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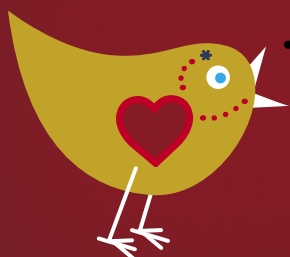
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Editorial

BY ANU AHOLA

Aural landscapes, sonic mindscapes

The foundation of every culture consists of the natural environment and the customs and beliefs of the community living in it. These basic elements shape each other constantly, sometimes in surprising ways. In this issue we explore the relationship between music and environment, both natural and cultural. What traces, influences and meanings of the environment do the people who create, consume and study music find in it today?

This question prompted further questions: How does a language environment manifest itself in music? Why does performing a concert in the natural environment seem to enhance the experience? And what about the evolution of music: is music essential for human beings, biologically speaking?

Although definitive answers cannot be found for all these questions, it is obvious that creating and experiencing music are always affected by nature, by nurture and by the culture we live in.

Over the course of our lives, music forms a sonic landscape around us. That in itself is a cultural environment that we recognise as our own. As times and places change, the music travels with us and within us, adapting to and communicating with its new environments. Therefore music can also contribute to inter-cultural understanding, which is what the world desperately needs today.

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The status of women in music emerged as a sub-theme in this issue almost of its own accord. The initial reaction of many to this topic was adopted as the title of the article by Anna Pulkkis (see p. 44), and responses to this question may be found in several articles on these pages.

Next year will bring a new era in the history of the FMQ. For more on this, see page 4. We are embracing the adventure with our ears and minds open; follow along, and you'll find rich rewards.



Jussi Pulkkinen

The FMQ enters a new era

The FMQ, which began life as a printed quarterly magazine in 1985, has long been serving its readers in digital format as well. More and more online material has been produced over the past two years, while the number of printed issues has been reduced.

The time has now come for the FMQ to take the next natural step into the future.

As of January 2017, the FMQ will be posting new items – articles, interviews, columns and reviews – on its website every week. And that's not all: the website will be undergoing a makeover in the autumn, and launching a special longread story. This will appear four times a year, seasoned with music, videos and other visuals.

The printed edition will also be given a new look in 2017. It will consist of a big compendium of items published during the year, and published at the end of the year in an even more appealing combination of first-class content and visual interest."

So be sure to check out the new-era FMQ in a format that is more varied, more readily accessible and more environmentally friendly than ever.

For further details of the FMQ, its stories and other news, follow us in social media and subscribe to our e-newsletter at fmq@fmq.fi.

Subscribe to the printed edition at fmq.fi.



More great reads at **FMQ** *fi*

You will find the following articles on the FMQ website.

Kaija Saariaho – Deep in sound, deep in soul

BY LIISAMAIJA HAUTSALO

Kaija Saariaho has frequently visited the USA in recent years, and her music has been widely performed in various concert series and at festivals there. The premiere of a new production of her first opera, *L'amour de loin*, at the Metropolitan Opera in December 2016 will be an opera event such as has not been seen for decades.

In the FMQ interview Saariaho talks about working in the US, about a new opera she is working on, and her concern about the eroding of the cultural content of our lives.

Conceptions of gender in music education

BY HEIDI HORILA

Boys are conspicuous by their absence in basic music education. This has been a source of concern for music education scholars internationally for quite some time. While music playschools have an equal number of girls and boys, in instrument studies the gender balance tilts alarmingly, fewer than one third of students being boys.

In the FMQ interview scholar Anna Kuoppamäki explores this subject.

Choral developers

BY MERJA HOTTINEN

The Helsinki Chamber Choir has always been an ambassador for the most demanding contemporary vocal music and for Finnish music. As Finland's only professional chamber choir, it has partnered numerous composers in developing the art of choral music over the years, besides giving voice to rarely performed early music. Lately, the choir's close collaboration with composers has progressed to the international level with the Rautavaara Composition Competition introduced by the choir and its artistic director Nils Schweckendiek, among other international workshops. Merja Hottinen introduces this brilliant choir.

The sky's the limit

BY JAANI LÄNSIÖ

Dima Slobodeniouk (b. 1975) has begun his tenure as Principal Conductor of the Lahti Symphony Orchestra this autumn. It is a busy time for the conductor, whose hectic lifestyle is balanced by his passion for aviation. Slobodeniouk's career has not been one spectacular lift-off. Instead he has achieved his current success through a slower and steadier working pace than many other Finnish conductors of international standard. Not unlike a plane that steadily climbs towards the clouds, as Jaani Länsiö writes in his FMQ article.

Erkki Melartin: rediscovering a remarkable Finnish composer

BY TUIRE RANTA-MEYER

Composer and conductor Erkki Melartin (1875–1937) was a key figure on the Finnish musical scene in his day. In 2016 two significant tributes to Melartin's life's work appeared. The first was a themed issue of the *Musiikki* periodical dedicated to the style, analysis and genesis of his music. The second was the release of an album containing world premiere recordings of *Traumgesicht*, *Marjatta* and the eight-movement suite from the ballet *Sininen helmi*. Tuire Ranta-Meyer writes about Melartin on the FMQ website.

Olavi Louhivuori's career makes it clear that music doesn't need to be categorised.

Olavi Louhivuori splashed on to the scene in 2002 as drummer of Ilmiliikki Quartet, which scooped up Finnish and Nordic jazz awards. Since then, this restless multi-instrumentalist has played with the genre-shattering Oddarrang and many other groups in Europe and the US – while at the same time composing for orchestras and electronic solo albums.

BY WIF STENGER
PHOTOS AJ SAVOLAINEN

Beyond genre

“My problem is that I like to do a lot of different stuff. And there always has to be an element of weirdness in it,” says **Olavi Louhivuori** with a grin, sitting at a café-laundrette on Helsinki’s Töölö Square.

“I’d say that 85% of what I do is jazz, more or less, while my solo stuff is more electronic-experimental and **Oddarrang** is no longer jazz. I’d say it’s experimental, instrumental something... if I had to categorise it.”

Louhivuori’s career makes it clear that music doesn’t need to be categorised. His work with symphony orchestras, big bands, small ensembles and as a solo artist reflects affection for many genres, spanning free and mainstream jazz, ambient, folk, hip hop and progressive rock to classical music. None of it fits neatly into any pigeonhole.

Exhibit A: the majestic confluence of electronic space music, post-rock and *krautrock*, blues and churchy sounds on the new fourth album from his main group, **Oddarrang**.

The album, *Agartha*, nearly shares a name with a **Miles Davis** live album, *Agharta*, from 1975. At that time, the trumpeter was moving further from jazz into a new kind of fusion – as **Oddarrang** have over their 13-year career.

Life-changing Miles album

It was a Davis live album from a decade earlier, though, that set Louhivuori on his path.

“When I was around 16, I got some albums from my friend **Janne Halonen**, who now leads **Helsinki-Cotonou Ensemble**. The most important was Miles’s *My Funny Valentine/Plus 4 and More*. That was life-changing for me. It worked as a motivator. I was completely like, this is what I want to do. I transcribed everything that the 18-year-old drummer **Tony Williams** was doing on there. And that opened the door to many other amazing albums.”

Around the age of nine Louhivuori started a school band called the **Rocking Stones** with pianist **Joona Toivanen** – in whose trio he still plays a quarter of a century later. “Joona brought in these amazing songs, which we played at the school spring show, like ‘Peaches en Regalia’ by **Frank Zappa** and ‘Watermelon Man’ by **Herbie Hancock**,” he recalls.

Wasn’t that fusion tune, with its many modal scales and irregular 16th notes, a bit challenging for young boys?

“We didn’t think about it,” says Louhivuori with a chuckle. “We were just playing!”

Around the age of 11, Louhivuori was introduced to jazz by his father, a music professor at the University of Jyväskylä.

“He took me to the local jazz bar to see a colleague of his, **Petri Toiviainen**, a brain researcher and a great jazz pianist, with drummer **Rami Väyrynen**. Rami became my teacher and later my younger brother **Kalevi Louhivuori** and I played at the same club.”

In high school, the Louhivuoris and Toivanen were jam-session regulars at the club, now known as Pop-pari. Besides his trumpeter brother and Toivanen, Louhivuori still plays with alumni of that scene, including guitarist Halonen, bassist **Tapani Toivanen** and pianist **Tuomo Uusitalo** – with whom he recorded in New York this September. Bringing things full circle, playing bass in that group is **Myles Sloniker**, who studied with **Ron Carter**, bassist on Davis’s *Agharta*.

It’s a family affair

Louhivuori’s open attitude and innate musicality were fostered in a family of five siblings with music-teacher parents. Everyone played instruments, but Louhivuori says efforts to perform as a family band often broke up in squabbles. Many have however collaborated later, including joint bands with their cousins the **Ikonens**, another illustrious musical family.

Louhivuori plays in **Sun Trio** with his brother Kalevi, and has produced an album for his younger sister’s folk-pop duo, **Eva & Manu**. His eldest sister **Aino Peltomaa** sings on *Agartha* while cousin **Osmo Ikonen** contributes cello, keyboards and vocals to Oddarrang. Another cousin, **Tuomo Prättälä**, plays keyboards in Louhivuori’s wife **Emma Salokoski**’s band.

“Tuomo got me into hip hop when we were kids,” says Louhivuori. “He introduced me to cool rap bands like **De La Soul**, **A Tribe Called Quest** and **Guru**, who used jazz samples. So this Afro-American rhythm and groove brought me into jazz somehow.”

Besides Ikonen, the relative he plays most consistently with is Kalevi. Their Sun Trio has also just released a new album and tours Japan and Finland this autumn. “Of course brothers have complicated relationships, but with Kalevi it’s always been about creating something rather than competing. There may be a rivalry, but it’s inspiring for both of us. We push each other in a positive way.”

Kalevi, who also performs with the **Northern Governors** and **Ricky-Tick Big Band**, admires his brother’s discipline. “What’s special about Olavi is his strong ambition towards playing drums and writing music,” he says. “I’ve always been amazed how much and consistently he used to practise, eight hours a day. He’s also very versatile in composing.”

Jump into the stream

The sibling rivalry within Sun Trio is mediated by bassist **Antti Lötjönen** – who also forms a rhythm section

with Olavi in Ilmiliekki and the free-jazz **Liberty Ship**.

“Antti is the bass player I’ve worked most closely with since moving to Helsinki in 2002,” says Louhivuori. “We grew up together as musicians and can more or less read each other’s minds.”

Besides Liberty Ship, Louhivuori plays in another free improvisational group, **Olavi Trio**.

“With both of those groups, the philosophy is the same: let’s just go with the flow; let’s not think about anything; let’s jump into the stream,” he explains.

Olavi Trio – so-called because all the members have Olavi as a first or middle name – is more playful, reflecting the personality of its founder, veteran bassist **Teppo Hauta-aho**. “He brings this element of joy and fun,” says the drummer. The trio recently recorded an album with US trumpet pioneer **Wadada Leo Smith**, due out next year.

Olavi Trio originally convened in 2004 to play at a birthday party for French producer and promoter **Charles Gil**, now director of the Raahe Jazz on the Beach festival. “On stage, Olavi has an intuitive sense of the whole musical image within which he is involved,” notes Gil.

Oddarrang’s odd arrangements

Nowhere is that more clear than in Oddarrang, which Olavi Louhivuori founded in 2003, tweaking its name from “odd arrangement”. Though it wasn’t a jazz outfit, the melodic new band quickly won the Finnish Emma (Grammy) jazz award.

“Some people try to categorise it as jazz, maybe because I have a jazz background. But it’s completely something else,” says Louhivuori. “The songs are quite well structured and thoroughly written, but I leave space for stuff to happen. We have a couple of songs that are almost completely improvised. But we don’t play solos. We try to find these colours and sounds together; it’s more like noise or ambient.”

The quintet’s unusual instrumentation is led by **Ilmari Pohjola**’s trombone and Osmo Ikonen’s cello. Other members are **Lasse Sakara** (guitar) and **Lasse Lindgren** (bass).

According to Ikonen, “the band is formed by five guys, each with our unique sound and ideas, but Olavi is the one who has the final say on which direction we’re going. He has a very melodic approach to playing drums. He’s always thinking about the bigger picture, as opposed to focusing on just keeping the rhythm.”

“The songs on the new album are composed by Olavi, Lasse Lindgren and me, but Olavi is in charge of the grand design. The sound is more electronic as we’ve experimented with synths and drum programming,” he adds.

Louhivuori notes that most of the group members play vintage Roland synthesisers on *Agartha*, which he describes as post-rock.

“I’ve been listening to a lot of old electronic music



Tero Ahonen

like **Brian Eno**, **Tangerine Dream**, **Cluster** and **Ash Ra Temple**. I’m really interested in the movement from German *krautrock* into the ambient electronic field, and how modern classical was involved. They started experimenting with tape in the ’50s. The whole German avant-garde scene, the classical modernists, were their forefathers. I’m really interested in that period, and that can be heard on the album.”

Oddarrang’s first three discs, beginning with *Music Illustrated* a decade ago, have featured subtle wordless vocals or vocalise. Now for the first time, on Ikonen’s “Admiral Byrd’s Flight”, there are actually lyrics – a few brief lines in English, nearly buried in the mysterious mix. They seem to refer to American explorer **Richard Byrd**, who claimed to be the first to reach the North Pole by air from Norway.

Nordic connections

Norway is a second musical home for Louhivuori. He plays there more than in Finland, in a variety of groups with bassist/guitarist **Mats Eilertsen**. And while some say Oddarrang’s name sounds Norwegian, the music is said to echo Icelandic acts like **Sigur Rós** – though this is denied by Icelandic guitarist **Sigurdur Rögnvaldsson**, who temporarily replaced Lasse Sakara in the band last spring. “Oddarrang have their own sound, and I don’t see any direct parallels with any other bands,” he says.

The new album *Agartha* is high-energy and dramatic but still includes delicate, richly melancholic intervals, occasionally building to cathartic climaxes.

“Oddarrang’s music has become quite big,” agrees the drummer. “I play with a bigger, louder set-up. We used some overdubs, but tracks like ‘Mass I–III’ were played more or less live – and it gets quite massive at the end.”

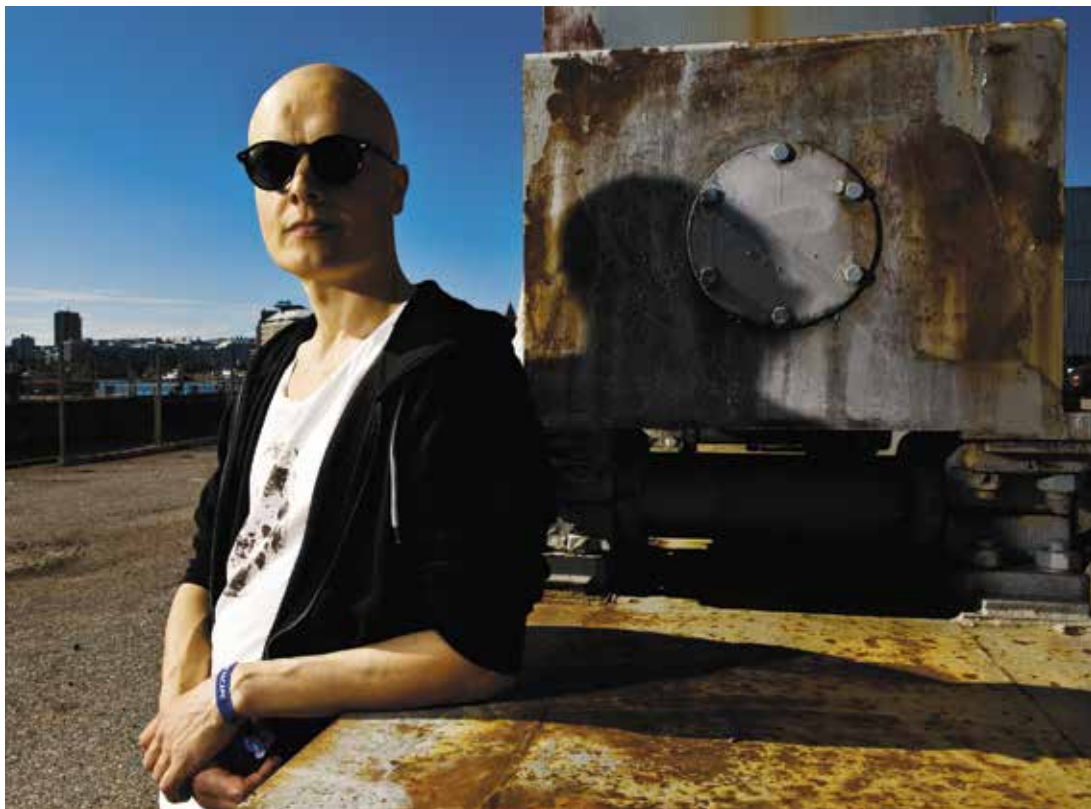
Still, Louhivuori promises that the new album’s sound carries over well onstage. The band tours Europe this autumn, including the Berlin and London jazz festivals. Louhivuori says most of the concerts are at “indie clubs, crossover venues, world music venues and experimental jazz venues. Our final gig of the year will be at the We Jazz festival in Helsinki in December, which will be epic!”

Classical and rhythms converge

As a kid, Louhivuori played violin, cello and piano before embracing the drums at the age of nine. His parents mostly played classical music at home.

“That was especially what they’d put on if I had a fever or was sick. There are a few amazing albums that I listened to a lot, especially when I was sick: one by **Kiri Te Kanawa** and some **Palestrina**. Whenever I hear those, I go into this state... a little out of this world.”

Louhivuori maintains contact with the symphonic world. He composed and performed a drum concerto



with the *Jyväskylä Sinfonia* and collaborated on a piece for the *Turku Philharmonic* by *Verneri Pohjola*, the *Ilmiliekki* trumpeter and *Ilmari's* brother.

"It's very different working with classical musicians," notes Louhivuori. "I've worked with big bands like the *UMO Jazz Orchestra*, but they're rhythm musicians, so we share the same idea of rhythm. That's not true with classical musicians, which has taught me a lot. They have a completely different way of approaching rhythm," he muses.

"But in the years I've been on the scene, there's been a big change. When I started to work with classical musicians of my age in the early 2000s, there was still this big gap. We were two worlds that didn't really understand each other. In a way, that made it nice to work together, because it was so bizarre. But in the last couple of years, when we meet, we can start to talk about the same things. Both sides have really changed."

Industrial experiments to folk ballads

Far from the concert hall, Louhivuori tapped into industrial, found sounds and Senegalese drumming for his solo debut, *Inhale Exhale*, in 2008. That was followed two years ago by *Existence*, with a brighter, crisper sound suggestive of electronic artists like *Aphex Twin*.

It also shows a leap forward in his skills as producer.

"The main difference with *Existence* is that I managed to make it work as a live act, for instance in an old industrial hall at Helsinki's Flow Festival," he says. "After the first album, I basically just played free improvised gigs by myself, which didn't have much to do with the album."

Existence also features a composition by his son *Emil*, then six, to whom the album is dedicated. That continues Louhivuori's tradition of collaborating with family members.

"It can be weird, but it can also be the most natural thing in the world. With my wife, it took some years before we found a way to work together. But when we did, it's been really nice."

The main result has been a set of Swedo-Finnish folk tunes recorded by Salokoski and *Ilmiliekki* Quartet, which Louhivuori co-founded with *Verneri Pohjola*, *Tuomo Prättälä* and *Antti Lötjönen* in 2002.

"*Ilmiliekki* is acoustic, jazzy and really sensitive. We can just go play anywhere, whereas with *Oddarrang* we now need a PA system and a proper venue. I'm in a kind of funny schizophrenic situation where I have this completely acoustic part of me, where all I need is the drums, like with *Ilmiliekki*, *Olavi Trio* and *Mats*

Eilertsen. And then I have this other side which is *Oddarrang* and now *Elifantree* and solo, which is a big sound.

"Those worlds might seem far apart sound-wise. For me it's important because I was never into this back-beat heavy stuff. I started out loving these small colours and playing with brushes. Now it's more interesting to try stuff that I haven't done before. It's a learning process for me to do this kind of banging!"

Elifantree and the big beat

A step in that direction this year was joining *Elifantree*, an idiosyncratic art-pop trio with Turkish-Swedish vocalist *Anni Elif Egecioglu* and saxophonist-keyboardist *Pauli Lyytinen*. Louhivuori appears on their new single and tours with them in Italy, Sweden and Finland in October.

"Pauli and I have played with Olavi before in different settings, so it felt natural to ask him," says Egecioglu. "Obviously the fact that he's a fantastic musician and a very loving person also played an important role." He took over the drum seat from *Tatu Rönkkö*, who left to form the band *Liima*.

"Tatu and I are really good friends, and I've learnt a lot from him," says Louhivuori. And like so many projects he plays in, *Elifantree* is utterly uncategorisable.

