

# Germany as a Cultural Paragon

## Transferring Modern Musical Life from Central Europe to Finland

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### Introduction

From the customary point of view, the two decades before and after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century form the era when the national music culture of Finland was born. During these years, the first symphony orchestra (1882), the first conservatory (1882), the Finnish National Opera (1911), the Finnish Musicological Society (1916) and the first chair of musicology at the University of Helsinki (1918) were founded.<sup>1</sup> Further, in the wake of the first symphonies (1900–1902) and other orchestral music by Jean Sibelius, the concept of ‘national style’ was born, and Finnish orchestral music witnessed a breakthrough in the Western world.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the years between the mid-1880s and the Great War became famous for national song festivals with unprecedented large audiences and a great number of performers: thousands of nationally-inspired citizens assembled at the festivals, organised almost every summer in regional centres, in order to listen to tens of choirs, brass bands, string orchestras and solo performances.<sup>3</sup>

On closer inspection, however, we also find the formation of a new music culture in the transnational context of general European music, both art and popular. This development can be seen as a long-lasting process, in which German music and musical culture were transformed and translated to a prominent part of modern national culture in Finland. This chapter highlights the process of transfer from two angles: professional and amateur music making. The former covers music authorities, conservatory training, orchestral musicians and even music trade. The latter refers to music festivals that were organised according to the Estonian model. However, the actual paragon came from Germany, where song festivals

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<sup>1</sup> Mantere 2015, 57.

<sup>2</sup> Down Goss 2009, 199–319.

<sup>3</sup> Rantanen 2013a, 61–84.

with huge numbers of participants formed an important part of the German national movement since the 1820s at the latest.

In this grand narrative German musical culture appears as the *primus motor*, irresistible model according to which local musical life was organised. In Finnish society in general, Germany and German culture were highly esteemed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the strong cultural and economic influence from Germany to Finland did not weaken until the end of the Second World War. This relation had a long history. The roots of Finland's affinity for German culture go back several hundreds years into cultural history, to the medieval urban cities that developed around the Baltic Sea and, thereafter, the Lutheran Reformation. Finland was an eastern part of the Kingdom of Sweden and local clergy and academics had close ties to the centres of learning in northern Germany for centuries. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Finland parted ways with Sweden but the connections to Germany remained and were further strengthened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: German was the most studied foreign language in secondary schools, and before the Second World War, half of the guest lecturers at the University of Helsinki came from Germany, which at the time was the leading nation not only in philosophy and humanities but also in modern natural sciences.<sup>4</sup>

In the arts, ties to Germany were particularly strong in the area of music, and they were further reinforced when modern musical life based on a continental model began to emerge around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was when the foundation was laid for Finland's current music education system, network of symphony orchestras as well as music trade and publishing. However, it is important to keep in mind that German influence was by no means limited to art music. Around the same time, urban and continental popular music – operetta and *variété* – also arrived in Finland.<sup>5</sup> The flow of influences and imports, often directly from Germany, was so strong that we could reasonably describe this process as the Germanification of Finnish music.

## Challenging the nation

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<sup>4</sup> Hietala 1986, 180–182.

<sup>5</sup> Jalkanen & Kurkela 2003, 209–226.

Despite the strength of German influence at all levels of musical life in Finland, in the following, we use the concepts of 'Germanification' or 'German influence' rather cautiously. Their uncritical use would simply be repeating an old conventional viewpoint, methodological nationalism, which oversimplifies the actual diversity of musical influences and transfers. For a similar reason, in this chapter we do not like to speak about 'Finnish' music but music, musicians and musical activities in Finland. On the macro level, national labels can be stripped away to reveal the underlying classical music scene in Europe, with a shared consensus on the autonomy of music, the criteria of good taste and the status of the classics. During the time under discussion, popular music was still simply a branch of the great system of art music. 'Continental music' was an umbrella concept for everything: classical and modern, serious and light, religious and secular.

At the grass-roots level, the national perspective obscures just how far-reaching the networks of musicians and other influential people in music were. As far as these networks were concerned, the constituents were primarily members of the general European community of music professionals and only secondarily national operators. There is an obvious parallel here with academia: theologians and mathematicians from Helsinki went to German universities and elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> certainly not to affirm their Finnishness, but as members of an international scientific community.

