

# The American Liszt Society

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN LISZT SOCIETY, INC.

## “Toward Re-Enchantment: Beauty as a Portal to the Sacred”

The 2026 American Liszt Society Festival,  
University of Nebraska, September 28-30

Paul Barnes, Artistic Director

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Paul Barnes has masterminded a terrific schedule of performances as performers and scholars will explore Abbé Liszt's deep faith and the profoundly spiritual connections in and around his music. The festival will feature **Angel Stanislav Wang** (pictured right), distinguished lecturers **Alan Walker** and **Junius Johnson**, and a host of American Liszt Society performers.



The festival program will take place in the state-of-the-art **Westbrook Music Building** (pictured left). Opened in 2025, it serves as the home of the **Glenn Korff School of Music**.

See p. 4 for more information about the 2026 Nebraska festival.

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## President's Message



Dear Lisztians,

There's an old proverb that states "in many counselors there is safety." I have been thinking about this proverb lately as I contemplate the privilege of being a part of the ALS board of directors. The board is a trustworthy group of dedicated Lisztians whose collective wisdom are a crucial part of the society's *raison d'être*. When one of one of our trusted directors decides to retire from the board we lament losing an important working voice for the ALS. This is particularly true as our beloved Justin Kolb has decided to retire as executive secretary after many years of faithful and consistent service. Justin has worn so many different hats over the years in his tireless advocacy for all things Liszt and beyond. A successful performing and recording classical artist, his career has taken him to many different places within the US and across the globe. Justin's own terrific Lisztian presentations at several ALS festivals included lecture/recitals on the music of Liszt pupil Hermann Cohen, affectionately known Puzzi, the "barefoot Carmelite." He has been an advocate for the music of composers such as William Ferris and Robert Starer, whose compact disc recordings can be found on Spotify and Apple Music. Justin is also an effective motivational speaker. His public-school clinics on success in music has captivated and inspired young people to pursue excellence in music. One of my local musician colleagues, a high-school orchestra director, invited Justin to give a clinic to the music students in Fargo, ND. For several years after, whenever we spoke, she always inquired after Justin, saying how impressed the students were with his presentation and playing. Even more, Justin's tireless work for the ALS as executive secretary has been integral to the collective wisdom of the board. Justin not only has brought valuable business sense and acumen from his earlier successful career in high-tech communications to the board, but he also kept us on track with the business at hand, always insisting that we could do better and be better. He has been a trusted counselor and friend to me and others on the board. And who can forget his humorous Garrison-Keillor-style humor in his long-term role as the master of ceremonies at our yearly festivals! We will definitely miss Justin's wisdom and well-considered input on the board. However, retirement will not stop Justin's love for music and his advocacy for young musicians. He has recently partnered with the Community Foundation for South Central New York to establish the Justin Kolb Music Scholarship Fund, supporting high school seniors accepted as undergraduate music majors at accredited schools of music. Like the energizer bunny, Bustin' Justin keeps on moving forward. We expect to see Justin at future festivals. On behalf of the ALS board of directors, I wish Justin a splendid retirement of health, prosperity, and a continued life of music. Excelsior! to you, our dear Justin!

The American Liszt Society notes with sadness the passing of pianist Ann Schein, a life member of the society and beloved artist/teacher of international renown and acclaim. All of us who knew her playing, teaching, and warm personal character lament the loss of one of the last representatives of the "golden age" of music making at the piano. Many of us had the privilege of hearing her play solo, chamber, and concerto performances at ALS festivals in the past. Her performance of the Rachmaninoff 3rd Piano Concerto with the Hamilton, ONT Philharmonic was breathtakingly beautiful. As we stood in awe at the end of the performance, a colleague turned to me and said: "if I could play the Rach 3rd, I'd want to play it like that!" We send our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, and colleagues. *Requiescat in pace*, Ann Schein.

I look forward to seeing all of you in Lincoln, NE, Sept. 28-30 for our 2026 American Liszt Society festival. This is the third festival that Dr. Paul Barnes has coordinated at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the program theme and content of Toward Re-Enchantment: Beauty as a Portal to the Sacred will take us into the realms of the transcendental. Don't miss it at all, dear friends. Excelsior!

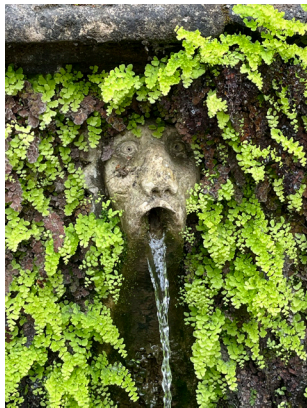
Jay Hershberger, president

# View from the Villa d'Este



Dear friends:

At the banquet following the stimulating 2025 ALS Festival at ETSU, I had the opportunity to speak with Paul Barnes about this year's festival theme. He hadn't solidified a title yet but already had several thoughts about Liszt's faith and sacred connections, particularly in his later works. The theme was easily expandable to include contemporaries and modern, even living composers; the festival therefore could be open to exploration in virtually any direction. In Paul's mind, an obvious fit for the festival would be to conclude with the entire third volume of *Années de Pèlerinage*, the volume he cultivated after taking holy orders in 1865. That volume contains the three pieces inspired by the Villa d'Este: two threnodies in honor of the towering cypresses, the other invoking the beautiful and elegant fountains.



