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## Fazil Say, piano

*'He is not merely a pianist of genius; undoubtedly he will be one of the great artists of the twenty-first century.'* (Le Figaro)

Born in 1970 in Ankara, Turkey, Fazil Say studied piano and composition at the Ankara State Conservatory. At the age of seventeen he was awarded a scholarship that enabled him to study for five years with David Levine at the Robert Schumann Institute in Düsseldorf. From 1992 to 1995 he continued his studies at the Berlin Conservatory. In 1994 he was the winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, which gave a rapid start to his international career.

Fazil Say is a regular guest with the New York Philharmonic, the Israel Philharmonic, the Baltimore Symphony, the St Petersburg Philharmonic, the BBC Philharmonic, the Orchestre National de France and other leading orchestras across the globe. He has appeared at the Lucerne Festival, the Ruhr Piano Festival, the Rheingau Music Festival, the Verbier Festival, the Montpellier Festival, the Beethoven Festival Bonn, and in all the world's leading concert halls, including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonie, the Vienna Musikverein, Suntory Hall in Tokyo, Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall in New York, and many others. In the 2003/04 season he made debuts at the Salzburg Festival, Lincoln Center Festival in New York, Harrod's Piano Series in London and the World Piano Series in Tokyo. His chamber music partners include Yuri Bashmet and Shlomo Mintz. In 2004 he made a major tour of Europe and the USA with Maxim Vengerov, appearing at such venues as Carnegie Hall, the Vienna Musikverein, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Barbican Centre in London, and the Salzburg Festival. He will tour Europe and Asia with Akiko Suwanai in 2006.

Say's passion for jazz and improvisation led him to found a 'Worldjazz' quartet with the Turkish *ney* virtuoso Kudsi Ergüner. During the summer of 2000 the quartet performed to a triumphal reception in St. Denis, Paris, Montpellier, at the Montreux Jazz Festival, the Istanbul Jazz Festival and the Juan-les-Pins Festival. In 2005 he made a return visit to Montreux for a concert and workshop, appearing with Bobby McFerrin among others.

Fazil Say is just as much a composer as he is a pianist. He wrote the work *Black Hymns* at the age of sixteen. In 1991 he premiered his Concerto for Piano and Violin with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, and in 1996 his second piano concerto *Silk Road* was given its first performance in Boston. Fazil Say played the latter work more than a dozen times in the course of the 2003/04 season. His oratorio *Nazim*, based on poems by the famous Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet and commissioned by the Turkish Ministry of Culture, was

premiered in Ankara in 2001 in the presence of Turkey's President. Say gave the world premiere of his Piano Concerto no. 3 (commissioned by Radio France and Kurt Masur) in Paris with the Orchestre National de France under Elisha Inbal in January 2002, to great public and critical acclaim. His oratorio *Requiem for Metin Altıok* was premiered in 2003 at the Istanbul Festival before an audience of 5000. In May 2005 he gave the premiere of his Fourth Piano Concerto, commissioned by ETH Zürich, in Lucerne. He has composed highly virtuosic adaptations for piano and orchestra of such works as Mozart's *Rondo alla turca* and *Paganini Jazz*. The city of Vienna has commissioned a ballet for Mozart Year, which has been given its first performance there on February 1st, 2006. He is also writing a new solo piece for the 2006 Salzburg Festival, and an orchestral work is at the planning stage. In 2003 he was appointed 'Artist in Residence' by Radio France, a position he also holds at the 2005 Bremen Festival.

Fazıl Say's first recording, a Mozart disc released in 1998, garnered rave reviews from the press. His discography includes Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and *I Got Rhythm Variations* with the New York Philharmonic and Kurt Masur, a Bach recital, and Stravinsky's own arrangement of *Le Sacre du Printemps* for four hands (in which Say plays both parts). He has received numerous international awards for this recording, including the 2001 Echo-Preis Klassik and the 2001 German Music Critics' Best Recording of the Year Award. He has performed the work live to ovations in concert halls around the world. Another of his recordings couples Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto no.1 (with the St Petersburg Philharmonic under Yuri Temirkanov) and Franz Liszt's Piano Sonata.

His first recording under a new contract with Naïve, exclusively devoted to his own works, attracted international attention. The second, acclaimed worldwide as a significant Mozart release, presents three of that composer's concertos with the Zurich Chamber Orchestra under Howard Griffiths. Fall 2005 a new CD was released with sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven.

Highlights of his schedule for 2005/6 include appearances at the Salzburg, Verbier, and Lucerne Festivals and at Mozart festivals in Vienna, Zurich, and Warsaw, as well as tours of the USA, Germany, Japan, Israel, China, Italy (including appearances with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra), South Africa and many other countries.

In May 2005 he composed his first soundtrack, for the film *Ultima Thule* by the Swiss director Hans-Ulrich Schlumpf (who made *Congress of Penguins*).

In the summer of 2005 the Franco-German television channel Arte shot a full-length portrait of Fazıl Say in Istanbul, Aspendos, Munich, and other places, which was broadcasted in early 2006. In 2005 a DVD production of his work for chorus and orchestra *Nazim* was filmed in Aspendos.