EDMONDS CENTER for the ARTS

2024|2025 Digital Patron Program

WE SPEAK

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HEADLINING ARTISTS

AMBER FLAME is an interdisciplinary artist garnering residencies with Hedgebrook, Baldwin for the Arts, Millay Arts, and more. A former church kid from the Southwest, Flame's first collection of poetry, *Ordinary Cruelty*, published in 2017 through Write Bloody Press. Flame's second book, *apocrifa, a love story told in verse*, launched in May 2023 from Red Hen Press. Flame is Deputy Publisher at Generous Press, a new romance venture publishing inclusive love stories, and Program Director for Hedgebrook, a literary organization serving women. Amber Flame is a queer Black dandy mama who falls hard for a jumpsuit and some fresh kicks

SHARON NYREE WILLIAMS loves experiencing life through the artistry of storytelling and leadership. She's originally from Fayetteville, NC. and has been writing and developing stories in Seattle, WA for over 19 years. She is the former Executive Director for the Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas, and the founder of The Mahogany Project, a theatre arts collaborative that focuses on allowing Black artists an opportunity to share their voice. Her work aims to be purposeful in sharing stories about imperfections in hopes of changing the world one story at a time, and sharing her truth as it relates to family, religion, depression, and being Black in America.

OLISA ENRICO (eMCee and PRE-SHOW TALK LEAD) is an artist, educator and administrator who engages the unique power of art to cultivate community and culture. Olisa spent her childhood writing music and performing, traversing genres and rooted in hip hop as her primary form of expression. She branched out to theater and found passion for the power of story to reveal and heal. A performing artist who prioritizes connection to emotional, spiritual and cultural truth, Olisa writes, produces and performs in a multidimensional magical manifestation of each moment.

Olisa is the Founder and Executive Director of Ase Theatre, a collective of Black Womxn artists whose mission is to engage the community in the art of storytelling through cultural practice and performance. Olisa provides performances, professional development, curriculum development, consultations and workshops through her business PraxisEssentials.com.

Olisa believes that artists and art are vital to the state of culture and society. She shares her soul through performance and cultural practice. She engages collaboration, in relationship, and community.

MBUMBA BANDA (Co-Finalist) is an Afro-Malawian writer and poet who first took stage at Deft Poetry in Malawi. She enjoys using words to tell stories and form connections. She has been greatly influenced by the likes of Qabansio Malewezi and Yellow Rose.

ALY FELLORES (First Place Winner) is a senior at Shorewood High school. Born and raised in Washington, Aly has found strength in their Filipino heritage. They have been passionate about writing since the 5th grade but only recently found joy in poetry. When they are not a poet, Aly is wrestling for their school or planning community events. They plan on continuing their literary journey at Western Washington University. Aly would like to thank everyone who has supported their journey especially their parents, teachers, and friends.

JANAE LU (Seattle Arts and Lectures, Seattle Youth Poet Laureate) is a writer whose work explores the nuances of transition, identity, and self-discovery through free-verse poetry and creative prose. She is the 2024-25 Seattle Youth Poet Laureate, a junior at Tesla STEM High School, the chair of the Redmond Teen Advisory Board, and a second-year member of the Seattle Youth Poetry Fellowship. When not writing she can be found doing endless amounts of homework, overanalyzing Taylor Swift lyrics, and adding to her forever growing book collection.
poems!

JASPER RHODES (Co-Finalist in 2024) is a 17 year old student at Scriber Lake High School who started writing poetry at age 11. He performed at the Edmonds Center for the Arts for WeSpeak 2024, then had his winning poem added to Scriber's publication of student writing called "I Used to Carry It All" later that spring. He has won an honorable mention for The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards two years in a row, and was accepted into the WAYAL WAshington Youth Arts Leadership program for the 2024-2025 school year.

SCARLETT SCOTT (Co-Finalist) is a senior at Jackson High school. She has been writing and performing spoken word poetry for the last three years. She's also been performing stand-up comedy since age 6. She looks forward to a career in special education for elementary school students, to help kids like her recognize their talents and thrive. She is grateful to the special education teachers who encouraged her to pursue a love of writing, even with significant challenges.

