

Inna Faliks

AWARD-WINNING PIANIST

“ADVENTUROUS
AND PASSIONATE”

The New Yorker

“POETRY AND
PANORAMIC VISION”

Washington Post

“IMAGINATIVE,
DELIGHTFUL,
SATISFYING...”

Chicago Sun-Times

“...ENERGETIC,
DETERMINED,
PERFECT”

Gazzettino Pordenone, Sicily

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“SIMPLY EXQUISITE...”

Haaretz



“Adventurous and passionate” (*The New Yorker*) Ukrainian-born pianist Inna Faliks has established herself as one of the most exciting, committed, communicative and poetic artists of her generation. Faliks recently relocated from NYC to Los Angeles, after being named the new Head of Piano and Associate Professor of Piano at UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music. After her acclaimed debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, she has performed on many of the world’s great stages, with numerous orchestras, in solo appearances, and with conductors such as Leonard Slatkin and Keith Lockhart. Critics praise her “signature blend of lithe grace and raw power” (*Lucid Culture*), “courage to take risks, expressive intensity and technical perfection” (*General Anzeiger, Bonn*), “poetry and panoramic vision” (*Washington Post*), and “riveting passion, playfulness” (*Baltimore Sun*). Her lauded discography includes a recent all-Beethoven release, “Sound of Verse – music of Boris Pasternak, Ravel, and Rachmaninoff” – both on MSR Classics, and a Disklavier recital recording for Yamaha. Upcoming recordings include “Polonaise-Fantasia, story of a pianist” theater-piano piece, and her Music/Words new commissions CD.

Ms. Faliks’s distinguished career has taken her to thousands of recitals and concerti in prestigious venues in the US as well as highly reviewed appearances in France, Italy, Switzerland, Ukraine, Estonia, Japan, Russia, and Israel. Winner of many competitions, including the ProMusicis International Award, she has been featured on radio and international television broadcasts, and has performed in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Concert Hall, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Paris’ Salle Cortot, Chicago’s Orchestra Hall, Moscow’s Tchaikovsky Hall, LA’s Zipper Hall, and in festivals such as Newport Festival, Bargemuisc Festival, Peninsula Festival, Verbier Festival, and more.

Committed to innovative programming, Faliks has premiered *13 Ways of Looking at the Goldberg*, has performed and recorded the unknown piano works of Russian poet Boris Pasternak, appeared in theatrical productions such as “Admission: One Shilling” with Downton Abbey star Lesley Nicol, has premiered new works by many contemporary composers, including Lev ‘Ljova’ Zhurbin, Clarice Assad, Jan Freidlin, Sean Hickey, Tania Leon, and more. Ms. Faliks is the founder and curator of Music/Words, a series that pairs together live performances with readings by established contemporary poets. The series has been heard and seen in NYC, Chicago and LA for 7 seasons now, live and on radio.

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CHICAGO

SUN-TIMES

Beethoven piano music by Faliks perfectly paired with words of Schiller, Goethe
May 2014

[On “Music/Words” program, May 2 in Nichols Concert Hall, Evanston, Illinois] “Who can object to an all-Beethoven program? Faliks eagerly embraced the challenge of that monumental composer. She opened with his Polonaise in C, which begins with crashing chords, but includes delicate moments. She handled everything deftly, displaying speed and her formidable technique throughout. Her second number was Beethoven’s Fantasia, a free flowing fire-and-ice composition. It seemed an ideal match with her temperament... Faliks concluded the night with Sonata No. 32, giving the work a nimble, graceful performance, showing off her dexterity, as well as her dynamic reach... [the concert] was so carefully crafted and delightfully done that it resembled a salon experience. This imaginative event lasted just over an hour, but was as satisfying, actually even more so, than a program twice its length.”

classical
MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO

Regional Spotlight: Inna Faliks
May 9, 2013

A soloist in total command of her instrument and in love with the music will silence any audience. It’s as if the music is so full of meaning and, well, just fun that members of the audience don’t want to miss a single moment.

Part of the magic, too, of the performance of the Mendelssohn Piano Concert No. 1 at the Basilica of St Mary on April 27 was the precision and emotional “color” of the Minnesota Sinfonia led by Jay Fishman. Also, Inna Faliks’ piano playing will have you shouting bravo to the radio!

