

# PREMIERE PERFORMANCES

## ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021





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# Message from Our Founder & Executive Director

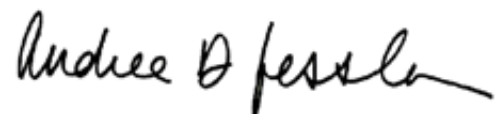
As I write this message in February 2022, it is clear that the pandemic has not yet run its course, and our operations will continue to be disrupted for the foreseeable future. With concert halls shuttered, and travel restrictions and quarantine still in place, our 2022 season is very uncertain. It was so disappointing that the Beare's Premiere Music Festival had to be cancelled for the second year in a row. And artists who were supposed to come in 2020 and who were rescheduled for two years later (Joyce DiDonato, Camille Thomas, Pavel Haas Quartet) may still not be able to perform in Hong Kong later this year.

One thing is for sure: this pandemic has given people a renewed appreciation for LIVE events. All of our concerts in 2021 were exceptionally well attended, far surpassing our expectations. That gives me tremendous hope that once we are able to re-open, people will treasure the opportunities to see international musicians perform live in the concert hall.

For the third year in a row, the Home Affairs Bureau has responded to the financial pressures we are facing by raising the matching ratio of the Arts Development Matching Grant Scheme from 1:1.5 to 1:1.8 and increasing the total grant amount for which we are eligible. We are so grateful that the government understands that we become more dependent on their support in these difficult times.

I would like to thank our loyal donors and audience members for their continued support, which confirms that our work makes a difference to the quality of people's lives. Let's hope that this fifth wave of the pandemic is the last wave, and that our lives can finally return to normal in the not-too-distant future.

Until we meet again in the concert hall,



## Administration (as of 30 June 2021)

### Board of Governors

Andrea Fessler, Chair  
Winnie Kwan  
Harry Lee  
Shu Yin Lee  
Ester Li  
Joanne Ooi (until May 2021)  
Vivek Sharma (until Jun 2021)  
Ada Tse (until Mar 2021)

### Staff

Andrea Fessler, Founder and Executive Director  
Loretta Cheung, Box Office Manager  
Ainsleigh Hennig, Development Officer (until Dec 2020)  
Alice Lam, Programme Officer (until Jun 2021)  
Sharen Lau, Marketing Manager  
Henry Leung, General Manager  
Marinella Li, Development Manager  
Lo Yim Kwan, Assistant Project Manager (until Apr 2021)

### Interns

University students have spent time interning with Premiere Performances. We are very grateful for their commitment to helping us in the office this year.

Angel Fong (Apr to Jul 2021)

If you would like to join one of our committees or volunteer in any capacity, please contact [info@pphk.org](mailto:info@pphk.org).



# About Premiere Performances

## Overview

Founded in 2007 as a registered charity by Andrea D. Fessler, Premiere Performances aims to establish Hong Kong as a leader in the international cultural landscape. Premiere Performances is a presenter of the world's best performers of recitals and chamber music with almost 100 events each year, featuring a dynamic array of instruments, performance styles and musical genres.

## Mission

Premiere Performances brings the best classical musicians in the world to Hong Kong for performances and outreach, building a vibrant local arts scene, nurturing local artists, and making the inspiration of a live music performance accessible to all.

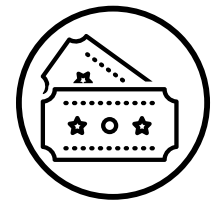
## Vision

Premiere Performances is sparking a musical movement. We want to enliven the imagination of Hong Kong audiences through extraordinary performances, inspire those who play to pick up their instruments and play with joy and love, and enable those who listen to have a concert experience like no other.

## Beneficiaries

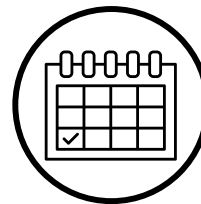
From special needs students to the elite of Hong Kong, we have programmes aimed at all demographics of society. We believe that everybody, regardless of social class or education, ethnicity or language, will be moved by the power of a live music performance presented at a world class level.

**In 2020/2021,  
Premiere  
Performances  
organised:**



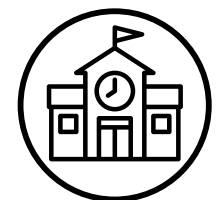
**4**

Public Concerts



**7**

Private Events



**30**

School Concerts



**6**

Online Pre-Concert  
Talks & Podcasts

with



**20**

Musicians

**impacting over**

**9,000**

**audience members**



# Audience Reach

Events (2020/21)	Concert Attendance	Outreach Attendance
Dan Zhu, Live! Beethoven & Schumann: Titan & Poet	433	34
Online Webinar: Violin Investments with J&A Beare and WSJ+	-	125
Chiyan Wong Piano Recital Goldberg Variations	745	121
Zee Zee Piano Recital Liszt/ Ravel: Voyages	681	63
Rachel Cheung Piano Recital Fantasies	697	-
Viva! Pipers School Tours	-	3,249
Fiesta Brass School Tours	-	975
Romer String Quartet School Tours	-	1,883
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2,556</b>	<b>6,450</b>
<b>Total Reach</b>	<b>9,006</b>	

## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

This was our second season tackling the effects brought on by the pandemic. Venue closures and fluctuating travel restrictions continued to make planning very difficult. To our great disappointment, our entire Beare's Premiere Music Festival 2021 had to be canceled, when venues closed in mid-November and quarantine was increased to three weeks. Artists whom we were supposed to bring to Hong Kong include Simon Trpčeski's Makedonissimo Quintet (Sep 2020), Camille Thomas (Apr 2021), Joyce DiDonato (May 2021) and the Jerusalem Quartet (May 2021). We have already confirmed new dates for Camille Thomas (Apr 2022), Joyce DiDonato (Sep 2022) and Pavel Haas Quartet (Oct 2022).



