

PRESS RELEASE

Prague Spring Festival with the Czech debuts of Klaus Mäkelä and John Adams

Artists from all over Europe and overseas are heading to Prague to bring their best to our largest music festival. As a tradition, the 78th Prague Spring International Music Festival will be opened with *My Country* by Bedřich Smetana, this time with the Welsh National Opera Orchestra and the conductor Tomáš Hanus, on Friday, 12 May. By 2 June, over forty concerts and events will take place in Rudolfinum, the Municipal House and at eleven other venues in Prague. For the first time, the most sought-after conductor of the young generation, the Finn Klaus Mäkelä, will make his appearance in our country. Surprisingly, also the concert of John Adams, the legend of American music, will be his Czech debut, just as the performance of the famous *Les Talens Lyriques* and their founder Christophe Rousset.

One of the most sought-after violists of our time, the charismatic Frenchman Antoine Tamestit, will become the festival's artist-in-residence. Audiences will be able to appreciate his mastership at four different concerts; he will also chair the jury of the international music competition in the viola category. New music will be devoted considerable space, especially at the Prague Offspring event thanks to the Klangforum Wien ensemble-in-residence and the composer-in-residence George Friedrich Haas.

The outstanding personalities of the 78th Prague Spring Festival also include conductors Daniel Harding, Christoph Eschenbach and Tomáš Netopil. The performances will be given by pianists Mitsuko Uchida, Igor Levit, Víkingur Ólafsson, Cédric Tiberghien, Joonas Ahonen, violinists Isabelle Faust, Frank Peter Zimmermann and singers Magdalena Kožená and Simona Šaturová. The festival will become the venue to mark the 100th anniversary of radio broadcasting of the Czech Radio national public broadcaster in the form of a concert by the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra with conductor Cornelius Meister and violinist Jan Mráček, concertmaster of the Czech Philharmonic.

The Prague Spring Festival programme now also includes two screenings of the documentary film under the title *No Fear* about pianist Igor Levit, a guest of this year's edition. The screening will take place on 22 and 29 May from 7 pm at the Edison Filmhub cinema in Prague.

The Prague Spring International Music Competition

For the first time in history, young musicians from all over the world will compete at the Prague Spring in the category of viola. Trombone is the other category of the competition. 78 candidates enrolled in the viola competition and 37 entrants will come to Prague on the basis of the preliminary round that included an audition of recordings. In the trombone category, there were 81 entries and the first round will be attended by 42 musicians. Most young artists – up to twelve – will come from China. As regards their presence by country, Korea comes after China with eight musicians and is followed by the Czech Republic with seven entrants.

The jury of the viola category is chaired by Antoine Tamestit and its members include Kristina Fialová, Garth Knox, Pavel Nikl, Cynthia Phelps, Lars Anders Tomter and Tabea Zimmermann.

The trombone jury will be chaired by Zdzisław Stolarczyk, a member of the National Symphony Orchestra of the Polish Radio in Katowice, a solo and chamber player, as well as a teacher. The jury also includes Zoltán Kiss, Robert Kozánek, Fabrice Millischer, Lukáš Mořka, Oliver Siefert and Jeremy Wilson.

The Viola Competition will start on 7 May at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and will culminate on Saturday 13 May with a concert of three finalists in Rudolfinum who will be accompanied by the Hradec Králové Philharmonic under the baton of Robert Kružík. The finalists will perform extracts from Sonata for Solo Viola by György Ligeti and The Rhapsody-Concerto for viola and orchestra by Bohuslav Martinů.

The competition in the trombone category will start on 8 May in the National House Vinohrady. The final competition is planned to take place on 14 May in the untraditional venue of the Municipal House of Prague. The three selected finalists will play Concertino in Eb major for Trombone and orchestra by Ferdinand David and Concerto for trombone and orchestra by composer Juraj Filas. As in previous years, the final rounds and the announcement of the results will be broadcast live on the YouTube channel of the Prague Spring Festival (youtube.com/PragueSpringFestival) and on the Facebook profile of the Prague Spring International Music Competition (facebook.com/PragueSpringCompetition).

The musicians have already competed in the trombone category nine times at the Prague Spring Festival, most recently in 2011.

The first three prizes in the Prague Spring competition involve financial awards in the amounts of CZK 250,000, CZK 150,000 and CZK 100,000 respectively. In addition to the main prizes, awards are also conferred by dozens of cultural institutions from the Czech Republic and abroad.

Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival

The eleventh edition of the Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival will feature five world pianists and two local pianists at five concerts in the Dvořák Hall of Rudolfinum and one in the Bohuslav Martinů Hall at the Academy of Performing Arts. The festival will be opened by Dutch brothers Lucas and Arthur Jussen with a programme by Mozart, Schubert, Ravel and Stravinsky, each time with a repertoire for two pianos. After five years, a pianist with Polish-Hungarian roots, Piotr Anderszewski returns to the festival to present pieces by Karol Szymanowski and Béla Bartók framed by Bach “in the French style”. After his Prague spring performance two years ago, pianist Denis Kozhukhin will come to the Firkušný festival with a program entitled Devilish and Divine, which combines the works by Franz Liszt and György Ligeti. The Czech piano interpretation school will be represented by Ivan and Lukáš Klánský: the first half of the night will belong to Ivan Klánský and the music by Ludwig van Beethoven. Then, after the intermission, the father and son will perform Dvořák's Slavonic Dances in four hands. In 2023, there will be a novelty: a concert dedicated to young talents. 32-year-old Anna Geniushene, a Russian pianist living in Lithuania, who was awarded the Silver Medal at the prestigious Van Cliburn International Competition in Texas last year, will perform in Prague. Thereby, the festival joins the Steinway Prizewinner Concert Network which includes sixty interpretation competitions and festivals worldwide.

Ticket sales for the Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival begin on 3 May at firkusny.cz. During the first nine days of sales, listeners can purchase tickets in any price category at a 20 % discount.

Unique publications about the festival

The history of the festival from its beginning to the last two “Covid years” of 2020 and 2021 is described in a new book entitled 75 years of the Prague Spring by the editor Svatava Barančicová. In most details, the team of authors led by Svatava Barančicová devoted themselves to the last 15 years of the festival which they described in a chronicle style, as a certain continuation of Antonín Matzner's previous publication Sixty Prague Springs. *“However, we went deeper into history. In the chapter Předjaří (Early Spring) we uncovered the first early forms of May festivals in the 19th century,”* says Barančicová.

The authors examine the Prague Spring Festival from various angles: novelties and world premieres brought by the festival, the way how it was influenced by social changes and how the graphic form of posters and publications was revolutionized. Then there are important personalities, memories by contemporaries, conversations and stories, testimonies of witnesses. The first post-war years of the festival captured through the eyes of former students, now well-known composers Sluka, Klusák, Šesták, as well as the visits of Kubelík and Firkušný to their homeland as they experienced them themselves according to their family or media

accounts. *“According to the original plans, the book was to be published in 2021, to celebrate 75 years of the creation of the festival,”* festival director Pavel Trojan describes the fate of the publication. However, Covid has changed these plans but every cloud has a silver lining. *“Thanks to the postponement of the date of publication, we managed to trace down and then incorporate into the book a unique collection of photographs by one of the most important Czech photographers of the 20th century, Václav Chochola, who was a great lover of classical music. His archives contain thousands of remarkable photographs from several decades of the Prague Spring. This discovery greatly influenced the visual appearance of the book. I am proud that the engaging texts written by leading Czech musical publicists are heightened by Chochol's photographs,”* says Pavel Trojan.

Authors Jindřich Bálek, Svatava Barančicová, Aleš Březina, Věroslav Němec, Kateřina Přidalová, Jiří Slabihoudek, Jitka Slavíková and Vlasta Reittererová produced eleven chapters. The visual aspect of the book is the work of the Toman Design studio and of the graphic artist Kateřina Orlíková. An epic publication of nearly five hundred pages is on sale at festival.cz and at all this year's festival concerts in Rudolfinum and the Municipal House.

CD Gold Edition IV

Before the festival, another CD from the Prague Spring Gold Edition series, the No. 4, also enters the distribution. The two allbums include Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 1 “The Titan”, performed by the Czech Philharmonic, with conductor John Barbirolli in 1960; Benjamin Britten's Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, performed by the English Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Sir Charles Mackerras in 1966; Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 7, interpreted by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and conductor Carl Maria Giulini in 1975; and Richard Strauss's symphonic poem Also Sprach Zarathustra by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and conductor Bernard Haitink from the Prague Spring of 1980. *“Since these conductors made repeated appearances at the festival and we also used to see them in other concerts outside the festival, their names are known in the Czech Republic and their every new return was warmly welcomed. Our edition offers rare live recordings of the Prague Spring festival concerts, as yet unpublished on albums and mostly made by the Czech Radio,”* musicologist Bohuslav Vitek wrote in the foreword to the recordings. The CD is released by Radioservis and the recordings will be available on Apple Music and Spotify, in addition to the regular distribution channels.

Press briefings with Prague Spring Festival artists

Tomáš Hanus, Aidan Lang	12.5.	14:00	Municipal House
Klaus Mäkelä, Antoine Tamestit	16.5.	15:30	Rudolfinum
Tomáš Netopil (in Czech only)	18.5.	14:00	Rudolfinum
Alena Hron, Tomáš Jamník (in Czech only)	22.5.	15.00	Rudolfinum
John Adams, Víkingur Ólafsson	23.5.	13:00	Rudolfinum
Georg Friedrich Haas, Mollena Williams-Haas	25.5.	15.00	Hotel Mozart
Oksana Lyniv, Eduard Resatsch	28.5.	13:00	Rudolfinum
Christophe Rousset	29.5.	11:30	Rudolfinum
Christoph Eschenbach, Simona Šaturová	1.6.	13:00	Municipal House

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Photos of the Prague Spring 2023 concerts are available here: bit.ly/PJ2023_foto

Photos of the concerts of the Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival 2023 are available here:
bit.ly/KFRF2023