

New Hampshire Book Festival Will Explore Poetry AND Politics

POETRY AND POLITICS is the theme of the first **New Hampshire Book Festival**, to be held October 9–23 and sponsored by the New Hampshire Writers' Project. NHWP will be working with several partners in Concord on book events and festival projects.

The festival includes a gathering of **state poets laureate** at a poetry conference in Concord and at free readings across New Hampshire, and a **journalism event** focused on the New Hampshire presidential primary. In addition, NHWP is inviting **presidential candidates** to recite a favorite poem at a venue of their choosing.

This first **New Hampshire Book Festival** will begin on Sunday, October 9, with **Writers in the Spotlight**, the **Gibson's Bookstore/Capitol Center for the Arts** partner series. The featured writer will be **Dava Sobel**, author of *Longitude* and *Galileo's Daughter*. Sobel has recently been ranked number 1 in *Publishers Weekly's* "**Top 10 Science**" books, for *A More Perfect Heaven: How Copernicus Revolutionized the Cosmos*.

The **state poets laureate** will arrive in New Hampshire on Thursday, October 13, and read throughout the state on Friday, October 14. The **free readings** will follow the format of the 2003 Poetry AND Politics event sponsored by NHWP. A local high school student who participated in this year's **Poetry Out Loud** program will recite a classic poem and will then be followed by two New Hampshire poets reading original work. One of the state poets laureate visiting from across the country will conclude the program with a reading of his or her work.

On Saturday, October 15, the state poets will gather at the **New Hampshire Technical Institute** in Concord for **Poetry AND Politics**, a daylong conference hosted by New Hampshire State Poet Laureate **Walter E. Butts**. The poets will examine the political aspects of their work in such areas as environment and politics.

On Thursday, October 13, **Concord Reads** will host **Warren St. John**, author of *Outcast United: An American Town, A Refugee Team and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference*, for a book discussion. On Sunday, October 23, Concord Reads

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Pulitzer Winner Kay Ryan Comes to New Hampshire

Mark Your Calendars for October 23

A FEW WEEKS before Kay Ryan won this year's Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, Wesley McNair chose her as the second recipient of the Donald Hall–Jane Kenyon Prize in American Poetry. Through this happy coincidence, New Hampshire poetry lovers will have a chance to meet and hear the reigning Pulitzer winner when Ryan comes to Concord for a public interview and reading on October 23.

The award, created last year to honor Hall, the Wilmot poet, and Kenyon, his late wife and a fine poet in her own right, is cosponsored by the New Hampshire Writers' Project and the *Concord Monitor* through a fund created after Kenyon's death in 1995. The winner receives \$5,000. At Hall's request, McNair, a Maine poet with roots in New Hampshire, makes the choice each year. Last year's winner was Ted Kooser.



Kay Ryan

photo by Don J. Usner

In Ryan, McNair has selected a poet whose poems look small on the page but expand in the mind of the reader. He calls her "a poet of speculation, each poem caught in the act of thinking." She sometimes begins with a familiar image that, upon closer inspection, turns unsettling or even troubling. Or she might start with a weird hypothesis and draw it out or test it in unpredictable ways. "Skepticism and doubt are her constant allies," McNair said.

Several years ago, Hall served on the committee that gave Ryan the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize. "Whatever she does, she surprises me," he said in an interview. "I never know what the hell she is going to do next. I love the way the poem moves down the page, with unexpected and delightful rhymes, with a kinky intelligence that hides itself and leaps on you."

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From the Editor

AS AN EDITOR, I'm blessed, issue after issue, with the work of **accomplished writers** who volunteer to share their professional insights and experiences with our NHWP community. I'm also blessed with amazing **feature editors and columnists, committee members, and production team.** My thanks to you all—and to **you, our readers.** I welcome your feedback on what you'd like to see in upcoming issues. You can contact me at editor@nhwritersproject.org.

Special thanks to **Alex Cohn** for his help in tracking down a terrific photo of Kay Ryan and to **Kathryn Barcos** of the Steven Barclay Agency for providing us with the JPEG.

All my best,
Martha

The New Hampshire Book Festival

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will sponsor **an afternoon of soccer** at **Bishop Brady High School**, followed by a potluck with an international flair.

Also on October 13, the **Capitol Center** will offer two events with **Taylor Mali**, one of the best-known poets to have emerged from the poetry slam movement. In the morning, students can attend a **workshop on creative writing, poetry, and self-expression** at Bow High School. In the evening, Mali will perform at the **Spotlight Café at the Capitol Center.** Mali is one of the original SlamNation poets and has appeared on the HBO series *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry*.

Throughout the festival, downtown Concord businesses will be displaying poems on their windows by the visiting poets laureate. The **"poetry on windows" project** is coordinated by **Sarah Chaffee** of **McGowan Fine Art** in Concord. In addition, Concord partners have scheduled **panel discussions, movies, readings, the launch party for *Live Free and Die, Die, Die*, and *Literary Flash***, an original fiction competition by regional authors.

