

24 25 ANNUAL REPORT

2025

“Narrative is how we can remain bonded together. It’s important to make sure that people listen and talk to each other, not to just communicate.”

Michele Norris



MISSION

**Seattle Arts & Lectures
cultivates transformative
experiences through story
& language with readers &
writers of all generations.**



VISION

**SAL envisions a future
in which story &
language continuously &
courageously revitalize
equity, justice, & belonging.**



VALUES

**Belonging
Racial Equity
Transparency & Trust
Curiosity
Joy**

Dear Friends,

Last June, Seattle Arts & Lectures closed our 37th season with a sold-out event with Ocean Vuong, author of the bestselling novel *Emperor of Gladness*. The packed hall buzzed in anticipation as folks chatted, waiting to see the author.

However, the evening quickly became about authors, plural, as we began the program by introducing a student poet from our Writers in the Schools program. If you have attended our events, you know this is a much-beloved ritual which twines together our Youth Programs and Public Programs, giving a youth poet the stage and a moment to shine.

That evening's featured youth poet was Pheakday Yim from the Seattle World School, a culturally and linguistically diverse Seattle Public School for newcomer secondary students. As Yim read his original poem, "My Frustrated Body," Ocean Vuong watched backstage—just as riveted as the audience. At the end, the entire hall joyfully erupted to give Yim a standing ovation.

This moment of expansion, of connection, of delight—even of slight upending of expectation—was just one of so many moments of transformation that occurred last year.

And it could not have happened without you.

Many SAL authors have noted over the years that when you read their work, it is an act of co-creation. So too is the shared endeavor of the work of SAL. We could not have written the story of last year without you. Thank you.

With your support, we co-created WITS programs at 39 schools and hospital sites, serving more than 6,000 public school students. Students who write their stories through WITS feel heard and feel seen. They report feeling greater self-confidence in all their work. They begin to engage more deeply in school and in their community. They become authors of their own lives.

With your help, we connected people to ideas and each other through author events like Ocean's, book programs like Summer Book Bingo, free reading parties, book clubs with partner bookstores, our podcast, and more. Readers who engage in SAL's Public Programs feel less isolated, are more likely to read diversely, read for pleasure, volunteer, and engage in the civic life of their community. Whether it was in the space of a classroom, the space of a hall, or an online space, together last year we held space—for stories that connected us, challenged us, and changed us.

With you, we had the best Words Bloom: SAL Gala of all time, exceeding our goal and raising almost \$200k more than the year before! The community support for SAL was in full bloom this year, and it showed. I am proud to say that we expanded our staff, our budget, and ended last year solidly in the black.

These are difficult times, times when community must come together like never before. In a time of misinformation and censorship, SAL will continue to uplift diverse stories and true tales—both from the best nationally known writers of our time and from the young people in our public schools.

In an era of fraying civil discourse, SAL will continue to build our community's capacity for creative and critical conversations. In a world that increasingly seeks to fracture our attention with algorithms, SAL will maintain our commitment to deep attention, to presence, and to attending. SAL will work to change the narrative for kids and adults who want to write a better world together—a kinder world, a more empathetic world.

We are here to continue to serve readers and writers, and those who might be. We are here to be human together. Thank you for bringing words into the world with us. We couldn't co-create this story without you.

In collaboration and community,

Rebecca Hoogs, *Executive Director*
rahoogs@lectures.org

p.s. Over the last year, we have asked you for your thoughts on a new strategic plan for SAL, and in just a few months we will be sharing that vision with you. Thank you for your time, feedback, and investment in our shared work. Stay tuned for more very soon!



Our 2024/25 Volunteer of the Year, Ronak Nisher, poses with SAL staff.



