Daniel Rodriguez biography

Daniel Rodriguez, the Brooklyn-born, now-retired New York Police Department officer, helped uplift the country after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks with his stirring rendition of “God Bless America” at numerous memorial events and on television. Witnessing firsthand the tragedy of 9/11 made him realize how fleeting life is.

But that is just one aspect of Rodriguez’s life. Another is his triumph over addiction.

Born in Brooklyn to parents who immigrated from Puerto Rico, Rodriguez’s singing talent was discovered at an early age. He began formal voice training, with his first recital coming at 17 in the famous Carnegie Hall. It came to a halt, however, when Rodriguez “accidentally” started a family with his high school sweetheart.

He had to work menial jobs in order to support his family. Theater and music were soon replaced by depression and shame. Rodriguez began drinking after work to soothe his torment. Eventually social drinking turned into substance abuse, then alcoholism and use of narcotics by the age of 25.

Once, after a three-day bender, Rodriguez glimpsed himself in a mirror and saw, in his words, a “dead man.” A call to his mother led to help from his family to enter rehab and a local 12-step program.

After an excruciating detox and emotional journey of recovery, Rodriguez joined the NYPD at age 30, where he became known as “The Singing Policeman” for his role as one of the department’s designated National Anthem singers.

He was driving over the Verrazano Bridge to begin his shift on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, when the first plane hit the World Trade Center. Rodriguez was on the ground near the buildings when they collapsed, nearly losing his own life, but spending hours on site as the tragedy unfolded.

At “Prayer for America” on Sept. 23, 2001, a performance by Rodriguez led to a meeting with legendary opera singer and conductor Placido Domingo, followed by an invitation for a personalized period of study at the Vilar-Domingo Young Artist program in Washington. Rodriguez’s operatic debut took place in June 2006, where he sang the role of ‘Canio’ in “Pagliacci” with the Chelsea Opera Company in New York City. In 2007 Rodriguez was
awarded “Best Performance by a Leading Male” for the 2006-07 season by Opera Online for his portrayal of ‘Canio’ with Granite State Opera.

He has performed at many high-profile events including the Republican National Convention and President Bush’s “Celebration of Freedom” inaugural concert. Locally Rodriguez has sang the National Anthem at the Indianapolis 500 and performed with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra as host of the Christmas Yuletide Celebration. He also performs as part of The New York Tenors in concerts around the country, and has sung at Sept. 11 Memorial Day services at Pearl Harbor.

Rodriguez has been a recurring guest on The PBS Memorial Day television concerts at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., with Gary Sinise and Joe Mantegna. He continues to perform classical crossover concerts around the world as well as “The Star Spangled Banner” and “God Bless America” at sporting events, including several World Series. He has toured Europe, New Zealand, Australia and extensively in the United States.

A television favorite, he has appeared on “The Late Show with David Letterman,” “Larry King Live,” “Live with Regis and Kelly,” “Oprah,” “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno” and “The Hour of Power.” Being fluent in Spanish, Rodriguez has appeared on the Latin market's top TV shows including “The Fernando Espuelas Show,” “Despierta America,” “Al Despertar,” “Sabado Gigante with Don Francisco” and “El Vacilon de la Manana.” He continues to welcome the opportunity to work with institutions such as United Service Organizations and numerous law enforcement and military organizations.