

PLUM TREE

A Newsletter for the Vancouver Haiku Group
by Angela J. Naccarato

June 6, 2014

Issue 5

The Vancouver Haiku Group (VHG) continues to meet at the Britannia Community Services Centre once a month, where members are happy to play an active role in the Grandview-Woodlands and Strathcona community.

I'm pleased to announce that the VHG, now in its fifth year, has participated in many events throughout the city over the last year, written some quality haiku and is currently working on two anthologies. Favourite poems, selected by members over the last several years, will be part of an anthology to be published later this fall. A second anthology, a collection of haiku inspired by the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver's Chinatown, titled "From the Garden" is in the works. Last year, the Group participated in a walk through the Garden to inspire the writing of haiku.

Michael Dylan Welch, co-founder of Haiku Northwest's annual Seabeck Haiku Getaway, has asked me to present the Garden poems at the Haiku Getaway in October of this year.

A recent walk through Queen Elizabeth Park on Saturday, April 12 introduced the Group to the arboretum's collection of exotic and native trees, as well as plants and animals in the Bloedel Conservatory, such as the Trumpet Tree with its smooth bark and the Japanese Koi in the fresh-water pond. It was a perfect day in the Park, with brides posing near the Dancing Waters fountain, hyacinths perfuming the gardens and panoramic views of the city and North Shore Mountains.

I've been asked by Vicky Earle, author of the Conservatory's blog, to profile the VHG and submit haiku inspired by the self-guided tour. Among the many birds in the forest's tropical habitat, my favourite is the Cordon Bleu Finch. I was so taken with the birds I went back to the Conservatory the following week to take more photos and met Malibu, a cockatoo known for his curiosity and intelligence. He perched himself beside me on a wooden bench and then hopped on my back. It was a bit unnerving, but with the help of a young bird whisperer, I managed to set myself free. Thanks, wherever you are!

a child / asks for a piggyback ride— / strangler fig – Jessica Tremblay

The information below details how to become a member of the VHG, as well as a number of announcements and acknowledgments. In this newsletter issue, the subject of 'Spotlight' is on Jessica Tremblay, author of *Old Pond Comics*, illustrator and poet. Thanks for the interview, Jessica. It's always a pleasure!

Membership

The VHG meets once a month for a lively discussion about haiku, including topics such as: books, upcoming events and online contests. As an active member of the VHG, you will learn to write contemporary English-speaking and experimental haiku through a variety of exercises. Discussions about the structure and form of haiku are based on contemporary English-style and traditional Japanese-style haiku. Membership is open to all people who are interested in writing haiku.

Meetings are held:
once a month

the next meeting is Sunday, June 22
1:00–4:00 p.m.
Britannia Community Services Centre
in the Family Resource Centre
1661 Napier Street
Vancouver, BC

Upcoming Meetings in 2014

June 22, September 21, October 19, and November 16

Announcements

Ginko at Kamei Royale Japanese Restaurant

The next ginko is Sunday, June 8 at 6:00 p.m. at Kamei Royale Japanese Restaurant, 211 – 1030 West Georgia Street, Vancouver. The intent is that the gathering will inspire poets to write haiku and incorporate food as a way to express and share emotion through poetry. Rachel Enomoto has reserved a table for 10 people. Kamei Royal is famous for its BC Roll and original sushi dishes. To add a little spice to the evening, there's a karaoke lounge for those who wish to share their voice.

<http://kameiroyale.com/>

Haiku Arbutus

Haiku Arbutus held its inaugural meeting in Victoria on Saturday, February 15, 2014 with a literary celebration of winter, walk along the Esquimalt lagoon and bird sanctuary, and a sharing of resources and haiku friendship. Haiku poets from Victoria and region, Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, Vancouver, the rest of the Lower Mainland and friends across the American border are welcome to participate in upcoming haiku meetings. The most recent meeting was held on Saturday, May 31 from 1:00–4:00 p.m. at the Coast Collective Arts Gallery, 3221 Heatherbell Road, Victoria, BC. The next meeting will be held in the fall. For more information, contact Terry Ann Carter, president of Haiku Canada.

terryanncarter3@gmail.com

Haiku and Beyond Workshop

Explore the history of haiku with Terry Ann Carter, with an opportunity to listen to classical (traditional) haiku and contemporary poems from some of the top haiku poets in North America. Learn specific techniques, and write and share haiku on various themes: the city, the moon, eroticism and the seasons. The workshop will be held on Saturday, June 21, 2014 from 2:00–4:00 p.m. at 737 – 6th Street, New Westminster, BC and is \$10 for members of the Royal City Literary Arts Society and \$20 for non-members. Terry Ann is the author of *Lighting the Global Lantern: A Teacher's Guide to Writing Haiku and Related Literary Forms*, has taught in China, Singapore, Malaysia, Bahamas, Canada and the US.

