

# A Business Plan Proposal for Prague Spring for the Period 2026–2037

# 1. Mission, Vision and Shared Values

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## **Mission**

The core mission of Prague Spring is

- a) to bring the best in classical music to the widest possible audience, allowing an ever-larger number of people to experience the transformative power of music
- b) to serve the city of Prague, and the Czech Republic, by bringing them prestige and making them ever more appealing
- c) to serve music by making every possible effort to raise awareness, appreciation, and esteem of the artform
- d) to help to preserve and protect the extraordinary world-famous millennium-old tradition of Czech music by presenting the nation's past composers, while at the same time supporting the creation of new works, looking for and fostering new talent and actively engaging in the building of a loyal future audience.

## **Vision**

A self-confident, resilient and forward-looking arts organization, one of the world's most successful festivals, well known and celebrated by the artistic community and the general public alike for its uncompromising standards and innovation.

## **Shared Values**

### *Artistic Integrity*

The festival's belief in its vision, excellence and professionalism, and in its uncompromising determination to pursue the highest artistic goals independently of political, commercial and other kinds of pressure.

### *Democratization of Art*

The festival's belief that music is for all, and that people should have access to its benefits regardless of wealth, age, social status or background.

### *Partnerships*

The festival's belief in progress through shared effort and collaboration.

### *Music Education*

The festival's belief in the far-reaching benefits of music education, which is not just about learning to read music, playing an instrument or singing, but also about developing vital life skills and strengthening communities.

### *Sustainability*

The festival's belief in the importance of stability and synergy of resources (human, material and financial).

## Shared Values

### *The Overarching Value of Service*

Central to these values is the belief that everything the festival does should be to serve music and musicians; individuals, communities and the wider society; partner organizations; and colleagues.

## 2. Strategic Objectives

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The proposed strategic goals derive from the mission, vision and shared values outlined in Chapter 1 above, and from the analysis in Chapter 4 below. Each of them is supplemented by a general strategy, a roadmap to accomplishing that goal.

### Strategy for Professional Activities

To create a definitive strategy, the ideas and proposals outlined below will be subject to discussion with the festival, both its staff and boards, who with their wealth of experience and expertise will have much value to contribute. Such a collaborative effort to give a final shape to the strategy will create a sense of shared ownership and ensure strong commitment.

#### **Strategic Goal 1: Democratization of Art**

The festival will annually reach and engage through its concerts and projects considerably more people than today (3Ts for democratization of art through Technological, Territorial and Time expansion of the festival).

##### **Technological Expansion of the Festival**

Once more radio and television broadcasts are secured and more internet streams are realized, a more diverse and larger group of people will be reached, including those from more remote parts of the country, a vast potential new audience abroad, low-income families, people with disabilities, etc.

This will be achieved by consolidating and growing the festival's existing partnerships and by establishing and nurturing new ones (with production companies, distributors, broadcasters, streaming services and platforms, media alliances, and other partners), in the manner of the Salzburg Festival, the Lucerne Festival and others.

##### **Territorial Expansion of the Festival**

###### *Concerts and projects outside Prague*

An expansion beyond Prague by organizing concerts in locations within the Central Bohemian Region. The proximity of these places to Prague often leads to the assumption that people attend concerts in the capital and that there is less need for the region to organize events locally. Musically and in other ways the region's towns can find themselves poorly served, or that they don't thrive as some other places do.



## **Territorial Expansion of the Festival**

One way to expand into the region would be to collaborate with the National Heritage Institute (NPÚ), putting on a series of concerts at its chateaux. The institute's director, Ms. Goryczková, would welcome such an initiative and has offered me active support.

### *Community outreach*

Taking classical music and music education to where people normally spend time, including various non-traditional spaces, both indoor and outdoor, thereby accommodating those who are otherwise unlikely to attend standard concerts. The Lucerne Festival and their project *In the Streets* provides a good example.

## **Time Expansion of the Festival**

In terms of classical music, Prague has only two major festivals, Dvorakova Praha in late summer and Pražské jaro in the spring. There is no major classical music festival in Prague either in the autumn or winter. To fill this gap, I propose to expand the Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival in November and to add a small themed festival in March.

