THE WRITING LIFE

Throughout the year, The Writing Life, HoCoPoLitSo’s writer-to-writer talk show, airs encore and debut editions on Maryland educational cable channels, HCC’s Dragon Digital TV and YouTube, with 85 editions accessible worldwide. Four new editions were produced in FY 2016. Aired during this period: July 2015: E. Ethelbert Miller hosted Michael Collier (encore 1997); August: Colm Tóibín hosted by Belinda McKeon (encore 2011); September: Tribute to Josefine Jacobsen with Clifton, Collier, Spries (encore 2003); October: Moshe Dor & Barbara Goldberg hosted by Michael Collier (encore 1999); December: Taylor Branch hosted by Timothy L. Jenkins (encore 2000); January 2016: Sunset Baby with Khalid Long hosted by Joseph Ritsch (debut 2016); February: Emma Donoghue hosted by Mary Kay Zuravleff (debut 2016); March: Li Young-Lee hosted by Michael Collier (encore 1996); April: Taylor Mali hosted by Chris August (debut 2016); May: Mark Doty hosted by Sue Ellen Thompson (encore 2011); and June: Carrie Brown hosted by Ron Charles (encore 2007).

THE WRITING LIFE THIS WINTER

NOVEMBER
Joseph Ross hosted by E. Ethelbert Miller (debut 2016)

DECEMBER
Jane Hirshfield hosted by Michael Collier (encore 2007)

JANUARY 2017
Eamon Grennan hosted by Terence P. Winch (debut 2017)

SAVE THE DATE
Friday, February 10, 2017 at 7:30 pm
29th Evening of Irish Music & Poetry
with novelist Belinda McKeon and Narrowbacks
Thursday, April 27, 2017 at 7:30 pm
Blackbird Poetry Festival with Tychimba Jess and E. E. Miller
Sunday, June 4, 2017 at 4:00 pm
Columbia Birthday reading with John Gregory Brown and
Second Tuesdays at 7:00 pm
 Wilde Readings at the Columbia Art Center

The leaves that bore fruit

By Susan Thornton Hobby
Recording Secretary of HoCoPoLitSo’s Board

Each May when I attend senior award ceremonies, I feel a bit abashed when I hand a senior a hardbound book of poetry or a hefty novel from HoCoPoLitSo as an award for their achievements in writing or literature. I usually walk up on stage just after a larger organization has offered a graduating senior a $10,000 scholarship check.

I won’t feel quite so humbled this year when I dole out my books in front of proud parents and beaming seniors. Since 1981, HoCoPoLitSo has given out more than one thousand books to graduating students, bearing leaves of paper inscribed with words from master writers like Lucille Clifton and Seamus Heaney and Edward P. Jones.

And now we know that one particular seed we planted has borne generous fruit right here in Columbia.

In 2003, Erik Pecukonis graduated from Glenelg High School, and a HoCoPoLitSo board member shook his hand and gave him a copy of Warrings 2000, The Maryland Millennium Anthology, a poetry collection edited by Michael S. Glaser. Pecukonis kept that collection, and poetry prompts to help his students.

This September, Pecukonis reached back through those thirteen years to HoCoPoLitSo, seeking our advice about forming an after-school poetry club for his students. He remembered that book, with the plate in the front bearing his name in calligraphy, and he remembered us.

HoCoPoLitSo “is a resource in the county that’s been around a long time, that is well-established and supportive of the arts,” Pecukonis said. When he asked, HoCoPoLitSo staff and board members provided him with some lesson plans and poetry prompts to help his students.

His poetry club, for third, fourth, and fifth graders who attend an after-school enrichment program at Swansfield, has met twice so far this year, and Pecukonis is excited.

“We want to give them an opportunity to express themselves through writing, without the rigors of the classroom,” Pecukonis said. “We’ve started with the basics. I’ve set an expectation that we’re in a safe space. There are no grades, no expectation that we’re in a safe space. There are no grades, I’m not worried about spelling or mechanics or form. We do a quick fun interpretation. I set a timer, and I say, Write, don’t stop.”