# Chamber Music in Schools

Our Chamber Music in Schools Programme brings specially trained chamber music ensembles into local schools for performances and workshops.

This year, our Chamber Music in Schools Programme crossed the important milestone of reaching over 100,000 students. Since the programme's establishment in 2013, we have brought 14 different overseas and local ensembles to Hong Kong schools, organising over 360 school performances, reaching more than 4,200 teachers and 102,000 primary, secondary and special education needs students.

This year, our three ensembles visited 22 primary schools, 1 secondary school and 4 special needs schools.

## **Fiesta Brass Quintet**

Diocesan Girls' Junior School  
Holy Angels Canossian School  
Lee Chi Tat Memorial School  
Society Of Boys' Centres Hui Chung Sing Memorial School  
St. John the Baptist Catholic Primary School

## **Romer String Quartet**

Buddhist Lam Bing Yim Memorial School  
Diocesan Girls' Junior School  
Fuk Wing Street Government Primary School  
International Christian Quality Music Secondary and Primary School  
Kowloon Tong Government Primary School  
Lingnan University Alumni Association (HK) Primary School  
Pentecostal Gin Mao Sheng Primary  
Shatin Government Primary School  
Tin Shui Wai Government Primary School

## **Viva! Pipers Wind Quintet**

Caritas Fanling Chan Chun Ha Secondary School  
C.C.C. Kei Chun Primary School  
Chiu Yang Primary School of Hong Kong  
Diocesan Girls' Junior School  
Hong Chi Morninghill School, Tuen Mun  
Hong Kong Red Cross John F Kennedy Centre  
King Lam Catholic Primary School  
Po Leung Kuk Anita L. L. Chan (Centenary) School  
Shap Pat Heung Rural Committee Kung Yik She Primary School  
SKH Yautong Kei Hin Primary School  
St Paul's College Primary School  
Sung Tak Wong Kin Sheung Memorial School  
Tseung Kwan O Pui Chi School

“ I like the performance with lots of fun and interactive elements. I wish the group will perform at the school again.” – a student from *HKFYG Lee Shau Kee Primary School*

“ We really appreciate your team's passion to do the performance. It is even better than the performance I watched in other concerts. Keep it up!”  
– a teacher from *Society Of Boys' Centres Hui Chung Sing Memorial School*

## **In 2020/21, we reached**

▶ **5,767**  
students

▶ **340**  
teachers

◀ **27**  
school visits





In 2021/21, the Chamber Music in Schools Programme was significantly impacted by the pandemic. There were no school visits at all during the fall of 2020. The school concerts only resumed once schools re-opened after Chinese New Year in February 2021.



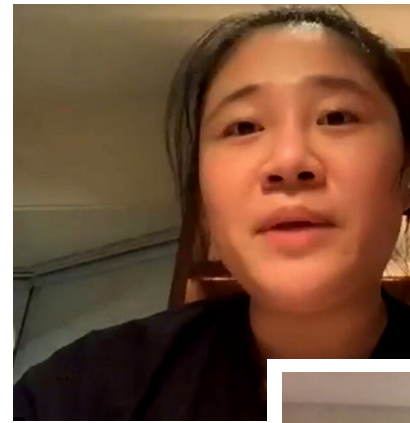
With on-going health and safety concerns, we offered schools the option of having a live performance, online streaming only or mixed-mode performance (that is, a live performance for a select group of students with streaming to other students in their classrooms). Schools were very appreciative of this kind of flexibility so that they could choose a programme that best served their needs and concerns.



17 live  
4 online streaming  
9 mixed-mode  
performances

# Outreach & Education

With the effects of the pandemic, our Outreach & Education programmes were greatly affected. In past years, we have always organised a wide range of activities, such as community concerts for the public and education concerts for students. In particular, we usually host a range of outreach and education events during the Beare's Premiere Music Festival, including music talks, open rehearsals and masterclasses by our festival artists. Unfortunately all of the above activities were cancelled with the exception of the online webinar with J&A Beare.

