

Media Contact:

Hafizah Geter, Programs Coordinator, Cave Canem Foundation:
718.858.0000; hgeter@ccpoets.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOI DERRICOTTE ELECTED TO ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS' BOARD OF CHANCELLORS

Brooklyn, NY (January 17, 2012)—**Cave Canem Foundation**, North America's premier home for black poetry, congratulates Cave Canem co-founder **Toi Derricotte** on her 2012 election to the **Academy of American Poets' Board of Chancellors**. Along with poets **Jane Hirshfield** and **Arthur Sze**, also inducted this year, Ms. Derricotte joins an illustrious Board of 15 whose members advocate for the programmatic work of the Academy, elect the recipients of some of the Academy's awards, and serve as ambassadors of poetry in the world at large. New Chancellors are elected by the current Board of Chancellors and serve a term of six years.

The Board of Chancellors was formed in 1946 in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Academy's founder, Mrs. Marie Bullock, who stated, "These men and women must be chosen from amongst literary persons of the highest standing. They must themselves be known for their good judgment and eminent integrity of opinion. They should geographically represent the entire United States, so that their choices will be representative of the nation as a whole, and not of one trend of and new energy."

Cave Canem co-founder and University of Pittsburgh Professor of English **Toi Derricotte** is the author of five books of poetry: *Tender*, winner of the 1998 Paterson Poetry Prize; *Captivity*; *Natural Birth*; *The Empress of the Death House*; and most recently, *The Undertaker's Daughter* (University of Pittsburgh, 2011), hailed by Terrance Hayes as "her most stirring and innovative work yet." Her *The Black Notebooks*, a literary memoir (W.W. Norton), won the 1998 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Non-Fiction and was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. Additional honors include the Lucille Medwick Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America; two Pushcart Prizes; the Distinguished Pioneering of the Arts Award from the United Black Artists; the Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award from Poets & Writers, Inc.; the Elizabeth Kray Award for service to the

— more —

field of poetry from Poets House; and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Founded by Marie Bullock in 1934, the **Academy of American Poets'** mission is "to support American poets at all stages of their careers and to foster the appreciation of contemporary poetry." Today, the Academy fulfills the first portion of its original mission by administering seven major awards—from a first-book prize through a lifetime-achievement award—and nearly 200 College Prizes at schools across the country. To fulfill the second half of its mission, the Academy administers several programs: *Poets.org*, an award-winning website that receives one million unique visitors each month; National Poetry Month (April), established by the Academy in 1996 and the world's largest literary celebration; the Online Poetry Classroom, a resource providing free poetry lesson plans and other tools for teachers; the Poetry Audio Archive, a collection of nearly 500 recordings dating back to the 1960s; and *American Poet*, a biannual literary journal and magazine for members. To learn more about the Academy, visit www.poets.org.

Founded in 1996 by poets Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady to remedy the under-representation and isolation of African American poets in MFA programs and writing workshops, **Cave Canem** is a home for the many voices of African American poetry and is committed to cultivating the artistic and professional growth of African American poets. Called "the major watering hole and air pocket for black poetry" by 2011 National Book Award winner Nikky Finney, Cave Canem has grown from an initial gathering of 26 poets to become an influential movement with a renowned faculty and a high-achieving national fellowship of 319. Its programs include an annual week-long retreat, first- and second-book prizes with prestigious presses, Legacy Conversations with pre-eminent black poets and scholars, Poets on Craft talks, writing workshops, publications and national readings. Such pre-eminent poets as Elizabeth Alexander, Yusef Komunyakaa and Natasha Trethewey number among the organization's faculty and judges; Major Jackson will judge the 2012 Cave Canem Poetry prize. To date, the organization has published *Gathering Ground: A Reader Celebrating Cave Canem's First Decade* (University of Michigan Press, 2006) and *The Ringing Ear: Black Poets Lean South* (The University of Georgia Press, 2007). The *Cave Canem Anthology 2008-2009* is forthcoming from Willow Books in 2012. For more information, visit cavecanempoets.org.

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