



Larry Levis

A Celebration

Marking the acquisition of the Larry
Levis papers by the VCU Libraries
September 22-24, 2010
Virginia Commonwealth University

VCULibraries

Virginia Commonwealth University

Larry Levis (1946-1996)



Larry Levis published five books of poems during his lifetime, including *Winter Stars* (1985) and *The Widening Spell of the Leaves* (1991), both from the University of Pittsburgh Press. A sixth book of poems, *Elegy* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), was edited by Philip Levine and appeared posthumously. Also appearing posthumously are *The Selected Levis* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), edited by David St. John, and *Larry Levis: The Gazer Within* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), a collection of Levis's essays and reviews in addition to interviews. Levis received numerous awards, including the U.S. Award of the International Poetry Forum and the Lamont Poetry Prize. A California native, he was educated at California State University–Fresno, Syracuse University, and the University of Iowa. He taught at the University of Missouri, the University of Utah, the University of Iowa, and Warren Wilson College. At the time of his death in 1996, he was a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Event Locations



James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives
901 Park Avenue, 4th Floor

Larry Levis Made possible by: *A Celebration*

Carole Weinstein, the Levis Family, New Virginia Review, Inc., VCU Libraries, James Branch Cabell Library Associates, VCU Friends of the Library, VCU College of Humanities and Sciences, VCU English Department, Blackbird, VCU MFA Creative Writing Program, VCU School of the Arts, VCU Honors College, The Community Idea Stations, Barnes and Noble, David Freed, Joan Gaustad, Myron Helfgott, and Mamma Zu restaurant.

Wednesday, September 22

8:00 – 8:45 p.m.

Grace Street Theater

David St. John Kick-off Reading Event

opening remarks by David Wojahn

8:45 – 10:00 p.m.

Grace Street Theater

Panel Discussion: "In the Beginning: Levis and California Roots"

featuring Sheila Brady, Philip Levine, and Sam Pereira; moderated by David St. John

Thursday, September 23

Light breakfast refreshments courtesy of the VCU Libraries available beginning 9:30 a.m., James Branch Cabell Library Special Collections and Archives

10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives

Critical Perspectives I: Papers

featuring Peter Campion, Matt Donovan, and Anna Journey; introductions by Ron Smith

Light refreshments courtesy of the VCU Libraries available beginning 1:30 p.m., James Branch Cabell Library Special Collections and Archives

2:00 – 3:15 p.m.

James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives

Panel Discussion: "Larry Levis: Influences and Evolution"

featuring Ed Ochester, Stanley Plumly, Dave Smith, and David Wojahn; moderated by Kathleen Graber

4:00 – 5:15 p.m.

Grace Street Theater

Favorite Levis Poems: A Reading of Larry Levis's Poems

featuring Michael Collier, Ed Ochester, Stanley Plumly, Dave Smith, and Ellen Bryant Voigt; introductions by Mary Flinn

6:00 p.m.

Grace Street Theater

Philip Levine Keynote Reading Event

introduction by David St. John

Friday, September 24

Light breakfast refreshments courtesy of the VCU Libraries available beginning 9:30 a.m., James Branch Cabell Library Special Collections and Archives

10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives

Critical Perspectives II: Papers by Nicky Beer, James Hoch, and Julia Johnson

introductions by Elizabeth Seydel Morgan

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives

Panel Discussion: "Larry Levis as Teacher"

featuring Randy Marshall, Amy Tudor, and Ellen Bryant Voigt;
moderated by Gregory Donovan

12:30 – 1:15 p.m.

James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives

Lunch Buffet

Open to panelists and event attendees

1:15 – 1:45 p.m.

James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives

Presentation of Highlights from the Larry Levis Papers

featuring Ray Bonis; introduction by John Ulmschneider

1:45 – 2:00 p.m.

Break

Light refreshments courtesy of the VCU Libraries available beginning 1:45 p.m., James Branch Cabell Library Special Collections and Archives

2:00 – 3:15 p.m.

James Branch Cabell Library
Special Collections and Archives

Panel Discussion: "Writing About Levis"

featuring Kathleen Graber, Alexander Long, David St. John, and
Dave Smith; moderated by Randy Marshall

4:00 – 5:15 p.m.

Grace Street Theater

Levis Legacy: A Reading of Original Poems

featuring Nicky Beer, James Hoch, Julia Johnson, Anna Journey, and
Amy Tudor; introductions by Gregory Donovan

8:00 p.m.

