

# PLACIDO DOMINGO

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## BIOGRAPHY

*Plácido Domingo -- singer, conductor and administrator.*

By now he has sung 124 different roles, more than any other tenor in the annals of music, with at least two more new roles planned in the next three seasons. His repertoire spans the gamut from Mozart to Verdi, from Berlioz to Puccini, from Wagner to Ginastera. He sings in every important Opera House in the world and has made an unparalleled amount of recordings of which 101 are full-length operas, often recording the same role more than once, and for which he has earned nine Grammy's and two Grammy's in the newly established Latin Division. He has made more than 50 videos and 3 theatrically released films which are Zeffirelli's "Traviata" and "Otello" and Francesco Rosi's "Carmen. His telecast of "Tosca" from the authentic settings in Rome, was seen by more than 1 billion people in 117 different countries. By now he has opened the Met season a record-setting 21 different times, having by-passed in 1999 the old Caruso record of 17 opening nights.

As a conductor he has led opera performances in all the important theaters from the Metropolitan to London's Covent Garden and the Vienna State Opera and has 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.

As administrator he was the music director of the Seville World's Expo Fair and in this capacity invited 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 ([www.dc-opera.org](http://www.dc-opera.org)) and of the Los Angeles Opera ([www.losangelesopera.com](http://www.losangelesopera.com)). Both companies enjoy today special artistic acclaim and financial stability.

Born in Madrid to parents who were Zarzuela performers, Plácido Domingo moved to Mexico at the age of eight. He 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. He made his operatic debut at Monterrey as Alfredo in "La Traviata" and then spent 2½ 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 appeared there in more than 590 performances of 42 different roles and is now in his 39<sup>th</sup> consecutive season with the company (2007/2008). 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,

# PLACIDO DOMINGO

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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.

Domingo's recordings, whether complete of operas, aria or duet albums or cross-over material, inevitably appear on the best seller-charts and at one time, seven of his CD's 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. Four of his most recent recording projects have been a double CD of every aria Verdi wrote for the tenor voice, a CD of excerpts from Wagner's "Siegfried" and "Götterdämmerung" which includes most of the music written for the Helden-tenor part of Siegfried and two complete Wagner operas, the first a complete "Tristan und Isolde" with soprano Nina Stemme and Anthony Pappano conducting the Covent Garden Orchestra, and the second a complete "Parsifal" with Waltraut Meier and Christian Thielemann conducting the orchestra of the Vienna Staatsoper. In a less Verdian or Wagnerian mood there have also been Puccini's early opera "Edgar" and a CD devoted mostly to Neapolitan songs, under the title "Italia ti amo".

His repertoire - 124 different roles, as mentioned earlier - includes almost all important parts in the Italian and French operas. Being constantly challenged by new roles, his ever expanding foray into the German repertoire consists of Wagner's "Parsifal", "Lohengrin" and Siegmund in "Die Walküre", in addition to recorded performances of "Meistersinger", "Tannhäuser" and "The Flying Dutchman", of Richard Strauss, "Die Frau ohne Schatten", of Weber's "Oberon" and of Beethoven's "Fidelio". Within the past few years he added to his stage performances his first role in Russian, Gherman in Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades", the Spanish Opera "Margarita la Tornera" by Roberto Chapí, Verdi's "La Battaglia di Legnano" and Alfano's "Cyrano de Bergerac". Unlike many of his colleagues, he is also interested in broadening his repertory with new compositions, such as Anton Garcia Abril's "Divinas Palabras," Deborah Drattell's "Nicholas and Alexandra", with him as Rasputin, and Tan Dun's "First Emperor". Also new for him, as recordings, are Breton's "La Dolores" and Albeniz's "Merlin", for which he won a Latin Grammy.

Domingo's interest in helping young singers has led his yearly competition "Operalia" ([www.operalia.org](http://www.operalia.org)) which so far has taken place in Paris (three times), Mexico City, Madrid (twice), Bordeaux, Tokyo, Hamburg, Puerto Rico, Los Angeles (twice), Washington, Valencia and a combination of Switzerland (St. Gallen), Austria (Bregenz), and Germany (Friedrichshafen, Isle of Mainau). It remains the biggest on the international scene with annual prizes amounting close to \$200,000. It has launched many singers to international recognition, not only through its prizes but because of

Domingo's continued interest in furthering their careers. The past five years also saw the inauguration of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program of the Washington National

# PLACIDO DOMINGO

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Opera and the Domingo-Thornton Young Artists Program of the Los Angeles Opera – other examples of his efforts to pave the way for opera’s future stars – a topic which formed the nucleus of a recent “60 Minutes” segment on him.

Highlights of the 2007/08 season include adding two new roles (the 125<sup>th</sup> and 126<sup>th</sup>) to his repertoire, namely Orestes in Gluck’s “Iphigenie en Tauride” at the Metropolitan Opera and Bajazet in Handl’s “Tamerlano” at the Teatro Real in Madrid and at the Washington National Opera. (The Gluck opera, although sung in the original French language, is given in the Vienna version, where Orestes is changed to a tenor role.) Additional singing engagements are “Cyrano de Bergerac” at Milan’s La Scala; “Die Walküre” at London’s Covent Garden and as a concert performance in Barcelona; The “First Emperor” at the Metropolitan; and “Luisa Fernanda” in Vienna. He conducts “Romeo et Juliette” at the Metropolitan; “Don Giovanni” at the Washington National Opera; “La Bohème” and “Tosca” at the Los Angeles Opera; and the world-premiere of Howard Shaw’s opera “The Fly” at the Théâtre du Chatelet in Paris (before the opera comes in the season 2008/09 to the Los Angeles Opera which commissioned the work.) He also concertizes extensively throughout the world.

Plácido Domingo has raised millions of dollars through special benefit concerts in order to help such causes as the victims of the 1985 Mexican earthquake, AIDS, and the victims of such other disasters as the Armenian earthquake, the mud-slides of Acapulco, Hurricane Catherine New Orleans etc.

Within the past few years he has become one of the most decorated and honored artists before the public today, being named one of the Kennedy Center Honorees; Commander of France's Legion of Honor, a decoration given very rarely to a non-French citizen; the recipient of the Honorary Knighthood of the British Empire; and of the highest decoration in the United States, the Medal of Freedom. Most recently he received an Honorary Doctorate from England’s Oxford University, was given President Gorbachev’s World Award for Humanitarian Causes and was chosen for an Award by Opera News Magazine for the inauguration of its first Annual Awards. 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".*

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