ON MUSIC AND POST-HUMANISM

ASPECTS OF MUSICOLOGY IN FINLAND

DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IN FINNISH MUSIC IN 2022

KAIJA SAARIAHON 70
2022 has been an extremely turbulent year, to say the least. Just as cultural life was gradually becoming free from the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the geopolitical situation in Europe changed dramatically with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February. In Finland, this turn of events sparked a heated debate about the political and cultural standing of the country. For many, the attack became a long-awaited opportunity to finally brush off the last remnants of so-called “Finlandisation” in the political sphere. Indeed, politicians in Finland have firmly articulated that Finland’s place is unmistakably in the West and in the EU.

Yet political and cultural spheres function on different grounds. Whereas political standings are, to a certain extent, relatively easy to determine, cultural organisations have faced difficulties in assessing how they should react to the new situation. While no-one obviously supports the war and countless concerts have been organised in support of Ukraine in Finland, it has been much more uncomfortable to assess whether it is, for example, justified to ban individual Russian musicians from participating in international competitions. These questions arose with two notable competitions in Finland, the Sibelius Violin Competition and the Maj Lind Competition, both of which were organised in 2022. The debate is still ongoing.

Yet at the same time, one can sense a feeling of liberation in cultural life and society at large due to the lifting of restrictions related to the pandemic. The number of concerts and other cultural events organised in Finland rose dramatically in 2022. While certainly a pleasing change for all concertgoers, the lifting of restrictions has been even more important to the many performers, composers and concert organisers who were suddenly stripped of the possibility to engage in their occupations. It remains to be seen, however, how serious a blow the pandemic left on cultural life in Finland.

This year’s printed issue of Finnish Music Quarterly does not address the pandemic or the geopolitical situation, though, but introduces aspects of music in Finland in our post-pandemic times. The third theme is devoted to the work of Kaija Saariaho, who turned 70 in October 2022 – an anniversary that was celebrated with countless performances. The last package of articles focuses on the various ways in which music intertwines with machines, the environment and other non-human entities.

The year 2022 has marked some notable changes for Finnish Music Quarterly. The long-time editor-in-chief, Anu Ahola, left her post at the end of 2021. Music journalist Kare Eskola inherited her chair for half a year, after which I became editor-in-chief in the autumn. You can certainly sense the touch of various editors on the pages of this printed issue, but whether for Finnish Music Quarterly or for cultural and geopolitical life, we truly hope that we can look forward to 2023 being an optimistic year.
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What characterises musicological research conducted in Finland? How do musicology and artistic research differ from each other, and where do they intersect – or do they?

Illustration by Eija Vehviläinen
“Let us accept as a starting point that one can be a musician if one has been trained as a musician and as a scholar. Failing to meet either of these two criteria removes the foundation from talking about music. Even the greatest musicians are often unable to describe conceptually what exactly it is that they are doing. The flipside of the coin is that music theories can seem abstract and aloof. Moreover, there is a great deal of intellectual writing and plausible research on music that is groundless and hypothetical simply because the writer lacks practical contact with music-making. Therefore, whoever opts to study musicology must accept that this requires a dual competence. That is laborious. Hence, musicology is perhaps the most difficult discipline in academic curricula.

This is also the reason why musicology can only flourish in the long-established academic environment of universities. Most music academies include music research in their curricula. But do future musicians have the time to learn all the historical and systematic knowledge and, above all, the skills required to write about music at a scientific level? If musicology is left to the conservatories (many of which now call themselves “universities”), there is the danger of falling into the habit of endlessly repeating old practices, because renewal requires the ability to “transcend” those practices by exploring theoretical alternatives.

So what are typical musicologists like? Some believe in music and language. This leads to contemplation of music as signification and communication, as semiotics. Semiotics is a discipline that one has to study systematically in order to understand its basic approach to musical signs. Musical semiotics has evolved into its own distinct paradigm in both musicology and semiotics. Some great semioticians such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes also wrote about music, but mostly they did not say anything – since, as reasonable scholars, they knew that without musical competence their theorising would have remained rather superficial. I have often heard when lecturing at a musicology conference that “Tarasti is not a musician, he is a semiotician”, and conversely at semiotics conferences that “Tarasti is not a semiotician, he is a musician”. This illustrates the dilemma of the musicologist, the dual identity.

Then there is the idea that music is culture. Because it is culture, one does not even need to read the notes on the page, they say. Here, we should remember what conductor Jorma Panula said is the main issue in any kind of music education: the score, the score, the score! In any case, any would-be anthropologists would do well to remember how one of the classics in that discipline, Alan P. Merriam, once defined the field: music itself, musical behaviour and musical concepts. Today, active research into music itself is represented by cognitive studies and brain research. Musicology has unquestionably improved neurologists’ understanding of how the brain functions.

As with many other disciplines, with musicology we must admit that it is difficult to define where exactly we might find its core, its true essence. Interest in and the influence of musicology have mushroomed. Applied musicology thrives on its contact with actual music-making – composing, educating, performing, administration, management. It guarantees that in any country with an active musical life there are no unemployed musicologists. The demand is endless, starting with the preparation of scores for performers and with historical performance practices. It also rubs shoulders with politics and social issues, one example being post-colonial analysis. Musicology is a key issue if we wish to understand how musical life functions. To quote Lévi-Strauss, it is one avenue to the mystery of music. © Liisa Takala

Studying the mystery of music

Others find something profound in the analogy between music and language. This leads to contemplation of music as signification and communication, as semiotics. Semiotics is a discipline that one has to study systematically in order to understand its basic approach to musical signs. Musical semiotics has evolved into its own distinct paradigm in both musicology and semiotics. Some great semioticians such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes also wrote about music, but mostly they did not say anything – since, as reasonable scholars, they knew that without musical competence their theorising would have remained rather superficial. I have often heard when lecturing at a musicology conference that “Tarasti is not a musician, he is a semiotician”, and conversely at semiotics conferences that “Tarasti is not a semiotician, he is a musician”. This illustrates the dilemma of the musicologist, the dual identity.
Artistic research at the Sibelius Academy focuses on musician-based knowledge

Doctors of Music have been graduating from the Sibelius Academy over the past 30 years. The spectrum of research undertaken at the academy is broad but its principal strength is in artistic competence, which helps open up new research prospects.

The Sibelius Academy is the only music university in Finland. More than 200 Doctors of Music have graduated from the academy since 1990. The first to do so were in the genre of classical music, but the doctoral programme soon expanded to cover all genres at the Sibelius Academy. A doctoral student can choose between three programmes: research study, applied study and arts study. The artistic doctorate’s dissertation includes both artistic and written components. The applied programme students design a development project, which can include various forms of publications and outcomes, and the research programme leads to the more traditional dissertation.

Professor of Folk Music Dr Kristiina Ilmonen reports that the policy for artistic doctorates has shifted over recent years. Previously, the “practice as research” approach was dominant, focusing on deepening musicianship and on artistic performances. Now, the emphasis is towards “practice-based” and “practice-led” approaches: musician-ship and creative work are seen as a foundation for academic research.

“Ilmonen notes that there are very few paid research positions at the units and is constrained by resources. Kristiina Ilmonen reports that the policy for artistic doctorates has shifted over recent years. Previously, the “practice as research” approach was dominant, focusing on deepening musicianship and on artistic performances. Now, the emphasis is towards “practice-based” and “practice-led” approaches: musician-ship and creative work are seen as a foundation for academic research.

Ilmonen. “However, our artistic doctoral graduates continued their postdoc life mainly as musicians and creative artists. I consider it important for musicians to develop their research skills too, so that they can make an expert contribution to society and engage in debate in the field of academic research.”

Shifting to a more research-oriented method still allows for multiple approaches.

“It is typical of artistic research that it employs multiple methodologies and is experimental. Musical acts or works of music may constitute the material for a study, or its method, or its outcomes – and often all three at once,” Ilmonen explains. “A professional musician or composer can identify relevant questions based on their practice that would be difficult to identify from the outside.”

As the artistic research results in the form of musical performances or compositions as such might be fully understandable only for a small expert audience, candidates are expected to link their work to existing scientific and artistic debate.

“Completing a doctorate represents a steep learning curve for someone trained as a musician. Everyone who has survived the ordeal swears by how hugely it has helped their artistic thinking processes,” says Ilmonen. “Sometimes you’re wearing your artist’s hat, and then you put on your researcher’s hat to think about how you can conceptualise your art. Changing hats is immensely fruitful and enriches an artist’s practice.”

CFAR looks beyond doctorates

In 2013 the Sibelius Academy, the Academy of Fine Arts and the Theatre Academy were amalgamated as the University of the Arts Helsinki. In addition to the various doctoral schools, the University has three joint research units focusing on postdoctoral research. History forum concentrates on researching the history of music and other arts, CERADA is about arts education research and CFAR (the Centre for Artistic Research) was created to boost artistic research.

Professor and composer Otso Lähdeoja notes that he is interested in the interface between artistic research and arts studies, which is where he positions himself. Lähdeoja’s chair is a joint one between the University of the Arts Helsinki and the University of Helsinki, and a similar joint chair is held by associate professor Susanna Valimäki.

“Our common goal is to make artistic research and arts studies talk to each other more. Their boundaries are ambiguous and not always relevant from a research standpoint,” Lähdeoja explains.

The quantity of artistic postdoctoral research depends on the units and is constrained by resources. Kristiina Ilmonen notes that there are very few paid research positions at the units, and the professors do not always have time to do research.

“I am the only Professor of Folk Music in Finland, but my remit is mostly in teaching. Fortunately, the leadership of the University of the Arts Helsinki are now on the ball. They have clearly recognised the importance of research resourcing,” says Ilmonen.

Plurality is the strength of research

Ilmonen considers the division into arts universities and academic universities to be somewhat outdated.

“The very name of the University of the Arts Helsinki is kind of a burden. It is an illusion that science and art form a dichotomy. Arts universities and academic universities are not mutually exclusive; they simply have different profiles. We need different universities and the various departments of arts research in them to achieve a plurality of views, a range of interests, interaction and conflicting views.”

Both Ilmonen and Lähdeoja recognise the quality of artistic work as a strength of the University of the Arts Helsinki, but there is growing interest in artistic research beyond the sphere of professional musicians too. Within the Sibelius Academy, the feeling is that the discussion about the nature of artistic education is done and dusted and now it is time to get down to it.

“We’ve spent a lot of time justifying its existence. Now we need to do stuff and to work together,” says Lähdeoja.

Professor Anne Kauppala, Director of the Uniarts History Forum unit, also sees a decline in the doctrine of the separation of art and science.

“We’re returning to a time before the 19th century, when musicians would also write and do research. It is a huge benefit that music is the main thing at the Sibelius Academy, so we have never had to have a debate about the importance of arts research like at other universities.”

Kauppala considers it a strength that a broad range of expertise and knowledge on music can be found under the same roof. This is one of the major advantages of the University of the Arts Helsinki. In Central Europe, for instance, entering an academic university may be the only option for a musician wishing to pursue a research career, since music education institutions do not have the authority to confer doctorates.

“We don’t ask permission for artistic research,” summarises Kauppala. “We just do it.” •

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
It is like being a detective. There is no better way to describe the archival research undertaken by Jean Sibelius Works (JSW), the project to compile a critical edition of the complete works of Jean Sibelius.

Consider this: the sources for a single piece of music may range from melodic sketches and printer’s proofs to letters and diary entries, and some sources have to be chased around the world. They can be found just about anywhere, a case in point being an early version of the choral work *Hail, O Moon* – which was discovered on a sheep farm in 2015.

“We are putting together a puzzle. There are all kinds of pieces that we have to fit together to gain an impression of what the sources are and of their chronology and lineage,” summarises Professor Timo Virtanen, editor-in-chief of the project.

Virtanen joined JSW soon after it was launched in 1997. At the moment, the project employs six editors. The complete works are being published by Breitkopf & Härtel, the Sibelius Society of Finland and the Finnish National Library, which holds an extensive collection of manuscripts donated by the Sibelius family. But the source material is constantly growing, an example being the addition of material from the former archives of publishers Lienau, obtained in 2020.

When Erik Tawaststjerna, Professor of Musicology at the University of Helsinki, completed his voluminous biography of Sibelius in 1988, notorious music critic Seppo Heikinheimo from the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper declared bluntly that the composer had now been picked clean. Anna Pulkkis, who has been editing piano and chamber music works for JSW, is familiar with the quip.

