Charting the Waters: Navigating Finnish American Folk Musics and Identity in the Pacific Northwest

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Arts and culture are deeply interconnected and interwoven into social identity formation and feelings of belonging, and into our existence on this earth. I am interested in research due to curiosity, the joy that comes from shared connection, the liberation that comes to speak about topics that feel difficult and powerful, and speaking things out loud or writing them down to give meaning and value and clarity. I see this research as an open process of continued questioning and reflection.

In my text and trains of thought as an artistic researcher, I want to promote awareness, inclusivity, and instill curiosity and pride in identities, where connected to cultural heritage, and/or found communities. We contain at this point, multiplicities, many identities all at once.

I want to dedicate this thesis in the memory of my grandmother Kristina Berney, and grandfather Bruce Berney.

Abstract in English:

I will explore the multiplicity and definitions of identity formation in generational Nordic Diaspora immigrant communities, and people connected to those communities. This will be explored through the lens of folk musics, and additional practices of creativity within cultural heritage in conjunction with Finnish American culture and identity formation in the Pacific Northwest (PNW)[1] region of the United States. My main research question explores: How does folk music making play a role in Finnish North American and Nordic diaspora identity formation in the Pacific Northwest of the United States? In order to understand the relevance of Finnish North American identity in the Pacific Northwest in 2025, I use my own positionality as a Finnish North American musician living in Finland as an example. I also use autoethnography to answer my research question from a perspective of self-reflection. Pairing this with ethnography, I interview four people living in the PNW who engage with Finnish and Nordic American culture with musical practices connected to Finland and/or Norway and how this impacts their connection with understanding their identities and relationship to cultural heritage. I imagine this research like a network, a web, a tree branching out from its roots and trunk. My results show that making space to dive into Finnish cultural heritage(s), whether through family or through adjacent community, and connecting with them through artistic practices such as music can help provide meaning, create community and senses/facets of identity. I argue that the space for this creativity music making is just as important as the music or artistic practice itself being created. This allows endangered traditions to change and continue with modern times, understand the connection of different times and elements, and interface with imagined realities as a powerful tool for creation.

The results of my thesis can be used for example to examine meaningful ways to develop and understand how identity(s), community building, and creative music making as well as place and space are useful in a diasporic cultural heritage context. Additionally, this thesis gives awareness to ever-shifting and complex dynamics and perspectives of Finnish and Nordic diaspora culture in the United States.

[1] The Pacific Northwest is a coastal region on the West Coast of North America encompassing British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. In this case people I interview, as well as my own background, are subsequently focusing on Astoria, Oregon on the border with Washington, the greater Portland area, and Northern California.

Abstrakti suomeksi:

Tutkin identiteetin rakentumista ja moninaisuutta pohjoismaalaisten siirtolaisten diasporayhteisöissä, ja ihmisiä joilla on niihin yhteyttä. Tutkin tätä tarkastelemalla kansanmusiikin ja muun kulttuuriperintöön liittyvän luovan toiminnan merkitystä amerikansuomalaisessa kulttuurissa ja identiteetin rakentumisessa Pacific Northwestin (PNW)[2] alueella Yhdysvalloissa. Päätutkimuskysymykseni on: Millainen rooli kansanmusisoimisella (tai kansanmusiikilla ja musisoimisella) on pohjoisamerikansuomalaisissa että pohjoismaisen siirtolaisdiasporan identiteetin rakentamisessa Pacific Northwestin (PNW) alueella Yhdysvalloissa. Ymmärtääkseni amerikansuomalaisen identiteetin ajankohtaisuutta Pohjois-Amerikassa vuonna 2025, hyödynnän omaa positiotani Suomessa asuvana amerikansuomalaisena. Käytän autoetnografiaa vastatessani tutkimuskysymykseen omaa kokemustani reflektoiden. Tutkimuksessani hyödynnän myös etnografiaa, ja haastattelen neljää PNW:ssä asuvaa henkilöä, joilla on musiikillinen yhteys ja miten tämä aiheuttaa niiden yhteyttä identiteetteihin sekä kulttuureihin ymmärtämiseen. Käsitän tutkimukseni verkkona, verkostona, tai puuna, joka kasvaa sekä juurista että oksista.

Tutkimusten tulosten mukaan tila suomalaiseen kulttuuriperintöön syventymiselle – joko perheen tai muun yhteisön avulla – yhdistettynä taiteelliseen/musiikilliseen toimintaan voi luoda merkityksen tunteita, yhteisöllisyyttä ja vahvistaa kokemusta identiteetistä.

Väitän, että tällaisen tilan tekeminen luovuudelle on toiminnalle on yhtä tärkeää kuin luotava musiikki. Tämä tukee uhanalaisten perinteiden muovautumista ja jatkuvuutta nykyajassa, edistää ymmärrystä aikakausien välisistä yhteyksistä ja kuviteltujen todellisuuksien hyödyntämistä luomistyössä. Lisäksi tutkimus lisää tietoisuutta muuttuvista ja moninaisista näkökulmista pohjoisamerikansuomalaiseen ja pohjoismaiseen diasporakulttuuriin.

Keywords:

Finnish American, Finnish North American, diaspora, United States, arts and culture, Finnish folk music, Nordic folk music, tradition, musicking, identity formation, Pacific Northwest, Finnish language, community music, cultural heritage

[2] The Pacific Northwest on rannikolla maantieetellinen alue, Tyynyn valtameren lähellä jossa lasketaan British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, ja Pohjois-Kalifornia. Tässä tapauksessa minun haastattelijat että oma taustaani, keskitymme Astoriassa Oregonissa (Washingtonin rajalla), suurempi Portlandin alueella, sekä Pohjois-Kaliforniassa.

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 16. Presentation at Suomi Hall, with puusarvi, Astoria, Oregon 2025. Photo: Orion Boughton.

Figure 17. Suomi Hall from the back end, Astoria, Oregon 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

Figure 18. Dog Titan, Devina Boughton and puusarvi, Joan Paddock and lur, McMinnville, Oreon 2026. Photo: Orion Boughton.

Figure 19. Levähdys/Unwind, 2025. Poster: Magdalena Kłodnicka.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Big Picture

1.1 Introduction

"To be whole is to be part, true voyage is return."

- Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Dispossessed"

"This leads me back towards the idea of intersections. Each person is a universe."

- Ayla Brinkmann, "We Are Many Things, Investigating a sense of shared space and questions of mixed identities in Indaba"

Identity is not one static definition, but a continual work in progress. We are all multiplicities and contain multiple truths. I believe in the meaning of stories, of sharing, of language, music and art. My master's thesis research aims to understand current diaspora identity formation in Oregon and the broader Pacific Northwest through communities practicing Finnish and Nordic American folk musics. Throughout this written work I will utilize both ethnographic and autoethnographic methodologies and interviews. I have identified four key concepts (see 1.4 Key Concepts) during this research, 1) *musicking, 2) identity*, 3) *diaspora*, and 4) *nostalgia*.

Growing up, I was active in Finnish American festival communities in Astoria, Oregon (see Chapter 4*).* My path as a developing musician then led me to Boston in 2016. Upon receiving a Fulbright Grant in 2021, a ten month visit to Helsinki turned into over four years of living and working (bilingually in English and Finnish) as an artistic researcher, musician, and pedagogue, an irrevocable transformation.

I decided to focus on the Pacific Northwest in my research, since additionally to my personal connections there, I noticed that less research has been done on the Finnish diaspora there compared to in the Midwest. I did not find clear present-day research on identity formation nor community music making in any of these communities, rather more research on the past in those places, or topics not so related to music.

As a part of this research, I returned to visit my Oregon roots in order to investigate how music affects the sense of identity and community in the Finnish diaspora of my youth. When I left for my return to Oregon in Summer 2025, I initially thought that I would focus on musicians active in only Finnish American diaspora communities. However, in practice, once entering these spaces it was

impossible to ignore the involvement and engagement of other Nordic and Scandinavian[3] communities connected to Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. Modern day members of Nordic diaspora in second and third generation immigrants have to actively choose to identify in the diaspora community (Jurva & Jaya 2008). Additionally, as more people from first and second generations passed away, these communities became smaller. As a result, these smaller diaspora communities banded together. Now they co-exist, sometimes with friendly rivalry, but always together. I expanded my research frames accordingly to include Nordic diaspora members in ways that were relevant to my research question, as the parameters and needs to the community also changed. As organisms evolve, so can cultures and identities move and shift.

I am hoping that this research can help bring to light the importance of music and culture as a social formation of community and identity. Through this mirrored image of understanding, respect and pride in the Finnish American diaspora, it could also give the potential to reframe perspective on immigrants in Finland today.

1.2 Artist Background: my positionality and the why?

Figure 1. 'Tervetuloa' dishtowel that used to belong to my mother, 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

I am a fourth generation Finnish North American. My great grandmother Aura Ester Palmrose is from Rauma, and my great grandfather Lauri Pernu's father is from Kälviä/Kokkola. They married

[3] A note on vocabulary. I would like to note that Finland is a Nordic country. However, as a side-effect of different Nordic and Scandinavian diasporas settling in Astoria, Oregon and Naselle, Washington states and surrounding areas, Finland there is considered part of Scandinavia, despite Finland technically having no real mountains, and not being part of the Scandinavian Mountain range. I would argue that due to historical background and cultural proximity, Finland shares cultural aspects and similarities with both Nordic and Scandinavian countries.

in 1940 in Astoria, Oregon, Clatsop County, where my mom's family lived for three generations (see Figure 2).

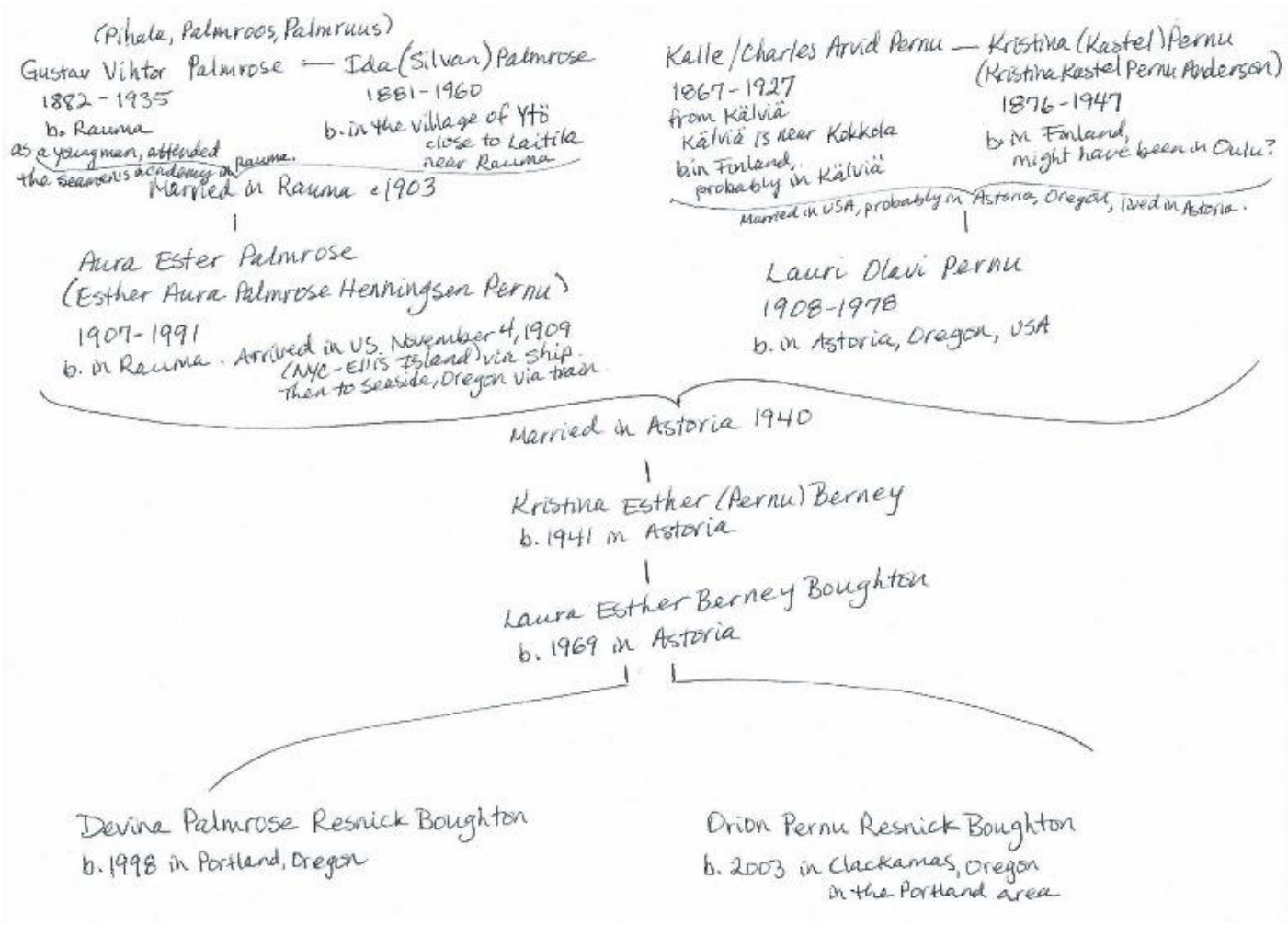

Figure 2. Showing my family's history from Finland to Oregon. My grandmother Kristina has since passed away in 2023. A marriage certificate has been found confirming that Charles/Kalle Pernu and Kristiina Kastel were married in 1902 in Astoria, Oregon. Compiled by my mother Laura Boughton, 2022.

Although Portland, Oregon is my hometown, Astoria was only a few hours' drive away, where we would go often to see my grandparents. There we would engage in aspects of Finnish American community, at the very least attending the Lutheran Church service and having coffee and *pulla* (cardamom bun) with my grandmother. Astoria was where my identity as a Finnish American was nurtured.

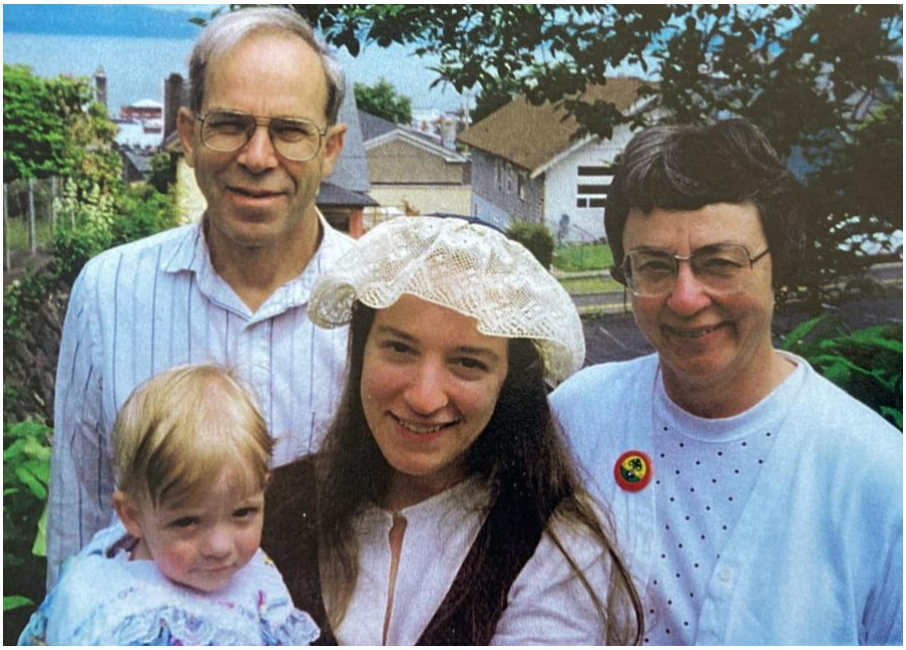

Figure 3. My grandfather, Bruce Berney, grandmother Kristina Berney, me, mother Laura Boughton. Astoria, Oregon, June 1999.