The song festival movement in Finland in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century forms another interesting example of micro level networks around music. The early music festivals in Finland have scarcely been studied<sup>7</sup> and the few existing studies have emphasised the national romantic ideology underlying their organisation. However, music festivals were not generated independently as Finnish innovations, but in close interaction with the continental development, and aesthetic ideas brought from Europe by Finnish music intellectuals and composers. Their actions became prominent especially in the planning of the music programmes of the festivals.

From the very beginning, the management of the festivals aimed at recruiting the leading figures in Finnish musical life to take part in the events. Alongside with programme planning,

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<sup>6</sup> Hietala 1986, 180; Hietala 1983, 32–34.

<sup>7</sup> Inkilä 1960; Smeds & Mäkinen 1984; Särkkä 1973.

they often acted as conductors for the choirs and brass bands performing at the occasions. Their presence had a great impact on the nature and character of the festivals and raised their public status both musically and ideologically. In addition, the festivals provided an opportunity for the composers to introduce their new music to the public and advance their careers through this kind of self-promotion. We argue that the emergence of the music festivals in Finland was a transnational process, and that its effect was felt all over the Finnish music life at large.

The studies employing transnational perspectives have exploded in quantity in recent years. Following Steven Vertovec, the transnational approach focuses on the on-going exchanges among non-governmental actors across national borders, as well as the collective attributes of such connections, their processes of formation and maintenance, and their wider implications.<sup>8</sup> Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht has come up with a similar kind of definition in her research on the transatlantic connections of music from the 1850s to the 1920s. She stresses the importance of cultural and emotional connections within the European and North-American relations. She argues that music as a soft form of interaction proved much more intense and enduring than political or economic ties. She does not, however, rule out the social dimensions of the networks formed around music. On the contrary, among the European intelligentsia of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, music was seen as a cultural phenomenon, which had a number of political and social implications. In particular, universally distributed and glorified German art music was seen as an important counterbalance to the rugged reality of industrialisation and international wars.<sup>9</sup>

The transnational perspective within music historiography creates an opportunity to understand the complex, multicultural and mediated forms of interaction in the musical context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. As Celia Applegate has emphasised, “the most obvious effect of active musical travel and the spreading of different musical practices was to create a transnational space, one recognised by the end of the eighteenth century in the phrase ‘the musical world’.”<sup>10</sup> In this context, Applegate also points at the 19<sup>th</sup> century choir movement as an important maintainer of transnational networks.<sup>11</sup> Especially with the rise of music

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<sup>8</sup> Vertovec 2009, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Gienow-Hecht 2009, 4–5, 9–11.

<sup>10</sup> Applegate 2011, 230–231.

<sup>11</sup> Applegate 2011, 239.

festivals, amateur choirs started to travel more and more. The development of the European railway network enabled more affordable and considerably faster travel, also across the nation states.

### Universal super-culture

From the transnational perspective, the ‘German’ aspect in music appears as a universal ‘super-culture’<sup>12</sup> that conquered the world – at least the Western world – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its hard core consisted of the great Classical masters – Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. These composers were German-speaking Austrians; but more to the point, they worked in a multicultural environment. The Habsburg Empire was not so much ‘German’ as a mishmash of ethnic groups and languages, and there were many noteworthy composers in Vienna at this time whose roots were in Bohemia, Italy or Hungary. The music of the Viennese Classics very quickly became international: the music trade took Beethoven’s Piano Sonatas to Moscow, Constantinople or New York with equal swiftness.

It was not only printed music that was mobile but musicians as well. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, itinerant musicians from the German-speaking countries were famous for their professional skills. They had an influential position in the centres of the Baltic Sea region: Copenhagen, Riga, Stockholm and St. Petersburg. Due to the central role of the Germans in the fields of music, philosophy and literacy, the idea of German culture as highly appreciated human capital became widely accepted already one hundred years before the German nation-state (the *Kaiserreich*) was fully formed. As Applegate states: “Itinerant musicians and music making formed the German nation, not in the sense of determining its borders or shaping its politics but in the sense of making it a lived experience”.<sup>13</sup>

The canon of classics – works by old masters or “dead composers”, as William Weber puts it – took over the core repertoire of symphony orchestras from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards,

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<sup>12</sup> The term ‘super-culture’ has mainly been used in cultural anthropology to denote a ‘higher-order culture’ that is characterised by a number of distinctive common elements or cultural regularities and consists of several sub-cultures; accordingly, we can speak of “the regional Scandinavian sub-culture of the Western European super-culture”. Bagby 1959, 105.

