

the **TELLING ROOM** PROUDLY PRESENTS



SHOW & TELL

A LITERARY SPECTACULAR

JOIN US

FOR A NIGHT OF:

FRIDAY
OCTOBER 2ND
2020

STORIES & MUSIC

FEATURING:

SOLO MUSICAL GUEST
APPEARANCE BY

PHUC TRAN KELLY CORRIGAN LADY LAMB

and **TELLING ROOM STUDENTS**

DIRECTED BY **SEAN MEWSHAW**

— "AT" THE FAMOUS —
STATE THEATRE ★ PORTLAND, ME

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Hello, Lisa,

The Telling Room is pleased to be celebrating its 15th anniversary and gearing up for its unmissable [Show & Tell](#), a literary spectacular reimagined as a virtual cinematic, theatrical experience. Directed by Sean Mewshaw, the event premieres on Vimeo Friday, October 2, at 8 p.m., and features storytellers Kelly Corrigan and Phuc Tran, and solo musical guest Lady Lamb.

There are also plenty of surprises. For example, three poems featured in The Telling Room's upcoming anthology, *A New World*, come to life during the show. Experience the magic of Lulu Rasor's "Grendel's Mother Takes the Mic" dramatized by Sarah Clarke and Matt Delamater; Siri Pierce's "Plastic Palaces" directed by filmmaker Brooke Saias; and Benedita Zalabantu's "Drop of Melanin and Blood" directed by filmmaker Egide Foxworth.

This is no ordinary fundraiser-in-the-time-of-coronavirus. We invite Masthead Media to help us share Show & Tell and the story behind it with Maine audiences before the premiere October 2.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Show & Tell interview opportunities:**
 - Talent: Kelly Corrigan, Phuc Tran, Lady Lamb, Lulu Rasor, Siri Pierce, and Benedita Zalabantu
 - Director: Sean Mewshaw, mastermind behind this reimagined virtual event
 - The Telling Room executive director: Celine Kuhn
 - Event Co-chairs: Alisan Kavookjian and Kate Malin
- **Show & Tell live taping:** Media access to State Theatre on Monday, September 21, and/or Tuesday, September 22, for photo, video, and interview opportunities. Contact Angela Smith at angela@shinebolt or 207-370-2404 for times and to confirm with our production manager.
- **Behind-the-scenes photos/video:** Unbelievable shots courtesy of Sean Mewshaw and The Telling Room. For example: action shot of Mewshaw running, camera in hand, filming Delamater in full costume running through woods with sword out.
- **Telling Room visit:** See firsthand where the Telling Room students write with opportunities to take photos and/or video of the spaces, books, etc.
- **The Telling Room digital press kit:**
 - The Telling Room Overview
 - Show & Tell Graphics: Poster, logos, talent and behind-the scenes images, etc.
 - Show & Tell Bios
- **Media support:** The Telling Room has teamed up with Shinebolt to market this event. Angela Smith and Jessica Esch are standing by to facilitate interviews, provide content, and help you get what you need to deliver a quality story with ease.

SHOW & TELL TALENT:

Show & Tell Director:

- [Sean Mewshaw](#) cut his teeth in Los Angeles, working on movies such as *Gangs of New York* and *Remember the Titans*, and directing his own short films featuring the likes of Frances McDormand and Tony Hale. He moved to Portland to direct *Tumbledown*, written by his wife Desi Van Til, which won Best Film and Best Director at the Savannah Film Festival and Best Screenplay at the Napa Film Festival. Sean's theater productions in Portland include *True West*, *Constellations*, and *Killer Joe*, all at SPACE Gallery.

Storytelling by:

- [Kelly Corrigan](#): Called "the voice of her generation" by *O: The Oprah Magazine* and "the poet laureate of the ordinary" by *HuffPost*, **Corrigan's new television show, *Tell Me More with Kelly Corrigan*, premieres on PBS stations nationwide Monday, October 5, 2020.** She is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Middle Place*, *Lift*, *Glitter and Glue*, and *Tell Me More*, and creative director of The Nantucket Project.
- [Phuc Tran](#): Tran is an author, educator, classicist, and tattooer. He has taught Latin, Greek, German, and Sanskrit in New York and Maine and was an instructor at Brooklyn College's Summer Latin Institute. His 2012 TEDx talk on grammar and identity was featured on NPR's *TED Radio Hour* and mentioned in *Newsweek*. Tran and his wife Sue own Tsunami Tattoo in Portland. **In April, he released his memoir, *SIGH, GONE*.**

