Istvàn Vardái  
Cellist/ Conductor

Artist Director: Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra

“His playing was commendable for its fluidity and virtuosity, distinguished by both a fleet-fingered lightness and a rich timbre.” (*The New York Times*) István Várdai is highly regarded for his joyous energy, rhythmic vigour and elegant grace in his soulful renditions of solo, chamber music and orchestral repertoire for cello. In his fourth season as Artistic Director of Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, he continues to present inspiring and creative programmes. Alongside this, István welcomes world-renowned musicians at the Kapostfest Chamber Music Festival in Hungary and continues his soloist career with leading orchestras performing repertoire from Bach to Péter Eötvös.

In 2024/25 István Várdai debuts with Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Tugan Sokhiev’s baton playing Shostakovich Cello Concerto No.2 which he records with BBC Philharmonic and John Storgards earlier in the season. Another highlight is a tour of Belgium and Hungary with Royal Liege Philharmonic under Gergely Madaras playing Elgar’s Cello Concerto. István returns to NFM Wroclaw Philharmonic for a play/direct programme of Mozart, Haydn and conducts Beethoven Symphony No.2.

István Várdai and Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra welcome Lucienne Renaudin Vary, Roman Simovic and Zoltan Fejervari in Budapest for FLCO’s series at the Grand Hall of the Liszt Academy. International tours take them to Germany to Kronberg Academy and Mecklenburg Vorpommern Festival, Cremona to the Stradivari Festival and to Musikverein in Vienna where István Várdai directs Dvorak’s Cello Concerto from the cello.

As a passionate chamber musician, István Várdai has played with [Víkingur Ólafsson](https://www.harrisonparrott.com/artists/vikingur-olafsson), András Schiff, Yuri Bashmet, Gidon Kremer, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, Mischa Maisky, Elisabeth Leonskaja and Liza Ferschtman at some of the world’s leading venues.

The programme for István Várdai’s latest album *Szinegia* celebrates the rhythms and folk traditions of composers such as Bartok, Hartmann, Kodaly and Weiner. István Várdai worked closely with clarinetist Pablo Barragan and Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra on the concept and the album is released from Accentus label. Over the years, István Várdai’s has recorded Janáček, Prokofiev and Elgar’s Cello Concertos on Ysaÿe Records, and his recording of Bach’s solo cello suites on Brilliant Classics has received critical acclaim. István Várdai is the subject of a new documentary [“VÁRDAI - non SOLO CELLO”](https://filmfreeway.com/VARDAInonSOLOCELLO) directed by Eszter Száraz and produced by TRIONFilm.

Following success on the competitions circuit, including first prizes at the 2014 ARD International Music Competition and at the 2008 Geneva International Music Competition, István Várdai served on the jury of the International Tchaikovsky Competition in 2019. He has been teaching at University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna where he succeeded the late Heinrich Schiff in the role, and where he himself studied in 2005. István Várdai plays on ‘Ex du Pré-Harrell’ Stradivari made in 1673, previously played by Jacqueline du Pré.

[](https://open.spotify.com/artist/4P4rYgvwv3DGEE7kEpxZYh?si=khfuqBKSTYWkuOrfaUHWeA)[](https://www.instagram.com/vardaiistvan/?hl=en-gb)