

Heininen sees new possibilities everywhere and compares composing to casting a net into the sea. His output includes surprising combinations of instruments and entire families of pieces. In recent years his adventures with 'simulations' of composer identities have begun to trickle into his own output.

# PAAVO HEININEN:

## CREATION – VARIATION – SIMULATION

**Paavo Heininen** (b. 1938), the most significant living Finnish modernist composer, cannot be described as a retiree in any sense of the word. But these days he likes to describe himself as a 'meta-modernist' as distinct from the historical modernist period: the search for all things new is not over. He is producing new works at a brisk pace and persists in discovering new possibilities in areas where no one has gone before. He comes up with new, surprising genres and categories, combinations of instruments and entire concert programmes of an unprecedented nature.

Heininen's recent output includes not only symphonies 🎧, concertos and sonatas but also completely surprising items such as 90 minutes of music for the four bells in the church of the composer's home town of Järvenpää; a full-length concert based on sine waves entitled *Sinikosketus* (*The Blue Exposure*, 1995/2001); the organ-piano duo *Quincunx duplex* op. 88bis (2002–03) written together with composer colleague **Jouko Linjama** using the exquisite corpse technique; a hymn-tune mass for congregational use entitled *Sunnuntain laulukirja* op. 110 (*Sunday Song Book*, 2009); and a quartet for the unlikely ensemble of harp, guitar, mandolin and harpsichord entitled *Lakkamaalauksia* (*Lacquer Paintings*, 2012). He also has plans to use virtual instruments that exist only on a computer, e.g. a microtonal vibraphone to be paired up with virtuoso pianist **Paavali Jumppanen**.

### 'Simulations' of composer identities

Paavo Heininen has also played around with the identities of other composers: inspired by various reconstruction projects, he 're-imagined' the lost Third Violin Concerto of his composition teacher **Aarre Merikanto** (1893–1958) (*Tuuminki / A Notion*, 1993). He has augmented the history of Finnish music by writing the hitherto non-existent string quartet output of **Leevi Madetoja** (1887–1947) (*Quartet No. 1 in F major*, 1999; *Quartet 'The French'*, 1999). "Nobody composed these works, but I have written them," Heininen says in response to puzzled inquiries.

In recent years, Heininen's adventures with 'simulations' of composer identities have begun to

trickle into his own output. In *Paralleeliaktio* op. 97bis (2008), the piano styles of Aarre Merikanto and **Selim Palmgren** (1878–1951) are filtered through Heininen's own style. The flute concerto *Autrefois* (2008/2010) began life through a meditation on the fact that there are no Finnish Romantic concertos for woodwind instruments, but despite its tonal material, this brainchild grew into such a modern structure in terms of dynamics and process that it emerged as an exciting stylistic paradox. Who composed this piece? The very question is a typical Heininen issue.

In his creative work, as in his career as a composition teacher, Heininen sees new possibilities everywhere. He compares composing to casting a net into the sea. This will never produce a finished work, though; the catch has to be selected and organised. "The so-called organic approach is nothing more than this. If you ask cells how they live, the answer would be the same!" Heininen's verbal images and parables provide a lot of food for thought. For him, they are a tool for attaining maximum accuracy in discussing music.

### Ideas are germinating

When Heininen's colleague created genuine contemporary music out of fragments of Finnish tangos, Heininen saw an idea for going in the opposite direction: the result was a 36-minute collection entitled *Mazurki* op. 79 (2000–01), where the musical details are real, incisive Heininen, while in their overall shape the pieces are undoubtedly mazurkas. "The challenge here is to use the rhythmic modes of old dances without getting too close to them in the details." Heininen continued with 'summer waltzes' in *Pianotansseja* op. 97 (*Piano Dances*, 2009/11), eventually writing a tango himself.

