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Justin Kolb

Pianist



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Biography

Justin Kolb's recitals include lively commentary that is always interesting and sometimes humorous. He enjoys programming music of Franz Liszt with music composed by living Americans.

Kolb began his piano studies at age four and soon became a student of Francis Clark and Lillian Whitaker DeCamp. He made his concert debut at the age of ten in solo performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Gary Symphony.

At DePaul University, Kolb studied with Herman Shapiro, Alexander Tcherepnine, and Paul Stacevich. While serving in the Army, Kolb was named a cultural ambassador by the State Department and toured throughout Europe and the Middle East.

He has studied with Rolf Beyer in Germany, and with Gui Mombaerts, Martin Canin, and German Diez. **Justin cites German Diez (once a teaching assistant of Claudio Arrau) as his most important musical influence. The master pedagogue is Justin's close friend, mentor, teacher of 20 years and artistic advisor.**

Kolb received the Distinguished Alumni Award from DePaul University, his alma mater. He serves on the Board of Directors of the American Liszt Society and is an Honorary Director of the Belleayre Music Festival in Highmount, New York. He is the artist-in-residence for Kids in the Kaatskills, a charitable foundation.

Kolb is married to prize-winning mosaic artist Barbara Mellon Kolb; they make their home in New York's Catskill Mountains.

Concerts

"A recital program with a difference." — Alex Ross, *New York Times*

- Repertory ranging from Galuppi to Barber with special programs of Beethoven, Liszt, Debussy and Ravel
- Championing new music and music by living American composers, with a repertory that routinely includes Victoria Bond, Kyle Gann, Tania Leon, Alfredo Diez Nieto, and Peter Schickele
- Particular focus on Robert Starer, Willian Ferris, John Downey, and Paul Alan Levi, all of whom have dedicated works to Kolb

Recordings—Albany Records

"Justin Kolb, decisive and persuasive at the keyboard, played the early Prelude at the start of a sequence of piano pieces that covered more than half a century and again proved Mr. Starer's stability of style." — Paul Griffiths, *New York Times*

- Robert Starer, Solo Piano Music 1946-1996
- William Ferris, Solo Piano Music 1962 - 1999
- To All, To Each, part songs from America and Britain, with the William Ferris Chorale
- Justin Kolb Live (Mellon Music Label)

Special Performances

“Music Crusader” — *Clavier Magazine*, cover story 2006

- Collaboration with actor David Aston-Reese: *Enoch Arden* by Tennyson, music by Richard Strauss
- Collaboration with performance artist, Mikhail Horowitz: *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* by Blake, music by William Bolcom
- Collaboration with psychiatrist François Martin Mai: *Diagnosing Genius: The Life and Death of Beethoven*
- Elementary schools: enrichment sessions
- High schools: motivational clinics for music students
- Universities and music schools: how-to presentations on music as a profession

Orchestras

- The Chicago Symphony Orchestra
- Hamburg Philharmonic (Germany)
- Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra
- Gary Indiana Symphony
- Hamilton-Fairfield Symphony Orchestra (Ohio)
- Suncoast Symphony (St. Petersburg, Florida)
- United States Military Concert Band at West Point
- Northshore Concert Band (Chicago)
- Westmoreland Symphonic Winds (Pittsburgh)
- Kalamazoo Concert Band (Michigan)
- The William Ferris Chorale (Chicago)
- Ars Choralis (Woodstock, NY)
- Columbia Pro Cantare (Columbia, MD)

Critical Acclaim

"A Piano Recital Program With a Difference."

"The pianist's exuberance and confident attack on the keyboard tied his unusual program together."

"Mr. Kolb plowed ahead with engaging spiritedness and a flashy technique."

— Alex Ross, *New York Times*

"It gives me great pleasure to hear this concerto (Schickele's *Concerto for Piano and Chorus*). Justin is doing a terrific job with it. He has to handle styles that range from Bach's cadenza in the *Fifth Brandenburg Concerto* to Lenny Tristano bee-bop."

— Peter Schickele, Woodstock, NY

Beethoven Festival:

"Of the performances this listener heard, the liveliest was Justin Kolb's precisely articulated reading of the C major (Op. 2, No. 3)."

