

## TOPICS AND COMMENTS

### Practical Guides to Studying Folklore

This is the second installment of **Folklore Forum's** new series of folklore program profiles. We encourage our readers to submit further contributions or suggestions. In particular, we invite students who participate or have participated in public sector folklore programs to send in accounts of their work experience.

#### FOLKLORE AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY FINLAND

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A little more than two years ago, I had the privilege of receiving a Fulbright grant to do fieldwork on the **kantele**, Finland's national musical instrument. I found Finland a land rich in living folk traditions, and was able to do a great deal of primary field collecting. But Finland has also been studied extensively by folklorists and ethnomusicologists in the past, and I obtained a great deal of valuable information from the excellent archives, museums and other institutions I visited. This article is primarily intended for folklore students, fieldworkers and other scholars who may some day visit Finland, and who can gain from an awareness of the resources available.

Finland has had a long academic tradition of studying folklore. (1) Any student of folklore recognizes the place of Elias Lönnrot, collector of folk runes and author of the epic **Kalevala**. One of the earliest paradigms of our discipline, the "Finnish Method," developed as a response to extensive folklore collecting and the organization of this material in archives. I am happy to report that folkloristics is alive and well in Finland. It is a highly respected field of study with many first rate, internationally known scholars and a good number of students. Folklore

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is taught to some extent in each of Finland's major universities, but the amount of training available and specialization vary from place to place.

At **Helsinki University** the folklore department is called the department of "Finnish and Comparative Folk Rune Study" (Suomalaisen ja vertaileva kansanrunoudentutkimus). It occupies a major portion of one wing of the university's main building, with offices, classrooms and a folklore library, where I met the professor of the department, Dr. Leea Virtanen, an expert in several areas, but particularly in children's lore. (2) The catalog for that semester listed several basic courses such as "Introduction to Folk Rune Research," "Methods of Tradition Research," and "Fieldwork." It also listed several unique and interesting advanced courses such as "Contemporary Folklore Study," "Aggression and Tradition," "Folklore and World View," and "Folk-Medicine." One ethnomusicology course was cross-listed, "Finnish and Karelian Popular Music Traditions." The catalog also cited other faculty members, which include Outi Lehtipuro, who has published some interesting articles on current trends in Finnish and Nordic folklore. (3)

Lauri Honko is a docent at Helsinki University and a professor at Turku University. During my year in Finland, I was able to visit Turku only once, when I went there to photograph and study the kanteles at the Sibelius Museum and I did not have an opportunity to meet with Professor Honko. He is one of the most widely published and respected Finnish folklorists today and has also served as the chairman of the Nordic Folklore Society. (4)

The Helsinki University folklore department's main resource is the large folklore archives maintained by the Finnish Literature Society (**Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura** or **SKS**). The main building of the SKS is located three blocks east of Helsinki University, about a ten minute walk. The SKS is a very impressive place. I can't adequately describe the feeling when I first walked in the front entrance and looked up at the frescos of the main hall, painted with the names of many of Finland's significant folklore scholars. I realized that they too had entered that hall, and indeed they were the ones who had built that outstanding institution. As one enters, the folklore archive is on the right and the literature

library is on the left. The building also houses a separate ethnographic library, a sound recording archive, offices, a meeting hall and a bookstore.

The SKS has published many significant works in folklore, such as the massive collection **Suomen kansan vanhat runot** (The Ancient Runes of the Finnish People) and the important series **Studia Fennica**. Literally hundreds of other monographs and scholarly studies on folklore have been published by the SKS.

The National Museum (Kansallismuseo) in Helsinki is the country's chief repository for its oldest ethnographic artifacts. It also houses an outstanding photograph archive. It is a must for anyone interested in material culture.

The study of folk music in Finland has grown along similar lines to that of folkloristics. (5) The SKS also played an important role in the collection of folk music. Many of the early collectors, such as J. J. Pipingsköld, Karl A. Gottlund, D.E.D. Europaeus and even Elias Lönnrot included some music transcriptions in their published folklore collections. The most prolific collector of folk music for the SKS was A.O. Väisänen, who by 1915 had collected almost 14,000 melodies. Väisänen was also a prolific writer. His articles and books covered the broad scope of his personal knowledge of Finnish folk music. (6) Beginning in 1893, the SKS published collections of folk music transcriptions entitled **Suomen kansan sävelmiä** (Finnish Folk Melodies), which grew to five volumes by 1928. With the invention of the phonograph, field collectors began making and depositing cylinder recordings in the SKS. As recording technology improved, the number of sound recordings grew. A sound archive was established in 1956 as a separate division of the SKS, which today contains over 20,000 items. Most of the material is oral folklore, but there is also a significant amount of Finnish folk music, making the SKS an important resource for ethnomusicologists as well as folklorists.

