

# ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI

PIANIST

“Dazzling technique that can rank with the best piano virtuosi.”

– *South Florida Classical Review*



**Zoltán Fejérvári**  
**Pianist**  
**2024-2025 Biography**

Zoltán Fejérvári has emerged as one of the most intriguing and exciting pianists among the new generation of Hungarian musicians. Winner of the 2017 Concours Musical International de Montréal and recipient of the prestigious Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship in 2016, Zoltán Fejérvári has appeared in recitals throughout the Americas and Europe, at prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall, Canada's Place des Arts, Gasteig in Munich, Lingotto in Turin, Palau de Música in Valencia, Biblioteca Nacional de Buenos Aires, and Liszt Academy in Budapest. He has performed as soloist with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Hungarian National Orchestra, Verbier Chamber Orchestra, and Concerto Budapest, and collaborated with such conductors as Iván Fischer, Markus Stenz, Gábor Tákács-Nagy, Ken-Ichiro Kobayashi, and Zoltán Kocsis. Fejérvári's solo recording debut, *Janáček*, released in January 2019, earned rave reviews as "the most sensitive and deeply probative recording" of that composer's work (*Gramophone*). His latest recording, *Schumann*, was released for the Atma Classique label in May 2020 and was again praised by *Gramophone*: "Fejérvári is a deeply communicative artist who combines an imperturbable yet magisterial command of his instrument with impeccable musicality. Those who have yet to hear him are in for a rare treat."

Fejérvári's 2024-2025 season includes Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra and a solo recital of Dvořák, Janáček, Schumann, and Brahms at the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. In Europe, he performs at the prestigious Klavier-Festival Ruhr and returns to Wigmore Hall. Highlights of the 2023-2024 season included Strauss's *Burleske* with Naples Philharmonic, a return to La Jolla Music Society, and performances with Concerto Budapest, the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, Hungary.

Fejérvári's notable orchestral collaborations include appearances with the Budapest Festival Orchestra; Chamber Orchestra of Europe; San Antonio Symphony with Kensho Watanabe; Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra with Matthias Bamert; Concerto Budapest Orchestra with András Keller; Hungarian Symphony Orchestra Miskolc with Mátyás Antal; Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra; and Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra as well as performances at the Liszt Academy, Warsaw Philharmonic, and KKL Lucerne.

Past seasons' recital highlights have included Classical Spree, the festival of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra; contemporary and Baroque concerti at Lucerne Festival at the request of

Sir András Schiff, a longtime mentor to Fejérvári; Gilmore Keyboard Festival Rising Stars series; and Vancouver Recital Society in British Columbia. Schiff chose Fejérvári to participate in *Building Bridges*,” a series established to highlight young pianists of unusual promise. Under this aegis Fejérvári previously gave recitals in Berlin, Bochum, Brussels, Zurich, and Ittingen, among other cities.

Fejérvári has performed chamber music with the Elias Quartet presented by the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, with Joshua Bell and Nicolas Alsteadt presented by the Liszt Academy, and with violinist Diana Tishchenko in Aix-en-Provence and La Chaux-de-Fonds. Fejérvári has also collaborated with the Keller and Kodály Quartets; violinists Joseph Lin and András Keller; cellists Gary Hoffman, Christoph Richter, Ivan Monighetti, Frans Helmerson, and Steven Isserlis; and horn player Radovan Vlatković. Fejérvári has appeared at Kronberg’s *Chamber Music Connects the World* program; Prussia Cove’s *Open Chamber Music*; Lisztomania at Châteauroux, France; the Tiszadob Piano Festival in Hungary; Encuentro de Música in Santander, Spain; and the Brooklyn Chamber Music Festival. At the invitation of artistic director Mitsuko Uchida, he participated twice in the Marlboro Music Festival. Fejérvári also toured throughout the United States with Musicians from Marlboro in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 seasons.

Zoltán Fejérvári’s solo recording debut, *Janáček*, was released on the Piano Classics label in 2019. It features performances of *On an Overgrown Path*, *In the Mists*, and Piano Sonata *I.X.1905*. In 2013 his recording of Liszt’s *Malédiction* with the Budapest Chamber Symphony, for Hungaroton, was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque. The recording was followed by a CD of four Mozart sonatas with violinist Ernő Kállai, issued in 2014 on Hungaroton. Fejérvári was also featured on a 2020 Warner Classics release of sonatas by Ravel, Enescu, Ysaÿe and Prokofiev in collaboration with violinist Diana Tishchenko entitled *Strangers in Paradise*.

Fejérvári currently holds a professorship at the Hochschule für Musik FHNW, Musik Akademie Basel in Basel, Switzerland, where he teaches piano and chamber music classes.

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**AUGUST 2024 - PLEASE DESTROY ALL PREVIOUSLY DATED MATERIALS**

“Fejérvári’s playing is multi-layered and precise, requiring full concentration on the part of the audience. Every note has its own particular dynamic, character, and expression.”

—*Kulturvollzug*

“Fejérvári’s rendition of Schumann was tender, philosophical, and somewhat introspective, but he played with great passion where necessary. He interpreted the slow movement with a speaking rubato and showed us his Florestanian temperament in the last movement, which made the performance truly authentic.”

—*Muzsika*

“[Fejérvári] evidenced dazzling technique that can rank with the best piano virtuosi and his interpretive instincts were consistently revelatory. He imbued even the most overt display pieces with subtlety and aristocratic insight.”

—*South Florida Classical Review*



## Zoltán Fejérvári

### Critical Acclaim



“Fejérvári is a deeply communicative artist who combines an imperturbable yet magisterial command of his instrument with impeccable musicality. Those who have yet to hear him are in for a rare treat.”

*Gramophone*

“Zoltán Fejérvári’s sheer technical prowess easily warranted the eager standing ovations he received in his Sunday recital at The Conrad. Fortunately, the young Hungarian pianist offered much more: an acute sense of style, sophisticated pacing, an array of ingratiating colors drawn from The Conrad’s Steinway, and a miraculously deft touch that never wavered through the most bravura passages.”

*San Diego Story*

“A 35-year-old Hungarian with boyish looks, he had a calm demeanor on the piano bench that at times seemed incongruous to the dazzling passagework and musical pyrotechnics he produced on his instrument.”

*San Diego Union-Tribune*

"His new Piano Classics disc of the piano music of Leoš Janáček is the most sensitive and deeply probative recording of the Czech master I have heard... Fejérvári plays all the mature works with a sure grasp of Janáček’s idiomatic style, drawing on a carefully calibrated spectrum of touch and, more importantly, a wealth of imagination... These deliciously understated performances reward repeated listening. I look forward to hearing more of the purity and imagination of Fejérvári’s piano playing."

*Gramophone*

“He demonstrated superlative technique throughout, and whatever he injected into any moment was entirely appropriate for the occasion, meaning that he never once sacrificed an ounce of musicality.”

*Music OMH*

“A personalized probing of material is balanced with refinement of sonic design and the mercurial nature of Schumann’s art is coalesced for the listener with a favourably fresh approach that connects hallmark performance practice from the early Romantic piano with that of our present day.”

*The Whole Note*

“He’s got a complete technical arsenal to deploy in service of the music’s ever-shifting moods.”

*CBC*

“Fejérvári...proved the kind of true ‘discovery’ this series was meant to display. The young pianist and chamber music instructor at Budapest’s Liszt Academy of Music evidenced dazzling technique that can rank with the best piano virtuosi and his interpretive instincts were consistently revelatory. He imbued even the most overt display pieces with subtlety and aristocratic insight.”

