

It's raining writers

Novelists will pour into the city for three literary series

By Bob Hoover
Post-Gazette Book Editor

From the hip to the corny, the novelists will be descending on the city next month like a swarm of literary hornets awakened after a summer snooze.

They will be accompanied by a wave of poets, biographers, social thinkers and essayists, writers all heading here to challenge our seasonally addled brains. Some will even try to sell us their books.

It's the fat fall crop of fiction authors, however, that makes this season's local reading scene distinctive.

On the list is Alice Sebold, the largest-selling novelist of 2002, with her enduring best seller "The Lovely Bones." Her fellow authors include Chuck Palahniuk, whose novel "Fight Club" launched his career as a new young voice in fiction. His latest is "Diary."

Another novelist who has built an avant-garde reputation with such works as "The Ice Storm" and "Purple America," is Rick Moody, scheduled to read in November.

From the sublime to the folksy is Garrison Keillor, the thinking person's Middle American, who will drag out his timeworn jokes next month, when he plugs his latest novel of timeworn jokes, "Love Me."

Adding a little gravity to follow Keillor's confections will be lawyer-novelist Scott Turow, but his topic won't be fictional. His new work, "Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing with the Death Penalty," grew out of his work on the Illinois advisory panel studying wrongful executions in that state.

Shadyside resident Anahita Firouz, author of the critically acclaimed "In the Walled Gardens," will join a panel discussion with poet Joel Brouwer and essayist Katherine Russell Rich.

Rounding out the cadre of novelists is crime-thriller expert James Patterson with another entry in his Alex Cross series.

The University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University and the Drue Heinz Lectures all open their series next month.

Pittsburgh Contemporary Writers Series

This is the sixth season of the series produced by the university's writing program to bring both established and emerging writers to campus for seminars and readings.

The readings are free to the community and held at a variety of venues on the Pitt campus. They start at 8:30 p.m.

The season begins Sept. 16 with novelist Palahniuk in the auditorium of Alumni Hall, the former Masonic Temple, 4227 Fifth Ave., Oakland. The other fall programs:

Sept. 29: Essayist Richard Rodriguez. His latest collection, "Brown: The Last Discovery of America" (2002), continued his discussion of a multiracial America recognizing the increasing presence of Latino culture in the nation. Rodriguez also appears on the PBS-TV program "The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer."



Ann Heseberg/Associated Press

Authors seen and heard at literary series:

Clockwise from above: Garrison Keillor kicks off the Drue Heinz Lecture Series Sept. 29; "Fight Club" author Chuck Palahniuk opens the Pittsburgh Contemporary Writers Series Sept. 16; Rick Moody, a judge for the Drue Heinz short-fiction prize this year, visits the Pitt series Nov. 5; and Alice Sebold, whose "The Lovely Bones" is a runaway best seller, will discuss her success with radio host Lynn Cullen as part of the Drue Heinz Lectures Oct. 27.



David Lawrence Auditorium, Forbes Avenue.

Oct. 13: Poet Joel Brouwer, novelist Firouz and essayist Katherine Russell Rich. Brouwer teaches writing at South-



ern Illinois University and is the author of the upcoming poetry collection "Centuries." Rich is the author of "The Red Devil: To Hell With Cancer and Back." Firouz was exiled from her native Iran in

1980. Her novel deals with the political history of that country. Frick Fine Arts Auditorium, Schenley Drive.

Nov. 5: Drue Heinz Literature Prize Reading with this year's winner Suzanne Greenberg ("Speed-Walk") and contest judge Moody. The Heinz Prize, administered by the University of Pittsburgh Press, is one of the country's leading awards for short fiction. This year's winner teaches at California State University Long Beach. Frick Fine Arts Auditorium. Information: 412-624-6506 or www.english.pitt.edu.

Adamson Visiting Writer Series

Carnegie Mellon's English Department invites a mix of academic and popular authors to share their work with students and the community. The readings are free and held in the Adamson Wing of Baker Hall on campus. They begin at 8 p.m.

The Adamson season also opens Sept. 16 with a pair of poets, Lisa Fishman and Richard Meier.

Fishman is author of the collections "The Deep Heart's Core is a Suitcase" and "Dear, Read." She teaches at Beloit College.

Meier is also at Beloit and has authored the collection "Terrain Vague." He has been a visiting poet in the Pittsburgh city school district.

Other Adamson programs:
Oct. 1: Poet and essayist Robert Stewart is editor of New Letters magazine and author of "Outside Language: Essays." He's on the faculty at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Oct. 20: Dan Chaon, who teaches at Oberlin College, is the author of "Among the Missing," a collection of short stories that was a National Book Award finalist in 2001.

Nov. 12: The author of five poetry collections, including "Palm Crow," Virgil Suarez is a native of Cuba and teaches at Florida State University.

Drue Heinz Lectures

This series presents a lineup of both fiction and nonfiction authors in the Carnegie Music Hall, Oakland. Programs begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$18, \$12 for students. Phone: 412-622-8866.

Keillor kicks things off Sept. 29. The rest of the schedule:

Oct. 13: Scott Turow.

Oct. 27: Alice Sebold, who will be questioned by radio talk show host Lynn Cullen.

Nov. 10: Psychologist Carol Gilligan, who became nationally known with her 1982 book "In a Different Voice," which raised questions about gender differences in education. She is a former head of Harvard University's Gender Studies program.

Nov. 25: Former media executive Walter Isaacson, the latest biographer of Benjamin Franklin.

Dec. 8: James Patterson.

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