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SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS, THE BIG MUDDY DANCE COMPANY, JAZZ ST. LOUIS AND THE NINE NETWORK OF PUBLIC MEDIA ANNOUNCE SUCH SWEET THUNDER COLLABORATION

Such Sweet Thunder

A multidisciplinary adaptation of Duke Ellington's twelve-part suite inspired by Shakespeare

Adapted and Directed by Bruce Longworth & Starring Ron Himes and Rayme Cornell

October 3, 4 & 5 at 8:00 p.m. in the Public Media Commons

Tickets are FREE, but reservations are recommended.

www.sfstl.com/ellington

September 17, 2019 -- This October, four major St. Louis cultural institutions will come together for three nights to present an unprecedented outdoor stage production of Duke Ellington's jazz suite, *Such Sweet Thunder*. The collaboration between Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, The Big Muddy Dance Company, Jazz St. Louis and the Nine Network of Public Media brings to life the twelve-part composition in a multidisciplinary performance charting a tempestuous love story set in the 1950s.

In the summer of 1956, Duke Ellington was inspired by a visit to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival to make a musical exploration of Shakespeare's sonnets and plays. The following year, Ellington and his jazz orchestra recorded an album over a three week period and titled it after a line from Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "So musical a discord, such sweet thunder" (Act 4, Scene 1). The suite which has been described by NPR as "one of the most remarkable orchestral pieces in all of American music" includes titles like "Sonnet for Caesar", "Lady Mac" and the "The Star-Crossed Lovers."

Dexandro Montalvo will create original choreography, and Bruce Longworth, acclaimed director of Shakespeare in the Park (*Winter's Tale*, *Henry V*), will adapt the script and direct the company of two actors, 16 dancers and a 15-piece band playing Ellington's timeless score. The production will star Founder and Producing Director of the Black Rep, Ron Himes, and Webster Conservatory professor, Rayme Cornell. Performances will take place in the Public Media Commons in Grand Center.

"The jazz in *Such Sweet Thunder* is evocative and pulses with life," says Longworth. "It sets the stage for a story told through dance and Shakespeare's verse. Ellington, Shakespeare, and wicked good dance is a powerful recipe for an innovative and entertaining evening."

Video and light projections will assist in setting the mood within the Public Media Commons. In addition to Longworth and Montalvo, the artistic team includes, Peter and Margery Spack (Scenic Design), Claudia Brownlee (Costume Design) and Jonah Schnell (Lighting Design).

The event is free but registration is required (www.sfstl.com/ellington). A limited number of chairs will be available onsite, but attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets. Light snacks and beverages will be available for purchase.

This collaboration is made possible with generous support from Alison and John Ferring, Terry & Sally Schnuck and Garden View Care Center.

About Shakespeare Festival St. Louis

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis presents Shakespeare and works inspired by his legacy of storytelling. Since 2001, the festival has grown from producing a single production of Shakespeare in the Park to a year-round season of impactful theater in exciting and accessible venues throughout the St. Louis community. The festival's artistic and education programs reached over 50,000 patrons and students during the 2018 season and have reached over one million since 2001. In 2019, the Festival received a "What's Right with the Region" award from Focus St. Louis.

About The Big Muddy Dance Company

The Big Muddy Dance Company is a St. Louis-based repertory dance company that seeks to build a love of dance by providing fun, experiential, and highly entertaining performances. By engaging both emerging and established choreographers, collaborating across the community through senior outreach, and training future performers through our school and trainee program, we constantly strive to invigorate life through dance.

About Jazz St. Louis

For more than 20 years, Jazz St. Louis has been the foremost presenter of jazz in St. Louis and throughout the region, as well as being a leader in preserving the legacy of this musical genre. Hundreds of local- and nationally-renowned musicians, such as Wynton Marsalis, Diana Krall, Harry Connick, Jr. and Al Jarreau, grace our stage each year as part of our performance season. The recently renovated, state-of-the-art Ferring Jazz Bistro has earned praise from artists and patrons alike as one of the best listening rooms in the country. Year after year, Jazz St. Louis strives to be the leader in developing unique programming that engages youth and adults alike and preserves the shared cultural heritage embodied in jazz music.

About the Nine Network of Public Media

The [Nine Network of Public Media](http://www.ninenet.org) is a multifaceted organization creating a network of individuals and organizations empowered by public media to strengthen civic life. One of the nation's most-watched public television stations, Nine Network offers the people of the St. Louis region multiple ways to explore the world and become engaged in civic life. Nine's platforms include four distinct broadcast channels (Nine PBS, Nine World, Nine Create and Nine PBS KIDS®), the Nine Center for Public Engagement, the Public Media Commons, social media, and multiple websites accessible at ninenet.org.

Bruce Longworth (Director) is a Resident Artist at Shakespeare Festival St. Louis and previously directed *The Winter's Tale* (2017), *Henry V* (2014), *Othello* (2012), and *Hamlet* (2010) for Shakespeare in the Park. He has been a faculty member in the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at

Webster University since 1985 and is the Head of the Performance programs. Local and regional directing credits include Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Repertory Theatre St. Louis, Pulitzer Museum, Saint Louis Symphony, Lyceum Theatre, Mustard Seed Theatre, New Jewish Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Missouri Thespians, International Thespians and many shows for the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster. Bruce is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Actors Equity Association.

Dexandro “D” Montalvo (Choreographer) is a San Francisco based director, choreographer, dancer, and teacher. Born in New York, Montalvo earned a BFA in dance from SUNY Purchase College and performed with a wide range of dance companies, including Robert Moses' Kin. Montalvo has performed with and created works for many dance companies and schools, as well as for television and music videos. He has taught at San Francisco Ballet, Stanford University, SUNY Purchase, University of San Francisco, Dominican University of California (LINES BFA Program), LINES Ballet Training Program, and ODC Dance Commons. Montalvo has choreographed for Robert Moses' Kin Dance Company, Liss Fain Dance Company, The Black Eyed Peas, and DanceWorks Chicago, among many others. From 2015 to 2018, he served as artistic director of Dance Theatre of San Francisco. Under his leadership, the company won two Isadora Duncan Awards, including “Outstanding Choreography” for Montalvo’s ballet Pent. Montalvo also received a 2014 Isadora Duncan Award for his choreography for “Art Behind Bars” at Alcatraz. DexandroMontalvo.com