**FOLK WIND INSTRUMENTS**

**The archaic wind instruments in the area covering Ingria, current Finland and Russian Karelia were flutes, trumpets, clarinets, oboes and other wind instruments. They were used for many practical purposes of communication by many occupational groups from the Stone Age up to 1950’s. After the long period of herding the sounds of these distinctive instruments got almost silent. Nowadays the tradition is kept alive by younger generations and know-how is shared in various ways. There is a lot to be done in order to get the intentions of visionaries to come true. Creative cooperation is the way to get the potential of these original and empowering musical instruments to available for diverse people.**

A folk music instrument is any instrument used for certain functions and in certain environments outside the church and beyond the public and private musical milieus of the bourgeoisie.

The skills for building archaic wind instruments were maintained and shared in families and by herders, travelling agricultural and forestry workers, musicians, peddlers and settlers. Wind instruments weren’t a part of everybody’s life; there have always been those who were more interested in and had talent for playing the instruments. Some played them in the evenings and some needed them to fulfill their beliefs. Others would stop working to listen and enjoy distant sounds of horns.

By the end of the 19th century people were slowly getting wealthier with the help of improved tools, machines and industrialization. In Western Finland, more and more people became ashamed of old things and traditions and forgot them. Many musical instruments were abandoned and replaced by new ones. In time, modern influences reached also the rural areas.

Therefore, by the beginning of the 1930’s, there were only a few old and odd fellows, kind of outsider artists, who still played pipes and horns. The rich culture of self-made wind instruments came extremely close to dying out. A former herder, Teppo Repo built Ingrian herding instruments, and made them and himself known by performing in various events and broadcasts, mostly his own compositions and improvisations, from 1930’s to 1960’s. Without the inspiring immigrant and his active manager Armas Otto Väisänen the great tradition could now be history. The heritage left by Teppo Repo has been received with respect and enthusiasm by Finnish folk musicians, instrument builders and researchers. Still in the 2000-tale Repo’s repertoire and flutes have been played several times in the halls of Uniarts Helsinki’s Sibelius Academy, which is one of the largest music academies in Europe.

**Types and materials of folk instruments**

There are only a few basic types of traditional wind instruments. Most of them, such as flutes, trumpets, clarinets and oboes produce sound primarily by causing a body of air to vibrate in a tube or a vessel. Another way to produce sound is to get a reed vibrate in a frame, for example by blowing to a grass between thumbs. Most of the over 100 models of folk wind instruments now known are local variations of these basic types.

The instruments, their names and appearances varied depending on the area, skills, preferences and imagination of their builders and available materials. Typical materials were bones, vascular plants, wood and clay. The origin of the bones were quills of game birds, horns of cattle and goat and shin or toe bones of cloven-footed animals. Vascular plants provide a tube without effort. Reed, straw and angelica work well for clarinets. Herders had plenty of fresh wood available; aspen, alder and willow were the softest to carve. The oldest models of wooden trumpets consist of hollowed halves united with hoops made of wood. The melted resin has possibly been used for making the joints air-tight. The horns made of fresh wood were kept in water during nights or when not played to keep them in shape. Ingrian shepherds built flutes of guelder rose (Viburnum opulus, also known as European cranberry bush or cramp bark) because of its soft heartwood. Various flutes were done in the spring of willow and other trees by removing the bark. More durable tubes were done of six-feet high pines by removing outer growth rings by twisting from heartwood. Trumpets of birch bark were the most common, but also alder bark was harvested in mid-summer as long strips.

In Ingria cow horns called trubas were used for calling cattle. A truba has five fingerholes on upper surface and a thumb hole underneath. The body is made of hollowed halves of juniper and the echo funnel is a bull’s horn. The trumpet is tied together with a long strip of birch bark. The bigger horse horn is similar, but without fingerholes. In Turku Castle there is an old wooden cow horn covered with birch bark without fingerholes. With these both cow horns it’s easy to imitate cow moos, and with Ingrian horse horn it’s possible to neigh like a horse.

Our ancestors worldwide have played whistle pipes for thousands of years, but the purpose for doing is mystery. A lot of information has been lost because the area’s acid soil destroys organic material, and due to lack of interest in the traditional folk culture. This is why this presentation can describe the history of the folk wind instruments only in part.

