

The Carson McCullers Center is proud to present the nineteenth issue of its quarterly newsletter.



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.

In Case You Missed It...

The Carson McCullers Center Produces Podcast's 2nd Season



On Friday, February 19, Carson's 104th birthday, the McCullers Center launched Season 2 of its podcast on "the life, work, and lasting influence of world-renowned twentieth-century American writer Carson McCullers." Season 2's first three episodes feature segments from an interview with Academy Award-winning actress Rachel Weisz.

Weisz, a longtime admirer of McCullers, wrote her thesis on the southern writer at Cambridge, having first encountered her work as a teenager in London when she picked up a novel her mother was reading as part of a psychology course on adolescence. That novel was *The Member of the Wedding*, and McCullers, to quote Weisz, "has been dear to my heart ever since."

Other guests in Season 2 include writer Jenn Shapland, whose book *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers* was a finalist for the National Book Award

and will soon be issued in a French translation; former Marguerite and Lamar Smith Writing Fellow and current Columbus resident Melissa Pritchard Schley; biographer Mary Dearborn, whose book on McCullers is due out from Knopf next year; Columbus-born artist Bo Bartlett; Columbus State University archivist Tom Converse; and McCullers scholar and major McCullers Center benefactor Dr. Thornton Jordan.

“We see these podcasts as a new way to fulfill the Carson McCullers Center’s mission,” Center director and podcast host Nick Norwood said, “and to spread the word of Carson McCullers, a twentieth century writer whose works promoted tolerance, understanding, and sensitivity to other people. It’s also work that explored what McCullers herself referred to as ‘social isolation’ and the desire on the part of all people to be understood, to feel themselves part of life, to discover, as she has her character Frankie Adams in *The Member of the Wedding* memorably put it, ‘the we of me.’”

Each episode includes a reading from Carson’s work, some by interviewed guests, some by Georgia native and former Nyack resident Suzie Parker Devoe, and some via recordings of Carson McCullers herself. And each episode is accompanied by theme music—an excerpt of Liliya Ugay’s composition in honor of Carson McCullers’s 100th birthday in 2017—as well as recorded selections from CSU’s Schwob School of Music.

The McCullers Center produces the podcast in collaboration with the Bill and Marion Feighner Recording Studio in CSU’s Schwob School of Music, under the guidance of Dr. Matthew McCabe. Dr. McCabe’s assistant, Nick Williams, serves as technical director of the podcast.

The podcast is available on a number of platforms, including Spotify, Anchor, Apple Podcasts, Breaker, Google Podcasts, Pocket Casts, and RadioPublic, and it is also distributed via the McCullers Center’s social media and on its website.

The geographical reach of the podcasts has been quite remarkable, with listeners from all over the United States and 45 countries worldwide.

[Click here to go to the Anchor Podcast site](#)

New Writing Fellow Named



The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians is proud to announce that fiction writer and poet Lauren Green is the winner of the 16th annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Fellowship for Writers. As the fellowship recipient, Green will live and work in Carson McCullers’s childhood home, the Smith-McCullers House, in Columbus, Georgia, in the fall.

Lauren Green’s work has appeared in *American Short Fiction*, *Ninth Letter*, *Conjunctions*, *Epoch Magazine*, and elsewhere. She has won *Glimmer*

Train's New Writers Award, *Southeast Review's* Ernest Hemingway Prize, and *Philadelphia Stories'* Marguerite McGlinn Prize for Fiction. She graduated with a B.A. from Columbia University, where she was awarded the Louis Sudler Prize in the Arts, and received her M.F.A. from the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas, Austin. While in residence at the Smith-McCullers House, she will be completing a novel.

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 Brings Award-Winning Poets David Kirby and Tiana Clark to CSU



The McCullers Center presented a virtual reading by featured poet David Kirby on Tuesday, February 9, via Zoom. This event was free and open to the public.

Poet, critic, and scholar David Kirby grew up on a farm in southern Louisiana. He received a BA from Louisiana State University and, at the age of 24, a PhD from Johns Hopkins University. Influenced by artists as diverse as John Keats and Little Richard, Kirby writes distinctive long-lined narrative poems that braid together high and popular culture, personal memory, philosophy, and humor. Kirby is the author of more than two dozen volumes of criticism, essays, children's literature, pedagogy, and poetry. His numerous collections of poems include *The Ha-Ha* (2003), short-listed for the Griffin Poetry Prize, and *The House on Boulevard Street: New and Selected Poems* (2007), a finalist for the National Book Award and winner of the Florida Book Award and the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance Award. Kirby has also won several Pushcart Prizes, the Guy Owen Prize, the Kay Deeter Award, the James Dickey Prize, the Brittingham Prize, and the Millennium Cultural Recognition Award. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Florida Arts Council. His poetry has been featured in numerous anthologies, including several issues of *Best American Poetry*.

