

CityLit Project & the Baltimore Symphony
Orchestra in partnership with Hedgebrook
and Chesapeake Shakespeare Theater
Company present:

BALTIMORE'S
20TH ANNUAL
CityLit
fest
ival

lifting as we climb

A THREE-DAY, LIVE, AND IN-PERSON, LITERARY CELEBRATION
FOR READERS & WRITERS - WITH A DAYLONG PROGRAM ON
SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 2023



CITYLIT
PROJECT

BALTIMORE
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

OUR SPONSORS AND FUNDERS:



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#citylitfest2023 | @citylitproject | @citylitproject | CityLitProject | The CityLit Festival is a FREE event. www.citylitproject.org

SATURDAY, MARCH 25: DAY-LONG PROGRAM

JOSEPH MEYERHOFF SYMPHONY HALL | IN-PERSON



10:00AM - 12:00PM
ONE-on-ONE, 30-Minute Editorial Critique Sessions (\$10)
GOVERNOR MEMBER LOUNGE

Rosalia Scalia (fiction)
Rebekah Kirkman (creative nonfiction)
Bret McCabe (creative nonfiction)
Chelsea Lemon Fetzer (poetry, fiction)
Kathy Flann (fiction, creative, nonfiction)
Lisa Snowden (journalism)

*Guidelines: FIVE pages of poetry OR prose
Double-spaced | 12 pt. font | 1 inch margin
Numbered pages | Name must be included
Manuscripts read at appointment*

\$10 Registration required.

11:00AM - 12:15PM
Of Mourning and Memory: Brown Girl and Muslim, The Poetry of Loss & Awakenings
AUDITORIUM

Poet, screenwriter, and author of the poetry collection *If They Come For Us*, ***Fatimah Asghar*** celebrates their debut novel *When We Were Sisters*, longlisted for the 2022 National Book Award, the Aspen Words Literary Prize, and The Center for Fiction First Novel Prize. *When We Were Sisters* explores identity and gender and evokes the story of three Muslim American girls, facing tragedy and triumph in their lives, left with the brutal reckoning of grief without parents to guide them through the wreckage. Experimental in form, drawn with a poet's assured hand, this story of orphaned girls embarking on a journey, caught between the borders of American culture and their family's Pakistani background, is a hymn of redemption. Asghar's belief is clear. No one should bear the burden of being a representative voice. You'll find no stereotypes here, but instead, lives painted in a multiplicity of broad strokes, revealing lives beyond what we think we know and believe. Asghar depicts work against the flattened immigrant identities we're accustomed to, teaching us, again and again, that there is no such thing as a single story. Joining Fatimah in conversation is **Nafisa Isa**, educator, organizer, and Program Manager at the **Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center**, noted for creating soulful spaces for

Muslim American women, and the founder of the **Muslim Writers' Salon** in DC.

11:30AM - 12:45PM
Queer Possibility: Writing Catastrophe and Imagining What Comes Next
LOBBY STAGE

LGBTQ+ people are under attack, both in the U.S. and globally, and their stories are no exception. Despite this, queer and trans writers continue to share their stories, histories, and futures as they build and strengthen literary communities. Join celebrated queer and trans writers as they share work about collapse, rebirth, and the possibility of Queer literature, and discuss surviving/thriving/imagining the future during bad times – a mix of laughter and haunting, how queerness also leads to creativity, sometimes out of the necessity of building a community of chosen family to experience the apocalypse with. Poet, essayist **Tonee Moll** is the Lambda Literary Award winner of *Out of Step: A Memoir*. Their latest book is *You Cannot Save Here*. Baltimore-based intermedia artist **Rahne Alexander** is a contributor to BmoreArt and the author of the award-winning essay collection *Heretic to Housewife*. Poet, performer, and '22 Baltimore Magazine's GameChanger **Unique Mical Robinson** is the Director of MICA's MFA in Community Arts Program and Chaired 2022 Baltimore Pride. The author of *Margaret and the Mystery of the Missing Body*, ***Megan Milks*** was named a finalist for the 2022 Lambda Literary Award in Transgender Fiction. They are at work on a memoir in essays called *Mega Milk: About My Name (and Family, and Fluidity, and Whiteness, and Cows)*. Moderator, and Arts and Culture writer **Imani Spence** focuses on how art affects the lives of people who live and create in Baltimore.

12:30PM - 1:45PM
Never Quite Like This: Hedgebrook introduces Carmen Maria Machado in Conversation with Nicole Shawan Junior
AUDITORIUM

Guggenheim Fellow and critically acclaimed author of the bestselling memoir *In the*

Dream House, and graphic novel *The Low, Low Woods*, **Carmen Maria Machado** joins CityLit in a new partnership with **Hedgebrook**, a premier women's residency on Whidbey Island, Washington with alumnae who include CityLit Project's Executive Director. A finalist for the National Book Award and the winner of the Bard Fiction Prize, the Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction, and numerous others, the *New York Times* listed Machado's award-winning short story collection *Her Body and Other Parties* as one of "15 remarkable books by women that are shaping the way we read and write fiction in the 21st century." Carmen will read from a short story and be in conversation with **Nicole Shawan Junior**, the founder of **SeaSalted Honey** and **Roots. Wounds. Words.** (literary arts revolutions that serve BIPOC writers.) Nicole is the Deputy Director of Prison and Justice Writing at **PEN America** and curated Raising Mothers' limited Justice Involved Mothers column, penned by formerly incarcerated Black women.

1:00PM - 2:15PM

The 'State' of Baltimore: Shedding Light on Critical Issues

LOBBY STAGE

Panelists discuss critical issues in Baltimore with the intention of shedding light, along with a broader view of justice, equality, art, and dignity in today's Baltimore. Expect a lively discussion with co-editor **Joshua Davis** (*Baltimore Revisited*, *Stories of Inequality and Resistance in a U.S. City*), author and cultural worker **Alanah Nichole Davis**, author **Lawrence Brown** (*The Black Butterfly*) with moderator **Nneka N'namdi**, whose lived experience gave birth to **Fight Blight Bmore**, a social and environmental justice tool for residents to identify, report and track blight.

2:00PM - 3:15PM

Little Devils with Unchained Arms: Hanif Abdurraqib In Conversation with Jason Reynolds

AUDITORIUM

Widely-published poet, essayist, cultural critic, and MacArthur Fellow ***Hanif Abdurraqib*** boasts two celebrated volumes – *The Crown*

Ain't Worth Much and his first collection of essays, *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us*, named a book of the year by several publications, including Buzzfeed, Esquire and NPR. His collections walk the territory of family, friendship, and community with compassion, depth, and clarity. This session is named for the joyful way Hanif described his manner of dance in his latest book, the National Book Award Finalist *Little Devil in America*, winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal, named after dancer Josephine Baker who declared, "I was a devil in other countries, and I was a little devil in America, too." Esteemed #1 New York Times bestselling author **Jason Reynolds** joins Hanif to discuss *Devil*, the reissue of *They Can't Kill Us*, life as an artist, publishing, community, and all things literary. Jason's novel-in-verse *Long Way Down* was the 2019 One Book Baltimore selection. He's the recipient of numerous awards, including a Newbery Honor, a Printz Honor, and multiple Coretta Scott King honors, served as the **National Ambassador for Young People's Literature** from 2020-2022, and has a forthcoming children's picture book *There Was a Party for Langston*, a joyous ode to Hughes.

2:30PM - 3:30PM

VOICES OF CARMEN

LOBBY STAGE

CJay Philip, Artistic Director and founder of **Dance & Bmore**, showcase youth 16 -24 years of age in **Voices of Carmen**, a musical adaptation of the opera Carmen developed through youth-centered conversation and collaboration. The musical, set in a High School, is filled with fresh yet familiar renditions of Georges Bizet's compositions as well as original music and rhythms that capture the voice and soul of today's youth. A theme within the production is 'crossroads' and the critical moments of reaction that lead us down one road or another. This original **CJay Philip** production was featured at the DC Black Theater Festival, The Atlanta Black Theater Festival, and the Kennedy Center Page to Stage Festival. Dance & Bmore is a Baltimore-based ensemble with a dynamic and unique fusion of movement, original music, and spoken word. They create socially

conscious work that is interactive, playful, and empowering and design multi-generational community programs that seek to stimulate the imagination and strengthen the community while building a sense of well-being.

