

Maria Schneider Biography

Maria Schneider's music has been hailed by critics as "evocative, majestic, magical, heart-stoppingly gorgeous, and beyond categorization." She and her orchestra became widely known starting in 1994 when they released their first recording, 'Evanescence.' With that recording, Schneider began to develop her personal way of writing for her 17-member collective, tailoring her compositions to distinctly highlight the unique voices of the group. Subsequently, the Maria Schneider Orchestra has performed at festivals and concert halls worldwide. She herself has received numerous commissions and guest conducting invites, working with over 85 groups from over 30 countries spanning Europe, South America, Australia, Asia and North America.

Schneider's music blurs the lines between genres, and as a result, her long list of commissioners have slowly become quite varied. They include: the Norrbotten Big Band and Danish Radio Orchestra with Toots Thielemans and Ivan Lins, the Metropole Orchestra in the Netherlands (several works), Orchestra National de Jazz (*Recapitulation*), Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra (*El Viento*), Monterey Jazz Festival (*Scenes from Childhood, Willow Lake*), The American Dance Festival (for dance company, Pilobolus - *Dissolution*), University of Miami Concert Jazz Band (*Three Romances*), Hunter College (*Concert in the Garden, Sky Blue*), Jazz at Lincoln Center (*Buleria, Soleá y Rumba*), Los Angeles Philharmonic Association (*Aires de Lando*), Peter Sellars' New Crowned Hope Festival (Vienna's Mozart Festival—*Cerulean Skies*), Kronos Quartet (*String Quartet No. 1*) and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra with soprano, Dawn Upshaw (*Carlos Drummond de Andrade Stories*), a work that had its New York premiere May 2011 at Carnegie Hall conducted by Schneider.

Schneider's most recent work (premiered June 12th, 2011), co-commissioned by the Ojai Festival, The Australian Chamber Orchestra and Cal Performances, blurred boundaries further as it featured the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Dawn Upshaw, and three musicians long associated with Schneider's own orchestra: pianist, Frank Kimbrough, bassist, Jay Anderson, and multi-instrumentalist, Scott Robinson. For this work, she incorporated poems by poet laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner, Ted Kooser, from his book, 'Winter Morning Walks.'

Schneider and her orchestra have a distinguished recording career with nine Grammy nominations and two Grammy awards. 'Concert in the Garden' (Best Large Ensemble Album), released only through her ArtistShare® website, became historic as the first record to win a Grammy with Internet-only sales. The second Grammy was awarded for Maria's composition, *Cerulean Skies* (Best Instrumental Composition).

Unique funding of projects has continued for Schneider, as she has recently composed two works for her own orchestra with the involvement of commissioners, not from arts organizations, but directly from her ArtistShare fan base. For these projects, she documented her process of creating the two new works for participating fans. The commissioners are, Christophe Asselineau (*The Thompson Fields*), and Bill and Carol Bloemer, Justin Freed, Paul James and John Koerber (*Lembrança*).

Concert in the Garden and her orchestra's latest album, *Sky Blue* (on which *Cerulean Skies* was recorded) were both named "Jazz Album of the Year" by the Jazz Journalists Association and the DOWNBEAT Critics Poll.

"She now has become entrenched among the ranks of America's leading composers. ... For Schneider, the question is no longer whether she can sustain the heights she has attained on earlier recordings; it is now how far her musical journey will take her."

-DOWNBEAT★★★★★

"... She puts together stories that speak with the clarity of Ernest Hemingway and the musical grace of Aaron Copland."

-PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

"It seemed impossible for Schneider to top her Grammy-winning *Concert in the Garden*, but she's done just that with *Sky Blue*. She has elevated her music to a seemingly impossible height. ... *Cerulean Skies* is the masterpiece within a masterpiece ... Magnificent. A magical work of art, from beginning to end."

-ALLABOUTJAZZ.com

"Maria Schneider's orchestral jazz is about feeling. Like Wayne Shorter, she somehow expresses compassion through tones."

-THE NEW YORK TIMES

"To call Schneider the most important woman in jazz is missing the point ... She is a major composer-period."

-TIME MAGAZINE

"Twenty-one musicians of tremendous technical sophistication and emotional energy channel their talents through the direction of the most significant big-band jazz composer of our time."

-THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR