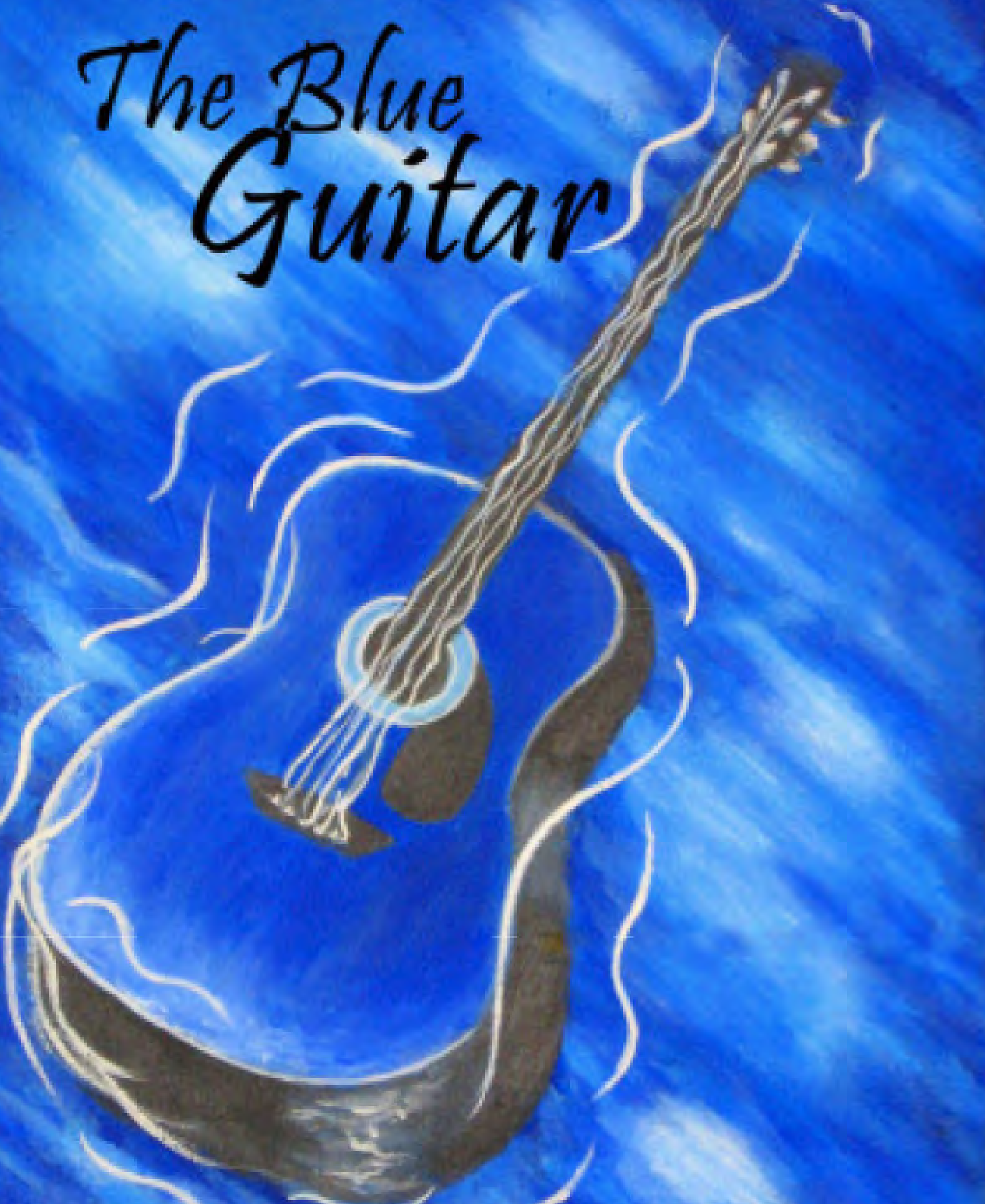
The Blue Guitar



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Editors' Note

My body
holds stones
too many to count.
From Laura Tohe's "My Body Holds Stones"

At the ASU Piper Center Writers Conference, "Desert Nights, Rising Stars," in October, Arizona Poet Laureate Laura Tohe described herself as a "poetry warrior," championing the literary arts in Arizona, especially by conducting outreach for poetry in rural communities through readings and workshops.

In November, the Phoenix Writers Club, which has been in existence since 1926, held a "Centennial Celebration" to fête its extraordinary achievement as well as look to the future: 100 years and counting of "writers helping writers."

Also in November, the annual Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts, organized by the Arizona Consortium for the Arts and the Phoenix Writers Club, hosted musical performances by youth as well as literary readings by local poets, writers and storytellers.



Phoenix Writers Club member Russell Wilson reads at the Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts.

As evidenced by these events, arts help build and sustain community, bringing together people from all walks of life to revel in and share the joy that the arts provide.

I said in remarks at the festival and want to share here: The arts are alive and living and need to be out there, not put away in a drawer or drawing dust on a shelf. The community gives as much to the arts as the arts give to the community.

Our soul lies in the arts.

***

A huge thank-you to Elena Thornton, CEO and founder of the Arizona Consortium for the Arts, her husband, Jim Thornton, and the Phoenix Writers Club and its president, Cindi Reiss, for bringing the Blue Guitar Festival to life.

As always, keep reading and keep submitting to The Blue Guitar!

Rebecca "Becca" Dyer, Co-Editor

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Passing Time

By Brayden Park

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There is a person here. You've known for a long time that they've been here. But you never wanted to accept it. You never wanted to accept them. They have your eyes. But they are no longer your eyes. They have your face, but their face is a block of clay, waiting for emotions to be sculpted. Their body is yours, but its size feels wrong, as though it belongs to a version of you that never fully fit. They have no soul. You have your soul. They are like you. You pushed them away many times, harder and harder, trying to escape and smother them beneath your anger. But you pushed too hard, and now they have resurfaced.

You could choose not to look. You could try to push them back once more. But it would fail regardless. You chose not to confront them. Now they confront you. You close your eyes. They are in front of you. You are stuck and cannot avert your gaze. You have no option but to face them now. You could try to flee, try to twist your head away. But you don't look away this time. Judgement Day has descended, but you refuse to live with regrets any longer. You look at them for the first time in a long time. They stare back. They are worse than you imagined. Their mouth hangs open, clamping shut whenever your eyes attempt to focus on it. Fingers curl up into a ball, then loosen to an open palm, only to tighten again. They even have the old clothes you used to wear, the ones that used to try to cover your dread. They are prepared for you. You begin to see. You begin to remember.

You try to make a deal. You open your mouth, but you already know what would occur. This isn't the first time you drowned them with your life. You close your mouth. There would be no point. You raise your arms. There would be no point. You try to take a step. There would be no point. Your fingers. Your ears? Your heart? Your nose? There would be no point. Their true weight has finally arrived upon you. You know the truth of hopelessness. But you also know another truth. A truth that told you that accepting wasn't the same as surrendering. You realized that there is no need to fight what will always be a part of you. This truth was one that you couldn't truly know before. But you don't begin to just know it. You begin to live that truth.

You open your eyes.

They are no longer behind you. They no longer stand far away, out of sight. No longer out of mind, no longer pushed away to forget. No longer the memory you hated, no longer the thoughts in your head that made you weep. They aren't in front of you. But they aren't gone. They will forever be with you. They will look ahead. With you. After all, they are you. And you are them.

Your life stretches before you. Even so, you won't cower from them. Not anymore.

For the first time, in a long, long time, you begin to live.



Brayden Park is in tenth grade. He is interested in writing to grow his literary skills. He also enjoys drawing, arts and crafts, theatre, and occasionally reading an entire book series within one day.

Poems by David Chorlton

After the Owl's Early Call

Thunder rolling roof to roof,
moon bouncing through the wash,
nobody awake to see
the javelinas walk on air
to Forty-fourth and Western Star.
Dust sky, lightning in the clouds,
South Mountain can't sleep
and a coyote jumps a wall into the yard.
Night's heartbeat slows,
dream upon dream,
mind floating
with nowhere to come down to
until a woodpecker hangs from daybreak
by a claw, a lizard climbs cinder block,
tail over head, tongue in, tongue out,
chasing time and he's too quick
for deception to catch. Sunlight
crunching underfoot,
animal tracks across the sky,
ants with somewhere to be so determined
to get there they swim
through a pool of leftover moonlight.
The desert's in the sky today, cloud found,
cloud lost, arroyos waiting for a miracle
to make them flow through
a hundred fourteen degrees of light
while the sun is laughing
at the complexity of laws
when down is up and up has nowhere else
to go. Coyotes waste nothing they find,
mark their dens with empty beer cans
chewed and left to rust; their way
of cleaning up what humans throw away
but even they can't make the campaign
season honest when lies fly high
above the he said, she said, everybody said and
nobody remembers.

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David Chorlton is a longtime resident of Phoenix who writes and sometimes paints to enhance the experiences of being close to desert and its wildlife.

Night Opens

Storm at the back door knocking
to be let in. Darkness alive, the moon
blinks, Heaven's not
as easy place to be tonight. No sleep
for the underworld, and none
in the rooms of the house
as each one fills with lightning for the seconds
it takes to reveal there is a soul
here, white face of fate
unafraid to show itself. Thunder in the kitchen,
thunder on the roof, and rain,
rain, rain front yard and back, rain
working to discover
what the earth is hiding. It gallops
through the wash, dances
on the pond, sings
to the streetlamps, the desert, insomniac
traffic and trees that ache
as they bend in the wind. The storm sky
is a happy sky with darkness
as a gambler's light. Another clap so close
it's a festival on the roof. Flash:
living room in chalk light, flash: front
room palely loitering while
the driveway flows
into the cul-de-sac. What a joy
the night becomes, fortune and misgiving
butting heads, a season's rainfall
in an hour, a purging
of restraint and desert never questioning
the beautiful violence of a monsoon sky.

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Desert's Mountain

Stands in place. Perfect stillness. Never
flinches at a storm. Just lets
the heat run down its slopes and drain
into the earth. Whatever
happens happens
without needing to be written, analyzed, stripped
to the bone. Placid. Wide view
in all directions, blue landscape,
dark city, transparent sky. Ravens
laughing, mesquites buzz, come clouds,
come midnight, stones
in search of home, coyote dens
and snakeskins filled with light. Past
and future much the same, anything
not now is time floating
in its own misty life. Welcomes boulders,
gravel, bees who occupy
an arroyo wall, lizards too quick
for their shadows to catch up with them
and javelinas who crush
stars. Summer's just
an itch. No difference between heat
and patience. It's the pleasure needing
nothing brings. And winter is
a deep breath disappearing
into earth, stony relaxation, time
of cloudlight and the shiver
slipping in between
the days and nights. Never introduced
to Zen, but meditates, stands
and stares as deeply inward as toward
the world around it upside down
without a compass needle
pointing to the heart.

