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## CityLit Stage 2017

Since 2004, CityLit Project (CLP) has worked to build and connect a community of avid readers and writers across Maryland through a wide range of programs, creating opportunities for youth and diverse audiences to embrace the written word. CityLit nurtures the culture of literature, and creates enthusiasm for literary arts to make it as pronounced and celebrated as the performing and visual arts. Two signature events define CLP, the CityLit Stage in partnership with the Baltimore Book Festival each fall, and the day long CityLit Festival each spring, which, once again, won a Best of Baltimore Award for 2017. CityLit Press further extends CLP's mission by connecting writers with readers, and by providing a venue for writers who might otherwise be overlooked by larger publishers due to the subject matter or regional focus of their projects. CityLit Project makes every effort to grow a larger, more informed and cohesive literary community. CityLit Project thanks our sponsor [Insight180 Brand Consulting & Design](#), "where creative and strategic come together" - a woman-owned graphic design company in Ellicott City that withstood the storm of 2016 - for shining their light on us.

Stage Location: **Baltimore's Inner Harbor, in front of the Maryland Science Center, 601 Light Street, Baltimore, MD 21230**

## Friday, September 22

12 PM  
– 3 PM

### Free Friday Feedback Returns with Editors from Regional Journals and Publishers

Attention, writers! On-the-spot feedback from editors of *Barrelhouse*, Cherry Castle Publishing, and *Little Patuxent Review*. Bring 2-3 poems or 4-5 pages of prose (fiction or nonfiction) and get suggestions on what to do next.

***Barrelhouse*** bridges the gap between serious art and pop culture. It's produced by writers for readers who are looking for quality writing with an edge and a sense of humor. Assistant Editor **Susan Muaddi Darraj** is the author of the short story collection *A Curious Land: Stories from Home* and *The Inheritance of Exile*.

***Cherry Castle Publishing*** is a press that honors the vibrant multicultural voice of American literature, and whose commitment is to practice literary equality and to embrace work that is informed by the social, political and cultural vigor of our times. Founder & Managing Editor **Truth Thomas** is a singer, songwriter and poet whose collections include *Party of Black*, *A Day of Presence* and *Speak Water*.

**Little Patuxent Review** reflects and draws upon the creativity and diversity of the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond by promoting the literary and visual arts in print and throughout the region's community and educational venues. Fiction Editor **Lisa Lynn Biggar** is currently working on a short story collection set on the eastern shore of Maryland. Her short fiction has appeared in numerous literary journals and forthcoming in *The Delmarva Review*. Deputy Editor **Ann Bracken** is the author of two collections of poetry, *No Barking in the Hallways: Poems from the Classroom* and *The Altar of Innocence*.

5 PM

### Black Existentialism Lends to Dystopian Afrofuturism

With so much emphasis on the Black body - police brutality, dense photographic explorations of the inner city, stories of reformed criminals, death and loss within plot lines of Empire inundating American culture, the exploration of Black consciousness, and the navigation of the Black perception of life has been nearly nonexistent in media. Authors **Olu Butterfly**, **Jordannah Elizabeth**, **Jason Harris**, and **Kaila Philo** speak about Black consciousness and existentialism in writing, and how it lends itself to dystopian stories and plot lines in Afrofuturism.

6 PM

### A Touch of Literati

**CityLit Press** celebrates the launch of author **Rafael Alvarez's** new collection of fiction, *Basilio Boullosa Stars in the Fountain of Highlandtown*. The book commemorates the 20th anniversary of Alvarez's fiction debut, *The Fountain of Highlandtown*, which was also published by CityLit Press's Gregg Wilhelm. The celebration includes 2017 Gordon Parks Foundation Fellow **Devin Allen**, founder of Through Their Eyes, a youth photography educational program, who will speak about the *Time* magazine photo that changed the trajectory of his career, and work and life after *A Beautiful Ghetto*. 2017 Guggenheim Fellow **Deborah Rudacille** is a science writer who tells stories about the ways in which science influences culture and culture informs science, the links between science and social justice movements, and the ways that science fuels cultural transformation. Her current project, funded by the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, is titled "*The Family Disease: Alcoholism, Addiction and Inheritance*." CityLit introduces singer, songwriter, guitarist **Jahiti of Brown FISH** to its stage. This session is moderated by WYPR's **Aaron Henkin**.

## Saturday, September 23

2 PM

### Awakening the Literary Warrior: Expressing Your Truth, Embracing Your Power, Empowering Your Dream

Writing gives access to the discovery of personal truths and one's most authentic voice. This talk will lead audiences on a journey of self-discovery that will help them to connect with their trial-to-triumph story, explore the concepts of truth, power, and authenticity, identify personal blocks to authentic self-expression, and discuss the process of writing for self-discovery and empowerment. **Lane Cobb**, MS, CPC, a Certified Life and Business Coach and author of *Heal Your Power Heal Your Life: Essential Healing Practices for Women on the Rise*.

