

Writers on Stage—A View from the Wings

A Young Poet Interns at Portsmouth's Music Hall and Learns the Ropes of Literary Marketing

Thursday, November 7, 2013

•
•
•



Portsmouth was in the midst of a blizzard when Katie Hogan came to check out UNH's MFA in writing program. From upstate New York, she immediately fell in love with the town and New England's rugged coast.

Then when she visited the MFA program at UNH in Durham, she met renowned teachers with whom she would work closely and a friendly group of graduate students. The program was what she hoped for—small, personal, and very dynamic. Plus, she

learned that every spring, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Charles Simic, would teach a poetry workshop.

What Hogan didn't learn on that visit was that down one of those narrow Portsmouth streets was The Music Hall, known throughout the publishing industry as one of the best literary venues in the country.

This past spring, one year into her graduate program, Hogan applied for and landed a paid internship at The Music Hall. Her job is to assist in marketing and production for The Music Hall's two literary series. Writers on a New England Stage features such generation-defining names as John Irving, Stephen King, and Elizabeth Gilbert. Its events are always held in the 900-seat historic theater. Writers in the Loft, a 125-seat theater, presents fresh prizewinners and bestselling authors ranging from Pulitzer Prize winners Jennifer Egan, novelist, and Paul Muldoon, poet, to Harvard's celebrated African studies scholar Henry Louis Gates.

What It Entails

On a day-to-day basis, Hogan works at home on a variety of tasks that include reviewing writers' websites and publishers' marketing materials, book critiques and TedEx talks, crafting press releases, and writing articles for Music Hall publications and other media. On performance nights, backstage she helps orchestrate a seamless event that often includes book signings and VIP receptions.



KATIE HOGAN (CENTER) WITH MARGARET TALCOTT (LEFT), PRODUCER OF WRITERS ON A NEW ENGLAND STAGE AND WRITERS IN THE LOFT, AND PATRICIA LYNCH (RIGHT), EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF BOTH SERIES AND OF THE MUSIC HALL.

"The two series are really different," says Hogan. "Writers on a New England Stage includes a reading and a formal interview. The Loft series is more intimate and conversational. At either venue, I usually get a chance to converse a bit with authors. I'm not an extrovert, and I've often wondered how I could present my work in public. But now I've seen many different personality types read, and I've found it encouraging. It's doable."

Hogan is learning how it all works from two top-notch professionals, Margaret Talcott, producer of both series, and executive producer, Patricia Lynch, who is also The Music Hall's executive producer.

Behind the Scenes

Just since September, Writers on a New England Stage has featured Margaret Atwood, A. Scott Berg, and Bill Bryson. Coming soon are Patricia Cornwell, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Sonia Sotomayor, and BJ Novak (turns out the genius behind television's "The Office" is also a short story writer).

"The spoken word is big in publishing these days. When industry insiders see our lists of previous writers, they're stunned," says Talcott, who works closely with writers, their friends, and representatives at all levels to secure today's best talent and slot them into The Music Hall's complex schedule.

"We've gone from presenting just six to eight authors a year to 16 or 18 a year," says Talcott. "About 50 percent of the time, we bundle the price of a book with up to two tickets for Writers on a New England Stage. The program is also rebroadcast on New Hampshire Public Radio, and they reach about 180,000 listeners each week. We partner as well with Yankee Magazine, which reaches two million readers."

Talcott attributes the growing popularity of both series to the people who live in the tri-state area—Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. "The Music Hall is an ideal gathering spot for interested and engaged audiences," says Talcott. "We are so pleased to have Katie working with us. I think it's very validating for a young writer like Katie to be involved in the series and meeting a great range of authors."

Executive producer Lynch adds, "Cultivating the careers of young writers is central to these writing series. We've been so fortunate to have MFA graduate students intern here. Director David Rivard has really given us the best and the brightest. This exchange really exemplifies a creative relationship between the university and The Music Hall."

The Writing Life

Hogan sees the internship as an exceptional opportunity. She notes that when the MFA program held an "Alumfest" last year, more than half of the MFA graduates worked in advertising, copy editing, and arts administration. "This experience will give me an edge when I start looking for jobs," says Hogan.

Rivard notes, "Writers have always done lots of different jobs. For years, there were many teaching jobs. But that's not true today. We want our students to graduate as accomplished writers with skill sets that will serve them well."

Hogan will graduate in December 2014. By then she plans to have completed a carefully honed thesis, comprising 45 pages or more. "Lately, I've been reading poems by Margaret Atwood," says Hogan, adding, "I don't think many people know that she writes poetry."

The MFA/Music Hall internship is funded by a UNH alumnus of the English program.

Originally published by:

The College Letter, Newsletter for the College of Liberal Arts

- WRITTEN BY:
Staff writer | Communications and Public Affairs

SUBSCRIBE TO THE UNH TODAY NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBE TO

UNH TODAY RSS



University of New Hampshire

UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.
The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).
Email us: unhtoday.editor@unh.edu.

[MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION](#) [CONTACT US](#)

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on YouTube

Follow us on Instagram

Find us on LinkIn

UNH Today RSS feeds

UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234
Copyright © 2021 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)
[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)