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Tonsättarporträtt

# Max Savikangas

med

## Uusinta stråkkvartett

Program Västerås konserthus 25 oktober 19.00

- «Milk» för recitator och stråkkvartett (1999)
- «Azonal Advice to solo viola» (2009)
- «Kaliki for solo cello» (2003) + videoverk av Teemu Mäki (2005)
- «First eRRe for violin and viola» (2002)
- «Kranker Matthäus» för flöjt och viola (2006)
- «Full Hands» för flöjt och stråkkvartett (2011), *uruppförande*

Malla Vivolin, flöjt, recitator

Uusinta stråkkvartett: Maria Puusaari, Teija Kivinen,  
Max Savikangas, Markus Hohti

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PAUS

«First eRRe for violin and viola» (2002), Maria Puusaari, violin,  
Max Savikangas, viola

«Kranker Matthäus» för flöjt och viola (2006), Malla Vivolin, flöjt,  
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Malla Vivolin, flöjt, recitation

**Max Savikangas, kompositör och violinist (f. 1969).**

Utexaminerad ifrån Finska Sibelius-Akademien i Finland år 1998 efter omfattande studier i musikteori, komposition, viola (altfiol) och elektroakustisk musik. Under flera år har Max varit verksam som fri kompositör, violinist och föreläsare. Han har komponerat över 80 verk av instrumental kamarmusik, vokalmusik, elektroakustisk musik och kombinationer av dessa. Hans största arbete hittills är en 7-timmars elektroakustisk ljudinstallation kallad "Hammer, Anvil, Stirrup" (2005)

### Kammarensemblen Uusinta

Uusinta är en högkvalitativ kammarensemble från Finland, med fokus på samtida komponerad konstmusik. Uusinta formades 1998 och gav sin första konsert i januari 1999. Sedan dess har Uusinta spelat över 100 konserter i Finland och fem andra länder, uruppfört över 100 nya verk av finländska och skandinaviska kompositörer samt musik från olika internationella tonsättare. Uusinta har gjort dussintals radiosändningar och har gett ut tre CD-inspelningar av musik av kompositörer företrädd av förlaget Uusinta, som specialiserat sig på samtida finsk konstmusik.

### Malla Vivolin

Studier i flöjt med Mikael Helasvuo och Hanna Juutilainen vid Sibelius Akademien. Vivolin är en aktiv frilansmusiker i både på orkester- och kamarmusikscenen och kan ofta synas dubblerande på piccoloflöjt.

### Max Savikangas, viola, composition

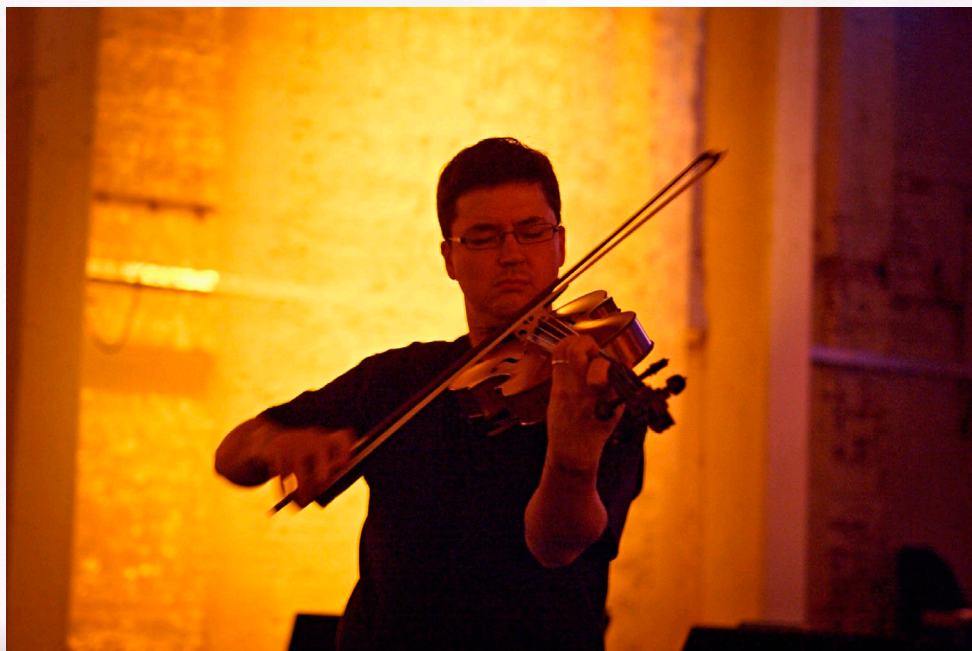
Max Savikangas, composer and violist (b. 1969), received M.Mus. from the Sibelius Academy, Finland, in 1998 after completing extensive studies in music theory, composition, viola performance and electroacoustic music. For several years now, Max has been working as a free composer, violist and lecturer. He has composed over 80 works of instrumental chamber music, vocal music, electroacoustic music and combinations of these. His largest work so far is the 7-hour electroacoustic sound installation entitled Hammer, Anvil, Stirrup (2005), which was nominated as one of the Finnish Composers' Copyright Society Teosto prize winner candidates in 2005. During the years 2007-2009 Max enjoyed the 2,5-year State Grant for Artists for composing, awarded by the Arts Council of Finland.



