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FRANZ LISZT CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

The Hungarian Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra was founded in 1963, by former students of the Franz Liszt Music Academy in Budapest. The first artistic director of the ensemble was Frigyes Sándor, a renowned professor of the Academy. After his death it was János Rolla, the excellent violinist, who took over the leadership in 1979 as a concertmaster.

During this nearly half of a century the orchestra have built up an exceptional international reputation which has been underlined by concerts in more than 50 countries, including the Carnegie Hall in New York, the Sydney Opera House, the Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. They regularly give concerts in almost all countries in Europe, and performed among others at the famous festivals of Ascona, Besançon, Edinburgh, Flandria, Helsinki, Luzern, Montreux, Prades, Salzburg, Santander, Moritzburg, and Menton. They have been invited several times to the United States and Japan, and made trips to South America (including highly successful concerts in Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo), India, and China as well.

The first official concert of the orchestra was held in Budapest, 18 March 1963. Since then they have played with exceptional soloists like Sviatoslav Richter, Yehudi Menuhin, Jean-Pierre Rampal, David Oistrakh, Henryk Szeryng, Isaac Stern, Mstislav Rostropovich, Vadim Repin, Zoltán Kocsis, Maurice André, Martha Argerich, Pierre Fournier, Heinz Holliger, András Schiff, György Pauk, Péter Frankl, Hansjörg Schellenberger, János Starker, Midori, and the Laredo Trio. Their repertory spans almost the entire history of music from Monteverdi, Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart to the romantics and to the 20th century composers. The orchestra has recorded more than 200 discs for publishers such as the Sony Classical, the CBS, the Teldec, EMI, Erato, Denon or the Hungarian Hungaroton. The orchestra was awarded the Grand Prix of the French Académie de Disque in Paris on three different occasions and has the "Record of the Year" award in Hungary many times.

The outstanding work of the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra has been rewarded by numerous prizes. In October 2001 they were given the Hungaroton Prize, in August 2003 the city of Sárospatak granted the Orchestra the Pro Urbe Prize, and in the same year Árpád Göncz, President of the Hungarian Republic donated the Diplom of the Hungary in Europe Foundation to the Orchestra. On 25 March 2006, the 125th anniversary of the birth of Béla Bartók, the Orchestra received a Bartók Memorial Statue from the Board of Hungarian Art and the Herendi Porcelain Factory as recognition of the "worthy continuation of Bartók's legacy". Since 1991 the home of the orchestra has been the very calm and peaceful Óbudai Társaskör.

The rich history of nearly fifty years has brought not only extraordinary success, but also new challenges. The orchestra has continuously been seeking new types of co productions with excellent artists from other areas. They played in the theatrical performance of Amadeus, worked with the Ballet of Győr, the Budapest Klezmer Band, the famous jazz band of Roby Lakatos, and played with Ferenc Snétberger guitar player, too. Performing classical music in the traditional way, however, has always remained the main profile of the group, and productions with Emmanuel Pahud, Vadim Gluzman, Denis Matsuev, Gustav Rivinius, Markus Stockhausen, Gábor Boldoczki, Andrea Rost or Steven Ysserlis proved to be memorable moments of the past few years.

There has always been efforts in the Orchestra to promote young talents, therefore they regularly perform with young Hungarian composers, and give concerts at universities and elementary schools. In the last three years the Orchestra gave concerts among others in the Alte Oper of Frankfurt, in the Düsseldorf Tonhalle, at the Mecklenburg-



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Vorpommern Festival, and in the newly built Operahouse of Muscat, Oman. In the Liszt year of 2011 they visited the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing, and were invited to the very prestigious China-Shanghai International Arts Festival. In 2012 the Orchestra made its first ever trip to Transylvania, and to the birthplace of Mstyslav Rostropovich, Baku, Azerbaijan. They also performed in Madrid, at the opening ceremony of both the Liszt year and the Hungarian EU presidency at the Auditorio Nacional, where the concert was visited by Juan Carlos I, King of Spain, and his wife Sofia as well.

János Rolla, concertmeister

János Rolla began playing the violin at the age of 5. He graduated from the Franz Liszt Music Academy of Budapest in 1969, where the famous violinist, Dénes Kovács, taught him. Though he became famous in the world's prestigious concert halls primarily as a chamber musician, he is also an excellent soloist. As leader and founding member of the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra he has been the artistic director since 1979. In appreciation for his work in spreading Hungarian musical culture both at home and abroad he was awarded the "Kossuth Prize" in 1985, the highest cultural distinction in Hungary. In 1992 he became "Chevalier de la Culture" in France; in 1994 he was given the „Cross of Order of the Hungarian Republic” by the President; and since August 2004 he possesses the „Cross of Order with a Star of the Hungarian Republic”. He is the founder of the Zemplén Art Festival, and, as recognition of his efforts, he was elected honorary citizen of Sárospatak in 1996. Since 2008 he has been the head of the Chamber Music Department of the Franz Liszt Music Academy of Budapest. During his career he always followed the aim to progress the famous Hungarian string traditions all over the world. His work and enthusiasm were praised in numerous personal confessions of soloists with whom he, and the orchestra, played together during the years.