*South Florida Classical Review*

“What’s more, the balances [Diana Tishchenko] achieves with her pianist, Zoltán Fejérvári, are never less than ideal: all of the Sonata’s contrapuntal textures come across with breathtaking clarity. Certainly, Fejérvári is Tishchenko’s interpretive equal, providing a wonderfully shaded account of the Ravel’s

keyboard part. Together, they turn in a spunky, seductive take on the central 'Blues' movement and an ecstatic, rhythmically taut reading of the 'Moto Perpetuo' finale that all but brings the house down."

*Arts Fuse*

"Fejérvári's playing is multi-layered and precise, requiring full concentration on the part of the audience. Every note has its own particular dynamic, character, and expression."

*Kulturvollzug*

"Fejérvári's rendition of Schumann was tender, philosophical, and somewhat introspective, but he played with great passion where necessary. He interpreted the slow movement with a speaking rubato and showed us his Florestanian temperament in the last movement, which made the performance truly authentic."

*Muzsika*

ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
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# GRAMOPHONE

THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

September 2020

## SCHUMANN *Waldszenen*, *Nachtstücke* & *Humoreske*



The Hungarian pianist Zoltán Fejérvári, a 2016 Borletti-Buitoni fellow and winner of the Montreal competition the following year, is a member of the chamber music faculty of the Liszt Academy in Budapest. On his latest ATMA Classique release, he plays three major Schumann works, imbuing each with its own distinctive identity.

Listening to the *Waldszenen* from 1849, the year Schumann described as his 'most productive', one is immediately struck by the precision, warmth and limpid clarity of Fejérvári's conception. Phrases are exquisitely sculpted and always ripe with meaning. An almost uncanny sense of proportion prevails; astonishing degrees of variety and colour are contained within the smallest

fraction of the dynamic spectrum. Whether depicting the jaunty approach to the forest, the hardy hunters, delicate flowers in a clearing, a wayside inn or the strange song of a bird overhead, these *Waldszenen* evoke a charmed sense of wonder.

The *Nachtstücke*, which along with the *Humoreske* date from a decade earlier, seem to tiptoe into the room. Even though the individual pieces piece lack descriptive titles, Fejérvári presents them so suggestively it's almost impossible not to imagine programmes. How can one listen to the extrovert third number and not imagine the abandon of a whirling dance, or hear the concluding fourth piece as anything but a poignant leave-taking? For once, the 'humour' of this mercurial *Humoreske* is perfectly obvious in its ever-changing moods and whims, now antic, now plaintive. It's the sort of music-making that leaves the listener with a gentle smile rather than perplexity. Everywhere, perfectly calculated gestures convey meaning, never overboard or raucous, but perfectly within the bounds of contained, seductively beautiful sound. Fejérvári is a deeply communicative artist who combines an imperturbable yet magisterial command of his instrument with impeccable musicality. Those who have yet to hear him are in for a rare treat.



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The San Diego Union-Tribune

January 18, 2022

**Pianist Zoltán Fejérvári impressive  
in San Diego debut**

By Christian Hertzog



On Sunday afternoon, a lanky, unassuming fellow ambled across the stage at Baker-Baum Concert Hall. He sat at the piano without any fuss and began to play.

If there were any doubts that this modest gentleman deserved to be in that hall, they were soon dispelled by the beautifully sounded voicings of the Allemande from J.S. Bach's "French Suite" No. 5 in G major, BWV 816.

The pianist was Zoltán Fejérvári, making his San Diego debut courtesy of the La Jolla Music Society. A 35-year-old Hungarian with boyish looks, he had a calm demeanor on the piano bench that at times seemed incongruous to the dazzling passagework and musical pyrotechnics he produced on his instrument.

Fejérvári had a beautiful singing tone, which he deployed throughout his recital. His interpretation of the "French Suite" was marked by a clear delineation of all the parts and a gift for ornamentation. The embellishments weren't merely trills, but additional pitches not found in Bach's score that were idiomatically appropriate.

His performance of the Sarabande was a gorgeous bit of sonic poetry, and the speed of the Gigue dazzled, all the more so due to its lucidity.

The program also featured Ravel's "Le Tombeau De Couperin" and Chopin's Preludes, Op. 28. Whether intentional or not, it could be viewed as an examination of the concept of a "French suite." In Bach's case, there's very little about the work that is French aside from the movement titles. (In his defense, Bach never called them "French suites"). Chopin's Preludes, whether performed in their entirety as Fejérvári did or as a group of excerpts, could be considered a suite, although it's debatable if there is anything French about them aside from Chopin's residence in Paris.

With "Le Tombeau De Couperin," we find a true French suite, inspired by the harpsichord suites of Bach's contemporary, François Couperin. Here Fejérvári was at his best, the first and last movements taken at dizzy tempos and sparkling like Champagne. His cantabile tone was exquisite in the "Fugue" and the "Forlane," capturing the melancholy character of these pieces dedicated to friends lost in World War I. Chopin was stimulated by the 24 preludes of Bach's "Well-tempered Clavier," written in all the major and minor keys. The way that Chopin moved through the 24 keys was different than Bach, but allows for a more harmonically natural listening experience.





Fejérvári played them with minimal pauses between each Prelude, discouraging applause and thereby allowing us to better experience the huge contrasts between these tiny gems. He easily met Chopin's technical challenges and manifested the appropriate emotions for each one.

For an encore, he played the first movement from Tchaikovsky's "The Seasons." He drolly pointed out that the "January" that Tchaikovsky experienced "is a little different than what you have here."

In a pre-concert performance, Del Norte High School sophomore Ellie Seohyun Lee performed the first movement of Sibelius' Violin Concerto. This member of the San Diego Youth Symphony played with surprising maturity and captured much of the sly humor in an arrangement of Rodion Shchedrin's piano work, "In The Style Of Albéniz." She was ably accompanied by pianist Cho-Hyun Park.

## San Diego Story

January 17, 2022

### Zoltán Fejérvári's Scintillating Debut Recital at The Conrad

By Ken Herman

Zoltán Fejérvári's sheer technical prowess easily warranted the eager standing ovations he received in his Sunday recital at The Conrad. Fortunately, the young Hungarian pianist offered much more: an acute sense of style, sophisticated pacing, an array of ingratiating colors drawn from The Conrad's Steinway, and a miraculously deft touch that never wavered through the most bravura passages.

His urbane program adroitly summed up the apogee of three centuries of keyboard composition: J. S. Bach's G Major French Suite, BWV 816; Frédéric Chopin's complete Preludes, Op. 28, and Maurice Ravel's "Le tombeau de Couperin."

Because Bach's G Major French Suite strikes contemporary listeners as extraordinarily tuneful—without sacrificing the composer's wonted contrapuntal genius—it is no mystery why this is the most frequently programmed of Bach's dozen dance suites. Fejérvári's bracing tempos for these elegant dance movements never seemed rushed, and his copious ornamentation, especially in the repeated sections of the *Allemande* and *Sarabande* movements, sounded uncannily relaxed and natural. His immaculate articulation in the most rapid dances, the *Bourée* and the *Gigue* finale, made them delectably radiant, a far cry from the mindless breakneck Bach tempos that Anthony

Newman championed in less enlightened times.

