

STANZA

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MAINE POETS SOCIETY

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 3

December 2023

A WINTER WORKSHOP WITH MPS PRESIDENT JENNY DOUGHTY

Winter Workshop: “Rhythm and Cadence in Free Verse”

Saturday, January 27, 2023

10:00 to 3:00 with a 45-minute break for lunch

Host and Workshop Presenter: MPS President, Jenny Doughty

Location: 31 Rustic Lane, Portland 04103

Limited to the first 8 members who ask to participate. Should you be granted a space and find yourself unable to attend, do make that known so that someone else can take part. Please arrive no earlier than 9:45 a.m.

NOTE: There are cats at this location

BRING: \$5 registration fee to cover expenses. A brown bag lunch, a notepad and pen, and poem(s) to share. Coffee/tea and water will be provided.

RSVP to Jenny at jennydoughty@icloud.com or 207-699-9243.

FORMAT: Maximum of 8 people

EMPHASIS: How rhythm and cadence work in free verse. In the morning session we will study various poems to look at this aspect of writing free verse poetry, and in the afternoon session we will share your own poems on which you would like feedback.

Members-Only “Reading in the Round” on Zoom

Saturday, February 17, 2024

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

A reminder will be sent sometime the week before and the Zoom link will be sent to all members a day or two before the reading. Those of us taking part in these events are finding them a really good way to get to know other members of the society as well as to hear the poets speak their own work in their own voices. If you haven’t tried it out yet, we hope you’ll consider doing so.

Mark Your Calendar! Meeting on May 18

Our spring in-person meeting will take place at Christ Episcopal Church in Gardiner on May 18. It will be a hybrid meeting so others can join us on Zoom. We’ll be using our own recently purchased OWL. Dennis Camire has agreed to be the judge for the contest and will offer a 45-minute workshop in the afternoon. Dennis is the author of the poetry collection *Combed by Crows* (Deerbrook Editions) and teaches writing at Central Maine Community College and at the University of Maine, Augusta. The former director of Maine Poetry Central, currently he curates the poetry column, In Verse: Maine Places and People, for *The Sun Journal*. Details about the members-only contest will be available in the Spring issue of the *Stanza*, which will reach you (as is our normal pattern) at least a full month before the April 18th contest submission deadline.

September 2023 CONTEST WINNERS

Contest: “Music”—Judge, Jim Mello

1st Prize— Alice Lee Timmins Finch Aria

I take the dirt road left
 along a margin of dusty Scrub Oaks
 and pleated beech leaves,
 A listening pace – soft even steps
 drumming the evening road.
 Out on a quivering branch,
 A yellow tuxedo in full finch view,
 his open furtive throat wiggling grace notes,
 scattering flecks of golden sound.
 His simple stanza flicks the sky,
 Nine notes rising
 quickening
 a descant popping aloft.

My toe barely scuffs the road.
 This careless puff
 sprays dozens of frenetic finches
 out of these beeches,
 A disarray of
 harps, strings, bows
 flinging up, fanning out
 stirring the air with a palpable
 trilling, trilling, trilling.

They re-assemble in mid-flight
 low over South Berwick powerlines,
 their allegro swerves under,
 then sky rolls over the wires.
 Finally the flock kites across the meadow.
 They choose a hefty white pine,
 well away from boots and roads,
 finches pour as one into the branches
 camouflaged, pine needles.
 A long rest note,
 Conspiratorial silence.

I steady my feet, tilt and cup my ear
 ’til faintly, softened by distance,
 There – a singular voice, that hypnotic scale,
 nine notes piping, ascending,
 A singular finch aria pierces the meadow.

Eventually, but not yet,
 the soft rhythm of my leather boots
 will accompany me home.

