

RUI MASSENA

Rui Massena was introduced to music at a very young age. He played his first piano pieces at the age of five and was eight years old when he made his first composition. Massena followed his piano studies and, in parallel, started developing his connection with choirs, ensembles and small orchestras. These introductions led him to his first experience as a conductor of choirs, and occasionally orchestral ensembles, and at sixteen he started writing for those same formations. Making music together was his dream, and it inspired him to embrace the career of a conductor.

Conductor

Massena graduated from Orchestral Conducting studies from the National Academy of Orchestral Studies, in Lisbon, where he studied with Jean Marc-Burfin, Jean Sébastien Béreau, Pascal Rophé and Robert Delecroix. Later on, in Sienna, Italy, he studied conducting with Gianluigi Gelmetti.

At the age of 27, Rui took up the Artistic Direction and the role of Principal Conductor in Madeira's Classical Orchestra, a position he kept for 12 years. There, in 2005, he accepted the challenge of directing Madeira's Conservatory of Music as the Pedagogical Leader until December of 2012, carrying out work largely integrated with the Madeira's Classical Orchestra's efforts to improve the valuation of music in the region and the integration of new cultural values.

Guest Conductor

Between 2001 and 2013, Rui Massena premiered dozens of works and conducted over 30 national and international notorious orchestras in world-renowned concert halls in 14 countries - Tonhalle of Zurich, Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Dvorak Hall in Prague, Giuseppe Verdi in Milan, amongst others. One of his highlights was his own debut conducting at Carnegie Hall, New York.

Massena has conducted soloists in all musical fields: Guy Braunstein, José Carreras, José Cura, Brigitte Engerer, Eva Zuk, Mark Zeltser, Zakhar Bron, Ute Lemper, Ivan Lins, Mariza, Mário Laginha and Bernardo Sasseti. Moreover, during the 2009/2011 seasons, he was one of the Principal Guest Conductors of the Rome Symphony Orchestra, in Italy.

As a form of recognition of his work during these years, Rui Massena was awarded the Gold Medal of Cultural Merit from his hometown and the Medal of Cultural Merit of Brazil's Academy of Letters, Arts and Sciences, amongst other distinctions. More recently (2021), was awarded with the Gold Medal of Cultural and Scientific Merit, from the city of Porto, in recognition of his continued contribution to the city.

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor FOE

In 2010, Rui Massena was invited to program the Music Cluster of the 'European Capital of Culture – Guimarães 2012' a body of work that he began developing in 2010 and through which he founded the Orchestra 'Fundação Orquestra Estúdio'. Five documentaries by film director César Pedro and with musical direction by Massena were recorded in both CD and DVD formats containing some of the works delivered during 'European Capital of Culture - Guimarães 2012 -' and premiered in concert by FOE.

One of the most important innovations in the music programming chapter was 'The New Creation', consisting of a series of premiers of new works by Portuguese and European composers. It brought a bit of the national and European musicality to the city of Guimarães, representing an instrument for the understanding of the internal climate of the common citizen and essentially embodied the epoch it documents. For FOE, the central and resident structure of 'Guimarães 2012', represented the opportunity to directly receive the composers' views during the rehearsing process. It also provided a chance to give voice to a generation of Portuguese composers of great quality.

In addition to the works included in the CD and DVD, 'Guimarães 2012' also presented works by Sérgio Azevedo, Fernando Lapa, Pedro Faria Gomes, Eurico Carrapatoso, Antero Ávila, a ballet by David Chesky, a symphonic poem by António Victorino d'Almeida, a symphonic work by Wim Mertens, a collective composition led by Carlos Guedes and an opera by Carlos Azevedo with libretto by Carlos Tê.

All recording sessions were attended by the composers themselves, who accompanied the process and validated the interpretations. David Chesky's 'The Zephyrtine' ballet was edited and internationally distributed under the label 'Chesky Records – Hdtracks'.

Collaborations

From 2003 up until 2017, Massena conducted, wrote and arranged in symphonic language for countless artists; amongst the most prominent are Max, Da Weasel, Expensive Soul and Jorge Palma. He was also the music director and pianist of the productions 'Fiore Nudo' (2006) staged by Nuno M. Cardoso, and 'Maria de Buenos Aires' (2006) staged by João Henriques, produced by São João Theater in Porto.

Later on, in 2019, Massena was invited by the organization 'Rock in Rio' to take up the arranging and conducting of the grand symphonic show commemorating the fifteen years of the music festival's presence in Portugal.

Television

Massena hosted 13 episodes of the show 'Música, Maestro' on the first channel of national television (RTP1), in an effort to bring Symphonic Music to the general public. This TV show was then selected as one of the three finalists in the Arts category at the Festival Rose d'Or in Berlin.

Between 2015 and 2020, Rui Massena was the author of a musical weekly talk show, 'Nota Alta', on Porto Canal, featuring interviews with personalities of major political and cultural relevance, and live performances by innovative classical and jazz projects.