Grace Street Theater

13th Annual Levis Reading Prize Event featuring

Peter Campion

introduction by David Wojahn; reminiscence of Larry Levis by
Gregory Donovan

Reception following the event

Larry Levis *A Celebration*

Focal Conference Participants

David St. John - Kick-off Reading Event

David St. John is the author of nine volumes of poems, including *The Face: A Novella in Verse* (HarperCollins, 2005); *Prism* (Arctos Press, 2002); and *Study for the World's Body: New and Selected Poems* (HarperCollins, 1994), which was a finalist for the National Book Award. He has received numerous awards, including the Prix de Rome fellowship in literature, the Discovery/*The Nation* Poetry Prize, and the James D. Phelan Award. He has also received several fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. He is a professor at the University of Southern California.

Philip Levine - Keynote Reading Event

Philip Levine is the author of sixteen books of poems: most recently, *News of the World* (2009), *Breath* (2004), and *The Mercy* (1999), all from Alfred A. Knopf. Among his many awards are the Pulitzer Prize for *The Simple Truth* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), the National Book Award for *What Work Is* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), and the National Book Award for *Ashes: Poems New and Old* (Atheneum, 1979). Levine has served as a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, as chair of the Literature Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts, and as the Distinguished Poet in Residence at New York University.

Peter Campion - 2010 Levis Reading Prize Winner

Peter Campion is the author of two books of poems: *The Lions* (2009) and *Other People* (2005), both from the University of Chicago Press. His writing appears in diverse publications such as *The New York Times*, *Poetry*, *The Yale Review*, *ARTnews*, and *Modern Painters*. Campion has received numerous awards, including a Pushcart Prize, a George Starbuck Lectureship, and a Wallace Stegner Fellowship. He is the editor of Oxford University's journal *Literary Imagination* and an assistant professor at Auburn University.

Conference Participants

Nicky Beer

Nicky Beer's collection *The Diminishing House* was published by Carnegie Mellon University Press in 2010. Her poems have appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *Poetry*, and *TriQuarterly*. She has won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. She teaches at the University of Colorado Denver, where she co-edits the journal *Copper Nickel*.

Sheila Levis Brady

Sheila Levis Brady is a landscape architect consulting in environmental projects and lives in Sea Ranch, California.

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Michael Collier

Michael Collier is the author of five books of poems: most recently, *Dark Wild Realm* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006), *The Ledge* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000), and *The Neighbor* (University of Chicago Press, 1995). He has also written a recent collection of essays, *Make Us Wave Back* (University of Michigan Press, 2007). Collier is the director of the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference.

Gregory Donovan

Gregory Donovan is senior editor of the online journal *Blackbird* and author of the poetry collection *Calling His Children Home*, winner of the Devins Award, as well as poetry, essays, and fiction published in *42opus*, *The Kenyon Review*, *New England Review*, *storySouth*, and *The Southern Quarterly*. He is an associate professor at Virginia Commonwealth University,

Matt Donovan

Matt Donovan's first book of poems, *Vellum* (Houghton Mifflin, 2007) won the Bakeless Literary Publication Prize in Poetry and the 2008 Levis Reading Prize. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *AGNI*, and *The American Poetry Review*. A fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts, Donovan is an associate professor at the College of Santa Fe.

Mary Flinn

Mary Flinn, a senior literary editor of *Blackbird*, has been director of New Virginia Review, Inc. since 1985. She has served as a reviewer for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts. Flinn is the coeditor of *Elvis in Oz: New Writing from the Hollins College Creative Writing Program* (University of Virginia, 1992).

Kathleen Graber

Kathleen Graber is the author of two books of poems: *The Eternal City* (Princeton University Press, 2010) and *Correspondence* (Saturnalia Books, 2006). Her writing has appeared in *The New Yorker* and *The American Poetry Review*, among others. Graber was an Amy Lowell Poetry Traveling Scholar and a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University. She is an associate professor at Virginia Commonwealth University.

James Hoch

James Hoch is the author of two books of poems: *Miscreants* (W.W. Norton, 2007) and *A Parade of Hands* (Silverfish Review Press, 2003), winner of the Gerald Cable Book Award. His work has been published in *The Kenyon Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Hoch is an associate professor at Ramapo College of New Jersey.

Julia Johnson

Julia Johnson's first book of poems, *Naming the Afternoon*, was published by Louisiana State University Press in 2002. Johnson is a three-time recipient of the Academy of American Poets Prize and winner of the Fellowship of Southern Writers' 2003 New Writing Award for Poetry. She is an associate professor at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Anna Journey

Anna Journey's first book of poems, *If Birds Gather Your Hair for Nesting* (University of Georgia Press, 2009), was selected for the National Poetry Series. Her poems and essays have appeared in *Blackbird*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *Parnassus*, among others. Journey is a Ph.D. candidate in creative writing at the University of Houston.

