



CENTRAL DISTRICT **FORUM** FOR **ARTS** & **IDEAS**



IMPACT REPORT
2017-2018

DEAR CD FORUM FAMILY,

It was an incredible 2017/2018 Season. I cannot tell you how lucky I feel at having worked with so many amazing artists and partners. CD Forum strives to provide a platform for emerging Black arts, artists, and their ideas and it has been my honor to collaborate and uplift so many talented voices.

We started our season off in a dynamic way in collaborating with our friends at The Hansberry Project, LANGSTON, NAAM, and Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute with *Every 28 Hours*. It wasn't about sharing Black pain but about coming together as a community and taking steps to move forward with our own strength. That was by far the most powerful way to have started a season in a time of such uncertainty and strife in our society. It was in this spirit of healing that we took that forward momentum and continued to give power to our artists with Felicia V. Loud's first solo performance, *Say It Loud: Simply Me*. On top of that, under the curation of Imani Sims, we had one of the most powerful *Kitchen Sessions* to date. Another program from the 2017/18 season that was very special and again, brought together the community in a special way, was entitled *Back to the Block*. We shocked ourselves with the success of our first collaboration with M.O.H.A.I. (Museum of History & Industry) and LANGSTON. The experience was a wonderful combination of monologues, dance and music centered around Seattle's Jazz Scene and the Central District.

In true CD Forum fashion we closed our season with national artist Taja Lindley's, *The Bag Lady Manifesta*. A powerful combination of performance art and installation centered around our ability to own our past in order to take steps in our own journey to healing.

Although I am proud of the content and the artists we were able to produce and present, I am most proud of the love, support and appreciation we received from our community. CD Forum wouldn't still exist, if there wasn't a desire and need for the type of work we create and produce. What is so exciting, is that we are constantly learning that the heart and soul of our community exists on the backs of our abilities to share our stories – Black stories – with our community.

As we enter the 20th year of our existence we stand on the foundation of our ancestors, founders and a community that has shown consistent resilience, strength and power for our truths to be told. Thank you for believing in us. It is my hope that you will continue to support our mission and vision as we fight to prove that art isn't just for entertainment. Art is living in our community as a mechanism to keep us connected and viable in conquering the challenges that we as a society face. In the words of my late professor Dr. Damus Kenjyatta, "It's on the stage, but it ain't no play thang". Much respect and appreciation, Sharon Nyree Williams, Executive Director

Sharon Williams
Executive Director



MISSION

To provide a platform for provocative arts and ideas that foster awareness of and involvement in Black experiences.

STAFF

Sharon Williams
Executive Director

Nina Yarbrough
Business Development
Manager

Merri Ann Osborne
Program Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alyson Palmer, President
Jeff Cohen, Treasurer
Rick Simonson, Secretary
Dawn Chirwa
Alvin Sturdivant

LOCATION

Langston Hughes
Performing Arts Institute
104 17th Ave S.
Seattle, WA 98144

CDFORUM.ORG

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& **IDEAS**

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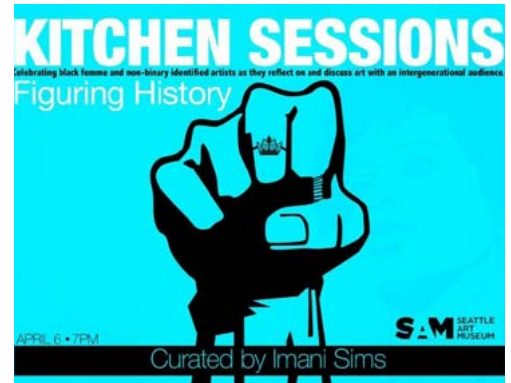
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| CENTRAL AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | BELLEVUE ARTS MUSEUM |
SEATTLE ARTS MUSEUM | M.O.H.A.I | KEXP | T.U.P.A.C. | ON THE BOARDS





