**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Naantali Music Festival invites the public to online concerts in June, and again to life musical experiences in Naantali this autumn**

*Naantali Music Festival has had to cancel its June public concerts due to coronavirus, but the festival will still take place: partly online and partly postponed to the autumn on a reduced scale. The updated festival programme for 2021 still includes a notable contingent of leading artists from Finland and elsewhere in Europe.*

“The public will not yet be able to attend our concerts in June, which is also a great disappointment to our artists. Despite the exceptional circumstances, we are still keen to give our audience high-standard concert experiences that represent the deepest essence of this music festival. We shall accordingly be live streaming some of the Naantali ambience directly into your living room in June,” says Artistic Director Arto Noras.

The **Naantali Music Festival Opus 41** opening concert will take place at the originally scheduled time of 19.00 on Tuesday 8 June with live streaming online. The programme will include Opus 41 works by *Jean Sibelius*, *Samuel Barber* and *Camille Saint-Saëns*, with a host of concert stars including baritone **Waltteri Torikka** making his Naantali Music Festival début, violinist **Elina Vähälä**, violist **Ilari Angervo**, cellist **Arto Noras**, and pianists **Joonas Pohjonen** and **Juhani Lagerspetz**.

The concert will remain available online free of charge for two weeks in the hope of attracting as many people as possible to celebrate the opening of the 41st Naantali Music Festival.

“With coronavirus causing the complete cancellation of last summer’s festival, we are pleased to be able to stage the event this time round. Our opening concert is therefore of particularly great symbolic significance. Online concerts are also an opportunity to reach new audience groups,” explains Executive Director Suvi Innilä of Naantali Music Festival.

**At Midsummer we shall enjoy music from the shores of the south-western archipelago and turn our gaze to the northern sky**

From Midsummer onwards two concerts will be streamed online: **Music from archipelago shores** will be filmed in four settings, providing an opportunity to enjoy the landscapes of Naantali and the south-western archipelago together with the music. These will include works by *JS Bach* at Seili Church and *Finlandia* by Jean Sibelius at Naantali cliffs. Leading performers at this concert will include violinists **Mihaela Martin** and **Elina Vähälä**, cellists **Frans Helmerson** and **Arto Noras**, pianist Ralf Gothoni, clarinetist **Michel Lethiec** and the **Key Ensemble Choir**. The other featured composers will be Naantali Music Festival favourites *Krzysztof Penderecki* and *Aulis Sallinen*.

**Look at the Northern Sky** - an evening of music and poetry will be arranged in partnership with Turku Book Fair. Originally scheduled for June 2020, this concert was highly popular and was quickly sold out. Even though the public concert had to be postponed initially and eventually cancelled, there have been calls to arrange this unique and special event online. The Look at the Northern Sky concert will see legendary actors **Seela Sella** and **Esko Salminen** interpreting Finnish poetry from an anthology by this name compiled by Book Fair Programme Director **Jenni Haukio**. In addition to the poems and Edvard Grieg’s Piano Trio, the concert programme will include Three Melodramas by Jean Sibelius, seldom heard works that splendidly combine music and poetry in the company of Seela Sella and Esko Salminen with violinists **Jaakko Kuusisto** and **Tami Pohjola**, cellist **Samuli Peltonen** and pianist **Juhani Lagerspetz**. O, om du sett (Oh, If You Had Seen) is based on a poem by **Ellen Hackzell**, Mustasukkaisuuden öitä (Nights of Jealousy) on the poem Svarsjukans nätter by J.L. Runeberg, whereas Metsänneito (Lady of the Forest) is based on Viktor Rydberg’s poem Skogsrået (The Forest Nymph). Two of the Sibelius melodramas will be performed exceptionally in Finnish this time, in translations by **Erkki Pullinen**.

**The stars also shine in autumn - public performance**

This autumn will finally provide an opportunity to enjoy the postponed June concerts of pianist **Iiro Rantala** and mezzo-soprano **Anne Sofie von Otter** as live performances in Naantali. Iiro Rantala will perform *My Finnish Calendar* at Naantali Spa on Friday 1 October, and the concert with Anne Sofie von Otter will take place at Naantali Church on Saturday 27 November. Anne Sofie von Otter has performed at Naantali Music Festival once before in 2008, so we welcome her return. Originally scheduled for 2020, the concerts of Iiro Rantala and Anne Sofie von Otter had to be postponed twice, but tickets previously sold will remain valid for the new date.

A **cello evening** will be celebrated at Naantali Church on Saturday 2 October with a programme including the world première of *Sonata for Four Cellos* by *Aulis Sallinen.* Soprano **Marjukka Tepponen** and baritone **Kevin Greenlaw** will feature in **Songs of Joy and Life**, a splendid concert of opera, operetta and musical melodies on 29 October. This concert is part of the *Lux Gratiae* event, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary. Tickets for these concerts will go on sale on Friday 14 May 2021.

More information concerning the Music Festival programme and tickets is available online at **www.naantalinmusiikkijuhlat.fi**

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