



NEWS RELEASE

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Celebrating 10 years in Utopia —

RopeWalk Writers Retreat slated June 6-13 at Historic New Harmony

For immediate release
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Several special events have been planned to mark the tenth anniversary of the University of Southern Indiana's RopeWalk Writers Retreat in New Harmony, Indiana.

A special pre-conference weekend will begin Saturday, June 6, with presentations by poet Andrew Hudgins and fiction writer Erin McGraw. An informal supper will be followed by a reading by poet David St. John and the evening will end with a reunion of RopeWalkers from the first nine years. An informal Sunday brunch will be followed by an afternoon open-microphone reading by alumni.

The 1998 conference will begin Sunday evening with a reading by guest artist and fiction writer Barry Hannah. Singer-song writer David Broza and poet Matthew Graham will present a special workshop/performance Tuesday evening to demonstrate how poet and musician work together to produce songs.

The week-long retreat gives participants an opportunity to attend workshops and confer privately with one of six prominent writers. Historic New Harmony, site of two 19th century utopian experiments, provides an ideal setting for this event with its retreat-like atmosphere and its history of creative and intellectual achievement. RopeWalk participants are encouraged to write, not simply listen to others talk about writing. In addition, several writers will give lectures, open to all participants, on aspects of the craft of writing.

RopeWalk has been assisted over the years by grants from Mrs. Ruth Lilly of Indianapolis, Evansville native Susan R. Enlow, the Indiana Arts Commission (IAC), the Blaffer Trust, the Witter-Bynner Foundation, the USI Society for Arts and Humanities, and the support and assistance of Historic New Harmony. USI extends special thanks for underwriting tenth anniversary events to Mrs. Lilly, the IAC, and the Blaffer Trust.

Workshops and lectures are held at various facilities, including the New Harmony Inn; the Wheatcroft Guest House, which also serves as conference headquarters; and the Barn Abbey. Participants may stay at the New Harmony Inn and Conference Center, the Barn Abbey, Harmonie State Park, New Harmony Bed & Breakfast, or nearby motels. Reservations at the inn should be made by May 9; call 800/782-8605 or 812/682-4491. To reserve space at the Barn Abbey, call USI Extended Services at 812/464-1989 or 800/467-8600.

Tuition for RopeWalk Writers Retreat is \$425, including workshops, individual conference, readings, receptions, and several meals. There is a 10 percent discount for Indiana residents. Those who wish to enroll in a second workshop may do so for an additional \$200 (no Indiana discount). A nonrefundable registration fee of \$100 is due by May 8.

The retreat offers a limited number of full and partial scholarships based solely on merit. Send a letter of application with relevant biographical information and a writing sample — maximum of three poems or 20 pages of fiction — to RopeWalk Scholarship, University of Southern Indiana, 8600 University Boulevard, Evansville IN 47712.

See other side for schedules, faculty, guest artists, conference staff

The faculty for 10th anniversary sessions will include:

Poetry

Stephen Dobyns - author of nine books of poetry and 19 novels, including last year's *New York Times* bestseller *The Church of Dead Girls*, and the book, *Best Words, Best Order: Essays on Poetry*. Dobyns is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and three National Endowment for the Arts fellowships. He returns to RopeWalk for his fourth visit.

Heather McHugh - a core faculty member of the M.F.A. Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. Between visits to RopeWalk — this is her fifth — she writes books of poetry, including *Shades, Dangers*, and *Hinge and Sign: Poems 1968-1993* and essays, most recently *Broken English: Poetry and Partiality*.

Ellen Bryant Voigt - author of five volumes of poetry — *Claiming Kin, The Forces of Plenty, The Lotus Flowers, Two Trees*, and *Kyrie*. She founded and teaches in the Warren Wilson College M.F.A. program. This is her fourth visit to RopeWalk.

Guest artists

David Broza - Israeli-born recording artist who lives in New York, his recordings include "A Time of Trains" and "Stone Doors." Broza works with contemporary poets, including Matthew Graham, USI professor, to create songs.

Barry Hannah - currently Writer in Residence at the University of Mississippi, he is a Guggenheim Fellow and author of *Airships, Geronimo Rex, Ray*, and *Bats Out of Hell*. He was a member of the RopeWalk faculty in 1995.

