



The Putney Talent Magnet Draws a Crowd

THERE WERE A REMARKABLE NUMBER OF NOTABLE POETS, ARTISTS, SCIENTISTS AND OTHERS VISITING THIS PAST YEAR THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF MANY FACULTY, STAFF AND ADMINISTRATORS. FUNDING TO BRING THESE CREATIVE MINDS AND GIFTED PERFORMERS TO THE PUTNEY SCHOOL WAS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY A GENEROUS GRANT FROM A TRUSTEE. HERE'S A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF WHO WAS HERE AND WHAT OUR GUESTS HAD TO OFFER:

1 Mike Boehm, Peacemaker

Chairman of the non-profit Madison Quakers and Vietnam War veteran Mike Boehm stopped at The Putney School last fall on a cross-country fundraising tour to show us a slide show called "Hope Rises from the Ashes of My Lai," and speak about his group's peace and reconciliation projects in Vietnam, which include a micro-loan program for poor women that allow them to start small retail businesses, an art exchange program with children in Madison, WI and the building of the My Lai Peace Park and Primary School. Unlike some other aid groups, the Madison Quakers prefer to respond to specific needs cited by the Vietnamese, rather than deciding what's best for them. More on this at www.madison.com/communities/madveteransforpeace/index.php.

2 Chakaia Booker, Sculptor

In Chakaia Booker's catalog, *No More Milk and Cookies: The Disillusionment of Chakaia Booker*, Jorge Daniel Veneciano of the Marlborough Gallery writes, "By now, with her second solo exhibition at Marlborough Chelsea, we should already know a few things about Chakaia Booker: that she has worked with children and adults as an arts educator, that she has training in sociology, sewing, and ceramics, that stories about the struggles of everyday life underlie her work on an alternate associative register, and that these draw on topics of Africanicity, concerns for the environment, and the plight of women in society should also be known. These facts and figures coalesce like a myth or a pretext before the text of the rubber-tire oeuvre. Yet there is more to learn..." Her work—

made from recycled materials including rubber tires, melded and formed into beautiful twisting, curved, alive, wild animal and bird-like forms—was on view here last fall. The show (and our gallery) was featured in *Art in New England* magazine. Chakaia was on campus for an all-school lecture and opening reception that was well attended by the greater Putney community. Her work is known internationally and is in many major museums and private collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Oberlin College, Storm King Sculpture Park, The Studio Museum (Harlem, NY) and the Queens Museum of Art (NY).

3 Joy Brown, Sculptor

Also known here as Ryo's mom (Ryo Brown-McClain '08), Joy Brown spent 18 years in Japan as a child of medical

missionaries, then returned for a four-year pottery apprenticeship. Joyce had a show of her clay and bronze works in the faculty room (and lawn) of the KDU last spring and gave a presentation and individual tutoring to our ceramics students. For more information on Joy and her work, see <http://artwith-in.net/joybrown>.

4 Galway Kinnell and Josephine Dickinson, Poets

Some wags would describe poetry as the anchovy of literature—meaning you love it or you don't. There's no middle ground. Galway Kinnell disproved that notion by reading his highly accessible, simple but elegant works to the Putney audience. His volumes of poetry include *A New Selected Poems* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000),

a finalist for the National Book Award; *Selected Poems* (1980), for which he received both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award; *The Book of Nightmares* (1971); and *Flower Herding on Mount Monadnock* (1964). He divides his time between Vermont and New York City, where he is the Erich Maria Remarque Professor of Creative Writing at New York University. He is currently a chancellor of The Academy of American Poets.

Josephine Dickinson suffered from a serious illness, which left her deaf at age six. Galway Kinnell, during a reading tour in England, was given two of Josephine's books of poetry, and they made such an impression on him that he has promoted her work ever since, writing the introduction to her 2007 collection, *Silence Fell*. Set on a farm, the poems tell the story in



the form of a modern shepherd's calendar and celebrate her marriage to a Cumbrian sheep farmer, a man of more than twice her age.