"That's why it felt so natural to join them, because that's my life! That's exactly what I do as a solo drummer and with *Oddarrang*."

As Egecioglu sees it, "Olavi has a very strong sense of melody and harmony, which is reflected clearly in his playing. He also composes beautiful music for all kind of settings. As a drummer, I think this makes him stand out."

So does Olavi Louhivuori ever wonder whether dancing across so many genres has been a good career move – or does he care? He looks at his coffee mug, empty now.

"That's a good question. I do care, because it's important to know where and how to focus." He pauses again, then smiles.

"I'd get bored just playing one type of music. I love to play different kinds and to hang with people. It's always about the balance. I want to do my own music and that's most important. But I'd never quit playing with all these people, because I love it."

olavilouhivuori.com
oddarrang.com

Wif Stenger is a journalist at the Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle), and also contributes to *Jazz Journal*, *Monocle*, *The Guardian* and *Deutsche Welle*.



Olavi Louhivuori

- :: born 1981
- :: studied at the Finnish Conservatory in Jyväskylä and the Sibelius Academy
- :: released four albums as leader of *Oddarrang*, nine as co-leader of *Ilmiliekki Quartet* and *Sun Trio*, as well as two solo albums
- :: performed on more than 20 albums with artists such as *Tomasz Stańko*, *Emma Salokoski*, *Alexi Tuomarila*, *Joona Toivanen*, *Mats Eilertsen*, *Piirpauke* and *Olavi Trio*
- :: composed works for *Jyväskylä Sinfonia*, *Turku Philharmonic Orchestra*, *UMO Jazz Orchestra* and *Jyväskylä Big Band*
- :: produced albums for *Eva & Manu*, *Emma Salokoski* and *Maria Ylipää*, along with short film scores
- :: has toured and recorded around Europe as well as in the US, Australia and Japan

Growing up in roughly beautiful Lapland has affected Outi Tarkiainen's personality and her voice as a composer. For her, music is almost like a force of nature, which can change people and their destinies. Andrew Mellor met Tarkiainen in Rovaniemi, just as she had finished her song-cycle.

BY ANDREW MELLOR

The voice of freedom

"About three years ago, I realised that my spirit is not at its freest when people commission me to write music," says composer **Outi Tarkiainen**. "I thought, if I'm a composer, it makes no sense if I don't do something for myself, to make my existence worthwhile. If there's one thing I'm proud of it's that I've had, and plan to have, the courage to speak out with my own voice."

At around the same time as those thoughts entered Tarkiainen's head, she decided relocate for a while to the town of her birth – Rovaniemi, "the gateway to the north", in her own words. There, on the shelves of her local library, she discovered a wealth of Sami poetry old and new that would form the basis of a new work that she effectively commissioned from herself. "I was between projects, and the most important and beautiful way that I could think of using my time was to write a song-cycle for mezzo-soprano and orchestra using female Sami poets' texts," she explains.

With some help from the conductor **John Storgårds**, Tarkiainen got the **Lapland Chamber Orchestra** on board. But soon the piece wasn't the 15-minute score she had promised to deliver. It was 45 minutes: seven songs with an orchestral prologue and epilogue, and a short film accompanying the epilogue. To help pay for the composer's time, the **Norrbottn Chamber Orchestra** (Piteå, Sweden) and **Arctic Philharmonic** (Tromsø, Norway) stepped up. On 1–2 September, *The Earth, Spring's Daughter* (Eanan, *gida nieida*) was performed for the first time by **Virpi Räisänen** and the Lapland Chamber Orchestra under Storgårds in Rovaniemi and Inari.

Major work

The score is Tarkiainen's most ambitious to date. It took her a year and a half to write. But in a sense, it also set her free. She has a glint in her eye when she talks about it. It may not be her Opus 1 – there are varied, rich and fascinating works from the 31-year-old composer's pen that precede it. But the piece certainly seems like a milestone: a focusing of Tarkiainen's connection with the north and maybe, even, her coming of age as a composer.

Rather more tangible than those elements is Tarkiainen's passionate advocacy of Sami identity and culture. "The Sami minority has been in Lapland for thousands of years, before Finnish and Swedish people came and started to take taxes from them so they lost their land and almost lost their culture," she says. "That touches me. It gives me this fuel, this longing. The Sami are a minority voice and in a way I am too because I'm a woman in a world made for men. It's more complicated than that feminist statement of course, but I do feel united with the Sami."

At times, *The Earth, Spring's Daughter* speaks with a raw, natural voice. It also evokes a very particular landscape. "In one of the poems, which are strongly influenced by the Sami mythology, the earth is spring's daughter. So it's a story of a chain of powerful women down the generations who are bound by love and care and all the things that happen to them," Tarkiainen says. She painstakingly researched her texts (translating each word from Sami into Finnish to inform the way she



"The fact that I grew up in Lapland has affected my musical personality and my voice," says Outi Tarkiainen.

set each stanza), but perhaps more significant than that is the "feeling" of the north in her music: its brutality, beauty, adversity, longing and occasional sparseness.

You can hear some of these elements in the broad horizons and tectonic undertow of Tarkiainen's accordion work *...ja alkoivat laulaa* (...and they began to sing, 2015) and perhaps in the wind-blown textures of her solo violin piece *Kunnes kivi halkeaa* (Until the stone breaks, 2008). Since her decade writing for and working with jazz orchestras, her music has started to explore the earth more – its dark underbelly as well as its rhythmic surface. "The fact that I grew up in Lapland has affected my musical personality and my voice," she says. "Within me I have this fundamental longing for the northernmost regions, and it has to do with Romance as well. The bareness and the immensity of the Arctic, and the fine line of what is already too bare and too rough to live in. I guess somehow I see the best music almost as a force of nature, which can flood over a person and fill a person and even change entire destinies."

Music and theatre

There are elements of the creative life in Lapland that have shaped Tarkiainen's career as well. Rovaniemi's vibrant arts scene is big enough to encompass everything but opera yet small enough to foster unlikely partnerships. "I have ended up getting to know contemporary circus artists, puppet theatre people, visual artists – encountering them in a bigger city would have taken so much longer," she says. "Right now I'm planning a chamber opera in which one of the main roles will be

composed for a silent aerial acrobat."

There is, Tarkiainen claims, little chance she would have become involved in such a project without the exchange of ideas that Lapland's close-knit creative circle offers. But following her Sami song-cycle, expect her to move resolutely in the direction of opera. She cites **Alban Berg** as a huge influence in her composing life, an influence that her music's occasional pain and sure sense of longing reveals. "I saw Berg's opera *Lulu* when I was 25 and studying in London," she recalls. "I remember walking in the city that night for hours, thinking whether one can change one's life at such an old age – whether one can start to do something really different. I realised that music theatre can be so very powerful and thought about how many operas there were about powerful men. 'Suurmies' is the Finnish word for it but there's no equivalent word for a female who has done such things. So somehow I would like to make those powerful women rise up with an opera or a music theatre piece, one with a female voice."

Despite her outspoken comments, Tarkiainen speaks slowly and quietly – perhaps that northern pace of life is there in her voice and her politely conceived English. But I have met few composers so determined or so convinced that there is societal work to be done through music. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, it's just what the art form needs.

Andrew Mellor is a freelance journalist and critic with a particular interest in the music and creative life of Finland and the Nordic countries. He lives in Copenhagen and is a regular contributor to *FMQ*, *Gramophone*, *Klassisk*, *Opera Now*, *The Strad* and the *BBC's Record Review* show.

Collective resonance

It all started with the *ilimba*, the traditional thumb piano of the Wagogo people of central Tanzania. The sympathetic resonating system of the instrument caught the attention of **Nathan Riki Thomson**, an Australian musician who was living in Africa at the time. “The *ilimba* has a huge amount of natural resonance. When you play it, you feel the vibration right through your body,” Thomson explains in his current home country, Finland, almost 20 years later.

The resonant frequencies, harmonics and overtone series of the *ilimba* inspired Thomson to think about resonance as a musical and physical phenomenon. The notion of resonance then broadened to embrace community. “I started thinking about the concept of resonance as more to do with how people connect and how communities resonate or connect,” says Thomson. “How people coming from diverse cultural backgrounds find points of connection and dialogue, and how they find ways of communicating that result in a feeling of being connected.”

All these dimensions of resonance came together at Thomson’s doctoral recital “Resonance” at the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki in June 2016. He made buzzing attachments, other preparations

and tuning systems for his own instrument, the double bass, in order to enable the instrument to resonate in exceptional ways in some of the pieces, resembling for example the Brazilian instrument *berimbau*. In some of the other pieces, the entire hall resonated as sound waves emanated from the seats, producing a physical sensation and connecting the audience through the experience. Community resonance was represented for example by the presence of a dancer. Overall, the sense of resonance made listeners extremely receptive to the concert both aurally and physically.

Thomson is engaged in an artistic research project at the Sibelius Academy, where he is also a lecturer and programme leader for Global Music studies (GLOMAS). Thomson’s research investigates artistic identity and collaboration in a transcultural context. The study is divided into two parts, the first focusing on collaborative processes in the transcultural environment and the second, more personal, examining artistic identity in a transcultural environment.

Roots and inspiration

Born in Australia with family roots in England, Scotland and New Zealand, Nathan Riki Thomson took an

interest in questions of culture and musical identity from an early age. His first degree was in classical flute and jazz double bass. During these studies he started to question his cultural identity and connection to the music he was playing.

“I remember thinking: what is my music actually? What is my culture? I started to wonder about the factors needed in order to really feel connected to the music you are playing,” Thomson recalls.

Questions such as these are becoming relevant for an increasing number of people in our increasingly multicultural age. Any given person may have roots in more than one culture, and the environment in their place of residence may provide a further component to their identity, not to mention the global media.

For Thomson, the crucial turning point in finding his own path was the discovery of the great diversity of approaches to making music around the world. He began to learn traditional instruments and musical traditions during extensive periods spent travelling. His five years in Africa made a huge impact, with exposure to new forms of music-making and the diversity of traditions found even within each country.

“If you open yourself to try to understand someone

else’s perspective, you perhaps learn more about yourself than the world around you,” Thomson explains.

“In musical terms, this can result in some very interesting musical developments. This is nothing new either. Musicians have always been inspired by new sounds and been influenced by the world around them in different ways, if you think about musicians and composers starting to travel and being influenced by the different forms of musical expression they have come across, for example.”

At the same time, it is important to maintain contact with one’s own roots and culture, whatever that may mean to any given individual.

“When you meet another culture, you’re able somehow to share your experiences with somebody else and you’re able to absorb some of their influences and experiences. But it’s not about watering down a culture or losing any aspect of your own culture, it’s about having a strong connection to your roots and then being open to share your knowledge and experiences through engaging in a dialogue with other cultures.

“In my own music I’m drawing on different influences and things that have affected me as a musician and person so far. But I’m not trying to emulate another



Nathan Riki Thomson learned melodies from a young shepherd boy he met in Ethiopia in 1995.

culture or pretend that I'm from that culture. I'm using it as a source for inspiration and as a seed to develop my own voice," says Thomson.

Common ground for collaboration

Having settled in Finland, Thomson has quickly established himself on the folk and global music scene. In addition to his own ensembles, he currently plays with the bands **Ilkka Heinonen Trio**, **Mari Kalkun and Runorun** and **Subsonic Trio**, together with **Kristiina Ilmonen** and Brazilian percussionist **Adriano Adewale**, among others. His own most recent album, *Shaped by the Sea* (2013), features musicians from all over the world.

Thomson thus has plenty of first-hand experience of transcultural collaboration, one of the key themes of his research. He is interested in the specific tools that are needed for collaborative processes.

Such tools are needed not only for artistic creativity but also in arts-based community projects, such as the community engagement projects in schools and villages that Thomson was involved in during his time in Africa. He developed his ideas further in London, where he was a lecturer at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and led various projects in schools, hospitals and prisons, with homeless people and with asylum seekers.

"Music is a great vehicle to facilitate meetings and collaborations between people and between cultures," says Thomson. "I think the important aspect there is that it puts you on an equal level. You perhaps stop thinking of each other as being different or judging one culture against the next. Instead, you are on an equal platform where you can really feel inspired by each other and learn from one another."

Some common ground has to be built, of course, as the people involved may begin from completely different assumptions.

"The process of working on music together means that you develop some kind of common ground, shared meaning and shared ownership in what you are doing."

The feeling of home

The "Resonance" recital began with a piece entitled *Homeland*, for which Thomson had recorded the sounds of birds of his native Australia.

"These are the sounds I grew up with and therefore feel part of my cultural heritage," says Thomson. Natural sounds are an element that create a feeling of home.

In Australia, the natural environment is full of sounds; in Finland, Thomson hears nature in a different way. "I think the kind of the silence that exists in the nature here is very unique. Perhaps that sense of space and silence has a direct effect on the musical culture here," he suggests. "In Finland, I've noticed that people generally feel very strongly connected to the natural world. That is a very important part of the culture, and it

is somehow all reflected in the music as well."

In *Homeland*, the Australian birds were paired with a Finnish nightingale, a bit of Thomson's new homeland. Indeed, Thomson considers that the feeling of home is not only about nostalgia.

"There's more and more immigration and there are more and more people from mixed cultural heritages and second- and third-generation cultures. So the idea of connecting to home and the sense of belonging also changes," says Thomson. An increasing number of people are having to make their home in a new place, in a new musical environment.

"We all have things that are important to us, that we feel connected to from our homelands. But it's equally important that we start to create a new environment that we can feel connected to as well. And I think that's an important reflection for society in the time in which we live."

Merja Hottinen is a doctoral student in musicology at the University of Helsinki. She is currently on study leave from her position as Research and Development Manager at Music Finland.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi



Nathan Riki Thomson.

Rosie Reed Gold

Music as refuge



Pasi Tiitola

The **Global Music** Programme of the Sibelius Academy, in collaboration with Caisa Cultural Centre and music educator and doctoral researcher **Katja Thomson**, organised a music project with asylum seekers in Finland during spring 2016. The project included participants from Iraq, Iran and Syria, a singer from Greece and a group of students from the Sibelius Academy. Although they had no language in common, they made music together on the basis of melodies, rhythms and musical ideas brought in by the participants. The project culminated with a concert in April and will continue again in autumn 2016.

Nathan Riki Thomson reports that the weekly project meetings quickly became an important anchor point not just for the asylum seekers but for the other participants as well. "I noticed after a period of time that the act of having somewhere to meet regularly became a kind of sense of belonging somewhere. The music that we were making was important, but of equal importance was just the act of having somewhere, a moment to gather together on a regular basis," says Thomson.

"For me, this started creating a sense of belonging to something, and I think for other members of the group as well: this feeling like you have something you can connect with, you have somewhere you can belong. In a way, that's a sense of home as well."

This GLOMAS project was one of many to have emerged in Finland after the huge influx of asylum seekers in 2015. Another major project is "Encounters – Kohtaamisia", run by the Uulu cultural cooperative and

funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation. This project offers opportunities for the majority population and the residents of reception centres to meet in the context of the arts.

"Children are a key target group, being offered music playschool or music workshops. Asylum-seeker children enjoy these sessions very much and are enthusiastic about any opportunity to make music or to play," says project leader **Petra Käppi**. "The children come from broken backgrounds, and many of them are attending school for the first time ever or after a long break. They have also had very limited opportunities for playing games or making music," she says.

Käppi reports that the children are open to new things and are accustomed to learning something new every day in Finland. Both the children and the other project participants are being introduced to Finnish traditional instruments, but the main point is not to saddle them with a Finnish identity. "However, I do believe that Finnish music is expressive enough to communicate something about Finland and what it is to be Finnish," says Käppi.

The main thing is to make opportunities for encounters. "The power of music is that it can bring people together for a moment and establish contact between them even if they don't speak a common language. We can share profound experiences and deep feelings even if we can't understand a word of what the other person is saying," says Käppi.

Susanna Mälkki began her three-year appointment as Chief Conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra this autumn. We asked her about the themes of her first HPO year and her thoughts about links between music and the cultural environment.

BY HANNA ISOLAMMI

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Spaces and pigeonholes

“I’d like the themes I’ve selected to show just how universal music is. When we focus on a specific idiom in depth, it broadens the expressive palette of the orchestra enormously, and the connections between works are also highlighted.

“I chose ‘French’ as one of the themes for my first year for a variety of reasons, perhaps above all because I felt I could start by bringing that kind of knowledge with me, since I’ve been assimilating that atmosphere for quite some time now,” **Susanna Mälkki** says.

In addition to Finnish and French music, the **Helsinki Philharmonic** will be performing a lot of Russian music. Mälkki considers it equally important to perform core repertoire at concerts, and Russian repertoire is one of the traditional strengths of the orchestra.

Musical atmospheres and cultural spaces

Space – sound in space – was an element in all music in some way. A concrete example of this is **Ligeti’s** *Atmosphères*, which was performed at the first concert of the season. Mälkki considers it the first musical work of the space age. However, the term “space” can be understood in multiple ways.

Another theme of this year, Orientalism in music, also has to do with musical atmosphere. Mälkki describes this trend as the manifestation of a longing for far-off places, which is universal to the human spirit. Music serves to bring the sights and sounds of an exotic land to the listener. “I’m fascinated by the way a partic-

ular sound can transport an entire world with it, in the same way as smells can,” says Mälkki.

Mälkki refers to language in discussing the possibility of sensing a specific cultural environment in music: “In a large enough sample and with sufficient generalisation, it may indeed be possible to sense in the music the environment in which it was created. But this begs the question: does culture shape language, or does language shape culture?” It is known that the structure of a person’s native language influences the way they think, and by extension a composer’s idiom is likely to embed indications of their native language. “It gets particularly interesting when we consider exactly what features in the music create contrasts. In this, every creative artist is in a way a pathfinder for his or her ideas, irrespective of their cultural background,” notes Mälkki.

A composer’s native musical language and the environment in which they grow up naturally have a bearing on his or her expression. “The music that people write in a land where Christmas carols are melancholic is very different from that of a land with salsa rhythms. It’s only natural. The typically broad horizons of Finnish music may have something to do with the slow shifting of seasons or our wide open spaces,” says Mälkki. “It’s just as well that we have the music, so that we don’t need to explain this in words!”

Having said that, Mälkki notes that all good music includes both elements typical of the composer’s culture and other influences, but above all depends on



Stefan Bremer

the composer’s personality and what he or she wants to express. “I have found, though, that the music of many Finnish composers ultimately turns to sweeping arcs, broad horizons and an ‘epic’ quality, whatever that is. With great heaviness comes great hidden power.” French music, by contrast, is typically seen as being light on thematic work and very much about rich tonal colour and tiny details. “But we should remember that there are dark colours under the surface in French music too; they just manifest themselves in very different ways,” Mälkki points out.

Territories and pigeonholes

When the programme of the Helsinki Philharmonic for this season was published in the spring, several writers commented that the orchestra’s profile was drifting closer to that of the other major Helsinki orchestra, the **Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra**; the common perception is that the FRSO, on average, performs repertoire that is newer. Mälkki dispels the notion.

“The Helsinki Philharmonic has always performed more contemporary music than people think. Both **Leif Segerstam** and **John Storgårds** brought in a lot of interesting music according to their respective tastes. It’s more about styles and aesthetic than the dates when particular pieces were written,” she explains. “It is true that the Helsinki Philharmonic hasn’t performed as much early 20th-century repertoire recently as it used to, but our repertoire shift is part of a bigger pic-

ture than the scene in Helsinki and the FRSO: as far as I know, no Finnish orchestra has previously planned a thematic framework for an entire season.”

Susanna Mälkki says it is understandable that the media creates and maintains profiles for performing artists and orchestras: “There is a tendency to pigeon-hole people for easy reference. This is restrictive, because it blurs a deeper understanding of music as a grand continuum extending through the centuries,” she says.

How the profile of a performing artist is established has much to do with his or her first engagements and their location, the desires and circumstances of his or her partners, and the context of concerts and rehearsals. “For myself, contemporary music was the genre in which I found my first professional opportunities in Finland, and this ‘labelled’ me in a way that has been difficult to shake off... perhaps this made me more acceptable, though, since as a woman in this profession I was a marginal sort of person anyway,” says Mälkki.

In appointing Mälkki Chief Conductor, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra has demonstrated that it was able to disregard the contemporary label. “It’s an unprejudiced orchestra that can see beyond appearances. There are wonderful years ahead,” Mälkki says happily.

Hanna Isolammi is the editor of FMQ and a freelance writer.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

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The North in music

Outi Tarkiainen (Finland)

Composer

Within me I have this fundamental longing for the northernmost regions. One of the driving forces in my creative work is the feeling of missing or belonging to somewhere where I'm not. I wrote a recent piece mostly in Paris and Berlin; I was sitting on my balcony, thinking of somewhere 3,000km north. Of course I enjoy being in bigger cities and feel the need of getting new cultural impulses from them frequently. But if you are from Lapland, you have a heart for it. There is even a saying in Finnish: Lapland goes into the man but won't go out from him.

