



The Mary E. Rolling Reading Series is a project of Penn State's M.F.A. program in English. It receives generous support from the The Mary E. Rolling Lectureship in Creative Writing, the Joseph L. Grucci Poetry Endowment, the Pennsylvania Center for the Book, the University Libraries, the Arts in Public Life Initiative, the Department of Women's Studies, the Department of English, and the College of the Liberal Arts.

Literature & Civic Life

Join the MFA Program, the Department of English and our friends, the Arts in Public Life Initiative and the Department of Women's Studies for a year-long conversation with poets, fiction writers, and non-fiction writers, as we explore how contemporary literature incorporates critical issues of our time. Creative writers will read from poems, stories, memoirs, and essays that address environmental stewardship, international relations, labor, mental health, race, social history, and the U.S. criminal justice system.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2009

Elizabeth Alexander

► *The 2009 Emily Dickinson Lecturer—courtesy of George and Barbara Kelly*



Elizabeth Alexander, author of "Praise Song for the Day," the inaugural poem for President Barack Obama, has published five books of poems: *The Venus Hottentot*, *Body of Life*, *Antebellum Dream Book*, *American Sublime*, one of three finalists for the Pulitzer Prize and one of the American Library Association's "Notable Books of the Year;" and her first young adult collection (co-authored with Marilyn Nelson), *Miss Crandall's School for Young Ladies and Little Misses of Color* (2008 Connecticut Book Award).

She has authored two collections of essays, *The Black Interior and Power and Possibility*, and The Yale School of Drama produced her play, "Diva Studies." Her many awards include the Jackson Prize for Poetry, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, two Pushcart Prizes, and a Guggenheim fellowship. She teaches in the department of African American Studies at Yale University.

OCTOBER 14, 2009

Ann Pancake



Ann Pancake's collection of short stories, *Given Ground*, won the 2000 Bakeless Award. Her first novel, *Strange As This Weather Has Been*, features a southern West Virginia family devastated by mountaintop removal mining. Based on interviews and real events, the novel earned a Kirkus Review Top Ten Fiction Books of 2007 citation. A finalist for the 2008 Orion Book Award, the novel won the 2007 Weatherford Award. *The Sunday New York Times* called the book "powerful, sure-footed and haunting..." Pancake lives in Seattle, Washington and teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University.

for the 2008 Orion Book Award, the novel won the 2007 Weatherford Award. *The Sunday New York Times* called the book "powerful, sure-footed and haunting..." Pancake lives in Seattle, Washington and teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University.

OCTOBER 22, 2009

Reading will take place at 6:30 p.m. in Boardrooms 1–2 of The Nittany Lion Inn

Alice Randall

► *In partnership with the Penn State African American Novel Conference*



Alice Randall's debut novel, *The Wind Done Gone*, became a *New York Times* bestseller. The *Los Angeles Times* lauded her second, *Pushkin and the Queen of Spades* as a "best fiction book of 2004." She will publish her latest novel, *Rebel Yell*, in September 2009. In 2001, Randall received the Free Spirit Award and in 2002 the Literature Award of Excellence

from the Memphis Black Writers Conference. She was a finalist for the NAACP Image Award in 2002. Randall's writing has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Elle*, and *O: The Oprah Magazine*. Also an accomplished songwriter, Randall is the only African-American woman ever to write a number-one country song. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, where she is Writer-in-Residence at Vanderbilt University.

NOVEMBER 11, 2009

Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno

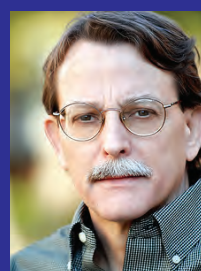


Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno, a Contributing Editor of *The American Poetry Review*, received a Pushcart Prize nomination for two poems from *Slamming Open the Door*. Bonanno's heartrending autobiographical collection inspires awe and compassion for the human spirit. *Library Journal* commented, "Written with skill in tight,

spare lines without sentimentality or melodrama, Bonanno launches readers through the experience, one that evokes a universal terror... A stunning first book." Bonanno teaches English and Creative Writing in Pennsylvania and advocates for families affected by violence.

JANUARY 28, 2010

James Brasfield



James Brasfield, author of *Inheritance and Other Poems* (a chapbook) and *Ledger of Crossroads*, his 2010 debut collection with Louisiana State University Press, has received fellowships in poetry from The National Endowment for the Arts and The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. His poems have appeared in many publications, including *Agni*,

Chicago Review, *Colorado Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *The Iowa Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Seattle Review*, *STAND*, and *The Southern Review*. Twice a Senior Fulbright Fellow to Ukraine, he has received The American Association for Ukrainian Studies Prize for Translation, a Pushcart Prize for translation, and The PEN Award for Poetry in Translation for *The Selected Poems of Oleh Lysheha*. For 2008–2009, he served as Visiting Poet at The University of Memphis.

FEBRUARY 25, 2010

Abbe Smith



Professor of Law and Co-Director of the Criminal Justice Clinic and Fellowship Program at Georgetown University Law School, Abbe Smith received a Senior Fulbright Scholarship in 2005–2006 to the University of Melbourne Law School in Melbourne, Australia. A widely published legal scholar, she teaches and writes in the areas of criminal defense,

legal ethics, juvenile justice, and clinical legal education. Smith chronicles, in *Case of a Lifetime*, her 28-year personal and professional journey to free an innocent woman from serving a life sentence.

MARCH 4, 2010

Elizabeth Kadetsky



Elizabeth Kadetsky grew up and lives in New York City where she has practiced yoga for twenty years. As a Fulbright Fellow to India in creative writing in 1999–2000, she studied with the Iyengars, conducting interviews with Iyengar and his contemporaries to construct a history of modern yoga. The research resulted in her memoir about

the experience, *First There Is a Mountain*. Her fiction and journalism have appeared in *Best New American Voices*, *the Pushcart Prizes*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Self*, *the Village Voice*, *LA Weekly*, and *The Nation*. She has received fellowships from institutions including the MacDowell Foundation, Camargo Foundation, Albee Foundation, and the St. James Centre for Creativity in Valletta, Malta. She joins the MFA faculty in fall, 2009 as a visiting assistant professor in English.

MARCH 18, 2010

George Saunders

► *The 2010 Steven Fisher Writer-in-Residence*



The Boston Globe has lauded George Saunders' ability to "construct a story of absurdist satire, then locate within it a moment of searing humanity." Saunders' collections of short stories include the bestselling *Pastoralia*, *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*; the novella-length illustrated fable, *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil*;

and the *New York Times* bestselling children's book, *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip*. Saunders has published regularly in *The New Yorker*, *GO*, and *Harpers Magazine*, and has appeared in the *O'Henry*, *Best American Short Story*, *Best Non-Required Reading*, and *Best American Travel Writing* anthologies. Most recently, his book of essays, *The Braindead Megaphone*, received critical acclaim and landed him spots on *The Charlie Rose Show*, *Late Night with David Letterman*, and *The Colbert Report*. Among countless other literary awards, in 2006, Saunders received both a MacArthur Fellowship, for "bring[ing] to contemporary American fiction a sense of humor, pathos, and literary style all his own," and a Guggenheim Fellowship. He teaches in the Creative Writing Program at Syracuse University.

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1909-2009

Free
and open
to the public.

All readings will
take place at 7:30 p.m.
in the Palmer Lipcon Auditorium
of the Palmer Museum of Art
unless otherwise noted.

For more information:

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