platforms designed for music out there and that many teachers are keen to learn how to use them. On the other hand, the discussions in the group demonstrate that this is not always easy.

“I think it’s excellent that our professional community has camped out in social media in these circumstances to share their digital experiences and observations,” says Miika Snäre.

Teachers differ hugely in their digital skills, but so do the students and their families. MARKKU KLAMI, who teaches composition and structural awareness of music at several music institutes in the Helsinki metropolitan area, explains that high-quality contact teaching promotes equality: “Although remote teaching has its merits, it does require not only being competent in using new technology but also having access to that technology in the first place. The financial situation of families is a factor in this.”

## Dedicated educators

Klami says that remote teaching is a relatively good fit for teaching composition. “If a student has a recording or sheet music of their work, it is quite easy to share and review it

online.” He reports having tested several programs: “I’ve learned a lot along the way, and in recent weeks I’ve come to understand the key technological needs for my teaching and the suitability of various programs and platforms for teaching composition.”

All the teachers interviewed agree that they now have to spend more time on preparation: the time taken in planning lessons has increased by a factor of two or three. However, this is bound to come down as their skills improve and procedures become established. “Digital devices are like instruments – you can’t expect to become a virtuoso overnight,” Miika Snäre points out. “With the coronavirus, many of us have simply been shoved out on stage to play an unfamiliar instrument, so to speak. My advice is to be lenient with yourself and to select any solution that will get you through your teaching.”

Tuuli Talvitie reports that as a rector she is particularly worried about how teachers are coping with the stress of the situation: “How can I, as a supervisor, guarantee equitable working conditions for teachers from completely different backgrounds and ensure that no one is overstressed? And how can we maintain enthusiasm and a community spirit when we only see each other via a video link?”

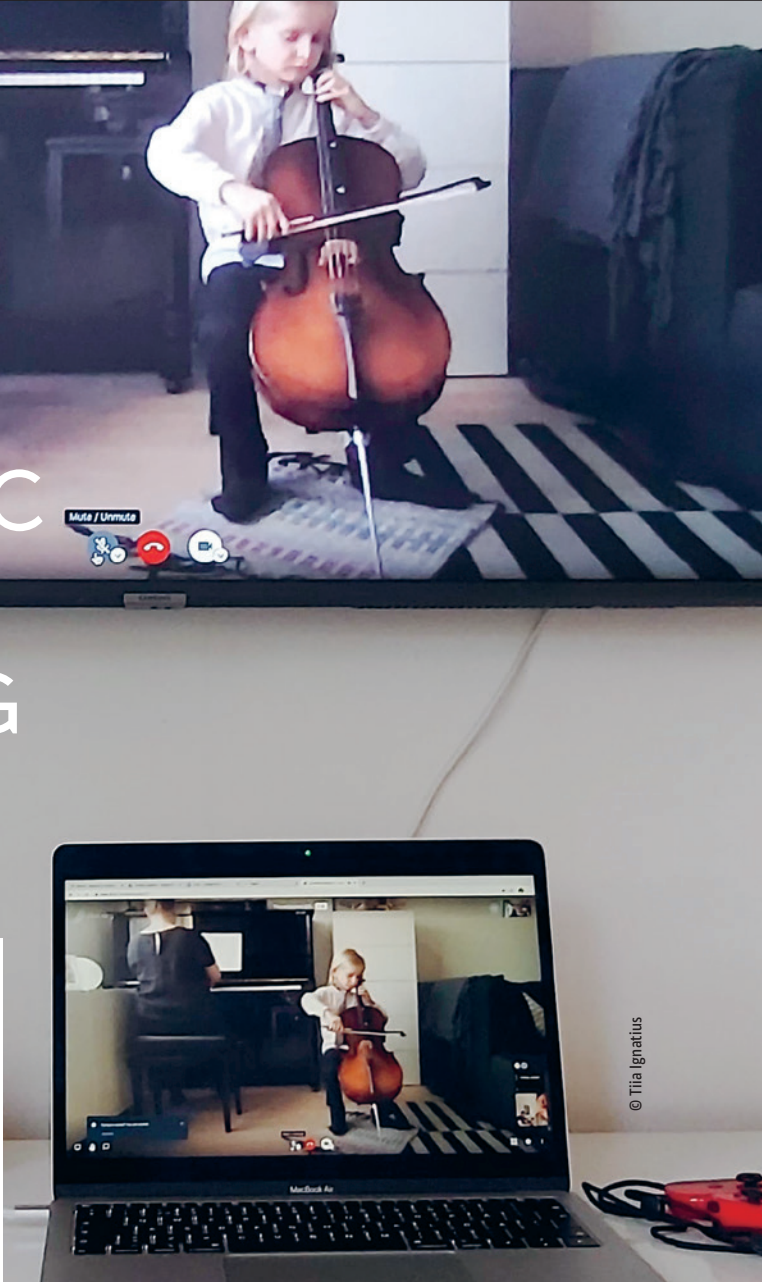
## Life after quarantine

The teachers interviewed agree that remote teaching can never fully replace face-to-face teaching. In addition to the poor sound quality and the impossibility of ensemble playing, something in human interaction remains lacking when the people are not in the same room. “Even if you have a video link, any remote communication has a distancing element to it. The natural mode of human interaction is meeting in person, not via technology,” says Markku Klami.

The physical presence of the teacher makes things easier and quicker, especially in the teaching of beginners. “What I miss in remote teaching is the element of touch. I can’t show the student paths of motion by guiding their hand, for instance,” says Sanna Vaarni.

Some practices adopted during the digital leap of spring 2020 will no doubt become a permanent feature of contact teaching too. In discussions in the aforementioned Facebook group, teachers who teach at several music institutes or several locations have declared that they would be willing to continue using remote teaching for some of their lessons. Remote teaching would also be useful in case of a mild flu, to prevent contagion. Recording music-making on video for teaching purposes has also become a natural part of studies at a music institute for many. “It’s useful to make a documentary database of your musical history that you may want to enjoy later in life,” notes Miika Snäre. © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).





# A drum teacher's springtime inspiration

BY Patrik Stenström

When instrument lessons were abruptly converted to remote teaching in Helsinki in March 2020, drummer and drum teacher Tommi Rautiainen decided to invite guest teachers to his courses. Soon his students found themselves receiving coaching from international drum legends.

When all teaching suddenly became remote teaching in March 2020, drummer TOMMI RAUTIAINEN, who teaches drums at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki, soon realised that his young students would now need him more than ever before. He was concerned with how his students could manage to keep up their motivation, both for music and in life in general. Living in student accommodation in isolation from the rest of the world was no picnic, and most students, for obvious reasons, did not have a drum kit at home.

Rautiainen continued giving lessons remotely but also announced that he would be available on Zoom every morning at 09.00 to discuss his own practising, inviting students to play along with him. These sessions included reviews of practice methods and technique. Very soon these meetings became sharing-based. “I always asked someone among the students to share something with the others. Then we discussed it. The things shared had to do with playing drums but also with coping in general. We had more than 70 sessions like this.”

