Chopin and changing

In the midst of a 100-city tour, Chinese pianist Li Yundi reflects on how his interpretation of his favorite composer’s music has evolved over the years, Chen Nan reports.

As coming full-circle, Li was one of the jurors at the 7th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in 2015. “I picked up the baton for the first time in 2017, leading the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra on a five-city tour of China, playing two Chopin concertos: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No 1 in E Minor and Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No 2 in F Minor.”

When Li celebrated his 34th birthday in Warsaw, performing Chopin concertos with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the orchestra played Happy Birthday for the pianist at the end of the recital, delighting Li with the surprise.

With his hectic schedule of touring and recording, Li says “to be relaxed” is the only word he uses to describe his recent state of mind. “Happy Birthday is a very impressive and encouraging title,”

When Li received the Gold Medal for the competition in 2000, he was 18 years old. “At that time, I was expecting to win, but I also had a fear of losing,” Li said.

As such, Li’s concert last Friday in Changsha was a welcome surprise for Li’s fans. “When I walk on the stage, I see the lights on me. I see the audience in the dark,” Li said.

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