Ethnomusicology has seen great growth in Finland since the late seventies. The formation of the Finnish Ethnomusicological Society (Suomen etnomusikologinen seura) has brought together groups of people with diverse interests, such as scholars concentrating on the music of other cultures, or "World Musics," others concentrating on urban musics, and still others concentrating on folk musics.

The FES publishes a journal, **Musiikin Suunta**, which has had a number of interesting and provocative issues covering such topics as street music, emigrant music and the world record industry.

Ethnomusicology courses are taught at Helsinki University through the musicology department. The Sibelius Academy, in a separate program, offers courses in ethnomusicology and Finnish folk music. The Helsinki University catalog lists "Introduction to Ethnomusicology" and "World Musics" as basic courses; area courses are listed, such as "Latin-American Music," "Indian Classical Music," and "The Contemporary Situation of the Finnish Music Culture." I attended the world music courses at both the university and the Sibelius Academy and was surprised to find more than thirty students enrolled in each course! Several graduate students at Helsinki University are completing doctoral dissertations in ethnomusicology. In November 1983, Timo Leisiö defended a dissertation on the traditional aerophones of the Finns and Karelians, which has been published. (7) Other outstanding scholars who are completing dissertations include Erkki Pekkilä, an expert on ethnomusicological theory, Pirkko Moisala and Matti Lahtinen, experts on the music of Nepal, and Vesa Kurkela, an expert on urban workers' music. The current professor of the musicology department, Eero Tarasti, is an internationally recognized expert on musical semiotics. (8)

At Sibelius Academy, the renowned folk musician Martti Pokela is the head of the folk music department. Part of his job is to teach students of Western classical art music how to learn and perform Finnish folk music "by ear." It is a requirement of all music education majors to take courses in ethnomusicology and Finnish folk music, so they are at least acquainted with traditional **Finnish** music when they go into various parts of the country to teach. It is also possible to major in folk music performance. Many students participate in folk music ensembles directed by Martti Pokela. These ensembles have performed all over Finland and Europe, and have produced folk music recordings for the Bratislava International Recorded Folk Music Competition, winning second place in each of the last two competitions. The program at the Sibelius Academy has had a significant impact on the

growth of interest in Finnish folk music. These students have become a new generation of tradition bearers and have "spread the gospel" of Finnish folk music using the country's educational system.

Finland also has several significant ethnomusicological research institutions: The Workers' Music Institute in Helsinki, the Folk Music Institute in Kaustinen, and the Institute for Folk Tradition and AAKOOLA in Tampere. The Workers' Music Institute (Työväenmusiikki-instituutti) was established in 1979 for the purpose of collecting, studying, and preserving workers' music. By "workers' music" is meant the music of the urban, industrial culture of Finland, as distinguished from the upper class, elite culture, and the rural, agricultural "folk" culture. The WMI studies both the history of workers' music and the current status of urban musics. It also studies the music of working minorities within Finland and the music of Finnish emigrants. It maintains an archive of materials on workers' music and publishes current research. (9) Several outstanding scholars are associated with the WMI. The director is Ilpo Saunio. Researchers have included Vesa Kurkela and Philip Donner. The chairman of the Institute's board of directors is Pekka Gronow, an internationally known scholar of the commercial recording industry and urban ethnomusicology.

The Folk Music Institute (Kansanmusiikki-instituutti) at Kaustinen was founded in 1974 by the Finnish Folk Music Foundation for the purpose of collecting, studying, and preserving the music traditions of rural Finland. It also acts as an information service for Finnish folk music, through publications, phonograph records, and courses. The Folk Music Institute is located in the small town of Kaustinen, in the Perho River Valley region of Finland, an area particularly rich in folk music. It is housed in a nineteenth century traditional wooden house called the **Pelimannitalo** (Folk Musicians' House) which was moved to Kaustinen in 1973. The FMI maintains an excellent collection of old traditional musical instruments and a fine archive of written and sound recorded materials on Finnish folk music. There are four full-time professional researchers employed at the FMI: Heikki Laitinen, the

director of the Institute, Simo Westerholm, Ilkka Kolehmainen and Hannu Saha. These researchers do primary field research, write and publish their findings. (10)

The FMI is also involved in the annual Kaustinen Folk Music Festival and the Kaustinen Kantele Workshop. The Folk Music Festival is a large, international festival held each year in July. It was first held in 1968 as a national folk music festival. Today the festival runs for an entire week and attracts about 2,000 folk musicians and folk dancers from all over the world and approximately 80,000 visitors. The Kantele Workshop is an enterprise which builds and sells kanteles particularly suited for the playing of folk music. In recent years, the craftsmen at the workshop have done extensive research on the old kanteles in the FMI collection. This work has resulted in the restoration of many of the old instruments and in the production of new instruments with the same playing and sound qualities as the old instruments.

