

## An interview with EERO TARASTI on Semiotics, Music and Silence

Interviewed by  
Sebastián Nabón

Eero Tarasti is a professor of musicology at the University of Helsinki, a semiotician, and a musician. After studying in Paris with Lévi-Strauss and A. J. Greimas, he received his PhD from Helsinki University in 1978. He was the president of the International Association for Semiotic Studies between 2004 and 2014. He is one of the founders and the director of the international research group Musical Signification since 1984. He has had a prolific academic career, while also being artistically active; he has published hundreds of articles, edited several anthologies, and written number of important monographs, such as: *Myth and Music* (1979), *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (1994), *Heitor Villa-Lobos* (1996, in Portuguese in 2022), *Existential Semiotics* (2000), *Signs of Music* (2003), *Fondéments de la sémiotique existentielle* (2009), *Fondamenti di semiotica esistenziale* (2010), *Semiotics of Classical Music* (2012, in French 2016), *Sein und Schein, Explorations in Existential Semiotics* (2015), *Moi ja Soi, Muistemat* (in Finnish, 2021), and *Transcending Signs* (ed.) (2023); two novels include: *Le secret du professeur Amfortas* ( 2002) and *Retour à la Villa Nevski* (2014, in Italian *L’eredità di Villa Nevski*, 2014 in Finnish *Eurooppa/Ehkä* 2017).

I can find several reasons to make an interview with Tarasti, but I will choose to share the more personal ones. A well-known and recognizable semiotician in our field and being similarly well-known as a musicologist and musician in the musical field, I have been interested in his work since my bachelor’s degree in musical composition before coming to the study of semiotics. I feel we share the pleasure of combining two passions: music and semiotics. Then, from the beginning of my musical path in the first place and the semiotic one in the second place, the name of Eero Tarasti appeared several times in impactful ways, in different articles and books that I was devouring with pleasure, but never thinking about the possibility of meeting him in person.

During my MA studies at the University of Tartu, I had the opportunity to contact Eero since I was working within the Existential Semiotics framework and

dealing with music analysis. After a friendly exchange of emails and a meeting in Tallinn, we met to review a draft of my MA thesis. We started exchanging ideas and kind talks, and I am now attending his weekly seminars via Zoom. In this seminar, a group of colleagues from different fields share their current or in-progress works to have peer feedback. This shows Eero to be the most active, humble, and encouraging professor and academic.

Due to his extensive experience in our field and music, I developed the interview from the most general ideas of semiotics and their connection with musicology to more specific ideas about silence, the importance of semiotics nowadays, and the future of the field.

I want to thank Eero for this interview and kind guidance and to wish the readers an enjoyable experience.

## Interview

**Sebastián Nabón:** What led you to semiotics? What motivated you to study all the different fields that you have studied? Do you see any common denominator among them, or are there any repeating patterns? How is semiotics compatible with or differ from other fields?

**Eero Tarasti:** I heard about semiotics for the first time from the Swedish translation of a booklet by Claude Lévi-Strauss *Myten om Asdiwal*. That was in 1971. So, it was via French structuralism that I came to semiotics. I immediately saw the possibility of uniting two major interests in my life: philosophy and music. It is true that my writings deal with a great variety of cultural phenomena, and in order to understand this, I should return to my education. I studied eight years of Latin, 5 hours per week, and three years of Greek at Helsinki Normal Lyceum. This kind of classical education did not only mean the languages—albeit, thanks to them, it was later easy for me to start with Roman languages like French, Portuguese, and Italian—but reading early phase classics of antiquity also formed one's whole worldview. Some say that theories are nothing but absolutizations of personal experiences. Yet, in higher classes, I also started with German literature, Goethe and Schiller, and continental philosophy. In 1960, when I was twelve years old, I became a Wagnerian when his last opera, *Parsifal*, was performed in Helsinki. Then, it was natural that I enrolled at Helsinki University in theoretical philosophy, which the Anglo-analytic school strongly dominated...and pursued music studies at the piano, entering Sibelius Academy.

Moreover, I have to mention an important episode, namely the military service in 1968, when I experienced a kind of social awakening. So, after the army, where I became an officer in the reserve, I changed my faculty to social sciences, taking sociology and ethnology as my major subjects. I was also active in the young intellectual generation of 1968, which launched my interest in Hegel's philosophy. So,

I translated almost all of his *Wissenschaft der Logik* into Finnish and later, in 1972, *Sein und Zeit* by Heidegger.

