

## Artist Bios

### Chimurenga Renaissance

A Zimbabwean-centered hip-hop project from Tendai “Baba” Maraire, Chimurenga Renaissance was formed in 2012 when Maraire teamed with Hussein Kalonji, the rapper formerly known as H-Bomb. That same year, the group introduced their mix of electronic (synths and samples) and organic (*ngoma* drums and *mbira* thumb pianos) on *Pungwe*, a mixtape where artists like Bob Marley and Spice 1 were mixed with African artists like Thomas Mapfumo and Youssou NDOUR. In 2014, the project made its official debut on the Brick Lane label with *riZe vadZimu riZe*.



Kelly O

### Carl Craig

Carl Craig is an elder statesman in the world of electronic music production and performance, and a legend of the genre (even with his many aliases). Founder of seminal record label Planet E Communications, Craig is described as a creative visionary, an electronic music icon, an esteemed Grammy-nominated composer, a world-class DJ, and an ambassador for his native Detroit. The common thread that runs through Craig’s broad musical canon and creative projects is a resounding fascination with futurism.

Craig’s interest in collaboration was realized with *Versus*, in which he merged techno and classical music with pianist Francesco Tristano, French orchestra Les Siècles, conductor François-Xavier Roth, and producer Moritz von Oswald. Inspired by well-received performances in European concerts halls, Craig started the process of developing the project into an album, which features eight of his techno masterpieces recomposed into classical works. He has since performed selected pieces from *Versus* with the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and at Royal Albert Hall alongside the Chineke! Orchestra. The Carl Craig Synthesizer Ensemble is an iteration of his *Versus* show. With the ensemble, Craig imbues a flexible and collaborative human touch into the more synth-driven, pulsing traits of techno.



Cristian Di Stefano

## Theo Croker

Theo Croker is a storyteller who speaks through his trumpet. A creative who refuses boundaries, the Grammy Award-nominated artist, composer, producer, thought leader, and influencer projects his voice through the music. After seven years of sojourn in Shanghai, Croker crash-landed with a simmering original sound on the 2014 Dee Dee Bridgewater–assisted album *Afro Physicist*. Following the success of *Escape Velocity* in 2016, he ascended to a new stratosphere with *Star People Nation* in 2019, earning him a Grammy nomination in the category of Best Contemporary Instrumental Album.

Along the way, Croker also lent his sound to platinum-selling albums by everyone from J. Cole to Ari Lennox while touring his band around the globe. In 2020, he hunkered down at his childhood home in the midst of the global pandemic and wrote his sixth full-length album, *BLK2LIFE // A FUTURE PAST*.

*BLK2LIFE // A FUTURE PAST* is a contemporary oratorio inspired by the forgotten hero's journey of becoming through the universal origins of Blackness. On the album, Croker unpacks moments of heroism, trials, tribulations, awakenings, and apotheosis within a musical pastiche brought to life by a myriad of fellow cultural renegades and threaded together by his playing. Traditions of the past, foundations in the present, and explorations of the future, *BLK2LIFE* is a sonic celebration and reclamation of Afro-origin.



Scenario Two

## Angel Bat Dawid

Angel Bat Dawid is a Black American composer, improviser, clarinetist, pianist, vocalist, educator, and DJ. Her critically acclaimed album *The Oracle*, recorded using only her cell phone in various locations, has been featured in *Pitchfork*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Guardian*, and many other publications. Dawid composed and premiered *Requiem for Jazz* at the Hyde Park Jazz Festival and *Peace: A Suite for Skylanding*, commissioned by the Art Institute of Chicago for Yoko Ono's outdoor *Skylanding* installation. Dawid also tours internationally with her septet Tha Brothahood, whose album *LIVE* made NPR's "Best of 2020" list. Angel leads the all-woman trio Sistazz of the Nitty Gritty with bassist Brooklynn Skye Scott and pianist Anaïet Sivad. As half of the duo group DAOUI, Dawid and sound artist Oui Ennui produced, mixed, and self-released the album *Message from the DAOUI*, which was featured at the 2020 TUSK Festival. As an educator, Dawid teaches her "Great Black Music" course at Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center through Old Town School of Folk Music. She is also clarinetist in Damon Locks Black Monument Ensemble as well as host of a monthly music show on NTS Radio. Dawid was recently honored as the 2021 "Chicagoan of the Year in Jazz" by the *Chicago Tribune*.