Many music lovers favor Ravel's own orchestration of "Le tombeau de Couperin," an eloquent modernist revival of the Baroque dance suite written during the First World War in his brilliant pianistic idiom. But I find the original piano version more satisfying, especially when delivered with Fejérvári's panache. His sheer command and blazing tempos of the outer movements, the *Prélude* and *Toccata*, were alone worthy of the price of admission. But his insights in the less bravura movements proved equally rewarding: his elegant, transparent textures of the *Fugue*; his sense of mystery in the curious figures of the *Forlane*, an antique dance, and his subtle variation of attack when the opening theme or its permutations surfaced throughout the wistful *Menuet*. Pairing these dance suites from different centuries reveals Fejérvári's astute sense of music history. While J. S. Bach did not attach the adjective *French* to the set of dance suites he wrote for his second wife Anna Magdalena—music lovers after the composer's demise came up with that label—what we call the French Suites (as well as the misnamed set of English Suites) are indeed indebted to the music of the 17th-Century French court. All of Bach's dances are French, labeled with their customary French names, and all owe their style to the harpsichord and lute suites cultivated by the likes of Louis Couperin and Jean-



Baptiste Lully. As a teenager, Bach encountered this musical tradition in the French-speaking schools he attended while studying in Lüneburg, where he was tutored by no less a musician than Thomas de la Selle, a pupil of the great Lully. So when Maurice Ravel turned his studies to the great French composers of the 17th century to compose his “Homage to [François] Couperin,” he was planting his music in the same soil that Bach tilled in the 18th Century.

Chopin’s 24 preludes in his Opus 28 include some of his most familiar pieces learned by beginning piano students everywhere, e.g. No. 4 in E Minor and No. 6 in B Minor, to rarely played preludes of astounding difficulty accessible only to performers of Fejérvári’s caliber, e.g. No. 24 in D Minor and No. 16 in B-flat Minor. So to hear the entire Opus 24 played at one

sitting proved a luxurious indulgence. With laudable composure, Fejérvári meticulously worked his way through all 24 preludes, imbuing each with its unique character and nuance, whether impassioned or reflective, or like No. 15 in D-flat Major (the “Raindrop” Prelude), a mixture of both moods. Like Emanuel Ax’s satisfying Chopin recital at The Conrad earlier this month, the young Hungarian pianist faithfully adhered to the score, without imposing the personal excesses on the music favored by the early 20th-Century piano virtuosos. We will never know for certain exactly how Chopin played his music in the Paris salons of the 1840s, but I am willing to bet that Ax and Fejérvári are at least on the right track. The recital’s encore was “January” from P. I. Tchaikovsky’s *The Seasons*, Op. 37a.



March 1, 2022

## Zoltán Fejérvári brings an hour of sheer bliss to the Wigmore Hall

By Sam Smith

A Sunday morning piano recital in which the featured composers are Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert and Robert Schumann sounds pleasant enough, but when the playing is of the standard delivered by Hungarian pianist Zoltán Fejérvári it can lead to an hour that has that feeling of understated perfection. This is because Fejérvári's playing proved to be quite dramatic, and yet this was not the element that necessarily hit the listener, since he never went to extremes. He demonstrated superlative technique throughout, and whatever he injected into any moment was entirely appropriate for the occasion, meaning that he never once sacrificed an ounce of musicality.

The programme opened with Beethoven's *Fantasia in G minor Op. 77* (1809), in which Fejérvári transitioned from the initial downward tumbling phrase to the more lyrical ones with breathtaking ease. Managing the contrast is a key component of the piece, but the manner in which he brought it out while providing an overarching sense of smoothness and continuity was notable, and his abilities in this area were to prevail throughout the piece.

This was followed by Mozart's *Adagio in B minor K540* (1788), in which Fejérvári gave the piece a delicacy that on the one hand brought its senses of intrigue,

eeriness and disquiet into focus, and on the other gave it an ethereal and hence uplifting quality as if it was capturing a sense of infinite flow.

With the very briefest of pauses, allowing no time for applause, Fejérvári moved straight from the Mozart into Schubert's *Impromptu in G flat D899 No. 3* (1827). This proved a masterstroke, because it highlighted the contrasts between these pieces that might be seen as epitomising Classical and Romantic piano writing respectively. In Fejérvári's hands, those contrasts became all the more poignant because paradoxically there are similarities as well. As Fejérvári revealed, here once again is a piece in which the more one digs deep and explores what is beneath the surface the more something ethereal rises out of it. Nevertheless, one was also left thinking that, though the Schubert was written nearly forty years after the Mozart and was undoubtedly very different, it did not necessarily feel forty years more *advanced*. This point, however, is not intended to cast any doubt on the brilliance of the *Impromptu in G flat*, but rather to highlight just how incredible Mozart's creations were in his own era.

The programme ended with Schumann's *Piano Sonata No. 1 in F sharp minor Op. 11* (1832-35). One of



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the most captivating elements of the performance was the manner in which the balance between the left and right hands remained perfect throughout the thirty minute piece, whether they were working in sync on a passage or the left hand was suddenly leaping out and over

the right. Those sitting to the left of the auditorium could have seen the reflection of Fejérvári's hands in the piano itself, thus manifesting further what they were hearing which was, quite simply, poetry in motion.

## Seen and Heard International

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July 6, 2023

### Kirill Gerstein and Zoltán Fejérvári give a two-piano recital that will linger long in the memory

By Mark Berry



Mozart ran like a golden thread through Busoni's life and music – though, as for many composers, Schoenberg included, he only became more important as time went on. It was only fitting, then, that in the last of Kirill Gerstein's Wigmore Hall series, we should be treated to a combination of the two, alongside the inevitable Bach. Joined by the equally outstanding Zoltán Fejérvári, Gerstein offered us a two-piano recital that will linger long in the memories of those who heard it. Here was a splendid recreation – reconstruction suggests something far too dry – of two concerts Busoni and Egon Petri gave in London (in this very hall) and in Berlin's Beethoven-Saal in 1922 and 1921 respectively. Where London had heard the F minor Fantasia and Berlin the Sonata for Two Pianos, London 101 years later was treated to both.

According to Erinn Knyt's informative note, Edward Dent and Jürgen Kindermann refer to an arrangement of the Sonata, but all that survives is a 'marked up performance score with

numerous annotations and suggested textual alterations,' and a 'cadenza handwritten in the back of the score'. I presume this is what we heard here; there were certainly numerous, delightful departures from Mozart's letter in something akin to Busoni's – and, I think, our twenty-first century pianists' – spirit. The first movement began, and proceeded, in significantly more inviting fashion than a performance in the same hall I had heard a few months previously. Warm, stylish, in the best sense bustling, it was unobtrusively well shaped and finely ornamented. One startling turn taken in the recapitulation I had never heard – nor played – before, but there were other departures too, for instance unfailingly stylish flourishes and filling in of textures (arguably) to suit better our modern instruments or at least (some of) our tastes. The *Andante* received a similarly glorious performance, lyrical and harmonically founded, musical threads shared and seamlessly passed across the stage. Ornamentation was once again imaginative and welcome: Busoni, Mozart, and, I imagine, Richard Strauss would surely have admired this greatly. Observation of repeats again offered a rare and welcome luxury. An affectionate and infectious finale proved full of *buffo* incident. I presume the interpolated cadenza, essentially an extended lead-in, was Busoni's; likewise the decision to take certain passages *sotto voce*. Whoever was



responsible, the results were a sheer delight.

The *Improvisation on JS Bach's Chorale 'Wie wohl ist mir, o Freund der Seele'*, obviously rooted in Bach, is also a drastic reworking of the finale of the Second Violin Sonata. We were immediately plunged into a Faustian world of new seeking: new harmonies, new touch, new half-lights, new rhetoric. Bach, after all, is ever new — and ever old. Busoni rarely, if ever, takes us where we might expect: his surprises here were most welcome. The music sounded ripe for orchestration without in need of it. Fantastical yet dignified, its tonality near-suspended and reinstated, soft-spoken yet diabolically eruptive: this was another fine performance indeed.