Lucid Culture

JAZZ, CLASSICAL MUSIC AND THE ARTS IN NEW YORK CITY

Cross-Pollination at the Gershwin with Inna Faliks

February 11, 2012

Virtuoso pianist Inna Faliks' latest installment of her innovative Music/Words series last night was a throwback to the Paris salons of the late 1800s, in the aptly lowlit atmosphere of the back room at the Gershwin Hotel. As she describes it, the concept of the series is to match music with poetry that shares a mood or evokes similar emotions, rather than referring to specific ideas or events. As an attempt to link two worlds that otherwise don't usually intersect, it's an admirable idea. Musically, this program was extremely diverse, spanning from classical to late Romantic, with Faliks pulling one of the obscurities she's so fond of out of the woodwork as well. Lyrically, it was surreal, impactful, and relevant. Poet Tom Thompson doesn't waste words: he finds the logic in cruel irony, assembles scenes vividly yet economically, and makes connections – like the commonalities in the desires of a child at play and a hungry spider – that might seem farfetched at face value but make perfect sense as he describes them (spiders got a lot of time this time out). “The lake is tired of being a mirror...it closes its one historical eye before we ever get to use it,” he observed bleakly. In an understatedly moving account of his son's experience with seizures, Thompson coldly acknowledged how in one culture, people who suffer from them get killed, while in another they're worshipped. A New York water tower became a “wholly owned subsidiary” of the dead leaves that get under the screws that hold it together; people and insects in Central Park shared a fate brought on by their inability to escape their desires. If insightfully ominous, loaded imagery is your thing, Thompson has a couple of collections out from [alicejamesbooks](http://alicejamesbooks.com) that you should investigate.

The music was good too. In between trios of poems, Faliks alternated with pianist Dimitri Dover, who warmed up the performance with the Haydn's uncharacteristically pensive Sonata in C Minor., Hob. 16:20. A bit later, he played three selections from Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet, the best being the anxiously stately “Montagues and Capulets” scene followed by Mercutio's scampering cinematics. He joined Faliks for a perfectly synchronized four-handed take of another uncharacteristic piece, Liszt's reflective, remarkably terse Symphonic Poem #4: Orpheus, eventually ending the show with three intuitive, energetic Debussy preludes and then a rather stern take on Chopin's Scherzo No. 2, Op. 31.

Although the program put her on the bill lower than Dover and Thompson, Faliks was still the star of this show, playing with her signature blend of lithe grace and raw power, particularly as she made her way through the nocturnal scenes of Liszt's Harmonies du Soir, and then the composer's transcription of Paganini's La Campanella, which she imbued with playful charm and then maintained it all the way through the dance's knotty, rapidfire thicket of staccato. Her obscurity du jour turned out to be 20th century Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin's Basso Ostinato, a fascinatingly biting, expansively acidic prelude that built from a walking bassline to echoes of Alban Berg and Vincent Persichetti. Faliks' next program in the Music/Words series, on April 22 at 7:30 PM at the Cornelia Street Cafe with Brazilian pianist Clarice Assad and poet Irina Mashinski promises to be equally intriguing.



“Words & Music” with poet Ellen Bass & pianist Inna Faliks
by Richard Lynde
February 27, 2015

On Sunday, February 22, 2015, in a wonderful hybrid recital of “Music/Words” Santa Cruz Poet Laureate Ellen Bass and internationally acclaimed pianist Inna Faliks alternated readings of deft, quiet, deep verse with keyboard performances that crackled with high energy always under control. The nearly full house at Peace United Church of Christ, Santa Cruz, came on Sunday February 22nd to what Distinguished Artists Concert & Lecture Series’ John Orlando described as “in the midst of our 30th year.” Many in the audience were well familiar with the words of Bass, and they alternated with the sounds of the magnificent Yamaha flagship CFX concert grand, rightly praised by the pianist. Each woman displayed formidable talents separately, their uniting character that of profundity. While Bass achieved this via brief, aphoristic, free verse literally understandable to middle school students, the pieces chosen by Faliks ranged from very few notes in Mozart, more in Liszt, a lot in Brahms, and a torrent in our contemporary Rodion Schedrin.

Inna Faliks began the “Music/Words” series in New York, and with her recent relocation as head of the Herb Alpert Piano Department at UCLA, has continued this unique and memorable practice to our state and county. In Ellen Bass, she could not have picked a better partner. Our poet said that for her this new way of thinking about music is “a conversation.” It began with her quiet reading of “Relax,” about bad things that will happen, such as fungus on tomatoes, cats run over, even a lesbian wife, all stated with a wry humor: like those to follow, what she called “talking poems” meant to be read aloud, something she is very good at. Faliks then took to the keyboard in Schedrin’s (b. 1932) “Basso Ostinato,” a blizzard of sound that was wild, fast, jazzy like Gershwin and reflective of Prokofiev and Stravinsky, a tour de force with underlying humor and perfect control.

