



ART MECHANIX THRILLHARMONIC

# A STORY FOREWORD

SCENE SUMMARIES

[TEMPORARY ALBUM SUPPLEMENT]

- 01 Faust Approaches
- 02 Germs, Guns, and Steel
- 03 The Middle Passage
- 04 The New World
- 05 An Imperfect Union
- 06 Blossom
- 07 Southpaw
- 08 Gazelle
- 09 The Day I Chose My Name
- 10 Breath Breaks the Law
- 11 The Great Migration

- 12 Harlem Renaissance
- 13 Double V
- 14 Black Lotus
- 15 The Mountaintop
- 16 With the Quickness
- 17 Switched On
- 18 Grace in Gravity
- 19 Naturalista
- 20 My Country's Keeper
- 21 The Art of Creative Resistance
- 22 Scions of Tomorrowland

February 1, 2019

Thanks for purchasing *A Story Foreword*. It is a cinematic hip hop album, dance opera, and multimedia project that takes listeners on a journey through the African American experience, from the 1500s to the present. It is released in celebration of Black History Month and in remembrance of the 400th anniversary of beginning of the *uninterrupted* history; the first *documented* arrival of enslaved Africans in Virginia, in 1619.

This is a *temporary* scene list to accompany the album. A full companion eBook is currently in production and will be available for free download on the Art Mechanix website upon completion. Stay tuned to the website, mailing list and/or Instagram Stories for an update about its availability.

While the album can be enjoyed as a standalone work, it was conceived to be paired with the eBook. The completed book will contain an introduction, production credits, and extended summaries that give more context and detail about each period, plus a couple of short related essays. The book is the result of more than 10 years of research.

My presentation strives to combine this research and commentary in one source while providing factual information that has been repeatedly documented, offering explanations as to how and why events may have shaped the evolution of this story. I aim to offer a fresh perspective on the African American journey that corrects and expands upon information that has largely been omitted, re-written, oversimplified, or scattered among “official” histories. I also link that information together to draw logical conclusions within a reasonable and sensible context.

The book should be a fascinating read for the casual reader and even longtime history buffs. For now, I hope you enjoy this audio journey and learning a little bit about what motivated the writing and production of each track.

Best,

Jammes Lockett  
*Composer/Producer*  
Art Mechanix Thrillharmonic

Follow me on Instagram: @heartmechanix

## The Art Mechanix Thrillharmonic is:

Jammes Lockett — vocals, synthesizers, drum programming, guitars, orchestral and horn arrangements

All compositions written, performed, and produced by Jammes Lockett

©2004-2018 Pied Piper Lorre Musesick (ASCAP)

©2018 Art Mechanix Entertainment. All Rights Reserved.

Except:

*"An Imperfect Union" derives melody from the U.S. national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner" [Public Domain]. The song itself derives lyrics from a poem written by Francis Scott Key (1814) and melody from "To Anacreon in Heaven" (or "The Anacreontic Song") written by John Stafford Smith.*

*"The Mountaintop" contains audio excerpts from "I've Been to the Mountaintop" [Public Domain], the final speech written and delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 3, 1968 at the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee.*

*"The Mountaintop" derives lyrics and melody from "We Shall Overcome" [Public Domain], a traditional gospel and protest song that was derived from the lyrics and music of "If My Jesus Wills" written by Louise Shropshire (1930s, first published in 1942) and possibly also lyrics from "I'll Overcome Someday" written by Rev. Charles Albert Tindley (published in 1900).*

Recorded, mixed, and mastered by Jammes Lockett at Art Mechanix — Los Angeles, CA

---

Album art and booklet designed by Jammes Lockett — Inspired by the sleeve design of Kraftwerk's "Tour de France" single (1983). The woman is based upon the painting "Black Woman portrait" by Florin-Chis / DeviantArt: <http://www.florin-chis.deviantart.com/> .

## 01 FAUST APPROACHES

We open on the West Coast of Africa – life bustles with rich culture, technology, and commerce.

After years of sociopolitical transactions with African rulers who traded resources and indentured servants, the Portuguese begin to directly invade and raid many different West African kingdoms in the 1400s for the explicit purpose of colonization. They now sanction and employ African warlords and mercenaries to kidnap men, women, and children. Other European powers (as well as Middle Eastern and Asian) that have similarly built wealth using African gold, resources, and technology soon follow suit.

## 02 GERMS, GUNS, AND STEEL

Capitalism is born through the blood, sweat, and tears of captive human beings. Primarily using gold and other goods obtained through trades with Africans, relatively small northern European kingdoms quickly grow. After amassing great wealth and powerful weaponry, each is able to expand their empires in neighboring territories.

