



Finlandia Foundation - Boston

December 2020 Newsletter

Website: <https://finlandiafoundationboston.com>

December 2020

Message from Our President Sirkku Konttinen

Happy Holidays to All!

Decorated Christmas trees are a classic tradition this time of the year. When I was growing up in Finland, we used to have real candles on our Christmas tree. As electric lights started to become popular, I found them unappealing. So, when I moved to Boston thirty years ago, I went to a candle shop at Faneuil Hall to buy real candles for our tree. The box said: "Only for decorative purposes, do not light these candles". I still did and some of the needles on the tree caught fire. This event ended that tradition. Since then, I have learned to enjoy all decorations that bring us light during this darkest time of the year.

The scent of cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, and cloves always fill my house during this holiday season, as does the sweet smell of rutabaga and other casseroles slowly baking in the oven. Christmas music is also a treasured part of our holidays, and 'White Christmas' by Elvis, Pavarotti's 'Ave Maria', Karita Mattila singing 'Jouluyö', and Vesa-Matti Loiri's 'Heinillä härkien kaukalon' are among my favorite Christmas songs.

The celebration of Finland's Independence Day on December 6th was different this year due to the pandemic. The traditional reception at the Presidential Palace was cancelled and most of the festivities were held virtually online. Nevertheless, the program was filled with beautiful musical performances, interviews, greetings, and displays of Finnish photographs. The Finlandia Hymn by Sibelius was played and the Finnish flag was proudly flown.

Books are some of my favorite presents to give and receive. We are planning a special book event for the spring. Other planned programs include documentaries of architect Alvar Aalto and of painter Helene Schjerfbeck.

Many of us received our basic education in Finland. We took the quality of the education for granted and did not compare it to the education anywhere else. However, today, the Finnish education system is often cited as being one of the best in the world. In January, Finlandia Foundation National together with the Finnish Embassy of Washington DC is organizing a two-part webinar to talk about education and studying in Finland.

In January we will also have our Annual Membership Meeting. Following the business part of the meeting, we will watch a documentary film featuring Roy Helander. Roy, who is a beloved member of FFB and a cultural treasure of New England.

Given the latest news about Covid-19 vaccines, I am cautiously optimistic that next year will allow us to resume our in-person meetings at the Scandinavian Cultural Center in Newton. In the meantime, I wish you all a Peaceful Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year, 2021!

-Sirkku Konttinen, FFB President

Upcoming January 2021 Events



January Webinar on Education in Finland

Mark your calendar for a two-part webinar on education and studying in Finland to be broadcast at 4-5 p.m. EST on two Tuesdays January 12 and 19. The webinars are conducted by the Embassy of Finland in the U.S. and Finlandia Foundation National (FFN). Find details at FFN social media and at <https://FinlandiaFoundation.org>.

Annual Membership Meeting on January 24

We invite everyone to attend our annual membership meeting via Zoom at 3 p.m. on Sunday, January 24. The business part of the meeting will include reports by the President, Treasurer, and Scholarship Committee. This will be followed by the election of new officers for 2021-22. The Nominating Committee will put forward the following slate of candidates:

- Treasurer: Tarja Vuolteenaho (Weston, MA)
- Board Member: Greta Ljung (Lexington, MA)
- Nominating Committee: Tuija Vainio (Boston, MA),
- Liisa Chanoff (Somerville, MA), and Nathalie Forssell (Sudbury, MA)

All other members elected to the Board in January 2020 will continue to serve through 2021.

After the business meeting, we will watch a film by Kristin Ojaniemi titled 'Roy – A Finnish Boy Who Caught the Bug'. The film features Roy Helander who is a long-time member of FFB and several other Finnish organizations in our area. About releasing the film, Ojaniemi wrote: 'Roy Helander has led a life devoted to Finnish-American history and culture, a passion he shared most frequently on stage. Enjoy the journey through nine decades as Roy shares anecdotes about his time on- and off-stage, and back-stage, as well as numerous other aspects of his life immersed in Finnish-American activity'.

Earlier this fall, Roy was also honored with the American Suometar Award from the Finnish American Heritage Center (FAHC) in Hancock, Michigan. Please join us to congratulate Roy and learn more about his journey. To receive a Zoom link for the event, please send us an email at finlandiaboston@gmail.com.

Watch New Videos on FFN Website

Finlandia Foundation National (FFN) has conducted video interviews related to Finland and Finnish culture over the past several months as their usual program offerings have been cancelled or postponed. Please be sure to watch the following two video interviews that are now available on the FFN website <https://finlandiafoundation.org/>:

Interview with Mikko Nissinen, Artistic Director of the Boston Ballet. This is a fascinating interview with Mikko, where he talks about how he as a boy became interested in dance, his rapid success as an internationally acclaimed dancer, choreographer and creative director, and how the world of ballet is changing. He also reveals what he does in his free time, how his Finnishness guides his life and his work, and his advice to "Take the best and leave the rest." It's an interesting and entertaining 45-minute program that provides insights into the world of dance and so much more. Please do not miss it!

Interview with Karl Marlantes on his 2019 novel 'Deep River'. This book details the lives of three siblings, Ilmari, Aino, and Matti Koski, who traveled from Finland to the Pacific Northwest during the logging boom more than a century ago. They fled Finland for the United States in the early 1900's as poverty and Russia's rule of Finland continued to take its toll on families. Layered with fascinating historical detail, the book draws you into the world of hard-working immigrants as they build their lives in a new country. In the video, the author reads passages from the book and shows historical photos that illustrate the hard lives and the difficult working conditions in a logging community at the time. Please watch the interview and please consider the book for your holiday shopping.

Finally, **FFN and musician Eeppi Ursin**, a native of Finland, bring you Christmas greetings in the video: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOmt1HUZUwFyDaV5CzRlpQA?view_as=subscriber.

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Books and DVD's Available for Loan

If you missed the 'Sirikka' video presentation in November, you can borrow a copy of the DVD from our treasurer Anne-Mari Paster. Other material available for loan is shown in the photo below. If Interested, please contact Anne-Mari at ampaster@rcn.com.



Membership: Please Renew or Join Us!

It is now time to renew your membership in Finlandia Foundation – Boston for 2021. The annual membership fee, which runs from January through December, is \$30 for families, \$20 for individuals, and \$10 for seniors. To renew your membership or to join us, please send a check to:

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Tax-deductible donations are also welcome. We thank you for your support and look forward to seeing you soon!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