Solo musical guest appearance by:

- [Lady Lamb](#): Brunswick native Lady Lamb is as much a storyteller as a songwriter. Her lyrics get at the heart of existential human curiosity. She's toured the United States, Europe, and United Kingdom, and her albums have landed on the Billboard rock, independent, and Heatseekers albums charts. NPR's *Morning Edition* describes her sound as having, "a dreamy, ethereal quality, with connections that seem subconscious." ***Even in the Terror* is her latest full-length release.**

Telling Room Poets:

- **Lulu Rasor** originally published "Grendel's Mother Takes the Mic" in her book of poetry, *An Open Letter to Ophelia*, as part of the 2019 Young Emerging Authors Fellowship. Her poem was also published in The Telling Room's anthology *Speak Up* and won the 2019 Maine Literary Award in Youth Poetry. She currently attends Oberlin College.
- **Benedita Zalabantu** originally published "Drop of Melanin and Blood" in The Telling Room's anthology *Atomic Tangerine*. Her poem won the Founders Prize in 2018, and a national Gold Medal in Poetry in the 2019 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.
- **Siri Pierce** published "Plastic Palaces" in The Telling Room's anthology *Sparks*. She won the 2016 Telling Room Writing Contest and was a 2020 recipient of the Michael Macklin Fellowship for Poetry from the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. Siri is the Youth Director of SolaRISE Portland and a freshman at Brown University.

BONUS STORY WE'RE SHARING WITH YOU FIRST:

Round out your Show & Tell Story, write a follow-up piece, or run a series!

The Telling Room to release a special 15th anniversary poetry anthology, A New Land.

Be the first to delve into *A New Land*, featuring 30 poems by 27 authors and shining a bright light on the writers behind them. Hear how The Telling Room students and alumni not only wrote but published this book as part of the Publishing Workshop. Already earning high praise by the likes of Richard Blanco (Presidential Inaugural Poet) and Amanda Gorman (Inaugural United States Youth Poet Laureate), this is the book the world needs right now.

We'll provide cover image, book details, reviews, poet interview opportunities, advance .pdf copy of *A New World*, artwork included in the book, and more.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Angela Smith: angela@shinebolt.com or 207-370-2404



OUR MISSION

The Telling Room is a nonprofit literary arts education organization in Portland, Maine, that empowers youth to share their voices with the world through writing. We love working with students of all backgrounds to invent new ways of finding, finessing, and unleashing words into the world, often pairing them with other art forms such as photography, song, or video.

We serve those who are reluctant to write as well and those who already identify as writers—including immigrants and refugees; kids with emotional and behavioral challenges; students struggling in mainstream classrooms; homeschoolers; LGBTQIA+ youth; incarcerated and under-resourced youth; and passionate young writers who need support beyond the classroom—to build confidence, strengthen literacy skills, and share their stories. For more, visit tellingroom.org/about-us.

HOW THE TELLING ROOM CAME TO BE

In 2004, three writers, friends, and difference makers—Susan Conley, Sara Corbett, and Mike Paterniti—came together to act on their belief that the power of story can change a community for the better. They'd all traveled the world but had found their way to (or back to) Portland, Maine, and couldn't imagine a better place to begin a youth writing center and do just that. They started small, bribing students with pizza to participate in roundtable workshops. Then, in 2005, they received their first grant and began working with International English Language Learners, publishing their best work in The Telling Room's first anthology, *I Remember Warm Rain*. As their voices grew, so did the organization. Today, The Telling Room is one of the top youth arts and humanities programs in the nation. To read more history, visit tellingroom.org/about-us/history.

