

A large brown bear is shown in profile, facing left, in a forest. The bear is illuminated by a warm, golden light that filters through the trees. In the background, a person is silhouetted against the light, holding a long staff or spear. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and epic.

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# Fire in the North Sky

## Epic Tales from Finland

(Saatuja Sanoja)

Nick Hennessey (storyteller, vocals)  
Anna-Kaisa Liedes (singer)  
Kristiina Ilmonen (flutes, percussion, vocals)  
Timo Väänänen (kantele, pyngyr, vocals)

An Adverse Camber production

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Commissioned in association with mac birmingham and Beyond the Border Storytelling Festival with support from Sage Gateshead. Thanks to Arts Council England, Arts Promotion Centre Finland, Finnish Music Foundation, Finnish Literature Society.

Concept, composition and arrangements:  
Nick Hennessey, Kristiina Ilmonen, Anna-Kaisa Liedes, Timo Väänänen

The performance takes place in two halves with an interval.

# Welcome to tonight's performance and thank you for coming!

The poems and songs which are at the root of **Fire in the North Sky** are part of an enduring oral tradition stretching back for thousands of years. In 1828, when Elias Lönnrot set out to collect runo-song\*, this tradition was particularly strong in Karelia, a remote, rural area, a borderland between Finland and Russia. Lönnrot gathered over 130,000 lines of runo-song and published two edited collections as *The Kalevala* in 1835 and 1849. The work inspired many artists, led to more collecting, and is credited as the catalyst for Finnish national identity emerging at that time.

All four of the artists creating tonight's performance have a deep, evolving and ongoing relationship with *Kalevala* source material. While drawing on this knowledge, they are also collectively reaching out for something new. The destination they've been working towards is the experience of performing to audiences. The presence of audiences reacting to the work is what truly makes the work come alive.

Thanks are due to so many people particularly our co-commissioners and funders and to you for being here. **We'd love to hear your feedback, so please do get in touch.**

Enjoy the show! Saatuja Sanoja!



**Naomi Wilds** Producer



\*discover more about runo-song on p6-7

Ruvennenko laulamahe  
soanenko sanelomahe?  
Pankamas käsi kätehe  
sormi sormien välihe  
haka toisehen hakahe.  
Sana siulta, toini miulta

Sung by Arhippa Perttunen, Latvajärvi, Viena

Shall I start to sing  
shall I begin to recite?  
Come let us put hand in hand  
and finger in finger-gap  
each grip in the other's grip.  
One word from you and one from me



## About *Kalevala*: Songs and Story Traditions

Between 2,500 and 3,000 years ago groups of people living around the Gulf of Finland developed a unique form of song, characterised by alliteration and parallelism\*. This singing tradition is 'runo-song', a form which draws on the unique cadences and rhythms of Finno-Ugric languages with their long vowel sounds and stresses on the first syllable. Each line is the length of a breath, and sections are grouped with repeating elements from the first line in the next, and so on.

This body of sung poetry was sustained as a widespread, continuous tradition until early 1900 (and in some areas continues today). The topics of poems were multiple and various. Some songs told epic stories of ancient folk heroes, others were incantations and evoked rituals such as the bear hunt, others expressed personal emotions. In the 19th Century, a keen folklorist and medical doctor Elias Lönnrot, amongst other collectors, set about collecting these runo-songs. He gathered over a hundred thousand lines of poetry and edited them into the publication we know as *Kalevala*.

Lönnrot famously said he had gathered enough material to make seven different versions of the epic. Out of the 23,000 published lines, only 3% were added by Lönnrot, all the others were recorded from individual singers.



In Autumn 1833, Lönnrot stayed in a region where poems were still sung by both young and old. He met a singer who sang to him for two days, 800 lines in all. Among these songs was the sequence of episodes relating to the Sampo, a mysterious object which brings infinite bounty. An elderly singer Vaassila Kieleväinen, guided Lönnrot in making links among different themes. Vaassila's knowledge was a decisive factor in the structuring of the first edition of *Kalevala*.

*Kalevala*'s publication picked up on a groundswell of interest in Finnish as a language and the distinctive culture of the people. (Until the late 19th Century, Swedish was the official language of Finland).