As violist Max is concentrated in contemporary chamber music and improvisation. He is the founder member of the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble and also performs regularly with the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra. Abroad Max has performed in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Holland, Germany, France, Spain, United Kingdom, South Africa, United States and Australia in various concerts, tours, festivals and congresses.

Max is the President of the Finnish Viola Society, member of the Society of Finnish Composers and the interdisciplinary artist association MUU. He was appointed as the executive secretary of the International Viola Society Presidency for three-year terms 2008-10 and 2011-13.

In addition to composing and performing on the viola, Max has been involved in multi-disciplinary co-projects, often utilising technology. He is also very interested in developing the viola - Max plays on a viola model which he has been developing with the Finnish luthier Pekka Mikael Laine since 1998, utilising computer spectral analysis and new varnishing techniques.



*foto: Heikki Tuuli*

### **Milk for reciter and string quartet (1999)**

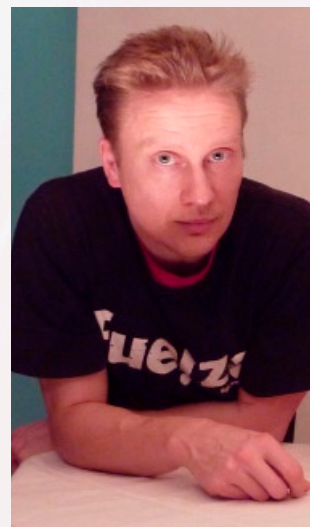
Text: Teemu Mäki 1998

Milk for string quartet and a reciter was inspired by the similarly titled text by Teemu Mäki. The text was originally part of Mäki's video art work. At the end of the video the text is read while a female head in an aquarium is slowly covered in milk. This work inspired me to write a composition based on the text. Milk is a melodrama, which is a form that I feel is too often overlooked nowadays.

### **Teemu Mäki, short cv**

Teemu Mäki (b. 1967) is an internationally acclaimed but also controversial visual artist, performance artist and essayist - to mention just few of his fields of artistic activity. He says that he is "an artist, perspectival moral relativist, atheist and socialist, compulsive joker and father of three children". During the more than 15 years I have known Teemu Mäki, his eclectic and exceptionally brilliant productivity has been constant.

In addition to all this, Teemu Mäki has been awarded numerous scholarships, has received Doctorate of Fine Arts from the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki in 2005 and is working as the Professor of Fine arts at the Aalto University School of Art and Design, Helsinki.



*foto: Teemu Mäki*



MJÖLK (1998)

Teemu Mäki, text

En dör av svält någonstans, en annan frossar någon annanstans, vilket är förhållandet mellan dem? Om frosseriet sker på den svältandes bekostnad, föder det då automatiskt skuldkänslor hos den som tar för sig? Om du känner skuld — dödar det aptiten? Om du inte känner skuld, betyder det att du är känslolös? Att du inte kan eller vill känna? Kan man känna skuld, lida av det och ändå vid behov helt och fullt njuta av att frossa på någon annans bekostnad? En dör av svält på andra sidan av TV-rutan, en annan frossar på den här sidan av TV-skärmen, det är ett faktum. Vem lider av det här? Den som dör av svält. Den tioåring som tvångsarbetar på en skofabrik. Och jag då? Vem drar nytta av situationen? Fabriksägaren? Frossaren framför TV:n?

