

Heart to Heart

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ROMANCE WRITERS
OF NEW ZEALAND

April 2018

Interview With Bella Andre

Tracey Alvarez



If you're a romance reader or author and you haven't heard of New York Times, USA Today, Publishers Weekly and Wall Street Journal bestselling author, Bella Andre, then, I can't even.

She has the kind of career every author dreams about and she's worked her tail off for every milestone of her success. When the opportunity arose to interview her (pick me, pick me!!) I leaped at it. Problem is, what do you ask Bella when she's already written a fantastic bunch of advice for writers on her website plus some fascinating video interviews? (If you haven't visited her, I suggest you do: <http://bellaandre.com/for-writers/>)

So me doing me, I asked her questions that were a little bit different, a little more like the questions I'd have fun answering. After all, how many of us are frothing at the mouth to hear the full version of her words of wisdom at this year's conference? (me!!) So without further ado, here's Bella Andre.

P.S I'm so excited for August I can't even.

Describe your muse? Sprinkled in fairy dust or wielding a bullwhip?

Definitely fairy dust. Writing, for me, is all about the magic!

What is one piece of advice you wished The God of Writing had whispered in your ear before you began your career as Romance Author Extraordinaire.

Take more breaks! Honestly, I can be so Type A, that I'll work through without stopping for too long. Breaks to eat, sleep, hike, swim, read—and just to relax—are crucial.

And writing fuel – tea, coffee, wine?

Water.

Plotter, pantser or a combination of both (Plantser? Panter? Plotser?)

Both! Although I lean much more heavily toward pantser.

Stubble, clean shaven or lumberjack beard?

Any of the three could be perfect, depending on the guy.

Who was the most memorable character you've written and why?

Is it cheating to say all of them? I've never been able to pick favourites amongst my heroes or heroines. Honestly, I love all of them. Otherwise, I couldn't write the books.

Do you have a feline overlord or a canine companion?

Gus is a 15 pound miniature poodle/Pekinese. He sits by my feet all afternoon while I write.

All Blacks or The Wallabies (Hint for the correct answer: Black is ALWAYS the right choice)

All Blacks!

Most embarrassing thing you've done as an author?

Too many to count... Can we just forget they ever happened?

What is the Bella Andre recipe for being so prolific and continuing to write so many amazing books each year? (Eg 1 cup of Sit Your Butt in a Chair, ½ lb of quit complaining and just write etc)

I can write anywhere, anytime. In a train, on a plane, in waiting room, in a car, in my backyard, in my office, on the end of a dock, on the beach, etc. I also work out a production schedule for all my upcoming releases at least two years in advance and try to stick to it as best I can.

Beach Babe or Mountain Hiker? (Just saying: New Zealand has BOTH close to each other)

Both!

How do you keep your stories fresh and interesting?

For me, every hero and heroine are totally unique people, with specific desires, loves, and fears. Inevitably, this makes every story completely different from any one that has come before.

One little fact or behind the scene tidbit nobody else in the world knows about your latest release (don't worry, Kiwis are good at keeping secrets)

In LOVE ME LIKE THIS (The Morrisons), I was really

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nervous about writing about Polycystic Kidney Disease, because I didn't want to get it all wrong. Thankfully, I've had many lovely emails from readers with PKD, or with family members who have PKD, who have been really happy to see the disease written about in a romance.

Proudest moment as an author?

Passing 7 million self-published books sold in February!

What are you most looking forward to about your trip to New Zealand in August?

EVERYTHING!



Amazon Kindle US: http://bellaandre.com/YDSTM_Kindle

Apple iBooks: http://bellaandre.com/YDSTM_iBooks

Barnes & Noble Nook: http://bellaandre.com/YDSTM_Nook

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“Exercise the writing muscle every day, even if it is only a letter, notes, a title list, a character sketch, a journal entry. Writers are like dancers, like athletes. Without that exercise, the muscles seize up.”

— Jane Yolen

WHEN LOVE COMES TO TOWN

ROMANCE WRITERS OF NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE
NOVOTEL AUCKLAND ELLERSLIE 10-12 AUGUST 2018



Conference is coming up fast, and the cheaper
Early Bird rates close on the 31st of May.

So keep saving - we have an amazing line-up!

Register here: <https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/event/rwnz-2018-conference/>

Interview With Harlequin Executive Editor Kathleen Scheibling

Kendra Delugar



Kathleen has worked in publishing for more than twenty years and is currently Executive Editor of Harlequin Series in the Toronto office. She has worked with many New York Times bestselling authors from imprints such as Blaze, Western Romance, and most

currently, Heartwarming. Harlequin has not only taught her all she needs to know about rugged cowboys and reclusive billionaires, it has also allowed her to work with the most professional, intelligent and inspiring group of authors in the business. Kathleen heads up the company's newest global series, Harlequin/Mills & Boon DARE, and we're lucky enough to have her attending the RWNZ 2018 'When Love Comes to Town' Conference!

Kathleen, when did you know you wanted to work in publishing? And would you tell us a little about your journey to get where you are today?

To be honest, I never thought about what I would do after university. Studying English Literature at the University of Toronto was my dream in high school. My older brother taught me to read when I was very young and I spent a lot of time doing that, which prepared me well for my English Specialist degree!

Near graduation, I was lucky enough to have an offer from a friend who knew a literary agent who took on a part-time apprentice every year, so I accepted and went right into that. I learned about all aspects of the business, from finding new authors and editing to contracts and foreign rights. That agent helped me get my first full-time job in publishing, which was PR and marketing at a small press. From there I started editing, and I freelanced for a while as a line and copy editor. I also took a left turn and worked in film development for a few years, reading and analyzing scripts (huh, more reading.) I got sick of freelancing because I was so diligent about being available (why isn't the phone ringing?!!) that it stressed me out. So I applied for a part-time job at Harlequin and got it. The great work environment (the people I worked with, the great books, the working with authors!) led me to accept full-time when it came up. That was fifteen years ago now. I fully acknowledge that luck and timing had a great deal to do with where I am now.

What is the favourite part of your job?

Working with authors. Reading their manuscripts, helping them craft great stories. And I absolutely love meeting authors in person after months or years of just emailing or talking on the phone!

How many manuscripts would you read in an average working week? Has this changed much since the advent of electronic publishing?

In my current position I work with fewer authors than I did previously. And so I read fewer full manuscripts and instead read more proposals that other editors send to me to see if we can buy the stories. I try to read our finished books and competitive titles as well, which I read mostly on my phone, easiest on the commute to work. And I have a thing for literary non-fiction. And I'm in a book club. Instead of quantifying the number of books, let's estimate I read 1,000,000 words / month. That sounds impressive. ☺

For those of us who knew and loved the now closed Blaze line so much, can you tell us how the new Harlequin DARE imprint differs from it? What makes a book a 'DARE book'?

Thanks so much for saying so! I loved Blaze, too. What we're doing with Dare is trying to reach a global market and so these stories are more sophisticated. Blaze heroes were often very blue collar, and Dare heroes are more upscale. Also, Dare settings are more glamorous – less small-town America and more big city and exotic locales. The heroes are more angsty. But most important, Dare heroines are always empowered—the alpha female meets the alpha male. Finally, we have kicked the explicitness up. We have more freedom to be more explicit now, sometimes jaw-droppingly so.

Is the fact that you've created the DARE imprint indicative that there has been a shift in buying toward the sexier end of the market?

Yes, I think so. But I think readers who love sexy books also want a strong conflict and relatable characters – in the way that even a billionaire can be relatable! As in, he has the same emotional problems as everyone else.

I notice the new DARE line has some debut authors in it. Why do you feel Harlequin is such a good place for beginning authors?

It is so exciting working with new authors! I absolutely love the mix of experienced and new authors in this line. One of the great reasons Harlequin is good for new authors is our support system—we have a full-on Harlequin community that will support you with anything from help with promotion to questions about royalties. And our author community is spectacularly welcoming and helpful to new authors. I have to give a shout out to our editors as well. In all three of our editorial offices—Toronto, London, New York—our editors absolutely love their authors, and love reading romance. And that's what's most important about support—an editor's commitment.

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What are your 3 top tips for those attendees who are pitching for the first time?

- Relax! A pitch doesn't make or break a writing career. Let's chat! I don't bite.
- Do some research. Check out the M&B web site and look at what we're publishing. If you're writing what we want to publish your chances just increased!
- Be prepared to talk about the plot and conflict of your story. The best romances have the strongest obstacles! Here's a blog on pitching that may be helpful: www.soyouthinkyoucanwrite.com/2015/09/the-pitch-query-and-synopsis-a-primer

At the RWNZ Conference, what lines will you be taking pitches for?

I'll be taking pitches for any of the Harlequin North America lines and the Mills&Boon UK lines. Information on those lines here: <https://www.millsandboon.co.uk/np/Content/ContentPage/15>

What are you most looking forward to doing/seeing while you're in New Zealand?

I don't know where to start other than saying I have ALWAYS wanted to visit New Zealand. I love the outdoors and I'm anticipating the spectacular natural beauty of your country. I'm going to get outside as much as I can—hiking (tramping, you say?), kayaking, looking out at oceans I've never seen before. Volcanoes! Learning more about your history. I'm a big film fan and have seen several NZ films. If you could introduce me to Taika Waititi on my visit, that would be lovely, thank you. ☺ The Hunt for the Wilderpeople was my fave film of 2016. And I'm going to drink all of your wine.

And what was the last book you read and couldn't put down? (It can be a book you read purely for fun.)
Sorry, can't pick just one:

The Break by Katherine Vermette—A powerful story featuring Canadian aboriginal women characters doing what they can to thrive and survive.

David and Goliath by Malcolm Gladwell—It's about how underdogs can win. He's a big non-fiction writer in the US but he's actually Canadian.

Make Me Crave by Katee Robert—A stunningly sexy book that gets my vote as fave vacation read, ever. Talk about hot beach sex! Oh, she's a Dare author.

Kathleen, thank you for taking the time to answer these question. It has been greatly appreciated.



“The work never matches the dream of perfection the artist has to start with.”

— William Faulkner

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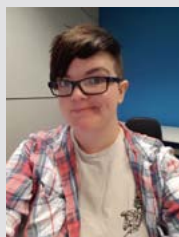
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Something Of A Memoir

Jamie Sands



I started writing seriously in my mid twenties. At the time I was a dress wearing, baking, femme wife. My imagination was a fertile place; I wrote three novels and lots of short stories. Somewhere over the years I realised I was miserable in my life. I spent a lot of time imagining various scenarios where I'd be free of my husband somehow. Where I'd wake up and he would have tragically passed away in the night and I'd be a (secretly relieved) widow. When I was in my early thirties it became impossible to ignore the fact I wasn't happy and I left my husband.

Once I started dating again, I dated women. I didn't particularly want to be in a relationship with a man again. This wasn't exactly a new thing. I'd had crushes on girls all through my childhood and teen years. In seventh form I even told a friend I loved her and cried for days when she turned me down. I decided it was easier to date boys and that's what I did.

I'm engaged to a gorgeous woman now. I've realised I'm trans genderqueer/non-binary instead of a woman. I'm pansexual (which means I fall in love with a person, and gender doesn't come into it). What I'm getting at is that I'm very queer!

Here's what I've learned: The world is much kinder to heterosexual couples. If I were to hold hands with a man in the city on a Saturday night no one would blink an eye. If I do it with my fiancé, it's an invitation to men to shout things. Things like 'you just need to try cock' or get in our faces and ask if they can join in.

This kind of thing completely sucks. I'm treated differently. It's not fun to constantly come out to people. Coming out is incredibly scary. You make yourself vulnerable and you can't predict how the person you're interacting with is going to react.

When I read and watch movies or TV shows, I look for people who are gay or queer or trans. I want to see those people who are like me. It's not easy. Many stories use queer-coded characters as villains. Silence of the Lambs is a famous example, where a character is a serial killer simply because they are trans. More often they are absent altogether. Books are generally more adventurous than movies. Lately I've been putting books with an LGBTQIA author or characters to the top of my reading list as often as I can.

For decades and decades, I've watched and read stories of heterosexual characters falling in love. I've seen so many men win over women. I've seen comedy movies making fun of gay guys. Stories that make jokes about queer panic and invited audiences to laugh at a man in a dress or make up. I've also seen straight, cis actors lauded for taking on 'challenging' roles where they portray trans or queer characters. I've read heroic gay characters with beautiful romances that end with one or both of them dying.

These tropes are damaging.

If a queer teen never sees themselves in the media they consume they feel alone in the world. Or more personally relevant – if a woman is stuck in a miserable marriage, questioning her desires but afraid of loneliness, she might turn to media to get her through. If she never sees lesbians living happily ever after, then she might stay in that miserable situation.

If you're a straight, cis person who is never exposed to media that shows other ways of life, how can you write a realistic world that incorporates background characters with diversity and nuance?

When I write now, I write characters who are queer and flawed, who are trans and nobody blinks an eye about it. Characters who are asexual, pansexual, polyamorous – all the good things. All the things you won't see in a Marvel movie or outside of an Oscar-baiting arthouse movie. If one of my queer characters dies, it's because there are so many of them in the story that it's not a token dead gay. There are many who live on and find happiness.

I sometimes wonder if I should fictionalise my personal history. Imagine it: Girl marries boy, leaves him, realises they're not a girl, settles down. They marry a wonderful girl and live happily ever after. But I don't, because I worry people would think it was far-fetched.

I'd rather live in a world where those kind of stories are as normal as 'alpha male wins heart of sassy woman'. As far as I see it, the only way to get that world is to put stories of my own out there, and support the published works of others who write this kind of story. Support the queer writers, support the romance and erotica that puts queer stories to the front. Seek out the marginalised voices and buy their stuff. Get it to the top of the Amazon bestselling list if possible! Lift them up any way you can with blog posts, sharing on social media, all that great stuff.

I know many writers are afraid of trying to write queer characters in case they 'get it wrong.' Honestly? Maybe you will get it a little wrong if you write gay characters without doing research or talking to queer people. But hey, making mistakes is how we learn, right? Besides sensitivity editors can help ensure your writing is authentic and doesn't rely on stereotypes. It's better to have some inclusion than avoid it because you're afraid.

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Maybe one day we can get to my ideal world, where queer stories aren't the exception. Where trans characters aren't a punchline. Where I won't worry I'm stretching credibility by having multiple queer and trans characters in a novel.

That's the plan. Let's make it happen.

Jamie grew up in Wellington and was a library devotee and constant reader of fiction from a very early age. Their fiction covers Romantic Comedy, Horror, Young Adult, Urban Fantasy and Cosy Mysteries; all have a romance element and highlight queer characters. They've had stories published in Baby Teeth horror anthology, Enamel literary magazine and self published a number of roleplaying games. They live with a wonderful girl called Anna and a round cat called Mochi. Jamie's visited Japan twice (another trip planned this year) and would like to move into Tokyo Disneyland. Read more here: <https://sites.google.com/view/jamiesands/home>

I Won't Be Home For Christmas - Amanda Prowse

A Book Review By Em Lowe



Last month Megan asked about authors and stories by/ or about older women and initially I thought, I don't tend to read books written about them. Then low and behold, I was given a book written by Amanda Prowse that fell precisely into that category. I'd never read her work before, so was uncertain when I first started. However, when I read the blurb on the back detailing a story

of a woman whose daughter is living in New Zealand, it kinda resonated. Particularly because my mum is in the UK, and I'm here amongst other reasons. So, I opened the first page and started reading... and reading... and couldn't put it down.

This lovely romance about a middle-aged woman who separated from her husband when her children were small, and remained single despite never divorcing. Whose children are now all grown up and whose daughter is travelling the world proved to be a wonderful story. The fear of growing old alone, of leaving old familiar things behind, of being hurt where we've been hurt before, of falling in love as a mature woman were all explored in what was a stunning story of a love affair between two middle-aged people. Not elderly. But past the child-rearing age, idealistic, dreamy-eyed hope of youth and adulthood.

Set on the north coast of New Zealand's North Island and in Bath, UK, it casts a beautiful portrayal of not only the idyllic Kiwi scenery, but of its people and of a friendship that's stood the test of time. It's definitely a must read, and I'm looking forward to reading many more books by Amanda Prowse in future.

From The Editor



It's been a rough couple of months here in Christchurch. In my non-romance writing life I lead a faith community. And in the wider faith community we have been wrestling with issues of inclusivity around same gendered relationships. Frankly it's a no brainer for me, in part because I grew up with a magnif-

icent gay man as a part of our family, and in part because my family were involved in media where issues around gender and sexuality were a non-event. As such, finding myself in this space has been painful - in part because who and how we love is something that I take seriously.

What has suffered most at this time has been my writing. You will note that the last couple of Heart to Heart magazines have been late – and for that I apologise. The executive and I am currently trying to find assistance in getting the magazine out. If you can help, please let me know.

It has been months since I was able to do my own writing work. Indeed, when I last left my heroine Riley, she was being hunted through a cave system as she sought to navigate a subterranean superhighway, in order to foil a psychopathic drug trafficker with an unnatural attachment to pointy objects. Meanwhile my hero – still in denial, was just about to get over himself and bring some heavy attitude and artillery to the party.

The parallels here with my own life are something I am aware of. No, I am not hunting a psychopathic drug trafficker through the darkness ... this week. But I have, when the stress of the world gets too much, abandoned that kick butt heroine within that raises me up, brushes me off and says "Go get it!" I really need to give her priority once again.

So, what is my learning for this part of the journey? To access my inner wonder-chick and claim back those things that give me life! Because love matters in all its rich diversity. "Hold on Riley – I'm coming for you!"

Peace,

Megan

Diversity, Faith & Love

Bridie Boyd

Diversity in Love was a fascinating theme for me. My day job is working for a social justice team, and diversity is a frequent discussion in the workplace. But if I am honest, I had not really thought about it when it came to my writing. I like to think that is partly because it is second nature.

A mixed race couple on the pages is not something I really think about, because I feel it is commonplace and normal and that is as it should be. A same sex couple is something I don't even blink at. Reading of older couples can pull at my heartstrings just as much as reading about first loves. The beauty of tried, true, and long lasting relationships is just as emotionally stirring for me as that first ever kiss, snuck under the tree in your backyard when the adults weren't looking. Diversity in Love is a challenge for me, because in many ways I like to think it is already done as naturally as breathing.

But then I started to really think about it.

I am a Church Go-er (exhales, whew, I said it). And often there is surprise on both the church side of my friendships and the writing side that I am a passionate romance writer with a faith. Last week at Church, while perhaps I should have been listening to the sermon, I began to think of Diversity of Love, my own first relationship, and where oh where was the spirituality of my characters and why was it not on the page?

I spent my hormonal teenage years in the Middle East (which is partly why I don't even think about mixed ethnicity couples, they were par for the course at high school) and discovered at an early age the difficulty of mixed faith relationships. Throughout both the expat community and through school, there were couples of mixed faiths. Indeed, my own first love was a Sunni Muslim boy. And what stood out for me when thinking about Diversity of Love, is what fantastic stories mixed faith couples can make and how few I actually see.

Part of that is because we have all been taught that you do not speak about religion and politics. And that message, I think, translates onto the page.

But in my opinion that is a bit tragic.

Experiencing someone else's faith can create moments of tension, of intimacy, and raw connection. For example, let us pair up a long-term Atheist woman with a confirmed Catholic man. Perhaps the couple can be invited to Sunday Lunch with the family after Mass. For the Catholic, this is the familiar, the norm, and something that is actually relatively mundane. It's not a point of contention. It doesn't even cross his mind that it might warrant a bit of conversation. But for the Atheist, it is an overwhelmingly

new experience with strange rituals and practices.

And when they glance over at the man they love, he is so poised and peaceful, connecting with his God. And that is a light she has never before seen him in. It's a new side for her to experience and he is not even aware of it. The woman has been asked to step outside her comfort zone and participate in something she doesn't believe in. And then, after the event is over, they have to go to massive family gathering where they know the Catholic beliefs are so tightly held, and when the mother of the man they love asks them how they found it, do they say that they don't have the same beliefs? Already the bubbling of emotions tied to this scene are intoxicating. One party is simply doing what they know, the other is entering a weird new world. And the disparity this tension makes can be riveting, page turning, and can be fuel for some stunning plots.

This is why I think the spirituality of characters can be a plot point, and a good one at that. On top of the newness of it all are the questions that go alongside this experience. Do your characters have to agree spiritually? Can you fall in love with someone's faith even if they hold beliefs you don't? How the hell will you get the mother-in-laws to behave during wedding planning if they both want to uphold conflicting traditions?

Even if you don't want to make the difference in beliefs a point of contention for your heroes to overcome, the subtle differences in their beliefs can make wonderfully rounded and full characters. When they have a fight, does one go to confession and the other pray alone at home? Does one want to say grace before a romantic meal? Does your ardent atheist find it very touching that their counterpart prays for them daily, is that particular discovery something that triggers the start of them falling in love? Use spirituality and religion as another dimension in your characters.

There is even a place for religious beliefs in sexy fun times. Does your usually adventurous, rough heroine want something more gentle on her wedding night because she feels it's a sacred occasion? Does your pagan character want to do it under the stars in a copse of trees because they feel they can be more intimately connected in the presence of nature? In some Jewish traditions, there are times during the month where sex is forbidden. And many followers of this belief report that not being able to even touch makes for some very sexually tense moments, and makes sex all the more intense, hotter and passionate when at long last they get to physically connect again. Imagine that build-up of tension in your next novel....

Whether a theist, polytheistic, or atheist, every person has a spiritual belief structure. But this chunk of the human experience is often missing from the written worlds we create. So next time you write romance onto a page, I challenge you to not just have your characters fall in love

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with the physical and the emotional, but also with the spiritual side of each other. Use faith as another element in your diversity, and writing, tool box, and see what these new elements add to your stories.

Bridie Boyd spends much of her time as a Social Justice Advocate working in such areas as elder welfare, mental health support for young people, and most recently developing programs for young people on the importance of consent. Bridie is also a graduate in philosophy and is currently studying theology. An avid lover of the word, Bridie is working on bringing her love of the spiritual and the romantic together as she explores love and diversity.

The Bookshelf



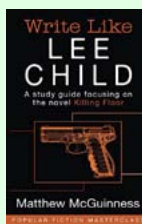
Strangers To Superfans

David Gaughran

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0798PH9QT>

It's not enough to know who your Ideal Reader is, you also need to imagine how she feels when recommended your book. You must figure out why she hesitated before clicking the Buy button. And it's crucial determine why she liked your book enough to finish it ... but not sufficiently to recommend it to her friends.

The Readers' Journey is the new marketing paradigm you need to transform strangers into superfans.

