

## **Victor Santiago Asuncion biography**

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Hailed by the Washington Post for his “poised and imaginative playing,” pianist Victor Santiago Asuncion is recognized as a pianist of innate musical sensitivity, fiery temperament and superb technique. As a recitalist and concerto soloist, he has appeared in major concert halls in Canada, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and the Philippines. He played his orchestral debut at the age of 18 with the Manila Chamber Orchestra and his New York recital debut in Carnegie’s Weill Recital Hall in 1999. In addition, he has worked with conductors including Sergio Esmilla, Enrique Batiz, Zev Dorman, Arthur Weisberg, Corrick Brown, David Loebel, Leon Fleisher, and Bobby McFerrin.

A chamber music enthusiast, he has performed with artists such as Lynn Harrell, Zuill Bailey, Cho-Liang Lin, James Dunham, Ronald Leonard, Susanne Mentzer, H.K. Gruber, John O’Connor, Marc Neikrug, Liang Wang, Ensemble Sao Paolo, and the Vega and Emerson String quartets at venues that include the Phillips Collection, the Corcoran Gallery, 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, Benaroya, Merkin, Spivey and Shriver Concert Halls, and the Santa Fe, Aspen, Madison, and Amelia Island Chamber Music Festivals. He was on the chamber music faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School, as well as the Garth Newel Summer Music Festival. He was also the pianist for the Garth Newel Piano Quartet for three seasons.

In addition to his active performing career, Mr. Asuncion is sought after as a piano, vocal, and chamber music coach. He was appointed assistant professor at the University of Memphis in 2003 and Director of Piano and Collaborative Arts Studies in 2004. He has given master classes at Minnesota State University, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Memphis; the Washington Conservatory, the Pera Piano festival in Turkey and throughout the Philippines. The 2006-2007 season featured solo and chamber music performances at Stetson, Vanderbilt, Ouachita Baptist, Henderson, and Christian Brothers Universities; The Virginia Military Institute, Randolph-Macon Women’s College and University of Mississippi at Oxford; St. Scholastica’s University, University of Santo Tomas, and GSIS Museum in the Philippines; Cerritos Performing Arts Center, Shriver Hall, and the Memphis Chamber Music Society. Festival appearances for the summer of 2007 included performances at the Madison and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festivals, and the Virtuosi Festival in Recife, Brazil.

Highlights of the 2007-2008 season included appearances with the violinist Susanna Gilmore, concert-master of the Memphis Symphony, featuring the 10 Sonatas of Beethoven for piano and violin, a Bach Harpsichord Concerto appearance with the Memphis Symphony, and a solo recital and concerto appearances with the Youth Orchestra of Pernambuco at the Garanhuns Winter Music Festival in Brazil. Victor also appears with the Vega String Quartet, violinists Dale Barltrop and Laurie Smukler, and cellist Felix Wang. His collaborations with Lynn Harrell continued with critically acclaimed performances at the Tacoma Philharmonic and Library of Congress Recital Series. In addition, he was a returning faculty member of the Memphis Opera and Song Academy at the University of Memphis. Mr. Asuncion also opened the 22<sup>nd</sup> season of the prestigious Filipino Artist Series at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in July to great acclaim and performed his debut recitals in Turkey and Singapore.

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The 2008-2009 concert season featured solo and chamber music recital appearances at the Virginia Military Institute, University of Mississippi, University of Memphis, and Kent State and Lynn Universities, Istanbul and Antalya, Turkey, and in Recife and Sao Paulo, Brazil. Mr. Asuncion also performed with the cellist Lynn Harrell in Atlanta, Georgia; Salt Lake City, Utah; Concord, Massachusetts; Minneapolis, Minnesota; SUNY Purchase and the People's Symphony Concerts in New York City; San Francisco and the Laguna Beach Chamber Music Festival in California. In addition, Mr. Asuncion will open and close the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season of the Memphis Chamber Music Society with performances with the Vega String Quartet and the violinist Sergiu Schwartz.