Due to this background, I was already interested in learning more about Finland from a young age. In middle school in 2009 when I was eleven years old, I wrote a term paper about Finland, and wrote this in the introduction:

> I chose Finland as my topic, not only because it captivated me as a place, but also because I have a connection to it. I am a quarter Finnish, my Mother is half Finnish, and my Grandma is all Finnish. The cool thing is, her Mother was all Finnish, and my Great-Grandmother was all Finnish, and her Mother was all Finnish… practically on to infinity, or to the beginning of life. It's a lot to think about isn't it? My Great Grandmother lived in Finland with their family, but when she was two-and-a-half, she and her siblings migrated here, to America. If she hadn't survived, I would never even be alive.
>
> I was very interested to learn all about it. But even if I just knew a bit about Finland, I still think I would pick this topic. Finland is such a wonderful, unique place, and in high school, I hope to go there. I really hope that you read this, enjoy it, and perhaps learn something from it.

One of my earliest memories, a melody that I can recall from my early childhood, refers to a Finnish folk tune that my mother sang to me as a lullaby: *Nuku nuku nurmilintu* (sleep sleep little bird). Growing up, we would go yearly to the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, and we also attended, more rarely, the Naselle Finnish American Folk Festival (since 1982) in Washington state, near to Astoria. I remember hearing my grandmother and my great aunt performing with the

Finnish American choir. One year I heard the sisters Jemina Selina Sillanpää performing and thereafter listened to their CDs on repeat. At home, we had a mix of music related to Finland and Finnish diaspora folk music. We had cassettes of Washington based kantele[4] player Wilho Saari Jr., one album made by the Portland Finnish Singers, and a large collection of Värttinä albums, which my mother played often. I remember being excited as a child when their song "Matalii ja Mustii" (from album "Seleniko") was used on the American television show, Arthur.

My exposure to Finnish folk music did not develop much further until 2017 when I took one lesson with American Roots fiddler Bruce Molsky, while studying Trumpet Performance at Berklee College of Music. During this lesson, he taught me (by ear) "Fasten", a Swedish *polska*. This experience stayed in my mind, and I wanted to learn more. To follow this path further, I then applied for a Fulbright Grant to come to the Sibelius Academy as an exchange student. I came to Finland in August 2021 and had a transformative experience of slowly but surely starting to meet, listen, and play with different folk musicians in Finland.

It took me several years before I felt like I could call myself a folk musician. Many folk music traditions in Finland are also very much intertwined with folk dance traditions, where different agogical rhythms and feels of pieces directly correlate to different steps. I started learning about folk dance and folk music traditions connected to the dance through taking lessons at Sibelius Academy, and attending jam sessions, dance evenings, and performances. Soon I found like-minded folk musicians with whom I could collaborate. Still, as a trumpet player, I feel very noticed as an outsider in the scene, as trumpet is a more unusual instrument in the Finnish folk scene. I started experimenting with finding a different type of sound, copying phrases and rhythms from instruments such as violin, accordion, and nyckelharpa. Yet, I also found solidarity listening to Nordic brass players such as Arve Henriksen and Daniel Herskedal. Little by little, other Nordic folk musicians started to reach out to me to collaborate[5], creating community and feeling of belonging for me.

One area of folk musics in which I felt I could specialize was when I discovered the shepherd's horn traditions. First, my friend and collaborator Veera Katila introduced me to the wooden trumpet-like *puusarvi* (buckhorn), originally a Karelian instrument, and we began playing together. I then started studying with Kirsi Ojala who encouraged me to experiment with several shepherd's

[4] In the zither family, the kantele exists in many Baltic states and Nordic countries in different forms, however, is acknowledged as the "national instrument" of Finland (Hakala 1997).

[5] For example, trumpet feature on single "Koira" (2023) by Finnish folk-punk band Slack Bird, "Sophia's Air" and "Sorina" in album "Courage in Colour" (2024) by folk duo Värivarjo, puusarvi on Vilma Jää's single "Kade" (2025)

horn instruments housed at the Sibelius Academy, for example overtone flute, *mänkeri, liru*, and the more trumpet-like *luikku* (*lur* in Swedish and Norwegian). I fell in love with the unique timbres, pitches, and limited amounts of notes that can be created on these instruments, which for me bring a simplistic richness. There are not many players of shepherd's horns currently in Finland, so I felt like there is also a need to continue to play them and create more community with the ones that do exist. Shepherd's horn traditions are very niche among Nordic countries, and much information has been lost from them, yet still there are many shared practices, and some shared instruments, among Nordic and Baltic countries.

This is exemplified by professional trumpet player, educator and lecturer Dr. Joan Haaland Paddock, one of my interviewees for this thesis. In this way, my own shepherd's horn practices and Joan's are deeply connected. We share an instrument as I have also been playing *luikku*/*brelo*, (the Finnish words for the *lur)*, which exists in Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian shepherd's horns traditions. Moreover, our *luren* are made by the same Norwegian instrument maker Magnar Storbækken.

Listen: Dr. Joan Paddock on the lur "calling the cows", 2025, mixed by Orion Boughton

Watch: Devina Boughton on the luikku/lur, 2024

Simmering for a long time, my thoughts on how to connect all these elements crystalized in winter 2022. I was performing at the funeral of the grandmother of my now *Etanavalaat* bandmate Maria Häkkinen. At this funeral, I was playing solo trumpet, and also playing different arrangements of "*Peltoniemen Hintriikan surumarssi*", (a local lament from Kaustinen) with Maria[6]. We had met at Kaustinen Folk Music Festival the previous summer, and had felt we should play more music together when opportunities arose.

One year later, I was in Astoria, Oregon, playing at my grandmother's funeral, and serving also as an ambassador from all my Finnish relatives. Parts of the church service were delivered in Finnish, and although much of the congregation understood nothing, it was important to them to hear the Finnish language. I arranged Sibelius's "Finlandia" with English text "This Is My Song" upon request, in English, for the church choir and myself and my uncle. At that moment, I felt like a

[6] At the time she lived in Kokkola, where I was looking to connect with the Kokkola/Kälviä side of my family that had been close with my grandmother. I had no contact information, only some names. I asked if she knew anyone with the surname Pernu. By coincidence, her coworker was the cousin of who I was searching for. Through Maria, I reconnected with this branch of family, they had even known of my existence through letters my grandmother had sent them many years prior.

grandchild, a child, and a living cultural marker for Finnishness *and* Finnish-American diaspora identity.

Growing up, my family used social symbolism such as the word, *sisu,* holding onto basic Finnish words such as *tervetuloa,* (welcome) *kiitos,* (thank you) numbers from 1-10 and attending Scandinavian and Finnish community festivals in Oregon and Washington. We engaged with music by singing the national anthem and other remembered Finnish songs such as "*Nuku nuku nurmilintu*" (Sleep, sleep little bird), and listened to CDs and cassettes from Finland and Finnish America. My mother's family was also involved in community choirs singing Finnish songs. We prepared family recipes from Finland such as *riisipuuro* (rice porridge) and *pannukakku* (oven pancake) and looked at photo albums of my grandparents' treasured visits to Finland. These aspects created feelings of "Finnishness" for us, as well as nostalgia.

As a Finnish North American on the outskirts of these active communities, returning to Finland, learning Finnish, folk music making, and connecting with my relatives deeply affected my life's path. These lived experiences inspired a need to understand more about these identities, and their personal meaning.

Now, a part of me will always be an outsider in Finland, yet another part can blend into daily life. What does it mean to hold these many identities simultaneously? Fellow researcher Ayla Brinkmann (2025) wisely points out the importance of intersections and intersectionality and highlights: "It is not possible to be 'purely' one thing – there is no such thing as a pure Finn, for example. Every parent is also someone's child. Mixing is the way that we come into being…" We have within us a myriad, space for multiple identities, yet also confusing at times to navigate. All these thoughts and questions have brought me to the focus of my research.

1.3 Research Questions and Aims

This written work asks the main research question:

> How does folk music making play a role in Finnish North American and Nordic diaspora identity formation in the Pacific Northwest of the United States?

In my research, I talk about Finnish and Nordic folk music traditions, and the influence of these musics on Nordic diaspora communities in the Pacific Northwest, and on myself as a member of both communities. I address communities surrounding the practice of Finnish and Nordic American

folk musics in the Pacific Northwest. I discuss the field work that I carried out in June 2025, using interviews and accounts of my own observations. With these interviews, I then synthesize my own autoethnographic experiences.

I interviewed four people[7] to dive into my research questions and hear their experiences interfacing and engaging with community musicking, art, and identity. My interviewees were Karen Henell, Dr. Joan Haaland Paddock, Helen Inga Pitkanen, and Eden Knutilla (see Chapter 4 for more information).

In addition to my work as a Guest Conductor with the Portland Nordic Chorus, I reflect on a solo performance lecture at Astoria's Suomi Hall, where I spoke about my research and played both traditional Finnish folk tunes and my own pieces inspired by active participation in the current Finnish folk scene.

This research is primarily presented in written form, with some auditory and visual elements. Throughout this thesis, in exploration of its research question, I will refer to previous written material about Finnish diaspora communities, identity formation, "Finnishness" and folk music activities. Additionally, I will give historical context for the development of Finnish American and Nordic diaspora communities in the Pacific Northwest.

The results of this research also relate to my artistic research performance practices in my master's concert "Levähdys/Unwind" at Sibelius Academy`s 2025 Global Fest on December 10th, at the Black Box of Helsinki Music House.

1.4 Key Concepts

"Music can be a tool to create a sense of belonging…"

- Güran-Aydin and DeNora, "Music and Cultural Memory" (2014, 35)

I have identified four key concepts, namely 1) *musicking 2) identity*, 3) *diaspora*, and 4) *nostalgia,* which arose from my analysis of my interview and ethnographic material. These concepts will be explored in further detail throughout the thesis.

[7] I also realized that I had interviewed my Grandmother about the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival for that same paper I wrote on Finland in 2009. I had completely forgotten, and was surprised, at the emotional significance these topics had to be for me to write about them as an 11 year old, and now. (See Appendix for full interview.)

1.4.1 Musicking

In this work, I am approaching interaction with community folk music making through the lens of *musicking* (Odendaal et al. 2013, Small 1998) in a community setting as a lived tradition, as well as participating in related activity such as Nordic folk dances *polska, mazurka, scottishe, waltz*.

Musicking is an adaptation of the idea of "making music" that gives music a more active role, beyond merely something possessed, and also includes everyone that contributes to the process of making music, for example the listener, as an important component (Clarke 2024; Small 1998). Odendaal claims that using *musicking* as a term heightens one's ability to deal with full social-cultural significance, taking in all aspects, rather than only focusing on the sounds itself, and makes connections between sounds, people, physical space, and cultural space (Odendaal et al. 2014, 2). Additionally, musicking can be an empowering experience of growth by bringing people together in "communality", although there is also a power dynamic that could be used destructively (Odendaal et al. 2013, 7). As Güran-Aydin and DeNora astutely state, "music is one of the most important and noticeable cultural agents for communities" (2014, 35). I agree with this standpoint, and I want to equally value the cultural importance of various roles of musicking.

1.4.2 Identity

Identity is important in a self-defined way, as one can have traits of an identity without feeling connected to it (Jurva & Jaya 2008 (referencing Stephan and Stephan 2000a)). Jurva and Jaya (2008, 111) add that identity also means having "a sense of affinity with the group through origin and/or culture". In this research I am working with people who are active in the Nordic diaspora, which include people who define themselves as interested in those specific communities and have been accepted into those spaces.

Thus, another important concept contributing to Nordic diaspora identity formation is *Nordic space*. This term was thoroughly explored by Österlund-Pötzsch, describing that, "ephemeral Nordic spaces are frequently awash with nostalgia and are closely linked with bodily embedded memory" (2010, 91). This also connects strongly with musicking, and the phenomenon of different Nordic/Scandinavian diaspora communities coming together through time to form one group.

1.4.3 Diaspora

By diaspora, I mean persons who have moved from their "home" country to another country, and maintained level of community, collective memory and connection to that real or imagined place (Dufoix 2008, 19; Brubaker 2005, 5). Diaspora coming from Greek *diaspeiro*, was only used in

other languages after the 19th century, and only in connection to religious groups until 1950 (Dufoix 2008, 19, 30, 32). After some variances in meaning, by the late 1990s it was used more broadly to refer to all "dispersed populations" with a more neutral tone, regardless of whether the groups migrated voluntarily or involuntarily. This has both widened the use of the word but also watered down the specificity of its meaning (Schnapper 1999, as cited in Dufoix 2008, 4. Brubaker 2005, 3). However, "diaspora" also maintains a strong tone of emotional connection to the home country, connecting to topics of identity, relationship between the home country, country of residence, and the diaspora communities itself (Sheffer 1999, as cited in Dufoix 2008, 34).

In this case, I focus on diaspora communities from Finland, and other Nordic and Scandinavian countries who have formed Nordic space in the Pacific Northwest of the US. I define the "diaspora community" as including anyone interested in and engaging actively with those cultural spaces and communities, not only someone with Finnish or Nordic roots/descent. In diaspora communities, cultural heritage evolves at a slower speed than in the home country, and sense of time slows down: focusing more on preservation of identity. There are only remembrances of how things were, without the connection to the present. Language, food, music, other cultural aspects, become either lost, frozen, and/or fused with nearby influences. Thereabouts also comes a nostalgia of the "motherland", which has fascinated me since childhood.

1.4.4 Nostalgia

Nostalgia also plays a significant role in these processes. Nostalgia is a painful experience of yearning, but at the same time it is understood that it is not possible to return to that which has already happened or been lost (Rantanen, forthcoming). Music and nostalgia are strongly interlinked in diaspora communities, especially when forming identity in a new place, and trying to hold on to and remember what has been lost (Güran-Aydin & DeNora 2014).

Through generations, music and nostalgia alike have played an integral role in diaspora communities to help weave together the past and present. This creates cultural memory as the identity and collective memory of these diaspora communities form (Rantanen, forthcoming and Güran-Aydin & DeNora 2014). Rantanen (forthcoming) continues that in the same way that there are physical monuments to remember, also events and songs can serve as an immaterial landmark to preserve and remind people of the past. This can help solidify one's understanding and cultural heritage identity.

In a way, these festivals and songs from my childhood served as both physical and musical landmarks of my Finnish North American identity, from which I wanted to further develop and

understand. Güran-Aydin and DeNora (2014) and Rantanen (forthcoming) state that through music and song it is possible to reach understanding of the past, about which we do not know a lot, by processing emotions through song. For example, in Songs of the Finnish Migration, a bilingual anthology of previously collected songs about leaving Finland for the USA, we get a perspective into these historic experiences and events that would otherwise be more difficult to capture (Westerholm, DuBois, Cederström, & Virtanen 2019).

