

WELCOME TO THE 2019 FISHERPOETS GATHERING

By Sierra Golden, fisherpoet, Seattle, Wash.

In America, there's a long-running tradition of proclaiming poetry dead — or near dead. In 2016, in his book "The Hatred of Poetry," acclaimed poet and writer Ben Lerner explained, "Every few years an essay appears in a mainstream periodical denouncing poetry or proclaiming its death ... Many more people agree they hate poetry than can agree what poetry is." To those who hate poetry, to those who proclaim poetry dead, I say, "Go, go now to Astoria for the FisherPoets Gathering."

I came to my first FPG in 2013. I had finished a graduate degree in creative writing the spring before and spent the winter as an intern at Copper Canyon Press, an esteemed poetry publisher in Port Townsend, Wash. By no means did I think of poetry as dead, but I did think of it as a bit pretentious, elite, refined. I thought of poetry readings as events that happened in fancy-schmancy, wood-paneled libraries with silent audience members — awed by the poet's words, perhaps, or just bored out of their minds. What I did appreciate from poetry was an attention to the world around us, the intention to find the holy, the humorous and the beautiful, articulate it, and share it.

I'm the daughter of a commercial fisherman, and the year before my first FPG, I'd also worked my seventh summer as a seiner deckhand in Southeast Alaska. In addition to loving poetry, I loved the feeling of sea salt crusting my face; the sound of a remote inlet after the anchor's dropped and the engine's off; the taste of salmon caught, fileted, and baked in the same half-hour; and the feel of a rowdy bar filled with smoke and strangers soon to be friends.

At my first gathering, I found the best of fishing and the best of poetry in a sort of elegant mishmash of worlds. And I found proof — undeniable, irrefutable, living, breathing proof: Poetry is not dead, and not only is poetry not dead, poetry is fun, like that quirky half-estranged aunt you always wished you had. She's vibrant, and thriving, and hopeful, and she came back from her last trip to sea bearing gifts.

What kind of gifts? A hundred and fifty years ago the Spanish poet Adolfo Bécquer wrote, "Maybe, one day, there won't be poets, but there will always be poetry." He articulated an idea that I think FisherPoets know instinctually: poems come through us, not from us. When we take a moment to write the poems we find in the natural world around us, or when we take a moment to listen to the talented poets among us — as you'll have a chance to do this weekend — we are gifted with community, laughter, joy, shared sorrow, epiphany and a whole range of human emotions that make us, well, more human.

Which is all to say that if you love poetry or hate it, if you're here for your first gathering or your 22nd: Welcome! It's going to be a special weekend at a time when so much of the world feels out of control and so many of us could use a little extra pep in our step. I'm so glad you're here, and I wish you an FPG weekend that feels a little like this poem:

"This Is the Dream"

By Olav H. Hauge

*This is the dream we carry through the world
that something fantastic will happen
that it has to happen
that time will open by itself
that doors shall open by themselves
that the heart will find itself open
that mountain springs will jump up
that the dream will open by itself
that we one early morning
will slip into a harbor
that we have never known.*

Translated from
Norwegian by Robert
Bly and Robert Hedin
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Alex Pajunas

Sierra Golden

GET YOUR ENTRY BUTTON!

Don't forget your entry button, good throughout the weekend at all reading and special event venues.

Buttons are for sale at:

- The FisherPoets Gearshack (1312 Commercial St.): Noon to 10 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday
- Astoria Brewing Co. (144 11 St.): 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday
- Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce (111 Marine Drive): 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

- Old Town Framing (1287 Commercial St.): 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

And at all reading venues during the Gathering.

Price:

- \$15 each
- Children and students under 18 get in free.



- 1 COLUMBIAN THEATER 1114 Marine Dr.
- 2 FORT GEORGE BREWERY LOVELL SHOWROOM 426 14th St.
- 3 KALA 1017 Marine Dr.
- 4 LIBERTY THEATRE 1203 Commercial St.
- 5 LABOR TEMPLE DINER & BAR 934 Duane St.
- 1 VODOO ROOM 1114 Marine Dr.
- 6 ASTORIA BREWING COMPANY 144 11th St.
- 7 WINEKRAFT 80 10th St.
- 8 BARBEY MARITIME CENTER 1792 Marine Dr.
- 9 SOUTH BAY WILD FISH HOUSE 262 9th St.
- 10 CLATSOP COMMUNITY COLLEGE PATRIOT HALL 1651 Lexington Ave.
- 11 FPG GEARSHACK 1312 Commercial St.
- 12 STUDIO 11 453-A 11th St.
- 13 PIER 39 HANTHORN CANNERY MUSEUM 100 39th St.
- 14 ASTORIA VISUAL ARTS GALLERY 1010 Duane St.
- 15 IMOGEN GALLERY 240 11th St. / JD'S OUTDOOR FILM PROJECTION