

A limb-saving residency

Catherine Bush, this term's Writer-In-Residence, discusses how neglecting to tell stories is like amputating perfectly good appendages

LACINA DESJARLAIS
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Raise your hand if you've ever met a real-life, honest-to-goodness famous writer before. I'm willing to bet that the number of people who say yes couldn't fill a city bus. And if you said no, well then you should stop believing that most writers are cranky, bathrobe-wearing recluses and take advantage of the University of Alberta's Writer-in-Residence program.

Now in its 31st year, the program has been bringing students and staff at the University some of the world's most promising writers. Last semester saw author Camilla Gibb installed as the Writer-in-Residence; however, this semester brings change to the program format and a fresh new face to the position. For the first time since its inception, two writers are sharing the position, the second author being Catherine Bush.

Bush is a talented writer whose literary works span the worlds of both fiction and non-fiction. She's the author of three books, *Minus Time*, *The Rules of Engagement* and *Claire's Head*, all of which have either won literary awards or were shortlisted for major prizes.

Tom Wharton, Writer-in-Residence chair of the program and former U of A Writer-in-Residence himself, says that choosing Bush was a no-brainer for the selection committee.

"[The Writer in Residence committee] had read her work and really liked it a lot," Wharton says. "She's a well known and respected fiction writer within Canada, which made her a good choice."

But despite all of the hype surrounding her and her work, on the phone Catherine Bush sounds humble and friendly. And, while she may well have been wearing her bathrobe, nothing in her voice implies that she's even a little bit cranky.

"One of the great things about the position is that you get to go to parts of the country that you may not have

been to before, so it's a chance to get to know a whole new part of the world as well as new people," Bush says. "I get to meet writers who live here and get exposed to their work and meet the community of writers. In that way, I get a real sense of the place."

"Storytelling is a fundamental human activity. It's meaningful to us as people in a very deep way; it's something that we should take seriously and that we should develop and let flourish."

CATHERINE BUSH

Bush says that while she has no definite plans to write about Edmonton yet, her experiences here could become the inspiration for her next work. But beyond a simple change of scenery, her new position offers her the chance to interact with a number of different people on an intellectual level.

"Most people write to engage with readers, and being a Writer-in-Residence is a way of engaging not only with readers but with other people who love to write," Bush says. "It presents an opportunity to have a dialogue about writing and stories and why storytelling is meaningful in our lives."

Despite all of the benefits and opportunities the Writer-in-Residence brings to the University and to the community, the program continues to lose funding. Bush, who's passionate about the program, believes that it's crucial to developing new talent and opening doors of opportunity for promising new writers.



JOSH NAULT

ONCE UPON A TIME... During her stay, Catherine Bush hopes to inspire both writers and readers to share their stories.

"Storytelling is a fundamental human activity. It's meaningful to us as people in a very deep way; it's something that we should take seriously and that we should develop and let flourish," Bush says.

"We need to do everything we can to give people opportunities to tell their stories," Bush continues. "It allows us to think more deeply about who we are as human beings, on all sorts of levels. It's like chopping off a limb if we lose

access to that part of ourselves."

While there may something to be said about the power of storytelling, there's also something to be said for the power of an appointment. The Writer-in-Residence keeps office hours during which appointments can be made to talk with them, and Bush seems to be enthusiastic about meeting with developing writers, and offering them constructive feedback. She also has a wealth of experience to

offer along with some wise advice.

"Above all, write because you love it," says Bush with a hint of emotion in her voice. "That's the primary reason for doing it. Writing is about thinking about the world and people through storytelling and using your imagination. Also, be prepared to do a lot of hard work; it's a great achievement to get a draft of something done, but the real work begins once you start revising it."

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE

Raygun Cowboys

With Betty Machete
Friday, 2 February at 8pm
Victory Lounge
\$8 at door

The world of rock needs more stand-up bassists. Particularly stand-up bassists who dress in Batman garb and pluck the steel on a yellow and black striped, furry stand-up bass. Yes, furry. Along with their propensity for superheroes and hairy instruments, the guys in Edmonton's own psychobilly group Raygun Cowboys—who are touring in support of their newest

record, *Underground Boogie*—have a special place in their heart for B-movies. They claim that the aforementioned *Underground* of their album's world is filled with "brain-eating zombie girlfriends, schoolboy mass murderers and light S&M footwear fetishists."

Cassidy Lee and the Shooting Spree

With River City Boyz and Orange in the Light
Tuesday, 6 February at 9pm
Sidetrack Café
\$7 at door

Cassidy Lee and the Shooting Spree clearly knows how to rhyme. But do they know how to rock? Venture to the 'Track Tuesday night to see if this Shooting Spree massacres the audience

or if they only truly hit a few innocent bystanders. The Edmonton alt-rock group occasionally waxes philosophical on their blog, struggling with burning questions of morality, hedonism and the search for the self, like their recent proposition that asked, "As a man, would you rather have sex with a chick with a dick, or a man with a vagina?" Kant would be proud.

Illfit Outfit

With End Credits
Saturday, 3 February at 8pm
Powerplant
\$8 door, or advance at SU Info Booths and Powerplant

Very rarely would anyone ever answer a cellphone at the U of A on a Friday saying, "Yeah, we're here 'illin at the 'Plant." It's

usually more like, "Yeah, we're just walking past the 'Plant right now." However, with the right posse, or "outfit" of homeboys, say, even the lackluster Powerplant could potentially be made into a chill joint. Well, my friends, that night could be upon us. The Outfit will be onstage at the 'Plant this Saturday, bringing some 'illin to fans of the Edmonton based pop-rock group, and bringing some green to an 'illin building that serves red ink more days a week than beer.

Partition

Directed by Vic Sarin
Starring Kristin Kreuk, Neve Campbell and Jimmy Mistry
Princess Theatre
Opening February 2nd

Set during the post-World War II strife

over the separation of India and Pakistan, *Partition* tells the tale of a Sikh soldier from the British Indian army and a young Muslim girl who fall in love. At the centre of two colliding worlds, significant political and cultural obstacles need to be overcome in order to keep their love. The tale is somewhat akin to the Disney classic *Aladdin*, but it unfortunately lacks exciting elements like flying carpets, genies and Gilbert Gottfried voiceovers. *Smallville* heroine and avid Neutrogena spokeswoman Kristin Kreuk stars, proving that intense, long-lasting ideological disputes can arise between nations who have the secret to eliminating acne with a smooth deep pore cleansing mask, and those who simply wash with water.

JOHN KMECH
Love me two times, baby