

APRIL 13-15, 2023

kalamazoopoetryfestival.com





The Kalamazoo Poetry Festival would not be possible with the generous support of many individual donors and these major supporters





















Welcome to the 2023 Kalamazoo Poetry Festival

Our theme this year - to commemorate our ten-year anniversary — is The Garden. Sometimes it takes many seasons before the fruits of our labor become clear. For example, it can take three to six years for an apple tree to bear fruit, and even longer for a cherry tree. The same is true for writing. Very few of us can sit down and plant a poem on the page right in front of us. There are weeds and pests to contend with as well as making sure there is sun on the best stanzas and rain on the lines that need growth.

Thank you to our small and powerful board of directors for putting together this year's festival. Thank you to the board members

and volunteers who came before us, leaving us fertile ground to work with. This year's harvest is bigger than usual, as it marks the 10 year anniversary of the Kalamazoo Poetry Festival. We chose to bring three nationally renowned poets this time, Traci Brimhall, Hala Alvan, and Kaveh Akbar, Since the beginning, the festival has strived to ensure very voice is heard.

We hope you enjoy all the fruit and flowers we offer during this festival. Some of what you see was planted many years ago. And we hope more seeds are planted tonight.

- Kaitlin Martin, Board President

We envision a community where every voice is heard. Our mission is to connect people through the power of poetry. We are an anti-racism and anti-bigotry organization.



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GUEST POETS FROM PAST FESTIVALS

Aracelis Girmay (2014) Ilya Kaminsky (2014) Jamal May (2016) Natalie Diaz (2016) Diane Seuss (2017)

Sally Wen Mao (2019) Sierra Freeman (2019) Patricia Smith (2021) Danez Smith (2021)



Air Poetry has become a Kalamazoo Poetry Festival event that the community has come to look forward to each year.





Thank you for joining us at these free events. Masks are required at all inperson events, and will be made available to anyone who needs one. All events will take place at the First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan, downtown Kalamazoo. (Except for the Broadsides workshop, which is at Kalamazoo Book Arts Center, 326 W. Kalamazoo Ave.)



THURSDAY, APRIL 13

(All events are in Kalamazoo)

3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Workshop: Broadsides - What have you got to say?

6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Workshop: Black Visual Culture and Womanist Aesthetics (ZOOM)

Workshop: The Tree of Life (ZOOM)

Workshop: Order & Disorder in the Garden (ZOOM)



FRIDAY, APRIL 14

6:00 p.m.

Celebration of Community Poets

Emceed by Ed Genesis and Allison Sonny Kennedy, with special video guest, Diane Seuss Music by Basic Comfort

8:00 p.m.

Your Turn Open Mic

Emceed by Masaki Takahashi, sponsored by WMUK

4/15

SATURDAY, APRIL 15

10:00 a.m.

Workshop: The Body Electric - Pleasure and Pain in Poetry

Workshop: Roses in Concrete

12:00 p.m.

Workshop: Mining the Poetic Unconscious

Workshop: Planting Words of Hope

Workshop: The Wild and Wonderful World of Weeds

2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Craft Talk

Gail Martin leads a discussion with Hala Alyan, Kaveh Akbar, and Traci Brimhall.

6:00 p.m.

Festival Finale

With guest readers Hala Alyan, Kaveh Akbar, and Traci Brimhall.



Woodward Elementary 4th graders wrote a poem for the 2018 Kalamazoo Poetry Festival and the young poets also took to the stage..



Guest poets for the first Kalamazoo Poetry Festival in 2016, Jamal May and Natalie Diaz, were entertaining and enlightening.



EVENTDETAILS



THURSDAY, APRIL 13

Workshops

Kalamazoo Poetry Festival is proud to offer the following workshops. All workshops are free and are limited to 12 attendees.

3:30 - 5:00 p.m. - Broadsides - What Have You Got To Say?

Kalamazoo Book Arts Center, 326 W. Kalamazoo Ave. Led by Kalamazoo Books Arts Center

This event is for: Youth - Suitable for Middle School or High School Students

Historically a broadside was used as street literature or an advertisement and then quickly thrown away. Today, broadsides are considered an art form often framed and displayed. In this workshop students will create their own broadside featuring their poetry and images that support those words. This workshop requires that participants arrive at the KBAC with their poem printed on one sheet of paper to be ready for illustration. Imagery will be achieved by carving stamps and hand printing a unique patterned border for the broadside.