[Haiku and Beyond with Terry Ann Carter Writing Workshop](#)

Tanka Workshop

On Sunday, June 22, the haiku meeting will include a tanka workshop at Britannia Community Centre facilitated by Kozue Uzawa, tanka poet and editor of the tanka journal, *GUSTS*. Members of Tanka Canada receive two issues of *GUSTS* and the opportunity to submit three unpublished tanka per submission period.

<http://members.shaw.ca/uzawa/TankaCanada.htm>

Haiku Workshop at Britannia

On Friday, June 27, members of the VHG will participate in the children's last day at Britannia Preschool by helping them and their parents write haiku on weathergrams. The idea of weathergrams originated with Lloyd J. Reynolds (1902–1978), an American professor who taught creative writing and calligraphy at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. Weathergrams include haiku written on narrow strips of biodegradable paper that may be left on trees to weather and disintegrate, with the intent that the poems will be carried by the wind and shared with others.

Seabeck Haiku Getaway

The seventh annual Haiku Northwest haiku retreat will take place the weekend of October 16–19, 2014 at the Seabeck Conference Centre by the water on Washington State's Kitsap Peninsula. Registration opens August 1 and closes October 10, with the discounted early registration deadline postmarked by September 19.

See you there!

<https://sites.google.com/site/haikunorthwest/seabeck-haiku-getaway-2014/>

Haiku North America Conference

The Haiku North America (HNA) Conference will be held October 14–18, 2015 in Schenectady, New York, at Union College, just west of Albany, the capital of New York State. The Conference will take place during 'peak leaf-bearing season' and a possible theme is 'How we teach haiku at all levels'. HNA conferences take place every two years. The HNA committee has prepared a promotional video for the 2015 haiku conference.

<http://vimeo.com/70412358>

Spotlight

An interview with Jessica Tremblay, cartoonist, illustrator and haiku poet by Angela J. Naccarato

*frogs
on my mind . . .
it's that kind of day
– Jessica Tremblay*

I met with Jessica Tremblay, a cartoonist and international award-winning haiku poet, over a buffet lunch on an early spring afternoon, when we discussed the creation of *Old Pond Comics*. For the last seven years, Jessica has been the voice behind the cartoon characters, master Kawazu and his apprentice Kaeru. Master Kawazu is the frog that inspired the famous haiku by Japanese master, Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694), *old pond / a frog jumps in / the sound of water*. Jessica had the idea for *Old Pond Comics* for many years before she actually drew the first comic, but didn't see herself as an illustrator. Then one day, she discovered a simple computer drawing program and just for fun, tried to draw a frog. The first Old Pond comic was born!

Jessica has been writing haiku for over twenty years. Her poem, *late for work / cherry petals / in my hair*, won the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival's Haiku Invitational "Best BC" category in 2008 and is sculpted on the haiku rock at the VanDusen Garden in Vancouver, BC. Her haiku have appeared in anthologies throughout Canada, Europe and the United States. She's won a number of

international and national awards for her haiku, including first place in the first *Ricepaper* magazine Haiku Death Match in 2013, *rubber stamps store / a man says I just picked up / the word love*.

Over a Belgian waffle topped with strawberries, Jessica shared personal stories about her early love of books. She was inspired by her father who was an avid reader, so she never had to persuade him to indulge her passion for books. Now a library technician at a local college, Jessica looks back with fond memories of her childhood trips to the library. “My father took me to the library every week, and I often reached the limits on my library card,” she said.

Jessica remembers discovering her first haiku at age twelve. “I was reading a book on whales, and there, in the middle of the page, was a haiku by Akutagawa Ryusunake. The poem blew me away!” she said in an interview for the *The Bulletin*, a journal of Japanese Canadian community, history, and culture. “It said so much in very few words.” Soon after, Jessica started writing her own three-line poems.

When a college teacher lent her a book with an introduction to haiku and a collection of the best Japanese haiku ever written, Jessica knew she had found her literary vocation. Her roots are in a small town north of Quebec, and the first haiku she published was in French. Her collections about scarecrows, *Le sourire de l'épouvantail* (2003) and *Les saisons de l'épouvantail* (2004), were published by Éditions David in Ottawa, a literary house focused on French-Canadian literature with a collection dedicated to haiku.

