

Presented by the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries in partnership
with Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians

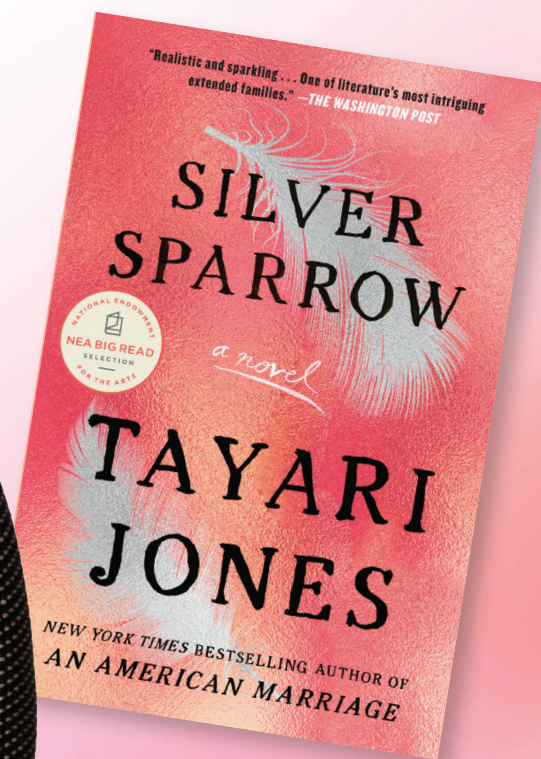
NEA BIG READ EVENT GUIDE

NEA BIG READ COLUMBUS: *Where We Live*

**WHERE WE LIVE. IT PROPELS OUR BELIEFS. IT
SHAPES OUR LIVES. IT FRAMES OUR OUTLOOK.**

And in literature and the arts – especially the works from where we live, the American South – it is the pre-eminent theme that connects writers, artists, and audiences from across the very wide spectrum of our experiences, our demography, and our world view.

This winter, the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries and the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians at Columbus State University join forces to celebrate the timelessness of *Where We Live* as seen in some of our country's greatest literary works from today and yesterday.



The NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment
for the Arts in Partnership with Arts Midwest

THIS YEAR'S NEA BIG READ BOOK: *Silver Sparrow* by Tayari Jones



National Endowment for the Arts creative writing fellow Tayari Jones was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, where her third novel, *Silver Sparrow*, is set during the 1980s. It tells the story of two teenage girls who are sisters but only one knows it, as their father has kept one family public, the other a secret. "Jones explores the rivalry and connection of siblings, the meaning of beauty, the perils of young womanhood, the complexities of romantic relationships and the contemporary African-American experience." It is "impossible to put down until you find out how these sisters will discover their own versions of family" (*Los Angeles Times*).



photo by Tyson Alan Horne

THIS YEAR'S NEA BIG READ AUTHOR: Tayari Jones

New York Times best-selling author Tayari Jones has written four novels, most recently *An American Marriage*. Published in 2018, *An American Marriage* is an Oprah's Book Club Selection and was awarded the Women's Prize for Fiction (formerly known as the Orange Prize), Aspen Words Prize and an NAACP Image Award. It has been published in two dozen countries. Jones, a 2021 Guggenheim Fellow, is a graduate of Spelman College, University of Iowa, and Arizona State University. She is an Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University and the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Creative Writing at Emory University.

Opening Event:

WUNDERKIND: CARSON MCCULLERS

We are pleased to present the Southeastern Premiere of this new documentary by famed German director Claudia Müller. In this illuminating portrait, we examine how Columbus, GA served as an inspiration and foundation for McCullers' novels whose heroes and heroines were those otherwise overlooked by society (and other artists). After the screening, director Müller is expected to join us remotely from Germany to answer audience questions.

Sun. February 2 | 2:00pm

Patrick Theatre at Columbus Museum
1251 Wynnton Rd.

Keynote Event:

AUTHOR TAYARI JONES

"It's among Tayari's many gifts that she can touch us soul to soul with her words." (Oprah Winfrey). An unforgettable evening awaits. Tayari Jones, the author of this year's NEA BIG READ COLUMBUS novel *Silver Sparrow* joins us for a dose of her intellect, inspiration and compassion. She will be available for autographs following the presentation.

Fri. February 21 | 6:30pm

Riverside Theatre at Columbus State
University's Riverpark Campus
6 W. 10th St.

Movies

COLUMBUS PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEA BIG READ: MCCULLERS MATINEES

Join us for a cinematic afternoon featuring films based on Carson McCullers' works!

