

Lomax

Bayard

Menefield

# Blues People

# Blues People

by Mark Lomax, II

## Movements

- I. Afrika
- II. Ma'afa (The Middle Passage)
- III. Prisoners Of War
- IV. Freedom|Reconstruction|KKK
- V. Civil Rights
- VI. Amerikkka
- VII. Freedom Ain't Free

Total run time 48 minutes

## Personnel

Mark Lomax, II -dr  
Edwin Bayard - ts  
William Menefield - p

Produced by Mark Lomax, II  
Recorded at Relay Recording Studios  
(Columbus, Ohio) January 24, 2016  
Engineered by Jon Fintel  
Edited & Mixed by Mark Lomax, II & Jon Fintel  
March 6, 2016  
Mastered by Mark Lomax, II & Jon Fintel  
April 1, 2016  
Liner Notes and Cover Design by Mark Lomax, II  
Photography William Menefield, Jason Wood &  
Charles Hairston

Mark plays RBH Drums exclusively.  
[www.rbhdrumsusa.com](http://www.rbhdrumsusa.com)

[www.marklomaxii.com](http://www.marklomaxii.com)  
[www.cfgmultimedia.com](http://www.cfgmultimedia.com)



# Notes on the music...

In 1963 LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) published one of the seminal texts on the music of Afrikans in America. *'Blues People'* offered a critical analysis of the important role music plays in African American culture as a primary testament of a peoples will to survive. Jones suggests that the music evolved as the people did, and while the Blues grew in complexity to become "jazz" it, like the culture from which it sprang, never lost its essence.

Descendants of Afrika in America are those who, because of the dubious institution of chattel slavery were separated from their culture, their homeland, their people, and their gods, have become ethnically Black. The trials and tribulations that came as a result of their servitude birthed one of the worlds greatest musical expressions manifested in two branches of the same tree, the Blues and the Spiritual. The Spiritual is a musical prayer to the God of an oppressed people. It signified the belief that there would be peace after this terrible life was over. On the other hand, the Blues embodies the here and now reflecting the harsh and inhumane reality of subjugation in America. It is within the ever present oppressive reality of Blacks in America that the Spiritual and the Blues continue to have relevance and power.

Today the threat of racism/white supremacy is as powerful and as present as it was 400 years ago. In the era of #BlackLivesMatter, Afrika's children, particularly the Blues People in America, are still fighting for freedom, still struggling for human rights, and still working to redefine their humanity. Drawing inspiration from Jones, Lomax has created a piece reflective of the Duboisian concept of double consciousness, at once simplistic and complex. Lomax's 'Blues People' is a seven movement composition that draws from the familiar "simplicity" of Negro Spirituals (sacred Blues) and the complexity of free improvisation of the avant-garde jazz period to create a powerful musical narrative of the ongoing African American struggle for identity, power, and Human rights.

Dr. Mark Lomax, II  
Columbus, Ohio  
January 2016



William, Edwin, and Mark premiering 'Blues People' at the Short North Stage in Columbus, Ohio as part of the August Wilson Festival. Concert underwritten by the Johnstone Fund for New Music.

*Blues People: an album by Dr. Mark A. Lomax. II*

“Negro music is always radical in the context of formal American culture.” — Amiri Baraka

This quote, taken from the closing lines of his seminal work, *Blues People*, poignantly sums up the role of Black music in American culture and history. We are essentially outsiders looking in on a society that from that most heinous act in 1619\* has deemed us as *other*. Written in 1963, *Blues People* was the first work to discuss Black music from the perspective of an actual Black author. Instead of the long-held scholarly tradition of merely discussing musical genres, individuals, and the like, Amiri Baraka (born LeRoi Jones) chose to illustrate the evolution of Black music in America from slavery to present day and sought to illustrate how the music *is* the history and identity of Black America.

The work was written at the cusp of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s which, in part, attempted to reinvigorate Black American society with a stronger sense of self-worth and identity through the Arts. This movement coincided with the climax of the Civil Rights and burgeoning Black Power movements, as well as the Jazz Avant-garde. Where the Harlem Renaissance exemplified a sense of Black aristocratic

---

\*1. There are several dates that indicate when slavery first began in the continental United States but one of the more concrete and widely accepted is that of the first slaves being bought and sold in Jamestown, VA in 1619.

equality to its white counterparts of the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Blacks Arts Movement, et al. were movements for the people.