Then Ellen Bass read again, this time, “Jazz,” about sending her poems out into the world as if a child, a modern take on our great 17th century American Ann Bradstreet’s own similar feelings. In “Waiting for Rain” she tells how the ancient philosopher Lucretius got her through the night with his idea of atoms “combining” and “recombining” amid the void. “When you return,” magically has eggs going back to shells, “letters unwrite themselves” and diamonds to coal to rotting leaves. Amazing imagery, fresh and immediate.

Next, Inna Faliks played the Mozart (1756-91) “Fantasie in D Minor K. 397,” a brief, intensely moody departure from his sonatas, which she made startling with its shifts between the opening Andante, then Adagio than a Presto played almost too fast to hear, but with perfect accuracy to end the high mini drama. Then, in “If you know,” Bass told of ticket takers touching palms with concert goers, followed by “God’s Grief” with startling images of God, Joan of Arc, Houdini – her words as magical as his magic tricks. In “God in Trouble” a beached whale decomposes, then in “Listening” she imagines having heard Keats read his “Autumn” to a friend. To “words like wine/ I listened with my spine,” both funny and profound.

Then in a brilliant stroke for both performers and audience, Faliks departed from the printed program which had Bass reading between movements of the huge Brahms (1833-97) “Sonata No. 2 in F Sharp Minor,” written and played by the composer in 1853 when he was “only” 20 and full of storm and stress along with tenderness. In the often fiendishly difficult and architecturally perfect four-movement work, played straight through and received with tumultuous applause, the noble work was the best-performed these ears have heard on this mighty Yamaha since Yevgeny Sudbin in a big Scriabin sonata almost two years ago. The Brahms began with a huge attack blaring forth the “allegro, not too fast but with energy.” The “andante with expression” was a stroll with purpose, a meditation that becomes intense and moody, alternating playfulness with severity, then lushness – typical of Brahms, and with Faliks sitting, as usual, with her face right over the keys, as expressive as the notes she was playing. The moving Scherzo was hardly a musical “joke,” but a brief lead up to the “Finale,” played with a gripping intensity, blazing keys played flat-fingered for speed like Horowitz, then a maternal tenderness like the famous Brahms “Lullaby,” coherent in all its many moods, and ending with a big bang. All gave a standing ovation.

Then Bass read three concluding poems, ending with “Reincarnation,” not returning as the “totem of a shaman,” but rather as an OYSTER! Very funny, very apt, very original, like all of her works. Faliks then concluded the intermissionless 110-minute program, which passed as if in a dream, with Liszt’s (1811-86) “La Campanella,” a glittering whimsical bon-bon that left a grateful audience with church bells ringing in our heads.



Review by Jerry Dubin
Issue 37:5 Fanfare [May/June
2014]

“Ukrainian-born, New York-based Inna Faliks is a pianist as brimful of ideas as she is endowed with talent. She draws a tone of deep sonority from her Yamaha piano, and one senses in her playing a technique of such reserves that she doesn’t even have to call on all of it for these works. That allows her to concentrate on matters of interpretation and communication, which, in the former case is penetrating, and in the latter, extraordinary.

“I really like, too, the idea of mixing lesser known Beethoven works with more familiar ones; it makes for an interesting program, and in the case of the Fantasia, a fun one. Play it for your friends, while trying not to laugh, and watch their reactions.

“Faliks has yet to become a major presence on record, but with this album and her above-mentioned Sound of Verse now out on

Concert Review

By Clelia Delponte

March 19, 2014

“A fierce performance; energetic, determined, and perfect for expressing the interior agitation of the Basso Ostinato by Rodion Schredrin, considered the successor of Shostakovich. This was the opening piece of the recent concert at the Fazioli Concert Hall. Inna Faliks takes command of the instrument, molding it in her unique, personal style that clearly has its origins in the Russian school and is fully capable of interpreting the Polonaise op. 89 (Composed during the Congress of Vienna, loved by the rulers of the period, and dedicated to Elizabeth of Russia) in a way that totally annihilates any accusation of frivolousness, revealing a new Beethoven.

“The solidity of her technique and her sense of dynamics also exalt the tragedy and intensity of the “Appassionata”, so rich with its silences and arpeggios, forti, fortissimi, until she arrives at the final apotheosis. And then a seldom heard piece composed for Faliks by Lev Ijova Zurbin, Sirota: two contrasting melodic ideas accompanying a historic recording, as was done in the post-war years by the avantgarde. In this case, it is a religious Jewish song, sung by the Polish singer Sirota for the Jewish New Year of 1908; a minimalist piece that Faliks imbues with interpretive intensity, making even more heart-rending the evocation of a lost time.

