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Menachem Har-Zahav - Biography

"A perfect romantic virtuoso, technically brilliant, expressive, sensitive without false sentimentality." This is how the German newspaper NRZ once characterized the American pianist Menachem Har-Zahav, summarizing the many facets that characterize Har-Zahav's playing. For him, music is a language of its own and virtuosity is never an end in itself, but he uses it to create transparent and nuanced soundscapes in the service of the music. He never sees himself as the center of attention. The music comes first.

As an experienced stage artist who can look back on over 1000 public appearances in the USA and Europe, this exceptional artist regularly delights fans of virtuoso and expressive piano music with a varied cross-section of the piano literature.

Having performed internationally as a soloist with and without orchestral accompaniment, he now lives in Germany and devotes himself entirely to concert activities with up to 60 concerts a year and regular CD recordings. His numerous guest appearances have taken him to venues including the Tonhalle Düsseldorf, the Gasteig in Munich and the Laeishalle in Hamburg. In other European countries, he has performed in England, Italy, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

His repertoire covers all eras of music literature with a focus on the Romantic period.

In 2021, he played the German premiere of the piano concerto by American composer Adam Neiman.

Menachem Har-Zahav's "life at the piano" began as a musical prodigy at the age of four. After just three months of lessons, he took over the musical part of an entire church service. Soon afterwards, a music college professor took over the young pupil and his first public concert followed at the age of seven. At 16, he performed George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" for the first time as a soloist

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with orchestra. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch subsequently found that his piano playing "is proof that talent trained locally can be of a quality comparable to that found in the hallowed music schools to the East [i.e. at the East Coast of the USA]".

He continued his studies at Indiana State University with William Hughes and, after earning a Masters Degree in Piano Performance from Central Missouri State University, taught at Lincoln University of Missouri and the University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff, where he held the position of Assistant Professor of Music and Head of the Piano Department at the young age of 26.

After three years of teaching, he continued his studies in the UK at the University of York with the well-known pianist Charles Hopkins, himself a student of Gyorgy Cziffra and John Ogden. In addition to his studies, he successfully took part in numerous competitions both in the USA and in Europe, including the International Busoni Competition, the International Clara Haskil Piano Competition and the International Scheveningen Piano Competition.

Having grown up in the Midwest of the USA, with the feeling that he did not really belong there, he appreciates his life in his new home country Germany with its enormous cultural heritage, especially in terms of classical music. He is very grateful that he was given the opportunity here, even though his family background did not allow him to attend one of the renowned conservatories, to make a living as a full-time musician solely through his passion for the piano and his discipline (including many years of 14 hours a day at the piano).

In his work, the long-term promotion of culture is very close to his heart. Children and young people under the age of 18 only have to pay one euro admission to his concerts and the person accompanying them receives a 50% discount. He wants to give young people and families in particular an incentive to attend concerts. Quote: "I think it's a shame that so many children and young people see classical music as old-fashioned and boring. I would like to offer them the opportunity to experience that composers have written exciting music throughout the musical epochs that is still captivating today. The love for classical music must not die out!"