



PHOTO BY JOSHUA BESSEX

The Astoria Event Center, from which KMUN broadcasts live both nights, boasts the most seats, raised theater seating in the back and a big stage.



PHOTO BY JOSHUA BESSEX

Larry Kaplan, from Essex, Connecticut, plays a song on guitar during last year's FisherPoets Gathering. Hear him perform 6 p.m. Friday at Wet Dog, 8 p.m. Friday at the Voodoo Room and around 8:40 p.m. Saturday at the Voodoo.

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PROGRAM TO  
THIS YEAR'S  
FISHERPOETS  
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# 'TRULY DEEP'

The 20th annual FisherPoets Gathering celebrates oral traditions and the human experience

By DAN HAAG

In the days of commercial fishing gone by, men and women would anchor alongside one another before the season got underway and read to one another over radios when fishing was slow or during late nights at the cannery. Driven by a desire to revive and sustain this oral tradition, kindred spirits decided to congregate in Astoria once a year on the last weekend in February to present original work.

It was dubbed the FisherPoets Gathering. Going on 20 years, the annual festival has evolved into a way for the close-knit commercial fishing community to honor one another through poems, stories and song.

### A wide reach

Astoria remains proud of its fishing heritage. Established near the mouth of the Columbia River, the city was the hub of commercial salmon fishing in the 19th and early 20th centuries. With thousands of resident fishermen and scores of canneries lining the

river, the town became synonymous with the salmon industry.

The FisherPoets Gathering — which takes place Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 24, 25 and 26 across 10 Astoria venues — honors that history, as well as those still plying cold ocean waters to make a living. Besides poetry recitations and storytelling, the weekend will feature films, workshops and live music.

During this three-day celebration, audiences are given a rare, precious insight into the culture of the contemporary fishing community.

The Gathering's oral tradition combines old-school fishermen and a new generation of poets and audiences, and it has evolved into a vibrant art form. The festival retains the character of yesteryear while discussing more modern themes relating to the fishing industry such as sustainability, concerns about the fishing industry's future, and its relationship with the modern, often unyielding demands of the 21st century.

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