



# **The Kalevala: An Epic Poem after Oral Tradition by Elias Lönnrot (Oxford World's Classics)**

*Elias Lönnrot*

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*The Kalevala* is the great Finnish epic, which like the Iliad and the Odyssey, grew out of a rich oral tradition with prehistoric roots. During the first millennium of our era, speakers of Uralic languages (those outside the Indo-European group) who had settled in the Baltic region of Karelia, that straddles the border of eastern Finland and north-west Russia, developed an oral poetry that was to last into the nineteenth century. This poetry provided the basis of the Kalevala. It was assembled in the 1840s by the Finnish scholar Elias Lönnrot, who took 'dictation' from the performance of a folk singer, in much the same way as our great collections from the past, from Homeric poems to medieval songs and epics, have probably been set down. Published in 1849, it played a central role in the march towards Finnish independence and inspired some of Sibelius's greatest works. This new and exciting translation by poet Keith Bosley, prize-winning translator of the anthology *Finnish Folk Poetry: Epic*, is the first truly to combine liveliness with accuracy in a way which reflects the richness of the original.

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