3 PM

### A Celebration of Asian-American Authors

Readings and discussions with authors: **Eugenia Kim**, whose novel, *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, won the 2009 Borders Original Voices Award. Her new work, *The Kinship of Secrets* follows two sisters, one raised in the US, the other in Korea, and the family that bound them together even as the Korean War kept them apart. In raw, poignant alternating first-person narratives, interspersed with e-mails, gay chat-room exchanges, and other fragments of a youth laid bare in the age of social media, **James Han Mattson's** debut novel, *The Lost Prayers of Ricky Graves* unravels the mystery of a life in all its glory. **Jung Yun's** debut novel, *Shelter*, explores the lives of people who will never forget the violence they suffered. It offers an honest, complex look at the human capacity to hope, change, and heal. *Shelter* was a finalist for the Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award.

4 PM

### A Novel Affair

Novelists read and discuss their new work: **Tracy Chiles McGhee**, author of *Melting the Blues*, set in Arkansas in 1957, where the complexities of identity, yearnings for love and acceptance, and racial tension are all unmasked. McGhee received the 2017 Independent Publisher Book Awards. **Donna Hemans**, author of *River Woman*, an unforgettable novel about promises kept and promises broken, exploring the unyielding bonds joining mother and child. She won the 2015 Lignum Vitae Una Marson Award for Adult Literature for her manuscript, *Tea by the Sea*. From Brooklyn to the island of Jamaica, Hemans' second novel traces a mother's seventeen-year search for the daughter taken from her at birth.

5 PM

### CityLit partners with JHU to feature novelist Cynthia Bond (Ruby & Wishbone) in Conversation with Joyell Arvelle

**Cynthia Bond** is a *New York Times* Best-Selling Author. Her novel *Ruby* was chosen to be an Oprah Book Club 2.0 selection in 2014. It was also a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers selection, and an Indie Next Pick. She recently completed a screenplay with Harpo Productions for *Ruby*, the epic, unforgettable story of a man determined to protect the woman he loves from the town desperate to destroy her—this beautiful and devastating debut heralded the arrival of a major new voice in fiction. The second, forthcoming book in the Ruby trilogy is tentatively titled *Wishbone*, from which Bond will provide a debut reading on the CityLit Stage. A PEN Rosenthal Fellow, Bond founded the Blackbird Writing Collective and has taught writing to at-risk and homeless youth for over fifteen years, and is on staff at Paradigm Malibu Adolescent Treatment Center.

6:30 PM

### Christen B Music: Clarity

**Christen B** seamlessly blends electronic and acoustic instruments with transcendent vocals leaving listeners in a state of euphoria. This Baltimore native is changing the way people experience music. Watch as she masterfully layers unique sounds while looping them on the spot, and leaving the crowd mesmerized. Her sound is similar to Corinne Bailey Rae, Erykah Badu, Fatai, H.E.R., Olah Bliss. Her albums include *Begins at the End* and *Clarity*.

## Sunday, September 24

11 AM  
– 7 PM

### 100 Thousand Poets for Change

CityLit Stage joins **100 Thousand Poets for Change in a Global Event** in an expression of peace, justice and sustainability. The day highlights artists of poetry, intention, song and words. Over 400 events in 100 countries are scheduled in a global effort on September 30th to include poets, writers and artists organizing events to promote environmental, social, and political change. They will create, perform, educate and demonstrate, in their individual communities, and decide their own specific area of focus for change within the overall framework of peace and sustainability, which co-founder Michael Rothenberg stated, "...is a major concern worldwide and the guiding principle for this global event."

12 PM

### A Revolutionary Summer: In Our Words

**A Revolutionary Summer (ARS)** is an intensive critical reading and writing program dedicated to shifting harmful narratives about Black women and girls through both the meaningful study and creation of art and the deliberate application of self-inquiry. For eight Sundays each summer, daughters ages 15 and older gather to discuss works like *The Bluest Eye*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Founder and director **Andria Nacina Cole** talks with **daughters** and **coordinators** to discuss the impact of Black women's art on Black women's inner and outer worlds, and how the program helps them reach beyond race, gender, and story to discover (and live) lives that have not been prescribed for them. The daughters will present excerpts from Ntozake Shange's "*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf*".

1 PM

### Featured Poet: Samantha Thornhill

**Samantha Thornhill** is a Trinidadian-born poet, writer, performer and educator. She has performed her work globally, and has published in dozens of journals and anthologies. She taught poetry to actors at The Juilliard School in New York City, and co-founded the grassroots collective, Poetry In Unexpected Places, which was profiled in *The New York Times* for its surprise pop up poetry showcases in public spaces. She just finished a residency at the Furious Flower Poetry Center. Her third children's book, *A Card For My Father*, is forthcoming.

