

Vadym Kholodenko Gold Medalist, Fourteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition

Vadym Kholodenko has emerged as one of the most musically dynamic and technically gifted performers of his generation, heralded for interpretations that are “impeccable, tasteful and vibrant, and also something more: imaginative” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*). Winner of the coveted gold medal and all special prizes at the Fourteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2013, he is forging an international career throughout Europe, Asia, and North America to great acclaim.

The 2016–2017 season finds Mr. Kholodenko concluding his three-year artistic partnership with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, which includes live recordings of the complete Prokofiev piano concertos released by harmonia mundi, in addition to chamber projects and other concerto performances. This season will also be highlighted by London appearances at the LSO St. Luke’s and with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, performances of the Scriabin Piano Concerto with the Orquesta Sinfonica de RTVE in Madrid, and a tour of Asia with appearances in Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, and Beijing. In the United States, he will make his Washington, D.C. recital debut at the Phillips Collection.

Mr. Kholodenko has collaborated with distinguished conductors including Leonard Slatkin, Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Yuri Bashmet, Carl St. Clair, Vladimir Spivakov, Valdimir Fedoseyev, and Cristian Mecalaru. In North America, he has appeared with the Atlanta, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, and San Diego Symphony Orchestras, among others, and traveled extensively across the United States for solo recitals. Internationally, he has performed with the orchestras of BBC Scottish, Kristiansand, Malmö, Madrid RTVE, Qatar, Norwegian Radio, and Sydney, and made recital debuts in Paris, Lucerne, Singapore, Budapest, Porto, and appeared throughout Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Japan. In 2013, he held a residency at the Mariinsky Concert Hall where he was named artist of the month by Valery Gergiev. Festival appearances include the Aspen Summer Music, Brevard Music Center, Flâneries Musicales de Reims, Pharos Chamber Music, Stars of the White Nights, and Festival del Sole.

A committed chamber musician, Mr. Kholodenko took home the 2013 Cliburn prize for best performance of a piano quintet with the Brentano Quartet. He has also collaborated with the Enso Quartet, violinists Vadim Repin and Alena Baeva, and cellist Alexander Buzlov. Also interested in composing, he performed a stunning cadenza in Mozart’s Concerto No. 21 in C Major, K. 467 during the Cliburn Competition’s Final Round—which he composed himself on the plane from Moscow to the Competition in Fort Worth

Mr. Kholodenko’s first recording for harmonia mundi was released in November 2013, featuring Stravinsky’s *Petrouchka* and the complete Liszt Transcendental Etudes. A disc of the Grieg Piano Concerto and Saint-Saëns Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Norwegian Radio Orchestra and Miguel Harth-Bedoya followed in August 2015 and was selected Editor’s Choice by *Gramophone* magazine, which declared it “a truly outstanding recording.” The first Prokofiev recording with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra was released in February 2016 featuring the Second and Fifth Piano Concertos, for which *Gramophone* again raved, “for a heroic reading of singular power, Kholodenko and Harth-Bedoya can scarcely be beaten.” The second CD with Prokofiev Concertos Nos. 1, 3, and 4 will be released in 2017.

Born in Kiev, Vadym Kholodenko is the first musician in his family. He began his studies at Kiev’s Mykola Lysenko Special Music School under Natalia Grydneva and Borys Fedorov. He made his first appearances in the United States, China, Hungary, and Croatia at the age of 13. In 2005, he moved to Moscow to study at the Moscow State Conservatoire with Vera Gornostaeva. Under her tutelage, he won top prizes at the 2011 Schubert, 2010 Sendai, and 2010 Maria Callas International Piano Competitions.

2013 CLIBURN COMPETITION AWARDS:

Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Gold Medal

Steven De Groote Memorial Award for Best Performance of Chamber Music

Beverley Taylor Smith Award for Best Performance of a New Work

July 2016

Please disregard all previous biographical information about Mr. Vadym Kholodenko. All changes to this biography must be approved.

Selected Press Quotes

“One of Kholodenko’s two most notable qualities as a pianist are his stunning ringing tone, which allows him to leave notes hanging in the air longer than the physics of acoustics would suggest is possible. The other is an opposite crisp and spectacular digital speed... There is little doubt that he is a pianist of stature.” – *Los Angeles Times*

“Vadym Kholodenko, gold medallist of the 2013 Cliburn, is at a stage in his career when his artistic maturation seems to burgeon from recording to recording. Here he is in his element, with forthright, lithe and virile performances.

