Schedule

FRIDAY

5:30pm Doors Open
6:20-6:30pm Opening Invocation with Seattle Civic Poet Jourdan Imani Keith (GH)
6:30-7:40pm Opening Keynote with Siddhartha Mukherjee, presenting The Song of the Cell: An Exploration of Medicine and the New Human (GH)
7:45-9:30pm VIP Reception (F)

SATURDAY

8:00am Doors Open
8:55-9:00am Welcome with Festival Producer Susan Lieu (GH)
9:00-10:00am Lan Samantha Chang presents The Family Chao (GH)
10:10-10:40am Book signing with Lan Samantha Chang (F)
10:30-11:30am A.M. Homes presents The Unfolding (GH)
11:40-12:10am Book signing with A.M. Homes (F)
12:00-1:00pm David Quammen presents Breathless: The Scientific Race to Defeat a Deadly Virus (GH)
1:10-1:40pm Book signing with David Quammen (F)
1:30-2:30pm Oscar Hokeah presents Calling for a Blanket Dance (GH)
2:40-3:10pm Book signing with Oscar Hokeah (F)
3:00-4:00pm Leila Mottley presents Nightcrawling (GH)
4:10-4:40pm Book signing with Leila Mottley (F)
4:30-5:30pm Joyce Carol Oates presents Babysitter (GH)
5:50-6:00pm Farewell Reflections with Seattle City of Literature (GH)
6:00-7:00pm Ted Chiang on “Magic and Imaginary Science in Fiction” (GH)
7:10-7:40pm Book signing with Ted Chiang (F)
8:00-9:00pm Nightcap with Sloane Crosley, presenting Cult Classic (GH)
9:10-9:40pm Book signing with Sloane Crosley (LL)

Live Music by the Bushwick Book Club Seattle.

Lineup and schedule subject to change.
Think back to two+ years ago. After the shock and scramble of the earliest days of Covid, remember the steady stream of trend stories about sourdough starter and pandemic puppies, personal reflection and (right on cue) our suddenly-thriving bookstores? While many booksellers would tell you they’ve never really un-thrived, it’s absolutely true that many readers felt unleashed during their suddenly under-scheduled time: a kind of “festival of solitude” where one could wander a midway of words, caroming from story to story. For many of us, books were the safest and most reliable transit beyond our increasingly constrained worlds.

Sure, the reading was great, but it was a tough time to be a reader. Um, wait —

While reading might seem like a solitary act, readers are frequently observed in packs. We find each other in the fiction aisles at our beloved bookstores or by the coffee tables at places like Town Hall. We’re defined most passionately by who we read and what we’re curious about. We communicate in recommendations and impressions, describing ever-tightening circles around what a book makes us think, or how it makes us feel. Sharing these thoughts and feelings recalls the satisfaction of reading itself — like staying at the table for a meal you never want to end.

With Town Hall’s gradual return to live author events, we’re remembering what it’s supposed to feel like: that alchemical moment of direct, eye-to-eye connection between an author and a reader. Readers develop a picture of the writers they admire — creators with near-mystical gifts, divining deep truths under piles of facts or catalyzing a uniquely personal reaction out of thin air. Writers cherish the connection too — most are not content to merely express themselves into a void. They want to communicate to people, and they love places like Town Hall (and libraries and bookstore reading rooms) because they celebrate and cement the links they have to their readers.

So that’s why we’ve launched this festival. Beyond the pop-up book shop and live music, the merch stands and food tents, Volume 1 is about two core experiences: the intense collective moment where we gather and listen to the authors we’ve invited to share the room, and the intensely personal moment shared between a reader and a writer at the Q&A mic or the book-signing table.

We hope the festival will give you those moments … a lot. You’ve heard of the runner’s high? That cruising, adrenalized reverie, that sensory flood where nothing exists but the road and your joy to be on it? We hope Volume 1 will feel like a nerd marathon that gives you all a reader’s high.

Whether you’re here as a Town Hall member, an avid reader, a fellow writer, or a seeker of community centered on the magic of the written word, know that you’re among friends. When this moment’s passed, we hope you’ll tell us how it was, help us envision how it might be next time, and even work with us to make it so.

