

## 2006 event

People's Poetry  
Gathering

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## THE FOURTH PEOPLE'S POETRY GATHERING

Featuring  
The Wor(l)d of New York

Poems from the World's Endangered and Contested Languages  
Read and performed in the Mother Tongue and English  
Including the Festival within a Festival  
Harpsong: Celtic Poetry and Music  
&

The new New York City Epic Poem and Poems of our Fair (and sometimes unfair) City  
Read by Twenty Poets Laureate of New York

Date	Time	Event	Venue	Tickets
<b>PRE-EVENT</b>				
Thursday April 20	7:00- 9:30pm	Voices of Kings: the Dankawali Village Epic — A Poetry Dinner	Windows over Harlem Restaurant	\$45; Members, Seniors, Students \$40.
<p>In 1998, during the recent civil war in Sierra Leone, a fire destroyed the only written copy of a village's epic poem. In 2002, City Lore commissioned <i>finah</i> poet and John Jay College professor <b>Kewulay Kamara</b> to return to his village and recreate the ancient story in song for the <i>People's Poetry Gathering</i>. <i>Voices of Kings</i> interweaves <b>Kamara's</b> own boyhood story of watching his father set down the epic with the epic itself, a creation myth that traces the origin of the Finah clan of Islamic warrior poets. Along the way, <b>Kamara</b> tells of a young boy who grew from the precolonial past to a post-colonial English-speaking and American future. This epic retelling brings in the history of slavery, colonialism, West Africa, and the savage Civil War in Sierra Leone, all appear in this sweeping poetry history, which also describes how reconstructing the ancient stories may hold a key to a better future for the continent. Performed at this pre-<i>Gathering</i> poetry dinner and at the <i>Gathering</i> for the first time, the performance features some of the finest African <i>jali</i> musicians in New York, and follows a delectable, traditional African dinner including nagui chicken, couscous, cassava leaves, sweet plantains, sorrel juice, and more! <a href="#">Click here to see pictures from the event!</a></p>				
Wednesday May 3	7:00- 8:00pm	An Evening with Robert Bly	Auditorium, CUNY Graduate Center Cosponsor: Poets House	\$12; Members, Seniors, Students \$10.
<p>Renowned poet, translator, and bestselling author <b>Robert Bly</b> reads from his own translations and performs his own poetry, delivering a keynote for the <i>Gathering</i>, highlighting the importance of working with poetry across languages, while sharing some of his own stunning contributions to our literature.</p>				
Thursday May 4	6:30- 8:30pm	Gotham Poetry and History	Auditorium, CUNY Graduate Center Cosponsor: Gotham Center for New York City History	Free, reservations required at 212-529-1955
<p>Inaugurating the <i>Gathering's</i> theme on the Wor(l)d of New York, this program highlights the relationships between the work of New York City-based poets who express a personal and collective vision of the City, the times they wrote about, and the social history unfolding at the time. Introduced by Pulitzer Prize-winning author, <b>Mike Wallace</b>, <i>Gotham Poetry and History</i> brings together historians <b>David Levering Lewis</b> from NYU, <b>Elisa New</b> from Harvard, <b>Al Filreis</b> from the University of Pennsylvania, writer <b>Phillip Lopate</b>, and poets <b>Carmen Boullosa</b>, <b>Iwan Llwyd</b>, and <b>Bob Holman</b>. Listen to readings from <b>Whitman</b>, <b>Ginsburg</b>, <b>Claude McKay</b>, <b>Marianne Moore</b>, the communists poets of the 1930s, as well as foreign language poets such as <b>Garcia Lorca</b> who wrote about New York. Includes two rare short films of <b>Allen Ginsburg</b>.</p>				
Friday May 5	3:00- 6:00pm	The Stones of Civilization	United Nations Headquarters Cosponsors: World Intellectual Property Organization, the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the United Nations SRC Society of Writers	Free, reservations required. *
<p>Of the 6,500 languages in the world, it is estimated that over half will fall silent before the close of the century. Who better to speak for these languages than their poets? A major presentation at the United Nations on poetry from the world's endangered languages. The celebration includes poets and musicians who write in endangered languages from each continent, including Native American poets, an African <i>finah</i> poet, Basque traditional <i>bertsolariak</i> (improvisers) and an Irish performance poet. The poets, literary and traditional, performative and text-based, take center stage and present their work in their mother tongues and in English. The poetry will be presented in the original language and in English language translations. The event is cosponsored with the United Nations SRC Society of Writers, the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and will help draw attention to this crucial issue in an era of globalization. Opening remarks will be given by the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the U.N. <b>Sir Emyr Jones Parry</b>. *No one can be admitted without a reservation. Please arrive 30 minutes ahead of curtain to clear UN security.</p>				
Friday May 5	9:00- 11:00pm	Black 47 (and the Celtic Poets)	Bowery Poetry Club	\$15; Members, Seniors, & Students \$12.
<p>New York-based Irish band Black 47 rocks the Bowery Poetry Club with poems by <b>Cathal O Searcaigh</b> and <b>Aonghas MacNeacail</b> interspersed throughout the evening.</p>				
Friday May 5	Midnight- 1:30am	Poe in the Graveyard	The Marble Cemetery on 2nd Street	\$10; Members, Seniors, & Students \$8.
<p>A midnight reading of Poe at the Marble Cemetery, a <i>Gathering</i> tradition (this time at the 2nd Street Marble Cemetery). Featuring New York City's own Edgar Allan Poe, <b>Edgar Oliver</b> as well as Philadelphia's unique Poe Channeler, <b>George Kovach</b>. Hosted by <b>Bob Holman</b>.</p>				

