

# IVAN ŠILLER

## RESUME

**Ivan Šiller** (1977) is a concert pianist, teacher and music project organiser.

He studied the piano in Bratislava (Primary Art School under Milica Kailingová, Academy of Performing Arts under Daniela Varínska) and in Ghent (Royal Conservatory, under Daan Vandewalle), as a scholarship holder in the USA (Tanglewood Music Center), in Canada (Banff Centre for the Arts) and in Germany (*Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* Darmstadt). He devotes himself to the performance of classical and contemporary music, ensemble and solo playing and the musical reinterpretation of artworks. He enjoys working with other musicians, with whom he forms various groups: Cluster ensemble, Ensemble Ricercata or Prague Modern. He helps shape alternative “educational institutions”: the student project VENI ACADEMY or the SoundOrchestra series of children’s workshops, aimed at improvisation, graphic notation and experimental music. He actively cooperates with contemporary Slovak and foreign composers. He worked at the Department of Music Education of the Faculty of Education of Comenius University as a teacher and head of department. He is the author of many music projects, an organiser of festivals and concert cycles. He is president of the Slovak section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), with which he prepared the musical event of 2013 – ISCM World New Music Days – which received an award at the Radio\_Head Awards 2014. In 2016, he became art director of the SUPERAR Slovakia education project which works in cooperation with the Vienna Boys’ Choir and the Konzerthaus Wien. He has received several awards and nominations for his artistic work.

In 2016 and 2018, the Cluster ensemble was nominated for the Tatra Banka Foundation prize for the album “Cluster ensemble Plays Philip Glass”, for the *Krištáľové krídlo* [Crystal wing] prize in the category of music, and for the Radio\_Head Award in the category of recording of the year – classical music. In 2018, he published his debut solo CD FIFTY which is a unique collection of over 20 compositions by contemporary composers [www.ivansiller.com](http://www.ivansiller.com)

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Ivan began to devote himself fully to music at the age of 14. He completed the first part of his studies at the L. Rajter Primary Art School under Milica Kailingová, taking private lessons with Daniel Buranovský. In 1996, he won a place at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, studying under Daniela Varínska. He also left to study at the Royal Conservatory of Ghent (Belgium). There he studied the piano under Daan Vandewalle, conducting under Wim Belaen, ancient music and the harpsichord under John Whitelaw and later, at the Orpheus Institute, chamber music under Jan Michiels. He completed his studies at the Royal Conservatory in 2004 as one of its top graduates. From 2006 to 2009, he was a doctoral student at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava.

As a student, he took part in several competitions. He was the winner of a Slovak competition for chamber ensembles (piano duet with Lenka Bálintová); he won first place at the Pál Kadosa competition in Levice and the prize for best piano accompaniment at the European Music Competition for Youth in Hamburg (soprano -Adriana Kučerová). He participated in the International Piano Competition in Dublin, where he caught the jury’s attention with his dramaturgy and performance of Ravel’s sonatas.

From 1995 to 1998, he took part in the International Performance Courses in Piešťany (Marián Lapšanský, Peter Toperczer and Eugen Indjić). In 2004, he won a bursary for the *Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* Darmstadt, Germany (Kaya Haan, Nicolas Hodges and Uli Wiget), and in 2005 he obtained a prestigious Tanglewood Music Center scholarship in the USA (piano – Emanuel Ax, Joseph Kalichstein, Claude Frank; chamber music – Joseph Silverstein, Pamela Frank, Ursula Oppens and Timothy Genis). In 2007, he received a bursary from the Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada.

As well as solo recitals, he regularly performs in concerts with his chamber partners, in particular with David Danel, Milan Paľa (violin), Ronald Šebesta (clarinet), Helga Varga Bach (soprano), Tomáš Boroš (piano), Fero Király (piano), Jozef Lupták (cello), Enikő Ginzer (cymbalo) and others. He collaborates with various ensembles and orchestra: VENI ensemble, Prague modern, Cluster ensemble, Ensemble Ricercata and others.

Ivan Šiller's musical activity also includes active collaboration with contemporary Slovak and foreign composers. He has taken part in the following festivals: Večery novej hudby, Orfeus, Konvergencie, Week of Contemporary Music Gent, Philippe Herrewegh's festival, Ostravské dny nové hudby, Festival van Vlaanderen, Steinway festival Bijloek, Gentse Feesten, Pražské jaro, Melos-Étos. He has performed concerts in various European countries, mainly in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic and the USA.

In 2001, he helped with the production in Luxembourg of the Slovak opera by Lubomír Burger and Martin Burlas "Face by face". He worked with the theatre ensembles Walpurgis (Antwerp) and Wederzjids (Amsterdam), with whom he presented a new production about the life and music of Charles Ives in the 2002/2003 season.

