



Bard College Conservatory of Music

20 Years of Music, Vision, and Excellence

Guest Artist Recital

EN RÊVE – LISZT INSPIRATIONS

András Szalai, *cimbalom*

Balázs Fülel, *piano*

Wednesday, December 10, 2025 at 7:00 pm
László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building, Performance Space

En rêve, S.207

Franz Liszt
(1811–1886)

Nuages gris, S.199

In festo transfigurationis Domini nostri Jesu Christi, S.188

Resignazione, S.187

La lugubre gondola, No.2, S.200

Klavierstück, F-sharp Major, S.193

Romance oubliée, S.527

Ave Maria IV., S.545

Recueillement – Vincenzo Bellini in memoriam, S.204

Ave Maria II. (from 9 *Kirchenchorgesängen*), S.504

Sancta Dorothea, S.187

Wiegenlied, S.198

NOTE ON THE PROGRAM

The cimbalom as we know it today appeared in Hungary in the second half of the nineteenth century, and became one of the symbols of the music of the Hungarian nation. Franz Liszt himself followed the birth of the instrument, and in many of his works for piano, motifs suggesting the cimbalom can be heard.

In 2022, we had the idea of transcribing Liszt's late piano works for a cimbalom-piano duo, and for solo cimbalom. The two instruments are similar in the way they produce a note. In the piano, the strings stretched over the soundboard are struck by hammers, while the player of the cimbalom uses beaters. Because of the cimbalom's slightly wavering, almost out-of-tune tone, and the difference in pedalling, playing together requires exceedingly great attention, and a perfect dovetailing of musical thinking from the two players.

The musical process of the twelve pieces we have chosen is an invitation to a shared meditation, to quiet contemplation. These pieces are music of solitude and self-surrender; the muted tones, and resigned mood summarize the great questions of life in quiet remembrance. Here, Liszt dispenses with all showy theatrical display, his notes lead us to a placid imaginary landscape, saying: do nothing, leave all behind you, merely lie and gaze at the sky, the clouds, and sense what a tiny speck you are in the universe...

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

András Szalai – Cimbalom

András Szalai was born in 1985 in Budapest. He graduated in classical cimbalom performance and composition from the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music. He is a prizewinner of several national and international cimbalom competitions.

His artistic focus lies in performing early music arrangements, 20th-century music, and contemporary solo and chamber works. Over the past twenty years, he has premiered or performed several pieces by Hungarian and international contemporary composers. He frequently performs works by György Kurtág, who has also composed a solo piece for him. As a soloist and chamber musician, he has appeared at major festivals, including the Budapest Spring Festival, the Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival, the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and the Haydn Festival in Fertőd.

He has performed with the Slovenian, Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Valencia, Moscow, and Stavanger Philharmonic Orchestras, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Tonkünstler Orchestra, the Helsinki Avanti! Chamber Orchestra, the Lapland Chamber Orchestra, the Plural Ensemble in Madrid, the Forbidden City Chamber Orchestra in Beijing, the Ars Nova Ensemble, and the Ensemble C Barré in France. In Hungary, he has played with the Budapest Strings, the Anima Musicae Chamber Orchestra, and nearly every symphonic orchestra in the country. He has worked with conductors such as Péter Eötvös, Iván Fischer, Michail Jurowski, Zoltán Kocsis, Ingo Metzmacher, Fabian Panisello, Michael Schønwandt, Walter Weller, Antoni Wit, and Simone Young, as well as performers like Claire Chase, Evelyn Glennie, and Helena Winkelmann. He is a member of the UMZE Contemporary Ensemble.

He teaches composition and music theory at the King St. Stephen Conservatory and cimbalom and chamber music at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music. His recordings can be found at Hungarian Radio and Hungaroton. He is a recipient of the Artisjus Prize

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Balázs Fülei – Pianist

Renowned Hungarian pianist Balázs Fülei boasts a diverse and expansive career, with over thirty piano concertos in his repertoire, including all the concertos by Beethoven, Brahms, and Bartók. His discography includes five solo albums: in 2013, he released works by Bartók and Grieg; in 2015, an album featuring Brahms, Beethoven, Debussy, and compositions by András Gábor Virágh connected to the Moon theme; in 2019, he recorded Beethoven and Schubert's penultimate sonatas and released a Liszt album focusing on late compositions. He has also recorded with the Auer Trio, clarinetist Zsolt Szatmári, and tenor Zoltán Megyesi, including a notable performance of Schubert's *Winterreise*.

Fülei entered the international music scene early, winning the Arcangelo Speranza International Piano Competition in Taranto in 2005, followed by additional awards in Milan, Cagliari, and Moscow. He was selected twice by the International Holland Music Sessions to perform as a soloist on the New Masters On Tour.

His international performances have graced some of the world's most prestigious venues, including the Grand Hall of the Liszt Academy, Palace of Arts in Budapest, Konzerthaus Vienna, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Kioi Hall Tokyo, Tchaikovsky Conservatory Moscow, NCPA Mumbai, and Carnegie Hall in New York, where he made his debut solo recital in 2008. Fülei has also performed with leading symphony orchestras both in Hungary and internationally.

A passionate chamber musician, Fülei regularly performs at renowned festivals such as the Festival de Bellerive, Miami Piano Festival, and Budapest Spring Festival. He is also a key member of the Auer Trio, which released its debut album in 2019, and has performed frequently with the Kodály Quartet, one of Hungary's most celebrated chamber ensembles.

Since 2012, Fülei has been a faculty member at the Liszt Academy, where he serves as Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Chamber Music. He has taught and given masterclasses around the world and is the founder of the Echo Summer Academy, an international program held annually at Károlyi Castle in Fehérvárcsurgó, Hungary.

Fülei's artistry has been recognized with numerous prestigious awards, including the Junior Prima Prize (2010), the Artisjus Prize (2011), the Solti Foundation Prize (2012), and the Diamond Career Grant from Charlotte White's Salon de Virtuosi (2015). In 2017, he was honored with the Liszt Prize, and in 2020, he was named a Steinway Artist by Steinway & Sons.