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SOMOS launches 2009 Winter Writers Series

Hampton Sides featured in special fund-raising event

By Tempo staff

Thursday, January 8, 2009 7:29 AM MST

The SOMOS Winter Writers Series launches Friday (Jan. 9) at 7 p.m. with readings by mystery writer Steven F. Havill and poet Matt Donovan, plus, music by bouzouki master and Zoukfest founder Roger Landes at Caffe Tazza, 122 Kit Carson Road.

Havill is also planning a book signing Saturday (Jan. 10), 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Brodsky Bookshop, 226A Paseo del Pueblo Norte.

New York Times best-selling novelist Alisa Valdes-Rodríguez, memoirist Robin Romm, poet Nancy Wood, novelist Julie Shigekuni, and poet Jesús Barquet will headline this year Winter Writers Series, which runs for eight consecutive Friday evenings, through Feb. 27. Most readings will be at Caffe Tazza, except for a special SOMOS fundraising event on Feb. 20 featuring author Hampton Sides and musician Paul Elwood, which will be at the Mabel Dodge Luhan House on Morada Lane.

This year's schedule, which was put together by series curator Diana Rico, is filled with opportunities to connect with the inner muse. "We have a hungry and enthusiastic literary audience here in Taos, and the writers know it," Rico said in a press release. "The level of enthusiasm among the participating writers has been amazing. For example, Lyla Johnson, a Taos poet who's studying at Stanford University, couldn't come to read, so she shot a poetry video just for us to premiere during the series."

In addition to the aforementioned installments, there will also be a special SOMOS fundraising evening featuring PEN USA award-winner Hampton Sides, author of the Kit Carson history "Blood and Thunder"; sneak previews into works-in-progress by nonfiction writer Chellis Glendinning, poet Erin Bad Hand, and memoirist David Pérez.

Rico said several internationally acclaimed authors are traveling to Taos just to read for SOMOS.

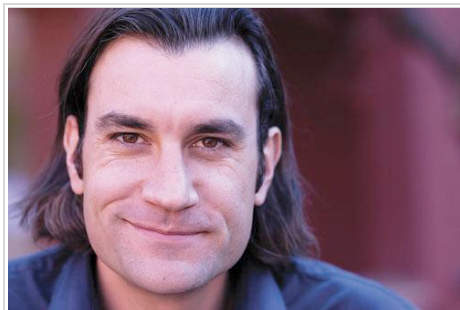
Among them are Alisa Valdes-Rodríguez, whose first novel, "The Dirty Girls Social Club," was a New York Times best-seller, has been published in 11 countries, and put the novelist on the map as "the Godmother of Chica Lit"; California-based poet and nonfiction writer Dale Pendell, whom the Village Voice called "the best writer (on psychedelics) since Terence McKenna"; and Sides, whose "Blood and Thunder" is a critically lauded follow-up to his international best-seller about the Bataan Death March survivors, "Ghost Soldiers," according to press materials.

"At the same time we've got a wonderful balance with many excellent authors from northern New Mexico," Rico said. "Two of our authors have won National Endowment for the Arts literature fellowships, three have won or been nominated for PEN awards, one has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, several were former Wurlitzer or Harwood artists-in-residence. All are writers of great achievement, whose work is compelling and important, as well as a pleasure to hear read."

Admission to the Friday opening night event is \$8; \$6 for SOMOS members. For more information, contact SOMOS Director Dori Vinella at (575) 758-0081 or SOMOS@laplaza.org. Curator Diana Rico can be reached at (310) 428-4412 or dianarico@earthlink.net.

Matt Donovan

After earning a masters degree from New York University, Donovan went on to garner a literature



Matt Donovan, one of the featured writers this week, is assistant professor of creative writing and literature at the College of Santa Fe. Courtesy photo



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fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2004. His first collection of poems, "Vellum" (Mariner 2007), was chosen by Mark Doty for the prestigious Bakeless Poetry Prize. His work has appeared in numerous literary journals, including Poetry, The Threepenny Review, Agni, The Gettysburg Review, The Kenyon Review, and Poetry Daily.

Of "Vellum," reviewer Diane Schenker wrote: "There is a hungry intelligence at work here ... (Donovan) takes us along on the vagaries of his mental journey, engineering beautiful moments where we recognize things we've experienced but never stopped to put a name to." He is an assistant professor of creative writing and literature at the College of Santa Fe.

Steven F. Havill

The author of two series of police procedurals set in fictional Posadas County, N.M., among which are "Heartshot," "Bitter Recoil," "Twice Buried" and "Dead Weight," Havill is perhaps best known for his character, the septuagenarian Undersheriff Bill Gastner. In his more recent books, including "Statute of Limitations" and "Final Payment," Havill passed the Posadas County undersheriff baton to a new protagonist, Estelle Reyes-Guzman. He will read from his new book, "The Fourth Time Is Murder," published under St. Martin's Minotaur imprint. Havill lives in Ratón.

Roger Landes

Founder of ZoukFest, the first international gathering devoted to the Celtic bouzouki, musician Landes took up the unusual instrument in 1981, cofounding the popular Celtic band Scartaglen.

Landes' music has been featured in the Ang Lee film "Ride with the Devil" and the PBS documentary "Last Stand of the Tallgrass Prairie," and he has appeared on the National Public Radio shows "Mountain Stage" and "A Prairie Home Companion." His critically acclaimed CDs include "Dragon Reels," "The Janissary Stomp" and "House to House," which was chosen by the Irish Times as one of the top five releases of Irish traditional music for 2005.

Last year, Landes performed "In Blue Spaces," an original chamber piece composed by Paul Elwood for Landes, in its New Mexico premiere with the Taos Chamber Music Group.

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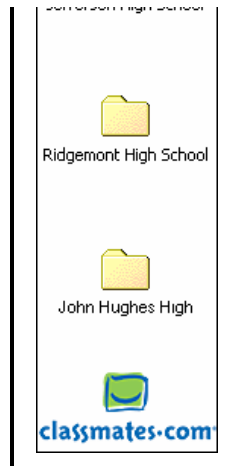
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