

Billy Collins Named...

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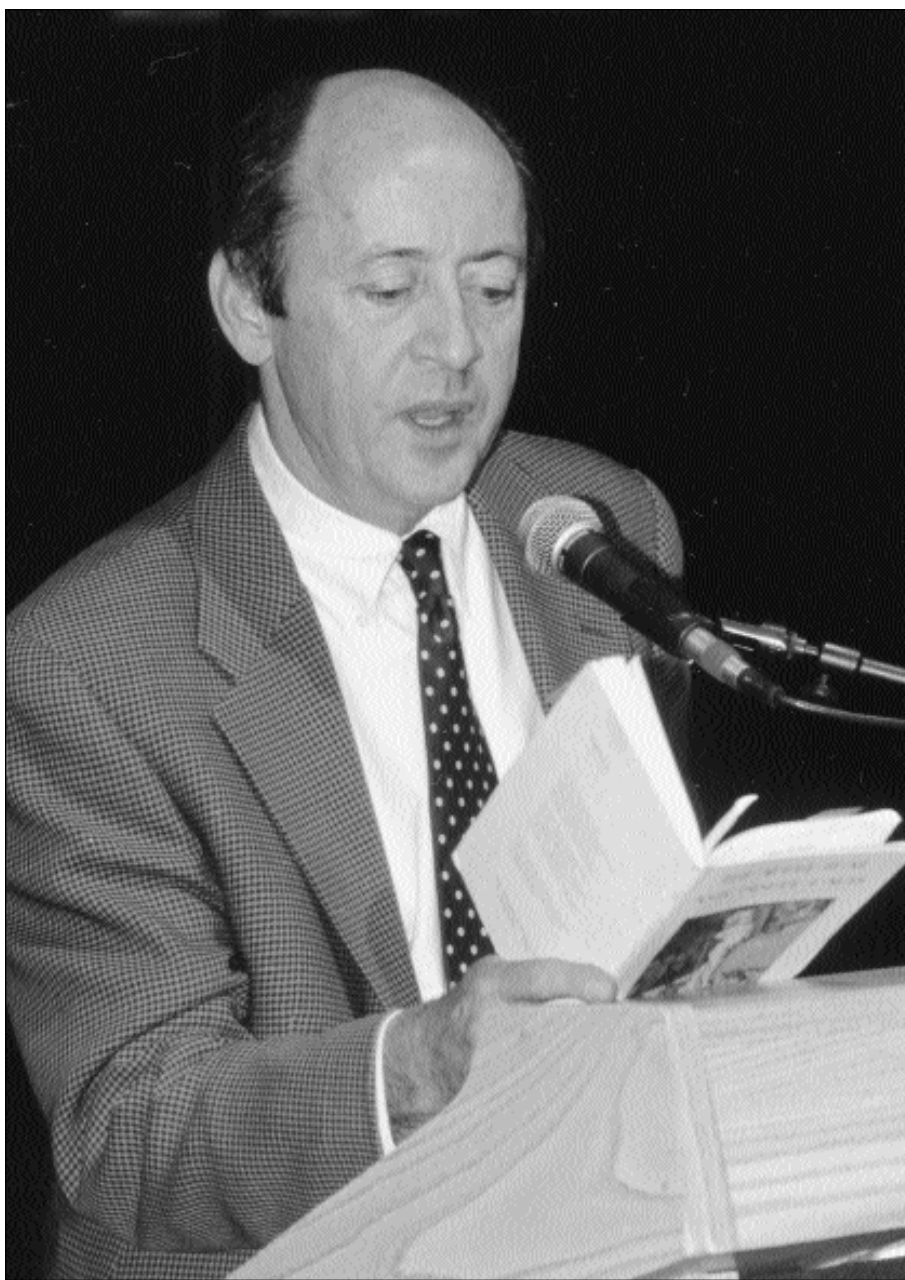


PHOTO: JASON GREEN

This is great not just for the poet himself, but for the Division of Arts and Humanities, especially these days when people are more interested in money than ideas

A crucial moment in Dr. Collins's meteoric ride to national popularity came in 1997, after "Picnic, Lightning" was published. Garrison Keilor, who had read several of Collins's poems during the "Writer's Almanac" feature on National Public Radio, invited him to appear on his show, "A Prairie Home Companion." Shortly after that, Dr. Collins was interviewed by Terry Gross, host of the NPR show "Fresh Air." His book sales surged, and requests poured in from schools and colleges for his readings.

Dr. Collins's fans are a diverse group ranging from high school and college students to famous writers such as John Updike and fellow poet Edward Hirsch, who has called him "an American original—a metaphysical poet with a funny bone, and a sly, questioning intelligence." His honors include a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Creative Writing, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, the 1999 J. Howard and Barbara M.J. Wood Prize, and the 1999 Patterson Poetry Prize. His ninth book, "Sailing Alone Around the Room: New and Selected Poems," will be published by Random House later this year.

"I have always admired Professor Collins' poetry," said Román Sierra, a graduate student of Multilingual Journalism. "In fact, one of his poems on how to write a sonnet reminded me of a sonnet in Spanish written by Spain's greatest dramatist Lope de Vega Carpio, exactly on the same subject, literally line by line. It only shows that great minds think alike.

I totally agree with Dean Gottlieb. This is great not just for the poet himself, but for the Division of Arts and Humanities, especially these days when people are more interested in money than ideas."

There are many talented faculty at Lehman College. I am glad that professor Collins was singled out this time, but I would like to see other professors being recognized. I'm sure their time will come."

Born in New York City in 1941, Dr. Collins graduated from Holy Cross College and earned a doctorate in romantic poetry at the University of California at Riverside. He lives in Westchester County with his wife, Diane, an architect.

Students from The Bronx Journal contributed to this article

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