

2015 LitTAP Facing Pages Statewide Literary Arts CONVENING Poet, Mentor, Presenter & Mission Moment Bios

Poets

Sherry Robbins has conducted creative writing workshops throughout New York State and abroad for more than 30 year and works with hundreds of students each year. She has a Masters in the poetics of ecstasy and two books of poetry, *Snapshots of Paradise* and *Or, the Whale*. Sherry ran her own letterpress for years, is a certified yoga teacher, and a multi-year panelist for the NEA's Art Works program.

Peter Connors began his professional publishing career when he was hired as Marketing Director for BOA Editions, Ltd. in 2003. An "editor" credit was added to his title shortly thereafter, and he spent several years working as both an editor and marketing director. In 2010, he was named Publisher of BOA Editions and has served in that capacity ever since. Throughout his tenure at BOA, he has had the privilege of working on numerous books by exceptional poets and authors at all stages of their careers, and has also been involved in all aspects of daily operations. In addition to his BOA career, Connors has had eight of his own books of poetry, nonfiction, and fiction published. He has been thrilled to work on the "other side of the desk" (as an author) with Da Capo Press, City Lights, Viva Editions, White Pine Press, Marick Press, and Starcherone Books, among others. Throughout his literary career, he has done a little of everything: created/edited a literary journal, taught writing, collaborated with artists and musicians, and generally embraced new challenges. The Arts & Cultural Council for Greater Rochester will present him with the Artist Award for his literary achievements, in June 2015.

Annette Daniels Taylor, a native New Yorker, by way of Staten Island believes theater and poetry changes lives. As a writer Annette studies past and present voices which inspire her character driven poems and prose. As a performer she is able to understand the human condition through another's words. Annette divides her time between writing, acting, reading, and teaching writing and theater workshops. She currently leads an Underground Railroad residency in schools throughout Western New York, and a poetry residency Stories through the Microphone at the Erie County Youth Detention Center, with Young Audiences-WNY.

Barbara Cole, Ph.D. is the Artistic Director of Just Buffalo Literary Center, responsible for developing and implementing Just Buffalo's artistic vision, strategy and public artistic programming. She received her Ph.D. in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 2006. Her research focuses on modernist and contemporary poetry and poetics; gender politics; and critical reception. As the Artistic Director, Cole has brought her passion for teaching to the larger community and not-for-profit sector. Most recently, she edited (with Sarah Bay-Cheng, from UB's Department of Theatre), *Poets at Play: An Anthology of Modernist Drama* (Susquehanna University Press, 2010). She was also a 2011 fellow in Poetry from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Mentors

Jennifer Benka

Jennifer Benka is the Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets <http://www.poets.org/>. She has served national organizations dedicated to writing and poetry for most of her 20+ years in the nonprofit sector. Prior to her work at the Academy, she was the National Director of Development and Marketing for 826 National, a youth writing organization founded by the award-winning author Dave Eggers. Prior to 826, Jen was the Vice President of Development for The Bay Citizen, an online start-up news organization that produced content for the New York Times. Before her time in San Francisco, Jen served as the Managing Director of Poets & Writers in New York City for nearly a decade where she was the chief fundraising and marketing officer and the deputy administrative officer. Jen has also worked as a consultant and trainer helping hundreds of nonprofit leaders nationwide develop successful fundraising, communications, and outreach plans...and she is a poet!

Ken Chen is the Executive Director of the Asian American Writers' Workshop. A poet and attorney, he earned his BA from the University of California Berkeley and JD from Yale Law School. His debut collection of poetry, *Juvenilia* (2010), won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. The book traces the development of a poet from child to adulthood and is marked by "the inability to communicate, an affliction that spans across generations for this Chinese American family," according to poet Rigoberto González. Judge Louise Glück noted that Chen's book is "exhilaratingly modern ... while at the same time never losing his attachment to voice, and the implicit claims of voice: these are poems of intense feeling." Chen's poetry and nonfiction essays have appeared in journals such as *Fence*, *Boston Review*, *Best American Essays*, and elsewhere. He lives and works in New York City.

