

## PRESS RELEASE

### **The “Pianos for Schools” project was successfully completed: The fundraising campaign raised 10 million CZK right before the end of 2021**

57 Czech schools are enjoying a new upright or grand piano.

**Prague, 28 December 2021 – Having been launched on November 24, 2020, by the Karel Komárek Family Foundation (KKFF), the collection has successfully achieved its goal: to obtain CZK 9,855,000 for all of the schools selected. The “Pianos for Schools” public collection followed last year’s decision by Karel and Štěpánka Komárek to purchase 11 pianos that a Chinese customer refused to purchase from Czech manufacturer Petrof. Thanks to the KKFF’s project, 57 elementary arts schools (ZUŠ), secondary schools, and primary schools (ZŠ) received 54 upright pianos and 3 grand pianos (1 Pasat and 2 Breeze). The schools were selected on the basis of predetermined criteria.**

*“We are delighted by how donors, both large and small, took to the project. It is amazing that we have managed to raise the entire amount, even in a year as difficult as the one that is just drawing to a close: 2021. The ‘Pianos’ reflect our values and fulfil the principles that have long governed our philanthropy. Our goal was to ignite people’s interest in an issue, which they could then actively address as well. That is exactly what we have done here. For both me and my wife, the ‘Pianos’ project has also been personally enriching – it brought many interesting people our way, whom we respect deeply,”* said one of the KKFF’s founders, entrepreneur Karel Komárek. *“Our thanks go to everyone who supported the ‘Pianos for Schools’ project during these past 16 months, whether with a small donation or a larger one, as well as to volunteers, associates, and media partners,”* adds the KKFF’s co-founder, Štěpánka Komárková.

A total of 152 schools applied for pianos when the grant call was announced (in September 2020). From that number, an expert committee then selected the 56 most suitable ones (based on predetermined criteria). One additional upright piano was a special gift from Štěpánka Komárková to the Allegro Elementary Arts School (see <https://youtu.be/4FLEQzZbtm4>). Committee members took into account factors such as the overall budget of each school, the cultural background and availability of music education, the average age of their instruments in years, and the number of students. *“We said right at the outset that the instruments should go to places where, in addition to the criteria mentioned, students can boast success in musical competitions. The expert committee also took into account the school’s local area and its social capital. We tried to give priority to regions in need,”* explained Luboš Veselý, Director of the Karel Komárek Family Foundation.

According to Luboš Veselý, a total of 1,255 small and large donors from the Czech Republic, the UK, and the USA contributed to the "Piano for Schools" collection. He says that community support of specific primary schools also had a huge impact. In Polička, for example, half the price of a piano was raised among parents and local residents, while the other half was paid for by a larger donor, the Cleverlance corporation. Another company, AUTOCONT, then contributed to a new piano for the Staňkov Elementary Arts School. *"Often people donate money to a school in the town where they grew up, to a school they attended, or which their children attend today,"* added Veselý. According to him, a major deed was the donation of five upright pianos directly from the piano manufacturer Petrof that helped launch the collection. A donation from the MND company then symbolically closed the collection. The public collection was also supported at the midpoint by the "A Grand Idea For Children" campaign and a charity concert, which took place as part of the Karlovy Vary Film Festival in the summer of 2021 (see [https://youtu.be/zWkJbhl\\_za0](https://youtu.be/zWkJbhl_za0)).

The project also revealed the poor condition of pianos in elementary arts schools. The average age of a piano in the schools identified by the Foundation is 49 years. *"Large cultural institutions change their grand pianos after five to seven years. For the needs of teaching in schools, it is advisable to replace pianos after ten or a maximum of 15 years, provided of course that they are regularly maintained,"* said Jan Simon, expert guarantor of the committee and intendant of the Academy of Classical Music.

New instruments went to schools across the Czech Republic. At the Jablonné nad Orlicí Elementary Arts School, for example, children still played a piano that is more than 100 years old (see the full story here: <https://youtu.be/p2YvcVHPaHg>). At the Milevsko Elementary Arts School, where young musical talents are educated by Margita Vanická, who is visually impaired. At this school, the oldest piano dates back to 1946 (see the full story here: <https://youtu.be/kroO1yFkI-c>). Thanks to the Pianos for Schools project, both these schools can now enjoy a new Petrof upright piano. *"The school does not have the money for such a high-quality musical instrument. The new upright piano is a great contribution, because we hold many events here, public events (not only internal school events) and children often put on performances for their classmates, strangers, parents, and grandparents. A beautiful new instrument with a soul really comes in handy here,"* says Jana Švédová from the Žižkova Elementary Arts School in Krnov. The KKFF has sent a total of 57 Petrof pianos to schools, worth more than 15 million CZK in total.