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Dry Wash

The Roadrunner makes a dinosaur run
neck stretching long
head low
from grass to asphalt to the grass
across the street north
edge of the park. A slow day's dust
hanging in sunlight, the easy pace
of walking nowhere in particular.
Time isn't measured above ground here
but centuries rest
underneath the walkway and
mesquites where
woodpeckers are climbing the angled boughs
and a flycatcher keeps
looping out with shreds
of shadow in his beak, flies across
a stretch of morning
to the weedy course the wash
pursues, dove happy,
ragged, where the cracked earth
doesn't care how it looks to the birds
and every stone can taste
its freedom to be stone.

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A watercolor by David Chorlton.

Poems by Alfred Fournier

Dad's Poetry

after Rudy Francisco

My dad was a stone poking out of a stream,
smooth and flat and not too slippery.
A stone you could step on in a row of stones called
this is the right way of doing things
and arrive to the other side of the creek
with dry feet.

My dad was a punch clock's dream.
Arrived with hands ready to work.
Big hands—like Paul Bunyan big.
Hands that could wrap around the world,
toss it like a baseball, a grape thrown high
then caught in the mouth.

My dad's hands knew their way
around the body of a woman.
One woman, his woman, my mother
who must have grown tired
birthing children by the time I came along—
number seven and not the last.

My dad knew his job—
to put food on the table, and he rose
through the ranks at the plant
like the bread he baked in the oven,
handed to you warm
and smeared with butter.

My dad knew his way around a hammer,
an engine, a kitchen remodel.
Had no use for poetry.
His poetry was in the way
he lifted the mood in any room
with a perfectly timed joke.

My dad was a giant I followed as a child
from a careful, curious distance.
He hated no one and would do
whatever he thought it took
to get the best out of you. To shape you
into the kind of person worth writing about.

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Originally from Royal Oak, Michigan, Alfred Fournier is an entomologist with University of Arizona. He has lived in the Phoenix Valley area since 2005. He hosts online poetry writing workshops for Connect and Heal, a nonprofit organization. He is the author of "A Summons on the Wind" (2023, Kelsay Books), and "King of Beers" (2025, Rinky Dink Press). His poems have appeared in Gyroscope Review, The New Verse News, Oyster River Pages, The Sunlight Press, The Indianapolis Review and elsewhere. Find him on Instagram: @alfournierwrites or at alfredfournier.com.

‘Are you crying because of love?’

Yes. Because the door was left open and the light flooded in.
Because I was born in a world too beautiful to bear sometimes.
Because I’ve watched situations align time and again
toward another chance to push the bounds of who I am.
Because I’m no longer afraid to speak out loud
each sweet improbable miracle that has blessed me.
Because I’ve learned that a single tear
can hold and release and make known to the world
a tiny piece of who we are, what we believe,
revealing the reason we are here.
And so I’ll stand in the middle of a salty puddle at sunset
waiting for the moon to rise in the gathering dark
and cry because of love, because spacetime
surrounds me with its eternal breath and grants one more day,
then another, to walk along tree-lined streets
in the shadow of the mountain, an irrepressible smile
brightening my face, saying *Thanks* and *Thanks*
as another tear forms at the corner of my eye.

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Note: The title is a question asked by poet Megan Fallen of poet Andrea Gibson in the Apple TV documentary “Come and See Me in the Good Light.”

Go West, Young Woman, Go West

By Deborah Partington

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"A pioneer!" That's what a stranger called me as I stood on a Mill Avenue corner in August 1991, looking for the post office so I could mail my handful of postcards to friends in Massachusetts. They needed to know I arrived safely. The stranger peered at me from under his floppy hat.

"Across the street. Down two blocks." He pointed where I needed to go. "You must be new to Tempe."

"Yes. Just arrived." The unfamiliar heat enveloped my alien being. I wore no sun protection.

"You drove?"

"Right. All the way from New England."

That's when he called me a pioneer and added, "You've got the spirit. I can tell." I thanked him for his help. He walked away in one direction; I crossed Mill Avenue and headed in the other. I never saw him again. He lives in my memory as the stranger who spoke to me on a sizzling August afternoon and who gave me a new identity: pioneer.

I never thought of myself as a pioneer. I don't relate to cowboy boots and Stetson hats. Still, being described as such periodically wedged its way into my thoughts over the ensuing thirty-plus years that I have lived in the Southwest. In 1991, Arizona State University accepted me into its MFA in Creative Writing Program, so yes, I drove across the country alone. I left Amherst, Massachusetts, early one morning and made my way through Connecticut, across the Tapan Zee Bridge into New York. I arrived in Warren, New Jersey, where I spent the night at my brother's home. The real journey started the next morning when I headed west. Once past the green mountains of Pennsylvania, all things familiar—forests of leafy trees, wood houses with peaked roofs, and stone fences—slipped away. Open land surrounded me as I crossed Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle. Entering Arizona, I drove through the vibrant, yet mystical, Painted Desert, and thought of Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, saying, "I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." New England boasts no such preternatural canvas painted by nature over millions of years. I paused briefly to marvel at the remnants of the petrified forest. As I entered Flagstaff, I remember wondering, "Where are the cacti? The saguaro?" Torrential rain slapped my car as I headed south on I-17.

In spite of driving alone, I hardly thought of myself as a pioneer, even though I was the first in my family to travel west of the Mississippi. I navigated no unpaved territory in a horse-drawn wagon. AAA provided a Triptik: full-color road maps that plotted my journey, along with sightseeing suggestions. My Toyota Tercel held up admirably on interstate highways. I slept in hotels reserved ahead of time, leaving as little as possible to chance.

In 1851, John Babson Lane Soule, a newspaperman in Illinois, coined the phrase popularized by Horace Greeley, another newspaperman, some 15 years later: Go west, young man, go west. Western expansion—the reigning zeitgeist of the young country—was a metaphor for the future, a map in the making, opportunities to both chart the unknown and find freedom: freedom from family constraints, from government and church restrictions, from crowded and noisy cities, and, for some, freedom to search for gold. In short, the "West" promised prospects that one did not have back East, even if the promise proved at times to be more myth than reality.

The further west I went, the deeper I descended into the

Continued on page 11



Deborah Partington holds a Master's Degree from Goddard College, VT, in calligraphy and poetry (1985) and a Master's of Fine Arts/Creative Writing from Arizona State University (1996). She is the author of three published novels: "Telling Stories" (2015) and "Telling Shadows" (2022), and "Telling Secrets" (2025). While at ASU, she was fiction editor and contributing editor for ASU's literary journal Hayden's Ferry. Her essay, "Writing My Life," won the first-place award in the "Formidable Woman" contest sponsored by the Phoenix Writers Club (2025). She is currently at work on a series of personal essays and a novel-in-flash. Deborah holds a doctoral degree in clinical psychology from the Arizona School of Professional Psychology and maintains a private practice in Phoenix, AZ.

Continued from page 10

realization of what I had left behind: my family, friends who sustained me in my daily life; the bookstores that consumed my meager earnings, and the Wednesday night writing group that I never failed to miss. I also left behind the pain of a stymied relationship, dead-end temp jobs, and working toward a meaningless academic degree. For months, I floundered in a twilight zone of not having a clear path ahead while knowing that I had outgrown my life in New England. An MFA degree, according to my writing mentor, Pat Schneider, was the ticket to teaching creative writing, and she felt I would be an excellent teacher.

Driving west, I saw through the rearview mirror the road already covered, and towns bypassed, rest stops, and numbered highway exits—none of which I took. As I looked ahead, I saw myself as a widely-read successful author—my version of the West's mythological promise. Simply driving a vehicle westward meant being alone in the present.

***

The English word pioneer derives from the Old French peonier for "foot soldier"—the man sent ahead of the main army to negotiate unfamiliar land, and, if necessary, clear it of obstacles such as trees and rocks. Meanings evolve with time. No longer simply a spatial concept of moving into unfamiliar land, the word pioneer embraces those who seek out knowledge and new ways of being.

The man on the Mill Avenue corner all those years ago suggested that I, too, am a pioneer. At 37, I possessed enough self-awareness to know that whatever I was looking for would not be found in western Massachusetts. Amherst, interestingly, sits cradled in the "Pioneer Valley," the colloquial name for the area of the Connecticut River Valley settled in the 1600s by pioneers heading west from the Atlantic coast. The pioneer spirit lies deep in the soil of the state and the town I left behind.

As I moved through my MFA program, I realized I could not live authentically within the academic system as I experienced it. I wanted the freedom to write books meaningful to me. My writing path led me to a Jungian analyst who needed an editor. This friendship pointed me in a direction I did not foresee during my cross-country drive—that I would graduate at 50 with a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. Nor did I foresee that I would travel to places I never thought possible earlier in life. I have sat among the ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru, bounced along unpaved roads in safari vehicles through several African countries, and visited Mandela's prison cell on Robben Island. I have watched the sunrise over the Judean Desert and ridden a camel in the Tunisian Sahara, to mention a few.

If the pioneer spirit is thought of as moving into one's own space, of being open to the unfolding present, of creating one's essence out of one's existence, then perhaps I am a pioneer. The highways that unfolded before me as I drove across country all those years ago have opened into other roadways. Had I not left the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts, I would not have encountered the stranger in the floppy hat who called me a pioneer; thus, I might not have connected the "West" to a spirit, an approach to being open to new opportunities, to becoming a psychologist and a traveler—as well as a writer.

In 1991, going west meant moving into my writing life. That said, to date, I have never taught a creative writing class. Though not yet a best-selling author, I remain hopeful. The past decade has been fruitful with three published novels and one award for an essay on formidable women. I continue to embrace the spirit of being present to the blank page, the blank screen, that opens up the unnavigated territory of the present. All writers undaunted by the blank page, the blank screen, manifest the pioneer spirit.

Poems by Sheila E. Murphy

In Memoriam Larry Sawyer

In the city full of beautiful you crash teach repeatedly
honoring each voice woven within a womb of staves.
You listen to insistence keening out of the mouths of others
lying awake at all hours in your sleep.

What is it like to propel your continuo from beyond
that once body uplifted past our only earth your sweet
lovely loving face facing Venus Nefertiti
picnicking now at the hour of every daylight
twirled toward oncoming twilight?

You boyishly beloved host of matins, vespers, all laud
to overhearing in free form free of edges free of
observing thin biographies stooping to conquer
cul-de-sacs still round and warm with itinerant blossoming
below those generous custodial wings of you.