Thank you for joining us at our humble beginning, a moment of joyous connection we hope we’ll remember — and then rewrite together — in all the Volumes to come.

Susan Lieu Wier Harman
Producer / Volume 1
Executive Director / Town Hall Seattle

The Moment of Connection

Susan Lieu Wier Harman
Producer / Volume 1
Executive Director / Town Hall Seattle

Town Hall Seattle Writers Festival 2022 | Volume 1 | Humble Beginnings

457527_TownHall_091222.indd   3
457527_TownHall_091222.indd   3
9/12/22   12:48 PM
Opening Invocation

Jourdan Imani Keith, a student of Sonia Sanchez, is a poet, essayist, playwright, naturalist, and activist. Her writing blends the textures of political, personal, and natural landscapes to offer voices from the margins of American lives. A recipient of the 2018 Americans for the Arts award, her TEDx Talk, “Your Body of Water” became the theme for King County’s 2016–2018 Poetry on Buses program. Her Orion Magazine essays, “Desegregating Wilderness” and “At Risk,” were selected for the 2015 Best American Science and Nature Writing Anthology. She has been awarded fellowships from Hedgebrook, Wildbranch, Santa Fe Science Writing workshop, VONA, and Jack Straw. Seattle Public Library’s first Naturalist-in-Residence, Keith is the founder and director of Urban Wilderness Project. She’s received awards from University of Washington, Artist Trust, 4Culture, and Seattle’s Office of Arts and Culture. Her memoir in essays, Tugging at the Web, is forthcoming from University of Washington Press. She is Seattle’s 2019–2022 Civic Poet.

About Town Hall Seattle

Town Hall is a space unlike any other. A vibrant gathering place in the heart of Seattle, we foster an engaged community through civic, arts, and educational programs that reflect — and inspire — our region’s best impulses: creativity, empathy, and the belief that we all deserve a voice.

A thriving civic and cultural hub, Town Hall hosts 400+ events and welcomes 100,000+ curiosity-driven audience members each year. But we’re far more than a venue. Town Hall is a nonprofit organization that maintains a landmark historic building — as well as marketing and production infrastructure — for shared community use. Our calendar represents life in the Puget Sound with programming collectively curated by our community, and an affordable ticketing model that ensures access for all.

Together, we’ve built a shared home that truly belongs to all of us. It’s your Town Hall. Join us in creating a place where new ideas can be heard, where we honor artistic expression, and where we aim to model the kind of society we want to share. Become a member at thsea.org/membership.
Siddhartha Mukherjee

Siddhartha Mukherjee is the author of *The Gene: An Intimate History*, a #1 New York Times bestseller and *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*, winner of the 2011 Pulitzer Prize in general nonfiction. Both titles were made into multi-part PBS documentaries produced by Ken Burns. Mukherjee also wrote *The Laws of Medicine: Field Notes from an Uncertain Science* and was the editor of *Best Science Writing 2013*.


siddharthamukherjee.com

Note: Copies of *The Song of the Cell* will be shipped to ticket holders once the book is released, slated for late October.

*The Song of the Cell: An Exploration of Medicine and the New Human*

Rich with stories of scientists, doctors, and patients, *The Song of the Cell* is an accessible and thrilling exploration of our radical new ability to manipulate cells and what it means to be human.

Starting in the late 1600s with the discovery of cells — and the reframing of the human body as a cellular ecosystem — announced the birth of a new kind of medicine based on the therapeutic manipulations of cells that continues to evolve today. A hip fracture, a cardiac arrest, Alzheimer’s dementia, AIDS, pneumonia, lung cancer, kidney failure, arthritis, COVID pneumonia — all could be seen as the results of cells functioning abnormally. And we could use cellular therapies to address all of them. Mukherjee tells of doctors who are transplanting bone marrow cells into the bodies of patients with cancer; insulin-secreting islet cells into patients with Type 1 diabetes; and electrodes into the brains of patients with recalcitrant depression to activate neurocellular circuits.

