

An Introduction to Finnish Music for Wind Band

Finland is not one of the first countries that comes to mind when discussing music for wind band. But this is a musical nation with rich traditions: it produced Jean Sibelius, one of the great symphonists of the 20th century; has nurtured internationally acclaimed conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Leif Segerstam, and Osmo Vänskä, as well as opera stars Karita Mattila and Martti Talvela; and supports 20 full-time symphony orchestras – all in a country with roughly the same population as the city of Chicago.

Finland has a long tradition of military and brass bands, whose repertoires until recently consisted primarily of light music and marches. Around 1990, however, bands in Finland initiated a transformation into more serious ensembles. Composers began to realize the wind band's potential as a medium for art music and a repertory began to develop. This recent repertory is the focus of this article.

Invaluable to this research was the Finnish Music Information Center (FIMIC) in Helsinki, an organization dedicated to the promotion of Finnish music and repository for musical materials from around the country. Perusal of hundreds of scores and recordings there resulted in the following annotated list. Almost all of the music described below is available through their website (www.fimic.fi). If it is not, the center can provide information on how to obtain it. Their wind music specialist is Kari Laitinen, co-author of this article.

In order to limit its scope, discussion here includes only works for full ensembles of wind and percussion instruments. It does not include works for chamber winds or brass, or for ensembles with a soloist. Scoring varies somewhat for these pieces, so an exact instrumentation is provided for each.

In the following study, an effort has been made to include the various types of ensembles that may be able to utilize this material. The list therefore includes some virtuosic works and some that are less technically demanding; a few older works and many newer ones; and some by established Finnish composers and several by younger ones. There is an emphasis on repertory that has distinctively Finnish musical materials or subject matter. Hopefully a proper balance has been achieved. The overriding consideration, however, is quality – well-crafted music with artistic integrity and intent. This is by no means a comprehensive list. Rather, it is a cross section of the more frequently performed Finnish works and composers, representing the finest Finnish music available for wind band.

Aho, Kalevi (b. 1949)

Tristia (1999), 11'

pic, 2 fl, 3 ob, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, cbsn, AATB sx, 4 hn, 3 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, 2 perc

Kalevi Aho has been called "Finland's most significant living symphonic composer" (Korhonen, 140). He is a former composition instructor at the Sibelius Academy, Finland's leading music institution, and currently a full-time freelance composer. He has been the composer-in-residence for the Lahti Symphony Orchestra since 1992. *Tristia* is his only work for wind band to date. It was commissioned by Klaus Pytkänen and the Apollo Wind Band in Helsinki for its 10th anniversary. The title comes from a poem of the same name by the Russian

Osip Mandelstam. The primary characteristics of this single-movement work are the long build-up and release of tension by using sustained chords supporting melismatic melodic lines passing through various instruments. It is tonally centered music that uses altered scales and chromatic colorings. Aho aimed to create a work that had few of the old standard wind band sounds. This work is a significant contribution to the repertory of Finnish works for winds. Technical demands are within the capabilities of most university wind ensembles.

Almila, Atso (b. 1953)

Visions from the North (1997), 19'

2 fl, 2 ob, Eb cl, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, ATB sx, 4 hn, 4 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, timp, perc, opt. fireworks, lights, and chorus

Sinfonia II (2003), 25'

2 fl (2nd dbl pic), ob, Eb cl, 2 cl, bcl, bsn, AT sx, 3 hn, 3 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, 2 perc

These two works are the largest of the several works that Atso Almila has written for wind band. All of them strike a balance between the accessible and the sophisticated. *Visions from the North* portrays various aspects of Finnish culture and history. It is in four movements: In Times of War, Dance of the Midnight Sun, The Mythical Gods, and The King's March; the last two are connected. Dance of the Midnight Sun is the centerpiece of the work, and captures the light delicacy of this most characteristic feature of the Finnish summer. It is an elegant dance with a rhythmic ostinato figure and an uncomplicated diminished-scale melody that passes through various voices. The optional fireworks and lights are intended to portray northern lights, a characteristic feature of the Finnish winter. *Sinfonia II* is a single movement work in a large ABA' form. The outer sections use the interval of the minor third as a significant building block. The center section is thinly scored with more technical challenges. This work was commissioned by the Guards' Band in Helsinki, the premiere military band in Finland.