No one in modern Finland has done more to collect, preserve and influence the growth of folk music than Professor Erkki Ala-Könni. He is one of the most prolific fieldworkers ever seen in our discipline. He received his training under A.O. Väisänen, and in many ways inherited his teacher's penchant for outstanding fieldwork and organization. Professor Ala-Könni began collecting folk music and folklore soon after the second world war. He attached a cylinder recorder to the back of his bicycle, later to his motorcylce, and travelled around the country collecting the living traditional music and lore of rural Finns. The cylinder recorder was contained in a wooden box with a rounded lid, which resembled the case of a sewing machine and many rural informants mistook Ala-Könni for a travelling tailor. In the late 1950's, he began using a tape recorder. In 1965 he donated a major portion of his field collections to Tampere University, which established an Institute for Folk Tradition (Tampere Yliopiston Kansanperiteen Laitos). Ala-Könni served as director of the Institute from 1965 until his official retirement in 1975.

The Institute for Folk Tradition is housed in a century old, stone building in downtown Tampere. It contains

a large museum of traditional musical instruments on the main floor, meeting rooms, offices, recording and playback facilities on the upper floor. In addition, the Institute contains sound recording, photograph and manuscript archives. The holdings are quite impressive. The Institute for Folk Tradition's catalog of musical instruments lists over 700 individual instruments, with detailed documentation for each. The collection contains a large number of kanteles, woodwinds, and brass instruments. One room is devoted entirely to accordions! Most of the instruments come from Finnish, Karelian and Lapp cultural areas, but there are also a limited number of instruments from diverse cultures around the world. The instrument collection alone would make the Institute for Folk Tradition one of the world's significant research centers for folk music. The Institute also maintains a sound recording archive, which contains nearly 11,000 hours of sound recordings. Approximately twenty percent of these are instrumental music and song. Interviews and oral folklore make up the remaining eighty percent. The major portion of the sound recordings were made by Ala-Könni, but in recent years other collectors have deposited their materials. The recordings are arranged in order of accession, with a multi-volume index arranged by geographic area.

The Institute's photograph archive contains about 230,000 slides and negatives, arranged by geographic area. This is a particularly valuable resource for anyone interested in material culture, since a large number of the photographs are of various buildings, musical instruments and informants which Ala-Könni saw in his travels. The story was told to me by Ala-Könni's long time assistant, Vuokko Kivisaari, that Ala-Könni was once traveling by train and the train came to a five minute stop at some remote station. From the train window, Ala-Könni noticed an interesting building down the street, so he left the train, ran down the street, photographed the building, and ran back to the train. He then recorded the place in his notebook and returned at a later time to photograph and study the structure further. During a lifetime of fieldwork, a camera was his constant companion. The nearly

quarter of a million photographs and negatives in the photograph archive have scarcely been studied. (11) They could provide the basis for numerous dissertations on material culture, building practices, musical instruments, clothing and customs of rural Finns.

The manuscript archive of the Institute for Folk Tradition, finally, contains about 14,000 personal letters which were written during the war years 1939-1944; a significant resource for historians. There is a large collection of traditional recipes, including about 10,000 recipes for Finnish bread. The manuscript archives also contains transcriptions of various interview tapes. The Institute has also published a series of books and scholarly reports produced by Finnish folklorists and ethnomusicologists.

In addition to the Institute for Folk Tradition, Tampere University sponsors a chair of Folk Tradition, with a special emphasis on folk music. This position is currently held by Dr. Timo Leisö, an expert on traditional musical instruments. The teaching aspect, added to the resources of the Institute of Folk Tradition, gives Tampere University an outstanding program in folk music research.

