

The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians

Fostering Literature and the Arts

Spring/Summer 2023

McCullers Center Celebrates Smith-McCullers House Renovation

On April 20, the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians hosted a celebration of its nearly completed total renovation of the Smith-McCullers House, Carson McCullers's childhood home on Stark Avenue in Columbus.

The renovation entails a complete refurbishing of the house, inside and out. The exterior was completely repainted and will soon have new awnings. The kitchen was updated with granite countertops, new appliances, and new cabinet doors. The house's original hardwood floors have been refinished and matching vinyl flooring installed in all other areas, including the visiting writer's apartment. New fixtures are being installed in all three bathrooms, along with new period-correct tile in one, restoration of the original tile in the other two. The newly installed plantation shutters on all windows will be instrumental in protecting artifacts relating to Carson's life and work, as will new museum-grade display cases, which are currently being fabricated in Germany. The renovation project was initiated by then Executive Director of Foundation Properties, Jim Akin, and completed under the



direction of incoming Executive Director Mitch Watkins.

Many McCullers Center patrons and CSU dignitaries attended the celebration, including Interim President John Futchko, former CSU President Frank Brown, College of Letters and Sciences Dean Annice Yarber-Allen, members of the McCullers Center Advisory Board, including board members Joan Mertens and Florence Neal who traveled to Columbus from New York to attend. Fundraising consultant Johanna Gurland and her husband Mark came from Cape Cod.

Although all of the McCullers Center's artifacts are still in storage for safekeeping in the CSU Archives and the house's furnishings are being replaced or refurbished under the direction of interior designer Arden Cheney, books, film stills, and text plaques were on display, as was the title drawing of a series of sketches by artist Cordray Parker donated to the Center by the artist's widow, a gift facilitated by McCullers Center patron Rose Steiner.

During the ceremony, Advisory Board member Thornton Jordan presented the McCullers Center with a fine art vase made from the remains of Carson's beloved holly tree in the yard of the house where she grew up. Dr. Futchko and Foundation Properties Board President Matt Swift also spoke, as did McCullers Center Director Nick Norwood.

Announcing the 18th Annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Writing Fellow: Lauren Irschick

The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians is proud to announce that music theory scholar Lauren Irschick is the winner of the 18th annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Fellowship for Writers. As the fellowship recipient, Lauren will live and work in Carson McCullers's childhood home, the Smith-McCullers House, in Columbus,



Georgia, from September 1 to December 1, 2023.

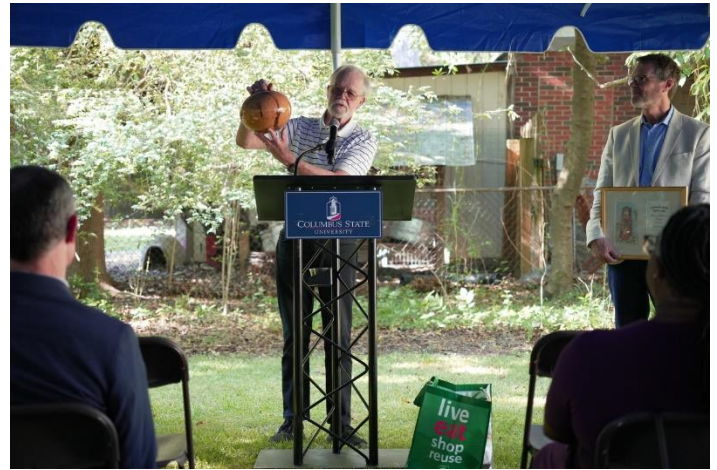
Lauren Irschick is a PhD candidate in music theory at the University of Rochester. Her current research investigates the ways in which techniques of fiction may be applied to music analysis through the study of novels by Carson McCullers, Willa Cather, and Richard Powers, among others.

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, Lauren will complete work on her dissertation, entitled "The Fictionalization of Music Analysis." Lauren represents the first writer with a scholarly emphasis to win the residency fellowship.

