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SUOMI CHAPTER

FINNOVATIONS

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EVERGREEN STATE TO THE GOLDEN STATE



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Cover Photo: The fountain-statue of "Havis Amanda," the symbol of Helsinki, capped by University students during May Day celebrations. To learn more about May Day in Finland, see page 10.



President's Corner

COVID-19 will stay with us and our social life will be to the minimum. There is no light at the end of the tunnel yet and won't be for some time. Vaccinations, social distancing, and masks prevent the spread of the virus, however, to reach herd immunity we will need between 80% and 85% of total populations to be vaccinated. Besides this, countries are struggling with new variants of the virus in many parts of the world.

Finland has survived the virus (it is called "korona" in Finland) pretty well. The infections are lowest in EU countries. Some 80,000 infections in Finland with approximately 800 deaths. There are not many in hospitals and only some 30 people in ICUs.

Most of the infections have been in Helsinki and the surrounding counties. With the help of the EU recovery program, Finland has received vaccines from Pfizer, Astra Zeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. Not sputnik from Russia.

Some summer events will take place starting next month. The audience of music and theater events will be kept to a minimum. Museums and restaurants will be opened and folks are encouraged to stay at their summer places close to nature in small family groups. Sauna and Sisu will help with a faster recovery!

Here in Bellingham and Whatcom County, the situation is better than in Seattle and its surroundings. Unfortunately our annual events such as Vappu and Juhannus, particularly for the whole membership, are on hold.

Hopefully this newsletter and possibly the future planned virtual zoom/skype meetings can be arranged for the rest of the year. The board will announce our plans for these events in the near future.

Stay safe. Use masks and keep the distance required, particularly in areas where many folks gather in your neighborhood.

Tapio Holma

As of May 4, 2021, the total number of coronavirus cases in Finland is 87,529.

For live updates on COVID-19 cases and deaths around the world, visit:

<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>

Composer Maija Hynninen Found Courage in California

In the music of Maija Hynninen, layers of reality slide over each other, fracturing and revealing glimpses of something inscrutable. Typically, this happens at the nexus of electronic and acoustic sound. Perhaps this has to do not so much with mysticism as with a philosophy of sound with connections to various aspects of culture and society.

As I meet her in February 2021, she is relieved. Her first real orchestral work, the oboe concerto *Incandescence*, was finally premiered by Kyeong Ham and the Finnish

Radio Symphony Orchestra at the concluding concert of the Musica nova Helsinki 2021 festival. The concerto had lain dormant for four years: having been on the recommendations list of the Uuno Klami Composition Competition, it had been programmed by two orchestras and then cancelled for various reasons. Ironically, it was in the midst of all the cancellations and uncertainty of the coronavirus pandemic that the premiere finally took place. Even the proposed soloist for the premiere had changed three times; the work was originally written to a commission from Eeva-Kaisa Rönkä.

“It isn’t easy to find opportunities for getting orchestral works performed,” Maija Hynninen says. If you fail to gain that all-important first commission, you end up in a limbo, because no one in the field will know that you are a potential orchestral composer. The competition for visibility is fierce. Hynninen notes that teachers or referees can often broker opportunities, and if a work once premiered gains further performances, that is a boost up the greasy pole. As an example, Hynninen mentions her ensemble piece *New Holland*, which was enthusiastically received in St Petersburg in 2013 but was not taken up in Finland until last year: the Hyvinkää Orchestra performed *New Holland* a year ago in March.



“But the main thing is to just keep on writing and not be bothered if a work doesn’t take off. It’s difficult to get your music programmed if you haven’t written standard works such as string quartets. It’s been easier to cope with this during the pandemic, with all the peer support that has been available,” she says.

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, Hynninen and her family relocated to Finland from the USA, where she had been working on an artistically oriented doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley for nearly four years. She spent her time there studying and teaching computer-assisted composition, seeking inspiration in technology and writing a new ensemble work as part of a research project on a computer-assisted orchestration tool.

How did Maija Hynninen end up as a composer in the first place? She originally studied the violin in Norway but did not feel at home with interpreting existing classical repertoire. Contemporary music felt much more appealing. “Contemporary music is not difficult, because we instinctively understand what our times are like. We all live in the present, and interpretation is born out of that,” Hynninen enthuses.