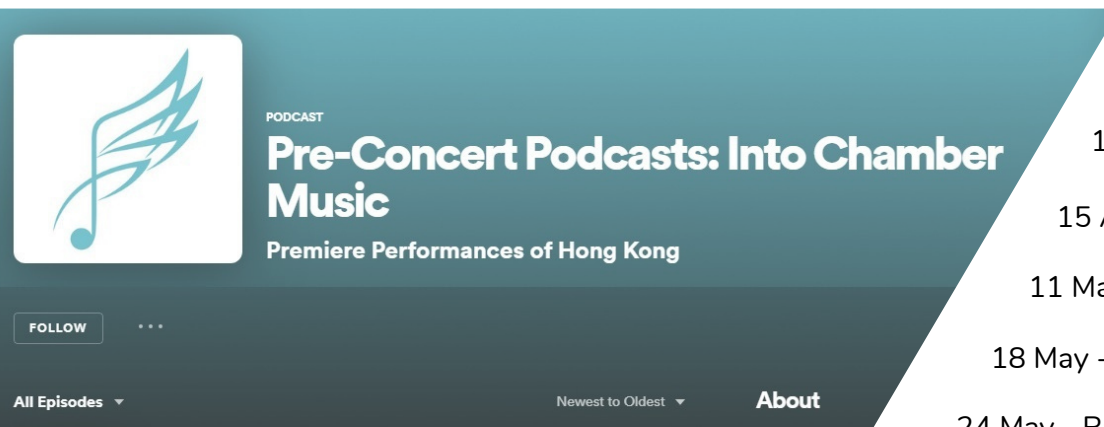
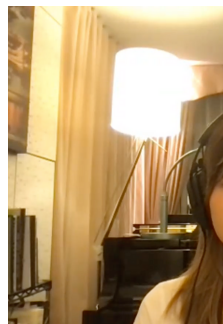


## Pre-Concert Zoom Chats and Podcasts

When the pandemic hit in 2020, we were all introduced to a "new normal" in the performing arts. While we are still firmly committed to the live music experience, we decided to go "digital" for the pre-concert talks.

In collaboration with Aura Music, we organised pre-concert Zoom chats with all of our Recital artists, with 50-80 audience members joining us for each chat session.

We then edited the chats into a pre-concert podcast, available on Spotify, YouTube, Anchor, Google Podcasts and other streaming platforms. Audiences were able to listen to the artists giving brief explanations of the music they were going to play in their Recital.



## Pre-Concert Zoom Chats:

- 11 April - Chiyan Wong (Cantonese)
- 15 April - Chiyan Wong (English)
- 11 May - Zee Zee (English)
- 18 May - Rachel Cheung (Cantonese)
- 24 May - Rachel Cheung (English)





## Music Talks

In collaboration with J&A Beare and the Wall Street Journal, we organised an online webinar about the investment proposition for rare stringed instruments. This was supposed to be part of the Beare's Premiere Music Festival. Around 125 people tuned into the webinar.



### Online Webinar: Violin Investments with J&A Beare and WSJ+

25 March 2021

**Speakers:** Steven Smith & Jonathan Moulds CBE

**Partners:** The Wall Street Journal and J&A Beare



## Education Concerts

In 2020/21, we had planned two education concerts: "Jazz & Blue Concert" by Australian group, Adam Hall and the Velvet Players in Fall 2020, and Viva Pipers Woodwind Quintet in Spring 2021 (as part of the Arts Experience Scheme for Senior Secondary Students). Both concerts were canceled due to the travel restrictions and school suspensions.

## Audience of Tomorrow Project

To make world-class music accessible to all, Premiere Performances donated 177 tickets to local NGOs and students. This year's partner organizations included:

- Caritas Institute of Higher Education
- Caritas Bianchi College of Careers
- Caritas Jockey Club Lok Yan School
- Hong Kong Baptist University
- Hong Kong Children's Choir
- Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups
- Lee Shau Kei Primary School
- Hong Kong Red Cross Margaret Trench School
- Hong Kong International Musicians & Artists Association
- HKMA David Li Kwok Po College
- Institute For Integrated Rural Development Hong Kong
- LocalMotion
- MINDSET
- NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong College
- OneSky Foundation Limited
- Stamford American School, HK
- Society of Boys' Centres Hui Chung Sing Memorial School
- The University of Hong Kong
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts
- Time Auction
- Tung Wah E Major

# 2020/21 Recital Series

Due to COVID-19, performance venues were closed for most of 2020. When concert halls suddenly reopened on October 1, 2020, we were fortunate enough to be holding a date at City Hall for October 21, and we scrambled to plan a recital with three weeks' notice. Concert halls shut again by mid-November.

When halls reopened after Chinese New Year, we were able to plan a full spring 2021 Recital Series, with three piano recitals featuring artists from Hong Kong and China. With tight travel restrictions in place, we were fortunate to be able to collaborate with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra to bring artists into the city.



## New Rules for Concerts in 2020/21:



Undergo body temperature check and scan the 'LeaveHomeSafe' app upon arrival



Reduced capacity in the hall, as seats are blocked to meet social distancing measures.



Wear masks at all times during the performance



Concerts run 60-75 mins with no interval, to avoid queues in and out of the hall at intermission.





“ (The repertoire of the concert) perfectly reflected the time we live in today. Maybe more important is the friendship made via the music-making. Dan Zhu has been a frequent visitor of Hong Kong in recent years. This time around, he came bearing a 14-day quarantine, reinforcing the connection and friendships he made with Hong Kong. This is a concert bringing hopes and encouragement during the pandemic.”

- Music critic, Chow Fan-Fu

## Dan Zhu, Live!

### *Beethoven & Schumann: Titan & Poet*

with Warren Lee and Vanessa Wong Wai Yin, piano

21 October 2020

The only concert of the Fall 2020 Recital Series was violinist Dan Zhu, who was the first international artist to perform a recital in Hong Kong after the “long pause” in arts performances.

