

Toivo KUULA

COMPLETE SOLO SONGS, VOLUME TWO

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FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

TOIVO KUULA: COMPLETE SONGS, VOLUME TWO

by Jenni Lättilä

Toivo Kuula lived a short but passionate life, marked by early professional struggles and by personal tragedy. His first marriage was a failure, his first child died in infancy and he worked long and hard to make a career as a composer. His love of his muse and future second wife, the soprano Alma Silventoinen, was obstructed by a difficult and prolonged divorce. Having finally reached stability in life, and even success and happiness, his life was ended as the tragic consequence of a drunken brawl in the wake of a May Day eve celebration of the end of the Finnish civil war in 1918.

Kuula is perhaps not generally familiar to international audiences, but he was an influential figure in Finland, where he is loved and appreciated by devotees of vocal and choral music. He was born on 7 July 1883, the son of Matti Kuula, a sergeant in the guards' regiment of the Russian Grand Duchy of Finland, a lay preacher and a police officer, and pursued a career as a composer, conductor and musician instead of joining the clergy (as his father would have preferred).¹

Young Toivo's talents were recognised early on. Even before he went to school, he played the piano and pump organ, accompanying the hymns his parents' congregation was singing. As a schoolboy, he was favoured by his teachers because of his fine singing voice, but they were less impressed by his mischievous behaviour. He grew up to be a short but strong man, with a quick temper and a daredevil attitude, traits he retained to the end of his life.

He experimented with composition from an early age: his first surviving works are from 1898, when he was fifteen. In addition to the piano, he also learned to play the violin and was possessed of a sonorous baritone voice. His earliest compositions

¹ For the details of Kuula's biography, this essay relies heavily on Dr Juhani Koivisto's book *Tuijotin tulehen kauan – Toivo Kuulan lyhyt ja kiihkeä elämä* ('I stared into the fire for a long time – Toivo Kuula's short and intense life'), WSOY, Helsinki, 2008.

for voice – short songs that he subsequently omitted from his catalogue² – date from 1899.

Kuula began his professional studies in Helsinki in 1900, at the conservatoire that was later to become the Sibelius Academy. In 1903, lack of funds forced him to quit his studies, and he went home to his native South Ostrobothnia, but in 1906 he was able to return to Helsinki, where in 1907 he became a student of Jean Sibelius. During those intervening years he was pressured to marry Silja Valo, who was visibly pregnant when she walked down the aisle. Their daughter, Aune, died in infancy. After a short and unhappy time together, Kuula relocated to Helsinki to continue his musical studies, and Silja Kuula moved in with his parents.

Soon after his return to Helsinki, Kuula met Alma Silventoinen, a young soprano who was also a conservatoire student. Alma was a beauty, whose company was sought by officers, students and even teachers at the conservatoire. She and Kuula fell in love, but the romance was not an easy one – Toivo was still married to Silja – but in Alma he found an understanding muse and a companion who appreciated his music. Most of the songs in this album were written for, and premiered by, her.

Kuula continued his studies in Bologna, Leipzig and Paris, and returned to northern Ostrobothnia, via Helsinki, in 1910, assuming the position of conductor of the orchestra of the Oulu Musical Society. The following year he moved back to Helsinki where he was appointed assistant conductor to Robert Kajanus, a prominent figure in Finnish musical circles at the time.

In 1913 Kuula and his first wife were divorced, and he became engaged to Alma, who was now a successful concert singer. They were married in 1914 and moved to the city of Viborg in 1916, when Kuula was appointed head conductor of the Orchestra of the Viborg Friends of Music. Their daughter Sinikka, who later became a distinguished pianist, was born in 1917.

During the early 1900s Finland was a grand duchy of the Russian Empire, in a close union with Russia proper. The turn of the twentieth century was marked by attempts by

² *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

the Tsar to eradicate the Finnish language and culture in a process of Russification. For Finns, this policy was nothing new: from the Middle Ages until 1809, Finland had been Swedish territory, and subject to active Swedification policies.³ By the early nineteenth century Swedish was the only language of higher education in Finland, and thus the language of the Finnish elites.⁴ The early 1900s was marked by a struggle against Russian dominion, and by the resistance of Finnish-speaking Finns (who formed 85 per cent of the population) to the dominance of the Swedish language. During this time, Toivo Kuula identified as a patriot, a Nationalist and as a 'Fennoman' – a fervent proponent of Finnish language and culture. This uncompromising political stance, combined with his idealistic character, were reflected in his untimely death.

The Russian Tsar was toppled in 1917 and by the following year the Communist revolution had turned Russia into a place of terror and turmoil. Amid this turbulence Finland gained its independence – but not without a bloody civil war, pitting a Communist revolutionary Social Democratic Party and its Red Guards against the 'farmers' army' of the democratically elected parliamentary government of the recently established Republic of Finland.

By May 1918 the Finnish government had emerged victorious. Kuula celebrated this victory on 1 May in a restaurant in his hometown of Viborg, which had recently been liberated from Communist insurgents. His party included several Jaegers and Finnish Nationalists – mainly university students – who had gone to Germany during the First World War to acquire military training and bring home the fight against Russia. One of the Jaegers in Kuula's party was a pharmacist, who was able to secure a sufficient quantity of strong medicinal alcohol to render them all thoroughly intoxicated. Kuula had a quarrel with some of the Jaegers: he was a proponent of the farmers' army, had composed a *Finnish White Guards' March* for them and now played it on the piano. The Jaegers were partly Swedish-speaking, they did not know Kuula and demanded that he

³ Nils Erik Villstrand, 'Valtakunnanosa. Suurvalta ja valtakunnan hajoaminen 1560–1812' ('Reichstag. The Great Power and the Disintegration of the Empire 1560–1812'), in *Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland*, Svenska Litteratursällskapet (SLS), Helsinki, 2009; English translation, *The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland*, published by SLS in 2012, pp. 54–55.

⁴ Sirkku Latomaa and Pirkko Nuolijärvi, 'The Language Situation in Finland', *Language Planning*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2002, pp. 95–202.

play Sibelius' *March of the Jaegers* instead, a suggestion Kuula found offensive. After an exchange of words turned into a brawl, Kuula drew a knife and wounded one of the Jaegers. Leaving the party because of this altercation, he was shot in the head by a Jaeger outside the restaurant and died two weeks later, on 18 May 1918.⁵ He was 34 years old.

Kuula was a composer of Finnish poetry in a time where existence of high culture in the Finnish language was neither granted nor guaranteed. Quite why Finnish meant so much to him requires a brief examination of the linguistic history of Finland. Naturally, a Finnish folk-culture, with some regional variation, had existed since ancient times, but since the thirteenth century Finland had been part of the kingdom of Sweden: the language of government and education had been Swedish. The domination of Swedish began to change in 1809 when, after a short military campaign related to the Napoleonic wars, the Swedish crown ceded Finland to the Russian tsar. The tsar granted his new subjects' autonomy, forming a separate 'grand duchy' of Finland instead of merging conquered Finnish territories with Russia. At first, the grand duchy had its own laws, based on the enlightenment-era Swedish constitution of 1772, and its own governmental institutions, instead of the autocracy of tsarist Russia. But later tsars attempted to reverse this position and implemented russification campaigns, as well as censorship and political oppression, which meant that in the early nineteenth century being Finnish suddenly became a status with certain privileges: having been cut off from the Swedish crown and dropped under Russian governance, the Swedish-speaking elites in Finland now discovered a new Finnish identity: 'Swedes we are no longer, Russians we do not want to become, so let us be Finns', as Johan W. Snellman (or possibly Adolf Arwidsson) crystallised the idea.⁶

Over the nineteenth century, Finnish language and culture was gradually introduced into the chambers of power and higher education: the first Finnish-language high school

⁵ In addition to Juhani Koivisto's 2008 biography of Kuula, the incident is discussed also in Hanna Asikainen's article 'Säveltäjä Toivo Kuula murhattiin yli sata vuotta sitten, mutta tekijää ei koskaan saatu tilille – nyt murhamysteeri on ehkä ratkennut' ('The composer Toivo Kuula was murdered over a hundred years ago, but the perpetrator was never brought to account – now the murder mystery may have been solved') posted on 25 October 2022: <https://yle.fi/aihe/a/20-10003568>, accessed on 1 November 2023.

⁶ Jani Marjanen, 'Ruotsalaisia emme enää ole. Erään ilmaisen historiasta', in Henrika Tandefelt *et al.* (eds.): *Köpa salt i Cádiz och andra berättelser – Cádizin suolaa ja muita kertomuksia* ('Buy Salt in Cadiz and Other Stories'), Siltala, Helsinki, 2020, pp. 163–84.

was founded in 1856; the first doctoral dissertation written in Finnish was accepted in 1858; in 1863 Tsar Alexander II ruled that Finnish was to be an official language alongside Swedish; in 1874 Finnish became a mandatory subject of matriculation exams even for Swedish-speaking students; and finally, in 1917, the first university giving education primarily in Finnish was founded.

The slow change of Finland from an eastern province of the Swedish kingdom, where Swedish-speaking elites governed Finnish-speaking subjects, to a bilingual country was met with enthusiasm and fascination on one hand, and stubborn and prolonged resistance on the other. Some Swedish-speaking politicians, artists and writers promoted Finnish language and culture, as did Swedish-speaking families eager to adopt Finnish (or to revert back to the Finnish of parents or grand-parents, having abandoned the language through necessity when embarking on a governmental or university career in the eastern part of the Swedish kingdom). There were, however, also Suecophiles who anchored their identity in the Swedish language and culture, and even ‘Suecomans’ who took their opposition of everything Finnish to odious extremes.

In this linguistic strife, Toivo Kuula was a fierce Fennoman during the formative years of the Finnish nation-state. He came from a Finnish-speaking family and composed almost exclusively to poems written in Finnish; among his *Lieder*, only four are not to Finnish texts: there is only one very early work with a Swedish text, *Ut min väg i världen går* (‘My Road Leads out into the World’), setting words by an anonymous poet;⁷ a *Vocalise* (*Mélodie lugubre*) [10], without a text; and two mature works where the language is not Finnish, ‘Heathland Allure’ [9] in German and ‘Ave Maria’ [3] in Latin.

Other than Oskar Merikanto (1868–1924), earlier Finnish composers had been almost exclusively Swedish-speaking; even Finland’s national composer, Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), was bilingual. Sibelius was born into a Swedish-speaking family, went to a Finnish-speaking school, kept his diaries in Swedish, wrote to his wife Aino in Finnish, and composed solo songs predominantly in Swedish, though there are also some songs in Finnish and in German.

⁷ Recorded on the first of these two albums, *Toccata Classics rocc 0719*.

Kuula's nationalism and Fennomanism is reflected in his choice of texts. He preferred texts by contemporary Finnish poets, especially Eino Leino (1878–1926) and Veikko Antero Koskenniemi (1885–1962),⁸ and selected those that use nationalist cultural and nature vocabulary together with often archaic forms to tell stories of inner emotion and present a particular worldview. The symbolism of these texts is often multi-layered and can be unfamiliar to modern readers, even in Finland. Kuula's treatment of these poems was nuanced and masterly.

Although he never received formal education in linguistics, philology or Finnish, he manages to treat the language with extraordinary skill, as has been noted by many musicologists. The pianist, pedagogue and scholar Gustav Djupsjöbacka refers to this skill as a 'magical alchemy of text and melody'.⁹ Another scholar, Juhani Koivisto, himself also a librettist and dramaturgist, notes in his excellent analysis of Kuula's solo songs¹⁰ that Kuula was extremely careful to match the metre of the poem and language with the metre of the music, and never does violence to the language.

The Songs

The opening track of this album, *The Maiden and the Son of a Boyar* [1], composed in 1911, is a monumental orchestral song, subtitled 'a legend for soprano and orchestra', and composed to a national symbolistic poem by Eino Leino in an archaic, Kalevala style. Kuula wrote the piece for his beloved Alma. The orchestral version was first performed in December 1912 by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the composer (then the assistant conductor of the Orchestra), with Silventoinen as soloist. Kuula prepared the piano version alongside the orchestral composition, and the couple performed it together on their concert tours.

⁸ He was published under (and is always known by) the name V. A. Koskenniemi.

⁹ Gustav Djupsjöbacka, *Istumme Ilokivelle. Sata suomalaista yksinlaulua* ('We sit on Ilokivi. One Hundred Finnish Solo Songs'), WSOY, Helsinki, 2001, p. 138.

¹⁰ Juhani Koivisto, *Sylkyty sydänelässä. Sanan, sävelen ja elämän kohtaaminen Toivo Kuulan lauluissa* ('Spitting in the Heart. The Meeting of Words, Melody and Life in the Songs of Toivo Kuula'), Sibelius Academy Publications No. 30, University of the Arts, Helsinki, 2024, p. 16.

Leino's text tells a story of a young maiden waiting for her betrothed to return from the war. As events turn out, the fiancé, a son of a feudal nobleman, kills his brother in a battle and ends up becoming a monk to try to repent of his wicked deed. Eventually, the maiden gives up hope of ever meeting him again and marries another man. The end of the text shows the inconsolable couple separately, the woman tending to a man she does not love, and the man in his cell in a monastery far away, flagellating his body to redeem his sins. In his two-part collection *Helkavirsiä* ('Helka Hymns', 1903 and 1916), Eino Leino uses folk-tale elements and the Kalevala metre to illustrate cosmic visions and tell universal stories about human life and death. This poem seems to move back and forth in time, reflecting alternately both a happier past and the gloomy present. Kuula paints the poem in vivid colours. The piano part reflects the rich orchestration, capturing the tempestuous gestures faithfully and thus making the piano part very demanding, even virtuosic. The vocal line is heroic, with long sustained lines and a wide tessitura. This is the first recording of the piano version, which is seldom performed.

Kuula's most productive period of song-composition was in 1912–13. He had just filed for a divorce from his first, unhappy marriage in 1911 and left for Berlin, Milan and Paris to compose. He was secretly engaged to Alma Silventoinen on 12 December 1912, the day of their successful first performance of *The Maiden and the Son of a Boyar* in Helsinki. During the following two years, he completed a total of eight songs (four songs each in his Opp. 23 and 24), all of them mature masterpieces. They are among the most prosodically accurate pieces of music in the Finnish Lied repertoire. 'Sinipiika' ('The Blue Maiden') [2] provides an example. In linguistics, 'prosody' refers to the patterns of rhythm, stress, intonation, tempo, pitch and similar elements of speech that reflect the emotional and intentional elements of spoken language not encoded by the speaker's grammatical selections or choices of vocabulary. Prosody encompasses those subtle yet nuanced hints of spoken language that allow a listener to discern the emotional state of the speaker, detect the presence of sarcasm or irony and recognise the emphasis the speaker places on the message. The rhythmic setting of 'Sinipiika' carefully matches the rhythm of Koskenniemi's sonnet, aligned to the rhythm a native Finnish-speaker would give this poem while reading or reciting it. But Kuula's careful treatment of language

does not end with rhythm: the word-stress and the accent of the music are matched immaculately, and even the melody is written in a manner similar to the intonation of Finnish. In his meticulous approach to language as a part of music, or music as a vehicle for language, Kuula can be compared to Wagner, even though Kuula's musical style is not particularly Wagnerian – at least, not on the surface.

