



A Jazz Odyssey: The Life of Oscar Peterson

Oscar Peterson

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Oscar Peterson's career as a jazz pianist has spanned over five decades. During that time, he has recorded nearly 90 albums, won seven Grammys, and earned lifetime achievement awards from the Black Theatre Workshop, the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences. He has played with, and come to know, many of the genre's greatest contributors, including Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington. Peterson chronicles his storied career in *A Jazz Odyssey: The Life of Oscar Peterson*. Organized chronologically, *A Jazz Odyssey* takes readers through the development of jazz over the course of the late 20th century as seen by one of the jazz world's most celebrated figures. Peterson guides readers through the turbulent 1940s, when he was playing with the Johnny Holmes Orchestra in Montreal, and first met Norman Granz - the jazz producer who would launch his career. With Granz, he joined *Jazz at the Philharmonic*, playing at Carnegie Hall and touring all over North America. *A Jazz Odyssey* also brings readers to the birth of the Oscar Peterson Trio - where Peterson would hone his trademark arrangement of piano, guitar, and bass and work with the likes of Ray Brown, Barney Kessel, and Herb Ellis. Peterson describes the endless practice sessions and tireless work ethic that earned the group the reputation of the hardest working trio in the business. He also describes meeting his idol Art Tatum during the 1950s and touring with him in *Jazz at the Philharmonic*. *A Jazz Odyssey* explores the process behind cutting the dozens of albums that the Oscar Peterson Trio cut during the 1950s. The trio's incarnation at that time included Peterson, himself, in addition to Herb Ellis and Ray Brown - a group that would become known as one of the greatest jazz combinations of the time. Peterson calls the 1960s "years of unbelievable music," as Ellis's retirement brought the renowned Ed Thigpen into the trio. During the 1960s, Peterson also opened the Advanced School of Contemporary Music in Toronto, Ontario, and released his first major composition, "Canadian Suite." *A Jazz Odyssey* delves into Peterson's relationship with German millionaire and jazz fanatic Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer, a friendship which Peterson credits with helping him create some of his best recordings ever. *A Jazz Odyssey* looks at the new incarnations of the Oscar Peterson Trio during the 1970s, but also examines the great deal of philanthropic work Peterson did for the nation of Canada. Over time, he would be recognized as an outstanding advocate for Canadian culture, eventually winning the title of Officer of the Order of Canada from the national government. Oscar discusses his experiences through the 1980s and 90s, the period when he turned more toward composing than performing, and saw one of his goals come to fruition with the performance of his "Easter Suite" composition. Peterson speaks candidly about his personal life throughout *A Jazz Odyssey* - giving readers a rare look at the private life of the jazz star. He discusses meeting his wife early on in his career and the role that she played in his work. He also recalls the debilitating arthritis he dealt with throughout the 80s and 90s - the condition that would prevent him from going out on the road, even though touring had been his whole life up until then. With the humor and energy that has characterized his personality throughout his brilliant career, Peterson also talks about his life after his stroke in the mid-1990s. In 1997 Oscar Peterson received a Grammy for Lifetime Achievement and an International Jazz Hall of Fame Award, proof that he is still regarded as one of the greatest jazz musicians ever to play. *A Jazz Odyssey* is a revealing, fascinating look inside the career and life of a jazz world luminary.

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