

The New York Browning Society, Inc. Newsletter

Founded in 1907

Date Wednesday, November 19th
2025

Time 6:00– 7:30PM

Place Jefferson Market Library
425 Avenue of the Americas

Angelina Zhang
Give Me A Stage



We Welcome Angelina Zhang's presentation as a call for revolution in a confounding world of struggle and the beautiful challenges that presents. She will draw upon our Society's history as a means for poetry to empower people as we gather together and Join us for the start of the 119th season at Jefferson Market Library this Wednesday 11/19 in the Mae West Room.

www.nybrowning.org

JEFFERSON MARKET LIBRARY – 425 AVE. OF THE AMERICAS 11/19/25 6pm!

Ring in the New Year with a Séance

Becoming an already beloved meeting brought to you by **Jane LeCroy** and company as we reach out to the words of our poets with tea, spirits and music! You Don't want to miss this fascinating event **January 21st 2026 6pm!**



Elizabeth Barrett Browning at Casa Guidi in Florence with Flush. Drawings by Vanessa Bell, as endpapers to her sister Virginia Woolf's book, *Flush*.

Our Annual Holiday Poetry Reading

Bring your favorite Robert and Elizabeth poems to read or share your own as we look to bring some holiday cheer this **December 17th** at 6pm. Feel Free to invite your best poet pals and friends, dead or alive to help us celebrate the love, life, work and joy that the Browning's shared with friends and family in this festive time!

We Can't Wait to hear your poems this holiday season!

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RB's Most Beloved Critic

Elizabeth Barrett knew Robert's poetry from the first works published until they finally met.

He was generally not favorably regarded by the critics, and was disheartened by some of the vituperative reviews he received. She, on the other hand, "got him" [in today's jargon], and recognized early on that he was ahead of his time. She offered not only moral support but also the occasional valuable criticism.

Here is what she wrote to him in a letter of February 17, 1845, a month into their 20-Month correspondence, and three months Before they finally met.

"You have taken a great range – from those Faint high notes of the mystics which are Beyond personality to dramatic impersonations, gruff with nature: "grr-r-r you swine" [from "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister"]; and when these are thrown into harmony, as in a manner they are in Pippa Passes (which I could find in my heart to covet the authorship of), the combinations of effect must always be striking and noble – and you must feel yourself drawn on to such combinations more and more.

But I do not, you say, know yourself – you. I only know abilities and faculties. Well, then, teach me yourself – you. I will not insist on the knowledge – and in fact you have not written the R.B. poem yet – your rays fall obliquely rather than directly straight. I see you only in your moon. Do tell me all of yourself that you can and will...

"Of the great body of critics you observe rightly, that they are better than might be expected of badness; only the face of their *influence* is no less undeniable than the reason why they should not be influential. The brazen kettles will be taken for oracles all the world over. Bu the influence is for to-day, for this hour – not for tomorrow and the day after, Do you know Tennyson? I have great admiration for him. That such a poet should submit blindly to the suggestions of his critics is much as if Babbage [inventor of the first mechanical computer] were to take my opinion and undo his calculating machine by it. But anybody is qualified, according to everybody, for giving opinions upon poetry. It is not so in chemistry and mathematics...

"The curious thing in this world is not the stupidity, but the upper-handism of the stupidity. The geese are in the Capitol and the Romans in the farmyard – and it all seems natural that it should be so, both to geese and Romans!"

Months after they met, she offered some suggestions for Browning's early version of "The Flight of the Duchess," and in a letter to her shortly after receiving them, he wrote (I think with some humor) "Your criticisms for my 'Flight of the Duchess' are adopted – all seventy-three of them."

And she also wrote: "I used to study your work, characteristic by characteristic, and turn myself round and round in despair of being ever able to approach it."

As for Robert: I believed in your glorious genius, and knew it for a true star, from the moment I saw it – long before I have the blessing of hoping it might by *my* star."

As you can see, at times their correspondence can be as eloquent and moving as their poetry.

-H. Robert Griffiths

Mark your calendars for this special presentation and be sure to also join us for our Holiday Poetry Reading and a Séance in January!

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**JOIN US THIS
WEDNESDAY
Nov 19thth
Mae West Room
3rd Floor 6pm!
nybrowning.org**