According to Gustav Djupsjöbacka, 'Sinipiika' is one of the most Impressionist songs in Kuula's *œuvre*, with an abundance of unreleased seventh chords and restless polyrhythms.¹¹ The vocal line floats in even time above the piano triplets, taking unexpected turns, like a 'blue maiden' or forest spirit flickering behind the trees, leading her follower astray. This song is quite complex as far as the duo work of singer and pianist is concerned. The syncopated vocal melody in $\frac{4}{4}$ reminds me of the Finnish variant of an Argentinian tango, a style full of melancholy and yearning – even though tango reached Finland a few years after the publication of this song, and the Finnish tango became popular only some decades later. The choice of the poem seems quite personal for Kuula: as Juhani Koivisto notes,¹² he repeatedly called Alma his blue maiden in his diaries and letters, comparing her to that unobtainable mythical creature.

'Ave Maria' [3] is Kuula's only sacred solo song, composed in Italy where he was staying with Silventoinen in spring 1912. It is based on a simple two-bar bass motif, repeated 32 times. In the beginning of the second bar of the motif, there is a lowered second, which creates a dominant-seventh chord with a lowered fifth. This feature occurs so often in Kuula's music that many Finnish musicians and researchers call it 'the Kuula chord'.¹³ The repetitive bass creates a meditative feeling, perhaps an allusion to the Catholic tradition where prayers such as 'Ave Maria' are repeated over and over again with the help of a rosary.

Eino Leino's poem 'Treading on Flowers' [4] has been set to music at least a dozen times, the versions best known in Finland being a simple, beautiful song by Oskar

¹¹ Gustav Djupsjöbacka, *'Not a Single Note May Be Changed!'* Towards a Critical Edition of Toivo Kuula's Songs, Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, 2005, p. 28.

¹² Koivisto (2024), p. 85.

¹³ Cf., for example, Koivisto (2008), p. 53.

Merikanto and a male-choir serenade by Leevi Madetoja (1887–1947). The text implies that, as far as the speaker of the poem is concerned, the loved one will be able to walk on flowers for the rest of his or her life. Kuula's rendition of the serenade is passionate, with intense piano phrases rushing forward and the vocal line soaring high. The performance indications, *Allegro giocoso* and *pp, grazioso*, obviously direct the interpretation away from melodramatic pathos. Kuula wrote to Silventoinen that his new song was 'light and bright', suitable for her lyric voice, and she in turn described the song in her diary as being 'sunny, bright as summer, light as a cloud'.¹⁴ In our recorded version, we have tried to avoid an overly dramatic approach to find a playful and light-hearted spirit.

Kuula composed two songs to poems from a 1910 anthology called *Mielialoja* ('Moods') by Lauri Pohjanpää (1889–1962). 'Fate' [5] talks about the futility of human life, efforts in vain, goals that remain unreached, like the horizon. Even though the poet uses oriental images of caravans travelling on the desert and the eternally smiling sphinx, Kuula's composition has no orientalist features. In the piano part, he makes reference to an earlier song, 'Summer Night in the Churchyard',¹⁵ to a poem by Koskenniemi, perhaps because of the similar topics and atmosphere of the songs.

The other song with a Pohjanpää text is 'Saturday Night' [6]. In Finland, until the 1960s, there were six working days in the week, and Saturday night was the only night of the week not followed by an early rise to work. In the poem, the yearned-for rest is at hand, and peace and quiet are very much present. The herders have just brought the cattle home, the sun is slowly setting behind the forest and the church bells are tolling from afar to announce that Sunday is coming. All is well. In the piano, there is a folkish tune as a counterpoint to the vocal melody, like a cow-herder's flute in the distance; the church bells can be heard as a pedal point in the left hand throughout the song. Kuula composed it alongside with his *Ostrobothnian Suite*, Op. 20, for orchestra, in which he used Ostrobothnian folksongs he had collected in 1907.

There is a common pattern in Finnish poems and songs where the opening – a lengthy description of nature and landscape – is followed by a turn to the inner life of

¹⁴ Koivisto (2024), p. 68.

¹⁵ No. 1 of the *Two Songs*, Op. 6 (1907), recorded on Volume One.

the speaker, presented in contrast or as a parallel to the nature imagery, and so it is in ‘Saturday Night’. After a virtuosic piano interlude, there is a revelation: this is how the speaker of the song wants to die, tired but happy after a long day’s work, anticipating well-earned rest. As it happens, this song was one of the last Toivo and Alma Kuula ever performed together on the fateful May Day eve in Viipuri, 1918, only hours before he was fatally wounded by a gunshot.

‘Ice Flowers’ [7], setting a Koskenniemi poem, is very modern, in that Kuula rings surprises to its basically Romantic harmonies. As Koivisto points out,¹⁶ the poem must have intrigued Kuula, since it has the familiar elements of ice and frost, night and day, summer and winter, and yet it is also quite abstract. As years go by, summers turn into autumns and winters. While the real flowers wither and die, the frost crystals on the window, the scentless ice flowers that would melt away with the touch of a human hand, seem to represent dreams one has never dared even to pursue, hopes that remain forever unblemished. The vocal line follows the prosody of spoken (or recited) Finnish very accurately. The composition is quite translucent, with the piano part once again independent of the vocal line; it could even be performed as a piano solo. The song reminds me of Richard Strauss’ style – and both composers performed as accompanists to their soprano wives.

‘Old Autumn Song’ [8], from the same Koskenniemi collection, continues with themes similar to those in ‘Ice Flowers’. The opening stanza paints a picture of summer ending and winter approaching through the image of crowning blooms of flowers that did not survive the autumn – even the most modest and cheapest flowers. The second stanza repeats this idea with reference to expensive roses and orchids that did not bloom at all. This gloomy, bleak vision of autumn uses natural images to set the mood, but with its references to crowns of luxurious, exotic flowers, it also evokes a nationalistic idea of Finland as a poor country of harsh and unforgiving winters, where hard-working and resourceful people can barely survive, let alone enjoy the luxuries of life. The poem – a lament for vanishing youth that thinks back to warmth and sun, turning into a defiant

¹⁶ Koivisto (2024), p. 89.

and desperate hope towards the next summer, however unreliable that might be – is firmly anchored in Finnish life, treating summer as a metaphor for happy times. The poem urges firmness in the face of forthcoming adversity, certain that it will eventually end.

Since the poem was written during 1906–8, amidst social and political turmoil while Koskenniemi was employed by the reformist socialist periodical *Raataja* ('The Drudge'), there may even be political undertones in this message. For Kuula himself, the poem might have had a more specific meaning, representing the infinite delays in the process of divorcing his first wife and marrying Alma Silventoinen: the question 'My sister and companion, are you still able to trust the forthcoming summer – and in case next summer also fails us, still wait for the summer after that?' seems to be directed to her. In 1913, the divorce was at last finalised, and he could go public with his engagement to Alma. They married in April 1914, which signified a change in the themes of the poems he chose for his songs: after this point, there was no more cold and frost in his songs – excluding the children's song 'The Bird Protecting its Nest' [12], where winter is mentioned.

Kuula's only song to a German text, 'Heidezauber' ('Heathland Allure') [9], is sung surprisingly often in a Finnish translation: the text, by August Hjelt, was translated by the actor and director Jussi Snellman. Hjelt (1862–1919) was a statistician, an actuary and a politician whose wife was of German ancestry, and he wrote this romantic poem for her as an engagement gift in 1885. Unfortunately, there remains very little information as to why Kuula ended up composing this single song in German. Juhani Koivisto suggests that Kuula's song might have been commissioned by the poet himself as a present for his wife on her 50th birthday.¹⁷ My guess is that he might have set an engagement poem as an engagement gift for Alma. The style of this song is very different from the other three in Op. 24, and from Kuula's songs more generally, since it has evident connections with German Romantic Lieder: it is an odd yet pretty Schumann pastiche, though with Kuula's own signature-chord.

¹⁷ Koivisto (2024), p. 130.