PROGRAMMING

All core programs at The Telling Room are free to help ensure all students can participate and have their voices heard. Each year, programs are linked by a new theme and the best student writing is published in a major anthology released every spring at a community event attended by hundreds of supporters. The Telling Room offers after school- and school-based programs, summer camps, and special events/programs for writers of all ages and abilities. Here are just a few (find more at tellingroom.org/programs):

- **Young Writers & Leaders:** Nine-month writing and leadership program for immigrant, refugee, and first-generation youth.
- **Young Emerging Authors:** Four students, selected through a rigorous application process, each write their own book in a single year.
- **Publishing Workshop:** Current students and alumni learn publishing skills alongside professional editors and designers during the editorial and production processes.
- **Second Story:** Focuses on strengthening writing and leadership skills while incorporating college readiness and creative expression.
- **In-school Residencies:** Telling Room teachers and community volunteers work in local classrooms to publish an original chapter book.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 28,000+ students served in 15 years
- 150+ books by young writers
(12,000+ in print, including 15 major anthologies of student work)
- Free creative writing, literacy, and arts programs delivered to 3,700+ students from 100 schools and 75 towns across Maine each year
- Nearly 100 programs delivered in 2019, including 32 field trips, 22 in-school residencies, 17 workshops, 10 different summer camps totaling 17 weeks
- Powered by more than 200 dedicated volunteers
- 90% of Telling Room students report gaining literary skills and self-confidence

UNEXPECTED TWISTS AND UPSIDES OF GOING DIGITAL:

When schools and businesses shut down this spring because of the coronavirus, The Telling Room acted quickly to ensure its students continued to feel supported. After all, if anything, the pandemic created an even greater need for youth to have a voice and stay connected. The organization swiftly moved programs, resources, and events online. They even launched a new program SWARM! to engage students from across Maine and beyond. Media resources and opportunities include but are not limited to case studies; audio and video clips; author interviews; and student testimonials that show audiences how The Telling Room reframed this challenging time as an opportunity to innovate and reach more students in new and interesting ways.

AS PART OF ITS DIGITAL PROGRAMMING, THE TELLING ROOM HAS OFFERED:

- Pre-recorded, youth-authored audio and video of poems, stories, and personal narratives for schools and teachers to use as writing prompts or discussion points in virtual classrooms.
- Daily writing prompts posted on social media for schooling-at-home parents, guardians, and helpers; teachers using virtual classrooms; and youth.
- Livestream readings with community and youth poets and authors, as well as craft talks about what it's like to live and work as a writer.
- Virtual write-and-share opportunities to support students in Telling Room programs and youth seeking virtual engagement with the arts in Maine and throughout the country.
- New programming!
 - SWARM! is a new network of youth writing groups ("hives") across Maine that meet virtually. Each hive is led by a trained teaching artist and Telling Room student guest authors. The first SWARM! publication will soon be available, including docu-videos.
- For a deep dive into The Telling Room's digital success, check out this [multimedia presentation](#).

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS WITH THE TELLING ROOM'S FIRST POETRY ANTHOLOGY

A New Land: 30 Groundbreaking Poems by Youth Poets debuts September 30, 2020. This inspiring compilation is a stunning exploration of coming-of-age and a triumphant chorus of American youth. Poets range in age from 12-28 and come from different ethnicities and backgrounds. They represent black and brown, immigrant and refugee, LGBTQIA+, and rural communities, speaking to an array of social issues facing today's youth. Inaugural United States Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman invites people into *A New Land* with a lovely introduction, and Alicia Brillant's shares their art, which accompanies each poem. *A New Land* earned early high praise, including from Presidential Inaugural Poet Richard Blanco: "An utterly moving collection of youth poetry that mirrors the face of America."

10 Things to know about The Telling Room

The Telling Room is a nonprofit writing program based in Portland, Maine. We empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world.



1 WE RECEIVED AN AWARD FROM FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA

in the East Room of the White House in 2015 for our Young Writers & Leaders program! The National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Award is the highest honor presented in our field.



2 WE BELIEVE ALL KIDS SHOULD HAVE A CHANCE TO TELL THEIR STORIES.

That's why we keep our core programs are 100% free to students and their families, ensuring that the students who need our programs most—those who are least likely to have a voice in the community—can participate.

3 WE PROVIDE hundreds of hours of one-on-one attention in the classroom each year from trained mentors and volunteers.

4 WE ENGAGE real, working writers to collaborate with our students like Pulitzer Prize winner Richard Russo!

5 WE MAKE a real impact. Nearly 100% of our students report gaining literacy skills they'll use beyond our programs and a huge boost in their confidence.

6 WE GIVE our students the skills they need to produce award winning writing! Each year, Telling Room students receive top honors in the Maine Literary Awards and the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

7 WE CHANGE kids' lives. TR Alum Chrispo Niyokwizera says, "The Telling Room affected my life in every way. I learned how to achieve and experience things that adults still struggle with. It changed my life so much that I don't know who I would be without The Telling Room."

