

# HoCoPoLitSo

Howard County Poetry & Literature Society

ENLARGING THE AUDIENCE FOR CONTEMPORARY POETRY & LITERATURE SINCE 1974

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2017

JULY 1, 2016-JUNE 30, 2017

## An Irish Family Affair

By Susan Thornton Hobby  
Recording Secretary of HoCoPoLitSo's Board

Biblical scholars debate the length of a generation, but most concede that forty years is close. If my college Bible as Literature class was right, HoCoPoLitSo's Irish Evening of Music and Poetry has now spanned a generation; the event will celebrate its fortieth anniversary in February 2018.

The original attending clan is now inviting the children, and grandchildren, to the party.

Mary and Brendan Donegan attended the first Irish Evening, Feb. 2, 1979, with actress Pauline Flanagan reading Irish poetry in the Kittamaquindi Room of the Rouse Company headquarters. The Donegans pulled in their Irish friends, Bernard and Katherine Farrell, in 1982, for the fourth Irish Evening, to hear Seamus Heaney. And in the 1990s, the local Celtic crowd, affectionately known as "the Irish mafia" to daughter-in-law Karen Donegan, started inviting their children. Karen and Peter (Brendan and Mary's son) Donegan now make the Irish Evening whenever they can, and the Donegan grandchildren come too. In 2011, Catherine McLoughlin-Hayes, the chair of the Irish Evening, brought her granddaughter, Fiona, to her first Irish Evening. Her children, Siobhan, Brendan and Caitriona, have been attending for decades.

"I love the fact that my heritage and tradition is passed on to my children and grandchildren in this way," McLoughlin-Hayes said. "May it continue."

Forty years has made many family memories. The notorious Irish Evening of 1994 began with the town abuzz about Seamus Heaney's reading. Then a thick layer of snow and ice beat down trees and power lines. Katherine Farrell remembers trying to dig out their car to take her children to the Nobel-winner's reading. A neighbor saw their efforts, and loaned them a four-wheel drive to make it to the show.

"It was a small but determined audience that night," Farrell remembers. "Magical to be there. And he congratulated our daughter who had just won a poetry prize at school. She was 11."

The 1994 reading was the first for Helen and Richard Carter; Heaney hooked them. About five years ago, the Carters began bringing their daughter, Emily.

The second Irish Evening that sparks the most family stories is when memoirist Frank McCourt spoke to a sold-out crowd. On Feb. 20, 2009, McCourt transported the crowd to the slums of Limerick and the schools of New York City, telling tales that drew laughter and tears from the audience.

"I will always remember him for his amazing sense of humor and affable personality," Helen Carter recalls of their chatting after the show.

For nearly forty years, HoCoPoLitSo has marked the end of winter with a joyous Irish celebration. This year, we welcome novelist Mike McCormack to read at the fortieth celebration, set for Feb. 9, 2018. Bring along the next generation, like the Irish crowd does.



"What keeps us coming back is the excellence of the authors that Catherine McLoughlin-Hayes finds and the friends we meet there year after year," Katherine Farrell writes in an email from Ireland. "We love it, and always mark it as the beginning of the St. Patrick's Day season."

### ALL IN THE FAMILY

Left: Catherine McLoughlin-Hayes with Irish Ambassador H. E. Anne Anderson  
Right: Novelist Calm Tobin and Belinda McKeon & Fiona (Catherine's grandbaby)

## Season Highlights July 2016 – June 2017



PHOTO BY BLUEFLOWER ARTS

Carolyn Forché

HoCoPoLitSo opened its 42nd season on October 30, 2016. Distinguished poet of witness Carolyn Forché read from her unpublished manuscript in the Montebano Recital Hall.

The 39th Evening of Irish Music and Poetry on February 10, featured award-winning novelist Belinda McKeon. Her reading was followed by traditional Irish music by Narrowbacks, Linda Hickman, Eileen Korn Estes, Dominick Murray, Jesse and Terence Winch, and newcomer Michael Winch. The evening included step dancers from the Culkin School and prelude by harpist Jared Denhard. Artwork depicting Ireland was exhibited by Denny Lynch and Katherine Farrell. Irish Ambassador H. E. Anne Anderson opened the evening.