The gloomy *Vocalise* [10] is known also by the name *Mélodie Lugubre* and was published in 1911 for violin or cello and piano. Kuula wrote the piece for Silventoinen in 1909, as a vocalise to help develop her lower range. As he wrote to her from Bologna on 5–6 March 1909:

Tonight, after dinner I quickly composed for you a vocalise that I think does well for your voice, especially the low range. It reaches the low *f*, so you can try to get your voice resonant on the low range. [...] I have worked so much I have a headache now: the first thing in the morning I was harmonising [*sic*] the vocalise I suddenly wrote for you last night.¹⁸

On 10 March, he sent the vocalise to Alma with the following notes:

Here I am now sending you the other vocalise I promised you. This is probably one of the hardest vocalises there are, since the range is two-and-a-half octaves, and it is equally impossible for both sopranos and altos, but as an exercise for you, I think it is unparalleled. Also, it is written in such a musical form that I don't think there is another vocalise like that, and so it should be pure enjoyment to practise. And this vocalise is meant for you alone, nobody else. This is the only 'example' there is, I will not leave any copies for myself, because I don't have time to transcribe it; so keep it safe and do not lose it in any case, then you can sometime, when competing with some 'primadonna', slap this in front of her face and say 'if you please' – and then she will stare at you in fear and horror. There are, for example, bars [music example] etc. that keep repeating, starting from one tone and then from another; these must be sung in a tremendously nervous manner, as if you were horribly angry and completely mad and distraught and wanted to say something to someone, imperious and irritated. [...] This vocalise I am now sending you is such that it requires perfect elasticity and strength from the chest and lungs. And I am asking you to practise this without accompanying yourself, or if you must, then you have to sing sitting down, under no circumstance standing up. Furthermore, banging notes out of the piano will not develop your ear, only singing does that for you.¹⁹

¹⁸ Toivo Kuula's letters to Alma Silventoinen, Finnish National Library archives.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

I have nothing to add to Kuula's own description of his vocalise: 'equally impossible for both sopranos and altos' says it all. This recording is the first of the original version for voice and piano, although several instrumental versions have appeared. The music was not included in Djupsjöbacka's critical edition of Kuula's songs, since the vocalise had never been published as a song, and we are grateful to the chairman of the Toivo Kuula Society, Tero Tommila, for sending us a copy in the original key.

'Come, my Love' [1], the first of the Three Songs, Op. 29a, of 1915 is an invitation, a cry for help, perhaps even a marriage proposal painted in strong strokes. Kuula chose a poem from Koskeniemi's first collection (1906) and composed the song while Alma, now his wife, was in hospital; it was waiting for her when she returned home.²⁰ On the surface, the speaker seems to be reaching out for his or her loved one while having a nocturnal anxiety attack, but it can also be seen as an invitation to lifelong companionship, sharing a long journey with both happiness and tears. The anxiety, despair and a degree of Weltschmerz can be heard in the sighing *Maestoso* chords in the piano in the first and second verses. In the third, Kuula uses his signature seventh chord with the lowered second. Koivisto notes²¹ that here the chord is not connected with winter, cold, frost or darkness; instead, it gives a darker colour to the idea of having 'the gift of dreams', or the lot of an artist's life.

Kuula's only children's song, 'The Bird Protecting its Nest' [12], was placed²² in the same opus, 29a, from 1915 as 'Come, my Love' and 'The Herder Boys' [13], even though this touching little piece can be considered much less of an art-song than the other two. The version of the song we have recorded is unpublished; it is kept in the Kuula manuscript collection in the Finnish National Library archives,²³ and we received a transcribed copy from Tero Tommila. In Gustav Djupsjöbacka's critical edition, there is another version of the song, for unison children's choir and harmonium, which was

²⁰ Koivisto (1924), p. 98.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Kuula gave opus numbers to his works himself; after his death Alma Kuula completed his catalogue, working especially with those works that had remained unpublished when her husband died. 'The Bird Protecting its Nest' was published in 1915, and so its inclusion in Op. 29a was most probably decided by Kuula himself.

²³ HYK/C3b, Marttinen collection, Finnish National Library.

originally published by the Hämeenlinna Animal Welfare Association in 1915. In the piano version, some of the chords are arpeggiated, whereas in the harmonium version they are not. There is also a slight difference in the vocal melody in the first phrase: the solo-song version dives down to B natural, but in the choral version the melody goes upwards to B natural instead, so that the ambitus is smaller.

The unusual nature of the publisher requires some explanation. In the early years of the twentieth century, animal welfare was a novel idea in Finland. In 1870, the author and poet Zacharias Topelius founded Maj Föreningen, the ‘May Association’, to protect wild birds, and the Finnish Animal Welfare Association was founded in 1901, with local branches spreading around the country. Poets and other artists took part in the campaigns to protect wildlife and prevent cruelty towards animals. Gösta Larsson (1873–1948), known as Larin-Kyösti, wrote his poem to educate children against robbing and destroying birds’ nests, and Kuula’s song was originally published in a children’s magazine called *Varpunen* (‘Sparrow’).

In ‘The Herder Boys’ [13], Kuula returns to the topic of blue maidens, this time as the culprit when a young herder gets lost in the woods. In Finland, pastures used to be tiny patches in the woods, far away from farmhouses. The cattle had to be taken through the woods in the morning, and brought back in the evening. Herders used cattle-calls and birch-bark trumpets as their tools for herding the cows and scaring-off predators. The job could be dangerous, and there was always the possibility that one could get lost or have an accident; still, it was an unskilled job that children could perform. The poem by Eero Eerola (1884–1939) gives an explanation as to why one herder should have gone missing whereas the other returned safely home with the cattle: the lost child was vulnerable to the call of forest spirits, because he (or she – the poem does not explain whether the herders were boys or girls) dreamed of vast forests and was drawn to them, while the other child yearned for bigger towns and villages.

Kuula treats this poem as a kind of an ominous pastoral, with a flute melody in the piano at first, followed by the swirling dance of the blue maidens. The song ends with the villagers futilely searching for the lost child in the woods, with dramatic triplet chords in the piano and a desperate cry in the voice part, turning into a strange, twisted vocalise

version of the original pastoral flute melody, with the familiar lowered second. Here, the Kuula chord seems to again signify something strange, menacing, supernatural. The harmonies are almost Impressionist, and so this song offers an example of what kind of music Kuula might have written, had he lived longer.

Kuula composed most of his songs to satisfy his inner compunctions and his artistic aspirations. In 1916–17, though, he was a married man, and his wife was expecting a child, who became their daughter, Sinikka. Having left his post as an assistant conductor in Helsinki in 1915, Kuula had to make ends meet, which led him to accepting assignments to compose theatre music. ‘Imandra’s Song’ [14] is from a fairytale play, *Taikapeili* (‘The Magic Mirror’), by Larin-Kyösti, for which Kuula wrote the music in 1916. The score includes attractive, folk-music-inspired pieces for chamber orchestra, one song for a female choir and one solo song. In the play, princess Imandra is a proud, wicked and unruly girl who is bored with her life at court. She rudely turns down a proposal from the prince from a Far, Far Away Land, who then decides to teach her humility and compassion by disguising himself as a gamekeeper and taking the princess with him to a small cottage in the woods. This beautiful song is from a scene in the third act where Imandra, dressed as a poor country girl, is sitting, alone and forsaken, by the loom, weaving a golden fabric for the wedding of another princess to the prince – or at least so she thinks. Eventually, there is a happy ending, of course. Kuula’s published song sets three verses; in the play, there are two further verses, to make the song text more coherent in context. We omit these to stay faithful to Kuula’s intention. Curiously, there is a thematic connection here to Kuula’s most famous solo song *Tuijotin tulehen kauan* (‘I stared at the fire for a long time’), Op. 2, No. 2:²⁴ in both songs, a maiden is weaving golden fabrics adorned with pearls for a wedding, but there will be a happy ending in only one of these stories.

Spring Song [15] was written for a historical play, *La cena delle beffe* (‘The Jesters’ Supper’), originally by Sem Benelli (1877–1949).²⁵ The Finnish journalist and writer Eino

²⁴ Recorded on Volume One, rocc 0719.

