

The music of Scandinavia and Finland



Finnish Composers

Uuno Klami (1900–1961)

The *Kalevala Suite* is Klami's main work for orchestra. He completed the first, four-movement version in 1933 but in 1943 placed an additional scherzo movement, *Terhenniemi*, in the middle. The *Kalevala Suite* is a combination of a national topic with an orchestral technique borrowed mainly from Stravinsky. The opening movement, *The Creation of the Earth*, growing from a mysterious whisper to a tremendous climax, and the closing movement telling of the *Forging of the Sampo* are evocative of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in their primitive ecstasy. *Terhenniemi* is a masterly, airy scherzo. The slow movements, *Sprout of Spring* and *Cradle Song for Lemminkäinen*, are more restful in mood and therefore possibly more traditional in style.

Leevi Madetoja (1887–1947)

The best of the Madetoja symphonies is, however, the **third** (1926), and it is one of the few items in Finnish orchestral literature on a par with the works of Sibelius. Whereas the first Madetoja symphonies are similar in style to the early symphonies of Sibelius, the third may be likened most closely to precisely Sibelius's third. While it does not quite capture the sovereignty of the first movement of Sibelius's third, the works as a whole are of equal merit. The thing that strikes the listener is the maturity of this composer still not in his 40th year.

There is one trait in the orchestral music of Madetoja that has passed almost unnoticed but that runs from the *Concert Overture* through the *Comedy Overture* (1923) and culminates in the third symphony. Elegy and resignation are swept aside, and so is grandiloquent romantic outpouring. The parallel between the third symphonies of Madetoja and Sibelius lies precisely in that they are both classical in spirit without being neoclassical in style.

Einojuhani Rautavaara (b. 1928)

Einojuhani Rautavaara (born 9 October 1928) is internationally one of the best known and most frequently performed Finnish composers. He is by nature a romantic, even a mystic, as is often apparent from the titles of his works: for example ***Angels and Visitations*** for orchestra or his double-bass concerto *Angel of Dusk*. Despite Rautavaara's label of "mysticism" he is a complex and contradictory figure whose works cannot be categorized in stylistic terms.

Rautavaara's earliest works revealed close ties to tradition but also his desire to renew it. They were followed by an extreme constructivist and avant-garde phase (as in the serially organized fourth symphony "Arabescata", 1962) after which Rautavaara turned to hyper-romanticism and finally mysticism. Since the early 1980s Rautavaara has adopted a sort of post-modern musical language in which modern and traditional elements of varying degrees of constructivism or freedom are combined with one another.

Joonas Kokkonen (1921–1996)

Joonas Kokkonen was one of the dominant figures of the post-war history of Finnish musical life. He was also a leading symphonist who, in addition to composing made a tremendous contribution to his field by serving in numerous important administrative capacities, such as the chairman of Teosto, the Finnish copyright bureau and the chairman of the Nordic Composers Council. Kokkonen was also professor of composition at the Sibelius Academy from 1959 until 1963.

Kokkonen has come to be regarded as the spiritual successor to Sibelius while names such as Bach and Bartók have been proffered as his models. Following an early period of neoclassicism, he turned to 12-tone technique and on via his third symphony (1967) to free tonality. In the 1970s, especially, melody acquired an increasingly prominent position in his music.

Kokkonen was not a particularly prolific composer. Beginning with chamber music, he did not progress to orchestral music - nowadays considered his core genre - until he was nearly 40. *Music for String Orchestra* was written in 1957 and marked his breakthrough as a major orchestral composer. Kokkonen composed four symphonies in all; he is also known for his famous ***Cello Concerto***, his *Requiem* and above all for the opera *The Last Temptations* completed in 1975. This main work by Kokkonen has won itself a place among one of the most successful Finnish operas.