**Naantali Music Festival cancels live audience concerts in June**

**The festival will go ahead on a smaller scale with compromises to adjust for the coronavirus pandemic**

*The Naantali Music Festival, which usually opens Finland’s summer festivals, has been forced to cancel its live audience concerts in June due to the coronavirus situation. The event was set to take place on 8–19 June and consist of 27 concerts in Naantali and the surrounding area. However, the festival is not being cancelled completely – three concerts will be livestreamed online in June and a few live concerts will be moved unchanged or with minor changes forward to autumn and 2022.*

The decision on how to organise the event and what its scope should be was delayed for as long as possible to ensure that it could be made on the basis of accurate information about the coronavirus situation and the resulting restrictions. Despite positive developments in recent weeks, it is still extremely difficult to predict what the situation will be in early June.

“We prepared several models early in the year that would have allowed us to organise most of the concerts regardless of restrictions with audience numbers reduced by up to 60%. Unfortunately, it doesn’t currently look like restrictions on public events will be relaxed anywhere near as much as we would need them to be by early June. We’ve also reached a point where we can’t delay our decision any further,” explains Suvi Innilä, Managing Director of the Naantali Music Festival.

The Government Decree on Communicable Diseases, which remains in force until the end of June, mandates a two-metre safety distance if the incidence rate exceeds 25. In the main venue of the music festival, Naantali Church, this would mean accommodating only 10% of the usual audience capacity of 650 people. This prohibits the festival programme from being carried out as normal, as ticket sales account for a significant portion of the event’s budget.

“It was an unpleasant and disheartening decision, but it had to be made because our financial risk became too great,” says Pekka Ritvanen, Chairman of the foundation’s board.

Though the festival is still going forward in a limited form, there was no choice but to cancel, for a second time, the Vallis Gratiae academy that is organised in connection with the festival. The Naantali Children’s Music Festival organised jointly with the Save the Children association and Naantali Museum will also be moved forward by one year.

**The over forty-year-old event offers wonderful experiences for audiences and work opportunities for artists – and will continue to do so in the future**

The Naantali Music Festival, which was first organised in 1980 and focuses on a wide variety of chamber music, is one of Finland’s oldest and most respected cultural events.

“Last year, the coronavirus pandemic shut down the event entirely, so we want to make the forty-first festival a reality this year, even if circumstances mean it has to be smaller than usual and different in form. By doing so, we want to let everyone know that the Naantali Music Festival will live on despite the pandemic,” explains cellist Arto Noras, founder and Artistic Manager of the event.

“We want to offer our audience the usual high-quality events of the festival despite the exceptional circumstances we are all currently living under, and I believe that the three concerts we are organising in June will be successful, even if they are only available online,” he continues.

“Additionally, despite our limited resources, it is still important to organise the event because it lets us offer work opportunities to artists who have been hit hard by the pandemic,” Suvi Innilä adds.

More information will be provided at the beginning of May on the programme for the three online concerts in June and the concerts that are being moved to autumn and winter.

**Tickets can be returned or swapped for vouchers**

Because the summer 2020 festival programme was moved almost entirely to 2021 after the event was cancelled due to the pandemic, some concert tickets people have been waiting to use date back all the way to autumn 2019.

“Though we are moving some performers and pieces forward to the summer 2022 music festival, next year’s festival programme will be its own and will not be the same as the programmes of this year or last year. Most of the concerts that are being moved to autumn and winter will also change to some degree in terms of content and performers. Because of this, we are refunding almost all of the concert tickets. Of course, we hope that most people who bought tickets will trade them for a voucher for future Naantali Music Festival concerts,” Suvi Innilä says.

More information about ticket refunds, rescheduled concerts and tickets for them can be found online at [www.naantalimusic.com](http://www.naantalimusic.com/).

**The Naantali Music Festival thanks its audiences and artists for their patience in waiting for the final decision on the summer’s events!**