However, then Lévi-Strauss and French structuralism came into my life. He became my great idol, and I still consider him the greatest human scientist of the 20th century. The first complete course of semiotics, which I attended, was given by Vilmos Voigt at Helsinki University in 1973. I wrote my master's thesis entitled *On the Possibility of a Structuralist Musicology*. I wanted to go to Paris to further my studies. In Paris, I attended the seminar by the Lithuanian-born professor Algirdas Julien Greimas at *Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, but I also met Roland Barthes twice and noticed how he as a pianist also wrote about music; I also followed the lectures by Michel Foucault at Collège de France. However, the most important thing was my meeting with Levi-Strauss, one of the 'immortal academicians.' I wanted to show him my MA thesis, but I had hardly mastered the French language. The appointment was easily arranged since we had a common acquaintance, the Finnish-Canadian anthropologist Elli-Kaija Köngäs-Maranda. This event had a profound impact on me. I always remember when, at the end, I humbly said that the structuralism of such a small country like Finland could only reflect such a center as Paris. "*Non monsieur, vous avez trompé. Le centre est toujours là où vos êtes vous-même*" (No sir, you are wrong. The center is always where you are yourself). Anyway, some years later, in 1976, I left with my wife Eila for Brazil in the steps of Lévi-Strauss. This was also an experience that radically expanded my worldview and made me understand that there was non-Europe on the side of Europe.

Speaking about semiotics, I have always considered it an universal study, almost like mathematics, the science of everything. But in starting semiotics, it is important that one already has much information, or rather a broad "encyclopedia of knowledge," as Umberto Eco has put it. Then, by semiotics, you can see how everything is interlinked in a culture, *comment tout se tient*, and find unities among different fields. If you are like Peirce, you synergistically see the universe. Or if you follow Greimas, you may say that semiotics 'surrounds' everything; it is *englobant*, not *englobé*.

Which authors have influenced your work, and how has your research developed over the years? How have you evolved as a researcher? What aspects of being a researcher have become more accessible and habitual, while others remain challenging and demanding?

I have already mentioned Levi-Strauss, but Greimas in Paris has become very important to me. He introduced me to his legendary seminar of 200 international students as the only one from Finland: "*Voici M. Tarasti, compatriote de G.H. von Wright.*" Namely, he respected v. Wright, the follower of Wittgenstein in Cambridge, as a philosopher of modal logic. I later tried to arrange a dialogue with them, but it did not succeed, because v. Wright spoke English and Greimas French. Yet, the deontic logic owed much to v. Wright, whom I also had the honor to know in person. In my semiotic career, I distinguish three phrases: 1) a Lévi-Straussian phase, culminating in my first international book *Myth and Music*, which was my PhD thesis

at Helsinki University in 1978; 2) a Paris school phase under the theory of Greimas. This was clearly seen in my book *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*, 1994, Indiana University Press; and 3) an Existential phase, i.e., the present one, which started some twenty-five years ago. This new approach was nothing else but a combination of classical semiotics - Peirce, Saussure, Greimas, Lotman, Eco...and the continental philosophy from Hegel to Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, J.P. Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Gabriel Marcel, and Hannah Arendt.

But altogether, I consider my development to be organic growth from my early premises into the present, almost like in the *Bildungsroman à la Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, in which case the semiotic community would represent that *alte Wahre* in which *edle Geisterschaft ist erfunden...* or like the narrator of Marcel Proust's novel *In the Search for Times Passed*, where he only at the end becomes a writer.

**SN:** Could you give one brief and concise definition of semiotics? Is it possible? How would you explain the field and the research object of semiotics to someone who has never heard of it?