Date	Time	Event	Venue	Tickets
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Saturday  
May 6POETRY BASH  
Concurrent Daytime Programs

CUNY Graduate Center

\$12; Members, Seniors, &  
Students \$10. Suggested  
donation for the day.

	<b>Book Sales and Signings</b>	<b>Foyer</b>
	Tables will be allocated for poetry book sales in every language conceivable. Poetry book signings will take place at the tables.	
<b>All Day</b>	<b>Creation of the New York City Epic</b>	<b>Foyer</b>
	Verses from the New Epic New York poem will be posted, and visitors will be invited to write down and enter their own verses in which they take on the personae of New York City places, icons, and lore. Think: "I am the Chelsea Hotel," "I am the footbridge over Sheepshead Bay."	
	<b>Words for Wee Folk</b>	<b>Break Out Room 1</b>
	Scottish Poet <b>Matthew Fitt</b> leads a workshop of storytelling and games for children.	
<b>12:00-1:00pm</b>	<b>Publishing Your Own Poems</b>	<b>Break Out Room 2</b>
	<b>Bob Hershon</b> , publisher of the fabled Hanging Loose Press leads, this hands-on how-to.	
	<b>Open Mic</b>	<b>Break Out Room 3</b>
	Bring your own poems.	
<b>12:30-2:00pm</b>	<b>Harpsong: Celtic Music and Poetry</b>	<b>Auditorium</b>
	Our Endangered Languages Mainstage Features readings by Wales' National poet <b>Gwyneth Lewis</b> and a performance by Irish poet <b>Gearóid MacLochlainn</b> and piper <b>Jarlath Henderson</b> . Hosted by <b>Robert Minhinnick</b> . Sponsored by the Arts Council Ireland, British Council Northern Ireland, the Scottish Arts Council, and Wales Arts International. Supported by the Welsh Assembly Government.	
	<b>Indigenous and Contemporary Voices from Alaska</b>	<b>Break Out Room 1</b>
	<b>Nora Marks Dauenhauer</b> , one of America's premiere Native poets, featured on <i>The United States of Poetry</i> , and poet <b>Richard Dauenhauer</b> present Tlingit poetry from Alaska.	
	<b>Arba Sicula: Sicilian Poetry</b>	<b>Break Out Room 2</b>
	Sicilian poetry Experience the rich poetic tradition of Sicily, known as <i>Isola dei poeti</i> (the island of poets). Sicilian poets from metropolitan New York recite their work in <i>ottava rima</i> , the quintessential Sicilian poetic meter, and perform <i>contrasti</i> , a poetic debate between two poets. Lead by <b>Dr. Gaetano Cipolla</b> , President <b>Arba Sicula</b> , <b>Nino Provenzano</b> , Vice President, <b>Joseph Turriciano</b> , <b>Gaspere Pipitone</b> , <b>Antonina LiCastri</b> , and <b>Frank Piazza</b> .	
<b>1:00-2:00pm</b>	<b>Open Mic</b>	<b>Break Out Room 3</b>
	Open mic for New York City poems. Led by <b>Jackie Sheeler</b> .	
	<b>Poems by Heart Memory Circle</b>	<b>Break Out Room 4 , Cosponsored with Poets House</b>
	An introduction to the joys of memorizing verse and an opportunity to recite poems you have committed to memory. Since this is a time to celebrate other people's poems, the only requirement is that you cannot recite your own work. In the words of group facilitator <b>Carolina Conroy</b> , "memorization can be a profound, cognitive, psychic, and spiritual journey."	