Recent Events at the Carson McCullers Center

The Carson McCullers Literary Festival

The McCullers Center, partnering with the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, presented the Carson McCullers Literary Festival to celebrate Carson's 106th birthday, February 17-18, 2023. The festival, held at the Riverside Theatre Complex on CSU's RiverPark Campus, featured graphic memoirist Thi Bui--whose book *The Best We Could Do* is a National Endowment for the Arts Big Read selection--and Natalia Temesgen, CSU creative writing professor whose recent work for television includes *Dear White People*, *Julia*, and *Reasonable Doubt*. The festival opened Friday, February 17, with a reading and book signing by Thi Bui, which was followed by a poetry slam for



Music theory scholar Lauren Irschick

high school and CSU poets. Saturday morning Thi Bui conducted a master class on graphic memoir, which was followed by a screening from the television work of three panelists--Natalia Temesgen and her TV writing room partners Anna Salinas and Edgar Momplaisir--who then sat for a Q&A. The festival concluded with the awards ceremony for the Carson McCullers Literary Awards.

Georgia Poetry Circuit

On April 7, the McCullers Center hosted poet Courtney Faye Taylor as part of the Georgia Poetry Circuit. Taylor is the author of *Concentrate*, winner of the Cave Canem Poetry Prize selected by Rachel Eliza Griffiths and was a finalist for the National Poetry Series. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, *The Nation*, *Ploughshares*, *Best New Poets 2020*, *The New Republic*, *Kenyon Review* and elsewhere.

Night Glare

The McCullers Center held its first post-pandemic event at the The Carson McCullers House in Nyack on Saturday, June 17, an open mic and reading by featured poets Jennifer Franklin and Isabella Desendi. A standing-room-only crowd gathered for the event, which began with a welcome by McCullers Center Director Nick Norwood and introductions by fellow hosts Anupama Amaran and Lily Greenberg. Many of the open mic readers are participants in the newly resumed weekly writing workshops being held at the McCullers House. For more information about the workshops, contact Lily Greenberg at lilygreenberg95@gmail.com.

McCullers Center Embarks on Documentary Film Collaboration with Award-Winning Filmmaker

Last year the McCullers Center began a collaboration with the CSU Film Production Program to produce a documentary film on the



COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY



Graphic memoirist Thi Bui, headliner of the Carson McCullers Literary Festival in February 2023

life and work of Carson McCullers. This spring they joined forces on an additional documentary film project, one already underway by award-winning filmmaker Claudia Müller.

Müller is a German documentary filmmaker based in Berlin and is known for her many film portraits of international female artists. Since 1991 she has been an independent television journalist and director, making numerous film documentaries. She founded her own production company, PHLOX, in 2001. More than 80 female artists from varied geographical and cultural contexts have been represented in her comprehensive documentary project, and her work has contributed to ongoing debates surrounding identity, gender, sexuality, feminism, female aesthetics, and the visibility of women in the arts.

Müller's film "Elfriede Jelinek--language unleashed," after having already won the FIPRESCI – Award (Fédération Internationale de la Presse Cinématographique) at Filmfest Munich, was named this May as the winner of the German Film Award 2023 in the categories "Best Documentary" and "Best Editing." In June the film also won the Austrian Film Award for "Best Documentary," "Best Camera," and "Best Editing."

Müller and cinematographer Klemens Koscher will be coming to Nyack in late August, then to Columbus in early September to film scenes from those two locales and to interview various individuals with a connection to Carson McCullers. The Columbus film crew will comprise students in CSU's Film Production Program under the supervision of Professors Adam Bova, Chris Robinson, and Bruce Getz, and students in the Schwob School of Music's Audio Technology Program under the supervision of Professor Matthew McCabe. So far, interviews have been conducted or arranged with McCullers scholar and McCullers Center founding director Carlos Dews, biographer Mary Dearborn, singer/songwriter Suzanne Vega, film critic Rex Reed, actress Angelica Huston, artist and former McCullers Center director Cathy Fussell, literary scholar Thorton Jordan, and others.

Agreements have already been reached with ARTE TV, Europe's premier arts and culture public broadcasting network, to air the film. And talks



Courtney Faye Taylor, poet hosted in the Georgia Poetry Circuit in April 2023

are currently underway with PBS's American Masters documentary series to broadcast the documentary in the U.S.

NIGHT GLARE
POETRY READING

WITH FEATURED POETS:
JENNIFER FRANKLIN
ISABELLA DESENDI

AT THE CARSON MCCULLERS HOUSE
131 SOUTH BROADWAY NYACK, NY 10960
SAT JUNE 17 . 7PM . 2023

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC ~~~ OPEN MIC TO START ~~~ @MCCULLERSHOUSENYACK

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY Poets & Writers

Flyer from first post-pandemic event at the Carson McCullers House in Nyack, NY.



Claudia Müller (center) and producer Martina Haubrich accepting the German Film Award for "Best Documentary" for their film "Elfriede Jelinek--language unleashed."