

Sinfonia Concertante

Mehetapja Meeli Unistus; (*Meeli; the Husband Killer's Dream*)

This work is dedicated to, and inspired by, Alex Pauk and the musicians of the Esprit Orchestra.

My interest in Estonian folk idioms has inspired many of my works in recent years, and the myth/epic poem/Runo-song of the Husband Killer is of particular interest to me. On her wedding night Meeli, a young bride, apparently for no reason murders her husband. The next day, she emerges from her bridal chamber and is confronted by the townsfolk. She runs into the forest and asks the birch, poplar and elm trees, as well as the rocks and earth, for forgiveness. They turn her away. She then wanders into a bog and dies. The source text only relates the events of the narrative, and does not allude to the reasons for her actions. I have always been a little bit haunted by this: what was she thinking?

Once I embarked on composing the work, it became a type of concerto for orchestra. In a very basic way, Sinfonia Concertante follows the narrative of the myth. The violence of the opening, alluding to the wedding-night murder, is followed by Meeli's encounters with the natural world: her attempt to solicit forgiveness and find solace. Her relationship with the natural world takes the form of individual instruments or small instrumental groups engaging in a dialogue. Eventually, the bog accepts her, and her last thoughts are of childhood.

Excerpt:

Meeli begged her knife,
"Oh, my dear knife,
Will you eat what I feed you?
Will you drink what I'll give you?
Will you drink the blood of the heart?
Will you eat flesh of the liver?"

Meeli killed her young husband,
Slew her new spouse.

After the deed was done, Meeli ran to the forest.
The aspen and birch and stones refused her.

But the bog took her in:
"Climb onto my back,
Step on my ridge,
Crawl into my waves."

Mommy, dear mommy
Why did you leave me to be blown by the winds,
Why did you leave me to be beaten by the rain?