The Europeans have developed appetite for more land, wealth, and the power that comes with both, but they are limited in a sufficient population in order to generate this wealth. The vast size of the continent, abundance of valuable resources and a large, skilled population makes Africa a tempting destination for not only setting up new outposts of European empires on that land but also taking millions of its people and resources to other lands to build prosperous “new worlds”.

This undertaking requires methodical subjugation of the entire continent. A fairly small population is able to accomplish this by first sanctioning and employing African warlords and mercenaries to kidnap a large swath of villagers for the purpose of enslavement. Sometimes, the Europeans will raid villages themselves. In addition to much of its human population, Africa is ransacked of many of its most valuable natural resources.

Although most African kingdoms possess large and fierce armies, and are able to resist being overtaken for a time, the Europeans have the “luck” of introducing crippling and fatal diseases to the continent in addition to powerful guns and cannons. Eventually, with enough of its population wiped out from kidnapping, illness, maiming, or murder, most of the people of Africa can no longer fend off invasions.

The Europeans’ most powerful weapon, however, is one that still endures today – calculated psychology bolstered by pseudo science to erect and fuel a concept of white, male, Christian, Northern European supremacy.

The tactics and propaganda used creates lasting social, political, and economic imbalances that eventually extend across all racial and ethnic lines throughout the world but is primarily designed to create a hierarchy in which rights and privileges are doled out according to the lightness of one’s skin.

## 03 THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

A miles-long trek through the coast leads to a port. Branded, chained, and bound, bodies now lay deep in a pitch-black, cramped hull. Via the Atlantic ocean, this ship is making its way to what will become America.

This is a two-to-four month journey; Enveloped in arid heat, the stench of waste and death, dripping water, low food rations, and the uncertainty of what lies ahead.

Although Africans made their mark there at least since the 1500s, it was in the Spring of 1619 that the uninterrupted documented story of Africans in America begins.

Two English ships commissioned by the Dutch engage in piracy of a Portuguese ship who have themselves abducted 350 captives from the Kingdom of Ndongo. These two English frigates then kidnap 50 Africans and take them to Point Comfort in Hampton, Virginia, arriving on August 20th.

## 04 THE NEW WORLD

The Africans have come from a place that was home to a rich and advanced culture that influenced the entire world. Their homeland had diversity in languages, religions, traditions, and also musical practices. Back home, a person's status came from their actual role in society.

But now, the captives have arrived in a strange land in which status is solely determined by skin color.

This new land, too, was invaded; and the occupiers have replaced its complex native culture with one that primarily revolves around restrictions imposed by religion.

As such, young America was largely restrained of color, emotion, and flavor except in the homes of the wealthy who visited and brought back souvenirs from well-established cities such as Versailles, Paris, London, and Rome. These were otherwise "cow towns" centered around agriculture and woodcraft. Focused upon accumulating wealth.

The Africans begin to survive by taking colorful elements from their cultural traditions and experiences and covertly weaving them into a new culture that becomes quintessentially American (food, music, art, language).

African-descended populations in South and Central America will also similarly transform the cultures of societies in which they were enslaved – many commonalities in their shared ancestral traditions can still be spotted and felt through the modern lens.

## 05 AN IMPERFECT UNION

The captors declare war to free themselves from the tyranny of a large empire. They draft documents declaring that "all men are created equal".

But a new country is born in contradiction and hypocrisy as it continues to deny the humanity, rights, and freedoms of the group of people who are building its economy.

Brave Africans choose to fight in the war, nonetheless, for the greater vision of democracy. They hope that the ideals proposed by the founding fathers will prevail and work for them, too.

Alas, most of their brethren will remain in chains for another century, subject to unspeakable horrors. Beyond that, they will continue to struggle for equality and equity for centuries more.

## 06 BLOSSOM

The Revivalist movement sees many American citizens embracing a new form of Christianity – in which God is one who wants them to preach to all people, regardless of color, even while enslaving them.

Although it is initially forced upon them, Africans begin to choose this religion for themselves – to form communities of their peers, gain strength and comfort to engage in a world that denies their humanity.

While noting the hypocrisy of those who introduced them to this new belief system, they embrace the religion on their own terms. They choose to worship a God who says that they are his children too and they find inspiration in the story of Moses, who freed his people.

But the Africans also use this Western religion to further subvert the system – to engage in the otherwise illegal practice of literacy.

