

Kardemimmit Finland

About the Artists

Kardemimmit is made up of four women from Finland who sing and play the Finnish national instrument, the kantele. All four members of the group grew up in the city of Espoo, and formed the band at the musical institute there in 1999. Since then, they have released five albums and performed around the world. Their unique, modern folk sound mixes vocal harmonies with the bell-like tones of the kantele.

Kardemimmit's members compose, arrange, produce, and perform all of their own music. Their vocal harmonies and kantele melodies are rooted in Finnish, Eastern European, and Scandinavian traditions. Their music includes Finnish reki-singing style, 19th century dancing music and Perhonjokilaakso kantele playing style, Eastern Finnish archaic improvisation, and ancient runo singing.



The members of Kardemimmit. From left to right: Anna, Jutta, Maija, and Leeni. Photos by Jimmy Träskelin.

Finnish Music

The songs that Kardemimmit play come from several different Finnish musical traditions.

Runolaulu (poem song) is an ancient form of Finnish singing. Runo songs have a simple rhythm, with four emphasized syllables per line, and use only five notes of a scale. The lines of the songs start with the same letter sound, but the ends do not rhyme. As with ancient poetry, runo songs often focus on epic tales of heroes, magicians, and quests for adventure.

Rekilaulu (sleigh song) is a more modern form of Finnish song. The structure of each reki song is the same—it has four lines in each stanza, and the second and fourth lines rhyme with each other.

Besides being fun to listen to, some of Kardemimmit's songs might make you want to dance—that's because they're dance songs! *Polska*, *schottische*, and *hambo* are all traditional Scandinavian dances, often performed at social events like weddings.



Kardemimmit perform together for their Folkefest workshop video.

Members

Maija Pokela
Jutta Rahmel
Anna Wegelius
Leeni Wegelius
Samuli Volanto (sound engineer)

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Kantele

The kantele is the national instrument of Finland, and has been played for over 2,000 years. It is a stringed instrument, similar to a zither or dulcimer. The body is made of wood, and the instrument can have between 5 and 38 strings, usually made of steel.

Kardemimmit use two kinds of kanteles: smaller 10 or 15-string kanteles and the larger 38-string concert kantele. The strings of the kantele can be plucked or strummed. Usually, a player uses their right hand to pick the melody, while the left hand plays accompanying chords. [Click here](#) to see how the *kantele* is played.



A 10-string kantele.
Photo by TheYellowFellow (CC BY-SA 3.0)



A 38-string concert kantele.
Photo by Paul Lenz (CC BY-SA 3.0)



Fun Fact

Kardemmuma, or cardamom, is a spice frequently used in Scandinavian baked goods, like the sweet breads and rolls that often accompany a cup of strong coffee. Mimmit means “girls” in Finnish. So you could say Kardemimmit are Finland’s Spice Girls!

Cardamom seeds and powder.
Photo by VeganBaking.net (CC BY-SA 2.0)

The legend of the kantele

According to the *Kalevala*, a collection of Finnish epic poetry, the first kantele was created by the magician Väinämöinen, made with the jawbone of a giant fish and strings made from a stallion’s hair. He soon lost it. His second kantele was made from birch wood with hair from a maiden. Today, kanteles are made from wood with steel strings.



A statue of Väinämöinen and his kantele.
By Vladimir Menkov (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Video

[Click here](#) to watch videos of Kardemimmit performing and talking about the kantele.



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