Alexander Long

Alexander Long is the author of three volumes: a memoir, *Noise* (RockWay Press, 2007); a book of poems, *Vigil* (New Issues Press, 2006); and a chapbook, *Six Prose Poems* (Brandenburg Press, 2004). He is co-editor of *A Condition of the Spirit: The Life and Work of Larry Levis* (Eastern Washington University Press, 2004). He teaches at West Chester University.

Randy Marshall

Randy Marshall is an associate literary editor of *Blackbird* and co-editor of *Larry Levis: The Gazer Within* (University of Michigan Press, 2001). His poems, essays, and reviews appear widely, and selections of his work were finalists in the 2004 and 2005 Frank O'Hara Award Competitions. Marshall received his MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Ed Ochester

Ed Ochester is the author of fourteen books of poems: most recently, *Unreconstructed: Poems Selected and New* (Autumn House Press, 2007). He was the director of the writing program at the University of Pittsburgh for twenty years and has served as general editor of the Pitt Poetry Series since 1979.

Sam Pereira

Sam Pereira's published volumes include the forthcoming reissue of *The Marriage of the Portuguese* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), *A Café in Boca* (Tebot Bach, 2007), and *Brittle Water* (Penumbra Press, 1987). His poems have been anthologized in *How Much Earth* (Heyday Books, 2001) and *The Body Electric* (W.W. Norton, 2000).

Stanley Plumly

Stanley Plumly, poet laureate of Maryland, is the author of the recent volumes *Posthumous Keats: A Personal Biography* (W.W. Norton, 2008), *Old Heart* (W.W. Norton, 2007), and *Now that My Father Lies Down Beside Me: New & Selected Poems, 1970–2000* (Ecco Press, 2000). He has received numerous awards: most recently, the 2010 John William Corrington Award for Literary Excellence. He is a professor at the University of Maryland.

Elizabeth Seydel Morgan

Elizabeth Seydel Morgan's fourth book of poems, *Without a Philosophy* (Louisiana State University Press, 2007), won the L.E. Phillabaum Poetry Award. Morgan is also the author of three other books of poems with Louisiana State University Press: *On Long Mountain* (1998), which was a finalist for the Library of Virginia Poetry Prize; *The Governor of Desire* (1993); and *Parties* (1988).

Dave Smith

Dave Smith is the author of twenty books of poems, including the recent *Little Boats Unsalvaged: Poems, 1992–2004* (Louisiana State University Press, 2005). He has received numerous awards, including an Award of Excellence from the American Academy and Institute for Arts and Letters. Smith has twice been a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize and is Elliott Coleman Professor of Poetry at Johns Hopkins University.

Ron Smith

Ron Smith is the author of *Moon Road* (Louisiana State University Press, 2007) and *Running Again in Hollywood Cemetery* (University of Florida Press, 1988). His poem sequence *To Ithaca* (2002) was published in *The Georgia Review*. A trustee for the Edgar Allan Poe Museum, Smith is writer-in-residence at St. Christopher's School in Richmond.

Amy Tudor

Amy Tudor's first books of poems, *A Book of Birds* (Briery Creek Press, 2008), won the Liam Rector First Book Prize for Poetry. Her fiction, nonfiction, and poems appear in *Blackbird*, *Cream City Review*, and *The Antioch Review*, among others. Tudor is a Ph.D. candidate in humanities at the University of Louisville.

Ellen Bryant Voigt

Ellen Bryant Voigt's most recent books of poems with W.W. Norton are *Messenger: New and Selected Poems, 1976–2006* (2007) and *Shadow of Heaven* (2002), which was a finalist for the National Book Award. Her book *Kyrie* (W.W. Norton, 1995) won the Sara Teasdale Award in Poetry. Voigt is a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

David Wojahn

David Wojahn is the author of seven books of poems, including *Interrogation Palace: New and Selected Poems, 1982–2004* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. He has received numerous awards, including fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, three Pushcart Prizes, and the Amy Lowell Poetry Traveling Scholarship. Wojahn is a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University.



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Larry Lewis: A Celebration – Sept. 22-24, 2010

James River Writers Conference – Oct. 8-9, 2010

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www.library.vcu.edu

Larry Lewis

A Celebration

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