

Jean-Luc Ponty & his Band

10.000 people captivated by an enchanting concert at the *Hollywood Bowl* on September 02, 2009! Jean-Luc Ponty is widely regarded as an innovator who has expanded the vocabulary of modern music. In cooperation with Hans J. Batschauer, Germany.



Line-up

Jean Luc Ponty - violin
William Lecomte - piano/keyboards
Guy Nsangué Akwa - bass
Pierre-François Dufour - drums
Albert Ceretti - road manager/sound engineer
Olivier Carrara - technician

On Stage: 4
Travel Party: 6

Website

www.ponty.com

Biography

Jean-Luc Ponty is a pioneer and undisputed master of violin in the area of jazz and rock. He is widely regarded as an innovator who has applied his unique visionary spin that has expanded the vocabulary of modern music. The great American jazz violinist Stuff Smith hearing Ponty in the 60's said 'he is a killer, he plays on the violin like Coltrane does on sax' (Jazz Encyclopedia In The Sixties by Leonard Feather). In an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle in 1976, Stéphane Grappelli said 'No he is not a student, only a great friend...he is a great musician and invented a new style on the violin'. Ponty was born in a family of classical musicians on September 29, 1942 in Avranches, France. His father taught violin, his mother taught piano. At sixteen, he was admitted to the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, graduating two years later with the institution's highest award, Premier Prix. In turn, he was immediately hired by one of the major symphony orchestras, Concerts Lamoureux, where he played for three years. While still a member of the orchestra in Paris, Ponty picked up a side gig, playing clarinet (which his father had taught him) for a college jazz band that regularly performed at local parties. It proved a life-changing jumping-off point. A growing interest in the jazz sounds of Miles Davis and John Coltrane compelled him to take up the tenor saxophone. Fueled by an all-encompassing creative passion, Jean-Luc soon felt the need to express his jazz voice through his main instrument, the violin. So it was that Ponty found himself leading a dual musical life: rehearsing and performing with the orchestra while also playing jazz until 3 AM at clubs throughout Paris. The demands of this doomed schedule eventually brought him to a crossroads. 'Naturally, I had to make a choice, so I took a chance with jazz', says Jean-Luc. At first, the violin proved to be a handicap; few at the time viewed the instrument as having a legitimate place in the modern jazz vocabulary. With a powerful sound that

eschewed vibrato, Jean-Luc distinguished himself with be-bop era phrasings and a punchy style influenced more by horn players than by anything previously tried on the violin; nobody had heard anything quite like it before. Critics said then that he was the first jazz violinist to be as exciting as a saxophonist. Ponty's notoriety grew with remarkable leaps and in June 1964, at age 21, he recorded his debut solo album for Philips, *Jazz Long Playing* (Universal/Emarcy). A 1966 live album called *Violin Summit* united Ponty on stage in Basel, Switzerland with such notable string talents as Svend Asmussen, Stephane Grappelli and Stuff Smith. In 1967, John Lewis of The Modern Jazz Quartet invited Ponty to perform at the Monterey Jazz Festival. Jean-Luc's first-ever American appearance garnered thunderous applause and led to a U.S. recording contract with producer Richard Bock for his World Pacific label (*Electric Connection* with the Gerald Wilson Big Band, *Jean-Luc Ponty Experience* with the George Duke Trio). Through the late-60s and early 70s, Ponty achieved mounting critical praise and popularity across Europe. In turn, the violinist soon found his signature talents in demand by top recording artists the world over. In 1969, Frank Zappa composed the music for Jean-Luc's solo album *King Kong* (BlueNote). In 1972, Elton John invited Ponty to contribute to his *Honky Chateau* #1 hit album. Within a year - at the urging of Zappa and the Mothers of Invention who wanted him to join their tour - Ponty emigrated with his wife and two young daughters to America and made his home in Los Angeles. He continued to work on a variety of projects - including a pair of John McLaughlin/Mahavishnu Orchestra albums/tours (*Apocalypse*, *Visions of the Emerald Beyond*) until 1975, when he signed on as a solo artist with Atlantic Records. He was invited by Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke to participate in the recording *My Spanish Heart*. For the next decade, Jean-Luc toured the world repeatedly and recorded 12 consecutive albums, which all reached the top 5 on the Billboard jazz charts and sold millions of copies. Early Atlantic recordings, such as 1976's *Aurora* and *Imaginary Voyage*, firmly established him as a figurehead in America's growing jazz-rock movement. He went on to crack the top 40 in 1977 with the *Enigmatic Ocean* album and again in 1978 with *Cosmic Messenger*. In 1984, a revolutionary video featuring time-lapse images was produced by Louis Schwarzberg for *Individual Choice*. Along with Herbie Hancock, Ponty became one of the first jazz musicians to have a music video. Besides recording and touring with his own group, Ponty also performed some of his compositions with the New Music Ensemble of Pittsburgh, the Radio City Orchestra in New York, as well as with symphony orchestras in Montreal, Toronto, Oklahoma City and Tokyo. In the late-80s, his contract ended with Atlantic and Jean-Luc recorded a pair of albums, *The Gift of Time* and *Storytelling* for Columbia. On 1991's Epic-released *Tchokola*, Ponty combined his acoustic and electric violins, for the first time, with the powerful polyrhythmic sounds of West Africa. He also performed for two months in the U.S. and Canada with a cast of African expatriates he had encountered on the Paris music scene. In 1993, Ponty returned to Atlantic in impressive fashion with *No Absolute Time*. Working with American and African musicians, Jean-Luc expanded on the explorations of *Tchokola* with a moving and soulful result. 'There is a whole scene in Paris of top-notch African musicians', he says. 'I was very curious and wanted to educate myself in these rhythms, which were totally new to my ears. In 1995, Ponty joined guitarist Al Di Meola and bassist Stanley Clarke to record an acoustic album under the name *The Rite of Strings*. This all-star trio also undertook a six-month tour of North America, South America, and Europe that earned them intercontinental critical praise. They reunited for world tours in 2004 and again in 2007. Ponty regrouped his American band in 1996 for live performances following the release of a double CD anthology of Ponty's productions for Atlantic Records entitled *Le Voyage*. One of these concerts was recorded in Detroit, Michigan, in front of 6000 fans, and released by Atlantic Records in February 1997 under the title *Live at Chene Park*. In 1997, Jean-Luc Ponty put back together his band of Western and African musicians pursuing this new fusion that he started in 1991. Together they toured for the next 3 years in North America, Western and Eastern Europe and triumphed from the Hawaiian Islands to Russia. In August 2001, Jean-

