



## THE CARSON MCCULLERS CENTER FOR WRITERS AND MUSICIANS

Quarterly Newsletter

FALL 2016

### PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF CARSON MCCULLERS

### IN THIS ISSUE

Columbus State University's Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians is dedicated to preserving the legacy of Carson McCullers; to nurturing writers and musicians and educating young people; and fostering literary, musical, artistic and intellectual culture in the United States and abroad.

### WHAT'S NEXT

*Upcoming Events at the Smith-McCullers House, 1519 Stark Ave, and Columbus State University's Arnold Hall, 4225 University Ave.*

#### DAVID DIAMOND R&R

The fall's final David Diamond Reading & Recital series event will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 2nd at 7:30pm in Arnold Hall atrium on CSU's Main Campus. The performance will feature a reading in poetry and prose by

Delaney Lee, an undergraduate student in CSU's creative writing program, and a musical recital by CSU's Schwob School of Music String Quintet, featuring Natalya Klenovskaya, Reisa Fukuda, Changhyun Paek, Ina Pekova-Apostolova, and Yair Ophir. The event is free and open to the public. Come out and show your support for Columbus's own aspiring writers and musicians!

#### MELISSA PRITCHARD READING

Join us for a reading by the 11th annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Writing Fellow, Melissa Pritchard, on Wednesday, Nov. 9th, at 7:30pm in Arnold Hall auditorium on CSU's Main Campus. The reading will be followed by a Q&A and book signing. Copies of Pritchard's three latest books will be for sale. This

event is free and open to the public. Please see the article below for more information on Pritchard's work, her new manuscript, and her involvement in the Columbus community.

#### GA POETRY CIRCUIT

The fall kick-off for the GA Poetry Circuit will bring poet Virgil Suárez to Columbus. A Cuban-American writer, Suárez is the author, editor, and translator of numerous books, including most recently the short story collection *The Soviet Circus Comes to Havana & Other Stories*, and of the poetry collection *90 Miles: Selected & New Poems*. Mr. Suárez is the recipient of a National Endowment for The Arts Grant



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as well as an Individual Arts Grant from the State of Florida.

Currently, Suárez is working on several projects including a new collection of poems titled *Indigo*. Suárez will give a reading on Tuesday, Nov. 15th at 7:30pm in Arnold Hall auditorium on CSU's Main Campus. This event is free and open to the public.



### Claire Bellanti

President of the Jane Austen Society of North America.

## JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY GUEST SPEAKER

Join us for an illustrated talk by Claire Bellanti, President of the Jane Austen Society of North America. Bellanti's talk, "You Can Get a Parasol at Whitby's: Circulating Libraries in Jane Austen's Time," will address an 18th century social institution that was very important to Jane Austen in her own life and in her fiction, the Circulating Library. It provides a brief history of the circulating library, and includes citations from Austen's novels and letters to explain the centrality of the circulating library and other forms of sharing books in Regency England. Bellanti will visit the Smith-McCullers House on Saturday, Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00pm. This event is free and open to the public.

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

### INTERNATIONAL COMPOSER GUEST SPEAKER

The Center welcomed composer Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon to the Smith-McCullers House on August 31st. A 2011 Pulitzer Prize finalist for his work *Comala*, Zohn-Muldoon's talk, which was co-sponsored by the Schwob School of Music, focused on the art of setting poetry to music. Following his lecture, a concert of Zohn-Muldoon's original music was performed at the River Center for the Performing Arts, which included CSU faculty and other musicians from around the world.



### David Diamond Performers

October's David Diamond R&R saxophonists and poet (left to right): Bryan Canonigo, Kaitlin Sheriff, Kirk Habana, Jared Cummings, and Justin Briley.

### DAVID DIAMOND R&R

On Oct. 5th, the David Diamond series held the McCullers Center's first event in CSU's newly renovated Arnold Hall on the university's Main Campus. The performance featured a reading in poetry and prose by CSU creative writing student Justin Briley and a

recital by CSU's Schwob School of Music Saxophone Quartet, featuring Jared Cummings, Kaitlin Sheriff, Bryan Canonigo, and Kirk Habana. For more on the McCullers Center events moving to Arnold Hall, please see the article below.

### THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING

Wednesday, Oct. 12th, saw the premiere of this year's Carson McCullers Film Series in honor of McCullers's 100th birthday. The film series debuted with a showing of the 1997 remake of *The Member of the Wedding*. The film, based on McCullers's third novel, stars Anna Paquin and Alfre Woodard. For more on events celebrating McCullers's 100th birthday, please see the article below.

## MCCULLERS CENTER EVENTS MAKE THE MOVE TO ARNOLD HALL

The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians has seen a venue change for many sponsored events this fall. The Center made the move from the more intimate setting of the Smith-McCullers House—McCullers's childhood home on Stark Avenue in Columbus—to the recently renovated Arnold Hall on CSU's Main Campus. The new venue offers multiple performance spaces for Center events, including an auditorium for readings, Q&As, and film screenings, and the atrium for musical recitals and larger performances.