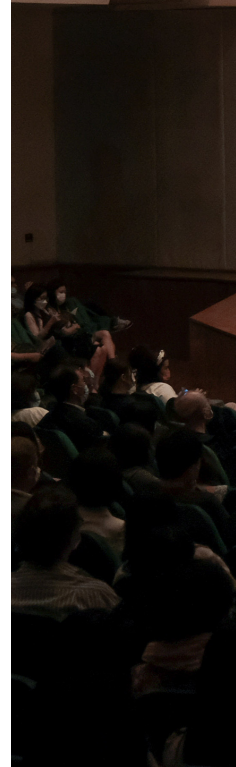
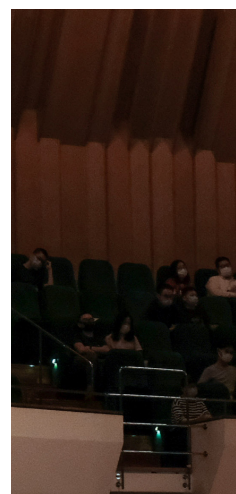
Dan collaborated with two well-known Hong Kong based pianists Warren Lee and Vanessa Wong Wai Yin, and gave a long-anticipated live music experience to Hong Kong audiences.



“ Thanks for putting together such an amazing concert in such a short time during this difficult pandemic period. Highly appreciated and keep up the good work!”

- Audience Member





“ Pianist Chiyan Wong shows masterful touch in Bach-Busoni Goldberg Variations... featured playing of tenderness and beauty.”  
- *South China Morning Post*



## Chiyan Wong Piano Recital *Goldberg Variations*

26 April 2021

After another long closure of performance venues, the first Spring 2021 Recital brought award-winning Hong Kong-born pianist Chiyan Wong back to his home city for a heart-warming recital featuring Busoni's kaleidoscopic arrangement of Bach's famous Goldberg Variations. Chiyan Wong was invited through a special collaboration between Premiere Performances and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

“ (Wong's recital was a reminder of why) we need to attend a concert and listen to music played by a human of flesh and blood.” - Music critic, Dennis Wu

“ It was out of this world outstanding. He is terrific!” - Audience Member





## Zee Zee Piano Recital *Liszt/Ravel: Voyages*

17 May 2021

Following her spectacular performances with the Zen Trio (Recital Series 2017) and in the 2016 Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival, Zhang Zuo (Zee Zee) returned to the Hong Kong Cultural Centre with a captivating programme of her signature Ravel and Liszt.

Zee Zee was invited through a special collaboration between Premiere Performances and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

“ Her recital made me fully understand the meanings of 'dazzling, and tasteful with extreme emotion'. ” – *Commercial Daily*





“ Rachel Cheung’s immaculately layered playing achieved an exquisite balance between impulse and rationality, from the mercurial Schumann to the intricate Ravel to the noble Chopin. Who’s in front of us is not a pianist in the making, but instead a complete musician with interpretive maturity, technical facility, and genuine love for music. – *Interlude*



## Rachel Cheung Piano Recital *Fantasies*

31 May 2021

Our closing concert of the Spring 2021 Recital Series featured a lyrical programme of Schumann, Ravel and Chopin by Hong Kong’s own rising star of the piano, Rachel Cheung.

“ Brilliant and reassuring in the midst of the pandemic anxiety.”  
– Audience member

“ A wonderful concert and beautiful opportunity to showcase local talent.”  
– Audience member

# Beare's Premiere Music Festival

Title Sponsor

**John & Arthur Beare**  
FINE VIOLINS SINCE 1892

Every year, the Beare's Premiere Music Festival is a highlight in the Hong Kong arts scene. This year marked the first pause since we started organizing an annual chamber music festival in 2009.

Originally planned for 13-21 January 2021, the 12th Beare's Premiere Music Festival was cancelled in its entirety because concert halls were closed due to the pandemic.

We had ten international musicians lined up to come and quarantine for two weeks, as well as seven local musicians.

