

Beyond the Notes Lecture Series at George Mason University

< RELIGIOUS IMAGERY IN MUSIC - THE ANGELS OF RAUTAVAARA >

BY LUKE RATCLIFFE

Friday, February 28th, 2020, 12:30pm

DeLaski Auditorium

PROGRAM

- Selections from Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* (1944)

Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928 - 2016)

ICONS / *IKONIT* (1955)

- I. The Death of the Mother of God / *Jumalanäidin kuolema*
- II. Two Village Saints / *Kaksi maalaispyhymstä*
- III. The Black Madonna of Blakernaya / *Blakernajan musta Jumalanäiti*
- IV. The Baptism of Christ / *Kristuksen kaste*
- V. The Holy Women at the Sepulchre / *Pyhät naiset haudalla*
- VI. Archangel Michael Fighting the Antichrist / *Arkkienkeli Mikael kukistaa Antikristuksen*

It is my belief that music is great if, at some moment, the listener catches a glimpse of eternity through the window of time. This, to my mind, is the only true justification for art. All else is of secondary importance.

- *Einojuhani Rautavaara*

Einojuhani Rautavaara was a Finnish composer whose music encompassed many different genres and styles and incorporated dense religious

and psychological imagery. His musical language develops out of the language of Olivier Messiaen, where Rautavaara expanded on the modal system created by Messiaen. Rautavaara characterized his work as constant reinventions of the same ideas, wherein he built entire symphonies on very simple motifs which he reshaped and recycled in other works.

Once the dust and ash had settled after World War II, composers sought to redefine the musical landscape. The established manner of composition had been torn apart much like Europe was. Musical serialism and minimalism rose to prominence. However, a new guard of mystic composers set out to reincorporate tonality and religious themes into music. Rautavaara developed a kind of 'ekphrastic' music--that is, music which draws its inspiration from other media, often religious. Developing out of Messiaen's methods, Rautavaara created a multi-dimensional music oeuvre that dove deep into the human psyche. This lecture-recital focuses on Rautavaara's compositional style and musical 'ekphrasis' in his piano suite "Icons". The talk will show the relationship between Messiaen and Rautavaara and how their extra-musical interests influenced their musical world through art and symbol.

- Luke Ratcliffe