Blues People is less music treatise than a cultural philosophy that seeks to define stages in evolution of the Black American (he used American Negro) from his roots in Africa through the subsequent generations; each generational step resulting in a new musical form of expression. The music of Black America is viewed as reactionary to the socio-political climate of the particular era, but also an important factor in creating a sense of Black-American identity that has endured through to the new millennia.

From a historical perspective, Baraka separates the Black-American experience into three distinct categories. Below is a summary of what Baraka termed the *Transmutation of the African Slave in America*.

1. *African*: This represents the first slaves brought to America. These people retain all of their Africanisms including (but not limited to) language, history, culture, and most importantly identity. Their musical output were traditional African songs, field hollers, ring shouts and work songs.
2. *Afro-American*: This stage represented the first few American-born generations of slaves in America. They are defined as a people who are losing many of their Africanisms (as many of the original generation have died). Language has been replaced by English and in certain regions mixtures of

French, Spanish, and Portuguese. Their musical output is that of the Spiritual. Baraka asserts the Spiritual is the first true American invention. As the slave master began incorporating religious conversion as part of the process of control, the Slave took solace and strength in the teachings of the Bible.

It is through the religious services that the slave adapted what remained of their African musical heritage with the music of the various Christian denominations that found their ways to the South such as: Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian. The Spiritual would find itself evolving from its folk roots to a more concertized version in 1871 thanks to George L. White of Fisk University.

3. American Negro: This is the final stage as Baraka had envisioned and it encompasses all the generations from roughly Reconstruction to the present. It is defined by a people who now consider themselves “American” and subsequently Africa is considered a foreign land. The musical output can be said to incorporate every musical genre created (in whole or part) by Black Americans beginning with the Blues (a genre that can be considered merely a secular Spiritual), and this thing called Jazz\*.

---

\*2. I refer to it as this “thing called Jazz” because it was a term forced upon the music and musicians by critics and journalists in white America and was able to take hold.

If there is one take away from this remarkable work (and there are many) it is the fact that one of, if not, the most powerful abilities of the Black in America is that of adaptation. It was and remains the ability of the Black American to adapt to a given situation and make something new. We see it in the traditional foods created out of slavery. It is evident in religious practices. We see it in language (Patois, Creole etc). And most relevant to this case is in the music: it was the ability to adapt the music of a plethora of sources that resulted in the rich musical history we have today.

The issue at present is one of identity. How does one view themselves or rather, how does society view us as individuals?

Dr. Mark A. Lomax, II is rooted in the Black aesthetic. He was born and raised in a traditional *Black* upbringing: the neighborhoods, the traditional church, the cultural milieu of urban Black America, and of course the music that encompasses it all. But beyond the *confines* of the Black aesthetic, Dr. Lomax’s musical identity surpasses that of *Black this* or *Black that*.

The systematic problem within American society is the incessant need to have qualifying labels and consequently those labels defining an individual’s entire identity. Dr. Lomax is a Black composer and therefore his music *sounds* not only *Black* but in addition and by extension it means his music is inherently *jazz*. This is a statement he has come all-too familiar with and wholly rejects, in much the same way as “this music *is* feminine because the composer is a woman” etc. But to





Mark Lomax, II

pigeon-hole an individual into one particular category based solely on the color of their skin (or gender, orientation, ethnicity, religion, etc) is naïve, counterproductive, and inherently ignorant.\* What exactly is a Black sound? Is it particular harmonies? Or perhaps melodies? Is it the use of improvisation? Or the heavy use of call-and-response? The problem with all of these defining questions is that there are a plethora of musical cultures throughout the world that use the same musical elements. Furthermore, if you did not know him to be Black would you automatically label Dr. Lomax's music as being such?

The point I am attempting to make is that Dr. Lomax is a composer in the truest sense of the word whose musical influences far exceed that of traditional *Black* genres. His music represents that wonderful ability to adapt a plethora of seemingly disparate musical languages into one cohesive sound. In this sense, Dr. Lomax is the epitome of a 21<sup>st</sup> century composer. This is the essence of his homage to Amiri Baraka.

