

Lalo Schifrin

Lalo Schifrin is a true Renaissance artist. As a pianist, composer and conductor, he is equally at home conducting a symphony orchestra, performing at an international jazz festival, scoring a film or television show, or creating works for Placido Domingo or the London Philharmonic.

As a young man in his native Buenos Aires, Lalo Schifrin received classical training from Juan Carlos Paz, Enrique Barenboim, Mariano Drago and his father, Luis Schifrin, a pioneer of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Buenos Aires and for 35 years the concertmaster of the Teatro Colon.

While studying in Paris in the early 1950's, Lalo Schifrin led a double life. He never told the jazz musicians with whom he jammed all Saturday night on the Left Bank that early Sunday mornings he would go to listen to Olivier Messiaen improvise on the organ during the mass at the Church of the Trinite. Nor did Messiaen, whose classical lectures Schifrin attended at the Conservatory, know of his nightly jazz forays.

When Schifrin returned to Buenos Aires in the mid-50's, he formed his own big concert band. It was during a performance of this band that Dizzy Gillespie heard Schifrin play and asked him to become the pianist and arranger of the Gillespie Band. In 1958, Schifrin moved to the United States and thus began a remarkable career.

"Music, to me, is a matter of growth, development and rejuvenation", says the prolific composer.

His music is a synthesis of all the twentieth century's techniques, and his early love for jazz and rhythm are strong attributes of his style. "Invocations", "Concerto for Double Bass", "Pulsations", "Tropicos", "La Nouvelle Orleans", and "Resonances" are examples of this tendency to juxtapose universal thoughts with a sort of elaborated primitivism.

He has written more than 100 scores for films and television. Among them "Mission: Impossible", "Mannix", "The Fox", "Bullit" and "Dirty Harry" have become very popular. Lalo Schifrin has won four Grammy Awards (with eighteen nominations), one Cable ACE Award, and received six Oscar nominations.

In 1987, a selected group of some of the best musicians in France decided to form the Paris Philharmonic Orchestra for the purpose of recording music for films, performing concerts and participating in television shows. They appointed Lalo Schifrin as Musical Director and their inaugural concert took place at the Theatre des Champs Elysees on January 26, 1988. Schifrin held the post as MD for five years before resigning to spend more time composing.

Among Schifrin's other conducting credits are the London Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Mexico City Philharmonic, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the National Symphony Orchestra of Argentina.

In 1986, the Glendale Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Lalo Schifrin, performed at the Hollywood Bowl. His "Salute to the Statue of Liberty" was received with a tumultuous ovation by a crowd of 17,000 people. In 1987, Schifrin was commissioned to write the overture for the Pan American Games which he recorded in Toronto and premiered with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. In 1995,

Schifrin composed and conducted the finale for the Pan American Games, which were held in Argentina.

It is Schifrin's ability to switch musical gears which makes him so unique in the music world. As a jazz musician he has performed and recorded with great personalities such as Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, and Count Basie.

His "Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra," which was premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra was performed at the International Music Festival in Liege, Belgium and televised to all Europe. It has become an example of contemporary literature for guitar. It was recorded by the London Philharmonic Orchestra for EMI records, featuring soloist Angel Romero.

One of the finest recent achievements in Lalo Schifrin's career was the world premier of his composition, "Cantos Aztecas" for chorus, solo voices and orchestra which he conducted at the Pyramids of Teotihuacan in Mexico with Placido Domingo as the tenor soloist. This event was telecasted worldwide in 1989, and the CD was released in May 1990.

In 1989, Lalo Schifrin was appointed Music Director of the Glendale Symphony Orchestra in Los Angeles, California, and he served in that capacity for six years. One of the highlights of the programming was Schifrin conducting "Doc" Severinsen in the world premier of "Impressiones", which is a concerto commissioned by and written for Mr. Severinsen by Schifrin.

Furthermore he was commissioned to write the Grande Finale for an event which took place in Caracalla, Italy, July 7th, 1990 to celebrate the finals of the World Cup Soccer Championship. In this concert The Three Tenors, Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras sang together for the first time. The orchestras of the Rome and Florence opera companies were conducted by Zubin Mehta. The record and video of this event have gone on to become the biggest sellers in the history of classical music. Schifrin also was engaged to arrange the sequel for July 1994, also for Carreras, Domingo, Pavarotti and Zubin Mehta, which was performed at Dodger Stadium, again on the eve of the World Cup Soccer Championship. The video and CD were released in the autumn of 1994 worldwide on the WEA labels. Currently Schifrin is writing arrangements for the next Three Tenors event to be held in July 1998 in Paris, France.