The 2009-2010 concert season features performances with the cellist Lynn Harrell in venues such as the Germantown Performing Center for the Arts in Tennessee, the University of Georgia in Athens; Palm Desert in California; as well as the La Jolla SummerFest and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. In addition, he performs chamber music with the cellist Antonio Meneses, the violinists William Preucil and Giora Schmidt, at the Virtuosi Festival in Brazil, the Highland-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, respectively. Solo appearances include all-Chopin recitals, as well as the two Chopin Concerti in Brazil, France, Singapore, and the Philippines.

Mr. Asuncion's major teachers include Rita Sloan at the University of Maryland at College Park, Roberta Rust at the Harid Conservatory, David Buechner at Manhattan School, Gary Steigerwalt and Luiz de Moura-Castro at the Hartt School, Avelina Manalo at the University of the Philippines and Rosario Picazo at the Philippine High School for the Arts. Additional studies include master classes and private lessons with Wu Han, Byron Janis, Santiago Rodriguez, Warren Jones, Andre Michel Schub, Paul Sperry, Irma Vallecillo, Christoph Eschenbach, Felix Galimir, Orlando Cole, Dorothy Delay, Donald Weilerstein, William Preucil and Leon Fleisher.

Mr. Asuncion received his Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in May 2007 from the University of Maryland At College Park. He is an Associate Professor of Piano, and the Director of Collaborative Piano Studies at the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music at the University of Memphis in Tennessee.

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### **Reviews for Victor Santiago Asuncion's Performances:**

“Mr. Asuncion is an extremely gifted pianist who plays with great sensitivity and possesses a wonderful technique. He plays with much conviction, emotion and passion.”

- New York Concert Review

“Lynn Harrell's recital, presented to a packed house by the Shriver Hall Concert Series, had an electric charge. Adding to the voltage was pianist Victor Santiago Asuncion, whose elegant articulation and remarkably sensitive phrasing complemented the cellist's every step of the way.”

- Tim Smith, Baltimore Sun

“...elegant, liquid playing..”

- Richard S. Grinell, Los Angeles Times

“...extremely powerful playing..”

- The Aspen Times

“...impressive approach to a virtuoso repertoire...”

- Wayne Lee Gay, Star Telegram/Fort Worth

“...assertive, refreshing approach. It is clear he has something special...”

- Tim Smith, Sun Sentinel

“...Asuncion reeled out the vibrant finale, bringing the audience to its feet.”

- Christopher Blank, Commercial Appeal

“His technique and skill is by far innate. Many pianists strive to reach that level of perfection but Asuncion has a sensitivity and technique that was given to him at birth. He is definitely a force to be reckoned with in the world of classical music.”

- Tarynne Swarts, The Daily Mississippian

“He had complete abandon in Liszt's Sonata in B minor, where he combined power and warm touch. His technical prowess could not be faulted as he fired brilliant octaves, handsome staccato in the fugue, and dynamic chords, all starkly contrasted by an alluring singing tone.”

- Antonio C. Hila, Philippine Daily Inquirer

“Asuncion didn't airily toss them off (Ravel's Gaspard de la nuit), even though he could do so; he's clearly too good a musician for that. He did play with a studied yet matter-of-fact formality that made the fairy-tale-with-teeth atmospheres, inspired by poems of Aloysius Bertrand, shiveringly real.

- Craig Smith, PASA Reviews

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“Asuncion is captivating to watch as his face broadcasts the emotional changes he attempts in the music...ravishing...creates a multi-layered, richly-textured sound.”

- Christopher Blank, Commercial Appeal

“The formidable Asuncion, showed outstanding technical command. His skills, revealing extensive and fastidious training, rendered the climax exciting; indeed, electrifying. Prolonged and resounding applause brought on a Chopin etude.”

- Rosalinda L. Orosa, Philippine Star

“Harrell and pianist Victor Santiago Asunción (a poised and imaginative partner throughout the evening) dug into the earthiness of the piece and made sure the melodic material soared.”

- Joe Banno, The Washington Post

“Here was bold playing coupled with secure technique to make you weep as you bask in the glorious music unfolding before you.”

- Joseph O. Cortes, The Business Mirror