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# CREATING A NATION IN SONG: 100 YEARS OF FINNISH INDEPENDENCE

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## **Creating a Nation in Song: 100 years of Finnish Independence**

### **Synopsis:**

Finland celebrates 100 years as a nation in 2017, and music played a crucial role in the drive to independence. Through the lens of song, we can illuminate the cultural, political, social and artistic significance of Finland's heritage and present-day role in the musical world. I will perform representative songs, including folk and classical, and discuss the significance of music to Finnish culture. This year is a rare opportunity to survey the musical history of a country in the context of its first 100 years of independence.

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**Creating a Nation in Song: 100 Years of Finnish Independence**

Abstract

Finland celebrates 100 years of independence in 2017. Music has played a crucial role in giving the Finnish people an identity and unifying them in the drive toward independence in 1917. My presentation will explore the role music, specifically songs, played in achieving independence, and the ways music has continued to be a central tenet of Finnish nationalism in this new era as a member of the European Union. The format for this presentation is a lecture-recital, and the aim is to give listeners an understanding of the role songs that have played in Finland's national identity. I will discuss traditional song repertoire, songs from the National Romantic period leading up to independence, and songs written in the 100 years since then. I will also perform representative songs, and provide a comprehensive list of songs for teaching and performing. The roots of Finnish music are found in folk music and the Kalevala. A keystone to Finnish identity, the Kalevala is a 22,795-verse poem from the mid-1800s. Folk music and the Kalevala continue to be a touchstone for culture, from classical song to rock and metal bands, and I will refer to their influence throughout my presentation. Finland's unparalleled national investment in music is grounded both in ample musical education for children and in the renowned Sibelius Academy, and I will discuss the role musical education plays in Finland's success as a nation. After centuries of political turbulence, music was a central element in forging a strong national identity for Finland during the late 19th and early 20th century. The deep emotional connection that songs evoke has been an enormous influence on Finnish culture, history, and spirit. I have done research in Helsinki, Stockholm, Seattle, and St. Olaf College, and have coached with faculty members at the Sibelius Academy, with the support of grants from the American-Scandinavian Foundation, the Finlandia Foundation, and the University of Wisconsin. I have presented lecture-recitals throughout the US, edited a three-volume anthology of Nordic songs, and recorded a CD of this repertoire. My research for this presentation will trace a country's musical development through specific examples of songs and composers. The implications of the importance of song to Finland as a nation are an important reference for musicians around the world. This year is a rare opportunity to survey the musical history of a country in the context of its first 100 years of independence.