

Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival

For many, Finland seems to be a far away country, and Kuhmo is in the far, far eastern corner of Finland. About an hour's flight across the country is followed by another hour or so by car through forest and beautiful lakeland scenery.

On arrival in the small festival town one is amazed by the lack of 'festival fever'. People are idly walking about the town, listening to musicians rehearse through open doors and windows, or taking a refreshing swim on the beach next to the concert hall!

The town is, in fact, one of the largest in the world. Its area of 5500 km² can be compared with Tokyo's 2000 km² but there is naturally a slight difference in population: Kuhmo has only eleven thousand inhabitants.

Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival is by far the most extensive chamber music event in Finland, barely equalled even globally. The festival was initi-

ated in 1970 by the young cellist Seppo Kimanen when he received a positive response to his idea of combining chamber music with the natural peace of the area.

Right from the beginning, Kuhmo has attracted leading musicians due to its exotic location and relaxed atmosphere. Musicians from all over the world come together to give concerts – about a hundred of them during just two weeks. It is a unique opportunity for the audience to hear top musicians perform chamber music classics as well as pieces more seldom performed. In addition, the musicians give master classes to young Finnish and international music students.

Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival is each year built on a theme, such as a journey through three hundred years of chamber music history, or the music of one composer or one era only.



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Midsummer is the season for making *vihta* or *vasta* (the sauna whisks) for the whole year; earlier dried for later use, nowadays also kept in deep-freeze