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Sheila E. Murphy is a Pushcart-nominated poet; her recent appearances include Gargoyle, Poetry Bay, Poetry, Black Sun Lit, Lana Turner, Seam Allowance, Poetose, Volta, and others. Her newest book publications are "I Want to Be Your Radio" (Unlikely Books, 2025), "Escritoire" (Lavender Ink, 2025), and "Permission to Relax" (BlazeVOX Books, 2023). She recently performed at Piper Writers Center at Arizona State University and the New Orleans Poetry Festival. She won the Gertrude Stein Poetry Award for "Letters to Unfinished J." (Green Integer Press, 2003) and the Hay(ha)ku Book Prize for "Reporting Live From You Know Where" (Meritage Press, 2018). She lives in Phoenix, Arizona. Her Wikipedia page can be found at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheila_Murphy_(poet).

Uncanny

A nurse can nanny. Uncanny canary.
Halt the arpeggio of song spree.
For brevity of a breathless somersault.
I'm lodged in a vault of my own making.

Wild window plush with a view beyond you.
I hear minnows weave through fluid
underpass. Their path a gray blue clarity.
Who will care for me, bring a symphony

to perform and pass the course, a cage.
At this age, a violet a royal hue.
Hear invisible wind thin the fronds
of fact intact as I have deemed them

bracken. Should I taste that tall muscular
feat of nature? Freeze frame otherness?
We are all one nest, vested in threads
rising singly from rhizomes to form a bed.

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Winged Ellipses

It’s not a rendezvous
I want. He can’t love
so what he attributes
to another species

becomes some
simulacrum of affection
a fair-trade narrative
stashed in a hutch

but not see-through
instead a clutch purse
the color of wizened cherry
wood looking delicate

as a Christopher
that hefts a life
across the floor encrusted
with Cape May diamonds

reminiscent of someone’s
cedar-scented sachet within
a hem sewn shut
close enough to her

murmuring *He was always*
a daughter to me
this henbane Viking
in my sleep who can’t

free throw his habitual
wildness where wilderness
equivalent to a trio of dots
atop the screen’s right side

prompts pairs of eyebrows
to rise above disguise
trebling trembling
bling as if to humble me

by way of tiny crawl-
space equating to someone
else’s will no accident
of these winged ellipses

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Energy

After Eduardo C. Corral

Stubborn as geese in v-formation, my energy lurches me forward.
Even as I envy the energy within the cloister of poised mock orange bushes in the yard,

Where standing is a usually witty monk-like man, absent energy.
I tell myself: Don't expect reciprocity; energy owes you nothing.

Energy is my first language echoing the film *Fantasia*
Relentlessly replicating selves speaking fluent energy.

Today dictator energy persists in raging nonstop at mirrors deemed inferior.
I tell myself a dose of energy may be antidote to the status quo.

Days before lifting away, my mother said, *If only I had my energy back.*
With her usual energy she might have flashed past in luge mode down winter hills.

Begging for an encore, I offer energy a standing invitation to return
to my aging body, telling myself energy cannot overstay its welcome.

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Oval Off-

She pitchpipes her clocks then removes her socks in time to sing, then slips into something less comfortable before sliding into the bath. One of her personalities lies down and soaks her back and back of the neck and neck and feet in Epsom salts plus gooey lavender body wash as fresh as the distant sea. The bath cap protects her recently washed hair. *Awesome hair* said the stylist friend who discerns the difference between platinum and the swish of all the hues still there. This abundant hair, with body, a shell that bespeaks her alive. Her still warm moist feet step on gray throws that protect from too cool tile. It is always morning mid-air around her where she recites a song. A song from dreamed voices punctuated by woodpecker pocks. The pulse of what's composed or lost to improvise lost limber, lost frost, lost genuflection to the cost of doing dross.

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Poems by Audrey Sher Walton

No Warning

Bruised sky color of Japanese eggplant
I'm standing in the eye of it
overwhelmed by the chaos you bring,
The sudden wind of you
unable to turn you away,
even as you dismantle the peace
I worked so hard to find

Now you are *here*, arriving with thunder in your soul
But more needy than ever
windows of my heart rattling
tearing through my quiet life
like a tempest with no teapot
Commanding all my focus
storm-tossed traveler, I cannot hold on tight,

In your wreckage, sudden and profound,
where are the fragile broken pieces?
Cold, sharp edge of your mendacity
like a silent knife cutting through my trust
leaving my heart hollowed out, shivering
in the wake of your betrayal

You might be the one who was dying
But every hour you were killing me

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Audrey Sher Walton facilitates Wordslingers Writing Group as well as Tucson Poetry Appreciators. The founder of Write ON! Eastside Writers, Audrey was the associate editor of Awakenings Literary Review & served on the Board of Directors for The Awakenings Project— both support and promote creative outlets for those living with mental illness. She is a 3x recipient of the Joanna Lowry Prize for Literary Arts and a Pushcart Nominee. She is the winner of Pima's Family Heritage Poetry Project and AZ State Poetry Society contests. She penned monthly columns in two Tucson newspapers. Her poems have been published in Zocolo, Aurora, "Write ON! Anthology," Blue Guitar, Heron Clan, Hydration, Sandcutters, Wondrous Sky, Literary Pantheon, Unstrung, and in her own collection: "All the Colors of My Life Are Red," a part of U of AZ Poetry Center's Archival Collection.

5.2 Mile Walk to Shea-Stadium of Hope

Rusty, I love you, I yell from behind the dugout
I know, you told me last night
Winks as he approaches the mound
That ginger wave of hope
Clenches the bat, but that rust colored dream
Could not get a base hit

Electrified score board
Paints the infield with the never-ending bad news
adolescent optimism prevails—you've just got to believe

Art Shamsky taps the dirt off his cleats
stance exudes confidence
Every fan's hold on their hot dogs and peanuts freeze in the heat
Leaning forward, hearts pounding
The muggy air drenched with hopeful anxiety
That perishes, but rises again

Looking like heartbreak
Looking like defeat
Tom Terrific arrives
Throws it wild, but true
And the side retires

Those amazing Mets
Full count / top of the 9th
A defiant edge that stares down defeat

Strutting up to the box:
Cleon Jones
Spits his tobacco
Adjusts his cap
Charged like lightning
Sparked by cheering fans

Explosive Thwack
Sailing it out of the park
On top of the world again
Let's go Mets!

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Still, I Wait

(Lost Mail)

A small rose colored envelope rests beneath the surface of my soul
The inky blue faded on the hummingbird notecard
My zip code blurred under a smudge of coffee
Perhaps the heavy canvas bag fell sideways from the truck

The stamp kept its promise to a ghost
letter buried like stones at the bottom of your heart
Words press against the paper like a rising tide
Years turned the dried glue to bitter dust

Still, I wait

Specious thoughts unlocked inside the sender's head
Anticipated apology dissolves in a puddle of muddy rainwater
Perhaps the mail carrier couldn't decipher my address

I cannot read the secrets meant for winter
Words wait inside the dark like seeds under frozen earth
Spring's thaw carries weight of silence

Still, I wait for lost mail
Lost like your spurious persona hidden beneath
the surface of *Your* soul
Still, I wait

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Beth Surdut

Tucson Artist



"Sing a song all the earth"
Fiber-reactive dyes and resist
on sand-washed crepe de chine silk
14" x 18"

"The tree of life from which this guitar was crafted lives on in the hands of the player. This is a detail from a custom prayer shawl, a *tallit* I designed for a young musician living in the Hudson River Valley. The prayer we chose is Psalm 96:1 *O sing unto God a new song, sing all the earth!*"

- Beth Surdut



Beth Surdut is an award-winning artist, writer and radio commentator, who creates the multi-platform Art of Paying Attention nature series heard and seen on NPR, as well as the Listening to Raven drawings and stories. She is a certified environmental educator who combines storytelling, visual art, and science to observe, understand, and learn from the creatures with whom we share our lives. Working with a variety of media, Surdut has a penchant for custom projects, including uniquely personal custom hand-painted silk shawls for rituals including prayer, meditation and healing. International projects have manifested as stained-glass windows, including 24 panels for a Middle Eastern palace, intricate glass and stone mosaic murals, textile designs, paintings, and large museum exhibits. Portfolios and contact information are available at www.bethsurdut.com.

Poems by Mary L. Serantoni

Desert Monsoon Haiku

high winds whip
and crack palm trunks
tree fronds blanket streets

© 2026

Fickle Landscape

There's a saguaro forest
left of the highway from
Phoenix to Sedona
that stands otherworldly,
unlike anything we've seen.

Every time we pass,
I ask to jump out of the car
to shoot this vertical mass
studded with jackrabbits,
bobcats and crow.

Yet, happenstance rules, the light–
is never quite right.

We need early dewy morning
or precision nightfall,
a perfect dusk, high drama mist,
a light rain, a first snow,
cloud-play, sky-ribbons in pink and gold
to do justice to this holy desert sight.

© 2026



Mary L. Serantoni is a poet, lyricist and award-winning photographer based in Arizona, originally from Chicago, Illinois. Her work appears in Poets for Science, Another Chicago Magazine, "Farraday Newsome: Memento Vitae, My Body Is Your Nest" for Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum exhibition, Museum of Northern Arizona's PoetryMaps exhibitions (2024, 2025), Amethyst Review (UK), Syncopation Literary Journal (Canada), Third Wednesday Magazine, "Remembering Dorothy Parker Anthology" (Moonstone Arts Center) and forthcoming in Zephyr Haiku (Winter Issue). She holds a BA from DePaul University. @serantonimary

The Girl Who Sees the Black Hole

By Rita Heinz

© 2026

Kyla sighed as another body shoved past her. Another day, same story. “Just four more weeks,” she muttered as a student bumped her shoulder. One more month until graduation, then she’d never have to walk in these halls again. She couldn’t wait to leave high school behind.

She paused mid-step, her head tilted to the side.

A black hole with spots of blue was on the wall next to the storage closet. Curious, she moved closer, her hand reaching out toward it, wanting to touch it.

This wasn’t here this morning. Her homeroom was in this building; she would’ve noticed something this strange. She stood frozen, mesmerized.

Students darted around her. Even teachers passed without a glance.

Why weren’t they curious? Could they even see it? Or was she the only one?

She should have been scared, but she wasn’t. She’d always seen things others couldn’t. Since she was five, Kyla had seen things other people didn’t see.

She shrugged. This was just another one of those unnatural events that happens to her sometimes.

The ice crystals next to the black hole caught her attention. Her fingers tingled from the cold when they drifted over the wall. The ice coated the wall from ceiling to floor. She shivered, rubbing her arms when a frigid breeze swept over her skin, raising goosebumps. The blue spots started to swirl inside the hole, turning clockwise.

She could see her breath as she exhaled.

“What is this thing?” she whispered. “Why is it moving now?”

Kyla gasped as her foot slid on the slick ice forming beneath her. She regained her balance as the hole rippled like a wave.

A pale hand tipped with talons crept out of the swirling blue.

