

Gunther Schuller

Biography

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The son of German immigrants, Gunther Schuller was born in New York on November 22, 1925. He studied flute, horn, and theory, advancing rapidly enough as a hornist to join the Cincinnati Symphony as principal horn at 17 and the orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera at 19. Schuller became actively involved in the New York bebop scene, performing and recording with such jazz greats as Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and John Lewis. At the age of 25, Schuller taught horn at the Manhattan School of Music, beginning a distinguished teaching career; his positions have included Professor of Composition at the School of Music at Yale, President of the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Artistic Director of the Tanglewood Berkshire Music Center and The Festival at Sandpoint (Idaho), and Co-Director of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. His love of a wide range of American music guides the activities of his publishing and recording companies, Margun Music and GM Recordings. He also currently serves as Artistic Director of the Spokane Bach Festival.

*Schuller has created more than 160 original compositions in virtually every musical genre, including commissions from the Baltimore Symphony, Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Minneapolis Symphony, National Symphony, and the New York Philharmonic. Recent commissions include his 1994 Pulitzer Prize-winning work *Of Reminiscences and Reflections* for the Louisville Orchestra; *An Arc Ascending* for the American Symphony Orchestra League and the Cincinnati Symphony; *The Past is in the Present*, also for the Cincinnati Symphony; a *Sextet for Leon Fleisher and the Kennedy Center Chamber Players*; *Brass Quintet No. 2* for the American Brass Quintet; an *Organ Concerto* for the 1994 Calgary International Organ Festival; and *Ritmica-Melodica-Armonica* for the Newton Symphony Orchestra.*

*Schuller is acknowledged as father of the Third Stream movement in American music. He has worked with Arturo Toscanini, Miles Davis, Aaron Copland, Ornette Coleman, Leonard Bernstein, Eric Dolphy, Charles Mingus, John Updike, Joe Lovano, Elvis Costello, Wynton Marsalis, Frank Zappa, and many more. He gathered together a lifetime of observations on conducting in his recent book, *The Compleat Conductor* (Oxford University Press). His extensive writings, on a variety of subjects ranging from jazz through music performance, contemporary music, music aesthetics, and education, have been issued in the collection, *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller*. His monumental jazz history, *The Swing Era*, was published in 1989. Among Schuller's many awards are: a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award (1991); the Pulitzer Prize (1994); inaugural Member of the American Classical Music Hall of Fame; DownBeat Lifetime Achievement Award; the Gold Medal for Music from the American Academy of*

Arts and Letters (1997); the BMI Lifetime Achievement Award (1994); the William Schuman Award (1988), given by Columbia University for "lifetime achievement in American music composition"; and several Grammy Awards. Though a high school drop-out, Schuller has also received twelve honorary degrees from various colleges and universities.

*While his numerous contributions to the larger music world are well-known, perhaps Schuller's best known contribution to the horn world is his *Horn Technique*, first published in 1962 and recently re-issued by Oxford University Press. His compositions have covered a full range of musical genres and he has found ways to include or feature the horn in almost every one. In addition to his challenging large ensemble works, there have been numerous chamber works including horns in traditional settings (e.g., brass quintets) and innovative combinations. He still found time to feature the horn in his work: two horn concertos, a horn sonata (commissioned by the IHS), *Lines and Contrasts* for 16 horns, and *Five Pieces for Five Horns*, recently recorded by Barry Tuckwell and the NFB Horn Quartet.*

*"Scholar, composer, conductor, teacher, author, music publisher, indefatigable advocate—Gunther Schuller isn't merely a musician, he's a monopoly." This description by Alan Rich, published in *New York Magazine* a decade ago, best summarizes the multi-faceted career of this Pulitzer Prize-winning practitioner of the 28-hour day. When contacted about the award, Mr. Schuller said, "This is a special honor for me because I haven't played the horn since 1963. I am very grateful to be so honored in the company of many other great horn colleagues." In 2000, the International Horn Society honored Gunther Schuller for his lifelong contributions to music and the horn. (This information was compiled from various Internet sources and materials courtesy of Scott Menhinick and Alison Williams of GunMar Recordings)*

*From:
International Horn Society
Honorary Life Members and
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