

for the Arts record

Poet Gregory Orr to read

Gregory Orr, a long time summer resident of Nantucket, will be reading from his poetry, Sunday, August 31, at the Atheneum from 1p.m. to 3 p.m. The reading is free and open to the public. Orr is the author of nine collections of poetry, the most recent of which is "Concerning the Book that is the Body of the Beloved."

Among his earlier volumes of poetry are "The Caged Owl: New and Selected Poems," "Orpheus and Eurydice," "City of Salt," "We Must Make a Kingdom of It," "The Red House, Gathering the Bones Together" and "Burning the Empty Nests." Orr is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and two poetry fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2003, he was presented with the Award in Literature by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In addition, he has also been a Rockefeller Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Culture and Violence. He is also the author of a memoir, "The Blessing," which was chosen by Publisher's Weekly as one of the fifty best non-fiction books of 2002. His recent book, "Poetry as Survival," an extended meditation on the dynamics and function of the personal lyric, was characterized

by Adrienne Rich as "a wise and passionate book." Earlier prose collections include "Richer Entanglements: Essays and Notes on Poetry and Poems" and "Stanley Kunitz: An Introduction to the Poetry." His personal essay was broadcast on National Public Radio's "This I Believe" series in 2006 and included in the anthology, "This I Believe." He is a Professor of English at the University of Virginia, where he has taught since 1975 and was the founder and first director of its MFA Program in Writing. He served from 1978 to 2003 as Poetry Editor of the Virginia Quarterly Review. He lives with his wife, a painter, and his two daughters in Charlottesville, Virginia. ■

Nancy Thayer speaks on latest book on Monday

Nancy Thayer, a prolific island author who focuses her novels on relationships between women, women and their loves and family relationships, will discuss her most recent novel, "Moon Shell Beach," in the Atheneum's Great Hall at 8 p.m. on August 18. This book centers around two Nantucket friends who shared their most intimate thoughts, then drifted apart but returned to their bond on the island and with themselves. ■

Creating "The Last Dance"

Expert basket weaver Michael Kane will be on hand at the Nantucket Lightship Basket Museum

tomorrow, August 14 at 2 p.m. to discuss his collaborative creation of the impressive, intricately detailed, four-foot tall-tiered basket called "The Last Dance" on display at the museum. It was featured on the Martha Stewart Show last fall. ■

West African dance class at New School

By STELLA PEISCH
INDEPENDENT INTERN

In Guinea, West Africa, children dance the way kids in America play sports.

Classes are offered after school, competitions are frequent and the government recruits star dancers.

One of these exceptional dancers, Abdoulaye Sylla, began dancing at the age of five and joined the National Dance Company by the time he was 16 years old. After performing around the world for 20 years, he moved to Connecticut and settled there, teaching kindergarten through college students dancing and drumming.

He was encouraged to dance full time, but he refused, wanting to attend and complete school while continuing to dance and teach dance.

Sylla started drumming soon after he began dancing, as the kind of dance he does is communication between the dancer and the drummer. There are two types of drums used in the music – a jimbaye and a doum-doum, both drums are made from goat skin and hit with sticks to provide the energetic

music for dancers.

His dance is specific to his homeland region of Guinea, and there are different varieties of dance, depending on each section of the country.

There are also dances for different occasions, such as for weddings, rites of passage and spiritual gatherings.

Guinea, a former French colony, was the first country in Africa to achieve independence. At the beginning of the first president's term, he was very interested in encouraging the West African youth to take part in after-school dance classes and competitions, which is how Sylla first started dancing.

Abdoulaya Sylla will be visiting Nantucket on Saturday, August 16, for a one-day workshop fundraiser for the New School. His classes are conducted in a specific order. Drumming will also be taught and those attending the class on Saturday are encouraged to bring any kind of drums they own.

All ages are welcome at the workshop as well as all levels of experience in dance and drumming. ■



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