

Lessons for birds and humans

Novel focuses on serinettes, built to teach songs to birds

Laura Stanfill is simply a pillar of the Northwest literary community. A transplant from New Jersey, Stanfill has been a Portland resident for many years. In the far archives of a blog she started more than a decade ago, she announces on her very first post, in a humble yet hopeful way, that the themes she's going to be dwelling on will be writing, reading and community.

Also in that initial post, Stanfill mentions a novel that she has been working on for some time, one that involves "mechanical music." As the author's blog develops, she shares interviews with other writers, lists of books she loves and information about writing, plotting and rewriting.

Two years later, she records her effort in launching a micro-press. Finally, Stanfill announces that her novel, that one with the mechanical music, is finished. It is titled "The Serinette."

Over the next year, Stanfill retreats from

the blog, but her publishing endeavor, Forest Avenue Press, continues to grow. With the tagline, "literary fiction on a joyride," the press has published nearly 20 books to date. Stanfill also launched the Main Street Writers Movement, encouraging writers to support regional literary organizations and independent bookstores and to cultivate a local literary ecosystem in every community.

And in case you were wondering about that novel that Stanfill was supposedly finished writing, it took another seven years before being published. The debut novel is a testament not only to Stanfill's dedication to learning and practicing craft, but also to her perseverance.

The book has a beguiling new title, "Singing Lessons for the Stylish Canary," but keeps its theme. It still revolves around serinettes, small barrel organs that were crafted in France 200 years ago to teach human tunes to songbirds.

The story has folktale qualities. Beginning in a small French village where the primary trades are serinette crafting and lacemaking, it seems to be a setting where little changes

This week's book

'Singing Lessons for the Stylish Canary'
by Laura Stanfill

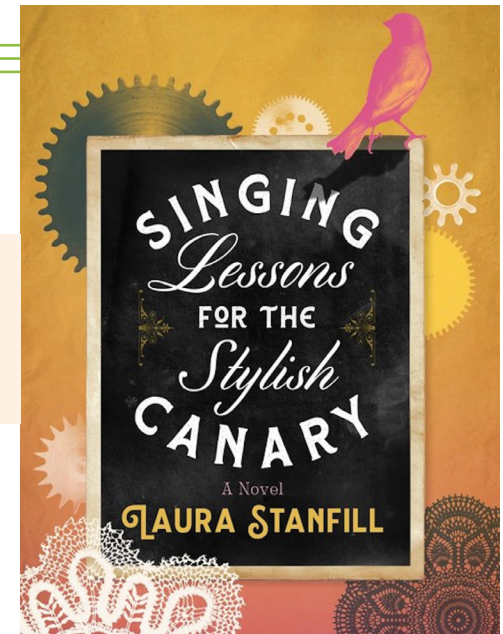
Lanternfish Press – 352 pp – \$18.99

from one generation to the next. Certainly serinette master Monsieur Blanchard expects to pass his business along to his first born son, Georges, and in time he will do the same.

But unusual events disrupt this expectation. For one, when Georges is a baby, the rain clouds that have perennially cloaked the village suddenly part. Soon, everyone credits Georges with bringing the sunny change to the weather.

Many years later, Georges' son, Henri, is born, and this lad finds it impossible to fill the shoes of his legendary father. But when Henri discovers a secret stash of letters in his parents' bedroom, what he initially believes will doom his future may have an entirely different effect.

This tale of generational tension, adoles-



cent growing pains and jealousy occasionally gets mired in despair. But it is leavened with historical curiosities and magical realism, not to mention canaries. Henri pursues a future where the sun may not shine every day, but optimism is the prevailing wind.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at barbaralmcm@gmail.com.

Coastal Living



LOWER COLUMBIA BOWL

NOW OPEN

826 Marine Dr. Astoria
503-325-3321



LOWER COLUMBIA BOWL

SAFE, SANITIZED, READY TO ROLL

Bowling is Back!

\$1 OFF WEDNESDAYS

Take \$1 off:

- Shoe rental
- Every Game
- Fountain Sodas
- Adult Beverages

Discover More!



DiscoverOurCoast.com

ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS HERE!

Call us at
503-325-3211
to learn more