3:30PM - 5:00PM

A Visual Mapping of Your Story: How to Write What You See

90-minute Craft Intensive

GOVERNOR MEMBER LOUNGE

Five celebrated authors share their visual processes of structuring a short story, novel, or larger literary work. They will offer their own visual interpretations of how they map stories and provide tips for writers to adapt or explore ways on their own. Meant for those who are open to diving into the visual landscape of their literary work. Fiction writer **Kosiso Ugwueze's** short stories have appeared in Joyland, Gulf Coast, Subtropics, and The New England Review. Her work interrogates queerness, intergenerational dynamics, and immigrant experiences. In *Heir to the Crescent Moon*, memoirist **Sufiya Abdur-Rahman** examines her experiences as a second-generation Black Muslim grasping for connection to the faith her parents embraced in Black Power-era New York City. Her nonfiction writing investigates questions of family, identity, race, and religion and, often, how they intersect. **Shannon Robinson's** fiction has appeared in literary magazines such as Gettysburg Review, Iowa Review, Water-Stone Review, Nimrod, and Joyland, and her short-story collection, *The Ill-Fitting Skin*, is currently in submission for publication. Through a blend of the gothic, the magical, and psychological realism, the collection explores dark undercurrents streaming through female experiences of nurturing and bodily autonomy. In writer and photographer **Kerika Fields'** latest project *With Your Bad Self*, she utilizes archival images and available family photos to ensure readers' authentic experience – the objective of her career, ultimately an exercise in capturing life's fleeting moments via words and images. Her novella is based on kitchen table stories told to her by her late grandmother. Author **Rosalia Scalia's** stories explore instances of imperfect people trying to connect to loved ones and others despite fractured relationships and personal flaws in *Stumbling Toward Grace*. In her work, we meet ordinary people striving

to survive and thrive in situations reflective of today's challenges.

3:30PM - 4:45PM

I've Been in Sorrow's Kitchen: The Many Ways We Wear Our Grief

AUDITORIUM

Zora got it right when she wrote, "I've been in sorrow's kitchen and licked out all the pots." A procession of artists in an eclectic exploration of grief in a multi-discipline fashion. We need to talk about grief. From an act of violence. Familial loss. The end of a relationship. Loss of a limb, or from an illness. COVID. Suicide. A dance of grief. When grief looks like rage. A healing song. An exploration of how to hold what we carry. *We invite our audience to write their own statements of grief and the ways they carry it, to be displayed, thereby launching a collective healing space.*

The Many Ways We Wear Our Grief features:

- **Kathy Flann:** From her essay "Why Was I So Full of Jokes When My Dad Died?" We can find laughter after the loss of a parent.
- **Chin-Yer Wright:** When our body deceives us then makes us whole.
- **Mejdulene Shomali:** When a loved one is still here but gone missing.
- **Kisha Webster, Greenmount West Community Center:** The Violence of Lack and its impact on youth and adults.
- **Kondwani Fidel:** When memories turn into stories.
- **Gayle Danley:** Hands up! Now screaaaaamm! Riding grief's rollercoaster with grace and realness.
- **Allen Xing:** "The Shape of Water" – The loss of a father and how we find solace in water and memory.
- **Black Assets:** "I don't know where I might go but I'm gonna take that journey, not so sure where it will lead but I know I'll find some healing."

5:30PM - 6:45PM

My Broken Language - Baltimore/DC Bushwick Book Club centers Quiara Alegria Hudes' work with a musical interpretation.