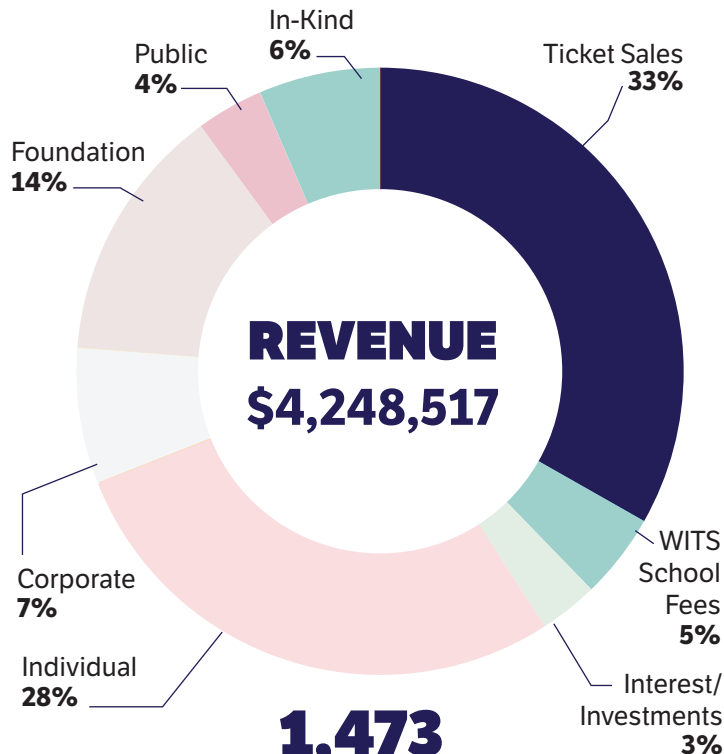
Audience members attending Percival Everett's event.



Students representing our 39 WITS partner schools gathered in early June to perform their original writing for family and friends at a live event at Town Hall Seattle.

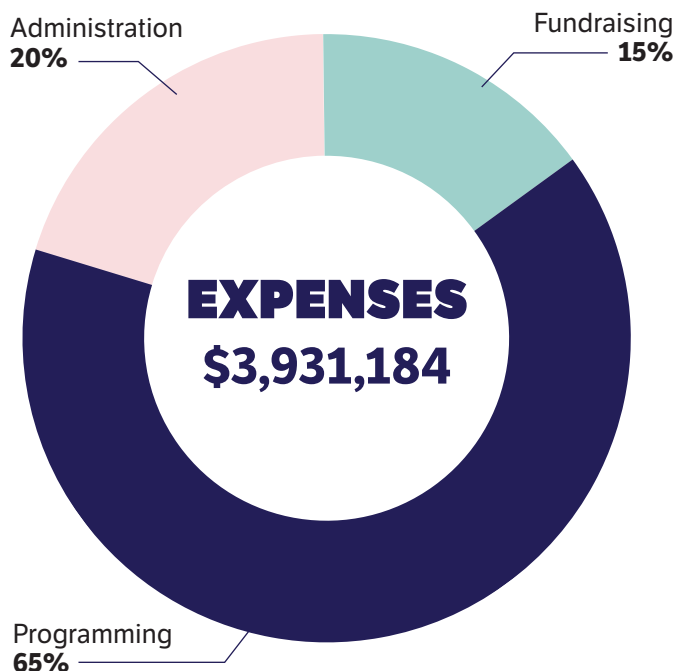
Financial Accountability

Your contributions, subscriptions, & ticket purchases made an impact last year!



1,473
people contributed
\$1,196,267
in gifts and pledges.

THANK YOU!



More than 39,000 people
engaged in SAL's programming

*Reported percentages are based on unaudited financial statements.

“Thank you for all of the incredible work that you and your team do for the greater Seattle community—we’re so thankful to be a part of it!”

Ballard Food Bank

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Many thanks to the dedicated Board Members who served during the 2024/25 fiscal year: Allison Augustyn, Stesha Brandon, Bradley Lane, Ben Rankin, & Nicole Y. Walters

Seattle Arts & Lectures
340 15th Ave E, Suite 301
Seattle, WA 98112

25 26 SEASON CALENDAR

OCT 20, 2025	Elizabeth Gilbert
OCT 26, 2025	Timothy Snyder
NOV 3, 2025	Li-Young Lee
NOV 9, 2025	Patti Smith
NOV 18, 2025	Padma Lakshmi
NOV 19, 2025	Murmurations
DEC 2, 2025	Salman Rushdie
JAN 13, 2026	Colm Tóibín
JAN 21, 2026	Murmurations
JAN 27, 2026	Honorée Fanonne Jeffers
FEB 5, 2026	aja monet
FEB 24, 2026	Cristina Rivera Garza & Javier Zamora
MAR 3, 2026	James McBride
MAR 18, 2026	Murmurations
MAR 21, 2026	The SAL Gala: Words Bloom 2026
MAR 30, 2026	Stephen Graham Jones
APR 7, 2026	George Saunders
APR 9, 2026	Emma Straub
APR 22, 2026	Patrick Radden Keefe
MAY 6, 2026	Marlon James
MAY 12, 2026	Emily Wilson
MAY 20, 2026	Murmurations
MAY 21, 2026	Tommy Orange



