
OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND SILENCES: LOTTA WENNÄKOSKI IN PROFILE

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Abstract: The sheer quantity and diversity of music being written in Finland today continues to surprise and delight us. But one significant strand in this otherwise egalitarian success story has remained in the shadows: the role of women composers. Kaija Saariaho appears to be the only such figure to hold a truly international reputation, raising basic questions: why should this be so, how are things changing and what kind of music is being produced. Outlining social and political issues that are distinctive to Finland helps to explain the emergence of Saariaho as a role model for younger women composers. It also invites a detailed case study of a leading member of this generation: Lotta Wennäkoski. This focus on an analytical reading of Wennäkoski's compositional process – as evidenced through her orchestral piece *Sakara* (2003) – reveals how this music communicates so effectively with contemporary audiences.



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Sibelius's Shadow

Nobody quite knows who coined the expression 'the shadow of Sibelius' or exactly when it first appeared, but according to Ilkka Oramo it 'pops up in the 1920s at the latest'.¹ By now it has become commonplace, rather like the 'ghost' of Beethoven or the 'spell' of Wagner, and exerts an equivalent degree of significance for any Finnish composer. The timing is important. Sibelius was at the peak of his composing career – a potentially daunting figure for the next generation – yet he was to retreat into a 30-year silence: a creative void, waiting to be filled. Today, all this may seem rather exaggerated and over-romanticized, but successive composers were acutely aware of their position in relation to this grand-old-man of Finnish music – and the legacy persists. The extent to which this shadow was to cast light is well documented, as Finland today produces a phenomenal amount of new music, displaying a disproportionate creative energy for such a small country.²

Such successes can be quantified in terms of the large number of composers – more *per capita* than anywhere else in Europe – and qualified in relation to their international recognition. In this context, Kaija Saariaho, for example, enjoys an enviable position as one of the most highly acclaimed Finnish composers of her generation. Yet she is the only woman to have achieved this status. Indeed, such a lack of women composers in Finland seems at variance with its thriving new-music scene: it appears to be following a trend, rather than setting an example. Sibelius's shadow has shaped a music history which is so dominated by a single figure that an extremely patriarchal framework is still influential. As Kaija Saariaho explains:

¹ Oramo, 'Sub umbra Sibelii: Sibelius and His Successors', 157.

² For a more comprehensive survey, see Howell, *After Sibelius: Studies in Finnish Music*.

In Finland we have an odd situation: on the one hand, we are equal; on the other, a completely patriarchal system governs. Every area must have some kind of father figure, Kekkonen [the former president of Finland for 25 years], or Kokkonen [one of the most prominent composers in Finland from the 1950s to the 1980s] – there is something inbuilt in it, the whole system of upbringing leads to that. All the important Finns are men, including musicians. It comes from Finnish mythology.³

This anomaly appears to be quite deep rooted. After all, Finland was the second country to give equal voting rights to women in national elections (in 1906), yet it was not until 1987 that its equality act was passed. Politically, it had the first female Minister of Defence in the world (1990), a woman Speaker in the Finnish Parliament (1994), elected a woman President (2002), and Prime Minister (2003) – but look how recently all this occurred. Likewise, female music students outnumber their male counterparts and Finnish orchestras enjoy a healthy gender balance; indeed, the achievements of women as performers, teachers, and administrators all positively reflect this underlying statistic. But the creative side of things remains stubbornly out of line. An age-old division between composer and performer, and its respective male/female divide, is still apparent: the product of deep-seated social conditioning. These are the conclusions reached by Ritva Mitchell (as Head of the Research Unit at the Arts Council of Finland) in a survey of women's participation in Finnish music.⁴

In this liberal, forward-looking society, where maternity leave and child day-care provision promotes an unrivalled equal opportunities policy, this is cause for concern. Everyone connected with promoting Finnish new music (staff at the Finnish Music Information Centre, the Society of Finnish Composers (SFC), and the Sibelius Academy) acknowledges the problem; but all agree that the situation is changing, albeit rather slowly. However, Annu Mikkonen, Director of the SFC, confirms that there are more female composition students at the Sibelius Academy today than had ever been the case, suggesting some progress.⁵ Indeed, the direct influence of Kaija Saariaho (b.1952) is now being more widely felt, with notable figures like Lotta Wennäkoski (b.1970), Riikka Talvitie (b.1970) and Pauliina Isomäki (b.1964) establishing significant reputations.