**Some beliefs, occasions and aspects related to the ancient wind instruments**

**1. Animal husbandry: Shepherds**

**1.1. Beliefs and magic**

According to old beliefs, cattle could be harmed on Easter morning, but they could be protected from evil witches by making noise with horns, pipes and other instruments on the roofs of barns and cattle shelters. The first morning and day of pasture season were also very risky times, which demanded many kinds of measures for prevention of the evil and envy. Ancient customs required that people bugle a horn early in the morning in turns in every house: it was believed that the cattle would be protected from the beasts as far as the sound of the horns could be heard.

Some herders played willow pipe, when there were too many clegs making the cattle nervous. It was believed that the sound of a whistle would raise the wind and bring rain, which would take the insects away.

Some whistles were used to call snakes. Old people could forbid children from playing willow flutes saying that it would attract “worms” to the home-yard.

It’s said that members of musically talented herding families were ceremonially initiated to their task. Others wouldn’t even dare to touch their horns.

According to a scientist from Petrozavodsk University, mighty herders in eastern Karelia made deals with the forest elf for the cattle’s protection. The agreement written on a piece of birch bark, was set against the wooden body of a horn and hidden inside the belt of birch bark. This procedure made the horn a magical item, which shouldn’t be touched by anybody else. After the herder had lead the cattle into the forest by playing fast tunes, he could take it easy, because the herd would stay safe, invisible and untouched the whole day. Before the sunset, the herder would sound his horn three times in order to get his cattle back.

  **1.2. In practice**

In Ingria, animal husbandry was one of the main sources of livelihood, which made herders important and respected people. In late 1800’s houses were located close to each other in villages, and one or two herders would take care of the cattle of the whole village. The best fields and meadows were fenced off to protect them from animals. The shepherd and his assistants got accommodation, clothes and food from the houses for one summer at a time. In the autumn there was a party for the herder, who was expected to play music for the villagers. Some skilled shepherds were asked to play at wedding parties, too.

In the spring, the Ingrian herder would build a horn of fresh wood. He would use his horn for herding the cattle, scaring beasts, directing herding dogs from a distance and for communicating with people. Each shepherd had at least one individual melody, which was used for example to wake up the women folk milking the cows. Then the shepherd rounded up the cattle and took them into the forest to eat, avoiding the private fields and meadows, rough places and swamps. The herder would follow the cattle lead by the oldest and wisest cow which had a bell round its neck. In the evening the shepherd again returned the cattle to the women. If the pastures were far away other systems were used.

Centuries ago, cattle were herded by adult men because wild beasts caused a real threat. Most people didn’t dare to go to a forest without a horn. Horns were also used by the villagers to signal the shepherds and to help lost people in finding their way back home. Later on, after effective hunting reduced the number of beasts around human habitation and houses begun being built further away from one another, herding the cattle was left for children, women and the elderly. Sounding the horn still helped to scare the beasts away, maybe give the image that there still was a strong man protecting the cattle.

There is a story about a young shepherd, who was attacked by cattle rustlers. His cattle were stolen and the boy was tied to a tree. However, the thieves hadn’t taken his horn and the boy managed to summon help by blowing his horn. The villagers came, set the boy free, found the thieves and rescued the cattle.

For their pastime, shepherds would make household items like whisks and more musical instruments. When the cattle didn't need any attention, the shepherds would play for their own amusement, relieve their loneliness or boredom, or to express other feelings. Sometimes they sounded their horn to call for help or company from other shepherds, or just to compete whose horn was the loudest.

Sheep, cow and horse herders were valued differently depending on the animal they worked with and on the demands of the work. Ingrian horse and sheep herders had to stay outside during nights with their animals. Their tools included a horn, a knife and a six-meter-long whip braided of leather and horsehair. The herder could make with his whip a loud sound, which was just like a gunshot.

The horse horns and trubas were still used in Ingria in the beginning of the 20th century. The occupation was learned as an apprentice to established shepherds. Children who took care of sheep didn't often have the strength to play horns. They liked to play a flute, which was therefore often called as a shepherd’s flute.

