

# BIOGRAPHY

The spirit of music courses through the veins of Eleonora Spina and Michele Benignetti. Coming from a strong musical lineage with backgrounds as soloist and chamber musicians, Eleonora and Michele's partnership as a piano duo took off in 2013 and was met immediately with positive critical acclaim.



In June 2014, they were unanimously awarded the prestigious '*Diplôme Supérieur d'Exécution*' at the Ecole Normale De Musique Alfred Cortot in Paris, under the supervision of Chantal De Buchy. Lifelong learners, they received master's degrees with honors, in 2019, at the Maastricht Conservatorium of Music - Zuyd University in the Netherlands under professors Igor Roma, Henk Guittart, and Enrico Pace. They also studied at the *Universität für Musik* in Graz (Austria) with Sivan Silver and Gil Garburg.

Awarded with the Gold Medal at the Manhattan International Music Competition in New York and at the Global Music Awards (USA), they were winners of numerous competitions dedicated to chamber music and piano duo, among which, we recall, the *Pietro Argento Competition* (Italy), London Piano Masters - Royal College of Music (UK), Virtuoso Grand Prize Competition (France) *Concours Musical de France* (France), International Artists Competition in Vienna. Such international achievements have led them to perform in the radio studios of *Radio France*, Rai Radio3, *Radio Classica*, *SBS Australia*, *Art Sound FM* Canberra. Their recitals at the *Maison de la Radio* and at the *Theatre de l'Alliance Française* in Paris, for the radio programs "*Génération Jeunes Interprètes*" and "*Génération France Musique - le Live*" were broadcast live by the famous national radio France Musique. Their recordings have also been streamed by *Vatican Radio*, *Rete Toscana Classica*, *Cultura FM Brazil* and *Radio Suisse*.

The American Record Guide, the oldest independent reviews magazine in USA, writes: 'Their ensemble is spot on, and there is a wonderful flow to the music under their fingers'.

Their concert activity has seen them perform in concert halls throughout Europe and across the Globe: *Auditorium Cité de la Musique et de la Danse* in Soissons, *Salle Cortot*, *Auditorium Opera Bastille*, *Maison de la Radio* in Paris and *Palais Acropolis* in Nice (France), *Hijstekzaal Maastricht* and *Linburgzaal Heerlen* (The Netherlands), *Grosser Konzertsaal* in Munich (Germany), *Izumi Hall* Osaka (Japan), *Musaion* Pretoria University and Johannesburg Mozart Festival (South Africa), *Auditorium Galindo Blas*, *Auditorium Conservatorio Nacional* and *UNAM* in Mexico City, Guangzhou Royal Opera House, Tianjin Grand Theater, Shandong Grand Theater and Auditorium Nankai University (China), Turner Center de Kerikeri and Wanganui Royal Opera

House (New Zealand), *Teatro Nacional de San Salvador* (El Salvador); *Aula Magna Bocconi University Milan* (Italy), to name just a few.

Repeatedly invited to play in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, their tours have always been surrounded by great success with audiences and critics. To quote the South African newspaper *Potchefstroom Herald*: "Their two pianos recital will be long-remembered". On the occasion of their 2019 tour in Oceania, the newspaper *SBS Australia* writes: "Eleonora and Michele enchant Sydney".

Their acclaimed 2015 recording of Brahms's complete works for two pianos for Brilliant Classics Records has been praised by audiences and critics alike. Many high-profile music magazines in Italy and France (*Amadeus, Musica, Suonare News, Pianiste*) regard the recording as among of their most notable work to date, awarding it the highest possible score in 2015. The Italian critic Luca Segalla commented that 'Eleonora Spina and Michele Benignetti, with utmost care and attention to sound, precisely execute the contrapuntal game of variation no. 4, carving out a finale which makes one feel as if one is listening to an orchestra' (*Musica Magazine*, September 2015).

The album '*Lifetime*' followed in January 2017. Released by *Sheva Collection*, it went on to win Gold Medals for Best Album, Best Duo, and Best Emerging Artists at the 2017 Global Music Awards in La Jolla, California (USA). The third album '*Visions*' is also released on *Sheva Collection*, the London-based label, on July 2021 and it contains the *premiere* of César Franck's *Prelude, Fugue and Variation op.18*, transcribed for piano four hands by Abel Marie Decaux. In September 2022, the album "Schubert's Music for Piano Four Hands" is released with *Apple Digital Masters* certification, by UK label *Ulysses Arts*, featuring Schubert's major works for piano duet and a transcription of the Trout Piano Quintet D667 for piano four hands. *Fanfare Magazine* writes about this recording: "Once again, the performers' sharply-honed synchronicity and elegant articulation and phrasing yield great dividends". The American journalist James Harrington states: "Spina and Benignetti's playing offers performances here that rank up there with the luminaries like Badura-Skoda and Demus. Their ensemble, especially in the ever-present dotted rhythms is truly as one.

In October 2024, the new album "Transcriptions for Piano Four Hands" will be released by Piano Classics.

Eleonora and Michele are also professors who currently teach at the *Cité de la Musique et de la Danse* in Soissons (France). Additionally, they are often invited to give masterclasses at the Summer International Academy of Colombes and at the Summer Arts Academy of Flaine (France), at the Beijing International Music Institute and Tianjin School of Music (China), at Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music in Melbourne (Australia), *UNAM Facultad de Musica* and *Conservatorio Nacional* in Mexico City, at the University of Costa Rica and *Conservatorio Nacional* in Guatemala City.

The Spina-Benignetti Piano Duo is an *Official Yamaha Artist* and has been proudly sponsored by them since December 2017.

[www.spinabenignetti.com](http://www.spinabenignetti.com)