

A flood of fisherpoetry

The 18th annual FisherPoets Gathering hauls in a catch of great entertainment this weekend in downtown Astoria with 90 fisherpoets, musicians, workshops, films and more

Story by CATE GABLE
Photos by ALEX PAJUNAS

Those fishermen and women are doing it again, haulin' in another bounty of poets — north from Alaska and British Columbia, west from Kauai, south from California and downeast from Maine. The North Coast is going to get hit with a virtual storm of fisherpoets Feb. 28, 29 and March 1. As they say on their website, www.fisherpoets.org, "The Fisher Poets Gathering is steaming toward Astoria, a bone in her teeth and looking good."

The FPG seems to broaden its horizons every year. As founder and organizer since its inception in 1997, Jon Broderick says, "We've got 90 fisherpoets from a dozen states and three countries. Sixteen newcomers from Marblehead, Massachusetts, to Palmer, Alaska. Our trusty venues that can have invited us back — the Wet Dog Café, the Voodoo Room, the Columbian Theater, the Astoria Event Center, KALA, Fort George Brewery's Lovell Showroom, the Columbia River Maritime Museum, and, this year, we've a new one: Pier 11.

"And with so many poets, we're not going to sink, though we may touch bottom," he continues. "You know, I looked around the last couple years and noticed ... a lot of the same faces. I didn't want our gathering to feel like a clique. So

I thought, 'We've got to engage some younger folks.' And we've done that this year — one in six poets is new this year.

'I thought, 'We've got to engage some younger folks.' And we've done that this year — one in six poets is new this year. I'm excited about that.'



Rob Seitz, of Morro Bay, California, performs during the 2013 FisherPoets Gathering at the Voodoo Room.

I'm excited about that. Some of them I haven't even met — we've just talked or exchanged email — and some of them I probably won't get to meet. The event is so big and happens so fast. The week after it, I'll hear thank yous from fisherpoets I never did meet."

Fisherwomen

At last year's gathering, Katrina Porteous was dubbed the farthest-flung participant, coming all the way from Northumberland in the United Kingdom. Her visit was sponsored by BBC Radio 4, and documentary journalist Julian Nay accompa-

nied her.

This year, Broderick heard from fisherpoet Jen Pickett. "First she said, 'I'd like to come, but ... I can't make it. I'm in Finland doing graduate work in psychology,'" Broderick recalls. "But she started looking into airfares and within a day or two called back to say she is flying in for the weekend, from Jyväskylä, Finland. She'll set a distance record this year that'll be hard to beat."

Over the years there have been not only more geographical representatives but also a larger proportion of women at the

Check out the official guide to this year's FisherPoets Gathering starting on page 13

podium. A third of this year's fisherpoets are women. It's always great to see the line-up of remarkable fisherwomen set in among all the fellas.

For instance, Mary Garvey, from Seaview, Washington, returns with her angelic voice and classic maritime ballads. Maria Finn is heading up the coast from Sausalito, California. Marsha King is venturing forth from Kauai, Hawaii. Lorrie Haight will participate (and we