Väinämöinen, a central figure in the songs, was seen to be the symbol of national rebirth. Artists across many different disciplines were drawn to *Kalevala*'s landscapes and characters - as seen in I.K.Inha's photography, Jean Sibelius's music and Gallen-Kallela's artworks amongst others. Some streets and corporations in Finland take their names from *Kalevala*. *Kalevala*, considered the national epic of Finland, has been translated into over 50 different languages, influencing writers and artists across the world. Finland became an independent nation in 1917.

**\*Alliteration** - repetition of the first sound of the word. **Parallelism** - using words which have the same meaning, sound or rhythm within a sentence.

Thanks to the Finnish Literature Society - find more links at [www.adversecamber.org](http://www.adversecamber.org)



## About Runo-Song: instruments, traditions and new music


Although *Kalevala* as a text has a particularly strong association with Finland and 19th Century folklore collecting, runo-song traditions stretch over a much wider geographic area and longer time period\*.

The archives in Helsinki contain over 100 years of research on oral traditions across Finno-Ugric language speakers, which include Finns, Hungarians, Karelians and Estonians amongst others. There is a similarly diverse body of research on early melodies and instruments, particularly kantele, bowed lyre (jouhikko) and various wind instruments. Contemporary traditional musicians, creating their own path as artists, benefit from these rich archives as well as the living traditions of master-apprentice transmission and an ethos which embraces invention and innovation as integral to traditional music.

In runo-song, melodies have a narrow range - usually five notes closely grouped together. The pattern of poetic beats is a trochaic tetrameter, now called Kalevala metre, four pairs where the stress falls on the first syllable of the pair.\*\* The repetition from line to line, building on the regularity of the stresses and rhythms, creates a meditative, hypnotic feel. The singer breathes life into the lines with voice, body and musical expression, playing inventively within the boundaries of the form.

In *Fire in the North Sky*, melody and text from different sources and different time periods are combined, according to the intention and instincts of the artists. Anna-Kaisa may sing the melody from an Estonian runo-song, with words from a Finnish variation. Sometimes, when Nick is telling one version of the story, Anna-Kaisa sings another, there are multiple layers. Kristiina incorporates the ancient music of shepherd flute traditions as well as imaginative percussion and her own vocal improvisations.





Timo incorporates Karelian style kantele, as well as more contemporary styles in his performances. The movements between these different styles are seamless and vary from performance to performance, as a continuous, inventive flow.

Lönnrot, who was himself a singer and kantele player, took on a role similar to that of the traditional singer - piecing together the poetic lines he recorded into a particular order. While his order was set in the form of a publication, the oral singers would have picked and chosen different variations every time they sung.

The four artists who create **Fire in the North Sky** are similarly able to draw from a rich body of different layers and variations across the work. The piece is influenced by the responses of audiences, the fifth, multi-layered member of the ensemble.

<sup>1</sup>see map of Finno-Ugric language speakers on page 14.

<sup>2</sup>this contrasts with iambic pentameter more familiar to English speakers where stress falls on the second syllable of five pairs.

Hear me, bear  
In your dreams you will have me  
Your dreams will make me true  
I shall have your strength



Kuule minua, karhu  
Tulen sinun uneesi  
sinä uneksit minut todeksi  
minulla on sinun voimasi



# Characters

Elias Lönnrot compiled *The Kalevala* with attention to epics of other cultures as well as the sequence order of the traditional singers. For Western audiences used to 'beginning, middle and ends', the stories within runo-songs offer less structure, we drop into a story, immerse ourselves in it, and leave. **Fire in the North Sky** gives audiences a sample of different moments and the freedom to forge your own connections.

Here are a selection of characters you may hear stories about:

## **Väinämöinen (Vai-na-moi-nen)**

The central hero of *Kalevala*. An old, wise man when the world was created, in some versions he is the son of the goddess Ilmatar, in other versions he created the world. He is a singer and made the first kantele. His playing is so magical that when he plays, all of nature comes to listen – bears, snakes, even the Gods of the underworld. He travels far and wide and has notable encounters with many other heroes, women and Gods.

## **Antero Vipunen**

**(Ant-er-o Veep-oon-en)**

An ancient and ill-tempered giant buried deep underground, he possibly even forms part of the earth. This giant knows all the spells in the world.



