



# Josef Bulva

BIOGRAPHY

Josef Bulva, born on January 9th, 1943 in Brno, Czechoslovakia, is an outstanding personality with an impressive career and life story. His education as a pianist started at the music school in the Moravian village of Napajedla where he lived with his family. His first piano steps proved rather mediocre until an encounter with Professor Václav Lanka produced a positive turn. He contrived to put a new studying method for his protégé in place that the boy welcomed with the flaming eagerness of a romanticizing child and which, from there on, he worked out with iron discipline. Thus, young Bulva certified his technical skills many hours a day, attaining astonishing virtuosity after barely three years, which made him a young prodigy. At the age of only thirteen, he went onstage to perform Mozart and Liszt piano concerts impressing the audience with such monumental works as Brahms' Paganini Variations.

His unique talent and performances could not be kept secret from the former Czech government. They took the prodigious twelve and a half year old child from his public school and sent him - two years younger than his classmates - to the music conservatory. Seven years later, at the Academy of Arts in Bratislava already, he accomplished his studies with distinction. The honoring nomination as a state soloist was bestowed upon him as he became the new esteemed rising star and thus a welcomed figurehead of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. This renowned position guaranteed Josef Bulva not only the opportunity to profoundly improve his artistic proficiency, it also gave him the chance of giving numerous concerts which, in sequel, germinated his onstage self-assurance.

Yet the young virtuoso developed still another activity which he himself qualified as the eminent element in his artistic career: the close cooperation with composers. He played numerous premieres of piano works - most of them dedicated to him - while studying structures and functions of music by authors.

In 1971, his career was interrupted by a savage accident followed by a year-long hospital stay. It was during this time that he took the decision to leave for Western Europe as he was convinced to be more able to strive towards his artistic ideals there. Back on his feet, he used the first right set of circumstances, a concert tour abroad in 1972, to emigrate. He became a citizen of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg and found a second home in the secret European capital of music - Munich.

International concert halls and recording company such as TELDEC, ORFEO, Madacy, and RCA opened their doors for Josef Bulva. The reputation of a unique artistic talent quickly spread around in the music community. Critics spoke very highly of his tremendous virtuosity and his analytically minded performances. Joachim Kaiser named his "The Pianist of the Scientific Age". However, Bulva did not surrender his skills to commercialism and kept more and more away from the concert stage instead. It was then that his aura of a difficult, even if socially wholehearted, enigmatic artist began to veil his name.

In March 1996, Josef Bulva slipped on an icy road where a piece of broken glass caused an injury to his left hand so severe that his career seemed finished; The world inherited a series of recordings from which the most important are integrated in a book-CD-set "The Art of Josef Bulva" (Amazon) He retired to Monaco where he kept seeking a new significance in life.

"I am born to be a pianist" - however successful his new activities resulted, they could not overcome his talent, his iron will and discipline - the qualities that made him a child prodigy. He would not tell anyone that he started retraining his left hand. After excellent surgery and an enormous recovery time, supervised by Professor Beat Simmen from Zurich, he actually regained his former virtuosity.

After fourteen years without giving a concert, Josef Bulva decided in the winter of 2009, to go back onstage and to studios; thus he resumed his life-long fight to put his own hallmark to the piano sound he heed as ideal.

He bought his famous grand piano at STEINWAY & SONS, elaborated in close cooperation with the factory up to his specific demands - the piano for "The Pianist among the Pianists". Thanks to the distinctiveness of its sound, this piano guarantees the realization of his performance ideals and precise unfolding of his stupendous technique.

But the unique and fundamental aspect of his virtuosity - and his inventive contribution to the history of the development of piano playing - is the implementation of the middle pedal within the rendition of the compositions. Its utilization makes the musical structures audible. Works performed by him appear in a completely new light. In the German daily "Süddeutsche Zeitung", Wolfgang Schreiber recognizes Bulva's performance as "masterly, precise and fully developed. The cantabile of the melody lines seems meticulously studied and conceived, lyrically thought out scales, all rhythmic accuracy in place. The musical maturity of a rich imagination is unmistakable, surprisingly soft and precise."

The German broadcaster SWR made a film about Bulva with the title "The big Comeback - Josef Bulva's way back into the lime which was released on April 17, 2011 by ARD. The television stations 3Sat, BR, ARD, SWR, NDR and WDR transmitted portraits about his work.

SONY CLASSICAL, today the owner of the legendary RCA has secured exclusive rights for the future on working with the formerly committed virtuoso and already produced three new CDs under the renowned RCA RED SEAL label, and on which he plays works by Beethoven, Chopin and Szymanowski with Josef Bulva.

In spring 2015, RCA honors Josef Bulva by editing and releasing a double CD with the recordings, from 1960 to 2015, of a lifelong struggle and confrontation with the works of composer Franz Liszt.

A DVD dedicated to its art to play, The Sound of 582310, was produced in 2016.