²⁵ Benelli’s verse-play, styled a *poema drammatico*, has a musical history of its own. It was premiered in the Teatro Argentina in Rome in 1909, with music by the then fourteen-year-old Manoh Leide-Tedesco (1894–1982). In 1923 Benelli adapted his play to

Palola (1885–1951) based his version only loosely on Benelli's poem, modifying and extending it. Kuula turned the text into a charming and light-hearted Neapolitan song, with a $\frac{9}{8}$ tarantella rhythm in the piano accompaniment. He was familiar with Italian music, having studied in Bologna and spent time with Alma in Milan. Though his style was emblematically Finnish, this piece shows that he was perfectly capable of bringing different colours to his work.

In an anthology of poems by Kalle Wuokoski (1880–1944), 'Sailing in the Moonlight', the first of the Two Songs, Op. 31a [16], was called simply 'The Sailor's Song': there is no indication in the text itself of whether it is day or night. Kuula loved sailing: he had a boat called Kajava ('Seagull') on lake Päijänne, the second-largest lake in Finland, located in Northern Häme, between Lahti and Jyväskylä. During the summer that preceded the composition of this song, Kuula had had a frightening accident: his boat suddenly ran aground on a skerry, and Kuula toppled into the water. It was a late August night, and already dark; Kuula had been standing in the fore of the boat, tending to the anchor rope, when suddenly he found himself in the lake under the boat, but he managed to drag himself back on board.²⁶ Päijänne is notoriously deep, with steep rocky shores: drowning is a very common way of dying in the area. The song is hauntingly beautiful, with the piano part rippling like small waves against the sides of the boat, *pianissimo*, glimmering in the moonlight, and melodies on parallel fourths creating capricious gusts of wind. In the text, the sailor prays to the mythical Ilmatar, the mistress of the air in the Kalevala, to protect the boat from peril and to guide it safely home.

The last art-song Kuula composed was 'In the Cattle-yard' [17], a musical snapshot of a late summer day in the countryside of Häme. The text is by Larin-Kyösti, who, inspired by the Swedish poet Gustaf Fröding (1860–1911), wrote a series of poems on rural themes, describing village life. The song opens with a cattle-call, as Anni the

provide a libretto for a four-act opera (with the same name) by Umberto Giordano (1867–1948), the 1924 premiere being conducted by Toscanini. The play, too, had a further life, with Sarah Bernhardt starring in *La beffa* in Paris in 1910, and *The Jest*, a 1919 English adaptation with the brothers John and Lionel Barrymore, running for 256 performances in New York. The melodramatic plot involves a plan for revenge which goes violently wrong, and the principal character descends into madness.

²⁶ Kuula's log for his boat Kajava can be found on the Tehi Sailing Club website, at <https://teps.fi/seura/historia/toivo-kuulan-lookikirja-kesilta-1916-1917/>, in addition to the Finnish National Library archives.

milkmaid is preparing to milk the cows. Taavi the farmhand is teasing her, throwing rowan berries into the pail. Anni threatens to dance with everybody else rather than him later that evening and tells him to go back to his work. Taavi then appeases Anni by telling her how pretty she looks and offering to shoo the mosquitos away – and then suddenly steals a kiss. The music is lively, starting in a folk-music-style Dorian mode and advancing towards more chromatic harmonies. There is a cheerful polka in the piano when the dance party is mentioned in the text; throughout the song, the piano continues to comment on events in a witty and humorous way.

Kuula's Missing Heritage

Toivo Kuula's late songs clearly show a progression from national Romanticism towards a more modern tonal language. We will never know what direction his art would have taken, and what treasures were lost with the premature end to his life. A few days before he died, on 18 May 1918, he said he still had two thousand melodies left to write, and the archives reveal that he had plans for at least a Kalevala-themed opera called *Lemminkäinen*, an orchestral cycle and ballet music to a play by Juhani Aho. Some of us believe he could have produced wonders: a teacher and mentor of mine at the Sibelius Academy, the conductor Erkki Pullinen (1939–2020), once told me that 'if Toivo Kuula had lived longer, this university would be called Kuula Academy, and there might be a smaller Sibelius Institute, maybe in Hämeenlinna'.

The history of music is speckled with lives cut short that might have changed its course: Arriaga in Spain, dead ten days before he turned twenty, the English George Pinto who made it to twenty but not 21, the Bohemian Voříšek, who died in Vienna at 33, and the sixteen-year-old Heikki Suolahti in Finland. Mozart (35) and Schubert (31) achieved enough in their short spans for posterity to admire what they did write rather than speculate as to what might have been. Kuula falls in the middle: whatever an alternative future might have brought, even the limited number of works he did manage to complete establish his position as one of the most remarkable of all Finnish composers. Indeed, his mastery of the Finnish language – indeed, his fervent love of it – makes him perhaps the most important composer of Finnish-language Lied and choral music.

Jenni Lättilä earned two masters' degrees at the Sibelius Academy, one from the department of Church Music and another from that of Vocal Music and Opera. She received her doctorate in 2017, having studied the young dramatic soprano voice as the vehicle of Wagnerian music (in a recital series), as well as 'opera as emotional labour' (in a written thesis). Jenni Lättilä has been a prize-winner in several national and international vocal competitions. Her dramatic soprano instrument is particularly suited for the major female roles in Verdi's and Wagner's operas; indeed, in 2010 her debut role as an opera singer was Lady Macbeth in Verdi's *Macbeth*. In 2011 she made her debut at the Finnish National Opera (FNO), singing three roles in Wagner's *Ring*; she has been a regular guest soloist at the FNO since then. She is also a sought-after orchestral soloist and performs regularly as a Lied recitalist; her recording of Wagner's complete Lieder with the pianist Kirill Kozlovski was published in 2016, and their Lieder duo has since appeared on a 2017 recording from Nova Records of newly discovered songs by Finnish composer Yrjö Kilpinen. The first volume of their Toccata Classics recording of the complete Toivo Kuula solo songs was met with enthusiasm from a writer for MusicWeb International: 'It should be said right off that soprano Jenni Lättilä and pianist Kirill Kozlovski exceed all expectations in their performances. Ms. Lättilä's singing is especially notable for the varied characterizations in each song, and her enunciation appears flawless.'



A versatile musician, Jenni Lättilä is renowned as a performer of contemporary music. She has also worked as church musician, voice pedagogue and as the conductor of a chamber orchestra and a number of choirs. Her scholarly interests as a post-doctoral researcher encompass aspects of classical singing as a profession rather than art.

Jenni Lättilä has served as the head of the Vocal Music department and lecturer of vocal arts at the Sibelius Academy since 2020. In January 2024, she was appointed the Academy Vice Dean for Artistic Activities.

Kirill Kozlovski is a Finnish-Belarusian pianist, harpsichordist and researcher. He holds a doctoral degree from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki for his research into the music of Dmitri Shostakovich (2017). His present research interests include Soviet music and cultural history, as well as performance practices within the Russian piano school. As a performing artist he aims at versatility and careful balance between different styles and epochs. His repertoire encompasses music from the late Renaissance to contemporary composers, although Soviet music occupies a special position. Kirill Kozlovski is a devoted collaborative pianist with a special affinity for vocal chamber music. His previous recordings include the complete songs by Richard Wagner with Jenni Lähtilä and the baritone Tommi Hakala (Siba Records), a solo piano album, *Shostakovich in Context*, combining preludes and fugues by Dmitri Shostakovich with Finnish contemporary music (Pilfink Records), and a programme of piano music by Yuri Shaporin for Toccata Classics. A critic in *Fanfare*, reviewing Volume One of the Lähtilä/Kozlovski Kuula project, wrote that ‘Kirill Kozlovski embraces Kuula’s symphonic keyboard writing, producing an impressive richness of tone and volume that complements Lähtilä’s dramatic soprano’.



