



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **MAYHEM POETS TO LEAD SLAM POETRY OUTREACH RESIDENCY AND PERFORM OWN WORK AT FESTIVAL**

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The Omaha Summer Arts Festival is pleased to feature the participation of the renowned masters of the spoken word - the Mayhem Poets - in this year's event. Hailed as "an amazing ride" by the *New York Times*, these theatre-trained, comedically-gifted, lyrical virtuosos seamlessly blend raw elements of hip hop, theatre, improv and stand up comedy to tell gut-wrenching truths.

The poets (Kyle Sutton, Scott Raven and Mason Granger) will lead two two-day outreach residencies at the Holland Center with youth from Girls Inc. of Omaha, Impact One, Love's Jazz & Art Center and several local high schools including North High School and Central High School. The workshops will be held at the Holland Performing Arts Center on June 24 and 25 and will culminate with a performance of the participants' original work on the Luigi Waites Main Stage at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 26. The Mayhem Poets will return to the stage to perform their own work on Saturday at 3:30 p.m.

The Mayhem mission originated at Rutgers University in 2000 when Kyle Sutton and Scott Tarazevits started an open-mic on campus called Verbal Mayhem. Their idea was to find a way to access people from all walks of life with spoken word. They reached out to prisons,

fraternities, churches and hip hop/poetry fans to attract the most diverse poetry open-mic scene in the world. The spirit of Verbal Mayhem convinced the two young performers to craft a show and go on a mission to change peoples' lives and reshape society's view of poetry.

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Working with youth is a central part of the Mayhem Poets' mission. They have lead many youth workshops and have developed a unique curriculum that breaks down the process they use to create slam poetry. The workshops begin with a discussion of the origins of oral poetry and famous works such as the Iliad and Beowulf, and the most famous oral poet of all time, William Shakespeare.

The Mayhem Poets will then teach participants about a variety of rhyming patterns and tools of the trade they can use to create their own slam poetry. The "Poet's Toolbox" includes acronyms, clichés, puns, pop culture references, similes, metaphors and more.

Next, the poets discuss the importance of originality and making poetry meaningful by drawing on personal connections and experiences. Finally, the Mayhem Poets instruct the budding young poets on performance skills including voice projection, timing and enunciation.

"These exercises blend hip hop, Shakespeare, and improv comedy, and equip participants with the tools to create and express authentic spoken word," said Kyle Sutton.

The Summer Arts Festival presented a similar poetry workshop in 1999 featuring another nationally known spoken word group – the Watts Prophets. It was very successful and event organizers are pleased to have another opportunity to showcase this unique art form.

For more information regarding the Omaha Summer Arts Festival presented by First National Bank and the Slam Poetry Outreach Residency underwritten by the Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Humanities Council, Richard Holland, Whitmore Charitable Trust and Northern Natural Gas, please visit **[www.SummerArts.org](http://www.SummerArts.org)**.

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