

A woman with flowers in her hair, wearing a green jacket, is performing poetry on a busy city street. She has her mouth open as if speaking or reciting. The background is a blurred city street with many people walking. In the top left corner, there is a black box with the text 'P.U.P.' in large white letters and 'POETS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES' in smaller white letters below it. In the bottom left corner, there is a black circle containing a quote from the New York Times. In the bottom right corner, there is a black box with the website address 'www.popuppoets.com'.

# P.U.P.

POETS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

***“New York City  
is invited to a poetry  
reading. There is no velvet  
rope to traverse,  
no waiting in line, and  
no entrance fees.”***

*– New York Times, 2013*

[www.popuppoets.com](http://www.popuppoets.com)



# About PUP

## Mission & Vision ◀

*Poets in Unexpected Places (PUP)* stages flash literary events in unconventional spaces, featuring accomplished poets and performance artists of diverse backgrounds and aesthetics. Using the element of surprise, PUP seeks to disrupt the frames that confine literature to traditional realms, utilizing the arts to galvanize audiences around the power of language and human stories, promoting community engagement and dialogue in the public arena.

“If you're looking for the new New, it's here! I wouldn't be surprised if PUP's revolutionary work actually begats a revolution—a revolution in the streets and subways, buses and classrooms, produce aisles, parks and Main Streets. A Revolution of the Word.”

—Bob Holman  
Founder of the Bowery  
Poetry Club

## Bio ◀

“What a great way, to take this ride that is full of awkward stares and I-Pods and turn it into something beautiful and inspiring”

—Andrew Kippen,  
Q Train Passenger

Affectionately known as the Pop Up Poets, PUP is a dynamic collective of writers, performers and educators. The group works with a range of educational institutions, businesses and arts organizations to stage active art experiences with their enlivening pop up performances in cities and towns, nationally and internationally. Recent collaborations have included partnerships with the National Endowment for the Arts, The Juilliard School, New York University, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Queens Museum of Art, and others.

In addition to curating performances and installations in public spaces, PUP founders also facilitate workshops and panel discussions on creative writing, performance, and public art, recently presenting at Split this Rock Poetry Festival, the Montreal Symposium for Art Curators, and the annual conference for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP). PUP's work has gained attention from The New York Times, Idealist.org and other local and national media outlets. This Brooklyn-based organization is a recent recipient of a grant from the Brooklyn Arts Council. For a detailed history, please request (or download directly) the project's curriculum vitae.



If you are interested in collaborating with PUP on an event, email us at [popuppoets@gmail.com](mailto:popuppoets@gmail.com), or call 1-646-537-5306.



***PUP was founded in 2010 by poets*** ◀

Samantha Thornhill, Jon Sands, and Adam Falkner. Believers in the transformational power of poetry, this trio of friends dared to explore “what might happen” if poems departed from their usual contexts (such as coffee shops and university auditoriums), and showed up in spaces that contain audiences less exposed to the art form. Would people listen? What if we don’t ask for money, or preach? Would they be moved? So, embodying Amiri Baraka’s advice, they decided to “take poetry to the people” with more questions than they had answers.



Surely, there were nerves to contend with, and personal challenges to overcome, however, the outcome of their first Q train train pop up was remarkable. The stories offered by the seven poets were met not with the cold, hard stares that have come to categorize New York City to the rest of the world, but rather with warmth, laughter and lively chatter between strangers.

PUP’s founders have since been joined by Syreeta McFadden and Elana Bell. What began as seven “pop up” poets and a photographer on a Brooklyn bound Q-train has since blossomed into a movement steered by these five curators. Since it’s founding, thousands of poets, musicians and artists have utilized PUP’s curatorial model to “pup up” on trains, ferries, in stores, parks, and laundromats across New York City, North America and Europe.



# Menu of Services



## **POETIC INSTALLATION (1-2 DAYS)** ◀

PUP curates full or multi-day “live literature installations” that incorporate: pop up performances throughout a range of local venues or classrooms, facilitation of creative writing/performance workshops with students or local artists, and a lively performance at a local theatre or event space featuring PUP, as well as a showcase open mic for local writers. While installations typically entail the entire workshop/”pop up”/performance package, services are also offered separately.



