

Portfolio

Heli Hartikainen

Saxophonist, Clarinetist, Composer, Sound Artist

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Heli Hartikainen (Finland) is an award-winning saxophonist, clarinetist, composer, and sound artist whose music merges experimental sonic textures with hypnotic, evolving soundscapes. As a saxophonist, Hartikainen is a passionate instrumentalist who continually pushes the limits of their instrument, themselves, and the possibilities of sound technology ever further.

Their internationally acclaimed debut solo album, the 3D sound work CHRONOVARIATIONS (2024), won the Finnish Critics' Association's honorary prize for the year's most significant artistic breakthrough and was nominated for Best Jazz Album at Finland's most prestigious music awards, the Emma Awards.

"Heli Hartikainen (b. 1993) is an innovative artist who, with their work CHRONOVARIATIONS, has created an artistically ambitious and challenging work that is difficult to categorize. – CHRONOVARIATIONS is a mature artistic debut that opens entirely new artistic worlds."

The Finnish Critics' Association in the award citation for the Kritiikin Kannukset prize



Selected works:

- CHRONOVARIATIONS (2024) is an experimental 3D-sound piece for tenor saxophone, live electronics and resonating metal objects. **Winner of Kritiikin Kannukset 2025 honorary prize.**

Watch [CHRONOVARIATIONS installation trailer](#) on YouTube

Watch [“Excerpt on II & III” from CHRONOVARIATIONS Music Video](#) on YouTube

Listen to [Full Album on Soundcloud](#)

- Interbody (2026)

Interbody examines time from the perspective of the human body: geological, atmospheric, and corporeal time as embodied experience. At its core is the tenor saxophone extended through a self-built live sampler that responds in real time to pitch and volume. A degree of randomness is built into the system, merging improvisation and algorithmic processes, the human and machine-organism – and keeps the performer on their toes.

Listen to [Full EP on Soundcloud](#)

Watch [Interbody live in Helsinki](#)

- Light Cones (2024)

Hartikainen was selected as Finland’s representative composer for an Ung Nordisk Musik (UNM) residency, a platform for emerging Nordic composers, where they created the work Light Cones. This 20-minute piece draws inspiration from fundamental concepts of physics, such as Planck time (the minimum interval of time) and the absence of a universal present.

Watch [Light Cones for Alto and Tenor Saxophone and String Quartet](#) on YouTube

CRITICAL ACCLAIM:

“While parts of this album could likewise fit in with the current “ambient jazz” trend, most of it is a tantalising mystery; indescribable, indecipherable long slabs of sound and melody, coupled with a sinewy physical and emotional power.”

FINNISH MUSIC QUARTERLY

“Phenomenal – A true musical experience, as an immersive sonic world of ambience and experimentalism blends with an array of influences.”

THE MOST RADICALIST

“Helsinki-based Heli Hartikainen’s saxophone rarely sounds like one. Chronovariations sees them attaching electromagnetic speakers to scrap metal sheets and pipes, and using these objects as secondary sound sources. Low-pitched drones and hymnal sax improvisations are drenched in reverb and accompanied by spectral creaks, metallic rattles and shimmering effects.”

THE GUARDIAN

“I got to listen to the album for almost 15 minutes before I had to return to the soundscape of family life, and those were the best 15 minutes I’ve had in a long time. It was a cleansing ritual. The turntable, the vinyl, and the concreteness of the sound grounded me in this world, but the music set me free from it.”

FINNISH NATIONAL BROADCAST

“All the sounds apparently originated from their tenor sax, shape-shifting from a rich, warm sound to a rough-edged keening, at times echoing the more soulful side of John Surman or Jan Garbarek (ECM should snap them up while they have a chance).

– – mind-expanding journey”

JAZZ JOURNAL UK

“The instrument bangs, clicks, hisses, and puffs. Hartikainen creates spatial sounds and a contemplatively painterly soundscape. Indeed, they break boundaries. There’s an experimenter in them.”