	<b>New York City Poems/ Epic Poem for an Epic City</b>	<b>Break Out Room 5</b>
	Listen to an array of New York City poems, and witness the creation of a multi-voiced <i>Epic New York</i> : an ongoing poem for/of our Fair (Sometimes Unfair) City, part of New York Wor(l)d. Twenty poets have each taken on the personae of different aspects of our City: from the restaurants to Dyddenham Hospital in the Bronx, from the Chelsea Hotel to Peter Stuyvesant's Church. Hear from <b>Keith Roach</b> , <b>Anselm Berrigan</b> , <b>Cecilia Vicuña</b> , <b>Bob Hershon</b> , and <b>Jerome Rothenberg</b> as they read New York into existence with the epic and other Gotham poems. The City itself is the hero. Inspired by William Carlos Williams' <i>Patterson</i> and the New York City phone book.	
	<b>Harpsong: Celtic Poetry and Music</b>	<b>Auditorium</b>
	Our Endangered Languages Mainstage Program. Features readings by Scottish poet <b>Matthew Fitt</b> , Welsh poet <b>Iwan Llwyd</b> , and <b>Cathal O Searcaigh</b> who the <i>Irish Times</i> called "one of our finest working poets." Hosted by <b>Robert Minhinnick</b> . Sponsored by the Arts Council Ireland, British Council Northern Ireland, the Scottish Arts Council, and Wales Arts International. Supported by the Welsh Assembly Government.	
	<b>Russian Poetry</b>	<b>Break Out Room 1</b>
	The New York City Russian poetry scene in all its glory, hosted by <b>Matvei Yankelevich</b> .	
	<b>South American Poetry</b>	<b>Break Out Room 2</b>
	A talk by <b>Cecilia Vicuña</b> on Mapuche Poetry with video performances by Leonel Lienlaf, Graciela Huinao, and Lorenzo Aillapan.	
<b>2:15-3:15pm</b>	<b>Oceania Poetry</b>	<b>Break Out Room 3</b>
	<b>Vanessa Fisher</b> performs traditional songlines and Dreamtime stories in English and indigenous languages from Australia--Duungidjawa, Turrbul, Wakka Wakka, and Gubbi Gubbi--accompanied by <b>Jimmy Smith</b> on didgeridoo. Cosponsored by the Australian Aboriginal Theatre Initiative.	
	<b>Workshop on Writing Poetry in Traditional Forms</b>	<b>Break Out Room 4</b>

A workshop on drawing inspiration from poetic forms found in other languages, led by Welsh poet **Gwyneth Lewis**.

**New York City Poems/  
Epic Poem for an Epic City** Break Out Room 5

Listen to an array of New York City poems, and witness the creation of a multi-voiced *Epic New York*: an ongoing poem for/of our Fair (Sometimes Unfair) City, part of New York Wor(l)d. Twenty poets have each taken on the personae of different aspects of our City: from the restaurants to Dyddenham Hospital in the Bronx, from the Chelsea Hotel to Peter Stuyvesant's Church. Hear from **Tsaurah Litsky**, **Toni Blackman**, **D. H. Melhem**, **Ishle Park**, and **Bushra Rehman** as they read New York into existence with the epic and other Gotham poems.

**Harpsong: Celtic Poetry and Music** Auditorium

Our Endangered Languages Mainstage Program. Features readings by Scottish poet **Aonghas MacNeacail** and music by one of Scotland's finest traditional bands, **Cliar** performing for the first time in the United States. Hosted by **Robert Minhinnick**. Sponsored by the Arts Council Ireland, British Council Northern Ireland, the Scottish Arts Council, and Wales Arts International. Supported by the Welsh Assembly Government.

**Travels Among Endangered Languages** Break Out Room 1

A talk with short readings by the acclaimed Canadian author and poet **Mark Abley**, author of "Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages." Mark will speak about poetry in the world's contested tongues, about the strength of Welsh and the revival of Manx, and about his own experience of hearing endangered languages spoken in several countries.

**Distant Languages, Real and Imagined** Break Out Room 2

Poets **Jerome Rothenberg** and **Pierre Joris** discuss the many types of languages poets use and read from experimental texts.

3:30-  
4:30pm

**Pakistani Mushaira** Break Out Room 3

Take part in a traditional *Mushaira*, a literary gathering where the close interaction between the performers and audience influences the sound, flavor and rhythm of the poems. Audiences participate by repeating refrains of poems in this pan-South Asian phenomenon. The *Mushaira* you will join at the *Gathering* is informal, celebrating poetic intimacy. Honoring the tradition, poets will sit in a semi-circle on a carpet covered floor, with an oil lamp to signal each poets turn to read.

**European Poetry: Basque Bertsolari** Break Out Room 4

Award-winning Basque *bertsolari* poets including **Johnny Curutchet**, **Gratien Alfaro**, **Jesus Goñi**, and **Martin Goicoechea** from the West Coast perform traditional poetry duels.

**New York City Poems** Break Out Room 5

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book award, **Galway Kinnell**, poet and President of the Guggenheim Foundation **Ed Hirsch**, and master spoken word poet **Sekou Sundiata** read their New York City poems.

**New York City Poems/  
Epic Poem for an Epic City** Break Out Room 1

Listen to three grand performances of New York City poems by Palestinian American author of *ZaatarDiva* and star of Russell Simmons *Def Poetry Jam* on Broadway, **Suheir Hammad**; native New Yorker, author of *Springing* and *The Bird Catcher*, and inspiration for generations of poets, **Marie Ponsot**; and author of the consciousness-cracking novel *Push*, and two books of poems *American Dreams*, and *Black Wings and Blind Angels*, **Sapphire**.

4:45-  
5:45pm

**New York City Poems/  
Oral Histories as Poems** Break Out Room 2

Immigrant Oral Histories as New York City Poems with **Judith Sloan**, **Warren Lehrer**, and special guests.

**The Poetry of Native American Women** Break Out Room 3

North America's great Native women poets, **Nora Dauenhauer** and **Ofelia Zepeda** will recite poetry in Tlingit and Tohono O'odham (Papago) – as well as in English. **Jennifer Kreisberg** will read in Tuscarora and Lakota.

**Finnish Poetry Slam** Break Out Room 4

Finnish Poetry Slam. Enjoy the drama and imagery of Finnish Spring. Discover the interaction between man and urban surroundings. Experience the humorous view of the everyday in the countryside in Finland, Poetry in Finnish, Swedish, Sami, and English.