Schifrin was commissioned by the Steinway Foundation to write his "Piano Concerto No. 2", which was premiered by the National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mstislav Rostropovich, in Washington, DC at the Kennedy Centre on June 11, 1992. In that year he also produced, conducted and arranged a record featuring Jose Carreras with the London Symphony Orchestra: "Friends for Life". Another of Schifrin's recent CD's is a recording with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra: "Romancing Hollywood", which is a compilation of Academy Award (Oscars) winning themes.

His longtime involvement in both the jazz and symphonic worlds came together beginning in 1993 when he was featured as pianist and conductor on his ongoing series of "Jazz Meets the Symphony" recordings, with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and such notable jazz stars as Ray Brown, Grady Tate, Jon Faddis, Paquito D'Rivera and James Morrison. "Jazz Meets the Symphony" was internationally successful, and led to the release in July 1994 of "More Jazz Meets the Symphony". The third release of the series "Firebird" ("Jazz Meets the Symphony #3") was released in the summer of 1996 and received two Grammy nominations.

Schifrin wrote and adapted the music for "Christmas in Vienna" in 1992 featuring Diana Ross, Jose Carreras, and Placido Domingo. The telecast was released as a CD, laserdisc and video in 1993 on the Sony classical label.

Schifrin returned to Vienna in December 1995 where he arranged the entire program of Christmas music

entitled "Christmas in Vienna", sung by Jose Carreras, Natalie Cole and Placido Domingo.

In 1993, Schifrin was commissioned to write his "Lili 'Uokalani Symphony" in honor of the last monarch of Hawaii, Queen Lili 'Uokalani. The work was premiered by the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra, and was recorded by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra with Schifrin conducting in the spring of 1995. It was released in November 1996.

In the spring of 1993, Schifrin conducted for a recording with the Vienna Volksoper Orchestra for Julia Migenes, "Julia Migenes in Vienna", and conducted the recording of "Te Deum" by Charpentier for classical trumpet virtuoso, Maurice Andre and chamber orchestra in Paris. Both projects were released in October 1993.

His recently conducted recording of "The Carnival of the Animals" by Camille Saint-Saens has been acclaimed by the electronic and printed media. The narrations are by Audrey Hepburn, Charlton Heston, James Earl Jones, Dudley Moore, Walter Matthau, and Lynn Redgrave.

On December 8th, 1995, in Marseilles, Schifrin led a symphony orchestra in celebration of the Lumiere brothers' invention of film with a concert entitled "100 Ans De Cinema", featuring singers Julia Migenes and Dee Dee Bridgewater, which was recorded by Warner Bros. Records in France.

In the realm of Hollywood, recently he has scored three films: "Money Talks", released in 1997 by New Line Pictures, "Something to Believe In", produced by Lord Lew Grade and to be released in 1998; and Carlos Saura's "Tango", will be released in 1998.

In addition to current commissions and film scoring activities, Schifrin does extensive touring conducting symphony orchestras, particularly featuring his repertoire of "Jazz Meets the Symphony". Other conducting programs include film music, classical repertoire and jazz bands. The big band formations are frequently featured in performing "Gillespiana", which has become a highly acclaimed classic. Recent performances have been at the Playboy Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, the 80th birthday commemorative concert for Dizzy Gillespie in Englewood New Jersey, television Big Band concerts in Germany, WDR Big Band concert in Cologne, Carnegie Hall Jazz Band in Carnegie Hall, the Clark University Jazz Band in Atlanta at the IAJE and with the BBC Big Band at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London.

In October 1996 was the world premier of "The Rhapsody for Bix." Schifrin was commissioned by the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Society to write a suite in honor of Davenport, Iowa's native son, Bix Beiderbecke. This piece will be included in Schifrin's already planned "Jazz Meets the Symphony #4".

Schifrin has been married to his wife, Donna, who has been an invaluable source of support for the past 26 years. His three children include William, who is a writer for films and television; Frances, who is an art director/designer; and Ryan, who is a film writer/director.

Lalo Schifrin is a recipient of the 1988 BMI Life Achievement Award. He has been honored by the Israel Government for his "Contributions to World Understanding through Music". In 1988 Schifrin received the "Walk of Fame" award by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. He was given an Honorary Doctorate degree in Fine Arts from the Rhode Island School of Design in June 1989.

He was honored at the M.I.D.E.M. Classique Festival in January 1990 at Cannes, France, conducting the National Symphony Orchestra of Lyon. Lalo Schifrin has been appointed "Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres" which is one of the highest distinctions granted by Frances' Minister of Culture.