

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. He collaborated with such famed orchestras and conductors as Charles Dutoit, Gábor Takács-Nagy, Peter Eötvös, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Iván Fischer, the Royal Concertgebouworkest, Mikko Franck and the Orchestre Philharmonique de 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, or Jose Cura.

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, the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, and the Accademia Internazionale per l'alta formazione Rome, 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. 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 the legendary Hungarian pianist 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 150 events took place in the most auspicious concert halls of 45 cities of 17 Asian and European countries with more than a hundred performers, such as Martha Argerich, Mischa Maisky, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Arcadi Volodos, and Vadim Repin

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. Since 2023 he has been member of the Hungarian Academy of Arts. In 2022, his album ImprovisArt won the first prize and the audience prize of the Music International Grand Prix in New York, and he was jury member of the Long-Thibaud Competition.

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):

Royal Conservatory – Brussels

Accademia per l'alta formazione nella Musica – Rome

Academy of Music – Zagreb

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

Long-Thibaud Competition, Paris (France)

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.

János Balázs - Biography



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

Member of the Hungarian Academy of Arts (2023)

Kossuth Prize (2019)

Young Steinway Artist (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

Music International Grand Prix in New York (2022), first prize for ImprovisArt CD

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
Member of the Kossuth and Széchenyi Award committee
Member of the board of trustees of the Junior Prima Award

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
Royal Conservatory – Brussels
Accademia per l'alta formazione nella Musica – Rome
Academy of Music – Zagreb

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

Long-Thibaud Competition, Paris (France)
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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, Gwendolyn Masin, Mikko Franck
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, the Orchestre de la
Suisse Romande, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France

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 (Senlis), Victoria
Hall (Geneva), Maison de la Radio (France)