

Moonday Celebrates 10 Years Extolling 'the Sound of Sense'

By [Libby Motika](#), Senior Editor

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Poetry is all around us, spontaneous arrangements of words describing what we see, what we feel and what we dream. Like particles of dust that sparkle in a shaft of light, the beauty of words is illuminated in formal presentation, spoken aloud.



For 10 years, Moonday in the Palisades has hosted poets in a monthly presentation, introducing their work to the community and beyond.

Alice Pero, who founded Moonday in 2002, and Lois P. Jones, who joined as co-director in 2006, will present an anniversary reading on October 8 with a special appearance by R.G. Cantalupo, who was the spark, unbeknownst to him, that ignited Pero's desire to codify a poetry reading program on the Westside.

Pero's creative impulses found expression in dance, music and poetry. She studied at the Martha Graham School in New York and continues to play flute and takes lessons with Paul Fried and Palisadian Susan Greenberg. It was while studying rhythm with music educator Jamie Faunt that she began to write poetry, which she has continued for 30 years.

Pero, a transplanted New Yorker who lives in Pasadena, is a member of the California Poets in the Schools and teaches at the Delphi Academy in Santa Monica.

"I had no aspirations to do a poetry reading program," says Pero. "But I happened to be attending a reading at the Barnes & Noble in the Westside Pavilion in September 2002. R.G. Cantalupo was running it and John Schofield and Jim Bolt were the featured poets. The evening was dynamic and full of energy, but at the end of the reading, the manager announced that this would be the last reading: they were discontinuing the series. I was flabbergasted and said to myself, That's it, I'm starting a reading and Jim and John will be my first guests."

Days later, Pero was walking on Montana with her husband and stopped by Seattle's Best Coffee, where she asked if she could host readings. "Out of the ashes, we were born," she recalls. "R.G. and [poet] Anne Silver were interested in helping and Anne coined our name because our first meeting was on a Monday."

Moonday met twice monthly at the start with a succinct mission statement: "A reading of high-quality features which attracts an audience of both good open readers and listeners and helps

expand the reach into the community for our own work and our own publishing endeavors.”

As the economy dictated, Moonday responded, moving from Seattle's Best after it closed to Diedrich Coffee in April 2004.

For Pero, the halcyon days arrived with the move to Village Books on Swarthmore Avenue in September 2004, where they hosted more than 160 poets until the store closed in June 2011.

“We are eternally grateful to owner Katie O’Laughlin for her generosity,” Pero says. “She not only donated the space, the after-hours times, but also the shelf space. Katie was the only one who actually bought the books: most stores only take them on consignment.”

At Katie’s suggestion, Moonday moved to Aldersgate Retreat/Buerge Chapel in August 2011. “We survived the death of our beloved bookstore and moved forward proudly, a little sadly, at a beautiful chapel/reading space on Haverford,” Pero says. That same year, she and Jones inaugurated Moonday East at Flintridge Books, with the help of the bookstore’s publicist Gail Mishkin.

Although the venue has migrated over the years, the program has grown. “Ten years ago, we just burst forth without a lot of thought,” Pero says. “We had friends in the poetry community and it has steadily grown to now when we are planning a year ahead.”

Jones, who joined Moonday after the death of Anne Silver in 2005, hosts ‘Poet’s Café on KPFK 90.7 FM and is the poetry editor of Kyoto Journal and the administrator of Penshells, an online poetry workshop forum. She is published in many journals and is the winner of the 2012 Tiferet Poetry Prize.

She and Pero receive poems through a submission process and from referrals. “Lois and I collaborate on the poets; we have a similar aesthetic,” Pero says. “There is a certain level of good poetry you want to feature. Good art is good art.”

Guest poets come from the Los Angeles area, where there is certainly no shortage of talent, and from other states. The work, while mostly English, has also included samples from Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, read by his translator William O’Daly; Chinese translations from Neil Aitken, and Palisadian Neven Karlovac reciting the work of Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz in both languages.

The audiences, too, are mixed, young and old, students and other poets. “The audience in Pacific Palisades stands out,” Jones says, “because they really listen to the poetry. They are focused, and buy books.”

The anniversary Moonday on Monday, October 8 will feature Peter Serchuk and Ruth Thompson, along with Cantalupo. Open reading sign-ups start at 6:30, followed by the program at 7:30 p.m.

Serchuk is the author of two collections, most recently *All That Remains*. A poem from that collection, ‘Heyday,’ was featured in August 2012 on Garrison Keillor’s ‘The Writer’s Almanac.’

Thompson splits her time between Colden, New York, and Hilo, Hawaii. Her second book, *Woman with Crows*, was a finalist for the AROHO Foundation's To The Lighthouse Poetry Publication Prize.

Playwright and poet Cantalupo has been published in over 100 literary journals and his play 'Heart' was presented at the Kennedy Center as a National Finalist for the American College Center. He is the artistic director and founder of The Little Theater in West Los Angeles.

For more information, visit moondaypoetry.com.

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