She stopped being an instrumentalist and applied for the composition class at the Sibelius Academy. She had in fact been writing music since she was a child. “I was timid but prepared to work hard. Paavo

Heininen’s classes were all about technique, about the craft, and this suited my violinist personality.”

Hynninen and her family left for California in 2016 in the midst of a family crisis: their youngest child was seriously ill, and Hynninen feared that her career as a composer might be in jeopardy. Yet she decided to apply for the doctoral programme at Berkeley and was accepted. The family adapted to life in the USA very well, enjoying Halloween and the giant redwood trees and so on.

At the University of California, Berkeley, Hynninen was assigned to assist Professor Carmine Cella, who has developed a computer-assisted orchestration software application named Orchidea. Her task was to write an ensemble work using the tool being developed and to help improve the tool to cater to composer’s needs. Hynninen, who has also studied at IRCAM in Paris, has never considered computer-assisted composition as meaning that the computer does some of the composer’s work for them. The purpose of Orchidea is for the software to suggest how the sounds in given concrete sound samples could be rendered through orchestration.

“For instance that a particular breathing-like sound could be approximated by adding a high col legno harmonic on a violin,” Hynninen explains. It is important to note that the computer does not make the work any faster or easier. It simply provides ideas which the composer must

then know how to process, even if they initially seem alien. “A composer’s work is about listening and selecting, and that’s tough. That’s where the craft comes in.”

Technology has been an important element in Hynninen’s work as a composer for a long time, and electroacoustic works are a major strand in her output. She views electronics much like she views a symphony orchestra. “Electronics contains an entire world, a wealth of sound. All you need to access it are one person, one computer and a pair of speakers.”

But she is itching to come to grips with the colours of the orchestra, given that acoustic instruments are unique and that she is specifically interested in instrumental properties and in exploring tonal colour. She gets up close and personal with the instruments with which she works, searching for new sounds with musicians and experimenting on the computer.



“I find that I tend to zoom in further and further towards the core of the sound, the colour, which is made up of overtones and their dynamic envelopes. Slight dynamic shifts within a tone can be inspiring because of how subtle they are. It’s like placing tiny weights on a scale, seeking to preserve a delicate balance,” she explains. “It’s exciting how broadly you can

experiment with sonority and texture using electronics. The parameters of electro-acoustic music, such as distance, localization and multi-dimensionality of the soundscape have become important elements in my acoustic works as well.”

Hynninen points out that working with technology actually highlights the craft and skill required in this time-consuming work. She wanted to make use of the offering at Berkeley and completed a module in new media including such diverse elements as philosophy, cyborgs, graphic design, feminism and building wireless devices. Her studies proved to be a welcome breathing space.

For Hynninen, every piece is a new research process where she seeks to push her own boundaries and dare to explore something new. This takes time. She notes that recently she has become more relaxed, allowing ideas to meander and opposites to clash. “Research is what puts the soul into a piece.”

Hynninen found the music scene and the general climate for conversation more relaxed in the USA than in Europe. She felt at home and inspired in California, even though living there as a struggling composer on a grant with family in tow was by no means easy. “I discovered a new source of courage there and an attitude of not caring what other people might think.”

Nevertheless, Finns find it difficult to adjust to the American way of putting oneself forward, which is ingrained in everyone as early as in elementary school. “You have to be honest to yourself and promote yourself in ways that are feasible for yourself. This will bring you into contact with people with

whom you want to collaborate, and they in turn will help shape your path,” Hynninen explains.

Hynninen experimented with lights and microcontrollers at Berkeley and explored how to engage with people in different disciplines. This comprehensive approach also provided input for her composing.

Having sat on various grant boards in Finland, she has found that women are more reserved than men on grant applications and that women are underrepresented to begin with. “We should have the courage to propound our ideas even if they are still in progress, just to make a statement saying, hey, look at this, this is what I do.”

This leads Hynninen to reflect on diversity more generally – with regard to not just gender but also age, educational background and geographical distribution. “It’s really difficult to sustain diversity in selections if the applicant pool is not heterogeneous in this sense. Institutions and performers should be sensitive to the importance of upholding diversity and should venture to raise up less well known names.”

