

## **JAM Performance Festival Artist and performer bios**

### **Alva Rogers: *Topsy-Turvy* February 2–4, 2023**

Artist **Alva Rogers** is a vocalist and dramatist who began inventing worlds at Just Above Midtown, where she performed with Lawrence D. “Butch” Morris and in Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees’s *...And He Had Six Sisters* (1984). Since then she has written plays and musicals; has participated in several collaborations, including work with the performance collective Rodeo Caldonia; and has been a muse/model for visual artists including Whitfield Lovell, Fred Wilson, Lorna Simpson, Dawoud Bey, Tina Barney, Lona Foote, Daryl Turner, Coreen Simpson, and Julie Dash, among others. Born and raised in New York City, she has received degrees from Brown University (MFA), New York University (MFA), and Bard (MAT).

The music of **Jason Kao Hwang** (violin/viola) explores the vibrations and language of his history. His most recent release, *Uncharted Faith*, has received critical acclaim. In 2020, the *EI Intruso* International Critics Poll voted him #1 for violin/viola, and he was voted a Rising Star for violin in the 2012 *Downbeat* Jazz Critics’ Poll. Hwang has received support from the NEA, Rockefeller Foundation, NJSCA, NYSCA, US Artists International, and others. He has worked with William Parker, Anthony Braxton, Butch Morris, Reggie Workman, Pauline Oliveros, Taylor Ho Bynum, Patrick Brennan, and many others.

**Amy Liou** is a theater artist from Taiwan who enjoys moving on stage and off stage. She celebrates the tiny moments in daily life that shape emotions and stir thoughts by bringing them on stage. She is currently in residence with the 2023 Object Movement Puppetry Festival at the Center at West Park.

**Brandon Ross** is a New York City–based guitarist and composer. His work with innovators in modern Black music like Henry Threadgill, Cassandra Wilson, Lawrence D. “Butch” Morris, and Harriet Tubman is legendary: “Ross is the epitome of the postmodern guitar hero, a fretboard virtuoso who adheres to no particular sound or genre, moving freely from the feedback-laden assault of the adventurous jazz-rock trio Harriet Tubman and the electronics-heavy jumble of Phantom Station to the delicate beauty of the acoustic chamber duo For Living Lovers in which he also plays banjo” (*Jazz Times* magazine). Ross is an ASCAP writer and publisher member.

**Jessica Simon** is a puppeteer, director, and dramaturg who has received an UNIMA Citation of Excellence and support from the Jim Henson Foundation. Most recently she was the lead puppeteer on the short film *Lake Minnetrista* and an ensemble member developing Dan Hurlin’s latest work, *Bismarck*.

**Ashley Winkfield** is a multidisciplinary artist specializing in new and devised puppet and theater works presented in New York (NYSPF, Dixon Place, LaMama Experimental Theatre), North Carolina, and internationally. Winkfield is currently based in New York City and Winston-Salem, NC.

**Lawrence D. “Butch” Morris *Conduction*® with Vernon Reid, Greg Tate’s Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber, and Special Guests**  
**February 9–11, 2023**

British-born American **Vernon Reid** is a Grammy Award–winning guitarist, composer, producer, and visual artist. In the 1980s, he led the pioneering multi-platinum rock band Living Colour, and has collaborated with Carlos Santana, Defunkt, Janet Jackson, Salif Keita, and many others. Reid spent formative time at Just Above Midtown gallery, a hub of discovery and activism, where he gathered with other musicians, artists, and entrepreneurs to eventually form the Black Rock Coalition, dedicated to exposing anti-Black bias and racism in the music industry. It was through Linda Goode Bryant that Reid experienced an aesthetic awakening through exposure to many artists, especially the radical composer and musical theorist Lawrence D. “Butch” Morris. Reid leads *Conduction*® with Greg Tate’s Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber.

In 2023, **Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber** (BSAC) celebrates more than two decades of “never playing anything the same way once.” As always they give tribute to their sonic sensei, the maestro Lawrence “Butch” Morris (1947–2013), for showing them THE WAY of “Conducted” Improvisation. Founded by recently and dearly missed *Village Voice* icon Greg “lonman” Tate (1957–2021) and co-led with Dayton, Ohio’s “Bubble” electric bassist Jared Michael Nickerson, BSAC is a sprawling band of musicians whose prodigious talent allows them to freely juggle a wide swath of the soul-jazz-hip-hop-experimental and avant-groidd spectrum.

**Shawn Banks** is a Brooklyn-based percussionist. He began to explore the world of percussion after being introduced to African drumming and the in-depth rhythms of West Africa at a young age. He has appeared with many musicians and spoken-word artists at New York City’s Blue Note, the Apollo Theater, Sounds of Brazil, SummerStage in Central Park, Lincoln Center, and other notable venues. He is currently developing a children’s African drumming and music appreciation curriculum and arts program, BEAT CAMP Edutainment, and also directs the collaborative funk-soul project People United For Funk.

