Canadian Poet Wins Award from JHUP Journal

Canadian poet JonArno Lawson has won the 2009 Lion and the Unicorn Award for Excellence in Poetry. This marks the second time in three years that the Toronto resident has won the award.

The award goes to an outstanding work of children’s poetry. Published by the Johns Hopkins University Press, The Lion and the Unicorn is a theme- and genre-centered journal of international scope committed to a serious, ongoing discussion of literature for children.

Lawson, who also illustrated the book, won for his April 2008 collection A Voweller’s Bestiary, From Aardvark to Guineafowl (And H). The idea behind the book is simple: an alphabet book based on vowel combinations, rather than on initial letters. Judges Michael Heyman, Angela Sorby, and Joseph T. Thomas, Jr., had high praise for Lawson’s work.

“A Vowel’s Bestiary is not just a fine book of poetry; it is also a benchmark, a signpost gesturing toward the future of the genre,” they wrote in the September 2009 issue of the journal announcing the award. “Indeed, Lawson’s A Voweler’s Bestiary is not just this year’s best book of children’s poetry; it is one of the year’s best books of poetry, period.”

In 2007, Lawson won the award for Black Stars in a White Night Sky. His first collection of work for children, The Man in the Moon-Fixer’s Mask, was a finalist for the 2005 award.

Lawson has also published three books of adult poetry. He lives in Toronto with his wife and three children.

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