**GIVE
TODAY!**

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#SAL2526

lectures.org



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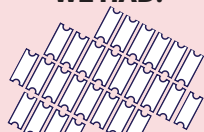
Many thanks to the
dedicated staff who
concluded their time
at SAL this year: Avery
Alexander (Youth
Programs Coordinator)
and Indira Dahlstrom
(Youth Programs
Associate).

Public Programs

SAL's Public Programs showcase some of today's most influential writers, storytellers, and thinkers for conversations that connect, challenge, and inspire. In the 2024/25 Season, SAL created spaces for people of all ages to joyfully connect to ideas and each other through 27 author events, Summer Book Bingo, free reading parties, book clubs with partnering bookstores, our podcast, and beyond.



IN OUR 2024/25 SEASON, WE HAD:



27
ticketed
events



2
SAL Book
Clubs

led by Seattle writer
Amy Hirayama



7
free events
2 Silent Reading
Parties & 4
Murmurations
events & **Summer
Book Bingo**



Over
1,550
Summer
Book Bingo
submissions
in collaboration
with the Seattle
Public Library



64%
joined
in-person



36%
joined online

OUR AUDIENCE IS:



66%
from Seattle



22%
from greater
King County



12%
from outside
King County

2024/25 SPEAKERS

Justice Ketanji
Brown Jackson

Connie Chung

Danez Smith

Sandra Cisneros

Malcolm Gladwell

Kelly Link

Ted Chiang

Casey McQuiston

Matty Matheson

Abraham Verghese

Aimee

Nezhukumatahil

Robin Wall Kimmerer

Percival Everett

Michele Norris

Naomi Shihab Nye

Audrey Tang

Kelsey McKinney

Ta-Nehisi Coates

Maggie Smith

Natasha Lyonne

Emma Donoghue

Abby Jimenez

Bonnie Garmus

Hanif Abdurraqib

C Pam Zhang

Kevin Kwan

Merlin Sheldrake

Ocean Vuong

24
youth writers
opened our
Public
Programs
events with
original work



20
local independent
bookstore partners

\$352,778
raised for independent
bookstores last year

41
community
partners

Youth Programs

SAL's Youth Programs provide young people with access to the literary arts as a transformative tool for expression and connection. Through sequential lessons, mentorship, performance and publishing opportunities, and more, students build self-awareness and voice, develop social-emotional and critical thinking skills, and experience the joy of creativity and connection.

89%

of Youth
said they were able
to be creative & use
their imagination
during WITS

91%

of Partner
Teachers
said WITS supported
them in meeting
classroom goals

100%
of WITS
Writers

are satisfied with the
overall experience
& connection to
Seattle's literary
community



94%

of Partner
Teachers
want to participate
in WITS again



WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS

Writers in the Schools (WITS) brings professional local writers to K-12 public school classrooms for extended creative writing residencies. Founded in 1994, the program has served over 150,000 students throughout the Puget Sound region. Through WITS, students become authors of their own lives.

2024/25 WITS WRITERS

Samar Abulhassan	Corinne Manning
Meredith Arena	Cypress Manning
Oliver Brickman	Nhatt Nichols
Karen Finneyfrock	Sierra Nelson
Danielle Hayden	Clara Olivo
Amy Hirayama	Putsata Reang
Rachel Kessler	Vincent Rendon
Troy Landrum Jr.	Ricardo Ruiz
David Lasky	Ann Teplick
Vivian Li	Acca Warren
ell lin	Ankober
	Yewondwossen

IN 2024/25 WITS
WORKED WITH



6,008
K-12 students



121
teachers



224
classrooms



39
Sites
37 public schools
& 2 hospital depts

**“Your
planets
order in
my empty
heart”**

Eliza Gomez,
WITS Student



Sandra Cisneros, author of *The House on Mango Street*, meets educators at Cascade Middle School.