**Aino (Ain-o)**

A beautiful young woman. She is described as fragile as a flower; and yet Aino has great inner strength and refuses to be tied down by any man, even when wooed by Väinämöinen. The story of Aino and Väinämöinen is the subject of a much-loved 1891 triptych painting by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, on display in the National Museum of Art in Helsinki.

**Louhi (Loh-hee)**

The hag of the far North, the land known as Pohjola. A mighty witch, she has shape-changing powers and can weave amazing enchantments. She has a number of beautiful daughters who the male heroes try to win but are often set amazing tasks before they are approved. In some versions, Louhi and Loviatar are interchangeable.

**Ilmarinen (III-mar-in-en)**

A mighty blacksmith, 'the God-created one'. He has the ability to forge anything he chooses, and he forges the Sampo, a mysterious, mystical object that brings infinite wealth and bounty. Ilmarinen and Väinämöinen are often shown as great friends, but also attempt to trick one another in rivalry.

**Loviatar (Lov-ee-ah-tar, also sometimes called Louhi)**

The daughter of the god of Death Tuoni and the underworld deity Tuonetar. Loviatar is the goddess of disease. Her name occurs in spells where diseases are banished.

**Lemminkäinen (Lem-in-kai-nen)**

A handsome and foolish youth, forever setting out northwards on his skis to woo women. One of Kalevala's most famous stories is his mother's quest to find and revive him on the banks of the river of Death, also captured in a painting by Gallen-Kallela. His story is also the subject of Sibelius' 'Lemminkäinen Suite'.







## Sharing culture across borders - the Finno-Ugric Languages map

The musical traditions and mythology of ancient runo songs, epic poems, lyric poems and sung spells, some of which are recorded in ***Kalevala***, are a common cultural heritage for many speakers of Finno-Ugric languages, as shown on this map.

## Nick Hennessey

### Storyteller/Vocals

**Nick Hennessey** is widely acknowledged as one of the UK's leading contemporary storytellers. He has performed at London's South Bank Centre and the Royal Albert Hall and extensively at folk, storytelling, and literature festivals throughout the UK and internationally. He has published three solo albums as a singer and storyteller, the most recent of which 'A Rare Hunger' received critical acclaim with plays on BBC Radio 3.

Nick has been telling stories from *Kalevala* for the past fourteen years both in Finland and England. He is the only international entrant to win the Runolaulu (runo-song) singing competition in Espoo near Helsinki (2000). In 2010 he was commissioned by **BBC Radio 4** to create a documentary about *Kalevala*.

Listen to Nick's Radio 4 documentary on the Adverse Camber website.

[www.nickhennessey.co.uk](http://www.nickhennessey.co.uk)





## **Anna-Kaisa Liedes** Singer

**Anna-Kaisa Liedes** is an integral part of the development of the modern experimental Finnish folk music scene. She is currently Head of the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department at the University of the Arts Helsinki and Senior Lecturer in Folk Song.

Anna-Kaisa performs worldwide as a solo artist and with numerous groups, including Suunta with Kristiina Ilmonen and Timo Väänänen.

She has composed and performed music for film and theatre and recorded numerous albums both solo and with different ensembles.

Besides Finno-Ugrian song tradition and kantele playing, Anna-Kaisa specialises in vocal improvisation exploring the emotional and expressive limits of the human voice.

[myspace.com/annakaisaliedes](http://myspace.com/annakaisaliedes)



## Kristiina Ilmonen

Flutes, Percussion, Vocals

Among the pioneers of the Finnish contemporary folk music movement, **Kristiina Ilmonen** is a musician, composer, teacher, researcher and folk music professional with three decades' experience in improvisation, cross-artistic collaborations and unusual performance arenas. She specialises in archaic woodwind instruments, percussion and vocal improvisation.

She has toured worldwide, plays on 30 CDs and performs solo and with various ensembles, of which currently active are Wind on Wind, Sysihai, Subsonic, Ural Pop and Suunta. She is a long-time teacher and current Professor at the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department of the University of the Arts Helsinki.

[www.kristiinailmonen.com](http://www.kristiinailmonen.com)



## Timo Väänänen

Kantele, Pyngyr, Vocals

**Timo Väänänen** plays the kantele, from the smaller traditional models to the modernized 39-string electrical version, which he has designed in collaboration with the instrument maker. He is known for playing both traditional and new music and for his explorations on sound effects and live looping systems.

