



Sunday, October 27, 2019, 7pm
Hertz Hall

— MYRA MELFORD JAZZ PLATFORM —

David Virelles Trio
featuring Marcus Gilmore and Rashaan Carter

Spider Web
by Nicole Mitchell and Josh Kun

David Virelles Trio
David Virelles, *piano*
Rashaan Carter, *bass*
Marcus Gilmore, *drums*

INTERMISSION

Spider Web
by Nicole Mitchell and Josh Kun

Nicole Mitchell, *flute, vocals, electronics, composition, text*
Josh Kun, *spoken word, text*
Jovia Armstrong, *percussion*
Damon Locks, *vocals, spoken word, electronics*
Joshua White, *keyboards*
S. Ama Wrey, *movement, spoken word*

The Bus
You're Not One of Us
Blue Pacific
Land of Dreams
Climate Crisis
Key to the Rise
Somebody Else's World
White Roses
Ghosts
The Spider

Cal Performances' 2019–20 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

This season, Cal Performances has invited pianist, composer, and UC Berkeley faculty member Myra Melford to co-curate our jazz programming, with concerts that will introduce local jazz aficionados to artists who are household names in New York and abroad, but may be less well-known here in the Bay Area.

Welcome to the first of two concerts bringing leading-edge jazz and improvisational artists to Cal Performances. Tonight's program features two artists who are extending the innovations in jazz ushered in by musicians who questioned both musical and social conventions in their work—Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane, along with the members of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), since the early-to mid-1960s. As noted musician and scholar George E. Lewis says in the preface to his book *A Power Greater Than Itself* (2007, University of Chicago Press), "AACM musicians developed new and influential ideas about timbre, sound, collectivity, extended technique and instrumentation, ... intermedia, (and) the relationship of improvisation to composition."

Nicole Mitchell, a third-generation member of the AACM (who formerly served as its first woman president), makes colorful and imaginative music for many different types of ensembles. She has enormous range both as a flutist of extraordinary expressive capability, and as a composer and bandleader. In her multimedia piece *Spider Web*, she joins forces with writer and scholar Josh Kun and a unique ensemble of spoken word and movement artists and musicians, to create a platform for the collaborative exploration of race and politics in Southern California in the context of Afro-futurism, black experimental music, and her own family history.

David Virelles, pianist, composer, and bandleader, has been blurring the lines between composition and improvisation, and between jazz and other styles of music (Cuban music, contemporary classical music) since he moved to New York City in 2009. He has a longstanding working relationship with composer and

woodwind player Henry Threadgill (himself an early and renowned member of the AACM) as a member of Threadgill's ensemble Double Up and other recent projects. Virelles is extending the lineage of such ground-breaking pianists as Don Pullen (who performed and recorded with Charles Mingus) and Andrew Hill. Tonight's trio is the perfect way to experience his rhythmically propulsive, thoughtful, and thought-provoking music.

These are artists steeped in the jazz tradition, who are extending it through new hybrid forms and highly personal approaches, insuring the continuing evolution of this inclusive and diverse art form into the 21st century.

—Myra Melford



Santiago de Cuba-born pianist David Virelles grew up in a musical home, his father a Nueva trova singer-songwriter and his mother a music teacher and a flutist in the Santiago symphony.

Though classically trained at the conservatory, he was also surrounded by many types of music in culturally rich Santiago while growing up. Eventually, Virelles also discovered Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, Andrew Hill, and Don Pullen, and he would soon become fascinated by the seeming connections between this musical tradition and those from his birthplace.

After studying in Toronto (at the invitation of Canadian musician Jane Bunnett), Virelles relocated to New York City in 2009 to study composition with Pulitzer Prize winner Henry Threadgill. Since then, he has established himself as one of the most sought-after pianists of his generation. He has performed and recorded with musicians as distinct as Threadgill, Mark Turner, Paul Motian, Andrew Cyrille, Chris Potter, Bill Frisell, Steve Coleman, Wadada Leo Smith, Tom Harrell, Hermeto Pascoal, Milford Graves, Ravi Coltrane, Marcus Gilmore, and Román Díaz.