1.5 Structure of the Written Work

In Chapter 1 I have introduced my research and presented my research question. I have also explained my own unique positionality, past, and motivations up to the present day for pursuing these topics and how they are relevant to the reader. Lastly, I have unfolded key concepts that I want the reader to keep in mind throughout reading this work.

I give an overview of the history of the places in which I am researching in Chapter 2, i.e. immigration to the Pacific Northwest of the United States, and reasons for choosing that location for my research. I then present a literature review of previous academic works that have touched upon related and relevant topics and note why my topics fill an existing gap.

In Chapter 3 I describe the methodologies used for this research. I discuss my balance between ethnographic research, interviews, and autoethnographic research. Finally, I discuss my own ethical approaches.

Diving into the different stages and positionalities of my field trip engaging with members Oregon's Nordic diaspora communities, Chapter 4 analyzes my takeaways from interviews, experiences, and autoethnographic reflections throughout this process, using the concepts of diaspora, identity and musicking.

Wrapping up the contents of this written work, in Chapter 5 I share and summarize my reflections and overall research conclusions, and discuss where I could take this research next.

Chapter 2: Opening My Eyes to Finnish Diaspora Communities: Literature Review and General Historical Context:

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing literature on my research topic of Nordic diaspora identity in the PNW through folk music making. I will cover relevant context and terminology and historical background, while critically questioning. I will explore integral positionalities for comprehending the meanings and symbolisms in musicking and identity formation in modern-day Finnish American diasporic communities.

2.1 "Finnishness" in the 21st Century Diaspora

First, I will cover research relating to identity formation and Finnish American diaspora communities outside of the PNW and not related to music. After a high concentration of Finnish emigrants starting in the late 1800s, Hancock, Michigan, in the Midwestern US, is considered the "capital of Finnish America". Karinen and Remlinger (2024) have researched "meaning related to Finnishness" in 2024. They focused on ideological changes in social symbolism in the Finnish diaspora context, as well as identity, belonging and placemaking occurring from the late 19th century to now. Symbols hold different meanings in different places, contexts, and environments. Karinen and Reminger (2024) emphasize changes in social symbols, such as the prevalence of the Finnish lion symbol adorned on local goods, and as the mascot of Hancock's Finlandia University, to represent a sense of connection to Finland. However, in present day Finland this symbol has in contrast been appropriated by white nationalists and members of far right political parties (Karinen & Reminger 2024, 74).

Such social symbols are also typified in the Pacific Northwest for example by *sisu* bumper stickers. *Sisu* is a Finnish term that means a quality of perseverance and grit, and by many Finns is seen as propaganda from wartimes. In Finland I have heard several opinions that *sisu* was used as a way to not ask for help or take care of oneself, creating a feeling that one must push through alone, no matter what cost. However, to Finnish Americans it is symbol of pride and a way to recognize other Finnish Americans. I grew up seeing *sisu* as a word that only Finnish Americans knew, and could celebrate. I only became aware of the problematic interpretation once I moved to Finland and began discussing the concept of *sisu* with other Finnish people. I feel that the different interpretations of the word are valid in both contexts, and hold different meanings.

Figure 4. My mother's car on the left, strangers car on the right, both with sisu bumper stickers. Grocery store parking lot, Astoria Oregon, 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

Karinen and Reminger affirm "meaning making as a dynamic process" (Karinen and Reminger, 2024), pointing to traditions as alive processes that also represent meaning and hold importance for identity formation.

Jurva and Jaya (2008, 124) have done research on the identity formation of second generation Finnish Canadians, and they found great variance in how strongly people identified with their "Finnishness". Results showed that they had embraced Canadian identity as valuing diversity and multiculturalism, thus feeling that their "Finnishness was part of their Canadianness" integrating these identities. However, their activity in Finnish Canadian diaspora communities was more likely to occur through attending special events, visits to Finland, or only within their own family circles (Jurva & Jaya 2008, 124-5).

2.2 Nationalism

While understanding the nostalgia and different social symbols present in these diaspora communities, I also want to share folk musics without promoting nationalistic ideologies, which often go hand in hand with colonialism/colonization. "Since World War II, every successful revolution has defined itself on national terms" (Anderson 2006, 2) – in his quintessential, yet nonetheless dated text, Anderson speaks to the invention of nationality, nation-ness and nationalism, through for example the accumulation of cultural artefacts, and the dangers that these ideologies hold, while simultaneously observing its irrevocable influence on Western understanding of societies. This concept has taken root and, similar to the invasive English ivy in the Pacific Northwest, proves challenging to eradicate.

Anderson understands nations as *imagined communities*, stating "…even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members…in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 2006, 6). This spoke to me as a way to understand the cultural differences between more static-moving diaspora communities and the faster-evolving current state of Finnishness in Finland, and even as a way to connect and find similarities between them, in contrast to ranking one as a more "true" identity than another.

Why is "Finnishness" so meaningful to people so physically far in distance from Finland, who might never even travel there in person? In a way, they are living with an imagined, romanticized reality of Finland. I am also interested in how people in third and fourth generation diaspora communities still feel connected to the diaspora. I would also argue here that we are all living in our own imagined realities. A friend told me once that their definition of Finnishness has to do with the kinds of direct communities and circles that they surround themselves with, creating their own type of definitions.

2.3 Notes on Finnish North America and Settler Colonialism

In providing historical context for my research, it is important to keep in mind that it takes place in the United States, a nation fully founded on colonialist structures. Finnish Americans, including my ancestors, while often leaving Finland due to dangerous and extreme conditions in search of a better life, also participated in settler colonialism. In pointing out multiple approaches for categorizing race in different contexts, in and outside of the United States, Nakano (2015) endorses an approach that stresses "the indeterminacy of racial categories and the fluidity and hybridity of racial identities."[8] This is useful in my context of the Pacific Northwest, where there has been mixing of cultures and mass emigration; these aspects can be recognized while still understanding and taking into account the power structures that have formed. I want to highlight, as does Nakano, "fluidity" and "hybrid identity" of race and gender identification, which nonetheless "remain persistent and resilient principles for organizing hierarchical relations within and between societies" (Nakano 2015, 54). Nakano continues that settler colonialism encompasses a transnational scope, thus it is more relatable on a wider geographical scale and can take into consideration these shifting definitions with an intersectional lens.

[8] To further unpack these concepts, it is also vital to note that race and gender are very different yet overlapping social constructs.

In the late 1800s there was a great "first wave" of immigration from Finland to the US, as well as many waves of immigrants to the US from other European countries. Around half of immigrants from Finland emigrated to the Midwest (Kilpinen 1995). Many others emigrated first from Nordic and European countries to the Midwest and later headed to Oregon to join in the colonization of indigenous lands and start a new life there (Bussel & Tichenor 2017). Therefore, there were considerable Finnish communities in many towns across the country including a sizable amount in Astoria, Oregon and Naselle, Washington[9]. Astoria had the largest Finnish immigrant community west of the Mississippi river, with one third "Finnish" population in the early 1900s. By 1920, there were almost 29,000 first generation Finnish immigrants in Washington, Oregon, California, or Montana (Kilpinen 1995).

Bussel and Tichenor argue, that "larger geopolitical developments created circumstances that inspired immigrants to leave their countries of origin for the United States and eventual settlement in the Pacific Northwest" (Bussel & Tichenor 2017, 461). The development of social constructs of racial power structures was also not invisible. At this time in the late 1800s, Oregon's Governor Lafayette Grover (1823–1911) was welcoming towards European immigrants but discriminating towards emigrants from China, emphasizing how, "Oregon's is a story of durable tensions between rival nativist, capitalist, and egalitarian traditions that have confronted new immigrant groups with a distinctive set of both openings and barriers to inclusion over time" (Bussel & Tichenor 2017, 461). A 1910 census states that the largest group of emigrants to Oregon were from Germany, followed by Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland (Bussel & Tichenor 2017). In the midst of this manifest destiny rhetoric, the country was "ready" for fishers, loggers, cannery workers, dairy and mink farmers, similar trades to those people had done in Finland. Nakano further defined that settler colonialism specifically targets the expulsion and erasure of indigenous peoples and their lands for this exact reason of "settling" somewhere, "its intention to acquire and occupy land on which to settle permanently, instead of merely to exploit resources" (Nakano 2015). This focus on Western assimilation and trade of extractivist resources (E.g. wood, salmon, furs) points to the capitalist, patriarchal framework of this early migration, which additionally fails in all senses to respect or acknowledge indigenous culture. In my research, it is important to understand the context, power dynamics and structures of the Finnish American diaspora's history. Emigrants left Finland in poor conditions to seek a "better life" while at the same time contributing to settler colonialism.

[9] Astoria borders Washington, with the Astoria-Megler Bridge connecting them.

2.4 Music and Identity in Finnish Diaspora Communities

After travelling to the Turku Migration Institute in 2024, I began to read Finnish historian and folklore collector K. A. Gottlund's writings, Ruotsin suomalaismetsiä samoilemassa (1817). Gottlund was looking for *metsäsuomalaiset*, i.e. Finnish diaspora in Swedish forests, who had emigrated there when Finland was under Swedish rule. He went to the Dalarna region in 1817 searching for shepherd's songs, folk traditions, instruments, and use of the Finnish language in these communities. For example, Gottlund (1928, 4) wanted to research their identities as immigrants after 300 years, see if anyone spoke Finnish, what the differences in their speech were, and collect memories, music and poems. This struck a chord in me because he was in fact, asking many similar questions that I am asking now 200 years later in a completely different world, atmosphere, and environment. I reflected on this thought in my diary:

> Although change is inevitable, despite this we still want to define things, ponder and discuss their significance and naming. Apparently this feels important to us. Maybe then we feel we belong somewhere. Is change easier to understand if we know from where it is changing? "Now", "modern-day", frame, graph, that helps our comprehension. Everything is going forwards although we are in the moment all at once. When a name is given to something, we can communicate about it to another person, and even say something (more) if the other person understands from the same perspective.[10]

Akin to Gottlund, I too was interested in the cultural and musical activities of Finnish immigrants.

Next, I will discuss the formation of social halls and groups amongst Finnish American communities, which influenced the musical traditions which began to take shape. At the turn of the 19th century, different Finnish American social organizations and factions began to form, stemming from political parties in Finland at the time, when the country was under Russian rule, with division between upper- and middle-class and working class. Finnish Americans founded social halls, with music serving a vital role in the process through which they developed and maintained community

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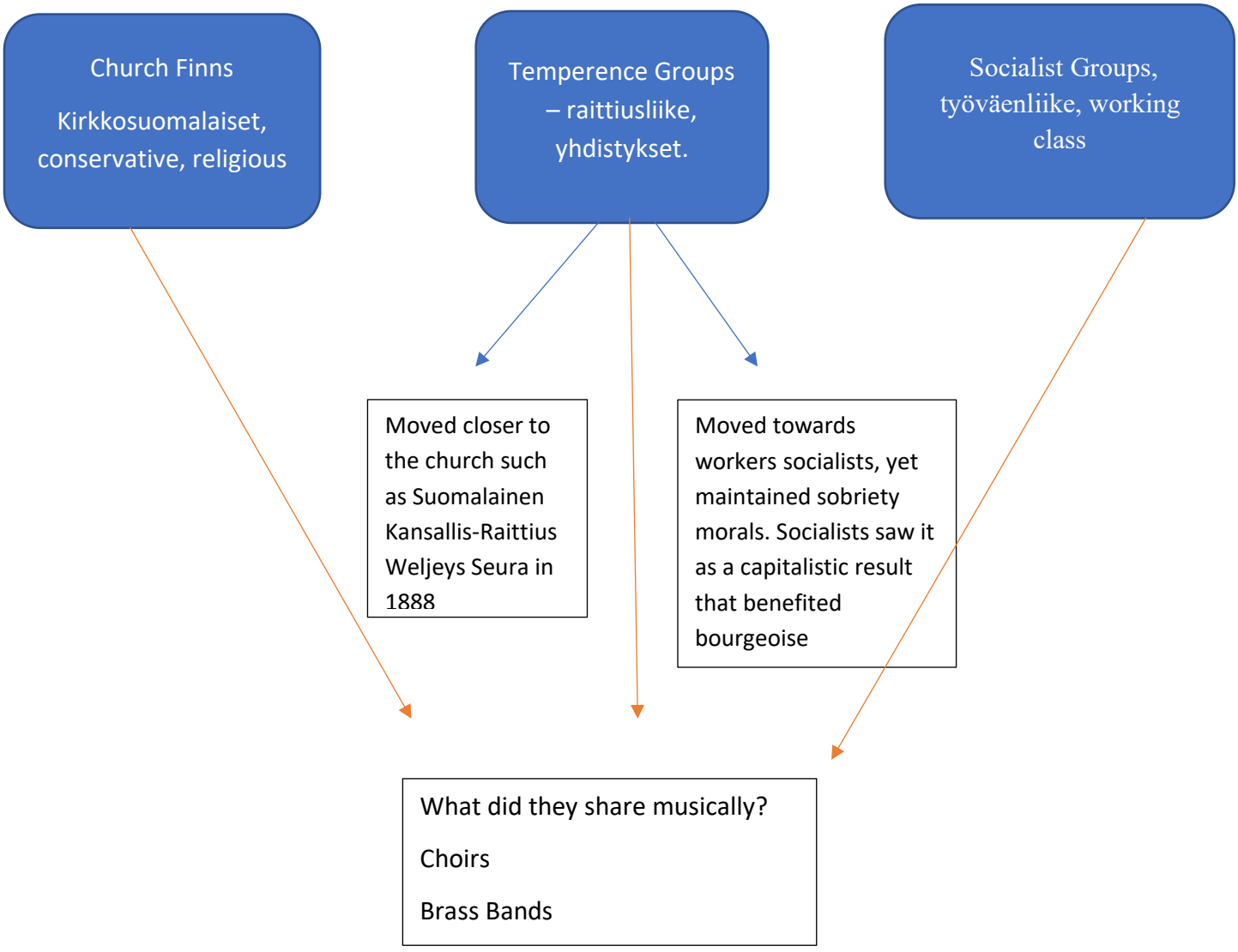
[10] My original diary text was in Finnish:

> *Vaikka muutosta on vääjäämättä, halutaan huolimatta kuitenkin määrittää asioista ja aprikoida ja keskustella niiden merkitystä sekä nimeäminen. Se tuntu ilmeisesti meille tärkeää. Ehkä just se, että kuulutaan sitten jonnekin/jossakin. Onko muutosta helpompi ymmärtää jos on niin sanotusti selkeää lähtökohta? "nyt", "nykyaikaa" ... raami, kaava, jotka auttaa meidän hahmotusta. Kaikki menee eteenpäin vaikka ollaan hetkessä yhtään aikaan. Kun annetaan jotain nimen, voidaan kommunikoida siitä johonkin toiselle ihmiselle, ja voi jopa kertoa itsestä jotain jos toinen ymmärtää jotain samasta pelistä.*

(Rantanen 2017). These social groups broadly fall into three categories, Church Finns, Temperance Groups, and Socialist Groups, presented below.

In 1884 in Ohio, Carl Johan Stenroos founded a temperance league of Finnish American immigrants, called *Hyvä Toivo* (Good Hope), aiming to promote community and combat alcoholism. There were community bands, hymns and prayers (connected to the Lutheran Church), but theatre and dance were strictly forbidden, and "amusement activities" were forbidden on Sunday, the day of rest. Different yet similarly framed "Suomi Halls" were built across the US as gathering points, some more liberal and some more conservative. In 1890 *Hyvä Toivo* turned into *Raittiuden Ystäväin Yhdistys Ry*, with for example a branch in Quincy, Massachusetts, and was more radical and encouraging of singing and theatre, although dancing was still forbidden, becoming a point of contention that led people to leave the society.



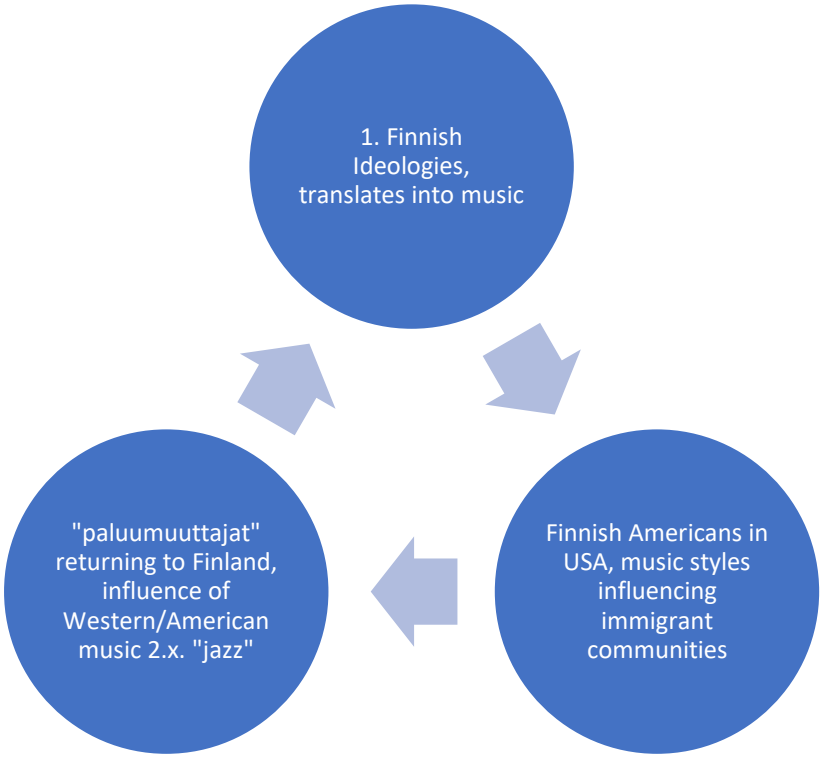


Figure 5. Table 1. Based on Saijaleena Rantanen's article, example from the late 1800s immigration wave.

How exactly Finnish Americans chose the musical material to perform in these social halls is unknown, however some were compiled into a *Työväen Laulukirja* and increasingly borrowed from pre-existing American workers songs (Rantanen 2017). Rantanen (2017, 54) writes that for example some of the brass bands' musical material[11] comprised of songs referencing Finland, with other material coming from arrangements and adaptations of European classical music and suggested "North American" classical compositions. Despite the complex relationships between these groups of Finnish American immigrants, Rantanen's research emphasizes the role of music, which played a part in all of these social halls. It gave meaning, respite and places to socialize in a strange new country where there was a considerable language barrier.

Astoria's Suomi Hall was founded in 1893, and Finnish Americans coexisted there before they later split off between the Church Finns and Socialists. The Astoria Finnish Socialist club was founded in 1905. They had their own Finnish Socialist Hall from 1910 until it burned down in 1931. There, one could attend lectures on music, drama and sing in a choir. In 1905 a male choir was started, followed by a female choir in 1916, and finally a mixed choir by 1922 (Hummasti 1995/96).

[11] Found from the brass band located in Hancock, Michigan at Finlandia University.

Astoria's "status as the center of Finnish culture in the West" (Hummasti 1995/96, 383) was strengthened by the presence of the Finnish language socialist newspaper, the "Toveri" (Comrade) run by Finnish Americans in Astoria from 1880-1930, with a spin-off produced in 1911 called "Toveritar" (Woman Comrade) specifically for socialist women (Hummasti 1995/96). As Hummasti states, "Toveri's" goals included mission of "connection in community", working class solidarity, and to "replace the nationalism of immigrant traditions with the internationalism of class-consciousness". These newspapers were ways for Finnish diaspora communities to receive information, including those about arts and culture. Unfortunately, during the Finnish Civil War in 1918, tensions increased between "Reds" (working class) and "Whites" (upper- and middle classes) also in the US. The editors of the newspaper were prosecuted in the Supreme Court, and in 1931 the 1st generation immigrant editors were deported back to Finland, where they were then coerced into going to work in Soviet Karelia. At this point the newspaper ceased being in print.

A relevant modern example of Astoria and Finnish Americans portrayed in arts and culture was seen this year at Helsinki's KOM[12] theater with the play *VAMPIRA: How to dig your own grave with your mouth* (dir. Susanna Airaksinen, KOM-teatteri, 2025). It presented the true story of Finnish American actress Maila Nurmi, recounting her life growing up, working in fish canneries in Astoria, and moving to Los Angeles in the 1940s. In pursuit of an acting career, she created the camp television character Vampira. The play highlighted Finland's exoticization at this time in the US, which Maila took advantage of by changing her last name from Niemi to Nurmi, and claiming that she was related to famous Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi. After falling into financial ruin and relative obscurity, her legacy, and connection to Finland, has been revitalized, with her niece Sandra Niemi publishing a biography about her (*Glamour Ghoul - The Passions and Pain of the Real Vampira, Maila Nurmi*, 2021)[13], upon which this play was based.

2.5 Folk musics in Finland and North America

Folk musics exist both in Finland and North America through efforts of revitalization and preservation. From my Finnish American upbringing, growing up listening to cassettes of Finnish American Washington-based kantele player Wilho Saari Jr., I was under the impression until

[12] Mixing Swedish words for "Come" and "Communism" together into KOM-teatteri, they have operated since the 1970's in Finland and Finnish-speaking Sweden, performing theatre and making musical albums with leftist and working class ideologies

[13] This book was translated into Finnish as *Vampira: Maila Nurmen tie Hollywoodiin* by Juha Ahokas

recently that kantele traditions were strong in Finland. It turns out that in the 1970s kantele traditions were stronger in Finnish America and had almost died out in Finland, and with efforts such as folk revivalist movement in 1968 (Hill 2009) in Finland, it became more normalized again in the folk music scenes (Hakala 1997). Mentorship, relying on oral tradition and memory, and developing a unique sound on one's instrument through time playing alone also appear to be common characteristics of folk music practices shared between Finnish and North American kantele practices[14] (Hakala 1997).

The first folk department in Finland, at the Sibelius Academy, was founded in 1983[15] as part of this folk revival. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the power structures of institutions. We can recognize that folk music practices[16] on one hand are still practiced, as the everyday, the mundane, yet also give space for preservation and revival in institutional setting as a performance art, which paradoxically changes their meaning.

On top of this, there are many shared aspects in the music of Finnish folk scenes with nearby Nordic and Baltic countries, and these are used as a bridge to connect folk musicians from or interested in pursuing music in these different countries. As ethnomusicologist Juniper Hill states from her extensive research at the Sibelius Academy folk department in the 2010s, "The toolboxes of contemporary folk musicians in Finland often contain musical devices inspired by many different genres and styles, including folk music from Finland, Scandinavia, and many other countries around the world, as well as jazz, popular musics, church music, classical music, and avant-garde or experimental music…" (Hill 2012). This is exemplified by the Masters of Nordic Folk Music Program that allows students to study at the folk department at the Sibelius Academy and across partner schools in Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

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[14] Hakala's writings on the kantele in the United States , "Memento of Finland" (1997), allude to nostalgia in the title alone. Hakala further states, "the kantele in (Finnish) America became a vehicle for nostalgia" (1997, 4). Hakala focuses on North American kantele players who emigrated from Finland after 1930, and their identities, the instrument's symbolism in Finnish diaspora, and the intertwining of the kantele as a mythological and national symbol.

[15] During the same year, the first Nordic Conference surrounding working class culture and folklore was organized in Copenhagen in August 1983 (Lindqvist, Mitchell & Bringeus 1983), spearheaded by scholars from Liperi, Finland, a region in North Finnish-Karelia, after they had previously held 22 such conferences in Finland. Most pertinent conference discussion topics included "conceptual analysis on working class folklore", and "problematic connection between culture and class", highlighting the importance of these social structures to the study of folk musics and bringing up commonalities in Nordic identity (Lindqvist, Mitchell & Bringeus 1983). Of note were papers regarding workers songs and music, and group consensus "…that archives, libraries and museums (were necessary) in making room for the culture of the working class and labor movement." (Lindqvist, Mitchell, & Bringeus 1983). Such conferences emphasize to me that discourse surrounding these topics is not new.

In the Pacific Northwest today, there is some amount of Finnish American musicians playing folk music from Finland and/or from their Finnish diaspora communities, or active in community musical groups or choirs. One prominent recent example is Wilho Saari Jr. (1932-2022), who continued his family's kantele-playing legacy and popularized the kantele in Pacific Northwest diaspora communities. There are still some efforts to continue kantele in diaspora communities today, and at least eight kanteles were donated to Astoria's "Suomi School" in 2025 [17] with help from a grant from Clatsop County Cultural Coalition.

Additionally, looking at past performer biographies from the Naselle Finnish American Folk Festival, Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, and the Nordic Northwest Portland Midsummer Festival showed me some interesting trends. Out of the nine performers listed in the 2025 entertainment section of the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival webpage, five of them prominently featured accordion, and mentioned playing traditional dance tunes. I also noticed other existing ensembles connecting their local areas with Finnish and Scandinavian/Nordic diaspora folk music influence, such as Brownsmead Oregon's "The Brownsmead Flats", and Wahkiakum County's "Skamokawa Swamp Opera". These groups perform both tunes from Scandinavian diaspora community as well as original tunes connected to the Lower Columbia River area. Additionally, I found mention of other groups drawing inspiration from Finnish folk dance background, such as Dan Schlesinger, who plays "Scandinavian folk tunes" with backing track accompaniment, and "Soittorasia/Music Box", a Finnish American trio based out of Portland/Vancouver who play kantele, jouhikko, woodwinds and percussion, and the "Livakat Evergreen" ensemble based in Seattle, Washington, a kantele ensemble.

Community choirs are also still alive, representing a mixture of Nordic diaspora communities. The Portland Finnish Singers merged with other diasporic choirs in the 1980s and 1990s, eventually becoming the Portland Scandinavian Chorus, now Portland Nordic Chorus. Sometimes there are Nordic and Baltic themed concerts with other choirs, such as in 2024 when the Portland Nordic Chorus combined with the Oregon Chorale in their concert "Songs of Scandinavia". Folk musics in Finland and Finnish America serve as an example of a subculture that is still very much living tradition[18].

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[17] Not a regular school, this is a weeklong summer school on Finnish culture put on by Friends of Suomi Hall in Astoria, Oregon

[18] In speaking about folk music traditions in Finland, I will not be speaking about indigenous Sápmi traditions, as these traditions are in a different, more sacred space. Sápmi people have their own unique culture, which should not be

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1 Ethnographic Research

Informed by Patricia Leavy's book "Method Meets Art" (2020) I adopted a hybrid approach, combining ethnographic and autoethnographic research. My own practices that contribute to the autoethnographic research also fall under artistic research. Ethnographic research is a qualitative research approach coming originally from anthropology, including an "ongoing subjective writing and interpretation process" (Leavy 2020, 43). This methodology "challenges… assumptions about our social reality (Leavy 2020, 8). Additionally, autoethnography is "a method of self-study in which the researcher is viewed as a viable data source." (Leavy 2020, 43). Combining ethnography and autoethnography gives depth and opportunity for personal development, shows the research from multiple equally relevant perspectives, and highlights the connection between researcher and research topic. With this comes the aim of being present, critical, and honest (Leavy 2020).

Through both ethnography and autoethnography I use my own positionality as a Finnish North American, and my lived experiences in Finland, to inform my research, and I add my own thoughts, feelings and opinions to the table. My autoethnographic method is based on personal reflections, journals, and logs of my thoughts and own artistic practices.

In Figure 6 below, I made a map of how different elements in Leavy's (2020) book "Method Meets Art" surrounding artistic research interested and inspired me within my own research process. Throughout this process, I made multiple similar maps to help organize and process my thoughts, and make different frameworks. Identifying different interesting ideas through this map helped me to narrow down on what I wanted to focus, and which methodologies would become relevant for this research.

touched unless in direct collaboration with Sápmi artists. This topic needs entirely its own exploration separately from these concepts of more general Finnish identity.

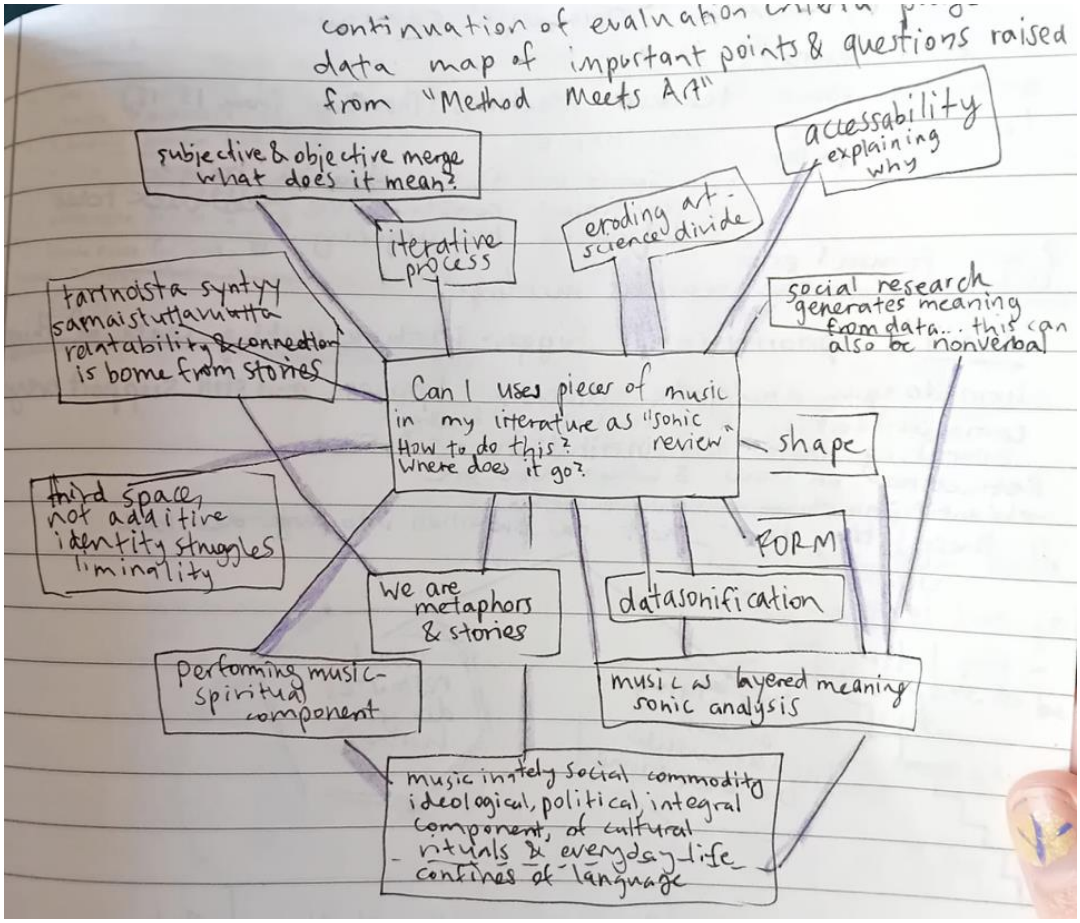

Figure 6. My notes inspired by Patricia Leavy's Artistic Research book "Method Meets Art".

3.2 Interviews

Data to address my research questions were collected via interviews with four local community members in the Pacific Northwest involved in practices relating to Finnish American and Nordic folk musics. I compiled my interview questions in English after having conversations with colleagues, looking at passages from my artistic journal, and thinking about what could be relevant to my research questions. I then translated them to Finnish if needed. I wanted to be free to talk with my interviewees as an open conversation, so I intentionally did not strictly follow my interview questions, but I used them as a loose framework to guide our conversations. My interviews were themed, meaning that they are in the middle of being completely free, and having strict questions to answer (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006). This gives the person being interviewed a structure upon which to speak, but also a freedom within that structure.

At the start of each interview, I explained my positionality, and that this interview would be part of my thesis research. I tried to create a comfortable and open atmosphere. After my interviews were over, I used a framework of thematic analysis to work with the data. I transcribed the interviews and

searched for common themes or patterns surfacing which related to my research question (Khalid Ahmed S. et al. 2025).

3.3 Ethics

My research and this written work follows in accordance to the Guideline of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK 2023) as well as The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland (TENK 2023). I am committed to following "good research practices" as stated by the Research Integrity Guidelines as "ethical self-regulation of the research community" (TENK 2023, 8). Through these guidelines, I vow to uphold their core principles of reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability (TENK 2023, 12).

This research as a whole puts my positionality as both outsider and insider in these different cultural settings. I received consent in writing from all my interviewees, and met them in places that they felt comfortable. I asked in the recording if they wanted their identities to be released anonymously or if they wanted to be named. I recorded these interviews with a Zoom Tascam recorder and manually transcribed them afterwards onto a Word document. All four have volunteered to be interviewed and have the right to drop out of the project at any time or decide that they want to become anonymous or have any of their statements redacted. Before this written work is published, I will get confirmation in writing that each participant is satisfied with how they have been portrayed.

I have been open about reporting my funding from the Finlandia Foundation and Sibelius Academy Global Music Department, and I also understand my position of privilege in both getting funding and being able to travel from Finland to the United States and back. In increasing times of instability and turmoil in my home country, as a white citizen of the US, I have a freedom of movement that others might not have, and do not want to take for granted.

In addition, I made a commitment to not use artificial intelligence in any known way in the writing of this work and throughout this research.

3.4 Land Acknowledgement: Portland Metro area and Astoria, Oregon[19]

The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Clackamas, Tualatin, Kalapuya, and Molalla. Extending to the mouth of the Pacific Ocean, the land where Astoria rests include ancestral lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Clatsop Nehalem, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Siletz. Indigenous tribes and people who made their homes along the Columbia River have created communities and summer encampments to harvest and live off the natural resources of the area for the last 11,000 years.

Portland and Astoria both fall on Chinook and Kathlamet lands, which I also acknowledge.

I give respect to the nine federally recognized Indigenous Nations of Oregon, including The Klamath, Burns Paiute, Coquille, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla, Confederated Tribes of Siletz, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw, as well as the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Additionally, I acknowledge all other tribes with traditional connections to these lands, and displaced Indigenous Peoples currently residing in Oregon. I acknowledge that displacing of Indigenous peoples was directly affected/impacted by my relatives when they actively participated in the settler colonialism of Oregon state.

[19] This land acknowledgement was informed by the Portland Parks Foundation and Sisu Coastal Wellness websites. https://www.portlandpf.org/land-acknowledgement

https://sisucoastalwellness.com/original-peoples-land-acknowledgment/

Chapter 4: Field Trip: Returning to Oregon's *"Finnish Americas"*

Throughout this research, I filled many roles – as a participant, as an interviewer, as a performer, and as a researcher. Sometimes these roles were intertwined. First, I attended the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival with my mother in June, 2025. I have attended this festival many times since childhood, and it shaped my experiences about Finnish and Nordic diaspora communities in the Astoria area. In 2025, my mother and I spent the rainy day eating prune tarts, watching performances, looking at Icelandic horses, and running into acquaintances of my mother's family. These activities comprise aspects of modern-day Finnish American identity in the PNW.

In my 2025 visit I took pictures to compare to the ones from my first time at this festival, in 1999 (see figures 7-14 below). These photos show the Nordic diaspora space that the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival has created over 26 years.

Figure 7. Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 1999.

Figure 8. Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 2025. Photo: Laura Boughton.

Figure 9. Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 1999.

Figure 10. Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

Figure 11. Friends of Suomi Hall booth, Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

Figure 12. Finnware booth at the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

Figure 13. Booths from the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

Figure 14. Riisipuuro (rice porridge) ja marjasoppa (fruit soup), coffee, and pickled herring from the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, June 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

The following weekend, I served for the first time as a Guest Conductor for the Portland Nordic Chorus[20] (PNC) at the Nordic Northwest Midsummer Festival in Portland, Oregon. This event took place at Southwest Portland's cultural hub for Nordic diaspora events, Nordia House. After this, my mother and I watched other performances, made flower crowns, and watched the Majstång parade, where they raised a flower-covered pole.

A few weeks later we spent time in the Astoria and Cannon Beach area where I gave a performance lecture on my research at Suomi Hall. After this, I was able to synthesize these experiences into musical material for my master's concert, "Levähdys/Unwind", held on December 10th, 2025.

During these weeks I also held my four interviews. My interviewees were:

- Karen Henell, a Finnish American, a member of the Portland Nordic Chorus and the Finnish International Choir, interview took place on June 27th, 2025, at the morgue where the choir rehearses in Portland, Oregon. I knew I wanted to interview someone from the Portland Nordic Chorus, and when I reached out to the choir, Karen eagerly responded.
- Dr. Joan Haaland Paddock, a Norwegian American, a professional classical trumpet player and *lur* Nordic shepherds horn player, interview took place on July 1st, 2025, in her home in

[20] Portland Nordic Chorus is "a mixed community chorus celebrating friendship and common interest in Nordic culture and music. They sing primarily in Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, and English and invite anyone with similar interests to join them".

McMinnville, Oregon. Joan played *lur*, a long shepherd's horn made from birch and birchbark by late Norwegian instrument maker Magnar Storbækken at the inauguration of the Astoria Nordic Heritage Park in 2022, an event which my mother attended. My mother told me she had heard someone in Oregon playing a shepherd's horn, and years later when I was thinking about who to interview on my trip back to Oregon, that encounter immediately came to my mind. I sent an email to Joan, and she agreed to meet with me.

- Helen Inga Pitkanen, a second generation Finnish American and Heritage speaker (Finnish is her first language) a longtime member and trustee of Friends of Suomi Hall, visual artist, and former member of Portland Finnish Singers, interview took place on July 19th, 2025, in her home in Astoria Oregon. Helen was part of the entertainment group that booked me to hold the performance lecture at Suomi Hall, and since she is a longtime member of Finnish American communities in Astoria, I wanted to get her perspective.
- Eden Knutilla, a fifth generation Finnish American from the Midwest, who lived more than ten years in California, a storyteller connecting with kantele and Finnish folk musics and incorporating it into their practices of performance art and community music, interview took place on July 23rd, 2025, at Common Grounds Café in Portland, Oregon. Eden and I met by coincidence on their trip to Finland in early summer 2025. When we started sharing our stories and artistic works, I knew immediately that I wanted to interview them for this research, since we had in some ways very similar stories.

4.1 Nordic Space in the Pacific Northwest

In this section I will explore the changes in Finnish American and Nordic spaces within the context of the Pacific Northwest and connect them to musicking within such spaces. First, I will open up the history of Nordic Space in the PNW. Then I will move on to analyzing musicking, identity, and Nordic Space at the two midsummer festivals I attended, in the Portland Nordic Chorus, other interviews, and in the shepherd's horn traditions.

In earlier times of Finnish diaspora communities across the US, identities were more specific (for example Socialist Finns, Temperance Finns, and Church Finns). However, over time and through necessity, these communities became smaller and more distant from Finland. Now it's enough for people to connect to this more general "Nordic space" identity. As my grandmother said in our 2009 interview, the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival "is a time for all people in the area

to be ‘Scandinavians’ for a day or two”. Therefore, all of these aforementioned festivals and the musical performances I witnessed and took part in there, are strong examples of Nordic Space.

4.1.1 Nordic Space Musicking in the Pacific Northwest

At Astoria’s festival, many local groups performed, as well as one guest, New York-based Finnish singer Eeppi Ursin. One of the local groups, The Brownsmead Flats, has a Finnish American member, Ray Raitala. They had one song about “Heikki” (a Finnish name) heating up the sauna[21], a song about rain (quite apt to the Pacific Northwest’s’ rainy climate), and a song about a community potluck. There was also a short review from the musical “Shanghaied in Astoria[22]”, which has been running for forty-two years, and includes some Finnish numbers and names in the plot. These examples combined important aspects creating a sense of local place, with symbols of Finnish North American identity. Inviting Eeppi Ursin also brings a guest from the outside, still related to the community from a diasporic identity level.

In the Portland festival one performance stuck out to me, a euphonium player, Dan Schlesinger. He played various Nordic folk dance styles, for example I recognized waltz, mazurka, wedding tunes, and polska. He announced where each tune was from and played with a clear and bright tone. He was reading sheet music, played to a backing track, and he did not adhere to any of the agogical rhythms present in these dance styles. All of his phrasing had more of a classical affect, a more quantized version of the repertoire. This was a fusion of traditional Nordic dance tunes with Western classical performance practice elements.

4.1.2 Nordic Folk Dance and Nostalgia

Both the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival and the Portland Nordic Midsummer Festival had folk dance performances, mostly kids, wearing folk dress outfits from some Nordic country. It was clear that although present on some level, the connection between folk music and dance as a normal community practice has been lost significantly. Older Finnish Americans such as Helen Pitkanen have heard of these dances, and Helen reminisced about times of social Nordic folk dance at Suomi Hall, with live music “…they played Finnish dance music, waltzes schottisches, polkas, do you know what a mazurka is? And hambos? Do you know how to dance those?” Now, there are

[21] The sauna was brought to the Pacific Northwest by immigrants from Finland

[22] The unsavory term refers to people getting drugged in bars and waking up as an indentured servant on a boat going to Shanghai.

Monday Nordic night dance evenings at Portland's Nordia Northwest, but coming from Astoria it would be unrealistic to make the commute. Corroborating with the previous research on social hall music from Saijaleena Rantanen (2017), Helen remembered how her parents met on the dancefloor of Astoria's Suomi Hall, back when community bands used to play there, adding: "…They used to have 2-3 orchestras that played and they don't do that anymore. I miss it dearly." Here, the significance of the bands stays in the nostalgic collective memory of older generations, yet this too as a constant practice is lost.

Overall, both the dances and the music that was played for them still linger on in many sets of local bands, such as in Brownsmead Flats' and Dan Schlesingers' performances. However, the specific musical traditions have been fused and combined with other musical aspects. The dances themselves are mostly for specific dance troupes that perform at these events, and serve more as a memory of old tradition and a point of nostalgic reminiscence rather than an active practice.

4.1.3 Nordic Space in the Portland Nordic Chorus

When Helen returned to the Astoria area after living in Hawaii, Eastern Oregon, and Portland, a lot had changed. "My friends have died. When I bought this house, I had a Finnish couple up the hill, they're gone, and a Finnish couple that way, and they're gone. It's so sad…" With change, the ways in which these diaspora communities are connected is mirrored in many facets of the arts and culture. Helen also recounted her involvements in the Finnish American community in Portland during the existence and collapse of the Finnish diaspora branch of what would later turn into the Portland Nordic Chorus. "I was in the Finnish American choir (Portland Finnish Singers)… we had practices once a week and we performed all over Portland and… went to Berkeley to perform for Finnfest. That was part of my life in Portland. The choir dispersed because the director died, then they got another one from Corvallis and it was hard for him to come to Portland all the time." In the PNW, each Nordic diaspora community used to have its own choir, but they had to join together since people were dying or getting less interested in their cultural heritage and so fewer from the next generation had interest to continue the activity of the choir. This phenomenon shows clearly in the existence of the Portland Nordic Chorus. Therefore, the Portland Nordic Chorus formed as a new representation of Nordic Space.

A handful of the choir members did not have any direct roots to Nordic countries but were curious to sing in the choir anyways. The choir also often makes humorous jokes and friendly rivalry amongst the different pieces and countries being worked on. Karen commented "A challenge for the

chorus is now to stay united with the idea of connecting these smaller ethnic communities that we have, we can be a central place in making those connections for people."

About the current state of the choir, Karen stated "we run on a shoestring and are not able to [commission new works]" but they have still managed to adapt, be resourceful, and stay afloat in recent years, with previous generations passing away, combined with the coronavirus pandemic and economic instability. Now the challenge is "…getting the choir to be sustainable, which means younger people need to come in. The 80- and 90-year old's can't do as much work as they used to…". This shows the immense amount of work it takes to uphold the choir, but also how important it is to the members of the choir that it continues to exist. Karen affirmed that there is a strong passion present to "keep this chorus alive". These kinds of musicking create space where one can think about and construct their relationship with their cultural heritage and identity.

4.1.4 Anthems: Access to a Lost Language, and Nostalgia for Lost Homeland

At the Nordic Northwest Midsummer Festival, I opened the PNC's performance with a *puusarvi* fanfare. I then led the choir to sing an hour-long set. The set included singing national anthems of the USA, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland, and then one other piece of choral repertoire from each aforementioned Nordic country. In looking back at the repertoire from the Portland Nordic Chorus, I asked Karen how the PNC created meaning in the choir and how their repertoire was chosen. She replied: "Sometimes folks in the choir suggest things, folk pieces or well-known pieces. Sometimes there are new things written. A Finnish-Minnesotan has written a song about iron ore and the miners coming. A Finn living in the Seattle area, Satu Mikkola, set text to [Wilho Saari from Naselle, Washington], a well-known kantele player's piece "Jäähyväiset". We sang it..." This shows that in interfacing with Finnish American diaspora communities and folk musicking, they are also both utilizing relationship to "current place" and songs from origins of the Nordic diaspora, to understand and create feelings of meaning and identity. This is a similar fusion utilized by The Brownsmead Flats and the Skamokawa Swamp Opera.

In singing the anthems, this reminded me that in my childhood we sang the Finnish National Anthem at Finnish and Scandinavian American gatherings in a higher frequency than I have encountered during daily life in Finland. Karen explained… "We gather from tradition and you must be struck by all the anthems 'who's being nationalistic now?' *(joke)".* In trying to understand these anthems, Karen explained to me the hidden meaning and that it is seen as a tradition honoring of that cultural heritage: "This is a tradition that the choir has had long before my time. At a gathering, you always sing the anthems…We have people who come up to us and say 'gee my

grandmother came from Iceland I'd just love to learn something!' The language can already do something for us." Understanding the power of the sung language made me realize that hearing these national anthems, whilst holding nationalistic elements, was also simultaneously an opportunity for someone to recognize language and song from their homeland that was "accepted" in the push to Americanize, because it was a national anthem.

Karen added that because the anthems are well known, they are easy for members of Nordic diaspora communities to sing, "… it's also a way to connect because the aging immigrant community and the ones who have just grown up there and moved here, they know those songs and they can sing with us…" This points to the recognizable quality, and in a way accessibility, to sing along with them. My experience conducting the PNC through the anthems matched this, and I could truly feel the joy of older diaspora community members recognizing the different languages and countries when their anthems were sung. My mother also found a letter from my grandmother (1977), noting that my grandmother had been the solo singer for the national anthem at that years' Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival. This shows that these pieces such the Nordic national anthems and Sibelius's "Finlandia" have a different meaning outside of the US then they have in Finland, and that they hold their own meaning for these US Nordic diaspora communities.

Listen: PNC sings Portland Nordic Chorus sings "Maamme" (Runeburg/Pacius), Portland Midsummer Festival 2025, mixed by Orion Boughton

I realized later that I have conducted Sibelius's "Finlandia" with the church choir of the First Lutheran Church of Astoria, Oregon (English text version, "This Is My Song"), with my own choir, Symbioosin Kuoro in Helsinki, and with the Portland Nordic Chorus in 2025. These performances were significant personal experiences and felt very different to perform in each context. In Finland it felt like an old classic, versus in Oregon a stronger presence of nostalgia was felt.

This joy felt in community choir singing is essential for building of cultural heritage creativity and identity formation, as well as addressing and holding space for nostalgia. Karen commented "This is… a connection to a past that I did not get to learn about first hand… understanding in this country that we are all immigrants and we are all here because we pushed earlier people out… I am a strong believer in learning what you can about history and knowing where you stand in it." For her, joining PNC has given her the space for music creation to reflect and develop a stronger feeling of meaning in her cultural identities.

Karen was so passionate about her time in the Portland Nordic Chorus that she additionally joined a virtual choir called the Finnish International Choir / Ulkosuomalaisten suurkuoro, with members

from over 12 countries. Joining choirs has connected Karen to members of Finnish and Nordic diaspora choirs globally and created the possibility for them to go on tour in Finland. Such events can have a lasting impact on one's cultural identity formation. I believe that this community choir space, through sharing sound and song, language, and connection to a past and faraway place, fosters important feelings of community, connection, and meaning. Karen summed up her experience of this in Portland Nordic Chorus, where she has been now very active, "when I am not singing with people, life isn't quite as good".

Figure 15. Conducting the Portland Nordic Chorus at Nordic Northwest's Midsummer Festival, 2025. Photo: Laura Boughton.

4.1.5 Nordic Space and Shepherd's Horn Traditions

Joan also mentioned the declining access to Nordic cultural heritage spaces with dying diaspora generations, remembering her early explorations with shepherds horn: "Because of my love for the instrument, before I even started studying about Prillar Guri, I played for a Norwegian Christmas service, for 20 years at Central Lutheran Church before they stopped the services." She continued, describing "I would play descants both on trumpet and on *lur*. I learned that I could not use C minor, it just sounded weird, tuning in the harmonic series clashed with the relative minor.[23]" Joan

[23] This also has to do with the tuning of the harmonic series clashing with the equal tempered Western piano, but even so, Joan was able to adapt with the major key, as the perfect 5th in the harmonic series is only 2 cents (out of a 100 cent measuring series in a semitone) off.

described synthesizing shepherd's horn practices with her prolific career as a classical trumpet player, an experience she could not have had today since these services do not exist anymore.

In hearing from Karen, Helen, and Joan, I conclude that these past few decades especially have marked a turning point for these Nordic diaspora communities, and now is the time that third and fourth generations need to continue this work.

4.2 Astoria's Suomi Hall

On July 14th, 2025, I gave an hour-long performance lecture, *Navigating Finnish American Identities Through Folk Musics* at the Suomi Hall in Astoria, Oregon as the next step in my research. I was interested to reflect on my own experiences, to Finnish Americans in the same Finnish American communities I had been in contact with since my childhood, and share my journey to Finland and connection with folk musics in Finland with them.

Figure 16. Presentation at Suomi Hall, with puusarvi, Astoria Oregon 2025. Photo: Orion Boughton.

Through playing live examples, and giving a Power Point, I opened up about my musical journey in Finland. I gave background on musical projects where we combine traditional Finnish and Nordic

dance tunes with original compositions and improvisation. Attending Kaustinen Folk Festival for the first time in 2022 allowed me to start both duos *Kietoutumo* (place of intertwinement) with Jp Jyväsjärvi, and *Etanavalaat* (Snail Whales) with Maria Häkkinen. During 2024 and 2025, I also dove further into brass and shepherd's horn influences. I studied in Malmö, Sweden with Swedish trombonist Timothy Krogerström who is interested in the microtonal shepherd's *vallåtsmodus*, and in Røros, Norway with Norwegian tubist Daniel Herskedal. These experiences helped to enrich my sound and my place in Nordic folk musics and gave me more material to explore.

I performed musical examples of these on trumpet, voice, and *puusarvi*. Then I opened up my specialization into shepherd's wind instruments and horns and my bull kelp algae/shepherd's horn Flagellate collective, which I co-founded in 2024 with Sonja Repetti, Kirsi Ojala and Veera Katila. Bull kelp also is native to Oregon, so it was nice to have that additional layer as a connecting element. Since it is already a subculture in Finland, bringing my shepherd's horn tradition information to Astoria was valuable to the Finnish American community, even just hearing the *puusarvi's* sound.

This experience provided interesting opportunities also to share with Finnish Americans in the Clatsop County area and hear their thoughts and perspectives. Furthermore, it was a chance for me to compile and summarize these past experiences and figure out how to communicate them to the public. In this way, I could also understand better myself and my own journey of musical identity.

I had one audience member ask about shepherds flute repertoire. I also talked about the research question of this thesis and described my activities thus far with the Portland Nordic Chorus. We ended with a Question and Answer section.

During the Q&A and after the lecture, many people wanted to come talk to me to ask questions and eagerly share anecdotes. What we said in this moment did not make so much of difference as the fact that we made connections and were present in the space with each other, sharing different lived experiences centered around Finland and the Finnish diaspora.

Figure 17. Suomi Hall from the back end, Astoria Oregon 2025. Photo: Devina Boughton.

Listen: Puusarvi Improvisation from Astoria's Suomi Hall Performance Lecture, 2025

4.3 Language as a Social Symbol

Now I will open the role of language as a social symbol in the Nordic diaspora communities in the PNW, and later how they combine with musicking, and identity. The majority of my interviews took place in English, however in all of them some words were thrown in in Finnish or Norwegian. Helen and I sometimes spoke in Finnish together, as she also speaks fluent Finnish, but most of our conversation happened naturally in English. Throughout all my experiences, people were not afraid to use any Finnish words they knew.

Overall, one element that I connect with the concepts of symbolism and meaning, is that everyone I interviewed, and myself, had names that they associated with Nordic diaspora heritage, some that had been anglicized in pronunciation and/or in spelling. Karen commented that they changed the name recently from the Portland Scandinavian Chorus to the Portland Nordic Chorus to reflect that Finland is not part of Scandinavia. However, Helen also mentioned the name change of Suomi Hall's association, which was difficult for her. It used to be Finnish Kalevala Brothers and Sisters

of Astoria, but now is called, more inclusively, Friends of Suomi Hall. In Oregon "Scandinavia" or "Scandi" is still used to refer to Finland as well, but people are trying to adapt to be more accurate. Karen mentioned that her family names were also anglicized. The "ä" in Pitkänen was removed from Helen's last name, becoming Pitkanen, and she also requested that I add her middle name of Inga. Joan Haaland Paddock said she wanted her middle name included so that the Norwegian part could be represented. Eden's last name Knutilla has been pronounced like noodle-ah (US American English), anglicized from Finnish Knuutila, but they are now experimenting with using Finnish pronunciation. My middle name[24] of Palmrose is the anglicized version of Finnish last name Palmroos, which was a Swedish-ized version of Pihala, from the Old Rauma area (see Figure 2). These are all representations of phonetic change which morphs the old meaning into something new due to cultural pressures.

Additionally, animal names also played a role in Nordic space meaning in the PNW. Helen's dog is named Sisu, showing strong connection to sisu as a valued social symbol. One of Joan's dogs is named Freija. These names show Finnish and Norwegian connections.

Community choir gives people access to interface and connect with lost languages, in a way that they were once, or still are, spoken. Music is a powerful tool for learning and connecting to language, and in the case of the Portland Nordic Chorus, language plays a huge part in reclaiming exposure to cultural heritage connections from Nordic countries. Karen said "I'm aware that in all of those families the kids were not allowed to speak the language that their parents and grandparents did, mouths washed out with soap…" This was due to pressure to "Americanize" and conform to a monolingual setting. Now, getting native or Heritage speakers (for example, two first generation Finns living in Portland singing in PNC) to help pronounce these languages in the songs sung by the PNC also adds to making connections with these languages and heal some of those past losses.[25] Therefore, language connected to music through song is also a huge symbol, as exemplified with the experiences of the PNC singing in different Nordic languages to connect with cultural heritage.

I asked Eden when they began discovering their Finnish cultural heritage. They recall that their dive into cultural heritage began

[24] For Finnish readers: my mother, me, and my sibling have middle names coming from the Finnish last or middle names of our great grandparents. I have learned that this is not a common phenomenon in Finland, so I thought it might be interesting to know.

> …in 2013-14 with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement into my consciousness. That was my first confrontation with whiteness, and being white and needing to be more intentional about how being a white (US) American impacted me… One of the pieces of advice I got early on in that research…(was) that I needed to support that work with cultural understanding, and that I should start to research my own ancestral cultural practices.

This led to an ongoing long and healing process, including bringing kantele and folk song learning into Eden's artistic practices. and also a complex understanding of their positionality within the social construct of whiteness in the United States and grappling with those meanings. As part of this process, Eden visited Finland for the first time in Summer 2025[26].

I asked Eden about their relationship to the Finnish language. They recalled: "I said *kiitos* to the guy I was staying with and he said 'how does it feel to speak your mother-tongue'? Well my mother-tongue is English but my mother-mother-mothers tongue, having that long cord stretch. And then, the tears came, what was left, what has been lost." They felt an emotional connection in using even a little of the language, spoken or in song. For both Eden and myself, connecting through Finnish folk musics and learning more of the language as adults has been meaningful and healing.

4.4 Helen's Artworks and Cultural Identity

Helen is a trustee and the chairman of the entertainment committee at Friends of Suomi Hall. She works with arts and culture and any musicians and artists connected to Finland who are coming through Astoria, in this case myself. She told me about her parents' difficult journeys from Finland to the United States, and how her artistic practices as a visual artist help pay homage and respect both to her parents, and to the nature and landscapes of Finland. Helen stated that she has an intense need to paint, her oil painting practice revolving around Finnish landscapes, and that she uses bright, happy colors, "…I found that it gave me hope and life" during and after hardships she has endured in her own life. She sells prints of her paintings in Suomi Hall Nordic Market event which takes place in November, giving a chance to share these sceneries with other members of the Astoria community.

Helen also mentioned the extreme poverty her parents came from and the difficulty of the move, stating that "work" was one of the only English words her father knew when he came, which got

[26] We met by coincidence at a gig I was playing with *Lempivärit* (Favorite Colors), a Finnish environmental folk-rock band.

him a job “driving railroad stakes” across the United States, and landing in Astoria also as a fisherman. In one painting, Helen’s features her father Heikki (or, Henry) fishing on a trolling boat. Helen referenced “America the Beautiful” and said that the song inspired the background in this painting. She told me that the “fruited plain” is the sea and that her father referred to fishing in the sea with the phrase “*mina kynnän maata*” (I am working the land). She wanted to pay respects to her fathers’ gratefulness to have fishing work, that he would always say “*Amerika on paras maa*” (America is the best land).

All of Helen’s artworks, hung up tastefully around her house, depict simple and powerful scenes of daily life in Finland or Finnish America. One painting depicts planting potatoes in a field, an activity which Helen herself took part in as a child on a trip to Finland. Another picture depicts her mother with her pet pig, Sofi. Another was painted from a combination of several photos Helen took on a trip to Finland on the Eastern border with Russia, a ramshackle house surrounded by a field of lupine. The colors and vacant house captivated Helen, and she wanted to capture them. Another painting shows her mother as a young woman in the town of Kiihtelysvaara (near Joensuu) with her first husband making plans to marry her and thusly that they could escape from Finland to Oregon, on what would be a multiple year journey, leading to them living in Astoria, his death, and then the meeting of Helens’ parents in Suomi Hall on the dance floor.

4.5 Karelian folk musics and Finnish diaspora

While first exploring our Finnish cultural heritage, Eden and I were both introduced to the Kalevala (1835). The Kalevala, often coined as the “national epic of Finland” inspired many others, such as Washington-based Finnish American author Karl Marlantes’s book “Deep River. This collection of mythologies and stories in trochaic tetrameter (meter of 5) also matches *rekilaulu* and other poems present in both Finnish, Karelian, and Estonian folk music histories. Ethnomusicologist Elias Lönnrot collected mythologies, originally sung as *runolaulu*, or sung poetry, and added his own texts, which in the end became the Kalevala. This work is complicated, for if Lönnrot had not collected these texts they would have most likely been lost. Simultaneously, when Finland built its national identity around these myths, the Kalevala’s origins and context were used as a way to understand “Finnishness”. This buries Karelian culture and language recognition in the process, both of which are now endangered (Kallio 2023).

Both Eden and I were deeply inspired by the Kalevala. As a teenager, I read the English translation and as a young adult I composed a piece of contemporary classical music, with Finnish text, from the creation myth. When Eden started to play the kantele, they also happened to work with the

creation myth, memorizing and performing Eino Frieberg's English translation of the text. We were both told incorrectly that this was part of "our culture". While coming to terms with the meaning of our own individual Finnish cultural heritage, we had to understand that the Kalevala is appropriated from Karelian culture.

When and where to perform Karelian folk music needs to be taken in a contextual and case by case basis, giving respect and reference to where it comes from, and not repeating tropes and stereotypes of colonialization and appropriation. However, this does not mean that Karelian folk music can never be performed. In the Finnish folk scene in the past decade, the same conversations have occurred surrounding Karelian folk music, and Finnish people should also understand similar relations. At the same time, efforts to preserve and respect Karelian folk music are taking place, by those with and without Karelian roots[27].