Smakar glassen mer när det finns något på TV att jämföra det med — glasslöshet? Om någon i TV-rutan åt choklad skulle jag då vara tvungen att ha den mest exklusiva kaviaren för att det ska smaka gott? Om alla får kaviar, en Mercedes och solsemester, inser vi då någonsin att det kunde räcka med en morot, dagis och bastu? Säg det till den sista koppen ris. Om alla hade TV och glass, skulle paradiset då finnas inte bara här utan överallt? Skulle förtvivlan och desperation ens försvinna? En arbetslös som hellre köper en flaska sprit än går till biblioteket och lånar en bok — hur mycket lyckligare är han än den som svälter? Hur mäter vi det? Är jag väldigt dyster? Låt oss hålla oss till saken. Om jag kom på att majoritetens hunger inte beror på minoritetens frosserier, om frosseriet inte sker på den hungrandes bekostnad — tycker jag ändå att man ska hjälpa dem som har det sämre? Föds en skuldkänsla? Leder den till handling? För vem och mot vem? Eller väljer jag medlidande? Kanske också välgörenhet? Så länge som det inte hotar återbetalningstakten på mitt bostadslån. Är medlidande och välgörenhet en följd av det illamående jag känner när jag ser en svältande varelse som är lik mig? Eller är medlidande och välgörenhet en följd av välfärden? Det är på grund av min välfärd som jag har råd med dem. Det är på grund av min välfärd som jag behöver dem. Varför? Jag står på mitt berg av rikedom och för att jag ska kunna uppleva den svindlande känslan av mitt välstånd måste många dö i klyftans botten och jag måste titta på dem. Man ska hjälpa dem som har det sämre, tycker jag automatiskt att så är det bara eller tycker jag att det lönar sig att hjälpa för min egen skull. Så att inte de som far illa senare kommer hit för att hämnas. Är det vad jag är rädd för? Eller är det så att om jag inte bryr mig om den svältande blir min kärlek till mitt eget barn mindre trovärdig? Blir den det? Mindre trovärdig för vem? För mig, för andra eller barnet? Kan inte kommandanten för ett koncentrationsläger vara en god far?

*Svensk översättning: Anna Andersson*

MILK (1998)

Teemu Mäki, text

Somebody starves to death somewhere, somebody else feasts in luxury somewhere else. What is their relation? If the luxury is there at the expense of the starved, does it automatically cause guilt in the mind of the exploiter? If the feeling of guilt does arise, does the luxury lose its taste? If the guilt, experience of it, doesn't arise, is the exploiter emotionally numb? To be without guilt, is it to be unable or unwilling to feel in general? Can you experience guilt, suffer from it, and yet whenever the time is right just switch to another mode and willingly enjoy feasting at the expense of others? Somebody is dying of hunger on the other side of the TV-screen; somebody else is feasting on this side of the TV-screen. This is a fact. Who is hurt by this? The one who dies of hunger. The 10-years-old in slave labour in a sneaker factory. What about me? Who benefits from this? The owners of the sneaker factory? The one who feasts and watches telly. Does the ice-cream have more intense taste when on TV there is something to compare it with, ice-creamlessness? If on the other side of the screen there was somebody with chocolate, should I have the most expensive caviar to still have this luxurious feeling? If everybody gets caviar, a Mercedes and vacations in Bermudas, will we some day all of a sudden realize that a carrot, day care and sauna is enough? Tell that to the last cupful of rice. If everybody had TV and chocolate, would the paradise be not only here but everywhere? Or would at least the desperation be gone? An unemployed person who is more interested in alcohol than the public library: how much happier is he than the starving one? What do I use to measure the difference? Am I now getting rather gloomy? Let's get back to the point. What if I decide that the deprivation of the majority is not the result of the luxury of the minority, if the privileged are not feasting at the expense of the poor, do I still think that the poor must be helped? Does guilt arise? Does it lead to action? On whose behalf and against whom? Or do I choose pity? Maybe also charity? Unless it interferes with my mortgage payments. Are pity and charity the results of the ill feeling that seeing a being like me starve to death causes? Or are the pity and charity a result of the wealth? Because of my wealth I can afford them. Because of my wealth I need them. Why? I'm standing on top of the mountain of my riches, and to experience the sweet dizziness of it I have to look down, and down there in the abyss there must be people starving to death. The un-legged must be helped; do I think so because that's just how it is, automatically, or because it's in my own interest to do so, not to be faced with an angry revolt of the poor later? Is that what I'm afraid of? Or am I afraid that my indifference to people starving proves my affection to my child shallow and false? Does it? Shallow and false to whom? To me, to others or to my child? Can't the commandant of a concentration camp, in his spare time, be a good father?

*English translation: Teemu Mäki*



**Azonal Advice for solo viola** (2009), dur ca. 5 min.

The term cadenza refers i.a. to the rhythmically free and virtuosic solo passage of an instrumental solo concerto, where the orchestra stops playing, or is at least reduced into the level of commentary. The soloist in focus.