**ET:** Earlier, I used to say that semiotics is what Umberto Eco does since he was such a media figure known by everyone. Now, I would repeat his other saying: Semiotics is communication plus signification. Well, certainly, it is about signs, although it is funny that in this discipline, there is no unequivocal definition of sign. The sign is, of course, something that refers to something else. By signs, we can speak about things that do not exist concretely in front of us. John Deely said that a sign is not a thing but an object. Philosophers like Meinong and Ingarden considered the sign an intentional entity. This idea is also present in the biosemiotics of Uexküll: we pick up only such stimuli from the *Umwelt* that correspond to our 'intention,' i.e., the inner score, *Ich Ton* (I like this musical metaphor!). This is *Merken*. Sebeok, who in his late years followed biosemiotics, said once in Imatra that semiotics studies the relation between illusion and reality. So, are signs illusory? The classical definition by Jakobson was that signs refer to something absent, or as the scholastics said, it is *aliquid stat pro aliquo*.

Now, we come close to my definition: signs are transcendental entities. The easiest definition of transcendence is anything absent but present in our minds so we can think about it. Then, ultimately, semiotics is a transcendental science or art: signification is about transcendental issues, and in communication, when Mr. A says something to Mr. B (here one could show the famous picture from Saussure's *Cours*) in a dialogue where Mr. B is a transcendental person to Mr. A, they are *fremdseelig*, alien-psyhic. Mr. A can never know what Mr. B thinks of the signs he is sending. Therefore, every act of communication is a terrible risk of misunderstanding. Mr. A can only presume that something similar happens in the mind of Mr. B, as in his own.

He is eigenseelig, auto-psychic. Anyway, you would search in vain for the term 'transcendence' in any encyclopedia or dictionary of semiotics.

**SN:** How would you summarize your contributions to general semiotics and musical semiotics? What is one thing you single out and feel particularly proud of from your research or academic career?

**ET:** Well, the one thing I have tried and perhaps managed to introduce to semiotics is my new theory of existential semiotics. It does not mean we should abandon the great achievements of classical semiotics; they remain valid, but the new theory is broader. For instance, I still use many ideas of Greimas, like isotopy, semanalysis, modalities, and actants. But my new theory may not be quite easy to adopt since it combines two rather different fields: such notions like *Dasein* (a term which I leave untranslated in any other language), transcendence, *Bestimmung*, *Scheitern* etc...and all classical notions of semiotics from icon, index, and symbol to the semiosphere; therefore one should have a double competence, or rather a pluri-competence to understand it. However, existential semiotics consider reality's temporal dynamic nature instead of the Cartesian rigorous square models of the Paris school. Yet, in the continental framework, all these trends from hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism, poststructuralism, deconstruction, and semiotics are, in fact, close to each other. Even German and French traditions are closely related. In Sartre, we find elements of Hegel, and in Lotman, we find thoughts of Cassirer.

In the musical field, I was glad to develop a method of analysis whereby one could analyze the semantic contents of music without any explicit literary or other programs. Music signifies, conveys, and expresses, as Rober Scruton said. But this project continues now when I apply my existential semiotics to music.

Nevertheless, one aspect of my life, perhaps characteristic, is that I have always wanted to create communities around me. This started as early as the reading circle of semiotics in my student years when we read Swedish and other translations of French and Italian scholars since none of us had mastered these languages. These circles led to the foundation of the semiotic society of Finland in 1979, with only six persons. The same year was significant for me since I left with my students from Helsinki for the Second World Congress of Semiotics in Vienna and was introduced there to Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Sebeok. Sebeok, originally a Finno-Ugrian scholar (he spoke Finnish), became a very important adviser, colleague, and friend until his passing in 2003. He invited me to Bloomington, Indiana University, for the first time, and he started to publish my books; then, he was very influential when the ISI, International Semiotics Institute, was established in Imatra in 1986. We were close, albeit he could not stand anything French, particularly Greimas (despite which he also published major works of Greimas in English in his series).

Greimas told me that I am a rare case in that I make science and organize things. Imatra, as you know, became an important center globally in semiotics when it was functioning in the 30 years 1986-2016. It is a great pity that our ministry

ultimately closed its funding. Many young Estonian semioticians visited it, and I befriended some of them. Also, the biosemioticians had their first meetings in Imatra (the Danish and Estonian).

However, the semiotic studies program at Helsinki University was closed. Moreover, the Pan European doctoral program, planned at Lapland University for five years, stopped its activities there just when the program was ready to start with Tartu, Turin, and New Bulgarian University in Sofia.

