

WINTER 2023/2024

POETRY

THE TEANECK POETRY PARK

PARK



poetry@teanecknj.gov

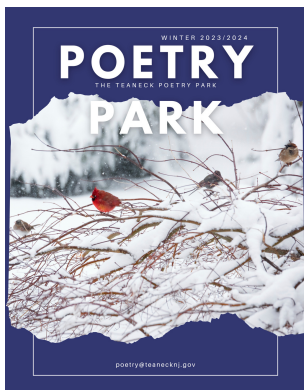


TOWNSHIP OF TEANECK, NEW JERSEY
818 TEANECK ROAD
TEANECK, NJ 07666

Michael Pagan, Mayor
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WELCOME TO THE TEANECK POETRY PARK

SHARE YOUR POETRY
SUBMISSIONS ARE OPEN
Email to: poetry@teanecknj.gov



ON THE COVER:

Poetry tends to find a branch to rest on within the changing seasons of life's journey. Take a moment to sit while making space for others and enjoy.

COVER PHOTO: STEVE SAVITZ

THE TEANECK POETRY PARK

LISTEN TO A POET

*When you want to see through
the wall that is right in front of
you
Listen to a poet*

*When you want to touch what is
deep inside your heart
Listen to a poet*

*When you want to clearly hear
those sounds in the distance
Listen to a poet*

*When you're reaching for the sky
and suddenly discovering your
own path
I implore you to just
Listen to a poet*

Scott Pleasants

Poet Laureate
Township of Teaneck, NJ

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About

The Teaneck Poetry Park is open and we are excited to welcome you inside. Founded in 2023 by Scott Pleasants, the first Poet Laureate for the Township of Teaneck, New Jersey. The Teaneck Poetry Park is a safe creative space that allows writers to simply share their words.

We are featuring many of our talented residents and some amazing visitors to our literary community. We encourage you to take a poetic stroll along our paths; gather a meaningful word on our sidewalks; share a story across our bridges and write a poem inside and outside the lines of your poetic experiences. Poetry has a universal allure that allows for important artistic uncompromised expression of thoughts, ideas and insights.

Teaneck has many cherished points of interest. With the addition of the Teaneck Poetry Park, we are continuing to highlight our initiatives in support of the arts. We value the creativity of all residents and visitors. We look forward to your continued support of this wonderful endeavor.

If you would like to share and feature your poetry, please send an email to, poetry@teanecknj.gov.

A stylized, cursive signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Pagan". The signature is written in a fluid, elegant script with long, sweeping strokes.

MAYOR, TOWNSHIP OF TEANECK, NEW JERSEY

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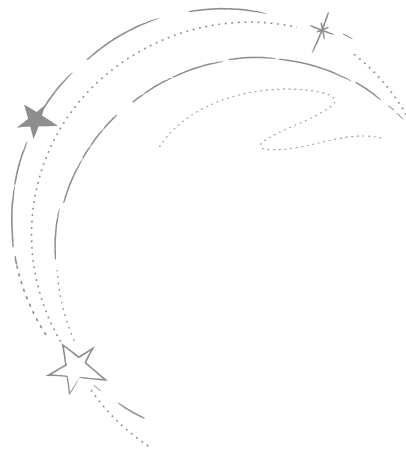
Marie Johnson-Ladson, Teaneck, NJ



Purpose

The thing that drives life,
That takes lives,
The thing that makes me wake up in the morning
And puts me to bed on time.
The passion,
The pain,
The reason,
Purpose.
That bright light
That steers a person
In the depth of darkness,
That gives strength to the weary
And vindication to evil.
Purpose,
In essence, a thought,
A belief,
So easily lost
In the ins and outs
Of opening and closing doors.
So easily lost in despair,
In anger,
In days that don't go your way.

But
If the purpose is true enough,
It will find its way back to you,
To rebuild,
To stand tall,
To be proud
Of your life.
It's the North Star,
It's your Holy Grail,
It's uniquely yours,
It's your purpose,
Your reason to be.



Allison Alt



My Magnum Opus

It's times like these
I wish I had my Magnum Opus before me,
The perfect poetry entry
That would resolve each plea.

Isn't that what I write for?
For all the lashes this body held before, For
all the drops to the floor,
For all the pain deeply rooted in my core.

My Magnum Opus would surround, My
Magnum Opus would ground,
My masterpiece would be bound
To be my ever resonating sound.

It would know what I cannot speak,
It would know what I wish to teach,
It would hug what others couldn't reach,
It would be my poem, what I always seek.

What are you, where are you,
This evasive string of words,
That I desire to hear,
And yet already heard.
My Magnum Opus,
My glorious bird,
Fly me to peace,
Soothe me to sleep,
Be my eternal keep.



