

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

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CPS Honorary Board

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate
Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate,
2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate,
2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, Connecticut State University
Distinguished Professor at SCSU

CPS Officers

President: Pat Mottola

Vice President: Victor Altshul

Secretary: Mark Sheridan

Treasurer: Mark Sheridan

Contests: Kathleen McIntosh

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert,
& Luisa Caycedo-Kimura

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

Publicity: David Cundy

POP Director: Jeanne LeVasseur

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola

Youth Outreach: Nancy Manning



Youth Outreach Program

On October 19, **Mark Sheridan** presented a virtual poetry talk on Robert Frost. High school students from Woodland Regional High School attended and thoroughly enjoyed discussing poetic elements and Frost's binary vision in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," "The Road Not Taken," "Neither out Far Nor in Deep," and "After Apple-Picking." The next scheduled poetry talk will be in April, when Mark will examine poems by Sylvia Plath.

On Saturday, December 4, at 2 pm, CPS sponsored an Open Mic for high school students, organized by **Nancy Manning** and our first ever Youth Ambassador, **Caroline Osborn**.

President's Message

"What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness?"

— John Steinbeck

Hello dear CPS members! Welcome to winter! I am so pleased with all that CPS has accomplished in 2021, and I thank each and every one of you for your unwavering support of poetry and of our great organization. I am looking forward to 2022 with great expectations. One of the things I am planning is the brand new "President's Workshop." I am so pleased that we have so many new CPS members – many of whom are not affiliated with a Chapter and who have not experienced a "writing workshop." I know the importance of feeling connected, especially in these times, and I hope any member who wants to participate will reach out to me and feel welcome and included in this new endeavor.

Also, here's a reminder that our POP program for December – on December 9th at 7:00 p.m. – will feature the poet Amanda Gorman, moderated by **Barb Jennes**. Don't miss it!

The holiday season is upon us and I wish you all the greatest joy as you celebrate with family and friends, near or far, in person or on Zoom. I leave you with this quote, one of my favorites: "I wonder if the snow *loves* the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, 'Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.' "

— Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland / Through the Looking-Glass*

It's always summer in CPS!

Pat Mottola, President

CPS/NEBT Collaboration

When New England Ballet Theatre reached out to CPS to collaborate with them on their *amazing* Poe-themed ballet, *The Myth and Madness of Edgar Allen Poe*, based on Poe's "The Raven," I immediately thought: What an ideal collaboration of the arts! This would give our members yet another opportunity to showcase the value and the power of poetry and enhance both our organization and New England Ballet Theater.

There is nothing better than the arts to lift our spirits and imaginations to new heights. Dancers, like poets, communicate so clearly their emotions, and the art of nuance. There is a certain vocabulary of movement which allows the body to tell stories and render emotion more truly, even, than the voice. In fact, Russian choreographer George Balanchine once described dancers as "poets of gesture." The gesture is a form native to both poetry and dance. Dancers use the body (and the body uses music) to deliver their truth and beauty, and poets use words (and music carries, as a body carries, those words) to deliver theirs.

CPS sponsored a poetry contest that encouraged our member poets to write a poem inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's works, to be read at the ballet performance. CPS Member **Ed Lent** authored the winning poem titled "The Mysterious and Unfortunate Incident at the Grave of Eliza Barrow." Congratulations, Ed!

—Pat Mottola

Contest News

Winners of the first **Vivian Shipley Award**, judged by **Robert Cording**, were announced in October, as follows:

First Place – **John Sibley Williams** for “At This Table We Sing, with Joy, with Sorrow”;

Second Place – **Matt Hohner** for “This Poem Has Been Sanitized for Your Protection”;

Third Place – **Karen Holmberg** for “As It Should Be.”

Honorable Mentions were awarded to **Sarah Key**, **Shellie Harwood** and **Rayon Lennon**. Winning poems along with judge’s comments are posted on the CPS website.