On Monday, April 5, the McCullers Center presented a virtual reading by featured poet Tiana Clark via Zoom. This event was also free and open to the public.

Tiana Clark is the author of the poetry collection, *I Can't Talk About the Trees Without the Blood* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), winner of the 2017 Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize, and *Equilibrium* (Bull City Press, 2016), selected by

Afaa Michael Weaver for the 2016 Frost Place Chapbook Competition. Clark is a winner for the 2020 Kate Tufts Discovery Award (Claremont Graduate University), a 2019 National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellow, a recipient of a 2019 Pushcart Prize, a winner of the 2017 Furious Flower's Gwendolyn Brooks Centennial Poetry Prize, and the 2015 Rattle Poetry Prize. She was the 2017-2018 Jay C. and Ruth Halls Poetry Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute of Creative Writing. Clark is the recipient of scholarships and fellowships to the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Sewanee Writers' Conference, and Kenyon Review Writers Workshop. She is a graduate of Vanderbilt University (M.F.A) and Tennessee State University (B.A.) where she studied Africana and Women's studies. Her writing has appeared in or is forthcoming from *The New Yorker*, *Poetry Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *VQR*, *Tin House Online*, *Kenyon Review*, *BuzzFeed News*, *American Poetry Review*, *New England Review*, *Oxford American*, *Best New Poets 2015*, and elsewhere. She teaches creative writing at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

Both Kirby and Clark answered questions from the audience at the conclusion of their readings. Clark also met with Dr. Nick Norwood's Introduction to Poetry Writing class earlier in the day, answering his students' questions about poetry and the writing life, and sharing a great deal about what she has learned by pursuing a career as a poet and teacher.

Founded at Mercer University in 1985, the Georgia Poetry Circuit is a consortium of ten Georgia colleges and universities working together to bring three poets of national and international reputation annually to all members' campuses, providing an important access to the literary arts for Georgia residents across the state. At each school, each Circuit poet gives a free and open reading of his/her work. Visiting poets also meet with creative writing students at each campus for workshops, talks, or extended question and answer sessions. In addition to the opportunity to hear work from diverse writers of national and international reputation, the Circuit events provide Georgia students with an immensely valuable educational opportunity for interaction with many of the best contemporary poets in the United States. Recent GPC poets include Adrian Matejka, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Sholeh Wolpe, Kevin Prufer, and Kim Addonizio.

The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians has sponsored CSU's participation in the Georgia Poetry Circuit for 17 years, and during that time, in addition to giving readings and making appearances on the CSU campus, visiting poets have stayed at the Smith-McCullers House and met with students and faculty there.

Annual Carson McCullers Literary Awards Held this Spring



The Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians in conjunction with the English Department of Columbus State University held its annual Carson McCullers Literary Awards writing competition this spring. The competition, which featured two separate contests—one for high school students from around the region, the other for students of CSU—awarded prizes in the following categories: fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, formal essay,

playwriting, and screenwriting. Both the high school and CSU first place winners in each category received \$300, second place winners \$200, third place \$100. Due to coronavirus restrictions, the awards ceremony was held virtually--on Thursday, April 8--which allowed high school and CSU award winners and their families from around the state to attend. The CSU-student portion of the competition included the Sara Ayres Jordan Prizes in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction, sponsored by the D.L. Jordan Foundation. Sponsors of other prizes included Brick Road Poetry Press, Susan Schley Gristina, Dr. Philip Schley and Mrs. Melissa Pritchard Schley, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Wade, and others. Contestants in the high school competition included students from Rainey-McCullers School of the Arts, Columbus High School, Heritage High School, Alan C. Pope High School, as well as homeschooled students and students from other high schools in Georgia and Alabama.

Workshop Performance of Opera Based on *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* Presented at Millikin Opera Theatre



On Saturday, May 8, in a live-streamed event, the Millikin University Opera Theatre presented a semi-staged workshop performance of eight scenes from an opera based on the Carson McCullers novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, including subtitles and narration between the scenes by librettist Carey Scott Wilkerson, assistant professor of creative writing at Columbus State University. The performance was the culmination of the 2020-21 academic year's focus on the process involved in creating an opera, including in-depth collaboration with the creators of this new operatic work.