— Allan Kozinn, *New York Times*

"Justin Kolb, decisive and persuasive at the keyboard, played the early *Prelude* at the start of a sequence of piano pieces that covered more than half a century and again proved Mr. Starer's stability of style."

— Paul Griffiths, *New York Times*

"The artist gave evidence that his capability reaches beyond the standard of a virtuoso of our days."

— Berlin, *Die Welt*

"He plays from the heart, with power where needed, yet with a tenderness that almost brings a sigh."

— Springfield, *Illinois Times*

"It was an opportunity to savour first hand the commanding abilities of the techniques of brilliant American pianists Justin Kolb and Ann Schein."

— *Hamilton Magazine*
Ontario, Canada

William Ferris: Solo Piano Music, 1962 – 1999:

"A highlight is *A Suffolk Memory* in which Kolb plays the eight atmospheric pieces with persuasive sympathy. Through this CD, Kolb confirms Ferris as a composer of unquestionable musicianship."

— *Clavier Magazine*

"The performances here are thoughtful, respectful, beautiful."

— *Scott Morrison, Amazon.com*

Justin Kolb – Live:

"Wow, can he play! From the delicacy of Debussy to the frenzy of Liszt, the orchestral sonorities of Copland to the Chopinesque dazzle of Moszkowski, Kolb demonstrates exceptional artistry in this program."

— *Daily Freeman, Kingston, New York*

"Starer found that 'as to Justin's playing my *Twilight Fantasies*, I felt totally and completely understood. Every tempo, every musical gesture, every nuance was absolutely right.' This disc is an absolute gem!"

— *Pan Pipes Magazine*

Robert Starer: Solo Piano Music, 1946 – 1996:

"Justin Kolb has become a champion and friend of the composer, and is the dedicatee of the Sonata No. 3, which he premiered at a Carnegie Recital Hall concert in honor of the composer's seventieth birthday. He plays all of the music with vigor, dexterity, and affection."

— *Fanfare*

"The Ideal Self (1981) begins as a musing, meditative fantasy and variations on one of Starer's own songs, concluding with a rousing and difficult fugue, perhaps the highpoint in Kolb's playing.... In this recording his control is excellent, and he plays all this music with expression, taste, and clarity."

— *Woodstock Times*

"The piano program--expertly performed by Justin Kolb, who has a long professional relationship with Starer--opens serenely, with the 1994 Sonata 3."

— *American Record Guide*


"The piano works, played with panache by Justin Kolb, have similarly wide stylistic range, mingling tonal and atonal elements but usually melodious and always listener-friendly."

— *The Washington Post*

Recordings & Articles

William Ferris: Solo Piano Music, 1962 - 1999

Piano Sonata (1975-1976)

- Boldly, In Big Style
- Waywardly, Dreamily — [LISTEN](#) 
- Urgently

A Suffolk Memory: A Suite of Impressions for Piano (1986)

- The Sea, at Dusk
- The Parish Churchyard, at Night
- High Street, Noon
- Sunday Morning, from the Terrace
- Saint Edmond's -- Southwold: Concert Day
- The Maltings, Snape: Festival House Fanfares
- The Red House
- The Sea, by Moonlight

Epitaph, for an Artist (1999) — [LISTEN](#)

Serenade, for a Morning Room (1984) — [LISTEN](#)

Tune for Ten (1987)

Sonatina

- With Verve
- Hymn Like
- Spirited

Albany Records

Produced in memory of Herman Shapiro.

Executive Producer: Marilyn Irvin

Cover Art: Marie Vickerilla

Justin Kolb - Live

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Images, Book I

- Reflections in the Water
- Homage to Rameau
- Movement

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Commentary

- **Gnomenreigen**
- **Sonetto 104 del Petrarca**


Robert Starer (1924-2001)

Commentary

- **Twilight Fantasies** — Premiere Recording

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Commentary

- **El Salon Mexico** (Transcribed by Leonard Bernstein) — [LISTEN](#) 

Anton Dvorak (1841-1904)

- **Waltz, Op. 54, No. 2, A minor**

Moritz Moszkowski (1854-1925)

- **Etude in F** — [LISTEN](#) 


Mellon Music Label

Photo: Robert Preston

Robert Starer:

Solo Piano Music, 1946 - 1996

Sonata for Piano, No. 3 (1994)

- Gently Flowing
- Moderately Fast — [LISTEN](#) 
- Slow, with Declamatory Strength


From Sketches in Color, Set Two (1973)

- Khaki
- Aquamarine
- Silver and Gold

Prelude & Toccata (1946)

- Prelude
- Toccata

The Ideal Self (1981)

Fantasy, Variations and Fugue on a Song - [LISTEN](#) 

Twilight Fantasies (1985)

The Contemporary Virtuoso (1996)

- Crossing Over
- Repetition
- A Singing Tone
- Thirds
- Dots, Dashes, and Slurs
- Scales
- Skipping without Looking

Albany Records

Produced in memory of Herman Shapiro.

Executive Producer: Marilyn Irvin

Cover Art: Marie Vickerilla

To All, To Each

Part Songs from America and Britain

Live Recording, Chicago, 1993

Finale:

Cindy (5:34)

A traditional American Folksong

arranged by Mack Wilberg (born 1955)

Justin Kolb, piano

Thomas Weisflog, piano

Aldo Mazzotti, xylophone

Michael Palencia, percussion

Jerry Fuller, double bass

William Ferris Chorale

William Ferris, director

Albany Records

The Colorful Music of Robert Starer

by Justin Kolb

A revealing person to person interview with the American Composer, Robert Starer, conducted in Woodstock, NY, 1999.

Clavier Magazine, July/August, 1999



[Download PDF of Article](#)

Working with Living Composers

by Justin Kolb

Humorous and delightful, Kolb shares with the reader a number of anecdotes describing an insider's experiences and feelings when working with some of today's more popular composers.

Keyboard Classics and Piano Stylists, March/April, 1996



[Download PDF of Article](#)

Educator and Speaker

Renowned for his humor and personable style, Justin Kolb brings his extensive knowledge of music, entrepreneurship and career guidance to audiences around the country through a series of workshops, clinics, motivational speaking engagements and music enrichment programs.

Educational and Motivational Programs

Elementary School

I've Got a Great Job - I'm a Musician

A Concert Pianist's Job, Instrument and Music

An Upbeat Music Program for Students K through 5



Program Description:

These sessions can take place in the classroom, the music room, or even on the floor of the gym. They are not appropriate for large assemblies. They are intimate, short and snappy, humorous, and memorable. Justin explains his job as a traveling concert pianist: the places he goes around the world; the music he performs (the three B's plus compositions by living American women and men); with stories about the pianos he plays (good ones and bad ones).

Short compositions are performed throughout the session always maintaining a high level of interest. Questions are always answered "on the spot" and laughing is encouraged.

Justin likes to touch base with the school's music teacher prior to the day of the session. The format described above is the same for all grade levels. Length and sophistication is, of course, targeted appropriately to each group of students. Justin Kolb is well known as a team player with on site faculty.

Class Size: Maximum 60 students (exceptions may be planned in advance)



Length of Presentation:

K - 3: approximately 25 - 30 minutes

Grades 4 - 6: approximately 40 - 50 minutes

Grades 7 - 12: may be accommodated when requested

This high quality learning experience has been presented to hundreds of schools in Canada and throughout the United States. Cooperative learning projects between the music and other departments often occur as a result of discussion with Justin prior to the artist's visit. Justin's view is that he is a resource to assist teachers in meeting their instructional goals. He is personable and works well with staff and faculty.

Middle/High School

Why Music Students Excel

Motivational Clinic for Band, Youth Orchestra and Chorus



Program Description

This morale and self-esteem building session begins with a ten minute solo performance by Justin. The performance is intentionally virtuosic, leaving no doubt in the student's mind that the artist is a seasoned professional who has experienced success on stage.

The objective of this learning experience for students is to reinforce what the music faculty has been stressing all along. That is: the student's musical experience and musical education goes well beyond 'blowing a horn'. This experience is about developing life survival skills. Skills that will help the students to become better adept at problem solving, decision making, enjoying a fulfilling life beginning now and into the future.