Kholodenko takes to the considerably greater technical and musical challenges of the Second Concerto like a duck to water... for a heroic reading of singular power, Kholodenko and Harth-Bedoya can scarcely be beaten.” – *Gramophone*

“...a performance of steely brilliance and polished projection.” – *The Sydney Morning Herald*

“Pianist Vadym Kholodenko was impressive in hi ASO debut... sparkingly clean, technically astute, and yet sensitive when called upon by the score and without excessive gesture or unnecessary bravado.” – *ArtsATL*

“[Scriabin’s 24 Preludes Opus 11 and Fantasie Opus 28] could not have been played more beautifully, coming as they did with gorgeous colors, sensitive rubato, and voices not just sounding clearly, but as if breathing independently.” – *Boston Musical Intelligencer*

“Vadym Kholodenko spins pure gold.” – *Audiophile Audition*

“With Kholodenko, the instrument, and the [Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1], showed refreshing vitality, showcasing a thoughtful and enterprising talent. The pianist made no gesture toward emulating Cliburn. He found absorbing melodic shadings, glittering passage work, and a sense of sound that erased any fears about the stereotypes of the competition winner.” —*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“...he brought such a refined level of sophistication to his phrasing that made one marvel at the beauty of the music instead of his level of virtuosity.” —*The Strait Times*

“Returning to Bass Performance Hall, where he took first prize in the competition back in June, the 27-year-old Ukrainian pianist Vadym Kholodenko put on a pretty amazing display of virtuosity—and, not a virtue inevitably linked, musical depth.

The first half was devoted to the vast, rambling Seventh Sonata, subtitled Winter Wind, by Nikolai Medtner... Clearly, Kholodenko is deeply committed to the piece, and it’s hard to imagine a more commanding performance—no small accomplishment, given some fearsome technical challenges.

Kholodenko brought delicious dreaminess to an arrangement of a Tchaikovsky Lullaby, its melody seeming floated on harmonic cotton candy. The Polka de V.R. was served up with delightful playfulness, the Kreisler Liebesleid with grand-manner rubato. Finally, the longer and more flamboyant version of Kreisler’s Liebesfreud was tossed off with wit, charm and apparently effortless brilliance.

The more I listened to Kholodenko’s warmly personalized performances of these pieces, the more I was convinced he has studied Rachmaninoff’s recordings. This was music-making as if from another world, far removed from the calculated brilliance more often heard today.” —*Dallas Morning News*

“Kholodenko, gold medalist in the 2013 Van Cliburn Competition, performed Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s massive Piano Concerto No. 1. The demanding piece was, as expected, forceful and lavish, but it was Kholodenko’s playfulness that brought a renewed level of delight to this familiar work, commanding applause after the first movement, multiple curtain calls at the work’s conclusion, and another prolonged ovation after his encore.

He brought forth an array of characters, attaching different attitudes to the sequencing lines and captivating cadenzas. A ferocious yet nuanced performer...” —*Kansas City Star*

“Most amazing of all to me was Kholodenko’s fascinatingly contrapuntal cadenza for the Mozart concerto he played. He wrote it himself, *while on the plane flying to Ft. Worth*. Now that shows the guts of a true superartist.” —*San Francisco Classical Voice*

“Kholodenko, with his masterful performance astonished us with the power and beauty of his playing...

We were hearing transcendental pianistic performances that demonstrated technical mastery of the highest order, plus superb musicianship that gave these performances a sense of inevitability.

It was pure spun magic, and Kholodenko had a little surprise for us at the end when in the blink of an eye, the texture turned suddenly pianissimo and a new melody emerged. It was the kind of magical performance that made you hold your breath." —*Peninsula Reviews*

"An astonishingly gifted player with transparent tone and supremely fine touch, he gave an enthralling performance of an all-Rachmaninoff program that combined nuanced shadings, brooding intensity, dazzling virtuosity, and bone-dry wit.

From the first bars, Kholodenko's technique was mesmerizing, clean and clear even in the most dense passages; the sound was like a deep, powerful river that you could see through to the bed. His manner at the keyboard recalled the image of the great Soviet pianists, sober and extremely disciplined, drawing controlled power from his back to his arched fingers and showing little on his face but pure concentration. Yet at the same time he suggested a wry sense of humor... in the second half he had much of the audience laughing after Rachmaninoff's transcription of the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" — "scherzo" is Italian for "joke," and his comic timing was impeccable." —*The Oregonian*

"His brilliant and sweeping account of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 was the highlight so far of the finals... He took delight in the score's acrobatic flights and whirlwind passagework, while also bringing affectionate nuances to lyrical episodes. Although the concerto abounds in writing that could emphasize the piano's percussive side, Kholodenko applied enough pinpoint clarity and deftness of touch to avoid harsh sounds. His attention to texture and shape was as fine as his contact with Slatkin and the orchestra, who were at their alert and poetic best." —*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"Kholodenko was, well, awesome. Anyone who supposes that the Soviet school of pianism collapsed along with the empire will have to find another way of explaining the robust colour, vibrant rhythm and superb ear for coordination he applied to Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 on Friday night.