One Finnish-Swedish writer said that a person who is living in a remote place might meet 2,000 people in his or her life, but that he or she has a picture and memory from each of them. In a big city you might meet 2,000 people every day, but you don't really know anything about them. In a sense, it's the same, creatively speaking, in the north: artists meet each other and are curious to do things together. The possibilities are there.

In Rovaniemi, where I live right now, the response from audiences is really genuine because the audience members aren't so full of different impulses. Their reactions to new music are much more open; they are curious to listen. That's quite rewarding but also something that can be thought about when composing.

David Harrington (USA)

Founder, artistic director and violinist, Kronos Quartet

In some ways, the Nordic region reminds me of Australia: there's an ability to look at what's going on in the rest of the world and be far enough away from the hub-bub to internalise things.

I remember the first time **Kronos** went to Australia; I was doing interviews and these journalists knew more about American music than anybody in America! They could see it – all the ins and outs. I feel something like that happens in the Nordic region as well; there's a clarity, and there seems to be time for thinking and absorbing. Does it have to do with the fact that in the winter it's dark for longer than it is elsewhere? Perhaps.

The music of the north has that sense of clarity too, as well as purity and passion. I don't know if it's being cooped up inside all winter; perhaps that makes you want to release all kinds of wildness. Maybe it's the light; maybe it's the northern lights. I don't know. But I can hear this remarkable clarity and passion in the works written for Kronos by **Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen**, **Aulis Sallinen**, **Kaija Saariaho**, **Jan Mortenson**, **Cecilie Ore**, **Kimmo Pohjonen**, and **Karin Rehnqvist**, as well as groups whose music we have played such as **Sigur Rós** and **Triakel**.



Outi Tarkiainen.



Kronos Quartet, David Harrington
second from right.



Adam Johnson / Brockit Inc

Sara Pajunen.

Sara Pajunen (USA/Finland)

Violinist, Aallotar duo

The idea of the closeness to nature lives on very strongly in the Nordic region. It is a way of living I'm really drawn to, that speaks to me and works well for me artistically. The climate – the sunlight, or lack of sunlight, or just the way the sky is – feels different to where I'm from, and especially different to other places I've lived in or travelled to. Nature and climate affect cultural mentality and the way people act socially.

For me, the nature of the north is about openness; you can hear the sounds of the natural world, and you can find a sense of peace, beauty and order in that. In Finland, it lives inside the culture. It lives in all humans, for sure, but I don't sense it in Minnesota or anywhere else in the US as I sense it in Finland. Finns have always lived with a reverence for the land, and as we know, it takes a very, very long time for change to take place over generations – within the same culture and even in displacement. Hopefully this is a change that will never take place, and Finns will always hold nature close.

Also, because Finland is so extremely northern, there is much darkness and much light. One goes to darker places when it's darker. We have to do something to take care of ourselves in dark places. Does creativity come from darkness? Heal or help darkness? A lot of powerful work comes out of that cycle; it mimics the

manic-depressive cycle that a lot of artists have, their ups and downs. I can't imagine living in a place near the equator where there's the same amount of light. There's nothing to respond to. I am, however, made of mostly Finnish blood, and perhaps that influences my preferences and way of being in the world!

Annika Lindskog (Sweden)

Lecturer, Department of Scandinavian Studies, University College London

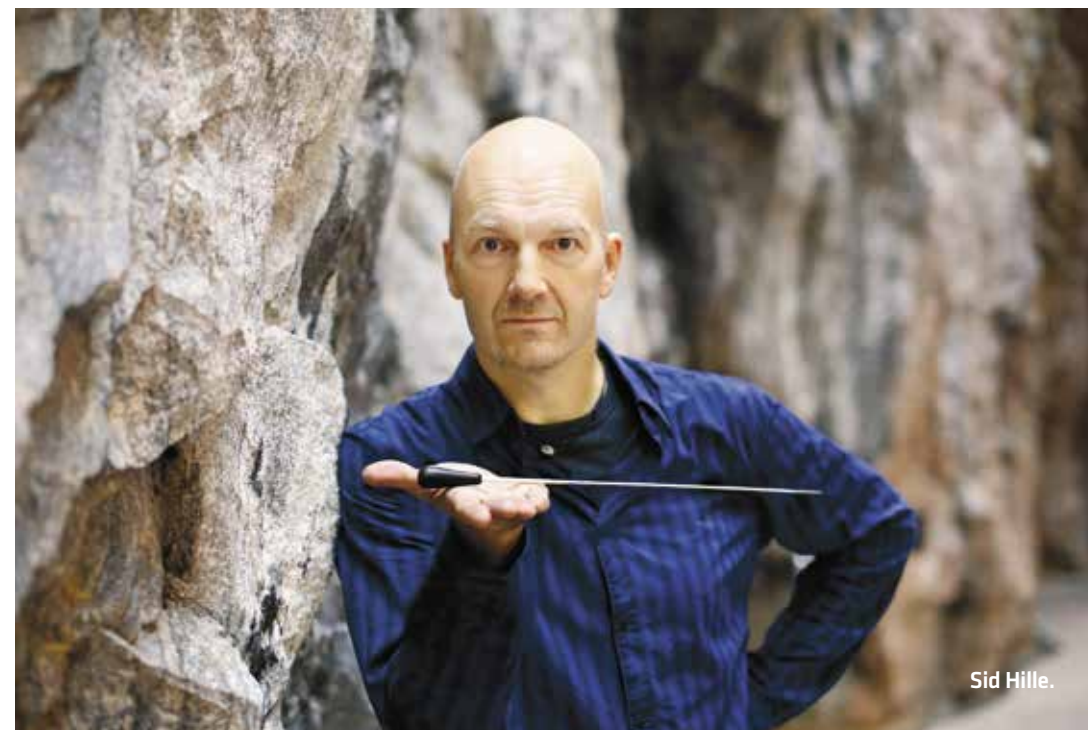
On one level, I don't feel there's anything tangible that indicates there's more creativity the further north you go. But then, I do think that surrounding geography and climate can somehow influence what comes out of the creative process.

Communication has changed things. As the world develops we get closer and closer to each other, which has certainly had an effect on the north of Finland and Sweden. You no longer have to go to Helsinki or Stockholm to see an opera; there are institutions in the northern regions that can train musicians who might once have had to travel to Germany. Sweden's prowess in popular music might have come from the "study circles", where the state would give small groups money



Christopher Williams

Annika Lindskog.



Maarit Kyöharju

Sid Hille.

to hire a space and instruments. Perhaps in Finland the choral tradition has done the same: involving a vast number of people in music-making and creating a base from which people can go and develop talent further.

Audiences listen in different ways. I lived for a time in rural Wales; a guy used to invite bands he knew down from London – it was the only live music around. I listened to an awful lot of music that I would never have sought out myself. That process has implications in rural communities where there isn't much music around. The audience becomes conditioned. If you're in a dense urban area you can be selective about what you listen to; if you play music in a rural place where people just come to listen because it's happening, you get a much more direct approach to it, and also a much less prejudiced one. People come because it's the only thing there; *ergo* they get subjected to a greater variety of music. That in itself will become a fuel to more creativity in new directions.

Sid Hille (Germany/Finland)

Composer, pianist, conductor

I have always been interested in silence – in particular the silence of the mind, the ongoing turnover of thoughts. I first went to Lapland in the winter of 1995.

I was in the middle of the forest, where the snow was reflecting what little light there was, and there was a complete and utter silence. I think it's a fantastic phenomenon and I cannot imagine that it does not influence a person. I think the further north you go, the more you become aware of it.

That has certainly influenced my music. In the Rock Church in Helsinki where I give regular recitals, you can make a slight sound and it can fill a whole space; then you leave that sound and let it drift back into silence. So this dialogue between even little sounds and the all-encompassing silence becomes more pronounced.

One element that feels so different to me, a German, is the Finns' pride in their own cultural roots – perhaps that comes from the Finnish struggle for independence from Russia, when culture played a big role in creating the Finnish identity. It seems that people are allowed to be proud of their traditions and nationality; people don't like to make a fuss about themselves but they can say "Finland is great", whereas in Germany it's the other way around. I think that's a healthy attitude, because you accept your roots; you can use them and explore their musical traditions and it's OK.

See also Andrew Mellor's review of Silence Festival (Lapland) on the FMQ website.

Radiopuhelimet has been performing “rural rock music” in Finnish for three decades. The visions embraced by the band are realistic, sometimes repellently so. Vocalist J.A. Mäki remarks that, even though human-kind deserves it, nature does not take revenge. Nature merely is.

BY JANNIE FLINKKILÄ

Natural born preachers

A woman offends the Lord of the Forest and comes to a bad end. That, in a nutshell, is the narrative of the song “Tapio”, named after the pre-Christian Finnish god of the forest. The band Radiopuhelimet (“Radio telephones”) released this song, written by their guitarist Jarno Mällinen, on the album K.O. in 1990, and it is still one of the most frequently requested songs whenever the band is performing live.

Although Radiopuhelimet perform in Finnish, their music exudes a raw power that carries beyond the language barrier. Over a 30-year career, this cult band has packed itself into vans to tour locations as diverse as Petrozavodsk and Berlin. Founded in the city of Oulu at the far end of the Gulf of Bothnia in 1986, the band presents a fascinating blend of urban and rural psyches: the respect of city boys for the forces of nature on the one hand and a detached observation of the madness of the world from the sanctity of nature on the other.

Blues from the woods

Radiopuhelimet released their 14th album, *Saastan kaipuu* (Longing for filth), in June 2016. The band has always had a whiff of high-octane petrol fumes around it, much in the vein of Detroit-based bands such as The Stooges, its heartbeat attuned to Motown on overdrive. But these urban influences are only one side of the coin. It is equally easy to imagine the manic fury of

the music of Radiopuhelimet as stemming from the fierce Arctic natural environment. Drummer Jyrki Raatikainen lays down an apocalyptic groove over which vocalist J.A. Mäki holds forth with the intensity of a lay preacher. His lyrics often address nature and how human beings relate to it.

“I don’t know if we’re about bricks or bogs. We’re about both. And when you go back far enough to the roots of music, it’s all about earth and jungle,” says Mäki, the vocalist and one of two principal lyricists in the band.

Mäki identifies the roots of his music-making as going back to blues in particular. For him, blues is not a museum exhibit or a chord sequence; it is timeless core music. Therefore, it is in a way the genre of popular music that is the closest to nature. The austere appearance of blues is touching because it conceals universal themes.

“The fate of a person, the fate of a community, the fate of a nation. Their relationship to the world around them and to the inner world of the singer and/or the narrator of the song. The life of a little person, the life of a nation,” Mäki explains.

When Mäki begins to write lyrics on these ageless themes, the story or its setting often turns to nature almost of its own accord. “Nature provides all kinds of inspiration. A walk in the woods actually brightens the



Toni Palsi

Radiopuhelimet on an acoustic gig.

mind, prompts ideas and sets moods. But nature is not just about woods, bogs and countryside. Nature is all around us, and inside us too,” says Mäki.

The nature of human beings

The lyrics of Radiopuhelimet are not just about nature at large but about human nature too. Their songs contain strident criticism of the consumer society and point to the power of nature as opposed to the insignificance of a human being. For myself, one of the most memorable moments was something that Mäki said in an introduction at a Radiopuhelimet gig a dozen years ago. It should be carved in stone and set up somewhere: “People say that nature takes revenge. Nature doesn’t take revenge. Nature reacts.” Today, Mäki puts it even more succinctly: nature is. No matter what happens to humankind over time.

Mäki’s relationship to nature developed as an emotional bond in childhood, but a rational bond has since emerged to complement it. The more he has learnt about the destruction of nature, the more his rational mind has begun to clamour for its protection. On the other hand, humankind has set up the very concept of intelligence as a weapon for defending its own supremacy over all other species.

“By this self-defined intelligence, humans justify harnessing nature to serve us, the superior beings. There is a tragic contradiction here. Much of what humans perpetrate is utterly unintelligent. There is no other species on this planet that wreaks so much destruction as to gradually destroy its own living environment.”

Mäki emphasises that when he writes about humans, he of course identifies himself as a member of the species. His lyrics thus have a broad streak of self-irony.

Finnish landscapes, nevertheless

Notwithstanding all of the above, the lyrics of Radiopuhelimet are not all about the destruction of nature, the end of the world and the decline of humankind. They are also about a sacred beauty that humans do not always appreciate. For all its aggression, the band’s music may also be heard to embody natural forces: the brooding air before a cleansing thunderstorm, the roaring of waves breaking against a rocky skerry, the clamour of male capercaillies engaged in a territorial dispute.

The natural imagery in Mäki’s lyrics is frequently based on personal experiences. He often sees his lyrics as images in his mind when writing. What does he think about if he wants to see something beautiful? “Just now, on this summer evening: a sunlit, windswept rocky shore in the Archipelago Sea. The sea is fragrant and stretches out to the horizon far away, a seagull cries and flies on, the eternal rock is warm underfoot.”

Janne Flinkkilä is a freelance journalist and cultural management entrepreneur from Helsinki. Whenever he needs to clear his head, he takes a long bike trip into the woods of Central Park. At a lakeside summer cottage he doesn’t listen to any music at all – except the steady old tinnitus beeping in his ears. Seeing some bands like Radiopuhelimet live quite a few times might have something to do with it.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

10 Finnish songs about and inspired by nature

BY MATTI NIVES

Mopo: “Luonto Kutsuu”

from the album *Beibe*, Texicalli Records 2014

As a very organic jazz trio at heart, it's fitting that **Mopo** should take a stand to defend all things natural. According to band members **Linda Fredriksson**, **Eero Tikkanen** and **Eeti Nieminen**, this track has been inspired by the widespread maltreatment of much of the nature and wildlife around. The composition itself is a haunting tribute to the voiceless victims of human indifference. Just listen to Fredriksson's sax take the melodic lead early on in a fittingly melancholy fashion against the surprising backdrop of the Jew's harp.

Flame Jazz Messengers: “No Blue-Green Alga, Please”

from the album *Port Arthur*, Fredriksson Music 2016

Flame Jazz Messengers is a fresh jazz act on the Finnish musical map and on its new album, *Port Arthur*, the group takes things on to a nautical level. The commentary here is pretty straightforward, addressing the ominously rising stock of the blue-green algae on the Baltic Sea. The Flame Jazz Messengers ensemble is led by drummer-composer (on other occasions also pianist) **Jussi Fredriksson** and vibraphonist **Severi Pysälo**.

Lau Nau: “Painovoimaa, valoa”

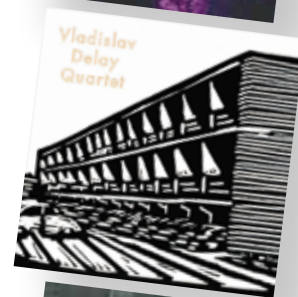
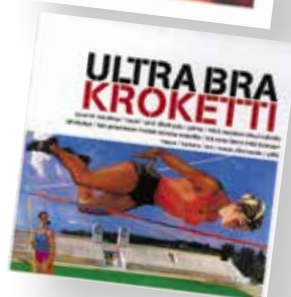
from the album *Nukkuu*, Fonal Records 2008

A delightfully abstract take on the natural elements surrounding us, namely gravity and light. **Lau Nau** (aka **Laura Naukkarinen**) is one of the leading artists in the so-called “forest folk” movement to come out of Finland during the late 2000s thanks to Tampere's Fonal Records. Many of her tracks sound as if they are sonic extensions of the nature surrounding us, even without addressing creatures or elements of nature as such.

Ultra Bra: “Hauki”

from the album *Kroketti*, Johanna kustannus 1997

“Hauki (the pike) is a happy fish with a flat head”, sing the generation-defining polit-pop group **Ultra Bra** on their 1997 release *Kroketti*. What's more, they ensure that the fish will be awarded at the “National Fish Convention”. Lest we forget: the pike is a predator with 700+ teeth ready to attack everything in sight, but maybe the particular fish here is a more benign fellow than most of its mates seem to be.



The Mystic Revelation of Teppo Repo: “Paimen kohtaa suden”

from the album *The Mystic Revelation of Teppo Repo*, Helmi Levyt 2014

The wolf is a somewhat mythological creature in Finland – and also one inspiring heated debate – especially along the eastern border towards the northern parts of the country. **The Mystic Revelation of Teppo Repo** is an ensemble that mines the archives to draw inspiration from the shepherd/musician **Teppo Repo**. In this episode, “Paimen kohtaa suden”, the shepherd meets the wolf – in a dub kind of musical surroundings.

Iro Haarla: “Persevering the Winter”

from the album *Ante Lucem*, ECM 2016

Composer/pianist/harpist **Iro Haarla** touches on one of the key issues for any northern nation on this composition, released on the famed ECM Records on the brand new album *Ante Lucem*. Of the track, Haarla says: “It is an allegory for the long winter season in the north and its different atmospheres. It is a time of hibernation, a long period of darkness and clear, frosty days with snow-covered landscapes. The northern winds sweep mercilessly over the horizon. Life in the forest continues silently and nature will survive.” See also the review of *Ante Lucem* on page 64.

Hurjat Silmät: “Kissa”

from the album *Hurjat Silmät*, El Camino Records 2014

The awe-inspiring children's duo **Hurjat Silmät** (“Wild Eyes”) sing about a cat “whose name is Goethe Mopo Aurinko (Goethe Moped Sun) and whose real name is Matroskin”. Apparently it is a special kind of cat because it is “cute, friendly, purring and cute”. A wonderful tribute to an apparently equally wonderful animal from the domestic end of the local fauna.

Vladislav Delay: “Minus Degrees, Bare Feet, Tickles”

from the album *Vladislav Delay Quartet*, Honest Jon's 2011

Vladislav Delay, aka **Sasu Ripatti**, leads his quartet through an abstract reading of what is a familiar situation to most northern inhabitants. This track, bordering on a genre which some might call “electronic noise”, literally feels like walking on frosty ice. Yes, it tickles. Like this.

Puunhalaaja: “Päivänkakkaroita”

from the album *Puunhalaaja*, Soliti Records 2015

The singer-songwriter **Puunhalaaja** (“Tree Hugger”) sings about a lei made of daisies and the mood here seems to be of an oddly perfect, lazy and mosquito-free sunny day. Everything is slightly askew, just in the right way. The dewy grass makes toes slightly wet. (Actually he seems to be singing about a failed relationship but, if you're not hip to the language, just better think about daisies as you listen to this fine piece of modern Finnish folkish indie pop.)

Pekka Streng: “Puutarhassa”

from the album *Kesämaa*, Love Records 1972

The primal work of Finnish hippie folk-jazz, “Puutarhassa” (“In the Garden”) paints an intricate and mysterious image of a thriving garden and its dwellers. The key line is “Roope-Hattu kertoo niille tarinoita / sillä kukat ovat hyviä kuuntelijoita”, which basically tells you that flowers are really good listeners so you can read them stories. Complete with bird whistles, “Puutarhassa” is a loving, colourful portrait of where nature meets the household. The classic album (*Kesämaa* is Finnish for “Summer Land”) also includes several other tributes to lovely things found in and around nature. Fun fact: “Puutarhassa” was the first track ever to be aired on Radio Helsinki, back in 2001.

Taking Note

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Naturally good music

BY JUHA TORVINEN

A while ago I had a conversation with a scholar who specialised in environmental issues. Our chat touched upon bands and artists like Finnish *Hexvessel*, with eco-agendas encompassing everything they do, ranging from music, lyrics and album covers to promotional texts and imagery. My associate considered such extravagant environmentalism a bit dubious. He saw it as musical greenwashing with mostly commercial aims and having little to do with an ecologically critical ethos.

This made me think once more about criteria for evaluating music in the context of nature and environmental concerns: what and how an environmentally critical piece of music really is.

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Nature is one of the most common themes in music of all ages. Music's relationship to our environment, broadly understood, is discussed in many ancient literary documents. The physical vibrations of music connect us concretely to our immediate surroundings. Even views that focus on music as pure sound and abstract structures often compare music to natural, organic processes.

Music can create an experience of being at one with nature, its course and dynamics. Think about **John Luther Adams's** *Become Ocean* (2013), for example. **Anna Thorvaldsdóttir** from Iceland lets natural processes, spaces and scales direct her compositional principles on a subtle and detailed level. Music can also remind us how natural phenomena have long formed

focal points for human cultures. This can be heard in **Kalevi Aho's** concerto for percussion and orchestra *Sieidi* (2010; "sieidi" means a Sami sacrificial stone).

