



THE CARSON MCCULLERS CENTER FOR WRITERS AND MUSICIANS

Quarterly Newsletter

The Centennial Edition
WINTER 2017

PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF CARSON MCCULLERS

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.

THE 100TH BIRTHDAY

Carson McCullers—novelist, short story writer, and playwright—was born Lula Carson Smith on February 19, 1917, in Columbus, Georgia. The daughter of Lamar Smith and Vera Marguerite Waters, McCullers is best known for her novels *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, and *The Member of the Wedding*, and for her award-winning adaptation of *The Member of the Wedding* for the Broadway stage.

After completing high school, Carson studied for two years in New York City before marrying James Reeves McCullers. Upon the publication of her first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*—in 1940, at age 23—she and Reeves settled permanently in New York. Heralded as a wunderkind by critics, McCullers was plagued by a series of strokes attributed to a misdiagnosed and untreated case of childhood rheumatic fever, eventually leading to her death at age 50 in 1967.

With a collection of work including five novels, two plays, twenty short stories, over two dozen nonfiction pieces, a book of children's verses, a small number of poems, and an unfinished autobiography, McCullers is considered among the most significant American writers of the twentieth-century.

This February commemorates what would have

been McCullers's 100th birthday. To celebrate the life and the legacy of McCullers, the Carson McCullers Center has collaborated with the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, the Columbus Museum, the Nyack Library, the Nyack Center, John Cabot University in Rome, the Library of America, and a number of other entities in Columbus, Nyack, New York City, and elsewhere for a McCullers centennial celebration. McCullers's debut novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* has been selected as Columbus State University's Common Read for all incoming first-year students and the Chattahoochee Valley Library's NEA Big Read 2017.

The Center's month-long celebration includes special film screenings, guest talks, and book clubs,



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all of which culminate in the showcase event: the Columbus premiere of Karen Allen's short film *A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.*, based on the short story by McCullers, which will debut on McCullers's birthday, February 19th (see below for details).

The following are all of the special events taking place in Columbus, GA, Nyack, NY, and abroad in honor of the centennial of Carson McCullers's birth. Please join us as we celebrate McCullers's impact as an American author and explore her rich history in Columbus, Nyack, New York City, and abroad.

GUEST SPEAKERS

CARSON AND COLUMBUS: IT'S COMPLICATED

Nick Norwood, director of the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians, will give a talk as part of the Columbus Museum's "Lunch and Lecture" series on the complex relationships between Carson McCullers and the people in her hometown of Columbus, Georgia. The talk will be held at the Columbus Museum, 1252 Wynnton Road, on Tuesday, February 7th, at 12:00pm. Please contact the Columbus Museum's Education Department at edu@columbusmuseum.com by Friday, February 3rd, if you would like to reserve a \$10 lunch.

CARSON MCCULLERS AND THE SOUTHERN GOTHIC

Former director of the Carson McCullers Center, Dr. Courtney George is an associate professor of English at Columbus State University specializing in southern literature. In this lecture,

Dr. George will explore Carson McCullers's influence on Southern Literature and the creation of the Southern Gothic genre. The talk will be held at the Columbus Public Library, 8000 Macon Road, on Thursday, February 16th, at 7:00pm. This event is free and open to the public.



Dr. Courtney George

Former director of the Carson McCullers Center and Associate Professor of English at Columbus State University.

THE ILLNESS EXPERIENCE IN CARSON MCCULLERS'S LIFE AND WORK

Dr. Casey Kayser, president of the Carson McCullers Society and co-editor of *Carson McCullers in the Twenty-First Century*, will examine McCullers's life as a writer and as a patient who, after a childhood misdiagnosis, suffered for many years from illness. She will also discuss the impact McCullers's work will continue to have on future generations of readers. The talk will be held at the Columbus Public Library, 8000 Macon Road, on Tuesday, February 21st, at 7:00pm. This event is free and open to the public.

AN EVENING WITH HILTON ALS

New Yorker critic Hilton Als will conclude the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries' NEA Big Read 2017 with his special

guest lecture. Als will present a fresh look at Carson McCullers, providing an exciting commentary on the Columbus native's influence on the "outsider" paradigm in American literature. A dessert reception will follow the talk, both of which will be held at the Columbus Public Library, 8000 Macon Road, on Friday, March 3rd, at 7:00pm. This event is free and open to the public.