In Finland, agriculture was the main livelihood and the cattle had a supplementary role. It was difficult to get adult men to be herders, because of responsibility for the animals and the harm they possibly caused to farmed land or property. It was also a very lonely occupation. The shepherds mostly worked alone, so they didn’t often get a chance to play music together.

In the late 19th century, farms in Finland were built further apart. Each household took care of their own cattle, and kids and elderly herded few cows in the forest. Their ability to build decent musical instruments in certain tunes was limited and that’s why not so many melodies are left – the instruments lasted only a limited time and the next ones often had a different scale. Many tried hard to place fingerholes in a right way in order to be able to play common tunes, but failed. However, everybody could improvise and let their feelings come out through melodies. The Ingrian tradition was rich, the melodies have been collected and published also in notation for anyone to practice and play.

Regulation for fencing in cattle on pastures was provided in the 1860’s and it gradually ended the period of shepherds and herders, which had started during the Bronze Age.

 **2. Wind instruments and other sources of livelihood**

When a tar grave – a tar-burning pit – was lit, the grave master, a person responsible for the tar-burning, it was informed to others with a pit horn. It was also a signal for the young people to gather to party. Every tar grave in a village used to be lit the same evening, which meant you could hear music from many directions. Also the horns were sounded if the fire got out of control.

Housewives would call workers from fields to eat by bugling a cow’s horn.

Vepsian boys and men used to play wooden Luttu-clarinets when walking to harvest potatoes. The purpose was to protect against evil.

Fishermen signaled each other with horns, and also fog horns were used. The Swedish-speaking fishermen and others in the west coast archipelago built of reed ninny pipes, which are like kazoos. A mirliton build of reed can also be called a humming pipe, because of the playing method.

Hunters have used various pipes and horns to attract fowl, wild ducks, swans and foxes. A tiny willow pipe has been widely used since the Neolithic times, in winter it was built of spruce. Nowadays hunters buy pipes made of metal or plastic.

Forestry workers built various musical instruments of the materials available; a clarinet could be made of a cigarette holder and a piece of juniper or birch bark.

In the Middle Ages, a firewatcher played his horn every hour as a signal that no fire had broken in the wood-built town. In Ostrobothnia, the firefighters played hoop trumpets to get help in putting out fires.

It is said that the ancient Livonians used to have guards with horns up in trees on hills during times of war and danger. These guards would signal information about the movements of the enemy with their horns.

North from Russian Karelia the ancient Bjarms used loud horns as burglar alarm when they informed that Vikings had attacked for a raid.

**3. Communality and spirituality**

Big ox horns were used as fire alarm bugles or to call villagers together. Ox horns and buck horns were also used as corpse horns for calling people to come and sing and pray at the house where somebody had died.

Young people used trumpets of birch bark to call each other to gatherings.

It is said, that at ancient pagan seremony (sacrificials), the men played horns as the priests prayed in a grove.

Middle Winter’s horn was a pagan habit adopted from Germans by people living in western Finland in the early Middle Ages. The horn would be played every quarter in the darkest time in December.

A religious sect in Ostrobothnia, western Finland, reminded their congregation to pray by playing a particular prayer horn. Between the time of the first Advent and the Candlemas on February 2nd, the reminder of prayer was given daily, otherwise weekly. The prayer trumpets, adopted from the crusaders or Hanseatic-traders, were used from the 13th century to the 19th century, after which the heritage collectors found them.

In south-west Finland, stolen church bells were replaced by prayer horns.

In the land of thousands of lakes, people used to row a long church boat to get to church, and they used to sound a horn when arriving to the shore.

A clarinet-model adapted from a 13th century crusader or Hanseatic trader horn, was used at a battlefront in the last war between Finland and Soviet Union to cheer up the troops.

It’s known that a boy tried to charm the neighbor girl by playing his mänkeri-clarinet in the evening.

Old men used to play ox horns in the evenings on the roofs of agricultural buildings. Sometimes people played provocative songs to tease or to irritate others.