**David A. Barnes** has been playing the harmonica for 50 years. He has been a member of the Memphis Blood Blues Band since its beginning in 2001. His association with both James Blood Ulmer and Vernon Reid has enriched his life in innumerable ways. Blessed with profound stage fright and social anxiety, Barnes does the best he can with what little he’s got. He was raised in the Bronx and lives in Brooklyn. It’s been said that he is a good man with a very bad attitude—and a deep understanding of the blues.

Influenced by Miles Davis, Kenny Dorham, Booker Little, and Thad Jones, trumpeter **Lewis “Flip” Barnes** is Virginia-born, New York City–reared, and Howard University–educated. A member of Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber for nearly two decades, Flip has lent his trumpet stylings to bassist William Parker’s critically acclaimed quartet, the JC Hopkins Biggish Band, Jean-Paul Bourelly, Jemeel Moondoc, drummer William Hooker, the Holmes Brothers, and Norah Jones.

**Beans** has had a fruitful music career spanning 30 years. His many notable releases include three projects on Anti-Pop Consortium’s former label, Warp Records, in 2003; *Only on Thirsty Ear*; and *End It All* on Anticon in 2011. He has collaborated with Vernon Reid of Living Colour and DJ Shadow, among others. In 2013, Beans worked with producer Mux Mool, releasing *Knifefight* for Anticon. After starting his own imprint, Tygr Rawwk Rcrds, Beans returned with

three albums and a novel, *Die Tonight*. He has had seven releases since 2017, and he is currently working with producer Vladislav Delay on an album called *ZWAARD*.

**Lisala Beatty** has been a Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber vocalist for nearly two decades. A vocalist, songwriter, and producer, Beatty's voice has a signature sound she calls "Grit Soul." She has recorded and/or performed with Vernon Reid, DJ Bobby D'Ambrosia, and Tamar-kali; toured with the Black Rock Coalition's all-woman Orchestra; and provided vocals for Jadakiss's song "I Tried." She sang and cowrote "Walkin'" with Angela Johnson, which appeared in A&E's drama *The Glades*. Offstage, she manages programs at New York City's largest music education program, Music and the Brain, with recordings of her vocal arrangements used in classrooms across New York City.

**Allison Costa** is a dancer, creative technologist, and transdisciplinary artist in New York City whose practice embraces tenets of emergent strategy, glitch feminism, and the risk/recovery practice of improvisation. She is Creative Research Artist at the Barnard College Movement Lab and a freelance artist. Recent collaborations include Nona Hendryx, Ailey II, Choreographic Coding Lab, SHIFT. Dance. Arts. & Media., Moving Body-Moving Image Festival, Creative Producer's Program, Dishman + Co. Choreography, and e<sup>lektron</sup>.art. She was introduced to Conductions with Greg Tate's Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber as a dancer in Burnt Sugar/Danz Dance Conduction Continuum, and is grateful to expand this work to conduct new media visuals.

Brooklyn-based musician and bassist **Jason Tobias DiMatteo** moved to New York City from Oregon at the age of 18. After a chance encounter with Greg Tate in the 1990s, he had his first big gig in Tate's band Women in Love. Since then, DiMatteo has worked with inspiring talents such as Tamar-kali, Petula Clark, Carl Hancock Rux, Chocolate Genius, Jeremiah Abiah, Mark Lesseraux and the Citizens, Avram Fefer, Lumatic, Edison Woods, Helga Davis, Graham Haynes, Songs from a Random House, and the Black Rock Coalition Orchestra. He has toured globally, has numerous national television appearances, and has more than 50 recording credits. A longstanding member of Valerie June's band, Jason can be heard on her two most recent releases, *The Moon and Stars: Prescriptions for Dreamers* and *Under Cover*.

An accomplished turntablist, **DJ Logic** is widely credited for introducing jazz into the hip-hop realm, and is a respected session musician and innovative bandleader. Since his emergence amid the early-1990s Bronx hip-hop scene, the New York City-based deejay has amassed numerous collaborations, including the John Popper Project ft. DJ Logic, a trio with Steve Molitz & Freek Bass (Headtronics), a jazz project with Beka Gochiasvili, and as a member of Grammy-winning Arturo O'Farrill & the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. He has also collaborated with Bob Weir, John Mayer, Medeski Martin and Wood, Christian McBride, O.A.R., Carly Simon, Jack Johnson, Vernon Reid, Warren Haynes, Mos Def, The Roots, Sean Kuti, and many more.

