

# Mario Grigorov

Film Composer

Mario Grigorov is a Bulgarian born film composer and pianist. His background reveals him as a musical prodigy; who at the age of five became one of the youngest students ever admitted to the Sofia Conservatory. He would go on to study music in four different countries before the age of eighteen, becoming an accomplished concert pianist and improviser in the styles of jazz, classical and world music.

Mario's most recognizable film work comes from his long-standing collaboration with director Lee Daniels, scoring *Shadowboxer*, *Tennessee*, the Academy Award-winning *Precious*, plus, *The Paperboy*, with Nicole Kidman. *The Hollywood Reporter's* Cannes review of *The Paperboy* noted that "the soundtrack, mixed with Mario Grigorov's original score and potpourri of period tunes, is a small feast."

A recent foray into television film work has included Lifetime's Original Movie series, cult classic, *Flowers in the Attic*, with Heather Graham and Ellen Burstyn, noticed by Hanco Entertainment, it quotes, "The musical score is eerie and uncomfortable, yet gorgeous. There's a wonderfully dark and creepy tone maintained throughout the movie." In succession and also well received, Mario completed, *Petals on The Wind*.

Other film scores include the supernatural thriller *Beyond*, starring Jon Voight, who stated that, "Mario is a master at his craft and delivered a score that elevated the movie to another level." Acclaimed director Susan Seidelman said of Mario's score for her dramatic romance, *Musical Chairs*, "Not only is he a brilliant composer and musician, but he is a great collaborative partner, always putting the artistic and emotional needs of the movie first without compromising his own vision."

International scores include *Patang* by Indian director Prashant Bhargava, who credited Mario with "elevating the work beyond what I could have imagined." New Zealand director Brendan Donovan said of Mario's score for *The Hopes and Dreams of Gazza Snell*, "Above and beyond the film, his music stands on its own feet." Mario was awarded Best Original Score at the Hamptons Film Festival in 1998 for Uruguayan director Leonardo Ricagni's film *The Lifejacket Is Under Your Seat*, and later scored Ricagni's *29 Palms*, *Feathers to the Sky* and more recently, *Our Boys*.

Mario's documentary credits include the festival favorite *Third Wave: A Volunteer Story* presented by Sean Penn, the Anna Halpern biographical film *Breath Made Visible* by filmmaker Ruedi Gerber, and the war documentary *Taxi to the Darkside* by Alex Gibney, which won a 2008 Academy Award.

Mario studied performance and composition at the Vienna Conservatorium and electronic music at the New South Wales Conservatorium in Sydney, Australia. Born in Sofia, Bulgaria to a concert trumpeter father and concert pianist mother, Mario was exposed to multiple cultures and musical styles due to his family's relocation to Iran and then East Germany, where he was first exposed to Deep Purple, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, whose music helped him understand the potential for pure improvisation.

Exposure to popular music with a strong instrumental component had laid the seeds, but it took the city of Vienna, Austria to water them. "There was simply so much music happening there," said Mario. "It was very free and open. For the first time I really began rebelling against the strictures of classical music. I was interested in something that expressed more of my own vision."

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Sydney, Australia was the next stop, with Mario becoming a producer, arranger and programmer for a variety of Australian jazz and rock groups. He soon began to compose musical scores for television shows and films and worked with the BBC on a series of documentaries.

His film scoring ramping up, Mario moved to Los Angeles under the tutelage of film composer Miles Goodman. Within four days of Mario's arrival, Warner Brothers Records A&R executive Bob James overheard him deep in a musical trance at a Disklavier piano, accompanying himself on an improvisational journey in a music store. James left with a five-track on-the-spot demo, and Mario inked his first major-label recording contract days later.

The result: *Rhymes with Orange*, Mario's debut album of astonishing improvisations blending his extensive classical training, the head-banging years of East Germany, and the Bulgarian and Cyrillic folk music he absorbed as a child.

Mario toured *Rhymes with Orange*, supporting icons such as Wynton Marsalis, Joshua Redman, Charlie Haden and Béla Fleck. *Aria* came next on Profile Records. Another exercise in stylistic crossovers and combinations, *Aria* combined Mario's darker, funkier, ambient side with operatic anthems from *Carmen*, *The Magic Flute*, *Madame Butterfly* and *Dido and Aeneas*. *Aria* reached #4 on Billboard's Top Classical Crossover chart. Mario's playful recording *Paris to Cuba* (2009) draws from his work in film scoring, combining diverse world music influences.

He moved on to New York for 10 years, founding a music production company and expanding into audio branding for major advertising campaigns. After this he returned to Los Angeles.

In addition to composing and playing piano, Mario indulges in ambidextrous creative outlets such as his simultaneous two-handed symmetrical drawings. He has also developed an experimental type of keyboard play known as Mirror Tones™, a creative interpretation of the fundamental structure of the piano keyboard.

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