

Toivo Kuula

7.7.1883 - 18.5.1918



TOIVO TIMOTEUS KUULA WAS BORN on July 7, 1883 in Vehkakoski, Alavus as a first child of the family. Toivo Kuula's mother, Mrs Susanna Kuula (née Vehkakoski), gave birth to her first child in her childhood home - according to the custom of the time - in Vehkakoski village of the town of Alavus. In Finland at that time, it was common for country children to be born in a sauna. It was a clean and peaceful place to give birth. The grandmother of the future child, relatives of the mother or the village midwife helped in the birth of the child.

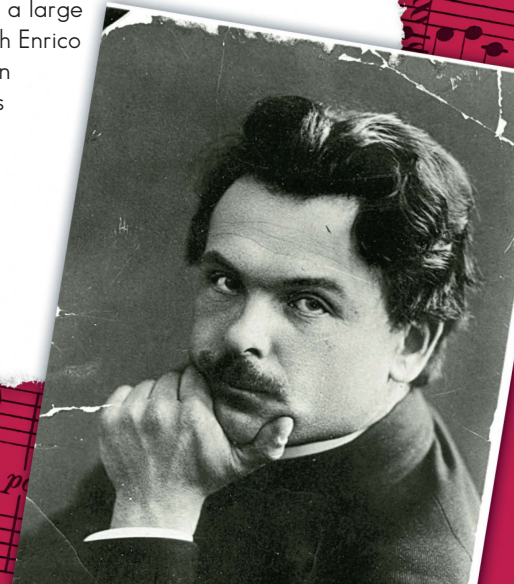
Toivo Kuula's father, Matti, was from Töysä, the neighbouring parish of Alavus. At the time of his son's birth, he was working in the Vaasa garrison. Matti's original family name was Taikinämäki, but he was named with a military name Kuula (meaning: bullet, shot, cannonball) when he joined the army. He later worked as a Laestadian preacher. The family had 8 children, 4 of whom died young.

Already in his childhood, Toivo Kuula was influenced by the spiritual songs his father sang and played. He also learned to play on the home harmonium.

TOIVO KUULA STUDIED MUSIC at the Helsinki Music Institute (later the Sibelius Academy) from 1900 to 1903 under Viktor Novacek (violin) and Martin Wegelius (theory and composition). Due to lack of funds, Toivo Kuula had to interrupt his studies. The first significant solo songs, Aamulaulu (Morning song) and Syystunnelma (Autumn mood), were composed even before Kuula was able to continue his studies in Helsinki again in January 1906 with the help of a loan. The recommendations for the loan were written by composer Selim Palmgren, who familiarised himself with Kuula's compositions and urged him to continue his studies based on them.

TOIVO KUULA MARRIED IN 1905 to his classmate Rauha Maria Cecilia Aleksintytär Nelimarkka (born 22 November 1883 in Saarijärvi) (later changed her name to Silja Valo). They had a child, Aune, who died shortly after birth. From the autumn of 1907, the spouses lived separately. In the summer of 1907, Toivo Kuula collected 262 folk songs and 34 polska from South Ostrobothnia with the help of a grant from the South Ostrobothnia Local Heritage Association. He made arrangements of these for song and piano. His instrumental compositions are also influenced by folk music in addition to being influenced by French Impressionism and Romantic styles.

TOIVO KUULA'S FIRST SIGNIFICANT solo songs "Tuijotin tulehen" (I stared into the fire for a long time) and "Suutelo" (Kiss) were born in the spring of 1907 at the same time as the violin sonata. During the following winter, Kuula composed a piano trio and the solo songs "Kesäyö kirkkomaalla" (Summer Night in the Churchyard) and "Epilogi" (Epilogue). They were heard in his composition concert on 7 October 1908 together with a piano trio and violin sonata. The concert was a great success, and the reviews even considered that only Jean Sibelius was ahead of Kuula. Toivo Kuula studied under Jean Sibelius in the spring of 1908 for a short time. Sibelius helped Kuula get a large scholarship to study in Bologna, where Kuula went the same year to study with Enrico Bossi and Luigi Torgh. In the spring of 1909, Toivo Kuula studied conducting in Leipzig under Hans Sitt. During the winter of 1909-1910 Kuula continued his composition studies in Paris privately under Marcel Labey. In Paris, Kuula completed his most complete large-scale work "Orjan poika" (Son of a slave) for soprano, baritone, choir and orchestra.



FROM 1910 TO 1911, KUULA WORKED AS A CONDUCTOR IN OULU

In the orchestra. In the spring of 1912, Kuula made a study trip to Berlin, where "Impi ja pajarin poika" (Maiden and Pajari's Son) for soprano and orchestra was born. In the same year, he composed many solo songs, including "Sinipiika" (Bluemaids), Ave Maria, "Kohtalo" (Fate), "Jääkukkia" (Ice Flowers) and Yö nummella/Heidezauber (Night in the meadows).



The composer's muse for years was the soprano Alma Silventoinen, who premiered several of his vocal works and who later became his wife. In 1912-1914 and 1914-1915, Toivo Kuula worked as assistant conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra together with his good friend, composer and conductor Leevi Madetoja. When the position of assistant conductor in Helsinki was abolished, Kuula worked as a freelance artist and toured Finland giving concerts together with his wife, soprano Alma Kuula (née Silventoinen). March 1913 Kuula and Silventoinen made a concert trip to St. Petersburg. In the same spring, Toivo Kuula made a study trip to Paris, and the divorce from Silja Kuula became final. Toivo Kuula married With Alma Siventoinen in April 1914 at Skinnarilanhovi in Lappeenranta.

