



Press Release

Prague Spring presents its opening Open-Air Concert, the programme of the 2026 Firkušný Festival, and six artists of the Art Salon

[Prague, 23 March 2026](#) | **The open-air opening of Prague Spring, supported by the ČEZ Group; the featured artist of this year's Prague Spring Debut; the programme of the 14th Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival; and the unveiling of six visual artists who have created works for the third edition of the Prague Spring Art Salon, culminating in a benefit auction in support of the festival on 31 May – these were the main themes of the festival's spring press conference, attended by the Czech Minister of Culture, Oto Klempíř, and the Mayor of Prague, Bohuslav Svoboda. The conference took place in the representative premises of Clam-Gallas Palace.**

“Prague Spring is a living organism, drawing strength and confidence from its distinguished history, yet it must also respond to the contemporary world, continue to evolve, modernise and serve as a source of inspiration for today's society. We are embarking on a new chapter, aiming to create a festival that is technologically innovative and more ambitious in both its geographical reach and timing, while opening itself more fully to educational activities and interdisciplinary projects. To realise these plans, we need strong and stable partners from both the public and private sectors. I am therefore very pleased to welcome representatives of Prague Spring's four principal supporters: the Czech Minister of Culture, Oto Klempíř, the Mayor of Prague, Bohuslav Svoboda, and representatives of the ČEZ Group and innogy Czech Republic, and to express my gratitude for their support of the festival,” said Prague Spring Director **Robert Hanč** in his opening remarks.

“Prague Spring is, for me, one of the most beautiful musical events of the year. I greatly look forward to this year's edition once again demonstrating the prominent place of Czech music not only within the European but also the global context – not only through traditional works such as Smetana's *My Country*, but also through newly emerging Czech compositions. For me, Prague Spring is also an opportunity to encounter outstanding soloists, orchestras and ensembles, as well as young musicians who will shape the future of music in the years to come,” said the Czech Minister of Culture, **Oto Klempíř**.

“Prague Spring is one of the cultural symbols of our city. For almost eighty years, it has been a reminder that Prague is a place where music holds a natural and vital position. I am pleased that

the City of Prague can stand alongside a festival that brings together tradition, artistic excellence and new generations of musicians,” emphasised the Mayor of Prague, **Bohuslav Svoboda**, in his address.

Prague Spring Open Air, supported by ČEZ Group

For the third consecutive year, **ČEZ Group**, the Prague Spring General Partner and partner of the Opening Concert, is a key strategic partner of the Prague Spring. With its support, the **Prague Spring Open Air, supported by ČEZ Group**, a lively musical afternoon for audiences of all ages, will take place in Riegrovy Sady on the festival’s opening day, 12 May, from 15.00. The programme will include a live edition of the popular *AZ Quiz* with guests Robert Jindra, Adam Plachetka and Marek Ivanović; *Musical Menagerie* with Czech Radio; a percussion show; and a concert by the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra featuring violinist Jan Novák, laureate of the 2024 Prague Spring International Music Competition. The open-air event will culminate in a live broadcast of the Opening Concert of Prague Spring 2026 from the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House at 20.00. Admission to all Prague Spring Open Air events is free. Further information and the full programme are available at <https://festival.cz/en/programme/prague-spring-open-air-supported-by-the-cez-group/>.

 Illustrative photographs (Open Air 2025): <https://bit.ly/4lBIVMu>

Prague Spring Debut

One of the festival’s most closely followed events is the traditional Prague Spring Debut for conductors, a project initiated by Jiří Bělohlávek in 2014. Over the years, it has introduced now established Czech conductors such as **Jiří Rožeň**, **Marek Šedivý**, **Alena Hron** and **Jiří Habart**. Among international participants are **Ben Glassberg**, currently Music Director of the Opéra de Rouen Normandie, **Jonathon Heyward**, Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and **Chuhei Iwasaki**, Chief Conductor of the Pilsen Philharmonic Orchestra. In 2026, Prague Spring will present **Ondřej Soukup**, laureate of the Ionel Perlea International Conducting Competition and a graduate of the Royal College of Music in London and the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. His name has been gaining increasing recognition in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia and the Czech Republic, where he assisted Robert Jindra in January in the preparation of Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* at the National Theatre. “It is, above all, an immense honour for me,” Ondřej says of the invitation. “As a ten-year-old music student, I already looked up to Prague Spring with admiration. When I was completing my conducting studies in Denmark, I even organised a kind of miniature Prague Spring for my final concert, featuring the fanfares from *Libuše* and Smetana’s *Šárka*. The spirit of that young musician, which still lives within me, is overjoyed that I will appear at the real Prague Spring this year.”

The programme will include works by Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Antonín Dvořák and Alberto Ginastera. Ondřej Soukup will collaborate for the first time with the **Prague Philharmonia** and soprano **Simona Šaturová**, who will perform the solo part in Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, set to an autobiographical text by James Agee. The Prague Spring Debut will take place on 18 May at 20.00 in Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum.

