



Otherworld Ensemble is a joint project lead by Finnish Jazz Legend Heikki "Mike" Koskinen and Finnish-American saxophonist and composer Rent Romus. Their music is inspired by Finno-Ugric mythopoetic structures, and traditional forms featuring some of the most creative musicians in the Finnish music scene. The spark of inspiration came after Romus toured Denmark in the mid-nineties working with musicians who were integrating their cultural traditions with African-American music. Romus realized the music he grew up with could serve as a platform and research tool into his own lost heritage. The "Other World" theme references heritage found deep in the "Body of Memory" embedded in the ensemble's musical psyche refracted through the lens of improvisation, folk, and composition.

The music consists of original melody and improvised transitions inspired by the epic rune poems of the Kalevala, northern regional folk songs, traditional healing arts, animistic elements, and jazz. Their arrangements range from small to large instrumental ensembles with voice augmented by traditional instruments such as kantele, bells, handmade reed instruments, and overtone flutes. The music utilizes these elements while embedded structurally in ways that abstractly reference a Finnish and American aesthetic.

In 2023 the Otherworld Ensemble will present music from **Itkuja Suite**, an exploration on the healing music of Finnish Nordic lament and life affirming elements of jazz. **Along with vocalist and renowned professor emeritus Heikki Laitinen, Rent Romus and Heikki Koskinen will be joined by multi-instrumentalist Otto Eskelinen, bassist Eero Tikkanen, and drummer percussionist Arwi Lind.**

Listen:

<https://soundcloud.com/rent-romus/2023-otherworldensembletoursampler>

Watch:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmt6KUw401VZCdSSA98auGH8iRv9V0Rq4>

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