*Blues People* is essentially a seven-movement journey through the history of Black America: each movement representing an evolutionary step in the history of the Black American as ascribed by Baraka. The entire work is

---

\*3. It must be stated that *jazz* as a term has often been debated and rejected by many of the greatest musicians of the genre including the likes of : Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane and many more.

seamless, transitioning smoothly from one movement to the next. This should not be overlooked as it is one of the several philosophical/cultural “easter eggs” that Lomax incorporates throughout the work. The seamlessness represents the evolution of the Black-American experience and how each stage is inherently linked.

Dr. Lomax often utilizes a three-part through-composed form throughout much of this work.

## 1. Afrika

### Part 1

*Blues People* begins (as it should) with the drum. It is with the drum that the African gained strength, retained his history, prepared for war, communicated, identified with etc. And it was the drum that was the first to be widely confiscated as a means of control by the slave master upon the African's introduction to the *new world*.

Dr. Lomax introduces us to a repeated motif with tuned drums. With every repetition the motif expands eventually giving the listener the full statement of the tuned-drum melody. Simple in nature, the melody consists of a call-and-response between the high and low-pitched drums. The rhythmic patterns become more complex and intense as the movement transitions to the next section.

### Part 2

The drums continue its frenetic pace as we are introduced first to the piano then the tenor saxophone. The piano plays a





Edwin Bayard

repeated three-chord motive that underpins the harmonic progression for the remainder of Part 2. The tenor saxophone fades in with a spiritual-esque melody and improvised solo reminiscent of Albert Ayler's spirituals renditions of the mid to late 1960s. Additionally, the tenor saxophone shows off one of his influences being that of John Coltrane in the heavy use of Coltrane's *sheets of sound* technique (this will become a common occurrence in the saxophone solos throughout the work).

### Part 3

As the Tenor saxophone fades the piano becomes the focal point. The three-chord vamp gradually expands into a carefully and beautifully constructed solo. As the solo progresses the rhythmic feel of the movement shifts toward a more Afro-Cuban construction. The harmonic modulation signals the transition to the second movement of the work.

## 2. Ma'afa

### Part 1

This movement begins with a controlled chaos reminiscent of Coltrane's Acknowledgement. The incorporation of multiphonics and modal passages hints at an evolutionary shift. Both the drums and tenor saxophone fade out.

### Part 2

The piano section is a three-part solo. The first section is an homage to blues with Ravel-ian and Debussy-an harmonic language interspersed. The second section is an octave-unison

melodic pattern. The rich chordal harmonies return in section three introducing the listener to a new harmonic language altogether minor and modal in nature.

### Part 3

The drums and saxophone reenter to continue this new harmonic section. The trio create a synthesis of disparate styles: the drums are metrically free and frenetic; the piano plays chordal accompaniments in a more controlled fashion; the tenor saxophone utilizes harmonic resolutions to ground the listener in this harmonic saturation. Part 3 builds in intensity as it moves to the climax of the movement and ultimate transition to movement 3.

## 3. Prisoners of War

The drums and piano now fade out allowing the tenor saxophone to perform a soulfully bluesy unaccompanied solo interspersed with multiphonics and sheets of sound all culminating in a poignant and eerie sense of loneliness.

## 4. Freedom[Reconstruction]KKK

### Part 1

This movement begins in the piano. It is a harmonic homage to the Spiritual which Baraka asserted was the first true American invention.

### Part 2

Dr. Lomax reminds the listener that history and the music is connected by reintroducing the listener to the tuned drum

passages from Afrika.

### Part 3

The spiritual duet gives way to frenetic chaos as the piano and drum set musically represent the uncertainty and horror represented by generations haunted by the KKK. We hear a familiar song of strength begin to interject itself as the piece transitions to the next movement.

### 5. Civil Rights

#### Part 1/Part2

The tenor saxophone plays the Civil Right's anthem *We Shall overcome* accompanied by a very simple chordal piano accompaniment. These two parts create a quasi theme and variations on the famous hymn. The two create a call-and — response duet while acting as both leader and follower.

### Part 3

The duet evolves into a saxophone solo acting as the “twilight” of the movement both literally and figuratively.