But in musical semiotics, I started in 1984 at a French Broadcast company in Paris, the project *Musical Signification*, which has survived until our days, organizing 13 international doctorates; postdoc seminars in Helsinki and Imatra; and 15 major congresses in various European towns. Now, we are looking forward to our 16th congress in 2025. Greimas, then, in the foundation year at his office at 10 rue monsieur le Prince, said to me: "Take it with you to Helsinki. We in Paris are too Bohemian to continue it!" So, I did.

This may provide the feeling of community and togetherness of scholars who would have otherwise remained alone with their semiotic enterprises in their home universities.

**SN:** What are the main differences and similarities between musicology and musical semiotics? What about the semiotics of music? Does it imply any difference from musical semiotics?

**ET:** I could not think of musical semiotics without its connection with traditional musicology. Often, when it is done by scholars in semiotics with only linguistic, philosophical, or sociological background and without musical foundation and competence, the results are trivial. For me, the foremost issue is the music itself, the musical experience, phenomenologically. It is perhaps like the famous professor Jorma Panula, having educated the young Finnish conductor stars from Susanna Mälkki and Dalia Stasevska to Klaus Mäkelä, who argued that there is only one thing: score, score, and score! Between musical facts – say a Beethoven symphony or Mozart piano concerto and the semiotic methodology – there is a gap, and it is filled by traditional musicology, which can be, of course, very conservative like in Germany from Adorno to Dahlhaus – or ultraradical like American new musicology, in its gender and queer studies. Here in Europe, we have the 'historical sympathy,' as Charles Rosen has put it, a sense of history that prevents us from misleading, hazardous, or extravagant interpretations.

**SN:** In one of your works, *Existential Semiotics* (2000), you relate music to a situation. What does this mean? Could you briefly explain?

**ET:** Situation is a notion that certainly has philosophical connotations, thinking of J.P. Sartre, for instance. In music, it means that we take into account all the elements of musical communication globally. We do not reduce music into any formalistic scheme. We can even question the existence of a musical object. However, books like Pierre Schaeffer's *Traité des objets musicaux* have written about it. One of the most truthful portrayals of a musical situation and what happens in musical communication is found in Marcel Proust's novel and its last volume, *La prisonnière*, and its famous scene in Paris at the salon of Madame Verdurin, where the Septuor of a fictive composer Vinteuil is performed. There is no center in this musical situation when the narrator tells about musicians, their instruments, how the harpist picks up notes like stars from heaven, or how the cellist draws his strings as if peeling a cabbage. Or Madame Verduin, the goddess of migraine and Wagnerism, is sitting there red, letting her understand that she only understands the music when the composer's life is referred to or the music itself, but very little for which Proust applied colorful metaphors. The situation is living, moving, and hanging out all the time. However, it is significant, or as Proust says, every musician is searching for his lost fatherland; sometimes they find it, sometimes not.

Generally, a musical performance always occurs in a given musical situation. Every musician knows it, myself too, especially now when, in my later years, I have returned to the stage playing piano at a chamber music ensemble with young top musicians. That is a challenge that I find the most rewarding. Yet, this double role as a scholar and musician may have some disadvantages. When I appear in a congress of semiotics, people may say that Tarasti is not a semiotician; he is a musician. When I go to a music symposium, they say that Tarasti is not a musician but a semiotician! The same concerns other artistic activities like writing novels. The passion for fabrication, so strong in Umberto Eco sometimes, may cause the reception of his theories to not be taken so seriously as science.

**SN:** Within this context of music as a situation, could we conceptualize and understand (semiotically) silence? And perhaps even beyond the musical discourse.

**ET:** Silence could be interpreted as a negation of sound and music altogether, but it is not so. Music does not stop at all with silence. In ancient rhetoric, such cases were already called *abruptio*, and they only intensified neighboring events in the discourse. Nothing could be more typical than the opening 'fate' motif of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. It is not a triplet figure and long note but a pause and three eighth notes; with the pause, it becomes an uncompleted *Gestalt*, which creates a narrative expectation: when will it be filled? And it truly happens later in a climax. The same happens at the end of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony. It suddenly has those six tutti chords after the great *Steigerungsanlage*; they are a surprise but still quite logical. Or in Wagner's *unendliche Melodie* technique, when the singer stops, the music does not end there at all, but it continues, or rather, its *melos* goes further by orchestra alone.