## **COMMUNITY/EVENT ORGANIZATION (1-4 DAYS)** ◀

PUP is, first and foremost, by the people and for the people. In addition to helping to execute the vision of a sponsoring organization, PUP also helps partnering communities build an installation from the ground up. PUP works with schools, businesses and organizations to create both large and small-scale events that: highlight the voices of local and emerging writers, enliven and celebrate regional literary scenes and build sustainable relationships between existing arts organizations and other community initiatives.

## **PERFORMANCE PANEL (60-90 MINUTES)** ◀

In addition to curating live installations in public places, PUP is also firmly rooted in the academic landscape of literary arts festivals, conferences and institutes. PUP’s Performance Panels entail a multimedia presentation around the organization’s history, mission and vision, a vibrant discussion of the historical importance of public art and performances by PUP’s curators.

“With their riveting, resonant, surprising performances, PUP artists remind us that poetry and music are not decorations, but necessities, found at the very heart of what makes us human. PUP restores our faith in poetry as a communal activity, and prompts us to imagine and strive for better worlds.”

–Alison Meyers, Executive Director,  
Cave Canem  
Foundation



# Installations



## **College Campus Pop Up** ◀

PUP has been commissioned by university administrators to surprise their student body by popping up in classrooms, laboratories, and cafeterias with their vibrant verses.

## **PUP Summer Youth Institute** ◀

IN collaboration with Urban Word NYC, PUP curators facilitate a “Taking it to the Streets” summer youth workshop, where young authors craft poems together in a safe space and hold weekly out-of-doors readings.

## **Ode to Lady Liberty** ◀

In collaboration with student actors and alumni of the Juilliard School’s drama program, PUP curates a 20-minute performance on the Statue Cruise Lines to and from Ellis Island. The scribes spend days writing original works and rehearsing them, before unleashing their odes to the “mother of exiles” onto unsuspecting tourists.



## **Business (Ad)ventures** ◀

From Whole Foods, to Victoria’s Secret, to the Wash & Play Lotto Laundromat in Brooklyn, PUP transforms a mundane business day into an enlivening poetry party in just minutes, which leaves employees and customers inspired.

“I just dragged myself out of the house to do washing, the last thing I wanted to do. Next thing, it was a flash mob of poets whilst I was folding my underwear, and it was very unexpected but it made this washing night.”

–Brooklyn  
Laundromat  
customer

## **Poetry Walking Tour** ◀

From Massachusetts to Montreal, PUP has collaborated with art organizers and business owners to plan and execute downtown poetry scrawls, in which PUP curators host a series of flash literary readings that traverse the business district by foot, featuring local scribes.



## **Museum Mayhem** ◀

PUP has been commissioned, as well as compelled, to curate installations in response to relevant exhibitions, from vibrant artists. From Peter Schumann to Kara Walker, PUP puts poetry in conversation with other works, creating a melange of entry points for viewers to engage the art in ways they could have never imagined.



Book PUP today at: [popuppoets@gmail.com](mailto:popuppoets@gmail.com)

# PUP ED



To many, poetry is for textbooks. It is a handful of rhyming couplets about fields of wheat and lavender tea, to be recited with the rhythm of a slowly whirring ceiling fan. For PUP, however, poetry is not only an important literary tradition, but is, at its roots, a living, breathing, playful and performative thing. Beyond that, PUP believes it is also a powerful tool for cultivating student engagement and building literacy in schools.

PUP partners with administrators to cultivate modes for engaging students that are suitable for their particular educational setting. Early on, PUP discovered the most exciting way of breaking the ice is to use a "push in" class model, in which PUP poets surprise students by entering their classrooms mid-lesson, unannounced, with a dynamic poetry set lasting between 5-7 minutes. Secondly, during lunch hour, PUP offers an optional writing workshop and dialogue for more engaged scholars. Lastly, at the end of the school day, PUP appears in a more traditional sense in the context of a school assembly, where they host a brief open mic for student scribes, share works of their own, and answer questions from the audience. Well aware that each school differs, PUP adapts to the needs of each setting.