Sun. January 12 | 2:00pm – *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (G)

Sun. February 2 | 2:00pm – *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* (PG-13)

Sun. March 23 | 2:00pm – *The Member of the Wedding* (G)

Auditorium

NEA BIG READ: VIEWING OF *DESCENDANT* (2022)

This documentary tells the story of the *Clotilda*, a ship that transported over 100 enslaved people to Alabama in 1860. The film explores the impact of the event on generations of descendants.

Fri. February 28 | 3:00pm

Auditorium

Artist Presentation:

WHERE I LIVE: ARTIST BO BARTLETT

Columbus native Bo Bartlett has earned an international reputation for his large-scale realist work depicting the heart and soul of America and the South. Join us in the eponymous gallery he helped co-found to see how our city and our region is manifest through his creativity and vision.

Tues. February 25 | 6:30pm

*Bo Bartlett Center at Columbus State University's Riverpark Campus
921 Front Avenue*

Where We Live in Southern Literature:

TIME AND PLACE: TAYARI JONES, CARSON MCCULLERS AND THE LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

Current McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians Director and Columbus State University Professor Nick Norwood joins with his predecessor at the McCullers Center, Professor Courtney George, for this entertaining discussion of our NEA Big Read book *Silver Sparrow* and how it's specificity about locale and era draws directly from some of the great works of American Literature, including that of Columbus' Carson McCullers.

Tues. February 11 | 6:30pm

Auditorium, Columbus Public Library

Exhibition:

A SOUTHERN ASSIGNMENT: THE LASTING IMPACT OF *LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN*

In 1936, writer James Agee and photographer Walker Evans accepted an assignment from the Farm Services Bureau to photograph migrant farm workers in the South. From that beginning came one of the most influential and controversial social documentaries of the twentieth century, the photo collection/story collection known as *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. In this exhibit, Evan's famous photographs and Agee's complex and poetic reporting of the poverty-stricken Alabama families they visited will be seen in the context of how the book has shaped (for better or for worse) the collective view of life in the American South.

January 28 – February 26 | During Library Hours

W.C. Bradley Reading Room, Columbus Public Library

GALLERY TALK: EVANS, AGEE, AND A NEW FORM OF SOCIAL DOCUMENTARY

Columbus State University Associate Professor of Photography Rylan Steele (whose own work regularly invoke themes such as *Where We Live* prominently) leads this discussion about how Walker Evans and James Agee exploited their respective crafts to create the overwhelming moods of sorrow, anger and pity in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Thur. February 6 | 6:30pm

W.C. Bradley Reading Room, Columbus Public Library

CELEBRATE COLUMBUS: OUR TOWN'S CULTURAL ARTS HISTORY

This exhibit created by Historic Columbus, honors the rich cultural arts history of our region present since the mid-1800s. The timeline display not only covers the various performance venues (such as Temperance Hall and the Springer Opera House) but also the many nationally-known artists and creators who called our town home.

Through April 30

Reading Hall, Columbus Public Library

McCullers Literary Festival

Each year the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians offers the Marguerite and Lamar Smith Fellowship for Writers, a unique opportunity for authors and composers to spend up to three months living in the house where Carson grew up. This all-expenses paid fellowship allows them uninterrupted time to work on their next novel or composition. In honor of this year's NEA Big Read, we are happy to welcome back five of those Fellowship Recipients to read or perform selections and to comment on how the concept of WHERE WE LIVE can be found in their work.

SAMUEL KÓLÁWOLÉ AND MELISSA PRITCHARD

Samuel Kóláwolé (2019 Fellowship) will read from his new novel *The Road to the Salt Sea*, a searing portrait of the global migration crisis. He will be joined by Columbus resident Melissa Pritchard (2016 Fellowship) who will share from her widely acclaimed novel about Florence Nightingale *Flight of the White Swan*. A cocktail reception and group book signing will take place after the presentation.

Fri. February 21 | 4:30pm

*Riverside Theatre at Columbus State University's Riverpark Campus
6 W. 10th St.*

CONCERT: AIMEE BOBRUK

2018 Fellowship recipient Aimee Bobruk will perform selections from her album *Malybanchia* which draws its inspiration from the Mississippi River and the themes of Carson McCullers.

Fri. February 21 | 8:30pm

*Bo Bartlett Center at Columbus State University's Riverpark Campus
921 Front Avenue*

PANEL WITH TAYARI JONES AND FELLOWSHIP AUTHORS

Our NEA Big Read author Tayari Jones will join the five Smith Fellowship author/composers in a discussion about the hows and whys of writing and creating new work.