Peter Connors – see above

Elliot Figman was born and raised in The Bronx. He graduated from The Bronx High School of Science and went to Oberlin College from which he graduated Phi Beta Kappa with Honors in English in 1971. He earned a Masters of Arts in Teaching from the University of Massachusetts in 1972 and taught high school English in Huntington, Massachusetts from 1972 - 75. He began work as a volunteer at Poets & Writers in 1977, where he has served as executive director since 1981. He is also a poet; his book of poems, *Big Spring*, was published by Four Way Books in 2003.

Joe Flaherty, Executive/Artistic Director of Writers & Books, received his B.A. in English from Penn State University and his MFA from the University of Buffalo. After graduate school he launched the Book Bus Project, a travelling bookstore promoting small press books and authors to audiences throughout the Northeast. As a result of the discoveries and observations he made during those travels, he determined that the next phase in the growth of literary audiences would come through the development of community-based literary centers. He founded Writers & Books in 1980, in Rochester, NY, out of that belief that reading and writing,

and the appreciation of literature, needed to be promoted as life-long activities to the widest possible audience, and must reach beyond the college, the classroom, and the library to achieve this goal. During the past thirty-four years, under his leadership, Writers & Books has grown to become one of the largest and most active community literary centers in the country, presenting over 350 separate literary programs, including classes, workshops, readings, lectures, and performances, to an annual audience of over 25,000 individuals. He has served as a speaker, arts panelist and consultant throughout the country, and has been honored in Rochester with a number of major awards, including The Arts Person of the Year from the Rochester Chamber of Commerce.

Gloria Jacobs, Executive Director of the Feminist Press from 2006 to 2013, and Executive Editor of Ms. magazine from 1995 to 2002, is currently a consultant who works in the areas of the arts and feminism. She serves on the boards of Girls Write Now, which mentors girls from disadvantaged communities to use writing as a tool to build confidence and leadership skills, and Bellevue Literary Press, which publishes literary fiction and nonfiction at the intersection of the arts and sciences.

Presenters

Dr. Sarah Cunningham is past Director of Arts Education for the National Endowment for the Arts, and current Executive Director of Research at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of the Arts. From 2012-2015, Dr. Cunningham has raised more than \$1 million to support innovative arts and design projects at VCU. In 2015, she directed A2RU's Emerging Creatives conference on VCU campus, a studio-style think tank for students from 30 research universities nationwide. Her most recent research explores arts research, creative cities and arts education, imagination in American arts education, and presidential politics and the arts.

Internationally, Cunningham serves as a U.S. representative to the Council of Europe's Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe, as well as the author of the United States Profile for the World Cultural Policy database (through the International Federation of Arts Council and Cultural Agencies). She serves as Research Associate to "Culturalizing Sustainable Cities," a project of the Cities, Culture, and Architecture Research Group at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. Domestically, Dr. Cunningham supports arts education development through her leadership on the boards of the National Guild for Community Arts Education, and the Strategic National Arts Alumni Survey (SNAAP). Dr. Cunningham also consults with the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) as Senior Strategic Policy Advisor to the Alliance for Arts in Research Universities. In 2011 and 2012, Dr. Cunningham was named in the top 30 most influential leaders in non-profit arts.

Adrian Ellis is a global thought leader in international arts and culture whose work spans the fields of cultural policy, planning and economics. He founded AEA Consulting in 1990, and the Global Cultural Districts Network in 2013, returning to his full-time position at AEA in 2012, after serving as Executive Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center from 2007 to 2011.

