

Czech Music Academy Celebrates the 100th Anniversary of Rudolf Firkušný

February 6th, 2012, Brno, Czech Republic, Europe

From April 25th – 29th, 2012, the Music Faculty of the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno¹ will present *Rudolf Firkušný 100th Celebration 2012*. The aim of this project is to pay tribute to this distinguished artist and teacher, the student of Leoš Janáček. Master Firkušný's former students, mostly from The Juilliard School in New York², will take part in three concerts, a conference and master classes.

The participation of experts from the United States of America and several European countries emphasizes the significance of this project. Rudolf Firkušný spent the most fruitful years of his artistic life abroad, and our project now offers the opportunity to contrast current Czech knowledge of Firkušný's creative potential with an international perspective, allowing for a broader context and a new angle from which to analyze the issue of general interpretational development.

Rudolf Firkušný 100th Celebration is intended for a wide range of interested parties, mainly to the professional community of students and teachers from music schools and academies, and also to the public. The aim of the project is to commemorate the legacy of this recognized artist and to acquaint Czech audiences with his musical legacy, with which he represented Czech art overseas.

The most important guests, who accepted an invitation to actively participate in the *Celebration*, are ten former students of Rudolf Firkušný; his daughter, Véronique Firkušný, is also planning to attend. The opening gala concert in Besední dům in Brno on April 25th will feature pianists Alan Weiss, Avner Arad, Carlo Grante and Eduardus Halim.

The program continues with the international musicological conference on April 26th; besides lectures by Firkušný's former students, there will be lectures by Czech music experts. The chamber concert will take place on April 27th, and will be followed by the final concert on April 28th, both in the building of the Music faculty. During these two days there will be master classes and some additional activities commemorating Firkušný (photography exhibition, etc.). The whole project will conclude with a memorial event held on Sunday, April 29th, at the Central Cemetery in Brno, where Rudolf Firkušný and his wife Tatiana are buried.

Rudolf Firkušný 100th Celebration 2012 aims to be the most prestigious memorial event commemorating this artist's 100th birth anniversary.

Additional Information for Editors

1. The Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno (JAMU) is one of two academies of music and the dramatic arts in the Czech Republic. It is named after Leoš Janáček, one of the most distinguished composers in modern European music, who was its spiritual father. JAMU was founded in 1947, when the many years of effort connected in the beginning with the personality of Leoš Janáček finally bore fruit. But the promising activities of the 1960s were suppressed during the years of Communist "normalization" in the 1970s and 1980s, and it was only after 1989 that JAMU could once again move forward along a well-conceived path open to the latest developments in the performing arts.

Independent Music and Theatre Faculties were reestablished, a number of professors who had been unable to teach were brought back, young teachers were admitted to the staff, new fields of study were introduced and foreign contacts were initiated. The institution soon gained wide recognition for its pioneering initiatives and impressive achievements. Honorary doctorates were awarded to the pianist Rudolf Firkušný (a native of Brno), the poet Ludvík Kundera, the playwright Václav Havel, and the poet and actor Jiří Suchý. The promising developments initiated in the early 1990s have continued into the new millennium, and at present JAMU has more than 500 students at its two faculties.

(source: <http://www.jamu.cz>)

2. Information about invited experts

Foreign experts

Alan Weiss – was born in New York City and hailed as “one of the outstanding pianists of his generation” by his teacher and legendary Czech pianist Rudolf Firkušný. Under the guidance of Firkušný’s deep musicianship he earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from The Juilliard School. Additionally, he was invited by Maestro himself to record alongside him the complete works for piano four hands by W. A. Mozart for the VOX label. Winner of prestigious piano competitions (Naumburg Piano Competition, Carnegie Hall; Queen Elisabeth of Belgium International Competition), Weiss established his residence in Belgium and has since played numerous recitals and concerts in his native United States, England, continental Europe, South America, and the Middle and Far East. Mr. Weiss is a professor of piano at The Lemmens Institute in Leuven, Belgium, and at the Utrecht Conservatory, Holland.

