

## Paquito D’Rivera

### Beginnings

Born on the island of Cuba, **Paquito D’Rivera** began his career as a child prodigy. A restless musical genius during his teen years, Mr. D’Rivera created various original and ground-breaking musical ensembles. 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 premiere 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).

### Awards and Grammys

Paquito D’Rivera’s first recognition as a solo artist by The Recording Academy (GRAMMYs) came in 1996 with the highly acclaimed recording *Portraits of Cuba*. Since then, Mr. D’Rivera has received many recognitions as an artist and composer.

*Funk Tango*, the first release of D’Rivera’s new label, Paquito Records, recently won his 9th GRAMMY for "Best Latin Jazz Album" in 2007. An 8th GRAMMY came in 2005 for *Riberas*, for "Best Classical Recording" with the Buenos Aires String Quartet. He also won a GRAMMY for "Best Instrumental Composition" in 2004 for his “Merengue” as performed by the distinguished cellist Yo-Yo Ma. In 2000, D’Rivera’s *Tropicana Nights* received a GRAMMY. That same year, he received a nomination in the classical category for his *Music of Two Worlds*, featuring compositions by Schubert, Brahms, Guastavino, Villa Lobos, and Mr. D’Rivera himself. In 2001 the Latin Recording Academy awarded a GRAMMY for his Quintet’s recording of *Live at the Blue Note* along with a nomination in the Classical Crossover category for *The Clarinetist Vol. I*. In 2002, he won again as a guest artist on the Bebo Valdes Trio’s recording *El Arte Del Sabor*.

The National Hispanic Academy of Media Arts and Sciences paid tribute to Mr. D’Rivera with their Annual Achievement In Music Award for his "*outstanding body of work*" along with Dizzy Gillespie and Gato Barbieri. Paquito D’Rivera is the first artist to win Latin GRAMMY’s in both Classical and Latin Jazz categories (2003), for Stravinsky’s *Historia del Soldado (L’Histoire du Soldat)* and *Brazilian Dreams* with the New York Voices. The other historic recipient who has won duo GRAMMY’s in both Classical and Jazz categories is Wynton Marsalis. Additionally, he has been awarded two Doctorate *Honoris Causa* in Music degrees; May, 2003 from the Berklee School of Music and May, 2008 from the University of Pennsylvania.

D’Rivera is a recipient of the National Medal for the Arts, presented at the White House by President George W. Bush in 2005 and was named one of the 2005 NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) Jazz Masters. In both 2004 and 2006, the Jazz Journalists Association honored Mr. D’Rivera as the Clarinetist of the Year. In March 2007 he was honored with the Living Jazz Legend Award in a ceremony at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. 2008 awards include the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) President’s Award, and the Frankfurter Musikpreis.

### **Classical Music and Ensembles**

While Paquito D’Rivera’s discography includes over 30 solo albums in Jazz, Bebop and Latin music, his contributions to classical music are impressive. They include solo performances with the London Philharmonic, the London Symphony, 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. A 2008 tour of Japan 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. Additionally, D’Rivera tours worldwide with his ensembles: the Chamber Jazz Ensemble, the Paquito D’Rivera Big Band, and the Paquito D’Rivera Quintet. 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 Yo-Yo Ma at Carnegie Hall, September, 2003.

### **Composer**

In addition to his extraordinary performing career as an instrumentalist, Paquito D’Rivera has rapidly gained a reputation as a dynamic composer. The prestigious music house, Boosey and Hawkes, is the exclusive publisher of Mr. D’Rivera’s compositions. Recognition of his significant compositional skills came in 2007 with the award of a 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. His works often reveal his widespread and eclectic musical interests, ranging from Afro-Cuban rhythms and melodies, including influences encountered in his many travels, and back to his classical origins.

“Conversations with Cachao,” a new concerto for double bass and clarinet/saxophone pays tribute to Cuba’s legendary bass player and received its premiere in June, 2007 at Caramoor. 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.

