



Paquito D'Rivera Biography

Paquito D'Rivera defies categorization. The winner of nine GRAMMY Awards, he is celebrated both for his artistry in Latin jazz and his achievements as a classical composer.

Born in Havana, Cuba, he performed at age 10 with the National Theater Orchestra, studied at the Havana Conservatory of Music and, at 17, became a featured soloist with the Cuban National Symphony. As a founding member of the Orquesta Cubana de Musica Moderna, he directed that group for two years, while at the same time playing both the clarinet and saxophone with the Cuban National Symphony Orchestra. He eventually went on to premier several works by notable Cuban composers with the same orchestra. Additionally, he was a founding member and co-director of the innovative musical ensemble Irakere. With its explosive mixture of jazz, rock, classical and traditional Cuban music never before heard, Irakere toured extensively throughout America and Europe, won several GRAMMY nominations (1979, 1980) and a GRAMMY (1979).

His numerous recordings include more than 30 solo albums. In 1988, he was a founding member of the United Nation Orchestra, a 15-piece ensemble organized by Dizzy Gillespie to showcase the fusion of Latin and Caribbean influences with jazz. D'Rivera continues to appear as guest conductor of that group which features such artists as James Moody, Slide Hampton, Airto Moreira, Flora Purim, Jon Faddis, Steve Turre, and others. A GRAMMY was awarded the United Nation Orchestra in 1991, the same year D'Rivera received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Carnegie Hall for his contributions to Latin music. Additionally, D'Rivera's highly acclaimed ensembles- the Chamber Jazz Ensemble, the Paquito D'Rivera Big Band, and the Paquito D'Rivera Quintet are in great demand world wide.

While Paquito D'Rivera's discography reflects a dedication and enthusiasm for Jazz, Bebop and Latin music, his contributions to classical music are impressive. They include solo performances with the London Philharmonic, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony, the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. He has also performed with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, the Costa Rica National Symphony, the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, the Bronx Arts Ensemble, and the St. Luke's Chamber Orchestra, among others. In 2005, he began touring with guitar duo Sergio and Odair Assad, in "Dances from the New World." In his passion to bring Latin repertoire to greater prominence, Mr. D'Rivera has successfully created, championed and promoted all types of classical compositions, including his three chamber compositions recorded live in concert with distinguished cellist Yo-Yo Ma in September 2003. The chamber work "Merengue," from that live concert at Zankel Hall, was released by Sony Records and garnered Paquito his 7th GRAMMY as Best Instrumental Composition 2004.

In addition to his extraordinary performing career as an instrumentalist, Mr. D'Rivera has rapidly gained a reputation as an accomplished composer. The prestigious music house,



Paquito D'Rivera Biography

Boosey and Hawkes, is the exclusive publisher of Mr. D'Rivera's compositions. Recent recognition of his compositional skills came with the award of a 2007 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in Music Composition, and the 2007-2008 appointment as Composer-In-Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. As part of the Caramoor Latin American music initiative, Sonidos Latinos, D'Rivera's new concerto for double bass and clarinet/saxophone, "Conversations with Cachao," pays tribute to Cuba's legendary bass player, Israel "Cachao" Lopez. D'Rivera's works often reveal his widespread and eclectic musical interests, which range from Afro-Cuban rhythms and melodies, including influences encountered in his many travels, and back to his classical origins. Inspiration for another recent composition "Three Poems from the New World" came from the writing of Fortunato Villarrondo, José Martí, and Dana Gioia. The three poems explore themes of societal struggles regarding racial intolerance, hate, injustice, and the appreciation of friendship, love, and life. The work was commissioned and premiered by the Chicago Chamber Musicians at the Grant Park Music Festival in June, 2006. His numerous commissions include compositions for Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Library of Congress, the National Symphony Orchestra and Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Turtle Island String Quartet, Ying String Quartet, the International Double Reed Society, Syracuse University, and Montreal's Gerald Danovich Saxophone Quartet.

Paquito D'Rivera is the author of two books: *My Sax Life*, published by Northwestern University Press, and a novel, *Oh, La Habana*, published by MTeditores, Barcelona. He is the recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Award 2005 and the National Medal of the Arts 2005. His numerous other honors include a Doctorate Honoris Causa in Music from the Berklee School of Music in Boston and the Jazz Journalist Association's Clarinetist of the Year in both 2004 and 2006. He is also the first artist to win Latin GRAMMYS in both Classical and Latin Jazz categories-- for Stravinsky's *Historia del Soldado* (L'Histoire du Soldat) and *Brazilian Dreams* with New York Voices. He has served as artistic director of jazz programming at the New Jersey Chamber Music Society and continues as Artistic Director of the famous world-class Festival Internacional de Jazz de Punta Del Este in Uruguay and the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival in Washington, DC.

2008 awards include the International Association for Jazz Education President's Award, the Frankfurter Musikpreis, and a Doctorate Honoris Causa in Music from the University of Pennsylvania. A tour in Japan in September 2008 includes Mr. D'Rivera conducting and performing Mozart concerti; the Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, and the Concerto in E flat Major for Piano and Orchestra.

In 1999, and in celebration of its 500 year history, the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares presented Paquito with a special award recognizing his contribution to the arts, his humane qualities, and his defense of rights and liberties of artists around the world. The National Endowment for the Arts website affirms "he has become the consummate multinational ambassador, creating and promoting a cross-culture of music that moves effortlessly among jazz, Latin, and Mozart."