Virelles is a Shifting Foundation Fellow, and a recipient of the Ontario Arts Foundation's Louis Applebaum Award, a Cristobal Díaz

Ayala Travel Grant, and a commission from the Jazz Gallery. He was named a top Rising Star (piano category) by *DownBeat* in 2017, and Artist of the Year by *Musica Jazz* magazine (Italy). While a student at Humber College in Toronto, he won the Oscar Peterson Prize, presented by Peterson himself. Virelles has also been mentored by jazz piano legend Barry Harris.

Virelles' 2012 album, *Continuum*, ended up on many "Best Of The Year" lists, including that of the *New York Times*. Since then, he has released three albums on the Munich ECM label to critical acclaim, documenting a wide artistic range—*Mbóko*, *Antenna*, and *Gnosis*. His latest release, *Igbó Alákorin (The Singer's Grove), Vol. I & II*—a joint effort between his El Tivoli Music label and New York's Pi Recordings—is a celebration of the musical history of Santiago de Cuba. The recording, which has garnered wide critical acclaim, features Santiago music legends and was recorded at the Siboney E.G.R.E.M. studios in this southeastern Cuban town.



Rashaan Carter (bass) grew up in the Washington (DC) area where, through the nurturing of his father, a saxophonist, and his mother, a jazz radio programmer, he forged an interest in music. After stints

with various instruments, he chose the bass as the voice for his musical expression. Carter worked and gained experience on the local Washington scene and after high school moved to New York City to attend the New School University. There, he studied with Buster Williams and Reggie Workman. While attending the New School he also began to work with many of the faculty members, including Joe Chambers and Jimmy Owens.

Since moving to New York, Carter has become entrenched in the jazz scene, working with Benny Golson, Curtis Fuller and Louis Hayes, Wallace Roney, David Murray, Henry Threadgill, Ravi Coltrane, Geri Allen, Marc Cary, Cindy Blackman, Doug and Jean Carn, Antoine Roney, Sonny Simmons, and many

others. He has also studied with one of his prime influences, Ron Carter.

Rashaan Carter regularly performs with a host of artists in and outside of New York and can be heard on numerous recordings.



Marcus Gilmore (drums), born in 1986, was first inspired by the music of his grandfather, legendary jazz drummer Roy Haynes, who gave Marcus his first set of drums at age 10. He has performed internationally

with some of today's best-known contemporary artists, including Chick Corea, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Natalie Cole, Clark Terry, Nicholas Payton, John Patitucci, Cassandra Wilson, Steve Coleman, Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Ravi Coltrane, Terence Blanchard, Vijay Iyer, Roy Hargrove, and Raul Midonand. Gilmore has been featured repeatedly in publications such as the *New York Times*, *DownBeat*, and *Modern Drummer*.

Spider Web

by Nicole Mitchell and Joshua Kun

In this collaborative piece commissioned by Clockshop, composer/flutist Nicole Mitchell and scholar Josh Kun explore visionary/reflective glitches between 1970s and pre-apocalyptic Southern California in an exploration of race and the politics of human life. *Spider Web* is fictionally based on Mitchell's own history of moving to Anaheim as a young girl, and her experiences with racism in the bright glare of suburban California sunshine. With glimpses into a future climate meltdown through her mother's communication with the spirit world, the piece uses music and text to explore Mitchell's family history within the context of Southern California's ongoing history of Black musical radicalism and experimental musical thinking. This piece is born of Mitchell and Kun's mutual interests in music as a language of social reckoning and social action, and music as a way of coming to grips with the limits and possibilities of place.



