

Ricardo Castro, musician

Born in Vitoria da Conquista, south-western city in the state of Bahia, Ricardo Castro revealed at the age of three a clear interest and ease to play the piano, listening at home his older sister's classes with their aunt.

At the age of five, drawing the attention of Esther Cardoso, a Margerith Long fellow, for his ability to play by ear combined with the skill to address and understand what he was shown, despite his youth, he was exceptionally accepted to join the School of Music and Performing Arts of the Federal University of Bahia. Three years later he made his debut in a solo recital. At age of 10 he was soloist in the Piano Concerto in D Major by Haydn.

In 1984 Ricardo entered the Conservatory of Music in Geneva in the virtuosity class of Maria Tipo, where he remained for three years, and in the conducting class of Arpad Gerecz for two years. First prize winner at Rahn Competition in Zurich in 1985 and Pembaur in Bern in 1986, he graduated from the Geneva Conservatory in 1987 with the "Premier Prix de Virtuosit  avec Distinction et Felicitacons du Jury". In this same year he was ex-aequo winner of the International Competition of the ARD in Munich, starting his international career. Shortly after he completed his piano studies in Paris with Dominique Merlet.

In 1993 he received the first prize in the prestigious "Leeds International Piano Competition" in England, becoming the first Latin American winner of the competition since its foundation in 1963.

Considered a "Marketing Dream" by the British press after winning the Leeds Competition, he was invited to concerts with major orchestras such as the Gewandhaus of Leipzig, Tonhalle Zurich, BBC London Philharmonic, English Chamber, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, City of Birmingham, Tokyo Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and the Mozarteum of Salzburg. Concerts followed in the most prestigious concert halls such as Barbican Centre and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London or Vienna Musikverein. Among the conductors with whom he has performed are Sir Simon Rattle, Leif Segerstam, Yakov Kreizberg, Kazimierz Kord, Gilbert Varga, Alexander Lazarev and Michio Inoue.

In 2003 Ricardo Castro began a piano duo with Maria Jo o Pires. Together they gave a series of recitals in the major concert halls of Europe, among which the Viena Konzerthaus, Palau de la M sica in Barcelona, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Auditorio Nacional in Madrid, Th atre des Champs Elys es, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Tonhalle Zurich. In 2005 was released a CD of the duo, Resonance

de l'Originaire by Deutsche Grammophon, with works by Franz Schubert solo and four hands. Several other CDs were recorded for BMG-Arte Nova, always with excellent reviews.

Despite this brilliant path, Ricardo Castro is more interested in sharing music in cooperative situations. Educational and social activities have always been a constant concern in his life. He teaches an exclusive group of young professional pianists since 1992 in the master degree class the Haute Ecole de Musique de Lausanne, in Switzerland.

Always concerned about social programs for youth and children, in 2007 invited by the Government of the State of Bahia, he creates NEOJIBA (State Centres of Youth and Children's Orchestras of Bahia), a pioneering program in Brazil who for its eight years celebration more than 4500 children are beneficiaries. The Youth Orchestra of Bahia, the most advanced in the program, performed already for more than 200.000 people conducted by Ricardo Castro, who remains its Principal Conductor and Artistic Director. Together they went on several tours to EUA and Europe, doing performances with prestigious soloist like Martha Argerich, Midori, Maxim Vengerov, Maria João Pires, Jean Yves Thibaudet and Labeque sisters among others, in major concert halls such as Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, Victoria Hall in Geneva, Konzerhaus in Berlin, Santa Cecilia in Rome.

His great dedication to Neojiba as an educator, conductor and manager, takes him to exercise unique expertise acquired in experiences with various personalities, institutions and cultures around the world. This intense and busy life does not prevent him to continuously search for excellence at the piano, which can be recognized in festivals and concert halls that he performs to the delight of his admirers.

Ricardo Castro became in 2013 the first Brazilian to receive the Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society, figuring since beside famous personalities in the history of Western music.

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www.ricardocastro.com