



California Writers Club – SFV

“Serving the writers of Greater Los Angeles”

THE SCRIBE

- established since 1983 -

Vol. XXII, No. 4

www.calwriterssfv.com

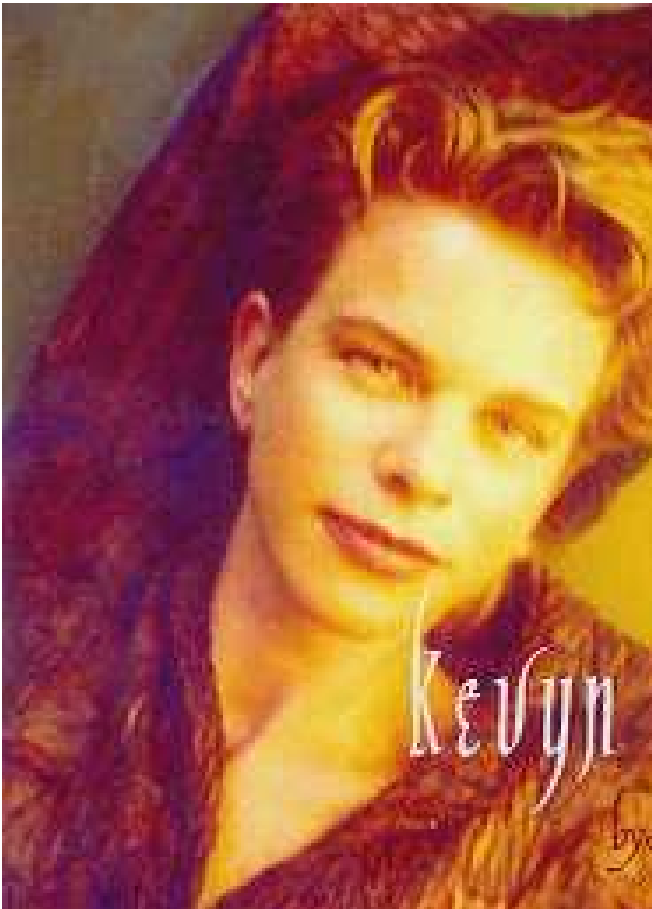
April 2008

COMING TO CWC APRIL 12

Kevyn Lettau: Poet & Chanteuse

By: Scott Alixander Sonders

Come be enthralled by the mellifluous riffs of Kevyn Lettau, poet and internationally known singer. She's the face on a Manhattan billboard and the voice behind Philippine Airlines and a recently sold-out gig at LaVaLee in Studio City.



Ms Lettau is enviable; she's a poet who actually gets paid for her verse. Okay, she also sets her poetry to music – but that just makes it twice as nice.

Kevyn is the intersection of melody & the poetic written word, the harmony of body language, tone of voice and verbal expression. And she will share a secret exercise that brings the poetry from your heart and head to your hands & paper.

Discover the symbiosis of music & poetry as Kevyn reveals the inner place that sparks imagination – and then performs the final result. Come be enchanted by the lilting words and voice of the Divine Miss Kevyn.

Visit Kevyn's website. Listen to some samples. Reward yourself: www.kevynlettau.com

So, come to the cabaret my friend, the California Writers Cabaret. ◇◇

WHEN:

Saturday, April 12th, 1:00-3:30pm

WHERE:

Encino Community Center
4935 Balboa Boulevard

THE WORD MECHANIC

RAMBLINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

CRITICAL SAVOIR FAIRE:

A 12-Step Program for Writing Workshops

By: Scott Alixander Sonders, Ph.D.



Most believe that by simply paying their money and occupying a seat, the chosen writer's workshop will routinely and in short-term imbue them with a profound sense of literary illumination. Well hold the phone

Sparky, it ain't necessarily so. There are rules. And here are just a few that will add to your ability to better digest a small bite from that lunchbox miasma of available information.

1. Submit all new work, old work, critiques and love notes to the instructor in the proper format. Use healthy 1.25" (Word.doc default) margins on the sides and 1" top and bottom. Use a clear, 12-point font (Arial, Tahoma, Times New Roman). Always double space (except in poetry, and in not-to-be-critiqued work). Your name and pertinent info should occupy the first few lines of the first page of your manuscript. Begin the TITLE about 1/3 page down on the first page. Indent paragraphs only in a finished manuscript, not in a "submission" mss. Double-double space between paragraphs and/or to indicate a lapse of time or sequence. Put continued at the bottom of each page, except the last; and number all pages except the first. Print on one side only, and save your concern about the destruction of trees for your extra-curricular, charitable work. Number your lines; this allows your critique partners and literary mentor to quickly refer to the subject of discussion.

2. Recognize and accept your own authority to make the ultimate decision on everything you do, for it is you who profits or suffers according to the consequences of your every choice. If the majority of the workshop participants and the teacher agree something in your manuscripts needs mending and you're still resisting, you may yet be the best judge.

But you also may end up with something not publishable. It's your choice.

3. Remember that you are not your actions.

Your actions are but the means your awareness selects to satisfy your needs. Your manuscript is not you. It is the product of your information and experience. If it is not received as well as you would like, it is not a judgment on your worth as a human being. Perhaps, as your information and experience improve, so will your manuscript.

4. The reason there are 31 flavors at Baskin Robbins is because we humans are creatures of varying tastes. Pralines & Cream is not good or bad. Triple Fudge Death is not right or wrong. They are simply matters of taste. Learn to discern. There is a viable difference between literary function and literary taste.

5. The purpose of workshop is to make your good better and your better best. This is accomplished only in an atmosphere of harmony and good will. One-upmanship is destructive to giver and taker. Choose your instructor carefully. Try to give and get reasoned opinions, not idle conjecture. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Let go of negativity, resentment, competition, or condemnation.

6. You can never prove your worth though your achievements. You have nothing to prove. As much as you learn from your classmates and instructor is what they will be learning from you.

7. Read, write; love, write. This is the only way I know of how to become a good writer. Take workshops but be selective. Take what's good for you. Don't take workshops in lieu of writing but as a supplement or inspiration to your writing.

8. Be professional. If you walk like a duck, quack like a duck and smell like a duck, most will assume you're a duck. The same goes for writers. So walk and talk like a writer – unless of course you'd rather be duck soup. Subscribe to *Poets & Writers*, *Writers Digest*, et al. Attend conferences. Don't submit a manuscript until you feel it's your most polished, best effort draft. Always include an s.a.s.e. If you don't know this acronym, you're not ready to submit. And it may not always make sense but it is a rule. And remember, there are rules.

More: Don't use colored paper or non-conforming envelopes. Don't include your astrology, religious preference, family crest, or politics anywhere in or around your manuscript, query letter, or envelope. If you wouldn't volunteer this information on a job interview or to the FBI, you shouldn't do it here.

9. When participating in a group, speak in the first person. Say, "I feel" rather than "people feel." Say what you mean, mean what you say. Write what you mean, mean what you write. Don't speak for others. Don't "read-in" ulterior meaning or motive. Do strive for improvement, which occurs only when we are honestly told how others respond to our behavior and to our work.

10. Speak to others directly. If someone asks your opinion of line-3 on page-4 of Joe's short story, then turn and speak directly to Joe. It is rude to speak around or through another human being. And speaking of speaking, if you limit what you say behind someone's back to what you would say face-to-face, you, and they will be much better off.

11. Don't patronize, condescend or effuse false praise. Do use phrasing that displays confidence, recognizes effort and improvement, and acknowledges appreciation and contribution.