TIGER YANG (Co-Finalist) is a junior at Mercer Island High School and is super excited and grateful to able to share his slam poetry filled with his cultural identity with a crowd. He'd like to thank his Creative Writing teacher who was the one that pushed him to do this. Aside from poetry Tiger loves writing plays and is prominent in drama programs having most recently performed as Hades in Hadestown at YTN and will soon play Juror 10 in his school's production of 12 Angry Jurors. Now please enjoy all these beautiful

All stage work performed by employees represented by I.A.T.S.E., Local No. 15

YOUTH POETRY SLAM COMPETITION JUDGES

JULIETA ALTAMIRANO CROSBY is a distinguished community leader, researcher, and advocate, known for her commitment to social justice and equity. Born and raised in Guerrero, Mexico, Julieta relocated to Washington state in 2009, where she has since made significant contributions to various spheres of public service and academia. With a Ph.D. in Social Communications and a Certificate in Race, Equity, and Leadership from Harvard University, alongside a Master's in Educational Leadership from Seattle Pacific University, Julieta possesses a formidable academic background. Her research focuses on the educational experiences of Latinos in Washington, and she has presented her findings at prestigious conferences such as the National Catholic Educational Association Convention and the Washington Education Research Association Conference. Beyond academia, Julieta's dedication to community service spans over a decade, evident through her roles as a board member of several organizations, including the Lynnwood Food Bank and the National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants.

JÓSE FRANCISCO ROBLES is an associate professor of Spanish at the University of Washington, Seattle. He has published two poetry collections *Especies* (2022) in Granada, Spain, and *La isla blanca* (2024) in Santiago, Chile. Many of his poems have appeared in literary journals in Latin America and Spain. He has also published a bilingual volume of Vicente Huidobro's poems co-translated from Spanish to English with Elizabeth Hochberg (University of Washington / RIL Editores / Fundación Vicente Huidobro).

RYLER DUSTIN began his poetry career by performing spoken word; he placed eighth while representing Seattle in the Individual World Poetry Slam, headlined at spoken word venues across the country, and was featured in *The Best of Button Poetry*. He is the author of *Heavy Lead Birdsong* from Write Bloody Publishing and *Trailer Park Psalms,* winner of the University of Pittsburgh's Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize. After earning an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Houston and a PhD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he went on to live in Spain, Jack Kerouac's former home, a cabin in the Oregon wilderness, and recently moved back to his hometown of Bellingham, Washington. You can find his work in outlets like *Verse Daily, American Life in Poetry, The Best of Iron Horse,* and Major Jackson's podcast *The Slowdown.*

DR. GERRY EBALAROZA-TUNNELL, affectionately known as Dr. G, is a Native Hawaiian scholar, cultural strategist, and systems thinker dedicated to personal and collective transformation. As the Founder and CEO of Co3 Consulting: Co-Creating Cohesive Communities, she helps organizations and leaders navigate complexity, foster belonging, and drive systemic change through the guiding principles of A.L.O.H.A.: Ask, Listen, Observe, Heart-focus, and Adapt.

Born and raised in Palolo Valley and Pearl City, Oahu, and now based in Bothell, Washington, Dr. G draws deeply from her Indigenous roots to bridge ancestral wisdom with contemporary leadership. She holds a doctorate in Transformative Studies and Consciousness from the California Institute of Integral Studies, where her groundbreaking research, *The Evolution of Aloha: Systemic Change through Personal Transformation*, centers healing and equity as catalysts for systemic evolution. Dr. G is an Adjunct Professor at Western Washington University's Woodring College of Education, where she teaches in the Department of Adult and Higher Education.

NAOMI BALTUCK
In 1985, after winning a West Coast Storytelling competition co-sponsored by the American Library Association and General Mills, Naomi became a full-time storyteller and writer. She taught storytelling at Seattle Pacific University, and for many years served as president of the Seattle Storytellers Guild. She is the author of award-winning anthologies of folktales and non-fiction storytelling resources and collaborated with her sister Deborah and, more recently, with her daughter to write novels that blend history, fantasy, folklore and romance