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From a public collection to the first concert. The new St. Vitus organ resounded the Prague Castle

The Cathedral of St. Vitus, Wenceslas and Adalbert at Prague Castle finally has an organ whose majesty equals the Cathedral's iconic place in Czech history. The Academy of Classical Music, which organises the Dvořák Prague Festival, played a major part in achieving this historical milestone from the very outset.

The Cathedral had lacked a suitable organ for decades. The new instrument is a true masterpiece. The organ was built by the prestigious Spanish organ-making company of Gerhard Grenzing, which has over 220 successful projects spanning the globe to its name. Organ-maker Gerhard Grenzing symbolically played one of the pipes in the Czech Republic and was in the audience at the first concert.

Construction of the organ began in 2017. The first composition that was played on the organ was the Czech national anthem. The tiniest pipe measures a mere 7 millimetres, while the largest is an incredible 10 metres in length. It took over 900 hours to complete the intonation and tuning. The total weight of the instrument, including the crystal ornamentation, is 45,755 kg.

A national achievement

The instrument is a testimony to national solidarity above all. Thousands of generous donors contributed to a public collection organised by the St. Vitus Organ Fund which was instrumental to the project's success. Over CZK 154 million has been raised for the organ to date.

The Academy of Classical Music also supported the collection. *“After we received the first donation of CZK 5 million from Karel Komárek’s KKCG group’s Sazka company (currently Allwyn), we held an initial benefit concert at St. Vitus Cathedral. To my great delight, members of the broad public donated an unbelievable CZK 22 million through the text-to-donate campaign during the concert and the subsequent benefit adoption of individual organ pipes. From the very start, I believed that we would be able to raise the funds to build the organ. It has become a nation-wide event. It reminds me of the historic public collection for the National Theatre,”* said Robert Kolář, Director of the Academy of Classical Music and a member of the Managing Board of the St. Vitus Organ Fund.

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The inauguration was followed by a tribute to the St. Vitus organ with Iveta Apkalna

The new instrument was inaugurated on 15 June to the sound of Dvořák's *Mass in D Major* ("The Lužany Mass"), which he composed in 1887. During the mass, Prague Archbishop Emeritus Jan Graubner blessed the organ and the current archbishop Stanislav Přebyl led the musical "awakening" of the instrument. The presence of prominent Czech figures created an exceptional musical experience. The consecration was followed by the "St. Vitus Organ Octave" concert series, designed for donors to thank them for their support. The first concert evening in the series, entitled "A Tribute to the St. Vitus Organ", was co-organised by the Academy of Classical Music and the St. Vitus Organ Fund.

Phenomenal Latvian organist Iveta Apkalna was honoured to perform and share the full majestic beauty of the sound of the new organ with the audience. The programme included Bach's iconic *Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor*, the Romantic *Fantasia and Fugue on the Theme B-A-C-H* by Liszt and the famous organ solo from Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass*. Dvořák's *Czech Suite*, performed by the Brno Philharmonic led by Jiří Rožeň, became a symbolic "thank you" to the thousands of donors who contributed to the effort. The evening closed with the monumental *Concerto for Organ, Timpani and Strings* by Poulenc.

"In my opinion as Artistic Director, with a superb instrument like this, we would be doing ourselves an injustice to not use it to its full potential," said Festival Director Jan Simon, adding: *"If you're wondering what our plans are for the 2027 Festival programme, you will have to wait. We're going to keep you in suspense for now, but you can definitely look forward to innovations."*

The concert partner is KKCG Real Estate.