

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Combined, Sibelius Festival Musicians Have Practiced for More Than 100 Years

HANCOCK – Collectively, the five musicians featured in this year’s Sibelius Academy Music Festival have been studying music for at least 100 years.

Music and performing arts education, from pre-school to postgraduate, is an integral part of Finland’s exceptional public education system. For the most accomplished student-musicians in Finland (and for musicians around the world) the Sibelius Academy is the destination for the best and brightest. The musicians featured in this year Sibelius Festival are among these gifted students of music.

Melis Jaatinen and Maija Väisänen perform Wednesday, July 30, 7:30 p.m., at the Finnish American Heritage Center, Hancock, Mich.

Mezzosoprano Melis Jaatinen (b. 1982), Vantaa, Finland, studied voice and musicology at the Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo, and now studies voice at the Sibelius Academy. She has, in recent years, sung in the Bach *b-minor Mass*, in a Schumann concert series, and at the Savonlinna Opera Festival. Ms. Jaatinen made her opera debut in 2005, singing Cherubino in *La Nozze di Figaro* for the Pori (Finland) Opera, and performing the role of Dido in *Dido & Aeneas* at the Sibelius Academy. Jaatinen sang the bridesmaid in Weber’s *Freischütz* and Ulla in *Isän tyttö (Daddy’s Girl)* by Olli Kortekangas for the Finnish National Opera in the 2007-2008 season. Her talent has been recognized at the Timo Mustakallio, the Lappeenranta Vocal Competition, and in Finnish Broadcasting Company’s competitions. Jaatinen’s vocal repertoire includes songs by composers including Fauré, Grieg, Ravel, Schumann, and Sibelius.

Jaatinen’s accompanist, pianist Maija Väisänen, (b. 1981) Oulu, Finland, began playing the piano at age six. Since 2002, she has been studying at the Sibelius Academy and in Berlin. Ms. Väisänen has performed at Finnish festivals such as the Nauvo Chamber Music Festival, Aboa Musica Festival, and in 2005 was named the Young Artist of the Year at the Oulu Music Festival. She has appeared as a soloist of the Turku Filharmonic Orchestra and the North Carelia Polytechnic Orchestra, and performed concerts in Finland and Germany as a solo pianist and a chamber musician. In 2007, Ms. Väisänen received Second Prize in the International Concours Grieg Piano Duo Competition in Oslo, and a Special Prize for Outstanding Performance of Finnish Music in the International Maj Lind Piano Competition in Helsinki.

Joonas Ahonen performs Thursday, July 31, 7:30 p.m., at the Finnish American Heritage Center, Hancock.

Pianist Joonas Ahonen (b. 1984) began taking piano lessons when he was five. He has been studying at the Sibelius Academy and at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague. Audiences first became widely aware of Ahonen following his success in the National Jyväskylä Piano Competition in 2001 and the International Maj Lind Piano Competition in 2002. In Finland, he has performed at the Helsinki Festival and with the Finnish National Opera. In 2003, Mr. Ahonen was appointed Young Musician of the Year by the Lux Musicae Festival in Siuntio, Finland. He has appeared with the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Finnish Chamber Orchestra, and the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra. Ahonen has worked with the eminent Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina in Santander, Spain. He has premiered two piano concertos composed for him, and regularly records for the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE).

Kaisa Koivula and Jukka Ojala will perform Friday, August 1, 7:30 p.m., at St. Peter's by the Sea Church, Eagle Harbor, Mich., and during a public reception at the Vertin Gallery, Calumet, on Saturday, August 2, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Clarinetist Kaisa Koivula is preparing for her Diploma at the Sibelius Academy. She is a member of Soli Amici, a chamber music group that has been studying and performing in Italy, France, and the U.S. In 2005 Soli Amici appeared the 7th Annual Sibelius Academy Music Festival. Ms. Koivula has worked as an assistant in the Radio Symphony Orchestra, Helsinki, and with the Tampere Philharmonias. She has played productions of Janacek's *Cunning Vixen*, Puccini's *Tosca*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *My Fair Lady*. Ms. Koivula teaches clarinet, and is an active member of the Helsinki Klezmer Kapelye. She has participated in Yiddish music master classes in St. Petersburg, Russia, and Weimar, Germany.

Accordionist Jukka Ojala began accordion lessons at the age of seven in Kouvola in southeastern Finland. In 2000, he began his studies at the Sibelius Academy. In addition to performing a solo repertoire, Mr. Ojala is an experienced chamber musician. He has performed with the Avanti! Chamber Orchestra and the Finnish National Opera orchestra. This April, Ojala gave his accordion Diploma Concert, receiving the highest honors. Just this summer, he completed a Master of Music at the Sibelius Academy of Music.

For concert ticket information visit www.finlandia.edu or contact Karen Johnson at 906-487-7348.