

## Ricardo Castro, piano and conducting

In 1993 Ricardo Castro received the first prize at the prestigious *Leeds International Piano Competition* in England, becoming the unique Latin American to win the competition since its foundation. 20 years later, he became the first Brazilian to receive the *Honorary Membership* from the *Royal Philharmonic Society*. The nomination put him alongside illustrious personalities in the history of Western music.

Born in Brazil, Ricardo Castro revealed a clear interest and ease to play the piano at the age of three, listening his older sister's classes with their aunt. At the age of five, drawing the attention of Esther Cardoso, a Marguerite Long fellow, he was exceptionally accepted to join the School of Music and Performing Arts of the Federal University of Bahia. Several public appearances followed immediately and at the age of 10 he performed as soloist the Haydn's Piano Concerto in D Major.

In 1984 Ricardo Castro began his musical studies in Europe, joining the Superior Conservatory of Music in Geneva in the virtuoso class of Maria Tipo and the conducting class of Arpad Gerecz. He won first prizes both at Zurich's Rahn Competition, in 1985, and Bern's Pembaur Contest, in 1986, before graduating from the Geneva Conservatory in 1987 with the "*Premier Prix de Virtuosité avec Distinction et Félicitations du Jury*". That same year, he was the *ex-aequo* winner of the ARD International Competition in Munich and in 1988 he was prize winner at Geza Anda Competition. Shortly after he completed his piano studies in Paris with Dominique Merlet.

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 Orchestra, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, City of Birmingham Symphony, Tokyo Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Mozarteum of Salzburg and many others. Among his partners are Sir Simon Rattle, Martha Argerich, Leif Segerstam, Kazimierz Kord, Midori and Antonio Meneses.

In 2003, he started a piano duo with Maria João Pires, performing a series of recitals throughout Europe. In 2005 a CD of the duo was released by the Deutsche Grammophon, with solo and four-hands works by Franz Schubert. He recorded several other CDs for the label BMG-Arte Nova, all of which were acclaimed by specialized critics.

In 2007, by invitation of the Government of the State of Bahia, Castro created NEOJIBA (State Centers for Youth and Children Orchestras of Bahia), a pioneering program in Brazil inspired by *El Sistema* in Venezuela that has benefited more than 10.000 children, adolescents and young people in Bahia. General director at NEOJIBA, Ricardo Castro is also Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Youth Orchestra of Bahia, the first Brazilian youth orchestra to perform in Europe. Since its foundation, the orchestra has done hundreds of concerts in Brazil and realized seven international tours in the most prestigious concert halls in Europe and USA.

In September 2020 Ricardo Castro was nominated professor at the prestigious *Haute École de Musique de Genève*, where he will act as head of the keyboard department from September 2021.

He also teaches piano at the *Haute École de Musique Vaud Valais Fribourg* in Switzerland and at the *Scuola di Musica di Fiesole*, in Italy, where in 2018 he created a course for "Conducting from the keyboard".

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