CARSON'S COLUMBUS

Historian Dr. Virginia Causey, a retired professor from Columbus State University and author of *Red Clay, White Water, and Blues: The History of Columbus, Georgia*, will discuss how a Columbus childhood influenced McCullers and will place her work within the historical context of her hometown. She will also observe how local historical events related to gender, social class, and race might have affected McCullers's writing. The talk will be held at the Columbus Public Library, 8000 Macon Road, on Thursday, February 9th, at 7:00pm. This event is free and open to the public.



Dr. Virginia Causey

Retired Professor of History at Columbus State University.

ART INSTALLATIONS

CARSON

Columbus State University's Department of Art will celebrate the centennial of Carson McCullers's birth with an art exhibition in which artists like

Sarah Hobbs, Bo Bartlett, and John Morton, among others, will pay tribute to the themes prevalent in McCullers's life and work. The exhibition will be in the Bay Gallery at the Corn Center for the Visual Arts on CSU's RiverPark Campus in Uptown Columbus, located at 902 Front Avenue. The "Carson" exhibit will run from January 17th to February 25th, and an opening reception will be held on Thursday, February 2nd, at 5:30pm. The Bay Gallery is open Monday-Saturday, or by appointment. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

THE WE OF ME: THE CHOSEN FAMILIES OF CARSON MCCULLERS

An art and artifacts exhibition, "The We of Me" exhibit highlights Carson McCullers's two separate worlds—the southern roots of her childhood and the northern landscapes of her adulthood—and the chosen families she created for herself within each. The exhibit features special archival materials, much of which has not been publicly displayed before, from the Columbus Museum, the Columbus State University Archives, and the Carson McCullers Center. "The We of Me" will be on display at the Columbus Museum, 1251 Wynnton Road, and will be open from January 31 to May 21, 2017. The



opening reception will be on Thursday, February 2nd, at 5:30pm. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

CARSON'S COLUMBUS: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN 20TH CENTURY COLUMBUS

Much like Dr. Virginia Causey's guest talk, the Columbus State University Archives will host an exhibit that grapples with the social aspects of Carson McCullers's southern childhood and the resulting impact of 20th century notions of race, class, and gender on her work. The special collection features a wide variety of both primary and secondary source materials produced by or about the writer. The Carson McCullers Collection will be displayed at Columbus State University's Schwob Memorial Library Archives on the Main Campus, 4225 University Avenue. The exhibit opens on January 31st, with a reception on February 2nd, at 5:30pm. The exhibition is free and open to the public.

BOOK CLUBS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Chattahoochee Valley Libraries will host several book discussions on Carson McCullers's debut novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* as part of the NEA Big Read 2017. Please see below for the list of book clubs. These events are free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.cvlga.org.

BOOKS AND BREWS

Saturday, February 4th, 2:00pm - Location TBD

PAGE TURNERS

Saturday, February 11th, 1:00pm - Mildred L. Terry Public Library, 640 Veterans Parkway

THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER, NEA BIG READ

Thursday, February 23rd, 5:30pm - Columbus Public Library, 8000 Macon Road

ONE MORE CHAPTER

Thursday, February 23rd, 6:30pm - North Columbus Public Library, 5689 Armour Road

ADULT AND TEEN

Date/Time TBD - Parks Memorial Public Library in Richland, Georgia.



LIBRARY PROGRAMS

The Chattahoochee Valley Libraries will host various programs on Carson McCullers's life and work as part of the NEA Big Read 2017. Please see below for the list of activities and events. These programs are free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.cvlga.org.

MEMOIR AND JOURNAL WORKSHOP

The North Columbus Public Library is hosting a memoir workshop based on the work of Carson McCullers. Discover the basics of journaling and get easy tips on how to start and keep your own memoir. All necessary materials will be provided at the event, which will be held on Tuesday, January 31st, at 4:00pm, at the North Columbus Public Library, 5689 Armour Road.

CHESS CLUB

For John Singer, one of the central characters in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, chess is a major form of recreation. Join the CVA Chess Club for a special McCullers session on Saturday, February 4th, at 4:00pm. New to the game? Stop by the North Columbus Public Library later in the month for a chess lesson for beginners. The session will explore the basics of chess on Tuesday, February 28th, at 4:00pm. For more information, please contact the Columbus Public Library at 706.243.2701.