Ampuja, Raine (b. 1958)

Magic (1998), 6:30'

2 fl, ob, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, ATB sx, 4 hns, 3 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba/cbs, perc

Raine Ampuja was a long-time director of the Guards' Band in Helsinki. He has written a number of arrangements and shorter works for wind band, often for amateurs. *Magic* was commissioned by Pekka Ulmanen and the Haapaniemi Youth Wind Orchestra from the town of Kuopio. The music is based on a tale from the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic. It describes an old wizard Väinämöinen, who knows the secret of song with which he can charm people and nature at will. The score carries the lines from the *Kalevala*: "I am driven by my longing, and my understanding urges that I should commence my singing and begin my recitation. I will sing the people's legends, and the ballads of the nation." The music is not technically difficult and is playable by less experienced ensembles.

Eerola, Lasse (1945-2000)*Sarja (Suite)* (1992), 16'

pic, 3 fl, 2 ob, Eb cl, 4 cl, bcl, AATB sx, 4 hn, 2 flgln, 4 trp, 4 trb, 2 euph, 2 tba, perc

Lasse Eerola was a composer, clarinetist, and teacher from the town of Joensuu. He wrote several works for his students, this *Sarja (Suite)* among the largest and most sophisticated. It is a sizeable and well-crafted work in three movements, *Maestoso*, *Molto adagio e semplice*, and *Scherzando*. The writing employs fresh, imaginative, and accessible ideas in a unified work. The theme from the first movement returns in the third movement but in a different meter. The second movement calls for long solos in the euphonium and oboe over a harmonic background that makes extensive use of percussion colors with vibraphone, glockenspiel, and chimes. Melodies in all movements move back and forth between duple and triple subdivisions of the beat, sometimes accompanied by contrapuntally elaborate countermelodies. Eerola also makes frequent use of rhythmic ostinato figures throughout, resulting in multi-layered musical textures. This is appropriate music for undergraduate symphonic bands. Eerola likely would have contributed many more quality works to the wind band repertory but for his untimely death in 2000 by suicide.

Ikonen, Janne (b. 1975)*Käikuja laulumailta (Echoes from Karelia)* (2002), 6'

pic (opt), 2 fl, 2 ob, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, AATB sx, 4 hn, 3 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, cb, perc

The “echoes” of this work are realized in different ways. Northern Karelian influences are heard in large contrasts: long and steady lines like its hilly landscape and fast and busy parts like its village festivals. The melancholy character of the work tells of the deep but not heavy personality of the people of this region in southeastern Finland. The piece loosely follows sonata form and its melodies are folk-like but not direct quotes. Janne Ikonen calls it “a melodic concert piece with the feel of a symphonic poem in the scale of an overture.” It was commissioned by the wind orchestra from the northern Karelian town of Joensuu for its 80th anniversary. Ikonen is a versatile musician whose activities include work as a percussionist, music theory teacher, and conductor. As a composer, he has written in genres that range from symphonic works to chamber music to musical theater.

Kantelinen, Tuomas (b. 1969)*Ghosts* (2000), 12'

pic, 2 fl, 2 ob, Eng horn, 3 cl, acl, bcl, 2 bsn, cbsn, ATB sx, 4 hn, 3 trp, 3 trb, 2 euph, 2 tba, timp, 6 perc

Tuomas Kantelinen is one of Finland's leading film -music composers. He is best known for his score to the 1999 film *Rukajärven tie (The Ambush)*, for which he received the Finnish equivalent of an Oscar. *Ghosts* is colorful and descriptive, as can be expected from the playful title in the hands of a film composer. It was written as part of a special project in November 2000, in which a number of wind players from leading Finnish orchestras joined forces to create a 110-member

symphonic band. The published version is a reworking of the instrumentation by Raine Ampuja for more conventional forces. Despite the difference in subject matter, *Ghosts* has characteristics in common with Michael Colgrass's *Winds of Nagual*. It is innovative, playful, at times humorous, technically demanding, has several characters, and uses the full palette of instrumental colors (including a large battery of percussion) to achieve its effects.

