

# Lesson/Rehearsal Plan – *Afro Blue*

## Warm-up/Skill-building suggestions

**Objective:** Establish a groove in the rhythm section.

Everyone except drummer tap \*heel and clap quarter notes at 160 bpm. Drummer plays on snare drum rim. \*Encourage students to tap their heel as opposed to their toe as more of your body is engaged in time-keeping.

- Bass and guitar add written parts (from mm. 9 -12)
- Horns and piano player say/sing bass and guitar part while maintaining time in heel.
  - add clapping the bass and guitar rhythm if possible.
- Piano add written part (from mm. 9-12)

**Keep repeating groove until it *feels* good.**

Bass, guitar and piano vamp written parts (from mm. 9 -12)

- Drummer play written part which includes repeated two-bar ride cymbal pattern.
- Horn players tap heel and say/sing repeated two-bar pattern in drummer’s ride cymbal part.
  - horns add clapping of ride cymbal pattern if possible.

**Keep repeating groove until it *feels* good.**

**Objective:** Review basic articulations of ^“Daht”, >“Dah”, — “Du”, . “Dit”

Rhythm section continue to vamp (mm. 9-12)

- On a Concert G, have horn players play the following rhythmic examples and articulations that are taken directly from the arrangement:

The image shows three rhythmic examples in 3/4 time signature, each with a repeat sign at the end. The first example consists of quarter notes: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. The second example consists of quarter notes with accents: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. The third example consists of quarter notes with accents and eighth notes: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter.

**Objective:** Increase students’ technical skill.

- Practice and review the scale/tonal center of *Afro Blue*, Concert G Minor Scale (Harmonic Form)

[Download the rhythm exercises](#) to review or practice.

## Rehearsal/Teaching Suggestions

1) mm. 1-4 (Introduction)

- This may or may not be conducted but should include some rubato.
- Think very legato style and \*shape musical lines. \*Typically when a musical line ascends the volume increases accordingly, when the line descends, the line decreases accordingly.
- On Fp, the p should be maintained until later in the measure and the start of the crescendo is delayed.

2) mm. 5-12 (Vamp to establish groove)

- The new tempo could be established by the drummer as the horns are sustaining.
- As horns diminuendo be sure that air support is maintained so that the pitch doesn't sag.

3) mm. 13-28 (A Section)

- With rhythm section, rehearse saxes aiming for very legato articulation. It should be tongued, not slurred.
- With rhythm section, rehearse brass background figures. Pay careful attention to articulation markings: Tenuto ( \_ ) means long, think "Du". Marcato (^) means separated, think "daht".

4) mm. 38-45 (B section or "Bridge")

- Have brass and bari sax first say/sing their rhythms and articulations. Note the added > articulation, think "Dah", emphasizing the front of the note. Add the rhythm section and play it together.
- With rhythm section have alto and tenor saxes shape their legato lines and start notated crescendo soft to get more of the overall effect of crescendo.

5) mm. 46-53 (Abbreviated A section)

- Saxes recap the latter half of the melody from the A section, again legato style.

6) mm. 54-61 (Interlude leading to solo section)

- Keep articulations smooth, and balance crescendo into solo section
- Think *energy* on long notes to create forward motion.

7) mm. 62-77 (Solo Section)

- Every student's part has a notated Concert G Minor Pentatonic Scale that they may use for improvising. Encourage them to make their own melodies using any of these notes in any order.

- On background figures aim for balance in harmonized parts within sections and between sections. Play and sustain various chords, encourage students to listen and adjust.

8) mm. 78-85 (A Section melody modified)

- Fragments of the A section melody builds to the ‘shout chorus’. Aim for even and balanced crescendos ensuring that lines with motion can be easily heard. Encourage students to listen.
- Ensure that the drummer sets up the transition to the ‘shout chorus’.

9) mm. 86-93 (Shout Chorus on A Section melody)

- All horns have harmonized version of the A section melody. Sound should be full across the band and with lots of energy.

10) mm. 94-101 (abbreviated A Section melody)

- Saxes should maintain volume and intensity of the shout chorus while brass add background figures.

11) mm. 102-fine (Outro)

- Keep ensemble volume big and intense. On Fp aim for quiet intensity and save crescendo for the last four measures.
- Last note, think “daht”.

### **Additional Musical Considerations**

- *Afro Blue* is an example of Afro-Cuban style, a fusion between Cuban, clave-based rhythms and Jazz harmony . Eighth notes should be performed straight.
- Melodies from the A and B sections employ a “Call and Response” pattern.
- Form of *Afro Blue* is a 16 measure minor blues.

### **Historical Considerations**

- Composer Mongo Santamaria was born in Havana, Cuba in 1917.
- Afro-Cuban style emerged in NYC in the 1940’s. Pioneers include Mario Bauza, Frank Grillo Machito, Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo.

# RESOURCES

## Reference recording

<https://d2fizz4npx5v6x.cloudfront.net/audio/2479366.mp3>

## *Afro Blue*

Mongo Santamaria / Arr. Michael Sweeney

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## Suggested Listening

*Afro Blue* — Mongo Santamaria

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbE7jf\\_Hp5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbE7jf_Hp5w)

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*Afro Blue* — Mongo Santamaria with Dizzy Gillespie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKtu2PWc51A>

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*Afro Blue* — John Coltrane

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAWRw-tdsII>

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