

## **Tulane's Courtney Bryan co-leads national Jazz Generations Initiative**

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Tulane University composer, pianist and MacArthur Fellow Courtney Bryan is co-leading a national effort to advance America's first original art form through the Jazz Generations Initiative. (Photo courtesy of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation)

Tulane University composer, pianist and MacArthur Fellow Courtney Bryan is co-leading a national effort to advance America's first original art form through the Jazz Generations Initiative, a multi-year program funded by a \$5.8 million Mellon

Foundation grant and sponsored by the Jazz Foundation of America.

Launched this month with events in New Orleans and New York City, the initiative brings together jazz scholarship, performance and community engagement to preserve jazz legacies and expand creative possibilities for the next generation. The program will support interdisciplinary residencies, intergenerational performances, oral history projects, new scholarship and a range of community programming rooted in the cultural traditions of both cities.

The Jazz Generations Initiative builds on the work of the Jazz Study Group, an interdisciplinary collective founded in 1995 by Columbia University scholar Robert G. O'Meally, who will co-lead the project alongside Bryan. Over three decades, the Jazz Study Group has helped shape modern jazz scholarship and served as an incubator for influential biographies, oral histories, cultural criticism and collaborative creative work.

Bryan, a professor of music at [Tulane University School of Liberal Arts](#), will direct the vision for the New Orleans programs with [Denise Frazier](#) serving as creative director. O'Meally will oversee the New York City component. Together, the initiative aims to present "jazz in motion" through a collaborative, community-centered model shaped by artists, scholars and writers.

"An outgrowth of the Jazz Study Group, our Jazz Generations Initiative celebrates the dynamic cultures and communities of New Orleans and New York while facilitating spaces for creativity and experimentation," Bryan said. "Jazz teaches us values of listening, community and freedom. With our interdisciplinary and intergenerational initiative, we aim to build upon the wisdom of our elders and the perspectives of our youth as we imagine new futures and bold possibilities."

The Mellon Foundation's support for the Jazz Generations Initiative is part of the foundation's broader \$35 million commitment to preserving and advancing jazz. In addition to performances and residencies, the initiative will produce a second volume of Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies, work to make the Jazz Study Group's archival materials publicly accessible and support oral history interviews with leading jazz elders. A digital platform will complement live programming, featuring a multimedia publication, a podcast, extensive video content and a live music listings resource for both New Orleans and New York.

The initiative's New Orleans work is anchored in Bamboula: Jazz Studies in Motion, an interdisciplinary residency, fellowship and creative hub directed by Bryan. Programs include residencies for artists, scholars and writers in partnership with The New Quorum; the Bamboula Creative Hub at Historic St. Luke's Episcopal Church, which will host workshops, rehearsals and community gatherings; and collaborations with Tulane University, Dillard University, Xavier University, NOCCA and local cultural organizations.

"The New Orleans ecosystem is fertile ground for exploring the tensions that have created this music," Frazier said. "This year, Bamboula: Jazz Studies in Motion will explore democracy and healing as points of departure to collaborate and connect with people and organizations in New Orleans and beyond. Our interdisciplinary and intergenerational approach to this project will serve as a teaching tool for understanding our basic humanity."

New Orleans programming began Dec. 3 with an album listening and discussion session centered on D'Angelo's "Voodoo." A multi-day celebration honoring Alice Coltrane — including an oral history presentation at Tulane's Dixon Annex Recital Hall — will take place Jan. 14–16, 2026, sponsored in part by Tulane's Newcomb Institute and the Department of Music.

The inaugural New Orleans resident artists and scholars include Brandee Younger, Allan Mednard, Rashaan Carter, Maxine Gordon, Cory Diane, Tim Mangin, PhD, and Erna Brodber, PhD.

The Jazz Generations Initiative is supported by the Jazz Foundation of America, which provides essential assistance and employment opportunities to jazz and blues musicians nationwide. By integrating scholarship, performance, community practice and digital storytelling, the initiative seeks to preserve the histories of jazz while supporting the artists and communities shaping its future.

More information is available at [www.jazzgenerations.org](http://www.jazzgenerations.org).



Courtney Bryan and Robert O'Meally (Photo by Freddy Hill)

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Courtney Bryan - Tulane University School of Liberal Arts





Denise Frazier, Courtney Bryan and Jane-Allison Wiggin (Photo by Freddy Hill)