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Matthew Whittall

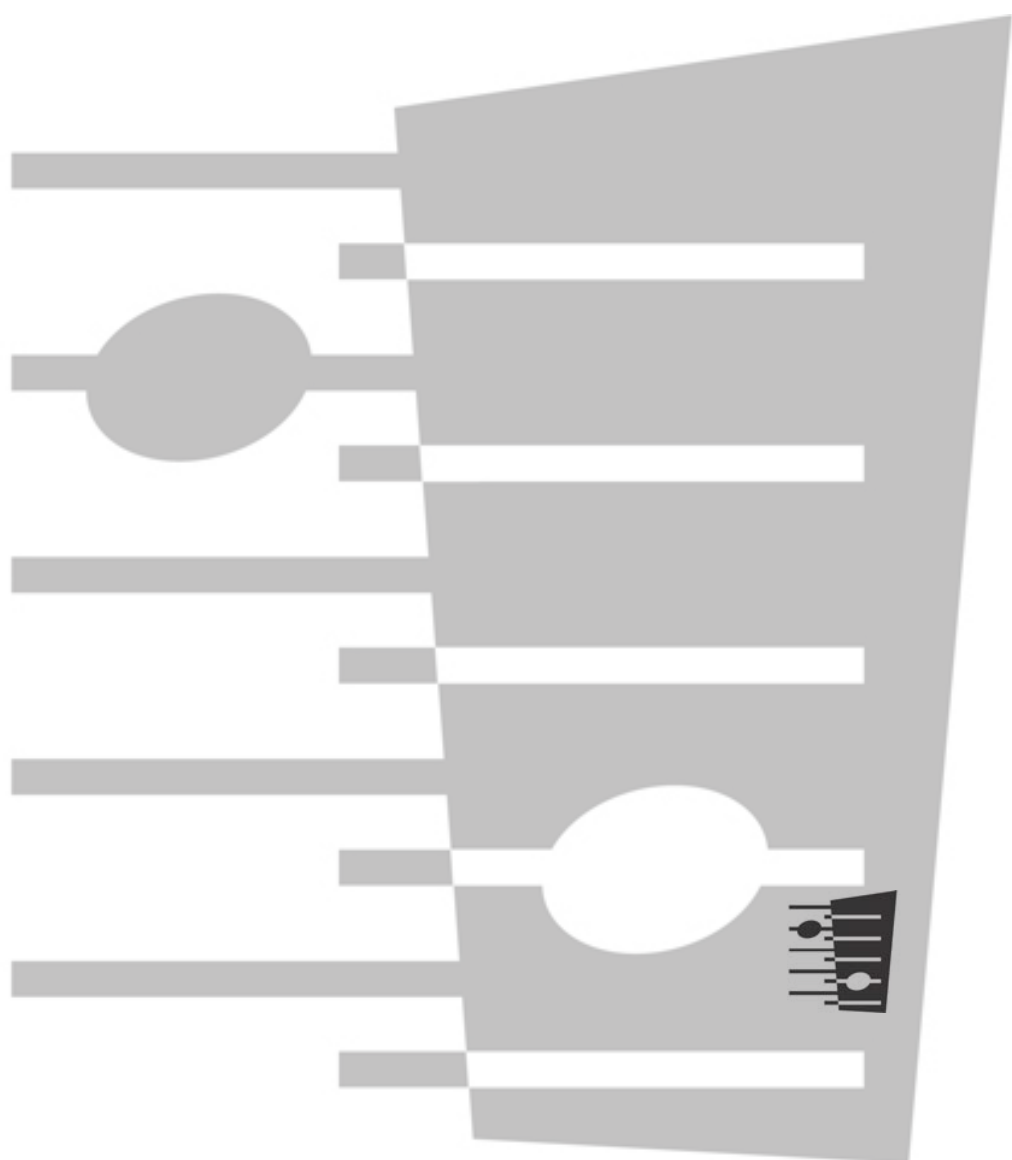
# HILJAISUUS PUHUU

## Silence Speaks

*Helsinki Variations*

(2022)

SCORE



## Instrumentation

4 Flutes  
4 Oboes  
4 Bb Clarinets  
2 Bassoons  
2 Contrabassoons

6 F Horns  
4 C Trumpets  
3 Tenor trombones  
Bass Trombone  
Tuba

Timpani  
3 Percussion (see detail)

2 Harps  
Celeste

Strings (16-14-12-10-8)

## Percussion distribution

Player 1: Crotales (lower octave, 2 bows), 2 Suspended cymbals (med. & lg.), Mark tree, Waterphone (empty, with bow), Tam-tam (large, may be shared with Player 2)

Player 2: Bass drum, Glockenspiel

Player 3: Tam-tam (large, may be shared with Player 1), Vibraphone (motor off), Sizzle cymbal, Tubular bells, Bell plate (D3 or D4, optional, may be substituted with Tubular bells)

Duration: ca. 14 min.

## Program note

“Täällä Ainolassa tämä hiljaisuus puhuu.” (“Here at Ainola this silence speaks”)

–Jean Sibelius, on life at his home in the Finnish countryside (radio interview, 1948)

Choral music for me embodies the values of the personal and the communal, that which is both intimate and shared. So asked for a work on a Finnish theme, I turned immediately to this repertoire. Having performed most of Jean Sibelius’s oeuvre at one time or another as a choral singer myself, the piece that remains my favorite is the modest song *Nyt seimelle pienoisen lapsen* (“Now to the little child’s manger”), with its asymmetrical rhythms and gently rising and falling Dorian scales.

The result is less a set of variations than a single large variation, in which the original music is slowed down, its individual tones, motives and harmonies sampled, remixed, looped and time-stretched, forming an ambient soundscape of tone clusters, chiming chords and occasionally growling noise. The silence of the title is presented as a quiet mass of strings hovering impassively for the duration. On this canvas, ideas are sketched in broad strokes, held up to the light and allowed to fade back into the mist, rarely leading anywhere. The orchestra is enormous, but is used more often for depth of sonority than volume. While I rarely state technical goals, I set myself the challenge of only using the pitches in the original song, with the result that much of the piece consists solely of “white” notes.

I went into this process with a bright tone in mind. This remains, but the intervening pandemic years had me considering different silences: the silence of solitude, of winters in isolation; the silence of creative drought; the angry, forced silence of the arts, of the singing voice, of political indifference and protest; the silence of grief and loss, and the comforting silence of togetherness. All these silences are given a place, but are eventually subsumed into a final, lyrical surge of light – a rebirth of sorts.

*Hiljaisuus puhuu* was commissioned by the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra as part of its Helsinki Variations project, and is dedicated to its conductor, Susanna Mälkki.