Kaija Saariaho: Arches of Light

What today might be termed the 'shadow of Saariaho' forms a starting-point; a single (female) role model who is enormously successful may seem to be a rather daunting figure to those who follow. Nevertheless, her achievement has cast light on the next generation, and Saariaho's position within Finnish new music helps to illuminate current considerations. Of particular significance is the fact that she sees herself first and foremost as a composer, and has no gender agenda.⁶

She frequently emphasised that she did not want her gender to be an issue and that she did not want to be called a 'woman composer' any more than she wanted to be labelled a 'computer composer'. She wanted people to experience her music as music, instead of as music composed by a woman.⁷

³ In Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 17

⁴ See Mitchell, 'Mainstreaming in Finnish Music: A Pyramid of Success in Transition'.

⁵ I am grateful to Annu Mikkonen for our useful discussions about the role of the Society of Finnish Composers. Current statistics suggest that about 7% of members of the SFC are women, essentially in line with other European countries, but this is hardly setting a new standard given the amount of compositional activity in Finland.

⁶ I am most grateful to Kaija Saariaho for agreeing to meet up in Paris and discuss her work in detail; she was particularly open about gender issues.

⁷ Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 16

Her reputation rests on the success of her music: how well it communicates, its characteristics that excite such positive response from wide-ranging audiences. These are the real issues to concern us here and they, in turn, condition and inform the discussions that follow, though a little more background helps set the scene.

In shaping her compositional identity, Saariaho talks of early influences. For her, as a student in the 1970s, the shadow of Sibelius does seem to have blocked out the light, generating a succession of male composition professors at the Sibelius Academy. Most relevant is Einojuhani Rautavaara, Professor of Composition from 1976–1988, who had written an article '*Naiset säveltäjinä*' (Women as Composers) just three years earlier. Here Rautavaara expresses a very traditional view that women belong to the concrete world of family and social relations, rather than in the abstract world of aesthetics; composition involves some kind of sacrifice on the altar of creativity, which is at variance with maternal instincts. He even tries to argue that the differences in genetic make-up between the sexes prevent woman from harnessing the drive, ambition and energy needed to be successful composers.⁸

Small wonder that when Saariaho went to study composition at the Sibelius Academy in 1976 she chose to work with Paavo Heininen (who was later to succeed Rautavaara as Professor of Composition). Heininen was a strict and very demanding teacher, but he forced Saariaho to become more confident, thereby playing a crucial part in her development. 'I was terribly insecure, after all, at that time in my life and also in my composing work. It had something to do with my identity as a young woman. I felt that Paavo pulled me back to life'.⁹ The only recognized Finnish women composer at that time was Helvi Leiviskä (1902–1982) but Saariaho could not regard her as a role model, finding it impossible to relate to the prevailing neo-romanticism of her music. It is interesting that musical style, technique and approach were to outweigh gender issues, with Heininen proving to be so important. Elsewhere, Saariaho found influential figures outside of music, an experience that positively broadened her horizons:

When I was searching for my identity, many women writers were important: Edith Södergran, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Anaïs Nin. I was interested in how women writers and painters had been able to do this creative work of which I didn't find any satisfying examples in music.¹⁰

Literary and visual elements (Saariaho studied visual arts alongside music in Helsinki) retain a vital position in her work today, with pieces that explore a relationship between freely-evoked images and a carefully-fashioned sound-world. From this creative milieu of visual, temporal and sonorous impulses comes a need to discover some focus and for Saariaho this seems to crystallize around titles: 'When I feel I have the right title, I can focus my material. The title is very important for feeding my imagination'.¹¹ A unique fusion of narrative, image, and (above all) time-scale helps to define Saariaho's aesthetic, suggesting an interdisciplinary approach that embraces a wide range of art forms.¹² A sense of musical isolation arising from a lack of female role models has actually resulted in a positive collision of influences; these, in turn, have defined Saariaho's compositional personality and help to account for her enormous international success. From the shadows of adversity come creative solutions.

⁸ Rautavaara, *Naiset säveltäjinä*' (Women as Composers), 4–8.

⁹ In Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 6.

¹⁰ In Beyer, 'Till Death Do us Part: A Portrait of the Finnish Composer, Kaija Saariaho', 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

Lotta Wennäkoski: A Case Study

Lotta Wennäkoski (b.1970) is a leading figure of her generation. She began her musical training as a violinist with notable studies (violin and folk music) at the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest (1989–90) before joining the Department of Music Theory at the Sibelius Academy (1990–94). Only then, at the age of 24, did she feel able to concentrate on composition, working with Eero Hämeenniemi, Paavo Heininen – and Kaija Saariaho. She gained her diploma in Composition in 2000. Appreciative of her training in Helsinki, she is also aware of possible limitations:

Finnish composition, in my opinion, is characterized by an approach that is both serious and thorough. New trends and genres are regarded with scepticism rather than curiosity. There is a respect for thorough training and expertise, and solid craftsmanship is still highly thought of, irrespective of genre.¹³

Hardly surprising, then, she also studied composition abroad, following a trend within modernist circles – dating back to Erik Bergman (1911–2006) – whose members find the smallness of their home country a limitation. Wennäkoski spent a year as a pupil of Louis Andriessen at the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague (1998–99). A range of influences that embrace practical and theoretical musical studies, an understanding of folk art, and experiences outside her native Finland encompassing a balance between East (Hungary) and West (Holland) have all contributed to a compositional palette that is richly varied. She writes enthusiastically about the value of living and working outside Finland, participating in a different compositional world, embracing what is varied and more international: ‘I went to Amsterdam to get away from home, but just as much to be somewhere else ... I got a bit of a shock from it all – and that is OK. That is precisely why I went abroad’.¹⁴

The musical consequences of this new perspective crystallize in a single work, *Het Waait* (‘It’s Blowing’), composed in Amsterdam (and Helsinki) in August 1999: Wennäkoski’s first piece for symphony orchestra. Perhaps due to that novelty of instrumental forces, it is structured around chamber-group ensembles that have been divided up into timbral families. A continuous stretch of musical discourse overlays more block-like formal contrasts, thereby paving the way for structural concerns explored in the orchestral work, *Sakara* (2003) and *Dalaim*, for violin and orchestra, (2005). *Het Waait* allows early pulses of sound to grow into larger gestures from which climactic peaks are fashioned. There is a fundamental sense of an ongoing dramatic narrative here – the unfolding of events through time – rather than any overriding (or predetermined) formal shape. Such a creative dialogue between content and form is a significant preoccupation of this composer.

Alongside these broad, aesthetic perspectives are more introspective references, of which one of her most profound and recurrent interests is in lyric poetry:

I have always been interested in language and literature, and lyric poetry is a major source of inspiration in other arts. So branding me as a lyricist is not entirely unfounded. I silently immerse myself in poetry in the same way as I do my own music until I have heard it. I read with my ears open, cajoling, highlighting, or simply seeking. The same could be said of the way I compose.¹⁵

More recently, she has expanded on that philosophy, saying:

¹² This forms the backdrop to a major new study, *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues*, ed. Tim Howell with Jon Hargreaves & Michael Rofe (2011)

¹³ Wennäkoski, ‘Up and Away’, 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵ In Hautsalo, ‘Lotta Wennäkoski: A Lyricist on the Borders of Silence’, 1.

Extra-musical ideas have always meant a tempting opportunity rather than a threat. The compositional process may be set in motion by the observation or recollection of some natural phenomenon, by the plumbing of silence, or, say, a book with a poem that is reflected off the white page, making neither sound nor movement. Only seldom have I been taken with some purely musical idea that it has directed my thoughts even as I sat down to contemplate the empty page.¹⁶

The imagery she associates with her music – silence, nature, darkness, light, lyricism – may appear to play into the hands of certain kinds of journalistic representations of ‘Nordic music’. However, the independent analysis that follows reveals a refreshing degree of compositional integrity, and rather than deconstructing what she says *about* her music, it is best to focus *upon* that music, uncovering objective evidence within its compositional processes. In *Sakara*, for instance, Wennäkoski evokes the image of a ‘star’ but the ways in which this conditions the structural, temporal and formal impulses of the piece are not explained in words: they emerge from her music. Through its analysis we learn how listeners may perceive the workings of *Sakara* – how it communicates.

Already we see a composer whose work suggests certain parallels with Kaija Saariaho’s own formative background: a strong literary and narrative thread, extra-musical influence and an international outlook that collectively embrace a wide range of inspirational reference. You only have to think of Saariaho’s highly-acclaimed *Lichtbogen* (‘Arches of Light’, 1986), a piece inspired by the ghostly qualities of the Northern Lights, to appreciate such correspondences. In interview, Wennäkoski acknowledged that her studies with Saariaho were rather brief but involved a level of discussion that was very inspiring; she also fully respected Saariaho’s position as ‘a pioneer’ within women’s music in Finland.¹⁷ For Wennäkoski, Saariaho’s inspiration is both simple and profound: ‘Whatever sorts of music her students are writing, Kaija has the same basic message: find a means of expression that’s yours and yours alone’.¹⁸

From this perspective, it is appropriate to single out Lotta Wennäkoski for an individual case study, taking a particular snapshot of a new generation of (women) composers in Finland through an analytical investigation of compositional process. Her credentials are impressive. She has, after all, been acknowledged by the Foundation for the Promotion of Finnish Music (LUSES) through their award (in 2005) of a five-year grant to support her compositional work (the maximum period). As the former Chair of the Ears Open! Society (*Korvat Auki!*) (1996–98), a member of the Society of Finnish Composers (since 1998), and more recently Artistic Coordinator for the 2008 Tampere Biennale Festival, Wennäkoski’s reputation is getting more established.

