

BAM presents *Word. Sound. Power. 2018*, an annual spoken word and hip-hop showcase focusing this year on women's voice in hip-hop, Apr 13, 14 & 18

Word. Sound. Power. 2018

Host/Director, Baba Israel

BAM Fisher (Fishman Space, 321 Ashland Pl)

Apr 13, 14 & 18 at 7:30pm

Tickets: \$20

Ages 13 and up

Featuring: Ashley August, CIPHERELLA, DJ Reborn, LATASHA, Medusa, Yako440

Get Up, Stand Up!

BAM Fisher (Fishman Space, 321 Ashland Pl)

Apr 14 at 2pm

Tickets: \$10

Ages 8 and up

Mar 23, 2018/Brooklyn, NY—In line with the zeitgeist of female empowerment, BAM's *Word. Sound. Power. 2018* features four female hip-hop artists with strong voices. This annual celebration of spoken word and hip-hop also includes winners from a student competition, a Beatbox workshop, a panel discussion, and a family-friendly concert, all designed to demonstrate hip-hop's impact on today's youth culture.

Initially a counter- and sub-culture and now the lingua franca of today's youth, hip-hop retains its radical roots and is closely attuned to social and political discourses. Four of the female MCs chosen for this year's *Word. Sound. Power.* all use beats and words to assert their identities in a male-dominated industry. Ashley August is the 2013 NYC Youth Poet Laureate and speaks fearlessly about issues close to her heart: patriarchy and gentrification. CIPHERELLA's acclaimed music video *Moments* boldly asks us to let go of our egos to achieve inner peace. Medusa has been called the "West Coast hip-hop underground queen." And Brooklyn-based LATASHA was one of the first rappers to be an artist in residence at National Sawdust.

Joining them will be five student poets from Brooklyn public schools: Trinity Angus Hunte (Bedford Academy), Assetou Soumbounou (Expeditionary Learning School for Community Leaders), Keyanna Elrington and Xiomara Davis (Cultural Academy for the Arts & Sciences), and Mikayla Mohan (Brooklyn School of Music & Theater). They all participated in the Brooklyn Reads Poetry Contest 2018 and are chosen through an online poll. The dynamic Baba Israel returns as the host and director. The performances also feature DJ Reborn and musician YAKO 440

The family-friendly concert *Get Up, Stand Up!* returns on April 12 with The Mighty Third Rail and Brooklyn-based MC Mikal Amin. The Mighty Third Rail mixes elements of hip-hop poetry, beat-boxing, violin, and upright bass. Featuring Darian Dauchan on vocals, Ian Baggette on bass, and Curtis Stewart on violin, this bold collective has performed at poetry cafés, colleges, and concert halls, including the legendary Blue Note, the Apollo Theater, and Lincoln Center.

New this year are a Beatbox workshop and a panel discussion. The “Sound. Power. Beatbox Workshop” (Apr 14) is for children ages 8—11 and will be an introduction to hip-hop’s “hidden element,” vocal beatbox, which provided the rap pioneers the only instrument and synthesizer they needed. The free panel “Word. Sound. Knowledge Cipher” (Apr 14) is an interactive discussion featuring several of the performers from *Word. Sound. Power. 2018* and will center around the realities women face in the hip-hop industry. The moderator is the renowned teacher, author, and poet Erica Buddington.

Tickets are \$20 for *Word. Sound. Power. 2018*, \$10 for *Get Up, Stand Up!* For more information call 718.636.4100 or visit BAM.org/literary/2018/word-sound-power.

For press information please contact David Hsieh, dhsieh@bam.org or 718-724-8027.

About the Artists

Ashley August is an actress, playwright, spoken word artist, multiple Grand Slam Champ, hip-hop junkie, and NYC's 2013 Youth Poet Laureate. She got her start at 14 in the off-Broadway production of *Love: A Circus in Three Acts* and has since been featured on stages such as the Apollo, the Great Hall at Cooper Union, and The Triad Broadway House. She began her poetic journey in the summer of 2009 at Urban Word NYC where she became a Youth Leadership board member, participating in several highly acclaimed competitions, including the Urban Word Grand Slam Finals and the New York Knicks Poetry Slam. Her work has been featured in many literary publications, both online and in print. She can also be seen in the critically acclaimed Netflix series *Orange is the New Black*. She is the author of two books of personal exploratory, *Love Handles* and *Licorice*, and was chosen by *The New York Times* for the 30 Under 30 Most Influential list.

Brandi “Cipherella” Stephney, also known as **Omega Born**, is a talented singer-songwriter, musician, MC, poet, humanitarian, and philosopher who is skilled in the art of storytelling. Born and raised in Tuscaloosa, AL, Cipherella sought refuge in New York City in 2013 after she and her mother lost everything in a tornado. Since her arrival, Cipherella has served as the host for New York’s longest running monthly open mic at the Nuyorican’s Poets café, been a contributing writer for *M-Pire* magazine, and served as a reappearing guest judge for *Supreme Bars: The Ultimate Emcee and Producer Battle*. Cipherella’s 2017 video release *Moments* received rave reviews and was the contender and winner of several film festivals throughout the world.

