

# Wind Band Music in Finland

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## A Short History of Finnish Wind Music

The first Finnish military bands to be formed in the 18th century were modelled on their European counterparts. Finland was at that time part of the Kingdom of Sweden and its soldiers part of its royal army, so military music in Finland was inevitably influenced by that in Sweden. The early bands consisted mainly of clarinets, bassoons and french horns, and their repertoires were for the most part made up of marches and dance music of European origin and serious music such as operatic arias arranged for wind ensemble.

During the period 1809-1917, when Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, more and more brass instruments found their way into the military bands, until by the mid-19th century, brass had replaced woodwinds almost entirely.

Finally, in the 1880s, the transition was made to the brass band pure and simple when Adolf Leander (1833-1899), conductor of the Guards Battalion stationed in Helsinki, gave the line-up and repertoire of the Finnish military band a complete overhaul. Instead of trumpets and trombones, bands started to cultivate members of the cornet family, from the high E-flat cornet to the low tuba. Leander left his mark on the history of brass music in other ways, too, by publishing a textbook on scoring for brass and by arranging hundreds of works for brass ensemble. He thus well deserved the honorary title of "father of Finnish brass band playing" later bestowed on him.

Leander was also to play a decisive role in the birth of the Finnish brass septet that was to contribute greatly to the rise of amateur music-making. The brass septet consisted of an E-flat cornet, two B-flat cornets, E-flat alto horn, B-flat tenor horn, B-flat baritone and tuba. Many mills and factories, societies and civic movements soon had a septet of their own, their music was deemed as "worthy", and people were encouraged in its pursuit in the spirit of public enlightenment.

The repertoire of the Finnish brass septet for the most part comprised traditional light and occasional music drawing on the sentimental slavic waltzes and brass band music from Sweden and Germany. Potpourris of Finnish folk songs were also very popular, as were arrangements of light classical music, marches and dance pieces. In the 1920s the repertoire absorbed elements of the tango and jazz as well. Although the repertoires of the brass septets were predominately popular music of foreign origin and Finnish folk song arrangements, there were some composers, such as Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) and Leevi Madetoja (1887-1947), who wrote little pieces expressly for them.

The golden age of the brass septet came in the second decade of the 20th century, but from then onwards its popularity began to wane as jazz gained more and more ground. Meanwhile changes were also taking place on the brass band front, as Lenni Linnala (1878-1947) began expanding the septet into a full wind band. The new trend is thought to have been set in motion by the visits to Finland of the American-

Finnish wind bands "Humina" and "Louhi". Inspired by these, wind players were soon being trained in Finland, too, to join the ranks of the brass bands. The process of change was nevertheless slow, and many bands continued as a septet right up to the Second World War.

After the war the work done by Linnala to develop Finland's brass bands was continued by Artturi Rope (1903-1976), founder of the band leader training as it is known today and pioneer of band instrumentation. Rope arranged a large volume of serious music for wind bands, thereby laying the foundations for the Finnish symphonic band repertoire. The biggest of these arrangements were symphonies by Tchaikovsky and Sibelius. Rope's successors in the arrangement of wind music have included the military band leader Teuvo Laine (1930-1996) and Arthur Fuhrmann (b. 1930), for many years conductor of the Helsinki Police Band, a prolific composer and an active figure on the musical scene in general.

### Finnish Wind Music and Composers

Although the music played by Finnish bands has from time immemorial tended to take the form of arrangements, there have always been composers writing specifically for this genre. The majority have themselves been band leaders producing music to suit their bands' own needs: marches, music for entertainment and light classical. A few 'serious' composers have also written works for wind band, but these have mostly been choral accompaniments for song festivals or marches commissioned by some organisation. Only since the 1970s have Finnish composers been adding to the repertoire in a big way, with concert music scored specifically for wind band.