ON 8 DECEMBER 1917, Jean Sibelius's 50th birthday was celebrated in the University of Helsinki Ballroom. At the event, Toivo Kuula gave a speech to the master he admired, excerpts from which are enclosed: "When we got to hear your brilliant compositions, we learned to notice what a Finnish tune is and how [...] (it) found heart and depth so impossibly abundant when it had been exploited by the master's hand. [...] We also feel that we are only skiing the trail which you have opened, and our admiration for you, the brave man who first skied into the raven, is unspeakable. I therefore ask you, on behalf of the younger generation of composers, to express to you our gratitude and boundless admiration."

IN 1915 KUULA COMPOSED CHORAL MUSIC AND SKETCHED THE CHURCH MUSIC WORK Stabat Mater.

In the same year, the solo songs "Tule armaani" (Come, my beloved) and "Paimenet" (The Shepherds) saw the light of day. In 1916, Toivo Kuula was invited to be the conductor of the Vyborg Music Friends Orchestra. He was also a founding member of the Association of Finnish Composers, founded in 1917. In 1917, Toivo and Alma Kuula had a daughter, Sinikka, who later became a well-known piano artist.

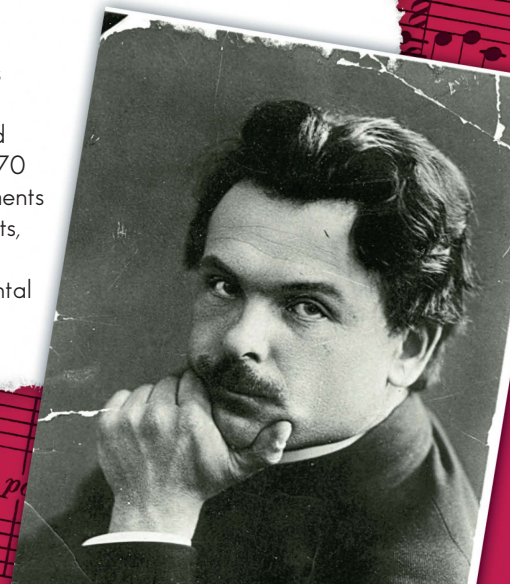
TOIVO KUULA PLANNED TO COMPOSE THE OPERA LEMMINKÄINEN, THE ORCHESTRAL SUITE

Aleksis Kivi's poem "Sydämeni laulu" (Song of My Heart) and ballet music for Juhani Aho's play "Karhunpeijaiset". The plans were not realised when Kuula experienced his fate on May Day Eve 1918 in Vyborg. Under unclear circumstances, he was shot in the head at a party that turned into a raucous gathering of highly intoxicated participants that included civilians and soldiers. Toivo Kuula died of his injuries on 18 May 1918 at the Vyborg Provincial Hospital at the age of only 34. Toivo Kuula is buried in Helsinki, at Hietaniemi Cemetery.

ON THE DAY OF TOIVO KUULA'S FUNERAL ON 28 MAY, Sibelius wrote in his diary: "I dag nedbäddas vännen Toivo Kuula i den kalla jorden. Huru oändligt sorgligt är ej denna konstnärslott! Mycket arbete, begåfning och mod - lifsmöd - och sedan allt." (Today we cover friend Toivo Kuula into the cold bosom of the earth. How immensely sad is this fate of an artist. A lot of work, talent and courage—the courage of life—and then it's all over.)

AS A COMPOSER, TOIVO KUULA REPRESENTED National Romanticism in his early works, but later also took elements from French impressionistic music.

Toivo Kuula was particularly significant as a vocal composer. Both his solo and choral singing are still popular. Toivo Kuula's vocal output includes more than 70 choral works and arrangements, about 30 solo songs, 12 folk song arrangements for voice and piano, as well as five major works for orchestra and choir/soloists, three orchestral vocal compositions and two orchestral vocal arrangements. In addition, he has composed violin and piano pieces, orchestral music, incidental music, chamber music and arrangements for various ensembles.



Laulu

Piano

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Snk.
Rmk

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cresc. poco a p

Andante semplice

Laulu

Piano



Toivo Kuula's complete list of works can be found e.g. Teosto's website at:

<http://www.teosto.fi/kuula/kuula.html>

Sources:

Koivisto, Juhani: *Tuijotin tulehen*

(I stared at the fire for a long time - The short and passionate life of Toivo Kuula). Helsinki: WSOY 2008

Sinikka Kuula-Marttinen's writings about her father
<https://suku.genealogia.fi/archive/index.php/t-2729.html>

YLE article: *Blue Song - Stories of the Finnish Arts*

Kuula Seura website

National Library.fi online exhibition about Kuula

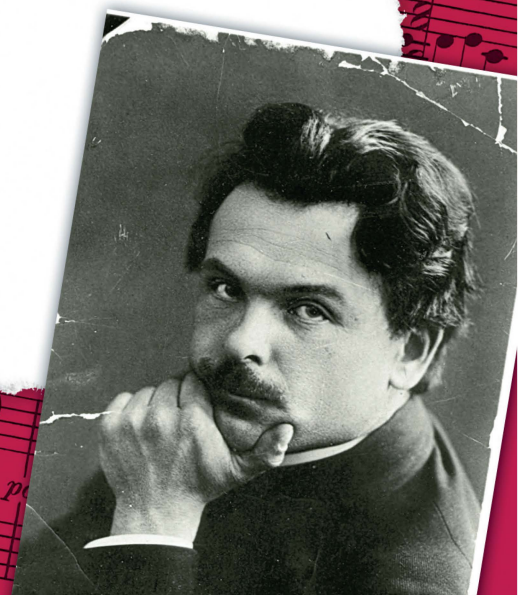
Sibelius Academy's Music History Online website

Toivo Kuula's compositions on Teosto's website

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