

New England WRITERS CENTRE

For people who love writing and reading

Newsletter
September- October 2009



Heather Shortridge, second place, and Toby Hemmings first place in the SLAM09 poetry competition

GRAND SLAMMIN'

An enthusiastic audience gathered at Armidale Library recently to witness the local heat of the State Library's SLAM09 poetry competition. The event was hosted by acclaimed performance poet, Miles Merrill, who was also visiting Armidale to take workshops for New England Writers' Centre's Youth Online project.

Miles opened the event with a dazzling show of poetry which brought nine contestants to show their skills hoping to win a place in the finals at the Opera House in November, as well as

\$5000 in prize money.

The Slam is an equitable event. The contestants' names are drawn out of a hat in order of performance and judges are chosen from the audience. The highest and lowest scores from the judges are discarded to eliminate any bias. Contestants have only two minutes to impress.

With original poetry ranging from shopping to worming your dog and love this was tightly contested, and with a margin of just 0.1, Year 9 Armidale High School Student Toby Hemmings won with an untitled poem about staring at a girl you like, until you notice the ring. In second place, local vet Heather Shortridge entertained with a rhyming piece about making sure you worm your dog.

As winner of the regional heat, Toby will compete in Sydney in November at the State Library in the State Final. The winner of the State Final will go to the Opera House in December and for a chance at the national title and win \$5000.

Toby said it was great to have won the event and he was looking forward to being in the State Final.

**Pam Summers interviews Miles Merrill on page 3.*

HUNTER- NEW ENGLAND POETRY EXCHANGE

It's Spring and the poets of the Hunter and the New England have decided to visit: a similar event a couple of years ago, saw three or four of our poets visit to be the guest PATP poets at the Northern Star Hotel.

In September, representing the New England, Peter Langston from Tamworth, Maxine Ross, Phillipa Trelford Brian Neville and Bernard Kusch all from Armidale, will be the guest readers at the Poetry in the Pub in Newcastle. On November 10th Poetzinc will be hosting the Hunter poets from Poetry At The Pub. The Hunter poets will be occupying the middle bracket of Poetzinc's November event. Poetzinc's Reading is at Trax Hotel in Rusden Street and begins at 7.30 on November 10th. Everyone is most welcome to come and hear the Hunter Poets. A gold coin donation would be appreciated.

Writing novels for teens & children with Sophie Masson

Writing for young people can be one of the most rewarding, viable and interesting literary careers of all. There's a constantly replenishing supply of readers, publishers are looking out constantly for new books and new authors, and the field is very wide and diverse--all genres, all ages. Perhaps you've got a burning ambition to write a novel for young people, but you're not sure how to start. Or you're not sure if you know what young people like to read today. Or you have something that sounds like it might be a good idea, but you're not sure where to go with it. Or you simply would like to toss around a few ideas, pick up a few tips and ask a few questions.

Sophie's workshop is a great place to get started. Sophie has published more than 30 novels, many for children and young adults.

DATE: Saturday, November 7.

TIME: 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$65/\$55 members

Must be booked in advance.

One-Day Workshop with Literary Agent Pippa Masson

What do agents do? How do you approach them? What are they looking for? These days it's nearly as hard to get the attention of an agent as of a publisher.

Pippa will answer questions, give examples of what they reject and accept, how she works with clients, and will show participants how to write the synopsis necessary to approach agents and publishers – whether for a real manuscript or a hypothetical case, participants will write a synopsis and get feedback from Pippa.

**PIPPA MASSON is an agent at Curtis Brown and has worked there for some eight years. She represents a wide variety of authors in many genres: from commercial to literary, adult fiction and non-fiction, children's picture books and novels and illustrated gift books.*

Her clients include Nick Earls, Scot Gardner, James Phelan, Matt Nable, Freya Blackwood

and Libby Gleeson as well as countless others! Curtis Brown is Australia's biggest and oldest literary agency.

DATE: Saturday November 14, 10am to 4pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$80 non-members / \$65 members

Writing Space Writing Workshop for Years 7- 10

Have you written a new Eragon, like Christopher Paolini? Do you like writing short stories or poetry? Do your poems sit in a drawer after you've written them? Do you want to publish your work? Workshop will discuss what is writing. How do we write ?

Participants will be writing new pieces and editing them. There will be discussion about the pieces.

Bring writing material and a piece of your own work and a piece of writing that you like - it can be a comic, a poem, a page from a John Marsden or a Cornelia Funke novel.