Peter and Lore Lindenfeld, Physics and Art

In February we were treated to a slide presentation and art show by Lore Lindenfeld, an artist who attended Black Mountain College from 1945–1948. Black Mountain College was the place to be if you were on the cutting edge of art and architecture in the 1940s. Lore fled WWII Europe and found a place for her talent to blossom. Others drawn to the place included futurist Buckminster Fuller, lithographer Robert Rauschenberg and modern dancer Merce Cunningham. Lore's work started in weaving, in which she experimented with design. Of Black Mountain she says, "It was the first place where color and design could be considered separately from art."

Glenn Littledale's astronomy class enjoyed the next treat. Lore's husband, Rutgers University

Professor Emeritus Peter Lindenfeld, an expert researcher in low-temperature physics (among other things) taught a class on energy use in honor of our last few days in the Green Cup Challenge (in which we monitored energy use for a month, then tried to conserve through behavioral modification—turning off unused lights, air-drying clothing, etc.). Peter is not only a top-rate researcher ["Impurity and strain effects on the magnetotransport of LSCZO films", *Phys. Rev. B* 65,100504 (2002)], but an engaging educator as well. The punchline in all this is that these two fabulous people are the parents of last issue's cover artist and Putney ceramics teacher, Naomi Lindenfeld. Thanks for sharing your folks, Naomi!

Charlotte Matthews, Poet

Charlotte Matthews, former Putney alumni director (1988–90) read from her work at an all-school assembly this year. Her first full-length collection of poetry, *Green Stars* (Iris Press, 2006) was published earlier last

year, and has received the 2007 Fellowship of Southern Writers' New Writing Award for Poetry. Charlotte is also the author of two chapbooks, *A Kind of Devotion* (Palanquin Press, 2004), and *Biding Time* (Half Moon Bay Press, 2005). Her work has recently appeared in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Borderlands*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Potomac Review* and in the Meridian anthology, *Best New American Poets*. She has received numerous awards for both teaching and writing, including a fellowship from Brown University and a grant from the Klingenstein Foundation. The Putney community warmly received her and her work.

Mark Mitton, Magician

Apprenticed for five years to the legendary sleight-of-hand master and vaudevillian artist Slydini, Mark Mitton's magic is old school—the sort of illusions created through dexterity, skill and practice, practice, practice. Mark literally enthralled an audience aged 8 to 80

in a Sunday Night Meeting performance. There are few things purer than the look of amazement on an 8-year-old's face when the card he chose appears out of his ear. An accomplished actor and comedian, Mark's greatest skill may be in a reading his audience and adjusting his delivery for maximum enjoyment. For more on Mark, see www.markmitton.com.

Butch Morris, Conductionist

Butch Morris, through his system of Conduction, is to music as founding Dadaist Marcel Duchamp was to art, except in this case there's no question that Conduction is art. There isn't even a question that Conduction is music. Butch spent a week with us teaching workshops and creating a Conduction "work in progress" that involved any Putney musician willing to take a chance and follow directions. The result is perhaps best described by the process. Butch first invites the assembly of musicians (it's hard to call it an orchestra when there are two pianos, a harpsichord, harmonica and an

electric bass mixed in with the strings, brass and timpani) to improvise on a phrase. He then labels it with a name and baton command. They then move on to other phrases, to which Morris adds commands for sustaining, adding and subtracting instruments, adjusting tempo and pitch, plus a few other nuances. The result is a compelling, perhaps somewhat cacophonous, musical composition that is a collaboration between Conductionist and Condonees. By the fifth day of the process, it's almost as if the assembled musicians are the instrument and Butch the player. He also dabbled in applying Conduction principals to an enthusiastic modern dance class full of Putney students and dance faculty. There's really not enough space here to explain the level of resulting consciousness raising that came of our time with Conduction, so read more here if you're intrigued: www.conduction.us.

