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POETS TAKE TO THE WAVES IN NEW YORK HARBOR

NYC Poets Afloat Holds First Group Reading Sunday

NEW YORK, NEW YORK - A new group of New York City poets hosts its first reading aboard the tall ship *Wavertree* at the South Street Seaport Museum on Sunday, May 19th from 3 pm to 4:30 pm. NYC Poets Afloat brings poets and vessels around New York Harbor together to inspire poetry that connects New York City residents with the city's extensive maritime realm.

Sunday's reading is free, but guests are required to RSVP to poetsafloatnyc@gmail.com in advance and check in at Pier 16 ticket booth on the day of the event before boarding the ship.

"As the city engages more and more with its 520 miles of waterfront in changing ways, I'm intrigued to see how my fellow Poets Afloat interpret the harbor from the unique vantage point of ships and barges at the water's edge," said poet Brad Vogel. "What will the new poetry tell us about the continuing centrality of water in the life of the city today?"

In April, the Seaport Museum joined a variety of vessel-centric groups around New York Harbor by hosting "Poets Afloat" as part of National Poetry Month. The poets in residence had an opportunity to muse and craft poetry while aboard various vessels, drawing inspiration from a maritime environment outside their typical daily routines. Now, all of the Poets Afloat from around the city will gather for a group reading to share poetry produced while afloat - having drawn inspiration from shipworms, lighthouse tenders, sea gulls, and more.

"Any time there's a chance to have the water's edge brought to life through the arts, we are game." said Carolina Salguero of PortSide NewYork in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Based aboard the *Mary A. Whalen*, PortSide hosted two poets. "It's a joy to see new faces finding creative value and inspiration in our maritime heritage and present."

Historic vessel organizations around New York Harbor that hosted poets included: PortSide NewYork (*Mary A. Whalen*), the Waterfront Barge Museum (*Lehigh Valley Barge #79*), the Lilac Preservation Project (*USCGC Lilac*) and the South Street Seaport Museum (*Wavertree*). NYC Poets Afloat is the brainchild of poet Brad Vogel of Gowanus and grew out of the 2019 Digital Maritime Heritage Floating Conference put on by Stefan Dreisbach-Williams for the Seamen's Church Institute. Poet David Groff helped select the first round of poets.

"This residency is a dream come true," said poet Michelle Yasmine Valladares. "What a perfect way to find inspiration - a beautiful afternoon in the captain's cabin stirred many ideas for new poems."

Poets participating in the initial 2019 round of NYC Poets Afloat residencies include Elaine Sexton, JP Howard, David Groff, Brad Vogel, Stefan Dreisbach-Williams, and Michelle Valladares.

"I look forward to sharing the stories of two ships: one a tramp freighter, the other a lighthouse tender," said poet Elaine Sexton, whose Poets Afloat residency included stints aboard both *Wavertree* and *USCGC Lilac*. "This was by far one of the most interesting residencies I've experienced as a poet."

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