The Festival was supposed to include the following concerts:-

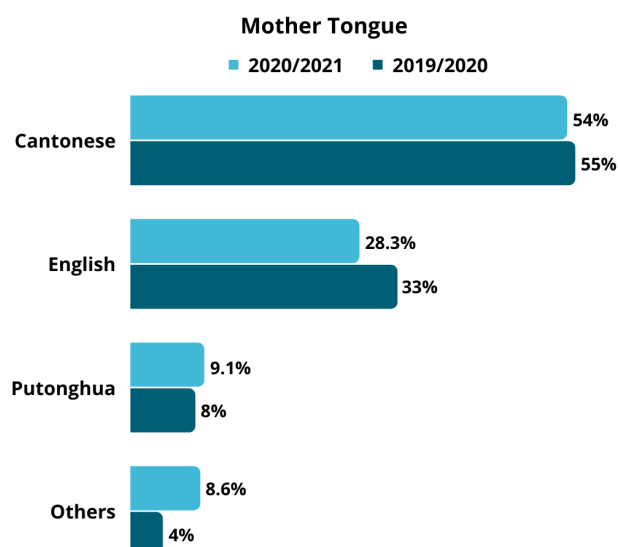
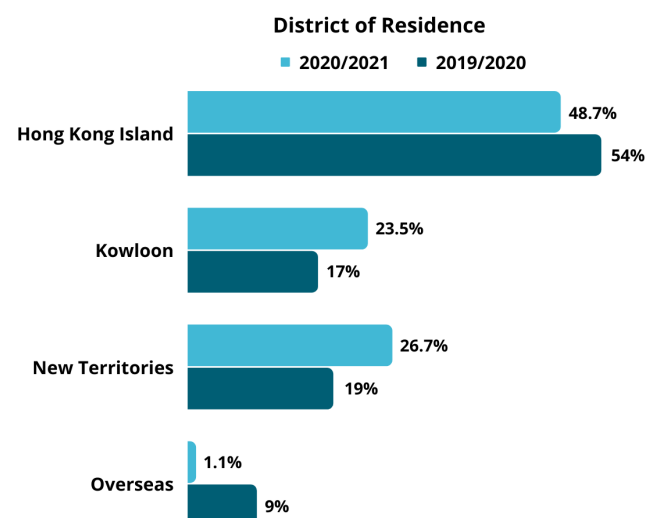
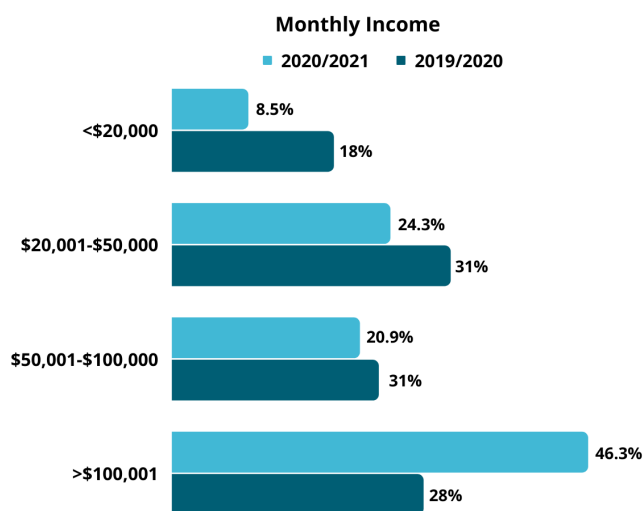
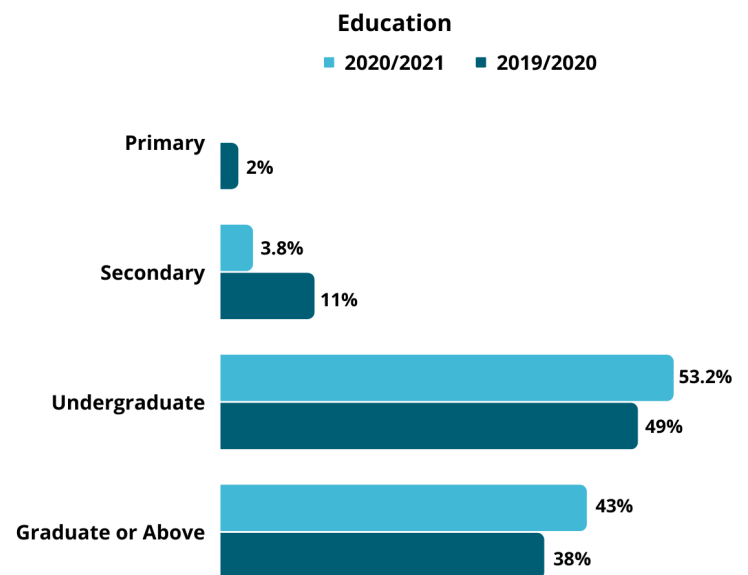
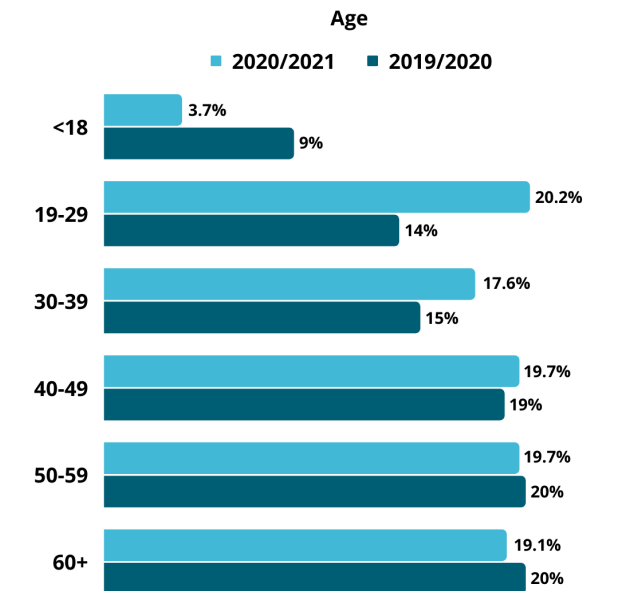
Miloš in Recital Beyond the Rainbow  
Akiko Suwanai & Friends  
Benjamin Appl's Winterreise  
Chamber Music Gala with Cho-Liang Lin  
Fiesta Brass Family Concert



We strive to bring these amazing artists and programmes back in the future.

# Our Audience

With only four Recitals in 2020/21, and no Family Series or outreach & education events, it is interesting to see how the audience demographics for our public concerts have changed (and how they have stayed the same) from last year.