<sup>13</sup> Applegate 2014, 61.

and this at the very latest made the Central European system of concert music universal.<sup>14</sup> Music theory reinforced this trend: budding composers all around the world studied J. S. Bach's counterpoint, seeing it not as a specifically German musical system but as a generic one.

The super-culture of music was strong enough to foster uniform music practices in nearly all the European countries. In emerging smaller nation-states, such as Finland, the continental models were brought in as completely new models, not as replacements of old ones – this is why the 19<sup>th</sup> century is so important in the music history of Finland. The new super-culture was mainly conveyed to Finland by a group of musical authorities, a handful of music merchants and a body of foreign musicians.

### **Authorities and businessmen**

In Finland, a handful of active individuals played a highly significant role because of the small size of the community. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were two Germans and two Finns advocating universal German culture in Finland: Fredrik Pacius (1809–1891) and Richard Faltin (1835–1918), and Robert Kajanus (1856–1933) and Martin Wegelius (1846–1906), respectively. Pacius, Faltin and Kajanus held the post of Music Director at the University of Helsinki, one after the other. Hermann Paul, a lecturer in German at the University and a well-known music critic, was also an important influence in the music scene. Two cosmopolitan institutions, music and academia, supported each other at the level of individuals.

All of these musical authorities had been trained in Germany – and three of them, Faltin, Kajanus and Wegelius, were students of the Leipzig Conservatory. Leipzig was an important place of study for all the future top musicians in Finland prior to the 1880s, when Martin Wegelius founded the Helsinki Conservatory. Thereafter, Finnish talent gradually began to explore further afield: Sibelius studied in Vienna and Berlin, and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century many Finnish musicians went to Paris.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Weber 2008, 169–177.

<sup>15</sup> Down Goss 2009, 99–128.

Richard Faltin and Hermann Paul were not only university teachers but also involved in the music business: Faltin imported pianos, and Paul published sheet music. The music business in Finland was generally in foreign hands at the time. The first notable sheet music publisher in Finland was Ludvig Beuermann, a German musician who set up shop in Helsinki in 1850. His business was continued by a Finn, Axel E. Lindgren (1838–1919), another alumnus of the Leipzig Conservatory.<sup>16</sup> Lindgren must have picked up more than just musicianship in Leipzig, as the city was a focal point for the music trade in central Europe at the time, and contacts made there with publishing houses would be of immense value for future composers and music entrepreneurs.

At the turn of the 20th century, music trade and publishing in Finland evolved rapidly. Several domestic businessmen entered the field, the most prominent among them being K. G. Fazer, R. E. Westerlund and Alexei Apostol. Most of their business involved selling musical instruments, but they all had an almost ideological mission to publish Finnish music in printed form. During the period 1890–1910, the production of Finnish printed music substantially increased and became manifold in quantity: from 88 items during 1891–1895, the number of new titles grew almost seven-fold during 1906–1910 (605 items).<sup>17</sup>

In those days, music publishing was a truly transnational business and relied heavily on international networks. The Finns had a lot to learn, but luckily they had the wits to hire an army of experts from abroad to help them. By now, it should come as no surprise that these foreign experts had German names: Kaibel, Cornelius, Koch, Zingel, Succo, Binnemann, Falkner – to mention only the most well-known. Many of them settled in Finland.<sup>18</sup>

### Leipzig students and cosmopolitan musicians

Between 1856 and 1900, at least 44 Finnish musicians studied in Leipzig, one third of them women. This may seem like a small number among the more than 8,000 names in the Leipzig student register,<sup>19</sup> but the list of Finnish students in Leipzig includes all major Finnish

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<sup>16</sup> The student files, Leipzig.

