

Piano man — fast as lightning

Hungarian musician connects with China through concert series, **Yu Ran** reports.

Balázs Havasi's recent concert at the Expo 2010 Shanghai was a significant event for the 35-year-old Hungarian, who has felt a connection with China since he was a young boy.

Havasi, who is renowned as the fastest pianist in the world, performed his *Symphonic Red*, a composition specially created for the Expo, at the Choir Festival of Expo 2010.

"The uplifting sounds of *Symphonic Red* gave the audience the feeling that they were flying," Havasi said.

Havasi's *Symphonic Red* is a monumental musical composition that was written to prove that music is a truly universal language that allows people to communicate easily. Certain traditional Chinese instruments were featured in the concert, including the *bawu* flute and *dagu* drums.

"I've tried to combine Chinese elements with European-style symphonies," he said.

"Those two traditional Chinese instruments I've applied in the performance symbolize an unique art integration."

Havasi, who began learning piano when he was four years old, practiced eight to 10 hours a day. He graduated from the Hungarian Music Academy, and persisted by expressing himself to all people through playing his own unique music, a combination of classical music with new elements.

"I personally don't think I belong to the classical music world, although classical music was my major in university," he said. "I appreciate the impact from the modern world, which gave me inspiration to compose creative works."

In November 2009, Havasi broke a Guinness World Record and became the "The fastest piano player of the World".

To break the record, Havasi hit the same piano key 498 times in 60 seconds, easily surpassing the old record of 200 strokes in 60 seconds. A Guinness World Record adjudicator had to use a high-definition camera to film his record-setting performance because he was so fast.

"I used to practice martial arts, which made my fingers stronger and more flexible," he said. "So I was able to break the record."

For Havasi, his trip to China was also sentimental. He has special feelings toward China as his mother lived in Beijing for five years before he was born.

"I started using chopsticks before a fork because my mom missed life in China so much that she cooked Chinese dishes very often," he said. "Performing concerts in China is my whole family's dream, especially my mum's."

Havasi said he was delighted that so many children in China were learning and playing piano with high standards.

"I was so impressed that playing the piano has turned out to be a favorite hobby among children. Practicing the piano is the only way to become a good pianist and practicing difficult scores will help children progress



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The fastest pianist in the world, Balázs Havasi, performed recently in the Expo Garden.

faster," Havasi said.

He emphasized, however, that children's interests were important and never force them to do what they don't like.

Havasi said he was looking forward to returning to China again at the end of the year to prepare for

the 2011 *Symphonic Red* Concert Tour of China.

"I would like to be the pioneer to establish a platform for the cooperation between Chinese and Hungarian cultures," he said. "Hopefully I will have more opportunities to work with excellent Chinese artists in the future."



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