

The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians Newsletter



Preserving the legacy of Carson McCullers

Fall/Winter 2023

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 to fostering literary, musical, artistic, and intellectual culture in the United States and abroad.

McCullers Center's Collaboration on Documentary Film Progresses to First Rough Cut



Filming on the first-ever documentary film about Carson McCullers got underway in August. The film, a collaboration between the McCullers Center and award-winning documentary filmmaker Claudia Müller, will cover both McCullers's life and work, with an emphasis on the latter. Müller, whose most recent film, *Elfriede Jelinek—Language Unleashed*, won both the German and Austrian film awards for best documentary as well as other awards, traveled to Rome in the spring to interview McCullers scholar Carlos Dews. In August Müller arrived in New York with cinematographer Klemens Koscher to film in the Nyack area and conduct filmed interviews with McCullers biographer Mary Dearborn, singer/songwriter Suzanne Vega, journalist and film critic Rex Reed, and writer and gay rights activist Sarah Schulman. Müller and Koscher were joined by McCullers Center Director Nick Norwood and CSU Recording Studio Sound Engineer Nick Williams-Smith. The crew packed their 20 or so cases of gear and luggage in a Chevy Suburban ("Bruno") and, with Norwood at the helm, traveled to the Berkshires, Cape Cod, and Roxbury, Connecticut, to conduct the interviews. They also filmed extensively in Nyack, as well as in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

After eight days in the northeast, the crew then traveled to Columbus, Georgia, to shoot B-roll footage in McCullers's hometown and to conduct interviews with former McCullers Center Director Cathy Fussell, writer and creative writing professor Natalia Temesgen, and Norwood himself. Müller also spent time in the CSU Archives, where archivists Tom Converse, David Owings, and Jessie Merrell helped her gather images and other materials for use in the film.

Back in Germany, Müller began editing the material and produced several rough cuts of the film, including German and English versions. She has shared those with both ARTE TV in Europe, which is helping to produce the documentary, and PBS's American Masters producers, who have expressed interest in airing the film.

McCullers Center Hosts Cocktail Party in Nyack



On Thursday, October 12, the McCullers Center welcomed invited guests to a party in the back garden at the Carson McCullers House in Nyack. In addition to members of the local community, CSU President Dr. Stuart Rayfield, College of Letters and Sciences Dean Dr. Annice Yarber-Allen, Senior Associate Vice President Dr. Rex Whiddon, McCullers Center Director Nick Norwood, as well as McCullers Center advisory board members and other supporters from New York were also in attendance.

Visitors were encouraged to tour the Main Floor apartment of the house and to examine drawings for the upcoming renovation produced by architects Walter Aurell and Margaret Garcia, who also gave a short presentation on the drawings and plans.

Columbus House Renovations Complete, Nyack Renovations to Begin in January 2024

The final touches on the renovation of the Smith-McCullers House in Columbus are now complete. The overhaul included repainting inside and out, vinyl flooring to match the original hardwoods from the breakfast room to the visiting writer's apartment, refinishing the hardwood floors in the rest of the house, new tile and fixtures in both main floor bathrooms, granite countertops, new cabinet doors, and some new appliances in the kitchen, plantation shutters on windows throughout. The custom display cases ordered from Germany are to be delivered and installed in early January, and Center Director Nick Norwood will be working with a museum curator to install all new exhibits over the course of the coming spring.

The first phase of renovation is to begin on the Carson McCullers House in Nyack in January. Local contractor Dave Sirois will be removing the front porch of the home to assess the extent of the foundational problems discovered during recent inspections. Following that, needed repairs are to be made to shore up the foundation and alleviate the sagging of the second story bow windows (which were added to the ca. 1880 home during a remodeling project in 1910). The front porch itself will then be restored, and landscaping work in the front completed.