A piece that has gained international enthusiasm, and one that arises from her fascination with lyric poetry, is the 45-minute song cycle, *Naisen rakkautta ja elämää* (‘The Love and Life of a Woman’).¹⁹ Here, contemporary vocal music (settings of six Finnish poetesses) is placed in creative dialogue with Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und Leben*. With each work comprising 12 songs arranged in a similar dramatic structure and using texts based on the same theme, the two song cycles were first performed in tandem at the 2003 Helsinki Festival, where they were staged as a chamber opera entitled *N!*. As the composer explains:

¹⁶ See CD liner notes, *Love and Life of a Woman*, Wennäkoski, 2007; translated by Susan Sinsalo.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Lotta Wennäkoski for agreeing to meet up and discuss her work in detail.

¹⁸ In Pennanen, ‘Lotta Wennäkoski: Searching for her own voice’, 58.

¹⁹ Reviews of this work are available through the Finnish Music Information Centre (www.fimic.fi). The CD recording of *Naisen rakkautta ja elämää* was reviewed by Calum MacDonald in *Tempo* Vol. 64 No. 252 (April 2010).

Love and Life is an important work in that it reveals my liking for vocal music. But arranging the poems and designing the overall dramatic scheme seemed only natural because the world of the lyric is one to which I can closely relate. The choice of topic also seemed significant: the portrait of the life of a woman is just as topical as it was when Schumann composed his work in the 1840s ... Yearning sounds the same, despite the passage of 150 years.²⁰

This concept is reflective of Wennäkoski's wider concerns about contemporary music and how it relates to audiences today: its potential to be seen as rather marginal and distant from tradition, and the need to address this. *Love and Life* 'keeps company' (as the composer defines it) with a work from the standard repertoire, treats it with respect, yet offers new insights. Where Ruth Solie's article illuminates the Schumann cycle from the standpoint of feminist musicology, Wennäkoski's music complements it, offering another perspective.²¹ Certainly this is a composer who has fully embraced the underlying ethos of Finnish new music – a desire to reach out to a wide variety of listeners – while acknowledging something of her position as a woman who is composing today.

Sakara (2003)

Recognized and acclaimed by a number of critics as one of Wennäkoski's most distinguished orchestral works, *Sakara* was commissioned by Esa-Pekka Salonen, who conducted its première along with two other pieces from the younger generation (by Tommi Kärkkäinen and Lauri Kilpiö). It therefore offers a focus, displaying a number of characteristic preoccupations: lyricism, delicacy, colour, timescale and the thresholds of silence. Also present is a new-found confidence, manifest in a more expansive expressive range and broader structural outline relative to earlier works. The Finnish word 'sakara' translates for Wennäkoski as 'the point of a star' and the potential meanings evoked by this image offer a useful starting point, especially given her engagement with visual, poetic and extra-musical concerns.²²

What follows is an independent analysis that draws upon the imagery of the composer's title in a study of its structural implications; Wennäkoski gives no clue as to the significance of the 'sakara' image. While the subjective pitfalls of becoming too celestial should be resisted, the seemingly fixed yet ultimately mobile qualities of a star are relevant. Indeed, the 'point' of a star – in terms of a particular shape, its recurrence, and the specific relationship it has to the whole – is especially vivid. The joining-up of a number of such points creates the star itself: the whole is the sum of its parts; yet beyond those confines, it offers us a tantalizing glimpse into a much larger universe. Something of the elemental processes and trajectories traced by stars is reflected in this work.