Sharon Olds, Poet

Though her language is often raw and shocking, Sharon Olds tells the truth



about domestic and political violence, sexuality, family relationships and the body. She read to us from her book, *The Wellspring* (1996), and other works late last winter. The New York State Poet Laureate from 1998–2000, Sharon is widely considered one of the best living poets. She has received many awards, including the San Francisco Poetry Center Award, the Lamont Poetry Prize, The National Books Critics Circle Award and the T. S. Eliot Prize. Sharon teaches creative writing at New York University, where Putney English Teacher Chris Bagg studied with her.

Grace Paley,
Postmodernist Writer

In nearby Thetford, VT lives a small woman, writ large, who deigned to visit us one day last winter. Grace Paley's short fictions plumb the depths of racial, gender and class issues done in a style that leads critics to classify her work as postmodernist. Her 1994 *Collected Stories* was nominated for a National Book Award. Her other awards include the Edith Wharton Award (1983), the Rea Award for

the Short Story (1993), the Vermont Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts (1993) and the Jewish Cultural Achievement Award for Literary Arts (1994). In 1980, she was elected to the National Academy of Arts and Letters and, in 1989, Governor Mario Cuomo made her the first official New York State Writer. No one had to be reminded to pay attention.

Bob Raynolds '69,
Geo-Environmentalist

One doesn't really converse with Putney School Trustee Bob Raynolds, who also happens to be a principal investigator for the Denver Museum's research project to study the geology and groundwater resources of the Denver Basin. You say, "What's new, Bob?" Then you listen, mouth agape, while Bob fills you in. Some months back we asked, "What's your take on sustainability, Bob?" and we got one heck of a geology lesson and slideshow in return. The editor's version goes like this: "Geologic time affords one the perspective to contemplate changes of process and phenomena spanning billions and

billions of years.... I propose that the recognition of the dynamic character of global climate is among the top five breakthroughs that have impacted our multidisciplinary science. You and I live in the era where this recognition is taking place and the manifestations are becoming evident to our citizenry. Earth scientists have the opportunity to place these issues in perspective and to assist the populace in making informed, cost-effective decisions about reasonable strategies with which to approach our new era." You can close your mouth now.

Sam Shaber,
Singer/Songwriter

As she did in her Barnes Assembly Hall appearance in 2003, Sam rocked the house last winter with vocal and acoustic renditions of her original music. In a school rife with acoustic guitar-slinging singer/songwriters, you can imagine how well received Sam's show was. Based in New York City, Sam tours frequently and has a number of CD recordings. In other words, she's living the dream. See more at www.samshaber.com.

Brian Turner,
Warrior Poet

In the truest sense of the label, warrior poet Brian Turner served in the U.S. Army as an infantry team leader in Iraq, starting in November 2003. Before that, he served in Bosnia-Herzegovina. An M.F.A. graduate of the University of Oregon, Brian received the Beatrice Hawley Award for his debut collection, *Here, Bullet* and his work appeared in the *Voices in Wartime* anthology. The poems are real—sometimes to the point of surreal for those of us who haven't seen combat—and pull no emotional punches. It was a powerful reading.

Venerable Lama
Tenzin Yignyen,
Sand Painter

During the final week of school, Venerable Lama Tenzin Yignyen constructed a sand mandala in the Currier Room of the Michael S. Currier Center. Tenzin was ordained by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, and entered Namgyal Monastery in Dharmasala, India in 1969 and is currently a visiting professor at Hobart and

William Smith College, where he has taught Tibetan Buddhist Studies since 1998. Tenzin has created sand mandalas in many museums and educational institutions throughout the U.S., including the Cleveland Museum of Art, The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles and the Asia Society in New York City. This was his third sand mandala at The Putney School. Michael Currier '78 was a strong supporter of The Putney School and Tibetan culture before an untimely death in 1998 at age 37. The mandala was commissioned to honor Michael's devotion to the plight of Tibet, expose our students to a foreign culture and offer the greater Putney community an experience they just won't get at the local library or general store. Each morning began with meditation and chanting and Tenzin was available during rest breaks to teach Tibetan culture, customs, religion and art. The dismantling ceremony (in which the mandala was swept into a jar, then deposited in the Puddle) was Saturday morning of Project Week.