

# Connecticut Poetry Society

December 2024



**CPS website is <http://ctpoetry.net/>.**

**Contact us at [ctpoetryline@gmail.com](mailto:ctpoetryline@gmail.com)**

**While you're online, *Friend us on Face-book.***

## **CPS Honorary Board**

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate  
Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022  
Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2001-2006  
Vivian Shipley, CSU Distinguished Professor Emerita

## **CPS Officers**

President: Pat Mottola  
Vice President: Jeanne LeVasseur  
Secretary: Amy Graver  
Youth Coordinator: Amy Graver  
Treasurer: Patti Fusco  
Membership: Patti Fusco  
Contests: open position  
Webmasters: Patti Fusco & Tony Fusco  
CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert, & John Surowiecki  
Newsletter: Ginny Connors  
POP Director: Jim Finnegan  
Publicity Director: Shawn Von Briesen

CPS, an affiliate of the National Federations of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS), is dedicated to the promotion and enjoyment of poetry.

## **Are You Up for a Challenge?**

We are encouraging you to participate in the "Getty Museum Challenge." Below is a link to the Getty Museum Challenge, where you are challenged to **recreate an artist's masterpiece**. You can be personally in the recreation, or you can fabricate the recreation using ordinary household items you have at home. We presented this idea at our Fall Festival. This will be great fun! See for yourself! <https://www.getty.edu/news/getty-artworks-recreated-with-household-items-by-creative-geniuses-the-world-over/>

This will tie in with an ekphrastic writing activity at our Spring Fling. Create your "re-creation" and photograph it. Bring the photo, as well as a photo of the original, to the Spring Fling, where CPS members will vote for our favorite re-creation. Yes, there will be prizes! And, in addition, we will each have a chance to write an ekphrastic poem based on one of the entries. This activity is the brainstorm of President **Pat Mottola**. Look forward to more details in a future email. In the meantime, start planning!



at the Fall Festival

## President's Message

Dear CPS members,

So quickly another year has gone by. We have so much to be thankful for. At the Fall Festival I couldn't help but notice the camaraderie and the genuine affection shown to one another. I had the opportunity to talk with many new CPS members who were very happy to find a poetry group to belong to. I welcome all and look forward to seeing everyone at our on-line as well as our in-person events.

Our Fall Festival, at the beautiful Blackstone Memorial Library in Branford, was a great success. The venue is absolutely beautiful. The luncheon, the bookfair, and the open mic were all fabulous. And wow, somehow, we have acquired our very own wizard – "Stanzo." Look for Stanzo (aka **Ron Gagliardi**) at future events. Dear CPS members: YOU make these events great, and I am grateful.

I would like to welcome our new (first ever!) Publicity Chair, **Shawn Von Briesen**. Shawn is a shining star! He truly lights up a room. If you haven't met him yet, prepare to be amazed. He is a man of many, many talents and we are beyond fortunate to have him on board.

I would also like to welcome **Jim Finnegan** as our new POP Director. Jim (aka jforjames) needs no introduction, as we all benefit from his numerous poetry event emails that remind us that poetry in CT is thriving. Jim is inheriting the title of POP Director from **Barb Jennes**. Barb has given us so many exciting, informative educational experiences. With her organizational skills and extensive knowledge of all things poetry, Barb works her magic! Barb, I thank you most sincerely for your huge contribution to CPS.

I would also like to thank **Kathleen McIntosh**, our outgoing Contest Chair. For the past several years Kathleen has kept our contests going without a hitch! In fact, she does it so well and with such grace that one might have thought the contests run themselves. Not so! I'm not sure we can replace her with just one person – we might need a team! Yes, we are looking for a Contest Chair – and perhaps an assistant unless, of course, we find another superwoman (or a superman).

I would also like to acknowledge our Chapter Presidents, who run our individual chapters around Connecticut. Join a Chapter! Check the newsletter for their contact information!

