

FALKO STEINBACH

Pianist | Composer | Teacher

Biography

The inexhaustible fantasy, his “mesmerizing sound” and his sharp understanding of the possibilities of playing the piano and its physical, spiritual and mental aspects have made Falko Steinbach a worldwide recognized soloist, composer and teacher for piano. Grown up in Leverkusen/Bergisch Gladbach (Germany), Falko Steinbach has an extended international performance career with solo performances and recordings in America, Europe and Asia. Here he is regularly invited at important international Music Festivals.

Falko Steinbach’s repertoire ranges from Bach to contemporary classical music. For several years he was chair of “Klang Köln”, an association for contemporary music in Germany. In Brauweiler (Germany) he was Artistic Director of the “Tage Neuer Musik” 2001 and the festival „Streams” 2010 and 2013 with many renowned composers such as Maurizio Kagel, Kurt Schwaen, Barbara Rettagliati, Martin Christoph Redel, Alexander Litvinowski, James Hullick and many others. In 2009 Falko Steinbach founded the international „Klavierfestival Lindlar”. The annual event has become a major cultural factor in the region, his compositions also being performed. This festival received the „Student Abroad Funding” award by UNM in 2014. Because new music is a significant interest for Steinbach, he frequently presents new works to audiences in lecture concerts. Also, Mr. Steinbach has premiered numerous contemporary works, some of which have been dedicated to him.

Falko Steinbach started composing at the age of seven. Beginning with minor pieces such as minuets for piano in the style of W.A. Mozart, by the age of 12 he had composed his first three - movement sonatina for violin and piano under the supervision of his schoolteacher Manfred Klink. Upon deciding to study theory and composition with Georg Kröll (Cologne) and Prof. Manfred Reiter, as well as Prof. Roland Löbner (theory), Steinbach composed his first serious piece, “Suite for Piano,” in dodecaphonic style. He finished his theory studies with a Bachelors Degree at the Musikhochschule Köln. Since that time he has continued developing his autodidactic style using dodecaphonic elements, rotational systems and synaesthetic- and jazz-influenced patterns. In the meantime, his oeuvre encompasses one opera, numerous major cycles for choir and various ensembles, chamber music, piano ensembles and piano solo. His compositions were recorded on CD’s, broadcasted and performed in several countries and significant international music festivals in Taiwan, USA and Germany. Falko Steinbach is a member of GEMA and the American Composers Alliance. ACA and Verlag Edmund Bieler, Cologne are his publishers.

Mr. Steinbach, who is a Steinway-artist has made 15 compact disc recordings as well as videos and has appeared widely on German and US radio and television. The proceeds from one of the CDs “Klassik für Menschenrechte” - with works of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin and Bartók - went to the Casa Alianza-Children’s Aid of Guatemala and Amnesty International. The proceeds of his CD “Humanity Classics” with piano concertos from Mozart and Schnittke went to a home for disabled women in Bulgaria.

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Besides a DAAD scholarship of the German government for Advanced Studies in England he received a grant from the "Stiftung Kunst und Kultur" of the state Northrhine Westfalia to produce the two compact discs "six take" and "Lieder aus dem Exil", a WDR produced CD with soprano Marlene Mild. He also received a grant from the University of New Mexico to translate his book, "Klaviertechnisches Kompendium" into the English language. In 2006 he received a grant to publish his "Figures" – 17 Choreographic Etudes for Piano. In 2008 he received two Grants to publish his CD „Figures“ with Centaur Records, one of which was the „RAC Grant“ of the University of New Mexico. This cycle of etudes was subject to two doctoral dissertations by pianist Shu Ching Cheng at the University of Arizona with the title: „The Interdependence of Movement and Sound in all Aspects of Piano Technique in Falko Steinbach's „Figures“- 17 Choreographic Etudes for Piano (2006)“ in 2010 and pianist Alexander Schwarzkopf at the University of Oregon with the title: „A Structural Analysis for Performers: Falko Steinbach's „Figures: 17 Choreographic Etudes for Piano“ in 2012.

