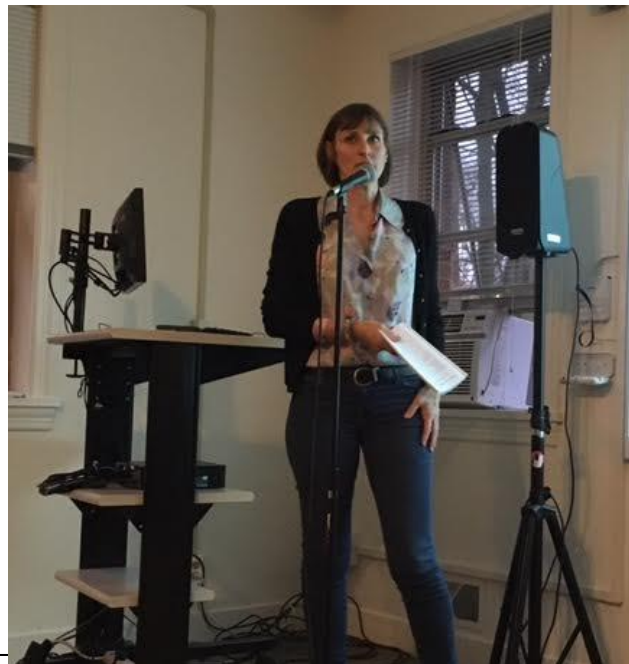


Women Writers in the House!



Left: Sharbari Ahmed gives background on her stage show “Raisins, Not Virgins” and shares a clip of the opening monologue. **Right:** Program alumna Laurel Peterson discusses her new book of poetry “Do You Expect Your Art to

Barat hosts Ahmed, Peterson readings

By Emily Jack

On March 23, author, screenwriter and playwright Sharbari Ahmed visited Manhattanville for the MFA program’s “Meet the Writer Series,” where she shared excerpts from her work, “Raisins, Not Virgins.”

Ahmed described the piece’s evolution from its beginning as a short story, to its revision into a successful play, leading to its current status: a screenplay in the works.

Part of Ahmed’s discussion addressed the issues facing Muslim writers in “the age of Trump,” a conversation in which she engaged her audience. Among many examples, she noted that Muslim characters are often written as exotic; a more revolutionary act of writing would be to create Muslim characters in ordinary circumstances.

“Raisins, Not Virgins” follows 29 year old Sahar Salam, a businesswoman in corporate advertising who suddenly finds herself single. She is forced to confront her own ideologies in comparison to her ex-boyfriend’s, and in the context of her Islamic upbringing and a country that tends to view Muslims negatively. Ahmed used “Raisins” to not only illuminate a variety of her own personal experiences, but also to open the floor to a pertinent question and answer (Article continues on the next page→)

session, a powerful end to the evening.

In addition to “Raisins Not Virgins,” Sharbari Ahmed is the author of the story collection “The Ocean of Mrs. Nagai.” She has also written for the television show “Quantico.” Follow her on Twitter at @sharbarizohra for information/updates about her life and work.

On April 4, Laurel Peterson, a program alumna and Norwalk Connecticut’s Poet Laureate, returned to Barat House to celebrate the release of her new collection of poetry. Peterson read from “Do You Expect Your Art to Answer?” a collection of work that responds to a variety of art types, exploring the idea that art and human beings are in a constant dialogue, whether it is realized or not. Poetry is used as the vehicle to drive that conversation.

Peterson, who is an English professor at Norwalk Community College, captivated her Barat House fans with not only a reading, but visuals of the pieces she “speaks with” through her poems.

Peterson’s other books include the novel “Shadow Notes” and a previous book of poetry titled “That’s The Way the Music Sounds.” Visit her website <http://www.laurelpeterson.com/>

Special MFA Events Coming Up Soon!

REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR GRAPHIC NOVEL WORKSHOP AND SUMMER WRITERS’ WEEK

Saturday, May 13, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Roz Chast, graphic memoirist and New Yorker cartoonist, keynote presentation for Mville MFA’s One Day Graphic Novel Writing Workshop **ROZ CHAST READING IS FREE! JOIN US!**

Paul Levitz, past president of DC Comics, will lead the adult workshop. Barbara Slate will lead a youth workshop. Roz Chast’s reading is open to public; workshop requires registration, \$75 admission fee.

Summer Writers’ Week! Monday June 19-Friday June 23

Featuring keynote Reader Joseph O’Neill and Special Guest Rivka Galchen, plus a host of other talented writers and teachers. **Registration opens March 1 2017.**

For more information see:

Mvillemfa.com

Register for Summer Writers’ Week and the Graphic Novel Workshop at

Community.mville.edu/mfa

Contact mfa@mville.edu for additional information on program events or visit mvillemfa.com

MFA Calendar of Events Summer 2017

MFA 2017 Graduate Final Reading and Patio-Warming Party

Wednesday May 10 6 p.m. Barat House

A send-off/celebration of the MFA program's graduating students and their hard work. Barbeque with Barat House's brand new grill begins at 6 p.m. Reading starts at 7.

RSVP REQUIRED! MFA@mville.edu

Presidential Write-In

Tuesdays/Thursdays June 6, 8, 13 and 15, 6-8:30 p.m. Barat House

A writing workshop with **author and MFA Director Lori Soderlind** for all who seek a creative way to respond to the recent presidential election and current American politics. Will include discussion of works ranging from authors Hunter S. Thompson to Rebecca Traister. Participants will craft and revise one personal essay, short memoir, or literary journalism piece.

Register online at community.mville.edu/mfa Registration Fee: \$125

Teen Essay Writing Boot Camp @ Manhattanville

July 10-11, 5-9 p.m. Barat House

Special Summer Workshop for Grades 9-12: Improve your writing skills for school, college applications and fun! Two, four-hour sessions over two days, taught by Master of Fine Arts writing students.

Register online at community.mville.edu/mfa

Registration Fee: \$150

News and Notes

Compiled by Tina Tocco (MAW '06, MFA '13)

Check out what our fellow MFA students and alums are up to!

Susie Aybar (MFA '13) leads writing workshops at Ruth Keeler Memorial Library in North Salem and at Gilda's Club in White Plains. Her "Healing Through Writing" class at Gilda's Club helps people who are affected by cancer. Susie also writes health articles for *Westchester Senior Voice*. For more information about Susie's classes, please contact her at saybar12@yahoo.com. On April 2, **Tina Tocco** read her poem "Boys of Fall" as part of Poetry Caravan's National Poetry Month event. The reading was held at the Mount Pleasant Public Library in Pleasantville. "Boys of Fall" was previously published in the Fall 2015 issue of *Glassworks*.

Upcoming Events in Rockland County

Save the date for River River's Lodestar Reading!

River River Writers Circle will host its bi-annual Lodestar reading series, featuring an award-winning local author and contributors to the Spring 2017 issue of *River River Journal*. Past guests have included Mary Beth Keane (*Fever*, Scribner 2013), Richard Jackson and Robert Vivian (*Traversings*, Anchor and Plume 2016), and Nick Samaras (*American Psalm, World Psalm*, Ashland Poetry Press 2014). Further details TBA.

Date: Saturday, May 20, 2017

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Cuppa Pulp Writers' Space, Nanuet, NY

For more information, please contact Mville MFA alum **Donna Miele** at donnamiele@riverriver.org.

What are you up to? Send your news about publications, teaching gigs, readings, and upcoming events to mvillealumcolumn@gmail.com.

Submissions, Deadlines and More

**Mortar Magazine Open for Submissions-Prose, Poetry and/or Experimental Writing
Deadline is rolling**

<http://www.mortarmagazine.org/#submit>

Colorado Review Short Fiction and Poetry Contest

Deadline 4/30/2017, entry fee \$3

<http://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/colorado-review/submit/>

Storm Cellar "Force Majeure" Flash Fiction and Nonfiction Contest-up to three flash entries in one file is acceptable

Deadline 4/30/2017, entry fee for one flash: \$5; entry fee for two or three flashes: \$12

<https://stormcellar.submittable.com/submit/72759/500-force-majeure-flash-contest>

Spokane Prize for Short Fiction

Deadline 6/5/2017, entry fee \$27.50

<http://willowspringsbooks.org/submit/>

Tammy Journal-Chapbook and Journal Submissions

Deadline 6/1/2017, entry fee \$10-\$23

<https://tammy.submittable.com/submit>

**Poetry Society of America's Spring Benefit Dinner, honoring Jacqueline Woodson-Young
People's Poet Laureate**

6/6/2017 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at New York Botanical Garden

http://www.poetrysociety.org/psa/about/spring_benefit/?utm_content=&utm_source=VerticalResponse&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=&utm_campaign=Save%20the%20Date%20for%20Our%20Spring%20Benefit%21

The Moth International Short Story Prize 2017

Deadline 6/30/2017, entry fee \$15.09

<http://www.themothmagazine.com/a1-page.asp?ID=8227&page=18>

New York City Poetry Festival

7/29/17-7/30/17 11 am to 6 pm on Governors Island, NYC

<http://newyorkcitypoetryfestival.com/>

Second Annual ex Ophidia Press Poetry Book Prize

Deadline 8/15/2017, entry fee \$25.00

<https://exophidiapress.submittable.com/submit/52356/second-annual-ex-ophidia-press-poetry-book-contest>

Dzanc Book Prizes in Fiction, Nonfiction and Short Story

Deadline 9/15/2017, entry fee \$25.00

<https://dzancbooks.submittable.com/submit>

**Has your work been published? Got something for the
calendar? Send it to us at MFA@Mville.edu**

For additional information on events, news and other updates,
be sure to check our website!

<http://mvillemfa.com/>

Don't forget to follow us on Twitter too!

@MvilleMFA

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