

Things To Do : Community : WHY Y

[Two Rivers: Letters from the Tigris to the Schuylkill](#)

Aug. 26, 2:30-5:30 p.m.

**Burholme Park by Ryerss Mansion, 1400 Cottman Ave., Philadelphia
Free**

Philadelphia and Mesopotamia have something in common: They're both situated between two rivers. That's the meaning of the word "Mesopotamia," a region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers containing most of modern-day Iraq and parts of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Syria. And it's the theme of an event this weekend, organized by the nonprofit Warrior Writers, where Iraqis and veterans of the Iraq War will share their writing about rivers and friendship.

The life of writer Yaroub Al-Obaidi has been shaped by rivers. He grew up in Iraq, in a city divided by and named for the Diyala River, a tributary of the Tigris. "We play, we swim in the river," he remembered. "We visit some our relatives and friends, they have plantations on the river." He went on to study product design and later worked as a lecturer at the University of Baghdad, a city divided by the Tigris.

But, in 2007, with the situation in Iraq worsening, Al-Obaidi was targeted by an Islamic militia over his involvement in art. He left for Syria, then Malaysia, and finally landed in 2016 along another river: the Schuylkill.

Living in Manayunk, Al-Obaidi and his brothers began to fish in the Schuylkill — it's not quite clean enough to swim in — and they started working with a project called [Radio Silence](#), a podcast by artist Michael Rakowitz that focused on the stories of Iraqi refugees in the United States. Through it, Al-Obaidi was introduced to American veterans of the war in his country. He hadn't really interacted with American soldiers before.

"We met some of them in checkpoint," he said. "But as a friendship, people you can meet...it's just they are soldiers, we are civilian people."

Through Warrior Writers, which promotes the arts as a form of healing and connection for returning veterans, Al-Obaidi got to know some, including engineer Lawrence Davidson who, it turned out, had [built a bridge over the Diyala River](#) in Al-Obaidi's hometown. While Al-Obaidi was thrilled to meet the veterans — "We all live in one city, that's why we are so excited to meet these people, see how they think. Can we become a friend with them?" — Davidson was nervous at first to meet the Iraqis.

"But once we find a topic we agree about, when we talk about the river, about the destroyed bridge, we start," said Al-Obaidi. "I say to myself, 'Lawrence built a bridge in my town, let's build a friendship bridge here in Philadelphia.'"

They and the other vets and Iraqis continued to meet up, eating at [Amasi](#), a local Iraqi restaurant, visiting each other's homes, going fishing.

“Friendship and rivers, they are a resource,” said Al-Obaidi, “Water is needed for the trees, the flowers need water to grow up. It’s exactly like friendship, it needs caring, communicating, to grow also.”

Sunday afternoon Al-Obaidi and Davidson will be reading some of their writing in Burholme Park. The reading will be followed by a picnic and a workshop in traditional Iraqi kite-making, all free.

[Global Guide Tours at Penn Museum’s Middle East Galleries](#)

Every Saturday and Sunday, 2:30 p.m.

Penn Museum, 3260 South St., Philadelphia

Tickets: Free with museum admission (\$10)

To learn more about Mesopotamia and its unexpected links to Philadelphia, take a tour of the new [Middle East Galleries](#) at the Penn Museum, just opened this spring. They house more than 1,200 artifacts from the region, many of them excavated by Penn archaeologists in 1887. The galleries trace not just the history of Mesopotamia, but of all civilization: the rise of the world’s first cities, the development of cuneiform writing, and the origins of global trade routes.

Every weekend, you can tour the galleries with a “global guide,” [an immigrant or refugee from the region](#). Yaroub Al-Obaidi, who will be reading in the event above, is one. In his tour, he links historical developments such as the invention of writing to personal stories of growing up in Iraq — including his adolescent urge to learn computer programming, and how he managed to do so. The galleries, which include artifacts from temples, palaces, schools, and homes, also highlight continuity between ancient civilizations and our own.

[Black Violin](#)

Aug. 23, 7:30-9 p.m.

Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks, 789 E. First St, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Free

Kevin Sylvester and Wilner Baptiste, known by their stage names, Kev Marcus and Wil B, are classically trained string instrumentalists who blend classical music with hip-hop to create wholly unique compositions that [bridge musical divides](#). They’ve performed with Alicia Keys, Wu-Tang Clan, and many others, and you can see them for free in Bethlehem this week.

