The Music of Joonas Kokkonen

EDWARD JURKOWSKI

ROUTLEDGE

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To Colleen and Joren

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Preface

As we look back upon the twentieth century from the vantage of a new millennium, Joonas Kokkonen's stature as one of the most significant post-1945 Finnish composers has become ever more apparent. Kokkonen is mainly known outside of Finland for his 1975 opera *Viimeiset kiusaukset* (*The Last Temptations*), by far the most successful Finnish opera, and his cycle of four symphonies, the most vital series of essays by any Finnish symphonist—save, of course, Sibelius. However, the impressive list of orchestral, chamber orchestra, and chamber works prove that beautiful and masterfully crafted compositions may be found in virtually every genre of Kokkonen's oeuvre. Oddly, however, piano music represents a small and minor position in Kokkonen's post-1957 works—a surprising fact, given the extensive number of pieces written for the instrument and Kokkonen's distinguished reputation as a piano soloist during his early career.

From 1950 to 1963 Kokkonen held various academic positions at the Sibelius Academy: he not only taught music theory and history, but was also a distinguished composition professor, who during his tenure at the Academy taught some of the most celebrated present-day Finnish composers. Through the 1950s Kokkonen was also an important and influential music critic who wrote for the two major Finnish newspapers of the day, *Ilta Sanomat* (*The Evening News*) and *Uusi Suomi* (*New Finland*). In addition, he was a noted essayist whose writings on a variety of subjects ranging from the importance of Bach in music education to philosophical issues surrounding contemporary music activities demonstrated a penetrating insight that still has relevance today.

Kokkonen's significance in Finland's musical life, however, extended far beyond his academic posts or distinguished career as a composer. For instance, in the nearly three decades that followed his appointment to the Finnish Academy in 1963, Kokkonen was tireless in his work surrounding legislative issues of copyright protection. In addition, he played a vital role in the development of an extensive music education system—in fact, a strong case can be made that the healthy and enviable status of music education currently in Finland is directly the result of Kokkonen's unceasing dedication to this aspect of his position within the Finnish Academy.

Kokkonen has, at times, been pejoratively labeled a conservative composer, an unfair point of view that the chapters which follow will

hopefully repudiate. Specifically, Kokkonen has been criticized for nurturing an old-fashioned narrative conception of musical structure and expression—narrative, in this sense, assumes that significance, formal or expressive, arises out of a linked series of unfolding events—at a time when other compositional aesthetics had captured the attention of composers. However, as we generate a new historiography of twentieth-century music (and, specifically, one not focused solely on musical activities west of the Rhine) Kokkonen, like so many other twentieth-century composers, has come to be viewed in a much different and more positive perspective. In particular, Kokkonen is now seen as a composer from a country rich in twentieth-century orchestral composition who fully and knowingly entered the arena of symphonic composition during the 1950s, i.e., at a time when the European avant-garde had dismissed the genre as a musical museum piece, and yet created what has come to be viewed as the most valuable series of symphonies by a Finnish composer from the second half of the twentieth century. However, not only have Kokkonen's symphonies and orchestral compositions proven to be worthy successors to Sibelius' towering works, but as the analyses of countless works from his oeuvre demonstrate—and in my opinion, this is one of his most distinctive contributions (and yet, up to now, has been completely ignored by scholars)—Kokkonen also created an interesting and refreshing approach to dodecaphonic composition and, as a corollary, to the pitch organization of a work. In sum, Kokkonen's challenging works not only occupy a vital place in Finland's remarkable lineage of twentieth-century composition, but have also had a profound influence upon his own, as well as succeeding generations of Finnish composers.

Readers interested in a detailed biography of Kokkonen's life and his influence upon Finnish music can do no better than Pekka Hako's excellent *Voiko Varjo olla Kirkas*;[1] unfortunately, the book is in Finnish, delimiting its potential readership. And while Kokkonen is far from an unknown composer outside of Finland, his music is still not as familiar as it should be; however, Hako's biography contains no formal analyses, thus restricting the book's use even further for someone interested in Kokkonen's harmonic, rhythmic and formal designs—in other words, the sound world of Kokkonen's compositions.

