

# The Popular Music of Planet X: A Symphony for Jazz Band

Composed September 1990-Dec. 22, 2004

Bill Robinson

## Program Notes

In 1990 I wrote several works for my friend Fred Robinson who was the composer/arranger at Warner Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. Among these was a work for jazz band, "The Popular Music of Planet X" in three "Books". The idea was the rather whimsical one that somewhere among the myriad planets there could be a civilization where the prime incentive for the music industry was *not mercenary*. Clearly such a planet must be far far away. The Air Force didn't seem to appreciate the effort, and the score and parts were returned unread. (When you bomb with the Air Force....you *REALLY BOMB!*)

Come summer of 2004 and I once again was writing music, and turned my attention to the old PMPX. I altered the instrumentation somewhat, kept most of the first book as the first movement (with additions), wrote a new second movement, kept only the opening trumpet theme from the old third book and wrote a new third movement from that idea, and finally made substantial changes and additions to the old second book to make the fourth and final movement. After all the changes the piece looks a whole lot like a little symphony, now don't it?

Considering that this is my personal vision of what music intended for mass consumption would be in a more ideal world, I've allowed myself to allow the influence of jazz and blues in a rather obvious manner. However this, as all of my music, is strictly in the classical tradition, with no improvisation, and to be treated in the same way as other "serious" art music—even, and perhaps especially, when it's intended to be for fun.

## Performance Notes

The Double Bass part is intended for an amplified acoustic bass, as there are bowed passages. An electric bass may replace it only as a last resort. The guitar (not used in the first movement) may be an amplified acoustic or electric instrument; remember that I have the classical guitar sound in mind. For proper balance the flute and clarinet will probably need to be amplified; this may also be required for the piano.

If an electronic keyboard is used it should use a concert grand piano sound except for the second movement, where other sounds may be appropriate (such as harp). There are no drums or percussion in this piece: the only suitable drums would be timpani, generally not available with jazz bands, despite their potential utility on the road for cooking large quantities of food for the band.