<sup>17</sup> Kurkela 2009, 312.

<sup>18</sup> Kurkela *ibid.* 112–115, 147.

<sup>19</sup> The last Finnish in the register of students filed in 1900 was pianist Elli Rängman with the student number 8155. The student register, Leipzig Conservatory.

musicians and composers of the 19th century, including Finland's first conductors, educators, orchestral musicians, a few concert virtuosos and Ilmari Krohn (1869–1960), the founding father of Finnish musicology.

The first students were sent to Leipzig on government grants, but in most cases going to Germany to study required the student to have substantial independent funds and a sufficient basic education: German language skills were essential. In 1887, Oskar Merikanto (1868–1924), subsequently one of Finland's most beloved composers of solo songs, began his studies in Leipzig. Talented but penniless, he had to go to a lot of trouble to find patronage for his studies abroad.<sup>20</sup> Many of the Leipzig students came from Swedish or German upper-class families, thus having musical training and language skills needed in Leipzig as part of the upbringing typical of the educated classes. However, Merikanto and other Finnish-speaking students in Leipzig with a lower middle-class background were by no means monolingual or musically uneducated. Most of them had gone to secondary school where German was the first foreign language, and some sort of earlier musical training – normally music lessons from a distinguished local musician – was self-evident for every Leipzig student.<sup>21</sup>

Due to the extensive and systematic training in Leipzig and other continental music centres, a group of native Finnish top musicians formed in Finland at the turn of the 20th century. The group was rather tiny, consisting of a few dozen musicians, music teachers, critics and composers. But this group of experts actually built new musical life – mostly according to universal German models. This founding cadre was assisted by a much greater group of musical amateurs, schoolteachers, politicians, businessmen and academic music lovers. It was this group of nationally-tuned citizens that assembled at music festivals and presented the new universal idea of music to ordinary people, the musically uncivilized masses.

Still, the real powerhouse in spreading the Central European super-culture far and wide consisted of the hundreds of orchestral musicians trained in German music centres. By the middle of the 19th century, they constituted a rapidly growing body of professionals whose numbers created a glut on the market on the continent, thus forcing them to seek employment opportunities in countries where the modern music scene was newly emerging.

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<sup>20</sup> Heikinheimo 1995, 57–61.

<sup>21</sup> The Student register, Leipzig Conservatory; Heikinheimo *ibid.*, 24–29.

The best musicians employed themselves on concert tours all over Europe and even in America. Many managed to find posts as music directors or teachers abroad, but the majority ended up as ordinary members in a wide variety of orchestras. The musicians' backgrounds and careers varied considerably, covering, on the one hand, poor female village musicians from Bohemia and Saxony performing popular music in restaurants and fairs, and, on the other hand, top musicians with conservatory training hired by the Russian Royal Opera in Saint Petersburg. Itinerant musicians from Central Europe were usually available whenever new orchestral music was publicly performed in the Nordic or Eastern European countries.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, it is not surprising that, in Finland by the turn of the 20th century, professional orchestral music was for the most part in the hands of 'Germans' – a blanket term for foreigners in this context. Actually, the music profession in Finland was ethnically highly diverse, including – in addition to actual Germans – Danish, Swedish, Baltic, Russian, Hungarian, Polish and Bohemian musicians. This cosmopolitan community had a common foundation in the Central European tradition, and the working language was usually German.

The community of foreign musicians in Northern Europe moved from country to country as the seasons dictated. The labour market was remarkably large, covering, in addition to the coastal cities of the Baltic Sea, the western part of the vast Russian Empire, and many centres around the North Sea, including London, inland cities and spa centres in Germany as well as those in the northern part of the Austrian Empire. The large labour market also involved various orchestras with different styles and repertoires: a great part of musicians of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra had previously acted as restaurant or military musicians; normally, they had no conservatory background, were more or less self-taught and improved their skills by taking private lessons from distinguished musicians.<sup>23</sup>

As recently as the early years of the 20th century, Robert Kajanus' orchestra – the Helsinki Philharmonic Society Orchestra – performed only from October to late April. At that point, a large number of musicians left Finland to play in orchestras in nearby metropolises and spa

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<sup>22</sup> Schwab 2005, 34–41; Werner 2005, 159–164; for detailed information on various careers of German-speaking musicians in the Russian Empire, see Koch 2005, 343–406.