Katila, Timo (b. 1956)*Sinfonia in C* (1989/99), 13'

pic, 2 fl, 2 ob, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, AATB sx, 4 hn, 2 cnt, 2 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, perc

Timo Katila's *Sinfonia in C* holds the distinction of being the first multi-movement symphony for winds by a Finnish composer. Its three movements – *Allegro*, *Andante*, and *Vivace* – are straightforward harmonically and formally. The writing is frequently in three- or four-part harmony, which Katila often orchestrates with several instruments doubling each part. The second movement is more chamber-oriented than the outer two; the saxophones, two horns, 2 trumpets, and non-pitched percussion are tacit. Katila has taught composition and flute at the music college in the town of Rauma and is currently its dean. In his administrative capacities, Katila has been a force in the development of wind bands throughout Finland.

Lindberg, Magnus (b. 1958)*Zungenstimmen* (1994), 14'

2 fl (2nd dbl pic), 2 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, SATB sx, 2 hn, 3 C trp, 3 tbn, tba, cb, perc (1 player), hp, pno

Grand Duo (1999-2000), 17:30'

3 fl (3rd dbl pic), 2 ob, EH, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, cbsn, 4 hn, 3 C trp (3rd dbl D), 3 trb, tba

Magnus Lindberg's international reputation warrants mention of both of the wind band works he has written. They are equally representative of his style: virtuosic in all parts, rhythmically complex, contain frequent and rapid meter changes, use interplays of instrumental colors in similar ranges, pass imitative melodic fragments through sections of instruments, and employ “sound pyramids.” *Zungenstimmen* is the composer's arrangement for wind band of the first movement of his *Aura* for orchestra. *Grand Duo* was commissioned by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Royal Festival Hall Millennium celebration and premiered in London in March 2000 with Simon Rattle conducting. This is music that will challenge the finest university and professional wind ensembles.

Linkola, Jukka (b. 1955)*Sisu* (1995), 11'

pic, 2 fl, 2 ob, Eb cl, 3 cl, bcl, contralto cl, 2 bsn, AATB sx, 4 hn, 3 cnt, 2 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, cbs, timp, 3 perc, pno

Wedding Music (1998) 12'

pic, 2 fl, ob, 3 cl, bcl, bsn, ATB sx, 4 hn, 4 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, timp, 3 perc (fl 2, cl 3, bsn, 4th hn, 4th trp all optional)

Jukka Linkola is a versatile musician whose interest and experience involves conducting, instrumental performing, and composing in genres as varied as opera, theater, jazz, symphonic works, and chamber music. The two works included here demonstrate his versatility even within the single genre of symphonic band. *Sisu* is in a single movement with several sections ranging in character from playful to heavy. It achieves formal unity through the recurrence of three main ideas: a clarinet-bassoon duet, a chorale, and a three-measure *sisu* theme. The term *sisu* describes the Finnish characteristics of strength and persistence in the face of adversity. The work has American roots; it was commissioned by the Finnish-American conductor Russel Pesola and the Concordia College Band (Minnesota). *Wedding Music*, in contrast, shows Linkola's tamer side. It is in a decidedly tonal idiom with long flowing melodic lines, evoking images of the big romantic summer weddings common in Finland. Its three movements – The March, The Wedding Waltz, and The Ceremony – use conventional forms and harmonies. The last movement concludes with a direct recapitulation of material from the first movement. The designation of several parts as optional make this work playable by smaller ensembles.

Marttinen, Tauno (b. 1912)

It is impossible to list just one or two representative works for Tauno Marttinen, because his output has been so large and spans such a long period of time. He has written almost 400 works covering all instrumental and vocal genres. Marttinen often finds musical inspiration in mythology, nature, and the *Kalevala*. The mystical quality of his music and his personality have earned him the epithet »the shaman of Hämeenlinna« after the town in which he lives. As with any *oeuvre* that is so large, the quality is uneven. His better-known and more frequently performed works for band include *Pohjola (The North, 1970-1977)*, *Yö linnakkeessa (Night in the Fortress, 1978)*, *Sirius (1980)*, *Adagio (1982)*, *Fanfare (1982)*, and *Concerto for Wind Band (1984)*. His output for wind band is remarkable because he composed serious music for bands decades before anyone else in Finland ever considered doing so.

Pekkanen, Pertti (b. 1944)

Jokeri (The Joker) (1972), 2:30'

pic, fl, 2 ob, Eb cl, 3 cl, bsn, ATB sx, 4 Eb hn, 3 trp, 3 trb, euph, tba, timp, perc

Jokeri is a rhythmic humoresque, short and light-hearted in the vein of Leonard Bernstein's *Slava!*, complete with a surprise at the end (optional). It is a popular work among Finnish wind bands because of its immediate appeal and accessible level of difficulty. The writing is so characteristic for winds that the work would not sound right with any other grouping of instruments. This is a tribute to Pekkanen's understanding of wind instruments, a consequence of his training as a flutist and in his years of playing in Finland's leading military band. His recent work has focused primarily on the orchestra. He has served as director of the City Orchestras in Turku, Kuopio, Lappeenranta, and Vaasa and has been professor of orchestral conducting at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. The horn parts to *Jokeri* are in Eb, as was the norm in Finnish band works from the 1970s.

Räisänen, Tomi (b. 1976)

Omenapuun alla (Under the Apple Tree) (2002-03), 12:30'

3 fl (1st dbl pic), ob, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, SATB sx, 2 hn, 3 trp, 2 trb, 2 euph, tba, cb, perc

Omenapuun alla is the most significant composition that this young composer has yet produced. This is evident from the work he has done with it since its inception. Räisänen first scored the work for piano in 2001 and has since created seven versions of it for various instrumental combinations. Version E was scored for wind ensemble in 2002-03. The work has dodecaphonic influences but is not strictly serialized; the composer calls it "quasi-dodecaphony." The wind score is precise in notation and carefully organized. It is cast in six short movements: Miron, Valkea Kuulas, Nalif, Hiberna, Jaspi, and Oranie. This is technically challenging music, but within the grasp of most serious university wind ensembles.

Rautavaara, Einojuhani (b. 1928)

A Soldier's Mass, Op. 40 (1968), 11'

2 fl, 2 ob, 3 cl, 2 bsn, ATB sx, 4 hn, 4 trp, 4 trb, euph, tba, timp, perc

Einojuhani Rautavaara is a familiar name to many wind conductors because of his well-known works for brass. Foremost among these is his *Requiem in Our Time* (1953), a work that brought him international acclaim. *A Soldier's Mass* is scored for a full complement of woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Rautavaara considers *A Soldier's Mass* to be a companion work to the *Requiem*. He also explains that because he had army experience both in war (as a young civilian) and in peace (as an officer in the reserve), the four movements of the work contain subtitles appropriate to a soldier: Kyrie-Lord of the Battle, Miserere-Have Mercy Upon Us, Gloria-On the Fields of Glory, and In Hora Mortis-In the Moment of Death [*Requiem* booklet]. As the titles suggest, this is heavy, sometimes even bleak, music.

Sallinen, Aulis (b. 1935)

The Palace Rhapsody, Op. 72 (1996), 16'

pic, 2 fl, 3 ob, 3 cl, 2 bsn, cbsn, AB sx, 4 hn, 3 trp, 3 trb, tba, 3 perc, hp, pno

Along with Einojuhani Rautavaara, Aulis Sallinen represents the older generation of distinguished Finnish composers who have an international reputation. *Palace Rhapsody* is based on Sallinen's 1995 opera, *The Palace*. The following year, after receiving a commission from Timothy Reynish and the Wind Orchestra of the Royal College of Music in England, Sallinen used music from the opera to create this work. It is in one continuous movement with several sections, each portraying a mood from the original opera. It is scored for expanded orchestral winds plus two saxophones, harp, and piano. The writing demonstrates Sallinen's thorough understanding of wind sonorities. The instrumental combinations are crafty and distinctive, the scoring often transparent and technically challenging.