The Kalamazoo Book Arts Center practices, teaches, and some arts of the book: papermaking, printmaking, letterpress, bookbinding, and creative writing, through preserving and employing traditional technologies and combining them with contemporary ideas and techniques to reinvigorate the collaborative arts of the book. In the past 16 years, we have reached thousands of kids and adults through our programming and poetry readings. Take a look at what we offer the Kalamazoo community at kalbookarts. org.

6:30 - 8:00 p.m. - Black Visual Culture and Womanist Aesthetics - ZOOM Led by B Carrie-Yvonne

This event is for: No Performing, and/or Publishing Experience Needed

Veronica Chambers writes, "It became a metaphor for rooting myself and my work in the long history of Blackwomen activism, creativity, and the art of manufacturing possibility in the cracks between race, gender, and class that others ascribed to you." This workshop explores the defining characteristics of womanism and Black liberatory imagination. We will draw parallels between the text In Search of Our Mothers Garden by Alice Walker and visual artworks. By using the text as a prompt we will form prose drafts. Featured works include Afronauts (2014), directed by Nuotama Bodomo, Arieanne Evans film

series In Remembrance (2021-), and Always Mine (2021) by surrealist figurative painter Obi Emmanuel Agwam.



Marked by footnotes, *B Carrie-Yvonne's* creative interest lies in the intersections of Black Southern space-time, memory work, and archival documentation. This practice

of theirs relies on poetry, film photography, and music as technology. They are also the founder of Somatic Birthing Studio, where they facilitate reading and poetry workshops to explore personal narratives across the spectrum of parenthood.

6:30 - 8:00 p.m. - The Tree of Life - ZOOM

Led by Tanisha Pyron

This event is for: Women. Trauma Survivors. Families

All the set-backs and patterns that once held you captive as a writer and hindered growth and healing, will remarkably and compassionately bring you into the light of your powerful voice. You have been through the darkest reaches in life, walking in and out of the struggle, yet miraculously surfacing with astonishing resilience. Whether or not your mind can accurately recall the details of this sacred journey, your body and soul remember and have saved every nuance of each experience to inform your writing. Every memory rests safely within your being, along with the

initial feelings birthed around each event. Poetry longs to connect with your most private realizations and inspirations using a unique language only you can supply.



Tanisha Pyron is a classically trained performer with a masters of fine arts in theater performance. A 10 year veteran feature poet, she

recently published her first volume of poetry *BLACK POOL OF GENIUS VOLUME I.* She is also a viral artist with features on *AfroPunk* and *For Harriet.*

6:30 - 8:00 p.m. - Order & Disorder in the Garden - ZOOM

Led by Amy Sailer

This event is for: High School or Adult Writers No Previous Publishing Experience Necessary

The garden is a dream of order within disorder. Perhaps for this reason, poets have used the garden as a political meditation, an example or counterexample when they want to critique a sense of disorder in their own societies. This workshop looks at gardening poems as a political genre, where we read Ben Jonson's "To Penshurst" alongside more contemporary gardening poems like Jericho Brown's Foreday in the Morning and excerpts from Jamaica Kincaid's My Garden Book to see how poets reflect and channel cultural and political anxieties through representations of their gardens.



Aracelis Girmay and Ilya Kaminsky, guest poets for the first Kalamazoo Poetry Festival in 2014, shared their insights at a craft talk.

We end with a writing exercise that invites the participants to imagine their own gardens as small utopias.



A former resident of Kalamazoo, *Amy Sailer* now lives in Salt Lake City, where she is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Utah and a

teacher at Interlochen Summer Arts Camp. Her poetry can be found in Cincinnati Review, Quarterly West, New South, Meridian, and Sycamore Review, where it won the 2020 Wabash Poetry Prize.



The Kalamazoo Book Arts Center hosted students in 2018 as they explored how to craft found poetry, printed their poems, and the presented them on video.





FRIDAY, APRIL 14

6:00 p.m. - Celebration of Community Poets

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo)

The evening will include poets from across the community. Some will represent groups active in the community, some are from various writing collaboratives across Kalamazoo, and others represent themselves.