The Center debuted the new performance space earlier this month with the fall revival of the David Diamond Reading & Recital series. Seated on the Google steps in the atrium, the audience enjoyed a recital by CSU's Schwob School of Music Saxophone Quartet, featuring Jared Cummings, Kaitlin Sheriff, Bryan Canonigo, and Kirk Habana. The musical performance was interspersed with readings in both poetry and prose by Justin Briley, a creative writing student who began his reading from the second floor balcony

above the steps. As the evening progressed, Briley moved about the space, reading from above, beside, and below the audience.

"We hope that by using the new space in Arnold Hall we'll create a more dynamic atmosphere and performance," said Director Nick Norwood.

Although the majority of events will now take place in the new space in Arnold Hall, the McCullers Center will continue to host events at the Smith-McCullers House. For a complete list of McCullers events with the location, please visit [www.mccullerscenter.org](http://www.mccullerscenter.org) or email us at [mccullerscenter@columbusstate.edu](mailto:mccullerscenter@columbusstate.edu).

While in Columbus, Pritchard has continued to work not only on her latest novel, but also on her humanitarian work right here in the local community.

Shortly after settling in at the Smith-McCullers House, Pritchard joined a yoga class at Art of Yoga on 2nd Street, where she met several attendees of St. Thomas Episcopal Church. Through St. Thomas, Pritchard became involved in the Path to Shine ministry, a mentoring-tutoring program designed to help at-risk youth succeed both inside and outside the classroom. A program with several locations across Georgia, Columbus's Path to Shine chapter was started by Greg Herring and Lisa Venable and operates out of the Boxwood Community Center in East Carver Heights, which reopened in March 2018.

During her residency, Pritchard has been volunteering weekly as a tutor at the Boxwood Community Center. She works with young girls and boys, helping with homework and doing arts and crafts. According to Pritchard, the importance of these weekly sessions lies not in completing that day's homework assignment, but in investing valuable, much-needed one-on-one time with the kids.

"I am grateful for this time to work at the McCullers Center and think it's important to give back to the community, even though my main focus while here is to work on the novel," Pritchard said.

Pritchard's volunteer work with Path to Shine is only her latest endeavor in a long line of service. In 2004, Pritchard began using writing as a form of witnessing about social injustice when she published a magazine article on the Lost Boys of Sudan. In the years that followed, Pritchard's writing as a way of witnessing got her involved in a

number of causes around the world, including sex trafficking in India, women and children's health in impoverished regions of Ecuador, and tribal extinction in Ethiopia. She also worked with the Afghan Women's Writing Project and founded the Ashton Goodman Fund after the death of Sr. Airman Ashton Goodman, a U.S. soldier who worked with a Provincial Reconstruction Team that Pritchard shadowed in 2009.

"I live with an almost constant tension between the writing of fiction and non-fiction, between the solitude needed to imagine fictional landscapes, and the desire to travel to all parts of the world, to hear and record stories of people in war zones, in brothel districts, in hospitals, on tribal lands under assault, in prisons, wherever the freedom of a people, a culture or the liberty of individuals is threatened," said Pritchard of her service work.



### David Diamond Reading

Justin Briley reads to the audience on the Google Steps in Arnold Hall's atrium at the fall's premier David Diamond R&R.

## A FELLOW IN THE COMMUNITY

For over ten years, the Carson McCullers Center has hosted visiting writers in residence, but none have taken to the Columbus community like Melissa Pritchard. As the recipient of the 11th annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Fellowship for Writers, the award-winning novelist, short story- and essay-writer has been living and working in McCullers's childhood home, the Smith-McCullers House, in Columbus since early September.



### Melissa Pritchard

The 11<sup>th</sup> annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Writing Fellow, award-winning novelist Melissa Pritchard.

While in Columbus, Pritchard will also speak at the adult education forum at St. Thomas and Path to Shine. As she moves forward, Pritchard feels confident in her role as a new member of the Columbus community. "I've been meeting a wonderful group of people, and feel overwhelmingly welcomed and supported," she said.

While in Georgia, Pritchard will be finishing up her research for the new

book—a historical novel based on the life of Fanny Kemble, an actress from a British theatrical family who married Pierce Butler, owner of plantations on St. Simons Island and Butler Island before the American Civil War—and she will be continuing to work on the manuscript.

Pritchard will also meet with CSU creative writing students to talk about writing and careers in publishing.

Her end-of-residency performance—a public reading from her work—will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 9th, in the Arnold Hall auditorium on CSU's Main Campus.



### A Photo for a Fellow

A mentee at the Boxwood Community Center drew this picture for Melissa Pritchard after a fun mentoring session!

## WHAT DOES CARSON MCCULLERS MEAN TO YOU?

Justin Briley is a senior English major with a concentration in creative writing at CSU. He is the current editor-in-chief of *Arden*,

CSU's journal for undergraduate art and writing, and was one of the featured readers for this year's David Diamond Reading & Recital series. For Briley, the Carson McCullers Center means a greater understanding of what it means to have a home.

"I will confess to being no great fan of Carson McCullers...She, like many of us, left [Columbus]. Unlike most of us, she didn't come back. She escaped to New York and died there. But nearly all her works focused almost exclusively on her childhood home. I, on the other hand, joined the Navy. I didn't see the world, but I did leave town. While away, the sound of Columbus played on loop in my head. I wrote of almost nothing else. I thought exclusively in terms of pine trees and bricks baked from red clay, and the elongated inhale of a Southern drawl. The droning applause of cicadas, cheering the setting sun.

In staying away, Carson lived the rest of her life in that headspace where Columbus is just as much a wellspring of ideas, images, and emotions as a place. The fact of it—that it's not Atlanta, New York, San Francisco, or wherever is supposed to be better—doesn't ever interrupt the fantastic memorial service for it. The parade of memories you've collected over the course of a childhood spent dangling your toes in the Chattahoochee, wondering.

It's appropriate, then, that Columbus State came to own her home in Nyack. The place she lived out her career as a writer became a tiny colony of the boring little Southern town she could never really leave.

And so, I lied. I do enjoy Carson McCullers—I don't like that, but I do. I like to think her ironic voice, smirking on the page, is a

teasing kind of confirmation of the aphorism of expatriates and grannies the world over—you are free to leave home. Home won't leave you."



### Justin Briley

Justin Briley shares with us what Carson McCullers's writing about home means to him.

## CELEBRATING CARSON'S 100<sup>TH</sup>: AN UPDATE

As the anniversary of Carson McCullers's 100th birthday approaches, both the Carson McCullers Center and the greater Columbus community are celebrating the life and legacy of the beloved author.

While the majority of events will take place in the spring, the celebration is starting this fall with the introduction of the Carson McCullers Film Series. On Thursday, Nov. 10th, the Center will host a showing of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, based on McCullers's debut novel. The film stars Alan Arkin, Cicely Tyson, and Sondra Locke. The showing starts at 7:30pm in the auditorium in Arnold Hall on CSU's Main Campus and is free and open to the public.

Additionally, CSU's Schwob Memorial Library is offering an exhibition on the life and work of Carson McCullers. The exhibit had a soft opening earlier this month and will celebrate McCullers's birthday with a reception in the spring. The exhibition

will remain on display until March 2017 at the Schwob Memorial Library on CSU's Main Campus. The archive showcasing is free and open to the public.



### Movie Night

Join us for the Carson McCullers Film Series screening of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* in the Arnold Hall auditorium on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, at 7:30pm.

For a comprehensive list of 100th birthday events, please visit [www.mccullerscenter.org](http://www.mccullerscenter.org) or call (706) 565-1200.

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Carson McCullers will soon be turning 100. The celebration is underway, and literati around the world are taking part. As the most prominent steward of Carson McCullers's legacy, The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians is both leading the way in celebrating this momentous occasion and assisting others in their own celebratory events. For instance, the McCullers Center is helping to promote the new album and series of concerts by world-famous musician and Carson

McCullers lover Suzanne Vega. Vega's new album, *Lover, Beloved: Songs from an Evening with Carson McCullers*, is receiving great reviews—especially in Europe, where she has recently been on tour and where *Vanity Fair France* recently ran a feature article on Vega, McCullers, and the new album.

The Center is currently collaborating with many partners on the birthday celebration. Here in Columbus, that list includes the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, The Columbus Museum, MidTown, Inc, the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Muscogee County School District, as well as a number of units within Columbus State University—the Departments of Art, History, and Theatre, the Schwob School of Music, the Schwob Memorial Library, and the First-Year Experience. Outside of Columbus, we are partnering with the Nyack Center, the Nyack Library, Nyack's Rivertown Film Society, the Library of America, and John Cabot University in Rome, where an international academic conference on the life and work of Carson McCullers will be held in July 2017.

And of course we've partnered with Karen Allen and her production team on the film adaptation of "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.," principle photography for which was completed this past summer. Please visit the film's website ([www.atreearockcloudthefilm.com](http://www.atreearockcloudthefilm.com)) to view production stills and, especially, "The Making of A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.: A Karen Allen Film," a 10-minute video shot on the set and featuring interviews with Karen, the principal actors, cinematographer Rick Sands, producers Brian Long and Diane Pearlman, and production designer Kristi Zea. Seeing this video will

only whet your appetite for the real thing, which Karen will be presenting in Columbus at the *Carson at 100: The McCullers Centennial* showcase event at the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts on Sunday, February 19th, 2017. She will also present the film at the Nyack Center on Saturday, March 25th, 2017, in New York City as part of the launch of the Library of America's new volume of McCullers work—*Carson McCullers: Stories, Plays, and Other Writings*—and at the conference *Carson McCullers in the World*, at John Cabot University in Rome.

Meanwhile, I'm on my way to Nyack, where I'll be meeting with some of our partners there, and where I'll be meeting with Liliya Ugay—composer-pianist, Schwob School of Music alumna—to view the performance space at the Nyack Library and to make further plans for the simultaneous celebration taking place there on Sunday, February 19th.

Stay tuned for more details!

-Nick Norwood



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