

A Suitcase Full of Words
The Expatriate's Guide to Creative Writing
 by Robin Meloy Goldsby
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Outline and Notes from the Workshop

"Writing presents the same challenges as learning a musical instrument. There aren't any shortcuts. You need passion, patience, and long hours of practice—every single day—until you get it right. Savor the tiny victories as they're happening, and you win the artist's race one step at a time. Don't wait for the book-launch party to break out the champagne. Instead, revel in the honest victory of each well-crafted sentence. Celebrate! Remember that the joy of writing reveals itself when you make your story sing. Practice as much as you can, and you'll find the music in your words. It's there."

Robin Goldsby,
The Writer magazine, July 2008

Why Write?

- You have a need to write.
- You miss your native language.
- You want your children and grandchildren to know about your life.
- You're funny, you're serious, you're sad, you're lonely, you're mad, but most of all you have something to say and a desire to say it.
- Your life is interesting and you want to share your experiences.
- You want to write about *Then*.
- You want to write about *Now*.
- Your club has a newsletter/bulletin/website and they need a writer.
- Your friends and family back at home want to read about your life.
- You want your friends and family back at home to read about your life.
- No one else is writing about you — so write about yourself.
- You have a fantastic story or idea for a novel and you can't stop thinking about it.
- You know a person who deserves to have an article written about him/her.
- You might make some money (but you probably won't).
- You feel powerful when you express yourself with your writing.

Reasons Not to Write

- You want to be famous.
- You want to be rich.
- You can imagine the book launch and the champagne and the long lines of adoring fans lining up to get your autograph.
- You want to get revenge.
- You want an excuse to stay in your pajamas all day and drink vodka.

Various Outlets for Writing as an Expat

- Your personal journal
- Blogging & social networking
- Your FAWCO club newsletter or bulletin
- Instructional articles for relocation companies
- Reviews of expatriate books (Amazon, Goodreads, etc)
- Interviews & expat profiles
- Poetry, song lyrics
- Biography, history, memoir, fiction

How to Get Started: Instant Writing Motivation**(From a Writer Magazine article by Luc Reid, April, 2012)**

- Start writing in a journal—every single day—and write about anything at all.
- Get a little exercise—it will help you think.
- Repair your ideas (change negatives into positives).
- Pretend you're finished.
- Track your word count.
- Converse—find a supportive friend who understands your subject.
- Bypass the mental debate.
- Take a short walk in a natural setting.
- Revisit your reasons—why did you decide to write this piece in the first place?
- Create an outline.
- Ignore an outline.
- Write about writing and why you can't write—it gets you writing and maybe you'll find a solution to your block.
- Go somewhere else (café, library, a quiet office).
- Introduce a change (plot twist, new character, new source of research).
- Warm up: Describe an object in the room, reconstruct a conversation, anything that feels easy.
- Choose a first step and give yourself an obvious and immediate goal.
- Skip ahead if you're having trouble with what you're currently writing.
- Find a reader (but just one!).
- Try Scrivener—software to help writers get organized (download a free trial at www.literatureandlatte.com)
- Write every day. Even a 100-word minimum can lead to high productivity.

Start a *Writing Women* Activity Group in Your Club

- Find a core group of women interested in creative writing in your club.
- Find a place where you can meet twice a month.
- Schedule two submissions per meeting, with a rotating schedule. Ideally, each writer should be submitting a piece once every four-six weeks.
- Submissions are sent out to the group digitally, a few days before each meeting.
- Members critique each submission and are prepared to discuss the submission at the meeting.
- Work with your WW members to create a warm and supportive atmosphere at the

meetings, and make sure that all work remains private and does not go beyond the group, until the writer is ready.

- Encourage all types of creative writing—anything goes.
- Ask the editor of your club magazine/newsletter to start publishing finished WW pieces. This will give writers publishing credits and experience in meeting deadlines, word counts, and editorial preferences.

Read!

- There is nothing more inspirational than reading good writing
- Go back to your favorite books and analyze the writing.
- Talk to friends about what they're reading.
- Get a Kindle and carry your library with you—you can always read in your down time. Aside from actual writing, this is the best way to improve your own work.