One more thing, and I can't emphasize this enough: CPS thrives **because of our stellar Board of Directors**. Our Board Members give and give. They step up time after time, and they make my job as President so much easier. I can count on them 100% – 100% of the time. Vice President **Jeanne LeVasseur**; Secretary and Youth Coordinator **Amy Graver**; Treasurer, Membership Chair and Webmaster **Patti Fusco**; Assistant Webmaster **Tony**

**Fusco**; Outgoing POP Director **Barb Jennes**;  
Outgoing Contest Chair **Kathleen McIntosh**;  
Newsletter Editor **Ginny Lowe Connors**; CRR editors  
**Ginny Lowe Connors, Debbie Gilbert; John  
Surowiecki**. They demonstrate what dedication  
really means.

Thank you, poets and writers, for enlightening the world with your words. Let me share with you these words by one of the most gifted writers of all time. I hope this message brings you hope and comfort in the year ahead.

*"There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal. I know the world is bruised and bleeding, and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence."* –Toni Morrison

Peace, Love, and Many Blessings for the coming year,  
Pat Mottola, President



Chris Gaffney, open mic

### **CPS Member Wins Hillary Tham Capital Collection Competition**

Congratulations to **Luisa Caycedo-Kimura**, a winner of the Hillary Tham Capital Collection competition for her debut full-length collection *All Were Limones!* Look for details for a Spring release date!

### **New Publication by Ed Ahern**

**Ed Ahern** believes that his newly published novel, *The Will of the Wisp*, a thriller, shows that his background in poetry helps with his fiction writing. His novel, published in November, has received good reviews.

### **Poetry and Art**

On March 15 at 1 pm at Farmington's Barney Library, artwork by **Garrett Phelan** will be exhibited. Both he and **Debbie Gilbert** will be sharing some of their poetry. He'll be reading some of his Coffee House Portrait poems and she'll be reading from new works.

### **New Poetry Collection by Ginny Lowe Connors**

**Ginny Lowe Connors'** new poetry collection, published in November by The Poetry Box, is called *White Sail at Midnight*. One reviewer comments: "In Maggie Smith's well-known poem "Good Bones," the speaker claims, "The world is at least fifty percent terrible..." And although some of the poems in Connors' *White Sail at Midnight* do confront the terrible, they do so in balance with poetry that takes the reader on an exploration of mystery and beauty in this world we inhabit. Follow with Connors on her quest to determine what may be preserved as time passes, as these poems of mortality call out to the eternal."

## Poet in the Spotlight: Barb Jennes

**Barb Jennes**, otherwise known as B. Fulton Jennes, says she is impressed by the quality and diversity of poetry in Connecticut. There's a wealth of talent within the borders of our small state. She herself is an impressive example. She is Poet Laureate Emerita of Ridgefield, Connecticut. Her book, *Blinded Birds*, channels life's trials into powerful poetry, delving into multigenerational struggles with depression and addiction. This book has earned much acclaim.

Jennes teaches workshops in local and regional schools, hosts ongoing generative and critique workshops online, curates the monthly "Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners" reading series hosted by Ridgefield Library on Zoom, and works year-round to line up amazing poets for the "Poetry in the Garden" series that runs each summer in the beautiful gardens of Keeler Tavern in Ridgefield. She claims to sleep a lot, but it's hard to imagine how she fits in time to sleep!

Her poetic career began in early childhood. After her older sister brought home a school newsletter with her own poem printed in it, Barb industriously scribbled on paper (*preliterate lightning*, she calls it now) and gave the "poem" to her mother, who "read" it out loud, imagining the words that were meant to be on the paper. After that affirmation, she's been writing poem after poem.

"To me, being in the poetry-writing zone is a bit like swimming underwater where reality is muffled – not gone entirely, but muted and blurred, like the conversation of a couple in the apartment next door," she says. She also claims to drive her

husband crazy with her need to work in an environment that is silent. She often wears noise-cancelling headphones, which means he's left with the ringing phone, the barking dog, and all the other interruptions of daily life while she writes.