In avant-garde music, the pause is more emphasized, like in John Cage. Yet, silence is also a principle in human communication. If Mr. B, in his dialogue with Mr. A, would not say anything, it would be a significant gesture in communication, either a sign of resignation or of stubborn resistance.

**SN:** Which role do you think that silence plays in relation to resistance and postcolonial semiotics?

**ET:** Postcolonial analysis is a theme I dealt with in my first English book on existential semiotics *Existential semiotics* (IU Press, 2000). My model for such a social condition provided one with a theory of how to react in such a situation where the dominant actor has deprived the speech, both *langue* and *parole*, of the dominated. Later, I noticed my theory was a part of broader topics, which I called resistance. This theory became very popular; they pronounced it bathetically in France: *Ooh, resistance!* Evoking thus the Second World War. When I lectured about it in Teheran, my audience at *Grande Centre Encyclopedique des Études Islamiques* liked it particularly – and let me say, over half of the public were ladies. I believe that resistance theory gives us a theoretical model of acting in the present very risky world. I have a list of things anyone can do – without damaging themselves.

Theoretically speaking, I dealt with the 'counter-current of signs', i.e., what if signs would not go from left to right like in the Shannon-Weaver communication model, but from right to left, from the receiver to sender. I also deal with counter-factuality, i.e., what might have happened when looking for action alternatives. Ultimately, this is crystallized in what Hannah Arendt said: The infinitely improbable can always be realized. This means we could get rid of the 'dictatorship of conditions' where George Henrik v Wright spoke.

**SN:** How can the aesthetics of resistance be understood in post-colonial semiotics? And how is it related to the semiotics of resistance?

**ET:** Certainly, they are connected. Silencing is one of the techniques whereby the dominant actor subordinates the dominated. In a congress, if you come from a minor nation or society, from the marginal, so to say, you are not supposed to say anything significant, and so your speech is not listened to. But semiotically speaking, one can get rid of the fixed sign position of subordination by certain artistic signs whose mere signifier is so revolutionarily new that it explodes that readymade sign complex. For instance, in Poland, the music of Krzysztof Penderecki in the early 1960s was a sudden revelation when his shockingly sonoristic works were performed at Western music festivals like Donaueschingen. I mean his works like *The Haven for Victims of Hiroshima*, *Fluorescences*, and *Anaklasis*. They were radically new both in their sound impression and their notation and certainly strongly resisted and opposed the Polish society of that moment; I have just studied them applying my 'zemic' model of



existential semiotics, which was an experiment for me since earlier I had mainly studied only classico-romantic pieces. Yet, the aesthetics of resistance contain more analytically applicable elements for arts, like the idea of counter-factuality, which I already mentioned, i.e., the network of possible choices under the level of the surface, which is based upon “what might have happened.”

Aesthetics of resistance is relevant for a nation fighting for its existence, as was the case of Finland at the turn of the century. Sibelius wrote his *Jägermarsch* for this purpose, and it still has a powerful indexical impact on people's behavior, at least in Finland. Not to mention such a work as *Finlandia*, in which the resistance symbolism is elevated to a universal level (in the United States, it is sung as a religious hymn and appears in many choral books. When Sibelius heard about this, he reminded us that it is an orchestral...but added: If the world wants to sing it, let it be then so!). Some try to promote the so-called 'engaged music,' like in Finland, the young Cecilia Damström, who writes symphonic pieces on climate change. Yet, her works are admirable, perhaps not so much by their program but by their inner musical structure and inventiveness.

**SN:** Has your Existential Semiotics theory changed through the years based on feedback, or through its applications by other colleagues and scholars?

**ET:** I must say that existential semiotics develops all the time. I feel like I am building the Cologne cathedral, bringing one stone upon another; the work may last a long time, and the end is not yet seen. Altogether, existential semiotics emerged in my mind due to the desire to develop semiotics further so that it would not just mechanically and orthodoxically repeat what the giants of semiotics of our time had said. However, Greimas had the vision that his method was so certain, fixed, and valid that he could sign any work by his students. I secretly thought there would never be any scientific development and progress. I am not yet competent enough to say anything about recent developments in my theory, but there are many indeed, and all over the world. Therefore, I maintain international research seminars on Monday afternoons by Zoom so anyone can get criticism and encouragement for such a theoretical enterprise. There are only time differences between Finland, Japan, Australia, California, and Brazil!

