

Hip-Hop Theater Festival

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10th ANNUAL D.C. HIP-HOP THEATER FESTIVAL **-Celebrating Ten Years of Hip-Hop Culture in Action with Art, Dance and Theater -**

Washington D.C. (June 2011) – Hip-Hop Theater Festival (HHTF) will be kicking off its tenth year of invigorating culture in action from **July 11th - 16th**, presenting live, professionally executed theater written by and about the Hip-Hop generation. HHTF and its annual line-up of free and low cost events will once again bring the best in local and international Hip-Hop culture, creating lasting and positive impacts on the Washington, D.C. community. Over the past ten years, the HHTF has served over 25,000 people in the DC area with its programs, and to commemorate this noteworthy anniversary the organization is commissioning DJ Munch to create a free mixtape featuring local artists such as Kokayi, Asheru, Jabari Exum, Tabi Bonney, Maimouna Yousef and others.

The DC Festival is receiving unprecedented support from three major institutions in Washington, D.C., including **The Kennedy Center, Arena Stage** and **Dance Place**. The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities is the longstanding partner for the Festival and **Ayris Scales**, Interim Executive Director said “Celebrating the 10th year anniversary of the Hip Hop Theater Festival in DC, is a true testament to the growth and sustainability of the hip-hop culture and its reach to a diverse group of supporters and appreciators. The platform provided by the Hip-Hop Theater Festival for local artists to create and release authentic original works, is unprecedented in this area, and brings validity to the importance and influence of this genre. I’m very excited about this year’s program!”

“At this, our 10th anniversary, the Hip-Hop Theater Festival has come to represent much more than the words ‘theater’ and ‘festival’ can connote,” says **Clyde Valentin**, producer and executive director of the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, “we are very excited for this year’s festival and celebrating a decade of culture in action.”

Hip-Hop Theater Festival kicks off on **July 11th**, with **M3: MC’s, Mics & Metaphors [Re/Mixed]**, which explores the creative power of the lyricism and poetry of hip-hop music through visual imagery. This exhibition first appeared at Flashpoint Gallery in 2010 and received critical acclaim. **M3**, remixed by Simone Jacobson and Tewodross Melchishua uniquely for the 14th Street Busboys and Poets, gathers a group of emerging artists from around the country, each responding to the theme of the MC (Emcee, or Master of Ceremonies) or simply a favorite hip-hop verse or song. These visual artists are working in a variety of media, including photography, mixed media, painting, video and animation. This is also the closing event for the exhibition, which will feature an artist talk and panel discussion with **M3** featured artists and curators and a visual cipher: emcees responding live to the work through freestyles and written rhymes. In the **Langston Room**, black and white photographs highlighting the rich history of African American musical forms, curated by Emma Mae Gallery, will be on display as part of “The History of Rhythm & Blues & The Gregory Gaskins’ Experience.” This event is free and open to the public.

The **HHTF Opening Night Party on July 11th** welcomes the Hip Hop Theater Festival back to DC! Hosted by LiL SoSo Productions and The Adinkra Group - two of DC’s most progressive culturalist organizations, the party will feature DJ sets by special guests and drink specials, attendees will be able to get a jump-start on all the festival has to offer. DJ Jahsonic’s “The Main Ingredient” set will follow right after so be prepared to make it a long night!

OKAYAFRICA: Hip-Hop from the African Diaspora, a concert and open dance workshop, has brought on **Maija Garcia**, Associate Choreographer for **Fela!** on Broadway, and **ONE Dancer Rujeko Dumbutshena** to lead dancers of all levels through a physical fusion of Hip-Hop and African dance. All ages can join in on **July 12th** at the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage before the international musical jam begins. Celebrating Hip-Hop’s new African Renaissance, and hosted by acclaimed indie **MC Tabi Bonney**. The concert performance will feature artists blending flavors and cultures from all over the music world.

Legendary Hip-Hop producer J Dilla has been a key figure in the music industry as evidenced by his work with Common, D’Angelo, Busta Rhymes, A Tribe Called Quest, and Janet Jackson amongst others. Now in its sixth year, **The Annual J Dilla Tribute & Fundraiser**, as part of HHTF, will pair a full live band of D.C.’s most prolific musicians to reproduce some of J Dilla’s best work at the **J DILLA ANNUAL BENEFIT CONCERT** produced by **Munch for Groove Gumbo** on **July 12th** at 930 Club.

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HHTF also presents the highly anticipated stage production **SEED**, written by **Radha Blank**, a **Public Theater Emerging Playwright Fellow** and directed by **Niegel Smith of Fela!** **SEED** explores themes of abandonment, poverty, class differences, distrust and byproducts of the crack epidemic that swept through Harlem in the 1980's and 90's. It tells the story in a vibrant and exciting style, using rhythms and verses that are an integral part of hip-hop culture. HHTF first presented Radha Blank's work as part of the 2003 NYC Festival. It will be showing **July 13th and 14th** in Arena Stage's Kogod Cradle.

Also a part of this year's HHTF is **Word Becomes Flesh**, a theater production stemming from **Marc Bamuthi Joseph's** landmark solo work now featuring new writing and direction. Through spoken word, dance, DJing and visuals, the talented collective Youth Speaks Living Word Project vets **Khalil Anthony, Daveed Diggs, Dahlak Brathwaite, Dion Decibels, Ben Turner, Mike Turner and B. Yung** deliver audiences a series of performed letters, spanning a nine-month period, reflecting a young single father's thoughts and emotions in anticipation of an unborn son. As women continue to live out the pro life vs. pro-choice debate, men continue to struggle with their social right to choose between committing to fatherhood vs. being absent from responsibility. **Word Becomes Flesh** critically, lyrically and choreographically examines this domestic reality at Dance Place, **July 15th and 16th**.