My fifth solo viola composition Azonal Advice is the cadenza from my first Viola Concerto (2008-), a work in progress. Azonal Advice can be performed also as an independent solo piece, similarly to Cadenza (1984) by Krzysztof Penderecki.

For Azonal Advice, I invented an improvisation method which I call Directed Modular-Transformative Improvisation, which allows the different ideas of the concerto to affect each other and mix into each other - and for the soloist a chance to shine.

**Kaliki for violoncello solo** (2003)

+ video work by **Teemu Mäki** (2006)

Max Savikangas writes: Kaliki-virus is small, round, and causes food poisonings. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, fever, headache and muscle fibre. The sickness-episode is fast, intensive but short. On the internet one can find also other, most peculiar contexts where the word kaliki has been used. For example the blind, singing pilgrims in the Middle Ages Russia were called kaliki pere khozie.

Kaliki for violoncello solo (2003) is divided into six sections, which are triggered by a “motto motive”. When composing, I have described the sound image of each section as follows: 1) Angry hiss and ticking 2) Whimpering and warble 3) Scratching and whispering 4) Rumbling and growling 5) Buzzing and bouncing 6) Double stops, crackling and ether. The sections 1-4 (ca 2 min.) are fast and 5-6 (ca 2 min.) slow music.

All the pitch material in the piece is derived from a chromatic three-note cell. I have also utilised special playing techniques originally developed by me for my own instrument viola. Before I started to write this piece, we adapted in collaboration with violoncellist Markus Hohti some of these techniques for violoncello. During this session Markus also presented to me a scale of natural harmonics playable almost entirely from one position, on which the closing flageolet section is based. Kaliki is commissioned by and dedicated to violoncellist Markus Hohti.

*Teemu Mäki writes:* Kaliki is a three-part music-dance video. The music is composed by Max Savikangas, it is a 5-minute violoncello solo entitled Kaliki. In this video the music is repeated three times with different video images. The first version is Contemporary Dance, which is choreographed and performed by Metsälintu Pahkinen. The Second version is Abstract, where everything is produced with a computer. The third version is Strip-Tease, a pole dance performed by strip-tease artist Pauliina, choreographed together with Metsälintu Pahkinen.

In the Kaliki-video contemporary dance, atonal contemporary music, computer graphics and strip-tease dance (which is usually considered as light-weight night

club entertainment) collide into each other as equal forms of artistic expression. This collision is not a joke or an accident. Instead, driven by artistic curiosity, we wanted to see and hear, what happens when the same music is reacted into with different forms of visual and performance strategies. Hence we are not Formalists. We have listened the music by Savikangas as conception of the human nature and the world, to which we have then tried to respond with the means of visual and performing arts; to express in a multidisciplinary, non-verbal way what it means to be a human being.

**First eRRe for violin and viola** (2002)

First eRRe is based on modular improvisation. The piece is not traditionally written out, but instead I have written four simple musical modules for both musicians, based on which they can create their own interpretation by means of improvisation. Each performance should be unique. Both players can freely choose which module to play at a certain moment. They also can jump freely and independently to another module whenever they want to.

The motivation for integrating improvisation into this piece was to enhance individuality and at the same time interaction, based on careful listening. Different playing techniques are welcomed, even self-discovered ones. I have also given the players the possibility to step out from the framework of the piece for a moment if they feel like it- but not for too long. The duration of the piece is open. However, a typical performance takes about 5 minutes.

**Kranker Matthäus for flute and viola** (2006)

J.S. Bach rewrites in his St Matthews Passion a choral by Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612). The choral is sung several times during the passion. I heard the choral first time as a small boy in April 1976 in The Helsinki Cathedral, when we popped in with my mother during an evening walk. Mother stayed behind the inner doors, but I, a curious boy, went inside. Just then the choral started, and my body hair reacted to the music. But shortly I got an uncomfortable feeling of somebody staring at me. And yes, there was a tall, dark fellow maniacally, furiously looking down to me from two meters distance. Soon I had to escape his burning gaze. When I told my mother what had happened, some lady commented from the side: “but didn’t you notice that you had your hat on?”. Where does the experience of holiness disappear from an non-believer like me? I don’t think it disappears anywhere, it’s just transferred from religion into everyday life - into dishwater, as my artist colleague Teemu Mäki puts it.

**Full Hands for flute and string quartet** (2011), first performance

In my compositions, I have constantly aimed at widening the expression scale of the viola - and consequently other instruments as well. However, my new playing techniques are not the final goal, but a necessary method to achieve my own musical expression. Perhaps there was a good reason to call me - as banal as it may sound - “The Hendrix of the Viola” (Jukka Isopuro in his cd review, Helsingin Sanomat, Finland, 2004)? The starting point in my instrumental composing is improvising. I enjoy improvising on the viola, and as often happens, some ideas survive and begin to live their own lives. Some of these ideas end up as starting points of written compositions.



