



Finlandia Foundation – Boston

March 2022 Newsletter

Website: <https://finlandiafoundationboston.com>

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Message from Our President Tuija Vainio

Dear members,

As I write this, there is great concern about the developments in Europe. Russia has started a war against its neighbor Ukraine. We still remember that the Soviet Union launched an attack on Finland on November 30, 1939 with very similar political rhetoric, demanding areas of an independent country for its “security”. Most historians agree that the Soviet Union planned to conquer the whole of Finland and, only because of stronger than expected resistance of the Finnish military, they did not succeed. The trauma of the war goes deep and many of our families lost a loved one during the Winter War or Continuation War. My grandmother lost two brothers and the grief of that loss followed her the rest of her long life. Yet, she never doubted that Finland’s fight for its independence was the right thing to do. As Ukraine is now fighting for its freedom, its leaders and citizens have shown incredible bravery. We are all following the invasion in the news and it is heartbreaking.

In the darkest times, it’s important to remember there is good in the world also. I try to find moments of joy where ever I can. I think back at February and how much fun I’ve had skiing and skating and how proud I was of our athletes competing in the Beijing Olympics. In February we also celebrated some important cultural figures. February 3 is now Alvar Aalto Day celebrating Finnish Architecture. On February 5, we ate “Runebergin torttu” honoring the birthday of Johan Ludwig Runeberg who wrote the words to Finland’s National Anthem, Maamme. And February 28 was Kalevala Day which celebrates the epic by Elias Lönnrot and is also the Day of Finnish Culture.

The National Sauna week just ended. I have enjoyed panel discussions on what makes an authentic Finnish Sauna and lectures on the health benefits of regular sauna bathing. Our own mobile sauna event was held at Scandinavian Cultural Center on January 26, the day after a major snowstorm. It was a fabulous day, with wonderful steam and birch aroma in the sauna, followed by grilled food and drinks. The SISU award went to a person who after the sauna braved the elements and jumped into an outdoor tub filled with ice water! The photos below were taken by Vesa Törmänen, who took part in the fun.

I wish you joy as we move towards warmer weather, spring flowers, and new opportunities to interact.

-Tuija Vainio, FFB President



Meet Eeppi Ursin, 2022 FFN Performer of the Year Via Zoom at 3 p.m. on Saturday, March 26



Eeppi Ursin is a New York -based award-winning singer, songwriter, and pianist originally from Finland. Ursin is known for her angelic-strong voice and exceptional skill set ranging from top-class performances to writing original music. Her recordings and performances as a singer vary from pop, jazz, dance, a cappella, and children’s music. She has captivated audiences all around the world performing as a vocal soloist at prestigious venues with acclaimed artists such as trumpeter Leroy Jones and Spirit of New Orleans, Vocal Ensemble Club For Five, and UMO Jazz Orchestra, to name just a few. Eeppi Ursin also collaborates with renowned theatres and modern opera ensembles as a composer and arranger.

In 2022, Eeppi Ursin is chosen as Performer of the year by Finlandia Foundation National – a nomination that sends her performing at venues all around the United States. In 2014 she was chosen to perform as the soloist at the President’s Independence Day Reception in Finland. In 2001 she won the 1st prize in the Lady Summertime international jazz vocal competition.

Please mark your calendars for this opportunity to meet Eeppi and see her perform. A Zoom link will be mailed to you a few days before the event.

In Memoriam: Jaakko Kuusisto, 1974- 2022

We are sad to report that Finnish violinist, composer, and conductor Jaakko Kuusisto has passed away. Diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2020, he succumbed to the disease in Oulu on February 23, 2022. We remember Jaakko from the three-part series ICE, or JÄÄ in Finnish, that was brought to us by Finlandia Foundation National last November. ICE was first an award-winning novel by Ulla-Lena Lundberg before becoming an opera composed by Jaakko Kuusisto and performed by the Finnish National Opera. Jaakko Kuusisto came from a musical family: his father was opera composer Ilkka Kuusisto, his brother musician Pekka Kuusisto, and his grandfather composer and choirmaster Taneli Kuusisto.

Remebering Finnish Feminist: Minna Canth (1844-1897)



On March 19, Finland will celebrate gender equality and the legacy of playwright, author and social activist Minna Canth. She was a controversial figure in Finland during her time. Her work explored women's life back in the late 19th century, questioning the patriarchal norms that limited women's opportunities. She tackled difficult issues such as poverty, class, unhappy marriages, and infanticide.

Minna Canth was widowed in 1879 and while pursuing her literary career she continued to manage not only her household and family of seven but also the draper's shop which she had taken over from her father. Call that multitasking and perseverance!

Her works often caused quite a sensation, particularly in conservative circles. The play "The Workers Wife" (1885) is considered one of her most iconic pieces of work. It tells the story of Johanna, a submissive wife whose alcoholic husband controls her finances. "Children of Misfortune" (1888) sympathetically depicts the social hardships of the unemployed. "Anna Liisa" (1895) tells the story of a teenager who becomes pregnant outside of marriage and is driven to kill her own child.

Minna's life's work has greatly influenced Finland's development as a pioneer in equality. Of course, the work still continues but her defense of human rights and her persistence on freedom and justice are always topical. Some could argue it is more topical now than ever with recent events on several continents where ruling majorities are abusing human, gender, and social rights. So even today, we can look up to this pioneer and perhaps even refresh our knowledge of her writings. Great minds never go out of style.

Newsletter Co-Editors: Greta Ljung, Teresia Moller, and Karoliina Muukari
Website: <https://finlandiafoundationboston.com/>
Email: finlandiaboston@gmail.com

Scholarship Opportunities

Finlandia Foundation – Boston is pleased to make the following scholarship available for the 2022-23 academic year:

1. Savele Syrjala Journalism Scholarship
For a student of Finnish-American heritage studying in the field of Journalism or Communications.
2. Aina Swan Cutler Music Scholarship
For a student of Finnish-American heritage studying music (excluding hard rock and electronic music).

For an application form or for further information, please contact: Edith Syrjala Eash, 80 Potter Pond, Lexington, MA 02421; syrjalaeash@gmail.com. The application form is also available online at the Finlandia Foundation – Boston website.

The application deadline is May 31, 2022 for both scholarships!

Membership: Please Renew or Join Us Now!

It is now time to renew your membership or to become a new member of Finlandia Foundation – Boston for 2022. The annual membership fee, which runs from January through December, is \$20 for individuals, \$30 for families, and \$10 for seniors. You can pay the fee or make a donation using **PayPal** by going to our website at <https://finlandiafoundationboston.com/membership/>.

Alternatively, you can also send a check to:

FINLANDIA FOUNDATION – BOSTON
P.O. BOX 308

Arlington, MA 02474-0007

Finns gather at Turun Tuomiokirkko (Åbo Domkyrka) to show solidarity with Ukraine



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P. O. BOX 308
ARLINGTON, MA 02474-0007