

William Cepeda Afro-Rican Jazz (bio)

Afro-Rican Jazz is an original concept developed by trombonist and composer/ arranger William Cepeda that celebrates the heritage of Puerto Rico music and its African roots while creating a new shade of jazz with a hip flavor, steeped in the jazz tradition (having performed with Dizzy Gillespie , Lester Bowie , Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton , David Murray and Donald Byrd, among others), Cepeda developed this unique artistic expression by incorporating a contemporary jazz perspective with the musical and cultural traditions of his homeland, Puerto Rico.

The seven- member band presents an innovative blend of jazz and traditional Puerto Rico musical forms such as bomba, plena, and danza, inspired in part by his family of five generations preserving Afro- Puerto Rican music, Cepeda Says:

"I wanted to do something different. For many years, there has been the fusion of Cuban rhythms with jazz. I love that music, but wanted to create something totally from my roots. This music tells the story of where I come from and the traditions and history of my people. No one has heard music quite like this."

William Cepeda Afro-Rican Jazz offers highly sophisticated jazz arrangements with a word music approach. The music is a collage of rigorous improvisations, complex harmonies, polyrhythmic grooves, modern colors and traditional elements. Idioms from all over the world are explored to create a dense mosaic of rhythms, lines and voices.

The band has performed throughout the U.S., Europe and Latin America. In 2000, the group performed in the Miles Davis Hall at the Montreux Jazz Festival as well as at the North Sea Jazz Festival. The group was featured at the Tabarka Jazz Festival in Tunisia and at Banlieues Bleues.

Cepeda has the reputation of being the pioneer of contemporary Puerto Rican music, as the cutting- edge composer who is creating new sounds and folding the tradition into the broader genre of New World music.

"Traditional Puerto Rico Music is often presented in a very simple manner, typically with only voice and percussion. Until now this music has not been heard much outside of Puerto Rico. I have brought this rich heritage to another level, to a wider audience, using a variety of indigenous instruments and remaining true to the tradition. I've added more fire to the music, in the form of modern beautiful music for many, many people to enjoy."