8 WE PREPARE kids for future success. Every year, we provide special college essay workshops for kids from all over Greater Portland. We offer special college application help to many of our students, and 100% of the high school seniors in our Young Writers & Leaders program graduate from high school and go on to college.

9 WE PUBLISH

over 10 books each year. Since 2007, we've published more than 150 books featuring the original work of 4,000 young writers.



10 WE STRENGTHEN

communities. Every year, we reach over 4,000 students from 100 schools in 75 towns across the state. Our students' stories reach thousands of people through our publications, radio partnerships, and community events, inspiring connections that transform lives.



Visit us at tellingroom.org





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- Virtual write-and-share opportunities to support students in Telling Room programs and youth seeking virtual engagement with the arts in Maine and throughout the country.
- New programming!
 - SWARM is a new network of youth writing groups ("hives") across Maine that meet virtually. Each hive is led by a trained teaching artist and Telling Room student guest authors. Interview students who participated over the summer and read their work about what it means to be a kid in Maine right now. Or follow a student through the fall semester (October 5 through December 7) to showcase The Telling Room's impact from Portland and Caribou to Lewiston and Vinalhaven.

The Telling Room is more dedicated than ever to provide resources, activities, and community engagement for everyone during this profound period of isolation and physical distancing. For a deep dive into The Telling Room's digital success, check out this extensive [multimedia presentation](#).



Portland | Tuesday, Sep 29

EAT

It's National Coffee Day, and sometimes we like our coffee in ice cream form. Recently, our favorite new go-to order is [Gifford's](#) (made in Maine!) Aroma Joe's PB Mocha. It uses Aroma Joe's cold brew blended with chocolate, then rippled with peanut butter and chocolate chips. Yes, it's as delicious as it sounds. Get a cone full of fun at one of the many Gifford's ice cream stands around the state including Yarmouth, Auburn, Waterville and more.



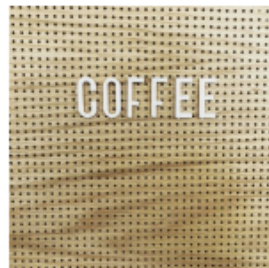
Image courtesy Gifford's FB

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DRINK



Coffee keeps us going and we are so fortunate to have some of the best small, independent coffee shops right here in Maine. Today's a great day to forgo the chain shops and visit a local shop you've never been to before. Order a specialty drink and watch the baristas create something special at: Arabica, Bard, Coffee By Design, Speckled Ax, Hilltop, Burundi Star, Tandem, Yordprom,

Rwanda Bean, Higher Grounds, The Proper Cup, Little Woodfords, Omi's or Coffee Me Up. Tip generously!

Image courtesy Speckled Ax FB

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LUCKY

[The Telling Room](#) has re-worked its major fundraiser, Show & Tell, making it better than ever and suitable for pandemic times. Lucky for us, the guests remain the same including storytelling by Phuc Tran and Kelly Corrigan, a musical appearance by Lady Lamb, and readings by the Telling Room poets. You can take it all in from the comfort of home while supporting The Telling Room's

mission to empower youth through writing and share their voices with the world. The premiere date is October 2, but you'll also be able to watch later at your convenience. Get all the details and tickets on the website. It's going to be a literary spectacular!



Image courtesy The Telling Room

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Karen Watterson, Contributing Editor
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E6 Maine Sunday Telegram / Sunday, September 27, 2020

SCENE & HEARD



Maine-based singer-songwriter Lady Lamb (Aly Spaltro) performs "Deep Love."

Photo by Ian MacLellan



Photo by Amy Paradysz

The stage at the State Theater set to introduce singer-songwriter Lady Lamb with a bit of humor as "Lady Lamp." Telling Room Executive Director Celine Kuhn said, "Sean Mewshaw put out a call for lamps from everyone he knows. He's a visionary and a perfectionist."



Photo by Ian MacLellan

Filmmaker Sean Mewshaw moves the Show & Tell viewer throughout The State Theater, a Portland icon that has been closed during the pandemic. Here he films Executive Director Celine Kuhn as she introduces the show while walking to the second floor balcony.



Photo by Ian MacLellan

Executive Director Celine Kuhn followed by co-hosts Salim Salim and Amanda Dettman.

Telling Room embraces virtual version of variety show

The annual Show & Tell fundraiser was prerecorded and will be available to view as of Friday evening.