There is, of course, lots of music with explicit environmentally critical messages. Metal band **Stamina's** record *Viimeinen Atlantis (The Last Atlantis, 2000)* or *Kaksi astetta (Two Degrees)*, a project by **Jaakko** and **Pekka Kuusisto** with the *Rajatön a cappella* ensemble (recorded in 2014), are just two Finnish examples. Furthermore, many music festivals are based in specific natural environments, forming what could be described as institutional negotiations of our relationship with nature (see the article on pp. 30-33).

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This list is far from comprehensive. Common to all of its categories is that they are not strictly about musical depictions of nature. Surely music can depict nature (or anything), but a representation of something means that this something as such is at the same time absent. This is why depicting natural phenomena does not automatically make music environmental in an ecocritical sense.

But let's not go to the other extreme, either. According to the principles of Modernism, musical innovations are comparable with or even superior to any other form of rational thought precisely because they express human logical faculties in a pure form and without contaminating "extra-musical" contents. This comes close to the idea of absolute music. However, if music existed "absolutely" or "purely" we wouldn't even know about

"Music's close relationship to nature can be seen precisely in the ways it alters and affects our relationship to the diversity of our surrounding world – and not only to itself or myself."

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its existence, because as an "absolute" phenomenon it has nothing to do with our socio-historically conditioned conceptions and perceptions.

In the context of current environmental concerns and against the backdrop of the long relationship between music and nature, a Modernist-Absolutist tenet strikes me as a relatively inconsiderate and eco-insensitive attitude. Modernist music (I'm not saying Modernist composers or musicians) suggests a world-view according to which one should not care about anything outside one's own realm. Old-school Modernism is, for good or ill, the most anthropocentric aesthetic that exists in music history.

Seeing music as something meant for delivering a message that is related only to its own sounding forms comes close to the idea of seeing too obvious an environmental message in music as a drawback. Both views imply that music becomes inferior if it does not require special skills or experience to be understood. Both views ultimately suggest that good music should be reserved for those who know how to decode its hidden messages, whether they be structural, environmental or whatever. Music becomes modern-day *musica reservata*; there is good music and there is bad music, and only few of us happen to know how to make the distinction.



Heikki Polonen

No composition can have a true environmental effect if its reception is essentially restricted from the start. No composition can influence our view of nature unless it manages to create an interesting and captivating musical experience and can make conceptual sense in the context of nature without alienating us from it.

How about letting nature decide what kind of music is environmentally bad and what is good? This isn't as mystical as it may sound. In the light of the long and close relationship between music and nature this is actually

much less otherworldly than the still common use of the completely speculative (i.e. mystical) term "absolute music".

The term "nature" derives from the Greek *physis*. *Physis* does not denote a collection of things around us but the *way* things appear. Music's close relationship to nature can be seen precisely in the ways it alters and affects our relationship to the diversity of our surrounding world – and not only to itself or myself. In the end, what does it matter if a composition is guilty of "greenwashing" or touches large audiences, as long as it brings about heightened eco-sensitivity?

Juha Torvinen is a PhD, Docent (Habilitation) and Academy of Finland Research Fellow specialising in ecomusicology.

See also Torvinen's article *All hear the holy nature* (FMQ 1/2013).

In Finland, dozens of music events with strong connections to nature are organised each summer. Nature itself seems to form an integral part of a successful festival experience at these events. We discussed with music researchers Merja Hottinen and Juha Torvinen the relationships between nature, the environment, music and listening experiences.

BY HEIDI HORILA

Nature's concert halls

The **alternative** and underground H2Ö Festival, organised in Turku for the third consecutive year this summer, made the old Ruissalo docklands bloom with a rough and warm industrial look: organic surfaces, shapes and materials met the hard and metallic infrastructure that oozes with the shipyard's history, through both music and the general look and feel of the festival area. The edgy lighting design brought life to the weathered industrial cranes in the darkening late July nights, with the sea undulating in the background.

Finnish classical and contemporary art music events instead have often chosen natural environments over urban spaces as event venues. What comes to mind when you think of such events as the Kuhmo Chamber Music, Luosto Classic or Naantali Music festivals? Forests, mountains, the sea and the archipelago are strong contributors to the mental image we have of these events.

There has been a long drive to extend classical and contemporary art music event venues beyond natural

environments and to include other places where such music has usually not been heard. Concerts at the Viitasaari Time of Music or Kuhmo Chamber Music festivals, for example, have been organised not only in nature, but also on the front stairs of houses, in libraries and courtyards where audiences have to make do with the number of chairs that happen to be available, and where many other elements of traditional concert etiquette have been absent as well.

The undeniable significance of nature

In their promotional and marketing copy, classical and contemporary art music festivals most often describe the relationship between nature and music as a particularly positive factor which strengthens the overall musical experience. The distance from growth centres and their busy lifestyle is emphasised.

Merja Hottinen is currently working on her doctoral research on the cultural meanings of contemporary music events in Finland, and one of her case stud-

ies is the Time of Music Festival, which has been organised since the early 1980s. The undeniable significance of nature as part of the festival is clear in the articles written about the event as well as in the verbal recollections of festival organisers, performers and audiences.

"International guest composers are infatuated with the scenery and the light, a journalist reminisces about picking wild mushrooms in the forest with **John Cage**, and the municipality of Viitasaari uses nature as a drawcard for tourists, advertising local fishing and kayaking opportunities in the festival brochure," Hottinen says as she describes some of her research material.

However, mental images of the wonders of nature can sometimes be in stark contrast with the real-life circumstances, where it is often rainy or windy and people get cold or bitten by mosquitoes, although these experiences hardly ever get a mention. Hottinen sees the Time of Music Festival as an interesting example of how the theme of nature can comfortably be associated with other kinds of mental images as well.

"The juxtaposition is formed through the extremely urban and modernistic image of contemporary music, and this is a big part of the rhetoric surrounding the festival. In participant feedback, however, the relationship to nature never comes across as problematic or conflicting, with everyone agreeing on the special significance of nature for the event," Hottinen explains.

Ecocritical listening

As a researcher, **Juha Torvinen** has explored ecomusicology, and especially the music cultures of the North. In Finland, the relatively new discipline of ecomusicology draws from ecocritical literature, reflecting on the relationships between music and different environments.

Torvinen feels that the act of listening is always loaded with particular meanings, and thus the listening environment plays a big role.

"Playing and listening to music in the midst of nature has a sneaky power to influence one's environmental



Salla Hakkola's Harp Rally at the Viitasaari Time of Music Festival in 2013.

awareness as well, and festivals organised in certain environments offer a certain listening perspective,” he says.

It is also significant if the new contemporary music work receiving its premiere has been composed with a particular natural environment in mind, and is performed there. Torvinen cites Kalevi Aho's *Symphony No. 12 “Luosto”* (2002–2003) as an example of a work which is an environmental art work in itself.

“It is designed to be performed on each of the four sides of a mountain – and of course the work sounds very different and unique there, compared to a performance in a concert hall. The mountain's acoustics form an independent element of the work,” Torvinen states.

Nature – a rare luxury

Local audiences and festival guests experience musical events from distinctly different viewpoints. While the mountains or rapids in Kainuu or Lapland are a part of everyday life for the locals, seeing and experi-

encing a symphony orchestra may be a completely new and exciting event for them. For festival guests and musicians, the local nature is an experience in itself, and international visitors can see Finland and Finnish nature as something alien and different, even exotic.

“Festival organisers' tendency to stage events in the midst of nature has a certain element of mystification or escapism. While the actual concerts are enjoyed in a natural environment, guests can be accommodated in four-star hotels. There is nothing wrong with that per se, but it may be that an experience of nature is not the essential element in that package,” Torvinen muses.

He sees a lot of positives in bringing art to the people. There is no need always to rely on “sacred” places, such as churches or concert halls, to be able to experience art. “It is important to dust off the traditions of the canon. This gradually helps music to gain a wider range of associations, beyond the old conformities,” Torvinen continues.

A Luosto Classic concert venue on Ukko-Luosto fell.



Pianist-composer Kalle Vainio gave pop-up concerts at various locations around Viitasaari in 2016.

With ample amounts of music offerings and events to choose from, the competition for audiences is stiff. Festivals have to come up with distinct profiles and find their unique directions. One of the reasons behind the strong presence of nature in festival profiling is the fact that it is otherwise hard to market the small towns they are organised in. The Finnish summer is short, and the proximity and presence of nature is a part of a brand that benefits the whole local community.

“Unless you are in London or another great metropolis, you really have to work those features and attractions that are readily available. Even if it means sitting in a concert in the pouring rain, that very concert may well stick in listeners' minds as a particularly memorable event – for Finnish and international audiences alike,” Hottinen says.

Heidi Horila is a Turku-based freelance journalist and critic who operates in the middle ground between art and culture.

Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham

Music is known to have a physical and psychological – and not just aesthetic and emotional – effect on us. But why is this so? This is one of the key questions in genetic and brain research on music.

BY HANNA ISOLAMMI

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Music in our nature

Music has an effect on the vast majority of people. Just listening to music is known to cause widespread activity in the brain, and actively practising music can shape the functioning and even the structures of the brain. The effects of music have been studied in brain research increasingly systematically since the 1990s. “The brain research on music undertaken in Finland is groundbreaking even in the international context,” says Professor **Mari Tervaniemi**, Head of the Brain and Music Team at the University of Helsinki. This network, formed by the University of Helsinki, the Helsinki and Uusimaa Hospital District (HUS), the University of Turku, Turku University Hospital and the University of Jyväskylä, specialises in brain research on music.

The early stages of the research in the 1990s focused on how musical sounds are processed in the brains of healthy adult individuals. The measurable positive effects noted in brain scans inspired the researchers to study how music is used for instance in the treatment and rehabilitation of stroke patients. Today, the brain research on music undertaken in Finland focuses on ageing people with memory disorders and patients with brain damage on the one hand, and healthy children and adults actively engaged in music on the other. The effects of listening to music are also still being studied.

Alongside brain research, genomics research on music got off to a flying start in the early 2000s. Fin-

land is at the cutting edge in this field too, thanks to a multi-discipline research group formed by the Sibelius Academy, the University of Helsinki and Aalto University. Musical aptitude, music evolution and the effect of music on human beings can be empirically studied through genomics research. The studies published by the group have for the first time ever shown proof that musical aptitude is inherited and that listening to and performing music have an effect on human gene expression profiles. This reinforces the biological foundation of the findings of studies that model brain functions – for instance the findings that there are measurable differences in function and structure between the brains of musicians and non-musicians.

Playing for the brain

Playing music is an almost incomprehensibly complex undertaking. It requires several senses working together, a feel for detail, fine motor precision, impeccable timing, learning, remembering and emotional input – all skills that are activated when making music. Engaging in music “exercises” the brain across a wide spectrum, and its by-product is the strengthening of other cognitive skills such as spatial or linguistic orientation. Making music also improves motor skills, observation skills and memory.

In 2003 the Cognitive Brain Research Unit at the



The brain research team investigates how this girl's brain reacts to music while she's concentrating on something else.

University of Helsinki embarked on an exceptionally lengthy monitoring study on the effect of music as a hobby on children's brains. “We're monitoring several groups of children who took up music at the age of seven. The oldest of them are in their twenties now,” says Mari Tervaniemi. “With such a long perspective, we can examine in detail how the learning of music shows up in the brain or, say, how having music as a hobby affects career choices. For me, this is the most fascinating study currently in progress at our unit,” she says.

“Making music causes plastic changes in the brain, especially in areas of key importance for making music such as the auditory cortex, frontal lobe, motor cortex and the corpus callosum,” writes Mari Tervaniemi's colleague **Teppo Särkämö** from the Cognitive Brain Research Unit at the University of Helsinki. Having music as a hobby would appear to support a child's development in a number of areas. “Although this study concerns children and adolescents, taking up music in adulthood has very similar effects,” Tervaniemi points out.

In addition to the long-term monitoring study, Tervaniemi's study groups are engaged in shorter, intervention-type projects. “We are just beginning a study in China to compare the differences in effect between music and sports. There are two groups of schoolchildren participating in music education and sports education, respectively, on a daily basis. The trial will run for six months, with studies performed before and after the music intervention period and the sports intervention period. A similar study is being carried out in the ArtsEqual project coordinated by the University of the Arts Helsinki,” says Tervaniemi. (For more about the ArtsEqual research initiative, see Tuulikki Laes's article *Democracy in the music education of the future* in FMQ Spring 2016.).

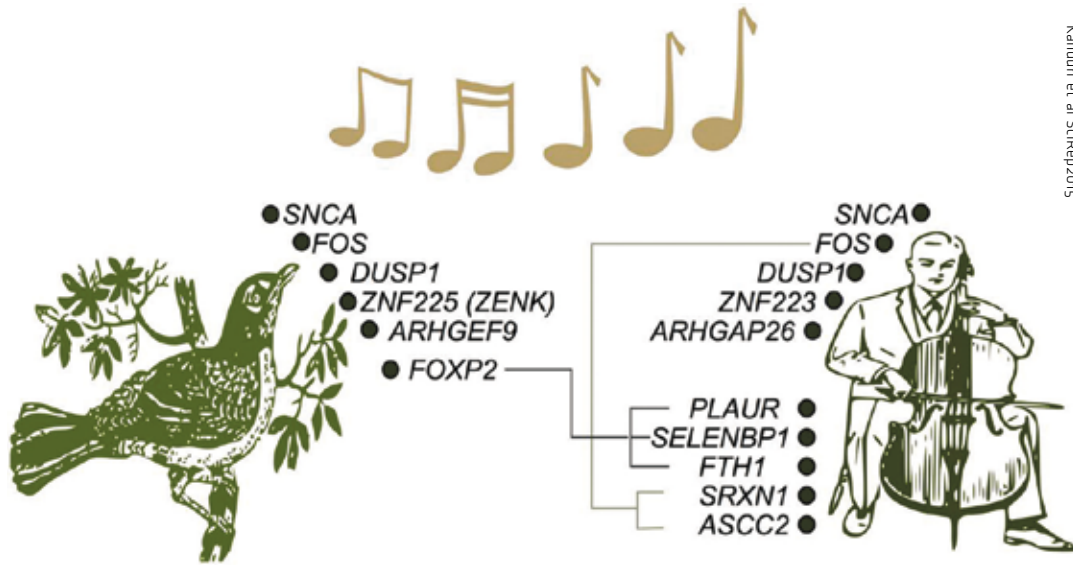
Musical medicine

The findings in brain research on music confirm what early childhood music educators, teachers and music therapists know from practical experience: music has also a healing effect. The benefits of music have been

Katri Saarikivi

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Many of the genes activated in playing music are the same as those activated in birds when they sing.

leveraged in treatment and therapy for a long time. Music therapy can help autistic patients express themselves better, bring down the blood pressure of coronary disease patients, improve the mood of depression patients, alleviate post-surgery pain – the list could go on.

“Music therapy has a long history of use in the treatment and rehabilitation of various somatic, developmental, psychiatric and neurological disorders. Music can help improve mood, speech, memory and motor skills,” writes Teppo Särkämö. Mari Tervaniemi would like to see Finnish brain research on music extended to examine various neuropsychiatric and neuropsychological disorders. “There is a lot of basic research on autism and ADHD, so the time might be ripe for more specific brain research on music. There is interest in the subject out there, and universities in the UK have already achieved promising results,” she says. “Music therapy is known to be particularly beneficial in these areas.”

So it is known and acknowledged that art fosters well-being, and music is increasingly being used at treatment and care facilities. “Some clinics abroad, referring to our research, recommend listening to music as a regular ‘treatment’, for instance for patients recovering from a stroke, even before they can move,” says Mari Tervaniemi. “However, we must remember that all our research is generic research, meaning that we cannot write a playlist prescription that works in the same way for everyone. Only positive effects promote recovery, and so perhaps only the music that the patient likes will be of any help.”

Music activates our genes

Both brain research and practical experience indicate that music has positive effects, but the causes of this process and its biological background are still very little understood.

“Genetic research gives us direct access to the molecules that are at play in musical aptitude, in listening to music and when professional musicians perform,” says Docent Irma Järvelä, clinical teacher at the Department of Medical Genetics at the University of Helsinki. “By examining which molecules are activated and which are silenced by music, we can investigate the biological impacts of music. The findings will allow us to evaluate the therapeutic effects of music better than so far,” says Järvelä, explaining the practical goals of genetic research on music.

Järvelä’s research team has performed two whole genome screens to locate regions and genes linked to musical aptitude in the human genome in Finnish families. The very first stage of the genetic study in 2003 gave indications that musical aptitude is a multifactorial trait determined by several genetic variants and environmental factors. The study was extended in 2011, and the findings remained the same. The genes responsible for inner ear development, auditory pathways and neurocognitive processes were found to be associated with musical aptitude. Both genetic inheritance and exposure to music affect the emergence of musical aptitude, a classic case of nature and nurture working in tandem. (For a more detailed description of this study, see the article *Homo musicus* by Anu Ahola and Jaani Lämsä in FMQ 2/2014.)

Kanduri et al. SciRep2015

Järvelä’s team has also performed a genome-wide screen of predisposing genes for musical creativity, a form of musical aptitude. The findings show that musical aptitude and musical creativity are present in people who are creative in other areas too.

The evolution of music

The next stage of the project involved finding out which genes are activated and which are silenced when the subjects listen to music and which genes react when the subjects make music themselves. A number of string players from the *Tapiola Sinfonietta* participated in the part of the study investigating the effect of playing music; blood samples were taken from them before and after a concert and analysed for changes in gene expression levels.

The study revealed, for instance, that playing music activates genes associated with dopamine and iron metabolism, calcium balance, muscle movement, memory and learning. The dysfunction of these genes is known to cause Parkinson’s disease and certain psychiatric disorders and degenerative diseases of the brain. Moreover, many of the genes activated when subjects listened to music and when professional musicians played music are the same as those activated in birds when they sing, suggesting a shared evolutionary background between the vocalising of birds and the musical aptitude of humans.

“At the moment, we’re exploring the effects of playing music by professional musicians and of listening to music on genetic regulation through microRNA studies. MicroRNAs are tiny molecules in the genome that regulate the function of genes. We know that about 60% of human genes are regulated by microRNAs. The purpose of the study is to increase our knowledge of the biological mechanisms at play in listening to music and performing music,” says Irma Järvelä.

Genetic research on music can also uncover the evolution of musical aptitude and music-making. This is of particular interest for Järvelä: “I feel that the most interesting question is why music has survived in human evolution, i.e. which genes are responsible for it. Evolution is based on genetic mutations that underlie the development of music and music cultures. It’s interesting that in our first study on the evolution of music we discovered genes linked to inner ear development, language development and birdsong. The findings indicate that the use of musical sounds has an ancient and common biological foundation. Both birds and people use sequences of sounds for social communication and courting, both essential functions for the continuity of life.”

helsinki.fi/tuhat - Research at the University of Helsinki

Hanna Isolammi is the editor of the FMQ, a music researcher and a freelance music journalist interested in both music and related phenomena. Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi



Uli Kontu-Korhonen sings and plays to a premature baby in neonatal intensive care. Find out more about her and music in healthcare in an extended version of this article on the FMQ website.

Heikki Tuuli

About art and money and the “special relationship Finns have with nature”

BY TAINA RIIKONEN

Public debate about the purpose of art, or more bluntly about the utility or necessity of art often turns to debate about art, and funding and the social parameters of an artist's work. In this debate, questions of what kind of art should be funded – and how often interconnect – with questions concerning the justification of art in general.

It is true, as sociologist Olli Jakonen states, writing in *Suomen Taidepoliittinen Käsikirja* (Finnish arts policy manual 2015), that today's independent art world swearing by art for art's sake was only historically enabled by the emergence of an arts market. Beginning in the 18th century, artists dissociated themselves from the patronage of courts, the nobility, academic institutions and the Church and entered the free market. Then, as now, creating art required financial resources and decisions to be made concerning those resources, and there is thus no ignoring economic discourse in this context.

But it is a different matter altogether what issues are addressed in the economic discourse; more specifically, how the relationships between the meaning of art and financial policy are defined.

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In Finland's current public debate on arts policy and financial policy, perhaps the loudest and most conspicuous strands have to do with the well-being impacts of art. *The Government Programme* of the Government of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä, published last summer, makes mention in the section “Knowledge and education” (under which art is covered in a short paragraph) of “access to art and culture” and “welfare impacts of

the arts”. Nothing is said about the intrinsic value of art, only its instrumental value: how art can serve as a medicine to produce health and a sort of generic endurance that promotes the growth of the national economy.

This is goal rationality of the heaviest calibre, linking the value of art directly to putative social and societal benefits that might be of some generally accepted utility, i.e. value for money. The creative economy concept, for all that it appears to acknowledge the value of art in its own right, is also above all a product of the logic of reification.

