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## » The Music of America: Wynton Marsalis

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Wynton Marsalis brings you this self-curated collection for The Music of America series. This 2-CD set blends the diverse musical languages that personify this unique American artist and composer. The compositions are performed by a diverse group of musicians including the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orion String Quartet, musicians from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and members of The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in various configurations. Speaking through the voice of a bluesman, parishioner, sophisticate, slave, griotor philosopher, Marsalis bring an eye of a musical historian as he takes us through a musical journey of some of his most outstanding works. This collection truly personifies Marsalis as the formidable trumpet player, the world-class composer and an extraordinary contributor to The Music of America.

### Track Listing

#### CD 1

#### Liner Notes

Yes and Love. These two words summon the affirmation and arc of intention, and the meaning and values at the core of Wynton Marsalis's oeuvre, a small sample of which is contained on this two-disc set. When you listen, other words will bubble to the surface, other metaphors and images will arise. Nouns like "America" – rural to city, farming to high-tech, white and black and the spectrum of colors of the spiral rainbow – will be evoked. Marsalis's music also registers an emotional spectrum, from the sensual slow drags to the in-the-pocket mid-tempo to the high-velocity-jet swing. You'll also find down-home timbres, horns with bite and sass, plus strings that sing and sting with a fiddler's edge.

The music in this collection covers only a thirteen-year period in a career that spans three decades, yet the scope and range of aesthetic content encompasses the sweep of a century of jazz tradition and modern innovation. Several cuts on the first disc – "Express Crossing (Astride Iron Horses)," "Station Call" and "The Caboose" – explore the dead metaphor of Pullman porter and Amtrak trains, even harkening back to the Underground Railroad, yet reinvigorate the metaphor in light of high-speed rails. These compositions are the best train onomatopoeia since Ellington's many classics capturing the iron horse in sound.

"D in the Key of F" captures the Yes and Love of romance and intimacy between couples, alto and tenor sax alternating conversational choruses, ending in an embrace of harmony. Another number, "Jump," swings with the verve of the best of the big bands of yesteryear. Marsalis's trumpet mentor, Harry "Sweets" Edison, rises to the occasion, showing the young men how it's

done. Edison was a member of the Count Basie Orchestra that came swingin' out of Kansas City in the 1930s.

"Fiddler's March," a response to Stravinsky's *A Soldier's Tale*, is exemplary of the way Marsalis incorporates classical composers into his aesthetic statements and counter-statements. "Hellbound Highball" demonstrates this engagement with European tradition more explicitly in string quartet format. "Go, Possum, Go" recalls the days of Davy Crockett, in an American slave fiddling context, through violin master Mark O'Connor, who, like Marsalis, reflects Anglo- and Afro-American traditions in his music.

The penultimate song on the first disc appropriates the march beat so fundamental to jazz and Western music. The last composition captures the spiritual optimism, the Yes and Love, of "I Am." Both are from Marsalis's 2002 engagement with a jazz quartet, a vocal choir and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, *All Rise*.

The second disc opens with the ultra-modern "The Majesty of the Blues," followed by "The Dance," an invitation to waltz along in triple meter, to modulate and break, and to flow in ensemble groove. But the reverie is interrupted by the tragic awareness of man's inhumanity to humankind, by the lurching of slave ships on the rocky Atlantic. From *Blood on the Fields* (Marsalis's epic piece, recorded by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, which garnered a Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1997), we see through hearing the tale of a man and woman captivated with each other as captives. "Move Over," said the woman, yet really desiring for him to "come close to me, touch me" because although they were enslaved externally, she tried to teach him how to live in spite of a bad situation.

This American tragedy, this tale of irony – freedom's grounding in unfreedom – and the romance and adventure of life still amounts to a Yes, an affirmation of life. But to affirm life we also say "No" to "Soul for Sale" –an allusion to Cole Porter's "Love for Sale," with likewise jaunty music contrasted by the harsh reality of the lyrics. We affirm life anyway by signifyin' and scattin', by declaring "We gonna swing anyway!" Even with tears, Yes. With the blues, Yes. With tenacity, discipline, integrity, and with what Marsalis calls soul: "to give without want." Yes. And to Love, to give without seeking in return. Yes.

Do you yet wonder how and why Yes, and when and where Love? The fourth cut, where the heroic soloist is supported by the ensemble bosom of the democratic process, shows a way, as "Double Rondo on the River (Pedro's Getaway)" swings the forward motion and drive of jazz. This is the feeling of players and listeners immersed in a purification ritual, the spirit of regeneration in the midst of tragedy. To complete the cycle of life, you also need romance, the sweet embrace of life captured in the tenderness of "Spring Yaoundé," whereby a ritual of fertility conceives springtime. That's the Saturday Night Function.

On Sunday morning, from the solemnity of the "Altar Call" to the jubilation of the "Holy

Ghost," you're in an Afro-American church service where you give glory to God in the Highest by shouting a joyful noise unto the Lord. You done worked hard all week, had a good time Friday and Saturday nights, so now's the time to rejuvenate through joy, to show gratitude for the blessing of life, of breath, of the senses, of time and space. Time to show appreciation for feeling in form, for the memory in sound that is music and all of God's gifts. Yes, Love.

Whereas a mournful "The Death of Jazz" taps into the very earliest of jazz traditions, the funeral and the parade, we ride the rollicking second line in the Crescent City with the final cut, "Oh, But on the Third Day." Guitarist and banjo player Danny Barker, who performed with, among others, Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet and Cab Calloway, shines here. Marsalis played in Barker's Fairview Baptist Church Brass Band when he was eight years old.