The Music of Joonas Kokkonen attempts to rectify this significant lacuna in Kokkonen scholarship. The book opens with a brief chronology of twentieth-century Finnish music to provide the reader with a general background to the musical landscape during the 1950s, i.e., the time during which Kokkonen established his early reputation as a composer. Chapter two contains a biographical sketch of Kokkonen; chapter three is a survey

of the salient features of his individual approaches to form and dodecaphonic composition. The next six chapters of the book contain analyses of all of Kokkonen's significant works; the chapters are organized according to genre. The final chapter contains some thoughts on Kokkonen's legacy to Finnish cultural life.

While the initial chapters (and especially chapter three) contain important expository material, the remainder of *The Music of Joonas Kokkonen* does not have to be read in a linear fashion, as the discussion of each piece is essentially self-contained. The prose is descriptive in nature and at a level for one with knowledge of rudimentary concepts of contemporary analytical writing. However, some terms have been created to address features specific to Kokkonen's music; such terms are defined in the Definitions section following the Acknowledgements.

Note

1. Pekka Hako, *Voiko Varjo olla Kirkas: Joonas Kokkosen elämä* (Helsinki: Ajatus Kirjat, 2001).

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my Finnish colleague Hannu Apajalahti. It was during my early years as a Ph.D. student that Hannu, a visiting scholar from the Sibelius Academy, suggested that I listen to *The Last Temptations* as an introduction to Kokkonen's music; it was advice for which I will be forever indebted. I went down to the local classical record store, came home and was immediately transfixed by the sheer energy and power of the libretto, music and Kokkonen's simply masterful control of the orchestra. Embracing Kokkonen's music led naturally to many other twentieth-century Finnish composers ranging from Leevi Madetoja to Magnus Lindberg, as well as a passion for Finnish culture in general. Happily, following several years of studying Kokkonen's music in exhaustive detail, articles, conference papers and ultimately this book, as well as innumerable discussions with colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, I recently listened to the opera with some friends and remained deeply moved by the experience.

Grateful thanks are due to Warner/Chappell Music Finland Oy and G. Schirmer Music, Inc., the copyright holders of Kokkonen's music, for granting me permission to reprint the numerous musical excerpts in the book. I would like to gratefully acknowledge the University of Lethbridge, which awarded me two research grants in 1998 and 2000 that allowed me to travel to Helsinki to procure the majority of the research materials for this project. To the invaluable help from the Finnish Music Information Centre and in particular, Pekka Hako and Anni Heino, I owe a debt greater than I will ever be able to repay. The library staff at the Sibelius Academy library was helpful in providing me unrestricted access to Kokkonen's extant manuscripts. Two of Kokkonen's children, Arja and Jarmo, were generous with their time and candid with their recollections about their father, providing me with a perspective that has shaped this book to a certain degree. Last, I would like to thank my wife Colleen Bakker and son Joren, for helping keep this project in perspective. It is to Colleen and Joren I dedicate this book with affection and appreciation.

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Definitions

Interval Cycle
A series of pitches separated by an identical interval that returns to the original pitch; the interval number represents semitones. Some examples include: a chromatic scale is an interval-1 cycle; a whole-tone collection, for instance, C,D,E,F♯,G♯,A♯,(C), is an interval-2 cycle; a fully diminished seventh chord, for instance, C,E♭,F♯,A,(C), is an interval-3 cycle; and a series of perfect fourths, C,F,B𝄫,E♭,A♭,D𝄫,G𝄫,B,E,A,D,G,(C), is an interval-5 cycle.

Octatonic Collection
The octatonic collection, a favorite of composers such as Bartók and Stravinsky (to name but two), is employed in a number of Kokkonen's works. The collection is a symmetrical ordering of eight pitches; its intervals alternate between a minor second and Major second. There are three possible transpositions of the octatonic collection: C,C♯,D♯,E,F♯,G,A,B♭, labeled as $OCT_{0,1}$; C♯,D,E,F,G,G♯,B♭,B, labeled as $OCT_{1,2}$; and D,E𝄫,F,F♯,G♯,A,B,C, labeled as $OCT_{2,3}$.

