

The Story of His Life

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor

Tuesday, 03 May 2016 10:47 - Last Updated Wednesday, 04 May 2016 08:30



Writer/publisher Tim Johnston discusses his new collection, his process, the human condition, and what's so great about the short story.

By Margaret Evans, Editor

I first read Tim Johnston's collection *Friday Afternoon and Other Stories* about two years ago, when it was still just a manuscript. It had a different title, a different story order, and an uncertain future. I zoomed through those pages with delight, so when Tim asked me for a blurb, I was happy to oblige.

At the time, I wrote: "Storyteller T.D. Johnston is a closer. He knows the secret that some writers never learn – that a great story demands a great ending. Some of his endings are deliciously open – almost like new beginnings – while others are as shocking and final as a door slammed in your face. In story after tantalizing story, Johnston sends his variously-flawed characters wobbling down the brutal balance beam of human existence – building tension as they go – then sticks his landing like an Olympic gymnast. Only then do we realize we've been holding our breath... and sometimes holding back tears."

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I am pleased to announce that this blurb – along with praise from several *serious* writers , including Pat Conroy – now appears on the back of a beautiful jacket, designed by local artist Tim Devine, wrapped around a sturdy volume you can hold in your hand.

Tim's book is finally here.

I spoke with Tim Johnston recently about his life as a reader, writer, teacher and publisher of short stories.

Margaret Evans: You've devoted your professional career to this literary form. Why short stories?

TD Johnston: Short stories turned me into a lifelong reader when I was a kid, just as I became a lifelong lover of music from listening to FM radio, and developed my affection for movies in the same era of my life. What do short stories, songs, and films have in common? Aside from the obviously-important job of entertainment, each form of art is experienced fully in one sitting, start to finish, in one focused and open mood, and can be repeated, relished, considered, examined for what it might have to do with us, still all in the same sitting. The good story has what Edgar Allan Poe called a "singular effect" on the reader – one that lasts and, in the case of the great story, influences us forever.

Every reader can be reached by the good short story, which is why as a teacher I

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