The nucleus of my composing is therefore the heard sound, perhaps in opposition to some more abstract ideas on paper or in a computer. Larger musical forms are born from interesting sound events – if they are strong enough to survive. Improvisation has a special meaning to me as a performing musician as well.

This doesn't mean that I wouldn't have a great interest in music that is notated in every detail. For example Milk is notated very carefully, and my viola repertoire includes a large number of technically challenging works by more and less well-known contemporary composers.

My new quintet Full Hands, which now receives its first performance, is putting all these ideas together. It is partly fully written out and partly it relies strongly on the improvisational skills of my friends and trusted colleagues in the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble. The free flowing and interchange between these two ways of making music is in focus.

## ENSEMBLE

### **Malla Vivolin, flute, recitation**

Studied the flute with Mikael Helasvuo and Hanna Juutilainen at the Sibelius Academy. Vivolin is an active freelance musician in both orchestral and chamber music scene and can often be spotted doubling on the piccolo flute.

### **Maria Puusaari, violin**

Maria Puusaari is one of the founder members of the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble. From year 2003 she has worked in the 2nd violin section of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Maria Puusaari mentions that she has a tendency to found new chamber music ensembles and then wonder the sudden lack of time. Puusaari has also worked as the member of the board of the Uusinta Publishing Company as well as the producer of the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble.

Maria Puusaari was drawn to contemporary music already as a teenager, but only in the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble she has had the opportunity to fully dwell on this urge. Nowadays Puusaari is also a much wanted guest in other contemporary ensembles. However, in her violin repertoire Maria Puusaari has not forgotten the music of the past.

### **Teija Kivinen, violin**

Teija Kivinen started playing the violin three decades ago in Jyväskylä, Finland - and started pretty soon earning money with it by performing Brahms's Valse at her mothers workplace's party. More lately, her career has continued in the Tampere Philharmonia and from year 2002 in the Helsinki Philharmonia. Her most important violin teachers have been Olga Parhomenko at the Middle Finland Conservatory and Seppo Tukiainen at the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, Finland. Teija Kivinen cherishes chamber music; an important forum for that has been the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble since 2004, when she was invited to become its 2nd violinist.

Teija Kivinen is also an original member of the contemporary music ensemble Tampere Raw and has founded the Karamzin String Quartet, consisting of the players of the Helsinki Philharmonia.

### **Markus Hohti, violoncello**

Markus Hohti is an active chamber musician and a distinguished performer of new music. He has studied cello performance at the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, Finland with Martti Rousi and in Basel with Thomas Demenga. Markus Hohti has also studied contemporary music with Pierre Boulez and has been invited as a guest artist to perform with Ensemble Intercontemporain. Markus Hohti performs regularly all across Europe, performing a wide repertoire from the classics of chamber music to the newest music. He has appeared at most of the Finnish music festivals, including Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival and Musica Nova Helsinki. Similarly, he has performed at some of the leading European music festival, such as Lucerne Festival and Musica Festival in Strasbourg. Markus Hohti has cooperated with several composers and premiered dozens of new solo and chamber music works. He is a founder member of the Uusinta Chamber Ensemble, member of the international Ensemble Laboratorium and the newly founded electroacoustic Defunensemble. Lately, one of Markus Hohti's projects has been to explore the possibilities for the amplified and sound processed cello; he has designed sound effects for solo violoncello pieces by Max Savikangas, Markus Fagerudd and Osmo Tapio Räihälä. In 2008 Markus Hohti was awarded a three-year artist grant by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

### **Uusinta Chamber Ensemble**

Uusinta (UCE) is a top quality chamber ensemble from Finland, focusing on contemporary music. UCE was formed in 1998 and gave its first concert in January 1999. Since then UCE has played over 100 concerts in Finland and five other countries, premiered over 100 new works by Finnish and Scandinavian composers as well as music from other countries. UCE has made dozens of radio broadcasts and released three CD recordings of music by composers represented by Uusinta Publishing Company Ltd. Uusinta Chamber Ensemble comprises a wind trio and a piano quintet, which are complemented with additional musicians, up to a sinfonietta sized chamber orchestra. The members of UCE are musicians from top Finnish symphony orchestras as well as some best Finnish freelance specialists of new music.



*foto: Hanna Korhonen*