

School Cancels Handel's 'Messiah' Performance Amid Controversy Over Christian Music

A school in Finland has cancelled a concert of Handel's "Messiah" performed by the Finnish Baroque Orchestra and the Helsinki Chamber Choir over concerns the recital's Christian themes might offend some students.

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Officials with the school hosting the concert in question made the decision after learning about a case in Hämeenlinna, a Finnish city, where a child objected to songs about the life of Jesus performed at an undisclosed school. Ultimately, the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal decided the non-Christian pupils should be compensated 1,500 euros (or \$1,562) for their offense, local outlets reported.

However, on Nov. 19, the city's Education and Welfare Committee voted 6-5 no payment was due to the offended school students.

The show in Hämeenlinna was one of three performances based on faith-filled themes. The first recital was held in 2022, with subsequent recitals in 2023 and 2024. At least one non-religious student watching the 2022 show was purportedly offended.

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Finnish news outlet Helsingin Sanomat reported the “religiosity of the concert was not announced in advance, but [the school] apologized after the concert.” It was only the first show accused of being “discriminatory.”

A hymn was removed from the second performance in 2023 and some apparently voiced concerns about a parish choir at the third event.

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