“The pianist also moves securely through all of the varied colours of the Davidsbundlertanze, composed by Schumann, at a time when he was battling against the ‘bad taste and bad faith’ of critics who had exalted opinions of Italian opera. Written under the alternating pseudonyms of Florestano and Eusebio, the piece was performed by Faliks with emphasis of harmonic adventure, and rich with dynamics and fantasy.

“As an encore, she performed an explosive Campanella by Paganini-Liszt, and followed that with Tchaikovski’s ‘Barcarola’. Executed with a lulling and even timing, it showed the most delicate and moving tones.”

American Record Guide

independent critics reviewing classical recordings and music in concert



Album Review

By James Harrington

May 2014

“In the old days of stores with a large selection of classical CDs, I browsed for hours and would have purchased this on the basis of its content alone. Here is my favorite piano sonata and my favorite set of variations, in a program with a couple of compositions I didn’t know — an unbeatable Beethoven recital. Played with strength and imagination, the performances are hard to beat. The program is perfectly ordered, opening with the

lighter-weight but charming Polonaise, followed by the hefty Variations. The Fantasia is a substantial eight-minute work vaguely reminiscent of Bach’s Chromatic Fantasy and offers an interesting break before one of the greatest piano works of all time, Beethoven’s final sonata.

“Faliks’s excellent first CD included Rachmaninoff Sonata 2 and Gaspard de la Nuit (MSR 1333, Jan/Feb 2010). I have seen her perform in New York on two occasions and have a non-commercial earlier recording of Sonata 32. She teaches at UCLA and performs all over the USA and also in Italy and Israel. She is a pioneer in Yamaha’s newest technology that allows long distance playing and teaching piano via the Internet, video, and their Disklavier recording and reproducing pianos.

“Her competition in the big pieces is formidable. I have spent many years listening to Richter (Olympic 339, May/June 1994) and Brendel (Vox 3017, Mar/Apr 1993) play the variations, and with this new recording in my collection, I doubt that I’ll return to the old favorites as often. I find a couple of these variations rare examples of Beethoven’s musical humor — and Faliks does not miss them. I don’t have a specific favorite for the sonata, though I’ve seen Barenboim perform it twice (EMI 72912, Mar/Apr 1999). Faliks captures the turbulent aspect of the first movement just right. From the stately theme to the jazzy dance elements of the middle variations to the heaven-bound trills in the upper reaches of the piano, II balances perfectly.

“I have purchased many CDs on the basis of their content. Rarely have performances measured up to the music as well as here.”



Album Review By Steven Ritter January 2014

Beethoven's last piano sonata is somewhat of the odd bird; often people ask "where is the last movement?" In fact, the first movement itself is so perfect in structure, so complete in total that when we get to the longer two-thirds of the whole last movement it can almost feel like a separate work, so worn out are we at the conclusion of the first. But the amazing complexities and almost three-dimensional imaginings of the second movement variations, the jazzy arches (yes, jazz) creative explosions that take place in this final sonata utterance are little less than astounding in their breadth, and transport us to another time and place, or, rather, other times and places.

Variations are of course the essential theme of this disc. The "Eroica" Variations use the familiar theme from his *Creatures of Prometheus* and *Symphony No. 3* to good effect, actually expanding on what we sometimes wish had gone on longer in the symphony. The piece is a piano tour-de-force that calls for big statements largely writ—no subtleties of expression are allowed here in the same way that many of the composer's other piano works allow. The piece is to be played with boldness and lots of color-laden contrasts in texture and dynamics.

The *Fantasia* is a piece that is not played all that often, and enters into a rather Lisztian prelude of forcefulness and tremendous virtuosity. Though the notes call it a "soul sister" of the *Choral Fantasy*, that work seems to me far more pedantic and controlled than what we have in the *Fantasia*. This is Beethoven at his most explicitly radiant and ecstatic, not as concerned with form as for feeling.

The *Polonaise* is a piece from 1814, but harkens back to Beethoven's earlier Viennese years, and was written for the money. He got 50 ducats for this brash and really entertaining opener, covering the dedicatee's previous owed amount for the *Op. 30 Violin Sonatas* from 12 years earlier. It's a distinctive opus with a lot to offer.

I was not familiar with Inna Faliks until now, and neither apparently is our site, but one hopes that the newfound acquaintance will be developed further. She is a remarkable Ukrainian pianist with chops to burn, a forceful technique and extremely attentive spirit to that of Beethoven. This is a fine recital in warm, resonant sound that highlights the clarity and reasonable sense of balance and voicing that Faliks brings to the instrument. With a desirable program to boot, this is an easy item to recommend.



