

Prague, Brno, October 8, 2014

Unique Big Band Consisting of Members from All Over Europe to Be Led by Czech Musician Jan Jirucha

Top-class musicians from all over Europe will be coming to the Czech Republic to participate in the Euroradio Jazz Orchestra project, initiated by Czech Radio. The twenty-one-piece ensemble will be performing in Czech Radio's studio situated in the building of Czech Radio – Regina in Karlín, Prague, on October 16 and in the Cultural Centre in Hradec Králové within the traditional Jazz Goes to Town festival a day later. The admission to the public recording session in Czech Radio's studio in Prague is free. In Hradec Králové the big band's concert will be preceded by a joint performance of the Karel Růžička Trio and Jiří Stivín, and tickets, which cost CZK 200, can be bought in Hradec Králové's inquiry office and on the spot.

“The best musicians from many countries join the Euroradio Jazz Orchestra project every year. This year the Czech Republic will be represented by two up-and-coming stars, Jan Jirucha, Jr. and Štěpánka Balcarová, who are both dexterous musicians as well as great conductors and composers. Moreover, the trombone section will include a talented Czech player, Štěpán Janoušek,” explains Czech Radio's music editor, Václav Vraný. While Jirucha will be conducting the orchestra, Balcarová will be featured as a trumpet player and composer. Both Jirucha and Balcarová have written special compositions for the big band, inspired by important figures of the twentieth century. They did not draw inspiration only from the music greats of the previous century, so besides pieces based on the work of jazz bassist Charles Mingus the concert will include music referring to the work of the legendary Czech film director, František Vlácil, and of the artist, Jan Zrzavý. “Jan Zrzavý is my favourite painter, which is why I decided to compose music inspired by his paintings for the Euroradio Jazz Orchestra,” says composer and trumpeter, Štěpánka Balcarová. Her colleague, Jan Jirucha, Jr., is going to approach the opportunity to write a musical theme dedicated to an important figure as a memory of the American jazz musician, Charles Mingus. “It was through his work that I gradually worked my way to classical music,” says the band leader. The young musicians in the orchestra are nominated by radio editors from the individual European Broadcasting Union (EBU) member states and apart from their high level of artistry it is also their age that is crucial. The project is focused especially on young musicians of up to thirty years of age.

The audiences can look forward to a unique musical experience that combines the traditional big band sound with elements of classical music. “The first and the last tunes continue the tradition of the big band and the listeners can expect passages based on improvisation. However, the two lyrical compositions in the middle of the show are closer to contemporary classical music,” confirms Balcarová. All around Europe the members of the ensemble have been practising their parts individually since the end of September. Their first common rehearsal will not take place until only three days before the concert. Jan Jirucha, Jr. is already looking forward to rising to the challenge of conducting the big band whose members will see each other just a few days before the performance. “Working under such conditions is a totally new experience for me. I have seen

some videos of the individual musicians and I believe that if all of them have practised their parts conscientiously, I can expect nothing but delightful work," adds the talented conductor, composer and trombone player.

The history of the Euroradio Jazz Orchestra goes back to 1965. This year its management has been taken over by Czech Radio for the first time, in cooperation with Twentyfourseven Promotions, which is an agency known especially for organizing the successful JazzFestBrno festival. For decades this European big band was managed by a Danish organization, Swinging Europe, which, however, had to finish supporting it due to a lack of funds. The endangered project was then saved by Czech Radio, which decided to take charge of the orchestra at least this year in order to keep the long-standing tradition alive. The future of the big band will be decided on at a meeting of EBU's editors that will also be taking place in the Czech Republic this year.

Czech Radio is going to make a recording of the performance, which will then be broadcast by its Vltava station at 9:30 p.m. on October 31. At the same time the concert will be included in the programmes of other EBU radio stations, so it will be heard by almost the whole of Europe.

More about history

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) has been active since 1950 and it is the foremost alliance of public service media (PSM) with 73 Members in 56 countries in Europe and 36 Associate Members in Asia, Africa and the Americas. In 1965 the EBU Bigband was established as part of its affiliated activities and then, in different years, the public media from all over the world nominated new great musicians to play in it. This international orchestra gradually won substantial renown. It was modified in 2005, when a Danish organization called Swinging Europe took responsibility for it. The organization came up with the idea of young musicians and the EBU Big Band was renamed the European Youth Jazz Orchestra. The extraordinary artistic level of the ensemble and one of the best organizational bases for its work further increased the jazz orchestra's quality and prestige. In 2008 the band was renamed the European Jazz Orchestra (EJO) and in the following years it went on remarkable tours of the world. In 2014 the patronage of the orchestra was assumed by Czech Radio in cooperation with a Czech cultural company called Twentyfourseven Promotions, which organizes one of the most important Czech jazz festivals, JazzFest Brno. The orchestra, supported solely by the radio stations that are members of the EBU, was renamed the Euroradio Jazz Orchestra and it is this year that it performs under that name for the first time in history.

Euroradio Jazz Orchestra

16th October, 8 p.m. – Prague, Czech Radio, Studio A, Karlín (admission free)

17th October, 9 p.m. – Hradec Králové, KC Aldis, Malý sál

More information:

www.rozhlas.cz

www.jazzgoestotown.cz

Contact persons:

Václav Vraný

Coordinator on behalf of Czech Radio

E: vaclav.vrany@rozhlas.cz

T: +420 731 323 942

Vilém Spilka

Artistic Director of the cooperating production agency

E: spilka@24-7.pm

T: +420 608 727 394

Jiri Hosna

Czech Radio's spokesperson

tel.: +420 725 793 397

jiri.hosna@rozhlas.cz