

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A True Cultural Curio for Our Time



“I just love the freshness of his writing, the boldness, the inventiveness, the play with language ... So many poets are tentative, but there’s a sense of confidence in Keith’s writing. It’s very much his own voice, something that has taken possession of him.”

IFEANYI MENKITI

Late Owner, *Grolier Poetry Book Shop*,
Harvard Square

NEW YORK, March 2026 — *Ragged Sky Press* is pleased to announce the release of literary oddity extraordinaire, *Petrushka*, by Keith O’Shaughnessy. Set in a quasi-Russian dreamscape, the blackly comic, darkly beautiful poems and fables contained in this vast volume chronicle, in an elaborate symphonic arrangement of recurring themes and motifs, the miscellaneous travails of several interacting characters—ballerina, chess master, opera tenor, cabaret chanteuse (if not, too, the odd street urchin, idiot, or organ grinder)—all under the vigilant glare of the gleefully belligerent, aggressively indecorous *Petrushka* puppet thwacking away savagely at his various adversaries with his signature slapstick. By turns elegant, satirical, and absurd, the collection, like its namesake, revels throughout in the perverse and grotesque, yet always with mischievous wit and rhetorical invention.

In 2011 Keith O’Shaughnessy’s first book of poems, *Incommunicado*, won the inaugural Grolier Discovery Award, sponsored by the legendary Cambridge bookshop of the same name. His second, *Last Call for Ganymede*, followed in 2014 from Ilora Press. At long last, his magnum opus, *Petrushka*, was released by Ragged Sky Press in March of 2026. Along the way he also authored three chapbooks—*Carnaval*, *The Devil’s Party*, and *Snegurochka*—all with Pudding House Publications. A near-lifelong resident of Princeton, he teaches English at Camden County College in southern New Jersey.

“His poetry is as impeccable and sui generis as he is ... His lines are simultaneously earnest and playful, austere and effusive, direct and multivalent. Sentences can spill across dozens of lines without losing their grammatical coherence or sense of trajectory.”

ERIC MCHENRY,
Columbia Magazine

Petrushka: Legendary jester antihero of Russian folk puppetry tradition, distinguished by his penchants for anarchic violence and subversive humor. His name was a homonym for ‘parsley’ but derived from Pyotr, the human trickster of yore. Typically, he had a crooked nose and humped back, sported a red skirt and cap, and wielded a slapstick during his various interludes with policeman, doctor, soldier, or priest—if not the very devil (or house elf) himself—before dragged off howling by dogs. His voice, a grating squeak, was produced by a tiny whistle (or ‘pishchik’) lodged in the puppeteer’s throat. Stravinsky composed a celebrated ballet on the subject, in which the notorious mischief-maker vies for the attention of his beloved ballerina with his rival, the Moor, but to no avail—that is, until the achievement of his menacing, posthumous revenge.

Paperback now available at *Amazon.com*, *BarnesandNoble.com*, and *Bookshop.org* ISBN 978-1-933974-46-0 \$20

For further information, contact: Keith O’Shaughnessy, keithoshaughnessy@hotmail.com, 609-610-6173