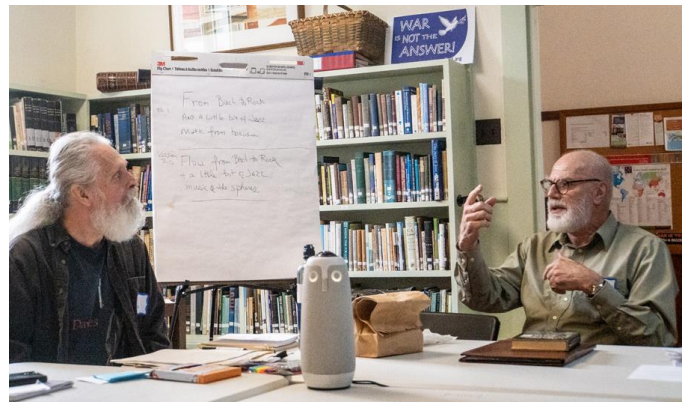
2nd Prize—Susan Van Alsenoy Fall Music

“Caw, haw,” cry the crows,
 “Swish, wish,” whispers wind
 swinging Autumn along
 singing leaves in her wake.

“Plop, ping,” drop the acorns,
 “Slap, lap,” sounds the brook,
 steaming summer along
 down the hill and into the sea.

“Hoo, who,” asks the owl,
 “Nibble, munch,” chomps the squirrel,
 chewing fodder furiously
 working winter’s cache.

“Honk, cronk,” intone geese,
 “Hi, bye,” sigh snowbirds
 seeking warmer places
 less harsh and less white.



3rd Prize—Sharon Bray**Foggy Morning Song***with a nod to Lawrence Ferlinghetti*

What did Dylan say and why did I believe him? Light of day arising barely glowing dim,

I hear guitar strings sing to the pale moon hanging down where leaves keep falling and the only crowd around zips along the wet road beside a lone man mowing under oak and maple trees, shredding their golden ground.

Rooster loud and raspy orders hens to their weedy yard beside empty fields where turkeys don't even eat tossed green tomatoes.

What can lovers write to remember days of Dylan a little short on rhyme while no wind is blowing?

I like toast and butter... I like toast with jam. Breakfast at Alice's restaurant: hold that peanut butter; bring on Dr. Pepper's band.

Simon fought Garfunkel. Bob Dylan won in the end, and not a breeze is stirring at my farm around the bend.

should I unrhyme? say farm down the road across a bridge over William Zan Zinger and his lonely rolling stones

I would not feel so all alone if boys had not thrown all those mossy stones.

Wind blows harder now, I must not write so fast. Slow down — got to make lined paper last...

**1st Honorable Mention—Timothy Barlow
Song**

*At the center of the candle lit hall
stood a man, hat in hand,
who began to sing a song lyric and heroic
threading words through the hushed quiet,
his storied voice wooing the candle wick to dance.
No mere rhymester or versifier,
this troubadour was poet and muse
offering tone and timbre
vivifying the journey of love, grief,
heartache and reckoning.
No whistle.
No fiddle.
No drum.
No bagpipe.
No tribal rhythms accompany the words wafting
round the room tugging at listening souls,
beckoning tears, tolling time
while words given voice shake the dust
from history's bones,
quivering the flame, a last time,
silence waiting.*

**2nd Honorable Mention—Pat Karpen
Do Mi Ti So Do Re Fa La**

Gipsy Kings. Pull down the shades. Lower the lights.
Body burning. Heart yearning.
Shake. Shimmy. Breathless. Kick. Spin. Alive. Sexy.

Up shades. World insane intrudes. Paganini.
Whispers. With me. Rescues me.
Fingers fly. Out-mads the mad. Damn, curse the world.

Fragile. Shaken. Mozart coos, soothes. Talks me down.
Crawl into his arms. Sip wine.
Curled like a cat. Content. Floating. Safe. Purring.

I unzip the case. "Stupid."
Cradle your child under my chin. "Disaster."
Tighten the bow. You chortle.
Rub rosin. You hiss. "Too much."
Begin practice. "Never play."

Laughter bursts.
Spatters notes.
Clings to face.

I am denied entrance to your secret world.
You offer foreplay only.

La danse macabre echoes and Saint-Saëns snorts.
Gatekeepers. All on your side.

3rd Honorable Mention—Sally Joy My Mistake

They were advertised as “kiddie records”
and my son was two years old.
I bought a couple, thinking he would like them.

I put the first one on the record player
and briefly left the room.
Came back to find him staring at the stereo,
tears streaming down his cheeks.

Coming from the machine was
a female voice, a simple tune, and the words:
“Puppy dog, puppy dog, what did you do?
Went to your closet and chewed up your shoe.”