Now I have long been fascinated by the Villa d'Este, the "place of peace" of a sort for Abbé Liszt. It is located in Tivoli, just a short train ride to the east of Rome. The space cascades down the side of a steep hill, an ornate palace overlooking acres of trees, terraced walkways, and hundreds of fountains, pools, and water spouts. Designed by Pirro Ligorio for Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in the style of an Italian Renaissance garden, it was completed centuries before, in the late 1500's. Between 1865 and 1885 Liszt would often retire there from Rome, sometimes weeks at a time, as a guest of Cardinal Gustav von Hohenlohe, who was responsible for restoring the villa and grounds during the last half of the 19th century.

Entering the gardens from the villa, it is immediately apparent how the surroundings were inspirational to Liszt, not just from the space itself, but also from the view of the valley stretching to the left of the city for miles. Throughout the property the water flows down through pools, channels, and sculptures (architectural concepts and even a few pieces were taken from the 2nd century Villa Hadriana just on the other side of the city) while massive cypress trees patrol the area. The constant murmur of running water along with the din of birds overhead certainly must have created an idyllic background for Liszt to be at peace with his thoughts and creative spirit.

The stage has been set for the Abbé; such a clear and obvious conclusion to his pilgrimage – introspection, lamentation, praise.

*Sursum corda! Habemus ad Dominum...*

I am very much looking forward to this spiritual journey.

See you soon,

Derek Parsons

## The American Liszt Society

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# Toward Re-enchantment: The 2026 ALS Festival

An exciting and thought-provoking event will be upon us in September of this year, as Lisztians come together from literally all over the globe to explore his deep and developing faith, the spiritual connections of his music and the inspirations of his artistic offerings. **Paul Barnes**, Professor of Piano at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Champion of the music of Philip Glass, offers the following invitation:

Please join us this fall for the 2026 American Liszt Society Festival “Toward Re-Enchantment: Beauty as a Portal to the Sacred” to be held at the Glenn Korff School of Music at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. The festival explores the theme of beauty as a means of revealing a shared transcendent reality offering an inspiring glimpse of our human destiny. Featured performances include the opening evening gala with Liszt’s ground-breaking *Via Crucis* with pianist **Nicholas Susi** and the University Singers. This will be followed by the UNL Orchestra’s performance of Liszt’s final tone poem *From the Cradle to the Grave* and the monumental chant inspired concerto *Totentanz* with **Richard Fountain** soloist. The second evening of the festival in collaboration with the Lied Center for Performing Arts features Van Cliburn finalist **Angel Stanislav Wang** in a solo piano recital including Liszt’s *Sonata in B Minor*. Other highlights of the festival include a complete performance of Messiaen’s *Visions de l’Amen* and Liszt’s third book of *Années de pèlerinage*. Invited scholars include renowned Liszt and Chopin scholar **Alan Walker** exploring the moral imperative of art immortalized in Liszt’s “*Genie Oblige!*” and theology of art scholar **Junius Johnson** unpacking the inherent theology of beauty resulting from the human encounter with art. Other composers featured include Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Franck, Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, Bach, and Schumann, as well as contemporary composers Arvo Pärt, Richard Danielpour, Victoria Bond, N. Lincoln Hanks, Einojuhani Rautavaara, and Judith Shatin. The festival will also feature world premieres by **Sawyer Gage** and **Andrew Fowler**. The festival concludes with a celebratory banquet as we reminisce on an unforgettable three days exploring a re-enchanted world.



Artwork by Jane Adams; reprinted by permission (janeadamsart)

## 2026 ALS Festival

**September 28-30, 2026**  
**Glenn Korff School of Music**  
**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

**Festival Hotel** - Embassy Suites Lincoln  
1040 P Street, Lincoln, NE, 68508  
(402) 474-1111

ALS Daily rate \$139 (Call the hotel for the ALS discount)

**Transportation** - Omaha Eppley Airfield (OMA) OR  
Lincoln Airport (LNK)

Omaha offers a shuttle service OMALink directly to the Embassy Suites in Lincoln - <https://www.omalink.com/>

### Registration

**Full Festival** – members of ALS - \$125

**Full Festival** – members of MTNA - \$145

**Full Festival** – students - \$45

**Full Festival** – non-members - \$165

**Single-day pass** – members of ALS, MTNA - \$45

**Single-day pass** – students - \$25

**Single-day pass** – non-members - \$60

**Banquet** (at Embassy Suites Lincoln) - \$48

Use the QR code below for quick access to the  
Registration portal:



# Justin Kolb: In Appreciation of a Career of Service



When the news of Justin Kolb's retirement from the Executive Board of the Liszt Society rang through the email chain this past March, it created an overwhelming response from Lisztians describing his humor, wit, and genuine care for both the membership and the cause. I am a relative newbie to the Society, having been a member only since 2014, but since that time I have witnessed on countless occasions the characteristics that flooded through the email channels, story by story. As Director of the 2018 Festival at Furman University, I was able to work closely with Justin for the first time in my career. He seemed to know everyone – he knew their artistry, their scholarly focus, but also their personalities. I suppose as Master of Ceremonies, it was supposed to be his job. But it was also his passion to know his colleagues well. And he greeted me at that first Board meeting with a big smile as if we had been friends for decades. Well, things didn't go so smoothly at that festival, with some weather delays and a few microphone issues, but he didn't miss an opportunity to fill the awkward silence with a story or two – and there were many! Since that time I have discovered just how important his ALS activities were – writer of Press Releases, Membership Secretary, Executive Secretary, Assistant to festival directors, and of course the usual Festival Master of Ceremonies, always a generous sense of "How can I help?" Later in this newsletter you will read about the most recent of