Hynninen summarises the work of a composer thus: process, make a synthesis, build an individual voice. She mentions the importance of dreaming. “Dare to see what you want to do three years from now. That will build an arc that will carry through into the future, even if that dream never actually comes true.”

By Auli Särkiö-Pitkänen

Adapted From Finnish Music Quarterly
(<https://fmq.fi>)

Lahti’s Green-Minded Initiatives Recognized by National Geographic

National Geographic has listed five forward-thinking European cities, with the Finnish city of Lahti among them.

One of the factors that caught the attention of National Geographic was Lahti’s goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2025, which would make it the first city to do so in Finland. The city also introduced an app-based trading scheme for personal traffic emissions for its residents last year.

National Geographic also underlined the city’s commitment to a circular economy, including reusing, recycling and renewing to remove waste from the system, and water conservation efforts.

Lahti made headlines when it was selected as the European Green Capital 2021 in recognition of its efforts “to inspire positive change and leadership in the transformation to a more sustainable future”.



its role in the European Go Green Routes

project. Together with LAB University of Applied Sciences, Lahti is seeking to improve the accessibility of its recreational areas and promote nature-based entrepreneurship. The first step in this process is the construction of an accessible nature trail to Likolampi as part of the Kintterö Health Forest.

“As the future green capital, Lahti will be looking for practical environmental solutions that can also be applied elsewhere in the world,” said Saara Vauramo, programme director of the European Green Capital 2021 project. “Through the Go Green Routes project, LAB and the City of Lahti will strengthen international co-operation aimed at studying and measuring the welfare effects of nature.”

By James O’Sullivan

Adapted From Good News Finland
(<https://www.goodnewsfinland.com>)



Traveling to Finland?

FINENTRY is a service that aims to make it easier to travel to Finland during the coronavirus pandemic. The service assesses travellers’ risk of spreading the coronavirus and provides travellers with information and instructions on coronavirus testing and self-quarantine.

You can use FINENTRY to:

- make an appointment for a coronavirus test in Finland
- get instructions for arriving at your test via SMS
- get your coronavirus test result via SMS
- Please note that a coronavirus test booked through the service does not provide you with a separate coronavirus test certificate.

See also instructions and restrictions regarding entry to Finland. They can be found on the website of the Finnish Border Guard (<https://raja.fi/en/guidelines-for-border-traffic-during-pandemic>).

The service is available with all common browsers: Firefox, Chrome, Edge, Safari.

To get started, please visit:
<https://app.finentry.fi/>



Among Forests and Lakes: Landscape Masterpieces from the Finnish National Gallery

The National Nordic Museum in Seattle is opening a new exhibition in May, featuring landscape masterpieces from the Finnish National Gallery. It examines how Finnish artists have depicted the landscape of their native country from the 1850s until the present day.

The exhibition presents over 50 paintings and prints drawn from the Ateneum Art Museum, one of three museums that form the Finnish National Gallery. Selected scenes cover more than 150 years and 800 miles, with artworks capturing the splendor and grandeur of Finland from the coast and archipelago in the south to Sápmi and the Arctic Ocean in the north.

Organized into four themes, the exhibition shows the sophistication of the Finnish art establishment and the concurrent development of the landscape genre from idealized views completed in the artist's studio to realistic scenes painted en plein air ("in the open air") to visual expressions of the landscape in a modern artistic language. An important loan of video art from the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma (also part of the Finnish National Gallery) strengthens the exhibition with the work of contemporary Sámi director, photographer, and video artist Marja Helander, who explores Finnish and Sámi culture through film.

This exhibition is curated by the Finnish National Gallery's Curator Dr. Hanne Selkokari and Senior Researcher Anu Utriainen.

To learn more, please visit <https://www.nordicmuseum.org/exhibitions/forestsandlakes>.



This European Country Was Just Named the Happiest in the World — For the Fourth Time in a Row

In a year filled with heartache and strife, one European country has remained consistent in its happiness, topping the World Happiness Report for the fourth year in a row.

Finland came in at No. 1 in happiness for 2021, according to a new report released Friday that included four other European countries in the Top 5.