Blogging

- Think before you make the commitment—a good blogger posts frequently. Do you have the time? Is this the best use of your writing time?
- Check out other expat blogs—there are many of them. Which ones work for you and why?
- Find a niche audience—don't make your blog too general.
- Check out these blog hosting sites and choose one that suits you: Wordpress, Tumblr, Blogger, Posterous, Typepad, Twitter, Facebook.

Memoir

- Chose a specific part of your life you want to explore—don't try to write about your entire life experience.
- Remember, when you write memoir you have way too much material—a good memoirist knows what to leave out.
- Be careful with using real names and identifying circumstances, unless you have the blessing of the person to whom you're referring.
- Remember, good memoir tells a story and should be captivating and thought-provoking, just like an excellent novel. Don't use the form as a public diary.

Fiction

- Outline your story.
- Think about your story while you work out, or cook, or before you drift off to sleep. If your story is a good one, you'll become obsessed with it. This is the state you want to be in when you start writing your short story or novel.
- Use your expat home to add dimension and spice to your story.
- Think of the outline as a bare bones map. You know where you're starting, you know where you're ending, and maybe you know some of the stop-off points. But there are multiple routes you can take from Point A to Point B. Explore.
- Keep it real.

- Onomatopoeia: Use onos to make a reader feel the action, whether they're hearing the word sounds or reading them. If your book has scenes set in a foreign country, use (sparingly) the language.
- Think of the novels you love that use the expat experience as part of the story. There are so many of them!
- Don't give up.
- Don't try to "sell" your story or novel until it is really finished. "Finishing" will involve many drafts. New writers tend to think they're finished way too soon in the process.

Articles (blog or print)

- Write what you know.
- Write what you don't know.
- Write what you've learned.
- Describe how you learned it.
- Write what you like.
- Write about what your personal experience.
- Write a lot about a very small and specific topic.

Revision (applies to all forms of writing)

- Get your word count right. Pros make the count!
- But what about blogging? There's no limit on-line. Yes, but this doesn't mean you should ramble.
- Simplify. Good writing is clean and clear. Cut the fat. Lose the adverbs.
- Make sure you're clear with your tenses. Present or past tense writing? Pick one and stick with it, making sure to check for tense agreement in flashbacks, flash-forwards, etc.
- Same thing goes for perspective. First person singular? Third person singular? The very tricky second person? Where are you most comfortable?
- Find your voice. This will take time. Experiment by copping the styles of skilled writers. This isn't plagiarism, it's smart borrowing, and it will help you discover your voice.
- Look for the flow. Listen to the rhythm. Read out loud and hear the music in your words.
- Kill your darlings (Stephen King).

Proofread

- Revisit the piece after a day.
- Sleep on it.
- Read out loud.
- Use a spellchecker, but don't rely on it.
- Read backwards (in reverse order).
- Let someone else read it.
- Let an editor read it.

Interview Someone

- Mastering the art of the interview can help you craft your piece, regardless of genre.
- In person or phone interview?
- Email interview is often the easiest. But you'll have to work harder to make it come alive on the page.
- Try a Q&A format for your article or essay—if you're pressed for time, these are easy to write.
- Use the interview to write a narrative and use selected quotes to punch up the piece.

Interview Tips:

(Most Tips from The Writer magazine, John Borchardt, Oct 2011)

- Plan the interview
- Put your source at ease
- Record the interview
- Find unique quotes (fresh)
- Attribute non-unique quotes (borrowed)
- Listen for potential follow-up questions
- Ask the same question in a different way until a good answer comes.
- Leave your opinions & bias out. (Shut up!)
- Or, give your opinion and wait for a response.
- Combine quotes from various sources to tell a story.
- Double check quotes and facts

Example: Here is an article—from my FAWCO Profile series—that I wrote about FAWCO President My-Linh Kunst. This was published in 2010, when ML was still 1st VP. It's a good example of combining narrative with Q&A. FYI: I conducted the interview via email. A photo of MLK also ran with the article.

