

Willie Colón

Date of Birth

28 April 1950, Bronx, New York City, New York, USA

Birth Name

William Anthony Colón Román

Nickname

El Malo Del Bronx

Mini Biography

Willie Colón, Bronx-born of Puerto Rican grandparents, has fused his musical talent, his passion for humanity, and his community and political activism into an extraordinary, multifaceted career.

His achievements in all his activities are widely recognized. As musician, composer, arranger, singer, and trombonist, as well as producer and director, Colón still holds the all time record for sales, he has created 40 productions that have sold more than thirty million records worldwide. His collaboration with Ruben Blades, "Siembra", is the biggest selling album of all time for this genre. His collaboration with Hector LaVoe was the milestone that spread this fusion of tropical/urban music throughout Latin America. He is a strong catalog sale artist, whose songs are included in almost every Salsa artist's repertoire.

Three recent hit TV-soaps, Corazón Partido, Demasiado Corazón and Perro Amor, used his recordings/compositions as theme songs. He has also won 11 Grammy nominations, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Latin Grammy, fifteen gold and five platinum records, and has collaborated with such musical greats as the Fania All Stars, Héctor LaVoe, Rubén Blades, David Byrne, and Celia Cruz.

His music, which has powerfully influenced modern Latin jazz, reflects both rhythmic traditional lyrics and the cries of farewell and hope from a new generation pressured to abandon their homeland to congregate in urban America. William Anthony Colón

Román (his full name) learned the lyrics from his Abuela (grandmother) Antonia, as she rocked him to sleep during his childhood in the heart of the Puerto Rican Bronx. Her strong beliefs and personality also powerfully influenced his devotion to his cultural roots. During his musical and cultural odyssey from the Bronx to the world scene, he moved from a fascination with the tropical paradise of his ancestors to the stark street images of rebellious youth and social struggle and finally to a mature fusion of joy and injustice, beauty and suffering, romance and realism. He has become an articulate and responsible public figure -- clever at injecting political messages into his music without becoming overbearing. He has been a visiting professor and lecturer at many prestigious colleges and universities.

As a community leader, he has won both local affection and national recognition. Colón, now 54, first emerged as a leader and organizer at age 16; he has since been a civil rights, community and political activist as well as Chair of the Association of Hispanic Arts, a member of the Latino Commission on AIDS, a member of the board of the United Nations Immigrant Foundation, President of the Arthur Schomburg Coalition for a Better New York, a current member of the Board of Directors of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, a founding member of the New Rochelle (NY) Hispanic Advisory Board, founding member of the New Rochelle Judicial System Committee and various other projects and organizations too numerous to mention. In 1993 he participated in the Presidential Inaugural Ceremonies, and in the following year, President Clinton invited Colón to become a member of the Presidents Committee on the Arts and Humanities. He declined this distinction in order to run in New York States 17th Congressional District primary.

In 1991 he was awarded Yale University's CHUBB Fellowship, a political recognition he shares with the late John F. Kennedy, Moshe Dyane, Jesse Jackson, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush, to mention a few. In 1995 he became the first minority to serve on the prestigious ASCAP National Board of Trustees and is now a member of the ASCAP FOUNDATION. In 1996 he was nominated as one of the 100 most Influential U.S. Hispanics by Hispanic Business Magazine.

In 1997 Willie Colón became a spokesperson for the international relief and development organization CARE and visited sites in Bolivia on their behalf.

In late 1997- early 1998 Colón appeared in the recurring role of Feliciano Pintor, a Puerto Rican DEA agent in the TV Azteca soap, "Demasiado Corazón." Willie's new CD release also titled "Demasiado Corazón" (Azteca Music) has been climbing the charts in Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico (currently available for U.S. and European distribution.) In November 1998 Colón & Blades made history again with the Amnesty International Concert at la Carlota Airport in Caracas Venezuela where more than 141,000 tickets were sold. In 1999 he opened Salón 21 in Mexico City, one of the finest grand live music halls in the Americas. On February 12th in collaboration with the United Nation's women's organization UNIFEM, and the Mexican sister organization SEMILLAS, Willie hosted the tremendously successful International Women's Day fund raiser.