Takalo, Arttu (b. 1971)*Symphony* (2005), 23'

2 fl (1st dbl pic), 2 ob, 3 cl, bcl, 2 bsn, AATB sx, 3 trp, 4 hn, 3 trb, euph, tba, timp, perc

Composer, arranger, percussionist, and conductor Arttu Takalo has written three sizeable works for winds within the last few years: *The Wastelands* (2000), *Music for Percussion and Band* (2004-05), and this *Symphony*. The *Symphony* was commissioned by the Karelia Wind Orchestra for their 60th anniversary; its premiere took place in October of 2005. Despite Takalo's history of compositions with extra-musical associations, this is "pure" music. Its four movements roughly follow classical form: Molto andante, Scherzo, Largo, and Allegro assai-Adagio. As with all of Takalo's compositions, this is strongly tonal or free-tonal music with extensive use of percussion. The most important element of the work is its key relationships. The C# minor first movement moves to a light and bright D major scherzo in the second movement. The dark third movement revolves around G minor, and returns to C# minor in the slow final movement before a conclusion in E major. The composer intends for this to be playable yet grandiose music that can be performed repeatedly.

Viitasaari, Jukka (b. 1961)*Arctic Games* (2004), 6:30'

pic, 2 fl, ob, 3 cl, bcl (opt bsn 2), bsn, AATB sx, 4 hn, 3 trp, 3 trb, bar, tba, cbs, timp, 3 perc

Although Jukka Viitasaari's output includes music for several instrumental combinations, he has specialized in works for wind band. He has written over fifty. The earlier ones are for younger groups; the later ones are longer, more contrapuntal, and appropriate for college bands. *Arctic Games* "cherishes snow wars and other delights of winter in childhood." It begins with a declamatory figure in the brasses that is the work's unifying element, accompanied by sometimes unusual rhythmic figures. The work uses time signatures of 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 7/4, and 5/8. As in many of his later compositions, Viitasaari calls for an array of percussion instruments, here consisting of snare drum, bass drum, crash and suspended cymbals, bongos, tom-toms, vibra-slap, whistle, glockenspiel, marimba, and timpani. The piece was commissioned by the Finnish Workers' Music Union (Suomalainen Työväen Musiikkiliitto, or STM) for the 50th anniversary of its summer band camp.

Vilén, Asko (b. 1946)*Sampo Sinfonia* (1982), 20'

pic, 2 fl, ob, 3 cl, acl, bcl, bsn, ATB sx, 2 hn, 4 trp, 4 trb, euph, 2 tba, 6 perc, opt. chorus and 2 kanteles

Asko Vilén is a music theory instructor at the Music Institute in the town of Hämeenlinna. He has written some 30 wind works, mostly for his students; *Sampo Sinfonia* is the largest of them. It is one long symphonic movement in ABA' form. The outer sections include portions in 8/8 time divided as 3+3+2/8. The middle

section includes optional chorus and kanteles, neither of which conductors outside of Finland will likely opt to use; the choral text is in Finnish, and kanteles (Finnish folk instruments similar to the zither) are rare outside Finland. Vilén included these parts in order to bring out the distinctly Finnish imagery of *sampo*, a magical machine from the *Kalevala* that makes money and great fortunes.

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Website

Finnish Music Information Center:

www.fimic.fi

Daniel Gordon is an Associate Professor of Music at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh where his responsibilities include directing the Symphonic Band and Saxophone Ensemble as well as teaching saxophone. He is also founder and Music Director of the Adirondack Wind Ensemble, a professional ensemble of performers from around the Adirondack region of Upstate New York.

