



PEACH PRESERVES

JUNE 2026
ISSUE 202606

Georgia Poetry Society Newsletter



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

June is not the excitement of spring beginning, nor the ending of summer. It is a pause between. It often feels like a month balanced between memory and possibility—between what has already bloomed and what may still surprise us.

Yes, June seems to stand quietly between “what has been” and “what may yet bloom.” As poets, we understand that place well. We gather memories, moments, joys, and disappointments from seasons already lived, then somehow transform them into new poems, new friendships, and new ways of seeing the world.

A poem itself is often a kind of blooming. Sometimes a line begins from an old memory, a childhood scent, a grief long carried, or a conversation nearly forgotten. Yet from those past moments something fresh can still emerge on the pages.

Poetry reminds us that creativity does not end with age, hardships, or uncertainty. There is always another image waiting, another story to tell, another poem preparing quietly beneath the surface.

Continued on page 4

INDEX

President's Corner continued	1 6
GA Poet Laureate Chelsea Rathburn	2
GPS Spotlight Bambie Wodkins	3
America 250 Poetry Opportunities	4
2026 Poetry Marathon	5
Resource Spotlight The Poet's Companion	5
Open Mic	6
Tiny Craft Tips	6

Georgia's Poet Laureate: Chelsea Rathburn



Since her appointment in 2019, Georgia Poet Laureate Chelsea Rathburn has brought a clear, resonant voice to the state's literary landscape. Known for her emotional precision and finely crafted lines, Rathburn serves as an ambassador for poetry across Georgia—supporting young writers, celebrating the state's literary heritage, and reminding us of poetry's power to illuminate everyday life.

Rathburn is the author of three acclaimed collections. Her most recent, *Still Life with Mother and Knife* (2019), was named a *New York Times* "New & Noteworthy" book and selected as one of the "Books All Georgians Should Read." In this collection, she writes with unflinching honesty about motherhood, the female body, and the complexities of intimacy. Critics have praised her ability to balance vulnerability with control, crafting poems that are both tender and exacting.

Her earlier books, *A Raft of Grief* (2013) and *The Shifting Line* (2005), reveal the foundations of her voice: narrative clarity, formal skill, and a deep interest in the interior lives of women. *The Shifting Line* won the Richard Wilbur Award, and *A Raft of Grief* received the Autumn House Prize, establishing her early on as a poet of both technical mastery and emotional depth.

Rathburn's poems have appeared in many of the nation's leading journals, including *Poetry*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic*, *The Southern Review*, and *New England Review*. She received a National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship in 2009.

Born in Jacksonville and raised in Miami, Rathburn has deep Georgia roots through her mother's family, who settled here in the 1830s. Today she teaches creative writing at Mercer University in Macon, where she continues to mentor emerging poets.

For Georgia writers, Rathburn's work offers a model of what poetry can be: intimate, artful, and grounded in the complexities of real life. Her voice reminds us that the stories we carry, however difficult, deserve to be shaped with care and spoken with courage.

GPS Member Spotlight: Bambie Wodkins



Macon native Bambie Wodkins has called Middle Georgia home for all of her 45 years. It's where she grew up, built a life with her husband of nearly 27 years, and raised three creative young men. Family is central to her world, and she credits her husband's humor and steadfast support as one of the great gifts of her life.

Outside of writing, Bambie finds grounding in her daily walks, where learning the names of flowers and spending quiet time in nature helps ease life's anxieties. She also has a surprising talent for foraging — she's created full “yard-to-plate” meals from edible weeds.

Bambie has been writing since childhood; she still has the first poem she penned at age six. Her work often explores growing up in a broken home, navigating mental health, and the layered experiences of womanhood, marriage, and motherhood. She writes from whatever life places in front of her, and after decades of practice, there are few subjects she hasn't touched on.

Her influences range from Emily Dickinson and Lang Leav to Ella Frears and Margaret Atwood, whose dual identity as poet and novelist mirrors Bambie's own

aspirations. She writes daily — poetry challenges, fiction projects, or bursts of inspiration — mostly on her laptop these days, thanks to carpal tunnel and “45-year-old eyes.”

Bambie has self-published eight poetry collections, including her popular *One Pot, One Spoon*, and her work appears in several anthologies, with more forthcoming. She is currently developing a new chapbook, *Unacceptable*, for release this year.