Artist, musician, entrepreneur, community leader and organizer *Ed Genesis* will emcee the Friday evening of in person readings that will

follow the popular format fans have come to appreciate during previous Kalamazoo Poetry Festivals.



Allison Sonny Kennedy, a former Kalamazoo Poetry Festival board member and executive director of FIRE Arts Collaborative, now an

entrepreneur. She says she is a grateful Kalamazooan of over ten years who led Fire Historical & Cultural Arts Collaborative for over five years, has organized multiple poetry collective events, and facilitates justice training in local institutions with Freedom Lifted. She also runs the creative design LLC, Sonnyside.



A reading by poets from across Kalamazoo.
Invited poets include:



Kathy McGookey
Marissa Harrington
Jen Clark
Tanisha Pyron
Rachel Alarcio
Connor Wilger
Yolanda Delfierce
Kathy Rabers
Jeffery Angeles
Tanisha Pyron and Marissa Harrington
Denise Miller
Alex Hoyle
Friends of Poetry
Diane Seuss

This year's Celebration features a wide variety of performances from locals poets, a musical set by Basic Comfort, a community poem, and a guest reading from Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Diane Seuss.





Diane Seuss is the author of the poetry collections Frank: Sonnets (2021), winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award; Still Life with Two Dead Peacocks and a Girl (2018); Four-Legged Girl (2015),

finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; Wolf Lake, White Gown Blown Open (2010), winner of the 2009 Juniper Prize for Poetry; and It Blows You Hollow (1998). Her work has appeared in Poetry, the Georgia Review, Brevity, Able Muse, Valparaiso Poetry Review, and the Missouri Review, as well as The Best American Poetry 2014. She was the MacLean Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of English at Colorado College in 2012, and she taught at Kalamazoo College from 1988-2016. Seuss earned a BA from Kalamazoo College and an MSW from Western Michigan University.



Basic Comfort is Kalamazoo's Alternative Bedroom Pop band. Led by Tony Mitchell, the group Basic Comfort

has had a rolling cast of faces until solidifying the current cast of members in 2019. Debuting their new matured sound in 2020 with their single "Drift," the group

takes inspiration from artists like Daniel Caesar, Parcels, Gil Scott Heron, and Daft Punk, Basic Comfort approaches their music writing from more of a personal perspective, letting the grooving music juxtapose therapeutic lyrics. They believe that music is healing, and with each release, they hope to give people a sonic space to connect with themselves and be their most present. Basic Comfort is more than just a band or catalog of music—they are a perspective in growth. Basic Comfort is also known for their work on season 10 of the "Something Was Wrong" Podcasts. The group reworked the show's theme song "U Think U," initially written by Glad Rags.



The Kalamazoo Poetry Festival sponsored an event that would be the inspiration for the 2023 community poem. *Dream Scene Placemaking* collaborated with KPF to create artwork by mem-

bers of the community around the theme of "The Garden," which was provided to poets from the Friends of Poetry, and they wrote an ekphrastic poem inspired by the artwork. Dream Scene Placemaking is the Kalamazoo-based, husband and wife team of Anna Lee Roeder and Erik Vasilauskas. Dream Scene offers painting and public art project support throughout West Michigan and worldwide. They are passionate about creating shared community experiences in public space. Bringing together the backgrounds of commercial painting and visual art, Dream Scene Placemaking creates colorful transformations of space. They also facilitate community projects that bring together youth and residents to participate in public art.



Diane Seuss was the guest poet in 2017 as the festival was making changes to its schedule.

Kalamazoo Draws

We drew together in an Edison neighborhood dance studio under the bright breath of a February sun to bunch blooms into sculpturekaleidoscope of dahlia and daisy.

We huddled shoulder-to-shoulder, wielding scissors and glue sticks, to dream of spring seeds, once sown, stretching into words and verses, a collage of voices rising from the pagepatient petals unfolding, morning glories at first light.

All ages drew together as adults reacquainted with crayons and children stepped up to the mic, a community quiet enough to make space for the wisdom of youth and the whimsy of age.

The one I remember was by a little girl who wrote a poem about not having anything to write about, and there was the poem: a miracle!

We drew together visions of our gardens in all seasons. We lay our artwork on the floor, creating another garden, the one that wraps around the room tonight. Where we have drawn together.