On April 27, the Blackbird Poetry Festival was held in collaboration with HCC's Department of English and World Languages and Office of Student Life. Workshops for students were hosted



PHOTO BY MEL VANCE FROM STALEY

Tyehimba Jess

by featured poets E. Ethelbert Miller and Tyehimba Jess, who was spinning from his Pulitzer Prize for *Ohio*, announced April 10. Sunbird and Nightbird readings were held in the Smith Theatre. Local Maryland Poetry Out Loud winners Naana Winful and Alex Berland (child of past HoCoPoLitSo volunteer Dan Berland) recited their winning poems.

For Columbia's 50th birthday, HoCoPoLitSo presented *Of Stars and Hurricanes* on June 4. Former residents and local journalists Carrie Brown and John Gregory Brown reminisced about their days in Columbia and read from their latest novels. Held in partnership with the Wilde Lake Community Association at Slayton House, the program also honored HoCoPoLitSo's founder Ellen Conroy Kennedy and advocate/promoter Padraic Kennedy.



Carrie Brown



John Gregory Brown

### Introduction of Wilde Readings

Under the direction of local poets Ann Bracken, Linda Joy Burke and Laura Showan, readings featuring 20 poets followed by public open mic sessions were held at the Columbia Art Center from September through June. Participating artists included: Jan Bowman, Derrick Weston Brown, Austin S. Camacho, Nancy Naomi Carlson, Grace Cavalieri, Virginia Crawford, Susan Mnaddi Darraj, Carla Du Pree, Jen Grow, Le Hinton, Sally Rosen Kindred, Merrill Leffler, Brian Potts, Michael Ratcliffe, Maritza Rivera, Michael Rothenberg II, Michael Salzman, Sam J. Schmidt, Lynn Silverman, Sue Ellen Thompson, Shelly Washington, and Ron Kipling Williams.

### Other Collaborations

As part of the Howard County Book Connection, HoCoPoLitSo and Howard County Library presented an evening with Ned Tillman, author of *Saving the Places We Love* on October 20.

Also, in partnership with the Howard County Library, HoCoPoLitSo presented a debut screening of *Robert By: A Thousand Years of Joy* by Zinc Productions on March 9. The film includes excerpts from his 1997 TWL show.

Blossoms of Hope, Columbia Art Center, Volunteer Center Serving Howard County and HoCoPoLitSo joined their talents and resources to create an exhibit of visual art and poetry called *Healing Hands*, an art show in April honoring service.

In partnership with the Wilde Lake Community Association, on April 28, co-chairs Hart and Singleton introduced the 50-plus Luncheon Series audience to HoCoPoLitSo.

Co-Chair Tara Hart interviewed acclaimed Nigerian-born Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as part of the Howard County Library's Salon Series in June.

### HoCoPoLitSo in the Schools

HoCoPoLitSo and Howard County Public Schools sponsored poet Laura Showan and playwright Daniel Johnston to provide workshops for more than 50 teachers during their Professional Development Day in August.

Playwright and actor Daniel Johnston served as HoCoPoLitSo's 25th Writer-in-Residence visiting six county high schools, Homewood Center and HCC, engaging more than 385 students in workshops and character development exercises.

On December 1, in partnership with Center Stage's education department, six actors educated and entertained 710 students from Wilde Lake, Elkridge Landing and Thomas Viaduct middle schools with scenes from Shakespeare.

HoCoPoLitSo held its 36th All-County Writing Competition for high school students. Submissions were read by former HoCoPoLitSo award-winner and writer Nsikan Akpan, professor Patricia Van Amburg, literature enthusiast Rob Spaulding and high school liaison Kathy Hurwitz.