Wynton Marsalis's achievement as a composer for small and large groups has not been given

due consideration by so-called serious music critics. Similar to Duke Ellington, whose prolific production make assessing his body of work a daunting task, Marsalis has written so much music encompassing such a panorama of styles, genres, grooves and feeling-tones that even a Ph.D in musicology is no guarantee of proper critical judgment. In 1999 alone, he came out with an average of one full recording per month. Who – in these days of pop flash and flesh, celebrity worship and corporate greed – does that? Who has the depth to plumb the entire American jazz tradition as if it's all good and new, and then connect it with music from Africa, Spain, France as well as the spicy flavors of the Mediterranean? Who is searching for the ineffable qualities of spiritual transcendence in the artistic objectives of jazz? Wynton Marsalis is foremost among them.

Perhaps his early celebrity, as a superb classical instrumentalist who also played precise jazz, overshadowed his compositional achievement. Benny Golson, one of the greatest jazz musicians and composers, puts this in perspective: “Wynton is fantastic. As a trumpet player, this guy did his homework. He used to play the classical literature, the Haydn Trumpet Concerto and what not. But when he started to write, everyone was so overwhelmed by the playing that they weren't aware of his writing. This guy has written symphonies, he won the Pulitzer Prize. He's been going forward ever since.”

We invite you to go forward also, with one foot in the past and the other pointing to the future, to bask in the music of Wynton Marsalis, so that you too will say: Yes, Love.

– Greg Thomas

Sidemen

CD 1

#1-2

Wynton Marsalis/Marcus Printup – trumpets

Wycliffe Gordon/Ron Westray – trombones

Todd Williams – tenor/soprano, clarinet

Wessell Anderson – alto/soprano saxophones

Victor Goines – baritone saxophone, bass clarinet

Kent Jordan – piccolo, flute

Eric Reed – piano

Reginald Veal – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

Robert Sadin – conductor

#3

Wynton Marsalis – conductor

Harry ‘Sweets’ Edison – trumpet solo

Ryan Kisor/Marcus Printup – trumpets

Wessell Anderson – alto/soprano saxophones

Victor Goines – tenor/soprano saxophones, clarinet

Ted Nash – tenor/soprano saxophones

Gideon Feldstein – baritone saxophone, bass clarinet

Wycliffe Gordon/Ron Westray – trombones

Kent Jordan – piccolo, flute

Eric Reed – piano

Ben Wolfe – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#4-5

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Farid Barron – piano

Rodney Whitaker – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

Roland Guerrero – percussion

Doug Wamble – guitar, banjo

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra

#6

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet, conductor

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra

#7

Mark O' Connor – mandolin, violin

Mark Schatz – bass, banjo

#8-9

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

Victor Goines – tenor/soprano saxophones, bass clarinet

Wycliffe Gordon – trombone

Eric Lewis/Marthaniel Roberts – pianos

Rodney Whitaker – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#11

Oriano String Quartet

Daniel Phillip/Todd Phillips – violin

Steven Tenenbom – viola

Timothy Eddy – cello

#12

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

David Shifrin – clarinet

Milan Turkovic – bassoon

David Taylor – trombone

Ida Kavafian – violin

Edgar Meyer – bass

Stefon Harris – percussion

#13-14

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra

The Paul Smith Singers

The Northridge Singers of California State University at Northridge

Morgan State University Choir

Esa-Pekka Salonen – conductor

CD 2

#1

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Marcus Roberts – piano

Todd Williams – tenor/soprano saxophones

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

Reginald Veal – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#2

Wynton Marsalis – conductor

Ryan Kisor/Marcus Printup – trumpets

Wessell Anderson – alto/soprano saxophones

Victor Goines – tenor/soprano saxophones, clarinet

Ted Nash – tenor/soprano saxophones

Gideon Feldstein – baritone saxophone, bass clarinet

Wycliffe Gordon/Ron Westray – trombones

Kent Jordan – piccolo, flute

Eric Reed – piano

Ben Wolfe – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#3

Cassandra Wilson – vocals

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

Victor Goines – e-flat clarinet

#4

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Marcus Roberts – piano

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

Herbert Harris/Todd Williams – tenor saxophones

Joe Temperley – baritone saxophone

Alvin Batiste/Dr. Michael White/Todd Williams – clarinet

Wycliffe Gordon – trombone

Reginald Veal – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#5

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Todd Williams – tenor/soprano saxophones

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

Wycliffe Gordon – trombone

Reginald Veal – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#6

Jon Hendricks – vocals

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet, conductor

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

James Carter – baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, clarinet

Victor Goines – tenor/soprano saxophones, clarinet, bass clarinet

Robert Stewart – tenor saxophone

Russell Gunn/Roger Ingran/Marcus Printup – trumpets

Wayne Goodman/Ron Westray – trombones

Michael Ward – violin

Wycliffe Gordon – trombone, tuba

Eric Reed – piano

Reginald Veal – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#7-8

Marion Williams – vocals

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

Wycliffe Gordon – trombone

Todd Williams – tenor/soprano saxophones

Reginald Veal – bass

Herlin Riley – drums

#9-10

Wynton Marsalis – trumpet 2nd, trumpet, mute

Marcus Roberts – piano

Todd Williams – tenor/soprano saxophones

Wessell Anderson – alto saxophone

Dr. Michael White – clarinet

Danny Barker – banjo

Teddy Riley – 1st trumpet

Freddie Lonzo – trombone

Reginald Veal – bass

Herlin Riley – drums