

Einojuhani Rautavaara in memoriam

In his eulogy for Einojuhani Rautavaara, Kalevi Aho described the indelible impression Rautavaara made as a composition teacher, as a colleague and as a fount of wisdom. Aho met the maestro for the last time a year ago. Rautavaara was physically fragile, but his mind was as sharp as ever, and his eyes retained the familiar keenly exploring and at times mischievous gaze. At that final meeting he remarked that he had already discovered in the sounds of his inner world all the musical material that he wanted to use and that he had completed his musical universe.

The music of Einojuhani Rautavaara has properties thanks to which he will remain a classic in Finnish music. As a composition teacher earlier in his career, he seemed to be exactly the right kind of teacher for most of his students, giving space for their own personalities to develop and encouraging them to find their own unique path.

Perhaps the most important things I gained from him as a composition student and later as a colleague were two general points that I have sought to keep as a guideline in my life. Shortly after completing my studies, I wrote a letter to Einojuhani where I discussed, among other things, what would happen if I should experience a crisis of composition and no longer knew what kind of music to write. He responded that if you are afraid of a crisis, it means that you are not fully committed to what you are writing. That is a crisis you must meet boldly. A crisis forces you to rethink all things, and in the best case it can revitalise and cleanse your mind.

The other thing I learned from him was a saying he had learned from his aunt, who was his foster mother: "Det är bäst som sker." This Swedish proverb translates approximately as "Whatever happens is for the best". Sometimes bad and tragic things happen in life, but we should be able to learn from all of them. If you can do that, you will have grown as a human being. In other words, we should try to turn losses, difficulties and even tragedies into mental victories.

Einojuhani's teaching was also teaching about how to grow up into a human being.

He himself drifted into difficult personal conflicts in his life, enduring them for a long time before finally following his own advice, making the crucial decision and a clean break with the past, leaving everything behind and beginning a life with his new wife, Sini. Then he was finally free to live his life without lies and roles, to be honest with himself and to write music that also was more honest.

Very often a person dies when it is their time to die, when they have given of themselves everything they can and have no more to give. This happened with Einojuhani too. When we met for the last time last December, he admitted to me that he had completed his musical universe, the domain of music and motifs that he had put into his works.

He had finished his work and would have been well justified to observe in his final moments, quoting from the St John Passion of J.S. Bach: "Es ist vollbracht" – "It is fulfilled." I have done everything I can, and I can do no more. I can only hope that all of us can say the same at the end of our lives.

Einojuhani's death leaves us with a profound longing. But he will survive in our memories; I am sure that everyone who ever met him will cherish those encounters. And of course he will live on for future generations in his music, in the wonderful musical universe that he created.

We can only be grateful that he lived and feel privileged for having known him.

Kalevi Aho

Footnotes:

Kalevi Aho lists four reasons why he believes Rautavaara's works will remain in the core repertoire:

- His works are always highly original, never sounding like typical contemporary music.
- They are not technically over-demanding and can be performed within the confines of a normal rehearsal schedule.

• His output is huge and includes works in all genres and for many different kinds of ensembles. His extensive output of choral and vocal music is particularly noteworthy.

• Included is a handful of major hits: *Cantus arcticus* 🎧 for birds and orchestra, the *Seventh Symphony (Angel of Light)* 🎧, several choral works, some piano cycles and so on, and these serve as gateways to a wider exploration of his music.

Two opera premieres in 2016:

• *The Mine (Kaivos)* was in the repertoire of the Hungarian State Opera in Budapest in October-November. This was the first stage performance of the work originally composed in 1957-58 (See: reviews).

• *The Gift of the Magi (Tietäjien lahja)* 🎭 received its European stage premiere at the Sibelius Academy in November (See: news).