

BIOGRAPHY

The more Plácido Domingo has studied, travelled and performed, the deeper his love of music has become. He maintains an active performing career as singer and conductor in addition to his work as a cultural impresario and entrepreneur. He serves as General Director of the Los Angeles Opera; Chairman of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry; President of Europa Nostra; Founder of Operalia, the World Opera Competition; and proprietor of Pampano, his restaurant in New York City.

PLÁCIDO DOMINGO

Singer, conductor and administrator

He has sung 148 different roles, more than any other tenor in the annals of music, with more than 3900 career performances. His repertoire spans the gamut from Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733) to numerous world premieres of operas by contemporary composers, and now includes a remarkable traversal of leading Verdi baritone roles.

He sings in every important opera house in the world and has made an unparalleled amount of recordings, of which more than 100 are full-length operas, often recording the same role more than once, and for which he has earned 12 Grammy Awards, including three Latin Grammys. He has made more than 50 videos and is the winner of two Emmy Awards. In addition to three

theatrically released films – Franco Zeffirelli's *La Traviata* and *Otello* and Francesco Rosi's *Carmen*– he has also made excursions into popular culture. His voice was featured in the 2008 Disney film *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*, in a 2012 special edition of the children's educational cartoon *Dora the Explorer*, and as Skeleton Jorge in the 2014 animated film *Book of Life*. He also appeared as himself (in cartoon format) in a 2007 episode of *The Simpsons*. His telecast of *Tosca* from the authentic settings in Rome was seen by more than one billion people in 117 different countries. He subsequently took the title role in a 2010 live telecast of *Rigoletto* from Mantua, Italy, the city in which the opera's story takes place.

In 2008, he appeared in the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics, performing for an estimated television audience of almost 2 billion people worldwide. He has opened the Met season a record-setting 21 different times, having surpassed in 1999 the old Caruso record of 17 opening nights. As a conductor, he led more than 500 performances worldwide, including opera performances in all the important theaters, from the Metropolitan to London's Covent Garden and the Vienna State Opera, and symphonic concerts with such renowned orchestras as the Vienna Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony and the Chicago Symphony, while also making recordings as a conductor. He has been included in the Guinness Book of Records for the size of his repertoire and for having received 101 curtain calls after a performance – for Verdi's *Otello* at the Vienna State Opera. His appearances around the world with his colleagues José Carreras and Luciano Pavarotti in the now legendary Three Tenors concerts were one of the great musical success stories of the 1990s.

As administrator, he was the music director of the Seville World's Fair and in this capacity invited the world's foremost orchestras and opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, to Seville. He has played an essential role in making regional American companies into internationally recognized ensembles, as General Director, first, of Washington National Opera, and currently as General Director of Los Angeles Opera.

Born in Madrid to parents who were zarzuela performers, Plácido Domingo moved with his parents to Mexico at the age of eight. He went to the Mexico City Conservatory to study piano and conducting, but eventually was sidetracked into

vocal training after his voice was discovered. He made his operatic debut at Monterrey as Alfredo in *La Traviata* and then spent two and a half years with the Israel National Opera, singing 280 performances of 12 different roles. In 1966, he created the title role in the United States premiere of Ginastera's *Don Rodrigo* at the New York City Opera, while appearing there in standard repertory as well. His Metropolitan Opera debut came in 1968, as Maurizio in *Adriana Lecouvreur*. He has subsequently sung there in more than 800 performances of 50 different roles, and he is currently celebrating his 48th consecutive season there (2016/2017). He appears regularly at all the big opera houses, including Milan's La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, London's Covent Garden, Paris' Bastille Opera, the San Francisco Opera, Chicago's Lyric Opera, the Washington National Opera, the Los Angeles Opera, the Liceu in Barcelona, the Colon in Buenos Aires, the Real in Madrid and at the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals.

Domingo's recordings, whether complete operas, aria or duet albums or cross-over material, inevitably appear on the best-seller charts and at one time, not long ago, seven of his CDs appeared simultaneously on *Billboard's* top-selling charts of classical and cross-over recordings. Eight of his records have gone gold, meaning they have sold well over one million copies. His recording projects include a double CD of every aria Verdi wrote for the tenor voice, and a CD of excerpts from Wagner's *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, which includes most of the music written for the Heldentenor part of *Siegfried*.

