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## Tuomas Holopainen: recent Orkus interview about firing Tarja

(Friday, 11 November 2005) - Contributed by Silvia Deurwaarder

Again there is a new interview with Tuomas Holopainen, founder of Nightwish. This time an interview copyrighted by the ORKUS magazine, Germany. Q: How are you? Have you had a chance to settle down a bit? Tuomas: It is all very very stressful. I knew that it would be like this, so I could prepare for it a little bit. At the moment everything is really confusing for me. I'm waiting for the day when everything will calm down and I'm really counting the nights until a time when I won't have to talk about all this anymore. But I suppose this will haunt me for months."

Q: In your open letter to Tarja, you write, "It's time to choose whether the story of Nightwish ends here or whether it will still continue an undetermined period of time." How difficult was it to make the decision [to part ways with Tarja]?

Tuomas: "It was the most difficult thing I ever had to do. Nightwish is not only a band but more like a big family that plays music together and it is a way of life, a way of feeling. I want everybody in the band to think that way. There has to be a mental connection &mdash; for the music, for the friendship, for the common journeys and for having fun together. Tarja's attitude and her values became more and more different from ours. In the last few months she cut herself off from the rest of the group. I think there is a specific quote from her that made her position clear: 'I don't need this band for my career anymore.' This statement felt really cruel for me. It couldn't go on like that&hellip;"

Q: In the end, was it a combination of many things that drove you to your decision or was there one specific event that happened that pushed you over the edge?

Tuomas: "It was a combination of many different factors: The way Tarja felt about the band, her motives, her values, the fact that the next album was definitely going to be her last and that she didn't want to tour with us anymore, not even after the next record. Why should we continue working a person with an attitude like that?"

Q: Do you feel relieved now that you made this decision and put it behind you or does it feel like it often does in these situations: After the relief comes the pain along with uncertainty and doubt&hellip;?

Tuomas: "It is a mixture of pain, hope and relief. All this has been a really big burden for the entire band and so it feels like relief, like a new start but of course it is sad as well that the whole thing had to end like this. It is hard for Tarja, for the band and for the fans &mdash; for everybody. But I also believe that time will heal all wounds. Perhaps the sun will shine again in a few weeks."

Q: That sounds like the end of a love of one's life, a relationship between two people.

Tuomas: "Yes; I've always said that personal relations are the most difficult thing in life and here we have a really good example of that. You can compare it to a divorce &mdash; a really ugly divorce&hellip;"

Q: &hellip;Which you made official immediately after the show in Helsinki, right after a long tour has reached its end.

When you went on stage with Tarja for the last time, you were aware of the significance of this show and that you would give your open letter to Tarja right after the concert. So how did it feel performing under those circumstances?

Tuomas: "It was really strange. That was the hardest day of my life but during the gig I was able to forget everything that was about to come. I think it was the best concert that we ever played. Everything was just great: the arena, all the visual effects and a lot more. Above all, the fans were fantastic. During our show a lot of dreams came true and it was the first time that I cried onstage during a gig &mdash; for a number of different reasons."

Q: When you decided on the title of the upcoming DVD, "End of an Era" [shot at the final concert in Helsinki], did you already know that things would be taking this turn?

Tuomas: "Yes, I wrote the letter about three weeks before the concert and when we decided on the title, we thought that it would fit the DVD."

Q: You gave Tarja the letter after the show. Why didn't you wait at least one day so that she could relax a bit following the completion of this long tour?

Tuomas: "The main reason was that we wanted to give her the letter personally so she didn't have to read its contents on the Internet. She wanted to fly to Argentina [where her husband Marcelo is from] the day after the show. But after our performance, we didn't want to take this last evening and her happiness away from her &mdash; and in addition, she [was throwing] a party [following the concert]. So we gave her the letter, hugged her and said, 'It's better that you read this tomorrow.' There were many different reasons for doing it this way and I don't want to explain in detail why we had to handle it like this. There was no possibility for us to talk about it with her. It was the only way. All I can tell you is: Believe me."

Q: So after everything that has happened, are you still sure that this was the right way to handle this?

Tuomas: "My conscience is clear and I have no doubts about whether we acted correctly or the way we did it."

Q: Well, if you had only given "personal disagreements" as the reason for Tarja's departure, there would have been thousands of rumors afterwards.

Tuomas: "Yes, exactly. That was a really important point in our decision to make it not only a personal letter but an open one for everybody to see. If we had announced that Tarja was no longer a member of the band and that we would go on with another singer, we would have to do interviews about this for the next few years. We wanted the truth to be told because we were a little bit concerned: Things went sour between us and we were worried that Tarja would come out

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with something first before we had a chance to explain ourselves. We wanted to be the first ones to tell the real story of what happened. That's why everything happened so suddenly. And then there was the fact that Tarja wanted to leave Finland the day after the show. We wouldn't have had the opportunity to do this for a month if we hadn't done it when we did. There was no other possibility. Anyway, we hadn't really been talking to each other for a year. We tried a few times, but it was a nightmare. I think she has to open her eyes first. There is absolutely nothing that we could have changed by talking; first of all she has to understand the facts and make them clear to herself."

Q: How is it possible for a band to go on tour when you don't talk to each other for such a long time?