“Hasn’t everything already been said that there is to say about Sibelius? I get that a lot. The short answer is no,” says Pulkkis with amusement. “There is a lot still to study, details to fill in, information to update.”

Virtanen concurs: “I would say that only through this project are we beginning to understand what the sum total of Sibelius’s output really is.”

Research born of a wealth of material

The body of musical material that JSW draws on can be described in a word as huge. Sakari Ylivuori, who is editing Sibelius’s choral works, is all too aware of this.

“Editing choral works is no different from editing any other kind of music, except that the volume of material available is enormous. Choral works exist in separate voice parts and in numerous arrangements for various ensembles.”

One might imagine that the sheer magnitude of the task would make it remarkably difficult to create a critical edition. While that may be true in some cases, Ylivuori has a somewhat different angle:

“You can never comprehend the evolution of a work by looking at a single manuscript; you need a body of sources to do that. What is more relevant than a single source is the role of that source in the lineage of sources.”

In the archival research conducted by JSW, an individual composition comes to be understood as a puzzle to which multiple sources contribute rather than as a monolithic entity. The challenge with the material is that often there are gaps in the puzzle. It is particularly frustrating when a particular source is known to exist but no-one knows where it is. Ylivuori provides an example with *The Lover*:

“[Choir conductor] Heikki Klemetti wrote in a letter to Sibelius that he had performed the work ‘with the alterations’. So we know that Sibelius requested changes to be made to the work, but because we haven’t found the copy of the score used by Klemetti, we don’t know what this refers to.”
Then there are cases where the location of a source is known but researchers do not have access to it. This may happen with private collections. With luck, a connection to the owner may be made, and a researcher may be able to take photos of the material, for instance. But having access to the manuscript itself is very different from just having a copy of it.

“Digital images and copies lose a surprising amount of important information,” Ylivuori explains. “For instance, you cannot distinguish the ink layers in the corrections made.”

Virtanen points out that Sibelius’s manuscripts are a national treasure in Finland. Storing the manuscripts appropriately is important.

“In private ownership, providing safe conditions for manuscript storage is often challenging. It is therefore important to ensure that these manuscripts are appropriately stored. Ideally, of course, we would like to see them here at the National Library,” says Virtanen with a smile.

Sources tell the story of a life that was lived
What is the practical impact of comparing sources when editing a piece? Ylivuori gives an example of performance notes entered in the score by Sibelius when conducting a rehearsal. “The acoustics of the space or the resources of the choir may have required a different dynamic or emphasis on a particular voice part. But it is also possible that Sibelius was making an actual revision to his composition. It’s often difficult to tell which is which.”

This example shows that the research undertaken by JSW extends far beyond the music on the page. Changes made are chased down by looking at letters, diaries, reviews and even such mundane things as receipts for payments made to copyists — anything, really, that has anything at all to do with the creative process, performances and reception of a particular work.

“Preparing the actual printed music and conducting background research are inseparable in editing,” Pulkkis explains. “They are not independent strands of inquiry, they are intermeshed. We do not accept the conclusions of earlier research as gospel; we always go back to the primary sources.”

This is also apparent in the publications. Although at the core of each volume is a critical edition of a musical work, the end product also contains a wealth of new research findings. For instance, the research documents the broader context for each source, i.e. the circumstances in which the work was created. Pulkkis hopes that the project will help dispel the time-honoured image of a composer compelled to write out masterpieces by a force of creativity.

“Sibelius wrote a lot of bread-and-butter pieces – which is exactly what a professional composer does! Composers do not have a moral obligation to create art for art’s sake.”

Virtanen estimates that JSW will comprise some 60 volumes when completed. The project is about halfway through, with 35 volumes published to date and several more in the pipeline. What is the status of JSW in the field of research and music editing in Finland?

“We’ve become a sort of Editor Central in Finland,” says Virtanen. “The experience acquired in this project has been leveraged in other critical editions and in the operations of the Finnish Musical Heritage Society.”

Critical editions of works by composers such as YOVO KUULA, LEKVI MADEFÖJA and FRIEDRIK PACTUS have been prepared in Finland. JSW also has an international dimension, as it has participated in joint research ventures in the Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe. Even without that, the project would have an international dimension through its publisher.

“Breitkopf & Härtel was the first publisher in the world to begin publishing the complete works of individual composers in the nineteenth century,” Virtanen points out. “We value this tradition highly.”

Through the volumes published, the impact of JSW is not limited to academia.

“I am delighted by how often we receive queries from musicians about manuscript materials,” says Ylivuori. “Awareness of these materials has clearly increased in the musical community.”

“We are making Sibelius’s entire output available to musicians,” Pulkkis continues. “This includes genres that have previously been unjustly neglected.”

Mosaic-like creative process
Writings by composers about their work are often used as entry points for interpreting their compositions and the genesis of those compositions. However, as Ylivuori points out, composers consciously construct an artist profile with their writings. He applies what is known as genetic editing in his work, questioning the finality of the completed work and focusing on the process rather than its end result. The reasoning here is that the creative process could have taken a different turn.

“This is an eye-opener. In many cases, the manuscript material reveals that the genesis of a work is completely different from what the composer claims. Indeed, the text-critical approach is more interested in everything other than the composer’s own words.”

Sibelius, to take the matter at hand, endeavoured to create an impression of a logically progressing creative process. Yet, as Virtanen explains, his sketches and other archival sources reveal that this impression is completely false, at least as far as Sibelius’s larger works are concerned: he typically jotted down fragmentary ideas and then began to consider how those ideas could fit together.

“Sibelius wrote: ‘It is as if God Almighty had thrown down pieces of a mosaic from heaven’s floor and asked me to find out what the original pattern was.’ This, ultimately, is the best description I have read of his composition process.”

Translation: Jaakko Mattiyainen

Anna Pulkkis and Tiito Virtanen

“IT IS AS IF GOD ALMIGHTY HAD THROWN DOWN PIECES OF A MOSAIC FROM HEAVEN’S FLOOR AND ASKED ME TO FIND OUT WHAT THE ORIGINAL PATTERN WAS: THIS, ULTIMATELY, IS THE BEST DESCRIPTION I HAVE READ OF HIS COMPOSITION PROCESS.”
Despite notable improvements in equality in music and music institutions in Finland, much remains to be done. How do the topics of equality and diversity surface in Finnish music in the 2020s?
When the Equity in Composing project began in 2019, there was momentum towards equality in the music field. Because the starting point was to identify gender-related segregation, opportunities were offered especially for girls and non-binary youngsters.

“We experimented with various pedagogical development activities in an effort to find new or alternative ways to teach composition,” says Partti. The project culminated with a composition concert in late 2020, which can still be viewed on YouTube. After the project, some of the young people applied for vocational studies in composition or music.

“We began the study with the question of why the professional composing field is gendered. Through the project, we gained a deeper understanding of how important composition pedagogy and the choices associated with it – and the values behind these choices – are in realising equality. In addition to focusing on the professional field, dismantling the situation must be done at all levels of music education. We need to look at what beliefs, traditions and narratives guide practical behaviour in pedagogical situations,” she says.

An article by Partti and composer Riikka Talvitie on the canon of art music is now in peer review. In another article-in-progress, Partti examines how personal and culturally shared narratives affect career choices.

For a year and a half, the pilot project provided composition studies, mentoring and opportunities for peer learning for a group of young people. Because the starting point was to identify gender-related segregation, opportunities were offered especially for girls and non-binary youngsters.

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“When the Equity in Composing project began in 2019, there was momentum towards equality in the music field. Issues of equality and diversity were popping up in discussion and research,” says HEIDI PARTTI, Professor of Music Education at the University of the Arts Helsinki’s Sibelius Academy.

“Every time a child or young person, regardless of gender, ethnic background or the socio-economic status of their parents, gets the opportunity to create their own music, equality progresses, as generations gradually grow up seeing musical creativity as accessible to all. The role of teachers is crucial here. What kind of critical reflections do they make on the canon of art music and the history of music, for instance? Can they help students understand what’s behind these phenomena?”

In this article, we’ll hear about the Responsible Music Industry and Estilenna eduskunta (Safe at Every Stage) projects from SANNI KAHILAINEN, Head of Communications at the Musicians’ Union; the Yhdenvertaisesti säveltäen (Responsible Music Industry) project from researcher HEIDI PARTTI, the Musequal festival from violinist and festival director LINDA SUOLAHTI and the Global Music educational programme’s pedagogy and values from musician and teacher PURO P. JUKI.

WHAT CONCRETE ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO ADVANCE EQUALITY IN THE FINNISH MUSIC INDUSTRY AND HOW CAN DIVERSITY BE PROMOTED? RESEARCHER HEIDI PARTTI, MUSICIAN-PEDAGOGUE PURO POUL, FESTIVAL DIRECTOR LINDA SUOLAHTI AND HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS SANNI KAHILAINEN TALK ABOUT PROGRAMMING, THE POSSIBILITIES OF PEDAGOGY AND QUESTIONING THE PREVAILING MODELS.
It’s not egalitarian to think that we’re all the same in terms of culture and skill. We have different values and starting points – and that’s how it should be. It’s important to welcome diversity,” says musician Puro Paju, a teacher on the Sibelius Academy’s Global Music degree programme, which is expanding from bachelor’s and master’s programmes to include youth education as well.

“Starting with the entrance exams, we build the idea that inclusiveness and equality are core values in our education. We’re working to dismantle colonialist thinking. Through actions and pedagogical exercises, we build the opportunity for everyone to be seen as themselves and to express their ideas safely. This allows us to do things within so many cultures,” says Paju.

The study language is English, but support is provided during the first years of study so that language is not an obstacle. Scholarships are available for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Studies can be pursued with any musical background or instrument.

“Almost all professional music training requires a certain level of knowledge of Western music theory, except ours,” they say. “If a student’s music culture starts from a modal starting point, for example, there’s no point in requiring knowledge of Western harmony. Therefore we try to design entrance exams so as to allow people from many backgrounds to participate.”

The jury itself is diverse. The core team of teachers includes representatives of different genders and sexual minorities, as well as people of various ethnic backgrounds from four continents.

“That already improves an applicant’s chances of having a jury member who understands the culture they represent. We try to consider cultural diversity and gender balance within each group of incoming students. Of course, skill is always the most important,” Paju emphasises.

Representation matters

The Global Music programme is not a “world music” course where one first learns to play Cuban and then Indian music. As each student is an expert and skilled representative of some kind of musical culture, students learn a lot from each other. Each of them develops their artistic identity by simultaneously deepening their own area of strength and bringing it into contact with other cultures.

“In this way of working, starting with the human encounter, there is an opportunity to get closer to real communal equality. Our approach to music is also evident on the concert stage, when our Global Orchestra brings together traditional instruments from many cultures with Western instruments to harmoniously play music composed for them,” says Paju. “It’s important to see from an early age that people from a wide variety of backgrounds can play different instruments as respected musicians. In the future, it should be possible to study music from around the world at music schools.”

“The situation has changed for the better, but I’m still the only teacher who identifies as non-male who teaches ensemble players in the Music Education department at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki. Sometimes I notice that that’s more important than I’d like it to be. Still, some students who identify as non-male, especially instrumentalists, experience so much questioning of their musicianship that they do their final projects on the topic.”

Sanni Kahilainen, head of communications at the Musicians’ Union, points to recent studies on equality themes.

“Among young people, there is more of an assumption that no-one should face discrimination. The culture will change with them,” says Kahilainen. “But if the music sector seems reactionary, do young people want to be involved in it? We need to show that our sector can meet the challenges and close the inequality gap by creating diversity and bringing new perspectives into our structures.”

“We wanted to allocate resources to have a contact person focusing on diversity, organising events that actively create safer spaces and monitoring what should be done to promote equality,” she explains.

The future is young

“Among young people, there is more of an assumption that no-one should face discrimination. The culture will change with them,” says Kahilainen. “But if the music sector seems reactionary, do young people want to be involved in it? We need to show that our sector can meet the challenges and close the inequality gap by creating diversity and bringing new perspectives into our structures.”

I wish that everyone was able to focus on music rather than their role as a player in a community.”

Stronger measures on the way

Sanni Kahilainen, head of communications at the Musicians’ Union, points to recent studies on equality themes.

