



Introductory word from the Minister of Foreign Affairs



Jan Lipavský

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Dear guests of the gala concert to open the Year of Czech Music in New York,

Heartfelt greetings from Czechia, where together with you we are entering the Year of Czech Music 2024. In many places in the Czechia and all over the world, events will be held reminding us of the richness of our cultural history.

In our interconnected world, where global challenges require collaborative solutions, cultural diplomacy emerges as a formidable tool. Music, arts, and culture serve as potent ambassadors, fostering a shared understanding that transcends linguistic and political barriers. That is why the Czech Government has designed 2024 as the Year of Czech Music. On the occasion of the 200th birth anniversary of Bedřich Smetana a number of events are planned both in Czechia and abroad. The gala concert "Tenor Petr Nekoranec In Recital", organized by the Czech Center in New York in cooperation with the Czech Consulate General in New York, and the Dvořák American Heritage Association, is the opening event of this magnificent project.

It is no coincidence that we are organizing this opening here in the United States of America and right here in New York. The Metropolitan Opera is closely associated with several great Czech names, such as Eva Urbanová, Dagmar Pecková or Renée Fleming – partly of Czech origin – and others. I trust I do not need to remind you how closely Antonín Dvořák was connected to New York. Moreover, it was on this very soil, during the summer of 1942 former minister Jan Masaryk, recorded the 'Songs of Lidice' alongside the illustrious Czech soprano Jarmila Novotná. A year later, Bohuslav Martinů, composing in the United States, crafted his 'Memorial to Lidice,' a touching tribute to the tragic events.

The commemoration in December, marking the 130th anniversary of the inaugural performance of Dvořák's New World Symphony in New York, along with a distinctive recent concert featuring the works of Josef Mysliveček by students from the Mannes School of Music at the Bohemian National Hall, has ignited a renewed surge of interest in Czech music.

For this year, we are preparing a number of other concerts all over the United States, in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, but also, at the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I extend a warm invitation to you for these cultural events, as I firmly believe that music unite us and fill us with optimism and faith in a world of peace, prosperity, and democracy. I believe that music – this universal language – stands to enrich our shared world cultural heritage, fostering our mutual understanding and partnership. And I hope that through music, we will contribute to composing the real new world symphony of free people.

I wish you a pleasant musical experience listening to Czech music throughout 2024 and all the best for 2024, lots of health, happiness, and personal achievements.