12. How we behave in workshop often mirrors how we behave with spouses, friends, parents, etc. As we gain insight into this, we gain insight into that. The same goes for our writing. As we gather our Toolbox of Critique Technique™, we learn to think more reasonably, read more accurately, listen more acutely, see more clearly, and feel more genuinely. As we learn how to write, we learn how to live. After a good workshop, we often view movies and read books with a more discerning eye. So now you know what workshop is all about. It's about savoir-faire, "to know how to be." Know a few rules, gather a few tools, and study in several schools. If you do it right, workshop can be cathartic and rewarding. ◇◇

REWIND

A REVIEW OF LAST MONTH

By: James Ganatta

The previous time Linda O. Johnston spoke to CWC-SFV, she gave us romance and mystery. This time the prolific author was all business, covering the full range of writing and the law. The long time corporate attorney cast a jaundiced eye

on the process announcing, "All law is fiction." Further, she said writers, to secure work, sign undesirable contracts as they lack the power to negotiate with powerful publishers. And, "Although options are often negotiable," Ms. Johnston counsels, "If you can get an agent; they may have more leverage." "When you write something you have a copyright," but it, "must be registered in order to sue."

The speaker addressed additional difficulties and dichotomies for the writer, stating, "Read the contract, and make sure you understand it," followed by, "Royalty contracts are unintelligible." On plagiarism she further states, "If you use it (someone else's words) verbatim it is, but using accurate paraphrased information is safer." "You can't copyright ideas." She indicated that if the possibility of libel through similarity to your characters arises, plot and persona should be changed sufficiently so that proof of modeling cannot be proven, safer still, "Get releases." She warns, "Truth is a defense, but you might have to prove it." With caution and hope she stated, "The law is not always fair, but both sides are allowed to present their case." Ms. Johnston finished with a thought most present could identify with, "I do it (write) for love, not just for the money, because I'm not getting rich."

Also on the agenda were the multi-talented, indefatigable authors, stage producers, actors and founders of the award winning company, StageWalkers Productions, They debuted the west coast production of the multi-award winning



production of August Wilson's "Jitney" and produced its revival, generating ten LA Weekly and LA Ovation nominations and awards. Russell has appeared

in numerous movie, television and stage productions and Katrina writes for LA Parent Magazine and wrote, "Cool! You're Pregnant! The Handbook for the Busy Woman."

Russell believes that the obstacles and difficulties of the artistic life can be overcome by, “just doing it and doing it yourself,” “making your own breaks.” He encourages, “Figure out a way to make it work, find the energy,” and say, “Why not you.” Eyes on the horizon he says, “It is better to go somewhere and not be prepared than to be prepared and have nowhere to go.” He believes that, “If you have faith in what you do, so will others.” With wit, he followed with to think a book is, “not judged by its cover is nonsense. You need eye candy,” “You have two seconds to get someone’s attention.” Russell and Katrina advise that authors need hard copies of their work to hand to prospective sellers and that a good place to start marketing your work is with independent book stores, in state and out.

Katrina suggests that you attempt to place your work anywhere connected to your genre not just bookstores. She advises, “Never edit yourself,” and the perfect advice for any artist, “Stay away from toxic people, they suck away your creativity.”

In a full day, our open mike hosted by Kelly Jungersmith featured Marshall Drazen’s wonderful, “Hero” and Robin Reed reading from her book of fanciful tales. Judy Barrat read from her story of compassion in hospice care, Judy Presnall reading her award winning “Reptile Skeletons,” Gil Roscoe’s tale of youthful abandon and guilt and Julie Blackwell’s story of spirits intruding into life.

FAST FORWARD

APRIL 12TH AT CALIFORNIA WRITERS



Sasha Faynor is both a tragedian and a comedienne. *Sex with Strangers* portrays her bi-coastal late 80s odyssey of nymphomania and nightclubs interspersed with drugs, homelessness, and her eventual triumph over bipolar

disorder. This former New Yorker sees her memoir as a vehicle towards advocacy for the integrative (body, mind, and spirit) treatment of mental illness. When not chasing jokes, she's chasing her two children. – Visit her humor at:

www.sashafaynor.com

MAY 10TH AT CALIFORNIA WRITERS

Kate Gale of Red Hen Press

Come hear what Kate has to say about poetry and the world as we know it. More than anything I could probably say about Kate Gale is told by a scan of those who’ve committed to adding their



noble names to her Advisory Board: Lucille Clifton, Carolyn L. Forché, Judy Grahn, Yusef Komunyakaa, Michael S. Harper, Garrett Hongo, Lawson Fusao Inada, X. J. Kennedy, Galway Kinnell, Robert Peters, Li-Young Lee, and Howard Zinn.