"We are students of words: we are shut up in schools, and colleges, and recitation rooms, for ten or fifteen years, and come out at last with a bag of wind, a memory of words, and do not know a thing."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Teachers & Parents

"I loved the assembly yesterday afternoon and so did the kids. I had the advantage of standing in a location where I could see their faces and how they were reacting to the poems. The smiles made it worth the disruption."

—Sheila Martin, Saranac Lake High School

"I can't say enough positive things about yesterday; I thought it was fantastic as did my students. Please bring them back!"

—Russ Haynes, Old Forge High School

"As a parent of a senior, our daughter shared with us what the poets brought to the classroom; she was eager to convey to us the highlights of the poetry readings. She even commented that she liked the element of surprise by not knowing ahead of time that they were coming."

—Amy Williams

## Students

"I've always been kind of nervous about writing because it's not really my forte, but their writing workshop really opened me up. I discovered that poetry really helps me kind of let everything out, and without PUP I don't think I would've even tried writing poetry. I hope to see them next year."

—Autumn, Saranac Lake High School

"I went from being certain that I had no poetry in me to reading my own poetry on the subway. I now have a new form of expression and I learned a lot about my creative process."

—Medina, MFA Candidate, The Juilliard School

# Talk Back

## Administrators & Funders

"The work with Pop-Up Poets this week was a fresh and exciting opportunity. Students were excited to see poetry exhibited as a surprise element added to their day. The teachers enjoyed the infusion of learning and enthusiasm from the poets. Their demeanor and passion overflowed into the classroom where students caught the desire to begin loving and writing poetry."

**–John Swick, Principal  
Old Forge Central School  
Lake High School**

"The poets continued to impress all of us with their talents and the ability to express their thoughts in amazing ways. I loved how they pushed students and adults out of their comfort zone and showed them how fun reading and writing poetry really is. My only wish, is that they were able to stay longer! Maybe next year!"

**–Josh Dam, Principal  
of Saranac Lake  
High School**



"It isn't every day when you can say that on this day I changed people's lives, but during a week tour with PUP, we did that each and every day, either by showing students that they do actually like poetry, inspiring them to write for the first time, or, because of the content of the poems, help them feel connected to others on very difficult topics. In a place as wild and remote as the Adirondacks, where the landscape is often valued more than the people living in it, this infusion of humanity and connectivity was deeply appreciated."

**–Nathalie Thill,  
Executive Director Adirondack  
Center for Writing**

# Meet the Curators

## SAMANTHA THORNHILL

is a writer, educator, and creative writing consultant. She has been invited to perform her written works across the US, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. For a decade, she has taught poetry & performance to actors at The Juilliard School. Numerous literary journals and anthologies have featured her poems, as well as Scholastic Press, which published her ode to the folk singer, Odetta, in the form of a picture book. Samantha is currently producing a documentary film, and curates poetry content for the All Def Digital Youtube channel. She holds a BA in English from Florida State University and an MFA in poetry from the University of Virginia, where she studied under two living US poet laureates, while coaching the state's slam team. A Brooklyn-bound native of Trinidad & Tobago, Samantha is a founding curator of Poets in Unexpected Places. [www.samanthaspeaks.com](http://www.samanthaspeaks.com)



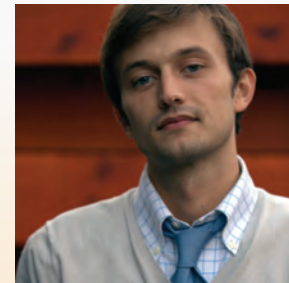
## JON SANDS

is the author of *The New Clean* (2011, Write Bloody Publishing), and the forthcoming collection *The Love Hustle* (2015, Rattapallax Press). His work has been featured in *The New York Times*, published widely, as well as anthologized in *Best American Poetry 2014*. He is a founding curator of Poets in Unexpected Places, the Interviews Editor for *Union Station Magazine*, as well as a Youth Mentor with *Urban Word-NYC*. He teaches creative writing for adults at both *Bailey House* (an HIV/AIDS service center in East Harlem) and the *Positive Health Project* (a syringe exchange in Manhattan). He tours extensively, but lives in Brooklyn. [www.jonsands.com](http://www.jonsands.com)