**Chris Eddleton**, originally from Roselle, New Jersey, is a musician and percussionist now residing in Maplewood, NJ. He has performed with various Brazilian artists such as Cidino Texiera, Vanessa Fallabella, and Claudio Roditi. He has also shared the stage with Beacon Brothers, N'Dea Davenport, Black Thought of The Roots, Pharoahe Monch, and Roy Hardgrove. He has toured the US and abroad with artists Lizz Wright and the Punjabi-Funk band Red Baraat, and has performed at numerous jazz festivals with them and Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber. He has performed off-Broadway with *The Black Nativity*, *The Supreme Bishop Tartuff*, Melvin Van Peebles's *Sweetback's Badasssss Song the Hood Opera*, and Rain Pryor's *Fried Chicken and Lattkes*, and recently on Broadway in David Byrne's *America Utopia*.

**Leon Gruenbaum** studied classical and jazz piano, clarinet, and music theory, and holds a BA in mathematics from Harvard University. In 1998 he invented the Samchillian, an interval-based keyboard controller, for which he received a patent and a prestigious award from the Guthman Musical Instrument Competition in 2011. Gruenbaum has recorded and performed on the Samchillian with artists such as Vernon Reid, James Blood Ulmer, and Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber. He has showcased the Samchillian with various projects of his own: L.E.G.Slurp, Math Camp, and Genes and Machines. In 2022 the musical device manufacturer Eventide released “Misha,” a Eurorack device that utilizes the core concepts behind Gruenbaum’s Samchillian.

**Bruce Mack** is a New York City musician whose primary instruments are synthesizer, clavinet, organ, percussion, and voice. He has worked with Melvin Van Peebles, Guru of Gang Starr, Me’Shell Ndegeocello, David Fiuczynski, Val-Inc, and Marvin Sewell. Mack has performed with Butch Morris, Vernon Reid, Dean Bowman, Swiss Chris, Black Rock Coalition Orchestra, and Gabri Christa, and is a member and conductor of Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber. Mack has created and taught music and art programs serving 20,000 kids in New York City schools. His work as a music educator was featured in Constantine Limperis’s documentary *When Fried Eggs Fly*.

Grammy-nominated electric “Bubble” bassist **Jared Michael Nickerson**’s ongoing musical journey initiated in Dayton, Ohio. After graduating from Notre Dame with a BA in business management, he studied for two years at the New England Conservatory. He has performed with Melvin Van Peebles, Nona Hendrix, Ivan Julian, Katell Keineg, The The, Charlie Musselwhite, Catie Curtis, Wadada Leo Smith, Freedy Johnston, Tammy Faye Starlite, Gary Lucas, The Yohimbe Brothers with Vernon Reid & DJ Logic, Marshall Crenshaw, and Human Switchboard, among others. Jared Michael was also the bassist for the 1995 Kennedy Center Honors Awards B.B. King Tribute. These musical associations have led to worldwide performances, fine dining, and television appearances. His business acumen has come into play as the Black Rock Coalition’s first director of operations and, currently, as business manager for BSAC’s Burnt Sugar Index LLC.

**Shelley Nicole** is a proud member of Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber and leader of the band Shelley Nicole’s blaKbüshe. Imagine Janis Joplin meets Grace Jones and there you will find the blaKbüshe experience. As the founder of Red Butterfly Music and Sovereign Hands Wellness, Shelley Nicole shines as vocalist, songwriter, bassist, yoga instructor, and Reiki master. With blaKbüshe, she has shared the stage with notable artists and luminaries including Nona Hendrix, Living Colour, Toshi Reagon, Erykah Badu, and Angela Davis.

**Ms. Olitheia** is a native New Yorker who began singing at the age of three and had performed at every major concert hall in New York City by the age of 18. She attended the Hartt School and received her BFA in musical theater. After the passing of her father, Olitheia started writing her own music. She has released two EPs: *Long Day’s Journey* (2016) and *To Be Seen and Heard* (2017). Since those releases, Olitheia has deepened her practice in meditation and experimental music. Using vocal loops, FX, and sound bowls, she channels spirit, calms the heart, and eases the mind.

**LaFrae Sci** is an imaginationist, multi-instrumentalist, educator, composer, and electro-acoustic adventurer. Bedrock to her artistry is the roots and the fruits of the blues, from spirituals to Afro-diasporic futuristic soundscapes that explore time travel, prayer, meditation, and the African

American ecstatic tradition. To date, she has shared her intentional creativity in 39 countries. LaFrae Sci is also the executive director/director of artistic programming at Willie Mae Future Sounds, named after Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton. W.M.F.S. is a STEM-based music program for girls and gender non-conforming youth in New York City.

**Dave “Smoota” Smith** is a trombonist, singer, songwriter, producer, and filmmaker. He has released two albums, many singles, and music videos with his one-of-a-kind, one-man band SMOOTA, which has taken him around the world on several tours. The debut LP of his psychedelic trombone band Smoota & The Beast arrives in 2023. As a sideman, he has recorded and performed with Valerie June, Aaron Neville, Run the Jewels, TV on the Radio, Steven Tyler, Angelique Kidjo, Sufjan Stevens, Pretty Lights, Gritz, Phish, Spoon, El-P, Rev. Vince & the Love Choir, and Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber.