Kari Laitinen is Information Specialist at the Finnish Music Information Centre where he works as a music librarian. He is at present writing a doctoral dissertation at the Helsinki University on the history of Finnish military music in the 18th century. He is also a board member of the Military Music Guild in Finland. His research on Finnish military music history and Finnish band music has been presented at international conferences in Italy (IGEB, 2002), Germany (Stiftung Kloster Michaelstein, 2004), Sweden (WASBE, 2004) and the United States (IGEB, 2006). Besides articles in national journals, his writings have been published in the *Finnish Music Quarterly*, *Alta Musica*, *Michaelsteiner Konferenzberichte* and the *WASBE Newsletter*. He is also author of the 20th anniversary history of the Military Music Guild (2003).

Playlist

“An Introduction to Finnish Music for Wind Band”

Presentation at the national meeting of the College Band Directors' National Association
University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
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Daniel Gordon, Associate Professor of Music, Plattsburgh State University of NY

1. Aho, Kalevi. Excerpt from *Tristia, Fantasy for Wind Orchestra*, on *Ghosts*, Kaartin Soittokunta (The Guards' Band), Elias Seppälä, conductor. Alba compact disc ABCD 170, 2001, track 2.
2. Almila, Atso. *Visions from the North*, second movement, “Dance of the Midnight Sun,” Adirondack Wind Ensemble, Nikke Isomöttönen, conductor. Live performance, Plattsburgh, NY, January 28, 2006.
3. Eerola, Lasse. *Sarja Puhallinorkesterille (Suite for Wind Orchestra, 1992)*, first movement, “Maestoso,” on *Made in Finland*, Seinäjoki Symphonic Band, Petri Salo, conductor. Teosto compact disc SSBCD003, track 1.
4. Ikonen, Janne. Excerpt from *Kaikuja laulumailta (Echoes from Karelia)*, Adirondack Wind Ensemble, Nikke Isomöttönen, conductor. Live performance, Plattsburgh, NY, January 28, 2006.
5. Kantelinen, Tuomas, arranged by Raine Ampuja. Excerpt from *Ghosts*, on *Ghosts*, Kaartin Soittokunta (The Guards' Band), Raine Ampuja, conductor. Alba compact disc ABCD 170, 2001, track 7.
6. Lindberg, Magnus. Excerpt from *Gran Duo*, on *Magnus Lindberg*, music by Magnus Lindberg, Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Sakari Oramo, conductor. Ondine compact disc ODE 1038-2, 2005, track 2.
7. Linkola, Jukka. *Wedding Music*, third movement, “The Ceremony,” on *Sisu*, music by Jukka Linkola, Kaartin Soittokunta (The Guards' Band), Elias Seppälä, conductor. Alba compact disc ABCD 161, 2001, track 9.
8. Pekkanen, Pertti. *Jokeri (The Joker)*, Plattsburgh State University of New York Symphonic Band, Daniel Gordon, conductor. Live performance, Plattsburgh, NY, November 11, 2005.
9. Rautavaara, Einojuhani. *Sotilasmessu (A Soldier's Mass), Op. 40*, first movement, “Sotajoukkojen Herra—Kyrie” (“Lord of the Battle—Kyrie”) on *Ghosts*, Kaartin Soittokunta (The Guards' Band), Raine Ampuja, conductor. Alba compact disc ABCD 170, 2001, track 3.
10. Sallinen, Aulis. Excerpt from *Palatsiarapsodia (The Palace Rhapsody), Op. 72*, on *Ghosts*, Kaartin Soittokunta (The Guards' Band), Elias Seppälä, conductor. Alba compact disc ABCD 170, 2001, track 1.
11. Viitasaari, Jukka. Excerpt from *Light Up the Sky*, combined Satakunta and Pohjanmaa Military Bands, Riku Huhtasalo, conductor. Live performance, Kankaanpää, Finland, November 24, 2006.

Information on recordings and scores is available at:

www.fimic.fi (website for Finnish Music Information Center, Helsinki)

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