Mukherjee’s artful prose and deep knowledge weaves a story of how scientists discovered cells, began to understand them, and are now using that knowledge to create new humans. Laced with Mukherjee’s own experience as a researcher, a doctor, and a prolific reader, *The Song of the Cell* is both a panoramic and intimate story of what makes us us.
The Family Chao

A literary mystery about America and human psychology, The Family Chao is a captivating, witty portrait of three brothers, a festering family drama, and the disquieting reality of the so-called American dream.

The seemingly pleasant, predominantly white town of Haven, Wisconsin, has been home to a Chinese restaurant, Fine Chao, for nearly four decades. Owned by the beguiling, tyrannical Leo Chao, the restaurant has offered nostalgic Chinese residents a bit of home, and white townspeople a bit of culture — Chinese food modified for American appetites (large chunks of meat, peanuts in everything, anything with sweet and sour sauce). Leo has succeeded as a restaurant owner thanks to his self-sacrificing wife, Winnie, and his bright, ambitious sons, Dagou, Ming, and James. Diners in Haven have happily consumed Fine Chao’s inexpensive food while praising the Chao parents for raising good, accomplished sons. But when Leo is found dead — presumed murdered — the community begins reevaluating the Chao family and speculating about the passions and culpability of the Chao brothers.

The ensuing trial brings to light potential motives for all three brothers, and while the spotlight on them sharpens, Dagou, Ming, and James must reckon with the legacy of their father’s outsized appetite and their own future survival. The Family Chao offers a kaleidoscopic portrait of a Chinese American family grappling with the dark undercurrents of small-town America.

Lan Samantha Chang

Lan Samantha Chang is the author of the acclaimed novels All Is Forgotten, Nothing Is Lost and Inheritance, as well a story collection, Hunger. Her short stories have appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, Ploughshares, and The Best American Short Stories. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Stanford University, the Ratcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the American Academy in Berlin. Chang is the director of the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop, where she is the first woman and Asian American to hold the position. She lives with her husband and daughter in Iowa City, Iowa.

lansamanthachang.com
A.M. Homes is the recipient of numerous literary awards including the Women’s Prize for Fiction for her novel *May We Be Forgiven*. She is the author of 13 books, among them the best-selling memoir, *The Mistress’ Daughter*; the novels *This Book Will Save Your Life*, *The End of Alice*, *In a Country Of Mothers* and *Jack*; the short story collections, *Days of Awe*, *Things You Should Know*, and *The Safety of Objects*; and the travel memoir, *Los Angeles: People, Places, and The Castle On the Hill*. Her work has been translated into twenty-two languages and appears frequently in *Artforum*, *Harpers*, *Granta*, *McSweeney’s*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *Zoetrope*. She also writes for film and television and teaches in the Creative Writing Program at Princeton University.

amhomesbooks.com

**The Unfolding**

*The Unfolding* offers a stunning alternative history of the United States that is terrifyingly prescient, deeply tender, and devastatingly funny.

Through the account of one American family, A.M. Homes offers a stunning alternative history of the United States that is terrifyingly prescient, deeply tender, and devastatingly funny.

The Big Guy loves his family, money, and country. Undone by the 2008 presidential election results, he taps a group of like-minded men to reclaim their version of the American Dream. As they build a scheme to disturb and disrupt, the Big Guy also faces turbulence within his family. While his wife, Charlotte, grieves a life not lived, his 18-year-old daughter, Meghan, starts to realize that her favorite subject — history — is not exactly what her father taught her.

In a darkly comic political parable that’s as much about family dynamics as it is about the desire for those in power to remain in power, A.M. Homes takes us into the heart of a divided country. *The Unfolding* prompts a reconsideration of the definitions of words like truth, freedom, and democracy, exploring what happens when the same words are interpreted differently by the people living together under one roof.
David Quammen

David Quammen’s sixteen previous books include The Tangled Tree, The Song of the Dodo, The Reluctant Mr. Darwin, and Spillover, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and recipient of the Premio Letterario Merck, in Rome. He has written for The New Yorker, Harper’s Magazine, The Atlantic, National Geographic, and Outside, among other magazines, and is a three-time winner of the National Magazine Award. Quammen has received honorary doctorates from Montana State University and Colorado College. He shares a home in Bozeman, Montana, with his wife, Betsy Gaines Quammen, author of American Zion, and with two Russian wolfhounds, a cross-eyed cat, and a rescue python.

