

Poet explores pain, truth of Holocaust

Charles Fishman offers poetry reading Tuesday night in Atwood Memorial Center

by Mark Rosenbaum
STAFF WRITER

The poetry of Charles Fishman, a Jewish poet, seeks to make sense of the frustration felt among Jews since the end of the World War II.

The Center for Holocaust Studies and the University Program Board Literary Arts Committee are sponsoring a poetry reading by Fishman.

The reading will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Atwood Little Theatre.

Fishman is a critically acclaimed poet whose writings about the Holocaust have been described as powerful, evocative, philosophical and angry.

David Romtvedt of the Wyoming Arts Council said Fishman manages in the poems to convey the pain of the Holocaust – pain for all people – while helping us to be healed and look forward.

He is currently a professor at the State University of New York at Farmingdale. He is also recognized as a Distinguished Service Professor and participates in the Visiting Writers Program.

Fishman's work has been praised by many writers, including Michael Blumenthal, Carolyn Foche and Denise Levertov.

Levertov described Fishman's poems as deep, sensuous, musical and fully alive.

Toshiko Schwerdtfeger, the assistant director of UPR and

adviser for the Literary Arts Committee, was approached by Steve Klepetar, SCSU English professor and poet, last spring.

Klepetar suggested Fishman's work to the committee members, and they read and reviewed it.

The poetry was well-received and liked by the committee.

"Holocaust poetry is serious, but at the same time, the delicacy is so beautiful

and complex. His poetry conveys a beauty, a beauty of truth, and it reaches into people's hearts."

Schwerdtfeger said.

In his book, "The Death Mazurka," he writes about the murder of the Jews in plain language, with nothing added or taken away from what happened in the Holocaust.

The book probes deep into the author's philosophy of the human condition and about life and death.

These poems are beyond sadness and beyond

anger, said Gerald Stern of the University of Iowa.

He added in their single

mindedness, in their sheer accumulation, they are terrifying and pure.

Some of Fishman's new poetry will be read on Tuesday.

According to Schwerdtfeger, he has sent Lynn Bryce, co-director of the Center for Holocaust Education, some of his poetry in progress via e-mail.

The Tuesday night reading will be an excellent chance to hear some of Fishman's work in progress.

According to an article by S.L. Kremer of Kansas State University published in a 1992 issue of *Choice* magazine, the sacred duty of Holocaust remembrance—commemorating the dead, honoring the living and posing the pertinent theological, ethical and political questions generated by the Holocaust – is the substance of Charles Fishman's compelling collection of American Holocaust poetry.

“
His poetry conveys a beauty, a beauty of truth, and it reaches into people's hearts.

Toshiko Schwerdtfeger
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
UNIVERSITY PROGRAM BOARD