



Soile Isokoski

Soile Isokoski is a senior lecturer at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

Soile Isokoski was born in Posio, Finland. She graduated from the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki with a cantor-organist diploma, a singing teacher's degree, and a singing diploma, making her concert debut there in 1986.

Isokoski has won several prestigious competitions, including the Lappeenranta Song Competition in Finland (1987), the Elly Ameling Competition in the Netherlands (1988), and the Tokyo International Singing Competition (1990). She was also a finalist in the 1987 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition.

Initially, she worked as a church musician in Northern Finland. In 1987, she joined the Finnish National Opera as a soloist, where she remained until 1994. Her debut role there was Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème*.

Isokoski has performed at many of Europe's leading opera houses, including the Vienna State Opera, Théâtre du Châtelet, Opéra Bastille, La Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Berlin State Opera, Semperoper, Hamburg State Opera, and Cologne Opera.

She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2002 as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*. The New York Times praised her performance, noting her ability to convey the Countess' sense of abandonment while maintaining her regal bearing and graceful humor.

In 2007, Isokoski debuted at the San Francisco Opera as the Marshallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, and in 2010, she made her Los Angeles Opera debut as Elsa in *Lohengrin*.

She has also appeared at numerous festivals, including the Salzburg Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Chorégies d'Orange, The Proms in London, Tanglewood Music Festival, and Savonlinna Opera Festival.

Isokoski's song repertoire is extensive. She has given recitals worldwide with her regular accompanist Marita Viitasalo-Pohjola, performing in cities such as New York, Washington, D.C., Fort Lauderdale, Vienna, London, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich, Rome, Athens, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Tokyo.

She has collaborated with many renowned conductors, including Claudio Abbado, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim, James Conlon, Andrew Davis, Colin Davis, John Eliot Gardiner, Daniele Gatti, Valery Gergiev, Bernard Haitink, Marek Janowski, Neeme Järvi, Okko Kamu, James Levine, Zubin Mehta, Yehudi Menuhin, Riccardo Muti, Sakari Oramo, Seiji Ozawa, Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Leif Segerstam, and Osmo Vänskä.

Photo: Milla von Konow



Janne Mikkonen

Janne Mikkonen is a senior lecturer at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

Janne Mikkonen is a jazz guitarist and educator from Oulu, Finland. He currently teaches electric guitar and ensemble performance at Oulu University of Applied Sciences, where he mentors music pedagogy students in both technical proficiency and artistic expression. Mikkonen's academic and artistic research focuses on the improvisational techniques of Wes Montgomery, with a particular interest in how Montgomery's style can inform contemporary jazz performance.

In his own compositional work, Mikkonen draws inspiration from the natural landscapes of northern Finland—capturing the elusive, lyrical qualities of the region's forests, rugged hills, and the untamed flow of its rivers. These elements inform the atmospheric, introspective character of his music, which merges a deep connection to place with innovative jazz language. Through both teaching and performance, Mikkonen continues to explore the intersection of tradition and innovation in jazz, while remaining firmly rooted in the unique cultural and natural environment of the Finnish North.



Outi Nissi

Outi Nissi is a piano music lecturer at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

Originally from Muhos, pianist Outi Nissi has been a piano music lecturer at Oulu University of Applied Sciences since 2006. In addition to piano teaching, she focuses particularly on coaching singers and orchestral musicians in her role as a pianist.

Outi Nissi has made concert and teaching visits to countries such as Norway, Italy, Hungary, and Japan. She is a popular collaborator in both lied and chamber music ensembles and regularly performs with the Oulu Symphony Orchestra and at various music festivals (including the Oulu Music Festival, Lieksa Brass Week, and the October New Music Festival). She is also a sought-after audition and competition pianist.

Since 2006, she has been actively involved in the organizing committee and jury of the national Leevi Madetoja Piano Competition.



Kristiina Puolitaival

Kristiina Puolitaival is a piano music lecturer at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

Kristiina Puolitaival has been a piano music lecturer at Oulu University of Applied Sciences since 2001. Prior to that, she worked as an accompanist at the Oulu Conservatory. In addition to teaching piano, her responsibilities include overseeing the pedagogy and practice of music pedagogy education. She has also led the curriculum development for music pedagogy education for a significant period. Piano pedagogy is a particular area of interest for her.

Kristiina Puolitaival has performed as a solo pianist in countries such as Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Estonia, and Norway. In Finland, she has served as a pianist for masterclasses at the Oulu Music Festival, Iin Lauluviikot, and Kangasniemi Singing Week. She has also performed with various choirs in the Oulu region.

Puolitaival holds higher education degrees from both the Sibelius Academy and the Cologne University of Music.



Olli Estola

Olli Estola is a drum teacher and a lecturer in rhythm music at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

Olli Estola (b. 1982) works as a full-time drum teacher and a lecturer in rhythm music at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences. His diverse freelance activities have recently been characterized by a focus on jazz within a range varying from fusion bands to Dixieland jazz, with a healthy addition ethno- and blues-influenced surf rock as well as New Orleans funk. His band history includes salsa, Finnish rock, heavy metal, reggae, as well as gospel and blues. Other ensemble activities include musical performances at the Oulu City Theatre and appearances with the Oulu Symphony Orchestra.

Internationally, Estola has worked in mostly in the Nordic countries, but also in Estonia, Russia, France and Canada, playing mostly blues and Brazilian music. His current second base of musical operations is Denmark, where he has played with a large number of freelancers and big bands in numerous venues in and around the Copenhagen municipality. He also has played the Copenhagen Jazz Festival for seven consecutive years and likes to frequent all the jazz jams whenever he is in town.

Photo: Simon Beyer-Pedersen



Tuomas Turunen

Tuomas Turunen is a senior lecturer at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences.

Tuomas J. Turunen (b. 1985) is a jazz pianist, composer and educator based in Helsinki, Finland. After working many years as a sideman, alongside with renowned Finnish Jazz Vocalists, he has released his first album as a leader in October 2018. The album, entitled “Megetme”, consists entirely of Turunen’s compositions for jazz trio and quartet. It features Manuel Dunkel on saxophones, who is one of the Finland’s most acclaimed saxophonists today.

Born in Rautavaara, he spent his childhood in Kesälahti, Eastern Finland where he began piano lessons at the age of 10. From the beginning he was playing by ear and composing tunes of his own, and the classical piano lessons hadn’t offered that freedom of expression what he had been searching for. While on his teens Tuomas finally found his own musical path in jazz. He began listening to records from Bill Evans, Miles Davis, Mel Tormé and John Coltrane. Because of the influence of Evans, the piano trio sound became the closest to him. Tormé’s music taught him to listen to the melody and the lyrics.

When Tuomas was 20 years old he fulfilled his biggest dream – to study in the renowned jazz department of Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. Since then he has been living in Helsinki and has established himself as a jazz pianist as well as versatile music professional. Turunen’s work as a pianist, composer and arranger can be heard in more than 10 album releases.

A versatile musician, Turunen can successfully function in different kinds of musical environments even though jazz is his main domain. He has performed a large variety of musical constellations varying from classical music to pop/rock, blues and jazz. In new kind of musical situations he always attempts to make his musical contribution to sound like his own.