Andrew Hudgins - currently professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, he is the author of four books of poems, including *The Glass Hammer* and *The Glass Anvil*. He has been on the RopeWalk faculty three times. He is married to:

Erin McGraw - author of two books of fiction, *Bodies at Sea* and *Lies of the Saints*, and an English faculty member at the University of Cincinnati. Her work has appeared in such magazines as *The Atlantic Monthly*. She was on the RopeWalk faculty in 1997.

Fiction

Pam Houston - author of a collection of short stories, *Cowboys are My Weakness*. Her new collection, *Waltzing the Cat*, will be published this year. Her stories have appeared in *Cimarron Review, Quarterly West, Mirabella, Mademoiselle*, and *Outside*. A contributing editor at *Elle* and *Ski*, she was previously at RopeWalk in 1996.

Richard Powers - author of six novels, including *The Gold Bug Variations* and *Galatea 2.2*. His new novel, *Gain*, is scheduled for release in June. He has been a finalist in the National Book Critics Circle Award and National Book Award competitions. He is Swanlund Professor of English at the University of Illinois, and is appearing at RopeWalk for the first time.

Fiction/creative nonfiction

Bob Shacochis - author of two collections of short stories, *Easy in the Islands* and *The Next New World*, the novel *Swimming in the Volcano* and most recently, a book of nonfiction, *Domesticity*. He is a contributing editor to *Harper's* and *Outside* magazines and his work has received the National Book Award and the Prix di Roma. This is his fifth appearance at RopeWalk.

David St. John - author of several collections of poetry including *Hush, The Shore, No Heaven*, and *Terraces of Rain: An Italian Sketchbook*. His most recent work, *Study for the World's Body: New and Selected Poems*, was nominated for the National Book Award. He is editor-at-large of *The Antioch Review*, a Guggenheim Fellow, and professor of English and director of creative writing at the University of Southern California. He was a member of the RopeWalk faculty in 1993.

Conference Staff

Dr. Thomas A. Wilhelmus, professor of English and associate dean of the USI School of Liberal Arts, and Matthew R. Graham, USI associate professor of English/creative writing, are founding directors of RopeWalk. Dr. Wilhelmus frequently reviews contemporary fiction in *The Hudson Review*, while Graham is the author of two volumes of poetry, *New World Architecture* and *1946*.

Linda L. Cleek, associate director of USI Extended Services, handles logistics for the retreat, and Mary Jane Schenk, administrative assistant to USI President H. Ray Hoops and a USI English graduate and frequent RopeWalk participant, is resident assistant at the Barn Abbey and big sister to RopeWalk newcomers.

Important dates

April 15 - scholarship application deadline
May 1 - scholarship notifications mailed; RopeWalk registration deadline
May 8 - workshop manuscript submission deadline
June 1 - balance of registration fees due
June 5 - deadline for requests for partial refund of fees

Public events

The following events are open to the public free of charge unless designated by a \$:

Saturday, June 6 - 5 p.m., picnic supper (\$) reservations required; 7:30 p.m., David St. John poetry reading, reception
Sunday, June 7 - 7:30 p.m., Barry Hannah fiction reading, reception
Monday, June 8 - 7 p.m., readings by Heather McHugh and Bob Shacochis, reception
Tuesday, June 9 - 9:30 a.m., Ellen Bryant Voigt craft lecture; 10:45 a.m., Stephen Dobyns craft lecture; 1:15 p.m., Heather McHugh craft lecture; 7 p.m., joint presentation on poetry/song writing by David Broza and Matthew Graham
Wednesday, June 10 - 7 p.m., readings by Richard Powers and Ellen Bryant Voigt, reception
Thursday, June 11 - 11 a.m., Pam Houston craft lecture; 1:15 p.m., Richard Powers craft lecture
Friday, June 12 - 6 p.m., readings by Stephen Dobyns, Pam Houston; 7:30 closing dinner (\$) reservations required

For information or reservations, call USI Extended Services:

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Web Site:

http://www.usi.edu/libarts/english/ropewalk.htm