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## WRITE ON!

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**Abstract (Abstract):** "Prairie Schooner's influence goes far beyond its circulation," [Speer Morgan] said. "It's a place of discovery of young writers and writers in their early careers."

"[Hilda Raz]'s editorship is one of renown around the country," Morgan said. "Prairie Schooner is an impeccably important magazine."

Thursday, 6 to 8 p.m., Chancellor's Reception at the University of Nebraska Press, 233 N. Eighth St., in the Haymarket. Hors d'oeuvres, refreshments and a toast to the oldest literary magazine west of the Mississippi at 6:15 p.m. A talk on the "History of Prairie Schooner" begins at 8 p.m. [Robert E. Knoll] serves as moderator. Each panelist will discuss one of the magazine's five editors and their influence on the magazine. Steven B. Shively will discuss Prairie Schooner founder [Lowry C. Wimberly]; Robert Phillips will talk about second editor and Pulitzer Prize-winner Karl Shapiro; Glenna Luschei will focus on the magazine's first female editor, Bernice Slote; David Boles takes on fourth editor Hugh Luke; followed by current editor Hilda Raz on the last two decades.

**Links:** [Linking Service](#)

**Full text:** Literary journal Prairie Schooner celebrates 75 years

When the literary journal Prairie Schooner set sail in 1926, it was just one of hundreds of so-called "little magazines" that sprang up in the early 20th century to publish poetry and fiction.

Now that many of those magazines have folded, Prairie Schooner holds the distinction as the oldest continually published literary magazine west of the Mississippi. The University of Nebraska has published the journal for 75 years, a noteworthy feat for which both readers and writers are grateful.

To celebrate its rich history, the Prairie Schooner is holding a three-day international conference featuring readings, panels, presentations and music. More than 80 scholars, critics and writers are expected to attend the conference, which begins Thursday at The Cornhusker.

The conference's final reading Saturday evening by two-time Nobel Prize nominee and Oprah's Book Club author Joyce Carol Oates may attract close to 500 people, said Erin Flanagan, the magazine's managing editor.

Hilda Raz, current editor-in-chief of Prairie Schooner, said the choice of Oates as keynote speaker was obvious.

"When I first came to the magazine, a new writer, J.C. Oates, was sending work of astonishing quality and daring, and we were publishing it," Raz said. "Joyce Carol Oates' stellar career represents the vigor and ambition of contemporary writing, and we wanted to bring her to Lincoln to help us celebrate our 75th birthday." Several of Oates' works, as well as those of other conference presenters, appear in the Fall 2001 75th anniversary issue of Prairie Schooner, available in bookstores. Oates, a professor at Princeton University, is known as one of America's most versatile and serious writers. Over the last 25 years, she has published numerous novels, including "You Must Remember This," several volumes of poetry and books of plays, short stories and literary criticism.

"The engine of Oates' immense talent is powered by a fecund imagination and an immense knowledge of literature, as all her writing -- both fiction and nonfiction -- made plain," writes national literary critic James Atlas.

Oates is only one of the many well-known authors and poets whose work has appeared in recent years within

the slim, 200-page quarterly publication. Other noted writers include Nobel laureate Octavio Paz, Pulitzer Prize winners such as Rita Dove and Stephen Dunn, National Book Award winner Marilyn Hacker, best-selling novelists Kent Haruf, Sherman Alexie and Richard Russo, and Oprah's Book Club authors Ursula Hegi, Bret Lott and A. Manette Ansay.

Throughout *Prairie Schooner's* long and interesting history, its pages have been filled with talented writers and poets. Founded by popular University of Nebraska English professor Lowry C. Wimberly, the magazine in its early days included the works of writers known as "Wimberly's Boys," including cult novelist and Oscar-winning screenwriter Jim Thompson, poet and artist Weldon Kees, journalists Edward R. Murrow and Edward Stanley and author Mari Sandoz.

According to Robert E. Knoll, author of the book "*Prairie University*," the magazine was begun in part because numbers of talented Nebraska intellectuals felt snubbed by the New York publishing world. After a few years of publication, however, editors at major publishing houses such as Doubleday, Scribner's and Little, Brown began soliciting works by *Prairie Schooner* authors. The esteemed Alfred Knopf himself even wrote Wimberly a letter praising the magazine.