Photograph: Markus Kaarto

Texts and Translations

1 Impi ja pajarin poika, Op. 18, No. 2 (1911)
Eino Leino

Istui impi lähtehellä,
vieritti suruista virttä
päivän mennessä majoille,
kesähiilun himmetessä,
syttyessä syksyn lampun,
pohjan tähden tuikkehessa.
Huone honkainen humautti,
kangas kultainen kumahti,
syöksähti sylistä illan
tuo kaunis pajarin poika
välkkyvällä varsallansa;
hetteessä hepoa juotti,
naljaeli neitoselle:
'Milloin oot minun omaani?'
Saneli ihala impi:
'Silloin minä sinun omasi,
kun sammuu sydänsuruni'.
Tuo kaunis pajarin poika
suki orhin sulkkukarvan,
naljaeli neitoselle:
'Milloin sammuvi surusi?'
Virkahteli viono virpi:
'Silloin sammuvi suruni,
kun minä sininen risti'.
Tuo kaunis pajarin poika
riisui ristin rinnaltansa,
naljaeli neitoselle:

The Maiden and the Son of a Boyar

*The maiden was sitting by the spring,
singing a sorrowful tune,
as the day was setting,
the glow of the summer night was dimming,
the autumn lamps were lighting up,
the North Star glimmering above.
There was a whoosh in the vast pinewood hall,
a rumble on the golden moorland,
when, from the embrace of the night,
the beautiful son of a boyar swooped in
on his lustrous colt;
he let his horse drink from the swamp
and spoke teasingly to the maiden:
'When will you be mine?'
The lovely maiden said:
'I will be yours
when my heartache fades'.
The beautiful son of a boyar
groomed the shining coat of his stallion
and spoke teasingly to the maiden:
'When will your heartache fade?'
The bashful sprig said:
'My heartache will fade
when I turn into a blue cross'.¹
The beautiful son of a boyar
took his crucifix pendant off his neck
and spoke teasingly to the maiden:*

¹ In another folklore-inspired legend by Eino Leino, God turns a maiden into a blue cruciform statue to save her from an attacker.

'Muistatko minua milloin?'
Heinä himmeä helisi:
'Muistelen minä sinua,
muistatko sinä minua?'
Tuo kaunis pajarin poika
kävi neitosen kätehen,
ristin kaulahan ripusti.
'Silloin minä sinut unohdan,
kun minä punainen nurmi.'
Singahti satulahansa,
kultanuolena katosi,
jäl impi imehtimähän
pohjan tähden tuikkehesen.
Tuo kaunis pajarin poika
kulki suurihin sotihin,
tasapäihin tappeloihin.
Tuo kaunis pajarin poika
vihdoin miekkansa veristi
oman veljensä veressä;
tuli portille pyhälle,
munkiksi monasterihin.

Tuo impi ihalan illan
kulki kaihoten kotihin,
kultaristi rinnallansa.

Kauan kaipasi urosta,
kesän mennyttä murehti;
meni miehelle hyvälle,
vaikkei varsin mieluksalle.
Tuo kaunis pajarin poika
viallista verta vitsoi
kopin kolkoilla kivillä;
tuo impi ihalan illan

'When will you remember me?'
The hay softly rustled:
'I will remember you,
but will you remember me?'
*The beautiful son of a boyar
took the maiden by the hand,
hung the crucifix pendant on her neck.*
'I will forget you
when the grass turns red below me'.
*He sprang on his saddle
and flew away like a golden arrow;
the maiden was left behind, astounded,
below the glimmering North Star.*
*The beautiful son of a boyar
travelled to great wars,
to equal battles.*
*The beautiful son of a boyar
eventually stained his sword
with the blood of his own brother;
he ended up before a sacred gate,
became a monk in a monastery.*

*The maiden, on that lovely evening,
walked home in a wistful mood,
with the golden crucifix pendant on her bosom.*

*For a long time she yearned for the hero,
worried for the one gone last summer:
in the end, she married a good man,
though not very pleasing to her.*
*The beautiful son of a boyar
flagellated his wicked blood
on the gloomy stones of his cell;
the maiden, on the same lovely evening*

se suki suruista päättä
miehen vieraan vuotehella.
Tuo kaunis pajarin poika
huuti suuressa hädässä,
anoi Herran armahdusta;
tuo impi ihalan illan
oudon liettä liikutteli,
oudon lasta laulatteli,
oudon karjoja huhuili,
oudon väänti värttinätä,
oudon kanssa illat istui,
oudon kanssa aamut astui,
oudolle tilan tekevi,
oudon ääntä kuuntelevi.

Four Songs, Op. 23 (1912)

[2] No. 1, Sinipiika
V. A. Koskenniemi

Veit kesäisenä yönä sielun multa,
sä metsän sinipiika loihdullas.
Sen teki kumma laulu laulamas,
sun silmäis sini ja sun kutreis kulta.
Se mikä ennen sytytti sydämeen tulta,
se kävi kalpeaksi rinnallas.
Veit paljon, paljon multa mukanas,
vain kaihon kalvavan sain sijaan sulta.
Ken lumoisissa on metsänneitosen,
hän omaa sieluansa etsien
käy muille outona kuin unissansa,
hän katsoo kaihoihin illan hämärään,
hän riutuu sanattomaan ikävään
ja etsii omaa sieluansa.

*brushed her sorrowful head
on a strange man's bed.
The beautiful son of a boyar
cried out in severe distress,
pleading for God's mercy;
the maiden, on the same lovely evening
poked the stove for a stranger,
lulled a child for a stranger,
called the cattle for a stranger,
spun the spindle for a stranger,
sat in the evenings with a stranger,
walked in the mornings with a stranger,
made room beside her for a stranger,
listened to the voice of a stranger.*

The Blue Maiden

*On a summer night you stole my soul with your
spell,
you blue maiden of the forest.
You did it by the strange song you sang,
the blue of your eyes and the gold of your locks.
The things that used to kindle my heart before
became bleak compared with you.
You took so much away from me
and only gave me a gnawing yearning in return.
He whom the forest maiden has enchanted,
walks the Earth seeking for his own soul,
a stranger to everyone, as if in a dream,
he gazes wistfully into the evening dusk,
he pines away in speechless longing,
and seeks for his own soul.*

[3] No. 2, Ave Maria

Ave Maria, gratia plena
Dominus tecum;
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
Amen.

[4] No. 3, Yli kukkien
Eino Leino

Hän kulkevi kuin yli kukkien,
hän käy kuni sävelten siivin,
niin norjana notkuvi varsi sen,
kun vastahan vaiti mä hiivin.

Ja kunis mun voimani kukoistaa
ja soi minun soittoni täällä,
sinis laulujen laineilla käydä hän saa
ja kulkea kukkien päällä!

[5] No. 4, Kohtalo
Lauri Pohjanpää

Karavaani pyrkii taivaan rantaan,
joka loitos jää.

Hail Mary

*Hail Mary, full of grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.*

Treading on Flowers

*He² treads as if on flowers,
he walks like one on wings of song,
his body moves so supplely
when I sneak quietly out to meet him.*

*And as long as my vigour flourishes,
as long as my music keeps playing,
he may walk on the waves of blue songs
and tread on flowers!*

Fate

*A caravan is heading for the horizon
that remains far away.*

²⁸ In Finnish, pronouns do not have a gender. In my interpretation, the person in question is a man, but the poet and composer both probably had a woman in mind.

Karavaani näantyy erämaan sanaan,
sfinksi hymyää.

Niin kuin päivä, tuhannen vuotta
hukkuu, häviää.

Karavaanit sadat jo näantyi suotta,
sfinksi hymyää.

Four Songs, Op. 24

[6] No. 1, Lauantai-ilta (1913)

Lauri Pohjanpää

Vasta, luulen, paimenpojat
karjan kotiin toivat.

Yli vetten kirkonkellot
sunnuntaita soivat.

Aaltoo laiho tähkäpäinen,
henkii tuuli lauha,

suvisen tienoon yllä lepää
sunnuntainen rauha.

Päivä hiljaa metsän taakse
laskee ruskoon kullan,

maasta hengitys se nousee
nuoren mustan mullan.