COFFEE AND COLORING

In addition to literary and musical, Carson McCullers also supported visual art. Join the Coffee and Coloring Club on Tuesday, February 14th, at 4:00pm, and create your own visual artwork inspired by Carson McCullers. All necessary materials will be provided at the event, which will be held at the North Columbus Public Library, 5689 Armour Road.

FAMILY SIGN LANGUAGE

The protagonist in McCullers's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is deaf and often uses sign language to communicate. Join this family-friendly program to learn a few basic phrases in American Sign Language. The program is held every Wednesday at 4:00pm at the Mildred L. Terry Public Library, 640 Veterans Parkway.

FILMS

The Chattahoochee Valley Libraries will screen film adaptations of Carson McCullers's work as part of the NEA Big Read 2017. These showings are free and open to the public and will be held at the Columbus Public Library, 3000 Macon Road. For more information, visit www.cvlga.org.

THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING (1952)

Carson McCullers wrote the screenplay and helped to cast this film adaptation of her beloved novel of the same name. Directed by Fred Zinneman and starring Julie Harris, Ethel Waters, and introducing Brandon de Wilde, the film follows the coming-of-age story of young tomboy Frankie in rural Georgia. The film is showing Saturday, February 4th, at 1:30pm.

THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFÉ (1991)

Based on the stage adaptation of Carson McCullers's novella, *Ballad* stars Vanessa Redgrave, Keith Carradine, and Cork Hubbert, and explores the trails of quirky moonshiner and her cousin who operate a café in rural Georgia. The film is showing Saturday, February 25th, at 1:30pm.

A NYACK BIRTHDAY

As Columbus folks celebrate in McCullers's hometown, birthday festivities will also take place at the author's adult home in Nyack, NY.

The Nyack Public Library, 20 S Broadway, will host a performance by actor-playwright John O'Keefe of his own one-actor adaptation of "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.", and a concert of original

music—inspired by McCullers's short story—composed by CSU alumna Liliya Ugay. The celebration will begin at 8pm and will be followed by a birthday reception at the Carson McCullers House, 181 S. Broadway.

In Nyack, visitors may also visit McCullers's grave in Oak Hill Cemetery, 140 North Highland Avenue. McCullers is buried beside her mother, Marguerite Smith. Her sister Margarita (Rita) Smith and her good friends Dr. Mary E. Mercer and Marielle Bancou Segal are also buried in Oak Hill Cemetery. Please see the Center's website for a map of Oak Hill Cemetery designating these gravesites.



Carson McCullers
McCullers on the porch of her home in Nyack.

CELEBRATING CARSON ABROAD

The Carson McCullers Center is partnering with the Carson McCullers Society and John Cabot University to celebrate the centennial of McCullers's birth by hosting *Carson McCullers in the World: A Centenary Conference* in Rome, Italy, 14-16 July 2017.

As a child, McCullers discovered the world through reading writers from around the world. Like the young McCullers, the characters in her work often longed to leave their small-town lives and become a "member of the whole world." McCullers's work has been translated into nearly forty languages, has wide appeal for

international readers, and has inspired scholarly interest throughout the world.

The conference will offer new perspectives on McCullers's life and work, especially on such topics as the international appeal of her work and its significance in global contexts, and its resonance and relevance in the twenty-first century.



Carson McCullers
A young McCullers.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

We've been preparing for the McCullers Centennial for over a year, and now the moment is here. I hope everyone reading this issue of the newsletter will be able to participate in some of the many events and exhibitions taking place to mark this important milestone in the history of one of America's great writers. It seems a little crazy to be planning two birthday celebrations to occur simultaneously roughly 1,000

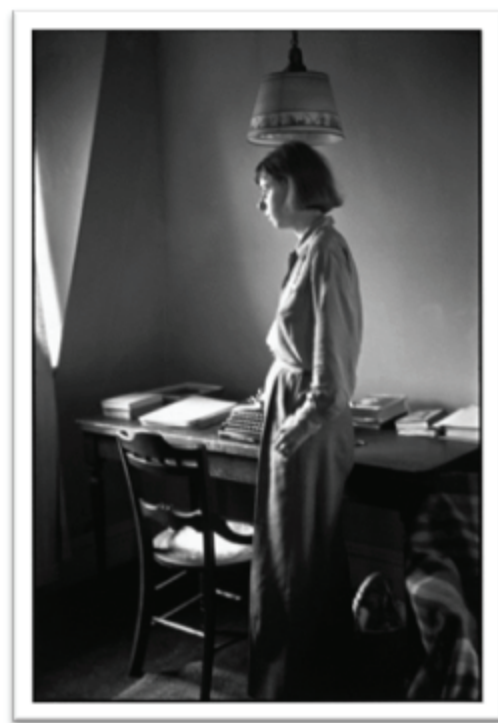
miles apart—the distance, by the way, from 1519 Stark Ave, Columbus, GA, to 131 S. Broadway, Nyack, NY—but that's exactly what we've been doing. The enthusiasm and dedication to the project of all the collaborators has been absolutely phenomenal. To the following (and to others who know who you are):