All My Dolls

Become more self aware each
 Cursed
 Day.
 Emily, the blonde with her head on backwards,
 Feeds on toenails, spiders, and
 Grape soda. She maintains a
 Healthy appetite.
 I never should have started this collection!
 Joke's on me, because now I'm
 Keeping all sharp objects on the top shelf. They better not
 Learn to climb, that would surely lead to
 My demise.
 Never again will we sleep. All my dolls and I remain
 On guard, a cold war.
 Please don't strike! I request with pleading eyes. They're
 Quietly scheming when I go out for a
 Run or to work or to the grocery
 Store.
 They will hopefully fight amongst themselves. Lord, if these sentient toys
 Unionize, they will riot against me
 Violently!
 What did I do to deserve their hate? This is blatant
 Xenophobia. Plastic bigots with plastic hearts!
 Yesterday, Emily flung her hard little clogs at me. Dolls - 1. Human -
 0.

Hannah Weisz



The Bleach Factory

People pour out of the bleach factory
 It's quitting time
 Everyone is tired
 They don't dash out
 Or run
 Or sprint
 They amble to their cars
 They shuffle through the parking lot
 No need to hurry
 No place special to go

The bleach factory employs
 A good deal of people
 It's a union shop
 A steady paycheck
 The families it feeds
 Working there can be hazardous
 But starving is fatal

They spend their days inside the factory
 Most bring their lunch in ancient pails
 Rookies take their car out and ride
 Searching the area for food
 Soon they get the gist of it
 And pack a lunch to save dough

The factory is on the outskirts of town
 Near the railroad tracks and the river
 The poorest neighborhoods are splayed out
 From the edges of the factory's square block
 A few houses
 Some worker's homes
 Abandoned shacks and vacant lots
 A tow truck lot is nearby
 People tend to avoid the area

I think it has a certain majesty
 It's functional and even historic
 Takes you back to when
 This country made things
 The industrial revolution and its effects on us
 You can run around and sin all you want
 But you cannot bleach your soul and
 Expect to reach heaven's gate

Now the factory is silent
 Low lights burn in random windows
 A night watchman makes his rounds
 And then he sits
 He dozes for a spell
 Then repeats his rounds
 Checks locked doors
 A few revolutions around the sun
 And your career is done
 A life
 Some kind of victory won
 At the bleach factory

John C. Massett



At Fabiola's

Ancient women being extracted
from Fabiola's with canes and walkers
after getting their hair starched and tinted
are being helped into their waiting transportation
blocking the flow of traffic
every time I try to pass by.



John J. Frause



Sunflower's Love

Summer sunflower
I lose myself in your gaze
This eternal love

The Red Cardinal

Beautiful songbird
Your bright red amidst the snow
Cardinal's Christmas gift

A Loving Home

Another new morn'
Your laughter in the kitchen
My heart is at peace

Melissa Rose Lawrence



Unending Moment

Wind on wave whispers
Softened pink light
Cloud ballet cover
Final sun sight

Nature calls through me
At peace, all is right
An end and beginning
Of this I will write

For beauty beholden
In every and each
Moment eternal
Flow never reach

David Hight



I and I

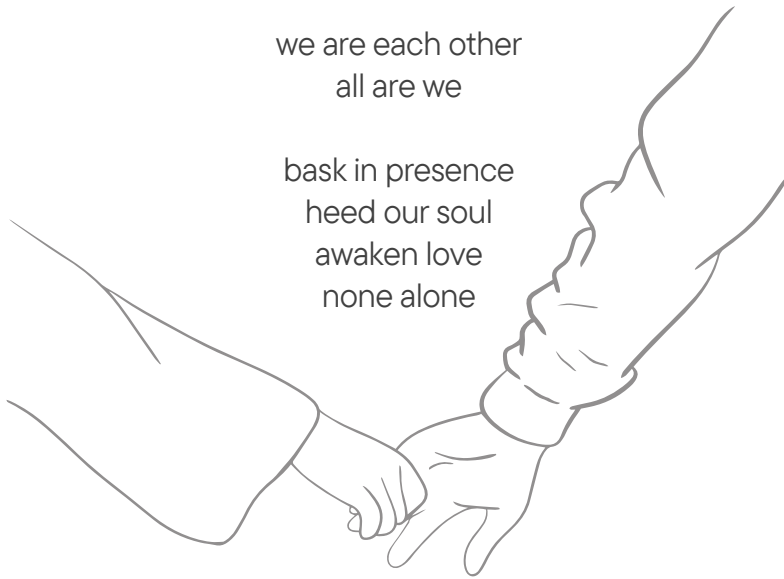
Offer yourself
in time of need
... or just because

