Aaron Zigman

Composer

As a classically trained pianist, composer, and conductor, Aaron Zigman has a degree of versatility rarely seen. His deep classical roots combined with his background in writing and producing songs for many of the greatest performers bring a unique skill set to his film and classical compositions.

Zigman began training as a classical pianist at age five. At age eighteen he studied orchestration with legendary composer and orchestrator George Bassman. Zigman soon became an in-demand writer, producer, arranger, and orchestrator for artists including Aretha Franklin, Natalie Cole, John Legend, Quincy Jones, Phil Collins, Christina Aguilera, Dionne Warwick, Carly Simon, Ray Charles, Tina Turner, The Four Tops, and Seal.

His career as a film composer was launched in 2000 when director Nick Cassavetes heard his symphonic tone poem entitled Rabin (1994), which was composed in memory of Yitzhak Rabin, the late Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and was performed by Los Angeles Jewish Symphony. Zigman and Cassavetes have since collaborated on six films, including the iconic romantic classic The Notebook (2004).

After composing more than 60 Hollywood films, including The Proposal (2009), Sex and the City I *&* *II* (2008 and 2010), The Company Men (2010), and Wakefield (2016), Zigman shared his creative energy with the classical music world with Tango Manos (2019), a concerto for piano and orchestra co-commissioned by the Beijing Music Festival, Radio France, and San Francisco Symphony. The concerto features world-renowned pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet and premiered to critical acclaim. In China, Tango Manos was conducted by Long Yu, Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the China Philharmonic. In the U.S., *Tango Manos* was premiered by San Francisco Symphony under the baton of the highly acclaimed Fabien Gabel.

Zigman believes tango is one of music’s most colourful and emotional forms, making the idea of a tango-based concerto for piano and orchestra both intriguing and compelling. He points out that the tango expresses feelings of ​“pain, beauty, and love, yet it is also a dance that must reflect these emotions. It’s a very introspective art form.” In his three‐​movement concerto, Zigman pays homage to tango’s unique essence, referencing its characteristic rhythms and harmonies while drawing on its rich sensuality and colour. The piano is a powerful protagonist throughout the piece, while the orchestra echoes the various thematic structure — soloist and ensemble joining together in a powerful symbiosis. In Zigman’s own words: ​“Music transcends all barriers. In a world full of chaos and turmoil, music has the power to bind humanity, creating a bridge between all of us and reminding us that we are all one people.”

In August 2021, Zigman’s Rhapsodyfor cello and piano was presented at The Conrad Prebys Performing Arts Center in La Jolla, played by Alisa Weilerstein on cello and Inon Barnatan on piano.

A recipient of numerous accolades and awards, including an Emmy in 2005, Zigman’s Tango Manos was a prize winner for the 2021 American Prize in Orchestral Composition and was nominated for the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in Music. Zigman lives in California.

[](https://www.instagram.com/aaronzigman/)

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[**Aaron Zigman’s website**](https://www.aaronzigman.com/?fbclid=IwAR2uvCafXS8kou1B7Fn5Id3WpU3J7PbiM1qDhFU6H61tf3FVtf9DVtO5_Bo)