The lessons included sight-reading tasks and audition assignments, and also drum tracks to songs that had not yet been published – jobs received by Rautiainen through his international contacts.

## Suddenly Eric Clapton's and Bob Dylan's drummers turned up

Back in the day, Rautiainen spent four years studying the drums at the Manhattan School of Music, and he has maintained contact with his teacher JOHN RILEY ever since. Once when they were catching up, Rautiainen asked casually whether Riley was busy or whether he could attend a session to talk to his students. Riley had practically nothing to do and instantly said yes.

“Riley came by on Zoom and played stuff for us and answered questions quite freely. He showed us the things he had been practising during the lockdown, now that he had more time than he knew how to fill.”

Rautiainen had established numerous contacts with some of the most prominent drummers on the planet during his time in the USA, and Riley provided him with more.



“What amazed me was that though these guys are at the top of their league worldwide, they were sitting at home pretty much doing nothing apart from practising. They had never once been asked to participate in anything like this. They were all highly enthusiastic and motivated.”

Eventually, Rautiainen's guest teachers included PETER ERSKINE, STEVE GADD, CLIFF ALMOND and JIM KELTNER. Finnish participating professionals included JUKKIS UOTILA, TEPPO MÄKYNEN, JUSSI LEHTONEN, RISTO SKRIKBERG and PETE KORPELA, who now lives in Los Angeles. It would be difficult to imagine a more distinguished array of instructors. Students were treated to rarities such as seeing Erskine's practice studio and the actual drum kit that he had used when playing with WEATHER REPORT – a virtually tangible piece of history.

When all the gigs stopped, nearly all these musicians had made use of the time they suddenly had to work on the basics, and they talked to the students about the importance of basic technique. Steve Gadd reported that he was doing the same stick exercises as he had done in drum groups at the ages of 10 to 14. He also said that he was compiling a small guidebook of his warm-up exercises.

## Extended toolkit and enhanced sense of community

In their final Zoom session, Rautiainen and his students summarised some of the thoughts that had emerged in the course of the sessions, about music and about life in general. “We made a list with the idea that we should read through the list every day and think about which things to focus on that day. There are all sorts of things on the list, from honesty and getting enough sleep to various aspects of playing the drums and being a musician.”

Rautiainen believes that the guest teachers provided additional motivation and fostered a spirit of helping and sharing for the students in their everyday lives. “I believe that some at least have broadened their stylistic sensibilities and understanding, and extended the toolkit they have for making music,” he concludes. “I hope that all this will help us remember these exceptional circumstances in a positive way.” © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).

# Lowering the threshold to composition

© Markku Klami



BY Jyrki Lähteenmäki

Opus1.fi provides teaching materials and support for the new needs of introductory teaching of composition.

Composing music is a discipline traditionally veiled in mystery. It is commonly believed that composers are born, not made, or at the very least that they must discover a passionate calling for composing at an early age.

In Finland, a different perspective on composing is given in the new curricula introduced for schools and music institutes (see also p. 42): all students should be encouraged to create their own musical ideas and solutions. HEIDI PARTTI, Professor of Music Education, has noted that in introductory teaching of composition it is not the end result that counts but the process in which students explore the potential of sounds and music. The focus is on doing things, on find-

ing out what composing is like – not on the finished piece of music.

This new approach requires unconventional teaching materials and pedagogical support. It was to respond to this need at schools and music institutes that the opus1.fi materials databank was launched in autumn 2018.

The opus1.fi materials databank was set up by the Society of Finnish Composers working with Mutes, the association of music theory and solfège teachers. It is a website with composition assignments, practical ideas and articles by experts in the field. Most of the assignments are suitable for group work, and indeed one of the aims here is to leverage the

strengths of group work especially in introductory teaching of composition.

“Group teaching works well especially in the early stages of studies; it is comfortable to play around and try out various musical ideas in a group,” says MARKKU KLAMI, a member of the opus1.fi working group.

## Coaching and teaching

Markku Klami says that composition teaching could easily be divided into two parts: composition coaching and composition teaching.

“Coaching is suited for group sessions, its purpose being to encourage students to exercise their creativity and their musical invention. This introductory teaching of composition can be given by any qualified music educator.” Although the community aspect is important, it is also important for each student's own voice to be heard and to be given space to develop. That requires individual composition lessons and a qualified composition teacher.

The purpose of the opus1.fi website is to offer material and tips for low-threshold composition teaching in particular. “The assignments are accessible, and the expert articles discuss composition pedagogy and envision what composition teaching could be like in the future. The short-term goal is to involve all education providers in developing composition teaching. The long-term goal is to establish composition teaching as a standard feature at music institutes,” says Markku Klami.

On the whole, music institutes in Finland have been positive about the project and have embraced its tips and ideas. The division into coaching and teaching has been a relief for many instrument teachers, as they have realised that composition coaching does not require the teacher to be a trained composer. © Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi). Opus1.fi – available in English, Swedish and Finnish.



## PEDAGOGUE-COMPOSER SOILI PERKIÖ



© Pertti Niskanen

# MUSIC IS LIFE!

BY Amanda Kauranne

When reading the National Biography's entry on Soili Perkiö, the living legend of Finnish music education, I begin to feel dizzy just seeing her list of publications. How is it possible for one person to achieve so much in a lifetime? The answer is simple: this pedagogue with a decades-long career at the Sibelius Academy, beloved composer, enthusiastic collector of instruments and active member of various associations, is someone who gets fired up through working with others.

"Children are a wonderful tribe who have a completely unique culture. The intensity that children have when they live in the moment is a goal of many major meditation techniques, and children are already experiencing it – and will for a time. That flow that enables them to face any situation, and the way all art forms are entwined in their life and play both fascinate me," says SOILI PERKIÖ, a specialist in early childhood music education.

"By my age, I have had time to get involved in many kinds of ventures. The energy comes from doing things together, and from music itself. During the past few years, I have managed to get even closer to young professionals through mentoring. Having been able to contribute to music textbooks has been an enjoyable facet of my career, as well as giving me the opportunity to influence the entire music education scene."

### Music as a career choice

Soili Perkiö's early childhood was peppered with everyday music-making: singing with her aunt and grandmother, and in larger groups whenever there was a gathering at home. No-one in Perkiö's childhood family pressured her to take up music. This is largely because her mother had been forced to take instrument lessons, and as a result she would only open the piano lid when the keys needed dusting. Only when Perkiö herself got motivated to play did she start taking

lessons. After finishing high school, she decided to pursue a career in teaching mathematics, following the example of her own inspiring maths teacher, who used singing as a way to illustrate the creativity of mathematical thinking.