More information, including stories directly from schools, is available on the Facebook and Instagram pages of the "Pianos for Schools" project. The KKFF's YouTube channel also features videos from schools and clips from the August Concert for Grand Pianos (see <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGq5-psVIipThN3usK2FqfMjWldQ6VTIt>).

### **About the KKFF**

The KKFF was jointly founded by Karel Komárek and his wife, Štěpánka Komárková. The Foundation's long-term focus is to support Czech cultural heritage – its main project in this area is the Dvořák Prague International Music Festival. In addition to music, the Komárks are also interested in the development of Czech public space, the environment, and education. All these topics are the focus of the Karel Komárek Proměny Foundation. The KKFF supports the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, as well as talented individuals and active civic communities in the Czech Republic. Having concluded their chairmanship of the Kennedy Center International Committee on the Arts (KCICA), the Komárks became members of the Kennedy Center President's Council. Last spring, the KKFF got involved in helping the fight against the pandemic. At short notice, it provided over twenty million crowns to two hundred and forty organisations providing care to senior citizens. The KKFF, in cooperation with Sazka, is also helping in the region that was struck by a tornado in June. Together, they have contributed 150 million CZK to the rebuilding efforts, the largest private donation given for that purpose.

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## **Appendix:**

The “Pianos For Schools” Project supported the following schools:

- Václav Pichl Elementary Arts School in Bechyně
- Jablonec nad Jizerou Primary School, Kindergarten, and Elementary Arts School
- Litoměřice Primary school
- Bedřich Smetana Elementary Arts School in Karviná
- Elementary Arts School in Brno, Veverří
- Český Krumlov Elementary Arts School
- Jablonné nad Orlicí Elementary Arts School
- PAMFILIA Elementary Arts School
- Šumperk Elementary Arts School
- Uničov Elementary Arts School
- Vysoké Mýto Elementary Arts School
- Allegro Elementary Arts School
- Robert Schumann Elementary Arts School in Aš
- Králíky Elementary Arts School
- Natanael Private Elementary Arts School
- Litovel Elementary Arts School
- Chotěboř Elementary Arts School
- Vítězslavy Kaprálové Elementary Arts School in Brno
- Jablonec nad Nisou Elementary Arts School
- Vejprty Elementary Arts School
- Nový Bor Elementary Arts School
- Milevsko Elementary Arts School
- Zruč nad Sázavou Elementary Arts School
- Zábřeh Elementary Arts School
- Přelouč Elementary Arts School
- Staňkov Elementary Arts School
- CAMPANELLA Elementary Arts School in Olomouc
- Jan Hanuš Elementary Arts School in Prague 6
- František Stupka Elementary Arts School in Sušice
- Hranice Elementary Arts School
- Hulín Elementary Arts School
- František Drdla Elementary Arts School in Žďár nad Sázavou
- Jaroslav Kvapil Elementary Arts School in Brno
- Bohuslav Martinů Elementary Arts School in Polička
- Iša Krejčí Elementary Arts School in Olomouc
- Jihlava Elementary Arts School
- Ořechov Elementary Arts School
- Střelice Elementary Arts School
- Pavel Křížkovský Elementary Arts School
- R.A. Dvorský Elementary Arts School in Dvůr Králové nad Labem
- Kutná Hora Elementary Arts School
- Dobřichovice Elementary Arts School

- Ilya Hurník Elementary Arts School
- Mladá Boleslav Elementary Arts School
- Bedřich Smetana Elementary Arts School in Nové Město nad Metují
- Chválenická Elementary Arts School in Pilsen
- Bohuslav Martinů Elementary Arts School in Havířov
- Teplice Elementary Arts School
- Bojkovice Elementary Arts School
- Krnov Elementary Arts School
- Otrokovice Elementary Arts School
- Episcopal Grammar School in Brno
- "Žerotín" Elementary Arts School in Olomouc
- Děčín 4 Elementary Arts School
- Elementary Arts School Třebíč
- Jan Opletal Secondary School in Litovel
- Krnov Primary School