Features

Recommended Reading from the McCullers Center



The McCullers Center hopes its supporters and their families are able to stay safe and well this summer. Like all seasons, summer is a great time to read and reread the works of Carson McCullers, as well as works about her. Here are three we'd like to recommend:

#1 *The Square Root of Wonderful*, Carson's most under-appreciated piece: as a play it had a very short run, but listen to Episode 2.20 of the McCullers Center's Weekly We of Me podcast for Dr. Thornton Jordan's reading from it and discussion of its strengths and you might just decide to give this thing a whirl. It is available in the Library of America's two-volume boxed set *The Collected Works of Carson McCullers*.

#2 *The Lonely Hunter*, Virginia Spencer Carr's biography of Carson McCullers,

originally published in 1975: because of Carr's extensive research and especially the interviews she conducted with friends and acquaintances of McCullers who are all now deceased, this work is and will likely remain the definitive biography.

#3 *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, Jenn Shapland's shape-shifting, genre-defying opus on her own sexual awakening and the part Carson McCullers's life and work played in it: the book was a finalist for the National Book Award and is soon to be released in a French translation.

McCullers Center Director Serves as Panelist for *An Intimate Conversation* with Nyack's Rivertown Film Society



The McCullers Center, in collaboration with Nyack's Rivertown Film Society, Nyack Library, and River River Writers Circle, hosted a virtual panel discussion on, Monday, June 28, with McCullers Center director Nick Norwood and Karen Clark, a board member of River River Writers Circle, moderated by writer and filmmaker Juliana Roth. The topics discussed included a great deal about Carson's relationships with both Truman Capote and Tennessee Williams. The panel discussion was held in conjunction with the Film Society's screening of a new documentary film *Truman & Tennessee: An Intimate Conversation*.

Archived Newsletters Now Available



All of our past newsletters are now accessible on our website at www.mccullerscenter.org! Just click on the "Newsletter" tab and then choose the issue you want to read.



From the Director

It seems safe to say that most if not all of us are ready for what comes next, even though we may face it with some trepidation. Speaking on behalf of the McCullers Center, there is so much to look forward to we can't help but be optimistic. This spring saw the first staged workshop performances of the opera based on *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* which composer Robert Chumbley and librettist Carey Scott Wilkerson have been working on for the past two years. That's news we're very excited to share as the McCullers Center is doing everything it can to encourage that project. We just finished Season 2 of the podcast, 20 new episodes featuring interviews with a fascinating slate of people

in the McCullers orbit—writers, scholars, artists, actors, archivists, and activists among them. We also hosted two nationally renowned poets in the Georgia Poetry Circuit series and hosted the annual Carson McCullers Literary Awards, an endeavor about which we feel very proud as it promotes writing and literature among young people and puts money in their pockets to boot. We collaborated with several of our Nyack partners—the Rivertown Film Society, Nyack Library, and River River Writers Circle—on a live-streamed panel discussion on the new documentary film *Truman & Tennessee: An Intimate Conversation*. We selected the 17th annual Marguerite and Lamar Smith Writing Fellow, Lauren Green, whom we're excited to be welcoming to the Smith-McCullers House to start her residency in September. And we've helped to facilitate the work in the CSU Archives of biographer Mary Dearborn, whose book on Carson is due out from Knopf next year.

But what we have planned for the future seems even more exciting. First, I want to mention a collaboration between the McCullers Center and the library at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. Every year a committee headed by Roger Williams University Library Archivist Heidi Benedict chooses a featured author around whom is built a series of lectures, live and streamed events, and displays of archival materials. Next year's featured author is none other than Carson McCullers. Adam Braver, the Roger Williams University Library program director and a creative writing professor at RWU, will be coming to Columbus in October with two student interns to visit the Smith-McCullers House, tour the featured author's hometown, and study McCullers materials in the CSU Archives. We're thrilled they've chosen McCullers to be next year's featured author and thrilled to be collaborating with Roger Williams University Library on this exciting project.

And next, our own biographical project: perennially stunned by the fact that one has never been made, the McCullers Center is now officially embarking upon the first-ever documentary film on the life, work, and lasting influence of world-renowned twentieth-century American author Carson McCullers. The Center has already been in consultation with a number of collaborators—Columbus State University's branch of the Georgia Film Academy in the Department of Communications, Dr. Matthew McCabe and his assistant Nick Williams in the Bill and Marion Feighner Recording Studio in CSU's Schwob School of Music, the Creative Writing and Literature Faculties in its Department of English, the university's Office of Sponsored Programs, University Archives, and external scholars such as McCullers Center founding director Dr. Carlos Dews. This project will take a great deal of time and protracted effort, but we are energized by the fact that somebody needs to do it, and who better than us?



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

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