

PINK MARTINI BIO

“Pink Martini is a rollicking around-the-world musical adventure... if the United Nations had a house band in 1962, hopefully we’d be that band.”

– Thomas Lauderdale, bandleader/pianist

In 1994 in his hometown of Portland, Oregon, Thomas Lauderdale was working in politics, thinking that one day he would run for mayor. Like other eager politicians-in-training, he went to every political fundraiser under the sun... but was dismayed to find the music at these events underwhelming, lackluster, loud and un-neighborly. Drawing inspiration from music from all over the world – crossing genres of classical, jazz and old-fashioned pop – and hoping to appeal to conservatives and liberals alike, he founded the “little orchestra” Pink Martini in 1994 to provide more beautiful and inclusive musical soundtracks for political fundraisers for causes such as civil rights, affordable housing, the environment, libraries, public broadcasting, education and parks.

One year later, Lauderdale called China Forbes, a Harvard classmate who was living in New York City, and asked her to join Pink Martini. They began to write songs together. Their first song “Sympathique” became an overnight sensation in France, was nominated for “Song of the Year” at France’s Victoires de la Musique Awards, and to this day remains a mantra (“Je ne veux pas travailler” or “I don’t want to work”) for striking French workers. Says Lauderdale, “We’re very much an American band, but we spend a lot of time abroad and therefore have the incredible diplomatic opportunity to represent a broader, more inclusive America... the America which remains the most heterogeneously populated country in the world... composed of people of every country, every language, every religion.”

Featuring a dozen musicians, Pink Martini performs its multilingual repertoire on concert stages and with symphony orchestras throughout Europe, Asia, Greece, Turkey, the Middle East, Northern Africa, Australia, New Zealand, South America and North America. Pink Martini made its European debut at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 and its orchestral debut with the Oregon Symphony in 1998 under the direction of Norman Leyden. Since then, the band has gone on to play with more than 50 orchestras around the world, including multiple engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, the Boston Pops, the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, the San Francisco Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the BBC Concert Orchestra at Royal Albert Hall in London. Other appearances include the grand opening of the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall, with return sold-out engagements for New Year’s Eve 2003, 2004, 2008 and 2011; four sold-out concerts at Carnegie Hall; the opening party of the remodeled Museum of Modern Art in New York City; the Governor’s Ball at the 80th Annual Academy Awards in 2008; the opening of the 2008 Sydney Festival in Australia; multiple sold-out appearances, and a festival opening, at the Montreal Jazz Festival, two sold-out concerts at Paris’ legendary L’Olympia Theatre in 2011; and Paris’ fashion house Lanvin’s 10-year anniversary celebration for designer Alber Elbaz in 2012. In its twentieth year, Pink Martini was inducted into both the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame and the Oregon Music Hall of Fame.

Pink Martini’s debut album *Sympathique* was released independently in 1997 on the band’s own label Heinz Records (named after Lauderdale’s dog), and quickly became an international phenomenon, garnering the group nominations for “Song of the Year” and “Best New Artist” in France’s Victoires de la Musique Awards in 2000. Pink Martini released *Hang On Little Tomato* in 2004, *Hey Eugene!* in 2007 and *Splendor In The Grass* in 2009. In November 2010 the band released *Joy To The World*—a festive, multi-denominational holiday album featuring songs from around the globe. *Joy To The World* received glowing reviews and was carried in Starbucks stores during the 2010 and 2011 holiday seasons. All five albums have gone gold in France, Canada, Greece and Turkey.

In Fall 2011 the band released two albums – *A Retrospective*, a collection of the band’s most beloved songs spanning their 18-year career, which includes eight previously unreleased tracks, and *1969*, an album of collaborations with legendary Japanese singer Saori Yuki. *1969* has been certified platinum in Japan,

reaching #2 on the Japanese charts, with the *Japan Times* raving “the love and respect Saori Yuki and Pink Martini have for the pop tradition shines through on every track.” The release of *1969* marked the first time a Japanese artist hit the American Billboard charts since Kyu Sakamoto released “Sukiyaki” in 1963. Pink Martini albums have sold over 3 million copies worldwide.

The band has collaborated and performed with numerous artists, including Jimmy Scott, Carol Channing, Jane Powell, Rufus Wainwright, Martha Wainwright, Henri Salvador, Chavela Vargas, New York performer Joey Arias, puppeteer Basil Twist, Georges Moustaki, Michael Feinstein, filmmaker Gus Van Sant, Courtney Taylor Taylor of The Dandy Warhols, clarinetist and conductor Norman Leyden, Japanese legend Hiroshi Wada, Italian actress and songwriter Alba Clemente, DJ Johnny Dynell and Chi Chi Valenti, Faith Prince, Mamie Van Doren, the original cast of *Sesame Street*, the Bonita Vista High School Marching Band of Chula Vista, California, the Portland Youth Philharmonic, and the Pacific Youth Choir of Portland, Oregon. Singer Storm Large began performing with Pink Martini in March 2011, when China Forbes took a leave of absence to undergo surgery on her vocal cords. Forbes made full recovery and now both she and Large continue performing with Pink Martini.

Pink Martini has an illustrious roster of regular guest artists: NPR’s *All Things Considered* host, Ari Shapiro, Cantor Ida Rae Cahana (who was cantor at the Central Synagogue in NYC for five years), koto player Masumi Timson, harpist Maureen Love, and Kim Hastreiter (the publisher/editor-in-chief of *Paper* magazine).

And while still in the studio for *Get Happy*, Lauderdale simultaneously began work on the band’s eighth studio album, *Dream a Little Dream*, featuring Sofia, Melanie, Amanda and August von Trapp, the actual great-grandchildren of Captain and Maria von Trapp, made famous by the movie *The Sound of Music*. These siblings have been singing together for 12 years and have toured all over the world in concert. Drawn into the magical orbit of Thomas Lauderdale, they now live together in a house in Portland, Oregon and have been frequent guest performers with Pink Martini for the past two years. The album, released in March 2014, traverses the world, from Sweden to Rwanda to China to Bavaria, and features guest appearances by The Chieftains, Wayne Newton, “Jungle” Jack Hanna, and Charmian Carr (who played Liesl in the original *Sound of Music*).

Pink Martini has just released its ninth studio album, *Je dis oui!*, which features vocals from China Forbes, Storm Large, Ari Shapiro, fashion guru Ikram Goldman, civil rights activist Kathleen Saadat, and Rufus Wainwright. The album is the band’s happiest in years; it features 15 tracks spanning eight languages (French, Farsi, Armenian, Portuguese, Arabic, Turkish, Xhosa and English), and affirms the band’s 22-year history of global inclusivity and collaborative spirit.