Timo has toured and recorded extensively. In 2005, he was a featured soloist in the Disney film 'The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. He performed the kantele concerto by Gillian Stevens with Mikkelä orchestra in 2009.

Timo performs solo and with the bands Suunta, Ontrei, Mitrej and Taith. Timo is a part-time lecturer at the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department at the University of the Arts Helsinki. His doctoral work explored stereotypes and symbolism of the kantele.

[timo.maanite.fi](http://timo.maanite.fi)



## Creative Team

### Director: Paula Crutchlow

Paula Crutchlow is an independent artist and performance maker who co-authors and directs live events across a variety of forms. She has been working as a director and dramaturg with storytellers, musicians, dance artists and new writing projects for nearly twenty years. Paula's work with artist collective Blind Ditch creates collaborative and unexpected happenings in everyday spaces; often using participatory approaches and digital media to engage varied publics as active spectators and citizen artists in the becoming of the event. Paula was an Associate Lecturer in Theatre at Dartington College of Arts, Devon 2001-10, and is now an ESRC funded PhD Researcher in Critical Human Geography at the University of Exeter. [www.blindditch.org](http://www.blindditch.org)

### Technical Managers Gethin Stacey (Sound) and Matt Blackmore (Lighting)

Gethin Stacey runs Sound Hire Wales, and is based in West Wales. Matt Blackmore, based in Yorkshire, works with Northern Ballet Theatre and on a wide range of medium to large scale productions. Gethin and Matt provide responsive sound engineering and lighting which evolve with the performance as it unfolds. [www.soundhirewales.co.uk](http://www.soundhirewales.co.uk)

### Clothing: Outi Karikivi

Outi Karikivi, based in Porvoo, Finland, creates clothes which combine natural and second-hand materials, hand-dyeing all the fabrics she uses. For this performance, Outi has made men's shirts from dyed, old damast tablecloths and wrist warmers from recycled t-shirts. She has combined second-hand materials with Finnish lamb's wool, silk chiffon and linen, using old lace curtains and sheets. Her clothes respect handicraft traditions and the individuality of the wearer. [www.willatar.fi](http://www.willatar.fi)



**Photography: I.K. Inha  
and Timo Väänänen**

We are showing a selection of I.K.Inha's archive photographs with kind permission of the Finnish Literature Society. I.K.Inha's (1865-1930) photography grew out of the upsurge of interest in Finnish identity which grew following publication of *Kalevala*. His portfolio of over 200 photographs of the Karelian region, gathered on a five month trip, are considered a national asset.

Timo Väänänen's camera is an integral piece of equipment in his work as a contemporary musician. He often finds inspiration in the detail or atmosphere of landscape and uses his camera to capture this, to assist the process of composition. Timo's contemporary Finnish landscapes support the pathway the performance creates from past, to present and beyond.

**Producer: Naomi Wilds**

Naomi Wilds founded Adverse Camber in 2006. She has produced ten national tours for the company, raising substantial funds for artistic and organisational development.

In 2009, Naomi was one of four East Midlands producers to receive a bursary from Arts Council England in recognition of her work. Naomi studied English Literature at the University of Leeds, gaining an MA by research on narrative strategies. Following work for various arts organisations, she specialised in literature development from 1999-2008 as part of the East Midlands Literature Network. [www.adversecamber.org](http://www.adversecamber.org)



# Where culture meets landscape: more about Finland

## Winter and Summer

In Finland, seasons are distinguished by temperature variation. Winter (where the mean temperature is below zero degrees) usually begins mid-October in Lapland and in November for the rest of Finland.

**Winter is the longest season, between 100 to 200 days.** North of the Arctic Circle there is the Polar Night, where the sun does not rise above the horizon. Elsewhere, it gets dark from 3pm. Permanent snow covers open ground around two weeks after winter begins. Summer is intoxicatingly beautiful, while heartbreakingly brief. In the northernmost land, Midnight Sun can last for two months.

## Northern Lights

When summer sunshine gives way to dark winter, the Northern Lights can appear like magic. Going further north increases your chances of spotting the Aurora Borealis, which can appear on **up to 200 nights** a year in Finnish Lapland.