Another recent commission came about through ensemble Opus 21’s interest in building bridges between audiences of different backgrounds. Dedicated to the works and art music of the 21st century, Opus 21 commissioned “The Chaser” and premiered it in May, 2006. In 2005, Imani Winds, a woodwind quintet committed to the exploration of diverse world music traditions and the broadening of the traditional wind quintet literature, commissioned “Kites.” This work personifies freedom and the vision that liberty and independence have a foundation through culture and music. Just as a kite may fly freely, its path continues to be bound to the earth--its foundation, by the string.

In 2002, the National Symphony Orchestra and the Rotterdam Philharmonic, commissioned Paquito D’Rivera to write a wind concerto entitled “Gran Danzón” (The Bel Air Concerto) for acclaimed flutist Marina Piccinini. The premiere was conducted by Leonard Slatkin at the Kennedy Center. The Baltimore Symphony and Ms. Piccinini recently presented the concerto at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center in April, 2006.

*"...Best that night was Paquito D’Rivera’s, ‘Gran Danzón’ (The Bel Air Concerto) in its world premiere. A spiky and imaginatively colored piece of Latin American orchestral writing..." (Joe Banno, Washington Post, February 11, 2002)*

*"...'Gran Danzón' ...this dazzling work...reveals D’Rivera’s sophistication as a composer..." (L. Peat O’Neal, Washington Post, June 3, 2002)*

Other premieres include commissioned works for the Turtle Island String Quartet, The Ying String Quartet, and the International Double Reed Society’s 30th Anniversary in Banff, Canada. A 2002 Library of Congress commission resulted in “Fiddle Dreams” a jazz fantasy for violin and piano written for Regina Carter. Jazz at Lincoln Center commissioned D’Rivera’s “Panamericana Suite” for their “As of Now” series in 2000. It was premiered and recorded by National Public Radio.

*"...The centerpiece of the concert was **La Jicotea** a newly commissioned work composed by D’Rivera for the **Turtle Island String Quartet**. Well-crafted ... the piece simmered with bits and pieces of Latin rhythms as the brief, but attractive, principal theme arched through flowing contrapuntal passages. As a showcase work, it will serve the TISQ well in future appearances. The most appealing segments of the program however were those in which D’Rivera performed with the quartet...the combination of clarinet and string quartet usually referred to as a Clarinet Quintet..." (Don Heckman, Los Angeles Times, 2002)*

In 1999, the Kammer Orchester Schloss Werneck presented a series entitled *Paquito & Mozart*, featuring his chamber compositions, along with those of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It culminated in Paquito's "Adagio," which features elements of Mozart's "Clarinet Concerto in A Major."

*"...The orchestra as well as the soloist executed the work with perfect intonation and precise interpretation. At no time came the impression that two different musical worlds were colliding. The concert was an offering of excellence by virtue of the soloist and the orchestra, led by Ulf Klautsenitzer. With a focused tone and intonation, he effortlessly graced through the various registers unwavering..." (Peter Linhart, Main Echo Aschaffenburg Kultur, Montag, June 1999)*

His commission for the New Jersey Chamber Music Society, "Rivers, A Poetic Suite...", premiered in 1998 for the organization's 25th Anniversary Opening Concert. In 1994, the Aspen Wind Quintet commissioned and premiered his suite "Aires Tropicales" at New York's Frick Collection. Often recorded, "Aires" is now the mainstay of many important wind ensembles including the New York Woodwind Quintet. Additionally, Mr. D'Rivera has written and arranged many chamber works which have become the standard repertoire of international ensembles including the Caracas Clarinet Quartet, Cuarteto Latinoamericano, and Quinteto D'Elas. In 1989, the Montreal-based Gerald Danovich Saxophone Quartet, commissioned and then recorded his acclaimed "New York Suite."

### **More Reviews**

*"...Cuban reed player Paquito D' Rivera has a foot in the classical world and a foot in the jazz world—and each foot is atop its respective world. With the Milwaukee Symphony Pops, he brought the two together in a thrilling and astonishing survey of music by George Gershwin. He did not so much bend Gershwin to his will as reconsider him in various lights...[with] D'Rivera, switching between clarinet and alto saxophone... The whole substantial set from Porgy and Bess was a fantastical journey among idioms. The pinnacle of it was the famous love duet, "Bess, You Is My Woman Now"...D'Rivera spinning circles around Porgy's part. Note that as spectacularly virtuoso as D'Rivera was here, his part fit the whole beautifully. He's no show –off; he balanced his part with the singer and the orchestra to make a beautiful whole. He has a concept that is bigger than his own voice, he hears the big picture..." (Tom Strini, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Music Critic, April 21, 2002)*