Mozart's Fantasia in F minor for mechanical organ, transcribed and, sparingly, elaborated by Busoni, opened the second half. A grand, unabashedly pianistic introduction, with counterpoint clear and directed, made the case for a more 'objective', indeed 'mechanical' performance, which yet somehow did not preclude metaphysics. Busoni's octaves, when they came, sent shivers down the spine. And the extraordinary double cadenza taking us from F major back to F minor truly took on the character of a fugal recapitulation-cum-coda. The *Duetto concertante after the finale of Mozart's Piano Concerto no.19 in F major* was conceived, it seems, also as a sort of finale to the Fantasia, though here it was performed as a separate piece. More overtly pianistic as work and performance, it was treated to a delightfully responsive performance, which seemed to speak of a love for the material to match Busoni's own. The cadenza proved a bizarre, rather

wonderful surprise, as did Busoni's new ending.

Finally, we heard the two-piano version of the *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, returning us to Bach and 'original' composition in equal measure. Its opening outlined Busoni's scale of ambition as well as elements of material and expression, dreamlike in concision, transition, and its paradoxical remembering *before* the event. Touch and voicing from both pianists summoned the spirit of Busoni, both as secure, imaginative guide to Bach, and Faustian voyager beyond. At times, the two keyboards seemed miraculously to merge into one; at others, almost equally so, they separated once more, as if antiphonal keyboard choirs. There was something Mephistophelian to what we heard — and rightly so. Not that a constructive, even constructivist, element was absent, but rather it emerged through the effort and experience of the variations. Gerstein and Fejérvári showed that it was perfectly possible, indeed mandatory, to exploit their pianos as pianos, not generic keyboards, to beguile, to thrill, even to seduce, without loss to direction. Far from it, those qualities were key to that achievement in neo-Lisztian necromancy. We were led in directions we had never imagined, yet which seemed after the event the only option, all the way to yet another surprising conclusion.

After that, a fitting encore: Kurtág's transcription for four hands at one piano of the opening Sonatina from the *Actus Tragicus*, BWV 106, 'Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit'. Touching in its intimate dignity, it was the perfect choice in as perfect a performance as we are likely to hear.





ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST

# theWholeNote

July 2, 2020

## Schumann: Waldszenen; Nachtstücke; Humoreske

By Adam Sherkin

A perfectly considered new album from Hungarian pianist, Zoltán Fejérvári, presents three works by Robert Schumann in reverse chronological order: the *Humoreske*, *Op.20*, the *Nachtstücke Op.23* (both written in 1839) and the later *Waldszenen*, *Op.82* of 1849. Recorded at Domain Forget's Salle de concert, this all-Schumann record features slightly offbeat choices from the composer's catalogue. But taking the road less travelled has paid off for Fejérvári, as he brings a unique sensibility to Schumann's music and dwells happily in the curious – at times unnerving(!) – realms of these three cycles.

One can, rather fancifully, divide the nine pieces of the *Waldszenen* into two groups: those that depict the natural world (i.e. the life of the forest and its nonhuman inhabitants) and those that do not (i.e. a hunter, an inn and a farewell). Fejérvári delivers a slight heft-of-hand in this playing, rather effective for those *human* narratives that require warmth and tonal weight; the more ephemeral music, (inspired by the woodland itself), urges a defter touch.

The latter two-thirds of the record are filled, quite simply, with beautiful music making. Fejérvári embraces *Opp.23* and *20* with spirited imagination and stylistic aplomb. A personalized probing of material is balanced with refinement of sonic design and the mercurial nature of Schumann's art is coalesced for the listener with a favourably fresh approach that connects hallmark performance practice from the early Romantic piano with that of our present day.



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ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST



June 10, 2020

***Schumann: Waldszenen,  
Nachtstücke & Humoreske***

By Robert Rowat

Even though he's Hungarian, pianist Zoltán Fájervári has had strong Canadian connections since winning first prize at the 2017 Montreal International Music Competition. This all-Schumann album, recorded in Saint-Irénée, Que., is a result of that win and reminds us why the jury was so taken with Fájervári. He's got a complete technical arsenal to deploy in service of the music's ever-shifting moods: a crisp touch for the hunter in *Waldszenen*, then seamless legato for "Einsame Blumen." Chords are perfectly voiced in the four *Nachtstücke*, and the *Humoreske*, while comprising contrasting episodes, is played with a cogent arc from beginning to end

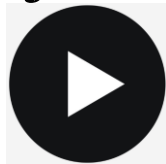
ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST

# INSIDE THE NOTES

A PODCAST FOR MUSICIANS

March 8, 2020

## Zoltán Fejérvári, piano



*Click to listen or visit <http://bit.ly/2Q1hSLF>*

Pianist Zoltán Fejérvári, chats with Inside the Notes, while in Bellingham, WA for his recital with the Sanford Hill Piano Series. In this episode we discuss programming, the importance of feeling nervous before a performance, competitions, and his studies at the Liszt Academy.

Winner of the 2017 Concours Musical International de Montréal for piano and recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, Zoltán Fejérvári has appeared in recitals throughout Europe and the United States in such prestigious venues as Carnegie's Weill Hall in New York, the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, the Library of Congress in Washington DC, Gasteig in Munich, Lingotto in Turin, the Palau de Música in Valencia, the Biblioteca Nacional de Buenos Aires and the Liszt Academy in Budapest. He has performed as a soloist with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, the Hungarian National Orchestra, the Verbier Festival and Concerto Budapest Orchestras among others, under such conductors as Iván Fischer, Zoltán Kocsis, Ken-Ichiro Kobayashi, and Gábor Takács-Nagy.

Zoltán Fejérvári is a passionate chamber musician. He has collaborated with both the Keller and Kodály Quartets and has worked with such musicians as Gary

Hoffman, Joseph Lin, Cristoph Richter, András Keller, Radovan Vlatkovic, Ivan Monighetti, Frans Helmerson, Steven Isserlis. He has been a participant in Kronberg's "Chamber Music Connects the World" program, Prussia Cove's "Open Chamber Music", Lisztomania in Chateauroux, the Tiszadob Piano Festival and Encuentro de Música in Santander. At the invitation of Mitsuko Uchida, he participated in the Marlboro Music Festival during the summers of 2014 through 2016.

Zoltán Fejérvári's recording of Liszt's Malédiction with the Budapest Chamber Symphony was awarded the "Grand prix du Disque" in 2013 [HCD 32801]. His CD of four Mozart violin sonatas, with violinist Ernő Kállai, was released in 2014 by Hungaroton [HCD 32740].

Distinguished pianist András Schiff chose Zoltán Fejérvári for his "Building Bridges" series created to highlight young pianists of unusual promise. Under this aegis Mr. Fejérvári will give recitals in season 2017-18 in Berlin, Bochum, Brussels, Zürich and Ittingen among other cities.

Since 2014 Zoltán Fejérvári, has been teaching at the Chamber Music Department of the Liszt Academy of Music.



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ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST



January 18, 2020

## Strangers in Paradise – Diana Tishchenko, Zoltán Fejérvári



This enticing album of sonatas by Ravel, Enescu, Ysaÿe, and Prokofiev emerged from violinist Diana Tishchenko’s victory at the 2018 Long-Thibaud-Crespin Competition in Paris. Born in Ukraine, and trained in Kiev and Berlin, she has been noted by The Strad for her “power to mesmerize the audience with her large gesture and strong personality.” Her musical partnership with the Hungarian pianist Zoltán Fejérvári is extraordinarily close and potent. In the words of the French online journal Toute la musique, they are “not two interpreters playing together, but a true musical entity, an artistic fusion.”

ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST

# The Washington Post

November 18, 2019

## Zoltán Fejérvári shows off his technique with a program of gems

By Grace Jean

Hungarian pianist Zoltán Fejérvári gave a dazzling Washington Performing Arts recital Sunday afternoon at the Kennedy Center, featuring two gems from his recent recording of Janáček, alongside treats by Chopin and Schubert.