DATE: Saturday, October 3. 2pm to 5pm

VENUE: NEWC

COST: \$10

Susan is an Armidale writer who has been published in magazines and various anthologies. Since 2007, Susan has been a tutor with the Youth on Line project with the New England Writers' Centre, presenting poetry workshops to students in district schools, via email

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR

We want to know what our members have been doing this year.

Have you got into print: articles, short stories, fellowships?

Those of you who went to the Peter Bishop consultation – where are you now with your book?

What has been your favourite book that you have read?

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MILES MERRIL

Performance Power



Miles Merrill mixes spoken-word with surreal vocals, vibrant hilarious characters and intense theatrical narratives. As a multi-award winning writer and performer, he has presented in Krakow's Audio Art Festival, writers festivals in China, Canada, the US and three times at the Sydney Opera House. In his busy career Merrill has included many workshops for schools, including our *Youth on Line* project, and has published on two CDs, a DVD and in several literary anthologies, including The Penguin Anthology of Australian Poetry. This acclaimed poet gives Pam Summers a few tips on improving presentation when reading out loud:

Publishers now expect all writers to promote their work. Not everybody wants to perform and a dull reading can destroy any piece. How can people improve?

My best advice is to try a theatre class or performance workshop. But here are some pointers-

1. Rehearse the section you are going to read.
2. Think of it as both a performance and a very passionate lively conversation with your best friend (the audience).
3. Be sure to modulate your voice: project loudly at times, stage whisper at other moments.
4. Try out different voices for multiple characters.
5. Pause for eye contact with a few people in the room.
6. Step out from behind the podium either for the entire reading or for key points.
7. Memorise sections, even just a few early sentences, and deliver them with confident power. This will get you past the nervous starts.
8. Engage directly with your audience- For example: ask questions in the middle of your presentation and wait for an answer. Sometimes you have to ask again as the group might not expect you to address them. If no one answers, ask one individual the question directly.
9. Another example is: get your audience to do some sort of action. It could be as simple as saying, "Okay, before I begin. Let's get the circulation going in your bums. Can I ask everyone to just stand up and wriggle like this..."

Is there an image to project?

The image is one of preparedness. If the audience has made an effort to read your work and/or attend your event, respect them enough to have rehearsed. You must be attentive to your listeners.

Is image important to a genre?

No. I think even dry academic information can be made engaging if you become more conversational and relaxed with your audience.

When you perform to little kids, what changes do you make to deliver the same work to teenagers?

I become more playful, using larger gestures more character voices, props, music etc. I change lines and words the younger people might not understand- Like "iridescent" becomes "rainbow-coloured".

How does this affect the writing of the work?

I write some work specifically for younger kids and it's often very interactive. Like "What are the

dangerous spiders called?” or “Everybody let’s hear your eerie wind whistles. Ready?”

When do you feel most inspired to write?

In the middle of the night when the world is quiet. After a coffee and when I’m on my bicycle. I’ll often stop riding and record a line or lyric on my phone. Activity jogs me.

Do you have any advice for aspiring writers?

With all the gate-keepers and hurdles in the publishing world, It feels good to try performing your work in front of a live audience. Try signing up to perform at a local open-mike, slam or organise a reading with a few other people. Include some music and nibbles, make a listening party out of it. Video yourself and put it on the web.

Most importantly- Edit, edit, edit. Anybody can vomit their emotions onto a page with words. The real creativity is to clean up the vomit, find the chunks that are still edible and use them to feed other people. It’s a disgusting metaphor I know but you get the idea.

Finally, if you are a writer and you want to make a living, think about all the different avenues for your skill. Try journalism, technical writing, screen-writing, theatre, editing... Even writing ad copy could be better than plugging away at a job that doesn’t utilise your talents. If none of these options appeal then apply for funding, keep your day job and become an expert at time-management. Remember, no matter how sacred your art is, your creative product still needs to be sold.

NEWS & INFORMATION

Larissa Behrendt speaks on *Legacy* with Germaine Greer in Sydney November 18, and Prof. Hilary Charlesworth in Canberra November 24. Prof. Larissa Behrendt is a Euleyai/Kamillaroi woman. She is the Professor of Law and Director of Research at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. She is admitted to the Supreme Court of the ACT and NSW as a barrister, and is a Land Commissioner at the Land and Environment Court and the Alternate Chair of the Serious Offenders Review Board, among other distinguished positions in institutions of social sciences, law and arts. Behrendt won the 2002 David Uniapon Award and a 2005 Commonwealth Writer’s Prize for her novel *Home*, and her new book, *Legacy*, will be released in October (UQP).

F C Sach & Sons published *Words to Inspire*

Writers, by Gregory Victor Babic, about 18 months ago. They say that it was so popular that they have now released it under a creative commons license for free distribution. To download go to: <http://fcsachandsonspublishers.files.wordpress.com/2007/12/babic-words-to-inspire-writers-cc-version.pdf>

The Writers' Resource Centre provides, amongst other things, videoed author interviews and seminars. Go to <http://www.writersworld.com.au> or contact Anthony Santoro, anthony@writersworld.com.au or The Writers' Resource Centre PO Box 397 Williamstown, Vic, 3016.

Media Release: *Deathknell of Bookshops?*

Carindale, Qld – Futurist publisher Dr David Reiter claimed that the bookshop chains arguing in favour of the Productivity Commission’s Report that would see the end of territorial restrictions on the importation of books will be hastening their own demise and endangering tens of thousands of jobs in the book trade.

Dr Reiter is director of IP (Interactive Publications Pty Ltd), a Brisbane company at the cutting edge of print and digital publishing, which is already investing heavily in selling its books and digital titles via global online sites.

‘What Alan Fels and his colleagues don’t realise is that deregulation will force the hand of Australian publishers to take drastic action to protect their margins,’ he said. ‘We’re already simplifying our supply chain by selling our titles on Amazon and other online sites world-wide.’

The new publishing model followed by IP is already seeing physical distributors and bookshops largely bypassed in favour of digital channels.

‘We can now produce a master and upload it to online distributors anywhere in the world, and, with the click of a button, make our books available for new generation eBook readers like the Kindle and iPhone in print and audio formats. People who prefer physical books can still order them online and have them supplied from quality print on demand companies that can produce books economically one at a time.’

The big advantage for independent publishing houses like IP is that the new model will eliminate costs like warehousing, physical distribution and freight. ‘We upload the title to the territory where we want to sell it,’ he said, ‘and orders are filled as they come in. The online distributor handles all the paperwork, and we get guaranteed compensation with each sale.’

Reiter is keen to see the new Espresso Book Machine spread in Australia like wildfire. ‘In its

current form,' he notes. 'The Espresso can produce a finished paperback book in less than five minutes from an ATM-like machine. There's no reason why Espressos can't be located in coffee shops, libraries or next to banking ATMs. Bookshops and physical distributors could become irrelevant.'

'We'd like to see a more measured approach to the issue of parallel importation,' he concluded. 'But we really think that bookshops have more to lose than to gain by forcing the issue.'

Director, IP, reiter@ipoz.biz or 0412 313 923

Press Release: *ASA welcomes ALP National Conference resolution*: The Australian Society of Authors (ASA) welcomes the resolution of the ALP National Conference "that the Government should give priority to encouraging Australians to keep on buying Australian books and to maximising the economic, cultural and creative viability of Australian literature and Australian book industries".

The ASA rejects completely the illogical and unfounded research promoted by the Productivity Commission in its recent report on the parallel importation of books, and looks forward to the determinations of the Working Group that the National Conference has set up to consider the report and recommend actions to relevant Ministers.

Contact: Tim Sinclair, communications officer, Australian Society of Authors, PO Box 1566, Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012 or 98 Pitt Street, Redfern 2016 or (02) 9318 0877, fax (02) 9318 0530 or tim@asauthors.org or go to <http://www.asauthors.org>

WORKSPACE

CONGRATULATIONS

A number of New England Writers' Centre members have achieved in different ways:

SOPHIE MASSON

Sophie Masson's book *The Case of the Diamond Shadow* (ABC Books, Harper Collins) has been short listed for Davitt Awards for the top crime books by women, Young Adult Novels section.

ROBERT EVERED

Robert Evered has been announced the regional winner of the Sydney Morning Herald Young

Writers' competition. The judges were unanimous in awarding Robert first place in the region.

SU DORLAND



Member Su Dorland's book *Exam Stress? No Worries!* published by John Wiley and Sons, Australia, will have been published by October. Su commented, 'What a journey this has been! Thanks to Lesley Sly for her help along the way.'

I wrote the book (which comes with a CD), based on my experience from many years of counseling at UNE. The book is a three-component package - the text, the CD and first aid tips for students whose exams are close and do not have the time or inclination to read the book. There are special chapters for part-time, mature age, off-campus, international and migrant students and also chapters on perfectionism and procrastination. It will be useful for prospective students as well as enrolled students and is suitable for year 12s, university, TAFE, and short-course students.

We received the following in response to our invitation for submissions of work. Our thanks to Brian Neville for this thought-provoking story.

The Graveside

"I think it's time for a drink." I couldn't believe he said that.

"But we're on our way to the funeral, Dad." I said immediately looking across at the old man by my

side. "It's half ten and we're nowhere near there."
 "What's a funeral without a few drops of drink?"
 he said with that sly smirk that I loved.
 My mother's early morning request to take care of
 him had, once again, to be reinterpreted.
 We stopped at the town of Athlone, half way to the
 West. We drank at Mulligan's Public Bar, not too
 much, just a few whiskies and a chaser. It was
 almost mid-day when we set off towards the West
 again.
 My cousin was being buried that day. He had been
 part of an argument which ended in a fight outside a
 pub in London. He had lost, lost dearly.
 The Coroner had given the verdict of 'death by
 misadventure'.
 He died in England and was now to be buried in
 Ireland outside his home town, Sligo.
 We arrived at the church. It seemed as if the sea
 was every where, crashing at the rocks below us;
 the Atlantic Ocean's roars surrounded us.
 After a dull Mass we walked from the church
 directly west towards the sea and cliffs and
 graveyard. The crosses and weather beaten
 headstones seemed to mock our new sorrow.
 We stood around the freshly dug grave.
 I could see the blue sky and the seagulls above the
 heads of five brothers. His white headed father,
 taller than them all, stood erect, spoke bravely of his
 son, and then shed tears like a child.
 The clay hit the coffin with an empty thud, the
 emptiness of a life lost, a young lost life.
 The circle of tall men tightened around the plot. My
 father and I were engulfed by the sorrow and pain
 of these men. Live standing stones of manhood.
 Grieving stones turned now to clay. Tears and
 curses, oaths and profanities, crying and cursing,
 they let their anguish flow, openly and freely.
 The deep dark grave accepted all.
 I looked across at my father and he, he smiled at me
 strangely, not a smile of joy, but, I thought, one of
 love.
 That evening we said goodbye and left the grieving
 family.
 We stopped, once again in Athlone and enjoyed our
 few drinks, but somehow it was different.
 I returned to my parents' house and my dad slowly
 left the car.
 I refused my Mother invitation to a cup of tea and
 began to leave.
 I kissed my Mother and, my Father in his usual
 'Man's Manner,' shook my hand, but, just as I was
 outside the house, he held me, stooped and kissed
 my cheek.
 The door shut and I could hear my Mother say
 'what did you do that for?' but couldn't hear the
 low reply.

My cheeks were still wet from tears as I started the
 car and headed home.

-Brian Neville

Letter from Victoria

Our newsletter gets around and broadens our
 information base:

I have just read - and saved - a copy of your May-
 July 2009 newsletter, forwarded to me by the
 secretary of Eastern Writers Group .

Of particular interest to me is Teresa van der
 Kraan's article, *Self-publishing A Book*. I have just
 self-published *Lighter Than Air*, a crime novel
 with a touch of romance set against a background of
 a flying school at a fictional town in Northern
 NSW, and successfully launched it at
 EWG's regular monthly meeting on 21st June. It
 is the first of six novels in a series written over a
 period of some years.

This novel did well some years ago in a
 competition against some 300 entries - third reading
 but didn't quite make it to the short list - but despite
 that and a very good professional assessment that
 followed, submissions to a number of well-known
 publishers were rejected.

I printed and perfect-bound a couple of A5 copies of
 five of the six books - not really difficult but too
 time-consuming to be a practical proposition -
 and lent them to friends and relatives. Most, on
 reading *Lighter than Air*, went on to read the others
 in the series and their urging finally convinced me
 to self-publish. An introduction through a mutual
 acquaintance led me to a printer/publisher in
 Melbourne suburb Box Hill who is keen to support
 self-publishing and has recently opened an online
 bookstore, and details of the result can be found on
www.palmerhiggsbooks.com.au also by 'googling'
 Clive N. Chatfield. Thought you might be
 interested.

Regards, Clive Chatfield (member of Eastern
 Writers Group, Box Hill, Victoria).

COMPETITIONS

The following are extracts from *Win Writing
 Contests* by Tom Howard:

1. If the contest has no line limits at all or a
 generous line limit of say 50 lines or more, don't pin
 your hopes on a short poem such as a sonnet or a
 haiku. Instead, send a suite of sonnets or a
 collection of haiku.
2. Give considerable thought to your title. It should
 stand out. It should be distinctive. It needs to catch
 the judge's eye. It should intrigue the judge. It

should arouse his or her curiosity so much that he or she WANTS to read your poem.

3. Your opening line must also grab the judge's interest. And don't save all your best imagery and all your most imaginative lines for the body of the poem. Work on that first stanza so that it not only reads smoothly and harmoniously but SOARS!

October 12: Inverawe nature poetry competition, poems for a first prize of \$1000. Go to: www.inverawe.com.au

October 16: Southern Cross literary competition, Australian and international writers of short stories. Prize \$1000. Go to: www.ballaratwriters.com

October 31: The Best of Times short story competition #8 for humorous short stories (any theme) up to 2500 words. Cash prizes for first, second and third place and highly commended and commended certificates. Contact: Chris Broadribb, PO Box 55, Blaxcell, NSW 2142 or cabbook-8@yahoo.com.au or <http://spiky.onetripod.com/comp8.html>

November 30: *The New Writer* magazine describes this as 'one of the major annual international competitions for short stories, novellas, single poems, poetry collections, essays and articles'. Guidelines: <http://www.thenewwriter.com/prizes.htm> or entry form: <http://www.thenewwriter.com/entryform.htm> or The New Writer, PO Box 60, CRANBROOK, TN17 2RE, UK or admin@thenewwriter.com

PUBLISHING/FELLOWSHIPS/ OPPORTUNITIES

Positive Words magazine invites submissions of poetry and prose for upcoming issues of the monthly magazine. Contact: the editor, Sandra James, PO Box 798, Heathcote 3523, Victoria. or positivewordsmagazine@live.com.au

Southerly described as Australia's oldest literary magazine accepts high-quality submissions all year round. Short fiction up to 5000 words, 3-10 pages of poetry. Visit <http://www.brandl.com.au/southerly/> for details.

Sharing stories of survival – Bulli resident, Robyn Morris has been thinking about compiling a book of stories about breast cancer for a while, but it took a cancer scare of her own to really kick-start the project. Ms Morris is a university tutor, English

literature researcher, editor and widely published critic. She said she knows a lot of people in the local community who fit the criteria for contributors to the book, but she is also keen to hear from people throughout Australia and even overseas. She is hoping to have the book published by Mothers Day next year. The proceeds from it will go to the National Breast Cancer Foundation, and ultimately the creation of the whole thing is simply Ms Morris' way of contributing to the fight to support those who have breast cancer and help find a cure. The book will be called *Warrior Women*, partly in reference to the mythical Amazons, women warriors who, legend has it, cut off their right breasts to make it easier to shoot a bow. Contact Robyn at ndu.literary@bigpond.com.

Melaleuca is described as a free e-zine of Australian poetry, delivered monthly through your email inbox. For submissions and subscriptions, contact the editor, Phillip A. Ellis, phillip.a.ellis@gmail.com

The Marten Bequest Traveling Scholarships 2010 – \$450,000 total prize money Two-year traveling scholarships offering support for young people in a variety of categories to help them further their cultural education. Three scholarships of \$25,000 each awarded in all of the following categories for study, maintenance and travel either in Australia or overseas: Acting, Instrumental Music, Painting, Poetry, Prose, Singing. To be eligible you must be born in Australia and aged 21-35 at the closing date of entries. www.trust.com.au/philanthropy/awards/awards/marten_bequest

Closing: October 30.

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS FESTIVALS

NSW Writers' Centre Workshops:
The opportunities of Romance Fiction with Anne Gracie, Sunday October 11, 10am – 4pm.
Leaping in the Dark – the Craft of Story with Margo Lanagan, Sunday, October 11, 10am- 4pm.
Advanced picture book workshop with Libby Gleeson, Saturday, October 24, 10am - 4pm.
Everything you need to know about ezines, Saturday, October 24, 10am – 4 pm.
Making it good enough to publish with Melaina Faranda, Sunday 25 October, 10am – 4pm.
To book or for more details NSW Writers' Centre, PO Box 1056 Rozelle, NSW, 2039 or (02) 9555 9757 or fax: (02) 9818 1327 or nswwc@nswwriterscentre.org.au or go to www.nswwriterscentre.org.au