Now admittedly, rarely does anyone on an “advisory board” ever meet the management, yet alone actually do anything. But their names sure add luster to your own when you get published in those pages. And so, Red Hen Press has become something of an icon of the Los Angeles literary scene. And Kate Gale is the gilded edge that frames that icon nicely.

An accomplished poet and author, Kate is also an engaging, dynamic speaker. She’s an odd blend of ethereal and down-to-earth. She is truly a not-to-be-missed presentation. – S.A.S.

MEMOIR

EXCERPT FROM “SEQUINS AND SORROW”

By: Marty Diamond and Erica Stux

I finally had to admit that something was profoundly wrong with Corky. He was too quiet and passive. I sang to him all the nursery rhymes and lullabies I could remember while cradling him in my arms. I talked to him while I changed his diapers. I sang gospel songs to him, and slow ballads that I heard on the radio. He was like a lump of clay, or a sack of potatoes in my arms. He never looked directly at me - not a flicker of recognition.

Sometimes I felt like shaking him in my frustration. “I’m your mamma, Corky, and you’re my baby boy. Do something, dammit, don’t just lie there!

What's wrong with you? Look, this is how you smile." I put my fingers at the corners of his mouth and turned them up. When I took my fingers away, his lips fell back into their usual repose.

Toys didn't interest him. I shook rattles at him, dangled beads in front of him, and put a fluffy teddy bear in his arms. He never reached for the toy; the teddy bear fell to the floor. When I approached him to pick him up, he never raised his arms, like normal toddlers do.

The hyperactivity started as soon as he could walk. "Don't scream, Corky, please! You've got no reason to cry or scream. You ate your strained peas and emptied your bottle, and you've got a dry diaper. Now stop running from room to room!"

How could this happen to me? I'd been a good girl, why is God punishing me? I took care of myself the whole nine months. Why isn't my baby normal? When reality hit me, I fell into depression. I felt like a yawning abyss had opened under me, and I was falling, falling, into a pit, I would never be able to climb out of.

I'd had such plans for Corky. He would finish high school. He would travel with me when he got older, to the cities where I would have dancing jobs. He'd be a good student, maybe a good musician too. He would not, like so many men I knew, succumb to the illusions found in a bottle of malt liquor. He'd find a nice girl, sweet pretty girl, and learn to make a commitment - not like the men I knew, who continually tried to prove how manly they are by scoring with as many girls as possible. Would any of this be possible for Corky? I took him to a doctor to find out what was wrong, but I don't think the doctor could come to a definite conclusion. His diagnosis was hearing loss and brain damage, resulting in retardation.

I couldn't bring myself to accept this. Would my baby be doomed to live in an institution: warehoused away, never to delight in a beautiful sunset, a stirring melody on a violin, a whispered phrase from a loved one? Surely, some day, with proper treatment, my son could become normal.



THE VIEWPOINT

WEB PETS

By: Robin Reed

The Internet is such a new phenomenon that we really aren't sure what ramifications it will have for society. Some say that it is a wonderful thing that it allows people to make human contact with other people all over the world, to find the love of their lives in unlikely places like Uzbekistan, Katmandu, or Cincinnati. Others say that the Internet is evil that seduces people into living hermit-like existences in their homes, staring into the glow of the computer screen and interacting with people whose idea of expressing emotion is to type punctuation marks that look like a face when you turn your head sideways.