I'll see you at the Fairgrounds I'll see you at Wings Stadium I'll see you at Arcadia

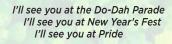
In winter, Kalamazoo dreams of thaw, sunshine smiles and honey, golden wet webs collecting minuscule drops of dew, golden flickers against the dark- sun spark, returning to find Kalamazoo, lost in a labyrinth of bloom.

Underwater is a womb with an indigo embryo, one eye visible from the side, cells divide. Above, a girl in a red sweatshirt collects the sun in a jar along Oakland drive. The sky, robin egg blue.

Cumulus clouds briefly catch on treetops. Over everything a holy red presence, a rooster with a multi-colored comb, watching all with its large green eye, unblinking.

Collaboration by

FRIENDS OF POETRY



It will be crazy for a while when one-way streets become two-way, but it's already crazy out here. We don't want to be the town with one-way streets, where you have to go where you don't want to to get where you do.

As a way to travel, it's historical as our brick streets. Rose Street, Black Lives Matter street, once one-way, is now a two-way street, which seems like progress. Some of you will travel it tonight and some travelled it to get here, where we have drawn together.

We travel down the charcoal road of one drawing to the Meijer parking lot and circle a poem of men in snowbanks—their torsos bare and chiseled-distracting from the grunge of day.

Drawn together, we hold many hands over this poem fired by imagination, warming ourselves as Kalamazoo dreams, one yellow flower dreaming hundreds of its kind.

I'll see you at the Farmer's Market I'll see you at Kleinstuck I'll see you at Asylum Lake

A wolf spider mends her broken web, heavy with jeweled water. She waits for the next tremble in her feet. secrets herself in a corner.

Millipedes wriggle, soundless worms push through, beetles begin their long ascent toward the sun near the bank of a small, choppy lake. Kalamazoo is dreaming a hummingbird's dream of juicy honeysuckle, a night owl's dream of midnight voles, a deer's dream of late-season tomato vines.

In November when the garden is done harvested or left to compost, we open the gate and let the deer in to graze on leftovers. They nap in the oregano and munch sage into winter.

When we take back the garden in April, the deer are busy birthing. Sitting time is done. Time for all things growing.

I'll see you at the Air Zoo I'll see you at Michigan News I'll see you at Studio Grill

In Kalamazoo, cacti burn and the one with the thumb is trying to hitch a ride to where anemone and blue stars bloom; petals don't fall, but shoot like rockets beneath their shallow roots.

They wait along Westnedge for someone brave enough to pick up prickly passengers, sharing this succulent dream in which ranunculus the color of smoked salmon swim within seven layers of soil. Kalamazoo dreams tangerine roses,

lilac chrysanthemums, lemon and lime. pale pink and magenta dripped like wax droplets on snow, and violet skies of never-ending stars, all the way to the stony surface of the moon.

I'll see you in all your human glory: crossing the street. shopping, bending to weed your garden. I'll see you in this community where we live and grow together.





Friday, April 14 Events > Continued

8:00 p.m. - Your Turn Open Mic with Emcee Masaki Takahashi

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo)



Masaki Takahashi, the Poet Laureate of Lansing, grew up in the Lansing area, an alumnus of Okemos Public Schools, Michigan State

University, Lansing Community College, and Davenport University. He is the founder and host of The Poetry Room Open Mic. a popular and dynamic spoken word series established in 2017 at The Robin Theatre in Lansing's REO Town. Now a 501 3C non-profit, The Poetry Room hosts a variety of events both inperson and online and features locally and nationally beloved poets, while also raising money for local non-profits. In

addition, Masaki has presented numerous workshops in area schools, both in spoken word and in computer coding. Masaki is a highly skilled and compelling performer and has appeared in numerous spoken word events in Michigan and nationally. His poetry has been featured on Lunch Ticket, Vol. 17; and Rigor, Vol. 5, Issue. His work and influence on the Greater Lansing Area poetry community has been profiled in the Lansing State Journal, Dec 7, 2019 ("6 people to watch: Leaders making a difference in Lansing's business scene and community") and the City Pulse, Nov. 24, 2021 ("Masaki Takahashi and building a powerful poetry culture in Lansing").