1:30 PM

### Poets Take: Rienne Scott, Nina Lyrispect Ball & Charles Xavier

**Rienne Scott** is a Baltimore City high school teacher, poet, mentor, and advocate for all LGBTQ+ people of color. She is the 2015 DC Black Pride Slam Champion, and created "OUTspoken" - an LGBTQ+ open mic and networking party. **Nina "Lyrispect" Ball** is a lyricist, co-founder and executive producer of the Harvest Open Mic in Philadelphia, and author of *The PreCursor*, the first of seven installments of *Spectrum of a Supernova*, a multimedia series of signature work. **Charles Xavier** is an Atlanta native who is a performance poet, self-care and mental health wellness advocate, and case manager at the LGBTQIA community center for Baltimore. As a man of trans experience, he feels it's his responsibility to use his transition to facilitate open conversations.

2 PM

### Poets Speak: Raw Wounds, Wise Blood, Speak Water

**Kondwani Fidel**, author of *Raw Wounds*, has been featured in *Business Insider* and *CNN*. He is a writer, speaker, and spoken word poet who is a 2016 recipient of the Ford: Men of Courage Award. **Robert Earl Price** is an author of four books of poetry, including *Wise Blood*. He has had eleven plays produced here and abroad, and is the recipient of the American Film Institute's William Wyler Award. **Truth Thomas** is a singer-songwriter and poet. His work includes *Speak Water*, winner of the 2013 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work in Poetry. He's the founder of Cherry Castle Publishing, LLC, and his poems have been twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. **Ron Kipling Williams**, who uses art, media, performance, and education to break down walls, facilitate open and honest conversations, and build community, and author of *Black Freak Mosh Heaven* will moderate.

3 PM

### The Spirit of Poetry in Baltimore

A celebration of poets in Baltimore, curated by **Shirley Brewer** and **Joey Reisberg**, as a national community poetry project for his term as a 2016 National Student Poet. Poets share their work, as well as the work of the enduring poetic talents of Baltimore greats, Lucille Clifton, Adrienne Rich, Edgar Allan Poe, Ogden Nash, and Frank O'Hara. The session features an Open Mic, showcasing the spirit of upcoming poets. Brewer will read from her new work, *Bistro in Another Realm*. Reisberg is a senior at the George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology. **Mejdulene B. Shomali** is a writer, teacher, and researcher, whose work has published in *The Feminist Wire*, *Mizna*, and *Tinderbox*. **Jamesha Caldwell** is a multifaceted college student, whose work surrounds the plight of her environment, womanhood, and Blackness. A portion of this session includes an **Open Mic**.

4 PM

### Featured Songstress: This is Lea

**Lea Morris** has shared the stage with luminaries including Odetta, Mavis Staples, Dar Williams and Anthony Hamilton, LEA performs at a far-ranging array of venues, including arts centers, universities, festivals, and places of worship. Washington Area Music Association recognizes her as one of the region's best vocalists, songwriters and recording artists. LEA's latest recording, "Let You In," is a collection of songs the artist hopes will cultivate greater compassion for femininity. Lea will be joined by an ensemble.

5 PM

### Not Without Black Women Writers: Finding Joy and Humor in Resistance

Black women's voices have been historically marginalized, generalized, ignored, overlooked, and devalued. Black Ladies Brunch Collective aims to uplift and inspire with their new collection, *Not Without Laughter*. Cave Canem fellows include: **Saida Agostini**, a queer Afro-Guyanese poet and social worker, **Anya Creightney**, a programs specialist at the Poetry & Literature Center in the Library of Congress, **Teri Ellen Cross Davis**, whose first collection *Haint* was published in 2016, poet and journalist **celeste doaks**, author of *Cornrows and Cornfields*, **Tafisha A. Edwards**, author of *The Bloodlet*; and **Katy Richey**, who hosts the Sunday Kind of Love reading series open mic at Busboys and Poets in Washington D.C.

6 PM

### Featured Poet: David Mills

**David Mills** is a writer and actor whose portfolio includes a one person show of the works of Langston Hughes. He has published two books of poetry, his second *The Sudden Country*. He has performed the works of Dr. King, 6PM including “I Have a Dream,” and “Promised Land” and has used excerpts from "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" to get participants to write epistolary poems. He is the subject of a recent documentary "Freak the Language".

6:45PM  
- 7PM

### Featured Musician: Jahiti of Brown FISH

**Jahiti** is a singer/songwriter based in Baltimore, MD. Jahiti has performed as part of Baltimore’s legendary group, Brown FISH, and as a solo artist throughout the US, Canada and Jamaica for the past 15 years. Bringing his own brand of roots, reggae and soul, Jahiti continues to build his solo legacy while remaining close to the spirit of the Brown FISH name.

[View Full Bookfest Schedule](#)