 Video profile of Ondřej Soukup: <https://youtu.be/RNO1TXrjZQw>

 Photographs of the Prague Spring Debut artists: <https://bit.ly/4uARcTM>

Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival 2026

The 14th Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival will take place from 3 to 9 November 2026 at the Rudolfinum, presenting over five evenings six internationally acclaimed pianists: **Evgeny Kissin** and **Sir Andrés Schiff**, who will appear together in Prague for the first time as a piano duo, **Lukas Sternath**, **Marek Kozák**, **Anna Vinnitskaya** and **Grigory Sokolov**.

“The Rudolf Firkušný Piano Festival has, over its thirteen years, become an integral part of Prague’s concert season, as evidenced, among other things, by the high attendance of recent editions. This year, we have prepared five piano recitals, once again bringing together an exceptionally strong line-up of Czech and international artists,” says Prague Spring Director **Robert Hanč**. “The programme will focus primarily on Romantic music of the 19th and early 20th centuries, including works by Czech masters. I am particularly delighted that **Grigory Sokolov** will return – he performs in the Czech Republic more or less exclusively at the Firkušný Festival – and that the duo of **Evgeny Kissin** and **Sir Andrés Schiff** has included our festival in its major European tour, which also includes concerts in Rome, Milan, Amsterdam and Munich. I regard this as a confirmation of the prestige of this Prague Spring’s autumn event,” adds the festival’s Artistic Director **Josef Třeštík**. As for the performers, the festival once again combines established tradition with the energy of young talents. One of the most anticipated appearances will be the debut of Austrian pianist **Lukas Sternath**, winner of the 2022 ARD Munich Competition and holder of the ECHO Rising Star 2024–2025 title, as well as the return of the outstanding pianist **Anna Vinnitskaya**, whose artistic profile includes appearances with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The Czech performing tradition will be represented by **Marek Kozák**, last year’s laureate of the Bach Competition in Leipzig and recipient of the Jiří Bělohlávek Prize 2025 (his festival debut in 2020 was streamed online). The 14th edition of the Firkušný Festival will conclude in grand style with one of the most original pianists on the planet, **Grigory Sokolov**, whose programme – as always – remains

a closely guarded secret. Ticket sales for all festival concerts open **on Thursday 19 March at 11.00 a.m.** online at www.firkusny.cz. **An Early Bird discount of 20%** on individual tickets will be available until 4 June.

 Artist photographs for RFPF 2026 and the new visual identity: <https://bit.ly/3Nv2Df5>

 Programme leaflet for download: <https://bit.ly/4sAPMaF>

Prague Spring Art Salon 2026

For the third time, the Prague Spring Art Salon exhibition will be on display throughout the duration of the festival, from 12 May to 4 June, at the Rudolfinum and the Municipal House. The project is organised by Prague Spring in collaboration with Galerie KODL. “This year’s edition presents six unique paintings on the theme of ‘*Spring*’, created especially for Prague Spring by **Pavla Malinová, Karolina Netolická, Michal Cimala, Jan Hísek, Jakub Špaňhel** and **Vladimír Věla**. The entire proceeds from the sale of these works at the spring auction, which will take place on 31 May 2026 at Galerie KODL and on the artslimit.com platform, will be dedicated to supporting the artistic projects of Prague Spring,” says **Milan Dospěl**, curator of the exhibition and Chief Curator of Galerie KODL. “The Prague Spring Art Salon project reflects our vision of transforming the festival platform into a space for broader cultural and artistic exchange. At the same time, I see it as an excellent example of modern fundraising,” adds **Robert Hanč**. High-quality reproductions of the works will be exhibited as part of the festival. The original paintings will be accessible to the public from 4 May at Galerie KODL, where visitors may also explore them in greater detail during guided tours held every Thursday from 16.00.

Works

Michal Cimala (1975)

Spring – and perhaps Glass and Vivaldi as well, 2025

Acrylic, spray on canvas over an artist’s stencil, 150 x 100 cm

Starting price: CZK 100,000

Estimated price: CZK 150,000–200,000

Vladimír Věla (1980)

Spring I (Awakening), 2026

Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 100 cm

Starting price: CZK 150,000

Estimated price: CZK 200,000–250,000

Pavla Malinová (1985)

Cutting, 2025

Oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm

Starting price: CZK 150,000

Estimated price: CZK 200,000–250,000

Jakub Špaňhel (1975)

Prague Spring, 2026

Acrylic, pigment on canvas, 130 x 100 cm

Starting price: CZK 180,000

Estimated price: CZK 250,000–350,000

Jan Hísek (1965)

Tree and Moon, 2025

Oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm

Starting price: CZK 130,000

Estimated price: CZK 200,000–300,000

Karolina Netolická (1993)

Ellipses of Spring, 2026

Mixed media (pastel, acrylic, micro-pen) on canvas, 115 x 100 cm

Starting price: CZK 150,000

Estimated price: CZK 200,000–250,000

 . Video introduction to the Prague Spring Art Salon 2026: <https://youtu.be/0OQkE9suwZE>

 Photographs of the works: <https://bit.ly/4blCp6s>



Partners

The principal public-sector partners of the festival are the **Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic**, founder of Prague Spring o.p.s., and the **City of Prague**, with support amounting to CZK 15 million in 2026.

