



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Join Shake Rag Alley in Virtual Community Conversations About “Citizen: An American Lyric”

MINERAL POINT, Wis.—In a pre-pandemic world, Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts and its community partners would have finished the NEA Big Read in Mineral Point of Claudia Rankine’s “Citizen: An American Lyric” two weeks before the May 25 killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. While the NEA Big Read programming scheduled for this spring is being rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Shake Rag Alley is launching a series of virtual community conversations to discuss the themes of the book, which has been called “an anatomy of American racism in the new millennium.”

The series kicks off at 6 p.m. Friday, June 19, with special guest Brian Benford. Benford, who grew up “between the Afrocentric inner city of Milwaukee during the height of the civil rights movement and the bucolic, all-white farm community of Fort Atkinson.” He chose to make Madison his adult home because he believed it “melded the best qualities of small-town living with the potential for diversity.” Now, having “spent close to thirty years working in community-based organizations seeing firsthand the challenges and suffering that so many low-income people of color endure on a daily basis,” Brian views Madison differently.

During this Zoom discussion, participants will have a chance to ask Brian how recent events further shape his experience and understanding. The conversation will also consider the meaning of Juneteenth -- the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States -- how a nation constructs a cohesive identity when citizens must carry disparate freedom narratives, and what it might take to change the racial imaginary.

To participate, please sign up to be added to the Community Conversations email list at <https://shakeragalley.org/virtual-community-conversations>. A link with password details will be emailed at least two days before each Friday event. For more information, or to request a free copy of “Citizen: An American Lyric,” call (608) 987-3292 and see <https://shakeragalley.org/nea-big-read/>.

Upcoming Events at Shake Rag Alley .

Join a Summer of Fun Youth Programs Now in Progress

It’s more important than ever to give kids a chance to participate in a variety of creative hands-on activities. While keeping the health and safety of our instructors, students and staff in mind,



instead of classes held at Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts, we have created kits of our classes for use at home or at daycare. To make sure that the project steps are easily understood, most kits come with both written instructions and a video or Zoom component. Kits will be available for pick up at Shake Rag Alley the day the class would have been held on our campus through Aug. 18. The Free Arts Camp will include a number of kit projects and videos. Kits will continue to be available until they are out of stock. Prices for most of the kits range from \$10-\$12 plus shipping if the kit will be mailed. To register, see <https://shakeragalley.org/youth-program>. For more information, contact Youth Program Director Elizabeth Johanna at ejohanna@shakeragalley.org. We're grateful to the Mineral Point Community Chest and United Fund of Iowa County for their support of our youth programs.

Mineral Point Museum Night June 18

Swing in to summer by engaging in Mineral Point history at several locations participating in the second annual Museum Night at 5 to 8 p.m. June 18. The Mineral Point Chamber of Commerce, Mineral Point Historical Society, Mineral Point Railroad Society, Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts and the Wisconsin Odd Fellows and Rebekahs Museum will be open and offering free admission where applicable. In compliance with Iowa County guidelines surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, safety and sanitation precautions will be taken at each site, and visitors will be asked to maintain 6 feet of social distance and wear masks around other members of the public. Visitors to Shake Rag Alley can tour the collection of historic and reproduction buildings representing Mineral Point architecture from the 1830s through 1940s. Aspiring fairy house architects can take home a make-your-own-fairy-house-kit to design a contribution to this summer's Aug. 1 Tour of Fairy Homes. Pre-drilled wooden foundations and a bag to fill to your heart's content with bits and baubles from our fairy house stash will be available outside weather permitting or in the spacious Lind Pavilion. For more information, see <https://shakeragalley.org/2020events/museum-night/>. For more information, call (608) 987-3292 or see www.shakeragalley.org.

About Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts

A nonprofit school of arts and crafts founded in 2004 by local artists and community members, Shake Rag Alley's 2.5-acre campus at 18 Shake Rag St. in Mineral Point (population 2,500) is a national destination for participants of adult workshops, a robust summer youth program and a host of annual special events. In addition, Shake Rag offers on-site lodging and custom facility rentals for meetings, events and celebrations. For additional information about Shake Rag Alley's 2020 workshops and events, or to request a catalog and information about facility rentals and volunteer opportunities, see www.ShakeRagAlley.org, call (608) 987-3292 or email info@shakeragalley.org.