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Press Release

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[Metro-North](#)

IMMEDIATE

### Keeping Time: Poets and Musicians Honor Grand Central Centennial

On **Wednesday, April 10, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.**, MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design, in partnership with the Poetry Society of America, the nation's oldest poetry organization, will present **Keeping Time: Poets and Musicians Honor Grand Central**. Some of the country's most exciting poets join forces with performers from Music Under New York for an evening of music and poetry honoring Grand Central Terminal in its centennial year.

During its 100 year history, Grand Central's vaulted Main Concourse has served as a glorious stage for the pageant of daily lives, a place where we meet and cross paths. At its center, the clock stands sentinel, bearing witness to countless moments and stories over time.

**Keeping Time: Poets and Musicians Honor Grand Central** will celebrate the place – its architecture, crowds, iconography, and poetics – by keeping time with its grand narrative.

"The MTA and Metro-North Railroad are celebrating the Centennial in a myriad of ways. Sharing the sounds and language of musicians and poets joins two great programs in celebration, *Music Under New York* and *Poetry in Motion*®, with which we proudly collaborate on with Poetry Society of America," said Sandra Bloodworth, Director, MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design.

"Poetry and music, two of the arts honored and held aloft year after year by MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design, come together in this ultra-grand centennial celebration of Grand Central, arguably the most beautiful and cherished space in New York City," said Alice Quinn, Director of the Poetry Society of America.

The poets, who will read poems around the themes of time and travel implicit in the space of Grand Central, include **Aracelis Girmay**, **Jeffrey Yang**, and **Billy Collins** of the newly re-launched *Poetry in Motion*® program, as well as **Eduardo C. Corral**, winner of the Yale Younger Poets Prize, New York State Poet Laureate **Marie Howe**, and **Bob Holman**, Artistic Director of Bowery Arts and Sciences.

The evening will also feature riveting performances by the **MTA's Music Under New York** groups including: **Yaz Band**, a four-piece group known for playing classic R&B music; the world's only all-female mariachi band, **Mariachi Flor de Toloache**, who blend edgy sounds with traditional Mexican music; Gambian Kora player and descendant of the inventor of the West African harp, **Salieu Suso**; and the New Orleans-style swing jazz group **Hot Sardines**.

**Billy Collins**, the former US Poet Laureate, will conclude the evening and read his poem "Grand Central" from *Poetry in Motion*®. The poem was commissioned to celebrate the Grand Central Centennial and is currently featured on subway posters and MetroCards.

The event, which is free and open to the public, will take place in Vanderbilt Hall in Grand Central Terminal at 89 E 42<sup>nd</sup> Street at 7:00 p.m. on April 10.

**Keeping Time** joins a roster of events presented by MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design to celebrate Grand Central's Centennial. Also on view is **On Time/Grand Central at 100**, an exhibition organized by MTA Arts for Transit featuring the work of eighteen contemporary artists, poets, photographers, musicians and filmmakers including Billy Collins, Vik Muniz, Jim Campbell, Jane Greengold, Lothar Osterburg, Penelope Umbrico and others who capture and reimagine moments in Grand Central Terminal – the site of the beginning and end of countless journeys for millions of travelers over the past century. On view at the New York Transit Museum Gallery at Grand Central until July 7, 2013. For more information, please visit [www.mta.info/art](http://www.mta.info/art).

#### Poet Bios

**Billy Collins** is the author of several books of poetry, including *Ballistics* (2008), *She Was Just Seventeen* (2006), *The Trouble with Poetry* (2005); *Nine Horses* (2002); *Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems* (2001); *Picnic, Lightning* (1998); *The Art of Drowning* (1995), which was a finalist for the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize; *Questions About Angels* (1991), which was selected by Edward Hirsch for the National Poetry Series; *The Apple That Astonished Paris* (1988); *Video Poems* (1980); and *Pokerface* (1977). In 2001, Collins was named U.S. Poet Laureate. His other honors and awards include fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Guggenheim Foundation. In 1992, he was chosen by the New York Public Library to serve as "Literary Lion." He has conducted summer poetry workshops in Ireland at University College Galway, and taught at Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence, and Lehman College, City University of New York.

**Eduardo C. Corral's** debut collection of poetry *Slow Lightning* (2012) won the Yale Younger Poets Prize, making him the first Latino recipient of the award. He has received numerous honors and awards, including the Discovery/*The Nation* Award, the J. Howard and Barbara M.J. Wood Prize, a Whiting Writers' Award, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. A CantoMundo Fellow, he has held the Olive B. O'Connor Fellowship in Creative Writing at Colgate University and was the Philip Roth Resident in Creative Writing at Bucknell University. He currently teaches at Columbia University.

**Aracelis Girmay** is the author of *Kingdom Animalia* and *Teeth*, for which she was awarded a GCLA New Writers Award. She was born and raised in Southern California, with roots in Puerto Rico, Eritria, and African America. She has taught youth writing workshops in schools and community centers for the past ten years, and is assistant professor of poetry writing at Hampshire College. A Cave Canem Fellow and an Acentos board member, Girmay also teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Drew University in New Jersey.