Though the report has come out each year since 2012, this year's posed a "unique challenge" due to the pandemic, which prevented most of the face-to-face interviews typically used to compile data.

"We need urgently to learn from COVID-19," co-editor Jeffrey Sachs said. "The pandemic reminds us of our global environmental threats, the urgent need to cooperate, and the difficulties of achieving cooperation in each country and globally. The World Happiness Report 2021 reminds us that we must aim for well being rather than mere wealth, which will be fleeting indeed if we don't do a much better job of addressing the challenges of sustainable development."

The report called Finland's win "no surprise," and said that it consistently ranked high in measuring mutual trust, which has helped protect lives and livelihoods during the pandemic.

John Helliwell, a professor at the University of British Columbia who contributed to the report, said that despite COVID, this year saw no actual average decline in well-being when measured by people's own evaluation of their lives.

"One possible explanation is that people see COVID-19 as a common, outside threat affecting everybody and that this has generated a greater sense of solidarity and fellow-feeling," he said.

Following Finland, the other countries that made the top 10 were, in order, Iceland, Denmark, Switzerland, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, Norway, New Zealand and Austria, according to CNN.

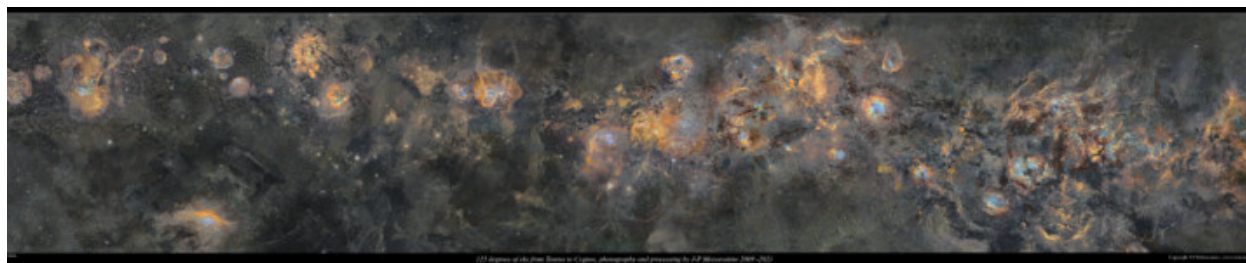
**Adapted From an Article on Yahoo.com
Submitted By Asko Hamalainen**



Photographer Spends 12 Years, 1250 Hours, Exposing Photo of Milky Way

Finnish astrophotographer J-P Metsavainio has released a Milky Way photo that took him nearly 12 years to create. The 1.7-gigapixel image has a cumulative exposure time of 1,250 hours. Metsavainio began shooting for the project back in 2009. For the next 12 years, he focused on different areas and objects in the Milky Way, shooting stitched mosaics of them as individual artworks. To complete the ultra-high-resolution view of the Milky Way as a whole, Metsavainio then set out to fill in the gaps that weren't covered by his original artworks. The photo is 100,000 pixels wide and comprises 234 individual panels stitched together.

To learn more, visit: <https://astroanarchy.blogspot.com/2021/03/gigapixel-mosaic-of-milky-way-1250.html>



May Day in Finland

The 1st of May is an official holiday of the Student Union of the University of Helsinki. To mark the day, the university students wear a traditional white student cap, which they have received as a symbol of their graduation from the upper secondary school (high school).

Nowadays, May Day Eve is the highlight of May Day celebrations for the university students, culminating at six o'clock in the central Market Square of Helsinki, where they gather around the fountain-statue of "Havis Amanda".

This statue, representing a mermaid-like figure of a young maiden sculpted by the artist Ville Vallgren in 1908, is regarded as a symbol of Helsinki, "the Daughter of the Baltic Sea". The students have a tradition of capping the maiden statue with a white student cap, while large crowds flock to watch the event.

On the following May Day morning, the students gather in a downtown park to have a picnic and listen to speeches given by Student Unions. Male choral singing and brass band music may be heard performed at these events, both being traditional May Day entertainment. During the recent decades, also other people have started to attend the event, making it a yearly May Day tradition.

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