

ELISABETH LEONSKAJA, PIANO

Elisabeth Leonskaja has long been among the most celebrated pianists of our times. In a world dominated by commercial media, she has remained true to herself and to music, in the tradition of great Russian musicians such as David Oistrakh, Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels. Like them, she has always stood for the quintessence of music even under the most difficult political conditions. And like them, she has never been interested in showy appearances. On stage, however, she overwhelms the audience with the power of the music; this has been the substance and the goal of her life.

Born into a Russian family in Tbilisi, Elisabeth Leonskaja gave her first concerts at the age of eleven. While still a student at the Moscow Conservatory, she won prizes at major international piano competitions, including the Enescu Prize, the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud Competition and the Queen Elisabeth of Belgium Prize. Her musical development was decisively influenced by her collaboration with Sviatoslav Richter who recognized her exceptional talent and encouraged her by inviting her to play duo concerts with him. This musical and personal friendship continued until Richter's death in 1997.

Leonskaja left the Soviet Union in 1978 and made Vienna her home. Since then, she has performed as soloist with the world's finest orchestras and has worked with many renowned conductors. She is a regular guest at numerous international festivals, such as the Wiener Festwochen, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Schuertiade Schwarzenberg, the Spring Festival Tokyo and the December Nights in Moscow. Her name is also to be found among international recitalists in the most prominent piano series of major musical centers off the world from Paris to Vienna to Melbourne.

In addition to her many solo engagements, chamber music remains an important part of her work. She has performed many times with string quartets, such as the Belcea, Borodin Artemis and Jerusalem quartets. She also had a longstanding musical friendship with the Alban Berg Quartet, and their piano quintet recordings are legendary.

Numerous LPs and CDs bear witness to the pianist's high artistic level, and her recordings have repeatedly been awarded prizes. The most recent appeared on eaSonus (www.easonus.com). "Paris", with works by Ravel, Enescu and Debussy, was named the Solo Recording of the Year 2014 by the ICMA Jury. "Saudade", an homage to Russian culture with works by Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff, was released in November 2017. A complete recording of Franz Schubert's piano sonatas in two volumes of four CDs each has been available since April 2016 and May 2019 respectively. A double-CD with variations and sonatas by Robert Schumann followed in January 2020.

In her second homeland, Austria, Elisabeth Leonskaja is an honorary member of the Vienna Konzerthaus. In 2006 she was awarded the Austrian Cross of Honor for Science and Art, First Class, for her outstanding service to the culture of the country. It is the highest award in Austria. In Georgia, she was named Priestess of Art in 2016, this country's highest artistic honor. In 2020 she received the International Classical Music (ICMA) Lifetime Achievement Award.