**African Poetry: Voices of Kings: the  
Dankawali Village Epic** Break Out Room 5

4:45-  
6:30pm

In 1998, during the recent civil war in Sierra Leone, a fire destroyed the only written copy of a village's epic poem. In 2002, City Lore commissioned *finah* poet and John Jay College professor **Kewulay Kamara** to return to his village and recreate the ancient story in song for the *People's Poetry Gathering*. *Voices of Kings* interweaves **Kamara's** own boyhood story of watching his father set down the epic with the epic itself, a creation myth that traces the origin of the Finah clan of Islamic warrior poets. Along the way, **Kamara** tells of a young boy who grew from the precolonial past to a post-colonial English-speaking and American future. This epic retelling brings in the history of slavery, colonialism, West Africa, and the savage Civil War in Sierra Leone, all appear in this sweeping poetry history, which also describes how reconstructing the ancient stories may hold a key to a better future for the continent. Performed with some of New Yorks' finest *jali* musicians. [Click here to see pictures of the pre-Gathering dinner!](#)

**Harrigan and Hart** Auditorium

**\$12; Members, Seniors, &  
Students \$10.**

Honoring the intermingling of Celtic and New York City cultural traditions, we offer a special tribute to the 19th Century Irish songsters, **Harrigan and Hart**. Though they are all but forgotten today, the team of **Harrigan and Hart** dominated American popular urban theater in

**5:30-6:30pm** the late nineteenth century. Through a variety of plays and sketches all woven together by the threads of music and dance they helped invent the genre of musical comedy on the American stage. They drew extensively on the day to day reality of life in lower class Irish American neighborhoods in New York City to create a backdrop for most of their of their major productions and their work affords a unique insight into 19th century Irish American urban life. **Mick Moloney** will explore this rich world of music, song, drama and social history in a talk richly illustrated with audio visual materials along with recordings and live performances of songs from that era all written by Ed Harrigan and his musical collaborator David Braham.

**New York City Poems/ Epic Poem for an Epic City** **Break Out Room 1**

Listen to an array of New York City poems, and witness the creation of a multi-voiced *Epic New York*: an ongoing poem for/of our Fair (Sometimes Unfair) City, part of New York Wor(l)d. Twenty poets have each taken on the personae of different aspects of our City: from the restaurants to Dyddenham Hospital in the Bronx, from the Chelsea Hotel to the Statue of Liberty. Hear from **Larry Kirwin, Max Blagg, Tato Laviera, Gil Fagiani, Tato Laviera** and **Denize Lauture** as they read New York into existence with the epic and other Gotham poems.

**6:00-7:00pm** **Open Mic** **Break Out Room 2**

Hosted by **John Chance Acevedo**. Bring your own poems.

**9/11 Open Mic** **Break Out Room 3**

An opportunity to read your September 11th poems. Led by **Christian McKuen**.

**Spanish Open Mic** **Break Out Room 4**

**Rosa Elena Egipciaco** hosts an open mic for poetry in Spanish.

**7:30-10:00pm** **Tongue Tripping** **Auditorium** **\$30; Members, Seniors, & Students \$25.**

A first-ever tribute to the world's diverse languages and musics, Tongue Tripping brings together South African, Yiddish, and Native American musical groups. The South African master **Bakithi Kumalo**, who played with Paul Simon, has put together a band that exudes sweet South African harmonies the **Kumalo South African Band**, with lyrics and seven African languages; **Michael Alpert and the Heymland (Homeland) Ensemble** (Yiddish), and the Native American group **Ulali** (Native languages and vocalizations). We conclude with a first-ever Tower-of-Babel jam by poets and musicians.

**10:30pm-12:30am** **Seisiún** **Bowery Poetry Club**

Led by master musicians and National Heritage Award-winner Mick Moloney, this Celtic "Seisiún" combines Irish music with Celtic poetry in an informal late night opportunity to bliss out on some of the world's finest poetry and music.

Date	Time	Event	Venue	Tickets
<b>Sunday, May 7</b>	<b>11:00-12:00pm</b>	<b>Poetry and Prayer</b>	<b>Bowery Mission</b>	<b>free</b>

A sacred Sunday event of poetry and prayer--bring a spiritual poem by a favorite poet – even if it's yourself! A *Gathering* tradition.

**12:30-2:00pm** **Yiddish Poetry** **Bowery Poetry Club** **\$5**

**Itzik Gottesman** leads a session on Yiddish poetry at the Bowery Poetry Club. Also featuring **Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman, Yoel Matveyev, Charles Nydorf, Mindl Rinkewich, Leah Robinson, Albert Rosenblatt**.