The General Partner of the 81st Prague Spring Festival is the **ČEZ Group**, one of the festival's key financial partners. This year, it has once again assumed partnership of the Opening Concert and the Prague Spring Open Air, and plans to continue its collaboration through the **ČEZ Foundation** by supporting the Prague Spring International Music Competition and the SpringTEEN project, designed for young audiences.

Prague Spring greatly values its long-standing cooperation with **innogy Czech Republic**, a festival partner for thirty-two years. innogy Czech Republic will once again serve as partner of the Closing Concert of Prague Spring 2026 and has newly taken on partnership of the documentary *A Window to the World*, directed by Martin Suchánek, which is being produced in co-production of Prague Spring and Czech Television to mark the 80th anniversary of the festival (1946–2026).

In 2026, partners of concerts and projects include **FNC Technology**, **Allianz pojišťovna** and **ABB Czech Republic**. The official hotel of Prague Spring 2026 is **Hilton Prague Atrium**, and the official car partner of 2026 is **Mercedes-Benz Czech Republic**.

Special thanks are extended to the Prague Spring Patrons Club, **Friends of the Prague Spring**.

Media Partners

The General Media Partner of Prague Spring 2026 is **Czech Television**, with **Czech Radio** as the Main Media Partner. **Economia, a.s.**, publisher of *Hospodářské noviny* and operator of the **hn.cz** and **aktualne.cz** portals, remains the partner for print and online media. In the field of specialist media, Prague Spring continues its partnerships with the online platforms **KlasikaPlus.cz**, **Operaplus.cz** and **polyharmonie.cz**. Following a successful collaboration in 2025, the partnership with the **Czech News Agency** (ČTK) also continues.



Ticket Sales

Ticket sales for the first and second rounds of the Prague Spring International Music Competition (flute and piano categories) opened on 18 March. Tickets for festival concerts, workshops and masterclasses can be purchased **online** at **festival.cz**. Detailed information on individual concerts is available in the Programme section of festival.cz/en. For enquiries regarding orders, payments, invoicing or group bookings, customers may contact ENIGOO at +420 461 049 232. Information about the festival programme is available from Prague Spring at +420 257 310 414.

Musical Performance

Johan Halvorsen: *Passacaglia on a Theme from Handel's Harpsichord Suite in G minor*
Performed by MenART Academy alumni **Magdalena Pawlicová** (violin) and **Tobiáš Balkovský** (cello)

Magdalena Pawlicová and Tobiáš Balkovský are united by their studies at the Řevnice School of Arts, their involvement in the TAM string trio and their experience with the MenART Academy. Magdalena studied in the violin class of Jan Fišer, while Tobiáš trained in the cello class of Michaela Fukačová. Both have successfully taken part in a number of masterclasses and national and international competitions. In 2025, Tobiáš became a laureate of the Heran Cello Competition in Ústí nad Orlicí for young musicians under the age of sixteen. Together, they performed at the MenART concert in November as part of the *Musical Odyssey* series at Atrium Žižkov.

Music School Salon and Cooperation with the MenART Academy

For the ninth time, graduates of the MenART Academy will conclude their year-long collaboration with leading mentors in a concert at Prague Spring entitled **Music School Salon**, to be held on 17 May at the Convent of St Agnes of Bohemia. "This concert is not only a significant musical occasion for our students, but also an inspiring meeting of generations united by a deep connection to music and the arts. It is a joy to observe how, under the guidance of exceptional mentors, young personalities develop, bringing a fresh perspective and new energy to classical music. We consider it important and a great honour that Prague Spring provides a platform for the very youngest talents," says **Dana Syrová**, Director of the MenART Academy. This year's programme will be dominated by the unusual combination of cello and accordion. Two sextets by **Nikol Bóková and Pavel Samiec**, commissioned by Prague Spring, will receive their world premieres as responses to works by Manuel de Falla and Astor Piazzolla. A third anticipated premiere will come from **Matteo Hager**, violinist and composer,

whom MenART has long supported through the Comenium Musicum scholarship during his studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London. A new feature will be short dramatic dialogues, directed and dramaturgically prepared by theatre mentor **Dominika Špalková**, guiding the audience through the concert. The writer **Markéta Pilátová** has accepted the invitation to create these dramatic miniatures inspired by well-known literary works.

 Illustrative photographs (Music School Salon): <https://bit.ly/4btA61l>

Press Conference Participants

Robert Hanč, Director of Prague Spring

Josef Třeštík, Artistic Director of Prague Spring

Oto Klempíř, Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic

Bohuslav Svoboda, Mayor of Prague

Ondřej Soukup, conductor

Milan Dospěl, Chief Curator of Galerie KODL and curator of the Prague Spring Art Salon 2026

 Photographs of Prague Spring 2026 artists: <https://bit.ly/4bJLQy5>

 Prague Spring Festival programme for download: <https://bit.ly/418q6pp>

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<https://festival.cz/en/>