

2020 Newburyport Literary Festival Poetry Events (April 24-25)

Friday Evening April 24th, at The Firehouse Center for the Arts

6:00 PM *Celticly Wild, Teutonically Fussy: X.J. Kennedy, A Life in Poetry*. Join us in celebrating this year's festival honoree, the "perpetually youthful" great man of American letters, X. J. Kennedy, poet, translator, anthologist, editor, and author of children's literature and textbooks on English literature and poetry. On top of all that, Joe Kennedy is a thoroughly delightful human being! We look forward to hearing him in conversation with *Ernest Hilbert*, founder of E-Verse Radio and winner of the 2017 Poets Prize.

Saturday, April 25th – Poetry Readings at The Central Congregational Church

8:30 AM *Breakfast with the Poets*. The Literary Festival happens only once a year—get an early start! We've got coffee, pastry and poetry to share. Five Powow River Poets, *Paulette Turco, Michael Cantor, Anton Yakovlev, Joan Kimball, and David Davis*, will read from books they've published over the past twelve months. (*A. M. Juster* will do the introductions).

10:00 AM *Nagging Questions: The Light Verse of Midge Goldberg and Chris O'Carroll*. Here are two poets who aren't afraid to ask the important questions ("What's your sign?"). They're not afraid to ask other kinds of questions, either, including the rhetorical ("Are you sick of being seen as a cutie?"), the metaphysical ("Is it tomorrow yet?"), the questions that arise from tattoo regret (Can I unprick my skin?), and those soul-searching questions we all ask ourselves upon entering a room, ("What did I want in here?"). Midge Goldberg and Chris O'Carroll are unquestionably two of the brightest wits in po-biz.

11:00 AM *Two Great American Poets, Linda Pastan & X. J. Kennedy*. "For Jews, the Cossacks are always coming," Linda Pastan writes. X. J. Kennedy, for his part alludes to "The Hail Mary" while reminiscing about his Catholic upbringing: "I was as full of grace as most." These two beloved poets combine an awareness of where their roots lie with an understanding embrace of people who are different—but never so very different—than themselves. Kennedy's Chaucerian take on the world includes every kind of pilgrim, and Pastan's interiors offer each of us journeyers a place to rest awhile and talk about the things that matter.

1:00 PM *Wary of Destruction: The Poetry of Susan de Sola & Robert W. Crawford*. Both of these outstanding poets have connections to Robert Frost's farm in Derry, NH—Crawford as founder of The Frost Farm Conference and de Sola as a recipient of the The Frost Farm Prize—but the connection goes deeper than that. Both poets are distinguished by their respect for the tradition of poetry that Frost embodied and the craftsmanship he demanded. And both of these *makers* seem warily "acquainted with the night," and its way of undoing things. "The sea is a hammer, a rough refiner," de Sola warns. Crawford doesn't even trust himself: "Feeling the cold creep through the watery glass,/There is... a part of you—admit it!—That wouldn't mind the starting all over again."

2:00 PM *The Art of Conversation: The Poetry of Rachel DeWoskin and Charles Coe*. Anyone who pictures the *poet* as a stock character should be forewarned: here are two poets who break the mold. Rachel DeWoskin, who has authored five critically-acclaimed novels and once starred in a Chinese soap opera, and Charles Coe, who has mastered the didgeridoo, an Aboriginal wind instrument, bring to the art of poetry unique sensibilities and a world of talent that crosses over into poetry's sister-arts: DeWoskin is an award-winning writer of prose, and Coe has an extensive background as a jazz vocalist, having performed and recorded with musicians throughout New England. What these two individuals do have in common is a recognition of how the arts speak to one another and a willingness to breeze past boundaries, to "open the imagination to the fantastic possibilities of a new way to look at – and see – the world."

3:00 PM *Public Poems and Private Songs: The Poetry of Martha Collins and Ernest Hilbert*. Martha Collins has written extensively about American's open wound—race and racism—including a book-length poem based on a lynching her father witnessed as a child. Her most recent book, however, is a sequence of poems so private that she did not originally intend to publish them. Ernest Hilbert, too, has dared to wear the mantle of the public poet. Critics often compare Hilbert to Robert Lowell, not only because he allows his personal demons a say in his poetry, but also because, in many of his poems, his intended audience is not one reader or a small group of aficionados, but our nation, these hardily-united States—whether or not our nation is willing to listen.

Saturday Evening, April 25th, at The Firehouse Center for the Arts

7:00 PM *Word-Music at The Firehouse: The Diminished Prophets*. On Saturday night, our weekend of events comes to a close with a performance of *melopoeia*, a stirring combination of music and poetry featuring poets Rhina Espaillat and Alfred Nicol and guitarist John Travano, cellist Roger Kimball and singer/guitarist Kate Sullivan, as well as special guest Charles Coe, jazz vocalist. Don't miss it!