Beethoven...Beautifully

A High Priestess of the Piano and Her Early Start on WTTW

by Marc Vitali

October 2013

A concert pianist of the highest order, Inna Faliks can be as dramatic or as subtle as a great stage actor. The New Yorker called her performances “adventurous and passionate,” reminding me of the first time I saw her play -- in her family’s living room nearly 20 years ago.

Born in Ukraine, Inna was recently named a Professor of Piano at UCLA. In between the Soviet Union and California, she grew up in the Chicago suburbs.

In 1994, Inna was one of the stars of WTTW’s annual program, The Illinois Young Performers Competition. At the age of 15, she performed Tchaikovsky with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. I was present at Inna Falik’s Orchestra Hall debut that evening 19 years ago because I produced a short profile of her that was part of the program. It was her debut and mine in a sense -- that story was the first story I ever did that made it to air.

An occasional guest soloist on 98.7 WFMT, Faliks has also become a regular at Chicago’s annual Beethoven Festival. Festival founder George Lepauw calls her “one of those trail-blazing musicians who are doing more than most to make classical music exciting and accessible.

She won’t be performing in Chicago again until spring. But if you want to hear the piano played with power and grace, Faliks has just released a new recording of Beethoven masterworks on the MSR Classics label.

The Glass

Inna Faliks, Music/Words at LPR (Review)

By Chris McGovern

September 28, 2012

Le Poisson Rouge was the scene where pianist Inna Faliks resumed her Music/Words series with a program of classical and contemporary classical music mixed with spoken word, and immediately sprang into action with Rodion Shchedrin's "Basso Ostinato", a piece that didn't even appear on the printed program, but seemed to set a strong pace for the evening's selections. It turned out that Inna was really playing the encore first instead of last because she says that the Beethoven piece she closed with (the Sonata Op. 111; We'll get into this shortly) is so epic that it cannot be followed by an encore. It was probably a good call.

The show felt a bit odd in terms of its placement of material. While you have music that is sure to be in line with a perfectly consistent classical recital, even with the new piece by John Eaton, there was the poetry read by its author Sandra Beasley that, while I really appreciated her work and her quirky style (the volume and character of her delivery would have impressed the casting chiefs of Broadway), wasn't sure gelled within the framework of this concert. In-between Inna's selections, Beasley came on and read several original poems that were titled after lines from A.C. Baldwin's "The Traveler's Vade Mecum" (While it would have been genuinely practical for me to have read that beforehand, I haven't) as well as 2 stand-alone poems titled "King" and "Mercy". Now, it probably hurts me that I am literarily challenged to begin with, but when you have so many artists now that are merging or attempting to merge different art forms together on a single concert stage, it takes daring performances to produce the example that sets the bar—Having said this, I applaud both Faliks and Beasley for making strides in presenting this kind of concert—I still think maybe a concert with more of a new music motif would be a better placement for Beasley's material, but perhaps if her readings had been in collaboration with Faliks' piano work, I might feel differently.

Of the music that made up the rest of the concert, Faliks was a glowing presence on the LPR Yamaha Grand (whose lid had a perfect reflection of the piano harp strings from my vantage point) and gave beautiful attack on the John Corigliano piece Fantasia On an Ostinato. The ostinato in question is the theme from the 2nd movement of Beethoven's 7th—This is clearly becoming one of the most-quoted classical pieces in music having heard it in this context, and Zoe Keating's arrangement for solo cello. Strangely enough, Pete Seeger doodling it on the banjo was something I heard recently as well.

The premiere of Eaton's Songs of Nature...and Beyond had guest vocalist David Adam Moore and Inna performing much of the way from inside the piano—Inna had used a shot glass and a towel placed on the strings and Moore sang into the piano mike on a few lines (He even bumped his head on the lid during one of the sections, but seemed to be okay and laughed it off). The piece itself is a considerably melodic work given that the experimental nature of the performance keeps it in an edgier playing field. Moore's booming voice had a magnificent range and clarity, and his delivery of the text (two of the selected poems are from WB Yeats and Wallace Stevens) was effectively executed (EDITOR'S NOTE: I haven't read those beforehand, either).

Faliks' reading of Beethoven's Sonata #32 in c minor, Op. 111 was the finale of this concert—Played beautifully, and the piece has such a stunning presence in any concert setting with its almost swing-like Arietta, and that seemingly endless trill. Faliks indeed made the right call to switch the encore to the start of the program in order for the coda of the sonata to resonate gently into the night.