Born in Aachen, Mr. Steinbach started playing the piano when he was 4 years old and made his public concert debut at the age of twelve. He received a first prize in the piano competition "Jugend musiziert" in Bergisch Gladbach when he was 17, studying with Grete Selle in Leverkusen. He then became a Special Student at the Musikhochschule Köln and studied with Prof. Tiny Wirtz, graduated with distinction and completed his solo studies with a doctorate. In addition to this, he pursued advanced studies in solo performance at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London with Craig Sheppard.

Falko Steinbach has taken international masterclasses in Switzerland, Austria, England and Germany as a soloist with Prof. Tatjana Nikolajewa and Peter Feuchtwanger, as well as with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as a collaborative pianist. After being a head of the keyboard area at the University of Cologne, since August 1999, Prof. Steinbach is head of the piano area of the music department at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and leads the piano performance studio for solo studies.

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Short Biography

The inexhaustible fantasy in an amazing symbiosis of technical perfection and highly sensitive sound production, alongside his sharp understanding of the possibilities of playing the piano and its physical, spiritual and mental aspects, have made Falko Steinbach a worldwide recognized soloist, composer and piano pedagogue. He performs and teaches at many international festivals in America, Asia and Europe. Born in Aachen, raised in Leverkusen/Bergisch Gladbach, he gave his first public recital at age twelve and won his first piano competition at seventeen.

He completed his solo performance studies with a doctorate after graduating with distinction. He also has a degree in theory and composition. In addition, he studied at the Guild Hall School for Music and Drama in London on a DAAD scholarship. Steinbach, a Steinway artist, participated in many international master courses and since 1999 offers master courses and has founded music - festivals himself. After having taught at the University of Cologne from 1989-1999, he became a professor for piano performance and head of the piano area at the University of New Mexico (USA). His assignment includes extensive performing - and teaching activities. Many of his students won prizes at regional, national and international competitions. His repertoire includes a wide spectrum from Bach to contemporary music, which is his special interest. As a composer, Falko Steinbach has created an extensive Oeuvre for church music, chamber music and piano music. An extraordinary number of reviews and articles as well as awards reflect great respect and recognition for his unusual artistic and pedagogic achievements. His humanitarian interest is also represented in several benefit CD's.

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Curriculum Vitae

Work experience

"Künstlerischer Lehrbeauftragter" for piano at the University of Cologne (1989 – 1999)
Professor of Piano at the University of New Mexico since 1999, Full Professor since 2010
Head of the piano performance program at UNM since 1999

Teaching/Applied lessons: for piano performance on graduate and undergraduate level

Teaching/Classes: Piano ensemble/Chamber music, Piano Pedagogy, Piano Repertory

Teaching/Master Classes: 76 international master classes and 1 – 2 week courses since 1999, in Lindlar and Heek (Germany) annually, at many Universities in Taiwan, USA and Germany, additional Master classes on music festivals in, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, Berlin, Albuquerque (annually) and Santa Fe

Performing: More than 1,000 recitals (solo and collaborative) in 46 years, nationally in Germany since 1970, internationally in Europe since 1987, in Asia and North-and South America since 1999

CD's: 16 mostly solo CD's for the label ambitus (Hamburg), Antes Edition (Germany). The latest: "Oboe on the edge," Centaur Records (2008); "Figures," Centaur Records (2009); "Devisadero," Navona Records (2011). Since 2012 Steinbach continues to produce recordings to be published on his website.

Compositions: 53 compositions – mostly cycles for piano solo, choir, ensembles, chamber music, among which one opera (Berlin Suite, finished 2011), one oratorio (Apocalypse, finished 2016), 4 volumes of 53 piano etudes (finished 2009), one cycle "Eclectic Eccentric" – 5 pieces for oboe and different instruments, and many other chamber music compositions for strings, recorders and other instruments. Most compositions have been world premiered and repeatedly performed by various artists and ensembles, choirs and orchestras on music festivals in Germany, Italy, Taiwan, Malaysia and USA. Many of them have been recorded on CD's.

