

TERENCE BLANCHARD FULL LENGTH BIO

Two-time Oscar nominee and six-time Grammy-winner Terence Blanchard has been a consistent artistic force for making powerful musical statements concerning painful American tragedies – past and present.

From his expansive work composing the scores for almost 20 Spike Lee projects over three decades, ranging from the documentary *When the Levees Broke* to the latest Lee film, *Da 5 Bloods*, Blanchard has interwoven beautiful melodies that created strong backdrops to human stories. Blanchard received an Oscar nomination for his original score for *Da 5 Bloods* in 2021 which marked his second nomination. Blanchard previously received an Oscar nomination for his original score for Spike Lee's *BlackKkKlansman*. Blanchard becomes only the second Black composer to be nominated twice in the original score category, duplicating Quincy Jones' feat from 1967's *In Cold Blood* and 1985's *The Color Purple*.

For One Night in Miami... which marked Regina King's feature directorial debut and premiered at the Venice International Film Festival, the Academy Award winning actress tapped the talents of Blanchard as did Gaz Alazraki, the director of *Father of the Bride* which debuted on HBO Max. Some of Blanchard's other film and television credits include Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, *25th Hour* and *Inside Man*; Kasi Lemmons' films, *Eve's Bayou* and *Harriet*; George Lucas' *Red Tails*; the critically acclaimed drama series *Perry Mason* starring Matthew Rhys with episodes directed by Tim Van Patten which debuted on HBO in June 2020, the National Geographic limited series *Genius: Aretha* which premiered in March 2021, HBO's NYC Epicenters *9/11 – 2021* ½ documentary miniseries produced and directed by Spike Lee which premiered in August 2021, the Apple TV+ series *Swagger* which debuted in October 2021 and Apple TV's docuseries *They Call Me Magic* which debuted on April 22, 2022 and for which Blanchard received his second Emmy nomination.

More recently, Blanchard wrote the original score for *The Woman King* directed by Gina Prince-Bythewood starring Viola Davis which premiered on September 16, 2022. Blanchard also arranged and produced songs for the upcoming feature *A Jazzman's Blues* written, directed, and produced by Tyler Perry. In addition, Blanchard wrote the original score for the upcoming Apple TV+ documentary *Louis Armstrong's Black & Blues* directed by Sacha Jenkins and produced by Ron Howard and Brian Grazer's *Imagine Documentaries*, released in September during the Toronto International Film Festival.

Blanchard has composed his second opera, *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, based on the memoir of celebrated writer and The New York Times columnist Charles Blow. The libretto was written by Kasi Lemmons and commissioned by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis where it premiered in June 2019. The New York Times has called Blanchard's opera "inspiring," "subtly powerful" and "a bold affecting adaptation of Charles Blow's work." The Metropolitan Opera premiered *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* on September 27, 2021 to open their 2021-22 season in New York, making it the first opera composed by an African American composer to premiere at the Met. Blanchard's first opera, *Champion* also premiered to critical acclaim in 2013 at OTSL and starred Denyce Graves with a libretto from Pulitzer Prize Winner, Michael Cristofer. *Champion* was staged at the Met in April 2023, followed up a restaging of *Fire Shut Up In My Bones* in May 2024 due to record-setting box office & huge critical acclaim.

With his current jazz quintet, The E-Collective, featured on the score to *BlacKkKlansman* with a 96-piece orchestra, Blanchard delivered “a soaring, seething, luxuriant score,” *The New York Times*. In *Vice Magazine*, Blanchard elaborates, “In *BlacKkKlansman* it all became real to me. You feel the level of intolerance that exists for people who ignore other people’s pain. Musically, I can’t ignore that. I can’t add to that intolerance. Instead, I have to help people heal from it. “

In his thirtieth year as a recording leader, Blanchard delivers *Absence*, a masterwork of sonic zest in collaboration with his longtime E-Collective band and the acclaimed Turtle Island Quartet which received Grammy nominations in November 2021 for Best Instrumental Jazz Album and Best Improvised Jazz Solo for Blanchard for this year’s Grammys. It may seem like an irregular pairing, but Blanchard discovered that the quartet proved a perfect fit. “Obviously I’ve worked with strings in my career,” he says. “But Turtle Island has reimagined the language for the string quartet. It’s extremely unique, and what they do is brilliant. Playing together, it’s like a chamber jazz ensemble.”

Recorded in February 2020 just before the Covid-19 lockdowns, *Absence* started out as a project to show gratitude to Wayne Shorter. “I knew that Wayne wasn’t feeling well at the time, so I wanted to honor him to let him know how much he has meant to me,” says Blanchard who today lives in Los Angeles as well as in his native New Orleans. “When you look at my own writing, you can see how much I’ve learned from Wayne. He mastered writing compositions starting with a simple melody and then juxtaposing it against the harmonies that come from a different place to make it come alive in a different light.”

Regarding his consistent attachment to artistic works of conscience, Blanchard confesses, “You get to a certain age when you ask, ‘Who’s going to stand up and speak out for us?’ Then you look around and realize that the James Baldwins, Muhammad Alis and Dr. Kings are no longer here...and begin to understand that it falls on you. I’m not trying to say I’m here to try to correct the whole thing, I’m just trying to speak the truth.” In that regard, he cites unimpeachable inspirations. “Max Roach with his ‘Freedom Now Suite,’ John Coltrane playing ‘Alabama,’ even Louis Armstrong talking about what was going on with his people any time he was interviewed. Herbie Hancock & Wayne Shorter who live by their Buddhist philosophy and try to expand the conscience of their communities. I’m standing on all their shoulders. How dare I come through this life having had the blessing of meeting those men and not take away any of that? Like anybody else, I’d like to play feel good party music but sometimes my music is about the reality of where we are.”

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