

Nelson Freire



International press hailed him as one of the great pianists of our time and constantly compares him to legendary figures in the history of piano. His career spans over 50 years and has led the artist to the best concert halls in the world. Despite his enormous prestige, Nelson Freire avoids fame and social life and devoted himself entirely to music, mainly inspired by the great pianists who impressed him from his childhood such as Rachmaninov, Horowitz, Rubinstein and Guiomar Novaes.

Born in the mining town of Buena Esperanza, since childhood he showed exceptional talent for music and piano. He studied with Nise Obino and Lucia Branco, to whom he owes the solid music and piano education acquired in Brazil. Nelson Freire made his first public performance at the age of four. At the age of twelve, as he played Beethoven Concerto The Emperor, Freire was awarded in the First International Piano Competition in Rio de Janeiro, where Guiomar Novaes, Marguerite Long and Lili Kraus participated in the jury, among others. This award allowed him to obtain a scholarship from the Brazilian government to continue his musical training in Vienna under the conduction of Bruno Seidlhofer.

When he made his debut at the Academy of Music in Vienna, at the age of 15, Freire played the Brahms Sonata in F sharp minor, deeply impressing teachers and students from that institution. He performed in the most important cities in over 50 countries across the five continents.

In 1964, he won the International Vianna da Motta Competition in Portugal, and the Dinu Lipatti Medal in London.

In five decades of dedication to music, Freire played with many distinguished conductors such as Sir Colin Davis, Pierre Boulez, Riccardo Chailly, Charles Dutoit, Valery Gergiev, Eugen Jochum, Lorin Maazel, Rafael Kubelik, Kurt Masur, Rudolf Kempe, Vaclav Neumann, Seiji Osawa, Michel Plasson, André Previn and David Ziman. He collaborated with major orchestras, among which we highlight the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich and Rotterdam, the Vienna and London Symphonies, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and the Tonhalle Zurich Orchestras, the Bayerische Rundfunk, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Royal Philharmonic London Orchestra, Orchestre National de France, Paris Orchestra, Radio France Orchestra, the Monte Carlo Orchestra and the Suisse Romande Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the St. Petersburg Symphony, the Israel Philharmonic and the Tokyo NHK.

In North America, he played with the Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Montreal, New York and Philadelphia Orchestras.

As a recitalist, Nelson Freire regularly performed in the most prestigious music halls in Paris, New York, London, Rome, Tokyo, Madrid, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Bilbao, Brussels, Zurich, Geneva, San Francisco and Toronto. In a famous duo with Argentine pianist Martha Argerich, he performed in Japan, Argentina, Europe, USA and Brazil.

His artistic engagements over the past few years include: a participation in the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of Chopin's death, in 1999, he was president of the jury in the 2001 Edition of the Marguerite Long Competition in Paris, concerts in the BBC Proms in London and in Japan (Tokyo with the NHK), performances in the La Roque D'Piano aux Jacobins and Anthéron of Toulouse Festivals; tours with the Leipzig Gewandhaus (Riccardo Chailly conducting), the London Philharmonic (conducted by Kurt Masur), the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Radio Denmark Orchestra, the Orchestre National de France (Kurt Masur), and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. He was part of the jury in the Chopin Competition in Warsaw in 2010 and the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 2011.

The pianist's discography includes recordings for the Sony-CBS, Teldec, DGG and Ipam London labels. In 1999, Philips released a CD with Nelson Freire performing in the series Great Pianists of the 20th Century. His recording of the 24 Preludes by Chopin (CBS label) was awarded with the Edison Award.

Since 2001, the artist has exclusively recorded for Decca label, releasing the following six highly lauded albums: in 2002, Chopin (Sonata No. 3, Etude op.25 and 3 New Etudes), he was awarded with the Diapason d'Or Awards, the l'Académie Charles Cros Grand Prix, Choc du Monde de la Musique, 10 from Repertoire e Clássica and in 2003, Schumann (Carnival, Op.9, Papillons, op.2, Scenes from Childhood, Op.15, and Arabesque) in 2005, Chopin (Sonata No. 2, Op.10 Etudes and Barcarolle op.60), nominated for the best solo recording by the Grammy Awards, Diapason d'Or and Choc du Monde de la Musique.

In 2006 his recording of the Brahms Double Album - The Piano Concertos (with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Riccardo Chailly conducting) was awarded as the best album of the year from the renowned magazine Gramophone London.

In 2007, Beethoven (Sonatas Op.27 No. 2 Moonlight, Aurora op.53, op.81a Les Adieux and Piano Sonata Op. 110).

In 2008, Debussy (12 Preludes - 1st. Notebook-, D'un cahier d'Esquisses, Clair de Lune).

In 2010 double album with Chopin Nocturnes.

Harmonies du Soir in 2011 dedicated to Liszt.

In 2003 the film maker João Moreira Salles released a documentary on Nelson Freire's life -a film about a man and his music, the pianist's touching portrait, his life and his art.

Throughout his career Nelson Freire has been awarded with several honors, among which:

Commander of the Order of Rio Branco in 1991.

Distinction of the Order of Cultural Merit in 2000.

Commandeur dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in 2007.

Commander of the Order of Ipiranga in 2009 by the São Paulo Government.

Distinguished Artist Award by the International Society for the Performing Arts, 2009.

Légion d'Honneur in France, 2010.

In 2002 he was named Soloist of the Year by the Victoires de la Musique French Association, and in January 2005 he was awarded with the Victoire d'Honneur, special award for his artistic and professional career.