

Janina Fialkowska

Beloved the world over for her exquisite pianism, Janina Fialkowska has enchanted audiences for over forty years with her glorious lyrical sound, her sterling musicianship and her profound sense of musical integrity. Blending her vast experience with her refreshingly natural approach „Fialkowska has become an artist of rare distinction as well as retaining all the virtuosity of her youth“ (La Presse, Montreal). The “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” called her “one of the Grandes Dames of piano playing.”

Celebrated for her interpretations of the classical and romantic repertoire, she is particularly distinguished as one of the great interpreters of the piano works of Chopin and Mozart. She has also won acclaim as a champion of the music of Franz Liszt as well as of twentieth-century Polish composers, both in concert and on disc.

Born to a Canadian mother and a Polish father in Montreal, Janina Fialkowska started to study the piano with her mother at the age of four. Eventually she entered the Ecole de Musique Vincent d'Indy, studying under the tutelage of Mlle. Yvonne Hubert. The University of Montreal awarded her both advanced degrees of “Baccalaureat” and “Maitrise” by the time she was only 17.

In 1969, her career was greatly advanced by two events: winning the first prize in the Radio Canada National Talent Festival and travelling to Paris to study with Yvonne Lefebure. One year later, she entered the Juilliard School of Music in New York, where she first studied with Sascha Gorodnitzki and later became his assistant for five years.

In 1974 her career was launched by Arthur Rubinstein after her prize-winning performance at his inaugural Master Piano Competition in Israel.

She has performed with the foremost North American orchestras, among them the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Houston Symphony and the Pittsburgh Symphony as well as with all of the principal Canadian orchestras, including the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra of Ottawa and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

In touring Europe and Asia, Ms Fialkowska has appeared as guest artist with such prestigious orchestras as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, the Halle Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, London's Philharmonia Orchestra, the BBC Symphony, the Royal Philharmonic, the Scottish National Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic and the French and Belgium National Radio Orchestras as well as the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed with the Israel Philharmonic, the Osaka Philharmonic and the Hong Kong Philharmonic and has worked with such renowned conductors as Sir Andrew Davis, Charles Dutoit, Hans Graf, Bernard Haitink, Kyril Kondrashin, Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Georg Solti, Leonard Slatkin, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and Klaus Tennstedt as well as those represented by the “younger” generation such as Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Thomas Dausgaard, Eiji Oue, Alexander Shelley, Michal Nesterowicz, Fabien Gabel and Grzegorz Nowak.

She has won special recognition for a series of important premieres, most notably the world premiere performance of a newly discovered piano concerto by Franz Liszt with the Chicago Symphony in 1990. She has also given the world premiere of a Piano Concerto by Libby Larsen with the Minnesota Orchestra (1991), of the piano concerto by Marjan Mozetich with the Kingston Orchestra (2000) and in 2010 with the Quebec Symphony Orchestra the world premiere of the Chopin inspired piano concerto „Prelude Variations“ by John Burge, written for and dedicated to Janina Fialkowska. In addition she played the North American premiere of the Piano Concerto by Sir Andrzej Panufnik with the Colorado Symphony (1992) and the Canadian premiere of the Piano Concerto by Witold Lutoslawski with the Toronto Symphony (2013).

Janina Fialkowska was the Founding Director of the hugely successful "Piano Six" project and its successor "Piano Plus". This latest project brought together some of Canada's greatest Classical pianists, instrumentalists and vocalists with Canadians who, for either geographical or financial reasons, would otherwise be unable to hear this caliber of "live" classical performance. In 2000 „Piano Six“ won one of Canada's top Arts' awards, the Chalmers Award.

In 1992 the CBC produced a sixty-minute television documentary, „The World of Janina Fialkowska“ that aired to great acclaim throughout Canada. This program won a Special Jury Prize at the 1992 San Francisco International Film Festival. More recently, the CBC produced in 2013 the 45 minute performance-documentary "An evening with Janina Fialkowska" based on a recital she gave in Montreal in February that year.

Janina Fialkowska is much sought-after for her master classes worldwide. She is the founder of the "International Piano Academy" held annually at the Bavarian Music Academy in Marktoberdorf, Germany. There she passes on the traditions of her own teachers from the Russian piano school of Anton Rubinstein and the French school of Alfred Cortot as well as her unique musical experiences as Arthur Rubinstein's protégé.

She also serves regularly as a jury member of some of the world's most prestigious international piano competitions.

