Inside Fuuga, Turku's new music centre, a 'bold and open' piece of public infrastructure

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Fuuga has just opened its doors as the new home of the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra, marking an important moment for Finland's cultural scene. Turku's new 15,000 sq m music venue, with two halls, seating 1,350 and 300 people, restaurants, a wine bar and a roof terrace, was designed by PES Architects and Kahle Acoustics.



(Image credit: Marc Goodwin)

Explore Turku's new Music Centre Fuuga in Finland

The hall's curvaceous design references the flow of the river Aura, on whose banks it sits, inviting visitors on an undulating path as they ascend through its interior. The pre-oxidised copper-scaled façade splays to make visual connections to Turku's landmarks, pulling you through the crescent lobby, which sits between the concert

halls and the river, promising views of the cathedral to the east and harbour to the west.

The walls register in layers: earth-toned textured ceramic slats in front of black felt and soffit fixtures behind a grated ceiling. The finishes, which take cues from the surrounding buildings, are an exercise in permeability, allowing the building to register its context.



(Image credit: Marc Goodwin)





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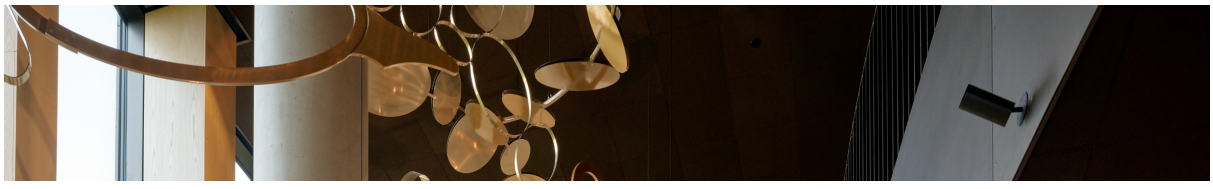
The building is a multisensory experience. The first thing you notice in the concert hall is the smell of wood. The space, a modified shoebox in design, is clad in bleached spruce and plaster-splotched concrete walls. It has five clerestory windows above an adjustable canopy. Underneath, two balcony levels are both aesthetic *and* acoustic. Yann Jurkiewicz of Kahle Acoustics spoke of the building’s 'psychoacoustic' materiality with pride. Indeed, acoustics were key: the city of Turku held the right of refusal over the acoustician's appointment at the competition stage and, in the finished article, this close collaboration is clear.

If the large hall unfolds in spruce and light, the smaller hall is black-clad and intimate, separated from the main one by the artists' lounge and ancillary spaces. The contrast is deliberate, offering two distinct spatial and acoustic experiences.





(Image credit: Marc Goodwin)





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Fuuga sits within Turku's new cultural district, flanked by the Wäinö Aaltonen Museum of Contemporary Art (WAM) and the Turku City Theatre. Mayor Piia Elo has spoken of the importance of being able to use the building without buying a ticket. In the two weeks since its soft opening, it has drawn an estimated 20,000 visitors – a ringing endorsement.

The city has recently built a Funikulaari (funicular), a Föri (ferry), a Föli (public transport system) and a Fölläri (bike share system). Fuuga, a name voted in by 40 per cent of Turku's inhabitants, and which takes its name from the Finnish word for 'fugue', continues Turku's penchant for alliteration and, like the other projects on the list, is considered vital public infrastructure.

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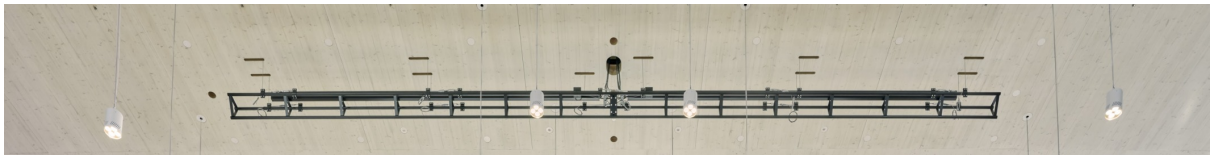