Permutation
A common feature of Kokkonen's dodecaphonic writing is to rotate or permute a row, thereby altering its series of order positions. For instance, by rotating the pitches of the row F,E,C,A,G,D,A♭,D♭,E𝄫,G𝄫,B♭,B to C,A,G,D,A♭,D♭,E♭,G♭,B♭,B,F,E, order positions 1 and 2 would become order positions 10 and 11, respectively, order position 3 becomes order position 1, order position 4 becomes order position 2, etc. One important rationale for permuting a row is to highlight specific harmonic features and associate them with particular order positions from other row orderings or row forms.

Row Form
Any row ordering (see the entry for **Row Ordering**) contains forty-eight possible row forms: the twelve transpositions of a (P)rime row form, the twelve transpositions of an (I)nversion row form, the twelve transpositions of a retrograde version of a prime row form (RP), and the twelve transpositions of a retrograde version of an inversion row form (RI).

Row Labels
Many of Kokkonen's works utilize multiple row orderings (see the entry for **Row Ordering**) within the same movement. The system of nomenclature to identify these different rows uses a Roman numeral to designate the movement, followed by a letter for the particular row. For instance, row I/A would be the first designated row in movement one, while III/B would be the second designated row in movement three. In general, a row with an "A" designation has greater structural importance than a row with a "B" designation.

P_n
The "prime" form of the row whose first pitch begins with "n," where n ranges in value from 0 for C, 1, for C♯/D♭, 2 for D, ..., 10 for A♯/B♭, and 11 for B. For instance, if the primary tone row is G♯,A,F♯,G,B,B♭,D♭,C,E,F,D,E♭, it would be labeled P_8. Note that this row played backwards, i.e., E♭,D,F,E,C,D♭,B♭,B,G,F♯,A,G♮, is referred to as a retrograde row form of P_8 and formally labeled as RP_8.

I_n
The "inverted" form of a row whose first pitch begins with "n," where n ranges in value from 0 for C, 1, for C♯/D♭, 2 for D, ..., 10 for A♯/B♭, and 11 for B. For instance, if the primary tone row G♯,A,F♯,G,B,B♭,D♭,C,E,F,D,E♭ is inverted to also begin on G♯, the row would be G♮,G,B♭,A,F,F♮,D♯,E,C,B,D,C♮. Note that this row played backwards, i.e., C♯,D,B,C,E,D♯,F♮,F,A,B♭,G,G♯, is referred to as a retrograde row form of I_8 and formally labeled as RI_8.

Row Ordering
A series of pitch classes which generates a particular succession of interval classes. While twelve-element rows are the most common in Kokkonen's music, the length can vary from as little as six elements to as many as fourteen.

Chapter 1

Historical Background

Although art music has been a part of Finnish culture for several centuries, Jean Sibelius is widely considered the first Finnish composer of international prominence and remains the country's most celebrated composer—arguably the most famous composer from any of the Nordic countries. Sibelius' extraordinary success in the genres of the symphony and symphonic poem are important contributions to large-scale orchestral music and have become a highly valued aspect of twentieth-century Finnish culture.[1] Finnish composers know well the impact of Sibelius upon twentieth-century Finnish music—indeed, Sibelius' compositions are widely considered to be the *sine qua non* exemplar of late-romantic Finnish nationalism and as such they have also been the yardstick that has measured the output of his contemporaries and successors.[2]

Despite the achievements of Sibelius, one can identify composers even from Sibelius' generation whose music, while strongly rooted in a late-Romantic style, occasionally contained musical attributes that anticipated stylistic features found in Finnish modernist compositions from the late 1910s; two examples include Selim Palmgren's *Kuvia Suomesta* and Toivo Kuula's *Eteläpohjalainen Sarja No. 2* (both works date from 1908). In an attempt to move beyond their inherited musical tradition, such works by these (as well as other) composers display elements of harmony, orchestration and texture found in the music of Claude Debussy. And even though the first Finnish premiere of an orchestral work by Debussy took place as late as 1922 (the composition was *La Mer*), the stylistic attributes of his music that began to appear in Finnish compositions from the early 1900s are an indication of the awareness of contemporary musical activities from France long before the music would have been heard in Finland's concert halls—not an insignificant point, given that late nineteenth-century German- and Russian-styled music would account for virtually all non-Nordic music to which a Finnish composer from the early part of the twentieth century would have been exposed.[3]