Barb Jennes

Jennes loves narrative poetry, and in the poems she reads she looks for "imagery. A gut punch. The feeling of deep truth, even if the scenario is entirely fictional." Like most writers, she reads widely, and even belongs to three book clubs: one focusing on award-winning contemporary fiction, another on world literature, and a third on the classics - so she usually has three books on the nightstand.

Barb Jennes recently stepped down from her position in CPS as director of the highly POPular POP (Poets on Poetry) program. Over the years, this monthly series has presented an outstanding array of poets who present information on other important poets or on an aspect of the poetic craft. In so many ways, Jennes continues to contribute to the poetry scene in Connecticut.

## **CPS Chapters & Presidents**

If you want to know more about meeting with a specific chapter, please get in touch with the chapter president.

### **Bethel**

Michael Garry  
mgarry1955@gmail.com

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 1-3 pm. Bring copies of a poem to discuss.

### **Farmington Valley**

Debbie Gilbert  
debbiewgilbert@hotmail.com

This chapter meets on the first Monday of each month, from 7-9 pm. Meetings are held in person at One Huntington Glen Road in Avon. Bring ten copies of your poem to share for critique.

### **Greater Hartford**

Pegi Deitz Shea  
pegideitzshea@aol.com

This chapter will meet on the second Monday of each month (except for July and August) at 6:30 pm, via Zoom, and will be managed by Pegi Deitz Shea. We welcome all current CPS members of towns in the Hartford area. If you would like to join, please contact her at pegideitzshea@aol.com.

### **Haiku Chapter**

Tony Fusco  
tfusco357@gmail.com

Members of the group share haiku in response to a prompt. The chair collects the poems in advance. Poems are due by noon on the 15th of the month. Send poems to Tony Fusco with "CPS Haiku for (month & year) in the subject line. Type your haiku directly onto the email and include your name.

The deadline for December Haiku is December 15th at noon.

The December prompt is "Light," although you can write on any subject, and it need not follow the 5-7-5 form.

### **Manchester**

Victoria Dubiel  
victoria.dubiel@hotmail.com

Manchester's Wit and Wisdom group meets on the second Saturday of each month from 1-3. They meet at the Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street in Manchester.

### **Middletown**

Pat Mottola  
ctpoeetryline@gmail.com

This chapter is resuming. Contact Pat for information on how to participate.

### **New Haven**

Tony Fusco  
tfusco357@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10-12. Presently they meet via Zoom.

### **Oreanaug Chapter: Woodbury, Watertown, Southbury, Roxbury, Bethlehem**

Sandy Carlson  
oreanaugchaptercps@gmail.com

The Oreanaug chapter meets in person on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 am. Contact Sandy for the location. The ekphrastic workshops are held at the Woodbury Public Library on the first Saturday of each month at 1 pm.

### **Wilton**

Ed Ahern  
salmonier@aol.com

The Wilton Workshop meets from 2-4 on the third Saturday of each month at the Wilton Library. Email a copy of your poem to Ed in advance, or bring copies when you attend the meeting.

### **Emory Jones Publishes Numerous Poems**

**Emory Jones** has successfully published numerous poems this year in venues such as *The Avocet*, *Pennsylvania's Poetic Voices*, *Agates*, *Pasque's Petals*, and online on the Illinois State Poetry Society's site.

### **Riverwood Poetry Series**

The Riverwood Poetry Series continues to convene monthly at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor Street in Hartford. Events begin at 7 pm.

On December 11 the featured poets will be **Martha Collins** and **Charles O. Hartman**.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> there will be a reading of the Witness Stones with **Marilyn Nelson**, **Kate Rushin**, **Antoinette Brim-Bell**, and **Rhonda Ward**. The Witness Stones project explores the-all-too-often forgotten history of enslaved people in Connecticut by sharing some of their stories.

On February 12, just before Valentine's Day, the program features poetry of two couples: **Margot Schilpp & Jeff Mock** and **Denise Abercrombie & Jonathan Andersen**.

Riverwood programs also include an open mic.

### **WordHouse Reading Series**

The WordHouse Reading Series takes place in the beautiful and historic Noah Webster House, 227 South Main Street, in West Hartford. Events start at 2 pm and include an open mic.