you'll be a seed

of
solace
friendship
connection
peace

we are each other
all are we

bask in presence
heed our soul
awaken love
none alone



David Hight

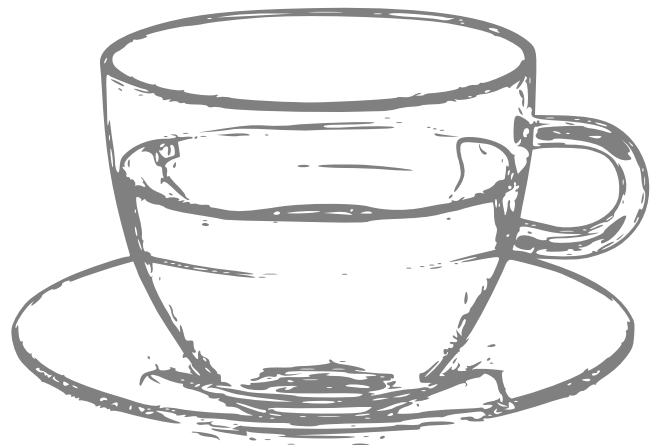


WAITING FOR SUMMER

I do not like the cold I said
I'd rather be back in my bed
Nor do I like the blowing breeze
It makes me feel so ill at ease

I'd rather have it warm and sunny
On my porch with tea and honey
As a matter of fact, what may be best
Is to lie down flat and take a rest

Now don't you worry that I'm too old
Just because I feel the cold
What's behind it all is not complex
It's a new phenomena: a polar vortex



Howard Rose



ODE TO A DOG

Although at first it seemed like folly
To once again consider a pet
Dog food, shots, trips to the vet
But she had a look that was so jolly

Only for a moment did I hesitate
It seems my mind was already set
Leashes and toys I'd have to get
The reality was, I could not wait

Always so cute and warm to cuddle
Small and furry, the size of a toy
So much spirit, and so much joy
Made us forgive the occasional puddle

As time went by, more trips to the vet
Her health was a problem, we could tell
There was enough love, so what the hell
We'd make sure her time had not come yet

For quite a while each time she was sick
Often it was difficult but hope we did
dare

We gave her medicine and very good
care

She rallied so often, luck helped it click

It comes to pass, beyond our control
Push, tug, pull, do your best to resist
Despite all efforts only memory will persist
Up down and around, life takes it's toll

She was more than a pet and by golly
I forgot to tell you, her name was Molly

Howard Rose



The Russian Breadline

A long bread line in Russia on a cold rainy night.
An official announces, "The delivery will be late
and contain only half the promised allocation.
All Jews must go home." They do.

The rain persists.
Hours later, a second announcement:
"The delivery will be much later and
contain one quarter the promised allocation.
All non-veterans must go home." They do.

The cold rain continues. The sun rises.
A third announcement : "The shipment
will not arrive this week. Everybody must go home."

As the line disperses, one veteran says to another,
"Damn Jews have all the luck."

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zev Shanken". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "Z" and "S".



Searing Silence

The vacuum is palpable.
 European cities that teemed with
 Jewish throngs, 20%-50%+ Jewish,
 Now have not a single Jew.
 Pressburg/Bratislava, one of the
 most noble Jewish metropolises for
 two hundred years, Can not even
 scrape together a minyan (prayer
 quorum) on a Monday.
 Look, a synagogue!
 No, that is a café, with proselytizing
 pamphlets in the bookcases.
 Wait, another!
 No, an art gallery.
 And so it goes: museum, cultural
 center, concert hall, nightclub,
 apartments for rent... Anything but
 for the divine.
 Every time we visit one,
 I close my eyes and hear the
 disembodied Jews shrieking
 through the walls: "Remember us;
 remember our names; remember
 our lives and our deeds.
 I beg of you, do not let us be
 forgotten."
 It's the same with the cemeteries.

Neglected, forlorn, or deliberately
 destroyed.
 The wind blows through the
 graves, silently, for there are no
 visitors.
 Tombstones piled higgledy-
 piggledy,
 In random sequence and
 zigzagging at otherworldly angles.
 It would be comical if it weren't so
 pathetic.
 Was the road paved along the
 bank of the Danube River in
 Bratislava
 Worth disposing of all those
 hundreds of graves??
 The saintly people that now do not
 even have a memorial, a place to
 be remembered? Tombstones
 ground into roads and walls, first by
 the Nazis and then by the
 Communists. When will the world
 learn? Who will open their eyes
 and hearts??
 Ida, you have been equipped with
 the knowledge.
 G-d gave you the feeling and the
 emotion,

The pathos and the heart wrench,
 The anguish and the pain.
 You can inject light into this
 darkness and help heal the world,
 One soul at a time.
 Though you will not make any more
 sense of it, for it is senseless,
 You will at least help others
 understand that which we have
 lost,
 The searing silence that now
 spreads across Europe, in so many
 dimensions,
 And has for almost eighty years and
 counting.
 The silence of the Jewish cemetery.