It's been a year of "the best we can do." Concerts on laptops. Auctions on phones. Awards presented over Zoom.

But as The Telling Room tried reimagine its popular Show & Tell literary variety show, originally scheduled for April at the State Theater, as something that wouldn't be less-than, director and filmmaker Sean Mewshaw saw potential.

"I realized that we could make it cinematic and surprising," said Mewshaw, who moved to Maine to direct the Starz film "Tumbledown" in 2015. "As a filmmaker and stage director, this is a kind of a dream come true for me."

The 90-minute, ticketed fundraiser, pre-recorded at the State Theater, will go live on Vimeo at 8 p.m. Friday but will be available to view anytime later. Headliners include New York Times best-selling author Kelly Corrigan, singer-songwriter Lady Lamb and Portland author Phuc Tran of "Sigh, Gone: A

Misfit's Memoir about Great Books, Punk Rock, and the Fight to Pitt In." Tran said, "Working with Sean Mewshaw was such an incredible experience—to have him take my writing and story and channel it through his cinematic genius. He saw all its humor, tragedy and paradox and laminated it with his mastery of visual storytelling."

The show also brings to life three award-winning poems featured in the nonprofit's 15th anniversary student anthology "A New World." "Grendel's Mother Takes the Mic," by Lulu Raso,



AMY PARADYSZ
SOCIETY
NOTEBOOK

dramatized by Sarah Clarke and Matt Delamater; "Plastic Palaces" by Sin Pierce, directed by filmmaker Brooke Salas; and "Drop of Melanin and Blood," by Benedita Zalabantu, directed by filmmaker Egidie Foxworth. "It's a visual escape, a bit of magic," said event co-chair Kate Malin. "It's storytelling in all these different media to spotlight and celebrate what The Telling Room does, which is programs for Maine's young people." Sonya Tomlinson, a mentor for the Young Writers & Leaders program, said, "I think it won't feel as much like a virtual event as a feature film." The Telling Room serves 4,000 Maine youth annually, with

those numbers growing thanks to the online platform SWARM! (Student Writers and Readers Meet). Students in 14 of the state's 16 counties have joined in during the pandemic—and, during the school year, all programs are free.

"We're still offering all our programs virtually, and we've done that since March," said Executive Director Celine Kuhn. "It's all new this year, pivoting to continue to reach students."

"Everybody has a story to tell, and everybody can heal from that story," said event co-chair Alison Kavookjian of Portland. Show & Tell 2020 is co-hosted by Salim Salim of Westbrook and Amanda Dettman of Yarmouth, both Telling Room alumni who graduated from college this year and now mentor younger writers.

"One of the most important things in fostering creativity in young people is free writing,"

said Salim, who immigrated from Iraq when he was 12. "There's self-empowerment and validation when you express your story with others."

Dettman, who was part of Young Emerging Authors, said, "It taught me to be vulnerable with people my own age. And to go through The Telling Room and hear stories from all over the world is something I'll never forget."

Tran, whose family were refugees from Saigon, Vietnam, in 1975, said, "Having grown up feeling—and being told—that my own story was not worth telling, I've seen at The Telling Room the transformative power of storytelling for young people."

For more information about Show & Tell 2020, go to showandtellportland.com.

Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer and photographer from Scarborough. She can be reached at amyparadysz@gmail.com.

Show co-hosts Salim Salim of Westbrook and Amanda Dettman of Yarmouth.

Photo by Ian MacLellan



Portland writer Phuc Tran reads from his memoir "Sigh, Gone." Show & Tell director Sean Mewshaw said, "His story is really moving, and it's incredibly cinematic."

Photo by Ian MacLellan



SEND US YOUR PHOTOS

Send your back-to-school pictures, with captions that include the full names, ages and hometowns of the students and the name of the person who took the photo, to amyparadysz@pressherald.com.

FIND MORE PHOTOS

and galleries of social events at pressherald.com/scene-and-heard.

Society Notebook: Telling Room embraces virtual version of variety show

 pressherald.com/2020/09/27/society-notebook-telling-room-embraces-virtual-version-of-variety-show/

By Amy Paradysz

September 27, 2020



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For more information about Show & Tell 2020, go to showandtellportland.com

*Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer and
photographer from Scarborough. She can be reached
at *

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society notebook

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PORTLAND TO HELP KIDS IN MAINE

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