Although she discovered books at a young age, Jessica also remembers eagerly flipping through the newspaper to get to the comics and was an avid reader of comic books like *Mafalda*, *Tintin*, *Garfield* and *Peanuts*. And it's no surprise that Woodstock, a fictional character created by Charles M. Schulz, who wrote the comic strip *Peanuts*, is her favourite cartoon character, because like haiku, Woodstock has few words.

With *Old Pond Comics*, Jessica teaches haiku to all levels of poets and keeps us entertained and up-to-date about haiku news, upcoming events and contest deadlines. While Schultz relied on the vibe of the Vietnam War era to develop characters like Woodstock, Jessica's characterization and narrative rely heavily on the current climate of haiku in North America. Kawazu, whose name means 'frog' in old Japanese, loves the traditional rules of haiku, while Kaeru, whose name means 'frog' in modern Japanese, has a more contemporary view. It's this difference that creates tension between the Master and his student and lays the foundation for the comic strip. *Old Pond Comics* is a welcome reprieve for haiku poets, offering entertainment and a lightheartedness for those who are trying to understand the traditional and contemporary views of haiku.

The comic was published for the first time in *Gong*, a journal of the Association Francophone de Haiku, in 2008, and has since been published in almost every issue. It appears regularly in *Frogpond*, a journal for the Haiku Society of America, and *The Bulletin*, a journal of Japanese Canadian community, history and culture. Jessica would like to publish her comics in Japan one day and is currently studying Japanese to better understand the essence of Japanese haiku. In her first series of comics created during the 24-Hour Comics Day challenge, she wrote 24 pages of comics in 24 hours, exploring what would happen if 'the frog' refused to jump into the 'old pond.' The original 24-Hour Comics Day was created by writer Scott McLeod and is a worldwide event. Jessica says she loves a challenge and works best with a deadline, and it was during this 24-hour challenge that her characters began to feel real.

The first time Jessica's three-framed comic strip was published with haiku was in February 2011 for National Haiku Writing Month (NaHaiWriMo), an event created by haiku poet Michael Dylan Welch to encourage haiku writing. Jessica runs the French NaHaiWriMo page on Facebook.

As the official cartoonist-in-residence for three conferences last year, Jessica created comics and presented them during the closing sessions. She worked many long nights to entertain attendees and capture the most memorable moments. In 2013, she was the official cartoonist for the Haiku North America conference in Long Beach, California, Aug. 14–18, Haiku Northwest on Washington State’s Kitsap Peninsula, Oct. 10–13, and Haiku Hot Springs in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Nov. 1–2. “An accomplished speaker, Tremblay has the audience in the palm of her hand as she entertains, educates, and enlightens,” wrote Vic Fleming, a writer for the Daily Record in Little Rock, Arkansas. And last fall, there were five different individual Old Pond comic strips repeating throughout notebooks given to attendees of the Haiku Meet in Hyderabad, India.

For the past two years, Jessica has also coordinated the haiku events for the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival’s Japan Fair, a celebration honoring the city’s ornamental cherries through cultural arts, traditions and performances. Earlier this year, she was interviewed about haiku on CBC’s French language television and appeared as a guest on a live national French radio show. “Oh, what I wouldn’t do for haiku!” said Jessica.

If this doesn’t sound busy enough, this year Jessica was awarded a \$25,000 Canada Council of the Arts creative writing grant for Professional Writers. The grant will cover part of her living expenses until January 2015 and allow her to develop *Old Pond Comics* into a 32-page graphic novel or a series of children’s books.

When I asked Jessica about the future of *Old Pond Comics*, she said, “Ultimately, my dream is to see the characters in animation.” My last question was about the possibility of a name for the ‘snail’, the newest character for the comic strip. She told me that he didn’t have name. “He’s just a little snail climbing to the top of Mount Fuji,” she said.

Read more about Jessica and *Old Pond Comics* through her blog and official website.

www.oldpondcomics.com

www.jessicatremblay.ca

Appreciation

I would like to acknowledge and thank members for their input and dedication towards the writing of haiku and thank people within the greater community who have inspired us to write.

Thank you to member Brenda Larsen for organizing the beverages and snacks that are enjoyed by members each month and for helping to facilitate the kukai contest and enhancement exercise at monthly meetings.

