

Spoken Word workshop at the Arts Council of Beaufort County
an interview with LaShanta Ase by Lisa Annelouise Rentz

Spoken word is a literary-performance art. Original lyrics, poetry, or stories are spoken, possibly with music, though emphasis is kept on the speaker. The original work is written to be spoken rather than read on the page, and it is often political and social commentary, where again the art still outweighs the speechifying. A Spoken Word workshop with LaShanta Ase on April 12th is a part of the Arts Council of Beaufort County's emerging artist initiative. It's free, and open to the public from 2 to 4pm (including writers looking for practice for reading on book tours), and J.W. Rone, ACBC's executive director, will be there to share his stage skills as well.

LaShanta Ase is a resident of St. Helena Island, after visiting in 2005 while attending Metro State College in Denver. Here are her words about what will happen in the workshop and what to bring. On April 12th at the ACBC performance space, she will answer more questions about the Spoken Word genre, and demonstrate how it's done.

What is Spoken Word?

Spoken word is dramatized poetry. It is poetry in motion. It is like watching someone perform a rhythmic monologue. But, an explanation of the noun 'spoken word', does it no justice. You have to experience it. It has a way of captivating an audience. The emotion and intensity that moves from speaker to listener can be quite profound. I've been to performances where I've gotten so full from the experience that I couldn't bear it any longer. I've witnessed an artist make a room of 200 people sit completely still and silent, like hear the pin needle drop silent, for 20 minutes because the performance was that powerful. And it doesn't have to be huge movement by the artist either, the voice alone can take you there.

How do you feel while performing?

It depends on the piece I'm performing. Either very grounded, or out-of-body. It's really nice though, when I hit a wave and the piece takes on a life of its own-- my voice just rides it.

What do you plan for the workshop?

The workshop. Yes. For me, spoken word elevated when I got familiar with the source of my muse. So, the workshop will focus on isolating the purpose of the performance piece and bringing that energy to life, for the artist first, and then the listener. In other words, lots of hands on, lots of fun. So, bring your work. Don't be intimidated by the 'performance' part. There is only one way to read the work you wrote and that is your way.

What can the community do to get more involved, and support Spoken Word as an artform?

There are spoken word artists in the Beaufort area, there just isn't a venue for them to do what they do. Not yet. So, having a venue is key. More than one venue is even better because variety is always a good thing with spoken word. Also, when the opportunity presents itself, go to a spoken word event. If you've only seen it in the movies, then you haven't seen it.

If you're interested in attending the free Spoken Word workshop (or the free editing workshop on Wednesday, April 16th from 6 to 8pm) please call the ACBC to let them know: 379-2787. More details are at the office at 1111 Boundary Street, across from the Boys & Girls Club, and

www.beaufortcountyarts.com

. LaShanta Ase's webpage is

www.myspace.com/asehoneyeye

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