His reaction took me by surprise.
“What’s wrong, honey?” I asked.
He shook his head “no”
and wailed: “Want Bay-Toe!”

I didn’t grow up with classical music
and seldom choose it for my listening pleasure,
but I’d read to play it frequently when expecting
might be beneficial to the coming child.
I played a few selections from my husband’s records
almost daily in the months before our son was born.

I played them for the baby and for the toddler he
became,
naming the composer each time I lowered the needle
though I only knew whose work was whose
because I’d read it on the label:
Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, Bach.

What he heard from the stereo that day
was not music to his ears.
With just two words he let me know,
he really wanted “Bay-Toe.”

4th Honorable Mention—Dean Abby Mindfully

Water falling over beaver dam plays a soothing summer song.
Gray skies sharpen images on a liquid palette.
Cool morning’s stillness awaits the coming storm.
Sounds and sights that silhouette a solitary snapshot for our
senses.

Moments meander as my mind mingles with the mesmerizing
merriment.
Mindful of such experiences expand the everyday and accentuate
the extraordinary.



National Federation of State Poetry Societies offers opportunities for Maine Poets

NFSPS conducts poetry contests in the spring of each year.
Their web site lists 50 contests nationwide. As noted in this
issue’s “President’s Ink,” as a member of Maine Poets Society,
you may enter any of these contests including the ones for
“members only.” Some have themes, such as “borders, real or
imagined,” and others specify certain forms, like “prose poems”
or “ballade.” There are cash awards ranging from \$20 to \$200.

You can enter using the Submittable platform, or by mail.
Entries must be postmarked no later than March 15, 2024.

Make sure you review the contest rules before entering.
https://www.nfsps.com/poetry_contests.htm

We hope you’re inspired by this benefit of MPS membership.

Is the cost-of-living crisis hitting you?

At the annual meeting this fall, the Maine Poets Society board voted to underwrite membership for those who may find joining MPS to be cost prohibitive. Because we value the engagement of Maine poets of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, we decided to offer a waiver of annual dues for those who are facing financial hardship. It is our hope that no writer need forego MPS membership only because they can't afford it. The waiver is good for one annual membership. A recipient may reapply when membership renewal is scheduled. Current members or prospective members may apply at any time during the calendar year. It's not necessary to provide a reason for applying, but if you wish to provide a very short statement of need, you may. Names of applicants and recipients will be held in confidence by the Society. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity when needed. Email our treasurer at netmotel@gmail.com for more information.

An Opportunity to Be More Fully Involved in the Maine Poets Society

Would you like to be more engaged with Maine's poetry community? We invite you to take the next step by joining the Maine Poets Society board.

As an MPS board member, you'll be able to become better acquainted with other writers; assist with activities like contests, readings, and gatherings; and help generate ideas about outreach and programming.

Like all other state poetry societies, the Maine Poets Society relies on the work of volunteers to keep things running smoothly and provide a focus and a forum for the many poets around our state. That's even more important in Maine, where poets can feel separated by geography. The board enjoys working together to help bring other poets together.

We'll be looking for a treasurer and a vice president in the near future, so we'd especially welcome a volunteer with bookkeeping skills and a volunteer familiar with technology (for our hybrid meetings). A willingness to organize member contests would be a plus.

Our board is fairly informal; our shared responsibilities occur regularly but are not too time-consuming. As a board member, you'd be expected to attend about four in-person meetings a year and provide input for our promotions and publications on an ongoing basis. You'd also have an opportunity to assist with administering the Maine Prize Poem Contest in spring.

Please consider becoming a member of the MPS board!

Report on the use of an Opportunity Grant

Carol Bachofner was awarded an Opportunity Grant which she was able to use in August of 2023. She tells us it was helpful as part of transportation costs to the manuscript conference in Burlington VT. Thanks to the hard work done in that conference/workshop, her new book is finally finished and out to the readers for comments, blurbs, and foreword. So far, she says, comments have been positive, everything from "brave" to "gorgeous" to "this is needed in the world." Now to find a publisher.