In 1999, Colón was ask to be part of the Jubilee 2000 Delegation to the Vatican along with Randolph Robinson of Trans Africa, Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, Bono from U2 and Quincy Jones. This initiative received Pope John Paul II's endorsement and later prompted President Clinton to forgive the US portion of the third world indebted countries. In November of 1999 he became Dr. William A. Colón when Hartford CT's Trinity College conferred the degree of Doctor Of Music for "The Art of Courage", a recognition given to artists who have used their art to make political change. In 2000, he was chosen to perform in Mexico City's El Zócalo plaza, to celebrate Easter (Sabado de Gloria) before a capacity crowd of over 100,000. Colón also appeared as the headliner to Puerto Rico's Regatta 2000 last May drawing a crowd of over 125,000 in Old San Juan. In Mexico City, he also wrote and produced a sitcom TV pilot titled "Willie's Café".

Willie Colón was also involved in the campaigns to end the Military occupation and practice bombing of the Puerto Rican island municipality of Vieques. It was through Willie's urging that Governor Pataki visited Vieques and pledged his support. On April 16, 2001, Willie received the EPA's "Environmental Quality Award" from EPA Director Gov. Christie Whitman. This is the EPA's highest award for people that do not work for the Agency.

Willie Colón ran in New York City's 2001 Democratic primary as a Candidate for Public Advocate of the City of New York, garnering a respectable 101,394 votes. After that primary, Colón endorsed then candidate Betsy Gotbaum for Public Advocate , who was handily elected. Willie Colón was also the first prominent Latino to endorse Michael Bloomberg for Mayor. He also composed and produced Bloomberg's Spanish campaign jingle.

In 2002, Willie Colón was retained by NYC & COMPANY (The City of New York Convention and Visitor's Bureau) as a Senior Advisor and Consultant, he was also appointed as Mayor Bloomberg's representative to El Museo Del Barrio.

On October 28, Willie Colón was received by President of the Dominican Republic, Hipólito Mejía and honored with the Order of The Hawk by Lieutenant General and Secretary of The Armed Forces, José Miguel Soto Jiménez.

On May 3 2003, Ruben & Willie reunited for the Siembra 25th Anniversary Concert. They packed Hiram Bithorn Stadium with 27,000 fans who turned out for this 3 hour concert show that included many of their early hits together. This concert was also critically acclaimed by the press for the excellent musical performance by Willie & Ruben and their All Star Orchestra that was composed of members of both Ruben and Willies present and former band members. On October 5, 2003 Willie Colón met with Ecuadorian Vice President Dr. Alfredo Palacios

ON October 28th, 2003, Mayor Michael Bloomberg kicked off the Latin Media

Entertainment Commission appointing Willie Colón as his Liaison to the Commission, Robert Deniro as Celebrity Chairman and Jennifer Lopez as Celebrity Chairwoman.

On February 17th 2004 Willie Colón received the Metro New York Better Business Bureau's Public service Award.

On February 27th 2004 Willie was received by the Peruvian Congress and Vice President Carlos A. Infantas Fernández. He was also feted by the Mayor Alex Coury of El Callao, Lima.

On June 3, 2004, Lehman College conferred the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters on Salsa Legend/Political Activist Willie Colón in recognition of his compositions, poems and essays and the effect his work has had on millions of Latinos throughout the world.

In 2005, Willie Colón was Co-Chair of Michael Bloomberg's re-election campaign.

In 2006, Willie Colón was largely responsible for bringing the Latin grammy to New York City.

IMDb Mini Biography By: Julia Craig

*From:
International Trombone
Association
Honorary Life Members*