Festivals: Founder and Artistic Director of the "International Piano Festival Lindlar" (Germany), annual event since 2009 Founder and Artistic Director of "Streams," International Festival for new spiritual and secular compositions in Brauweiler (Germany), 2010 and 2013 under "Schirmherrschaft" of the governor of the state Northrhinewestfalia. Co founder and chair of jury of the piano competition "Competition Internationale" in Albuquerque (UNM) and Santa Fe, 2005. Artistic Director of "Tage Neuer Musik" in Brauweiler (Germany) 2001.

Conferences: Lecturer, performer and clinician on more than 20 regional, national and international conferences since 1999 in Germany, Taiwan, Malaysia, USA.

Topics: Music, Brain development and Mentoring, New Music, Own compositions, e.g: Tage Neuer Musik, Brauweiler, Germany, 2001, International Conference on Piano Musical Arts and Pedagogy, Ping Tung, Taiwan, 2003, Liszt Society, Convention Gainesville, USA 2003, "Streams", Brauweiler, Germany 2010, "Streams", Brauweiler, Germany 2013, Regular invitations to: UNM Mentoring Conference and UNM Composer's Symposium.

Publications: 1 book: A Compendium of Piano Technique (1995 in German and 2007 in English)
Music Scores: "Slapstick Variations" for two pianos (1998), Five Birthday pieces for piano solo (2005), Piano Etudes: "Figures" (2008), "Moving" (2009), "Finger Paintings" (2009), "Mirror Visions" (2011), Etude 53 (2011), all Verlag Edmund Bieler, Cologne (Germany), "Organisms" for Organ for four hands (2013) – self published music print. Since 2017 Steinbach continues to publish his compositions on his own website.

Honorary Cultural activities: since 2004 advisory board member of the concert series "Freundeskreis der Abtei Brauweiler" in Germany; 1999 – 2005 board member of PMTNM – New Mexico; 1996 – 99 board of directors DTKV Köln/Aachen (Germany); 1991 – 1999 founder, member, chair, artistic coordinator of Klang Köln e.V. (Germany); 1990 – 99 co founder and board of directors L'Association Musical Européenne (France); 1987 – 1990 co founder and board of directors Initiative for the Enrichment of Culture, Hückeswagen (Germany).

Adjudicator Activities: Adjudicator on 25 regional, and international piano competitions since 1999.

World premieres: 42 world premieres of compositions by different composers and own compositions (1984 – 2016).

Radio: 25 radio productions and live recordings by WDR and NDR (Germany's two biggest Radio- and TV stations 1991 – 1998).

Student Recitals: Since 1999 two student recitals every semester in Keller Hall, UNM, various student recitals on international master courses. Since 2009 about 10-21 student recitals every year on the "Klavierfestival Lindlar".

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Distinctions and Recognitions

Publications about Steinbach's work: Besides many reviews and articles in newspapers, music publications and music magazines (more than 370 collected articles until September 2015), 6 major publications among which two doctoral dissertations about Steinbach's etudes "Figures" and my book "A Compendium of Piano Technique": 1. The independence of movement and Sound in all Aspects of Piano Technique in Falko Steinbach's "Figures" – 17 Choreographic Etudes for Piano (2006) by Dr. Shu Ching Cheng at the University of Arizona (2010) and 2. A Structural Analysis for Performers: Falko Steinbach's "Figures: 17 Choreographic Etudes for Piano" by Dr. Alexander Schwarzkopf at the University of Oregon (2012).

Awards: Winner of the piano competition "Jugend Musiziert", Bergisch Gladbach (Germany) 1976, Stiftung Kunst und Kultur, Northrhinewestfalia, Grant to publish CD, "six take", DAAD Grant from the German Government (1986), CFA Grant for Translation of "A Compendium of Piano, Technique"(2001), Landschaftsverband Rheinland, Grant for CD production "Humanity, Classics" (2003), CFA Grant to publish the score of "Figures" (2007), CFA Grant to publish CD "Figures" (2008), RAC Grant to publish CD "Figures" (2008), UNM Student Abroad Funding Award (2014).

