

Rio Clemente

Master Jazz Pianist

NEW YORK CITY – Manhattan’s famed Birdland. The Oak Room at the Algonquin Hotel. The West Bank Café’s Laurie Beechman Theater. The New York Friars Club. The Sylvia & Danny Kaye Theatre at Hunter College. The Player’s Club. Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. It’s a New York State of Mind.

Anyone who has listened to Rio Clemente play piano, comes away in awe. This master pianist mixes a strong classical background with a rich knowledge of jazz history, then adds an amazing sense of creativity and interpretation. The result is music that is different from others, and nearly always produces a standing ovation and cries for “more.” When reviewers stumble for words to describe his work, it’s because words fail to convey the rich depth of character, nimble facility of play and ease with which his music is crafted and performed. The man brings something very special and decidedly unequaled to the piano.

Rio’s career began with a BMI scholarship for musical theatre and subsequent studies at Julliard School of Music. A grant from Broadway Tomorrow for new composers followed. Along with his classical training, Rio developed a style embracing a diversity of music that makes him one of the most expressive and versatile pianists anywhere.

After several television appearances, Rio advanced professionally to playing at the JVC Jazz Festival, Newport Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. He has entertained audiences in Europe, Bermuda, the Virgin Islands and Antigua. He has performed at the United Nations and has appeared with the Jefferson Symphony in Golden, CO, with the Livingston (NJ) Symphony and with ensemble groups like the Morris Choral Society and Orchestra. He has performed from coast to coast for senators, governors, mayors and other dignitaries. He has played jazz clubs from Manhattan to Cape Cod and from Florida to California.

He has recorded under contract for Melody Music, Satellite Records, Riff Records and Holland labels, and published eight CDs under his own Etnemelc Music Productions label. As a composer, he has written a number of selections ranging from gospel to Latin, including orchestral arrangements. In collaboration with lyricist/author, Carmine Lombardo, Rio has composed the music for three musicals including the family musical, “Dobdinob.” As a music educator, he has served as music director for the Generations of Jazz program of the New Jersey Jazz Society, and presents customized programs in schools, including Viva La Musica Latina with percussionist Russ Moy.

He has recorded with bassist Milt Hinton, performed Dave Brubeck’s mass (To Hope! A Celebration) and prepared a feature CD on Richard Rodgers that led Linda Rodgers to say, “Rio plays my father’s music better than anyone I ever heard – with unremitting style and sensitivity, and always with a technique that is elegant.” Dave Brubeck has written, “Rio Clemente is EXCELLENT!,” and comedian Freddy Roman has said, “I want to open for you!”

A native of Morristown, NJ, Rio is a member of its Hall of Fame. He’s been named Professional Artist of the Year by the Arts Council of the Morris Area, New Jersey Monthly Magazine named him among its “Top 40 New Jerseyans” and the New Jersey Jazz Society named him Musician of the Year.