

Born in the Czech Republic in 1986 Lukas Vondracek's musical ability was spotted at the age of two by his mother, herself a professional pianist. He gave his first concert at the age of 4 and now, at the age of 21, he has visited 25 different countries giving in excess of 850 concerts.

His first visit to the UK was at the age of 10 when he performed at the Wirksworth Arts Festival in Derbyshire. Recitals at many UK Music Festivals followed and in November 2002 he made his debut recital at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on London's South Bank. He was the youngest pianist to have been invited to play in their prestigious International Piano Series.

In the intervening years he gave many recital and concerto performances throughout his home country as well as abroad. He also spent time studying at the Academy of Music in Katowice with Prof. Jasinsky, at the Vienna Hochschule with Prof. Peter Barcaba, and at Ostrava University. Lukas was offered places at both the Royal Academy of Music in London, and the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia but had to decline for personal reasons.

Lukas performed debut recitals at Paris La Cite, the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels and the Auditorio Nacional in Madrid as well as at the Mecklenburg Vorpommern Festival. He has also played in a number of piano festivals in the USA, including the Gilmore Festival, the Ravinia Rising Stars Series and the New York International Piano Series.

Vladimir Ashkenazy was the conductor when Lukas made his debut with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in May 2002 with concerts in Prague and Italy. Since then he has appeared frequently with the orchestra, including a major USA tour, and concerts in Cologne, Vienna, Lucerne, Bad Kissingen, and Birmingham's Symphony Hall.

Lukas' performances with orchestras are widely acclaimed - in March 2003 it was Prokofiev's 1<sup>st</sup> Piano Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy in Birmingham. In 2004, at very short notice, he had the opportunity to play in Birmingham again. This time it was Mendelssohn's 1<sup>st</sup> Piano Concerto with the London Sinfonia under Richard Hickox who said afterwards : "...the boy's a genius".

In October 2004 Lukas made his debut with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra in Hanley and Chester when he played Grieg's Piano Concerto under conductor Vassily Sinaisky and in September 2005 he was again in Hanley with the BBC Philharmonic, playing Tchaikovsky's 1<sup>st</sup> Piano Concerto with Gianandrea Noseda conducting.

In March 2005 he joined the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in Mendelssohn's 1<sup>st</sup> Piano Concerto, conducted by Paavo Jarvi; in April it was Helsinki and the Dvorak Piano concerto with Ashkenazy conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic, and in May he was back in the UK, playing Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on the Theme of Paganini with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under their conductor Marin Alsop.

As a concert soloist Lukas has played with orchestras throughout the world - the Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool, and Royal Scottish National Orchestra in the UK, St Petersburg Philharmonic, Flemish Radio, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Malta National Orchestra, Iceland, Dallas, Cincinnati and he has toured in Japan with the NHK Symphony.

In January 2006 the Mozart Prague 2006 programme commenced at the Rudolfinum in Prague. Lukas joined the Czech Philharmonic in Mozart's concerto No 24 in C minor K491 conducted by Walter Weller. Other projects during the 2006/2007 season include recital debuts at the Zurich Tonhalle and Dortmund's Next Generation Series, and his debut with the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Lisbon. Later in 2007 he joins the Australian Youth Orchestra on their European tour before his first visit to Australia when he will play with the Sydney Symphony and the West Australian Symphony Orchestra.