“A study called Yhdenvertaisuus musiikkialalla (Equality in the Music Industry) was commissioned by the Musicians’ Union and the Finnish Music Creators’ Association along with other music industry groups. We weren’t surprised by the findings that most had experienced inappropriate treatment based on their language, background, skin colour, sexual orientation or gender,” she says. “The project was carried out by Inklusiv, an NGO focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion. Based on the respondents’ experiences, it drew up recommendations for better working models.”

Concrete guidelines can also be found on the Safe at Every Stage website, which went online in May, offering extensive information on what to do when encountering discrimination. A number of music industry groups have been involved in developing these rules aimed at creating safer spaces.

The project is led by the Musicians’ Union’s newly appointed Community Coordinator, Anna Dantchev.
The Sámi musical landscape is about building community, revitalising and maintaining culture and language, as well as helping Sámi people have a stronger sense of pride in their identity. But the artist is often balancing between minority versus majority culture, old and new, traditional and modern. They will try to appeal both to Sámi audiences and to those outside the community. Nákkálájvirvi-Lánsman states. Young Sámi people around the world can often welcome as guests at arts festivals or cultural happenings. Even though they are not often heard in the mainstream and making money – it is often about building community, revitalising and maintaining culture and language, as well as helping Sámi people have a stronger sense of pride in their identity.

If you go to a Sámi party, the music in the background is exactly what you would expect at any gathering. You will often hear traditional yoik songs, but you can also hear modern Sámi pop music. There can be a spiritual and philosophical connection to a song. But a person who does not know the yoik or the person or history can listen to the song as just a song, listen to the arrangements of the instruments and listen to the melody of the yoik,” she continues.

Like Anna Nákkálájvirvi-Lánsman, Ínga Márét Gaup Juuso is also more familiar with traditional yoik – but she does it with her own twist. In 2022 Gaup Juuso won the song contest category of the Sámi Grand Prix in Kautokeino, Norway – the song contest could be described as the Sámi Eurovision. While Gaup Juuso has grown up around traditional yoik, she is now best known for her award-winning song Dovdamehtuni and her work with her band Tundra Elektro, which represents a more modern type of Sámi music.

“I feel that yoik is growing in popularity in Europe,” Gaup Juuso states. Her winning song is featured on one of Norway’s biggest radio playlists, and her art is welcomed by the Norwegian art scene. She finds it strange that Sámi artists are not welcomed in the Finnish mainstream in the same way.

“Maybe Finnish ears are not so used to listening to yoik,” she wonders. Gaup Juuso finds that Sámi artists are often exoticised in Finland, and political and cultural questions undermine the art itself. “If I wear my Sámi dress I easily become an object and it does not always feel good,” she says.

Gaup Juuso underlines the importance of yoiking and Sámi music to the Sámi. Music can be a way of bringing more confidence and pride to young minds – not to forget the Sámi people living outside the Sámi homelands, who do not have the same access to culture as those living closer to the region. For them, hearing Sámi music and finding Sámi artists are a key feature in maintaining that connection with the culture that otherwise could be lost.

“If you think of Sámi parties, you can guarantee that when there is yoik the party is blowing up,” the veteran yoiker says. In her 35 years, Gaup Juuso has already had a long career in Sámi music, and has seen the development that Sámi music has gone through. “Even back in the day, yoiking has been done together,” she continues.

The Sámi artists are raising a storm in their local communities. Even though they are not often heard in the mainstream music scene, their importance to the local community is as strong as ever. Generations of Sámi people have had to figure out how to find themselves, how to find that balance between the two cultures – and music is such a helpful tool in this.
A couple of years ago, a debate about plurality in art music arose again in Finland, this time with a bigger noise than usual. Aleksi Malmberg, General Manager of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, notes that everyone was forced to contemplate who have been, are and will be in the canon of Western art music.

“‘I became aware of plurality issues back when I was a musicology student. Improvement has been slow; art music is so deeply rooted in the chauvinist worldview of the upper classes of the 19th century,” says Malmberg. As General Manager, he began to contemplate how to explore plurality in a sustainable way. While orchestras already have the duties of upholding the tradition of Western art music and of creating a future for that tradition with new music, there is also a third duty:

“We may examine history critically and search for that which has been neglected. That was the initial impulse for Huom.”

Malmberg was joined in designing the project by Susanna Välimäki, Associate Professor of Art Studies at the University of Helsinki. She had been researching Finnish women composers of the 19th and early 20th centuries in a project titled “Daughters of music”, and with this the concept of Huom came together: finding orchestral music written by historical Finnish women composers, making fair copies of the material and having the orchestra play it in a reading session. This would make it possible to re-evaluate our musical heritage by making these works available for concert use, to publish them and to tell the story of this music and its makers.

“We needed a network where music scholars, archives, publishers, the orchestra and its conductor dedicate part of their everyday work to this common goal,” says Malmberg.

Reading sessions bring music to life

Finding orchestral music neglected by history is not an easy task, but Susanna Välimäki and VUPU KOIVISTO-KAARSK had already unearthed a hundred or so women composers born in Finland in the 19th century.

“The problem is that a lot of their orchestral works have been lost, such as the symphonies written by Ida Moberg and Betzy Holmberg,” says Välimäki. “The music was never published or recorded.”

In the 19th century, most students at conservatories across Europe were women and musical performance at the grass-roots level was largely the domain of women, but for ideological reasons women back then almost never attained a place in the canon as orchestral composers. Finnish women composers wrote quite a lot of solo songs, dances, children’s music and music for gymnastics.

“I suppose we should redefine the profile of a composer,” says Välimäki. “But for Huom we did find ballet music and other dance music, appealing miniatures and concertos, the latter being a genre in which women were also performers could somewhat more easily be heard as composers.”

This body of music has been preserved in archives but in manuscript form.

“It was a surprise how laborious it was to edit the music to a point that it was usable for a reading session,” says Välimäki. They did it anyway, because Susanna Mäkki, Chief Conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic, considered it vital that the music should not remain just notes on paper but should be performed at least at reading sessions. The first session in 2021 was an emotional event.

“It was a heartfelt moment to realise that it was the first time in a hundred years that anyone had heard this music,” says Aleksi Malmberg. “There have been so many composers who wrote accessible and compelling music but never got their voice heard.”

Indeed, many tears were shed,” Susanna Välimäki confesses. “But isn’t it great that the music and the stories behind it have the power to move people so profoundly?”

Musical experiences and narratives are key tools in how Huom is re-evaluating history.

“An orchestral concert is always a reflection of a particular worldview, indicating whose stories are considered important,” Välimäki explains. “If you never hear music written by women of the past, you may unconsciously acquire the view that women’s stories are not important. Then, when you hear music whose story you can identify with, it may be a truly moving experience.”

Where are the voices we hear at concerts? Which stories are conveyed through art music, and which are not? The Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra is engaged in a project titled Huom. History’s Unheard Orchestral Music. The project is reviving orchestral music written by Finnish women composers in the 19th and 20th centuries.

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“‘I became aware of plurality issues back when I was a musicology student. Improvement has been slow; art music is so deeply rooted in the chauvinist worldview of the upper
Composer Kaija Saariaho turned 70 in 2022. Her original musical thought and captivating works have resulted in fascinating artistic collaborations and international prominence on an extraordinary scale.
This collection celebrates the extraordinary accomplishments of Kaija Saariaho, whom most of us regard as the greatest living composer – not the greatest woman composer, though she certainly is this, but the greatest, period. Over the course of the past fifty years, Kaija has created masterpiece after masterpiece, winning most of the international awards available to musicians and securing a permanent place in the programming of symphony orchestras, chamber groups and opera houses. And she has done so without surrendering a bit of her artistic integrity to a populist strain of postmodernism. Even as her stringent musical language challenges listeners still anchored in older idioms, she has proved able to engage and electrify them.

In contrast to many of her modernist colleagues who write to explore abstract schemata, Kaija composes to communicate. With the opening sonority of each of her works, Kaija establishes a vibration that resonates deep inside the listener’s body along with a spectrum of overtones that grow out of that original sonority but that also foreshadow the complex contradictions that compel us to identify with and follow the web she weaves. “With the opening sonority of each of her works, Kaija establishes a vibration that resonates deep inside the listener’s body along with a spectrum of overtones that grow out of that original sonority but that also foreshadow the complex contradictions that compel us to identify with and follow the web she weaves,” writes Susan McClary in her essay on Kaija Saariaho’s work.

Like many other female artists, Kaija long resisted identifying as a “woman composer”. But her perspective changed radically when she became pregnant and gave birth to her first child, Aleksi Barrière, in 1989. Rather than regretting this transformation, she saw it as an opportunity. In her words: “As a mother, I have access to many things that men could never experience. Before having children, I really was up in the air most of the time. The earthly aspect became more present with children. Has my music changed with motherhood? Of course.”

If the equivalent of Woolf or Plath did not exist in music then, they do now, thanks in large part to Kaija’s own brave imagination. So when I discuss Kaija as “woman composer”, it is because she has given voice to so many dilemmas particular to women.
In choosing to identify herself in her music as a woman and a mother, Kaija risking a great deal. She reports that “I really felt some when I first to child, suspicions like: this is the end of her serious music, she’ll become too sentimental”. And some of her subse-quent works received contemptuous reviews from critics who specifi- cally ridiculed her decision to foreground such issues. When I give talks about these pieces, I still have to field objections from female composers and musicolog-ists who argue that women should stick to the gender-free abstractions developed by their male colleagues; they actually express fear in the face of Kaija’s breaking of long-established taboos. It is not only abortion, in other words, that provokes controversy but also the alternative – namely childbirthing.

Sentimentality, femininity and masculinity

Let’s return to the word “sentimental”, which Kaija used to describe how women composers are expected to sound. European music theory has long made use of gendered binary oppositions: a masculine theme stakes out the turf for standard symphonies while a sweet lyric theme allows for some relief before being assimilated to the key of the first theme in the recapitulation, exactly the way a wife is expected to take on the name of her husband; masculine cadences are the ones that absorb all the energy leading up to that point; they project modernity; men act as the agents in operas, while female characters mostly get acted upon (or else pay the consequences). And given those associations, what artist of any integrity would want to identify with those weaker positions?

Keep in mind that women novelists, poets and visual artists usually understand their experiences as women as central to their work. A song cycle by TONY MORRISON wrote from her experiences as a Black woman, FRIDA KAHLO drew on her life as a disabled Mexican woman for her representations. When she was young, Kaija immersed herself in literature by women. She writes:

In the beginning of my compositional studies, I tried to in vain to find a model in the world of music; female composers were few and far between. No doubt this is why I was interested in the lives of female writers, and took pleasure in reading their diaries, letters and biographies, in addition to their works. Besides Viginia Woolf, the two figures who meant the most to me were Sylwia Plath and Anaïs Nin [because] of their urge to combine – at least that’s what it seemed to me – a “woman’s life”, meaning their roles as mother, and their artistic careers... I was searching for a way of life, I was reading these diaries as survival manuals.

If the equivalent of WOOLF or PLATH did not exist in music then, they do now, thanks in large part to Kaija’s own brave imagination. So when I discuss Kaija as “woman composer”, it is because she has given voice to so many dilemmas particular to women.

Her most recent opera, Innocence, features three princi-pal women: Tereza, whose child was murdered in a school shooting, Patricia, the mother of the shooter; and Stella, the unsuspecting bride whose potential for reproduction hangs in the balance. Ten years after the violent incident, both mothers still suffer the repercussions – guilt and immeasurable loss – of that act as they find themselves face to face at a wedding celebration. Stella will learn over the course of the opera how her choice of husband risks perpetrating a toxic gene pool. Of course, many other survivors in the opera also give voice to trauma, including the multilingual students who testify to their inability to lead normal lives, as well as their teacher and a priest, who castigate them-selves for failing to protect their charges. I happened to be on a panel discussion with Kaija in November 2015 when she learned of the terrorist attack on the Bataclan Concert Hall and feared that her son might have been a victim; I have watched her as she suffered for several hours waiting to hear of Alexei’s fate.

The subject matter of Innocence seems ripped from the front page of yesterday’s headlines with ever more frequent school shootings. But Kaija has been grappling with the joys and dangers of motherhood since she first decided to compose music. Her 1996 song-cycle Château de l’âme, for instance, includes along with love songs a ritual chant from Ancient Egypt dealing with the healing of child-birth. Yet it is in her two operas Adriana Mater and Emilie that she confronts these issues most powerfully.

