

# PAUL WINTER

Soprano saxophonist Paul Winter is one of the pioneers of world music. In addition to combining elements of African, Asian, Latin, and Russian music with American jazz, Winter was one of the first to incorporate the sounds of nature and wildlife into his compositions. Winter was initially rooted in the jazz tradition. Although he majored in English composition at Northwestern University in Chicago, he frequented the city's jazz clubs. With his college band, the Paul Winter Sextet, he won the Intercollegiate Jazz Festival competition in 1961, and was signed by John Hammond to Columbia Records, recording a self-titled debut album that December. In 1962, a cultural exchange tour of 23 countries of Latin America, sponsored by the U.S. State Department, opened Winter's ears to a broader world of music. The success of the tour led to an invitation from Jacqueline Kennedy to play at the White House, and the Sextet's concert on November 19, 1962, was the first ever presented by a jazz group there.

Winter was so captivated by Brazilian music that he returned to Rio to live for nearly a year in 1964 and 1965, during which time he recorded albums with Carlos Lyra, Luiz Bonfá, The Tamba Trio, Roberto Menescal and Oscar-Castro-Neves. In 1967 he formed the Paul Winter Consort, as a forum for the whole range of music he had come to love, borrowing the group's name from the house bands of the Elizabethan Theatre of Shakespeare's time. The Consort recorded three albums for A&M Records between 1968 and 1970. *Icarus*, a masterpiece that serves as a bridge between small-combo jazz and world music, was recorded in 1971, produced by George Martin, who called it "the finest record I have ever made." Considering that Martin produced nearly all the albums of the Beatles, the remark carried much importance. In 1972, with cellist David Darling, Winter organized a new ensemble, and original band members Ralph Towner, Paul McCandless, Collin Walcott and Glen Moore launched their experimental jazz band Oregon.

The sounds of nature fascinated Winter, who first heard the songs of humpback whale in 1968, and was beguiled by their poignant and complex vocalizations. Winter and the Consort combined the sounds of whales, wolves, and birds with their acoustic improvisations on their next recording, *Common Ground*, the first album to blend musical influences from around the globe with voices from nature. In 1980, Winter and the group became artists-in-residence at New York City's "green" cathedral, St. John the Divine, the world's largest Gothic cathedral, and launched their own record label, Living Music. While many of these albums have been recorded in a studio that Winter built in a barn, the Paul Winter Consort has recorded in such locales as the Cathedral, the General Assembly of the United Nations, and the Grand Canyon.



## The Essential Album Guide

The Consort toured the United States with Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko in 1985, and joined with a Russian chorus, the Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble, to record *Earthbeat* three years later - each a groundbreaking artistic achievement and social statement during the Cold War. Winter worked with marine biologist Roger Payne and narrator Leonard Nimoy in 1986 to record *Whales Alive!*, an album of compositions based on melodies from whales. The Consort provided musical accompaniment for beat poet Gary Snyder on the 1991 album *Turtle Island*. Winter and his musicians have earned numerous awards for their albums. *Sun Singer* was named "Best Jazz Album" of 1983 by the National Association of Independent Record Distributors; *Spanish Angel* and *Prayer for the Wild Things* won Grammy® Awards back-to-back in 1993 and 1994. Winter produced Pete Seeger's *Pete*, which received the "Best Traditional Folk Album" Grammy® in 1996.

Winter's own most recent albums are squarely in the world-music canon. *Brazilian Days* (Living Music, 1998) is a collaboration with Oscar Castro-Neves, the Brazilian guitarist whom Winter had met in Rio in 1962 and who was one of the seminal figures in the bossa nova movement. *Celtic Solstice* (Living Music, 1999), also a Grammy® winner, draws from the stellar Celtic musicians who have played at Winter's annual Summer and Winter Solstice Celebrations at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Many of the albums tracks were recorded in the Cathedral, and it's a cornucopia for Celtic fans, including appearances by Uilleann piper Davy Spillane, singer Karan Casey from Solas, tin whistle player Joanie Madden from Cherish the Ladies and fiddler Eileen Ivers of Riverdance fame, not to mention a full Irish, African, and South American percussion ensemble. Winter's latest album, *Journey with the Sun*, features Armenian vocalist and instrumentalist Arto Tunçboyacıyan, Davy Spillane, and Grateful Dead percussionist Mickey Hart, and was nominated for a Grammy as "Best World Music Album."

— Craig Harris

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