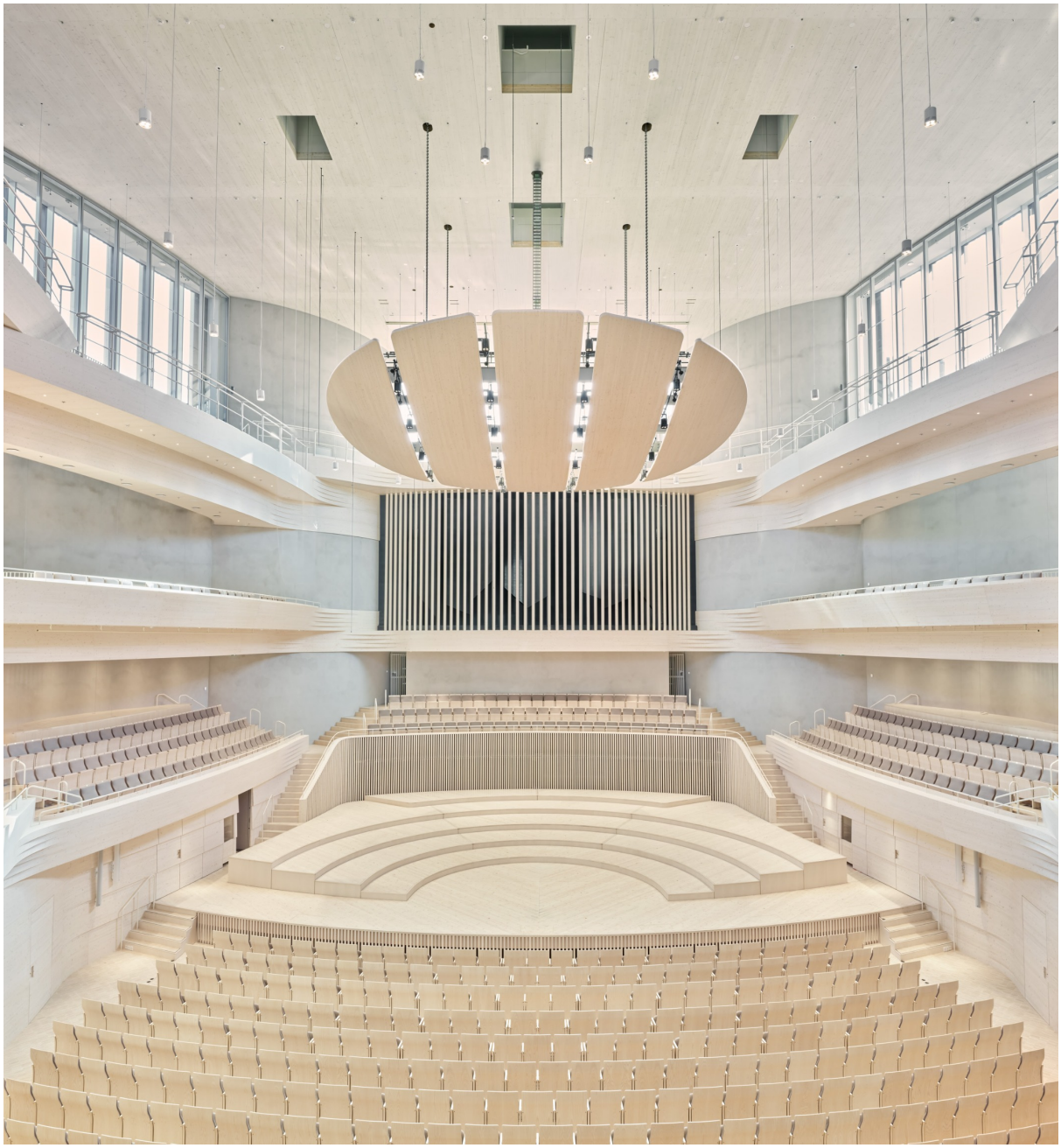

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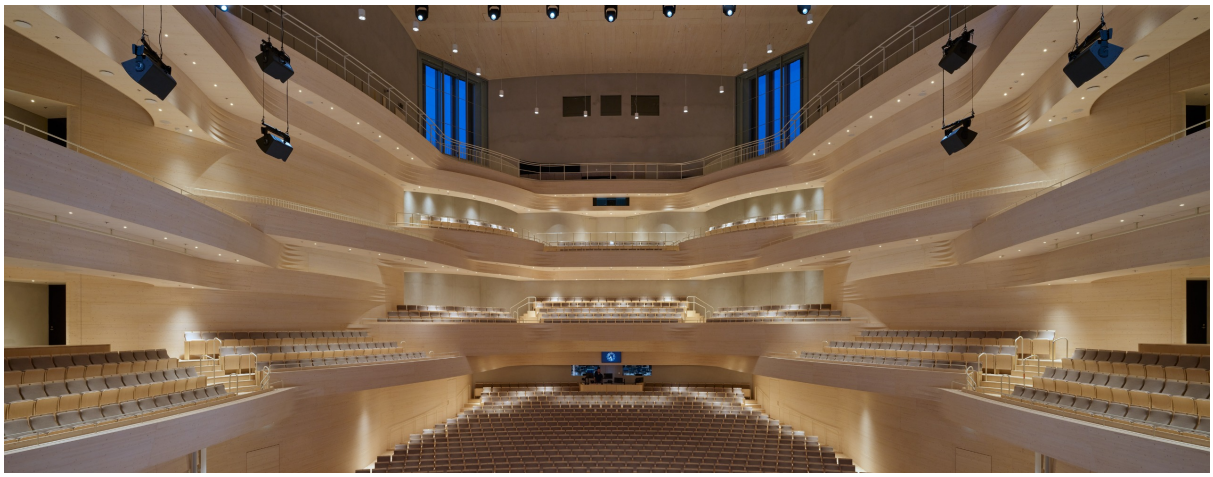



(Image credit: Marc Goodwin)

Karita Mattila, the renowned Finnish soprano, performed at Fuuga's opening concert. Mattila's fans speak of the respect they have for her, of her talent, but also of her strength of character, unguarded and unapologetic. Few would expect a city of 210,000 inhabitants to spend €90 million on a concert hall; fewer still would expect it to open its doors to everyone for free. Fuuga is a building unafraid to be both bold and open, and in that spirit, Mattila was a fitting choice.

musiikkitalofuuga.fi