It is no surprise that there are fewer children under the age of 18, but it is interesting that more young adults attended our concerts, and all other age categories (for ages 40+) remained the same (20%). The percentage of audience members who are local (with Cantonese as their mother tongue) remained the same, but there was a decrease in native English speakers, and an increase in native Mandarin speakers or people with another mother tongue. Most interestingly, the percentage of people who live on Hong Kong Island decreased and the percentage of people who live in Kowloon and the New Territories increased.



# Donor Programmes

Donations at every level are extremely important to us, so we have created various donor programmes to support our work. Developing a strong and stable donor base is essential because we are the recipient of a government matching grant called the Art Development Matching Grants Scheme whereby every dollar we raise from donors is matched 180% by the Home Affairs Bureau. Without private donations, we would simply not be able to continue delivering the range and quality of our programmes.

## Audience of Tomorrow

The Audience of Tomorrow Project is a donor initiative that underwrites tickets to Premiere Performances' concerts, allowing underprivileged children and elderly to attend our concerts. In 2020/21, our donors helped us to donate 177 tickets to

beneficiaries from 21 charities and schools. See page 9 for the list of charities.



Zee Zee salon in Repulse Bay



Chiyan Wong salon on The Peak

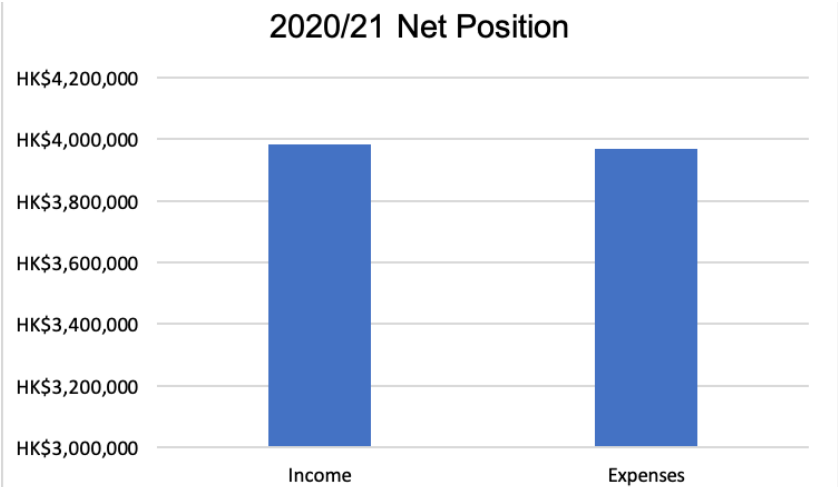
## Salon Circle

Premiere Performances organizes private Salon concerts for our top donors and invited guests featuring our world class artists, taking place in private homes and boutique venues. These salons are a unique opportunity to see performances by the best in the world in an intimate setting. Donors of \$10,000 or more receive invitations to private salon concerts.

## Young Music Lovers Circle

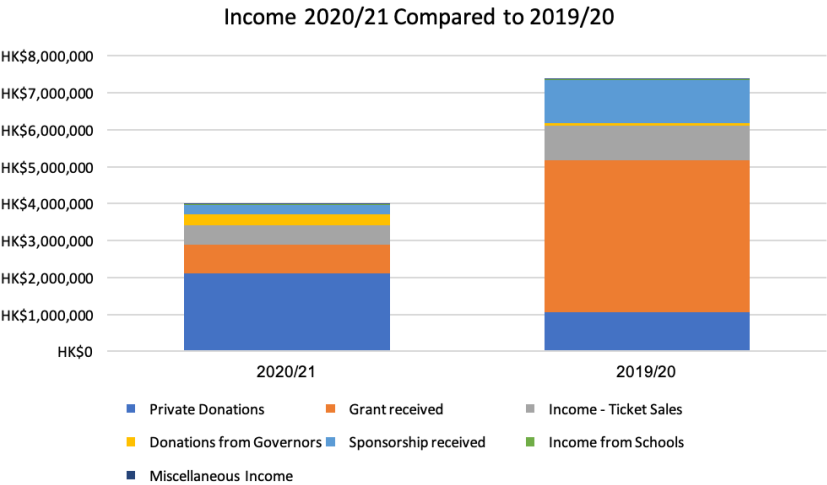
The Young Music Lovers Circle is a philanthropy circle for young professionals in their 20s and 30s who are passionate about arts and culture. For an annual donation of at least HK\$2,500, Young Music Lovers are invited to exclusive events involving world-class musicians.

# Financial Information

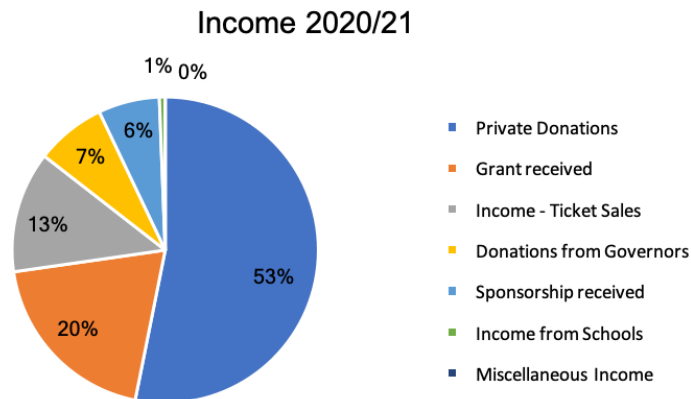


In 2020/21, Premiere Performances achieved breakeven, with total Income of HK\$3,982,316 and total Expenses of HK\$3,969,216 (net position: \$13,100). Nevertheless, it was still not a very good year, as our operations were significantly impacted by the pandemic. During this whole fiscal year, concert halls and schools were only open for five and half months, thereby curtailing our activities significantly.