Eleven Questions with My-Linh Kunst: 1st VP of FAWCO Communications, Berlin, Germany

FAWCO's membership includes many fascinating women (you're one of them!) leading exceptional lives. Each month, I'll profile a FAWCO member from one of our sister clubs by asking a series of questions relating to the expatriate experience.

My-Linh Kunst counts resourcefulness as the trait she most admires in a woman. When you hear about her childhood, the reason becomes clear. My-Linh was born in Vietnam in 1963. Her father was a business mogul who owned Ford's import franchise in Vietnam. My-Linh's mother founded the International School in Saigon. The family led a comfortable upper-class existence until increasing violence and political strife forced them to flee their home.

My-Linh recalls the harrowing journey: “We escaped from Vietnam in the middle of the night—I hid under the boat's floorboards while it was searched by the Vietnamese Coast Guard—and travelled the China Sea to Singapore. We reached Singapore in four days. Since we didn't have legal papers, the Singaporeans allowed us to anchor off shore with a 24/7 watch from a police boat. We were there for two weeks, waiting for my American-born sister, who was in DC for College at the time, to get us sponsorship papers.”

The family emigrated to the USA at the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Twelve-year-old My-Linh quickly learned English. After three months of a summer program, she began attending seventh grade in an American school.

My-Linh’s knack for resourcefulness has served her well. After graduating from high school, she attended the University of Virginia, where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Management Information Systems and Finance. After college, My-Linh worked on projects in Chicago, Cincinnati, and England. As planned, she went back to school for her MBA at The Wharton School, graduating in 1990.

My-Linh met her German husband on a consulting project in the USA, and transferred to Europe in 1994 to be with him. She has since enjoyed a string of successful consulting positions, including her last post as the Managing Director of a Frankfurt-based firm.

Since the birth of her children, My-Linh has turned her long time passion for photography into a second career. She’s now an established portrait photographer, with an acclaimed photography book called *Beyond Borders: Portraits of American Women from around the World*. The project features FAWCO members from fifteen countries on three continents. My-Linh says: “I believe the achievements of ordinary American women living extraordinary lives will inspire others to reach for their dreams.” The *Beyond Borders* exhibition opened in Seoul at the FAWCO annual conference 2008, and has since been shown in Berlin, Paris and The Hague.

My-Linh has held various positions in FAWCO clubs, including President of the AIWC Cologne. She has been involved in FAWCO as co-founder of the “Ending Violence to Women & Children” Task Force, and since 2009, as 1st VP of communications. Currently, My-Linh stays busy caring for her boys, her photography, and being a good weekend-wife to her commuting husband. Busy? Of course. She’s reaching for her dreams—but that’s what resourceful women do.

FAWCO: Eleven Questions

1. What's your third favorite city in the world?

Third favorite: London; First place goes to New York, and Barcelona comes in second.

2. What things do you miss most about your hometown?

Family!

3. What is the trait you most admire in women?

Resourcefulness. I admire a woman who can work through a challenge, who refuses to be a victim, who would never say "can't".

4. What is the trait you most deplore in women?

Small-mindedness.

5. What has been your most challenging expatriate shopping experience?

Trying to find a small toaster oven – how can something so practical NOT exist in Germany?

6. Which cities have you lived in, and which one of these cities has the best food?

I've lived in Saigon, Vietnam; Washington, DC; Houston, TX; Charlottesville, VA; Chicago, IL; Blackpool/St Annes, England; Cincinnati, OH; Philadelphia, PA; New York, NY; Brussels, Belgium; London, England (2x); Ingolstadt, Frankfurt, Cologne, and Berlin, Germany. Best food? Belgian food is unexpectedly good – much better than French food.

7. If you could start all over again in any city, which one would it be and why?

New York, because I had a great time when I lived there—I loved the energy, the culture, the people, the residences, the city itself. Looking at my friends who still live there, I can imagine what my life would be like if I had stayed – and I would have liked it ! ☺

8. Which living female do you most admire?

My Mom – at eighty, she is currently traveling on her own for two months in Vietnam, giving us daily reports from her iPad. I admire her curiosity, her resourcefulness, the way she looks at the world—she marvels with wide-open eyes like a child—, not to mention her resilience when my Dad divorced her at the age of seventy.