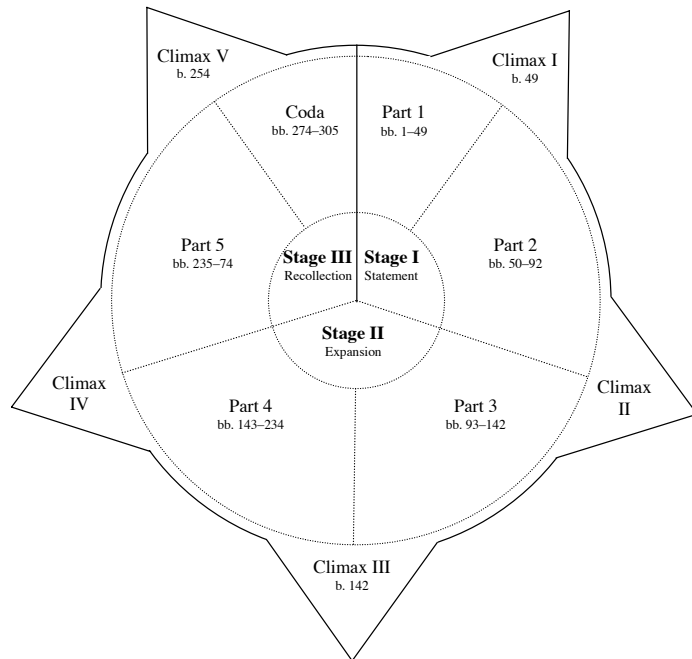
The structural outline of *Sakara* relies on a fundamental contrast between freely-floating episodes, which seem to suspend time, and strongly-directional events that articulate climactic focal points. What creates momentum is an exploration of the balance or conflict between these two states: temporal fluidity versus formal shaping. Locally, this emerges through the ways in which narrative and discourse outline the overall architecture of the work. Just as its opening stages gradually make silence and space audible, their overall temporal mobility is even-

²⁰ In Hautsalo, 'Lotta Wennäkoski: A Lyricist on the Borders of Silence', 2.

²¹ See Solie, 'Whose life? The gendered self in Schumann's *Frauenliebe* songs'

²² In fact 'Sakara' is a Finnish word that has multiple meanings: 'arm', 'branch', 'cusp', 'horn', 'point', 'spike', 'tooth'; essentially, it is any single element of a group of objects that collectively form a serration, like the teeth of a saw or – as in this case – points of a star.

tually channelled, through arches of activity, into a formal shape. The presence of dynamic, temporal arcs within articulated, formal arches offers a visual manifestation in musical terms of the *sakara* metaphor. With five such climactic arcs that point up its overall shape, a star is formed: see Example 1 (which shows further formal subdivisions to be discussed below).



Example 1:
Sakara – Formal Outline as the
Product of Climactic Waves

With a perception of structural outline that is reliant on systematically-staged focal points, where each is a pinnacle of dynamic/textural activity, there is a danger that such a scheme might become rather predictable. This is definitely not the case. On the contrary, Wennäkoski skillfully exploits listener anticipation and much of the inherent drama of the piece arises from a subtle handling of patterns of expectation and denial. There is an impressive variety of discursive and intuitive processes (which play on the ambiguity of being goal-directed or fluid) operating within each dynamic arc, opening up a wide-ranging number of different possibilities. Conceptually, this is reminiscent of Paavo Heininen's typically idiosyncratic teaching of variation form, something a number of his pupils talk about. For instance, Magnus Lindberg quotes him as follows: 'Variation is not doing the same thing in different ways, but doing many different things in the same way'.²³

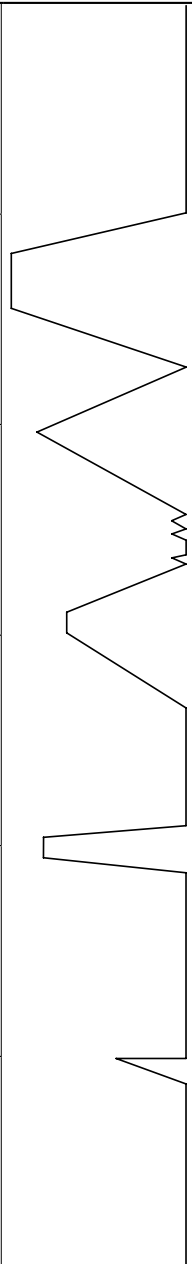
All of this serves to confirm Wennäkoski's acknowledgement of the positive influence of her composition teacher, while *Sakara* takes this concept of variation a stage further. The articulation of *form* emerges from doing the same thing in different ways (an architectural shape based on five focal points), while its *content* relies on doing many different things in the same way (a variety of narrative processes, each of which outlines a dynamic arc). Overall, the piece offers an interesting perspective on the relationship between content and form, one that

²³ In Cody and Kirk, 'Magnus Lindberg in Conversation: Moving Between Extremes', 13.

Example 2:
Sakara – Formal Overview

seems to explore the correspondence between the ‘point’ of a star and its implicit ‘whole’. Example 2 offers a summary overview, which on the largest scale corresponds to three quite elemental, formal stages: statement, expansion, and recollection.