*"...The Second half became a Paquito D'Rivera show. Mr. D'Rivera, a gifted saxophonist and clarinetist has become the man to call if you want a concert-hall presentation of Pan-Latin music. All in rich Carnegie Hall-style arrangements . . . Mr. D'Rivera is a ~~2002~~able musician, and in his clarinet playing, with lovely, clear low registers and never*

*a squeaked high note. He was at his best..." (Ben Ratliff, New York Times, Saturday November 3, 2001)*

### **Artist in Residence and Director**

Mr. D’Rivera is Artist in Residence at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), and serves as a member of the board of directors of many influential artistic organizations in the United States, impacting both classical and jazz musical idioms.

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. Guest musicians there have included such luminaries as McCoy Tyner, James Moody, Phil Woods and many more. Additionally, he is Artistic Director of the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival in Washington, DC, a festival celebrating Washington DC's rich Jazz history and native son Duke Ellington.

### **Other Talents**

A gifted author, Mr. D’Rivera’s book, *My Sax Life*, was published in Spain by the prestigious literary house, Seix Barral, and contains a prologue by Guillermo Cabrera Infante. Acclaimed by the public and critics alike, the English edition was released by Northwestern University Press in November 2005. Mr. D’Rivera’s reading of his book is available in Spanish by Recorded Books, LLC on both the Internet and in libraries. His novel *Oh, La Habana* is published in Spain by MTeditores, Barcelona and is also available in Spanish by Recorded Books, LLC.

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."*

### **Concert review:**

Familiarity Breeds Virtuosity  
By Don Heckman-Special to The Times-Jan 27 2005

Clarinetist Paquito D’Rivera and the Assad brothers - guitarists Sérgio and Odair - first got together in 2003 as participants in Yo-Yo Ma's "Obrigado Brazil" project. The partnership was a logical one, in that all the participants - Ma, D’Rivera and the Assads - are eclectic artists, comfortable with music that ranges across genre boundaries. So it's not surprising that D’Rivera and the Assads decided to take their creative relationship further, broadening the perspective to emphasize their common roots in the music of the

Western Hemisphere. Their "Dances From the New World" concert program was the result, a collection of works reaching from Argentina and Brazil to Cuba and the United States. On Tuesday at UCLA's Royce Hall, the trio played in a relaxed, even casual manner. D'Rivera is always an ebullient performer, and his easygoing manner - joking with the Assads and the audience, rolling his eyes after playing a particularly difficult passage - helped create a pleasing, in-your-living-room listening experience. The music was a fascinating mix of sounds and styles: tango-based pieces by Astor Piazzolla, offbeat contemporary Brazilian works by Egberto Gismonti and Hermeto Pascoal, classics from Cuba's Ernesto Lecuona, Brazil's Heitor Villa-Lobos and Argentina's Alberto Ginastera, pivotal Brazilian works by Ary Barroso and Pixinguinha. The broad range of compositions, embracing myriad styles and rhythms - tangos, sambas, choros, Habaneras, boleros - was handled with great ease and subtlety. The Assads' playing is so seamlessly integrated that their ensemble passages flowed with the living, vibrant voice of a single instrument. Their brief solo segments, as well as a duet rendering of Gismonti's "Baiao Malandro," were equally impressive examples of the sort of playing in which the music completely transcends the mechanics of music-making. D'Rivera added character and individuality to everything he played. Classically trained, he brilliantly executed rapid-fire, finger-busting passages in pieces such as Pixinguinha's "Um a Zero," without losing the jazz-tinged individuality of his sound and phrasing. In a few numbers, space was opened up for him to explore his extraordinary improvisational skills. One of the evening's highlights was D'Rivera's improvisation on themes by Dizzy Gillespie (including an effort to have the audience join in the vocal exclamations of "Salt Peanuts"). Call it one of the most engaging musical presentations of the season. Better yet, call it a stunning display of the music of the Western Hemisphere, performed by three of that region's (and the world's) finest artists.

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