



Nitty Gritty Slam

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MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nitty Gritty Slam Makes it Official: It's Sending Albany-based Team to National Championship

ALBANY (June 26, 2012) - **Nitty Gritty Slam** today announced that it been named an official slam venue and will send a team of poets to The National Poetry Slam, held in Charlotte, NC this coming August. This summer will feature special events and fundraisers to fund the trip.

Held the first and third Tuesdays at Valentine's Rock Club and Music Joint in Albany, Nitty Gritty Slam held its first event in September 2011, making it the Capital Region's first regular poetry slam in well over a decade. Poetry Slam, Inc. (PSI), the non-profit organization that oversees the international coalition of poetry slams, certified Nitty Gritty Slam in May 2012.

To be certified as an official poetry slam involves paperwork, a supportive venue, and an average audience of 30 people. Certification literally puts Nitty Gritty on the map: PSI has a map of slams across the country for people looking for a venue for slam performance poetry.

THE TEAM

Three members of Nitty Gritty's team were selected from regular winners of the slam, with a fourth member as well as alternates selected from an special slam held this past June 19. Representing Team Nitty Gritty in Charlotte will be the following:

D. Colin, the Lead Counselor and Arts & Crafts Specialist at the Troy Boys and Girls Club from Bridgeport, CT, currently residing in Troy, NY

Elizabeth Gordon (aka **Elizag**), a professor who teaches at RPI and Northampton Community College, from Cohoes, NY and native of Queens, NY

Kevin Peterson, an electronics company employee from Albany, NY

Shannon Shoemaker, a professional dog trainer from Hannacroix, NY,

Michael Sloman (aka **ILLiptical the Wizard of Mars**), an Albany High School Teaching Aide and SAAJCC Teen Camp Director from Albany, NY.

Coaching the team will be **Mojavi**, poet and teacher from Albany, NY.

“Slam is the product of people who love poetry enough to slam it!” says Mojavi. “For the first time, Albany has taken poetry to the national stage.”

ABOUT THE NATIONAL POETRY SLAM AND NGS

The National Poetry Slam (NPS) is the largest team performance poetry event in the world. The first event took place in 1990 in San Francisco with three teams: Chicago, New York, and the host city. The event has been held every year since. This year in Charlotte, 72 teams from all over North America, and a few from other places will converge for a week of “poetry, revelry and competition.”

“This is truly a dream come true for those of us have been a part of the local poetry scene and watched it grow into the vibrant and passionate community it is today,” **Thom Francis**, President of Albany Poets, who works as a web professional at WAMC Northeast Public Radio. “We’ve have worked tirelessly since the event series began in September 2011 to get the team together and ready to perform at NPS.”

Each Nitty Gritty Slam event begins at 7pm, and features an open mic, hosted by local poet and Team Nitty Gritty coach **Mojavi**, followed by the slam, held at 8pm, emceed by Albany Poets president. Anyone is invited to sign up for the slam, and five members of the audience are selected to judge the poems.

NGS is sponsored by Albany Poets, Urban Guerilla Theatre, and Frequency North: The Visiting Writers Reading Series at The College of Saint Rose.

“What makes Nitty Gritty special is that it’s an all-star team of the different reading venues in the area,” **Daniel Nester**, who is a professor of English at The College of Saint Rose and one of the slam’s organizers through the Frequency North reading series. “We’ve got diverse poets from all over the area, from all different ages, backgrounds and styles, all rocking the same microphone.”

“Slam has changed my life,” team member Elizabeth Gordon said. She has already represented Nitty Gritty at The Women of the World Poetry Slam (WOWps), an all-woman PSI event create by women for women poetry slam competitors, and was the winner of a haiku slam in Pittsfield. “I’m thrilled to be on the team and look forward to working hard all summer on—how lucky am I?—poetry.”

THE FUNDRAISER

To send the team to the Nationals and cover for travel, hotel, and meals, the organizers have done what any grass roots arts project would do: they've started a Nitty Gritty PayPal Pledge Drive (<http://albanypoets.com/support/>).

Different donations reap different awards. Some examples:

- \$20 gets you a new CD of Nitty Gritty poetry.
- \$50 gets you a college application coaching session from team member Elizag, a tutor and English professor
- \$100 and you will receive commissioned poem on theme or subject of your choice
- \$250 gets you a one-hour Swedish massage from Mary Panza, Albany Poets Vice President and longtime local poet
- \$1,000 and your business logo goes on the team's t-shirts, CDs and publications.

For more information about Nitty Gritty Slam go to nittygrittyslam.com. For comments or to arrange interviews with NGS team members, contact Thom Francis at 518-487-9170 or email him at thom.francis@gmail.com.

ABOUT THE CO-SPONSORS

Albany Poets is a local organization whose goal is to promote the poets and poetry of Upstate New York. Albany Poets hosts open mics, poetry readings, slams, music and spoken word events, and the annual Albany Word Fest to increase participation and attendance in the local arts community. Albany Poets' website, albanypoets.com, is the most comprehensive resource in Northeast for news and events listings for poetry and spoken word. Albany Poets mission is to give everyone the platform to share their poetry with the world. Whether it is at an open mic, on a website, or in print, Albany Poets strives to integrate poetry and spoken word into the Capital Region. More information at albanypoets.com.

Frequency North, the Visiting Writers Reading Series at the College of Saint Rose, calls itself "aggressively eclectic." Events at Frequency North feature fiction writers, memoirists, graphic novelists, poets, slam performers, singer-songwriters, even game shows. All readings are free and are open to the public. Frequency North also regularly co-presents both on-campus and in the community. More information at frequencynorth.com.

Urban Guerilla Theatre is a Poetry/Spoken Word/Performance artists' collective based in Albany, NY dedicated to reviving, redefining, and revolutionizing spoken word. Held at the Linda, WAMC's Performing Arts Studio, UGT employs various styles of poetry, music, spoken word and theatre to address life, love, relationships, social and societal issues. UGT also uses their open mic readings to host events and create an artistic space to house and develop artists and upcoming poets.



The 2012 Nitty Gritty Slam Team. From left to right: Elizabeth Gordon (elizag), Kevin Peterson, D. Colin, Patrick Williams, Michael Sloman (ILLiptical), Shannon Shoemaker

Photo credit: Dan Wilcox

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