9. How many languages do you speak, and which one do you find the most challenging?

I speak five languages. German is by far the most challenging.

10. What was your last mistake?

I make mistakes every day ... mostly small ones that keep me on my toes.

11. What was your last triumph?

I got FAWCO's Conference registration online, and taught a water photography class at FAWCO's Region I meeting, again using self-taught materials.

Here is another article I wrote—this time for Steinway Magazine—about Fred (Mister) Rogers and his relationship to the piano. Almost everything in this article comes from a two-hour phone interview I did with Fred's widow, Joanne. I transcribed the entire conversation, double checked the facts, and found quotes in my transcription to help support and craft my story. This isn't an expat piece, but sometimes writing about Home is exactly what I need to stay connected.

A BARRELFUL OF SONGS

On a sparkling July morning—a beautiful day in the neighborhood—three broad-shouldered men gently boost a concert grand piano from a fourth-floor apartment window

onto a towering platform. Swaddled in thick blankets, the Steinway D waits for the next part of its voyage to begin. The workers cautiously slide the piano onto a set of pipes that extend from the scaffolding while a crane operator attaches the thick rope coiled around the instrument to a large metal hook. After much double-checking, the crane springs to life, lifting the Steinway into a beam of sunlight. The piano seems to hover over the street, pausing for just a moment, and then—with grace, dignity, and an almost human air of self-determination—it swoops to the earth below.

Joanne Rogers, a seventy-nine-year old concert pianist who has spent much of her adult life playing this piano, stands in the imposing space once occupied by the instrument and takes a deep breath. She hurries down to the front of the building and watches as the movers load the piano into a truck. The time has come to say goodbye.

“I thought at one point, this is crazy, why am I doing this?” says Joanne from her home, six weeks after the piano’s departure. “I guess maybe we have those feelings about every big thing we do in life. We want to back out at the last second.”

Joanne’s honest words would have made her husband proud. She was married to television legend Fred Rogers—of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*—for 50 years. She and Fred celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at the White House in 2002; on the day Fred was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. A year later, her husband was gone.

Almost five years after his death, Joanne decided to donate Fred’s Steinway D to the *Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media* at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, the town where Fred was born and raised. In a way, the piano is going home. But first, it will travel to the Steinway Restoration Center in New York City, where master technician Chris Arena will supervise a total restoration of the piano’s interior and exterior. The work will be completed in time for the spring 2008 opening of the Center.

“The idea to donate the piano to the Center suddenly came to me,” says Joanne, who followed through on her promise in spite of last-minute jitters. “It was a very practical decision, and yet I got very excited at the same time. It makes me so happy to think that the piano will be there.”

Two years before Fred died, Archabbot Douglas R. Nowicki, of Saint Vincent Archabbey, began planning the Center with Fred. According to a statement compiled by its Board of Advisors, “the mission of the Fred Rogers Center is to advance the fields of early learning and children’s media by acting as a catalyst for communication, collaboration, and creative change.” These are fancy words to describe a man whose remarkable career was launched by the purest of musical beginnings.

Fred’s beautiful journey began with a piano.

“When he was a child,” says Joanne, “he would go to the piano to express all of his feelings: mad, glad, and sad all came right out through his fingers.”

In the early 1940’s, in a scene out of every piano student’s wildest fantasies, Fred’s parents took him to Mellor’s Music Store in downtown Pittsburgh. Fred, thirteen at the time and blessed by a supportive and enthusiastic family of means, was given his choice of instruments. He selected the Steinway D. The piano, manufactured in 1920, had been played for two decades by concert artists passing through the city. Shortly after taking possession of the instrument, Fred developed a strong interest in songwriting.

When I ask Joanne if her husband cited any mentors, she says, without missing a beat, “Why yes! Jack Lawrence!” Mr. Lawrence, now 95 years old, penned an astonishing number of popular songs that became standards, including “Beyond the Sea,” “Tenderly,” and “All or Nothing at All.”

In his book *The World According to Mister Rogers*, Fred writes about his meeting with Mr. Lawrence: “I took him four or five songs that I had written and I thought he’d introduce me to Tin Pan Alley and it would be the beginning of my career,” writes Rogers. “After I played him my songs, he said, ‘you have very nice songs. Come back when you have a barrelful.’”