Justin asks the students to identify skills that they have learned from their musical experience (lessons, practice, or performance) that they have found useful when they are outside the world of music. Skills described by the students typically range from attention to detail and time management, to conflict resolution and ability to accept criticism. At the end of this segment of the session, a list

sometimes comprising as many as 24 skills has been articulated by the students. Kolb looks at the students and asks them to seriously contemplate the "skills inventory". Kolb then exclaims, "Look at who you are and what you can do!" He quickly points out that large corporations and even governments invest great amounts of dollars to teach their employees how to acquire these same skills.

The next segment introduces the concept of goal setting and planning. Additionally, issues such as career choices, undergraduate music school possibilities, practice routines, and obtaining performance opportunities are addressed.



Equipment

Blackboard, chalk and eraser, whiteboard or flip chart with new magic markers. A tuned piano and piano bench (nothing fancy): spinets, uprights, consoles, and grands are all okay.

Length of Presentation

A normal class period may be expanded to 90 minutes. An evening parents' session is available at no extra charge. An evening recital for the community is an additional fee. Residencies culminating with Justin performing as soloist with the school concert ensemble are also popular.

References

For information regarding Justin's past collaborations with Jack Stamp, Tim Lautzenheiser, and the late John Paynter, [contact Mellon Music Management](#).

Know the Score

Inspiration and Motivation for Life after Music School in the 21st Century: Entrepreneurism, Community Engagement, Technology



Courtesy of the Photography Students of Margaretville Central School, NY

OVERVIEW

- **INVOLVES** students in a one to two hour provocative, interactive lecture that is targeted at both undergraduate and graduate students who have professional teaching or performing as their goal.
 - **PREPARES** the participant to respond aggressively, yet professionally, when teaching and performing opportunities are at a minimum and when competition for these opportunities is fierce.
 - **PRESENTS** the many career opportunities available to the music graduate inside and outside the music world and how to pursue them.
-

TOPICS ADDRESSED

- Goal Setting and Its Importance
 - How to Develop a Plan: When and How to Change the Plan
 - Becoming a Musical Entrepreneur
 - Websiting Effectively
 - How the Music Industry Operates
 - Ethical Marketing and Promotion: How to Build a Press Kit and Develop Marketing Materials
 - How to Build Your Personal Performance Circuit
 - How to Expand Your Own Studio of Students
 - The Value of Strong Verbal and Writing Skills
 - Tips on Grants and How to Reach "Deep Pockets"
 - Tips on How to Defend Your Budget Requests to Your School Board and/or Granting Organizations
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PARTICIPANTS

This "how to" program is intended for individuals who desire to perform and/or seek a career in teaching. It is appropriate for undergraduate and graduate level students, as well as faculty members.

University/Professional

Entrepreneurism and Self Promotion for the Serious Musician

How Our Business Really Works in Today's World



Program Description

An insider's view of how musicians develop their careers and survive in the industry of "classical music".

Critical knowledge for professionals and those individuals teaching and advising students. This is a dynamic presentation that either asserts or challenges six traditional parameters:

1. Are hours of practice and "being discovered" a thing of the past?
2. Yesterday, performances in the "hinterland" initiated a career and a commercially produced recording signaled an established career.
3. Today a produced CD, DVD or "You Tube" video can initiate a career and performances in the "hinterland" with occasional appearances in the "big leagues" signal an established career.
4. Today a "climb to the top" is theoretical but a "climb to a comfortable and reasonable income with pension" – though elusive – can be attained.
5. We live in a world of branding and product development. We must consider ourselves the brand and our teaching and performing our products. Marketing and selling this "package" is entrepreneurism.

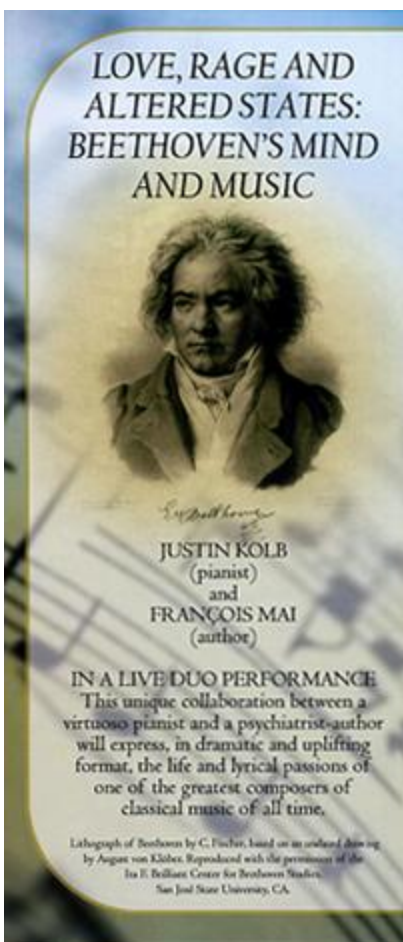
6. As performing and teaching artists we need not create our products anew. They exist within us as a result of our rigorous training and experience. We have only to organize them, announce them, and sell them.