Women’s fates on the stage

Kaija and her magnificent librettist AMIN MAALOUD devel-oped the plot of Adriana Mater when she mentioned that she could feel two hearts beating inside her when she was pregnant. The protagonist, Adriana, has been raped during wartime, bringing to mind the women of Ukraine who now suffer such assaults on a daily basis. In the crucial middle of the opera, Adriana’s husband tries to persuade her to terminate the pregnancy that resulted from the rape. But Adriana, echoing Kaija’s imagery, replies that she feels that second heart, even while fearing that the child might inherit the violent tendencies of his father (also Stela’s dilemma in Innocence), she chooses to carry it to term.

But this decision does not qualify as an unambiguous triumph for the anti-abortion crowd. The remainder of the opera traces the ways in which both Adriana and her son, Yonas, must handle the consequences in their lives that bear the mark of Cain. The shame of his conception leads Adriana to claim that he is after all her child rather as revenge. He stops at the last minute before shooting, yet despite this rather bittersweet reconciliation at the end, the opera traces the terrible consequences of this pregnancy on the lives of everyone involved. It follows that the initial foetal heartbeat to its unending aftermath. Kaija and Maaloud do not offer easy solutions or celebrate childbirth as an unambiguous good. Adriana never regrets her choice, but she has nonetheless lived in anguished uncertainty ever since.

The stakes are even higher in Kaija’s monodrama of 2011, Emilie. Émilie. MARQUISE DU CHÂTELET, died in child-

birth in 1749 at the age of 42, just as she was completing her translation of ISAAC NEWTON’S Principia – long the standard

version of his crucial study in France. An accomplished physicist, astronomer, mathematician, musician and writer, she was an intimate friend of Voltaire and a strong influ-

ence on the encyclopedists. Scientists who have recently assessed her pioneering work find that she anticipated aspects of EINSTEIN’S Relativity and the game theory that makes possible much of our digitised culture.

As Emilie approaches the due date for both her transla-

tion and her child, she has a strong presentiment that she will not survive labour. The monodrama traces her warring emotions during her final week: her memories, scientific speculations, fears, hopes and desires. But this towering intellectual knows – just as surely as any criminal on death row – that her days are numbered, that she is now in count-
down.

“Sentimental” is scarcely the adjective that comes to mind with the horrifying subject matter and often brutal sonor-

ity. Kaija produces in Adriana Mater or Émilie. Our laws concerning pregnancy are so harsh in part because we fail to acknowledge the very personhood of women. In the history of opera, women may express emotions, but they still ally as their teacher and a priest, who castigate them-

selfs for failing to protect their charges. I happened to be on a panel discussion with Kaija in November 2015 when she learned of the terrorist attack on the Bataclan Concert Hall and feared that her son might have been a victim; I have watched her as she suffered for several hours waiting to hear of Alexei’s fate.

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KAIIA SAARIAHO AND OLLI VIRTAPELKO: A CONVERSATION

BY Olli Virtaperko

Composers Kaija Saariaho and Olli Virtaperko sat down to talk about the meaning of art and music. In this dialogue between composers from different generations, fascinating insights emerged into the structures of and changes in writing music, and the world of music at large.

Olli Virtaperko  – One of the themes that has been rolling around in my mind for a long time is how the symphony orchestra is structurally trapped at the beginning of the last century. It would take quite a different set of tools to make the symphony orchestra capable of reflecting our day and age in its instrumental line-up. How do you feel about the relevance of the sound of the symphony orchestra and the current state of the institution?

Kaija Saariaho  – This is really interesting for me, because around the time I was completing my studies, it was taken for granted that there was no future for the symphony orchestra. When I moved to France, they had [Ensemble] L’itinéraire and the Ensemble Intercontemporain, and then Ensemble Modern and Avanti! were founded. The symphony orchestra was regarded in much the same light as opera: both were stuffy and expensive systems, and it would only take a few years to get rid of them, and then electronics or synthesizers would create completely new colours and opportunities. Well, it certainly didn’t turn out that way! Since then, I’ve written major orchestral pieces myself, and I’ve enjoyed the concentration of human energy in an orchestra. There’s something quite irreplaceable about it. Never mind that an orchestra is a sort of relic of ages past – I’ve come to appreciate it. Few musical contexts offer the thrill of energy that a symphony orchestra can generate. For me, it’s empowering. I’ve been both adamantly opposed and avidly in favour, and there’s no way I could now even try to form an objective opinion about the relevance of the symphony orchestra. What is important is that the balance between contemporary music and core repertoire in orchestral programming should be healthier. The institution needs to be revitalised in one way or another.

Olli Virtaperko  – There are two things in parallel here: the status of contemporary music in a concert culture that is heavily biased towards the past, and the issue of the make-up of a symphony orchestra. There’s something quite irreplaceable about it. Never mind that an orchestra is a sort of relic of ages past – I’ve come to appreciate it. Few musical contexts offer the thrill of energy that a symphony orchestra can generate. For me, it’s empowering. I’ve been both adamantly opposed and avidly in favour, and there’s no way I could now even try to form an objective opinion about the relevance of the symphony orchestra. What is important is that the balance between contemporary music and core repertoire in orchestral programming should be healthier. The institution needs to be revitalised in one way or another.

Olli Virtaperko  – The scenario I’ve toyed with is converting the rearmost desks in the strings into flexible freelance positions, which would free up resources for, say, having five new musicians/instruments in the orchestra to begin with. This means that orchestras could play Mahler and Strauss just as before [with violins in those flexible positions], but composers would have easier access to something like a concert accordion or a saxophone section. This tiny amount of structural flexibility would yield huge added value in musical opportunities, as it would become financially more feasible to score for unusual instruments. The problem here is that in order to work worldwide, this would have to be an internationally established practice, because otherwise works written in such a context would not gain traction beyond the country where they were written. This seems quite unrealistic.

Kaija Saariaho  – Partly, yes, but if we began amplifying the violins, it wouldn’t be the same as having those 16 first violins actually on stage – the human experience is different. As for the instruments of the orchestra, I quite happily discard some of the most standard instruments in my orchestral works. And on the other hand, there’s a huge number of percussion instruments today that were not available in Beethoven’s time. Having said that, for a composer to be able to express themselves in their own idiom in this day and age, they should have the right to choose their palette according to their needs. Inevitably, this may run up against the structures and financial constraints of an orchestra. Being compelled to consider such things does force us [composers] towards a middle ground, of course.

Olli Virtaperko  – Indeed. I’ve found that in criticising the orchestra institution I’m wearing two hats, so to speak, representing diametrically opposed value sets. Criticising symphony orchestras for having the wrong instruments and playing the wrong music seems undeniably valid, but on the other hand the sensation of working with an orchestra is overwhelming – as you said, it’s about empowerment and shared energy like nothing else. It must be said in defence of the instruments of the symphony orchestra that they’ve been found to have sound resources for which they were never designed: we need only consider multiphonics on the clarinet or the rich array of noises that the strings can produce. Nevertheless, these are in effect unintended by-products of the original purpose for which those instruments were made, prompting the question of whether we shouldn’t be designing instruments from the ground up to cater to the sound ideals of our time. That would lead to a very different orchestral line-up, and we wouldn’t need to amplify existing instruments, as with the electric guitar. We would invent new acoustic instruments. Wouldn’t that be fascinating?

Kaija Saariaho  – Certainly, but how could such a thing gain wider interest? There have been all sorts of attempts of this kind.

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KS – There was actually a time beginning in the late 1980s when it seemed that orchestras were broadening their horizons to include electronic instruments. The trend was that every orchestra should have a synthesiser, and as those instruments got better, they were able to imitate all kinds of keyboard instruments, like harpsichords. Composers were excited about this, and I myself wrote for [synthesizers] in Da cristal... à la fumée, but when that piece was performed again, the equipment available was completely different. Technology advances so rapidly that the POU's that were state of the art at one point had been replaced with new, better instruments. With the rapid developments and turnover in synthesizer models, orchestras began to lose interest.

OV – You’ve included electronics in your orchestral works. Have you come up against problems because of outdated software or having to apply old technology in a new context?

OV – It’s quite clear that you have to control the end result in performances of your works as far as possible. But going from the world of the orchestra to the world of opera, with a range of soloists with very different expressive idioms, one might imagine that the potential for control over, say, the choice of soloists would be very limited. How much can a composer influence casting? Are there collisions of conflicting ways of making music?

KS – It’s a perennial problem, because you have to keep updating your software all the time. I’m fortunate to have JEAN-BAPTISTE [BARBIERE] taking care of all this for me. But it’s an endless slog, and over the years I’ve come to consider that if a particular musical idea doesn’t absolutely require electronics to produce, then I won’t use electronics. Rehearsal times are shorter, no-one has time for a sound check, or the sound check is minimal, and then you have to work out things on the fly in concert. I’ve rarely been completely satisfied with it. So once again it’s a question of conception coming up against reality.

OV – It sounds like established practices in the orchestra world are so robust that if you want to deviate from the standard you’re asking for real trouble, or at least substantial difficulties.

KS – That’s very much the truth, because in this more than in anything else, time is money.

KS – Well, with the score, of course. It’s how I do things. I’ve learned how to do it. I can quite clearly recall a rehearsal, and I write notes based on that.

KS – Both the soloist (if there is one) and the conductor. Sometimes the conductor pretends to be so busy that they don’t have time for a debriefing. What I do then is give the conductor the list of notes I compiled and say that all these things need to be fixed.

KS – It’s hugely important! These days, I don’t want the premieres of my orchestral works to be conducted by conductors who have never performed any of my music. Those conductors just don’t know where to begin, however big stars they may be. It’s a foreign language to them, and that’s all there is to it. There’s really no chance for someone unfamiliar with my music to come to grips with its logic on the basis of a single work.

OV – Do you communicate directly with the soloist or the orchestra, or do you go through the conductor?

KS – Yes, I do see that, and I also understand that that applies to every one of us. After all, every one of us is unique. Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

KS – I do exercise quite a bit of control in premiere productions, and I do have influence over the casting, if only because of the voice types required. Sometimes you get men who are WAGNER singers, and then it’s just a question of working through things together. If I ask for a glissando, then it’s a glissando that I want, not a portamento. Also, every singer has a different and unique voice.

OV – What made you venture into opera in the first place? I recall that you once declared that you would never write an opera – yet here we are, many operas later!

KS – As much as I loved to listen to Tristan und Isolde on record, all of the operas that I saw live in my youth – because my family wasn’t a musical one – were at the old National Opera. They did perform large-scale works too, but largely I got the feeling that the singers were just there to showcase their voices. I can’t recall seeing anything very interesting, apart from Silkkirumpu (The Damask Drum) by PAAVO [HEININEN]. And then there were Batsamies (The Horseman) by AULIS SALLINEN and Vimeiset kiusaukset (The Last Temptations) by JOONAS KOKOVEN in Savonlinna. At the time modernism was on the rise, and the question was raised whether such grandiose stuff was needed any more. But once I moved to Germany and went to the Stuttgart Opera, and particularly once I moved to Paris, I saw quite incredible works such as HOZZÉK [by ALBAN BERG]. The opera productions I saw in Germany and France were comprehensive artworks, meetings of artists. I recall Paavo [Heininen] once saying to me: “Opera is how you define it.” That was important for me to hear at that particular time.

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OV – I recall a column you wrote for FMQ in 2019, where you described a summer course and the young composers with a range of soloists with very different expressive idioms, who are already familiar with the aesthetics of your music. Those conductors just don’t know where to begin, however big stars they may be. It’s a foreign language to them, and that’s all there is to it. There’s really no chance for someone unfamiliar with my music to come to grips with its logic on the basis of a single work.

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OV – Do you communicate directly with the soloist or the orchestra, or do you go through the conductor?

KS – – because my family wasn’t a musical one – were at the old National Opera. They did perform large-scale works too, but largely I got the feeling that the singers were just there to showcase their voices. I can’t recall seeing anything very interesting, apart from Silkkirumpu (The Damask Drum) by PAAVO [HEININEN]. And then there were Batsamies (The Horseman) by AULIS SALLINEN and Vimeiset kiusaukset (The Last Temptations) by JOONAS KOKOVEN in Savonlinna. At the time modernism was on the rise, and the question was raised whether such grandiose stuff was needed any more. But once I moved to Germany and went to the Stuttgart Opera, and particularly once I moved to Paris, I saw quite incredible works such as HOZZÉK [by ALBAN BERG]. The opera productions I saw in Germany and France were comprehensive artworks, meetings of artists. I recall Paavo [Heininen] once saying to me: “Opera is how you define it.” That was important for me to hear at that particular time.

