



CENTER FOR WORLD MUSIC

AND RELATED ARTS



Merja Soria

Merja Soria taught and performed Finnish *kantele* and song for the Center for World Music in 2018. A native of Finland, she was the first Finlandia Foundation performer of the year in 1996. She received a master's degree in music from the Sibelius Academy in Finland and has taught Finnish music at San Diego State University and the University of San Diego. In 2003 and 2006, Merja was featured in *Who's Who in America* and in 2005 received an award at San Diego State University for Academic Excellence and Community Outreach. Merja has taught young children in San Diego at her music school, Miss Merja's Music Room.

As a performing artist, she is particularly dedicated to sharing the touching music of the Finnish heritage with her audiences. She combines the Finnish folk zither (*kantele*) and her singing voice to express the hauntingly beautiful traditional sung poetry of her homeland. Finnish folk poetry, for example, tells that when the first *kantele* was played for the first time, the sound was so beautiful that everybody started to cry; when the tears touched the water of the ocean, they turned to pearls. Merja has performed at the Los Angeles Music Center, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., the Toronto Centre for the Arts, the Peninsula Music Fair, and many other music festivals in the United States and Europe.

Merja's CD *Arctic Silence* is a selection of ancient Finnish songs. One song from that recording was featured in the National Geographic Television's program *Beyond the Movie: Lord of The Rings*. "Her vocals are so haunting, her folksongs scholarship impeccable... Soria doesn't need to clutter songs with much instrumentation, her voice carries the day all on its own." —Sing Out!