LOBBY STAGE

The Bmore/DC Bushwick Book Club - the joyous intersection of indie artists and book nerds, of music and spoken word - is the

closing night event, a special presentation inspired by **Quiara Alegria Hudes'** Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, *My Broken Language*. The Book Club gathers a group of artists of different disciplines to read a book and create new works inspired by it. With active chapters in New York City, Seattle, Oakland, LA, London, and Malmo, the Bmore/DC Chapter launched last year with shows inspired by the works of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., K. O'Neill, and Octavia Butler.

My Broken Language is Hudes' coming of age story set against the backdrop of a Philadelphia barrio, with her sprawling Puerto Rican family as her collective muse. Her plays are hailed around the world for their exuberance, intellectual rigor, and rich imagination. They include *Water By the Spoonful*, and *In the Heights*. This year's Festival performances curated by **Sea Griffin** include **Boy Meets Pearl**, a queer-fronted and oddly-orchestrated Victorian Music Hall Dream Pop Daddy, with lush sounds and music box melodies; DC musician **Antonio Villaronga's** combined influences from traditional South American folklore to classic rock and modern

Latin music debuts a song for the occasion. Called a "sophisticated global pop," Peruvian-born singer **Lou Black**, reminds his fans of Roy Orbison or Lou Reed. Singer/songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and founder of the Club, **Susan Hwang** tours internationally and refuses to play anything but songs about books. Described "as if Nina Simone and Yo-Yo Ma had a kid," **Patricia Santos** draws on her classical training to meld the cello with non-classical styles. Dominican Republic-born, artist/activist **Morelys Urbano** discovered the world of poetry at thirteen in La Coruña, Spain, and made history by becoming the first fully undocumented afro Latina to found an organization that protects immigrant rights at a Historically Black University. Multi-disciplinary artist **Valeria Fuentes** founded **Kinetic Kitchen** and **Roots and Raices** and consults on youth development and design strategy. DC's Dreamy Pop Princess **Ari Vox** transcends genres with a sound heavily inspired by the moods and vibes of the 80s/90s new-wave and pop artists. These artists will speak for themselves. You're going to love what they have to say.

TUESDAY, MARCH 28 | 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

CATCHING THE LIGHT WITH JOY:
A Reading & Conversation with Brendan Basham
Featuring former U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo

CHESAPEAKE SHAKESPEARE THEATER
7 S Calvert Street | Baltimore, MD 21202

An evening with **Joy Harjo**, the 23rd United States Poet Laureate, the first Native American to hold the position, and only the second to serve three terms in the role. Harjo's nine books of poetry include *Weaving Sundown in a Scarlet Light*, *An American Sunrise*, *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings*, *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems* and *She Had Some Horses*. She is the author of two memoirs, *Crazy Brave* and *Poet Warrior*, which invite us to travel along the heartaches, losses, and humble realizations of her "poet-warrior" road. She edited *Living Nations, Living Words*, the companion anthology to her signature poet laureate project, and the children's book, *Remember*, based on her iconic poem of the same title, inviting young readers to reflect on the world around them and their place in it. Her many writing awards include the Ruth Lilly Prize from the Poetry Foundation, and the Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets. She is a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. A renowned musician, Harjo performs with her saxophone



nationally and internationally; her most recent album is *I Pray For My Enemies*. Harjo will be joined in conversation with Navajo writer, educator, and former chef **Brendan Basham** whose novel *Swim Home to the Vanished*, debuts in June with Harper Books, the flagship imprint of HarperCollins.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31 | 7:00 PM - 9:30 PM

UNSHUTTERED POETS: POETRY AT THE CENTER OF HISTORY & REMEMBRANCE

Featuring Musical Guest Jahiti and Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize - Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Patricia Smith

BUSBOYS AND POETS - BALTIMORE

3224 St Paul Street | Baltimore, MD 21218

As part of Baltimore's legendary group, **Brown FISH**, **Jahiti** brings his own brand called World Country Reggae Soul, building his solo legacy while remaining close to the spirit of the Brown FISH name. 2021 recipient of the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize for Lifetime Achievement presented by the Poetry Foundation, **Patricia Smith**, is a 2022 inductee of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences who will read from her latest poetry collection *Unshuttered Poems*. The author of nine books of poetry, including *Incendiary Art*, winner of the 2018 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award, and finalist for the 2018 Pulitzer Prize and *Blood Dazzler*, a National Book Award finalist, she is a renaissance artist of unmistakable signature, recognized as a force in the fields of poetry, playwriting, fiction, performance, and creative collaboration. She is also a recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including a four-time individual champion of the National Poetry Slam.

Ephraim Nehemiah, author of *The Autobiography of Absence*, has showcased their work with Tedx Talks, Saul Williams World Tour, and the National Basketball Association. Palestinian American poet and community activist **Zeina Azzam** is the widely published poet laureate of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and the author of *Bayna Bayna*, *In-Between*, and a mentor for **We Are Not Numbers**, a writing program for youth in Gaza. **Sean Murphy** is the Founding Director of 1455 - a non-profit that celebrates storytelling. His published works have been nominated four times for the Pushcart Prize. His collection of short fiction debuts in 2023. **Kathleen Hellen**'s latest poetry collection is *Meet Me at the Bottom*. Her credits include *The Only Country Was the Color of My Skin*, the award-winning collection *Umberto's Night*, and two chapbooks, *The Girl Who Loved Mothra* and *Pentimento*. Light of Literacy Awards' winner, **Tara Elliott**'s poems have appeared in *Cimarron Review*, *TAOS Journal of International Poetry & Art*, among others. Executive Director of the **Eastern Shore Writers Association (ESWA)**, she is the co-chair of the annual **Bay to Ocean Writers Conference**. Writer and book designer **Jalynn Harris**' work can be found in *Feminist Studies*, *The Best American Poetry 2022* at Poets.org, *The Hopkins Review*, and elsewhere. Their first chapbook of poems is called *Exit Thru the Afro*.



CityLit Festival Partnerships

The **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's (BSO)** mission is to perform the highest quality symphonic music of all eras that nurtures the human spirit. We are committed to engaging, inspiring, educating, and serving our audiences in meaningful and intentional ways, and to enhancing Maryland as a center of cultural vitality and importance. In July 2022, the BSO once again made musical history with its announcement that Jonathon Heyward would succeed Music Director Laureate and OrchKids Founder Marin Alsop as the Orchestra's next Music Director. Maestro Heyward begins his five-year contract in the 2023-24 season.

bsomusic.org

📍 @balsymphony

Hedgebrook is a global community of women writers and people who seek extraordinary books, poetry, plays, films, and music by women. A literary nonprofit, our mission is to support visionary women-identified writers whose stories and ideas shape our culture now and for generations to come. We offer writing residencies and Radical Craft Retreats on Whidbey Island, and public programs that connect writers with readers and audiences around the world.

hedgebrook.org

📍 @hedgebrook

Chesapeake Shakespeare Company is the leading classical theatre company in Maryland, offering vibrant performances and cutting-edge education programs that generate powerful, magical theatre and a more purposeful, engaged, and connected community.

chesapeakeshakespeare.com

📍 @ChesapeakeShakespeareCompany

Busboys and Poets - Baltimore is a community where racial and cultural connections are consciously uplifted... a place to take a deliberate pause and feed your mind, body, and soul... a space for art, culture, and politics to intentionally collide... we believe that by creating such a space we can inspire social change and begin to transform our community and the world.

busboysandpoets.com

📍 @busboysandpoets

BmoreArt is the leading resource for contemporary art and culture in the Baltimore region, a platform for creative and critical discussions. We apply editorial and community-building capabilities including digital publication, a biannual print journal founded in 2015, community events, lectures, and social media, to further the cultural and economic interests of artists, arts organizations, cultural institutions, and diverse audiences for arts and culture in the region.

bmoreart.com

📍 @bmoreart

Baltimore Beat is a Black-led, Black-controlled nonprofit newspaper and media outlet. Our mission is to honor the tradition of the Black press and the spirit of alt-weekly journalism with reporting that focuses on community, questions power structures, and prioritizes thoughtful engagement with our readers. We aim to serve all of Baltimore City, including those with limited internet access and those who are a part of underrepresented communities. Our organization aspires toward a more equitable, accountable, and rigorous future for journalism that fully represents the stories of all our neighbors.

baltimorebeat.com

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insight180 is a brand consulting and design firm that helps forward-thinking businesses and nonprofits clarify, focus and differentiate themselves through brand messaging and design. Lovcers od words, conscious companies and mission-driven nonprofits, insight180 adopted CityLit Project seven years ago to help amplify their mission.

insight180.com

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The Ivy Bookshop is an independent bookstore specializing in fiction, non-fiction, history, biography, art, interior design, cooking and children's books.

theivybookshop.com

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Baltimore National Heritage Area promotes, preserves, and enhances Baltimore's historic and cultural legacy and natural resources for current and future generations.

explorebaltimore.org

📍 @bmoreha

University of Baltimore is where MFA graduate students learn to write, design, and publish their own books. Learn to Plork = play + work, a creative way of life for life.

ubalt.edu

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The Village

CityLit Project recognizes these organizations as part of its Village, local, regional and state-wide organizations that serve readers and writers by displaying their information at signature events and on our website. We realize many individuals and organizations ... bookstores, entrepreneurs, reading series, and more — do their level best to provide services, information, and opportunities to grow and enhance the lives of poets and writers. This is our way of supporting you and amplifying the work of these cultural individuals and institutions.

<https://www.citylitproject.org/about-us/the-village/>

- Artist U
- A Revolutionary Summer
- The Baltimore Review
- Center for Black Literature
- Doerr&Co
- Furious Flower Poetry Center
- George Mason University Creative Writing
- Howard County Poetry & Literature Society
- Iceland Readers Retreat
- Libraries Without Borders
- Maryland Writer's Association
- Midwest Writing & Editing
- The Modell Lyric
- Passager
- Pen Parentis
- Poe Baltimore, The Edgar Allan Poe House & Museum
- The Poet & The Poem from The Library of Congress
- The Inner Loop
- Writers & Words
- Yellow Arrow Publishing
- Zora's Den

*The Writer's Room:

The Writer's Room, which debuted at the virtual 2021 CityLit Festival, is designed to engage participants face-to-face with authors in an informal conversation about the different aspects of writing, including questions about craft, research, writing process, challenges, and publication. Featured authors get a chance to wind down from being 'on' and simply engage with the writers assembled about all sorts of things. In the past, Emily St. John Mandel, Terrance Hayes, Nikky Finney, Jenny Offill, and Roxane Gay participated, and simply loved it. Roxane Gay was so taken by the diverse and inclusive writers assembled that - to our delight and surprise, she stayed for an hour. A hit with festival attendees! This year's featured guest authors include:

Megan Milks | 1:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Carmen Maria Machado | 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Hanif Abdurraqib* & *Fatimah Asghar | 5:00 pm - 5:45 pm

CityLit Project recognizes and honors the enduring presence of indigenous peoples in Baltimore City, including the Piscataway, Lumbee, and Eastern Band of Cherokee community members. As we gather in literary spaces, we are committed to championing emerging and established Native poets and writers on our platforms. We invite you to download the [Guide to Indigenous Baltimore](#).

*CityLit Project nurtures the culture of literature, creates enthusiasm for the literary arts, connects a community of avid readers and writers, and designs opportunities for diverse audiences to embrace the literary arts with three signature events, the **CityLit Stage**, the **CityLit Studio: Writers on Craft, Creativity & Community**, and the **CityLit Festival**. CityLit is a founding sponsor of **Scribente Maternum** (Writer Moms) and features an annual, innovative **Write Like a Mother Retreat**. citylitproject.org | scribentematernum.com*

FESTIVAL PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Ryan Day is a published Photographer, Cinematographer, Director, Producer, and Creative Director
infinitemotionx.com

Rian Watkins began his artistic journey over 10 years ago shooting lifestyle portraits and street-style captures. Today he focuses on storytelling through a lens of empathy and respect.
rianwatkins.com

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