

Sir András Schiff

Pianist

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Born in Budapest in 1953 Sir András Schiff began piano lessons at the age of five with Elisabeth Vadász. He subsequently continued his studies at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest with Pál Kadosa, György Kurtág and Ferenc Rados, and with George Malcolm in London.

An important part of his activity are piano recitals, where he is particularly drawn to cyclical programmes; accordingly, he has focused especially on piano works by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann and Bartók. Since the pandemic, the artist no longer announces the programmes for his recitals in advance: He chooses the works for the concert evening to suit the instrument and the hall during the pre-rehearsal in the hall. Having performed with the world's leading orchestras and conductors, it became increasingly important to him to perform the piano concertos of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven under his own direction.

In 1999 he founded the Cappella Andrea Barca, a chamber orchestra consisting of international soloists, chamber musicians and friends with which he has since worked closely as a conductor and soloist, as well as with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. In 2018 he accepted the role of Associate Artist with the Orchestra of the Age Enlightenment, which met his growing interest in performing on period keyboard instruments.

Since his early youth Sir András Schiff has been a passionate chamber musician. From 1989 to 1998 he directed the chamber music festival Musiktage Mondsee, from 1995 to 2013 he and Heinz Holliger were joint artistic directors of the Ittinger Pfingstkonzerte at the Ittingen Charterhouse in Switzerland. Since 1998 he has curated the festival "Omaggio a Palladio" at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza.

The support of young musicians is important to him. He teaches piano and chamber music at Kronberg Academy and the Barenboim-Said Academy and gives frequent masterclasses. In 2014, he founded the mentoring programme "Building Bridges", which provides targeted and sustainable support for talented young pianists.

For 15 years, Sir András Schiff was an exclusive artist on the Decca label; on the occasion of his 70th birthday, a 78-disc edition was released with all albums he had recorded for Decca. Sir András Schiff has been recording exclusively for the ECM label since 1998: The live recordings of all of Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonatas from the Zurich Tonhalle received the highest honours. In 2012 András Schiff won the International Classical Music Award in the category "Solo Instrument. Recording of the Year" for his CD recording of works by Robert Schumann, *Geistervariationen*. His recent recordings include a 2020 album with the clarinetist and composer Jörg Widmann that features Brahms's Clarinet Sonatas op.120 alongside intermezzi for piano by Jörg Widmann dedicated to András Schiff, a 2021 recording of both of Johannes Brahms's piano concertos with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and a 2023 recording of key works of J.S. Bach on a clavichord.

In 2017 his book "Music Comes Out of Silence" was published by Bärenreiter and Henschel including essays and conversations with the feature writer Martin Meyer about his basic artistic views, his playing techniques and methods of interpretation and his professional experiences as a pianist and conductor, which has been translated into several languages and was reissued in 2024.

In spring 2011 Sir András Schiff attracted attention because of his opposition to the alarming political developments in Hungary and, in view of the ensuing attacks on him from some Hungarian Nationalists, decided not to perform again in his home country. However, now that Péter Magyar was elected as the new Prime Minister in April 2026, Sir András Schiff is once again keen to perform in Hungary.

In March 2025 he had cancelled all further planned appearances in the United States in protest against the policies of Donald Trump and his supporters.

András Schiff has received numerous international prizes and honours.

In June 2006 he was made an honorary member of the Beethoven House in Bonn for his exceptional work as a Beethoven interpreter. He was the recipient of the Robert Schumann Prize of the City of Zwickau and the 'Order Pour le mérite for Sciences and Arts' in 2011. In 2012, he was awarded the Grand Cross of Merit with Star of the Federal Republic of Germany, and in 2022, the Bach Medal of the City of Leipzig as one of the most important Bach interpreters of our time.

In 2008 he was honoured with the Wigmore Hall Medal in London for his 30 years of musical activity there. In 2012 he was appointed "Special Supernumerary Fellow of Balliol College" (Oxford). In 2013, he received the Royal Philharmonic Society's highest honour, the Gold Medal, for his outstanding musical work. He received honorary doctorates from the University of Leeds (2014) and the Royal College of Music (2018). In June 2014, he was made a Knight Bachelor by Queen Elizabeth II for his services to music.

In 2021, Sir András Schiff received the Antonín Dvořák Prize in Prague for his many years of promoting Czech composers through his concert activities all over the world and his numerous recordings.

Sir András Schiff has been an honorary citizen of the city of Vicenza since December 2014 and an honorary member of the Accademia Olimpica di Vicenza since 2016, from which he received the "Lauro Olimpico" in 2023 for his exceptional contribution to the enhancement of Vicenza's artistic and cultural heritage. In March 2024, he was awarded the "Una vita nella musica" prize by the Teatro La Fenice in Venice.

In 2012 he received the Golden Mozart Medal from the International Mozarteum Foundation Salzburg and he was appointed honorary member of the Wiener Konzerthaus. At his 66th appearance at the Salzburg Festival in August 2023 he was awarded the Festival Brooch with Rubies as "An essential artist who has made Festival history, one of the most important pianists of our time, and a true friend of the Salzburg Festival." In June 2024, Sir András Schiff was awarded the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art I Class, and he received the Bösendorfer Ring, which had previously been awarded to Wilhelm Backhaus and Paul Badura-Skoda.

In 2025, Sir András Schiff will be awarded the Praemium Imperiale, the most prestigious international art prize for music, painting, sculpture, architecture, theatre and film. The prize is presented annually by the Japan Art Association and is considered the 'Nobel Prize of the Arts'.

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Kontakt: Mag. Nora Pötter-Grabko | poetter@rbartists.at | +43 650 700 7477

Andreas Neudauer | neudauer@rbartists.at | +43 660 300 2908

Mag. Vera Kalman | kalman@rbartists.at | +43 660 300 2911