AWP Event: GPC at 35: Creating the Sustainable Reading Series

Panelists:

Rick Campbell, GPC touring poet and Director of the Florida Writer’s Circuit, modeled on the GPC
Gordon Johnston, GPC Director from 1996-2007
James Davis May, participating poet in the Georgia Poets Initiative, a special project of the GPC for poets living in Georgia
Sandra Meek, GPC Director from 2007-present (session moderator)
Sholeh Wolpe, GPC touring poet

Panel Details:

As institutions continue to cut programming budgets, finding affordable ways to bring writers to read and meet with creative writing students becomes ever more urgent. In this session, panelists will address the rewards as well as the challenges of creating and maintaining a successful and affordable reading series. Significant time will be left for the audience to ask questions.

Questions the panel will address:

—how, and why, begin a consortium
—how this model makes a reading series affordable and sustainable
—how logistics can best be managed as a director, as an institutional representative, and as a touring poet
—how this model benefits institutions and audiences
—how poets benefit from participation

Background on the GPC and GPI:

The Georgia Poetry Circuit was founded by Adrienne Moore Bond, Mercer Professor, who served as the Circuit Director until her death in 1996. Dr. Gordon Johnston then assumed the Directorship, a post he held until 2007. Mercer served as the flagship school for the Circuit from 1985 to 2007, when the Circuit directorship was moved to Berry College, where it is now housed.
Dr. Sandra Meek, Professor of English, Rhetoric and Writing, has served as Georgia Poetry Circuit Director since 2007.

Founded at Mercer University in 1985, the Georgia Poetry Circuit is a consortium of ten Georgia colleges and universities working together to bring three poets of national and international reputation annually to all members’ campuses, providing an important access to the literary arts for Georgia residents across the state. At each school, each Circuit poet gives a free and open reading of his/her work. Visiting poets also meet with creative writing students at each campus for workshops, talks, or extended question and answer sessions. In addition to the opportunity to hear work from diverse writers of national and international reputation, the Circuit events provide Georgia students with an immensely valuable educational opportunity for interaction with many of the best contemporary poets in the United States. Recent GPC poets include Adrian Matejka, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Sholeh Wolpe, Kevin Prufer, and Kim Addonizio.

A program of the Georgia Poetry Circuit created by GPC Director Dr. Sandra Meek in 2015, the Georgia Poets Initiative is a registry of Georgia’s best poets who have each generously agreed to give one reading per academic year at a Georgia college or university for no stipend. Most GPI poets are also available for readings at Georgia high schools, libraries, and community arts organizations, and some GPI poets are available for more than one event per year.

The Georgia Poetry Circuit mission since 1985 has been to bring poets of national reputation to audiences in Georgia; the Georgia Poets Initiative extends and enhances the GPC’s mission by bringing Georgia poets to new audiences across the state, increasing access to the literary arts for Georgia audiences and celebrating the accomplished and diverse contemporary world of poetry in Georgia. All GPC and GPI readings are free and open to the public.