

## Spoken Word Festival *Stellar Masses* Features Poetry and Performance, the Sacred and the Cosmic

*Stellar Masses Brings Together Writers, Musicians, and Filmmakers in  
Philadelphia for Three Days of Public Programming and a Get Down Celebration*

May 9, 10, & 16, 2018  
Plus, A Stellar Masses Get-Down: May 12



King Britt. Photograph courtesy of King Britt and Philadelphia Contemporary

(PHILADELPHIA, PA — April 18 , 2018) — **Philadelphia Contemporary**, a globally oriented visual and performance art nonprofit, is pleased to announce ***Stellar Masses***, a public festival spanning three days in May. Funding for *Stellar Masses* has been generously provided by the Daniel W. Dietrich II Foundation.

Organized as a series of gatherings that explore the sacred roots and interstellar potential of spoken word practices, *Stellar Masses* upholds the spoken word as at once ancient and futuristic, capable of testifying, time traveling, and spellbinding. The site-specific events will feature writers, musicians, and filmmakers, guiding attendees through a mind-expanding continuum of ritual and performance.

Curated by Philadelphia Contemporary's newly appointed Curator of Spoken Word, **Yolanda Wisher**, *Stellar Masses* will feature **King Britt, Samuel R. Delany, V. Shayne Frederick, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Husnaa Hashim, Madison McFerrin, Sirius Juju, Moor Mother, Raquel Salas Rivera, Ursula Rucker, and Marvin K. White**, among others, and short films by **Renee Cox, Terence Nance, Frances Bodomo, Johan Grimontez, and Saya Woolfalk**. A complete listing of participants for each event is below.

"*Stellar Masses* is a cousin of the sermons of James Baldwin and Toni Morrison, the prophecies of Ralph Ellison and Octavia Butler, the mantras of Jayne Cortez and Amiri Baraka," said **Philadelphia Contemporary Curator of Spoken Word Yolanda Wisher**. "Like freedom-seekers following the drinking gourd out of slavery or the Maya clocking eclipses, we humans have long looked up to the stars and heavens for answers to the deepest questions we have about ourselves. Witnesses are welcome at these pop-up churches of soul, where the exchange of energy between artists and audiences is bound to create something ecstatic."

**Stellar Mass I, *Firmament***, will take place **Wednesday, May 9, 6:30-8:30 pm**, at the **Free Library Skyline Room & Terrace**. [Tickets available here.](#)

**Stellar Mass II, *Heaven***, will take place **Thursday, May 10, 6:30-8:30 pm**, at the **Iron Gate Theater**. [Tickets available here.](#)

**Stellar Mass III, *Earth***, will take place **Wednesday, May 16, 6:45-8:30 pm**, at the **Fels Planetarium**. The performance will be preceded by a reception from **6:00-6:45 pm**. [Tickets available here.](#)

**Hive Revival: A Stellar Masses Get Down**, a celebration of the series, will take place **Saturday, May 12, 7:00-11:00 pm**, at **Union Transfer**. The party will be free and open to the public. [Tickets available here.](#)

Tickets to *Firmament* and the Hive Revival are free, and tickets to both *Heaven* and *Earth* are \$10.

Each *Stellar Mass* will feature unique giveaways for attendees. The series is presented with support from the Daniel W. Dietrich II Foundation, and Stellar Mass I in partnership with The Free Library of Philadelphia.

## SCHEDULE AND PARTICIPANTS

### **Stellar Mass I: Firmament**

Skyline Terrace, Free Library of Philadelphia  
1901 Vine Street, Philadelphia, PA  
Wednesday, May 9, 6:30-8:30 pm  
*Presented in partnership with the Free Library of Philadelphia*

Blessing by Philadelphia Youth Poet Laureate **Husnaa Hashim**  
**The Stellar Mass Choir** directed by **V. Shayne Frederick**  
Performance by **Sirius Juju**  
Film shorts by **Terence Nance, Frances Bodomo, Johan Grimonprez, and Saya Woolfalk**  
**Moor Mother** delivers The Word

### **Stellar Mass II: Heaven**

Iron Gate Theater  
3700 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA  
Thursday, May 10, 6:30-8:30 pm

Benediction by Philadelphia Poet Laureate **Raquel Salas Rivera**  
**The Stellar Mass Choir** directed by **V. Shayne Frederick**

**Samuel R. Delany** and **Alexis Pauline Gumbs** deliver The Word  
Performance by **Bethlehem** and **Sad Patrick**

A book signing, with Samuel R. Delany, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and Raquel Salas Rivera, will follow.

### **Hive Revival: A Stellar Masses Get Down**

Union Transfer  
1026 Spring Garden St, Philadelphia, PA  
Saturday, May 12, 7:00 - 11:00 pm

### **Stellar Mass III: Earth**

Fels Planetarium at The Franklin Institute  
222 N 20th St, Philadelphia, PA  
Wednesday, May 16, 6:00-8:30 pm

Libation by **Ursula Rucker**

**The Stellar Mass Choir** directed by **V. Shayne Frederick**

**Marvin K. White** delivers The Word

**King Britt** presents *Fhloston Paradigm*

Star show by **Madison McFerrin**

Film shorts by **Renee Cox** and **Will Haughery & Kris Harzinski**

Tickets to all *Stellar Masses* events are available [here](#).

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### **About Philadelphia Contemporary**

Founded in 2016, Philadelphia Contemporary is dedicated to bringing visual art, performance art, and spoken word to the city of Philadelphia. A nomadic contemporary art organization with ambitions to establish a free standing globally oriented and locally aware museum, Philadelphia Contemporary has pioneered a vibrant and sustainable model based on partnerships and collaborations. Having commenced pop-up programming in October 2016, Philadelphia Contemporary continues to develop an ambitious roster of projects that will be mounted in the coming years, while planning for a permanent home in a new building.

### **CONNECT**

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