“Crap on a cracker,” she breathed. “Now I’m getting scared.” Her voice trembled. This had never happened before. Something was coming out.

She stumbled backward and collided with Mr. Mike, one of the physics teachers.

“Careful, you don’t want to fall,” he said, steadying her.

Kyla swallowed hard, her gaze flicking from him to the taloned hand suspended within the black hole.

“Mr. Mike… do you see it?” she asked, gesturing toward the wall.

He looked at her, then at the wall, then back again, his forehead wrinkling.

“See what?”



Rita Heinz writes: “I’ve been happily married to the love of my life for more than thirty years and am the proud mother of three grown children, three mischievous German Shepherds, and one old-soul Bassador. I love creating stories where anything is possible, from shifters and magic to cyborgs and distant worlds. When I’m not writing, you’ll find me reading, gardening despite my black thumb, or enjoying a good Godzilla movie.”

The (Mis)Adventures of Sewer Suzy

By Karen Davis

© 2026

Mr. Massey was at his wit's end. His youngest daughter opened the pet door to let in their black, standard-size poodle, Suzy, who proudly presented herself in full, muddy glory, having spent the entire day at the open bog in the woods, where she rolled about in the sewage, returning to the doorstep of the little, crowded home with maximum stinkiness. Once inside, she shook her fur and sent mud and dead leaves flying.

"OHHHHH, SOOOZEEE!" the girls screamed, and covered their noses with the end of their shirts as the dog gleefully rose on her hind legs and set two wet, stinky paws on their shoulders, breathing into their faces something smelling like rotten garbage.

"Not again!" Mr. Massey grumbled. "That's the third time this week!"

"I'll take care of it," Mrs. Massey sighed. Then, turning to Suzy, "Bad dog! Tub! Now!"

But that was easier said than done, as Suzy took off running through the house trailed by the whole Massey family and a host of muddy paw prints. "Catch me if you can!" Suzy seemed to say. What a great game!

All the neighbors knew Sewer Suzy, but especially the kids. She was just like them—wild, free, happy-go-lucky. And everyone knew who owned Suzy and where she lived—with the Masseys, who they called "The Messies," since their daughters always wore on their shirts what they ate for dinner, and their yard was always strewn with toys and litter among the overgrown grass in front of the house with peeling, faded paint.

It was the perfect home for Suzy, who had a habit of running off, staying away for days, and then suddenly reappearing in her stinking condition. She smelled so bad that the kids avoided her, but that led to another bad habit, because whenever Suzy felt ignored, she would chase cars. And when the cars would fight back and sometimes run over her foot, Suzy would come back limping, holding up her injured paw. Then, when the kids gathered around her, exclaiming, "Poor Suzy!" she would soak in the sympathy and attention, but she never stopped chasing cars.

Taking care of Suzy seemed to fall on Mrs. Massey's exhausted shoulders. She tried keeping Suzy indoors, but the dog found a way to get into the garbage, no matter where it was located or how it was contained. And after Suzy ate some of the girls' socks that they left on the floor, a cherry pie set out on the kitchen counter to cool, and dug a hole in the Masseys' new carpet, Mrs. Massey resigned herself to allowing Suzy to resume her daily excursions. But first she took her to the pet salon to make her look like a poodle again. Maybe it would give the dog a sense of pride, she thought, and might keep her clean for a while. But Suzy hated the cut, and the perfume they used made her sneeze. The next day, she promptly visited the open bog in the woods, but this time came back a stinky, muddy mess after more than a week.

As Mrs. Massey watched her household expenses rise from vet bills, cleaning supplies, and the grooming salon, she knew that something had to change, but she was running out of ideas. Then she suddenly noticed the ad in the newspaper underneath her elbows at the kitchen table:

"UNRULY DOG? THERE ARE NO BAD DOGS, JUST BAD DOG OWNERS! COME SEE ME—THE DOG PSYCHOLOGIST!
FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION!"

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Karen Davis, a retired academic advisor, refers to her 25-year career at Arizona State University as her "past life." She graduated cum laude from the University of Illinois with a B.A. in Honors English, with minors in Biology and French, and an MFA in Playwriting from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. During that time, she taught freshman composition and creative writing at SIU-C, and created an award-winning one-act play ("Ma'am") that was also produced on WSIU television, a children's play "A Moth is Born," based on a James Thurber parable, and "Granny's Birthday Party," which also received a reading at the American College Theatre Festival Regional in Steven's Point, Wisconsin. Her MFA full-length thesis play, "Mrs. and Mr. GBS: Portrait of a Marriage"—dramatizing the marriage of Bernard Shaw and Charlotte Payne-Townshend—received a reading at the American College Theatre Association Convention in San Diego, won First Prize in the SIU-C Theatre Department play competition, and was a finalist in the Eugene O'Neill Summer Conference National Competition, the Playwrights Unlimited National Competition, and the Aspen Playwrights Summer Conference National Competition. It was produced as an MFA Directorial Thesis by Frances Fazio at North Texas State University. "The (Mis)adventures of Sewer Suzy" is her first creative writing effort in over ten years, and the first publication (or staging) of her work in over 36 years. Having re-discovered the pure joy of writing, though, she hopes to do more of that in the future.

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Mrs. Massey looked up and dully noticed that Suzy, who had been busy ripping up the rest of the newspaper had progressed to eating her shoe laces from under the chair. "Well," she thought, "what do I have to lose?"

The Dog Psychologist's office was impeccably tidy, with photos of his own dogs and those of his patients and owners—satisfied customers—decorating his walls. His academic diplomas and awards hung over his amazingly neat and well-organized desk. A comfortable, overstuffed chair and a long leather couch were on one side of the room, a wall-to-wall bookcase occupied another, and a third wall had a large picture window that allowed the sunshine to stream in. The far corner had a fluffy dog bed with a few toys. Mrs. Massey—looking haggard and unkempt— sat on the edge of the couch as the Psychologist sat in the chair, scribbling in a small notebook, brow furrowed, while Suzy sniffed the dog bed and toys.

"I don't know what else I can do," Mrs. Massey said, on the verge of tears. "The kids call her 'Sewer Suzy'."

"Sewer Suzy?"

"Yes," she said. "Because she likes to roll in the sewer."

"Ah. Okay," the Psychologist said, as he escorted her out to the waiting room. "I believe I have enough to go on. Sit. Stay," he commanded, and Mrs. Massey obediently took a seat. Then, turning to Suzy, he said, "You—Suzy—On the couch!" Suzy, surprised at this calm, authoritative tone from a total stranger, complied and hopped up on the couch. "Lie down," the Psychologist instructed, and Suzy obeyed, lying on her back, splay-legged, with her front paws resting on her chest. The Psychologist tried to ignore the odor of rotting garbage coming from the panting dog, and busily scribbled some notes before coming nose-to-nose with Suzy and looking deep into her eyes. After a few minutes, he clicked his pen and put away his notebook. "All right, then," he concluded.

When she was allowed back into the office, Mrs. Massey sat on the edge of the overstuffed chair with eager anticipation. "Your dog does not respect you," the Psychologist announced. "Like children, dogs need love and attention—sure—but they also need structure. They need to know what to expect from the humans they depend upon, and if there is chaos in the home, dogs react accordingly. Discipline is essential. It is not the opposite of love; it is a necessary part of the love they have come to expect, and should never be delivered in anger or frustration. But, by the same token, if you never discipline, dogs believe that you don't care and they can get away with anything. Consistency is important, so if Suzy was allowed a life with no consequences and suddenly is faced with strict discipline, expect a very confused—if not rebellious—dog. I hope that helps."

Mrs. Massey thanked the Psychologist for his time and walked back to her car with Suzy on a leash, her mind swimming with the doctor's advice and insight.

Suzy, of course, continued as usual. In the meantime, Mr. Massey had some very exciting news.

"I got the job!" Mr. Massey yelled, as he lifted up his wife and twirled her around while the girls jumped up and down with excitement.

"That's wonderful!" said Mrs. Massey, who took her husband's face in her hands and gave him a big kiss.

"It's everything we always wanted—more money, more benefits, and they even have a nice, big, company-owned house ready for us to move in!" Mr. Massey said breathlessly. "But," he added seriously, "they need me to start as soon as possible, and since it's out of state, we need to pack up now. They're giving me two weeks."

"Two weeks?" Mrs. Massey forced a smile, but she was secretly worried. What about Suzy?

Over the next two weeks, the Massey household was in constant motion, as the family scurried to pack up their house. Mrs. Massey carefully stored the dishes, the clothing, the linens, the books, and the keepsakes while the girls packed up their room. Needless to say, no one had any time for Suzy, so she trotted off to enjoy some bog-time in the woods. Amidst all the boxes and chaos, no one noticed.

Finally ready to leave, the Masseys said their goodbyes to all their friends and neighbors. Mrs. Massey walked through the empty house and wondered where Suzy could be. Was she okay? Did a car finally do more than run over her foot? Mrs. Massey filled Suzy's dish with dry food, left the open bag on the floor, and filled Suzy's water reservoir. She made sure that the panel to the pet door was open, but when she looked at the abandoned dog bed, she couldn't help getting a little misty-eyed realizing that she probably would never see Suzy again. Then she wiped her eyes and joined her family just as the moving van was pulling out of the driveway. The Masseys were gone for good.

The next day, Suzy came back from the bog, muddy and stinking, and pawed her way through the pet door, surprised to find an empty house and no one around. But she was hungry, so she ate until she could eat no more. Stuffed and content, she plopped into her dog bed and was soon fast asleep. It'll be fine. The humans should be home soon.

But they didn't come home—not the next day, or the day after that, or the day after that. Bored and tired of waiting, she headed back to the bog for a few more days. When she returned to the empty house, muddier and stinkier than ever, she was surprised

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to find that racoons had entered through the pet door and were busy chowing down on what was left of the dog food. They looked up from their bounty and hissed at Suzy, who turned around and ran out the pet door. She was so confused. Where were her humans? Maybe she should try to find them.

Already foot-sore from her exploration into the wonders of the forest bog, Suzy found it easier to travel on the paved road. She loped along, making her way from the city streets into the surrounding countryside when she heard a familiar set of squeaks, rattles, and worn out tires coming up behind her. She was certain that it was finally the Masseys' car, and her heart beat with excitement. When the car caught up with her, Suzy felt a surge of adrenaline and began to chase it. The car sped on relentlessly, but not before running over Suzy's left front paw, causing her to scream in pain and limp over to the side of the road where she spent the next few hours in the brambles, whimpering and licking the blood from her injured paw. Hungry, injured, alone and in pain, Suzy remained in the brambles. And then, as night fell, it began to rain. Exhausted and defeated, Suzy shivered uncontrollably and finally fell asleep.