Eden reflected on their experience of realizing the complexity of the Kalevala, recalling how:

> I entered into learning Kalevala with this idea that I was learning my traditional Finnish ancestral music and I found out that that wasn't true, that is such a gift, going through that process has been very informative of how I think about my identity. One thing that has happened in this process is getting more connected with what it means to be American… When I started singing that song it had the somatic/body experience of having this bubble of old singers behind me that formed through the process of memorizing that song… I am a listener too in terms of when and where certain songs and stories want to be told and learning what that is…

Upon coming to Finland, my own eyes were also opened to the complex appropriation of folk traditions from Karelian[28] minorities, navigating questions of when it is acceptable to learn and present a folk music tradition. Eden later shared their perspective that for them, the creation song "… isn't an ancestral song but it is a story of this world that is very powerful and part of that is informed by conversations that I had to have in Finland with Karelian people – where's this song inside of your imagination – that doesn't exist the same for everybody". These cases point to the

[27] Some examples are Anne-Mari Kivimäki's "Kotiin", Amanda Kauranne's work with Karelian laments, groups such as Celenka, Sähköpaimen (Electric Shepherd), and *puusarvi* shepherd's horns.

[28] Karelian people, now existing in both Finnish and Russian nations, are a minority group of Finland with their own language and culture, which has been colonized by Finland and claimed as "Finnish". For example "The Kalevala" coined as Finland's national epic, actually comes from Karelian mythologies.

ongoing importance of conversations amongst Finnish Americans and in Finland about the appropriation of Karelian culture in formation of ideas of cultural or national identity.

4.6 Musicking and Diaspora Identity through Visiting Finland

To feel that you come from somewhere and belong to somewhere is both a fairytale that we tell ourselves, and something incredibly powerful. Personally, Oregon will always be a strong and important place for me, yet my family participated in settler colonialism by coming there and displacing original inhabitants. By living in Finland, I have become more connected to the land from where I have roots, yet I feel if I had moved to another place where I had immersed myself culturally just as much, I could also feel that same connection.

To Eden, visiting Finland in Summer 2025, which was something they had spent years planning for, was a transcendental experience. "I always had this 'I am Finnish'. When I got to Finland it was the first time that folks were like 'where?'. … really new idea that the specificity actually means something…" This experience of visiting Finland affords a deeper understanding of place and space, that can inspire more musical and artistic work, as it did for Eden, Helen and me.

Eden described how singing and playing kantele in the US and connecting with their Finnish heritage, both of which have been strengthened following their journey to Finland, affected their feelings of identity and brought powerful emotions to the surface. They recalled to me when they first performed with kantele and song in a group:

> I do not have an imagination for that, I do not know what that feels like. So the first time that I am singing the whole song and playing the kantele and I'm in this group of people, feeling them breathing with me, that's more or less my first time really being engaged with folk music…the place in my body of being able to find out what it felt like to have a connection to the idea of culture. …that also allowed me to identify those different alive places here (in the US). And it introduced a different way of seeing for me.

I asked Eden how their experiences in Finland brought meaning to folk music. They responded:

> I'd go to sauna and just go back and forth singing… folks would start singing and someone else would join in… here's the bunch of folk musicians that I am like living and working around in but just how much we're singing together, and to be able to be singing all the time which is really what nourishes me so much. One of the interesting things that happened… is

> having an ancestral connection… Nothing really strong was happening until I was getting ready to go home and I was with my *heilat* and they were like, can we sing you one of the Finnish immigration songs. In this song it's like, oh in America the streets were lined with gold, *Suomi* can't sustain me anymore, the *heila* at home says write to me if you can. They started singing and a huge hole opened up in my back… I speak poetically and literally on that matter, this is a way that I connect to this idea. I mean, we left, I am the first person to come back to Finland in my family since my great-grandparents left... From *Pohjanmaa*.

To Eden, travelling to Finland and participating in events such as a queer folk music jam in Helsinki inspired them even further to think about the power of folk song, and how they can bring that back to their work and artistic practices. They added:

> In my mind singing is such a powerful thing to do, it activates your voice, takes you from doing nothing to doing something. In my art practice, I really feel like right now, so many people are feeling really frozen… If you can get somebody to make a sound, doesn't even have to be singing, then you've opened up a part of their experience, consciousness, ability to move through space that wasn't opened before.

Eden also commented on their perspective of Finnish folk musics as a piece of technology, a tool for reflecting and understanding life, and how this also can connect to their own experiences and feelings. Eden and I then discussed ways to interact with Finnish folk music in the context of being in the US, where Finland may be mostly unfamiliar to majority of people. For Eden, understanding the multifacetedness of their identity also necessitates making space for cultural heritage creativity in ways that do not only include performing Finnish music. They stated:

> Singing songs in America there are so many different cultures and songs and stories happening, if I were to JUST know stories from Finland that wouldn't be able to speak to all of the different types of voices and sounds… you can keep growing and building out your storytelling capabilities and your doctors' suitcase of songs.

Eden exclaimed:

> you look at community dances, community songs, they have a rhythmic repe(tition)… doing that together with a bunch of people, this is us being together moving together and our brains are literally moving and shaking in the same way and how much that helps the sense of belonging… It's so simple and it makes so much sense… and these moments where we get to be stars and people look at us and say wow that's so good! This journey between

> separation and unity that's so helpful where we have that balance and folk music allows us to do that!

This sums up well the relationship between having one's own sound, performing solo, and performing in communion and collaboration with others. In this space for cultural heritage creativity, large emotions such as joy and grief can also be processed. Eden and I agreed that finding joy in community practices is very important. With joy also comes grief, such as in the Karelian lamentation songs *lamentti* or *itkuvirsi*, literally crying-hymn, from people who would go and sing and cry at funerals. This has directly influenced Eden's plans of moving to New York City to study both social work and at a seminary. There they hope to integrate folk song practices into, for example, a clinical setting. They shared some of their inspiration, striving to:

> …learn how to take these myths, interpret and understand them theologically in a spiritual care setting, and myth also includes folk song practices, and apply those in clinical settings…The thing that is so unique to me about Finland … are these huge folk song practices that are somewhat embedded in daily life and there's just a lot of 'em… Also …the practice of taking the melodies and applying different lyrics, songs are shared and also shared in meter, you can switch them around. So I think there's a lot of potential for application in an American setting with young people and their families inside of a hospital setting… Part of my idea of research is using myth and different cultural understandings and cultural lives, bringing in those technologies…

As with Joan and Norway, Finland as a country has become a very special place for Karen, Eden, Helen, and myself alike, in different ways. Karen upheld the idea that Finland felt like a type of home for her. The word and concept of home can be complicated, and it was interesting to me that she felt feelings of home somewhere where her family had not been for generations, and where she does not live. Yet, she can take that symbolism and imagined home with her back to Oregon: "Experience for me in Finland is like when I hike deep into the mountains …it's a place I feel so connected to the earth and I feel so safe and so at home in a way that I do not feel in the city… the people and the culture just felt like coming home to me." It was her trip to Finland that ultimately led Karen to becoming more interested in her cultural heritage and joining PNC.

4.7 Shepherd's Horns and Identity through Musicking

Part of my personal practice in becoming a folk musician in Finland has included finding my own sound. Within my autoethnographic research I have kept an artistic journal reflecting on that process.

Here is an excerpt from 11.9.2024

> I am connected to: connected perspectives and stories, spectrums, concrete and abstract concepts, structure and freedom, sound and tuning awareness. Music's ineffability, connection, purpose, communication, feeling, expressing, processing, subjectivity and effect, identity formation. In solo brass…sounds, expression, gesture, perceived philosophies? For the majority of my "career" as a musician (up until this point), I have thought that I don't see a purpose to create solo work, when the greatest meaning I get from music definitely stems from collaboration, sharing of sound experiences. Yet I wonder what it means to have my own sound? …it's a bit like asking "who am I, really?" Concrete, yet fleeting, on the periphery. That is how I would describe the influence Finnish American communities gave me as a child. Now, I have told myself a story based on what I remember. Some of it may even be true…When we romanticize and linearize the past, does it become a story? In any case, I want to dive into identity formation and the chasm between the Finland that is yet imagined on the West Coast of Oregon and the Suomi existing precariously today. I am in between these two realities (of many). Am I a trumpet player? A folk musician? I have been learning by doing. I am interested in how Finnish folk music and dance influence people's connection to their cultural identity in an increasingly blurred and heterogenous definition of cultures. (How to recognize and truly celebrate that diversity while holding onto something of the past?) Above all, change is constant. And these (folk music) aspects, can still be alive. Interacting with myself in a dialogue from the past to the present, I try to understand how I came to be here, and what it means to be in this positionality…synthesizing with concepts of structure and freedom.

When I was working in 2024 with Timothy Krögerstrom, a Swedish trombone player specializing in playing local shepherd's horn repertoire with microtonal tuning (*vallåtsmodus*), which is very unusual and highly aligned to some of my own specializations. Timothy states in his research "(variable) intonation can be used in the genre to give colour to the melodies, and…personal expression" (Wendell 2023). While I was studying *vallåtsmodus* with him, I exclaimed at the difficulty of tuning in the 5-step tunings system used, and he pointed out the importance of finding

one's own colors on the instrument. He emphasized that it was more about personal self-expression to convey the feeling of the song, rather than the idea that one has to be exactly "in tune", which itself is a social construct reinforced by the 12-note per octave equal temperament predominant in Western classical, jazz, and pop music in the 21st century. This was a massive epiphany in my artistic identity and understanding of how to approach playing shepherd's music repertoire. Tuning is also contextual and can be approached as so. As Timothy states, this kind of daily practice of shepherd's folk tunes in *vallåtsmodus* can bring "raised awareness of the intervals of modality, as well as deeper knowledge of aural traditional performance practice" (Wendell 2023). After working with Timothy, I have taken this knowledge wholeheartedly into my own practice, as well as in continuing my work with Karelian *puusarvi*, (buckhorn), *pitkähuilu* (overtone flute), algae horns, trumpet and voice.

To play with others, one also must have their own sound. But that sound does not have to be only one thing. This statement to me is equally relevant to identity. Building one's identity as a folk musician in the modern day, I have been using shepherd's horns and horns made of bull kelp algae as a platform for making space for these underrepresented sounds and for algae awareness. With our Flagellate Collective, the idea that shepherd's horns carried practical messages can now carry the message that algae are vital to the health of the Baltic Sea and create air that we breathe.

It also brings me great joy to serve shepherd's horn repertoire as a horn player. Since the industrial revolution, many ritualistic and practical aspects of the shepherd's horn traditions have become obsolete and the practices are endangered. It is also suitable that I am a trumpet player as I can more easily make sounds from the trumpet-like *puusarvi* and *luikku/brelo/lur.* Trumpet and *lur* player Joan Paddock agrees with me, and we had a long and fruitful conversation at her house in McMinnville, Oregon. She stated:

> Well absolutely cultural identity, and as a trumpet player I feel very connected, …some people have told me that I must be the best *lur* player in the world, I don't know that that can even be possibly true because there are so many people that haven't even been heard but because I'm in a lot of public places and I love to do it and I just play what comes to my heart. I love playing outside, and I love playing in large spaces, old wooden spaces, because the *lur* sounds so great in that acoustic…

Figure 18. Dog Titan, Devina Boughton and puusarvi, Joan Paddock and lur, McMinnville, Oregon 2025. Photo: Orion Boughton.

Especially for brass and wind instruments, literal space and acoustics makes such a big difference.

With passion, Joan recalled an important memory of playing the lur when she was in Norway and some of her friends organized a surprise performance opportunity:

> First they took me to the Maihaugen Museum…she said… take your lur out of the car, and I said why… do I need that in this museum… but I was in another side of the part playing for the cows and all that, so I came there… I took out the lur, there was a policeman standing on the other side, and I figure it out by now, there must be a queen coming… so I said to the policeman in sign language as best I could, is it ok if I play or not? So typically as I do for weddings or any ceremonial occasion I kept playing… She was in the car in the front seat. I saw her, and I smiled with my eyes and she tipped her hat. And so I played for the queen as she was going to cut the ribbon on her childhood home… I got a chance to play for the queen, so you know, it is very special.

This shows one surprising direction that following a passion can go, and is a great example of an experience that would never happen without Joan's dedication to playing the *lur*. "I've met people, I have learned to be more free and improvise rather than being stuck to the page."

Listen: Dr. Joan Paddock improvising a fanfare on the lur, 2025, mixed by Orion Boughton

Chapter 5: Reflections and Conclusions

5.1 Reflections

First, I will summarize my findings related to my research question:

> How does folk music making play a role in Finnish North American and Nordic diaspora identity formation in the Pacific Northwest of the United States?

I found that folk music making, or Nordic space musicking, shows up in personal artistic practices, which can lead towards performing and engaging the public, such as in my, Eden's, and Joan's cases. It also shows up in a more communal way, such as being part of a group such as Portland Nordic Chorus, and performing in public spaces, which are often also examples of Nordic space. I conclude that the existence of these Nordic spaces is very important for both giving opportunities for musicking and thinking about topics such as diaspora identity. With everyone I interviewed, visiting Nordic countries of interest also strengthened feelings and activities towards musicking in the places they live in, or in Helen's case, inspired her painting practice. For Karen, Joan, and myself, musicking has also allowed us to spend time in Nordic countries. This shows that arts and culture, and creativity as a whole, are an important and integral medium for translating meaning of one's identity and feeling connected to oneself and creating community.

Although Finnish American communities exist actively in the Pacific Northwest of the US, their identity shows up stronger in a place of Nordic Space, rather than existing solely as "Finnish American". Events surrounding community music making often have overlap with Finnish and other Nordic diaspora communities, such as in the cases of the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival and the Portland Midsummer Festival. However, I saw that Nordic Space also creates the possibility for Finnish American identity to exist musically and culturally. There, such social symbols of the national anthems, Nordic dance traditions, singing in Finnish, and eating traditional foods are understood and recognized. This can make people feel seen and appreciated, and help feel and process feelings of community, identity, and nostalgia.

Through my interviews and autoethnographic experiences, my data has shown that aspects of Nordic space musicking in the Pacific Northwest are experienced privately in the everyday. Publicly they are experienced in organized events and special gatherings, but less often, such as in the Portland and Astoria Midsummer festivals once a year which require both physical space and active effort to maintain. There has to be strong interest or connection in order to be involved, with an existing community or link. If not, one must create that community oneself. However, for those

who have done so, it is very worthwhile. As Eden exclaimed: “Doing antiracist work (inc. cultural heritage) fills a part of my life that was hungering that I did not realize was hungering”. Highlighting these Nordic spaces and examples of cultural heritage identity through musicking in the PNW show that there are still diaspora communities today to whom these activities are important and healing.

In my case, all of the projects and the experiences from my field trip, research questions, and ongoing collaborations in Finland have helped inform my artistic practice and reshape my sound.