This was not simply a display of grand tone and steely technique, but a case study in how to put such attributes to consistently musical use. Even the orchestra under Slatkin sounded inspired." —*Montreal Gazette*

"Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 also went well on Sunday, particularly in the scampering finale. What branded this performance as distinctive rather than merely successful were Kholodenko's own cadenzas, written in a classical style and with finely wrought counterpoint that few enough composers these days (let alone pianists) can produce.

Did Kholodenko spend a lot of time piecing those cadenzas together? "I wrote them on the airplane," he said at the conference, eliciting another laugh. This guy has confidence." —*Montreal Gazette*

“Suffice it to say, Kiev-born pianist Vadym Kholodenko, 26, brought down the house with his performance of Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major. It was a mesmerizing and exhilarating performance, and the Fort Worth crowd cheered him like a rock star.” —*Cincinnati Enquirer*

“For Kholodenko, that was Mozart’s C Major Concerto.... He was able to communicate its joy from the first moments, and added his own tasteful embellishments. His cadenzas were fascinating and well-constructed, calling upon techniques such as imitation and fugue and with unexpected harmonic turns. I found them inventive and stylistically true. He built excitement with momentum, but pulled back to savor a phrase. The slow movement was deeply felt, and one was captivated by the beauty of his phrasing.” —*Cincinnati Enquirer*

“I have the distinct feeling that Ukrainian pianist Vadym Kholodenko, 26, is in love with the piece. He was at complete ease throughout, and his performance on the Cliburn’s American Steinway (mirabile dictu, no New York Hamburg tonight!) never lost me. A delightful bonus was that the Fort Worth Symphony, led by Leonard Slatkin, listened and responded to Kholodenko’s energy in a way I hadn’t heard up to this point.” —*Clavier Companion*

“The biggest crowd-pleaser of the evening was Vadym Kholodenko’s performance of Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 3, an old standby in Cliburn finals. Kholodenko’s playing was swift and agile, with power to spare but without a sense of banginess. This is a multifaceted work, and there was plenty of beauty to complement the muscularity. The crowd roared its approval.” —*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

“Vadym Kholodenko, this year's gold medalist, performed Stravinsky's *Pétrouchka* at the end of his second preliminary-round recital. For many in the audience, Kholodenko's recital came at the end of a long afternoon of listening. His was the last of nine recitals that day. He didn't even take the stage until 9:25 p.m. For weary ears, the thought of sitting through yet another banging, clanging *Pétrouchka* rendition, even for the most dedicated fan or critical judge, had to be tough to swallow. Kholodenko shook out his wrists and arms and then launched into the sea of notes. Fingers flew as they had all week, but as he played, the audience grew more attentive. They woke up from a collective daze and sat forward in their seats.

In Kholodenko's hands, the music danced. It lilted and twirled and zipped and jolted with dizzying speed and accuracy. After so many examples of sheer technical skill, this was a virtuosic display not of piano playing, but of thrilling music-making. It was mesmerizing not because it was impressive (although it was), but because it took you to the edge of exhilaration and then jumped back, leaving you breathlessly waiting for the next sonic rise to whip your ears around the psychedelic dance floor of your imagination.” —*Dallas Observer*

“From the opening bars, it was clear that Kholodenko had that swing. He also had that dynamic range, technical prowess, timing, intellect, plaintiveness, and exuberance. The piece itself is a thrill ride; what a pleasure to have Kholodenko at the helm.” —*Clavier Companion*

“Ukrainian pianist Vadym Kholodenko again stood out for elegant and scintillating artistry.

Kholodenko fulfilled his requirement to play a work from the Classical era with Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 21, which is known as the ‘Elvira Madigan’ for the use of the second movement theme in the movie of that name.

Although it’s a work rooted in the key of C major, Kholodenko didn’t neglect the dark clouds that occasionally hover. The 26-year-old pianist gave shapely accounts of the three movements, pointing out contrasts of mood and applying the loveliest simplicity to the theme in the slow movement that today would gain Mozart much-needed royalties.

Kholodenko’s playing was impeccable, tasteful and vibrant, and it was also something more: imaginative. His two cadenzas came across as deftly conceived fantasies, especially in the first movement, where the pianist played expansive variations on Mozart, even throwing in witty fugal elements. It may have gone on too long, but Kholodenko’s delight was infectious.” — *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

“[Kholodenko] appears poised for a big career; he was a clear front-runner in the finals, and his performance of Prokofiev’s Concerto no. 3 in C major was the best I’ve ever heard of this popular work.” —*Bachtrack*

“Kholodenko revealed a gift for coloring and a variety of touch, always applied judiciously. He made terraced dynamic—soft and dreamy in one hand, forceful and mezzo-forte in the other—sound magical. Chords were carefully voiced and poised. But none of this attention to detail bogged down the narrative. The performance had strong direction and backbone throughout. His tone was warm and full... In all, it was a recital that made me want to hear Kholodenko again, the sooner the better.” —*Orange County Register*

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