**2:00-3:30pm** **Poetry Across Languages** **Bowery Poetry Club** **\$5**

Although Umberto Eco called translation, "the art of failure," and others have described reading poetry in translation as looking "through a glass darkly," translating poetries from lesser-spoken or stateless languages and dialects into more dominant languages has been crucial to preserving the legacy of endangered languages and cultures as part of humanity's heritage. It offers poets from minority languages the opportunity to be heard, when the readership in their own languages may be miniscule. And it preserves key elements of worldview. In addition, if performed with care, it can also be extremely important to translate poetry written in dominant languages like English, Spanish, or Mandarin, into lesser-spoken tongues like Navajo, Ki'che, or Tibetan. As people all over the world have increasingly more access to one another's cultural traditions through travel and media, what role does poetry play in helping to share worldviews and lifeways between many different language communities? How can translating a performance style and performing a poem also transmit information about language and culture? How can the poetry of threatened languages be preserved and made available to a wider audience? Yoruba scholar **Oluseye Adesola**, Swahili and Gikuyu scholar **Ann Biersteker** of Yale University, Basque historian **Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe**, and Native poets **Nora Marks Dauenhauer**, and **Richard Dauenhauer** discuss.

**2:30-4:00pm** **Tribute to Miguel Piñero** **Meet in front of the Nuyorican Poets Café** **\$20; Members, Seniors, Students \$18.**

Just once before I die, declaimed Nuyorican poet Miguel Piñero, author of the play *Short Eyes*, and subject of a feature film starring Benjamin Bratt, I want to climb up on a tenement sky / to dream my lungs out till / I cry / then scatter my ashes thru / the Lower East Side. A tribute walking tour led by Miguel Algarín traces the steps outlined in Piñero's poem and the original walk in which his ashes were scattered according to directions after his death in 1988. The tour begins and ends at the Nuyorican Poets Café.

**3:30-5:00pm** **Revitalizing Language through Literature, and Literature through Language** **Bowery Poetry Club** **\$5**

This panel discussion brings together translator **Charles Cantalupo**, Yiddish poet and activist, **Itzik Gottesman**, Native American poet, scholar, and co-

founder of the American Indian Language Development Institute, **Ofelia Zepeda**, and Welsh poet, translator, and editor of *Poetry Wales*, **Robert Minhinnick**, and "father of ethnopoetics" **Jerome Rothenberg**. They discuss what steps can be taken to culturally ground the language in the world view of the younger generation and encourage them to take responsibility for their own language learning and cultural heritage. How can poetry and song contribute to the revitalization of languages? How can the revitalization of languages help to preserve poetry traditions? What role can poetry and song play in education?

7:00-  
9:30pm

**Basque Poetry Dinner**

**Bowery Poetry Club**

**\$40; Members, Seniors, & Students \$35.**

This year, the *Gathering* closes with a Poetry Dinner dedicated to Basque music, poetry, hard cider, and cuisine. National Heritage Award-winning Basque *bertsolari* poets from San Francisco, Nevada, and Wyoming, **Jean Curutchet**, **Gratien Alfaro**, **Jesus Goñi**, and **Martin Goicoechea** perform traditional, musical poetry duels in Basque, the only surviving non-Indo-European language in Western Europe (with English translations). Casks of Basque-style hard cider will be served in traditional Basque and Spanish fashion, provided by Breezy Hill Orchards. The cider will complement a meal of paella with *txistora* (Basque sausage), *pinxtos* (tapas), *Soansih omelette*, *anchovies*, *stuffed codfish*, and Basque cheeses, provided by the restaurant Pintxos. Introduction by noted author Mark Kurlansky (*The Basque History of the World, Cod, Salt*). *The People's Poetry Gathering* also welcomes Slow Food to the Bertsolari Poetry Dinner because of their parallel work with the "world's endangered and contested" foods and food traditions. [Click here for more information.](#)