Writing Fellow Lauren Irschick Delivers End-of-Residency Presentation



Lauren Irschick

Lauren Irschick, 18th Annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Fellow in Writing at the Carson McCullers Center, delivered her end-of-residency presentation, Wednesday, November 15, in Arnold Hall on CSU's Main Campus.

Lauren is a PhD candidate in music theory at the University of Rochester. Her current research investigates the ways in which techniques of fiction may be applied to music analysis through the study of novels by Carson McCullers, Willa Cather, and Richard Powers, among others. Her talk featured a broad overview of her study and a closer analysis of her work with McCullers. Following the talk, she answered questions from the audience.

A native of Canada, Lauren holds an MA from the University of Rochester and a BMus from McGill University. She has taught courses in popular music analysis, collegiate writing, and tonal and post-tonal music theory and aural skills at the University of

Rochester's Eastman School of Music and the College of Arts and Sciences, and her teaching has been recognized by the TA Prize for Excellence in Teaching (Eastman School of Music), the Breadth Fellowship for Warner School and Eastman School Students (University of Rochester), and the Tomlinson Engagement Award for Mentoring (McGill University). While in residence at the Smith-McCullers House, she continued work on her dissertation, entitled "The Fictionalization of Music Analysis." Lauren represents the first writer with a scholarly emphasis to win the residency fellowship.

Named in honor of Carson's parents, The Marguerite and Lamar Smith Fellowship for Writers was inspired by McCullers's experience at the Breadloaf Writer's Conference in Vermont and, especially, the Yaddo Arts Colony in Saratoga Springs, New York. To honor the contribution of these residency fellowships to McCullers's work, the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians awards fellowships for writers to spend time in McCullers's childhood home in Columbus, Georgia. The fellowships are intended to afford the writers in residence uninterrupted time to dedicate to their work, free from the distractions of daily life and other professional responsibilities.

McCullers Center Hosts Poetry Readings in Columbus and Nyack



Emily Lee Luan



James Hoch

The McCullers Center presented a reading by poets Emily Lee Luan and James Hoch at the Carson McCullers House in Nyack, Friday, October 13. The event began with a welcome from Center Director Nick Norwood, followed by an open mic emcee'd by McCullers Center collaborator Anupama Amaran and an introduction of the first poet by event coordinator Lily Greenberg.

A former Margins Fellow at the Asian American Writers' Workshop and the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, Emily Lee Luan is the author of *I Watch the Boughs*, selected by Gabrielle Calvocoressi for a Poetry Society of America Chapbook Fellowship. Her work has appeared in *The Best American Poetry 2021*, *Best New Poets 2019*, *American Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA from Rutgers University-Newark.

Award-winning poet James Hoch is the author of several full volumes of poetry, including *A Parade of Hands* (Silverfish Review Press, 2003), *Miscreants* (W.W. Norton, 2007), and *Last Pawn Shop in New Jersey* (LSU Press, 2022), and the chapbook *Radio Static* (Green Linden Press, 2021). He teaches at Ramapo College of New Jersey.



Chen Chen

The McCullers Center presented award-winning poet Chen Chen in the first of this year's Georgia Poetry Circuit readings, Thursday, November 9, in the Arnold Hall Auditorium on Columbus State University's Main Campus.

Chen Chen's second book of poetry, *Your Emergency Contact Has Experienced an Emergency*, is out now from BOA Editions and Bloodaxe Books (UK). His debut, *When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities* (BOA, 2017; Bloodaxe, 2019), was longlisted for the National Book Award and won the Thom Gunn Award, among other honors. Chen is also the author of five chapbooks, including the forthcoming *Explodingly Yours* (Ghost City Press, 2023), and the forthcoming book of craft essays, *In Cahoots with the Rabbit God* (Noemi Press, 2024). His work appears in many publications, including *Poetry*, *Poem-a-Day*, and three editions of *The Best American Poetry* (2015, 2019, & 2021). He has received two Pushcart Prizes and fellowships from Kundiman, the National Endowment for the Arts, and United States Artists.