Sat. February 22 | 10:00am

*Riverside Theatre at Columbus State University's Riverpark Campus
6 W. 10th St.*

LAUREN ALIZA GREEN AND SNOWDEN WRIGHT

Award winning poet and *Forbes*' "30 Under 30" honoree Lauren Aliza Green (2021 Fellowship) will read from her recently published novel *The World After Alice*, the gorgeous and gripping story of two families brought together by devastating tragedy and unexpected love. Joining her will be Snowden Wright (2022 Fellowship) who will share tales from his latest novel, the edgy and hilarious Southern noir thriller *The Queen City Detective Agency*.

Sat. February 22 | 10:00am

*Riverside Theatre at Columbus State University's Riverpark Campus
6 W. 10th St.*

Book Clubs

COLUMBUS PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEA BIG READ BOOK CLUB

Join us as we dive into the NEA Big Read and related books and authors!

Mon. January 27 | 6:30pm – *Silver Sparrow* by Tayari Jones

Mon. February 24 | 6:30pm – *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee and Walker Evans

Mon. March 17 | 6:30pm – *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

Betty Van Cleave Meeting Room

MILDRED L. TERRY PUBLIC LIBRARY

BOOKS -N- BREWS

Like books? Like brews? This adult book club is the perfect "mix" for a lazy Saturday afternoon! New members are always welcome!

Sat. March 1 | 2:00pm – NEA BIG READ: *Silver Sparrow* by Tayari Jones

Iron Bank Coffee Company 2nd Floor Meeting Room, 6 11th Street

PAGE TURNERS

Join us for a lively book discussion of popular titles.

Sat. February 8 | 2:00pm – NEA BIG READ: *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner

NORTH COLUMBUS PUBLIC LIBRARY

BYO BOOK CLUB – "WHERE WE LIVE"

Join us for this special BYO Book Club event where we preview our NEA Big Read selection – Tayari Jones' *Silver Sparrow* – along with other Southern Literature that explores the theme of "Where We Live."

Wed. January 27 | 4:00pm

Large Conference Room

NEA BIG READ WRAP-UP BOOK CLUB: AN NEA BIG READ PROGRAM

Celebrate your season of learning at this special Book Club. Discuss books you read during the NEA Big Read, and fill up your TBR list with read-alike recommendations. Light refreshments provided.

Mon. March 21 | 4:00pm

SOUTH COLUMBUS PUBLIC LIBRARY

SHH...WE'RE READING BOOK CLUB

Love to read a variety of books? Want to chat with others about the story? This club is for you! Follow us on Facebook for reminders.

Wed. Jan 22 | 6:30pm – NEA BIG READ: *Silver Sparrow* by Tayari Jones

Wed. February 19 | 6:30pm – *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

Wed. March 19 | 6:30pm – NEA BIG READ: *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee

Local History

COLUMBUS PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEA BIG READ: FOUND FAMILY HEIRLOOM SHOWCASE

Bring your small family heirlooms and a tidbit of history about them to Adult Services staff on the 2nd floor, and we will display them in our Genealogy and Local History Room during March! Provision of contact information and vetting of items by staff are required.

Mon. February 24 – Fri. February 28

2nd Floor Genealogy and Local History Room

NEA BIG READ: DISCOVER COLUMBUS

Are you new to Columbus, or do you just want to know more about where you live? Join us to discover Columbus! We'll discuss great local eateries, the bustling arts scene, and annual city activities to explore.

Sat. March 8 | 3:00pm

Betty Van Cleave Meeting Room

MILDRED L. TERRY PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEA BIG READ: MA RAINEY'S COLUMBUS ROOTS

Learn more about the legacy of Columbus' own Mother of the Blues, Ma Rainey, from the Gertrude "Ma" Rainey House and Blues Museum. This program will also provide a walking tour of her home.

Sat. February 22 | 10:30am

NORTH COLUMBUS PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEA BIG READ: FAMILY KEPSAKE SHOW AND TELL (*Families*)

Do you have a family heirloom, photograph, or keepsake that has a special story behind it? Bring it to the Library and tell us all about it! Join us for an afternoon of family history crafts and activities, and learn about how to access Library genealogy resources.

Sat. February 8 | 11:00am

Children's Department

NEA BIG READ: MEET THE MAKERS

Each month, a local artist will speak about how they have been inspired by our community, or what influence they hope to make with their work. Whether you've seen their art or are just curious to learn more about what makes our community so unique, you can meet local artists face-to-face. Call us at 706-748-2855 or visit cvlga.org/neabigread2025 to discover our makers!

Thur. January 30 | 11:00am

Thur. March 20 | 11:00am

Thur. February 27 | 11:00am

*presented by the Chattahoochee Valley Libraries in partnership
with Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians*