**Bob Holman**, founder/proprietor of the Bowery Poetry Club and Artistic Director of Bowery Arts + Science, the nonprofit that programs the Club. He has published sixteen books of poetry including CDs and DVDs and the 3-part TV series exploring endangered language and culture in West Africa and Israel, "On the Road with Bob Holman," and *Crossing State Lines: An American Renga* — a collaboration of 54 US poets, edited with Carol Muske-Dukes (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux). Coffee House Press will bring out a full collection of his work, tentatively titled *I Wrote Money But I Meant Crocodile*.

**Marie Howe's** most recent book, *The Kingdom of Ordinary Time* (W. W. Norton, 2009) was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. Her other collections of poetry include *What the Living Do* (W.W. Norton, 1998) and *The Good Thief* (Persea, 1988), which was selected by Margaret Atwood for the 1987 National Poetry Series. Her other awards include grants from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Bunting Institute, and the National Endowment for the Arts. She has taught at Tufts University and Dartmouth College, among others. Currently she teaches at Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and Columbia University.

**Jeffrey Yang** is the author of two books of poetry *An Aquarium* (Graywolf, 2008) and *Vanishing-Line* (2011). He is the translator of Liu Xiaobo's *June Fourth Elegies* (2012) and the editor of *Birds, Beasts, and Seas: Nature Poems* from New Directions and *Secret Identities: Asian American Superheroes* from The New Press. He is an editor at New Directions Publishing.

#### Featured Musicians from Music Under New York

##### **Yaz Band**, *Jazz, Funk & R&B Band*

A native of Osaka Japan, Yasuyuki "YAZ" Takagi came to NYC in 1992 and formed Yaz Band in 2002. The band is a four-piece group which plays classic R&B songs written by artists such as Stevie Wonder, Earth Wind & Fire and Marvin Gaye, as well as original instrumental tunes influenced by Grover Washington, Jr., Maceo Parker, and The Crusaders. Through MUNY, Yaz Band performs at a number of train and subway stations. Yaz Band was featured on Subway Idol and numerous Cable TV programs as well as live on WBAI FM and at the Lincoln Center Out of Doors Festival in 2005.

##### **Mariachi Flor de Toloache**, *Female Mariachi Band*

Mariachi Flor de Toloache, the first and only established all female mariachi band, was founded in New York City in 2008 by Mireya I. Ramos. The women came from around the globe - Puerto Rico, Mexico, Germany, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and the United States. Their goal is to add their own edgy and versatile sound to Mexican music. Like a band of sisters, their grace and vibrancy have been casting spells over audiences on stages, theater venues and stadiums worldwide just like the legendary and magical Toloache flower, Mexico's love potion. Mariachi Flor de Toloache has performed at various venues such as the Blue Note, Rockwood Music Hall, Mexican Consulate, Queens Museum, and has been featured on NBC, Univision, El Diario, NY Daily News and others.

##### **Salieu Suso**, *Gambian Kora Player*

Muhamadou Salieu Suso was born into a West African Gambian family of Mandinka griots,

musicians and storytellers extending back nearly 1,000 years. Muhamadou continues the tradition of these keepers of history. He began training on the 21-string kora with his father, the renowned Alhaji Musa Makang, at eight years old and began a career at age 15. Since then he has performed throughout Africa and Europe, playing and promoting Gambian music and the kora, before settling in the US. He is leader of the Jaliya Kafo music ensemble as well as a leader in the nation's rapidly growing African music scene.

##### **Hot Sardines**, *New Orleans Style Swing Jazz*

The Hot Sardines were born when a guy and a girl met at an open vintage-jazz jam session advertised on Craigslist. Between two noodle shops on 49th Street, they discovered a mutual love for songs from the 1920s, '30s and '40s that no one really plays anymore, from salty stride tunes by Fats Waller to obscure foot-stompers by Louis Armstrong and his Hot Fives. The guy (Evan Palazzo) and the girl (Elizabeth Bougerol) found a few more kindred spirits – a trumpeter, clarinetist/saxophonist, drummer, and tap-dancer – and began creating their unique sound of Hot jazz, Dixieland, and gut-bucket blues with vocals in English and French. The group invokes sound of a near-century ago, but resolutely in step with the current age.

#### About MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design

MTA Arts for Transit and Urban Design (AFT) encourages the use of mass transit in the metropolitan New York area by providing visual and performing arts in the transit environment. The permanent art program is one of the largest and most diverse collections of public art in the world, with over 300 works by world famous, mid-career and emerging artists. AFT produces art posters, art cards, photography installations and musical performances through *Music Under New York* where live music is heard throughout the MTA transit system with 350 performers and ensembles and 7,500 performances annually. Commuters catch trains to the beat of classical, jazz, folk, and a cappella and may hear instruments ranging from Gambian Kora, Korean drum, West Indian steel drums, Andean pipes, Cajun cello, Celtic as well as guitar, violin, and dulcimers. In 2012 Arts for Transit re-launched the *Poetry in Motion*® program with the Poetry Society of America. For more information, please visit [www.mta.info/art](http://www.mta.info/art).

#### About Poetry Society of America

The Poetry Society of America, the nation's oldest poetry organization, was founded in 1910. Its mission is to build a larger and more diverse audience for poetry, to encourage a deeper appreciation of the vitality and breadth of poetry in the cultural conversation, and to place poetry at the crossroads of American life. For more information, please visit [www.poetrysociety.org](http://www.poetrysociety.org)