<sup>23</sup> The card files of the staff, 1905–1955. Helsinki Philharmonic.

towns for the intervening months. In the autumn, Kajanus had to recruit his orchestra all over again; turnover was high. As a result, during the years before the Great War, Finnish orchestral life was truly cosmopolitan, and it was not until recently, a hundred years later, that similar circumstances could be seen in local symphony orchestras, with a number of foreign players and a shared non-local working language – now English instead of German.

### **National music festivals – spreading universal music to ordinary people**

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new universal art music culture was budding in Finland, through the agency of domestic top musicians and music authorities trained in Germany. However, one element was missing: a way of presenting new music to the masses and educating them to understand it. The method for this mission was found in music festivals.

The first modern music festivals in Finland were organised in the 1880s by the Finnish Association for Folk Enlightenment, *KVS Foundation*. They had a huge collective significance for the participants socially, musically and ideologically. These early festivals were the first extensive music events in Finland and also the first mass events in the proper sense of the word. From the very beginning, they gathered together hundreds of performers and thousands of listeners from all over the country.

The first festival in Jyväskylä in 1884 attracted so much enthusiasm that it was decided to start planning the next one right away. At first, festivals were meant to take place every three years, but as a result of their big success, cities were soon competing to be the festival organiser. This led to, in particular in the 1890s, a national music festival being held almost every year, the venues alternating between all larger Finnish towns.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the 1890s became the decade of a real music festival boom in Finland.<sup>25</sup> The programme consisted of speeches, poetry reading, various concerts, festival parades, amateur plays and less formal popular feasts. The main event of the festival was a singing and playing contest in which all Finnish amateur choirs and brass bands were invited to compete.<sup>26</sup> When the

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<sup>24</sup> Inkilä 1960, 216–220; Smeds & Mäkinen 1984, 29–36.

<sup>25</sup> National music festivals in Finland were organised in Jyväskylä 1884, Jyväskylä 1887, Tampere 1888, Vyborg 1889, Jyväskylä 1890, Kuopio 1891, Turku 1892, Vaasa 1894, Sortavala 1896, Mikkeli 1897, Helsinki 1900.

<sup>26</sup> Professional music groups were able to participate to the festivals but not the competition.

popularity of the competitions grew, they were extended so that each choir type – men’s, women’s and mixed choirs – had their own competition.

Despite the fact that the festivals were, without exception, held in cities, they had a significant impact on the musical life of the countryside as well. With the rise of popular organisations, the festivals contributed significantly to the spread of choirs and brass bands all over the country. The festival enthusiasm also appeared as smaller festivities organised by local youth associations, temperance societies and other associations.

Music festivals in Finland could not have been possible without the wide networks of the organisers. The most influential musicians and authors behind them were the same, above-mentioned music authorities Richard Faltin, Robert Kajanus, Martin Wegelius and Oskar Merikanto. Among them, Ilmari Krohn and Emil Sivori (1854–1929) had an important role in the increase of the phenomena. Additionally, Fredrik Pacius was a notable figure behind the early rise of the choir movement in Finland as a choirmaster and a composer.<sup>27</sup>

To get a more detailed picture of the music festival phenomenon in Finland, we will use the Kirvu<sup>28</sup> music festival as a case example of the organisation and networks of the festivals. It was organised in 1898 by the Karelian youth association. The Kirvu festival was the first music festival held among the youth movement, which was gaining popularity in the country, and therefore it attracted a lot of publicity in the local and national press. At the same time, it is a concrete example of utilizing European, especially German models in the development of the music festivals in Finland. Even though the Kirvu festival was local and locally organized, it had, at the same time, both national and transnational connections. In Kirvu’s case, the macro and micro levels of research can be combined in a way that enables a broader analysis not only of Finnish but also of European development.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> He had close connections to Germany, and was, for instance, invited as a guest of honour to the choral festival in Hamburg in 1882. *Namen-Verzeichniss* 1882.