Adrian writes and lectures extensively internationally on management and planning issues in the cultural sector, and has published, lectured and organized conferences for The J. Paul Getty Trust, Demos, The Wallace Foundation, Grantmakers in the Arts, The Jerwood Foundation, Clore Duffield Foundation, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute at Williams College, Bolz Center for Arts Administration at the University of Wisconsin, and the Australia Arts Council, among others. He is also a regular contributor to *The Art Newspaper* and the *Grantmakers in the Arts Reader*.

Adrian is a member of the International Advisory Committee of the Master of Management in International Arts Management, a joint program of SMU, HEC Montreal, and Bocconi University in Milan. He has served as a board member of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters; the Getty Leadership Institute's Advisory Board; The Kaufman Center in New York; and Pathé Pictures. He is also a past member of the Governing Council of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, and the Royal Institute of British Architects' Architecture Centre Committee. Prior to founding AEA, Adrian served as Executive Director of The Conran Foundation, where he was responsible for planning and managing the establishment of the Design Museum in London. In 2012, Adrian was named a "Jazz Hero of the Year" by the Jazz Journalists Association.

Gloria Jacobs – see above

Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer is the Executive Director of the Queens Council on the Arts. She is the author/illustrator of *Rabbit Mooncakes*, a picture book published by Little, Brown & Company. Her next book is a ghost story for young adults. She is a blogger who writes style notes for people who change the world at www.hoongyee.com. Hoong Yee holds a B.A. from Oberlin, diplomas from the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria in piano and a Masters Degree in Piano Performance from the Manhattan School of Music. She is married to a nice Jewish boy from Rockaway Beach, NY where they surf with their three children, Mikki, Remy & Sky.

Jeffrey Lependorf serves as the shared Executive Director of CLMP (Community of Literary Magazines and Presses) and SPD (Small Press Distribution), America's two national service organizations for independent literary publishers—CLMP works to raise the organizational capacity of small literary publishers and advocates on their behalf, while SPD provides distribution services.

Kathleen Masterson is Director of Literature & Arts Education at NYSCA. During her tenure, LitTAP/Facing Pages, NYTAP at CLMP, the Literary Map of NYS, the Bronx Writers Center, the Adirondack Center for Writing and the Spring Writes Literary Festival in Ithaca were created with great partners around NYS. She is also a librettist, most recently of *Buffalo Nation (Bison bison)*, music: Jerome Kitzke.

Alison Meyers is a poet and fiction writer twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. The Executive Director of Cave Canem Foundation, Brooklyn, NY since 2006, she previously served as Poetry Director and Director of Marketing & Communications at Hill-Stead Museum, CT. She has served on the boards of several non-profit organizations and as a grants review panelist; presented at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conferences, NYSCA's Facing Pages, NEFA and elsewhere; and was a judge for the NEA's Poetry Out Loud 2013 National Competition Finals.

Debora Ott is an arts management consultant whose practice focuses on capacity building, program development, succession and strategic planning for nonprofit, primarily literary arts, organizations. The founder of Just Buffalo Literary Center, she's the author of the monograph *About Face – A Guide to Founder Transition*. Debora served as Literature/Arts Education Program Manager at the Georgia Council for the Arts where she cultivated a literature program. She's the Founding Director of the Literary Technical Assistance Program (LitTAP) and the curator of Facing Pages.

Laurie Dean Torrell is Executive Director of Just Buffalo Literary Center (www.justbuffalo.org), and administers LitTAP with founding director Debora Ott. Under her leadership, Just Buffalo has doubled its budget to expand literary programming, including launching the BABEL International author series, "the most exciting literary series that Buffalo has ever seen," and the new JB Writing Center which is a gathering place designed to support young and emerging writers in the development of their skills. Just Buffalo developed one of the nation's first Administrative Collaborations in the arts with CEPA and Big Orbit Galleries—a venture honored with a National Certificate of Recognition and profiled in three national publications, and is now in the midst of JB40, a comprehensive \$1M Campaign to support long-term sustainability in honor of the organization's 40th Anniversary in 2015.