Luc Ponty released his new studio CD *Life Enigma* on his own label (J.L.P. Productions, Inc.), a return to his concept from the 70s with a very modern production. Ponty played all the instruments on some tracks and was joined by his band members for superb performances on other tracks: William Lecomte (keyboards), Guy Nsangue Akwa (bass), Thierry Arpino (drums) and Moustapha Cisse (percussion). Ponty gave an extremely successful concert with his band in his native town of Avranches, in the French province of Normandie, on September 21, 2001. He was also honored during a special ceremony at City Hall, finally gaining recognition from his compatriots. He then embarked on a very successful concert tour in the USA in October-November 2001, receiving strong and loyal support from his fans despite the uncertainty that followed the September 11 terrorist attacks. That same year, Ponty recorded a memorable concert with the same musicians at the superb opera house in Dresden, Germany. This recording was released in July 2002 on a CD entitled *Live at Semper Opera* (J.L.P. Productions, Inc.) In January 2003, Jean-Luc toured in India for the first time, 7 shows in 6 major cities for the Global Music Festival organized by Indian violinist L. Subramaniam. Jean-luc brought along his bassist Guy Nsangue Akwa, both performed with Subramaniam's band and drummer Billy Cobham who was also a guest star on that tour. Ponty also did an extensive tour across the U.S.A. in the Fall. In 2004, Jean-Luc Ponty's first DVD *In Concert* was released in Europe and in North America (J.L.P. Productions, Inc.). It contains a live concert with his band mixed in 5.1 plus bonus materials, such as an 11-minute film of travels and backstage scenes. *In Concert* is also available on CD in some countries. Jean Luc Ponty & His Band toured in 2004 in France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Lithuania and India, for their first concert as a whole band in Bombay. Ponty also did a reunion tour with Stanley Clarke and Al Di Meola as the Rite of Strings from June to October 2004 in the U.S.A. and Canada. In 2005, Ponty has been touring in North America and Europe with a new project called *Trio!* in collaboration with Stanley Clarke on double bass and Bela Fleck on banjo. In 2006 Ponty reunited 'Jean Luc Ponty & His Band' and toured in the USA, Chile, Venezuela, Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, The Middle East and India; they also recorded a new studio album called *The Atacama Experience* with guitarists Allan Holdsworth and Philip Catherine appearing on a few tracks. This new CD has been released in June 2007 by Koch Records in North America and by Universal in Europe, and received 4-stars in the US jazz magazine *Down Beat* as well as raving reviews internationally. Most critics say that it is one his best since *Enigmatic Ocean*. End of 2008 'Jean Luc Ponty & His Band' becomes a quartet without percussion, a return to the 'Ponty sound' of the 70s-80s in a modern version. One of the many highlights in 2009 was the concert at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles where Ponty enthralled more than 10.000 people in an outstanding concert evening playing together with Chick Corea, Chaka Khan and also Stevie Wonder who showed up unannounced at the end of the show for an extended jam session.

Discography

1962 *Oeil Vision* - Club de
1964 *Jazz Long Playing* - Philips
1964 *Les Grands Violinistes des Jazz* - Phillips
1967 *Sunday Walk* - BASF
1969 *Electric Connection* - One Way
1969 *King Kong: Jean-Luc Ponty Plays...* - Blue Note
1969 *Canteloupe Island* - Blue Note
1969 *Live at Donte's* - Blue Note
1969 *Experience* - Pausa
1969 *More than Meets the Ear* - One Way
1969 *Critic's Choice* - Prestige
1970 *Astrorama* - Far East

1972 Live at Montreux 72 - Pierre Cardin
1973 Jean Luc Ponty and Stephane Grappelli - Verve
1973 Open Strings - BASF
1975 Upon the Wings of Music - Atlantic
1975 Aurora -Atlantic
1976 Imaginary Voyage - Atlantic
1977 Enigmatic Ocean - Atlantic
1978 Cosmic Messenger - Atlantic
1979 A Taste for Passion - Atlantic
1979 Live - Atlantic
1980 Civilized Evil - Atlantic
1981 Mystical Adventures - Atlantic
1983 Individual Choice - Atlantic
1984 Open Mind - Atlantic
1985 Fables - Atlantic
1987 The Gift of Time - Columbia
1989 California - LRC
1989 Storytelling - Columbia
1991 Jean-Luc Ponty Experience - Pausa
1991 Tchokola - Epic
1992 No Absolute Time - Atlantic
1993 The Jean-Luc Ponty with the George Duke Trio - One Way
1996 Live at Chene Park - Atlantic
2001 Jean-Luc Ponty with Kurt Edelhagen & His... - Vantage
2001 Life Enigma - JLP
2002 Live at Semper Opera - Jlp
2007 The Acatama Experience - Koch records

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Tel: +33 553585256 - wolf@novaconcerts.com - www.novaconcerts.com