Rounding out the 2011 DC Festival is **The Freshest of All Time**. Presented by **Words Beats & Life, All Ways Rocking,** and **Lionz of Zion** in association with HHTF, **Freshest** is D.C.'s largest B-Boy Jam celebrating one of the cornerstones of Hip-Hop culture – the Battle. Last year's **Freshest** event was attended by over 800 people, and in the past has featured some of the most prominent crews from D.C., Maryland, Virginia, Philadelphia, Boston and New York including the Dynamic Rockers, Evade and Meen 187, Flying Fists from the Floor, Rhythm Fetish, Beat Whacks, The Wild Ones, Mystery Meat, Breakfamous, Killa Groove, Blackout Crew, Lionz of Zion, Vaz and Rawned, and Problems Crew. **The Freshest of All Time** is a two-on-two b-boy/girl and one-on-one popping battle. On-site registration and the battle will be held at the Saint Stephens Church on **July 16th**.

Directly following **The Freshest of All Time**, LiL SoSo Productions and The Adinkra Group return to host the **Closing Night Party** at Tap and Parlour. The party starts at 9pm, is free of charge and open to those 21+ over. Members from The Soul Controllers (DJ Stylus & Jahsonic), will be on board spinning soulful sets that bring the festival's DC run to a fitting close!

For more information regarding the Hip-Hop Theater Festival, please visit - www.hhtf.org

About Hip-Hop Theater Festival:

Beginning in the summer of 2000, the annual Hip-Hop Theater Festival brings together the Hip-Hop generation and those interested in learning more about it in a celebration of the Hip-Hop culture. The non-profit festival has presented over 100 world-renown artists in festivals reaching major metropolitan audiences in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Since its inception, The Hip-Hop Theater Festival has grown into one of the most influential outlets showcasing Hip-Hop performing arts in the country and has become an important contributor to the cultural life of participating Festival cities. This influence has been extended through live, professionally executed theater performances written by and about the Hip-Hop generation. Often using the elements of Hip-Hop culture (including MCing, DJing, Hip-Hop dance, graffiti and Spoken Word), Hip-Hop Theater tells urgent stories seldom represented on stage, and through language that embraces Hip-Hop's multi-literate and poly-lingual vitality. Always imbued with an undercurrent of activism, Hip-Hop Theater ignites dialogue and social change through exciting, provocative and celebratory performance. For more information, go to www.hhtf.org

Upcoming Dates, Venues and Slated Performers:

DATES	TITLE	LOCATION NAME Address	CREDITS
Monday, July 11 th (6-8 pm)	<i>M3: MC's, Mics & Metaphors [Re/Mixed]</i>	Bus Boys and Poets- FREE 2021 14th St NW	Presented by Various Visual Artists Langston Room Curated by: Emma Mae Gallery
Monday, July 11 th (10 pm)	<i>Old School Hip-Hop Jam 10th Anniversary Opening Night Party</i>	Marvin DC- FREE 2007 14 th Street, NW	Lil So So Productions and The Adinkra Group
Tuesday, July 12 th (5 pm)	<i>OKAYAFRICA: Hip Hop from the African Diaspora, Open Dance Workshop with choreography and dancers from Broadway Musical FELA</i>	Kennedy Center Millennium Stage- FREE, all ages welcome! 27 F Street, NW	Open Dance Workshop - Maija Garcia and Rujeko Dumbutshena
Tuesday, July 12 th (6pm)	<i>OKAYAFRICA: Hip Hop from the African Diaspora, Concert</i>	Kennedy Center Millennium Stage- FREE 27 F Street, NW	Concert - Maimouna Youssef, Bajah and the Dry Eye Crew, and Tabi Bonney

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Tuesday, July 12 th (9pm)	<i>J DILLA ANNUAL BENEFIT CONCERT</i>	930 Club 815 V Street, NW	Produced by Munch for Groove Gumbo
Wednesday & Thursday: July 13 th and 14 th (8pm)	<i>SEED</i>	Arena Stage 1101 6 th Street, SW	Written by Radha Blanks Directed by Niegel Smith
Friday and Saturday: July 15 th and 16 th (8pm)	<i>WORD BECOMES FLESH</i>	Dance Place -\$20 3225 8th Street Northeast	By Marc Bamuthi Joseph & Youth Speaks The Living Word Project Co-Presented with Dance Place
Saturday, July 16 th (Noon-8pm)	<i>THE FRESHEST OF ALL TIME</i> On site registration B-boys/girls and Poppers	The Saint Stephens Church 1525 Newton Street NW	Presented by Words Beats & Life, All Ways Rocking, and Lionz of Zion in association with HHTF.
Saturday, July 16 th (9pm- on)	<i>Hip Hop Theater Festival Closing Night Party</i>	No Cover- Must be 21+ Tap and Parlour 2001 11th St, NW	Presented by LIL So So Productions and The Adinkra Group. Members from The Soul Controllers (DJ Stylus & Jahsonic)

To learn more about The Hip-Hop Theatre Festival, to speak to a representative or any of the HHTF artists involved, please contact Sarah Cirkiel (scirkiel@pitchcontrolpr.com) or Valeria Carrasco (vcarrasco@pitchcontrolpr.com), Pitch Control Public Relations, 212.475.4919.

To learn more about The Hip-Hop Theater Festival in DC, please contact Joy Lammie (joy.lammie@fleishman.com) at Fleishman-Hillard, 202.403.8913

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