

Dr. Zachary Deak

Alfred Cortot: Teaching, Interpretation, and the Art of Piano Pedagogy



Friday, January 15th, 2027

Location: Old Dominion University
1339 West 49th Street, Norfolk VA 23529

10:00 Business Meeting & Workshop

12:00 Lunch

Biography: Pianist Zachary Deak has appeared in recital as a soloist and chamber musician in the United States, France, Morocco, Portugal, Moldova, and the United Kingdom. He has performed at venues including the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles, the Cité de la Musique and Salle Cortot in Paris, the Casa da Música in Porto, and the Institut Français in Agadir, Morocco. Recent highlights include a performance of Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the ODU Symphony Orchestra; a performance at the Jimmy Carter Forum on U.S.–China Relations at the Carter Center in Atlanta; a lecture-recital on American pedagogical piano music at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna; a performance of Peace for clarinet and piano by Jessie Montgomery at the Virginia Arts Festival; and chamber music appearances in the Masters in the Chapel concert series in Venice, CA, and the Henry J. Bruman Summer Chamber Music Festival at UCLA. Deak's work as a performer is closely connected to his research on piano pedagogy, interpretation, and cultural memory. His article "Pianistic Memorization as Cultural Memory: Insights from Religious and Devotional Traditions" was published in the *Journal of Piano Research* in 2026, and his essay "The Seventh Book: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Piano Study" appeared in the *EPTA Piano Journal*. He is currently conducting ongoing research at the Bibliothèque musicale La Grange-Fleuret in Paris through a Cr  dit Agricole d'  le-de-France Research Fellowship for his project "Revivre le cours: Alfred Cortot, archives p  dagogiques et transmission interpr  tative sur le Steinway 1907." Deak received the Hopkinson Silver Medal at the Chappell Medal Piano Competition in London and worked intensively with Maria Jo  o Pires in Paris and Brussels. A graduate of the   cole Normale de Musique de Paris and the Royal College of Music in London, he received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance from the University of Southern California. He currently serves as Assistant Professor of Piano and Musicology and Director of Keyboard Studies at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

Workshop Description: This workshop explores the teaching legacy of Alfred Cortot, one of the most influential pianist-pedagogues of the twentieth century. The session will introduce Cortot's career, his work at the   cole normale de musique de Paris, his public courses in interpretation, and his famous   ditions de travail of Chopin, Liszt, Schumann, and other composers. Drawing on recent archival research in Paris and Switzerland, Zachary Deak will examine Cortot's distinctive approach to piano teaching. Particular attention will be given to his technical exercises and preparatory studies, as well as to his broader ideas about interpretation, style, imagination, and musical character. The workshop will also consider Cortot's use of analysis, metaphor, literary imagery, and poetic language as tools for shaping musical understanding. Deak will also share insights from recent workshops in Paris that explored Cortot's teaching methods with students today. The session will consider what Cortot's ideas can still offer modern piano teachers and performers, especially in relation to technique, interpretation, imagination, and musical communication.