

Zhenni Li, piano

Biography



Photo: Ryan Brandenburg
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Zhenni Li's riveting personality and passionate performances have brought audiences to their feet around the world. Hailed for her "torrents of voluptuous sound," "Li impresses as an artist of tremendous conviction, who fascinates even as she provokes" (*Gramophone*). A winner of Astral's 2016 National Auditions, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has also praised her "big, gorgeous tone and mesmerizing touch." Ms. Li has performed throughout North America, Europe, and Asia, in such venues as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Merkin Concert Hall, WQXR's Greene Space (New York), Philadelphia's Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, San Jose's California Theater, the Grieghallen in Norway, and the Berliner Philharmonie.

Highlights of the past season include recitals in Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall and the Berlin Philharmonie, and her debut CD *Melancholie* for the Steinway & Sons label. Featuring works by Schumann, Lourié, and Bartók, the recording was lauded by the *Art Music Lounge* as "extremely expressive...with a smoldering undercurrent that reaches deep inside the notes...a fascinating album, one that points to an artist with a deep emotional commitment to the music she is playing."

Upcoming performances include concerto appearances with the National Symphony Orchestra of the Dominican Republic, Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra, and the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, and recitals at Oregon's Portland Piano International, Rhode Island's Jamestown Piano Association, and the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series in Chicago, as well as several recording projects, including *Beethoven's 65 Variations* and works of Sergei Bortkiewicz, entitled *Une lettre*, for the Steinway & Sons label.

Recent engagements include recitals at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia's American Philosophical Society, McGill University, and the University of Washington; performances of Beethoven's *Concerto No. 4* with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra under Edward Gardner; Beethoven's *Concerto No. 2* and Rachmaninoff's *Concerto No. 3* with the McGill Symphony Orchestra under Maestro Alexis Hauser and the NYCA Symphony Orchestra under Eduard Zilberkant; and Beethoven's *Concerto No. 5* with the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony with Jason Weinberger. She also appeared as a guest artist for the New York Philharmonic Symposium under maestro Valery Gergiev.

Ms. Li has garnered worldwide recognition, most recently as the winner of the 2017 New York Concert Artists Worldwide Debut Auditions and the Grieg International Competition in Norway, and she was the unanimous First Prize Winner of the Concours Musical de France. She has also been a top prizewinner at the International Russian Piano Competition, Midwest International Piano Competition, the Kosciusko Chopin Piano Competition, and the Heida Hermanns International Piano Competition. Her performances have been broadcast internationally on New York's WQXR, Canada National CBC Radio, Norwegian National Radio: NPK P2/NPK Klassisk, Texas Public Radio, Chicago's WFMT Public Radio, Iowa Public Radio, Philadelphia's WRTI and WWFM, and the Hunan Daily in China.

A deeply devoted chamber musician, Ms. Li has collaborated with the New Orford String Quartet, the Jasper String Quartet, and Quatuor Hugo Wolf, and has appeared in concert series at Ravinia, Pennsylvania's Brandywine Museum, Château de Fontainebleau in France, Salle Redpath and Pollack Hall in Montréal, and the Théâtre de Vevey in Switzerland. Summer festival appearances include Ravinia's Steans Institute, Music@Menlo, Kneisel Hall, Juilliard's ChamberFest, and the Fontainebleau Festival in France.

Zhenni Li holds both a Bachelor's and Master's degree on full scholarship from The Juilliard School, under the tutelage of Seymour Lipkin and Joseph Kalichstein. After receiving an Artist Diploma with Peter Frankl from the Yale School of Music, she completed doctoral studies at the McGill School of Music under Dr. Stéphane Lemelin. She has served as Piano faculty/Chamber Music coach for the McGill School of Music and for the HeifetzPEG Institute. She is the co-founder and Artistic Director of the Fishin' in C chamber music series in Philadelphia's Fishtown neighborhood, and The Last Soirée, a multi-genre performing arts series that launched in New York in 2018.

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Zhenni Li, piano

Acclaim



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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**