Overall Shape	Stage I: Statement Introduce, outline and unfold		Stage II: Expansion Develop and prolong		Stage III: Recollection Contract, resolve and recall	
	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Coda
Formal Divisions	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4	Part 5	Coda
Bar Numbers	1–49	50–92	93–142	143–234	235–274	274–305
Tempo Indications; Internal Divisions	b. 1: <i>Lontano</i> b. 28: Fig. X (Horn) b. 3: 5: <i>accel. espressivo sostenuto</i> b. 44: <i>crecendo</i> b. 49: <i>molto rit</i>	b. 50: <i>Tempo primo o ancor più lento</i> ; <i>soave e calmo</i> b. 67: Fig. X (Clarinets) b. 72: intermediate point of climax	b. 93: <i>Chiano e dolce</i> ; <i>leggiero assai</i> b. 126: Fig. X (Flutes)	b. 143: episode b. 186: episode – <i>delicatamente</i> b. 210: episode	b. 254: most sustained climactic peak (20 bars)	b. 274: <i>Un poco meno mosso</i>
Summary of Main Events	Non-directional, timeless, non-progressive; gradual sense of textural accumulation; fast-paced, abrupt arrival at point of climax.	Intensified re-working of earlier textural features; clearer sense of articulation and momentum; emergent sense of direction.	Episodic fragmentation of earlier gestures; disruption; loss of energy; spiky figuration but lack of direction	Repeated-note figures give way to more sustained sonorities; both are trapped, inert; longest episodic passage, biggest delay between climactic focal points.	Pulses of sound, repeated-note figures build rapidly to the final climax; characterised by brass writing; shortest distance between two points of climax (balancing Part 4, which has the longest).	Gradual fade-out overall; repeated-note figures are recalled; sense of reminiscence; shimmering texture from the opening; mysterious atmosphere returns.
Climactic Focal Points; Orchestration	Climax I: b. 49 Strings and percussion <i>ff</i>	Climax II: b. 92 Brass and percussion <i>fff</i>	Climax III: b. 142 Woodwind and percussion <i>ff</i>	Climax IV: b. 234 Horn, Strings and percussion <i>ff</i>	Climax V: b. 254 Tutti <i>fff</i>	

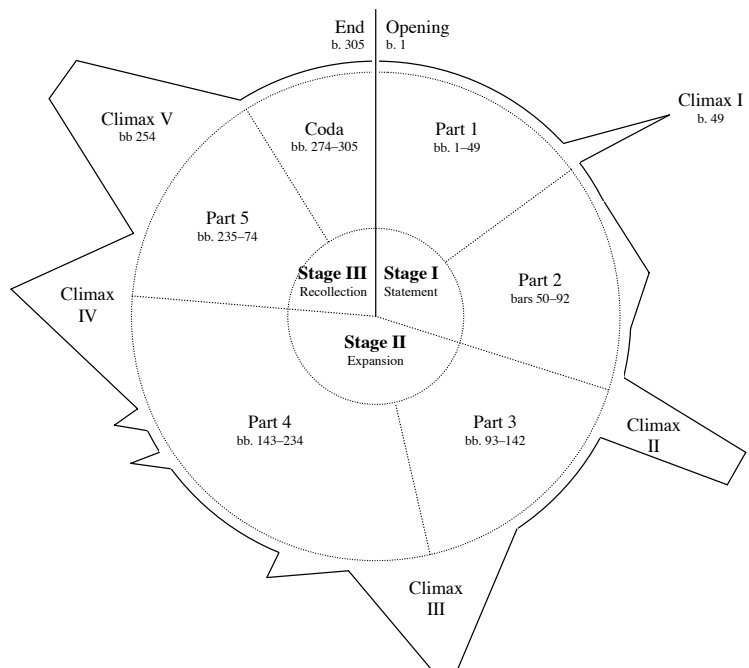


Matters of Time and Space

These five structural arches plus a final Coda articulate a balanced framework (as originally shown in Example 1). Of greater interest, though, is the ebb-and-flow of activity that operates between these focal points, during the intervening episodes: the dislocating – almost distorting – effect of time on space. For instance, the opening stages of the piece seemingly suspend time, as a number of parameters (like pitch organization) are fixed, while its shimmering surface implies some degree of activity. What remains deliberately (and delightfully) ambiguous is the extent to which any suggestion of movement may be directed – through time, not just in space – especially as its textural accumulation and dynamic expansion are so clearly designed to arouse our expectations. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, a process of accumulation – an expansion of texture (from the outset), tempo (from b. 35) and dynamic (from b. 44) – generates momentum. At first, this motion is rather slow and directionless but then it becomes quite abrupt and more linear (over a mere 6 bars) as the first climactic focal point (b. 49, *molto rit*) is established.