### *An expansion of the Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival*

I propose a transformation of what is now a series of recitals to a short but comprehensive festival, with each of the pianists of the series or some of them making an appearance in more than just one role: performing a solo recital, playing with a chamber group, offering a masterclass, and performing with an orchestra, which would help to fill another gap: in contrast to other European capitals, Prague hardly ever hosts major foreign orchestras outside the two weeks in September (the Dvorak Festival) and the three weeks in late May and early June (Prague Spring).

Not many people outside the artistic community currently associate the Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival with Prague Spring. It might be convenient for both to merge their names and prestige, for example by renaming the former the *Prague Spring Piano Festival*, with the words of *In Honour of Rudolf Firkušný* appended to the name when desirable.

### *The addition of a small themed festival in March*

To help the Prague Spring Festival retain its presence all year round, I propose the addition of a small themed festival in March, based around a different theme each year, such as a country or a city, a culture or a period. If the topic was Japan, for example, the festival could showcase Japanese artists and programme Japanese composers.

At the same time, such a themed festival (*Prague Spring Themed Weekend*) could provide a platform for the partnerships mentioned below, with galleries, dance companies and theatres, museums and other partners contributing their specific content, and thus contributing to the exploration of the chosen theme more fully.

## Strategic Goal 2: Music Education

Considerably more weight will be placed on music education.

<b>Training for Future Arts Professionals</b>	Providing future arts professionals with hands-on practice (and mentorship and networking) through their involvement in the production of Prague Spring. The project will be organized in partnership with schools, those offering arts management programmes, including the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, whose rector, Ms. Radok Žádná, welcomes the idea and is ready to support it.
<b>Masterclasses</b>	<p>The festival's guest artists will give a series of masterclasses. Importantly, this initiative needn't be restricted to the spring festival: a series of masterclasses can be given in November (the piano festival) and in March (the themed festival).</p> <p>Mr. Kahánek, Prague Conservatoire's director, welcomes this initiative, as does Ms. Radok Žádná.</p>
<b>Music Competition Development</b>	A transformation of the Prague Spring International Music Competition from a project whose main focus is on discovering new talent to a project which has two equally important functions: (a) discovering new talent and (b) launching their careers by offering substantial visibility; securing performing opportunities; offering advice on contracts, concert fees and other terms; connecting them to agencies and agents; and making their first albums, promotional videos, and press kits. As a secondary outcome, this will boost the competition's brand.
<b>International Orchestras Performing Concerts for Schools</b>	While concerts for schools and concerts for families with children have long been a tradition in this country, to my knowledge, they are not performed by artists from abroad. The Berlin and the Munich Philharmonics, the Budapest Festival Orchestra and other ensembles do perform such concerts on tour, thus exposing local children to cultures other than their own. With all its excellent guest artists, the festival could offer some such concerts.
<b>Prague Spring Youth Orchestra</b>	<p>To support (mostly Czech) future orchestral musicians, the festival will organize a music training camp that will culminate in a series of concerts. This will require engaging a star conductor (the likes of Simon Rattle), and professional orchestral musicians from iconic European orchestras, to coach the project's trainees.</p> <p>One of the ways to assemble such an ensemble would be to bring together Czech orchestral academies, for example those of the Brno Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra and Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra.</p>

### Strategic Goal 3: Partnerships

The festival will form long-term partnerships with other organizations.

To achieve its strategic goals, and to amplify its reach and visibility and thereby gain extra relevance and strength, the festival will form successful partnerships with galleries, libraries, archives and museums, with theatres and dance companies, as well as with other institutions, with whom it will organize various meaningful interdisciplinary projects (small festivals) around specific themes. To the audience, such projects can provide much greater value, by broadening perspectives and fostering holistic understanding.

Besides the already mentioned outcomes (greater reach and visibility, greater value to the audience, etc.), these partnerships and interdisciplinary projects will also help to boost Prague's reputation as a major cultural metropolis, attracting not only Czech audiences, but culture-loving people in general.

Several arts executives have expressed their interest in these partnerships and in making the city's cultural scene more collaborative, including Michal Lukes (National Museum) and Naděžda Goryczková (National Heritage Institute).