However, the utility ideology of strict performance management need not be the only possible frame of reference for the funding and meaning of art. In fact, it is in many ways a highly problematic notion to apply to the arts world. In my view, its greatest problem is that it forces the potential and requirements for creating art into a restrictive mould, and this has a direct impact on the content of art. Art should never be set goals, not to speak of half-baked quality criteria, and decision-makers should steer clear of attempting to control the content of art.

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The relationship between forms of funding on the one hand and the objectives of art and its assumed returns or impacts on the other is always important for the content of art. Funding providers have differing social policy ideologies and aims, and it is therefore not irrelevant whether arts funding comes from public finances, community funding, self-financing, entrepreneurship or private donors.

If and when the current situation leads to steering the content of government-funded art towards fulfilling aims of well-being and ideology, it is likely that creating socially critical art in particular will become more difficult. Obviously the people who come up with objectives and goals have little desire to have their handiwork or the entire system responsible for it called into question.

For my part, I consider that, in an environment where there is an aggressive drive towards governing the content and purpose of art on the part of the government, we should create as much critical and socially conscious art as possible. The field of art should be deliberately diversified to embrace activities that are not as yet identified or acknowledged as art. This is particularly important in today's entertainment-driven and uncritical media content production.

Social art is usually divided into at least two strands: art that aims to influence society directly, and art that comments on the current state of society. This distinction is nominal at best, because commenting creates situations and is thus an influence of a kind.

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Sometimes artists are asked why they keep to art if they want to change things in society. Why not get involved in civic activism or engage in some other field?

For my part, I can address this question through ideas related to the installation I created at Galleria Akusmata in Helsinki in spring 2016, *Suomalaisten erityinen luontosuhde* (*The special relationship Finns have with nature*). The starting point for the installation was to explore through means of sound a quote taken from a speech given on TV by Prime Minister Juha Sipilä in September 2015: “We Finns have a special relationship with nature, we embrace new technology enthusiastically, and in practical problem-solving we are among the best in the world.”

The purpose of this work was above all to explore political rhetoric, particularly its sensory and informational aspects. Sipilä's statement takes for granted the romanticised image of communing with nature, where the human individual encounters “nature”, whatever that is, as a separate being, humbly admiring it from afar. This little-person model emphasises how powerless any individual is in the face of the natural environment, and this completely ignores issues such as the ethical responsibility of groups of people, e.g. corporate



A detail of Taina Riikonen's installation at Galleria Akusmata, Helsinki.

executives, and sidesteps the instrumental and at times destructive aspects of our relationship with nature.

I wanted to explore the uncomfortable feeling that Sipilä's statement prompted in me and, as far as I can tell, in many other people: presenting assumptions as self-evident truths, unquestioningly propounding power structures and engaging in a monotonous rhetoric of no options. I ended up commenting on the statement by editing, repeating and looping it in full sentences, individual words and syllables. The resulting repetitive, grinding speech is a material manifestation of the unquestioned underlying assumptions present in the original statement as implicit threads. I juxtaposed this sound material with rubbish found in the street and contaminated soil samples from the Talvivaara mine. I wanted to bring together the poisoned, gooey soil, the rubbish and the insistent jabbering in such a way as to make visitors almost physically sick.

My feeling is that socially active art may be both in-your-face and more subtly influencing; it may mix up meanings in brutal ways, mashing them up, exploring impossible worlds and shaking us up from unheard-of angles. Creating and crossing interfaces between different realities and playing with them is perhaps the most important thing that separates (at least in part) activism and art. And this, in my view, is the sort of art that specifically should be funded out of public finances.

Taina Riikonen is a Helsinki-based sound artist and a PhD in musicology. Her sound works and writings focus on themes of corporeality, sexuality, urban noises and cultural criticism. She is currently loosely affiliated with the Allegra Lab Helsinki association, and was previously a post-doctoral artist at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and the University of the Arts Helsinki.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

Cut off a piece of willow, construct a whistle and blow through it – this is as close as it gets to a perfect combination of the roles of musician and instrument maker. Although this kind of playing has not always been considered as music, folk wind instruments have gradually taken their place among contemporary folk music instruments.

BY TOVE DJUPSJÖBACKA

Music for cows and wolves

A lone shepherd leads his cows to graze. He blows into a horn to keep wild animals away, but also to communicate with other shepherds. He sits down under a tree and plays his flute, just for his own enjoyment.

Shepherd culture is often considered a thing of the past. Master instrument maker and musician **Rauno Nieminen** remembers his time as a cowherd as recently as the 1960s and '70s, playing **Beatles** and **Bob Dylan** songs to the cows on his guitar. He learned from his mother how to make a willow whistle and eventually got interested in building flutes, inspired by **Paroni Paakkunainen** and the **Karelia Ensemble**, as well as Chilean refugees and their instruments.

Over the years, Rauno Nieminen has built hundreds of different instruments and played them in many groups. In addition to wind instruments, Nieminen has worked on new versions of the *kantele* and the *jouhikko* (see articles in FMQ 2/2009 and 3–4/2015). His solo album *Sarvella*, due to be released soon, is the first Finnish recording featuring the folk horn as the main instrument.

Wind instruments go back a long way

Many Finnish and Karelian folk wind instruments represent ancient instrument types. Finnish flutes have traditionally been fairly simple, with finger holes becoming more common from the 17th century onwards. In Karelia, folk clarinets with a cane reed were known since the Middle Ages, and they have also been played on the west and south coasts of Finland. The birch bark horn was a common trumpet instrument in both Finland and Karelia. The goat's horn was adapted as an instrument in south-eastern Finland in the 16th century, being the first melodic wind instrument that could be played throughout the year. In Karelia, where goats were not commonly kept, horns were made out of wood instead.

"When there are no instruments, there are no players either. When we have no information about these instruments and their music, we have neither instruments nor music," says Rauno Nieminen, who has striven to rectify the situation. Over the years, he has built instruments, played them, run numerous instrument-making workshops and edited sheet music.



Musician and master instrument maker Rauno Nieminen among his wind instruments.

The late professors **Martti Pokela** and **Erkki Ala-Könni** were important sources of inspiration and support from early on. Emeritus Professor **Timo Leisiö's** research has also been an invaluable resource for Nieminen.

"The fact that shepherd instruments, the *jouhikko* and the *kantele* are still played today is due to the efforts of only a handful of people! Pessimistic predictions about the extinction of shepherd music culture have been voiced for the past hundred years," Nieminen sighs.

When shepherd music was being revived in the 1970s, there were many who considered it to be closer to children's culture than to music. "There were simply no gigs for willow whistle players," Nieminen describes, and remembers his performances with the **Primo Ensemble** (Primitive Music Orchestra), using old Finnish instruments such as wind instruments and the *jouhikko*. "We were about as popular as week-old fish."

The primary function of wind instruments used to be completely practical. "The target audience for shepherd music consisted of cows, sheep, horses, bears and wolves," Nieminen smiles. "Cattle represented your livelihood and playing would protect it from beasts – and demons. But shepherds had their artistic side as well, sometimes playing just for their own enjoyment."

Very few folk wind instruments have survived to be displayed at museums. "Instruments were often made out of fresh plant parts, and they simply haven't lasted,"

Nieminen explains. "When an instrument stopped working, a new and slightly different one would be made. This is the reason why there hasn't been an established music culture for these instruments, with the exception of goat's horns."

Ingrian shepherd player

The bulk of what has been written about Finnish shepherd music is connected to the legendary Ingrian musician **Teodor "Teppo" Repo** (1886–1962). He was a significant figure in his own right but he also played a part in the making and romanticising of Finnishness – the last shepherd player from an oppressed sister nation. Despite of the shared Finno-Ugric heritage, Ingrian music culture was distinctly different to Finnish music culture. "Folk music scholar **A. O. Väisänen** was on the lookout for a shepherd music player, but failed to find a good one in Finland as the playing here tended to be insubstantial. But in Ingria he found Repo, a fine composer who had been a shepherd player in his youth, but also played in a military band. In other words, he was a trained musician, although this side of him was intentionally kept in the dark," Rauno Nieminen explains.

Finnish folk music collectors of that time showed little interest in wind instruments or shepherd music.

"The collectors had important criteria: only good folk music was to be collected," Rauno Nieminen states drily. "This year, a sheet music publication is finally coming out, edited by Timo Leisiö and me and contain-



South Karelia Museum archives

Four Karelina women playing folk horns in 1900.

ing some 250 tunes played on traditional wind instruments such as the tronopilli (pine or willow whistle), soropilli (cane reed clarinet), mänkeri (folk clarinet), clarinet, overtone flute, horn and birch bark horn."

Stage instruments are a different breed

Today, folk wind instruments are the most marginal of all marginal instruments. Players and instrument makers are few and far between. The **World Mänkeri Orchestra**, established in 1984, and the goat's horn ensemble **Pukinsarven Tröötöttäjät** are some of the groups promoting folk wind instruments. Instruments have also been actively developed to meet contemporary musicians' needs.

Some of our significant contemporary masters of folk wind instruments include **Leena Joutsenlahti**, **Kurt Lindblad** and the current Professor of Folk Music at the Sibelius Academy, **Kristiina Ilmonen**, who was the first folk wind instrumentalist to receive an Artistic Doctorate. As part of her degree, she and Nieminen devised a new kind of a pine flute specifically for concert performance.

"Without professional players, the instruments will not keep evolving," Rauno Nieminen points out. "Shepherd instruments are simple artefacts that date back thousands of years. Today's players need to be able to practise every day and play concerts that last for a full

hour! If you look at a symphony orchestra, for example, each instrument is the product of a long evolution".

Recently, many players have sourced their instruments from other Nordic countries as well, often because there is no other choice.

"In Finland, the private use of goat's horns is no longer allowed: the EU has forbidden it due to mad cow disease," Rauno Nieminen explains. "Some time ago, there was a performance of **Pehr Henrik Nordgren's** composition *Taivaanvalot* (*The Lights of Heaven*) which is written for chamber orchestra and folk instruments. A month before the performance, it was discovered that there were no goat's horns to be found! The only option was to make new ones, and so I started phoning through a list of goat farmers, hoping one of them had kept old horns. I managed to find one, and tracked down another one from Norway!" But life is not easy for Norwegians, either. Last year, Norwegian wind instrument player **Karl Seglem** had to resort to a crowdfunding project to allow a pair of goats to live long enough for their horns to grow to a decent size.

Tove Djupsjöbacka is a music journalist and musicologist specialising in flamenco and folk music, but eagerly diving into all kinds of music from opera to hip hop. Unfortunately, she did not learn to make a pajupilli (willow whistle) as a child, something that needs to be fixed.

Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham

A case full of instruments

How is everyday life for a young folk musician who has chosen folk wind instruments as her main instrument? One of the implications is having to constantly lug around a case full of different instruments.

"A mate once observed that I had brought along the whole orchard," smiles wind instrumentalist **Kirsi Ojala**. "I pulled out my instruments: cherry, bird cherry, pine..."

Having a command of many different instruments is naturally essential for a folk wind instrument player, and at the Sibelius Academy, for instance, these instruments are studied as a combined instrument group. "Different instruments bring out completely different aspects of a musician," Ojala states. "If I had to choose only one instrument, I wouldn't necessarily be able to express everything I want."

Kirsi Ojala and **Mimmi Laaksonen** play together in two ensembles, **Wind on Wind** and **Armas**, and each of them plays with many other groups as well. Both players discovered their instruments through the recorder. The will and the need to play together with others is strong, although there are challenges, starting with tuning. Mimmi Laaksonen explains:

"The band wants to play a certain tune. First, we have to consider which instrument can be used to play it, or at least most of it... Violin repertoire, for example, has a

wide range of pitches."

"Whistles and flutes are also fairly quiet instruments," Ojala continues. "The wooden horn has the necessary volume, but it's impossible to cover two octaves or to play in two different keys..." Their joint ensemble **Armas** was born out of the wish to examine the Ingrian shepherd tunes collected in 1914 by **A. O. Väisänen** and published in 1985 in a book entitled *Karjasoitto*. The book is a rare treat for wind instrument players as the sheet music is written out specifically for their own instruments.

"Instead of simply replicating the tunes exactly as they were played, we arrange them in a contemporary way," Kirsi Ojala explains. The ensemble **Wind on Wind**, established by Ojala (read more: FMQ 1/2014) is one of a kind: an ensemble consisting solely of folk wind instrument players. Most of their instruments are made in Sweden by **Gunnar Stenmark**. This year, the ensemble has begun a collaboration with a group of kindred spirits, the Swedish wind ensemble **Zephyr**.

"We share a lot of similar thoughts with Zephyr, but the end results are very different," Ojala says. "Everyone brings along a case full of instruments, so we can create endless different combinations. Whenever **Wind on Wind** and **Zephyr** meet, there are more than 80 instruments involved!"

Marianne Korpi



Marianne Korpi



Kirsi Ojala and Mimmi Laaksonen play together in two ensembles, Wind on Wind and Armas.

In 2016 women are still under-represented in classical concert repertoire, never mind the canon. At contemporary music concerts, however, women appear as composers with increasing frequency. How should we address the issue of a composer's (female) gender in this day and age? Are we really still talking about this, in Finland?

BY ANNA PULKKIS

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Are we really still talking about this?

Few people know about Finland's first female professional composer, **Ida Moberg** (1859–1947), even though she conducted the premiere of her symphony in 1906 and won a composition competition with her work *Tyrannens natt* (*Night of the tyrant*) for choir and orchestra in 1909. **Helvi Leiviskä** (1902–1982) might be somewhat more familiar but her three symphonies have also failed to find their way into the core repertoire.

Finland did not really have a strong tradition of women composers until the emergence of **Kaija Saariaho** (b. 1952). Her ascendance to the international elite in contemporary music has been of huge importance to the growing body of her junior colleagues.

From woman composer to composer

Minna Leinonen (b. 1977) is a composer who has firmly established herself in recent years. She notes that Saariaho blazed the trail for younger generations to profile themselves not as women composers but simply as composers, and there is no need for affirmative action in Finland. "When you live in a country where women have equal rights and equal opportunities to get their works performed, then it should be enough just to compose."

Leinonen says that she imagined that the question of a composer's gender would no longer be relevant. "And

yet many journalists bring up this issue when interviewing a composer who happens to be a woman. What does that say? Is a female composer still a curiosity?"

Kaija Saariaho remarks: "I should think that the situation is rather good in Finland today, and attitudes to women as composers have changed dramatically if you compare the present situation to what I experienced as a young composer," she says. "Back then, a few composers teaching at the Sibelius Academy actually refused to teach me because I was a woman." Later, Saariaho imagined for a long time that the problems had gone away. "I avoided addressing the issue, because I considered it more important to talk about the music itself. But a few years ago I suddenly realised that though my status as a composer is wonderful and I am very rarely disparaged professionally because of being a woman, the situation in general is not as uncomplicated as I had imagined, particularly for the young generation."

Saariaho concludes that even though the generation immediately following her had an easier time than her, even globally, the situation is not the same everywhere. "Also, the equality drive of 30 years ago did not take root and grow in a way that seemed self-evident at the time. The questioning of women's rights, racism, inequality and prejudice have returned and influenced the attitudes of the public at large."

Playing the "woman card"?

Few today question whether composing is a suitable occupation for a woman, but there are lingering suspicions of the female gender being used as a trump card. "A male colleague told me a few years ago that these days you have to be a young woman to get grants and commissions," says Leinonen. "So women have it easier, do they? We work just as hard as men do; we don't write music with our gender."

Resentment is quicker to arise as an increasing number of people are vying for a shrinking pool of resources. It is easy to believe that if a colleague receives a grant it is due to some factor other than professional competence – connections, age or gender, perhaps. The notion of a "woman card" forces women into a struggle to prove their credibility, to qualify for the "open series", as it were.

But the environment may also be encouraging. Leinonen points to the importance of the support she received from her teachers, especially **Veli-Matti Puumala** and **Jouni Kaipainen**. Saariaho says: "When I was a student, the saving grace was that I had great fellow students, almost all of them men, and of course there was my teacher **Paavo Heininen**." On the other hand, Saariaho has had her share of envious quips. "It makes me smile to hear my male colleagues speculate that a large part of my success must be due to my being a woman!"

Courage and tenacity

The Society of Finnish Composers has 203 members, of whom 21 are women – about 10%. Leinonen was recently elected a member of the board of the Society and hopes to be able to contribute to a broadening of employment prospects for composers in educational and cross-discipline projects. She does not consider herself as automatically representing the mandate of women composers; she simply represents the entire membership. "Treating our members equally is a goal that all board members share."

Marcia Citron notes in her book *Gender and the Musical Canon* (1993) that women as professional composers have challenged conventional wisdom about both composers and women. Leinonen has noticed that being a professional composer still requires courage and tenacity, which do not necessarily come naturally. "I'm a child of the 1980s, when girls were brought up to be polite and obedient. I've had to learn how to break out of the box and take risks!"

Many women composers in the course of history remained unmarried. In today's Finland, day-care and pension security for grant recipients provide a better foundation for combining family life and a career as a composer. Leinonen says she worried about her budding career surviving motherhood. "I knew I wouldn't be able to write music as intensely as before, and I also wasn't prepared to compromise on spending time with

Soprano Camilla Nylund
in Kaija Saariaho's monologue
opera *Émilie* at the
Finnish National Opera in 2015.

Stefan Brenner



my child. But when my first one was born, I realised that the process strengthened my composer identity.”

A woman's voice

Contemporary reviews of the Piano Concerto of Helvi Leiviskä noted that it was “somewhat in a man’s voice”. This comment, for all that it shows a flagrant bias, also illustrates that the models to which women writing music aspired were, unavoidably, male. Favouring extensive musical forms was a composer’s way of seeking to be taken seriously.

The history of music is full of men talking about women, but in contemporary music we can hear women’s voices. In 2003, **Lotta Wennäkoski** (b. 1970) wrote a piece entitled *N!* (*Naisen rakkautta ja elämää*) (*Love and life of a woman*), which engages in dialogue with **Robert Schumann’s** song cycle *Frauenliebe und -leben* and has become a classic in its genre.

Leinonen’s radiophonic work *Äiti – iäti* (*Mother – forever*, 2012) is based on experiences of joy and sorrow among mothers of her acquaintance. In *Naisen muotokuva* (*Portrait of a woman*, 2013), the titles of the movements are extracts from reviews received by women artists in the 19th century. “I wanted to show how much more equal our society has become in a cen-

tury,” says Leinonen. “And going forward another century, there will be no need to talk about women artists in particular except in a historical context.”

In *Låt mig vara – Anna mun olla* (*Leave me alone*), which Leinonen wrote for the **Lyrän Academic Women’s Choir**, she combined texts written by choir members with poems by **Edith Södergran**. “Many of the women had never revealed their most painful experiences regarding their body image or physical appearance to anyone; the shame ran too deep. I wanted to use this work to tell them that they are all beautiful.”

Saariaho’s monologue opera *Émilie* and grand oratorio *La Passion de Simone* gave voice to an 18th-century scientist and a Jewish philosopher respectively. “I don’t feel that I chose these women to write about specifically in order to promote a feminist agenda,” says Saariaho. “It’s more a question of addressing themes that are important to me. I was interested in **Émilie du Châtelet** and **Simone Weil** long before I had the idea of writing works for the stage about them. Their exceptional strength and mental independence were pioneering and exemplary, and as such empowering.”

Strongholds of male dominance

The majority of students at music institutes are girls,

Read the recent interview with **Kaija Saariaho**, *Deep in sound, deep in soul*, by **Liisamaija Hautsalo** on the FMQ website.



Piiska Ketterer



Minna Leinonen attends a rehearsal of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Heikki Tuuli

and there is no longer anything strange about women being employed as instrument teachers or musicians. Certain institutions, such as the **Vienna Philharmonic**, remain strongholds of male dominance, and the vast majority of conductors and composers are still men. In Finland, professional composition tuition is solely in the hands of men, but at the music institute level the situation is different: Leinonen, **Riikka Talvitie** (b. 1970) and **Sanna Ahvenjärvi** (b. 1972) are all engaged in teaching budding young composers.

Saariaho’s music has reached venues that most contemporary composers of either gender can only dream of. A new production of her opera *L’amour de loin* (2000) will be staged at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in December 2016. In February, the *New York Times* pointed out in a headline that *L’amour de loin* will be the first opera written by a woman staged at the Met since *Der Wald* by **Ethel Smyth** (1858–1944), performed in 1903.

“Opera remains largely the province of men; there’s big money involved, and people throw their weight around. Women still play a very minor role in it,” notes Saariaho. “The fact that [the *New York Times*] focused on me being a woman is typical of today’s scoop journalism – a shock effect to catch the attention of the public. Naturally, I would have liked the publicity to focus on the opera itself, although I suppose it’s good that this cat was let out of the bag; maybe it’ll make some opera director somewhere think twice about things.”

Saariaho says that getting *L’amour de loin* to the Met has been a ten-year project. “I’ve grown accustomed to the idea and no longer think of it as a major conquest.