Tauno Marttinen (b. 1912) is one of the most prolific Finnish composers of all times, and represented in his oeuvre of some 400 works are almost all genres of serious music. He writes in an idiom that is modern yet highly sonorous and melodic. He has sought inspiration in Finnish mythology, thereby earning himself the soubriquet of "the shaman of Hämeenlinna" after the town in which he lives. Marttinen was one of the first serious music composers to write for wind band, and his output in this genre includes such works as Pohjola (The North, 1970-77), Yö linnakkeessa (Night on the Fortress, 1978), Sirius (1980), Adagio (1982), Fanfare (1982) and a Concerto for Wind Band (1984).

Wind instruments are very much to the fore in the works of Leonid Bashmakov (b. 1927), who has written several concertos for wind instruments and a wealth of chamber music. His idiom is close to neoclassical, his music melodic and imaginatively scored. The colourful Trombonidol (1993) for trombone and wind band represents Bashmakov in concertante mode. Other earlier works for wind band include Etappeja (Stages, 1968), the 1971 Overture (1971), Prelude and Scherzo (1973), Crescendo (1980) and Aubades and Serenades (1991) for symphony orchestra winds.

Composer-conductor Luis Pasquet (b. 1917) was born in Uruguay but has been living in Finland since the 1970s. His music is an interesting mixture of impressionism, expressionism and jazz seasoned with South American spice. Three Red Tangos for wind band is an impressionistic fantasy on the Argentinean-Uruguayan tango and Canto a los naranjales (The Song for the Orange Groves), El valle de las flores (The

Flowers of the Valley) and Carnaval antiguo (The Old Carnival) were inspired by folk dance rhythms from South America.

Works for wind and above all his own instrument, the clarinet, form the backbone of the music by Lasse Eerola (1945-2000). A teacher by profession, he made special allowance for the needs of music students in composing a large volume of chamber music for them. His style is best revealed in precisely the works for wind band, such as the internationally acclaimed Variations for Wind Orchestra (1975/88), Fantasia for Clarinet and Wind Orchestra (1986) and the dynamic fanfares (1984, 1985, 1987 and 1996). Other works by Eerola for wind band include Syksyisiä kuvia (Autumn Scenes, 1985), the Suite for Wind Orchestra (1992) and the Music for Brass Quintet and Wind Orchestra (1998).

Representing a new-romantic trend in Finnish music is Harri Wessman (b. 1949), a composer of works characterised by a flexible handling of rhythm and lyricism. These musical features are interwoven in his works for wind with the clarity associated with Gebrauchsmusik. Wessman emphasises the pedagogical aspect of his music but without making any stylistic compromises in composing for young people. Kälviä (1995) and Kuopio (2000) were composed expressly for youth wind bands, but his other works for wind band – Loitsunpuhallus (Winding a Spell, 1984), Kanen teema (Kane's Theme, 1986), Alla Marcia (1988) and Mia's Rhythm (1991) – are also in the repertoire of many a youth and amateur wind band. Representing concert music of a more demanding nature is Prelude and Toccata (2001) for euphonium and wind band.

Composer-conductor Atso Almila (b. 1953) is a jack of all musical trades. As a composer he has concentrated primarily on theatre music, opera and wind music. The style of his wind band works subscribes to traditional, tonally clear ideals in the spirit of Gebrauchsmusik, and he is not above borrowing ingredients from popular music. This is very much apparent in his short concert pieces Concert March (1979), Allegro agitato (1986) and Fanfare (1987), but also in the larger-scale Concerto for Two Clarinets and Wind Band (1980) and Visions from the North (1997), the latter also being scored for lights and fireworks to give an impression of the Northern Lights.

Finnish composers with an international reputation such as Einojuhani Rautavaara (b. 1928) and Aulis Sallinen (b. 1935) have also written for wind band. Rautavaara's Sotilasmessu (A Soldier's Mass, 1968) is scored for the wind and saxophone sections of a symphony orchestra, while the organ concerto Annunciations (1976-77) is for organ, brass quintet and symphonic band. Sallinen's Chorale (1970) is scored for symphony orchestra winds, and Palace Rhapsody (1996), built round the main themes from his opera The Palace, is for symphonic band. The latter work has had a warm reception due to its challenging but surprisingly popular idiom.