SPOTLIGHT AUTHOR VISITS

Spotlight Author Visits bring SAL speakers to WITS partner schools for free, one-time visits. Last year's included **Sandra Cisneros**, **Aimee Nezhukumatathil**, **Michele Norris**, **Maggie Smith**, and **C Pam Zhang**. During visits, authors read their work, talk about their life in reading and writing, and answer students' questions.

**“The event with Cisneros
was a highlight for me this
year (and in my career!).
Thank you!”**

Kimberly Tracy, WITS Partner Teacher



2024/25 Youth Poet Laureate, **Janae Lu** laughs on stage with Percival Everett, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *James*.

YOUTH POETRY FELLOWSHIP

The Youth Poetry Fellowship (YPF) is made up of young writers and leaders who are committed to poetry, performance, civic and community engagement, education, and equity across the Puget Sound region. At community events, Fellows share their powerful voices, leadership, and love of community. One fellow is selected to serve as the Seattle Youth Poet Laureate.

YOUTH POETRY FELLOWS

Janae Lu

Eka Bhuyan	Adisa Grant
Agustina Campaz	Nadia Najam
Linus Elkins	Charlotte Soliven
Rediet Giday	Catalina Videla

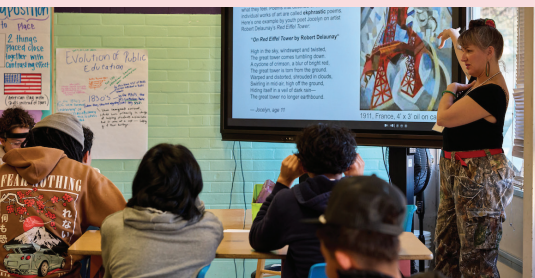
YPF MENTORS

Jourdan Imani Keith & Nanya Jhinghran

2024/25 SCHOOL & DISTRICT PARTNERS

Aki Kurose Middle School	Laurelhurst Elementary School
Alan T. Sugiyama High School	Leschi Elementary School
Ballard High School	Lopez Middle School
B.F. Day Elementary School	Lopez High School
Big Picture Middle School*	McClure Middle School
Big Picture High School	Mercer Middle School
Brookside Elementary School	Nathan Hale High School
Cascade Middle School*	Orca K-8 School
Catharine Blaine K-8 School	Rainier Beach High School*
Center School	Renaissance School of Art & Reasoning
Cleveland High School	Rising Star Elementary School*
Dearborn Park International Elementary School	Roosevelt High School
Evergreen High School*	Roxhill Elementary School
Foster High School	Seattle Children's Hospital (Ed)
Garfield High School	Seattle Children's Hospital (PCP)
Graham Hill Elementary School	Seattle World School
Hamilton International Middle School	TOPS K-8 School
Innovation Heights High School	Washington Middle School
Lafayette Elementary School	West Woodland Elementary School
	Wing Luke Elementary School*
Highline Public Schools	Seattle Public Schools
Lake Washington Public Schools	Shoreline Public Schools
Lopez Island Schools	Tukwila Public Schools

*WITS Rewritten Schools – schools which received the program at no cost as part of our initiative to serve schools with the least amount of arts access



WITS Writer Rachel Kessler leads a lesson at Evergreen High School. WITS Writers develop lessons that are attuned with the needs of students and classroom goals.

Thank you to the individual donors & sponsors who supported SAL in 2024/25!

Luminary \$25,000+ Peter Byers & Virginia Sybert, Chris Capossela & Leigh Toner, Debra Dahlen & Bob Fries, Don Guthrie & Candace Tkachuck, Jonathan Beard & Grace Nordhoff, Judy Pigott
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Youth Poetry Fellow Rediet Giday meets Hanif Abdurraqib on April 9, 2025 at Town Hall Seattle.

& Elizabeth Wales, Eliza Medearis & John Williams, Jamie & Troy Miller, Nisha Nariya & Sugandhan Venkatachalam, Jane W Nelson & James Oswald, Ann Ongerth, Jane Park & Yumi Park-Davis, Mary Pigott, Sherry Prowda, Ben & Margit Rankin, Chris & Katie Schwarzenburg, Marc & Nancy Tollefson, Timothy Tomlinson, Lisa & Sam Verhovek, Jason Davis & June Yoshinari Davis
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SAL events have truly been life-changing for me and are one of my favorite things about living in Seattle!"

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