

## **Transcript: Queer Poem-a-Day, an introduction with Lisa Hiton & Dylan Zavagno**

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Dylan Zavagno 0:16

You're listening to Queer Poem-a-Day on the Deerfield Public Library Podcast.

Lisa Hiton 0:21

Hi, I'm Lisa Hiton, a poet and teacher from Deerfield, Illinois.

Dylan Zavagno 0:27

And I'm Dylan Zavagno, the Adult Services Coordinator at the Deerfield Public Library and host of the Deerfield Public Library Podcast. We are transforming the Deerfield Public Library Podcast for Pride Month 2021 into a daily poetry podcast. So, normally on the podcast, I host interviews, conversations with authors of all genres and some other notable people from Chicagoland and around the world.

Lisa Hiton 0:54

This June, Dylan and the Deerfield Public Library are allowing us to turn the podcast into a literary Pride Parade of queer poets. Each day, you will hear a poem written and read by a contemporary queer poet. Some of our poets are emerging, some are well-established. And all of them stand to teach us a whole lot about poetry's role in the culture that we experience now.

Dylan Zavagno 1:26

This is a teaser trailer episode. So we are putting this out here and inviting you to subscribe to the Deerfield Public Library Podcast so you don't miss a poem--each day we'll have a poem come out. And we also want to direct you to our website for the series, [deerfieldlibrary.org/queerpoemaday](http://deerfieldlibrary.org/queerpoemaday). You're going to find the text of the poems, there, bios of the poets, some related programs we're hosting virtually, and we are also going to be purchasing, as much as possible, recent books from our participating poets, so you'll be able to check those out at the Deerfield Public Library. Lisa, what are some things we can think about as we're listening to all of these wonderful poems?

Lisa Hiton 2:13

There's not really an assignment for any of the poets. The theme is just that we wanted to give a platform--or a virtual Parade Float space, if you will--for each of these poets, their voices and poetics will speak for themselves. You all stand to hear different things about the queer experience and you also stand to just hear some great poetry that happens to be written by someone in the queer community. These poems gathered

together, like a really good Pride Parade, will leave our listeners with feelings of hope, emotionality, liminality, and all of the flair and complexity that Pride, with its roots in revolution, stands for. You're going to hear all different kinds of voices coming from all different kinds of bodies, sometimes about similar things like Pride itself, and sometimes about just small intimacies that happen in our lives that queer people are now able to increasingly be able to share, at least in art spaces.

Dylan Zavagno 3:39

Well and I want to tell our listeners some additional background of both of us that we both grew up here in Deerfield, Illinois. We have a shared experience of coming to the Deerfield Public Library and finding those queer books, queer poets that maybe weren't talked about in school. And one of the things we talked about when planning this was how often queer poetry is actually already taught in schools, has been for a long time from some Dead Poets, but we don't always talk about them as queer.

Lisa Hiton 4:15

It's true. I can remember as a high school student who didn't quite know who I was reading poems by...I think it's often in America, especially that we encounter Mary Oliver, for example, who's even more contemporary than someone like Walt Whitman, or [Emily] Dickinson, who all are part of a queer context. It's just never presented as such in our classrooms. And Dylan, I think it would be good for our listeners to consider it this way too: In August of 2019, one of Pritzker's first moves in the state of Illinois [as governor] was to pass a law, an inclusive curriculum law, that requires our public schools here in Illinois, to incorporate US history contributions made by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer people. I'm wondering if you might talk about how and why you see the library--the Deerfield Public Library--as an organization that can help in that educational prospect at this time.

Dylan Zavagno 5:33

The library's mission statement includes connecting our patrons to the world of information and ideas, and that's a wide world and to promote lifelong learning. So I see the library as a one-stop place for connecting you to any educational endeavor that you want. Connecting you to information that might be complex, might be unknown to you, might have interesting folds and wrinkles to it. But we are going to help you get there. So the intimacy of this form and having a poem in your ears, written and read by a contemporary queer poet, is, I think, our intention to really go a long way towards that deep educational engagement with poetry, which often requires that kind of quiet intimacy, and aloneness sometimes that you can get from a podcast.

