



ZHENNI LI-COHEN, piano



Photo: Ryan Brandenburg

Zhenni Li-Cohen's riveting presence and passionate performances have brought audiences to their feet around the world. Hailed for her "torrents of voluptuous sound... Li-Cohen impresses as an artist of tremendous conviction, who fascinates even as she provokes" by *Gramophone Magazine*, "a thrillingly good pianist" by *The New Yorker* and for her "...big, gorgeous tone and a mesmerizing touch" by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Ms. Li-Cohen has performed in such notable venues as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and WQXR's Greene Space in New York, Philadelphia's Kimmel Performing Arts Center, Washington D.C.'s Smithsonian Museum, San Jose's California Theater, the Helsinki Music Center in Finland, the Grieghallen in Norway and the Berliner Philharmonie in Germany.

This season's engagements include concerto appearances with the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the National Orchestra of the Dominican Republic, the Fairbanks, Johns Hopkins, Bucks County and Knoxville Symphony Orchestras, and recitals in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Alaska, South Carolina, and Rhode Island. Deeply committed to the art of recording, Ms. Li-Cohen is passionate about memorializing lesser known works and sharing them with a greater audience as well as traversing the heights of the familiar giants of the repertoire. Fresh off the heels of her critically acclaimed debut album *Mélancolie*, she is currently working on three different recording projects with the Steinway & Sons label. In *Une Lettre*, she delves into the music of Sergei Bortkiewicz, a Ukrainian/Polish composer-pianist of the late 19th century whose life was constantly plagued by the horrors of war. *Legends of the Phoenix Queen* came about from Ms. Li-Cohen's desire to reconnect with her musical heritage, exploring traditional and contemporary Chinese works inspired by folk songs, stories and historic instruments. In *Beethoven's Apotheosis*, the great master's final piano sonata is juxtaposed with the iconic "Hammerklavier" sonata and 32 Variations.

Her difficult early years did not portend a remarkable career. After a year of study with her childhood teacher, she was rejected for lack of talent at the ripe old age of seven years. Intuiting her passion and promise, her father took charge of her music education, learning the piano himself in the process. Eventually, at age eleven, she moved away from home to continue her piano studies while her parents remained behind, working to support her education. Alone in her rental apartment, she spent her free time expressing her emotions through the piano and reading books endlessly. Music was her only refuge, and her prowess soared, until at age sixteen, she emigrated to the United States and was accepted to study at the Juilliard School shortly thereafter, earning Bachelors and Masters degrees in piano performance. She spent her summers in France, leading to a great love and appreciation for French music, particularly that of Claude Debussy, whose *Préludes* were eventually the subject of her dissertation. After further studies at Yale University, she pursued her Doctoral degree at McGill University in Montréal and began concertizing in earnest, earning worldwide recognition as the winner of the 2017 New York Concert Artists Worldwide Debut Audition, Astral Artist's 2016 National Auditions, the Grieg International Competition in Norway, and the unanimous 1st Prize at the Concours Musical de France. Her performances have been broadcast internationally on Canada National CBC Radio, Chicago's WFMT Public Radio, Iowa Public Radio, New York's WQXR, Norwegian National Radio: NPK P2/ NPK Klassisk, Philadelphia's WWFM and WRTI, Texas Public Radio, and West Virginia's WVTF.



In addition to her solo career, she is a deeply devoted chamber musician. She has collaborated with members of the Aeolus, Borromeo, Jasper, Hugo Wolf, and New Orford quartets and has performed at numerous chamber music festivals including Classical Bridge, Fontainebleau Festival, Kneisel Hall, Methow Valley Chamber Music Festival, Music@Menlo, and Ravinia's Steans Music Institute. Her passion for chamber music led her to co-found "The Last Soirée", a multi-genre performing arts series which launched in New York in 2018, and "Fishin' in C Chamber Music Series." a diverse chamber concert series in Philadelphia with the aim of bringing music to underserved areas.

She is immensely grateful to be able to count among her artistic influences many incredible teachers and mentors, including Peter Frankl, Richard Goode, Joseph Kalichstein, Stéphane Lemelin, Seymour Lipkin, Robert McDonald, Mark Salman, Craig Sheppard, and Vera Wilson.

In her spare time, she enjoys learning new languages, looking forward to becoming pentalingual, traveling and meeting people of different cultures.

Zheni Li-Cohen is a Steinway Artist and is proud to be represented by Astral Artists.

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"Zhenni Li's new Steinway release is a bolt from the blue....Her beautiful sound is captured in full dimension and depth in this expertly engineered recording. Li leaves no detail of Schumann's F sharp minor Sonata unattended. The minute scrutiny brought to every element of the score would, in other hands, fragment and shatter the piece. Yet somehow, by dint of passionate identification and sheer force of will, Li pulls it off. Her extravagant and pervasive rubato, which occasionally risks derailing everything she sets in motion, strikes nonetheless as so heartfelt and intrinsic to her emotional response to the music as to be indisputable. There are moments when you wish for more than just a few consecutive measures of steady pulse, but then Li's torrents of voluptuous sound sweep away any reservation....Li impresses as an artist of tremendous conviction, who fascinates even as she provokes."

—*Gramophone*

"...a thrillingly good pianist" —*The New Yorker*

"Zhenni Li...with a big, gorgeous tone and a mesmerizing touch" —*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Li is an extremely expressive artist. She understands not merely the notes on the page but how they should progress, one following the other, to make coherent musical statements....she manages to 'lead' the ear to connect the phrasing and complete the musical structure. This is a very high level of artistry....She presents us with a sort of smoldering undercurrent that reaches deep inside the notes. It's hard to explain; you just have to hear it....In her hands, [Schumann's Piano Sonata No. 1] becomes almost like a fantasy in which the composer's mind wanders through various moods and images, portrayed vividly by this gifted and imaginative artist....fascinating...an artist with a deep emotional commitment to the music she is playing." —*The Art Music Lounge*

"Zhenni Li, a brilliant, sophisticated, and versatile master of piano..." —*Helsingin Sanomat (Finland)*

"a magnetic pianist—with fire and poetry. Everyone should hear her" —*David Dubal*

"Zhenni Li found the quirky harmonic sensibility and strange beauty of Schumann with natural ease, with especially incisive drawing out of inner voices." —*Broad Street Review*

"Li recontextualizes [Schumann's Piano Sonata No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 11 and Bartók's Two Elegies, Op. 8b] effectively. It's an impressive program, both accessible and highly original." —*Allmusic*

"Li is a real personality - she comes across as passionate, driven and resolute." —*Pianist Magazine*