

Frank Proto

Frank Proto, born in Brooklyn, New York, began piano studies at the age of 7 and the double bass at 16. As a student of David Walter at the Manhattan School of Music, Frank performed the first solo double bass recital in the history of the school. As a composer he is self-taught.

During the early 1960s Frank worked as a free-lance bassist and pianist in New York City playing with various Broadway and Off-Broadway show bands and in many of the jazz clubs that were a mainstay of New York nightlife at the time. He played, as one of the original members, in the American Symphony Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski and served as solo double bassist with the Robert Shaw Chorale.

In 1966 he joined the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for a 30 year stay in which the orchestra premiered over 20 large works and countless smaller pieces composed for Young People's concerts, Pop's concerts, tours and special occasions. During his tenure every music director - including Max Rudolf, Thomas Schippers, Walter Suskind, Michael Gielen and Jesús López-Cobos - commissioned him to compose works to feature various principal players or the orchestra itself on concerts, recordings and tours.

He has written music for Dave Brubeck, Eddie Daniels, Duke Ellington, Cleo Laine, Benjamin Luxon, Sherill Milnes, Gerry Mulligan, Roberta Peters, François Rabbath, Ruggerio Ricci, Doc Severinsen and Richard Stoltzman. Among America's most performed contemporary composers, almost every major, metropolitan and regional orchestra in the U.S. as well as orchestras in all parts of Asia, South America and Europe have performed his compositions. His latest orchestral work *The Dalí Gallery*; a commission by the Louisiana Philharmonic was premiered in May 2009. His DVD project: *Bridges – Eddie Daniels plays the music of Frank Proto*, received nominations in two categories for the 2008 *Grammy Awards*.

In 1977 he began a collaboration with double bass virtuoso François Rabbath. He has written Rabbath five major compositions with orchestra that span a musical landscape from the most contemporary and serious - *Four Scenes after Picasso* – to the wildly popular *Carmen Fantasy*. Rabbath has recorded all of the pieces and continues to perform them worldwide.

Since 1993 Proto has collaborated regularly with poet, playwright and author John Chenault. Working with Chenault has brought an added dimension to Proto's music – the visual. Their pieces, which bring a more all-encompassing, quasi-theatrical experience to audiences include, *Mingus – Live in the Underworld*, *Ode to a Giant* and *Ghost in Machine – an American Music Drama for Vocalist, Narrator and Orchestra* which was commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony for the orchestra's 100th anniversary in 1995. The 70-minute work, which starred Cleo Laine and Paul Winfield, received 14 nominations for the 1996 *Pulitzer Prize*. In 2009 Proto and Chenault finished their largest project to date: *Shadowboxer, an Opera based on the life of Joe Louis*. Commissioned by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center and the University of Maryland School of Music, the two-act, two and a half hour production was directed by Leon Major and given its premiere production in April of 2010.