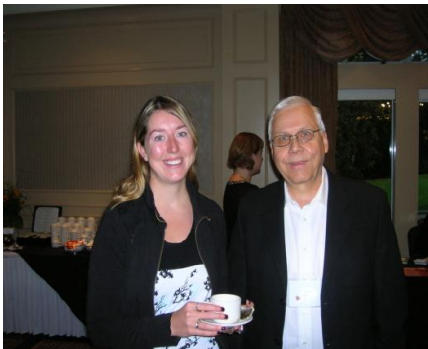


Wicked: Maguire 'Lights Up' Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable Breakfast

By Susan A. Henderson.

On the wickedly windy and wet morning of Saturday, October 17, a band of colleagues from the Vancouver Children's Literature Roundtable, friends and fans gathered at the University of BC Golf Club to hear, see and if lucky, meet Gregory Maguire. Though blustering outside, the atmosphere inside was warm and familiar as the gathered librarians, university professors, students, teachers and writers were treated to a personal and intimate conversation. Notably in attendance were BC writers and illustrators, Irene Watts, Kathryn Shoemaker, Sarah Ellis, Kit Pearson, and Nan Gregory, among others.



Kat Thomson, UBC MA student with author, Glen Huser.

The familiar atmosphere can be attributed to many elements but the delicious buffet, a smooth and organized agenda chaired by Kathryn Shoemaker and Margot Filipenko and the ghoulish witch and crow table pieces all added to the ambience. Ron Jobe's presentation of the Ronald Jobe Children's Literature Scholarship to UBC MA student, Karen Taylor was another highlight of the event. Karen was recognized for her academic excellence as well as her commitment to community through her volunteer work.

UBC MLIS student, Shannon Ozirny's sparkling introduction set the stage for Gregory Maguire. In his opening to, 'Playing with Fire', Maguire ironically tells us, he vowed "to stop giving speeches." Breaking this

promise is at the peril of his 3 children at home not doing their homework and he can only hope that "the house is not going up in smoke."



Igor aka-Marilynne Black, Master of Arts in Children's Literature Alumna.

During what felt like an intimate living-room conversation, he revealed personal stories- of his mother's death during his birth and playing make-believe as a child, he showed slides of Sendak's illustrations and discussed his book, "Making Mischief: A Maurice Sendak Appreciation", he explained his Oz philosophy underlying *Wicked*, shared the behind-the-scenes making of the musical, *Wicked* and finally, gave a sneak peek at Maguire's written and illustrated, *Matchless: A Christmas Story*-a retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's *Little Matchgirl*.

The tragedy that marked Maguire's beginning and the time he spent in an orphanage fuels his admittedly, "fretful and morbid" outlook which propels his dark, political and fierce *Wicked* series: *Wicked*, *Son of a Witch: Volume two in The Wicked Years* and *A Lion Among Men: Volume Three In The Wicked Years*. But it may also explain the connection he has with Maurice Sendak as a storyteller, illustrator, mentor and friend. "We name heroes as our family-kinship as fairytales become the

nest for the dispossessed." His revealing investigation of Sendak's illustrations and influences bespeaks an almost family-like closeness to the author.

The audience held its breath as Maguire told his own chilling childhood tale, "Let's Play Wizard of Oz". Life almost imitated art when the young Maguire shoved his infant brother Joe, cast as the defeated wicked witch, under the porch and almost suffocated him. Maguire ends the story with his quip to his adopted mom the rescuer, who feverishly dug the suffocating child out with a slotted serving spoon, "It's not our fault that the first time we let him play with us, he almost commits 'infant suicide'".

The self deprecating Maguire asks, "Why shouldn't your literary heroes be your friends?" and answers his own question by recounting his experience of finally meeting author David Sedaris, (*Me Talk Pretty One Day*, *When You are Engulfed in Flame* and recently,

Naked), after following closely behind him for some time on his book tour. Sedaris signs Maguire's book with, "Stop following me." Maguire deadpans, "It's hard to make friends as an adult."

Maguire finished his conversation with this truism: "The Oz inside [his] head is the paradox of life: things change and they stay the same-permanence and change." He graciously wrapped up the event by answering questions and signing books. Outside, the wind still blew, and the rain poured down, but we were warm and comfortable with the inspiration Maguire "lit" within.

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