

PRESS RELEASE

The Pianos to Schools project continues: The first pianos are on their way to their designated schools and a nationwide collection is underway. Its aim is to provide schools with more musical instruments.

Prague, 24. 11. 2020 – **Today, the list of primary art schools (see Appendix no. 1) which are to receive pianos from the rejected “Chinese” shipment was published by the Karel Komárek Family Foundation (KKFF; the Foundation). The project, which was announced in September, has acquired a new dimension over the last two months, as it uncovered the alarming age of pianos at primary art schools. The average age of pianos at schools selected by the Foundation is 49 years – and instruments should ideally be replaced after ten or, at most, fifteen years.**

“We have been highlighting this situation for some time now. It’s not unusual for the parents of a talented child to themselves invest in a high-quality piano to have at home. Nevertheless, if he or she is to develop, a child requires tuition at school, which often takes place on an out-of-date instrument, causing pupils unnecessary problems,” says Zuzana Ceralová Petrofová, agent and director of PETROF, the biggest piano manufacturer in the Czech Republic. *“What the Komárks are doing for the development of talented young Czech musicians is amazing, and we’re really grateful for it,”* added Ceralová Petrofová.

“We received 152 applications and in every one, you could feel the sincere effort of school teachers and directors to do the best thing for their pupils. We are delighted with the number of people who truly live and breathe music, love it and try to get the youngest

generation involved in it. We thank every school that applied for a piano. This massive level of interest led us to the decision to continue the project. Today, our Foundation is launching a public collection to buy pianos for a further forty-five schools recommended by the expert committee," said KKFF co-founder Štěpánka Komárková.

The expert committee, which is composed primarily of representatives of primary art schools (for the full list of members, see Appendix no. 3) assessed all applications and gradually selected schools to receive one of the eleven pianos (1x PETROF Pasat, 2x PETROF Breeze, 1x P118 M1 upright piano, 5x P125 M1 upright piano and 2x P131 M1 upright piano). The committee assessed individual applications based on precise criteria, which included school budgets, the number of students, cultural backgrounds and accessibility of musical education, tuition fee amounts and achievements of students in music competitions, as well as the average age of instruments and number of pianos in the school.

The average age of pianos at 56 schools is currently 49 years. The school with the most modern equipment has instruments with an average age of 17 years and the school with the oldest equipment has pianos with an average age of 79.1 years. *"Major cultural institutions change their grand pianos after 5-7 years. For the needs of tuition, it is advisable for schools to acquire new pianos after 10, or at most 15, years – assuming they are regularly maintained,"* says Jan Simon, expert guarantor of the committee and artistic director of the Academy of Classical Music. The project is also important because it at least partially exposed the economic situation in primary and general music education and helped to

provide a description of the instruments available to specific schools. These findings will be used in the future by the Council for Primary Art Schools in the Czech Republic in its discussions with school funding bodies and the Czech Ministry of Education.

As part of the broader selection process, the committee recommended including 45 schools (attended by a total of 7,000 children) on the list for the public collection (see Appendix no. 2). *"The announcement of a public collection for pianos for schools is a logical step in the development of the KKFF's strategy, which also seeks to support talented young people. Pianos to Schools is a continuation of all of our previous activities in classical music and our support for the national cultural legacy, of which music is a very significant part. We believe that in these difficult times, the new pianos in schools will motivate and delight both pupils and teachers,"* says KKFF director Luboš Veselý.

The general partner and first benefactor of the collection is PETROF. The largest producer of pianos in the Czech Republic will donate five pianos for another five schools. This means that a total of sixteen primary art schools should receive pianos in the new year.

The KKFF has carefully prepared a public collection, which will accept donations in both Czech crowns and other currencies. Donors can choose to support the project as a whole or contribute to a specific school – this is an opportunity for both parents and specific communities. All funds collected will be spent on pianos. Other costs, e.g. administration, will be met by the KKFF. You can donate to the collection at www.pianadoskol.cz, and information is also available on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). The goal of the collection is to collect 9,885,000 CZK.

The KKFF was jointly founded by Karel Komárek and his wife, Štěpánka Komárková. The Foundation's long-term focus is the support of Czech cultural heritage – its main project in this area is the Dvořák Prague music festival. Through the Karel Komárek Proměny Foundation, the Komárks have consistently supported projects that help the Czech public sphere, the environment and improvements in education. In addition to this, the KKFF supports the Kennedy Center in Washington, as well as musically talented individuals and groups. This spring, the KKFF made a rapid, significant contribution to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic when it provided over 20 million crowns to 240 organisations providing care to senior citizens at short notice.

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