Between Wimberly and Raz, only three other editors were at the helm of the magazine. Raz said her tenure as the magazine's fifth editor for the last 20 years has been a pleasure.

"It's been an honor and a delight to serve the literary voices in America," Raz said.

Besides introducing new writers to new audiences, Raz said attracting new and established writers for publication has been another rewarding aspect.

"All contributions come to us knowing they won't be paid," Raz explained. "We publish good works not big names."

Since *Prairie Schooner* is respected and widely read in literary circles, Raz believes it provides fresh, unknown talent an opportunity to attract attention and even literary grants or prize money from influential publishers and agents.

Susan Hahn, editor of the *Tri-Quarterly* magazine in Evanston, Ill., explained in a phone interview why she feels *Prairie Schooner* holds a special place in the literary world.

"While many, many literary magazines come and go, *Prairie Schooner* has maintained itself as one of the few bright lights that give both new and established talents its day," Hahn said. "This is due in large part to the continued editorship of Hilda Raz."

Hahn said she's personally indebted to Raz for publishing one of her poems years ago at a time when only two of her poems had ever been published.

Speer Morgan, editor of the *Missouri Review* in Columbia, Mo., has an idea why *Prairie Schooner* is among very few magazines of its vintage to survive. Only the *Sewanee Review*, published out of the University of the South in Tennessee, has had a longer life, he said.

"*Prairie Schooner's* influence goes far beyond its circulation," Morgan said. "It's a place of discovery of young writers and writers in their early careers."

Twenty-odd years ago when Morgan himself was shopping around for a place to publish one of his own short stories, he made a list of the best literary magazines to contact. "I winnowed my list down to six, and *Prairie Schooner* was one of them," Morgan said. "And I was lucky enough to be published."

Not only was Morgan's story published, he won the first ever Lawrence Foundation award for best short story. In fact, after he took home the same honor last year, Morgan became the only prize winner to date to have won the acclaimed award twice. "Being published in *Prairie Schooner* definitely helped launch my writing career," he said. With five novels under his belt and a sixth in progress, Morgan understands why writers may have a strong sense of connection to the magazine.

"Hilda's editorship is one of renown around the country," Morgan said. "*Prairie Schooner* is an impeccably important magazine."

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#### CELEBRATION EVENTS

The following events in conjunction with the 75th anniversary celebration of the Prairie Schooner are free and open to the public. Anyone interested in attending any of the conference sessions held at The Cornhusker hotel Thursday-Saturday may still register for \$10. Call (800) 715-2387 or 472-0911.

Thursday, 6 to 8 p.m., Chancellor's Reception at the University of Nebraska Press, 233 N. Eighth St., in the Haymarket. Hors d'oeuvres, refreshments and a toast to the oldest literary magazine west of the Mississippi at 6:15 p.m. A talk on the "History of Prairie Schooner" begins at 8 p.m. Robert Knoll serves as moderator. Each panelist will discuss one of the magazine's five editors and their influence on the magazine. Steven B. Shively will discuss Prairie Schooner founder Lowry C. Wimberly; Robert Phillips will talk about second editor and Pulitzer Prize-winner Karl Shapiro; Glenna Luschei will focus on the magazine's first female editor, Bernice Slote; David Boles takes on fourth editor Hugh Luke; followed by current editor Hilda Raz on the last two decades.

Friday, two lectures at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery's Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater. At 7 p.m. Sheldon curator Daniel Siedell will discuss "The Visual Culture of Prairie Schooner: 1926-2001." At 8 p.m. National Book Award winner Marilyn Hacker will give a reading. A reception will follow in the Sheldon's Great Hall.

Saturday, 8 p.m., The Cornhusker, Nobel Prize nominee and Oprah's Book Club author Joyce Carol Oates will read from a selection of her works. A reception and booksigning will follow Oates' appearance.

#### Illustration

Caption: ROBERT BECKER/Lincoln Journal Star Hilda Raz has been editor of the Prairie Schooner for more than 20 years. 9 COLOR PHOTOS OF SCHOONER ISSUES b/w photo of Joyce Carol Oates

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