

WE THE PEOPLE is a musical conversation inspired by the Preamble to the Constitution and the ongoing fight for equity in America today. The four movements; Perfect Union, Justice, the Blessings of Liberty and Domestic Tranquility convey these key points from the perspective of an African American woman.

Composed using the whole tone scale, it offers a harmonic perspective that is often unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable. Composer Akua Dixon invites listeners to sit with the discomfort and discord and consider a different reality. Juxtaposing complex African-based rhythms with traditional European instruments, the composition reflects a true American experience - the blending of cultures.

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MOVEMENT 1 - Perfect Union: The composition starts with a dialogue between instruments and signify the difficult but necessary conversations needed to bring a perfect union to our nation. Emotions run high during notated solos where contrasting perspectives express ideas and feelings.

MOVEMENT 2 - Justice: Composed with a dreamlike feeling, this movement is an elusive fantasy as justice is still a dream for Black Americans today. The opening theme is written to include a breath of respectful silence for those lost to police brutality and wrongful incarceration.

MOVEMENT 3 - Blessings of Liberty: As justice is a fantasy, the blessings of liberty is a joyful celebration speaking to the hope of what is possible in America. For centuries, African Americans have worked to liberate themselves from a myriad of oppressions. This movement journeys through that process via the history of Black music in America. Starting with elements from an African musical tradition, Call and Response, its 12 bar form is reminiscent of the Blues. It evolves into a rousing ensemble chorus which stems from a writing technique utilized in Jazz.

MOVEMENT 4 - Domestic Tranquility: The composition culminates with an almost macabre, tritone statement, twisting and evolving as our nation continues to do. Settling into the rhythmic pulse of the Cello, this segment is reminiscent of the composers Heritage and the impetus of the chain gangs of yore.

It ends with an unanswered recapitulation of the main theme as Black American citizens are still asking “when?” and waiting for basic equal rights.

Speaking to the theme of Justice, Equality and Hope of the CityMusic Cleveland 2021 season, Composer Akua Dixon asks all participants in this work - performers, presenters and audience members - to continue the conversation beyond this colloquy.