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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Itamar Carmeli in Vienna

Ehrbar Saal, 29.04.2026 [ENA]

At the Ehrbar Saal, this C. Bechstein Klavierabend presented by Sir András Schiff offered the kind of artistic debut that immediately marks a pianist as one to watch. Itamar Carmeli's recital was not merely a student's homage to a great teacher, but a fully formed musical statement: thoughtful in conception, poised in execution, and strikingly individual in voice. The programme itself was beautifully judged, tracing a line from Bach and Mendelssohn through Gideon Klein and Bartók to Schumann, and thereby creating a panorama of continuity, contrast, and inner necessity.

The opening Bach works established the tonal and intellectual center of the evening. The Capriccio sopra la lontananza del suo fratello dilettissimo, BWV 992, can easily become illustrative or mannered in lesser hands, but here it was shaped with real narrative instinct. Carmeli found the work's emotional balance between wit, tenderness, and farewell with admirable naturalness. He understood that Bach's early keyboard writing already contains an astonishing dramatic imagination, and he made the piece feel both intimate and architecturally sure. The selected Prelude and Fugue in E minor from The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I was equally convincing: clear in texture, flexible in pulse, and attentive to the contrapuntal strands.

What was especially impressive throughout the first half was the pianist's ability to move between styles without losing identity. The Gideon Klein Sonata brought a different world entirely — compressed, urgent, and historically charged. Carmeli approached it with concentration and emotional seriousness, allowing the music's tension to speak plainly. The performance suggested a pianist who does not treat modern repertoire as an obligatory contrast, but as part of a larger artistic argument. That is a rare and valuable quality, especially in a programme designed around lineage and transmission.

The Mendelssohn pieces were a natural extension of this thinking. In the Prelude and Fugue in E minor, Op. 35/1 and Prelude and Fugue in B minor, Op. 35/3, Carmeli revealed an ear for the composer's distinctive blend of classical discipline and Romantic ardor. Mendelssohn can sound polite if the pianist emphasizes elegance alone, but here the music had thrust, rhetoric, and luminous singing line. The fugues were shaped with strong direction, while the preludes retained their freshness and volatility. This was playing that respected form while also embracing emotion.

After the interval, the concert moved into a more extroverted and characterful sphere with Bartók's

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Burlesques, Op. 8. These pieces require rhythmic bite, coloristic imagination, and a certain fearless attack, and Carmeli delivered them with tremendous assurance. He gave the music its necessary edge, but never at the expense of clarity. The rhythmic profile was sharply etched, the dynamic range was thrilling, and the sense of Hungarian vernacular energy was completely alive. This part of the recital confirmed his versatility: he is not only a serious Bach player, but a pianist with real command of modernist energy and tonal brilliance.

The evening closed with Schumann's Humoreske, Op. 20, one of the great tests of pianistic imagination. It is a work that can fragment if the performer does not sustain its emotional thread. Carmeli's reading was notable for its coherence and poetic instinct. He treated the piece not as a sequence of moods but as a living interior monologue. Its shifts between intimacy, agitation, reverie, and exuberance were beautifully handled, and he found a generous emotional range without overstatement. The result was deeply satisfying: a performance that trusted Schumann's strange, mercurial world and allowed it to unfold organically.

Equally important was the broader significance of the concert itself. The programme was framed by Itamar Carmeli's connection to Sir András Schiff, and that lineage was audible not as imitation, but as seriousness of purpose. This was a recital shaped by listening, discipline, and stylistic intelligence. Carmeli clearly belongs to a generation that values depth over display, and his playing showed a rare maturity for an artist making a Vienna appearance of this kind. The Ehrbar Saal, with its intimate acoustics, proved a fitting setting for such a nuanced event: close enough to reward precision, spacious enough to let the emotional breadth of the programme resonate.

In all, this was a remarkable recital — musically rich, intellectually coherent, and emotionally engaging. It combined scholarship with spontaneity, discipline with imagination, and stylistic awareness with genuine personality. Itamar Carmeli emerged as an artist of real promise and substantial present achievement, and this concert felt less like a debut than the beginning of an important pianistic journey.

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