Student Awards: 73 regional, national and international Student Awards and prizes until summer 2017.

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Curriculum Vitae

Education

Degrees: Certificate of Advanced Studies (Post Graduate), Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London (1987), Konzertexamen (equivalent to DMA) in Piano Performance Musikhochschule Köln (1986), BM in Music Theory and Composition, Musikhochschule Köln (1986), MM with distinction Musikhochschule Köln in Piano Performance (1984), BM, Piano Pedagogy, Musikhochschule Köln (1983)

Languages: German, English (spoken and written), French, Italian (rudimentary spoken), Latin, Kleines Latinum (minor degree)

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The Press about Falko Steinbach

A warm sound, a sensitive interpretation, deep emotion, an astonishingly sensitive, almost lyrical touch, big dramatic lines, incredibly precise technique and an unconventional choice of repertory.

- La France

A musician's personal style has to be the most honest thing he possesses. And that is the subconscious. Just as a dream can only manifest itself by being consciously analyzed, so too can the artist give life to a subconscious inspiration or his creativity by grasping them mentally. In order to achieve this he must apply absolute concentration and technique. It is the only way for the subconscious to materialize in the form of thought. And in this process there is no room for dogmatism but only for inner stringency. Technique is the basis for flexible and spontaneous expression. It is the materialization of subconscious emotions. A note is always created from within a movement. Your body awareness must correlate with the music. Working on a piece is an ongoing process. And the growing understanding of the technical side of it leads to a transformation of one's emotions vice versa. Personally, aside from the emotional, mental and rational analysis of music, teaching and composing is also an important aspect of my work. The ideas I get while teaching and composing are vital for me. And one of the most important things is retaining my ability to abstract.

- Falko Steinbach, Interview RheinArt (a.o.)

Steinbach plays like the composer he is, with a strong narrative sense and informed structural grasp. His approach resembles that of pianists like Alfred Brendel and Maurizio Polini, who submerge themselves in the composer's intention, going deep into the score.

- Joanne Hoover, Albuquerque Journal

Falko Steinbach is the exact opposite of a dazzling virtuoso burying his claws deep into the keys' ivory, gnashing his teeth all the while. Elegance and restraint are what he is after, not melodramatic suspense. And he is more interested in the all-encompassing line of compositional coherence than spectacular little gestures.

- Werner Wittersheim, Philharmonische Blätter

The musical fantasy, the sensitivity for touch, the inspired quality of sound - these are talents Falko Steinbach was born with. And because of them he fascinates his listeners. - Hannelore Bauer-Bienen, Rhein-Sieg-Anzeiger Falko Steinbach, pianistic seer, delights Los Alamos - Craig Smith, The New Mexican With sovereignty he (Falko Steinbach) gives lightness to the dark passages. The ballade is „reflection“, the dance is archaic and the affects are directly understandable.

- Helmut Peters, Piano News

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Mozarts klangvoller tonreich wirbelnder Stil kontra Schumanns kühne Harmonik wurde von Steinbach atemberaubend umgesetzt in ein Feuerwerk poetisch interpretierter Musik
- neue musikzeitung

Nur stichpunktartig können diese wohldurchdachten und dabei nicht "verkopft" umgesetzten sondern klanglich beeindruckenden Strukturen angerissen werden. Beim Hören des Werkes (der Agnesmesse) ... erklingt... im besten Sinne innerlich engagiertes, sinnerfülltes Musizieren.
- Kölner Stadt Anzeiger

... la sua ammaliante esecuzione della Fantasia op. 116 die Brahms ha letteramente ipnotizzato i presenti.
- Liberta (Italien)

Souverän verschafft Falko Steinbach auch den düsteren Partien eine Art von Leichtigkeit: Das Erzählte ist "Reflexion", der Tanz ist archaisch und die Affekte sind unmittelbar verständlich.
- Piano News

" Music is very strongly connected with human beings and humanity, so I think it is important to know why you make music", said the German born Steinbach. And for him that why means concentration and attention, never a mindless rattling off of notes.
- Pasatiempo