The next morning, Suzy woke up to the sound of dogs excitedly barking somewhere off in the distance. Weighed down with layers of caked mud and thorny branches, she managed to lift herself up and disentangle herself enough to make it back to the road, where she continued her journey. It was midday by the time she dragged herself to the top of the steepest hill and looked down to the broad, bright green expanse of land below. It was a kind of dog park, although fenced in, with a whole herd of creatures running about. There was a big house and a few smaller ones, and she could see some humans walking about. *That* was where the barking dogs were coming from. *That* was where Suzy needed to go.

It wasn't easy, but she managed to make it down the hill and over to the fence. What was this? There were dogs—all sorts of dogs—purebreds, mixed breeds, adult dogs and puppies, chasing each other, sniffing each other, barking, watching, or just lying together in the sun, happy, healthy, and wanted. There were toys everywhere and an agility course. And there were other creatures, too—chickens, rabbits, goats, and cats perched up high as they oversaw the joyous chaos below, tails switching—ever vigilant. A large German Shepherd named Boss sat apart from the crowd and oversaw it all. Suzy pressed her face against the fence, but all she could manage was a weak bark and whine. That was enough for some puppies to take notice, though, and they ran to the fence, yipping excitedly just as a man set down some food bowls. He came to the fence as Suzy lifted her head and tried to wag her tail. For some reason, he seemed familiar.

"Good lord," the man said. "What do we have here?" He opened the gate and knelt before Suzy, crinkling up his nose at the familiar sewer smell. He noticed her injured paw and looked deep into her eyes. "I think there's a dog under all that mud," he said. "And I do believe we've met before."

They had, indeed, met before. It took a few sessions in the tub, but the Dog Psychologist shampooed out the mud and bugs in Suzy's fur. Realizing that he couldn't rid her of the stubborn thorns and sticky weeds, he took the clippers to her, making her look more like the poodle she really was. It was a close clip, but Suzy seemed grateful for the effort. He carefully treated her injured paw while Boss watched closely, and the Psychologist could have sworn that he heard a disgusted sigh come from the German Shepherd as Suzy lay in his dog bed. "It's just a temporary situation," he explained to Boss. When he was done wrapping Suzy's paw, he set a bowl of food before her. Suzy devoured every bit with a gusto that surprised even him. "Now," he said. "Let's see if we can get you back home."

Suzy had no embedded microchip, but the Psychologist managed to track down Mrs. Massey from the office intake form—only to discover that the family had moved out of state. The cell phone number still worked, though, and Mrs. Massey sounded relieved to know that Suzy was still alive, even though they had to leave her behind.

"It was the opportunity of a lifetime," Mrs. Massey explained.

"I'm sure it was," the Psychologist said. "Now we need to decide how to get Suzy back to you."

There was an uncomfortable silence. "I don't think that will be possible," Mrs. Massey said. "See, this is a company home, and our contract doesn't allow pets. But—" she continued excitedly, almost as an afterthought, "My husband just bought the girls a goldfish. They'll allow us to do that."

"A goldfish?" the Dog Psychologist asked.

"Yes," she replied. "They're quieter and a lot easier to take care of."

"I see," said the Psychologist.

"I hope you can understand."

"Oh, yes," the Psychologist said. "I understand perfectly."

"Maybe you can help Suzy find a new home?" Mrs. Massey suggested.

"I will see what I can do," the Psychologist replied stiffly, although—given Suzy's checkered history—he wondered who would be willing to take on such a challenge. He turned to Suzy, who was still convalescing in Boss' dog bed and quietly observing the Psychologist. "Your presence is no longer required," he said. "You have been replaced—by a goldfish."

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Suzy's recovery was slow but gradual, and once she was well enough to get around by herself, her first step was to learn the rules at the Canine Psychology Study Center. The first lesson was learned early one morning when the Psychologist came out to feed the animals. An assistant arrived on the "playground"—as the agility course and yard full of toys was called—with a load of food, and the Psychologist was mobbed by a crowd of puppies, as Boss, Suzy, and the rest of the adult dogs stood back to watch. As the Psycholgist filled each dish with kibble, Suzy—always in the mood to eat—decided that she should take advantage of the opportunity. Boss let out a low growl, and Suzy froze. "Quite right," the Psychologist commented. "Puppies first. That's Rule #1 around here. Good job."

There were other rules, too: 2) Wait your turn, 3) No fighting or bullying the other animals, 4) Obey the humans, 5) Come when you're called, 6) Don't jump up on people, and 7) No crazy barking—as well as the traditional rules of sit, stay, and heel. Thanks to Boss and the other dogs, Suzy learned very quickly and completely forgot about rolling in the sewer or chasing cars. Then, one night, the Psychologist happened to discover something he never anticipated when he discovered Boss and Suzy lying side-by-side in the dog bed, fast asleep. "Huh," he said, before turning off the lights and heading for bed himself.

A few months later, the Center prepared for its annual Pet Adoption Day, always a hit with the local townspeople. The Psychologist, always a stickler for a tidy environment and well behaved animals, became even more exacting. He showed off his most accomplished dogs at this event—Boss, in particular, was a star on the agility course, and Suzy learned from the best, much to the Psychologist's surprise. Families toured the facility while their children played with the puppies and begged their parents to bring one home. Boss and Suzy sat calmly, side-by-side and watched the crowd with interest, even amusement. A little girl came up to Suzy and wrapped her arms around the dog's neck. "This one, Mommy!" she said. "How about this one? She's got curly hair just like me!"

"That's an excellent choice," the Psychologist said approvingly. "Suzy has come a long way since she came here. She's got a good disposition and is a fast learner. She is an exemplary student."

The couple asked the Psychologist how much it would cost to adopt Suzy, and he paused. He looked at Boss, who steadily met his gaze. And he looked at Suzy, who rested her muzzle on her paws. Then he walked off with the couple as their daughter took off after a puppy she had played with only minutes before. Boss watched grimly as he saw the Psychologist chat with the couple, smile, and gesture to Suzy. They ended their conversation with more smiles, nods, and handshakes. The Psychologist walked off to attend to his other guests, whistling "How Much is that Doggie in the Window?"

The next day, the Center's assistants cleaned up after Adoption Day as the Psychologist took Suzy into the grooming salon, while whistling the same tune. Boss followed and laid down in the corner, silently watching. "Let's get you ready for your new owners," the Psychologist said, as he lathered up Suzy with his best shampoo, rinsed her completely, and then took his time drying her fur and clipping her nails. Suzy no longer struggled with the bath; in fact, she had learned to love these sessions, especially because she was no longer itchy and the humans gave her lots of attention, affection, and treats.

When he was finished, the Psychologist stepped back and assessed his work. "As you may know," he said, "I promised to try to find you a new home. And I have done just that." He reached into his pocket and produced a brand new collar with a shiny new tag. "I am pleased to announce that 'Sewer Suzy' is no more. 'Susan' has taken her place." With that, he fastened the new collar around the dog's neck and offered his hand, on which Susan placed her paw.

"Welcome to the pack."

Marieke Davis

Gilbert Artist



"Magic Hour Page 1"



Arizona native Marieke Davis is a childhood cancer survivor and legally blind visual artist dedicated to expanding accessibility in the arts. Diagnosed with right-side hemianopsia following multiple brain surgeries to remove recurrent tumors since age ten, she turned to narrative art to promote the theme that DISability does not mean INability. Marieke graduated summa cum laude from Arizona State University with a BFA in Drawing, later earning her MFA in Visual Arts from the Columbus College of Art & Design in 2023. Her notable achievements include winning the Herberger IDEA Showcase Audience Choice Award for her graphic series Ember Black, being named a VSA Emerging Young Artist by the Kennedy Center for her comic strip Life is Blurry, and receiving the Copic Marker North American Award. She also created "Lily, the Blind Unicorn," a children's book produced in print, audio, and Braille. Her artwork has been exhibited at Arizona's historic ASU Gammage Theater and Yavapai College. Currently, Marieke works as a Teaching Artist at the Mesa Arts Center, the Vision Gallery, and the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing. She aspires to teach at the collegiate level to continue exploring and expanding the definition of visual art. Email mariekemdavis@gmail.com, go to mariekedavis.com. On Instagram @marieke.davis.

Marieke Davis

Gilbert Artist



"This short comic was conceived from a single-word prompt (magic) that was chosen by my classmates in my Comics Illustration class at the Columbus College of Art & Design. Being a lover of music and storytelling, I often imagine small stories as I listen to my playlist while I draw and—in this case—Magic Hour was inspired by my interpretation of the song "In the Woods Somewhere" by Hozier. The song tells the story of a man who has lost his will to live, only to find it again when he has to fight for it. Being a childhood cancer survivor, this story resonated with me because I believe that our fears, our monsters, don't simply exist to scare us, but to reveal to us hidden truths about ourselves. This is how we become strong enough to keep living."

- Marieke Davis

"Magic Hour Page 2"

Marieke Davis

Gilbert Artist



"Magic Hour Page 3"

Marieke Davis

Gilbert Artist



“Magic Hour Page 4”

Marieke Davis

Gilbert Artist



"Magic Hour Page 5"

I’m Leaving

By Duann Black

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Mert heard the phone ringing. After a momentary struggle to get the key into the lock, he threw the door open and ran for the phone. He rarely left the house without his phone, but this morning when he realized he’d forgotten it, he was already on the way to the store and decided he didn’t need it.

“Hello, Mert, how’re ya doing?” Edith asked.

“Hi, Edith. I’m fine, what’s up?”

“I received some interesting news and wanted you to be the first to know.”

Waiting a few moments, Mert wondered if she expected him to guess what her news was. He remained silent.

Edith cleared her throat before continuing, “I’m leaving.”

Her message caught Mert by surprise. “Are you referring to the project you volunteered for or are you going somewhere else?”

“I was turned down for the project. I wasn’t a good fit.”

“Sorry to hear that, Edith. I know how much you wanted to go to the moon.”

“I thought that’s what I wanted, too. Turns out I have a better place to go.”

“Okay. We gonna dance around this all afternoon or are you gonna tell me where you’re going?”

“I’m heading to Alpha Centauri on the first warp-capable spacecraft. I leave next week. They’ll announce the departure after we’ve left, to minimize sabotage and bad press.”

“Wow. I admit, I never would have guessed that. Is there time for me to take you out to dinner before I don’t see you again?”

“Is tonight at 6 too soon?” she asked.



Duann Black is an author, poet, imaginationist, and well-traveled veteran with stories to tell. Duann always has a story to share and believes no good story is too short or too long. She collaborated with her husband, Alan Black, on 20 books, including “A Planet with No Name” and the award-winning “Metal Boxes.” She recently published “Stories to Tell Book One,” a book of short stories she and Alan wrote. It kicks off a new series of short fiction and poetry. Recently, she collaborated with three authors, Kat Emmons, Charles L.M. Plumb, and Michele Venné, on the short story anthology, “Four Adventurous Seasons.” Her published works are available on Amazon and are listed on Alan Black’s Amazon Author Page.

