

2013-2014 LOFT MENTOR SERIES IN POETRY & CREATIVE PROSE WINNERS

The Loft Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose offers twelve emerging Minnesota writers the opportunity to work intensively with six nationally acclaimed writers of prose and poetry. Selected participants work throughout the year with the six mentors, and all participants and mentors give public readings at the Loft. Dates for those readings will be announced this fall. This program is funded by the Jerome Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Park Construction Company, RBC Foundation, and by the generous support of Loft members.

2013–2014 ENTRIES AND SELECTIONS

The Loft Literary Center received 197 entries to the 2013-2014 Loft Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose, from which the preliminary judges had the difficult task of choosing 20 finalists per genre. We received 61 entries in nonfiction; 52 poetry applications; and 75 fiction submissions.

Nonfiction Selections

Nonfiction mentors Mark Anthony Rolo and Jerald Walker selected Elizabeth di Grazia of Richfield, Welcome Jerde of Minneapolis, Ember Johnson of Lake City, and Pamela Schmid of St. Paul for the program.

Honorable mentions are Michael McGehee and Taylor Brorby. Finalists are Luce Amundsen, Laura Theobald Benda, Jean Cook, Anike Eide, Tracy Harris, Paula Moyer, Judy Nelson, Marcia Peck, Paul Pfeiffer, Vikki Reich, Ty Sassman, Lisa Simons, Emily Urness, and Ralph Winkelmeier.

Poetry Selections

Poetry mentors Peter Champion and Cathy Park Hong chose poets Caitlin Bailey, Sandra Evans, and Isadora Gruye of Saint Paul and Kristin Fitzsimmons of Minneapolis

Honorable mention went to Kate Lucas and Jacob Yordy. Finalists are Sherry Anderson, Cristiana Baik, Micki Blenkush, Anika Eide, Katie Gorrie, Georgia Greely, Anna Jursik, Michael Lee, Noah Mass, Lisa Pierce, Penelope Simison, and Sarah Spleiss.

Fiction Selections

Fiction writers selected for the program by mentors Christopher Castellani and Mary Francois Rockcastle are M.G. Fischer of Eden Prairie, Toni Halleen of St. Louis Park, Steven Lang of Lauderdale, and Cole Perry of Bovey.

Honorable mention went to Moe Lionel and Henry Schulteis. Finalists are Ayodele Alofe, Jenny Barlow, Jeremiah Bey, Amit Bhati, Marc Burgeet, Andrew Cleary, Karlyn Coleman, Brian Duren, Daniel Eckman-Thomas, Alison Morse, Mary Stein, and Charlotte Sullivan.

BIOS FOR THE 2013-2014 LOFT MENTOR SERIES WINNERS

Caitlin Bailey holds an M.F.A. from Hamline University where she served as an Assistant Poetry Editor for *Water~Stone Review*. Her poems have appeared in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Bateau*, *Lumina*, *Paper Darts*, *Poetry City USA*, Vol. 2, and elsewhere. She is currently working on a collection of poetry. She lives near the river.

Elizabeth di Grazia with her partner created a home in Richfield, MN and eleven years ago, welcomed two infants, completing their family. She is a contributing and founding member of the blog, *WordSisters*, *In it together - from Inspiration to Publication!* She has been published in many literary publications and was a 2013 recipient of a Next Step Grant. She earned her MFA at Hamline University.

Sandra Evans is a poet and educator living in St. Paul, Minnesota with her husband, two elderly dogs and, occasionally her two grown children. She has an MFA in Poetry from Hamline University where she also served as assistant poetry editor for *Water~Stone Review* and an adjunct instructor. Her writing has appeared on *What Light* and in *rock, paper, scissors*.

Maureen Fischer has published a short story in the anthology, *Once Upon a Crime*. Another of her short stories won Honorable Mention in the 78th Annual *Writers Digest* Writing Competition. Currently, she is working on her first novel, *Kisangani Mother*, set in modern day Democratic Republic of Congo. She is a former United Press International reporter and also spent fifteen years as an advertising copywriter. She now runs her own freelance marketing business.

Kristin Fitzsimmons received her MFA from the University of Minnesota in June 2013 and has since been a summer teaching artist at The Loft and a co-host and editor for the YouTube series *What Did You Look Up on Wikipedia?* Her work has most recently been published in *New England Review Digital*, *Midway Journal*, and *Handsome*.

Isadora Gruye is a writer and photographer living in St. Paul, Minnesota. She gets less than 4 hours of sleep each night, except for weekends when she sleeps until her muscles ache from atrophy. Things that few people know about Isadora: she plays chess but is not very good at strategy. She believes in cartography and beekeepers but has little need for maps or honey. In her writing, Isadora goes for a gut reaction. She wants no reign over your brain or your heart, there are too many competing, fleeting factions there. Her poems are the girl at the bar who can hold an intellectual conversation while drinking your whiskey, then sucker punch you when the brawl starts. Her work has previously appeared at Katherine Press.

Toni Halleen is a writer, speaker and lawyer based in Minneapolis. She teaches interactive communication skills workshops to legal professionals using techniques of improv comedy. Toni is also an award-winning playwright and composer. Her play, *Soulless, Bloodsucking Lawyers: A Musical!* was voted Best Selling Show and Best Musical at the Minnesota Fringe Festival. Toni writes and performs music about lawyers and public affairs, as seen on T.V. and at private events. She helps run her husband's law firm, enjoys time at the lake with her family and has been in a book club for 25 years.

Welcome Jerde publishes a column in *The Southwest Journal* and studies writing at The Loft and at week-long residencies (Split Rock Program, Madeline Island School of the Arts). Her greatest challenge centers on completing a memoir on loss, grief, and renewal. In addition to her writing interests, she manages two small non-profit groups: *Service Works...Changing the World One Month as a Time*, offering monthly service projects, and *Books for Bassodawish*, helping support a secondary school in northern Tanzania through fund raising and guided service trips to the village. She has an M.B.A. in Marketing and a B.A. in Theater from the University of Minnesota. She's employed at Broders' restaurants where she provides marketing support. Welcome lives with her husband, daughter, two cats, and a Mexican dog in Minneapolis.

Ember Johnson lives in lovely Lake City, Minnesota where she raises two amazing children and writes. In her earlier years she worked on a dock in Alaska, worked as a land surveyor, and even owned a small goat farm. So far she's been published in *Georgetown Review* and is currently working on a memoir.

Artist and writer **Steven Lang** received his B.F.A. from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. In 2012, he was a resident artist at [Elsewhere](#), a living museum set in a former thrift store in downtown Greensboro, NC, and was a participant in the 4th season of [CSA -- Community Supported Art](#), sponsored by [mnartists.org](#) and [springboardforthearts.org](#). He has recently exhibited at Rosalux Gallery, Soo Visual Arts Center, and the Walker Art Center's [Walker Shop](#). His short story, "Tandem," was included in the recent Milkweed Editions anthology *Fiction on a Stick*.

Cole Perry was raised in Bovey, MN, and spent nearly a decade in South and Central America, before returning to northern Minnesota. His writing has received awards from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the Jerome Foundation. He is currently at work on a novel.

Pamela Schmid is the creative nonfiction editor for *Sleet* magazine. Before receiving her MFA degree from Hamline University, she spent more than a decade reporting and editing for the *Star Tribune* and The Associated Press. Her poetry and prose have appeared in *Sweet, Sleet*, and *Rock Paper Scissors*. She lives in St. Paul with her husband and son.

BIOS FOR THE 2013-2014 MENTORS

Peter Champion received his BA from Dartmouth College and his MA from Boston University. His collections of poetry include *Other People*, *The Lions*, and *El Dorado* (due out in fall of 2013.) He has also written monographs and catalog essays for the painters Joseph McNamara, Terry St. John, Mitchell Johnson, Kim Frohsin, and Eric Aho. The recipient of a Pushcart Prize, the Larry Levis Reading Prize, the Rome Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Guggenheim Fellowship, he currently teaches at the University of Minnesota.

Christopher Castellani is the son of Italian immigrants and a native of Wilmington, Delaware. He resides in Boston, where he is the artistic director of Grub Street, one of the country's leading non-profit creative writing centers. He is the author of three novels: *A Kiss from Magdalena*, winner of the Massachusetts Book Award in 2004; *The Saint of Lost Things*, a BookSense

(IndieBound) Notable Book; and *All This Talk of Love* published in February 2013. In addition to Grub Street, Christopher is on the faculty of the Warren Wilson MFA program and the Bread Loaf Writers Conference.

Cathy Park Hong is the author of three collections of poetry, including *Translating Mo'um* published in 2002 by Hanging Loose Press. Her second collection, *Dance Dance Revolution*, was chosen for the Barnard Women Poets Prize and was published in 2007 by WW Norton. Her third book of poems, *Engine Empire*, was published in 2012 by WW Norton. Hong is also the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship and a Village Voice Fellowship for Minority Reporters. She is an Assistant Professor at Sarah Lawrence College and is regular faculty at the Queens MFA program in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Mary Francois Rockcastle is the author of the novels *In Caddis Wood* and *Rainy Lake*, both published by Graywolf Press and nominated for Minnesota Book Awards. *Rainy Lake* earned a “Best Book for the Teen Age” by the New York Public Library. Her awards include a Bush Foundation Fellowship, a Loft-McKnight Award of Distinction in prose, and the Stanley Lindbergh Award for Excellence in Literary Publishing. She is Director of The Creative Writing Programs at Hamline University and founding and executive editor of *Water~Stone Review*.

Mark Anthony Rolo is an enrolled member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. He teaches at the White Earth Tribal and Community College. His memoir, *My Mother Is Now Earth*, is nominated for a 2012 Minnesota Book Award. He is also the author of the novel *The Wonder Bull* and an anthology of plays, *What's an Indian Woman To Do and Other Plays*. He has worked as a journalist in Washington, D.C., Minneapolis and Los Angeles. His plays have been performed in the Twin Cities, Tulsa, Oklahoma and Los Angeles.

A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, **Jerald Walker** has published in magazines such as *Creative Nonfiction*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Harvard Review*, *Mother Jones*, *The Iowa Review*, and *The Oxford American*, and he has been widely anthologized, including multiple times in *The Best American Essays*. Walker is the author of *Street Shadows: A Memoir of Race, Rebellion, and Redemption*, recipient of the 2011 PEN New England/L.L. Winship Award for Nonfiction and named a Best Memoir of the Year by *Kirkus Reviews*.