Mission Moments

Geneseo Migrant Center: <http://www.migrant.net/migrant/overview.htm>

Julia Stewart-Bittle, Assistant Arts Program Coordinator for the Geneseo Migrant Center (GMC), began teaching art in the CAMPS program in the summer of 2000. Beginning in 2003, she scheduled artists and interpreters to give art workshops at area farms. Julia worked with Janine Pommy Vega for seven years, arranging her weeklong stays and scheduling her poetry classes in the camps. Presently, she plans writing workshops for Henry Padron, Rochester poet. Over the years, Julia's responsibilities have included organizing fundraising galas and designing art and poetry exhibits.

Sylvia Kelly, Arts Program Coordinator for GMC, began as an In-Camp teacher in migrant farmworker labor camps in 1975. As a fiction writer married to a poet, she began writing grants for visiting writers to give readings/workshops in the camps. This program eventually included NYSCA-funded Literature, Special Arts Services, & Folk Arts (w/travelling exhibits) workshops. She is also a 1991 Fiction Fellow, and award-winning teacher of Gifted/Talented English programs.

Just Buffalo Literary Center, Inc.: www.justbuffalo.org

Janet Kaye joined the Just Buffalo Literary Center Board in 1997, and after serving the maximum number of terms, was asked to return in 2013. She brings many years of institutional knowledge, along with the analytical capabilities of a former federal government attorney and journalist, the concerns of an educator, and the perspective of a once-struggling freelance writer to her work as a board member. She has served as a NYSCA Literature Panelist, and a NY State Foundation for the Arts panelist. She is a member of the National Book Critics Circle, a member of the Erie County Bar Association, a board member of Bistro Bookers (affiliated with the Library Foundation), and has been a volunteer at Buffalo International School 45 since 2009.

Ugly Duckling Presse: <http://www.uglyducklingpresse.org/>

Matvei Yankelevich is the author of *Alpha Donut* (United Artists), *Boris by the Sea* (Octopus), and *Some Worlds for Dr. Vogt* (Black Square). He is the translator of *Today I Wrote Nothing: The Selected Writings of Daniil Kharms* (Overlook/Ardis) and co-translator of the *National Translation Award-winning An Invitation for Me to Think by Alexander Vvedensky* (NYRB Poets). He is one of the founding editors of Ugly Duckling Presse, where among other things he curates the Eastern European Poets Series and co-edits 6x6. He teaches translation and the art of the book at Columbia University's School of the Arts, and is a member of the Writing Faculty at the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College.

Word Up: <https://wordupbooks.wordpress.com/>

Veronica Santiago Liu is the founder and general coordinator of Word Up Community Bookshop, a collectively managed volunteer-run bookshop and arts space in Washington Heights NYC (wordupbooks.com), and the president of the literature-access nonprofit Seven Stories Institute. As an arts organizer, she has received individual grants for writing, the development of an arts and music fair, oral history, and various community publishing projects from the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, the Manhattan Community Arts Fund, the Citizens Committee of New York City, and the Goodman Fund. Her writing, comics, photography, and silkscreen prints have been published in *Broken Pencil*, *Quick Fiction*, *We'll Never Have Paris*, and other journals and zines. She is also senior editor at Seven Stories Press.

Writers & Books: <http://www.wab.org/>

Sally Bittner Bonn is a poet, writer, performer, and teaching artist who has taught or performed in over 50 venues throughout Western New York and Southern California. Her work has been published in various anthologies and journals including *Don't Blame the Ugly Mug*, *ReVerb*, and *Lake Affect*. In addition, Sally promotes disability awareness through her writing (www.oscar-go.org) and speaking engagements. Sally lives happily in Brighton with her husband and son, but occasionally longs to wander the Mojave Desert or the Pacific coast. She was a student in the very first Writers & Books youth class in the mid- 1980s and is thrilled to have come full circle, now planning these programs.