Alongside his many concerts, Ivan Šiller is the initiator and organiser of a wide range of various musical and educational projects. As a student at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, he helped found the Orfeus student festival; during his studies at the Royal Conservatory in Ghent, he produced the Chamber Music Festival and the Evening of Slovak Music. His projects *Stretnutia* [Meetings] (Levice, Bratislava) and the Chamber concerts cycle (Watou, Belgium) combined music and the spoken word, thus giving spectators the opportunity to deepen their relationship with classical music. In collaboration with Milica Kailingová, he created the project of creative workshops and concerts for children and young people "Music from (exactly) the last century" and "Encounters with music". As part of the Convergences chamber festival, he introduced concerts for children. He founded and was the artistic director of the *SPACE* festival, which focused on presenting 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century music.

In 2006, he initiated the creation of a cycle of chamber concerts in the Nitra Gallery and in the Ernest Zmeták Art Gallery in Nové Zámky; since 2009, he has worked with the Stanica Žilina-Záriečie organisation. In 2008, he prepared a festival aimed at presenting a period instrument dating from 1815: the Hammerklavier festival, which continued successfully in the following years. He also prepared the chamber festival "Schubertiády". With Enikő Ginzer, he organised the Tokaj Art Summer Music Courses in eastern Slovakia, where he also gave piano lessons. In 2006, in cooperation with the Nitra Gallery, he created a happening using Erik Satie's music, called Vexations. In 2009, he gave the Slovak premiere of Steve Reich's composition "Six Pianos", together with students of the Academy of Performing Arts, and prepared further concerts featuring this unusual line-up.

Ivan Šiller has also profiled himself as a conductor. For several years, he led the youth choir Eben Ezer, with whom he gave several concerts in Slovakia and abroad. He played and produced a concert version of W. A. Mozart's *Requiem*. He was the conductor of the children's choir Kvapôčky. At the end of his work there, he recorded the CD "*Prší, či neprší*".

He works intensively to ensure the continuity of the above-mentioned projects, and is preparing further recitals and chamber performances of works by Schubert, Janáček, Brahms, Ravel, Ives, Reich, Glass and other composers.

In 2016, with the Cluster ensemble, he published the debut album "Cluster ensemble Plays Philip Glass", for which he received an excellent review from the British newspaper *The Guardian*, and the American *The Pitchfork*. In 2016, the Ensemble Ricercata, of which Ivan Šiller is the artistic director, also released its debut album. The album features solo and chamber work by Slovak composers.

#### HE HAS RECEIVED SEVERAL AWARDS AND NOMINATIONS FOR HIS ARTISTIC WORK:

##### **2018**

Slovakia | Tatra Banka Foundation Award for Art 2017

The Cluster ensemble was nominated for the award for the multimedia performance DANCING WITH CHANGING PARTS in the National Theatre in Prague

##### **2017**

Slovakia | Radio\_Head Awards 2016

The Cluster ensemble was nominated for the award for performance – 3CD Cluster ensemble Plays Philip Glass

Slovakia | Tatra Banka Foundation Award for Art 2016

The Cluster ensemble was nominated for the award for performance – 3CD Cluster ensemble Plays Philip Glass

##### **2016**

Slovakia | Krištáľové krídlo Award

The Cluster ensemble was nominated for the award for performance – 3CD Cluster ensemble Plays Philip Glass

##### **2015**

Bratislava | Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava – Letter of thanks from the Rector for his contribution to teaching

##### **2014**

Bratislava | Radio\_Head Awards 2013

Ivan Šiller and his team received the Music Event of the Year award for organising and preparing the festival ISCM WORLD NEW MUSIC DAYS 2013, Vienna, Bratislava, Košice.

Bratislava | Radio\_Head Awards 2013

VENI ACADEMY won for its debut 2CD the prize for best recording of the year in the field of classical music.

## **2012**

Bratislava I Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava Letter of thanks from the Dean for his contribution to teaching

## **2001**

Hamburg (DE) I EMCY Singing Competition  
Ivan Šiller won the prize for best piano accompaniment

## **2000**

Bratislava I Saint Gorazd Award  
Prize of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, which Ivan Šiller won for his work in education.

## **1997**

Dublin (IE) I EMCY Piano Competition  
Ivan Šiller won the title of laureate of the Radio Head Awards

## **1995**

Slovakia I Pál Kadosa competition, Levice 1<sup>st</sup> place

## REVIEWS:

*"An excellent solo performance. He gave us a rare piano recital of contemporary music. Ivan Šiller presented 30 experimental, barmy, lyrical and expressive compositions."*

Robert Kolář

*"A great talent. A very open, flexible and excellent musician"*

Daan Vandewalle, Belgium

*"Ivan Šiller played an incredibly difficult piece by the modern American composer Alvin Curran entitled "For Cornelius". So difficult that not only do I admire the masterliness of his performance, but also that of the composer Peter Zagar who was turning the pages."*