This talk is highly informational, uplifting and empowering!

Concert Informance

Love, Rage and Altered States: Beethoven's Mind and Music

A stunning collaboration of virtuoso Justin Kolb and author/psychiatrist,
François Martin Mai



How is Beethoven's personality and emotional state reflected in his music?

Beethoven was a passionate man who wore his emotions on his sleeve. Joy, grief, love, rage and elation are some of the emotions that he experienced in his everyday life; moods that also are easily heard in his music.

This unusual recital-performance, featuring dynamic readings and music, is based on the research that led to the publication of François Mai's book *Diagnosing Genius: The Life and Death of Beethoven*. It will make you laugh and cause you to consider.

Mai enthusiastically reads extracts from his book and describes in colorful narrative anecdotes from Beethoven's life. Kolb performs excerpts of Beethoven's music selected specifically to express the emotion portrayed in the readings. Complete piano works will also be performed.

The performance can last from 45 to 90 minutes depending on the needs of the audience and the situation.



"Francois Martin Mai is a psychiatrist who has written an excellent book describing Ludwig van Beethoven's life, health problems, and how his illness may have affected his creativity."

– New England Journal of Medicine

"*Diagnosing Genius* will strike a chord with anyone interested in music, medical history, medical mystery, and the connection between creativity and disease. Bravo!"

— Journal of the American Medical Association



Beethoven Festival

"Of the performances this listener heard, the liveliest was Justin Kolb's precisely articulated reading of the C major (Op. 2, No. 3)."

Allan Kozinn, *New York Times*

Community Engagement

KIDS in the KAATSKILLS

Justin participates actively in his Catskill Mountain community as a performing artist and as an advocate of arts in education. He believes passionately in the high value of including the performing and fine arts as a critical component of elementary and secondary level education.

His community engagement presentations and performances are popular and as frequent as his touring schedule allows. Annual visits to area schools include collaborations with music, theatre, and visual arts teachers and students.

These programs are a result of a partnership between the charitable foundation "KIDS in the KAATSKILLS" and Justin. When requested, Justin "goes to bat" on behalf of faculty and students in assisting procurement of instruments, budget dollars for projects, and overall support from parents, the school board and the community.

Delaware County ARC

The challenged clients of ARC share piano self-expression master classes with Justin and sometimes in the presence of an audience. Local senior residences and nursing homes also take advantage of Justin's presence in the community.

Belleayre Summer Music Festival

Annually Justin presents performances with musical friends and performance artists at the popular festival produced by the Belleayre Conservatory and NY State's Belleayre Ski Center under the aegis of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Home School Master Class

Students visit Justin's mountain top home and former farm to meet, discuss, share and perform for each other and to listen to tales from the road of Justin's vibrant musical experiences.

In the Neighborhood

Presentations to a local roundtable discussion group and presentation of workshops for local non-profit arts groups complete Justin's neighborhood and community engagement.



2009 Highlights

Performance Highlights:

- World Piano Conference
Novi Sad, Serbia
- Cutting Edge Concerts
Symphony Space - NYC
- American Liszt Society Festival
University of Kansas
- McMaster University Recital Series
Hamilton, Ontario
- Belleayre Summer Music Festival
Highmount, NY
- MTNA Conference
Atlanta, GA
- Mohonk Mountain Concerts
New Paltz, NY
- Austrian Embassy
Ottawa, Quebec
- Pasco-Hernando Community College
Newport Richey, FL
- Liszt-Garrison Festival and Int'l Piano Competition
Baltimore, MD