



## SAIL TO SUCCESS 2012

The Sail to Success 2012 writer's workshop, sponsored by Arc Manor/Phoenix Pick press and organized by Shahid Mahmud, was held onboard the *Norwegian Sky* cruise liner, sailing from Miami on December 3 and returning December 7 after a tour of the Bahamas, including Grand Bahama Island, Nassau, and Great Stirrup Cay. Onboard instructors were authors Kevin J. Anderson, Paul Cook, Nancy Kress, Rebecca Moesta, Mike Resnick, and Jack Skillingstead, publisher and editor Toni Weisskopf, and literary agent Eleanor Wood. *Locus* was invited to attend, and design editor Francesca Myman was on board to represent the magazine.

Over the four days, 17 panel-style classes and two critique sessions were scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., with a five- to six-hour break each day for cruise activities. Most students attended a majority of the classes, though there was no requirement to do so. Students had excellent social access to instructors, with three scheduled group meals and the opportunity to make individual appointments to discuss the industry or just share a drink.

Overall, the focus was on the seminars, with classes slanted towards providing an insider perspective on the business of science fiction and fantasy publishing, but also including the history of science fiction, a solid introduction to writing basics, and some advanced technique. Highlights included Kevin Anderson and Rebecca Moesta's well-known "Professional Approach to Writing" seminars, Eleanor Wood's insider look at the intricacies of contract negotiation, and manuscript critique sessions with Nancy Kress and Toni Weisskopf. Critique sessions were structured as a kind of "speed-dating" version of traditional workshoping, with the instructors offering comments on manuscripts submitted prior to the cruise and a brief opportunity for fellow students to comment. Additional optional follow-up critique sessions were available with Kress.

Arc Manor/Phoenix Pick provided plenty of swag, including T-shirts and bags printed with the Sail to Success logo and instructor names, and a 550-page perfect-bound book with glossy cover containing all the students' manuscript submissions bound into a single volume.

The *Norwegian Sky* itself was a handsome 848-foot-long ship with a friendly crew of 934 and a Hawaiian-luau atmosphere: hibiscus flowers

printed on the hull, bright aqua carpets with tropical fish swimming down the hallways, etc.

Onboard amenities included three *plein-air* pools on the top decks, five Jacuzzis, three "free" restaurants, three luxe "paid" restaurants, five bars, a fitness center and volleyball court, a spa offering massages and facials for purchase, a video arcade, and the requisite shops and casino. Despite these glitzy offerings, the overall atmosphere for workshop participants was quiet, with a preference for sharing time with instructors and classmates, enjoying the clean salt sea air on the many open decks, and even writing! (Kevin J. Anderson was spotted writing away with his signature giant headphones affixed, in the forward lounge. According to Anderson, he continued writing even when a dance class started up around him.) The cruise line offered classes in everything from dancing to cupcake decoration to circus skills like juggling, plate spinning, and devil sticks, which might have challenged even Anderson's concentration.

There was a bewildering (and exciting) array of shore excursions available, including visits to the recently opened billion-dollar Atlantis Aquaventure resort development, scuba diving, various flavors of snorkeling – including the usual variety and a variant with powered scooters, sailing, fishing, kayaking, parasailing, and dolphin and sea lion encounters. Various tours were available by glass-bottom boat, underwater motorbike, semi-submarine, Harley-Davidson (I'm not joking), Segway, bike, off-road jeep, horseback, and catamaran. Workshop participants tended towards milder away expeditions, including historical tours and self-made adventures, though many also opted for at least one good snorkel or swim. Participants and instructors all had positive things to say about the experience in the evaluations, and many instructors have chosen to return next year at Mahmud's invitation. Confirmed faculty members include Kevin J. Anderson, Eric Flint, Nancy Kress, Rebecca Moesta, Mike Resnick, Jack Skillingstead, Toni Weisskopf, and Eleanor Wood.

The 2013 workshop will be held aboard *Norwegian Sky* from December 2-6, sailing again from Miami to the Bahamas. Further information will be available at <[www.sailsuccess.com](http://www.sailsuccess.com)> and <[www.phoenixpick.com](http://www.phoenixpick.com)>.

– Francesca Myman ■



Transportation to Nassau Island, where Thoraiya Dyer, Jeff Giese, and Francesca Myman explore the local hotspots

Eva Eldridge asks Mike Resnick to sign a book

Attendees (l to r): Therese Pieczynski, Lou Berger, Ron S. Friedman, Shahid Mahmud (sponsor), Ilana Harris, Eva Eldridge, Kelly Varner, Alvaro Zinos-Amaro, Gamaliel Martinez, Frank Morin; front: Jessica Carlson, Sandra Odell, Thoraiya Dyer

Instructors (l to r): Paul Cook, Kevin J. Anderson, Rebecca Moesta, Mike Resnick, Toni Weisskopf, Eleanor Wood, Nancy Kress, Jack Skillingstead

