

## News Release



For Immediate Release  
March 1, 2006

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### **“SLANGUAGE,” A UNIQUE THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE FROM PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE THE UNIVERSES, COMES TO PITTSBURGH MARCH 24 & 25**

**Presented by The August Wilson Center for African American  
Culture and The Andy Warhol Museum**

**PITTSBURGH, PA** – Described by the *New York Theatre Experience* as “the unmistakable birth of new art for a new generation,” **Universes’ Slanguage** arrives in Pittsburgh with a fusion of poetry, theater, jazz, hip-hop, politics, down-home blues and Spanish boleros, creating an all-new theatrical experience. Performances will take place **March 24th & 25th, 8:00pm, at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty**, and are presented by The August Wilson Center for African American Culture and The Andy Warhol Museum (as a part of its “Off the Wall Series”).

Known for creating moving, challenging and entertaining theatrical works, the multi-disciplined Universes break the boundaries of traditional theater to create their own brand of performance. The five-member ensemble, which consists of founding members Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz and Gamal Abdel Chasten, plus performers Marlyn Matias and Ninja, describes their work as “suitable for anyone who lives life. Through slang we search and comb the gamut of language and culture, which makes us who are first and foremost: Poets.”

The Universes’ poetry comes to life in *Slanguage*, a full-evening work, directed by Jo Bonney, that blends storytelling, rhythm, music, song and movement to tell a poignant tale. Built loosely around a subway ride from Brooklyn to the Bronx, the piece reveals a portrait of the urban landscape through rap, gospel, bluesy laments and other poetic forms.

Along for the ride, the audience will encounter beggars, hustlers, street merchants, subway preachers and riders who make up the fabric of the city. Through its characters, music and prose, *Slanguage* integrates theatre and street humor with emotional truth – bringing issues of poverty, family, drug, racism and violence to the stage, and finding hope in the contemporary urban landscape.

**Tickets for the Universes’ Slanguage are on sale now**, and can be purchased by calling 412.394.3353 or online at [www.proartstickets.org](http://www.proartstickets.org). Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$15 for students.

As part of their Pittsburgh engagement, **Universes will lead a Poetry in Performance Workshop for emerging performing artists, Thursday March 23rd, 12pm-2pm at the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater**. Led by Steven

Sapp, the free workshop will help participants learn how to translate their poetry to the stage. Space is limited, and reservations are required. Interested participants can contact the August Wilson Center for African American Culture for an application. Call 412.258.2700 or [info@africanaculture.org](mailto:info@africanaculture.org).

Later that evening, the Universes will pay a cameo visit to The Shadow Lounge, located at 5972 Baum Boulevard in East Liberty. For more information, visit [www.shadowlounge.net](http://www.shadowlounge.net) or call 412.363.8277.

### **About Universes**

The original members of Universes: Steven Sapp, Mildred Ruiz, Gamal Abdel Chasten, Lemon and Flaco Navaja, created an ensemble company rooted in the natural relationship born of friends and artists living in the same urban experience, working in the same circles, stomping through the same New York City open mic venues. Varying in age range, ethnic backgrounds and experiences, each member brought a different element of style to create five collaborating “universes” in one very real world: Sapp delivered the voice of Jazz and literary style from the 1970s to now; Ruiz mixed Spanish boleros with gospel, the blues and contemporary sounds; Chasten brought lyricism and music; Navaja embedded Salsa and Nuyorican poetry; and Lemon introduced to the mix a voice laced with the grinds of urban reality.

### **About The Andy Warhol Museum**

The Andy Warhol Museum receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the place of Andy Warhol's birth, The Warhol is one of the most comprehensive single-artist museums in the world. The Andy Warhol Museum is one of the four Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. Additional information about The Warhol is available at [www.warhol.org](http://www.warhol.org).

### **About The August Wilson Center for African American Culture**

The August Wilson Center for African American Culture presents, interprets and preserves the art, culture and history of African Americans in Pittsburgh and of people of African descent throughout the world. The Center realizes its mission with an engaging schedule of visual and performing arts programs as well as educational and public programs.

The programs of the Center's 2005-2006 season are supported by lead gifts from The Heinz Endowments, The Pittsburgh Foundation and The PNC Financial Services Group. More information is available at [www.augustwilsoncenter.org](http://www.augustwilsoncenter.org).

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