The saxophone you hear on every hit Billy Ocean record is **V. Jeffrey Smith** (“Get Outta My Dreams, Get into My Car,” “When the Going Gets Tough,” “Caribbean Queen”). Along with Sandra St. Victor and Peter Lord, he is a cofounder of The Family Stand, known for their early 1990s radio hit “GHETTO HEAVEN.” Smith is also an accomplished record producer, with credits that include Daryl Hall (Hall & Oates), Corey Glover (Living Colour), Paula Abdul, and Tamia. He has performed with BSAC since 2011.

**Mazz Swift** is a composer, conductor, singer, bandleader, educator, and Juilliard-trained violinist who weaves classic African American musics, electronica, and mindfulness into their music. Improvisation is a throughline in their practice across genres and instrumental configurations, and can be found in most of their works. They are a 2019 Jerome Hill Fellow and a 2021 United States Artist Fellow. Works include commissions by the Los Angeles Philharmonic (2020), the Silkroad Ensemble (2021), and the Kronos Quartet (2022 and 2023).

Guitarist **Ben Tyree** is a performer and composer of virtuosic ability, infectious groove, and eclectic tastes. All of those elements are on display on albums released by his own Sonic Architectures label (*re:Vision*, 2010; *Thoughtform Variations*, 2012; *Burn It! LIVE*, 2014; *Lifelines*, 2020; *Sameer Gupta + Ben Tyree = Unruly Neighbors*, 2020; and *Sameer Gupta & Ben Tyree: Catalytic*, 2022). Originally from Washington, DC, and having attended the prestigious Duke Ellington School of the Arts and subsequently majored in jazz studies at Howard University, Tyree has been NYC-based since 2002. His versatility has additionally led to work with artists as diverse as Vernon Reid, Valerie June, Elliott Sharp, Brooklyn Raga Massive, and the mainstay Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber, to name a few.

**James Blood Ulmer** has been a jazz icon for nearly 50 years. Born and raised during segregation in rural South Carolina, Ulmer’s earliest musical roots can be traced to gospel music and the Baptist church. In his early 20s, Ulmer went to Pittsburgh, where he began gigging as a professional musician on the Midwest’s chitlin’ circuit. While working steadily alongside his harmolodic mentor Ornette Coleman in the fabled New York City downtown jazz scene, Ulmer’s guitar work blossomed into an idiosyncratic style that transcends genre. He went on to release a string of acclaimed albums, including *Tales of Captain Black*, *Freelancing*, *Black Rock*, and *Odyssey*. Recognized as an elder statesman of the blues, Ulmer continues to progress.

**J.S. Williams**, a New York City native, is a trumpeter and trombonist in high demand as a teacher and performer. Since matriculating at New York City’s High School of Music & Art (now Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School) and the New School, he has shared the stage with Living

Colour, Marc Cary, Winard Harper, and Burnt Sugar The Arkestra Chamber, and is currently touring with George Clinton and Parliament-Funkadelic.

A leading voice of the harp, **Brandee Younger** made history at the 2022 Grammy Awards as the first Black female solo artist nominated in the Best Instrumental Composition category, for her song “Beautiful Is Black,” from her major label debut album, *Somewhere Different*. Younger has performed and recorded with artists including John Legend, The Roots, Lauryn Hill, Common, Pharoah Sanders, Ravi Coltrane, Ron Carter, and Charlie Haden. Her ability to seamlessly inject the harp where it has historically been overlooked is a testament to her deep love and command of the instrument. She is also on the teaching artist faculty at New York University and the New School College of Performing Arts in New York City.

**Senga Nengudi Fittz and Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees: *Tying & Un-Tying*  
February 17–18, 2023**

**Senga Nengudi Fittz** was born in Chicago, raised in Los Angeles, and spent a pivotal year in Tokyo. Since 1990 she has lived in Colorado. Her works question our relationship to the universe and each other (our messy selves). What’s love got to do with it? What does touchy fee-lie have to do with it? Ever excavating the sensuality of all things, her work invites viewers to become participating fellow explorers discovering/uncovering unknown-ness.

**Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees** was born at the crossroads of African, Native American, and European identities and cultures. She was raised in the Midwest and lived in New York, New Mexico, California, England, and Germany. Her nomadic life of contrasts and intersections inspires her expressions of an intimate relationship with nature as an unmediated connection with the sacred. Her spatial and sensory installations, performances, and artist’s books seek to evoke/invoke/provoke human embedded connective memory and links to our cosmic ancestry. She currently lives in Vermont.