On December 14 the featured poets will be **Debbie Gilbert** and **V. Penelope Pelizzon**. Debbie Gilbert has written several poetic narratives related to Irish history, including *Finches in Kilmainham* and *Misneach: A Story of Kidnap, Enslavement, and*

*Colonialism* (Grayson Books). V. Penelope Pelizzon's fourth book, a *LitHub* recommendation for 2024, is called *A Gaze Hound That Hunteth by the Eye* (Pitt Poetry Series, 2024). Her first, *Nostos*, won the Poetry Society of America's Norma Farber First Book Award.

### **Contest News**

We are pleased to announce that **Darren Morris** is the winner of the **2024 Experimental Poetry Award**, which was judged by **Claire Donato**. See his winning poem, "Eisegesis 1-3," along with the judge's comments, now on the CPS website. <http://www.ctpoetry.net/experimental-poetry.html#/>

The **2024 Vivian Shipley Award** was judged by **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura**. Congratulations to the winning poets:

- First Place: **Laurie Zimmerman** – "Lunar Eclipse Litany, East and West"
- Second Place: **Panika Dillon** – "we were raised in the wheat fields, we razed the pomegranate orchard"
- Third Place: **Lynn Pedersen** – "After Moving, I Train Myself to Call This Home"

Read all three as well as honorable mention poems from this contest on the CPS website:

<http://www.ctpoetry.net/the-vivian-shipley-award.html#/>.

The **Nutmeg Contest**, which is open only to Connecticut poets, is underway now through January 31. **Amy Nawrocki** will judge. CPS members may submit for free; submit at <https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/submit>.

## Poetry Rocks

On December 8<sup>th</sup> Poetry Rocks will offer a workshop on performing poetry, followed by a reading from some stellar poets. These events will take place at Arts Center East in Vernon. The performance workshop begins at 1:30 and costs \$20 for non-members, \$15 for members. New Haven Poet Laureate **Sharmont “Influence” Little**, a Poetry Slam champion and a past coach of Yale’s Slam team, will give tips making your words jump off the page. Bring a stanza of your own to perform aloud for critique. To register, please email Liz Bologne at [director@artscentereast.org](mailto:director@artscentereast.org).

A free poetry reading featuring **John Surowiecki**, **Sharmont Little**, **Jonathan Andersen**, and a youth poet begins there at 3 pm. An open mic, book sales and signing, and refreshments will follow.

## Wintonbury Poetry Series

On December 19 at 7 pm, the Wintonbury Poetry Series will host **June Mandelkern** and **Sandra Yannone**. An opportunity to share a poem of your own will follow during the open mic. This is a virtual event. Please sign up at <https://bplct.librarycalendar.com/event/copy-wintonbury-poetry-series-virtual-2821>.

## Love Poems and Rock Music

*Poets at Large* will be at The Bradley Playhouse Theater in Putnam, CT on February 8<sup>th</sup>, from 7-10 pm to present *Passion & Pulse: Love Poems and Rock Music*, with special guests including the Worcester band, The Vig. Tickets are \$25 (\$30 at the door) for this evening of music and spoken word capping off Putnam’s Fire & Ice Weekend. Order through the Bradley’s website or at their Box Office at 30 Front Street, Putnam, CT. Please

contact [karen.warinsky@gmail.com](mailto:karen.warinsky@gmail.com) if you are interested in participating in the open mic. The Vanilla Bean is assisting with this event. *Poets at Large* is a project of Windham Arts.



image credit: <https://silverbackdigest.com/2022/03/01/winter-crows/>

## Poem for Winter

Here’s a favorite poem by Robert Frost:

### Dust of Snow

The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.

## Watch and Listen to Robert Bly Read a Poem

Robert Bly was a poet and essayist, and a key figure in the mythopoetic men’s movement. He died three years ago, but in this poem, he is noticing the frailty of his parents. Here’s a link to a video of him reading his poem “Driving My Parents Home at Christmas.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhisWKDR7wI>