



PRAGUE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Today's **Prague Symphony Orchestra** was founded in the autumn of 1934 by the conductor and musical organizer Rudolf Pekárek. He defined the new ensemble's fields of activity with the words Film-Opera-Konzert, which as the abbreviation FOK became part of the orchestra's title. By recording music for the majority of Czech films in the 1930s and performing regularly in live broadcasts of Czechoslovak Radio the FOK Orchestra made a name for itself and its economic existence was assured. This allowed gradual development of concert activities, whose main promoter from the very beginning was Dr. Václav Smetáček.

Within a very short time Dr. Smetáček managed to build the orchestra into a large symphonic ensemble fully capable of standing up to strong domestic competition. In 1942 he became the orchestra's chief conductor, and he stood at its head for a full thirty years. During the period of his leadership the orchestra achieved a high performance standard and international renown.

After many years of efforts by the orchestra's leadership starting in 1945, the City of Prague followed the model of other European cities and in 1952 established its own professional concert ensemble to represent the city. The traditional acronym "FOK" was retained, and the new title of the orchestra became Symphony Orchestra of the Capital City of Prague - FOK. In 1957 the orchestra departed on its first foreign tours - to Poland, Italy, Austria, and Germany - and thus inaugurated its regular and intensive engagement on the international scene.

After Smetáček's departure from the post of chief conductor, artistic leadership was taken over in succession by Ladislav Slovák (1972 - 1976), Jindřich Rohan (1976 - 1977), and then Jiří Bělohlávek (1977 - 1989), whose work marked an important stage from the standpoint of the ensemble's intensive artistic development. After Bělohlávek came Petr Altrichter (1990 - 1992), Martin Turnovský (1992 - 1995), and Gaetano Delogu (1995 - 1998).

Other important Czech conductors who have worked with the orchestra over a long period have included especially Václav Neumann, Zdeněk Košler, and Vladimír Válek. From March 2001 to the end of the 2005/2006 concert season, Chief Conductor and Music Director of the Prague Symphony Orchestra was Serge Baudo.

From the 2006/2007 concert season on, Jiří Kout has been holding the position of Chief Conductor of the Orchestra. Serge Baudo is the Honor Conductor.

Over the course of the orchestra's history many important conductors of the world have appeared with it as guests, as well as a remarkable range of soloists. The orchestra has performed in most countries of Europe, repeatedly in Japan and the USA, and has also visited South America, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Korea, Turkey, Israel, and other countries.

Another testimony to the orchestra's work is its extensive catalogue of phonograph, radio, and television recordings including both Czech and worldwide repertoire. Most of the commercial recordings have been made for the Supraphon label, but the orchestra's name also appears on recordings for BMG, Conifer, Philips, Erato, Universal, Harmonia Mundi (Praga), Victor, Koch International, Panton, Music Vars, and other labels.