### 6. Amerikkka

This movement is powerful in its satire. The drums commence in a military cadence followed by a not-so-subtle rendition of *America the Beautiful*. Much like Jimi Hendrix's now legendary (infamous to some) interpretation of the *Star Spangled Banner* at the Woodstock Music and Arts Festival in the summer of 1969, Dr. Lomax turns what is considered by many to be America's second national anthem on its proverbial head by utilizing one of the 1960s most radical musical art forms in

the Avant-garde of Ornette Coleman, Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, AACM, and so many others. It is a powerful statement illustrating the militancy of the Black Power Movement of the 1960s while criticizing white America.

### 7. Freedom Ain't Free

The final transition into the moral of the work: Freedom Ain't Free. The finale brings back the entire trio. Dr. Lomax incorporates motivic material from throughout the work all the while displaying it within a new musical aesthetic. The style of this final movement is modern in its complexity and harmonic development and is far more conventional, and accessible than the previous movements.

Overall *Blues People* is as poignant as its literary predecessor. Updated for a modern audience it retells Baraka's treatise accurately and faithfully. I have been witness to the evolution of Dr. Mark A. Lomax's works for almost a decade. *Blues People* represents a musical vision that has become mature in its artistry and depth.

It is as true a representation of a 21<sup>st</sup> century composer.

Andrew. M Wesley, MM. MA.

Solano Community College in California.

April, 2016





William Menefield

# The Musicians

## Dr. Mark Lomax, II

Born January 23, 1979 in Blacksburg, Virginia to parents who were leading student religious activities on campus, his father, Dr. Mark Sr., would become a well known theologian and Cynthia, his mother, a teacher and composer of children's music. He began playing drums at two years old and was playing in church by age six. Lomax started playing jazz at fourteen and had recorded his first CD of original music by his 19th birthday. Mark has worked with Delfeayo Marsalis Sextet, Clark Terry, Marlon Jordan, Ellis Marsalis, Victor Goines, and has recorded with Billy Harper, Azar Lawrence, and Bennie Maupin. Dr. Lomax holds a Doctor of Music Arts degree from The Ohio State University and his myriad experiences have allowed him to create a wonderful blend of styles in his music.

## Edwin Bayard

Virtuoso tenor saxophonist, Bayard, is the son of bebop trumpeter Frank and mother Ascilla Bayard. He grew up listening to both jazz and hip-hop and began to craft an approach that showcases a unique blend of the two musical styles in his solos. Edwin was born on October 2, 1973 and became known for his skill on the alto saxophone early on. He studied at the Berklee School of music and has performed with Betty Carter, Wynton Marsalis, Azar Lawrence, Pharez Whitted, Ralph Peterson, and Marlon Jordan.

## Dr. William Menefield

Born a musical prodigy, Dr. Menefield entered this existence on May 28, 1980 to musical parents. His father Bruce is a saxophonist of reputation in Cincinnati, Ohio and his mother, Cynthia, is string specialist and principle of a local public school. William began on the cello, receiving private instruction from Norman Johns (Cincinnati Symphony) and attended the prestigious School for the Performing Arts. He was signed to J Curve records whilst in high school and released his debut recording 'Big Will Leaps In' to critical acclaim after which he developed a dislike for the way artists are treated in the industry and embarked on a career of excellence away from the mainstream. Dr. Menefield earned his Doctor of Music Arts from the University of Texas at Austin in composition.

## Ensemble History

Mark, William and Edwin have been performing together as an Ohio based quartet with bassist Dean Hulett since 2001. This, their first recording as a trio, comes after Dean moved to California.