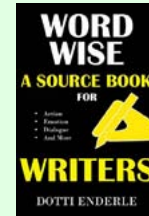


Write Like Lee Childs

Matthew McGuinness

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B079GLM9XV>

In Write Like Lee Childs, you will discover what it is that makes Lee Childs' novel a highly effective crime thriller. Armed with a host of insights into the workings of a great crime thriller, you will feel much more confident as you approach the task of planning your own novel.



Word Wise: A Source Book For Writers

Dotti Enderle

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B079DPJPPY/>

WORD WISE works as a reference guide and writer's thesaurus...with an extensive listing of actions, emotions, body language, and more. A must for every writer's bookshelf!



The Pro Writer Mindset

Jennifer Blanchard

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01GZIBGJE>

Mindset is 90 percent of success, the other 10 percent is taking actions that are aligned with the goals you have. Get your mind in the right place and you can accomplish anything.

This interactive book will help you think and act like the bestselling author you dream of being. It also gives a full breakdown of the mindset, practical actions and energetic actions the author took to become a #1 Amazon Best Seller. You'll walk away with a whole new lease on your writing life.



Bootcamp For Writers: Beyond The First Draft

Linda Style

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00EGOX0F8>

Linda's popular "Techniques of the Pros" online writing classes have been praised for providing a wealth of information in a clear, concise, and easy to understand style.

In the lessons Linda dissects and discusses powerful techniques used by bestselling authors and includes examples and exercises that will enable you to recognize and analyze problems in your work...and then use the techniques to create compelling, memorable stories.

2017/2018 Great Beginnings Contest Report

Kendra Delugar

We got a solid number of entries in the Great Beginnings Contest this year – 34 (not as high as it has been in the past, but by no means as low as we've had either). It was well over the 21 entries required so we could have the full five finalists.

The entries were made up of: Historical Romance (6), Romantic Suspense (6), Sweet Contemporary Romance (2), Sci-Fi Romance (1), Paranormal Romance (1), Contemporary Romance (10), Sexy Contemporary Romance (3), Women's Fiction (2), Young Adult Fantasy (1), New Adult (2).

Four entries were self-classified as category romance. And we had one self-classify as erotica, and another two that bordered on erotic in content (and it's vital we know this when assigning to judges).

The quality of work entered was amazing, and it was a really tight race at the top with several entries missing out on finaling by the slimmest of margins.

I would like to thank all the first-round judges who gave up their time to make this competition possible. And the entrants for putting their work out there. I've been told by several entrants how invaluable the comments and feedback were.

Thank you also to the final judges, Kathleen Scheibling from Harlequin Global and Elaine Spencer from The Knight Agency.

The Welcome Mat

We're rolling out the red carpet this month for another lovely group of new members. Welcome, everyone. It's great to have you as part of RWNZ!

Sarah Barrie - Australia

Leah Bromilow - Australia

Amanda Clymo - Australia

Téa Cooper - Australia

Samantha Douglas - Australia

Ann B Harrison - Australia

Fiona Marsden - Australia

Anne Smith - Australia

Carol-Anne Tate - Otago

You should already have your username and password for the RWNZ site. If not, give Gracie a shout at membership@romancewriters.co.nz and she'll sort you out.

Don't forget to read the INFORMATION FOR NEW MEMBERS page on our website:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/membership/information-new-members/>

Of course, you'll need to login before you can access the members' area, but you'll find information there about how to join up with our Members Only Facebook page and the NZRomance Yahoo loop—along with a whole lot of other fun stuff.

The winners of the RWNZ 2017/18 Great Beginnings Contest are...

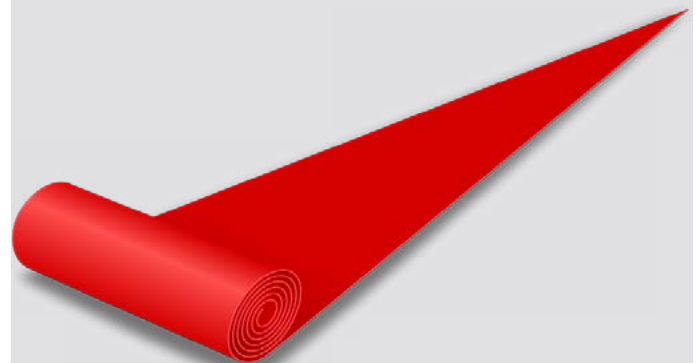
Editor's choice:

1. Conquering Nick / Jennifer Raines
2. Finding Solace / Catherine Hudson
3. Taylor's Law / Jennifer Raines
4. Beyond Heat / Ashley Logan

Agent's choice:

1. Conquering Nick / Jennifer Raines
2. Taylor's Law / Jennifer Raines
3. Beyond Heat / Ashley Logan
4. Finding Solace / Catherine Hudson

Congratulations!



Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust Scholarship



Many of you are familiar with the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust, set up in memory of Desire author Sandra Hyde (writing as Sandra Hyatt), a beloved member of RWNZ for many years.

Sandra passed away suddenly on August 21, 2011. Because so many were touched by her life, either personally or through reading her wonderful books, her family set up an education trust to continue her legacy of generosity and kindness by furthering the career of a NZ-based romance writer.

If you'd like to improve your craft and further your career goals, applications are open for a scholarship to the 2018 RWNZ annual conference, When Love Comes To Town which will be held in Auckland on August 10-12. Here are the details: (more information on the conference programme is available through the RWNZ website www.romancewriters.co.nz)

2018 Scholarship: RWNZ Conference fees (Friday Workshop and Weekend Conference, plus cocktail party). If the winner is not currently a member of RWNZ, their prize will include a one-year membership subscription, since only members can attend the Weekend Conference. The winner will also receive \$150 contribution toward expenses.

Who can enter: Any New Zealand-based writer of romantic fiction (published or unpublished). **Anyone who has previously entered (other than a prior successful applicant), is very welcome to reapply.**

How to enter: The Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust was established to benefit aspiring New Zealand romance writers. Please email your application, telling us a little about your writing career to date, how you are "aspiring", and why you would like to attend the RWNZ conference. Your email should be no longer than one A4 printed page (feel free to make it shorter!) and should be in the body of your email. **DO NOT SEND AN ATTACHMENT.** Include your name, email address and phone numbers in the email. Send your email to the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust on sandrahynetrust@gmail.com

Deadline to enter: Midnight, NZ time, Monday, May 21, 2018.

Winner announced: By Monday, May 28, 2018.

Disclaimers: The prize is conference registration, as described, plus \$150 contribution toward expenses. Flights, additional hotel costs, breakfasts and dinners (including the Awards Dinner) and all other non-conference meals,

associated travel costs, and all other costs are the responsibility of the winner. If no applications are received that are deemed worthy of the award, the judges reserve the right not to make an award. The winner will be required to register for the conference by the early-bird deadline of **May 31, 2018**, otherwise, the judges reserve the right to offer the prize to another applicant. The conference fee will be paid directly to RWNZ with the \$150.00 toward expenses paid directly to the winner. Please read the FAQ below for further information. Then get cracking!

Good luck, we look forward to receiving your entry. The Trustees of the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust.

FAQ

I am a published author (or an unpublished author). Can I still enter?

The award is open to both published and unpublished writers.

I don't live in New Zealand. Can I still enter?

No, sorry. The Trust deed specifies that the trust is for the benefit of New Zealand writers.

I don't really write romance...my book is Young Adult / women's fiction / a thriller. Can I still enter?

No, sorry. The award is for romance writers. You don't have to be a member of RWNZ, but you do have to be writing romance.

Does the prize cover my travel costs?

No. See the disclaimers above.

Do I have to prove financial hardship to win this award?

No. Hardship is just one reason why you might have an interest in this award. Go ahead and mention it if it's relevant, but don't worry if it's not.

If I win, and then I decide I can't go to the conference, can my friend use the prize instead?

No. The prize is not transferable. If the winner is unable to make use of the prize, another winner will be chosen.

Will you pay me the cash for the prize?

No. We will pay RWNZ directly for your conference fee, and will pay you a \$150 cheque toward expenses.

I've already registered for the RWNZ conference. Can I enter this award?

Yes. You will be reimbursed for your Friday and Weekend Conference fees.

Will you be running this award again next year?

That's the plan! The Trust has received several donations to enable us to offer this scholarship. Thank you very much to everyone who has donated so far. If you'd like to make a donation, email sandrahynetrust@gmail.com for

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further details.

Who will select the winner?

The decision will be made by the Trustees of the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Trust. These include members of Sandra's family and some of her writing friends.

Who can I contact with questions about this award?

No one. Just use the information above to guide you. If something's not mentioned here, use common sense.

How will I hear if I've won?

The winner will be contacted via phone, and we'll follow up with non successful applicants by email. The result will also be announced in Heart to Heart, the RWNZ newsletter.

"The more closely the author thinks of why he wrote, the more he comes to regard his imagination as a kind of self-generating cement which glued his facts together, and his emotions as a kind of dark and obscure designer of those facts. Reluctantly, he comes to the conclusion that to account for his book is to account for his life."

— Richard Wright



Beyond Gay Romance

Gillian St Kevern



I wrote my gay paranormal romance, *Thorns and Fangs*, in 2013, without any idea if there was a market for it. When I discovered there was an established, thriving market already in existence, I was delighted. There were readers

interested in stories like mine! I'd assumed my only option was self-publishing. Instead, there were a number of small presses dedicated to LGBT romance, even thriving communities on Facebook and Goodreads. It felt like coming home.

Now, only four and a half years after discovering the gay romance genre, I'm ready for something different. While all my stories have LGBTI protagonists, the romance part of my stories is getting smaller and smaller. I'm exploring new genres—vintage mystery and YA fantasy—that I hope will put my stories in front of a larger audience. My latest experiment was taking part in a kindle scout campaign. While ultimately, my campaign was unsuccessful, *Gentlemen Don't Murder* was viewed 1200 times over a month, which is more interest than any of my other stories to date have generated in such a short period. I also received some lovely messages of support, including one from a seasoned kindle scout veteran who suggested I try again, without the LGBT category as she didn't see that 'it added anything to the story.'

I appreciate the kind intention behind the advice, but it's not advice I plan on taking. Instead, I'm finding myself driven to tell stories about characters whose sexuality is only one part of their lives. I'm not saying goodbye to romance entirely—in fact, while I made the decision that there wasn't going to be a romantic plotline in my murder mystery, my characters decided that there was and is, and well, that's happening. But it's not the main thrust of the story. Instead of romance driving the plot, I've got Peregrine's desire to build a career, and Phoebe's determination to reunite her family. Their sexuality determines how they view themselves and others, but it doesn't define them. I think that's important.

NineStar Press, the small press that gave my vampire novels a home, accepts stories across a wide range of genres and the entire spectrum of identities. Their catalogue includes romances—which sell well and have an established reader base, even if the big 5 are not that interested—and the mysteries, sci-fi, fantasy, literary and horror, which struggle to find their readership.

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Despite their wide range of books, readers see LGBT content and assume romance. I'm finding this limiting, and I think this was one contributing factor to my desire to write something with potentially wider appeal—to push back at this assumption.

What's really interesting is that I was contacted out of the blue this weekend by a fellow writer who is putting together a support group for writers who write LGBTI fiction but don't class themselves as romance writers. He's hoping that together we can figure out a way to avoid being pigeonholed. It'll be interesting to see what comes out of our discussions, but I really hope we can find a way to put stories that reflect a variety of identities and experiences in front of a wider audience.



