

Cornelia Sonnek, Pianist

Cornelia Sonnek, now in her early 30s, started her successful career as a soloist as early as the mid-1990s. After fate forced her into a career break of several years, this young pianist – who now lives in Munich – is increasingly building a reputation, particularly as an interpreter of Mozart.

Her love of music and the piano dates right back to her early childhood. Her parents – her father was an astrophysicist, her mother a chemist and mathematician – nurtured the early passion and special talent for classical music of their little daughter. At the age of seven (1981), Cornelia Sonnek was already receiving her first piano tuition under Ingeborg Müller-Sachse at the Mainz Conservatory and under Maciej Lukaszcyk in Darmstadt.

During her school career, she won first prizes at the “Jugend musiziert” youth music competition and prizes at the International Steinway Piano Competition in Berlin and the 35th Ettlingen International Piano Competition for Young Pianists.

In 1987, Cornelia Sonnek was accepted at the age of 14 in the private class of Professor Elza Kolodin at the Freiburg University of Music (*Musikhochschule Freiburg*). In 1989, two years before her school-leaving examinations and having been assessed as highly gifted, she continued her training – then as a junior student (*Jungstudentin*) – under Professor Elza Kolodin and Professor Robert D. Levin. Under his tuition, she also began her regular degree, specialising in the piano, at the Freiburg University of Music, before successfully completing her intermediate degree examination (*Vordiplom*) and joining Professor Bernd Glemser at the University of Music Saarland (*Musikhochschule des Saarlandes*).

In Saarbrücken, she completed her degree in music education (*pädagogisches Diplom*), specialising in the piano, with the highest possible grade in 1996, and then followed Professor Bernd Glemser to Würzburg, where she also achieved the highest possible grade in her music degree (*künstlerisches Diplom*), again specialising in the piano. In 1998, Cornelia Sonnek was awarded a place in the “Master Class”, the final level of study for pianists, which she completed successfully in 2000.

Even while still a student, Cornelia Sonnek deputised for a piano professorship at the Würzburg University of Music (*Würzburg Musikhochschule*) in the specialism of piano during a four-year university teaching position. For four years, she also worked as an assistant lecturer for the auxiliary subject of piano teaching and correpetition.

Between the ages of 14 and 24, Cornelia Sonnek attended a variety of master classes, including those run by Professors James Avery, Eduard Brunner, Matthias Deutsch, Elza Kolodin, Stefan Littwin, Vitaly Margulis, Dominique Merlet, Edith Picht-Axenfeld, Karl-Heinz Kämmerling and Menahem Pressler; she also worked together with the violinist Dimiter Ivanov and the cellist Themistokles Vagenas.

Cornelia Sonnek’s first recording appeared in 1999 as a benefit CD for the German Red Cross, followed by her second CD, ‘Aufforderung zum Tanz’ (‘An Invitation to Dance’) at Ars Musici, in 2001. Radio recordings with the Südwestrundfunk, Hessischer Rundfunk and the Saarländischer Rundfunk radio stations and solo and chamber-music concerts (throughout Germany and the rest of Europe) were soon to follow. Thanks to her strong social commitment, Cornelia Sonnek is also a highly regarded guest at concert events for the Richard Wagner Gesellschaft, the Lions, the Leos and the Rotary Club. She also works for the German UNO refugee aid federation (*Deutsche Stiftung UNO Flüchtlingshilfe [DSUF]*) and the German Red Cross, organising and playing benefit concerts, among other activities.

Recently, Cornelia Sonnek started working with the pianist Igor Kamenz, and their work includes a new CD which will be published next year.

“My main motivation is above all the desire to bring classical music closer to young people in particular. Even as artists, we ourselves have to make a greater contribution towards getting today’s youth excited about classical music. I would find it very sad if the music that I love so much gradually simply faded away over time because we did not make it attractive enough for young people in the home, in schools and on the part of the music industry. We have here a unique cultural heritage of incredible value that we simply have to preserve and pass on. It may sound rather melodramatic, but I just want to play my part in doing that.”