This is the spark that gives birth to the first African American community leaders, and launches a long legacy of writers, orators, scientists, inventors, philosophers, and human and civil rights activism.

## 07 SOUTHPAW

In boxing, the southpaw stance is an unorthodox one that can allow a small fighter to dramatically catch a fighter from a heavier weight class off guard.

There are over 300 documented cases of uprisings involving 10 or more enslaved people. One that was nearly successful involved an uprising of over 500 captives. In many other undocumented cases, rebellion came through more subtle methods such as work stoppage.

The vast majority of American plantations held less than 50 captives and those in the Deep South, were surrounded by other states that embraced the institution of slavery. Not the best conditions for successful rebellions.

Still, even though they knew they were at a grave disadvantage, it didn't stop captives from sacrificing their lives for the slim hope of freeing their people.

## 08 GAZELLE

Under the cover of night, guided by clever navigational songs and dedicated abolitionists, many captives make successful escapes to freedom on a smaller and more personal scale. The Underground Railroad becomes instrumental in granting safe passage to those, primarily in the northernmost Southern states.

## 09 THE DAY I CHOSE MY NAME

From the day they were forced onto ships, captives had been assigned Christian names, as well as random names in the manner of pets and objects.

With the ratification of the 14th Amendment, all captives now gain American citizenship and the promise of freedom.

Though they will still face many hardships, an essential manifestation of freedom is embraced: the ability to claim and define one's identity – how they and their families will be addressed, no longer as anyone's property but as human beings.

## 10 BREATH BREAKS THE LAW

The false promise of Reconstruction allows Southern legislators to put into place so-called Black Codes, which evolve into Jim Crow laws. This legalizes the continuation of the institution of slavery by another name.

Eventually, as each new Federal civil rights law is put into place to end the practice, loopholes allow systemic racism to morph under the radar. It rears its head in more subtle forms of disenfranchisement,

discrimination, and other restrictions of upward mobility that are seamlessly woven into the fabric of every day life and will affect most African Americans well into the 21st century.

## 11 THE GREAT MIGRATION

Fleeing the domestic terrorism of the South and seeking political asylum within their own country, millions of black people make their way to the North, seeking a taste of the American Dream.

The north, too, will offer its share of systemic racism and disenfranchisement as woven into the fabric of American democracy.

However, the first generations born after this move will radically transform the entire country with new forms of expression, industrial productivity, and organized activism. And they will be the forebears of most every African American born in the North and West from this point forward.

## 12 HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Fueled by the Jazz Age, an intellectual, social, and artistic explosion occurs in New York City and spreads through the country.

Harlem becomes *the epicenter* of American culture.

Its heyday is cut short by effects of the Great Depression but its impact is tremendous and lasting for the entire country. It is an especially fruitful time for African Americans, who now gain international notice as influential artists and intellectuals.

## 13 DOUBLE V

Just as they did during the Revolution and first World War, African Americans stepped up to show their commitment to their country and to the idea of human rights and democratic freedom for all in WWII.

They willingly registered to fight and die overseas and also to contribute domestically; even as the government refused to acknowledge those previous contributions and also wouldn't allow them to serve in the same units as white citizens. Jim Crow was alive and well even in the United States Armed Forces.

African Americans pressed on, knowing that they were fighting two wars at once, and thus seeking double victories in the spirit of democracy – one against the Axis powers abroad and one against white supremacists at home. Over 1 million black Americans were sent to liberate the European countries (who enslaved their ancestors) from Nazi control.

The contributions of African Americans such as the Tuskegee Airmen helped propel the U.S. and its allies to victory. After applying pressure upon the government, eventually the U.S. desegregated its troops. But when the war was over, black Americans who fought for democracy abroad still found themselves denied America's own democratic promise when they returned home.

The World War II experience exposed black Americans to European cultures that had seen at least a little bit of social progression in the years since those nations' own enslavement practices were abolished. While these places were hardly free of racism, most African Americans gained their first experiences in societies that had no color-based Jim Crow restrictions (some had also experienced this in WWI). In fact, many Europeans simply saw them as Americans and were longtime aficionados of black cultural expressions such as jazz music, food, and fashion.

Mostly left out of the exultant narrative of "The Greatest Generation", African Americans once again found themselves written out of America's collective memory of the war.

But the experiences in Europe allowed black citizens to become fully cognizant of the fact that America had always needed black manpower, resourcefulness, and creativity to win wars, propel industry, grow the economy, and create some of the most interesting, attractive, and influential aspects of its culture.

They would now demand their rights. And many of these men and women who helped win the war became the foot soldiers for an entire movement to fight for a better America on its own soil.

