

# RMA Nordic Music Study Day

Department of Music (Room E106)

University of York

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*



# Welcome!

Welcome to this RMA Study Day on Nordic music. The papers, discussions and performances featured in this day demonstrate the breadth and diversity of approaches to understanding music from the Nordic regions, and the University of York is delighted to host and facilitate discussion in this rapidly growing research area. We are grateful to the Royal Musical Association, the University of York, the Chimera Ensemble, and all of you for enabling this conference to take place.

## Getting around on and off campus:

Refreshments and lunch are available, but there are also colleges and shops on campus. The campus itself (est. 1963) is picturesque, featuring a lake, plenty of greenery and wildlife (do not be alarmed by freely-wandering geese – they are friendly, we promise).

The centre of the historic city of York is around a 20-25-minute walk from this part of the university, via University Road. If you have any questions, or need directions, please don't hesitate to ask.

*Owen Burton*

## Route from University of York (bottom-right) towards City Centre (top-left):



**9:30-10:00 – Registration and refreshments**

**10:00-11:00 – Session 1: Vocal music (Chair: Lucy Abrams)**

**Sarah Moynihan** (Royal Holloway) – ‘The Double-Tonic Landscape of a Lullaby-Lament: Sibelius’s ‘Sydämeni Laulu’’

**Daniel Collins** (Oxford Brookes University) – ‘Finnish Opera during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century’

**11:00-11:30 – Break**

**11:30-13:00 – Session 2: Issues surrounding musical modernism (Chair: Elke Albrecht)**

**Leah Broad** (University of Oxford) – ‘Music on the Nordic Stage’

**Christopher Tarrant** (Anglia Ruskin University) – ‘Carl Nielsen’s Musical Vitalism’

**George Kennaway** (University of Leeds) – ‘Baltic Octatonicism and Abstraction: aspects of the art and music of Mikalojus Čiurlionis (1875-1911)’

**13:00-14:00– Lunch**

**14:00-14:45 – Performance: Chimera Ensemble (introduction by Prof. Tim Howell)**

**Kaija Saariaho:** *Light and matter*

**14:45-15:00– Break**

**15:00-16:30 – Session 3: Contemporary Music in Finland (Chair: Sarah Moynihan)**

**Owen Burton** (University of York) – ‘Northern Light: Register, Harmony and “Light” in Esa-Pekka Salonen’s *Violin Concerto*’

**Lucy Abrams** (Sibelius Academy/ University of the Arts Helsinki) – ‘“Ears Open”: Performance-led research of Finnish contemporary music’

**Elke Albrecht** (Independent scholar) – ‘*One concerto for every orchestra instrument* – a multi-perspective work-biographical study on Finnish composer Kalevi Aho’s solo concertos’

**16:30-16:45 – Break**

**16:45–17:30 – Session 4: Panel discussion (Chair: Dr Rich Powell)**

Prof. Rachel Cowgill, Dr Annika Lindskog, Prof. Tim Howell

**18:00 – Informal meal in York**

## 9:30-10:00 – Registration and refreshments

### 10:00-11:00 – Session 1: Vocal music (Chair: Lucy Abrams)

**Sarah Moynihan** (Royal Holloway) – *‘The Double-Tonic Landscape of a Lullaby-Lament: Sibelius’s ‘Sydämeni Laulu’*

The expansive overlapping ostinati textures of Sibelius’s music, taxonomised by James Hepokoski in 1993 as ‘Klang-meditations’ and ‘sound-sheets, have long been interpreted as evocative of the human experience of Finnish landscapes. However, other means of evoking space can be deduced, even in the absence of such ‘sonata deformations’ or orchestral textures.

A voice-leading analysis of Sibelius’s song, ‘Sydämeni Laulu’ (1898), for example, reveals how tonal distance between spatially remote landscapes is conveyed without the use of Klangflächen. The song, which lies in almost total musicological obscurity, thus warrants critical attention as a counterpoint to the established analytical approaches to Sibelius’s musical landscapes.

Sibelius’s song associates tonal relatives and static Kopftons with the spatial subject positions expressed by Alexis Kivi’s lyrics. The lullaby-like poem is sung at the end of Kivi’s novel, *Seisemän Veljestä*, by a mother to her baby as he dies, to reassure him that the afterlife – Tuonela of Finnish mythology – will be peaceful. Sibelius sets this as a miniature ternary form of five strophes (ABABA), which end in C minor or E major according to the alternating poetic content of the stanzas. The relative major of the song’s double-tonic complex is associated with a desired, but ultimately unobtainable landscape of Tuonela, while the minor is associated with the sorrowful tonal ‘reality’ of the mother’s position in the realm of the living. This paper will foreground these tonally and poetically spatial positions within a voice-leading analysis to understand Sibelius’s syncretic dialogues with Finnish-Karelian and Central-European musical traditions.