SATURDAY, APRIL 15

Workshops

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - The Body Electric: Pleasure and Pain in Poetry

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo) Led by Traci Brimhall

This event is for: High School or Older

Walt Whitman celebrated and sang the body and all its atoms. Virginia Woolf asked why, if illness is so common and the spirit so changed, it didn't take its place among the major themes of literature. In this class we will look at poems about the body and its changes, its aging, its pleasures, and its struggles. We will read poems by poets such as Lucille Clifton, Sharon Olds, Kyle Dargan, Ross Gay, Leila Chatti, and Danez Smith, and discuss the myriad of ways the body arrives on the page. We will consider questions such as:

how does the form of the poem reflect the body? What is the body's vocabulary for joy? How do we express pain's unsayables? We will generate the beginnings of new work to translate the experiences of our bodies into lines of poetry.



Traci Brimhall is the author of four poetry collections: Come the Slumberless from the Land of Nod (Copper Canyon); Saudade (Copper Canvon): Our Lady of the Ruins (W.W. Norton),

Saturday, April 15 Events

The Body Electric: Pleasure and Pain in Poetry > Continued

winner of the Barnard Women Poets Prize: and Rookery (Southern Illinois University Press), winner of the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award. Her poems have appeared in The New Yorker, Poetry, The Believer, The New Republic, Orion, New

York Times Magazine, and Best American Poetry. She's received fellowships from the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing and the National Endowment for the Arts. She is the Poet Laureate of Kansas

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - Roses in Concrete

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo) Led by Ed Genesis

This event is for: Community members, youth, ages 15-65+, no publishing experience necessary, first time writers and performers are welcomes

The late, great Hip Hop Artist Tupac Shakur has a poem titled "The Rose That Grew From Concrete" in keeping with "The Garden" theme. The poem speaks about the amazing fact that the inner city youth can still grow despite the oftentimes challenging conditions that surrounds them. This poem describes my upbringing along with so many others, it is my goal for my workshop to lift up this powerful messaging by showcasing works from the

Community, "The Garden" and how we too grow even when expected not to.

Ed Genesis is a Hip Hop Artist

that has been doing music professionally for 20 years, and has hosted the Kalamazoo Poetry Festival for the last 5 years in a row. which he is very proud of. He is co-director at Speak it Forward, a youth mentoring program that presents poetry workshops for the youth to express themselves. Genesis has recently collaborated with Kalamazoo Valley Community College to instruct courses on social justice in America through a Hip Hop lens, and in September he released his first coloring/ activity book called "The 4 Elements of Hip Hop" for a fun interactive way to learn about the fundamentals and history of Hip Hop.

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Mining the Poetic Unconscious

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo) Led by Kaveh Akbar

This event is for: High School or Older

If, as Vijay Seshadri says, the purpose of poetry is "to deal with unprecedented experience," then it's what's inside the poet's mind, what (or who) is hooting or singing or moaning or gagging inside the poet's own totally unique psychic ecosystem that allows the poet access to a singular voice. In this workshop we'll try various methods of popping under our own hoods and exploring our cognitive machinery (using things like meditation and bibliomancy), mining our discoveries for poetic language and imagery and more. Leaving the workshop, we'll have

generated drafts, jumping off points for new poems, and hopefully, if all goes well. better relationships with the little voices in our heads.



Kaveh Akbar is the author of Pilarim Bell (Gravwolf Press. 2021) and Calling a Wolf a Wolf (Alice James Books, 2017; Penguin UK, 2018). He

is also the author of a chapbook. Portrait of the Alcoholic (Sibling Rivalry, 2017). He is also the editor of The Penguin Book of Spiritual Verse: 110 Poets on the



Saturday, April 15 Events

Mining the Poetic Unconscious > Continued

Divine. Kaveh is the recipient of the Levis Reading Prize, multiple Pushcart Prizes, Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship, and Civitella Ranieri Fellowship. Kaveh is the founding editor of Divedapper, a home for interviews with major voices in contemporary poetry. Born in Tehran, Iran, he teaches at Purdue

University and in the low-residency MFA programs at Randolph College and Warren Wilson. His poems appear in The New Yorker, Poetry, PBS NewsHour, Paris Review, Best American Poetry, The New York Times, and elsewhere. Kaveh currently serves as poetry editor for The Nation.

