

# HONENS MEDIA RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **CD Releases and Launch of “Honens Sessions Live” digital series by Canada’s Honens International Piano Competition**

CALGARY, AB, August 8, 2011 – Canada’s Honens International Piano Competition has added four discs to its catalogue of studio Laureate recordings – the *Honens Laureate Series* – and has introduced a new live-performance digital series named *Honens Sessions Live*.

The release of these recordings coincided with the birthday of Andrew Raeburn, Artistic Director of Honens International Piano Competition from 1993 to 2004. Raeburn passed away last summer at age 77. Minsoo Sohn’s *Goldberg Variations* was the last recording Raeburn produced after a long career as musician, arts administrator and record producer. Sohn’s disc is dedicated to him.

With Sohn’s CD, Honens and The Banff Centre expand their commitment to past Laureates of the Honens Competition by recording and releasing their projects beyond the three-year Artistic & Career Development Program.

*Honens Laureate Series* recordings are available in CD format from honens.com and for digital download from all major online music retailers. All recordings, made at Canada’s Banff Centre, were made possible through the Honens Competition’s Artistic & Career Development Program with support and guidance from The Banff Centre’s Music & Sound Program.

#### HONENS LAUREATE SERIES RELEASES

Minsoo Sohn  
2006 First Laureate

J.S. BACH  
Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

Georgy Tchaidze  
2009 First Laureate

SCHUBERT  
Sonata in A major, D. 664  
Drei Klavierstücke, D. 946  
Fantasy in C major, D. 760, “Wanderer”  
Allegretto in C minor, D. 915

Evgeny Starodubtsev  
2009 Laureate

SZYMANOWSKI  
Masques, Op. 34  
  
HINDEMITH  
Suite ‘1922’, Op. 26  
  
SCHOENBERG  
Klavierstücke, Op. 23  
  
STRAVINSKY  
Sonata (1924)

Gilles Vonsattel  
2009 Laureate

RAVEL  
Sonatine  
DEBUSSY  
Images Séries I & II  
HOLLIGER  
Elis: Drei Nachtstücke  
HONEGGER  
Hommage à Ravel  
RAVEL  
Gaspard de la nuit

The new *Honens Sessions Live* series features live solo and collaborative recordings by Honens Laureates. These recordings are available for digital download only. The first in the series, by Trio élan, features Gilles Vonsattel, Laureate of the 2009 Honens Competition, and the music of Beethoven, Brahms and Ravel.

HONENS SESSIONS LIVE RELEASE

Trio élan  
BEETHOVEN  
Piano Trio in E-flat major, WoO 38  
BRAHMS  
Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor, Op. 101  
RAVEL  
Piano Trio in A minor

These new Honens-label releases are available for free-listening at [honens.com](http://honens.com) until September 30, 2011.

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# **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

HONENS LAUREATE SERIES

## **Minsoo Sohn**

### **Goldberg Variations**

Honens © © 201104CD (75' • DDD)

*The Boston Globe* describes pianist Minsoo Sohn as “an artist, a man who will create a life in music, find listeners, and reward them.” Sohn’s poetic vision and musical intelligence have garnered accolades from critics and audiences alike for his masterful virtuosity and deep musicianship.

Live performances of Sohn’s notable interpretation of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* have been broadcast numerous times on the CBC and across the United States on NPR’s *Performance Today*. This studio recording follows his debut Honens-label recording of Liszt transcriptions, about which *The Toronto Star* wrote, “Sohn tosses off the fearsome technical challenges without breaking stride while at the same time elegantly colouring each mood.”

Minsoo Sohn is First Laureate of the 2006 Honens International Piano Competition. He was born in Korea and moved to Boston in his teens to study with Russell Sherman and Wha Kyung Byun at the New England Conservatory of Music where he received his Artist Diploma. At the time of this CD’s release, he is on faculty at Michigan State University.

*from Liner Notes:* Minsoo Sohn in conversation with Eric Friesen

There is an astonishing, mysterious power in Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* to attract a young pianist. The most famous instance is Glenn Gould’s first commercial recording in 1955, with which the 23-year old Canadian announced himself to the world. Before Gould, there was Rosalyn Tureck, who at age 19, was already playing the *Goldbergs* in public on the piano, this in the 1930s. Minsoo Sohn was also in his teens when he began with naïve ambition to tackle one of the monumental works in piano literature. “It was like a climber’s dream for Mount Everest.” Now, 15 years later, “through many years and many cycles of studying and re-studying,” Minsoo has finally come to record it for the first time.

