

3-30-2007

New Writing Series - Fall 2007

English Department

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CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES
GRANT APPLICATION

PROVIDE 12 (TWELVE) COPIES, INCLUDING THE ORIGINAL.
PLEASE PLACE A COPY OF THIS COVER SHEET ON TOP OF EACH COPY

I. Applicant/Organization: New Writing Series (English & National Poetry Foundation)

II. a. Responsible Organization Officer: Steve Evans

b. Title: Associate Professor of English, NWS Coordinator

c. Campus Address (include EMail and Telephone): 304 Neville, steven.evans@umit.maine.edu, 356-5921(cell), 581-3822 (office)

III. Summary of program requiring funding (title; featured artist(s); speaker(s); scheduled date (s):

New Writing Series Fall 2007 Program featuring ten writers in seven events.

Poets Joanne Kyger, Ron Padgett, Michael Davidson, Sawako Nakayasu, and Aaron Kunin. Fiction writers Aimee Bender, Edward Desautels, Lydia Millet, George Saunders, and David Matlin.

Most events Thursday afternoons at 4:30 in Soderberg Center Auditorium

\$4000

IV. Budget Proposal Form must be attached. Spreadsheet attached.

Funding for current application is contingent upon submission of reports for any previous grant awards, including final budget and attendance figures.

Signature of responsible organization officer/date:  3-30-07
SIGNATURE DATE

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION TO: CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES COMMITTEE
C/O PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
200 ALUMNI HALL, CAMPUS

28 March 2007

Dear Members of the Cultural Affairs Committee,

I write to request the Committee's support for the fall 2007 New Writing Series, an innovative literary arts program sponsored by the English Department and the National Poetry Foundation.

The amount we request, **\$4,000**, is less than one-third of the projected operating budget for the fall Series of \$13,115. The majority of the financial support for the Series will be provided by the English Department, through its Elliott (\$4915) and newly-established Ellis (\$1200) funds. The National Poetry Foundation will provide important logistical support and a financial contribution of \$1000. Co-sponsorships with the Honors College (\$1500 for poet and translator Ron Padgett), the Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies (tentative commitment of \$500 for poet and disability scholar Michael Davidson), and perhaps Public Policy (for fiction writer and prison specialist David Matlin), make up the remainder of our funding package. The detailed budget appended to this letter provides an overview of projected expenses and revenue sources.

The fall Series is projected to comprise seven events featuring ten writers (five poets and five fiction writers). The exciting line-up includes famed "Beat" poet **Joanne Kyger**, whose poems are in a deep, four-decade-long dialogue with the Buddhist tradition; the Guggenheim and MacArthur fellow, novelist **George Saunders**; the witty and elegant New York School poet, translator, and anthologist **Ron Padgett**; emerging writer and translator **Sawako Nakayasu**, whose work as a translator between English and Japanese is especially noteworthy; the "darkly humorous" author of five novels, **Lydia Millet**, whose *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart* has been short-listed for the Arthur C. Clarke Award; and the poet and literary historian **Michael Davidson**, whose scholarship in recent years has focused on the poetics of American Sign Language and the ways in which "disability" has been a constant, but too seldom acknowledged, fact of literary practice in the U.S. Biographical sketches of all ten writers are appended below.

Over and above the excellent credentials of the individual writers forecast for the fall Series, we believe there are other compelling reasons to support of the New Writing Series.

- **A cutting-edge research university with an institutional commitment to innovation deserves literary arts programming that is diverse, daring, and original.** The New Writing Series is such a program. While all modes and methods of writing fall within its ambit of curiosity, we take care to ensure that writers whose work departs from, and perhaps even challenges, dominant commercial and aesthetic assumptions are given a fair hearing. Our programming

is consistently among the most diverse on the campus (and by extension in the region), foregrounding ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and sexual diversity (see the appended document "About the New Writing Series" for details). And our programming is original: no other institution in Maine, and only a few others in the country, have shown the kind of commitment the New Writing Series has toward the full-range of contemporary literary practice. We seek to confer recognition with our programming, not just to ratify judgments made somewhere up the literary food chain.