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Planting Words of Hope

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo) Led by Jennifer Clark

This event is for: Youth

After exploring the life and work of David Drake, the poet/artisan who was enslaved in the 1800s and wrote poems on pots during a time when it was illegal for Black people to even write, youth participants will delve into creating their own poem in a relaxing and inspiring environment. The Kalamazoo Wild Ones who believe that "You can make a difference—no matter the size of your yard" will be on hand to literally provide seeds of hope that youth can plant.



A Kalamazoo native and avid gardener, *Jennifer Clark* is the author of three fulllength poetry collections and a children's book. Her newest

collection, Kissing the World Goodbye, ventures into the world of memoir, braiding family tales with recipes. Over the past 30 years she's facilitated poetry and creative writing workshops for children and adults in schools, homeless shelters, jails, mental health facilities, churches, and neighborhood centers. Her website is ienniferclarkkzoo.com.

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. - The Wild and Wonderful World of Weeds

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo) Led by Jeffrey Angles

This event is for: Young Adults or Older

In gardens, the plants that gardeners cultivate are not always the ones that are the most vibrant and vital. Weeds often appear in gardens, taking root spontaneously where they are not wanted. In fact, weeds often do better than even more desirable, native plants. Weeds might crowd out other plants or even change the

chemical balance of the soil, sometimes in ways that promote their own growth, sometimes in ways that complement and help the other plants around them.

In regular, day-to-day speech, people often talk about weeds metaphorically. One might hear, "Over the summer, she

Saturday, April 15 Events

The Wild and Wonderful World of Weeds > Continued

sprouted up like a stalk of goldenrod," or "He put down roots in his new, hostile environment like a dandelion growing between the cracks." Weeds are uninvited yet often strong, invasive yet sometimes beautiful, ignored yet sometimes beneficial. Because weeds have so many different qualities, poets have often used weeds in their work, even when talking about big social issues, such as migration, prejudice, and even ethnic cleansing.

Since this year's festival focuses on gardens, we will take some time in this workshop to think about the special qualities of weeds. We will start by reading a few short poems about weeds, then brainstorm about their seemingly "negative" and "positive" qualities. After this, we will sit down to start writing our own short poems about weeds and the many things that they represent to us and the world.



Jeffrey Angles is a poet, translator, and professor of Japanese literature at Western Michigan University. His collection

of original Japanese-language poetry entitled Watashi no hizukehenkōsen (My International Date Line) won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature, a rare honor accorded only a few non-native speakers since the award began in 1949. He has translated dozens of translations of Japan's most important modern authors and poets into English. He also believes strongly in the role of translators as activists and has focused on translating socially engaged. feminist, and queer writers. Among his most recent translations are The Thorn-Puller, by the feminist Japanese-American poet Hiromilto, and Godzilla & Godzilla Raids Again, the Shigeru Kayama novels from the 1950s that introduced the now iconic monster to the world.

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Craft Talk

First Congregational Church, 435 W. Michigan (Downtown Kalamazoo)



A discussion with three guest poets and questions posed by Kalamazoo Poet *Gail Martin*. Kalamazoo Poet Gail Martin's first book is The Hourglass

Heart (New Issues Press, 2003). Begin-Empty Handed (Perugia Press, 2013), her second book, won the 2013 Perugia Press Prize and the 2014 Housatonic Book Award in Poetry. Her third book, Disappearing Queen (Two Sylvias Press, 2021), won the Wilder Series Book Prize. Martin is a Michigan native with deep roots in both southern and northern Michigan. She works as a psychotherapist in private practice in Kalamazoo, where she lives with her husband, George.



Denise Miller performed at both open mics and during the Celebration of Community Poets through the past 10 years.

6:30 p.m. - Festival Finale and Reception

Civic Auditorium, 329 S. Park Street, Doors open 6:00 p.m.



2023 Festival Finale and Reception with Guest Poets Hala Alyan, Kaveh Akbar, and Traci Brimhall



Hala Alvan is the author of and The Arsonist's City (2021). She was born in Carbondale, III. and lived in Kuwait, Oklahoma, Texas, Maine, and Lebanon. She holds a BA from the American University of Beirut, an MA from Columbia University, and a PsyD from Rutgers University. She is the author of four books of poetry, including The Twenty-Ninth Year (Mariner Books, 2019); Hijra (Southern Illinois University, 2016), winner of the 2016 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry; and Atrium (Three Rooms Press, 2012), winner of the 2013 Arab American Book Award. Her debut novel. Salt Houses (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017) was the winner of the Layton Literary Peace Prize. Alvan was awarded a Lannan Foundation Fellowship, and works as a clinical psychologist and as an adjunct assistant professor at New York University. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.