#### **Bio:**

After submitting her thesis on analytical conceptions of Sibelius's music at Royal Holloway, Sarah has recently continued her research by examining manuscripts at several Sibelius archives in Finland. She has lectured at Nottingham University

and led seminars at Royal Holloway and University of Oxford, focusing on Schenkerian analysis and Sonata Theory.

**Daniel Collins** (Oxford Brookes University) – *‘Finnish Opera during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century’*

Finland underwent many changes politically through the course of the nineteenth century. The country began the century under Swedish rule but became a Duchy of the Russian Empire in 1809. Throughout this time the Finnish people expressed their nationalism through music as they opposed Russian rule. Music composed throughout nineteenth century utilised folk music of the Finnish people and drew inspiration from Finnish mythology to showcase their culture and history.

Opera in Finland in the 19th Century has been seldom studied, with the academic focus predominantly on orchestral works coming from the country. With the political messages that Opera can purvey, this paper examines whether Opera became a way of expressing Finnish Nationalism and culture, or whether the teachings of Western Europe were used predominantly, allowing us to see if Opera was used for entertainment value or whether it was a form of rebellion against the nationalistic views of Russia. During Russian rule, the Swedish speaking aristocracy began to encourage Finnish culture whilst also encouraging the Finnish language to be utilised. This led to Russian censorship which enabled Russia to gain further control.

This paper aims to delve deeper into Finnish Opera throughout the 19th Century and to critically debate the importance of Opera during this time. Were Finnish folk songs and mythology used in their Operas? Did Finnish Operas draw upon Western European influences in their Operas? Can the influences and language showcase an attempt to counter Russian rule and censorship to showcase Finnish Nationalism?

**Bio:**

Daniel Collins is a postgraduate musicologist at Oxford Brookes University, with focus on 19th century musicology and Opera. With a keen academic interest in Nordic music during the 19th century, Daniel hopes to utilise these research interests, not only in his master’s dissertation, but also at PhD level.

## 11:00-11:30 – Break

## 11:30-13:00 – Session 2: Issues surrounding musical modernism (Chair: Elke Albrecht)

**Leah Broad** (University of Oxford) – *‘Music on the Nordic Stage’*

Within the recent proliferation of scholarship on music from the Nordic countries, incidental music has remained relatively unexplored. Nonetheless this was an extremely popular genre at the start of the twentieth century; composers including Sibelius and Nielsen wrote extensive incidental scores, as well as lesser-known composers including Ture Rangström, Christian Sinding, Hilding Rosenberg, and Wilhelm Stenhammar.

This paper explores the impact that including incidental music within narratives of the early twentieth century has on our understanding of modernism in the Nordic countries. It argues that as a multimedia art form that involves collaborators from different artistic backgrounds and perspectives, theatre is uniquely placed to interrogate competing ideas about modernism in the early twentieth century. Focusing on theatre reveals how complex the intersection between ideas about ‘modernity’, ‘modernism’, and ‘progressive’ was. Composers could be viewed as being simultaneously both ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’, while also being ‘anti-modernist’.

I focus on Swedish productions between 1920 and 1944 directed by Per Lindberg (1890-1944), considered in his lifetime to be one of Sweden's foremost theatrical modernists. Many of the composers involved with his performances thought about their music as explicitly anti-modernist, in a musical sense. Nonetheless within the context of Lindberg's productions, their music was received by critics as modernist in a theatrical sense. Working within the theatre instead of the concert hall gave composers different rubrics for success, allowing them to explore compositional techniques that prioritised accessibility rather than being preoccupied with moving towards atonality.

### **Bio:**

Leah is a Lecturer in Musicology at the University of Oxford. She specialises on Nordic music, and has recently published on this topic in *Music & Letters*, with forthcoming publications on Nordic incidental music from both Boydell & Brewer and Oxford University Press.

**Christopher Tarrant** (Anglia Ruskin University) – *‘Carl Nielsen’s Musical Vitalism’*

The Vitalist aesthetic has become a key point of reference in the last ten years for our understanding of Carl Nielsen’s compositions and writings (philosophical, musical, and autobiographical). This talk situates Nielsen’s literary and musical output as a double-rejection of, on the one hand, a conservative approach to absolute music, and on the other hand the perception of decadence and degeneration in the late nineteenth century that was highlighted in Nietzsche’s critique of Wagner. This rejection manifested itself in various ways, extending to Nielsen’s direct attacks on Wagner in his musical writings; his understanding of aesthetic creation and Nature’s development of life as two sides of the same coin; his incidental appeals to physical health and musical health being in close relation; closeness with nature in his autobiographical *Min Fynske Barndom* (*My Childhood on Funen*); and crucially his musical output, in which the Vitalist aesthetic is embedded. While there is consensus that Vitalism is a potentially useful aesthetic category for engaging Nielsen’s music, some authors have been circumspect in their willingness to support the concept with analytical observations. This talk engages Schenkerian, Caplinian, and Hepokoskian techniques in order to clarify Nielsen’s engagement with Vitalism, and his place as an early modernist.