Raummusik und Polyphonie entführten in Träumereien , die vom Schlagwerk mit harten Schlägen ins jetzt zurueckgerufen wurden. Wunderlich wanderten die Klänge zwischen Orgelempore und Altarraum, in dem sieben Posaunen clusterhafte Schwebungen und im Schluß-Stück solistisch wie zornige Engel zum "Dies irae" bliesen.
- Kölnische Rundschau

Eine spannungsreiche und effektvolle Komposition
- Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

Ein Klavierkonzert der Extraklasse
- Sonntagspost Pulheim

Alte Muster neu interpretiert
- Kölnische Rundschau

Alles entsteht aus dem erfüllten Augenblick heraus
- Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

Steinbach possesses a compelling musical intelligence and a fluid technique to realize his insights. He plays like the composer he is, with a strong narrative sense and informed structural grasp. His approach resembles that of pianists like Alfred Brendel and Maurizio Polini, who submerge themselves in the composer's intention, going deep into the score.
- Albuquerque Journal (USA)

Meisterhaft gespielt mit persönlicher Note
- Kölnische Rundschau

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Mit "Slapstick-Variationen" zeigt Steinbach sein Gespür für Stile, die er hier zwischen Jazz, Blues und Neuer Musik sucht und findet...eine faszinierende Studie über Stimmverteilung und kraftstrotzender Akrobatik...

- Piano News

Steinbach bewältigt die diversen Stile mit traumwandlerischer Sicherheit und zupackender Virtuosität-und davon benötigt er eine gehörige Portion.

- Fono Forum

Schön, wie es dem Pianisten gelingt, klanglich und thematisch zu differenzieren, die Dinge nebeneinander (be)stehen zu lassen. Eine interessante, das Eisler-Bild vervollständigende Interpretation.

- Berliner Zeitung

Troetschel's "Drei Elegien für Klavier op.14" gewann Falko Steinbach deutlich Akzente instrumentaler Klagen ab.

- Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung

Wer seine Technik bisher mit Hanon, Pleyel, Czerny oder den Etüden von Cramer , herausgegeben von Hans von Bülow "gestählt" hat, wird bei Steinbachs Kompendium noch manche Anregungen finden können.

- Piano News

Bei Wagner wie beim ebenso überzeugenden Debussy-Zyklus findet Anne Schwanewilms in dem Pianisten Falko Steinbach...einen Partner von gleicher Wellenlänge und von hoher Anschlagskultur.

- Philharmonische Blätter

Ein sechster Sinn für die Moderne. Steinbach, der das Publikum in die Stücke einführte, war leidenschaftlich dabei, blieb andererseits auf Distanz zum Gegenstand. Die Zuhörer zeigten sich aufgeschlossen und applaudierten kräftig.

- Kölnische Rundschau

"Der persönliche Stil eines Musikers muss das Ehrlichste sein, was er besitzt. Und das ist das Unterbewußte. So wie ein Traum nur eine Aussage konkret erhält, wenn er bewußt nachvollzogen wird, beispielsweise durch eine Traumdeutung, so bekommt beim Künstler die unbewußte Eingebung oder Kreativität nur Gestalt, indem sie geistig erfaßt wird. Dazu gehört äußerste Konzentration."

- Rhein Art-Interview

Weltreisender in musikalischer Mission-Eindrucksvoller Auftritt

- Kölnische Rundschau

Hinreißende musikalische Ausdruckskraft. Interpretation spürte der Kraft des Moments nach. Als Meister klarer und einfacher, subtil gezeichneter Linien stellte sich Falko Steinbach dem Publikum...vor.

- Rhein-Sieg-Anzeiger

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Mit Akribie und Geschick zu guter Technik. Falko Steinbach hat sich dieser Aufgabe gestellt und löst sie sowohl mit bewundernswerter Akribie als auch in weiten Teilen mit Geschick in der verbalen Darstellung technischer Problemfelder und deren Lösungsmöglichkeiten.