"He would make up songs about his students and improvise. For him, music was part of an ordinary school day. It was tremendously inspiring." After a year of studies, however, Perkiö realised that her fellow students did not share her enthusiasm for combining singing and maths, and she made the switch to the Sibelius Academy Music Education Department. There she learned about the history of music education, and soon began to spend her summers on study trips to Kodály, Jaques-Dalcroze and Orff institutes.

Perkiö found her spiritual home at the Orff Institute in Salzburg, where she studied creative music education for a year, and has returned there nearly every year to teach, in addition to her work as a lecturer at the Sibelius Academy Music Education Department.

The following are highlights of Soili Perkiö's thoughts on music and music education. The extended version of the article can be read at [fmq.fi](http://fmq.fi).

### Music is self-expression

"I think about that child who lives inside of us, and the fact that all art forms are aspects of a greater whole. Different forms of art are entwined in a spiral, drawing energy from each other and giving out impulses in turn. It is an endless chain which enables you to discover yourself, the world and other people through art.

"Composing is a form of recreation for me. It is something I do for myself in a heartfelt manner, and it gives me energy. Even when I receive a commission, I make sure to allow enough time for the process so that I never have to force myself to compose. That way, I can get to it whenever I have that tickle, that inkling that a song is about to pop into the world! Then it is easy to find the time and space for it, even with other things going on in my life.

"When I am at home and have the time to sing, I play with rhythms and look for natural repeats that make it easy for audiences to sing along. The way the song sits in your mouth is really important.

"Improvisation is expression done by myself, and for myself. When done in a group setting, it involves sharing the feeling and mood of the situation."

### Music is tonal colour

"I have brought back instruments of all conceivable shapes, sizes and sounds from overseas. They represent memories of my travels and people I have met. I fall in love with a sound and in a way ask the instrument how it would feel about moving to Finland!

"Through these instruments, I want to guide people to see that there is no right or wrong way of playing them, that they only need their own hands and skin. Skin meets skin

or wood, and there may be the odd mallet in the mix. This may be one way for an adult to go back to a child's way of marvelling at a sound they have just discovered, and to keep searching for sounds that seem like the best fit for them."

### Music is rhythm and movement

"Movement is visible music, and music is audible movement. This was the key message from INKERI SIMOLA-ISAASSON, the legendary teacher of music and movement, and I adopted it as my own way of thinking. Now I get to teach music and movement to a new generation of music educators. It has given me an opportunity to reflect upon what it means to learn and understand concepts through one's body. International research and my own experiences support the fact that children's education must include art subjects and learning through their bodies, as it is such a strong way for many people to perceive things."

### Music is a community

"One of the challenges for the future is to include music education as a part of a natural flow in a school day, and to recognise what supports learning: positive experiences and alternating between physical learning and learning through thinking and analysing. I feel that today's school is already heading towards this through the new national curriculum which includes the concept of phenomenon-based learning, where a lengthy period of time is spent examining a specific learning topic."

Perkiö is a founding member of the JaSeSoi association, where she continues to be actively involved as an educator. Founded in 1985, the association operates on a voluntary basis and offers professional development in creative music education, catering to teachers all the way from early childhood education to high-school level. The association wishes to enhance their course participants' pedagogic techniques and to offer a platform for collective thinking. "Every time we organise an event, it is a veritable firework display of creativity. Once you have experienced it, you will want to return."

### Put down your devices and start creating

"Parents who take their children to early childhood music classes know that music is good and beneficial for their child. Through these classes, it is possible to reassure parents that their own voices are valuable and important, and they should sometimes switch off from technology and make their own music instead. Music is not tied to formal music classes, it can be present in the smallest moments of being together, in mundane tasks and with the joy of inventing. Music is not just accomplishments, it is everyday life!" ©

Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham



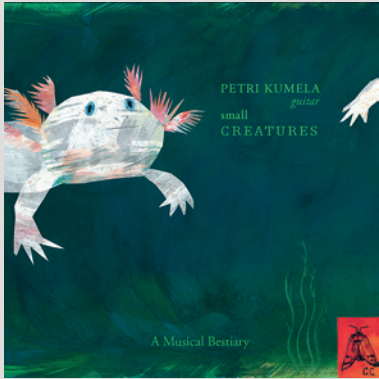


# Recordings of the year

“One would be forgiven for thinking that 75 minutes of miniatures would get tedious after a while, but there is no danger of that, for two reasons: first, the progression of the pieces ensures that the listener’s interest is sustained, and second, Kumela is such a brilliant performer that even the musically less than fascinating creepy-crawlies manage to sound interesting. The takeaway from

this album is its enormous range of tonal colour and mood. This is remarkable, considering that it was created entirely without electronics.” • Hanna Isolammi

*Small Creatures - A Musical Bestiary*  
Petri Kumela  
2020



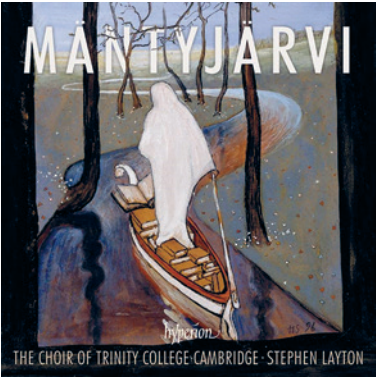
“Musically, *The Earth, Spring’s Daughter* is dramatic and gorgeous-sounding. The vocal part is melismatic and ecstatic, whereas the orchestral part, built on pedal

**TARKIAINEN:**  
*The Earth, Spring’s Daughter; Saivo*  
Virpi Räisänen (mezzo-soprano),  
Jukka Perko (saxophone), Lapland Chamber  
Orchestra, cond. John Storgårds  
Ondine ODE 1353-2

points, is in a constant state of subtle transformation (one comes to think of Saariaho) and supports instrumental solo phrases with leitmotivic character. [- -] *Saivo* elegantly combines contemporary aesthetics, associations with nature and a mythological dimension. There is no doubt that Tarkiainen writes brilliant music!”  
• Anna Pulkkis

The following quotes are from the reviews published during the year 2020. All the full reviews and more can be found at [fmq.fi/reviews](https://www.fmq.fi/reviews).