His repertoire includes almost all important parts in Italian and French operas. Being constantly challenged by new roles, his ever expanding foray into other repertoire during the 1990s and early 2000s included Siegmund in Wagner's *Die Walküre* and the title part in the same composer's *Parsifal*, as well as Gherman in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*. In 2007 Domingo devoted himself to important works of the baroque and early classical eras by giving his first performances as Oreste in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* at the Seattle Opera as well as at the Met, and as Bajazet in Handel's *Tamerlano* at the Washington National Opera and Los Angeles Opera. Since 2009 he has been adding baritone parts to his repertoire: the title role of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* at the Vienna Staatsoper, Berlin Staatsoper, La Scala, the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden and Madrid's Teatro Real; the title role in Verdi's *Rigoletto* in an on-location worldwide telecast; Athanaël in Massenet's *Thaïs*; and several other

Verdi roles: Rodrigo in *Don Carlo*, Francesco Foscari in *I due Foscari*, Giorgio Germont in *La traviata*, the title parts in *Nabucco* and *Macbeth*, Giacomo in *Giovanna d'Arco*, and the Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*. Unlike many of his colleagues, he is also interested in broadening his repertory with new compositions, such as Tan Dun's *The First Emperor*, Anton Garcia Abril's *Divinas Palabras*, Deborah Drattell's *Nicholas and Alexandra* with him as Rasputin, and Daniel Catán's *Il Postino*, with him as Pablo Neruda.

Since 1993 Domingo has promoted highly talented young singers through his Operalia voice competition. Each year, in a different international city, forty pre-selected singers have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities before an international jury, and Operalia has helped to launch the careers of such artists as Nina Stemme, Joyce DiDonato, Eric Owens, Rolando Villazón, Erwin Schrott, Joseph Calleja, Isabelle Bayrakdarian, and many others. In March 2002 the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program – another of Domingo's undertakings to nurture and give opportunities to promising young talents – came into being at the Washington National Opera, and similar objectives are at the heart of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program, subsequently founded under the auspices of Los Angeles Opera, and the Centre de Perfeccionament Plácido Domingo at the Palau de las Arts in Valencia, Spain.

Within the past few years he has also become one of the most decorated and honored artists before the public today. He has been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and has been a Kennedy Center Honoree in the United States; he is also a Commandant of the Legion of Honor in France, an Honorary Knight of the British Empire, and both a Grande Ufficiale and a Cavaliere di Gran Croce of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. He has received honorary doctorates from Oxford University and New York University for his lifelong commitment and contribution to music and the arts. In 2009, King Carl Gustaf of Sweden presented him with the first Birgit Nilsson Prize (at one million dollars, the most generous prize in the world of classical music) for his outstanding achievements in opera; the prize was donated to help fund Operalia. Domingo has raised millions of dollars through benefit concerts to aid the victims of Mexico's devastating 1985 earthquake, the floods caused by Hurricane Paulina in Guerrero and Yucatán (also in Mexico and in El Salvador), and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, where, in 2009, the stage of the Mahalia

Jackson Theatre for the Performing Arts was named for him. In 2006, he conducted Verdi's Requiem in Warsaw, to commemorate the first anniversary of Pope John Paul II's passing. He was chosen for an award by *Opera News* magazine for the inauguration of its first annual awards.

Domingo is president of Europa Nostra, an organization that champions projects of restoration and preservation of Europe's cultural heritage. His role as chairman of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) has him lobbying for the protection of intellectual property within the music industry and on the Internet. He also sits on the board of trustees of the National YoungArts Foundation, which supports all artistic disciplines among young American-based high school graduates.

The accolades most often associated with him are "King of Opera," which was originally the banner headline on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine and "a true renaissance man in music," which was first printed in Italy's *Corriere della Sera* newspaper. London's newspaper *The Guardian* summed it all up recently by simply naming Plácido Domingo "the greatest operatic artist of modern times." In its April 2008 issue, the *BBC Music Magazine* published the result of a poll of renowned opera critics and experts, hailing him as the "greatest tenor of all time."

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