With an elegant approach, Fejérvári sat tall, relying on his long arms and fingers to bring out the Steinway's range of colors and dynamics. In the two Janáček pieces — Piano Sonata 1.X.1905 and “In the Mists” — he tickled the ears with shimmering notes and silken arpeggios, but also jabbed with sharply accented chords. Such contrasting moods dominated both works; gentle melodies often yielded to tempestuous passages, like a sudden breeze whipping up fallen leaves. At times, Fejérvári played so softly that he competed with the Terrace Theater's humming ventilation system.

Rarely did Fejérvári play phrases the same way, even when they repeated note for note several times in a row. In Schubert's Drei Klavierstücke, D. 946, he relied on his expansive pianism and

artistry to highlight nuances and details. Filigree trills hovered like hummingbirds and quicksilver scales, and delicate grace notes melted into an expressive chorale. The aria-like allegretto offered an opportunity for Fejérvári to show off his technique in layers with bass staccato notes popping against creamy treble thirds and lyrical lines.

Similarly in Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat Minor, Op. 35, Fejérvári charted a sonic course of twists and turns. From the emphatic opener to the scherzo's heroic chords, the pianist's versatility and inventiveness were evident. His “Marche funèbre” followed a linear progression not unlike the stages of grief, with an aching introduction, a plaintive interlude and a cathartic crescendo in the final march that receded into glowing acceptance. Fejérvári took the finale at breakneck speed, but the notes sparkled like diamonds.



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# GRAMOPHONE

THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

August 2019

## JANÁČEK *On an Overgrown Path.* *In the Mists*

By Patrick Rucker



Zoltán Fejérvári, a native of Budapest still in his early thirties, won the 2017 Montreal Competition and was a Borletti-Buitoni fellow. A student of Rita Wagner and Dénes Várjon, he is now a member of the chamber music faculty at the Liszt Academy. His new Piano Classics disc of the piano music of Leoš Janáček is the most sensitive and deeply probative recording of the Czech master I have heard.

Janáček's solo piano music occupies a relatively small corner of his legacy. Save for an early set of variations, all of it was written over the course of a scant dozen years, between 1901 and 1912. Far from virtuoso in the conventional sense, its means are nevertheless consistently appropriate to its ends. As a body of work, its unique musical content more than justifies the vital place it holds in the current repertory. Apart from the posthumous *Intimate Sketches*, Fejérvári plays all the mature works with a sure grasp of Janáček's idiomatic style, drawing on a carefully calibrated spectrum of touch and, more importantly, a wealth of imagination. The gentle redolence of reminiscence pervades Fejérvári's performance of Book 1 of *On an Overgrown Path*. Each

self-contained miniature has the shimmer of a burnished gem. Rather than emphasising the folk elements that unify the sequence, Fejérvári chooses to suggest them, lending the whole a delicate, dreamlike quality. *In the Mists* is more extrovert but no less atmospheric. In the second piece, *Molto adagio*, Fejérvári's silvery, bell-like sound seems the perfect match for Janáček's mercurial flights of fantasy. The concluding *Presto* wraps up the suite in a delirium of dissonance and lightning figuration.

Following these Impressionistic musical evocations, the *Sonata 1.X.1905* seems like a plunge into heroic drama of cinematic intensity. The nervous energy of the first movement, 'Presentiment', is almost palpable, while 'The Death' skilfully suggests both shock and disbelief, before dissolving into inconsolable grief. Fejérvári's performance achieves a gripping power, without resorting to melodrama or over-playing. After Janáček's depiction of political tragedy, Book 2 of *On an Overgrown Path*, the concluding cuts on the disc, comes as a welcome antidote. These deliciously understated performances reward repeated listening. I look forward to hearing more of the purity and imagination of Fejérvári's piano playing.



March 19, 2018

## Hungarian pianist displays revelatory artistry in SoFla debut

By Lawrence Budmen



The newly reconfigured Colony Theater in Miami Beach made a fine showcase for the South Florida debut of Hungarian pianist Zoltan Fejérvári for the Miami International Piano Festival's Discovery Series on Sunday night.

With three rows of seats removed and new seating on the side, the audience now enters by walking up onto the stage and down a small ramp into the hall's main seating area. The stage has been extended and thrust forward, resulting in a more intimate performing space. On first hearing, the acoustic seemed improved with keyboard resonance clearer and more immediate.

Fejérvári, who counts pianist András Schiff among his mentors, proved the kind of true "discovery" this series was meant to display. The young pianist and chamber music instructor at Budapest's Liszt Academy of Music evidenced dazzling technique that can rank with the best piano virtuosos and his

interpretive instincts were consistently revelatory. He imbued even the most overt display pieces with subtlety and aristocratic insight.

In Bach's English Suite in G minor, Fejérvári managed to emulate harpsichord-like registrations on a modern Steinway. The opening Prelude was lithe and Fejérvári brought out the inner voices of the austere Allemande. There was transparent precision in the rapid figurations of the Courante. The Sarabande, the score's heart, is one of Bach's most soulful instrumental creations. The pianist's subtle detailing of variegated dynamics was infused with a touch of poetry. Fejérvári's wonderfully quirky hesitations and angular phrasings gave distinctive personality to the two gavottes. Fugal lines in the concluding Gigue emerged with clarity at an unusually brisk clip.

Fejérvári turned full-blooded romantic for Schumann's Sonata in G minor. In the first movement, huge contrasts of tempo and volume held sway. Schumann instructs the pianist to play "still faster" in the coda and Fejérvári captured the devilish fantasy of those closing pages.

The calm and serene Andantino has its genesis in Schumann's vocal lieder. Here Fejérvári achieved a quiet and contemplative aura by unusually judicious utilization of the piano's soft pedal. He realized both the fierce and playful qualities of the Scherzo, more a



Paganini-like caprice for the keyboard. There was fine coloration in a fleet reading of the Rondo-Presto with Schumann's split musical personality projected richly.

Fejérvári turned to bravura showpieces for the program's second half. The percussive power and deliberate pauses of the opening chords in Chopin's Scherzo No. 1 in B minor seemed almost shocking and the fluid, high-voltage reading was definitely not the Chopin of prettified salon vignettes. If Fejérvári's Chopin was Lisztian, he infused Liszt's Ballade No. 2 in B minor with a song-like romance. The opening rumblings in the left hand, as if from the lower depths, were given space and the big-boned volleys were powerful indeed.

The tritone opening of Liszt's *Après un lecture de Dante* (Dante Sonata) was

revolutionary in its day. Fejérvári managed to restore the adventure and modernity to the score. He gave full vent to the music's virtuosic qualities while bringing dramatic coherence and surprising moments of contrasting beauty and even elegance amid the bombastic thunder.

Responding to repeated bravos and cheers, Fejérvári told the audience that he was not used to playing for such enthusiastic listeners. His encore of Schubert's Impromptu in G flat Major was almost operatic in singing line and softly tinted glow. This is a pianist who needs to be heard more frequently in American concert halls.



ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST

# THE PLAIN DEALER

June 22, 2018

## ChamberFest Cleveland triumphs with haunting 'Voice of the Whale'

By Zachary Lewis

Music made the longest night of the year feel like the shortest.

While the sun Thursday took longer than ever to set, the solstice-night performances at ChamberFest Cleveland practically flew by, even as they created lasting musical memories. They even made a little bit of history. Notable on several accounts, the concert in Mixon Hall at the Cleveland Institute of Music went down in the record books as a rare presentation of George Crumb's "Voice of the Whale" in its fully staged form.

Complete with drawn curtains, blue lighting, and amplification, the performance of the 1971 masterpiece easily supported the program's title, serving beautifully as an example of a critical artistic "Turn in the Road."

As flutist Lorna McGhee sang hauntingly into her instrument and cellist Clive Greensmith slid fingers eerily up and down his, Roman Rabinovich sealed the deal, evoking chirpy whale song and the murky sounds of the deep with electronic effects on a grand piano.