- **The New Writing Series does a lot with a little.** For what would be a modest honorarium if paid in a lump sum to a single celebrity on campus for one evening, the New Writing Series creates a coherent sequence of events that adds a distinctive dimension to the intellectual and artistic climate on campus and in the region. The honoraria we offer are low (between \$250 and \$1000) and we economize in every way we can on other expenses (see appended budget). Because the Series has an established identity—in terms of time (Thursday afternoons), place (the Soderberg Center Auditorium), and "look" (MaJo Keleshian's bold designs, echoed in our electronic publicity)—we get more out of each individual event. This has been a key to our successful audience development. Inertia is the enemy of artistic creation: the New Writing Series creates momentum around the act of literary creation, stirring up lively conversations that resonate beyond the cube-like walls of the Soderberg Auditorium.

- **The New Writing Series has a strong local audience, but it also brings national visibility to the University of Maine.** The off-campus publicity for the New Writing Series always spotlights the UMaine (rather than the English Department or the NPF): our goal is to keep Orono on the national map when it comes to the literary arts, and to emphasize that the UMS flagship campus is at the leading edge of literary artistic practice. No other college in the state or campus in the UM system can demonstrate the depth of commitment and ongoing excellence that the New Writing Series, with the Committee's support, has achieved.

- **Literary culture is an essential piece in the "creative economy" puzzle.** A university campus that fails to stay in touch with contemporary literary practice is depriving itself of access to the fresh thinking that writers, often in advance of their colleagues in other disciplines, bring to the world around us. The literary arts are essential to the creation of an atmosphere of free exploration of any and all aspects of contemporary existence, an atmosphere as decisive in the sciences as in the humanities.

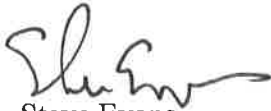
- **The "New" in New Writing Series.** We have been fortunate to receive Committee support for the NWS in the past and we are deeply grateful for it. But the enduring institutional framework of the Series should not mask the fact that we bring new voices and visions to campus with every fresh season of the NWS.

We are, in other words, offering "new programming" for the Committee's consideration, programming that will disappear from the cultural calendar without your support.

I have included an itemized budget (using an Excel spreadsheet in lieu of the supplied form) for the fall New Writing Series. Our travel policy allots to invited writers "up to \$500 for travel" (note that airfares even from the Northeast often exceed that sum). We work with individuals to minimize that expense whenever possible. Accommodations are for two nights at the University Inn in Orono at "Fall Season" rates of \$72 single, \$82 double. Meal and reception expenses do not factor into our request for Committee support: they are included here for informational purposes only. In those cases where scheduling or other difficulties preclude a proposed writer from participating in the Series, we seek replacements of comparable rank and reputation to fill the slot. I believe the other items should be self-explanatory, but I am more than happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Evans", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steve Evans
Associate Professor of English
New Writing Series Coordinator

