

BIOGRAPHY

Jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has recorded and performed extensively since the early 1990s. Mehldau's most consistent output over the years has taken place in the trio format. Starting in 1996, his group released a series of five records on Warner Bros. entitled *The Art of the Trio* (recently re-packaged and re-released as a 5-Disc box set by Nonesuch in late 2011). During that same period, Mehldau also released a solo piano recording entitled *Elegiac Cycle*, and a record called *Places* that included both solo piano and trio songs. *Elegiac Cycle* and *Places* might be called 'concept' albums made up exclusively of original material with central themes that hover over the compositions. Other Mehldau recordings include *Largo*, a collaborative effort with the innovative musician and producer Jon Brion, and *Anything Goes* "a trio outing with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy.

His first record for Nonesuch, *Brad Mehldau Live in Tokyo*, was released in September 2004. After ten rewarding years with Rossy playing in Mehldau's regular trio, drummer Jeff Ballard joined the band in 2005. The label released its first album from the Brad Mehldau Trio "Day is Done" on September 27, 2005. An exciting double live trio recording entitled *Brad Mehldau Trio Live* was released on March 25th, 2008 (Nonesuch). On March 16, 2010, Nonesuch released a double-disc of original work entitled *Highway Rider*, the highly anticipated follow up to *Largo*. The album was Mehldau's second collaboration with renowned producer Jon Brion and featured performances by Mehldau's trio "drummer Jeff Ballard and bassist Larry Grenadier" as well as percussionist Matt Chamberlain, saxophonist Joshua Redman, and a chamber orchestra led by Dan Coleman. In 2011 Nonesuch released *Live in Marciac* "a two CD release with a companion DVD of the 2006 performance, and *Modern Music*, a collaboration between pianists Brad Mehldau and Kevin Hays and composer/arranger Patrick Zimmerli. In 2012 Nonesuch released an album of original songs from the Brad Mehldau Trio "Ode" the first from the trio since 2008's live Village Vanguard disc and the first studio trio recording since 2005's *Day is Done*. *Ode* went on to garner a Grammy nomination. Nonesuch released the Brad Mehldau Trio's *Where Do You Start*, a companion disc to the critically acclaimed *Ode*, in the fall of 2012.

Whereas *Ode* featured 11 songs composed by Mehldau, *Where Do You Start* was comprised of interpretations of 10 tunes by other composers, along with one Mehldau original. In 2013, Mehldau produced and performed on *Walking Shadows*, the acclaimed Nonesuch release from Joshua Redman. 2013 also saw a number of collaborative tours including a duo tour with mandolin virtuoso Chris Thile, piano duets with Kevin Hays and a new electric project with prodigious drummer Mark Guiliana entitled 'Mehliana.' *Mehliana: Taming the Dragon*, the debut release by Mehliana, was released in early 2014. Mehldau's monumental and ambitious *10 Years Solo Live* eight-LP vinyl box set was released to unanimous critical acclaim on October 16th, 2015 (with CD and digital versions released in November). The set was culled from 19 live recordings made over a decade of the pianist's European solo concerts and was divided into four thematic subsets of four sides each: Dark/Light, The Concert,

Intermezzo/Rückblick, and E Minor/E Major. In 2016, Nonesuch Records released the Brad Mehldau Trio's *Blues and Ballads*—the ensemble's first new release since 2012's *Where Do You Start*—and the celebrated debut album of the Joshua Redman/Brad Mehldau Duo, *Nearness*, featuring recordings from their 2011 European tour. Both albums have received universal praise from critics and audiences alike, and both earned a Grammy nomination for Mehldau. After several years of performing live, labelmates Mandolinist/singer Chris Thile and Mehldau released their debut: *Chris Thile & Brad Mehldau*. Nonesuch Records released *After Bach* in early 2018 to instant critical acclaim. The album, comprised of solo recordings including Mehldau's previously commissioned work *Three Pieces After Bach*, also paired Mehldau performing Bach compositions alongside improvisational responses to them. On May 18th, 2018 Nonesuch released the highly anticipated Brad Mehldau Trio recording *Seymour Reads the Constitution!*.

Mehldau's musical personality forms a dichotomy. He is first and foremost an improviser, and greatly cherishes the surprise and wonder that can occur from a spontaneous musical idea that is expressed directly, in real time. But he also has a deep fascination for the formal architecture of music, and it informs everything he plays. In his most inspired playing, the actual structure of his musical thought serves as an expressive device. As he plays, he listens to how ideas unwind, and the order in which they reveal themselves. Each tune has a strongly felt narrative arch, whether it expresses itself in a beginning, an end, or something left intentionally open-ended. The two sides of Mehldau's personality—the improviser and the formalist—play off each other, and the effect is often something like controlled chaos.

Mehldau has performed around the world at a steady pace since the mid-1990s, with his trio and as a solo pianist. His performances convey a wide range of expression. There is often an intellectual rigor to the continuous process of abstraction that may take place on a given tune, and a certain density of information. That could be followed by a stripped down, emotionally direct ballad. Mehldau favors juxtaposing extremes. He has attracted a sizeable following over the years, one that has grown to expect a singular, intense experience in his performance.

In addition to his trio and solo projects, Mehldau has worked with a number of great jazz musicians, including a rewarding gig with saxophonist Joshua Redman's band for two years, recordings and concerts with Pat Metheny, Charlie Haden and Lee Konitz, and recording as a sideman with the likes of Michael Brecker, Wayne Shorter, John Scofield, and Charles Lloyd. For more than a decade, he has collaborated with several musicians and peers whom he respects greatly, including the guitarists Peter Bernstein and Kurt Rosenwinkel and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. Mehldau also has played on a number of recordings outside of the jazz idiom, like Willie Nelson's *Teatro* and singer-songwriter Joe Henry's *Scar*. His music has appeared in several movies, including Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* and Wim Wender's *Million Dollar Hotel*. He also composed an original soundtrack for the French film, *Ma Femme Est Une Actrice*. Mehldau composed two new works commissioned by Carnegie Hall for voice and

piano, *The Blue Estuaries* and *The Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*, which were performed in the spring of 2005 with the acclaimed classical soprano, Renee Fleming. These songs were recorded with Fleming and released in 2006 on the Love Sublime record; simultaneously, Nonesuch released an album of Mehlau's jazz compositions for trio entitled *House on Hill*. A 2008 Carnegie Hall commission for a cycle of seven love songs for Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter premiered in 2010. *Love Songs*, a double album that paired the newly commissioned song cycle, with a selection of French, American, English, and Swedish songs that Mehlau and von Otter performed together, was released in late 2010 (on the Naïve label) to unanimous praise. In 2013, Mehlau premiered and performed *Variations on a Melancholy Theme* a large format orchestral piece which was performed with both Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and Britten Sinfonia. Commissioned by Carnegie Hall, The Royal Conservatory of Music, The National Concert Hall, and Wigmore Hall with the support of Andre Hoffmann (president of the Fondation Hoffmann) in 2015, Mehlau's *Three Pieces After Bach* were inspired by selections from Johann Sebastian Bach's seminal work, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Mehlau was appointed as curator of an annual four-concert jazz series at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall during its 2009-10 and 2010-11 seasons, with Mehlau appearing in at least two of the four annual concerts. In late January 2010 Carnegie Hall announced the 2010-11 season-long residency by Mehlau as holder of the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall "the first jazz artist to hold this position since it was established in 1995. Previous holders include Louis Andriessen (2009-2010), Elliott Carter (2008-2009), and John Adams (2003-2007).