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The Music Institute of Kotka - A music school in Finland

In Finland, it is possible for any person or organisation to set up and run a music school. However, to receive state funding one must have a license from the Ministry of Education. To be eligible to receive the license, there must be a need for the school in its region. It also has to meet certain criteria and must not be run for profit.

In the beginning of 1999 took effect a new legislation about basic schooling which also replaced the separate legislation about music schools. Music schools giving basic music teaching are now being guided by the law and statutes governing the basic art training. The main function of the law is to govern funding. It also handles the curriculum, student intake and evaluation. The most important document in a student's point of view is the curriculum. It is set by each school in accordance with the guidelines given by the Ministry of Education.

The Guidelines for planning a curriculum

A music school is an arts education institute which is responsible for organising teaching of music and music related art forms. The aim of the teaching is to develop creative and extensive abilities for practising and performing music and for professional studies. The teaching supports goal-oriented practising of music and comprehensive development of the student both as an individual and as a member of a group. Special needs of students applying for professional studies are taken into consideration when planning the teaching.

The development of the teaching should be based on the changes in national and international music education, on the developmental needs of the different fields and contents of musical culture and on co-operation with institutions and others which organise music education.

The music schools organise teaching in the basic level and in the following music institute level. These schools are primarily meant for school-age children but may also have, at the organiser's discretion, a department for adults and music playschool for pre-school children. The education given at a music school can be linked with the ordinary youth schooling system within its statutes.

The goals and contents of teaching are set in each school's own curriculum which is based on the national guidelines. The curriculum takes into account the traditions and development of the national and international music culture and each student's individual musical capabilities. The curriculum is meant to serve the whole school community; to support and enable them to meet the objectives of teaching and to help in evaluating how well they have succeeded in this.

The curriculum must include the guiding principles of the music school in question and the goals, contents and time allowed for teaching different subjects. It must also have directives for organising the teaching, course criteria and course evaluation. Co-operation agreements with different schools and interest groups are to be written in the curriculum.

The Association of Finnish Music Schools

The Association of Finnish Music Schools (founded in 1956) is an umbrella-organisation of music schools with 87 music schools and 8 conservatories as its members. The Association promotes high artistic and professional level in the music schools and makes their work and aims known to the public. It is the guardian of interests of Finnish music schools in music and cultural politics. The Association is responsible for planning

the course examination criteria for the basic and music institute level studies. It is a member of both the European Union of Music Schools and the International Society of Music Education.

The Music Institute of Kotka

The Music Institute of Kotka is a privately-owned music school which receives legislated state funding. It is owned by the Association for Supporting the Music Institute of Kotka which was founded in Kotka in 1945. The Institute is located at the City of Kotka with premises also in the Town of Hamina. Other members are the municipalities of Vehkalahti, Virolahti, Pyhtää and Miehikkälä. The area served by the Institute houses a total of around 84.000 people.

The Principle Idea of our music institute

The Music Institute of Kotka is an arts education school. Its function is to organise music education and to enrich the music and arts culture primarily in its region. The education aims to give the student facilities to pursue music as a hobby and to enable professional studies.

Studies - Basic studies

Students are always selected through entrance tests. In the spring of 1999, 220 applicants participated in the entrance tests of the Music Institution of Kotka, of which 92 were accepted. A student begins her studies at the basic level. The aims and contents of the basic studies are set in the curriculum which is based on the national guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education. The Music Institute of Kotka, along with 86 other music schools and 8 conservatories, is a member of the Association of Finnish Music Schools.

The Association is responsible for formulation and distribution of the examination standards for basic and music institute level. During the basic studies, the student has to take three graded (1/3, 2/3, 3/3) exams in her main instrument and exams in basic studies of musical theory, ear training and music history. The Student also participates in ensemble playing at a suitable level. Those with non-orchestral instruments can sing in a choir or act as an accompanist.

