Artists to “Perform the Word” at 10th Annual Line Breaks March 11-13, 2016

Lineup Includes First Wave Hip Hop Scholars, Musical Artists Me eN You & Guest Artist Dasha Kelly

MADISON, Wis. — This year marks a decade for the Line Breaks Festival, the largest Hip Hop theater festival in the Midwest, which will be presented by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives (OMAI) at the Overture Center for the Arts, March 11-13.

“PERFORM THE WORD: From IDEA to PAGE to PERFORMANCE” — the 2016 festival’s theme— represents a program of carefully curated experimental theater, music, spoken word, poetry and staged readings, all centered around the artistic process. Audiences will not only see performances, they will also have the opportunity to experience the artists’ creative process over three days.

“Per many artists of color on campus, the process of creating their art continues to evolve,” said Chris Walker, UW-Madison Associate Professor of Dance and Artistic Director of the First Wave Hip Hop Theater and Urban Arts Community. “During this time in America, when there are brutal and violent acts that take Black lives, and when there are overt and subtle acts of racial inequality it affects how and why young artists create, and this is important to recognize…important to show.”

Walker said he has seen shifts in processes and approaches to creative work with many of his student artists that includes “both, an intense activism and a deep, abiding connection with one another.” He says the First Wave 9th Cohort, the festival’s openers, are an example of that.

The group performs “Unhe[a]rd: Radical Forms of Protest” Friday, March 11 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, March 12 at 3:30 p.m., a piece Walker says was created in response to how these students see and engage in protest in the 21st century. The multi-faceted production explores, displays and discusses various forms of protests from older generations to current methods implemented by younger activists as they seek to challenge the status quo.

Walker’s aim over the three days is to expose audiences to the artists’ process and to new First Wave collaborations, which reach beyond the program, into the campus and wider Madison community. “People can view performances, hear a reading, read a chapbook,” he said. “They can also take a writing workshop, listen to a stage reading, give feedback directly to the artist on stage, watch artists create and perform response works to other artists’ works, and experience the musical collaborations of First Wave students.”

Guest Artist Dasha Kelly
On Saturday afternoon, the community will have the opportunity to explore the creative process with writer Dasha Kelly during her “More Than Words More Than Words” writing workshop. Kelly is the featured Line Breaks guest artist (biography below). She calls the workshop “a play date for both established and unsuspecting writers to scribble descriptions, plot lines and stanzas and flip the words
and ideas on their sides.” The workshop will take place at 1 p.m. in The Bubbler at Madison Public Library, 201 W. Mifflin St. immediately following a meet and greet with the public and a book signing.

In the evening at 8 p.m., Kelly will present “The Dynamic Page,” a performance reading of her second novel “Almost Crimson,” a story that explores a woman’s lifelong challenge of loving and caring for a parent with mental illness. The novel, released last spring, and Kelly’s accompanying performances have earned strong reviews during her nationwide tour. Buzzfeed Books calls the novel “candid and heartfelt…a poignant examination of love, family, chronic depression.” Immediately after the performance reading, Kelly will conduct an open discussion with the audience and invite performances in response to her work by First Wave artists and Madison musicians.

**Solo Performance by Eli Lynch**
Eli Lynch, a senior at UW-Madison (mass communications major) and First Wave scholar (5th Cohort), will present his solo work “Explosions” Friday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 6 p.m. “Explosions” is a piece he says he’s worked on “sporadically, but consistently” for the last four years. “I’m engaged in a process that is about stitching together relevant pieces of this scattered culmination of years worth of rigorous passion into a cohesive, compelling expression,” said Lynch. “As of now, I am excited for the chaotic product of this chaotic process.”

**Music**
Performances during the weekend will also include music by artists from First Wave and the broader campus community including The Dowry, The Studio and Me eN You. On Saturday at 7 p.m. The Dowry will take the stage — a group that “brings womyn together” with “empowering and intentional lyrics written by womyn, for womyn.” The Studio (UW-Madison’s Creative Arts & Design Learning Community) will perform a multi-media, music-centered production featuring first-year students in a new interdisciplinary work created for the stage on Sunday at 5 p.m. The festival will close on Sunday at 7 p.m. with Me eN You – a fluid community of artists, including First Wave scholars, other UW-Madison students, and members of the local community who are deeply connected to music and come together to make creative work and create an experience of the work, with the broader community.