For the 2023 festival, the community was invited to create art work that would be the inspiration for a community poem. The Ekphrastic poetry event was coordinated by Dream Scene Placemaking.

Kaveh Akbar is the author of Pilgrim Bell (Graywolf Press, 2021) and Calling a Wolf a Wolf (Alice James Books, 2017; Penguin UK, 2018). He is also the author of a chapbook. Portrait of the Alcoholic (Sibling Rivalry, 2017). He is also the editor of The Penguin Book of Spiritual Verse: 110 Poets on the Divine. Kaveh is the recipient of the Levis Reading Prize, multiple Pushcart Prizes, Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowship, and Civitella Ranieri Fellowship. Kaveh is the founding editor of Divedapper, a home for interviews with major voices in contemporary poetry. Born in Tehran. Iran, he teaches at Purdue University and in the low-residency MFA programs at Randolph College and Warren Wilson. His poems appear in The New Yorker, Poetry, PBS NewsHour, Paris Review, Best American Poetry, The New York Times,

and elsewhere. Kaveh currently serves as poetry editor for The Nation.



This is a Bookstore has hosted readings and workshops over the past 10 years.



Traci Brimhall earned a BA at Florida State University, an MFA at Sarah Lawrence College, and a PhD at Western Michigan University. In her lyric poems, she often merges the everyday with surreal imagery to meditate on themes of sacrifice and transformation. She is the author of the poetry collections Come the Slumberless to the Land of Nod (2020), Saudade (2017). Our Lady of the Ruins (2012), selected by Carolyn Forché for the Barnard Women Poets Prize, and Rookery (2010), winner of a Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award and a finalist for the ForeWord Book of the Year Award. Brimhall collaborated with Brynn Saito on the chapbook Bright Power, Dark Peace (2013), and her poetry has been anthologized in Best American Poetry 2014 (edited by Terrance Hayes). Winner of a 2013 National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship in poetry. Brimhall lives in Manhattan, Kansas, where she has served on the faculty of Kansas State University.



At the Civic Auditorium, Sally Wen Mao and Sierra Freeman intertwined readings and craft talk in one event









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PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

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Black Arts and Cultural Center develops potential and creativity in Blacks in the Kalamazoo area, advances the awareness of Black artistic ability, helps to preserve Black cultural heritage and enhance interactions among diverse groups. They believe engaging arts, culture, and history are critical to a strong community.



Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo (CIS) has as its mission to surround students with a community of support. Without community support, students who live in poverty are more at risk for missing school, dropping out and failing to earn a high school diploma. By helping the most vulnerable students stay in school and succeed in life, Community In Schools builds stronger, healthier, and more economically stable communities where every person is capable of reaching his or her greatest potential.



Face Off Theatre Company is the new face of BACC theater and launched during the 2015 Black Arts Festival. It is the goal of both organizations, within this partnership, to provide innovative and diverse theatre all year.



First Congregational Church's identity as faithful people is rooted in its practice of hospitality and celebration. The church welcome all to Christ's table and says lives are changed through His teachings, First Congregational's faith grows daily through the disciplines of prayer, worship, and joyful service. It is church that encourages critical thinking, individual creativity, and asking difficult questions. Together, they are searching for the meaning in God's Word. First Congregational takes the Bible far too seriously to read it literally. It is a proud member of The United Church of Christ. The year 2010 marked our 175th anniversary celebration. but our congregational roots go back to the Pilgrims who came to the New World in the 1600s seeking freedom to worship God as they chose. The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a progressive, dynamic denomination offering Christ's extravagant hospitality and welcome to all. UCC is grounded in Scripture while listening for the "Still Speaking" God.



Friends of Poetry is a nonprofit Kalamazoo group dedicated to the enjoyment of the reading and writing of poetry.