## Income



In 2020/21, our income dropped by 46% compared to the previous fiscal year. Due to the timing of receipt of the cheque for our matching grant, our largest income category moved from Government Grants to Private Donations, which grew from 14% to 53% of our annual income (61% of our annual income if Donations from Governors are included). This highlights how important our donors are for our financial sustainability. Overall, donations received in 2020/21 increased 116% over donations received in 2019/20.



We are very fortunate to have the support of the Home Affairs Bureau under the Art Development Matching Grants Scheme. For the second year in a row, the Home Affairs Bureau retroactively changed the matching ratio from 1.5:1 to 1.8:1, and increased the maximum amount of the grant from \$4.0 million to \$4.5 million as a special subsidy due to the hardships of the pandemic. The HAB also reduced the amount that we had to raise from \$2.67 million to \$2.5 million in order to qualify for the maximum amount of the grant.

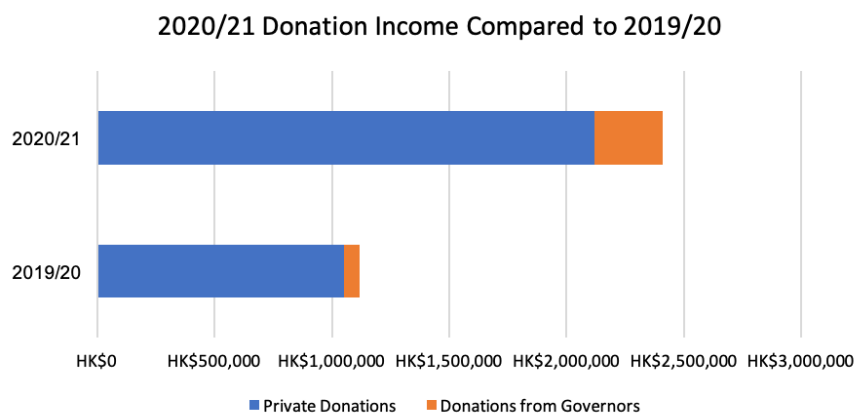
Because our Government Grant is a matching grant, we must continue to endeavor to raise money from companies and private individuals. The pandemic has made it almost impossible to find corporate sponsorship. This is because events are regularly canceled (when concert halls close), and also because companies do not want to take on the reputational risk of being associated with a super-spreader event (or one where close contacts are sent to government quarantine). For that reason, Sponsorship tumbled down to a paltry 6% of our income (down from 16% in 2019/20, and 20% in 2018/19). Private Donations (including from Governors) increased to 61% and Ticket Sales remained flat at 13% of our budget. Income from Schools actually increased by 59% over 2019/20, although it still only accounted for 1% of our income.

In 2020/21, Sponsorship decreased by 78% to \$257,600 from \$1.17 million in 2019/20, primarily because our only sponsored event, the Beare's Premiere Music Festival, was canceled in 2020, and we did not have any Concert Sponsors for any of the Recitals. Fortunately, a new sponsor Systematic Edge supported our Recitals, and outreach sponsor Lipman Karas supported Fiesta Brass' school tour. We also received a (smaller) contribution from J&A Beare.

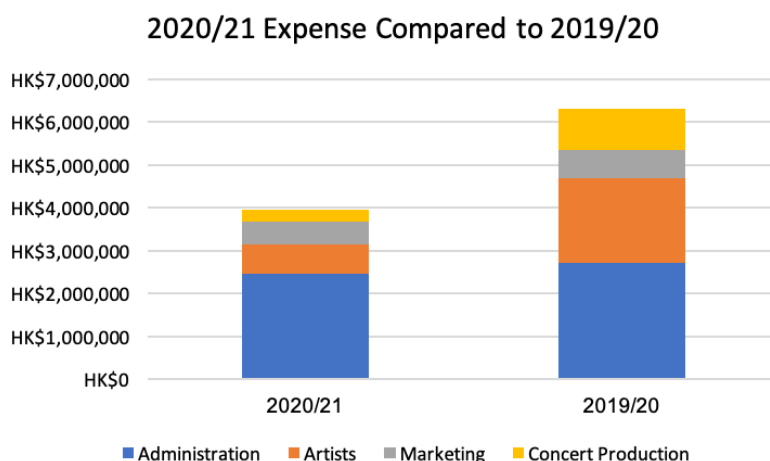
Ticket revenue decreased by 45% from 2019/20, primarily because we only had one third the number of concerts, and the concerts were subject to reduced capacity seating. In 2019/20, we had 12 ticketed concerts (3 Recitals, 1 Jazz concert, 6 Festival concerts and 2 Family concerts), with Ticket Sales of \$932,720, which was not a particularly strong year due to the protests. In 2020/21, we only had 4 ticketed concerts (4 Recitals) with Ticket Sales of \$509,528. We actually had very strong ticket sales for all our Recitals this year, with excellent attendance (over 80%) for all.



