Marcus Norris

Brown Eyes,
Black Magic
About the Work

Brown Eyes, Black Magic is a tribute to women of color in America. The title pays homage to the “Black Girl Magic” campaign. CaShawn Thompson created the slogan and movement in 2013 to empower women of color by highlighting their achievements in different fields. When asked about using the term “magic”, Thompson told the LA times, “I say ‘magic’ because it’s something that people don’t always understand. Sometimes our accomplishments might seem to come out of thin air...” Although the piece is not programmatic, I tried to create a mysterious sound world, in which the focus would be on the beauty of the ever-shifting colors of sounds.

Performance Notes

INSTRUMENTATION

1. The piece is written for a small chamber orchestra, consisting of a minimum of Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, French horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba and Strings. Minimum strings should be 4-4-2-2-1. Violin IA, IB, IIA, & IIB should each have at least 2 players. All other instruments should be one player per part.

2. Percussion needed: Tubular bells, vibraphone (motor not needed), tam-tam (medium-sized), suspended cymbal, and glockenspiel.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

1. Accidentals only apply to the note that they precede, except in the case of repeated notes.

2. In the winds, tongue slap refers to the sound that is created as a result of the release of suction in the mouth and the popping sound that the reed produces which amplifies as it travels through the instrument. In the flute, tongue ram is a percussive device produced by completely covering the embouchure hole with the mouth and forcibly sealing it with the tongue, creating a pizzicato-like sound. Air sound in the winds and trombone is an effect produced by blowing through the instrument without generating an audible pitch; instead the sound of the air passing through the instrument is what is desired.

3. For the brass mutes, Harmon mutes are preferred.

4. In the percussion, the tam-tam should be played moving the superball mallet in a slow circular motion around the instrument, producing a ringing sound.

5. In the piano, glissandi inside the instrument should be played in the highest register possible by running the hand across the strings near the pin, while holding down the pedal. Pizz. f.n. refers to plucking the strings inside the piano with the finger nails, while pizz. f.t. refers to plucking them with the finger tips. Muted with f.t. near pin means to use the fingertip to mute the string near the pin and then play the key. When there are a group of notes, the strings can be muted with the palm.

6. The duration of the piece is about 12 minutes.
Fl. Fl. Fl. Fl. Fl. Fl. Fl.
Cl. Cl. Cl. Cl. Cl. Cl. Cl.
Vln. II-A Vln. II-A Vln. II-A Vln. II-A Vln. II-A Vln. II-A Vln. II-A
Vla. II Vla. II Vla. II Vla. II Vla. II Vla. II Vla. II
Vc. II Vc. II Vc. II Vc. II Vc. II Vc. II Vc. II

Tap the body of the cello using the palm, on the front of the instrument near the F-holes.
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