With the end of World War I and Finland's independence in 1917, the country went through a number of seismic political and social changes. Not surprisingly, these substantial transformations to Finland's society were mirrored by the visual art, drama, literature and music from the time

period. While many composers played a role during the 1920s and 1930s in changing the prevailing style of Finnish music, one which, as noted above, was strongly entrenched in late romanticism, Uuno Klami (1900–1961), Aarre Merikanto (1893–1958), Ernest Pingoud (1887–1942) and Väinö Raitio (1891–1945) represent a group of Finnish composers whose music has been recognized as the most significant attempt during this time period to overcome what many Finnish scholars have referred to as "The Shadow of Sibelius." These four composers founded no school and wrote music that is, perhaps not surprisingly, stylistically divergent. However, their association may be made by their attraction to the more progressive music of Debussy and Scriabin as the basis for their radical musical compositions, rather than such late nineteenth-century composers as Reger, Strauss and Tchaikovsky, the foreign composers who would have been favored by most Finnish composers from this time, as well as Sibelius. In short, while nationalism was still held as paramount, there was a general mood for change in the air, where a new generation of composers was ready to embrace novel influences outside of Finland.

While the popularity of Sibelius' musical style, both within Finland and abroad, may have elevated the composer's status to near mythical proportions, Erkki Salmenhaara has noted that, paradoxically, Sibelius' influence on younger Finnish composers such as the above-mentioned four modernists was marginal.[4] For instance, composers such as Merikanto, Pingoud and Raitio all openly acknowledged Sibelius' use of overt tonal structures as, for instance, in the fifth symphony, was a major disappointment and could not (or refused to) see the significance of the composer's later output.[5] Einar Englund has described a personal accounting of their reaction to Sibelius' later music as follows:

> After the first performance of the fourth symphony by Sibelius Väinö Ratio and Aarre Merikanto were sitting in a restaurant and celebrating the occasion with a glass of wine. Both radicals were of the opinion that Sibelius with his new symphony had proved that their belief in the validity of music which shunned tonality was right. "If he goes on along this line, the fifth will have already moved towards atonality," they thought, and waited excitedly for the next work. The fifth came, and with it disappointment. The fourth symphony thus was a sheer experiment, a brain wave of their idol. Disappointed, they turned their gaze in the direction of Schoenberg and Hindemith—and, specifically, the latter's early expressionistic compositions—and continued persistently to write their bold works.[6]

To claim that these modernists had difficulty getting their music accepted is no mere understatement. Simply stated, Finnish composers

during the 1920s and 1930s had to contend with an audience that placed Sibelius' music—and specifically, his overtly tonal compositions—on the highest order, a demand that was exacerbated by a country proud of the independence it had attained in 1917. As Glenn Koponen has noted, following the country's independence in 1917:

> [N]ational unity and cooperation in all areas of Finnish society were essential factors in light of the Russian and German oriented tensions which were continually pervasive during the first half of the century. Thus the official façade of musical life remained one of national romanticism during the period between the two world wars.[7]

With their edict for dramatic changes to the stylistic norms of Finnish composition, it would seem inevitable that these young composers would be controversial and harshly received by both audiences and critics. In fact, several of their works remained unperformed until the last few decades. An often-cited example of such neglect is Merikanto's acknowledged masterpiece, his 1922 opera *Juha*, a work which received its first complete staged production as late as 1962, and four years after the composer's death. Although not immune to the negative criticism many modernists encountered, Klami's music enjoyed more success in the concert hall than his contemporaries. For instance, Klami's most famous piece, the *Kalevala Suite* Op. 35, has been actively performed both within Finland and abroad (the work was even programmed several times in the United States by Leopold Stokowski during the 1940s). It should be noted, however, that for as much as he had embraced progressive compositional features of Ravel and Stravinsky, Klami also used themes from Finland's national folk epic *The Kalevala* in his music to a far greater degree than most other modernist composers—and especially when compared with Merikanto, the Russian-born Pingoud (who may be the sole composer from this time who never once used elements of Finland's famous folk epic in his music), and Raitio—which may have provided a more familiar basis for audiences anticipating such musical attributes and thus engendering a more favorable response to his work, at least within Finland.