Näin minä kerran kuolla tahdon,
hiljaa niin kuin tuuli,

katsoen kauas taivaan ruskoon
onnen hymyssä huuli,

sammuvan päivän siunatessa
kultaviljamaita,

kellojen kaukaa soittaessa
suurta sunnuntaita.

*The caravan wastes away in the sand of the
desert,*

the sphinx is smiling.

*Like a day, a thousand years
go by, vanish.*

*Hundreds of caravans have already wasted
away in vain,
the sphinx keeps smiling.*

Saturday Night

*The young cowherds, I guess,
have just brought the cattle home.*

*The church bells toll over the waters
announcing Sunday.*

*The ears of the growing crop wave
in the mild breeze,*

*a Sunday calm rests
over the summery region.*

*Day is slowly setting behind the woods
into a golden afterglow,*

*from the ground rises the breathing
of fresh black soil.*

*This is the way I want to die one day,
silently like the wind,*

*gazing far into the sunset glow,
with a contented smile on my lips,*

*as the fading day blesses
the golden fields of rye,
as the bells toll from afar
announcing a glorious Sunday.*

[7] No. 2, Jääkukkia (1913)
V. A. Koskenniemi

Jääkukkaset ikkunalla,
te vuoteni viimeiset kukat,
kukat, joihin ei koskenut halla,
te olette jäänehet.

Te tulitte tummin illoin
yön valvojan ikkunaan,
ken teitä lempinyt on milloin,
ei kylmene konsanaan.

On kevättä, kesää monta
ohi kulkenut kukkasin,
jääkukkaa tuoksutonta
enin lemmin kuitenkin.

Ilo, nuoruus sen loistossa nukkuu,
kuin koskaan ei herätä vois
ne päivään mi hämyhyn hukkuu
ja kesään, mi katoa pois.

[8] No. 3, Vanha syyslaulu (1913)
V. A. Koskenniemi

Ei kruunut syksyhyn säilyneet
ole kukkaimme halvimpainkaan.
Kaikk' kallihiit ruusut ja orkideet
ne eivät kukkineet lainkaan.
Mun leikkisiskoni, tähtiöin
jo taivas yllämme palaa,
mut vielä ma kesään ikävöin

Ice Flowers

*Ice flowers on my window,
you, the last flowers of my year,
the only flowers that the frost has left untouched,
you have remained.*

*You came on the dark nights
onto the window of the sleepless one;
he who has loved you once
will never grow cold.*

*Many springs and summers
have gone by with their flowers,
it is still the ice flower, the scentless one,
I love the most.*

*Happiness and youth sleep in its splendour,
as if they could never wake up
to a day that vanishes into the dusk
and to a summer that fades away.*

Old Autumn Song

*The blooming crowns of even our most humble
flowers
did not last until the autumn.
All the precious roses and orchids,
they did not bloom at all.
My sister and companion, in the starry nights
the sky is already burning above us,*

ja sun sydämes suvehen halaa.

Osan nuoruudestamme hautahan
joka syksyhän sentään viemme.
Kesän loistoa päivän paahtavan
niin vähän me saaneet liemme.
Mun leikkisiskoni, vieläkin
sinä voitko kesää kiittää?
Niin paljon on sortunut suruihin,
niin niukasti riemua riittää.

Mut oman veremme unelmain
me tunnemme hurman ja huuman
ja toivossa kesäin tulevain
me pyyhimme kynnelen kuuman.
Mun leikkisiskoni, vieläkin
sinä voitko kesähän luottaa –
ja jos pettää ensi suvikin
yhä suvesta suveen vuottaa?

[9] No. 4, Heidezauber
August Hjelt

Still ruhet die Heide in weihvoller Nacht,
sie träumet ganz stille in mondlichter Pracht.
Es zieht durch die Bäume ganz leise der Wind,
es atmet die Heide wie ein schlummerndes
Kind.

Durch Wiesen und Felder, durch Büsche
und Wald,
das Himmelslicht spiegelt in Geistergestalt.
Still schweiget da alles in heiliger Stund,

*but I still long for the summer,
and your heart is yearning for warmth.*

*Every autumn, a part of our youth
we lay into the grave.
We seem to have received such a small share
of the splendour of the blazing summer days.
My sister and companion, can you still
be grateful to the summer?
So much has wasted away because of sorrow,
there is so little to be happy about.*

*But we still feel the rapture and ecstasy
of our aspirations in our blood,
and in the hope of summers to come
we wipe away the burning tears.
My sister and companion, are you still able
to trust the forthcoming summer –
and in case next summer also fails us,
still wait for the summer after that?*

Heathland Allure

*The heathland rests calmly in the blessed night,
it dreams serenely in the moonlit splendour.
The wind blows gently through the trees,
the heath is breathing like a slumbering child.*

*Through meadows and fields, bushes and forest.
the heavenly light reflects in a spectral form.
All is silent in the sacred hour,
only a brook murmurs in the deep, dark valley.*

ein Bächlein nur flüstert im tiefdunklen
Grund.

Da kommen zwei Menschen, ein Weib
und ein Mann,
durch Wald und durch Büsche zum Bächlein an.
Da bleiben sie stehen im Zauber der Nacht:
‘Was habt Ihr gesucht, was habt Ihr gemacht?’

Sie wissen's nicht selber, sie fühlen es nur:
Sie sind nur die Kinder der großen Natur.

Three Songs, Op. 29a

[11] No. 1, Tule armaani (1915)

V. A. Koskenniemi

Kuin meren raskaat mainingit mun aatokseni
lyö,
mua kaamoittaapi elämä ja kuolon pitkä yö –
tule armaani ja kätes anna mulle!
Tule, yksin pitkä kulkea on taival elontien,
tule, unten kultalinnaan sinut kerallani vien
ja puolet annan surustani sulle.

Ma isiltäni perinnöksi unten lahjan sain,
ma kaksin verroin painon tunnen elon suuren
lain
ja onnen, jok' ei toisten osaks tulle.
Tule armaani mun luokseni, niin täys on
sydämein,
tule, uskalla en jäädä enää yöhön yksiksein,
tule armaani ja kätes anna mulle!

*Two people come, a woman and a man,
through forest and bushes to the brook,
there they stand in the allure of the night:
‘What were you looking for, what were you
doing?’*

*They don't even know it themselves, they only
feel it:
They are merely children of the great nature.*

Come, my Love

*My thoughts billow like the heavy surges of the
sea,
I am terrified by both life and the long night of
death –
come, my love, and give me your hand!
Come, the journey of life is long to travel alone,
come, I will take you to the golden castle of
dreams, and I will give you half of my sorrows.*

*I have inherited the gift of dreams from my
fathers,
I feel doubly the weight of the great law of life
and the bliss no-one else can achieve.
Come to me, my love, and my heart will be full,
come, I don't have the courage to be alone in the
night any longer,
come, my love, and give me your hand!*

[12] No. 2, Pesäänsä suojeleva lintu (1914)
Larin-Kyösti)

Tästä käy sun kotiis tie,
älä vie, älä vie!
Laulan kerran kesässäni
nyt on pojat pesässäni
älä vie, älä vie!

Iloisemmin laulu sois,
mene pois, mene pois!
Pienet huutaa jyvä mull' on,
Koti myöskin hyvä sull' on
mene pois, mene pois!

Puute puussa, ruoka maass' –
tule taas, tule taas!
Kun on kirsi kireimmillään,
Kun on virsi vireimmillään
tule taas, tule taas!

[13] No. 3, Paimenet (1915)
Eero Eerola

Kaksi paimenta karjoja metsään vie,
kaksi paimenta torvea soittaa,
niin vilvas on metsolan vihreä tie,
uni pienen paimenen voittaa.