(left to right) Joshua Kun, Jovia Armstrong, Nicole Mitchell, S. Ama Wray, Damon Locks, Joshua White

Nicole Mitchell is an award-winning flutist, composer, conceptualist, bandleader, and educator. Having emerged from Chicago's innovative music scene in the 1990s, her artistic work celebrates contemporary African-American culture and is centered in the belief that art has the power to be transformative. A Doris Duke Artist and recipient of the Herb Alpert Award, Mitchell is renowned as the founder of the Chicago-based Black Earth Ensemble, and the former first woman president of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Her primary inspiration was her mother, Joan Beard Mitchell, a self-taught Afro-futurist writer and visual artist and an early member of the Black Folk Art Gallery of Syracuse. Mitchell celebrates endless possibilities by "creating visionary worlds through music that bridge the familiar with the unknown." As a composer, she has been commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture, French American Jazz Exchange, Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, Newport Jazz Festival, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Jazz Festival, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Chicago Sinfonietta, and by Chamber Music America. She

has been repeatedly named "Top Flutist of the Year" by the *Downbeat* Magazine Critics Poll and the Jazz Journalists Association (2010–19). Her project *Mandorla Awakening* (FPE Records), was cited the top jazz album of 2017 in the *New York Times*. Black Earth Ensemble celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2018. Mitchell is the William S. Dietrich II Chair of Jazz Studies and a professor of music at University of Pittsburgh. She is endorsed by Powell Flutes.

Josh Kun is director of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California, where he is the chair in cross-cultural communication and a professor of communication, journalism, and American studies and ethnicity. A cultural historian, curator, journalist, and MacArthur Fellow, he writes and researches about music and the politics of cultural connection. Kun is the winner of an American Book Award (2005) and a Berlin Prize (2018). He is an author and editor of several books, anthologies, and artist monographs, and as a curator of music and public humanities projects, he has worked with SFMOMA, the California African American

Museum, the Grammy Museum, the Getty Foundation, and the Los Angeles Public Library. He co-edits the book series *Refiguring American Music* for Duke University Press.

Jovia Armstrong, a percussionist and educator, is a well-traveled musician and a regional Sabian and Gon Bops artist. She is also an artist ambassador for Sedo Audio. Detroit-bred, she was named the 2014 Black Female Percussionist of the Year at the Black Women in Jazz Awards. Armstrong is a member of the Chicago soul/punk group JC Brooks Band and a member of and composer for the group Musique Noir.

Damon Locks is a talented musician, visual artist, and teacher, who, over the past 30 years, has used these various avenues as a way to unleash his politically driven, urban-influenced art upon the world. Locks' artwork often revolves around people and their landscapes; the narrative themes of protest, unrest, and tension are woven throughout. As a musician, he has been operating on the Chicago music scene since the late 1980s. Today, he splits his time between his work as a visual artist and illustrator, a deejay, and a member of both The Eternals and the jazz ensemble Exploding Star Orchestra. Locks' love for both visual art and music inform and complement each other and help form an overall aesthetic, with ideas and tonalities bouncing back and forth between genres. He is the recipient of a 2015 Meier Foundation for the Arts Achievement Award, recognizing mid-career artists for their innovation, past achievements, and community contributions.

Joshua White had parallel musical training in both classical and gospel music traditions before encountering the music most commonly referred to as "jazz." For the past several years, he has been in demand as one of Southern California's most creative and technically accomplished pianists. White is, in short, a cultural improviser, taking his inheritance and venturing into possibility. Herbie Hancock told music critic George Varga of the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, "I was impressed by his daring and courageous approach to improvisation on the cutting edge of innovation. He is his own man. I believe that Thelonious Monk would have been proud of the performance of this great young artist."

S. Ama Wray is an associate professor of dance at UC Irvine. She is a former UK NESTA Fellow (National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts, similar to the MacArthur Awards)—an improviser, choreographer, director, teacher, and scholar. Wray self-titles as a "Performance Architect," having received her PhD from the University of Surrey, where she developed her theory and practice of embodiment, a neo-African approach to contemporary dance improvisation. In 2015, the UK's National Resource Centre for Dance invited her to place her archive within its permanent collection. In the realm of theater, Wray has successfully directed two of Mojisola Adebayo's plays—*Moj of the Antarctic: An African Odyssey* and *Muhammad Ali and Me*—which have toured the UK and South Africa supported by the British Council.