While the fifteen years from 1915 to 1930 represented an unprecedented period of musical growth in Finland, the harsh criticism that the modernist composers faced inevitably took its toll: by around 1930 one can detect a pronounced change to a more reactionary style in their music.[8] Consider, for instance, the differences between Merikanto's *Abduction of Kyllikki*, an orchestral work written in 1935 to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the *Kalevala*: as Salmenhaara has observed, the composition is much less adventuresome, as regards harmony and rhythm,

when compared with a work such as Merikanto's tone poem *Pan* from fifteen years earlier.[9]

The paucity of experimental works by composers such as Merikanto and Raitio came to nearly a complete cessation by the end of the 1930s, prompting the Finnish composer Sulho Ranta (1901–1960) to write:

> To put it in general terms: the work "modern" has lately vanished entirely from the annals concerning our young composers. I cannot, however, have another opinion of a young tone-smith's first concert of his works, where one sits "with a sage mind," than that it somehow tastes strange. One has time later on to cool down 'intellectually speaking.' And recalling other branches of our art, so far there is not yet as much of romanticism as among the youngest of our music: the poets still go on with their free metres and among the painters there are even surrealists![10]

In addition to the hostile reception many modernist composers received during the 1940s, they also faced a more practical problem: like continental Europe, there was a drastic decrease of musical activity in Finland during World War II—a situation greatly exacerbated by its complex political role between Germany and Russia—as many musicians were called to active service duty during this seven-year time period.

The end of World War II seems to have sparked a major moment in Finnish culture. Specifically, there was a general sense that it was time to move away from nationalistic styled art that had dominated the first half of the century; music, more than the other art forms, seemed galvanized to catch up with continental Europe's lead. As Kalevi Aho writes, "New trends followed one another in Finnish music in such rapid succession that several styles were always simultaneously present, and the general image of Finnish music has been pluralistic ever since the [end of the] war."[11]

With a musical landscape ripe for change, the appearance of Einar Englund's first two symphonies, dating from 1946 and 1948, was heralded as a pivotal moment in Finnish music. An important feature of these two works—indeed, his compositional style in general—is that Englund consciously set out to free himself from the established styles of Sibelius and Leevi Madetoja (1887–1947), and did so by instead relying upon the Russians Stravinsky, Prokofiev and, especially, Shostakovich. Further, stylistic attributes by these composers are cast within formal designs, orchestration and textures that demonstrate Englund's proclivity towards European neoclassicism.

Englund is usually acknowledged as the first Finnish composer whose style was more predisposed to Shostakovich's music than his Finnish predecessors. For instance, the melodic and rhythmic ideas from the two

symphonies demonstrate that he knew his Shostakovich well (the first and ninth symphonies are particularly relevant here); Englund also wrote an unpublished study of the composer as early as 1946.

During the 1940s and 1950s Englund's neoclassical-styled compositions were of great interest for many younger Finnish composers looking to Europe for musical influences; four prominent composers include Nils-Eric Foufstedt (1910–1961), Nils-Eric Ringbom (1907–1988), Ahti Sonninen (Sonninen (1914–1984) is the composer of arguably Finland's most performed ballet score, the 1952 *Pessi ja Illusia*) and Jouko Tolonen (1912–1986), as well the early works of Usko Meriläinen (b. 1930) and Kokkonen. However, a significant boost to the influx of new musical trends in Finland was the founding in 1949 of the Society of Contemporary Music, an organization in which Englund played a founding role. The Society not only arranged concerts, but also brought prominent foreign composers and performers into Finland who specialized in contemporary music.

One Finnish composer who also played a role in the early years of the Society was Eric Bergman (b. 1911). Bergman is usually attributed as the first Finnish composer to utilize dodecaphonic procedures extensively in his music, a compositional style he learned primarily from his studies in 1954 with Wladimir Vogel. Vogel, in fact, became an important foreign teacher for several Finnish composers during the 1950s. For instance, following Bergman, Tauno Marttinen, Einojuhani Rautavaara and Meriläinen all traveled to Switzerland for private instruction (all these composers were leading dodecaphonic Finnish composers during the second half of the 1950s and the 1960s).

