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My Sax Life: A Memoir (Latino Voices/Vidas)



Synopsis

Winner of 2005 Grammy Award for Best Instrumental Composition Winner of 2005 National Medal of Arts *My Sax Life* is the award-winning memoir of famed Cuban musician Paquito D'Rivera. A best-selling artist with more than thirty solo albums to his credit, D'Rivera has performed at the White House and the Blue Note, and with orchestras, jazz ensembles, and chamber groups around the world. Propelled by jazz-fueled high spirits, D'Rivera's story soars and spins from memory to memory in a collage of his remarkable life. D'Rivera recalls his early nightclub appearances as a child, performing with clowns and exotic dancers, as well as his search for artistic freedom in communist Cuba and his hungry explorations of world music after his defection. Opinionated but always good-humored, *My Sax Life* is a fascinating statement on art and the artist's life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Writing with his Cuban heart on his sleeve, the legendary reed player and composer of jazz and traditional Cuban music is passionate as he discusses everything from the importance of learning to read music to cellist Yo-Yo Ma's thoughts on communism. The narrative moves quickly as D'Rivera (b. 1948) bops back and forth between his life as a musical prodigy in Cuba, stories of musical greats like Celia Cruz and Tito Puente, and his international travels. And while most of the book is upbeat and humorous, the passages where D'Rivera recalls his 1981 defection from Cuba and the

people he left behind are especially poignant. D'Rivera is openly critical of Castro's beliefs and actions, what he sees as the faults of communism, the political systems of Latin America and any government that strives to curb artistic freedom and expression. He liberally inserts quotations, letters and extended passages written by friends, acquaintances and fellow musicians to add different perspectives on his own stories (which often seem to set the record straight). D'Rivera's knowledge of music and recording is readily apparent, but his penchant for naming everyone he ever played with can become tedious. Still, D'Rivera's writing -- like his music -- is infused with zest. B&w photos. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Mr. D'Rivera is a formidable musician. . ." --New York Times
"Paquito D'Rivera has a foot in the classical world and a foot in the jazz world-and each foot is atop its respective world. . ."

--Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
"Paquito D'Rivera is one of the woodwind giants of our time. . ." --Jazz Times

This book is an autobiography of the great musician Paquito D'Rivera. Paquito describes the many obstacles that he has endured and how he survived using the knowledge and love that he was given from his parents, the help of friends and the support from his wonderful wife Brenda. This is a very well written book that I highly recommend reading. Tony Marino

A Cuban musician's day-to-day struggle may be appreciated in the reading of *My Sax Life*, a compilation of the memoirs of Paquito D'Rivera, a Cuban-born, Grammy winning jazz saxophonist and clarinetist who defected from Cuba in 1980. Paquito talks of Castro's censure which suppressed British and American influences in Cuban music. The censure prevented Cuban musicians from playing anything resembling jazz or rock and roll during a period of several years during the 60's and 70's, depending on the Cuban tyrant's whims. Various stories throughout the book tell of a musician's search for artistic freedom and expression under the tight grip of Castro's police state censors, while struggling on in the daily life of a typical Cuban in search of consumer goods. Paquito also tells of Cuba's restrictions of travel on suspected dissidents that could potentially defect. D'Rivera's knowledge of music is apparent and his ability to name everybody he ever played with is impressive. Although his writing is somewhat hard to follow, it is infused with zest and good humor and it is a statement by an artist on his art and his life.

Paquito d’Rivera is an undisputed virtuoso on saxophone and clarinet in both the jazz and classical worlds. One of the great innovators of Latin jazz in modern times, Paquito has always been at the forefront of the movement. Unless you are familiar with his random writings in numerous publications, most people were unaware of Paquito’s talent of prose in Spanish and English. After penning his novel, *Oh, La Habana!* and the Spanish version of his memoirs, he has now released his memoirs in English or his anti-biography as he prefers to call it. Much like his lyrical improvisational style, Paquito d’Rivera’s book is filled with his trademark humor and wit, bounces between decades here and abroad and includes personal antidotes and stories as well as those of his closest friends and collaborators. Destined to becoming one of the great jazz memoirs of all time, and definitely a must read for this year’s music book releases, *My Sax Life* is highly recommended.

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