### Strategic Goal 4: Programming

The festival will keep on developing its programming.

In terms of its offerings, in the last several years, the festival has gone from strength to strength, regularly presenting world-class orchestras, renowned conductors, famous soloists, prominent chamber music groups and other well-established artists, while simultaneously consistently engaging new talent. It has offered varied programming, spanning works of early music to pieces of the 21st century, both Czech and international. I will do everything I can to ensure that the festival protects this legacy. That said, it would be a mistake not to use the festival's success to build on and further develop this progress.

In line with the vision above, the Prague Spring Festival will continue to collaborate with the most important artists and groups. It has already had a great deal of success, having recently presented the likes of the Berlin Philharmonic, the orchestras from Boston and Chicago or the LSO. While presenting these again, it will also bring new artists, or those that have been absent for years (Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, the Cleveland Orchestra, LA Phil, Staatskapelle Dresden, etc.).

Importantly, the festival should nurture gender balance, frequently engaging female artists, including in the most prominent roles, such as the opening concerts of the festival.

As far as possible, the festival will invite the best of these artists to take up residencies. While it has done so with great soloists, conductors and ensembles in the past (the recent Patricia Kopatchinskaja residency and the Ensemble Modern residency providing good examples here), it hasn't done so with the most important orchestras. Within such a residency, an orchestra can give symphonic concerts, perform chamber music, and engage in educational and community work, thereby making their Prague visit more meaningful.

#### Strategic Goal 4: Programing

While showcasing the best of international music, the festival will programme Czech composers, both past and contemporary, to preserve and protect the extraordinary world-famous millennium-old tradition of Czech music. In doing so, the festival will go beyond the obvious (Smetana, Dvorak, Janacek, Martinu or Suk), presenting also those composers who are played less often.

While safeguarding tradition and heritage, the festival will foster innovation, bringing new ideas and projects (the likes of Prague Offspring), and creating an ambitious plan for commissioning new music.

Opera performances – If the festival and the National Theatre in Prague enhance their current partnership, together they can offer Prague audiences what they normally only see abroad: world-renowned conductors, star soloists, opera directors of the likes of Barrie Kosky, and other major players of the opera world.

Jazz – Only one jazz concert is presented by the festival each year. It could be a series of four concerts, curated by a noted jazz musician. This will draw new listeners, as well as new media and sponsors.

## Investment Strategy

Unlike the National Museum or the NPU, which invest in buildings and in collections covering art, natural history, history and other areas, the festival administers no such tangible assets.

Nevertheless, to keep its recent success and to foster further growth, the festival will make investments too, including in:

<b>The festival's core product</b>	The better the festival's core product (concerts and projects, including educational), the greater the festival's capacity to be useful (see the festival's proposed mission above) and to achieve its vision (also above).
<b>Marketing capacity</b>	Even the best programming will fail if its target audience is unaware of its existence, its benefits and its success. For more information on my plans regarding marketing, please see Chapter 3 below.
<b>Fundraising capacity</b>	The growth described in this document will necessitate a substantial new investment in fundraising. This is to ensure that current sponsors are retained and that new ones are secured. For more information on my plans regarding fundraising, please see Chapter 3 below.
<b>Human resources</b>	Its staff is arguably the festival's most important resource. Without it, there is no festival and certainly no growth. For more information on my plans regarding human resources, please see the human resources strategy below.
<b>Offices</b>	As I understand it, the festival lacks sufficient office space and modern meeting rooms. If, in line with the paragraphs below, the festival engages extra staff, it will become necessary to find additional offices or an entirely new home for the festival.

# Financial Strategy

## **The Present State of Affairs**

At the time of the writing of this text, no financial statements had been published by the festival for the fiscal year 2025. In 2024, the festival achieved a budget surplus of 4,520,000 CZK, as its revenue (123,687,000) was higher than expenses (119,167,000).

The amount of 59,500,000 CZK (approximately half of the income) was provided by the Ministry of Culture (42,550,000) and the City of Prague (16,950,000). The rest was mainly ticket sales (28,230,000) and sponsorship.

The amount of 70,365,000 CZK was invested in the festival's core product (concerts and various projects), and the amount of 17,164,000 CZK in its personnel. The rest was tax and various "smaller" items (water supply, energy supply, travel expenses, representation, etc.).

## **The Festival's Future Needs**

The future growth of the festival as proposed in this document will necessitate a revenue increase of 49,300,000 CZK, to be raised in the next several years and invested in the festival's:

- core product in the estimated amount of 36,800,000
- marketing capacity in the estimated amount of 5,000,000
- fundraising capacity in the estimated amount of 2,500,000
- human resources in the estimated amount of 5,000,000

These are present costs, excluding the impact of inflation. For information on the sources of this revenue increase please see the business strategy below.

# Human Resources Strategy

## **Strategic Goal for January 2028**

A group of talented managers and other staff members, possessing diverse skill sets, but sharing the festival's mission, values and vision, and a strong dedication to the arts. They are all reliable and ready to support one another. There is trust and respect among staff members, and between staff members and managers. The members of the team think positively and are good communicators. Always eager to learn, they excel in adapting to change. Responsibilities are clearly defined.

## **Strategy**

For the Prague Spring Festival to grow and to be up to speed with major European festivals, an expansion of the team may prove necessary, especially in the fields of fundraising and marketing, where certainly in the future a staff of three to four in each of those areas may be necessary to cover all the needs of the festival. For more information on these topics, please scroll down to Chapter 3.

## Strategy

It may also be advisable to structure the team differently. At the moment, each staff member of the festival reports to the managing director. In my experience, it may be impractical for a leader to have twelve direct reports, as this often leads to him or her spending too much time on daily operations, and too little time on strategy. Around five direct reports would seem sensible in the case of the festival, to include the festival's economist, artistic director, head of marketing, head of fundraising, and the secretary of the music competition. The artistic director and the two heads of departments would in turn each have their own direct reports.

Attention will be paid to teaching competencies and building good relationships.

### 3. Business and Marketing Strategy

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#### **Introduction Business**

In my experience, there is great potential in fundraising, with numerous prospects still untapped. At the Czech Philharmonic, my colleagues and I have begun to exploit that potential with considerable success: the orchestra's fundraising performance has more than tripled in the last four years, increasing from around 30 million Czech crowns per annum to around 100 million.

#### **Strategic Goal**

The festival's new leadership will secure enough funds to achieve the vision above, while simultaneously giving an extra boost to the festival's financial stability.

#### **Strategy**

Our strategy will be:

To keep the current balance between earned and contributed income (it would be unreasonable for all the growth of the festival to be financed by the state or the city).

To keep diversifying income streams. The Central Bohemian Region, its towns and local sponsors in those towns are just some examples of possible new income streams.

To increase the revenue from existing income streams (sales of tickets and other services, grants from the state and the city, existing sponsors and donors, etc.).

To secure multi-year grants, as one-year grants, which tend to be the norm, seem utterly inadequate in a field where multi-year planning is a necessity.

To keep a sufficient cash reserve to provide financial stability.

In line with the chapters above, the festival will recruit two extra fundraisers: it currently employs only two, compared to the five fundraisers of the Salzburg Festival, the five of the Lucerne Festival, and the six of the Czech Philharmonic. The festival will work with volunteers, and with fundraising consultants, including the likes of Jiří Bárta, Deborah Borda, and Jan Kroupa.

#### **Introduction Marketing**

A lot has been achieved in terms of marketing, with the festival having a strong brand and being highly visible. This existing marketing success is something that the festival can build on.



## Introduction Marketing

Where the festival is very much behind though is (a) international marketing (the festival is visible in Prague and the Czech Republic, but less so internationally) and (b) digital marketing. At the time of the writing, it only had approximately 21,000 followers across its social media, compared to the Czech Philharmonic's 152,000 followers.

Moreover, the festival had no profiles on TikTok, X or LinkedIn, thus completely missing major target audience groups: teenagers and young adults on TikTok, influential politicians and journalists on X, and large group of professionals on LinkedIn.

## Strategic Goal

A vast majority of Czechs will know and recognize the festival, including those who do not attend concerts of classical music. They will know what the festival does, how successful it is, and what benefits it has for the country. They will see it as a national treasure, just like they do Pilsner Urquell or Škoda.

