

Radio Sandels, 2018-07-13

Now we have on the phone world record accordionist Anssi K. Laitinen, a musician from Kuopio.

- Hello, Anssi.

- Good morning.

- **Good morning and congratulations for the world record.**

- Thank you.

- **The time is now already 1:08 pm, but did you just wake up, Anssi?**

- Actually I opened my eyes about ten minutes ago.

- **That accordion performance must have been quite a task, no wonder you're tired after that.**

- Not any more, but about 6:30 am when I was sitting on a chair in the living room I almost fell down on the floor, and then I knew it's time to go to bed.

- **So last night you could not yet calm down enough to sleep?**

- No, I was still in the same hectic mood as during the 40 hours I played.

- **Tell us something about the performance, you started playing accordion Wednesday morning at 8 and finished yesterday, Thursday afternoon at 4:15. How many hours that was altogether?**

- Oh no, I did not finish Thursday afternoon, I continued after midnight so it was actually Friday already.

- **So it continued that long? So I had incorrect information! But now, Anssi, tell us all about this feat.**

- Thursday at 4:15 pm was the moment when I exceeded the existing record of Cory Pesaturo from America, but then we continued all the way to the 40 hour mark non-stop. The final time according to the records is 40 hours, 3 minutes and 10 seconds.

- **And when did you stop playing?**

- It was 3 or 4 minutes after midnight.

- **Did you play all the time without interruption, or were some breaks allowed?**

- The pauses between pieces were 30 second maximum, and each piece had to last at least 2 minutes. And after playing 60 minutes without interruption I earned 5 minutes of maintenance break, which I could save and use later. This time I played 13 hours without a break, at which point I had accumulated 65 minutes of maintenance break. Then I used about half an hour of that break, took a shower and got a massage, and then I continued playing.

- How were you able to eat during the performance?

- I had an excellent maintenance team lead by Anita Jämsén, the team steadily fed me raisins, nuts, also salt because I was losing fluid and the body needs salt to keep going. I also got juices and mineral water to drink, and so on.

- That was quite a feat. How were you able to carry on, did you get exhausted or sore?

- There was pain and agony, I knew that in advance because of the previous record attempt in Koljonvirta, Iisalmi, 2010. But now as we started planning this event with Olavi Rytönen, he introduced me to Janne Juvonen, a trained massage therapist. We met for the first time a month before the event and he gave me a massage. My muscles were really stiff at the time. I got a few massages during the preceding weeks and he managed to relax my muscles. Janne was indispensable during the whole event when my tendons swelled and I was sore. I have no idea what acupoints he may have used but always he managed to get me all right again. This maintenance continued as necessary even while I played, and there were about 20 seconds in between pieces that could be used for this. I also used some of the accumulated maintenance breaks for this, 3 to 4 minutes at a time. Then we continued again, and this way we kept going all the way to the end.

- Were you sometimes ready to fall asleep?

- Unquestionably. The maintenance team, Olavi Rytönen and others sometimes wondered whether I would stay awake. But I just lived along each piece, closed my eyes and kept nodding my head.

- They thought you're so talented that you could play even while you're asleep. How many pieces did you play, did you count?

- Actually I don't know yet, but I have several folders full of documents which the official witnesses have written. Now I must scan them all through, have them translated in English and prepare summaries, and send them along with the full video footage to Guinness office in London, and in that context I will also get to know the exact number of pieces. So no answer at the moment. I calculated that the number should be around 700 but probably a bit less, 650 or so.

- And you never played the same piece twice?

- The rules would allow playing the same pieces again after 4 hours, but I made the piece list so that I wouldn't need to play the same piece twice. I thought that there are so many good songs in this world that should not be forgotten. Even then there was not enough time to play all the pieces.

- Now you have the Guinness World Record and you are the champion again, and the title is here in Savonia. What do you think, does this American-Italian Cory Pesaturo already know that you have broken his record?

- I don't know, but I want to specify that now we have only made a record attempt, and the Guinness office will now review all our documentation and decide whether it will be an official World Record. It will take about 16 to 18 weeks before the London office has checked the material, so we may get some kind of results in late November or early December. They will then send a message that the attempt was accepted, congratulations, or that the attempt was rejected. They won't need to state reasons or explain.

- Do you think that somebody else could be such a madcap and try to attempt a similar record?

- I hope so. There have been many attempts around the world, in Italy, Slovenia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the current World Record in United States. I held the record for 7 years, which is the longest time in the history of this category.

- Let's hope you will get the official World Record back. But now, Olavi Rytönen was the organiser of this effort, was he also awake and actively involved during the whole event?

- Olavi was there quite a long time but he had 5 other people as supervisors, holding the strings and ensuring that everything is functioning all right, welcoming the witnesses, taking the statements and controlling the progress of the whole event. I think Olavi slept a few hours at some time.

- So Anssi, how does it feel now, are you ready to play accordion already today or will you take a few days off? When will you have the accordion on your knee the next time?

- I was asked for a gig today but I did not accept that offer. Tomorrow I have one gig in the afternoon and another in the evening, and on Sunday there is the Strawberry Carneval, so the musician's work continues.

- Are your fingers sore from the record attempt?

- It's hard to believe but the maintenance team did such a marvellous job that now I have practically no discomfort whatsoever.

- Great, you've been in good hands. Thank you Anssi, I'll let you rest now and enjoy this great accomplishment. Thank you very much and congratulations.

- Thanks, but I want to emphasise that I could not have done this by myself, there were about 50 people involved, and I had the easiest part sitting there and playing when told and ending a piece when told.