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Announcements: *Fiction Fix*, Issue 9, is now out! Go to [http://www.fictionfix.net](http://www.fictionfix.net)

Come see Assistant Professor Tiffany Beechy give her farewell address! Thursday, June 23 at 6:30 p.m. Building 9, Room 1233. Sponsored by E.G.O.

(English Graduate Organization)

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*Tempest Rocks Atlantic Beach Crowd*

A nearly full moon and a powerful wind set the backdrop for the last night of this year’s production of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, a play that sprang to life under the waving trees and the powerful direction of Dr. Pam Monteleone.

Setting the play off the coast of Florida in the age of exploration, Monteleone brought new energy to this Shakespearean classic through her well chosen cast and crew, composed of UNF and FSCJ students, alumni, and a beautiful group of spirits, many of whom are still in elementary or middle school. A simple set—the wrecked ship with flowing torn sails, and a six-tiered platform—created the perfect stage. The spirits, dressed in tattered rags of animal hues, with make-up covering their arms and faces in varying patterns, moved nimbly, squatting and growling, laughing or casting curses. They moved atop the destroyed ship and crawled below the speaking cast, lending dramatic energy through their reactions to the unfolding action. Joshua Kenneth Allen Johnson, a sixth grader at Episcopal High School, played the drums along with the other spirits who accented dramatic moments with single beats on a range of percussion instruments.

Monteleone made a wise move when she decided to engage Ryan Janney, a UNF music major, to direct the music and write a musical score for the
play. Janney researched the music of the play’s setting and composed the background chorus—what the cast called “The Island Music”—that punctuated the scenes. Directing his fellow musicians—Mark Liebszeit on trumpet, Erin Keller on flute, Tony Park and Rafael Hernandez on clarinet, Samson Mandrick on drums, and Hunter Rhyne on guitar—Janney helped create the sense of chaos and disorder that haunts Shakespeare’s island, further bringing the audience into the show.

The actors, remarkable for their clarity of speech and energy, gave the audience what one hopes for in a Shakespearean dramatic event. Moments of hilarity such as when Trinculo, played by Robby McChargue, mounts Caliban, played by FSCJ student Christopher Williams, were followed by times of great seriousness and struggle. Returning alumni Ronica Arntzen played Prospera with intensity, following Michael Santana’s eye rolling, leg shaking (side splitting) antics as the drunken butler Stephano. English major Lily Hickey gave a strong final performance as Miranda as did senior English major Cameron Lewis played as the lead spirit Ariel. Senior psychology major Michal Grimes graced us with her powerful presence as Queen Alonsa, bringing a welcome revision to the originally male-dominated play.

Monteleone’s plays, as always, are huge events that draw students, alumni, technicians, and set designers together in a way that celebrates the human spirit. Perhaps the sprites who published the note of gratitude in the play program best express some of the energy and joy Monteleone elicits from her actors and production staff:

“While The Tempest brought justice to Prospero and love to Miranda, it was YOUR timely teaching, your dutiful dedication, and your ‘spiritual’ nurturing that led us through this ‘Shakespearean’ storm. Thank you for helping us to ponder the poetry and the prose, navigate the many moral twists and turns, to find, ‘most surgically,’ THE SPIRIT of kindness, peace, love and hope in each other.”

Our hats to off to “Dr. Pam,” the woman who spends so many hours bringing the dreams of those around her to life.

—Betsy Nies

Students Slam for UNF Club

On March 28th, S.P.I.T.S (Spoken Poets Integrating Theatrical Style) presented their Open Mic Poetry Slam at a Student Union auditorium. English faculty Mark Ari and Betsy Nies were on hand in support of this student run affair, which S.P.I.T.S President Stephanie Brendle told is all part of her club’s mantra.

“We’re trying to create more of a sense of community on campus, to give people something they can go to, give them something that they can say,
Sam Bilheimer won the first S.P.I.T.S Beat Award for his singing and guitar playing.

‘Hey, I was having a bad day,’ but when I went to see the Slam, I got a little smile.”

Acting as the night’s emcee, Brendle had quite the onstage presence—inciting laughter from the crowd several times with her quick-witted remarks and observations. With the help of S.P.I.T.S Vice President Cedric Bacon (and a little audience suggestion), she even took to the stage to showcase her own spontaneous brand of spoken poetry. It’s this “spoken” element that Brendle notes her club is trying to highlight.

“No matter where you are, you still have words. And even if you don’t write them down, you still have the ability to speak and express those words. That’s what we emphasis, the ability to express and connect,” says Brendle.

And it was the student entrants who also wanted to connect with the audience for their chance to win the S.P.I.T.S Beat Award (and a $25 Chili’s gift card).

