

## Midnight Poetry Jam

The start time of the Midnight Poetry Jam is not hard to forget. Perhaps, that is one of the reasons why it has become one of the National Black Theatre Festival's most popular and enduring attractions.

The event is a celebration of spoken-word, the poetry genre that has inspired television shows and stage productions and created many stars.

Anyone can become a star – for a few minutes, at least – at the Midnight Poetry Jam. Poets of all skill levels can sign-up immediately before the event to perform on stage, although demand for spots is high and space is limited each night. It is also not unusual to see celebrity guests on stage spitting an original piece. “The Cosby Show” actor Malcolm-Jamal Warner, who helped to mold the Midnight Poetry Jam, has performed, as has “Judge Judy” bailiff Patri Hawkins-Byrd and Lamman Rucker of “Why Did I Get Married?” fame. Each night, a celebrity will co-host with longtime host Helena D. Lewis, an award winning actress, poet and playwright.

Lewis has picked up several awards, including a 2014 AUDELCO, for her acclaimed one-woman show, “Call Me Crazy: Diary of A Mad Social Worker.” Lewis, who has a Master of Social Work from Rutgers University School, wrote the play based on her own experiences as a social worker, licensed clinical drug and alcohol counselor and HIV/AIDS health educator. In it, she portrays 25 characters, from pimps to



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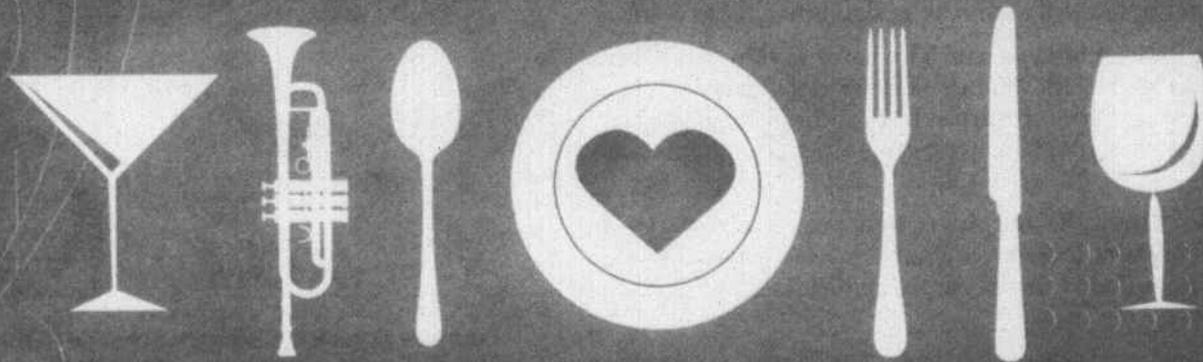
menopausal women. Lewis has been featured on “Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry” and is the host of VERSES at the famed Nuyorican Poets Café in New York.

Venue space for the Midnight Poetry Jam is abundant, yet it still fills up pretty quickly. In the past, scores of fans have had to be turned away. Arriving a little early for this amazing event is advised. ■



## ALL THE INGREDIENTS FOR A GREAT MEAL.

(And no, there's no mamma slappin' allowed)



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