



# Biography

## Gunnar Madsen

Gunnar Madsen entered the world of children's entertainment by accident. The acclaimed acapella group he founded and wrote for, The Bobs, were known for their witty and adult lyrical twists and complex musical arrangements. But their unique all-vocal sound won them a surprise popularity with children. Inspired by this audience demographic, Gunnar joined with a group of songwriters to write songs specifically for the children's market. One of their tapes landed on the desk of an editor at Orchard Books. She gave Gunnar a contract to write a story based on his song, *Old Mr. Mackle Hackle*, and over the course of a year she helped Gunnar develop many stories. When she left her job, her replacement cancelled the contract, leaving the stories unpublished. But Gunnar continued writing stories and songs, eventually developing teleplays and screenplays from some of the material. In 1999 he released his first commercial recording for children, *Old Mr. Mackle Hackle*, to tremendous national acclaim. The phenomenal success of the recording has inspired the 2 award-winning follow-up CDs (*Ants in My Pants!* and *I'm Growing*) and a picture-book based on *Old Mr. Mackle Hackle* (published by Little, Brown & Co.).

Gunnar has received commissions from Lincoln Center, the Los Angeles Theater Center, the Minnesota Opera, Oberlin Dance Collective, ISO Dance Theater, National Public Radio and many others. His music is featured in episodes of HBO's *Sex and the City*, and in the films *The Break Up*, *Just a Kiss*, *Breaking the Rules* and *A Special Providence*. He is a featured performer on the soundtrack of *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, in the National Geographic Special *Asteroids: Deadly Impact*, and is the emotionally charged voice of Sammy Davis, Jr. in the Emmy-award winning HBO film, *The Rat Pack*. He can also be seen in the Vince Vaughan/Jennifer Aniston hit "The Break Up" (for which he also arranged the music).

Gunnar's stage musical based on the outsider group *The Shaggs* (with collaborator Joy Gregory) has played in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York to thunderous critical and popular acclaim. According to **The New York Times**, it is "Unsettling, disturbing, challenging, even a little awe-inspiring." It won Best Original Score from Entertainment Today, the Ovation Award for Best World Premier Musical, and Musical of the Year and Best Score from both LA Weekly and Backstage West.

Spanning almost 30 years, Gunnar's career has constantly pushed the boundaries. He steps out of stereotypes - even the ones he himself helped to create. After 10 years on the road with The Bobs singing 4 and 5 part harmonies without instruments, Madsen's first solo album, *Spinning World, 13 Ways of Looking at a Waltz* is a stunning collection of lovely waltzes - all instrumental! In the fall of 2000 Gunnar journeyed to Russia to film a documentary on a remarkable farming community for disabled people. The film, finished in May 2001, was an official selection of the Ojai International Film Festival and enjoyed a week-long run at Berkeley's venerable Fine Arts Theatre.

Gunnar is the recipient of numerous music and theater awards, including a Grammy nomination, Izzy nomination, Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award and the ASCAP special award for 9 consecutive years. His family CDs have received numerous prestigious national awards, including Parents' Choice Gold Award, Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Gold, NAPPA Gold, Scholastic Teacher's Pick Award, and the CMW Best Recording for Older Children award.

Gunnar's albums with The Bobs remain in print on Rhino and Rounder Records. *Two Hands* is Madsen's thirteenth (13th) CD, and his combined album sales total more than 150,000. A Bay Area native, Gunnar Madsen currently resides in Berkeley, CA where he continues his many music, theater, film and writing projects.



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