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The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts announces its

2017–2018 HIP HOP CULTURE SEASON

Bridging Past, Present, and Future Generations with the Introduction of Several New Series

Season highlights include performances by Kennedy Center artistic directors Jason Moran & Q-Tip, Pioneering Emcees Vol. 1, a 35th anniversary screening of Wild Style, a multimedia performance of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ award-winning book Between The World and Me

More To Be Announced

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced its first round of Hip Hop Culture programming for the 2017–2018 season. In March 2016, the Kennedy Center recognized Hip Hop as one of its key programming genres. This recognition has culminated in its first full season of programming led by the Center’s first Artistic Director for Hip Hop Culture, Q-Tip and Director of Hip Hop Culture and Contemporary Music, Simone Eccleston.

The 2017–2018 season features the introduction of several new series. The In the Beginning Dance Party series is an ongoing free dance party presenting Hip Hop trailblazers and today’s leading DJs as they share their distinct voices and sonic

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interpretations of the beginnings of Hip Hop. The Bridge Concert Series has been designed to showcase musical innovators in Hip Hop Culture through a mix of performances and collaborations that build bridges between the artists, audiences, and beyond.

“I am proud to share the first round of announcements for the 2017–2018 Hip Hop Culture season at The Kennedy Center,” said Q-Tip, Artistic Director for Hip Hop Culture. “To be able to present some of the pioneers that have played a foundational role in the culture, alongside contemporary artists who are creating work inspired by and/or impacting the Hip Hop generation, is extremely rewarding. I hope that you will join us this season. We are just getting started and there is so much in store.”

This season will mark Q-Tip’s debut performance at the Kennedy Center on Oct. 6 as he shares the stage with the Kennedy Center Artistic Director for Jazz, Jason Moran. In addition, this will also be the first time a Hip Hop artist will receive a Kennedy Center Honor. LL Cool J will be recognized as an honoree at this year’s 40th annual Kennedy Center Honors. This significant shift highlights the profound impact that Hip Hop culture has had on American society and around the globe.

The season also reflects a sustained partnership with long-time collaborator and curator-in-residence, Hi-ARTS. The collaboration will showcase the Critical Breaks residency program which provides support for theater artists who are in pivotal phases of generating new work and creates a development and presentation pipeline between the Kennedy Center and Hi-ARTS. There is also an expanded commissioning and producing partnership with The Apollo Theater to present the multimedia performance of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ New York Times bestseller Between The World and Me. The live performance event will be a presentation of excerpted selections, read monologue-style by notable guest artists with newly composed music by Kennedy Center Artistic Director of Jazz, Jason Moran.

“This season reflects a unique opportunity for audiences to experience the curatorial vision of our Artistic Director, Q-Tip, who is deeply committed to celebrating early pioneers while highlighting the past-present-future continuum. We have a dynamic mix
of programs that help to celebrate the tenets of the Culture while demonstrating Hip Hop’s impact on contemporary culture at large.” said Simone Eccleston, Director of Hip Hop Culture and Contemporary Music. “In addition, we will be announcing a range of exciting initiatives and programs throughout the course of the season.”

Listen to a playlist of the Kennedy Center Hip Hop Culture season [here](#).

**About the Hip Hop Culture Program at The Kennedy Center**

With Hip Hop Culture serving as one of our nation’s greatest cultural assets and ambassadors, The Hip Hop Culture program at the Kennedy Center recognizes Hip Hop’s contributions to global culture and its power to build and transform communities through art and action. Through this programmatic platform, the Center aims to create a dynamic home for Hip Hop Culture and celebrate Hip Hop’s role as a catalyst for innovation, exploration, and transformation with a dynamic mix of performances, humanities events, film screenings, workshops and interactive experiences, in person and online. In 2016, the Kennedy Center appointed iconic rapper, producer, and DJ Q-Tip as its first Artistic Director of Hip Hop Culture.

**2017–2018 Hip Hop Culture Schedule**

*Artists and performances are subject to change.*

**Jason Moran and Q-Tip**
October 6, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. in the Terrace Theater
Pioneer rapper, DJ, and producer Q-Tip shares the stage with renowned pianist and composer, Jason Moran, the Kennedy Center Artistic Director for Jazz. In their first-ever musical collaboration, the two artists explore contemporary sounds at the crossroads of their respective genres. Support for JFKC: A Centennial Celebration of John F. Kennedy is provided by Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, Chevron, The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, Northern Trust, and Target.

Following the concert, there is a free *In the Beginning Dance Party* with Rich Medina + The Markmen in the Atrium.

**In the Beginning Dance Party: Rich Medina + The Markmen**
October 6, 2017 at 9:00 p.m. in the Atrium
This free dance party series showcases pioneers and today’s leading DJs sharing their distinct voices and sonic interpretations of the beginnings of Hip Hop. Join us as world-renowned Hip Hop, house, soul, afrobeats, funk, breaks, and dance classics DJ Rich Medina teams up with The Markmen for an after-party to the Jason Moran & Q-Tip performance.
Words, Beats, and Life Festival: Top Notch B-boy & B-girl Competition and Paint Jam
November 5, 2017 at 12 p.m.
Join the Kennedy Center and Words, Beats, & Life (WBL) as we partner to celebrate the art forms of breakdancing and graffiti through Top Notch 2017 and WBL’s annual Paint Jam.

