

On the art of János Balázs

"If you have heard János Balázs perform, you must have experienced a compelling and completely unique concert. He renders a 21st-century interpretation of classical music with spell-binding and superior technic and has a singular knack for capturing the audience. By doing so, he blurs the distance between the performer and his listener. His thematically unparalleled concerts and programme repertoire reach out to crowds - also the younger generations-, which he undertakes solely for the popularisation of classical music."

He is keen to demonstrate his improvisation skills in various areas beyond the classical stage, such as jazz, world music, or folk music, which is always imbued with classical music's values and the 20th-century tradition of improvisation.

Music critiques highlight the delicacy and diverse colours of his piano playing, his unlimited dynamic scale and his fascinating virtuosity. Attending János Balázs' concerts is a genuine time travel, as he evokes with full force the intimate ambience of the composers and pianists of the so-called 19th century golden age, like Franz Liszt or Frédéric Chopin.



He is a returning artist of the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moscow, the Cologne Philharmonic, the Liszt Academy and MüPa in Budapest. He has given celebrated concerts on the stages of the Cité de la Musique, Palau de Musica, Barbican Centre, Wiener Konzerthaus and the Royal Conservatory. In the following season, he is going to collaborate with such famed orchestras and conductors as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Peter Eötvös and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Iván Fischer and the Royal Concertgebouworkest, Mikko Franck and the Auditorium de la Maison de la Radio France.

János Balázs is a born soloist who also received the ECHO (European Concert Hall Organisation) Rising Star "Artist of the Season" Award. He is well able to hold the attention of the audience by himself. Nonetheless, chamber music also plays a central role in his art, where he can delight his listeners with glamorous, sparkling and out-of-the-box performances alongside friends of a similar mindset and orientation, such as Mischa Maisky, Vadim Repin, Jose Cura, or Boris Berezovsky.

As a graduate of the Budapest-based Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, János Balázs finds it crucial to pass on Liszt's tradition to future musicians. Some major universities of the world have taken notice of this mission of his, and he has been invited by the Canadian McGill University, the Shenyang Conservatory of Music, the Hanoi Conservatory of Music to give masterclasses. He was also appointed associate professor of the Liszt Academy.

In 2016, János Balázs founded the György Cziffra Festival, which he dedicated to the conservation and care of the intellectual and musical legacy of his role model, György Cziffra. In the past five years, the festival has risen to one of the most high-ranking classical music festivals in Hungary; with its diversity of genres and the kind participation of international guest artists, it is an unmatched colour on the palette of the Hungarian culture scene.

2021, the 100th birthday of György Cziffra was declared an official memorial year by the Hungarian Government, with János Balázs as its artistic director. In collaboration with Unesco, within the framework of the memorial year 2021/2022, over a hundred events will take place in the most auspicious concert halls of 36 cities of 15 Asian, American and European countries with a hundred performers.

János Balázs is an awardee of nearly all professional and state accolades. He is so far the youngest recipient of the prestigious Kossuth Prize, and as such, he is in the same league as musicians like György Ligeti, György Kurtág, András Schiff or Iván Fischer. His Young Steinway Artist title and the accolade of the State of Poland stand out from his international awards, the latter being conferred upon him for the performance of Frédéric Chopin's complete works.

Teaching and education activity

“With my teaching activity, I have always pursued the ultimate goal that students find themselves and their own individual tone in music. I never convey the necessary techniques, methods and traditions mechanically but with emotional force, enthusiasm and encouragement.”

(János Balázs)

Teaching activity

2019- : Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music – classical piano as main subject.

Academic degree, university position: associate professor

2014-2018: Snétberger Centre, classical piano as main subject

Masterclasses

János Balázs graduated from the Liszt Academy, Budapest founded by Franz Liszt. which has been a great incentive for him to represent and pass on to younger generations the over 150-year-long tradition going back to Franz Liszt, himself. The worldclass genealogy of the Hungarian piano school ranges from its founding father, István Thomán to Ernő Dohnányi, György Cziffra, Annie Fischer, Zoltán Kocsis and Kálmán Dráfi to János Balázs, in other words, the youngest generation of piano professors.