Sometimes an entire family of pieces may emerge 'at once', as was the case with the sonatas for wind instrument and piano, *Vaskisonaatit* op. 117 (*Brass Sonatas*, 2010): the basic idea in these is

that the piano part is adapted to each solo instrument so that it is possible to guess the solo instrument as soon as the piano part begins. The works were written in parallel, mutually exclusively.

Heininen has been a pioneer among Finnish composers in adopting new technology. In 1984, while the libretto of his opera *Veitsi* (*The Knife*, 1985–88) was in preparation, one of the first musical notation programs came on the market. In a bold leap, Heininen decided to write his opera using that software. Before this, he had already written a program in the BASIC programming language to create his own brand of space-time notation for a piece based on stochastic principles. He developed the logic behind this (after an early version on an Apple II) first at IRCAM and then with **Mikael Laurson**. This was the origin of Patchwork, the embryonic form of the OpenMusic program, which today is popular worldwide.

Heininen speaks of 'pots' on his computer where ideas are germinating. He looks in every now and again 'in passing' to see if anything is growing. One day, one of these pots began to show such promise that the *Sixth Symphony*, being written for the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (2012–14), began to emerge. He is also currently working on a one-hour *Organ Concerto* for **Jan Lehtola** and two orchestral solo songs – and these are further germinating new ideas.

The most recent Heininen-recordings include Jan Lehtola's double-album *Complete Organ Works 1966–2006*, and a forthcoming CD with the flute concerto *Autrefois* on Alba Records.

### JARKKO HARTIKAINEN

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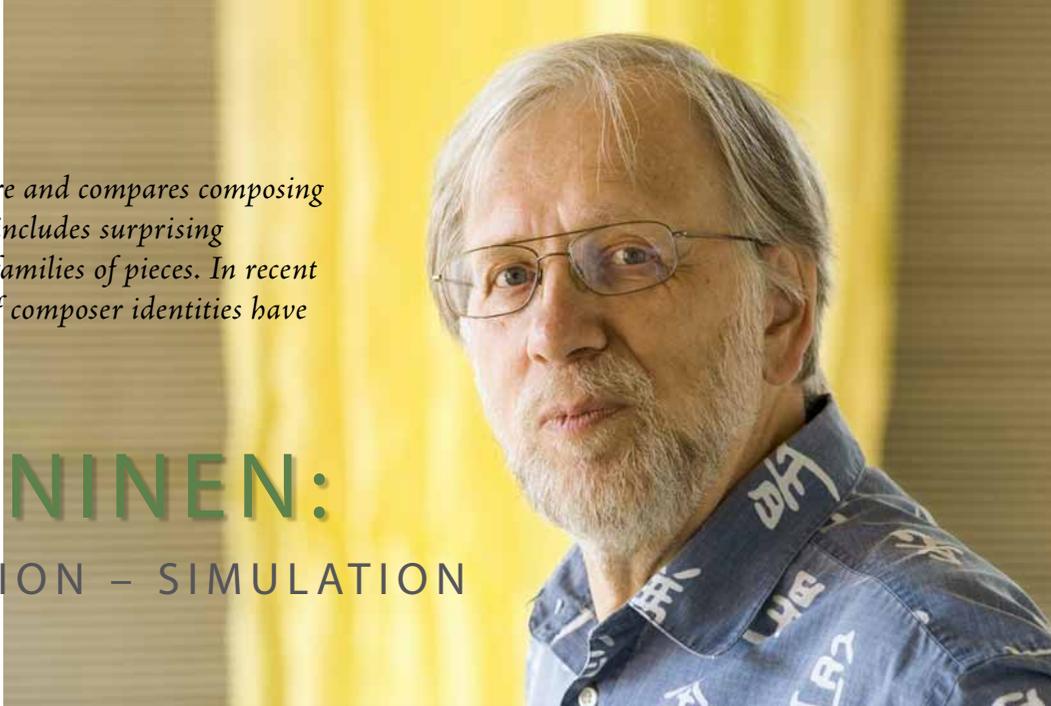


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