Annlynn Miller – is widely acclaimed as an extraordinarily dynamic and sensitive concert pianist. Her all-encompassing repertoire of solo and chamber music and her extensive recordings for European radio stations have enabled her to captivate audiences in major cities and capitals throughout the United States and Europe. Annlynn Miller was born in New York City, and pursued her musical studies at The Juilliard School of Music and at Sarah Lawrence College. Among her professors at Juilliard was also Firkušný, who recommended her for further studies to professor Bruno Seidlhofer at the Vienna Academy of Music. Annlynn Miller has produced a remarkable number of prize winners since establishing her piano class in Switzerland.

Anya Laurence – The Canadian pianist, teacher and writer. Private student of Rudolf Firkušný in the 1960's, she completed her studies with a recital at Carnegie Hall in New York. She then studied at the W. Landowska Institute and devoted herself to teaching, playing concerts, and mostly to her publishing activities. She is the author of many award-winning literary works and articles.

Avner Arad – The Israeli pianist received his Master's degree from The Juilliard School of Music in New York City, where he studied with Firkušný and Emanuel Ax. Arad was a participant in the Steans Institute for Young Artists at the Ravinia Festival in 1994 and 1995, and has returned each subsequent summer as a collaborating pianist in the program. He was a recipient of Carnegie Hall's 1998 Distinctive Debuts Award. Avner Arad has performed throughout North America and Europe as soloist, recitalist and chamber musician. He studied Janáček's complete work for piano (including chamber work), with Mr. Firkušný and later recorded an album of the composer's most famous pieces for piano.

Carlo Grante – The Italian pianist graduated in Piano performance with Sergio Perticaroli at the Conservatoire of Rome. He then continued his studies in the USA with Ivan Davis, graduating from the University of Miami, and with Rudolf Firkušný at The Juilliard School of New York. Later he moved to London. Carlo Grante is one of the most active and accomplished recording artists of his generation. His concert activity features a wide array of repertoire that also includes many works of contemporary composers. Carlo Grante has given concerts in numerous important Italian and foreign musical centres. He has appeared as a soloist with many major Italian and international orchestras,



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such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London. Carlo Grante's discography includes more than thirty titles, including works by Platti, Scarlatti, Clementi, Liszt, Busoni, Chopin and Prokofiev.

Donna Lee – The American pianist made her solo debut in 1990 with the National Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed in Asia, Europe and throughout the U.S., with recent performances in Hong Kong, Beijing, China and Puerto Rico. Donna Lee earned her doctorate from the Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University; her Masters from The Juilliard School; and her bachelor of music degree from the University of Maryland, College Park, where she studied with prominent artist-professors Julian Martin, Rudolf Firkušný and Thomas Schumacher, respectively. Donna Lee is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Piano Division at Kent State University. She also co-directs the Piano Institute at Kent State and is a member of the artist-faculty at Kent/Blossom Chamber Music in Ohio and at the Brevard Music Center in North Carolina.

Dora Nováková – Wilmington – pianist of Czech origin, daughter of Czech composer Jan Novák, studied piano playing with Vitaly Margulis at Hochschule für Musik in Freiburg and with Rudolf Firkušný at The Juilliard School in New York. She has performed in the USA, Europe and Japan. She has made recordings for the music publishers Audite and VDE Gallo, as well as for many radio and TV stations. Her pedagogical experience began already at The Juilliard School in New York. Since 1990 Dora Nováková-Wilmington has been teaching at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Munich. Ms. Nováková-Wilmington also regularly teaches master classes in Rovereto, Italy, and Oomuta, Japan.

Douglas Buys – American pianist, received his bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School as a scholarship student of Rudolf Firkušný. His other teachers included John Perry and Lillian Kallir; he was also sponsored to study in France with the Casadesus family and Nadia Boulanger. He has appeared in recitals and with orchestras in the U.S. and Europe, most notably in two-piano repertoire with Firkušný. Recent concerts have taken him to summer festivals in California and Vermont, and he has taught and given master classes and recitals at the Humboldt State University, San Francisco Conservatory, and the University of Idaho. In 1988 Buys received the Presidential Certificate for Excellence in Teaching at a National Press Club ceremony with George Bush.