An overall sense of transformation from the vague fluidity of space into the clear directedness of time, from stasis to dynamism, is how listeners may perceive these opening events unfolding. Structurally, though, it is by strategically assigning these temporal impulses to points in space (a complex perceptual process of pattern-matching) that a formal understanding emerges; a fluid experience becomes rather more fixed, as the listener comprehends and formulates an outline shape. Example 3 reveals the ‘star-like’ outline now proportionally drawn to scale, and the variety in duration and contrasts of pacing, both between and during these five climactic points, are striking. The concept that time can dislocate space is visibly apparent here, with a temporal process that strongly counters any formal predictability.

Example 3:
Sakara – Effect of Temporal
Processes on Formal Shapes



Different Things in the Same Way

The rest of the piece explores a great deal of contrasting material – many different things – but it also retains the kind of musical discourse outlined in its early stages: saying those different things in the same way. This is probably most important, but least obvious, in its more extreme episodic passages, which explore constantly fluctuating states of energy. The respective pacing of the fourth and fifth points of climax provides the best example of this process, given its carefully-judged sense of balance. The longest stretch of episodic material, which delays the arrival of the fourth focal point, is followed (and offset) by the shortest distance between such events; this, in turn, results in the last – and most sustained – climax of the work. Conceptually, this kind of formal articulation is analogous to breathing: a process of expansion and contraction. There is an underlying sense of regularity and balance, even if sometimes you are required to hold your breath before being allowed a sigh of relief.

This analogy holds good for the way in which we perceive the *internal* activity of these blocks of material too; for all its celestial connotations, *Sakara* works on a human scale. Localized processes are, therefore, reflective of this principle with a clear balance being negotiated between competing levels and parameters. If the expressive quality of a given passage becomes more intensified, then its temporal impulse may well be compressed; melodic gestural expansion is countered by motivic repetition; the ebb-and-flow of textural layering and dynamic accumulation are also part of this flux. Consequently, the surface of this ever-changing momentum is often quite mosaic-like. Small figures that locally seem quite independent may, over time and with the perspective of distance, be understood as parts of larger, more organized patterns. Events conceived as one thing may eventually be perceived as another. The presence of repeated-note figures, due to their articulation may imply energy, melodic arcs likewise as they outline directed motion, but perceptions of appearance and reality remain constantly fluid. Repetition can lead to stasis; melodic ‘motion’ may be slow or even circular: they both can become rather inert, exploring the illusion of time passing when, in fact, it has been suspended. Agitation and restlessness can simply serve to mark time, rather than direct it towards any formal goal. Ultimately, the block-like episodes in *Sakara* create the structural effect of holding back time, ensuring the arrival at a climactic focal point is all the more effective: a kind of delayed gratification.

Similar Things in Different Ways

Processes of repetition – be they direct, varied, immediate or delayed – act as a further, almost middleground, level of connectivity. More larger-scale recurrence or recollection offers another means of outlining form, signposting events that help to mark out structural articulation beyond (and between) climactic focal points. Example 4 charts something of this process. The earliest instance in the piece where a sense of coalescence results in a clear melodic gesture occurs at b. 28 with Figure X (solo horn, *lontano*). Emerging from a shimmering surface of directionless textures, this simple, pitch-defined statement has an immediacy that is instantly memorable: the product of that coalescence. The rather distorted parody of it that appears at b. 67 (clarinet, oboe, piccolo), encapsulates the process of intensified reworking of material that characterizes this stage in the piece; Climax II uses a further derivation of this gesture (trumpets, b. 92ff).

A later recurrence, such as the varied, more concealed statement of b. 126 (Piccolo, Flute *leggero assai*), serves to represent the developmen-

tal and expansive activity of this central portion of the work. (Indeed, the sustained, unison F# of Climax III (b. 142) may be viewed as a dramatically reduced version of this figure: its presence is felt through a single pitch class.) Thereafter, as the more episodic nature of events comes to prevail, references to Figure X are correspondingly less precise, with an absence of any direct recurrence in favour of more derivative recollection. The woodwind figures at Letter G (b. 186) may provoke associations, especially as these give way to a melodic statement on bassoon (bb. 190–200) that clearly includes intervallic correspondences with earlier models (see Example 4). In keeping with this more developmental phase, the horn statements just after Letter H (bb. 213–14) are also worth noting, especially as their timbre adds to a sense of recall. Arguably, then, it is a timbral (rather than pitch-based) motivic resonance that characterizes the last and most sustained climax of the work: Figure X achieves its final melodic outburst here (b. 254ff).

Although selective, these extracts reveal a degree of repetition that is sufficiently varied to offer narrative continuity, yet direct enough to provide another level of formal outline. During the closing moments of *Sakara* this dual function, exploring the borderline between difference and similarity, comes most significantly into play. The Coda is in one sense reflective of initial events, with a number of subtle reminiscences (shimmering textures, woodwind fragments, melodic string writing, repeated-note figures) that echo earlier characteristics: similar things are being said in different ways. The fixed yet moving quality of this celestial piece remains as it fades away through shadows into silence.

Out of the Shadows

Wennäkoski's work offers us a tantalizing glimpse into a particular compositional world, which in itself is representative of wider issues surrounding new music in Finland. In interview she confirmed that she has a number of compositions in progress, and there is no doubt that her reputation continues to grow apace both at home and abroad. Of her more recent pieces, *Nostalgiam* (2006–07) for chamber ensemble is a work that seems to go right back to Wennäkoski's compositional roots. Commissioned by the Kalevala Society and premièred at their annual gala, its title implies a yearning for the past, but more specifically (being Hungarian for 'my nostalgias') refers to her earlier experience. Her formative visit to Hungary has left a lasting impression and this piece is based on two Hungarian folk songs, from which all its material is derived. As Wennäkoski explains: 'People nowadays have a variety of identities, and we each filter what we see and hear through our own personality. Hovering in the background to *Nostalgiam* is not Hungarian folk music as such but my own reading and interpretation of it and of what it embraces. What I happen to remember, what I want to remember'.²⁴

From the shadow of Sibelius and the relative silence of women composers in Finland, a new, post-Saariaho generation offers some reassurance that issues of gender imbalance within the creative process are starting to be addressed. It is, of course, merely the tip of an iceberg as the ever-changing new-music scene in Finland continues to develop and evolve with astonishing energy. By outlining part of Wennäkoski's contribution, the strength of her music should be clear: it is powerfully emotional, highly expressive – surprisingly dramatic. At the same time

²⁴ See CD liner notes, *Nostalgiam*, Wennäkoski, 2007; translated by Susan Sinsalo.

The musical score is divided into several systems, each with a lettered section marker:

- System 1:** Horn 1 (Hn.1), measure 28. Section marker **A**. Instruction: *1. solo lontano*. Dynamic: *p*.
- System 2:** Piccolo (Picc) and Oboe 1 (Ob.1), measures 67-72. Section marker **C**. Dynamics: *mf*, *ff*, *f*, *fff*.
- System 3:** Clarinet 1 & 2 (Cl.1&2), measures 67-72. Dynamics: *mf*, *ff*, *f*, *fff*.
- System 4:** Trumpet 1 (C Tpt.1) and Trumpets 2 & 3 (C Tpt.2&3), measures 92-97. Section marker **D**. Dynamics: *ff*, *fff*.
- System 5:** Piccolo & Flute 1 (Picc & Fl.1) and Flute 2 (Fl.2), measures 126-127. Section marker **E**. Instruction: *leggero assai*. Dynamic: *ff*.
- System 6:** Oboe 1 (Ob.1) and Oboe 2 (Ob.2), measures 186-191. Section marker **G**. Instruction: *cantabile*. Dynamics: *f*, *p*.
- System 7:** Clarinet 1 & 2 (Cl.1&2), measures 186-191. Dynamics: *mp*, *p*.
- System 8:** Bassoon 1 (Bsn.1), measures 190-195. Instruction: *solo dolce, poco lontano*. Dynamic: *p*. Marking: *poco*.
- System 9:** Horns 1 & 2 (Hn.1&2) and Horns 3 & 4 (Hn.3&4), measures 213-218. Dynamics: *pp*, *mf*, *pp*.
- System 10:** Bassoon 1 (Bsn.1), measures 254-259. Section marker **J**. Instruction: *bend the pitch a quartertone down and back*. Dynamic: *fff*.
- System 11:** Trombone 1 & 2 (Tbn.1&2), measures 254-259. Instruction: *glissandi con tremolo portamento e leggero; gliss. senza tremolo non-portamento e pesante*. Dynamic: *fff*.
- System 12:** Violin I (Vln.I) and Violin II (Vln.II), measures 254-259. Instruction: *glissandi con tremolo portamento e leggero; gliss. senza tremolo non-portamento e pesante*. Dynamic: *fff*.
- System 13:** Viola (Via), measures 254-259. Dynamic: *fff*.

Example 4: Sakara – Use of Figure X

it can be subtle, delicate and understated. Her creative utterance, like that of so many of her compatriots – both male and female – succeeds in reaching out to its audience, communicating directly with a broad range of listeners. From this case study we may gain a different perspective on Finnish new music, acknowledging that greater equality is contributing to its success and discerning that compositional quality transcends any barriers of gender.

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