Though the Internet has been proven to cause many cases of neck strain when all those people turn their heads sideways to see what their on-line pal LustyGuy439 is feeling, I don't feel that it is evil in itself. However, I did discover that the Internet is being used for an evil plot, a scheme to lure our loved ones away, into the arms of strangers, whose motivations are unknown. I discovered this when I got up late one night to get a snack, and saw an eerie glow coming from my home office. I looked into the office and found my cat staring into the computer screen. I crept up behind the chair where my cat was sitting, mesmerized by the screen. He was in a chat room, seemingly in a private conversation with one person.

Here is a little bit of how their conversation went:

PurrLover46: (The other person) LOL! I can't believe your person did that to you.

TunaFreak92: (My cat) and she gives me GENERIC cat food! Can you believe that?

PurrLover46: Yuck!

TunaFreak92: Double Yuck! :-p

PurrLover46: We would never give you crap like that.

TunaFreak92: How would I get away from here?

PurrLover46: Easy. Just slip out the back, cat. :)

TunaFreak92: ROTFLACUAH! (Rolling on the floor laughing and coughing up a hairball.)



At this point, I cried out. "What are you doing, Nanette?" (I wish I could say that I named my cat Nanette when he was a very small kitten

and I was unsure of his gender. Unfortunately, I adopted him when he was three years old. And he wasn't neutered, either. I am just really bad at cat anatomy.) My cat just gave out a startled meow and leapt straight out of the chair. I'm sure he didn't mean to land on me and dig such deep furrows in my chest with his claws. Besides, I was only in the hospital for three days, no big deal.

When I got back, I began to investigate the illicit world of pet chat rooms. It became clear to me that various organized gangs of would-be pet owners were using the web to lure cats, dogs, birds, and occasionally fish, into leaving their masters. The diabolical dog and catnappers promised everything to the pets. All the food they wanted, brand new furniture to scratch, or for dogs, lots of slippers to chew.

Who are these people? Lonely would-be pet owners? Shut-ins who can't get to their local pound? Agents for a South American catnip cartel? No one is sure. I have notified the authorities of this situation, and I am happy to say that they are hard at work trying to catch the perpetrators. One of the gang was caught recently by an FBI agent posing on-line as a Black Labrador named Lucky. So be careful. Don't let your pets use the internet without your supervision. Buy software that blocks sites that aren't considered pet safe. Most of all, treat your pets well and let them know you love them, so they will have no reason to slip out the back and seek new owners.

As for me, I'm on-line trying to find my cat. He left me the night I found him at the computer, and where he went to, I don't know. I haunt animal chat rooms leaving this message with everyone I meet: If you see Nanette, tell him to come home. I miss him. I haven't had a good claw wound in weeks.

THE KODAK BROWNIE

By D. William "Doug" Douglas

Glossy black-and-white, three inches square, white border, serrated edges: the frozen moment, captured caricature of emotion (or lack thereof). I recognize my Dad; Mom told me I'm the one he's cradling tentatively in his arms, only a tiny infant's slumbering face exposed among the layers of blankets. My Dad's wearing the white shirt and scratchy, pleated woolen slacks he always seemed to have on...I think he had a dozen identical outfits. He has a pipe in his mouth, and his head is reared back, like this thing in his arms just befouled its diaper with the biggest brown baby bomb ever to fill his nostrils with the sludge's perfume.

Or at least that's how it looks to me now. And that stink must have left scars on his olfactory, because (other than the occasional, admittedly well-deserved open-handed thwack to my rear) I don't think he ever touched me again. That precious moment of paternal affection was captured by a Kodak Brownie camera. I've seen that slightly off-square, black metal box because my Dad never threw anything out -- never to be used again, never touched, and just stashed away.

I came across this archival photo while searching for pictures of you and me. Here I am standing next to you at Lake Tahoe with my hands in my pockets; when we were opening these Christmas presents, the red-eye flash didn't work -- we both look demon-possessed; you and I are walking along the beach at Cambria in these, always at least a yard of space between us.