NWS F07 Proposed Budget
Cultural Affairs Committee
3-30-07

I	Event Expenses	honorarium	travel by	travel from	trav allotment	accommod	meals	cosponsor
	writer							
	David Matlin (Fiction)	500	air	San Diego	500	144	50	
	George Saunders (Fiction)	500	air	Syracuse	500	144	50	
	Lydia Millet (Fiction)	500	air	Arizona	500	144	50	
	Edward Desautels (Fiction)	250	air	Pittsburg	500	144	50	
	Aimee Bender (Fiction)	500	air	Los Angeles	500	144	50	PubPolicy
	Joanne Kyger (Poetry)	1000	air	San Francisco	500	144	50	NPF
	Michael Davidson (Poetry)	500	air	San Diego	500	144	50	CIDisStudies
	Ron Padgett (Poetry)	750	air	New York	500	144	50	Honors
	Aaron Kunin (Poetry)	250	air	Los Angeles	500	144	50	
	Sawako Nakayasu (Poetry)	250	air	San Francisco	500	144	50	
		5000			5000	1440	500	
II	Fixed Expenses							
	Agent	Expense	Service	Note				
	MaJo Kaleshian	225	Poster Design					
	Printer	150	Poster Printing					
	Marketing Dept	300	Event Taping					
	Pulp & Paper	donated	Room	\$350 value				
	Local print news sources	500	Advertising					
		1175						
III	Total Series Expenses							
	Honoraria	5000						
	Travel	5000						
	Accommodations	1440						
	Meals	500						
	Fixed	1175						
	total	13115						
IV	Overview							
	Elliott Commitment	4915						
	Ellis Commitment	1200						
	Honors Commitment	1500						
	NPF Commitment	1000						
	Other Commitments	500						
	Cultural Affairs Request	4000						
		13115						

Bio-bibliographical Information for Proposed Readers (Alphabetical)

AIMEE BENDER (FICTION)

Aimee Bender is the author of three books: *The Girl in the Flammable Skirt* (1998) which was a NY Times Notable Book, *An Invisible Sign of My Own* (2000) which was an L.A. Times pick of the year, and *Willful Creatures* (2005) which was nominated by *The Believer* as one of the best books of the year. Her short fiction has been published in *Granta*, *GQ*, *Harper's*, *Tin House*, *McSweeney's*, *The Paris Review*, and many more, as well as heard on PRI's *This American Life* and *Selected Shorts*. She's received two Pushcart prizes, and was nominated for the TipTree award in 2005. She lives in Los Angeles, and teaches creative writing at USC.

MICHAEL DAVIDSON (POETRY)

Davidson has written eight books of poetry as well as numerous historical, cultural and critical works. He has been affiliated with the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) since 1974 and as a professor of American literature since 1988 with areas of study and research in Modern Poetry, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, and Disability Studies. Davidson edited *George Oppen: New Collected Poems*, which appeared in 2002. Davidson, who recently became hearing impaired, served as the first curator of the Mandeville Department of Special Collections (UCSD) where the George Oppen papers are stored. The Archive for New Poetry is now a major campus, community and international resource for studying post-1945 English-language poetry, and is one of the four largest American poetry collections in the U.S. The archive contains holdings that emphasize the ongoing "countertradition" in recent American writing – particularly the Objectivist poets, the Black Mountain poets, the San Francisco Renaissance, the New York School, and the Language School. In addition to being a widely published poet and poetry editor (he is represented in the 2004 edition of *Best American Poetry* by a poem entitled "Bad Modernism"), Davidson is known for insightful literary criticism, his work in disability studies, and for the meticulous editing of the monumental *George Oppen: New Collected Poems*.

EDWARD DESAUTELS (FICTION)

A stylist and caustic social critic in the Burroughs vein, Desautel's novel *Flicker in the Porthole Glass* was described by the *Review of Contemporary Fiction* as, "a disturbing—and eerily riveting—account of the dilemma posed by our cultural addiction to film," while *Context* wrote, "the achievement here is Desautels's prose, an aural event...that moves with the...urgent kinesis of hard bop jazz." One of the interesting things about Ed is that he lives and writes outside of academia, working a nine-to-five job and playing golf on the weekends while writing some of the most challenging and absorbing fiction today.

AARON KUNIN (POETRY)

Aaron Kunin is the author of *Folding Ruler Star* (Fence Books) and *Secret Architecture* (Braincase). He is an Assistant Professor of English at Pomona College, where his research and teaching focuses on early- and pre-modern forms of lyric and literary practice. His work has appeared in *Boston Review*, *FENCE*, *The Germ*, *No: A Journal of the Arts*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *The Poker*, and elsewhere.