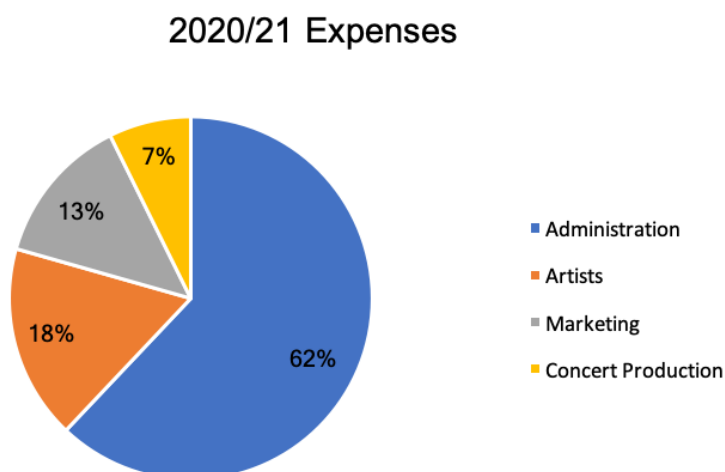
As mentioned above, private donations doubled year-on-year, climbing to \$2.4 million. Excluding Governors, private donations increased by 53%. In 2020/21, we received donations from a record 155 donors (compared to 99 donors in 2019/20), a 56% increase.



## Expenses



With only four Recitals, our annual Expenses decreased by 37% in 2020/21 to be HK\$3,969,216, which is HK\$2.33 million less than in 2019/20.



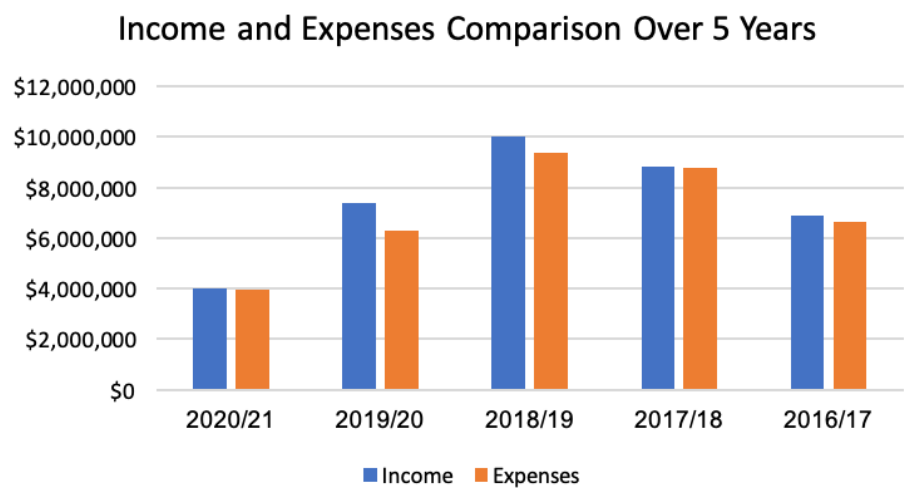
For the second year, our biggest expense of 2020/21 was Administration, which decreased by 10% to HK\$2.46 million, which is 62% of our total Expenses. The decrease in our Administration costs is attributable to a decrease in staff members through the pandemic. Payroll costs (plus MPF) account for 70% of our Administration costs, and office rent is 17.5% of our Administration costs.

Artist Expenses was our next largest expense at 17% (down from 31% in 2019/20). This includes the costs of bringing performers to Hong Kong, including travel, accommodation and transportation. Our Artist Expenses decreased by 65% to HK\$688,131 (HK\$1.98 million in 2019/20). This decrease is attributable to both the reduced number of concerts, but also because the travel costs for two of our Recital artists (Chiyan Wong and Zee Zee) were shared with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

Concert Production (venue rental, production, printing) accounted for only 7% of our total expenses (14% in 2019/20), decreasing in dollar terms by 69% to HK\$290,572 from HK\$948,245 in 2019/20. This decrease is directly attributable to the reduced number of concerts, as well as a special subsidy by LCSD venues reducing the rental cost of City Hall by 80%.

Marketing Expenses decreased by only 19% over the previous fiscal year, and constituted 13% of our Total Expenses (up from 11% in 2019/20). We spent HK\$527,000 for Marketing (down from HK\$648,500 in 2019/20). Although our marketing spend per Recital was in line with our usual budget, we also incurred marketing expenses for canceled events, including the 2020 Beare’s Premiere Music Festival.

### Five Year Comparison



In order to better understand the impact of the pandemic on our financial position, it is worth highlighting a comparison over five years. Our income and expenses had been growing incrementally since we first received the Springboard Grant in 2012. Five years ago, our income and expenses were around \$7 million. Our income/expenses peaked in 2018/19 at around \$10 million. 2019/20 was challenging because of the protests/pandemic, but this year has been even worse. Unfortunately, there is no light at the end of the tunnel, as the pandemic continues to significantly impact our operations.

# Thank you to our supporters!

Premiere Performances is financially supported by the Art Development Matching Grants Scheme of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region.

## Sponsors & Collaborators

Financial Support

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