

Writers' Festival had over 50 accomplished authors read

Over 50 accomplished authors read at the 19th Annual Eden Mills Writer's Festival. Here is a sample of the talent on hand, continued from last week's issue.

Trevor Cole read from his latest novel *Fearsome Particles*, a finalist for the Governor General's Award. The story is about a young man who is sent home from the war in Afghanistan, where he was a support worker. Something has happened, but his parents don't know what exactly.

Cole read excerpts that introduce the parents and the young man. The father, Gerald, is terrorized by a cat he calls Rumsfeld. It

represents the unpredictable things that enter his life and threaten happiness. The mother, Vicky, furnishes upscale homes that are for sale, giving life stories to each piece and to the buyer she imagines.

Kyle, the son, is despondent to be home, with all the tensions he had taken for granted, "Like the way Mom and Dad edged around each other all the time..." He preferred the "...dry-as-dirt, hot-as-hell military camp in Afghanistan, surrounded by uncleared minefields and angry private militias to living in a luxury five-bedroom home on a street lined with big trees and SUVs."

The story was inspired by Cole's experiences as a journalist in Bosnia in 2003. "It was my first time among the military and I was fascinated by the culture and challenges. It was useful to see real people, kids largely," he says, "At the time, things were pretty much settled and Canada was pulling troops out. A soldier committed suicide though, and a sense of shock stayed with me. In the relative calm and safety, bad things still happen."

Mystery writer Michelle Wan read from *Orchid Shroud*, her second novel in a series, which follows British orchid lover Julian Wood and Canadian Mara Dunn in their hunt for an unknown lady-slipper orchid.

In the first novel, *Deadly Slipper*, they see it in a marred photograph. In the second, they see it in an embroidered representation. The novel delves into a past mystery of the Kelly family in the 1800s, who were suspected of being werewolves. Wan based this on folktales of Dordogne in France, where she visits every year.

This particular folktale is based on 121 actual horrific deaths that occurred over three years. "Heads were torn off, bodies were mauled and throats bitten out. In those

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JAZZ IN EDEN: Internationally renowned jazz musicians led by Eden Mills own Dave McMurdo treated the village of Eden Mills to a wonderful night of jazz as part of the Eden Mills Writers Festival. - Rebecca Ring Photo

Jazz workshop concert packs Eden Mills hall

By Rebecca Ring

The community hall was packed in Eden Mills on Friday, September 7, for a warm, welcoming night of Jazz as part of the Writer's Festival.

Internationally renowned and award winning musicians Dave McMurdo (trombone), Mike Malone (trumpet), Quinsin Nachoff (saxophone), Kevin Dempsey (drums), Geoff Young (guitar), and Pat Collins (bass) made up the sextet that wowed the crowd. Brian Dickinson joined in on piano for a couple of pieces as well. McMurdo says the idea of a concert in Eden Mills had been going around for a few years, and it finally happened.

The musicians held the third annual Jazz composing workshop earlier in the day, where they offered tips and guidance to



LEARNING FROM THE PROS: Talented young jazz guitarist Sam Dickinson had the honour of hearing his composition played by a sextet of internationally acclaimed jazz pros in Eden Mills during the recent Writer's Festival. He completed the composition with the help of Geoff Young at the Jazz Composers Workshop. - Rebecca Ring Photo

about 20 people working on original compositions. "The interaction between the students and the guys

in the sextet was amazing," says McMurdo, "They really care about the music and there truly was magic in the air."

Collins says he was surprised at the high quality of compositions; "The writing was really mature. The students had clearly done their homework." Malone adds that it was a really special day and evening; "Communicating through music and sharing this language with each other is such a fulfilling and ethereal experience."

The sextet played one composition created at the workshop. It was written by fifteen-year old, grade-ten student and guitarist Sam Dickinson. "No matter how the tune was written, it sure sounded great played by this band," says Dickinson.

The piece was a work-in-progress and he had become stuck. Finally, an idea came to him the day before the workshop and he finished it there with the help of Young.

In addition to his high school studies at Toronto's Rosedale Heights, Dickinson is studying music at Humber College. He is part of a trio with Matthew Chalmers on drums and Kintaro Akiyana on bass. He says he may pursue a career in music and would also love to become a yoga instructor.

His proud father and pianist Brian Dickinson, says it was great to see the two arts of music and literature come together in such a beautiful place. See Sam's trio play at www.myspace.com/samdickinson123.



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