Taking Lawrence’s words to heart, teenage Fred Rogers devoted himself to the art and craft of songwriting. Sitting at his piano, he began shaping many of the ideas that would later become Mister Rogers classics. “The more I wrote the better the songs became, and the more those songs expressed what was real within me.”

“Fred was a very disciplined writer,” says Joanne, who met him while she was studying classical piano performance at Rollins College in Florida. “He had a composition teacher there who taught him the necessity of having a time every day specifically for writing. You go and you just do it. You sit there until you can.”

Joanne’s practice schedule and Fred’s devotion to his writing meant that the Rogers family needed instruments everywhere they went. Joanne enjoyed practicing one of the big pianos at home in Pittsburgh, but Fred accomplished some of his best work on Nantucket Island, where the Rogers family owns a lopsided beachfront cottage called The Crooked House.

“His piano there, a tiny thing, was from a company called Grand,” says Joanne. “So the piano was referred to as his *grand piano*. You know, the music was in his head, he didn’t need a big fabulous piano to compose, he always had a sense of what the piece would sound like.”

In their Pittsburgh home, next to Fred’s Steinway D, Joanne also kept a Bechstein C. For the last thirty years Joanne, a former student of Ernst von Dohnanyi, has performed two-piano concerts and recitals with Jeannine Morrison. She and Jeannine frequently practiced side by side on the grand pianos in the Rogers living room.

“Fred’s Steinway was the piano I loved to play the most when I had a lot of practicing to do to get ready for a concert. It had a firmer touch than the Bechstein. Fred and I played both pianos, but when Fred was working he liked to play his Steinway. He would almost purr when he played that piano.”

Millions of children who have listened to *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* over the years have been enchanted by the lush sounds of the program’s Steinway B. This piano, signed by John Steinway and played by Johnny Costa, holds the honor of being heard by more children than any other piano in television history. The raffish Johnny Costa—Fred’s musical director for thirty years—peppered Mister Rogers’ easy-going neighborhood with fiery dashes of swinging jazz, performed live for every program.

“Sophistication was built into Fred’s compositions, but Johnny always knew how to find the right chords to enhance that,” says Joanne. There were lovely surprises in

Fred’s collaborations with Costa—childlike melodies that seemed to dance through a maze of mature harmonic underpinnings. Those elements, mingled with the poetry of Fred’s lyrics and the thrill of Costa’s playing, created a magical partnership. When Costa died in 1996, pianist and arranger Michael Moricz stepped in as musical director, taking over Costa’s duties and gracing the neighborhood with his own creative brilliance and musical charm.

Fred always insisted on a stellar jazz trio for the program—including bassist Carl McVicker and percussionist Bob Rawsthorne—and he taped memorable segments with giants like André Watts, Van Cliburn, and Yo-Yo Ma. By avoiding obvious commercial choices, he hit on a simple truth: that children, when given the opportunity to hear excellent music, will listen. “Fred provided children with music they ought to be hearing,” says Joanne. “He always knew he was giving them the best.”

Fred never lost faith in the power of musical expression. Recalling her husband’s final weeks, Joanne says: “When he returned from the hospital, he walked straight to the piano and sat down. That’s what he wanted to do. And he would go every day to the piano, and play. He did this until he was completely bedridden. I think he was improvising—his way of composing—until the end.”

According to Father Paul Taylor, the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Saint Vincent College, the restored Steinway will be given a place of honor in the atrium at the Fred Rogers Center—a fitting tribute to a human being whose passage from young man to television legend began with a piano, a soaring imagination, and the desire to give shape to his feelings through song.

When the piano is played—by hands large and small—Joanne Rogers hopes visitors to the Center will remember that Fred’s music has carried millions of children to the proud heights of self-recognition. One heartfelt song, that’s all it takes to make a person feel good. In his lifetime, Fred Rogers wrote a whole barrelful of them.