It’s a fine venue, and I’m very happy to have my music performed there, of course. I hope that everything will go well; I find all the attention and the limelight somewhat awkward and tiring.”

Yes, we’re still talking about this

The woman question is a current one in music, and not just in Finland. According to a recent study (British Academy of Songwriters, Composers & Authors: *Equality and Diversity in New Music Commissioning*), commissioning parties in the UK, particularly those commissioning orchestral works, tend to favour male composers. In Sweden young women have set up a network named *Konstmusiksysstrar* (Art music sisters) to correct anomalies like this. So there is still work to do.

It is possible that maintaining discussion about the gender issue serves instead to perpetuate the marginal status of women as composers – the notion that there are real composers and then there are “women composers”. On the other hand, not talking about this might lead to a false sense of security; even in our apparently equal Nordic society there are still attitudes and structures that constitute obstacles to women seeking to create careers as composers. So I suppose the best thing to say is this: we must remain vigilant on equality issues.

Anna Pulkkis D.Mus. is a researcher with the Jean Sibelius Works project at the National Library and a freelance music writer.

See also Heidi Horila’s article *Conceptions of gender in music education* on the FMQ website.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

Notes & Letters

In this column composers, songwriters and musicians write about music

BY KREETA-MARIA KENTALA

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From second-class citizenship to the conductor's podium

I began my career as a professional musician playing violin with the **Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra** in 1989. At that time, there were numerous elderly gentlemen in the ranks and only a few women, and I almost tripped over my feet in amazement when a senior colleague politely opened the door for me and tipped his hat as I arrived at work at the House of Culture one day.

The same gentleman also gave me valuable advice for my first foreign tour with the orchestra: "Everything will be fine if you remember to remove your shoes every night before going to bed. If you leave your shoes on, you will have the most terrible headache." The handful of us young women in the orchestra at the time were under the "protection" of our older colleagues, and I still recall this useful advice fondly whenever I return to my hotel room after post-concert parties.

After only one year with the orchestra, I decided to go to Cologne to study early music. I played with an ensemble with several women in it, but there was no hope of equality, let alone a protective attitude. Women were second-class citizens, and that was that. At one rehearsal, the conductor of the ensemble went so far as to ask us all out loud whether it was not after all the "truth" that men are better musicians than women. Our always verbose harpsichord player tried to venture some sort of vague defence – mentioning the name of **Anne-Sophie Mutter**, I believe – but otherwise this utterance was met with a stunned silence.

I realised that this was the cue for my exit and return to Finland. Up until that moment the expert training and excellent concerts had weighed more in the balance than misogynistic comments, but enough was enough.

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Having returned to Finland after a couple of years studying Baroque music abroad, I found myself transformed into one of Finland's leading Baroque specialists, much to my surprise. I was invited to join small professional orchestras as leader for Baroque concerts, and of course I put on a brave face and took the gigs, though I was terrified. My self-confidence had not been boosted at all by my studies abroad – quite the opposite.

My first guest conductor gig did not begin well. I noticed to my horror that a recently retired colleague with a reputation for being a crank was playing with the orchestra in that programme. Just before the first rehearsal began, this tall man came and stood in front of me, looking me in the eye from a great height and said: "I've played at concerts for dozens of years, but never have I performed under a woman conductor, so this is the very first time."

His tone of voice left no doubt that he would have preferred to spend the rest of his life without such a first time. This comment destroyed what was left of the self-confidence I had mustered for the occasion, and my knees trembled as I progressed towards the scaffold, the front of the church where the rehearsal was to take place.

Admittedly a small, plump woman not yet turned thirty, with curly hair pointing every which way and violin in hand, is not the most confidence-inspiring figure to step up on the conductor's podium, which at the time was still the province of venerable maestros.

It did not help that my guest appearance featured



Ulla Nikula

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Baroque music, which in the 1990s lay far beyond the comfort zone of most musicians. By then, musicians' training had not included any instruction in the styles of early music at all. In order to get the dance rhythms swinging and articulations loosened, we had to engage in some purely physical exercises. If looks could kill, I would have died many times over when I had the string players raising their bows towards the ceiling.

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In retrospect, it is something of a miracle that I survived those days with my sanity more or less intact. My self-confidence began slowly to build up once more, as successful concerts resulted in a rising reputation.

And then the old-fashioned thing happened in the middle of this career uplift: I got married and had the child I had wanted for quite some time. When my son was little, I could not bear long trips away from home and instead focused on my teaching work. I suppose every woman faces such choices between home and career. There is no single correct answer: everyone must do what they consider best at the time.

Just now, I am beginning a new chapter in my life, as I was awarded a five-year artist grant by the government and can focus on my own musical projects. My son is in upper secondary school, and I suspect that these days he is only glad to see the back of me if I go on tour.

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Being a woman and a conductor has changed hugely since the 1990s. Today, so many different personalities may be found on the podium – women and men – that the days of me feeling like a freak up there are, fortunately, over.

At the same time, my speciality, Baroque music, has changed from an alien monster to a standard accessory in musicians' toolkits, thanks to improved basic train-

ing and visits by competent specialist instructors. Conducting an orchestra from the leader's seat has become more common, and musicians today play in a more reactive manner reminiscent of chamber music than in my early days in the profession. Indeed, in Baroque instrumental music a conductor mostly just gets in the way. It is more versatile to be part of the performing ensemble; one phrase played with gusto can convey more information than any amount of talking about it.

I now find it much easier to open a score in front of an unknown ensemble than I did back in the day, and more often than not someone will approach me before the first rehearsal to say they'd been looking forward to that week so that they can play their favourite music.

See also a review of Kreeto-Maria Kentala's new album on p. 60.

Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

Kreeto-Maria Kentala

- :: comes from a long line of fiddlers and has been playing folk music since childhood
- :: studied the violin and Baroque music at the Central Ostrobothnia School of Music, the Sibelius Academy, the Edsberg Music Institute and the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Hilversum
- :: has played in the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Musica Antiqua Köln ensemble
- :: teaches musicians specialising in Baroque music at Novia, the Pietarsaari University of Applied Sciences
- :: is a member of the Rantatie String Quartet, the Jouheva ensemble, the folk Baroque ensemble SAMA, the Jones Band and the Barocco Boreale ensemble
- :: has received two Emma Awards, a Janne Award from the Finnish AV producers and a Record of the Year award from the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE

In the heart of folk music is an idea of equality: professionals and amateurs playing the same repertoire, each at their own skill level, as valued members of the community. There is a natural curiosity about different cultures and any form of exclusion is discouraged. However, gender equality is an issue that still seems to need some fine tuning. What is the status of female folk musicians in the Finland of 2016?

BY AMANDA KAURANNE

Conquering the tradition

Laughter is the first thing that comes to mind when I think back to interviews with female players. Humour, albeit quite dark at times, played a prominent part as they shared their experiences about the joy of working, the challenges of their profession, and womanhood as an artistic resource. And about how gender does not – or at least should not – matter any longer.

Statistics, however, have a different story to tell. For

example, the most significant folk music accolades, such as the titles of master player or alderman, are still most often awarded to men, with female performers representing a minority at major folk music festivals as well.

These statistics are baffling, especially as the “other gender” is a majority among those with the highest education in folk music. Since its inception in 1983, university-level education of folk musicians at the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department has produced 150 master’s degrees, out of which 65%, judging from their names, have been awarded to women. A similar female-heavy trend in education can be seen across other music genres as well.

Ritva Talvitie (centre) has been playing in Tallari, a pillar of Finnish folk, for 30 years. Her fellow players are Katri Haukilahti (left) and Sampo Korva (right).



Lauri Oino

New role models emerge gradually

“When I got involved in the Kauhajoki *pelimanni* circles as a teenager in the 1970s, there were a few other women there who joined in once they had finished milking the cows,” violinist Ritva Talvitie says. “But the big names in folk music were always men. When violinist Konsta Jylhä walked past at a festival I was beside myself, trying to pluck up the courage to ask for an autograph. There were simply no female virtuosic role models of the same scale.”

Talvitie graduated as a classical violin teacher from the Sibelius Academy and worked in the Finnish National Opera Orchestra before the sudden onset of an eye condition changed her career path. Around the same time, the first government-funded folk music ensemble was announced and Talvitie applied for the job. Over the years, the group boiled down to the legendary quartet Tallari, in which Talvitie was the only woman. Now, as the ensemble celebrates its 30th anniversary, the other permanent members are Sampo Korva and Katri Haukilahti, who are occasionally joined by Matti Hakamäki from the group’s admin team.

One of Tallari’s missions is to advance the status of folk music through education, and countless folk music violinists have had the chance to learn from Talvitie, who is known for her vigorous playing style. Her energetic approach is the reason why many regard her as their fiddler role model.

This was the case with violinist Piia Kleemola, who is currently working on her artistic post-doctoral research. She is aiming to comb through the archives of the Finnish Literature Society, the Folk Music Institute in Kaustinen and the Folklife Archives in Tampere in order to map all the existing archival recordings of Southern Ostrobothnian folk fiddlers, and to determine if a specific Southern Ostrobothnian fiddling style can be detected. During her first research year, she has trawled through all of the Finnish Literature Society’s 650 archival recordings of Southern Ostrobothnian solo fiddlers. Only one of them was performed by a woman.

Alina Järvelä plays in Frigg, the top, seven-member, world-touring folk group.



Tommi Laitinen

In addition to carrying out postdoc research, Piia Kleemola plays in several groups and is co-Artistic Director of Haapavesi Folk.

“In agricultural society, women’s work was tied to the home and the dairy. Singing was the most common form of musical expression, which could be practised while working. It was also more socially acceptable for men to practice the precarious profession of a travelling musician – private dance gatherings were illegal and musicians’ fees at weddings were sometimes partially paid in spirits.

“Although I already knew that there used to be precious few female players, I was quite surprised by these findings,” Kleemola says. She continues her research into the traditions of fiddlers – mastering these archival tunes by learning to play them herself.

More than a mascot

Just a generation ago, women didn’t play the violin even in the famous folk music town of

Kaustinen. Instead, they were busy looking after their home and cattle, just like their mothers did before them. Boys, however, learned to play the fiddle from their fathers. “For a girl to come up with the idea of doing that would have required quite a unique and determined character,” muses Alina Järvelä, who represents the next generation in a Kaustinen fiddling family, and who has played the violin for so long that she cannot even remember when she began. Like her siblings, she has chosen to become a professional musician. Recently, violin teaching has given way to studying towards a master’s degree in the Baroque violin.



Jimmy Taskelin



Maija Kauhanen addressed stereotypes attached to female musicians, expectations of how they should look and roles in her MA degree concert *Pinnalla – Floating*.

“So I’m not a real folk musician,” she grins, yet she is the only female member in the seven-piece top internationally touring folk music ensemble **Frigg**, which she established together with her brother and their cousin.

“There have been many times when I’ve been the only woman on the festival stage all night. If there are any others, they are usually fronting their own ensembles. At one festival, we were welcomed by a handshake – everyone else but me. This is pretty typical as it seems to be hard to get that a woman can be a regular member in a band’s line-up. And when I then shook hands with the festival organiser, he got confused and asked if I was the singer. I didn’t even have time to reply before he concluded that I must be the group’s mascot, and promptly walked away,” Järvelä laughs. “This seems to be some kind of a reflection of what a woman’s role should be in an ensemble!”

Non-music-related pressures

“I have been told that I should smile more when I’m performing. Watching live recordings of our concerts, I’m definitely smiling more than anyone else in our ensemble, but because I’m a woman, people pay attention to how I look,” Alina Järvelä says. All of the interviewees talk about expectations in relation to their appearance. Some of the deepest reflections about the topic were offered by kantele player and multi-instrumentalist **Maija Kauhanen**.

“I am interested in appearance issues and stereotypes associated with female musicians, and the conscious and unconscious roles in musicianship and in society. I examined these questions in my master’s degree concert titled *Pinnalla – Floating*, which featured the music from my upcoming solo album.”

Kauhanen also researched the mental images provoked by different promo pictures. She had pictures taken in five different styles. Seeing a long evening gown, studded heavy metal accessories, an ethereally frilly outfit or a pose with a disco ball inspired the sur-

vey respondents to write lengthy descriptions of what the player in each picture was like, not only as a musician but as a person as well. The visual imagery has a huge impact.

“In one photo where I was wearing my everyday clothes, looking appropriate enough to go and play at a nursing home, some red nail polish was accidentally visible. Someone saw this as a sign of a secret fire burning underneath my sedate appearance!” Kauhanen says.

She is one of the pioneers of solo kantele playing, combining the Saarijärvi region stick-playing style with foot percussion and singing in order to create lush musical textures. “I’m fascinated with trying to do many things at the same time and I want to keep challenging myself, for instance by managing different time signatures with my singing, feet and both hands. This requires huge amounts of practice and makes for a sweaty performance.” It sounds grim if, and when, the feedback after such a virtuosic performance mainly focuses on the performer’s appearance.

New approaches needed

Double bass player and percussionist **Sara Puljula** is the only woman in the ensemble **Orkestar Bordurka**, playing music from the imaginary Eastern European country of Borduria while dressed in a PVC outfit and a pink wig. “Not everyone understands that this is a stage persona, and some come up with all kinds of suggestions because of the way I’m dressed. I simply shut them up with a good one-liner. Humour always helps with things like this,” she affirms and makes the interviewer howl with laughter with a few well-chosen examples. A musical polymath with a strong involvement in theatre music, Puljula says, however, that even humour does not help when experiencing gender-based inequality in one’s work.

“Women still have to be just a bit better and achieve a bit more in order to secure the same job or salary as a male colleague with equivalent training. We should

already be in the position where a job is given to the most competent person, regardless of their gender. Yet we keep repeating questions like ‘can a woman be a conductor?’ This kind of thinking is dated,” Puljula states.

As a child, Puljula was encouraged to play the piano, as it was considered a suitable instrument for a girl. As a teenager, however, she told her parents that she would be changing instruments and starting the drums and double bass instead. This is how she became one of the trailblazers whose example encourages today’s girls to choose the instrument they really want to play. This is already seen, for example, in the renowned Näppäri folk music teaching method (read more in FMQ 1–2/2015), created by **Mauno Järvelä** and based on the power of playing together.

“We can still see a certain gender division around the choice of instruments: there are still more boys and men playing band instruments and brass, but this is gradually changing. In twenty years’ time, our bands will look very different,” predicts Alina Järvelä, who is one of the Näppäri tutors.

A woman’s choice

Instrument choices alone do not explain why female players are still a minority on the big stages. Festival organisers say that the rules of supply and demand apply: female-dominated ensembles approach them less often with a proposal, whereas men are more keen to sell their bands and to follow up afterwards.

“Is it because girls and boys are brought up differently?” contemplates **Kristiina Ilmonen**, who is Professor at the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department. “According to a Finnish proverb, modesty makes you more beautiful – and we women should apparently always be beautiful,” she jokes. “But does this old thinking model actually prevent women from boldly pursuing a career?”

Apart from upbringing, the interviewees see family issues as the most obvious contributor: having a baby is still enough to suck a woman



Kristiina Ilmonen, Professor of Folk Music at the Sibelius Academy.

away from working life. “It can be challenging to make it back to the scene if you have been away for three or four years because of your children,” Järvelä considers.

Kristiina Ilmonen also questions big stage appearances as the measure of success. “Does being famous equal success? Not everyone wants the life of a touring musician, because it’s hard work and requires not only travelling, but also constantly applying for grants and updating your social media. Perhaps a different kind of music career is a conscious choice for many women? Could we actually begin to ask what artists themselves are striving for?”

Having a choice, however, feels important – and in 2016, it may finally begin to feel realistic. There is no lack of female role models, the player standard is high and the folk

music scene is full of interesting, female-dominated ensembles. The path has been blazed and is ready for travelling.

See some skewed statistics on female musicians in folk music in an extended version of this article on the FMQ website.

Amanda Kauranne is a folk musician and music journalist who believes that art can be a tool towards building a more equal world.

Translation: Hanna-Mari Latham



Double-bassist and percussionist Sara Puljula plays folk music from the fictitious Borduria with the Orkestar Bordurka dressed in PVC and a pink wig.

Rautavaara's death leaves a huge void in Finnish contemporary music

BY KALEVI AHO

My first meeting with Einojuhani Rautavaara: in September 1968, I arrive for my first lesson as a timid composition student. Rautavaara looks through the works I wrote while at school, passes a favourable comment or two, but then declares that I should work my way out of traditional tonality. Thus we begin to explore the techniques of modern music and modern harmony. Towards the end of my first year, I begin to write an orchestral piece. Rautavaara looks at it and says: this is turning into a symphony, isn't it? So that was the title sorted. I completed my First Symphony during my summer holiday in 1969.

My last meeting with Einojuhani was in late December 2015, after the funeral of the composer **Jouni Kaipainen**. **Esa-Pekka Salonen** also attended the funeral, and I suggested to him that we should go see Einojuhani together. Esa-Pekka had also studied with Rautavaara but had not had contact with him for a couple of decades. Einojuhani was physically fragile, but his mind was as sharp as ever, and his eyes retained the familiar keenly exploring and at times mischievous gaze. We spent a thoroughly enjoyable two hours at his home on Katajanokka in Helsinki.

When Einojuhani suffered an aortic rupture in 2004, he spent months in intensive care hovering on the threshold of death. He later explained that he simply could not die yet, because he was still needed and because of his wife **Sini**. Having recovered, he no longer dared travel abroad, and the sphere of his life became considerably narrower. After this episode, he took a calm view of death, observing simply that it was an option always to be considered, with Death constantly hovering over his shoulder, as it were.

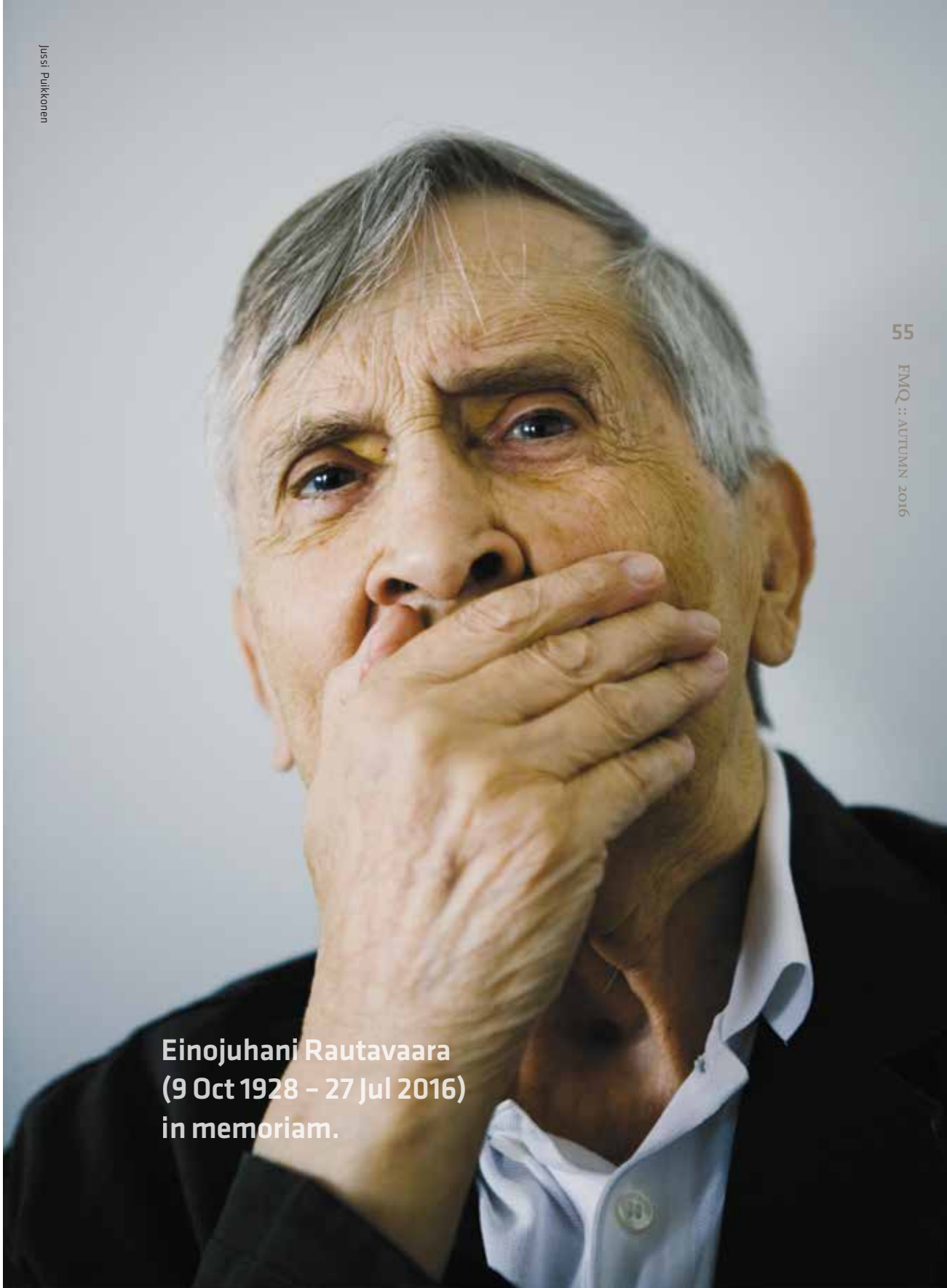
Composer

Einojuhani Rautavaara stressed on many occasions his feeling that his compositions pre-existed in a kind of abstract Platonic world of ideas. He viewed the composer's task as that of a midwife, bringing the compositions cautiously into the world without damaging them at birth.