His only requirement? “They have to have a stake in what they’re saying,” Pecukonis said.

Pecukonis’ long-term goals include setting up a poetry library (donations appropriate for young people are welcome), and perhaps publishing a collection of the young poets’ work. HoCoPoLitSo’s long-term goals? Plant more of the seeds that bear fruit, like children expressing what matters to them through poetry. Raise enough money to spread the light of literature to teachers, students, literature lovers, and even people who are imprisoned as many as we can.

Please help support this vital work with your donation, to let there be light for all.
HocPoLiSo formally opened its 42nd literary season on Friday, Oct. 23, with the 50th annual Linda Clifton Reading Series featuring poet and activist E, Ethelbert Miller in “Say Something: Poetry in School” at the Montebello Recital Hall, Howard Community College. The Columbia (MD) Almanac’s chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority presented the event.

The 38th Evening of Irish Music and Poetry on Friday, Feb. 19, 2016, featured poet Eamon Gunn, introduced by Anne Anderson, Ambassador of Ireland. Musical performances were by Narrowbacks Linda Hickman, Dominick Murray, Brendan Mulvihill, Terence Winn, Jesse Winn, with Ileen Korn Estes, and step dancers from the Culkin School. Host Jaycen Dendahl provided a prelude.

On Thursday, April 28, 2016, in partnership with Howard Community College (HCC), the eighth annual Blackbird Poetry Festival featured former New York State Poet Laureate Howard Goodkin. MUSIcances presented Howard Community College English World Language Division, Office of Student Life.

HocPoLiSo held its 35th All-Country Writing Competition for high school students. This year’s judges were Sarah Bellino, retailer-classification technology, Jackie Bolte, poet and editor, Patricia Van Amburg, poet and professor, Howard Community College; and Nolan Alkan, HocPoLiSo board member and former Promote and Achievement in Language Arts Award winner. There were nine creative writing winners Nadina Elsobhy (Community), Angelina Zelter (Howard), and Kasmira Miram (Glenelg) in the personal essay category. Catherine Salazar (Oakland Mills), Ben Yodzis (Hammond), Alexa Marquis (River Hill), Devon Carberry, Grace Yi (Marriotts Ridge), Casey Kendall, Cory Weller (Mt. Hebron), Kiera Bell (Oakland Mills), Joseph Smith, Mary Mosnano (Reservoir), Alex Marquis (River Hill), Yuanan Gu, and Sara Shumsky (Wild Lakes).

Partnerships
Meeting HocPoLiSo’s committment to building and maintaining community relationships, the society co-sponsored the following: a writing workshop with poet Ann Bracken at the Patuxent Institution on November 10, 2015. The House exhibit with Grant Meyers at the Columbia Art Center, a Salon Reading at the Howard County Library, Miller Branch, with Tara Hart and Lavinia Peterson; and non-profit Laura Lippman with the Wilde Lake Community Association.

The society also partnered with the Arts Collective Underground Rooftop Coffee House on September 10, 2015, and W1G Cabin: Actors and Writers Fire Up on April 8, 2016.

ANNUAL CONTRIBUTORS
This list includes cash and major in-kind contributions from July 1, 2015-October 31, 2016. Subsidy gifts by the same contributor are merged. Every effort was made to include all names and to spell them correctly. Please let us know if there are errors or omissions.
Special appreciation to this year’s donors who ensured that a financial match of $10,000 was met to support HocPoLiSo programming.

Contributions
Teddy’s Bar
K. Steven

Earnings

Revenue

Programs

Administrative

Fund Raising

FY 2016 By THE NUMBERS

22 Writers and
13 Musicians and Actors participated in HocPoLiSo Programs

550 Students visited by writer-in-residence

820 Students engaged with Shakespeare

1216 Adult audience attendees

4 New editions of The Writing Life

31 Books awarded to presented the Writing Life Students

FY 2016 Total Budget $94,786
(includes in-kind contributions of $16,600)