Space Spurs

By Duann Black

© 2026

"Elmer, where are your spurs?" Gertrude asked after checking every cubbyhole she could think to check.

Elmer looked up from their interplanetary runabout's control yoke. "Heaven only knows, dear. Why do you ask?"

"Because it says we're supposed to wear western attire to this wedding."

"Drat. I'd rather show up in Bermuda shorts and flip-flops. Why can't Cindy live on an ocean planetoid instead of a dust bowl at the end of the galaxy cluster?"

"Dear, a girl goes where her heart leads. Hers ran after that cattle herder shortly after he picked her up in the City Six Bar on Perkins Space Station."

"I know you're right, you usually are. Tell me again, why are we going to this wedding?"

"Because we were asked and we have the time to get there between cargo runs. If we're lucky and you're a good salesman, we may get an extra supply run with lucrative livestock hauling contracts between Solis and Zipster Prime."

"Woman, I like the way you think. You're the smartest thing I ever did with my life."

"Pardon me?"

"I mean marrying you, even though your father did have his shotgun pointed at me through the whole ceremony."

"You do realize he would never have pulled the trigger, don't you?"

"Don't change the good story I've made about our wedding. It always gets great reactions, not to mention a couple of free beers."

"Ha, ha, love you, dear."

"Love you too, my pretty daisy. Have you found my spurs yet?"

The Breathing Mask

By Duann Black

© 2026

Hacking, Betsy struggled to breathe, to draw in enough air so she could speak without wearing the breathing mask.

"Come on, Betsy. Please put your mask back on. You're only harming yourself. We can hear you when you speak while wearing your mask, I promise."

Betsy shook her head. A moment later she stomped her foot for emphasis.

"Now you're acting like a two-year-old. Please put your mask back on."

The medic held the open mask in front of Betsy's face. He smiled and looked like he was here to help her, not harm her. But Betsy didn't believe it for a moment. She was convinced the mask was designed to kill her. Admittedly, it would be a slow, painful death, but still it was not what she wanted.

Betsy wanted to escape. To escape this world full of deadly pollution that reduced human life spans to the mid-30s. Escape the solar system controlled by pirates who operated at the order of the galactic governmental agency originally responsible for the catastrophic atmospheric disaster that befell her home planet.

Her lungs grew weaker with each effort to fill them with breathable air. The air quality was too low to keep her alive for long. Every time she removed the mask while outside, she hoped her lungs would do better, adapt, so she could escape without needing a mask. She knew the masks were built with active tracking devices incorporated.

She gave up and took the mask. Immediately her lungs filled with breathable air. She checked the clock on the wall above the medic's head. This time she lasted 30 seconds longer than the last time. Maybe someday she would reach her breathing goal and by then have a successful escape plan to implement.

Tomorrow she would be one day closer to escaping the worst air in the empire.

The Project

By Duann Black

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"Dr. Goins, doesn't it seem odd to you that we have never once had the opportunity to study first-hand the progression of a Civilian Drasco trio into one surviving male?" Dr. Frederico asked.

Dr. Goins continued pacing the well-worn path running along the video wall of her office. She did her best thinking while pacing. Expending calories while mentally gnawing on a problem helped her stay in physical shape and mentally sharp.

"I can see why you'd think that, but let me assure you, it's not by design – at least not any design conjured up by the Emperor."

"But we've had Civilian Drasco trios serving with the Empire Marines in active combat for over five years. It can't be logical. The odds must be skewed somehow in favor of the Civilian Drascos."

Dr. Goins stopped pacing. "Are you saying I'm a liar? Do you have proof of some conspiracy? What exactly are you driving at?"

Surprised by her tone, Dr. Frederico stepped back as he considered his response. "Maybe I should rephrase my concern. I did not mean to insult you or infer either the Emperor or any governmental body is involved in a conspiracy to unnaturally protect Civilian Drascos. It's just that the odds seem unbelievable."

Though Dr. Goins hadn't moved or dropped her stern stare, Dr. Frederico thought she was considering what he said.

Dr. Goins released a stress-induced sigh and looked at her toes. She knew Dr. Frederico had every right to be curious about Civilian Drascos and the impossible odds surrounding their survival rates. Her dilemma was what to tell him: the truth, what little they knew, or the cover story. It had to be the cover story. She needed approval to read anyone in on the details. Her work was too vital to lose her job by revealing a top-level empire secret.

"Civilian Drasco physiology, even after five years of intense study, remains mostly unknown to us. I've never actually factored the odds, but I certainly understand how you can be concerned. No matter how impossible the odds are or become, I assure you, we will never kill a Civilian Drasco twin to cause the survivor to complete the metamorphosis to adult male. Not because we don't have the facilities to handle the size and possible cantankerous disposition of a male, but because it's not allowed by empire law. Civilian Drascos are empire citizens with full rights as sentient beings. Wild Drascos are animals but still treated humanely. We must be aware of the distinctions at all times. More than that. I can't say."

"Okay," said Dr. Frederico, "I guess you're right. I haven't worked as long on this project as most of the team. I guess my real concern is that we are working on an impossible project. Either from the standpoint that somehow we can never overcome the Drasco species survival odds, or that the data available to us is never going to be enough to develop valid conclusions. At times I feel like we're running in circles, sometimes circles within circles."

Dr. Goins smiled. "Did you ever hear the story about Thomas A. Edison, the inventor of the first reliable light source, called the incandescent light bulb back in Old Earth history?"

Dr. Frederico shook his head.

"Mr. Edison's research team ran hundreds of experiments before achieving success. If they had stopped after hundreds of failures and moved on to other projects, it may have been many years before another scientist solved the puzzle. Each unsuccessful experiment attempted brought them one step closer to success.

Our team's work is no different than Mr. Edison's. Every experiment we complete, no matter how successful or unsuccessful, moves us one experiment closer to knowing the truth about the Civilized Drasco physiology.

"You've given me plenty to chew on, Dr. Goins, thank you. Mr. Edison's odds were much higher than what we currently face. You've put this project into perspective for me. Again, thank you. I'm sorry I disturbed you."

"Don't apologize, Sam; we all get frustrated at times. Hopefully we'll figure out the solution long before reaching experiment one hundred." She walked him to her office doorway, smiled warmly, and patted his shoulder. "Remember, Sam, my office has no door because we work on this project together as a team. I want no barriers between the teammates. I want every concern, every question, and every idea shared with me. That way I can coordinate how best the team can handle those concerns, answer the questions, and work every idea to a successful conclusion. Our goal is to successfully finish the Civilized Drasco Project in a reasonable amount of time. No one gets to retire working on this project. The faster we answer the questions that need answering, the better. Our work is of vital importance to the Civilized Drasco community, not just the empire. No one is dragging their feet or skewing the odds to defeat the project. If they were, I'd have raised the bullshit flag and told those in power to find a new sucker to head the project."

Sam thanked Dr. Goins for her time and headed back to his office.

Dodged that bullet, thought Dr. Goins, as she returned to the project spreadsheet she was working on.

Poems by Richard Fenton Sederstrom

Un bel di vedremo

Mostly, when my mother sang
she sang alone in her alien kitchen.
Songs from *The Student Prince* she had sung
for a performance in high school.
All of the songs,
all sung to her unrequiteful emptiness.

Her barren stage a kitchen sink,
store-bought green tomatoes
softening three by three
in boxes trapped in cellophane
on the winter-shaded windowsill.

***

No one else at Washburn High could sing a lick.
My mother's voice,
so young then in mid-adolescence,
was enchanting.
Incantevole.

But my mother couldn't act a lick.
Cognition paralyzed,
she wandered around the stage
a pottering extra. As directed,
she took over every song.
Her voice flew like a soul:
incantevole.

Continued on page 37



Richard Fenton Sederstrom's family moved to the Sonoran Desert of Arizona in 1954. They brought Richard along, for which he is still both appreciative and bewildered. The Sonoran Desert, for all of humanity's wounds and insults, remains a gift. Sederstrom's seventh book of poems, "Icarus Rising: Misadventures in Ascension," which occupies that desert from Tempe to Guaymas, appeared in 2020. "The Dun Box," which regards the "American Century" as a total of minus 21 days in 1945, was released in 2023. "Pewter," attempting to recover some of the chthonic tradition of Intelligent Artifice, is now out under the tender care of The Jackpine Writers' Bloc, the poet's longtime publisher.

Continued from page 36

My mother was enchanting.
She sang alone
what she had picked up from Puccini:
Mimi's arias.
Madame Butterfly.
sixty-five years after she sacrificed
our voices to utility
I cannot listen to "Un bel di. "

Ah, I must listen to "Un bel di"
somehow to share the beauty
and hazard an attempt to court
some vain corrective memory of their horror.

***

My mother was enchanting.
She sang from the scullery
of women's forlorn sublime.
They sang,
a duet of a single voice in two souls.

They each know that their aria is about death:
theirs shared.
Butterfly sings of her lover's return,
Pinkerton gone forever
to her deadly/sublime belief.

One fine day and soon,
she would take their lives.

The two women together sing
their lonely way out of deadly routine,
sing into that fine day,
sing their common way out of life.

Together and apart, sharing
the life-long suicide that may be beauty,
together as one they remain enchanting.

And I gesture toward the empty pit
directing their only survivor—
Mi metto là sul ciglio del colle e aspetto,
on the edge,
like Odysseus staring out at the fruitless sea,
e aspetto gran tempo.

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tremor est futurus:

but the present is a pratfall

Sunday

the bruise
on my face
my arm my side
vastly colored to signal
the rash delinquency
of my fall—

anti-autumnal
as I am not
a late sleet-snow
storm blasting
the dooryard
of azaleas and lilacs

s p r e a d

as mortal dye
only by sparing notice.

No mirrors again today—
getting up
reminded by
grievous

forward
floorward—

WHAAACK
that I and my works
gravely lack in Depth—
a deep moment.

I wake up
make up for maybe
in some Range of minds
squinted by day
goggled by night
but always one color—

Continued on page 39

Continued from page 38

lilac?
raw-beef lilac display
of mortality and the passive
tone of a bruise otherwise
waxing meatmarket
movie-chase mayhem.

The cat scan will be immediate
and the cat scan will be revealing:
first no cat, second
no, not nothing at all
but a fortuitous something
a bit more than

nothing—

Wednesday

The coronary chest pain
!
ALERT
!
Ache in the jaw startled me:
alert?

Alert.