Marián Jaslovský

*"Ivan Šiller introduced himself at the festival with two late opuses by Beethoven: Bagatelles op. 119 and op. 126. Šiller "tamed" the hammer piano probably as much as it can be: he had a soft tone which didn't lose its quality even in fast passages. Out of the pianists who performed in the Hammerklavier project, he had the most beautiful tone... Šiller's performance clearly showed Beethoven as a visionary and great improviser. Quite deservedly, the performer scored the greatest success."*

Vladimír Rusó

*"We can be glad that after Mikuláš Škuta, who recorded Bach's works on CD, we have another pianist in Slovakia who is able to give it just as authentic a form, yet also different." Vladimír Bokes on the performance of J.S. Bach's Goldberg variations*

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY:

### **FIFTY**

InMusic, o.z., 2017

Performers:

Ivan Šiller, piano, prepared piano, electronics Fero Király, electronics, objects, software design

Daniel Matej, tuned bottles, whistling

Braňo Dugovič, clarinet, bass clarinet

An album of occasional compositions for the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the composer and teacher Daniel Matej. The person behind this idea is Ivan Šiller, a pianist and Matej's long-term collaborator on various projects. He asked several Slovak and foreign music composers to compose 29 short compositions on the occasion of Daniel Matej's birthday. "It is a remarkable nice collection with some very very nice pieces, many very interesting ones, and in fact all very good; it is very nice performed and played, first class! And the edition is beautiful."

Boudewijn Buckinx

### **Cluster Ensemble Plays Philip Glass**

Hevhetia Records, 2016

Performers: Cluster ensemble

The Cluster Ensemble plays several important works of classical American minimalist music. The release of this three-disc box was a great event not only in Slovakia, but also made waves abroad. Philip Glass also appreciated it, with reviews full of praise published by the BBC, *Guardian* and *Pitchfork*.

"The Cluster Ensemble tackles some of Philip Glass's iconic early works, playing them more crisply and clearly than perhaps any other recording in history"

Seth Colter Walls (Pitchfork, 2016)

What's remarkable about the performances by the Cluster Ensemble is that they never seem didactic, and are wonderfully natural and constantly involving musically. The Slovak group, led by keyboard players Ivan Šiller and Fero Kiraly, has devoted itself to Glass's early music for the last three years, and that total familiarity shines through every aspect of their playing.

Andrew Clements (*The Guardian*, 2016)

### **Ensemble Ricercata**

Hudobný fond, 2016

Performers: Ivan Šiller, piano, harpsichord, artistic directorship, Ensemble Ricercata This profile double CD maps out two concert seasons during which the Ensemble Ricercata was the ensemble in residence of Radio Devín. The album primarily presents music which had not been recorded on CD, namely compositions by Ilja Zeljenka, Juraj Beneš, Ivan Parík, Tadeáš Salva and Juraj Pospíšil.

"The name itself of the ensemble, which was Radio Devín's ensemble in residence in the 2014 – 2015 season, evokes a light form of nostalgia for the series of events in the large concert studio, where the public was sitting on the podium, and could, as it were, see the musician's music, the unique atmosphere of which must have made a lasting impression on every visitor."

Robert Kolář (Hudobný život, 2016)

### **VENI ACADEMY – Dispersion**

Mode Records, 2018

Performers: VENI ACADEMY ensemble, Elliott Sharp – guitar, Marián Lejava, conductor

Elliott Sharp is an important American multi-instrumentalist and composer. VENI ACADEMY is an

international ensemble in which students of conservatoires and music academies perform. Sharp composed the music for the VENI ACADEMY; they recorded it together and the result of the collaboration was released by a New York label which has artists such as John Cage, Morton Feldman and Iannis Xenakis in its portfolio.

“It is neither so much a one thing or another as it is very much Elliot Sharp music, which is a very important thing. This time now is in part on Elliot Sharp time. Set your watches, put them aside, then listen to this album! I very much recommend it.”

Grego Applegate Edwards (GappleGate Classical-Modern Music Review, 2018)

“Composer gives the opportunity to all musicians to make their own decisions and interpretations. That why free improvisation is very important compound of this music. Strange tunes, extraction of weird sounds, an expand of technical abilities, eclectic fusions, contrasts and free improvisations are heard very frequently. The music is completely based on authentic and original Elliott Sharp’s composing style.”

avantscena (2019)

#### VIDEO:

Cluster ensemble plays Changing Parts by Philip Glass

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTzuZik3jYs>

Ensemble Ricercata: Intermezzo

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM6GyJd\\_M2A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM6GyJd_M2A)

Ensemble Ricercata: Songs My Mother Taught me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCK0rOG4raA>

Ensemble Ricercata: *Ein Kinderspiel*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHnO3oaY-rk>

Ensemble Ricercata: *Chansons Madecasses*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIANOEpt\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIANOEpt_k)