In the years to come, the military expertise and training of black veterans would be invaluable in the coordination and execution of marches and protests, and in frequently pushing back against some of the most aggressive of opposition to their nonviolent actions.

## 14 BLACK LOTUS

A lotus is one of the most beautiful flowers in the world and lives its life in a cycle of growth and renewal in the most turbulent of circumstances. When darkness falls, the lotus looks inward and the re-emerges into its full beauty in the promising sunlight of a new day. It is the embodiment of perseverance through adversity.

During the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans engage in their first mass direct action, seeking full political and economic rights in the face of aggressive opposition. Voices like Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. bring leadership to the movement, and usher in an empowering self-recognition of African American's contributions and inherent power to bring about change. Over the next two decades, various civil rights legislation is passed but new ways to deny African Americans full rights emerge in still more subtle forms.

In the 1950s, yet another style of music that African Americans developed as a way to claim and express personal freedoms makes its way to the mainstream after years in segregated spaces and "race records". The backbeat, swing, casual language, chord progressions, and uninhibited accompanying dances make it unmistakable as the child of the blues and jazz music developed in the Deep South.

Although history and credit will be rewritten (even regarding the origin of its name) as it is adopted as the soundtrack of white teenage rebellion, "Rock'n'Roll" was slang that its black pioneers coined for "sex", (which was perfect to describe this wild, hip-gyrating new sound).

Additional contributions to early rock came from bluegrass and country music developed by white people in Appalachian regions but those, too, were derived from the Africans' introduction of the banjo and rhythmic evolution of instruments such as the fiddle.

## 15 THE MOUNTAINTOP

Dr. Martin Luther King gives his final speech on the night before he is assassinated. In recent years, Dr. King had began speaking in more radical terms. He addressed topics such as anti-war sentiment and economic inequity. More black lives were being lost in the Vietnam War while still experiencing denial of fair opportunities in employment and housing at home.

The loss of Dr. King radically shifts the dialogue within African American communities regarding the future of Civil Rights Movement. Although it splinters across many groups, black activism will largely no longer be a matter of patient and polite negotiation. The movement will consist of smaller but more direct and urgent actions.

## 16 WITH THE QUICKNESS

Black activism finds its new voice with more bold choices in language and style, growing out of a changing cultural and political climate. A new arts movement is also borne of a collective sense of pride – Black people begin to embrace their African heritage, and fully and openly celebrate and express themselves and their unique cultural identity without apology.

While doing so, they become a more regular presence in mass media – literature, journalism, film, television, sports, politics, and other areas of participation.

## 17 SWITCHED ON

Continuing the tradition of repurposing limited resources and combining it with storytelling, groups of young people in NYC, Detroit, Chicago and other cities express themselves through new musical forms.

These are hip hop, techno, and electro. In a short span of time, these will become the dominant forces in American music, give rise to many other forms, shape language, fashion, and culture. It will spread across the globe like wildfire.

## 18 GRACE IN GRAVITY

Even in the earliest days of America, black people like Benjamin Banneker gazed upon the stars and saw limitless possibilities, even while restricted on terrestrial earth. Centuries later, in 1983, Guion Bluford, Jr. became the first African American (but second person of African descent) to travel to space.

In addition to these, there is a long legacy of countless black men and women who have defied the gravity of oppression with the very audacity to survive, thrive, and dream a better world for themselves and all of Humankind. They have contributed to astronomy and oceanography in roles as diverse as astronauts, mathematicians, engineers, physicists, surgeons, chemists oceanographers, marine biologists, and beyond. These contributions have helped to create and shape technologies that we use every day.

## 19 NATURALISTA

A new wave of self-awareness, pride, and celebration takes root and becomes more personal.

Ever since the Trans-Atlantic slave trade began, the very nature of a black person wearing one's hair as it grows out of the scalp has been viewed as a political act, even if styled. Yes, even dead strands of collagen and keratin have always been viewed as a threat to white supremacy.

Captives were forcibly shorn of their hair as though they were sheep – in West African cultures, hair and adornments were a source of pride and often communicated a person's status and entire history. In America, their descendants continue to have restrictions imposed upon them in many environments including educational institutions, military and law enforcement, and in employment. This is directly connected to the long history of Eurocentrism, and has been reinforced through media and entertainment.

With the rise of internet and social media, however, many African Americans begin rejecting the longstanding insidious psychological warfare as well as the physical dangers of products that primarily white entrepreneurs have long marketed to African Americans; commanding them to adopt a more "acceptable" European appearance.