#A?L?E?R?T#

Thursday

"Why are we not sitting in our little chair?"
I display the tubes in each arm. "I can't get there."
Then professional suasion happens, followed by:

"At my age I have no interest in serving life
at the possible cause of either my death
or my final years devoted to rehab. I admit

a devotion to the ideas of science;
but the rest is only technology.
I like not to be puttered at."
* * *

Continued on page 40

Continued from page 39

It seems a restful now and healthful pastime
to unstuff an arrogant by-pass surgeon. So
I have met Royalty, dismissed It, and I
have survived.

Heart thrums.
Mind hums.
Chevalier, pass by.

***

And inside the x-ray I imagine idle days
not in our little chair. Five silver stents
dangle bright and argent, urgent—

caught in the colored x-ray photo
in a fellow sheen with the crimson of
the pulsating gift of—of blood, drying—

Gyre spins:

Dies irae, dies illa,
Solvet saeclum in . . .

Then Oneday—

. . . *favilla*

. . . washed away some nether time by an indifferent virtue of rain

A bare page, suddenly printed by the old HP
at no prompting by the poet
at his even more obsolete MacBook Air:

May this be evidence that part of the future belongs
to archaic technology? My 9th birthday Esterbrook?
My 1938 Underwood portable, once my father's?

Should he find a typing ribbon and an ink bottle
the poet may gladly express his dubious gratitude
for the gift from Accidence of a page-worth of time.

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Dear Doctor Buchwald

Thanks for the quantification.

I admit that I had been somewhat prepared for
confusion, but at my age, I have to reckon
with the identity of the phenomena that may

(or may not) be causing the potential confusion(s)
as well as the possibly shifting identities of the person
in charge of receiving and understanding
the ramifications

of those phenomena that may be
causing the confusion(s) as well as the definitions
and the dimensions of those definitions and some
decision as to the meanings roiling about in all that . . .

but I think that a good nap should take care of that
bounty of scattering whatevers. See you in September
"in the plains in the mountains by the seas by the rivers
running water running fire the air . . . " *

Yours in the Holey Quest for *Lucenctias,*
Lucky—
*Lucky's disquisition, *Waiting for Godot*

© 2026

What's Found in Translation

When I have finished the mind
I've been translating I look back
toward what's lost,

now in the language,
now in myself, two among
fading threads of human intelligence.

I look hard to restore
what's left of the poem
and of myself and we examine

the blurred exterior
of both of us together
as though we ever were.

***

I think and shiver and then
work to add to what we all
have begun to become.

Still lost of course. But tracking
lostness has gained the dull soul
some freedom of new sounds.

Some sounds blaring bold,
some sounds night-muted, lost
from old freedom to create it anew:

Caw
Caw
ca-Caw

Hoo
huh-Hoo
Whoooo

from the beak and with
something feathering—
wings above—beyond.

© 2026

Will Be Done

There will be clocks in heaven—
one new clock anyway, digital
since Pete's eyes' event, for every halo,
and each and every haloing, of course.
Heaven loves the good. The good

stay good by reverence to worship of,
if not time, the predicate, then the Clock,
solid to hand, conceived in faith—
Medieval alchemical physics.
But heaven, determined by eternity,

in the grace of the maker/breaker
of the tiktoking Clock depends on
the handmaid Clock to remind the worthy
by each ring and the hours of each ring's
holy echoes of all the bong and clang

of the neverending glare of neverendings.
Else when there be no clocks, hospitals,
or bars, backseats, other places of healing—
no more than *be* will be. The House of Am.
And wheren't might we rather?

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Sage

clue: a bush, a color, a bearer of wisdom—
genus *Salvia*

I shall aspire to become a sage when I grow
up again; maybe I'll make it. Maybe a color,
maybe, a dull green going gray, fit for

upholstery as on our napworth old sofa. I may
become, longing for rest, the sofa, or become
a long nap, the smooth breath of a long nap. Or

I shall become, perhaps, a bush, the same dull
green, sage, soon to pale sere in the late summer
desert sun, one hundred fifteen degrees maybe,

then to trip from my fragile dry stump, maybe
a tumbleweed now, waiting for a stiff wind
from south-west to blow me, parts of me, maybe,

into the high mountains as winter comes in her
blind regularity, some fond consistency, to whiten,
brighten my dullness beneath its crush of freeze.

My color will change entirely maybe, maybe
a color the absence of color, a silent absence
of any sense at all of any color, the color of the deep

still and silent nap that I chanced to become back
on the sofa, sage green, supporting my color-free
weightless desert rest. Bodiless breath only,

revenant of nothing.

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Community Spotlight on Arizona musician Max Tovstyi

From Ukraine to Arizona: Local musician Maksym "Max" Tovstyi has traveled the world over and now calls Scottsdale home. He is an internationally acclaimed blues-rock guitarist, vocalist, songwriter, and Recording Academy Voting Member (Class of 2026), as well as the founder of Electric Experience Records. Tovstyi has three European tours and hundreds of live U.S. performances under his belt over his so-far 15-year career. Tovstyi shares with The Blue Guitar about how he got to where he is now.

What is your story? How did you get started in music?

"I started music when I was six at a specialized arts school. While most kids had four or five lessons a day, we had eight—music, singing, painting, dance, and English starting in first grade. Honestly, back then, I hated it! I started on violin and piano, but everything changed around age 14 when I fell in love with classic rock—The Doors, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, and The Rolling Stones. My dad owned a record store, so our house was filled with thousands of CDs and vinyl records. The moment I switched to guitar, I found my true passion and never looked back."

'Blues is the root of everything I love'

Why choose the blues — as opposed to choosing hard rock, hip-hop, or other genres of music?

"As for why the blues? Deep down, I'm a rock and roll guy. My original material blends classic rock with psychedelic and progressive blues. But blues is the root of everything I love—all rock music was born from it. Plus, playing regular bar and restaurant gigs, blues is the perfect language to connect with any audience."

What inspires you and your music? What drives you to succeed?

"I love the thrill of performing live just as much as the process of locking into a studio to record an album. There's no

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Above, blues-rock musician Max Tovstyi is the 2026 Arizona Blues Showdown winner. (Photo by Max Tovstyi)

Below, Tovstyi's original material blends classic rock with psychedelic and progressive blues. (Photo by Veronika Fedorova)



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feeling quite like seeing people genuinely connect with my original songs, or hearing someone in the crowd say, 'Hey, this guy is the real deal' after we rip through a track by my heroes like Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, or Eric Clapton. That energy exchange with the audience is everything."

What drew you to Arizona? How does Arizona inspire you?

"When things back home in Ukraine became severe, my wife and I decided to move to the United States. We both spoke English, and America represents opportunity—a nation built by immigrants and, of course, the birthplace of blues music. People across the country offered support, but we ultimately chose Scottsdale because we were completely done with cold winters!

"People often ask why we didn't pick Chicago, Memphis or another traditional blues capital. But Arizona has been deeply inspirational for me—I released my album 'Arizona Blues' back in 2023, followed by my original record 'Songs From The Desert' in 2025. The desert has a soul of its own. Fast forward to today: I'm incredibly honored to be the 2026 Arizona Blues Showdown winner, and my band and I are thrilled to represent the state at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis this January 2027. Wish us luck!"

Want more information? How to contact him

- Facebook: @maxtovstyi
- Instagram: @maxtovstyi
- YouTube: @MaxTovstyiMusic
- Linktree: linktr.ee/MaxTovstyi



Above, blues-rock musician Max Tovstyi with his guitars. (Photo by Max Tovstyi)

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Free admission!

For more details, go to The Arizona Consortium for the Arts website, www.artizona.org.

Who we are

All about The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a nonprofit organization that launched in 2007 and was approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2008. We hold a 501c3 tax-exempt status.

We are all-volunteer. We are educators, artists, performers, writers and supporters of all artistic endeavors, and are proponents and supporters of the rich, vibrant and diverse community of the Greater Phoenix area as well as the entire state.

The Arizona Consortium seeks to create a multicultural, multidisciplinary arts center that will provide a home for our activities and foster artistic growth for people of all ages in conjunction with exhibiting artists, writers, actors, dancers and musicians who will share their expertise in a gallery, theater setting.



Please visit www.artizona.org or www.theblueguitarmagazine.org for more information about becoming a member, networking, donating, advertising, volunteering or submitting work to The Blue Guitar arts and literary magazine, Unstrung poetry magazine and The Blue Guitar Jr. literary and arts magazine for youth.

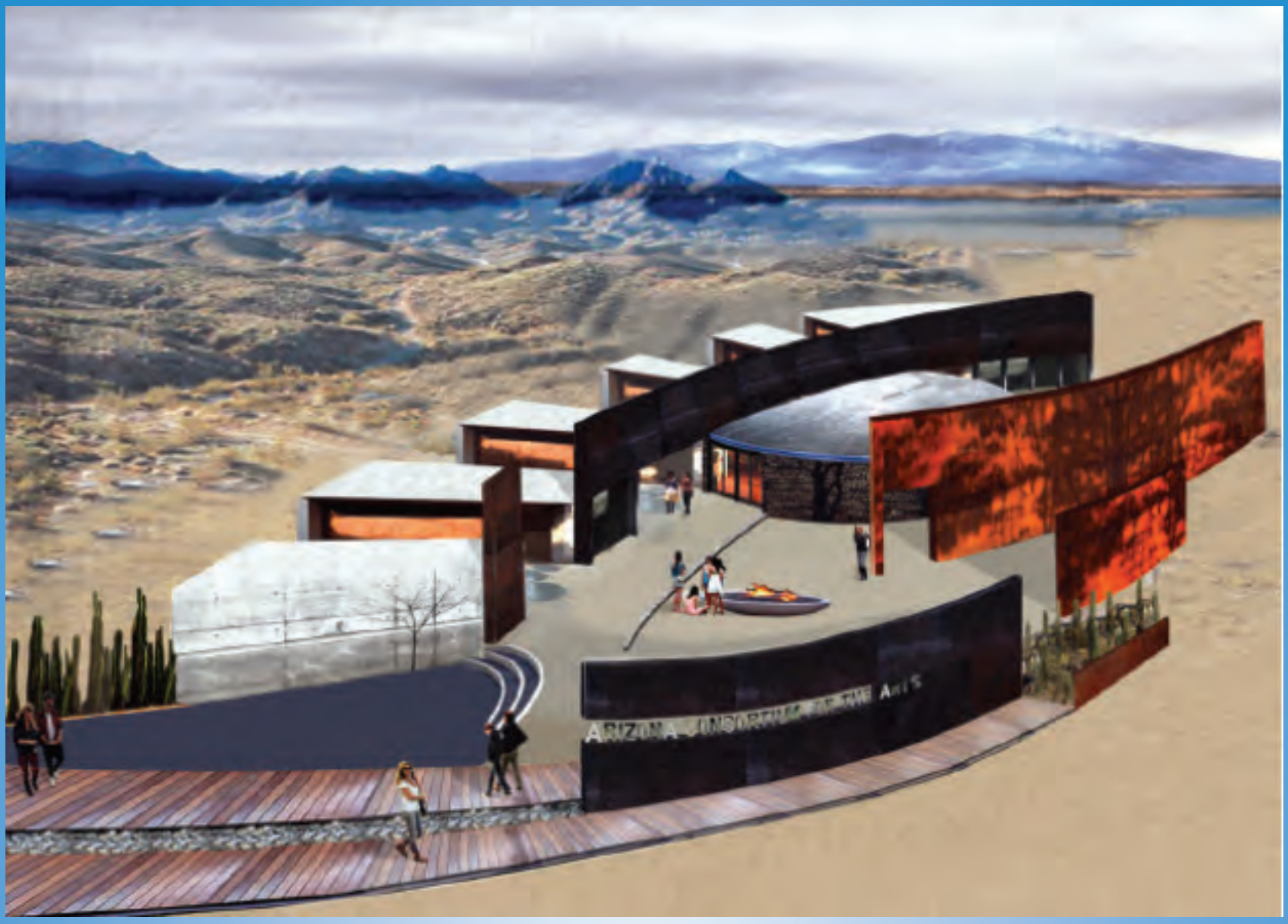
You can become a part of the Arizona Consortium and make a difference. There are countless ways to contribute, and the consortium is grateful for any donation in any form.

