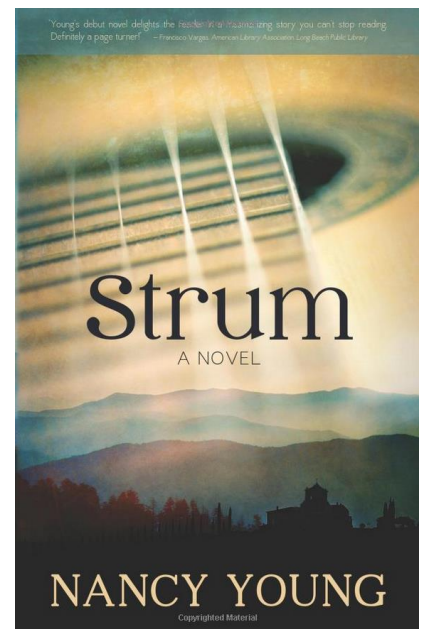




LITERATURE

Long Beach Author Scores Prestigious IPPY Award for Debut Novel

by BRIAN ADDISON
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Long Beach author and Belmont Shore resident Nancy Young picked up the Seagull classic guitar she bought and noticed the claim by the guitar's manufacturer attached in a pamphlet: "No trees are ever cut down to make our instruments; our guitars are made from 800-year-old cedars that fall naturally in the forest of Quebec."

At first, *Strum* was meant to be a short story about the ideas of love and guitar music but eventually morphed into Young's 380-page debut novel that intricately weaving together love, spirits, ancestry, and a family's intimate tie to music. The book has garnered her three awards, including the Silver Medal for Best Regional Fiction from the Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPYs), a contest that drew in some 5,500 applicants from across the States, Canada, and 32 other countries.

"I write in a very global, literary style," said Young, noting Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as one her inspirations behind *Strum*. "I particularly love the Latin American writers like García Márquez and early Isabella Allende, whose magical realism is akin to the spiritual and ancestral fiction of Asian American writers like Amy Tan."

Ever the avid traveler, Young lived in Australia for over a decade and has visited over 30 countries—“International travel is my first love,” she said—largely inspiring much of the work behind *Strum*, whose narrative crosses four different continents and two centuries.

The Long Beach Public Library Foundation worker—Young is the Foundation’s Director of Development—may be new to the Long Beach scene given she moved here only a year ago, but she has deep insight into the literary scene of our city. We are, after all, talking about the city which was once home to John Updike, Upton Sinclair, and Ray Bradbury. PEN Center USA, the nonprofit dedicated to writers east of Mississippi, even wanted to bring Long Beach into its fold, Young noted.

“But those days seem to be gone,” Young said. “However, there are a few of us here trying to think of how to change this—including the Foundation.”

The Foundation has never shied away from engaging the writing and literary community, having hosted a now-defunct author series called *Booked and Long Beach Reads One Book*. Apostrophe and Gatsby Books both have notable book clubs and author nights, but Young notes that the the audiences are not large.

The lack of popularity in or for literary events isn’t to say the literary scene is completely inept: The Foundation is the beneficiary of one of the largest international mystery writers conference come November, *Bouchercon: Murder at the Beach*, dedicated to the work of American author Anthony Boucher.



“We are hoping there will be a huge infusion of writer and readers to our shores in November that will start a small tidal wave,” Young said. “But for budding authors in the area, I say that the whole publishing industry is exploding and changing right now—and there is no reason not to just do it!”

Young echoed this sentiment several months ago when speaking to high school students in Northern California.

“I told them to be very observant and pay attention to the small details in life,” Young said. “Write every opportunity you have and go deep: explore issues and personal interactions and learn to think deeply. I have kept a continuous journal since I was 12 years old. It’s never too late to start, no matter how old you are—that is the beauty of writing.”

Take note, budding writers—from an award-winning writer no less.

To purchase [Strum](#), click here.

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