David Raccuglia

## Fatoumata Diawara

Hailed as one of the most vital standard-bearers of modern African music, Fatoumata Diawara takes her artistry to fresh and thrilling heights on her new album *Fenfo*. Boldly experimental yet respectful of her roots, it's a record that defines her as the voice of young African womanhood—proud of her heritage, but with a vision that looks confidently to the future and a message that is universal. *Fenfo* (which translates as “something to say”) dramatically fulfills that promise on a set of vivid and original new compositions that draw on Diawara’s rich experiences.

One of 11 children, Diawara grew up in the Malian capital of Bamako. Fiercely independent from a young age, she became a celebrated child actor and in 2001 starred in Dani Kouyaté’s film *Sia, The Dream of the Python*, based on an ancient myth about a young girl who runs away from her family. Real life followed fiction, and against the wishes of her parents, Diawara fled Bamako at the age of 19 to join the French street theater company Royale de Luxe. Touring the world with Royal de Luxe, her singing became a feature of the company’s performances. That led to her backing American jazz singer Dee Dee Bridgewater and Malian superstar Oumou Sangaré on tour and on record, bringing Diawara to the attention of the World Circuit label, which released her debut album in 2011.

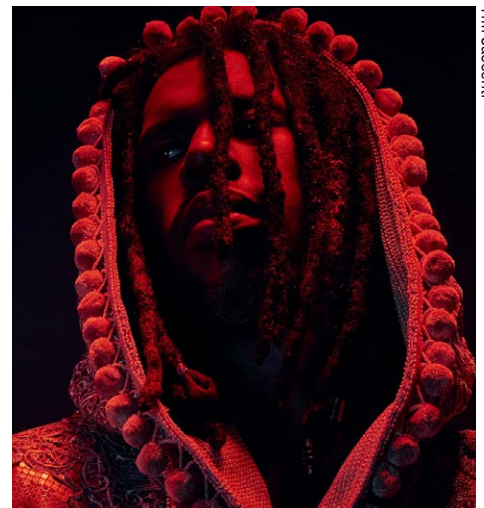
Diawara has since recorded with Bobby Womack and Herbie Hancock, played Glastonbury and other major festivals, and toured with Cuban pianist Roberto Fonseca. She also assembled a West African super-group that featured Amadou and Mariam, Oumou Sangaré, and Toumani Diabaté to record a song calling for peace in her troubled homeland, and climbed aboard Damon Albarn’s star-studded Africa Express, which culminated in her sharing a stage with Sir Paul McCartney. In addition, Diawara has continued her parallel career as an actor, including an acclaimed appearance in *Timbuktu* (2014), which received both BAFTA and Academy Award nominations.



Aida Muluneh

## Flying Lotus

Steven Ellison, also known by his stage name Flying Lotus, is a Grammy Award-winning, multi-genre music producer, electronic musician, DJ, filmmaker, and rapper from Los Angeles. His past six studio albums—*1983* (2006), *Los Angeles* (2008), *Cosmogramma* (2010), *Until the Quiet Comes* (2012), *You’re Dead!* (2014), and *Flamagra* (2019)—were released to critical acclaim. His sounds can also be heard on Cartoon Network’s *Adult Swim* programming block, where he produces much of their bumper tunes. Inspired by more than music, he released his debut feature film, *Kus* (2016), which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017. He recently executive produced and composed for Netflix’s anime series *Yasuke*, a show only made possible by an auteur who consistently shows immense care to the audible and visual aspects of his creations.



Tim Saccenti



## Kelsey Lu

Kelsey Lu is a classically trained cellist and polymuse from Charlotte, North Carolina. Their artistic practice flows comfortably at the intersection of visual art, performance, healing activism, and music. In addition to their solo work, they find collaboration to be fundamental in the expansion of their practice, which has brought them to collaborate with artists across several different disciplines, from musicians such as Yves Tumor, Moses Boyd, Sampha, Florence + the Machine, Skrillex, and Solange to Kahlil Joseph and Wu Tsang.



## Nicole Mitchell

Nicole Mitchell is an award-winning creative flutist, conceptualist, and composer. Having emerged from Chicago's creative music community, she is the former first woman president of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), a Doris Duke Artist, and United States Artist. For more than 20 years, Mitchell has utilized her art to create worlds that bridge the familiar with the unknown through her Black Earth Ensemble. She also composes for contemporary ensembles of varied instrumentation and size (from solo to orchestra and big band) while incorporating improvisation and a wide aesthetic expression. She is perhaps best known for her work as a creative flutist, having developed a unique improvisational language that has repeatedly earned her "Top Flutist of the Year" recognition by *DownBeat* Critics Poll and the Jazz Journalists Association. Much of Mitchell's creative process is informed by literature and narrative, with a special interest in science fiction. As a composer, she has been commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Music NOW, French Ministry of Culture, Fromm Music Foundation, Chamber Music America, International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Newport Jazz Festival, Art Institute of Chicago, French-American Jazz Exchange, Chicago Jazz Festival, and Chicago Sinfonietta. Mitchell currently teaches at the University of Pittsburgh as the Williams S. Dietrich II Chair and Director of Jazz Studies.



