

Janne Palkisto, *Säveltäjä-klarinetisti Bernhard Crusellin ammatillinen toiminta ja vuorovaikutus Ruotsissa 1795–1833* (Turku: Turun yliopisto). 83 pp.

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Janne Palkisto's PhD dissertation, a thesis consisting of four previously published peer-reviewed articles and a substantial theoretical and methodological introduction, focuses on the professional musical life of one of the few Finnish-born internationally known composers of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bernhard Henrik Crusell (1775–1838). Crusell was a musical cosmopolite in his time, which in itself is remarkable as his family background was relatively modest. A son of a book-binder, he studied the clarinet in the military band of Sweaborg and finally ended up as one of the leading musicians of the Royal Chapel in Stockholm and a musical professional of great renown in Europe. During the four decades of his life that Palkisto discusses, Crusell was, of course, also much more than a well-known musician: a composer, teacher, philanthropist, husband and father. All this becomes clear over the course of Palkisto's work due to his holistic approach to his topic.

Palkisto, in his own words, situates Crusell and his public musicianship within various contexts of agency: newspaper debates, charity institutions and Freemasonry (p. 13). Theoretically Palkisto subscribes to the new cultural history of music, in which music is discussed as a cultural practice, agents' adherence or resistance to conventions and norms, as well as a social interaction. In addition to this well-articulated framework grounded in cultural history, Palkisto bases his argumentation on Irma Sulkunen's theory of action biography, together with neo-hermeneutic musicological criticism, mostly elaborated by scholars such as Lawrence Kramer.

As indicated above, Palkisto does not, in spite of his focus on a person, aim at a biography in and of itself. Rather, the four research articles present themselves to the reader as theoretically diverse cross-sections, snapshots as it were,

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to Crusell's public musical life. For the most part, these takes on Crusell are innovative, interesting and convincingly establish new knowledge about the composer. For this reader, the fourth article "Säveltäjä-klarinetisti Bernhard Crusell vapaamuurarina 1800-luvun taitteessa: uusia tuttavuuksia, hyväntekeväisyyttä ja musiikillista symboliikkaa" [Composer-clarinetist Bernhard Crusell as a freemason around the turn of the century 1800: new acquaintances, philanthropy and musical symbolism]] (*Musiikki* 4/2020, 8–42) was, however, less convincing than the others. The essay, that in many ways was a highly pleasurable reading experience, would have benefitted from a more elaborated theoretical grounding regarding the relationship between musical texture and ideology, together with probing of the epistemology of neo-hermeneutic criticism that Palkisto practices in the essay. Finally, I would have wished to read some contextualizing background to previously known Freemasonry-affiliated music. In practice, as the essay was published as early as 2020, the kind of after-the fact (self)-reflection called for here could have taken place in the Introduction, had Palkisto regarded it as relevant.

For the most part, Palkisto's command of the theoretical framework and the research methods – primarily context-sensitive close reading – is laudable. Particularly valuable for future scholars are the new sources to Crusell's life that he has managed to unveil through his research. Previous research literature on Crusell is scarce, and the obvious, often the only, target for Palkisto's arguments is the earlier work by prof. emeritus (Åbo Akademi) Fabian Dahlström. Other previous research on Crusell is referenced by Palkisto throughout the work only briefly.

Questions regarding nationalism and transnationalism are discussed only briefly in the conclusion, which I find a little surprising, as Palkisto briefly discusses the well-known early articulations of the "Finnish composer Crusell" by Topelius and Reinholm in the Introduction (p.18). Crusell is a great example of how multifaceted and flexible our conception of a "Finnish composer/musician" has to be from a modern transnational standpoint. As recent scholarship inspired by transnationalism (e.g. Vesa Kurkela, Helena Tyrväinen, Olli Heikkinen, Tomi Mäkelä) has highlighted, "Finnish music" plays itself out in many instances as an ideological nationalistic formation, and cosmopolites such as Crusell should be regarded as no less "Finnish" for our music history than his peers whose careers unfolded mostly on Finnish soil and whose musical idioms were more inspired by the vernacular. In Crusell's time, transnationalism and mobility were, perhaps more than today, rather the norm than the exception in the daily life of a capable musician and the identity of Crusell and many of his contemporaries seems to have been constructed locally, independent of an imagined community or a

nation-state. “Finnish” and “Swedish” were not seen as mutually exclusive epithets, nor were they, as perhaps today, grounds for identity formation.

The few research questions related to transnationalism that Palkisto does return to in the concluding stages of the work are highly important. For instance, the question of Crusell’s historiographical position in Finnish music history is certainly worthy of further scrutiny in the future beyond the scope that Palkisto could afford in the present work. Why, Palkisto seemingly innocently probes, was German Fredrik Pacius (1809–1891), rather than Crusell, established as the “Father of Finnish music” through his tenure as the music teacher at the university in Helsinki 1834 onwards? Pacius and Crusell were colleagues at the Royal Chapel in Stockholm for six years prior to Pacius’s appointment in Helsinki, but according to existing documents and research, I am under the impression that no one at the time seems to have considered Crusell eligible for the position. It is likely that the elder, already ailing composer was not seen as up to the challenge and the expected workload and thus not suitable for the post. In retrospect, this can only be a partial answer to questions of music and national identity. Viewed from a broader, historiographical aspect, Crusell’s near absence from the canon of “Finnish music” has to do with the classical-romantic musical style that he represented as well as with his cosmopolitan profile of musical agency. His international continental music idiom and musicianship were not something that could not have been seen as truly “Finnish”. However, in lieu of a more realistic, transnational and plural account of our musical past, the official historical narrative of “Finnish music” was written as a mythical, nationalistic story in which Sibelius’s *Kullervo* as late as in 1893 was heard as the “birth”, and everything before that as solely “maturing” of the musical life into a state of development where that became possible in the first place. It is a Hegelian grand narrative pure and simple, and it is remarkable that it has been questioned and interrupted as late as the recent two decades.

As Palkisto emphasizes throughout his dissertation, he is more interested in structures, institutions and the professional agency of Crusell than the actual living person. This abstinence from a more micro-historical approach is well justified and leaves open some highly interesting Crusell-related research areas to which I hope Palkisto returns in his future work.

Palkisto’s doctoral dissertation is a welcome addition and corrective to earlier research on the composer. His thesis reminds us that there is a lot to research in the life and music of Crusell – as well as, in my opinion, his contemporaries such as Thomas Byström (1772–1839) and Fredrik Lithander (1777–1823) – which has mostly been left outside the nationalistic music historiography in Finland. The thesis is a successful and theoretically sophisticated grasp into a rich research area to which I hope Palkisto returns with new questions in the future.