She joined GPS after a friend shared her work, and she has especially enjoyed discovering spoken word through our monthly Open Mic. Ultimately, Bambie hopes her poetry helps readers feel seen, understood, and connected through shared human experience.



America 250 Poetry Opportunities



As the nation approaches its 250th birthday in July 2026, several national projects are inviting poets to help commemorate this historic milestone. Here are a few opportunities open to writers of all backgrounds:

America 250 Dica-Poem Contest — A nationwide creative project combining an original digital photograph with a poem of five lines or fewer. Entries celebrate American history, place, and community, with categories for both adults and students. Deadline closed.

US250 Persona Poem Project — Poets are invited to write persona poems in the voice of someone living between 1765–1800. Selected works will be published in an anthology and performed in story-theater events. Three \$250 prizes will be awarded. Deadline closed.

250mph Second Wind Contest — A national poetry and essay competition offering \$2,500 prizes. Poets may submit an original poem of up to 50 lines (or 250 words) reflecting on America at 250 years. Winners will be announced just before July 4, 2026.

These opportunities offer a meaningful way for poets to join the national celebration while exploring history, voice, and the evolving American story.



The 2026 Poetry Marathon Registration Now Open

The annual Author's Publish Poetry Marathon returns June 13–14, 2026. The deadline to apply to participate in the 2026 Poetry Marathon is June 8th at 9 AM ET.

This worldwide event challenges poets to write one poem every hour for 24 hours. Two half-marathon options are also available, each requiring 12 poems in 12 consecutive hours. Participants may catch up if they miss an hour, but poems cannot be written in advance.

The Marathon begins Saturday, June 13 at 9 AM ET and ends Sunday, June 14 at 9 AM ET. Half-marathon poets may choose either 9 AM–9 PM or 9 PM–9 AM. A time-zone converter is available on the website for international participants.

Each hour, a new prompt appears on the official site, though following prompts is optional. Poets post their work as they go, building a full chapbook's worth of poems in a single day. Finishers receive an Official Marathon Writer's Certificate.

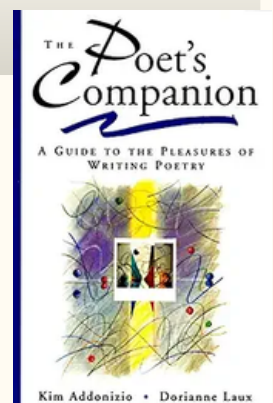
The Poetry Marathon was founded in 2011 by Caitlin and Jacob Jans and now draws hundreds of poets from around the world each year.

Sign up and learn more: [2026 Poetry Marathon](#)
Questions: poets@thepoetrymarathon.com

Resource Spotlight:

THE POET'S COMPANION BY KIM ADDONIZIO & DORIANNE LAUX

A compact, practical guide filled with craft essays, prompts, and clear discussions of poetic technique. It's one of the most accessible books for poets at any stage — perfect for jump-starting new work or refreshing your creative practice.



President's Corner, continued

Our Georgia Poetry Society itself reflects this idea. Longtime members bring wisdom, experience, and treasured traditions, while newer voices bring fresh perspective and energy. Together we continue to grow, season after season.

May your notebooks fill, your hearts stay open, and your summer days offer at least one moment worthy of a poem.

Barbara Barry- Nishanian
Macon, Georgia

“Poetry asks us to slow down, to pay attention, to look closely at the world and at each other.”
- Chelsea Rathburn

Tiny Craft Tips

- 1. Micro-Revision Trick**
Before you call a poem finished, read it aloud once with every line break removed. Then restore the breaks only where the poem insists on breathing. This simple test often reveals the poem's true rhythm.
- 2. The Noun & Verb Pass On**
On your final read-through, circle every noun and verb. Strengthen just one or two — the poem often sharpens instantly. Small upgrades in diction create surprisingly large shifts in tone and clarity.



GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY
OPEN MIC
THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2026
Hosted on Zoom • 7:00 PM

Join us for an evening of poetry, community, and connection. All are welcome—whether you'd like to read, listen, or simply enjoy the company of fellow writers.

Hosted by:
Barbara Barry Nishanian
President,
Georgia Poetry Society

Bring a poem to share, or come to enjoy the voices of our GPS community.

Follow Georgia Poetry Society On:

