The National Storytelling Festival: Words, Music, and Memories

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The Poet’s Voice

NESTING DOLLS

Oksana, my Russian daughter-in-law gave me a set of nesting dolls last Christmas.

There are five of them. They nestle inside one another, enveloped by the largest doll. I take them out and line them up. I put them back together inside their large outer shell. This week it occurred to me that they are a metaphor for my poetry writing and reading life.


Michael Harper responds by telling how he began with a rhyming dictionary given to him as a child, how he had to learn everything the hard way. He tells about neighborhoods loved and lost, studies, (including pre-med), and “biding time.” He mentions musicians and writers who have mentored him.

What I learned from this interview is that nothing we learn or do is irrelevant. Harper says, “For myself poetry still burns with a life, like my fifty-two-year writing life cantered a synthesis. Michael Harper’s writing and musing over my nesting dolls, I discovered this poem after I left a 30 year career in a symphony orchestra. These poems live in doll #3.

FROM POEM V

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence.
Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.

Liesel Mueller’s book, Alive Together, and her poem, “Brendel Playing Schubert,” is a revelation that someone else understands what it means to make music. Not only the audience, but the players retreat into a “nowhere where the enchanted live.”

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THE NATIONAL STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

Words, Music, and Memories

Anyone who shares an appreciation for the telling of stories should note that the world’s oldest and largest festival dedicated to celebrating that ancient art will take place in western North Carolina on October 4-6, 2013.

Held each autumn since 1973 in Jonesborough, Tennessee, and produced by the Jonesborough-based International Storytelling Center (ISC), the National Storytelling Festival — called by USA Today “the leading event of its kind in America” — will feature compelling performances by some of the world’s most interesting and entertaining storytellers.

People at the Festival will be privileged to sit and listen to the magical word-weaving of Bil Lepp, Syd Leiberman, Ed Stivender, the legendary storyteller Donald Davis, and storyteller/ballad singer Sheila Kay Adams. While they have developed markedly different performance styles, all five storytellers have in common an uncommon ability to entertain large audiences with stories that are at the same time deeply personal and profoundly universal.

Where I live influences what I write. My Minnesota poems fill Doll #4 with snowstorms, clouds and sky. My North Carolina poems reside in the largest doll. In this place, mountains become choirs, clouds, shrouds, and October, an Appalachian tapestry.

This morning my nesting dolls are contained in their proper spaces. They don’t fit any other way, like poems that claim me in time, some written by me, most written by others, belong to me in their time. I take out old poems, and am “there.”

I read the oldies. I read them in order. They remind me of two things:

1. My writing is a testament of survival;
2. “I am not done yet.” (huskclifton, from good woman: poems and a memoir, BOA 1987.)

Read the poem “Dear John, Dear Coltrone” by Michael S. Harper online right now by going to www.rapidrivermagazine.com
Points of Light

Points of Light crystal and mineral gallery, located just two minutes north of Asheville on Merrimon Avenue, is a wonderful source for fine crystals, gems, minerals and living art.

The gallery, which boasts an amazing collection of huge Quartz crystals, as well as a seven-foot tall Agate geode, is much more than just another rock shop. Points Of Light’s collection includes many unique Quartz clusters and Amethyst Geodes in addition to healing stones, mineral specimens and a wide variety of books on stones. They specialize in breathtaking interior design pieces and one-of-a-kind pieces for decorators, collectors and healers.

Every single item on display has been carefully and lovingly hand-picked for quality, beauty and energy. The gallery works with a renowned group of internationally acclaimed crystal and mineral artisans, and as a result carries some of the finest cut and polished pieces available anywhere in the United States.

Points Of Light is also home to one of the largest selections of crystal singing bowls on the east coast, as well as a comprehensive and truly beautiful group of crystal healing wands, including cuts by world-famous lapidary artist, Lawrence Stoller. From museum pieces weighing more than a ton, down to the smallest of their tumbled stones, the quality and scope of their inventory is unsurpassed. Points Of Light is a “must see” destination in Asheville!

Points of Light carries a variety of Quartz clusters and Amethyst Geodes.

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