LATASHA is an independent artist based in New York City. Her form-free art travels through a wide range of inspiration found in experimental, world, and hip-hop music. Her energetic calls and performance-based sound have opened doors for her to perform at culturally prestigious events like SXSW, A3C, and Manifesto. In the beginning of 2018, she performed as the headlining act for Brooklyn Museum’s First Saturdays. LATASHA finds resonance in speaking on political, social, and cultural experiences in her music, promoting a much needed agenda for those looking to find inner peace, specifically young women of color. With all of her depth, the beauty in LA’s creative style stems from the juxtaposition of her thought-provoking, influential messages and her blithe, unbound sound.

Coming up in the LA scene, **Medusa** honed her skills at the Good Life café and Leimert Park’s “Project Blowed” Workshop, around Freestyle Fellowship, Black Eye Peas, Macy Grey, and Xzibit. Pop-lockin with the Groove-Atrons gave her talents a platform to win the Best Female Dancer in the first Hip Hop Dance Awards at the Palladium. After the release of her EP, *Do It The Way You Feel It*, Medusa gained a strong fan base overseas, on college campuses across the nation, and has become a guru to the LA underground hip-hop scene and artistic community. She has also received a Grammy with the band Ozomatli. *LA Weekly* voted her best hi-hop artist two years in a row. She wrote, produced, and performed *My Momma Raised a G* for the HBO film *Stranger Inside* in which

she also played the role of Leisha, and doing voiceovers in *Sistas N The City*. Medusa is also a motivational speaker and has talked about the effect of hip-hop on children and women.

DJ Reborn is a Brooklyn-based DJ who has been moving audiences for more than a decade with her mellifluous blend of soul, hip-hop, reggae, house, Latin, electronic, and Afrobeat. She has spun at shows by artists including the Roots, Common, Talib Kweli, John Legend, and India.Arie, and at museums including the Whitney, Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum, and Brooklyn Museum. DJ Reborn has also spun exclusive events for Maxwell, Metallica, and Lauryn Hill, as well as for visual artists Kara Walker and Wangechi Mutu. She has appeared on BET's *Rap City* and served as the 2004—05 international tour DJ for Russell Simmons' *Def Poetry Jam*. She was musical director and DJ for actor/playwright Will Power's off-Broadway hit *Flow*. As a youth mentor and arts educator with Urban Word NYC, DJ Reborn created a workshop for teenage girls that explores deejaying, creative writing, and critical analysis of women's images in media culture.

YAKO 440 is a musician, beat maker, graffiti writer, and graphic designer. He attended Berklee College of Music, and his musical skill set includes human beatbox, bass, guitar, keys, turntables, and drums. YAKO 440 has toured and created original music for Baba Israel's shows *Boombap Meditations* and *The Spinning Wheel Keeps Turning*, performed and composed a beatbox score for the play *How To Break* by Aaron Jafferis, and is well traveled with the improvisational hip-hop theater troupe Playback NYC. Baba Israel and YAKO 440 have released several albums *Force of Life* (2003), *Beatbox Dub Poetics* (2006), and *Highest Degree EP* (2012), and have also produced for many artists in NYC's music scene. He is also a scholar and teaching artist with an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College and experience leading music and visual art workshops with all age groups throughout NYC and cities all over the world.

Baba Israel was raised in New York and has toured across the US, Europe, South America, Australia, and Asia, performing with such artists as Outkast, the Roots, Ron Carter, and Afrika Bambaataa. He began his career as an arts educator in Australia and has gone on to be a leading educator and consultant working with organizations such as Urban Word, BAM, and the University of Madison. He worked as a cultural ambassador with the State Department and served as artistic director and CEO of Contact Theatre in Manchester from 2009—12. Israel is the co-founder and artistic director of Playback NYC Theatre Company, which brings theater to under-represented communities; he has served as a lead teaching artist for the Brooklyn Reads education program at BAM. His debut solo show *Boom Bap Meditations* was supported by the Ford Foundation and the Hip-Hop Theater Festival. He is currently creating a piece inspired by his late father Steve Ben Israel in collaboration with Leo Kay and Yako 440. He is a core member of hip-hop/soul project Soul Inscribed. He has an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College.

Credits

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General Information

BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, BAM Rose Cinemas, and BAMcafé are located in the Peter Jay Sharp building at 30 Lafayette Avenue (between St Felix Street and Ashland Place) in the Fort Greene neighborhood of Brooklyn. BAM Harvey Theater is located two blocks from the main building at 651 Fulton Street (between Ashland and Rockwell Places). Both locations house Greenlight Bookstore at BAM kiosks. BAM Fisher, located at 321 Ashland Place, is the newest addition to the BAM campus and houses the Judith and Alan Fishman Space and Rita K. Hillman Studio. BAM Rose Cinemas is Brooklyn's only movie house dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film and repertory programming. BAMcafé, operated by Great Performances, offers varied light fare and bar service prior to BAM Howard Gilman Opera House evening performances.

Subway: 2, 3, 4, 5, Q, B to Atlantic Avenue – Barclays Center (2, 3, 4, 5 to Nevins St for Harvey Theater); D, N, R to Pacific Street; G to Fulton Street; C to Lafayette Avenue
Train: Long Island Railroad to Atlantic Terminal – Barclays Center
Bus: B25, B26, B41, B45, B52, B63, B67 all stop within three blocks of BAM
Car: Limited commercial parking lots are located near BAM. Visit BAM.org for information.

For ticket information, call BAM Ticket Services at 718.636.4100, or visit BAM.org.

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