

The 2023 Dvořák Prague Festival is full of Dvořák, Brahms, and big returns

Prague (7 March 2023) – We pay tribute not only to Antonín Dvořák, but also to Johannes Brahms as we commemorate the 190th anniversary of his birth this year, with performances by top artists, many of whom have shined at the festival in recent years. Along with that, there will be another portion of Dvořák’s string quartets and another birthday celebration. That is how one might briefly summarise the programme of the 16th annual Dvořák Prague International Music Festival from 7 to 25 September 2023. Listeners can look forward, for example, to appearances by the Vienna Philharmonic, the Israel Philharmonic, and Sir András Schiff. Again this year, the festival will keep in mind the youngest generation of performers, offer accompanying programmes, and commemorate 100 years since the launch of Czech Radio broadcasting.

Ticket sales begin on 7 March 2023 at www.dvorakovapraha.cz.

“One of the most important figures who influenced Antonín Dvořák personally and artistically was Johannes Brahms. He not only inspired Dvořák, but also unselfishly helped him achieve worldwide fame. For the 190th anniversary of Brahms’s birth, the two composers will encounter each other symbolically at the festival more than usual, with Brahms’s concertos running through the programmes for the celebrations,” says Dvořák Prague Festival Director Jan Simon.

Dvořák and Brahms are most firmly interlinked on 13 September at a **Vienna Philharmonic** concert under the baton of Jakub Hrůša, beginning with Brahms’s Second Piano Concerto and the soloist Igor Levit, followed by Antonín Dvořák’s Eighth Symphony. Also, the Vienna Philharmonic has chosen to share this concert through the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Dvořák and Brahms in a superior performance at the Dvořák Prague Festival can thus be enjoyed not only by the audience at Dvořák Hall, but also by television viewers and radio listeners in 50 countries.

World-Class Orchestras

The programme series World-Class Orchestras also offers two concerts by the **Israel Philharmonic** with its music director Lahav Shani and the violinist Gil Shaham. On Sunday, 10 September we will hear Brahms’s Violin Concerto and the next day his popular Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, for which Shaham is joined by Austrian cellist Kian Soltani. Both performers thrilled the Dvořák Prague Festival public in 2019 when they appeared together on stage repeatedly in the Chamber Series.

The gala opening of the festival, with its traditional performances of two emblematic compositions by Antonín Dvořák—the Cello Concerto and the New World Symphony—will feature the **Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich** and its music director Paavo Järvi, and the cellist Anastasia Kobekina will play the solo part. The next day, the orchestra will join forces with the pianist Ivo Kahánek.

The Dvořák Collection and the Chamber Series

For a second season, the Dvořák Collection programme series will focus on performances of Antonín Dvořák’s complete string quartets, so the series’ contents overlap with the Chamber Series. Under the supervision of members of the Pavel Haas Quartet as curators, Dvořák’s compositions are heard in interpretations by top quartets from this country and abroad—this year, for example, the Belcea Quartet and the Schumann Quartet. For the Chamber Series, renowned quartets will be expanded to include more star performers like clarinetist Sharon Kam, pianist Bertrand Chamayou, and others.

Brahms 190

Besides the concerts mentioned above, the Brahms 190 series will also present Brahms's First Piano Concerto played by Paul Lewis at the conclusion of this year's festival, and his partners will be the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and its chief conductor Petr Popelka. On 14 September, the festival's orchestra-in-residence, the Czech Philharmonic, will perform Brahms's German Requiem with the conductor Sakari Oramo, soloists Christian Senn and Anu Korsi, and the Prague Philharmonic Choir. There will also be chamber music by Brahms with the Zemlinsky Quartet playing a viola quintet joined by violist Vladimír Bukač.

