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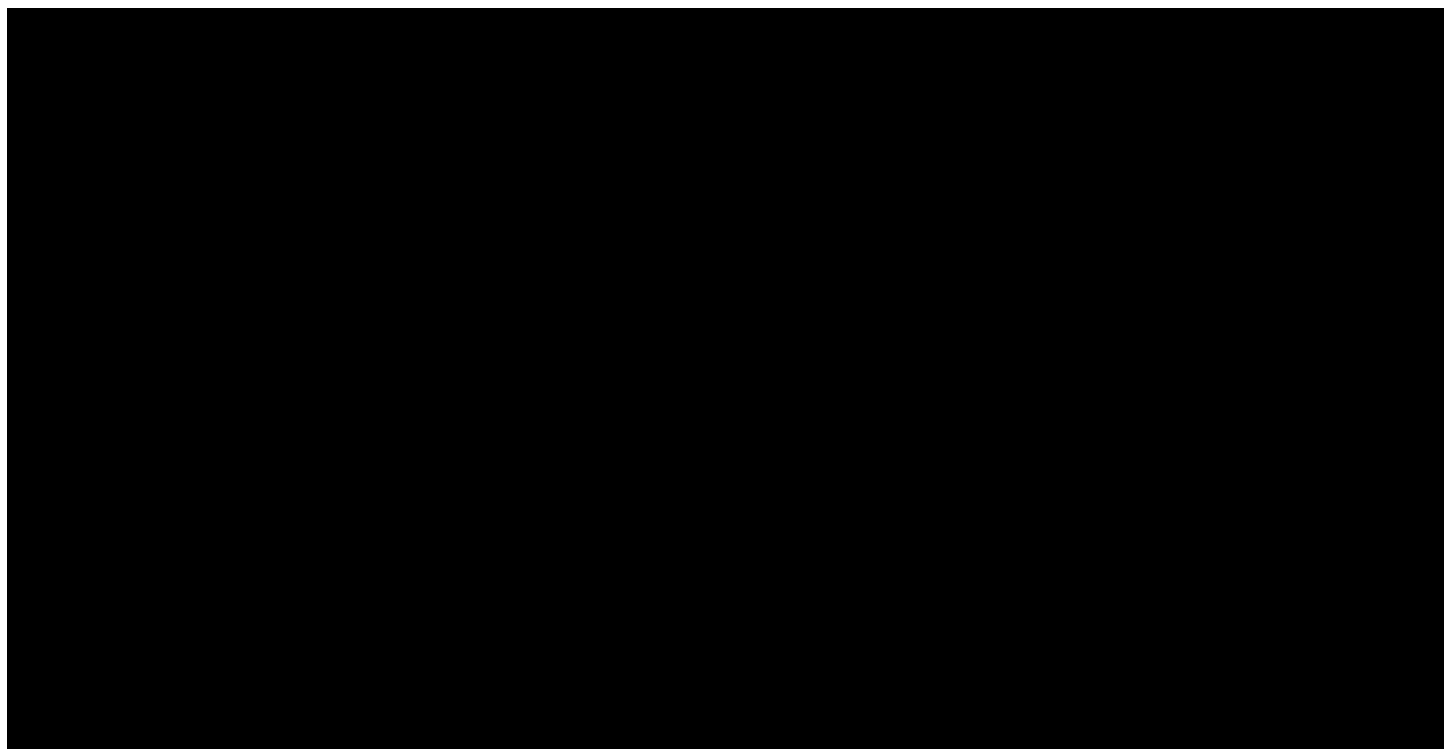
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## Actor LeVar Burton talks books and kids for Arts Alliance

### Tulsa

By James D. Watts Jr. Tulsa World May 11, 2018





LeVar Burton will be the keynote speaker for the third annual Arts Alliance Tulsa Play Your pART Brunch on Saturday. Courtesy/Gotham Artists

Award-winning actor LeVar Burton, best known for his roles on “Star Trek: The Next Generation” and the PBS series “Reading Rainbow,” will be the keynote speaker at the third annual Play Your pART Brunch on Saturday.

The event is the principal fundraising effort of Arts Alliance Tulsa, with all proceeds going to fund grants for the 40 Tulsa-area arts organizations that are AAT members.

Burton shot to national fame at the age of 19, when he was cast as Kunta Kinte in the miniseries “Roots,” based on the best-selling book by Alex Haley.



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Burton went on to even greater fame as Geordi La Forge, the blind helmsman turned chief engineer of the Enterprise on “Star Trek: The Next Generation,” appearing in seven seasons of the TV series and four feature films.

However, Burton’s most cherished role was as executive producer and host of “Reading Rainbow,” one of the longest-running and most prestigious children’s shows of all time.

Over the course of its run from 1983 to 2009, “Reading Rainbow” earned more than 200 awards, including 26 Emmy Awards.

Burton has continued to create projects to improve childhood education through innovative storytelling, including launching the website “LeVar Burton Kids,” which offers Skybrary, an interactive library of digital books and video explorations designed to engage young readers and foster a love of learning.

Following the brunch, Burton will go to the Guthrie Green, 111 E. M.B. Brady St., to give a public reading of one of his favorite children’s books in an event co-sponsored by Arts Alliance Tulsa, Magic City Books, the Tulsa City-County Library, Reading Partners Tulsa, Guthrie Green and Tulsa Drillers.

Todd Cunningham, Arts Alliance Tulsa executive director, said Burton’s choice as keynote speaker ties in with the Reading Tree Challenge, a program of The Gathering Place that encourages Tulsa-area children to read an aggregate of 2 million books by the summer of 2018.

“We wanted to help in that cause, so we decided to invite an artist to be our keynote speaker who also happens to be famous for reading,” Cunningham said. “While raising much-needed funds for our 40 Alliance members, LeVar Burton will also give a boost to this year’s reading initiative. He is living proof of the important correlation between the arts and reading.”



**Event details:** 11 a.m. Saturday, May 19, at the Hyatt Regency Tulsa, 100 E. Second St.

**Attire:** Business casual

**Sponsors:** Arts Alliance Tulsa, Magic City Books, the Tulsa City-County Library, Reading Partners Tulsa, Guthrie Green and Tulsa Drillers

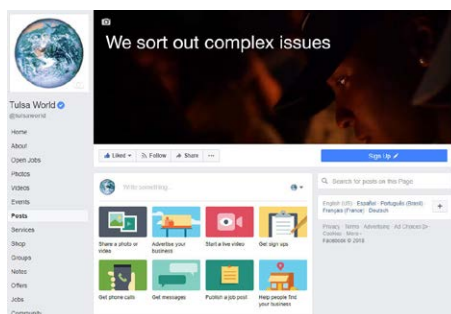
**Tickets:** \$250

**To purchase and more information:** [artstulsa.org](http://artstulsa.org)



## Scene Writer James D. Watts Jr.

James writes primarily about the visual, performing and literary arts. Phone: 918-581-8478



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