

Annual report 2020

A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITIES

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the operations of the UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra was considerable, but not only in a negative way.

As public events were either completely banned or the number of attendees was restricted, and as the big band with 16 persons could not even gather when the situation was at its worst, swift changes in the operations were needed. In the year 2020, UMO Helsinki made a digital leap: the orchestra built a recording and music studio in its facilities, launched a mobile app and began streaming concerts. The orchestra created more digital musical content than ever before.

The digital activities are likely to become a permanent part of the operations of UMO Helsinki even after the corona crisis. They are important also from the perspective of accessibility and internationalisation: the orchestra is easily accessible from the whole of Finland as well as all over the world. Other issues that are emphasized also in the field of culture in the future are diversity and environmental issues. The UMO Foundation is committed to the operational programme Carbon-neutral Helsinki 2035.

Operations

The amount of live concerts and the audience dropped to a third of a so called normal year. During the year of operation, the UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra arranged 40 live events (year 2019: 112), with an audience of 10 828 (year 2019: 32 907) which is in line with the reduced amount of events. The orchestra performed 13 streamed concerts, with a total audience of 10 722. Other digital content reached over 360 000 listeners.

Of the live events, 32 % were arranged outside of Helsinki and 68 % in Helsinki. The audience was distributed accordingly.

The customer satisfaction of the UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra is extraordinary: in a customer survey the orchestra got an average score of 4.3 (scale 1–5). No less than 91 % of the customers would recommend the orchestra's concerts to others.

During the year of operations, UMO Helsinki released one album. The amount of new arrangements were 25, and 35 commissioned works were premiered.

In audience development, the most important projects were Art Testers (Taidetestaajat) and The Music Factory (Musatehdas), which both were focused on young listeners. Most of the audience development work was also switched over to the internet.

Funding and finances

The UMO Foundation is funded by its owner, the City of Helsinki (52 %), and the Ministry of Education and Culture (38 %). The self-financed part of the funding (10 %) comes from ticket sales as well as private performances and festival performances. The personnel costs account for 69 % of the total expenses. Despite the corona situation, the UMO Foundation achieved its financial goals and reached a positive result for the fourth year running: the result was 13 872 euros.

Organisation

UMO Helsinki Jazz Orchestra is a big band with a default setup of sixteen musicians. At the end of year 2020 the orchestra had 12.5 permanently employed musicians with monthly salary. The rest, 3.5 posts, were filled by musicians with either temporary contracts of different lengths or production specific contracts. Each year, the UMO Foundation employs a substantial amount of musicians, soloists, arrangers and composers in different projects: during the year 2020 the orchestra co-operated with 65 professional musicians.

In addition to the orchestra and the freelancers, the UMO Foundation has four employees in charge of the administration, concert production, audience development as well as marketing and communication. The year 2020 was the first whole year of operation for the orchestra's artistic director and chief conductor, Ed Partyka.