

# THE KITCHEN

NEW YORK CITY'S CENTER  
FOR EXPERIMENTAL ART  
AND THE AVANT-GARDE  
SINCE 1971

For Immediate Release  
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## THE KITCHEN PRESENTS AMIRTHA KIDAMBI AND DARIUS JONES: *ANGELS & DEMONS*, DECEMBER 9

Kidambi and Jones Join Sonic and Compositional Forces, Musically Adapting the  
Cosmological Writings of Composer, Bandleader, and Thinker Sun Ra

The Kitchen presents *Angels & Demons*, longtime collaborators Amirtha Kidambi's (voice) and Darius Jones's (alto sax) musical adaptations of poetry by iconic musician and writer Sun Ra (December 9 at 7pm at The Kitchen at Westbeth, 163B Bank Street, Fourth Floor Loft). Formed to honor the intellectual, literary, and spiritual contribution of Sun Ra, as a philosopher and teacher, the duo's music dances between the prophetic poetic verse, abstract phonemes and syllables, sound, noise, tone, melody and rhythmic interplay of Ra's written word. In the six new works that merge throughout the evening, Jones and Kidambi use their unique compositional and improvisatory voices to amplify Ra's poetry to contemporary audiences. *Angels & Demons* is organized by **Matthew Lyons**, Curator.

When *This Planet Is Doomed: The Science Fiction Poetry of Sun Ra* was published in the early 2010s, it gathered poetry from throughout Sun Ra's life into a tome of psychedelic mysticism, dense symbolism, expansive Afrofuturism and trenchant commentary. Darius Jones was so struck by it as to carry it everywhere with him on tour. He recalls, "It got to the point where people were like, 'Man, you're still reading that book?' There's something about what's being expressed that speaks so deeply to a person of color, particularly someone who feels on the margins of mainstream society; how he's grappling with power, how he's grappling with white supremacy, how he's dealing with being strange and queer and apart from the mainstream. It felt like he was kind of letting you know who he was through this poetry."

Early in the history of their collaboration, Jones introduced Kidambi—who already considered Sun Ra a primary influence—to this lesser-known side of Ra's artistry and thought that existed solely on the page. She recalls that as they rehearsed for a performance at Carnegie Hall in 2014, Jones would begin every meeting with a poem from *This Planet Is Doomed*. In their eventual conception of *Angels & Demons*, the

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aim became, as Kidambi describes, to “showcase Sun Ra’s poetry and his serious, philosophical thinking. His writing is intricate, with each word signifying so much; everything is a double or a triple entendre.”

*Angels & Demons* is a joining of two kindred instruments rarely experienced as a duo: the voice and the saxophone. In Jones, Kidambi found a creative partner who uplifts virtuosic vocal musicianship within jazz and the avant-garde—where the vocalist has historically been a sidelined figure. In Kidambi, Jones found a creative partner similarly interested in collapsing binaries between the instrumental and vocal and exploding perceptions of what’s possible for either—challenging the creative confines we accept in much the same way, as Jones notes, that Ra “could walk around and say, I’m on Earth, but I’m from another place.”

He adds, “Amirtha has a unique instrument that’s not like another voice out there. When people hear this work, they’re not just like, ‘oh, there’s a singer there.’ No—‘there’s Amirtha there.’ And I try to get to a level of uniqueness in my own saxophone playing—where it becomes, ‘that’s not a saxophone. That’s Darius.’ In *Angels & Demons*, we’re asking, how do these two things come together to make another unique instrument in the moment? Where do they get to a point where you can’t tell the difference between the two?”

Jones and Kidambi draw parallels between the generativity of their collaboration and that of Sun Ra and Arkestra band-member **June Tyson**, a powerful vocalist and violinist—and the two chose to create and perform this work as a duo because of the ritualistic potential of a dialogue between two artists. The setup of *Angels & Demons*, as such, is not forward-facing, eschewing the rigidly performative format of live music; lighting and production design by **Nicholas Houfek** contribute to the feeling that the audience is entering an inner sanctum rather than a presentational space. Says Jones, “There’s something mystical about two people being a team engaging each other around this work. It’s emotional for me talking about some of this stuff—Amirtha and I are connected in this really beautiful way.”

Following the performance, a discussion with the artists will be led by interdisciplinary poet and sound artist **LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs**.