Film Music

In 2019, Massena made his debut in film scoring in the short film 'Carnaval Sujo', directed by José Miguel Moreira, winner of Festival Bragacine 2019, category Best Short Movie and nominated to FESTin – Portuguese Film Festival, Festival Internacional de Curtas Metragens dos Açores e International Film Festival of Vila Nova de Foz Côa. In 2021, he composed and performed the soundtrack for two TV Films by the production company Santa Rita Filmes, "Esperança" directed by Cláudia Clemente and "Medo" directed by Patrícia Sequeira, included in the film trilogy "Na Porta ao Lado", focusing on the scourge of domestic violence.

In 2022, he composed and performed for the film "La Manzana de Oro", directed by Jaime Chávarri, a prestigious name in the Spanish cinematographic world and for the documentary "Triunfo do saber" directed by Frank Saalfeld.

Video Game Music

In 2023, he made his debut in music for video games, composing and performing the soundtrack of the video game "Planet Free".

Solo Works

After thirteen years of non-stop weekly conducting, Massena made the decision to finally give space to his old composing dream.

"SOLO" 2015

With an intimate, centred, and tranquillity-transmitting language, Rui presents himself at the piano, in 15 songs. While he regarded 'Solo' as a spiritual retreat needed to find his own balance, this path amazingly would launch him on a composing career. His first album of original compositions reached the second position on the national sales chart in Portugal.

'ENSEMBLE' 2016

In this album, Rui Massena embodies the superior art of conciliation, more docile or more agitated according to the inspiration and needs of the moment. 'Ensemble' starts off with Abraço ("Hug") and finishes off with Valsa ("a Waltz"). The music is poetic and positive while also structured and engaging. Whilst listening to 'Ensemble' one enters a new dimension created with the support of the string section of the Czech National Symphonic Orchestra. This second album immediately reached first place on the national sales chart in Portugal.

"III" 2018

Rui Massena's third album of original compositions is more progressive. It was released in November of 2018 with Universal Music in an international partnership with Deutsche Grammophon, which gave this album its prestigious yellow label. This album is characterized by its use of electronics and the cutting edge of sound mixed with acoustic sounds in a game of timbres that blurs the line between the two; however, after just seconds of listening, one will find the characteristic values of Rui Massena's music to guide us along the way by tranquility, challenge and emotion. His third album reached fourth place on the national sales chart in Portugal.

"20PERCEPTION" 2021

More recently, Massena wrote, produced and interpreted his new work, '20PERCEPTION'. It is an EP from the year 2020, with six pieces compressed into a symbolic 20 minutes of music. Imaginaries of grief and tenderness are navigated, all backed up by the reorganization of the composer's senses, by a Perception.

The music installs a pipe organ, oscillating between joy and sadness, reflection and belief. The strings sing as a choir, free from individualities, in collective movements. The Piano explores different hues, in search of an intimacy escaping melodic assertiveness.

The videos accompanying the pieces are filmed by the composer himself and mirror his own visual perception. They're a field wide open to interpretation, in a symbolic encounter between what these times awoke and what they made us value. They stand as an imagination-provocative exercise.

20 full minutes of music, to be listened to in a single gesture. Intense and Peaceful.

"WORLD PIANO DAY" 2021

Invited by the publisher Deutsche Grammophon, alongside Maria João Pires and 15 other world-class performers and composers, participated in the World Piano Day 21 festival, broadcasted all around the world.

"CHRISTMAS WALK" 2021

After having released in the same year his EP "20PERCEPTION", Rui Massena returns with a new project, a timeless album full of Christmas classics, recorded with an orchestra and with arrangements by himself.

This is a warm and peaceful album. To listen at once. Sometimes bold, sometimes predictable, it balances Rui Massena's pianos with the orchestra's strings, with disconcerting percussions, with two-string pianos, bells, loops and various imagery. Along the 'Christmas Walk', we can rediscover with a neoclassical sound timeless themes like 'Jingle Bells', 'Have Yourself a Merry Christmas' or 'Amazing Grace'.

Now

Today, Rui Massena works as a composer and producer based in his studio, near Granja's beach, in the creative city of Porto. He plays his music live in concert halls all around the world, either solo or as a part of a larger ensemble. He likes to look at music as a whole, with no distinction, as a vibration that lulls the world. Each time Rui sits at his piano, he is a man with an orchestra inside.

EMI MUSIC Portugal (2007)

Da Weasel feat. Rui Massena, with Prague Symphonic Orchestra
"Amor, Escárnio e Maldizer"

EMI MUSIC Portugal (2008)

Da Weasel feat. Rui Massena - Live Pavilhão Atlântico;

EMI CLASSICS (2009) 5 discs

Madeira Classical Orchestra - 252 years of W.A. Mozart

- Symphonies: 35th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st;
- Concerts: Horn and orchestra nº4, Clarinet and orchestra,
Flute and orchestra nº1, Piano and orchestra nº23, Sinfonia
concertante for violino, viola and orchestra;

HD CHESKY RECORDS (2012)

Fundação Orquestra Estúdio
The Zephyrtine, by David Chesky

SONY MUSIC Portugal (2012)

Fundação Orquestra Estúdio
Expensive Soul Symphonic Experience

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE (2013)

Fundação Orquestra Estúdio

- Abertura em Forma de Pena, by Telmo Marques
- A incrível Jornada de Sousa Mendes, by Nuno Corte-Real
- Ouvertures and Closures, by António Pinho Vargas
- Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, by Mário Laginha