**Bio:**

Christopher earned a PhD from Royal Holloway, University of London in 2015 with a thesis on sonata-theoretical and psychoanalytic approaches to the music of Franz Schubert. He is currently researching the Nordic symphony and has published in *Music & Letters*, *Music Analysis*, and *Dansk Årbog for Musikforskning*.

**George Kennaway** (University of Leeds) – *‘Baltic Octatonicism and Abstraction: aspects of the art and music of Mikalojus Čiurlionis (1875-1911)’*

Mikalojus Čiurlionis (1875-1911) was the first important Lithuanian composer, with special status in his home country. His music is frequently performed there, and the gallery housing his art works is an important institution. There is some Western literature on his art, but his music has until recently been unfamiliar outside eastern Europe – only in 2019 was his symphonic poem *Jūra* [The Sea] premièred in the UK. His creative output

amounts to some 300 compositions and 300 works of art, many of which carry musical titles. His more experimental music, using octatonicism and cryptograms, has been discussed in terms of its avant-gardism, but his most characteristic works are in a simpler, post-Chopin, idiom. Much of his music applies a highly chromatic surface to an underlying simpler, tonal, base. Earlier in the 20th century, he was hailed both as a pre-Kandinsky abstractionist and a pre-Schoenbergian serialist, partly fuelled by post-Tsarist Lithuanian independence, but current thinking places him more clearly in his geographical and temporal context. Čiurlionis experimented with octatonicism to varying degrees, sometimes composing very rigorously, but at other times more freely; in one work he invents an artificial key signature for this purpose, and in another he uses an octatonic theme subjected to 'serial' processes. While his art is broadly symbolist there remains – as with other symbolist artists – an element of realism which was recognised at the time. This paper will consider aspects of his tonal/octatonic experiments and his realist/abstractionist tendencies.

**Bio:**

Dr George Kennaway, formerly co-principal cello in the Orchestra of Opera North, is Visiting Research Fellow at the universities of Leeds and Huddersfield. Publications include a monograph and several articles on HIP, and on aspects of the works of Čiurlionis; a book chapter on Čiurlionis will be included in a forthcoming edited volume (Routledge) on experimental tonalities in early 20th-century music. He has lectured in Vilnius and Kaunas and has given conference papers elsewhere in Lithuania.

**13:00-14:00– Lunch**

**14:00-14:45 – Performance: Chimera Ensemble (plus introduction to the piece by Prof. Tim Howell – see biography on page 12.)**

**Kaija Saariaho: *Light and matter***

**Piano:** Jakub Watrobski

**Violin:** Pip Booth

**Cello:** Rebecca Burden

### **The Chimera Ensemble:**

This entirely student-run ensemble, founded and based in the Music Department at York, is dedicated to the performance of contemporary music in all its diversity. As its name suggests, *Chimera* adapts its assemblage, drawing on a pool of performers, according to the requirements of any piece. This highly flexible group provides a public platform for new undergraduate and postgraduate commissions, and gives students the opportunity to perform challenging contemporary repertoire.

### **14:45-15:00 – Break**

### **15:00-16:30 – Session 3: Contemporary Music in Finland (Chair: Sarah Moynihan)**

**Owen Burton** (University of York) – *‘Northern Light: Register, Harmony and “Light” in Esa-Pekka Salonen’s Violin Concerto’*

The music of Esa-Pekka Salonen (b. 1957) has received scant attention from researchers, a fact no doubt explained by his world-wide reputation as a conductor. His compositions nevertheless demonstrate unquestionable originality and personality, acquired through rich musical experiences. Salonen’s *Violin Concerto* (2009) features an important hallmark – the notion of “light”. A persistent metaphor for describing harmony, timbre and transformative processes, “light” in non-programmatic music is difficult to analyse, and yet Salonen’s explicit references to this phenomenon make it equally difficult to ignore.

Referring to theories of light in music, this paper explores how this notion is evoked through combinations of harmony, register, timbre, dynamics, as well as how it affects musical form and the dualities of a concerto. Through this particular approach to sonority, Salonen pursues techniques found in music by other Finnish composers, such as Rautavaara, whilst also drawing upon a broader nexus of influences. As hybridity is a crucial component of his style, evocations of light form part of the concerto’s internal stylistic dialogues and contrasts, so the extent to which this is a Finnish technique requires attention. To an extent, this paper therefore aims to shed (further) light on the context around Salonen, given his cosmopolitan standpoint as a Finn who has been creatively freed by experiences abroad, without forgetting his “Finnishness”.

**Bio:**

Owen is currently completing his PhD at the University of York on the Finnish composer, Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928-2016). He has taught undergraduate modules at York and conducted the Chimera ensemble. His wider research interests include Nordic music, the renewing of tonal thinking in recent music, and musical modernism.

**Lucy Abrams** (Sibelius Academy/ University of the Arts Helsinki) – *“Ears Open”*: *Performance-led research of Finnish contemporary music*

The new music society “Korvat auki”, or “Ears Open”, was founded in 1977 and marked the birth of contemporary music in Finland. Its founding composers grew up in a period socioeconomic boom, which swept through Finland in the 1960s and 1970s. The economic growth and social reforms cemented societal values like equality, a willingness to try new things, and an acceptance of individuality. Since then, contemporary music has not only remained central to classical music culture in Finland, but Finnish contemporary music has achieved startling levels of international recognition. But despite its collective popularity, there exists a tremendous variety in style and musical language amongst even the ‘Korvat auki’ generation. This challenges researchers to find connections between Finnish composers, as well as connections to other contemporary styles.

It is my suggestion that artistic research, or performance, can be used to enrich both musicological and sociocultural study of Finnish contemporary music. Using performance perspectives of selected solo and orchestral works by the ‘Korvat auki’ composers, I will demonstrate how elements like melodic development, experimentation, and the cooperation between instruments in ensemble can be used to characterize early contemporary Finnish music. I propose that these elements provide insights into not only compositional philosophies and styles, but also serve as musical embodiment of Finnish cultural values. It is the musical translation of these values - equality, experimentation, and individuality - that defined the ‘Korvat auki’ generation and continue to define Finnish contemporary music today.

**Bio:**

Lucy Abrams is an orchestral clarinetist and doctoral candidate at the Sibelius Academy. Her research explores contemporary clarinet repertoire by Finnish

and American composers and the differences in contemporary music practice in both places. Lucy holds Bachelors degrees with High Honors in Clarinet Performance and Anthropology from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Master of Music degrees in clarinet performance from the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY) and the Sibelius Academy.

**Elke Albrecht** (Independent scholar) – *‘One concerto for every orchestra instrument – a multi-perspective work-biographical study on Finnish composer Kalevi Aho’s solo concertos’*

Finnish composer Kalevi Aho (born 1949) has become internationally known primarily through his large format symphonies and concertos for solo instruments.

The focus of this study is on the systematic documentation and analysis of Aho’s works, their creation and reception, in particular of 25 of those concertos for solo instruments composed between 1980 and 2015, his symphonies with obligatory solo instruments as well as the series for solo instruments.

The basis of this study is a work catalogue of the selected works. As an essential addition to the written sources, over 40 interviews were conducted with the composer and the soloists, whose respective narratives provide further perspectives on the study of the manuscripts. Moreover, conductors, orchestra managers and other people involved have significantly given insights into the formation process of works that are exploring and indeed expanding the possibilities of these instruments.

What my study thus provides is an in-depth analysis of the entire process of formation of these concertos, their characteristics, their manifold interrelationships; finally a discussion of their reception as well as Aho’s development of *modus operandi* in a composing career that has spanned more than 50 years.

**Bio:**

Elke Albrecht is an Austrian-German musicologist and music theatre scholar resident in Helsinki. She completed a doctorate at the University of Vienna on operas based on the Kalevala. Her research focuses on the Finnish opera boom, the works for music theatre of Aulis Sallinen and the works of Kalevi Aho.

**16:30-16:45 – Break**

**16:45–17:30 – Session 4: Panel discussion (Chair: Dr Rich Powell)**

**Participants:**

**Prof. Rachel Cowgill** (University of Huddersfield)

Rachel Cowgill is Professor of Musicology and Head of Music & Drama at the University of Huddersfield. Her current projects focus mainly on music and the First World War, and her collection of essays on Music and Ideas of North, co-edited with Derek Scott, is due out from Routledge later this year.

**Prof. Tim Howell** (University of York)

Tim Howell is Professor of Music at the University of York where he specializes in the analysis of new music, especially from Finland. An internationally recognized authority on the music of Sibelius, his research now focuses on contemporary Finnish music as reflected in two major publications: *After Sibelius: Studies in Finnish Music* (Ashgate, 2006) and *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues* (Ashgate, September 2011). He has recently edited and contributed to a new volume: *The Nature of Nordic Music* (Routledge, in press).

**Dr. Annika Lindskog** (University College London)

Annika is a lecturer in Swedish at the School of European Languages, Cultures and Society at University College London and Head of Department for Scandinavian Studies. The primary research focus is on music as a cultural expression in historical contexts, both in Scandinavia and beyond, and often centres on relationships between landscapes, societies and identities as articulated through cultural texts.

*Thank you all for attending and contributing to the study day. There will be an informal meal in York from 6.00pm.*