

Vida is the second album by the impressive 17-piece big band. The Cassio Vianna Jazz Orchestra is filled with some of the top jazz artists from Washington State. All eight compositions on this release were written, arranged and orchestrated by its leader.

The opener, "Tocando a Vida," features guest altoist Eric Marienthal, who is heard in top form. The happy piece, originally written for Vianna's Brazilian jazz trio, has plenty of spirit and rousing ensembles. "Sea-Song," which is about the unpredictable life and difficulties of being an immigrant, is a jazz waltz with fine solos by trumpeter Michael Van Bebber and the versatile guitarist Brian Monroney. The excitement of flying from Rio de Janeiro to Portland to start a new life is conveyed on "Flight 962," a stirring arrangement that features trombonist Conner Eisenmenger and altoist Mark Taylor. A contrast is offered in the romantic "Unwritten Letter" which has melodic spots for pianist David Lee Joyner and soprano-saxophonist Tom Bergeron.

Throughout Vida, Cassio Vianna's writing is melodic, generally utilizes rhythms that reflect his Brazilian heritage, and features ensembles that are colorful and accessible while being a bit unpredictable. On the uptempo "Scrabble," he switches to bebop, devising a relative of "How High The Moon" and "Ornithology" while giving solo space to tenors Alexey Nicolaev and Kareem Kandi, trumpeter Carter Eng, and pianist David Lee Joyner. "In Her Garden" has a welcoming melody, original chord changes, and warm ensembles. "Choro For My Boys" pays tribute to Brazilian music of the late 19th century while "Mistlike," which has particularly warm playing by flugelhornist Jared Hall and pianist Joyner, is a heartfelt ballad that closes the memorable program.

It is no surprise that the musicians in the orchestra sound consistently inspired by the writing on Vida. Cassio Vianna is a talented big band arranger and composer who deserves to be much better known. Fans of modern big bands will enjoy Vida.

~Scott Yanow