

THE DEMOCRACY! SUITE

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA SEPTET WITH WYNTON MARSALIS

THIS IS A TIME OF GREAT STRUGGLE FOR HEALTH, WEALTH, LIFE, AND LIBERTY.

A panorama of timeless national and international human rights dilemmas have been accelerated and surfaced by the pitiless glare of 2020. We are uncertain about how, where, and who we are. We need the healing insights of jazz. This music was born and raised in difficult times. It provides solutions to the central issue of our democracy and of our universal humanity: should we work together to create unlimited resources and agency for each other? Or should the strong exploit and control the weak?

Even the oldest jazz is relevant in this present moment because jazz is always on the side of human rights. The fight for freedom is in the sounds, rhythms, and voices of those singing horns and dancing drums that stretch back to the years immediately after the abolition of American slavery. Jazz is the spirit of Congo Square meets the intention of Constitution Hall.

From deep in the souls of those who put the foundations of this music in place sprang an entire sweep of collective creativity that would come to define the rights and responsibilities of our way of life. It was a powerful and provocative sound. It was and is and is still called—jazz. And though there are many more fans of the name than the music, only the actual music has that combination of insight, virtuosity, grit, soul, invention, honesty, and integrity that makes the sound of jazz like nature herself: sweet and pungent.

The Democracy! Suite is a non-polemical, instrumental composition inspired by the facts, feelings, and fictions of our current global situation. Written a few months into the Covid-19 lockdown, this piece addresses the drama, beauty, and ugliness of these times, but it is ultimately optimistic in tone and execution.

—WYNTON MARSALIS
JANUARY 2021







All compositions and arrangements by
Wynton Marsalis (Skayne's Music (ASCAP)).

1. BE PRESENT

Solos: Wynton Marsalis *trumpet*,
Dan Nimmer *piano*, Elliot Mason *trombone*

A piece inspired by citizens who have put their lives on the line working through this pandemic (whether by choice or not). It also recognizes the efforts of everyone who has chosen to enter the fray and fight for human freedoms, wherever and however they choose.

2. SLOGANIZE, PATRONIZE, REALIZE, REVOLUTIONIZE, (BLACK LIVES MATTERS)

Solos: Walter Blanding *tenor saxophone*,
Carlos Henriquez *bass*, Obed Calvaire *drums*,
Ted Nash *alto saxophone*, Wynton Marsalis
trumpet, Elliot Mason *trombone*

A slogan-chant-battle cry that has dominated the airwaves and the social space. Its intention is very clear but the facts of it all remain shrouded in mystery. Is it an organization, a philosophy, a call to arms, a call for justice,

or all of the above? Used and obscured by all sides to mean whatever they want it to mean, it has illuminated, excited, and exacerbated the multiple segregated fault lines that corrupt of our way of life. Will this be a passing slogan used to patronize and move on? Or will we realize a bloodless revolution by changing the laws and mechanics that allow unarmed citizens to be slain by peace officers who lie beyond the arm of the same justice they are sworn to uphold?

3. BALLOT BOX BOUNCE

Solos: Wynton Marsalis *trumpet*,
Ted Nash *flute*, Walter Blanding *tenor saxophone*, Dan Nimmer *piano*, Carlos Henriquez *bass*, Obed Calvaire *drums*

The Postmaster General is making mailboxes bounce away. It's like your fire chief being an arsonist. The to-and-fro of Swing is applied to our national vote. Some want you to vote; others want you to stay away. Haha—it's ironic, funny, and difficult to play. Prohibition created more drinkers; these preventative actions will create more voters.

4. THAT DANCE WE DO (THAT YOU LOVE TOO)

Solos: Walter Blanding *soprano saxophone*, Elliot Mason *trombone*, Ted Nash *alto saxophone*, Dan Nimmer *piano*, Carlos Henriquez *bass*, Obed Calvaire *drums*, Wynton Marsalis *trumpet*

I listen closely to the different music in all the various protests, in person and over the international airwaves. There are so many grooving beats accompanying the varying slogans and chants and... and always people with tambourines. Where do all of these tambourines come from? This movement is a recognition of *them* and of *us* getting out and gettin' down for our beliefs, rights, and responsibilities.

5. DEEPER THAN DREAMS

Solos: Wynton Marsalis *trumpet*, Ted Nash *alto saxophone*, Walter Blanding *tenor saxophone*, Elliot Mason *trombone*, Dan Nimmer *piano*

Many of us have lost loved ones to Covid-19 and didn't have the chance to say goodbye in person. So they are forced to come to you from

the spirit world and sit with you. Their presence allows you to grieve slowly and completely. So many people say they just can't sleep. It is a profound, holistic pain that can only be assuaged in a realm that is deeper than dreams.

6. OUT AMONGST THE PEOPLE (FOR J BAT)

Solos: Walter Blanding *soprano saxophone*, Obed Calvaire *drums and tambourine*, Wynton Marsalis *trumpet*, Dan Nimmer *piano*, Ted Nash *alto saxophone*, Elliot Mason *trombone*

Musicians are trying to stay active in this period. Many of my younger students call me to come and play at this protest or the other. Invariably, they tease me about my age and so on—"Climb up out of that jar of formaldehyde and join us out here, man." I love pianist and entertainer Jonathan Batiste. He has always been about getting in front the people and serving to uplift the entire community. I saw a picture of him playing with drummer Joe Saylor and other members of the Stay Human band, surrounded by people with masks. They were all grooving and doing their thing in the name of freedom. It was pure inspiration to see our younger musicians engaged with the fundamental





principles of democracy. For every call I got saying “Let’s get out there!” and in the festive spirit of J Bat, I wrote this.

7. IT COME ROUND ‘GIN

Solos: Wynton Marsalis *trumpet*, Ted Nash *alto saxophone*, Carlos Henriquez *bass*, Walter Blanding *tenor saxophone*, Elliot Mason *trombone*, Dan Nimmer *piano*

Is this actual change or a wash cycle that will soon pass until the next time we have to “let a little pressure out of the system”? Time will tell. This is what old wise people say whenever you ask a question about a current crisis: “I remember a time when so and so happened—and it come round ‘gin.” Maybe—maybe not. In the words of great American historian Geoffrey Ward, “History doesn’t repeat itself, people do.”

8. THAT’S WHEN ALL WILL SEE

Solos: Wynton Marsalis *trumpet*, Ted Nash *alto saxophone*, Walter Blanding *tenor saxophone*, Elliot Mason *trombone*, Dan Nimmer *piano*

It’s easy to look away from human tragedies that befall others. Bad things that happen to

“them” do not affect “us.” Sometimes, when “we” become “them” and circumstances leave us with no other option, we are forced to see. Then, as a matter of survival, we come together and act for the good of a larger community.

After 9/11 and in the aftermath of Katrina, we saw a national awakening and a mutual productivity for the benefit of those trying to recover. This we also saw after the murder of George Floyd.

Propaganda is powerful and illusions are comforting. They allow feelings to override facts. Every now and then, a reality is so inescapable that fabrications fall and facts make themselves evident. For some, this is very painful. For others, it is cause for celebration. This song is celebration. A parade for some future time when we won’t need tragedy to make us see how interconnected we all are; we won’t need death and destruction to force meaningful, intelligent, and humanistic change. Let’s see.



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WITH WYNTON MARSALIS

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, tambourine

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