Czech Philharmonic

Again this season, the Dvořák Prague Festival's orchestra-in-residence is the Czech Philharmonic. The orchestra will be led successively by three conductors: Sakari Oramo, mentioned above, principal guest conductor Tomáš Netopil, who will be joined by the pianist Boris Giltburg as part of commemorations of 150 years since the birth of Sergei Rachmaninoff with a performance of his Third Piano Concerto. Finally, Sir András Schiff, who is appearing with the Czech Philharmonic in the dual role of soloist and conductor and has included his concert at the Dvořák Prague Festival in celebrating the approach of his 70th birthday. The celebration is truly conceived in a "Schiffian" manner, i.e. in the company of the composers who are dearest to him: Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven.

For the Future

As the name tells us, the programme series For the Future focuses on the rising generation of musicians. It will offer the finals of the Concertino Praga competition in the chamber music and solo categories, and on Sunday, 17 September there will be an appearance by students of the Academy of Chamber Music and by its artistic director Tomáš Jamník. To join in playing with the orchestra, Jamník has invited his friends – violinist Josef Špaček and pianist Roman Rabinovich.

Opera in Concert

The programme series Opera in Concert does not take place at the festival every year. Last year, the series was represented by three concert performances of Rusalka. This year's concert on 18 September will take a rather different form. The married couple Kateřina Kněžíková and Adam Plachetka, working with the chief conductor of the Orchestra of the National Theatre Robert Jindra, have chosen arias that are close to their hearts. Besides selections from Dvořák's operas, they will also present less frequently performed music by composers who joined with Antonín Dvořák in shaping the history of Czech opera.

Soirées at the Božislavka Centre

After last year's successful premiere, the Dvořák Prague returns to the foyer Božislavka Center, site of the headquarters of the festival's chief patron, the Karel Komárek Family Foundation. In a series of four early-evening concerts, the performers will include, among others, the pianist Jan Schulmeister, a laureate of the 2021 Concertino Praga competition, and the Klánský father-and-son duo. Once again, proceeds from admission will go to the KKFF Scholarship Fund for talented young musicians.

Academic Series

The Bethlehem Chapel is the ceremony hall of the Czech Technical University in Prague (ČVUT), and it will be the venue for concerts of a new programme series created at the initiative of ČVUT rector Professor Vojtěch Petráček. The common interest of the university and of the festival is to support interest in classical music concerts among students and pedagogues. The programme will include, for

example, a solo recital by the Italian pianist Giuseppe Guarrera on 20 September and an appearance by the New European Strings chamber orchestra led by the violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky with the pianist Jan Bartoš on 23 September.

The festival's accompanying programme includes an excursion "On the Trail of Dvořák" taking us to Olomouc on 2 September, Family Day and Family Concert on 17 September, several Aftertalks hosted by Jiří Vejvoda, and masterclasses, for which this year's mentors will be the violinist Gil Shaham, the cellist Pablo Ferrández, and Berlin Philharmonic French horn player Sarah Willis.

Since its founding in 2008, the festival has relied on financial support from a combination of private and public sources. *"Traditionally, the chief patron of the Dvořák Prague Festival is the Karel Komárek Family Foundation, but the Ministry of Culture and the City of Prague also play an important role in our budget. We are very pleased by the growing interest of patrons who give us long-term support, along with a new festival partner this year, the media agency Mind2FLO. We owe all of them our sincere thanks,"* says Robert Kolář, director of the festival presenter, the Academy of Classical Music.

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About the festival

The Dvořák Prague International Music Festival is not only a celebration of Antonín Dvořák, a musical genius and the most famous Czech composer around the world, but also an important societal event, presenting a succession of top soloists, conductors, internationally acclaimed orchestras, and chamber ensembles. They come to Prague to present Dvořák's music and works by other world-famous composers to an international public. The festival presenter is the Academy of Classical Music. Its co-founder and supporter for many years is the entrepreneur and philanthropist Karel Komárek through the Karel Komárek Family Foundation. The festival receives long-term support from the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and the City of Prague. We thank all of our other partners and patrons who help us bring the world's most important star performers of classical music to Prague.

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The Dvořák Prague Festival takes place from 7 to 25 September 2023. For more information, visit www.dvorakovapraha.cz.