

## Chestnutwold YWD Writer Bios 2022

### Liz Abrams-Morley

Liz Abrams-Morley's poetry collections include *Beholder* (2018), *Inventory* (2014), and *Necessary Turns*, which was published by Word Poetry in 2010 and won an Eric Hoffer Award for Excellence in Small Press Publishing. In 2020, Liz was named the Passager Poet of the Year in *Passager Journal's* annual contest. Her poems and short stories have been published in a variety of nationally distributed anthologies, journals and ezines, and have been read on NPR. A sometimes faculty member in the Rosemont College MFA program, Liz is co-founder of *Around the Block Writers' Collaborative* ([www.aroundtheblockwriters.org](http://www.aroundtheblockwriters.org)) and has taught literacy through the arts programs to children in K-12 classrooms. Visit her on the web at [www.lizabramsmorley.org](http://www.lizabramsmorley.org).

### John Butler

Philly native John Butler, known as Cousin John, is a sports journalist and educator who has turned his passion for writing into a series of children's books about a boy named Chase. Books in the series include *Chase Does It All*, *Chase Learns to Share*, *Chase is Ready for Takeoff*, and *Chase and the Case of the Missing Jersey*. The Chase books are filled with adventure and feature characters of color that all children can relate to. John's mission is to introduce young readers to the world of literacy, while instilling valuable life lessons. [www.chasebooks.com](http://www.chasebooks.com)

### Maria Ceferatti

Maria Ceferatti is a music teacher and writing instructor in the Philadelphia area. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Rosemont College. Her stories, poems and essays have been published in *Hippocampus Magazine*, *Antigonish Review* and *The Best of Philadelphia Stories*, among others. Maria is also the music director of Acting Without Boundaries, a theatre group for actors with physical disabilities. She has been a teacher with Young Writers Day since 2016.

### Eoin Dempsey (Chestnutwold parent)

Eoin Dempsey was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1977. He grew up in the beautiful Dublin suburb of Dalkey, where he and his friends would jump into the icy waters of the Irish Sea (during summertime) to prove their manliness. Eoin had a fantastic time attending Blackrock College, where he played rugby (poorly) and did his best to coast his way through. Eoin's first ambition was to play rugby for Ireland. Due to a lack of talent, he soon abandoned that goal for the more reasoned path of the rock star. He played in bands through his teens and well into his twenties before harsh reality came calling, and his dreams of being the next Keith Moon faded.

Eoin made the ill-reasoned decision to study business in university and was accepted into University College Dublin to study Commerce in 1995. While Eoin did attend college, studying wasn't his priority there.

He met his beautiful wife, Jill, while traveling to the USA in 1997, though it would be several years before he managed to break her down and they got together as a couple. It was during Eoin's second stint in the USA, which he spent with his brother in New York City, that he decided to start writing a novel, for the express purpose of impressing women. This effort was met with mixed success. Eoin finished his first novel a year later. The over hundred and fifty rejections he received from publishers didn't discourage him. He pinned them to his wall. After spending a year in Australia, where he was fired from many jobs, including picking red and green peppers and toiling for scallops miles out to sea on a fishing trawler, he returned home and decided to

write again. Another novel followed while he phoned it in at a number of jobs in financial services in Dublin.

By this time Eoin had managed to convince Jill, the girl he'd met in the USA years before to move over to Dublin. She did so in 2004. It was the best negotiation he ever undertook. They were married in 2007. Jill's more brilliant negotiating skills led Eoin to move to her hometown of Philadelphia in 2008, just in time for the economy to collapse. The plan to live with her parents for a few weeks turned into eighteen months, as Eoin struggled to retain employment in a fractured economy. It was during this time that he wrote *Finding Rebecca*, which would go on to be his first published novel and be translated into fourteen different languages.

Eoin and Jill have three beautiful sons, Robbie, who was born in 2015, Sam, born in 2017, and Jack who came in 2019. Eoin enjoys playing with them and marveling at how much more talented they are at the sports that he loves, particularly golf. Eoin's son Robbie is a second grader in Chestnutwold.

[www.eoindempseybooks.com](http://www.eoindempseybooks.com)

### **Matt Gelb**

Matt Gelb is a senior writer for *The Athletic*, covering the Philadelphia Phillies. He has covered the team since 2010 while at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, including a yearlong pause from baseball as a reporter on the city desk. He is a graduate of Syracuse University and Central Bucks High School West.

