

Aristo Sham, Gold Medalist, 2025 Cliburn Competition

Hong Kong, China

29 Years Old

Pianist Aristo Sham exudes astounding intellect and a deep emotional resonance; a cultivated sophistication and an immediately engaging presence; a penchant to take on the great monuments of the piano repertoire and a natural, infectious spontaneity. This makeup is fueled by a fascination with the world and its rich cultures: he was an international prodigy, is a voracious student of wide-ranging interests, and currently splits his time between three continents.

At the 2025 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, Aristo found his breakthrough moment, taking home both the gold medal and the audience award at “one of the most prestigious contests in classical music” (The New York Times, June 2022). And the critics showered him with imaginative praise, calling him “a marvel of deft characterization,” “consistently authoritative,” “a card-carrying risk taker,” “a dapper, aristocratic figure on stage,” “a pianist I look forward to hearing again” (The Dallas Morning News, Gramophone, Texas Classical Voice). In just two months’ time, he was mentioned in more than 800 news articles, and his Cliburn performance videos were streamed 2 million times across 125 countries.

Aristo was featured in the 2009 documentary *The World’s Greatest Musical Prodigies* on Channel 4 (UK), has performed for royalty including King Charles, and was hailed by The New York Times in 2020 as an artist “whose playing combines clarity, elegance and abundant technique.” He has concertized across Asia, Europe, and the United States, with major highlights including the London Symphony Orchestra under Sir Simon Rattle, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra under Edo de Waart, English Chamber Orchestra under the late Sir Raymond Leppard, Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, and Minnesota Orchestra. His 2025–2026 debut season as Cliburn winner includes a major tour of Asia through South Korea and China, and U.S. recitals for Aspen Music Festival, La Jolla Music Society/The Conrad, UCSB Arts and Lectures, and the Skyline Piano Artist Series at Northwestern University.

Recently, he recorded and hosted the complete Brahms solo piano music on RTHK4, Classical Radio in Hong Kong. Upcoming seasons will see the release of two albums on Platoon: a Cliburn live release, as well as his debut studio album.

Aristo Sham’s mother taught piano in their Hong Kong home, so he says: “I was enveloped in the environment of the piano even before I was born.” His parents recall his immense curiosity towards the instrument when he was a toddler and started him in lessons when he was 3. At the age of 10, he began competing and concertizing. But he also went to regular schools, never making the conscious decision to focus solely on the piano or his other studies; this made the dual degree program at Harvard and the New England Conservatory a perfect fit when he went to college. He finished his Bachelor of Arts at Harvard in 2019 and master’s at NEC under Victor Rosenbaum in 2020. He then went to the Ingesund School of Music in Sweden to study with Julia Mustonen-Dahlkvist before returning to the States to earn an artist diploma at The Juilliard School with Robert McDonald and Orli Shaham. In addition to the

Cliburn, he's a laureate of international competitions, with first-prize wins at Young Concert Artists, Ettlingen, Gina Bachauer, and Monte Carlo Music Masters.

Source: cliburn.org