A Judge's Perspective

From our fall members-only contest

How do contest judges evaluate poems? In September, our members-only contest judge, Jim Mello, read aloud—with feeling and sensitivity—the submissions of all those at the meeting. He also provided generous and helpful comments. They provide several touchstones for us to consider in polishing our work. Certainly, every judge has a unique perspective and set of criteria. And it's unlikely that any *one* poem would be a vehicle for all of these qualities! But they're useful reminders.

Jim noticed and appreciated:

- the hook of a personal story.
- alertness to the music of nature; the power of a “seasonal” quality.
- use of alliteration.
- the reversal of cliché—a knowing use of cliché.
- specifics! Including “local color.”
- awareness of history and word origins. And in relation to this contest's theme (music): effective use of others' song lyrics.
- an inner monologue that helps readers identify with the poem's speaker.
- the poet's awareness of the visual—how the poem looks on the page: “look at the paper as a canvas.”
- a central image that ties stanzas together.
- musicality in language.
- unusual juxtapositions.
- awareness of form: how the number of lines, or other structure, relates to the content of the poem.
- introduction of vocabulary that “stretches the reader a little bit.”

We hope you'll consider entering our next members-only contest!

— Jeanne Julian, MPS Secretary

Recent Purchase of “OWL” System Will Enhance Hybrid Meeting Experience

Our spring in-person meeting will take place at Christ Episcopal Church in Gardiner on May 18. It will be a hybrid meeting so others can join us on Zoom. We'll be using our own recently purchased OWL. Dennis Camire has agreed to be the judge for the contest and will offer a 45-minute workshop in the afternoon. Dennis is the author of the poetry collection *Combed by Crows* (Deerbrook Editions) and teaches writing at Central Maine Community College and at the University of Maine, Augusta. The former director of Maine Poetry Central, currently he curates the poetry column, *In Verse: Maine Places and People*, for *The Sun Journal*. Details about the members-only contest will be available in the Spring issue of the *Stanza*, which will reach you (as is our normal pattern) at least a full month before the April 18th contest submission deadline.

Good Writing,
Gus Peterson, Vice President

Publication & Member News

Poems

Nancy Sobanik's entry "Falling Birds" was awarded 2nd place, and she read at the Belfast Poetry Festival's Maine Postmark Poetry Contest. "Garlic" was published September 4, 2023 by Silver Birch Press in its Spice and Seasonings poetry series. Three poems, "Coconut," "Listening at Dusk," and "Swift Current," appeared in the November issue of *Verse-Virtual*. *Sparks of Calliope* nominated her poem "Pilgrimage" for Best of the Net 2023 and for a Pushcart Prize 2024. Two poems, "September" and "Morning," were accepted for publication in the upcoming *Frost Meadow Review Vol. 12*. She was a top-ten finalist in Seneca Park Zoo's "Poetry Takes Wing—Nature Poetry Contest" for her poem "The Red-Tailed Hawk."

Robert Paul Allen's three poems, "Insurrection," "Strange Fruit Revisited 2023," and "Unmasked," will appear in the June 2024 issue of *Children, Churches, and Daddies*. "Check the Box Marked Other" and "An Inside View" will appear in the July issue. His poem "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" will appear in the winter issue of *Frost Meadow Review*.

Richard Foerster's three poems, one of which received Honorable Mention in the 2023 Maine Poets Society Prize Poem Contest, can be found in the current issue of *Hole in the Head Review* (<https://www.holeintheheadreview.com/post/richard-foerster-2>). And the recently published *Ten Piscataqua Writers 2024: An Anthology from the Watershed* (tenpiscataqua.com) features a chapter entitled "The Birder," which is a selection of poems about birds drawn from Richard's various books.

Dr. Emory D. Jones has six poems in *The Weekly Avocet* #572 (November 2023), including "Dancing Autumn: An Etheree," "Autumn Vees" (a triolet), "Leaf Ballet" (a free verse poem); and three haiku: "Autumn breeze touched...", "On the pale blue sky...", and "Trees stretch twig fingers."

Gus Peterson's "Therapy Poem" was accepted for the upcoming issue of *Frost Meadow Review*. His poem "That's Right" appeared online this past October in *One Art*. A debut full-length collection, *Male Pattern*, will be published by Finishing Line Press in 2025.

