

YUNDI LI

"With four Deutsche Grammophon recordings already to his credit and an ardent following smitten with his boyish appeal, this brilliantly talented virtuoso is off to a quick start." – *New York Times*

"Pianist Yundi Li has the talent, the looks, and the personal charisma to be a standard-bearer for a new generation of performers and audiences." *Boston Globe*

"He does not need to strive for brilliance or individuality: He starts to play and those qualities are simply there." *Washington Post*

"Yundi Li . . . is a member of a new generation of superb, prize-winning keyboard autocrats." *Gramophone*

Yundi Li was catapulted into the elite of the international music scene after winning the *2000 Chopin International Piano Competition* in Warsaw. At 18 years of age, not only was he the youngest ever to win the Gold Medal, but also the first pianist in 15 years to be awarded the prestigious first prize.

It is astounding that at just twenty-four years of age, Yundi Li has garnered the type of press and accolades that artists of any genre work their entire lives to receive, through astounding performances that exude the intoxicating confidence normally associated with musicians more than twice his age. Yundi Li has no problem owning the title "Prince of the Piano" bestowed upon him by fans, based on his elegance while playing, his masterful interpretations, and his youthful desire to continue to challenge himself and his repertoire. As the editor of *Gramophone* has stated, "You will search far and wide to hear a more swashbuckling yet precisely controlled Liszt, and if artists of any older generation offered a more courtly and benign, more memorable Chopin, they hardly equal Li's outward paragon."

In February 2007, Yundi released his fifth recording, *Liszt's and Chopin's First Piano Concertos with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis*. The recording was an unequivocal succès d'estime, receiving immense critical acclaim. Geoff Brown, of the *London Times*, comments that "this disc of Liszt and Chopin's first piano concertos gives ample proof that virtuosity needn't be empty-headed or lit by candelabras. This would rate an unqualified A grade... Yundi Li already knows how to be subtle even when loud (crucial in Liszt). And when he's restrained he glows with banked fires: sample here the stretches of dreamy poetry towards the end of Chopin's monster first movement. Yundi Li is never reckless; there's always an artist in firm control, sculpting both tone and phrasing." This recording stands apart from the music of his contemporaries, and critics consistently marvel at the young musician's unwavering artistic integrity. He favors substance over style, and yet he never lets the audience forget that they are still witnessing an artist at the beginning of a remarkable career, where every year brings the opportunity for fresh interpretations.

Yundi's musical career began with the accordion at the age of 4. His prodigious talent was recognized only one year later, when he won the top prize at the Chongqing Children's Accordion Competition. At the age of 7, under the tutelage of renowned pianist Dan Zhao Yi, Yundi began his journey to greatness on the piano. At the age of 18, Yundi burst onto the European scene, claiming First Prize at the 14th International Frederick Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw. Yundi was the youngest winner in the competition's history. One year later, Yundi signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon, providing him the opportunity to embark on a recital tour throughout North America and Europe. His subsequent rise to international acclaim and his succession of high-profile international performances have made him a hero back in China, where secondary school children now study Yundi's success story, with the hopes that one day they too will be able to make their dreams come true.

Yundi's determination to succeed is formidable, and his list of triumphs beyond impressive for an artist of his age. As Anthony Tomassini of the *New York Times* recently observed, "With four Deutsche Grammophon