## Thank U's

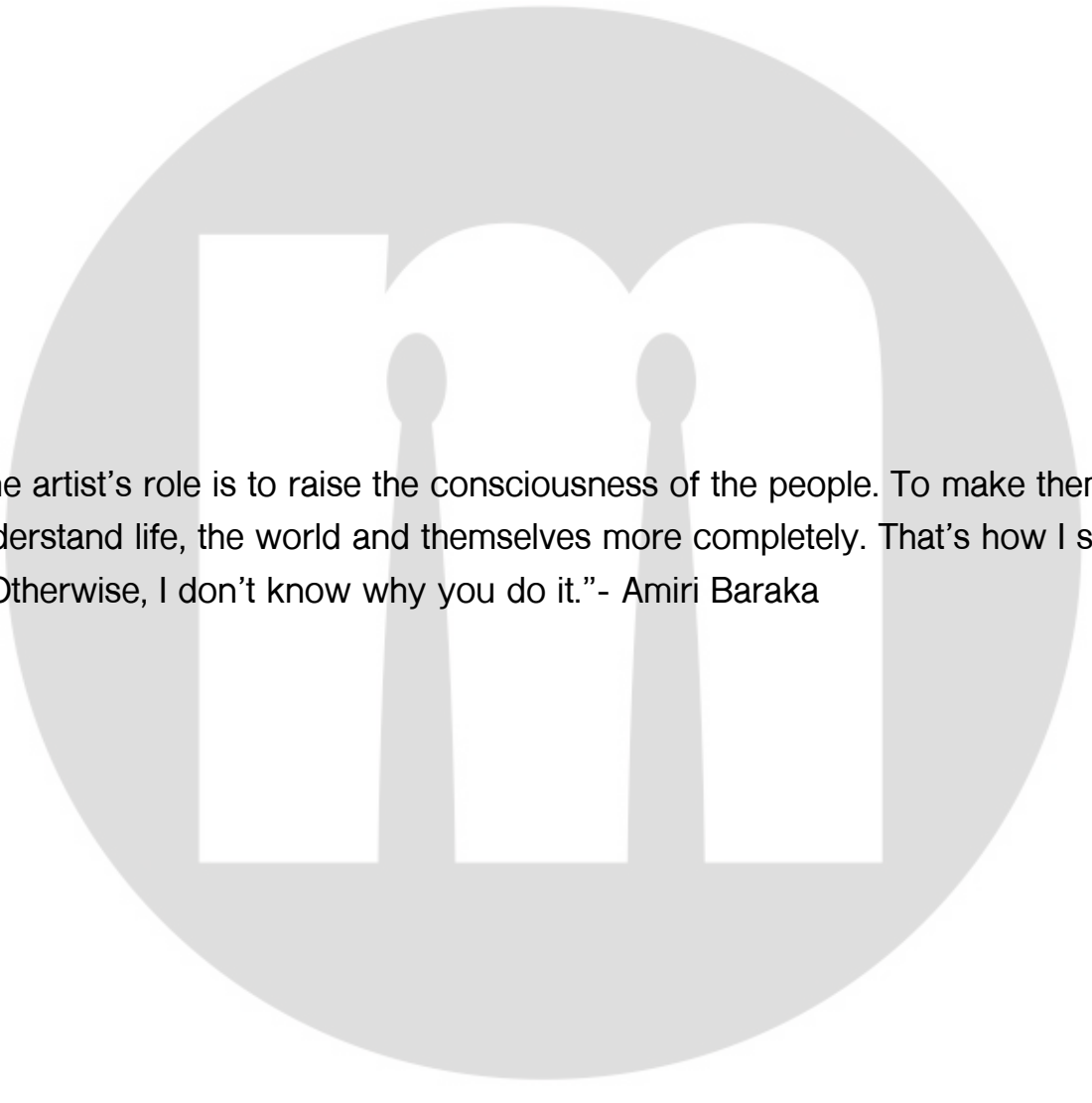
Mark Lomax, II - Thank you to the Creator for the gift of music, and the strength to push the boundaries of my gift. Thank you to Imamu Amiri Baraka for being your baad Black self, and for giving the world the concept of the Blues People. Your speaking truth to power to a younger me during our only meeting made a lasting impact. Thank you to my family and friends for allowing me to BE. Thank you to Eddie and Will for helping me push into the void.

William Menefield -

Edwin Bayard - Thanks to Kidd Jordan, David S. Ware, Odean Pope, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Monk, Mingus, Miles, Andy McGee, Gene Walker, Pharez Whitted, Ralph Peterson, Abby Bayard, Frank & Asila Bayard, Sun Ra, Willis Jackson, Frank Foster, John Gilmore, Stanley Turrentine, and all of Black music.







“The artist’s role is to raise the consciousness of the people. To make them understand life, the world and themselves more completely. That’s how I see it. Otherwise, I don’t know why you do it.”- Amiri Baraka

© 2015 © 2016 CFG Multimedia, LLC. Produced by Mark Lomax, II  
for CFG Multimedia, LLC. Warning: All Rights Reserved.  
Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.

