

Plácido Domingo – a short biography

Plácido Domingo was born in the Barrio de Salamanca district of Madrid on January 21, 1941. He is the son of Plácido Domingo Ferrer and Pepita Embil Echaníz, two Spanish Zarzuela performers, who nurtured his early musical abilities. Domingo's father, a violinist performing for opera and zarzuela orchestra, was half Catalan and half Aragonese, while his mother, an established singer, was a Basque.

After moving to Mexico at the age of 8, Plácido Domingo went to Mexico City's Conservatory of Music to study piano and conducting, but eventually was sidetracked into vocal training after his voice was discovered. The highly gifted singer had his first professional engagement as accompanist to his mother in a concert at Mérida, Yucatan, in 1957. He soon achieved great acclaim at international level.

Challenged by cosmopolitan groups and new roles

In 1961, Domingo made his operatic debut in a leading role as Alfredo in La Traviata at Monterrey. The performance of La Traviata included a baritone singing in Hungarian, a soprano in German, a tenor in Italian, and the chorus in Hebrew. Domingo credits this cosmopolitan group for improving his abilities in several languages.

At the end of 1962, he signed a six month contract with the Israel National Opera in Tel Aviv but later extended the contract and stayed for two and a half years, singing in 280 performances and incorporating 12 different roles. Domingo has sung and continues to sing in every important Opera House in the world including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, 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 Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, the Real in Madrid, and at the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals.

Being constantly challenged by new roles - in six different languages - he has made an unparalleled amount of recordings, of which 101 are full-length operas, and often recording the same role more than once. For these he has earned nine Grammy's and two Grammy's in the newly established Latin Division.

Successful as singer, conductor and administrator

Plácido Domingo's worldwide career as a great singer and conductor is legendary. By now he has sung 130 different roles, including almost all important parts of Italian and French operas, more than any other tenor in the annals of music. His repertoire spans the gamut from Mozart to Verdi, from Berlioz to Puccini, from Wagner to Ginastera.

Furthermore, Domingo showed his talent as a wonderful singer and passionate actor in performances with Birgit Nilsson. Nilsson and Domingo first sang together in New York at the Metropolitan Opera on February 15, 1969 in a matinee production of Tosca. That same year in July at the Arena di Verona, with an audience of over 22,000 opera goers, Birgit and Plácido sang their first "Turandot". Once again, Ms. Nilsson was impressed by the young tenor in his first performance as Calaf.

Contacts

Birgit Nilsson Foundation
Prof. Dr. Rutbert Reisch
President

Press Office International
Farner PR
Jun Sarbach/Barbara Koster
Oberdorfstrasse 28
CH-8001 Zürich
Tel. +41 44 266 67 67
press@birgitnilssonprize.org

Press Office Sweden
Prat PR
Hannes Hultcrantz
Sveav. 90 6tr
SE-11359 Stockholm
Tel. +46 8 545 152 35
sverige@birgitnilssonprize.org

As a conductor in the classical field of opera and concerts he has led performances in all the important theatres from the Metropolitan to London's Covent Garden and the Vienna State Opera. He has also conducted purely symphonic concerts with such renowned orchestras as the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic, London Symphony and the Chicago Symphony, while also making recordings as a conductor.

Moreover, Domingo was the music director of the Seville World's Expo Fair and invited in this capacity the world's foremost orchestras and opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, to Seville, Spain. He is today the General Director of both the Washington National Opera and of the Los Angeles Opera.

Encouraging and supporting the gift of young artists

Domingo's interest in helping young singers is emphasized by his yearly competition "Operalia" which so far has taken place all over the world. It remains the biggest similar talent competition in the international scene, with annual prizes amounting close to \$200,000. "Operalia" has launched the international careers of many singers, not only through its prizes but because of Domingo's continued interest in furthering their careers. Also in the past five years, both the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program of the Washington National Opera and the Domingo-Thornton Young Artists Program of the Los Angeles Opera were inaugurated. Not only are his accomplishments as a creator of young artist programmes and competitions remarkable, but he also has philanthropic endeavours. After the big earthquake on September 19, 1985, he hosted several benefit concerts for the victims and released an album recorded at one of the events.

Special honours and awards (a selection)

- 1971 G. Verdi, Aida, Principal Soloist for Best Opera Recording
- 1973 G. Puccini, La Bohème, Principal soloist for Best Opera Recording
- 1983 G. Verdi, La Traviata, Principal Soloist for Best Opera Recording
- 1984 G. Bizet, Carmen, Principal Soloist for Best Opera Recording
- 1984 Always in my Heart (Siempre en mi Corazon)
- 1988 R. Wagner, Lohengrin, Principal Soloist for Best Opera Recording
- 1990 Carreras Domingo Pavarotti in Concert, Best Classical Vocal Performance
- 1992 R. Strauss, Die Frau ohne Schatten, Principal Soloist for Best Opera Recording
- 2000 100 years of Mariachi, Best Mexican-American Performance
- 2000 T. Breton: La Dolores, Best Classical Album
- 2001 I. Albéniz, Merlin, Best Classical Album

Further information and pictures of Plácido Domingo on placidodomingo.com