### **Megan Hicks**

Megan Hicks is a retired children's librarian who writes, tells stories, and makes art from things other people tend to throw away. She honed her storytelling chops as a solo performer in libraries, classrooms, cafeteriums, and regional conferences. She has since "graduated" to festival stages nationwide, including the National Storytelling Festival. Her credits also include storytelling tours in China, New Zealand, and South America. Currently she co-produces The Rose Valley Storytelling House Concert series.

### **Elise Juska (Chestnutwold parent)**

Elise Juska is the author of five novels including *If We Had Known* and *The Blessings*, which was selected for the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers series and named one of the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* best books of the year. Her fiction and nonfiction have appeared in many national magazines and been cited by the *Best American Short Stories* and *Pushcart Prize* anthologies. Ellie is a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of the Arts, where she received the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching. Her son Theo is a second-grader at Chestnutwold.

[www.elisejuska.com](http://www.elisejuska.com)

### **Janine Kelly**

Janine Kelly is a writer, producer, and performer of music who has been the principal composer for Makin' Music Rockin' Rhythms for over 20 years. Her music has won 12 national and local awards including Best of Philly, Best of the Main Line, and Parents' Choice. Janine has composed theme and motivational songs for corporations and private companies, and her originals have been featured on Philadelphia radio. A frequent speaker at seminars and conferences, she teaches educators how to use the power of music in their classroom.

[www.makinmusic.com](http://www.makinmusic.com).

**Lisa Leicht** (Chestnutwold parent)

Lisa Graff has written eleven novels for young readers, including *The Great Treehouse War*, *Absolutely Almost*, and *A Tangle of Knots*, which was nominated for the National Book Award. She also occasionally writes young adult novels and picture books. A former children's book editor and professor of children's literature, Lisa loves to talk to kids about reading, writing, and books! She is the proud mom of two Chestnutwold students: Lena (1st grade) and Nathan (2nd).

Learn more about Lisa and her books at [www.lisagraff.com](http://www.lisagraff.com).

**Cindy McCord**

Cindy McCord has been a professional musician and songwriter for many years. After writing and recording her signature CD (*Cindy Duffie, Not Your Typical Housewife*) she moved on to writing children's music. In 2010 Cindy and her husband Chris wrote and recorded music for Club Kiddoo, a children's enrichment program in North Jersey. Nowadays, Cindy writes songs on commission, for birthdays, anniversaries and special events/people. Cindy is thrilled to be a part of Young Writers Day and is super excited to be back.

**Tim McManus** (Chestnutwold parent)

Tim McManus joined ESPN in 2016 as the Philadelphia Eagles reporter for NFL Nation. He writes for ESPN.com and contributes to *NFL Live*, *SportsCenter*, ESPN Radio and other platforms. McManus has been on the Eagles beat since 2010. He previously covered the team for *Philadelphia Magazine's* Birds 24/7 – a site he created along with NFL Nation Seahawks reporter Sheil Kapadia in 2012 – and is a regular contributor on 97.5 The Fanatic, an ESPN affiliate. Tim's three kids — Juliana (5th), Braden (1st) and Casey (K) are all at Chestnutwold this year. He and his family love the school, love Havertown (they've been here since 2016) and feel fortunate to be a part of the community.

**Christian Patchell**

Christian Patchell is the creator of *The Brothers Grimm*, an award-winning animated short and comic series. His friends and students all call him Patch. For decades he has written, illustrated, and self-published books, comics, and zines, and his art and design work has appeared on everything from toys to greeting cards.

**Matt Phelan** (Chestnutwold parent)

Matt Phelan is an author/illustrator of many books for young readers. He is also the proud father of a Chestnutwold fifth grader and Chestnutwold graduate.

[www.mattphelan.com](http://www.mattphelan.com)

**Margo Rabb**

Margo Rabb is the author of the novels *Lucy Clark Will Not Apologize*, *Kissing in America*, and *Cures for Heartbreak*, which have been named to multiple best-of-the-year lists. Margo's essays, journalism, book reviews, and short stories have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, *Salon*, *Marie Claire*, *Seventeen*, *Best New American Voices*, and *One Story*, and have been broadcast on NPR. She received the grand prize in the *Zoetrope* short story contest, first prize in *The Atlantic* fiction contest, first prize in the *American Fiction* contest, and a PEN Syndicated Fiction Project Award. She grew up in Queens, New York, and now lives in Narberth with her family.

Visit her online at [www.margorabb.com](http://www.margorabb.com).