davidquammen.com

Breathless

Quammen’s latest book tells the story of the worldwide scientific quest to decipher the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, trace its source, and make possible the vaccines to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Breathless is the story of SARS-CoV-2 and its fierce journey through the human population, as seen by the scientists who study its origin, its ever-changing nature, and its capacity to kill us. Based on interviews with nearly one hundred scientists, including Anthony Fauci and leading virologists in China and around the world, David Quammen expertly shows how strange new viruses emerge from animals into humans as we disrupt wild ecosystems, and how those viruses adapt to their human hosts, sometimes causing global catastrophe.

Quammen’s findings describe how infectious disease experts saw this pandemic coming and how their warnings were ignored for political or economic reasons. Scientists even predicted “the next big one” would come in the form of a changeable new virus, and very possibly a coronavirus. Yet there is still so much to discover about its beginnings and future.

Quammen explains why this coronavirus will probably be a “forever virus,” destined to circulate among humans in one variant form or another. Breathless takes us inside the frantic international effort to understand and control SARS-CoV-2 as if we were peering over the shoulders of the brilliant scientists who led the chase.
Calling for a Blanket Dance

Hokeah’s coming-of-age tale chronicles one Indigenous family’s struggle to live honorably and love unconditionally, giving insight into the vulnerabilities, strengths, and joy of human nature.

Calling for a Blanket Dance fearlessly examines the all-too-common issues that often plague the Native American community: financial instability, imprisonment, alcoholism, and the search for a familial identity. Told in a chorus of multigenerational voices, Hokeah’s debut novel follows the life of Ever Geimausaddle, a young man of Native American and Mexican heritage struggling to find strength in his familial identity.

Faced with a myriad of obstacles over the decades — his father’s injury at the hands of corrupt police, his mother’s struggle to hold a job and care for her husband, the legacy of centuries of injustice — Ever’s flawed, yet deeply connected family watches as he grows from an intense child to a young man filled with barely-contained rage. His relatives do their best to steer him toward his true self, but they also have their own ideas about who he should be. As he grows into an adult, Ever faces a choice: does he alter his fate, or will he let his growing anger become his failure? Honest, heartbreaking, and ultimately uplifting, Calling for a Blanket Dance is the story of how one finds their way home.

Oscar Hokeah

Oscar Hokeah is a Native American writer of literary fiction. He holds an M.A. in English from the University of Oklahoma, with a concentration in Native American Literature and a B.F.A. in Creative Writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts, with a minor in Indigenous Liberal Studies. He is a recipient of the Truman Capote Scholarship Award and winner of the Native Writer Award through the Taos Summer Writers Conference. His writing can be found in World Literature Today, American Short Fiction, South Dakota Review, Yellow Medicine Review, Surreal South, and Red Ink Magazine. Hokeah is a citizen of Cherokee Nation and the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma on his mother’s side, and he has Mexican heritage through his father. He currently lives in his hometown of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in the heart of Cherokee Nation.

oscarhokeah.com
Joyce Carol Oates is a recipient of the National Humanities Medal, the National Book Critics Circle Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement Award, the National Book Award, and the 2019 Jerusalem Prize for Lifetime Achievement, and has been nominated several times for the Pulitzer Prize. She has written some of the most enduring fiction of our time, including the national best sellers We Were the Mulvaneys; Blonde; and the New York Times Bestseller The Falls, which won the 2005 Prix Femina. In 2020, she was awarded the Cino Del Duca World Prize for Literature. She is the Roger S. Berlind ’52 Distinguished Professor of the Humanities emerita at Princeton University and has been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters since 1978.

Babysitter

In the waning days of the turbulent 1970s, in the wake of unsolved child-killings that have shocked Detroit, the lives of several residents are drawn together with tragic consequences.

There is Hannah, wife of a prominent local businessman, who has begun an affair with a darkly charismatic stranger whose identity remains elusive; Mikey, a canny street hustler who finds himself on a chilling mission to rectify injustice; and the serial killer known as Babysitter, an enigmatic and terrifying figure at the periphery of elite Detroit. As Babysitter continues his rampage of abductions and killings, these individuals intersect with one another in startling and unexpected ways.

