



COMMUNITY

## Six-week poetry workshop welcomes poets of all ages

MARIEL ROSSI DEVRIES • 2 WEEKS AGO • 0 COMMENTS • 71 VIEWS

Writers gather at the Center for the Arts for a poetry workshop led by poet Jessica Wilson in Los Angeles on April 17, 2018. Nora Fujita-Yuhua/The Occidental

The Center for the Arts Eagle Rock is hosting a poetry workshop with the theme of intergenerational poetry, which welcomes individuals of all ages, every Tuesday until May 22. Jessica M. Wilson, founder of the Los Angeles Poet Society — a community organization for art and literature based in the city since 2009 — is leading the workshop. Members of the public can sign up for the full six weeks at a fee of \$60 or attend a single workshop for \$10. Five people attended the first workshop on April 17 and discussed works by beat generation poet Allen Ginsberg, author of “Howl.”

“Everyone is included because everyone has their own stories to share and their own truth, and they are all experts in their own right so we want to hear from everybody. We are bringing everyone together and having that same communal experience of poetry,” Wilson said.

The workshop involves reading poems by different authors, including students in other poetry workshops, and analyzing their style. Wilson emphasizes the themes of memory, observation and speaking one’s truth. She provides attendees with a notebook to write down ideas for their own poems and encourages them to share them with others in the workshop. Individuals can also bring in poetry that they are working on outside of class and receive feedback.

While the workshop is meant to encourage poetic expression, everyone has a different idea of what they will gain from the experience, according to Wilson.

Community member Rick Van Voorden attended the first workshop on April 17 and said that he wanted to write lyrics for the music he has written.

“I’ve been songwriting most of my life, playing music, playing guitar,” Van Voorden said.

Van Voorden said that songwriting — meaning the writing of melodies and harmonies — comes more naturally than writing the lyrics themselves, and that he will be using his experience in the workshop to write a complete song. He said that he is going to emphasize common emotions in his lyrics because they are easy to interpret.

“A lot of poems are very particular to one time and one place and they don’t necessarily cross cultures very well, so [I am writing] something maybe a little more universal,” Van Voorden said.



Jessica Wilson leads a poetry workshop for writers at the Center for the Arts in Los Angeles on April 17, 2018. Nora Fujita-Yuhua/The Occidental

Community member Juan Cardenas also attended the April 17 workshop and said that he hopes to use the time to focus on compiling his poems into a book.

“I am in the process of writing my own poetry book, so I definitely want to learn more editing skills and sharpen the pieces I already have and, of course, add new material because I’m short some poems to a book,” Cardenas said.

Cardenas is a member of California Poets in the Schools, a statewide organization that brings poetry programs and workshops to schools and community centers. As a part of the organization, charter schools and the Los Angeles Unified School District hire Cardenas to lead workshops for students.

While Van Voorden, Cardenas and Wilson are involved in the workshop for different reasons, they share a long-term interest in writing poetry.

“I’ve been writing poetry since I was in middle school. It was kind of one of the first things that interested me once I learned how to speak English since Spanish is my first language. So once I started writing, it kind of felt like the rest is history,” Cardenas said.

Wilson said that she too had been writing poems since elementary school and became particularly interested in poetry from the beat generation. She also likes stream of consciousness poetry, which Wilson said is a style of poetry in which a person writes what is on their mind without stopping or editing.

According to Wilson, the workshop will culminate in a poetry reading during the last session. Wilson will also create a short book of the collective works written in the workshop.

Wilson said that she hopes the workshop will demonstrate the interconnected nature of humanity.

“It’s empowering where they can see the value of their own thoughts and ideas but they will also get a sense of why they are all there because we all share that same thing, we are all alive in the same time and place. There are so many things that we share, so many ways to connect and we don’t even know it,” Wilson said.

The intergenerational poetry workshop meets on Tuesdays from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Center for the Arts Eagle Rock located at 2225 Colorado Blvd.

### STRAIGHT FROM THE TIGER'S MOUTH