## **Georgy Tchaidze**

### **Schubert**

Honens © © 201101CD (67' • DDD)

Georgy Tchaidze was named First Laureate of the Honens International Piano Competition in 2009. He is a native of St. Petersburg, Russia, and began music studies at age seven. He received a degree from the Moscow State Conservatory where he studied with Sergey Dorensky and, at the time of this recording, is working with Klaus Hellwig at the Berlin University of the Arts. His Honens win allowed him to bring his artistry beyond Russia for performances throughout Europe and North America for the first time. These included performances at the Verbier Festival Academy, with Pinchas Zukerman and Canada’s National Arts Centre Orchestra, and recital debuts at New York’s Carnegie and London’s Wigmore Halls. Aside from music, Tchaidze is a film buff – those of Jean-Luc Godard are among his favourites.

*from Liner Notes: Georgy Tchaidze in conversation with Eric Friesen*

Franz Schubert is, in many ways, the most underrated of the great composers. Music of the most astonishing variety and originality poured out of him almost every day of the very few he had on this earth, and yet he is rarely given his rightful place in anyone's top ten list of great composers. Georgy Tchaidze is one musician who does. "Schubert's music had a very strong influence on me when I was in my teens and for some time now his creativity occupies one of the central positions of my mind," Georgy told me recently when I asked him why his first solo recital CD was made up entirely of Schubert's music. This may seem an unusual program for a young Russian pianist, but there is a profoundly poetic side to this young man, as drawn to lyric intimacy as he is to dazzling firebrand virtuosity, a true Honens "Complete Artist".

### **Evgeny Starodubtsev**

**Hindemith | Schoenberg | Stravinsky | Szymanowski**

Honens © © 201102CD (61' • DDD)

Russian pianist Evgeny Starodubtsev is a Laureate of the 2009 Honens International Piano Competition. After being introduced to music by way of accordion at a young age, he studied piano and composition at the Moscow State Conservatory's Central Music School before entering the Conservatory and continuing piano studies with Natalia Troull. Starodubtsev splits his time between piano performance and composing. His compositions include chamber works for varied instruments, including woodwinds, strings and harp. This performer-composer combination no doubt accounts for his sense of adventure and intelligent approach to music-making. Starodubtsev has an affinity for music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and revels in revealing this repertory's wonder and beauty.

*from Liner Notes: Evgeny Starodubtsev in conversation with Eric Friesen*

The music that Evgeny Starodubtsev has chosen for this CD, most of it written in the 1920s, is now almost a century old, and yet it still sounds modern to our ears. Maybe we don't find it as shocking as listeners did at the time, but there's no doubt that audiences today still don't embrace this music with the warmth they give to Brahms and Wagner, who came just before. This is why the music of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century needs champions, artists who believe in the music, who understand its essences and who can convince us to pay attention.

Evgeny is drawn to this period of ferment and change. As he told me: "The attraction of early 20<sup>th</sup> century music for me has its root in the phenomenon of the new musical language. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main structure was tonality, that is, major and minor keys. The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought absolutely new, independent systems. Composers invented their own way to organize sounds – each created a new language." Then Evgeny becomes almost rhapsodic: "Heady delight of a new universe of sounds, courage, the ecstatic loneliness of the discoverer, a dizzy freedom – these are the main things for me in this music."

### **Gilles Vonsattel**

**Debussy | Holliger | Honegger | Ravel**

Honens © © 201103CD (70' • DDD)

Swiss-born American pianist Gilles Vonsattel is an artist of uncommon breadth with a repertoire that ranges from J.S. Bach's *Art of the Fugue* to the complete works of Xenakis. He is Laureate of the 2009 Honens International Piano Competition, recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and winner of the Naumburg and Geneva Competitions. He made his Alice Tully Hall recital debut in 2002 and has appeared with esteemed orchestras including the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood, the San Francisco Symphony, the Warsaw Philharmonic and l'Orchestre de Chambre de Genève.