Tuomas: "The thing is that we never saw Tarja, because she did everything on her own. At gigs we always met her fifteen minutes before the start of the show. She never came to interviews and she never turned up at soundchecks. We saw her when she was completely dressed up and prepared for the show shortly before the gig started and afterwards she went directly to the car and drove to the hotel. And that was it. The next time we saw her was right before the next gig. She didn't want to travel with us, she didn't want to go by bus with us nor by car. She didn't want to join us for meals, she didn't want to do any interviews &mdash; nothing. Actually, there were two different camps. During the last few months, Tarja told the Finnish media about her solo career and she always emphasized that Nightwish was not the thing that she wants to do in her life, that it was not her voice and not her music &mdash; she was only a guest musician. She really hurt me with these words because it sounded like the whole thing felt just embarrassing to her."

Q: Nevertheless, you don't think that a slightly less personal letter would have been a better alternative?

Tuomas: I don't think that there are any passages in that letter which are too personal. I rewrote the letter over and over again and in the beginning it included a lot more personal stuff. She has accused us for dragging her husband into the whole thing, but we haven't criticized him as her husband. I'm sure that he is a wonderful and caring husband, but as her manager, he is the main reason why the whole situation was created in the first place. That just has to be said, because I want people to understand why we decided to take this step and why we will carry on. In the last year I said in some interviews: 'If Tarja leaves the band one day, then this could be the end for Nightwish.' So I had to explain myself so that everybody's able to understand why we decided to go on without her. By doing it this way, I stood up for myself and defended myself."

Q: Can you tell us more about the role of Tarja's husband Marcelo? What did he do?

Tuomas: "It's like John Lennon and Yoko Ono. It was very difficult to get close to Tarja because there was a huge Argentinean wall between us. When you sent her an email or an SMS: it was answered in English &mdash; by Marcelo. All the financial issues and arguments started to be really ridiculous. It is not so much that she didn't want to do gigs in America or Australia, because &mdash; in her opinion &mdash; the venues and fees were too small &mdash; it's more about her attitude as a whole. It all started with two sentences from her &mdash; one of them I already mentioned: 'I don't need Nightwish for my career anymore. You know, I can leave this band anytime.' That sent the coldest shiver down my back. She is an old friend of mine and for her to think that way. So these are her motives to be in the band. It was unbelievable."

Q: So you didn't only lose a singer but a friend as well.

Tuomas: "Yes, I lost a friend. I lost a lot. And when you read the letter and read between the lines as well then I hope you'll understand that I'm not angry with her, that I don't hate her."

Q: But I suppose that a lot of unpleasant memories about Tarja will remain?

Tuomas: "During the last year, I was very frustrated and I still am. I'm sad and disappointed. But it is not Tarja that I see. It is someone else."

Q: You probably read Tarja's reply to the media and the fans. She writes that she was shocked and devastated by the words in your letter. What went through your mind when you read that?

Tuomas: "I was surprised that she sounded that shocked. I don't know how blind and deaf she must have been over the last year. Things went incredibly bad between her and the rest of the band and I thought she would have at least expected something like this to happen."

Q: There is a passage in your letter that sounds a bit acusatory: "We were never bothered by the fact that you didn't participate in writing/arranging songs, you never in 9 years came to rehearse the songs with us before going to the studio. Not the fact that while on tour you always wanted to fly, separately from us with your husband."

Tuomas: "I wasn't trying to accuse her with those words."

Q: But it sounds like it.

Tuomas: ,, I wrote all that because I want the fans to understand why Tarja is replaceable. There are so many people who think that NIGHTWISH is Tarja's band, that she writes all the songs, does all the interviews and so on but during the last year she didn't contribute anything else other than the one and a half hour on stage. I simply had to put that into the

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letter in order to make the fans understand why we had the right to do all this. I don't blame her; I really mean what I wrote. These things didn't matter to me."

Q: But how were you able to survive this atmosphere on the road?

Tuomas: Because we [the rest of the band] supported each other. The band grew really close. This is probably the only positive aspect that the whole situation brought along. Even the crew and our manager &mdash; we were like one big family and we had the best time ever on tour. Actually we were a family, and from time to time there was a guest."

Q: You are the one that composes all the songs and writes the lyrics, so you can say that you are the soul of NIGHTWISH but Tarja was the voice and the face of the band. Are you scared that many fans will turn away from you now?

Tuomas: "I cannot do anything to change that. Many fans will feel that way and I don't criticize them for it. In some way it is understandable. Tarja gave NIGHTWISH its image but I still hope that many people will understand how much the whole band makes Nightwish what it is. I don't claim that Tarja's position was wrong because it worked really well like that. I try to see it as the end of an era and the beginning of a new one."

Q: Sometimes it is difficult to imagine that there is a new door that opens when another one shuts, but it's always like that. Time will tell...

Tuomas: "Exactly. I've never been scared about the band's future or that we won't find a singer. I'm sure that we will find a really good one and I'm confident about the new album. It will still sound like Nightwish. My biggest concern is about Tarja herself and also about the other guys in the band, how they will cope with the situation. 'Once' sold over one million copies [worldwide]. It doesn't matter to me if the next record sells only 100,000 copies. Who cares, as long as everybody is having fun and we are making good music."