Black Orpheus

Music by LUIZ BONFA
Arranged by ERIC RICHARDS

INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor

Bb Soprano Saxophone

1st Eb Alto Saxophone

2nd Eb Alto Saxophone

1st Bb Tenor Saxophone

2nd Bb Tenor Saxophone

Eb Baritone Saxophone

1st Bb Trumpet (Optional Flugelhorn)

2nd Bb Trumpet (Optional Flugelhorn)

3rd Bb Trumpet (Optional Flugelhorn)

4th Bb Trumpet (Optional Flugelhorn)

1st Trombone
2nd Trombone
3rd Trombone
4th Trombone
Guitar Chords
Guitar
Piano
Bass
Drums



NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

"Black Orpheus" was commissioned for the University of Northern Colorado Jazz Lab Band I directed by Gene Aitken. It was intended to serve as an opening or closing piece, and has been performed at concerts and festivals nationwide with great success. I offer a few suggestions to help with the rehearsal and performance of this chart:

The tempo should never be faster than quarter note or half note at 120 bpm. Concentrate on getting a good ensemble groove which I describe as a unified, precise, and exciting approach to the rhythms. The writing is somewhat intricate in places and, from my experience, any increase in tempo will make the performance sound frantic.

The beginning and concluding passages of the chart are set in an Afro-Cuban (Abakua) 4/4 feel. It's important that the quarter-note triplets in the horns align with the eighth-note triplets in the groove. One way to make this happen is to clearly understand that each note of the quarter note triplet is equal to two notes of the eighth-note triplets. The Latin groove in the cut time should be as smooth, simple and flowing as possible, especially in the solo section.

For flexibility, the 1st alto saxophone part is written for soprano sax lead as well as alto sax. Personally, I prefer to hear the soprano if ensemble instrumentation permits. The flugelhorn parts can be played with bucket mutes to give a darker, more mellow sound. Do not use vibrato for the unison melodic lines. In general, connected eighth-note lines should be played legato; for example, keep measures 143–144 smooth. Even though not every eighth note is notated, single eighth notes should be articulated short but don't try to lay back the time, especially at this tempo. In the introduction and closing measures, make sure that the tempo stays constant as it moves from a quarter-note pulse in 4 to a half-note pulse in 2. If flugel-horns are not available, use trumpets with bucket mutes. If bucket mutes are not available, play the passages with bells in stands. At measure 85, be careful to lock into the groove and avoid rushing. Solos are at measure 149 and backgrounds for the horns should be cued as desired.

Measure 218 is on cue, and should have a lighter feel to provide some contrast. The drummer should set up this feel when coming out of his or her solo in measure 217. Measure 250 is the climax of the chart. ROAR!

The drummer should concentrate on time and groove first then think about catching ensemble figures. A good approach is to underplay the chart in terms of technical complexity, and let the ensemble writing take care of the excitement factor. The guitar intro in measure 8 is cued for piano if necessary. In Latin music, in general and especially at this tempo, the guitar and piano players should avoid clutter while comping. If the guitar is comping rhythmically, the piano should comp in a sustained simple style to contrast. Also, consider alternating the comping responsibilities. The bass player must be accurate with the time, I recommend practicing with a metronome for the bass and all rhythm section members.

Please enjoy

—Eric Richards



Eric Richards



A composer, arranger, instrumentalist and conductor active in a wide array of musical media and styles, Eric Richards serves on the composition faculty of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music. Dr. Richards' music has been heard worldwide in major concert venues such as Carnegie Hall, the Montreux, Nice, and North Sea Jazz Festivals performed by groups such as the US Army Field Band, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Pops Orchestra, and the USAF Airmen of Note. From 1984-2004, Eric served as composer/arranger with the US Army Field Band based near Washington D.C.



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