

HONENS MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALESSIO BAX JOINS 2018 HONENS COMPETITION JURY

Calgary, AB, August 14, 2018—Honens is pleased to announce that Italian pianist Alessio Bax will join the Second Jury for its 2018 Honens International Piano Competition. He replaces Inon Barnatan, who has had to withdraw.

Combining exceptional lyricism and insight with consummate technique, Alessio Bax is without a doubt “among the most remarkable young pianists now before the public” (*Gramophone*). He catapulted to prominence with First Prize wins at both the Leeds and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions and is now a familiar face on four continents, as a recitalist, chamber musician, and concerto soloist who has appeared with more than 100 orchestras, including the London and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Dallas and Cincinnati Symphonies, NHK Symphony (Japan), St. Petersburg Philharmonic, and the City of Birmingham Symphony.

This season, Bax makes his Boston Symphony Orchestra and Melbourne Symphony debuts with Sir Andrew Davis. A spring tour of Australia and New Zealand also sees the pianist lead Mozart’s B-flat Major concerto (*K.595*) from the keyboard with the Sydney Symphony. Other engagements include a tour with the Tokyo Symphony, concerts in Israel, and numerous US concerto collaborations. Festival appearances include France’s International Chamber Music Festival of Salon-de-Provence and Tuscany’s Incontri in Terra di Siena festival, where he serves as Artistic Director. Bax’s acclaimed discography includes Beethoven’s *Emperor* concerto (Southbank Sinfonia); the same composer’s *Hammerklavier* and *Moonlight* sonatas; a solo album of Mussorgsky and Scriabin; *Bax & Chung* (Stravinsky, Brahms, and Piazzolla); *Alessio Bax plays Mozart* (concertos K. 491 and K. 595); *Alessio Bax plays Brahms*; *Bach Transcribed*; and *Rachmaninov: Preludes & Melodies*.

A Steinway artist, Bax lives in New York City with pianist Lucille Chung and their daughter, Mila. In addition to his role as a Juror, Bax will lead a public Masterclass on September 2, 2018.

The 2018 Honens International Piano Competition is presented by TD Bank Group. The 2018 Honens Festival is presented by Nexen Energy, a CNOOC Limited company. Lead Partners are TransAlta and RBC Emerging Artists Project. The ninth edition of the Honens International Piano Competition & Festival runs from August 30 to September 8, 2018.

Backgrounder Attached

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BACKGROUNDER

ALESSIO BAX

Combining exceptional lyricism and insight with consummate technique, Alessio Bax is without a doubt “among the most remarkable young pianists now before the public” (*Gramophone*). He catapulted to prominence with First Prize wins at both the Leeds and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions, and is now a familiar face on four continents, not only as a recitalist and chamber musician, but as a concerto soloist who has appeared with more than 100 orchestras, including the London and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, Dallas and Cincinnati Symphonies, NHK Symphony in Japan, St. Petersburg Philharmonic with Yuri Temirkanov, and the City of Birmingham Symphony with Sir Simon Rattle.

This season, for his first appearances with three major orchestras, Bax revisits the two concertos heard on *Alessio Bax Plays Mozart*. He makes his Boston Symphony Orchestra debut playing Mozart’s C-minor concerto (*K.491*) with Sir Andrew Davis. Then, on a spring tour of Australia and New Zealand, he not only reunites with the eminent conductor to reprise the same work for his Melbourne Symphony debut, but leads Mozart’s B-flat major concerto (*K.595*) from the keyboard in his first performances with the Sydney Symphony. Bax completes the tour with a series of solo recitals and accounts of the Grieg concerto with Tadaaki Otaka that mark his Auckland Philharmonia debut. His international lineup also includes concerts in Israel and a Japanese tour featuring dates with the Tokyo Symphony, solo recitals, and chamber music at Le Pont International Festival in Ako and Himeji. Back in the US, he undertakes multiple concerto collaborations, including Brahms’s Second with the Fort Worth Symphony under Miguel Harth-Bedoya and Barber with the Kansas Symphony and Edo de Waart, besides rejoining the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for a Hungarian-themed program and season-closing concert. He rounds out the season with a full summer of festivals, highlighted by his debut at France’s International Chamber Music Festival of Salon-de-Provence, and returns to the Great Lakes Music Festival, Saratoga Chamber Music Festival, and Tuscany’s Incontri in Terra di Siena festival, where he serves as Artistic Director.