#### New Wind Band Music Boom in the 1990s

From the 1970s onwards the new Finnish concert music for wind band has for the most part been confined to the repertoires of the professional wind bands. Over the past decade the standard of amateur brass bands in Finland has, however, risen considerably and the demand for Finnish concert repertoire has thus grown

accordingly. Composers are becoming more and more interested in the potential of wind bands and are now writing new symphonic concert music for them.

Works for wind band have been composed in the past decade or so by such composers as Harri Ahmas (*Hic et nunc*, 2000), Kalevi Aho (*Tristia*, 1999), Kimmo Hakola (*Triumph*, 1997), Tuomas Kantelinen (*Ghosts*, 2000), Timo-Juhani Kyllönen (*Meren kaupunki* (*Town by the Sea*), 1999) and Magnus Lindberg (*Zungenstimmen*, 1994 and *Grand Duo*, 1999-2000). A few composers with a background in jazz have also produced traditional concert music for wind band. They include Petri Juutilainen (*Tapahtuipa kerran Karjalassa* (*Once Upon a Time in Karelia*), 1997), Kirmo Lintinen (*YTY*, 2000), Antti Rissanen (*Suite Nostalgie*, 1999) and Arttu Takalo (*The Wastelands*, 2000).

In addition to these composers of perhaps a single work for wind band, the 1990s saw the emergence of a few addressing themselves first and foremost to concert and light wind music. Better allowance is now being made for the growing number of youth wind bands.

Jukka Linkola (b. 1955) is a composer known for his ability to switch with ease from one stylistic genre to another. Making a name for himself first as a jazz pianist and band leader, he has in recent years been identified primarily as a composer of not only orchestral and big band but also chamber and vocal music. He has written several concertos and other works for wind instruments and bands, one of which, *Wedding Music* (1998), has assumed a very prominent position in the Finnish wind band repertoire. In the composer's own words, *Wedding Music* is unashamedly beautiful music without making any obeisance to the demands of serious music. The *Concerto for Saxophone and Wind Band* (1999) is marked by the fact that it has several cadenzas and stretches the saxophone register to the extreme. Other works by Linkola include *Tango Tarantella* (1995) for trumpet and wind band, and *Sisu* (1999).

Jukka-Pekka Lehto (b. 1958) is best known in wind circles, where his music is performed by amateurs and professionals alike. Stylistically he is firmly rooted in neoclassicism, though he has nothing against modern performing techniques or free-pulsative episodes. In his *Concertino* (1995) for trombone and wind band he uses a number of modern effects, minimalist repetition, aleatory and multiphonics. The *Fantasia concertante*, "Il sonno" ("A Dream", 1998) for flute and wind band is a journey in the land of dream and the subconscious. Other notable works by Lehto include *Suita I* (1991), *Suita II* (1994) and *Kellojen legenda* (*The Legend of the Bells*, 1997).

The music of the Estonian-born Priit Raik (b. 1948) is characterised by an international wind sound displaying the influence of both Russian and American wind music. *Three Pieces for Wind Orchestra* is interesting because of the way it combines traditional and modern compositional techniques and faces the performer with rhythmic challenges.

Two of the most interesting wind composers to emerge in the past decade are the brothers Jukka (b. 1961) and Markku Viitasaari (b. 1966). Both have demonstrated a unique ability to combine the traditional Finnish national idiom with the Afro-American pop and jazz tradition. They have expressly concentrated on composing rhythmic functional music for young people that has become highly popular with

youth wind bands. The brothers have also championed the traditional brass septet by composing and arranging repertoire for this line-up.