**SN:** *Dasein* and transcendence are the main concepts of existential semiotics; how would you explain the terms? Are there terms by other scholars that are especially compatible or complementary to them?

**ET:** As I said, I leave the German term *Dasein* untranslated in all my English, French, Italian, or Finnish texts. The root 'Sein' is so important in German philosophy with all its connotations. If for Heidegger, *Dasein* was essentially my 'being there,' for me, it

is broader, covering the whole world of subjects and objects; one might also call it like phenomenologists *Lebenswelt*, living world. As said, the results of classical semiotics remain valid for the study of *Dasein*. In the later phase of my theory, I filled the *Dasein* with different 'zemics' whereby I understood models for the human mind consisting of *Moi1*, *Mo2*, *Soi2*, and *Soi1*, i.e., body, person, practice, and values. This was supposed to be an ontological theory. Yet, when zemic is represented in various ways, it becomes Sig-zemic. Moreover, *Dasein* is surrounded by transcendence, of which I distinguish three species: empirical, supra-zemic, and radical transcendence.

**SN:** What do you think is the role and importance of semiotics nowadays? And what about the relevance of studying musical semiotics? Are there any social implications?

**ET:** Semiotics is the only theory capable of dealing with problems of the modern media world of communication because it is also a critical theory of our living world. Therefore, it should be taught everywhere. But you have to ask, which semiotics do you mean? It contains so many epistemological choices, of which you cannot say immediately what is the right one. Suppose you believe that transcendence is a pure cognitive construction we pursue in order to make our lives more comprehensive and acceptable despite its controversies. In that case, you are in the same line as Jean-Paul Sartre in his *L'Être et le Néant*. Yet, if you believe that transcendence is the only real thing in the universe and the rest only its metaphor (like at the end of Goethe's *Faust II: alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis*), then you are close to theology, something like Thomas Aquinas proposed, for whom the world would finish existing immediately if the transcendental grace would stop supporting it.

Semiotics is a critical theory altogether; with semiotics, we live, experience, and interpret issues around us differently.

**SN:** What are the flaws or limitations of semiotic study?

**ET:** Semiotics has no limits at all. Earlier in its structuralist days, it believed in formalization; linguist laws prevailed everywhere. The computer aspect has remained; now, we only speak about digitalization. The postmodern period produced radical programmatic studies, albeit in gender studies, the problem of gendered signs has not yet been solved.

**SN:** What do you imagine are the prospects of general semiotics and musical semiotics?

**ET:** In those places and universities where semiotics has become a discipline with its chairs, it has often had to adapt to the requirements of contemporary worlds like

marketing, media, and digital processes. The only problem may be that semiotic analyses are too sophisticated for those who should read them, i.e., engineers, technicians, information scholars, media people, etc. But it is often so that most abstract theories are those which most radically change the world.

**SN:** Which advice would you give to your younger self, students of semiotics, and our readers?

**ET:** Who am I? I do not know, although my memories were just published some years ago, entitled *Moi ja Soi*. That is, of course, partly French but also a pun in Finnish: young people greet each other by saying hello! In Finnish: *Moi*. And French *Soi* (society) is the same as *Sound* in Finnish. It would be rather egoistic to demand that all should follow my path. If I believe in what I call a 'classical European text,' like R. Scruton stated: "Best that has been said and thought," I do not suppose all should rush to follow me. Returning to my baccalaureate fest at Helsinki Normal Lyceum (in 1967), I remember how our Rector Aulis Ojajärvi announced: "Be grateful and work hard" (*Ole kiitollinen ja näe vaivaa*) or our teacher of biology Tellervo Rosenberg: "Protect nature and yourself as a part of nature!" To these slogans, I could add what the Rector of Indiana University in Bloomington said in 1996 when I got my honorary doctor's degree there in the stadium: "Follow your passion and furnish your mind!"

**SN:** Do you have anything else you want to share with us?

**ET:** No... or rather, I could continue on as a talkative person who lives mostly in discourse, but it is better to stop here. In Finnish, we say *Lyhyestä virsi kaunis* (the hymn must be short). Thanks!