



MODERN ENGLISH TANKA PRESS

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PRESS RELEASE

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Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka, 2008 Anthology, Published by Modern English Tanka Press

Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka is edited by M. Kei, Sanford Goldstein, Pamela A. Babusci, Patricia Prime, Bob Lucky, Kala Ramesh. This editorial team set out to read the entire field of tanka publication for a single year, regardless of source, without any dogma regarding definition, form or content. Over the course of fourteen months, they read over fourteen thousand poems. The results are gathered in one of the best new poetry anthologies.

Baltimore, Maryland – April 7, 2009 – *Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka*, edited by M. Kei, Sanford Goldstein, Pamela A. Babusci, Patricia Prime, Bob Lucky, Kala Ramesh, has been published in trade paperback by Modern English Tanka Press. Original cover art by Pamela A. Babusci.

Tanka, the ancient Japanese poetic form, has been an important source for modernists for more than a hundred years, but never relegated itself to the position of dusty relic. It is alive and vital and producing some of the most eloquent and insightful poetry published in English today. Anthologies, contests, journals, and web sites publish thousands upon thousands of tanka poems every year—but which ones are the most rewarding for the readers?

The editorial team of *Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka* set out to read the entire field of tanka publication for a single year, regardless of source, without any dogma regarding definition, form or content. Over the course of fourteen months, they read over fourteen thousand poems. The results are gathered in one of the best new poetry anthologies. Famous names and unknown poets from around the world appear side by side in 321 single poems and several tanka sequences and tanka prose pieces. A List of Venues consulted and complete publishing credits are included, along with an introduction that covers the history of tanka and the project itself.

The poets included are: Hortensia Anderson, Susan Antolin, Aurora Antonovic, An'ya, Harue Aoki, Megan Arkenberg, Pamela A. Babusci, Dave Bacharach, Marty Baird, Jon Baldwin, Collin Barber, John Barlow, Frederick Bassett, Roberta Beary, Janick Belleau, Cathy Drinkwater Better, Randy Brooks, Marjorie Buettner, Owen Bullock, David Caruso, James Chessing, Bell Gale Chevigny, Margaret Chula, Tom Clausen, Șerban Codrin, Norman Darlington, Janet Lynn Davis, Cherie Hunter Day, Andrew Detheridge, Melissa Dixon, Jim Doss, Curtis Dunlap, Jeanne Emrich, Margarita Engle, Michael Evans, Amelia Fielden, Trish Fong, Sylvia Forges-Ryan, Stanford M. Forrester, Bernard Gadd, Linda Galloway, Denis M. Garrison, Beverley George, Sanford Goldstein,

Tom Gomes, M. L. Grace, Andrea Grillo, David Gross, William Hart, M. L. Harvey, C. W. Hawes, Peggy Heinrich, Lorne Henry, William J. Higginson, Ruth Holzer, Elizabeth Howard, Roger Jones, Jim Kacian, Kirsty Karkow, M. Kei, Susan Lee Kerr, Michael Ketchek, Larry Kimmel, Mariko Kitakubo, Kathy Kituai, Deborah P. Kolodji, Robert Kusch, Lynne Leach, Gary LeBel, Angela Leuck, Darrel Lindsey, Bob Lucky, Jeanne Lupton, Carole MacRury, Laura Maffei, Mary Mageau, A. A. Marcoff, Thelma Mariano, Francis Masat, Karen McClintock, Michael McClintock, Tyrone McDonald, Jo McInerney, Dorothy McLaughlin, Paul Mercken, Annette Mineo, Vasile Moldovan, Mike Montreuil, Jim Moore, June Moreau, Joan Murphy, H. Gene Murtha, Peter Newton, Linda Papanicolaou, Patrick M. Pilarski, Jack Prewitt, Patricia Prime, Carol Purington, John Quinnett, Claudia Coutu Radmore, David Rice, Andrew Riutta, Barbara Robidoux, James Rohrer, Alexis Rotella, Miriam Sagan, Fujiko Sato, Grant D. Savage, Philip Schofield, Billy Simms, Guy Simser, Paul Smith, John Soules, Art Stein, John Stevenson, Richard Stevenson, Maria Steyn, John Stone, André Surridge, George Swede, Noriko Tanaka, Frans Terryn, Carolyn Thomas, Marc Thompson, Tony A. Thompson, Michael Thorley, Julie Thorndyke, Kozue Uzawa, Geert Verbeke, Ella Wagemakers, Linda Jeannette Ward, Michael Dylan Welch, Liam Wilkinson, Robert D. Wilson, Jeffrey Woodward, An Xiao, Peter Yovu, and Aya Yuhki.

“*Take Five* is like Dave Brubeck’s famous long jazz piece of the same name: both simple and complex, with varied rhythms that can make fingers snap and hips sway. Beguiling for the beginner and expert alike.” — George Swede

“It seems that with every turn—whether it be picking up the latest tanka journal, navigating your way to tanka sites across the web or checking out a new entry from one of the ever-growing number of tanka bloggers—that these small but perfectly formed poems continue to offer us some of the most breathtaking moments in contemporary poetry. It’s nothing short of spellbinding to behold a new tanka, its five-lines engraved in the granite of an ancient form of literature but with all the freshness of a green leaf showing. Today, writers are leaving their tanka ajar—in these brief moments of poetry, anything is possible and everything is welcome—and, as a result, tanka is able to thrive across the globe. As writers of tanka embrace the modern world, the modern world embraces tanka.

Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka succeeds in providing a comprehensive illustration of the state of modern tanka. Here we have a veritable feast of the finest individual tanka, tanka sequences and tanka prose published over the last year, handpicked from every nook and cranny by an editorial board that consists of some of the most highly respected figures in the field. *Take Five* is, at once, a satisfying digest of quality tanka and an indispensable tanka handbook for new and experienced writers of the form. With an extensive and absorbing introduction from the chief editor of the anthology, M. Kei, the book is not only a literary treat but an essential addition to the poetry shelf of reader and writer alike.” —Liam Wilkinson, Editor, *3 Lights Gallery*

“Powerful short stories written in five lines—that’s what *Take Five* is all about. This anthology is not just your tanka wallpaper variety; nearly every piece is a jumpstart for the heart that tells the truth about that four-letter word called ‘Life.’ M. Kei and his team of editors are to be commended—when I was done reading *Take Five*, for a moment, I didn’t know if I was a woman, a monk or a pelican.” —Alexis Rotella, Ed., *Prune Juice: Journal of Senryu and Kyoka*

About Editors:

M. Kei crews aboard a skipjack, a traditional wooden sailboat used to dredge for oysters in the Chesapeake Bay, the last vessel in North America to fish commercially under sail. Sadly, it is not a profitable way to make a living anymore. The vessel serves as a museum on the water and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Kei has published over 1100 tanka and 300 other short poems during the last few years. His first book was the anthology *Fire Pearls: Short Masterpieces of the Human Heart* (2006), which he edited. An instant classic, it was followed by *Heron Sea, Short Poems of the Chesapeake* (2007) and *Slow Motion: The Log of a Chesapeake Bay Skipjack* (2008), the log he kept in poetic form while making extended cruises aboard a skipjack. He is editor-in-chief of *Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka*.

Sanford Goldstein writes: “As for my own work, I have been a tanka poet for about fifty years. I am called a co-translator of six collections of famous Japanese tanka poets. Even with years of study of Japanese, I could do nothing alone. Two books took five years each, though it was still enjoyable to do the translations. I know what it means to be rejected quite often these 65 years as a writer. So I join in sympathy with those whose tanka have not appeared in our edition.”

Pamela A. Babusci is an award winning poet and artist. Some of her awards include: Museum of Haiku Literature Award, Tanka Splendor Awards, First Place Yellow Moon Tanka Competition, First Place Kokako Tanka Competition, Basho Festival Haiku Contest, and HM Suruga Baika Literary Festival. Pamela has illustrated several books, including: *Full Moon Tide: The Best of Tanka Splendor Awards*, *Taboo Haiku*, *Take Five: Best Contemporary Tanka* and the forthcoming haiku chapbook, *Chasing The Sun*. She was the logo artist for Haiku North America in NYC in 2003 and Haiku North America in Winston-Salem, NC in 2007. She says poetry & art have been an integral part of her existence since her early teenage years & will continue to be a driving force until she meets her creator.

Patricia Prime retired from teaching pre-school a couple of years ago, but is still involved in relief teaching and working with children at her local school with English as a second language. She is the co-editor of the NZ haiku magazine *Kokako*, reviews editor of *Takahe* and *Stylus*, and assistant editor of *Haibun Today*. Patricia's tanka has been published in *Modern English Tanka*, *Atlas Poetica*, *Eucalypt*, *Ribbons*, *moonset*, *Gusts*, *3 Lights Gallery*, *Kokako*, *Time Haiku*, *Presence* and *Blithe Spirit*. Her haiku have been published in several magazines and her haibun have been published in *Contemporary Haibun Online* and *Haibun Today*. She has been published, with three other poets, in the haibun collaboration *Quartet* and is currently working on a tanka prose collaboration with three other poets. Patricia also writes articles, mainstream poetry, annually judges a formal poetry contest, is one of the nominees for the tanka for *Gusts*, and is on the panel of judges for the Presence Seashell Game.

Bob Lucky holds degrees from Dartmouth College and the University of Washington. He is currently in the online MFA program through the University of Texas at El Paso. His work has appeared in various international journals. He has spent stretches of his adult life living and working throughout Asia. Currently, he lives with his wife and son in Hangzhou, China, where he teaches history and makes noise on an assortment of ukuleles.

Kala Ramesh is a musician and haiku poet. Her work, consisting of more than 200 haiku, tanka, senryu, haibun, renku and one-line haiku, have appeared in leading e-zines and anthologies. _kala heads the World Haiku Club in India. As director, she organised the World Haiku Club Meet in Pune in 2006. The four-day 9th World Haiku Festival she organized at Bangalore in February 2008 was

sponsored jointly by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Ji and Sri Ratan Tata Trust. Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *The World Haiku Review*, also she is an in-house editor of poetry in *Katha*, a leading publishing house in India. _kala is an exponent of both Carnatic and Hindustani Classical Music styles. She has performed professionally in major cities in India.

For media inquiries or to arrange an interview with the author, contact editor-in-chief M. Kei by e-mail at firepearls@verizon.net. Publisher information at: www.modernenglishtankapress.com.

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About Modern English Tanka Press:

Modern English Tanka Press (MET Press) is an independent publishing house in Baltimore, Maryland, dedicated to producing books and periodicals of lasting literary value, especially poetry. A family business, we treat our customers and partners in publishing like family. We use modern print-on-demand production and distribution methods. Our special mission is to promote the tanka form of poetry and to educate newcomers about this most ancient poetic form.

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