Ms Fialkowska is an „Officer of the Order of Canada“ and holds honorary doctorates from Acadia University, Queen's University and Wilfrid Laurier University. She is the recipient of the „2012 Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement in Classical Music“, Canada's foremost honor for excellence in the performing arts. She was the first woman instrumentalist to be so honored.

In January 2002 at the onset of a major European tour encompassing eight different countries, Ms. Fialkowska's career was brought to a dramatic halt by the discovery of a tumour in her left arm. After successful surgery to remove the cancer, Ms Fialkowska underwent further surgery in January 2003; a rare muscle-transfer procedure. After 18 months of performing the Ravel and Prokofiev „concertos for the left hand“ which she transcribed for her right hand she has resumed her two-handed career beginning with a tremendously successful and highly emotional recital held in Germany in January 2004. Ms Fialkowska has recorded for RCA Red Seal, Naxos, CBC Records, Opening Day and since 2008 she has worked exclusively for the ATMA classique label producing eleven tremendously successful recordings with them so far.

Her discography includes CDs with several solo albums featuring music by Chopin, Liszt, Schubert and Szymanowski as well as the highly praised CD, „La jongleuse - Salon pieces and encores.“ She has also recorded her popular CD of the Paderewski piano concerto with the Polish National Radio Orchestra, the rarely heard piano concerto by Moritz Moszkowski, the three Liszt piano concertos with the Calgary Philharmonic, Hans Graf conducting and a live-recording of the two Chopin piano concertos with the Vancouver Symphony, Bramwell Tovey conducting ("Definite concerto disc", The Guardian). Released to the highest critical acclaim were performances of piano concertos by Chopin and Mozart in authentic versions consisting of piano solo and string quintet accompaniment. "Chopin Recital" made it into the Gramophone classic charts as well as among the London's Sunday Times Top 10 "Best classical recordings of the year". It also won a nomination for the "International Classical Music Award 2011". Bryce Morrison raved in Gramophone Magazine about her double album "Chopin: Etudes, Impromptus, Sonatas": "Indeed, lesser mortals may well weep with envy at such unfaltering authority." Her CD „Liszt Recital“ was hailed as „The most beautiful Liszt CD of this decade“ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) and the London Times stated: „... the playing is magical.“ In 2013 she received the coveted „Instrumentalist of the year“ award from the BBC Music Magazine for her recording "Chopin

Recital No.2". "Chopin Recital No.3" won the 2018 "Juno", Canada's highest recording award in the category "Classical Album of the Year 2018 (solo or chamber)."

Highlights from the 2014-2015 season included the release of her much-anticipated recording of the complete Chopin Mazurkas („...her masterwork“, FonoForum Magazine, Germany) as well as a selection of Edvard Grieg's „Lyric Pieces“ („The Canadian is an interpreter of sublime inspiration ...once again identifies her as a musician of extraordinary sensibility and captivating, artless purity ... - The Telegraph, London), two recitals at London's Wigmore Hall, a tour with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, concerts with the Vancouver Symphony and her debut at the Klavier-Festival Ruhr replacing her venerable colleague Maria João Pires on two days' notice for which she received ovations from the audience and a rave review in the Frankfurter Allgemeine (... and even in the encore a seemingly beaten-to-death Chopin waltz can be transformed into something great and unknown ...).

On the occasion of her 65th birthday in May of 2016 a "Birthday Celebration Tour" took her around the world with concerts in Japan, Germany, Canada, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In 2017 she was a year that kept her particularly busy acting as a juror on international piano competitions traveling to China, Russia, Hungary, South Korea, Israel, Finland, the Netherlands as well as performing concerts in Germany, Austria, Italy and England (playing a recital at Wigmore Hall and touring with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra).

Due to serious health reasons Ms Fialkowska had to cancel most of her concerts in 2018. She resumed concertizing again in October that year with recital and orchestral appearances in Germany and the UK. She performed two recital programs in London and celebrated the Republic of Poland's 100th anniversary with the BBC Symphony Orchestra performing the Paderewski piano concerto in London's Barbican as well as in the award-winning Philharmonic Hall of Szczecin, Poland. She will also perform several recitals and orchestral concerts in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Spain. Ms Fialkowska returns to her native Canada for a tour in Spring of 2019 and later that year again for a tour of summer festivals. A new recording of French piano music will appear in October on the ATMA Classique label. She will also continue with the 6th edition of her own "International Piano Academy" in Bavaria and will be acting once again as a juror of the world's most prestigious piano competitions.

Ms Fialkowska and her husband, cultural manager Harry Oesterle, reside in Bavaria, Germany.

2018/19 season, as of February 2019