KULTTUURITOIMITUS

Heli Hartikainen

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Hartikainen's work combines experimental sonic textures with hypnotic soundscapes. Their debut solo album, **CHRONOVARIATIONS**, which utilises 3D audio technology, **won the Finnish Critic's Association's "Kritiikin Kannukset" prize** in 2025 for the year's most significant artistic breakthrough and was **nominated for the Emma Award—the Finnish equivalent of the Grammys**—for Best Jazz Album of 2024.

Education:

- **Master of Music, the Sibelius Academy of the University of the Arts, Helsinki 2022**
Folk music and improvisation
- Musician, Kuopio Conservatoire 2015
- Matriculation Examination, Kuopio Music High School 2012

Selected recordings:

- Heli Hartikainen - Interbody (EP, Multiphonic Works 2026)
- Pneuma (single, Multiphonic Works 2026)
- Antiphonia (single, Untempo Postcards 2025)
- Heli Hartikainen – CHRONOVARIATIONS (Multiphonic Works 2024)
- Heli Hartikainen & Noise Trees - Live at Nomen Nescio Festival (Post-Rift 2024)
- Study on Overtones / Improvisation at Ställbergs gruva (single, Why Keith Dropped the S 2024)
- Aoide - I (Helmi Levyt 2020)
- Museum of Impossible Forms - thinking sound (Impossible Reader 2019)
- Project Vainiolla Ensemble - Suruvesi (Vainiolla Sounds 2018)

Recognitions:

- **The Finnish Critics' Associations' Kritiikin Kannukset (Critics' Spurs), honorary prize 2025**
- **The Jazz Album of the year 2024 - Emma-award nomination (the Finnish Grammys)**
- Finnish Representative / Young Nordic Music – Residency Composer in Örebro 2024
- Co-composer / Young Composers Exchange / Nordic Music Days in Glasgow 2024

Commissioned compositions:

- “Flux” for saxophone and electronics at Oulu 2026 European Capital of Culture
- Original music for Hannu Karjalaisens’ feature film 2027-
- Ung Nordisk Musik 2024: Light Cones for 2 saxophones and string quartet
- Piece for solo violin and live electronics, for violinist Linda Suolahti 2026
- Nordic Music Days 2024: KIDE (vln, vla, electr.) with Aileen Sweeney
- Music for Heidi Piironens’ In Case of Loss / sitten haluaisin laulaa - multimedia exhibition at Rauma Art Museum 2024-2025.
- Dance Theatre Auraco: Tuhkasisko -video piece 2021
- Dance Theatre Auraco: Miksi Mix / The Why Mix 2020- composition and sound design

Grants:

- Finnish Arts and Culture Foundation 4500 € for artistic work
- Samuel Huber Art Foundation 3500 € for Interbody record expenses 2026
- **Kone Foundation 32 400 € one year artistic work 2025**
- Madetoja Foundation 2500 € for composing a solo piece for violinist Linda Suolahti 2026
- Music Finland, 1000 € Export grant 2024
- Finnish Music Foundation 1900€ 1 month artistic work 2024
- **Finnish Cultural Foundation 15 000 € 6 months artistic work 2024**
- Otto A. Malm Foundation 3000 € CHRONOVARIATIONS- tour 2023
- Arts Promotion Center 12 000€ 6 months artistic work 2022
- Finnish Music Foundation 1900 € 1 month artistic work 2022
- Arts Promotion Center 6000€ 3 months artistic work 2021

Selected solo performances:

- 2022 Flow Festival
- 2023 The University of the Arts’ Young Artists of the Summer -series
- 2024 Inkonst, Malmö, Ung Nordisk Musik, Örebro, We Jazz Festival, Sibeliusmuseum
- 2025 Into The Open, Strasbourg, Glivelab Tampere, JazzAnti, Avanti-klubi, Silence Festival
- 2026 Glivelab Helsinki, Sellosali, Finnish Jazz Showcase, Tallinn Music Week Showcase, Digital in Berlin Kiezsalon