Players of birch bark trumpets and wooden horns were proudly being presented as signs of national spirit alongside kantele players and poetry singers in the Helsinki Song Festivals and other similar big cultural events in the beginning of the 20th century,

**4. Children's play and learning**

In olden days, children had to help with different household and farm work. The adults would make for them various whistles of materials available in order to keep them entertained when not working. For example straw pipes were made during rye harvest. After each bed, the children got to rest from raking while the men sharpened their scythes or sickles and might make tiny clarinets for the children. Many tasks on farms were tedious, like keeping an eye on a kiln. To pass the time, a father might teach his children to make and play straw pipes.

In the beginning of 19th century, schoolboys used to make several straw pipes for each in Saturday evenings in August. Then they hided themselves among a long rye field. When the girls walked by to dance, the boys would stay hidden and make the most awful discords by playing as many pipes as possible at the same time. The scared girls would run away skirts swaying.

Sometimes an adult made many straw or willow pipes of different length. When they were tuned and each kid got one pipe, they could together, in turns, play simple songs. Another way to apply the same idea was to set few stalks of dandelion next to each other between a folded cardboard. When this instrument was flattened simultaneously when blowing to each skaft, it might have sounded in tune, or not.

In summer there are many plants, which children of many generations certainly have made music with, because they are totally or almost ready to be played easily. In addition to single or set of dandelion oboes, they might have played flowers of a hemp-nettle. Holding a grass between thumbs is an ancient instrument, which is still known in most parts of Finland. Very few can nowadays play a leaf of a plantago major or lilac, but some old people remember having done that in their youth. Maybe the same people have known that also the leaves of water and cow lily could be played in the same way. Pods of Siberian pea tree become small oboes, when the tips and seeds are removed. It’s easy and fast to build many kinds of clarinets and oboes of cow parsley and angelica. It’s important to learn the plants well, to distinguish them from poisonous plants which look almost the same.

In the olden times, children learned to use their knives early on to build various items such as musical instruments. Making of willow pipes was something typically taught from father. Otherwise making of new instruments were learned from peers and anybody who had know-how to share. With self-made pipes, children played and compared their skills with each other. Children gathered quickly around visiting musicians, asking them to play and show their instruments.

In Eastertide, children played loud Easter pipes made of reed, with an echo funnel of animal horn or birch bark. A mother who had spent hours next to the hot stove might shout:” Ya all get out for making such racket! (Mänkeä ulos siit mölisemäst!)

It was a common practice to recite a spell or a poem when building a pipe of willow, straw or reed. There were various spells, but it always was about the builder commanding the whistle to sound. The spells coaxed the pipes by promising all the good that would happen if the pipe came out good, and threatened with all the bad that would happen if it came out bad. While you said the spell, you were supposed to roll the pipe between your palms.

In 1950’s, children made karutsa pipes by stretching and tying up a shred of inner tube of wheel tyre on the other end of spool of thred. According to a reminiscence, in Ostrobothnia county in the Western Finland children played these pipes on the way to school and back. That’s how the neighborhood around a lake knew, where the kids walked.

**5. Souvenirs for tourists**

Authenticity and nature are a part of the Finnish image. That’s the feeling that the people are trying to recreate with the souvenirs sold to the tourists. Sometimes the producers or manufacturers are neglectful: they want to earn more by lowering the quality of the product. They might think that a souvenir horn doesn’t have to sound nice, an authentic material and shape and any noise are enough. Durability might not be a priority either. Playing a birch bark horn built for tourists can give a false and negative impression of traditional pipes and horns. Instruments typically sold to tourists include also various types of one or two-tone whistles. A piston whistle gives a sliding sound. Earlier these whistles were made of natural materials, but nowadays that’ not always the case.

Despite the degradation, preserving heritage in the present can motivate individuals to contribute, increasing the respect and power of tradition and nature. Taking time to learn to build and play ancient wind instruments is a way to inspire oneself and share the astonishing sounds and feelings of ancient music. Traditions are living when people use them to fulfill their diverse needs. In the materialistic culture, meaning of life is more and more being questioned. As the search goes on, I propose that you give yourself the opportunity to learn about the treasures growing around us. Co-creating with nature harmonic and vibrant instruments for making music, for expressing feelings and sharing, appeals to me. There is interesting work available for others, too. Can you hear the call of becoming a bearer and practitioner of tradition in your own way?