KS – Yes, I do see that, and I also understand that that applies to every one of us. After all, every one of us is unique. Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
"KAIJA SAARIAHO 70"

“KNOWN TO HER FRIENDS AS KAIJA”
A MUSICAL JOURNEY WITH TRUSTED INTERPRETERS

BY Anu Jormalainen

Over the decades, numerous musicians and ensembles around the world have performed the music of Kaja Saariaho. Without long-term relationships with trusted interpreters, the Finnish composer’s music would have travelled quite a different path.

“Kaja.” In this story, KAJA SAARIAHO, 70, one of the world’s most respected classical music composers, is repeatedly referred to familiarly by her first name.

And no wonder – the interviewees are long-time friends of the celebrated composer and trusted interpreters of her work: cellist Anssi Karttunen, 62; soprano Anu Komsi, 55; and pianist Pia Värri, 56, who have performed her work together and separately. To all of them, Saariaho is a close colleague, friend and source of inspiration whose music is inextricably intertwined with their own career paths.

In harmony

“A 40-year partnership born by chance. We’ve had parallel careers and progressed together.”

That’s how cellist Anssi Karttunen, one of Finland’s best-known musicians internationally, describes his time with Saariaho. The story began in the early 1980s with the meeting of two Finnish strangers who happened to move to Paris at the same time. Regular interaction quickly deepened into friendship.

“At first, neither of us spoke French. We reported to each other daily, had long phone calls and together learned about living in France.”

Between discussions about everyday life, they talked about music. Over the years, the two shared worldviews and grew together artistically as Karttunen helped the composer to understand the cello. In 1988 she dedicated her first solo cello work, Petals, to him.

“When Kaja brought me the sheet music for Petals, it was completely ready. She had fully developed her writing for cello, and there was no need to change anything.”

Petals opened a path towards a new type of cello literature. “It was more like the first fruit of our friendship than a search for collaboration. Our friendship began to generate music, and it has never stopped doing so,” says Karttunen.

This includes six solo pieces, four orchestral works and an innumerable number of duets, trios and so on. The two artists’ connection remains vibrant.

“If you talk on the phone for an hour almost every day for 40 years, then maybe you can call it friendship,” says Karttunen wryly.

Saariaho. Without long-term relationships with trusted interpreters, the Finnish composer’s music would have travelled quite a different path.

“Sometimes, though, the composer may approach Karttunen to check a detail, ask a technical question or send a couple of notes or a rhythm.”

For Kaja, music is comprehensive and involves so much personal feeling that she goes beyond all the technical issues. What makes her music unique is how she experiences the composition even before she composes it, as a visual or emotional metaphor. I imagine that Kaja’s music comes in through many doors: visual, emotional and practical. All of this brings together music that could not be born otherwise.”

Indeed, Saariaho’s music must be understood beyond what is in the sheet music.

“Kaja has her own unique notes and tone. It’s instantly recognisable. Her music has its own kind of strong expressiveness, harmonies and spectra, which must all be conveyed to the listener. The notes are just a raw copy of a world that is beyond them,” says Värri. Karttunen agrees.

“Kaja’s music cannot be ‘heard on paper’ in the classic manner. There are so many subtle little colours that vary slightly every time,” he says. “It’s still a mystery to me how a composer can imagine them so accurately in her own head.”

Saariaho’s music offers a challenge for musicians as it calls for unusual methods of sound production. In the case of the cello, this includes distorting the sound by adding bow pressure.

“That’s not a negative thing; it becomes part of your vocabulary,” says Karttunen. “As performers, we have to learn that the vocabulary of an academically trained cellist suddenly grows ten times larger, and we need to learn to use it.”

“According to Komsi, performing Saariaho’s music requires ‘an excellent ear, an ambitious approach to clear intonation, passionate phrasing and an open mind’.”

Musicians who work frequently with Saariaho often mention freedom of interpretation. According to Värri, Saariaho’s pieces must be performed with the heart. In addition to sensitivity and self-discipline, they also call for “courage, including inner courage.”
“Kaija trusts our artistic vision of her music. She doesn’t forbid anything; there’s no single correct interpretation. Kaija trusts the performers to give their all, and the music is alive,” says Värri.

For me, Kaija’s music is pure emotion. I try to convert all the technical and practical things related to playing to the level of feeling,” he says. “Interpretation does not mean trying to add something of my own to it but letting the music flow through me as directly as possible.”

Playing Saariaho’s music brings Karttunen a sense of security, as he recognises his friend in the works.

“For me, Kaija’s music is a safe place and an experience that’s accompanied by the joy of being able to convey a message and show how important it is to me. Even though I travel the world alone, I’m never alone thanks to Kaija,” says Värri.

"Kaija trusts the performers to give their all, and the music is alive," says Värri.

Karttunen approaches Saariaho’s work from an emotional standpoint.

“Kaija is a role model for all of us: a leading star in art music whose value globally is on par with Jean Sibelius,” says Komsi. Värri recalls an experience in the remote French countryside, where a young man commented on one of her concert programmes: “Oh, I would have so loved to hear Kaija Saariaho’s music.”

“I think it’s a sign of a great composer when the audience that enjoys Saariaho’s music is so international and comes from such socially diverse backgrounds,” the pianist adds. Värri has been impressed by Saariaho’s exemplary, pioneering career, in which “a creative musical gift that’s so incomprehensible charts its own unique path with no alternatives”.

“Saariaho’s background and strength of will have also impressed Karttunen: “She has moved ahead inexorably, based completely on her music and art, without ever compromising herself.”

As Karttunen sees it, Saariaho has a unique gift for everyone. “A good way to understand our world just a little bit better is to listen to the music of Kaija.” • Translation: Wif Stenger

From the Echoes of Dreams

For the sheer richness that we may confront the mien of the rain and remember it with snow that in the sunshine we can slice a sliver of mandolin and in rubber boots tread into the long illuminations, where a young man commented on one of her concert programmes: “Oh, I would have so loved to hear Kaija Saariaho’s music.”

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Music is not merely the sphere of humans interacting with each other. Music also manifests itself through communication between humans, nature, machines and traditions.
The Kaustinen fiddling tradition has remained unbroken ever since the instrument first made its way to Finland some three hundred years ago. How does a living tradition pass from one generation to another, and what does the everyday music scene in Kaustinen look like?

In December 2021 Kaustinen fiddle-playing was included on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Kaustinen fiddling tradition has remained unbroken ever since the instrument first made its way to Finland some three hundred years ago. How does a living tradition pass from one generation to another, and what does the everyday music scene in Kaustinen look like?

Each week, the lobby of the Folk Art Centre comes alive with an adult folk music group as well as the children’s group NÄPPÄRIT. The Youth Association’s folk dance groups rehearse weekly, with dancers ranging from toddlers to young adults, all accompanied by the ensemble OTTONEK. In addition to hearty meals, the local Pelimanni restaurant has regular jam sessions on the menu. You may even get exposed to music while shopping for pastries: the Pesola Bakery is a popular hangout for folk players, much in the same way as the legendary group Kaustisen Purppuripelimanni used to congregate in the Santeri Café – there is even a tune dedicated to the establishment, composed by Konsta Jylhä, the figurehead of the group.

Music playing everywhere

Matti Hakamäki, Director of the Finnish Folk Music Institute, is hard-pressed to nominate another small geographical area anywhere in the West where playing instruments is as popular as it is in Kaustinen: “Here, in our municipality of 4,000 people, we have hundreds of players. And for many who haven’t picked up instruments themselves, playing represents the traditions of the family and the region. It has a certain cross-generational pull, which is tightly woven into this community’s tapestry.” Hakamäki himself did not grow up in Kaustinen, but he and his family have made their home there. “Our four children play with Näppärit and the younger ones are also folk dancers. My wife and I are both music professionals, and our family ideology is reflected in our choice to replace our living room TV screen with instruments scattered all over the sofa. This makes it easy for everyone just to pick up an instrument and start playing for pleasure. Still, we are not immune to having to keep reminding our kids to practise,” he confesses.

“During the winter months, folk players perform infrequently, lying low in their own cocoons,” says Kreeta-Maria Kentala, a classical violinist specialising in Baroque music and a folk fiddler with strong roots in Kaustinen. “Then there is a mighty crescendo towards summer and the festival, where players are busy for the entire week, performing with their own village ensembles and combining forces with all Kaustinen players in the massed concerts. Although amateurs, they have the skills to be comfortable on the stage and to learn often large chunks of music in just a few rehearsals. Sometimes it can actually be more challenging working with professionals,” she laughs.

In addition to music, the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage listing covers a larger concept titled “Kaustinen fiddle playing and related practices and expressions”. “The concept of a living tradition is centred around the community. Instead of valuing a tradition based on how old or how beautiful it is, you must consider whether the community feels that their tradition is worth protecting,” Hakamäki illustrates. “During the first stages of the application process, we asked our community what the tradition is, and who are the ones who practise it. As a result of extensive discussions, it was decided that the application title would include our most well-known symbols, in other words Kaustinen and the fiddle, although the tradition itself covers a variety of
Järvelä family players

Esko Järvelä comes from a folk music family in which all five siblings play the violin. Both their father Mauno Järvelä, known from the ensemble JPP and for his famed Nappari teaching method, and their grandfather Johannes Esko Järvelä come from a folk music family in which work and play for fun. Although Kaustinen tunes can sometimes be difficult to play, folk dance and education, and to

as freely and independently as when I play folk music,” says violinist Kreeta-Maria Kentala about the effects of tradition.

Music was always present in Kentala’s childhood home. Her mother Ann Kentala was a classically trained singer, while her father Aaro Kentala was a church musician and music teacher who is best known for his long-term work with the Kaustinen Wedding Choir. He was a tutor for the folk music groups at the Perhankoilaaakkko Community College and a curator for the local programme contributions for the Folk Music Festival.

“Masivelty”}

Esko Järvelä

is now known as a violinist, his first instrument was the harmonium.

“In day care, I started improvising on the harmonium and when my father discovered this, he taught me some basic chords. Soon I was accompanying traditional tunes that were already familiar to me, with music being such an organic part of our family life. Some of my favourite tapes as a child were of my grandpa playing the fiddle, with his mate Arvo Myllykangas accompanying him on the harmonium. I could not imagine better music than that.”

The playing tradition continues with the children of Esko and his wife, keyboard player Pilvi Järvelä. “Sometimes they get excited about something outside the daily grind of their set lesson pieces, and I try to support them as much as I can. Last summer, our eldest got interested in the Kaustinen purppuri dance sequence. The first rehearsal was challenging, but he managed to learn everything in time for the festival,” Järvelä smiles.

Flowing with music

“Because I learned the Kaustinen playing style when I was very young, traditional music now stems from somewhere so deep within me that no amount of formal education with its critical approach has managed to touch it. When I play art music, I try to get into a headspace where music flows

instruments, folk dancing, singing and traditions around celebrations, as well as all the related handicraft traditions from the wider region. Definitions are allowed to change and will change according to what the practitioners of that tradition think.”

The decision-making UNESCO committee session last December was watched via a livestream at the Folk Musicians’ House. Naturally, the positive result was welcomed with music. Playing continued through two consecutive even dates, and the local primary school organised a festive procession.

“Around forty players turned up for the second jam session. These were people who do something entirely different for work and play for fun. Although Kaustinen tunes can sometimes be difficult to play, everyone joined in for every single piece. The overall mood was unreal,” says violinist Esko Järvelä, whose folk music ensembles Frigg, Baltic Crossing and Teho, have enjoyed international success.

What next?

My best Kaustinen memory is from a few years ago, when I got to participate in a guided walk in the nearby country-side, as a prelude to the festival. The unique geographical

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In spring 2022 the opera All the Truths We Cannot See: A Chernobyl Story, composed by Uljas Pulkkis to a libretto by musicologist Claudia Fawc Gans, was premiered at the Music Centre in Helsinki. The opera is based on the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in April 1986 but also takes a more general look at the relationships between humans, technology and nature. It refers to the serious threats to life on Earth resulting from humans – with their aspirations, ideologies and technological devices – imagining themselves superior to the natural environment.

Soon afterwards, I found myself looking at projects by the composer, sound artist and scholar Otso Lahdeoja. In 4-Hands Electroacoustic DJ’s (2020), he and Alejandro Montes de Oca experimented with four-handed DJ’ing in a live remixing of musical materials prepared by themselves. There is a link here to Lahdeoja’s ongoing research project titled Intersubjectivity in Music: The Perspective of Technological Mediation. This is about examining ways in which digital technologies not only shape music as a sonic event but also enrich the interaction of music-making humans.

After this technology-facilitated ensemble, I came across the idea of musical coexistence of humans with each other and with non-human creatures as a feature not only of non-Western worldviews and musical cultures as explored and shown by ethnomusicologists but of Western cultures too,” writes Milla Tiainen, PhD and current Chair of the Finnish Musicological Society.

"As the climate crisis accelerates and other societal threats emerge, musicologists can join in demonstrating that the close coexistence of humans with each other and with non-human creatures is a feature not only of non-Western worldviews and musical cultures as explored and shown by ethnomusicologists but of Western cultures too," writes Milla Tiainen, PhD and current Chair of the Finnish Musicological Society.

Developing a post-humanist approach also has to do with the sort of worldview and ethical values the research is supposed to espouse. For decades, humanist research has questioned the original European humanist ideal of the human being as a self-contained individual, because this image of humans does not help us understand why human culture always evolves in interaction. Post-humanism expands on the self-criticism of humanism on the basis of the insight that our largely European conceptions of the individual and of humanity are a key component not only in the oppression of non-European and non-white other humans but also in the exploitation of the non-human natural environment.

As the climate crisis accelerates and other societal threats emerge, musicologists can join in demonstrating that the close coexistence of humans with each other and with non-human creatures and beings is a feature not only of non-Western worldviews and musical cultures as explored and shown by ethnomuscologists but of Western cultures too. The fact that all human activity depends on relationships with other creatures and other processes is a richness and an ethical guideline that will provide scope for our research and our aspirations for decades to come.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
Depending on one’s perspective, 60 years may seem like a short or long time. As it covers most of the history of electroacoustic music, the 60th anniversary of the University of Helsinki’s Music Research Laboratory & Electronic Music Studio (UHMRL) is a significant milestone. From a Finnish perspective, it has been a pioneer in the field.

The university’s electronic music studio was born just after the first wave of electroacoustic music. Its operation has gone through many phases over the decades, evolving from a workshop for creative work to, above all, a research infrastructure where sound and music are studied and research methods such as sound analysis are developed. Nowadays, the studio’s activities are characterised by a breadth that serves many sciences and perspectives.

The university’s Head of Musicology, Associate Professor Susanna Välimäki, emphasises the studio’s central, multifaceted mission. “After all, musicology encompasses an extremely broad area, from acoustics to history and aesthetics. That is encapsulated in the studio’s operations, because for example, sound is studied there from a physics perspective, as sound waves and frequencies, but also music production and technology, as well as the related cultural, social and historical perspectives,” she says.

And since it is a 60-year-old institution, it is also a cultural practice in itself that is being studied – “for example, how it has influenced the history of Finnish music and electroacoustic music in particular,” notes Välimäki.

A university electronic music studio is born

The University of Helsinki’s electronic music studio was born in 1962, when three young students, Erkki Salmenhaara, Ilkka Oramo and Ilpo Saunio, proposed the idea to professor of musicology Erik Tawaststjerna, renowned for his research on Jean Sibelius. Also invited to join in as a technical expert was Erkki Kurenniemi. Salmenhaara, Oramo and Kurenniemi had been classmates at the Normal Lyceum of Helsinki. In the spring of 1960, they had been featured in the newspaper *Uusi Suomi*’s youth column for their experimentation with electronic devices in the school’s organ loft.

The University of Helsinki’s electronic music studio is the oldest active facility of its kind in the Nordic region. Electronic sounds created in the studio were first heard in public in January 1963 as part of the Helsinki Student Theatre production of Maurice Maeterlinck’s play *The Death of Tintagiles* (*La Mort de Tintagiles*).

The university studio’s early history has been studied by Mikko Ojanen, PhD, a university lecturer in musicology who is responsible for the studio’s operations and related teaching work. His 2020 dissertation on the history of Finnish electroacoustic music focused on Erkki Kurenniemi (1941–2017), the driving force of the institution in its early years.

“Kurenniemi was a theoretical physics student and amateur radio operator, but he was also familiar with music, and for instance had listened to Karlheinz Stockhausen as a schoolboy. He combined technical and artistic knowledge,” says Ojanen.

Kurenniemi is remembered perhaps more as a developer of a number of electronic instruments than as a composer. He worked at the university studio without pay, as a “volunteer assistant”.

“Kurenniemi wanted to break away from the more traditional approach based on tape editing and instead turned to computational, computer-controlled sound production. Kurenniemi’s method of device construction is comparable to today’s DIY electronic instrument trend. His devices look very much like prototypes and did not have labels to indicate what each button did. So he always had to be on hand at the studio to help when someone wanted to use the equipment that he had developed and built,” explains Ojanen.

Pioneering operations

In the early years, works were created in the studio by Kurenniemi and Salmenhaara as well as Henrik Otto Donner and Jukka Ruohomäki. Swedish composer Folke Rabe also created two pieces at the University of Helsinki studio.
The University of Helsinki's Electronic Music Studio is the Oldest Active Facility of Its Kind in the Nordic Region.

Two other Swedes, Ralph Lundsten and Leo Nilsson, also came to Helsinki in search of sounds. They obtained synthetic and automatically sequenced sounds here that were only possible a bit later in Stockholm,” says Ojanen. Besides the university, it was also possible to create electroacoustic music at the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle) and at the Sibelius Academy. However, neither institution had its own regular studio in the 1960s.

“At Yle, projects were implemented as individual composers’ projects beginning in the late 1960s, but the equipment was always assembled for each project and dismantled again afterwards. Yle’s experimental studio was not established until 1972, and it did not begin full-fledged operations until the mid-1970s,” explains Ojanen.

Another difference was that it was much more difficult to get into Yle to do projects. In comparison, the university studio was a low-threshold place that was easier to enter.

Electronic music instruction began at the Sibelius Academy in 1972 but the school did not get its own studio until 1978. Before that, Sibelius Academy students went to the university studio to do practical work.

Kurenniemi gradually withdrew from activities at the university studio in the 1970s after he set up his own company, DigiEus Electronics Finland. Emerging in his place was Jukka Ruohomäki (1947–2022), who maintained the equipment and provided instruction but was also a significant electroacoustic composer in his own right. He was nominally responsible for the studio’s operations until the mid-1980s, but his contribution decreased after he started working in 1978 at Toit-Filmi, which focused on animated films. In the early 1980s, the studio was maintained by British-born Andrew Bentley (b. 1952), later a professor of music technology at the Sibelius Academy.

After Kurenniemi and Ruohomäki, the third major figure in the university studio’s history was Kai Lassolk (1961–2022), who maintained the facilities and equipment, and provided instruction but was also a significant electroacoustic composer in his own right. He was the university studio’s current operating environment is broadly active and remains an important facility.

Kurenniemi provided an example of the studio’s breadth. “In one of Lassolk’s courses, the students recorded a Beatles song as an experiment,” she recalls. “The students investigated it from the inside out to figure out how it was constructed. There were the musicians, using microphones and equipment from that era. They studied how they were placed in the space and recorded the performance, reconstructing the original recording event. This was practical, phenomenological research that expanded their historical understanding.”

Today’s challenges

The university studio’s current operating environment is completely different from when it was founded six decades ago. One major change is linked to the explosive proliferation of home computers. Does that pose a challenge to the studio’s operations?

“You can do amazing things with home computers these days, but I still don’t see them as a threat to the studio and its work,” says Ojanen. “We also look at things critically, and many people focused on artistic work get new ideas here. We’ve had excellent courses where almost half of the participants have been from the Sibelius Academy and half from the university. We’ve got creators and researchers to talk to each other.”

Ojanen points out that the facilities and equipment, including the range of microphones, are exceptionally good. When you get good musicians into the studio, what they create ideally complements the purely machine-made music.

“Even though the reel-to-reel recorders and synthesizers are old devices, handling them is highly educational and also helps advance the work done on the computer,” he says. “At the same time, of course, they teach students about the history of music technology.”

Now, however, there is concern about cuts in the University of Helsinki’s budget for arts research programmes.

“After all, we have a collection that’s completely unique in terms of cultural history, about 400 tapes including many unreleased electronic works, as well as most of the electronic instruments built by Kurenniemi 50–60 years ago, along with other more conventional instruments. The studio also has a mission to preserve tangible, intangible and digital cultural heritage, and the studio’s instruments must be used and repaired so that they stay in good condition.”

Valiämäki emphasises the meaning and importance of the studio for today’s scientific research into music.

“The essence of musicology is how the sound material is conceptualised; musicology develops concepts and methods to explain why something sounds the way it does. The studio offers research and teaching opportunities that are essential for this.”

Valiämäki stresses the societal networking of music technology. After all, society has very rapidly become oriented towards technology and media.

“Nowadays, music technology is a central issue throughout the cultural sector. Musicologists must know at least something about music technology and its development and understand the connection between music and technology,” she says.
THE OTHER WEST COAST:
JUSSI FREDRIKSSON AND THE TURKU JAZZ SCENE

By Santti Kaipainen

For more than a decade, jazz musician Jussi Fredriksson has played a significant role in building up the Turku jazz scene. The Baltic Archipelago Sea’s environment is featured on his recent solo album, both as a source of inspiration and as a cause for concern.

“I have been going to the Archipelago Sea since the age of one, when my parents bought a summer cottage on the island of Korpo. With each passing year, my own mental landscape has been shifting increasingly towards the archipelago. During the pandemic, it felt natural to leave the city and spend time there instead – both at sea and at the cottage – and around the same time the idea was born to create an entire project around that theme,” explains pianist, drummer, composer and cultural advocate Jussi Fredriksson.

This was the initial spark for the Jussi Fredriksson Trio’s third album Archipelago Sea Tales, released in 2021. During his composition process, Fredriksson spent time on different Archipelago Sea islands, each providing a unique source of inspiration – a particular natural element, or a colour.

“I have synaesthesia, which leads me to associate each key signature and pitch with a specific colour, yet I had not really utilised this attribute in my previous compositions. This time round, I started thinking about all the different colouristic landscapes found in the archipelago and tried to combine them in my mind with the specific colours I associate with key signatures.”

Red ochre, for example, refers to the typical red ochre paint that is a classic exterior house colour in the archipelago and which Fredriksson associates with R major, whereas Rock manifests itself through a grey B minor key. The polytonal Splatter depicts sunlight reflecting on sprays of water, creating a rich palette of colour combinations.

“I prefer to think of these examples as a smattering of colours, as opposed to some sort of systematic scheme permeating the entire album. Different locations also have their own meanings: my piece Kätkiraiminty (Twisted Pine) came about after discovering an exceptionally fine pine tree on the island of Brännöset, and Rock was inspired by the flat rocks of Aspö,” Fredriksson says.

JAZZ FOR THE BALTIC SEA

The Jussi Fredriksson Trio took Archipelago Sea Tales on tour last September through Jazz Finland’s touring scheme. The most fitting performance location in view of the overall theme was the Seili (Själö) island, where the trio’s gig was presented by Turku Sea Jazz.

“The island is also home to an environmental research base, so the milieu felt very authentic vis-à-vis the album’s themes. The tour itself had an environmental angle, with Jazz Finland measuring and attempting to reduce the carbon imprint and environmental effects caused by their touring activities,” Fredriksson points out.

The Archipelago Sea is the only area inside Finland’s borders that has been identified as a Hot Spot by HELCOM (Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area). The marine area has been classified as a significant eutrophication site, largely due to Southwestern Finland’s agricultural nutrients leaching into rivers and subsequently into the Baltic Sea. The concern for the well-being of the archipelago can be heard on the album.

“For example, the track Dead Sea ties in with this concern – the name reflects a scenario where the sea has become dead. We are already experiencing the effects of pollution in our everyday lives, for example when you cannot go for a swim in the Baltic Sea because of blue algae. I am an active participant in the campaign to safeguard various protection measures, and to persuade farmers to adopt restorative practices available to them, such as treating their fields with gypsum.”

According to Fredriksson, jazz music audiences are not large enough for his trio and their environmental activism to really make a notable impact.

“However, event organisers are better placed to influence. Through Archipelago Sea Jazz, a series of four festivals, we raise funds in conjunction with ticket sales towards environmental organisations such as the John Nurminen Foundation, as well as collaborating closely with the Keep the Archipelago Tidy Association.”

From concert series to production organisation

Ever since 2011, there has been a gradual infiltration of non-performance-related cultural activities into Fredriksson’s work.

“That year, Turku was one of the European Capitals of Culture, and I was involved in founding the Flame Jazz event as part of the year’s programme. Our goal was to present high-quality jazz concerts and events in Turku throughout the year,” Fredriksson says.

Fredriksson was born in Turku and Flame Jazz gave him an incentive to move back to the city.

“In my youth, the Turku jazz scene was pretty much non-existent save for the annual Turku Jazz Festival, which was the only event where you could hear professionals perform. Ville Herrala and I were the only Turku kids from our generation who ended up becoming professionals in jazz music.”

In 2016 the Turku Jazz Orchestra was founded and 2017 saw the inception of the Jazz City Turku project, where Flame Jazz, the Turku Jazz Festival and Turku Jazz Orchestra pooled their resources. Since 2020 the three organisations have been operating as one joint association.

Now for the first time in history we have a Turku-based professional jazz industry organisation, which has made everything easier – starting from securing collaborative partners and managing salary and fee payments. We are not just an orchestra, a festival or a club but a versatile production platform with public funding.”

Similar trends are emerging in other Finnish cities as well. The April Jazz Festival, established by the Espoo Big Band, has expanded into a concert series, while events such as the Oulu Music Festival and the SaloJazz Festival offer jazz concert series outside their main event dates. Jazz City Turku has also undertaken the marketing and programming coordination for four Baltic Archipelago jazz festivals, under the umbrella title Archipelago Sea Jazz.

Making music through changing roles

Participating in municipal politics has proved to be an organic continuation of Fredriksson’s work with associations promoting the Turku cultural scene. He is a member of the city of Turku’s Cultural and Youth Committee and a deputy member of the City Council.

“After moving back to Turku, I actively sought to participate in politics after identifying certain shortcomings in the cultural sector, particularly around funding structures. Unless you personally know and are able to influence those politicians who defend culture, you must assume an active role in order to change things,” contemplates Fredriksson.

Is today’s Turku an interesting city culturally?

“Increasingly so each year. We are seeing new investments in culture, with the culture and business hub Logomo operating since 2011, followed by the opening of the Taiteen Talo arts centre this year and the upcoming development of the Turku Concert Hall.”

Despite his work for organisations and through elected positions, Fredriksson makes sure toallow time for his own music-making and maintains strict boundaries around his artistic work, blocking out diary dates for intensive free periods earmarked for tours and recordings.

“Over the past few years, my own trio has felt like the perfect vessel for fulfilling my visions as both composer and pianist. In addition, I have toured with Pope Puolitalo this year, and Mika Kallio’s Gong Odyssey album tour is scheduled for next spring. Saxophonist Max Zenger and I have recently started a band called Freezer,” Fredriksson says.

“I concentrate on one project at a time: I get a new idea that I want to realise, without thinking too much about whether I am being a musician or an event organiser. For me, the two are effectively the same thing: to be involved with interesting music, whether on or off stage.”

Translation: Haina Mari Latham
Jean Sibelius: Symphonies, Tapiola, 3 Late Fragments
Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra/Klaus Mäkelä
Decca, 2022

Lohja City Orchestra / Jukka Untamala, Conductor
Valunta – Aki Yli-Salomäki Orchestral Works
Eclipse Music, 2022

Quiet philosophy of the everyday
A cycle of Sibelius symphonies

“It takes courage to stay true to one’s vision and realise it in a way that feels authentic. Aki Yli-Salomäki’s style evolved in the early 2000s and has remained the same without losing its sincerity. His works, for the most part written for orchestra or large ensemble, plumb subtle emotions of the mind with an aesthetic coherence rather unfashionable in contemporary art music.” • By Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen | Translation: Anni Heino

Finland’s latest star conductor, Klaus Mäkelä, has caused a bit of a stir with his Decca label debut – a full cycle of Sibelius symphonies, no less. Conductor and orchestra clearly trust each other. That’s why they can fly together – as in the famous ‘Swan’ theme at the end of Sibelius’s Fifth Symphony.” • By Marcus Stäbler

Yoik and choir collaboration without borders
The kantele empress strikes back

Folk & Global

“Kauhanen’s one-woman-band concept, where she sings while playing the kantele and percussion, is hugely impressive. Here, she explores the limits of her instrument with experimental, even painful techniques, including using a bow. Her singing voice is confident and wide-ranging, allowing for both belting and lyrical moments.” • TD

Rap aesthetics with soil under the fingernails
A spoonful of metal makes the folk tunes take wing

“This music is clearly made for dancing – but in what way? That is for the listener to decide: one can dance Finnish and Karelian folk dances with their familiar steps to this music or listen to the metal sounds and make a mosh pit out of it.” • TD

“I enjoy the world hapoja & illmari kollektiivi create, where a folk music mood coexists with rap aesthetics and a soundscape vibe. Folk music is in the air, and the sound is so earthy you can practically hear the soil under the fingernails.” • TD
**Jazz & Beyond**

**“ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT PARTICULARLY WELL KNOWN OUTSIDE OF FINLAND, ILMILIEKKI QUARTET IS NONETHELESS A SUPERGROUP”**

By Elin Mäkelä.

*POLENTA* %

Polenta: *Kuusinen Turbo*.

"Listening to this material as a folk musician is like looking at an everyday object through a kaleidoscope: details, colours and shapes are revealed that I had not previously noticed. Polenta’s innovative arrangements highlight the natural rhythms and lovely melodies of these traditional pieces, and their sound world extends to a grand cinematic feel, complete with angelic harmonies." • AK

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**Raucous dancing and melancholy tones**

By污染

*Virtuoso weirdness facing a sacred experience* %

"The varied elements brought together by three strong musical personalities combine in a wide scale of expression and a brilliant constellation of colour. The archival material links the disc to a historical continuum, but it is entirely possible to enjoy this exhilarating music without knowing anything about its backgrounds." • YD

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**Embraced by vocals and stringed instruments** %

"It is easy to understand why Barbora Xu’s music sounds familiar in both Finland and China. The ten tracks on the disc form an attractive whole showcasing the ancient connection between humans, music and nature and, on the other hand, modern cosmopolitanism." • AK

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"Petra Poutanen’s vocal folk music toolkit includes Scandinavian ornaments, Finno-Ugric singing styles and throat-singing techniques. The album makes the point that the need of the human animal to experience the sacred is tied up with the history of sexuality, gender and power." • AK

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**Stoking a quiet fire**

By Jussi Leppänen.

"It happens that every now and then the globalised music scene provides us with wonderful quirks such as a young US musician moving to Helsinki to study the jazz tradition. But on *Diamondback* the generational or geographical gap is nowhere to be heard. That is the power of tradition." • KK

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"The music can smoulder for lengthy passages but the flame eventually burns bright." • KLG

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**Young guns embrace the risk**

**The most Finnish music possible?**

By Vesa Vennila.

*Tomi Nikku* + *Ilmiliekki*.

"It is entirely possible to enjoy this album without knowing anything about its backgrounds." • TD

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"Although it is not particularly well known outside of Finland, Ilmiliekki Quartet is nonetheless a supergroup. The result is a mixture that is able to stand sonically on its own." • KK

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**Living tradition**

By Kalle Khtinen.

"The semantic clash of the two words in the title *Both Only* is a thought-provoking way into consistently stimulating music. The astute blend of motion and stillness, as if the trio had woven the vocabulary of ambient electronics into the lexicon of acoustic jazz, lends to many of the songs an intriguing sense of meditation-disruption." • KLG

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"Although it is not particularly well known outside of Finland, Ilmiliekki Quartet is nonetheless a supergroup, a band of bandleaders who have all worked in a wide variety of contexts, from soul to jazz and electronica. The music can smoulder for lengthy passages but the flame eventually burns bright." • KLG

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**Fresh new steps from Ed Partyka**

By Antti Pussinen.

Jukka Orma: *Argentiinan Pusta*.

"It is easy to understand why Barbora Xu’s music sounds familiar in both Finland and China. The ten tracks on the disc form an attractive whole showcasing the ancient connection between humans, music and nature and, on the other hand, modern cosmopolitanism." • AK

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The UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra maintains its track record of working with the right people on the right time." • KLG

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**Two and one does make sense**

By Alexander Kuvaja.

Nathan Francis: *Diamondback*.

"Although it is not particularly well known outside of Finland, Ilmiliekki Quartet is nonetheless a supergroup, a band of bandleaders who have all worked in a wide variety of contexts, from soul to jazz and electronica. The music can smoulder for lengthy passages but the flame eventually burns bright." • KLG

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The Northern Silence: Journeys in Democratic utopia in the various
Mellor does not seek to redefine
Music journalist Andrew Mellor
ments and the triumph of the Social
ing a little too sweet to be true, we are
Mellor, but in a similar fashion he
telle, from folk songs to heavy
Mellor employs a similarly broad brush in
in and enthusiasm for his subject
sion that Mellor has drawn in
izations of Nordic orchestras.
Mellor manages to tell the
tales of post-war political develop-
metal, from Lutheranism to Social
et home well: just as the reader
against and effect, but Mellor has done
thinks that the description of cultural
from, folk songs to heavy metal, from
Mellor keeps the
rative as broad as this, it obviously
tin in the Nordic countries is becom-
bowing to disband
involves in such
Mellor keeps the

descriptions of Nordic orchestras.
In considering a book with a
subject as broad as this, it obviously
becomes a matter of taste what any
particular reader would have liked
to see included. At the end of the
day, however, there is little point in
guelling about the comprehen-
siveness or lack thereof of the map
that Mellor has drawn in The Northern
Silence; his journey is not and
does not claim to be an encyclopaedia.
Mellor’s expertise in and enthusiasm
for his subject come clearly across in the
long time, Mellor is at once an insider
and an outside observer. His hybrid
role yields him fascinating insights
on the various cultural circles in
which he moves and on their inter-
actions. For example, Finns speak a
completely new kind of English to
Mellor, but in a similar fashion he
discovers something unique in the
sound, national status and interpreta-
tions of Nordic orchestras.

The backbone of The Northern Silence
is made up of interviews made
for various media over the years,
offering glimpses behind the scenes
of the world of music. Having been
based in the Nordic countries for a
long time, Mellor is at once an insider
and an outside observer. His hybrid
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The book is above all a profuse and
expert love letter to music and life in
the Nordic countries. Mellor’s
expertise in and enthusiasm
for his subject come clearly across in the

You know Eppu Normaali, Night-
wish, Yö, Dingo and Hurriaganes?
Eppu Normaali, who sing in Finnish,
have sold more than a million records
– quite an achievement in a country
of 5.5 million inhabitants. The more
globally oriented Nightwish have
reportedly sold more than nine
million records worldwide. Yö, Dingo
and Hurriaganes also belong to the
best-known bands in Finland, but few
people outside the country are famil-
ial with their music, or even their
names.

Therefore Made in Finland: Studies in Popular Music, written by estab-
lished scholars in the field, is a
welcome addition to the meagre liter-
ature in the English language on
Finnish popular music. This book
is not intended as a comprehen-
sive guide to all varieties of Finnish
popular music; there is very little
about the “progressive” varieties
of Finnish popular music and do not
read Finnish, this is the book for you.
Like other volumes in the
series, Made in Finland is a collec-
tion of essays. In addition to (what
the authors see as) the main narrative
of Finnish popular music, the topics
include many fascinating marginal
areas.

Pekka Sutin and Juho Hanninen survey
underground music in the age
of platforms. I would never have
imagined that an “electric light piano”
was demonstrated in Finland as early
as 1894.

Johannes Bruhila writes on
the popular music of the Swedish-
speaking minority of Finland.
Swedish is the second official
language of Finland, but only 0.3
million Finns speak it as their mother
language today. Säijäläinen Katya-
en writes about another minority,
the Finnish-Americans. At the begin-
nning of the 20th century, there were
more than two hundred thousand
Finns in America. Most came from
poor rural backgrounds and worked
in mining, forestry and farming.
The role of Karelia in Finnish music
is more complex. In the 19th century,
Karelia was the mythical home of
the Kalevala, the Finnish national
epic. Helene Pekka wrote the Karelia
Suite, and Karelian girls have been
celebrated in popular songs since
the 1920s. Pekka Sutin concen-
trates on Karelian influences in the
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the 1960s and the role of Karelian
immigrants who moved to Finland
after the breakdown of the Soviet
Union. Like all volumes in the Global
Popular Music series, the book ends
with an interview with an eminent
artist in the field. True to the concept
of this volume, the editors have
taken Russian Hologapenski, the
leader of Nightwish.

Popular Music Made in Finland
BY Pekka Gronow

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**Magnus Lindberg’s Piano Concerto No. 3 premiered by Yuja Wang, the SFSO and Salonen**

Given its eagerly awaited world-premiere performances by Yuja Wang, the San Francisco Symphony and Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen, Magnus Lindberg’s outstanding Piano Concerto No. 3 (2020–22) is on its way to becoming a repertory item. The new concerto fuses together the composer’s virtuosic grasp of musical form, exuberantly pianistic writing and riveting orchestral mastery, giving rise to a thirty-minute score of special magnificence.

Although cast in three movements, the concerto does not follow the usual fast-slow-fast scheme. “At some point, I started thinking about those three movements coming off almost as if they were three self-standing concertos. Each movement opens with an intense dialogue between piano and strings, which then gives over to further dialogue between piano and winds, followed by a synthesis. I wanted to keep my orchestral writing more disciplined than in the Second [Piano] Concerto. Thus, I’ve experimented with some filigree in the new concerto,” the composer recalled in our recent talk in Helsinki.

Tailor-made for Yuja Wang, to whom the score is dedicated, Piano Concerto No. 3 is a virtuoso affair. “In terms of technique, Yuja is certainly one of the most amazing pianists of our time. The speed, the accuracy – those elements are really on the surface of her seemingly effortless playing. Therefore it would have been far-fetched to write some kind of contemplative piece for her,” Lindberg pointed out. Regarding the concerto’s thematic line-up, there are several recurring groups of motifs and gestures, developed organically in time and texture throughout the concerto, as if three parallel universes were being born from shared parameters. In genuinely Lindbergian fashion, both the solo part and the orchestral writing are remarkably detailed and ever-imaginatively interlocked. The electrifying opening movement is set in motion with the soloist’s gorgeous opening statement of chords and scalar passages, leading to a long-held harmonic field. A series of ascending musical lines heralds the second movement. Eventually, the instrumental fabric becomes distilled almost into chamber music. Kinetic and resplendent, the third movement is a celebration of all things pianistic. Lindberg also finds endless joy in writing for orchestra, including wonderful moments for timpani, bass drum and pitched percussion, most notably crotales, with gongs and metal plates.

A thunderous world premiere, the performance by Yuja Wang, the orchestra and Salonen was nothing short of a triumph.

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**Chamber music series fostering continuity**

Hietu is Happening! runs on the logic of improvisation, while Helsinki Seriös has ambitions to become a new cornerstone of the chamber music scene. Both are examples of how non-institutional concert organisers can foster continuity.

BY Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen

Hietsun Paviljonki in Helsinki is a venue showcasing how to introduce and establish a new kind of chamber music culture in Finland: with an inspiring location and a logic of improvisation, while Helsinki Seriös has ambitions to become a new cornerstone of the chamber music scene.

While the mantra “location, location, location” still holds, we also need to consider what kind of content is provided to compete for the interest of the increasingly pluralist tastes of the musical public. The general purpose of the Hietsu is Happening! series is to be an arena for experimentation, bringing together artists from varied backgrounds and allowing various genres of music and branches of art to collide at concerts whose formats may be very diverse. Improvisation is the key to everything, not just in music.

The Helsinki Seriös series, meanwhile, aims for success with a completely different concept. While the classical music sector has long been concerned about the genre labouring under the disadvantage of being perceived as serious and elitist, Helsinki Seriös has cheerfully adopted “serious” as part of its very name. Additionally, Helsinki Seriös does not seek to specialise or to build content thematically. If anything, the series specialises in providing a chamber music series during the winter concert season in Finland to complement the summer festival season. Translation: Jukka Mäntyjärvi

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**Festivals and performances**

Hietsu Paviljonki in Helsinki is a venue showcasing how to introduce and establish a new kind of chamber music culture in Finland: with an inspiring location and a logic of improvisation, while Helsinki Seriös has ambitions to become a new cornerstone of the chamber music scene. Both are examples of how non-institutional concert organisers can foster continuity.

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Late-night contemporary music? Solutions at Tampere Biennale

BY Jari Juhani Kallio

The 2022 edition of Tampere Biennale took place in April 2022. Although many festivals and performing organisations have shown extraordinary creativity in programming contemporary music, at best demonstrating genuine interest in diversity and innovation, one perennial question still remains largely unanswered, what to do with late-night shows?

Classical and contemporary concerts tend to take place sometime between lunch hours and nine pm. For many years, promoters have been keen on presenting various permutations of late-night programming, with varying success. With late-night events, the balance between artistic integrity and marketability has occasionally been somewhat challenging, and understandably so. Devising programmes to meet, without pushing audiences too far out of their comfort zones, is not an easy task to fulfil.

The Biennale’s first Festival Club brought together two rather different aspects of electronica, in the guise of a joint gig by the improvisational ambient drone duo HLER, alongside 8 Bits High, a trio producing music using only Commodore 64 home computers as sound sources. In a nightclub setting, the extended improvisations of HLER, often based on video game music. Game music is gradually gaining more and more presentable status in concert settings, an unsurprising development with its emphasis on video game music. Game music is gradually gaining more and more presentable status in concert settings, an unsurprising development with its visual impact, combining classical and contemporary concert elements with video games.

When we consider what to name a triple bill of ballet, Made in Germany would be ironic and Made in the USA would be suspect. What should we think, then, of a ballet production titled Tripla: Made in Finland? Marking one of the high points of the centenary of the Finnish National Ballet, Tripla brings to the stage new works by three internationally successful Finnish choreographers, and the title subsumes a multitude of identities. Ultimately, the most proudly Finnish thing about the evening is how utterly seamlessly the dance, music and staging work together.

The triple bills staged by the FNB commonly highlight the plurality of contemporary dance rather than a common narrative, and the very diversity of the backgrounds of the choreographers selected. Made in Finland in itself reflects the international biography of Finnish contemporary dance. Johanna Nuutinen (b. 1963) is a former member of the FNB and a world citizen in today’s generation of dancers; Kenneth Kvarnström (b. 1963) has made a career out of cross-discipline stage works with Scandinavia’s finest dance companies; and his contemporary Tero Saarinen (b. 1964) has a brutally beautiful idiom of absolute movement that has gone over well particularly in central Europe.

In this narrative, the opening number – Nuutinen’s Surge – feels unabashedly Finnish. This impression is created by the archaic primeval fog on stage but even more so by the music. The natural, seamless music creates just the right sort of conflict with Nuutinen’s dance narrative, with its abrupt transitions and criticism of consumerism. The next item on the bill, Rodero 2.0 by Kvarnström, scrubs away the national-mythical imagery with its visual impact, combining 1970s studio sets with brightly coloured silk tunics. The evening concludes with Wode by Tero Saarinen, which is set to and based on the Cello Concerto (1972) of composer and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen (b. 1958).

Ultimately, the works included in Made in Finland refuse to form part of a coherent single narrative, and the title is little more than a superficial marketing ploy, as titles always are. If we must find something overarching Finnishly here, then let’s decide that in this instance it has to do with the non-hierarchical collaboration between choreographers, composers, set designers and costume designers. Witnessing the well-oiled production machinery of the FNB at work, one can sense that every creative contributor has had enough space and responsibility to dispel any need for power struggles or artistic compromises.

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Organic equality at the Musequal Festival

BY Jari Ahaniala

In this respect, the Musequal Festival in May in Janakkala came off as one of the most promising affairs around. As manifested by the ideology of the festival organiser, the Musequal collective, the festival aims to promote equality in terms of equal realisation of human rights and the equality of people as members of a nation. According to the collective, the main goal is to make the forgotten works of historical female composers more public and enable them to become regular repertoire among both large institutions and individual actors.

With Artistic Directors Antti Tikkanen and Linda Suolasti at the helm, the two-day festival consisted of five concerts, performed at various locations around Janakkala, alongside a preliminary mid-week evening in Helsinki. The festival programming revolved around the multifaceted music of its Composer-in-Residence, Iranian-bom, Europe-based BOZBEHR RAFAIE. In addition, notable contributions from Cecilia Damström were featured, alongside new commissions and premieres from Mikk Heinimo and V była Skog.

The festival proved that it is indeed possible to put on a series of top-class concerts without the usual big names, with some minor exceptions. In terms of aesthetics, the festival endorsed an extended stylistic arch from Baroque to contemporary music of post-minimalism. Looking at geography, however, the audience remained somewhat Eurocentric, with only a handful of composers from North and South America featured, alongside Rafie. With proper planning involved, the festival programmes came off as organic entities, ones defying standard repertoire in meaningful ways, without making eccentricity an end in itself. Musequal Festival remained true to its core ideology. Programming was aptly apolitical throughout, and each musical work was performed with commitment and enthusiasm, while maintaining a delightfully easy-going overall ambiance. Still, one hopes that there will be a wider range of audiences attending the festival in the future. Whether this is to be achieved by marketing, timing or logistics remains to be seen, but in any case these programmes deserve to be played to sold-out crowds.

The Time of Music festival built its anniversary festival programme on the theme of diversity. Under the banner ‘Mundi Novi – New Worlds’, the festival showcased ideas and voices that often remain in the shadows.

The Time of Music festival was established in 1982 in a Finland that was largely unaware of international trends in contemporary music – outside the Helsinki area anyway. The Ears Open Society, established in 1977, or the Helsinki Biennale, first held in 1981, could not address all of the interesting issues in the field. For this, we needed the Time of Music festival.

The event focused on courses rather than concerts. The founders considered that the Viitasaari courses would be the jump-start that Finnish musical life required in the field of contemporary music at the time. The courses were very popular in the early years, with more than 100 participants each summer. Now, forty years on, courses are still a major component of the Time of Music festival. This year there were 37 participants, most of them from outside Finland.

In summer 2022 four courses were organised at Viitasaari. Three of these – composition, improvisation, and instruments – form part of the core programme, but the offering also included a course titled “Curating Diversity”, which forms part of the Sounds Now project, funded in part through the EU’s Creative Europe programme. Over six days, the participants discussed the ethical aspects of the diversity theme and social responsibility from the perspective of contemporary music. The diversity theme took on a concrete shape even for those who come to the Time of Music festival principally for the concerts. “Mundi Novi – New Worlds” provided a forum for topics and voices that often remain in the shadows, whether because of ethnicity, language, nature, gender or power.

One of the highlights of the festival was the hypnotic work Femenine by JUULI EATMAN, forgotten for years but recently revived. The programme also featured the world premieres of the first performances in Finland of Answer Machine Tape, 1987 by PHILIP TENABLES, works by JAMES A. MCKEAN and MIKO YOKOYAMA for the Ulysses Percussion Ensemble and the audiovisual work Hibernation, where animation by JENNY JOKELA and music by SEBSTIAN HILLI told a tale of loneliness, isolation and depression. The string quartet Three Point Eight by MINNA LINONEN, commissioned by the festival, raised the issue of the bearing capacity of the natural environment.

Building such a plurality of concerts and courses would not be possible without international cooperation. The festival has for many years been a member of the Ulysses Network and Sounds Now project of the EU’s Creative Europe programme. For concert audiences, networks such as these manifest themselves in joint commissions that a single festival would be unable to achieve and in appearances by international guests – there were more of them at Viitasaari in this anniversary year than ever before.
Gender equality in orchestral performances

A recent survey conducted by the Society of Finnish Composers and the Association of Finnish Symphony Orchestras shows that the number of performances by female composers is higher in contemporary music than in all repertoire.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Performances of works by female and male composers, contemporary works:</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performances of works by female and male composers, all works:</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Society of Finnish Composers / Association of Finnish Symphony Orchestras
Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi
A FRESHER TAKE ON MUSIC

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