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Press Contact: Gabrielle Nomura Gainor  
gabrielle@stgpresents.org  
206-905-6664

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## **Black and PoC youth step into the spotlight for Seattle Theatre Group's ELEVATE**

7:30 p.m., June 16 at the Moore Theatre  
Free event; RSVP at [stgpresents.org/elevate](https://stgpresents.org/elevate)

SEATTLE— Art might not be able to combat systemic racism overnight. But organizers behind ELEVATE—Seattle Theatre Group's spoken-word poetry showcase—are hoping that art can empower Black and Brown youth navigating oppression everyday.

Coming up in June, ELEVATE returns to the Moore Theatre for the second year in a row—and for the first time as an in-person performance due to the pandemic. This is a free event created by and for Black people and other People of Color. However, all are welcome and invited to attend.

"ELEVATE is about young people speaking up about social issues, which affect our future," said Nyshae Griffin, who participated in the program in 2021. "We're going to grow up to try to stop these oppressions. And to stop this violence. If we have a say in this now, it could help us when we're older and have even more of a say."

Last year, ELEVATE premiered as [a free virtual performance](#) on STG's website. With the help of adult mentors, the youth performers ages 11–19 created a compelling evening of poetry and dance. Inspired by the history of the Moore Theatre's segregated entrance, the performance touched on themes including George Floyd's murder, the racial justice uprisings, and Vice President Kamala Harris's ascent to power as a Black and South Asian woman.

While still centering Black and PoC youth, this year's ELEVATE is focused on the ways young people are impacted, and sometimes harmed, by social media. The youth poets will work with mentors in the weeks leading up to the show as they craft and learn how to speak their own pieces. Then, they'll perform surrounded by peers, mentors, family, and many people from their own communities. Ultimately, this release of pain is an opportunity to create space for joy and hope, said Shakiah Danielson, program lead.

For Danielson, a Seattle-based emcee and choreographer who previously led the hip-hop program at Northwest Tap Connection, ELEVATE is personal. In addition to her own experience as a Black woman, Danielson reflects on the hardship within her own sphere of friends and family. Add on the recent Buffalo and Uvalde massacres. Trauma compounded on top of trauma only underscores the need for transformative art and storytelling, she said.

“Young people are getting numb. My whole thing is, I’m trying to do whatever I can to keep them from getting cold. I want them to know they are not alone.”

Joining Danielson as the 2022 ELEVATE mentors are acclaimed artists, poets, emcees and activists. Mentors include Nakeya Isabell, Tia-Nache Yarbrough, Chelsey Richardson, Kyle Danielson and Yirim Seck.

Youth performers include Maya Michelle Russell, Rahma Mohammed, Chase Roberts, John Dawson, Enaja Sykes, Harlem Yarbrough, Jazzmin Barrett and Jelijah Sherman.

To RSVP to this free community event, and for more information, go to [stgpresents.org/elevate](https://stgpresents.org/elevate).

**ABOUT SEATTLE THEATRE GROUP (STG)**

Seattle Theatre Group (STG) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization whose mission is to make diverse performing arts and education an integral part of the region's cultural identity while keeping three historic venues, The Paramount, Moore and Neptune, alive and vibrant. STG presents a range of performances from Broadway, off-Broadway, dance and jazz, to comedy, concerts of all genres, speakers and family shows - at these three iconic theatres in Seattle and venues throughout the Puget Sound region and in Portland, Oregon. For more information visit [stgpresents.org](https://stgpresents.org). STG Education and Community Programs extend beyond the Paramount, Moore and Neptune Theatre stages and into the lives of the greater Seattle community. Each season, STG offers over 65 education and community programs impacting over 30,540 students and community members from diverse ages and backgrounds. These programs deepen significance to performances through opportunities to engage with artists, inspire youth and local artists through training and performance opportunities, and provide exposure to the arts through access initiatives. For more information visit [stgpresents.org/ece](https://stgpresents.org/ece).