[Happy Birthday, Leonard Bernstein](#)

Aug. 25, 10 a.m.-5.30 p.m.

The National Museum of American Jewish History, 101 S. Independence Mall East, Philadelphia,

Free

On Saturday, the National Museum of American Jewish History is celebrating what would have been Leonard Bernstein’s 100th birthday with [free admission](#) to its exhibition “Leonard Bernstein: the Power of Music” and the entire museum. The exhibition, which closes Sept. 2, explores not only Bernstein’s musical career, but also his social activism — including [the 1970 fundraising party](#) he infamously held for the Black Panthers.

[Delaware Burger Battle](#)

Aug. 25, noon-3:45 p.m.

Cauffiel House, 1016 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington

Tickets: \$10-\$50

Chefs from more than 15 Delaware restaurants will compete for glory and fame at the seventh annual Burger Battle. They're vying to be tapped for critic's choice, people's choice, and best alternative burger, which does include vegetarian options. For one admission price, visitors can try burgers from as many restaurants as they like. Beer and wine are also included.

[Schooled — Teacher's Edition at Good Good Comedy Theatre](#)

Aug. 25, 7-8:30 p.m.

Good Good Comedy Theatre, 215 N. 11th St., Philadelphia

Tickets: \$10

I know, I know, it's that time of year again. Back to school. At least Good Good Comedy is here to lighten the mood. Once a month, it hosts "Schooled," a night of comedians riffing on their school years. This month, the theme is teachers. Michael Brooks, Ben Fidler, Casey Kuftic, Mallory Leonard, and Alyssa Renee will take the stage, with Geoff Jackson hosting.

[Tryzub Ukrainian Folk Festival](#)

Aug. 26, noon-8 p.m.

Tryzub Ukrainian American Sport Center, 1 Lower State Road, North Wales, Pennsylvania

Tickets: \$10-\$15, kids under 14 free

The Tryzub Ukrainian American Sport Center is celebrating the 27th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with a day of folk arts and crafts, traditional food, music, and dance. There will even be live re-enactments of pivotal points in Ukrainian history.

Outdoor movies, from the drive-in to Clark Park

Various times, locations

Free

The waning weeks of summer offer plenty of chances to catch free outdoor movie screenings. There's "Black Panther" Thursday in [Kensington's Hart Park](#) and on Aug. 31 in [West Philly's Clark Park](#). "Coco" will screen in Franklin Square Friday and [in Benson Park](#) Saturday. "Wonder Woman" will play at [City Hall's Dilworth Park](#) Friday.

Adults can catch "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" Thursday as part of Manayunk's [Stroll the Street](#), which also includes vendors and food trucks on Main Street, as well as \$6 cocktail and appetizer specials. Plenty more outdoor movie listings [here](#).

And don't forget about the drive-in movies. There are still a handful in Pennsylvania and South Jersey, including [Shankweiler's](#) near Allentown in Orefield, Pennsylvania, the country's oldest operational drive-in theater Also near Allentown, [Becky's Drive-In](#) in Walnutport, Pennsylvania, is known for its superior snack bar, which serves

fresh funnel cakes, burgers, kielbasa, and other favorites. The Mahoning Theater, in nearby Lehigh, serves up stranger movie fare, such as [“Camp Blood IV,”](#) a series of horror triple features happening this weekend.

The [Delsea Drive-In](#) in Vineland, which bills itself as New Jersey’s only drive-in theater, allows dogs on Sundays.

Outdoor yoga, on the beach, in the city, and the suburbs Various times, locations, prices

The days are also numbered for big group outdoor workouts, which is just as well — it’s actually nicer to be in Downward Dog on the beach when the weather gets a little cooler. [Beach yoga in Sea Isle, New Jersey](#), continues until the end of September for \$10. BYO mat and you don’t need to sign up ahead of time. Island Aerobics of Stone Harbor, New Jersey, recommends a beach towel instead. [Classes take place in Avalon](#) at 30th Street Beach every Monday through Saturday at 8:30 a.m. for \$15.

[Stand-up paddleboard yoga](#) continues at Spruce Street Harbor Park until Sept. 23. Roots2Rise continues to follow Parks on Tap around town for [\\$10 suggested donation classes](#) every Thursday evening until Sept. 27. In the Philadelphia suburbs, you can combine your [outdoor yoga with a wine tasting](#) in Chadds Ford or uh...[goats in Quakertown](#).