### **Trish Rodriguez**

Trish Rodriguez is a writer raised in Philadelphia. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, receiving a B.S. in Systems Engineering, and Rosemont College's MFA in Creative Writing. Fiction writing is her dream, though she has been known to dabble in creative nonfiction and poetry. She is the newly appointed Editorial Director for the literary magazine *Philadelphia Stories*, where she served as Fiction Editor since 2018, and her own writing has been published in *Awakened Voices* and *Animal: A Beast of a Literary Magazine*. She lives in Media with her family, including her cat, Elvis, and her Samoyed, Rico Suave.

### **Vicky Town**

Vicky Town is an interactive storyteller, playwright, and teaching artist who has been delighting audiences with her unique blend of physical comedy, improvisation, and love of language since 1988. From the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia to the Kansas prairie to the city of Philadelphia, Vicky has shared stories that warm the heart and tickle the funny bone. She is a three-time winner of a Parents' Choice Award and two regional awards from the Philadelphia area. Her published works include *The Runaway Pumpkin Pie Man* (Pelican Publishers) and the play *Mayhem in the Museum*. When Vicky isn't telling stories, she can be found keeping bees, canning vegetables, and running the non-profit regional youth theatre program Summer Stage near her farm in the Appalachian Mountains: [www.graysoncountysummerstage.org](http://www.graysoncountysummerstage.org). For more information visit [www.vickytown.com](http://www.vickytown.com).

### **Melissa Trempe** (Chestnutwold parent)

Melissa Trempe is a picture book author, former fifth grade teacher, and proud Chestnutwold mom of William in second grade and Emma who is now in sixth. Melissa's debut picture book, *LADYBUG LAUNCH: Inspired by a True Story of Chinitas in Space* is co-authored with Dr. Natalia Ojeda and illustrated by Manu Montoya. The story is about a ladybug who dreams of becoming an astronaut and a little girl who aspires to be a scientist. While their tale is fictional, it is closely based on a very real and inspirational class of girls from Chile who had a big idea about a little ladybug. With the help of their teacher, they were determined to make the world listen and send the first ladybug to space! *LADYBUG LAUNCH* will release in the spring of 2024 with Simon & Schuster. Melissa is represented by literary agent Eve Adler and hopes to have more picture books out soon.

### **Rodney Whittenberg**

Rodney Whittenberg is an Emmy Award-winning composer and an Emmy-nominated film producer. He is also a multi-instrumentalist, audio engineer, sound designer, music producer, writer, podcast producer, film director, editor, producer, educator, and founder of Melodyvision, a full-service media production company. Rodney has produced and directed the award-winning documentary *Voices of Ages* and produced and co-directed the Emmy-nominated *Portraits of Professional Caregivers - their Passion, their Pain* and award-winning documentary *Angels and Saints - Eros and Awe*. He has co-directed more than two dozen short, experimental documentaries, many of which have won numerous film festivals. He has also worked as a freelance segment producer for HBO, WYBE, and WHYYY.

As a film composer, Rodney has written music for over thirty-four films and TV shows, as well as countless dance performances. His projects include *Code Name: Ayalon*, Anthony Bourdain's *A Cooks Tour*, PBS's POV Documentary *The Camden 28*, *The Spanish American War* (co-written with Time for Three) for the History Channel, and horror film classics *Infested* and *Return to Sleepaway Camp*. He's received a regional Emmy for his musical score for the TV Documentary *Mother Dot's Philadelphia* and a Best Sound Design award at the Terror Film Festival for the

movie *Tolltaker*. He also directed the orchestral film shoots for *Beethoven to Beijing*, which was nominated for the Library of Congress's Ken Burns Prize.

Rodney has taught music and audio production courses at Lincoln University, University of the Arts, Drexel University, and Philadelphia Community College, as well as graduate level film courses at Rosemont College and an audio production course for animation at Jefferson University. He has been a guest lecturer at Temple University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Franklin and Marshall College, and has co-written curriculum for the Southeast Delco School District.

Rodney has also had the pleasure of interviewing Terrence Blanchard, John Lewis, Andrew Young, legendary bassist Ron Carter, avant-garde composer George Crumb, jazz piano icon Ramsey Lewis, and swing guitarist John Pizzarelli. As an audio engineer and record producer he has worked with artists as varied as Time for Three, Bobby McFerrin, the Philadelphia Orchestra Percussion Ensemble, and The DePue Brothers Band.

[melodyvisionrecording.com](http://melodyvisionrecording.com)