## Forest

**Over 77% of Finland is taken up by forest.** The forest in Finland is a place of life, provision, a natural habitat which people are still very much in touch with.

## Water

Finland has 188,000 lakes, the most water in relation to landmass of all countries. **Väinämöinen's name** comes from the Finnish word *väinä*, meaning *stream pool*.

## Cultural Features

Runo-song has been part of everyday life in this extreme climate for thousands of years, easily accessible entertainment for the long winter months, through which people share stories, poetry and the beauty of language and music. The stories and poems at the root of Kalevala and wider runo-song traditions express the culture of the people.

In most homes and many public buildings in Finland, you reliably find a sauna (pronounced sow-nah). The sauna is a place which can raise your core temperature, it's also a place for communal relaxation and leisure and a sterile environment where, in the past, many women gave birth. The elements of wood, stone, water, fire and air offer relaxation and cleanliness, conversation is relaxed and arguments or controversy are avoided.

### Facts about the Finnish language:

- There is no grammatical gender - both male and female are referred to with the same pronoun 'hän'
- There are no articles (a/the)
- Finnish is the only European language in which normal text contains more vowels than consonants, this adds to its melodiousness.
- There is a clear relationship between how words are written and pronounced, there are no changes in pronunciation based on context.





## About Adverse Camber: how the show was made

Adverse Camber is an independent production company, based amongst the historic mills of Cromford, Derbyshire. We act as a catalyst, bringing artists, partners, venues, audiences and funders together to create and enjoy outstanding works of storytelling and music. We are energised by the feedback of audiences at our tours, so please do get in touch and let us know your responses to the show.

Adverse Camber supports the ambitions of mid-career UK storytellers who are reaching for new horizons in their work. We work closely with partner venues to reach out to more diverse audiences, transporting people into the incredibly diverse soundscapes and imaginative material of these rich oral tales.

We are inspired by the work of artists across many cultures for whom oral traditions are fundamental source material for their own creativity.

Working on ***Fire in the North Sky***, we have frequently found ourselves talking about layers - the different time periods which inform the artists' work, the layers of different languages which have gone into the piece - whether Finnish, English





or Estonian, and the languages of storytelling, music, performance, lighting, sound, marketing and producing all of which have been part of the process. As with all Adverse Camber shows, the 'authoring' artists are at the heart of the creative process, working with a team who support the work as it develops. Thanks to Paula Crutchlow for leading this creative work so expertly, enabling everyone to give of their best, it has been a fascinating process.

Variation is a motif running through this work - there is never a definitive version of a character, poem, or story in runo-song. This body of stories and music will continue to grow and change as the show tours, through the ongoing conversation with audiences.

Many people are surprised to discover that in oral traditions, the work is not scripted or written down. In this piece, improvisation is also at the heart of much of the music, as the artists play with the many layers of the runo-song form.

Adverse Camber is passionate about stories and music and we takes risks on behalf of new creative work. This programme illuminates the source material and craft which has gone into creating the piece, but the destination we've been working towards is simply the experience of sharing the event with audiences. We really hope you enjoy the experience, and join us for more Adverse Camber tours. Please like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and sign up for our email newsletters to be the first to hear Adverse Camber news.





A SMOOTH AND HONEST VODKA  
FROM THE VILLAGE OF KOSKENKORVA  
WITH SCANDINAVIAN SALTY CANDY,  
CREATING A SALTY LIQUORICE LIQUEUR

[KOSKENKORVA.COM](http://KOSKENKORVA.COM)

## Acknowledgments

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### Adverse Camber Team

Producer **Naomi Wilds**

Artistic Advisor **Paula Crutchlow**

Marketing Associates **Jenny Babenko** and **Palmer Squared**

Associate Producer **Louisa Davies**

Assistant Producer **Amy Marsh**

Participation Associate **Jan Reynolds**

PR Associate **Rob Allen**

Adverse Camber Board **Nick Cutts** and **Amanda Wilde**

With thanks for support on *Fire in the North Sky*:

Arts Promotion Centre Finland, Finnish Music Foundation, Finnish Literature Society, mac birmingham, Beyond the Border Storytelling Festival, Sage Gateshead, Square Chapel Centre for the Arts, Arts Council England.






Listen again to


# Fire in the North Sky

on CD

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[www.adversecamber.org](http://www.adversecamber.org)

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