## Contemporary and classical albums 2020



**MÄNTYJÄRVI:** *Choral Music*  
The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge,  
cond. Stephen Layton  
Hyperion CDA68266

“The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge under Stephen Layton commissioned an entire Evensong service for this disc, the *Trinity Service*. The rest of the album features other sacred pieces by Mäntyjärvi, most prominently the dark and edgy *Stuttgarter Psalmen*. The choir’s immaculate intonation and sonorous sound reveal deeper layers in Mäntyjärvi’s musical idiom than just that it is pleasing to sing and to listen to. Mäntyjärvi makes such full use of the potential of the choral sound and the registers of the human voice in his harmonies that the colours begin to flicker like the Northern Lights, superbly enriching the text.”  
• Kare Eskola



**AUVINEN:** *Junker Twist; Himmel Punk; Turbo Aria*  
Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra,  
cond. Hannu Lintu  
Ondine ODE 1326-2

“Auvinen’s finest talent is in the chillingly clear musical images that emerge from pressurised fury. *Junker Twist* suddenly rasps more terrifyingly than Darth Vader, *Turbo Aria* unexpectedly floats up a repeated minor triad, and *Himmel Punk* presents an image of heaven that is far too concrete for comfort. The relentless onslaught of sound energy and aural images begging for an explanation depletes the listener’s emotional energy, but it feels good because there is catharsis at the end of it all.” • Kare Eskola



**HILLI:** *confluence / divergence*  
Petri Kumela (guitar), Uusinta Ensemble,  
cond. József Hárs  
Kairos 0015078KAI

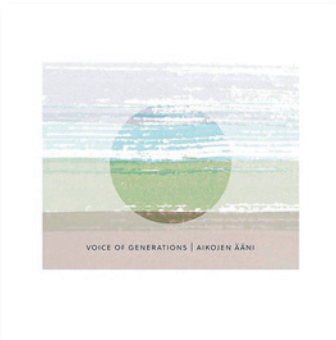
“Sebastian Hilli’s *confluence / divergence*, a 30-minute work for solo guitar and small ensemble (flute, percussion, harp, cello), sweeps the listener straight into a breathtaking flow of imaginative sounds, produced through a variety of unconventional playing techniques. The instruments imitate each other and become a deceptive multi-instrument that dissolves the border between the soloist and the ensemble; Petri Kumela and the other musicians do outstanding work. The deep groans in the second of the three movements are quite extraordinary.”  
• Anna Pulkkis





**HAAPANEN:** *Flute Concerto; Ladies' Room; Compulsion Island*  
Yuki Koyama (flute), Helena Juntunen (soprano), Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, cond. Hannu Lintu & Dima Slobodeniouk  
Ondine ODE 1307-2

“Haapanen writes for the orchestra as for a collective of virtuosi and the FRSO do not let him down in this scintillating performance.”  
• Martin Anderson



**Voice of Generations**  
Vocal ensembles Club for Five, McNaiset, and Signe; Quartet in Piae cantiones: Tuuli Lindeberg, Teppo Lampela, Juho Punkeri, Sampo Haapaniemi, Sibelius Academy Vocal Ensemble, cond. Nils Schweckendiek  
SibaRecords SRCD 1025

“Voice of Generations is a mishmash, but also an inspiring example of open-minded repertoire planning.”  
• Anna Pulkkis



**LEINONEN:** *Chamber Music*  
Terhi Paldanius and Jukka Untamala (violin), Antti Tikkanen (viola), Tomas Nuñez-Garcés (cello), Roope Gröndahl (piano), Olli Leppäniemi (clarinet)  
Alba ABCD 447

“The experience is powerful yet also exhausting, and a feat of strength for the musicians, who perform it brilliantly.” • Anna Pulkkis



**LINDBERG:** *Accused; Two Episodes*  
Anu Korsi (soprano), Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, cond. Hannu Lintu  
Ondine ODE 1345-2

“Hannu Lintu obtains glorious playing from the musicians of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the members of the engineering team can congratulate themselves on recorded

sound that ranges from chamber-music delicacy to knee-weakening power at the climaxes.”  
• Martin Anderson



**Choral Works by Antti Auvinen and Sampo Haapamäki**  
Helsinki Chamber Choir, cond. Nils Schweckendiek  
Alba ABCD457

“Generally speaking, exploratory modernist choral music is taxing both to perform and to listen to, but this disc is an exception. Antti Auvinen and Sampo Haapamäki take the listener on a roller-coaster ride.”  
• Kare Eskola



**KAILA:** *The Bells Bow Down*  
Adrienne Kim (piano), Isabelle Lepanto Gleicher (flute), Aizuri Quartet  
Innova Recordings 1036

“There is a certain calmness but also a constant sense of moving towards a goal. The performances are lively and delicate throughout, resulting in an elegant and enjoyable whole.”  
• Anna Pulkkis



**Kromos - 21st-Century Guitar Music**  
Ismo Eskelinen  
BIS-2395 SACD

“Kromos is a rewarding listening experience. This is, naturally, due to Eskelinen’s splendid musicianship, but also much to the diversity of styles and ideas in the chosen six works.”  
• Anna Pulkkis



**Broken - Music by Tim Ferchen**  
Awake Percussion  
SibaRecords SRCD-1024

“Ferchen builds up an incredible intensity based not only on rhythm but also on bright and surprising colours.” • Kare Eskola



**Finnish music for flute, viola and harp**  
Ensemble Transparent  
Pifink JJVCD-220

“The combination of flute, viola and harp creates a heavenly, balanced and rich sound, and one regrets that the recording is so short, only a good thirty minutes.” • Anna Pulkkis



**AHO:** *Chamber Music*  
Samuli Peltonen (cello), Sonja Fräki (piano), Jaakko Kuusisto (violin), Pekka Kuusisto (violin)  
BIS-2186 SACD

“The performances are as full of feeling as the music, and the recorded sound is bright and immediate.”  
• Martin Anderson



**TURRIAGO:** *Complete piano solo works performed by the composer*  
Pifink JJVCD-215

“Turriago plays energetically and his booklet texts are disarmingly straightforward. The newest works are the strongest ones, making one look forward to more.” • Anna Pulkkis



Folk & world  
music albums  
2020



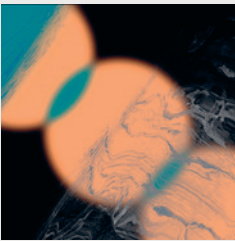
TIMO ALAKOTILA  
*Ikiliikkuja*  
2020 Åkerö Records

“I immediately allow myself to throw all thoughts of genre out of the window and just enjoy the music. The communication between the musicians is the key here.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka



JOAKIM BERGHÄLL  
*Dialogues IV*  
2019 Boulder Music Helsinki

“The final entirety ends up being amazingly peaceful, full of understanding and musical equality. As a good dialogue should be.” • Riikka Hiltunen



VIMMA  
*Meri ja avaruus*  
2019 Eclipse Music

“The philosophy of progressive rock seems like a world close to Vimma, but you can definitely hear the taste of folk music, classical music, funk and jazz.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka



ILKKA AROLA SOUND TAGINE  
*Land Ahead!*  
2019 Flame Jazz Records

“Trumpet player Ilkka Arola has a background both in jazz and in Arabic music. On this new release these influences truly shake hands in a natural way.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka



FREILACH MIT KNEIDLACH  
*Gefilte Fidl*  
2019 Global Music Centre

“The album rings with tears of joy, as well as joy through tears – in other words, we are at the heart of Klezmer music!” • Amanda Kauranne



EMMI KUJANPÄÄ  
*Nani*  
2020 Nordic Notes

“The varied use of vocal technique and storytelling go naturally hand in hand throughout this album.” • Amanda Kauranne



