



Rashida Braggs

Performance as Research: Embodying Race & Gender in Jazz

How do we perform diaspora? This question persists on and beyond the pages of Rashida K. Braggs' book *Jazz Diasporas: Race, Music and Migration in Post-World War II Paris* (University of California Press 2016)—a monograph that explores the migratory experiences of African American jazz musicians in post-WWII Paris and how ideologies of racial and national identity were enacted through their musical performances and collaborations. As Braggs explored their cultural, social and musical performances, she discovered limits to theorization based solely on archival and ethnographic jazz research. She questioned, where was the body in the jazz diaspora? Did her black, female, mobile body converge with other black women from different times and locations in the Francophone African diaspora? To address these questions, Braggs created original solo-embodied performances to explore the sensorial and experiential knowledge of the diaspora and to situate herself directly in relation to the experiences of other African diasporic jazz women performers, via her own body. In this presentation, Braggs will discuss her merging of archival and ethnographic research with embodied performance to investigate select black women singers in contemporary and historical Paris and her new research at the Meilan Lam archive at Concordia University on black jazz dancers living and performing in 1930s Montreal. Braggs will share how she uses performance as a research tool for recovering, reviving and reimagining the archive of women jazz performers and some of the questions, challenges and opportunities that arise from embodying the diasporic experiences of black women jazz performers.

Rashida K. Braggs is Associate Professor in Africana Studies and faculty affiliate in Comparative Literature and American Studies at Williams College. Her background in performance studies prompts her consistent study of African diasporic cultural expressions via a performative lens. In such courses as *13 Ways of Looking at Jazz* and *Black Migrations: African American Performance at Home and Abroad*, Dr. Braggs teaches students to explore how performance conveys values, patterns and negotiations of power in society. In addition to her book *Jazz Diasporas: Race, Music and Migration in Post-World War II Paris* (2016), Braggs has also published in such journals as *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International*, *The Journal of Popular Music* and *The James Baldwin Review*.

MARCH 27, 2018, 1:35 p.m.
Marvin Duchow Music Library
Room A-410, 527 Sherbrooke W.