

BOOKS NOVEMBER 17, 2015

Winterson's reading of Shakespeare mesmerizes at Miami Book Fair

**BY CONNIE OGLE***cogle@miamiherald.com*

The power of words took over in a special way at Miami Book Fair Tuesday night, with local poets reading their works to strangers in an intimate setting and novelist Jeanette Winterson channeling William Shakespeare in an electric, theatrical appearance that was half reading, half performance piece — and entirely mesmerizing.

Remember the best English teacher you ever had, the one who first made you fall in love with language? That was Winterson.

Instead of the usual introduction, Winterson stepped on a barren stage after Cyndi Lauper's *Time After Time*. The usual jaunty blue book fair banners were covered; nobody gave Miami Dade College a round of applause or talked about Winterson's long career (which has included writing such novels as the autobiographical *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and the memoir, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*).

As part of a new series in which contemporary novelists reimagine Shakespeare's works, Winterson has tackled *The Winter's Tale* in her latest work, *The Gap of Time*. She brought Shakespeare's play about jealousy, love and forgiveness to life on that simple stage.

She set the stage by conjuring images of the Globe Theater in 1611, when crowds first came to see *The Winter's Tale*. "This is theater for everybody," she explained. "At a time when life was short and most people didn't live past 50, how are you going to extend the beats of life?"

By telling these stories, of course. And so she read *The Gap of Time's* breathtaking opening, complete with sound effects that never grew louder than her words.

Two starstruck students said the performance made them want to read Shakespeare.

"I'm a writer – she inspired me to write," said Miami Dade College student Salua Rivero. "She turned this story into her own story."

"She engaged us," said Ligia Filgueiras, who attends Miami Beach High. "She said everything we create comes from inside us. I'm an artist, and that's very important to know."

Earlier in the evening, O, Miami celebrated the publication of *Eight Miami Poets* by Jai-Alai Books with the World's Smallest Poetry Reading, in which the poets read their works one-on-one to listeners in a small red tent at The Swamp.

"I've never done this before," said Fabienne Josaphat, who was thinking about reading a poem about her father. But she was game. Because it's all about telling the stories.

WEDNESDAY AT THE FAIR

6 p.m.: "An Evening With Marlon James," Chapman Conference Center, Miami Dade College, 300 NE Second Ave.; \$15; www.miamibookfair.com

7 p.m.: "Paris Is Still Burning" with Reading Queer and contemporary queer poets of color; Olympia Theater, 174 E. Flagler St., Miami.

8 p.m.: "An Evening With Tom Brokaw," Chapman. \$15.

At The Swamp: 7 p.m.: "A Sound Trip through the Florida Film Archives"; 8:30 p.m. "A Swampy Romance" with vaudeville, puppetry, dance and more.



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Alena Fresquet

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