The festival will become much more visible internationally, will boast global brand awareness, and will serve as the country's cultural ambassador, just like the Czech Philharmonic does. Industry professionals will rank it with the likes of the Salzburg Festival, the Lucerne Festival, and London's BBC Proms.

Its concerts will be sold out.

## Strategy

Our strategy will be:

While continuing to exploit traditional marketing channels (television, radio and print), the festival will enhance its online presence, working with its website more and with social media, increasing its activity on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube and launching its accounts with other platforms. Festival highlights, artist profiles, and various behind-the-scenes are just a few examples of what the festival's content strategy will be.

In terms of branding, besides artistic excellence, the festival will communicate the following key messages to its target audience: accessibility (a festival for everyone), responsibility (education and community work) and community (connections, collaborations and partnerships). It will thereby enhance its reputation as the Czech Republic's most important festival.

A more robust piano festival, an added festival in March, a series of concerts at chateaux of the Central Bohemian Region and the other projects outlined in this document will help the Prague Spring Festival stay present all year round (not just in May) and not only through sales, but through the festival's activities.



## Strategy

The number of followers will grow and awareness of the festival will increase thanks to long-term partnerships (see above), interdisciplinary festivals or projects (also see above), and various joint campaigns built around those projects, as it will through cross-promotion with important artists.

To gain increased attention not only locally but also internationally, the festival will establish long-term partnerships with major TV stations (such as Mezzo), streaming services (such as medici.tv) and other players, and it will offer more broadcasts and streams.

In line with the chapters above, the festival will recruit more marketeers, to be able to exploit more of its marketing potential: it currently employs only one, compared to the five of the Salzburg Festival and the six of the Czech Philharmonic.

## 4. Assessment of the Current State of the Organization

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### Strengths

- A strong traditional brand (the Czech Republic's oldest and most prestigious festival)
- The City of Prague as the festival's home, the city's vibrant artistic life and cultured citizens
- The Ministry of Culture as a strong and prestigious founder
- The festival's programming
- Long-term support from the Ministry of Culture and the City of Prague

### Weaknesses

- The recent employee turnover rate
- Funding unpredictability
- Unexploited audience potential
- Fundraising capacity
- Marketing capacity

### Opportunities

- A considerable untapped audience, both in this country and abroad
- The growth potential of the Rudolf Firkušný International Piano Festival
- The growth potential of the Prague Spring International Music Competition
- No major classical music festival in Prague in autumn and in winter
- No international orchestras in Prague from late September to early May
- The festival's unexploited fundraising potential
- The festival's unexploited marketing potential
- The potential for growth and prosperity hidden in new partnerships

### Threats

- Continued instability with regards to human resources (which could be caused by various factors, including work overload, insufficient salaries, inadequate facilities, less-than-ideal leadership, etc.)
- Insufficient financial resources
- A negative social climate change (war...), which is why the arts (music included) are important, with their ability to play a role in preventing any such changes, by promoting understanding, increasing tolerance, and fostering connection.

## 5. Long-Term Objectives

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The most ambitious new projects of this strategy will be established during the first period and will be consolidated and substantially developed during the second period. This concerns – among other things – the piano festival, the themed festival, the series of concerts in the South Bohemian Region, the broadcasts and streams, and the Prague Spring Youth Orchestra. Because of limited resources, they will start as smaller-scale projects, week-long festivals of no more than a few concerts each. If they are successful in the first period, the festival will develop them more fully in the second.

As a result of the work done in the first period and the further growth achieved in the second, Prague Spring will have attained a whole new level: it will be a much bigger festival, present all year round, serving much wider audiences, thereby becoming much more relevant and useful. As such, it will need a new, bigger home.

Therefore, under its new leadership the festival should do its very best to secure a place as resident in the planned Vltava Philharmonic. Both the concert hall and the festival would benefit from this, with the concert hall getting world-class programming, credibility and a global audience, and with the festival getting a new home, one that accommodates its needs.

The festival could launch the Philharmonic, presenting a series of concerts and other events in the hall to mark the occasion and to show the venue's capabilities to an international audience of artists, cultural executives, politicians and other public figures, the media, etc.