## About Darius Jones

Darius Jones has created a recognizable voice as a critically acclaimed saxophonist and composer by embracing individuality and innovation in the tradition of African-American music. Jones has been awarded the Van Lier Fellowship, Jerome Foundation Commission, Jerome Artist-in-Residence at Roulette, French-American Jazz Exchange Award, and, in 2019, the Fromm Music Foundation

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commission at Harvard University. Jones has released a string of diverse recordings featuring music and images evocative of Black Futurism. His work as a new music composer for voice culminated in a major debut performance at Carnegie Hall in 2014. Jones has collaborated with artists including Gerald Cleaver, Oliver Lake, William Parker, Andrew Cyrille, Craig Taborn, Wet Ink Ensemble, Jason Moran, Trevor Dunn, Dave Burrell, Eric Revis, Matthew Shipp, Marshall Allen, Nasheet Waits, Branford Marsalis, Travis Laplante, Fay Victor, Cooper-Moore, Matana Roberts, JD Allen, Matthew Shipp, Nicole Mitchell, Georgia Ann Muldrow, and many more. In 2023, Darius released a new album on Northern Spy and We Jazz Records, entitled *fLuXkit Vancouver (its suite but sacred)*. Jones' music is a confrontation against apathy and ego, hoping to inspire authenticity that compels us to be better humans.

## About Amirtha Kidambi

Amirtha Kidambi is invested in the creation and performance of subversive, anti-hegemonic music, from free improvisation and avant-jazz, to Indian carnatic and devotional, experimental bands, noise and new music. She is an educator, activist and organizer working to challenge systems of white supremacist, colonial, capitalist, patriarchy, and is co-founder and co-organizer of South Asian Artists in Diaspora and Musicians Against Police Brutality. As a bandleader and composer, she is the creative force behind the incendiary protest group Elder Ones and has received critical praise for dual releases on Northern Spy records from *The New York Times*, *Pitchfork*, *Wire Magazine*, and *Downbeat* among others, topping Critics Poll in the categories of "Rising Star Vocalist," "Rising Star Composer," and "Rising Star Jazz Group." Their forthcoming third record, *New Monuments*, will be released in 2024 on We Jazz (EU). Kidambi is active in several improvising duos with bassist Luke Stewart, guitarist Matteo Liberatore, meimei (മൈമി) with pianist Ananya Ganesh and Neti-Neti, with percussionist Matt Evans. She is a key collaborator in MacArthur "genius" Mary Halvorson's sextet Code Girl, the duo Angels & Demons with saxophonist Darius Jones based on the poetry of Sun Ra, and in various collaborations with bassist William Parker and with late elders Muhal Richard Abrams and Robert Ashley. She has performed and presented her music in the U.S. and internationally at Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, The Kitchen, Whitney Museum, MoMA PS1, Berlin Jazzfest (Germany), Skaņu Mežs (Latvia), Out Fest (Portugal), Big Ears Festival and various DIY and punk spaces. Kidambi has received grants and commissions from NYFA, Jerome Foundation, Jazz Coalition, Dither Ensemble, Asian Cultural Council, Mid-Atlantic Arts and artist residencies at EMPAC, Roulette, Pioneer Works, and Bucareli 69 in Mexico City. Kidambi is also the composer for the films of Suneil Sanzgiri, scoring his two-channel film exhibition currently on view at Brooklyn Museum, on the Goan and Angolan liberation struggles.

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## About The Kitchen

Founded in 1971 as an artist-driven collective, The Kitchen today reaffirms and expands upon its originating vision as a dynamic cultural institution that centers artists, prioritizes people, and puts process first. Programming in a kunsthalle model that brings together live performances, exhibition-making, and public programming under one roof, The Kitchen empowers its audiences and communities to think creatively and radically about what it means to shape a multivalent and sustainable future in art. The Kitchen seeks to cultivate and hold space for wild thought, risky play, and innovative and experimental making, encouraging artists and cultural workers alike to defy boundaries and sending them into the world to remake art history and catalyze creative change.

Among the artists who have presented significant work at The Kitchen are Muhal Richard Abrams, Laurie Anderson, ANOHNI, Robert Ashley, Charles Atlas, Kevin Beasley, Beastie Boys, Gretchen Bender, Dara Birnbaum, Anthony Braxton, John Cage, Lucinda Childs, Julius Eastman, Philip Glass, Leslie Hewitt, Darius James, Joan Jonas, Bill T. Jones, Devin Kenny, Simone Leigh, Ralph Lemon, George Lewis, Robert Longo, Robert Mapplethorpe, Sarah Michelson, Tere O'Connor, Okwui Okpokwasili, Nam June Paik, Charlemagne Palestine, Sondra Perry, Vernon Reid, Arthur Russell, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Spiegel, Talking Heads, Greg Tate, Cecil Taylor, Urban Bush Women, Danh Vō, Lawrence Weiner, Anicka Yi, and many more.

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