Babysitter is a suspenseful, starkly narrated exploration of the riskiness of pursuing alternate lives, calling into question how far we are willing to go to protect those we cherish most. In its scathing indictment of corrupt politics, unexamined racism, and the enabling of sexual predation in America, Babysitter is a thrilling work of contemporary fiction.
Nightcrawling

Rich with raw beauty, electrifying intensity, and piercing vulnerability, Nightcrawling marks the stunning arrival of a voice unlike any we have heard before.

Kiara and her brother, Marcus, are scraping by in an East Oakland apartment complex optimistically called the Regal-Hi. Both have dropped out of high school, their family fractured by death and prison.

But while Marcus clings to his dream of rap stardom, Kiara hunts for work to pay their rent — which has more than doubled — and to keep the nine-year-old boy next door, abandoned by his mother, safe and fed. One night, what begins as a drunken misunderstanding with a stranger turns into the job Kiara never imagined wanting but now desperately needs: nightcrawling. Her world breaks open even further when her name surfaces in an investigation that exposes her as a key witness in a massive scandal within the Oakland Police Department.

Leila Mottley

Leila Mottley is a New York Times bestselling author with an interest in reflecting on institutional and individual inequity, liberation, and joy through writing. Her debut novel, Nightcrawling, was selected as an Oprah's Book Club pick (the youngest writer ever selected). She was named a New York Times Writer to Watch in spring of 2022, and her work has been published in Oprah Daily and The New York Times. Leila was also the 2018 Oakland Youth Poet Laureate in Oakland, California, where she was born, raised, and resides today.

leilamottley.com
“Magic and Imaginary Science in Fiction”

Ted Chiang explores our human curiosity about real and imaginary science, technology, and magic — and how they help us make sense of the world.

A quiet luminary in the world of speculative fiction writing, Ted Chiang is known for bridging the gap between humanism and hard science with his short stories, novellas, and novelettes. The New Yorker calls him “one of the most influential science-fiction writers of his generation” — with a collection of 27 major literary prizes and writings that are regularly studied in college philosophy classes, it’s not difficult to see why.

Chiang joins us at Town Hall for a peek into his craft with a talk that sheds light on how magic and imaginary science shape how we understand the real world. Chiang also revisits his 2019 book, Exhalation, nudging audiences to consider morally complex worlds with characters and dilemmas that (in the words of Joyce Carol Oates) will “linger in the memory the way riddles may linger — teasing, tormenting, illuminating, thrilling.”
Sloane Crosley


sloancrosley.com

Cult Classic

Hilariously insightful and delightfully suspenseful, *Cult Classic* is a literary fantasy of love, memory, morality, and mind control, as well as a fresh take on what it means to be in love.

One night in New York City’s Chinatown, a woman is at a dinner with former colleagues when she excuses herself to buy a pack of cigarettes. On her way back, she runs into a former boyfriend. And then another. And another. Nothing is quite what it seems as the city becomes awash with ghosts of heartbreaks past.

What would normally pass for coincidence becomes something far stranger as the recently engaged Lola must contend not only with the viability of her current relationship but the fact that both her best friend and her former boss, a magazine editor turned mystical guru, might have an unhealthy investment in the outcome. Memories of the past swirl and converge in ways both comic and eerie, as Lola is forced to decide if she will surrender herself to the conspiring of one very contemporary cult.

Is it possible to have a happy ending in an age when the past is ever at your fingertips and sanity is for sale? Sharp, chatty, and funny, Sloane Crosley spins a tale that is equal parts page-turner and poignant portrayal of alienation.
The partners listed below represent the rich literary community here in Seattle. We encourage you to learn more about each wonderful organization and all they bring to our City of Literature.

**The African-American Writers’ Alliance** is a diverse and dynamic collective of Seattle-area writers of African descent, providing an informal and supportive forum for new and published writers. They help one another polish their skills, provide peer review, and create opportunities for public readings and other media venues.

