

CAROLINA PERFORMING ARTS

THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA SEPTET WITH WYNTON MARSALIS

The Democracy! Suite

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

PERFORMANCE BENEFACTORS Sharon and Doug Rothwell

The Democracy! Suite
Wynton Marsalis, b. 1961

“Be Present”

“Sloganize, Patronize, Realize,
Revolutionize (Black Lives Matters)”

“Ballot Box Bounce”

“That Dance We Do (That You
Love Too)”

“Deeper Than Dreams”

“Out Amongst the People (for J Bat)”

“It Come ‘Round ‘Gin”

“That’s When All Will See”

Wynton Marsalis, trumpet,
music director

Ted Nash, alto and soprano
saxophones, flute

Walter Blanding, tenor and
soprano saxophones, clarinet

Elliot Mason, trombone

Dan Nimmer, piano

Carlos Henriquez, bass

Obed Calvaire, drums

PROGRAM NOTES

The product of New Orleans musical royalty and a tireless promoter of Black culture, trumpeter/composer/bandleader Wynton Marsalis is as close to a household name as modern Jazz has produced. Beginning with his apprenticeship with Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers to his breakout as a solo star in the 80s, Marsalis has spent decades upholding the rich musical traditions of Bebop, Big Band and New Orleans Jazz, European Classical and the Blues.

An ambitious and thoughtful composer and bandleader, Marsalis is no stranger to producing complex works that address the darkest and most transcendent aspects of American history, as well as the socio-political challenges we face today. In 1985, Marsalis would release his GRAMMY Award-winning album *Black Codes (From the Underground)*. Later his 1996 work *Blood on the Fields* would go on to become the

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first jazz composition ever to win a Pulitzer Prize. 1997's *All Rise* was a celebrated work performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and a 100-voice choir while 2007's *From the Plantation to the Penitentiary* delved deep into the heart of American racism, politics, and the entertainment industry.

For his latest longform work, *The Democracy! Suite*, Marsalis once again uses Jazz as a tool to speak to the major issues of the day. Composed by Marsalis during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis as a response to the political, social, and economic struggles facing our nation, *The Democracy! Suite* taps into decades of Black American musical tradition to produce a poignant and sweeping commentary on the state of the country and the many challenges that we face. In the nationwide lockdown ordered as a result of Covid-19, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra Septet convened to record *The Democracy! Suite* in The Appel Room at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall in New York City. The piece was released as a digital album by Blue Engine Records.

Marsalis once famously stated that "Jazz music is the perfect metaphor for democracy." With its emphasis on creativity, spontaneity and shared responsibility through intentional musical interplay, it's not hard to see why he draws that conclusion. In the way that Jazz acts as an open space for both individual genius and collective action and collaboration, the music gives us a window into the best aspects of the human mind and nature. Jazz gives human beings a model for behaving and creating together. In that way, *The Democracy! Suite* is a truly democratic affair, with Wynton Marsalis (trumpet), Ted Nash (alto and soprano saxophone and flute), Walter Blanding (tenor and soprano saxophone and clarinet), Elliot Mason (trombone), Dan Nimmer (piano) and Carlos Henriquez (bass) each musician listening intently and using their individual talents and ability to contribute to the greater whole.

"Be Present"

A bright and swinging introduction to the proceedings, the piece's exuberant main theme draws the audience in immediately. Marsalis and Mason's solos are particularly strong and the group's rhythmic and melodic interplay are exhilarating.

SOLOS: WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET), DAN NIMMER (PIANO), ELLIOT MASON (TROMBONE)

"Sloganize, Patronize, Realize, Revolutionize (Black Lives Matters)"

This powerfully titled song is a rich and fiery composition rooted in the spirit of the Blues. Walter Blanding's solo on tenor saxophone is bursting with fire and energy. The ensemble plays together beautifully, and the entire piece captures the sound of revolution in the air.