David Plotzker



A Train

The Glimpses of you through the train's car
window will always remain the best way to start
my day

I could run like Florence just to make it to the train
in time
And be on our train

On the A train
The train car before the last one in the back
You would sit in the middle seat right by the
Subway map
I would stand, back turned to you and holding the
pole
Face as flushed as chocolate skin can get
Beads of sweat making pools below my chin
Trying to remember to breathe as your face
caused lumps to form in my throat

This is where I fell in love with you five days a
week at 7:45 am

This was our locomotion of love

Through the commotion

I could count every white stripe on your button
down shirt
You were a sight to behold
You wore the same 3 cufflinks
The power puff girls one was my favorite
You are my buttercup

Me your blossom
I could blow bubbles at your feet
To help shine your Stacy Adams

I was in awe
You oblivious
As you furrowed your bro in your laptop
Tapping away the way my heart tap danced
As I named our 2.5 kids and bought us a house
in a good neighborhood
You made me creative

I just knew that as Hoyt and Schermerhorn
Approached our entanglement would end
My drunken gaze of wonder at your reflection
Would soon disappear
The regeneration of my imagination
Caught in temptation for your touch
Would subside
I had to abide by principle and move aside
For you to pass and take my daydream with
you
I watched you walk and run up the stairs and
transfer to the G train
Without knowledge of the fire that raged in my
heart
Me, left heartbroken but optimistic of
tomorrow's unsuspecting date
Where I fall in love with you again on the
A train

Millicent Ansah



Johnson Avenue

We had been walking home from
the bus stop at the corner
of Johnson and Mildred St. and
we couldn't find where the tree
was where the nest
would have been
home to the mother who had
had this grey, unbearable thing. My own
mother
was the one to name it-- chick-- and I
stared as she lifted and carried
it home in her naked palm. Standing
in the corner of her bedroom, I watched
as she placed it on a ceramic plate--our
dinner plate--and gave it light
from the nightstand lamp, listened
as she washed her hands from
the gels and the smells in the bedroom
bathroom and left me
there alone with it--its skin
translucent, a purple
that made me think of Sundays
on the porch out back with a bowl
of moist grapes and how

I'd peel them meticulously with my two
front teeth until they were the color
of the jelly thing right then
still and washed in the heavy
light and I could not
believe that this is how it had
begun, a sticky skinless grape
cradled
in a mother's palm.

Though the next day
the lamp was off, the bowl gone,
and my mother, finding me
by the empty nightstand,
told me what I did not
know then, what I
only learned to know-- that she could not
save the thing, that she had
so badly wanted to
with white light and paper
towels, and that she could not and did not
know why.

Yael Herzog



September

Yesterday the corn can wouldn't open.
It should have opened with the
metal flap which tore. The opener let soft
into the edges, didn't
break. This is the love for me.
Tender when supposed to be hard. Give
way when supposed to break. Too late
on a Saturday night to eat, anyway.
Instead, we hold each other to a song we both don't know.
The kitchen is dark and the windows let in a wet breeze.
We sway. If love is this soft, what was I so afraid of anyway?



Yael Herzog



Time Capsules

It's the way warm crystals drop from
your mouth mistaking themselves
as gentle storms along my back,
the sleepless nights we sift through in
secret that we might dig up the
memory boxes we buried together
as children (*then*) with
thousands of miles between us
somehow seeming a thousand and one
times closer.

It's the way you shift your eyes
in my direction, how only you can
ever know these dimples as intimately
as falling stars know the ground
on which they humbly land, unseen
except by those pure of spirit.

It's how that once in a lifetime
happens once during every lifetime
though it's only in *this one* we remember
its happening.

How fortunate am I then,
to recollect it all,
dimples blossoming by the light of
your shooting stars, splitting skies
like moons eclipsed, eyes opened
to receive the storms,

In the sleeplessness between us,
we bury time capsules to one day
unearth a thousand times
and a thousand and one miles
from here, more than children (*now*)
yet nothing less brilliant
than dust tailing fallen stars across
a universe ever so needful of its light.

J. T. Trigonis



October, 5pm

Deferring cocktails, I'm again this hour
staring through venetians at what
weird and wonderful things ebbing
light does to our dogwood. Muted rusty red
and browning leaves, backdropped by all-green neighbors,
remain gently luminous against grey southern sky.
They contain constrained colors eager to burst forth
when sun breaks through cloud cover,
but are also content to tease anticipation,
engaging us with a quiet riot of their subtle palette
(they have all month to really show off).
Inches from back bedroom windows the tree towers above our eaves.
I recall our son 30 years ago bringing the seedling home from Kindergarten
grasped in a 4 oz. crumpled Dixie cup.

A stylized, cursive signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Sieg". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first name "Dan" and last name "Sieg" clearly distinguishable.



Simply Sense-sational

When melancholia strikes,
and I'm feeling dull as a plastic butter knife,
I hop on a bus to New York City
where my senses come alive
in a spectacular symphony of life.

I wander busy streets
surrounded by skyscrapers piercing the clouds,
gaping at millennial moms
in their electric pink designer yoga pants,
wheeling babies in thousand-dollar strollers,
like mini-Rolls Royces,
as homeless people
huddle together in cardboard boxes,
wearing hopelessness and despair
on their faces like worn out shoes.

My heart beats to the rhythm of street
performers
pounding the pavement,
feet crashing down like thunder,
cabbies blaring their horns
as the buzz of fifty different languages meld
together in a melting pot of soup.

I breathe in the fragrance of garlicky hot dogs
charring on the grill,
chestnuts roasting to perfection,
salty hot pretzels steaming bakery fresh,
as I get high on the heady aroma of
weed permeating the air

When hunger strikes,
I buy a slice of the world's best pizza,
expertly folding it in half like a native New
Yorker,
savoring the thick chewy crust as strings of
gooey mozzarella drip down my chin.
For dessert, swirls of chocolatey ice cream,
piled high on a sugar cone,
the decadent sweetness exploding
in my mouth,
melting away my troubles.

Underneath my feet the subways rumble,
the sidewalks crumble and
I feel the thrum of the city that never sleeps,
like the steady boom chicka boom of a
dance club,
enveloping me, energizing me, invigorating
me,
bringing to life all of my senses.

New York City is not just a place,
it is a living, breathing entity.

Peggy Gerber



Dating

Dating, it sometimes feels like you're shopping on a clearance rack

Sorting through colors

White, brown, or black

Finding something that kinda looks good but that's no longer you

Varying clothes capture our attention

But very few would wear a sweater in June

Those glaring blemishes from material already donated

Outfits that you held onto long after fabric is outdated

Similes of dating short and sweet

Ending with haiku to make this poem complete

Fashions come and go
Our love, only a short film
We will just be friends

Philip J. Curtis

we meet again
at the sidewalk plateau
of unrequited travels

another witness
to the fallacy of names
spoken like artifacts coveted from a fabled memory
entombed to the tundra of the hourglass

their fragile silence seeps through the windowpane dawn
where you watch the ocean reveling
between a dying star
and the indented reflections
of your gaze

I sip the horizon marooned on the edge
of a wine glass
unearthed by light's celibate erosion

we meet again
before the ritual doorframe
to stranded hours

another bookmark
to the book of possibilities that inscribed
the line in the sand
with words that ingrain the amnesia of the wind

Raul Garcia



Nameless Faces

When I open old picture books that my family owned I see mostly

Nameless Faces

I wonder what was your name and what was your life like

Most seemed to show expressions of happiness when their pictures were taken but
some showed sadness, fear, anger, surprise and/or disgust

It made me feel good to see gone souls from long ago

But sad because I didn't know their names, who they were or their stories

I know you were family or a friend of the family

There is an old saying that says "only if these walls could talk"

Well I feel the same way about these old pictures "only if these pictures could talk"

I know these Nameless Faces could tell some extraordinary stories that happened
during their lifetime

But now I can only fantasize on who you were

Nameless Faces who were you?

Marie Johnson-Ladson

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TOWNSHIP OF TEANECK, NEW JERSEY

UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF
POET LAUREATE
SCOTT PLEASANTS



Welcome to the Teaneck Poetry Park.
Send us your poems to be featured.

poetry@teanecknj.gov

Thank you for your support:

Dean Kazinci, Teaneck Township Manager
Doug Ruccione, Teaneck Township Clerk
Teaneck Public Library
Friends of the Teaneck Public Library



Township of Teaneck, New Jersey

818 Teaneck Road
Teaneck, NJ 07666



"WHEREAS, poetry is a powerful form of literature that honors self-expression and promotes understanding within communities;"



SEE FLIPBOOK

----- Township Council Resolution 206-2023

poetry@teanecknj.gov