<sup>28</sup> Kirvu is the name of the county where the festival was organised. It is located in the Karelian area which is now a part of Russia.

<sup>29</sup> About Kirvu festival and its networks as well as connections to the European festival movement in more detail, see Rantanen 2014.

## Between German and Estonian

Music, and especially choir singing, was considered an important tool for the transmission of Finnish national identity.<sup>30</sup> From the outset, the music festivals in Finland had a very national character. However, it was clear to the public who followed the newspapers and attended the festivals that influences for the phenomenon came from abroad. The model for the Finnish music festivals was imported from Estonia and Germany by travelling individuals.<sup>31</sup> Estonia was geographically close to Finland, and the networks between the countries were tight. Therefore, the Estonian example was often highlighted in the Finnish newspapers and in the festival speeches.

Both the national, and along them, the local song festivals copied their structure and content in detail from European models. The first music festivals organised entirely around choral singing were held in Germany already in the 1810s. The driving force of the European choral festival movement, however, was the establishment of the German Singing Confederation (*Deutsche Sängerbund*) in 1862. As a central organization, its main goal was to increase cooperation among the local choirs. Soon after its establishment, it started to organize national music festival. The basic meaning of the festivals was to reinforce the idea of a united Germany. The soul of the movement was mixed amateur choirs operating like associations. The model spread quickly to other parts of Europe.<sup>32</sup> The most effective distributors for the phenomenon were touring choirs, musicians and music students residing abroad, who introduced the festival idea both in their home countries and abroad. Especially with the rise of music festivals, amateur choirs started to travel more than ever. During the travels the geographical awareness of the festival participants also grew, when the remotely familiar places that they had read about in school books and newspapers were put into a real context through travelling: the *imagined communities*<sup>33</sup> became visible.

The musical programmes of the festivals were similar across Europe. Their core consisted of the European art music of the great classical masters, spearheaded by Beethoven, Handel, Haydn and Mendelssohn. Art music was used as a tool for educating lower classes. This was

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<sup>30</sup> See Kurkela 1989; Rantanen 2013b.

<sup>31</sup> Smeds & Mäkinen 1984; Zetterberg 1974.

<sup>32</sup> Applegate 2013, 9–10.

<sup>33</sup> See Anderson 2007.

also the cardinal principle behind the music festivals in Finland. Among the European intelligentsia, the high status of the classical music canon of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century musical life was often explained with its musical as well as its spiritual effects. According to the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humbolt (1767–1835), a shared musical canon was an ideology that embodied many humanistic values such as open-mindedness and free spirit, and a way of life unconstrained by geographical or intellectual preconditions with many integrating social and physical effects. Furthermore, the classical canon was considered a transnational medium of communication, “the international language”, which made it possible to go beyond the borders of different nationalities.<sup>34</sup> However, when European music culture was imported to Finland, it was shaped to fit the national and local conditions, needs, and purposes.

### The Kirvu Music Festival

During the 1890s, musical practices gained increasing popularity among the Finnish youth associations.<sup>35</sup> Musically, the most spectacular innovations were the associations’ own music festivals, the organising of which started to be discussed in the mid 1890s. Local music festivals had been organised previously by the branch associations of the KVS Foundation but the festival fever had not spread among the other organisations yet, except for the participation of individual choirs and brass bands in the national festivals. From the perspective of youth associations, the main goal of the festivals was to increase the number of choirs and brass bands at a local level. Although different musical events had increased throughout the country during the 1890s, the number of choirs and brass bands was still relatively low.<sup>36</sup>

The Kirvu music festival forms a typical example of how music festivals were organised in the Finnish countryside in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was held in Midsummer in 1898. Because of the easy access, a large natural field close to the local train station was selected as the place for the event.<sup>37</sup> According to the local newspaper *Laatokka*, more than 6,000 people attended the festival. Altogether 10 mixed choirs, seven male choirs and six brass bands, approximately

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<sup>34</sup> Gienow-Hecht 2009, 65; Weber 2011, 211–212.

<sup>35</sup> Youth movement was the most popular form of mass organisation at the time.

<sup>36</sup> See Rantanen 2013b.