Anne Rankin's poem "Pattern of Barely" was a finalist in this year's Belfast Poetry Festival, and "The winter I descended" was published by *Whale Road Review* in its winter 2023 issue (<https://www.whaleroadreview.com/issue-33/>).

Books

Reviews of Richard Foerster's new book, *With Little Light and Sometimes None at All* (littoralbooks.com) can be found at <https://www.holeintheheadreview.com/post/a-review-of-with-little-light-and-sometimes-none-at-all-by-richard-foerster>; and in recent editions of *The Boston Globe* and *The Kennebec Journal*.

Other Member News

Jeri Theriault was interviewed for Episode #17 of the Franco-American Pathways (University of Southern Maine Franco-American Collection). Here is a link to the podcast: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/francopathways/episodes/Episode-17-Self-Portrait-As-Homestead-with-Jeri-Theriault-e2b8hch>

Dr. Emory D. Jones, who recently joined MPS, is a retired English teacher who lives in Iuka, MS. In response to our invitation for "Publication & Member News," he sent more than a full page listing just his successes in 2023. He entered a number of State Poetry Society Contests (not just those in the NFSPS brochure). His work was selected for numerous honorable mentions and placed in several contests, placement ranging from 1st to 10th place. We welcome him as a member of the Maine Poets Society.



President's Ink December 2023

End of the year already? Where did that time go?

I have done far less than I intended to do this year, having run out of energy and had family issues to deal with at various points. I guess this applies to many of us when life puts a spanner in our creative works. So how do we get out of a dry spell?

First, I think we need to accept that for many of us spells of dryness are normal. As long as you can click back into writing when you want to, a dry streak is no big deal.

Second, I think we need to give ourselves opportunities to break it. One way of doing that is to enter not just our MPS members-only contests but those offered by our fellow state poetry societies through the NFSPS, of which we are all members if we belong to MPS. There are many online resources where you can find contests to enter – and not all of them are in the USA. Submittable makes it possible to enter contests in other countries too. Facebook has a regularly-updated page showing available contests to enter, so even if you don't want to maintain a Facebook page, it's possible to go and look at the possibilities there.

Another way is to carry a small notebook in your pocket or purse and jot down anything interesting that you see or a line or phrase you like that crosses your mind. Set aside a specific time in your busy week when you can review that notebook, and the contest possibilities, and see if anything there sparks your creative juices.

You can also buddy up with another poet, either as part of a writing group or just the two of you. There's nothing so motivating as having to produce something to a time limit!

Finally, I think the biggest help to getting out of a dry spell is dealing with the imposter syndrome. The imposter syndrome causes people to doubt their skills and accomplishments. Sometimes it comes from growing up in a family that only prizes actual achievement rather than effort ("I'm not really a poet if I've never had a poem published"). Sometimes it comes from being in a group where your presence is only valued by achievement ("I've never placed in a contest").

I hope that this doesn't apply to MPS members. One of the reasons why we read out all the contest entries at our meetings is that we want to hear you, your voice, your poem. We all need technical feedback sometimes, however well-published we are. That kind of teaching helps us grow as poets rather than knocks us down. But your voice is your voice whether the judge at that particular contest placed you among the winners or not. A different judge on a different day might have decided differently. Your contribution is valuable and valued.

I wish all of you a warm and cozy holiday season, and my best wishes for 2024. I will try to take my own advice.

Jenny

"You can find poetry in your everyday life, your memory, in what people say on the bus, in the news, or just what's in your heart."
 ~ Carol Ann Duffy

STANZA, Maine Poets Society
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Augusta, ME 04330

FIRST CLASS

Stanza is the tri-annual
newsletter of the
Maine Poets Society
promoting good poetry
since 1936

FMI or to join, write
John Seksay
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Augusta, ME 04330

Board Members

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Dr. Jim Brosnan, Board Member at-large, opmewriter@gmail.com

Webmaster, Lisa Montagna LMontagna@apitechnology.com

MPS website (MainePoetsSociety.com)

MPS Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1747588905507733/>. When you indicate an interest in joining the group, Jenny or Jeanne (as Administrators) will be able to confirm your request. You can also search within Facebook for Maine Poets Society. Choose the option that says “public group.”