THE BAG LADY MANIFESTA, BY TAJA LINDLEY



KITCHEN SESSIONS, CURATED BY IMANI SIMS



BACK TO THE BLOCK, BY CD FORUM, NAAM, & MOHAI



SAY IT LOUD: SIMPLY ME, BY FELICIA V. LOUD



THE EVERY 28 HOURS PLAY, BY VARIOUS ARTISTS



SPIRITRIALS, BY DAHLAK BRATHWAITE



MILLENNIALS, BY ALEX CROZIER

1,035

Minds
expanded
by incredible
Black art

190

Artists
served,
mentored,
and
supported

12

Amazing,
unique
programs
completed

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY



ARTISTS IN THEIR PRIME



Working with talented artists is one of the major highlights for CD Forum. We are able to uplift and promote a diverse range of creative individuals and groups. Dancers, photographers, poets, actors, and so many others have called CD Forum home during our 2017/2018 season.

It is important that artists have a base of operations; that they be given a platform and a stage. CD Forum is deeply grateful that we can provide that space for artists in Seattle. That so many artists consider their home with CD Forum is incredible. Let us celebrate their creativity and ingenuity together.

IMANI SIMS

Imani Sims is a speaker, person of letters, and a poet. As the lead curator of one of CD Forum's signature programs, Kitchen Sessions, Imani has modeled the way for other fierce Black artists to claim their own space. In her own words: "As a Black Queer Femme, it was incredibly important to create space for Femme and non-binary voices to exist within the performance art/multidisciplinary art canon. I always loved talking about art and hearing artist's inspiration and wanted to give folks space to experiment. Kitchen Sessions was born out of the idea that we Black folk do talk about art and we do respond in kind. As I've watched the program grow, it has become incredibly apparent that this has the potential to be a global project. Ultimately, I'd like to take a cast into an international art setting and allow them to experiment and respond in spaces outside of the United States. I want black Femmes/non-binary folks to experience different performance/multimedia reflections of themselves. I want them to gain the deep breath that comes with experiencing blackness outside of the social tension that exists and open space for them to create, as artists first."



ALEX CROZIER

Alex Crozier is a choreographer, dancer, and filmmaker. He has performed with some of Seattle's best companies. Alex is a great example of how an artist evolves and grows into their best creative self. In his own words: "Sharon Williams and her team at CD Forum were with me every step of the way through the creative process of my production *Millennials*...She empowered me to take charge of my career as an independent artist. The lessons Sharon taught me are invaluable and something I will take forward throughout the rest of my professional life."



TAJA LINDLEY

Taja Lindley is a New York based performance artist and healer. Her one-woman show, *The Bag Lady Manifesta*, was a deeply moving and arresting experience. Of her time with CD Forum, Taja said: "Producing [my show] ...was my first time visiting and performing in Seattle. CD Forum treated me like family: asked me what I needed, made sure I was comfortable, and went out of their way to ensure that my Stage Manager and I were well equipped and prepared for our two night run at The Langston Hughes [Performing Arts] Institute - including selecting hardworking and detail oriented volunteers and interns to help with installation and break down." We were so honored have Taja transform the Grand Hall into an immersive multi media installation.



BUILDING A SEASON

Creating an entire artistic season is exciting, time consuming, and filled with incredible opportunities for the person at the helm. CD Forum is very proud of our curator-centered artistic model. It gives an artist whom we have built a relationship with, the chance to flex their leadership muscles and gain more in-depth experience as a content creator. In partnership with the Executive Director Sharon Williams, Dani Tirrell has built an incredible 2018/2019 Season. It is sure to have everyone in Seattle clamoring for a ticket. When asked to speak about his experience as a performer and how it might differ from his role as the 2018/19 Season Curator, Tirrell had this to say:

"I have had a wonderful time with CD Forum from both iterations of *Showing Out*, to *The Creation Project* to, *Kitchen Sessions*. I was able to be in a space that I did not need to explain myself. I was able to create with artists that looked like me. I have been to many programs and I just love that it is about Blackness, that our voices are not shut down." We are thrilled to have Dani as our Artistic Curator and we look forward to all the exciting work ahead of us!



THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

The Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas will celebrate its 20th anniversary on February 16, 2019. A lot has changed over the past 20 years. The city of Seattle looks drastically different, especially as it concerns the Central District. Gentrification has displaced many of the Black residents that called the CD their home for so many years. As Seattle has evolved, so too has CD Forum. As the fourth Executive Director, Sharon Williams has been tasked with leading the organization in one of our country's most divisive political climates since our founding. The escalation of police brutality and racism in our country seems to permeate our newsfeeds nonstop. There are times where it feels almost impossible to hear through all of the noise. CD Forum prides itself on being a safe space for Black artists to heal, create, and offer a counterpoint to these challenging times. On the eve of our anniversary, we can reflect on 2018 as a year of transformative change for the organization. As a National Performance Network/Visual Arts Network (NPN/VAN) partner, CD Forum is fortunate to be part of an incredible program called Leveraging A Network for Equity

(LANE). In partnership with the Mellon Foundation, LANE brings together extraordinary leaders from arts and culture organizations to address racial and geographical imbalances in the field together. This program has allowed CD Forum—the only participant in Washington State—to use recovery capital to retire debt; hire new staff, implement much needed technology, and work with incredible consultants on financial sustainability using change capital. Most importantly, the LANE initiative will grant CD Forum the most invaluable resource of all: time. CD Forum will finally have time to dream big and robustly plan in a way that we have not been able to before. For many years the daily operations, artistic oversight, and financial decisions fell on the shoulders of the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. Now however, there will be dedicated staff to support Sharon in her role as the executive, work to build a sound fundraising plan, and provide stewardship of artistic programming. These are exciting times and we could not be happier to share them with you.



WELCOME CD FORUM'S NEW STAFF

NINA YARBROUGH



Hailing from Cincinnati, Ohio, Nina Yarbrough came to Seattle in 2014 for the MFA in Arts Leadership at Seattle University. It was there that she first met Sharon and was introduced to CD Forum. With a background in theatre performance and playwriting, Nina has worked for stellar arts organizations while living in Seattle. Most recently, Nina served as the Capital Campaign Manager at Seattle Opera where she worked with an incredible team of fundraisers to support one of Seattle's largest arts company. As the Business Development Manager at CD Forum, Nina will work to ensure the company has the resources it needs to thrive. Her background in fundraising and donor relations will be used to build strong relationships where she can connect the great people of Seattle to the incredible art that CD Forum loves to produce.

MERRI ANN OSBORNE



Merri Ann Osborne, our new Program Manager, brings to CD Forum her diverse and broad experience as a program manager and artist. She brings with her experience with program management at the local, city, state, and federal levels. This also includes positions working with homeless families, young adults, refugees, and immigrants. She has been the Co-Artistic Director of The Mahogany Project since 2014 and is also an actor, writer, singer, and a self-described amateur musical theatre artist. She has performed locally, in California (her second home), and abroad. Merri Ann looks forward to working with performers and the audience to provide positive and memorable experiences when attending CD Forum events.

The Central District Forum for Arts and Ideas presents our 2018/2019 Season:

RENAISSANCE IN BLACK

REMIXING THE MOVEMENT

Sunday Dinners: Conversations of Artistic Process

Showing Out: Contemporary Black Choreographers

Showing Out: Contemporary Black Writers and Poets

Showing Out: Contemporary Black Singers

Kitchen Sessions at Bellevue Art Museum

Kitchen Sessions with KEXP

Remember Me Young by Noelle Price

Community Event for Barbershop Chronicles

Edwin T. Pratt 50th Anniversary Celebration

New Dance Work featuring Dani Tirrell

Juneteenth Celebration

Vibe 4.0: Party for the People