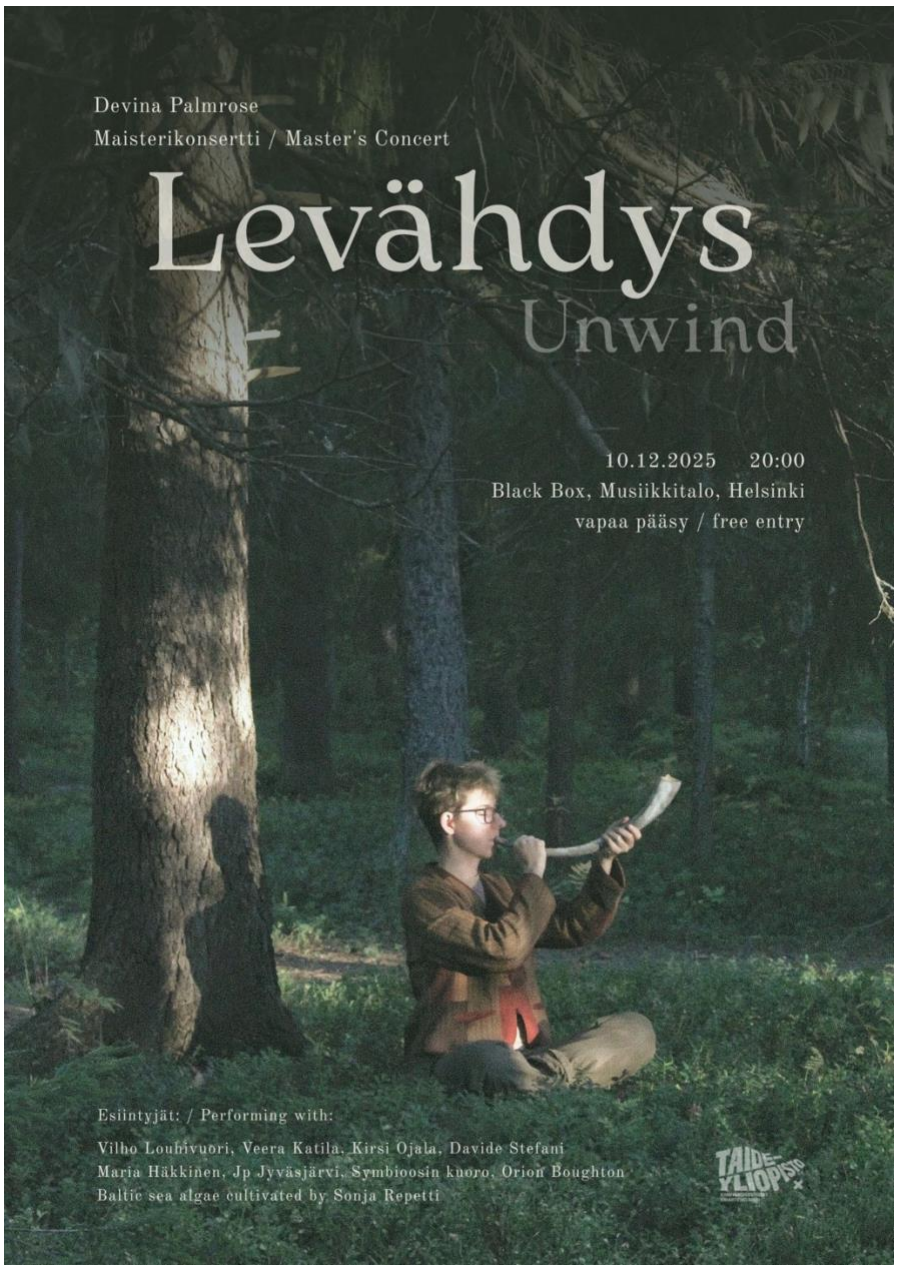

Figure 19. Levähdys/Unwind, 2025. Poster: Magdalena Kłodnicka

This informed the material for my masters performance “Levähdys/Unwind” in an artistic research culmination on Decmber 10th, 2025 at Helsinki Music House’s Black Box. The sounds I explored

throughout this research and representing my Finnish American identity showed up strongly in the musical material of this concert, which featured musicians from Flagellate Collective, my choir Symbioosin Kuoro, and duo Kietoutumo, as well as pieces I composed, improvised, and co-created using elements of Nordic space musicking. “Levähdys/Unwind” also marked the beginning of expanding my artistic research into algae/shepherds horns collaboration, which I hope to further explore in doctoral research.

Before I went to Finland, I did not know what it meant to be Finnish American on a daily basis. Upon moving to Finland, I slowly realized in what ways I am more “Finnish” and in what ways I am more “Oregonian”. Coming back here to Oregon, working with PNC, performing in Suomi Hall, and speaking to people in these Nordic spaces creates a direct connection. Going back in time with these groups and having a more personal level of engaging has helped me see what these communities here are doing.

Through this process, I discovered that collaboration and being influenced by my surroundings is at the heart of my musical values and my process, and Finnish and Nordic folk music both from my childhood and my time in Finland have had a meaningful effect on my sound.

Through these conversations, I learned that all of the family members of Helen, Karen, and myself coming from Finland were farmers, fisherman, working class, who moved to the United States in search of a better life. Karen reflected on this big move, asking “What was it like for them, what made them take this chance? None of my family were well to do, farmers and fisherman that didn’t own businesses, so that was a pretty big deal.” The Finland of today is different from the Finland that my ancestors left, and the carrying of that in the diaspora communities. There is not one static answer of “Finnishness” that one can grab on to, it is individual for each person, but also I feel there are collective ideas coming out of that, there is this imagined Finland in Finnish America. These imagined communities can be very different, however they are connected by shared memory, tradition, language, music, and social symbols although they can have different meanings.

Now Nordic diaspora communities are left with generational memory, nostalgia, and ideas of what “somewhere” means. Beyond that, individuals must have existing communities and/or do their own research to discover or create Nordic spaces.

This research illuminates the meaning of musicking and community on cultural heritage identity in Nordic diaspora communities based in the Pacific Northwest in 2025, an area which is not as highly researched as for example the Midwest of the US. Examples of Nordic space musicking are explained. Additionally my interviews and performance lecture allowed for cross-cultural diaspora

exchange as I shared my experiences in modern-day Finland as a Finnish American from Oregon. On a personal level I reflected and came to better understand how experiences and places I have encountered have affected, and shown the importance of, my artistic identity.

There are numerous side topics I did not have a chance to explore in this research. One is the continually heightened role of technology, ranging situationally between aiding and hindering cross-cultural communication and understanding of identities. This, as well as multiple diasporas existing in the same physical space, has allowed for globalization. I do not want to ignore the duality and complexity of our identities, nor do I want to pretend that anything is universal. One cannot ignore these aspects as we move further and further away from homogeneity yet still want to hold onto defining folk musics.

Another would be the musical characteristics themselves. I touched on this topic when analyzing some of the differences in Nordic space musicking in diaspora communities, that there has been clear fusion and combining of influences. However I did not go into a deep musical analysis as I had initially thought I might. In the end my research question was more about feelings of identity from musicking, rather than the substance of the music. Although they cannot really exist without one another, I could also further analyze specific musical features and compare them to each other. I could also further analyze how my time in Finland and specialization into Nordic shepherd's horns have affected my sound on trumpet and voice.

In many ways, we are our lived experiences. There can be multiple truths existing at once, and I strive to help give space and visibility to the unsaid. At the end of my conversation with Helen, I thanked her for sharing so many life stories with me. She replied "It's not stories, it's real".

5.2 Conclusion: What Now?

After this written work is published, I will continue this research in different modalities. I will figure out how to present this research to wider audiences, for example through future articles, podcasts, and lectures.

My second goal is record and release more music with the previously mentioned groups, such as those from my master's concert. I will start with my recording works from my duo "Kietoutumo", and with my own compositions featuring guest collaborators, in continuation of the musical aspects of this research. I also want to visit the SKS archives more to collect more folk tunes that were

present in Astoria, Oregon in the 1960s and make a concert of a collection of these tunes to tour in Astoria.

My final aspiration is to continue this research on the doctoral level: Shepherds of the Baltic Sea, creating contemporary folk musics and revitalizing Nordic shepherd's horn traditions through art-science collaboration and algae awareness, from queer perspectives. I will start by organizing a tour "Playing with algae" around Finland with Flagellate Collective for Spring/Summer 2026, which is supported with a grant from Kone Foundation.

My path in Finnish North American diaspora folk music communities could continue in many directions. I could delve further into the symbolism of "Finnishness" in different contexts or look into Finnish American identity and globalization. I could also write a narrative inquiry based on different stories and interviews from further interviews with Nordic diaspora community musicians in the Pacific Northwest whom I have not yet met. It would be fruitful to continue that research, as well as more deeply analyzing musical characteristics, or into the aspects and sounds of Finnish language spoken in the Pacific Northwest.

No matter where my research journey leads, I want to stay curious, stay open, and continue to learn and make meaningful connections with the world I encounter. In these times, this is a vital task.

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Appendix I: Devina Master's Thesis Interview Questions, June 2025

Research Question: How do folk and creative community music engagement practices play a role in Finnish American and Nordic diaspora identity formation in the Pacific Northwest of the United States?

My interview questions:

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[29] From temperance movement to hall-socialism. Formation of amateur music-making practices in Finnish American immigrant communities in the United States at the turn of the 20th century

[30] *Colouring with intonation – variable intonation of Swedish folk music on the trombone*

NOTE: these are conversation starters! Not all questions need to be answered, other questions can come up!

1. What kind of relationship do you have with Finland and/or with Finnish American communities here in the West Coast (where specifically?) Do you have family ties to Finland?
    a. If last question is yes, what generation are you?
2. What kind of relationship do you have with your Finnishness, and how does music play a role in that relationship?
3. What IS the music that plays a role in your life that has connection to Finland? Can be many answers… how do you define your relationship with these musics? What draws you to these musics?
4. Why do you engage with this music/these musics (and in what roles?) What significance/meaning does this music have for you?
5. Do you see anything as a "living tradition" in your practice?
6. Where have you found/learned relevant music that you make as part of your connection to these communities.
7. Do you have any stories that you want to share specifically that have to do with these musics?
8. What do these "Finnish" symbols mean to you – national anthem, hymns, flags, sisu, etc…
9. How do different Nordic diaspora groups come together, musically and culturally? Do you see similarities and differences or do you see more strongly the Nordic diaspora as one group?
10. What do you hope for in the future with your engagement with Finnish and Finnish American musics?

Appendix II: Interview with my Grandmother, Nov. 17th, 2009

My Interview. This interview is with my grandma about her Finnish background, and about the Scandinavian Festival; a celebration that happens every year in the outskirts of Astoria, where she and my Grandpa live.

Q #1. To you, what is the Scandinavian Festival?

It is a time for people in the community who are of Scandinavian descent to remember their origins, to enjoy food, arts and crafts, costumes and friends from their heritages. And it is a time for all people in the area to be "Scandinavians" for a day or two.

Q #2. Why is it celebrated?

It is celebrated because over 40 years ago a Brownie Scout troop in Astoria put on the first Scandinavian festival in Clatsop County. The girls were part of a folk dance group and wanted to share their skills and interest with the community. The festival grew from there. A large percentage of Clatsop Co. folk claim at least some Scandinavian heritage. Their forebears left the "old country" in the period from about 1880 to 1950 to find a better life for themselves and their children in America. In the "old country" opportunities were limited by famines, social classes, lack of education, and, later by wars and political unrest. Here, the immigrants found work in the woods, in the mines, on the fishing grounds and in the canneries. Some found work on farms. All of them found greater opportunities for education, safety and prosperity for their children than they would have had in the "old country". The Scandinavian festival is a chance to remember all that and look back nostalgically, while having a good time with friends and fellow Scandinavians.

Q #3. What would it look like to go there? What would you see?

The festival is held in the fair grounds. You would see booths where different traditional foods are for sale, crafts are for sale (like wood carvings). Other items for sale are woven rugs, wonderful wool sweaters, jewelry, Finnish knives. Other food items like krumkake, roolepolsa, sturgeon sandwiches, prune tarts, are also available to satisfy the hungry. You would also see various dance groups performing on stage. The dancers are dressed in authentic ethnic costumes. Some dance groups are local, some come from Seattle, Portland or even from Finland or Sweden. You would see and hear other performers: singers, accordion players, ensembles. You would also see the festival court. Each country is represented by both a "senior" and a "junior" princess. At the coronation, each senior princess makes a speech telling "what my heritage means to me". One of the princesses is crowned "Miss Scandinavia". All the princesses wear authentic costumes. You would also see the raising of the flags for each country and the US and hear the singing of each national anthem to "kick off" the celebration.

Q #4. What do you do there?

When I go to the festival, I eat. I have to have my *riisi puuro ja hedelmä keitto* (rice pudding and fruit soup), my frickadiller and red cabbage, my Swedish pea soup with rye bread, and my *abelskiver* (apple dumpling). I love to watch the dancing and other performances. I love just

walking around and bumping into old friends for a greeting or a chat. Occasionally, I buy something. On Sunday morning I sometimes attend the nondenominational church service during which hymns and scripture lessons are read and sung in the various Scandinavian languages, as well as English.

Q #5. What are some of your favorite things to do at the Scandinavian Festival?

All of the things I mentioned above are my favorites. In addition I love over-hearing any Finnish conversation. I love going to the festival with my children and grandchildren, sharing the experience.

Q#6. Is it important to you? If so, why?

It is important to me. It builds community, helps us know something about who we are and where we come from.

Q #7. What are some of the things you are interested in, about Finland and your Finnish background?

I am interested in anything about my Finnish "little Cousins". Because all my grandparents, as well as my mother, were born in Finland, I have a great many "little cousins" in Finland. We exchange Christmas messages so I "keep in touch" with many of them. I am interested in the towns of Rauma, Turku, Kokkola, Kälviä and Helsinki because I have family ties there. I have visited all these places and more. I love Finnish music and listening to the CDs I have. It is a special treat when Finnish musicians and artists come to Astoria to perform. I am proud to know that the Finnish educational system rates high among world education systems. Finns also excel in cell phone technology and silvaculture (forestry methods).

Q #8. What is your opinion on the Finnish language and culture?

Until recent years Finland has had quite a homogeneous culture, even though there are regional differences. While the country is the fifth largest in area of European countries, it has a population of only about five million. Because it is so far north, Finland has always had to deal with long, dark, cold winters and the possibilities of crop failures in the summers. Fortunately, modern transportation and communication mean that her people no longer have to suffer famines. But they still have to contend with the elements and nature. Perhaps it is the long, dark, cold winters which help explain the high rates of alcoholism, depression and suicides among Finnish people. On the other hand, the Finns are known for their honesty and integrity, for their hard work and industriousness. Finns value handwork and maintain a fine network of *käsityökoulut* (handwork

schools) open to both youngsters and adults. Finland is famous for having fully paid its war debt after World War I. The Finnish national character is summed up as sisu, a stubbornness, “guts”, grace under pressure which has enabled this people to keep her language and identity for centuries even though she has been under the rule of other nations for centuries. As to the Finnish language, it is unique. It is completely unlike the other Scandinavian languages which are Indo European. Finnish is Finno-Ugric along with Estonian, Hungarian and a few other small language groups. The music of Finnish is in my ears and mind from having listened to it all the while I was growing up. But I am very sorry not to be able to speak Finnish.

I replied: The only thing is that you do speak Finnish. Maybe not perfectly, but you mentioned a lot of Finnish words, and put that you liked overhearing Finnish conversations.

Q#9. Anything else you would like to add? This is all for now.