I would also like to acknowledge Kozue Uzawa, editor of GUSTS, Canada’s first tanka journal, for inspiring the Group to write tanka and facilitating workshops on February 3, June 2 and November 17, 2013 at Britannia Community Centre. Your insights about Japanese language and culture have been invaluable.

Thank you to the poets who read their work at Chapters bookstore in Vancouver last spring, when the Group presented “Under the Cherry Tree”. I would like to extend a special thank you to poet and musician, James Mullin for being my co-host, as well as accompanying my reading with his fine selection of street flutes. James also accompanied me during several public events late last year and this year.

On Saturday, June 29, 2013 from 1:00–3:00 p.m., several members of the VHG facilitated workshops at the Bamboo Festival, a public event held at the Classical Garden in Vancouver. Member Jacque Pearce captivated us with a presentation at the Garden during the Bamboo

Festival, using photos of Japan that included a picture she took of Basho's hut. Basho is considered one of the four great masters of Japanese haiku. I would like to acknowledge and thank the staff at the Garden for their generous support and for allowing us to use the Scholar's Study for workshop facilitation. René Soucy, a tourist visiting the Garden from Montreal, QC who attended one of the haiku workshops said, "the workshop was definitely a highlight," and during the workshop he wrote his first haiku: *the bamboo flute sings / a hummingbird / across the sky*.

Lisa Bayer, a local photographer, displayed a series of her photos at the meeting on Sunday, October 20, 2013. It was a pleasure to get to know Lisa through her work, as the group had the opportunity to work with her and use her photos as a source of inspiration for writing haiku.

<http://www.lisabayer.com/>

Jacque Pearce created the Facebook Page for the VHG and facilitated a bookmaking workshop on Sunday, March 16, 2014. Thanks to Jacquie, members and others can access the Group's Page for updates and discussions and to share haiku-related information. For the workshop, Jacquie used a variety of paper that included Japanese paper she'd brought back from Japan and taught members how to make small accordion books.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Vancouver-Haiku-Group/1571492576409446?id=1571492576409446&sk=likes>

In addition to the above, I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the VHG who volunteered their time at the Sakura Days Japan Fair at VanDusen Botanical Garden on April 5–6, 2014. I would also like to thank members who participated in the Fair's haiku-related events and attended the public reading on Saturday, April 5, 2014.

Lastly, I would like to thank Marianne Dupre for coordinating the ginko walk at Queen Elizabeth Park and self-guided tour at Bloedel Conservatory on Saturday, April 12, 2014.

Groups and Affiliates

Haiku Arbutus is a Victoria based group of haiku poets meeting seasonally at the Coast Collective Art Gallery, 3221 Heatherbell Road, Victoria, to promote and appreciate haiku and related literary forms in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. For more information, contact Terry Ann Carter.

terryanncarter3@gmail.com

Haiku Canada is a society of haiku poets and enthusiasts dedicated to promoting the creation and appreciation of haiku and related forms (tanka, renga, senryu, sequences, haibun, and visual haiku) among its members and the public at large; and fostering association, friendship, communication and mutual support among haiku poets in Canada and abroad.

www.haikucanada.org

Haiku Society of America is the oldest haiku organization in the world outside of Japan (founded in 1968). It publishes a journal, *Frogpond*, and a newsletter, *Ripples*, which provide some of the most important poetry, essays, news and information about haiku in North America today.

www.hsa-haiku.org

Pacifi-kana is a network of haiku poets affiliated with the BC and Territories region of Haiku Canada. Its mission is to promote awareness and appreciation of haiku and related forms as well as create association, friendship and mutual support among haiku poets. If you would like to become a member of Pacifi-kana and receive current haiku news and updates, contact the regional coordinator, Vicki McCullough.

vmccullough@telus.net

The **Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival** inspires participants to express their response to the trees through music, poetry, photography, art, design, craft and cuisine. Fostering community spirit and civic pride, the Festival is continually building international friendships and cross-cultural exchanges through their Haiku Invitational program.

<http://vcbf.ca/2014-haiku-invitational>

Writers International Network seeks to nourish and recognize artists of various disciplines so that together they can make this world a better place.

www.writersinternationalnetwork.wordpress/

If you have any questions regarding this newsletter or would like to submit information for the next publication, contact Angela J. Naccarato using the email address below.

Best wishes,

Angela J. Naccarato

Facilitator

Vancouver Haiku Group

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