Among the Slam’s performers were Mike “DNA” Tomassoni, who recited several of his poems. Tomassoni displayed passionate delivery of his writing that included a tale from the curious viewpoint of a worm’s life on a hook. Thomas Eadie, reading a piece he completed in Ari’s fall Image/Text workshop, incorporated the visual aid of a projector for his hybrid story titled “Flames.” But it was Sam Bilheimer, or “Sam B,” who emerged as the night’s Open Mike Poetry Slam favorite. Buoyed by his acoustic guitar renditions of several original songs, Bilheimer received audience approval to win the first S.P.I.T.S Beat Award—a trophy with a can of actual beets hidden inside. The evening closed with an outstanding performance by a member of the group Capricide Mark Douglas McCombs, President of the Death Metal Society here on campus.

Of all the artists who entered the Slam—poets, musicians, authors—their work consisted of style and subject that was surprisingly different, but as Brendle pointed out, this is because S.P.I.T.S isn’t solely a club for poets.

“It’s for everybody. It’s for anybody who does performance art,” commented Brendle. After their first successful outing as a UNF club, S.P.I.T.S plans to turn their Open Mic Poetry Slam into a biannual event. For more information on club S.P.I.T.S, visit them online at http://www.spitsjax.com or write to Club Spits club.spits@gmail.com. Check out their album and links on the Department of English’s Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/#!/profile.php?id=1463856077.

–Travis Wildes

**English Honors Society Hosts Q&A for Those Considering Grad School**

The Alpha Pi Sigma chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society recently hosted a Graduate School Application FAQ session. The event was a huge success! We had a wonderful panel that consisted of Dr. Sam Kimball, English Department Chair; Dr. Jason Mauro, Graduate Coordinator; Dr. James Beasley, faculty sponsor of STD; and Laura Early, the North Florida representative from Teach for America! We are so very grateful for their participation! We had refreshments and discussed the ins and outs of applying to grad school. Some notable points included the necessity of a pre-meditated focus and commitment to a
Minimalist Poet Educates Students About Visual Space

Márton Koppány, a minimalist concrete poet, gave a public reading/presentation of his work at the Thomas G. Carpenter Library on April 4th. Organized by Associate Professor of English Clark Lunberry, who teaches courses on contemporary experimental poetry, brought Koppány to campus to supplement two courses that he is currently teaching, focused specifically on poet’s work.

Lunberry said, “Koppány’s visual poetry offers readers a distanced and detached view upon their own everyday language, often making quite strange and fresh the otherwise familiar and unexamined workings of English.”

Students who attended found meeting the poet in person and hearing him present his work an inspiring experience.

UNF philosophy major Ralph Figueroa commented, “It certainly changed my perspective of his work. It is not often that a reader is given the chance to hear from the original artist. The living author before you makes the work come alive and helped me focus even more on his visual poetic creations.”

About himself, Koppány writes, “Born in 1953, I’m a writer and editor living in Budapest, Hungary. I started writing something that turned out to be ‘visual poetry’ thirty years ago because, by the late seventies, I’d understood that if I didn’t want to give up the faint hope of communicating, I should ‘get rid’ of my mother tongue. So, the main source of my way is a deficiency, which makes things simple in some sense.

“My inclinations have always directed me towards the (actual, ever-changing) limits of verbal communication. But I don’t distrust/need/enjoy words more or less than the empty spaces between them, the sheet of paper they are written on, the rhythm of the turning of the pages, unknown and forgotten symbols, fragments, natural formations, like clouds—each of them, and any combination of them, may be an invitation. When I feel at ease and ready to make something, I experience their complete equivalence.”

Koppány stopped at UNF as a part of a small tour. He now heads to, among other places, the Chicago Art Institute, the Chicago Poetry Project, as well as Milwaukee’s renowned Woodland Pattern Book Center.

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Márton Koppány with Clark Lunberry
Visual Poetry on the Pond

Clark Lunberry, Associate Professor of English, recently completed the fourth in his ongoing series of “writing on water/writing on air” installations on the pond in front of the UNF library, in its stairway and in the library’s showcases. The installation, titled “Water/Trees/Sky: Sensation,” ran from March 21 until April 13, with the pond component of the poem undergoing regular adjustments. The piece began with the intersecting words, “Sinking Sensation,” floating upon the surface of the pond; the words changed the second week to “Thinking Sensation,” then, days later, to “Inking Sensation.” At last, without intersection, the single word “Sensation” was left to float alone. Finally, the remaining word—SENSATION—was pulled from the water on April 13. With this removal, the fifth and final phase of the poem began, uninscribed, and remained on the surface of the pond for an indefinite period of time.

For further information about this installation, as well as Lunberry’s other recent installations, visit <http://www.unf.edu/~clunberry>.

–Clark Lundberry

Authors Visit UNF for English Writers Series: Joanna Howard and Brian Evenson

On April 8th, as a part of the UNF Writers Series, sponsored by the Department of English, students had the opportunity to listen to two outstanding authors from Brown University. Joanna Howard and Brian Evenson read from their most recent works and answered questions related to their own literary journeys from neophytes to well published authors.

Howard’s first solo book of short stories On the Winding Stair, self categorized as “girly,” is a collection of hauntingly beautiful stories creating detailed images using word choice and sentence structure. Anything but mundane and bland, the collection of stories touches on the romantic past, haunting ruins, and overdone present. Howard draws inspiration not only from inner thoughts but obsessions as well.