The **Nutmeg Poetry Contest**, a competition for Connecticut poets, is currently underway. The judge of the 2022 contest is **Barb Jennes**, Ridgefield chapter president. The submission period extends through January and submission is free for CPS members; see the CPS website for details.

The **Lynn DeCaro Competition**, a contest for Connecticut high school students, will begin on January 1 and will be judged this year by **Pit Pinegar**. **Nancy Manning**, Chair of CPS Youth Outreach efforts, will coordinate publicity.

Please watch the CPS website for information on the 2022 **Connecticut Poetry Award**, which will begin April 1.

CPS members are also members of **NFSPS** (National Federation of State Poetry Societies). Among the benefits of this organization is the opportunity to submit to any or all of their 50 annual poetry contests, which accept

entries from January 1 — March 1. They offer cash prizes large and small. Get more information at http://www.nfsps.com/poetry_contests.htm

POP: Poets on Poetry

The next POP program, moderated by **Barb Jennes**, will focus on Amanda Gorman. It will take place on December 9, from 7-8:15 pm, via ZOOM. <https://zoom.us/j/95497811390>

Passcode: 495308



Amanda Gorman took the nation by storm at Joe Biden’s Presidential Inauguration. But how does a 22-year-old who was raised by a single mother in Watts, and who struggled to overcome a serious speech impediment, end up on the world’s center stage? We’ll watch clips from interviews with the former U.S. Youth Poet Laureate in which she discusses the hills she’s climbed in her rise to fame, then look closely at several of her poems. We’ll also deep-dive into “The Hill We Climb”—a well-crafted poem that includes a wealth of poetic, metrical, and rhetorical devices.

Our moderator, **Barb Jennes** is the Poet Laureate of Ridgefield, CT, and serves as Poet-in-Residence for the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.

CPS Chapters & Presidents

COVID-19 has changed the way our chapters meet. If you want to know more about meeting with a specific chapter, please get in touch with the chapter president.

Bethel

Liz Massey
finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Sunday of each month, from 2-4 pm. Masks required. Bring five 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. Email Debbie to submit your poem for critique and to receive the Zoom link. So as to have enough time to respond to each poem, we cap each meeting at ten participants.

Greater Hartford

Julia Paul
Julia.Paul@cox.net

Currently, this chapter is meeting via Zoom. Members are looking forward to the resumption of in-person meetings.

Haiku Chapter

Marita Gargiulo
MarGarArts@mail.com

This online chapter welcomes CPS members interested in reading and writing haiku. Members of the group share haiku and senryu on a regular basis.

Manchester

Matthew Borrelli
matthewborrelli296@gmail.com

This chapter will be meeting in person once again.

Middletown

Pamela Guinan
860-563-5761
Pamela.cps@hotmail.com

New Haven

Laura Altshul
lauraaltshul130@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter has been meeting on the third Saturday of each month. Presently they meet via Zoom, for the safety of all members.

Pomfret

Christine Kalafus
CEKworks@charter.net

This chapter is resuming in-person meetings. Meetings will be held at the Pomfret Library, 449 Pomfret Street, from 7-9 pm on the second Monday of each month.

Ridgefield

Barb Jennes
barbjennes@gmail.com

This chapter will meet every fourth Saturday from 10 am to noon, via Zoom until the Ridgefield library re-opens. Email Barb to get the library registration page URL, which changes monthly. Interested CPS members can register on the library website (barbjennes@gmail.com); they will subsequently receive the Zoom link and an email address to which their poems should be sent.

Shoreline

The **Shoreline Chapter is not currently meeting.**

Southbury

Marion McGauhy
860-354-2157
Mcgauhy@aol.com

Chapter members will resume meeting soon.

Wilton

Ray Rauth
Rayrauth@optonline.net

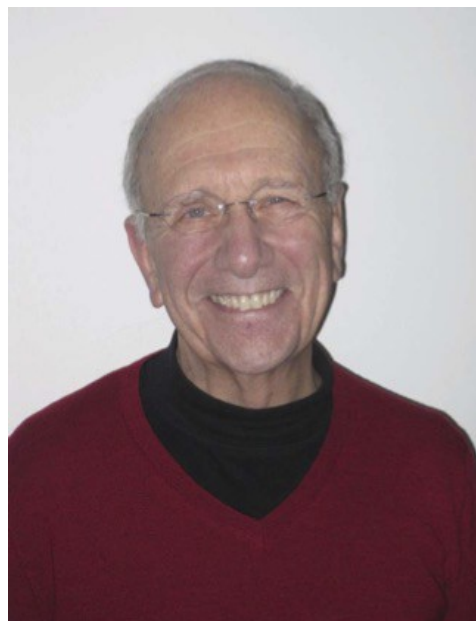
The Wilton Workshop will meet from 10:30 until noon on the third Friday of each month, via Zoom. Registration will be through the Wilton Library. We are hoping to resume in-person meetings before long.

Poet in the Spotlight: Victor Altshul

It was Elizabeth Bishop's poem "One Art" that pushed Victor Altshul toward a serious journey into poetry. He had written a few poems as a lovesick adolescent, and then set poetry aside—for decades. In his seventies he attended a psychoanalytic conference in which he was introduced to Bishop's villanelle. He says, "I was particularly struck by the fact that the central loss, that of her mother's watch (the only connection to her dead mother she could possibly have remembered), occurs in line 10, the very center of the 19-line poem; and also by the heartbreaking two-word intrusion (enclosed in parentheses, for heaven's sake!) in the very last line, a breaking through into consciousness of uncontained grief. I later learned about the poem's connection with the youthful Alice Methfessel, the most passionate love of Elizabeth's love-full life, to whom and for whom the poem was written."

Altshul decided that he had to venture more into the world of poetry, and that included writing it. He self-published his first collection, *Stumblings*, the following year. His friend, the poet and cardiology professor Barry Zaret, introduced him to Rennie McQuilkin, who was impressed with Altshul's poetry. Altshul went on to publish three more collections through McQuilkin's poetry press, Antrim House.

Meanwhile, Altshul's wife, Laura, who had previously written only fiction, became attracted to poetry and began writing it too. She went on to publish four collections with Antrim



House. Husband and wife have a lot of fun supporting each other's creative strivings.

The husband and wife duo became very involved in the Connecticut Poetry Society, hosting a chapter in New Haven, attending many events, etc. Victor Altshul has served as vice president of Connecticut Poetry Society since 2018, and has made many valuable contributions to our organization. Although he plans to give up that position at year's end, he hopes to continue his involvement with poetry, which he finds deeply rewarding.

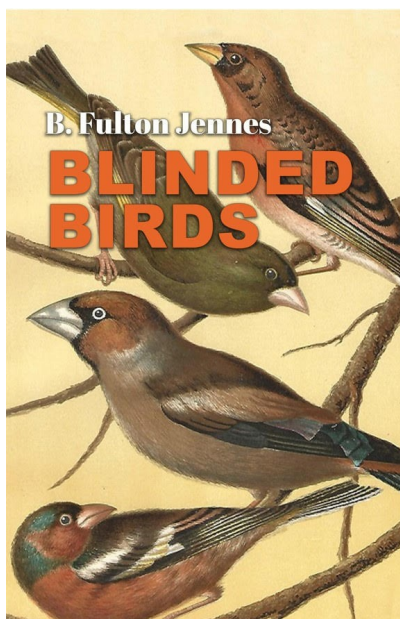
CRR to Accept Submissions Beginning in February

Connecticut River Review will accept submissions from February 1-April 15 for the 2022 edition. Interested poets can submit up to three poems for consideration. Guidelines can be found on the CPS website.

Our Members Continue to Publish!

