

VOLKER BANFIELD

[internet – www.banfield.de]



At age 14 Volker Banfield entered the Northwest German Music Academy in Detmold (Germany) with a Bavarian State Scholarship. In 1960 he was the only German prize-winner in the Berlin "Jeunesses musicales" competition. With a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Scholarship he went to the USA in 1965, studying first with Adele Marcus at the Juilliard School in New York and later with Leonard Shure at the University of Texas in Austin. The teaching of both artists has provided Banfield with a strong connection to both the Russian school of virtuosity and the German intellectual tradition of the Schnabel school.

Since Banfield's return to Germany, he has concertized regularly in the major music centres, played with important German, French and English orchestras, toured the USSR with the Saarbrücken Radio orchestra conducted by Hans Zender. He has toured extensively in the USA, Iran, England, Denmark, Switzerland, Italy, France, Austria and throughout South America. Many of his solo recitals and concerto appearances have been broadcast by European Radio networks (among others his concerts under the auspices of the Berlin Festival, the Bonn Beethoven Festival, the Schleswig-Holstein-Festival, the Festival of New Music in Donaueschingen, the Warsaw "autumn", Wien Modern, Music Biennale Zagreb). He performed as soloist with the orchestras of the following radio stations: WDR Cologne, SFB (RSO) Berlin, SR Saarbrücken, NDR Hamburg as well as Hannover, BR Munich, WF Baden-Baden, SRG Basel, BBC (London Sinfonietta), Copenhagen, Ljubljana, KUT (Texas), Tallinn, RAI Milano, KBS Seoul (Korea). In addition to ca. 90 productions for German radio stations (as well as BBC London, Radio France, ORF) he has recorded the Liszt E-flat concerto for ZDF national TV in Germany and Frank Martin's 2nd concerto as well as d'Albert's 2nd concerto for Swiss TV (SRG). The Martin production won a gold medal at the New York TV-Film festival in 1988 (the SRG recordings are available on RCA-Victor VHS-Cassettes). Munich (Bavarian) TV presented a live broadcast from the "Münchner Klaviersommer" featuring the Ligeti piano concerto as well as the Burlesque by Strauss in the same concert.

WERGO has published five records with Banfield's interpretation of works by Scriabin, Killmayer, Villa-Lobos, Müller-Siemens, Ligeti and Messiaen. CPO released seven CD's, the world-première recording of Pfitzner's piano concerto (with the Munich Philharmonic), Busoni's piano concerto (Symphony Orchestra of Bavarian Radio Munich) and the two piano concertos by Hermann Goetz (Radio Philharmonie Hannover). Three CD's are dedicated to the works of Robert Schumann, featuring the Phantasy op. 17, the three Sonatas, and Kreisleriana op. 16, supplemented by the Fantasy Pieces op. 12 and op. 111, the ABEGG-Variations op. 1 and the Romances op. 28. These recordings have been highly acclaimed by European and US record magazines. The Busoni CD won the DIAPASON d'OR, Paris and the "Record of the Month"-distinction of FONOFORUM, Germany. A CD featuring piano concertos by Saint-Saëns, Liszt, d'Albert and Franck was issued by VENUS.

Banfield is elected member of the Hamburg "Freie Akademie der Künste" as well as the "Bayerische Akademie der schönen Künste" in Munich.

He is also an eminent pedagogue, just retired from a full professorship for piano at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg which awarded him its medal of honour, and is a sought after juror in international competitions.

...Banfield is a pianist of firm technique, good taste, and a superb sense of musicianship... (American Record Guide)

...une force, une virtuosité implacable et une vision - Banfield accroche, renverse, subjugué. C'est superbe, terriblement technique mais aussi terriblement beau... (Octobre en Normandie - Liberté dimanche, Rouen)

...La Fantaisie op. 17, où ont sombré des pianistes parmi les plus grands, est sous les doigts de Banfield une leçon de style. La cohérence de la pensée, le sens de l'architecture n'occulent jamais la dimension poétique qui habite ce "cri pour Clara"... (Le Monde de la Musique)

...Volker Banfield played brilliantly, unleashing veritable niagaras of sound from the Merkin Hall Steinway... (New York Times)

...From the very opening of 'Kreisleriana' here, Banfield's affinity with Schumann's highly complex emotional character is abundantly clear, as is his command of the keyboard. Powerful, but never blatantly so, beautifully rounded in tone, and structurally far-seeing, his playing is impressive in its authority and self-evident commitment... (***** -Siepmann, BBC Magazine)