In this note you left, your words play a tune: a neat jiggle, a traditional sarabande. But I can hear the counterpoint -- I know the coda's coming. I thought about calling you, but my voice will crack; maybe even end up crying. Pity is so embarrassing.

There's more room in the closet now...I forgot how big it is, even with all my junk. So I change my clothes, hang up my white shirt and wool slacks, sit down with the newspaper, and light my pipe.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The editors are soliciting creative works for the May issue of our literary journal, *THE SCRIBE*. Submit your essays about writing, memoirs, short stories, film/book/stage reviews, humor pieces, and excerpts from longer works -- and poetry.

See revised guidelines below where we increased the word limits for your creative work.

Photos: If your work is published in THE SCRIBE, then we'd like you to send portrait or candid shots of yourself, to accompany your work. We find photos of members enhance the newsletter and increase your name recognition. ◇◇

Email your submissions to George Hirai, our Scribe Editor, as Word.doc attachments. Our next submission deadline is April 19, 2008.
Email: cwcsfv@gmail.com

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles about writing, essays, memoirs, excerpts from fiction/non-fiction, and general features. Not to exceed 700 words.

Reviews of fiction, non-fiction, essays, and film. Not to exceed 400 words.

Poetry. Not to exceed 35 lines, approximately 250 words. Poetry reviews. Not to exceed 150 words.

Occasionally, on an as needed basis, we may extend word limits listed above.

The Editorial Committee determines articles to be published in *Scribe*.

There is no charge to members for Scribe submittals. There is a \$15 "reading fee" for non-member submittals.

All submittals are to be e-mailed to Scribe Editor, George Hirai (cwcsfv@gmail.com), as MS Word "attachments" - not as a text message.

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Editors,

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in the process of making our meetings so fascinating and engaging. These gatherings on the second Saturday of each month have certainly enriched me as an author. Thanks for finding such interesting presenters, and please keep up the good work! Good health to you all,

-- *Richard Schmorleitz, Chatsworth*

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

OUR OPEN MIC VENUES...

We now have two Open Mics to benefit you, our SFV members, located in Canoga Park and in Encino. Please see the details concerning these venues on the last page of this journal.

At each of these events, your opportunity to read will be greatly enhanced as they run two plus hours – and are much more interactive.

Beginning with the April 12th meeting, we will discontinue the Open Mic at our monthly General Meeting. It is only 30 minutes duration and does not lend itself to interaction.

We will however continue to support and encourage you at our wonderful, alternative venues at Borders and Barnes & Noble bookstores. – Thank you, The SFV Board

CWC-SFV TEAM

Executive Board:

Scott A. Sonders, President
George Hirai, interim VP¹
Leila Morris, Secretary
James Ganatta, Treasurer

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Lenora Smalley, SFV Spokesperson
Bruce Zacuto, Sergeant-at-Arms
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Debra Zednik, Critiques Advisor
Megan Masten, Outreach
Elizabeth Jaimes, Hospitality

¹ also: Editor of the Scribe

² also: VP of the CWC-Central Board

APRIL MONTHLY MEETING

WHO: CWC-SFV - Serving Greater Los Angeles writers

WHEN: Saturday, April 12th, 1:00-3:30

WHERE: Encino Community Center - 4935 Balboa Boulevard

GET YOUR 15-MINUTES OF FAME – NOW x2 OPEN MICS!

1 – At Barnes & Noble in Encino. Sign-ups begin at 6:45 p.m. on the second Friday of every month – 16461 Ventura Boulevard. For more info please...
email: cwcsfv@gmail.com

2 – Borders Books in Canoga Park. Sign-ups begin at 6:45 p.m. on the third Thursday of every month – 6510 Canoga Avenue. For more info please...
email: rrdeets@socal.rr.com

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Serving Greater Los Angeles™
Postal Box 17897
Encino, CA 91416

www.calwriterssfv.com