Marttinen, Rautavaara and Meriläinen all began their respective careers as neoclassical composers but altered their styles during the 1950s once they recognized the variety of modes of expression that became available to them via dodecaphonic composition. However, Paavo Heininen (b. 1938) is another composer who rose to prominence during the 1950s who should be acknowledged. Even from his earliest works, Heininen has displayed a much greater proclivity towards the modernist stance of the Darmstadt serialists than his Finnish heritage. In fact, a strong argument can be made to consider Heininen as one of the first composers to have successively shunned all traces of Sibelius' influence, a tradition that had been such a vital part of Finnish composition during the first half of the twentieth century. Not only has Heininen (himself a student of Kokkonen) had a distinguished career as a composer, but he has also taught the vast majority of the internationally prominent composers who studied at the Sibelius Academy during the final thirty years of the twentieth century—a

roster that includes Eero Hämeenniemi (b. 1951), Jouni Kaipainen (b. 1956), Magnus Lindberg (b. 1958), Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952), and Jukka Tiensuu (b. 1948).

Notes

1. Present day statistics bear witness to such a statement. Although Finland has a population of approximately five and half million inhabitants, it contains twelve professional orchestras (several of international stature) and an equivalent number of semi-professional orchestras, indicating that there is indeed something quite special about the state of musical affairs in this Nordic country.
2. For discussion regarding the impact of Sibelius upon Klami, see Helena Tyrväinen, "A l'ombre de Sibelius, Uuno Klami à Montmartre" *Boreales* 54–57 (1993), pp. 109–135.
3. A substantial portion of volume 24 (2000) of *Cahiers Debussy* is devoted to the reception of Debussy's works in the Nordic countries. In particular, see Helena Tyrväinen, "Les origines de la réception de Debussy en Finlande (1901–1933)" *Cahiers Debussy* 24 (2000), pp. 3–23.
4. See Erkki Salmenhaara, "Finnish Music in the 20s and 30s: Internationalism vs. Nationalism," article contained in Tomi Mäkelä, ed., *Music and Nationalism in 20th-Century Great Britain and Finland* (Hamburg: von Bockel Verlag, 1997).
5. While it is beyond the scope of this book to discuss the more advanced aspects of the later compositions by Sibelius, for instance, issues of large-scale formal structure or long-range time spans, it should be acknowledged that these features have been either ignored or placed on a lower level of importance when compared with more surface aspects of his music—for instance, triadic harmonies or nationalistic folk influences, features which critics, for decades, have used as exemplars of a reactionary style of composition, and which have been viewed in a much different light only within the last fifteen years or so. Some examples of the literature that discuss the more progressive features of Sibelius' music include: James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Tim Howell, *Jean Sibelius: Progressive Techniques in the Symphonies and Tone Poems* (New York: Garland, 1989); Timothy L. Jackson and Veijo Murtomäki, *Sibelius Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Veijo Murtomaki, *Symphonic Unity: The Development of Formal Thinking in the Symphonies of Sibelius* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1993).
6. The Englund quote is cited in Salmenhaara, "Finnish Music in the 20s and 30s: Internationalism vs. Nationalism," p. 176.
7. Glenn Koponen, "A Study of the Symphony in Finland from 1945 to 1975 with an Analysis of Representative Compositions" (Ed.D. Dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College, 1980), p. 44.
8. For discussion of the political changes found in Finland at this time see: W. R. Mead, *Finland* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1968), pp. 149–178; chapters six and seven from Fred Singleton, *A Short History of Finland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Eric Solsten and Sandra Meditz, eds., *Finland: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress Publication, 1990), pp. 16–41.
9. Salmenhaara, "Finnish Music in the 20s and 30s: Internationalism vs. Nationalism," p. 181.

10. Sulho Ranta, "Syyskauden alku," *Suomalainen Suomi* 7 (1939), cited in Salmenhaara, "Finnish Music in the 20s and 30s: Internationalism vs. Nationalism," p. 182.
11. Kalevi Aho, "Finnish Music in the Postwar Years," contained in Kalevi Aho, Pekka Jalkanen, Erkki Salmenhaara and Keijo Virtamo, *Finnish Music* (Helsinki: Otava, 1996), p. 78.

