

NADAČNÍ FOND SVATOVÍTSKÉ VARHANY  
Hradčanské náměstí 56/16  
119 02 Praha 1  
IČO: 027 94 471

## **Work on the St. Vitus Cathedral organ begins today**

A national collection will help with the funding

Prague, 24.4.2017

**With the signing of a contract between Cardinal Dominik Duka and the organ construction firm Gerhard Grenzing, the work on the organ for St. Vitus Cathedral begins. This iconic basilica lacks the great organ which had originally been planned for the western choir loft and for almost ninety years the interior has been filled by the sound of a provisional instrument. The new organ will require an investment of 80 million Czech crowns to be funded, in part, by a nationwide collection organized by the Endowment Fund for the St. Vitus Cathedral organ. The instrument will be heard for the first time in October 2019.**

The contract, signed on 24<sup>th</sup> April in St. Vitus Cathedral, is the culmination of long term planning by expert committees that over the years have discussed and rejected a number of variants of the organ. In the open tender announced last year, four premier organ builders submitted bids in line with the carefully defined criteria. All of the organ construction firms fulfilled the criteria of the contractor and presented their individual concepts of the organ. After careful consideration of the classical and contemporary variants offered, the current version presented by the firm Gerhard Grenzing S.A. was chosen.

“The winning company from Barcelona, Gerhard Grenzing, has made over 130 organs, including organs for the cathedrals of Brussels and Madrid. In addition to these references, the firm provided a proposal of high technical and artistic quality”, said Štěpán Svoboda, organ expert and member of the evaluation committee.

The organ will be a symphonic instrument with 97 registers and inspired by French influences which, by its representative character, will be appropriate for the space of the cathedral; it will allow for the performance of classical as well as contemporary organ compositions. The instrument replaces the small Mölzer organ, which was considered as a provisional instrument for the cathedral following its completion in 1929. A lack of finance and/or will over the following decades, prevented a suitable instrument from being realised and the western organ loft, which had been reserved for a grand organ from the start, has remained empty to this day.

“It is up to us to fulfil the legacy of our ancestors, primarily the ‘father of the nation’, Charles IV, in this time of peace and freedom and thus to symbolically complete the cathedral,” says the initiator of the project Cardinal Dominik Duka. The blessing of the completed instrument is scheduled for October 2019.

The instrument itself will require an investment of 69.1 million Czech crowns which will involve the construction of the instrument and its placement in the western choir loft. Additional costs will be incurred for ensuring the architectural stability of the loft and for electrical installation and other adjustments. At this time, the fund has already been supported by tens of individuals, institutions and firms. The Endowment Fund for the St. Vitus Cathedral organ has already raised one third of the required sum. The Prague Archdiocese symbolically contributed the first million Czech crowns. Other resources for the realization of this unique organ come from the public fund raising programme for the St. Vitus Cathedral organ, conducted under the auspices of the Endowment Fund of the St. Vitus Cathedral organ.

‘Going down the path of national fund raising is symbolic given the deep tradition of collective endeavour in Czech history. A public collection not only built the National Theatre but was also the main source of funding for the St. Vitus Cathedral in the nineteenth century. As a consequence, the cathedral belonged to everyone and its symbol far exceeded and still exceeds the bounds of its function as a church. The cathedral is a symbol of spiritual heritage, culture and history,’ Cardinal Dominik Duka explains as the reasons for the public collection.

The construction of the organ is aided by the various institutions which make up the Association of St. Vitus Cathedral, whose main task is to publicise the project. Each institution contributes according to its individual ability and means. ‘We founded the Association to create a continuity with the Society for the Completion of the Basilica of St. Vitus, established by Cardinal Schwarzenberg in the middle of the nineteenth century, which resulted in the construction of and the raising of funds for the new part of the cathedral,’ says Pavel Smutný, president of the Bohemian Heritage Fund and the initiator of the Association of St. Vitus Cathedral. The National Technical Museum will introduce the organ as part of its exhibition programme this year and the Bohemian Heritage Fund plans to auction works by contemporary Czech artists. A number of benefit concerts also await us: on the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the eve of the national holiday to celebrate the proclamation of Czechoslovakia, the first of these concerts will take place in St. Vitus Cathedral. The concert, co-organized with the Festival Dvorak’s Prague (Festival Dvořákova Praha) will be broadcast live by Czech Television (CT2 from 8.00 pm) and the audience will have the opportunity to contribute to the collection for the organ on the spot or on-line from their homes. The Czech Philharmonic Orchestra will host a benefit concert on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2017 in the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum in which the organist Pavel Svoboda, winner of several international organ competitions, will take part. The National Theatre will host an organ concert in its historic building in May 2018 and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra will perform in a benefit concert hosted by the National Monuments Institute to be held in one of the objects managed by it. Other institutions in the Association of St. Vitus Cathedral will propagate the organ project in their particular circles. Thus the Chamber of Commerce of the Czech Republic, will publish an open letter to its members encouraging their support for the project, the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic has called for a contribution of one Czech crown for every resident in their municipality and Charles University is organizing a collection within its own ranks to fund one of the large pipes for the organ.

*Contributions to the organ can be made by sending donations to the account of the Endowment Fund of the St. Vitus Cathedral organ, bank account number 2109930876/2700.*



*Media Contact:*

*AMI Communications, Šimon Slavík, [simon.slavik@amic.cz](mailto:simon.slavik@amic.cz) +420 724 464 953*