<sup>37</sup> Railway formed an important factor for the emergence of the music festivals, since the towns and villages selected as the festival venues usually were located near a train station.

300 singers and 50 musicians, participated in the competition. When adding music clubs that did not compete, the number of musicians rose to more than 500. It was just as many, or even more, people than in previous national festivals.

Everything was planned well beforehand. The festival committee, which anyone could join, was founded first. The leader of the committee was the local organist and choirmaster Nestor Huoponen (1861–1916). He was the key figure of the festival. Because of his activity and successful career, he had wide connections to Finnish musical life. Most importantly, he had previous experience in the national song festivals as a conductor. These networks were crucial to the success of the Kirvu festival.

Socially, the impact of the festival was manifold both at a local and at a regional level. At local level, the organising of the event had a huge collective importance among the inhabitants of Kirvu. The whole parish was recruited to take part in the festival arrangements – all capable help was needed. Together, they formed a large community sharing the same goal and social action and created new experiences, which had far-reaching significance in people's lives. In the newspapers people were coaxed to participate in organising activities, and reminded about the importance of the festival to Kirvu. All choirs and brass bands in the region were invited to take part in both the festival and the competition. By encouraging people to participate in singing and other musical and organisational activities, the most important goal was to evoke a sense of nationality and patriotism in the Karelian area, which was regarded as the home district of ancient Finnish culture.

The Kirvu music festival began with welcoming words by the local primary school teacher A. J. Vartiainen. The speech was followed by a collective rehearsal for all choirs and brass bands participating in the event. The organisation of the Kirvu festival was in accomplished hands. The leader of the brass bands was Nestor Huoponen's friend and colleague, organist Emil Sivori from Vyborg – again an alumnus of the Leipzig Conservatory. The male-choirs were conducted by a notable choirmaster, Arthur Siegborg<sup>38</sup> (1862–1948).<sup>39</sup> Huoponen himself took charge of leading the mixed-choirs. As highly experienced musicians, both Sivori and

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<sup>38</sup> Siegborg was the leader of Finland's best-known male choir at the time, YL Male Voice Choir (university students' choir).

<sup>39</sup> *Laatokka* 25.6.1898; *Wiipurin Sanomat* 26.6.1898; *Mikkeli* 1.7.1898.

Sieberg, like Huoponen, had visited many national music festivals before. Sivori also had experience as an organiser of national music festivals.

After the rehearsal, it was time for a celebration concert. It started with the national anthem of Finland *Maamme* [Our Land], which was sung jointly with horn accompaniment. According to the newspapers, the concert also included the hymns *Jo joutui armas aika* [All Things Fair] and *Jumala omi linnamme* [God is our Mighty Fortress], a few folksongs arranged for a choir, as well as the well-known Finnish patriotic songs *Porilaisten marssi* [Pori March] and *Oi terve Pohjola* [I Greet you, the North]. A similar kind of format was echoed in the music programmes of the music competition and the popular feast held the next day.<sup>40</sup> In addition to Finnish music clubs, a choir from Ingria (a district near Saint Petersburg) performed in Kirvu.<sup>41</sup> Local newspapers also reported about many Estonian festival guests.<sup>42</sup>

### From the elite to the masses

The ideology and structure of the Kirvu festival was copied directly from the national festivals, but the aims were set more locally. The main difference between national and local festivals was that locally organised festivals were smaller and usually only lasted one or two days instead of three. Furthermore, the standards of music did not always correspond to the level of national festivals. For example, local festivals did not usually include commissioned compositions or competitions for composers. In addition, it was normal to modify the programme based on the local needs and possibilities.

In spite of its popularity, classical music never did become a universal art form embraced by all ranks of society – not even among festival audiences in Finland. Especially at the local music festivals, instrumental music was in minority. The lyrics were considered more important than the melodies, as they transmitted the objectives of the events to the public more effectively. The programme of the Kirvu festival is a good example of this. It consisted of religious hymns, folk songs and patriotic songs, which, following its European models, highlighted the central themes with regard to building the Finnish nation state. The same

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<sup>40</sup> *Laatokka* 25.6.1898; *Wiipurin Sanomat* 26.6.1898; *Mikkeli* 1.7.1898.

<sup>41</sup> *Laatokka* 29.6.1898; *Wiipurin Sanomat* 27.6.1898.

<sup>42</sup> *Päivälehti* 28.6.1898.

practice was also replicated at the national festivals, especially at the competitions and popular feasts. Few years later, after the Russian revolution of 1905, when Labour movement with its Marxist programme stressing the concept of class struggle arose in Finland, the role of singing as a means of pursuing politics and raising awareness gained even more strength.

Because the choir movement in Finland started relatively late compared to Continental Europe, women were a part of the movement from the beginning. As the idea of mixed choruses became more popular, women gained access to the choral singing activity on a more equal basis with men. In addition to educational and moral goals, new associations that formed around music offered independence from traditional social structures and “individualism in the form of freedom of choice”.<sup>43</sup> Even though it was not common in Finland to form an organisation only around music,<sup>44</sup> choirs and brass bands outside the societal organisations often acted like small associations with rules and statutes. At the same time decision-making, programming, formulation of rules, elections, financial management, membership controls, and public outreach “not only put organisational power into the members’ hands, but also taught them – often in the important general meetings – how to use it”.<sup>45</sup> This practice helped later political movements and also the rise of labour and other political associations.

## Conclusion

The late 19<sup>th</sup>-century music festivals in Finland formed a complicated network of local, national and transnational interdependency. They produced an entirely new type of publicity, giving people the possibility for experiences that went beyond the limits of their local environments and that were individual and collective at the same time. Alongside displaying national and local identities, playing in a band, singing in a choir or taking part in an organising committee, music festivals offered the common people a possibility to catch a glimpse of a shared European identity.<sup>46</sup> This was the situation especially before the Russian revolution of 1905, after which the previously remarkably monolithic musical culture started to fragment alongside with the whole Finnish society.

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<sup>43</sup> Ahlquist 2006, 266.

<sup>44</sup> Normally amateur choirs and brass bands operated under bigger organisations, like youth associations.

<sup>45</sup> Ahlquist 2006, 266.

<sup>46</sup> See also Pollari 2012.

At the turn of the 20th century, professional and trained musicians, amateur choral singers and concert audiences were a firm part of a musical super-culture that was mainly formed in the German speaking countries and consisted of widespread models of musical training, repertoires, and concert and festival conventions. However, this new culture did not make Finland's musical life identical to that of Germany. In Finland, the new music culture was called national, but actually it was pan European and more or less universal. The cultural transfer from the continent made Finnish music and musical institutions universally European much in the same way as the European Union today is unified by the legislation and administration of its Member States.

In this process German music was favoured and distinguished. However, this does not mean that only German repertoire, musical trends or models for composition ruled among Finnish music professionals. Music festivals had a strong local tinge. As the theory of transnationalism tends to emphasise, cultural transfer is seldom based on one-way traffic. Usually cultural change is mutually constructed and based on multipolar exchange of influences. Everything occurs in a network of several actors and multilateral operations. Many features in our Finnish case refer to a quite similar situation: French, Russian and Scandinavian music was highly popular in the Finnish orchestral repertoire, and 'German' orchestral musicians came from various national backgrounds – as did the foreign music teachers at the Helsinki conservatory.

Still, German knowhow was held in high regard even in the field of music with non-German origin. French *variété* and operetta were mainly performed in Finnish restaurants and theatres by German, Swedish and Russian troupes – thus being at least partly Germanised before presented to local audiences in Finland. Even new American dance music, jazz of the 1920s, was not imported to Finland directly from the US. The first jazz bands in Helsinki were named 'Lärm-Jazz-Orchester' (noise jazz orchestras) – and they came straight from Berlin.<sup>47</sup> The last evidence of German influence can be found in Finnish music terminology. The Finns do not call the third smallest interval a 'third' but 'terssi' as the Germans do (Terz), neither do we use Bb7 chords but H7 – except in popular music and jazz. The example may sound trivial

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<sup>47</sup> Jalkanen 1989, 73–78.

and self-evident, but it indisputably shows how deeply J. S. Bach and the other gods of German universalism have settled in Finnish musical soil.

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