SOLOS: WALTER BLANDING (TENOR SAXOPHONE), CARLOS HENRIQUEZ (BASS), OBED CALVAIRE (DRUMS), TED NASH (ALTO SAXOPHONE), WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET), ELLIOT MASON (TROMBONE)

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“Ballot Box Bounce”

A quick-tempoed tune featuring some truly dexterous playing, “Ballot Box Bounce” articulates the joy of participation. Marsalis opens with a darting, virtuosic solo; later, listen for Ted Nash’s solo on flute, which is rich, clear and elegant. The piece showcases the entire ensemble’s mastery at playing both contemporary and traditional styles.

SOLOS: WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET), TED NASH (FLUTE), WALTER BLANDING (TENOR SAXOPHONE), DAN NIMMER (PIANO), CARLOS HENRIQUEZ (BASS), OBED CALVAIRE (DRUMS)

“That Dance We Do (That You Love Too)”

Marsalis’s solo here is particularly bright and articulate, with the rest of the ensemble melding together beautifully. A subtle, grooving performance, “That Dance We Do” is a stunning piece of musical celebration in motion.

SOLOS: WALTER BLANDING (SOPRANO SAXOPHONE), ELLIOT MASON (TROMBONE), TED NASH (ALTO SAXOPHONE), DAN NIMMER (PIANO), CARLOS HENRIQUEZ (BASS), OBED CALVAIRE (DRUMS), WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET)

“Deeper Than Dreams”

Another rich and Blues-informed composition, “Deeper Than Dreams” is a slowly-paced and elegant tune with a world-weary atmosphere. The opening theme is heavy with emotion, while Nimmer’s solo on piano is particularly graceful. Bandleader Marsalis pours waves of emotion and spirit out of his horn.

SOLOS: WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET), TED NASH (ALTO SAXOPHONE), WALTER BLANDING (TENOR SAXOPHONE), ELLIOT MASON (TROMBONE), DAN NIMMER (PIANO)

“Out Amongst the People (for J Bat)”

A swinging and animated tune, “Out Amongst the People” perfectly articulates the joy of community and celebration. An endearing composition with stunning solos, this piece is brimming with hope and optimism. Obed Calvaire’s drumming and tambourine anchor the tune’s rhythm while Nimmer, Marsalis, and Nash play standout solos.

SOLOS: WALTER BLANDING (SOPRANO SAXOPHONE), OBED CALVAIRE (DRUMS AND TAMBOURINE), WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET), DAN NIMMER (PIANO), TED NASH (ALTO SAXOPHONE), ELLIOT MASON (TROMBONE)

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“It Come ‘Round ‘Gin”

A meditation on the nature of true change versus the mere repetition of old cycles, “It Come ‘Round ‘Gin” urges us to pay attention to the lessons from the past, in order to prepare ourselves for the challenges of today. Henriquez and Nimmer’s interplay is particularly strong here, while the rest of the ensemble carries the musical conversation with great energy and attention to detail.

SOLOS: WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET), TED NASH (ALTO SAXOPHONE), CARLOS HENRIQUEZ (BASS), WALTER BLANDING (TENOR SAXOPHONE), ELLIOT MASON (TROMBONE), DAN NIMMER (PIANO)

“That’s When All Will See”

The final composition of The Democracy! Suite. Here, the subtle thread of hope and optimism that runs through the entire program comes out in its full glory. Composed and performed in the style of great, traditional New Orleans Jazz, “That’s When All Will See” leaves us hopeful and electrified. Nimmer’s piano solo jumps into the forefront with ease and grace while Elliot Mason shines on trombone. The music prepares us for the promise of a brighter day, and serves as a fitting closing statement.

SOLOS: WYNTON MARSALIS (TRUMPET), TED NASH (ALTO SAXOPHONE), WALTER BLANDING (TENOR SAXOPHONE), ELLIOT MASON (TROMBONE), DAN NIMMER (PIANO)

Notes for this evening’s program were written by John Morrison, a freelance journalist from Philadelphia. He is a regular contributor to NPR’s All Songs Considered, and his work has appeared in publications like Bandcamp Daily and Jazz Tokyo. John is a voting member of the Grammy/Recording Academy and the host of Culture Cypher Radio, a monthly Hip Hop show aired on University of Pennsylvania’s public radio station, WXPB.