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Volume XLIV
Number 47



www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • November 4, 2015



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Stoked for Wordstock

Literary festival has
new diversity focus

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A beloved Portland literary festival will kick off Saturday with an added focus on diverse authors and hopes of reaching out more than ever to communities of color and young people.

After a one year hiatus and some negotiation, Wordstock returns under new leadership from Literary Arts, Oregon's prominent literary non-profit organization and annual presenter of the Oregon Book Awards and prestigious Portland Arts & Lecture series.

When building this year's festival lineup, Literary Arts put diversity and inclusion at the forefront of their curatorial thinking, both in who is represented in the festival and what stories are told in their work, subjects such as gender, sexuality, race, age, genre, geography, independent publishing, and more.

The nonprofit pulled together an advisory board and spent months planning how to keep the event inclusive while making sure that this year, everyone 17 and under would get in for free.



Sandra Cisneros



Renée Watson

"A festival should reflect the many different kinds of stories that are being told in many different ways in our thriving literary culture," says Amanda Bullock, Wordstock's new festival and events manager. "We're off to a great start and I am proud that Wordstock 2015 features stories that will resonate with many different people."

And different voices is spot on – the organization has managed to land some of the most famous voices of color in the modern literary scene, including internationally acclaimed Chicana author Sandra Cisneros and Jefferson High School alumn-turned-celebrated writer Renée Watson.

Both Watson and Cisneros took some time to talk to the

PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

'Wordstock,' the annual Portland book festival, returns Saturday, Nov. 7 to the Portland Art Museum with a new emphasis on the diversity of the authors involved and the participation of communities of color and young people. Promoting the festival are Amanda Bullock, (second from left) Literary Arts new festival and events manager; J.S. May (far left) of the Portland Arts Museum; Andrew Proctor (second from right), Literary Arts' executive director; and Brian Ferriso, Portland Art Museum director and chief curator.

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