JOANNE KYGER (POETRY)

Kyger studied at Santa Barbara College but left before graduating. She moved to San Francisco and became involved with the poetry scene around Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan. In 1959 she moved to Japan with Gary Snyder and then traveled to India with Snyder, Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky. She returned to the United States in 1964 and her first book, *The Tapestry and the Web* was published the next year. Kyger has published more than twenty books of poetry and prose, including *Going On: Selected Poems, 1958-1980* (1983) [1] and *Just Space: poems, 1979-1989* (1991). She has lived in Bolinas since 1968, where she has edited the local newspaper and done some occasional teaching at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. In 2000, Kyger published a collection of autobiographical writings: *Strange Big Moon: Japan and India Journals, 1960-1964*, which Anne Waldman has called "one of the finest books ever in the genre of 'journal writing.'" Most recent poetry collections: *God Never Dies* (Blue Press), *The Distressed Look* (Coyote Books), *Again* (La Alameda Press), and *As Ever: Selected Poems* published by Penguin Books. As of the Fall 2006, her latest collection *About Now: Collected Poems* is forthcoming from National Poetry Foundation.

DAVID MATLIN (FICTION)

Writer and cultural critic David Matlin teaches in the MFA program at San Diego State University and is the author of numerous works of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, including *How the Night Is Divided* (McPherson & Company, 1993), a novel (chosen by the National Book Critics Circle as one of the ten most notable books of the year), and *China Beach* (Station Hill Press, 1989), a collection of poems. He spent a decade teaching English in a Prison Education Program in upstate New York, an experience that informs his powerful indictment *Prisons: Inside the New America from Vernooeykill Creek to Abu Ghraib* (North Atlantic Books, 2005). His current work in progress weaves together writing in multiple genres (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction) and moves through multiple disciplines (history, politics, poetics, anthropology) to create an unusually rich description of American culture at the present moment. Matlin was proposed for the spring 2007 series but was prevented from attending by scheduling conflicts.

LYDIA MILLET (FICTION)

Millet is the author of five darkly humorous novels: *Omnivores*, *George Bush: Dark Prince of Love*, *My Happy Life*, *Everyone's Pretty*, *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart*. Her third

novel, *My Happy Life*, won the 2003 PEN-USA Award for Fiction. Her fifth novel, *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart* has been short-listed for the 2007 Arthur C. Clarke Award.

SAWAKO NAKAYASU (POETRY)

Sawako Nakayasu was born in Yokohama, Japan, and has lived mostly in the US since the age of six. Her books include *So we have been given time* (Or, (Verse, 2004), *Nothing fictional but the accuracy or arrangement* (she, (Quale Press, 2006), and *Clutch* (Tinfish chapbook, 2002). A frequent translator from Japanese into English (and vice versa), Nakayasu recently edited, introduced, and translated *Four From Japan: Contemporary Poetry and Essays by Women*.

RON PADGETT (POETRY)

Ron Padgett was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1942. He began writing at the age of 13 and started a little magazine in high school called *The White Dove Review* with friends Dick Gallup and Joe Brainard. In its five issues, the magazine published Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Robert Creeley, LeRoi Jones (now Amiri Baraka), Ted Berrigan, and others. In 1960, he moved to New York, where he attended Columbia College and studied with poets such as Kenneth Koch and Lionel Trilling. Padgett later spent a year in Paris on a Fulbright scholarship where he studied French literature. His first collection of poems, *Bean Spasms*, written with Ted Berrigan, was published in 1967. Since then he has published several books of poetry, including *You Never Know* (Coffeehouse Press, 2002), *Poems I Guess I Wrote* (2001), *New & Selected Poems* (1995), *The Big Something* (1990), *Triangles in the Afternoon* (1979), and *Great Balls of Fire* (1969). He has also published a volume of selected prose titled *Blood Work* (1993), as well as translations of Blaise Cendrars' *Complete Poems* (1992), Pierre Cabanne's *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (1971), and Guillaume Apollinaire's *The Poet Assassinated* (1968).

