

The Big 3 Palladium Orchestra

THE PALLADIUM BALLROOM

In the 1950's America fell in love with the MAMBO and "The Home of Mambo" was the PALLADIUM BALLROOM at 53rd Street & Broadway. Re-named The Palladium from Alma Dance Studio in 1946, six local bands were booked with MACHITO the headliner. This continued playing to huge audiences of all colours and creeds until 1948 when TITO PUENTE appeared as a bandleader for the first time. Later, singer TITO RODRIGUEZ and his band became a major crowd-puller and competed with Machito & Puente as the star act; thus THE BIG 3. The Palladium was the heart of Mambo & Latin music until it closed in 1966.

The Big 3 Palladium Orchestra is the brain-child of Machito's son Mario Grillo. After a discussion with Ina Dittke (then at BPR) & Jyrki Kangas (Pori Jazz Festival) in New York, it was decided to approach the Puente & Rodriguez families to represent the music of the Palladium era. Margaret Puente and Tito Rodriguez Junior were delighted to offer their original charts for use, along with the Machito scores.

Joe Madera began writing augmented charts to enable the bigger group to perform these pieces of Americana Music History and the ball was now in motion. Grillo, Rodriguez and Brian Theobald (BPR) spoke about the format & personnel to be used and the 17 piece Orchestra began to take shape. Using members of the Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez and Machito bands, some of whom played with the masters, a line up consisting of 2 vocalists, 3 trumpets, 4 saxes, 3 trombones, piano, bass, congas and timbali was formed to play with the leaders, Tito Rodriguez Jr. and Mario Grillo, Machito's son.

The inaugural performance happened at Columbia University in NYC for the Verizon Festival Dates followed in 2002 at The Belleayre Jazz Festival, up state New York; The Kimmel Centre, Philadelphia; Concord Jazz Festival, San Francisco, The Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles, Ravinia, and many other PACs with the orchestra receiving rapturous applause at each venue.

The New York Sunday Times critic proclaimed The Big 3 Palladium Orchestra as "Americas first Latin Repertory Orchestra." - Praise indeed.

TITO PUENTE

Born in Spanish Harlem in 1923, Tito began a professional career at the age of 13, playing with local Latin & Society bands before moving on to the, then big names. From '42 to '45 he was in the US Navy and was honourably discharged with a Presidential Commendation for Bravery in nine sea battles. By 1948 he had completed his formal music education at Julliard School of Music in Manhattan and formed his first band, The Piccadilly Boys. The band led to the Tito Puente Ensemble etc. and after many US hits he wrote & recorded Oye Como Va, which is still the number one Latin anthem and which Carlos Santana made internationally famous in the 70's.

Tito Puente collected many Doctorate Degrees and commendations and was depicted on a US Postal Stamp in '96 as well as receiving a "Star" on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Up to his death in 2000 at age 77, Tito continued to record, (120 + Albums) with numerous Grammy awards & nominations and appear 'live' around the world.

MACHITO

The Machito Orchestra was founded in New York in 1939 by Frank Grillo (Machito) & Mario Bauza. Both of Cuban origin they began a partnership that would last until the 70's, when Grillo's son Mario replaced Bauza as musical director. Surviving fashion changes and fads, the band continues to work on all the continents of the world playing concerts, dances & clubs, retaining their Afro-Cuban roots whilst portraying present day Latin nuances. Machito received many Grammy nominations and in 1982 was proclaimed winner of 'The Best Latin Recording'. Machito & The Afro Cubans performed with all the major Jazz & Latin star names, recording with many, and, to this day, are still touring Europe and South America as well as performing regularly in New York and the other US States.

TITO RODRIGUEZ

Pablo 'Tito' Rodriguez was born on 4 January 1923 in Santurce, Puerto Rico. The internationally renowned vocalist, percussionist, bandleader, composer and record producer was equally talented as an up-tempo sonero and romantic singer. Tito began his musical career at the age of 16 in 1939. For a 10-year period he sang with the legendary orchestras of Cuarteto Caney, Enrique Madriguera, Xavier Cugat and Jose Curbelo. During his career, Tito recorded over 50 albums with RCA, Tico, United Artists Records, Musicor and his own label, TR Records. His orchestra alternated with Puente, Machito and other bands at the Palladium when the rhythms of Mambo, Cha-cha-cha and Merengue were at their peak. While with UA, he established himself as a ballad singer with the classic interpretation of Involvidable, which sold millions of copies. In the late '60s he hosted an immensely popular variety show in Puerto Rico. Tito's last performance was sold out at Madison Square Garden. Tito Rodriguez died on 28 February 1973 of leukaemia. Time Magazine referred to him as ' the Frank Sinatra of Latin Music'.