Some of my favorite writing books:

William Zinsser: *On Writing Well*

Anne Lamott; *Bird by Bird*

Stephen King: *On Writing*

William Strunk & E. B. White: *The Elements of Style*

Julia Cameron: *The Artist’s Way*

PART 2: So You Want to Publish a Book?

“A writer has two obligations: Write the best book possible and then find a way to get it out there!” William Zinsser, author of *On Writing Well*.

Traditional Publishing: The Hard Road

- Use an organizational system like Word, Pages, or Scrivener for your manuscript. Your work should look professional. Make sure you’ve got a clean manuscript

- before you start approaching publishing professionals.
- Prepare a detailed outline of your book. Do this before you even think of submitting. A detailed outline can take a lot of time—and you’ll want to have one ready to go if it’s requested..
 - Target an appropriate literary agent or publisher. Do your homework. Submission guidelines are always posted on websites of agents and publishers.
 - Follow the submission guidelines of the literary agent or publisher.
 - Send a query letter to the agent or publisher. Make it short and to the point. Introduce yourself and your book, and tell the recipient why you are qualified to write this particular book. Remember, your writing will be judged by this query letter, so don’t screw it up. This is not the time for typos.
 - If the agent/publisher approves of your query letter, you will likely be asked to submit a proposal, an outline, and several chapters of your book. *Note: Nonfiction can sometimes be sold with a catchy title, a proposal and an outline, but fiction always requires a complete manuscript.*
 - Keep working on your draft while you wait to hear if you’ll accepted or rejected.
 - Get used to rejection.
 - Food for thought: the publishing industry mirrors the record industry in about 1997—chaos prevails at the present time.
 - What kind of publishing deal can you get? Advance? How does an advance work? Should you give your work away just to be “published?”

An Editor’s Advice: Richard Johnston, former Senior Editor, Backbeat Books (Hal Leonard) and former Senior Editor of Bass Player Magazine:

“I always preferred a short synopsis that summarized the subject, its newsworthiness, and how readers would benefit from the information. I also needed to know about the writer’s experience and qualifications if he or she wasn’t familiar to me. That would include examples of published work. For a book proposal I usually required a detailed outline.”

RJ’s Tips:

- Write every day. Keeping a journal is a good way to start.
- Read.
- When you write, use a dictionary instead of a spellchecker. Consult a grammar/style source such as "Words Into Type" or Schertzer's "Elements of Grammar." Read Zinsser's "On Writing Well" and Strunk & White's "Elements of Style."
- Find someone who can offer informed criticism about your work. Don't be defensive about your writing.
- Research a publisher’s submission and editorial guidelines before you pitch a story.
- Read.
- Write every day.

“To ingratiate yourself to an editor, when you get an assignment, ask about the

publication's house style. Do they use serial commas? What word-processing formats do they prefer? When all else is equal, writers that meet their deadlines are most likely to go to the top of the assignment list."

RJ's list of pet peeves:

- Spelling mistakes, typos, bad grammar.
- Not knowing enough about the magazine's goals, audience, and content. It's shocking how often I would get a pitch about a topic or an artist that the magazine had just covered. It's like, Dude, don't you even read this rag?
- Being pestered for a follow-up to a submission.

Independent Publishing (Self Publishing)

Print Publishing

Self-publishing is often called independent publishing these days. The publishing business today seems to be where the recording business was in the mid-90s. Vanity publishing has a bad rap from the days when major publishers controlled the book market, and unknown authors sometimes resorted to paying exorbitant amounts to have a company (a vanity press) print their book. It's not like that any more. Even traditional publishers are using print-on-demand or just-in-time logistics to print and distribute hard copies of books. You can, too! For most writers, independent publishing is an excellent option.

Below is a list of options for publishing independently, but before you read on, **I urge you to check out Createspace**, Amazon's one-stop shopping outlet for indie authors. The company is operated by a dedicated group of writing professionals who are compassionate and serious about the business of designing, publishing, and marketing your book. Because they use POD technology and because your book will automatically be part of the Amazon store, you will never have to fuss with shipping inventory to the USA—critical for those of us who live overseas. Your book will also be available through Amazon worldwide. Your readers need access to your book, and this is the best possible way to do it. Createspace is hooked up with major book distributors, so readers, if they prefer, will be able to order your book at their favorite bookstores.