His first successes, the piano suite *Pelimannit* (*Fiddlers*, 1952) and the brass band work *A Requiem in Our Time* (1953), are good examples of pieces that came out just right in every way. Of *A Requiem*, Rautavaara said that when writing it he had absolutely no experience of writing for brass band and that his compositional technique was immature at the time anyway; yet the completed work has integrity and quality and is exactly as it wanted to be born.

There is thus a mystical, metaphysical dimension to Rautavaara's output. He was not a religious man as such, but he took a keen interest in the myths underlying religions and ancient folk traditions. Rautavaara's *All-Night Vigil* (1971) is the most extensive Orthodox liturgical work written in Finland, yet Rautavaara was not himself a member of the Orthodox Church. The piano cycle *Ikonit* (*Icons*, 1955) stemmed from a childhood visit to Valamo Monastery. His "angel works" – the orchestral work *Angels and Visitations* (1978), the double bass concerto *Angel of Dusk* (1980/1993) and the frequently performed Seventh Symphony, *Angel of Light* (1994) – refer to Christian mythology without the composer himself necessarily believing in angels.

Rautavaara explored ancient Finnish mythology and how it succumbed to Christianity in a trilogy of works for the stage comprising *Marjatta*, *matala neiti* (*Mar-*



Einojuhani Rautavaara
(9 Oct 1928 – 27 Jul 2016)
in memoriam.

jatta, *Lowly Maiden*, 1975) for children's choir, soloists and instruments, *Runo 42 "Sammon ryöstö"* (*The Myth of Sampo*, 1974/1982) for male choir, soloists and tape, and *Thomas* (1985), a full-length opera that is one of Rautavaara's finest works. Rautavaara wrote seven full-length operas, all except one to librettos written by himself, an approach to the genre reminiscent of that of Wagner.

Another important aspect of Rautavaara's composer persona, particularly when he was younger, was his capacity for being curious, experimental and playful. This blends very well with mythology, most idiosyncratically in works such as *True & False Unicorn* for soloists, choir and orchestra (1971/2000).

Sometimes the birth process of a composition was less than successful. Rautavaara revisited many of his works to rewrite and adapt new versions after long periods of time, and he also removed several works from his catalogue, banning them from public performance.

At our final meeting, Einojuhani remarked that he had already discovered in the sounds of his inner world all the musical material that he wanted to use. In light of this, it is understandable that he recycled material from earlier works, particularly towards the end of his career. For me, the culmination of his late period is the cantata *Balada* (2014), a Lorca setting whose vocal solo part contains an anguished passion that was quite new for Rautavaara.

Human being and teacher

Rautavaara was a tolerant teacher. He never tried to impose his own style and ideology of composition on his students or cut them down to size; he always took the student's perspective and supported their psychological development. He inquired what the student wanted to say with a piece, what its aim was. Having received an answer, he then gave a critical appraisal of the work from the student's perspective, meaning an appraisal of how well the student had managed to execute the intended vision using the means available at the time. Rautavaara stressed that there must be a vision underlying every work, that composing must not comprise merely the mechanical resolution of abstract musical problems.

Rautavaara's teaching was far from academic. In my composition lessons, the discussions were about much more than just music, such as literature, philosophy and even politics. Einojuhani was a widely read and educated man with an excellent, somewhat sarcastic sense of humour. You had to focus when talking to him. Composition lessons turned out to be a school of intellectual development for me.

Occasionally Einojuhani sank into a phlegmatic mood, perhaps contemplating his own music as he sat and rolled his eyes. By contrast, he also had a fiery and unyielding side to him, as we may read in his autobiography.

Legacy

Rautavaara did not make his international breakthrough until the 1990s, but today he must be the most frequently performed Finnish contemporary composer, both in Finland and abroad. Many composers fade into obscurity when they die, but my firm belief is that Rautavaara will not suffer this fate; his works will remain in the core repertoire, and he will endure as a major classic in Finnish music.

There are several reasons for this. First, Rautavaara's works are always highly original, never sounding like typical contemporary music. Second, they are not technically over-demanding, meaning that they can be performed within the confines of a normal rehearsal schedule. Third, his output is huge and includes works in all genres and for many different kinds of ensembles. His extensive output of choral and vocal music is particularly noteworthy. Fourth, his output includes a handful of major hits: *Cantus Arcticus* for birds and orchestra, the Seventh Symphony (*Angel of Light*), several choral works, some piano cycles, and so on, and these serve as gateways to a wider exploration of his music.

His internationally most successful operas are *Vincent* (1985–1987) and *Auringon talo* (*House of the Sun*, 1989–1990). His first opera, *Kaivos* (*The Mine*, 1957–1963), based on the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, is to be performed in Hungary in autumn 2016. *Rasputin* (2001–2003) has been produced in Lübeck and also has potential for wider international appeal.

Rautavaara said that he only wrote music for himself and that he preferred to live in his own blissful seclusion, inhabiting a world created by himself. He also remarked that a composer should not attempt to follow the times, because following the times means by default that you are behind the times. In reality, however, Rautavaara was not completely aloof from the real world; on a number of occasions he took a very clear political stand, as in the opera *Kaivos*. Also, in some works written in the 1960s, he embraced the modernist ideals of the era before abandoning them in favour of a different approach.

Rautavaara never engendered a school of composers; his style is not and should not be imitated by anyone. His original output and considerable success serve to remind us of a principle of his that applies to all composers of whichever generation: "Dare to be yourself in your music."

His death leaves a huge, Rautavaara-shaped void in the Finnish creative musical arts.

Kalevi Aho is a renowned Finnish contemporary composer who studied under Einojuhani Rautavaara in 1969–1971.

This article is based on one published (in Finnish) in July by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE).

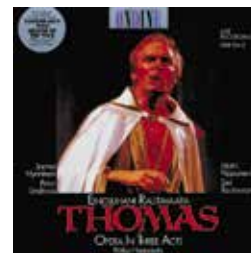
Translation: Jaakko Mäntyjärvi

Einojuhani Rautavaara in the FMQ archives

For three decades the FMQ followed the life and career of Einojuhani Rautavaara. He was also a member of its editorial board in the magazine's early years. The following selection of articles about and by him is now available on the FMQ website.

Einojuhani Rautavaara: Thomas – analysis of the tone material (FMQ 1-2/1985)

Rautavaara wrote about his opera for the first issue of the FMQ.



"Nature does not improvise, nor is it chaotic; it follows strictly the directions of a genetic code, in mutual relation with environmental factors. Within musical material, within its constellations, there lies hidden such a genetic code, the amino acids of the music

– all the necessary information is implanted there. The composer is not able to add anything of any significance to this. He must simply find it, and so must be interested in the tendencies of his material."

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Einojuhani Rautavaara: The aviator's synthesis (FMQ 2/1994)

"And how does the avant-garde feel this morning?" In 1994 FMQ addressed this question to two very significant and oh so very different Finnish composer personalities, Paavo Heininen and Einojuhani Rautavaara.

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Samuli Tiikkaja: Fortune's Fantasy (FMQ 3/2008)

An interview with 80-year-old Rautavaara by his researcher, Samuli Tiikkaja.



Jussi Puikkinen

Martin Anderson: Obit Einojuhani (p. 61 in this issue)

In 1986 Ondine released a disc of Rautavaara's opera *Thomas*. It marked the beginning of a long and fruitful collaboration with the record label that continued right up to his death. Ondine has already released more than 40 recordings covering most of his works, and a disc of his compositions for cello and piano is scheduled for 2018, played by Tanja Tetzlaff (cello) and Gunilla Süssmann (piano). Martin Anderson wrote the review of the latest Rautavaara disc for the FMQ.

The review of the premiere of Rautavaara's Kaivos at the Hungarian State Opera in 2016

The world stage premiere of Rautavaara's opera *Kaivos* (The Mine) will take place at the Hungarian State Opera House, Budapest, on 21 October 2016. Three more performances will be given through October and the beginning of November. FMQ will publish a review of the performance on its website.

Recordings

Reviews by Martin Anderson (MA), Tove Djupsjöbacka (TD), Jan-Erik Holmberg (JEH), Amanda Kauranne (AK), Mats Liljeroos (ML), Jaani Länsiö (JL), Sini Mononen (SM), Anna Pulkkis (AP), Jean Ramsay (JR), Petri Silas (PS), Wif Stenger (WS), Fiona Talkington (FT). Translations: *Jaakko Mäntyjärvi, **Susan Sinisalo, ***Petri Silas

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Simply the Super Trio?

IIRO RANTALA, LARS DANIELSSON, PETER ERSKINE
– *How Long Is Now?*
ACT 9823-2

Pianist **Iiro Rantala** returns to the classic piano trio format after some solo and duo records, among others. Rantala, of course, is also familiar from **Trio Töykeät**, which toured 43 countries playing over 2,000 gigs some years ago.

This new trio has already been called the Super Trio, and with stateside dweller **Peter Erskine** on drums, in addition to Swede **Lars Danielsson** on bass, the claim seems reasonable. Rantala has performed and recorded with Daniels-son before, as has Danielsson with the legendary **Weather Report** drummer. The trio members are very much in accord with each other and the playing is brilliant.

With two contributions from Danielsson and one song by Erskine, the rest of the compositions are by Rantala. As stated in the liner notes, Rantala's ambition is to create simple melodies, emphasising the groove of the trio.

The trio also plays "Little Wing" by **Jimi Hendrix**, the "Kyrie" from **Bach's Mass in B minor** and **Kenny Barron's** "Voyage". The beginning of Rantala's solo in "Little Wing" is simply astounding – no simplicity there!

JEH



Sounds that invade your dreams

ODDARRANG – Agarth
Edition EDN1079

The versatile **Olavi Louhivuori** is equally at home in the acoustic as well as the electric. With **Oddarrang's** fourth release, the drummer and composer seems to be taking more risks than before. Anchoring the familiar dreamy sound to electronics and the trombone of **Ilmari Pohjola**, he leads the group on a weird and wonderful trip – perhaps to the centre of the earth, as the title suggests. Key tracks on the journey are "Central Sun" and "Mass I-II", where the signature sound of brass is perfectly balanced by the guitar of **Lasse Sakara** and the cello of **Osmo Ikonen**.

For those interested in labelling, **Oddarrang** could easily be lumped in with so-called post-jazz bands if only they relied solely on meandering and moody soundscapes. But the strong compositional vision of Louhivuori, so apparent ever since the group's debut album *Music Illustrated* (2006), is the magnet that pulls the quintet away from the masses of bands creating "cinematic" and melancholy albums that are forgotten as soon as they are over. **Oddarrang** haunts the listener for a long time.

PS



Exquisite beauty and fun

VÄRTTINÄ – Viena
KHY Suomen Musiikki KHYCD075

Have the legendary **Värttinä** produced their best ever album after over 30 years together? *Viena*, their thirteenth studio album, marks a return to their roots and grew out of the excitement of visits back to Karelia to hear and be inspired by the last surviving runo singers.

Audiences throughout the world are well rewarded in the outstanding quality of the performances and the variety and thrill of the material. There's a real sense of connection back to **Värttinä's** early days, when they were children performing traditional music in the village of Rääkkylä, but their decades in the music business have also given them the scope and experience to explore many musical paths along the way, all of which feed into a sense of permission to celebrate their sound and enjoy being themselves. Listen to the stunning and riotous "Kanaset" for example, bristling with energy: this is **Värttinä** at their very best. The fiery, spitting, snarling vocal spells are still there, bewitching and intoxicating as ever, and the band, which has been through many changes over the years, provides exquisite beauty and fun.

If the die-hard **Värttinä** fans put *Viena* up there with the best, newcomers to one of the finest bands anywhere will find this exceptional CD a compelling place to start.

FT



Expressive versatility

FAGERLUND, AHO: Bassoon Concertos
Fagerlund: Bassoon concerto "Mana"; Woodlands; Aho: Bassoon concerto; Solo V
Bram van Sambeek (bassoon), Lahti Symphony Orchestra, cond. Dima Slobodeniouk; Okko Kamu
BIS2206

Bassoon players do not have a great many solo concertos to choose from, but here **Bram van Sambeek** presents two valuable additions to this limited repertoire. **Kalevi Aho** wrote his concerto for **Bence Bogányi** in 2004, while **Sebastian Fagerlund's** concerto *Mana* (2014) was tailor-made for Sambeek himself.

Fagerlund is on good form with his capacity for expressing himself accessibly without being banal, and in his typical fashion he balances the flowing energetic vitality of his rhythmic music with contemplative sections.

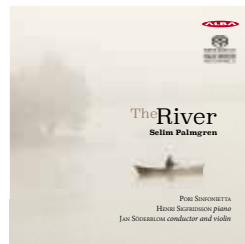
If in Fagerlund's concerto the soloist is cast in the role of a shaman evoking the orchestra, in Aho's concerto the bassoon is more integrated into the orchestral texture in a symphonically conceived tapestry rich in contrasts.

Both concertos showcase the expressive versatility of the bassoon effectively, and the same is true of the two works for solo bassoon featured here, *Solo V* by Aho (1999) and *Woodlands* by Fagerlund (2012). Sambeek tosses off the technically incredibly demanding music with aplomb, and Sinfonia Lahti gives a splendid performance under their former and current Chief Conductors **Okko Kamu** (Fagerlund) and **Dima Slobodeniouk** (Aho).

ML*

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Bach gets air under his wings

KENTALA: Side by side

Bach partitas and folk music from Kaustinen
Alba ABCD 388

Baroque violinist **Kreeta-Maria Kentala** combines on her recording her two strong areas of expertise, baroque and folk music, in a most innovative and fruitful way.

Movements in **Johann Sebastian Bach's** solo violin partitas in D minor (BWV 1004) and E major (BWV 1006) are paired with carefully selected pieces of folk music from Kaustinen, among them two dance tunes by Kentala's grandfather **Wiljami Niittykoski** (1895–1985). These two musical traditions may seem far apart but they are able to enter into a discussion with each other, especially because both take strong advantage of dance rhythms.

The light-hearted E major partita in particular is naturally connected with the Finnish polka and waltz tunes. The contact with folk music highlights the capricious features that flavour the strictly logical undercurrent in Bach's music, shuffling off all unnecessary constraint and letting the partitas get air under their wings.

Kentala's violin sings lushly in the favourable acoustics of the Kaustinen church. (See also Kentala's column, pp. 48–49.)

AP

Head-spinning – mind-clearing

KUJALA: Hyperorganism

CybOrgan; Hyperchromatic Counterpoint
Veli Kujala (quarter-tone accordion and pre-recorded tape); Susanne Kujala (organ); Uusinta Ensemble, TampereRaw (strings)
Alba ABCD 393

Oh yes! One of the best releases this year is the gilt-edged calling card of accordionist-composer **Veli Kujala** that simultaneously slakes a thirst for something new and strikes a nostalgic chord.

The cover and soundscapes evoke immediate connotations with video games in the days when the figures were pixel guys and the soundtrack was a sharp, beeping organ. Heavy music at that time also exuded a blokish bluster that springs to mind on hearing the thudding, teeth-grinding *CybOrgan* beat.

The **TampereRaw** and **Uusinta Ensemble** strings plus **Susanne Kujala's** organ sound as bombastic as a stadium band. The composer himself gives a head-spinning performance in *Hyperchromatic Counterpoint* on a quarter-tone accordion, and it is surprising how quickly the ear gets used to this “out of tune” instrument.

Forty-five minutes of this instrument and this work do, however, test the listener's staying power, and probably not even the most hardened new-music fan can avoid a moment of weariness, but this is precisely why the experience clears the mind and opens up the ears. **JL****

Brilliant and flowing Palmgren

PALMGREN: The River

Piano Concertos 1–3; Pieces for violin and piano
op. 78
Henri Sigfridsson (piano), Jan Söderblom (violin; cond.), Pori Sinfonietta
Alba ABCD 385

The recordings released by Finlandia Records of the five piano concertos of **Selim Palmgren** (1878–1951) in the 1990s were welcomed with enthusiasm. While the piano playing was impeccable, otherwise the recording left much to be desired.

On Alba's new recording of Concertos nos. 1–3, turning to the orchestra of Palmgren's native Pori seems only right and proper. **The Pori Sinfonietta** has advanced hugely under **Jan Söderblom**.

Though this recording is not hands-down sensational, it is a clear improvement on its predecessors as far as the carefully considered interpretations and production values go. This aesthetic suits **Henri Sigfridsson** excellently, and he makes the most of Palmgren's brilliant solo parts in *The River* (Piano Concerto no. 2) and *Metamorphoses* (no. 3) without reducing them to shallow virtuoso vehicles.

Söderblom is an alert conductor, and even if the strings sound unduly thin at times, there is a passionate attitude to making music that compensates. The filler, op. 78 for violin and piano, is surprisingly substantial. **ML***

Text-sensitive tone-painting

BERGMAN: Bergmaniana

Music for male voice choir
Bergmania ensemble, cond. Matti Hyökki
Alba ABCD 392:1-3

Erik Bergman has fallen into partial obscurity since his death ten years ago, and it is therefore all the more gratifying that Alba has released this triple CD of works for male choir. After all, the choir plays a key role in many of his most powerful works, whether a *cappella* or accompanied. Both genres are represented here, and in all the works we find the humourist, lyricist, mystic and magician in full command of his text-sensitive tone-painting.

Wisely enough, the works are not arranged in chronological order; the decades meet and clash, while Bergman's literary sensibility is shown to have been superb at all times. We come across writers such as **Fröding**, **Södergran**, **Lagerkvist** and **Solveig von Schoultz** as well as the *Edda*, the book of Isaiah and Buddhist texts.

The aesthetic pluralism represented here is remarkable; Bergman pushes the envelope of musical expression. Matti Hyökki, with a group of professional singers, masters even the trickiest passages with aplomb.

But this set begs the question: why not record Bergman's complete music for male choir? The 15 or so works that are missing here could easily have been accommodated by adding another CD to make this a package of four. **ML***

Centenary Celebration

ENGLUND, KLAMI: Violin Concertos

Benjamin Schmid (violin), Oulu Symphony Orchestra, cond. Johannes Gustavsson
Online ODE1278-2

Einar Englund's centenary fell on 17 June, but this is the only release marking the date that has come my way so far. His Violin Concerto of 1981 is one of the major violin concertos of the past century – and not just from Finland.

The sardonic humour and driving energy of the opening paragraph make it instantly recognisable as Englund, although he also knows to stand back and let his soloist soar. The chordal passage after the first-movement cadenza is perhaps the most beautiful thing he ever wrote. The clarity of the orchestral texture, based on mobile bass lines, points to a closeness to **Shostakovich's** First Violin Concerto, reinforced when Englund's slow movement evokes Shostakovich's passacaglia, not least in the soloist's dialogue with the lower strings. The music certainly has wit, but it also has considerable bite.

Uuno Klami's Violin Concerto, four decades older than Englund's, sits well with it here. It doesn't have the individuality of its partner, but Klami's lyrical solo line and luminous orchestral colours retain the interest throughout. Wonderfully buoyant performances from **Schmid**, **Gustavsson** and their Oulu colleagues. **MA**

Obit Einojuhani

RAUTAVAARA: Rubaiyat; Into the Heart of Light; Balada; Four Songs from the Opera Rasputin

Gerald Finley (baritone); Mika Pohjonen (tenor); Helsinki Music Centre Choir; Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. John Storgårds
Online ODE 1274-2

One of the paradoxes about the much-missed **Einojuhani Rautavaara** is that his music should have swung through so many styles early in his career and then settle into so fixed a manner later in life, around the time of his Seventh Symphony, *Angel of Light*, in 1994. Rautavaara's late style is a good one: soaring melodic lines over swirling inner parts balanced on nimble bass lines, pulled together in warm modal harmonies.

The four works here present his last thoughts in four genres: the song-cycle *Rubaiyat* (2014) is his last work for voice and orchestra; *Balada* (2014, rescuing music from an unfinished opera) his last piece for chorus and orchestra, here with an important tenor solo; *Into the Heart of Light* (2012) his last score for string orchestra; and the *Four Songs from the Opera Rasputin* (2001–3, arr. 2012) squeeze some more mileage from his last completed opera.