Kalamazoo Book Arts Center practices, teaches, and promotes the collaborative arts of the book: papermaking, printmaking, letterpress, bookbinding, and creative writing, through preserving and employing traditional technologies and combining them with contemporary ideas and techniques to reinvigorate the collaborative arts of the book. It was founded in 2005 by artists and writers with a passion for book arts. Its vision is now a creative public space where artists and book enthusiasts of all kinds gather to collaborate and celebrate books and the many arts that inform them.



Kalamazoo College offers a popular major in English with a writing emphasis, through which students specialize in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry and staff the literary magazine, The Cauldron.



Read and Write Kalamazoo (RAWK) exists to support the growth and learning of young Kalamazooans through the consistent cultivation of reading and writing skills. Speak It Forward works to uplift youth and adults who have been silenced by helping them find and powerfully express their voices.



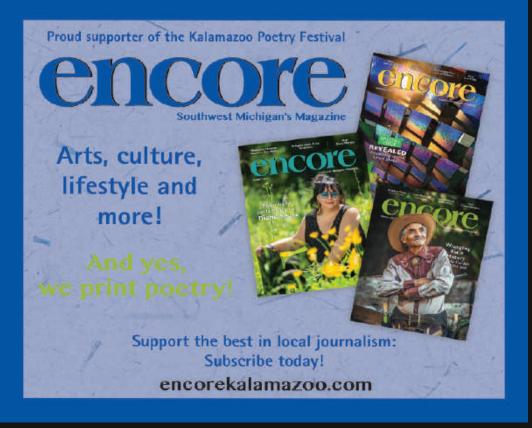
Western Michigan University's department of English gives students the opportunity to study literature, writing, and rhetoric in a supportive and engaging intellectual community of faculty and peers.



Wild Ones promotes the propagation of native plants that are part of our rich natural heritage here in Southwest Michigan. The Kalamazoo Area chapter of Wild Ones was established to help inform, educate and offer resources to people interested in learning about native plants. There simply isn't enough protected or potentially protectable land to depend on its saving our birds, mammals, amphibians and insects, including pollinators. By planting a diverse assortment of native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses in your yard, you'll be doing your part to replace the vast amount of habitat that has been lost to development or destroyed by invasive non-native plants. You'll be helping to slow the rapid extinction of species already under way and providing protection for the plants and animals of our region against the coming rigors of climate change, with its increased temperatures and scarcity of water.



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Remembering PHOTOS





In an online event in 2021, festival goers were delighted by the readings of Patricia Smith and
Danez Smith



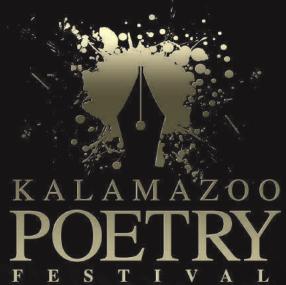
Workshops have been a feature of the Kalamazoo Poetry Festival since its beginning in 2014. Susan Ramsey and Bonnie Jo Campbell work with a worship attendee



Workshop leaders such as Elizabeth Kerlikowske also provided readings of their work at some festivals.



Sierra Freeman had the audience laughing and crying during her reading as a guest poet in 2019



Remembering PHOTOS



Great Dane brought a special magic to Your Turn Open Mic for many festivals.



Theatre and its relationship to poetry were explored in the 2019 festival

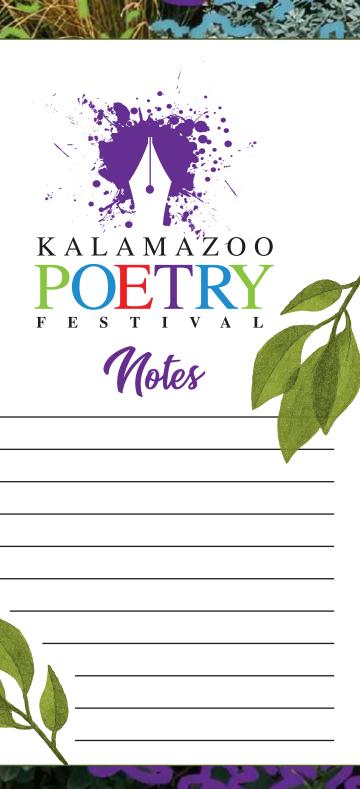


Ed Genesis keeps the crowd engaged as the emcee for the Celebration of Community Poets.



Theater and dance and their relationship to poetry were themes explored in the 2019 festival.





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