- Neue Musik Zeitung

In der CD-Serie "Klassik für Menschenrechte" gab der Pianist Falko Steinbach eine ausgezeichnete CD heraus. Er selbst erläutert dazu: "Diese CD unterstreicht mein musikalisches Engagement für das menschliche Recht auf ein würdevolles Leben. Wenn meine begrenzten künstlerischen Möglichkeiten hierzu einen kleinen Teil beitragen, wäre dies der schönste Lohn für die Mühen, welche die Musik einem Interpreten bereithält, indem sie ihm Schlichtheit, Geradlinigkeit und Lauterkeit abverlangt.

- Neue Zeitschrift für Musik

Steinbach lotet diese sich von der Zwölftonmusik abgewandten und zur harmonischen Tonalität zurückfindenden eher als spätromantisch zu bezeichnenden Sonate interessant aus, gestaltet tiefgründig...schöpft gerade im dritten Satz aus dem Vollen.

- Pianoforte

L'Europe sur une trame musicale. Falko Steinbach, un jeune pianiste allemand don't le renom commence a franchir les frontieres.

- La France

Ein warmer Klang, eine sensible Interpretation, eine tiefe Emotion: Langanhaltender Applaus für den jungen deutschen Virtuosen Falko Steinbach

- La France

Ein gewaltiger Konzertblock, der dank atemberaubender Spielweise ...nie an Spannung einbüßte.

- Bonner Generalanzeiger

In sich hineinzuhorchen, den feinen Klanggespinsten nachzulauschen, ist Steinbachs interpretatorisches Geheimnis: er hat Mut zur Stille.

- Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

Steinbach gehört jener neuen Generation von Pianisten an, die gleichermaßen verantwortungsbewußt wie auch umsichtig mit klassischer und moderner Literatur umzugehen verstehen.

- Philharmonische Blätter

Mit großen manuellen Fähigkeiten im immer wohlklingenden Fortissimo wusste er sich aber auch bei den Leggieropassagen mit bemerkenswerter Tonfülle und ...Leichtigkeit zurückzunehmen.

- Sud Ouest (Frankreich)

Falko Steinbach's Accidents for piano and oboe is challenging and seems to deconstruct even the academic idiom into cells of music-just ideas linked together by a bony structure. Steinbach plays piano on this piece and probably contributes to what comes across as genuine charm.

- American Record Guide

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Feuerwerk der Klänge. Steinbach demonstrierte mit seiner Feinfühligkeit einmal mehr, dass man Beethoven auch klassisch modern spielen kann. Der Pianist hörte in die Töne hinein, ließ jedem Ton am Ende seines Satzes das freie Hinausschwingen in den Raum. Er gab der Expressivität der Vorlage ihren Freiraum, an dem Beethoven Gefallen gefunden hätte. Ganz anders und dennoch ebenso frei interpretiert entzündete Steinbach mit den Etüden von Chopin einen wahren Feuersturm einer Klangvielfalt, die das Klavier überhaupt bieten kann.

- Münsterland Zeitung

Es geht um mehr als nur darum, Fingerfertigkeit zu vermitteln. Vielmehr soll das Bewußtsein für das „große Ganze“ geschärft werden: dass gutes, ja virtuosos Klavierspiel ebenso mit einem guten Körpergefühl einhergeht als auch mit der Lust an geistiger Auseinandersetzung.

- Piano News I, 2011 über Falko Steinbach's „Fingerbilder“, „Beweglich“ und „Figuren“

As new discovery for me, Accidents for Piano and Oboe is a wonderful piece to have in our repertoire for the advanced and experienced oboist to perform. It is wonderfully fun to listen to, and it uses both the piano and oboe expertly with great originality and to pleasing effect. Audiences

will like it very much. Terrific piece!

- Dr. Jacqueline LeClair, Bowling Green State University - The Double Reed, Vol. 34 No. 1, Spring 2011

Figures are highly creative and beautiful compositions that are well worth studying, teaching and performing. In particular, they may be highly motivating for students who are more perceptive to sonorities, colors, and mood in music.

- Clavier Companion - March/April 2012

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