An artistic mindset fosters an experience-based performance practice that focuses on the freedom of music, the centrality of emotions and spontaneity. János Balázs' online or face to face masterclasses are personally tailored without any repertoire-related restrictions.

Last invitations (masterclasses):

McGill University - Canada

Shenyang Conservatory of Music – China

Hanoi Conservatory of Music – Vietnam

Talent development

National Talent Program – jury member, mentor

Stipendium Peregrinum Scholarship Programme – jury member

Junior Prima Award – jury member

Felczak Foundation – jury member

Virtuózok ('Virtuosi') TV talent show – jury member

Jury membership at competitions

International Liszt Competition, Budapest (Hungary)

György Cziffra International Music Competition, Senlis (France)

Bogota Piano Competition, Bogota (Columbia)

Magic Music Four Hands Piano Competition, Eger (Hungary)

'Get to know the piano' concerts

At these spectacular concerts, children can learn about music historical curiosities and the history of the piano while listening to a choice selection of compositions. The interactive experience-based 50-minute performance brings children closer to the mysteries of classical music through the most splendid works of world-famous composers and related magical stories.

Curriculum Vitae
János Balázs, pianist

Born: 19 September 1988, Budapest, Hungary

Education and tutors

1996-1998: Pál Járdányi Music School – Erika Becht
2002-2006: Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest – School for Exceptional Young Talents – Gyöngyi Keveházi – István Gulyás
2006-2016: Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, BA-MA – Kálmán Dráfi

Academic position: associate professor

Awards

Young Steinway Artist (2019)
Kossuth Prize (2019)
Meritous Artist (2018)
Hungarian Academy of Arts – Musicians’ Prize (2017)
Prima Award (2016)
Ferenc Liszt Prize (2015)
Gramofon Prize (2015)
Rising Star “Artist of the Season” Award (2013)
Junior Prima Award (2011)
Award of the State of Poland (2011)

International competition - 1st place

György Cziffra International Piano Competition - Austria
György Cziffra International Piano Competition - France
Aspen Concerto Competition - USA
International Nishinohon Music Competition -Japan
Pécs International Ferenc Liszt Piano Competition - Hungary
National Piano Concerto, Nyíregyháza - Hungary

Further professional and social activities

Board member of the Hungarian Academy of Arts
Honorary Member of the Pécs Liszt Society
Honorary Member of the Hungarian Wine Academy

Teaching activity:

2019- : Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music – classical piano as main subject

2014-2018: Snétberger Centre – classical piano as main subject

Masterclasses

McGill University - Canada

Shenyang Conservatory of Music – China

Hanoi Conservatory of Music – Vietnam

Talent development

National Talent Program – jury member, mentor

Stipendium Peregrinum Scholarship Programme – jury member

Junior Prima Award – jury member

Felczak Foundation – jury member

Virtuózok ('Virtuosi') TV talent show – jury member

Jury membership at competitions

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György Cziffra International Music Competition, Senlis (France)

Bogota Piano Competition, Bogota (Columbia)

Magic Music Four Hands Piano Competition, Eger (Hungary)

Cooperation with renowned artists, orchestras and conductors, among others

Mischa Maisky, Tamás Vásáry, José Cura, Vadim Repin, István Várdai, Charles-Olivieri Munroe, Pinchas Steinberg, Stéphane Denève, Jukka Lisakkila, Ksenia Zharko, Roger Bausier, David Mathues, or Gwendolyn Masin

The Brussels Philharmonic, the Dortmund Philharmonic, the Aspen Philharmonic, the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra, the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, the Danubia Orchestra Óbuda, Moscow Women Symphony Orchestra, the Dohnányi Orchestra Budafok, the Hungarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

Auspicious venues

Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Cité de la Musique (Paris), Palau de Musica (Barcelona), Barbican Centre (London), Wiener Konzerthaus (Vienna) Cologne Philharmonie (Cologne), Teatro Colón (Bogota), Bozar (Brussels), Tchaikovsky Conservatory (Moscow), the Royal Conservatory (Toronto), Saint Frambourg chapel in Senlis