

PRESENTS

**Such Sweet Thunder: Ellington Plays Shakespeare—  
Love and Power in Adaptation**

A series of public events across the arts inspired by the "tone parallel" between Shakespeare and Duke Ellington

*Such Sweet Thunder: A Listening Session*  
*with*



Prof. Courtney Bryan  
Tulane University



Prof. Brent Hayes Edwards  
Columbia University



Prof. Nicole Mitchell  
University of Pittsburgh

**Friday, February 11, 2022, 7:00 pm**

**Program**

Welcome

Prof. Robert O'Meally

Performance

The Louis Armstrong Jazz Performance Program

Stephanie Chow (guitar), Andre Yan (sax), Paul Torres (bass)

Introduction

Prof. Robert O'Meally

Talk & Presentation

Prof. Brent Hayes Edwards, Prof. Courtney Bryan  
& Prof. Nicole Mitchell

Open Discussion----- Q & A



# the center for jazz studies at columbia university

## Bios



**Courtney Bryan** is “a pianist and composer of panoramic interests” (New York Times). Her music is in conversation with various musical genres, including jazz and other types of experimental music, as well as traditional gospel, spirituals, and hymns. Bryan has academic degrees from Oberlin Conservatory (BM), Rutgers University (MM), and Columbia University (DMA) with advisor George Lewis, and completed postdoctoral studies in the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University. Bryan is currently the Albert and Linda Mintz Professor of Music at Newcomb College, Tulane University. She served as the Mary Carr Patton Composer-in-Residence with the Jacksonville Symphony, 2018-20. Her work has been presented in a wide range of venues, and she has two recordings, *Quest for Freedom* and *This Little Light of Mine*. Bryan was the 2018 music recipient of the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, a 2019 Bard College Freehand Fellow, and is currently a 2019-20 recipient of the Samuel Barber Rome Prize in Music Composition and a 2020 United States Artists Fellow. She has recently begun a new role as Creative Partner with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO). [www.courtneybryan.com](http://www.courtneybryan.com)



**Brent Hayes Edwards** is the Peng Family Professor of English and Comparative Literature. He also serves as the Director of the Scholars-in-Residence Program at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library. His books include *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Harvard, 2003) and *Epistrophies: Jazz and the Literary Imagination* (Harvard, 2017), which was awarded the 2018 ASCAP Foundation Virgil Thomson Award for Music Criticism and the 2019 Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism. Edwards has also published scholarly editions of classic books by W. E. B. Du Bois, Frederick Douglass, Joseph Conrad, and Claude McKay, and numerous translations including Michel Leiris’s *Phantom Africa* (Seagull, 2017). He was a 2015 Guggenheim Fellow.



**Nicole M. Mitchell** is an award-winning creative flutist, composer, bandleader and director of jazz studies in the University of Pittsburgh’s Deitrich School. She has been awarded “Top Flutist of the Year” by *Downbeat* Magazine Critics Poll and the Jazz Journalists Association (2010-2017). She is the founder of Black Earth Ensemble, Black Earth Strings, Sonic Projections and Ice Crystal. She was the first woman president of Chicago’s Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. In January 2018, Mitchell was the Artist in Residence at New York’s Winter Jazzfest. As a composer, Mitchell has been commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture, the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, Art Institute of Chicago, the Stone, the French American Jazz Exchange, Chamber Music America (New Works), the Chicago Jazz Festival, ICE, and the Chicago Sinfonietta. She is a recipient of the Herb Alpert Award (2011), the Chicago 3Arts Award (2011) and the Doris Duke Artist Award (2012).

21-year old **Stephanie Chow** is guitarist and producer based in NYC. Born and raised in Bloomington IL, she was introduced to jazz by listening to records from Wes Montgomery. Stephanie has been a member of the prestigious All-National Honors jazz band, and an alternate for the Jazz Band of America. She is a winner of the national ACF NextNotes Composition Contest, the NafMe Computer Music Contest, the Downbeat Outstanding Pop, Rock, and Blues award and an Ella Fitzgerald Merit Scholarship from the GRAMMY Camp. Stephanie performs frequently around NYC in both jazz and pop contexts, including opening for Gucci Mane and Bohan Phoenix, and playing at venues such as Terminal Five, Berlin Under A, and the Bowery Electric.

**Paul Torres** is a jazz bassist from Milford, Pennsylvania. He spent two years studying in New Orleans, where he was playing professionally alongside New Orleans musicians such as Ashlin Parker, Jesse McBride, and Johnny Vidacovich. Outside of music, Paul is a junior at Columbia College majoring in political science. He is involved in activism and works in research.

**Andrew Yan** is a jazz saxophonist and flautist from Princeton, NJ. He has experience playing around central NJ and in the Philly area and enjoys playing jazz, RnB, and latin jazz styles. At Columbia, he is studying computer science and math and plays in the MPP jazz program.

\*\*\*\*\*

**SUCH SWEET THUNDER**  
**ELLINGTON PLAYS SHAKESPEARE—LOVE AND POWER IN ADAPTATION**

Columbia University Center for Jazz Studies, Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Core Curriculum, Heyman Center for the Humanities, Wallach Art Gallery, Miller Theatre, and the Office of the President

In the 2021-2022 academic year, Columbia University will present Such Sweet Thunder: Ellington Plays Shakespeare—Love and Power in Adaptation, a year-long series of public events across the arts inspired by the resonances and dissonances between Shakespeare and the Duke Ellington Orchestra's 1957 Shakespearean suite Such Sweet Thunder. Programming includes an evening of dramatic performances by renowned Shakespearean actors moderated by James Shapiro and Ayanna Thompson; a Such Sweet Thunder listening session with Brent Hayes Edwards, Nicole Mitchell, and Courtney Bryan; lectures by Fred Moten and Hortense Spillers; an exhibition of Othello etchings by Turner Prize-winning painter Chris Ofili; a discussion of Toni Morrison's *Desdemona* with Jean Howard and Rebecca Kastleman; and a performance of Such Sweet Thunder at Miller Theatre led by trumpeter Jon Faddis using Ellington and his collaborator Billy Strayhorn's original scores; a graduate conference; and a one-man show based on Frederick Douglass's unrealized ambition to play the Moor.

"Somehow, I suspect that if Shakespeare were alive today, he might be a jazz fan himself," wrote Ellington in the program for the first full performance of Such Sweet Thunder at the 1957 Stratford Shakespearean Festival in Stratford, Ontario. "He'd appreciate the combination of team spirit and informality, of academic knowledge and humor, of all the elements that go into a great jazz performance." For Ellington, both he and Shakespeare were "beyond category," a credo our series seeks to embody as we examine the epistemological implications of what Ellington called "tone parallels," not just a suggestion that music could "parallel" historical events and geographies, but that great works of art are capable of what Brent Hayes Edwards refers to as "hearing across media."

This public humanities project raises broad questions of race, gender, and geography, all of which involve issues of love, power, and adaptation. As Columbia first-year students study *Othello* and Such Sweet Thunder in tandem during our year of Such Sweet Thunder, we ask them to consider: What happens when we see Shakespeare's world through the eyes of Duke Ellington? Ellington's world through the eyes of Shakespeare? How do Ellington and Shakespeare dramatize questions of race, imperialism, and sovereignty? How do these questions of love and power, so urgent in our time, affect our responsibilities as students, educators, and global citizens?

For more information about this series of events please visit <http://suchsweetthunder.columbia.edu/>