Michael Jackson

## Moor Mother

Camae Ayewa, a.k.a. Moor Mother, is a national and international touring musician, poet, visual artist, and workshop facilitator. She is a vocalist in three collaborative performance groups: Irreversible Entanglements, MoorJewelry, and 700bliss. As Moor Mother, Ayewa released her debut album, *Fetish Bones*, to critical acclaim in 2016. It was hailed as one of the best albums of the year by *The Wire*, called “one of the most innovative and important records of 2016” by *Jazz Right Now*, and appeared on numerous end-of-year lists in *Pitchfork*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Spin*. She was named one of *Rolling Stone*’s “10 New Artists You Need to Know” in 2016 as well as one of Bandcamp’s artists of the year.

Since then, Camae has released multiple albums, working with frequent collaborators Olof Melander, Mental Jewelry, and Billy Woods. Her latest work, *Black Encyclopedia of the Air*, was released last September. Camae is the co-founder of the multidisciplinary collective Black Quantum Futurism, co-founder and curator of Rockers! Philly, and has been an artist-in-residence at West Philadelphia Neighborhood Time Exchange and WORM! Rotterdam. Camae is a Pew Fellow, and the recipient of The Kitchen Inaugural Emerging Artist and Leeway Transformation awards.



UV Lucas

## Mwenso and the Shakes

Michael Mwenso was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, but spent his teenage years witnessing some of the greatest Black artists of the 20th century. In London, he was exposed to musicians such as Ray Charles and B. B. King. In his youth, Mwenso started honing his talents as a trombonist and singer in reggae, Afrobeat, and carnival bands. His talent as a performer subsequently led him to meet James Brown, who allotted space for him to sing and dance during his shows in London.

In 2012, friend and jazz musician Wynton Marsalis brought Mwenso to New York City to serve as curator and programming associate at Jazz at Lincoln Center, where he also booked nightly sets at Dizzy’s Club. Through these performances, Mwenso began to collaborate with a variety of Juilliard-trained musicians that soon became known as the Shakes. This unique group of global artists presents music that merges entertainment and artistry with a formidable timeline that reflects the history of African and Afro-American music. In 2019, Mwenso and the Shakes released their debut album, *Emergence [The Process of Coming Into Being]* to widespread critical praise.



Oluwaseye Olusa

## Soul Science Lab

Soul Science Lab (SSL) is a music and multimedia duo powered by Chen Lo and Asante Amin. SSL is dedicated to creating a celebrated body of work and cultivating the next generation of iconic artists. The duo's current projects include *Soundtrack '63, Make a Joyful Noize* (commissioned by Carnegie Hall), and *Renaissance Mixtape* (commissioned by the Apollo Theater). SSL has released three studio albums: *Footprints*, *The Visitor: Alter Destiny*, and *Plan for Paradise*. SSL has also developed a culturally responsive education platform for music creatives and educators at Soul Science University.

Chen Lo is a seasoned emcee, songwriter, and creative director. He has toured the globe and worked with premier cultural arts institutions, including Jazz at Lincoln Center, the August Wilson African American Cultural Center, and 651 ARTS. Lo has also shared the stage with the likes of Common, Erykah Badu, KRS-One, A Tribe Called Quest, Rapsody, Sunni Patterson, and The Last Poets. He has recorded notable collaborations with international artists Stogie T and Cheikh Lô.

Asante Amin is a gifted multi-instrumentalist, composer, and producer. He has shared the stage with several globally renowned artists, including Rhiannon Giddens, Jessica Care Moore, Blitz the Ambassador, Ismael Kouyaté, Mos Def, GZA, Wynton Marsalis, and others. Amin is also a MetLife Meet the Composer award winner.



## Sun Ra Arkestra

Sun Ra was among the earliest pioneers of the synthesizer and the free-jazz revolution. He founded the Sun Ra Arkestra in Chicago in the mid-1950s, combining big-band swing, space-age jazz, singing, dancing, chanting, and Afro-pageantry. The Arkestra's live shows feature up to 20 musicians.

Marshall Allen—the avant-garde alto saxophonist who is 97 years young and one of the Arkestra's original members—has been leading and directing the Arkestra since 1995. In addition to alto saxophone, he also plays flute, oboe, and EVI (electronic valve instrument).

The Arkestra's 2020 album *Swirling* is nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album.

