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Poets create atmosphere of openness, honesty

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Samuel Irving has been writing poetry since he was five years old, after the death of a close friend prompted an array of emotions.

"For years I just kept it to myself," he said. "I was afraid to let anyone inside."

All that changed when Irving met someone in high school that challenged his isolation.

Marquis Stoudamire wrote poetry as well and intuitively the two understood each other. They shared work and encouraged one another's aspirations.

"We've been friends ever since," said Stoudamire.

Now that friendship has blossomed into a collaborative literary project called Abstract Visionz. The two poets will produce their own books and cd's and are hosting Emotions, a twice-monthly poetry and spoken word night, at Sweetwaters in Southeast Portland. Cover is ten dollars and includes a hearty meal.

Irving said the poetry and spoken word scene in Portland was in need of some new blood.

"Poetry wasn't being represented," he said. "We wanted to bring some light to it."

The light shed by Irving and his closest friends is unfiltered, unstaged and all together elegant. On the first Wednesday of Emotions a talented handful of artists came out to rhyme and rap to the truest rhythms of the heart.

Usman Ally is a student at Lewis and Clark



Above Emotions poet Marquis Stoudamire embraces an audience member after his reading at Sweetwaters. Below, a spoken word artist Turiya Atry performs an original work. Poets meet every other Wednesday for an evening of entertainment and food.



Your love was refreshing like the cold side of a pillow on a hot summer's night, constantly flipping it over every five minutes.

—excerpt from a poem by Marquis Stoudamire.

He feels comfortable performing in the atmosphere Irving and Stoudamire have created.

"You can talk about race in this environment," he said. "I just enjoy being able to get it out."

Themes of expression range from life and death, to sex and relationships, but beneath it all there is an awareness of a higher meaning and a search for truth. Here, you don't have to worry about saying the wrong thing you just say what's on your mind.

"We want everyone to just be themselves," Stoudamire said. "You got to have a sense of belonging."

Irving's father, also called Samuel, was listening in last Wednesday night. As a practicing jazz musician he appreciates the work

his son is doing.

"It's a very expressive art form," he said. "It's a combination of love, scrutiny, and problem solving. I'm really impressed by this."

The cast of friends knows there may not be a lot of money in the art they pursue, they're just doing what feels right — and telling it like it is.

"I really don't know how I'm surviving, I'm just doing what I love to do," Stoudamire said. "This is my passion. It's all about honesty."

Abstract Visionz and other spoken word and poetry guest artists will meet for Emotions again on Wednesday, Nov. 20 at 7 p.m. at Sweetwaters, 3350 SE Morrison.

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ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Doug Woy Paintings; til Nov. 30
North Portland artist Doug Woy presents a new solo collection of mixed media pieces at Needleful Things, 325 NW 6th Ave. With a vision beyond his 22 years, Woy utilizes texture, complex layering techniques and found objects to create social commentary about poverty, domestic violence and other troubles found in blue-collar American life.

Jungle Book; Friday, Nov. 15 through Dec. 1
Tears of Joy Puppet Theater Family Series presents Jungle Book, featuring the adventures of Mowgli as he tries to discover whether he is a monkey, a wolf or a man. Show times at the PCPA Dolores Winningstad Theatre, 1111 SW Broadway, are Fridays, at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays, at 11 a.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. For information, call 503-284-0557.

!TchKunG! and Culture Jam, Friday, Nov. 15
!TchKunG! is an artist collective, experimental percussion and theatre troupe comprised of musicians, fire workers, performance artists, martial artists, welders, painters, sculptors, graphic designers, videographers, activists and clowns. Culture Jam has all of these elements plus some speakers, poets, comedians, architects, alchemists and raving lunatics. This avant-garde show with an 'extremely special guest' is either at Plan B, 315 SE 3rd Ave, or at The Medicine Hat, 1834 NE Alberta, or at both. Tickets are \$8.99 at the door. For more information, call 503-231-0039 or 503-231-0039, or both.

Children of a Lesser God; Nov. 14 through Nov. 23
The Portland Community College Theater Department presents Mark Medoff's deeply moving, beautifully written play about the romance and marriage of a spirited deaf girl and the devoted young teacher she meets at the school for the deaf. Show times are at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, Nov. 14 through Nov. 23. Tickets are \$5 for students and \$7 for general admission. For more information, call 503-977-4323.

On the Verge; Nov. 15, 16 and 17
Concordia University Theater presents Eric Overmyer's comedy, On the Verge: Or the Geography of yearning, a zany tale about three adventurous Victorian ladies who set out on a journey in 1888 and end up traveling forward to 1955. Described as a cross between Jack Kerouac and Oscar Wilde, Overmyer's script leads these ladies through their discovery of twentieth century gadgets, catch phrases and cliches — all seen through the eyes of Victorian anthropologists. On Friday and Saturday showtime is 7:30 p.m., on Sunday there is a 2 p.m. matinee. The Concordia University Fine Arts Building is located two blocks north of Ainsworth on the corner of 27th and Highland. For more information call, 503-280-8614.

Compania Nacional De Danza, Tuesday, Nov. 19
Led by world famous artistic director and choreographer, Nacho Duato, Spain's premier dance company makes a one night appearance at the Keller Auditorium, SW 3rd and Clay, at 7:30 p.m. Compania will perform 'Bach: Multiplicity, Forms of Silence and Emptiness,' a full evening of work inspired by the life and music of Johann Sebastian Bach. Tickets are \$18 to \$39 and can be found at the PCPA Box Office on SW Broadway and Main, Ticket Central at Pioneer Square and at all Ticketmaster locations or by calling 503-224-4400.

Derrick Bell reading, Tuesday, Nov 19
Derrick Bell, an internationally recognized legal scholar, civil rights activist and author of *Ethical Ambition: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth*, will host a discussion, reading and book signing at Powells Books on Burnside at 7:30 p.m.

American Idol; Tuesday, Nov. 19
Get a chance to see the American idol finalists live in concert at the Rose Garden. See Kelly Clarkson, Justin Gaurini, Nikki McKibbin and other top finishers as they perform songs from the television show and from the soon to be released CD. The event will be at the Rose Garden on Tuesday, Nov. 19, 7:30 p.m. Call 503-224-4400 or go online to www.rosequarter.com or www.ticketmaster.com.

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