For us to grow as an organization, provide various services to artists, and support inspiring projects, your financial support is needed.

Every dollar received will support our website, the publication of our magazines, and the establishment of our future center.

Please visit our donations page, http://www.artizona.org/donate.html, and donate today!

Thank you for your support!



A rendering of the consortium's dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, building designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

The consortium's vision for a multicultural arts center

The rendering of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts' dream multicultural arts center by Effie Bouras, Building Designer, Mechanik Design Office, LLC.

The Center will be a source and a destination for creativity and inspiration. It will be a home for many wonderful community organizations, creative and innovative multicultural and multidisciplinary activities, classes and projects representing and celebrating our diverse community.

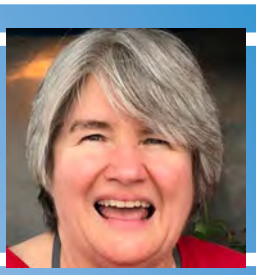
The Center will be a cultural icon in the Phoenix area. The Center will be an inimitable foundation for a unique experience, one that you'll want to share with family, friends and community.

Designed by Effie Bouras, the Center will feature numerous spaces for the arts in all genres, performances and presentations. A flexible and variable seating performance theater for rehearsals, concerts, theatrical presentations, video art and films, lectures, meetings and recordings will be available free-of-charge or at a minimum cost.

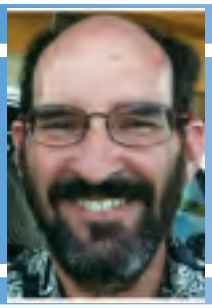
Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar magazine



Elena Thornton, publisher: Founder and president of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at info@artizona.org.



Rebecca Dyer, co-editor: A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet, journalist and teacher residing in Mesa with her husband, Rick, her Blue Guitar co-editor. Reach her at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.



Richard H. Dyer Jr., co-editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the managing editor of six monthly newspapers and websites in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor. Reach him at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.



Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for The Blue Guitar: Marjory, of Scottsdale, is an award-winning artist, muralist and an acrylic-painting instructor. Her biography and contact information are available at mboyerart.com.

Check our websites for news on the arts



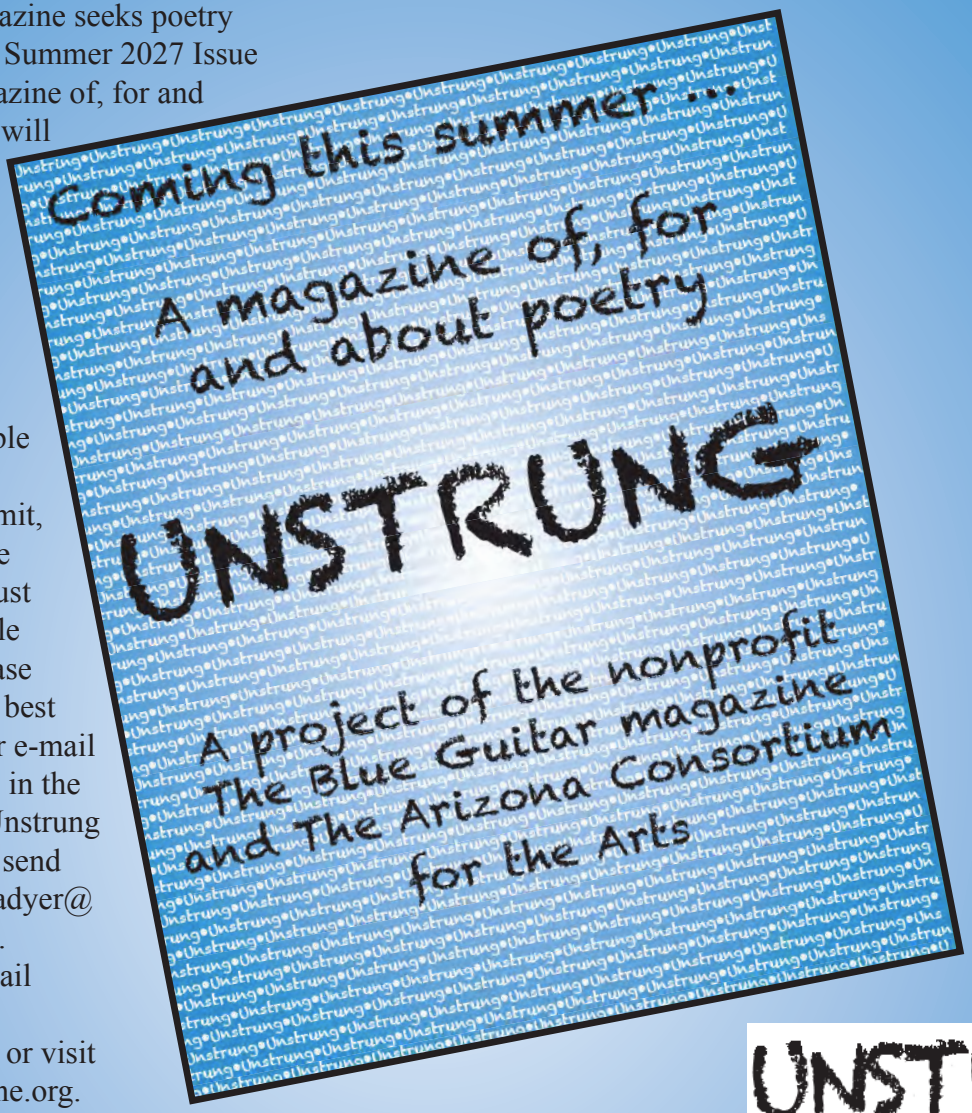
Check out The Arizona Consortium for the Arts website, www.artizona.org. There, you can sign up for an e-mailed newsletter. Also follow us on Facebook and Twitter.



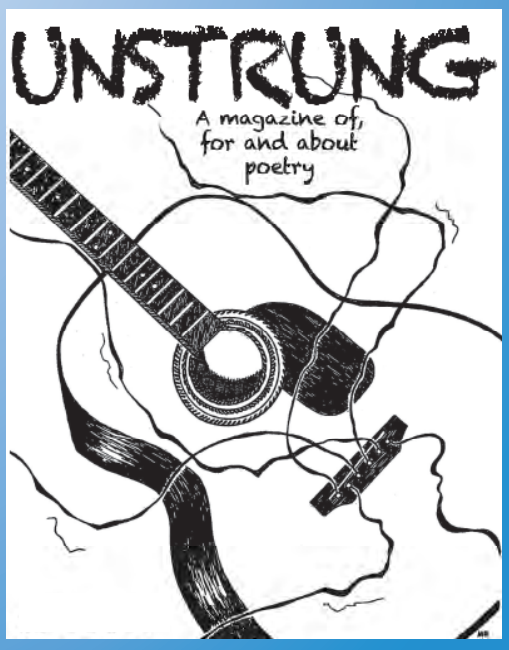
The Blue Guitar Magazine's website is www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.
Like us on Facebook.
Follow @BlueGuitarMagAZ on Twitter and Instagram.

A Call to Poets for the 2027 Issue of Unstrung

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks poetry submissions for the Summer 2027 Issue of Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry. Submissions will be accepted from June 1 through July 4. Poets must submit original work and must have a tie to Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the poet must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and multiple poems may be submitted. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your e-mail submission. Please include in the e-mail subject line: Attn. Unstrung — Poetry submission, and send to Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, e-mail Rebecca at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org or visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.



Unstrung, a magazine of, for and about poetry, is a nonprofit project of The Blue Guitar magazine and the nonprofit The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about Unstrung magazine, The Blue Guitar magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites: www.theblueguitarmagazine.org and www.artizona.org.



A Call to Writers for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who write and to adults who write for children and teens

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks literary submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who write for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2027, in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction — all geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona (no AI-generated works). Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For additional information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine is a project of the nonprofit The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. magazines and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites: www.theblueguitarmagazine.org and www.artizona.org.

A Call to Artists for The Blue Guitar Jr.

Open to children and teens who create art and to adults who create art for children and teens

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine seeks art submissions for its next annual issue for children and teens. Submissions from children and teens and adults who create art for children and teens are sought by Oct. 1, 2027, in all media geared to appeal to youthful audiences. Artists must submit original work and must live in Arizona (no AI-generated works). Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the artist must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple mediums; up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail; please provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name, contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Please include your name and the best way to contact you. To submit or for more information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For additional information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

The Blue Guitar Jr. magazine is a project of the nonprofit The Blue Guitar literary and arts magazine and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts. The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a startup, nonprofit group dedicated to supporting and fostering artists and the arts in Arizona, including the literary, visual and performing arts. For more information about The Blue Guitar and The Blue Guitar Jr. magazines and The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, visit our websites: www.theblueguitarmagazine.org and www.artizona.org.

A Call to Writers for Spring 2027



The Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Spring 2027 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 4. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work (no AI-generated works) and must live part- or full-time in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

A Call to Artists for Spring 2027



The Blue Guitar magazine seeks art submissions in all mediums for the Spring 2027 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 4. Any artists who work in any visual art media, are 18 years or older and are part- or full-time Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 original images (no AI-generated works) can be submitted. Please submit images of work by e-mail and provide high-resolution JPEGs of 300 dpi. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist's name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. Submissions must be in the best shape possible and publication-ready. To submit or for further information, e-mail Editor Richard Dyer at richarddyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

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"Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar."
— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens' 1937 poem "The Man With the Blue Guitar."
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Volume 18, Number 2 Fall Issue FREE!

"Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar."