

André Mehmari – CV

Andre Mehmari is considered one of the most talented young musicians of his native Brazil. His activities as pianist, composer, arranger and instrumentalist are highly regarded both in popular and classical music. As his compositions and arrangements have been performed by important Brazilian orchestras (OSESF) and chamber ensembles (São Paulo String Quartet), his career in jazz and Brazilian popular music has also attained wide attention as he has gained wide recognition for his music in jazz festivals and concerts.

Born in 1977 in Niteroi (RJ), he began to study music with his mother at the age of five, and completed an organ course in the Conservatory of Ribeirao Preto (SP). At the age of ten, having been self-taught in jazz improvisation, he wrote his first compositions. After beginning his professional career playing piano and organ in social events he later formed his own jazz trio demonstrating his abilities as composer and performer in local jazz clubs. At the age of 15 while teaching organ in the Conservatory of Ribeirao Preto, Mehmari was invited to compose a method for keyboard beginners. The result was a 20-piece collection, a work greatly appreciated by young musicians and their teachers. Andre's precociousness as a composer and multi-instrumentalist was well documented by the media.

In 1995 he moved to Sao Paulo to study at the Sao Paulo State University (USP). In the same year he won the university's competition for original Brazilian popular music (MPB). The same honor was awarded to him for classical music in 1997.

In 1997, after developing an active piano performance schedule, he started writing orchestral arrangements for major musical events in Sao Paulo. He participated in a recording with the inclusion of a Mehmari/Jardim's composition interpreted by the popular Brazilian singer/composer, Milton Nascimento. In the following year he won the first national VISA MPB (Brazilian Popular Music) Competition, the most important award for popular music in Brazil.

After recording his first CD, as reward for the first prize winner (highly praised by reviewers and listeners), Mehmari performed in various Brazilian concert halls. "Odisséia" was recorded shortly after the VISA CD. It is a totally improvised piano trio album with long time collaborators Célio Barros and Sérgio Reze.

Many activities mark the year of 1999. He was invited to teach jazz piano in the Campos do Jordao Winter Festival, one of the most important musical events in Brazil. André played in both Chivas Jazz and Heineken Concerts, two of the most important Jazz Festivals in Brazil's scene.

Recorded in that same year at his home studio, the colorful "Canto", released in 2002, where the multi-instrumentalist Mehmari shows his abilities as composer and arranger, playing also all 26 instruments heard on the CD : piano, clarinet, viola, violin, cello, percussion, guitars, double-bass, flute and voice, to name a few. "Sinfonia para Mario Covas" National Composition Competition Award, first prize winner with "Sinfonia Elegíaca" in four movements.

A new CD, *Lachrimae*, was released in 2004 by the audiophile label CAVI. Two different piano trios are the center of this recording with special guests Mônica Salmaso (voice), Dimos Goudaroulis (cello) and Luca Raelle (clarinet). The combination of Brazilian MPB classics in highly creative arrangements and Mehmari's own compositions create a very special portrait of the pianist's unique style and language. Also won the National Composition Competition Award "Camargo Guarnieri", with "Omaggio a Berio" based in Monteverdi's music.

He has an active performing schedule with his two trios, solo piano and in duet with singers Monica Salmaso and Ná Ozzetti. With the later, he recorded the acclaimed "Piano e Voz", considered a true Brazilian masterpiece of recent MPB. Mehmari regularly write compositions and arrangements for

Brazilian leading orchestras (OESP) and chamber ensembles (Quinteto Villa-Lobos, Sao Paulo String Quartet). Recent compositions includes the "Angelus Piano Quintet" and "Dance Suite", commissioned by São Paulo State Symphony and 'Viagem de Verão', commissioned by Portuguese pianist Maria João Pires, for her Spanish Schubertiade.

He made his U.S. premiere at the 2005 edition of Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina, stunning the audience with his blend of virtuosity, vitality, and musicality. Was invited to play at the TIM festival 2006, with his trio on the jazz stage. After winning the Carlos Gomes award for classical music revelation of the year of 2006, Mehmari was appointed resident composer for the São Paulo State Wind Band. Also wrote original orchestral music for the official PAN American games ceremonies, that took place on legendary Maracanã Stadium, Rio de Janeiro, in July.

Played under direction of Maria Schneider at the Ouro Preto Jazz Festival in Minas Gerais. Released the 'Continuous Friendship' album (Adventure Music) , in duet with mandolin- virtuoso Hamilton de Holanda. In 2008 released a CD entirely dedicated to his own compositions: 'About waltzes and trees' and (aged 30) toured the northeast of Brazil with Ivan Lins, playing both Ivan's and his own compositions at the traditional Pixinguinha Project, 30th anniversary special edition. For Ivan Lins and the Metropole Orkest Amsterdam, wrote an arrangement, played under direction of Vince Mendoza.