Eduardus Halim – pianist and teacher, born in Indonesia. Studied at The Juilliard School under guidance of Sascha Gorodnitzki and Rudolf Firkušný. Additionally, he was to become the last private

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student of the legendary piano virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz (himself a friend and admirer of Mr. Firkušný). Winning the Young Concert Artists International Auditions 1989, Eduardus Halim has been hailed as a pianist whose virtuosity is matched only by his distinctive artistry. Eduardus Halim's distinctive approach to the piano is paired with a charismatic personality. Eduardus Halim is currently a „Sasha Gorodnitzky Chair“ professor at the Artist Faculty of New York University.

Richard Cionco – American pianist, first performed as soloist with orchestra at age nine, and has since performed with many international orchestras. In Europe, he has performed concerts with the Czech State Chamber Orchestra and with the North Bohemian Philharmonia as a winner in the Prague Spring International Music Competition. He has delighted audiences in major American concert halls. Mr. Cionco is a graduate of the University of Maryland and The Juilliard School; he has studied with Rudolf Firkušný, Thomas Schumacher, and Audrey Bart Brown. Mr. Cionco was a Teaching Fellow and Assistant to David Dubal at The Juilliard School for four years, and joined the piano faculty at California State University, Sacramento in 1993. He also teaches and performs at the Schlern International Music Festival in northern Italy each summer.

Sara Davis Buechner – is a Canadian pianist of American origin and a student of Rudolf Firkušný. She is the winner of a bouquet of prizes from the world's most prestigious piano competitions. Now residing in Canada, she enjoys a vibrant international performance and recording career. With an active repertoire of over 100 piano concertos, she is sought after as soloist by major international orchestras. Ms. Buechner's numerous recordings have received prominent critical acclaim. Ms. Buechner is currently Associate Professor of Piano at the University of British Columbia. She has presented lectures and master classes worldwide, notably at The Juilliard School in New York, The Royal Academy in London, as well as many others.

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Czech experts

Prof. Alena Štěpánková-Veselá is strongly connected with the Music faculty of JAMU, where she worked for almost 50 years, since 1952, first as a teaching professor, then as head of the Piano department (1986–1990), and finally as rector of the university (1990–1997). Deeply involved in the local cultural scene, she helped to revive the local Friends of Music group (Spolek přátel hudby), and she holds many posts in cultural fields. She has received many awards, including the Golden Medal of Masaryk University and JAMU, and two awards from the city of Brno (1979 and 2011), among others.

Prof. Jindřiška Bártová is professor and head of the Music and humanistic department at the Music faculty of JAMU. The focal point of her professional interest is the music of the 20th century. In the music environment of Brno she is also well known as a publicist and music critic.

PhDr. Jiří Šafařík is connected with the city of Kroměříž, where he has been working at P. J. Vejvanovský Conservatory for forty years as a teaching professor of Music History. The core of his professional interest lies mainly with the music of the Renaissance and the Baroque. He is also known for his numerous musical activities – he founded the choir of Moravian madrigalists and acted for almost thirty years as its choirmaster and artistic director. He is the author of so far the only monograph about Rudolf Firkušný, published in the Czech Republic (MU Brno, 1994).

Michal Mašek, since his childhood, belongs among the biggest talents of piano playing. At 16 he recorded Bach's Goldberg variations as the first Czech to do so. He won many international competitions, and was awarded with the „Talent of the year” prize for his recording of Bach's concerto with Jiří Bělohlávek and the Prague Philharmonia. He collaborated on concerts and studio works with legendary violinist Josef Suk for many years; his recordings of Beethoven's „Emperor” concerto and a Martinů recital were internationally recognized. After health reasons prevented him from performing concerts publicly, he devoted himself to merchandising, marketing and PR activities. Today he successfully combines these talents as a producer while organizing his own original cultural projects.

PhDr. Miloš Štědroň, CSc., is a teaching professor at the Philosophical faculty of Masaryk University in Brno. He devotes himself mainly to research of Janáček's works, is the author of more than 50 expert studies with Janáček as the theme, and alongside this activity he has devoted himself to critical work in Janáček's works releases. A special field of his interest is the reconstruction and

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realisation of Janáček`s unpublished works. Additionally, he is the author of a book called Leoš Janáček and the music of 20th century, (Brno, 1998). He is also known and respected as composer of classical music.

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