From The President

I hope everyone is getting excited about the RWNZ conference. In the next few issues of Heart To Heart, we will be starting to hear from our fabulous guest speakers and workshop presenters. I am so excited just thinking of meeting Damon Suede, Bella Andre, my friend and fellow historical writer Grace Burrowes, and to hear Nalini Singh talk about writing series. I have to give the thumbs up to the conference committee for the outstanding programme they have put together.

If you have never been to one of the RWNZ conferences I urge you to try and get to this one. You can make lifelong friendships, learn so much about our industry and the craft of writing, and you come away absolutely energized and enthused to 'finish that damn book.'

I can still clearly remember my first conference. I think it was in 2006. I had only just joined RWNZ and begun my writing journey. I had only just started a book, but I pitched to editors and agents anyway, and to my surprise I got a request. Boy, did that make me have to finish the book.

I knew absolutely no one when I went to my first conference, and believe it or not I'm pretty shy when it comes to meeting new people. You have to make an effort and be prepared to instigate a conversation, and I'm basically lazy.

But you know what? Most people were very friendly. It's easy to start chatting to those you don't know because you all have something in common. You start by asking what they write, how long they have been writing, what are some of their favourite authors etc. The passion to write romance unites us all.

I soon realized that there were writers of all levels and genres, and to this day I still call the writers I met in 2006 really good friends. I got to rub shoulders with NY

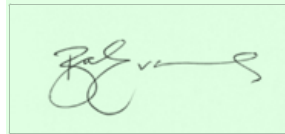
Times best sellers, and other very successful authors. I got to quiz them on EVERYTHING to do with writing and publishing. I got to talk with others like me who were just starting out and realize we all held the same fears.

Now I'm an old hat at attending RWNZ conference and I've even been to a few RWA conferences too. Yet, I have to say I ALWAYS look forward to August and the RWNZ conference. I'm excited to be going once again this year. I LEARN something new at each and every conference.

I hope to see you in Auckland this year. Visit our website to see the full programme, and remember, if money is tight, apply to the Sandra Hyde Romance Writers Memorial Scholarship.

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/events/sandra-hyde-romance-writers-memorial-scholarship/>

Happy Writing



Bronwen Evans



"People on the outside think there's something magical about writing, that you go up in the attic at midnight and cast the bones and come down in the morning with a story, but it isn't like that. You sit in back of the typewriter and you work, and that's all there is to it."

— Harlan Ellison

Pacing Pitfalls

Allison Lane

One of my chores last weekend was to shelve the stack of keepers I've accumulated over recent months. Since my 144 shelf feet of keeper space is full, adding anything means getting rid of older books – which explains why the pile gets so big before it actually gets shelved. I must decide which of the existing keepers get donated to the library before I can add new titles. Thus I must take a brief look at every book on the shelf. Some are easy to keep – favourites that I reread whenever I need the comfort of crawling into a beloved world with characters I adore. Some are easy to discard – books I've never returned to and can no longer remember even after reading the back cover blurb. And then there's my warning collection: books that contain major writing flaws; I keep these as a reminder to avoid these flaws in my own work.

Each book in the warning collection has a label on the spine defining its fault. The label that caught my eye this time said PACING.

The story is a time travel published some years ago when time travel was all the rage. The first three-quarters of the book is actually quite good. The characters are well developed. The history of the target period is well researched. The characters understand the rules they must follow while visiting that period, rules that are clearly laid out and stressed more than once. The rules themselves form a significant part of the conflict, building tension as the characters face situations that tempt them to break those rules. The author carefully inserts period research in tiny bits to build a delightful world without burying the reader in information dumps. Interesting twists in the action advance both a romance plot and a suspense plot.

But all that changes at the three-quarters point. Suddenly the characters charge from crisis to crisis without even a one-paragraph bridge to let the reader catch a breath. They abandon all those carefully stressed rules without a second thought or any remorse and scatter anachronisms right and left. At least half the plot points get stuffed into a quarter of the word count. Not a pleasant experience for the reader.

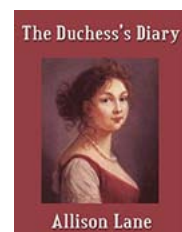
I don't know if the author ran up against a deadline and finished the book in a mad rush or suddenly realized that the contracted word count was approaching and panicked. I do know that there was no apparent effort made during revisions to correct the problem. So instead of going on my keeper shelf as a great read, this one landed in the warning collection.

Pacing is one of the more difficult to learn aspects of writing. A thriller moves faster than a cozy mystery. Action/adventure has a different pace than a romance. But there is no formula telling us how to accomplish that, so no genre is immune from pacing problems. Slow scenes let the reader meet characters or assimilate what just happened. Yet many consecutive slow scenes bore readers, encouraging them to set the book aside, never to be opened again. Fast scenes build tension. But long strings of fast scenes make the reader so edgy that the book gets tossed aside in favour of a more relaxing activity. One of the author's jobs is to find the appropriate mix to properly pace that particular story.

The book in my warning collection could have been vastly improved if the primary plot points had been spread more evenly throughout its chapters instead of crammed together at the end. In other words, the author should have cut or combined earlier scenes, providing ample space to handle the rest of the plot. Then the characters could either have found a way to address the final crisis while following the rules or have made the wrenching decision to break them. While the pace of any book will always pick up as it approaches its climax, the acceleration should happen naturally, not in a jarring jolt that smacks the reader upside the head. And even at the peak of activity, the readers needs occasional relief from non-stop action. This particular volume forgot that need.

I've done this sort of revision many times, always to the benefit of the story. It is one of first items I address after completing the rough draft. I start by defining the purpose of each scene. Does it reveal character, advance the plot, or clarify the conflict? If it does none of these, it is merely filler and has to go. (I wrote a drawing room scene a few years ago that was charming, witty, and delightfully appealing, but it bore no relationship to the conflict, the plot, or the characters, so out it went.) Weak scenes accomplish one of these three purposes. Strong scenes accomplish at least two, so combining two weak scenes with different purposes can create a strong, vibrant scene.