After Professor Ala-Könni retired, he established a separate institute called AAKOOLA for his own personal collections of field recordings, manuscripts, and musical instruments. AAKOOLA is also located in Tampere and is currently being cared for by Vuokko Kivisaari. While not the size of the Institute for Folk Tradition, AAKOOLA contains Ala-Könni's most treasured materials, including his extensive collection of field notebooks. Ala-Könni himself showed me how he would write only on the right side of leaves of his notebooks, reserving the left side for when he returned to the same place or spoke with the same informant again. There is a great wealth of information in AAKOOLA which has never been published. Hopefully, some day, this significant material will be made available to the scholarly community at large, and Ala-Könni will be more widely recognized for his work.

Finland is one of the best places in the world for folklore and ethnomusicology fieldwork. A great deal has already been done by outstanding scholars and institutions, but there is still room for new researchers who



have an interest in Finnish traditions. Those who have gone on before have prepared the way: now it is our responsibility to build on their accomplishments.

#### NOTES

1. For histories of Finnish folkloristics, see Jouka Hautala, **Finnish Folklore Research 1828-1918** (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1969) and William A. Wilson, **Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland** (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).
2. Leea Virtanen, **Children's Lore**, Studia Fennica 22 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1978).
3. Outi Lehtipuro, "Trends in Finnish Folkloristics," in **Finnish Folkloristics 2**, pp. 7-36, Studia Fennica 18 (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1975); "Trends in Nordic Folkloristics," in **Trends in Nordic Tradition Research**, pp. 208-223, Studia Fennica 27 (Helsinki, 1983).
4. Lauri Honko is a noted expert on Karelian laments. See for example "Balto-Finnic Lament Poetry," in **Finnish Folkloristics 1**, pp. 9-61, Studia Fennica 17 (Helsinki, 1974). The Nordic Institute of Folklore publishes a quarterly newsletter in English which is available on request (see address below).
5. For histories of Finnish folk music research, see Erkki Ala-Könni, "Kansanmusiikin keruun ja tutkimuksen vaiheita" (Phases of Folk Music Collection and Research), **Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 49** (1969):267-71; Anneli Asplund, "Kansanmusiikin keruu ja tutkimus" (Folk Music Collection and Research), **Kansanmusiikki**, pp. 240-47, edited by Anneli Asplund and Matti Hako (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1981) and "Fonografista nauhuriin" (From the Phonograph to the Tape Recorder), in **Paimensoittimista kisällilauluun**, pp. 7-28, edited by Heikki Laitinen and Simo Westerholm (Kaustinen: Kansanmusiikki-instituutti, 1976). For a history of Finnish ethnomusicology see Erkki Pekkilä, "Suomalainen etnomusikologia: Katsausta historiaan, tutkimusmenetelmiin ja-näkökulmiin" (Finnish Ethnomusicology: Survey of History, Research Methods and Viewpoints), in **Musiikkikulttuurin murros teollistumisajan Suomessa** (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopistoon musiikkitieteen laitos, 1982).
6. Several articles on the life and work of A.O. Väisänen may be found in **Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja 50** (1970).

7. Timo Leisiö, **Soumen ja Karjalan vanhakantaiset torvi- ja pillisoitimet** (Kaustinen: Kansanmusiikki-instituutti, 1983).
8. Eero Tarasti, **Music and Myth: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music** (The Hague: Mouton, 1979).
9. Vesa Kurkela, **Taistojen tiellä soiteltiin** (Jyväskylä: Työväenmusiikki-instituutti, 1983); Ilko Saunio and Kalevi Immonen, eds., **Pororumpu ja Balalaikka** (Helsinki: Työväenmusiikki-instituutti, 1979).
10. The Folk Music Institute publishes a journal, **Kansanmusiikki** (Folk Music), a series of twelve books and a series of ten phonograph records (as of 1983).
11. One important study has come from the photograph collection: Erkki Ala-Könni, **Kaustinen kuvateos** (Tampere: Kansanperinteen laitos, 1980).

#### ADDRESSES OF INSTITUTES AND SOCIETIES

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**M.A. AND PH.D. PROGRAMS IN FOLKLORE AT  
 THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**

**Information Compiled by Patricia E. Sawin \***

**The Program**

The University of Texas at Austin offers both the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees with a Folklore concentration as well as a special concentration in Folklore for undergraduates. Students may select programs of study in either the Anthropology or English departments, but the great majority choose to enroll through Anthropology. English requires the student to complete the regular literature and theory requirements **plus** work in Folklore, while Anthropology treats Folklore as a sub-discipline, equal in status to Archeology and Social, Linguistic and Physical Anthropology.

We currently have 26 students actively taking classes in Austin, 10 others doing fieldwork or working on their dissertations elsewhere. The small size of the program promotes friendly interactions between students and faculty members. Students benefit from considerable personal