MERIHEINI LUOTO  
*Metsänpeitto 2*  
2019 Meriheini Luoto

“Violinist Meriheini Luoto creates a space, builds a soundscape and disorientsates the listener.” • Riikka Hiltunen



JUURAKKO  
*Yhdeksäs talvi*  
2019 Inkoon Musiikki

“A winter-themed album that ingeniously combines the modern with the traditional.” • Amanda Kauranne



MARIA KALANIEMI & EERO GRUNDSTRÖM  
*Mielo*  
2020 Åkerö Records

“The music is full of the power of nature, the aches and pains of finding the wings of one’s soul, and the joy of discovery when one finally finds them.” • Amanda Kauranne



PEKKO KÄPPI  
*Finnish folk songs vol. 1*  
2019 Helmi Levyt

“With everything else removed, the most distinguishable elements of his music remain: his unique voice and brilliant jouhikko playing.” • Riikka Hiltunen



NIEMI  
*Spiraalit*  
2020 Bafe's Factory

“Niemi’s calm and unpretentious voice is accompanied for example by kanteles, other string instruments and a beautiful-sounding piano.” • Riikka Hiltunen



IKIRANKA  
2020 Kuu Records

“Many tunes make me think of traditional wedding musicians: on their way to the ceremony, taking some jazzy turns halfway there, allowing themselves to roam free.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka



NATHAN RIKI THOMSON  
*Resonance*  
2019 SibaRecords

“The listening experience is refreshing and reminds me of a rainforest landscape, with a lot of small exciting sounds joining in from here and there.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka



AKKAPELIMANNIT  
*Kaustinen*  
2020 Alba ABACD 23

“The disc is a good introduction to the gamut of music from Kaustinen, its history and the local humour.” • Amanda Kauranne



PETRI HAKALA & MARKKU LEPISTÖ  
*Nordic Route*  
2020 Rapusaari Records

“One of the best folk music albums in a more traditional style that I’ve heard for a long time.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka



DANCHEV:DOMAIN  
*Say It*  
2020 Glomama Music

“There are a lot of intriguing musical landscapes, from big epic sounds and suggestive drones to a cappella singing.” • Tove Djupsjöbacka

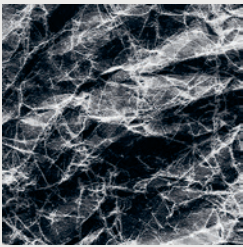


ILONA KORHONEN & TAITO HOFFRÉN  
*Minä, Paraske. Sinä, Arhippa.*  
2020 Kanteleen Ääniä

“The two discs complement each other, and listening to the double album you notice once again how beautiful and interesting the human voice is – in its simplicity and richness.” • Amanda Kauranne



Jazz & ambient  
albums 2020



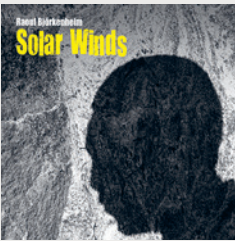
AKI HIMANEN & ALEKSI KINNUNEN  
*Scapes I*  
2020 Super Life

“Here machines are sparring partners [- -] that react to the organic instruments and parry back with their own input, creating a real dialogue.” • Wif Stenger



DALINDËO  
*Dark Money*  
2020 Suomen Musiikki

“Dalindëo plays instrumental but still political jazz on this themed album.”  
• Jan-Erik Holmberg



RAOUL BJÖRKENHEIM  
*Solar Winds*  
2020 Long Song Records

“Sublime guitar lines that soar like birds of prey in the sky, daring harmonic innovations and immersive metric modulations.” • Petri Silas



3TM  
*Lake + Abyss*  
2019 We Jazz Records

“A sweet spot where a rough sketch turns into something concrete, Mäkynen is all about moods and the subtle shifts in between them.”  
• Petri Silas



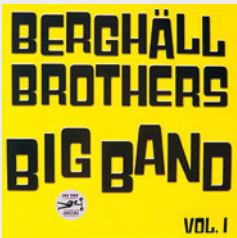
DJANGO COLLECTIVE HELSINKI  
*Do Standards*  
2020 DCH

“Time-honoured melodies that have comforted many generations through wars, financial turmoil and epidemics before – and still have that power.”  
• Wif Stenger



SUPERPOSITION  
2020 We Jazz Records

“Drummer Olavi Louhivuori’s new band Superposition is also capable of multiple simultaneous states, from sensitive balladry to free-jazz intensity.” • Wif Stenger



BERGHÄLL BROTHERS BIG BAND  
*Vol. 1*  
2020 Boulder Music

“Berghäll’s six compositions have a multifaceted global flavour. Straightforward jazz rhythms and African beats meet Nordic and oriental ideas.” • Jan-Erik Holmberg



VERNERI POHJOLA  
*The Dead Don't Dream*  
2020 Edition Records

“Pohjola embraces new settings and situations as a hired gun yet also frequently seeks to shed his skin in the projects he leads or co-leads.”  
• Petri Silas



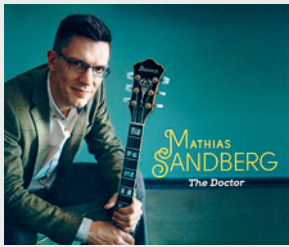
TAPANI RINNE  
*Foghornia*  
2020 Signature Dark

“The overall sound is eerie, nocturnal and wintry – yet somehow comforting, as deep forests are for people of the North.” • Wif Stenger



AINON  
*Drought*  
2020 We Jazz Records

“Veering from the vast, brooding and sedate to the petite, playful and sanguine, the group establishes a solid interface of unique inventions.”  
• Petri Silas



MATHIAS SANDBERG  
*The Doctor*  
2020 Sandberg Music

“The trio swings seriously and authentically, but also gives a taste of countryside Americana. Sandberg’s clean execution is sophisticated.”  
• Jan-Erik Holmberg



KARI IKONEN  
*Impressions, Improvisations & Compositions*  
2020 Ozella Music

“Ikonen alternately figure skates, tap dances and prances across the keys, sounding like a jaunty, syncopated one-man band.” • Wif Stenger



SAKARI KUKKO AFRO CHAMBER & STRINGS  
*Kainuu – Casamance*  
2020 Rockadillo

“Sakari Kukko was mapping new areas long before it became fashionable or something to aspire to.”  
• Petri Silas



RAN BLAKE & FRANK CARLBERG  
*Gray Moon*  
2020 Red Piano Records

“The collaboration flourishes beautifully, with the two pianos almost becoming one through spectacular voicings.”  
• Jan-Erik Holmberg



SID HILLE  
*Here – Beyond the Infinite*  
2020 SatnaMusic

“Sid Hille and Abdissa Assefa managed to create and capture some truly momentous and mesmerising moments.” • Petri Silas



HOT HEROS & IRO HAARLA  
*Vodjanoi*  
2020 Karkia Mistika Records

“At times surprisingly groovy, at others surreptitiously enticing, *Vodjanoi* is free jazz for the future.”  
• Petri Silas



LAU NAU  
*Sjalö*  
2020 Fonal Records

“A poignant soundscape that works equally well as a standalone work and as a movie score.” • Wif Stenger





# Performances of the year

In Finland, the pandemic brought a complete stop to live music events in March 2020, and at the time of writing, restrictions on events are still in place. The music industry, however, was not content to sit around twiddling its collective thumbs: very soon several operators, large and small, showed a willingness to keep in touch with their audiences, to continue to employ musicians and to keep the torch lit, resulting in a veritable flood of digital performances ranging from home concerts on social media to carefully designed live-streamed events.