This book remains in my warning collection, of course. I can't afford to discard such a valuable reminder of what revision should accomplish.



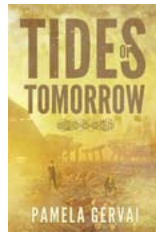
Award-winning author Allison Lane has enjoyed a lifelong affair with books. Born in Minnesota, she earned degrees in mathematics and computer science from the University of Illinois, then embarked on careers designing computer software and teaching classical piano, before settling on writing novels. Among her many awards is the Romantic Times Career Achievement Award and being named a finalist for RWA's RITA award. Allison and her husband currently reside in California. Visit her website at <http://www.eclectics.com/allisonlane/>

Meet The Authors

Pamela Gervai

www.pamelagervai.com

Pamela Gervai found her inspiration to write novels at her first RWNZ Conference. She was born in Fiji but is now a NZ citizen. Until recently Pamela was Convener for the Auckland Chapter. She loves associating with Romance Writers, as she says, they are the most supportive writers on the planet.



Tides Of Tomorrow: <https://amzn.to/2HdQEhE>

Annie Seaton

<http://www.annieseaton.net>

Annie Seaton lives near the beach in Australia. Her Porter Sisters series is in print in Australia and New Zealand, and Whitsunday Dawn will be out with Harlequin Mira in July. Each winter, Annie and her husband roam the remote areas of Australia for story ideas and story research.

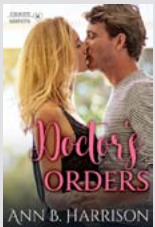


Annie Seaton Amazon Page: <https://amzn.to/2H7GJu1>

Ann B Harrison

<https://www.annbharrison.net>

Ann B Harrison was born in a small town in the South Island, and was content until her husband wooed her with tales of sunshine. She now calls Australia home. Ann dipped her toes into Self Publishing in 2014 with great success and is now also published with Tule Publishing.



Christmas Glitter: <https://amzn.to/2uW9Rj4>

Tea Cooper

www.teacooperauthor.com

Tea Cooper writes Australian historical fiction and rural romance. She's been a teacher, a journalist, and a farmer, but these days she haunts museums and indulges her passion for storytelling. Her books are published by Harper Collins Australia (HQ imprint) and Escape Publishing. Her latest release is The Naturalist's Daughter.



The Naturalist's Daughter: <https://amzn.to/2Hfa2vv>

Regional Round-Up Reports

Auckland
Convener: Ruth Bell
(ruth.s.clough@gmail.com)

Our speaker for April was Darian Smith, who gave an interesting presentation on psychology and how certain aspects of it can be applied to your characters to make them more realistic and grounded. Psychology is also a great way to add internal conflict to your story.

We learned about transactional analysis and how a lot of what think and feel and fundamentally believe as 'true' is developed when we are young and receive messages from parents, teachers and other adult mentor figures. These messages may be good or bad and they are the building blocks of who we are as a person. We also learned about the five 'love languages' and how different people express their feelings in different ways and how this can lead to conflict. Thanks Darian for a great presentation.

Our next meeting will be on held on Saturday 5 May at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. We have three wonderful speakers in May, who will form a panel - Jackie Ashenden, Frances Housden and Karina Bliss.

Hawkes Bay
Convener: Kendra Delugar
(kendraonthemove@hotmail.com)

Our March meeting took place at Jackie's. At this month's meeting Bronwen helped us work on Show and Tell. Using our own work we went through identifying the four ways to show, so we could see how much showing we do and how much telling. We also went through the exercises we'd done beforehand to see if we could deepen our POV by adding in more showing. It was a small group of six - four hard working writers and two sleepy kittens.

We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 1pm, and new members are always welcome. Our next meeting will be held on the 7th of April where we'll be working on Setting and Description.

Coast to Coast Convener: Vivienne Matthews (vivienmatthewswriter@gmail.com)

Wellington/Kapiti Coast
Convener: Kris Pearson (kris.p@paradise.net.nz)

Blenheim Convener: Iona Jones (ionajones@xtra.co.nz)

Otago Convener: Maria King (franciscowie@gmail.com)

Nelson
Convener: LaVerne Clark
(nelsonromancewriters@xtra.co.nz)

Eight attended our March meeting. After a quick round of introductions, Lorna Croft www.elsieediting.co.nz presented a follow-up workshop from last year's Show Vs Tell session. Both informative and full of useful tips, we had our work cut out for us but everyone rose to the challenge amid much laughter, discussion, and puzzled expressions. We broke for a cuppa and sampled Annika's delicious baking. Lorna ended the workshop with a fun and innovative activity to help anchor the theory of 'Show' in our writing—think Charades. A great big thank you to Lorna.

Our next meeting is on the 14th April 2 pm at Nick Smith's Head Office on Waimea Road.

Christchurch
Convener: Lyssa Randolph
(lyssarandolph@hotmail.com)

The March meeting of the Christchurch Chapter met in South Library with a good turnout, and it was great to see a few new faces again this month. We are always glad to welcome some new members to the group. We had a useful and productive session lead by Amy Paulussen on how to write Query Letters to editors and agents. We considered what was needed for a succinct and effective business letter with a strong hook! Amy kindly shared a query letter of her own which had produced requests, and we also tried writing our own brief synopses.

We also spent time on some 'cold reads' of two pages of opening chapters giving some constructive and thoughtful feedback for members on work in progress.

Then this month we had a healthy number of attendees to hear the awesome Soraya Nicholas, writing as Soraya Lane, as she spoke on her publishing career to date. Soraya generously shared her time, her wealth of industry knowledge and even some books with a keen group of listeners in a brilliant Q and A session that fired everyone's enthusiasm for their own writing, no matter the stage.

Next meeting Sunday 6th May at South Library 2-4pm. All welcome.

