

A global superstar on the rise

Renowned pianist
Ádám György in
concert, 24 November

KIMBERLY CARRALERO

Hungary has produced many virtuoso pianists, but arguably none since Franz Liszt have exhibited the star potential of Ádám György. György's virtuosity and his sensitive interpretations have won him critical acclaim and built him a fan base worldwide. On Saturday, 24 November at 7:30 pm, György will perform pieces by Bach, Chopin, Liszt and Mendelssohn, as well as improvisations on well-known melodies, in a solo concert at the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy's Great Hall.

György plans his concerts to enhance the audience's enjoyment and understanding of the music. He begins with improvisations on popular pieces that draw the audience in, enabling them to relax and focus on the music. He then moves on to classical masterpieces. His goal is to make classical music popular.

No walls between music

"Some people say we have to break down the walls between classical and popular music," György explains. "I would say that we don't need to break them down, because there are no walls. My goal is to show that music is a language that can communicate our thoughts and emotions better than any other way in this world. It doesn't matter if it is classical or pop music; it is simply music, with a message to deliver and with emotions to explain."

His programme on Saturday will present the audience with improvisations, Bach transcriptions, and virtuoso pieces, including Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, famous for the ecstatically playful chaos of the "Tom and Jerry" chase theme, with its joyful, tumbling climax.

From Prodigy to Cultural Ambassador

Like Franz Liszt (or Ferenc Liszt as he is known to Hungarians), György was a child prodigy who began playing the piano at the age



Pianist Ádám György: "My way of saying 'thank you' for my talents and gifts is to work on them constantly and acquire control of these qualities"

of four. A graduate of the Béla Bartók Conservatory and the Liszt Ferenc Music Academy, he has won many prizes in competitions in Hungary, Austria and Italy.

In 2005, he was invited to join the Steinway Artist community, a signal honour that places him in the company of many of the greatest pianists of all time, including Vladimir Horowitz, Artur Schnabel and Krystian Zimerman. He debuted at Carnegie Hall in New York in 2006. To date he has produced five albums, including his latest, *Plays the Piano*, released this year.

György is the first Hungarian pianist to sign an online contract with a US label. His recordings are now available in 400 online stores. He regularly appears at prestigious concert halls in the United States, Europe and Asia.

The pianist's art

"Audiences are now used to listening to 'perfect' recordings, which make our ears spoiled," says György. "We want to hear the same quality of playing at every concert. Without good technique, this is impossible."

Although technique is important, György insists it is only part of a pianist's art.

"The great cellist János Starker once said that to have a successful world career, it is imperative to have the ability to play well in different time

zones at very short intervals," he says. "This requires concentration and fitness, which are closely connected. There are strategies for improving concentration, and we have to work on it all the time, as well as staying physically fit. The mental and physical states are inseparable."

György believes that the greatest advantage of the Hungarian piano school is that it looks at every detail of each composer's style, and makes not losing energy a priority. He credits his teacher Katalin Halmágyi, the wife of István Antal, one of the most famous pedagogues of the last century, with teaching him "how to play" each composer, how to use all his energy, and how to reuse the energy that comes back through the keyboard.

György also believes an artist must understand his innate gifts, develop them faithfully, and use them well.

"My way of saying 'thank you' for my talents and gifts is to work on them constantly and acquire control of these qualities," explains György.

Art in education

Like Franz Liszt, whose motto was *Genie Oblige*, or "Genius comes with obligations," Ádám has already come to realise that his gifts can be used to help others. The proceeds of his second concert at Carnegie Hall on 6 October

2007 were donated to support Hungarian education.

"I think education is very important," says György, who wrote his dissertation on how music can improve the different parts of the brain. "Art helps education in so many ways, not only by training the brain, but also by attracting donors whose money can be put to good use in the right places. Art can help us understand why we are here, and what our goals and obligations are. Artists should be the 21st century's heroes, by providing a good example to kids and by helping connect people to the arts."

When asked if he has a motto, he mentions the support and inspiration that his father and brother László (who is also his manager) have given him. He credits his father with teaching him, among other things, to "stay human in all circumstances".

"I am always happy to hear positive comments, but I have to stand on the earth with both feet. I am fighting for my goals, and just as I do when I learn a new piece, I believe in trying to make things better in life one step at a time."

Concert Saturday

Tickets to Ádám György's upcoming concert on 24 November can be purchased at the ticket office of the Liszt Ferenc Academy. For more information, go to www.adamgyorgy.com.