The spell they cast was complete. Patrons were advised in their program books to listen for allusions to Strauss and demarcations between movements, but in reality the performance needed no explanation. It was a single, cohesive, and fully intuitive experience that paid moving tribute to the world's largest animals and possessed all the sighs, groans, chaos, and serenity of a real underwater conversation.

Similarly absorbing, and yet not so radical when considered in conjunction, was the Adagio from Berg's Chamber Concerto. Like Crumb's evocation of whales, Berg's arranged trio for violin, clarinet, and piano emerged as both fragmentary and unified, sensuous and shrill, a stimulating and ultimately mysterious musical moment.

Pianist Rabinovich gave an insightful overview, but again, words proved unnecessary. In performance, he, violinist Diana Cohen, and clarinetist Franklin Cohen saw right through the complexity and found all that was delicate, lyrical, and colorful in the music. Out of something potentially daunting or off-putting, they crafted something welcoming and scintillating. How Dvorak's F-Minor Piano Trio, Op. 65 constituted a turn in the musical road wasn't exactly clear. Still, as rendered by Greensmith, pianist Zoltan Fejervari, and violinist Amy Schwartz Moretti, the feisty work was both welcome and utterly consuming.

Like their colleagues on the program, the three artists in Dvorak were unfazed by technical demands. They'd clearly done their structural analysis and fully processed all the score's rhythmic, dynamic, and melodic potential.

Thus were they able to maximize the drama and pour their hearts into every lyrical opportunity. On every account, theirs was Dvorak at the highest level, and much like Thursday night as a whole, it was over too soon.



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ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST

# The Gazette

May 11, 2017

## Europe owns the winners' circle at CMIM piano competition

By Arthur Kaptainis



Hungary's Zoltán Fejérvári won first prize in the 15th Concours musical international de Montréal after performing a bracing account of Bartók's Third Piano Concerto.

Zoltán Fejérvári, 30, a Hungarian schooled largely in the Franz Liszt Academy of his native Budapest, has won first prize in the 15th Concours musical international de Montréal. He was followed by two Italians in a final round that included another European, two South Koreans and no contestants from the Americas.

Fejérvári leaves town with the \$30,000 first prize offered by the city of Montreal and the \$50,000 Joseph Rouleau Career

Development Grant funded by the Azrieli Foundation. His victory was based on a bracing account of the Third Piano Concerto of his compatriot Béla Bartók, a relatively rare bird on the competition circuit.

Winner of the second prize is Giuseppe Guarrera, a 25-year-old trained partly in Berlin. His takeaway for a robust and forward-moving performance of Tchaikovsky's much more familiar Piano



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Concerto No. 1 is \$15,000, courtesy of Québecor.

Third prize goes to Stefano Andreatta, also 25, who ably contrasted the intimate and extrovert elements of Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2. While not exactly a rarity, this 22-minute fantasy is seldom heard in competitions. Andreatta earns \$10,000 from Stingray Classica.

The finals took place Tuesday and Wednesday in the Maison symphonique with the demonstrably excellent OSM under Claus Peter Flor, who encouraged positive rather than deferential accompaniments. Pinpoint interplay with the woodwinds certainly did not hurt Fejérvári in the first two movements of the Bartók.

Unranked finalists (there is no fourth, fifth or sixth prize) did not disgrace themselves. Jinhung Park, 21, produced a refined if sometimes languorous performance of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2. If there were an award for delicate slow movements, he would surely be considered.

His fellow South Korean Yejin Noh, 30, played brilliantly and with much rhythmic inflection in Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1. Unfortunately, her performance included an emphatic wrong note in the first cadenza and a memory lapse later in the opening movement. She was the only female to reach the Maison symphonique round.

The other unranked finalist was Albert Cano Smit, 20, who was playing under the flags of both Spain and the Netherlands despite his Swiss birth. He elicited many beauties from Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1, but stumbled early and often in this majestic score. Whatever his standing, the youngest contestant in the finals established himself as an artist to watch with a thoughtful semifinal recital last Saturday.

Keep in mind that the final round with orchestra was in essence a new competition. The nine judges (who are not allowed to confer with each other) ranked the concerto performances 1 to 6. The best possible score was 9, the worst 54.

All very sanitary, although it is conceivable that judges might

consciously or unconsciously bear prior achievement in mind when ranking the concerto outings. Scores are not made public. (Where is WikiLeaks when you need it?)

Many players, including some who did not advance, worked wonders in the earlier rounds. Alexey Sychev, 28, of Russia surely delighted many in the semifinals with his fun-loving treatment of Ravel's La Valse. Alas, certain subpar interludes in his Liszt Sonata in B Minor put him out of the running.

Noh's interpretation of Stravinsky's Three Movements from Petrushka was dazzling, and both Cano Smit and Fejérvári did well by playing Schumann's unjustly neglected Humoreske. Fejérvári might have earned extra brownie points for programming unconventional solo works by Bartók and Janáček.

Fejérvári, Guarrera and Andreatta may not be the only prizewinners. Special awards, including honours for the best semifinal recital and the best performance of the compulsory Canadian work, are scheduled to be conferred Friday evening during the CMIM's gala concert.

This program with Flor and the OSM in the Maison symphonique involves past CMIM winners — soprano Measha Brueggergosman (2002), pianist Serhiy Salov (2004) and violinist Benjamin Beilman (2010) — as well as an encore performance of the Bartók with Fejérvári.

Teo Gheorghiu, the lone Canadian semifinalist, is the inevitable winner of the award for best Canadian, offered by the Bourbeau Foundation. Former Quebec finance minister André Bourbeau is the non-voting chairman of the CMIM jury.

CMIM artistic and general director Christiane LeBlanc probably spoke for many impressed onlookers (online as well as in person) in praising the calibre of this year's scrimmage.

"Clearly the highest level of playing we have had in CMIM piano editions," she said Thursday morning. "We heard some very rich musical personalities and true artists, which the jury detected and honoured."

ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST



ludwig van  
TORONTO

May 18, 2017

## Zoltán Fejérvári: A Winning Image of Hungarian Classical Music

By Jennifer Lu



Zoltán Fejérvári feels a deep connection to the piano music of his homeland. At this year's Montreal International Music Competition (MIMC), he successfully made his case for Hungary, emerging as the Competition's grand prize winner which includes the \$30,000 City of Montreal First Prize, plus the Joseph Rouleau Career Development Grant worth \$50,000 (funded by the Azrieli Foundation).

Fejérvári's understanding of Bartók's music runs so deep, he had prepared the Piano Concerto No. 3 on his own, having already completed his formal music training in Budapest in 2011. Consider also that two days before his competition-clinching performance, he hadn't yet memorized the Concerto.

"I was very focused on the first round, less focused on the second round, and not focused at all for the concerto [...] After the second round, I went to practice directly. Of course, once you've played this piece it comes back much faster. But still it was pretty tricky." The Bartók was a sound choice in many ways: he knew that this Concerto's neo-

classical aesthetic would be a suitable introduction to Hungary's music for newcomers: "It is kind of classical, but it's still Bartók, so the language is still familiar to me. And I thought that it's not that hard either for the orchestra or for the piano, so we can pull it off."

From reintegrating the notes, to synchronizing the concerto with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and conductor Claus Peter Flor, a lot of ground was covered in the final six days of the MIMC. Looking back after the final gala performance, "the first [performance] was still at the competition and I was pretty stressed out. The days before, the rehearsal was very rushed; we had limited time. You have this thing in your stomach and you somehow knew that it was going to be judged. And of course, before the rehearsals today we already had the concert experience, the concert acts like three rehearsals. We knew much better what to do, how to use our time, so we had a great rehearsal and it made the performance more expectable, easier to communicate. It felt like a better performance."

At which point, Maestro Flor approaches us and interjects heartily, "Bartók won, don't forget! Which competition has the courage to let Bartók win?"

But as our Hungarian subject points out, that concerto isn't an obscure choice in his homeland. So how big of an influence does Bartók have in Hungary? "Really big. I mean, really big." Bartók's



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mark on their music is indelible: “20th-century composers can’t really avoid this influence, so all the composers in Hungary started with this language. Depending on how good they were, they found their own languages.”

A heritage which found its way to Fejérvári, who effortlessly incorporates the rhythmic lilt of the Hungarian language into his playing. After all, it’s been said that there are linguistic similarities between the language and Bartók’s music, right? “100% percent. It’s a little easier for us, but absolutely not impossible to understand his language for non-Hungarian people. Once you understand basic rules, you somehow understand... that Bartók’s language, let’s say Bartók’s music, is always speaking. Not just singing, but speaks. So it always has to have this *parlando*, *rubato* quality. But yes, certainly when I played the bass written in the third movement, words immediately come to mind and you can just compose a text there, there’s so much about the language.”

If we were to compare Bartók’s legacy to that of another compatriot: Franz Liszt? “Well, Liszt was born in Hungary and his father was Hungarian. But he didn’t speak the language. His mother was Austrian, and he was raised in Paris. So Liszt was kind of cosmopolitan.” There seems to be a trend of Hungarian composers who apply their musico-linguistic toolbox to the Romantic medium: “I mean, Bartók was a Romantic pianist; his piano teacher was a Liszt pupil, so the language was absolutely Romantic: poetic, *rubato* piano playing. [...] So his playing is very free all the time, always. Even when he plays his own music. He was very precise, but then as he plays it doesn’t seem to be very strict, it’s always free. So it’s almost improvised. I mean, that’s how he composed — the first step was always improvisation.”

Amongst a classical music crowd that finds comfort in so-called “evergreen” piano concertos, Fejérvári’s competition program bucked the trend. “I don’t know how significant [my win] is... I choose the program that I feel. I don’t

consider myself to be an extreme virtuoso. Of course, I can play, but I think my stronger profile in music is more about poetry in music, and not virtuosity.” His success at the MIMC took even himself by surprise: “On one hand, I didn’t really expect this. Because [my] image of myself was always like, ‘You’ve got some talent,’ but I always thought that I never would be able to play at that level, or in such a way that a competition demands, let’s say, or what you need for winning a competition. And it surprised me a lot that the jury was interested in this kind of music-making.” Indeed, the MIMC had assembled a panel that was sensitive to performance in a globalized community, and they should be commended for their openness to a work that hasn’t established itself in musical centres outside Hungary. All while upholding the ultimate goal of competitions: selecting candidates based on musical ability and faithfulness to the composer’s wishes.

Apart from Fejérvári, the entire crop of MIMC pianists this year offered top-level presentations. In particular, Giuseppe Guarrera was hot on his heels in each round: “A part of the jury probably would have voted for him [for first prize], you never know; that’s what tells the rest of the prizes [recall that the Italian won second prize, as well as all the special prizes except the Best Canadian Artist Award]. But it’s really fine, I absolutely can understand.” It’s hard to tell then, which of the two are happier! “I mean, he’s younger than me: he’s 25, I’m 30. If he continues this way, I think he’ll win a competition at some point.” Fejérvári himself arrived in Montreal having decided that the MIMC would be his last competition. “And I hadn’t done many competitions at all; this is my number four competition in 10 years. And I don’t know why I did it actually!”

For Fejérvári, life before the MIMC had already been anchored for some time in Budapest, where he studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music from 2005 to 2011. Numerous Hungarians — friends as well as new fans — tracked his

ascension at the MIMC: “The last two days, I think I got — I think I’m not exaggerating — 100 emails, which is a really nice feeling, really wonderful. So they’ve been following, and I’m sort of proud!” He remains in the Hungarian capital, where he is highly involved in the chamber music scene: “I have a part-time job coaching chamber music. I play lots of chamber music, probably from now on I will play more solo. But I definitely will keep playing chamber music when I need it, I really love it.”

And what is life as a classical musician like in Hungary? “It’s very good, very rich; the country is small so basically you know everybody in the music life. We have lots of venues, lots of talent; good people and good orchestras come to Hungary. Basically as a musician, you live in the capital. There is maybe one other city that provides a decent orchestra, but if you really want something, then you have to live in Budapest. But then the capital is full of music life.” Eminent ensembles such as Iván Fischer’s Budapest Festival Orchestra come to mind: “We have maybe three good orchestras in the capital, and an amazing concert hall for the big orchestras. There is the Great Hall of the Liszt Academy, which is more like a chamber music hall and very ideal for recitals.” A venue which would suit the likes of pianist András Schiff, who hasn’t been living in Hungary for the past 40 years.

And why not a crash course on the makeup of Hungary’s people and topography? “This is an interesting geographical situation. So this is sort of a valley, Hungary, surrounded by mountains and surrounded by very different nations, mostly Slavic nations but also German-type of people from the West; then Romania, the Latin type of

area. Then you probably can’t really speak about a... ‘clean’ nation, because it’s always very mixed, a variety of nations; [it’s] still a kind of a wonder that the language remains spoken! So probably this is the strongest element of the nation. It’s very colourful, at least it used to be very colourful, let’s not get to the politics...”

Does Budapest hold enough appeal for Fejérvári to remain there in the long run? “For now I’m fine to live there, because I go out the country pretty much so I can breathe fresh air! But I like actually to speak my native language, and I’m happy that I can teach there [in Budapest] so I can be a part of the education of the next generation.” A new generation of promising musicians, which Fejérvári can now consider himself a part of. What does he imagine for himself after the Competition? “Only time will tell; I don’t know anything, really. Lots of new opportunities, and we didn’t get to the point to talk about dates and places [with music organizations], but as far as I know they are interested in my ideas about projects I’d like to do. I’m thinking about maybe recording a CD, stuff like that.”

Everything felt right for him here: “I like Montreal a lot. I like it because it’s not a huge city.” He would have liked to take in more of the city’s arts and culture scene: “I was planning to go to museums, but then I won! So I couldn’t; I didn’t have time.”

You can’t have everything in the world, but Fejérvári will gladly take first prize from the Montreal International Music Competition back to Hungary. Aside from crowning this year’s top pianist, the award could also herald a shift in classical music’s trajectory.

ZOLTÁN FEJÉRVÁRI  
PIANIST

theStrad  
VOICE OF THE STRING MUSIC WORLD SINCE 1890

May 2015

**Mozart: Violin Sonatas: in E minor K304; in A major K305; in B flat major K454; in A major K526**

By David Denton



Though the booklet makes no reference to the use of period instruments, the tonal quality and style of performance would place this disc within that category. The joyful approach to K305 finds Zoltán Fejérvári's staccato keyboard ideally complementing the sparing use of vibrato by the young Hungarian-born violinist Ernő Kállai. It is, together with K304, one of Mozart's early two-movement sonatas, the duo adhering to the composer's description as 'sonatas for keyboard with violin accompaniment', and Fejérvári's tight trills coming close to the sound of a harpsichord.

The remainder of the disc is given to the extended sonatas from Mozart's later life, the instruments now sharing centre stage. Tempos in outer movements are brisk without being rushed, the central andantes flow with eloquent lyricism, and I particularly enjoy the mischievous approach to the opening movement of K454, a mood that carries over into the account of K526. Here we find the many scale passages, which can sound unduly hurried on so many discs, perfectly articulated.

The engineers provide an admirable balance between instruments and, though the violin part presents few challenges in these four works, Kállai's refined and elegant playing makes for a much recommended release.