- the advisory board of the Carson McCullers Center and the members of the "Carson at 100: the McCullers Centennial" Planning Committee;
- the staffs of the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries and the Nyack Library;
- of the Columbus Museum and the Nyack Center;
- the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Village of Nyack;
- students and faculty of CSU's departments of English, Music, Theatre, History, Art, and the First Year Experience;
- Karen Allen and the production team for her film *A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud*;
- Scott Harris, Carlos Dews, Lauren Rosen, Liliya Ugay, John O'Keefe, and Paul Neubauer—presenters of the McCullers Centennial Celebration program at the Nyack Library;
- John Morton, Bo Bartlett, and Sarah Hobbs—artists contributing work to the "Carson/Reflections" exhibition at the Corn Center for the Visual Arts;
- Cris Spezial and the staff of Nyack Gourmet;
- Anu Anupama of River Writers Circle;

- the CSU Foundation, Office of University Relations, and Office of Sponsored Programs;
- the Columbus Cultural Arts Alliance and the Georgia Humanities Council;
- CSU Logistical Services, Aramark Catering Services, and the staff of the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts;
- Houghton Mifflin and the Library of America;
- the CSU Bookstore and Pickwick Books;
- Cailee Davis (McCullers Center Student Assistant), Annie Carey (English Department and McCullers Center Administrative Assistant), Miraca Stovall (English Department Student Assistant)—

THANK YOU FOR
HELPING TO MAKE THIS THE
KIND OF CELEBRATION
CARSON MCCULLERS
DESERVES!

-Nick Norwood



Carson McCullers
A young McCullers looms over her beloved typewriter.

CARSON AT 100: THE MCCULLERS CENTENNIAL

THE SHOWCASE EVENT

Please join us for "Carson at 100: The McCullers Centennial," the showcase event in honor of McCullers's 100th birthday.

The showcase will feature the directorial debut of actress Karen Allen (*Scrooged*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Perfect Storm*), with her short film *A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.*, based on McCullers's short story. One morning in 1947, a young boy and an older man meet by chance at a roadside café. What follows is the man relating to the boy his own poignant tale of love, heartbreak, and loss. For more information on the film, please visit www.atreearockacloudthefilm.com.

The showcase celebration will also include a dramatic excerpt from McCullers's stage adaptation of her novel *The Member of the Wedding*, directed by Larry Dooley; monologues written by playwright, poet, and CSU professor Scott Wilkerson and performed in the role of McCullers by CSU actress Marcia Harper; and performances of some of McCullers's favorite classical music, curated by CSU's Ethel Foley Distinguished Chair in Orchestral Activities Dr. Paul Hostetter and performed by the CSU Philharmonic Orchestra.

The centennial showcase will be held at the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts, 900 Broadway, on Sunday, February 19th, at 4:00pm. This event is free and open to the public. Come help us celebrate the life and legacy of Columbus's own Carson McCullers!



A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.

Jackson Smith and Jeffrey DeMunn in stills from the new film.

MORE WITH KAREN ALLEN

After her directorial debut, Allen will visit Columbus State University to discuss *A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.*, her film career, and her relationship with the work of Carson McCullers. Nick Norwood, director of Carson McCullers Center, will host a talk-show like interview with Allen before opening up the floor for questions from the audience. This event is free and open to the public, and will be held on Monday, February 20th, at 12:00pm in the University Hall Auditorium on CSU's Main Campus, 4225 University Avenue.

Later that day, Allen, her producers, and her production designer will visit CSU's RiverPark campus to meet with CSU film, theatre, and creative writing students for a private film



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Director Karen Allen

For more information, please visit mccullerscenter.org or email mccullerscenter@columbusstate.edu