For all the passion at the climax of the *Balada* and the lusty drama of the last of the *Four Songs*, the music here sings Rautavaara to rest in the rich autumnal tones that are unmistakably his. **MA**



Another world

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ARJA KASTINEN – Emanuel
Temps CD05

The Emanuel Vigeland mausoleum in Oslo has lured musicians to its haunting space, which is decorated by dimly lit frescoes, and has a huge reverberation time of 20 seconds. The room is definitely the extra member of the band. It's not surprising then that **Arja Kastinen**, who has devoted a considerable amount of time to researching and exploring the acoustic properties of the kantele, was drawn to embark on a musical journey here, bringing seven kanteles of various sizes and an expert sound recordist in **Taito Hoffrén**.

There's a real sense of narrative in the music as Kastinen moves between the different instruments in her improvisations, and combines different playing techniques with bows and plucking, slides, sticks and mutes as well as using her own breath. In particular "Aaveita täynnä" ("Full of ghosts") captures the experience with its eerie, glimmering sounds and rich textures as the 15-steel-string instrument meets the warmth of the bronze stringed kantele before the more oriental sounds of the viscous strings and a final chorus of kanteles and bronze bells (played by **Tuomas Ylönen**).

The CD can only ever be a taster of what it's like to listen inside the mausoleum, but Kastinen's creative and adventurous spirit transports us to another world that's hard to leave.

FT

Vocal folk hop it is

TUULETAR – Tules maas vedes taivaal
Bafe's Factory MBA013

Tuuletär ("Goddess of the Wind") is a quite recent addition to the high life of Finnish *a cappella* groups that has already been successful in international vocal group competitions. The genre headline they use is "vocal folk hop", which is actually quite suitable for their music. They are clearly inspired by Finnish folk music and enjoy especially its beautiful, old language and some razor-like voice production. But the result and overall sound is definitively 2016, a well-produced product which works in any mainstream context.

The four singing ladies all deliver high quality, with a taste of both soul divas and Nordic part-singing. They use a wide range of colours with some impressive beatboxing added. The impressionistic texts work well even for non-Finnish speakers. The general feeling of the songs is quite clear anyway, ranging from self-confident groove ("Ei leijuta") to sincere ballad ("Soua").

A promising start for an ambitious ensemble.

TD

Folk music concertante

KARUNA – Tuulispää
Kuu Records KUUREC007

The second album of **Karuna**, a trio of accordion, piano and nyckelharpa, is even more stylish and secure than their debut. The musicians are all superb: **Teija Niku** (acc), **Juha Kujanpää** (pf) and **Esko Järvelä** (nyckelharpa), with Järvelä occasionally changing to fiddle and even guitar, which gives a refreshing percussive feeling.

The ensemble clearly start to find their personal way of playing together, without any conventional-sounding solutions and with a big dose of liberty. The instrumentation sounds like one entity, intertwining and dialoguing with each other without any strict roles (melody/bass/harmony or such). The tunes (all are own compositions) cover a wide range, including lyrical ballads, soft, dreamy waltzes, even some more experimental tunes with light Balkan-attitude – and then heating up the machine and letting the groove loose every now and then in some more traditional-sounding Nordic folk stuff.

The phrasing is always strong, a few times maybe a little too polished, but there is really a true chamber music attitude with a lots of nuances, also taking it all down too soft and whispering. One of the strongest instrumental albums this year.

TD

Songs in the Helsinki lingo

STADIN KADONNEET – On rookis kalsa hima
Playground music

The Helsinki of the late 19th and early 20th century was a linguistic and cultural melting pot of Finnish, Swedish and Russian in which the working class, in particular, developed a lingo of its own that came to be known as *stadin slangi*. Most likely, a "Helsinki way" of making music was also born.

What were those lost Helsinki folk songs like? **Anna E. Karvonen**, herself a singer, wanted to find out, and the result of her search is a disc of songs she recorded with **Roope Aarnio**, **Antti Kujanpää**, **Tuomas Skopa** and **Tuomas Timonen**. Their debut disc is not only a pleasing, varied musical experience; it is also a cultural-historical tribute to an urban culture which the folklore collectors failed to value at the time.

This is a brilliant recording made up of scraps of information, gems from the archives and the contributions of contemporary speakers of the Helsinki lingo. Each of the songs astounds – the genres enchantingly change from one track to the next, the instrumentations season the moods, and the singing is charming, full of power and grace. There are also numbers by various guest artists. The magic of the disc would seem to lie in the fascinating balance between clear and distorted – just as in Helsinki.

AK**

Poignant, witty, thoughtful

TIMO ALAKOTILA & PIANO
Åkerö CD016

Timo Alakotila is one of the quiet geniuses of Finnish music. It will come as a delight to so many listeners that Alakotila has, at last, decided that he and his piano should have their own voice in a solo album. His trademark delicacy of touch, his exquisite use of light and shade, the fragility of his melodic lines, his wistful harmonies where **Bach** meets jazz and folk music, and his compelling rhythms all add up to a collection of the most beguiling and thought-provoking music. Poignant, witty, agile, mischievous, thoughtful, beautiful: this is **Timo Alakotila** and his piano.

FT

A true sound garden

ONTREI
Maanite MAA04

The first half of the debut album of **Ontrei** (**Timo Väänänen** and **Rauno Nieminen**) is all about the sounds, and the musicians have some very special ones available. Instead of familiar-sounding kantele, Väänänen plays the Novgorod lyre and the West-Siberian pyn-gyr, the sound reminding one of a muffled guitar. Nieminen is on the bowed lyre with its magic, raspy sound, as well as guimbards and drum. The music starts as a slow process with small gestures, later landing in more traditional, energetic dance tunes.

TD

A Finnish wedding night

ENKEL – Pappilan hääyö
KICD 126

A delightfully fresh debut disc of originals in the spirit of trad plus new takes on folk music, both instrumental and with vocal seasoning. The combination of viola, 15-stringed kantele and two 2-row accordions fearlessly exploits the instruments' potential in the hands of **Iida Savolainen**, **Maija Pokela** and **Miia Palomäki**. A good beat blends with humour and sensitivity in this release by the spiritual offspring of the old folk players.

AK**

Pillar of the Finnish folk music community

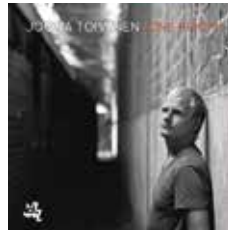
TALLARI – 30
KICD 130

This album by 30-year-old **Tallari** has a track for every year. Running through this elegant retrospective is the incomparable collaboration of four musicians with a long history of playing together – **Antti Hosioja**, **Risto Hotakainen**, **Timo Valo** and **Ritva Talvitie** – in the company of numerous guests and styles. Three of the group's members have already retired, but **Ritva Talvitie** continues in the revamped **Tallari** and on this disc really puts the present trio (with **Katri Haukilahti** and **Sampo Korva**) through its paces. Though **Tallari** succeeds in transforming into whatever it wishes, something always remains – the fundamental lilt and the soulful playing.

AK**

63

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Reconstructing the classics

KALEVI LOUHIVUORI QUINTET – Almost American Standards
Cam Jazz CAMJ 7900-2

There are perhaps more excellent trumpeters today than ever in Finland. **Kalevi Louhivuori** certainly belongs to this bunch.

The idea behind his quintet record *Almost American Standards* is to use compositions by American jazz musicians as loose foundations for new material. However, the old works are reworked in such a fashion that the songs acting as models are not always obvious, even if the titles sometimes give strong hints. Titles like *Take 4*, *Yes And Now* or *6 Steps To Heaven* will not keep the jazz buff wondering too long.

Stylistically the music moves logically from '50s hard bop to modal jazz and occasionally beyond. The playing is very enjoyable, with heartfelt solos from pianist **Mikael Myrskog** and others. Drummer **Jaska Lukkarinen** and Louhivuori are well-known names in Finland, while Myrskog, reedsman **Ville Vannemaa** and bassist **Eero Seppä** represent a somewhat junior force. The Ellingtonesque ballad *Alone Again*, with Vannemaa on clarinet, is a real heartbreaker which could work well in a **Woody Allen** movie. (See also the article on pp. 6–11.) **JEH**

The way outside of the box

SID HILLE – Ugetsu
SatnaMusic CD 162

A jack of many trades, **Sid Hille** arrived from Germany via the Netherlands and the US in 1994. Made with an agile team, *Ugetsu* (meaning “rain” and “moon” in Japanese) reaches far and wide. Hille has reimagined himself as a pianist many times before, but this disc may prove to be a pinnacle in his career. Apart from the man himself, guitarist **Teemu Viinikainen** and reedsman **Jukka Perko** shine throughout on the artsy set filled with diverse elements ranging from spoken word to the kantele and beyond.

PS

Gratifying solo piano

JOONA TOIVANEN – Lone Room
Cam Jazz CAMJ 7904-2

After five trio recordings and a solo outing, **Joona Toivanen** indulges himself for a second time in the glorious world of contemporary solo piano. Contemporary, meaning the instrument is extended by preparation. However, *Lone Room* is an acoustic adventure, while *Polarities* (2013) employs overdubbing, electronics and heavier preparation. Toivanen is an adept writer and a logical improviser with his own individual voice, who balances his output masterfully between natural-sounding harmonic beauty and bold melodic statements.

JEH

How to strike gold

IRO HAARLA – Ante Lucem
ECM 2457

Iro Haarla's star has been on the rise ever since the turn of the millennium. After starting out on her own in more intimate settings, the pianist and composer has continued to experiment with larger ensembles. A logical progression is *Ante Lucem*, a four-piece suite for jazz quintet and symphony orchestra. Not only one of Haarla's brightest artistic statements so far, this disc is a waypost in Finnish jazz. Grandiose projects are always high-risk ventures, which makes the success even sweeter.

PS

Four good 'uns

JUKKA ESKOLA SOUL TRIO
Grotto 001

Jukka Eskola's 10-inch EP is not only the debut for the trumpeter's trio (**Mikko Helevä**, organ; **Teppo Mäkynen**, drums), but also the dawn of a new label. The man behind Grotto is **Antti Eerikäinen**, famous for the now-defunct Ricky-tick Records. “Railyard Boogie” is a darkish strut with Swedish flautist **Magnus Lindgren** and bassist **Ville Herrala** as guests. “Hong Thong” is reminiscent of the tunes of the featured guest, **Timo Lassy**. “Jumpin’ Punkins” is an old swinger by **Mercer Ellington** with juicy Hammond organ and some nice percussive work. But who is the mystery vibist on “Subterranean Variations”? **JEH**



Celestial psychedelia, pt.2

MIKKO JOENSUU – Amen 2
Svart Records

Having all but disbanded his celebrated band **Joensuu 1685** after just one record (and a 7” single) some eight years ago, **Mikko Joensuu** retreated, and in recent years has seemed satisfied simply playing guitar in his wife **Manna's** band. An EP last year signalled that something was under way, and late 2016 now sees a second full-length album release from Joensuu.

Amen 2 is the second instalment of Joensuu's magnum opus, the triptych *Amen 1–3*. The record builds on the introspective countrified folk of its predecessor; not reaching the peak of the *crescendo*, which is evidently to be expected from the third instalment, but still functioning as a worthy link between the two sonic extremes.

Strangely enough, *Amen 2* sounds very much like what one could have expected from a second Joensuu 1685 record: echoes of **Spiritualized**, ambient and shoegaze, sung in an earnest voice not unlike that of a young **Bono**. Themes of faith lost and regained abound, ranging from the feminine to the divine. The scope is epic: the closing track “I Gave You All” clocks in at over 20 minutes.

JR



Tantalising tales

MOONFACE & SIINAI – My Best Human Face
Jagjaguwar JAG278

Finnish instrumental rock band **Siinai** and Canadian singer-keyboardist **Spencer “Moonface” Krug** share a taste for melodrama and heroics – as suggested by the title of their first album together, *Heart-breaking Bravery*.

That was recorded in 2012, when Krug was living in Helsinki. He's since moved back to Canada and restarted **Wolf Parade**, the band that earned him indie rock stardom in the last decade.

The second, cheerier Siinai collaboration was mostly recorded in Finland, with Krug later adding vocals, including a female choir. As on their own stellar albums, Siinai tap into hypnotic '70s German *krautrock*, especially on “Prairie Boy”, where Krug spins one of his tantalising tales over their propulsive 4/4 *motorik* beat.

His melodic and lyrical mastery shine on “City Wrecker” – which could be a Generation Y follow-up to **Joni Mitchell's** “Last Time I Saw Richard” – as well as “The Nightclub Artiste” and “The Queen of Both Darkness and Light”, haunting tunes that bookend the album.

Vocally, this is one of the prolific Krug's most enjoyable albums, as he's mostly moved on from his earlier vibrato-laden mannerisms. Still, it would be fascinating to hear an instrumental version of the album with the full power of Siinai.

WS



The sweet swing of Americana

TUOMO & MARKUS – Dead Circles
Grandpop Records 2016

Dead Circles, a collaboration between **Tuomo Prättälä**, mostly known for catchy, danceable jazz, and **Markus Nordenstreng**, a singer-songwriter, found its sound on a trip to Tucson, Arizona. Both men have left their unmistakable mark on the project but Nordenstreng has the stylistic upper hand.

This placid and laid-back album commences with guitar-driven folk and goes out with a transparent reading of **Bob Dylan's** classic “Lay Lady Lay”. Those used to Prättälä's soul jazz may actually be surprised by the billowy softness of *Dead Circles*. Acoustic guitars meet vocal harmonies with piano and Hammond organ lulling on top of the soft, swinging melodies. All in all, *Dead Circles* is a grower that demands time and a few concentrated listens to flourish fully.

Among the musicians on the set are **John Stirratt** and **Pat Sansone** of **Wilco** and **The Autumn Defense** fame, plus **The Jayhawks'** very own **Gary Louris**. The affinity and connection *Dead Circles* has with all the groups mentioned is tangible, as the album is bursting with swinging Americana, lush road-trip music and romancing the radio.

SM***

Opening concert of the Turku Music Festival, 11 August, 2016, Turku Concert Hall
Opening concert of the Helsinki Festival, 19 August, 2016, Musiikkitalo of Helsinki
Classical Trancelations in Concert (Helsinki Festival), 26 August, 2016, Musiikkitalo of Helsinki

Trance in trancelation

BY MERJA HOTTINEN

Within fifteen minutes of going on sale, the concert by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra at this year's Helsinki Festival was sold out. Another concert scheduled for that evening proved equally popular.

The reason for the rush for tickets was not 20-year-old conductor comet Klaus Mäkelä, or even the soloists; it was the programme – EDM classics of the past couple of decades arranged for large symphony orchestra, choir and soloists. The eager audience was not disappointed. From time to time the applause reached such a pitch that the conductor had to cover his ears.

Undergoing an audio makeover in a project entitled "Classical Trancelations" were such hits as Faithless's "Insomnia" from the golden years of trance, the 1990s, "Sandstorm" by the Finns' pride and joy Darude, and such more recent numbers as Eric Prydz's "Opus". The arrangements were by Petri Lowland Alanko, one of the fathers of the idea, and composer-songwriter Pessi Levanto.

Best of all were the pieces where the boundless energy of the trance originals, with a big orchestra firing on all cylinders, could still be discerned. The arrangements were nuanced and entertaining, but too many of the pieces had travelled so far from their original character as to resemble a soft cinematic blanket. They, too, nevertheless appealed to the audience and the hazy ambience certainly contrasted well with the electric beat of the originals.

One of the project's missions was to prove that trance pieces are in themselves interesting as compositions and can work with any line-up. For the audience, particularly, there was a carnivalesque element: here was music taken from the clubs to a temple of classical music and high culture, and this in itself was fun. The concert was also a sign of the respect – manifest in hundreds of hours of hard work and dozens of performers –

paid by musicians committed to giving their very best. Seeing that the result was furthermore entertaining, no wonder the audience were entranced.

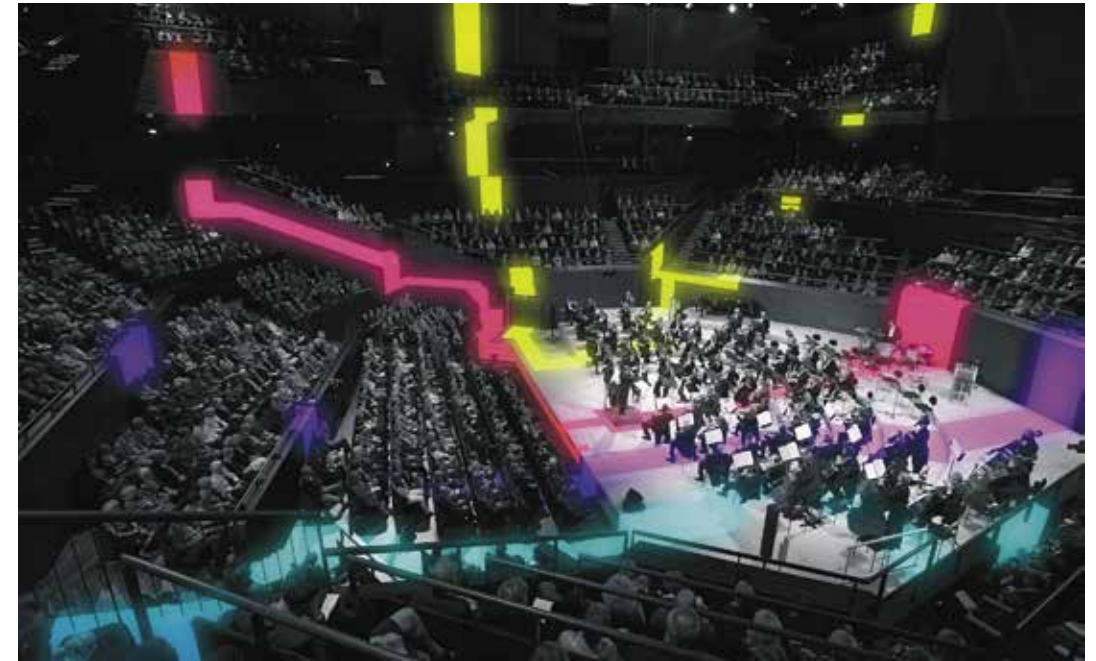
In view of the context, the Helsinki Festival's classical music slot, it is tempting to examine the concert from the genre perspective, too. For "Trancelations" was not the only genre flirtation at this summer's Finnish festivals. The soloist in the orchestral work at the opening concert of the Helsinki Festival was a rap artist, and there were street dancers performing to Mendelssohn. At another prestigious event, the opening concert of the Turku Music Festival, the solo instrument in the brand-new work was a cello spiked with effects familiar from metal.

Though these commissioned works differed greatly, their genesis had such obvious similarities that they are clearly part of a wider phenomenon. The two concerts both eagerly explored the territory that lies between genres in the hope of discovering something fruitful, something new.

::

The Turku Music Festival had commissioned a new work from Olli Virtaperko. The solo cellist in *Romer's Gap* was Perttu Kivilaakso of Apocalyptica metal fame, who got to use every trick of the trade. The cello's electric sound integrated to the full with Virtaperko's own musical language and skilful orchestration. The effects were a natural element of what was, for a concerto, actually a very classical expression, adding roughness, growls and grit but also sensitivity and a certain brittle quality.

For Virtaperko, such things as stylistic pluralism and communication are of fundamental importance to his music. *Romer's Gap* did indeed demonstrate how cross-



ing borders can add something to a composition without in any way watering it down. On the contrary: transferring the effects from their home in rock to a contemporary music context gave the concerto an edge and a touch of the experimental that raised it to a new plane.

::

The work commissioned for the Helsinki Festival's opening concert, Lauri Porra's *Kohta*, was a completely different stylistic kettle of fish, gliding sovereignly through inter-generic waters without permitting any clear categorisations or definitions. Porra's background as a composer of film scores was very obvious, but *Kohta* also had the rhythm typical of rap, electronic experimentation and a firm, dramatic structure to hold it all together.

Cast in the leading role was the text penned by the young, critically acclaimed rap artist Paperi T, who also performed it. Equally important was the omni-

work played by Porra. This is a unique instrument with a soft, brittle yet fascinating sound that brought with it a strange yet pleasing vulnerability. At the opposite pole was a completely different sound world: that produced by powerful, robust orchestral instruments at the zenith of their evolution.

::

Crossover has been like a red rag to a bull for many a serious-minded contemporary music buff. Though readily associated with dumbing down and pandering to audiences, the crossover products of the present decade nevertheless carry a greater significance. They speak of a respect for difference, and of the multidimensional aspect of both the present day and ourselves. They are fragile and delicate, while also possessing the exuberance and energy of different expressive devices. This does not necessarily mean abandoning a specific style but rather being open to new combinations.

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