

Danilo Perez

Pianist



"... but there are still amazing musicians – like Danilo Perez, who plays piano with Wayne Shorter’s quartet. He is not afraid of anything." -- Herbie Hancock

"There's nobody like Danilo. What I especially like is his sense of rhythm, color and form. He's studied, he's open, he's flexible, generous and sweet. This guy's got everything, all the qualities are there." -- Steve Lacy, quoted in DownBeat cover story on Danilo Perez

"Danilo Perez has all of the attributes of a performer, conductor, impresario, and purveyor of musical expression greatly needed in these uncertain times. His effort to bring to the world a beacon of hope and inspiration... is a prime example of confidence in a future laden with cornucopian gifts for all humanity." -- Wayne Shorter

Grammy award winner Danilo Perez is among the most influential and dynamic musicians of our time. In just over a decade, his distinctive blend of Pan-American jazz (covering the music of the Americas, folkloric and world music) has attracted critical acclaim and loyal audiences. Danilo's abundant talents and joyous enthusiasm make his concerts both memorable and inspiring. Whether leading his own ensembles or touring with renowned jazz masters (Wayne Shorter, Roy Haynes, Steve Lacy), Danilo is making a decidedly fresh imprint on contemporary music, guided, as always, by his love for jazz.

He has led his own groups since the early '90s, and as bandleader has earned three Grammy® nominations for his ebullient and innovative recordings. Motherland, was nominated for two Grammy® Awards for "Best Latin Jazz Album," and also garnered his third win for "Best Jazz Album" from the prestigious Boston Music Awards. Motherland was named (as were his previous four releases) among the best albums of the year by such publications as the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, San Diego Tribune, Billboard and JazzTimes. In 2002, he received a nomination from the Jazz Journalists Association for "Pianist of the Year."



Born in Panama in 1965, Danilo started his musical studies at just three years of age with his father, a bandleader and singer. By age 10, he was studying the European classical piano repertoire at the National Conservatory in Panama. After receiving his bachelor's degree in electronics, he moved to the United States to enroll at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and, after changing his major to music, transferred to the prestigious Berklee College of Music. From 1985-88, while completing his studies in jazz composition, he performed with Jon Hendricks, Terence Blanchard, Claudio Roditi and Paquito D'Rivera, and produced the critically-acclaimed Reunion album (Messidor) featuring D'Rivera and Arturo Sandoval: in 1994, Danilo also appeared on Sandoval's Grammy®-winning album, Danzon. Since the late '80s, he has toured and/or recorded with Wayne Shorter, Steve Lacy, Jack DeJohnette, Charlie Haden, Michael Brecker, Joe Lovano, Tito Puente, Wynton Marsalis, John Patitucci, Tom Harrell, Gary Burton, and Roy Haynes. " Roy Haynes Trio (Verve 2000) was named one of the best albums of the year by Gary Giddins, critic for The Village Voice: "(This CD) displayed Danilo's skills perfectly – glinting technique, an expressive melodic gift, and unerring time . . ."

Danilo first attracted the spotlight as the youngest member of Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra (1989-1992). This pivotal tenure solidified his command of the eclectic, post-bop Latin style, and brought him to the forefront on Gillespie's Grammy® Award-winning recording, Live At The Royal Festival Hall (Enja), an appearance at the Kennedy Center, and worldwide touring.

In 1993, Danilo turned his focus to his own ensembles and recording projects. A bold, ingenious bandleader, he moved into the spotlight once again, this time for his own RCA/Novus CDs - Danilo Perez (1993) and The Journey (1994). The Journey placed prominently in several Top Ten Albums of 1994 lists. DownBeat gave it 4 1/2 stars and listed it among the best CDs of the '90s; it also received a Jazziz Critics Choice Award. In 1995, Danilo became the first Latin member of Wynton Marsalis' band, and the first jazz musician to perform with the Panamanian Symphony Orchestra, which featured an expanded 80-piece orchestral version of "The Journey." He also released two recordings for impulse! – PanaMonk (1996) and Central Avenue (1998) – and won his first Grammy® nomination for "Best Jazz Album" for the latter; The New York Times praised PanaMonk as "a masterpiece of jazz synthesis." These four CDs accumulated numerous awards and Top Ten citations, firmly establishing Danilo's leadership role in a new generation of jazz artists.

Danilo also is part of the Wayne Shorter Quartet. The new Wayne Shorter Quartet was voted "Best Small Ensemble of the Year" by the Jazz Journalists Association in 2002 and 2004. He is featured on Shorter's Verve releases, Alegria and Footprints Live!, which received Five Stars from DownBeat. Shorter invited Danilo to join his first all-acoustic group after hearing him play, "It was adventurous and fresh," Shorter observes (Jazz Times, 2002). "He wasn't playing to show off his technique. He was interested in telling stories." Favorably compared to the '60s Miles Davis group that featured Shorter, the new quartet displays a remarkable freedom.

Currently, Perez serves as the Ambassador of Goodwill for Unicef, Cultural Ambassador of his native country of Panama, President and Founder of the Panama Jazz Festival, Artistic Advisor of the innovative Mellon Jazz Up Close series at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia and faculty of New England



Conservatory and Berklee College of Music in Boston. He also continues to play with Ben Street and Adam Cruz, musicians that have been working with him for more than two years. "Trust and deep knowing are the foundation for the spirited and soulful interplay among the musicians in this trio. "I know them very well," says Perez, "and we all try to practice brotherhood, love, equality and freedom in our personal lives and in our music. All of us have become a family, and there is a feeling of celebration, of transcending communication, when we play that it is very magical to me."

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