Last season saw Signum Classics release the pianist’s recording of Beethoven’s *Emperor* concerto with the Southbank Sinfonia. Bax also undertook duo recital tours with Joshua Bell and Emmanuel Pahud; gave solo recitals at London’s Wigmore Hall and the Leeds Piano Festival; returned to Hong Kong; and performed concertos by Gershwin, Rachmaninov, Grieg, and Schumann with orchestras including the Minnesota Orchestra, North Carolina Philharmonic, and Armenian Philharmonic. In 2016/2017, he stepped in to play Brahms’s Second with the Cincinnati Symphony under Sir Andrew Davis, in what proved “the most exciting debut in recent memory” (*Cincinnati Enquirer*), and made three appearances at the Wigmore Hall, including his solo recital debut, which aired live on BBC Radio 3.

Other highlights of recent seasons include Rachmaninov with London’s Southbank Sinfonia and Vladimir Ashkenazy; his Minnesota Orchestra debut under Andrew Litton; a return to the Dallas Symphony for Barber under Jaap van Zweden, named one of the top ten concerts of 2013 by the Dallas Morning News; season-opening appearances with the Colorado Symphony; and concerts at L.A.’s Disney Hall, Washington’s Kennedy Center, and New York’s Carnegie Hall. In 2009, the pianist was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and four years later he received both the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award and Lincoln Center’s Martin E. Segal Award, which recognizes young artists of exceptional accomplishment.

Bax is a staple on the international summer festival circuit, and has performed at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland; England’s International Piano Series and Aldeburgh and Bath festivals; the Risør Festival in Norway; and the Moritzburg Festival, Ruhr Klavier-Festival, and Beethovenfest Bonn in Germany. In the U.S., he makes regular appearances at New York’s Bard Music Festival, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival, the Bravo! Vail festival, Mimir Chamber Music Festival, Minnesota’s Beethoven Festival, Seattle Chamber Music Festival, Music@Menlo, Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. He has given recitals at New York’s Lincoln Center and other major music halls around the world, including those of Rome, Milan, Bilbao, Madrid, Paris, London, Tel Aviv, Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Washington, DC. As a chamber musician, Bax has collaborated with Emanuel Ax, Sol Gabetta, Steven Isserlis, Nicholas Phan, Paul Watkins, Jörg Widmann, and the Emerson String Quartet, among many others.

Bax's celebrated discography for Signum Classics includes Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* and *Moonlight* Sonatas (a Gramophone "Editor's Choice"); *Bax & Chung*, a duo disc with Lucille Chung that includes Stravinsky's original four-hand version of the ballet *Pétrouchka* as well as music by Brahms and Piazzolla; *Alessio Bax plays Mozart*, comprising Piano Concertos K. 491 and K. 595 with London's Southbank Sinfonia and Simon Over; *Alessio Bax: Scriabin & Mussorgsky* (named "Recording of the Month ... and quite possibly my recording of the year" by *MusicWeb International*); *Alessio Bax plays Brahms* (a Gramophone "Critics' Choice"); *Bach Transcribed*; and *Rachmaninov: Preludes & Melodies* (an *American Record Guide* "Critics' Choice 2011"). Recorded for Warner Classics, his Baroque Reflections album was also a Gramophone Editor's Choice. He performed Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata for maestro Daniel Barenboim in the PBS-TV documentary *Barenboim on Beethoven: Masterclass*, available as a DVD boxed set on the EMI label.

Alessio Bax graduated with top honors at the record age of 14 from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, where his teacher was Angela Montemurro. He studied in France with Francois-Joël Thiollier and attended the Chigiana Academy in Siena under Joaquín Achúcarro. In 1994 he moved to Dallas to continue his studies with Achúcarro at SMU's Meadows School of the Arts, where, with Lucille Chung, he is now the Johnson-Prothro Artist-in-Residence. He also serves with Chung as co-artistic director of the Joaquín Achúcarro Foundation, created to support young pianists' careers. A Steinway artist, Bax lives in New York City with Chung and their four-year-old daughter, Mila. Beyond the concert hall he is known for his longtime obsession with fine food; as a 2013 *New York Times* profile noted, he is not only notorious for hosting "epic" multi-course dinner parties, but often spends his intermissions dreaming of meals to come.

ABOUT HONENS

Honens discovers, nurtures, and presents Complete Artists—21st century pianists for 21st century audiences. The Honens International Piano Competition takes place every three years and is considered one of the world's most prestigious events of its kind. Honens prepares its Laureates for the rigours and realities of professional careers in music and creates opportunities for growth and exposure. The annual Honens Festival is one of Canada's premier classical music events, intended to share Mrs. Honens' love of world renowned music with Albertans every year. The 2018 Honens International Piano Competition & Festival takes place in Calgary from August 30 to September 8.

Esther Honens created a legacy of musical excellence to be enjoyed for generations. In 1991, Mrs. Honens gave \$5 million to endow an international piano competition in her hometown of Calgary, Canada. Her generosity, vision, and love of music continue to touch the lives of musicians and music-lovers at home and around the world. Legacy Partners follow in Esther Honens' footsteps by securing Honens' future and ensuring its continued ability to offer a broad scope of programming and community outreach projects.

2018 HONENS INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION & FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

30 August to 3 September 2018

12:30 and 7:30 pm

Competition Semifinals

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons

Ten Semifinalists perform a solo recital and a collaborative recital with baritone Phillip Addis and violinist Jonathan Crow.

1 September 2018

9 am

Masterclass with Ingrid Fliter

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons (Free Admission)

Visiting pianist Ingrid Fliter instructs and inspires music students and instructors from across Alberta.

2 September 2018

9 am

Masterclass with Alessio Bax

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons (Free Admission)

Visiting pianist Alessio Bax instructs and inspires music students and instructors from across Alberta.

3 September 2018

10 am

Storytellers: *The Hockey Sweater*

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons (Free Admission)

Join us for the world premiere of the newly commissioned arrangement of Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater*.

11 am

Xenia Concert

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons (Free Admission)

Xenia Concerts are a series of accessible concerts that are designed to appeal to, and be welcoming of, children on the autism spectrum and their families.

4 September 2018

8 pm

Garrick Ohlsson

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons

"Garrick Ohlsson is an elegant pianist with a prodigious technique, and it is evident that he takes great joy in music-making." — *Telegram*

Honens' 2018 Mentor-in-Residence and multi award-winning pianist, Garrick Ohlsson, performs in Calgary for the first time in more than 15 years as part of the Honens Festival.

5 September 2018

5 pm

Honens Honours

The Fairmont Palliser

Pay tribute at this fundraising dinner to extraordinary Calgarians, Heather Bourne and Masters Gallery Ltd., for their contribution to the city's musical life.

8 pm

Laureates of the Honens and Rubinstein Competition with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons

2015 Honens Prize Laureate Luca Buratto and 2017 Rubinstein Competition winner Szymon Nehring perform a program of Mozart, Prokofiev, and Strauss with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Karina Canellakis.

6 September 2018

7:30 pm

Competition Finals I

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons

The three Finalists each perform a quintet with the Azahar Ensemble.

10 pm

Bison Noir

Royal Canadian Legion No. 1

A truly Calgarian evening! Local artists Susanne Ruberg-Gordon and Josh Jones come together for an exciting contemporary program for piano and percussion, including pieces by Calgarian composers Allan Gordon Bell and Vincent Ho.

7 September 2018

7:30 pm

Competition Finals II & Awards Show

Jack Singer Concert Hall at Arts Commons

The three finalists each perform a concerto of their choice with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Karina Canellakis. The 2018 Honens Prize Laureate is awarded the top prize of \$100,000 and an Artist Development Program valued at a half-million dollars.

8 September 2018

2 pm

Open Air

Central Memorial Park (Free Admission)

Wrap up the festival with an outdoor chamber music concert for the entire family.