## ADAM FALKNER

is an artist, educator and scholar. He is the Founder and the Executive Director of the Dialogue Arts Project, and an Arthur Zankel Fellow at Columbia University, Teachers College, where he is a PhD candidate in the English Education program. His work has been published in a range of both literary and academic journals, and has also been featured on HBO, Michigan and New York Public Radio, in *The New York Times*, and elsewhere. Adam currently tours the United States as a featured artist, speaker and trainer, and serves as an instructor of English Education at Columbia University, Teachers College. He is a founding curator of Poets in Unexpected Places. [www.adamfalknerarts.com](http://www.adamfalknerarts.com)



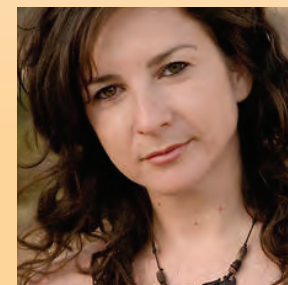
## SYREETA MCFADDEN

is one of the founding editors of the online literary magazine, *Union Station*. She is a regular contributor to *Feministing.com* and her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *BuzzFeed*, *The Guardian*, *The Huffington Post*, *Storyscape Journal*, and others. She has appeared on NPR's *On The Media* and *Tell Me More*, and *Sirius XM Radio's Make It Plain*. A former urban planner, she holds degrees from Columbia University and Sarah Lawrence College. She is an adjunct professor of English and Humanities, and is currently writing collections of short stories and essays.



## ELANA BELL

is a poet, performer, and educator, whose first collection of poetry, *Eyes, Stones* (LSU Press) was selected as the winner of the 2011 Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets. She is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the Jerome Foundation, the Edward Albee Foundation, and the Brooklyn Arts Council. Her work has recently appeared in *AGNI*, *Harvard Review*, and the *Massachusetts Review*. Elana leads creative writing workshops for women in prison, for educators, for high school students in Israel, Palestine and throughout the five boroughs of New York City, as well as for the peace building and leadership organization, *Seeds of Peace*. She also teaches literature and creative writing at CUNY College of Staten Island. In addition, she sings with the acapella trio, *Saheli*. [www.elanabell.com](http://www.elanabell.com).







# Book PUP

## *Poets in Unexpected Places (PUP)* ◀

thrives on the adventurous process of introducing poetry and the literary arts to non-traditional spaces -- and no venue is too weird, too corporate, or too... well, fill in the blank. For a deeper look at precisely where PUP has been and who they have worked with, please contact us below to request a CV or additional media.

### CONTACT

**Email:** [popuppoets@gmail.com](mailto:popuppoets@gmail.com)

**Phone:** 1- 646-537-5306

**URL:** [www.popupoets.com](http://www.popupoets.com)

“It’s not easy to find words enough to describe the impact of PUP’s participation in this year’s programming. The underlying generosity behind PUP lay as a foundation upon which the WordXWord festival stood. Their spirit of openness, directness- what the heck, just dive in and see what happens- set an example that, in ways subtle and not so subtle, influenced everyone who participated. The result was the most successful, engaging WordXWord yet, and one that people in our community are still talking about.”

–William C Yehle  
Business Owner,  
Pittsfield, MA

“It was marvelous to experience Poets in Unexpected Places' (PUP) work with my NYU Language as Action Class. The skill, wisdom, flexibility, and depth the poets brought to our class far exceeded any anticipation I held. I gained new useful, thoughtful, inspiring prompts and was reminded of the importance of joy and humor in our work. PUP approached our collaboration with the utmost professionalism, humility and sensitivity. I am so excited about the next opportunity.”

–Kathy Engel  
Assistant Arts Professor,  
Tisch School of the Arts,  
NYU

**P.U.P.**  
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