

CYPRIEN KATSARIS

“A strong individualist with glittering fingers... He has a pronounced musical profile which puts him in a class far above the cut and dried exponents of the international school of modern pianists.”

(Excerpt taken from “The Great Pianists – from Mozart to the present”, by Senior Music Critic Emeritus of the New York Times, Harold C. Schonberg)

Cyprien Katsaris, the French-Cypriot pianist and composer, was born on May 5th 1951 in Marseilles. He first began to play the piano at the age of four, in Cameroon where he spent his childhood. His first teacher was Marie-Gabrielle Louwerse.

A graduate of the Paris Conservatoire where he studied piano with Aline van Barentzen and Monique de la Bruchollerie (piano First Prize, 1969), as well as chamber music with René Leroy and Jean Hubeau (First Prize, 1970), he won the International Young Interpreters Rostrum-Unesco (Bratislava 1977), the First Prize in the International Cziffra Competition (Versailles 1974) and he was the only western-European prize-winner at the 1972 Queen Elisabeth of Belgium International Competition. He was also awarded the Albert Roussel Foundation Prize (Paris 1970) and the Alex de Vries Foundation Prize (Antwerp 1972).

He gave his first public concert in Paris, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on May 8th 1966, as a “Knight” of the youth competition “The Kingdom of Music”; he performed the *Hungarian Fantasy* by Franz Liszt, with the Orchestre Symphonique d’Ile-de-France conducted by René-Pierre Chouteau.

His major international career includes performances with the world’s greatest orchestras, most notably the Berlin Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra Washington D.C., Detroit Symphony, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Toronto Symphony, The Philharmonia (London), The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, The Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, The NHK Symphony Orchestra (Tokyo), Japan Philharmonic Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Chamber Orchestra of Europe and the City of Mexico Philharmonic Orchestra whose inaugural concert’s and subsequent tour he was the featured soloist (1978). He has collaborated with conductors such as Leonard Bernstein, Eugene Ormandy, Mstislav Rostropovich, Sir Simon Rattle, Kurt Masur, Christoph von Dohnanyi, Charles Dutoit, Antal Dorati, Ivan Fischer, Eliahu Inbal, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Kent Nagano, James Conlon, Sir Charles Mackerras, Rudolf Barshai, Sandor Végh, Vladimir Fedoseyev... and Karl Münchinger, who on the festive occasion of his farewell concert in 1986, with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, personally invited Mr. Katsaris to perform the Haydn *D major Concerto*.

Mr. Katsaris has recorded extensively for Teldec (Grand Prix du Disque Frédéric Chopin, Warsaw 1985; Grand Prix du Disque Franz Liszt, Budapest 1984 and 1989; British Music Retailer’s Association’s Award 1986; Record of the Year 1984, Germany, for the *9th Symphony* of Beethoven/Liszt), Sony Classical, EMI, Deutsche Grammophon, BMG-RCA, Decca, Pavane, and now on his own label, Piano 21.

His discography consists of solo works by most of the greatest masters as well as works for piano and orchestra including Bach Concertos with the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Brahms’s *Concerto no. 2* with Eliahu Inbal conducting the Philharmonia (London), both Concertos of Mendelssohn with Kurt Masur and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (of which Mendelssohn had been music Director), and the complete Concertos by Mozart, recorded live and performed in Salzburg and Vienna with Yoon K. Lee and the Salzburger Kammerphilharmonie.

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In addition to the standard repertory, Cyprien Katsaris has recorded, as world premières, long lost works such as the Liszt/Tchaikovsky's *Concerto in the Hungarian style* with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Beethoven's own piano arrangement of his Ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* and Gustav Mahler's original piano version of *Das Lied von der Erde* with Mezzo Brigitte Fassbaender and Tenor Thomas Moser.

In addition to his activities as a soloist Mr. Katsaris founded the "Katsaris Piano Quintet". They have received enthusiastic responses from both the press and audiences in the Americas, Europe and Japan.

In 1992, the Japanese NHK TV produced with Cyprien Katsaris a thirteen programs series on Frédéric Chopin which included masterclasses and performances. On October 17th 1999, the New-york concertgoers offered Mr. Katsaris a standing-ovation in Carnegie Hall for his recital dedicated to Frédéric Chopin, performed on the day of his 150th death Anniversary. This concert was recorded (audio and video) and has been issued on the Piano 21 Label. Two famous film directors, Claude Chabrol and Oscar-winner François Reichenbach, have made films of Cyprien Katsaris in live concert performances.

Mr. Katsaris has been a member of the jury of the following International Competitions: Chopin (Warsaw 1990), Liszt (Utrecht 1996), Vendôme Prize (Paris 2000), and Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud-Ville de Paris (2001).

He has also conducted masterclasses at the Mannes College of Music, in New York City, the University of Toronto, the Salzburg Mozarteum, the Arts Academy in Mexico, The Academy of Performing Arts in Hong-Kong, and the Royal Conservatory of The Hague.

He was appointed in 1977 Artistic Director of the International Festival of Echternach in Luxembourg.

Mr. Katsaris's work has been honoured and recognized by the following awards: "Knight of Merit of Cameroon" (1975), "Artist of Unesco for Peace" (1997), "Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters" (France, 2000). He also received the "Vermeil Medal of the City of Paris" (2001).

"I was lucky enough to hear Cyprien Katsaris in his dazzling interpretation of Rachmaninov's *Third Concerto* and also in his magnificent performance of the last piece of my *Vingt Regards*. His steel technique, his ardour spirit and his authority, and lastly his brilliance, make Cyprien Katsaris a marvellous pianist, and I have the fullest confidence in his future."

Olivier Messiaen

"I am convinced that Cyprien Katsaris represents the greatest artistic value of his generation."

György Cziffra

"He is a major pianist and, even better, a major artist. And he has a true feeling for the romantic style."

Harold C. Schonberg