The Music Institute of Kotka now has the following ensembles: a symphony orchestra, two chamber orchestras, Junior orchestra, The Violin Kids, two wind orchestras and a big band. There are also four child and youth choirs in the Institute.

The basic studies take about four to seven years to complete. The students undergoing basic studies are between six and 16 years old. In the school year of 1999-2000, there were 438 students in basic studies at the Music Institute of Kotka.

Music Institute Level

The Music Institute level studies are based on the skills learned at the basic level.

The aim at the institute level is for the student to attain skills enabling her to begin studying in a professional graduate degree program.

In addition to the subjects of the basic level, subjects at the music institute level include harmonics and free accompaniment.

The requirements for completion are level I exams at main instrument, ear training, musical theory, harmonics and music history and participation in ensemble playing.

Completed studies at the music institute level are required from students applying for professional graduate degree program at a conservatory.

This is not, however, required from applicants to the Sibelius Academy. Entrance to the Academy is determined by skills and knowledge shown at the entrance examination.

Students are supposed to complete the music institute level in approximately four school years. In the school year of 1999-2000, 39 students studied at the music institute level in the Music Institute of Kotka.

Approximately 2-5 students a year from the Music Institute of Kotka are accepted for professional studies at the conservatories or the Sibelius Academy.

Adult department

The Music Institute of Kotka has an adult department which accepts students aged from 16 to 26. They are selected at an entrance examination.

Students may study up to five years at the adult department. More time to study can be applied for. In the school year of 1999-2000, 39 students studied in the adult department most of whom were singers. Music playschool and preparatory instrumental training Music playschool is musical training for pre-school children.

They approach the world of music by singing, dancing, playing and listening. Children are taught in groups of 6 to 10.

It is also possible to begin learning music in a preparatory instrument training group with instruments like violin, cello, recorder or accordion. In our institute there was, in the school year of 1999-2000, 310 children in the music playschool groups and 16 children in preparatory instrumental training.

Many of the Violin kids have begun at a pre-school age at a preparatory instrumental training group and have later on been accepted for basic level studies through the entrance tests.

Teaching

In addition to orchestral instruments, the Music Institute of Kotka offers teaching in piano, singing, accordion, guitar, organ and theoretical subjects.

In the school year of 1999-2000, the students of the Music Institute of Kotka were divided into the following instrumental groups:

- Strings 153 (violin 114, cello 35, double bass 3, viola 1)
- Wind instruments 106 (fl 39, ob 5, cl 16, sax 8, bs 3, horn 4, tr 17, trb 11, tb 3)
- Piano 146
- Singing 50
- Guitar 22
- Electric guitar and electric bass 6
- Percussions 9
- Organ 1
- Keyboards 2

In the school year of 1999-2000, the

Institute had 46 teachers of which 30 were full-time teachers. A student is entitled to a minimum of 35 lessons per year in her main subject. One lesson lasts either 45 or 60 minutes.

Administration and Funding

The administration and economy of the Music Institute of Kotka is the joint responsibility of the director, financing secretary and office secretary according to the decisions of the board of the Supporting Association. The Annual budget of 1999 of the Music Institute was FIM 6.661.105 (EUR 1.119. 513).

In 1998 50,4% of the budget was covered by the state, 32,3% by the member communities and 16,6% by tuition fees.

Tuition fees per semester Music Institute level FIM 900 (EUR 150) Basic level FIM 750 (EUR 126) Adult department FIM 1000 (EUR 168) Music playschool FIM 300-500 (EUR 50-84)

Association of Parents

The Music Institute has an Association of Parents which promotes co-operation between the students and the Institute. The Association also supports teaching by assisting in concert management, information distribution and public relations work and by collecting money for grants and the instrument purchasing fund.

One of the strong points of musical life in Finland is the wide-spread network of music institutions with approximately 56.000 students and 3500 teachers. The State supports basic musical training with FIM 653.200 (EUR 35.571.966) a year. The Music Institute of Kotka is a fine example of a well-functioning Finnish music school.