CM Burroughs



Patrick Rosal

The spring calendar features two GPC readings: Monday, February 19 (Carson's 107th birthday!), poet CM Burroughs will read from her work; Friday, April 12, the McCullers Center hosts Patrick Rosal. Both events will be held in Arnold Hall on CSU's Main Campus beginning at 7:30 pm. As always, those events are free and open to the public.

The Georgia Poetry Circuit is a consortium of 10 colleges and universities across the state of Georgia, including, currently, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Agnes Scott College, Berry College, Brenau University, Columbus State University, Georgia Southern University, Savannah State University, Thomas University, Valdosta State

University, and Young Harris College. Since the 1980s the consortium has brought to Georgia campuses three poets of national renown each year, including Bryan Turner, Marianne Boruch, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Victoria Chang, David Baker, Margaret Gibson, Robert Morgan, Erica Dawson, and scores of other award-winning poets. The Carson McCullers Center has sponsored CSU's participation in the GPC since 2004. Nick Norwood—CSU's GPC representative from 2004 to 2022—now serves as the Circuit's executive director. Professor Carey Scott Wilkerson currently serves as CSU's GPC rep.

Annual Carson McCullers Literary Awards



The Carson McCullers Center and Columbus State University's English Department are currently accepting submissions for the Carson McCullers Literary Awards. The McCullers Center awards literary prizes to high school students in Georgia and Alabama, and students currently attending Columbus State University. High school students and CSU students are judged separately. Students can submit original work in

the following categories: fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, expository essay, playwriting, and screenwriting.

In each category, first place wins \$300, second place wins \$200, and third place wins \$100. The Sara Ayres Jordan Awards are issued to CSU students in the categories of fiction poetry, and creative nonfiction.

The deadline for submissions is Friday, January 19, 2024. The award winners will be announced on February 19, 2024.

A Note from the Director



With the possible exceptions of 2003 (the year of its founding) and 2017 (the Carson McCullers centennial year), 2023 was likely the most momentous year in the history of the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians. For one, the Center enjoyed making it to its twentieth anniversary! For another, the Center got underway renovation of both the Smith-McCullers House, the world-famous novelist's childhood home in Columbus, Georgia, and the Carson McCullers House, her home for the last twenty years of her life in Nyack, New York. The Center also formed a collaboration with award-winning filmmaker Claudia Müller on the first-ever documentary about Carson McCullers and facilitated the completion of its filming as well as the gathering of archival materials. Among those interviewed for the film are Carlos Dews, the founding director of the McCullers Center and the world's foremost McCullers scholar, whose editing of the Collected Letters of Carson McCullers is nearing completion, and Mary Dearborn, whose biography of McCullers will be coming out next year. Other notables interviewed include film critic Rex Reed, singer/songwriter Suzanne Vega, writer and gay rights activist Sarah Schulman, writer and Columbus State University creative writing professor Natalia Temesgen, artist and former McCullers Center Director Cathy Fussell, and current Director, yours truly.

What is perhaps most exciting about all this activity is the future it assures—the continuation of the McCullers Center as a hub for literature and the arts in both Columbus and Nyack, with expanded programs for visiting writers, musicians, artists, filmmakers, scholars, CSU faculty members and undergraduate students. Indeed, the coming year stands to be another big one for Carson McCullers—holding as it will the premier of the documentary film, the publication of a new biography, and the completion of the collected letters—and another momentous year for the Carson McCullers Center as it pursues completion of its renovation projects and the reopening of its facilities for house tours and programming. Meanwhile, we'll continue to offer poetry readings in Columbus and Nyack (stay tuned for information about our collaboration with Nyack Library!), conduct the Carson McCullers Literary Awards competition, and offer other events. We're very grateful to have your support and to know you'll be sharing in our success!



COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY

To keep up with the latest news and upcoming events, follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, or visit us at www.mccullerscenter.org.