Lisa Hiton 6:39

I think that's also the kind of ripe aloneness that many of us find in going to libraries quietly and seeking out some of those voices on our own. I hope that putting them together this way serves to celebrate something a little bit more loudly in this curatorial and educational fashion.

Dylan Zavagno 7:07

I once made a library display for Pride Month, a few years ago, and I was telling everybody, all right, I'm outing all of these authors now because they're on the Pride display and whether you knew that they were queer or not, you will now. This project goes a lot farther in that direction to, I think let us investigate just the variety, the vitality in the world of queer poetry today.

Lisa Hiton 7:34

Yes, and I think, to our memories, as citizens of Deerfield, Illinois, and as young people who did or didn't know our own desires and bodies at whatever point in time, it may be, I also hope that it serves as a kind of model of change and transformation, not just for us in the queer community, but how other communities like Deerfield, or a library, or Illinois or Chicagoland, or every ripple out toward the larger world can continue to transform. It's sometimes very painful and scary to be a queer person in any given context, or time and history or location. And this--creating this space--feels like the sort of wealth and kinship that I hope models the love that also is inherent in making art amongst queer people, those times of year that we are so rare where we get to put all the voices together.

Dylan Zavagno 9:00

Yes, you might find listening to this a poem that changes your life, you might find a poem where you find a recognition in yourself you had no idea would be there. And it might look nothing like you thought it would be. So we've had that experience with poetry in libraries and other institutions. And we want to give that back to you.

Unknown Speaker 9:25

Absolutely. I think, also, the poems will raise all kinds of excellent questions to our listeners. Some of it is very intellectual. What are queer poetics? What kinds of things are queer poets interested in? What is the line that we see in the sand about our own body, like is the body permanent, is it changeable? What is fluid? Those kinds of questions and so so so many more will be raised by each of the poems and then all of the poems together in ways that I think help us understand the literary landscape too. What are identity politics? How are different writers approaching them and thinking about them? What are the limitations? Where are the moments of grand expanse, and so on, and so on?

Dylan Zavagno 10:21  
Absolutely. The recognition could be a question.

Lisa Hiton 10:26  
Exactly.

Dylan Zavagno 10:27  
Well, we're so excited. I hope you'll subscribe to the Deerfield Public Library podcast and listen to a Queer Poem-a-Day.

Richie Hofmann 10:39  
I bought a bag of hard green pears today.

Chen Chen 10:42  
You are not a jigglypuff, not yet a wigglytuff.

Eileen Myles 10:48  
I must be calm. I must be calm.

Xandria Phillips 10:50  
Want could kill me.

Shelley Wong 10:52  
It is June and I read about having grace to forgive those who would condemn us.

Carl Phillips 10:59  
For mostly, yes, we were silent – tired, as well...

Jill McDonough 11:03  
I want to know on her left ankle, like a chicken leg. Anybody would and don't get me started on her breasts.

Ruben Quesada 11:10  
I have only ever left this planet once...

Derrick Austin 11:14  
The air has that early fall smell, things beginning to rot, the wet soil nourishing itself.

Sam Herschel Wein 11:20

Animals love the queers.

Cyril Wong 11:22

They pass us in the streets. They're going to the gym, to the park, to the pub.

Rachel Mennies 11:28

I bought two books of poems online with the sole intention of reading them to you.

Phillips B. Williams 11:34

I've learned to plead and to please

H. Melt 11:37

Praised are you who hold up the trans universe

Jenny Johnson 11:42

We know how you feel about ghosts.

Dan Kraines 11:46

What will I do for pride? You want to know?

Dylan Zavagno 11:55

For details about Queer Poem-a-Day, including texts of the poems, information about our poets, or virtual programs and our collection, go to [deerfieldlibrary.org/queerpoemaday](http://deerfieldlibrary.org/queerpoemaday), or find links in the show notes. And subscribe to the Deerfield Public Library podcast for a new poem every day of June.

Lisa Hiton 12:16

Music for our program is from the first movement of Excursions, Opus 20 by Samuel Barber performed by pianist Daniel Baer. Queer Poem-a-Day is directed by Lisa Hiton poet and teacher,

Dylan Zavagno 12:29

and Dylan Zavagno, Adult Services Coordinator at the Library and host of the Deerfield Public Library Podcast.