



Arto Järvelä and Kaivama (Sara Pajunen and Jonathan Rundman)

Finnish Fiddle Music Kaivama and Arto Järvelä

by Stewart Hendrickson

Last May I enjoyed hearing some great Finnish fiddle music by [Kaivama](#), a duo of two young musicians of Finnish-American heritage, Jonathan Rundman and Sara Pajunen, and the Finnish fiddler extraordinaire [Arto Järvelä](#) at a Seattle Folklore Society Concert. I was somewhat familiar with Finnish folk music and this increased my interest in the fiddle music.

I find Finnish folk music a little different from the more mainstream Nordic folk music. I like the haunting, melancholic use of the minor key – often alternating with a major key – giving it a sort of Russian sound. It has a certain edge to it which I like. Two major traditions of Finnish folk music are the Kalevalaic tradition, and the Nordic folk or pelimanni tradition.

The Kalevalaic tradition is older and was influenced by traditions of the Finnish people of [Karelia](#) (in northwestern European Russia), and traditional tunes and lyrics from the [Kalevala](#), an epic poem by Elias Lönnrot in the 19th century drawing on early Finnish folklore.

Pelimanni is the Finnish version of Nordic folk dance music. It came to Finland from Central Europe via Scandinavia beginning in the 17th century and has taken on a distinctive Finnish flavor. In the 19th century it began to replace the Kalevalaic tradition. Pelimanni music was generally played on fiddle and clarinet. Later, the harmonium and accordions were also used. Common dances in the pelimanni tradition include the polska, polka, mazurka, schottische, quadrille, waltz, and minuet.

Early in the 20th century, the region of [Kaustinen](#) became a center for pelimanni music. Friiti Ojala and Antti Järvelä were fiddlers of the period. [Konsta Jylhä](#) and the other members of Purpuripelimannit, formed in 1946, became perhaps the

most influential group of this period. Well-known Finnish folk music groups of today in the Kaustinen tradition include [JPP](#) and [Frigg](#) (although part Norwegian).

This past May Arto Järvelä joined Kaivama for a West Coast tour to promote their new CDs [Arto Järvelä & Kaivama](#) and [Kaivama](#). [Kaivama](#)'s 14 tracks are drawn from the traditional fiddle-tune repertoire of Western Finland, contemporary pieces by current Finnish fiddlers, and seven songs written or co-written by Pajunen and Rundman. Sara's unique fiddle playing, a meld of technique and nuance, is the common thread of their latest CD [Kaivama](#). Jonathan adds various instruments, from rollicking acoustic guitar to a WWII-era foot-pump harmonium and his Grandfather's tenor banjo. A companion to this CD is a [book](#) with scores and historical commentary for all the tunes.

Arto Järvelä discussed his association with Kaivama in the liner notes of his CD [Arto Järvelä & Kaivama](#). “It all started in August 2010 when Sara came to visit me in Ulvila, Finland, to study Finnish folk fiddling. The next year I was heading to Minnesota’s Niccwa-Stämman Festival and was wondering if I could schedule a little tour around. Then I remember Sara mentioning her new duo with Jonathan, who I had met shortly before in Minneapolis after a house concert. Soon we found ourselves touring the Midwest USA and having loads of fun. We found a nice format for playing gigs: I play a set and Kavama plays a set, and at the end of each we join our forces and play as a trio.”

[Jonathan Rundman and Sara Pajunen](#) were both raised in Finnish-immigrant communities not far from the shores of Lake Superior, Sara in Hibbing, MN, and Jonathan in Ishpeming, MI. Both towns are famous for vast open-pit iron ore mines. Their band’s name reflects this spirit of excavation. “Kaivama” is a Finnish word stemming from kaivaa: to delve or dig.

[Arto Järvelä](#), born in 1964 in Hattula, Finland, is a Finnish musician and composer. He is primarily a fiddler, but he also plays nyckelharpa, mandolin and kantele. Arto is the fourth generation of the well-known Järvelä fiddler family whose musical roots come from the rural area near the town of Kaustinen. He studied folk music in the Sibelius Academy where he now teaches. He was also one of the founders of the Finnish band JPP.

You can listen to streaming audio from [Kaivama](#) and from [Arto Järvelä](#).

Below are videos of Kaivama and Arto Järvelä playing various tunes.

Taapeli Valssi - Kaivama plays Taapeli Valssi (by Arto Järvelä) at the Ontonagon Theater of Performing Arts in Michigan on July 13, 2012.

Arto Järvelä (on nyckelharpa) and Kaivama play Starc polskas at the Cedar Cultural Center, Minneapolis, June 17, 2011.

I Denna Ljuva (by Hans Kennemark) played by Kaivama

FlinnFest 2011 featured Kaivama from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Youthful Finnish music with violins. Sara Pajunen on Violin and Jonathan Rundman on acoustic guitar and pump harmonium.

Kaivama and Arto Järvelä play Røros (by Arto Järvelä)

Taklax Gee performed by Arto Järvelä