Chapter 2

Biographical Sketch

Joonas Kokkonen was born the youngest of five children on 13 November 1921 in Iisalmi; the city is almost equidistant between Helsinki and the Arctic Circle. Along with Kokkonen, it is also the birthplace of the renowned Finnish writer and poet Juhani Aho (1861–1921). Kokkonen's family moved to Järvenpää in 1926, a charming city approximately forty kilometers north of Helsinki (Sibelius also lived in the city from 1904 until his death in 1957). A few years after he graduated from the Järvenpää Community School, Kokkonen entered the University of Helsinki, where he studied music history, philosophy and literature. Military service during the early 1940s interrupted his academic study for a couple of years: while Kokkonen spoke little about his war experiences, the horrors he observed as a soldier profoundly shaped the pacifistic sentiments he carried throughout his life (one of Kokkonen's daughters once recounted a humorous story that his lack of aggression was so ingrained that he was even incapable of setting mouse traps for fear of harming a family of mice that had once infested their Helsinki residence). Despite the time spent serving in the war, Kokkonen ultimately received his M.A. degree in music history in 1948. While at the University of Helsinki, however, Kokkonen was simultaneously enrolled at the Sibelius Academy, where he obtained a diploma in piano performance in 1949 (he also studied composition briefly with Selim Palmgren, although Kokkonen would later state that he had learned virtually nothing from him).

Kokkonen's piano instructor was Ilmari Hannikainen (1892–1955), one of the finest Finnish pianists from the first half of the twentieth century, who was not only known in Finland, but also toured extensively throughout Europe and the United States. As well as a celebrated pianist, Hannikainen was a composer, with numerous songs and short piano pieces to his credit, as well as some short orchestral compositions. While there is no evidence to suggest that Kokkonen received any instruction or even encouragement from Hannikainen about his own compositions during his studies with the pianist, one cannot help but believe that Hannikainen's successful dual career as pianist and composer would have influenced Kokkonen as he was establishing himself as a concert soloist and chamber musician: every composition until the 1957 *Music for String Orchestra* is

written either for piano solo, voice and piano, or features the piano prominently in a chamber work. In short, Kokkonen's early career was as a pianist—during the 1940s and 1950s he received much recognition for his performances of the Viennese classics, as well as Brahms and Chopin. However, as his compositions became better known during the 1950s he also became increasingly in demand as an interpreter of his own music.

Following a two-year engagement, Kokkonen and his first wife Marie (né Pananen) were married in 1944; by 1950 they had three children—two boys and one girl. In order to supplement his meager and unpredictable income as a pianist to support his young family, in 1946 Kokkonen began work as a music critic for the Finnish newspaper *Ilta Sanomat* (*The Evening News*); further similar appointments include chief critic for *Uusi Suomi* (*New Finland*) from 1957 to 1963 and chief editor for the journal *Uusi Musiikkilehti* (*New Music Periodical*) from 1954 to 1956. Additional stability came in 1950 when Kokkonen began teaching music history and theory at the Sibelius Academy, an appointment that he held until 1959.

The stresses of an erratic income combined with Kokkonen's increasing troubles with alcohol, however, reached a breaking point by the early 1950s and Marie filed for a divorce in 1953 (Kokkonen's tribulations with alcohol appear to have begun during his years of military service and plagued him throughout his life; they became increasingly problematic in the final decade of his life). Kokkonen remarried in 1954 to Maija (né Heljo) and together they had two daughters. By all accounts, Maija and Joonas led a tranquil and idyllic marriage—however it seems clear that it was Maija who shouldered the greater responsibility to bring constancy and structure to their home life. For instance, Joonas was frequently prone to indolence and Maija more than occasionally was the disciplinarian who kept him to a regular work schedule, especially when composition deadlines loomed.

From 1959 until 1963 Kokkonen served as professor of composition at the Academy. A number of important post-1960 Finnish composers studied with Kokkonen during his tenure, a roster which includes such names as Henrik Otto Donner (b. 1939), Paavo Heininen (b. 1938), Aulis Sallinen (b. 1935), Erkki Salmenhaara (1941–2002) and Leif Segerstam (b. 1944)—although it should also be noted that once he left his teaching appointment in 1963 Kokkonen continued to teach composition privately to a few students (two noted composers include Pehr Henrik Nordgren (b. 1944) and Mikko Heiniö (b. 1948)). Kokkonen placed great demands upon his students; he believed that mastery of counterpoint and form (both *Formenlehre* designs as well as the more general, abstract definition of the term), through extensive study of the music of Bach and the early Viennese