A piano solo album entirely dedicated to the music of the Clube da Esquina was recently released. With the quintet album Nonada, Mehmari was nominated for the 2008 Latin Grammy Awards. Also he wrote a double concerto for jazz piano, clarinet and winds, performed with clarinet master Gabriele Mirabassi and Sao Paulo State Wind Band.

Composed and performed a Concert for Jazz Piano Trio and Strings, commissioned by the São Paulo State Orchestra. For the São Paulo Dance Company composed a full scale ballet, premiered this April.

A Mehmari-Mirabassi duet CD called MIRAMARI, is now released, both in Brazil and abroad. In 2010, signed with the main contemporary Italian label, EGEA . Composed "Contraponto, Ponte e Ponteio", for the Petrobras Sinfonica, premiered under Isaac Karabtchevsky at the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theater. After receiving a commission from the German TV Deutsche Welle, Mehmari wrote "The City of Sun", for the Heliopolis Symphony. The work was successfully premiered in Germany, at the Beethovenfest, both in Bonn and Berlin. Recently toured solo piano in Japan and played with Hamilton de Holanda the new release Gismontipascoal in several European countries.

QUOTES

Simply tracing Mehmari's steps doesn't adequately explain his diverse gifts. (...)Each piece seems to channel volumes of musical history and understanding. He deftly integrates whatever interests him at the moment, but nothing about his work sounds calculated. Into every project, he injects a mesmerizing passion. (...) He keeps his ear to tracks that crisscross the world and contributes as much to MPB as he takes from it.

By Emerson Dameron

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Spoleto Festival, 2005

Bruce Gilman in Brazil Magazine

"Pianist/composer/multi-instrumentalist Andre Mehmari has the rare distinction of being one of the most consistently inventive and absorbing, yet unacknowledged musicians in the forefront of

Brazilian instrumental art.

Convincingly at ease in nearly all possible contexts, from Mozart to Monk, Mehmari possesses an impressive classical technique that is never just paraded; there is conviction in all he plays.

His formidable improvisatory imagination and uninhibited lyricism have made his presence on any recording a strong assertion of its high quality."

Arthur Nestrovski in "Folha de São Paulo"

"Nobody plays like him in Brazil and only a few outside Brazil"

"What is most impressive in Mehmari's playing is not the technical fluency but the musical intelligence"

Carlos Calado in "Valor Econômico"

"If you enjoy modern pianists like Jarrett or Mehldau and still don't know André Mehmari, listen to his music. Like the two mentioned above, the young pianist combines classical music influences with an exuberant improvisation capability. As a composer, his talent is not less brilliant."

J. Jota de Moraes in "Jornal da Tarde" Sao Paulo:

"The "fluminense" [born in the Rio de Janeiro state] Andre Mehmari is, At the age of 21, a singular artist. Owner of a new lyricism, he shows himself able to re-visit the romanticism from a well-humored angle. By possessing a composer mind, he indeed composes, even when he puts himself to improvise upon other people's ideas (...) He creates new pieces, by taking certain elements as points of departure and making, then, real sound excursions."

Mauro Dias in "O Estado de Sao Paulo" Sao Paulo

"... the pianist Andre Mehmari, only 20 years old, is a precocious genius, an extraordinary talent of vibrating and generous imagination. He uses the classical formation for approaching the popular music as great pianists, such as Luis Eça and even Egberto had done before him, in a rich and creative way, making the formality of one language work for the enrichment of the other."

At 20 years, Andre Mehmari has the inventiveness of Hermeto Pascoal and the interpretative sensitiveness of Gismonti. These are not two Names cited at random. Two pillars of the Brazilian instrumental music, they are the most notable influences on Mehmari's music, ... Yet Mehmari does not play the work as written. As a great interpreter, he re-creates it, submitting it to his particular syntax, to the sensitiveness which is not common today, but which in reality materializes a vision of a complex music, articulated and full of life. For many years there has not appeared on the Brazilian musical scene such a promising young pianist. ... Certainly Andre Mehmari is leaving the VISA Prize toward the great stages, for giving continuity to Egberto and Hermeto's lineage."

"Andre Mehmari has become a reference for the new pianists causing amazement among the veterans by the harmonic intelligence, the capability of improvisation, the quality of composition, the deep knowledge of the Brazilian music. ... He is already among our greatest jazz instrumentalists of all times."

Mark Holston in Americas Magazine

Canto is a richly textured solo triumph--he's featured on a phalanx of instruments, from keyboards to cello, guitar, bass, and a multitude of percussion.

Many tracks evoke the moody quality of vintage Milton Nascimento (...)