

A Literary Life

Saint Mary's graduates create new literary journal

By Ryan McKinley



Jeff Chon

Photo Ryan McKinley

Saint Mary's College adjunct professor Jeff Chon is something of a renaissance man. Chon is equally knowledgeable in baseball and comic books as he is in Alice Munro's use of the retrospective narrator. At heart Chon is a writer, and he holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Non-Fiction Writing from Saint Mary's. In between teaching and writing Chon's newest venture is as the editor in chief of The East Bay Review, an up and coming literary journal.

Like many storytellers Chon started writing at an early age, "I remember being eight and writing Spider-Man fan fiction," Chon said. However, it wasn't until high school, when he read "The Stranger" by Albert Camus, that he knew he wanted to be a writer. "The simplicity of the language really hooked me. Until then I thought writing was really complicated poetic language [but] seeing a story told straight forward like that opened my eyes."

After graduating from Washington State University, Chon moved to Los Angeles in hopes of becoming a professional writer but his plans fell through. "I was working in a museum warehouse processing invoices in a tiny cubicle."

Several years later Chon decided to apply to graduate school. "I realized maybe it's time to shift gears and do what I want to do," he said. Initially planning on studying in LA, a last minute trip changed his mind. "I was visiting Northern California and on a lark I came [to Moraga]." He walked around the Saint Mary's campus and met the creative writing faculty. "This area it gets in your blood and by the time I left I knew I was coming to [Saint Mary's]."

Chon graduated in 2013 but continued a close relationship with his classmates. "The program gave us these valuable resources, the most important of which is each other," he said. This past winter, Chon and his former classmates joked about found-

ing a literary journal. "Which I imagine is how a lot of journals start," he said with a laugh. And The East Bay Review was born.

The staff of the journal is made up of a dozen graduates of Saint Mary's Creative Non-Fiction MFA Program. Along with Chon, the main editorial staff includes Maria Judnick, Michael Sakoda, Alex Herrington (all class of '13) and Michael Caligaris ('14). "It's a great group of people and they're all great writers in their own right," Chon said. "We see this journal as an extension of the MFA program for us."

Like any business, collaboration is a big part of what makes the journal work. "We have such different sensibilities and skill sets," Chon said. "There is a diversity of ideas that we've managed to make cohesive. We trust each other intensely and we know we can work together to make something great."

The East Bay Review, subtitled "this is the epicenter," is designed to showcase the East Bay and beyond. Aside from the stories, essays, and poetry there is also a section of the journal, titled "dispatch," that aims to focus on East Bay life and culture.

Currently published online, the first issue was released in June. The second issue will be released later this year featuring writers from places as far as Quebec and close as Berkeley, as well as a greater number of female authors. The staff is also in talks to create a print version of the journal.

In the end Chon hopes that The East Bay Review will help the public discover new authors and foster the local literary community. "When you read The East Bay Review, if you like these authors please go buy their books. These are local writers, I feel like we should support the local literary community the way we would support any local business."

To read, and submit manuscripts to The East Bay Review visit <http://theeastbayreview.com>.



CollegePrep

A private high school for grades 9-12

Our approach to learning requires collaboration, patience, and creativity—all within a kind and joyful community.

- Average academic class size of 14
- More than \$2 million given annually in need-based financial aid
- 84% of faculty with advanced degrees

Be inspired. Refine your thinking. Express yourself.

6100 Broadway Oakland CA 94618 510.652.4364 college-prep.org

Velvet Waterfalls: Orinda Jazz Festival, Aug. 17

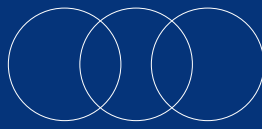


Multi-award winning vocalist Amikaeyla Gaston will perform at the upcoming Orinda Jazz Festival. Photo provided

Music lovers will be groovin' again on a Sunday afternoon when the Fourth Annual Orinda Jazz Festival kicks off at 2 p.m. Aug. 17 at the Orinda Library Auditorium. Headlining from 5 to 6 p.m. will be Amikaeyla Gaston, a multi-award winning vocalist whose style is "like listening to velvet waterfalls," according to MTV. Christened by NPR as one of the "purest contemporary voices," Gaston will present a free "Power of Sound" workshop for aspiring singers prior to her main performance.

The always sold-out event, which receives rave reviews annually for its eclectic range of offerings, will benefit the Orinda Arts Council. Other

headliners scheduled to appear include two-time Grammy winner Mads Tolling; Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center flutist and vocalist Carol Alban; Marc Levine, who backed Dionne Warwick on bass; and Ben Flint, an ivory tickler for Isaac Hayes. Major sponsors include: the Orinda Community Foundation and Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation, Whole Foods Lafayette, Diablo Magazine, Orinda Chamber of Commerce, Aspen Consulting, Premier Cru, The Orinda News, Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa, and UPS (Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda). Tickets range from \$13 to \$50. Purchase online at: www.OrindaJazzFestival.org, or call (925) 255-5164. L. Snyder



ORINDA ACADEMY

PARENTS, STUDENTS & TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER

College Prep for Students (Grades 8-12)

Structure - Support - Success

LIMITED OPENINGS FOR FALL 2014

(925) 254-7553

WWW.ORINDAACADEMY.ORG

"INSPIRING SUCCESS - FULFILLING POTENTIAL"

"I love Saklan because I'm able to be myself."

Tara
grade 8



The Saklan School is a proud partner of the Project Happiness Coalition.

Nurturing the true spirit of every child

PRE-K — 8TH SAKLAN.ORG 925.376.7900