Justin's endeavors, that of partnering with a local foundation to create a scholarship for talented high school students to attend college as a music major. Chapeaux, Justin, for a career filled with Lisztian ideals! I will miss you at Board meetings, but I'm sure to see you at another ALS Festival soon! Given the opportunity to share, several members have offered these words of gratitude:

**Richard Fountain:** Justin, you've been a profound influence in my life and a great friend to so many of us! Not only a hearty "Excelsior!", but also deep and sincere thanks and best wishes for retirement!! I hereby nominate you as "Master of Ceremonies Emeritus."

**Gila Goldstein:** Justin was a vital member of the ALS Board of Directors. His presence at our meetings will be greatly missed. As well as his presence at every single one of the ALS NY/NJ Chapter concerts during the years.

One of the most important traits about Justin's personality is that he is a huge source of encouragement and inspiration. A very clever and knowledgeable man, a man of word, he always came up with brilliant ideas and various helpful suggestions. His contributions to ALS were consummate in terms of service, his concert presentations, and his role as the master of ceremony in numerous festivals. Highly organized and proactive in his nature, a man

who believes in communication first and foremost as a key to navigate life, solve problems and succeed, Justin IS the ultimate optimist, supporter, team player, and spirit lifter. Thank you, Justin, and I am so glad you will continue to come to our festivals.

**Jay Hershberger:** From the first moment I met Justin Kolb at the ALS festivals, I was struck by his winsome and gregarious personality, his encouraging and generous observations about the musicians we heard, his uproarious sense of humor, and his deeply personal commitment to music as a vocation and high calling. When he visited Concordia College, I thoroughly enjoyed observing his interactions with my piano students. It was captivating to watch him draw them in, disarm their midwestern reserve and timidity, and to see the light bulbs go on in their eyes with how he encouraged them in their own musical pursuits and dreams. It truly was a masterclass on how to motivate student musicians to not only strive for excellence, but to have a good time doing it!

**Éva Polgár:** A deeply inspiring mentor, Justin has offered clarity, insight, and unwavering support that have shaped my artistic journey in lasting ways, consistently guiding me with a strong sense of direction and purpose. His incisive humor and charm bring energy to every interaction, qualities that have become unmistakably associated, in my eyes, with his leadership and presence in the American Liszt Society. His musicianship and genuine generosity shine through his engagement with students at ALS festivals and young artists at the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition, where he has consistently met emerging pianists with encouragement, attentiveness, and care. I remain deeply grateful for his mentorship, artistry, and dedication, which have had a lasting influence on my own musical development and on generations of musicians.

*(continued, p. 12)*



# George Walker Revealed: An Interview with Alexandre Dossin

In March of 2024, Furman University had the distinct pleasure of hosting Dr. Alexandre Dossin for a short residency. I had previously heard Alex on several occasions, always taken with his combination of power and elegance. This time he offered a very unique and unusual program – music of the American composer George Walker. Walker had built a celebrated career as a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, concert pianist, and college professor, and had written several works for piano solo as well as a piano concerto. In our conversation after the concert, Dossin remarked that he was in the process of completing an edition and recording of Walker's complete piano works, including the rarely heard piano concerto. Recently I had the opportunity to reach out to Dossin about his important contribution to the legacy of the American composer:

*(DP) The music of George Walker has become an important contribution to American music of the last century. When did you first encounter his music? Were there specific details that particularly appealed to you?*

*(AD)* It was an unexpected encounter. Browsing music during my breakfast at the end of 2021, I came about the 5th Sonata, performed by Robert Pollock. The music had a powerful effect on me, and I immediately started looking for more info on the composer. When I realized that he was born in 1922, I had the idea of recording his complete piano music and celebrate his centenary in 2022. At that time, I had two contracts signed with Naxos for all-Prokofiev CDs. I called and convinced them to put aside Prokofiev and let me work on Walker. In less than 48 hours, I went from not knowing who Walker was to having a contract to record his complete piano works! This never happened to me before, it was an impulse decision. When I got the scores, a week later, I realized the amount of work I committed to...



Alexandre Dossin (<https://dossin.net/>)

*(DP) How does one even begin to map out a project like this? With 5 sonatas, a piano concerto, and several smaller works, where to start?*

*(AD)* One note at a time. The original game plan was just a single CD. But after recording all the solo works, reality checked in: the music clocked in at over 90 minutes, making it way too long for one physical disc. Naxos told me we were officially moving to a 2-CD set, which meant one thing—we needed more material. When I pointed out that I'd already recorded literally every solo piece Walker wrote, they casually suggested, "Well, what about his piano concerto?" Great idea. Except a concerto requires an entire orchestra and a conductor. I pitched the idea to my colleague David Jacobs, wondering if we could pull off a massive team-up with the University of Oregon Symphony and our performance faculty. The Dean jumped on board, and just like that, a brand-new ensemble was born: the University of Oregon Philharmonia. What started as a frantic search for filler tracks turned into an incredible student and faculty collaboration and the first recording of this tremendous

concerto in over a decade (and the third recording overall).

*(DP) Walker stated from a relatively early age that his goal was to be a concert pianist. How does his music reflect this sense of deep understanding of the piano and how it works?*

*(AD)* His music is extremely well written for the piano. When one passes through the initial challenge of reading the notes, it becomes a great pleasure to perform. As an avid hiker, I compare it to a very difficult trail: if you want to experience the fabulous view at the top, you need to do the work and walk as many hours as it takes to get there. Finding the fingering was very challenging, but once I did, the music plays nicely under the fingers. Another, very important by-product of this project will be the upcoming performance edition, to be published by Keiser Productions at the end of 2026. In that edition (two volumes), I will share all fingerings, performance notes and the extensive research that went into this project. I visited the George Walker archives at Emory University several times in the process.

# Alexandre Dossin and the George Walker Project

(continued)

(DP) *How has the piano music of Walker changed over the course of his career? As you made your way through the project, were there specific challenges for you? How long did it take to learn and record these works? Has your musical immersion into his style had an effect on how you approach other composers?*

(AD) This project changed me as a musician. The effort of learning those demanding works was very rewarding. I learned how to understand complex music notation and find the hidden messages that appear once we “get it.” When I returned to other composers, I realized that I could hear them much better, in a deeper way. It is almost like Walker’s music opened my musical ears to new universes. I play Mozart, Liszt, Beethoven and others much differently now.

(DP) *Is there a work or group of works that you feel you connected to more fully? How so?*

(AD) They are all unique in their own way. I can’t say I have one favorite. Perhaps, Sonata 5, as the initial catalyst in this project, would be a strong candidate.

(DP) *As you performed these works for audiences in preparation for the*



George Walker, early 1940's

*recording project, how have your audiences responded to the music?*

(AD) There is something for everyone. After performances or lectures, people come and tell me they liked this or that piece a lot. Walker managed to create a musical soundscape that is overarching.

(DP) *I noted that the second volume of Walker’s complete piano music was released in 2024. How long did the entire project take?*

(AD) From my first taste of his music (December 2021) until the recordings were complete (November 2023), it took almost two years. In October 2022 I presented 15 performances of his music in 6 states, driving over 3500 miles, celebrating the 100th anniversary. It was my sabbatical project, and I truly enjoyed the process. I felt like a preacher, driving around and spreading Walker’s musical message!

(DP) *Volume II also involved a piano concerto – I assume a new experience for the orchestra. How did you present the piece to the conductor? The players?*

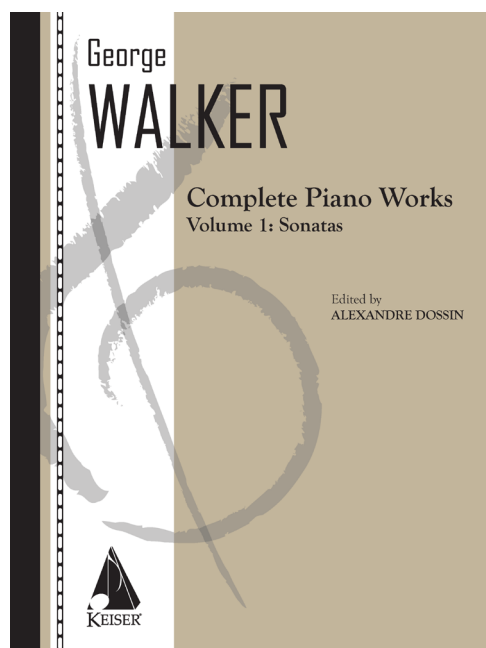
(AD) David Jacobs was very receptive to the idea, and we spent the summer of 2023 preparing our parts in great depth. I remember many phone calls where we discussed certain sections, tempi, etc. His detailed and thorough preparation was paramount to the

project. When the orchestra came together, the professionalism of my performance colleagues in the main parts, plus the dedication of our top students, made it for a wonderful collaboration.

(DP) *Now that it is completed, are there specific pieces you will incorporate into your performance repertoire?*

(AD) I have been taking most of the sonatas (2, 3, 5, and the second movement from sonata 1) and shorter pieces on the road. Sometimes I perform them as traditional solo recitals with spoken commentary, and other times I present a lecture-recital and PowerPoint presentation. When I mix Walker’s music into programs with other composers, I usually treat certain pieces like “gateway tracks.” The *Prelude and Caprice*, *Sonata No. 5*, and the *Variations on a Kentucky Folk Song* are perfect for a first-time listener. They act like teasers, giving the audience a taste and hopefully leaving them wanting to look for more. The whole project has really come full circle now. The live performances introduce the music to new audiences, the recordings make the complete catalog easy for anyone to stream, and the upcoming performance edition will provide fingerings and performance notes for any pianists inspired to tackle these incredible works themselves, while sharing the in-depth research that went into this project.

(continued, p. 8)



AMERICAN CLASSICS



George  
**WALKER**

**Complete Piano Works • 2**

Alexandre Dossin, Piano

University of Oregon Philharmonia • David M. Jacobs





# Dossin/Walker

(continued)

(DP) *What's next for you - Walker-related or otherwise? Has this experience inspired you to new projects? Or are you still finding opportunities to present the music of George Walker to an ever-widening audience?*

(AD) I plan to continue until I reach all 50 states. I am at 15 now, so still a ways to go... I started to include his music with other composers as well. All-Walker recitals are very demanding for the pianist and the audiences. I will probably still do those, but it is also important to show how well he does side-by-side the standard composers. This project opened many doors and introduced me to wonderful new friends. His son Gregory Walker has been a great supporter of this project and has been very generous with his time, answering many questions I had during these past years. Robert Pollock and his wife Klazine became great friends – I performed Walker in his concert series in Maui, and we visited them more than once. Robert, as mentioned above, recorded the 5th sonata, and his recording was the beginning of this great journey. He is a great pianist and composer, and I am very excited about presenting some of his music together with Walker in my upcoming recital during the 2026 San Francisco International Piano Festival. As for future, non-Walker related projects, I started to prepare a Naxos recording with the music of Liszt pupils. Repertoire still to be finalized, and the recording is scheduled for the summer of 2027.

In 2024, Maria and I founded a non-profit organization, the Oregon Piano Institute. It has become a big part of our lives, and we are now preparing for the first-ever international piano competition in Oregon, the Murdock International Piano Competition. It attracted 185 pianists from over 20 countries, and it promises to be an elite event, with only 8 pianists being invited to Eugene. I am also excited about the parallel composition award (88 composers for several countries); the winning composition will be premiered in the final round of the competition. In other words, no rest for the weary...

(DP) *Any final thoughts?*

(AD) Unexpectedly, I went from not knowing of George Walker to becoming the foremost expert on his piano music in just a few years. I am currently the only pianist in the world to have recorded both his complete piano works and the piano concerto. While I hope other pianists take on this challenge in the future, I am proud to hold this privilege and responsibility for now.

\* \* \* \* \*

The award-winning pianist **Alexandre Dossin** has cultivated a flourishing career as a performer, recording artist, and master teacher. He has released widely acclaimed recordings of music by Liszt, Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, Kabalevsky, Bernstein, and others in addition to his recent CDs of the complete piano music of George Walker. We eagerly await his artistry and creativity on full display as Host and Artistic Director of the 2027 Liszt Festival, *Liszt and Beethoven*, at the University of Oregon.

\* \* \* \* \*

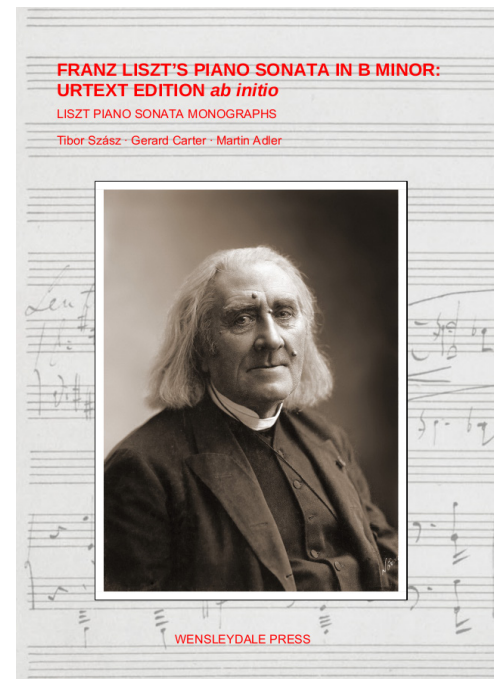
## Of note...

The ALS Board was saddened to hear the news of **Tibor Szász's** death in April of last year. Winner of the 1974 Maryland (now William Kapell) Piano Competition, Dr. Szász performed and lectured extensively on the music of Liszt, Beethoven, Enescu, and others. Like many of us, he was fascinated, perhaps even consumed, by Liszt's massive B minor sonata. He lectured regularly on the work, illustrating various thematic connections and programmatic theories. His research was deep and thorough – and ongoing. He continued to develop and share his thoughts on the subject matter well into his time as Professor of Music at Freiburg, where he taught up until his death.

We were informed earlier this year

that a new edition of the Liszt B minor Sonata has been released, a collaboration of **Tibor Szász**, **Martin Adler**, and **Gerard Carter**. Published by Wensleydale Press, it is described as follows:

“The current Urtext edition *ab initio* by Szász, Carter, and Adler corrects the most important flaws by giving Liszt's manuscript its proper weight. The editorial principles of Szász, Adler, and Carter have received critical support from scholars and performers such as Charles Rosen, Marc-André Hamelin, and Mária Eckhardt.”



This text may be accessed, and other related publications, at the following link:

<https://lisztsonata.com/>

For long-time ALS members, the memory of Tibor is well-preserved in his lecture on Liszt Sonata Symbolism, recorded on October 21, 1983, at the Liszt Society Festival in Atlanta, GA:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFPSXBtE-JQ>



# Member News

**Ben Arnold** has published a new article about Liszt and his voracious appetite for the written word. The author describes his publication:

“In this article I rely heavily on Liszt’s words to examine his preoccupation with purchasing and owning books, his breadth of and passion for reading, and focus on the literary influence that led to his self-identification with Lord Byron. Liszt’s strong desire to educate himself and read books, journals, pamphlets, and newspapers on all subjects interested him consistently throughout his life. From this passion, he created musical compositions out of words, out of the inspiration and imagery he found in the texts. His creativity most often started with the written word, for his passion for and love of literature, authors, and ideas that he could unravel, translate, and transform into his music.”

The citation is below.

Arnold, Ben. “It All Starts with Words: Franz Liszt’s Passion for Books, Authors, and the Written Word,” in *Liszt als Leser, Liszt-Jahrbuch 2025/26*, Bd. 6, ed. Christiane Wiesenfeldt (Kassel: Verlag Merseburger: 2026), 10–23.

**Csanád Barbarics**, who is pursuing a Master’s degree in piano performance at East Tennessee State University, has joined the American Liszt Society as a new student member, earning his membership as an alternate finalist in the 2025 Franz Liszt International Piano Competition – Ohio. He recently received Third Prize in the Artist Division of the Knoxville International Piano Festival and Competition on March 1. Barbarics also served as coordinator of the American Liszt Society Festival held at ETSU in October 2025, further contributing to chapter activities. In addition, he presented the world premiere of the first movement of Mildred Ellis’s Piano Sonata in the ETSU Collegiate Chapter program “Between Tradition and Identity: Piano Sonatas by Florence Price and

Mildred Ellis” at the Tennessee Music Teachers Association State Conference on June 1.

**Matthew Bengtson** has just released on IBS Classical a recording of significant interest to Lisztians: Roberto Sierra’s ‘Estudios de ejecución trascendental (después de una lectura de Liszt).’ He performed and presented on four of these Estudios at the ALS festival at Indiana University. Sierra takes as inspiration Liszt’s original musical materials, his visionary concept of transcendental virtuosity, and his love of reworking existing music (as represented by the Transcendentals themselves). In this manner Sierra transforms Liszt’s Etudes into a contemporary language, requiring a more modernist virtuoso approach to the piano, and including his own harmonic vocabulary and elements of Latin music. Together with Sierra’s 12 “Estudios rítmicos y sonoros” these 12 pieces represent some of the most important contemporary additions to the Etude genre. The recording also offers two piano sonatas, nos. 13 and 14, from Sierra’s rapidly-expanding catalog. The 13th, dedicated to Matthew Bengtson, is a “broken sonata” in which the musical fabric is fragmented and reassembled in pieces in the manner of a cubist painting. It may seem of a kind with Beethoven’s op. 27 no. 1. Certainly the 14th sonata is directly inspired by Beethoven’s 14th, op. 27 no. 2. Even more than the other pieces on the album, it plays with the idea of musical memory, as it tries to recreate a forgotten version of the Moonlight sonata, creating numerous (at times humorous) distortions in its wake.

**Madeleine Hsu Forte** continues to produce recordings of her solo and ensemble activities. Forte and her performance groups, **The Lillibridge Ensemble** and **The Bel-Être Duo** have recently released multiple albums on Romeo Records — a solo album of home recordings, a live album of solo and duo piano pieces, two albums of violin sonatas, and an album consisting of a cello sonata and

a string quintet.

You can read the review of the group’s violin sonatas by Beethoven and Debussy on Fanfare:

<https://fanfarearchive.com/ntbm/articles/forte-dubins-7347.html>

In the first half of 2026, pianist **Gila Goldstein** performed a solo recital in Tel-Aviv, a Trio performance of Schubert Op. 100 and Shostakovich No. 2 at the “Close Encounters with Music” Series in Great Barrington, a solo recital and a master class at CA State University in San Marcos, California, and two concerts titled “classical & beyond” featuring some solo works and some non-classical arrangements and improvisations with Percussion & Flute (in Boston) and with Percussion & Accordion (in New York City).

In April, the Wheaton College Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Benjamin Klemme, celebrated its 100th anniversary with a gala program featuring the Liszt Second Piano Concerto and Mahler’s First Symphony; **Daniel Paul Horn** was soloist in the concerto.

Pianist **Justin Kolb** has partnered with the Community Foundation for South Central New York to support high school seniors accepted as undergraduate music majors at accredited schools of music. “This scholarship will serve as a note of appreciation to Catskill parents, patrons, and students for supporting my efforts to acknowledge the merit and value of performing and fine art as the cultural DNA in everyone,” said Kolb. The scholarship will be available to students across more than 25 school districts in the Catskills and surrounding region. One can support this scholarship today by donating to the Fund using this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/JKolbMusic>

# Member News

(continued)

**José López** performed a recital at New York's Cutting Edge Concerts on March 23, 2026, that included works by Cuban American composers Aurelio de la Vega, Tania León, Orlando García, Antonino Hernández Lizaso and Ivette Herryman, all recipients of the CINTAS fellowships. The CINTAS Foundation, named after Cuban industrialist and art patron Oscar Cintas (1887-1957), was established in the early 1960's to celebrate the contribution of composers, creative writers, visual artists, filmmakers and architects of Cuban descent.

**Éva Polgár** has been appointed Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of North Texas College of Music, where she will begin her tenure-track position in Fall 2026. She also began serving as Executive Secretary on the Executive Board of the American Liszt Society in Spring 2026, succeeding the irreplaceable **Justin Kolb** in this capacity. Her recent professional activities included a presentation titled "From Étude to Encore: Hungarian Piano Repertoire for Study and Stage," delivered at the Tennessee Music Teachers Association State Conference hosted at East Tennessee State University on June 2, where she also served on the organizing committee as President of the Appalachian Chapter of the Music Teachers National Association, a term that concluded recently. Her performance schedule in June included an appearance at the Flatiron Festival in New York City under the artistic direction of concert pianist **Asiya Korepanova**, as well as a four-hand piano recital with Hungarian pianist Krisztina Fejes in Budapest. The program was broadcast by Hungarian National Radio and featured works by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and three songs by George Gershwin in arrangements by University of Michigan faculty artist **Logan Skelton**.

In January 2026, **Dmitry Rachmanov** hosted the Scriabin Society of

America West Coast Festival. He helped organize performances at CSUN by young artists in a recital of works by Scriabin, and a lecture demonstration on Scriabin's late style and the Symphonic Poem Prometheus, presented by the SSA Board Members Lindsey Macchiarella and James Palmer. In addition was James' solo recital in an all-Scriabin program. Rachmanov also presented a masterclass on two sonatas by the Russian master. Other highlights included a performance of Prometheus by the LA Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen with the pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet. Rachmanov conducted an interview with Thibaudet for the latest SSA Journal, dedicated to this seminal Scriabin's symphonic creation.

During this spring Rachmanov performed in recital and conducted masterclasses in California (for the Thousand Oaks Philharmonic, Music Teachers Association of California West Valley Branch and at California School of the Arts) as well as at Andrews University (MI), Portland State and University of Oregon. At The University of Oregon he coached the Ten Scriabin Sonatas at the invitation and for the studio of **Dr. Alexandre Dossin** (the ALS Vice President) in preparation of the studio's performance presentation of the cycle.

In May-June Dmitry toured China with recitals, lectures and masterclasses in Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Dalian and in the Inner Mongolia region, at several schools, concert venues and institutions. Later in June he gave a masterclass for the Tone Base seminar at Coburn School. In July he joins the InterHarmony International Music Festival at Acqui Terme, Italy. He is also co-hosting the OpusOne International Music Festival in Los Angeles for its second 2026 edition. In August Dmitry will rejoin the faculty of the Adamant School of Music in Vermont, followed by the adjudication of the USIMC Competition in San Jose, CA.

Life Members **Edward and Lois Rath** spent two weeks in Austria in August 2025. One of the highlights of the trip came when Ed was awarded the city of Eisenstadt's "Grand Joseph Haydn Gold Medallion" at a ceremony in the Haydnssaal of Schloss Esterhazy. Rath was the Administrative Director of the Classical Music Festival in Eisenstadt for 22 years, and the award was presented at a concert commemorating the 50th anniversary of the festival. Eisenstadt is located a short distance north of Raiding, the birthplace of Franz Liszt, and Liszt's father was employed by the Esterhazy family.

## New Members Spring 2026

Runze Bai  
Tierra Cassens  
Adrian Coburn  
Thomas Croke  
Elizabeth Grimpou  
Forest Howell  
Seth Johnson  
Haeun Jung  
Duy Nguyen  
Neil Rutman  
Huanwen Wendy Wang  
Scott Watkins  
Christopher Wright  
Wenhao Zhang  
Ying Zhang

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# Chapter News

## CHICAGO/MIDWEST CHAPTER

In collaboration with the Chicago chapter of the American Liszt Society, Wheaton College Conservatory piano students and faculty joined together to present a complete performance of Franz Liszt's *Weihnachtsbaum* under the Conservatory Christmas tree on December 5, 2025. Among the performers were ALS members **Hyejin Cho** and **Daniel Paul Horn**. (See picture p. 12)

## NEW YORK/NEW JERSEY CHAPTER

As it does each year, on June 27-28, 2026 the Chapter collaborated with the Taubman Institute at Montclair State University (MSU) in New Jersey. Prof. **David Witten**, Coordinator of Keyboard Studies at MSU, and vice-president of the NY/NJ Chapter served as the host and organizer of the event. Please check details here:

<https://www.Taubmanuniversalapproach.org>

## SOUTH FLORIDA CHAPTER

Duo-pianists **Meeyoun Park** and **Matthew Gianforte** performed a 4-hand and 2-piano recital at Florida International University's Wertheim Concert Hall on January 31, 2026. The program included Franz Schubert's F-minor Fantasy, D. 940, Samuel Barber's *Souvenirs*, op. 28, Maurice Ravel's *La Valse*, and Franz Liszt's *Réminiscences de Don Juan*.

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

On Saturday, November 22, 2025, the SoCal Chapter of the American Liszt Society presented its bi-annual festival (which traditionally alternates with the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition every other year), hosted by the Pasadena Conservatory of Music. The one-day event featured a lecture on the History of the Nocturne presented by a PCM Faculty and an excellent pianist in his own right,

**Dr. Vatche Mankerian**, followed by a showcase recital by some dozen-plus students from pre-teen to college-age and beyond range, performing works by Liszt and his contemporaries. The day's events were capped by a detailed masterclass offered by **Dr. Stephen Cook**, the conservatory president. He worked with three students on the works of Liszt. The final official part was the presentation of prizes for the young showcase participants for best performances in various categories. A fine courtyard reception brought the event to a close.

## ALSO FROM THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, THIS SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

**The Los Angeles International Liszt Competition for Pianists and Vocalists** will be held on November 21-22, 2026 on the campus of Azusa Pacific University in Southern California.

We invite your talented students to participate in this highly anticipated biennial event. The Competition is adjudicated by national and international Liszt performers and scholars, including members of the American Liszt Society, with entrants competing in ten different divisions. Further information is available on the website:

[www.lalisztcompetition.com](http://www.lalisztcompetition.com)

Information on the competition also may be requested from the co-directors, **Katherine Hickey** and **Éva Polgár**. Online registration is currently open, with an application deadline of October 18, 2026.

We look forward to building on the successes of past competitions and providing young artists with a rewarding performance experience. We also look forward to an exciting Competition.

## Los Angeles International Liszt Competition

for PIANO and VOICE  
November 21-22, 2026

**Application deadline:**  
**October 18, 2026**

**CONCERT AND CASH PRIZES**

[www.lalisztcompetition.com](http://www.lalisztcompetition.com)



### Next Issue Deadline: November 1, 2026

Contributions to the newsletters are welcomed and encouraged! Contact [dparsons@furman.edu](mailto:dparsons@furman.edu).

Photos should be high resolution b/w or color. Thank you!

# Justin Kolb: In Appreciation

(continued)

**Dmitry Rachmanov:** Justin and I have known each other since 1990s in New York, when we often participated in the same music festivals, such as the annual summer Beethoven Festival held at Long Island's Planting Fields Arboretum. Our friendship continued through our interactions at the ALS festivals, from the 2006 UGA one and on through the years. I have always appreciated Justin's genuine humanity and warmth, his caring advice at various junctures of our communications as colleagues and friends. I wish him many more years of good health and continued creativity. His presence at the ALS Board will be greatly missed!

**Ed Rath:** I first met Justin in 2004 when I organized the ALS Festival at the University of Illinois. The festival was a "baptism by fire" because I had never attended a festival. As a matter of fact, I wasn't even a member of ALS at that time! Justin and I had corresponded by email and spoken on the phone, but it was on the first day of the Illinois festival that I actually met the gentleman. Justin makes quite a first impression! His sense of humor is immediately apparent, as is his friendly demeanor and musical talent. But there is a sense of helpfulness that underlies all that he does and says. When he realized that I did not have an emcee for the festival, he stepped right up and took on that responsibility. His excellent memory of past festivals supported his sense of timing and ability to ad lib, and his personal friendships with most of the members in attendance lent a casual, entertaining, and almost folksy feeling to our very busy schedule of concerts and lectures. Since then, Justin and I have become close friends, sharing our thoughts and ideas about how ALS might develop, but also enjoying a good laugh and slapping one another on the back as we parted company at the end of our times together. His contributions to ALS, especially in his roles as Executive Secretary, board member, presenter, performer, and all-around goodwill ambassador, will remain with us as he continues his membership in

the Society. And a special shout-out to his lovely wife, Barbara, for her unending support of Justin and the ideals of the American Liszt Society. I treasure our relationship and will always look forward to seeing and hearing him; I join thousands of Lisztians in saying "Thank You, Justin," and best wishes for good health and happiness.

**Steven Spooner:** Justin has been far more than an executive board member and MC of the American Liszt Society. He has been its conscience. Year after year, with unflinching integrity, he has never shied away from asking the hard questions — the ones that matter, the ones that challenge us to do better, to be better. He has worked faithfully and tirelessly to preserve the legacy of Liszt, and for that, we all owe him a debt that is not easy to put into words. Justin has been a light and beacon to us all through his artistry, leadership, and inimitable personality. But I want to share my own story, because it is almost entirely the story of Justin's kindness. As a doctoral student, I sent in my application to the Society — not knowing quite what to expect. Before long, the phone rang, and it was Justin. He simply wanted to know more about me. I cannot overstate how deeply that gesture moved me. Who was I? A young, hopeful musician — and here was Justin taking the time to call, to ask about my studies, my aspirations, my connection to Liszt. I was happy to tell him that my nearly completed doctoral document was devoted to Liszt and the culture of transcription. Justin didn't waste a moment. He immediately put me in touch with the Festival director — our current Festival director, Paul Barnes — and within just a few days, I was slated to perform at my very first American Liszt Society Festival in Lincoln, Nebraska. A single phone call. A single act of generous attention — and my career was set on a new course. The years that followed brought more memories than I could ever recount. But one stands out with particular warmth: the evening Justin came to a concert of mine...

People were congratulating him as my father — something about the uncanny similarity of our haircuts — we still laugh about it. It seemed that whenever I performed, Justin and Barb would always find their way to my concert. That kind of steadfast, loyal friendship is a gift beyond measure. We all have so much to thank Justin for. But I am certain I have more reason than most. And I want every person reading these words to know how profoundly and personally grateful I am — not only for what Justin has done for this Society and for Liszt's legacy, but for what he has done for me.

**Alan Walker:** For each one of the twelve years that I directed the Great Romantics Festivals in Hamilton (three consecutive ones in the late 1990s were annual ALS festivals, while all the later ones continued to receive vital support from the ALS) Justin was the irreplaceable Master of Ceremonies, holding things together with colour, charm, wit, and sheer chutzpah. Among my own treasured memories is the occasion when he gave a block-buster talk to 500 school children in a downtown cinema that we had rented as part of the ALS town-and-gown festival that year, and played Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody to them on a portable electronic keyboard while they munched popcorn and looked at supporting images of Liszt on the screen. I also recall his memorable encounter with "Franz Liszt" (the Canadian actor Robert Latimer) who gave a speech that I wrote and later insisted on a personal encounter with Justin in a local hotel. As for his celebrated run-in with McMaster University's campus police for an incorrectly parked vehicle abandoned outside a building where he was meanwhile addressing a concert of "The Young Romantics" and the fine I subsequently paid for him — I will leave that reminiscence for another occasion.