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PIANIST

# THE HINDU

September 22, 2017

## A class apart: in conversation with pianist Zoltán Fejérvári

By Keith A. Gomes



What does it really take of one to choose the classical music over the contemporary as a preference? Is it the same as saying, “I’d prefer a finely aged vintage port over a freshly brewed craft beer?” The Imperial Hotel organised a recital by Zoltán Fejérvári, a highly regarded pianist from Hungary. Having played solo recitals in various parts of Europe and the United States, and performed with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, the Hungarian National Orchestra, he brought to Nostalgia, the European restaurant at the hotel, Beethoven’s *Sonata in C*

*Major and Kodály: Dances from Marosszék* for Chamber Music enthusiasts living in the Capital.

“I was always surrounded by instruments since I belonged to a family of musicians — they were a part of the normalcy of life at home,” began Zoltán. But, out of all the instruments, why the piano? “It was always there, I didn’t have to tune it or anything. It just invited me to play,” he answered humbly. At the age of eight Zoltán had been enrolled into music school, where he ascertained that reading music came naturally to him; but, it was at the age of



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fifteen — the age when Hungarian musicians must attend Conservatory (music school for the pursuers) — that he began to practice rigorously. “And, by the time I was 18,” Zoltán added, “I was in Budapest, at the Listz Academy of Music, and I was attending concerts.”

Zoltán is among the proud pianists that have performed at prestigious venues such as Carnegie’s Weill Hall in New York, the Paul de Música in Valencia and Gasteig in Munich. And he’s worked with musicians such as Gary Hoffman and Josheph Lin, to name a few. Post all this experience of varying kinds, he’s learnt some philosophies which guide his performance on stage, out of which he shared a simple yet beautiful one, “It is only possible if you have faith, unlike the religious kind, it’s a strong belief in what you do, in the music you play,” and paradoxically he used the Bible for elucidation, “It’s like how Jesus walked on water, if you believe then you walk on that water, and if you don’t, you sink.” He laughed at that closing word, and substantiated the air of comfort about him.

“What music do I listen to? Let me think about that...” he wondered, making it rather strange since one would assume that he’d instantly blurt out a long list of names, “I like Jazz, specifically from the 20th century, but that’s strictly for when I’m alone. I listen to classical Viennese pieces, pieces from different periods like Renaissance, Romantic and also those of the Baroque style.” And to complete surprise he added, “I like some others like the Beatles and Queen, other than Beethoven, Schubert and Béla Batók. The rest escape my mind right now,” he laughed again as he added that final remark.

Zoltán won the 2017 Concours Musical International de Montréal for piano as well as was the recipient of the honoured

Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship. And, among the things he enjoys most, besides the piano, he enlisted: “I still enjoy watching DVDs or even old tapes on my VCR. And, I love playing Lego with my two sons. I used to love Lego as a kid, it’s lovely to return to them after so long. I even love my cat and my dog, their company is always a cheerful pleasure.” He also went on to tell about how he always makes it a point to catch up on reading, and among his favourites are Fyodor Dostoevsky, Milan Kundera, Herman Hesse and Thomas Mann. Zoltán likes the silence that is offered by villages until they become too oppressive, which is why he’s settled within an hour’s distance from the city.

The concert with Zoltán was a completion of the whole idea behind the restaurant, with its Steinway grand piano, of a journey into a classical space; it is an effort to create something that a selective few truly crave for in Delhi. And this brought about the question of numbers, where in the world did Zoltán come across the largest reception for Chamber Music? To which Zoltán answered without a second thought, “Germany, its rather heart warming to see how a majority of their towns have a Chamber Music series, thus there is some Chamber Music here or there in Germany all year round.”

“Music for me is the classical, it is the language I understand.” Said Zoltán as he continued with the conversation, and then went on to close with a thought that has stayed on with him since his academy days at Listz, where today he teaches Chamber Music, “My teacher, Andras Kemenes, I liked him, there was just this way about him and this one particular thing he’d teach everyone: you can’t lie on stage, never. It is on the stage that the musician must be the most honest of all.”

## **Zoltán Fejérvári Concerto Repertoire**

### **Bach**

Piano Concerto in d minor, BWV 1052  
Piano Concerto in D major, BWV 1054  
Piano Concerto in A major, BWV 1055  
Piano Concerto in f minor, BWV 1056  
Piano Concerto in F major, BWV 1057  
Concerto for two Pianos in C minor, BWV 1062  
Concerto for three Pianos in C major, BWV 1064

### **Bartók**

Scherzo for Piano and Orchestra, Sz 28  
Piano Concerto No. 1, Sz 83  
Piano Concerto No. 2, Sz 95  
Piano Concerto No. 3, Sz 119

### **Beethoven**

Piano Concerto in C major, Op. 15  
Piano Concerto in B flat major Op. 19  
Piano Concerto in C minor, Op. 37  
Piano Concerto in G major, Op. 58  
Piano Concerto in E flat major, Op. 73  
Concerto for Piano, Violin, Cello and Orchestra in C major, Op. 56

### **Brahms**

Piano Concerto in D minor, Op. 15

### **Chopin**

Piano Concerto in E minor, Op. 11

### **Haydn**

Piano Concerto in D major, Hob. XIII:11

### **Ligeti**

Piano Concerto

### **Liszt**

Totentanz  
Piano Concerto in E Flat major

### **Mozart**

Piano Concerto in G major, K 41  
Piano Concerto in E flat major, K 271

Piano Concerto in G major, K 453  
Piano Concerto in F major, K 459  
Piano Concerto in D minor, K 466  
Piano Concerto in B flat major, K 595

**Poulenc**

Concerto for Two Pianos

**Prokofiev**

Piano concerto No.3, Op. 26

**Rachmaninov**

Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini, Op. 43

**Ravel**

Piano concerto in G major

**Schumann**

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54  
Introduction and Allegro, Op. 134

**Shostakovich**

Piano concerto No. 1

**Stravinsky**

Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments  
Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra

## **Zoltán Fejérvári Conductor List**

Ovidiu Balan

Tibor Bogányi

Iván Fischer

Claus Peter Flor

Zsolt Hamar

Zoltán Kocsis

János Kovács

László Kovács

Stefan Lano

Gergely Madaras

Gábor Takács-Nagy

Gilbert Varga



## Zoltán Fejérvári Discography

### Atma Classique

ACD22816

*Schumann*: Ravel: Waldszenen, Op. 82; Nachtstücke, Op. 23;  
Humoreske, Op. 20 (May 2020).

### Genuin

GEN20689

*Folk Music*: Works by Janacék, Veress, Holliger, Enescu, Schulhoff  
and Bartók. Maia Cabeza, violin; Zoltán Fejérvári, piano; Alexandros  
Giovanos, percussion (March 2020).

### Warner Classics

9029540391

*Strangers in Paradise*: Ravel: Sonate pour violon No. 2 in G Major,  
M. 77; Enescu: Sonate pour violon No. 3 in A Minor; Ysaÿe: Sonate  
pour violon No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 27, "Ballade;" Prokofiev: Sonate  
pour violon No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 80; Diana Tishchenko, violin;  
Zoltán Fejérvári, piano (November 2019).

### Piano Classics

PCL10176

*Janáček*: *On an Overgrown Path*; *In the Mists*; Sonata 1.X1905  
(June 2019).

### Hungaroton

HCD32833

*Schubert on Violin*: *Rondo in B Minor D.895*, *Introduction and  
Variations ("Trockne Blumen") D.802*, *Sei mir gegrüsst D. 741*,  
*Fantasia in C Major D.934*; Júlia Pusker, violin (April 2022).

**Mozart**: Sonatas for Violin & Piano (September 2014).