Steps to Independently Publishing Your Book

1. Clear rights (photos, song lyrics, anything you might be using in your book that does not belong to you)
2. Copyright **your** work, apply for an ISBN / "International Standard Book Number" (if your POD company does not provide an ISBN for you).
 - www.isbn.org
 - www.copyright.gov
 - www.copyright.gov/fls/fl109.html
3. Hire an editor. I can't stress this enough! A professional editor will clean up your manuscript, pimp the prose, and make your work shine. Find an editor who specializes in your genre. You can get suggestions and ideas by talking to authors

you know, or by checking on-line writing forums for tips. Be prepared to spend a chunk of change on this. It's worth it. Work with a designer to do the interior layout and cover design for your book. Createspace offers a fantastic package that includes a design team. They'll come up with a knockout cover and beautiful interior design, or, if you're skilled with such things, you can do it yourself using their templates.

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4. Upload your manuscript and cover art for printing. Or have your design team do it for you.
 5. Create a sales channel
 - Amazon Advantage (not necessary if you use Createspace)
 - Direct sales from your website over PayPal
 - Distribution or licensing through a traditional publisher
 - Readings and other “live” appearances as a guest lecturer where you might sell your books
 6. Come up with a marketing plan.
 7. Get out there and sell your book.

Publish your eBook

- Distribute and sell through Amazon Kindle, Apple, Sony eReader and Barnes & Noble Nook
- Upload your converted manuscript to Kindle. Amazon Kindle will take you on—and they offer the best deals for authors and readers alike. It's impossible as an unknown author to get into the Apple, Sony or B&N stores, so you should go through a digital book distributor if you want your books to be distributed in those outlets. At the moment, I recommend Bookbaby.com.
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4. Monthly payments are deposited directly in author's bank account. You'll need a US bank account for this.

BookBaby www.bookbaby.com

1. 100% royalty for all sales
2. \$99 setup fee for conversion (basic service, more for premium services)
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What about selling the PDF version of my book?

- You can sell or give away a PDF version of your book, the same way I am giving away the notes for this workshop. You can format the PDF yourself, or have a professional format the book for you. A PDF version should have hotlinks in the table of contents and the index of the book. www.ebookarchitects.com will also format a PDF.

PART 3: Marketing

- Find a niche for yourself—examine the themes of your book and go after your audience. Look beyond the obvious.
- Use your website or blog to let your fans know about your book.
- Yes, put social networking to good use.
- Tap into the expat network for club support.
- Business cards, postcards, etc.
- Solicit reviews from friends, family, club members. Don't be shy!
- Get out there and do readings or lectures for groups interested in your topic.
- Offer discounts for volume sales.
- Create a newsletter
- Hire a publicist if you have the money.

Music and Words: Finding the Rhythm

Note: This is a piece I was asked to write for The Writer magazine. It's applicable here because it deals with my breakthrough as a writer. As is usually the case with writing, I learned a lot about myself by sitting down and thinking through exactly why I decided to start writing.

Robin Meloy Goldsby

(from *The Writer* magazine, Breakthrough Column, July Issue, 2008)

My father plays the drums. He also tells stories. When I was a child, he entertained our family at dinnertime with colorful observations about playing in symphony orchestras, jazz clubs, and burlesque theaters, mesmerizing us with pitch-perfect tales about fall-down drunks, stuck-up divas, and exotic dancers with names like Irma the Body. Fantasizing about my future as a performer, I listened to the rhythm of my father's words and dreamed that someday I'd be seasoned enough to tell a few stories of my own. But first, I had to learn a bit of piano playing, memorize hundreds of songs, and spend years negotiating the touchy social situations familiar to most musicians.

Breakthrough: The idea for *Piano Girl: A Memoir* came to me after decades of working as a solo pianist in roadside dives, plush Manhattan hotels, and European castles. Playing pleasant background music for listeners and non-listeners alike, I kept my sanity by monitoring the human comedies, tragedies, and mundane miracles drifting past the Steinway. After thirty years of scribbling notes on cocktail napkins and in journals, I began writing my book.

With a dose of cautious optimism, I sent a *Piano Girl* proposal to Richard Johnston, then the senior editor at Backbeat Books. Richard, who shared my musician's sense of humor, surprised me with a contract, an advance, and a six-month deadline.

Piano Girl received a *Publishers Weekly* starred review, an endorsement from *BookSense*, and landed feature interviews for me on *All Things Considered*, *The Leonard Lopate Show*, and *NPR's Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland*. Henry Steinway sponsored a *Piano Girl* reading and concert at Steinway Hall; attended by the esteemed William Zinsser, whose wonderful book *On Writing Well* had been my desktop bible while working on *Piano Girl*. His hopeful smile in the audience that night cast a magic spell over the evening and soothed my jangled nerves.

Backbeat Books coordinated a book-launch cocktail party at the Waldorf Astoria. NPR taped the event, which attracted friends, industry professionals, and booksellers from all over the country. I wore an over-the-top red evening gown, played "Night and

Day” on Cole Porter’s piano, and signed books. Sipping champagne, I checked out the stylish crowd swirling around the piano, stunned that my childhood fantasy had evolved into a book that people seemed to like. I never thought I would be published, much less with my first submission. But sometimes in the writing business, as in the music business, just showing up for the gig—ready and willing to give 100% —reaps huge rewards. The rosy glow of the Waldorf spotlight faded quickly, but I can still feel its warmth.

What I Learned: Memoirists suffer from the curse of too much material. Constructing a solid outline eased the selection process for me. Before I started writing, I knew exactly which stories I wanted to tell.

As a lyricist, I’ve studied the craft of setting words to music. As a memoirist, I’ve learned to work from the opposite direction, by stringing words together and finding a musical flow. Good music features well-placed moments of silence. The same can be said for writing. By revising constantly, I learned to hear the subtle rhythm of my sentences as I arranged the peculiar themes of my life into beautiful or ugly melodies that made sense. Whenever I got a phrase just right, I experienced a *whoosh* of elation.

The media hoopla surrounding *Piano Girl* stoked my ego, but it couldn’t compete with the contentment I had experienced while writing—the bliss of finding the lore of a story or discovering the musical threads connecting the chapters of my life.

Advice: Writing presents the same challenges as learning a musical instrument. There aren’t any shortcuts. You need passion, patience, and long hours of practice—every single day—until you get it right. Savor the tiny victories as they’re happening, and you win the artist’s race one step at a time. Don’t wait for the book-launch party to break out the champagne. Instead, revel in the honest victory of each well-crafted sentence. Celebrate! Remember that the joy of writing reveals itself when you make your story sing. Practice as much as you can, and you’ll find the music in your words. It’s there.

About the Author

Robin Meloy Goldsby is the author of *Piano Girl* and *Rhythm. Waltz of the Asparagus People: The Further Adventures of Piano Girl* is Goldsby's third book and first to be translated into German (*Walzer der Spargelmenschen*). Goldsby's thirty-year career as a musician has taken her from roadside dives to posh New York City venues and exclusive resorts, and on to the European castles and concert stages where she now performs. Robin has six solo piano recordings to her name—*Twilight*; *Somewhere in Time*; *Songs from the Castle*; *Waltz of the Asparagus People*; *Magnolia*; and *December*—and has appeared on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and *Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland*. Robin is a Steinway Artist. She is also the author and composer of *Hobo and the Forest Fairies*, a musical for children recorded by WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) in Germany. As a lyricist Goldsby has penned songs for Till Brönner, Curtis Stigers, Jessica Gall, Robert Matt, and Peter Fessler. In 2010 her collaboration with singer/composer Joyce Moreno, *Slow Music*, received a Latin Grammy nomination for Best Brazilian Album.

Robin currently lives outside of Cologne, Germany, with her husband—jazz bassist John Goldsby—and their two (almost) adult children.

You can visit Robin Meloy Goldsby's web page at www.goldsby.de. To hear Robin's interviews on *All Things Considered* and *Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland*, please go to www.npr.org/artists.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/16/technology/personaltech/ins-and-outs-of-publishing-your-book-via-the-web.html?pagewanted=all>