**Chapbook Series Readings**
Thiahera Nurse, UW-Madison MFA student in creative writing and member of First Wave 4th Cohort, will host a series of First Wave Chapbook readings at 6 p.m. on Saturday. This project was created to support six First Wave artists as they create their first books, leaving no subject unexamined.

**Event/Performance Information & Schedule**
All events take place at the Overture Center for the Arts (201 State St., Madison, Wis.) unless noted otherwise. All Line Breaks events/performances are free and are open to the public.

More details about the productions and artists are available at linebreaks.wisc.edu.

**Schedule**
**Friday, March 11**
7 p.m. First Wave 9th Cohort: “Unhe[a]rd: Radical Forms of Protest”
8 p.m. Eli Lynch presents solo performance “Explosions”
9 p.m. First Wave Music (lineup TBA)

**Saturday, March 12**
Noon  Author Dasha Kelly meet & greet and book signing, Madison Public Library, The Bubbler*
1 p.m.  "More than Words More than Words" writing workshop with Dasha Kelly, Madison Public Library, The Bubbler*
3:30 p.m.  First Wave 9th Cohort presents “Unhe[a]rd: Radical Forms of Protest” – includes talkback
6 p.m.  First Wave Chapbook Series Readings hosted by Thiahera Nurse
7 p.m.  First Wave Music: The Dowry
8 p.m.  Dasha Kelly presents “The Dynamic Page”

Sunday, March 13
5 p.m.  The Studio production and talkback
6 p.m.  Eli Lynch presents solo performance “Explosions”
7 p.m.  Me eN You concert

*The Bubbler at Madison Public Library is located at 201 W. Mifflin St., Madison, Wis.

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Line Breaks | linebreaks.wisc.edu
Line Breaks is produced annually by the Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives (OMAI) and is curated by Chris Walker, Artistic Director of First Wave and Associate Professor of Dance at the UW-Madison. The festival is designed to bring the top new aesthetics in contemporary performance art to the UW-Madison campus and the surrounding community. It has evolved into a space for the investigation of contemporary American culture through the lens of Hip Hop performance.

Line Breaks was initially developed as a performance/lecture/discussion series, where invited professional artists engaged with the local campus community. It was sponsored by OMAI and was part of the UW-Madison Arts Institute’s Interdisciplinary Arts Residency Program in spring 2007, which featured spoken word and Hip Hop theater artist, Marc Bamuthi Joseph. The project culminated in a final performance of student work called “Just Bust” – an event, which has evolved into a monthly open mic. Line Breaks has since evolved into a festival that cultivates performance art by building relationships among and between industry-leading artist professionals and aspiring student artists. In OMAI’s commitment to create access to the work, all activities tied to this, the largest Hip Hop-centered performance festival in the Midwest, are free and open to the public. For past performers, visit: http://omai.wisc.edu/line-breaks-festival.htm

Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives (OMAI) & First Wave | omai.wisc.edu
The Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives (OMAI), within the UW-Madison Division of Diversity, Equity, & Educational Achievement, provides culturally relevant and transformative arts programming to promote positive social dialogue and to give cultural art forms a legitimate academic forum. OMAI’s First Wave Hip Hop and Urban Arts Learning Community is a groundbreaking collective of spoken word poets, emcees, dancers, singers, actors and activists from across the United States, brought together as scholars who follow three pillars: academic, arts and activism. Using the pedagogy of traditional spoken word, movement and performance, the students use these principles of linguistics, writing, communications, social and political awareness as an additional learning framework for their major areas of study across the university.

Featured Guest Artist Dasha Kelly | dashakelly.com
Dasha Kelly is a writer, artist and social entrepreneur. As a spoken word artist, Kelly has performed throughout the United States, in Canada and appeared on the final season of HBO’s “Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry.” Kelly earned her MFA in creative writing from Antioch University, is an alum of the iconic Squaw Valley Writers Community, a former writer-in-residence for the historic Pfister Hotel and founder of Still Waters Collective, an arts education and community-building initiative. In 2014, she was selected as a U.S. Embassy Arts Envoy to teach and perform in Botswana, Africa. She is the author of one chapbook, “Hither,” and three books: “All Fall Down,” “Hershey Eats Peanuts” and “Call It Forth.” Her second novel, “Almost Crimson,” was released through Curbside Splendor in spring 2015. She used to work in recruitment and community outreach for OMAI and continues to teach writing workshops for First Wave students. She lives in Milwaukee, Wis.

Acknowledgments
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