The nine creative writing winners were: Rachel Yu (Marriotts Ridge), Divine Amayo and Sheila Hourihan (Atholton) in the personal essay category, Adrianna Renehan (Atholton), Michael Blout (Hammond) and Luis Requejo (Centennial) in the short story category, and Emily Buckley (Glenelg), Mahitha Vijitha Saya (Marriotts Ridge) and Tess McKae (Hammond) in the poetry category; and Makarand Parigi and Rachel Yu (Marriotts Ridge) in the playwright category. In addition, twenty-six students were chosen by their English Departments to receive HoCoPoLitSo's Promise and Achievement Award in Language Arts. The honorees were: Natalie Kann, Brett Swanson (Atholton), Rohan Laljani, Mary Monroe (Centennial), Emily Buckley, Lindsay LeTellier (Glenelg), Samantha Smith, Michael Weiss (Hammond), Sasha Bernstein, Tyshae Hale (Homewood Center), Sydney Kempf, Stewart Slocum (Howard), Malcolm DeShields, Stephanie Moy (Long Reach), Joel Landsman, Allison Smith (Marriotts Ridge), Grace Dillon, Blake Morris (Mt. Hebron), Clairisse Reiher, Evan Riss (Oakland Mills), Tess Greene, Benjamin Hyatt (Reservoir), Lucas Parker, Laurel Pulford (River Hill), Jennifer Lees, and Jack Tripp (Wilde Lake).

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Ensure HoCoPoLitSo's FUTURE. Gifts and pledges to the HoCoPoLitSo Fund at the Community Foundation of Howard County from February 1996-October 15, 2017.

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HoCoPoLitSo is grateful to all who support our programs and mission.

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# HoCoPoLitSo

Howard County Poetry & Literature Society

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Plan to join us  
Friday, February 9, 2018



## 40th Annual Irish Evening



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### **THE WRITING LIFE**

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Produced by Dragon Digital TV, *The Writing Life*, HoCoPoLitSo's writer-to-writer talk show airs encore and debut editions on Maryland educational stations, throughout the year and on YouTube, with 97 editions accessible worldwide. Five new editions debuted and four were produced between July 2016 and June 2017. The FY 2017 program schedule included: July: Laura Lippman hosted by Mary Kay Zuravleff (2009); August: Li-Young Lee hosted by Michael Collier (1996); September: A tribute to Josephine Jacobsen with Lucille Clifton, Michael Collier, and Elizabeth Spires (2003); October: E. Ethelbert Miller hosted by Joseph Ross (debut 2016); November: Joseph Ross hosted by E. Ethelbert Miller (debut 2016); December: Jane Hirshfield hosted by Michael Collier (2007); January 2017: Eamon Grennan hosted by Terence Winch (debut 2017); February: Edward P. Jones hosted by E. Ethelbert Miller (2005); March: Marie Howe hosted by Sandra Beasley (debut 2017); April: Gregory Orr hosts Stanley Kunitz (1993) May: Charles Guggenheim hosts Reynolds Price (1994) and June: Alice McDermott hosted by Ron Charles (2012).

### **THIS WINTER ON THE WRITING LIFE**

Enjoy a conversation with Tara Betts and Terrence Hayes (2011) in November; Manil Suri hosted by Sangeeta Ray (2009) in December; Belinda McKeon hosted by Richard McCann (debut 2017) in January; and Tychimba Jess hosted by E. Ethelbert Miller (debut 2018) in February. Editions air on HCC's DDTV, Comcast Channel 96 or Verizon Channel 41 and [www.YouTube.com/HoCoPoLitSo](http://www.YouTube.com/HoCoPoLitSo).

### **SAVE THE DATES & JOIN US**

**Friday, February 9, 2018 at 7:30 pm**

40th Evening of Irish Music & Poetry featuring novelist Mike McCormack and music by Narrowbacks in Smith Theatre, Horowitz Center (HCC).

**Thursday, April 26, 2018, Blackbird Poetry Festival**

Sunbird Reading at 2:30 p.m. and Nightbird at 7:30 p.m. with poet and writer Marilyn Chin.

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*HoCoPoLitSo is grateful for your generous cash and in-kind donations that help to defray annual operating expenses. To make a year-end gift, use the enclosed envelope or visit [HoCoPoLitSo.org/donate](http://HoCoPoLitSo.org/donate). Please designate HoCoPoLitSo on Amazon Smile (FEIN 52-1146948)*

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