Jukka Viitasaari's rock roots are very much in evidence in such zesty pieces for youth wind band as Mollipop (G Minor Pop Song, 1995), Beatmarssi (Beat March, 1995), Brazilian Pojat (Boys of Brazil, 1997) and Veli Nopea (Brother Sliver, 1998). His works in more serious vein include The Missing Season (2001), winner of the second prize in the international competition for a composition for wind band held in Italy.

Markku Viitasaari has written all sorts of wind music for beginners and more advanced players alike. Fanfaarimarssi (Fanfare March, 1988) is a brief but highly colourful fanfare, Upside Down in a Roundabout (1989) easy-going swing, while Inconscius (1992) is more demanding concert repertoire. Soulbeat (1987), Yksi teema (A Theme, 1994) and Proggis (1998) are rhythm music for young people.

Timo Forsström (b. 1961) is active in many fields of light music, both as a composer and as an arranger. Though a dedicated wind enthusiast and publisher, he has also made a name for himself as a schlager composer. His spirited concert march Castle Park (1996) is extremely popular, but Majakkasaari (Lighthouse Island, 1992) for euphonium and wind band, Taivallahti Blues (1992) and On the Long Road (1993) have also enjoyed a first-class reception among wind bands.

Raine Ampuja (b. 1958) is known as a military band leader with wide experience of the entire field of Finnish wind music, being a composer, performer, teacher and organiser. His most familiar concert works for wind band are Reverie (1988) and Magic (1998), a work steeped in the mythology of the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala.

Other works in the contemporary concert repertoire for wind band include Episodit (Episodes, 1989), and Sarkastinen tanssi (Sarcastic Dance) No. 1 (1986) and No. 2 (1987) by Asko Vilén, (b. 1946) and the first wind symphony to be composed by a Finn, that of Timo Katila (b. 1956). Juhani Leinonen (b. 1948), the driving force behind the Finnish tattoo tradition, has mostly written marches, but his output also takes in some light and concert music, such as the Ruukinmäkisarja (The Mill Hill Suite, 2001). The strong blues march Sininen paraati (Blue Parade) by Timo Hytönen (b. 1955) won the march composition competition held by the Finnish Defence Forces and MTV3 in 1986. Further representing the younger generation of wind composers are Harri Mäntynen (b. 1963), Ilppo Hiekkänen (b. 1964), Pasi-Heikki Mikkola (b. 1965) and Janne Ikonen (b. 1975).

## Finnish Wind Bands

Finnish wind band music would not exist without the Finnish bands that perform it. Although the bands draw widely on the international repertoire, the emphasis is on Finnish music. Many bands have commissioned new works, and a number of works are the result of sustained partnerships between composers and wind bands.

Finland at present has 12 professional military bands and a Conscript Band in which music students and keen amateur players can do their national service. The biggest of the military bands is the Guards' Band, which performs on formal national occasions and is an active champion of new Finnish concert music. The Helsinki

Police Band is semi- professional, since its players spend half their working hours on band duty and half on police duty.

Proof of the high standard of young Finnish players are the many wind bands established at music institutes and schools. The Seinäjoki Symphonic Band operating under the auspices of the South Ostrobothnian Music Institute, the Finnish Conservatory Wind Band in Jyväskylä, the Haapaniemi Youth Wind Band in Kuopio, and the Lieksa Youth Wind Band have won a strong foothold in Finnish youth band music thanks to their sustained wind training programmes. The Apollo Wind Band, the Rauma Boys' Band and the Tampere Workers' Association Youth Band not attached to any music institute have also done pioneering work on behalf of wind music.

Numerous new student bands, such as Puhkupillit, the wind band attached to the University of Jyväskylä, have introduced a youthful sound and humour into wind music. Meanwhile the Academic Wind Band at the University of Helsinki has concentrated on symphonic music for wind and brass, and the wind band consisting of students in vocational training at the Lahti Conservatoire has a repertoire ranging from classical concert to light music.