GEORGE SAUNDERS (FICTION)

George Saunders is the author of the short story collections "*Pastoralia*," "*CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*" (both New York Times Notable Books) and, most recently, "*In Persuasion Nation*." "*CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*" was a Finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award. "*In Persuasion Nation*" is one of three finalists for the 2006 STORY Prize for best short story collection of the year. Saunders is also the author of the novella-length illustrated fable, "*The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil*" the New York Times bestselling children's book, "*The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip*," illustrated by Lane Smith, (which has won major children's literature prizes in Italy and the Netherlands), and a forthcoming book of selected non-fiction, "*The Braindead Megaphone*." Saunders's work has been translated into many languages, and has appeared in the O'Henry, "Best American Short Story," "Best Non-Required Reading," and "Best American Travel Writing" anthologies. In 2001, Saunders was selected by Entertainment Weekly as one of the 100 top most creative people in entertainment, and by The New Yorker in 2002 and one of the best writers 40 and under. In 2006, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and named a MacArthur Fellow.

About the New Writing Series — A Brief History

The New Writing Series was formally inaugurated in the spring of 2000 when a proposal drafted by Steve Evans in consultation with Benjamin Friedlander and Burton Hatlen received unanimous approval from the English department's Speaker and Special Events Committee, then chaired by Welch Everman. In the sixteen semesters of its existence, it has served as an instrument for investigating the state of contemporary writing here in Maine, in the U.S. and Canada more broadly, and to some extent the world (Nigerian, Australian, Jamaican, English, Chilean, and other writers have come to Orono through the Series). The Series receives primary funding through the English Department's Lloyd H. Elliott fund and has received consistent administrative support from the National Poetry Foundation, matching funds through the Cultural Affairs Committee, and co-sponsorships from a wide variety of departments and programs (the Honors College, Art, Multicultural Programs, Women in the Curriculum, Wilde Stein, Modern Languages & Classics, and others).

The primary objectives of the New Writing Series are (i) to make contemporary poetry and fiction a valued part of the cultural life at the University of Maine, (ii) to broaden the University's local, national, and international reputation as a site of vibrant cultural exchange and creativity, and (iii) to cultivate links within the University as well as between the University and area secondary schools that foster imaginative approaches to thinking about contemporary literary practices. Whereas developing an audience for individual events can be difficult, a Series creates an ongoing context for the exploration of contemporary writing and signals a more serious level of commitment to the inclusion of the literary arts in the cultural repertoire of campus and community life.

Since 2000, the Series has hosted more than 100 events, featuring more than 150 writers, and it has earned a loyal local audience (typical event attendance ranges between 40 and 150 people) as well as a strong national reputation. Extended residencies by Robert Creeley (between 2000-2003) and Alice Notley (2004) have been coordinated in conjunction with the Series, as has a Libra Professorship that brought four African American poets—Jay Wright, Jayne Cortez, Lorenzo Thomas, and Amiri Baraka—to campus in 2001.

A Series weblog was created in the fall of 2006 and a substantial archive of materials of research and pedagogical value (countless hours of sound recordings, videotapes of live readings, forty professional quality digital-video "Poet Profiles" of NWS participants) has been carefully gathered.

New Writing Series • Fall 2006 • Narrative Report

The New Writing Series requested \$4185 (of a total proposed budget of \$10,685) from the Cultural Affairs Committee to support its Fall 2006 programming. Due to a high volume of competing requests, the Committee was constrained to limit its support to \$3000.

The six events (featuring seven visiting writers) of the pared-back Series drew a combined audience of 355 people (an average of about sixty people per event) and expenses for the Series totaled \$7435 (see attached spreadsheet). We were able to economize on our travel and accommodation budgets largely due to the willingness of several of our guests to travel by means other than plane and/or be accommodated at faculty members' homes rather than the University Inn.

Full documentation of all expenses is retained by the English Department and is available upon request.