The book festival will conclude on Sunday, October 23, with the presentation of the **Donald Hall–Jane Kenyon Prize in American Poetry.** Former U.S. poet laureate **Kay Ryan** will receive the second annual award, which carries a \$5,000 prize, and will read her poems. (See Mike Pride's profile of Ryan, page 1)

The prize is cosponsored by the New Hampshire Writers' Project and the *Concord Monitor* through a fund originally established in Kenyon's memory. Donations may be made to the Donald Hall–Jane Kenyon Poetry Prize Fund, c/o New Hampshire Writers' Project, 2500 North River Rd., Manchester, NH 03196.

Cosponsors of the New Hampshire Book Festival include **Lincoln Financial Foundation** and the **New Hampshire State Council on the Arts.**

Further details and registration information will be forthcoming in news releases, at the NHWP website (nhwritersproject.org), and on Facebook (at The New Hampshire Writers' Project page). Those interested in being a part of the event, as a reader or volunteer, may contact NHWP executive director George Geers at ggeers@nhwritersproject.org or (603) 314-7980.

The theme of next year's New Hampshire Book Festival will be "Murder in New Hampshire."

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NHWP is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster the literary arts
community in the Granite State. Its goals are to serve as a resource for and about
New Hampshire writers; to support the development of individual writers; and
to encourage an audience for literature in New Hampshire.

We publish nonfiction articles on writing and publishing, notices from editors
and publishers requesting manuscripts, a calendar of readings and literary
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Sangha, or the Need to Connect with Other Writers

by Anne Waldman, transcribed by Dawn Coutu

Anne Waldman taught The Poem-in-Performance, a concentrated study session at the MFA Program in Poetry 2011 winter residency at New England College. Her son, musician and composer Ambrose Bye, helped her prepare and record students' work.

THE SANSKRIT word *sangha* describes a like-mindedness of practice and intention, similar to how a community of writers may manifest as a spiritual community. As writers, you are on the same path; you know the vicissitudes and demands of the writing vow. You struggle to communicate, to publish, to maintain the intellectual discourse, and to move the work forward. You struggle for your creative zone, both private and public.

We may, and often, connect now with writers all over the world through the Internet, but the person-to-person contact is also important and salutary. The advantage of meeting people in a program, such as the poetry MFA at NEC, opens a conversation that can continue through correspondence. This connection with like-minded people is so useful, whether that person is in China or New Hampshire. It is just as important, especially with groups like the Writers' Project, that you get together to share your work and connect and recharge your synapses.

While I was still in college, I heard not only Robert Lowell and Marianne Moore read but also Denise Levertov, Allen Ginsberg, Charles Olson, and Frank O'Hara, pioneers in the New American poetry. This influenced me to travel to the Berkeley Poetry Conference in 1965 and costart *Angel Hair Magazine*, which led to correspondence with other writers, which resulted in work at the Poetry Project at St. Mark's.

St. Mark's Church in New York provided a meeting ground for a huge mandala of events, from jazz festivals and a soup kitchen run by the Black Panthers to a lecture series for Frank Lloyd Wright, among others. Later, St. Mark's served

as a home to the Poetry Project, where I served as director, working there [for] nearly a decade. My living room in the East Village in New York City also became a salon for poetry. These church spaces, like the Judson Church for dance and "happenings," provided free space and were a huge help in building community at the time. St. Mark's allowed all these people to exist without academic restrictions and lent itself to a new experimental poetic infrastructure, which I later built on for the Kerouac School project in Colorado.

Through the existence of such places, we create *sangha*, or community. William Carlos Williams spoke of the poet's duty to move the art of poetry forward a few inches. It may not sound like much, but this movement may be momentous and inspiring to others. The stimulation you get from listening to people talk about a book you need to read or contemporary poetics is important. A great exchange may go on for decades, beyond the intuitions themselves. At the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poets, there is tremendous mutual support and struggle to "keep it going," and "to keep the world safe for poetry." We need this kind of structure, or this kind of common ground. A non-competitive arena, like those listed above, helps develop a long lifeline for the work.

Newly appointed as a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, Anne Waldman is one of the cofounders of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poets at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. Her modern epic, The Iovis Trilogy: Colors in the Mechanism of Concealment, has recently been published by Coffee House Press. She is the coeditor of Civil Disobediences: Poetics and Politics in Action and Beats at Naropa and the author of Manatee/ Humanity. Fast Speaking Music has released The Milk of Universal Kindness, a collaborative CD of Waldman and Ambrose Bye.

Poet Dawn Coutu is marketing coordinator at NHWP and a student of the New England College MFA program.



Anne Waldman

photo by Kai Sibley

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