Laura Altshul's fourth book of poetry, *The Shearing*, was recently published. The eloquent poems in the book face loss of all sorts, but through the good offices of love, courage, and the grace of nature the message of the book is an uplifting one. It offers hope in a time of trouble. She gave a reading from *The Shearing* at the Yale Book Store in November.

Blinded Birds, a chapbook by **Barb Jennes**, will be released on March 25. The poems share the struggle of three generations of a family plagued by addiction and depression (with a decidedly hopeful ending for two of them). Jennes will donate 10% of her proceeds to the non-profit organization To Write Love on Her Arms, a group dedicated to presenting hope and finding help for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide.



Margaret Gibson's latest book, *The Glass Globe*, completes a trilogy distinguished by its meditative focus on her experience of her late husband's Alzheimer's disease. In this collection she blends elegies of her personal bereavement with elegies for the earth during our global crisis of climate change. As Eamon Grennan has said of this book, "Gibson's imaginative reach is intimate and wide-ranging, fusing personal grief and the natural endangered world."



Ginny Lowe Connors' newest poetry collection, *Without Goodbyes*, is forthcoming in January. It's based on a historical event: the infamous 1704 raid on the village of Deerfield, Massachusetts. More than 100 Deerfield residents: men, women, and children, were captured. Then they began the 300-mile trek to New France, the French colony, in Quebec. The poems focus on Joanna Kellogg, an eleven-year-old girl, and two of her siblings. They were adopted into Mohawk families in the village of Kahnawake. The physical journey Joanna and her siblings took to reach Kahnawake was grueling; of even greater interest is the journey she took to truly become a member of the Mohawk community.

Riverwood Poetry Series

The Riverwood Poetry Series at Real Art Ways in Hartford will present a program on December 14th at 7 pm: *Jennifer Jean Speaks the Truth to Human-Trafficking and Objectification*. A question and answer discussion will follow, as well as an open mic.

On January 11, the program is *Three of Connecticut's Asian-American Poets Welcome the New Year*. The poets are **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura, Srini Mandavilli, and Deborah Kuan**.

Both events begin at 7 pm via Zoom. Register at <https://www.facebook.com/riverwoodpoetry>. Go to Events. You can sign up for the open mic at RiverwoodPoetry@yahoo.com.

Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith at the Connecticut Forum

The Connecticut Forum will host a program on December 9th at 7:30 pm at the Bushnell, which will include Poet Laureate **Tracy K. Smith**, along with **Nick Offerman** and **Jeff Tweedy**. They will be talking about their lives, their work, the creative process. Members of CPS receive \$5 off each ticket! (Use the code **CTPoets** at checkout.) The Forum will be available as livestream for ticketholders who do not feel comfortable attending in person. People attending in person must follow the Bushnell's mask and vaccination requirements. Find out more at <https://www.ctforum.org/event/creative-minds>.

Anyone can view Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith's inaugural reading via YouTube by using this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HaDoAq0XPI>

Robert Bly

Here's an early winter poem by the late poet **Robert Bly**, who died in November at the age of 94. His work was notable for its intense imagery. His (prose) book *Iron John: A Book About Men*, was a best-seller, and one of his poetry books, *The Light Around the Body*, won the National Book Award.

A Dream on the Night of First Snow

I woke from a first-day-of-snow dream.

I dreamt I met a girl in an attic,
who talked of operas, intensely.

Snow has bent the poplar over nearly to the ground,

new snowfall widens the plowing.

Outside maple leaves floated on rain water,
yellow, matted, luminous.

I found a salamander! and held him.

When I put him down again,

he strode over a log
with such confidence, like a chessmaster,
the front leg first, then the hind
leg, he rose up like a tractor climbing
over a hump in the field

and disappeared toward winter, a caravan
going deeper into

mountains,
dogs pulling travois,
feathers fluttering on the lances of the arrogant
men.