In solo and chamber music performances, he has appeared at the Tonhalle Zurich, Wigmore Hall in London and Munich's Gasteig, and at international festivals including the Gilmore, Caramoor and la Roque d'Anthéron. Vonsattel is committed to the performance of contemporary works, having given premieres on both sides of the Atlantic, and has worked closely with composers including Ned Rorem, Nico Muhly and Heinz Holliger. He received his bachelor's degree in Political Science and Economics from Columbia University and a master's degree in Music Performance from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Jerome Lowenthal. At the time of this recording Vonsattel is an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

from *Liner Notes*: Gilles Vonsattel in conversation with Eric Friesen

ERIC FRIESEN: You clearly have a great love for French music, as this program and your performance of it shows. What attracts you to the impressionist and post-impressionist atmospheres of Debussy and Ravel?

GILLES VONSATTEL: As a pianist I am perhaps happiest when I feel myself drawing something almost other-worldly from my instrument. For me, the piano has always been a wonderful, profound escapist pursuit, and because there is so much to listen for in this music from a purely audiophile point of view it feels so easy and comfortable to lose myself in the process of creating – and listening to – sound. More specifically, I am drawn to the challenge of creating such a wide array of colours and textures while discretely but firmly maintaining an underlying structure.

EF: Tell me about the architecture of this program. What was your plan?

GV: There is a slight foray into the boundary between Swiss and French music (the Ravel/Holliger/Honegger connection) but this is almost accidental or at least quite subtle. I did like the idea of beginning and ending with Ravel, although they are very different works; the first is neoclassical and the other, well, not at all. Also I wanted to explore the connections between *Images* and *Gaspard de la nuit*, of having Holliger's *Elis* draw a link to a more modern sound, and of having a little prelude to *Gaspard* via the Honegger *Hommage à Ravel*.

H O N E N S   S E S S I O N S   L I V E

### **Trio élan**

#### **Beethoven | Brahms | Ravel**

Honens © © 201001MP3 (61' • DDD)

Trio élan is violinist Frank Huang, cellist Nicolas Altstaedt, and pianist Gilles Vonsattel. Huang and Vonsattel first collaborated after each had been named winner of New York's Naumburg Competition in 2002 and 2003 respectively. After performing with Altstaedt at Switzerland's Davos Festival in 2007, Vonsattel explored the idea of the three musicians sharing their diverse yet complementary musical personalities on stage together. They began reading the wealth of piano trio repertory in New York, where they were members of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society II. By June 2009, the Trio became an official entity and soon its first concert engagements were secured at the Rockport Chamber Music and Davos Festivals, and at New York's Bargemusic and Lincoln Center. Of these early concerts *The Strad* wrote that the trio had "Spot-on teamwork and unanimity of musical impulse..." This live recording by the Trio is the first in a series of live recordings called *Honens Sessions Live*.

## ERIC FRIESEN

Eric Friesen is author of the liner notes for the *Honens Laureate Series* recordings. Friesen is a veteran broadcaster, writer and speaker on music and culture. He spent much of his life as a network classical music host and producer for CBC Radio and Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). For CBC he hosted programs such as *Studio Sparks*, *In Performance*, and *Onstage at Glenn Gould Studio*, as well as the celebrated documentary series, *The Concerto According to Pinchas*, *The Concerto According to Manny* and *Peter and the Symphony*. Since leaving the CBC at the end of 2008, Friesen has been busy serving a wide variety of major cultural organizations in Canada.

## HONENS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION

Canada's Honens International Piano Competition is a leader in discovering and launching the careers of young concert pianists. It searches for Complete Artists – 21<sup>st</sup> century musicians for 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences – and awards its Laureates the competition world's largest cash prize and most comprehensive artistic and career development program.

The Seventh Honens International Piano Competition takes place October 17 to 26, 2012 and is presented by Nexen Inc.; Lead Sponsors include Enbridge Inc., Statoil and TransAlta; Supporting Sponsor: Macleod Dixon LLP. Other Competition sponsors include: ARC Financial, Bantrel Co., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, WAX Partnership Inc., Deluxe Design Group, ecentricarts inc. and Hôtel Le Germain Calgary. Honens also thanks corporate supporters TD Waterhouse, Mawer Investment Management Ltd, Masters Gallery, Gluskin Sheff + Associates Inc., and public and foundation partners Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Alberta Lottery Fund, Calgary Arts Development Authority / City of Calgary, The Calgary Foundation and the Rozsa Foundation.