

Pianist Curtis Phil Hsu wins the Fundación Occident Prize in the 70th edition of the Maria Canals Competition

The Foundation supports the winner with 25,000 euros and four remunerated concerts with orchestra

The pianist Curtis Phil Hsu, a 20-year-old American, has won the Fundación Occident Prize, receiving prize money of 25,000 euros as well as four remunerated concerts with an orchestra, and has also been proclaimed winner of the 70th edition of the Maria Canals International Piano Competition. The award ceremony and event closure took place on 3 April at the historic Saló de Cent in Barcelona City Hall.

Curtis Phil Hsu beat 61 contestants from 25 countries, after a demanding competition that culminated with the Final Test held on 2 April in the Palau de la Música Catalana concert hall. At this stage, the three finalists were accompanied by the National Youth Orchestra of Catalonia (JONC), under the direction of Manel Valdieso.

Thanks to the Fundación Occident Award, Curtis Phil Hsu will be performing at concerts in the established seasons of prominent orchestras in cities such as Madrid, Bilbao, Granada and Tenerife, thus consolidating a promising international projection.

Commitment to music culture and education

The support offered to the winner is just one of the manifestations of the close collaboration between Fundación Occident and the Maria Canals Competition, an alliance that for years has been promoting projects that seek to encourage music and playing the piano to various audiences, especially among young people.

These include, the ¡Me Toca! (It's my turn) programme, a key educational and social initiative that came to Bilbao for the first time during its last edition, and was repeated in Barcelona, Madrid and Seville. This project aims to continue discovering and promoting musical talent among children aged between six and eight in vulnerable situations, and who are offered a three-year scholarship for studying the piano. The Foundation has collaborated in ¡Me Toca! since 2016 and has awarded more than 960 scholarships.

Another of the flagship projects shared by Fundación Occident and the Maria Canals Competition is "Your city is full of pianos," a touring initiative that transforms urban spaces into collective musical experiences. With grand pianos available so that anyone -experts and novices alike- can experience the art of performing. The objective of this activity is to democratize access to music. "We want people to come by, dare to give it a try and experience creating music in a special setting," says Ignacio Gallardo-Bravo, director of Fundación Occident.

Since its launch, the initiative has covered over 20 Spanish cities, including Madrid, Bilbao, Seville, Valencia, Cádiz, Santiago de Compostela, Zaragoza and Palma de Mallorca. The next date will be in Barcelona on 16 May.

About Fundación Occident

Fundación Occident, formerly Fundación Jesús Serra, is a private non-profit entity, created in memory of Jesús Serra Santamans, a renowned businessman and patron, who was the founder of GCO (Grupo Catalana Occidente). Its activity consists of developing and supporting initiatives in the fields of research, business and teaching, social action, sport, and promotion of the arts, with a common objective: responsible commitment to society.

With this sustained collaboration, Fundación Occident and the Maria Canals Competition reiterate their commitment to universal access to culture, promoting talent and transforming the urban environment into meeting spaces through music.

About Fundación Occident

Fundación Occident, formerly Fundación Jesús Serra, is a private non-profit entity, created in memory of Jesús Serra Santamans, a renowned businessman and patron, who was the founder of GCO (Grupo Catalana Occidente). Its activity consists of developing and supporting initiatives in the fields of research, business and teaching, social action, sport, and promotion of the arts, with a common objective: responsible commitment to society.