Moreover, unlike in many other countries, live music concerts were reinstated in Finland amid these exceptional circumstances.

At first it looked as if all summer festivals would be lost this year, but as restrictions were eased, streaming events and live concerts

for limited audiences were organised near and far. Introducing streaming instead of completely cancelling a festival came across as a message of hope. For many, visiting a beloved summer festival is an irreplaceable annual ritual, and being able to see familiar musicians and venues – even if remotely – may be of great value.

In the autumn, too, many orchestras, clubs, bands and artists have been performing both live and remotely. Music festivals, instead of being cancelled nationwide, simply reinvented themselves in multiple ways.

The music sector devised guidelines for organising live events safely. Performers and venues alike have adapted themselves to these guidelines. Orchestras typically began to play concerts without an interval and with added distancing within both the orchestra and the audience. Many concerts and gigs have been

performed twice in one night to make up for the loss of ticket revenue due to restricted attendance.

The entry and exit of audience members is ushered and staggered at some venues and concert halls, and several orchestras have discontinued the sale of season tickets and of refreshments at concert venues. Some of the larger orchestras have performed in smaller formations, and ensembles have also performed at locations outside concert halls, such as public libraries.

**The following pages feature highlights of musical events streamed and live that took place in Finland in 2020, this most exceptional of years.**

• Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

## Remote concerts for schools

Concert Centre Finland is a non-profit association that organises live concerts and workshops at schools and daycare centres in Finland. When exceptional circumstances arose, the Centre began to produce remote concerts that helped the work of music

teachers and eased the everyday lives of parents of children of daycare and school age who were working from home. The remote concerts continued alongside live concerts with limited audiences in the 2020–2021 school year.



Pikku Papun Orkesteri

© Antti Kokkola

## Tampere Biennale 2.0

“The 2020 edition of the Tampere Biennale had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. As a substitute programme, the Biennale and the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle organised a radio festival called Tampere Biennale 2.0. The festival continued at the Ung Nordisk Musik festival (see p. 65) in Tampere in August. The programme here consisted of concerts, a family day, sound art installations and video works posted on the Biennale website. Composer JENNAH VAINIO, artistic director of the Tampere Biennale, spoke to FMQ about the scheduled programme of the 2020 event and about her work as a composer. Read the interview at [fmq.fi](http://fmq.fi).

“In the spring of the pandemic in Finland, the largest symphony orchestras had the greatest potential for creating remote concert series, as they already had experience of streaming concerts, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra most prominently so. The Helsinki Philharmonic, Tampere Philharmonic, Tapiola Sinfonietta and Turku Philharmonic were also remarkably quick to act, the latter two offering a dozen online concerts each, including children’s concerts.

The Jyväskylä Sinfonia and Kuopio Symphony Orchestra boldly joined ranks with their larger counterparts. The Jyväskylä Sinfonia launched a series of eight remote concerts on 1 April and posted greetings from orchestra members on YouTube on a daily basis. The orchestra also produced online content to support remote home-schooling, and a brass quartet toured old people’s homes and assisted living facilities to play music under their windows.

## Chamber music spring

© Petra Tiihonen Alias Creative



The remote concerts of Finnish orchestras have featured repertoire that musicians have been hankering to play, in some cases for quite some time. The pieces featured range from classics to rarities. Many have favoured music perceived as calming or hopeful – Bach or Sibelius being safe choices.

The Turku Philharmonic and the Tampere Philharmonic both programmed the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* by Messiaen – a hypnotic and searing work written in a prisoner-of-war camp and reflecting on a life turned upside down.

• By Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen.  
The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](http://fmq.fi).



## Midwinter Night's Dream

Signe © Venla Helenius



SIGNE & EMMI U QUINTET 4 February, Eclipse Jazz Club/G Livelab, Tampere

In February, Signe and Emmi U Quintet brought a dreamy night of jazz and beyond to Tampere's stellar new music venue.

“Some nights it all comes together: performance, visual design, ambience and surroundings. On one of this mild winter's coldest nights, the stars aligned at G Livelab Tampere. The red-brick nineteenth-century building and its smokestack seemed to glow on a snowy riverbank behind the city theatre. It once housed a paper mill's boiler, later serving as a library before reopening as the second G Livelab in August 2019, three years after the club's high-tech Helsinki cousin.

You could have heard a pin drop as vocal quartet Signe took the stage in bright colours. The lighting, dance moves and stage patter were all on point, but the group's distinctive sound made the night.

Five years since they started, the group has become much more poised, relaxed and radiant onstage. [-] Double bassist KAISA MÄEN-SIVU is Signe's only instrumentalist – and her precisely targeted playing is the secret weapon that sets them apart from other vocal groups. Also making them unique is a repertoire that ranges from ancient Greek poems to Swedish-Finnish sea shanties. Though jazz is only part of their sound, it too makes them singular.

At times, this was experimental choral music, an exploration of the possibilities of four voices, four strings and some finger-snapping. *Ode to Aphrodite's* whispered intro

sounded like an electronic loop, while the breathy repetition at the start of *Sardeesta* suggested Laurie Anderson's *O Superman*. *Cretan Girls*, with its cartoony falsetto vocals, was like stepping into a surreal Frank Zappa operetta, sounding less shrill than on record. There were ambient drone soundscapes on *Puhun totta* and *Ruben*, a harrowing spoken-word tale of archipelago bootleggers worthy of Ernest Hemingway.

Like Signe, pianist EMMI UIMO-NEN's background spans folk, classical and jazz. Her Emmi U Quintet released its debut in late 2019. In Tampere she was expressive and lyrical, bringing strong percussive effects to *My Bird*, the album's title track.

• By Wif Stenger. The full review at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).



Kari Ikonen

## April Jazz went online

## Jazz home delivery

“The Flame Jazz concert series came up with a concept called Flame Jazz Home Delivery & Stream. In May and June, this involved a series of jazz gigs literally delivered to people's homes by order in the Turku area and streamed online. A band would perform on the back of a truck that drove around residential areas on demand, respecting social distancing at all times. Flame Jazz intends to resume the home-delivery service in spring 2021.

© Christina Pirainen



“April Jazz showed its tenacity in April when, instead of cancelling the festival, it went online at short notice, presenting a four-day festival called April Jazz Subgrooves and streamed live from G Livelab in Helsinki. There were four nights of concerts, featuring both solo performances and small groups including KARI IKONEN SOLO, TIMO LASSY & TEPPA MÄKYNEN and Superposition headed by OLAVI LOUHIVUORI.

APRIL JAZZ 22-25 April

## Sounds of summer

While holding major summer events proved impossible in Finland this year, not all festivals and concert series were completely cancelled: music of all genres continued to be performed around the country, exceptional circumstances notwithstanding.

© Mikko Keski-Vähälä



Klassinen Hietsu in Helsinki

“In summer 2020, concerts for very limited audiences sprung up in Finland, for instance at G Livelab, at the Savoy Theatre, by the Finnish Baroque Orchestra and jointly by the concert series Hietsu is Happening and Klassinen Hietsu in Helsinki.

The Music by the Sea festival in Inkoo in June was wholly streamed, and a limited number of tickets were available for all concerts. The festival was exploring its titular theme, music of the sea, under its new artistic director JAN SÖDERBLOM.

Meidän Festivaali [Our Festival], a famously unprejudiced chamber music festival specialising in unusual concert concepts, was able to conjure up a full-fledged festival week for the period 26 July to 1 August, comprising performances for limited audiences, outdoor concerts and live streaming. The theme for this year was to have been “Ilman” [Without], being the contribution of the Kamus Quartet, the joint artistic directors of the festival, to the Beethoven anniversary year. Because of the current extraordinary circumstances, however, the theme of the festival was “Poikkeus” [Exception], although the original programme planning was still lurking in the background. There was one Beethoven piece on the programme but in other respects the composer names were far from the canon; as examples, we may mention CAROLINE SHAW and JUSTINIAN TAMUSUZA.

© Krista Järvelä



## More than 300 videos at Kaustinen Folk Music

The venerable Kaustinen Folk Music Festival was held in virtual form in July 2020. The most popular content items, according to the organisers, were the folk music videos provided by folk musicians from all over the

The Jyväskylä Festival built its own streaming platform on which to place its events this year but the festival also featured live concerts in early July, such as a Beethoven recital by OLLI MUSTONEN. The Pielinen Soi festival organised four concerts in July, the idea being to have them outdoors. Also in early July, the Hauho Music Festival streamed concerts for instance by their artists-in-residence, Virtuosi di Kuhmo.

The Korsholma Music Festival focused on the 1920s and on Beethoven under the banner “wild and free”. The concerts were streamed, and live audiences admitted to some.

Some festivals postponed some of their concerts to the autumn or to next spring (Turku Music Festival, Mikkeli Music Festival) or invested in a winter concert series.

• By Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen.

The extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).

KAUSTINEN FOLK MUSIC 13-19 July

country and around the world. About 45 folk music videos were released every day, to a total of almost 400.



## Laila – Electronic fantasy of an artificial intelligence

How does artificial intelligence sing? Art made using AI has emerged as a genre unto itself in the arts in recent years. *Laila* is a new production of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet that brings AI into real-time interaction with audience members.

“*Laila* is a 20-minute piece with music by ESA-PEKKA SALONEN that might be described as an interactive chamber opera. It is uniquely performed in a videodome, a structure that houses the audience for the duration of the performance. A virtual environment is projected on the walls and ceiling of the space, and this environment changes according to the movements of the audience. Sometimes it seems as if the music follows the visitors as they move around the space. Only six audience members are admitted at a time, and there are no musicians or other performers present.

*Laila* was created by a large team. In addition to Salonen, it included TUOMAS NORVIO (sound design), PAULA VESALA (dramaturgy) and the Ekho Collective (visual design), the latter being a group of professionals in arts, design and technology.

Audience members are admitted into the videodome singly from a holding area where they are prepared for the performance by giving them respirators and plastic shoe covers. They are also given small speakers to wear on a cord around their neck; these play part of the music. Indeed, even though *Laila* was not specifically tailored for the current coronavirus

circumstances, it certainly gives that appearance.

En route to the videodome, every visitor has to give a sound sample for *Laila* to use; in a small anteroom, they are instructed to speak single words into a microphone for the AI to use as material as the opera proceeds.

Although there is no orchestra present, the sound material used in *Laila* was recorded by the singers and Orchestra of the FNOB. The result is somehow distanced and alienated from the familiar drama of opera. Perhaps this is intentional. *Laila* is at once a nightmare and a fantasy – a dream image of the world as dictated by technology.

Because of the heavy front-ending of technology in *Laila*, the universe of the piece seems somehow dystopian and predetermined. Its emotional landscape is surprisingly restrained and cool. It is difficult to perceive a narrative in the piece. In musical terms, it is more a space than a story, albeit it is organised into sections illustrated with visual cues.

• By Sini Mononen. Read more in the article *Art of the future – the art of together* p. 20 and the extended version of this article at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).

**LAILA** 20 August – 13 September, Finnish National Opera

“MARITZA NÚÑEZ, one of the most prolific opera librettists in Finland today, was in Lima, Peru, giving an opera workshop in early 2020 when the government declared a state of emergency. Her planned six-week stay extended to more than six months, during which time she worked on several librettos. It was during this quarantine and at Núñez’s initiative that the exceptional opera *Eclipses* for two female voices and chamber ensemble was created. The opera was conceived as a collaborative effort, with the music being provided by 15 composers, one scene from each. *Eclipses* was given a virtual premiere on 25 October.

**ECLIPSES** Facebook page of Universidad Nacional de Música Peru

## Other exceptional opera premieres

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet rustled up a completely new opera production from scratch in only a few months. Based on Mozart’s opera *Così fan tutte* and with a new libretto by MINNA LINDGREN, *Covid fan tutte* broke the audience record for the FNOB’s live streams and attracted a great deal of media attention. The opera is a satirical take on the coronavirus pandemic in Finland in spring 2020, and its starry performers include soprano KARITA MATTILA and conductor ESA-PEKKA SALONEN.

**COVID FAN TUTTE** 28 August – 23 October, Finnish National Opera

Covid fan tutte, Karita Mattila © Stefan Bremer

## 75th anniversary of the Society of Finnish Composers

“The year 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the Society of Finnish Composers. This was celebrated with an anniversary concert on 2 October, at which the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by HANNU LINTU performed a programme including premieres of works by OUTI TARKIAINEN and SAMPO HAAPAMÄKI. At a second anniversary concert on 6 December, the Tampere Philharmonic conducted by JAN SÖDERBLOM will perform a programme ranging from *Piae cantiones* tunes to the very latest music, including works by HELVI LEIVISKÄ, MINNA LEINONEN and LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI.

In October the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra premiered KALEVI AHO’s Sonata for Cello and

Piano in its concert series, and the Joensuu Symphony Orchestra premiered KAI NIEMINEN’s Third Symphony. The autumn of this anniversary year further included two festivals: New Music October featuring premieres and a concert of music by JUKKA RUOHOMÄKI, and the RUSK chamber music festival in Pietarsaari in November, where the featured composer was JUHANI NUORVALA.

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet staged a revival of JAAKKO KUUSISTO’s opera *Jää* [Ice] on 22 October, making its contribution to the celebration of the Finnish creative musical arts.

• See the article *Finland is a paradise for composers* by Pekka Hako at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).

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## Sámi Music Academy Festival



“The first Sámi Music Academy Festival was held in Utsjoki on August 29 as a remote event and was also streamed live. Most of the performers were students at the Music Academy, giving

solo performances and appearing with professional musicians.

• For more on the Sámi Music Academy, see *Music and identity building – World-first conservatory degrees of Sámi music completed* at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).

## Concerts continue

“Sinfonia Lahti performed the entire cycle of Sibelius’s symphonies at the traditional Sibelius Festival in October.

The Helsinki Philharmonic designed a new concert format for the autumn, with short works forming a coherent programme that also always included a solo dance work. The Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra has highlighted its role as a national institution, as it is able to cater via radio, TV and the internet to those people nationwide who cannot or dare not attend concerts. Radio broadcasts and online streaming used to be regarded a by-product of the FRSO’s concerts but now the live and remote aspects have merged into one.

• See also the column by Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen on concerts during lockdown at [fmq.fi](https://fmq.fi).

## “Music Ecology” at Ung Nordisk Musik

“Ung Nordisk Musik was held from 24 to 29 August in Tampere with an environmental theme. All the concerts were live-streamed. UNM is a festival that rotates between the Nordic countries, presenting, as the name states, a cross-section of music by young Nordic composers. The theme of each particular festival is explored in lectures, public discussions and this year also in the festival Zine. One of the key works on the programme was CECILIA DAMSTRÖM’s *Requiem for Our Earth*.

• More about UNM and Cecilia Damström on page 38.

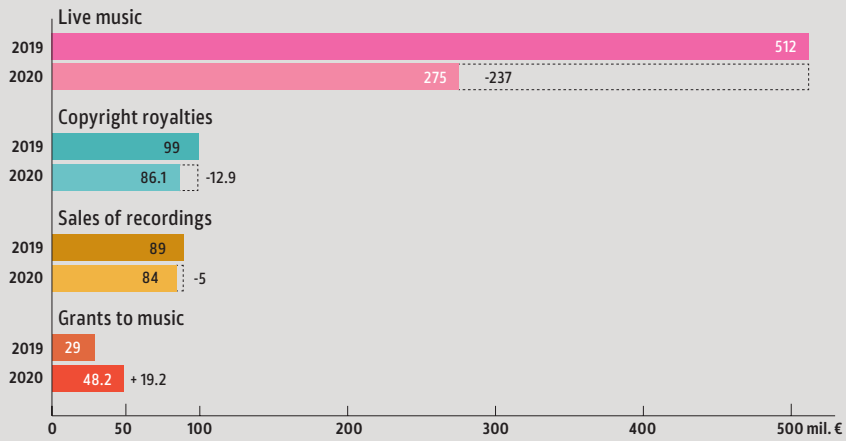


# NOTABLE NUMBERS

## Covid-19 and the total value of Finland's core music industry in 2020

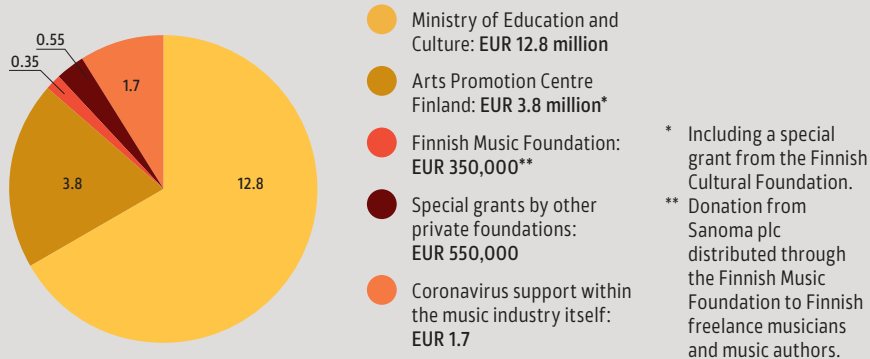
### Loss of revenues

The total value of Finland's core music industry was EUR 718 million in 2019. As of October 2020, it is estimated that the Covid-19 pandemic will cause c. 250 million euros' loss of revenues for the industry. This includes revenue from live performances, recording sales and copyright royalties but excludes music education and music exports. Source: Music Finland.



## Covid-19 and the special grants to music in 2020

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, special grants totalling more than EUR 19 million have been allocated to the Finnish music industry. The figure is based on estimates from October.



## How has the pandemic affected music listening in Finland in 2020?

More than 1,000 Finns aged from 13 to 75 responded to a survey conducted by the Finnish Composers' Copyright Society Teosto and IFPI Finland in August this year. The survey revealed that:

- 23%** of the respondents had accessed a live-streamed concert, **13%** for the first time ever.
- 24%** had attended a live performance of music during the previous six months; the figure for the same period in 2019 was **56%**.
- 35%** were listening to more music than before.
- 24%** had found an important source of comfort in music.
- 4%** were listening to less music than before.

Overall, music listening increased in all digital channels. And although in the spring it looked for a while as if everyone was mostly listening to old, familiar music, eventually the pandemic did not prevent new performers from making their breakthroughs in Finland. Source: GroupM Finland, which conducted the survey.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

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### Upcoming concerts at G Livelab Helsinki

- 27.1. Iiro Rantala Flock
- 19.2. Tomi Salesvuo East Funk Attack
- 25.2. Osmo Ikonen Swings
- 21.4. Vasas Flora och Fauna
- 27.5. Timo Lassy feat. Joyce Elaine Yuille (FI/US)
- 28.5. Timo Lassy feat. Joyce Elaine Yuille (FI/US)

### Upcoming concerts at G Livelab Tampere

- 16.1. Ilmiliekki Quartet
- 22.1. Räjättyt + Luukas Oja
- 19.2. Maarit & Sami Hurmerinta
- 27.2. Tampere Filharmonia presents: TF Brass
- 13.3. Olavi Uusivirta (duo)
- 27.3. Tuomari Nurmio



suomen  
säveltäjät

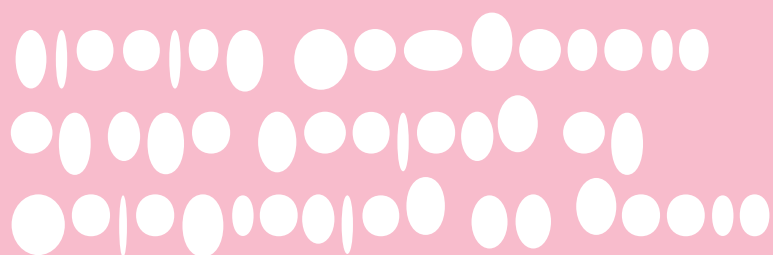
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