

## The Jungle (Symphony No. 4)

### Wynton Marsalis

Wynton Marsalis scarcely requires an introduction to audiences at David Geffen Hall, so abundant and influential has been his presence at Lincoln Center over the years. In 1987 he co-founded a jazz program that by 1996 had grown into a full-fledged constituent organization, Jazz at Lincoln Center. He now serves as its artistic director and as music director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. But that hardly begins to describe the breadth of Marsalis's activities at America's premier performing arts complex. He embodies the spirit of inter-organizational involvement that was imagined by Lincoln Center's founders. For New York City Ballet he composed *Jazz: Six Syncopated Movements* and *Them Twos*. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center has commissioned two works from him, introducing the string quartet *At the Octoroon Balls* in 1995 and then, three years later, *A Fiddler's Tale* (inspired in part by Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*). He also serves as director of the Juilliard Jazz Studies program.

Lincoln Center itself commissioned his *Blood on the Fields*, a vast, three-and-a-half-hour oratorio that, in its revised version, was awarded the 1997 Pulitzer Prize for Music. In 2001 the New York Philharmonic presented a section of that work on a joint concert with Jazz at Lincoln Center, and in 2005 it included his composition titled #8 in a joint concert with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, in a benefit performance scheduled in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. At the end of 1999, the New York Philharmonic joined with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the Morgan State University Choir to perform the World Premiere of a work

commissioned from Marsalis by the Philharmonic, *All Rise*, an evening-length work that represented a symphonic expansion of the idea of the blues. The composer commented:

The piece was intended to extend the continuum of jazz / symphonic orchestra collaborations foretold by Dvořák, initiated by Ellington and Gershwin, and furthered by Bernstein and Schuller. It expresses an unshakable belief that our humanity will triumph, that joy can be every bit as profoundly meaningful as pain and that optimism is a more heroic perspective than cynicism or apathy.

In 2010 the New York Philharmonic performed the premiere of Marsalis's *Swing Symphony* (Symphony No. 3), whose five movements reference various strands of jazz that fed into the style of swing. Now it introduces his *The Jungle* (Symphony No. 4), which is a wary, unvarnished ode to New York City. Marsalis has written:

New York City is the most fluid, pressure-packed, and cosmopolitan metropolis the modern world has ever

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### IN SHORT

**Born:** October 18, 1961, in New Orleans, Louisiana

**Resides:** in New York City

**Work composed:** 2016, on commission from the New York Philharmonic to commemorate the Orchestra's 175th Anniversary

**World premiere:** these performances

**Estimated duration:** ca. 45 minutes

seen. The dense mosaic of all kinds of people everywhere doing all kinds of things encourages you to “stay in your lane,” but the speed, freedom and intensity of our relationships to each other — and to the city itself — forces us onto a collective super highway unlike any other in our country.

Like *All Rise*, it utilizes chorus-formatted forms, blues-tinged melodies, jazz and fiddle improvisations, and a panorama of vernacular styles. *The Jungle*, however, is darker in tone and in perspective. It considers the possibility that we may not be up to overcoming the challenges of social and racial inequality, tribal prejudices, and

endemic corruption. We may choose to perish in a survival-of-the-fittest, asphalt-jungle-style battle for what is perceived as increasingly scarce resources, instead of coming together to create unlimited assets and to enjoy the social and cultural ascendancy that our form of democracy makes conceivable.

**Instrumentation:** three flutes (one doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling English horn), three clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings.

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## The Work at a Glance

Wynton Marsalis has provided this guide to the movements of *The Jungle* (Symphony No. 4):

**The Big Scream (Black Elk Speaks)** represents nervous energy, the primal soul of our city as maintained across time. It reflects on our Native American roots and the many forms of strife we have endured in an attempt to negotiate this small space with and without each other.

**The Big Show** evokes the brash, brassy, razzle-dazzle of our city. It is the feeling of ragtime, of Broadway, and the European immigrant’s transition to New Yorker through the syncopated spirit of the early 20th-century dance, animal movements like the turkey trot and fox trot.

**Lost in Sight (Post-Pastoral):** Everywhere we turn we see the homeless, the dispossessed, the out of luck, and the love-lost. In the midst of staggering wealth, we house a large population who can’t survive. They are ubiquitous and invisible. Their presence connects us to the 19th century and our legacy of slavery.



Wynton Marsalis

**La Esquina:** Hispanic sounds and rhythms have pressed an indelible groove into the character of the city. Afro-Latin culture is a foundation of New York life and our city has inspired some of its greatest music.

**Us:** Although we are gritty and brusque by day, we can also be romance, elegance, and sophistication by night. “Us” is what it means to be with, against, and up against another.

**Struggle in the Digital Market:** The city is driven ever forward by more and more profit and the myth of unlimited growth for the purpose of ownership and seclusion. Some form of advertisement occupies every available space. The struggle asks, “Will we seek and find more equitable long-term solutions ... or perish?”