

Alfredo Rodriguez is an internationally acclaimed Cuban jazz pianist who, due to his formal training, is as proficient at playing classical music as he is his chosen genre.

Rodriguez was born in Havana in 1985 and named for his father, a popular singer, television host, and entertainer. He began his musical studies on percussion at the age of seven and training on the piano at age 10. He was enrolled in the Manuel Saumell Conservatory, and later at the Amadeo Roldan Music Conservatory. He won classical competitions in both schools.

He also received some on-the-spot training; at the age of 14, he began playing with and arranging for his father's orchestra. At the age of 15, he received Keith Jarrett's classic Köln Concert album as a gift from an uncle, and his ears were opened to improvisation.

Rodriguez eventually studied at Cuba's premier school, Instituto Superior de Arte, where he also won several competitions.

In 2006, he was invited to play the Montreux Jazz Festival. The festival's founder, Claude Nobs, requested he play privately at his home for Quincy Jones. The producer and arranger liked what he heard and wanted to work with the young pianist. It took three years for that to come to pass.

While working with his father in Mexico, Rodriguez decided to relocate to the United States with nothing but his clothes and a suitcase. He was arrested at the border in Laredo, but he was resistant and insisted that he be let in because he was a musician and was going to work with Jones. Remarkably, he eventually convinced them; they let him in and even put him in a cab.

Rodriguez began working wherever he could, eventually finding his way and forming his own trio. His first collaboration with Jones was later in 2009 where, at the latter's request, he collaborated with him, Chinese composer Tan Dun, and songwriter Siedah Garrett to compose the English-version theme song "Better City, Better Life" for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo.

The young pianist continued to wow critics and club-goers. He toured incessantly, opening for any number of jazz and popular music artists. He played not only Montreux again, but also the Playboy, Detroit, Newport,

San Francisco, North Sea, Umbria, and Vienna Jazz Festivals, and in prestigious jazz clubs including Ronnie Scott's, Yoshi's, and The Blue Note.

In 2011, Rodriguez signed with Detroit's jazz label Mack Avenue Records. His debut album, *Sounds of Space* -- co-produced by the artist and Jones -- was issued in 2012, winning wide critical acclaim and resulting in more touring opportunities. In the spring of 2014, Rodriguez, his trio, and notable guests issued *The Invasion Parade* (again co-produced with Jones), a collection of originals based on Cuban folk traditions as well as standards from his homeland.

The association with the legendary producer continued for his next Mack Avenue recording, 2016's *Tocororo*. Named for the Cuban bird that dies of sadness if caged, for the artist it reflects: "...not only the desire for liberty, but the necessity of it...freedom, travel, and the cross-pollination of Cuban culture...." His guests on the date, Richard Bona, Ibrahim Maalouf and Ibeyi underscored that notion. In 2018, the pianist returned with his fourth studio album, *A Little Dream*. ~ Thom Ju