After traveling and getting into mixed martial arts, Howard’s new work she read had a more masculine, tough tone. For this work, Howard got help from an artist Chemlawn, with whom she is currently collaborating. In her normal writing process, Howard works on many different things at once, then over time sees what fits together. For the new piece, Chemlawn gave her feedback and told her was she liked and directed her. Howard regards this as an “amazing process to let someone direct and figure out what pieces go together.” Howard has also been working on a novel.

Howard got her start with getting various short stories published in Conjunctions, Chicago Review, Unsaid, Quarterly West, etc. After a stroke of luck, Howard was able to put all her stories together in book form. Her first book was a chapbook with Rikki Ducornet called In the Colorless Round, then On the Winding Stair. In advice to young writers, Howard stated that “the best pathway to publishing is to not turn down any opportunity.”

Following Howard, Evenson, the Chair of the Literary Arts Program at Brown, read an unpublished short story called “Windeye” along with sections from “Invisible Box” and “An Accounting,” a part of a story story collection titled Fugue State (2009). An award winning
literary fiction writer, Evenson’s work functions on multiple levels, dealing explicitly with the way language becomes removed from its moorings, leaving his characters (and his audience) unsure of their identities. For example, in the short story “Invisible Box,” a woman has intercourse with a mime who, wearing his gloves and make-up, insists on miming the act of sex during the act. This moment, of course, raises questions about the real and unreal; the woman finds herself trapped in the invisible box that the mime leaves behind. Metaphorically, Evenson investigates the nature of reality and the extent to which we are absorbed by our own fabrications.

Our thanks to faculty member Duncan Barlow who spearheaded the event.

–Stephanie Pellerito and Betsy Nies

Meet the Faculty

Dr. Baron's View of the Art Inside

Dr. Mary Baron is an inspiration to all who hear of her work in the Duval County Jails. She lives by the idea that “if you change your story, you can change your life. We are all handed a story, some of us get a good one, a mediocre one, a bad one. But you can rewrite your life.” She compares it to college. Students come to learn and find out what they want to do with their lives, and “that’s what we do for the people in the jails.”

Twenty-five years ago while Dr. Baron was teaching in Alaska she was asked to volunteer to teach college classes in the jail in Fairbanks. Later on, when she moved to Jacksonville, she helped the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville write an NEA grant to promote the arts in the jails. When the grant was given to Jacksonville, she was hired as part of the program as the full time writer and worked with many different visual artists.

When the funding ran out, she kept up the programs with volunteers from UNF and her church. She faces some challenges with small classrooms, but the benefits far outweigh the small problems. Dr. Baron finds that the improvement in the inmates’ dispositions is not limited to in-class behavior. Officers report improvement in behavior in other areas such as dorm life. Dr. Baron has kept in touch with some inmates, and she knows she has truly made an impact in their lives. When asked what was the most gratifying to her, she said that it was “seeing people who don’t think they are worth anything realize that someone is willing to listen to them.” In an atmosphere of very little communication, this program promotes cooperation and lowers levels of hostility.

If you are interested in helping keep this program alive, please feel free to contact Dr. Baron at mbaron@unf.edu for more information. She has a particular need for high interest, middle reading level paperback books. Any copies of Paterson, Grisham, Clancy and others are more than welcome. There is a box outside her office (Bldg. 8/ 2617). In addition, any extra theme paper, pencils, and envelopes would also be appreciated because they are in such high demand.

–Brentley Stead
From Here to There: What Do You Do with a Degree in English?

Celebrating UNF’s Alumni
Undergraduate English Graduate Follows His Writing Dreams

Kris Knapp, currently enrolled in the UNF graduate program for European History, is an award-winning writer recognized for his work in poetry and short-fiction. He began writing while in the 7th grade. Writing for the Pedro Menendez High School literary magazine and the St. Augustine Record, Knapp began getting semi-professionally published. A long time ago his father advised him to write short stories, advice Knapp followed. Knapp stated that short stories were a good way for writers to learn their craft.

"You should write what you want to write. Write what's within you to write and have fun with it," noted Knapp.

Knapp praised some of the professors who made him a better writer while an undergraduate student. He named Dr. Tiffany Beechy and Dr. Betsy Nies as two professors in the English department who improved his writing. He especially praised Mark Ari.

"It's impossible to give Ari too much praise. He's incredibly smart, enormously kind, and a true friend. Anyone serious about writing should enroll in his workshops."

Obviously a motivated and serious writer, Knapp believes ego and confidence are key in getting published. Knapp has had various science-fiction short stories published in Redstone Science Fiction, ResAliens Issue 5, and Roll the Bones: Fantastic Tales from Fight On! Magazine, as well as winning Second Place in the Fight On! Weird Enclaves and Black Pits short story contest for his works Weregild and Scaling the Tower. Knapp is currently writing a novel and plans to someday teach. Visit his blog at http://thelifefromtheslushpile.blogspot.com.

–Stephanie Pellerito

Contributing writers and staff:

Please e-mail bnies@unf.edu if you would like to join our staff.