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Vote for the musical kantele stamp as the most beautiful in Europe

The stamps introduce a new feature: a music video starts directly from the stamp

The *National instruments* stamp, designed by graphic artist **Sanna Mander**, is the representative of Finland in an online competition (www.posteurop.org/StampContest) in which everyone can vote for the most beautiful stamp in Europe in 2014.

The specialty of the National instruments stamps, published last Monday, May 5, is a hidden code, which opens the brand new Folk Big Band music video (<http://youtu.be/mdybfVGo4g>) on your smartphone or tablet.

In the music video, Folk Big Band, a band specializing in folk music and hailing from the Sibelius Academy, play their own energetic version of schottische in D minor by **Konsta Jylhä**. In addition to FBB and its group of almost 30 musicians, the video, produced by Itella Posti Oy, features dancer **Tuomas Mikkola** who is lead around Helsinki by the rhythms of the music. Magneetto Media Oy was in charge of the implementation of the Eurovision-style video postcard.

The video was made as part of the extensive and long cooperation between Itella and Sibelius Academy.

A code hidden in the stamp's image opens a video

An identifier that can be scanned with the CEE App application is hidden in the images of the National instruments stamps. Users who have downloaded the app only need to align their smartphone or tablet with the stamp and directly access the web to watch a music video.

The stamps' CEE App application works on all Android and iPhone phones and tablets. Customers can download the application free of charge from App Store or Google Play. The application will also be released for Windows devices during May.

Music and the surrounding nature as one

Sanna Mander chose the kantele and the accordion as the national instruments for her EUROPA stamps. In the stamps, Mander handles a traditional subject in her own, personal style, combining fairy tales with a modern twist. The kantele stamp will take part in the PostEurop competition.

Mander considers traditional folk music a continuum that links the past with the future. She wanted to depict the musicians in the stamps in the moment in which music and the surrounding nature merge into one. "The kantele is played in a field covered with notes and the accordion in a forest with notes rising to form the tops of birches."

Sanna Mander is an award-winning graphic designer from Helsinki. Her colorful work is familiar among Finnish as well as international customers. Mander has produced illustrations for print media, children's books and household textiles. Her customers include Itella, Paulig, New York Magazine, and Volkswagen.

Folk musicians need no sheet music

Art director of Folk Big Band and folk music lecturer at Sibelius Academy, **Petri Prauda**, thinks the kantele is a good choice for a stamp depicting Finnish national instruments. "Sure, stringed instruments similar to the kantele are common in many countries, but Finnish folk music is quite unique in the world with its Slavic influences."

Prauda believes that the schottische in D minor by Konsta Jylhä, performed on the video, is an excellent example of Finnish folk music. "Konsta is a very well-known musician and his composition provides a good basis for an interpretation of a larger ensemble."

Folk Big Band is made up of students, teachers and other musicians. According to Prauda, folk musicians do not play from sheet music, but by heart without a conductor. "We aim to harness the creative strength of the musicians into a larger whole. All the musicians react rhythmically to different situations and thus constantly dynamically affect the interpretation of the music."

In the spring of 2014, Folk Big Band published an album, which has received a great deal of praise in music circles.

Voting period lasts until the end of August

National music instruments are the theme of PostEurop's stamp competition this year. All European postal operators have published stamps in the EUROPA series during the spring of 2014, presenting the national instruments of each country. In the competition, Finland is represented by a stamp designed by Sanna Mander and featuring a kantele.

The voting, which is open to the public, is arranged online at www.posteurop.org/StampContest. The site presents all the stamps from the different countries signed up for the competition. The online voting period lasts until 31.8.2014. Stamp-themed prizes will be drawn among all those who have voted. In addition to the online voting, a jury of experts will rank the stamps. The winning stamps will be published in September 2014.

"Go vote for the stamp showcasing Finnish competence in both graphic design and innovation. More CEE App applications will be featured in the stamps later in the fall, and just imagine all the content we could link to the stamps' images," says Itella Posti Oy Development Director **Markku Penttinen**.

Itella Posti Oy has good prospects for the PostEurop competition, as last year the international jury of experts chose the Finnish stamp, depicting a mail delivery car, as the most beautiful in Europe. The stamp was designed by **Ari Lakaniemi** and **Susanna Rumpu**. Last year, the theme for the EUROPA stamps was mail delivery vehicles.

PostEurop, the association of European postal operators, has published EUROPA stamps since 1956. The stamps are published with a common theme, which tells of the mutual European roots, culture and history of the different countries. The stamps are popular among collectors and a new EUROPA logo was launched in them in 2011.

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Folk Big Band's music video:

<http://youtu.be/mdybfVGo4g>

PostEurop competition website:

www.posteurop.org/StampContest

Image material for the media:

<http://digilibrary.itella.com/?cart=1711-cdhdhbgdca&l=FI>

All stamps available for sale are featured in Posti's online shop:

www.posti.fi/goshopping