

Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf

- Biography -

Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf was born on 22 October 1962 in Mannheim. He received his musical training in composition (with Brian Ferneyhough, Klaus Huber and Emanuel Nunes), piano (James Avery) and music theory (Peter Förtig), completing studies at the Academy of Music in Freiburg in 1992. Concurrently he completed university studies in musicology, philosophy (with Jürgen Habermas amongst others) and sociology, becoming a Doctor in Philosophy in 1993 with a dissertation on Arnold Schönberg.

His first authorised composition (*Sonett*) already received an international prize. Further major awards followed: Gaudeamus Prize, Stuttgart Composition Prize and the Ernst von Siemens Furtherance prize. Mahnkopf was awarded stipends at home (e.g. Academy Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart and the Baldreit Stipend Baden-Baden) and abroad (Villa Massimo in Rome, Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani in Venice, Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel). Since the world premiere of *Krebszyklus* at the Gaudeamus Festival 1986 in Amsterdam, his music has been played not only at important places (e.g. Darmstadt Summer Courses, Munich Biennale, Märzmusik, Eclat, bludner tage zeitgemäßer musik, Salzburg Festival), but also within the framework of numerous portrait concerts, most recently also in Africa. Many pieces were commissioned by renowned organisations – including the Flanders Festival, Salzburg Festival and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and interpreted by ensembles such as the Ensemble SurPlus, ensemble recherche and Ensemble Modern. Particular interpreter personalities, with whom Mahnkopf has worked for over twenty years, are especially important; these include Peter Veale, Jürgen Ruck, Sophie-Mayuko Vetter, Carin Levine, James Avery, Ermis Theodorakis and Frank Cox. Between 2001 and 2005 he has worked continually at the Experimental Studio of the Heinrich Strobel Foundation of the SWR.

Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf has developed, together with the oboist Peter Veale, the internationally successful Handbook of Oboe-Playing Techniques, which has set new standards for practice. He was a lecturer at the Darmstadt Summer Courses between 1988 and 1994, has taught and lectured in numerous countries and occupied several posts in advisory (Stuttgart State Opera, ISCM Festival 2006) and jury capacities.

Beyond that, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf has published over 120 essays, written five books and edited a further ten. In these he deals not only with new music but also composer personalities such as Wagner and Cage or the musical philosophy of Adorno. In 1995 he played a decisive role in the founding of the *Gesellschaft für Musik und Ästhetik* (Society of Music and Aesthetics) and since 1997 has been one of the editors of the magazine *Musik & Ästhetik*, one of the world's foremost reflection sources. Moreover, he is the editor of the book series *New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century* and the study series *sinefonia*. His interests extend from the arts and "humanities" (especially philosophy) to politics and theoretical physics.

Mahnkopf's musical roots lie deep in German-Austrian art music. His central point of reference is Beethoven, and for the twentieth century, Alban Berg. At the same time, his interests extend back to the Renaissance (for example Josquin Desprez) and to the Ars subtilior. He is strongly influenced by the avant-garde of high modernism and is internationally orientated, thanks to his non-German teachers. He emphatically represents an autonomous standard of art and believes in the necessity of both placing art music in the context of culture and democratic civil society and of providing it with a carefully messianic future perspective.

After many years of teaching activity as a lecturer of music theory, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf has been Professor of Composition at the University of Music and Theatre "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" in Leipzig since 2005. He has been married to the Jewish religious philosopher Prof. Dr. Francesca Yardenit Albertini since 1999 and lives in Freiburg, Leipzig and Berlin.