Sinipiikojen karkelo keinutti pois
sen paimenen korpien syliin,

The Bird Protecting its Nest

*Your way home passes my nest,
don't take it, don't take it!
I only sing once every summer,
now I have young ones in my nest,
don't take them, don't take them!*

*I would sing a happier tune
if you went away. Go away!
The young ones are crying, I have seeds for them,
you also have your good home to go to.
Go away, go away!*

*Poverty in the trees, food on the ground –
then come back! Come then!
When the crust of snow is hardest,
when I sing of need and hunger,
then come back! Come then!*

The Herder Boys

*Two herder boys take the cattle to the forest,
two herder boys play their birch trumpets,
the green path of the woodland is so pleasantly
cool,
the little herder falls asleep.*

*The blue forest maidens' frolicking dance swayed
that herder away, into the heart of the deep
forest,*

ja on kuni toisen soitto nyt sois
yhä kaipuuta suuriin kyliin.

Yksi illalla soittavi torvea vain,
yksi karjoja kotiin huhuu.
Sen toisen korvahan korpi ain
niin outoja unia puhuu.

Sen huilussa metsien houkutus soi,
sinipiiat on silmien eessä.
Hoi, paimenta hoi,
hoi-hoi, eksynyt paimen,
kylä etsivi silmät veessä.

Taikapeili: Incidental Music, Op. 30c

[14] No. 4, Imandran laulu (1916)

Larin-Kyösti

Nyt tornissa kutoo
neitoset hääkultakangastaan,
ja morsiusneidot laulavat
nyt armaastansa vaan.
Soi viimeisen kerran
mun lempeni laulu!

Ja ken ne helmet, kivet saa,
ja ken sen kruunun saa,
ei kukaan enään rakasta
nyt kurjaa kutojaa.
Soi viimeisen kerran
mun lempeni laulu!

*and now it sounds like the other one is playing
his birch trumpet, longing for the great villages.*

*Only one is now playing the birch trumpet in
the evening,
only one is calling the cattle home.
The deep forest is still whispering
its weird dreams into the other one's ears.*

*The allure of the deep forest rings in the sound
of his flute,
the blue maidens are blocking his view.
Hoy, herder boy, hoy,
hoy-hoy, lost herder boy,
all the village is searching with tears in their
eyes.*

The Magic Mirror

Imandra's Song

*In the tower maidens
are now weaving their golden fabrics for their
wedding,
and bridesmaids are singing
of their loved ones.
Resound for the last time, song of my love!*

*And who will get all the pearls and gemstones,
and who will get the bridal crown?
Nobody loves the wretched weaver
any longer.
Resound for the last time,
song of my love.*

En kiviä, en helmiä
ma siihen punoa saa,
on kyynelhelmet ainoat,
joilla sen voin koristaa.
Soi viimeisen kerran, ah,
soi viimeisen kerran
mun lempeni laulu.

[15] Kevätlaulu (1917)

Eino Palola, based loosely on an Italian
song-text by Sem Benelli

Jo puhkes lehteen kukka, puu,
on tullut unten toukokuu.

Jo saapui kevät kukkineen,
iloineen, lemменleikkineen
ja kaikki riemuitsevat.
Kun yöhyt päivän verhoaa
ja kuumemmaksi kaiho saa,
suo lohdutusta kevät.

Jo tuuli liehuu tuoksuvin
salaisin onnen toivehin
jokaisen neidon luo.
Kun lentää soinnut kaivaten
säteillä öisten tähtien,
on taivaassakin kevät.

*I cannot intertwine gemstones nor pearls
into my weave or my songs,
teardrops are the only pearls
I can adorn them with.
Resound for the last time,
oh, resound for the last time,
song of my love.*

Spring Song

*The flowers and the trees are already sprouting,
the May of dreams has come.*

*Spring is here with its flowers,
its joys, its games of love
and everyone is rejoicing.
When night wraps its veil around the day
and the longing becomes more ardent,
spring gives us refreshment.*

*The breeze moves with fragrant
secret wishes of happiness
to greet every maiden.
When chords are soaring upwards
following the beams of the stars on the night sky,
it is spring in Heaven, too.*

Kuink' onkaan aamu suloinen,
kun yö on mennyt lempien
ja uuteen riemuun tuokaa.
Taas veri kuuma viekoittaa,
on autuasta rakastaa,
kun hehkuu heliä kevät.

Siis terve, terve tänne tultuas,
iloisen onnen valtiias,
mi hehkuu rakkautta!
Ja joka neitonen riemuiten
rinnasta tempaa sydämen
lahjaksi sulle, oi kevät!

Two Songs, Op. 31a (1917)

[16] No. 1, Purjein kuutamolla
Kalle Wuokoski

Ilman impi sinisiipi,
johda purtta pientä,
johda yli mustan veen
kohti kotinientä.
Rauhoittaos hymylläsi
musta meren syli,
jotta pääsee pursi pieni
suurten vetten yli.
Koske valkosormellasi
purren mastopariin,
ettei särkyis pursi hento
meren salakariin.
Ilman impi, sinisiipi,
johda purtta pientä
kohti kotinientä.

*Ah, how lovely is the morning
when we have spent the night making love –
now bring us new joys!
The avid blood is tempting us again,
it is blissful to love
when the bright spring is glowing.*

*So we greet you now that you are here,
the lord of joyful ecstasy
who radiates love!
And every maiden will happily
tear their heart out of their chest
as an offering to you, o spring!*

Sailing in the Moonlight

*Maiden of the air, blue-winged,
lead the small shallop,
lead it over the black water
towards the familiar cape at home.
Calm the black bosom of the sea
with your smile,
so that the small shallop
will be able to cross the great water.
With your white fingers,
touch the pair of masts
so that the fragile shallop would not crash
and break onto a hidden skerry of the sea.
Maiden of the air, blue-winged,
lead the small shallop
towards the familiar cape at home.*

[17] No. 2, Karjapihassa

Larin-Kyösti

‘Hoi, Muurikki, Täplikki, Tessa ja Mansikki,
lehmäni kaikki jo tulkaa!’

Karjako-Anni se huutavi karjaa,
kujassa kellot ne kalkkaa ja soi,
puhtahat kiulut jo tyttönen toi
ja poskensa innosta hehkuu.

Kas, Taavetti-veitikka hiipivin askelin
nurkalta Annia väijyy,
pihlajanmarjoja heittävi kiuluun.
‘Hyi sinä Taavetti-hylkiö, pois!’
Anni se huus’ kuni suuttunut ois,
‘niin ootaskin kostanpa vielä:
kun talkoot on tanhulla,
näät sinä silloin,
ma tanssi en kanssasi laisinkaan;
Luikalan Ansukin pulski on, näät sä,
ja silloinpa sappesi kiehuu kai,
poikia muitakin on hui, hai!
Mene pellolle, Eero jo kyntää!’

‘No, mitäs sinä turhia, Annini, marjani,
heitä jo hiitehen riitä!
Kaikista sievin oot sinä sentään.
Anna kun hyttysset häädän noin,
tultakin viereesi laitella voin!’

– Sitä Taavia, nappasi suuta!

In the Cattle-yard

*‘Hoy, Brownie, Spotty, Tessie and Strawberry,
all my cows, come here!’*

*Anni the milkmaid is calling for the cattle,
cowbells are jangling and ringing in the alley,
the girl has already fetched the clean pails
and her cheeks are glowing with enthusiasm.*

*Look, the rascal Taavetti is sneaking around,
stalking Anni from behind the corner,
throwing rowanberries into the pail.
‘Bah, Taavetti you jerk, go away!’
Anni yelled, as if angry,
‘so just wait, I will get my revenge:
when there’s dancing after work,
you will then see,
I will not dance with you at all:
Ansu from Luikala is handsome, you will see,
and then your gall will boil for sure,
there are other boys besides you, pish posh!
Go to the field now, Eero is already ploughing!’*

*‘Now, that is quite unnecessary, Anni, my sweet
berry,
away with the quarrel already!
You are the prettiest girl of all.
Here, let me shoo away the mosquitos for you,
I can also kindle a fire beside you!’*

– Oh that Taavi! He stole a kiss!

— English translations: Jenni Lättilä



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Kirill Kozlovski, piano

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