**Top Notch 2017**
Top Notch 2017 is a 3v3 b-boy competition presented as part of the annual Words, Beats & Life Festival. Leading b-boys and b-girls demonstrate their skills and knowledge on panels, in circles, and teaching workshops. Competing for cash prizes, the dance battle’s preliminary rounds begin at 3 p.m. with the final rounds beginning at 6 p.m. Registration opens at 12 p.m. in the Kennedy Center’s Grand Foyer. Don’t miss some of the best b-boys and b-girls from around the country as they defy the laws of gravity while legendary DJ’s spin the hottest tracks.

**Paint Jam**
As a celebration of graffiti, street art, and fine arts, WBL presents 30 D.C.-based artists creating live works of art outdoors at the Kennedy Center. Add tunes from legendary DJs + a couple of food trucks in the mix. We call it a Paint Jam. This year’s paint jam will draw inspiration from the classic Hip Hop film *Wild Style*.

**The Bridge Concert Series: Pioneering Emcees Vol. 1**
November 20, 2017 at 8 p.m. in the Concert Hall
A celebration of the trailblazing artists who laid the foundation for Hip Hop culture, this volume of Pioneering Emcees will feature early Hip Hop giants **MC Sha-Rock**, **Queen Lisa Lee**, **Roxanne Shanté**, **Spoonie Gee**, **Kurtis Blow**, **Kool Moe Dee**, **Kool DJ Red Alert**, and more. Produced by **Pay To Winn Management**

**In The Beginning Dance Party: Holiday Jam and Silent Disco**
December 8, 2017 at 7 p.m. in the Atrium
Join the Kennedy Center for this special holiday jam and silent disco edition featuring iconic DJs. **In The Beginning** is a dance party series that showcases pioneers and today’s leading DJs sharing their distinct voices and sonic interpretations of the beginnings of Hip Hop.

**Critical Breaks Reading Series: Chinaka Hodge’s Chasing Mehserle**
March 9-10, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. in the Family Theater
*Chasing Mehserle* is a performance piece that maps the city of Oakland’s changing demographics, morphing culture, gentrification, and the communal response to the real-life tragedy of Oscar Grant. A sequel to Chinaka Hodge’s first play *Mirrors in Every Corner*, *Chasing Mehserle* examines race, class, gender, and privilege through the lens of fictional character, Watts, who is traumatized after seeing the Rodney King beatings as a child. He makes a New Year’s resolution to finally face his trauma January 1, 2009, the same day Oscar Grant is murdered by transit officer Johannes Mehserle.

*Chasing Mehserle* was originally commissioned by Black Women’s Playwrights Group and co-presented by Intersection for the Arts, Hip Hop Theater Fest, The Living Word Project, and MIT’s Media Lab.
Wild Style 35th Anniversary Film Screening, Discussion and Demo
Featuring Charlie Ahearn, Fab 5 Freddy, Grandmaster Caz, Busy Bee, and Grand Wizard Theodore
March 16, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the Terrace Theater
In celebration of the 35th anniversary of the New Directors/New Film Screening of *Wild Style*, join Director Charlie Ahearn and special guests for a screening of Hip Hop’s first motion picture. Featuring seminal figures of the era, such as Fab Five Freddy, Lee Quinones, Lady Pink, the Rock Steady Crew, The Cold Crush Brothers, Queen Lisa Lee of Zulu Nation, and Grandmaster Flash, *Wild Style* documents the rise of early Hip Hop.

The screening will be followed by a discussion facilitated by Charlie Ahearn along with special guests Fab 5 Freddy, Grandmaster Caz, Busy Bee, and a DJ demo by Grand Wizard Theodore, the inventor of the Scratch technique.

**Come Early:** Arrive at 6:30pm to catch the “Scratch Ecstasy” slide show, which served as the rough storyboard for what would later become *Wild Style*, with a super-mix by Grand Wizard Theodore.

**Stay late:** Join us for a *Wild Style* themed dance party with guest DJ sets and performances by Grand Wizard Theodore and Grandmaster Caz.

**In the Beginning Dance Party: Wild Style Dance Party featuring Grand Wizard Theodore and Grandmaster Caz**
March 16, 2018 at 9 p.m. in the Atrium
Join us as the legendary Grand Wizard Theodore and Grandmaster Caz spin signature sets celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the New Directors/New Film Screening of *Wild Style*. This free dance party series showcases pioneers and today’s leading DJs sharing their distinct voices and sonic interpretations of the beginnings of Hip Hop.

**Between The World and Me**
April 7, 2018 at 8 p.m. in the Eisenhower Theater
In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates’ *Between the World and Me*, offers a powerful framework for understanding our nation’s history and current crisis.

The live performance event will be a presentation of excerpted selections, read monologue-style by notable guest artists with newly composed music by Kennedy Center Artistic Director of Jazz and MacArthur Genius Award recipient Jason Moran (*Selma* and Netflix’s *13th*), direction by Apollo Executive Producer Kamilah Forbes (Broadway’s *Sticfly*, NBC’s “The Wiz”), and interactive visual storytelling by projection media artists. Commissioned and produced by the Apollo Theater and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

**Ticket Information**
Tickets will be available to Kennedy Center members on Wednesday, Aug. 23 at 10 a.m. and to the general public on Friday, Aug. 25 at 10 a.m. Patrons wishing to purchase tickets can do so by calling the Instant Charge office at (202) 467-4600 or by visiting [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org)

For more information about the Kennedy Center, visit [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org).

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