[aawa/seattle.org](http://aawa/seattle.org)

**The Bushwick Book Club Seattle** delivers literature, music and songwriting to the Seattle community while building the next generation of musicians and readers. Through one-of-a-kind musical literary events, they hope to increase awareness in literature and song writing and inspire people to read as a part of their daily lives.

[bushwicknorthwest.com](http://bushwicknorthwest.com)

**Clarion West** supports emerging and underrepresented voices by providing writers with world-class instruction to empower their creation of wild and amazing worlds. Through conversation and public engagement, they bring those voices to an ever-expanding community.

[clarionwest.org](http://clarionwest.org)

**Hedgebrook** is a global community of women writers and people who seek extraordinary books, poetry, plays, films, and music by women. They support visionary women writers whose stories and ideas shape our culture now and for generations to come.

[hedgebrook.org](http://hedgebrook.org)

**Hugo House** is a place for writers, readers, teachers, and learners, where people of any age and every background can engage with writing. They offer classes, events, youth programs, and free events that bring people closer to the written word, and to each other.

[hugohouse.org](http://hugohouse.org)

**La Sala** creates and catalyzes opportunities for Latino/a/x artists and arts organizations, with the goal to facilitate and promote the creative and artistic production of the Latinx community in the greater Seattle area.

[lasalanw.org](http://lasalanw.org)

**Seattle Arts & Lectures** cultivates transformative experiences through story and language with readers and writers of all generations. They envision a future in which story and language continuously and courageously revitalize equity, justice, and belonging.

[lectures.org](http://lectures.org)
Seattle City of Literature builds relationships and community partnerships to help creative potential meet opportunity, connecting and strengthening the local and global storytelling ecosystem, and centering stories rooted in traditionally marginalized communities.
seattlecityoflit.org

Seattle Escribe supports Spanish-speaking writers based in the United States, especially in the Northwest. They help writers to carry out their craft regardless of their stage of training, and offer classes, workshops, and readings entirely in Spanish in order to strengthen writers’ identities through language.
seattleescribe.org

Seattle Urban Book Expo is a writing services and promotions organization for self-published authors of color. They aim to build community by building opportunities through book fairs, writing events and promotions.
subeseattle.com

The Elliott Bay Book Company is an independently owned, full service bookstore located in the heart of Capitol Hill. Home to over 150,000 titles, set on cedar shelves in a multi-level, unique atmosphere, they also host a full calendar of author readings and events throughout the year.
elliottbaybook.com

Third Place Books is the deliberate and intentional creation of a community around books and the ideas inside them. With locations in Lake Forest Park, Ravenna, and Seward Park, they provide a fun, comfortable, and safe place to browse, lounge, read, eat, laugh, play, talk, and listen.
thirdplacebooks.com

Food Vendors

Afella Jollof Catering
Cute Dumplings
Theary Cambodian Foods
The Village Perk
Thank You to Our Sponsors

FOUNDING SPONSORS

KERRY & LINDA KILLINGER FOUNDATION

A special thank you to the Writers Festival Visionary Circle: Kerry and Linda Killinger; Yazmin Mehdi and Liam Lavery; Ed and Marjorie Ringness; Fraser and Deirdre Black; Deborah Person; Mary Blodgett and Carlton Calvin; Breneman Jaech Foundation; Clyde Hill Publishing.

PRESENTING SPONSORS

SEASON SPONSORS

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTERS

Town Hall also offers very special thanks to Shin Yu Pai; Ashley Toia; Barbara Sauermann; Tom Nissley; Karen Maeda Allman; Heather Tuininga; Barbara Malone; Ron Darling; Stephen Weil; Sara Nisbet; Elizabeth Herman; Kate Lloyd; Erin Sinesky; Josefine Kals; Stephanie Rene Mendoza; Sara Leonard; Miriam Hathaway; Christa Fleming; Farrar, Strauss and Giroux; MCD; Penguin Random House; Simon & Schuster; Scribner Books; Norton; Algonquin Books; our incredible staff and volunteers; all of our authors and literary partners; each and every denizen of our marvelous City of Literature; and especially Kerry and Linda Killinger, without whose gentle nudge we might never have seen the moment right before us.