The "Natural Hair Movement" creates an explosion of self-expression, self-awareness, and pride. Many African Americans choose to embrace more natural products for the hair and skin, and to celebrate the beauty, diversity, creativity, and versatility of not only black hair but black people as a whole. It not only

inspires others around the world but it also ushers in a new wave of black entrepreneurship and trusted voices in new media.

## 20 MY COUNTRY'S KEEPER

The house that stands at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW in Washington, D.C., was built by enslaved people. In 2008, the United States chose its first resident who is known to be one of their descendants.

Although he is best known as the Hawaiian-born son of a Kenyan father and a European American mother, this young president's mother was also descendant of John Punch – the first person in America to have a legal distinction made solely on the basis of race to be enslaved for his entire lifetime.

President Barack Obama, his First Lady Michelle, and their daughters Malia Ann and Sasha offer the country a masterclass in dignity, civility, and personal decency during a scandal-free presidency that lasts for eight years.

Obama attempts to govern with compassion and empathy, while rescuing the country from complete financial collapse. Among the socially-responsible missions he is able to see through in the face of extreme legislative obstruction and the re-emergence of overt racism are laws to provide figurative and literal care to the most vulnerable in society.

## 21 THE ART OF CREATIVE RESISTANCE

Especially after the abolition of the slave trade, black bodies have always been indiscriminately harassed and slaughtered, seen disproportionate mass incarceration, and faced new versions of discrimination in nearly every walk of life.

Into the 21st century, more black faces became popular public figures and black cultural creations influenced the wider American (and global) arena, it became easy for some to sit comfortably in the illusion that racism had been largely a thing of the past and toss off complaints as oversensitive "political correctness" and "identity politics".

However, blacks in America had always known that the daily ugliness of white supremacy they've endured had never disappeared but continued to evolve into more subtle expressions and manners of execution, mostly undetectable by anyone other than those in its crosshairs.

By the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, white nationalism was now shouting into megaphones. Not long after, white nationalism would also once again be shouted from the corridors of Washington (along with the embracing of authoritarianism) as a result of foreign interference, intentional voter depression, blatant voter suppression, and a woefully outdated Electoral College (created solely to give a boost to slave states – white Virginian slaveholders occupied the presidency for 32 of the Constitution's first 36 years).

Long before social media, black activists previously spoke out for years (and were ignored) about gun violence, harassment and assault of women, living wages, and criminal justice reform. But an increased assertion of white male supremacy more openly targeted many more marginalized groups besides black and brown people, including women, LGBT, non-Christian religions, and people with disabilities.

This now meant that movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, and those calling for equal pay and sensible gun control laws would now be recognized in mainstream media and inspire similar protests around the world.

The U.S. would see its greatest numbers of mass protestors and the most diverse candidates (and eventual elected officials) in history. Black women, in particular, began to show an increase of power and visibility as candidates and as an essential voter demographic.

Just as their ancestors did throughout the history of the country, African Americans continued to manifest resistance to injustice and inequity through creativity, resourcefulness, and organization. They continue to fight for representation and demonstrate excellence in every arena in which it is won while creating and executing new visions of freedom that serve and support all people.

## 22 SCIONS OF TOMORROWLAND

Before its history was rewritten from a Eurocentric perspective, the reality was that Africa was home to innovation, wealth and productivity. Its vast empires also were home to advanced cultures, science, and technology that was admired and envied by the rest of the world. It was the original “Tomorrowland” – a vision of the possibilities of the future from which visitors took souvenirs as a taste and to reproduce what had been offered in abundance by peaceful means.

Eventually, these aspiring empires needed the continent’s people, too, in order to more quickly and authentically reproduce the most prosperous material goods. What those people brought to the Americas and every part of the globe to which they were taken resides in every African descendant living today.

Each breath is a testimony to it: The ability to survive. The ability to create and reinvent. The ability to contribute and influence.

Every human of every nation and every hue shares a common ancestor from that magnificent continent known as Africa. Traces of this fact spills forth from the mouths of every speaking person alive today, through the many families of languages still in use. You can also see it in the traditions and art forms of ancient cultures that still exist around the globe.

We all share a collective inheritance not only of the qualities that allowed our ancient common ancestors to share resources as their survived, migrated to and explored other lands to be custodians, caretakers, and executors for one another’s well being and that of the planet on which we live.

Perhaps, our own version of Tomorrowland can be one in which all of our brethren and cousins will have learned to share resources, spaces, hardships, and human triumphs.

If we don’t destroy ourselves first, perhaps we can rebuild the world (and potentially worlds away) as one people.