

# Bob Rodriguez

Critically acclaimed pianist Bob Rodriguez is one of the most distinctively imaginative musicians in contemporary jazz today. Possessing a refined virtuoso technique, extraordinary harmonic sensibility and an incomparable approach to his instrument that melds aspects of European classical and Latin music with modern jazz, Rodriguez's performances and recordings of his own compositions and interpretations of standard material have distinguished him as a truly original pianist with his own tale to tell.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1955, Rodriguez began studying classical piano at a very early age. At 15, after hearing Teddy Wilson on the radio, he was inspired to write an original blues, revealing a nascent aptitude for composition and prompting his teacher to send him to his first jazz instructor, Hank Kahout, an expert on Wilson and Art Tatum, who was a stride piano specialist. Next, he studied privately with Bill Gidney, a bebop pianist who had accompanied Charlie Parker. Rodriguez studied harmony formally at the Modern Music School of Cleveland with Phil Rizzo (a former Stan Kenton arranger) and twelve tone composition at Baldwin Wallace University. Later, he attended Akron University, where he spent time analyzing modern classical techniques under the tutelage of Pat Pace, who had written arrangements for Miles Davis.

Rodriguez was an active player on the Cleveland jazz circuit throughout most of his twenties, but by the mid eighties he was weary of the local scene there and seized an opportunity to move to Houston. There he played jazz and latin gigs with his trio, occasionally working with visiting luminaries such as Kenny Wheeler, Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Billy Hart, Muhal Richard Abrams, Joe Farrell, Pharoah Sanders and Freddy Hubbard. He was invited to teach jazz piano at the prestigious Houston High School for the Performing and Visual Arts and in 1988 he met modern jazz vocalist Tina Marsh, who engaged him as pianist and composer-in-residence for her forward looking fourteen piece big band, the Creative Opportunity Orchestra. Rodriguez made his first cd recording with Marsh and the Orchestra on her album **The Heaven Line**. He's also recorded with singer and his trio on their co-led disc **Out Of Time**.

In 1989 Rodriguez moved to the New York area to study with pianist Richie Beirach, the final step on his road to developing a personal style built on very modern harmony with an exceptionally melodic approach. He performed his music with the BMI advanced composers workshop and in 1994 recorded his first date as leader, **Mist**, for the Nine Winds label. An album of rare beauty, it featured Rodriguez's own compositions as well as pieces by Bill Evans and Herbie Hancock, two of his primary influences. In 1998 he recorded a solo cd, **Reinventions**, that includes two Chopin Preludes that he had arranged for 4 hands (with a guest pianist). Since his arrival in the jazz capitol of the world Rodriguez has performed at the Blue Note, Birdland, Cornelia Street Café and Trumpets. He played solo concerts at Gracie Mansion and various venues in the tri-state area and broadcast performances on NPR in Texas, Maine, and New York.

In 2005, Rodriguez released his most recent cd, **Corridor**, a much praised masterwork featuring bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Eliot Zigmund. More recently he's arranged the music of Charles Mingus with Boris Korscov for the Creative Opportunity Orchestra. In addition to his highly respected work as a performer, Rodriguez is a very much in demand clinician/instructor in the world of jazz and classical music education.